



SCANLON
FOUNDATION
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE



Explainer Series - 01

Understanding belonging

Why it matters for social cohesion

Author: Trish Prentice, Senior Researcher

Belonging

Belonging has long been regarded as a fundamental human need.ⁱ Early in human history, it was essential for people to work together just to get by and survive. In the days of hunting and gathering, where life involved facing harsh landscapes and challenging conditions, doing the tasks necessary for survival was more efficient in a group, where physical labour could be shared. Ejection from the collective, in these circumstances, meant almost certain death in a world far more inhospitable for an individual on their own.ⁱⁱ While today, the modern world has largely moved on from a subsistence lifestyle, and it is a lot easier for individuals to live in isolation from others, the evolutionary drive to be part of the group remains.ⁱⁱⁱ In fact, it continues to be a powerful and pervasive motivator of human behaviour.

What is belonging?

What does it mean to belong? This is a question that has occupied thinkers, theorists and academics for some time. We all have a general, intuitive sense of what we mean by belonging (something to do with being part of a group...), but actually defining the term has been a more complex project.^{iv} Over time, different theoretical perspectives have emerged, driven by different fields of interest, conceptual underpinnings and assumptions. While these studies have all contributed to the richness of the thinking and data we have on belonging, they have also created a research landscape that often feels complex and disconnected. A psychologist, for instance, will define belonging by focusing on internal factors, such as a person's subjective state and needs;^v whereas a sociologist will focus on an individual's position in relation to social groups, structures or institutions.^{vi} A geographical perspective will describe belonging in terms of connection, familiarity and feelings of security in or to a 'place,'^{vii} while a philosophical definition will focus on a person's self-understanding as they define their identity and find intra (and inter) personal meaning.^{viii} Added to this are the insights (and complexities) brought to the subject by different forms of belongings: cultural belonging, linguistic belonging, systemic belonging,^{ix} place-based belongings^x and belongings vis-a-vie constructs like the nation state^{xi} (which encapsulates things like civic and political belongings). Navigating the insights that different disciplines and approaches have brought to our understanding of belonging, while separating the core components of belonging from those things that are merely contributors to it (like precursors),^{xii} is a challenging task. It has made not only defining belonging difficult but measuring it too.

Over time, different theoretical perspectives have emerged, driven by different fields of interest, conceptual underpinnings and assumptions.

In recent years several review studies have emerged which attempt to make sense of the breadth of research and data on belonging. These studies typically bring together a large number of research studies from different disciplines to determine the commonalities across definitions and perspectives. By taking a trans-disciplinary approach, these studies frame belonging in a way that is broadly applicable and useful for contexts that are inherently multidisciplinary (like understanding social cohesion). They also provide a structure to help navigate some of the research's growing complexity.

One such study was undertaken by Canadian researchers Mahar, Cobigo and Stuart in 2013, who completed a narrative review of 40 research papers drawn from fields as broad as education, mental health and disability, to religion, immigration and citizenship.^{xiii} They identified five elements as central to a multidimensional understanding of belonging:

- **Belonging is subjective**

First, belonging is a perception.^{xiv} It is entirely subjective, centred around whether a person feels valued, respected or that they ‘fit in’.^{xv} In this way, belonging is not something tangible or objective. Regardless of whether a person formally belongs or actively participates in a group, their sense of belonging derives from their subjective feelings about the group (not simply from their membership or participation).^{xvi}

- **Belonging involves a referent**

Secondly, belonging requires a referent^{xvii}—something to ‘feel belonging’ to. Feelings of belonging are often anchored to a social group^{xviii} or another form of collective, and as an individual can belong to more than one group or collective at a time (for instance, a local neighbourhood, a national body, an ethnic community, a workplace, an extended family etc.), they can experience multiple senses of belonging.^{xix} This means that an individual may experience a sense of belonging and non-belonging at the same time, depending on the referent/s in question. The importance individuals place in certain types of belonging may also be different to others, as might the valued placed on particular belongings by an individual at any one time.^{xx} This means that when it comes to belonging, each set of connections and interactions is unique, both to the individual, and to the group.^{xxi}

- **Belonging is dynamic**

Third, belonging is dynamic because “emotions, like perceptions, shift in different times and situations and are more or less reflective.”^{xxii} At any one time there may be factors that contribute to or detract from a sense of belonging.^{xxiii} Belonging therefore should never be seen as static.^{xxiv} It *can* change and *can* be influenced, both negatively and positively.

