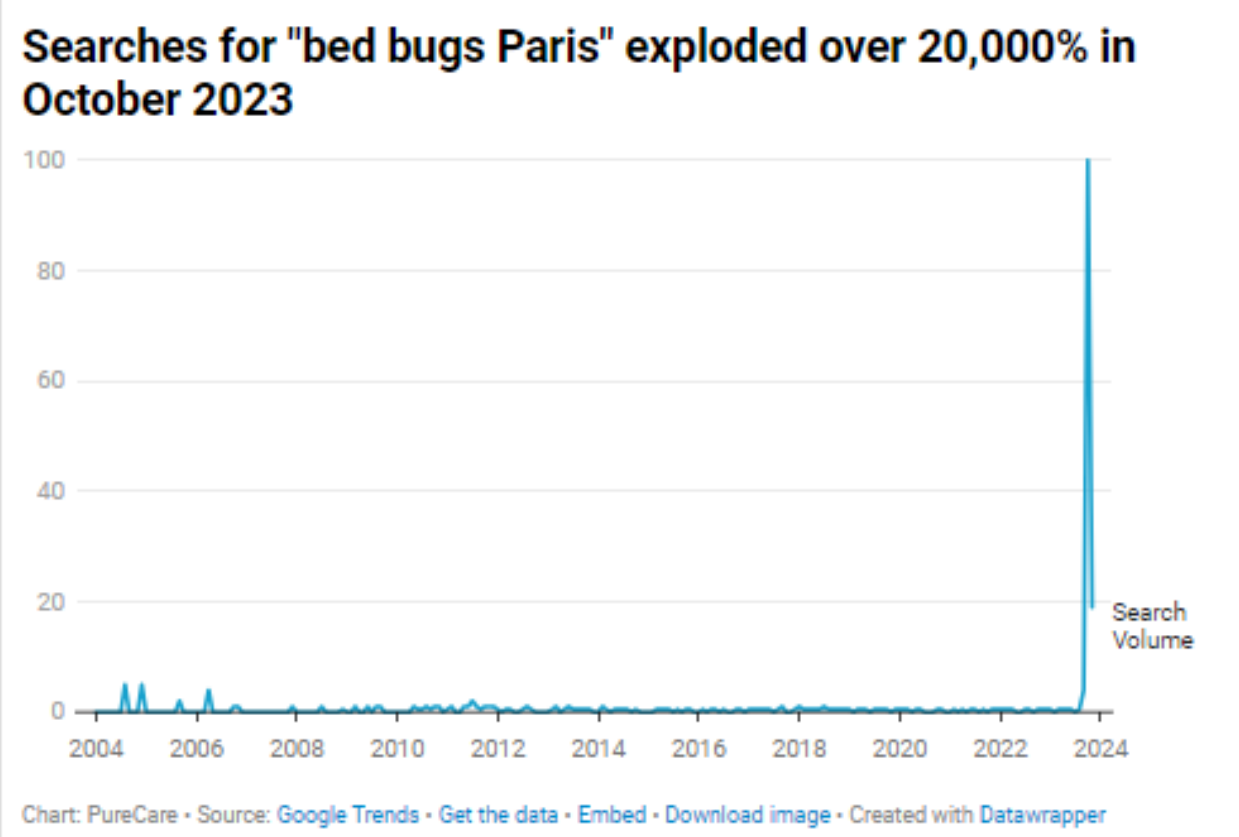
Bed bugs in America: Which states suffer the most?

An analysis of Google Trends data.

Following the surge of reports that bed bugs had taken over the city of Paris, panic ensued.

