



ST PAUL'S AFRICAN HOUSE



# AFRICAN FOCUS COMMUNITY SURVEY 2021

Cover photo:

African Focus team members and support staff (left to right):  
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Mireille Byamasu, Gracia Musafiri, Solange Habonimana.

# FOREWORD

African Focus “Our voices are important in Greater Shepparton” is a project of St Paul’s African House and the African communities of Greater Shepparton, funded by the Victorian Government’s Working for Victoria program. The centrepiece of the project is this African Focus Community Survey, conducted by members of the African communities in Shepparton.

Our motivation for this project was the lack of information available about the demographics, experiences and support needs of the African Communities in Greater Shepparton. This has made it difficult for community service organisations and service providers to serve the African communities’ needs effectively, and support community development and capacity building.

African Focus is the first detailed survey of the African Communities in Greater Shepparton. It was designed and conducted following extensive consultation, with African community leaders and members, and with organisations, both private and public sector, involved with the African communities. The information it provides will benefit African community members, employers, educational providers, government agencies, St Paul’s African House

and the many other community service organisations that support the African Communities of Greater Shepparton.

The African Focus survey is very much a ‘first look’ into the African Communities in Greater Shepparton. We hope that follow-up surveys will be conducted at regular intervals in the future, to help track changes over time and gain deeper understandings in key areas.

We are pleased to deliver this report as a way of sharing invaluable data about the African communities living in Greater Shepparton. We look to our African community leaders, supported by stakeholders and funders, to use this information to create positive change in the areas identified.



**Dr. Steve Little**

Executive Officer (voluntary)  
St Paul’s African House

## WHO COMPLETED THE SURVEY

**255**

Respondents

**18**

years & older

**African  
heritage**

**Living in  
Greater  
Shepparton**

The data in this survey was collected between 24 March - 16 May 2021

# ABOUT THIS SURVEY

## WHERE DID WE START?

The African Focus Team began the project with comprehensive pre-survey stakeholder research. The research aimed to introduce the upcoming survey to the African communities, identify the most important information sought about the African communities, what information the African communities would like to share with the wider community of Shepparton and what are the areas of unmet need identified by the African communities. This research included a written survey completed by 17 external stakeholders and face to face interviews with 26 African community leaders and members.

## HOW DID WE SELECT THE QUESTIONS?

The information gathered from the interviews and surveys identified the key themes for the survey questions. The African Focus team designed and refined the survey questions with input from the Project Partners (Harris Park Group and the University of Melbourne).

The questions on experiences of racial discrimination were based on Ferdinand A, Kelaher M and Paradies Y, 2013. *Mental health impacts of racial discrimination in Victorian culturally and linguistically diverse communities: Full report*. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. Melbourne, Australia.

Some of the questions on sense of belonging and happiness were based on Markus A., 2020. *Mapping social cohesion: The Scanlon foundation surveys*. Monash University, Caulfield East. The survey included 59 questions. We used the Survey Monkey online survey tool.

## HOW DID THE TEAM CONDUCT THE SURVEY?

The survey was promoted through social media, newspaper, radio and by word of mouth. The African Focus team visited locations regularly frequented by members of the African communities, including supermarkets, African speciality shops, churches, schools and workplaces. The team also visited people in their homes.

Most surveys were completed face to face in the participant's first language with the assistance of an African Focus team member. (Our team was able to speak with survey participants in 7 languages). Surveys were completed between 24 March and 16 May 2021. Most were completed using a mobile phone.

## HOW DID WE GET THE INFORMATION TO SHARE IN THE REPORT?

The raw survey data were cleaned and extensively analysed by statistician Dr. John Morton, Jemora Pty Ltd. This has enabled deeper insights into the key themes explored by the report.

## READING THIS REPORT

This report is designed to be visually descriptive and easily read. It deliberately does not contain large paragraphs of writing. We hope this design will give greater access to the information for a larger portion of the community, particularly those for whom English is not their first language.

