

Summer Melt and Free Application for Federal Student Aid Verification

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Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) verification and its role in summer melt is examined in this brief. *Summer melt* is when high school seniors who appear ready to go to college the fall following graduation do not enroll.

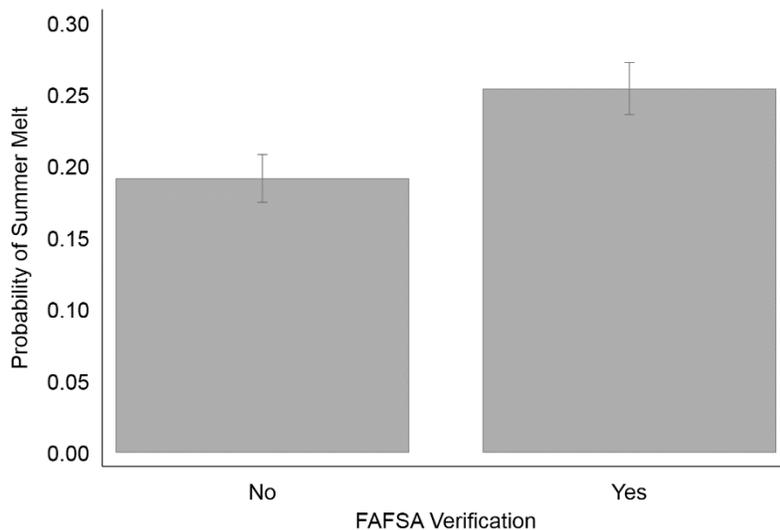
- FAFSA verification increased the likelihood of summer melt by six percentage points.
- One-third of Houston Independent School District (HISD) college-intending students were flagged for FAFSA verification, and racial and ethnic minorities were especially at risk of verification.

Reducing FAFSA verification and/or providing support to students and families managing the process may be a way to improve college enrollment rates and reduce summer melt.

The full report is available at kinder.rice.edu/houston-education-research-consortium.

Key Findings

Figure 1. Summer Melt by FAFSA Verification

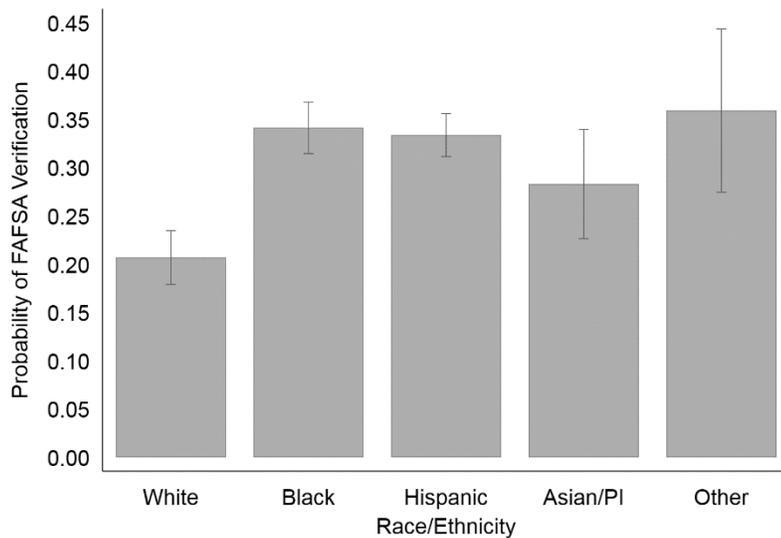


- One-in-four college-intending students experienced summer melt and did not attend college by November 1 of the fall semester after high school graduation.
- FAFSA verification strongly predicted summer melt, increasing the likelihood of summer melt by six percentage points, after accounting for other factors.

Source: Figure 2 in full report.

Note: Note: The lines near the top of each bar in the graph are error bars. If the error bar from one bar overlaps the error bar from another bar, then the difference between the two bars is *not* statistically significant.

Figure 2. FAFSA Verification by Race/Ethnicity



- One-third of college-intending students were flagged for FAFSA verification.
- Racial and ethnic minorities were more likely to be flagged for FAFSA verification than white students, net of other factors.

Source: Figure 1 in full report.

Note: The lines near the top of each bar in the graph are error bars. If the error bar from one bar overlaps the error bar from another bar, then the difference between the two bars is *not* statistically significant.

Recommendations

1: Districts like HISD may try to identify strategies that can reduce FAFSA verification issues and/or provide support to students and families working through the verification process. Schools can embed strategies within existing structures like ongoing college advising initiatives. College advisors may consider assisting students and families as they fill out FAFSA applications and give additional guidance if they are flagged for verification.

2: The school district may consider integrating messages about FAFSA verification into its summertime texting outreach program and offer students guidance if they encounter it as a barrier.



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