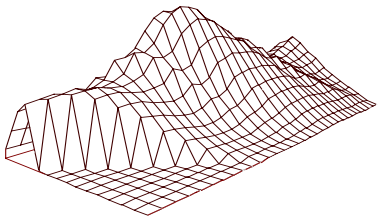


Birth Trends & School Enrollments

A Lapkoff & Gobalet Demographic Research Report - July 1997

Fifth Year of California Birth Decline—a new trend?

Did you know that after nearly two decades of uninterrupted growth, the number of babies born in California dropped for five consecutive years?

California births fell 10% between 1990 and 1995

Total births reached a record high of 611,666 in 1990, but then fell to 551,226 in 1995—a drop of nearly 10%—a ccording to the most recent data from the California Department of Finance.

Birth numbers are affected by two immediate factors: the fertility rate (the average number of children born to each woman), and the total number of women in their childbearing years.

Why the decline?

California women's average fertility rate fell from 2.46 to 2.38 children between 1990 and 1995. This reversed a 15-year trend of rising fertility after the 1975 historic low of 1.74 children per woman.

Still, the modest fertility rate drop accounted for only about one-third of the total birth decline between 1990 and 1995.

Most of the birth reduction can be traced to a sharp drop in the number of women of childbearing age. Between 1990 and 1995, the number of California women between 20 and 34 years of age dropped by nine percent. This resulted from two powerful trends.

First, Baby Boom generation women (born from 1946 to 1964) are aging and completing childbearing.

Second, a serious recession caused more people to leave than enter California from other U.S. states between 1992 and 1996—an unprecedented event in the post-World War II era. Since the young adult age group (20s and 30s) is typically the most mobile, it's likely that population losses were heaviest among people in their peak childbearing years.

Foreign immigration did not make up for California's population losses to other states.

Bay Area Patterns

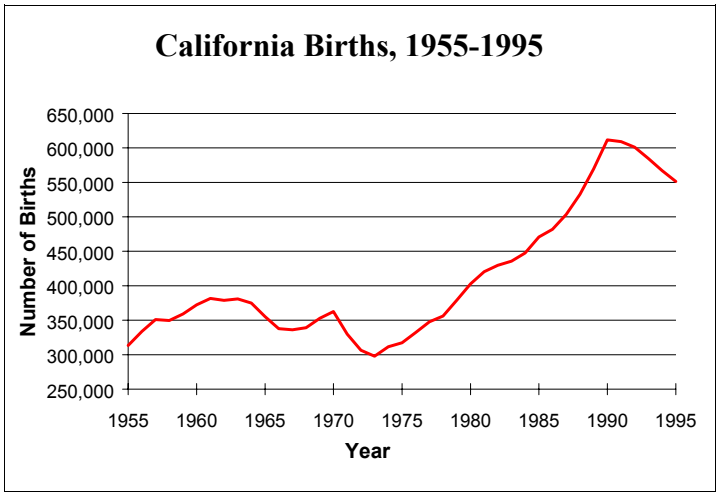
These demographic forces played out very differently around the state.

Still, every Bay Area county had declining births between 1990 and 1995. Napa County's births dipped a modest 2%. San Francisco had a substantial 15% drop. Santa Cruz County births fell 20%.

The greatest numerical declines were in Alameda and Santa Clara Counties. The map on page 4 illustrates these changes.

What's next?

It remains to be seen whether the birth decline will continue. The robust recovery from recession may prompt increased immigration and fertility. Time will tell. In fact, 1996 births were up in some Bay Area communities (see page 2).



How does the recent birth decline affect California schools? Read on!

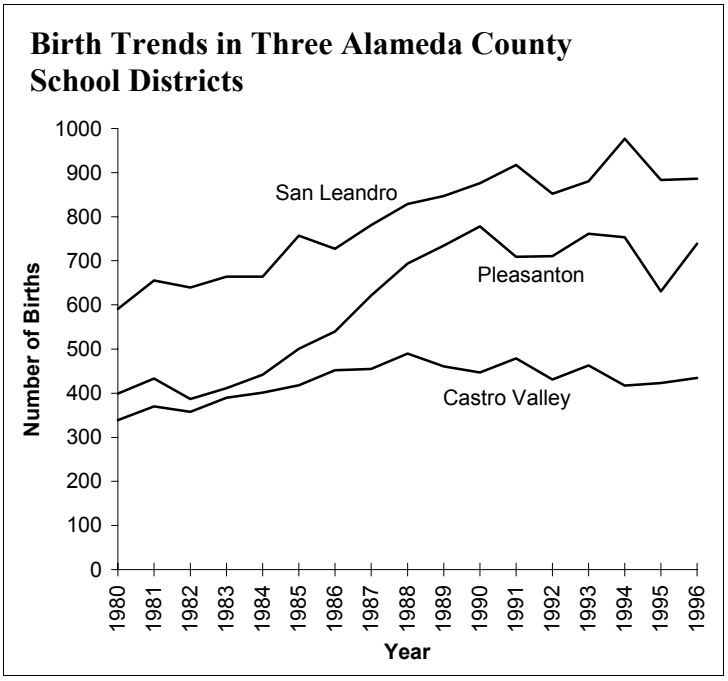
Lapkoff & Gobalet Demographic Research, Inc., provides custom demographic research. We specialize in California school district demography as well as other types of analysis. See page 3 for information about how to reach us.