Page 5 is an overview of the key messages of each theme. These key messages can also be found on the top right hand corner of each survey result page. Page 6 provides more information about the survey respondents (demographics). Pages 7 to 13 present the survey results for key themes that the survey explored. The infographics on these pages give you more details about the survey results.

# KEY MESSAGES

## DEMOGRAPHICS Pg 6

- Nearly all respondents (98%) are now Australian citizens or permanent residents. Most (90%) arrived on a humanitarian visa.
- Respondents came from over 10 countries in Africa, with different cultures and languages.
- Nearly all respondents (98%) are religious: Christian (82%) and Muslim (16%).

## LANGUAGES Pg 7

- People of African heritage in Greater Shepparton are skilled linguists. Respondents spoke a total of 32 languages. 1 in 10 people speak 4 or more languages.
- The main languages spoken at home are: Swahili (39%), Dinka (23%), English (11%) and Arabic (6%).
- Respondents from Sudan and South Sudan report better skills in speaking, reading and writing English. On average, men have better English language skills than women.

## SERVICES & UNMET NEEDS Pg 8

- Respondents found support difficult to get in: running their own businesses (45%), housing (38%), employment (30%) and access to interpreters (27%).
- Assistance in employment and education (including learning English and learning to drive) are most needed right now.
- Barriers to accessing services and support include: language difficulties (56%), lack of transport (51%), fear of discrimination (46%), and cost (34%).

## EMPLOYMENT Pg 9

- Finding paid employment is a significant issue for people of African heritage in Greater Shepparton. Almost two thirds of respondents are looking for paid work or more paid work, including those in full time paid work.
- 1 in 4 respondents working full time are also enrolled in education.
- Employment was rated as the most important area of need, with 1 in 3 people saying they are not getting all the services and support they need.

## RACIAL DISCRIMINATION Pg 10

- Many respondents have experienced racism, especially at work (2 out of 3 respondents), but most don't report it because they are afraid of the consequences.
- Fear of racist responses also prevents people from reaching out for services and support.
- 1 in 10 respondents who have children report that their children experience racist teasing or bullying weekly or monthly.

## EDUCATION Pg 11

- Education is seen as an important path to success, with 45% of all respondents enrolled in some form of learning. Of these, 29% were enrolled in university and 43% in TAFE/apprenticeship.
- 41% of respondents' highest level of education is currently high school, followed by university (18%), primary school (15%), and TAFE (13%).
- Almost half (48%) of the respondents who had completed university had done so overseas.

## SENSE OF BELONGING & HAPPINESS Pg 12

- Nearly all respondents (94%) have a sense of belonging in Greater Shepparton and Australia.
- Most important things for long-term success and happiness are: employment, family and reuniting family, education and community
- Opportunities to share their views and cultures would help unite African people of different backgrounds.

## COVID-19 Pg 13

- People of African heritage in Greater Shepparton are well informed about COVID-19, with 79% receiving the information they needed in the main language spoken at home.
- When the survey was conducted (March-May 2021) the majority of respondents said they would definitely or probably get the vaccine when available.
- Sudanese and South Sudanese respondents were more likely to get vaccinated than the Congolese and Burundian respondents.

# DEMOGRAPHICS

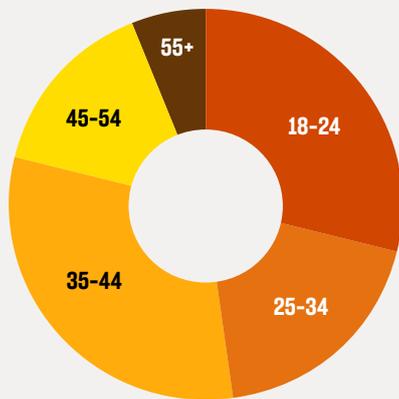
- Nearly all respondents (98%) are now Australian citizens or permanent residents. Most (90%) respondents arrived on a humanitarian visa.
- Respondents came from over 10 countries in Africa.
- Nearly all respondents (98%) are religious: Christian (82%) and Muslim (16%)

