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Central Valley Metropatterns Part I

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Central Valley Metropatterns



Regional Challenges
in California's
Central Valley

BY MYRON ORFIELD

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FOREWORD

CENTRAL VALLEY METROPATTERNS is a project of the Metropolitan Area Research Corporation (MARC) in cooperation with the Great Valley Center. It was made possible with the financial support of The David and Lucile Packard Foundation. The conclusions and analysis expressed in this report are those of the Metropolitan Area Research Corporation and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Packard Foundation or the Great Valley Center, its Board of Directors or staff.

Created in 1995 by Myron Orfield, a Minnesota State legislator, law professor, and expert in regional growth issues, MARC has completed (or is in the process of completing) studies of social separation and sprawl in more than thirty regions of the United States, including California's largest metropolitan regions—Los Angeles, San Diego, and the Bay Area.¹

These studies have been conducted in conjunction with dozens of universities, research centers and private and public organizations throughout the country. Financial support has been given by over fifteen of the nation's leading philanthropies, including the Ford, Rockefeller, and MacArthur foundations, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Further information on MARC's history, research projects and methodology can be found on its website at: www.metroresearch.org. Additional information about the Great Valley Center can be found at www.greatvalley.org.

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Central Valley Metropatterns

CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY is in the midst of profound demographic, economic, and social change brought about by the region's population growth. The Valley's population has risen by 18 percent since 1990. By 2040, it is expected to more than double again, rising from 5.7 to some 12 million people.² This growth presents significant challenges to residents, local government officials, businesses, and organizations throughout the Valley.

Effectively managed, the growth of communities throughout the Central Valley can help diversify the regional economy, bring much-needed job growth, improve local schools, and raise the standard of living for Valley residents. Poorly managed, growth threatens unnecessary degradation of valuable farmland, environmental harm, and increased social and fiscal disparities among communities and residents.

Choices made today by political, social and business leaders will determine which of these paths the Valley will follow. It is essential that state and local policies relating to local taxation, land use, and economic development promote long-term, sustainable growth patterns. In making policy decisions, there are a number of issues that will be important to consider. Among these are:

- **• SOCIAL DISPARITIES:** Significant concentrations of poverty, unemployment, and other social stresses continue to plague communities throughout the Central Valley. These challenges serve to isolate many residents from the educational and economic resources needed to succeed and raise their standard of living. This isolation occurs at two levels, as inequality grows between communities within the Valley and as it increases between the Valley and the rest of the state.

- **• FRAGMENTED LOCAL TAX AND LAND-USE POLICIES:** As in other parts of the state, the Valley's fragmented system of local government financing inhibits regional

cooperation by encouraging communities to shun affordable housing and compete with each other for economic development. These practices intensify regional disparities, waste taxpayer money, and contribute to inefficient development patterns.

- **• SPRAWLING GROWTH PATTERNS:** New housing and commercial developments in the Valley are occurring largely at the edges of the region's metropolitan areas, increasing the need for new infrastructure and placing



pressure on the Valley's unique agricultural and environmental resources. Faced with limitations on local tax rates and dependent on local development fees and tax resources to generate revenue, many communities are struggling to pay for the increased costs that are created by this growth.

Addressing the challenges of poverty, economic development, social equity, and land-use planning will require that those familiar with the social, economic, and political structures of the region discuss and debate what their plan of action will be. It is MARC's hope that this report will help to frame this discussion in a new way by highlighting the interconnections between these issues and the need to address them from a regional perspective.

Social Disparities

CONCENTRATIONS OF SOCIAL NEEDS at the core of the Valley’s metropolitan areas and in outlying rural communities create barriers to regional cooperation and effective management of the region’s growth. In metropolitan areas such as Sacramento, Fresno, and Stockton, poorly performing schools, relatively low growth in property values, high crime rates, and other challenges associated with inner-city neighborhoods ‘push’ new residents out to previously undeveloped areas at the fringes of the regions. Likewise, high-poverty rural communities such as those found in much of the San Joaquin Valley have a greater difficulty attracting economic and social investment, isolating residents of these areas from opportunities for high academic achievement and higher-paying jobs that help to raise their overall quality of life.

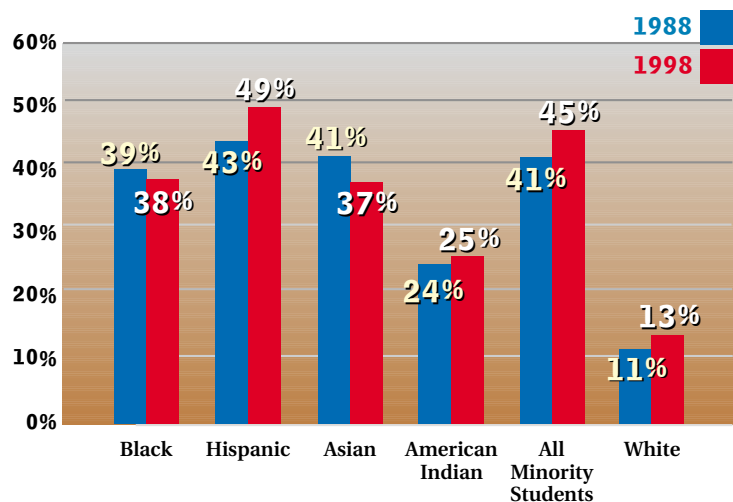
The impact of concentrated social need in Valley communities has been spreading in recent years, creating changes in housing and development patterns throughout the region. Usually, the first signs of these changes are rising poverty or racial segregation in schools. This is because families with residential choices will typically not choose to live in areas with densely poor or racially segregated schools—regardless of their own socioeconomic status or race. As a result, poor and minority families in the Valley have become overly concentrated in high-poverty communities and schools (see chart).

