

Federal Student Aid Borrowers in Income-Driven Repayment Plans Customer Satisfaction Survey

[Programming instructions in brackets – questions asked of two groups: borrowers in income-driven repayment (IDR) plans and borrowers not in IDR plans]

You have received this survey as part of an initiative the United States Department of Education Office of Federal Student Aid has undertaken to improve customer satisfaction for borrowers who are in repayment. Our records indicate that you have one or more of your federal student loans in repayment status.

The survey will take approximately ten minutes to complete. CFI Group, an independent research and consulting firm, is conducting this survey. The survey is hosted via a secure server and your responses will remain strictly confidential. If you have any questions, please contact survey@cfigroup.com.

Thank you in advance for your valuable feedback.

Introduction

1. **[Ask of borrowers not in IDR; if in IDR, skip to Q5]** Our records indicate that you have at least one student loan that is in repayment. Is that correct?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No **[close survey]**
 - c. I don't know/I'm not sure

2. **[Ask of borrowers not in IDR]** As you may know, under a standard student loan repayment plan the amount you pay each month remains the same until you pay off your loan. Other repayment plans offer the option to pay a monthly amount that goes up or down based on your income (these are known as "income-driven repayment plans"). How much do you know about income-driven repayment plans?
 - a. I have never heard of them
 - b. I have heard of them, but I don't know much
 - c. I know a fair amount, but not a lot
 - d. I know a lot about them
 - e. Other (please specify)

3. **[Ask of borrowers not in IDR]** Have you ever applied for an income-driven repayment plan?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes, I applied, but I was not eligible
 - c. Yes, I applied and was put into the plan, but later I switched to a different plan
 - d. I started the application process, but did not finish [Follow-up: Why did you not finish the application? Open-ended]
 - e. Other (please specify)

Repayment Choices

4. **[Ask of borrowers not in IDR; if Q3=a]** Please tell us why you have not applied for an income-driven repayment plan. (select all that apply)
 - a. I do not have enough information
 - b. I do not think I am eligible
 - c. The process to apply is complicated
 - d. I am concerned about the amount of interest that will accrue
 - e. I want the certainty of a fixed payment
 - f. I want to pay off my loans in a shorter amount of time
 - g. The plan I am in currently is a better fit for my needs
 - h. I am too busy to consider all of my options
 - i. Other (please specify)

5. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR]** An income-driven repayment plan allows you to pay a monthly amount that goes up or down based on your income. Our records indicate that you are currently repaying your student loan(s) under an income-driven repayment plan. Is that correct?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No **[skip to Q8]**
 - c. I don't know/I'm not sure

6. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR]** Which repayment plan are you enrolled in?
 - a. Income-Based Repayment
 - b. Pay as You Earn
 - c. Income-Contingent Repayment
 - d. I don't know/I'm not sure **[skip to 8]**

7. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR]** When deciding to apply for an income-driven repayment plan, how important were the following benefits to you? (please rank)
 - a. Lower monthly payment **[skip to 9]**
 - b. Flexible monthly payment in case my income changes **[skip to 9]**
 - c. Potential loan forgiveness **[skip to 9]**
 - d. Other (please specify) **[skip to 9]**

8. **[Ask of borrowers not in IDR]** When deciding on your current repayment plan, how important were the following benefits to you? (please rank)
 - a. Lower monthly payment
 - b. Lower total interest paid
 - c. Pay off my loan(s) more quickly
 - d. Flexible monthly payment in case my income changes
 - e. Potential loan forgiveness
 - f. Other (please specify)

Application Process

9. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR; if not in IDR, skip to Q15]** How did you apply for an income-driven repayment plan?
 - a. Electronic application on StudentLoans.gov

- b. Paper application printed from StudentLoans.gov
- c. Electronic application from my loan servicer
- d. Paper application from my loan servicer
- e. I don't know/I'm not sure
- f. Other (please specify)

10. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR]** Please rate your satisfaction with the application on the following: [scale of 1-10, very dissatisfied to very satisfied]

- The clarity of the instructions
- The clarity of the questions
- The ease of navigating through the application
- The ease of using the online tool to transfer tax information to the IRS
- The amount of time it took to process my application

11. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR]** How could the application process be improved? **[open-ended]**

Recertification Process

12. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR]** Have you gone through the annual recertification process for your repayment plan?

- a. Yes, I recertified
- b. No, I do not need to recertify yet
- c. No, I was supposed to recertify, but I have not
- d. I don't know/I'm not sure

13. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR; if Q12 = b, c, or d]** If you do not complete the annual recertification process, what is your understanding of what will happen?

