

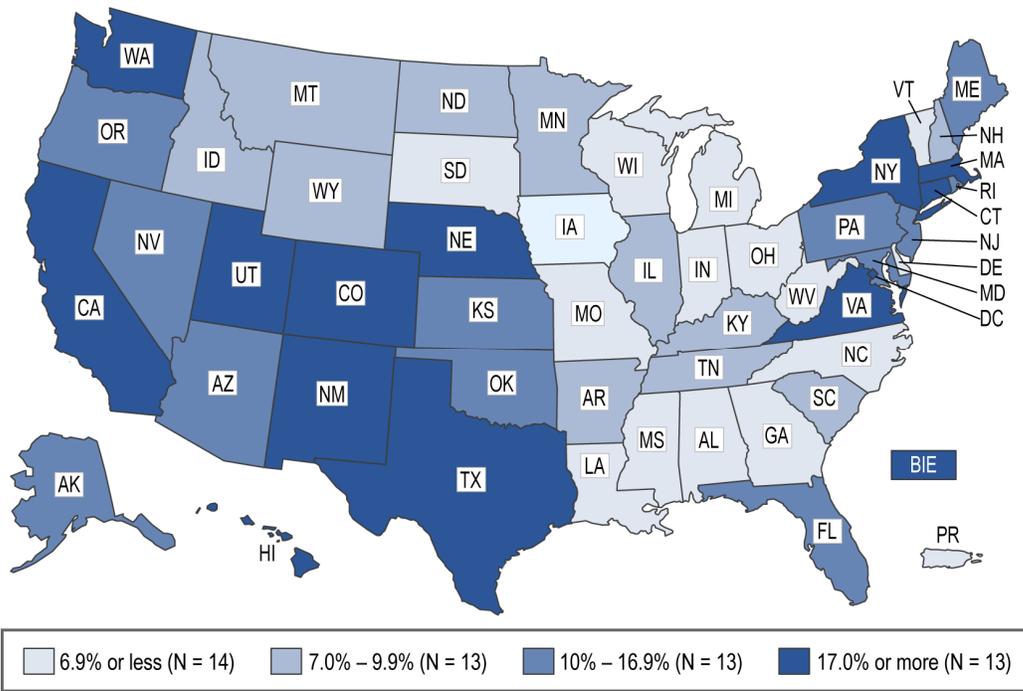


Office of English Language Acquisition English Learners and Homelessness

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, students who experience homelessness have the right to remain in their school of origin or to immediate enrollment in a new school.¹ Eligible English learners (ELs) who are homeless have the right to access language assistance services. States must ensure that homeless children and youths have equal access to free, appropriate public education. “Homeless children and youths” are defined as those without a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence,” including those living in shelters, doubled-up housing, camping, motels, and cars.² Every public school district must assign a local homeless education liaison, also called a McKinney-Vento liaison, to ensure that homeless children and youths are identified and that they are informed of and have access to all services to which they are entitled.

Homeless Education Helpline³
800-308-2145
homeless@serve.org

Percentage of Enrolled Homeless Students Who Were English Learners: School Year 2018–19



ELs (also referred to as multilingual learners) made up the second largest group of students within the homeless population enrolled in school. There were 226,724 ELs who experienced homelessness during the 2018–19 school year (SY) in U.S. public schools, including ELs enrolled in Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools. While ELs made up 16% of the homeless student population, they made up only 10% of the total student population, making them overrepresented among students experiencing homelessness.

¹ The school stability provisions in the McKinney-Vento Act, as explained in guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education: “Strongly emphasizes the importance of school stability for homeless children and youths. Changing schools multiple times significantly impedes a student’s academic and social growth. The research on highly mobile students, including homeless students, indicates that a student can lose academic progress with each school change. Highly mobile students have also been found to have lower test scores and worse overall academic performance than peers who do not change schools frequently. Therefore, the McKinney-Vento Act calls for [local education agencies] to maintain students in their school of origin to promote school stability and greater educational outcomes overall, unless it is not in the student’s best interest.”

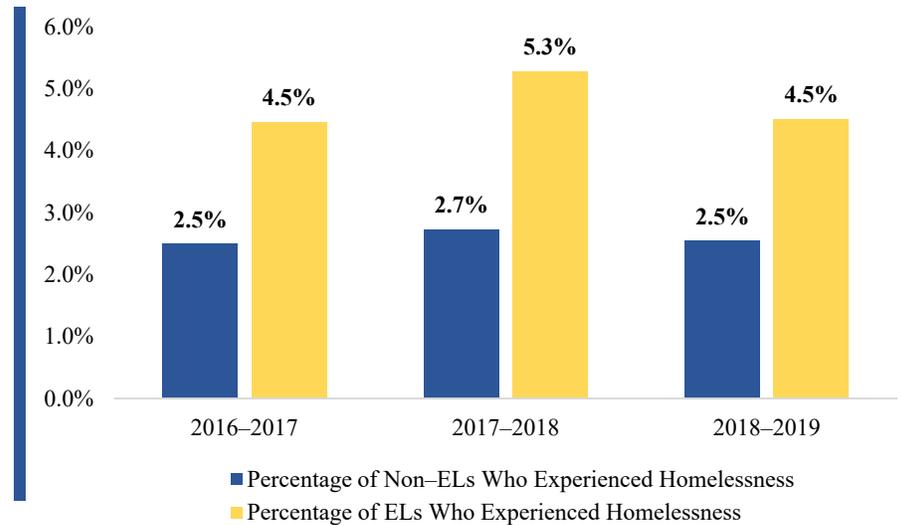
Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance, p. 2 (footnotes omitted). Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160240ehcyguidance072716.pdf>

² The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. <https://nche.ed.gov/mckinney-vento>.

