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Rising Numbers, Fading Resources: Students Experiencing Homelessness in Los Angeles County

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Students Experiencing Homelessness
in Los Angeles County



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UCLA

**Center for the Transformation
of Schools**

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted the education of students experiencing homelessness by limiting school engagement, exacerbating chronic absenteeism, and impeding accurate identification due to remote learning conditions (Bishop, Camargo Gonzalez & Rivera, 2020; SchoolHouse Connection, 2023; KALW, 2025).

Recent national data highlights that significant numbers and proportions of students experiencing homelessness also have a disability, are a migrant student, or are english learners (Cazares-Minero et al., 2025a, 2025b). In response to these compounded needs, an influx of one-time federal funds in 2021 led to unprecedented resources directed toward pandemic recovery efforts in education, including \$98.7 million in one-time federal funds for supporting students experiencing homelessness in California under the American Rescue Plan – Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) program that had to be spent by September 2024. These funds were used to better identify students experiencing homelessness (e.g., hiring additional homeless liaisons), to support an array of wrap-around services (e.g., emergency motel stays, transportation, and school supplies), and to double down on post-COVID-19 learning gaps by providing students tutoring services (according to Jennifer Kottke, Project Director II of Homeless Education at the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE)). Despite the substantial funding provided under the ARP, many LAC school districts and charter schools reported challenges in spending the funds, citing policy constraints and auditing requirements as major barriers.

Homeless liaisons in multiple California counties stated that ARP-HCY was the first meaningful funding source, enabling them to proactively identify and

support families (Stocktonia, 2024). Unfortunately, this funding reached a fiscal cliff in January 2025, ending services for students that liaisons began offering during the pandemic, leading to layoffs of staff and strategies that supported braiding funding. For many LAC school districts and charter schools, this fiscal cliff occurred even earlier—by the end of the 2023–24 school year. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act’s Education for Homeless Children and Youth grant is another source of funding, but at \$129 million nationwide, it represents a fraction of what the ARP-HCY provided. In earlier analysis, researchers noted that 2 out of 3 students experiencing homelessness in California attended schools with no dedicated McKinney-Vento funds (Bishop et al., 2023). It’s unclear how California—or the nation as a whole—will continue to support students experiencing homelessness, especially as numbers continue to rise both statewide and across the country. For example, a 25% surge in student homelessness between SYs 2020-21 and 2022-23 reflected some of the highest numbers of students experiencing homelessness in the U.S. in the last decade (Cazares-Minero et al., 2025b). The U.S. recorded its highest number of students experiencing homelessness in SY 2017–18, with more than 1.5 million students identified.



The national trend of record-high counts for students experiencing homelessness is also true in California. Recent data from the California Department of Education (CDE, 2024b) revealed a 16% rise in student homelessness between SYs 2022–23 and 2023–24. This pattern is even more pronounced in Los Angeles County (LAC), which saw a nearly 30% increase over the same period—double the state rate and the highest total reported in the county in the last five years (CDE, 2024b). Nearly one in four students experiencing homelessness in California—about 21%—were located in Los Angeles County. Given this concentration, deeper county- and district-level analyses are essential to fully understand the scope of the crisis and to design targeted, effective responses. Los Angeles County’s vast education system, comprising 80 school districts and 371 charter schools, underscores the complexity of this challenge. Strengthening local data capacity and resource allocation at the district level is critical to sustaining and improving supports for the students and families most affected.

Purpose of Study

This comprehensive investigation compares students experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County with unhoused youth in California and across the country over 5 years. The analysis also explores educational patterns for students experiencing homelessness across districts in the county most impacted, followed by recommendations for targeted interventions and driving evidence-based reform for the state’s most vulnerable students. This analysis includes charter schools, acknowledging their substantial enrollment across Los Angeles County and ensuring a more comprehensive examination of educational patterns among students experiencing homelessness.



METHODS

Using 2023–24 school year data from the California Department of Education (CDE), this analysis describes the characteristics of students experiencing homelessness and highlights statewide trends as well as patterns in the 10 Los Angeles County school districts with the highest proportions of student homelessness.

Examining proportions instead of overall counts allows for a more equitable comparison across districts of varying sizes and highlights where homelessness affects the largest share of the student population. This approach better identifies districts where housing instability may have the greatest systemic and educational impact on local schools and communities. This data provides a total count of all students who were cumulatively enrolled during the academic year (July 1 to June 30) and, of those students, the number who were reported as being homeless at some point during that time by the most recently reported

dwelling type (i.e., dwelling, structure, or location) (CDE, 2025). For example, if a student is enrolled in multiple schools within a district during the academic year, they are counted once at each school, but only once in the corresponding district's cumulative enrollment. The homeless student data displayed in this report are collected under the authority of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act) (42 United States Code § 11431-11435), as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015). It's important to note that McKinney-Vento student identification is primarily based on self-reporting through housing questionnaires administered during school enrollment and throughout the academic year.

SY 2022–23 data from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to describe trends in student homelessness across the nation was also utilized. ED measures student homelessness through data collected annually under the federal McKinney-Vento Act, which requires every state to report the number and characteristics of K-12 students experiencing homelessness.



FINDINGS: NATIONAL, STATE, AND COUNTY ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

1. Between school years 2022–23 and 2023–24, student homelessness rose 30 percent in L.A. County, surpassing California and national numbers.

In the school year (SY) 2023–24, there were 61,249 students experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County, marking a nearly 30% increase from the previous school year and the highest total in the last five years (CDE, 2024b; see Figures 1 & 2). The number of students experiencing homelessness in LAC represents approximately 4.5% of the overall student population in LAC, based on county enrollment figures.

This spike in student homelessness in LAC outpaced both the state's 16% rise recorded between SYs 2022–23 and 2023–24 (CDE, 2024b; see Figure 2) and the national 25% increase recorded between SYs 2020–21 and 2022–23 (Cazares-Minero, et al., 2025b; U.S. Department of Education, 2023). There are various possible explanations for the increase in student homelessness in broader California and in LAC. One major driver is increased housing market pressures: According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, when median rents increase by \$100, homelessness rates increase by nine percent (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2024). The fundamental link between the broader housing affordability crisis in LAC and homelessness directly impacts families with school-age children, creating instability for families and forcing them into temporary or inadequate living situations. Additionally, according to the Neighborhood Data for Social Change (NDSC, 2025), housing production in Los Angeles County has slowed dramatically over the decades, leaving the region with an older, more strained housing stock and a deep shortfall in affordable options.

The increase in student homelessness in California and nationwide can also be partially attributed to identification efforts by homeless liaisons who are hired with the American Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) funds (Cazares-Minero et al., 2025b). Despite improved identification of students experiencing homelessness, liaisons have cited a critical issue: there is no dedicated, ongoing funding for their work, which they say impedes their ability to implement long-term programming, hire staff, and build out preventive measures to help families avoid homelessness (EdSource, 2024). Without sustained investment, the progress made through ARP-HCY risks being short-lived, leaving districts unable to maintain the infrastructure needed to support and stabilize highly mobile students.



Figure 1. Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness in California and in Los Angeles County, from SY 2019–20 to 2023–24

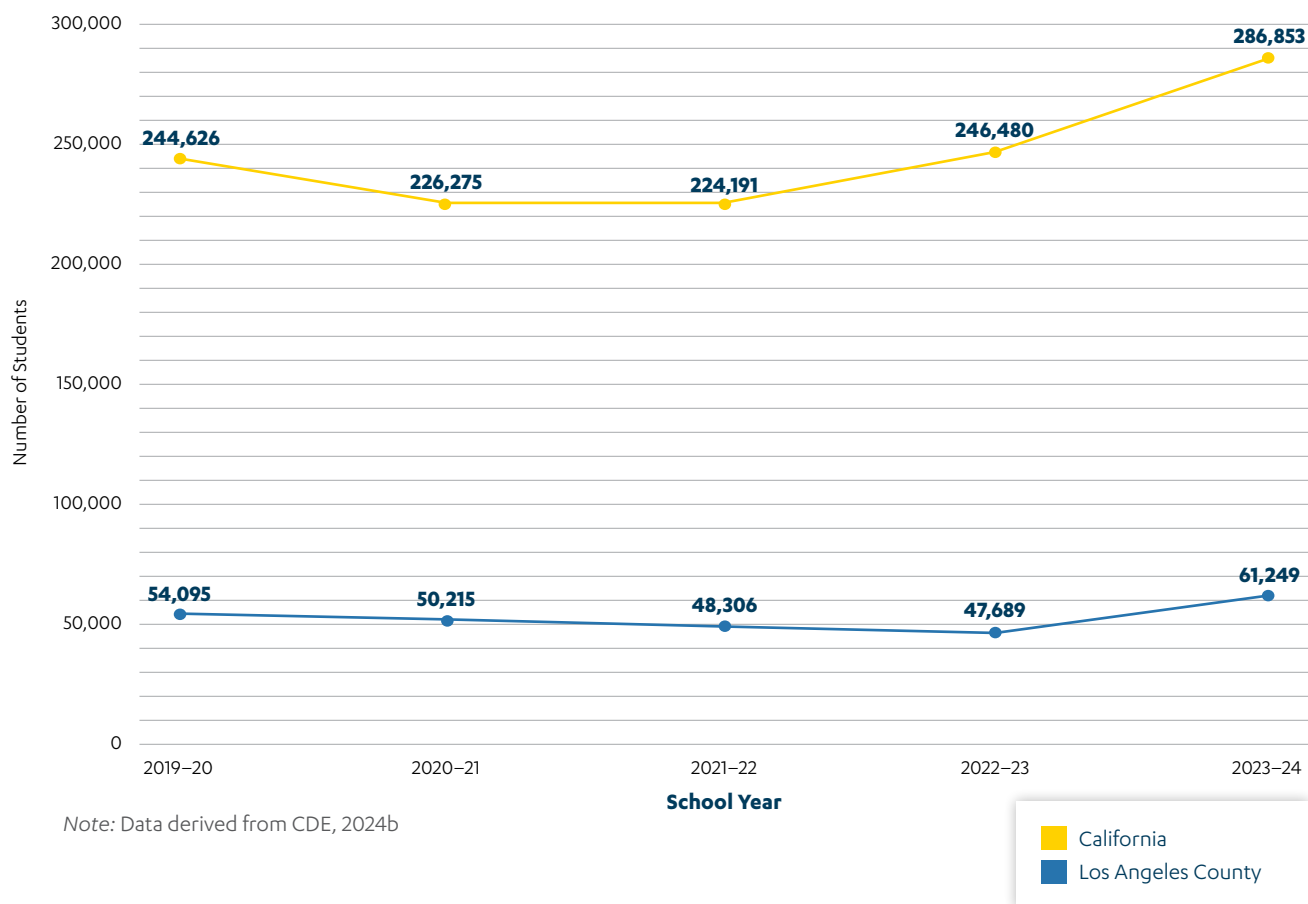
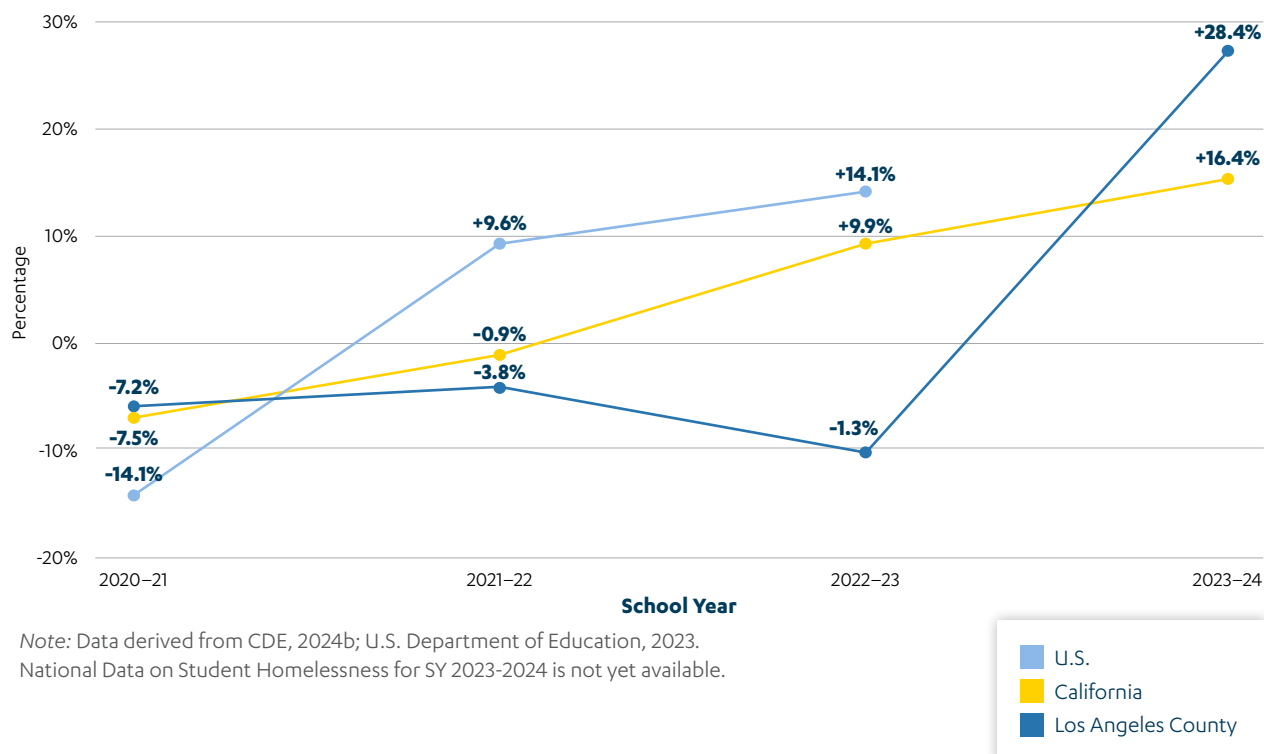


