Six Years of Change:

What Statewide Trends Reveal About California's Teaching Workforce

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2019-20 2020-21 2021-22 2022-23 2023-24

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ABSTRACT

This brief analyzes newly released statewide teacher data from the California Department of Education (CDE), providing the most comprehensive view of California's teaching workforce since 2019. Covering more than 285,000 teachers, the dataset reveals significant post-pandemic shifts in experience levels, workforce composition, credentialing, and subject-area staffing.

Key findings include a decline in experienced teachers alongside rising numbers of first-year and inexperienced educators, especially in critical subjects such as English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. The state also saw notable increases in Latine and Asian teachers, contrasted with declines among white and Black teachers, reflecting both demographic changes and differential retention pressures. Credentialing patterns show growing reliance on teachers who are not fully credentialed. At the same time, the expansion of Integrated Teacher Education Programs has increased the proportion of teachers entering the profession with only a bachelor's degree. Despite ongoing policy efforts, gender representation remains largely unchanged. These trends highlight persistent challenges in recruitment and retention and underscore the need for targeted supports, strengthened preparation pathways, and improved data transparency. The brief concludes with policy recommendations aimed at stabilizing the workforce, advancing educator diversity, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of California's teacher pipeline.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Bachelor's plus:**
  A bachelor's degree plus additional post-baccalaureate coursework, but not a full graduate degree.
- **Full-time equivalent (FTE):**
  Total number of full-time teachers, often those working over 30 hours a week.
- **Hispanic:**
  Term used to identify people from Spanish-speaking countries.
- **Integrated teacher education programs (ITEP):**
  Teacher preparation programs that combine undergraduate study and teacher credential preparation into a single, coordinated pathway.
- **Latino/a:**
  Term used to identify people of Latin American descent.
- **Latine:**
  Gender-neutral term used to identify people of Latin American descent.
- **Teacher demographic:**
  Teachers' reported ethnic and racial backgrounds.
- **Teacher experience:**
  Teachers' completed years of full-time teaching.
- **Teacher educational level:**
  Teachers' highest level of attained degree.
- **Teacher gender composition:**
  Teachers' reported gender identities.

INTRODUCTION: A NEW WINDOW INTO CALIFORNIA'S TEACHING WORKFORCE

In July 2025, the California Department of Education (CDE) released its first statewide educator data since 2019—including more than 285,000 teachers—providing the most comprehensive view of the state's teaching workforce in six years. While extensive student-level data on pandemic-related learning differences has been available and analyzed (Kuhfeld et al., 2020; Pier et al., 2021), comparable statewide data on teachers had been absent until now. According to the CDE, the delay stemmed from staffing shortages and the state's transition to new course codes in school year (SY) 2018–19, which required reconfiguring five years of reports and data (Lambert, 2024b; Lambert & Willis, 2025).

The absence of statewide teacher data is particularly notable given the pandemic's profound impact on educators. Both state and local teacher surveys have reflected national trends, revealing widespread concern among California educators. Many reported considering leaving the profession altogether, citing excessive workloads, inadequate pay, and increasing challenges related to student behavior. A significant number also indicated that their own social and emotional needs were not being met (Education Week Research Center, 2024). A separate survey conducted by UCLA's Center for the Transformation of Schools and Hart Research Associates, involving more than 4,600 California educators, further highlighted high levels of fatigue, burnout, and dissatisfaction—especially among educators of color (Hart Research Associates & Mathews, 2022). These findings suggest that the teaching workforce experienced strains parallel to those seen in student learning during COVID-19, though such impacts were difficult to quantify prior to the release of the 2025 data.

Despite the importance of this new dataset, several key limitations remain. Notably, the data omit information on dual-language teachers, educators who have retired or left the profession, and demographic breakdowns of new teachers by race/ethnicity and gender. Without these details, it is difficult to fully capture workforce trends or develop targeted, equitable strategies to strengthen the teacher pipeline and address persistent challenges in recruitment and retention.

This brief aims to: (1) highlight key findings from the newly released CDE teacher data; (2) examine trends that emerged between the SYs 2019-20 and 2023-24; (3) discuss implications and limitations; and (4) recommend strategies to advance educator diversity and support intentional efforts to recruit and retain teachers of color.

METHODS

This brief draws on newly released statewide teacher staffing data from the California Department of Education (CDE), covering five school years from SY 2019–20 through SY 2023–24.

Data were obtained from the CDE's public educator workforce files, which compile annual counts of certificated teachers reported by local education agencies across California (CDE, 2025). The dataset includes information on teacher full-time equivalent (FTE), race/ethnicity, gender, years of experience, highest degree attained, credential status, and subject-area assignments, allowing for longitudinal analysis of workforce composition and trends over time.

CTS researchers downloaded the statewide data files from the CDE website (https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/staff.asp) and constructed analytic datasets to examine changes in both counts and percentages of teachers across key dimensions of interest. Teachers were grouped by experience level (first-year, inexperienced, and experienced), race/ethnicity, gender, educational attainment, credentialing status, and subject area, with a particular focus on high-need subjects such as English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. Percentages were calculated using total teacher FTE as the denominator to ensure comparability across years. Trends were examined descriptively by comparing year-to-year changes in levels and shares, rather than through causal or inferential statistical modeling.

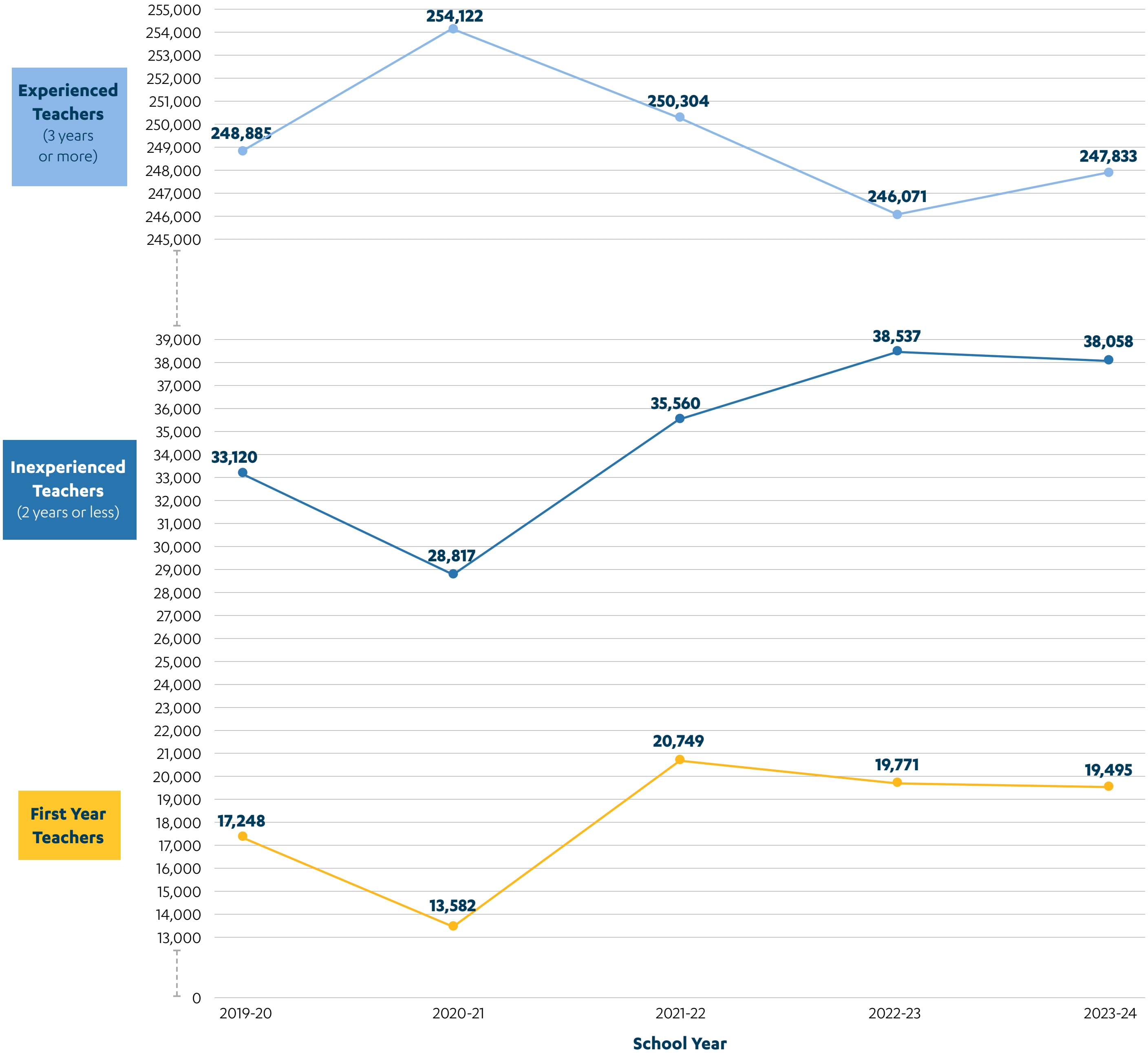
Several limitations should be noted. First, the data do not capture teachers who retired or exited the profession, limiting the ability to directly assess attrition or turnover. Second, the dataset lacks disaggregated demographic information for newly hired teachers and does not include indicators for dual-language educators or within-school assignment changes. Finally, changes in reporting practices and course coding prior to SY 2019–20 restrict the ability to extend trend analyses further back in time. Despite these limitations, the newly released CDE data provide the most comprehensive statewide picture of California's teaching workforce in recent years and offer valuable insights into post-pandemic shifts in recruitment, retention, preparation, and workforce diversity.

FINDINGS

1. The number of experienced teachers decreased.*

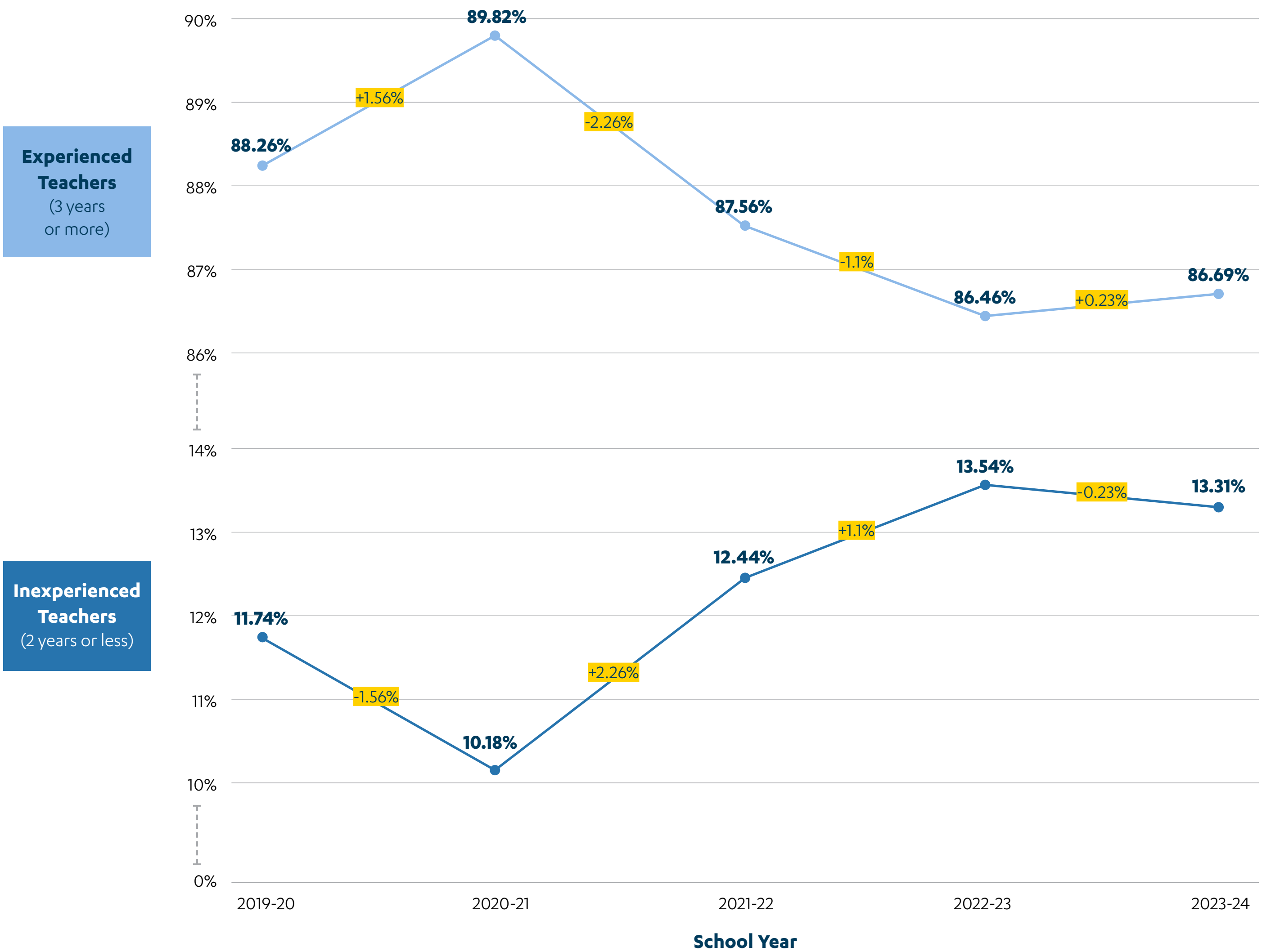
The number of experienced teachers decreased from the peak in SY 2020–21 of 254,122 to 247,833 in SY 2023–24, and the number of first-year teachers increased from 17,248 in SY 2019–20 to 19,495 in SY 2023–24.

