

Preschoolers Receiving Special Education: California and National Data (School Years 2011–12 to 2019–20)

This brief summarizes key findings on where children ages 3 through 5 years with disabilities in California received their special education services. The data are from the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) from school years 2011–12 to 2019–20.



Finding 1: Six percent of preschoolers received special education services

86,331



Number of children ages 3 through 5 who received special education services in October 2019.

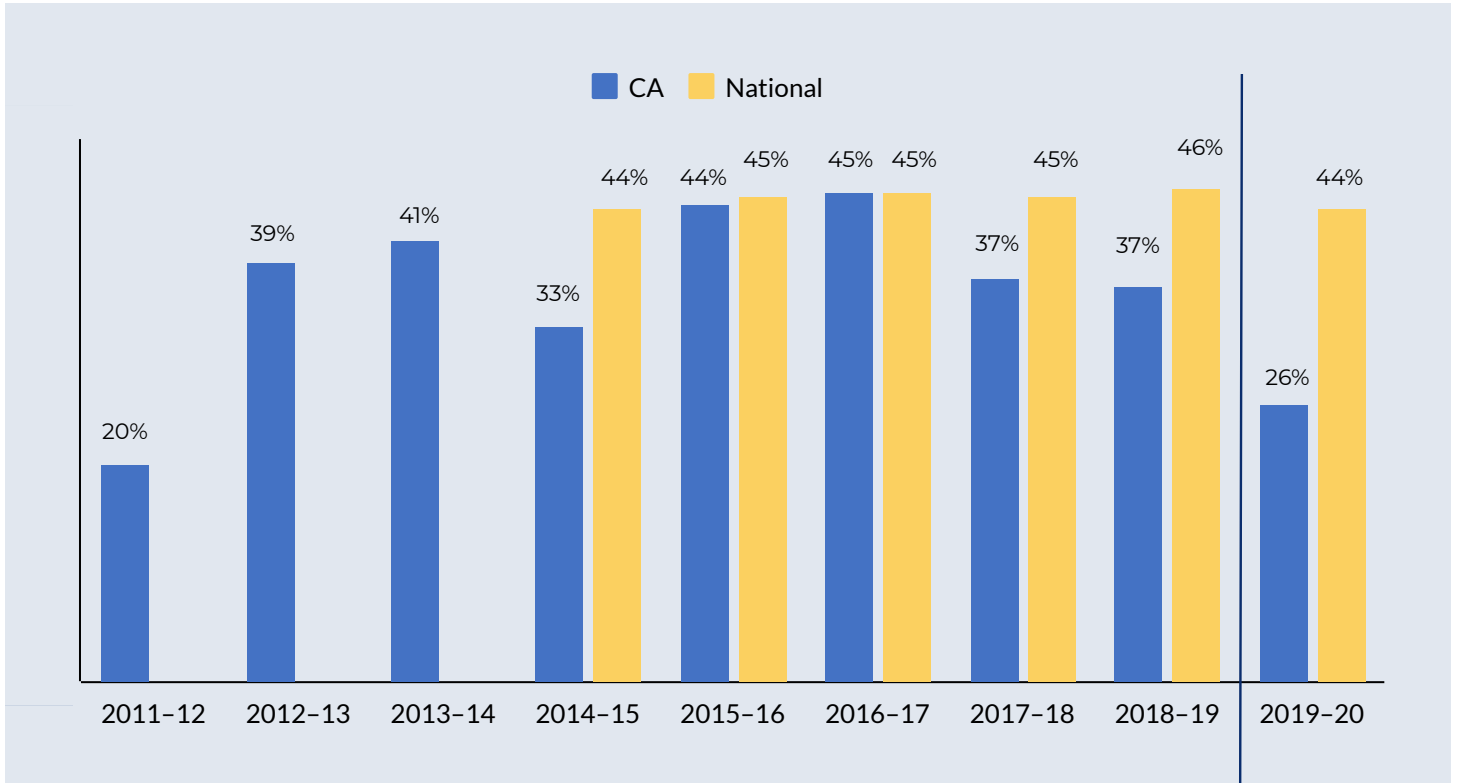
6%

Percent of total population of children ages 3 through 5 who received special education services in October 2019.

[SRI Education](#) is collaborating with the [California Department of Education](#) and the [California Department of Social Services](#) to conduct research to better understand and improve the inclusion of preschoolers (i.e., children ages 3 through 5) with disabilities (i.e., with an Individualized Education Program [IEP]) in subsidized early learning and care. When young children with disabilities participate in settings with their peers without disabilities, all children benefit. Through analyses of administrative data, interviews with leaders across the state, and case studies, the team will identify strategies for increasing facilitators and decreasing barriers to inclusion of preschoolers with disabilities in subsidized early learning and care settings.

