

Preliminary Outcomes of Refugee and Asylee Students in Texas:

A Study of State
Accountability Data

LONESTARP3 Connect

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Problem Statement

- The United States has historically resettled the highest numbers of refugees in the world.
- About half the refugees admitted by the United States are under the age of 17 (Department of Homeland Security, 2023) and attend schools as part of their resettlement program (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2019).
- Research shows the importance of education to restore social and emotional healing of refugee children (McBrien, 2005).
- Little is known about long-term educational outcomes of young refugees or asylees that attend public schools in the US.

Purpose & Research Question

- The purpose of this research is to:
 - provide a first glance at the state of refugee and asylee students' educational attainment
 - aid in the incorporation of education as a fundamental part of refugee and asylee resettlement
 - contribute to the improvement of state educational policy and practices
- Research Question
 - What are the demographic characteristics, educational classifications, and long-term academic outcomes of refugee and asylee students enrolled in Texas public schools?

Why Texas?

- Texas has consistently resettled one of the highest number of refugees in the U.S.
- In 2010, Texas Education Agency introduced an identifier in the Texas Student Data System to flag refugee and asylee students (TEA, n.d.).
- Access to ERC data

Data Sources

- The University of Houston Education Research Center data repository (UH ERC) is a statewide individual-level data repository that combines data from the Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and Texas Workforce Commission.
- The structure of the dataset allows for individuals to be tracked from their entry into the K-12 system, through higher education, and into the workforce.
- Each year, the Texas public school system enrolls roughly 5.5 million students in prekindergarten through 12th grade and graduates more than 300,000 students.
- <https://www.uh.edu/education/research/institutes-centers/erc/>