Figure 1. ***Number of Teachers by Experience from SY 2019–20 to SY 2023–24***



*Newly released data from CDE for the 2024-25 school year published after the completion of this analysis reports an increase in the number of experienced teachers. The new data shows 88.3% of K–12 teachers in California in 2024–25 are considered experienced, representing an increase of 4,929 teachers since the 2023–24 school year.
Note: Data derived from CDE files, SY 2019–20 through SY 2023–24 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-13,000 and 39,000-245,000 are not observed.

Figure 2. ***Percentage of Teachers by Experience from SY 2019–20 to SY 2023–24***



Note: Data derived from CDE files, SY 2019–20 through SY 2023–24 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-10% and 14-86% are not observed.

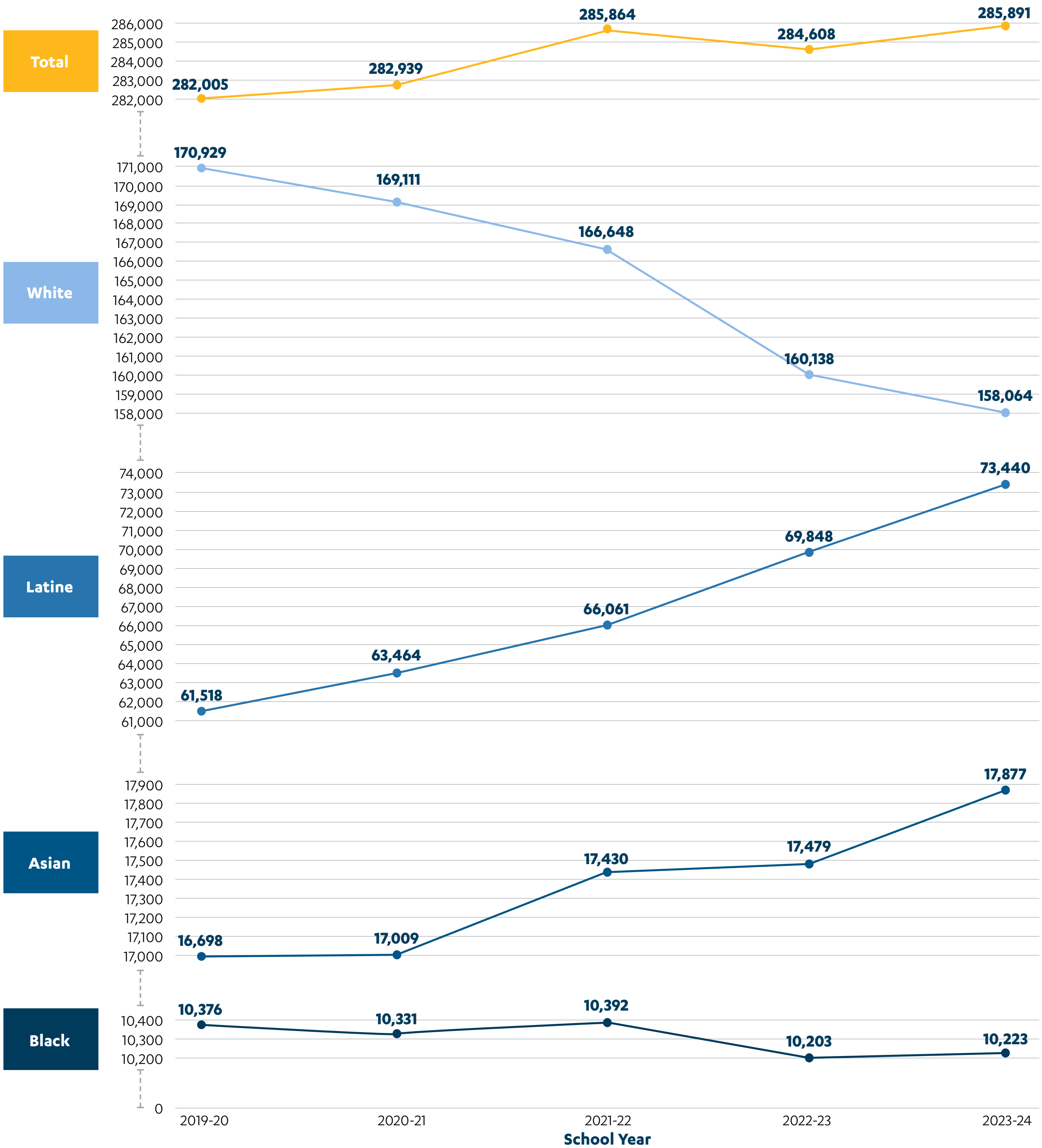
Compared to SY 2020-21, the data reveal a slight downward trend in the number and percentage of experienced teachers (those who have more than 2 years of experience). The peak of experienced teachers occurred in SY 2020–21 with 254,122 experienced teachers, followed by declines to 250,304 in SY 2021–22, 246,071 in SY 2022–23, before a modest rebound to 247,833 in SY 2023–24. In contrast, the number of inexperienced teachers was at its lowest in SY 2020–21 at 28,817 but has since risen steadily, reaching 35,560 in SY 2021–22, 38,537 in SY 2022–23, and 38,058 in SY 2023–24 (see Figure 1). A similar upward trend of first-year teachers is evident over the same time period.

Percentages of experienced versus inexperienced teachers reinforce this trend, demonstrating an increase in the percentage of inexperienced teachers and a decrease in the percentage of experienced teachers (see Figure 2). Given that there were 282,005 teachers in SY 2019–20 and the number of teachers grew to 285,891 in SY 2023–24, these patterns suggest both decreased teacher retention and increased recruitment post-COVID. These trends align with national data from the National Center for Education Statistics, which reported that 86% of K-12 schools faced challenges hiring teachers for SY 2023–24 (Delarosa & Robelen, 2023).

2. The number and percentage of Latine* and Asian teachers increased.

The number of Latine teachers increased from 61,518 (21.81% of the workforce) in SY 2019–20 to 73,440 (25.69%) in SY 2023–24. The number of Asian teachers increased from 16,698 (5.92% of the workforce) in SY 2019–20 to 17,877 (6.25%) in SY 2023–24.

Figure 3. ***Number of Teachers by Race from SY 2019–20 to SY 2023–24***

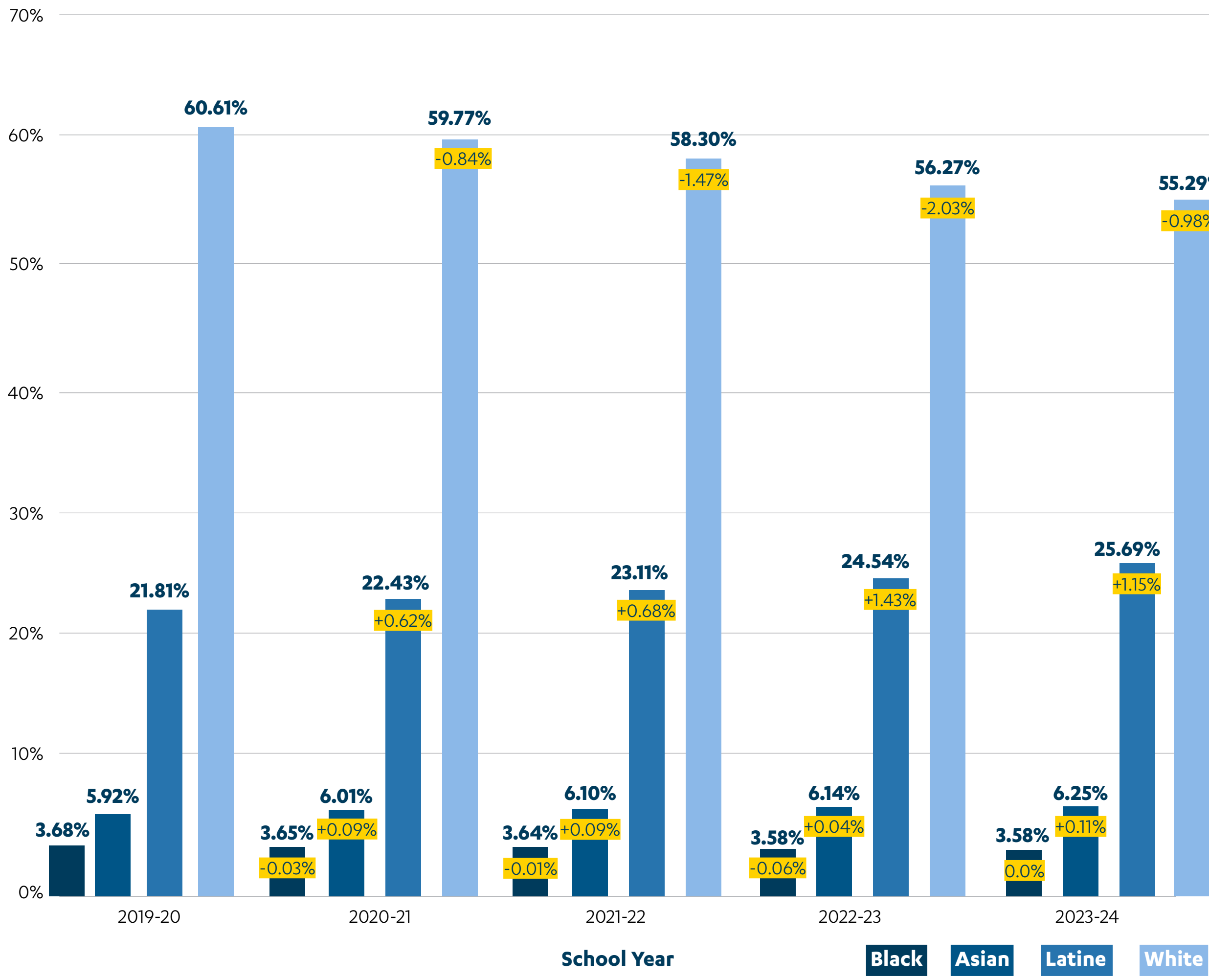


*Newly released data from CDE reports the numbers of Hispanic or Latino/a/e teachers continued to climb during school year 2024–25 — rising an additional 2.1% to 74,974.

Note: Data derived from CDE files, SY 2019–20 through SY 2023–24 (accessed 2025).

Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-10,200, 10,400-17,000, 17,900-61,000, 74,000-158,000, and 171,000-282,000 are not observed.

