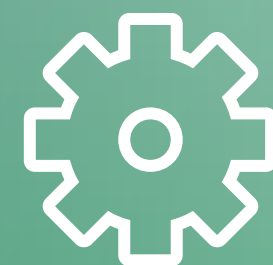


Pillars of Progress

ANNUAL REPORT 2023





Contents

About WES	1
2023 in Review	
Letter from WES CEO and WES Board Chair	2
Pillar 1: Enabling Individuals	3
By the Numbers.....	4
Applicant Profile	5
Top 10 Receiving Institutions in the U.S. and Canada	6
Top 10 Countries of Applicants' Residence.....	6
Top Countries of Education by Region	7
Social Impact Initiatives	8
Pillar 2: Driving Systems Change	9
Pillar 3: Staying Ahead of the Curve	10
Pillar 4: Investing in Our People	11
Pillar 5: Leading as a Social Enterprise	12
WES Economic Inclusion Forum	13
Our Leadership	
Executive Leadership and Board of Trustees	14

About WES



Our Values

Opportunity

We open doors so people can build better futures.

Equity

We uphold fairness and justice in our work and actions.

Inclusion

We become stronger, more creative, and more resilient when we embrace diversity.

Enterprising

We are resourceful, inventive, and driven.

Expertise

We challenge ourselves to be the best at what we do.

World Education Services is a non-profit social enterprise that supports the educational, economic, and social inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and international students. For 50 years, WES has set the standard for international academic credential evaluation, supporting millions of people as they seek to achieve their academic and professional goals. Through decades of experience as a leader in global education, WES has developed a wide range of tools to pursue social impact at scale. From evaluating academic credentials to shaping policy, designing programs, and providing philanthropic funding, we partner with a diverse set of organizations, leaders, and networks to uplift individuals and drive systems change. Together with its partners, WES enables people to learn, work, and thrive in new places.



Our Vision

Everyone is able to put their education, experience, and skills to work anywhere in the world.



Our Mission

We help people learn, work, and thrive in new places. We help society recognize the value of people's education and experience.

Letter from WES CEO and WES Board Chair

WES is deeply committed to building a world where immigrants, refugees, and international students can thrive in their communities. In 2023, we made real progress towards achieving that reality, thanks to the hard work, passion, and expertise of our staff, the dedication and innovation of our partners, and the engagement of our Board of Trustees.

One of our key mandates as an organization is to enable individuals to pursue their academic and career goals. With five decades of experience in credential evaluation, WES remains dedicated to supporting the global mobility of individuals. In 2023, WES completed over 430,000 credential evaluations spanning nearly 200 countries and territories.

Another major initiative to enable individuals is the WES Gateway Program, which helps forcibly displaced individuals access credential evaluations, despite challenges obtaining verified degrees and transcripts. In 2023, we served 5,300 Gateway applicants across the United States and Canada. This represents an increase of over 70 percent from the previous year. We have now received over 10,000 applications since 2018, a major milestone in our Gateway program.

Thanks to our partners, and to our policy and advocacy work, we have also been able to reduce barriers and drive systems change. For example, in the U.S., WES worked directly with advocates and policymakers to develop plans to expand the network of Offices of New Americans to 20 states. And in Canada, we helped bring a three-

month practice ready assessment program to Ontario, allowing eligible internationally trained doctors to move directly into supervised practice.

Further enabling systems change, the Skilled Immigrant Integration Program, a network of U.S. organizations dedicated to advancing state and local initiatives to promote immigrant workforce inclusion, grew to 45 member communities in 31 states. In Canada, a highlight of our #WelcomingEconomy initiative in 2023 was a refugee hiring event organized in part with the host city of Moncton. At the event, displaced individuals were directly connected with employers that had open positions. Most attendees received job offers or moved on to the next round of interviews. In partnership with Jumpstart Refugee Talent, we are excited to expand these hiring events to reach more people in more regions in 2024.

WES continues to stay ahead of the curve to meet the changing needs of those we serve. In 2023, WES began a partnership with the New Zealand Qualifications Authority to streamline qualifications assessment for individuals relocating to New Zealand who hold credentials from another country. As an organization, WES is committed to exploring new opportunities and implementing innovative strategies to continue serving individuals and partners worldwide.

WES is focused on investing in its people and prioritizing initiatives aimed at fostering an inclusive, mission-driven culture that supports every employee. We enhanced learning and talent development programs,

including launching a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Justice strategy, four racially and culturally diverse employee resource groups, and three affinity groups. The WES mentorship program also launched its third cohort with 34 staff members participating in the program to expand their knowledge base across departments at WES.

As a leading social enterprise, we constantly strive to become better stewards of our mission. Throughout 2023, WES embarked on a deliberate journey to redefine its approach to stewardship, adopting a new Investment Policy Statement to align 100 percent of its financial resources with its mission. This shift underscores WES' commitment to integrating financial and mission objectives for long-term sustainability and positive impact. As WES implements this mandate in 2024, the focus will be on gradual portfolio realignment over several years, with an emphasis on transparency and sharing insights in the non-profit sector and social enterprise arena.

You can find more information on these efforts and many of our 2023 achievements in the following pages of this report.

In 2024, WES is celebrating its 50th anniversary. We are so proud of all that we have accomplished together over half a century. And we look forward to continuing to work closely with partners and communities over the next 50 years and beyond to advance educational, economic, and social inclusion in a world with expanding global mobility.




