Child and Youth Homelessness in California

What It Is
Kidsdata.org presents the number and percentage of public school students recorded as being homeless at any point during a school year, by grade level, and by nighttime residence. The estimated number of homeless public school students in each legislative district also is available. Data on homeless public school students are based on McKinney-Vento Act definitions, and include students whose nighttime residence is (i) shared housing with others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason, (ii) a hotel or motel, (iii) a temporary shelter, or (iv) unsheltered.

Kidsdata.org also presents the number of unaccompanied children and young adults found to be homeless during the national point-in-time (PIT) count of homeless individuals.

Why This Topic Is Important
On a January night in 2020, 161,548 people living in California (41 per 10,000) were identified as homeless, over 30,000 more than were counted two years earlier. On this night, the state accounted for more than a quarter of all homeless people in the U.S., and more than a third of homeless unaccompanied youth under age 25. During the 2017-18 school year, more than 250,000 California school-aged children were recorded as homeless—not including young children who were not enrolled in public preschool, students who experienced homelessness during the summer only, or those who dropped out of school; this figure represents more than one in six of the record-high 1.5 million homeless public school students nationwide.

Homelessness at any point in a young person’s life can cause severe trauma, hamper their development, disrupt their relationships, and put their health and safety at risk. Homeless children are more likely than others to experience hunger and malnutrition, physical and mental health issues, developmental delays, and academic problems. Many of these children and youth are exposed to deep poverty, family instability, drug use, or domestic violence before becoming homeless, and homelessness increases their vulnerability to additional trauma. For example, homeless youth are vulnerable to exploitation, physical and sexual victimization, substance abuse, and other harmful experiences.

Some adolescents and young adults are at heightened risk of homelessness, such as African American and Hispanic youth, those who identify as LGBTQ, child welfare- and
Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (Point-in-Time Count), by Age Group and Shelter Status: 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Sheltered</th>
<th>Unsheltered</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages 0-17</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ages 18-24</td>
<td>2,455</td>
<td>8,915</td>
<td>11,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for Ages 0-24</td>
<td>2,662</td>
<td>9,510</td>
<td>12,172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Definition: Number of unaccompanied children and young adults ages 0-24 found to be homeless during the national point-in-time (PIT) count of homeless individuals, by age group and shelter status (e.g., 595 California children ages 0-17 were found to be homeless and unsheltered during the 2020 PIT count).


Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Ages 0-24 (Point-In-Time Count)

How Children Are Faring

In California, 277,736 public school students—4.5% of all enrollees—were recorded as being homeless at some point during the 2017-18 school year. This number is up from 2010-11, when 220,708 public school students (3.6%) were reported to be homeless.

Half of all homeless public school students in California were enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5 in 2017-18, while 21% were in Grades 6-8 and 29% in Grades 9-12. Sharing housing with friends or relatives (‘doubling up’) was the most common type of nighttime residence among homeless students statewide (84%).

During the 2020 homeless point-in-time (PIT) count, 12,172 children and young adults ages 0-24 were found to be homeless and unaccompanied in California, down from 14,161 in 2013. Most of these homeless young people (9,510) were unsheltered, or residing in a place not ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation. The vast majority of unsheltered children and young adults were transitional age youth ages 18-24 (8,915), but a substantial number of unsheltered unaccompanied minors were identified as well (595).

View references for this text and additional research on this topic: https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/40/homelessness/summary

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