Pleasanton, San Leandro, and Castro Valley

. . . A Tale of Three Cities

How can three neighboring communities have very different birth trends?

Pleasanton, Castro Valley, and San Leandro are practically next door to each other. Yet their recent fertility trends have been very different, for reasons peculiar to their settings.



Pleasanton is a striking example of how local housing dynamics can drive birth trends. During the 1980s, the city had one of the Bay Area's hottest housing markets. Total housing stock grew 65%, attracting large numbers of relatively affluent, mainly white Baby Boomer couples with children. Pleasanton births nearly doubled between 1980 and 1990.

Births dropped, however, as Pleasanton's housing market cooled during the early 1990's recession. From 1991 to 1995, Pleasanton developers built less new housing than during the peak year of 1989 alone. Meanwhile, the city's aging Baby Boomers' fertility declined, as well.

Castro Valley's housing and birth increases and decreases were more modest. Total housing stock increased just 15% between 1980 and 1990, while births rose 32%. Castro Valley's relatively stable birth trends since 1980 have been driven mainly by age effects.

During the 1980's, Castro Valley birth increases resulted from Baby Boomers' passage through the peak childbearing years. In the 1990's, births dropped as Boomers moved to other activities, like driving the kids to soccer games and saving for retirement.

San Leandro's birth trends are the most surprising. Although the city's housing stock grew about half as fast as Castro Valley's during the 1980s (9%), births rose much faster (48 %).

The rapid rise in San Leandro births can be traced to a major demographic transformation in that city. The older, white population is steadily being replaced by younger Hispanics, Asians, and African-Americans. The city's rapidly rising birth figures reflect these groups' higher average fertility levels. As a result, the share of San Leandro births to non-Hispanic white mothers fell from 79% in 1980 to just 35% in 1995 (compared to 64% in Castro Valley and 79% in Pleasanton).

Three communities, three patterns

The stories of Pleasanton, Castro Valley, and San Leandro nicely illustrate how housing markets, age structure, and ethnic change can produce different birth trends in neighboring areas.

We can make reasonable estimates of things like future school enrollments only by paying close attention to a community's unique demographic conditions. Pleasanton, Castro Valley, and San Leandro are close neighbors with different demographic patterns.

Births: Our Crystal Ball for Future School Enrollments

Educational planners often face tough decisions affecting schools for 20 years or more. These include whether to build new facilities, sell existing sites, consolidate schools, and hire teachers.

Effective long-range decisions depend on reasonable estimates of future student populations. Yet few of us can imagine what our own lives will be like in 20 years, much less conditions in a whole school district!

Close tracking of local births is crucial for school planners. This is the single best predictor of the number of future students. The graph below shows that birth data have been a reliable harbinger of future California enrollments.

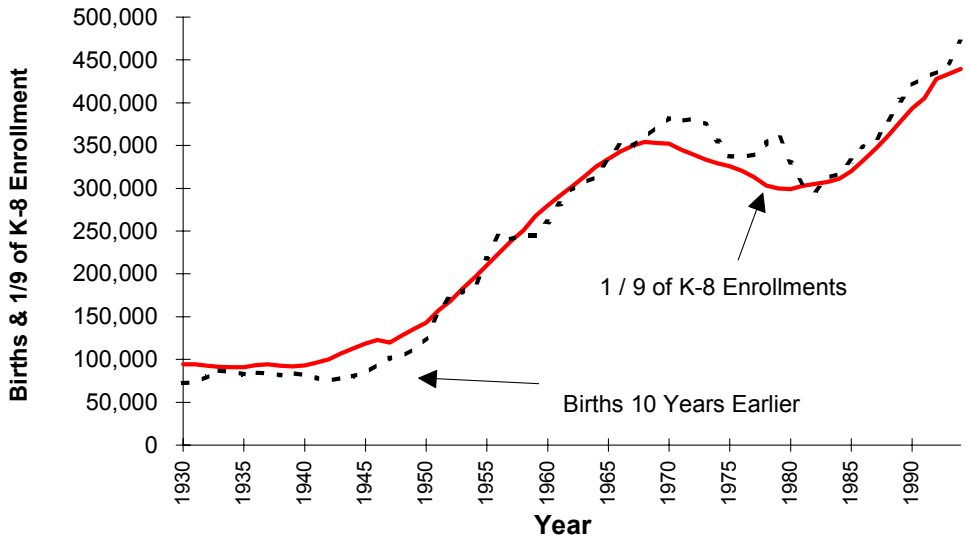
Soon, the 1990's birth decline will produce falling primary enrollments in most school districts.