Finding 2: California lags behind other states

California’s percentages of preschoolers who received their special education services in a regular early childhood program have fluctuated, declining in the past few years to well below the national average.



Reporting requirement changed.*

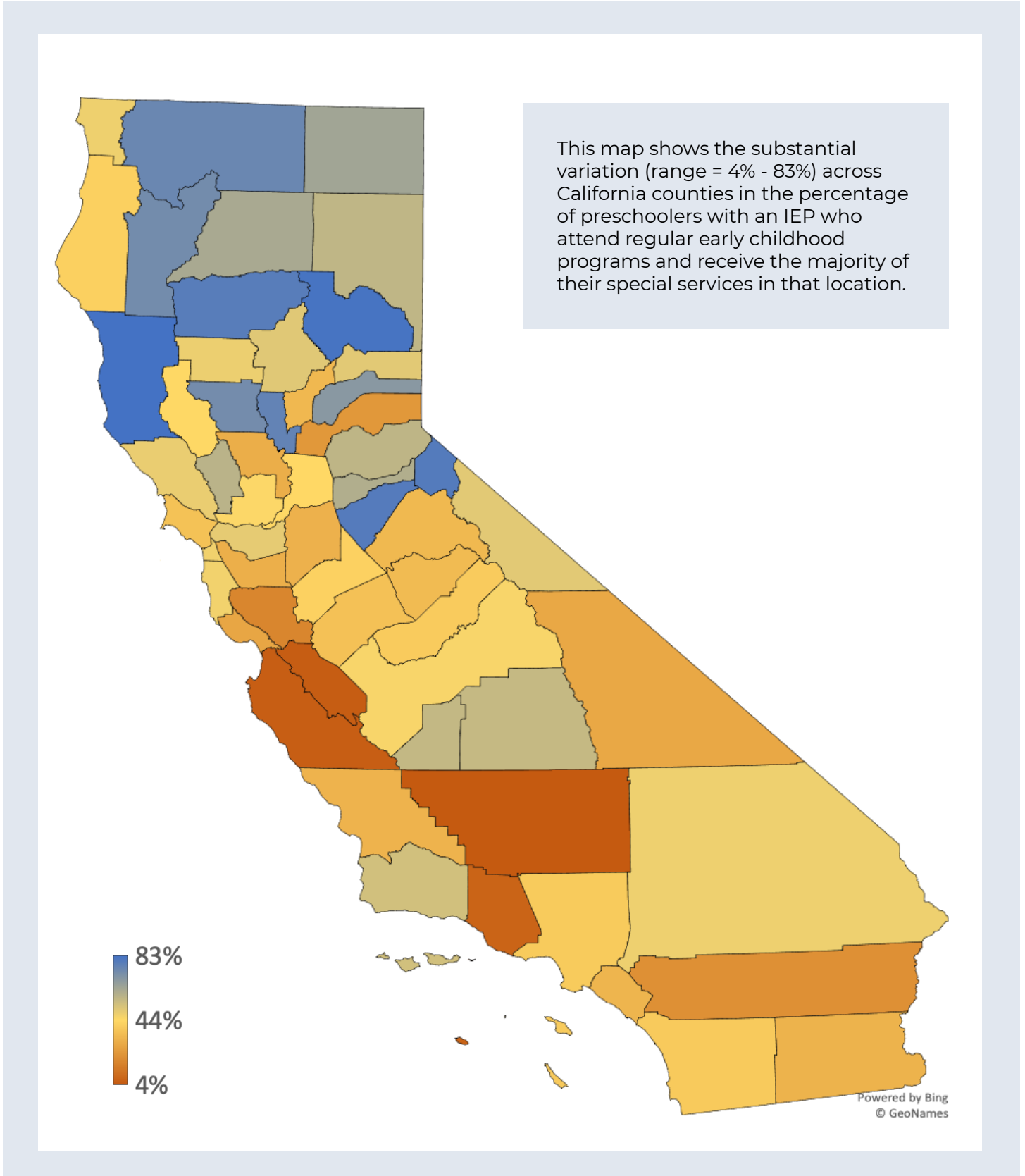


All states are required to report data to the Office of Special Education Programs on the percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) who participated in a regular early childhood program and received a majority of their special education and related services in that location.

*The reporting requirement was changed in 2019-20. States were given the option to no longer include 5-year-olds in the state count and California and several other states exercised that option. This means that both the national and California state data are not comparable to the previous years' data.