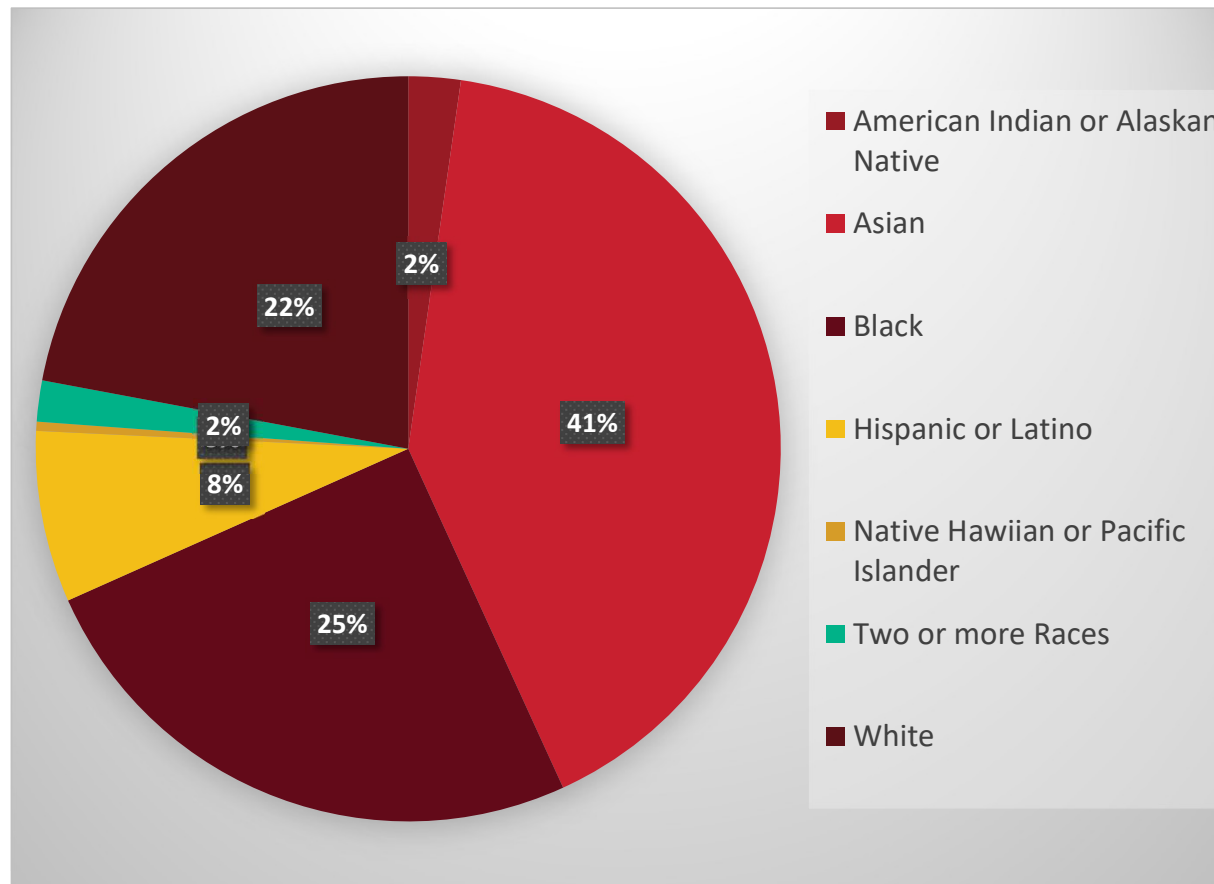
Data Overview

	Administrative Data (PEIMS)	Standardized Academic Testing Data (STAAR)	Standardized Language Proficiency Testing Data (TELPAS)
Purpose of Identification	Accountability exemptions	Accountability exemptions	Not specified
Labeled as	unschooled_asylee_refugee	unschooled_asylee_refugee	unschooled_asylee_refugee
Grades	7-12	3-8	K-12
Years	2011-present	2014-2017, 2019, 2022-present	2014-present
Total students through 2023	8,112	9,032	13,863
Refugee and Asylee Labels	Yes	No	No

Methods

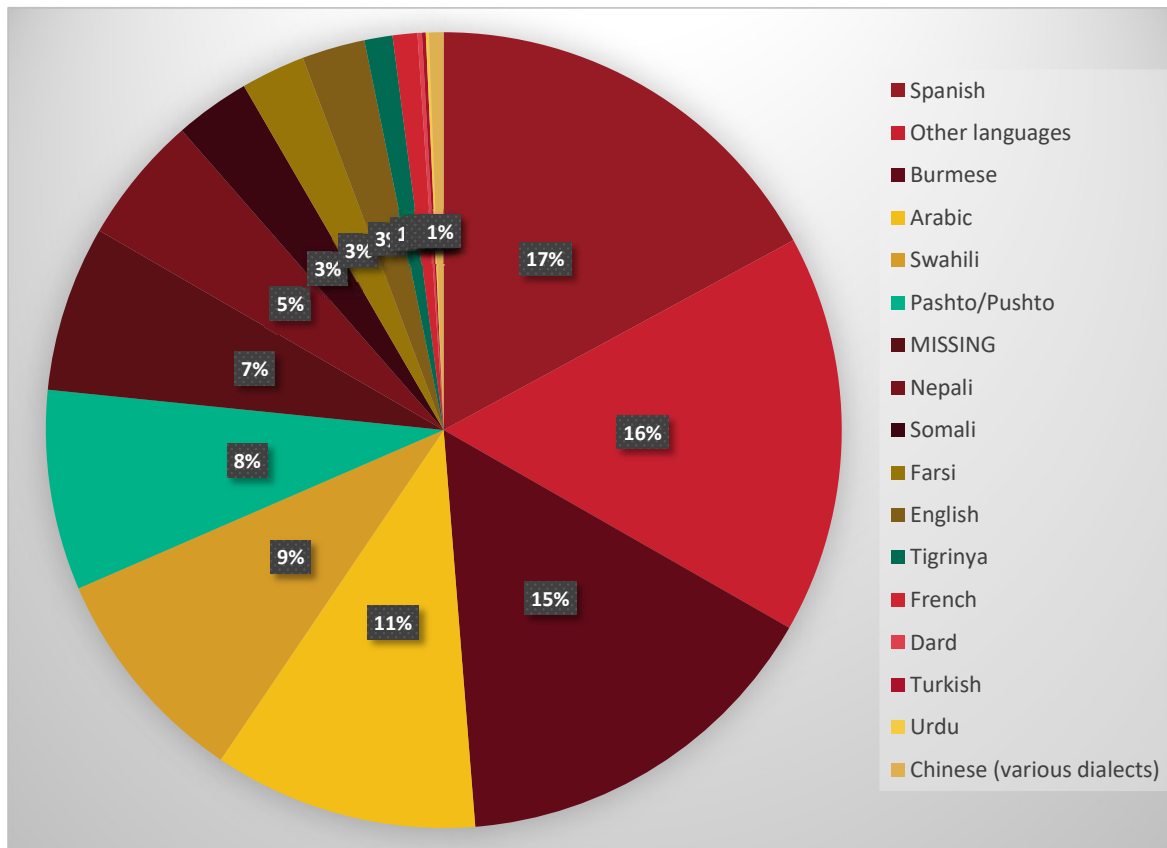
- Combined all PEIMS enrollment files from 2011 through 2023 and creating a variable to indicate a student who was identified as a refugee or asylee student in any year.
- Repeated a similar process for STAAR and TELPAS data for the years that the label was present.
- We then combined the three datasets and constructed a variable indicating the first instance of refugee or asylee identification for each student.
- We made cohorts of students in the 9th grade for further exploration of their educational attainment and outcomes.