For those who live in neighborhoods afflicted with concentrated poverty, the effects on their quality of life are profound. School achievement suffers, as does the desire of students to seek out higher education. Students are far more likely to drop out of high school and have greater difficulty in finding a job that will allow them to escape their poverty. Poverty also con-

tributes to the Valley’s “digital divide” between those who have access to information technology and those who do not. Social and economic connections to opportunities outside of these poor communities diminish, contributing to a cycle of poverty that passes from one generation to the next. Further, the extreme concentrations of poverty in these communities make it difficult for them to attract the public and private investment that is so desperately needed if they are to turn their communities around.

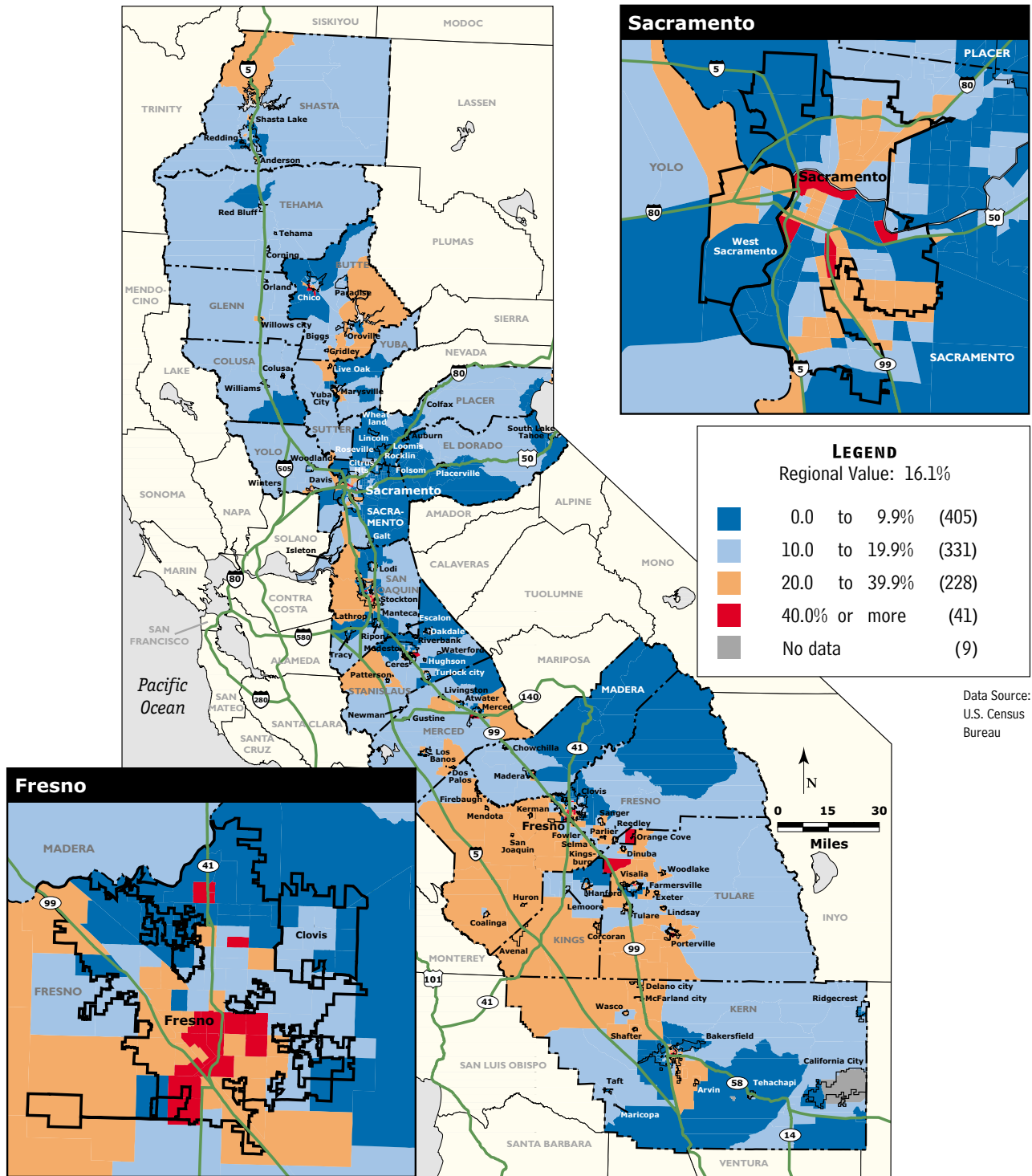


**PERCENTAGE OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS ATTENDING HIGH POVERTY-SCHOOLS³ BY RACE/ETHNICITY OF STUDENT: 1988-1998
CENTRAL VALLEY**



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD)