Figure 2. Year-to-Year Percentage Change of Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness in the U.S., California, and in Los Angeles County, from SY 2020–21 to SY 2023–24



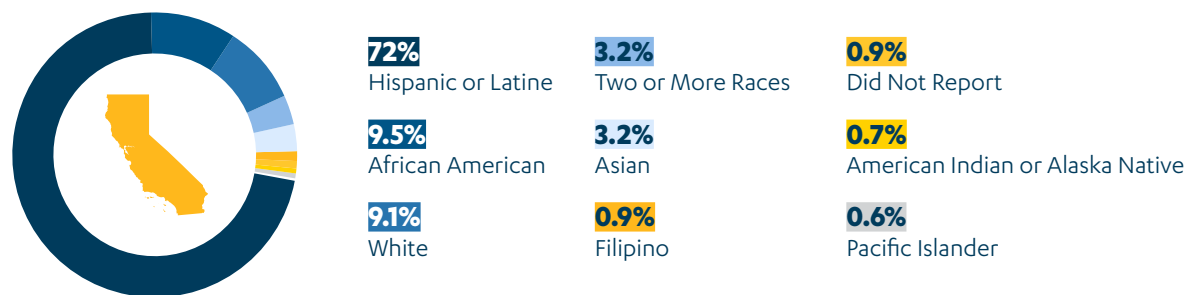
2. **Latine students** are disproportionately likely to experience homelessness.

In SY 2023–24, 3 in 4 students experiencing homelessness in LAC and 72% of students experiencing homelessness statewide were Latine (see **Figures 3 & 4**), while Latine students constituted 65% of the overall LA County student population and 56% of the California student population. Additionally, student homelessness rates in LAC exceeded the previous school year's proportion of Latine students experiencing homelessness nationwide (40%) (Cazares-Minero et al., 2025b; CDE, 2024b; U.S. Department of Education, 2023). The proportion of Latine students among students experiencing homelessness indicates that Latine families are being disproportionately affected by California's and LAC's specific economic and housing challenges. Research demonstrates that economic hardship, often related to underemployment or job loss, is a primary driver of housing insecurity among Latine families (Carmona, 2024). Immigration status further exacerbates housing challenges. Historically, Latine families experienced a lower rate of homelessness compared to other marginalized groups nationally, but this pattern has shifted significantly in California due to the state's

unique combination of high Latine population, severe housing shortage, and extreme cost of living (Carmona, 2024). Southern California is home to most of the state's housing-insecure individuals, with over 55% of all housing-insecure individuals living in Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties (Carmona, 2024). Latines make up 72% of the housing-insecure population across these counties (Carmona, 2024).

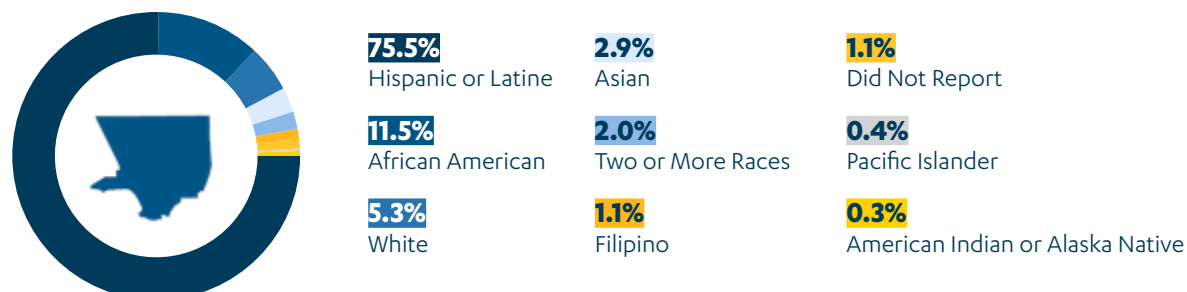
In SY 2023–24, LAC showed a marginally higher representation of Black students among its homeless population (12%) compared to the state (10%) (see **Figures 3 & 4**). However, both rates were substantially lower than the national proportion of students experiencing homelessness who were classified as Black (25%) recorded in SY 2022–23 (Cazares-Minero et al., 2025b; CDE, 2024b; U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Data also shows that, over the past five years, the number of students experiencing homelessness has increased within every racial and ethnic group—except Filipino students.

Figure 3. *Students Experiencing Homelessness in California by Race/Ethnicity, SY 2023–24*



Note: Data derived from CDE, 2024b

Figure 4. *Students Experiencing Homelessness in Los Angeles County by Race/Ethnicity, SY 2023–24*



Note: Data derived from CDE, 2024b

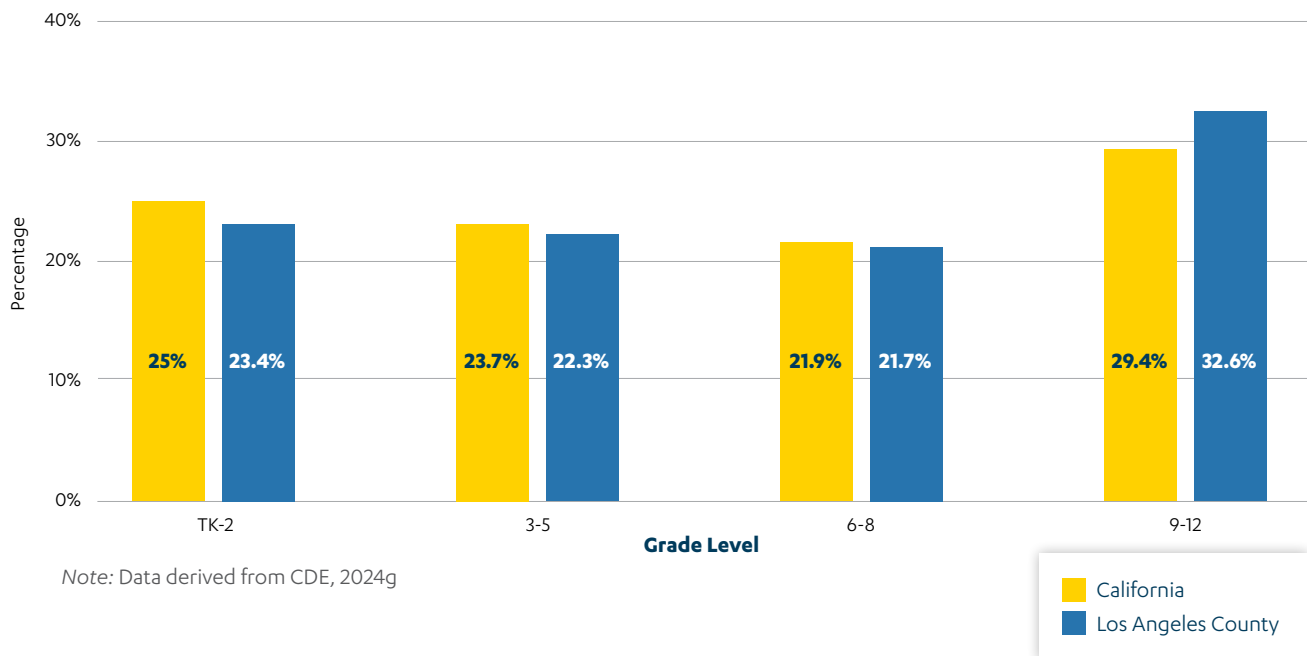
3. One in three students experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County are in high school.

In SY 2023–24, a significant share of students experiencing homelessness were in high school—32% in LAC and 29% statewide—indicating that older youth make up a substantial portion of the population (see **Figure 5**). In California, nearly half of all students experiencing homelessness were in elementary school: about 25% were in grades TK–2, another 25% in grades 3–5, and 21% in grades 6–8. The pattern is similar in

LAC, where 24% were in grades TK–2, 22% in grades 3–5, and 21% in grades 6–8.

In SY 2023–24, 51% of students experiencing homelessness in California were male and 49% were female. The proportions were the same in LA County as statewide for students experiencing homelessness in 2023–24: 51% were male and 49% were female.

