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Chronic Absenteeism Among Students Experiencing Homelessness in America

School Years 2016-17 to 2020-21

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National Center for Homeless Education
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO



With funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro provides critical information to those who seek to remove educational barriers and improve educational opportunities and outcomes for children and youth experiencing homelessness.

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Chronic Absenteeism Among Students Experiencing Homelessness in America

Overview

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act) provides students who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence with the right to the same free, appropriate, public education that other students receive. Each year, to ensure the law is fully implemented by school districts and states, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) collects demographic and academic data on students eligible for services under the McKinney-Vento Act.¹ This brief examines chronic absenteeism among students who experienced homelessness using data from School Years (SYs) 2016-17 through 2018-19, which are the first three years in which the data were collected. Data available on ED Data Express² were aggregated to the state level for this report; an appendix also provides an analysis using school district data that identifies differences in absenteeism based on district locale.³

Key findings in this brief include the following:

- During SY 2018-19, public schools identified 524,389 students experiencing homelessness who were chronically absent and 1,429,110 students experiencing homelessness overall. Thus, 37% of students experiencing homelessness were reported as chronically absent.

¹ Data on students experiencing homelessness included in this report are collected by the U.S. Department of Education through the ED*Facts* Initiative. To learn more about ED*Facts* Initiative, visit <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/index.html>. The first school year for which ED*Facts* enrollment data are available is SY 2004-05; chronic absenteeism data were first collected in SY 2016-17. Data included in this report were extracted from ED Data Express in December 2021. School districts that reported chronically absent students but no enrolled students experiencing homelessness are excluded from this report.

² <https://eddataexpress.ed.gov/>

³ Counts and percentages of chronically absent students, including those experiencing homelessness, are often inflated when reported at the national, state and school-district level because they likely contain duplicates. When a student experiencing homelessness attends more than one school during the school year within the same school district, the student could be counted as chronically absent at every school the student attended but will only be included in the count of students experiencing homelessness enrolled in a district one time. This likely inflates the rates of chronic absenteeism among students experiencing homelessness included in this report.

- For each of the years included in this report, the number of chronically absent students who also experienced homelessness was evenly split between female and male students.⁴
- Between SYs 2016-17 and 2017-18, the number of students who experienced homelessness and chronic absenteeism changed by 25% or more in 10 of the 46 states that reported data for both years. Between SYs 2017-18 and 2018-19, the number of students who experienced homelessness and chronic absenteeism changed by 25% or more in six of the 51 states that reported data in both years.
- At the national level, the percentage of students who experienced homelessness and were chronically absent increased by four percentage points between SYs 2016-17 and 2017-18 and increased by nearly three percentage points between SYs 2017-18 and 2018-19.

⁴ *EDFacts* File Specification 118 does not collect data on the gender of students identified as homeless. However, File Specification 195 collects data on chronically absent students and divides each subgroup into female and male categories.

Chronic Absenteeism

In the past ten years, chronic absenteeism has attracted increasing attention. Research correlates chronic absenteeism with lower standardized test scores and grade point averages. Chronic absenteeism also correlates with higher rates of grade retention and dropping out (UEPC, 2012). Being present in school is a necessary precondition to receiving instruction and needed supports to help master lessons. As a result, many states now use a measure of chronic absenteeism as a component in the accountability system they use to evaluate their public schools each year. Additionally, states submit chronic absenteeism data annually through the *EDFacts* Initiative for students enrolled in Kindergarten through Grade 12 and comparable ungraded students. These reporting criteria were implemented after the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) was amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015.

Students who miss 10% or more of the days in which they are expected to attend school are reported as chronically absent, regardless of the reason the student missed school (ED, 2017, 2018). Students who were enrolled in a school for at least 10 days are included in the count of students while students enrolled in a state institution are included if they have been in attendance for 60 days.⁵ Students also must participate in instruction or instruction-related activities for at least half of the school day to be considered in attendance. By basing the definition of chronic absenteeism on a percentage of the days a student is enrolled in school and the amount of time that a student participated in a school day, schools can consistently apply a standard for attendance that naturally accounts for students who attend more than one school during the year, intentionally planned half-days of school, and students who only attend school part-time.

The first year for which the data are available is SY 2016-17. Prior to this, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) gathered data on chronic absenteeism using a different definition of chronic absenteeism.⁶ This report does not address the chronic absenteeism data collected previously by OCR and instead focuses on the newly available data.

Students Experiencing Homelessness

The McKinney-Vento Act defines a student experiencing homelessness as one who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2), 2015). The McKinney-Vento Act requires public school districts to appoint a liaison to ensure the identification of students experiencing homelessness in coordination with other school personnel and community agencies (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(i)). It also outlines circumstances that fall under this definition. While the list of circumstances described in the McKinney-Vento Act

⁵ Examples of state institutions include department of health services schools and juvenile justice schools.

⁶ Information about data collected by OCR can be found at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/data.html>. Furthermore, the 2015 CRDC data on chronic absenteeism is featured in a 2016 ED Data Story on *Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools*, available at <https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html>.

is not exhaustive, it helps liaisons determine which students are eligible for services under the law. Circumstances which meet the criteria of lacking fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence include students:

- sharing housing with others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- staying in hotels, motels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative, adequate housing;
- staying in emergency or transitional shelters;
- abandoned in hospitals;
- staying in public or private places not designed for humans to live; and
- staying in cars, parks, bus or train stations, abandoned buildings, or substandard housing.

The definition also includes migratory students who are living in a situation that meets the homeless definition criteria (42 U.S.C. § 11434(a)(2)).

A primary purpose of the McKinney-Vento Act is to identify and remove any law, regulation, policy, or practice that acts as a barrier to the identification, enrollment, or attendance of students experiencing homelessness (42 U.S.C. § 11431(2)). Additionally, once identified, several rights are provided to students experiencing homelessness for the purpose of increasing student stability and success. These include the right to remain in the school of origin or enroll in the local school where they are staying based on what is in the student's best interest, receive transportation to the school of origin, receive free school meals, and receive educational and related supports under Title I, Part A of the ESEA. The McKinney-Vento Act and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 also provide supports and services through subgrants to school districts to serve students experiencing homelessness. As noted above, attending school regularly and consistently is an essential element to helping educators identify and provide supports to students. As a result, identifying students experiencing homelessness who are chronically absent, and identifying and removing barriers to their attendance is critical to meeting these students' needs. While the laws granting students these rights and services are typically described as homeless education policies and not chronic absenteeism policies, they all strive to address the high rates of mobility experienced by students experiencing homelessness and the inherent challenges associated with attending school while homeless.

Chronic Absenteeism in the States

This report presents the numbers and percentages of students experiencing homelessness who were chronically absent by state for the first three years of the collection (see Table 1). The report also includes data for SYs 2019-20 and 2020-21 but due to altered school operations as a result of COVID-19, absenteeism data for those years may be impacted by variations in the capacity of school districts to track attendance accurately. As a result, these data may not accurately represent chronic absenteeism in SYs 2019-20 and 2020-21 and are included in Appendix B.