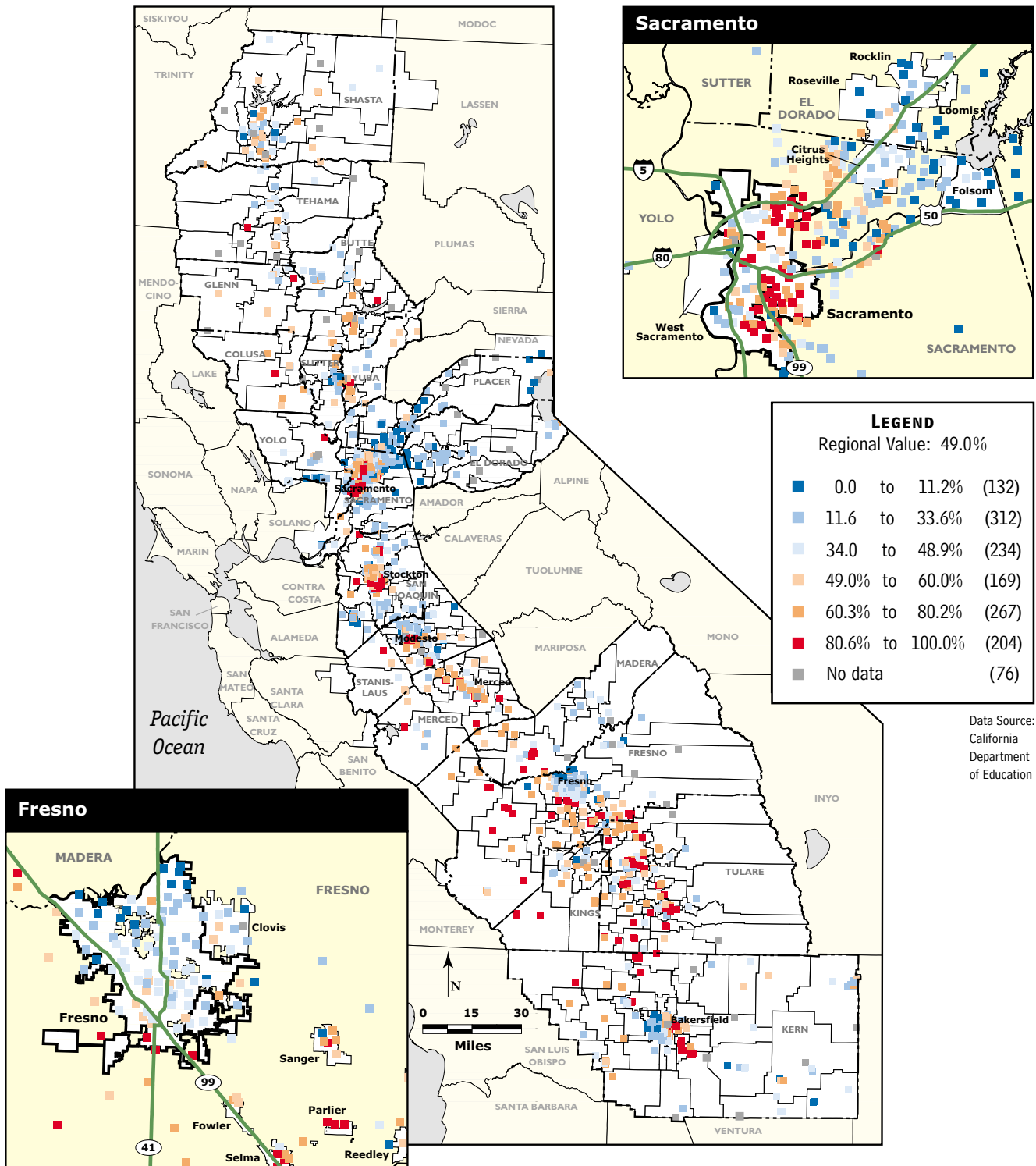
PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS IN POVERTY BY CENSUS TRACT, 1990



HIGH CONCENTRATIONS OF POVERTY in many rural communities and in large cities such as Sacramento, Fresno, and Stockton make it difficult for these areas to attract needed social and economic investments as the region grows.