Audrey Hendley
Chair, WES Board of Trustees


Esther T. Benjamin
CEO & Executive Director



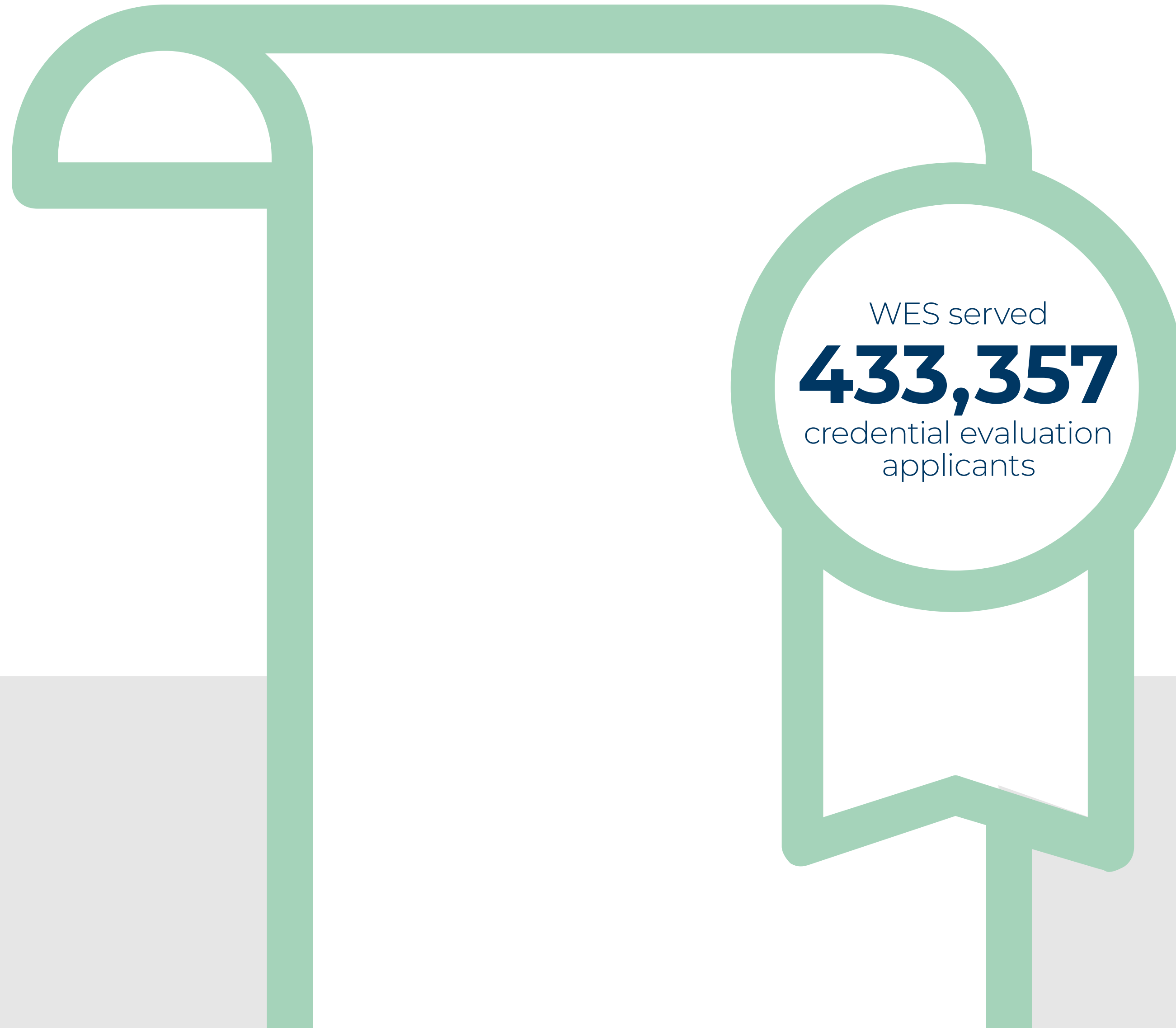
Enabling Individuals

We enable immigrants, refugees, and international students to make full use of their education, skills, knowledge, and experience so they can achieve economic and social mobility.

For five decades, we've been committed to helping people on their educational and professional journeys as they unlock doors to new opportunities. Through our expertise, we assess credentials and enable individuals to navigate complex systems, pursue their dreams, and contribute meaningfully to society.



2023 by the Numbers



588,666
credentials

from



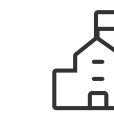
198
countries & territories

sent by



31,408
institutions

received by



5,366
U.S. & Canadian
institutions & departments

Average Processing Times



6
business days
*(documents received
to completion)*



30
business days
*(application
to completion)*



2023 Applicant Profile

UNITED STATES

121,824

Completed credential evaluations

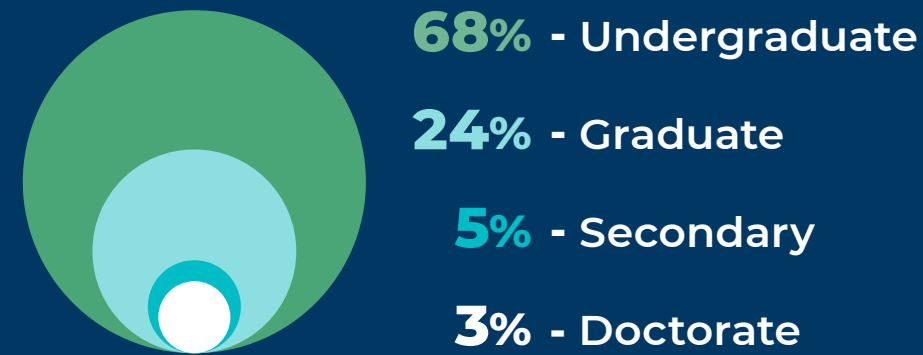


40% of these applicants lived in the U.S.