Figure 5. *Students Experiencing Homelessness in California and Los Angeles County by Grade Level Categories, SY 2023–24*



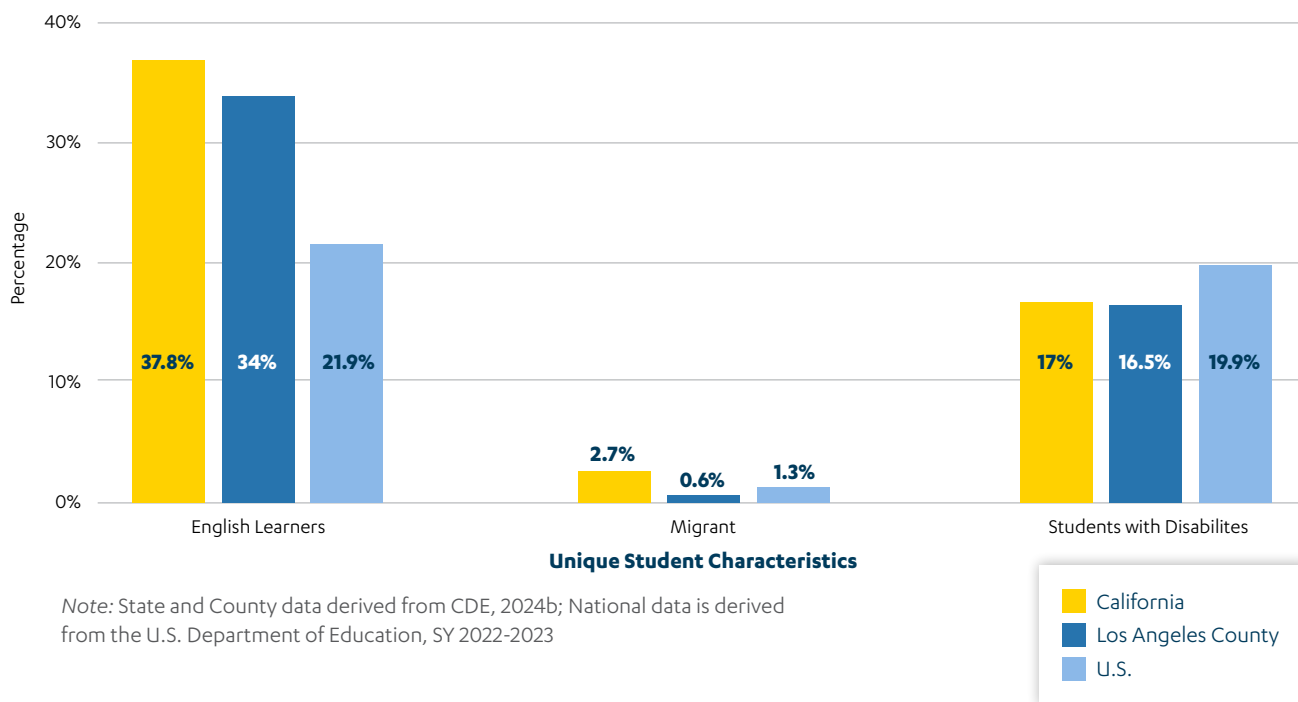
4. English Learner students are overrepresented among homeless youth in Los Angeles County and California, outpacing U.S. rates.

In SY 2023–24, the proportion of English Learners among students experiencing homelessness in California (37.8%; CDE, 2024b) or LAC (34%; CDE, 2024b) (see **Figure 6**) exceeded the previous school year's proportion of English Learners among all students experiencing homelessness nationwide (21%) by more than 10 percentage points (Cazares-Minero et al., 2025b; U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Additionally, in SY 2023–24, the proportion of migrant students among students experiencing homelessness in California (2.7%) was double that of the previous school year's proportion of migrant students among all students experiencing homelessness in the nation (1.3%) (Cazares-Minero et al., 2025b; CDE, 2024b; U.S. Department of Education, 2023). These statistics align with the finding that Latine students disproportionately experience homelessness. Research consistently highlights that factors such as immigration status, English language proficiency, employment, and socio-economic status are closely linked to rates of housing insecurity among Latine families in California (Chinchilla-

Fonseca & Mesén-Rosales, 2023). This insecurity more frequently affects entire Latine families, including children, at higher rates than other racial/ethnic groups (Khadduri et al., 2018). Additionally, prior literature suggests that Latines facing housing insecurity in rural areas are primarily migrant farm workers and their families (Carmona, 2024). Research has shown that the seasonal and low-wage nature of agricultural employment has promoted higher rates of poverty and underemployment (Gold, 2022). Additionally, migrant farm workers are predominantly undocumented immigrants, which makes them more vulnerable to exploitation and less able to access supplemental support during periods of adversity (Villarejo, 2016).

In SY 2023–24, California saw 17.0% of students experiencing homelessness identified as having disabilities, while Los Angeles County reported 16.5%—both figures falling slightly below the national rate of 19.9% from the previous school year. (Cazares-Minero et al., 2025b; CDE, 2024b; U.S. Department of Education, 2023).

Figure 6. Unique Student Characteristics Among Students Experiencing Homelessness in California and in Los Angeles County, SY 2023–24



5. In SY 2023–24, Los Angeles County school districts with the highest proportions of students experiencing homelessness reported student homelessness rates 2–6× higher than California’s statewide average.

Within L.A. County, in SY 2023–24, rates of student homelessness across the 10 school districts with the highest proportions of student homelessness far exceeded the county proportion of student homelessness (4.8%; See **Table 1 & Figure 7**). The districts with the highest proportions of students experiencing homelessness included Norwalk-La Mirada Elementary, Wilsona Elementary, Rowland Unified, Mountain View Elementary, Bassett Unified, Pomona Unified, Los Nietos, Azusa Unified, Eastside Union Elementary, and El Monte City (CDE, 2024b) (See **Table 1 & Figure 7**). Norwalk-La Mirada Elementary School District, located in the East region of Los Angeles County, reported the highest proportion of student homelessness, with nearly 1 in 3 students experiencing homelessness (CDE, 2024b), followed by Wilsona Elementary, located in the Antelope Valley, with 18% of students experiencing homelessness.

Notably, three of the five school districts with the highest proportions of student homelessness were located in the San Gabriel Valley (i.e., Rowland Unified, Mountain View Elementary, and Mountain View Elementary). There are various explanations for the high rates of student homelessness in the San Gabriel Valley including regional challenges in the lack of affordable housing as noted by local organizations like the YWCA San Gabriel Valley, improved identification and reporting at the federal and state level (Cazares-Minero et al., 2025b; Cal Matters, 2025), and demographic factors such as being an English Learner or being the child of immigrants (PPIC, 2024). In Finding 7 of this report, we found that English Learners comprised over half of the students experiencing homelessness in the San Gabriel Valley School Districts.

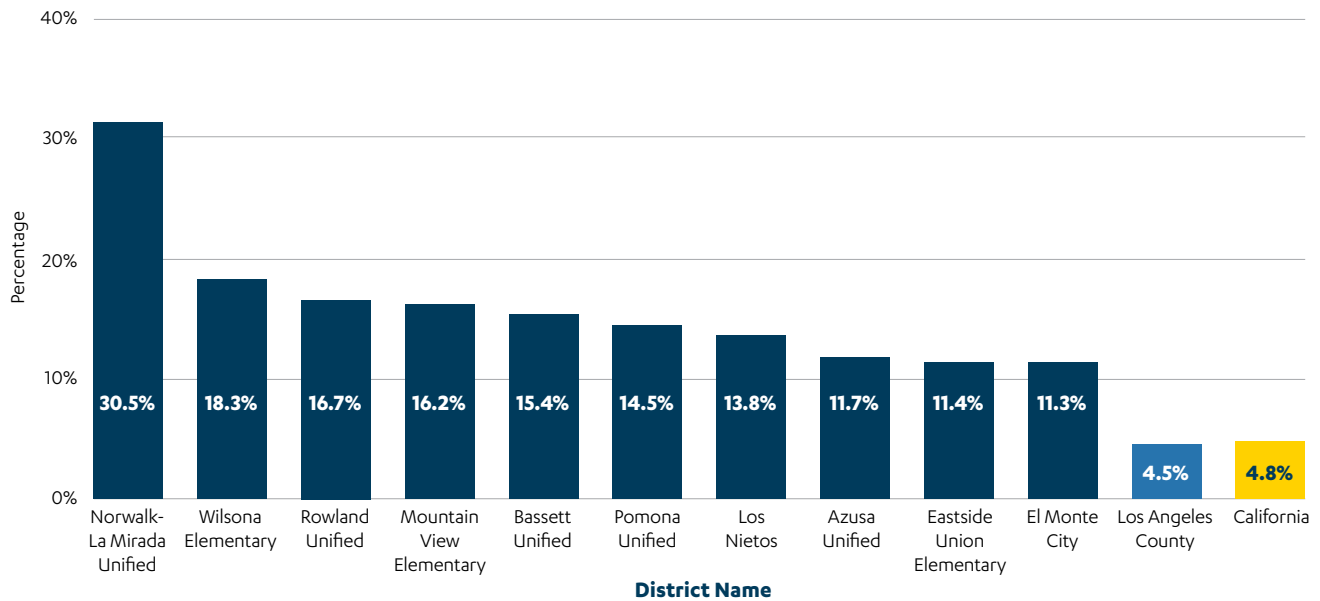
Table 1. School Districts with the Highest Proportions of Students Experiencing Homelessness in Los Angeles County, SY 2023–24

District	Total Cumulative Enrollment	Total Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness	% of Students Experiencing Homelessness ⁴	SPA/Region in Los Angeles County
Norwalk-La Mirada Unified	15,636	4,765	30.5%	East
Wilsona Elementary	1,430	261	18.3%	Antelope Valley
Rowland Unified	14,370	2,400	16.7%	San Gabriel East
Mountain View Elementary	4,993	811	16.2%	San Gabriel West
Bassett Unified	3,053	470	15.4%	San Gabriel East
Pomona Unified	23,122	3,346	14.5%	San Gabriel East
Los Nietos	1,326	183	13.8%	East of Downtown LA
Azusa Unified	6,826	799	11.7%	San Gabriel East
Eastside Union Elementary	3,569	407	11.4%	Antelope Valley
El Monte City	7,407	837	11.3%	San Gabriel West
Los Angeles County	1,351,126	61,249	4.5%	n/a
California	6,023,851	286,853	4.8%	n/a

Note. Data derived from CDE, 2024b

⁴ Calculated as the total number of students experiencing homelessness divided by the total cumulative enrollment.

Figure 7. School Districts with the Highest Proportions of Students Experiencing Homelessness in Los Angeles County, SY 2023–24



Note: State and County data derived from CDE, 2024b; National data is derived from the U.S. Department of Education, SY 2022–23