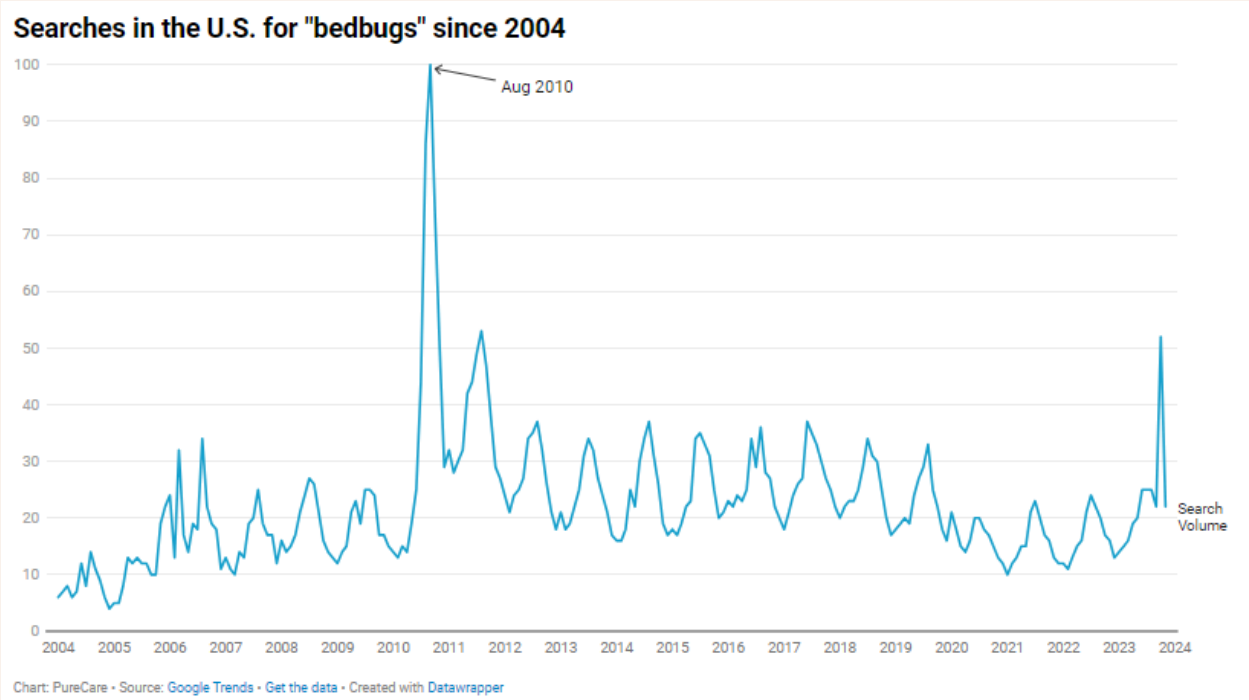
An explosion of searches for queries including “bed bugs” and “Paris”

In the US alone, **searches for “bed bugs Paris” increased over 20,000%** from the average number of searches for this query in all the years before (as far back as 2004).



(Monthly search volume average from Jan 2004 to September 2023: 0.399)
Link to interactive visualization: https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/OIPIP/1/

Even still, Google Trends search data shows that “**bedbug”** searches in the United States — even with the October 2023 spike thanks to the pesky *punaise* (French for bed bug) — are not as numerous as they were in **2010**.



Link to interactive visualization: https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/eUqSe/1/

What happened in 2010?

Well, like Paris in 2023, **New York was suffering a similar bed bug epidemic in 2010**.

Where are bed bug infestations in the United States most prevalent?

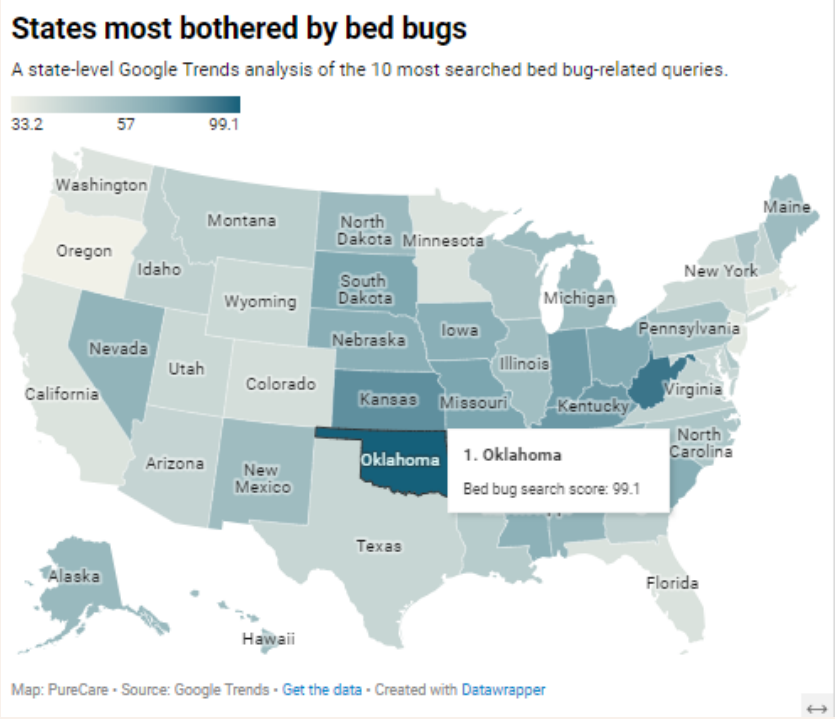
To find which states are bothered most by bed bugs, we use **Google Trends** to analyze the state-level search volumes **for ten of the most searched bed bug-related queries**:

1. bed bugs
2. bed bug bites
3. bed bug
4. bedbugs
5. what do bed bugs look like
6. how to get rid of bed bugs
7. bed bug treatment
8. how to kill bed bugs
9. how to check for bed bugs
10. what do bed bug bites look like

Using the search volume data from Google Trends, we determined a “Bed bug search score.”

“Bed bug search score” = the average volume of searches across all ten queries

States with the highest “**Bed bug search score**” were determined as those with the biggest bed bug problem.



Link to interactive visualization: https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/lytyo/1/

Worst States Rank	States + DC	Bed bug search score
1	Oklahoma	99.1
2	West Virginia	91.2
3	Kansas	81.6
4	Kentucky	78.2
5	Indiana	76.5
6	Arkansas	76.4
7	Missouri	73.2
8	South Dakota	72.5
9	Ohio	70.3
10	South Carolina	68.2

On the flip side, which states struggle the least when it comes to pesky bed bugs?

Best States Rank	States + DC	Bed bug search score
1	Oregon	33.2
2	Massachusetts	36.7
3	New Jersey	37.8
4	Connecticut	39.1
5	Washington	39.3
6	California	39.4
7	Minnesota	39.8
8	Florida	39.8
9	Colorado	41.4
10	Wyoming	44

Full data is available for your reference here:
PureCare - Bedbugs - Google Trends Data

Links to datawrapper visuals:

- Searches for "bed bugs Paris" exploded over 20,000%
- Searches in the U.S. for "bed bugs" since 2004
- States most bothered by bed bugs

Bed bugs for Christmas?

During the summer months, searches for bed bugs often rise because the truth is they like warm environments and warm bodies. So they are more active in summer-time temps.

That begs the question: **is there even a reason to be worried about bed bugs in the wintertime?**

In short, yes.

When temperatures fall outside, we turn up the temperature inside (warm environment) and hunker down for the winter (warm bodies). This creates the ideal environment for those biting bugs to feed.

Of course, if you let in some cold air, the bed bugs are likely to turn on their hibernate mode and leave you alone.

Methodology: How did we determine where bed bugs are the biggest problem?

Reporting bed bug cases isn't a common practice. Googling our problems is.

Typically, if and when bed bug "cases" are reported, the data is not (usually) publicly available. When it is, the available data captures just a slice of the total outbreaks nationwide (like NYC's bed bug reporting or a report from a single company's bed bug treatment services.

One proven method to measure bed bug cases is to use internet search data as a source. Academic researchers have successfully used this method to understand the bed bug epidemic. In a 2015 study published in the Journal of Medical Entomology, **researchers investigated Google search to find patterns for queries including and related to bed bugs**.

Methodology

We used Google Trends data for this analysis.

- Time series data:
  - Includes findings for all 50 U.S. states and D.C.
  - Includes data from January 2004 to November of 2023.
- State-level data:
  - Includes findings for all 50 U.S. states and D.C.
  - Search volume popularity time frame: November 15, 2022, through November 15, 2023
  - Analyzes the following search queries: "bed bugs," "bed bug bites," "bed bug," "bedbugs," "what do bed bugs look like," "how to get rid of bed bugs," "bed bug treatment," "how to kill bed bugs," "how to check for bed bugs," and "what do bed bug bites look like."

Google Trends uses a 100-point scoring system to represent a normalized search volume proportional to searches across a given region, such as a state, during the time period analyzed. So, a score of 100 means the state's proportion of searches to its entire search volume was the highest compared to other states, 50 represents half the popularity, and so on.

Google is the most popular search engine in the U.S., and Google Trends data is a widely regarded source for tracking and measuring what people are paying attention to, historically and in real-time.

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