Counts of chronically absent students are reported at the school level but counts of enrolled students experiencing homelessness are reported at the school district level. As a result, when a student experiencing homelessness attends more than one school during the school year within the same school district, the student could be counted as chronically absent at every school the student attended, but they will only be included in the count of enrolled students experiencing homelessness one time. This means that the chronic absenteeism rate is likely inflated for students experiencing homelessness. Large districts are perhaps more at risk for this type of skewed data because students experiencing homelessness could move a considerable distance within district boundaries, prompting a transfer to the local school while remaining enrolled in the same school district.

During SY 2018-19, public schools identified 524,389 chronically absent students who experienced homelessness. This means that nearly 37% of the 1,429,110 students who experienced homelessness missed at least 10% of the school days they were expected to attend. Wyoming (15%), Tennessee (20%), Missouri (22%), Idaho (23%), and New Jersey (24%) had the lowest rates of chronic absenteeism among students who experienced homelessness during SY 2018-19. Twelve states had chronic absenteeism rates for students who experienced homelessness over 50%. They include Alaska, Hawaii, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin.

Table 1. Number and percent of students who experienced homelessness and chronic absenteeism by state, SYs 2016-17 through 2018-19

State	SY 2016-17		SY 2017-18		SY 2018-19	
	Number of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Percent of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Number of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Percent of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Number of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Percent of students who were homeless and chronically absent
United States¹	425,470	30.2	529,539	34.0	524,389	36.7
Alabama ²	5,876	37.0	5,485	36.6	5,837	36.3
Alaska	2,324	56.4	2,179	56.9	2,139	58.9
Arizona	10,364	39.4	10,674	42.5	9,693	44.7
Arkansas	2,811	21.5	4,249	30.3	4,225	30.4
Bureau of Indian Education	528	23.6	--	--	--	--
California	88,801	33.1	78,774	29.3	83,473	30.0
Colorado	7,698	36.6	11,920	51.7	10,649	48.0
Connecticut	1,247	28.2	1,491	29.3	1,386	28.8
Delaware	1,389	41.8	1,515	43.5	1,585	44.8
District of Columbia ³	2,717	40.8	3,138	40.4	3,003	42.0
Florida	37,123	48.9	46,475	48.4	44,389	48.4
Georgia	13,295	33.3	13,974	34.0	13,996	34.8
Hawaii	1,515	51.2	1,532	49.4	1,832	50.9
Idaho	1,625	20.9	1,668	20.0	1,849	22.8
Illinois	--	--	21,554	40.1	19,602	33.2
Indiana	4,837	26.3	5,514	29.7	6,246	34.3
Iowa	1,546	22.6	1,763	24.4	1,928	26.2
Kansas	3,014	32.6	3,168	35.0	3,003	33.5
Kentucky	7,813	27.2	7,692	30.1	8,635	32.5
Louisiana	6,452	21.0	4,808	25.8	4,640	26.2
Maine	--	--	1,014	42.2	1,098	43.7
Maryland	8,711	50.0	9,265	51.8	8,770	53.3
Massachusetts	7,604	36.5	8,825	37.1	8,356	34.0
Michigan	17,970	46.1	20,652	55.2	20,274	54.8
Minnesota	12,430	70.3	10,768	64.7	9,418	55.4
Mississippi	3,503	31.9	3,740	35.2	2,354	30.6
Missouri	10,073	29.8	6,872	19.4	7,344	21.6
Montana ³	1,960	54.0	1,876	46.9	2,208	52.4
Nebraska ⁴	1,432	39.8	1,657	44.2	1,846	42.0
Nevada ⁵	9,770	58.3	3,637	17.6	9,635	51.7
New Hampshire ⁶	11	0.3	1,965	41.8	1,402	35.4
New Jersey	2,714	25.0	3,656	27.7	3,369	24.2
New Mexico	2,750	23.7	2,656	24.9	3,202	27.4
New York	62,171	35.1	64,667	36.4	60,897	37.2

Table 1. Number and percent of students who experienced homelessness and chronic absenteeism by state, SYs 2016-17 through 2018-19, cont'd.

State	SY 2016-17		SY 2017-18		SY 2018-19	
	Number of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Percent of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Number of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Percent of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Number of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Percent of students who were homeless and chronically absent
North Carolina	13,048	43.6	11,522	39.2	13,582	38.2
North Dakota	863	39.8	732	33.5	961	38.0
Ohio	5,795	18.9	14,377	41.5	16,601	51.2
Oklahoma	--	--	8,498	33.2	8,779	37.6
Oregon	12,434	49.4	12,222	51.4	12,532	51.3
Pennsylvania	--	--	8,957	27.5	9,410	30.2
Puerto Rico	78	1.6	684	10.2	2,496	52.9
Rhode Island	627	50.6	750	49.0	821	55.2
South Carolina	4,808	40.0	4,507	35.6	4,706	36.8
South Dakota	1,020	49.2	968	46.9	964	49.8
Tennessee	4,111	23.9	4,938	27.1	4,171	20.1
Texas	--	--	54,998	23.0	37,435	31.8
Utah	4,164	27.0	3,918	28.3	3,992	29.1
Vermont	112	10.3	--	--	339	33.4
Virginia	5,646	26.9	5,394	25.9	5,410	26.0
Washington	18,955	46.3	16,314	46.5	19,664	47.8
West Virginia	2,170	24.0	2,448	25.2	2,796	26.6
Wisconsin	9,341	48.8	9,234	49.1	11,194	59.0
Wyoming	258	13.5	245	14.2	266	15.0

¹The United States total includes the Bureau of Indian Education, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. School districts that reported chronically absent students but no enrolled students experiencing homelessness are excluded from this report. Massachusetts and Oregon allow for non-binary gender, resulting in missing chronic absenteeism data.

²Alabama counts only include those students who were experiencing homelessness on the last day of school ; *EDFacts* file specifications require a cumulative count.

³Montana's chronic absenteeism data was impacted by a system error in SY 2018-19.

⁴A change in Nebraska's data collection system may have resulted in lower counts for SY 2018-19.

⁵A change in Nevada's data collection software may have resulted in lower counts for SY 2016-17.

⁶New Hampshire counts only include those students identified by October 1.

— Not available.