What's more, recent population forecasts from the California Department of Finance indicate that births should continue to fall for several more years. However, predicting future fertility is far more perilous than using recent birth data to forecast future students!

Birth trends can vary widely from one school district to another, depending on local housing and job conditions. Also relevant are the population's age structure and ethnic composition. School reputations can matter. The most reliable enrollment projections begin with local birth figures, refined to take these and other complex factors into account.

Who needs a crystal ball when we have accurate local birth data? We can never predict the future with certainty. But armed with the right information, we can make very good guesses.

California K-8 school enrollments could have been predicted 10 years in advance using birth data!



Lapkoff & Gobalet provides custom demographic research for school districts, including:

- *enrollment forecasts*
- *attendance area realignment*
- *developer fee negotiations*
- *policy implications of demographic trends*

Questions or comments? Here's how to reach us:

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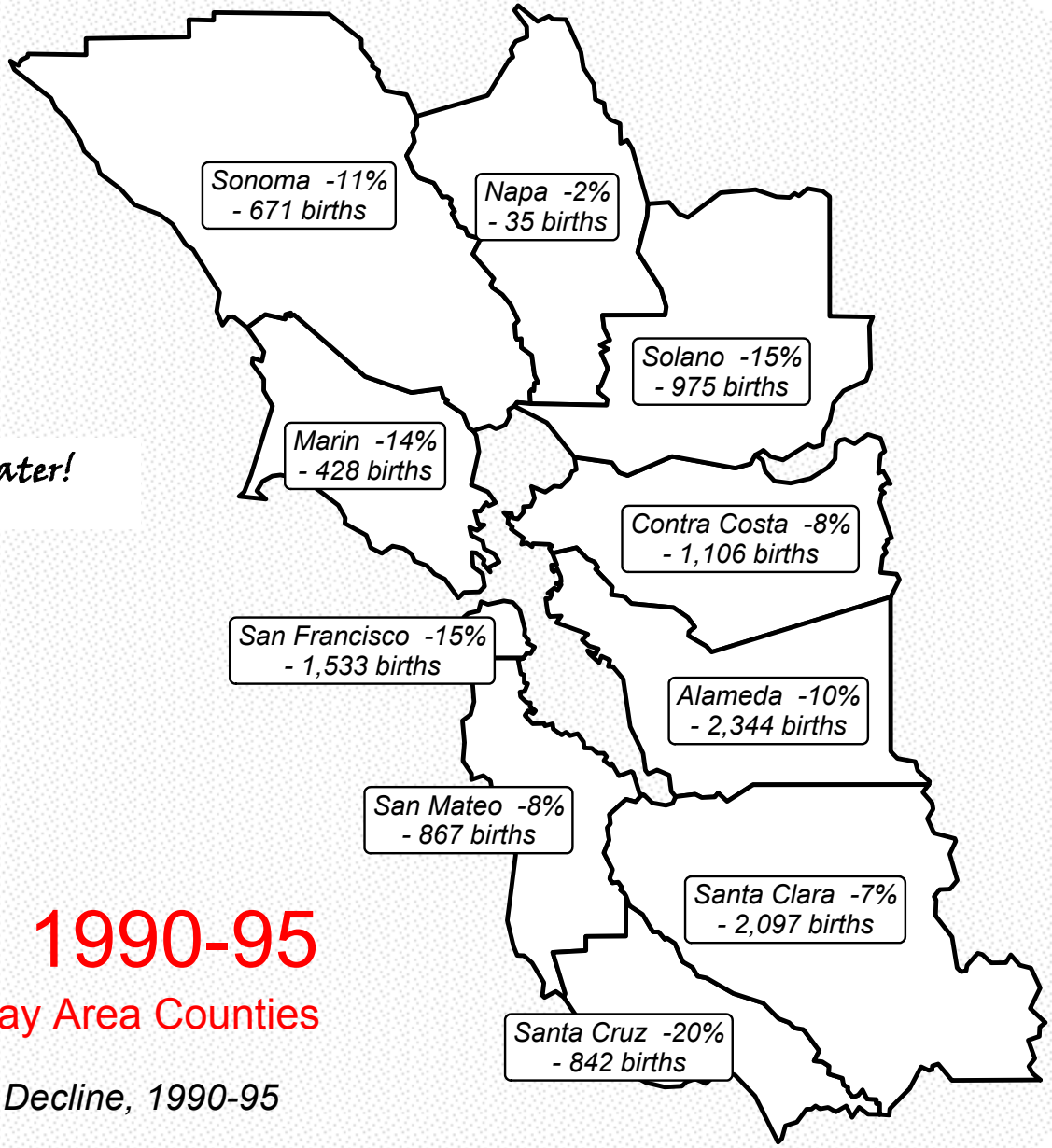
See you later!



Birth Decline, 1990-95

Greater San Francisco Bay Area Counties

Percentage and Numerical Decline, 1990-95