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Article abstract

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Towards Equitable Inclusion for Refugees: The Needs of Students With and Seeking Refugee Protection

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Abstract

Despite data increasingly being used to advance equity in education, students with and seeking refugee protection (SWSRP) are largely invisible in education data. To equitably include SWSRP in national education systems as envisioned by global refugee education policy, data on their needs are required. The purpose of this study was to source, organize, and analyze data on the needs of SWSRP in primary and secondary education in Canada. This needs assessment involved the use of experts, a selective review of empirical literature, and a review of publicly available data. Five common areas of need were identified among SWSRP globally and across Canada's 13 primary and secondary education systems: access to education, accelerated education, language education, mental health and psychosocial support, and special education. Rates of needs varied by a range of student experiences and circumstances. These data can inform efforts to responsively support SWSRP in Canadian education systems.

Keywords: refugee education, inclusion, equity, data, needs, Canada

Towards Equitable Inclusion for Refugees: The Needs of Students With and Seeking Refugee Protection

Data-informed decision-making is increasingly seen as a way to advance equity in education (Datnow & Park, 2018; Mandinach & Schildkamp, 2021a, 2021b; Schildkamp et al., 2019). Equity involves providing fair opportunities to learn and supporting the full development of every student (Harris & Jones, 2019). Nevertheless, the most marginalized groups tended to be invisible in education data at global, national, and regional levels (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS], 2021). This includes students with and seeking refugee protection (SWSRP) (UIS & United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2021).[1]

Despite over 100 million people being forcibly displaced worldwide in the last decade (UNHCR, 2020) and data on forcibly displaced populations being positioned as critical to informing policy responses (UNHCR, 2019a), current data on the education of SWSRP are limited (UNHCR, 2019b, 2021b), fragmented (UIS & UNHCR, 2022; UNHCR, 2015, 2019b, 2019c), and can rarely be disaggregated by refugee claimant and refugee status (UIS & UNHCR, 2021; Wiseman & Bell, 2021). Where data exists, they relate to the education access and enrolment of SWSRP but even here there are gaps (Cerna, 2019; Global Education Monitoring Report Team [GEMRT], 2019; UIS & UNHCR, 2021; UNHCR, 2021). Data on other aspects of SWSRP's education (e.g., learning outcomes, education quality, learning environment) are scarce (Cerna, 2019; GEMRT, 2019; UIS & UNHCR, 2021) and often anecdotal (Wiseman & Bell, 2021).

Challenges in data use for the education of SWSRP are related to reforms in global refugee policy.

In 1985, UNHCR began supporting the access of all SWSRP to primary education (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). At that time, UNHCR favoured the use of camps to provide shelter and services to forcibly displaced persons, leading to education mainly being provided to SWSRP in camps (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, 2011; UNHCR, 2000). Later, UNHCR altered its policy to support the residence of forcibly displaced persons in urban areas (UNHCR, 2009) and provided alternatives to camps (UNHCR, 2014). This prompted a change in education policy to promote the inclusion of SWSRP in national education systems[2] (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; see UNHCR, 2019c, 2012). This shift was not accompanied by a change in the management of education data of SWSRP, which tended to be used by humanitarian organizations (UNHCR, 2019b) and remained unavailable from government-managed education systems (Wiseman & Bell, 2021; Cerna, 2019; GEMRT, 2019). Presently, UNHCR's strategy for SWSRP, *Refugee Education 2030*, sets a vision for their "inclusion in equitable quality education in national systems" (UNHCR, 2019c, p. 6). However, data on the educational needs of SWSRP are lacking at multiple levels (UNHCR, 2019b), making it difficult for states to accommodate the needs of SWSRP and advance educational equity for them.

Purpose

Our purpose was to source, organize, and analyze data to support an assessment of the needs of SWSRP to inform policymakers and practitioners on advancing the equitable inclusion of SWSRP. Focusing on the Canadian context, we sought to address:

1. What areas of need of SWSRP are inherent in UNHCR's *Refugee Education 2030* strategy as the global reference point for their equitable inclusion?
2. How are these areas of need described and explained in empirical studies in the research literature?
3. To what extent are these areas of need present in SWSRP across Canadian education systems?

We were concerned with SWSRP under the age of 18. To reflect the distinction in Canada's refugee system (Government of Canada, 2021), we took into account students with refugee protection (SwRP) and students seeking refugee protection (SsRP).

Canada was selected for three reasons. First, 20% of all refugees resettled globally between 2010 and 2020 were received by Canada (UNHCR, 2020). Second, Canadian education systems have a long-standing practice of including students resettled to Canada as refugees. Here, it is important to note that Canada's 10 provinces and three territories (i.e., Canada's 13 educational jurisdictions) have the responsibility for education, with each having its own education system (Council of Ministers of Education, 2020). Third, the Canadian federal government has responsibility for refugee status determination (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2022) and refugee resettlement (Government of Canada, 2022), and all data collected about these decisions are publicly available as of January 2015 (Government of Canada, 2019). This latter feature helps make it possible to assess the needs of SWSRP in Canada's 13 education systems to advance equity for SWSRP. To our knowledge, such data have not yet been used to do so – hence, our approach used here.

