

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 2017-18 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 2018, 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.

Table 1. Homelessness determinants. Counts represent unique applicants.

Application Cycle	¹ Unaccompanied Homeless Youth					² Undetermined Requests for Homelessness Consideration
	Agency Determinant (Self-Reported on FAFSA)			School Financial Aid Administrator Determinant	Sum	
	High School or School District	HUD Program	Youth or Transitional Program			
2016-2017	23,053	3,571	3,323	2,792	32,739	24,902
2017-2018	26,181	3,706	3,448	3,251	36,586	31,448
2018-2019	28,929	4,474	4,624	3,123	41,150	28,883

¹Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Applicants determined to be (or at risk of becoming) unaccompanied homeless youth, either by an agency (self-reported on the FAFSA) or by a school financial aid administrator.

²Undetermined Requests for Homelessness Consideration

Applicants whose homelessness statuses remain unknown because no determination had been made in response their requests for schools to consider their special circumstance of being homeless. Reasons for this are unknown, but could include not attending or following up with school or not being determined to be unaccompanied homeless.

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 2. Unaccompanied homeless youth by state. Counts represent unique applicants.

State	Application Cycle		
	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
AK	136	140	131
AL	451	457	521
AR	308	345	429
AZ	600	817	866
CA	3,871	4,584	5,674
CO	626	680	702
CT	205	212	259
DC	126	141	130
DE	97	98	105
FL	1,991	2,179	2,559
GA	939	1,085	1,235
HI	36	45	49
IA	269	324	326
ID	201	240	257
IL	2,104	2,203	2,338
IN	461	524	559
KS	307	307	320
KY	362	403	455
LA	523	573	685
MA	565	583	694
MD	601	688	815
ME	232	241	254
MI	1,626	1,720	1,830
MN	514	584	679
MO	1,227	1,424	1,442
MS	217	225	289
MT	109	138	168
NC	900	982	999
ND	44	71	71
NE	165	194	183

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Table 2. Unaccompanied homeless youth by state. Counts represent unique applicants (continued).

State	Application Cycle		
	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
NH	107	132	150
NJ	430	448	600
NM	225	255	253
NV	304	337	356
NY	1,206	1,246	1,456
OH	815	878	878
OK	457	530	593
OR	1,117	1,233	1,255
PA	737	785	928
RI	45	55	52
SC	305	365	400
SD	40	32	50
TN	536	626	731
TX	3,535	4,107	4,615
UT	187	227	243
VA	543	536	534
VT	45	45	55
WA	1,428	1,535	1,845
WI	461	557	629
WV	188	233	224
WY	64	86	105
Other	151	131	174
Sum:	32,739	36,586	41,150

Table 3. Total applicants by dependency (for reference)

Dependency Status (for Federal Student Aid)	Application Cycle		
	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Dependent	8,694,465	8,877,285	8,811,096
Independent	10,046,590	10,092,331	9,724,636
Sum:	18,741,055	18,969,616	18,535,732

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