

Child and Youth Homelessness in California

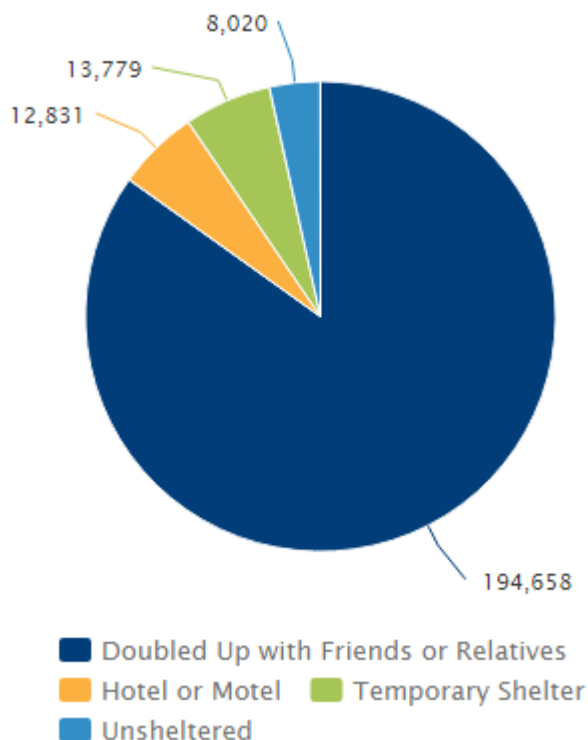
Public School Students Recorded as Homeless: 2021

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 2022, 171,521 people living in California (44 per 10,000) were identified as homeless, including 9,520 unaccompanied young people under age 25—the highest figures among U.S. states. On this night, California accounted for 30% of the nation's overall homeless count and 32% of homeless unaccompanied youth. Over the previous calendar year, 2021, an estimated 268,263 Californians received services from public homelessness programs, including 25,182 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

Data Source: California Dept. of Education, Coordinated School Health and Safety Office custom tabulation (Feb. 2023).

Year	Number of Cases (California)
2016	~280k
2017	~300k
2018	~280k
2019	~280k
2020	~260k
2021	~230k

Data Source: California Dept. of Education, Coordinated School Health and Safety Office custom tabulation & DataQuest (Feb. 2023).

California	Number	
Age Group	Sheltered	Unsheltered
Ages 0-17	230	314
Ages 18-24	2,598	6,448

Data Source: U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness in the U.S. (Feb. 2023).

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



This PDF Was Generated On: 8/17/2025