Methodology

This study was designed to methodically gather and analyze information relating to the needs, conditions, and capacities of SWSRP to support policy and decision-making (UNHCR, 2017; Hughes, 2015). The study had three phases, designed to answer three research questions in sequence.

The first phase relied on the needs assessment method of collecting information from credible authorities (Bass & Chen, 2015). We used UNHCR's *Refugee Education 2030* as the starting point because UNHCR is considered an expert in protecting the rights of refugees and refugee claimants, including their right to education (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; UNHCR, 1951, 2013). To identify the needs of SWSRP, we focused on the section in UNHCR's policy text on Enabling Activities of Expected Result 1 of Strategic Objective 2 because it clearly articulates an equity aim: To "support learning for all students, regardless of legal status, gender or disability" (UNHCR, 2019c, p. 43). It enumerates the supports with which SWSRP should be provided (Table 1). We inferred areas of needs of SWSRP from this list: Access

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[2] Education systems are made up of the totality of formal education programs within a national or sub-national region and the totality of authorities that govern them (UIS, 2022). Formal education programs are institutionalized, intentional, and planned through public organizations and private bodies recognized by the relevant educational authorities (UIS, 2022).

to education, accelerated education, language education, psychosocial and mental health support, and special education.

In phase two, we conducted a selective review of empirical research studies, another method of needs assessment (Bass & Chen, 2015). The review focused on studies related to the areas of need of SWSRP derived in phase one. Our objective was to explain and describe these needs and their associated conditions. Our search strategy combined the term "refugee" and a term related to each area of need. Working sequentially through each area of need, we searched these databases: ERIC, Education Source, PsycINFO, and LearnTechLib. We included and excluded sources based on specific eligibility criteria (Appendix A). We imported the final sample of articles (Appendix B) to NVivo (qualitative data analysis software), coded segments of text relating to the areas of need of SWSRP, and produced an analysis for each area of need based on these data.

In phase three, we assessed the extent to which the needs identified and explained in the first two phases are present among SWSRP in the Canadian context. We did this by reviewing and synthesizing publicly available data from government and international organizations, and academia – another mode of needs assessment (Bass & Chen, 2015). We accessed federal government datasets from Open Government (Government of Canada, 2019) and the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada on refugee claimants and refugees relevant to one or more of the areas of need of SWSRP (Table 3). The datasets covered the period of January 2015 to March 2020 (Appendix C). These dates stem from the Canadian federal government making all data publicly available as of January 2015 (Government of Canada, 2019) and the coronavirus pandemic prompting the government to restrict travel into Canada beginning March 2020, thereby restricting refugee claims and resettlement (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], 2021; UNHCR in Canada, 2021). We used these Canadian data in combination with data published by global governance institutions (i.e., UNHCR, UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank). Data sources were found by searching the term "refugee" on these organizations' websites, with specific data being collected from yielded reports, databases, and dashboards. Data had to be in English or French, global or specific to a country, and relevant to SwRP or SsRP and an area of need to be included. Where possible, we integrated data from different sources (i.e., IRCC, 2020a-f; IRCC, 2020c; IRB, 2016-2020, UIS, 2017; World Bank, 2020). We then analyzed these data using descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies and percentages). For one area of need (mental health and psychosocial support), we could find no relevant datasets published within the last five years. We, therefore, conducted a search for empirical studies relevant to the Canadian context using the same search strategy and eligibility criteria as in our second phase, but the study location had to be Canada or the methodology had to be a meta-analysis or systematic review because the latter synthesized the existing evidence base.

Findings

Phase 1: Identification of the Needs of SWSRP

The first phase identified the areas of need of SWSRP relative to equitable inclusion in primary and secondary education in national education systems. Per our methodology, we derived five such areas of need by inductively analyzing the text describing the Enabling Activities for Expected Result 1 of Strategic Objective 2 in UNHCR's *Refugee Education 2030* strategy. These areas of need include: Access to education, accelerated education, language education, mental health and psychosocial support, and special education (see Table 1).

Table 1

Elements of UNHCR's (2019c, p. 43) Refugee Education 2030 Strategy Used as Reference Points for This Study and Corresponding Areas of Needs of SWSRP

Strategic Objective 2	Expected Result 1	Enabling Activity	Corresponding area of need
Foster safe enabling environments that support learning for all students, regardless of legal status, gender, or disability	Children and youth are prepared to learn and succeed in national education systems	Children and youth receive any supports required to enable their *access to the education system*	Access to education
		Children and youth are supported to make up for *missed schooling* in preparation for entering formal education at age-appropriate levels	Accelerated education
		Children and youth are provided with adequate *language training* where necessary	Language education
		Children and youth will be provided with conditions that foster social and emotional learning (SEL), and where needed, receive *mental health and psychosocial support*, allowing them to concentrate, learn, and develop healthy relationships	Mental health and psychosocial support
		Children and youth are taught by teachers who have been adequately prepared to include refugee children and learners with *diverse learning requirements, including children and youth with disabilities* (	Special education

Phase 2: Description and Explanation of the Needs of SWSRP

The second phase synthesized descriptions and explanations of the five foregoing areas of needs from a selective review of empirical studies in the scholarly literature.