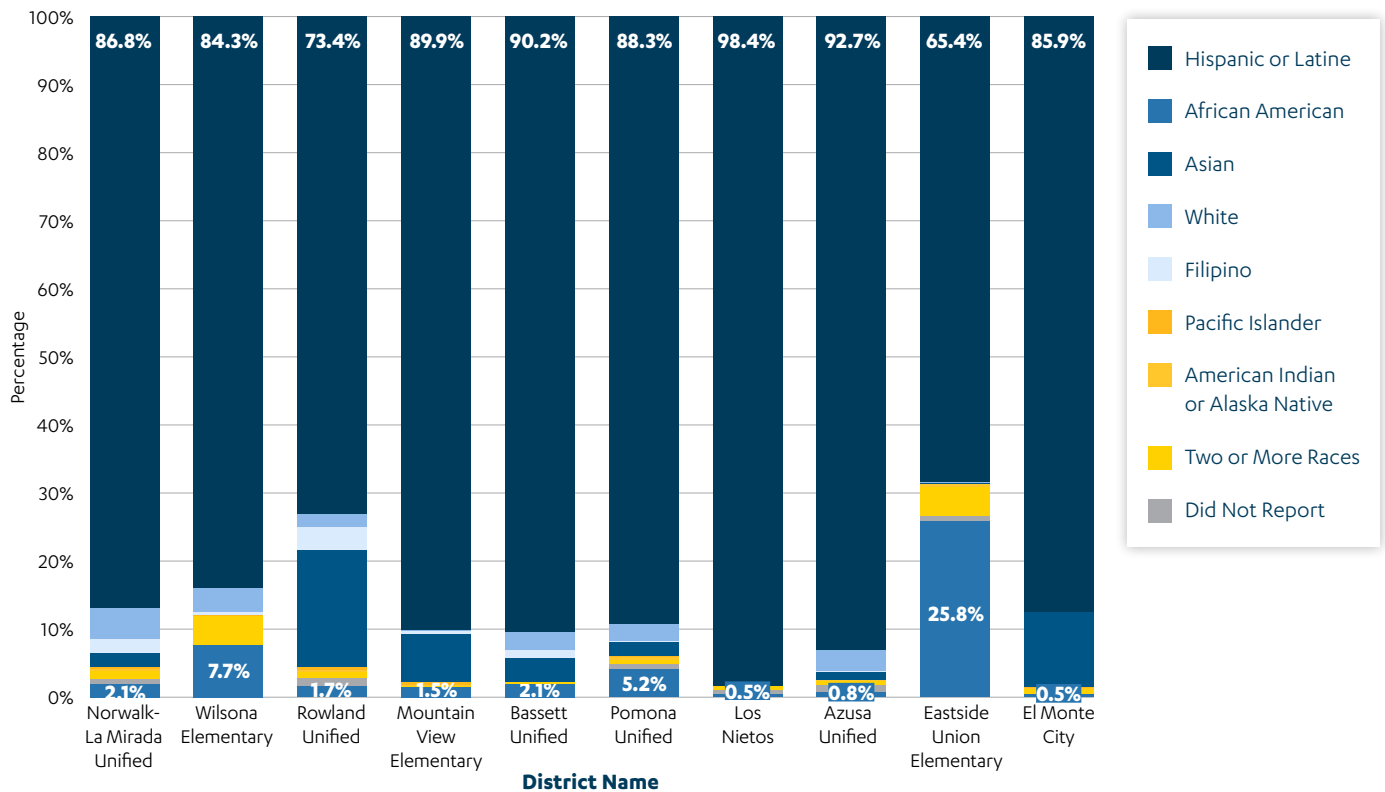
6. **Latine students are overrepresented** among students experiencing homelessness in eight Los Angeles school districts with the highest homelessness rates.

During the 2023–24 school year, Latine students were overrepresented among students experiencing homelessness in eight school districts with the highest homelessness rates, comprising between 73% and 93% of that population across those districts (CDE, 2024b) (see **Figure 8**). These figures are higher than the national (40%), state (72%), or countywide (76%) proportions of students experiencing homelessness who were identified as Latine. In several districts—including Azusa Unified, El Monte City, Los Nietos, Mountain View, Norwalk-La Mirada, Pomona Unified, Rowland Unified, and Wilsona Elementary—Latine students were slightly overrepresented among students experiencing homelessness compared to their share of the overall student enrollment (See

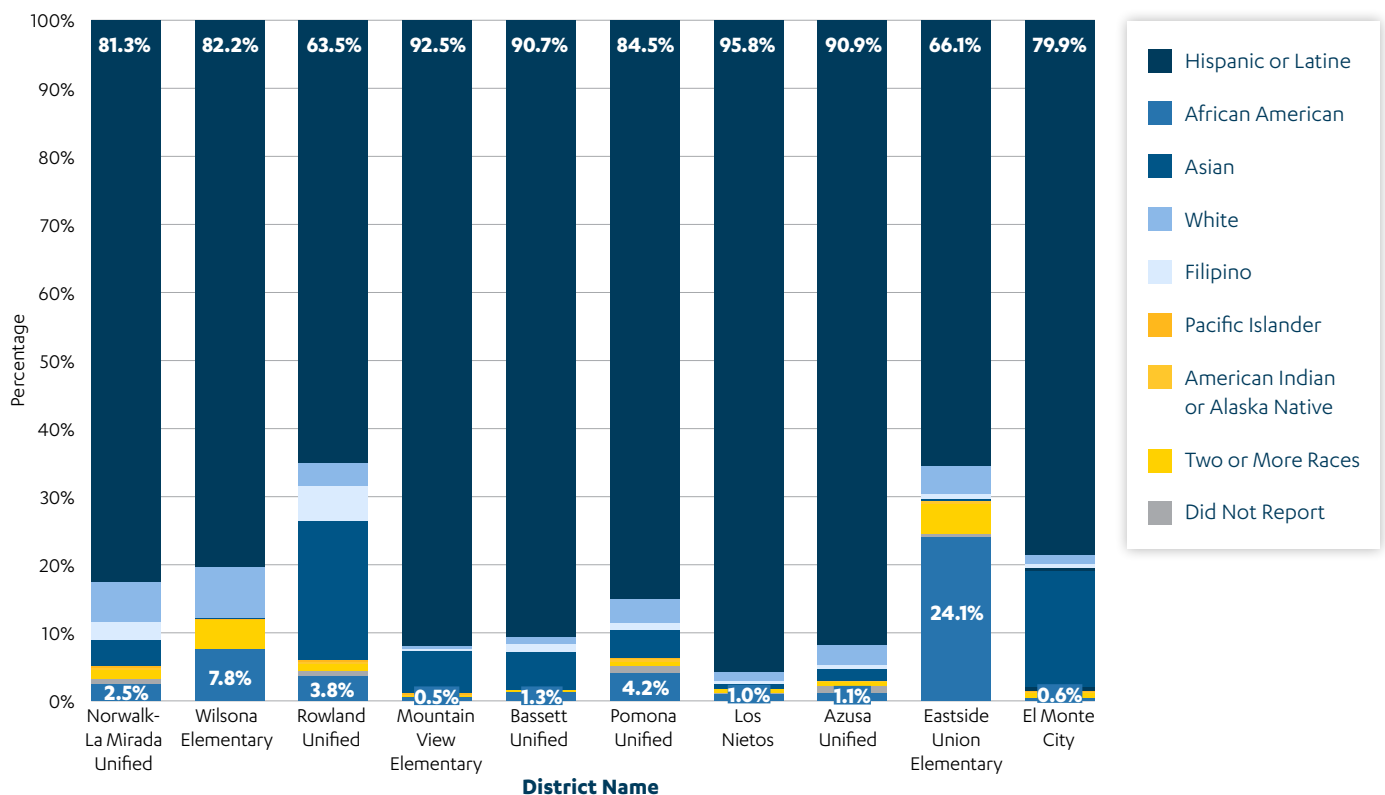
Figure 9). For example, at El Monte City, Latine students made up 86% of students experiencing homelessness, compared to 80% of total student enrollment. At Azusa Unified, they accounted for 93% of students experiencing homelessness versus 91% of total enrollment. Similarly, at Rowland Unified, Latine students represented 73% of those experiencing homelessness, compared to 63% of the overall student population.

At Eastside Union Elementary, Black students were slightly overrepresented among students experiencing homelessness, comprising 26% of that population compared to 24% of the district's total student enrollment (CDE, 2024b).



Figure 8. Race/Ethnicity of Students Experiencing Homelessness by District, SY 2023–24

Note: Data derived from CDE, 2024b

Figure 8. Race/Ethnicity of All Students Enrolled by District, SY 2023–24

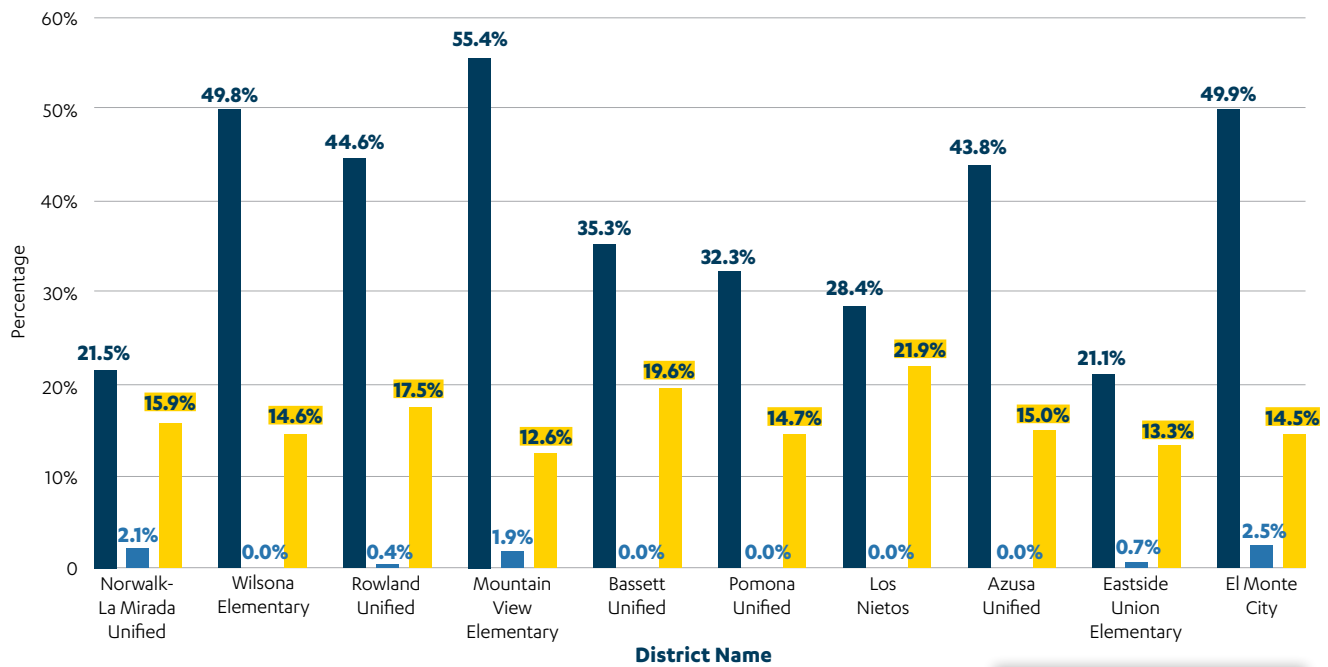
Note: Data derived from CDE, 2024b

7. English Learners comprised up to half of students experiencing homelessness in San Gabriel Valley school districts with the highest homelessness rates.

In SY 2023–24, English Learners comprised a significant proportion of students experiencing homelessness at these Districts, with the highest rates ranging from 32.3% to 55.4% (CDE, 2024b) (see **Figure 10**). Notably, school districts in the San Gabriel Valley had the highest rates of English Learners among their students experiencing homelessness, ranging between 32 and 55%. Other research demonstrates that student homelessness disproportionately impacts English Learners and migrant students (Carmona, 2024; Cazares-Minero et al., 2025a; Cazares-Minero et al., 2025b; Chinchilla-Fonseca & Mesén-Rosales, 2023; Gold, 2022; Khadduri, Walton, Lopez, & Burt, 2018; PPIC, 2024).

