Math Proficiency in California

What It Is
Kidsdata.org reports the percentage of public school students in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11 who meet or exceed their grade-level standard on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment for mathematics. These data are available by grade level for counties and school districts, as well as by English language fluency, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status for counties.

Why This Topic Is Important
Basic math skills are essential to navigate through life, and competence in mathematics is associated with future academic and economic success. Math is more than an academic subject—quantitative literacy is a gateway to opportunity and a foundation for achievement in school, work, and life. Nationwide, increasing emphasis is being placed on children’s proficiency in mathematics, science, technology, and engineering, recognizing the importance of these fields in the 21st century. According to a recent assessment, the U.S. ranked 38th out of 71 countries in math scores among 15-year-olds. In California, student math scores consistently rank among the lowest in the nation, even though U.S. and California scores generally have improved since the 1990s. Further, large inequities persist in math achievement by student socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, disability status, and English proficiency, statewide and nationally. Critical to addressing these gaps, leaders must work to ensure that all students (regardless of social position or circumstance) have equitable access to high-quality learning environments and math instruction.

How Children Are Faring
In 2019, among California public school students who took the CAASPP Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment for math, 40% met or exceeded their grade-level standard, up from 34% in 2015. Over the same period, the percentage of students demonstrating math proficiency rose in all but six counties, though county-level figures vary considerably, from 20% to 58% in 2019. Statewide, gaps in math proficiency by English language fluency and socioeconomic status are wide. For example, in 2019, students proficient in English were more than three times as likely to meet or exceed their grade-level standard when compared with English Learners, and non-socioeconomically disadvantaged students were more than twice as likely as their socioeconomically disadvantaged peers to score
Definition: Percentage of public school students in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11 scoring in the standard met or standard exceeded achievement level on the CAASPP Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment for mathematics, by fluency in English (e.g., in 2019, 13% of English Learners in California met or exceeded their grade-level standard in mathematics).

Data Source: California Dept. of Education, Test Results for California’s Assessments (Jan. 2020).

Across all California race/ethnicity groups with data, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding their grade-level standard in math increased between 2015 and 2019. Still, disparities remain. In 2019, nearly three-quarters (74%) of Asian American students in California scored at or above their grade-level standard, compared with one-third or fewer African American/black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic/Latino, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students.

View references for this text and additional research on this topic: https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/22/math-proficiency/summary