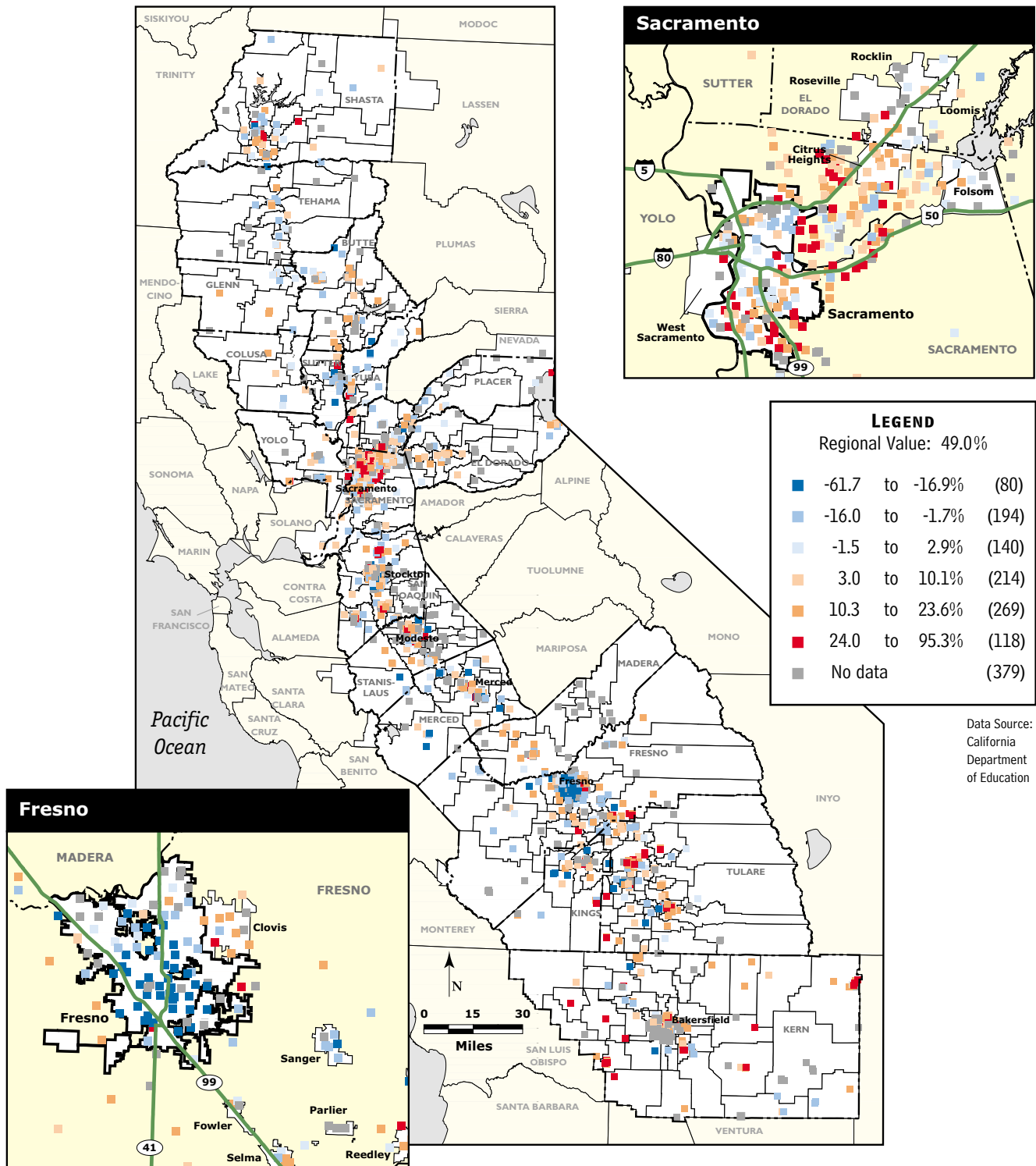
Poverty in Schools

PERCENTAGE OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE LUNCH BY SCHOOL, 1998



SOCIAL DISPARITIES ARE FORMING CLUSTERS OF HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS in the Valley's largest cities and throughout much of the San Joaquin Valley, discouraging families from locating in these areas. These concentrations of poverty are also contributing to sprawling development pressures at the edges of these cities.

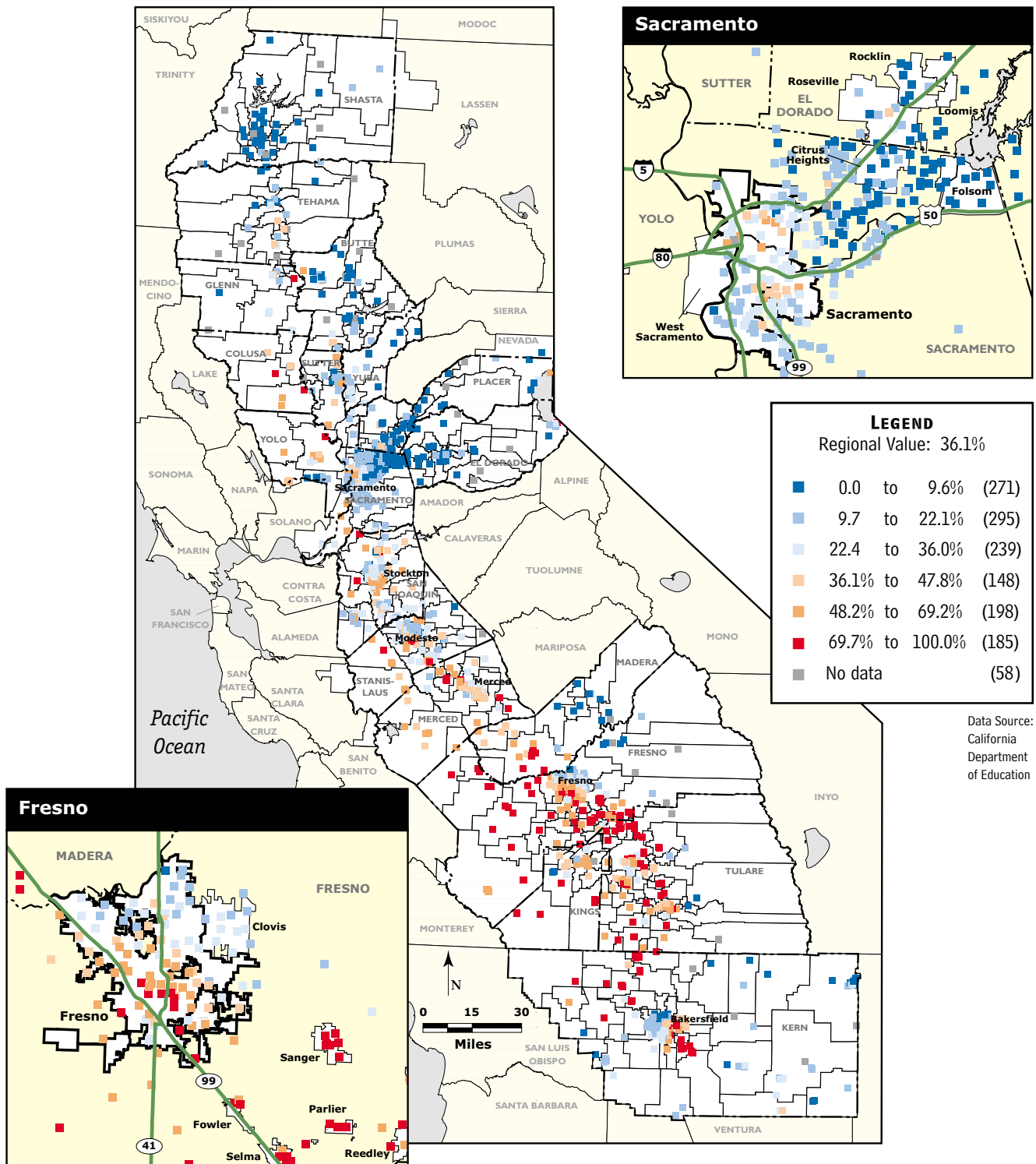
CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE LUNCH BY SCHOOL, 1988-1998



COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY HIGH OR RISING POVERTY in their elementary schools are increasing throughout the Valley—particularly at the edges of urban centers such as Sacramento, Fresno, and Modesto. The rapid increases signal instability in these communities as they become less desirable to families with other residential choices available to them.

