

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.

FAFSA Cycles 2022 – 2023 and 2023 – 2024

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 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.

FAFSA Cycle 2024 – 2025

For the 2024–25 FAFSA homelessness-related questions were revised. Questions 5 and 6, along with information from other FAFSA questions, are used to determine if a student meets eligibility criteria to be considered independent and not required to submit information about their parents. Due to the lack of skip logic, applicants answer all dependency determinant related questions. Applicants who are enrolled in a graduate program, on active duty, veterans, or those who are orphans, in foster care, wards of the court, emancipated minors, in legal guardianship, or providing more than half of a dependent's support may be included in the homelessness counts.

Considerations for Interpreting Year-to-Year Changes

Year to year changes in homelessness reported here do not necessarily represent trends in homeless populations. Federal Student Aid requirements, including skip logic for application cycles prior to the 2024-2025 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

For FAFSA cycles 2022 – 2023 and 2023 – 2024 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 55-57 on the 2022-23 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.

FAFSA Cycle 2024 – 2025

Beginning with the 2024–25 cycle, homelessness related questions were consolidated into a single question (question 6 on the 2024–25 paper FAFSA), which asks whether at any time on or after July 1, 2023, the student was unaccompanied and homeless or self-supporting and at risk of being homeless. Applicants who answer “Yes” are then asked to identify which authority made the determination.

1. Director or designee of an emergency or transitional shelter, street outreach program, homeless youth drop-in center, or other program serving those experiencing homelessness
2. The student's high school or school district homeless liaison or designee
3. Director or designee of a project supported by a federal TRIO or GEAR UP program grant
4. Financial aid administrator (FAA)
5. None of these apply

Notes:

- Although 99% of initial applications were submitted by students via FAFSA on the Web in application cycle 2023-24, 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.

Note: Data retrieved from CPS on 1/16/25. Data retrieved from FPS on 3/23/26. 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 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			
2022-2023	21,972	4,300	5,426	4,313	36,011	43,949
2023-2024	28,475	5,373	6,567	5,564	45,979	43,083

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.

Table 2. Homelessness determinants. Counts represent unique applicants.

Application Cycle	³ Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (Self-Reported on FAFSA)					
	At any time on or after July 1, 2023, was the student unaccompanied and either (1) homeless or (2) self-supporting and at risk of being homeless; (6a) or the applicant answered yes to 6b, 6c, 6d, or 6e	Director or designee of an emergency or transitional shelter, street outreach program, homeless youth drop-in center, or other program serving those experiencing homelessness (6b)	The student’s high school or school district homeless liaison or designee (6c)	Director or designee of a project supported by a federal TRIO or GEAR UP program grant (6d)	Financial aid administrator (FAA) (6e)	None of these apply (6f)
2024-2025	908,424	17,143	27,626	2,376	28,547	77,311

Note: Data retrieved from CPS on 1/16/25. Data retrieved from FPS on 3/23/26. 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.

³Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Applicants determined to be either (1) homeless or (2) self-supporting and at risk of being homeless (self-reported on the FAFSA). The homeless sub-questions (6b, 6c, 6d, 6e, and 6f) are not mutually exclusive, and the homeless counts should not be interpreted as unique applicants. The counts for question 6f are only considered valid when at least one other part of the homeless question (6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, or 6e) are true and 6f is also true. Not all applicants that answer “yes” to question 6a provide a follow-up response to questions 6b through 6f.

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Table 3. Unaccompanied homeless youth by state. Counts represent unique applicants.

State	Application Cycle		
	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
AK	96	92	1,646
AL	450	521	12,814
AR	343	427	9,381
AZ	757	981	20,956
CA	5,319	7,332	148,923
CO	581	733	15,422
CT	209	253	6,225
DC	120	122	2,235
DE	83	109	2,477
FL	2,251	2,862	61,375
GA	1,112	1,376	42,209
HI	61	76	2,432
IA	276	354	5,635
ID	263	251	3,812
IL	2,022	2,467	32,047
IN	452	598	18,820
KS	314	359	6,290
KY	401	514	16,132
LA	607	698	18,617
MA	661	789	14,762
MD	718	948	17,304
ME	194	258	2,822
MI	1,293	1,594	27,067
MN	481	572	12,060
MO	1,011	1,323	15,968
MS	205	258	8,064
MT	144	181	2,380
NC	777	960	26,763
ND	77	95	1,540
NE	192	220	3,993

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Table 3. Unaccompanied homeless youth by state. Counts represent unique applicants (continued).

State	Application Cycle		
	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024 - 2025
NH	88	130	1,873
NJ	369	457	15,877
NM	242	315	6,412
NV	297	374	10,599
NY	1,225	1,575	34,617
OH	773	963	30,615
OK	536	641	11,692
OR	1,015	1,258	15,499
PA	865	1122	21,958
RI	69	104	2,199
SC	229	341	12,700
SD	59	62	1,390
TN	774	1020	19,229
TX	4,647	6,002	89,768
UT	213	273	6,770
VA	455	565	18,987
VT	43	56	895
WA	1,603	2,194	26,883
WI	539	641	11,746
WV	230	273	4,643
WY	165	188	1,354
Other	105	102	2,547
Sum:	36,011	45,979	908,424

Note: Data retrieved from CPS on 1/16/25. Data retrieved from FPS on 3/23/26. 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 (for reference)

Dependency Status (for Federal Student Aid)	Application Cycle	Application Cycle	Application Cycle
	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Dependent	8,189,852	8,551,203	8,126,367
Independent	8,854,909	9,377,079	9,436,538
⁴ Provisionally Independent	-	-	119,280
⁵ Unknown	-	-	44
Sum:	17,044,761	17,928,282	17,682,229

⁴ For 2024-25, provisionally independent are those applicants who are considered independent but also answer “Yes” **and** “None of these apply” in question 6 (Student Other Circumstances) or answered “Yes” in question 7 (Student Unusual Circumstances).

⁵ For 2024-25, unknown dependency values are processed transactions without a dependency model value recorded; however, this omission did not influence processing outcomes or the accuracy of the SAI calculation. The system derives dependency status during application processing rather than the stored table values.

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