## GENDER

44%  Male

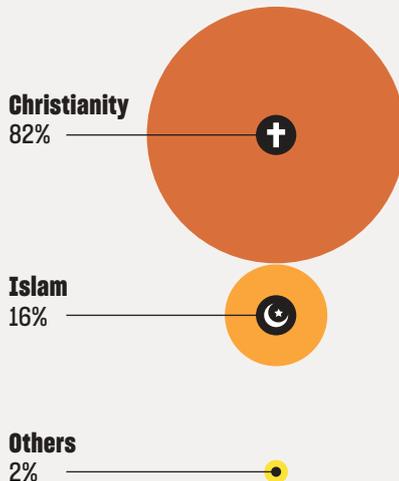
54%  Female

## AGE



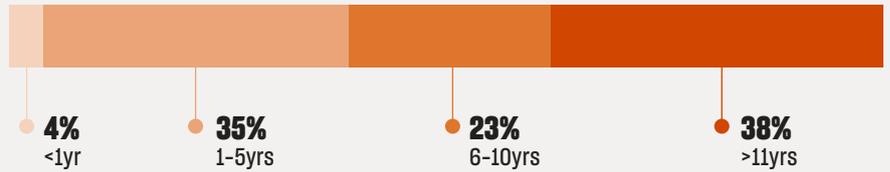
- 29% 18-24yrs
- 19% 25-34yrs
- 31% 35-44yrs
- 15% 45-54yrs
- 6% 55+yrs

