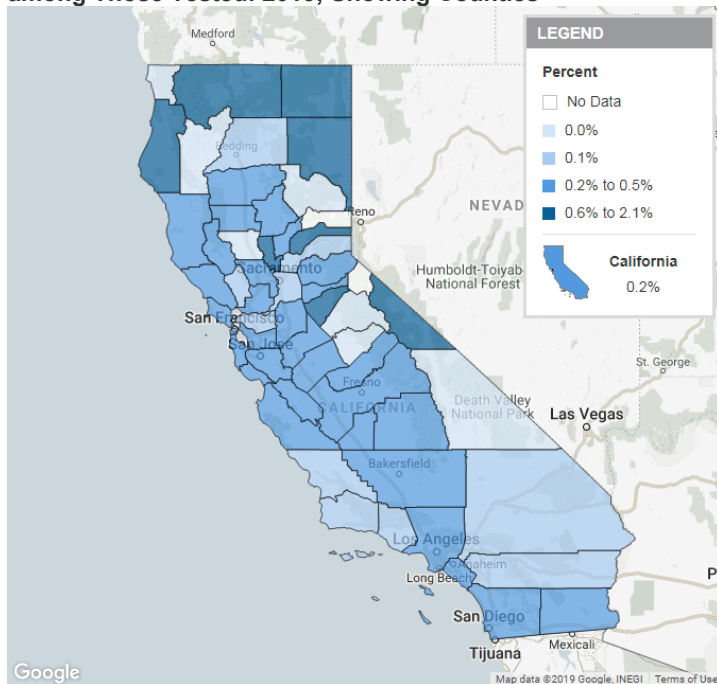


## Lead Poisoning in California

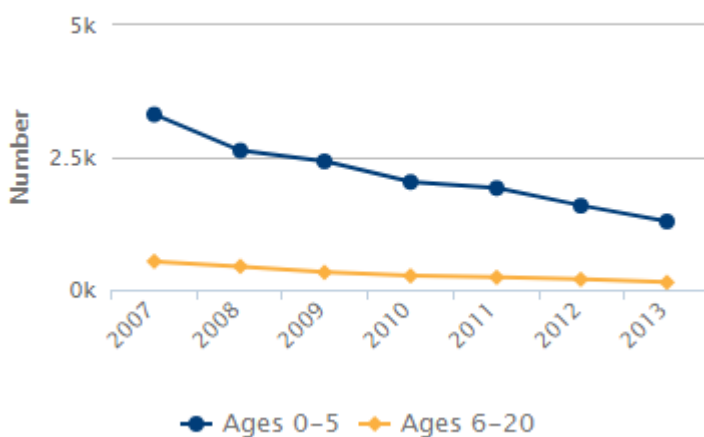
Percentage of Children Ages 0-5 with Elevated Blood Lead Levels among Those Tested: 2013; Showing Counties



**Definition:** Percentage of children/youth ages 0-20 with blood lead levels at or above 9.5 micrograms per deciliter, among those screened, by age group (e.g., among California children ages 0-5 screened in 2013, 0.2% had an elevated blood lead level).

**Data Source:** California Dept. of Public Health, [Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch](#) (Aug. 2017).

### Number of Children/Youth with Elevated Blood Lead Levels among Those Tested, by Age Group California



### What It Is

Kidsdata.org provides the number and percentage of children and youth under age 21 who are tested and found to have elevated blood lead levels (at or above 9.5 micrograms per deciliter). Medicaid and state regulations require that every child in a government-funded health program be screened for blood lead level at 12 months and again at age 2. When a blood test is missed, health care providers are required to screen the child at the first opportunity up to age 6. It is also recommended that health professionals screen any child or youth who exhibits symptoms of lead exposure, has known lead exposure, or is considered to be at risk for lead exposure.

### Why This Topic Is Important

Lead is a leading environmental threat to children's health in the U.S. (1, 2). When children are exposed to lead—usually through contaminated dust, paint, or soil—it can have lifelong adverse effects, such as disrupted postnatal growth, hearing and learning disabilities, lowered IQ scores, behavioral problems, difficulty paying attention, and hyperactivity (1, 3). Children are especially vulnerable to toxic substances such as lead, as their bodies are fragile and still developing (1). 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 (1). Some groups are at higher risk for lead exposure than others, particularly low-income and African American/black children (1, 3, 4).

No safe blood lead level (BLL) in children has been identified (3, 4, 5). Kidsdata.org reports on children and youth with elevated BLLs at or above 9.5 micrograms per deciliter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ ), but the threshold at which the CDC now recommends public health action be taken is 5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ , and adverse health effects can occur at even lower concentrations (4, 5). In addition, lead exposure often goes undetected as it usually does not result in obvious symptoms, and its effects are not reversible (2, 4, 5).

While the number of children affected by lead in the U.S. has decreased in recent decades due to policy changes, millions still are exposed each year, and an estimated 24 million households still have lead-based paint risks (3, 4).

### How Children Are Faring

In 2013, 1,427 California children and youth ages 0-20 (0.2% of all those tested) were

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**Data Source:** California Dept. of Public Health, [Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Branch](#) (Aug. 2017).

### Number of Children/Youth with Elevated Blood Lead Levels among Those Tested, by Age Group: 2013

California	Number
Ages 0-5	1,288
Ages 6-20	139
Total for Ages 0-20	1,427

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found to have elevated levels of lead in their blood, down from 3,846 (0.6%) in 2007. Due to government regulations relating to young children, the vast majority of children and youth tested are under age 6; among those ages 0-5 screened in 2013, 1,288 (0.2%) had elevated levels of lead in their blood. While elevated blood lead levels are defined here as 9.5 micrograms per deciliter or higher, experts have identified no safe level of lead exposure for children.

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

<https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/81/lead-poisoning/summary>



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