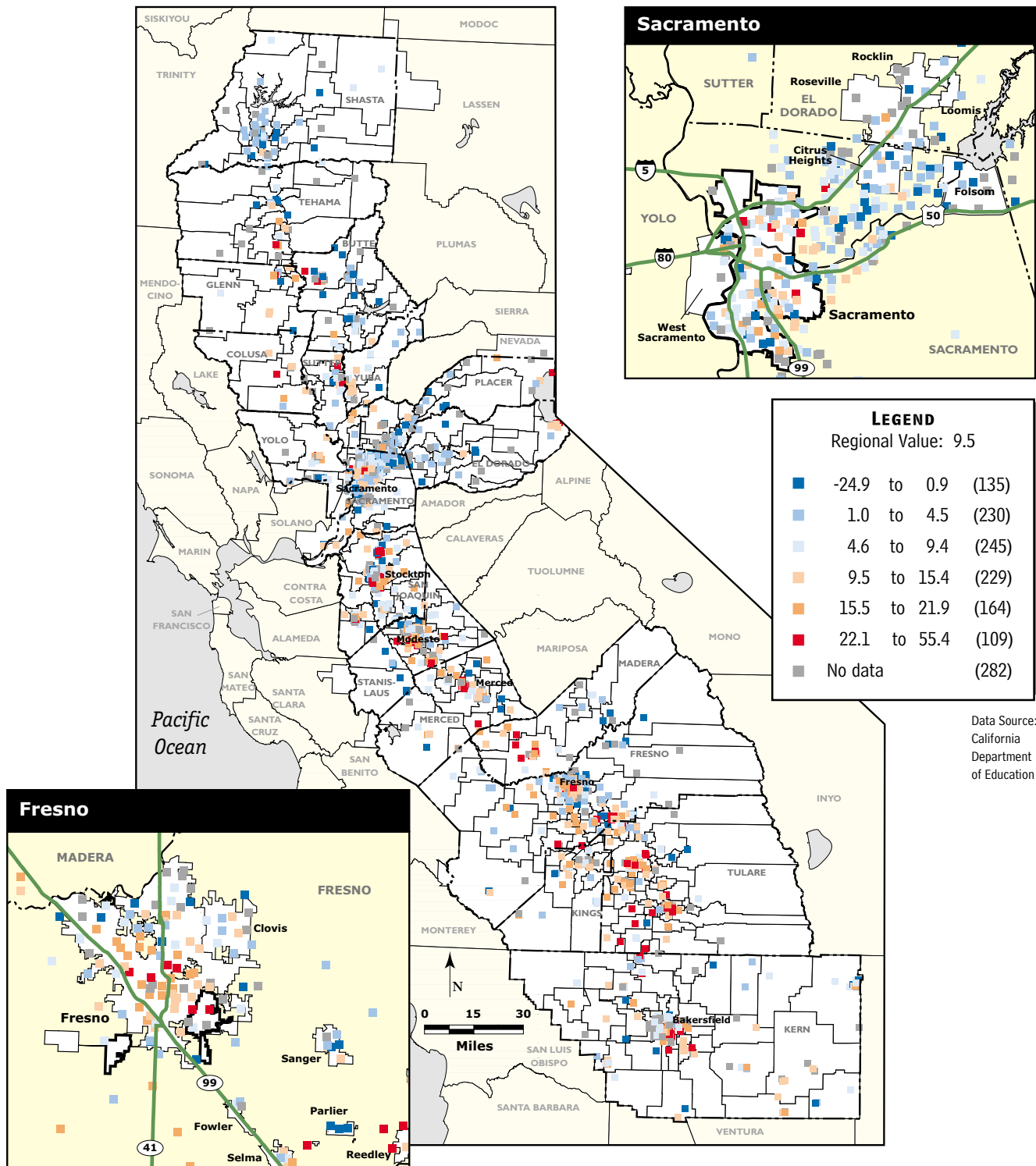
Hispanic Students

PERCENTAGE HISPANIC ELEMENTARY STUDENTS BY SCHOOL, 1998



ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS WITH HIGH HISPANIC ENROLLMENT are found largely in the San Joaquin Valley, particularly in its southern counties. Within large cities such as Fresno and Bakersfield, schools with high Hispanic enrollments also tend to be those with the highest poverty.