## RELIGION

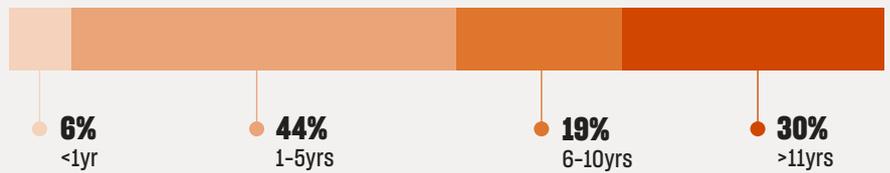


## TIME SPENT IN

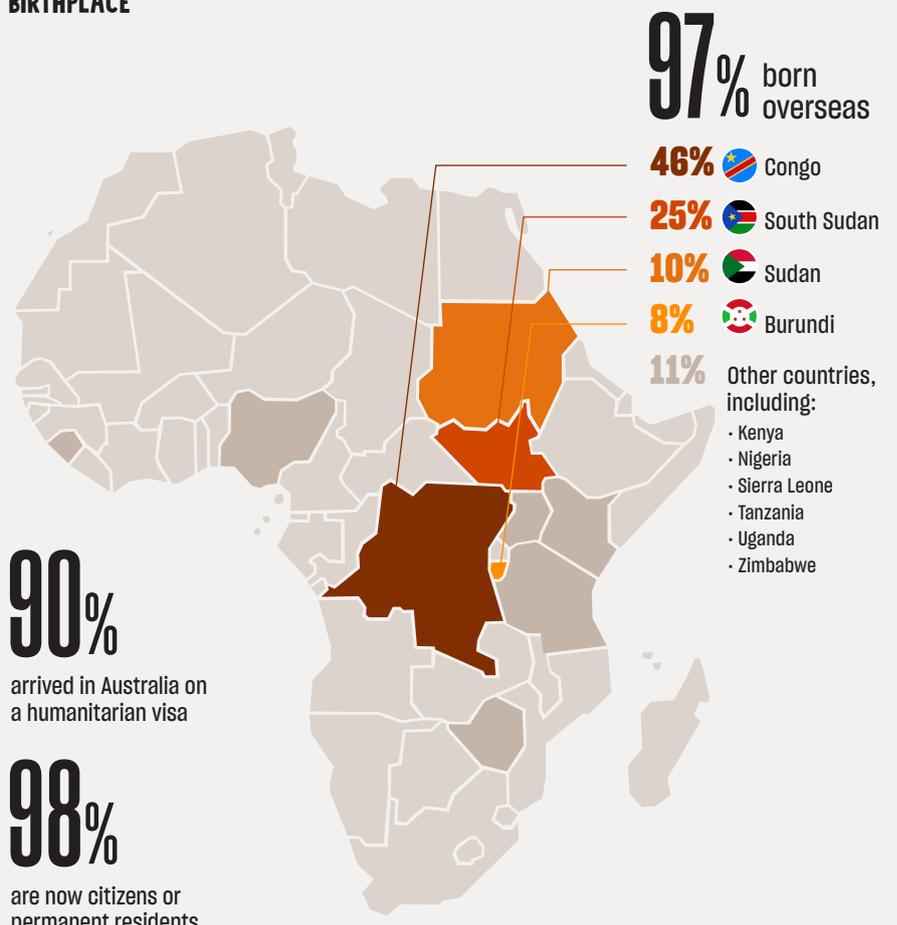
### Australia



### Greater Shepparton



## BIRTHPLACE



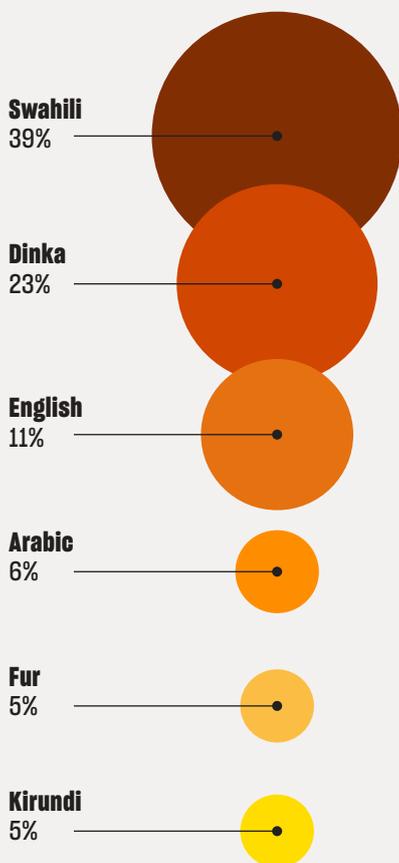
# LANGUAGES

**32** Languages spoken by African community in Greater Shepparton



1 in 10 speak **4** or more languages

## MAIN LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME



- Respondents spoke a total of 32 languages. 1 in 10 people speak 4 or more languages.
- Main languages spoken at home: Swahili, Dinka, English and Arabic.
- Sudanese and South Sudanese report better skills in English. On average men have better English language skills than women.

## LANGUAGES READ



**2/3** have attended English classes in Greater Shepparton



## ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

**Males** are better than females

**Sudanese and South Sudanese** report having the greatest skills in English

**>6yrs**

People who have been in living in Australia greater than 6 years have stronger English skills.

In Africa, boys get to go to school more than girls.

Sudan and South Sudan are different. In Sudan our schooling is in Arabic. My family are from Darfur and we speak Fur as our main language. In South Sudan, school is taught in English. Many people in Shepparton are from the Monjieng or Jieng tribes in South Sudan and they speak Dinka.

Swahili is a widely spoken language across Eastern and Central African countries. In Congo, school is taught in French and at home we speak a mix of French and Swahili.

I am from Burundi and my first language is Kirundi.

# SERVICES & UNMET NEEDS

- Support is difficult to get in: running their own businesses, housing, employment and access to interpreters.
- Assistance in employment and education are most needed now.
- Barriers to accessing services and support include: language difficulties, lack of transport, fear of discrimination and cost.

## SERVICES AND SUPPORT

# MOST DIFFICULT

“

You can apply for a house but you need to tick a box about employment. They just look at your income and decide on the house for you.

# TO GET

“

Starting a business here is desired by many but also yet people are afraid of it.



Opportunities to run own business

“

The colour of my skin stopped me getting housing. When we ring to make an appointment they listen for my name. My name also influences how I am treated.



