

Uneven Progress in Math Achievement among California Students

October 13, 2026

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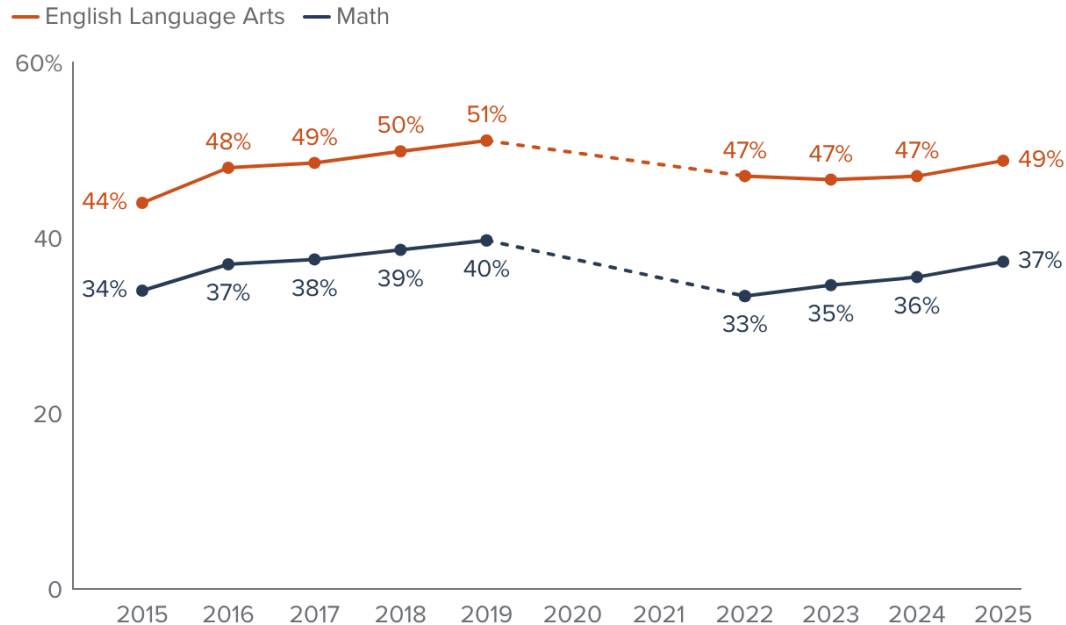
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FIGURE 1

Student proficiency rates were rising before the pandemic, and have recovered slowly since

Share of students proficient in ELA and math (%), 2015–2025



SOURCE: California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)

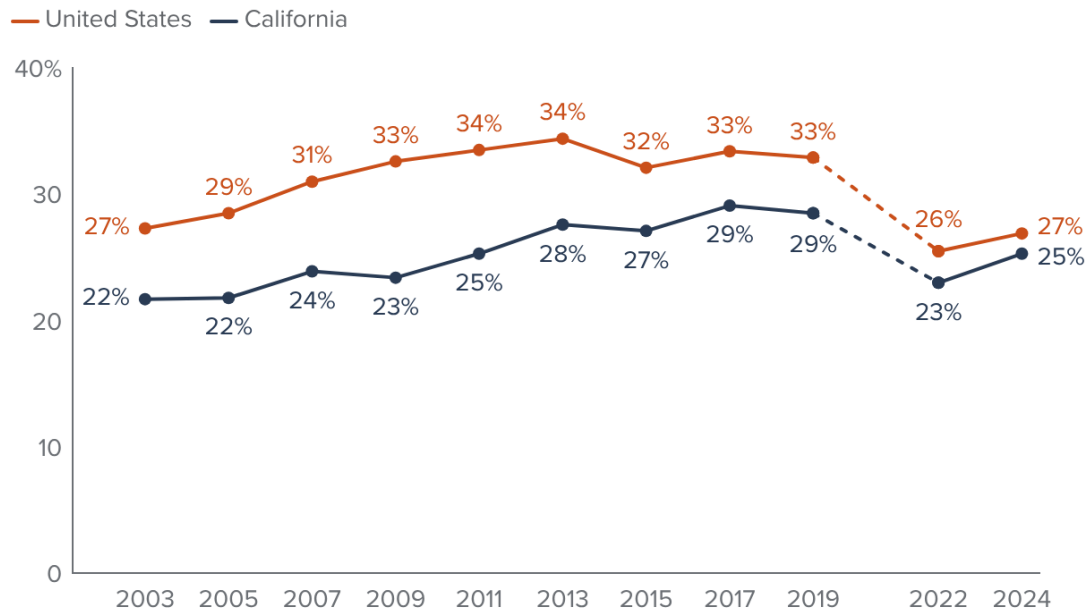
NOTES: Results are from the Smarter Balanced assessments for grades 3–8 and 11. Testing was canceled in 2020. Results for 2021 are omitted because participation was limited.