Figure 4. ***Percentage of Teachers by Race from SY 2019–20 to SY 2023–24***



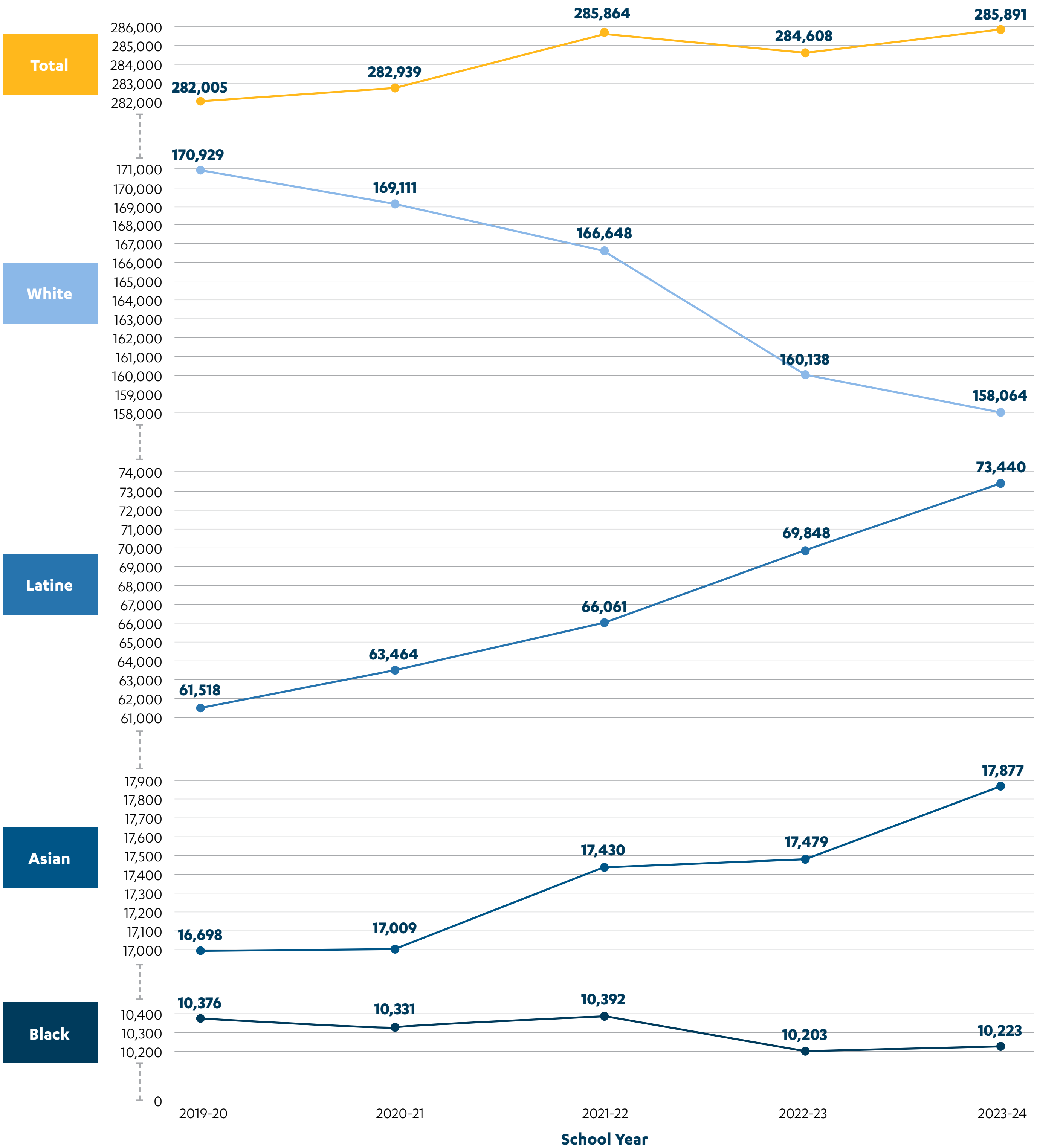
Note: Data derived from CDE files, SY 2019–20 through SY 2023–24 (accessed 2025).

One of the most noticeable changes from SY 2019–20 to SY 2023–24 is the rise in the number and percentage of Latine and Asian teachers and a corresponding decline in the number and percentage of white teachers. The share of white teachers decreased by 5.32% while the combined share of Latine and Asian teachers grew by 4.23%, with Latine teachers alone increasing by 3.88% (see Figure 4). In particular, we see that the number of Latine teachers grew from 61,518 in SY 2019–20 to 73,440 in SY 2023–24 (see Figure 3). We can view such increases in the number and share of Latine and Asian teachers as suggestive evidence of successful retention (or reduced attrition) of teachers of color, particularly given documented patterns of turnover among underrepresented educators. Research has shown that teachers of color tend to leave the profession at higher rates than their white peers, often citing lack of support, marginalization, and misalignment between school practices and their communities (Carver-Thomas, 2018). In California, the state has invested heavily in incentive and support programs aimed at recruiting and retaining diverse educators—for example, the California Diversifying Teacher Grant Program (AB 520) and the formation of a state Educator Diversity Advisory Group, which helps sustain locally developed retention programs (CDE, 2022). At the same time, analyses of state staffing trends document that while the share of white teachers is falling, the shares of Latine and Asian teachers are trending upward, even as turnover pressures remain high in many districts (Hill et al., 2023).

3. The number and percentage of white teachers decreased.

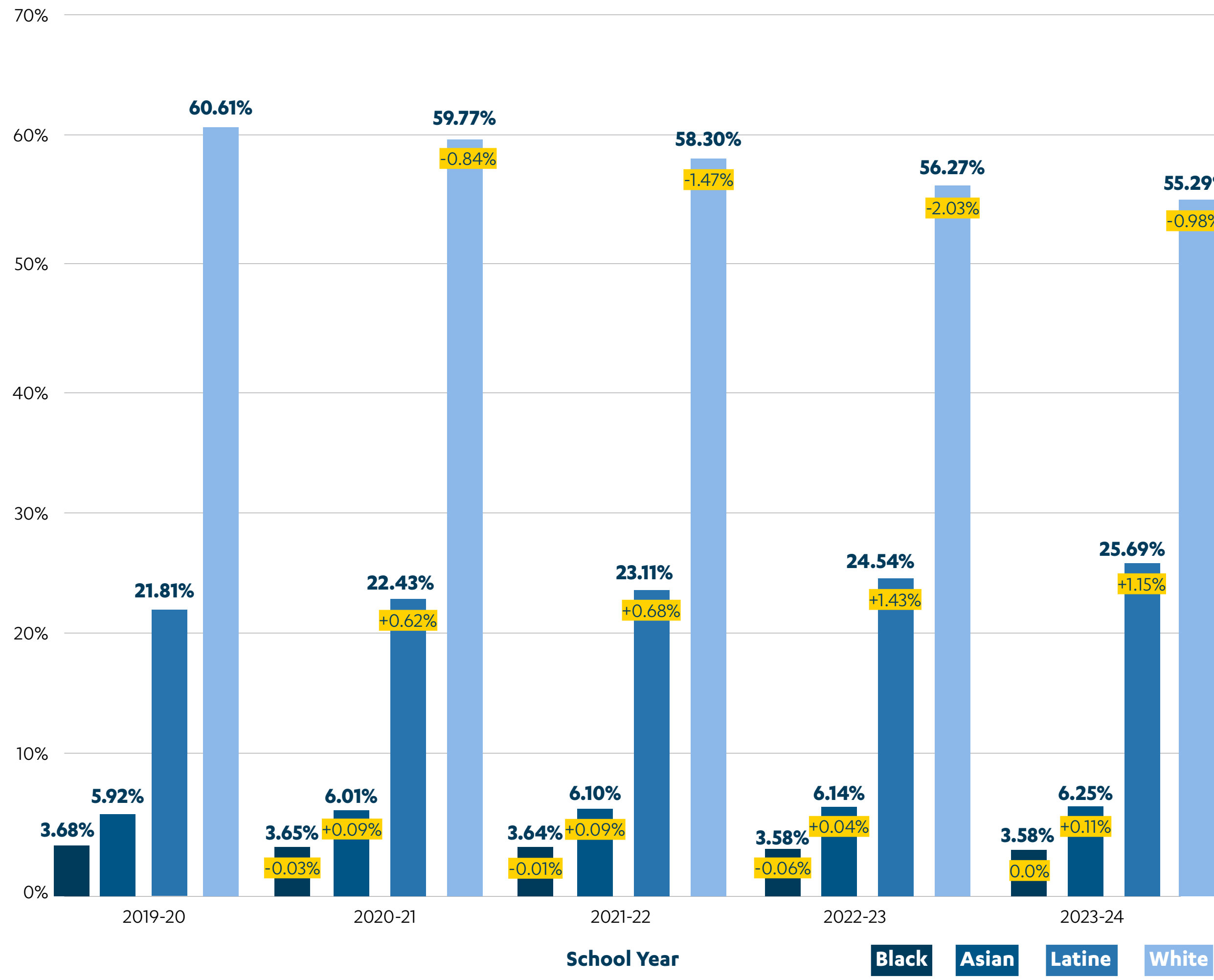
The number of white teachers decreased from 170,929 (60.61% of the workforce) in SY 2019–20 to 158,064 (55.29%) in SY 2023–24.

Figure 3. ***Number of Teachers by Race from SY 2019–20 to SY 2023–24***



Note: Data derived from CDE files, SY 2019–20 through SY 2023–24 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-10,200, 10,400-17,000, 17,900-61,000, 74,000-158,000, and 171,000-282,000 are not observed.

Figure 4. *Percentage of Teachers by Race from SY 2019–20 to SY 2023–24*



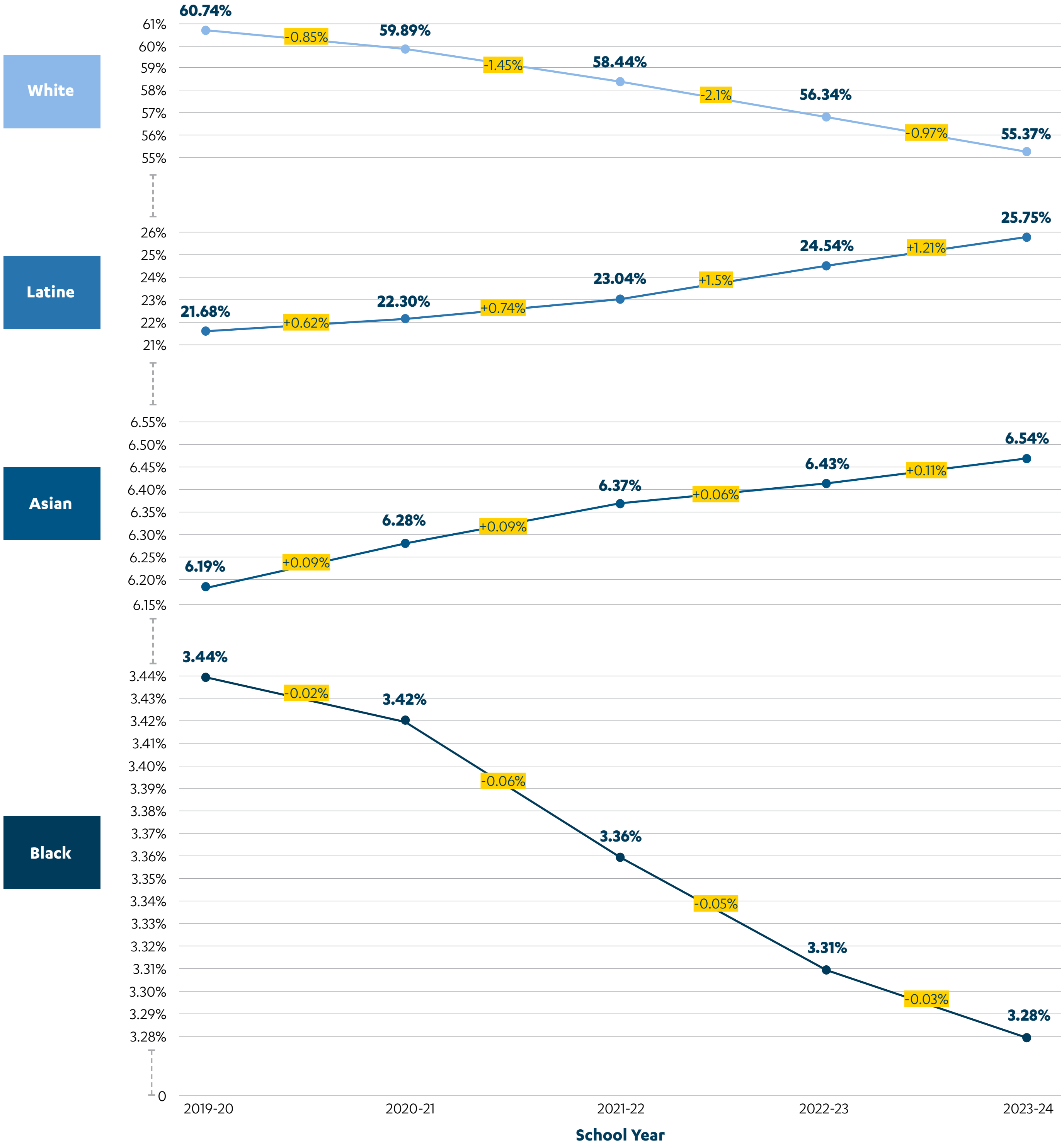
Note: Data derived from CDE files, SY 2019–20 through SY 2023–24 (accessed 2025).