Housing

“

Employers are not willing to train us for the job. They think it will be harder for them to train us than someone who is white.



Employment



Interpreters

# BARRIERS TO ACCESSING SERVICES AND SUPPORT

**1 in 5** experience 4 or more barriers accessing services

“

It is easy for me to speak, read and write English but accessing services in English is hard.

“

Parents are afraid to go to their children's school to tell them about the problems their child is facing due to their lack of language skills.

## AREAS OF GREATEST

# NEED NOW

 **Employment**

 **Education**

Including learning English and learning to drive



**56%** Language difficulties



**51%** No or lack of transport



**46%** Fear of discrimination

- More males than female
- South Sudanese & Sudanese



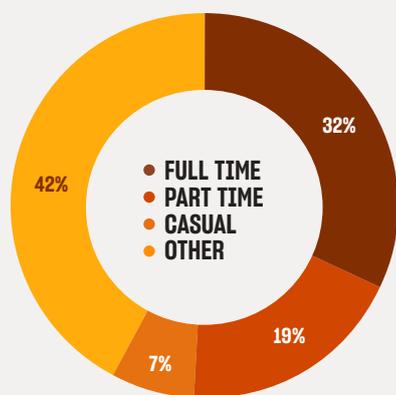
**34%** Cost

# EMPLOYMENT

- Finding paid employment is a significant issue for people of African heritage in Greater Shepparton.
- Employment was rated as the most important area of need.
- 1 in 3 people say they are not getting all the services and support they need.

**34%**  Unemployed

**66%**  Employed



Of those employed full time:

**64%** are looking for more work

“ We are building a new life here in Australia. We must work hard.”

**1 in 4**  are currently enrolled in study

## MAIN INDUSTRIES

 Males

 Females



## INDUSTRIES BY AGE

**18-24 yrs**

-  Healthcare and Admin & Support
-  Education & Training
-  Accommodation & Food

**25-34 yrs**

-  Agriculture or Horticulture
-  Cleaning

**35-44 yrs**

-  Cleaning
-  Agriculture or Horticulture

**45-55+ yrs**

-  Cleaning
-  Construction
-  Healthcare

# RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

- Many respondents have experienced racism, especially at work (2 out of 3 respondents), but most is not reported.
- Fear of racist responses also prevents people from reaching out for services and support.
- 1 in 10 respondents' children experience racist teasing or bullying weekly or monthly.



experience racism weekly or monthly



have reported this discrimination to authorities

## MOST COMMON FORM OF RACISM

**Being treated as less intelligent or inferior because of cultural characteristics**



report their child/children being the target of racist teasing, jokes or bullying weekly or monthly

“ Many children face discrimination and racism without knowing it.”

## IN THE WORKPLACE

The **workplace** is by far the most common place for racism followed by at school and in public places.



have experienced unfair work practices because of their cultural background

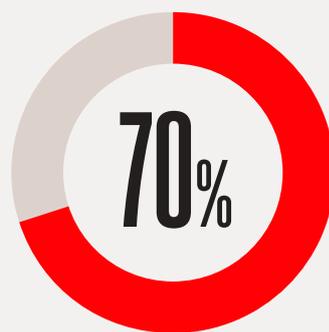
## INDUSTRIES MOST AFFECTED

 **Agriculture or Horticulture**

 **Cleaning**

“ Many people get bullied at the workplace, especially the farm, but they are scared to report it in case they get kicked out from the job.”

## PORTRAYAL OF AFRICAN PEOPLE IN MELBOURNE'S MEDIA



agreed that the portrayal of African people in the Melbourne media had impacted on their experience of racial discrimination whilst living in Greater Shepparton.

