

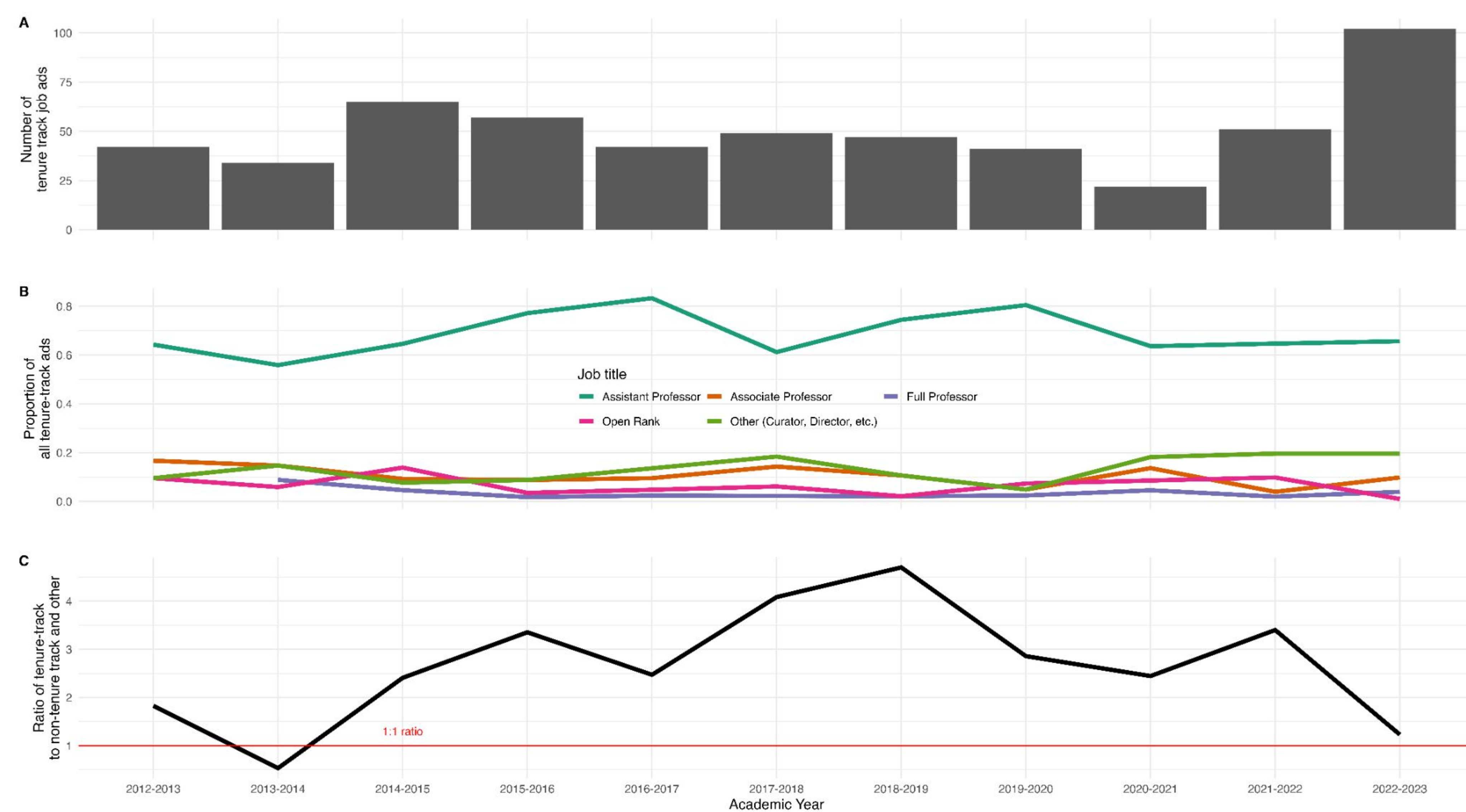
# Careers in Ruins: Academic Archaeology Job Trends From 2013 – 2023

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## Introduction, Questions and Data

- We examined the **text of advertisements for tenure-track jobs** to get insights into the archaeology academic job market. We analyzed job titles and descriptions.
- We used data from the **community-edited Archaeology Academic Jobs Wiki** to explore changes in the academic job market over during **2013-2023**.
- We read all **550 job ads** (433 for US universities) for this period and manually identified the archaeological topic and geographic foci of each ad.
- We ask: what were the **trends in topics and geographic foci** of job ads?
- We ask: how have the **instructions to applicants** changed over time?