Access to Education

While global averages of primary, secondary, and post-secondary education access for SWSRP are 63%, 24%, and 3% respectively (UNHCR, 2019d), their education access differ across countries (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). Systemic barriers often included a lack of documentation (e.g., birth certificate, transcripts) required for enrolment (Mace et al., 2014), a lack of recognition of educational equivalency (Crea, 2016), complex enrolment procedures (Gladwell, 2019), and discriminatory entry requirements (Schneider, 2018). School-level barriers included poor infrastructure, large class sizes, a lack of qualified teachers, insufficient teaching and learning materials, and far distances to schools (Al-Hroub, 2014; Bilagher & Kaushik, 2020; Dryden-Peterson & Reddick, 2017). Contextual barriers commonly included a lack of post-graduation opportunities (Dryden-Peterson & Reddick, 2017), early pregnancy and/or marriage (Al-Hroub, 2014), and bullying, discrimination, and gender-based violence (Graham et al., 2016; Stark et al., 2015). Financial barriers (Bilagher & Kaushik, 2020; Schneider, 2018) and the need to contribute to their household through employment or caring for siblings (Al-Hroub, 2014) can prevent school attendance.

Accelerated Education

Most SWSRP have a need for accelerated learning when they gain access to quality, formal education. SWSRP can benefit from accelerated education programmes that condense a formal curriculum while

developing literacy and mathematics as the foundation of content-area learning, so they can complete learning in a shorter period of time (Bilagher & Kaushik, 2020).

Most SWSRP need accelerated education because they experience interruptions in access to formal education, inadequate quality of formal education, and differences between curricula and languages of instruction (LOI) used in different jurisdictions (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Mace et al., 2014; Morrice et al., 2020; Potochnik, 2018). Children who were persecuted or living in situations of armed conflict typically had reduced access to quality education (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). Economic, social, and environmental instabilities tend to contribute to low quality education in their countries of origin and countries of first asylum (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Potochnik, 2018). SWSRP often have difficulty keeping up with the curriculum content because they spend a disproportionate amount of time learning LOI (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). The development of literacy and mathematics skills is adversely affected by interruptions and transitions (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Mace et al., 2014; Morrice et al., 2020; Potochnik, 2018), and the amount of time SWSRP can spend in school is usually restricted (Due et al., 2015).

Language Education

It is common for the languages that SWSRP learn and use to continually change (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Reddick & Dryden-Peterson, 2021). In their country of origin, the LOI were often different from the language(s) that SWSRP spoke at home and in their community, so many SWSRP had to learn the LOI in their country of origin before they were forcibly displaced to another country (Mace et al., 2014; Reddick & Dryden-Peterson, 2021). In their country of first asylum, many SWSRP need to learn the LOI used in that education system (Reddick & Dryden-Peterson, 2021). This LOI might be different from the language(s) commonly spoken in the communities in which SWSRP lived in that country, and SWSRP may also need to learn the(se) language(s) to support their development of social relationships with community members (Reddick & Chopra, 2021; Reddick & Dryden-Peterson, 2021). SWSRP who moved on to another host country or who were resettled needed to learn one or more additional LOIs to be included in those education systems and communities (Reddick & Chopra, 2021; Reddick & Dryden-Peterson, 2021). Throughout these transitions, many SWSRP strived to maintain and develop their plurilingual proficiencies (Reddick & Chopra, 2021).

These complicated language learning scenarios prompt Reddick and Dryden-Peterson (2021) to argue that schools and education systems should support the use of all the languages that SWSRP used alongside the LOI. This would involve using an active plurilingualism approach to language education that supports the maintenance and development of SWSRP's proficiency in the languages already in their linguistic repertoires, builds upon existing language skills, promotes intentional and systematic translanguaging, and provides support for learning the LOIs and potentially other languages that SWSRP wished to learn (Reddick & Chopra, 2021; Reddick & Dryden-Peterson, 2021). SWSRP can benefit from being placed in appropriate language education classes, provided with language support for a sufficient amount of time,[3] and taught using suitable teaching methods and materials (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Morrice et al., 2020). Yet, current policies and practices relating to the language education of SWSRP in host and resettlement countries are often inappropriate and inadequate, which likely adversely affects not only SWSRP's learning of the language and through the language, but also their academic performance, wellbeing, identify formation, sense of belonging with families and communities, and access to future educational, economic, and social opportunities (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Miller et al., 2018; Reddick & Chopra, 2021; Reddick & Dryden-Peterson, 2021).

