KidsData

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Child and Youth Homelessness in California

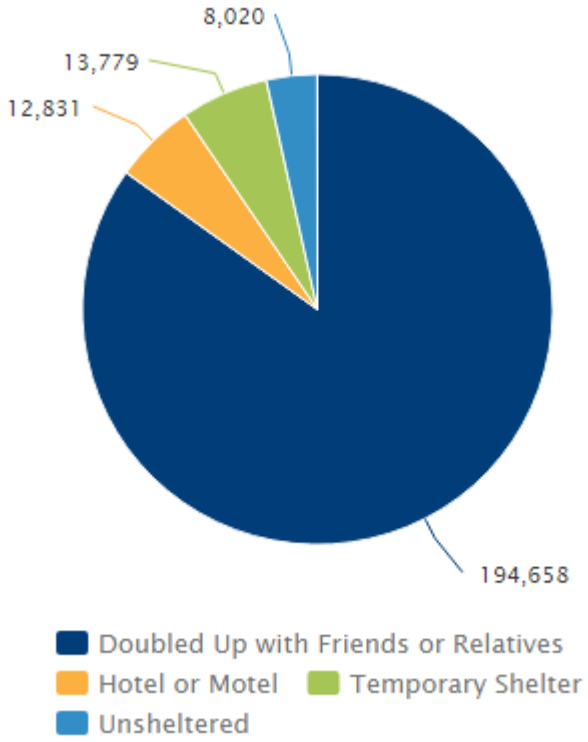
Public School Students Recorded as Homeless: 2021

Locations	Percent
California	3.8%
Alameda County	1.5%
Contra Costa County	1.4%
Fresno County	1.8%
Kern County	2.4%
Los Angeles County	3.6%
Orange County	5.3%
Riverside County	4.0%
Sacramento County	3.5%
San Bernardino County	6.5%
San Diego County	3.8%
Santa Clara County	1.4%

Definition: Percentage of public school students recorded as being homeless at any point in the school year (e.g., 3.8% of California students were homeless at some point during the 2021 school year).
Data Source: California Dept. of Education, Coordinated School Health and Safety Office custom tabulation & DataQuest (Feb. 2023).

Public School Students Recorded as Homeless, by Type of Nighttime Residence: 2021

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.

Kidsdata.org also presents the 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.

Why This Topic Is Important

On a January night in 2025, 181,934 people living in California (46 per 10,000) were identified as homeless, including 8,086 unaccompanied young people under age 25—the highest figures among U.S. states. On this night, California accounted for 24% of the nation's overall homeless count and 23% of homeless unaccompanied youth. In calendar year 2023, an estimated 340,000 Californians received services from public homelessness programs; around 1 in 8 (13%) were unaccompanied youth.

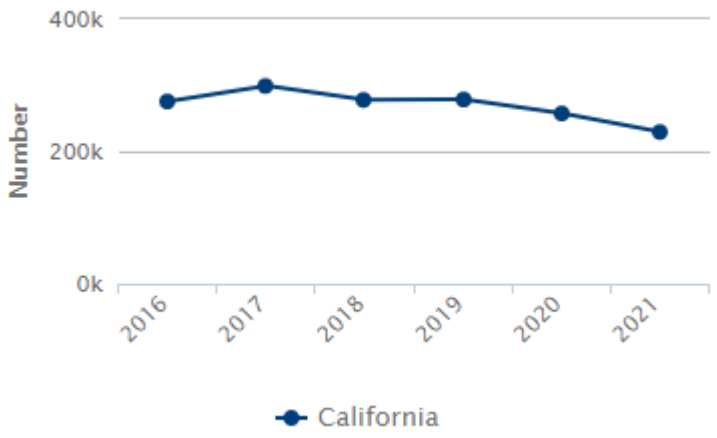
During the 2020-21 school year, 3.8% of California's school-aged children were recorded as homeless—not including young children who were not enrolled in public preschool, students who experienced homelessness during the summer only, or those who had dropped out of school; the number of homeless students in California (around 230,000) also was the highest in the nation, representing more than 1 in 5 U.S. public school students recorded as homeless that school year

Homelessness at any point in a young person's life can cause severe trauma, disrupt their cognitive and psychosocial development, 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, and academic problems. Many of these children and youth are exposed to mental illness, substance abuse, family instability, domestic violence, or deep poverty before becoming homeless, and homelessness increases their vulnerability to additional trauma. For example, homeless youth are vulnerable to exploitation, physical and sexual victimization, and other harmful experiences.

Some adolescents and young adults are at heightened risk for homelessness, such as African American/black and Hispanic/Latino youth, those who identify as LGBTQ, child

Definition: Number of public school students recorded as being homeless at any point in the school year, by type of nighttime residence (e.g., 8,020 California students were homeless and unsheltered at some point during the 2021 school year).
Data Source: California Dept. of Education, Coordinated School Health and Safety Office custom tabulation (Feb. 2023).

Public School Students Recorded as Homeless



Definition: Number of public school students recorded as being homeless at any point in the school year (e.g., 229,288 California students were homeless at some point during the 2021 school year).
Data Source: California Dept. of Education, Coordinated School Health and Safety Office custom tabulation & DataQuest (Feb. 2023).

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (Point-in-Time Count), by Age Group and Shelter Status: 2025

California	Number		
Age Group	Sheltered	Unsheltered	Total
Ages 0-17	165	193	358
Ages 18-24	3,338	4,390	7,728
Total for Ages 0-24	3,503	4,583	8,086

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., 193 California children ages 0-17 were found to be homeless and unsheltered during the 2025 PIT count).
Data Source: U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness in the U.S. (Aug. 2026).

welfare- and juvenile justice-involved populations, youth with disabilities, English learners, and young people who are pregnant or parenting.

How Children Are Faring

In California, 229,288 public school students—3.8% of all enrollees—were recorded as experiencing homelessness at some point during the 2020-21 school year. These figures are down from 2016-17, when 298,914 public school students (4.8%) were reported to be homeless. At the county level, rates of student homelessness in 2020-21 ranged fewer than 1 in 75 to more than 1 in 8.

Statewide, around half of homeless public school students in 2020-21 (47%) were enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5, while 22% were in Grades 6-8 and 31% in Grades 9-12. Overall, the most common type of nighttime residence among homeless students was in shared ('doubled up') housing with friends or relatives (85%).

During the 2025 homeless point-in-time (PIT) count, 8,086 children and young adults ages 0-24 were found to be homeless and unaccompanied in California, down from 12,172 in 2020. Most of these homeless young people (4,583) were unsheltered, meaning their nighttime residence was 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 (4,390), but a substantial number of unsheltered unaccompanied minors were identified as well (193).

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