

# Federal Student Aid 2014 Borrowers in Default Survey

## [Programming instructions in bold brackets]

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 delinquent in one or more of their student loan(s) for more than 271 days.

The survey will take approximately twelve minutes to complete. CFI Group, an independent research and consulting firm, is conducting this survey, which is authorized by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, Control No. xxxx-xxxx. It is hosted via a secure server. Your responses are strictly confidential. **Individual responses will not be reported and you will not be contacted as a result of taking this survey.** If you have any questions, please contact [survey@cfigroup.com](mailto:survey@cfigroup.com).

Thank you in advance for your valuable feedback.

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## Introduction

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1. Which best describes your current status?
  - a. I graduated with a degree/certificate
  - b. I left school (withdrew) or am no longer pursuing my program of study **[Skip to Q3]**
  - c. Other (please specify) **[Skip to Q4]**
  
2. **[If Q1 = a]** What degree(s)/certificate did you earn most recently? Please check all that apply (for example, if you completed a dual-degree program).
  - a. Certificate **[Skip to Q4]**
  - b. Associate's degree **[Skip to Q4]**
  - c. Bachelor's degree **[Skip to Q4]**
  - d. Master's degree **[Skip to Q4]**
  - e. Professional degree (MBA, J.D., etc) **[Skip to Q4]**
  - f. Doctorate degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)**[Skip to Q4]**
  
3. **[If Q1 = b]** What degree(s)/certificate did you pursue most recently? Please check all that apply (for example, if you completed a dual-degree program).
  - a. Certificate
  - b. Associate's degree
  - c. Bachelor's degree
  - d. Master's degree
  - e. Professional degree (MBA, J.D., etc.)
  - f. Doctorate degree (Ph.D., Ed.D, etc.)

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## Communication

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4. Have you been contacted about your student loan(s) going into default?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No **[Skip to Q6]**

c. I'm not sure (please explain)

5. **[If Q4 = a]** What entity most recently contacted you about your student loan(s) going into default?
- a) Debt Management Collections Services (DMCS)/Default Resolution Group (DRG) (This group is an office within the United States Department of Education)
  - b) Loan servicer (i.e. Sallie Mae, AES, NelNet, Great Lakes, EdFinancial, Fed Loan Servicing, MOHELA, etc.)
  - c) Guaranty agency (i.e. PHEAA, Great Lakes GA, USA Funds, College Assist, ECMC, ASA, New York HESC, etc.)
  - d) Collection agency (i.e. Coast Professionals, Pioneer Credit Recovery, etc.)
  - e) School (i.e. City University of New York, Penn State, University of Phoenix, etc.)
  - f) Other (please specify)
  - g) I'm not sure

Think about communications you have received about your student loans going into default, such as an initial notification of default status, monthly statements, notification that your loan(s) had been forwarded to a collection agency, etc. Thinking about the communications you have received, and using a 1 to 10 scale where 1 is "Poor" and 10 is "Excellent", please rate them on:

- 6. Ease of understanding the content of the notifications
  - 7. Making clear the next steps required of you
  - 8. The accuracy of your account information (e.g., student aid debt status, payments, balances, etc.)
  - 9. Ease of finding the customer service help number
10. Do you know where to go to file a complaint about the entity that is handling your defaulted student loan(s)?
- a. Yes (please specify)
  - b. No

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### **Exit Counseling**

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11. At the time you graduated, left school, or became enrolled below half-time, you may have been offered exit counseling to help you understand your rights and responsibilities as a student loan borrower. Did you complete exit counseling?
- a. Yes
  - b. No **[skip to Q15]**
  - c. I don't know/I'm not sure **[skip to Q15]**

On a scale of 1-10, with "1" being "poor" and "10" being "excellent," please rate the exit counseling you received on **[add "I do not remember" column]:**

- 12. Helping you understand your rights and responsibilities as a student loan borrower
- 13. Helping you understand how to manage your loan(s)
- 14. Helping you understand your options for your repayment plan

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### **Understanding and Awareness of Options**

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15. Where have you gone to find out information about your repayment options or how to manage your student loan(s)? (Check all that apply)
- a. Collection agency
  - b. Online loan servicer/guaranty agency account management
  - c. Phone number for loan servicer/guaranty agency

- d. Website: MyEdDebt.com
- e. Website: www.nslds.ed.gov (National Student Loan Data System)
- f. Website: www.studentaid.gov
- g. Website: www.studentloans.gov
- h. Other online government resources
- i. Online non-government resources
- j. Exit counseling at my school
- k. Talking with staff at my school (for example, financial aid officers or academic counselors)
- l. Talking with friends or family
- m. Mobile phone apps
- n. Social media resources (for example: Twitter, YouTube, or Facebook)
- o. Other (please specify)
- p. I have not used any of these sources of information

On a scale of 1 to 10 with “1” being “no understanding” and “10” being “complete understanding,” please rate how well you feel you understand each of the following:

- 16. Repayment
- 17. Deferment
- 18. Forbearance
- 19. Consolidation
- 20. Delinquency
- 21. Default
- 22. Rehabilitation

24. Have you considered income-driven repayment (i.e. income-based repayment, Pay as You Earn, income-contingent repayment, income-sensitive repayment)?