Global refugee education policy promotes the inclusion of SWSRP in national education systems where the LOI is often an unfamiliar language for them (UNHCR, 2019c). The ways in which inclusion is enacted and the ways in which language education support is provided often only partially attends to the needs of SWSRP (Reddick & Chopra, 2021). For example, language education for SWSRP tends to use subtractive approaches in which the LOI is learned to the detriment of other languages in the linguistic repertoires of SWSRP (Bartlett & García, 2011; Reddick & Chopra, 2021). Subtractive approaches may result in SWSRP struggling to develop the literacy skills necessary to learn academic content, feeling marginalized, and facing challenges in academic persistence (Piper et al., 2020; Reddick & Dryden-Pe-

[3] Most language learners develop conversational skills similar to grade norm within two to three years, but most require five to seven years of quality support to develop academic language skills similar to the grade norm. Students who have experienced interruptions in formal education or issues around education quality – like many older SWSRP have – need up to 10 years of language support to develop academic proficiency (Cummins, 2000; Reddick & Dryden-Peterson, 2021).

terson, 2021). Such approaches can also lead to language loss, adversely affecting SWSRP's relationships with their families and communities (Reddick & Chopra, 2021). Additionally, in some contexts, SWSRP who are language learners are placed in separate classrooms or schools to attend language education programs until they develop sufficient language proficiency required to integrate mainstream classes (Miller et al., 2018; Morrice et al., 2020). These language programs often lack appropriate teaching and learning materials (Due et al., 2015: Miller et al., 2018), have insufficient funding (Miller et al., 2018), are provided for an insufficient amount of time (Due et al., 2015), and delay SWSRPs' access to curriculum content learning (Morrice et al., 2020). Upon their integration into mainstream classes, SWSRP may receive limited language support (Due et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2018; Morrice et al., 2020) and may be more likely to experience stigmatization, stereotyping, and inequitable treatment based on their identities as language learners, SWSRP, racialized persons, and/or other grounds (Graham et al., 2016; Kiramba & Oloo, 2019; Miller et al., 2018).

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

There is an increased prevalence of mental health concerns in children with and seeking refugee protection compared to their non-refugee peers, especially depressive, anxiety, and trauma- and stressor-related disorders (Beiser & Hou, 2016; Hodes & Vostania, 2019; Mace et al., 2014; Pieloch et al., 2016). Refugee status is not itself a predictor of mental health concerns; rather, this high prevalence is commonly attributed to forcibly displaced populations experiencing increased volumes, durations, and frequencies of exposures to stressful and/or traumatic events, erosions of resiliency factors, and disparities in the social determinants of mental health (Beiser & Hou, 2016; Hodes & Vostania, 2019).

Schools are well-positioned to support the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of SWSRP because schools are the main institutions that SWSRP access, and there are a range of mental health and wellbeing supports that can be offered in schools for SWSRP (Beiser & Hou, 2016; Fazel et al., 2016). Mental health support programs can be provided in schools to promote the resilience of SWSRP (Ellis et al., 2013).

Special Education

There is little data on neurodiversity and corresponding special education needs in SWSRP (Graham et al., 2016; Hodes & Vostania, 2019). However, as most SWSRP come from low- and middle-income countries where some neurodevelopmental disorders are more prevalent, SWSRP are more likely to have special education needs than their peers living in high-income countries who had not encountered refugee experiences (Hodes & Vostania, 2019).

It can be difficult to identify special education needs in SWSRP because assessments use age-based developmental benchmarks, though the dates of birth of many SWSRP are incorrectly documented (Mace et al., 2014), assessment tools can be linguistically and culturally inappropriate (Graham et al., 2016), and indicators of special education needs are similar to those of language learning and accelerated education (Gladwell, 2019; Hodes & Vostania, 2019). Having co-occuring needs (e.g., mental health needs) and experiencing changes in LOIs and curricula can also decrease the likelihood of neurodiversity being identified in SWSRP (Alodat & Momani, 2019). Serial assessment procedures may help identify SWSRP with special education needs (Graham et al., 2016).

In terms of addressing special education needs, access to supports are often impeded in countries of asylum (Al-Hroub, 2014) and delayed in resettlement countries (Gladwell, 2019). Accessible transportation, assistive devices, and appropriate teaching resources may not be available (Al-Hroub, 2014). Teachers may lack training on differentiating instruction and supporting learners with special education needs (Al-Hroub, 2014). Where limited special education programming is available, SWSRP tend to be underrepresented (Alodat & Momani, 2019).

Phase 3: Estimation of Needs Present in SWSRP Across Canadian Education Systems

The third phase estimated the extent to which the foregoing five areas of need may be present in SWSRP across Canadian education systems. As the findings showed, we can expect all five areas of need to be present in the cohort of SWSRP who arrived in Canada between January 2015 and March 2020. The

prevalence of these needs likely varies across Canada's 13 education systems because children with and seeking refugee protection are unevenly distributed across Canada as evidenced by patterns in refugee protection claim submissions and resettlement.