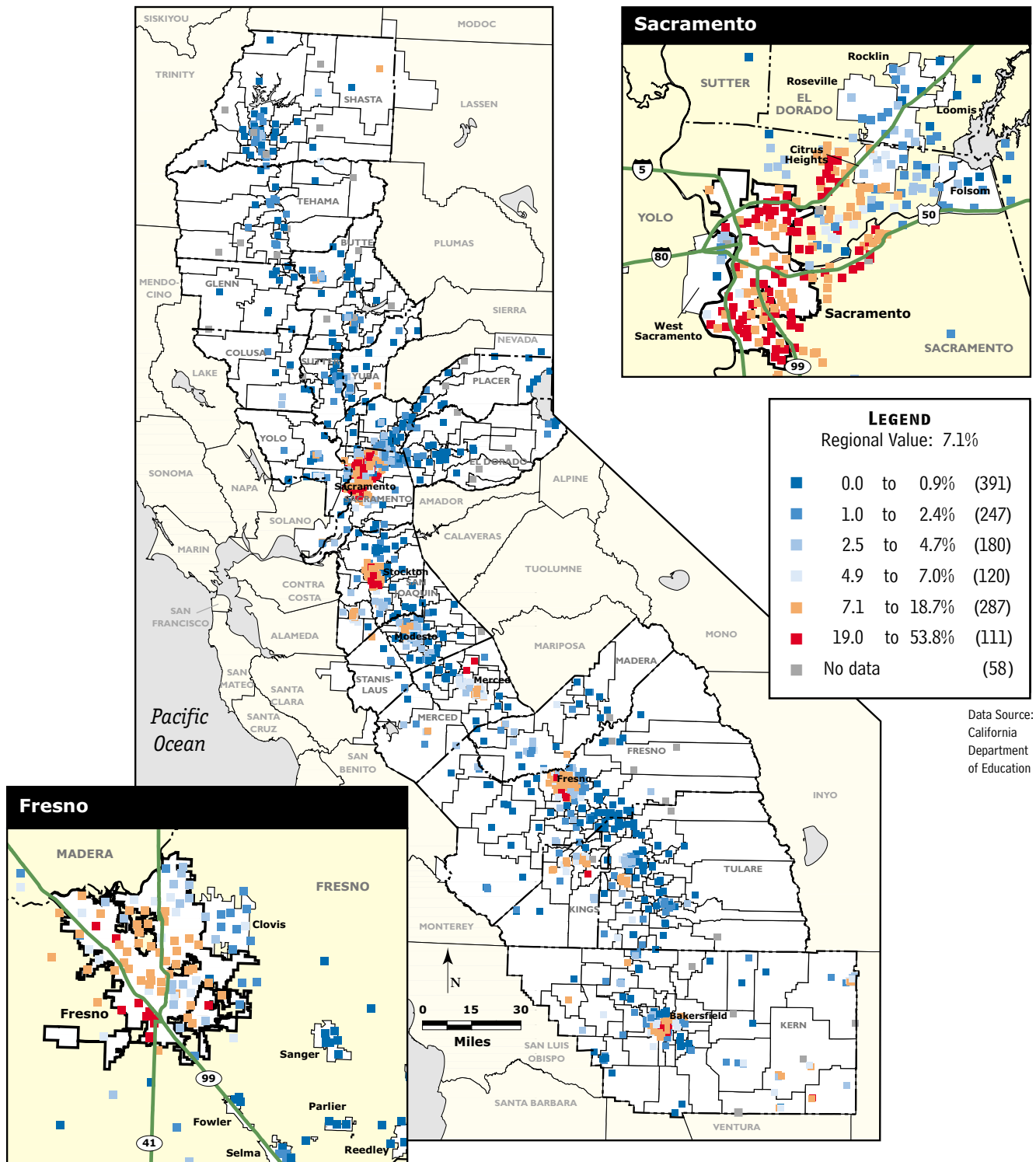
CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OF HISPANIC ELEMENTARY STUDENTS BY SCHOOL, 1988-1998



HISPANIC ELEMENTARY STUDENTS have become much more segregated over the past decade. The percentage of these students attending high-minority schools increased from 45 percent in 1988 to 62 percent in 1998. The percentage of Hispanic students attending high-poverty schools also increased, from 43 to 49 percent over the same period.