- a. Yes, I currently have an income-driven repayment plan
- b. Yes, I have considered it, but I have another plan (Follow up –Why do you have another plan instead of income-driven repayment?)
- c. No, I didn’t have enough information about it (Follow up - What information do you feel you still need to consider income-driven repayment?)
- d. No, I am not interested (Follow up – Why are you not interested in income-driven repayment?)
- e. No, I don’t think I qualify

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**Default Difficulties**

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25. Which situations best describe the reasons you have defaulted on your loan(s)?

	Main reason (select one)	Secondary reason (select one)
a. The quality of education that I received was insufficient to get a job		
b. I dispute owing the loan		
c. Due to medical reasons, I am unable to make payments		
d. I am unemployed		
e. I am underemployed		
f. My expenses are too high		
g. I am not aware of my repayment options		
h. My payments are unmanageable		
i. I don’t understand my repayment options		

j. I move frequently and was never notified that I defaulted on a loan		
k. I was never notified that I defaulted on a loan		
l. Other (please specify)		

25. Please check all of the debts that you are behind in payment or in collections:

Bill Type	I do not have this bill	I am behind on this payment	I am not behind on this payment
Mortgage			
Rent			
Car(s)			
Credit card(s)			
Bank loan (not housing-related)			
Utilities			
Telephone/cable television/internet service			
Other (please specify)			

26. What do you consider the highest manageable monthly payment for your student loan(s)?

- a. 5% of my monthly income
- b. 10% of my monthly income
- c. 15% of my monthly income
- d. 20% of my monthly income
- e. Other (please specify)

27. Based on what you know or understand today, which of the things listed below can happen if your student loan(s) go into default? (check all that apply)

- a. Lower credit score
- b. More difficult to borrow (please specify)
- c. Not able to get student loans
- d. Bankruptcy
- e. Received collection calls
- f. Stress
- g. Collection fees
- h. Federal tax refund was withheld by the government
- i. Money withheld from pay check
- j. No consequence
- k. I don't know
- l. Other (please specify)

28. Were the consequences (e.g. lowered credit score, collection calls etc.) for defaulting on your loan better or worse than you anticipated?

- a. Better than I anticipated
- b. About what I anticipated
- c. Worse than I anticipated

Please think about your experiences dealing with the student loan process, including exit counseling, communication with your loan servicer, information about your repayment options, and anything else you can think of related to paying back your student loan(s).

29. Using a 10-point scale on which "1" means "very dissatisfied" and 10 means "very satisfied", how satisfied have you been with your experiences concerning the handling of your federal student aid debt since your loan(s) defaulted?
30. Now please use a 10-point scale on which "1" now means "falls short of your expectations" and "10" means "exceeds your expectations" - in a positive sense. To what extent has your experience with the handling of your federal student aid debt met your expectations since your loan(s) defaulted?
31. Imagine your best-case scenario for working with a, collection agency or the Department of Education on the handling of your federal student aid debt - your ideal process for interacting with them. How well do you think your experiences with your student aid debt since your loans defaulted compare with that ideal you just imagined? Please use a 10-point scale on which "1" means "not at all ideal," and "10" means "very close to the ideal."

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### Outcomes and Closing

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32. Considering all of your student loans, both federal and private, approximately how much do you currently owe? Please enter a number with no spaces, commas or dollar signs (for example, if you have \$5,000 of loans please enter 5000).
  - a. Amount owed **[capture number, do not require response – validate numeric value entered]**
33. Do you have a private loan?
  - a. Yes
    - i. **Private loan amount owed [capture number, do not require response – validate numeric value entered]**
  - b. No **[skip to Q36]**
  - c. I don't know **[skip to Q36]**
34. **[If Q33=a]** What best describes the status of your private loan(s)?
  - a) Repayment
  - b) Deferment
  - c) Forbearance
  - d) Defaulted
  - e) Paid-in-full
  - f) Cancelled/discharged
35. For your federal and private student loans, how would you pay these loans?
  - a) I would pay my private loans before I pay my federal loans
  - b) I would pay my federal loans before I pay my private loans
  - c) I would pay both my federal and private loans at the same time
  - d) Other, please explain

36. When you first enrolled in school, you may have had an idea of how much you expected to borrow in student loans. Now that you are finished, did you end up borrowing more or less than you initially anticipated?
- More
  - Less
  - About what I expected
  - I'm not sure yet because I plan to continue my education
  - I don't know/not sure
37. If you could go through the process of taking out loans to pay for your education all over again, would you take the same actions or make a change?
- Take the same actions
  - Make a change (please explain)
  - I don't know/not sure
38. What is your current employment status?
- Employed part-time
  - Employed full-time
  - Internship (unpaid)
  - Not employed, looking for work
  - Not employed, not looking for work
  - Other (please specify)
39. What is your approximate annual income (before taxes)? Please enter a number with no spaces, commas or dollar signs (for example, if your income is \$20,000 per year, enter 20000). **[capture number, do not require response – validate numeric value entered]**
40. In your own words, is there anything the U.S. Department of Education could do to improve the information or services it provides on student loans to customers such as yourself? **[open ended]**