Access to Education

More than 130,000 refugee claimant and resettled refugee children of primary and secondary school age arrived in Canada between January 2015 and March 2020.[4] There were nearly equal numbers of resettled refugees under the age of 18 ($n = 64,070$) and refugee claimants under the age of 18 ($n = 66,539$).[5] Approximately 60% of refugee claimants in the period of study were granted refugee protection.[6]

All 13 educational jurisdictions in Canada have responsibility for ensuring access to schooling for SwRP and SsRP, even though population distribution varies dramatically (Table 2). Refugee protection claims were submitted by refugee claimants under the age of 18 in all provinces and territories during the period of study, but the majority were in Ontario (46%) and Quebec (44%).[7] Refugee children were resettled to all 10 provinces and two of the three territories.[8] Most resettled refugee children were to live in Ontario (41%), Quebec (18%), and Alberta (14%).[9]

Table 2

Numbers and Percentages of Refugee Claimants and Resettled Refugees Under the Age of 18 by Canadian Education Jurisdiction, January 2015 – March 2020[10]

Canadian education jurisdiction	Refugee claimants under 18 (% of refugee claimants under 18)	Resettled refugees under 18 (% of resettled refugees under 18)	Total (% of total)
Alberta (AB)	2,436 (3.66)	9,040 (14.11)	11,476 (8.79)
British Columbia (BC)	3,392 (5.10)	5,380 (8.40)	8,772 (6.72)
Manitoba (MB)	807 (1.21)	4,510 (7.04)	5,317 (4.07)
New Brunswick (NB)	119 (0.18)	1,785 (2.79)	1,904 (1.46)
Newfoundland and Labrador (NL)	50 (0.08)	735 (1.15)	785 (0.60)
Northwest Territories (NT)	>5 (ID)	>5 (ID)	>5 (ID)
Nova Scotia (NS)	86 (0.13)	1,745 (2.72)	1,831 (1.40)
Nunavut (NU)	>5 (ID)	0 (0)	>5 (ID)
Ontario (ON)	30,365 (45.63)	26,060 (40.67)	56,425 (43.20)
Prince Edward Island (PE)	>5 (ID)	305 (0.48)	305 (0.23)
Quebec (QC)	29,159 (43.82)	11,730 (18.31)	40,889 (31.31)
Saskatchewan (SK)	125 (0.19)	2,700 (4.21)	2,825 (2.16)
Yukon (YK)	>5 (ID)	20 (0.03)	20 (0.02)
Not stated	>5 (ID)	60 (0.09)	60 (0.05)
Total	66,539 (100.00)	64,070 (100.00)	130,609 (100.00)

Note. Values representing between 1 and 4 individuals are shown as ">5" to prevent individuals from being identified. ID = insufficient data for calculation.

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[4] Calculated using data from IRCC (2020c) and IRB (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, & 2020).
[5] Calculated using data from IRCC (2020c, 2020g).
[6] Calculated using data from IRB (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, & 2020).
[7] Calaculated using data from IRCC (2020g).
[8] Calculated using data from IRCC (2020c).
[9] Calculated using data from IRCC (2020c).
[10] Calculated using data from IRCC (2020c) and IRB (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, & 2020).

Accelerated Education

Many SWSRP in Canadian educational jurisdictions had no or interrupted prior formal education.[11] Approximately 21% of the refugees resettled to Canada between January 2015 and March 2020 had no prior formal education, with rates varying by jurisdiction (Table 3).[12] On average, SWSRP missed three to four years of schooling (UNHCR, 2016).

Table 3

Numbers of Resettled Refugees of All Ages by Canadian Education Jurisdiction and Years of Schooling, January 2015 – March 2020

Canadian education jurisdiction	0 years of schooling	1 to 12 years of schooling	13 or more years of schooling	Unknown
AB	4,740	13,770	2,740	1,755
BC	2,740	7,520	1,745	890
MB	2,535	5,980	830	1,475
NB	915	1,970	175	290
NL	385	910	115	170
NT	>5	25	>5	0
NS	950	2,090	330	250
NU	NA	NA	NA	NA
ON	13,110	35,655	10,300	4,050
PE	130	355	75	65
QC	5,110	15,385	6,480	2,370
SK	1,480	3,465	465	490
YK	5	15	5	15
Not stated	0	0	0	165
Total	32,140	87,225	23,290	11,840

Note. Values representing between 1 and 4 individuals are shown as ">5" to prevent individuals from being identified. NA = not applicable, no refugees resettled to the jurisdiction.

The education that many SWSRP who had access to formal education prior to arriving in Canada received was likely not conducive to the development of minimum levels of proficiency in mathematics and literacy. Approximately 82% of the refugees resettled to Canada[13] and 23% of refugee claimants[14] between January 2015 and March 2020 were from countries classified by the World Bank as low-income in 2020 (Table 4), and the United Nations Institute for Statistics (UIS) notes serious issues in literacy and mathematics education in such contexts (UIS, 2017).

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[11] Calculated using data from IRCC (2020d).
[12] Calculated using data from IRCC (2020f).
[13] Calculated using data from IRCC (2020c), UIS (2017), and the World Bank (2020).
[14] Calculated using data from IRB (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, & 2020), UIS (2017), and the World Bank (2020).