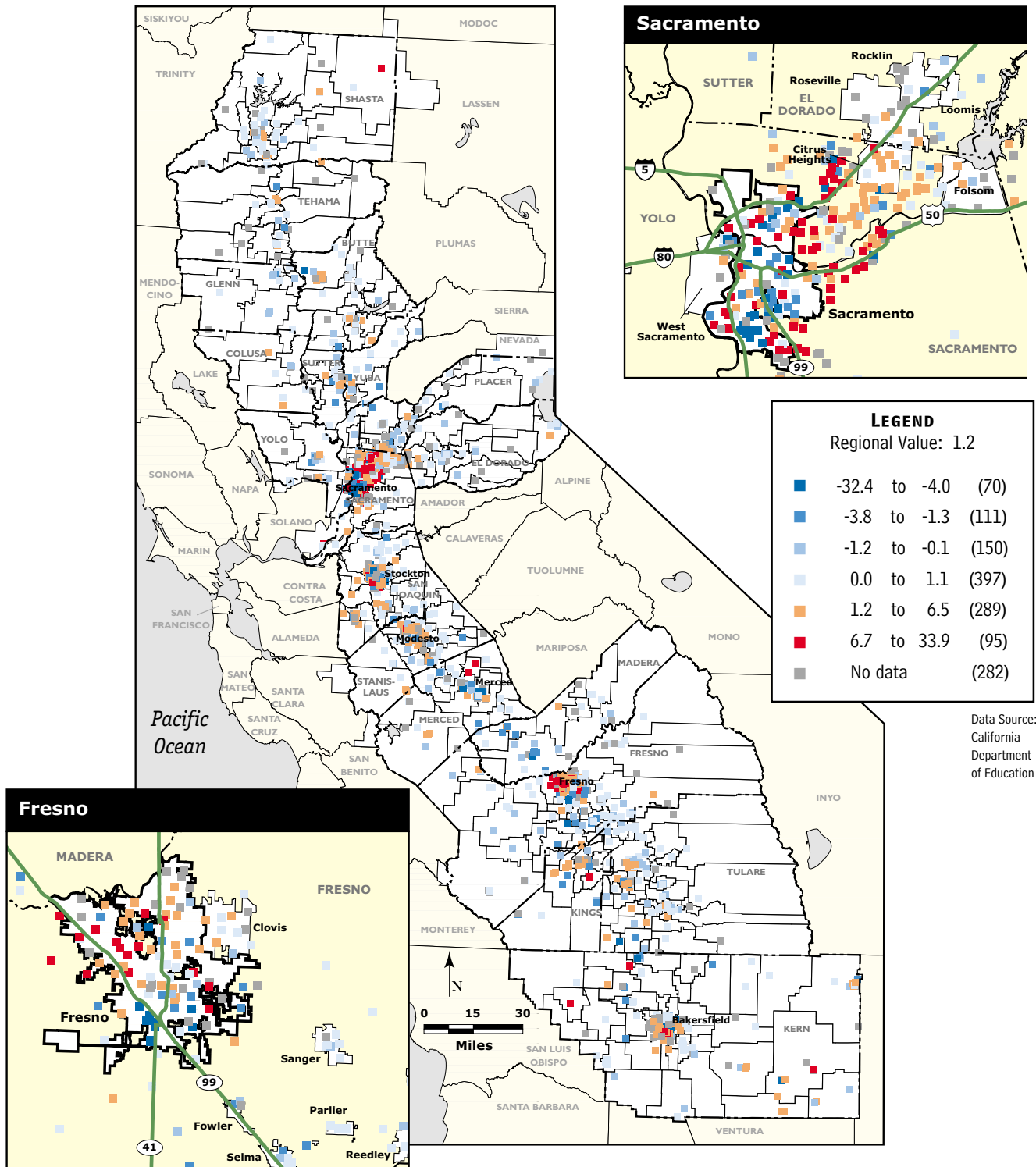
African American Students

PERCENTAGE AFRICAN AMERICAN ELEMENTARY STUDENTS BY SCHOOL, 1998-1999



AFRICAN AMERICAN ELEMENTARY STUDENTS in the Central Valley are heavily concentrated in urban centers such as Sacramento, Fresno, Bakersfield, and Stockton. Within these cities, schools with high African American enrollments also tend to be those with the highest poverty.

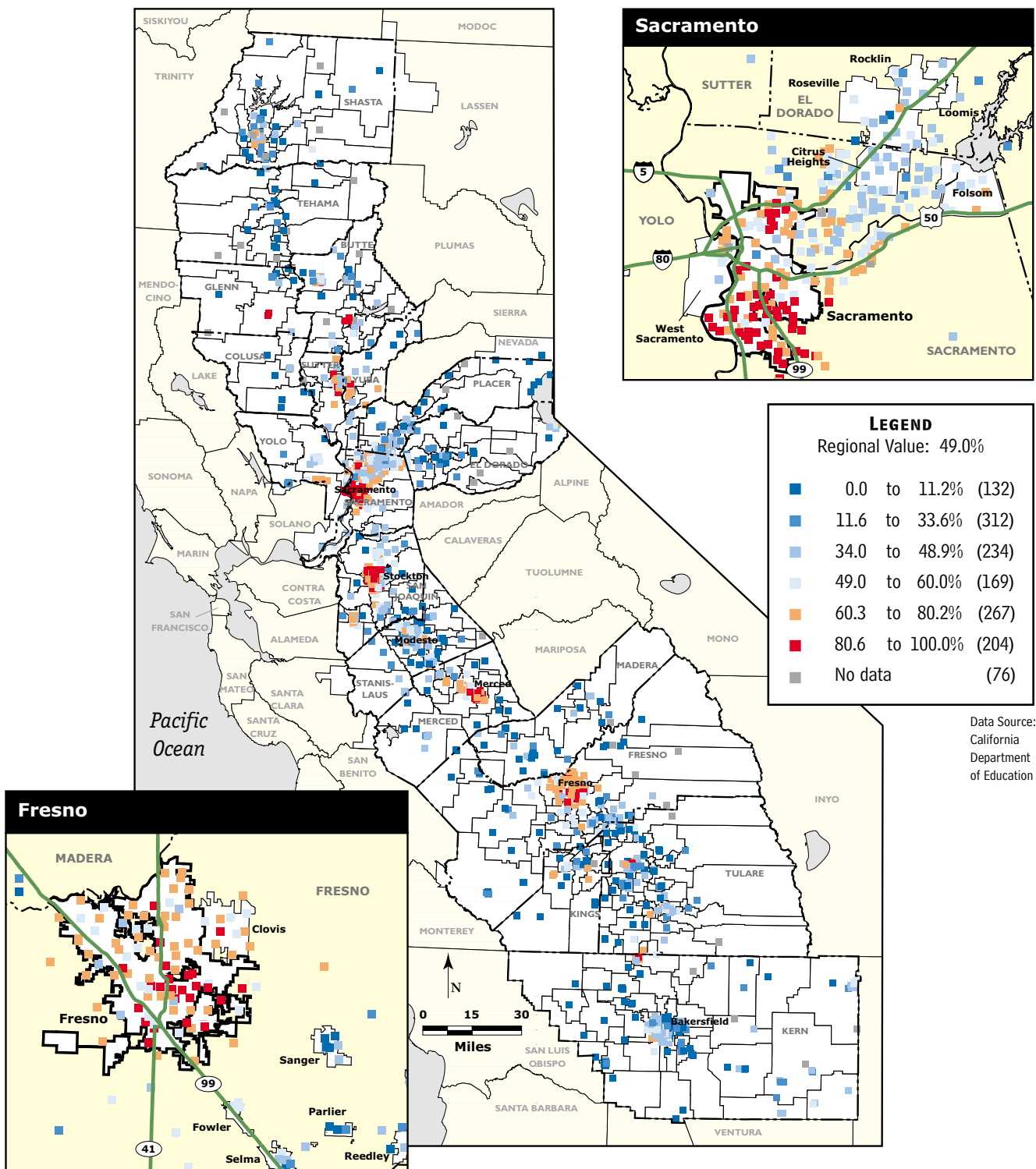
CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ELEMENTARY STUDENTS BY SCHOOL, 1988-1998



