



County-by-County Projections for California Populations Age 50+ 2023-2050: Tableau.

Executive Summary

This analysis looks at how the need for long-term services and supports (LTSS) is expected to change across California as the population ages. It is designed to help policymakers and planners understand where demand is likely to grow most in the future.

The maps show projected changes in need across counties, highlighting areas that may face greater pressure on local systems over time. To make comparisons easier, counties are grouped into four categories—lower, moderate, high, and highest levels of projected need. These categories are shown using color shading, making it easier to quickly see which areas may require the most attention.

Overall, the findings provide a forward-looking view of where needs are increasing, helping guide decisions about planning, investment, and policy.

California has 58 counties, and they vary widely in size—from fewer than 1,500 people in Alpine County to more than 10 million in Los Angeles County. Because of data limitations, detailed estimates are not available for counties with populations under 100,000.

To address this, 17 smaller counties are combined into groups based on geographic areas called Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs), which allow for more reliable estimates.

In alignment with the Governor's Master Plan for Aging, this report was funded by the California Department of Aging's Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Financing and Affordability Initiative as part of the Budget Act of 2022 AB 179 (Ting). This Initiative focuses on data and research of LTSS financing and service options for older adults, people with disabilities, and family caregivers. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, the State of California. For more information, please see the [LTSS Financing and Affordability Initiative webpage](#).

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Research bridging policy and practice

The following county groupings are used in this analysis:

- Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, and Tuolumne counties
- Colusa, Glenn, Tehama, and Trinity counties
- Del Norte, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, and Siskiyou counties
- Lake and Mendocino counties
- Monterey and San Benito counties
- Nevada and Sierra counties
- Sutter and Yuba counties

Even with these groupings, this analysis provides a clear and consistent way to understand how needs are changing across regions. It is intended to support state and local leaders in planning ahead and targeting resources where they may be needed most.

How We Created County-Level Projections

To estimate how many people age 50 and older live in each county—and how many may need long-term services and supports (LTSS), broken down by income—we used a well-established national model developed by the Urban Institute called DYNASIM. This model projects how people’s demographics and finances change over time. However, DYNASIM does not identify where people live at the county level. So, we used a two-step approach to estimate that.

Step 1: Predicting Where People Live

We used data from the American Community Survey (ACS) to build a statistical model that estimates the likelihood that someone lives in a particular county. The model looks at characteristics such as:

- Age and sex
- Race and education
- Marital status
- Health and functional limitations
- Income sources
- Household composition

Based on these factors, the model calculates the probability that a person with similar characteristics lives in each county.

Step 2: Applying Those Probabilities to the Model

We then applied these probabilities to individuals in the DYNASIM dataset. Instead of assigning each person to just one county, we allowed them to “count” in multiple counties based on likelihood. This improves accuracy—especially for smaller counties where data can be limited.

To strengthen the predictions, we used a machine learning approach, which helps the model better capture differences across counties and population groups.

Ensuring Accuracy

We adjusted the 2023 estimates so they match known population totals from the ACS. This helps ensure the results are grounded in real-world data.

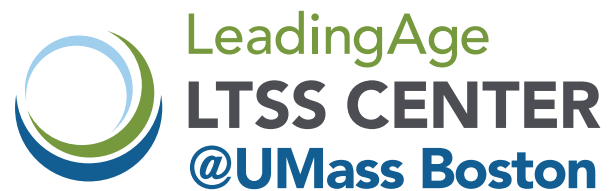
What the Projections Show

We present estimates for both 2023 and 2050, including a focus on the “Overlooked Middle”—people with incomes between 139% and 500% of the federal poverty level.

How to Interpret the Results

These projections are best understood as informed estimates, not exact predictions. They do not fully capture all future changes—such as migration patterns—but they provide a useful directional picture to support planning and policy decisions.

[View the county-by-county projections for California](#)



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