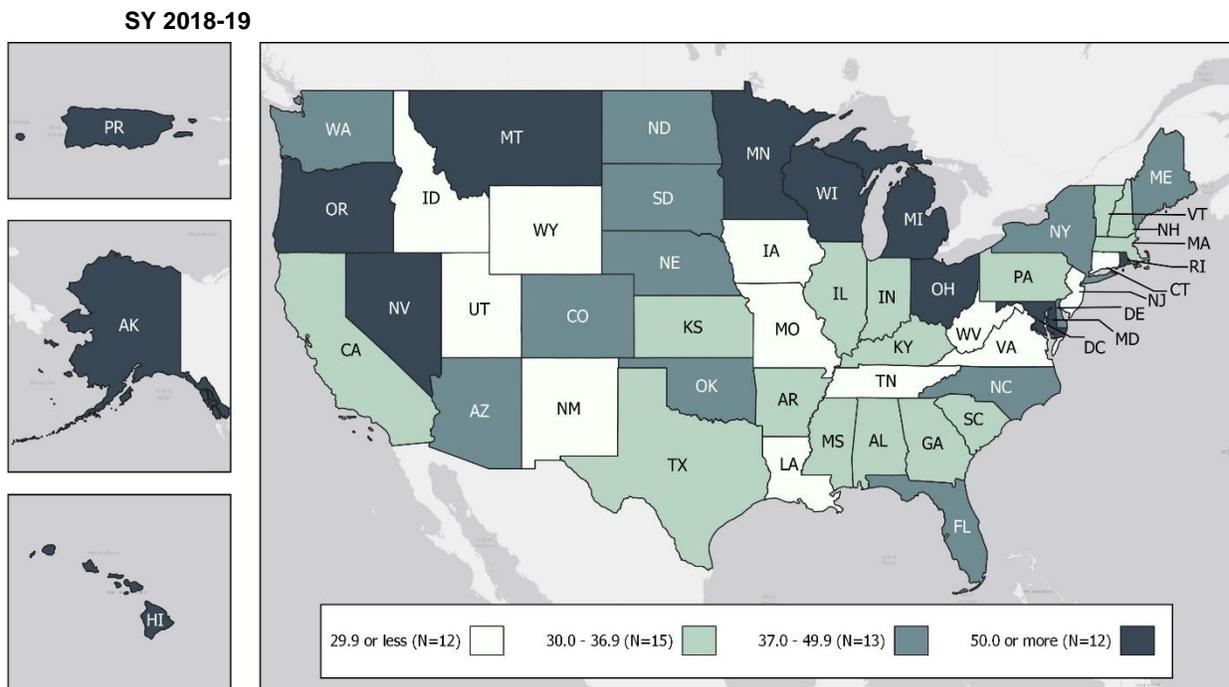
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, *EDFacts* File Specifications 118 and 195, School Years 2016-17 through 2018-19 (Retrieved December 2021).

As a new data collection, certain data quality issues must also be considered when reviewing chronic absenteeism data. During the first year of reporting, 48 of 53 states reported chronic absenteeism data for students experiencing homelessness. In the second year, 51 states reported data. All but one state reported data for SY 2018-19. Two states, Montana and Nebraska, noted concerns about data quality due to new reporting systems or a data systems error. Two other states, Massachusetts and Oregon, noted differences between state policy and the federal absenteeism reporting criteria in that they allow gender categories that do not align with

federal reporting requirements, resulting in the exclusion of some students from chronic absenteeism reports at the federal level.

Large changes in the number of chronically absent students who experienced homelessness from the first to the second year may represent improvements in data quality as states and school districts adjusted to the new reporting requirement.

Figure 1. Percent of students experiencing homelessness who were chronically absent by state:



NOTE: School districts that reported no enrolled students who experienced homelessness are excluded from this report. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, ED Facts File Specifications 118 and 195, School Year 2018-19 (Retrieved November 2021).

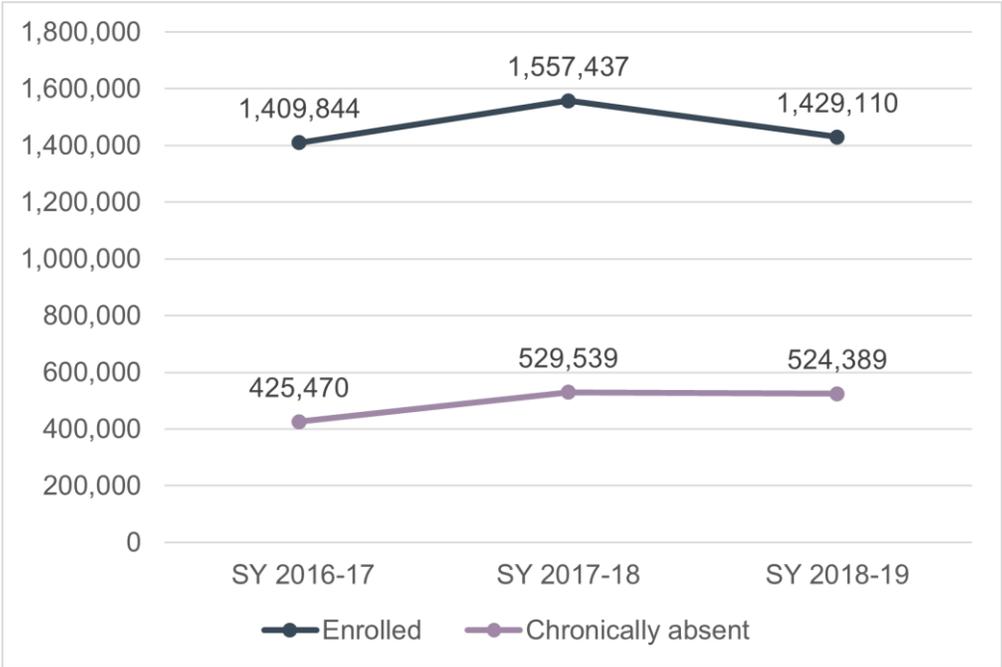
In addition, in comparison to other subgroups of students, the size of the population of students who experience homelessness is less stable. The number of students experiencing homelessness often increases or decreases more than other groups each year due to a variety of economic, social, and environmental factors; other groups of students remain relatively unchanged more often. For example, as a result of Hurricane Harvey in SY 2017-18, the number of students who experienced homelessness in the state of Texas doubled in comparison to the previous year. During SY 2018-19, the number dropped to nearly the same level it had been in SY 2016-17. In contrast, the number of students enrolled in Texas public schools overall remained stable at 5.4 million students in the fall of 2017 and the fall of 2018 (ED, 2021a and 2021b).

The subgroup of students who are both homeless and chronically absent is also less stable than other subgroups of students experiencing homelessness. For example, 9% of students who experienced homelessness have been identified as unaccompanied every year since SY 2015-16. Migratory students have accounted for 1% of students who experienced homelessness since at least SY 2014-15. While English learners steadily increased among

students experiencing homelessness between SYs 2014-15 and 2017-18, the annual increase was by one percentage point or less. Similarly, the number of children with disabilities (as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) who experienced homelessness has increased over time, but the net effect is an increase of two percentage points between SYs 2014-15 and 2018-19 (NCHE, 2019, 2021). In contrast to the other subgroups of students, students who experienced homelessness and were chronically absent increased by four percentage points between SYs 2016-17 and 2017-18 and then again by nearly three percentage points between SYs 2017-18 and 2018-19.

Between SYs 2016-17 and 2017-18, the number of students who experienced homelessness and were chronically absent changed by 25% or more in 10 of the 46 states that reported data in both years. Between SYs 2017-18 and 2018-19, the number of students who experienced homelessness and were chronically absent changed by 25% or more in six of the 51 states that reported data in both years.