Belonging involves reciprocity

Fourth, for there to be belonging, there must be a sense of reciprocity (meaning “relatedness or connectedness”^{xxv}) between the individual and group.^{xxvi} Belonging doesn’t simply come from sharing similar characteristics with others. For instance, an individual might share inherent characteristics, a geographical location or political status with others that might appear, at first instance, to afford them membership of a particular group. However, belonging doesn’t come from shared characteristics alone. It derives from the feelings of connectedness to the group and its members.^{xxvii} Connection can emerge from repetitive practices,^{xxviii} shared history, experiences, or values;

Reciprocity means belonging is a two-way relationship. It depends not only on an individual’s desire to belong, but also on whether they are recognised, accepted, and included by the group.

explicit acknowledgement by the group; or acts like support or welcome.^{xxix} Importantly, this means the relationship is not just one-sided. A sense of belonging involves the contribution of the group.

Belonging involves a sense of self-determination

Finally, belonging involves a sense of self determination:^{xxx} an individual must feel they have a sense of power in their interactions with the group; a sense of having some influence over it.^{xxxi} In this way, belonging derives from individual agency—from exercising the choice to belong—not simply from “qualifying” to be part of a group.^{xxxii} In the words of one theorist, “It is an active choice we make to a relationship, to a place, to our body, to a life *because we value it* (my emphasis).”^{xxxiii}

Yet individual agency is not always the full picture; belonging can be contested. In these instances, an individual may seek to become part of a group and even identify very strongly with the group, only to be told they cannot belong. Studies have found that when an individual’s “power” in this regard is taken away, they do not reach a sense of belonging.^{xxxiv} Discrimination, social roles or norms can therefore serve as barriers to a sense of belonging despite an individual having group ‘qualifying characteristics,’ ultimately depriving a person of their power of choice.

As this conceptualisation suggests, belonging is complex and it is multidimensional. It involves subjective elements that are unique and internal to the individual (like personal feelings: a sense of emotional connection, acceptance or feelings of being valued) and objective elements that are external to the individual (such as social structures that provide referent points for belonging). It is dynamic, and it involves contributions both from the individual and the group.

Belonging and positive outcomes

There is no doubt that the notion of belonging has risen to prominence in social research in recent times. One of the reasons for this is that a sense of belonging has been found to be associated with a wide range of favourable outcomes. Recent research has found that a sense of belonging is associated with positive outcomes for individuals in areas like physical and mental health, academic and vocational achievement and social and financial progress,^{xxxv} while individuals who experience a low sense of belonging seem to experience greater challenges in educational environments and the workplace, and generally demonstrate less ability to respond to adversity or setbacks.^{xxxvi} Belonging has been found to have positive connections to individual wellbeing,^{xxxvii} workplace productivity^{xxxviii} and civic participation,^{xxxix} while research into school shootings, radicalisation, chronic loneliness, social isolation and suicide has found an inverse relationship.^{xl}

Belonging matters. It shapes individual wellbeing, progress and participation, and it underpins a cohesive society.

While belonging is certainly not a silver bullet for fixing all of society’s ills, it does seem to play an important role in healthy societal and individual functioning.^{xli xlii} What is it about belonging that gives it such potential to positively influence individual outcomes?

