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Data Availability and Use
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Data Availability and Use

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is the national peak body representing Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and their organisations. FECCA provides advocacy, develops policy and promotes issues on behalf of its constituency to Government and the broader community. FECCA supports multiculturalism, community harmony, social justice and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and racism so as to build a productive and culturally rich Australian society. FECCA's policies are developed around the concepts of empowerment and inclusion and are formulated with the common good of all Australians in mind.

Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse population

Twenty eight per cent of the Australian population was born overseas.[1] The 2011 Census showed that a further 20 per cent of Australians had at least one overseas born parent.[2] The number over Australians who were either born overseas or have at least one parent who was born overseas is expected to rise to over 50 per cent when data from the 2016 Census is available.[3]

People from CALD backgrounds are not a homogenous group. They encounter different outcomes based on a variety of factors which include: backgrounds and life experiences; length of time since their arrival; migration pathway (e.g. as a refugee); gender; age; level of acculturation and exposure to Australian systems; English language proficiency; and socioeconomic status. Each of these factors impacts on the wellbeing of people from CALD backgrounds.

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[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics, '3412.0 – Migration, Australia, 2014-15', accessible at: http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3412.0Media%20Release12014-15

[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics, '2071.0 – Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census, 2012-2013', accessible at: http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2071.0main+features902012-2013

[3] SBS, 'ABS seeks bilingual and multilingual Census field officers' (13 May 2016), http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2016/05/13/abs-seeks-bilingual-and-multilingual-census-field-officers

There is sufficient evidence and research to indicate that Australia's migrants and refugees continue to face multiple disadvantages across a number of indicators. The subsequent risk adversely affects not only migrants themselves, but also the levels of social cohesion within communities, and halts the potential for increased and inclusive economic growth, and prosperity for Australian society at large. It is imperative that the levels of multiple disadvantage of CALD Australians are addressed through all government policy and program design and delivery to eliminate any disparities in terms of equity in access, participation, and outcomes.

Targeted policies are necessary to address the specific needs of Australia's CALD population, foster social inclusion and to continue attracting migrants.

Using data to improve public policy and service delivery
Better results in public policy can be achieved through appropriate data collection and disaggregation to ensure more effective and practical service delivery that would match the needs and circumstances of individuals. Data collection and linkage can also be used to measure agencies' progress in meeting their obligations under the *Multicultural Access and Equity* policy.

The *Victorian Government Standards for Data Collection on Interpreting and Translating Services* provide an example of State Government policy developed to:
  - enable the compatibility and comparability of data across Government and over time;
  - facilitate the setting of standards and targets for service provision; and
  - be consistent with whole of government reporting.

This policy applies specifically to the translating and interpreting industry, but can be used as a model and translated more broadly across services.

Government agencies should collect data on:
  - country birth;
  - main language spoken at home;
  - religious background (where applicable);
  - ethnicity; and
  - English language proficiency

This data can be cross-referenced with other indicators including gender, age, income, and migration status. Better collection and disaggregation of data can provide valuable insights in the situation of specific CALD communities in Australia across a number of social indicators, including employment and economic status, levels of education, health and wellbeing, family safety, social and economic participation, and reliance government services and supports.

Given the increase in delivery of government services online, government agencies should use these platforms to collect data on users:

> Data analytics and research can tell a lot about the individuals using [online government] services and how they use these services, which can then be utilised to improve the service delivery design. Adequate, disaggregated information collection can also provide insights into the social, economic and cultural considerations impacting on clients of a service. This data can assist to develop policy and responsive services for individuals.

Importantly, data collected through digital platforms must be able to identify when a user is being assisted to utilise the service and for what reasons, so that the evidence is clearer about who needs help and at what stages of the process.

This can be achieved through the development of data collection plans. Agencies should collaborate to agree on terminology, (for example, names of languages), and types of information that would be collected.[4]

FECCA recommends development of data-collection plans, with consistent terminology and types of collected information across government agencies.[5]

Trust and Privacy

Many migrants come from countries where the government is not trustworthy and thus hold significant concerns about how their personal information is used and stored by the Australian Government. Due to the lack of easily understood, publicly available information about how an individual's personal data is handled, there is little understanding of this topic among migrant communities.

Privacy concerns with regards to accessing government services online have been raised particularly in the context of *myGov* where access to a number of services is available through one portal. Migrants and refugees may have lived in countries where government agencies are not trustworthy, and thus are wary of anything which puts all of their personal information in one place. Many are not aware of the security of online services.[6]

While data linkage is an important tool which can improve the effectiveness of public policy and service delivery, many migrants are fearful that it will be used to 'catch them out' and result in punitive measures. Careful consideration must be given to which datasets are linked, and what the rationale for doing so is. For example, there are important reasons why Census data is kept separately to other data collected by government.

FECCA recommends implementing targeted communication strategies to reach ethnic communities to improve awareness of online services and reduce concerns about privacy and security, including easy-to-understand information in plain English and community languages to communicate messages about privacy and security of government digital service delivery to existing and prospective users.[7]

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[4] FECCA, *Digital Access and Equity for Multicultural Communities* (2016).
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

Recommendations

1. FECCA recommends development of data-collection plans, with consistent terminology and types of collected information across government agencies and jurisdictions.

2. FECCA recommends implementing targeted communication strategies to reach ethnic communities to improve awareness of government service delivery and reduce concerns about privacy and security, including easy-to-understand information in plain English and community languages specifically around data collection, protection and linkage.