Figure 2. Enrollment and chronic absenteeism among students who experienced homelessness: SYs 2016-17 through 2018-19



NOTE: School districts that reported chronically absent students but no enrolled students who experienced homelessness are excluded from this report.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, ED Facts File Specifications 118 and 195, School Years 2016-17 through 2018-19 (Retrieved December 2021).

ED does not collect data on the number of enrolled students who experienced homelessness by gender, but ED does collect data on chronically absent students by gender. This creates challenges in collecting data for students who may not identify with a binary gender definition and likely leads to some students being excluded from the data collection.

For each of the years included in this report, the number of chronically absent students who also experienced homelessness was evenly split between female and male students.

Table 2. Percentage of students who experienced homelessness and were chronically absent by gender, SYs 2016-17 through 2018-19

Gender	Percent of students SY 2016-17 ²	Percent of students SY 2017-18	Percent of students SY 2018-19 ³
Total¹	100.0	100.0	100.0
Female	49.5	49.5	49.3
Male	50.5	50.5	50.7

¹This table includes the Bureau of Indian Education, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Alabama counts only include those students who were homeless on the last day of school. Massachusetts and Oregon allow for non-binary gender, resulting in missing chronic absenteeism data. New Hampshire counts only include those students identified by October 1

²A change in Nevada’s data collection software may have resulted in lower counts for SY 2016-17.

³Montana’s chronic absenteeism data was impacted by a system error in SY 2018-19. A change in Nebraska’s data collection system may have resulted in lower counts for SY 2018-19.

NOTE: Data by gender are not available online except for SY 2017-18 school level data in the 2017 Civil Rights Data Collection.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, *EDFacts* File Specification 195, School Years 2016-17 through 2018-19 (Retrieved December 2021).

While this brief discusses data aggregated to the state level, Appendix A provides further analysis of these data by locale type to see what variation exists between urban, town, suburban, and rural school districts.

Appendix A: Using District and School Data on Chronic Absenteeism for the Students Experiencing Homelessness Subgroup

Since the fall of 2020, ED has publicly released chronic absenteeism data at the school and school district or local educational agency (LEA) levels. The first year of data collection based on ED*Facts* File Specification 195 was SY 2016-17. Data in this file are reported only at the school level. Aggregated and privacy-protected LEA level counts of all students reported as chronically absent and for the subgroups of students experiencing homelessness through SY 2019-20 were made available through ED Data Express⁷ in spring and summer 2021. The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) released SY 2017-18 chronic absenteeism data at the school level⁸⁹ Both data releases apply privacy protections by suppressing or perturbing¹⁰ the data so that the counts reported for school districts and schools do not all exactly match the actual data reported at these levels by state educational agencies (SEAs). These two datasets give the public the capacity to assess the percentage of chronically absent students who are experiencing homelessness by school and school district. At the school district-level, the percentage of students experiencing homelessness who are chronically absent is determined by dividing the count of students experiencing homelessness who are chronically absent by the total count of students experiencing homeless who are enrolled in the school district.¹¹

⁷ To run a report of chronic absenteeism on ED Data Express (<https://eddataexpress.ed.gov/>), select “download”, “file spec” (bottom left) and “195.” Be sure to select the school years to include in the report. The data used in this report were pulled on July 28, 2021.

⁸ Once the zip file of SY 2017-18 data is downloaded from the CRDC website, there are several subfolders to select. When presented the choice, open the folders for data and school level, and then ED*Facts*. In scrolling to the bottom, the chronic absenteeism file is the last file in that folder. The homeless subgroup counts appear in columns H_M and H_F. Other information about the CRDC is available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/data.html>.

⁹ The 2019 CRDC was delayed by one year due to the pandemic and will release SY 2020-21 chronic absenteeism data at the school level instead of SY 2019-20 data. It will continue with SY 2021-22 data the following year and resume every other year reporting afterwards.

¹⁰ Data Perturbation is a disclosure limitation method which involves making small changes to the data to prevent identification of individuals from unique or rare population groups. More information is available at https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/data_deidentification_terms.pdf.

¹¹ ED has made enrollment counts for students experiencing homelessness by school district publicly available since SY 2013-2014 at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/data-files/school-status-data.html>. The privacy protection method for these files is different from the one for chronic absenteeism as school districts with counts of 0-2 are suppressed, as are preschool enrollment counts. The homeless enrollment data used for this analysis were pulled from ED Data Express on August 27, 2021, as all three reporting years could be pulled into one file. Only the values for all students by school district were used. School districts whose data were suppressed were excluded.

Both chronic absenteeism and student homelessness vary significantly by state, school district, and school, making an analysis of these variations over time and location valuable. This appendix presents another analysis of these data is by locale type to see the variation among urban, town, suburban and rural school districts as designated by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES).¹² NCES published a spotlight on *Homeless Children and Youth in Public Schools* in the *2017 Condition of Education* that also analyzed homeless enrollment data by school district locale type.¹³

Students Experiencing Homelessness and Chronic Absenteeism: A Three-Year Longitudinal Analysis by Locale Type¹⁴

Analysis of the first three years of chronic absenteeism data shows that a significant percentage of students experiencing homelessness were chronically absent in all three years, regardless of locale type. While 2 to 3% of all students in public schools experienced homelessness during the reporting years covered in this analysis, the percentage of all chronically absent students who experienced homelessness by locale type ranged from 5 to 9%. The percentage of students experiencing homelessness who are chronically absent is much higher, ranging from 30 to 40% by locale type. Due to hurricanes, floods, and wildfires early in SY 2017-18, which led to an increase in students experiencing homelessness, one should interpret the three-year trend data with caution. As the count of students experiencing homelessness decreased for SY 2018-19, the rate of chronic absenteeism among them increased. As noted above, some of the change may be due to improvements in data collection by the third year of chronic absenteeism by schools, school districts, and states.