Table 4

Numbers and Percentages of Refugee Claimants and Resettled Refugees of All Ages Who Arrived in Canada Between January 2015 and March 2020 by Income Level of Their Country of Origin as Classified by the World Bank in 2020

Income level of country of origin	Refugee claimants of all ages (% of refugee claimants)	Resettled refugees of all ages (% of resettled refugees)	Total (% of total)
Low	48,096 (22.52)	126,340 (81.78)	174,436 (47.39)
Lower middle	75,200 (35.21)	6,765 (4.39)	81,965 (22.27)
Upper middle	74,591 (34.93)	20,200 (13.07)	94,791 (25.75)
High	15,399 (7.21)	225 (0.15)	15,624 (4.25)
Not applicable (i.e., stateless)	11 (0.01)	1,120 (0.72)	1,131 (0.31)
Unknown[15]	264 (0.12)	0 (0)	264 (0.07)
Total	213,561 (100.00)	154,495 (100.11)	368,056 (100.04)

Note. Data on resettled refugees was sourced from IRCC, with values rounded to the nearest 5.

Language Education

In Canada, the LOIs are most commonly one or both of Canada's official languages of English and French; however, four western provinces (AB, BC, MB, SK) have legalized languages other than English and French as LOIs in public primary and secondary education systems and Inuktut is being phased in as an LOI in Nunavut (Government of Nunavut, 2021). Approximately 61% (*n* = 93,930) of the refugees resettled between January 2015 and March 2020 spoke neither French nor English.[16] Most SwRP entering Canadian education systems, therefore, need to learn at least one of the LOI(s), with rates varying by jurisdiction (Table 5).

Table 5

Percentages (%) of Resettled Refugees Who do not Speak the Language(s) of Instruction (LOI) by Province/Territory of Destination, January 2015 – March 2020[17]

LOI	Canadian educational jurisdictions												
	AB	BC	MB	NB	NL	NS	NT	NU	ON	PE	QC	SK	YK
English	63	73	68	88	80	79	40	>5	68	77	61	77	67
French	98	98	96	95	96	97	10	>5	98	97	87	97	>5

Note. Values representing between 1 and 4 individuals is shown as >5.

Many SWSRP in Canada are plurilingual. Although just over 2% (*n* = 3,410) of the refugees resettled to Canada in the period of study spoke English or French as their first language, approximately 39% (*n* = 60,565) spoke English and/or French when they arrived in Canada.[18] At least 56 first languages other than English and French were spoken by the refugees resettled to Canada during this period.[19]

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[15] Information on country of origin not provided to or reported by Canadian authorities.

[16] Calculated using data from IRCC (2020a). A definition of what speaking "neither" official language was not provided.

[17] Calculated using data from IRCC (2020c) and language policies from the Education Acts/Public School Acts of provinces and territories and the Charter of French Language in Quebec. Where the LOI in public primary and secondary schools can be any language other than English or French (as in AB, BC, MB, SK), there was insufficient data to estimate the numbers of SWSRP who have some level of proficiency in the LOI. In NU, it is estimated that few, if any, SWSRP in the jurisdiction speak the LOI of Inuktut as this is an indigenous language spoken by the Inuit (Inuit Circumpolar Council of Canada, 2022), and few refugee claimants and resettled refugees arrived in Canada from regions that are traditional territories of the Inuit during the period of study (IRCC, 2020c; IRB, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020).

[18] Calculated using data from IRCC (2020a/b). Although less than 1% (n = 1,120) refugees resettled to Canada in the period of study spoke English as their first language (L1) and less than 2% (n = 2,290) spoke French as their L1, 30% (n = 46,775) spoke English, 2% (n = 3,720) spoke French, and 2% (n = 3,115) spoke both English and French.

[19] Calculated using data from IRCC (2020b).

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Between 20% and 50% of SWSRP in high-income resettlement countries, such as Canada, experienced significant mental health concerns (Fazel et al., 2012). There is a higher prevalence of many mental health concerns in SWSRP compared to their peers who have not been forcibly displaced (Beiser & Hou, 2016; Blackmore et al., 2020). The most common are trauma- and stressor-related disorders, depression, and anxiety (Hodes & Vostanis, 2019; Kien et al., 2019), with a recent meta-analysis indicating prevalence rates of 22.71%, 15.77%, and 13.81% respectively (Blackmore et al., 2020). SWSRP are at a higher risk of mood disorders (Hodes & Vostanis, 2019), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (Blackmore et al., 2020), psychotic disorders (Barghadouch et al., 2017), conduct disorder (Hodes & Vostanis, 2019), and emotional and behavioural concerns than the general population (Kien et al., 2019; Beiser & Hou, 2016). SWSRP may also experience comorbidity in mental health concerns (Hodes & Vostanis, 2019).

Like all children and youth, SWSRP are developing socially and emotionally, and should be supported in this development. Their particular experiences and circumstances warrant targeted psychosocial support. Experiencing psychological trauma of a social nature is a prerequisite for being granted refugee protection, and the effects of social trauma have the potential to be multifaceted and long-lasting (Beiser & Hou, 2016; Petrucci & Hamburger, 2019). As newcomers in Canada, SWSRP are adjusting to Canadian sociocultural contexts (Morantz et al., 2012). Many experienced discrimination on various bases (e.g., race, religion, legal status) even though this is prohibited in Canada (Beiser & Hou, 2016).