Belonging as a protector and a motivator

Some of the power of belonging seems to derive from the role it played in human evolution. Being part of the group, back then, offered both practical support and physical safety. Connection with others allowed work to be shared, ultimately reducing the load carried by each single person. At the same time, each person in the group knew others had their back. Everyone had an interest in the group surviving because they knew their odds of survival were better with others, than alone.^{xliii}

Today, belonging still provides a protective function. Having the support of a group can help an individual to navigate life's challenges,^{xliv} both practically and emotionally, thereby reducing the

Belonging provides protection through safety, support and connection. It reduces stress, isolation and fear, creating a sense of security. From this base, individuals can thrive and are motivated to act, participate and contribute to the group.

physical and mental effects of hardship or stressors.^{xlv} It also provides a sense of security.^{xlvi}

Although for people these days it may no longer be life or death at stake, getting through life feeling connected and receiving social and emotional support buffers an individual against loneliness, social isolation, fear and anxiety (and mitigates the harmful physiological impacts of these^{xlvii}). An

individual who belongs, therefore, has a more safe and secure place in the world, from which they can re-direct the energy they would otherwise use to assess or respond to threats towards positive outcomes (like achievement, productively or contribution^{xlviii}).

Belonging also acts as a motivating force, both internally and externally. Individuals are incentivised to adopt the behaviours, attitudes, and standards of a group for themselves to ensure they continue to be accepted. In other words, wanting to be part of a group inspires acts and behaviour in the individual that the group values. Alongside this, individuals are drawn to engage in actions that benefit the group.^{xlix} These behaviours maintain crucial relationships within the group but also ensure the group itself survives. Participation and contribution therefore serve both to reinforce person's status within the group (as they act, alongside others, towards the collective good) and the group itself.

Belonging and migration

In the context of migration, developing a sense of belonging is widely recognised as a crucial element of the process of settlement and integration.ⁱ Leaving one's country of origin changes established ties—physical, social, financial, and emotional—ⁱⁱ often resulting in significant psychological stress.ⁱⁱⁱ While individuals may retain some sense of belonging to their former “home,”^{liii} the connections that once sustained this feeling are fundamentally altered. As a result, establishing life in a new country involves

not only the challenges of navigating all the practical realities of finding housing, employment or education, learning new systems and becoming familiar with new places, but establishing new social, emotional and financial bonds that can help an individual to feel a sense of emotional and social security in their new environment.^{liv}

Migration alters established connections and can create significant stress. Developing new social, emotional and practical ties builds a sense of security in a new environment. Without belonging, wellbeing declines, participation reduces and integration becomes more difficult.

For migrants (as for everyone), belonging evolves in different contexts (referent points): at the neighbourhood level and at a national level, in the different social contexts they participate in and through legal and political recognition, which says to the individual, vis-a-vis the rest of the population, “I belong as much as you do...”^{lv} At the same time, belonging is influenced by the “discourses and practices” a person is subject to.^{lvi} When there is an unmet need to belong, individuals can experience increased stress, decreased physical and mental health and reduced capacity to participate in various spheres.^{lvii} This, in turn, can impact the process of social integration, connection with broader society and the development of the shared identity that is foundational for social cohesion.^{lviii}

Belonging and social cohesion

Belonging is regarded as a fundamental component of social cohesion. For society to be cohesive, individuals need to feel they belong. But how does belonging contribute to the cohesiveness of society?

Belonging is a core part of social cohesion, shaping how people experience connection within a society. It grows through everyday experiences of acceptance, recognition, and mutual support that make individuals feel part of the broader community.

One way to think about the interconnection between the two is this. If social cohesion refers to the strong social bonds that bind a society together, then belonging can be thought of as the vehicle that provides those subjective feelings of connectedness. Belonging comes from the experiences of welcome, acceptance, recognition and mutual support – all those encounters that help reinforce to an individual that they are, indeed,

part of the group, while it is unpinned by the ‘sticky’ components of trust, common values and shared goals that bind group members together.

