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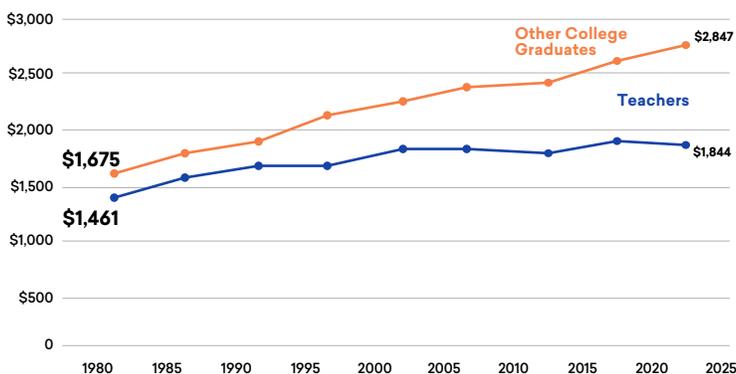
The latest findings on teacher pay

A new **report** from the Center for Economic and Policy Research looks at over four decades of data on teacher pay in California to understand how it compares to wages for other college-educated workers, and how pay has changed in a period of soaring consumer and housing prices. The findings reflect what California teachers know all too well: teacher pay has been falling further and further behind wages for non-teacher college educated peers, threatening the stability of our public education workforce.

The Takeaway: “Teacher Penalty” and Lagging Wages

Teacher penalty: California teachers have long faced a “teacher penalty” on payday. In the 1980s to 1990s, CA teachers earned on average 11.9% less than their peers, but by 2022 this gap had widened to 35%.

Average Weekly Wages of Public School Teachers and Other College Graduates
California 1979-2024



During this period, more jobs became available to women who previously might have gone into teaching, introducing an opportunity to earn higher wages. When options were more limited, teaching jobs represented relatively strong earning potential for women, but teacher wages have not remained competitive. To recruit and retain all teachers, pay must keep pace.

Teacher Wage Stagnation: Over the last four and a half decades the inflation-adjusted average weekly wage of teachers in California increased by 26.3%, while those of non-teacher college graduates increased by 70.0%. In fact, the average weekly wage for teachers has been flat since 2003.

Average wage growth, 1981-2022:

Teachers

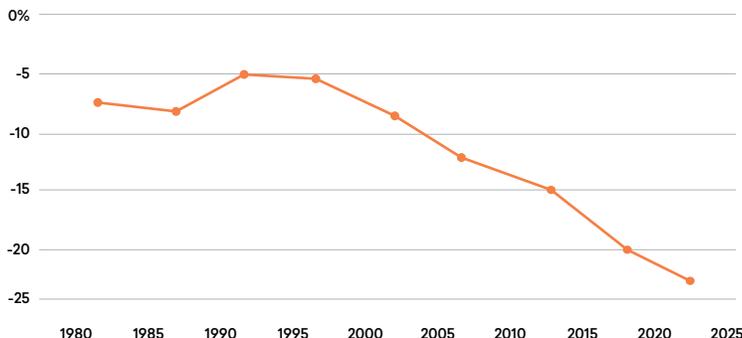
26%

Non-teacher college-educated workers

70%

Teachers in California Are Falling Further and Further Behind

Public school teachers relative weekly wage gap, 1979-2024



In 1981, teachers earned 92.8 cents for every dollar their counterparts earned; by 2023, this has dropped to 76 cents to the dollar. This is based on a regression analysis that controls for other factors that affect wages, like age, race/ethnicity and educational attainment.

Efforts to recruit more male teachers must contend with an ever-increasing pay penalty for men who choose teaching: **male teachers earn 65 cents for every dollar that their college-educated counterparts earn.**

What about benefits? Teaching jobs have historically been associated with middle-class wages and strong benefits. But detailed economic analysis shows that the “teacher penalty” has canceled out any advantage that these benefits offer, leaving teachers nationwide with a 16.7% wage penalty, even after factoring in benefits’ packages.

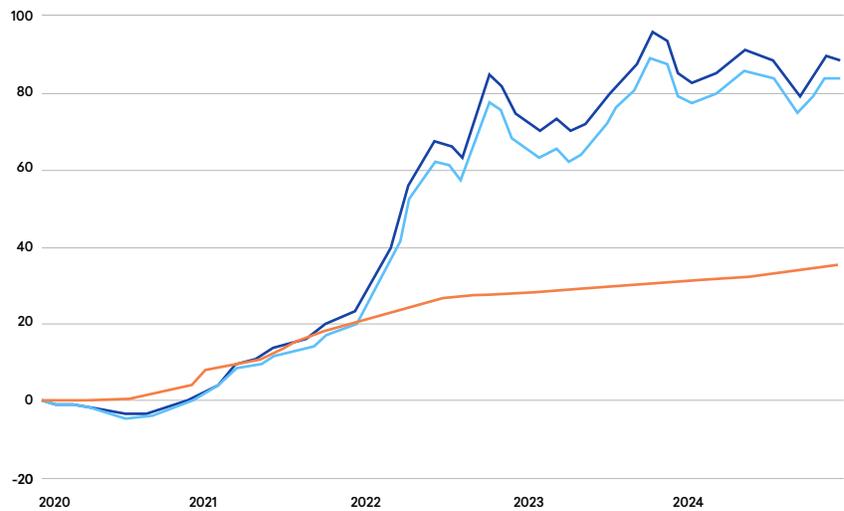
Buying power diminished as costs soar: Consumer prices have nearly doubled (up 99.5%) since 2000, but teacher pay has risen just 61%. In the last 25 years, the cost of renting a two-bedroom home has more than doubled¹ across California, and buying a home is 389% more expensive.² During the same time period, gas prices in the state increased \$2.86 per gallon on average, or 162%.³

Homeownership Out of Reach

Mortgage Growth Outpaces Rents

(Cumulative Growth Since January 2020)

- CA mid-tier home payment
- CA bottom-tier home payment
- CA rents



¹U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Office of Policy Development and Research. “Dataset: Fair Market Rents (40th Percentile Rents).” Query Tool. Available at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html#>

²LAO, California Housing Affordability Tracker (4th Quarter 2024). See figure “Housing Costs Vary by Location, Especially for Homebuyers.” <https://lao.ca.gov/LAOEconTax/Article/Detail/793>

³U.S. Energy Information Administration. “Weekly U.S. All Grades All Formulations Retail Gasoline Prices.” https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=PET&s=EMM_EPM0_PTE_NUS_DPG&f=W and “Weekly California All Grades All Formulations Retail Gasoline Prices.”

The full report can be found **here**.