

# 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 or forbearance.

The survey will take approximately thirteen minutes to complete. CFI Group, an independent research and consulting firm, is conducting this survey. Your responses will remain anonymous and will only be reported in aggregate form. If you have any questions, please contact [survey@cfigroup.com](mailto:survey@cfigroup.com).

Thank you in advance for your valuable feedback.

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 13 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](mailto:customersurveys@ed.gov) directly. [Note: Please do not return the completed instrument, form, application or survey to this address.]

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#### Introduction

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1. **[Ask of all borrowers]** Our records indicate that you have at least one student loan that is in repayment, forbearance, or deferment. 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 (IDR) 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 contacted your loan servicer(s) regarding a more affordable repayment?
- a. Yes, they told me about income-driven repayment (IDR), deferment, and forbearance options
  - b. Yes, but they told me only about deferment or forbearance options
  - c. No
4. **[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 **Ask Q5 Follow-up question**
  - e. Other (please specify)
5. **[Ask of borrowers not in IDR; if Q4=d]** Why did you not finish the income-driven repayment plan application? **[Capture verbatim, do not require a response]**

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#### Repayment Choices

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6. **[Ask of borrowers not in IDR; if Q4=a]** Please tell us why you have not applied for an income-driven repayment plan. (Select all that apply) **[Randomize choices a - i]**
- 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. I am currently attending school or plan to return to school
  - j. Other (please specify)
7. **[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

c. I don't know/I'm not sure

8. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR]** Which repayment plan are you enrolled in?
- Income-Based Repayment
  - Pay as You Earn
  - Revised Pay as You Earn (REPAYE)
  - Income-Contingent Repayment
  - I don't know/I'm not sure
9. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR]** Please use the list below to indicate which benefits are most important to you when deciding to apply for income-driven repayment plan. Please rank the benefits below from 1 to 4, with "1" being the benefit that is most important to you and a "4" being the benefit that is least important to you. **[Randomize presentation of list]**
- Lower monthly payment **[skip to Q11]**
  - Flexible monthly payment in case my income changes **[skip to Q11]**
  - Potential loan forgiveness **[skip to Q11]**
  - Other (please specify) **[skip to Q11]**
10. **[Ask of borrowers not in IDR]** Please use the list below to indicate which benefits are most important to you when selecting a repayment plan. Please rank the benefits below from 1 to 6, with "1" being the benefit that is most important to you and a "6" being the benefit that is least important to you. **[Randomize presentation of list]**
- Lower monthly payment
  - Lower total interest paid
  - Pay off my loan(s) more quickly
  - Flexible monthly payment in case my income changes
  - Potential loan forgiveness
  - Other (please specify)

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#### Application Process

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11. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR; if not in IDR, skip to Q19]** How did you apply for an income-driven repayment plan?
- Electronic application on StudentLoans.gov
  - Paper application printed from StudentLoans.gov
  - Electronic application from my loan servicer
  - Paper application from my loan servicer
  - Third-party company applied for me (you or your servicer did not apply)
  - Other (please specify)
  - I don't know/I'm not sure

12. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR]** Please rate your satisfaction with the application on the following: [scale of 1-10, 1 = very dissatisfied to 10 = 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 from the IRS
- The amount of time it took to process my application

13. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR]** How could the application process be improved? **[Randomize choices a - f] [Check all that apply]**

- a. Quicker automated processing of IDR applications
- b. Clearer loan servicer communication
- c. Detailed information on how my loan balance is impacted by payments
- d. Automatic renewal with signed certification
- e. Option to apply/ recertify on servicer website
- f. Ability to upload income documentation
- g. Other [Please explain]

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#### Recertification Process

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14. **[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
- c. No, I was supposed to recertify, but I have not **[Ask Q15 Follow-up question]**
- d. I don't know/I'm not sure

15. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR, if Q14=c]** Why did you not recertify the income-driven repayment (IDR) application? [Capture verbatim, do not require response]

16. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR; if Q14 =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. **[skip to Q19]**
- b. My payment amount will no longer be based on my income and my interest may be added to my outstanding principal balance (capitalize). **[skip to Q19]**
- c. I don't know what will happen **[skip to Q19]**
- d. Other (please specify) **[skip to Q19]**

17. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR; if Q14 =a]** Have you had issues with recertifying your income-driven repayment plan? (If yes, check all that apply) **[Randomize choices b - e]**
- a. No
  - b. Yes, the servicer lost the paperwork
  - c. Yes, I had to submit multiple applications to the servicer
  - d. Yes, there was a long processing delay
  - e. Yes, the loan servicer gave me incorrect information
  - f. Yes, other (Please explain)
18. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR; if Q14 = a]** Please rate your satisfaction with the recertification process on the following: [scale of 1-10, 1 = very dissatisfied to 10 = very satisfied]
- The clarity of the instructions
  - The clarity of the deadlines
  - The ease of the recertification process
  - The helpfulness of my loan servicer
  - The timeliness of the loan servicer's response