Essentially, belonging can be described as the “felt experience” of cohesion. It is the recognition and the expression of the connection and solidarity that an individual feels to and with the broader group, whether their local community or the nation as a whole.

The paradox of belonging

Individuals will always find their sense of belonging—arguably, we all have little choice, we are biologically driven to do so—but where that belonging is found, matters. Finding belonging in a group which exhibits behaviours that are toxic or harmful to an individual will ultimately outweigh any positive benefits that a sense of belonging may bring. Studies into the functioning of cults or extremist groups are clear that membership of such groups are only detrimental to an individual. In such contexts, group membership provides a sense of belonging, but that sense of belonging does not provide an individual with a sense of safety, security or protection. It only harms them.

Likewise, finding a sense of belonging can have negative ramifications for society as a whole, when the group an individual belongs to actively works against the goals of the collective. Sometimes identification and connection to one group is so strong that it works to separate an individual (whether consciously or unconsciously) from those ‘outside’ the group. In this way belonging can work as an isolating force, not one that contributes to overall societal cohesion. Belonging, therefore, can be

considered a paradox. As much as it provides positive benefits for individual and societal functioning, it can also be detrimental.

The challenge for all societies, including Australia, is how to foster belonging to groups that contribute to societal cohesiveness overall, not detract from it. Finding a sense of belonging in your sporting team, workplace, environmental club, cultural community, friendship group or religious institution is not inherently detrimental to Australia's social cohesion. These are places where individuals most tangibly experience the reality of belonging—the lived experience of social and emotional connection and the sense of safety and security that comes from being part of a group. However, Australia's social cohesion relies on something bigger—on individuals having a sense of membership, shared identity, common values and trust in the collective. Individuals need to feel they belong to the larger whole. Narratives that are exclusionary, that tell individuals they don't belong, that they are not part of the group, whether because of their race, visa status, socio-economic position, gender, sexuality, religion, age or ability, work against societal cohesiveness. They remove individuals (at a subjective level) from the collective, and by doing so, they discourage individuals from behaving in ways the group values and from engaging in actions that benefit the group. On the other hand, recognition and acceptance from the broader group, feeling valued, having opportunities to participate and practicing and contributing to shared values, common goals and mutual trust all work to enhance an individual's feeling of group membership and belonging.

People can find connection in groups that harm themselves or others. At the same time, strong belonging can also bring people together and strengthen communities.

The challenge is to foster belonging that connects people, rather than separates them.

We all seek to belong. When people feel a sense of belonging not just within their immediate social circles but more broadly, it provides a foundation for societal strength. It is from this protective place that individuals find motivation to participate, contribute and act in ways that benefit others, both for their own good, and for the good of the whole. Individuals will always find their sense of belonging—arguably we all have little choice, we are biologically driven to do so—but where that belonging is found, matters. Finding belonging in a group which exhibits behaviours that are toxic or harmful to an individual will ultimately outweigh any positive benefits that a sense of belonging may bring. Studies into the functioning of cults or extremist groups are clear that membership of such groups are only detrimental to an individual. In such contexts, group membership provides a sense of belonging, but that sense of belonging does not provide an individual with a sense of safety, security or protection. It only harms them.

Likewise, finding a sense of belonging can have negative ramifications for society as a whole, when the group an individual belongs to actively works against the goals of the collective. Sometimes identification and connection to one group is so strong that it works to separate an individual (whether consciously or unconsciously) from those 'outside' the group. In this way belonging can work as an isolating force, not one that contributes to overall societal cohesion. Belonging, therefore, can be considered a paradox. As much as it provides positive benefits for individual and societal functioning, it can also be detrimental.