Evaluation Purpose*



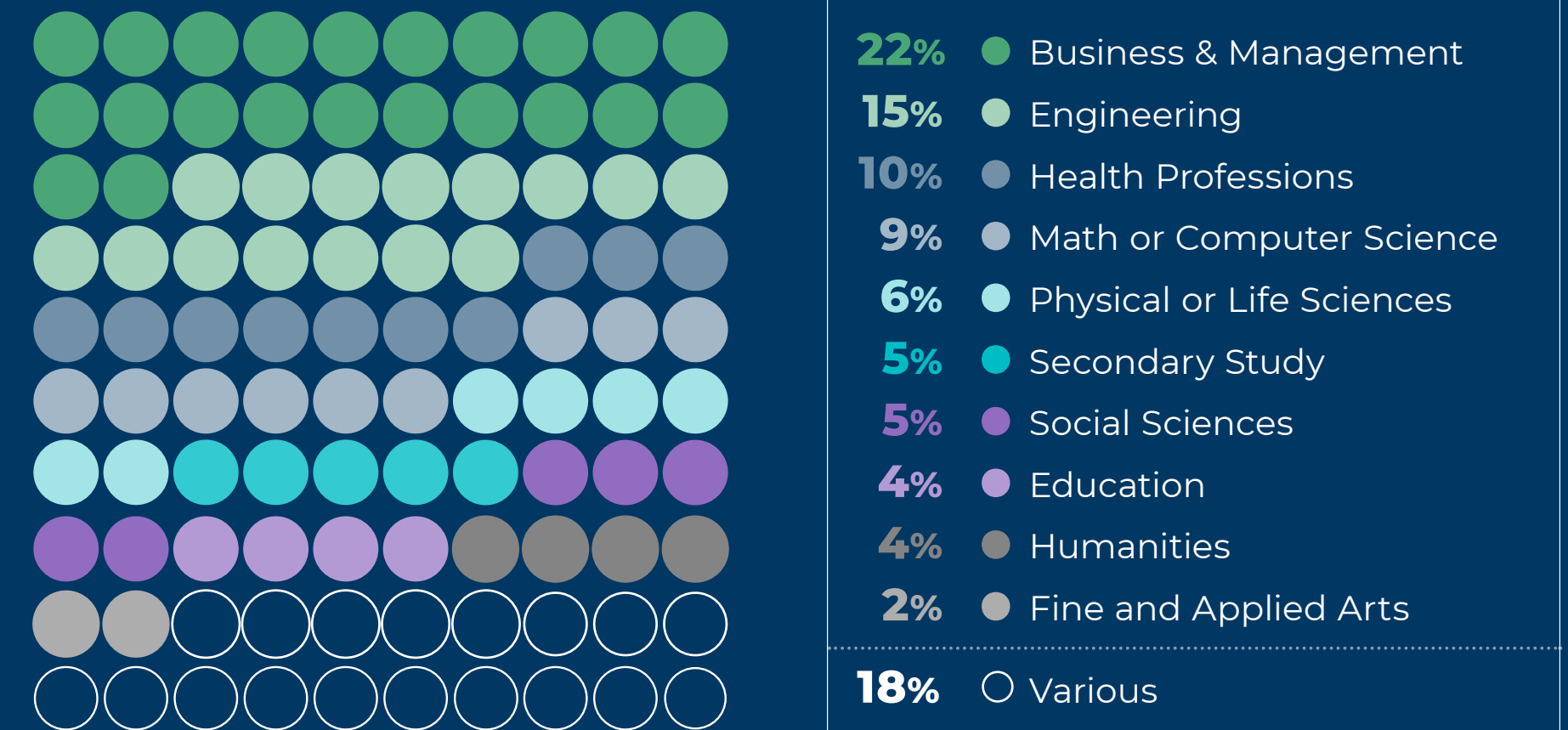
Highest Education Level*



DISTINCT MAJORS*

In 2023, WES evaluated credentials associated with **37,564** distinct majors. These majors can be grouped into the following top 10 fields of study.

TOP 10 FIELDS OF STUDY*



* The number of distinct majors included illustrates only those for which WES evaluated 10 or more credentials. These majors were categorized into fields of study based on categories established by the Institute of International Education.