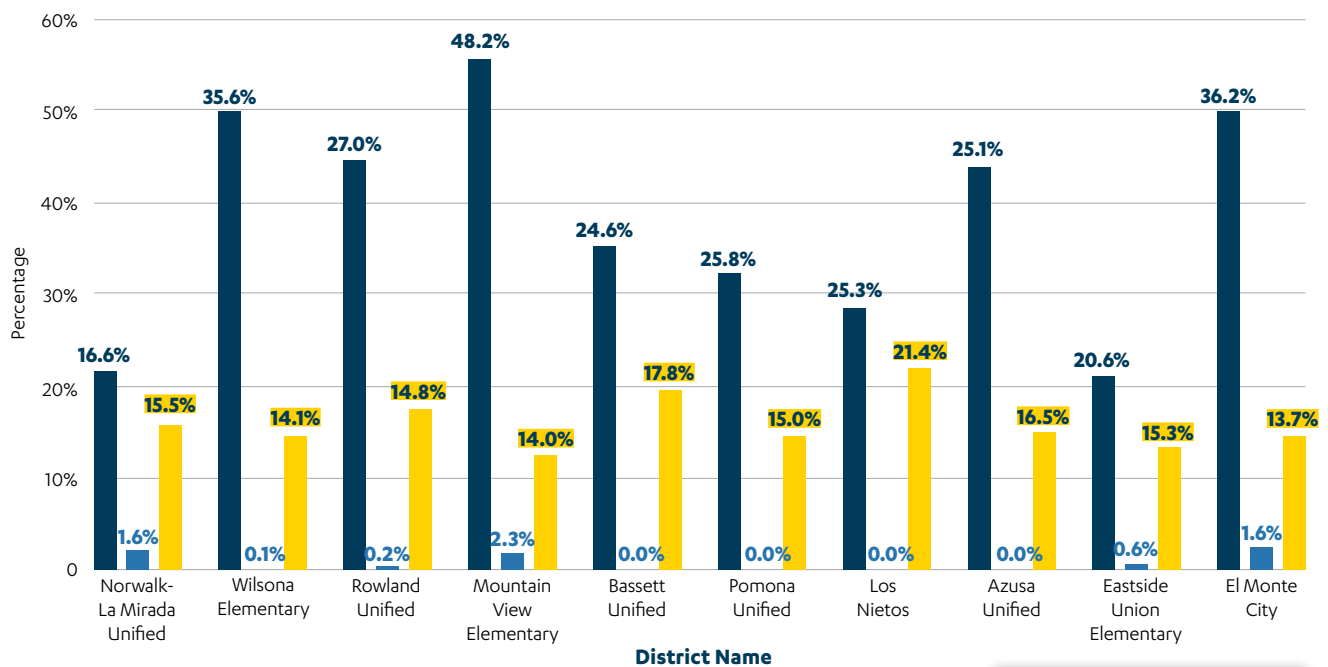
Additionally, students experiencing homelessness in three districts with the highest homelessness rates, all in the San Gabriel Valley—Bassett Unified, El Monte City, and Rowland Unified—were more likely to have disabilities (15-20%) than all students enrolled at these districts (14-18%) (CDE, 2024b) (see **Figure 11**). Among students experiencing homelessness, El Monte City Unified had a higher proportion of migrant students (3%) compared to their overall district enrollment (2%) (CDE, 2024b).



Figure 10. Unique Students' Characteristics for All Students Experiencing Homelessness by District, SY 2023–24

Note: Data derived from CDE, 2024b

English Learners
Migrant Students
Students with Disabilities

Figure 11. Students' Characteristics for All Students Enrolled by District, SY 2023–24

Note: Data derived from CDE, 2024b

English Learners
Migrant Students
Students with Disabilities

8. Chronic absenteeism affects over a third of students experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County and California.

In SY 2023–24, chronic absenteeism affected over a third of students experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County (37.2%) and California (36.3%), significantly higher than the chronic absenteeism rates among the general student population—22.0% in Los Angeles County and 20.4% statewide (CDE, 2024c; see **Figure 12**). Nonetheless, chronic absenteeism rates among all students enrolled at Eastside Union Unified (54.4%) and Azusa Unified (37.3%) exceeded the rates reported for students experiencing homelessness at both the county and state levels (See **Figure 13**). These rates suggest that regional challenges associated with chronic absenteeism exist in the San Gabriel Valley and the Antelope Valley, including a lack of transportation to school, low school engagement, and students needing to contribute financially to their families. More research is needed to understand the factors

contributing to chronic absenteeism for students in these regions. Moreover, if data were available, chronic absenteeism rates are likely higher for students experiencing homelessness in these regions.

Additionally, data demonstrated that chronic absenteeism rates among the general student population in several Los Angeles school districts with the highest homelessness rates ranged from 22% to 54%, exceeding the county and state averages. This pattern suggests that students in these districts, regardless of housing status, are facing more significant day-to-day barriers to school attendance compared to their peers across Los Angeles County and California.

Figure 12. Chronic Absenteeism Rates for All Students Enrolled and Students Experiencing Homelessness Statewide and Countywide, SY 2023–24

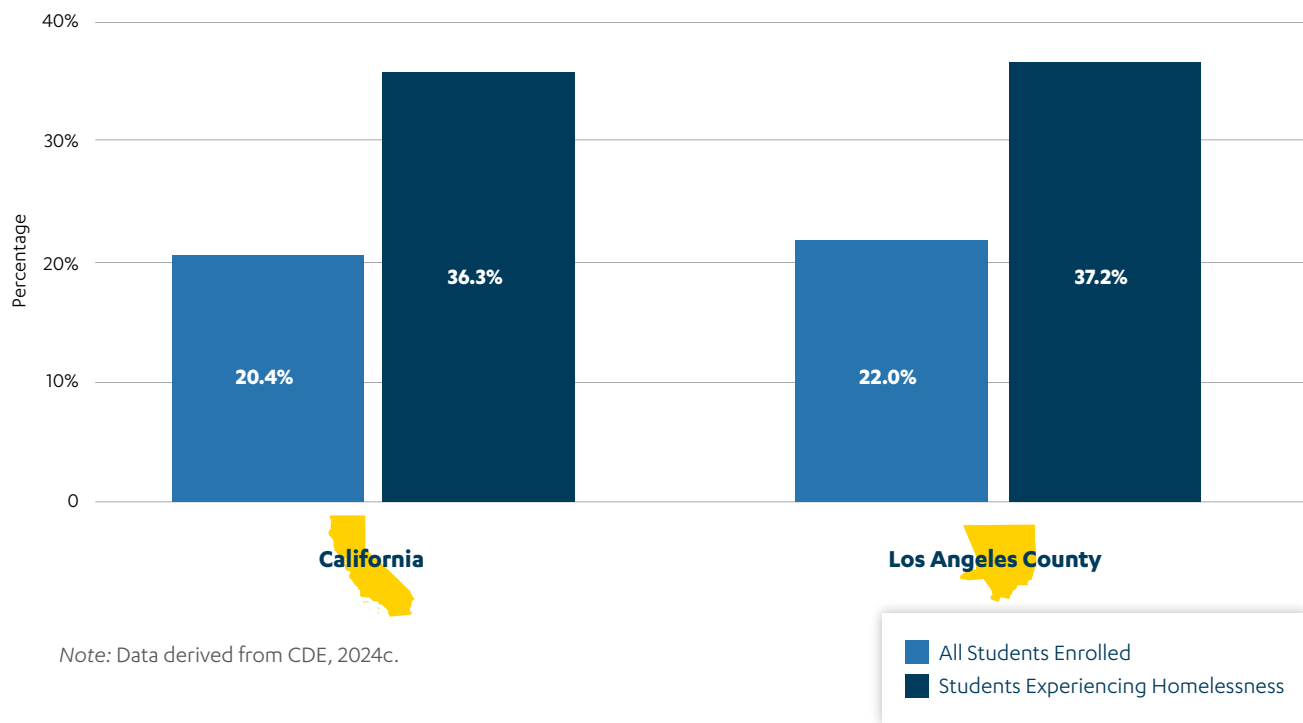
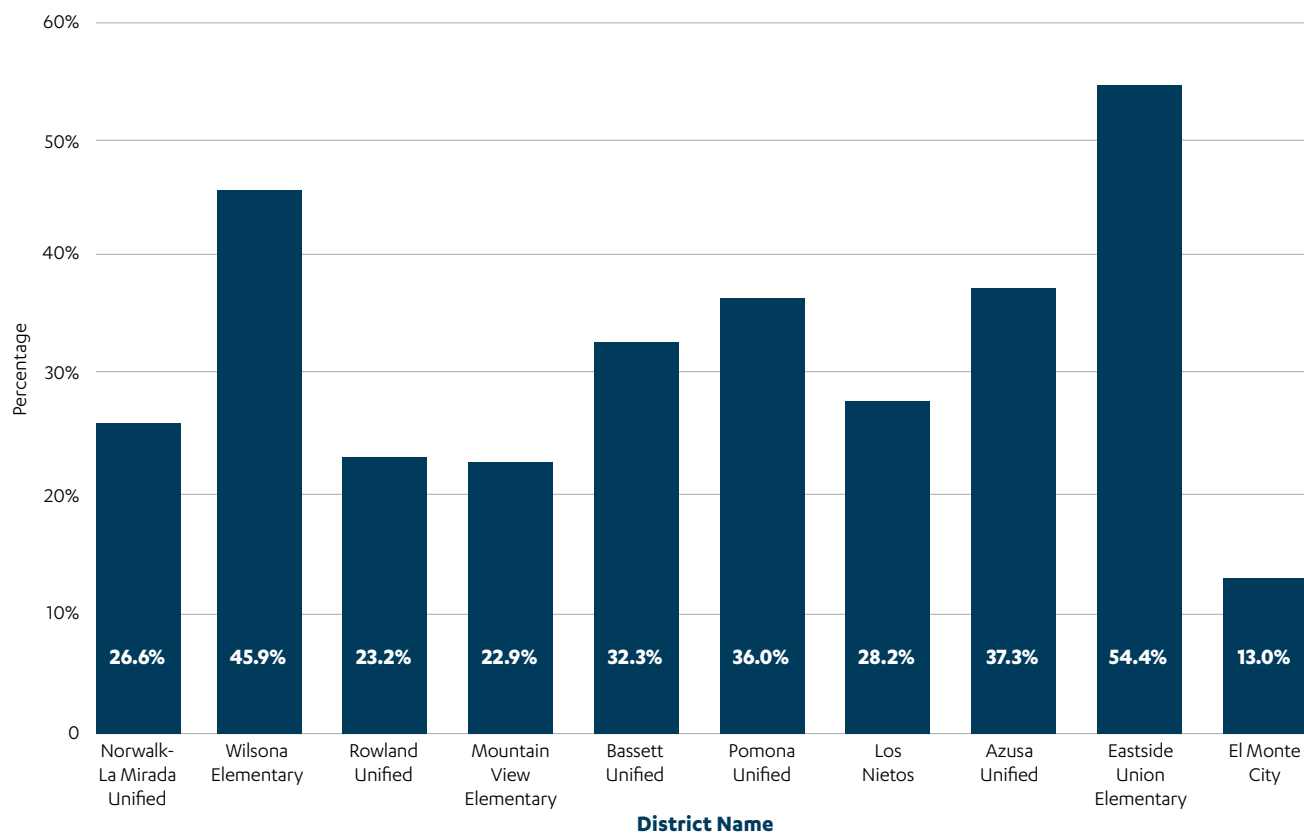


Figure 13. Chronic Absenteeism Rates for All Students Enrolled by District, SY 2023–24

Note: Data derived from CDE, 2024c; detailed breakdowns of chronic absenteeism rates by homelessness status and school district are not publicly available.