In contrast to the increase in Latine and Asian teachers, we see a decline in the number and percentage of white teachers. In SY 2019–20, there were 170,929 white teachers (60.61% of the workforce); in SY 2023–24, there were 158,064 white teachers (55.29%) (see Figures 3 and 4). The decline in white teachers may reflect a wave of retirements and early exits among older cohorts of the workforce, who are disproportionately white. Projections have shown that as many as one in four California teachers from the SY 2013–14 cohort would retire by SY 2023–24, with higher retirement rates in rural counties (Fong et al., 2016). Districts have also introduced early retirement incentives to manage budget pressures, which further contributed to veteran teachers leaving the classroom (Lambert, 2025). Statewide, the number of white teachers has declined steadily since 2019, which observers have linked not only to demographic change but also to broader workforce aging and the loss of experienced educators (Fensterwald, 2021). Taken together, these patterns suggest that while retention programs may be helping to stabilize the numbers of Latine and Asian teachers, the decline in white teachers is likely tied to structural retirement trends and policy choices around workforce reductions.

4. The number and percentage of Black teachers decreased.

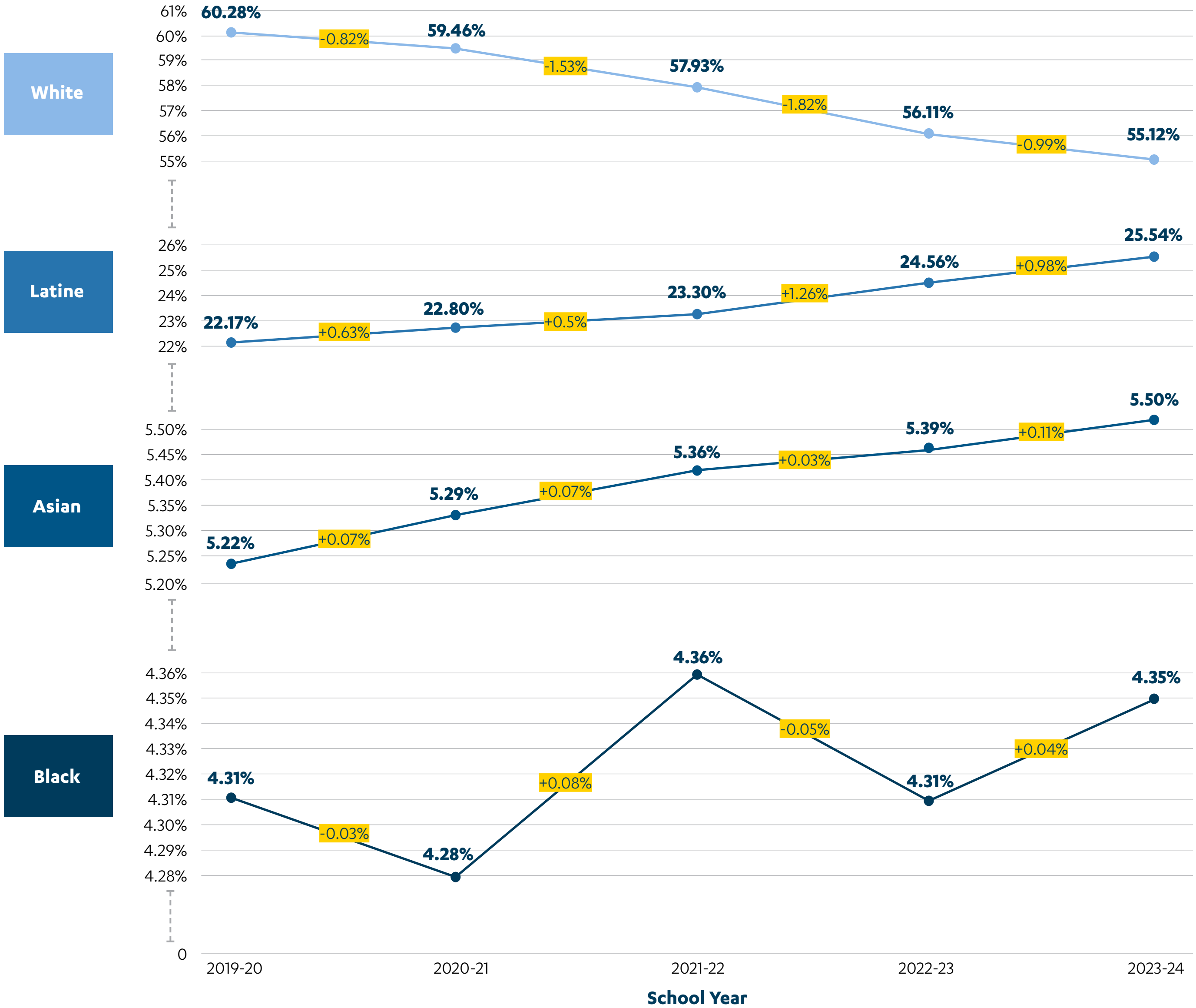
The number of Black teachers decreased from 10,376 (3.68% of the workforce) in SY 2019–20 to 10,223 (3.58%) in SY 2023–24.

Figure 5. ***Percentage of Female Teachers by Race from SY 2019–20 to SY 2023–24***



Note: Data derived from CDE files, SY 2019–20 through SY 2023–24 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-3.28%, 3.44-6.15%, 16.55-21%, and 26-55% are not observed.

Figure 6. ***Percentage of Male Teachers by Race from SY 2019–20 to SY 2023–24***



Note: Data derived from CDE files, SY 2019–20 through SY 2023–24 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-4.28%, 4.36-5.20%, 5.50-22%, and 26-55% are not observed.

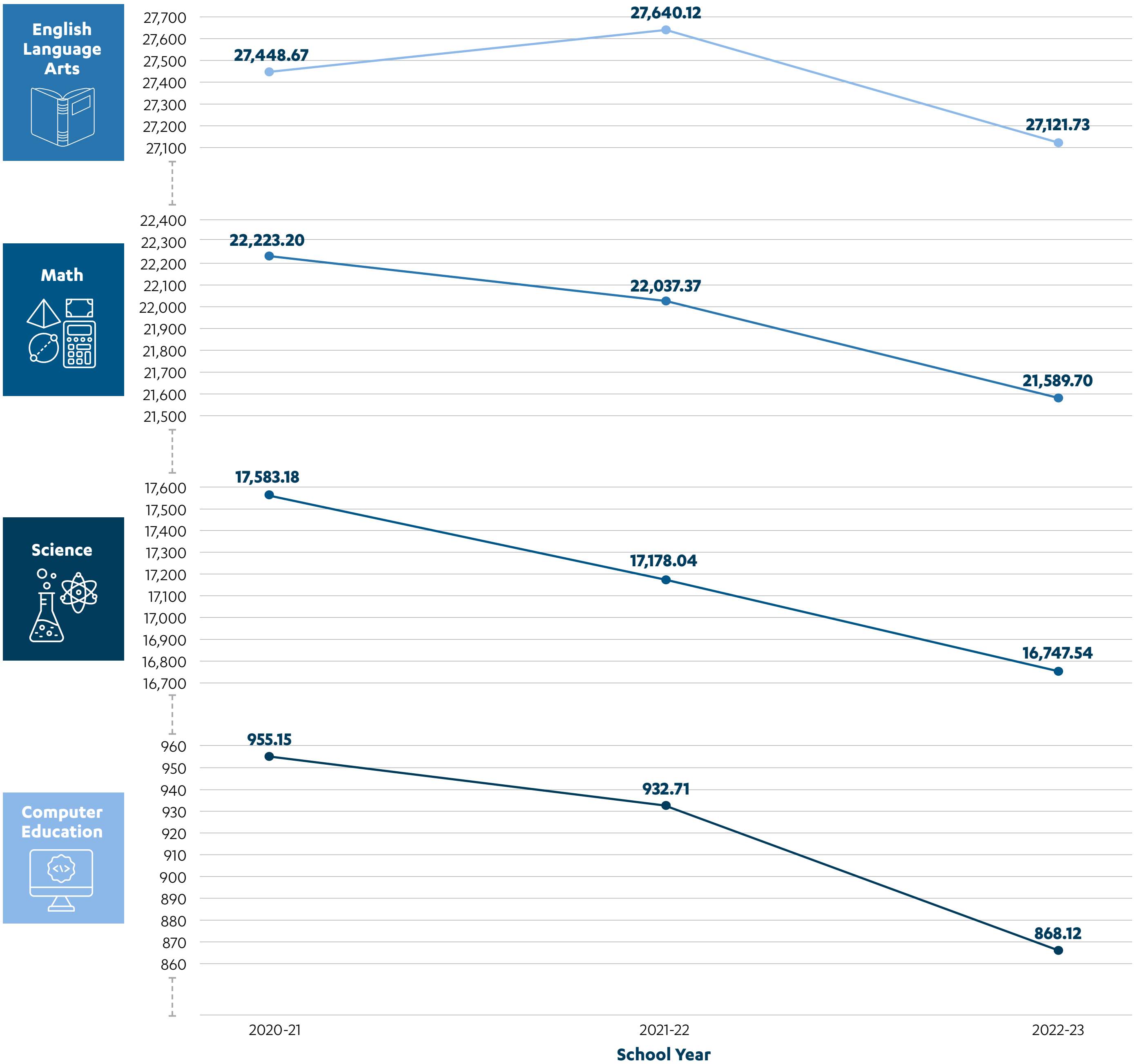
While most ethnic groups, except for white teachers, show increases in both number and percentage, the number and percentage of Black teachers in California declined slightly between SY 2019–20 and SY 2023–24. While the change is relatively minimal, with a decline of 153 teachers equivalent to a 0.1% drop, it is also important to note that this was solely due to the number of Black female teachers decreasing, as Black male teachers have experienced a modest 0.04% increase (see Figure 6). While an overall drop of Black teachers to 3.58% does not align with the Black student proportion of 5% in the California K-12 population, the percentage of Black male teachers among male teachers was 4.35% in SY 2023–24 compared to 3.28% for female Black teachers among female teachers, showing a higher percentage of Black male teachers than Black female teachers (see Figure 5; CDE, 2025; Márquez Rosales, 2025). Even as such, due to the difference in the absolute number of female teachers and male teachers, there is still a larger number of Black female teachers than Black male teachers.

This pattern underscores how differential attrition by gender within the Black teacher population may mask larger trends in racial diversification. Nationally and in policy research, Black teachers face higher turnover rates compared to white teachers, often citing burnout, accusations of unequal workloads, lack of support, isolation, and emotional labor burden as contributing factors (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Lambert, 2024a). In qualitative studies focused on Black female educators, participants emphasize the cumulative strain of managing racial and gendered expectations, limited administrative support, and lack of peer community as key stressors contributing to decisions to leave (Battle, 2022). Furthermore, research shows that Black teachers working in racially isolated environments—without colleagues of the same race—are more likely to depart: a Black teacher with no Black colleagues is 5.2 percentage points more likely to leave than one in a more racially diverse school environment (Fordham Institute, 2024). Collectively, these factors suggest that retaining Black teachers may require more deliberate supports, peer networks, and institutional change to counteract systemic pressures disproportionately affecting Black (especially female) teachers.

5: The percentage of inexperienced teachers increased for critical subjects such as English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science.

The percentage of inexperienced English Language Arts teachers increased from 10.89% in SY 2020–21 to 14.41% in SY 2022–23. Inexperienced Mathematics teachers increased from 11.16% in SY 2020–21 to 13.98% in SY 2022–23. Inexperienced Science teachers increased from 12.39% in SY 2020–21 to 14.39% in SY 2022–23.

