

Projected teacher retirements differ widely across California's counties

The Need

In recent years, policymakers and researchers have expressed interest in how anticipated retirements of baby-boomer educators may affect schools' ability to meet teacher demand. With that issue in mind, officials in California have requested teacher retirement projections to use in workforce planning at the state and county levels.

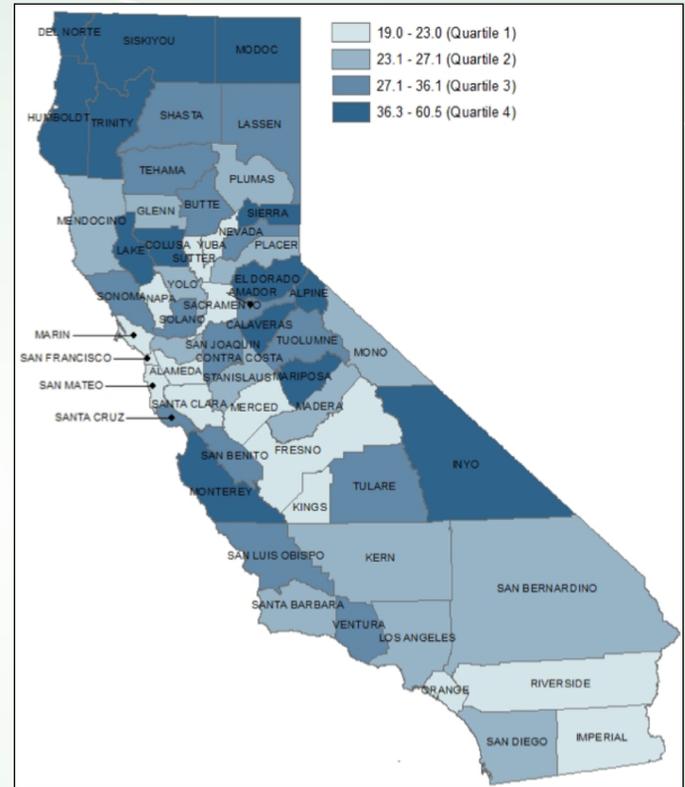
Study Overview

This study, *Projections of California Teacher Retirements: A County and Regional Perspective*, uses a comprehensive set of data to answer the question, "What proportion of California teachers who were teaching in 2013/14 are projected to retire between 2014/15 and 2023/24, statewide and by county, both overall and within certain key teaching fields?" Using data from the California State Teachers' Retirement System (which serves most of the state's teachers), the California Department of Education, and the California Department of Finance, the study draws on teacher age information, historical retirement data, and student enrollment growth estimates to project retirements.

Findings

Statewide, one quarter of California educators who were teaching in 2013/14 are projected to retire between 2014/15 and 2023/24. However, the proportions of teachers projected to retire during that period vary greatly by county, from 19 percent in Sutter County to 61 percent in Sierra County (see map). The counties with the highest projected teacher retirement rates tend to lie in the more rural northern and eastern parts of the state, while the counties with the lowest projected teacher retirement rates tend to be in or around metropolitan areas, such as San Francisco, Sacramento, Orange County/Los Angeles, and Fresno.

Map: Percentage of California teachers in 2013/14 projected to retire between 2014/15 and 2023/24, by county



Source: Analysis by study authors based on California State Teachers' Retirement System data for 2006/07 through 2013/14 and on the California Department of Education's Personnel Assignment Information Form data for 2012/13 and 2013/14, both obtained by special request.

At the state level, teachers' projected retirement rates did not vary widely by field—that is, math, science, English language arts, history, special education, and elementary school; in all fields, the projected rates statewide fell between 23 and 26 percent. However, some counties are projected to face much higher proportions of retiring math, science, and/or special education teachers (see table on following page), which are key areas of need identified by the state.

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Table: Percentage of California teachers who were teaching in 2013/14 projected to retire between 2014/15 and 2023/24, by teaching field

Teaching field	Projected retirement rate statewide	Range of projected retirement rates across 58 counties	Two counties with highest projected teacher retirement rates	Two counties with lowest projected teacher retirement rates
All teachers	24.7	19.0–60.5	Sierra (60.5) Colusa (49.0)	Sutter (19.0) San Francisco (19.3)
Math	22.5	14.8–49.4	Colusa (49.4) El Dorado (43.9)	Yuba (14.8) Plumas (18.7)
Science	24.3	0.0–52.6	El Dorado (52.6) Trinity (48.4)	Sierra (0.0) Lassen (11.9)
English language arts	22.6	15.3–64.5	Sierra (64.5) Colusa (44.8)	San Benito (15.3) San Francisco (16.5)
History	23.1	9.2–61.2	Sierra (61.2) El Dorado (49.9)	Mono (9.2) Yuba (18.2)
Special education	25.6	12.0–86.5	Inyo (86.5) Modoc (69.0)	Glenn (12.0) Yuba (13.7)
Elementary school/ multiple subjects	25.2	17.1–50.0	Modoc (50.0) El Dorado (49.5)	San Francisco (17.1) Yuba (18.6)

Source: Authors' analysis based on California State Teachers' Retirement System data for 2006/07 through 2013/14 and on the California Department of Education's Personnel Assignment Information Form data for 2012/13 and 2013/14, both obtained by special request.

Taken together, the study's findings suggest that California's counties will confront very different types of staffing situations over the 10-year period due to projected retirements.

Practice and Policy Implications

Prior research shows that teacher labor markets tend to be local, suggesting that boosting the supply of teachers in one part of the state may not necessarily help meet teacher demand in another. This study offers a wealth of county-level data that can be used in county and regional workforce planning. Districts can also use the study's data tables to predict their own future teacher retirements. By using the district's teacher age distribution and the study's statewide retirement rates by age (found in table B1 in the report), districts can roughly predict their retirement landscape. Those interested in the more detailed six-step projection methodology should refer to the full study.

Ultimately, this study examines just one aspect of the teacher workforce picture: retirement. A more complete analysis of teacher labor market variables, including pre-retirement attrition and trends in projected graduates of teacher certification programs, is necessary to assess whether there will be too few teachers to meet local needs in the coming years. If the supply of teachers is not expected to meet projected demand, local and state education leaders might consider policies to increase teacher supply, such as alternative certification options, signing bonuses, or loan forgiveness for student teachers.

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