Unemployment among Arabic-Speaking Residents of Australia: Migrants & Refugees

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Arabic-Speakers in Labor Force   ~ 273,000

Unemployed Arabic-Speakers   ~ 56,000

Summary: Due to a lack of available information about unemployment among Arabic-speaking residents, an estimation was needed to profile unemployment among this particular group. Data presented in the tables below come from different sources to provide an estimation about the unemployment among Arabic-speaking residents in Australia. This estimation is around 56,000 residents, which means that the unemployment rate among this group is 21%. Contributing factors to these high unemployment rates among Arabic-speaking residents can be low English language skills and low levels of computer skills. This is an estimation only and may contain errors.

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The following three tables (Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3), show that between 2012 and 2018, Australia has welcomed around 1.5 million individuals, on skilled migrant, family and humanitarian visas. While around 60% of them are working class individuals, only 25-30% of those arriving to Australia have good English skills. Around 90,000 of entrants are coming from Arabic-speaking countries, and refugees constitute 55% of this figure.

Table 1: Migrants to Australia (2012 – 2018) by Country of Birth

Visa / State	Humanitarian N	%	Family N	%	Skilled N	%	Total[1][2][3] N	%
Australian Capital Territory	**1,115**	100%	**7,043**	100%	**19,112**	100%	**27,270**	100%
Total Arabic Countries	461	41.35	262	3.72	497	2.60	**1,220**	4.47
Total World Countries	654	58.65	6,781	96.28	18,615	97.40	**26,050**	95.53
New South Wales	**39,239**	100%	**146,141**	100%	**307,562**	100%	**492,942**	100%
Total Arabic Countries	28,614	72.92	9,454	6.47	8,670	2.82	**46,738**	9.48
Total World Countries	10,625	27.08	136,687	93.53	298,892	97.18	**446,204**	90.52
Northern Territory	**371**	100%	**3,946**	100%	**10,085**	100%	**14,402**	100%
Total Arabic Countries	59	15.90	55	1.39	136	1.35	**250**	1.74
Total World Countries	312	84.10	3891	98.61	9949	98.65	**14,152**	98.26
Queensland	**14,466**	100%	**59,907**	100%	**124,028**	100%	**198,401**	100%
Total Arabic Countries	4,558	31.51	978	1.63	1,864	1.50	**7,400**	3.73
Total World Countries	9,908	68.49	58,929	98.37	122,164	98.50	**191,001**	96.27
South Australia	**8,483**	100%	**20,845**	100%	**53,638**	100%	**82,966**	100%
Total Arabic Countries	1484	17.49	619	2.97	1512	2.82	**3,615**	4.36
Total World Countries	6,999	82.51	20,226	97.03	52,126	97.18	**79,351**	95.64
Tasmania	**2,586**	100%	**2,985**	100%	**9,086**	100%	**14,657**	100%
Total Arabic Countries	232	8.97	42	1.41	113	1.24	**387**	2.64
Total World Countries	2,354	91.03	2,943	98.59	8,973	98.76	**14,270**	97.36
Victoria	**35,504**	100%	**118,887**	100%	**286,569**	100%	**440,960**	100%
Total Arabic Countries	13,932	39.24	5,491	4.62	6,372	2.22	**25,795**	5.85
Total World Countries	21,572	60.76	113,396	95.38	280,197	97.78	**415,165**	94.15
Western Australia	**6,350**	100%	**46,353**	100%	**122,652**	100%	**175,355**	100%
Total Arabic Countries	1321	20.80	1228	2.65	2112	1.72	**4,661**	2.66
Total World Countries	5,029	79.20	45,125	97.35	120,540	98.28	**170,694**	97.34
Not Recorded State/Territory	**15**	100%	**1,093**	100%	**5,462**	100%	**6,570**	100%
Total Arabic Countries	2	13.33	96	8.78	295	5.40	**393**	5.98
Total World Countries	13	86.67	997	91.22	5167	94.60	**6,177**	94.02
TOTAL	**108,129**	**7.44**	**407,200**	**28.01**	**938,194**	**64.55**	**1,453,523**	**100%**