AFRICAN AMERICAN ELEMENTARY STUDENTS have become even more segregated over the past decade. The percentage of these students attending high-minority schools increased from 42 percent in 1988 to 55 percent in 1998. The percentage attending high-poverty schools, however, remained relatively stable, dropping slightly from 39 to 38 percent over the same period.

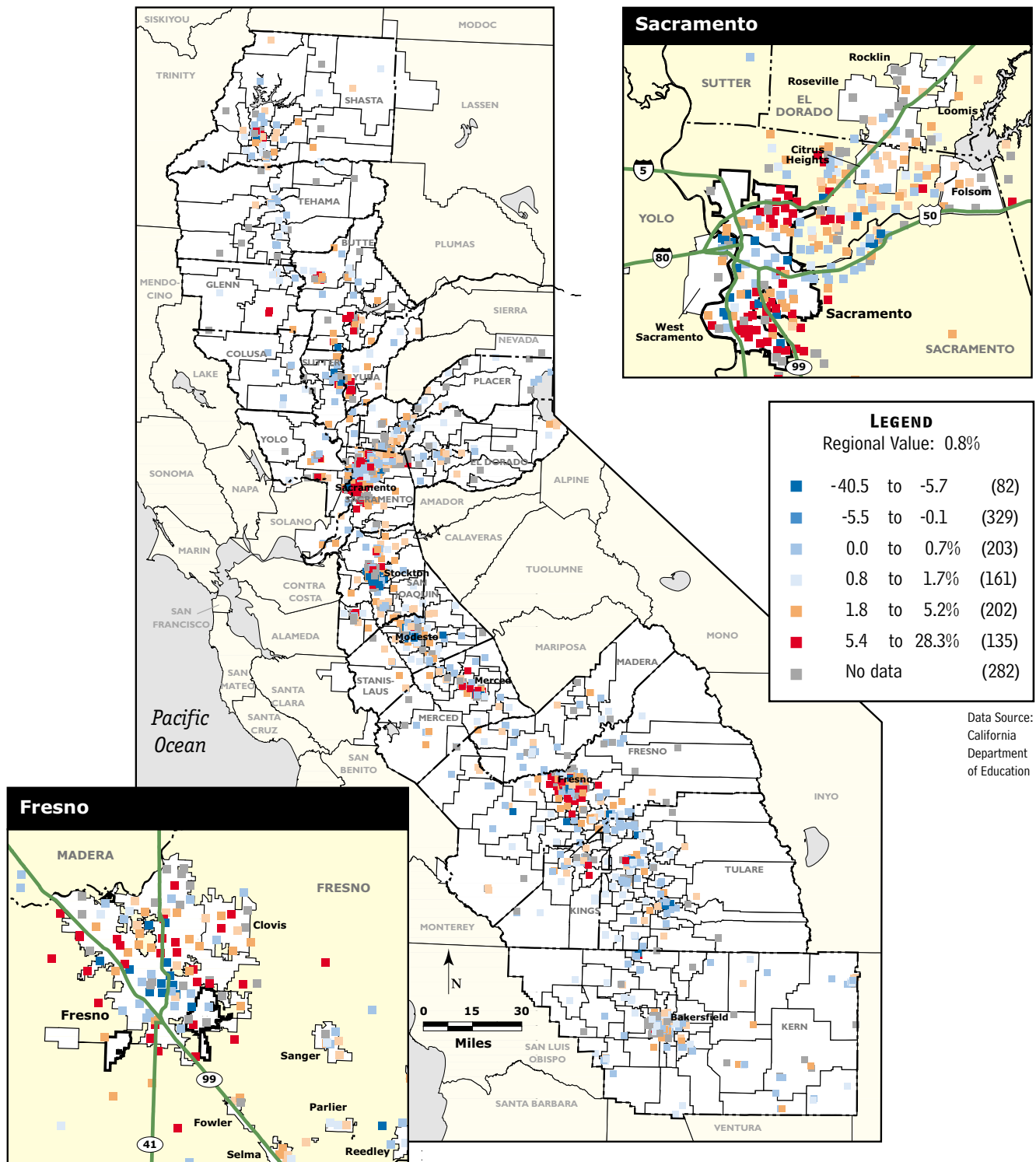
Asian Students

PERCENTAGE ASIAN ELEMENTARY STUDENTS BY SCHOOL, 1998



ASIAN ELEMENTARY STUDENTS in the Central Valley are heavily concentrated in urban centers such as Sacramento, Fresno, Merced, and Stockton. Within these cities, schools with high Asian enrollments also tend to be those with the highest poverty.

CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS OF ASIAN ELEMENTARY STUDENTS BY SCHOOL, 1988-1998



ASIAN ELEMENTARY STUDENTS have become much more segregated over the past decade. The percentage of these students attending high-minority schools increasing from 42 percent in 1988 to 55 percent in 1998. The percentage attending high-poverty schools, however, dropped from 41 to 37 percent over the same period.