

The Economic Struggles of San Diego, Orange County and Inland Empire Educators: **By the Numbers**

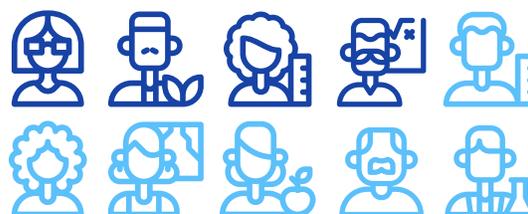
Knowing that educators across the state are facing economic precarity, CTA surveyed nearly 2,000 members to surface trends and shared experiences. These are the key findings that illustrate the impact of wage stagnation and penalties for educators.¹

81% of surveyed California teachers salaries are **not keeping up with the cost of everyday goods and services.**



One-third are living paycheck to paycheck.

4-in-10 educators are considering leaving education in the next few years, and **77%** say financial strain is influencing their decision.



Teacher Wage Stagnation²: 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:



Over half of surveyed educators also have the following financial concerns:



Covering **healthcare costs**



Affording the cost of **living expenses**



Paying the **rent or mortgage**



Saving for their **child to attend college**

This economic hardship is compounded by the high cost of living in the state and the region:

In the last twenty years, the **cost of renting a 2-bedroom home in San Diego County rose by over \$1,698—or 144%**³. Two-bedroom rents in San Bernardino and San Diego counties increased, respectively, 43% and 29% in the five years between 2018 and 2023 alone.⁴

Homeownership remains out of reach for many, especially in Orange and San Diego counties, where mortgage payments for lower-priced homes are respectively 91% and 68% higher than average rents. Average monthly home payments have doubled across the region.⁵

California is in the top-ten most expensive states for childcare. Statewide, 15% of children had parents who made job changes due to problems with child care.⁶ The average cost of center-based child care in the San Diego-Orange County-Inland Empire was \$9,181 in 2022—15% of the household median income, on average.⁷

Statewide, overall consumer prices have nearly doubled since 2000.⁸

Gas prices in California have increased \$2.86 per gallon on average, or 162%, in the last 25 years.⁹ In 2024, California gas prices were an average of \$1.22—or 36%—higher than gas prices nationally.¹⁰

Californians pay more for their weekly groceries than any other state except Hawaii. As of October 2023, Californians had the second-highest weekly spending at the grocery store, at nearly \$300 on a weekly basis. California households with children spent almost \$370 per week.¹¹



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¹Note: This survey included non-teacher educators, including counselors, special area teachers, and education support professionals.