Figure 7. ***Number of Teacher FTE[1] by Subject from SY 2020–21 to SY 2022–23***

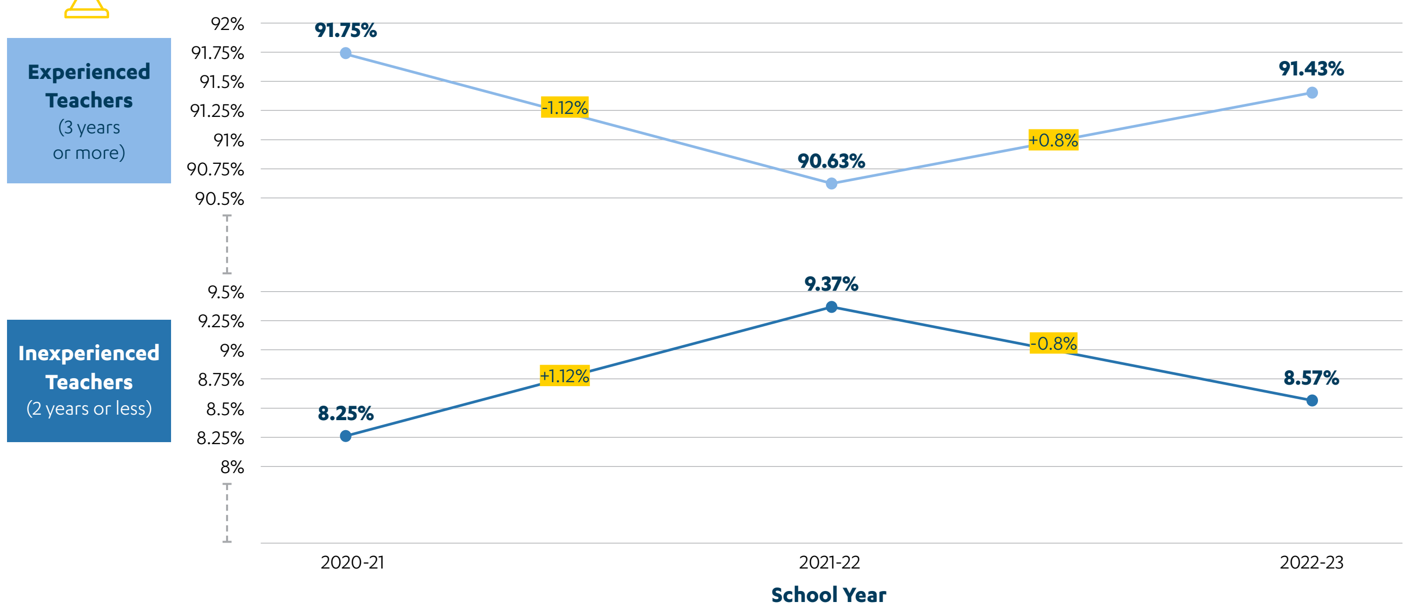


[1] Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) represents the workload of a full-time teacher and allows part-time teaching assignments to be aggregated into a standardized measure, allowing for accurate comparisons of instructional capacity across subjects and years. For example, two half-time teachers are counted as one FTE. Dashed line indicates discontinuity.

Note: Data derived from CDE files, SY 2020–21 through SY 2022–23 (accessed 2025).

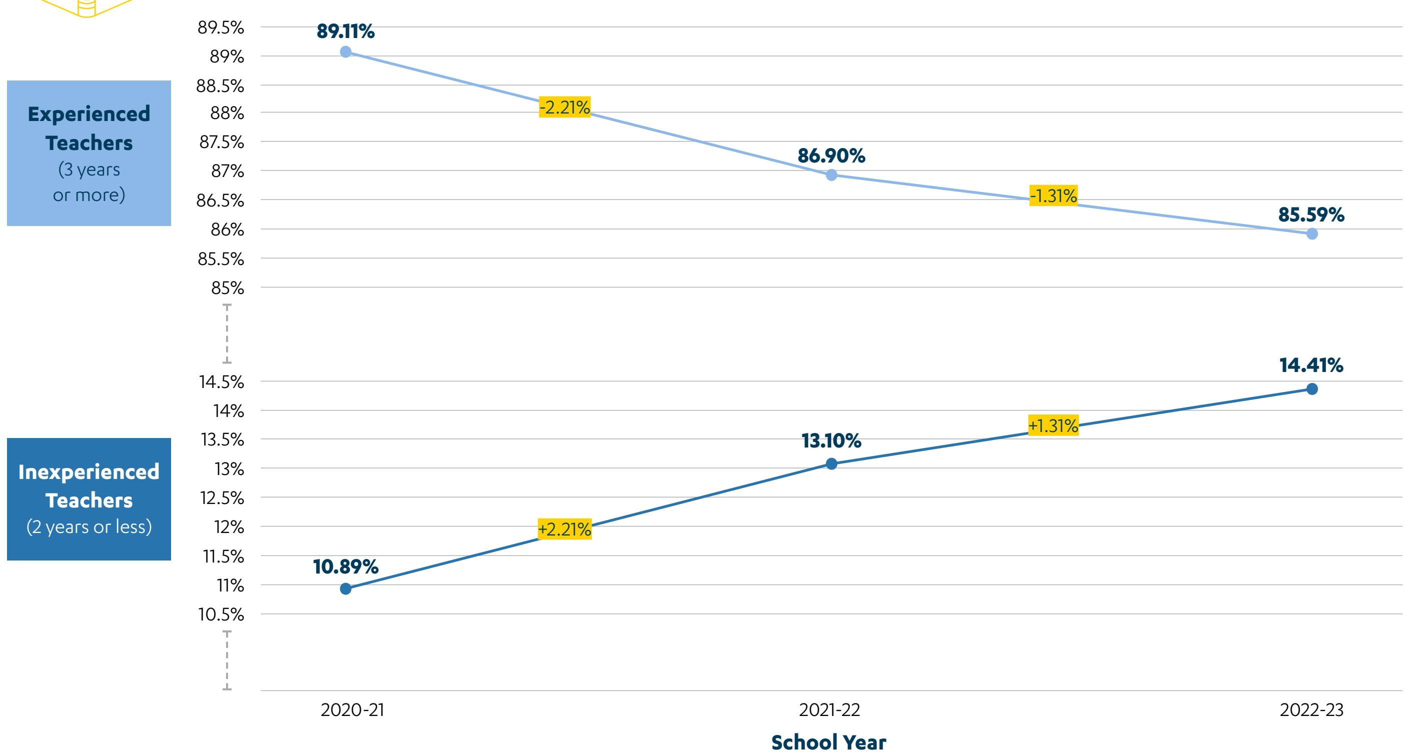
Values between 0-860, 960-16,700, 17,600-21,500, and 22,400-27,100 are not observed.

Figure 8. *Percentage of Computer Education FTE[1] by Experience from SY 2020–21 to SY 2022–23*



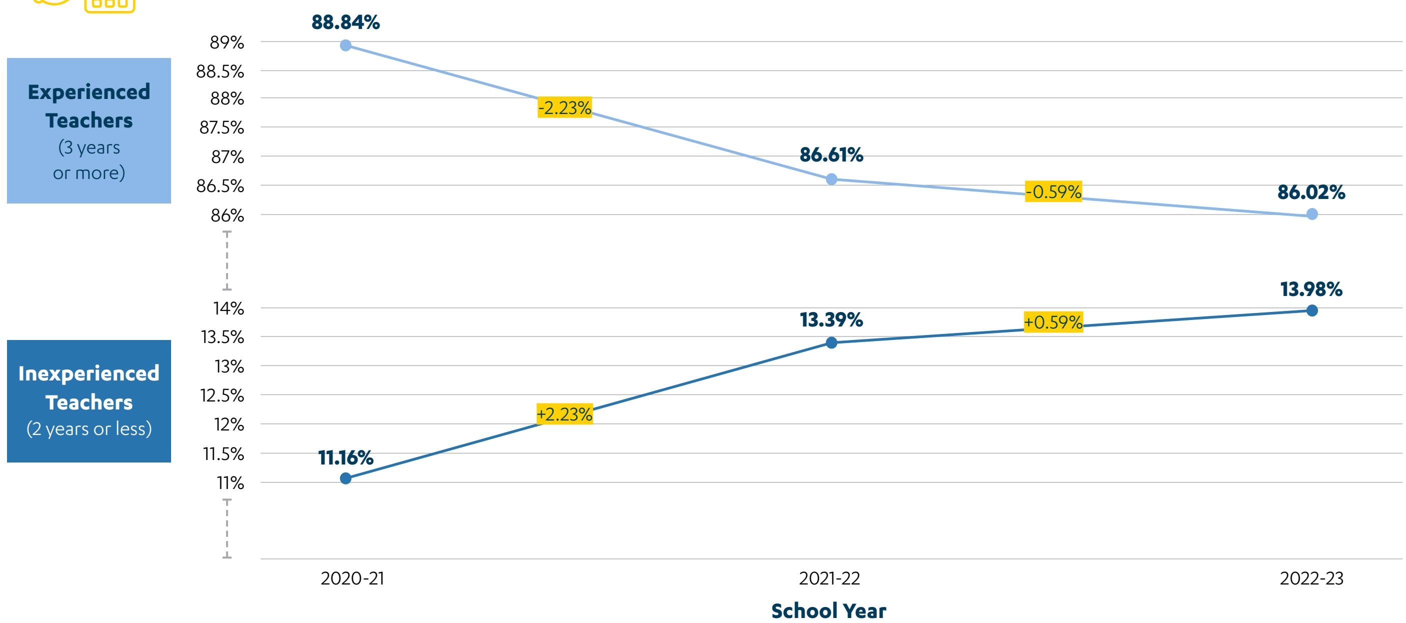
Note. Data derived from CDE files, SY 2020–21 through SY 2022–23 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-8% and 9.5-90.5% are not observed.

Figure 9. *Percentage of English Language Arts FTE[1] by Experience from SY 2020–21 to SY 2022–23*



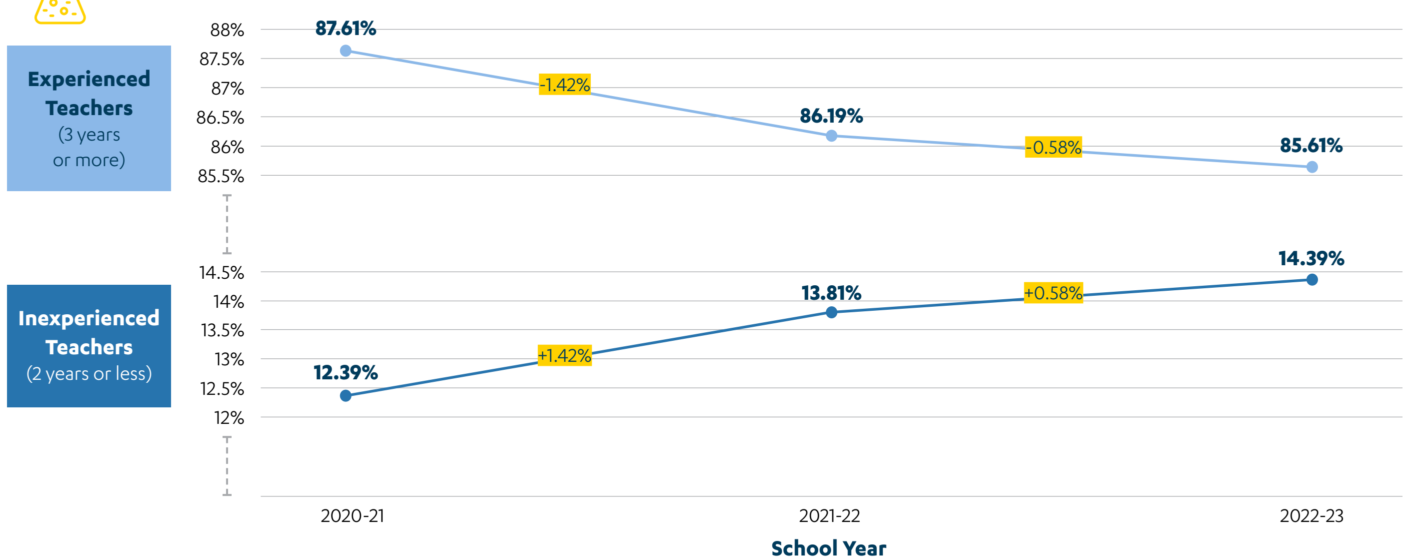
[1] Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) represents the workload of a full-time teacher and allows part-time teaching assignments to be aggregated into a standardized measure, allowing for accurate comparisons of instructional capacity across subjects and years. For example, two half-time teachers are counted as one FTE. Dashed line indicates discontinuity.
Note. Data derived from CDE files, SY 2020–21 through SY 2022–23 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-10.5% and 14.5-85% are not observed.