Table 2: Migrants to Australia (2012 – 2018) by English Proficiency

Visa / State	Humanitarian		Family		Skilled		Total[4][5][6]	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Australian Capital Territory	**1,115**	**100%**	**7,043**	**100%**	**19,112**	**100%**	**27,270**	**100%**
None or Poor English	841	75.43	1,562	22.18	3,052	15.97	5,455	20.00
Not Recorded	188	16.86	4,321	61.35	10,286	53.82	14,795	54.25
Good or Very Good English	86	7.71	1,160	16.47	5,774	30.21	7,020	25.74
New South Wales	**39,239**	**100%**	**146,141**	**100%**	**307,562**	**100%**	**492,942**	**100%**
None or Poor English	33,385	85.08	38,819	26.56	48,361	15.72	120,565	24.46
Not Recorded	4,545	11.58	89,282	61.09	160,683	52.24	254,510	51.63
Good or Very Good English	1,309	3.34	18,040	12.34	98,518	32.03	117,867	23.91
Northern Territory	**371**	**100%**	**3,946**	**100%**	**10,085**	**100%**	**14,402**	**100%**
None or Poor English	314	84.64	745	18.88	1,586	15.73	2,645	18.37
Not Recorded	27	7.28	2,617	66.32	4,596	45.57	7,240	50.27
Good or Very Good English	30	8.09	584	14.80	3,903	38.70	4,517	31.36
Queensland	**14,466**	**100%**	**59,907**	**100%**	**124,028**	**100%**	**198,401**	**100%**
None or Poor English	12,111	83.72	11,305	18.87	20,864	16.82	44,280	22.32
Not Recorded	1,690	11.68	35,058	58.52	59,332	47.84	96,080	48.43
Good or Very Good English	665	4.60	13,544	22.61	43,832	35.34	58,041	29.25
South Australia	**8,483**	**100%**	**20,845**	**100%**	**53,638**	**100%**	**82,966**	**100%**
None or Poor English	7,347	86.61	5,147	24.69	8,108	15.12	20,602	24.83
Not Recorded	731	8.62	12,544	60.18	29,095	54.24	42,370	51.07
Good or Very Good English	405	4.77	3,154	15.13	16,435	30.64	19,994	24.10
Tasmania	**2,586**	**100%**	**2,985**	**100%**	**9,086**	**100%**	**14,657**	**100%**
None or Poor English	2,388	92.34	491	16.45	759	8.35	3,638	24.82
Not Recorded	130	5.03	1,722	57.69	4,675	51.45	6,527	44.53
Good or Very Good English	68	2.63	772	25.86	3,652	40.19	4,492	30.65
Victoria	**35,504**	**100%**	**118,887**	**100%**	**286,569**	**100%**	**440,960**	**100%**
None or Poor English	29,469	83.00	27,923	23.49	44,477	15.52	101,869	23.10
Not Recorded	4,156	11.71	75,075	63.15	161,637	56.40	240,868	54.62
Good or Very Good English	1,879	5.29	15,889	13.36	80,455	28.08	98,223	22.27
Western Australia	**6,350**	**100%**	**46,353**	**100%**	**122,652**	**100%**	**175,355**	**100%**
None or Poor English	5,035	79.29	8,064	17.40	26,131	21.30	39,230	22.37
Not Recorded	968	15.24	27,740	59.85	52,954	43.17	81,662	46.57
Good or Very Good English	347	5.46	10,549	22.76	43,567	35.52	54,463	31.06
Not Recorded State/Territory	**15**	**100%**	**1,093**	**100%**	**5,462**	**100%**	**6,570**	**100%**
None or Poor English	7	46.67	2	0.18	404	7.40	413	6.29
Not Recorded	7	46.67	979	89.57	3,442	63.02	4,428	67.40
Good or Very Good English	1	6.67	112	10.25	1,616	29.59	1,729	26.32
TOTAL	**108,129**	**7.44**	**407,200**	**28.01**	**938,194**	**64.55**	**1,453,523**	**100%**