Race and Ethnicity of all Identified Refugee/Asylee Students



- Highest percentage of refugee/asylee students are identified as Asians, at 41%.
- 24% are identified as black
- 22% are identified as White
- Ethnicity data is available for 8% of students, who are identified as Hispanic or Latino

Most Dominant Home Languages of Refugee/Asylee Students



- Highest percentage of refugee/asylee students are identified as Spanish speakers, at 17%.
- Burmese speakers are third highest at 15%.
- Arabic speakers make up 11% of refugee/asylee students

Home Language by Race

Home Language	American Indian/Alaskan Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic or Latino	Native Hawaiia/ Pac. Isl.	No Data	Two or more	White
Total (n)	408	7315	4463	1363	60	108	318	3986
Spanish	87%	1%	1%	93%	33%	6%	0%	34%
Chinese (diff. dialects)	*	1%	0%	0%	0%	*	0%	0%
Burmese	1%	37%	0%	0%	27%	*	6%	0%
Arabic	2%	4%	4%	0%	18%	8%	11%	36%
Swahili	*	0%	36%	*	*	12%	2%	0%
Pashto/Pushto	*	12%	*	*	0%	32%	57%	9%
Nepali	*	12%	0%	0%	8%	0%	3%	0%
Somali	0%	0%	12%	*	*	*	2%	0%
Farsi	*	3%	*	*	*	*	6%	7%
English	4%	1%	4%	4%	*	*	*	2%
Tigrinya	*	0%	4%	*	0%	0%	*	0%
French	0%	0%	4%	*	0%	*	0%	*
Dard	0%	0%	0%	*	0%	0%	*	1%
Turkish	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	*	1%
Urdu	0%	0%	*	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other languages	1%	21%	27%	1%	13%	17%	9%	3%
No Data	5%	7%	8%	1%	*	25%	5%	8%

- Burmese speaking students are categorized as Asians (37%), many are sorted into various other racial categories, including American Indian or Alaskan Native (1%), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (27%) and Black (6%).
- As many as 18% of Arabic speaking students are identified as being Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders and 2% are identified as American Indians or Alaskan Natives.
- Nepali, Pashto, Farsi, and Urdu, all predominantly spoken in South Asian countries (Afghanistan, Iran, Nepal, and Pakistan) are categorized as both Asian and White, among other racial categories in case of Nepali.

Key Findings

- The label “Unschooled Asylee/Refugee” is in itself misleading.
 - Assumption of being “unschooled”
 - No distinction between a refugee or an asylee status
- When labeling is done for the purposes of accountability, students’ intersectional identities are obscured.
- Home language data, when put against the Racial data shows some jarring results.

Key Findings (Outcomes)

- Although we see an improvement in graduation and dropout rates for all groups of refugee and asylee students over time, however, HS completion rates are well below the average for Texas state.
- Even though fewer number of female refugee and asylee students are identified each year, they consistently demonstrate higher graduation rates than their male peers.

Discussion and Implications

- Labeling is related to obscurity of refugee and asylee students' intersectional identities
- We notice that when labeling is tied to accountability, errors may occur as goal is not to identify these students for provision of services, but to seek exemption from accountability
- We argue for improved policies related to labeling these populations to achieve the following goals:

Discussion and Implications

- Proper identification improves refugee/asylee students' experiences in schools
- Proper identification empowers educators
- Proper identification aides in school improvement
- Proper identification improves accountability

Next steps

- Comparison groups
- Expanding to newcomer student populations and different programmatic pathways to explore trajectories and outcomes

THANK YOU!

Questions?



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