

FEBRUARY 2024

INTEGRATION SURVEY

BARRIERS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS TO
SUPPORT SOCIAL
INTEGRATION FOR MIGRANTS
IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

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ABOUT MIGRATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

We exist to provide strategic support to the voluntary and community sector in the region, for any organisation working with migrants.

Our aim is to support collaborative working through the development of the West Midlands Migration Network, allowing organisations to come together and discuss joint working to address key priorities.

COMMUNITIES NETWORK

Our Regional Migration Network provides a forum for organisations supporting migrants across the region to come together and agree current priorities, develop actions and discuss best practice.

Our Communities Thematic Group meets regularly as part of the Network to address key barriers around social and community integration for migrants. They look to measure the success of current activities that could be used as best practice and ensure the voices of those with lived experience are centered in any service planning.

SCOPE:

“*Social integration is a two-way process. The most successful interventions offer mutual benefit, including giving something back to the existing community, whether that be the opportunity to make friends from different backgrounds or to take part in something creative*”

The Group has looked to develop understanding of both the barriers experienced by migrants in achieving successful social integration, and which interventions have positively impacted in reducing these.

In order to provide data as a starting point to develop responses, a survey was developed by the group and shared through partner networks.

The survey asked participants to compare their experiences when first arriving in the Midlands to their current situation in terms of their friendship groups and involvement in social activities.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

There were 28 responses to the survey, with most having lived in the UK for more than 5 years.

Over half of participants had previously been a refugee or asylum seeker. 20% were still awaiting the outcome of their application.

A further 20% had been refused asylum whilst 20% had come to the UK as part of a government resettlement scheme.

A third of participants originated from Central African countries, with a further 20% from the Middle East and 15% from East Africa.

Although 30% of participants had no right to work, a further third were currently in employment which was roughly split between full and part time work. Four individuals were unemployed but jobseeking.

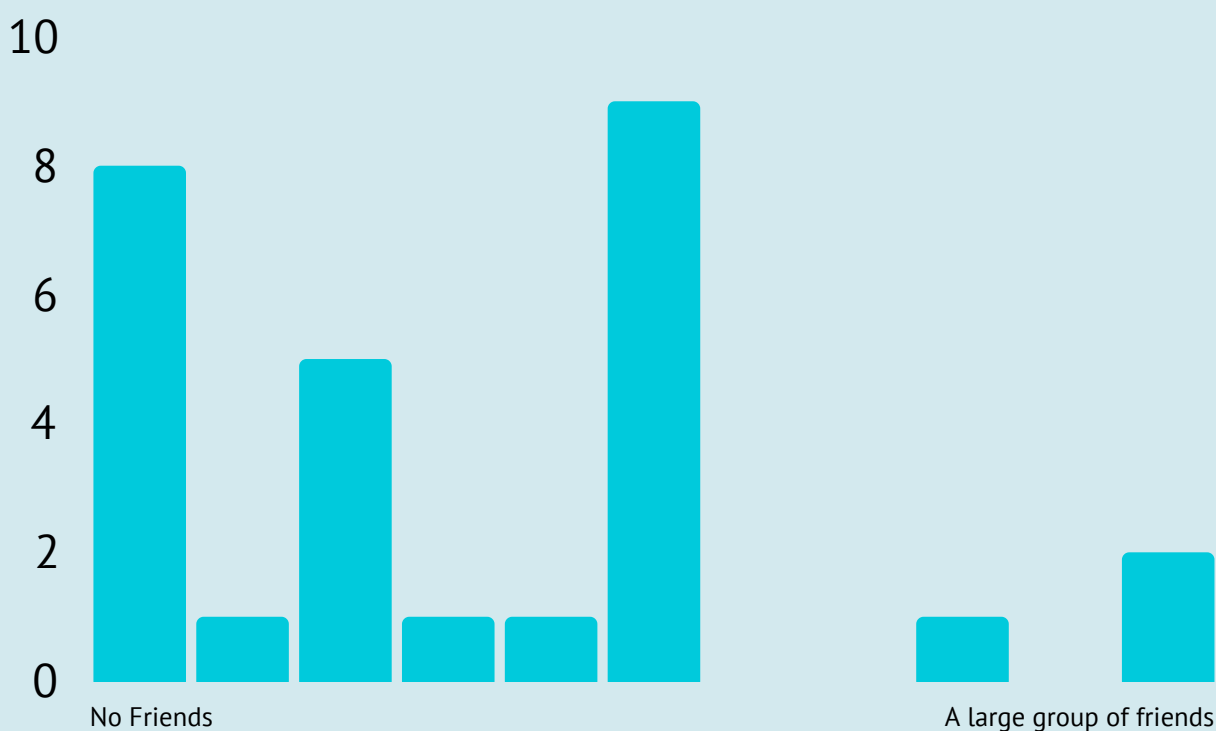
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INITIAL SITUATION

KEY FINDINGS

Most individuals rarely left their home and had small friendship groups

“How would you best describe the size of your friendship group?”



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Participants were asked to grade the size of their friendship group when first living in the region from a scale of 1-10. The average grade given was 3.2 suggesting a small level of social interaction with others.

This was also seen when participants were asked how frequently they left their address, with 60% stating this was only several times a week.

Those who had given a low score were asked to give reasons why. Three were most common. Over half stated they they were unsure where to go to meet people, while other reasons were a lack of language proficiency or simply not knowing anyone in the area.

For those that made friends during the initial stages of settlement this was largely a result of meeting through ESOL classes or religious communities.