Table 3: Migrants to Australia (2012 – 2018) by Age Category

State / Visa	Humanitarian N	Humanitarian %	Family N	Family %	Skilled N	Skilled %	Total[7][8][9] N	Total %
Australian Capital Territory	**1,115**	**100%**	**7,043**	**100%**	**19,112**	**100%**	**27,270**	**100%**
00 - 24	546	48.97	1,994	28.31	7,687	40.22	10,227	37.50
25 - 65	534	47.89	4,749	67.43	11,410	59.70	16,693	61.22
66 - 99	35	3.14	300	4.26	15	0.08	350	1.28
New South Wales	**39,239**	**100%**	**146,141**	**100%**	**307,562**	**100%**	**492,942**	**100%**
00 - 24	18,031	45.95	42,469	29.06	110,145	35.81	170,645	34.62
25 - 65	19,419	49.49	96,061	65.73	197,223	64.13	312,703	63.44
66 - 99	1,789	4.56	7,611	5.21	194	0.06	9,594	1.94
Northern Territory	**371**	**100%**	**3,946**	**100%**	**10,085**	**100%**	**14,402**	**100%**
00 - 24	214	57.68	1,438	36.44	3,643	36.12	5,295	36.77
25 - 65	151	40.70	2,476	62.75	6,428	63.74	9,055	62.87
66 - 99	6	1.62	32	0.81	14	0.14	52	0.36
Queensland	**14,466**	**100%**	**59,907**	**100%**	**124,028**	**100%**	**198,401**	**100%**
00 - 24	8,393	58.02	18,483	30.85	47,198	38.05	74,074	37.34
25 - 65	5,837	40.35	39,452	65.86	76,708	61.85	121,997	61.49
66 - 99	236	1.63	1,972	3.29	122	0.10	2,330	1.17
South Australia	**8,483**	**100%**	**20,845**	**100%**	**53,638**	**100%**	**82,966**	**100%**
00 - 24	4,846	57.13	7,436	35.67	21,653	40.37	33,935	40.90
25 - 65	3,489	41.13	12,741	61.12	31,944	59.55	48,174	58.07
66 - 99	148	1.74	668	3.20	41	0.08	857	1.03
Tasmania	**2,586**	**100%**	**2,985**	**100%**	**9,086**	**100%**	**14,657**	**100%**
00 - 24	1,503	58.12	798	26.73	3,650	40.17	5,951	40.60
25 - 65	1,014	39.21	2,100	70.35	5,427	59.73	8,541	58.27
66 - 99	69	2.67	87	2.92	9	0.10	165	1.13
Victoria	**35,504**	**100%**	**118,887**	**100%**	**286,569**	**100%**	**440,960**	**100%**
00 - 24	18,131	51.07	37,110	31.21	116,053	40.50	171,294	38.84
25 - 65	16,402	46.20	77,154	64.90	170,388	59.46	263,944	59.86
66 - 99	971	2.73	4,623	3.89	128	0.04	5,722	1.30
Western Australia	**6,350**	**100%**	**46,353**	**100%**	**122,652**	**100%**	**175,355**	**100%**
00 - 24	3,332	52.47	15,281	32.97	45,782	37.33	64,395	36.72
25 - 65	2,911	45.84	29,527	63.70	76,739	62.57	109,177	62.26
66 - 99	107	1.69	1,545	3.33	131	0.10	1,783	1.02
Not Recorded State/Territory	**15**	**100%**	**1,093**	**100%**	**5,462**	**100%**	**6,570**	**100%**
00 - 24	5	33.33	285	26.08	2,187	40.04	2,477	37.70
25 - 65	9	60.00	782	71.54	3,267	59.81	4,058	61.77
66 - 99	1	6.67	26	2.38	8	0.15	35	0.53
TOTAL	**108,129**	**7.44**	**407,200**	**28.01**	**938,194**	**64.55**	**1,453,523**	**100%**

There are no available statistics about how Arabic-speaking residents in Australia master the Information and Computer Technologies (ICT). ICT skills include the ability to use the technology and to create and communicate information and ideas through making use of available digital technologies in every life aspects; and this is evident in the extensive use of internet technology and the resulting changes in ways we construct knowledge and interact with others (ACARA, 2019). Based on this definition, we can construct estimations based on available statistics provided by Internet World Statistics IWS (IWS, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c). According to IWS, although 55% of the total Arabic-speaking Middle East population has internet access, only around 8% of such population can access the internet, and have the skills to search for and process information.

Table 4: Internet in Arabic Middle East Countries

Arabic Middle East Countries[10]	Population 2019	Internet Access 30 June 2019[11]
Algeria	42,679,018	25,428,159
Djibouti	985,690	548,832
Egypt	101,168,745	49,231,493
Libya	6,569,864	3,800,000
Mauritania	4,661,149	969,519
Morocco	36,635,156	23,739,581
South Sudan	13,263,184	2,229,963
Sudan	42,514,094	13,124,100
Tunisia	11,783,168	7,898,534
Western Sahara	582,478	28,000
Bahrain	1,637,896	1,615,620
Iraq	40,412,299	19,947,510
Jordan	10,069,794	8,700,000
Kuwait	4,248,974	4,231,978
Lebanon	6,065,922	5,546,494
Oman	5,001,875	4,011,004
Palestine (State of)	5,186,790	3,381,787
Qatar	2,743,901	2,734,297
Saudi Arabia	34,140,662	31,856,652
Syria	18,499,181	6,335,969
United Arab Emirates	9,682,088	9,532,016
Yemen	29,579,986	7,903,772
TOTA	**428,111,914**	**232,795,280[12]**