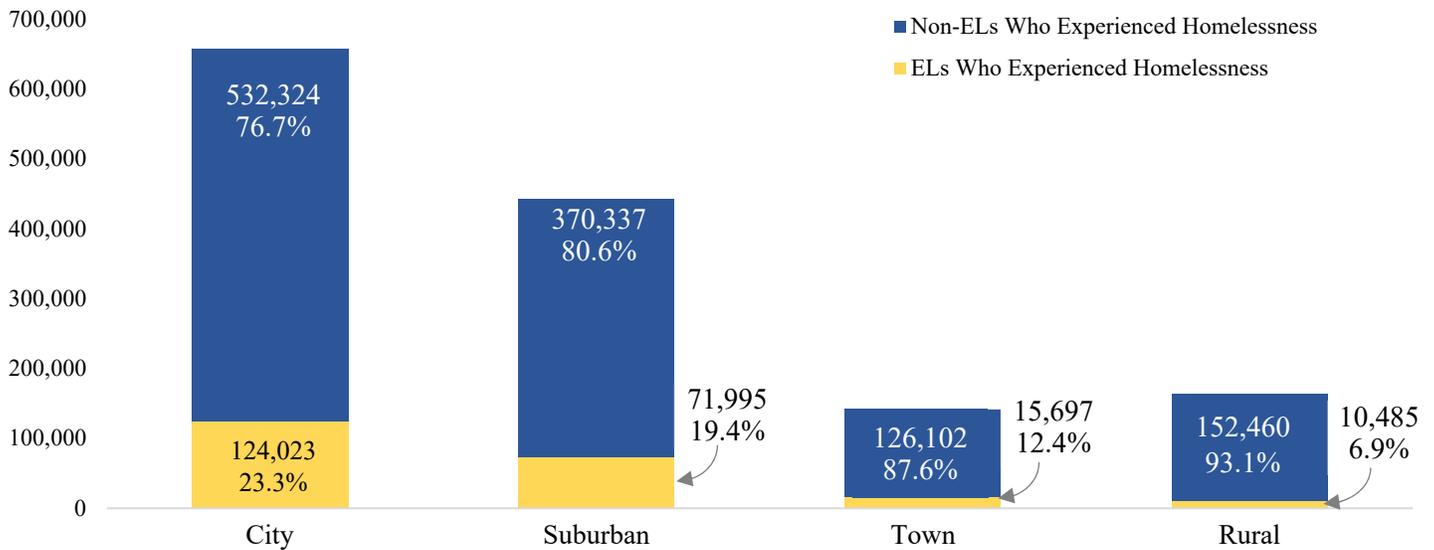
³ The National Center for Homeless Education offers assistance with issues related to the education of a child experiencing homelessness. See <http://nche.ed.gov>.

Percentage of Students Who Experienced Homelessness by English Learner Status: 2016 to 2019

From 2016 to 2019, a greater proportion of K–12 ELs experienced homelessness when compared to non-ELs.⁴ From SY 2016–17 to SY 2017–18, the incidences of homelessness among EL students and non-EL students reflected a slight increase of 0.8 and 0.2 percentage points respectively. However, in SY 2018–19 incidences of homelessness in both student groups returned to SY 2016–17 levels.



Number and Percentage of Homeless Students Among K–12 Students by Public School District Geographic Locale: School Year 2016–17



In SY 2016–17, ELs were more likely to experience homelessness in urban settings. ELs accounted for 23.3% of homeless students in cities and 19.4% in suburbs. In towns and rural districts, ELs accounted for 12.4% and 6.9% of all students who experienced homelessness, respectively.

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). Digest of Education Statistics 2018, 2019, 2020 tables 203.10, 204.20 and 204.27b. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/>. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Homeless Education. (April 2021). Federal data summary: School years 2016–17 to 2018–19. <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Federal-Data-Summary-SY-16.17-to-18.19-Final.pdf>. National Center for Homeless Education. (n.d.). The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. <https://nche.ed.gov/mckinney-vento>.

⁴ Author calculations: The percentage of ELs who experienced homelessness is based on the number of enrolled EL homeless students divided by the total EL student enrollment times 100. The percentage of non-ELs who experienced homelessness is based on the total number of enrolled non-EL homeless students (total number of homeless students minus homeless EL students) divided by the total non-EL student enrollment (total student enrollment minus total EL student enrollment) times 100.