Special Education

Approximately 15% of any given population are persons with disabilities (UNHCR, 2020c).[20] In populations of forcibly displaced persons, particularly from conflict-affected areas, the incidence of disability is higher than 15% (UNICEF, 2017; UNHCR, 2019i). Between January 2015 and March 2020, an estimated 15,726 SWSRP with serious health conditions and/or disabilities arrived in Canada.[21] This includes an estimated 1,257 SwRP who were resettled through government-sponsorship specifically because of the severity of their medical needs,[22] an estimated 4,892 SwRP with disabilities resettled to Canada through other resettlement pathways,[23] and an estimated 9,577 SsRP with disabilities who came to Canada as asylum seekers.[24]

Discussion

For SWSRP to be equitably included in national education systems, the education they access and receive must be responsive to their particular needs, strengths, and circumstances. However, there are limited data on SWSRP – especially on SsRP – to inform policy and decision making in such systems. To our knowledge, this study is the first to develop a means of assessing the needs of SWSRP using publicly available government data. By using these data in concert with UNHCR's *Refugee Education 2030* document and our sample of empirical studies, it was possible to identify five areas of need of SWSRP and to estimate these needs among SWSRP who recently arrived in Canada. These data revealed that 130,609 refugee claimants and resettled refugees under the age of 18 arrived in Canada between January 2015 and March 2020, all of whom required access to education. Following our assessment procedure, we also observed that nearly all of the SwRP could benefit from accelerated education due to previously experiencing no, interrupted, or low-quality formal education. Most SsRP could benefit from accelerated education, even if they are more likely to have had access to a higher quality education than SwRP before coming to Canada. Approximately two in three SWSRP who came to Canada need to learn the

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[20] The term 'persons with disabilities' is used to be consistent with UNHCR and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNHCR, 2019d).

[21] Calculated based on IRCC (2020c), UNHCR (2018), and UNHCR (2020). No data were found on the prevalence of giftedness among SWSRP in Canada.

[22] This was calculated by multiplying the sum of the number of refugees under the age of 18 resettled through the government sponsorship pathway (from IRCC, 2020c) by 5%, the percentage of cases that UNHCR refers to the Canadian government for resettlement under the medical needs resettlement submission category every year (from UNHCR, 2018, p. 2).

[23] This was calculated by multiplying the sum of the number of refugees under the age of 18 resettled through private (28,005) and blended (4,605) sponsorship to Canada (from IRCC, 2020c) by 15%, the approximated percentage of refugees with disabilities (from UNHCR, 2020c).

[24] This was calculated by multiplying the estimated number of refugee claimants under the age of 18 (n = 63,845) (from IRCC, 2020c) by 15%, the approximated percentage of refugees with disabilities (from UNHCR, 2020c).

LOI, many need supports for specific mental health and psychosocial concerns, and at least 15 percent required special education.

The use of open data also made it possible to assess the distribution of needs across Canada's provinces and territories. While all 13 jurisdictions have responsibilities for responding to the needs of SWSRP, these responsibilities are unevenly shared because of the differential population distribution of refugee claimant and resettled refugee children across Canada. The education systems in Ontario and Quebec are responsible for responding to the needs of most SWSRP in Canada. An estimated 74% of this population resided in those provinces in the period under study. In contrast, the education systems of the western provinces (AB, BC, MB, SK) are responsible for hosting approximately 22% of this population; those of the maritime provinces (NB, NS, NL, PE) for almost 4%; and those of the three territories (NU, NT, YK) for less than 0.03%.

We recognize the volume of SWSRP coming to Canada and their distribution patterns across the country may change in the future. However, based on this assessment over five recent years, a reasonable observation is that those responsible for developing and implementing education policies and practices in Ontario and Quebec have the biggest stake in ensuring educational equity for SWSRP, and those in the western provinces also have a pressing role to play. That being said, equity is founded on a commitment to meaningfully differentiating education to *each* student and *every group* of students (Datnow & Park, 2018; Garner et al., 2017; Lasater et al., 2021). Thus, SWSRP in *every* Canadian schooling system should be supported regardless of their number in a system.

Conclusion

This study has implications for administrators and educators as well as those studying and making policy with respect to refugee education.

Policymakers, administrators, and educators across systems may wish to use the findings of this study to tailor education policy, programming, and praxis to the five areas of need of SWSRP. Here, a recent study (Schutte et al., 2021) that examined 155 policy documents related to refugee education from Canada's 13 provinces and territories could help focus their analysis. For example, in Quebec, policymakers and administrators may wish to focus on access to education for SWSRP given that the present study estimates that Quebec was the destination of 31% of the SWSRP who arrived in Canada between January 2015 and March 2020 while our previous study found policies explicitly guaranteeing SWSRP access to education in Quebec to be lacking (Schutte et al., 2021). In Ontario, policymakers, administrators, and educators may wish to prioritize work on accelerated education because an estimated 43% of SWSRP in Canada resided in Ontario and most of them have accelerated education needs, but there is a level of incoherence in policies addressing accelerated education needs in Ontario that may deleteriously affect implementation of objectives in this area (Schutte, 2020; Schutte et al., 2021). In New Brunwick and Nova Scotia, they may wish to prioritize access to education because of the apparent absence of provincial policy explicitly guaranteeing education access to SWSRP, which stands to affect all SWSRP in these jurisdictions (Schutte et al., 2021). Policymakers may also wish to use the method and open sources of data outlined in this study to remain up-to-date on the scale and nature of potential needs in their systems.