CANADA

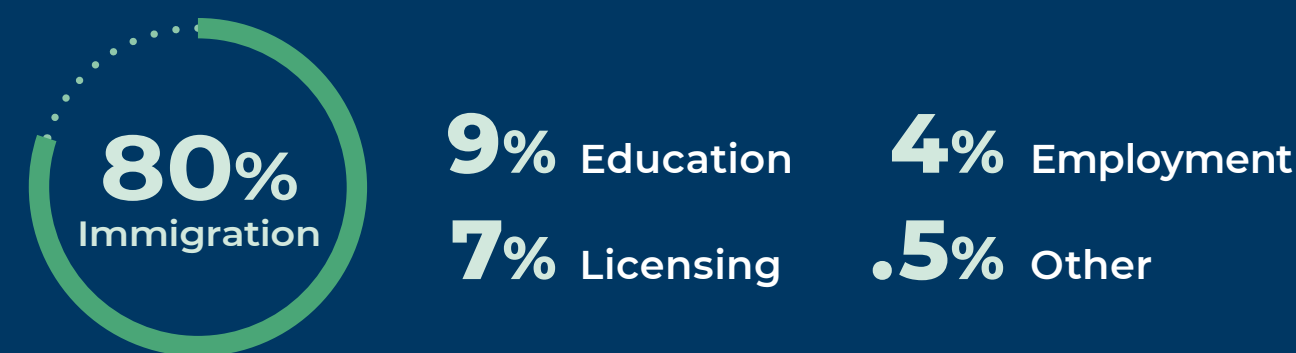
311,533

Completed credential evaluations

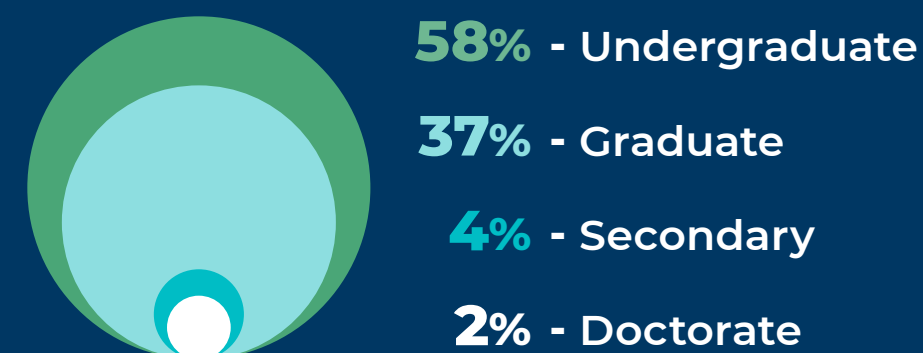


45% of these applicants lived in Canada

Evaluation Purpose*



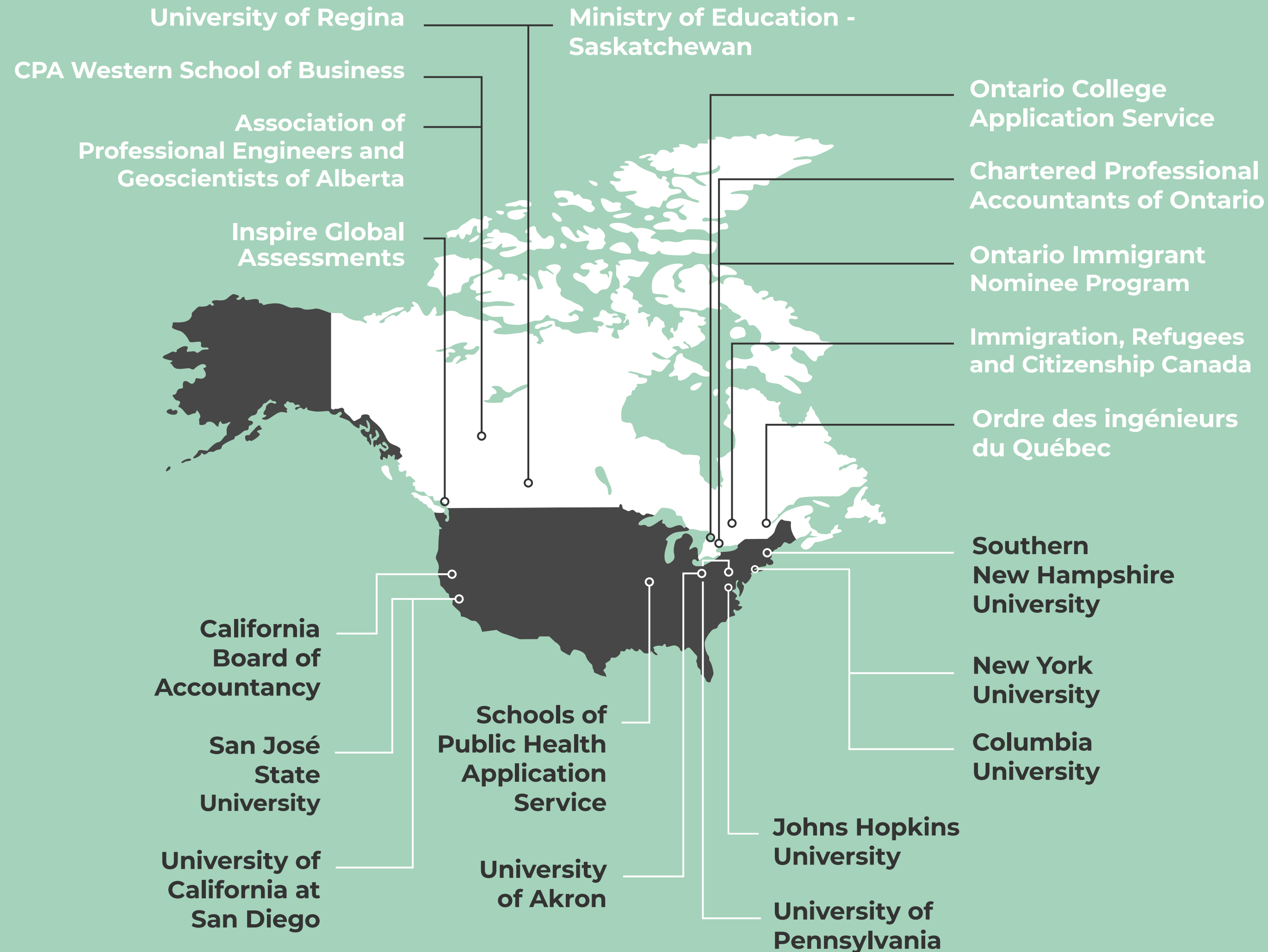
Highest Education Level*



* Note: Percentages have been rounded.