- a. Nothing will change. My plan and payment amount will remain the same.
- b. I will no longer be in a repayment plan based on my income.
- c. I will remain in the same plan, but my payment amount will change to the amount I would have paid under a 10-year standard repayment plan.
- d. I don't know what will happen
- e. Other (please specify)

14. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR; if Q12 = a]** Please rate your satisfaction with the recertification process on the following: [scale of 1-10, very dissatisfied to very satisfied]

- The clarity of the instructions
- The clarity of the deadlines
- The ease of the recertification process
- The helpfulness of my loan servicer

15. Please select the top three sources of information that influenced your choice of repayment plan (select a minimum of one, a maximum of three):
- Online loan servicer website
 - Phone number for loan servicer
 - Website: www.nslds.ed.gov (National Student Loan Data System)
 - Website: www.studentaid.gov
 - Website: www.studentloans.gov (including the Repayment Estimator)
 - Other online government resources
 - Online non-government resources
 - Entrance counseling at my school
 - Exit counseling at my school
 - Talking with staff at my school (for example, financial aid officers or academic counselors)
 - Talking with friends or family
 - Mobile phone apps
 - Media (for example, newspapers, magazines, or news websites)
 - Social media (for example, Twitter, YouTube, or Facebook)
 - Other (please specify)
 - I have not used any of these sources of information
16. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR]** If you still have a balance on your loans at the end of your repayment period, what is your understanding of what will happen?
- I will have to pay the remaining balance
 - The balance will be forgiven, but it will not be taxed
 - The balance will be forgiven, but it could be taxed
 - I don't know/I'm not sure
 - Other (please specify)
17. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR]** If your income increases, what is your understanding of what will happen?
- My student loan payment will increase
 - My student loan payment will decrease
 - My student loan payment will stay the same
 - I don't know what will happen to my student loan payment
 - Other (please specify)
18. Considering all of your student loans, both federal and private, approximately how much do you currently owe (total balance)?
19. Considering all of your student loans, both federal and private, approximately how much is your monthly student loan payment?
- \$0
 - \$1-\$199
 - \$200 - \$399
 - \$400 - \$599
 - \$600 - \$799
 - \$800 - \$999

- g. \$1,000 or more
- h. I don't know/I'm not sure
- i. I am not currently making a monthly payment
- j. Other (please specify)

20. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR]** Compared to your previous repayment plan amount, how much less do you pay each month because you are in an income-driven repayment plan?

- a. Less than \$100
- b. \$100 - \$199
- c. \$200 - \$299
- d. \$300 - \$399
- e. \$400 - \$499
- f. \$500 or more
- g. I don't know/I'm not sure
- h. The monthly payment amount is about the same
- i. Other (please specify)

ACSI Benchmark Questions

21. Using a scale of 1 to 10 where "1" means "not at all confident" and "10" means "completely confident," how confident are you in your ability to manage your student loan(s) both now and in the future?
22. Using a 10-point scale on which "1" means "very dissatisfied" and "10" means "very satisfied," how satisfied are you with your student loan repayment plan?
23. Using a 10-point scale on which "1" means "falls short of your expectations" and "10" means "exceeds your expectations," to what extent has your student loan repayment plan met your expectations?
24. Imagine what an ideal plan for repayment of your student loans would look like. How well do you think your current loan repayment plan compares with the ideal you just imagined? Please use a 10-point scale on which "1" means "not at all close to the ideal," and "10" means "very close to the ideal."

Closing/Demographics

25. Which best describes you?¹
- a. I graduated from school with a degree or certificate
 - b. I left school (withdrew) and did not complete a degree or certificate
 - c. I am a current student
 - d. I am on a leave of absence from school
 - e. Other (please specify)

¹ A similar question exists in surveys of borrowers in grace: Which best describes your current status? Choices: I graduated within the last six months with a degree, I left school (withdrew) or am no longer pursuing my program of study, I am now enrolled less than half-time in my program of study, Other (please specify).

26. **[If graduated with a degree or certificate]** What degree(s) did you earn most recently?
Please check all that apply (for example, if you completed a dual-degree program).

- a. Associate's degree
- b. Bachelor's degree
- c. Undergraduate certificate
- d. Graduate certificate
- e. Master's degree
- f. Professional degree (MBA, J.D., etc.)
- g. Doctorate degree

27. What is your current employment status?

- a. Employed part-time
- b. Employed full-time
- c. Paid internship, fellowship, or residency
- d. Unpaid internship
- e. Not employed, looking for work
- f. Not employed, not looking for work

28. **[If employed]** What type of employer do you work for?

- a. Private business
- b. Government organization
- c. Non-profit organization
- d. I am self-employed
- e. Other (please specify)
- f. Not applicable

29. What is your marital status?

- a. Never married
- b. Married
- c. Widowed
- d. Divorced

30. Approximately how much income do you expect to make this calendar year (before taxes)
[numerical field]?

31. How much income do you expect to make five years from now?

- a. Less than the amount I make now
- b. About the same amount I make now
- c. \$0 - \$10,000 more than I make now
- d. \$10,001 - \$20,000 more than I make now
- e. \$20,001 - \$30,000 more than I make now
- f. More than \$30,000 more
- g. I do not expect to be employed
- h. I cannot predict my future income
- i. Other (please specify)

32. Please use the space below to provide us with any thoughts you may have about how to improve communication to borrowers about their repayment plan options.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1845-0045. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 10 minutes per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The obligation to respond to this collection is voluntary. If you have comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual submission of this survey, please contact Federal Student Aid/Customer Experience Office/Customer Analytics Group at 830 First Street, NE Washington, DC 20202 or customersurveys@ed.gov directly. [Note: Please do not return the completed survey to this address.]