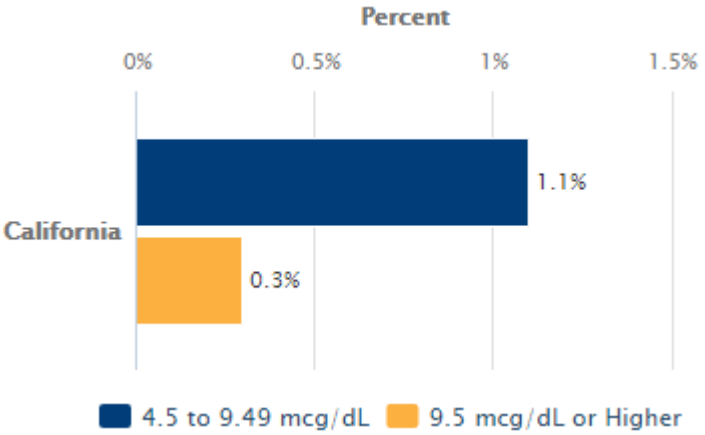
KidsData

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Childhood Lead Poisoning in California

Percentage of Children and Youth Ages 0-20 with Blood Lead Levels of 4.5 mcg/dL or Higher, Among Those Tested: 2020



Definition: Percentage of children and youth ages 0-20 with blood lead levels (a) below 4.5 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL), (b) between 4.5 and 9.49 mcg/dL, and (c) at least 9.5 mcg/dL, among those screened, by age group (e.g., among California children ages 0-5 screened for lead poisoning in 2020, 1% had blood lead levels between 4.5 and 9.49 mcg/dL).
Data Source: California Dept. of Public Health, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch, California Blood Lead Data & *California's Progress in Preventing and Managing Childhood Lead Exposure* (Apr. 2022).

Number of Children Ages 0-5 with Blood Lead Levels of 4.5 mcg/dL or Higher, Among Those Tested: 2020

Age Group: Ages 0-5	Number	
Location	4.5 to 9.49 mcg/dL	9.5 mcg/dL or Higher
California	3,292	838
Alameda County	171	60
Contra Costa County	51	25
Fresno County	182	43
Kern County	123	21
Los Angeles County	671	176
Orange County	185	55
Riverside County	99	23
Sacramento County	294	79
San Bernardino County	142	26
San Diego County	257	69
Santa Clara County	116	42

Definition: Number of children and youth ages 0-20 administered a blood lead screening, by age group and blood lead level (e.g., among California children ages 0-5 screened for lead poisoning in 2020, 3,292 had blood lead levels between 4.5 and 9.49 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL)).
Data Source: California Dept. of Public Health, Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch, California Blood Lead Data & *California's Progress in Preventing and Managing Childhood Lead Exposure* (Apr. 2022).

What It Is

Kidsdata.org provides data on California children and youth ages 0-20 who are administered a blood lead screening, by age group. Among children/youth screened in each age group, the number and percentage with blood lead levels (a) below 4.5 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL), (b) between 4.5 and 9.49 mcg/dL, and (c) at least 9.5 mcg/dL, are available at the state and county level.

Why This Topic Is Important

Lead is a major environmental threat to children's health in the U.S. Childhood exposure to lead—usually through contaminated paint, dust, soil, or water—is linked to lifelong adverse effects on physical, neurological, cognitive, academic, and economic outcomes. Children are especially vulnerable to toxic substances such as lead, as their bodies are fragile and still developing. Young children are the most vulnerable and tend to come into the greatest contact with lead, through playing or crawling on the ground or through hand-mouth contact. More than one third of homes in the U.S. contain lead-based paint, including nearly four million homes with young children. Some groups are at higher risk for lead exposure than others, particularly low-income, African American/black, and Latino/Hispanic children.

Preventing lead exposure before it occurs is essential, as no safe blood lead level in children has been identified. The threshold at which the CDC recommends public health action be taken is 3.5 mcg/dL. Lead exposure often goes undetected as it usually does not result in obvious symptoms, making effective screening and early intervention for exposed children critical.

Estimates indicate that the economic burden of lead exposure in the U.S. is between $50 billion and $84 billion annually due to reduced productivity and costs related to health care, education, and incarceration. In California alone, it is estimated that lead exposure costs $8-11 billion in lost earnings over the lifetimes of children born in a single year.

How Children Are Faring

Blood lead screening results were reported for 368,813 California young people ages 0-20 tested in 2020—a drop of nearly 30% when compared with 2019 and almost 50% compared with 2010. Among those tested in 2020, 1.3% recorded a blood lead level (BLL) of at least 4.5 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL). This amounts to 4,930 children and youth statewide, the vast majority (3,950) under age 6, with

levels at which the state requires direct public health responses including case management and follow-up. Across counties with data, the percentage of children ages 0-5 with BLLs at or above 4.5 mcg/dL ranged from less than 0.5% to more than 4% of those tested.

View references for this text and additional research on this topic:
https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/81/lead-poisoning/summary