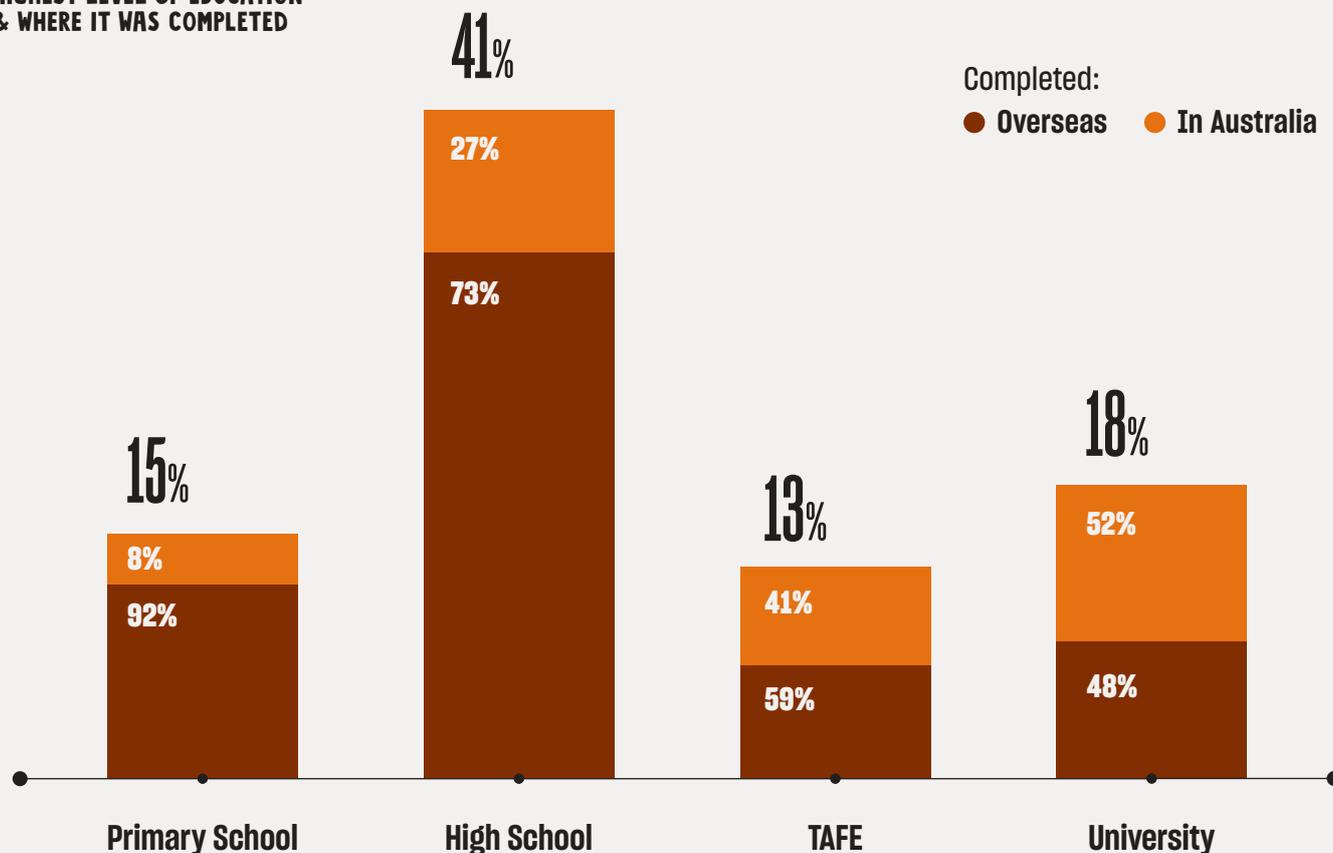
**Sudanese and South Sudanese** respondents were most impacted by this.

“ Fear of racial discrimination is real. It is stopping people from accessing services.”

# EDUCATION

- Education is seen as an important path to success.
- 45% of all respondents are enrolled in some form of learning.
- 29% are enrolled in University and 43% in TAFE/Apprenticeship.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION & WHERE IT WAS COMPLETED



Of those currently enrolled in learning:

TAFE / Apprenticeship

43%

University

just under  
1 in 3

**45%** currently enrolled in some form of learning

“ Education is important to me as it’s my pathway to a better life. We came to Australia to get these types of opportunities. ”

# SENSE OF BELONGING & HAPPINESS

- Nearly all respondents (94%) have a sense of belonging in Greater Shepparton and Australia.
- Employment, family and reuniting family, education and community are most important for long-term success and happiness.
- Opportunities to share views and cultures would help unite African people.