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FIGURE 2

California's test scores lag the national average, but gaps have narrowed since the pandemic

Share of grade 8 students proficient in math, by state (%), 2003–2024



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

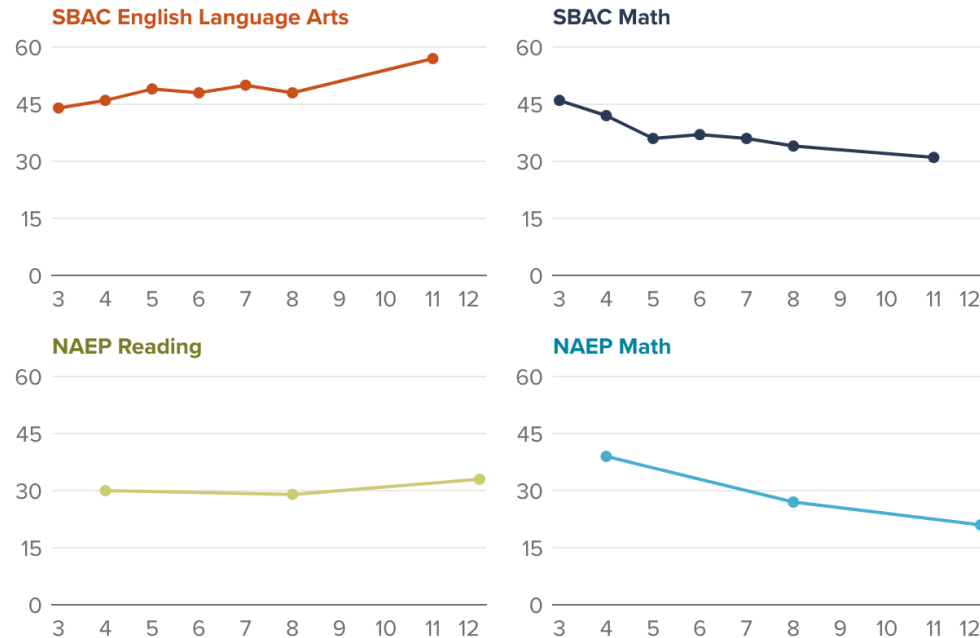
NOTES: Results are for public school students. Proficiency is defined according to NAEP achievement standards, which differ from California's state standards. The national series represents public school students nationwide.

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FIGURE 3

Math proficiency rates are typically lower for students in higher grades

Share of students proficient in ELA and math, by grade (%)



SOURCES: California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP); National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

