

Factors and Future Projections for K–12 Declining Enrollment

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Why does declining enrollment matter?

- What is declining enrollment?
 - Loss of enrollment over specific time frame
 - Typically measure using October enrollment data
- Districts are funded per pupil (ADA)
 - Loss of *total* funding... but not per-pupil
 - Downsizing challenging, can be inefficient w/ constraints

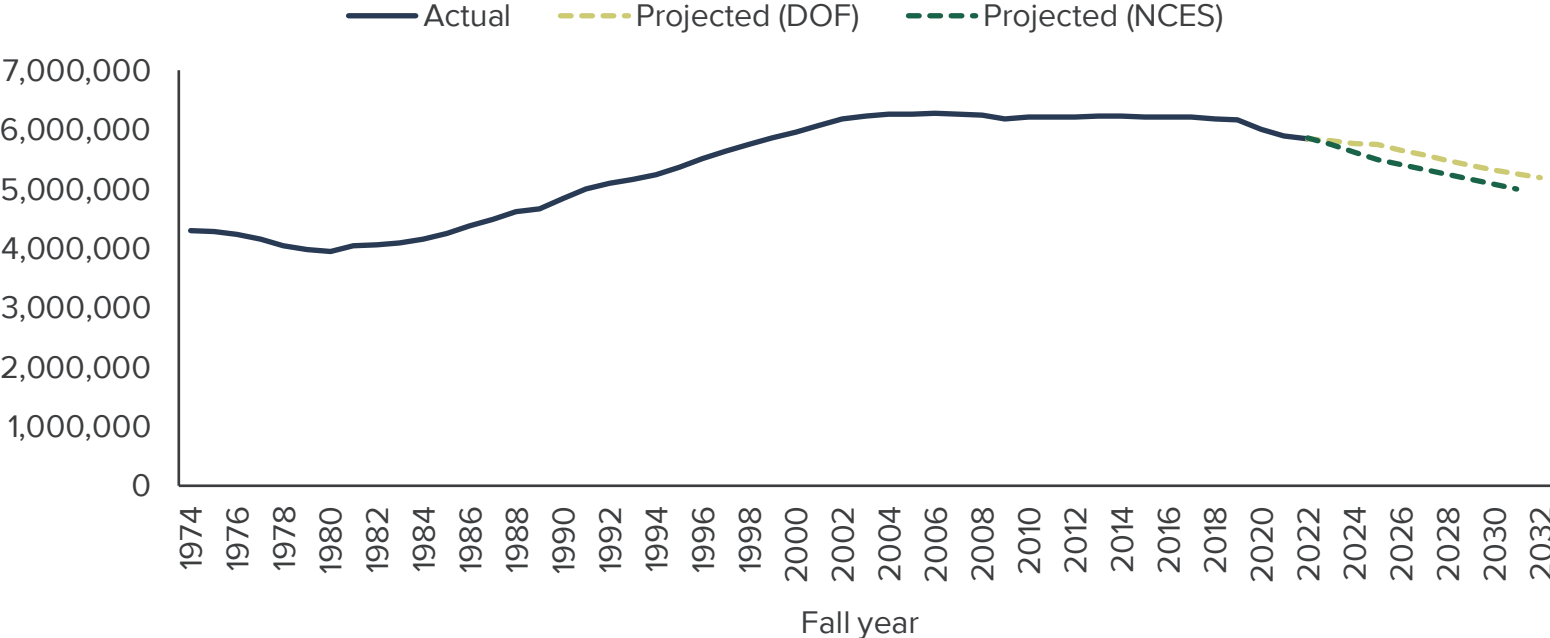
We study state and regional trends as well as district responses

- Trends
 - Past and projected
 - By grade, demographics, county, region
 - Examine potential causes of declines
- District-level responses
 - Where past district declines occurred
 - Are school closures likely? How equitable are closures?

