# 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 55-57 on the 2021-22 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 2021-22, 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** | **1Unaccompanied Homeless Youth** | | | | |  | **2Undetermined 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** |  |
| 2019-2020 | 27,870 | 4,617 | 5,348 | 3,408 | 41,243 |  | 31,405 |
| 2020-2021 | 25,280 | 3,924 | 4,952 | 3,325 | 37,481 |  | 38,604 |
| 2021-2022 | 19,735 | 3,697 | 4,684 | 3,633 | 31,749 |  | 40,228 |

# 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. Unaccompanied homeless youth by state. Counts represent unique applicants.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **Application Cycle** | | |
| **2019-2020** | **2020-2021** | **2021-2022** |
| AK | 122 | 117 | 89 |
| AL | 492 | 477 | 378 |
| AR | 422 | 367 | 316 |
| AZ | 864 | 790 | 659 |
| CA | 5,945 | 5,381 | 4,568 |
| CO | 670 | 635 | 523 |
| CT | 226 | 206 | 199 |
| DC | 142 | 139 | 119 |
| DE | 83 | 89 | 74 |
| FL | 2,546 | 2,318 | 2,035 |
| GA | 1,237 | 1,176 | 1,020 |
| HI | 51 | 67 | 45 |
| IA | 310 | 312 | 263 |
| ID | 289 | 266 | 229 |
| IL | 2,328 | 2,000 | 1,808 |
| IN | 507 | 514 | 474 |
| KS | 359 | 343 | 284 |
| KY | 407 | 402 | 300 |
| LA | 686 | 614 | 471 |
| MA | 689 | 608 | 590 |
| MD | 818 | 748 | 637 |
| ME | 249 | 222 | 159 |
| MI | 1,848 | 1,618 | 1,179 |
| MN | 622 | 526 | 520 |
| MO | 1,384 | 1,222 | 987 |
| MS | 278 | 242 | 219 |
| MT | 156 | 147 | 128 |
| NC | 1,016 | 920 | 705 |
| ND | 62 | 59 | 63 |
| NE | 197 | 203 | 195 |

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

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **Application Cycle** | | |
| **2019-2020** | **2020-2021** | **2021-2022** |
| NH | 135 | 94 | 72 |
| NJ | 618 | 448 | 373 |
| NM | 282 | 246 | 184 |
| NV | 365 | 338 | 291 |
| NY | 1,527 | 1,335 | 1,124 |
| OH | 895 | 773 | 674 |
| OK | 577 | 581 | 491 |
| OR | 1,262 | 1,151 | 870 |
| PA | 882 | 823 | 747 |
| RI | 60 | 61 | 48 |
| SC | 374 | 300 | 236 |
| SD | 40 | 35 | 42 |
| TN | 785 | 854 | 715 |
| TX | 4,622 | 4,280 | 3,705 |
| UT | 254 | 187 | 204 |
| VA | 529 | 457 | 460 |
| VT | 62 | 51 | 38 |
| WA | 1,808 | 1,703 | 1,366 |
| WI | 596 | 522 | 418 |
| WV | 261 | 241 | 203 |
| WY | 109 | 133 | 134 |
| Other | 195 | 140 | 118 |
| Sum: | 41,243 | 37,481 | 31,749 |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 3. Total applicants by dependency (for reference)** | | | |
| **Dependency Status  (for Federal Student Aid)** | **Application Cycle** | | |
| **2019-2020** | **2020-2021** | **2021-2022** |
| Dependent | 8,728,902 | 8,562,207 | 8,288,977 |
| Independent | 9,357,583 | 9,304,162 | 9,241,951 |
| Sum: | 18,086,485 | 17,866,369 | 17,530,928 |