Figure 10. *Percentage of Math FTE[1] by Experience from SY 2020–21 to SY 2022–23*



[1] Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) represents the workload of a full-time teacher and allows part-time teaching assignments to be aggregated into a standardized measure, allowing for accurate comparisons of instructional capacity across subjects and years. For example, two half-time teachers are counted as one FTE. Dashed line indicates discontinuity.
Note. Data derived from CDE files, SY 2020–21 through SY 2022–23 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-11% and 14-86% are not observed.

Figure 11. *Percentage of Science FTE[1] by Experience from SY 2020–21 to SY 2022–23*



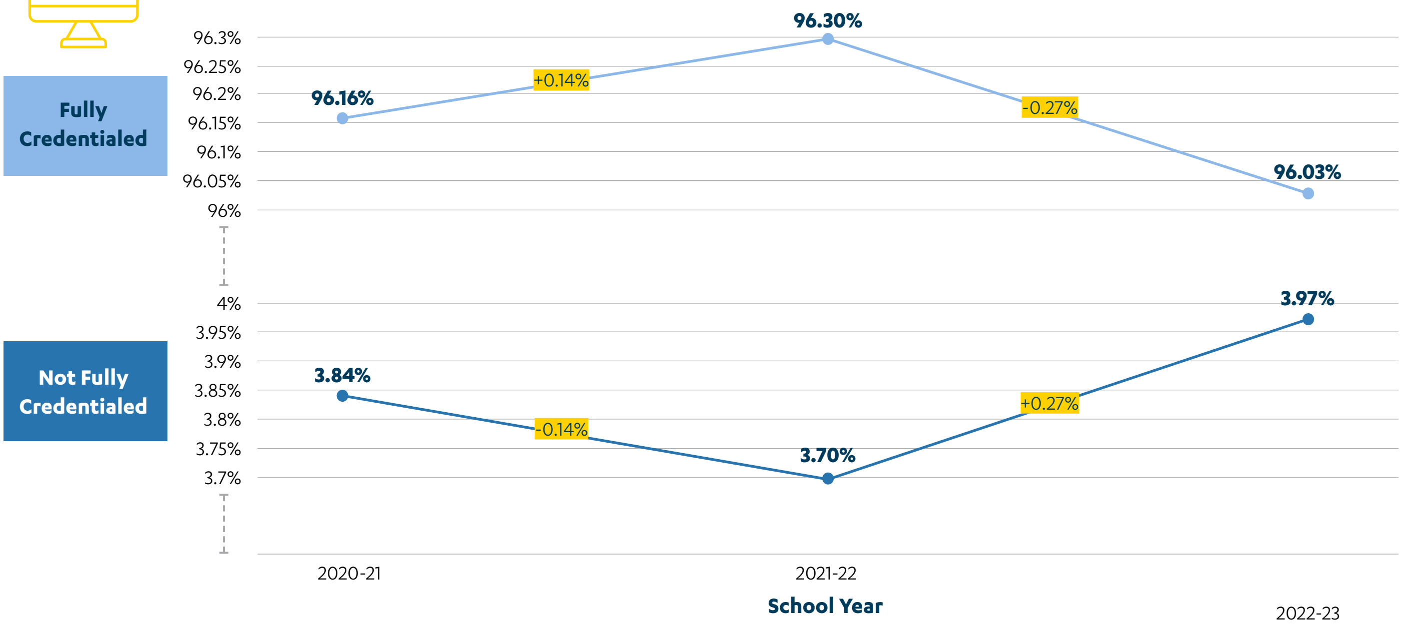
[1] Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) represents the workload of a full-time teacher and allows part-time teaching assignments to be aggregated into a standardized measure, allowing for accurate comparisons of instructional capacity across subjects and years. For example, two half-time teachers are counted as one FTE. Dashed line indicates discontinuity. *Note*. Data derived from CDE files, SY 2020–21 through SY 2022–23 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-12% and 14.5-85.5% are not observed.

For specific subjects, we looked at Computer Education, English Language Arts, Math, and Science Full Time Equivalent (FTE) teachers. Looking at teacher FTE by subject, we overall see decreasing trends of teacher FTE for all 4 subjects across the 3 years, excluding a slight increase in teacher FTE for English Language Arts in SY 2021-22 (see Figure 7). In terms of experience, Computer Education had the lowest rate of inexperienced teachers across the 3 years, ranging between 8.25 to 9.37% (see Figure 8). English Language Arts, Math, and Science showed similar rates and increasing trends of inexperienced teachers across the 3 years. English Language Arts increased from 10.89% in SY 2020–21, 13.1% in SY 2021–22, and 14.41% in SY 2022–23 (see Figure 9). Math increased from 11.16% in SY 2020–21, 13.39% in SY 2021–22, and 13.98% in SY 2022–23 (see Figure 10). Science increased from 12.39% in SY 2020–21, 13.81% in SY 2021–22, and 14.39% in SY 2022–23 (see Figure 11). Similar to the trend of overall increase in the number of inexperienced teachers from SY 2020-2021 to SY 2022-23, the increase in percentage of inexperienced teachers and decrease in percentage of experienced teachers for English Language Arts, Math, and Science could indicate increased recruitment and decreased retention post-COVID.

6: The percentage of undercredentialed teachers increased for critical subjects such as English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science.

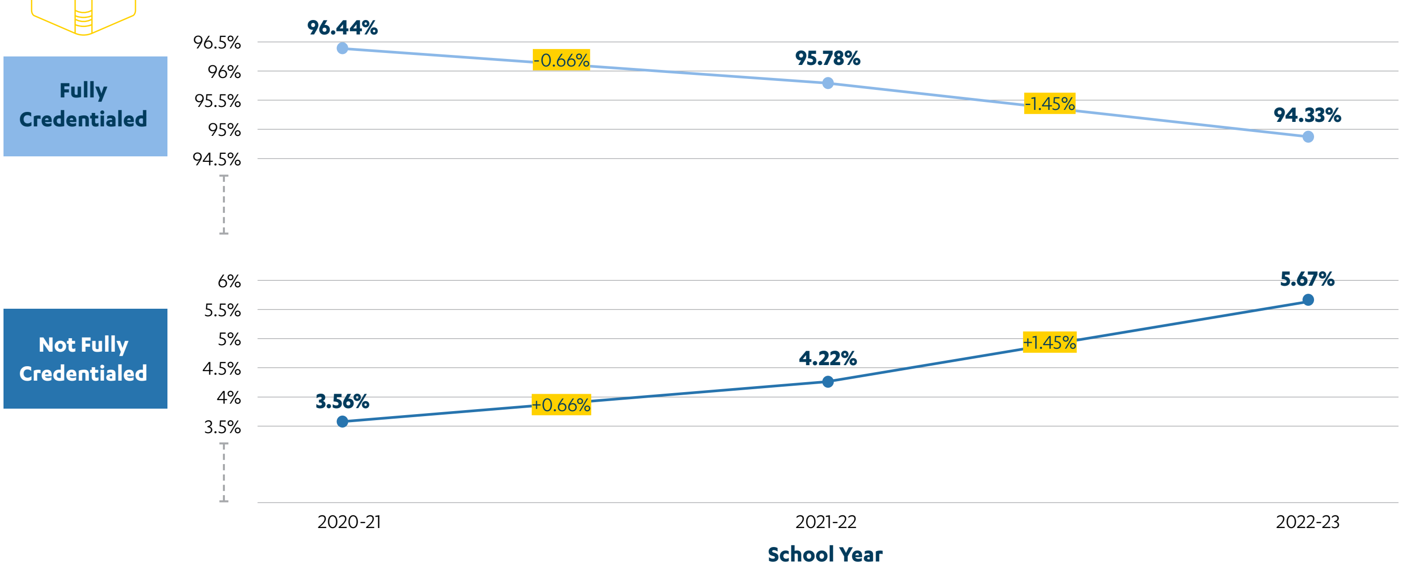
English Language Arts teachers who are not fully credentialed increased from 3.56% in SY 2020–21 to 5.67% in SY 2022–23. Mathematics teachers who are not fully credentialed increased from 4.16% in SY 2020–21 to 6.36% in SY 2022–23. Science teachers who are not fully credentialed increased from 4.06% in SY 2020–21 to 5.98% in SY 2022–23.

Figure 12. ***Percentage of Computer Education FTE[1] by Credential from SY 2020–21 to SY 2022–23***



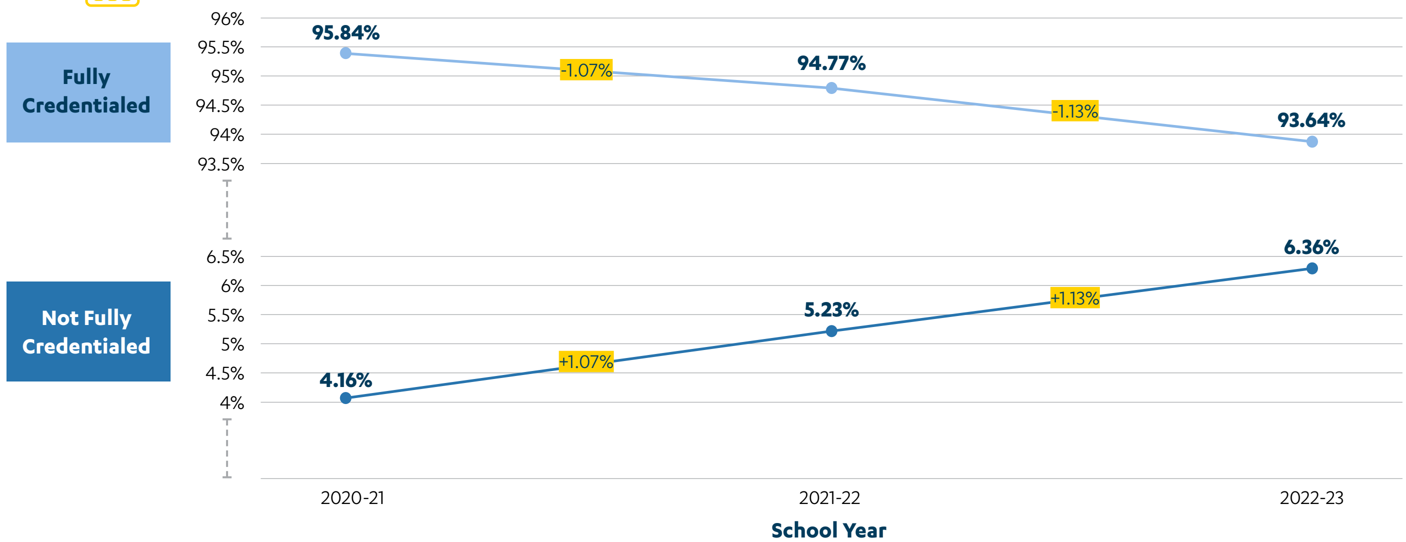
[1] Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) represents the workload of a full-time teacher and allows part-time teaching assignments to be aggregated into a standardized measure, allowing for accurate comparisons of instructional capacity across subjects and years. For example, two half-time teachers are counted as one FTE. Dashed line indicates discontinuity.
Note. Data derived from CDE files, SY 2020–21 through SY 2022–23 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-3.7% and 4-96% are not observed.