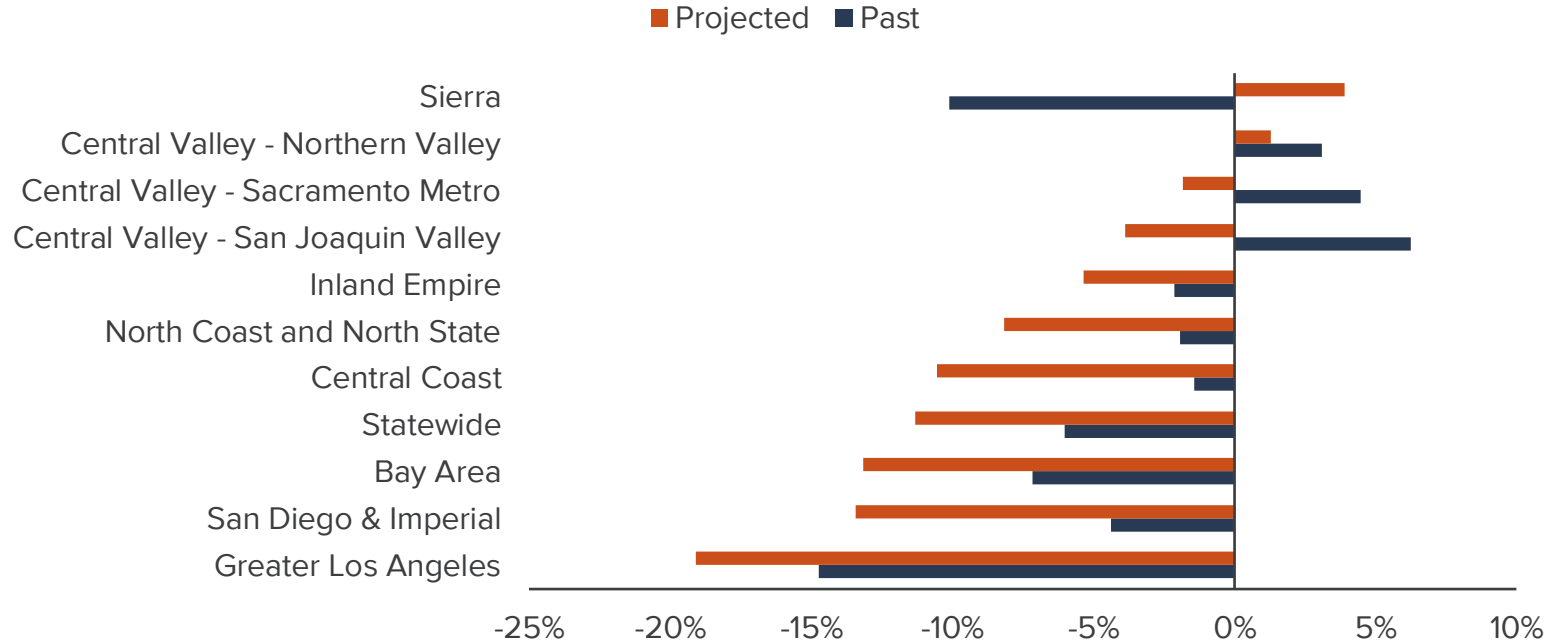
Declining enrollment has fiscal impacts for the state

- Prop 98 guarantee: “**silver lining**”
 - Declining enrollment is a boon to system on per-pupil basis
 - If budget constant or growing, more \$\$ per child
- Hold harmless creates **winners and losers**
 - Growing and stable districts implicitly receive less
 - Funding students that “no longer exist”

Enrollment rose for decades, plateaued, then dropped in recent years—with declines projected to continue



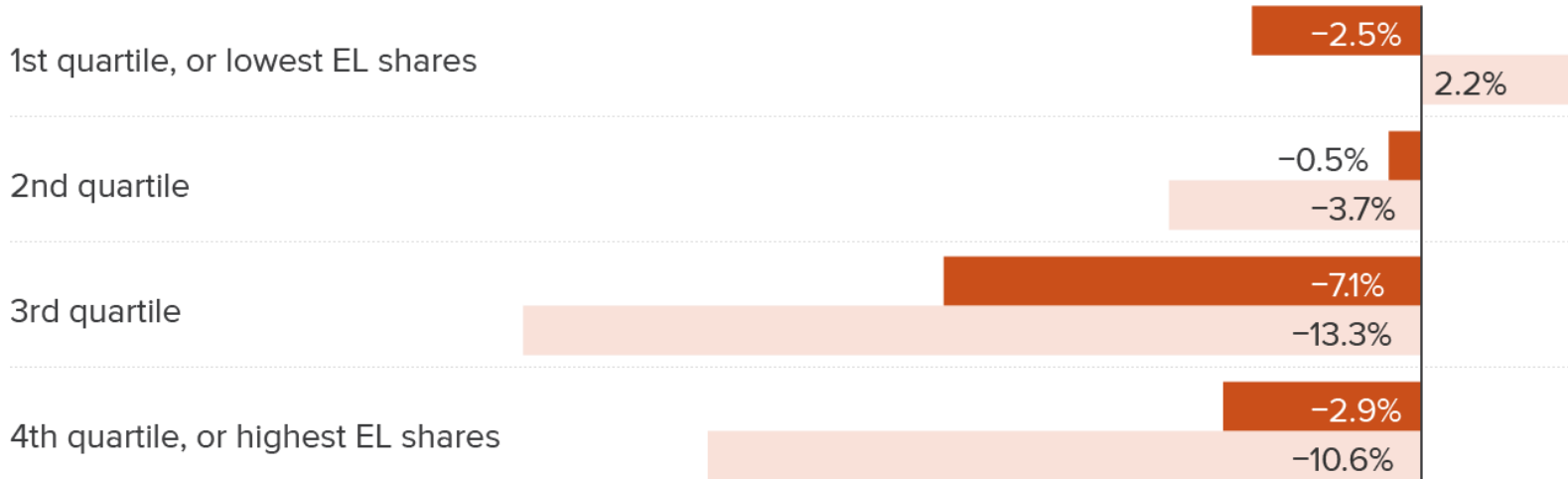
Enrollment is expected to decline in all but two California regions over the next decade