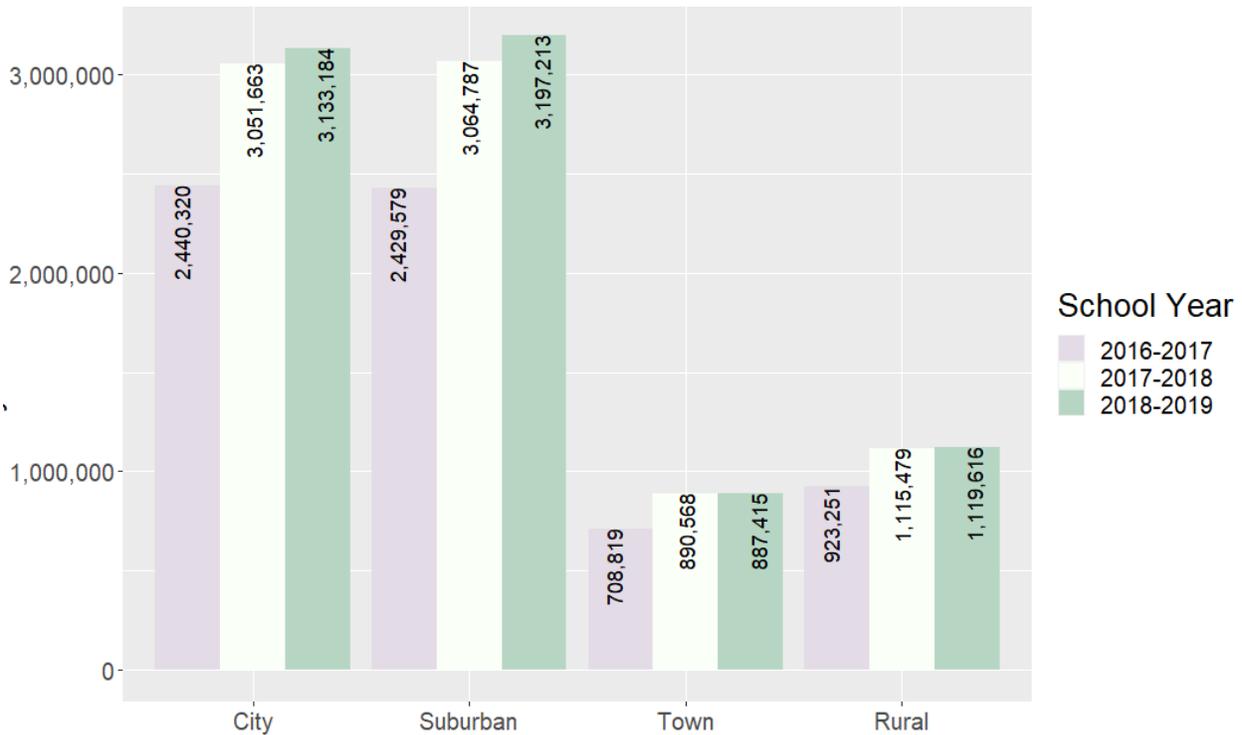
¹² This analysis was prepared by Jack Olcott, Sanskar Bista, and Brooke Van Horne, interns of the Office of Chief Data Officer, in summer and fall 2021.

¹³ https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_tgh.pdf

Data Visualizations

Figures 1, 2, and 4, present counts of all chronically absent students, students experiencing homelessness who are chronically absent, and total enrollment of students experiencing homelessness by locale type from SYs 2016-17 to 2018-19. Figures 3 and 5, present calculations of the percentage of all chronically absent students who experienced homelessness and students who experienced homelessness and were chronically absent by local type.

Figure 1: Chronically absent total student counts by locale, School Years 2016-17 through 2018-19¹⁵



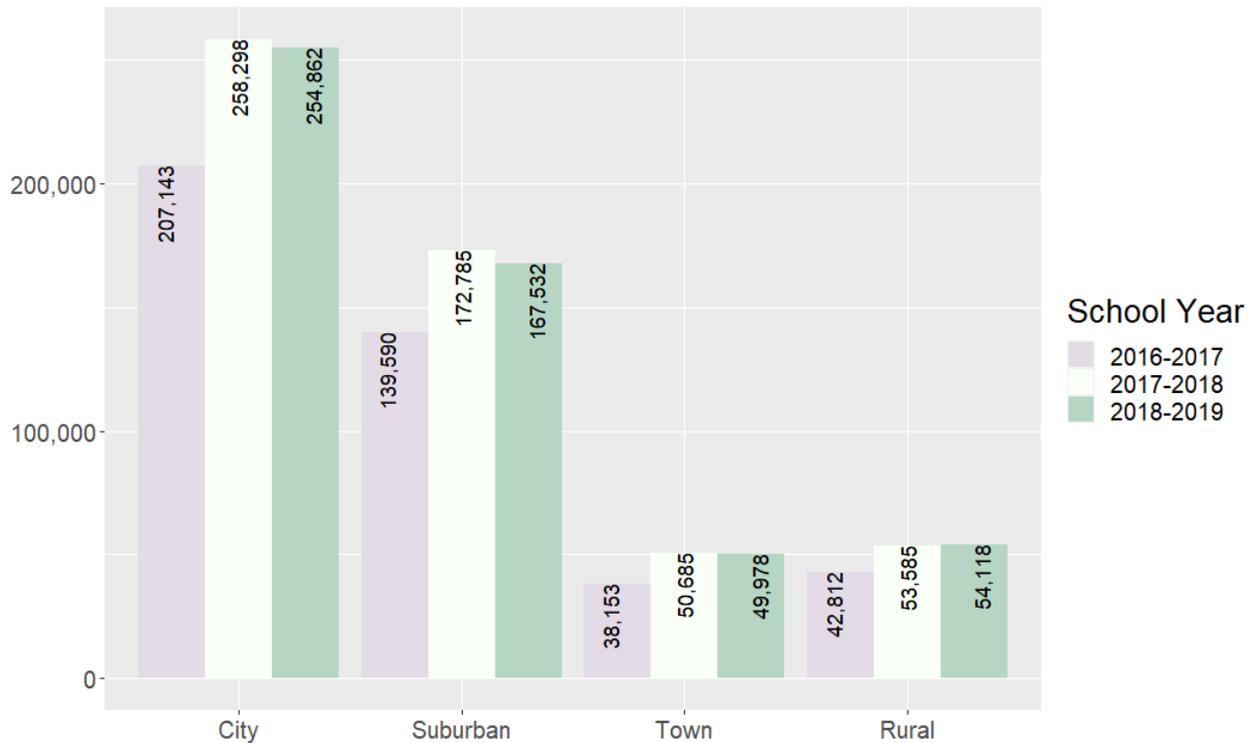
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, *EDFacts* File Specification 195, School Years 2016-17 through 2018-19 (Retrieved November 2021).

Figure 1 shows that the number of chronically absent students has generally increased or stayed level over the three reporting years for the four locale types. There are similar numbers and increases for city and suburban school districts and their numbers are much greater than those of rural and town school districts.

¹⁵ Locale Type is a variable that classifies and describes the type of area in which a school district is located: *City* is a territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city; *Rural* is a Census-defined rural territory that is a certain distance away from an urbanized area and an urban cluster; *Suburban* is a territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area; *Town* is a territory inside an urban cluster that is a certain distance away from an urbanized area.

While both city and suburban school districts had similar counts of chronically absent students overall, city school districts far surpassed every other locale type in the counts of chronically absent students who experienced homelessness during all the available years. The counts of chronically absent students experiencing homelessness in suburban school districts were notably smaller.