The challenge for all societies, including Australia, is how to foster belonging to groups that contribute to societal cohesiveness overall, not detract from it. Finding a sense of belonging in your sporting team, workplace, environmental club, cultural community, friendship group or religious institution is not inherently detrimental to Australia's social cohesion. These are places where individuals most tangibly experience the reality of belonging—the lived experience of social and emotional connection and the sense of safety and security that comes from being part of a group. However, Australia's social cohesion relies on something bigger—on individuals having a sense of membership, shared identity, common values and trust in the collective. Individuals need to feel they belong to the larger whole. Narratives that are exclusionary, that tell individuals they don't belong, that they are not part of the group, whether because of their race, visa status, socio-economic position, gender, sexuality, religion, age or ability, work against societal cohesiveness. They remove individuals (at a subjective level) from the collective, and by doing so, they discourage individuals from behaving in ways the group values and from engaging in actions that benefit the group. On the other hand, recognition and acceptance from the broader group, feeling valued, having opportunities to participate and practicing and contributing to shared values, common goals and mutual trust all work to enhance an individual's feeling of group membership and belonging.

We all seek to belong. When people feel a sense of belonging not just within their immediate social circles but more broadly, it provides a foundation for societal strength. It is from this protective place that individuals find motivation to participate, contribute and act in ways that benefit others, both for their own good and for the good of the whole.

About the Author

Trish Prentice is a qualitative researcher with a particular interest in social cohesion. She has worked in Australia and overseas in the government, academic, corporate and not-for-profit sectors, including in Cairo, Egypt, working for an organisation specialising in Arab-West Understanding and in Geneva, Switzerland for a human rights group with United Nations Special Consultative status.



Trish holds degrees in Education and Law and has managed research projects in Indonesia, Singapore, Pakistan and Australia. She has written on a variety of topics for academic and general audiences. Trish joined the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute in 2020.

Notes:

- ⁱ K.A. Allen, M.L. Kern, C.S. Rozek, D. McInerney, G.M. Slavich, "Belonging: A Review of Conceptual Issues, an Integrative Framework, and Directions for Future Research." (2021) 73(1) *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 88.
- ⁱⁱ Ibid.
- ⁱⁱⁱ K.A. Allen, "Making Sense of Belonging" (2019) 49(3) *InPsych*, June 2019. Available <https://psychology.org.au/for-members/publications/inpsych/2019/june/making-sense-of-belonging>.
- ^{iv} K.A. Allen, M.L. Kern, C.S. Rozek, D. McInerney, G.M. Slavich, "Belonging: A Review of Conceptual Issues, an Integrative Framework, and Directions for Future Research." (2021) 73(1) *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 89.
- ^v For instance, Rogers (1951) defines belonging as "a unique and subjective experience that relates to a yearning for connection with others, the need for positive regard and the desire for interpersonal connection." Cited in K.A. Allen, "Making Sense of Belonging" (2019) 49(3) *InPsych*, June 2019. Available <https://psychology.org.au/for-members/publications/inpsych/2019/june/making-sense-of-belonging>.
- ^{vi} For instance, Hagerty et al (1992) describes belonging as "a subjective feeling that one is an integral part of their surrounding systems, including family, friends, school, work environments, communities, cultural groups, and physical places." See B.M. Hagerty, J.L. Lynch-Sauer, K. Patusky, M. Bouwsema and P. Collier "Sense of Belonging: A Vital Mental Health Concept." (1992). 6(3) *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 172–177.
- ^{vii} Belonging is "a personal and intimate feeling of being 'at home' in a place, characterised by familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment." See M Antonsich, "Searching For Belonging – An Analytical Framework." (2010) 4(6) *Geography Compass*, 644–659.
- ^{viii} See James Greenway, *A Philosophy of Belonging*. (2023) University of Notre Dame Press. ISBN 9780268206024.
- ^{ix} For instance, Fozdar and Hartley (2013) note refugees' sense of belonging emerging from access to services, which, for them, provided "evidence of belonging." See Farida Fozdar and Lisa Hartley, "Civic and Ethno Belonging among Recent Refugees to Australia." (2013) *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 8–10.
- ^x See, for instance, discussion by Marco Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging– An Analytical Framework." (2010) 4/6 *Geography Compass*, 646.
- ^{xi} An "imagined community." See Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging." (2006) 40(3) *Patterns of Prejudice*, 204.
- ^{xii} B.M. Hagerty, R.A. Williams, J.C. Coyne, M.R. Early, "Sense of Belonging and Indicators of Social and Psychological Functioning." (1996) 10(4) *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 236.
- ^{xiii} A.L. Mahar, V. Cobigo and H. Stuart, "Conceptualizing Belonging." (2013) 35(12) *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1028.
- ^{xiv} Ibid., 1030.
- ^{xv} Ibid.
- ^{xvi} Ibid., 1030.
- ^{xvii} Ibid.
- ^{xviii} A sense of belonging can be associated not just with people, but "places, memories, objects, experiences, events, countries, places and land." See K.A. Allen, *The Psychology of Belonging* (1st ed.). (2020) Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429327681>, 3. However, the focus of this text is on interpersonal belonging.
- ^{xix} Other theorists refer to this as "modes of belonging." See for instance Marco Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging– An Analytical Framework." (2010) 4/6 *Geography Compass*, 645.
- ^{xx} Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging." (2006) 40(3) *Patterns of Prejudice*, 202.
- ^{xxi} A.L. Mahar, V. Cobigo and H. Stuart, "Conceptualizing Belonging." (2013) 35(12) *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1030.
- ^{xxii} Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging." (2006) 40(3) *Patterns of Prejudice*, 202.
- ^{xxiii} A.L. Mahar, V. Cobigo and H. Stuart, "Conceptualizing Belonging." (2013) 35(12) *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1031. Allan et al. (2021) elaborates on this point: "Biological needs complement, accentuate, and interact with social structures, norms, contexts, and experiences... The sense of self emerges from one's predominant social and environmental contexts, reinforcing and challenging the subjective sense of belonging. Belonging is facilitated and hindered by people, things, and experiences of the social milieu, which dynamically interact with the individual's character, experiences, culture, identity, and perceptions." See Kelly-Ann Allen, Margaret L. Kern, Christopher S. Rozek, Dennis McInerney and George M. Slavich, "Belonging: A Review of Conceptual Issues, An Integrative Framework, and Directions for Future Research." (2021) 73(1) *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 87–102.
- ^{xxiv} Some theorists argue that belonging is in fact a process rather than a status. See Marco Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging– An Analytical Framework." (2010) 4/6 *Geography Compass*, 652.
- ^{xxv} A.L. Mahar, V. Cobigo and H. Stuart, "Conceptualizing Belonging." (2013) 35(12) *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1030.
- ^{xxvi} Ibid.
- ^{xxvii} Ibid. See also D. Haim-Litevsky, R. Komemi, & L. Lipskaya-Velikovsky, "Sense of Belonging, Meaningful Daily Life Participation, and Well-Being: Integrated Investigation." (2023) 20(5) *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 4121.
- ^{xxviii} Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging." (2006) 40(3) *Patterns of Prejudice*, 203.
- ^{xxix} A.L. Mahar, V. Cobigo and H. Stuart, "Conceptualizing Belonging." (2013) 35(12) *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1030.
- ^{xxx} Other theorists refer to this factor as "influence" – "the ability of members make an impact on a community, and vice versa." See D. Haim-Litevsky, R. Komemi, & L. Lipskaya-Velikovsky, "Sense of Belonging, Meaningful Daily Life Participation, and Well-Being: Integrated Investigation." (2023) 20(5) *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 4121.
- ^{xxxi} A.L. Mahar, V. Cobigo and H. Stuart, "Conceptualizing Belonging." (2013) 35(12) *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1031.
- ^{xxxii} Ibid.
- ^{xxxiii} See K.A. Allen, *The Psychology of Belonging* (1st ed.). (2020) Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429327681>, 4.
- ^{xxxiv} A.L. Mahar, V. Cobigo and H. Stuart, "Conceptualizing Belonging." (2013) 35(12) *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1031, citing J.M Ahnallen, K.L. Suyemoto, A.S. Carter, "Relationship Between Physical Appearance, Sense of Belonging and Exclusion, and Racial/Ethnic Self Identification among Multiracial Japanese European Americans." (2006) 12 *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 673–686.
- ^{xxxv} See authors such as Kelly-Ann Allen, Margaret L. Kern, Christopher S. Rozek, Dennis McInerney and George M. Slavich, "Belonging: A Review of Conceptual Issues, An Integrative Framework, and Directions for Future Research." (2021) 73(1) *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 87–102; D. Haim-Litevsky, R. Komemi and L. Lipskaya-Velikovsky, "Sense of Belonging, Meaningful Daily Life Participation, and Well-Being:

Integrated Investigation.” (2023) 20(5) *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 1-16; Lincy Scholten, János Betkó, Maurice Gesthuizen, Gerdine Fransen-Kuppens, Renée de Vet and Judith Wolf, “Reciprocal Relations between Financial Hardship, Sense of Societal Belonging and Mental Health for Social Assistance Recipients.” (2023) 321 *Social Science & Medicine*, 115781.

^{xxxvi} Bethany M.S. Keene, “Belongingness (Sense of Belonging).” (2024) *Salem Press Encyclopedia*.

^{xxxvii} I. Romeo, H. Stanislaw, J. McCreary, M. Hawley, “The Importance of Belonging for Well-Being in College Students.” (2024) 1(1) *PLOS Ment Health*, e0000057; D. Haim-Litevsky, R. Komemi and L. Lipskaya-Velikovsky, “Sense of Belonging, Meaningful Daily Life Participation, and Well-Being: Integrated Investigation.” (2023) 20(5) *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 1-16.

^{xxxviii} Y. A. Mumcu, “A Study on Belonging Theory and the Importance of Belonging in Businesses.” (2024) 9(3) *Finans Ekonomi Ve Sosyal Arařtirmalar Dergisi*, 300-316.

^{xxxix} D.J. Dallimore, H. Davis, M. Eichsteller, & R. Mann, “Place, Belonging and the Determinants of Volunteering.” (2018) 9(1) *Voluntary Sector Review*, 21-38.

^{xl} See K.A. Allen, *The Psychology of Belonging* (1st ed.). (2020) Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429327681>, xiii

^{xli} Katherine Jenkins, “Why a Sense of Belonging Matters – Neurodiversity and the Shaping Us Framework.” (2025) Royal Foundation for Early Childhood, 2 February 2025. Available <https://centreforearlychildhood.org/news-insights/guest-essays/why-a-sense-of-belonging-matters-neurodiversity-and-the-shaping-us-framework>.

^{xlii} See K.A. Allen, *The Psychology of Belonging* (1st ed.). (2020) Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429327681>, 6.

^{xliii} J.D. Afonso, S. Barros & I. Albert, “The Sense of Belonging in the Context of Migration: Development and Trajectories Regarding Portuguese Migrants in Luxembourg.” (2023) 57 *Integrative Psychological and Behavioural Science*, 518–546, citing R. Lee, “Sociality, Selection, and Survival: Simulated Evolution of Mortality with Intergenerational Transfers and Food Sharing.” (2008) 105(20) *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 7124–7128.

^{xliiii} See B.M. Hagerty, J.L. Lynch-Sauer, K. Patusky, M. Bouwsema and P. Collier “Sense of Belonging: A Vital Mental Health Concept.” (1992) 6(3) *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 237.

^{xlv} Lei Chai, “The Moderating Role of Perceived Community Belonging in the Association between Food Insecurity and Health and Well-Being.” (2026) 71(1) *Social Work*, 48; Mayo Clinic Health System, “Is Having a Sense of Belonging Important?” (2021) *Speaking of Health*, 8 December 2021. Available <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/is-having-a-sense-of-belonging-important>.