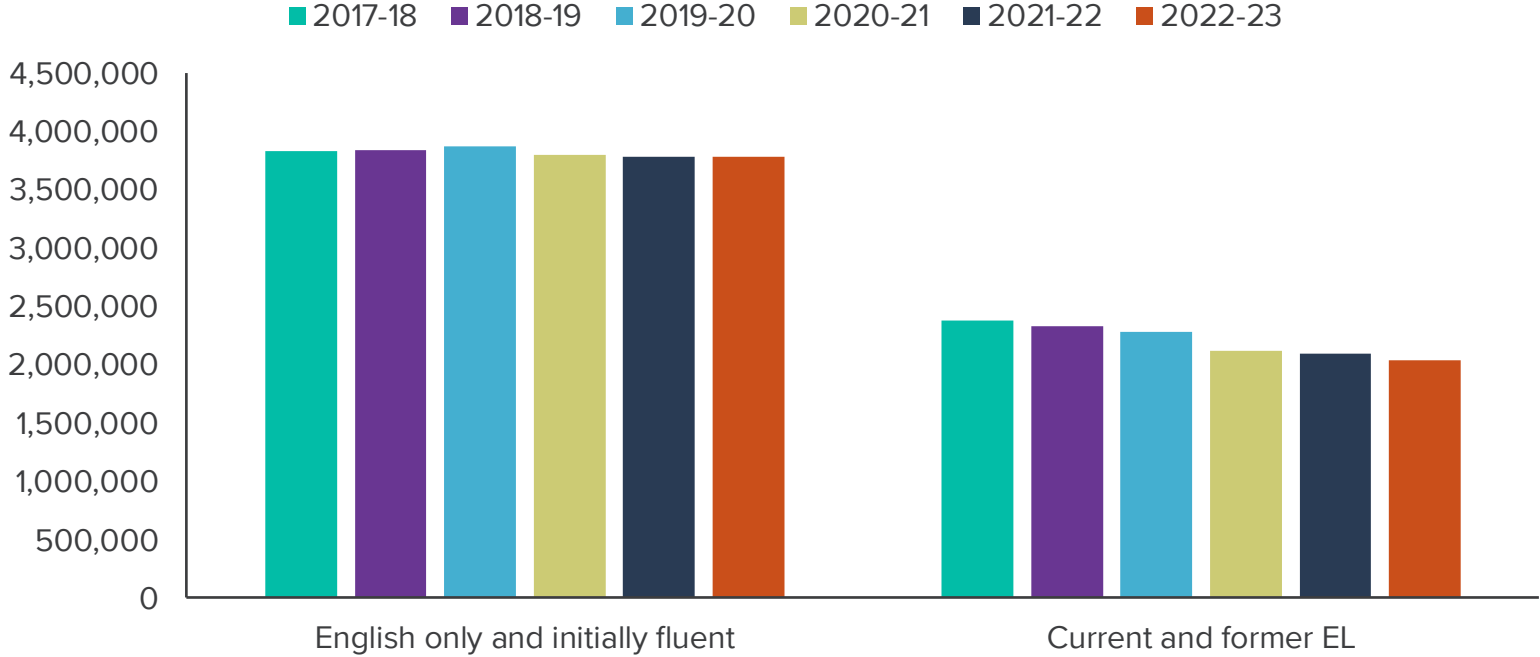
Counties with more English Learners expect larger declines