Figure 2: Counts of chronically absent students experiencing homelessness by locale, SYs 2016-17 through 2018-19¹⁶

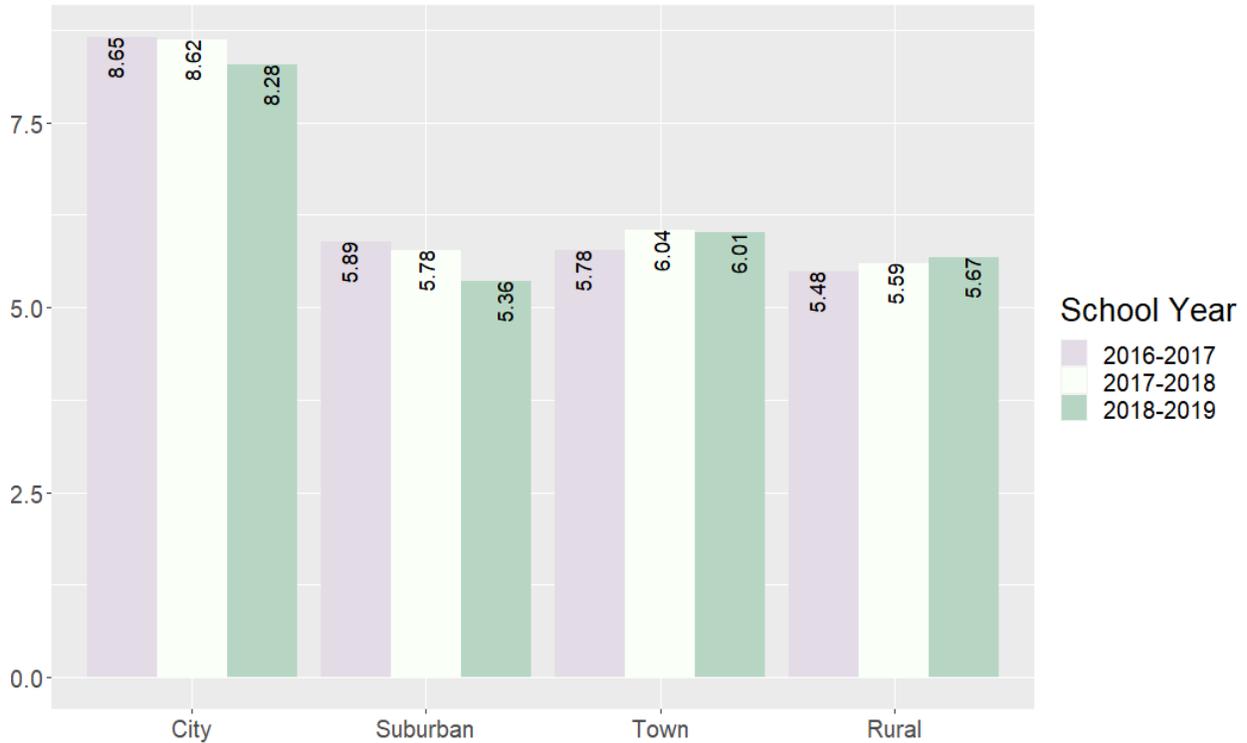


SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, ED*Facts* File Specification195, School Years 2016-17 through 2018-19 (Retrieved November 2021).

Percentages of students who experienced homelessness and were chronically absent were highest in cities, compared to the other locale types. Overall, the rates also decreased over three years in city and suburban school districts, due to of the number of chronically absent students increasing faster than the number of chronically absent students experiencing homelessness. In 2018-2019, rural and town school districts had a higher percentage of chronically absent students who experienced homelessness than suburban school districts; these two locales also showed a slight increase in rate over the three years.

¹⁶ The number of school districts reporting chronically absent students experiencing homelessness over the three reporting years is 15,070 fewer than the school districts reporting any chronically absent students over the three reporting years (on average, 5,000 fewer school districts per reporting year). Of the 78,243 school districts in the ED Data Express report, 46,665 reported any chronically absent students and 31,578 reported chronically absent students experiencing homelessness.

Figure 3: Percentage of chronically absent students who experienced homelessness by locale, SYs 2016-17 through 2018-19¹⁷



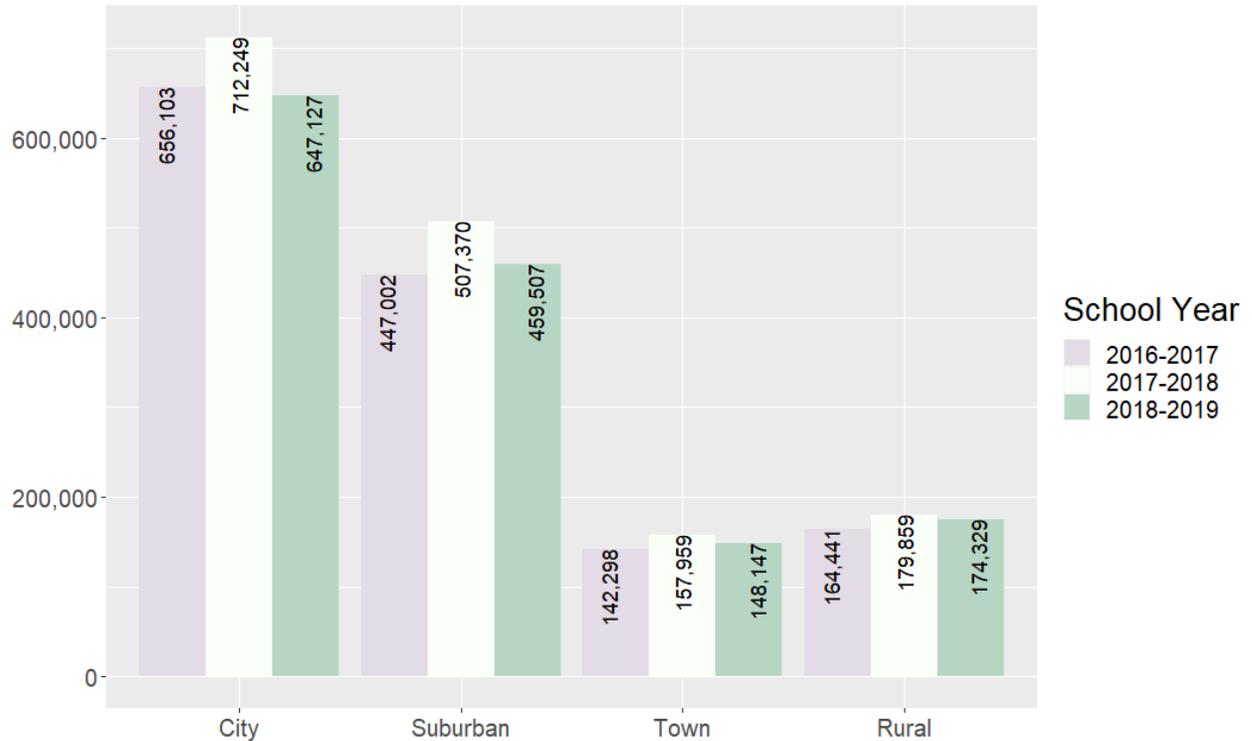
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, ED*Facts* File Specification 195, School Years 2016-17 through 2018-19 (Retrieved November 2021).

To calculate the percentage of students experiencing homelessness who are chronically absent by locale type, enrollment counts of students experiencing homelessness by locale type is included.¹⁸ City school districts exceed all other locale types for count of enrolled students experiencing homelessness. Both city and suburban school districts had increases in homelessness during SY 2017-18 and then decreases in SY 2018-19, so the annual changes are greater. This figure shows a distribution pattern similar to Figure 17 in the *2017 Condition of Education* (McFarland et. al., 2017) that showed homelessness by locale type using SY 2014-15 data.