Table 5: (Un)Employment among Australian Migrants born in Arabic Countries[13]

Labour Force Status	Employed, worked full-time	Employed, worked part-time	Employed, away from work	Employed, hours of work not stated	Unemployed, looking for full-time work	Unemployed, looking for part-time work	Not in the labour force	Labour force status not stated	Not applicable	Total
Algeria	372	214	16	18	49	38	606	22	55	1389
Egypt	9818	5300	409	405	889	673	18582	518	3182	39776
Libya	548	332	31	19	114	68	1055	28	326	2533
Morocco	524	306	30	20	93	56	791	26	35	1882
Sudan	3267	2535	147	477	1417	931	6665	345	1247	17029
Tunisia	136	60	6	5	19	17	287	7	18	565
Western Sahara	5	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	7
South Sudan	1706	1192	55	241	726	418	2711	182	469	7697
Bahrain	595	244	31	16	49	37	328	5	311	1617
Gaza & West Bank	494	277	26	34	84	48	1836	38	92	2939
Iraq	10157	7142	363	849	2198	1767	38142	792	5943	67353
Jordan	1437	867	80	91	267	178	2113	46	837	5914
Kuwait	1762	691	78	70	227	170	2428	30	567	6016
Lebanon	17659	10899	753	1288	1727	1153	42515	1029	1632	78649
Oman	244	163	14	7	18	70	693	0	420	1625
Qatar	229	99	9	12	21	29	195	10	511	1118
Saudi Arabia	1275	868	78	51	201	354	6403	33	3333	12578
Syria	2262	1478	82	159	402	422	7976	138	2407	15324
UAE	1672	916	87	64	184	237	1544	19	3491	8226
Yemen	203	89	5	0	32	25	249	4	75	686
Total	**54363**	**33656**	**2309**	**3830**	**8724**	**6689**	**135110**	**3267**	**24955**	**272915**

As outlined in Table 5, there are approximately 272,915 people in the labour force from Arabic Middle East countries. The numbers of Arabic-speaking residents within each category of the labour force status are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6: (Un)Employment among Arabic-Speaking Migrants

Labour Force Status	Numbers
Employed, worked full-time	54363
Employed, worked part-time	33656
Employed, away from work	6142
Unemployed, looking for full-time work	8724
Unemployed, looking for part-time work	6689
Not in the labour force	135110[14]
Not stated	3267
Not applicable	24955
Total	**272915**

According to the definition of "Not in the labour force", as discussed in the Census Glossary, this category includes people who do not want to work (~70%) as well as those who want to work (~30%). Therefore, an estimate of the population of Arabic Middle East residents would be around 56,000. This estimation is based on combing those unemployed, both looking for full-time or part-time work as well as 30% of those not in the labour force (Table 7).

Table 7: Estimation of Unemployment among Arabic-Speaking Migrants

Categories of Unemployed	Numbers
Unemployed, looking for full-time work	8724
Unemployed, looking for part-time work	6689
Not in the labour force[15] → [30% x 135110]	40533
Total	**55946**

The percentage of total unemployed Arabic residents is ~20.5% (estimated unemployed 55946 ÷ total labour force 272915). Such an estimated number of total unemployed Arabic residents is close to the percentage given by ACOSS (2018, p. 10) in which they report that 21% of the unemployed are from the culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Table 8: Number of employed and unemployed across Australian States & Territories[16]

(Un)Employment	WA	NT	SA	Qld	Vic	ACT	NSW	Tas	Total
Reported employed	**1,255,702**	**110,390**	**806,589**	**2,312,118**	**2,929,592**	**215,833**	**3,605,872**	**232,950**	**11,469,046**
full-time	715,287	74,100	435,110	1,333,193	1,670,556	137,058	2,134,521	121,822	6,621,647
part-time	376,590	21,493	270,409	691,751	920,875	57,064	1,071,151	81,601	3,490,934
Away from work	65,859	7,112	40,582	111,509	144,696	11,506	174,654	13,162	569,080
Unemployed	**97,966**	**7,685**	**60,488**	**175,665**	**193,465**	**10,205**	**225,546**	**16,365**	**787,385**
Unemployment %	**7.8%**	**7%**	**7.5%**	**7.6%**	**6.6%**	**4.7%**	**6.3%**	**7%**	**Avr ~ 7%**