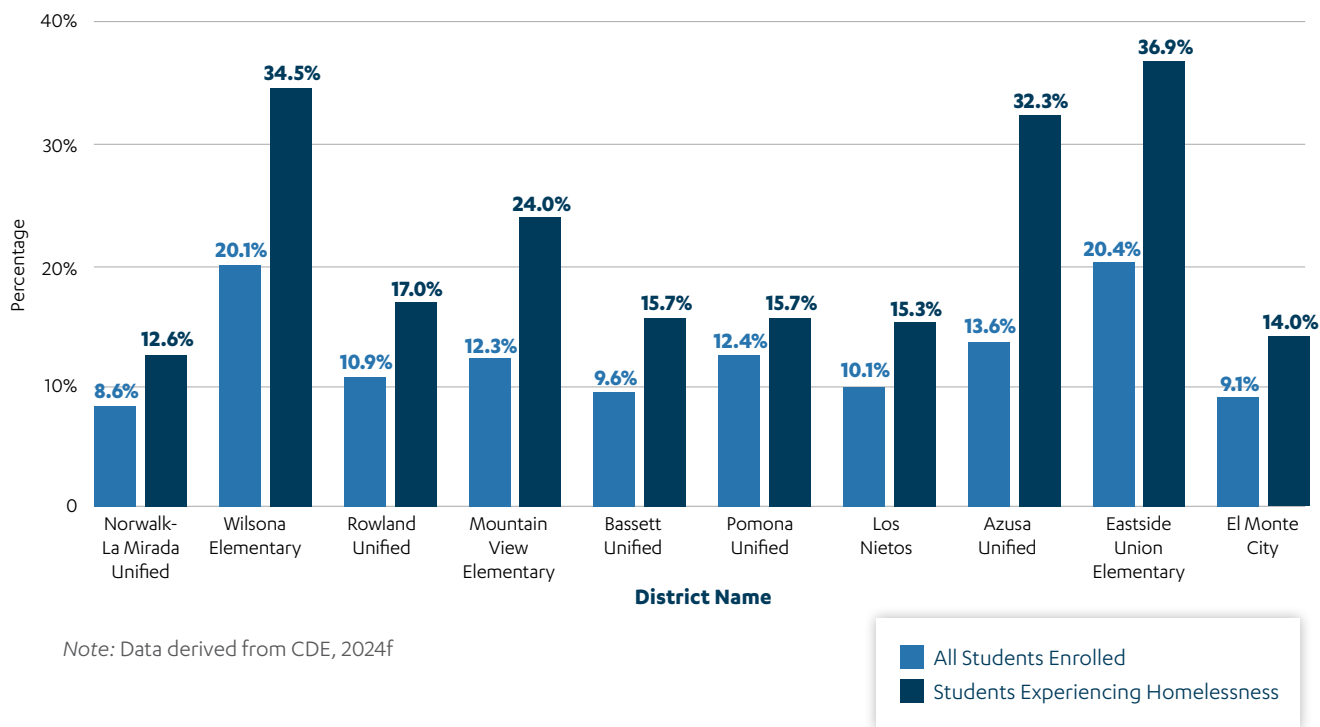


9. Students in high-homelessness districts experience greater school instability than county and state peers.

In SY 2023–24, in the ten Los Angeles County school districts with the highest concentrations of students experiencing homelessness, both the general student population and students experiencing homelessness had higher student non-stability rates⁵ than their peers at the county and state levels (see **Figures 14 & 15**; CDE, 2024f). Student non-stability, or school instability, is closely linked to homelessness. Both homelessness and school instability negatively affect multiple aspects of students' lives, including their academic achievement, social and emotional well-being, mental health, and physical health (Burnset al., 2021; Cazares-Minero et al., 2025a, 2025b). At Azusa Unified, Eastside Union,

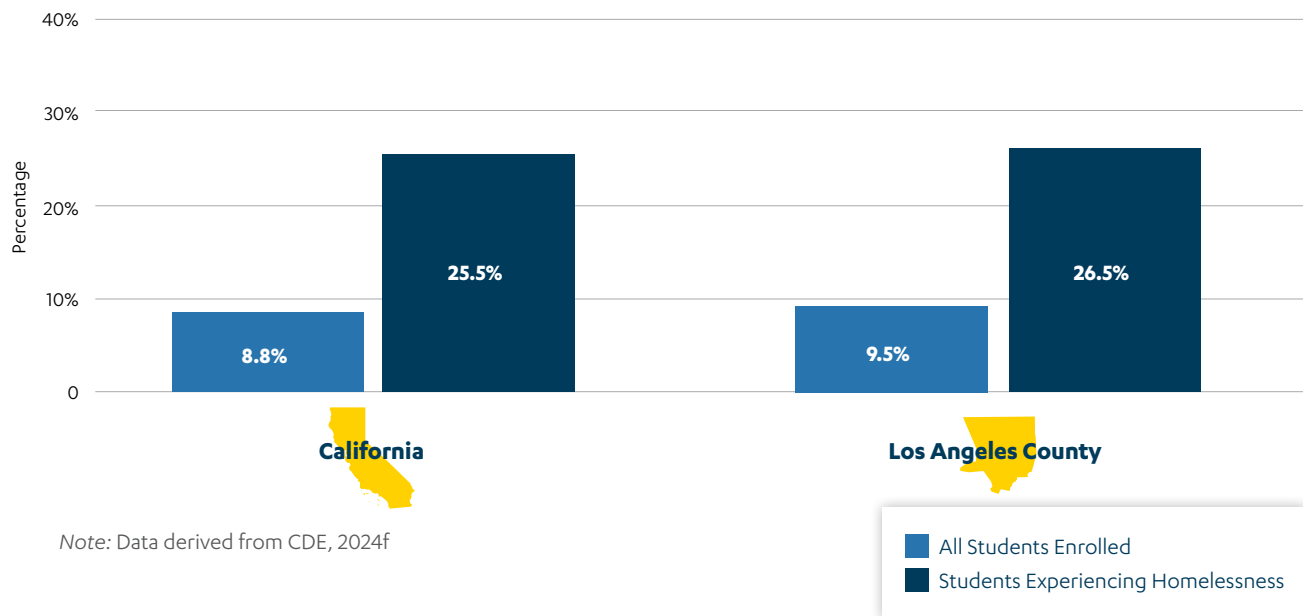
and Wilsona Elementary school districts, over one in three students experiencing homelessness reported having to change schools during the academic year—a rate notably higher than the approximately one in four students experiencing homelessness who experienced school changes across Los Angeles County or the state of California. The general student population at the 10 Los Angeles County school districts with the highest concentrations of students experiencing homelessness also reported a higher rate of school changes compared to the general student population across Los Angeles County and the state of California.

Figure 14. *Non-Stability Rates for All Students Enrolled and Students Experiencing Homelessness Statewide and Countywide, SY 2023–24*



⁵ Non-stability rate was calculated as the total number of students in the Non-Stability Count divided by the total Adjusted Cumulative Enrollment at a selected entity. Non-Stability Count was calculated using the total number of students in the Adjusted Cumulative Enrollment without a Continuous Enrollment in one school or with a disqualifying exit.

Figure 15. Non-Stability Rates for All Students Enrolled and Students Experiencing Homelessness Statewide and Countywide, SY 2023–24



10. Most districts with the highest rates of student homelessness report lower dropout rates than the county and state.

In SY 2023–24, secondary attrition rates at Bassett, Norwalk-La Mirada, Pomona, and Rowland Unified were lower than county and state averages across housing groups, with Azusa Unified as the exception. Statewide, 14% of students experiencing homelessness dropped out, compared to 11% in LAC. In contrast, students experiencing homelessness in Norwalk-La Mirada, Rowland, Bassett, and Pomona Unified had far lower rates, ranging from 1.5% to 8.6%.

Secondary school attrition rates at Azusa Unified exceeded county and state benchmarks across

housing stability demographics (see **Figures 16 & 17**; CDE, 2024e). Housing-insecure students at Azusa Unified demonstrated a 20% discontinuation rate, compared to 14% statewide and 11% countywide. All students enrolled at Azusa Unified experienced a 13% attrition rate, compared to 6% at the state level and 7% at the county level. Comparative analysis revealed that unhoused students at Azusa Unified experienced dropout rates 2.5 to 5 times higher than their counterparts in neighboring districts, including Norwalk-La Mirada Unified, Pomona Unified, and Rowland Unified.



Figure 16. Dropout Rates for All Enrolled Students and Students Experiencing Homelessness by District, SY 2023–24

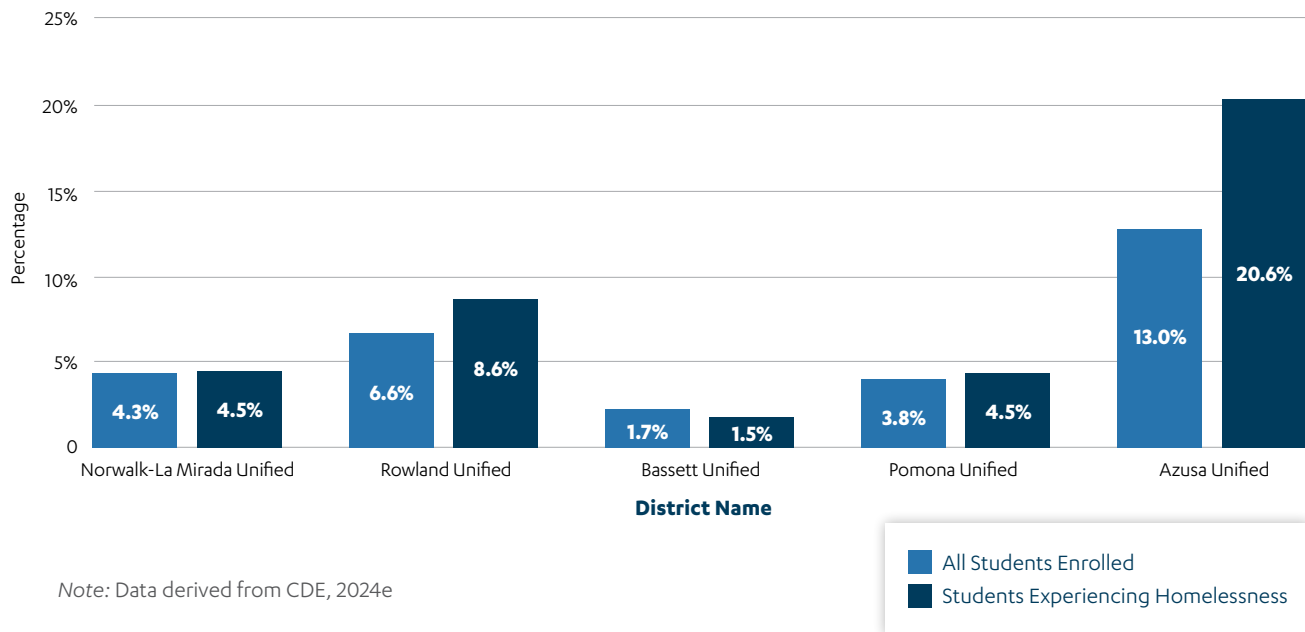
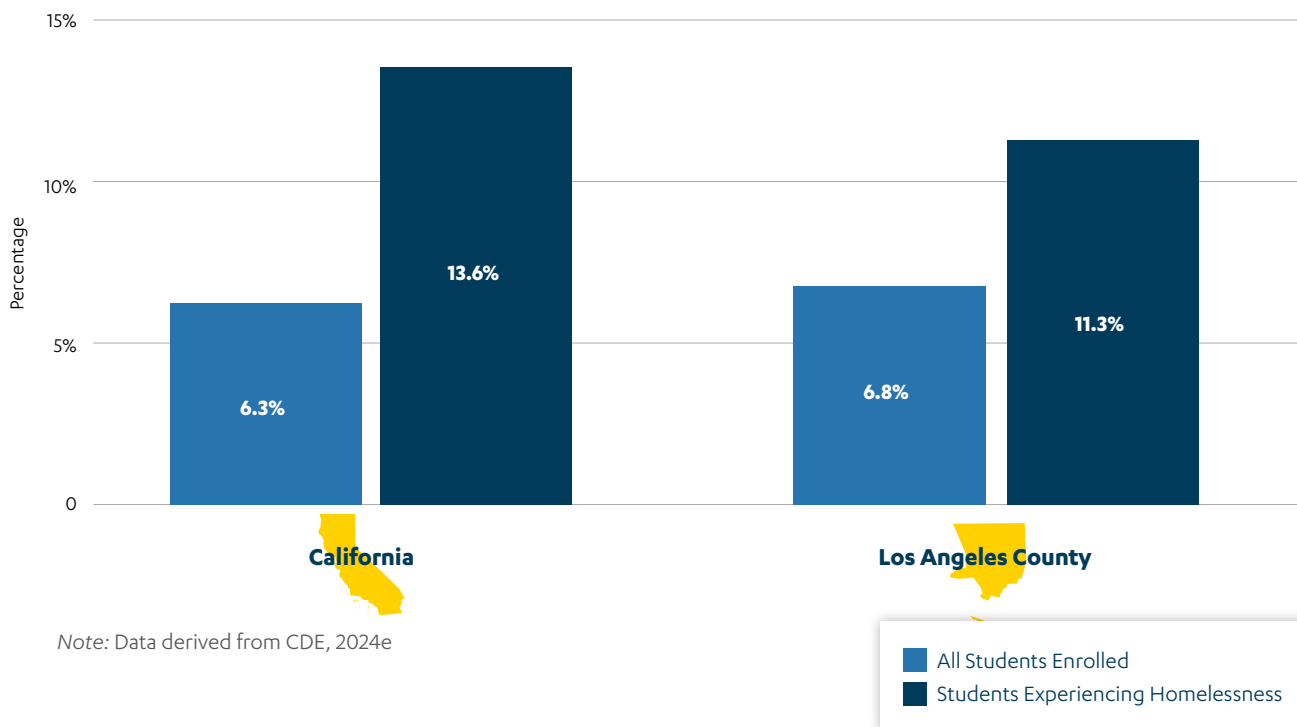