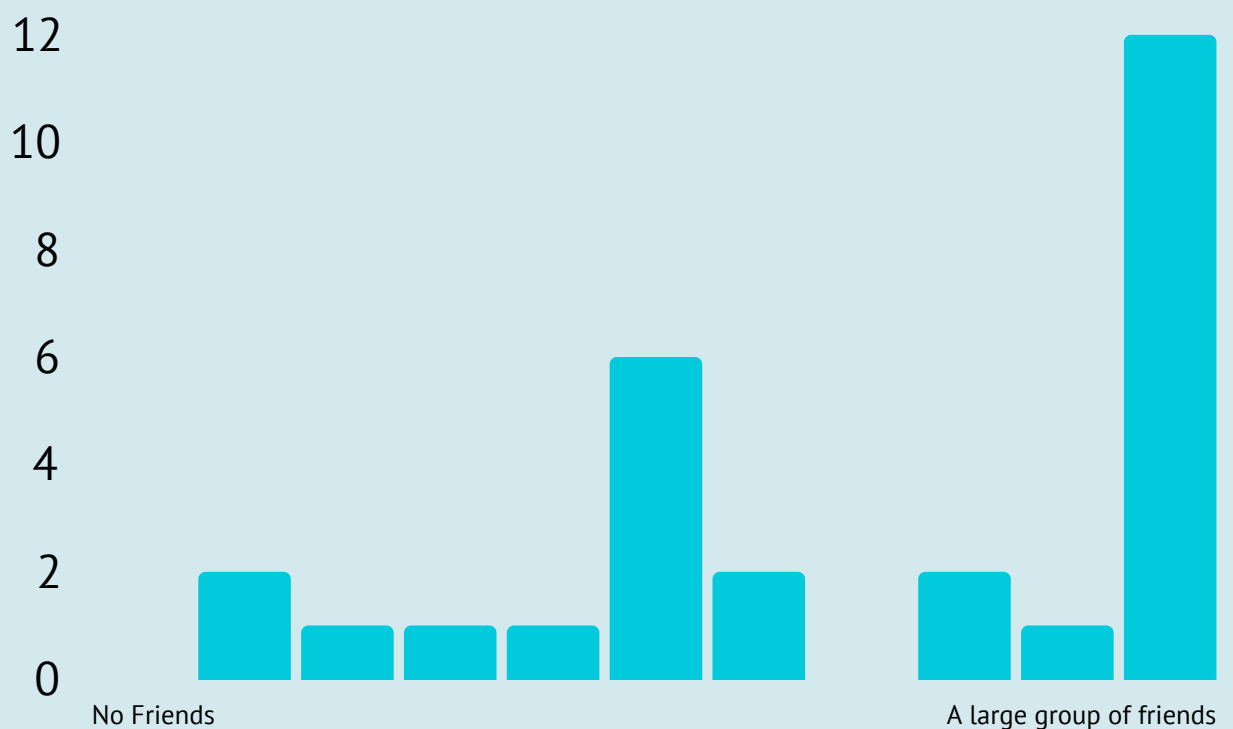
07

CURRENT SITUATION

KEY FINDINGS

Individuals who have accessed social activities have wider friendship groups, often from different communities.

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INITIAL SITUATION

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Engagement with the survey was driven by partners, and those taking part were involved in community activities organised by these groups. This may account for the increased levels of interaction highlighted in this section.

Participants self-assessed a larger size of friendship group on the same scale as used in the first section of questions, with an average score of 7.2, suggesting a large increase.

Around two thirds of respondents stated that they now met with friends in person at least once a week and 90% that they had friends from other communities.

A significant number were members of religious groups or attended services. Although they were some respondents who attended secular groups such as those involved in sports activity, these were a comparatively small number. It is unclear from this sample if this is due to personal choice or barriers to access.

KEY FINDINGS

- NEWLY ARRIVED MIGRANTS WERE MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE ISOLATION, RARELY LEAVING THEIR HOME ADDRESS
- MANY DID NOT KNOW HOW TO ACCESS GROUPS AND SERVICES TO SUPPORT THEIR INTEGRATION.
- LANGUAGE BARRIERS WERE ONE OF THE KEY ISSUES PREVENTING ACCESS
- THOSE THAT WERE ABLE TO ENGAGE WITH GROUPS REPORTED LOWER LEVELS OF ISOLATION AND GREATER ENGAGEMENT
- ALL MIGRANTS REPORTED THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING
- FURTHER WORK NEEDS TO BE DONE TO IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO WIDER ACTIVITIES AND ORGANISATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

INCLUDING SUGGESTIONS MADE BY PARTICIPANTS

- GREATER SIGNPOSTING OF RELEVANT ACTIVITIES AND ORGANISATIONS FOR NEWLY ARRIVED MIGRANTS
- PROVISION OF WELCOME PACK WITH LIST OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS, ACTIVITIES AND PLACES OF INTEREST
- DEVELOP LINKS WITH WIDER COMMUNITY BASED CHARITIES TO ENABLE COLLABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVITIES
- SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY AND ACTIVITY BASED ESOL PROVISION
- BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF BARRIERS TO PHYSICAL AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE TO MIGRANTS

FURTHER INFORMATION

WEBSITE:

[MIGRATIONPOLICY.ORG.UK/COMMUNITIES](https://migrationpolicy.org.uk/communities)

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[INFO@MIGRATIONPOLICY.ORG.UK](mailto:info@migrationpolicy.org.uk)

JOIN OUR NETWORK:

[MIGRATIONPOLICY.ORG.UK/GET-INVOLVED](https://migrationpolicy.org.uk/get-involved)