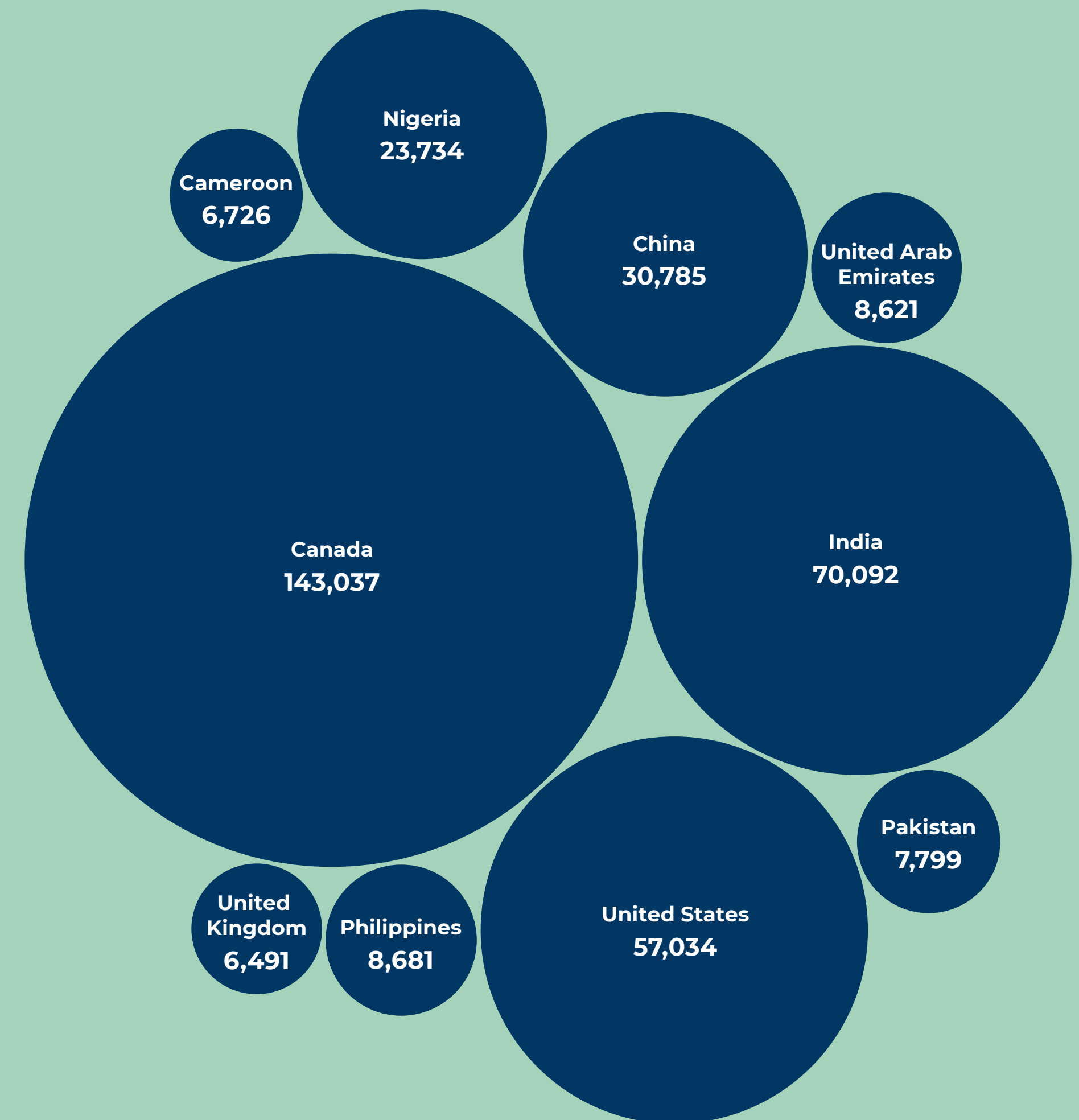


2023 Top 10 Receiving Institutions in the U.S. and Canada



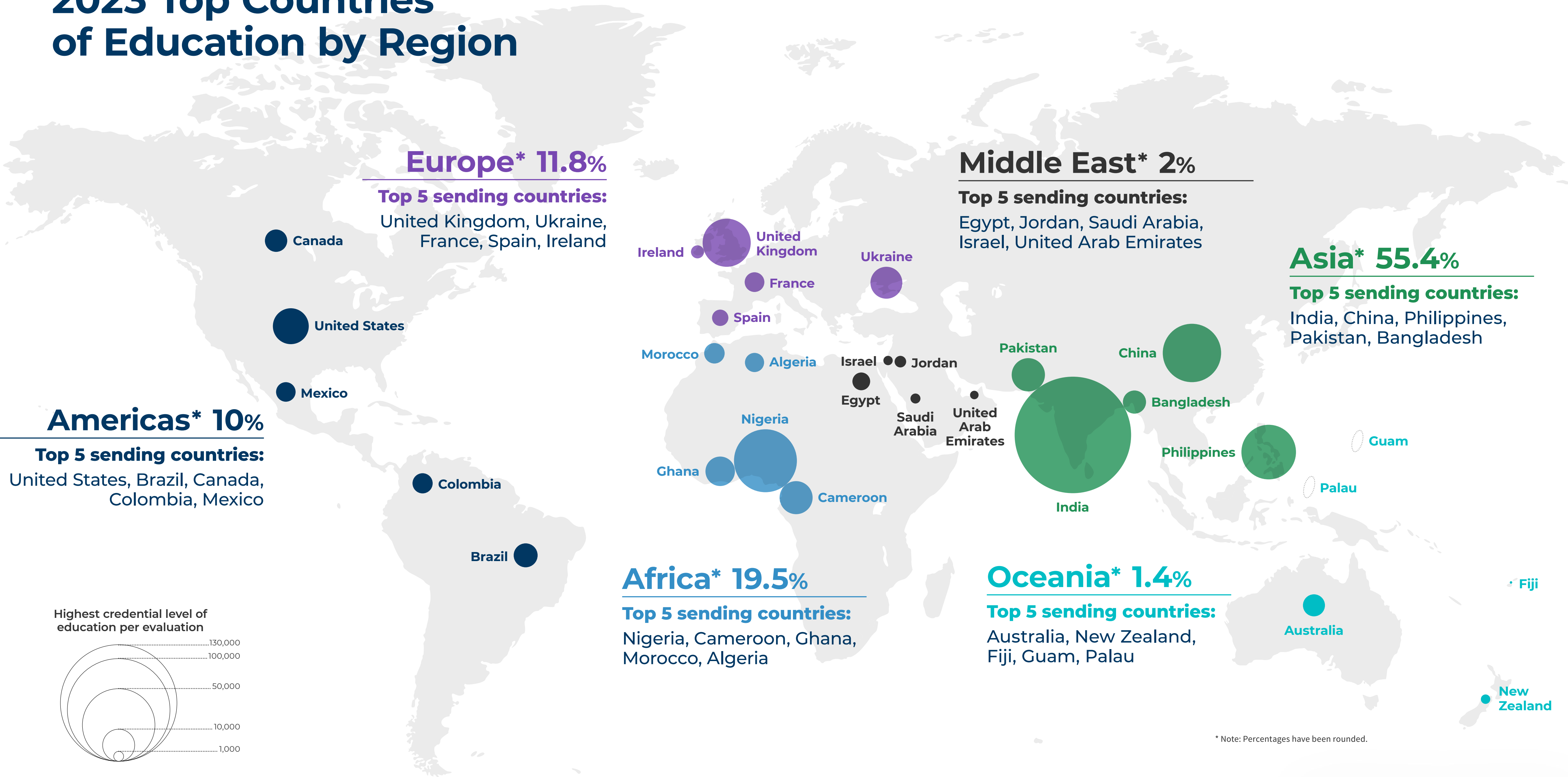
2023 Top 10 Countries of Applicants' Residence

(by completed evaluations)





2023 Top Countries of Education by Region





Social Impact Initiatives

Initiatives like the WES Gateway Program and the refugee hiring events are examples of some of the ways WES actively bridges gaps to facilitate the inclusion and economic empowerment of immigrants, refugees, and international students, enabling them to thrive in their communities.

The **WES Gateway Program**, which provides credential evaluations to displaced people who lack access to official academic transcripts, had a record year: 5,300 applicants (Canada: 4,119 applications; U.S.: 1,181 applications) accessed the program, bringing the total number of individuals served since program launch to over 10,000. The program is delivered in collaboration with more than 120 community partners, 30 of which joined the referral network in 2023. The network of partners helps to identify individuals educated in Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Syria, Türkiye, Ukraine, and Venezuela who could benefit from the Gateway Program. Referral partners play an essential role in applicants' success, as highlighted by a comprehensive program evaluation conducted in 2023. The evaluation showed that over 90 percent of applicants found the wraparound supports provided by referral partners useful, and the same percentage reported high confidence in using their WES credential evaluations to support the recognition of their education.



5,300
applicants
in 2023



10,000+
individuals
served since
program launch



120+
community
partners

WES partnered with Jumpstart Refugee Talent, Starbucks Canada, and member organizations of the Refugee Jobs Agenda Roundtable to host two refugee hiring events, one in Toronto, Ontario, and one expanding the model to a new location in Moncton, New Brunswick. Through the **Toronto Refugee Hiring Event**, 26 employers, including Scotiabank, Telus, Interac Corp, and DHL, interviewed 400 applicants; 86 percent of these candidates got a job on the spot or moved to the next stage in the hiring process. At the **Moncton Refugee Hiring Event**, 85 percent of candidates got a job on the spot or moved to the next stage. An initiative of the Refugee Jobs Agenda Roundtable, co-chaired by Senator Ratna Omidvar, Rashmi Vohra (TD Bank Group), and Jim Estill (Danby Appliances), refugee hiring events are designed to strengthen local workforces and connect refugees with employment opportunities.

Driving Systems Change

We partner widely to facilitate social and economic mobility for the individuals we serve, and we seek to build open and equitable systems that provide access to opportunity for immigrants, refugees, and international students.