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Financial Literacy

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19. Please select the top three sources of information that influenced your choice of repayment plan (select a minimum of one, a maximum of three):
- a. Online loan servicer website
  - b. Phone number for loan servicer
  - c. Website: [www.nslsds.ed.gov](http://www.nslsds.ed.gov) (National Student Loan Data System)
  - d. Website: [www.studentaid.gov](http://www.studentaid.gov)
  - e. Website: [www.studentloans.gov](http://www.studentloans.gov) (including the Repayment Estimator)
  - f. Other online government resources
  - g. Online non-government resources
  - h. Entrance counseling at my school
  - i. Exit counseling at my school
  - j. Talking with staff at my school (for example, financial aid officers or academic counselors)
  - k. Talking with friends or family
  - l. Mobile phone apps
  - m. Media (for example, newspapers, magazines, or news websites)
  - n. Social media (for example, Twitter, YouTube, or Facebook)
  - o. Other (please specify)
  - p. I have not used any of these sources of information

20. **[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)
21. **[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)
22. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR]** Did you know while you are making payments under some of the income-driven repayment plans, that *if* your payments do not cover interest, your overall loan balance can increase?
- Yes
  - No
23. Approximately how much do you currently owe? (Please enter numbers with no spaces, commas, or dollar signs (for example, if you have \$5,000 of loans, please enter 5000).)
- Federal student loans **[Capture number, validate numeric response, no negative numbers]**
  - Private (non-Federal) student loans **[Capture number, validate numeric response, no negative numbers]**
24. Approximately how much is your monthly student loan payment? (Please enter numbers with no spaces, commas, or dollar signs (for example, if your payment is \$300, please enter 300, or if your IDR payment is nothing, enter 0).)
- Monthly federal student loan payment **[Capture number, validate numeric response, no negative numbers]**
  - Monthly private (non-federal) student loan payment **[Capture number, validate numeric response, no negative numbers]**

25. **[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 (IDR)? (For example, if you would have paid \$800 under the standard repayment plan, but pay \$200 under your income-driven repayment plan, the answer would be choice f, \$500 or more since you pay \$600 less in IDR.)
- 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. I have only been on an income-driven repayment plan
  - j. Other (please specify)

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ACSI Benchmark Questions

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26. 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?
27. 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?
28. 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?
29. 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."



30. Which best describes you?
- I graduated from school with a degree or certificate
  - I left school (withdrew) and did not complete a degree or certificate
  - I am a current student
  - I am on a leave of absence from school
  - Other (please specify)
31. **[If Q30 = a, 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).
- Associate's degree
  - Bachelor's degree
  - Undergraduate certificate
  - Graduate certificate
  - Master's degree
  - Professional degree (MBA, J.D., etc.)
  - Doctorate degree
32. What is your current employment status?
- Employed part-time
  - Employed full-time
  - Paid internship, fellowship, or residency
  - Unpaid internship
  - Not employed, looking for work
  - Not employed, not looking for work
33. **[If employed (If Q32 = a, b, c, or d)]** What type of employer do you work for?
- Private business
  - Government organization
  - Non-profit organization
  - I am self-employed
  - Other (please specify)
  - Not applicable
34. What is your marital status?
- Never married
  - Married
  - Widowed
  - Divorced

35. Approximately how much income do you expect to make this calendar year (before taxes) **[Capture number, validate numeric response, no negative numbers, do not require response]**? (Please enter numbers with no spaces, commas, or dollar signs (for example, if your income is \$20,000, please enter 20000).)
36. How could the Department and the loan servicers improve communications to borrowers about their repayment plan options? (Please check all that apply.)
- The Department would provide me the ability to select communication mode (e.g. text, snail mail, multiple communication modes, etc.)
  - Provide customized and/or additional loan counseling
  - More frequent communication
  - Other (please specify)
37. Have you considered the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program (PSLF)?
- No, I do not have enough information about it
  - No, I am not interested
  - Yes, I have considered it, but I am not eligible
  - Yes, I am hoping to qualify for Public Service Loan Forgiveness
38. 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? **[For choices “a” through “e” please order them like below for half of the survey respondents and for the other half with the reverse order for choices “a” through “e” – meaning starting with “e” for “A lot less”, “d” for “Less”, “c”, “b”, and “a”, etc.]**
- A lot more
  - More
  - About what I expected
  - Less
  - A lot less
  - I’m not sure
  - I don’t know
39. What do you consider the highest manageable monthly payment for your federal student loan(s)? Please enter a dollar figure below. (For example, if a manageable monthly payment is \$1,000, please enter 1000). **[Capture number, validate numeric response, no negative numbers, do not require response]**
40. **[Ask of borrowers in IDR] and [Ask if Q39 amount less than Q24a amount]** In a sentence or two, tell us why you need a lower federal student loan payment. **[Capture verbatim, do not require response]**

41. On the list below, while you were in school, would you have participated in or accessed any of the following to assist in student loan borrowing decisions? (Please check all that apply.) **[Randomize choices a - e.]**
- a. Mandatory 1 credit hour financial literacy course offered by your school before the beginning of the first academic term
  - b. In-person counseling at my school
  - c. More online resources that show loan balances and financial decision points
  - d. Mobile app for managing my money
  - e. Money management video tutorials