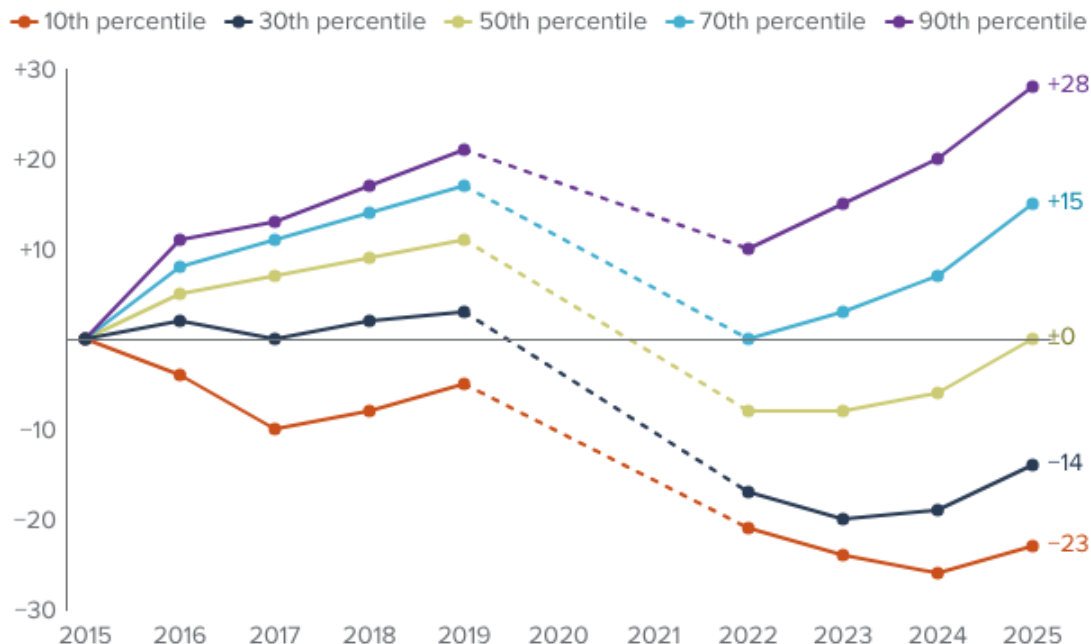
NOTES: California results are from the 2025 Smarter Balanced assessments for grades 3–8 and 11. National results are from the 2024 NAEP assessments for grades 4, 8, and 12. The assessments use different proficiency standards. Results compare different groups of students, not the progression of individual students across grades.

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FIGURE 4

Growing gaps between high- and low-performing students widened further after the pandemic

Change in grade 6 math scale scores since 2015, by percentile



SOURCE: California Department of Education, CAASPP Scale Score Percentiles

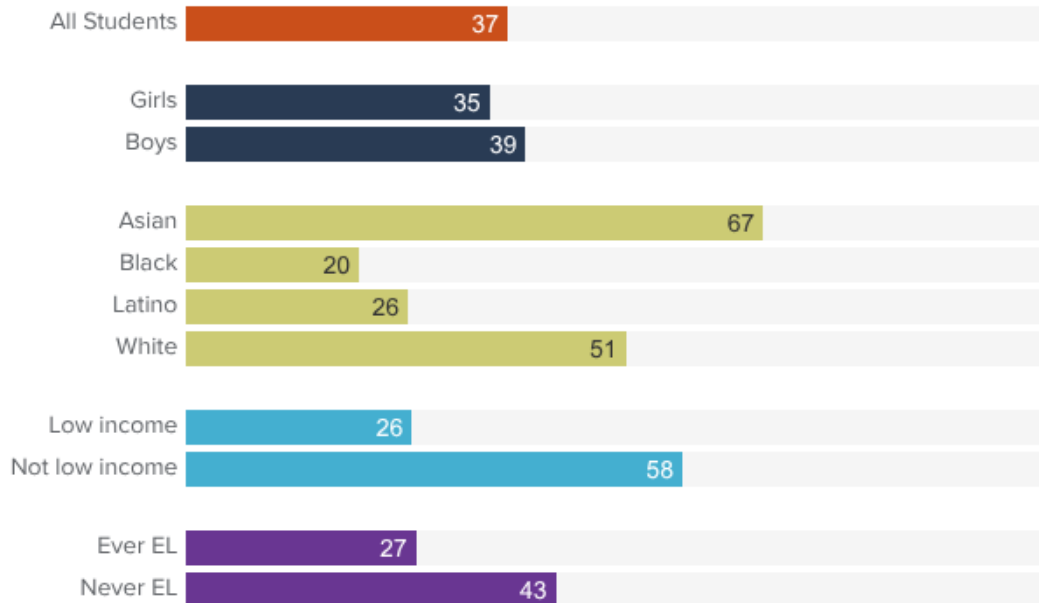
NOTES: Changes are relative to 2015 scores at each percentile and do not track individual students over time. Results for 2020 and 2021 are omitted because testing was canceled or participation was limited.

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FIGURE 5

There are significant achievement gaps across race, income and English Learner status

Share of students proficient in math, by student group (%), 2025



SOURCE: California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)

NOTES: Results are for grades 3–8 and 11. Asian includes Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander students. Ever English Learners includes current English Learners and reclassified fluent English proficient students; Never English Learners includes English-only and initially fluent English proficient students.

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Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.