¹⁷ When merging the chronic absenteeism “All Students” count with the chronic absenteeism “Homeless” count by school district to calculate the percentages of chronically absent students who experienced homelessness over the three years, the 15,070 school districts reporting any chronically absent students, but no homeless students experiencing homelessness were deleted. On average, over the first 3 reporting years, 15,555 school districts reported any chronically absent students, and 10,532 school districts reported any chronically absent students experiencing homelessness.

¹⁸ Note that if you sum across locale types for reporting years, the total is greater than the unduplicated state-level counts used in NCHE’s Federal Data Summary, roughly by about 50,000 students every year. That is because students experiencing homelessness may enroll in more than one district in a state during a school year and would be counted in the LEA-level data of each district.

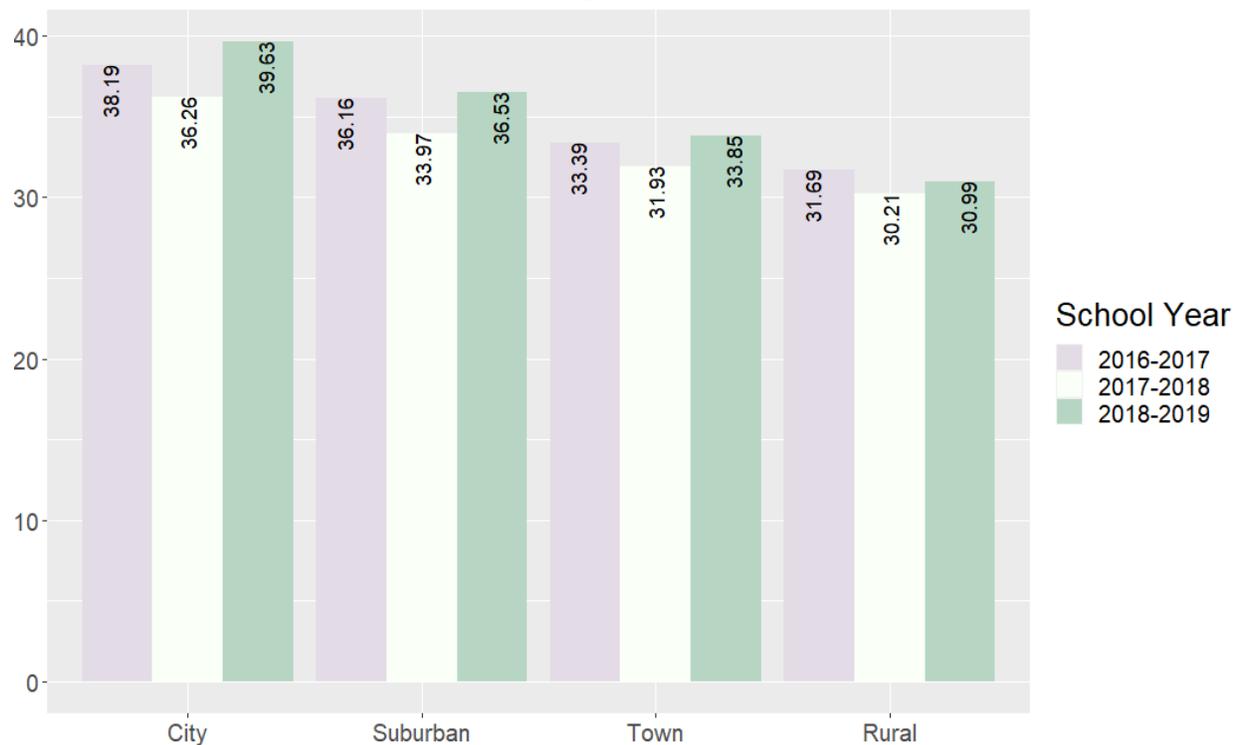
Figure 4: Counts of students identified by LEAs as experiencing homelessness by locale, SYs 2016-2017 through 2018-19



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, ED*Facts* File Specification 118, School Years 2016-17 through 2018-19 (Retrieved November 2021).

This final figure shows the percentage of students experiencing homelessness who are chronically absent by locale type in SYs 2016-17 to 2018-19. While the percentages of students experiencing homelessness who are chronically absent are slightly higher in city school districts than the other three locale types, the percentages across locale types show less deviation than the counts and percentages in the preceding figures. Chronic absenteeism among students experiencing homelessness is a cross-cutting phenomenon impacting school districts, regardless of locale.

Figure 5: Percent of students experiencing homelessness identified by LEAs who are chronically absent by locale, SYs 2016-17 through 2018-19¹⁹



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, ED Facts File Specifications 118 and 195, School Years 2016-17 through 2018-19 (Retrieved November 2021).

Summary

By analyzing school district level data by locale type, this analysis aims to present a different perspective on the phenomenon of chronic absenteeism among students experiencing homelessness than the state-level data and trends presented in the main report. Since chronic absenteeism data are only reported at the school level and duplication isn't accounted for at the school district or state level, some students experiencing homelessness are double counted as they were enrolled in more than one school in a school district or multiple school districts in a state during a particular school year. Therefore, there are always data quality challenges when analyzing chronic absenteeism based on students experiencing homelessness on state- or school district-level data. Future analyses may examine the correlation of chronic absenteeism and other outcome measures at the school level,

¹⁹ In merging data from the chronically absent homeless file with the homeless enrollment file, some school districts were omitted from one file or the other because they reported a count for chronically absent students experiencing homelessness but not enrolled students experiencing homelessness or vice versa. In fact, many states report chronically absent students experiencing homelessness in schools in districts for which no enrolled students experiencing homelessness are reported. These are noted in the documentation with the school district homeless enrollment file releases at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/data-files/school-status-data.html>. We are curious if this is a data quality issue or indication of underreporting of enrolled students experiencing homelessness.

such as on-time graduation rates and grade-level proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science, to understand the impact of chronic absenteeism on student outcomes.

Table 1. Summary of counts and percentages of all chronically absent, homeless enrolled and chronically absent students experiencing homelessness by locale, SYs 2016-17 through 2018-19

School year	Locale	All chronically absent students ²⁰	Students who experienced homelessness and chronic absenteeism ²¹	Percent of chronically absent students who experienced homelessness ²²	Enrolled students who experienced homelessness ²³	Percent of students who experienced homelessness and were chronically absent ²⁴
2016-2017	City	2,440,320	207,143	8.6	656,103	38.2
2016-2017	Rural	923,251	42,812	5.5	164,441	31.7
2016-2017	Suburban	2,429,579	139,590	5.9	447,002	36.2
2016-2017	Town	708,819	38,153	5.8	142,298	33.4
2017-2018	City	3,051,663	258,298	8.6	712,249	36.3
2017-2018	Rural	1,115,479	53,585	5.6	179,859	30.2
2017-2018	Suburban	3,064,787	172,785	5.8	507,370	34.0
2017-2018	Town	890,568	50,685	6.0	157,959	31.9
2018-2019	City	3,133,184	254,862	8.3	647,127	39.6
2018-2019	Rural	1,119,616	54,118	5.7	174,329	31.0
2018-2019	Suburban	3,197,213	167,532	5.4	459,507	36.5
2018-2019	Town	887,415	49,978	6.0	148,147	33.9

²⁰Reported in Figure 1.

