

Memorandum

United States Department of Education
Institute of Education Sciences
National Center for Education

Statistics

DATE: October 23, 2024

TO: Beverly Pratt, OMB

THROUGH: Carrie Clarady, OMB Liaison, IES

FROM: Tracy Hunt-White, NCES

SUBJECT: 2023–24 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:24) Incentive Boost for Remaining Non-FAFSA Filers in All Waves Change Request (OMB# 1850-0666 v.40)

The 2023-24 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:24) is a nationally representative cross-sectional study of how students and their families finance education beyond high school in a given academic year. NPSAS is conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and was first implemented by NCES during the 1986–87 academic year and has been fielded every 3 to 4 years since. This request pertains to the 12th cycle in the NPSAS series being conducted during the 2023–24 academic year. NPSAS:24 will consist of a nationally representative sample of undergraduate and graduate students, and a nationally representative sample of bachelor's degree completers. Subsets of questions in the NPSAS:24 student survey focus on describing aspects of the experience of bachelor's completers in their last year of postsecondary education.

The request to conduct all activities related to NPSAS:24, including materials and procedures related to the NPSAS:24 student data collection, consisting of abstraction of student data from institutions and a student survey was approved by OMB in December 2023, with updates approved in January 2024 (OMB#1859-0666 v. 36 and 37, respectively) and August 2024 ((OMB#1859-0666 v. 38), and carried over respondent burden, procedures, and materials related to the NPSAS:24 institution sampling, enrollment list collection, and matching to administrative data files as approved by OMB in September 2023 (OMB#1859-0666 v. 35). The NPSAS:24 enrollment list collection from institutions takes place from October 2023 to October 2024, the student records and student survey data collections take place from February 2024 through November 2024.

This request is for approval (1) to shift the end date of data collection from October 31, 2024, to January 12, 2025; (2) to modify and add contacting materials; and (3) to offer non-FAFSA filers in all waves a \$10 boost to increase their likelihood of participation in the student survey. OMB approved a \$10 boost incentive for the earlier data collection waves (1-3) on August 13, 2024 (OMB#1859-0666 v. 38) and a second \$10 boost incentive for the remaining waves of data collection on September 16, 2024 (OMB#1859-0666 v. 39). These earlier boosts targeted key underrepresented sample groups using a binary logistic regression model. The current request would target an

additional group of sample members who did not submit a federal aid application for the 2023-24 financial aid year, in all data collection waves. This request does not introduce significant changes to the estimated respondent burden or the costs to the federal government.

End Date for Data Collection (see Part A.16, p. 16)

While earlier NPSAS student data collections have ended in November or December, the end date for the most recent NPSAS:20 student collection was extended to January 31, 2021, because the later waves of student samples struggled to achieve target response rates. Continuing through January resulted in an increased response rate of about 15 percentage points from the start of the last data collection wave.

Currently, about 71,400 sample members have completed a full or partial survey, for a response rate of 47.4 percent across the 9 waves (ranging from 60.3 percent for Wave 1 to 34.5 percent for Wave 9). We would like to continue student data collection through the end of the first full week of January 2025, ending at midnight, January 12, 2025, to allow all cases to benefit from holiday themed contacts and an increase in participation rates through the holiday season.

A data collection extension benefits sampled students in later waves of data collection that have had far less time to respond. Sample members in later waves are substantively different from sample members in earlier waves in that they include more sample members from the private for-profit (PFP) sectors (91 percent of the NPSAS:24 PFP sample is included in Waves 7-9). It is particularly important for sample in Sectors 9 and 10 (private for-profit less-than-2-year and private for-profit 2-year, respectively) because they were underrepresented in NPSAS:20 (showing lower response rates than other sectors) and the nonresponse bias analysis from NPSAS:20 indicated that Sector 10 had the largest number of significantly biased estimates. An extension provides additional time to collect responses, decreasing the potential for nonresponse bias, while also allowing these sample members sufficient time to consider recent and upcoming incentive boost/abbreviated survey interventions.

Additions and Modifications to Mailout Materials and Methods (see Part B.4.b, p. 30)

A set of outreach letters and emails was provided in appendix J, Student Data Collection Materials, of the NPSAS:24 student data collection forms clearance package (OMB#1859-0666 v. 37) and updated in the June change request (OMB#1859-0666 v. 38). With the data collection extension and effort to increase the participation of aid non-filers (see below), we would like to update our student outreach plans to (1) add holiday-themed contacts, including a greeting card, emails, and texts for Thanksgiving (November 28, 2024) and the winter holidays; (2) update contact materials for the end of data collection; (3) add content targeting specific situations, including extending time to complete a survey; partially completed surveys; following up on recent study voicemail messages; participation by international students; and addressing relevance of participation to federal aid application non-filers (see appendix J for the complete set of materials).

Boost Incentives for Aid Application Non-Filers (see Part B.4.b, p. 25)

Data from the federal Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) is a key data source for NPSAS, providing information submitted by and about students selected for participation in the study, including demographics and information needed to determine aid eligibility. Many important variables in NPSAS are derived from data available only from the FAFSA or the survey. FAFSA data, available through 2023-24 from the Central Processing System (CPS), are also important for obtaining locating information during data collection. In NPSAS:20, about 61 percent of students matched to CPS overall, and the data collection contractor received new address information or confirmed existing information from this CPS match.

To date for NPSAS:24, about 70 percent of the sample submitted FAFSA applications (matched in CPS). Of those who did not submit, about 58 percent have yet to complete the student survey. FAFSA non-filers are a group that is systematically different from FAFSA filers. Anecdotally, a common question asked of NCES by sample members is whether or not their participation in the NPSAS survey is needed since they did not apply for student aid. Our expectation is that this sentiment is common among non-filers. For non-filers, the NPSAS interview becomes the only source for the critical data (e.g., income, dependents) that are missing without a CPS match. Together with the targeted contacting materials described above, we believe a \$10 boost offered to non-filers will increase the likelihood of their participation. About 14,900 non-filers have not yet received a separate boost offer.