Figure 17. Dropout Rates for All Enrolled Students and Students Experiencing Homelessness Statewide and Countywide, SY 2023–24

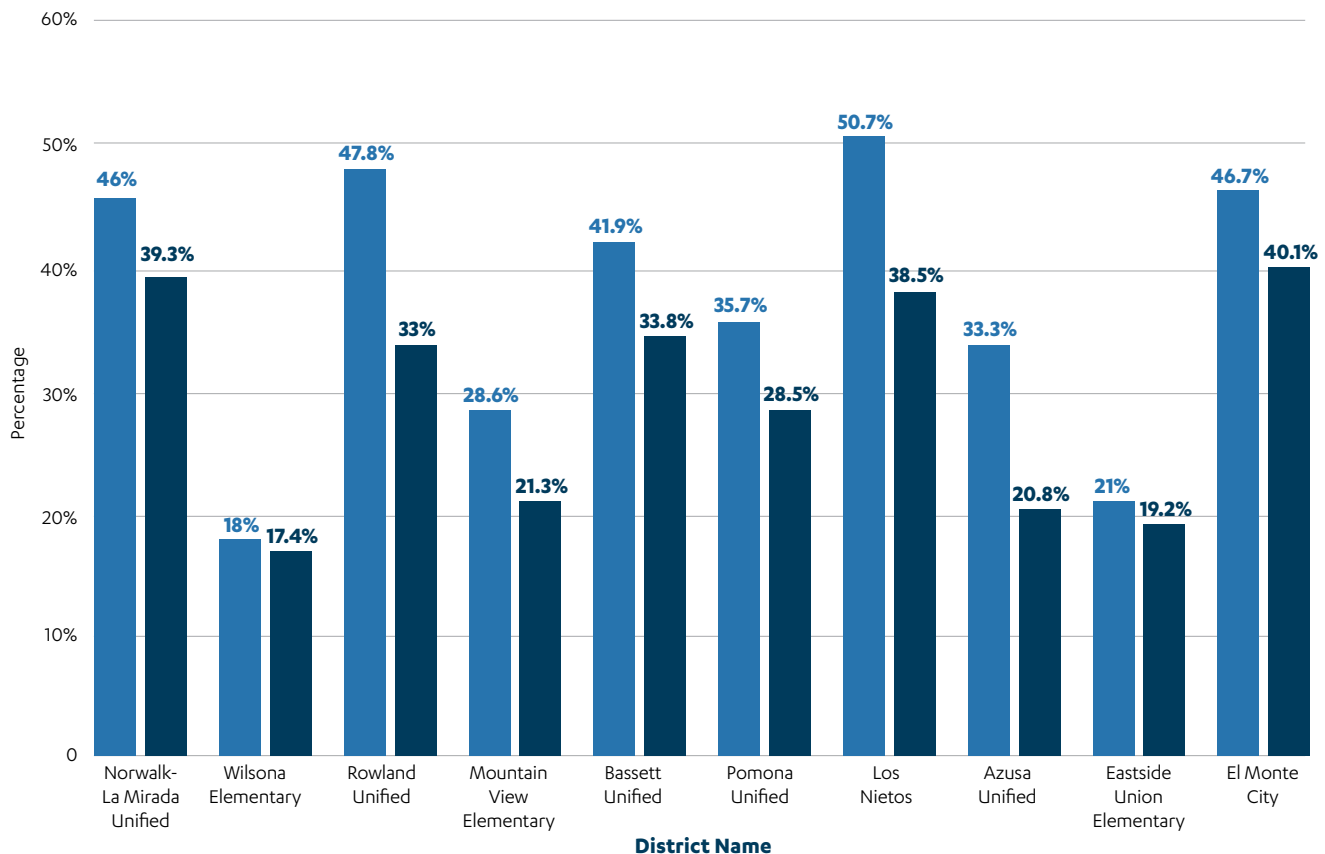


11. High-homelessness districts outperform county and state peers experiencing homelessness in Math and ELA, but lag compared to all enrolled county and state peers.

In SY 2023–24, students in districts with the highest homelessness rates, regardless of housing status,—particularly Norwalk, Rowland, Bassett, Los Nietos, and El Monte—performed better in Math than students experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County and statewide (see **Figures 18–20**). However, overall Math performance in California and LAC still exceeded that of all students in these districts. A similar pattern emerged in English Language Arts (ELA): most high-homelessness districts outperformed county and state averages for students experiencing homelessness, yet overall ELA scores in California and LAC remained slightly higher than those of students in these districts.

Azusa Unified students scored below county and state averages on English and Math tests, regardless of whether they were unhoused or had stable housing (see **Figures 18–20**). Students experiencing homelessness at Azusa Unified struggled more than those elsewhere: only 21% met English standards (compared to 26% statewide and 29% countywide) and just 11% met Math standards (compared to 16% statewide and 18% countywide). When compared to other districts, Azusa’s unhoused students performed worse on English tests (except for Eastside Union and Wilsona Elementary) and on Math tests.

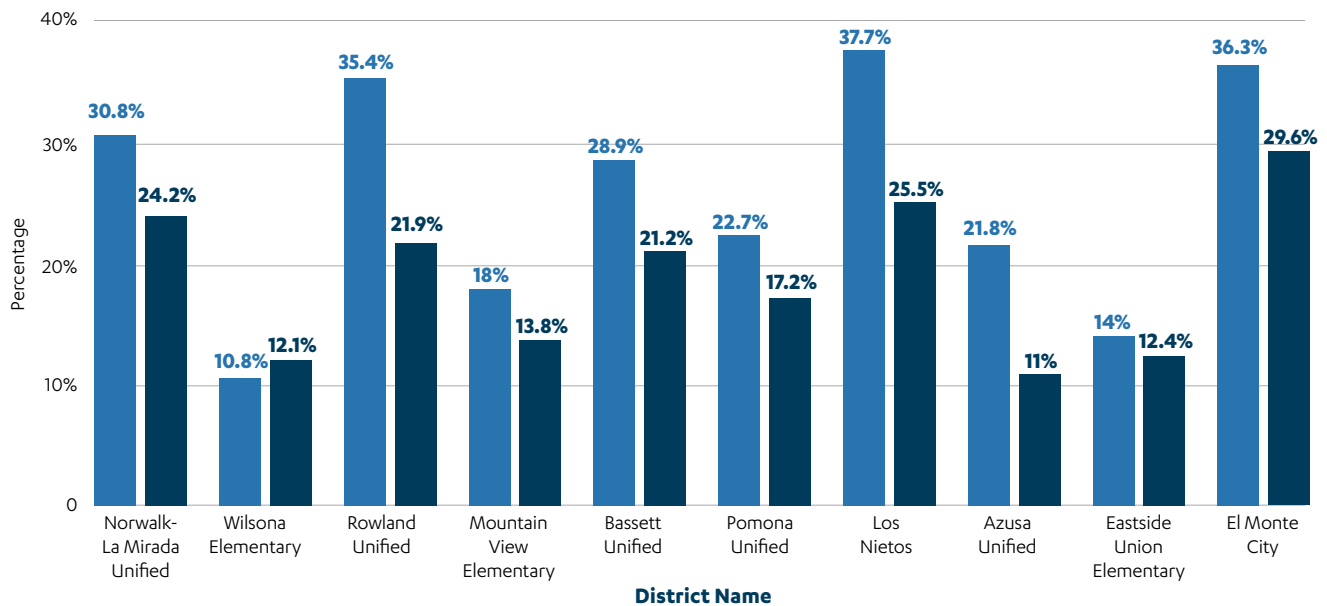
Figure 18. Percentage of All Enrolled Students and Students Experiencing Homelessness that Met or Exceeded Standard for ELA by District, SY 2023–24



Note: Data derived from CDE, 2024h

■ All Students Enrolled
■ Students Experiencing Homelessness

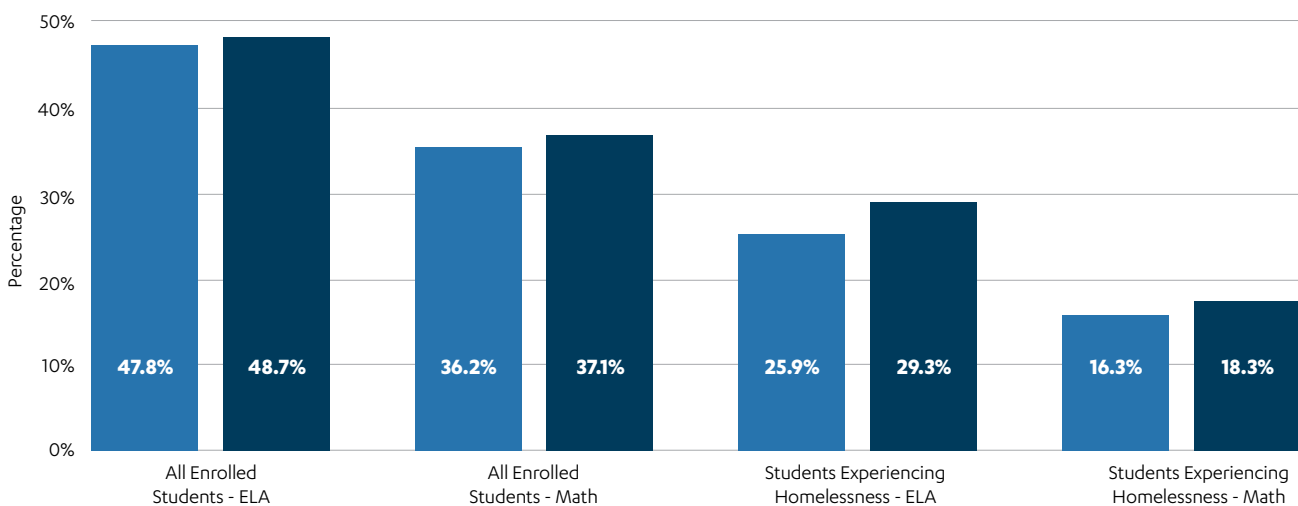
Figure 19. Percentage of All Enrolled Students and Students Experiencing Homelessness that Met or Exceeded Standard for Math by District, SY 2023–24



Note: Data derived from CDE, 2024h

■ All Students Enrolled
■ Students Experiencing Homelessness

Figure 20. Percentage of All Enrolled Students and Students Experiencing Homelessness that Met or Exceeded Standard for ELA and Math Statewide and Countywide, SY 2023–24



Note: Data derived from CDE, 2024h

■ California
■ Los Angeles County

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

Addressing the educational challenges faced by students experiencing homelessness—particularly Latine, English Learner, and highly mobile youth—requires coordinated action at every level of California’s education system. The following recommendations outline targeted strategies for state, county, and district leaders to strengthen identification, expand supports, and reduce systemic barriers for these students.