Change in enrollment

■ Past: 2012–2022 ■ Projected: 2022–2032

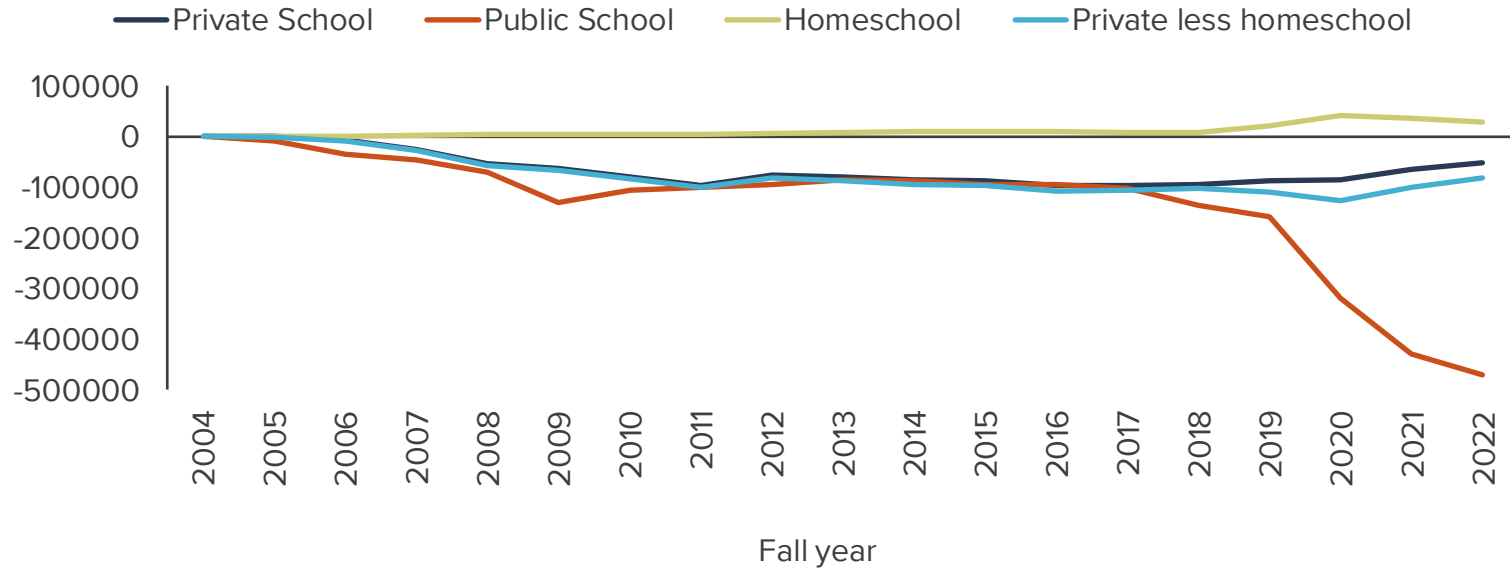


Enrollment has fallen more among students who have ever been English Learners



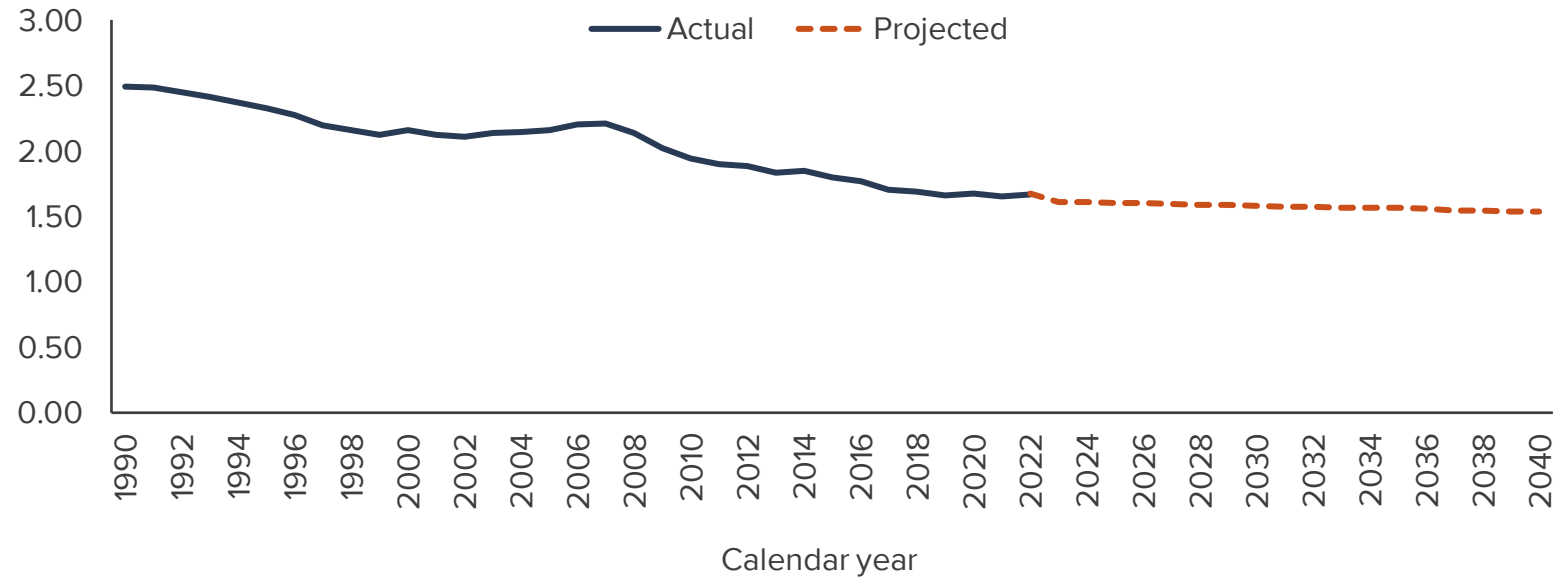
As public school enrollment sank, private school enrollment grew during the pandemic