Policymakers can use this study and its methods and data sources to refine their understandings about the number and specialized needs of SWSRP in their systems. Those jurisdictions with the largest cohorts of SWSRP (i.e., ON, QC) have the most pressing responsibilities to address the needs of SWSRP, but the search for equity involves providing opportunities to learn and supporting the full development of every student and all groups of students (Harris & Jones, 2019). It is, thus, essential that all jurisdictions – including those with comparatively small numbers of SWSRP – have policies that targeted the needs of SWSRP. That said, we want to be clear that not all SWSRP have needs in the five areas identified here. The last thing we would want to do is to create a homogenizing discourse about SWSRP in education policy circles. It is important to recognize diversity across and within populations of SWSRP, including with respect to needs. Not all SWSRP might have any or all of these needs (e.g., one SWSRP may have accelerated education and language education needs while another may have special education needs). Not only are there different specific needs within an area of need (e.g., for special education needs, there are needs stemming from visual impairment, learning disability, etc.), but there may also be different levels of need for each specific need (e.g., SWSRP will have different levels of proficiency in the LOI

and levels of literacy in the Latin alphabet). Policymakers may wish to consult studies that research these needs more specifically to inform policy that is nuanced and responsive to the diversity of SWSRP. Such use of research to inform policy reform would support the equitable inclusion of SWSRP in education systems.

Many existing studies on refugee education aggregated SwRP and SsRP into a cohort of "students from refugee backgrounds" (e.g., Arar, 2021; Ramsay & Baker, 2019). Students from such backgrounds have needs that differentiate them from other populations in the the schooling systems in countries like Canada. But SsRP have a more precarious relationship with public institutions and resources made available through public policies and programs, including in education (Webb et al., 2021) and despite international conventions that aim for education for all children, for refugees, and for persons who may later be determined to be refugees (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1990; UNHCR, 2010). Our studies highlight there can be differences between the needs, capabilities, and circumstances of those seeking refugee protection and those who had been granted refugee protection (see also Schutte et al., 2021). These differences may have important implications for the education of SsRP.

Researchers in other jurisdictions with access to open data on persons with and seeking refugee protection who find value in our approach could replicate this study to help target policy development to address the needs of the SWSRP. In the Canadian context, this work could be updated, for example, on a five-year cycle using the data sources included here and others that come available as, hopefully, more governments and other organizations move towards an open data society.

As the needs addressed in this paper were derived from UNHCR's education strategy and triangulated with empirical studies in the available literature, it may be important going forward for researchers to also conduct primary research with SWSRP to identify potential areas of need not addressed here. In addition, our study focused on the needs of SWSRP rather than their capabilities and strengths because policy is often developed in response to perceived problems and ways to address them (Rein & Schön, 1996; Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016). It is also necessary to understand and build on the prior learning, capabilities, and strengths of SWSRP. Future research could source, organize, and analyze data about the capabilities and strengths of SWSRP to provide policymakers with a more holistic picture.

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Appendix A

Eligibility Criteria of the Selective Literature Review

Criteria elements	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Document type	• Empirical article in peer-reviewed journal	• Grey literature, or • Article in journal without peer review
Language	• English or French	• Language other than English
Subject	• Pertains to one or more areas of need derived from phase 1 of the study • Pertains to primary and/or secondary education	• Does not pertain to any of the areas of need derived from phase 1 of the study • Pertains to pre-primary or post-secondary education; or • Does not pertain to education
Participants (where applicable)	Some or all participants are: • SWSRP of primary and/or secondary school age; or • Professionals involved in the primary and/or secondary education of SWSRP; • Stakeholders of the primary and/or secondary education of SWSRP (e.g., parents, community members); or • Professionals providing non-educational wraparound supports to SWSRP of primary and/or secondary school age (e.g., counsellors, psychologists, physicians)	None of the participants are: • SWSRP of primary and/or secondary school age; and • Professionals involved in the primary and/or secondary education of SWSRP; and • Stakeholders of the primary and/or secondary education of SWSRP • Professionals providing non-educational wraparound supports to SWSRP of primary and/or secondary school age

Criteria elements	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Date of research and publication	• The study was conducted and published since 2012[25]	• The study was conducted and/or published before 2012

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[25] The current epoch of global refugee education policy began in 2012 (Dryden-Peterson, 2016).

Appendix B

Final Sample of Articles Included in the Selective Literature Review

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Appendix C

Data sources used from the Government of Canada, the United Nations, and the World Bank

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