Figure 13. ***Percentage of English Language Arts FTE[1] by Credential from SY 2020–21 to SY 2022–23***



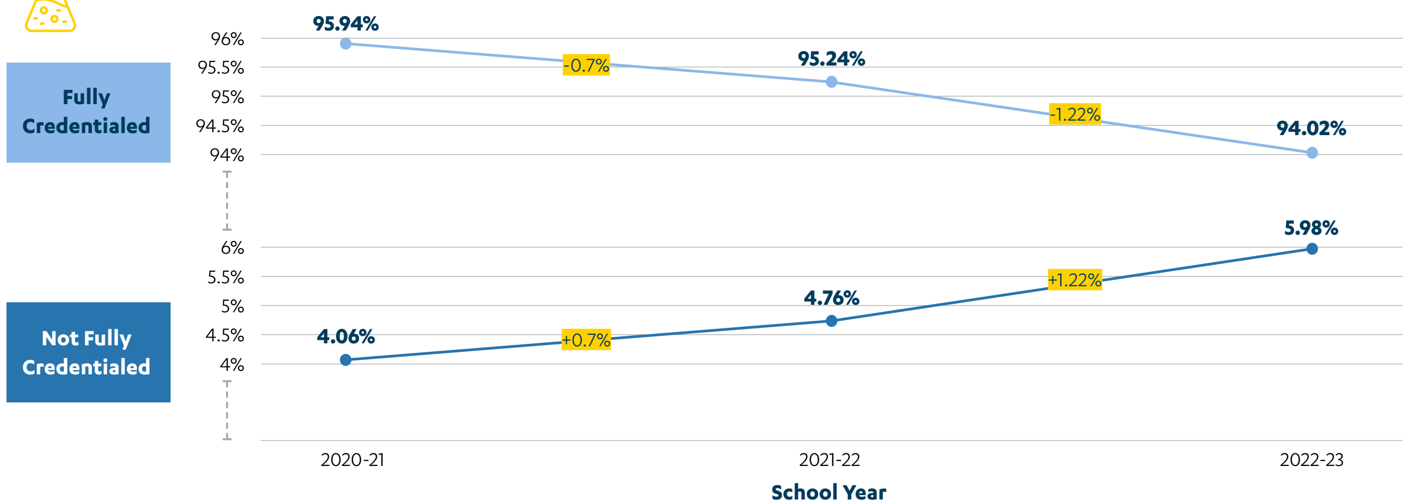
[1] Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) represents the workload of a full-time teacher and allows part-time teaching assignments to be aggregated into a standardized measure, allowing for accurate comparisons of instructional capacity across subjects and years. For example, two half-time teachers are counted as one FTE. Dashed line indicates discontinuity.
Note. Data derived from CDE files, SY 2020–21 through SY 2022–23 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-3.5% and 6-94.5% are not observed.

Figure 14. ***Percentage of Math FTE[1] by Credential from SY 2020–21 to SY 2022–23***



[1] Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) represents the workload of a full-time teacher and allows part-time teaching assignments to be aggregated into a standardized measure, allowing for accurate comparisons of instructional capacity across subjects and years. For example, two half-time teachers are counted as one FTE. Dashed line indicates discontinuity.
Note. Data derived from CDE files, SY 2020–21 through SY 2022–23 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-4% and 6.5-93.5% are not observed.

Figure 15. ***Percentage of Science FTE[1] by Credential from SY 2020–21 to SY 2022–23***



[1] Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) represents the workload of a full-time teacher and allows part-time teaching assignments to be aggregated into a standardized measure, allowing for accurate comparisons of instructional capacity across subjects and years. For example, two half-time teachers are counted as one FTE. Dashed line indicates discontinuity.
Note. Data derived from CDE files, SY 2020–21 through SY 2022–23 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-4% and 6-94% are not observed.

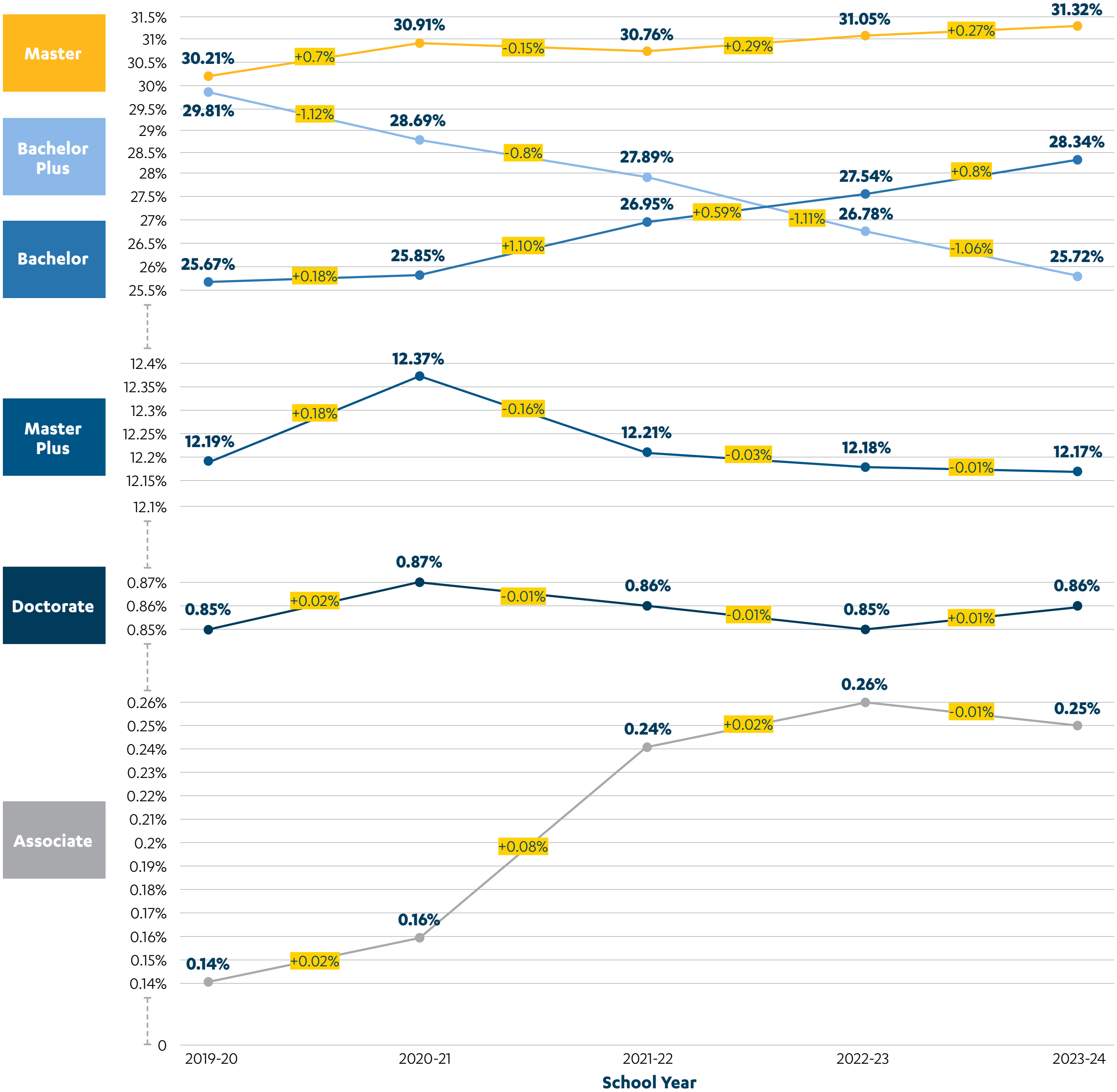
Credentials also showed similar patterns as teacher experience with Computer Education having the lowest rate of not fully credentialed teachers across the 3 years, and English Language Arts, Math, and Science showing increasing rates at similar percentages, with Math showing the highest rates. English Language Arts increased from 3.56% in SY 2020–21, 4.22% in SY 2021–22, and 5.67% in SY 2022–23 (see Figure 13). Math increased from 4.16% in SY 2020–21, 5.23% in SY 2021–22, and 6.36% in SY 2022–23 (see Figure 14). Science increased from 4.06% in SY 2020–21, 4.76% in SY 2021–22, and 5.98% in SY 2022–23 (see Figure 15).

Those who are not fully credentialed may be working on emergency permits, with intern credentials, or credentialed teachers teaching out of field in subjects they are not officially certified in (Mays, 2022). Those teaching out of field used to lead this group, but the increase in teachers in California who are not fully credentialed was further exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Governor Newsom temporarily suspended examination requirements for student teachers to allow them to receive preliminary credentials with the expectation of completing missing requirements before the credential expires (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, [CTC], 2020). Preliminary credentials are typically valid for five years and are issued to new teachers and teachers transferring from other states, but were excessively issued when California faced teacher shortages due to fleeing and retiring teachers during COVID-19 (Mays, 2022). While teachers with preliminary credentials are considered fully credentialed, those who received them during COVID-19 are still expected to complete the missing requirement. It remains unclear whether those with expiring preliminary credentials are contributing to poor student learning conditions, but the number of teachers with intern credentials has risen at least 2.5% from SY 2020–21 to SY 2022–23 (CDE, n.d.-a; CDE, n.d.-b).

7: A master's degree continued to be the most common level of educational attainment among teachers. Notably, the share of educators holding a bachelor's degree surpassed those with a bachelor's plus credential, making it the second most prevalent level of attainment among practicing teachers.

The percentage of teachers with master's degrees remained the highest at 31.32% in 2023-24. The percentage of teachers with bachelor's degrees increased from 25.67% in SY 2019–20 to 28.34% in SY 2023–24. The percentage of teachers with bachelor's plus decreased from 29.81% in SY 2019–20 to 25.72% in SY 2023–24.

Figure 16. *Percentage of Teachers by Education Level from SY 2019–20 to SY 2023–24*



Note: Data derived from CDE files, SY 2019–20 through SY 2023–24 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-0.14%, 0.26-0.85%, 0.87-12.1%, and 12.4-25.5% are not observed.

The evolving trends in teacher educational attainment in California from SY 2019–20 to SY 2023–24 reflect both the persistence of traditional credentialing pathways and a growing shift towards more accessible, integrated teacher preparation programs. Across the five years, the percentage of teachers with master's degrees remains the most common educational attainment, and shows a slightly increasing trend from 30.21% to 31.32% (see Figure 16). This aligns with California's rigorous teacher license credentialing process, which traditionally requires a licensing program equivalent to a master's degree after obtaining a bachelor's degree, whereas other states offer pathways to become a teacher with a bachelor's degree (Lambert, 2024c).

However, according to the same CDE data, there has been an increasing trend of percentage of teachers with bachelor's degrees from 25.67% to 28.34% and a decreasing trend of percentage of teachers with bachelor's plus degrees from 29.81% to 25.72%, essentially showing that more teachers are taking advantage of newly introduced integrated undergraduate programs obtaining their teaching credentials without the post-baccalaureate credentialing program (Cerritos College, 2025; Klitzing, 2019). The traditional pathways in California often require aspiring teachers to attend at least six years of higher education, adding extra financial and chronological burden compared to other professions or even teachers in other states, often discouraging those from underrepresented backgrounds (Gist & Bristol, 2025; Mathews, et al., 2024). However, with more universities and community colleges offering integrated undergraduate programs, often referred to as "blended" or "Integrated Teacher Education Programs" (ITEP), there is now increased access and fewer barriers for those who wish to become teachers more quickly and more cost-effectively (CTC, 2025).

