

Homelessness Reported for Federal Student Aid Applicants

Important Information

Because the FAFSA only collects limited data on homeless applicants, we release this information with a detailed explanation. If you include this information in writing or in a presentation, please ensure that you provide a clear understanding of what the data mean. Data on unaccompanied homeless youth collected on the FAFSA should not be construed to be representative of the entire population of homeless applicants.

Limited Population of Applicants Included in this Report

The FAFSA does not collect homelessness information for the purpose of determining the population of homeless students attending postsecondary institutions. Rather, homelessness questions on the FAFSA are for the sole purpose of determining an applicant's dependency status for Federal Student Aid and are presented only to a subset of the applicant population.

There are ten other questions on the FAFSA that also are used to determine dependency status and homelessness questions are the last ones presented. Once an applicant provides a positive response on FAFSA on the Web for any of the questions, most of the additional questions, including those for homelessness, are not presented (skipped).

Based on the priority order of questions on FAFSA on the Web, homelessness questions were not presented to applicants who were 24 years or older, married, or who answered "Yes" to the any of the questions: in a graduate program, in active duty, veteran, orphan, in foster care, ward of the court, emancipated minor, in legal guardianship or providing more than half of a dependent's support. Therefore, this report excludes applicants in any of these situations (see exception in note below). Counts also exclude applicants who were determined to be independent by a school financial aid administrator for a special circumstance when homelessness was not specified.

Year to year changes in homelessness reported here do not necessarily represent trends in homeless populations. Federal Student Aid requirements, including skip logic on the FAFSA, could impact counts of homeless applicants between cycles. Additionally, changes in other applicant characteristics between cycles could impact the numbers of applicants presented with homelessness questions, and, because of skip logic, mask or falsely indicate underlying changes in homeless populations.

Determining Homelessness

There are three questions on the FAFSA that ask an applicant if he/she has been determined by an authority (school, HUD or youth center/program) to be (or at risk of becoming) unaccompanied and homeless (reference questions 56-58 on the 2015-16 paper FAFSA). If an applicant cannot provide a positive response to any of the questions, he/she can request consideration for determination of a homelessness status by a school financial aid administrator.

There are two groups of applicants reported here.

1. Applicants determined to be (or at risk of becoming) unaccompanied homeless youth, either by an authority (self-reported on the FAFSA) or by a school financial aid administrator, are considered independent for the purposes of Federal Student Aid and do not need to report parents' financial information on the FAFSA.
2. The homelessness status remains unknown for applicants who had requested consideration by a school for a determination of homelessness, but for whom no determination had been made by the end of an application cycle. This could be due to several reasons, including a student not following up with a school financial aid administrator, not satisfying the requirements for a homelessness determination, or even not attending school.

Notes:

- Although 99% of initial applications were submitted by students via FAFSA on the Web in application cycle 2016, a similar logic does not exist for skipping questions on applications or corrections submitted via paper or directly from a school. Therefore, in some cases, homelessness might not be the only reason an applicant was determined to be independent, especially in earlier years when fewer applications were submitted online.
- Counts in these reports include all application sources, include both rejected and completed applications, and are based on last transaction. Counts represent unique applicants.

Table 1. Homelessness determinants for unaccompanied homeless youth

Application Cycle	High School or School District	HUD Program	Youth or Transitional Program	School Financial Aid Administrator Determinant	Sum of Determined Requests for Homeless Consideration	Undetermined Requests for Homeless Consideration
2013-2014	18,214	4,430	5,686	1,382	29,712	26,452
2014-2015	22,438	4,156	3,872	1,739	32,205	30,010
2015-2016	22,435	3,822	3,506	2,185	31,948	27,243
2016-2017	23,053	3,571	3,323	2,792	32,739	24,902

Table 2. Unaccompanied homeless youth by state and application cycle

State	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
AK	137	161	138	136
AL	378	403	391	451
AR	262	276	270	308
AZ	588	670	671	600
CA	3,432	3,697	3,660	3,871
CO	543	576	631	626
CT	190	171	203	205
DC	103	127	119	126
DE	97	94	104	97
FL	1,537	1,794	1,853	1,991
GA	813	966	960	939
HI	52	62	41	36
IA	226	255	280	269
ID	186	173	172	201
IL	2,084	2,336	2,222	2,104
IN	440	483	463	461
KS	247	271	311	307
KY	281	344	302	362
LA	419	421	492	523
MA	547	559	556	565
MD	444	538	558	601
ME	201	247	201	232

Note: The counts in this report include only a portion of applicants who might be homeless and should not be construed to be representative of the entire population of homeless applicants. Additionally, year to year changes in homelessness reported here do not necessarily represent trends in homeless populations.

State	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
MI	1,582	1,617	1,707	1,626
MN	526	526	515	514
MO	1,020	1,108	1,153	1,227
MS	192	193	212	217
MT	60	90	88	109
NC	824	877	824	900
ND	46	43	38	44
NE	164	165	158	165
NH	123	133	139	107
NJ	405	461	426	430
NM	189	184	223	225
NV	291	323	335	304
NY	1,235	1,317	1,245	1,206
OH	845	814	784	815
OK	385	400	412	457
OR	1,194	1,112	1,001	1,117
PA	650	683	745	737
RI	59	48	53	45
SC	283	345	301	305
SD	40	41	50	40
TN	448	487	533	536
TX	2,918	3,400	3,397	3,535
UT	114	137	158	187
VA	447	563	506	543
VT	51	68	40	45
WA	1,477	1,475	1,427	1,428
WI	544	523	465	461
WV	148	189	155	188
WY	37	46	52	64
Other	208	213	208	151
Sum	29,712	32,205	31,948	32,739

Note: The counts in this report include only a portion of applicants who might be homeless and should not be construed to be representative of the entire population of homeless applicants. Additionally, year to year changes in homelessness reported here do not necessarily represent trends in homeless populations.

Table 3. Total applicants by dependency status for federal student aid and application cycle

Dependency Status	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Dependent	9,131,781	9,022,795	8,893,669	8,694,465
Independent	12,061,972	11,539,134	10,864,095	10,046,590
Sum:	21,193,753	20,561,929	19,757,764	18,741,055

Note: The counts in this report include only a portion of applicants who might be homeless and should not be construed to be representative of the entire population of homeless applicants. Additionally, year to year changes in homelessness reported here do not necessarily represent trends in homeless populations.