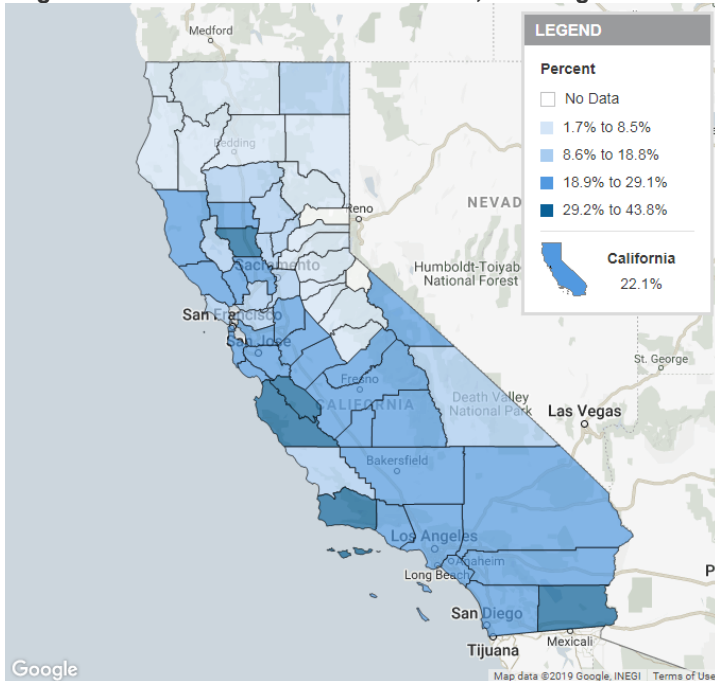


English Learners in California

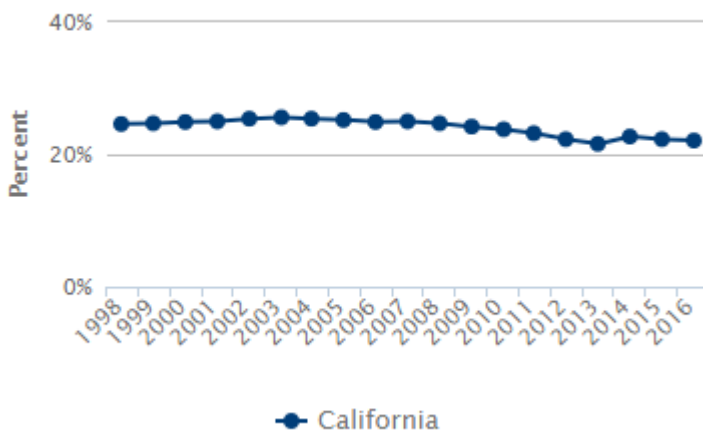
English Learners in Public Schools: 2016; Showing Counties



Definition: Percentage of public school students identified as 'English Learners,' a term used to describe students with a primary language other than English and who lack the defined English language skills of listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing necessary to succeed in a school's regular instructional programs (e.g., in 2016, 21.1% of California public school students were identified as English Learners).

Data Source: California Dept. of Education, [DataQuest](#) (May 2016).

English Learners in Public Schools



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What It Is

Kidsdata.org offers the number and percentage of English Learners among public school students, the number and percentage of students by English Learner status (i.e., English Learners with Spanish as a primary language, English Learners with a primary language other than Spanish, or non-English Learners), and the top 10 primary languages spoken most frequently by English Learners. English Learners are students who have a primary language other than English and who lack the clearly defined English skills of listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing necessary to succeed in a school's regular instructional programs.

Why This Topic Is Important

Trends in English proficiency and primary languages spoken among children and families can be useful in projecting potential needs and planning appropriate services in health care, education, child care, and other settings. For example, quality health care requires effective communication between families and providers. Research shows that children in families with a primary language other than English experience disparities in health status, quality of health care services, and access to care, compared to children with English as a primary household language (1). Academically, children with limited English proficiency tend to have lower test scores than their native English-speaking peers. English Learners face the challenge of mastering content presented in the school curriculum at the same time they learn a new language (2, 3, 4). These circumstances create exceptional challenges for later educational attainment and socioeconomic success.

California's public school system is charged with serving a diverse student body. In 2015 more than 2.6 million California students (43%) spoke a language other than English at home, compared to a national estimate of 22% among all children ages 5-17 (3, 5). More than 65 primary languages are reported among California students classified as English Learners (6). To ensure that children with limited English proficiency reach their maximum academic and health potential, it is critical for California's education, health, social service, and community systems to be adequately prepared to meet the needs of the state's increasingly diverse child and family population.

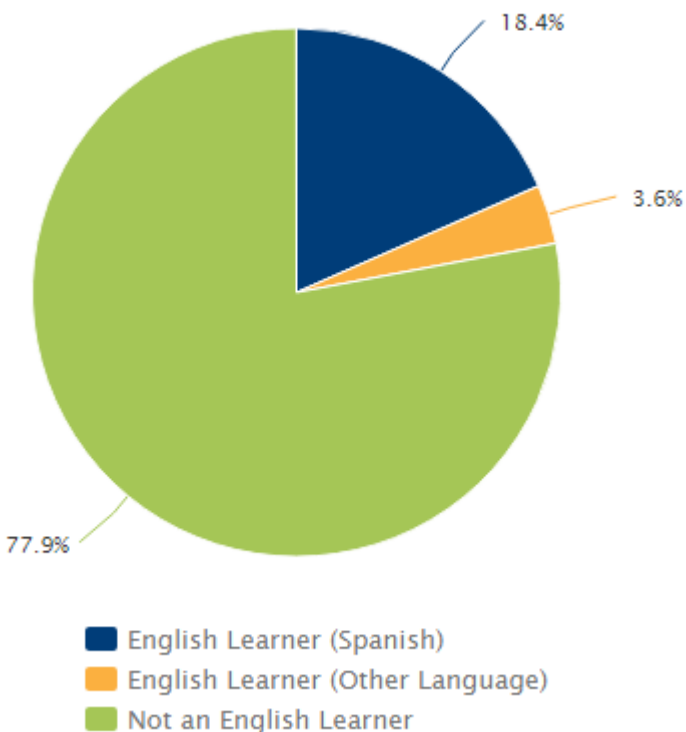
How Children Are Faring

In 2016, 22% of all California public school students were classified as English Learners,

lack the defined English language skills of listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing necessary to succeed in a school's regular instructional programs (e.g., in 2016, 21.1% of California public school students were identified as English Learners).

Data Source: California Dept. of Education, [DataQuest](#) (May 2016).

Students by English Learner Status in California Public Schools: 2016 California



Definition: Percentage of public school students who are English Learners (with Spanish as a primary language), English Learners (Other Language), or not English Learners (e.g., in 2016, 18.4% of California public school students were English Learners with Spanish as a primary language). English Learners are students with a primary language other than English and who lack the defined English language skills of listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing necessary to succeed in regular school instructional programs.

Data Source: California Dept. of Education, [DataQuest](#) (May 2016).

which equates to more than 1.3 million students with limited English proficiency. The percentage of English Learners remained around 22% to 26% between 1998-2016.

In 2016 and previous years, Spanish was by far the most common first language of students classified as English Learners, statewide and in virtually all counties with available data. Nearly one in five (18%) California public school students were Spanish-speaking English Learners in 2016; 4% were English Learners with a primary language other than Spanish. Following Spanish, the state's most common non-English primary languages were Vietnamese and Mandarin.

View references for this text and additional research on this topic:

<https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/10/english-learners/summary>



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