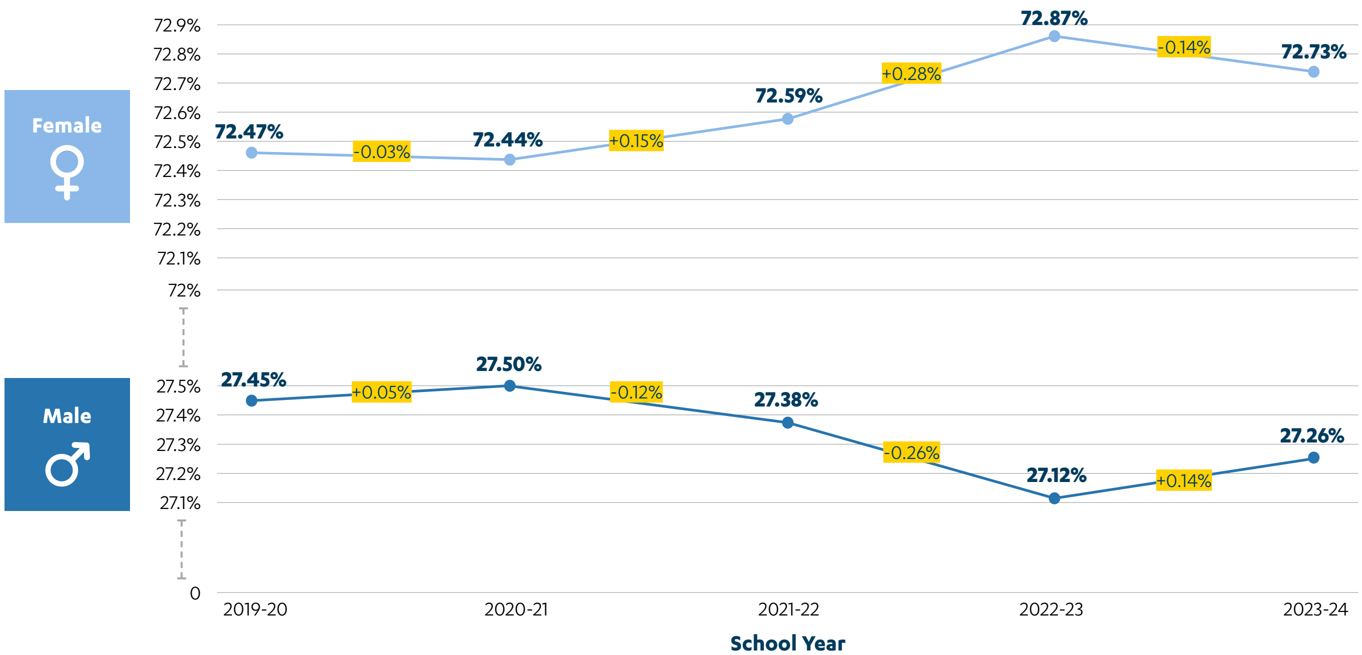
One of the pioneers of integrated programs is Cerritos College, which, in partnership with CSU Long Beach, is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its Teacher Training Academy (TRAC) program in 2025 (Cerritos College, 2025). The program trained over 800 teachers prior to 2020 (Walker, 2020), serving as an early model for expanding accessible programs. More recently, San Diego State University launched its integrated program in 2020, highlighting the growing trend of integrated programs in recent years (Klitzing, 2019). This increase corresponds with the changes observed in Figure 16, where the percentage of teachers entering the profession with only a bachelor's degree has risen. Collectively, these examples demonstrate how integrated programs diversify entry points into the profession, but also underscore the importance of expanding affordable, streamlined teacher preparation as a key strategy to attract and retain diverse teacher candidates in California.

1 https://www.cerritos.edu/teachertrac/default.htm
2 https://math.sdsu.edu/programs/undergraduate_mathematics/ba_math_sstc_itep

8: The teacher workforce's gender composition remains stagnant.

Male teacher percentage remains relatively stagnant, at 27.45% in SY 2019–20 and 27.26% in SY 2023–24. Female teacher percentage also remains relatively stagnant, at 72.47% in SY 2019–20 and 72.73% in SY 2023–24.

Figure 17. *Percentage of Teachers by Gender from SY 2019–20 to SY 2023–24*



Note: Data derived from CDE files, SY 2019–20 through SY 2023–24 (accessed 2025).
Dashed line indicates discontinuity. Values between 0-27.1% and 27.5-72% are not observed.

Despite ongoing efforts to diversify the teaching workforce, the gender distribution of teachers in California has remained largely unchanged from SY 2019-20 to SY 2023-24, with a persistent and gradually widening gap favoring female educators throughout several decades. Overall, the teacher percentage by gender has remained relatively stagnant at around 73% female and 27% male teachers from SY 2019-20 to 2023-24 (see Figure 17). To be precise, although there are slight increases and decreases every school year, the percentage of female teachers has increased by 0.26%, whereas the percentage of male teachers has decreased by 0.19% in the past 5 years, incrementally widening the male and female gender gap in the teaching workforce. This slow but growing gender gap has been continuing since the 1980s. In the 1987-88 school year, the male teacher population was at 29.5% (NCES, 2013). According to the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS), 69% of its retired members are female, and 31% are male (CalSTRS, 2020). As the gender gap is slowly growing despite most retired and retiring teachers being female, it is safe to assume that new teachers are also majority female.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations build on these findings to address challenges in teacher recruitment, diversity, preparation, retention, and quality. They are designed to help state and district leaders translate emerging data into actionable strategies that strengthen the educator pipeline, ensure equitable representation, and support the long-term sustainability of California's teaching workforce.

1. Establish statewide metrics and goals for a capable, sustainable, and diverse teacher workforce.

California should establish statewide metrics and goals for teacher preparation, placement, retention, and diversity—explicitly aligned with the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), educator workforce grants, and credentialing policies. While the state invests significantly in teacher pipeline and retention initiatives, these efforts are not guided by a shared set of policy goals, outcomes or accountability measures.

By leveraging the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs), California can encourage districts to set measurable goals for building teacher workforces that reflect their student populations and meet local needs. Aligning educator workforce grants and credentialing policies with these goals would strengthen coherence across preparation, induction, and advancement, improve monitoring of workforce stability and equity, and ensure public investments produce sustainable results for California's schools.

2. Strengthen teacher mentorship to address the rising number of inexperienced teachers post-COVID.

California should prioritize policies and funding that support teacher retention, mentorship, and professional growth, especially for early-career educators. As the data show, the number of experienced teachers has declined since SY 2020–21, while first-year and inexperienced teachers have increased. These trends suggest ongoing retention challenges that mirror national data indicating that 86% of K–12 schools faced difficulties hiring teachers for SY 2023–24 (Delarosa & Robelen, 2023). To stabilize the workforce, the state and districts should strengthen induction programs, provide mentoring from veteran educators, and address the workload and well-being challenges that lead to burnout. Districts might also consider incentives—such as housing assistance, stipends, or reduced non-teaching duties—to encourage experienced teachers to remain in the classroom.

3. Expand and sustain recruitment pathways for teachers of color.

State and district leaders should expand targeted recruitment and retention programs that successfully attract and sustain teachers of color, including initiatives such as the California Diversifying Teacher Grant Program (AB 520) and partnerships with Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs). Findings show notable increases in Latine (+3.88%) and Asian teachers (+0.35%), even amid overall workforce declines. These gains likely reflect the impact of diversity initiatives (CDE, 2022; Hill et al., 2023). However, the slight decline in Black teachers—especially among Black women—underscores the need for tailored support addressing the isolation, workload inequities, and lack of institutional support that disproportionately affect this group (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Battle, 2022; Fordham Institute, 2023). Sustaining this momentum requires mentoring networks, affinity groups, and culturally responsive leadership development to create environments in which educators of color can thrive. To strengthen retention efforts, state and district leaders should also provide mentoring, peer support networks, and leadership development opportunities for underrepresented teachers to counteract isolation and burnout. Evidence from national research further emphasizes that recruitment initiatives must be paired with strong retention conditions to sustain gains in educator diversity. A recent synthesis by the Learning Policy Institute finds that teachers of color are more likely to enter the profession through under-resourced preparation pathways and are disproportionately affected by inadequate mentoring, inequitable working conditions, and financial strain—factors that significantly increase turnover (Carver-Thomas et al., 2025). Aligning California's diversity initiatives with investments in high-quality preparation, structured induction, competitive compensation, and supportive school climates is therefore essential to sustaining the state's recent gains in Latine and Asian teacher representation while addressing persistent attrition among Black educators.

4. Expand student teacher pathways without compromising the quality of preparation programs.

Given the rise in teachers entering the profession with bachelor's degrees (through integrated programs) and the corresponding decline in post-baccalaureate credential holders, California should ensure that the growth of Integrated Teacher Education Programs (ITEPs) maintains both quality and accessibility. Programs like Cerritos College's Teacher TRAC and San Diego State University's integrated credentialing model demonstrate the potential to diversify the pipeline and reduce barriers (Cerritos College, 2025; Klitzing, 2019). However, oversight and alignment between universities and districts are needed to ensure these pathways provide adequate classroom readiness and equitable support. The state should also consider stipends or loan forgiveness for candidates from underrepresented backgrounds, who often face financial barriers (Gist & Bristol, 2025; Mathews et al., 2024). Strengthening monitoring and support for these alternative pathways will ensure that increased accessibility does not come at the expense of preparation quality.

5. Focus on credentials in critical shortage fields.

The state should invest in subject-specific recruitment, scholarship, and mentoring programs for high-need areas such as English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science. The findings reveal increases in inexperienced and not fully credentialed teachers in these subjects between SY 2020–21 and SY 2022–23, with Math and Science showing the highest rates of uncredentialed staff. These patterns are consistent with broader reports of post-pandemic reliance on emergency or alternative credential pathways to address teacher shortages(Lambert et al., 2022). To maintain instructional quality, districts should expand subject-specific induction programs and university partnerships to prepare teachers with deep content expertise. Financial incentives, such as service scholarships and "grow-your-own" programs, could encourage candidates to pursue full credentialing in critical areas rather than short-term or emergency routes.

6. Develop comprehensive succession planning to mitigate retirement-driven attrition.

Given the steady decline in white teachers and the aging of California's educator workforce, the state should implement proactive succession planning that anticipates retirements and promotes smooth transitions. Research projected that one in four teachers from the 2013–14 cohort would retire by SY 2023–24, with particularly high rates in rural areas (Fong et al., 2016). Early retirement incentives introduced to manage budget pressures have also accelerated the departure of experienced teachers (Lambert, 2025). Districts can mitigate knowledge loss by creating mentorship roles for retiring educators, developing transition pipelines, and offering phased retirement options that allow veteran teachers to mentor early-career staff.

7. Address persistent gender imbalances.

Although female educators continue to dominate the teaching profession (76%) and male representation has declined slightly since SY 2019–20, gender diversification remains an overlooked equity issue. The growing gender gap may reflect both long-term structural patterns and male attrition from the teaching field (CalSTRS, 2020; NCES, 2013). Recruitment strategies should intentionally engage men of color through paraprofessional-to-teacher pipelines, community partnerships, and marketing that challenges gender stereotypes about teaching.

8. Strengthen data collection and transparency on teacher diversity and credentialing.

The state should enhance its educator data systems to capture disaggregated information on teacher demographics, credentialing status, and retention. The lack of detailed, disaggregated data—especially on dual-language teachers, exit patterns, and the demographics of new hires—limits the ability to fully understand teacher workforce dynamics.

Robust, transparent data collection is foundational for informed policymaking, enabling the state to evaluate equity initiatives, monitor progress, and design targeted interventions.

9. Advance data-informed policy decision-making.

To ensure that equity initiatives and workforce strategies are effective, California should embed data-informed decision-making into all aspects of educator policy and practice. This includes integrating real-time data dashboards, cross-agency data sharing, and evidence-based evaluation frameworks to continuously assess program outcomes. By leveraging comprehensive data on educator preparation, placement, and retention, policymakers can identify inequities, allocate resources strategically, and adapt interventions based on measurable impact. A culture of continuous learning–guided by transparent, high-quality data–will strengthen accountability and promote sustained progress toward an equitable educator workforce.

10. Leverage existing state investments and funding opportunities to strengthen recruitment, preparation, and retention efforts.

California has already invested substantially in diversifying and stabilizing its educator workforce through initiatives such as the Teacher Residency Grant Program (CTC, n.d.-b), Local Solutions Grant Program (CTC, 2023), the Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Program (CTC, n.d.-a), and the Golden State Teacher Grant (California Student Aid Commission, n.d.)—each designed to support teacher candidates, reduce financial burden, and expand high-need subject pipelines. These investments can be further amplified when districts and preparation programs strategically align them with external funding opportunities. The California Educator Diversity Funding Guide 2025–26 outlines approximately $300 million in federal, state, local, and philanthropic resources available to support educator diversity initiatives, teacher recruitment, and culturally responsive professional learning (Johnson et al., 2025). State and district leaders can use this guide to identify complementary grants, braid multiple funding streams, and sustain programs that support teachers of color, paraprofessionals entering the profession, and candidates in high-need fields. Coordinated use of existing state investments and the funding opportunities mapped in the guide can help districts build long-term workforce stability while advancing equity goals.

CONCLUSION

These findings illuminate both the resilience and fragility of California's educator pipeline. While progress has been made in diversifying the workforce and expanding recruitment, persistent gaps in retention, credentialing, and educator capacity threaten long-term stability. To build a sustainable and equitable teacher workforce, state and local leaders must take coordinated action to strengthen pathways into the profession, especially for educators of color and those entering through alternative routes.

Prioritizing mentorship, compensation reform, and mental health supports can help address burnout and improve retention among early-career and experienced teachers alike. Expanding access to integrated preparation programs and improving data transparency will further enable targeted, equity-driven policy solutions.

As California continues to recover from the disruptions of the pandemic, these steps are essential—not only to stabilize the teaching workforce but also to ensure that every student benefits from diverse, well-prepared, and supported educators across the Golden State.

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