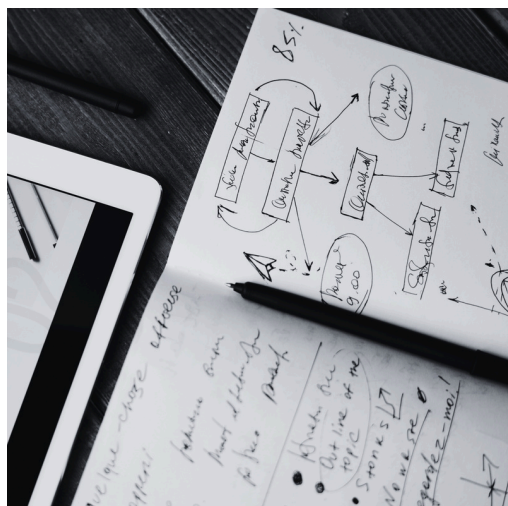


# Research and Advocacy Statement



September 2024

The MCWH Research, Advocacy and Policy Department



# About us

MCWH is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation led by, for and with women and gender diverse people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. We increase migrant and refugee women's and gender diverse people's opportunities for health and wellbeing in Australia through bilingual health education, advocacy and leadership.

Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (MCWH) conducts research related to migrant and refugee women's and gender diverse people's health that is feminist, intersectional, equitable, co-produced and has practical outcomes to inform advocacy, policy, and systems and social change to benefit migrant and refugee women and communities in Australia.

Our Research, Advocacy and Policy Department (RAP) is led by an experienced and diverse team. We conduct primary data collection and analysis, and we translate and synthesize data, research and information obtained from academic, professional, government and other sources.

We have an ethical and collaborative research culture that aims to achieve transformative change in migrant and refugee women's and gender diverse people's lives. Our approach to research is underpinned by the following principles:

**1. Intersectionality**

**2. Equitable collaboration and ethical engagement**

**3. Centring experience as evidence**

**4. Advocacy and systems-change**



# 1. Intersectionality

MCWH follows a feminist intersectional approach that analyses how structures of power can produce or reinforce gender, racial and social inequity for migrant and refugee women and gender diverse people.

There is little comprehensive research that focuses on the health and wellbeing of migrant and refugee women and gender diverse people in Australia. Within the limited literature that exists, the implications of 'cultural difference' are widely discussed, but often misunderstood. Culture is often conflated with ethnicity and race and/or equated with 'cultural' practices, which means that other systemic factors tend to be ignored.

Our research program is guided by the understanding that while individual behaviour, attitudes or beliefs are important, the role of systems and structures is pivotal in shaping health and wellbeing outcomes for migrant and refugee communities in Australia.

## 2. Equitable collaboration and ethical engagement

We believe that equitable collaboration and ethical engagement should be at the core of all research with migrant and refugee women and communities. Our RAP Department comprises of women from migrant and refugee backgrounds and our accredited and highly trained bilingual health education team plays a central role in our research as co-researchers and peers in the collection and evaluation of data. Our health educators often have shared experiences and language, intersectional understanding of the issues, and in-depth knowledge of their communities.



### 3. Centring experience as evidence

MCWH research respects and values women's and gender diverse people's experience, knowledge and wisdom. In terms of methodology, we value participatory, action-based research that not only seeks to centre migrant and refugee women's and gender diverse people's lived experience, but positions them as co-producers or creators of knowledge and evidence.

The practice of centring experience as evidence and using narrative or stories as methods of research is grounded in feminist scholarship. It can be used to serve political purposes and challenges the methodological 'rules' for the production of knowledge and what counts as 'evidence'. When research is led by the community and is for the community, it can transform inequitable power relations by challenging the role of the 'detached observer' which characterises the dominant mode in social science and public health research.

### 4. Advocacy and systems-change

MCWH conducts research and engages in research partnerships that aim to positively impact the social, physical and mental wellbeing of migrant and refugee women and gender diverse people. We believe that research should translate to real world outcomes and seek to transform inequitable systems and structures for migrant and refugee women and gender diverse people.

MCWH draws from the evidence-base to advocate for migrant and refugee communities by providing advice to government as members of key committees, provide input into policy, as well as build the capacity of employers in industry, health and community sectors to incorporate principles of intersectionality into their policy frameworks and service delivery.



# Our Research Partnerships

MCWH partners with universities, community researchers and community-based organisations to build the evidence-base on migrant and refugee women's and gender diverse people's health, advance health equity, and promote intersectional feminist approaches to research.

We prioritise research partnerships with researchers whose work is guided by a feminist intersectional approach, framework and methodology.

MCWH conducts research and engages in meaningful research partnerships that respect the dignity and well-being of participants. Participant wellbeing takes precedence over the expected benefits to knowledge.

Too often, migrant and refugee organisations like MCWH are approached by researchers to be involved in research at the point of participation or recruitment, and are not consulted about research design or research methods.

MCWH values equitable research and engagement that considers issues such as power relations, decision making, representation and leadership. Equitable collaboration and partnership involves prioritising appropriate funding and compensation for expert organisations such as MCWH to be engaged in research.

As such, MCWH seeks to conduct research that values the expertise and guidance of migrant and refugee women and gender diverse people and positions migrant and refugee researchers as leaders of research. When MCWH partners with researchers, we seek to be actively engaged throughout the research project, starting at the beginning with decision-making when developing research questions, design and methodology, through to data collection, analysis and writing.

**To discuss a research partnership with the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health please contact the Research Advocacy and Policy Team:**  
**[rap@mcwh.com.au](mailto:rap@mcwh.com.au)**