**83%** are happy with their life

“

When we are alive, we are happy. You make money, it doesn't make you. If you are not making money, it's ok. You will make money one day.

**94%** have a sense of belonging in Greater Shepparton and Australia

**92%** are happy with their current family relationships



**1 in 4** 

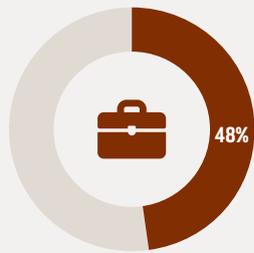
were not satisfied with their current financial situation

“

We are happy and grateful for what we have in Australia but you still need to find a job.

## FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO

long term success + happiness



Employment



Family



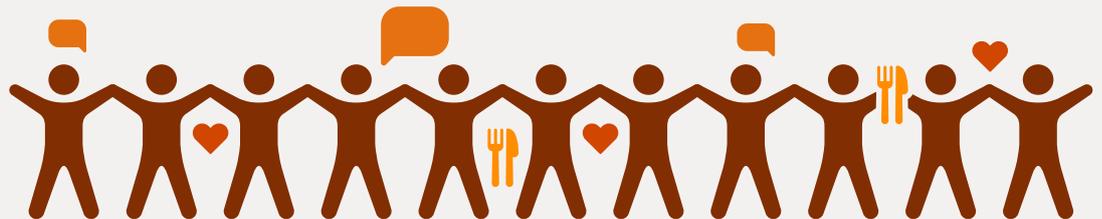
Education



Community

## BEST WAYS TO

unite African people in Greater Shepparton

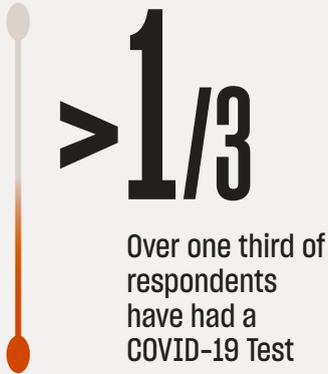


Activities where views and cultures can be shared

# COVID-19

- 79% received the COVID-19 information they needed in their language.
- Most respondents said they would definitely or probably get the vaccine when available.
- Sudanese and South Sudanese respondents were more likely to get vaccinated than the Congolese and Burundian respondents.

## TESTING



## INFORMATION



is the main source of getting information about COVID-19



have received COVID-19 information in their main language



reported getting all the information they needed

## VACCINATION



Most respondents were **positive about** getting vaccinated

### MORE LIKELY TO GET



**Sudanese and South Sudanese**



**Males** in each community

### LESS LIKELY TO GET



**Congolese and Burundian**



**Females** in each community

### MAIN CONCERNS

- **Safety**
- **Side Effects**



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## AFRICAN COMMUNITY MEMBERS

We would like to sincerely thank all the African community members who participated in the survey. Without your interest and contribution this project would not have been possible. This is your information and we look forward to supporting you to work on these areas.

## AFRICAN FOCUS PROJECT TEAM

### Executive Officer

Dr. Steve Little

### Partnerships & Programs Manager

Kate Radevski

### Senior Community Connections Coordinator

Akuot Wundit

### Community Connections Workers

Thomas Tiny

Rebecca Awan

Solange Habonimana

Beatrice Nyinawabera

### Support Staff

Mireille Byamasu

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Dr. John Morton, Jemora Pty Ltd

## FUNDER

Victorian Government, Working for Victoria program.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

If you are interested in further details on a specific topic explored in the survey, please contact St Paul's African House [partnerships@stpaulsafricanhouse.org](mailto:partnerships@stpaulsafricanhouse.org)





ST PAUL'S AFRICAN HOUSE