Conclusion: It can be concluded that the unemployment among Arabic-speaking residents of Australia is 3-times (21%) higher than the average unemployment rate in Australia (7%). Such an estimation is suggested to be valid, as Davidson (2018, p. 10) has also reported that 21% of the unemployed individuals in Australia are those from the culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

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Notes

Notes on Table 1

[1] Number of migrants from Arabic Middle East countries is 90,459 (~ 6%), and world countries (94%). Humanitarian entrants from Arabic Middle East countries are 50,663.

[2] This table have been developed and compiled based on the data obtained from the Department of Home Affairs, Settlement Data Unit settlement.data.request@homeaffairs.gov.au , on Monday 16 September 2019.

[3] Data provided by the Department of Home Affair of Australian Government, have some limitations, including that the Settlement Database has not been adjusted to reflect settlers who are deceased or have had their visas cancelled. Moreover, the settlement database includes some duplicate settler records and only record the settler's latest known residential (or intended residential) address. Any value <5 was replaced by 2 by the researcher, with some minor adjustments to maintain the logic of data presentation. Arabic countries include Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Gaza Strip, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

Notes on Table 2

[4] Nearly 20% - 25% of migrants to Australian states and territories has poor or no English skills. The average of None/Poor English (22.8%), Unknown English Skills (50.2%) and Good/Very Good (27%).

[5] This table has been developed and compiled based on the data obtained from the Department of Home Affairs, Settlement Data Unit settlement.data.request@homeaffairs.gov.au , on Monday 16 September 2019.

[6] Data provided by the Department of Home Affair of Australian Government, have some limitations, including that the Settlement Database has not been adjusted to reflect settlers who are deceased or have had their visas cancelled. Moreover, the settlement database includes some duplicate settler records and only record the settler's latest known residential (or intended residential) address. Any value <5 was replaced by 2 by the researcher, with some minor adjustments to maintain the logic of data presentation. Arabic countries include Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Gaza Strip, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

Notes on Table 3

[7] Almost 60% of migrants is working class.

[8] This table has been developed and compiled based on the data obtained from the Department of Home Affairs, Settlement Data Unit settlement.data.request@homeaffairs.gov.au , on Monday 16 September 2019.

[9] Data provided by the Department of Home Affair of Australian Government, have some limitations, including that the Settlement Database has not been adjusted to reflect settlers who are deceased or have had their visas cancelled. Moreover, the settlement database includes some duplicate settler records and only record the settler's latest known residential (or intended residential) address. Any value <5 was replaced by 2 by the researcher, with some minor adjustments to maintain the logic of data presentation. Arabic countries include Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Gaza Strip, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

Notes on Table 4

[10] The source data coming from selected Arabic-speaking Asian Countries available at https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm as well as selected Arabic-speaking African Countries available at https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm

[11] Internet World Stats (IWS) differentiates between Internet Usage and Internet Users [source: https://www.internetworldstats.com/surfing.htm#1]. In their views, internet users are those who currently have the capacity to not only to access the Internet but also have the basic knowledge to use web technology and process the information. Therefore, it is the researcher view to better defining the Internet Usage as Internet Access.

[12] After excluding Israel and Iran from Middle East countries [https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats5.htm], we can conclude that only around 8% of those who have internet access in Arabic-speaking Middle East countries are can use the internet to search for information and process the information.

Note on Table 5

[13] Data presented in this table is retrieved by using Census Table Builder Tool, from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Government Retrieved from https://auth.censusdata.abs.gov.au/webapi/jsf/login.xhtml

Note on Table 6

[14] In the Census Glossary, the meaning of "Not in the labour force" for the total Australian population, includes not only people who do not want to work (~70%) but also includes those who want to work (~30%); available at https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/6220.0Main%20Features2September%202013?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=6220.0&issue=September%202013&num=&view=

Note on Table 7

[15] In the Census Glossary, the meaning of "Not in the labour force" for the total Australian population, includes not only people who do not want to work (~70%) but also includes those who want to work (~30%); available at https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/6220.0Main%20Features2September%202013?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=6220.0&issue=September%202013&num=&view=

Note on Table 8

[16] Data presented in this table are retrieved from the 2016 Census and presented per state/territory (ABS Census, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d, 2016e, 2016f, 2016g, 2016h).