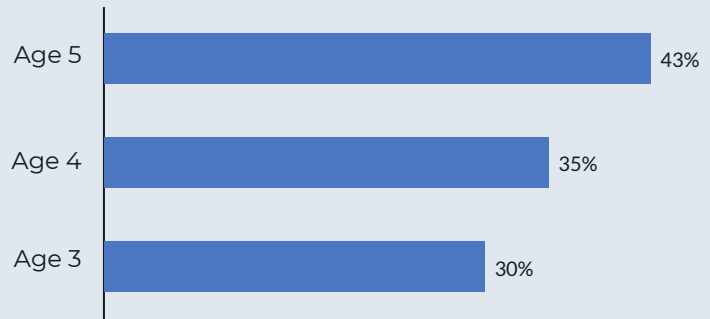
Finding 3: Substantial variation across counties

Counties vary in the proportion of preschoolers with disabilities who received their special education services in a regular early childhood program (2018–19).



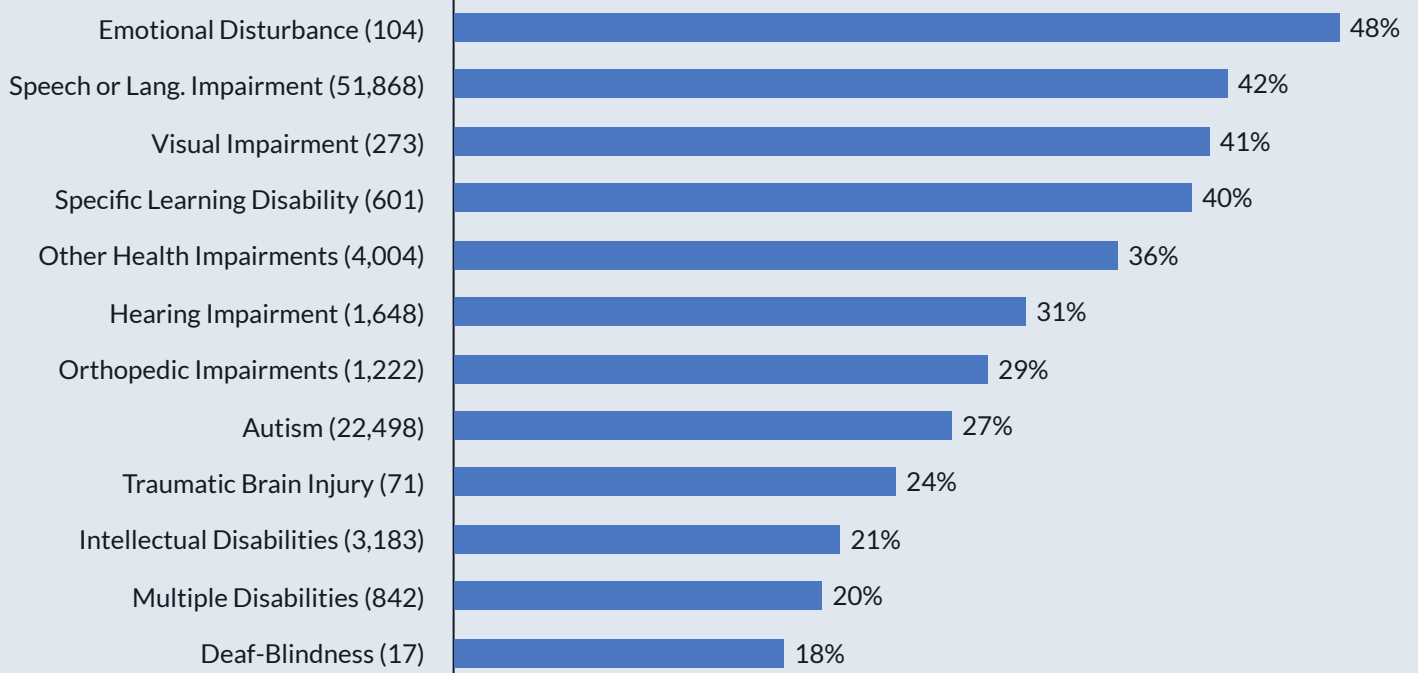
Finding 4: More 5-year-olds than 3s and 4s

In school year 2018–19, 5-year-olds were more likely to receive their special education services in a regular early childhood program compared to 3- and 4-year-olds.



Finding 5: Much variation by disability

The percentage of preschoolers who received their special education services in a regular early childhood program varied greatly by disability type, with as few as 18% of children with deaf-blindness receiving services in regular early childhood programs compared to 48% of children with emotional disturbance (2018–19).



The number in parentheses is the total number of children 3 through 5 years with this disability.

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