At the federal and state level, policy priorities include sustaining and expanding dedicated funding streams, promoting equity-driven practices, and building robust data systems to guide interventions. County-level actions focus on targeting high-need regions, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and implementing early-warning systems to address risk factors before they escalate. At the district level, recommendations emphasize resource allocation, instructional and socio-emotional supports, and community engagement strategies tailored to the needs of homeless and highly mobile students. Together, these actions provide a roadmap for aligning policy and practice to ensure that all students, regardless of housing status, have equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities.

Federal & State-Level Recommended Actions

1. Sustain and expand funding for McKinney-Vento, ARP-HCY, EHCY, and other homeless education sources. Encourage flexibility in how districts can use these funds and remove restrictive policy and auditing requirements that limit their responsiveness to local housing pressures, student mobility, and emergency needs.

EHCY funds are especially critical for LAC, where student homelessness has surged nearly 30% in the past year and yet only 16 of 80 school districts currently receive this federal support. These funds provide the foundational infrastructure for identifying and serving students experiencing homelessness, covering essential services such as transportation, school supplies, emergency housing assistance, and liaison staffing. Without EHCY support, most districts in the county must absorb these costs within already strained general budgets, leaving many students without the

consistent support necessary to remain engaged and stable in school. Expanding access to EHCY grants and aligning them with local funding priorities would help ensure that all districts, not just a small subset, have the capacity to meet the growing needs of unhoused students and families.

2. Policymakers and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) should strengthen collaboration between districts and charter schools to align identification practices, share data, and coordinate services for unhoused students. Charter schools often operate with fewer centralized supports and limited access to McKinney-Vento or EHCY funds, yet they serve a significant share of the county’s student population. Providing targeted technical assistance, dedicated funding opportunities, and inclusion in regional professional learning networks would ensure that all educational institutions, district and charter alike, are equipped to identify, support, and stabilize students experiencing homelessness

across LAC. As charter schools serve a growing share of LAC's student population, expanding technical assistance and funding eligibility for them is essential to ensure equitable, countywide responses to student homelessness.

3. Support training for district staff to effectively identify and serve unhoused students, maximizing the impact of federal and state investments. Since the end of ARP-HCY funding, many staff have resumed multiple roles, often serving both youth in foster care and students experiencing homelessness simultaneously, which limits their ability to provide specialized support. Historically, funding streams have prioritized foster youth, while dedicated resources for students experiencing homelessness remain scarce. Establishing targeted training and funding specific to homelessness can help districts maintain consistent, high-quality support for this population.

4. Develop policies to reduce barriers for Latine and English Learner students. Fund bilingual staff, culturally responsive counseling, and instructional support programs that meet the academic, linguistic, and socio-emotional needs of Latine and EL students. Promote equity audits in districts to identify and remediate policies or practices that disproportionately affect these student populations.

5. Implement early identification and prevention strategies for at-risk students. Establish statewide early warning and universal screening systems that identify students at risk of homelessness, particularly in elementary and high school grades. Support cross-sector partnerships with housing agencies, public health, and social services to prevent prolonged housing instability.

6. Standardize data collection on homelessness, absenteeism, mobility, and academic outcomes. Build a state-level database to monitor trends and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Use data to inform targeted policy adjustments, funding allocations, and statewide initiatives aimed at reducing inequities and improving student outcomes.



County-Level (LAC) Recommended Actions

- 1. Target resources to high-need regions (East region, San Gabriel Valley, Antelope Valley).** Support local programs that address housing instability, transportation gaps, and service shortages. Invest in community-based partnerships to provide wraparound supports, such as after-school programs, mental health counseling, and nutrition services.
- 2. Coordinate with housing, social services, and community organizations.** Partner with community organizations that focus on at-risk youth to provide mentoring, enrichment programs, and family supports that complement school-based interventions. Develop coordinated response systems for rapid intervention when families lose housing or students become mobile. Share best practices and lessons learned across districts to improve efficiency and outcomes.
- 3. Implement early-warning systems for chronic absenteeism and mobility.** Provide interventions such as transportation assistance, tutoring, mentoring, and family outreach. Use data to target supports for students most at risk of disengagement or dropping out.
- 4. Expand supports for Latine and English Learner students, including bilingual staff, translation services, and culturally responsive family engagement.** Address systemic barriers, including fear of immigration enforcement, to improve access to school and community resources. Offer trauma-informed supports to address the social-emotional impact of housing instability.

District Recommended Actions

1. Allocate resources to schools with the highest homelessness rates. Allocate additional staffing and resources to McKinney-Vento programs to ensure students are identified and supported promptly at specific school sites. Middle and secondary sites would benefit the most from targeted supports for students experiencing homelessness, based on the analysis in this paper.

2. Offer tutoring, credit recovery, and extended learning programs. Integrate trauma-informed instructional strategies to support students experiencing instability. Monitor student progress and adjust supports based on data-driven assessments.

3. Develop mentoring programs, counseling, and flexible scheduling to reduce secondary attrition. Ensure all students, especially those experiencing homelessness, have access to extracurricular and enrichment opportunities.

4. Provide transportation to reduce mobility impacts. Minimize the impact of student transfers by implementing streamlined enrollment processes, providing transportation assistance, and coordinating placement strategies. Provide consistent communication and case management to families navigating housing transitions.

5. Strengthen family and community engagement, including McKinney-Vento outreach. Collaborate with local organizations to provide wraparound supports for housing, mental health, and basic needs. Foster culturally responsive engagement practices to effectively reach Latine and English Learner families.



CONCLUSION

In SY 2023–24, student homelessness in Los Angeles County (LAC) surged nearly 30%—the highest in five years—outpacing state and national trends. This rise may reflect both worsening housing pressures and improved identification through ARP-HCY-funded liaison work, underscoring the need for sustained investment. Further, ten LAC school districts had student homelessness rates far above the county average, with Norwalk-La Mirada Elementary School District reporting nearly one in three students unhoused. Three of the five districts with the highest homelessness rates were in the San Gabriel Valley. The concentration of student homelessness in specific regions, particularly in the East region and San Gabriel Valley, suggests that homelessness is not evenly distributed across LAC and is shaped by localized factors such as housing costs, community disinvestment, and service gaps. These patterns underscore the importance of regionally tailored strategies, stronger inter-agency collaboration at the local level, and targeted resource allocation to the districts and communities most affected.

This report also highlighted that Latine students were disproportionately affected, making up three in four students experiencing homelessness in LAC and over 70% in several high-rate districts, particularly in the East region and San Gabriel Valley. The recent surge of federal immigration enforcement activity across LAC and other regions with a high population of Latin American immigrants may directly and indirectly worsen homelessness among Latine students by creating housing instability, economic precarity, and reduced access to services. Punitive immigration policies, when combined with housing instability, create a reinforcing cycle that undermines students' academic outcomes—where fear of enforcement exacerbates instability, and instability further limits educational engagement and achievement. New

Stanford research demonstrated a sharp increase in student absences starting in January at schools in California's Central Valley, a region with a high population of Latine immigrants. Analyzing three years of daily attendance data from five school districts in the Central Valley, the study found on average a 22% increase in student absences in January and February 2025, compared with the same months in previous years (Dee, 2025).

In districts with the highest rates of homelessness, 32–55% of unhoused students were English Learners. These students may face compounded challenges in accessing academic content, navigating school systems, and receiving services due to language differences, immigration-related stressors, and systemic under-identification. This highlights the need for culturally and linguistically responsive supports, increased bilingual staffing, and stronger cross-system coordination to ensure ELs experiencing homelessness are not further marginalized.

Across California and LAC, over one-third of students experiencing homelessness were chronically absent—rates far above those of the general student population—reflecting the compounded impact of housing instability, transportation barriers, and unmet basic needs. In the ten LAC districts with the highest concentrations of unhoused students, both unhoused and housed students had higher school non-stability rates than county and state averages, signaling broader community-level instability. Addressing it will require coordinated efforts to increase housing stability, improve school continuity policies, and invest in school- and district-level supports that help mitigate the effects of frequent mobility. These patterns show that homelessness not only deepens absenteeism and school non-stability but also intersects with place-based challenges that disrupt continuity for entire school communities.

Students experiencing homelessness across California faced higher attrition rates and lower English and Math scores compared to the general student population. Los Angeles County mirrored these statewide patterns, with elevated dropout and attrition rates and significant academic underperformance among unhoused students. In Azusa Unified, academic underperformance and high attrition rates affected students regardless of housing status, pointing to systemic challenges. Secondary school attrition rates exceeded county and state benchmarks for both unhoused and stably housed students, pointing to systemic retention issues. Academic performance lagged behind county and state averages in English and Math, regardless of housing status, suggesting district-wide instructional and resource gaps. For students experiencing homelessness, these academic and retention challenges are likely compounded by the added barriers of housing instability, mobility, and unmet basic needs.

Across California and LAC, homelessness affected students across grade levels: nearly one-third were in high school, while almost half were in elementary school, signaling urgent needs for both early intervention and supports for older youth navigating graduation and postsecondary transitions. The high

proportion of high school students suggests that interventions must address not only immediate basic needs but also long-term planning, such as credit recovery, mental health services, and transition supports into college, career, or independent living. The high proportion of elementary school-aged students underscores the importance of integrating housing-sensitive supports into early education settings, including trauma-informed care, family outreach, and coordination with early childhood and housing services.

California and Los Angeles County must take urgent, coordinated action to address the growing crisis of student homelessness. This requires sustained, targeted investments in housing supports, McKinney-Vento services, and district-level programs that improve attendance, stability, and academic outcomes. Regionally tailored, culturally responsive interventions are essential, especially for Latine and English Learner students disproportionately affected. State and county leaders, alongside districts, must work together to close gaps in stability and achievement, ensuring that every student in California, regardless of housing status, can access a safe, supportive, and equitable education.



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