This year, our efforts led to the introduction of a practice ready assessment program for internationally trained physicians in Ontario, and we continue to shape pathways to workforce inclusion and economic mobility, centering immigrant and refugee voices and driving change through projects like the WES Youth in Design pilot and our collaboration with policymakers across various states and provinces. These are just some of the ways we are driving systems change to realize our vision of a world where everyone can put their education, experience, and skills to work anywhere in the world.

As a result of ongoing advocacy to support the integration of internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs), this year saw the introduction of a **practice ready assessment** program for internationally trained physicians in Ontario, and the release of a major Statistics Canada **study on IEHPs**. To add to the data landscape on IEHPs, the policy team conducted a survey of internationally educated nurses not currently working as nurses in Ontario, to be released in 2024. The team also published a **scan of provincial initiatives** supporting IEHPs, which has been shared broadly and will be updated periodically. The policy team continues to work directly with those who have lived experience, helping to amplify their voices.

The **WES Youth in Design (YID)** pilot project engaged refugee youth in designing practical solutions to building career-relevant social

capital. During the first phase of the YID pilot, in 2023, youth participants and service providers received four training courses each on topics that help enhance skills needed to actively participate in the co-design process. All participants then engaged in eight sessions of trust building, co-designing, and planning. In the final workshop, they determined which idea would move forward to implementation in 2024.

In the U.S., WES worked directly with advocates and policymakers in several states to help states develop plans for **Offices of New Americans (ONA)** to support immigrant inclusion in the workforce and economy. With the addition of Maine, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Utah, the ONA Network—which WES co-convenes with the American Immigration Council—has expanded to 20 states.

In 2023, the **IMPRINT Coalition** added 14 new members to its network, expanding to 43 organizations in 18 states across the U.S. The Coalition concluded the #UntappedTalent campaign—IMPRINT’s first national awareness-raising initiative to advance policy reforms that are inclusive of immigrant and refugee workers in the U.S. Launched in 2021, the campaign received overwhelming support from more than 130 organizations, including 23 international, 30 U.S. national, and 78 local organizations in 27 states across the U.S. The IMPRINT Coalition continues to be at the forefront of policy initiatives that create pathways to workforce inclusion and economic mobility to address the needs of immigrants and displaced persons, including those who have earned their credentials in countries other than the U.S.

Staying Ahead of the Curve

We ensure growth, organizational resilience, and continued impact by anticipating and pivoting to meet the needs of customers, academic institutions, clients, partners, and stakeholders in a dynamic environment.

As an organization, we proactively adapt to meet evolving needs, exemplified by partnerships with entities like the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and investment in Qualification Check. Staying ahead of the curve means streamlining processes and enhancing efficiency so we can carry out our mission as best we can.

WES partnered with the **New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)** to provide qualification verification services to immigration applicants to New Zealand. The new WES Global Records Verification Report for NZQA will streamline qualifications assessment and expedite services for individuals who hold credentials from another country and qualify for resident visas under New Zealand's skilled migrant category, all in an effort to strengthen the country's economy.

WES invested in **Qualification Check**, a global academic and professional verification company based in London, England. Leveraging the leading technology

and innovative verification processes of Qualification Check, WES will provide faster, more comprehensive support to the communities it serves and better aid the global mobility of individuals' education and experience around the world.

.....
The **Skilled Immigrant Integration Program (SIIP)** network grew to 45 communities in 31 states across the U.S., increasing the number of state and local governments, non-profit organizations, community colleges, and other stakeholders that are building and scaling promising practices in immigrant and refugee workforce inclusion. The program further scaled up its capacity through the SIIP Demonstration Opportunity, which welcomed its third cohort in 2023. Building on the success of the model, this cohort is developing innovative practices that create pathways to teaching for internationally trained immigrants and refugees. Selected participants include the Asian Community and Cultural Center in Lincoln, Nebraska; the Mayor's Office of Resilience and Equity in Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Richard J. Daley College in Chicago, Illinois.



Investing in Our People

We foster an inclusive, mission-driven culture where every employee feels valued, encouraged, and motivated, where every employee is empowered to do excellent work every day, and where every employee becomes a catalyst for change.

In 2023, WES undertook a comprehensive review of its approach to learning and talent development. It augmented its existing programs supporting employee growth, such as paid professional development and tuition reimbursement, and launched dedicated learning programs and a personal development series called Invest in Yourself.

WES' Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Justice (DEIBJ) office launched a three-year comprehensive strategic plan that provides an overview and framework of the methods that will be implemented to translate WES' DEIBJ commitments into action. In 2023, WES launched four racially and culturally diverse employee resource groups and three affinity groups to foster a collaborative and inclusive workplace for all employees. The office also successfully launched enterprise-wide training for employees and leaders, which provided foundational learning in diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Guided by WES' mission and values, WES' DEIBJ initiatives focus on cultivating an environment that can engage and fit with the diverse global employees and communities we serve.

The **WES mentorship program** gives employees the opportunity to expand their knowledge base and leverage input from colleagues across departments and fields of expertise. In 2023, the program launched its third cohort with 34 staff members. Program participants gained a better appreciation

for how to manage and shape their personal career journeys and a new understanding of different parts of the organization.

