

# Refugees face poverty, food insecurity

June 15 2020

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At the start of Refugee Week, a timely study reminds us of the experiences and 'cultural acclimatisation' of recent arrivals.

The simple but important act of preparing and sharing familiar foods is one of the biggest challenges for refugees building a better and healthy

new life in Australia, Flinders University researchers say.

Many resettling from war zones, drought, persecution and deprivation, often after lengthy transition and racism in [refugee camps](#), then face the daunting prospect of finding work, housing, schooling, and every day necessities such as food upon arriving in Australia.

The new study focuses on the experience of Afghani refugees in Adelaide, finding language and cultural issues, limited income and difficulties in sourcing halal ingredients among barriers and additional stresses in their immigration experience. Transport and shopping practices might also influence their ability to provide healthy food options for their family.

Researcher Dr. Foorough Kavian says Afghanis are one of the fastest growing [refugee](#) groups in Australia, with South Australia home to about 6000 people of Afghani ancestry—with most of them refugees.

About 12,000 refugees arrive in Australia every year as part of the rising tide of global dislocation of millions of people.

"Afghan refugees to Australia typically migrate via countries such as Iran and Pakistan and may well come by boat," she says. "In transition countries, food stress and poverty are often aligned with racism and lack of resources.

"Our study focused on both the transition and then destination country, where racism and access to services is followed by possible lack of income and other stressors.

"In Australia, despite social services supports, there are still difficulties in accessing appropriate food due to significant cultural and religious differences, problems with language, housing and employment

marginalisation."

The project, focusing on the experience of 10 young Afghani refugee women in Adelaide in 2017, recommends a culturally appropriate program to assist newcomer refugees and immigrants with healthy adaptation and navigating the new food system in Australia.

"While availability of multicultural food is improving Adelaide, we found different structural, cultural and political factors come in to play as the women learn and re-learn how to manage provision of food for themselves and their families."

The researchers say the increasing number of Afghani refugees to Australia, as well as other minority groups, is increasing the need to address the social determinants of health by increasing pathways to employment and financial security to alleviate [food](#) stress and poverty.

"Migration, Stress and the Challenges of Accessing Food: An Exploratory Study of the Experience of Recent Afghan Women Refugees in Adelaide, Australia" has been published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*.

**More information:** Foorough Kavian et al. Migration, Stress and the Challenges of Accessing Food: An Exploratory Study of the Experience of Recent Afghan Women Refugees in Adelaide, Australia, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* (2020). [DOI: 10.3390/ijerph17041379](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17041379) 3

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Provided by Flinders University

Citation: Refugees face poverty, food insecurity (2020, June 15) retrieved 22 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-06-refugees-poverty-food-insecurity.html>

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