^{xlvi} A.M. Riazi, L. Cochrane, K. Moloney, R. Mohamed, “Social Cohesion: A Multi-Dimensional and Multi-Faceted Framework.” (2026) 6(80) *SN Social Sciences*, 13 citing N. Yuval-Davis, “Belonging and the Politics of Belonging. (2006) 40(3) *Patterns Prejudice*, 197–214.

^{xlvii} Mayo Clinic Health System, “Is Having a Sense of Belonging Important?” (2021) *Speaking of Health*, 8 December 2021. Available <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/is-having-a-sense-of-belonging-important>.

^{xlviii} Hagerty describes this as “a fundamental foundation for emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses.” See B.M. Hagerty, J.L. Lynch-Sauer, K. Patusky, M. Bouwsema and P. Collier “Sense of Belonging: A Vital Mental Health Concept.” (1992). 6(3) *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 236.

^{xlix} A.M. Riazi, L. Cochrane, K. Moloney, R. Mohamed, “Social Cohesion: A Multi-Dimensional and Multi-Faceted Framework.” (2026) 6(80) *SN Social Sciences*, 13 citing F. Anthias, “Belongings in a Globalizing and Unequal World: Rethinking Translocations.” (2006) 7(47) *Situated Polit Belonging*, 17–31.

^l A strong sense of belonging to one’s community is a marker of positive social integration. See K.M. Frensch, B. Akesson, “A Socio-Spatial Perspective on Fostering a Sense of Belonging Among Refugee Families Resettled in Canadian Small Cities.” (2025) 8 *Wellbeing, Space and Society* (online). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wss.2025.100267>.

^{li} J.D. Afonso, S. Barros & I. Albert, “The Sense of Belonging in the Context of Migration: Development and Trajectories Regarding Portuguese Migrants in Luxembourg.” (2023) 57 *Integrative Psychological and Behavioural Science*, 518–546.

^{lii} Ibid.

^{liii} Ibid.

^{liiii} S. Keiff, “Societal Factors Influencing the Sense of National Belonging: A Statistical Analysis of Residents in Canada. (2025) *International Journal of Public Administration*, 2. Antonsich argues that economic factors matter too “as they contribute to create a safe and stable material condition for the individual and her/his family.” See Marco Antonsich, “Searching for Belonging– An Analytical Framework.” (2010) 4/6 *Geography Compass*, 648.

^{liv} Yuna Blajer de la Garza, “Conceptualizing Belonging for Democratic Theory.” (2023) 85(4) *The Journal of Politics*, 1459.

^{lv} S.Huot, B. Dodson, D.L. Rudman, “Negotiating Belonging Following Migration: Exploring the Relationship Between Place and Identity in Francophone Minority Communities Négocier L’appartenance Après La Migration: Une Exploration de la Relation Entre le Lieu et L’identité Dans les Communautés Francophones En Situation Minoritaire.” (2014). 58(3) *Canadian Geographer*, 330. These can be both positive or negative, see previous discussion about reciprocity and self-determination.

^{lvi} Z. Wu and V.W.Y. So, “Ethnic and National Sense of Belonging in Canadian Society.” (2020) *International Migration*, 58(2), 234; R.F. Baumeister and M.R. Leary, “The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation.” (1995) 117 *Psychological Bulletin*, 497–529.

^{lvii} S. Keiff, “Societal Factors Influencing the Sense of National Belonging: A Statistical Analysis of Residents in Canada. (2025) *International Journal of Public Administration*, 3; J.D. Afonso, S. Barros & I. Albert, “The Sense of Belonging in the Context of Migration: Development and Trajectories Regarding Portuguese Migrants in Luxembourg.” (2023) 57 *Integrative Psychological and Behavioural Science*, 521.

Image - Pexel