²¹Reported in Figure 2.

²²Percentage of Chronically Absent Students Experiencing Homelessness: The variable describing the percentage of chronically absent students who are reported as homeless. These percentages are reported in Figure 3.

$$= \frac{(TotalCountofChronicallyAbsentHomelessPopulation)}{(TotalCountofChronicallyAbsentPopulation)} * 100$$

²³Homeless Enrolled is the total count of all students that were reported as homeless and enrolled in an school district minus any district whose data were suppressed because the state reported 0-2 students experiencing homelessness enrolled in them. These numbers are reported in Figure 4.

²⁴Percentage of Students Experiencing Homelessness and Chronically Absent is the percentage of enrolled students experiencing homelessness from FS 118 that are chronically absent based on counts from FS 195. Each file used a different privacy protection method so that when an school district's homeless enrollment count is suppressed, the chronic absenteeism count is also excluded from this analysis. This removed 4,993 school districts from the calculation but presumably a small percentage of the total chronically absent students experiencing homelessness.

$$= \frac{(TotalCountofChronicallyAbsentHomelessPopulation)}{(TotalCountofHomelessEnrolledStudents)} * 100$$

Additionally, in merging data from the chronically absent homeless file with the homeless enrollment file, some school districts were omitted from one file or the other because they reported a count for chronically absent students experiencing homelessness but not enrolled students experiencing homelessness or vice versa. In fact, many states report chronically absent students experiencing homelessness in schools in school districts for which no enrolled students experiencing homelessness are reported. These are noted in the documentation with the school district homeless enrollment file releases at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/data-files/school-status-data.html>.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, ED Facts File Specifications 118 and 195 (2020).

Appendix B. Chronic Absenteeism Among Students Experiencing Homelessness, School Years 2019-20 and 2020-21

Table 1. Number and percentage of students who experienced homelessness and chronic absenteeism by state, SYs 2019-20 and 2020-21

State	SY 2019-20			SY 2020-21		
	Number of students who were homeless	Number of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Percent of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Number of students who were homeless	Number of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Percent of students who were homeless and chronically absent
United States¹	1,280,886	349,254	27.3	1,099,221	460,088	41.9
Alabama ²	11,578	2,624	22.7	9,365	2,542	27.1
Alaska	3,126	1,278	40.9	2,578	1,418	55.0
Arizona	17,386	6,757	38.9	13,920	8,145	58.5
Arkansas	13,339	4,885	36.6	11,871	3,304	27.8
Bureau of Indian Education	2,373	674	28.4	2,202	--	--
California	246,350	--	--	227,612	64,922	28.5
Colorado	20,821	10,126	48.6	15,176	8,787	57.9
Connecticut	4,183	1,423	34.0	3,310	1,716	51.8
Delaware	2,709	1,263	46.6	2,576	1,711	66.4
District of Columbia ³	6,332	2,460	38.9	5,026	2,330	46.4
Florida	79,357	35,640	44.9	62,971	38,689	61.4
Georgia	35,538	9,167	25.8	31,161	14,079	45.2
Hawaii	3,586	1,677	46.8	3,089	1,759	56.9
Idaho	7,835	1,578	20.1	7,358	1,984	27.0
Illinois	47,445	12,700	26.8	36,898	11,257	30.5
Indiana	17,324	5,184	29.9	15,376	8,073	52.5
Iowa	6,042	1,950	32.3	6,057	3,383	55.9
Kansas	7,650	2,686	35.1	5,632	2,339	41.5
Kentucky	21,620	5,343	24.7	18,697	9,682	51.8
Louisiana	15,533	3,483	22.4	11,768	5,050	42.9
Maine	2,302	952	41.4	2,142	1,149	53.6
Maryland	15,548	7,775	50.0	11,760	6,866	58.4
Massachusetts ³	22,648	7,344	32.4	19,954	9,025	45.2
Michigan	32,935	17,622	53.5	26,867	13,252	49.3
Minnesota	13,295	9,016	67.8	10,588	8,644	81.6

Table 1. Number and percentage of students who experienced homelessness and chronic absenteeism by state, SYs 2019-20 and 2020-21, cont'd.

State	SY 2019-20			SY 2020-21		
	Number of students who were homeless	Number of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Percent of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Number of students who were homeless	Number of students who were homeless and chronically absent	Percent of students who were homeless and chronically absent
New Mexico	9,033	2,918	32.3	8,135	3,782	46.5
Mississippi	7,973	1,729	21.7	7,754	3,500	45.1
Missouri	34,942	7,681	22.0	32,674	6,561	20.1
Montana	4,265	1,553	36.4	4,670	2,514	53.8
Nebraska	4,084	1,729	42.3	2,549	1,332	52.3
Nevada	18,264	8,448	46.3	15,093	8,635	57.2
New Hampshire	3,518	1,516	43.1	3,109	1,918	61.7
New Jersey	12,741	2,734	21.5	10,539	3,660	34.7
New York	143,329	53,338	37.2	126,343	57,600	45.6
North Carolina	27,044	8,065	29.8	22,660	13,987	51.7
North Dakota	2,675	1,005	37.6	1,775	865	48.7
Ohio	30,060	11,378	37.9	24,699	14,124	57.2
Oklahoma	25,010	6,185	24.7	22,438	7,975	35.5
Oregon ³	22,336	9,201	41.2	18,485	11,000	59.5
Pennsylvania	31,876	9,391	29.5	27,235	9,927	36.4
Puerto Rico	4,058	2,048	50.5	2,424	905	37.3
Rhode Island	1,531	844	55.1	1,109	728	65.6
South Carolina	11,736	3,005	25.6	11,986	5,109	42.6
South Dakota	2,015	798	39.6	1,561	1,034	66.2
Tennessee	18,482	4,104	22.2	14,386	5,091	35.4
Texas	111,411	23,779	21.3	93,096	32,783	35.2
Utah	13,223	3,055	23.1	10,295	4,084	39.7
Vermont	883	401	45.4	1,006	566	56.3
Virginia	17,496	4,915	28.1	13,752	4,627	33.6
Washington	36,685	12,373	33.7	32,931	16,583	50.4
West Virginia	10,394	3,596	34.6	9,452	2,432	25.7
Wisconsin	17,220	9,614	55.8	13,450	8,388	62.4
Wyoming	1,747	244	14.0	1,661	272	16.4

¹The United States total includes the Bureau of Indian Education, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

²Alabama counts only include those students who were experiencing homelessness on the last day of school.

³Massachusetts and Oregon allow for non-binary gender, resulting in missing chronic absenteeism data.

— Not available.

NOTE: Due to altered school operations as a result of COVID-19, absenteeism data may be impacted by variability in school district capacity to track attendance accurately. This data may not accurately represent the actual chronic absenteeism numbers in SY 2019-20 and SY2020-21.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, *EDFacts* File Specifications 118 and 195 (2021).

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