The **Fund Ambassadors Program** is a professional development initiative that provides WES employees with hands-on philanthropic experience and the opportunity to champion organizations that assist immigrants and refugees. In 2023, led by WES Mariam Assefa Fund team members and distinguished sector leaders, the program selected nine individuals to participate in the eight-month program as Fund Ambassadors, during which they learned about topics ranging from trust-based philanthropy to impact investing. At the program's end, participants emphasized the invaluable insights they acquired as well as skills to navigate the intricacies of philanthropy. Moreover, the Fund Ambassadors selected nine organizations to receive \$90,000 in grant funding.

The **Immigrant Youth Internship Program (IYIP)** at WES is an early career work-integrated learning intervention for youth of immigrant backgrounds. As part of the program, WES hires an annual cohort of first- and second-generation immigrant youth, refugees, and international students as paid interns to support various teams across the organization. Through three successful cohorts to date, WES has hired 16 interns, four of whom were hired into permanent positions at WES. The program is designed to support immigrant youth who are transitioning from school to the workforce by equipping them with skills that enable employment success.

Leading as a Social Enterprise

We maintain the highest standards of excellence and scale as a financially independent, sustainable organization driving measurable social impact.

In 2023, we took significant steps to align our financial resources with our mission. These actions, alongside initiatives like convening partners and awarding grants through the WES Mariam Assefa Fund, reflect our commitment to driving long-term, positive social change as a non-profit social enterprise.

Over 2023, WES staff and Board of Trustees engaged in an intentional and thoughtful journey to reimagine what stewardship and fiduciary duty mean for a mission-driven organization. This process culminated in November 2023, when the Board voted unanimously to adopt a new **Investment Policy Statement (IPS)**, which includes a commitment to align 100 percent of WES' financial resources with its mission. This builds on the work WES has demonstrated over the past four years—from implementing negative and positive investment screens to building a catalytic investment portfolio. In 2024 we will focus on building a strong foundation and take a measured approach to rotate the total portfolio towards mission over multiple years. WES is excited to launch this pioneering work for the organization and the field, document its journey, and share what it learns along the way—continuing its efforts to lead as a social enterprise.

WES convened more than 200 partners representing 40 state and local communities from across the U.S. in Washington, D.C., for the **2023 WES Economic Inclusion Forum**.

Researchers, policymakers, philanthropists, and state and local practitioners discussed innovative and actionable insights to address the challenges faced by immigrant and refugee communities in accessing economic opportunities and achieving social mobility. The forum took place in conjunction with the annual SIIP Convening and the ONA State Network Convening.

In 2023, the **WES Mariam Assefa Fund** continued to fulfill its philanthropic mission by awarding \$7.5 million in grants and impact investments, along with donations, bringing the total contributions since inception to \$32 million benefiting over 180 partners. In 2023, these funds supported 84 organizations across the U.S. and Canada, including 40 new partners, that are dedicated to increasing access to opportunity, fostering wealth creation, empowering marginalized communities, and promoting justice for immigrants and refugees. Additionally, \$10.8 million in aligned funding was secured during the year.

The Fund brought together 60 individuals from its U.S. grantee partner community at the WES Economic Inclusion Forum to reflect on challenges related to advancing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, and to support organizations in encouraging empathy, action, and understanding. The Fund also hosted an **Equity Retreat** in partnership with Just Strategies, an external firm that supports non-profits in making changes to center equity and community, at the Economic Inclusion Forum.

WES Economic Inclusion Forum

The WES Economic Inclusion Forum centers on ways to advance the economic, social, and workforce inclusion of immigrants and refugees. Together with our partners, we envision a future where everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the global economy.

“

Take the time to build trust and say, ‘When you are ready, we are here for you.’”

*- Niurka Melendez,
Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid*

Executive Leadership



ESTHER T. BENJAMIN
CEO and Executive Director



ABBIE COWAN
Chief People Officer



SHAMIRA MADHANY
Deputy Executive Director
and Managing Director, Canada



MONICA MUNN
Chief Social Impact Officer



CHERYL CRAMER TOTO
Chief Operations Officer



JOHN VERMAATEN
Chief Financial Officer

Board of Trustees



AUDREY HENDLEY
Chair, WES Board of Trustees;
President, American Express Global
Travel & Lifestyle Services



SIDNEY R. HARGRO
Vice Chair, WES Board of Trustees;
Executive Director,
The LeadersTrust



**FERIDUN
HAMDULLAHPUR, CM**
Treasurer, WES Board of Trustees;
President Emeritus,
University of Waterloo



HELEN HAYWARD
Secretary, WES Board of Trustees;
Independent Board Director



FANTA AW
Executive Director
and CEO, NAFSA



**TOMAS CHAMORRO-
PREMUZIC**
Chief Innovation Officer,
ManpowerGroup



CAROLINE GAYLE
Managing Director, Technology
Financial Services, Accenture



JOANNA HARRIES
Senior Vice President of Expansion,
Endeavor Global



SHAKTI JAUHAR
Global Head of Transformation,
Global Business Services,
McDonald's Corporation



AJAY PATEL
President and CEO,
Vancouver Community College



DR. JULIE REDDY
Former CEO, South African
Qualifications Authority



PAOLO VARIAS
Associate Director of Clinical and
Support Services, Niagara Region



AARON WILLIAMS
Former Director, U.S. Peace
Corps; Former U.S. Government
Diplomat; Senior Advisor
Emeritus, RTI International



ESTHER T. BENJAMIN
Ex officio; CEO and Executive
Director, World Education Services



wes.org/AnnualReport2023

© 2024 World Education Services. All rights reserved.