Change since 2004–2005



Fertility rates have fallen over the past 30 years, and are projected to decline further

Total fertility rate

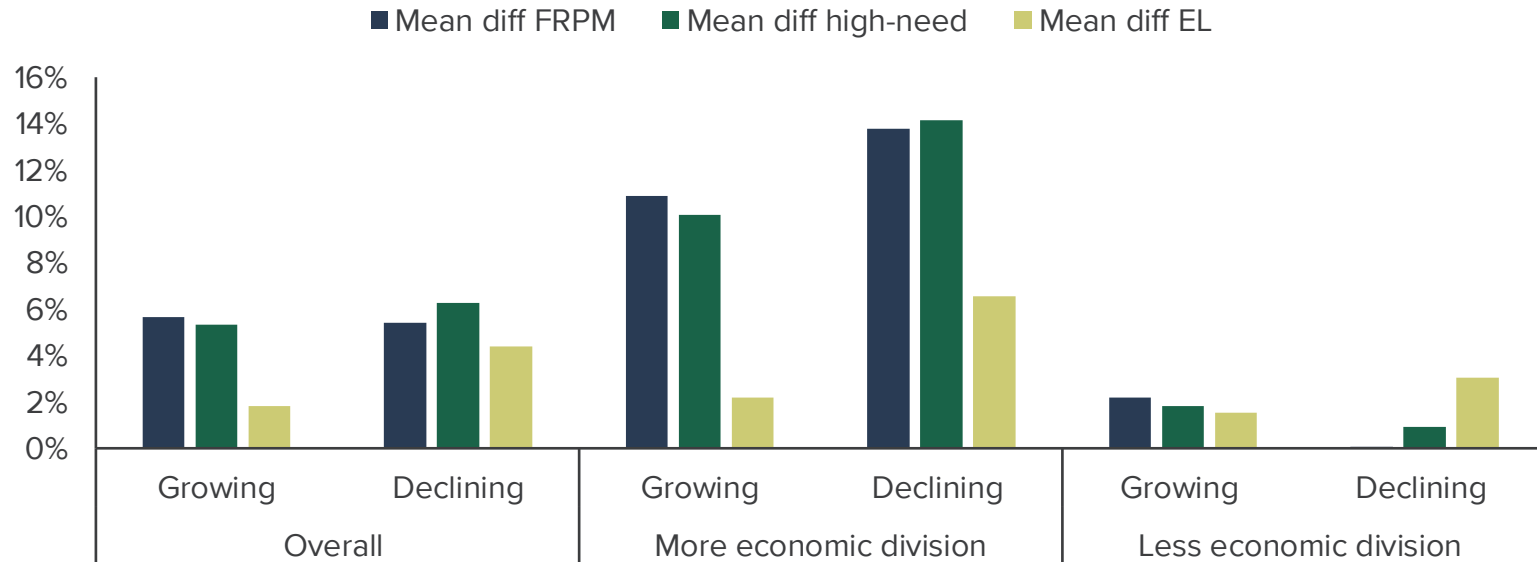


Districts facing declines rarely closed schools

- More than 70% of districts are now facing declines
- School closures are fairly not common
 - Even when declines are 10% or more, less than 40% of districts closed schools
- Schools closed by districts had lower test scores

In districts with wider income division, closed schools have far more low-income students than the rest of the district

Closed school vs district average



Policy Recommendations

- Provide greater assistance and information to districts on effective and efficient downsizing
- Prioritize equity in decisions on school closures so that they do not disproportionately affect high-need students
- Avoid insulating districts from enrollment declines through additional funding

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.