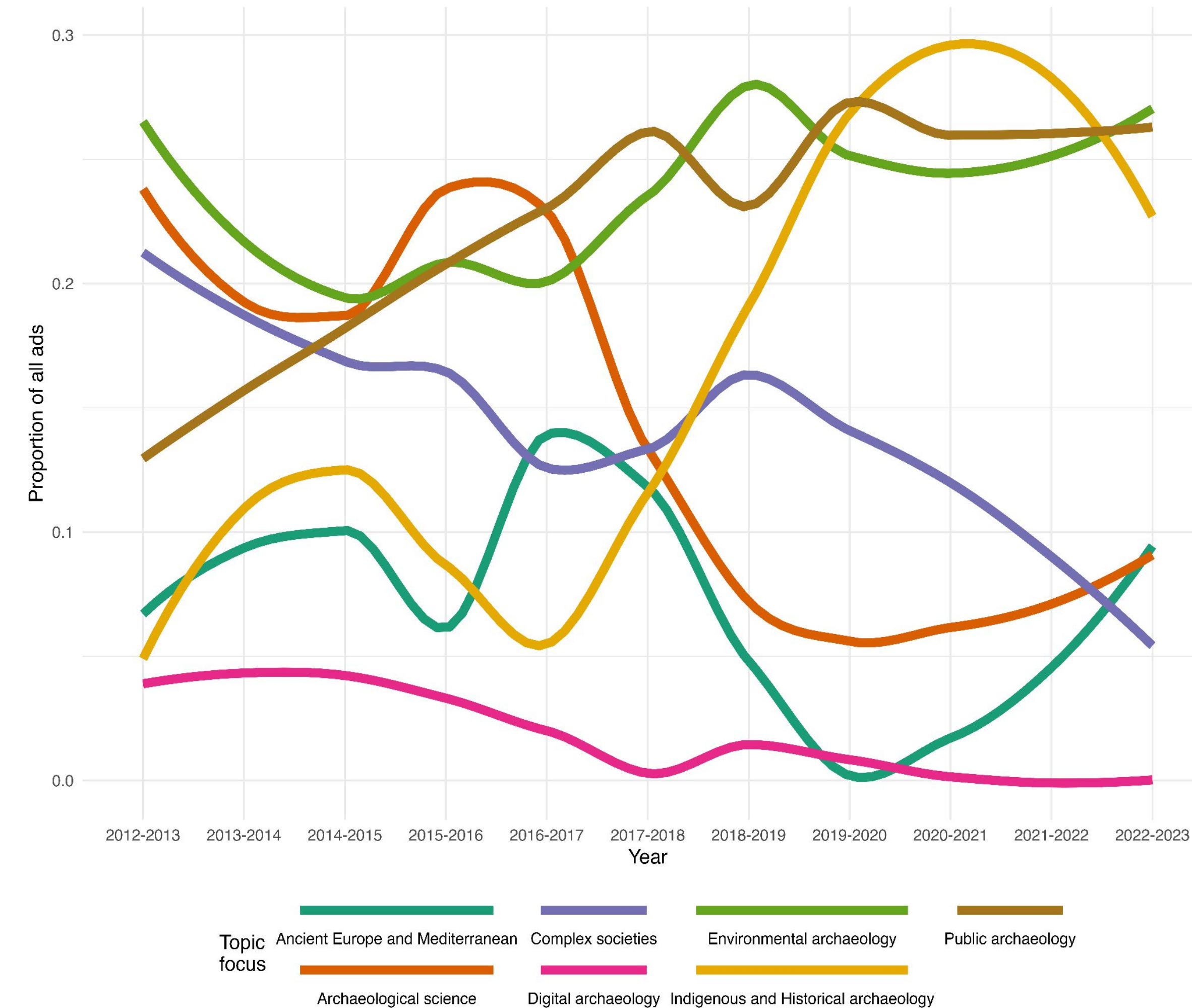


**Fig. 1** A) Number of tenure track job ads. B) Proportion of all tenure-track ads by job rank. C) Ratio of tenure-track to non-tenure-track. The number of tenure-track job ads are consistently higher than non-tenure-track opportunities. Job ads for Assistant Professor dominate consistently. The number of tenure-track job ads ranged consistently from c. 25-60 from 2012-2021, then increased to > 100. The ratio of tenure-track jobs to non-tenure-track started at around 1:1 in 2012, increased to about 4:1 in 2018-2019, then declined to the present.

## Results

### Topic trends over time

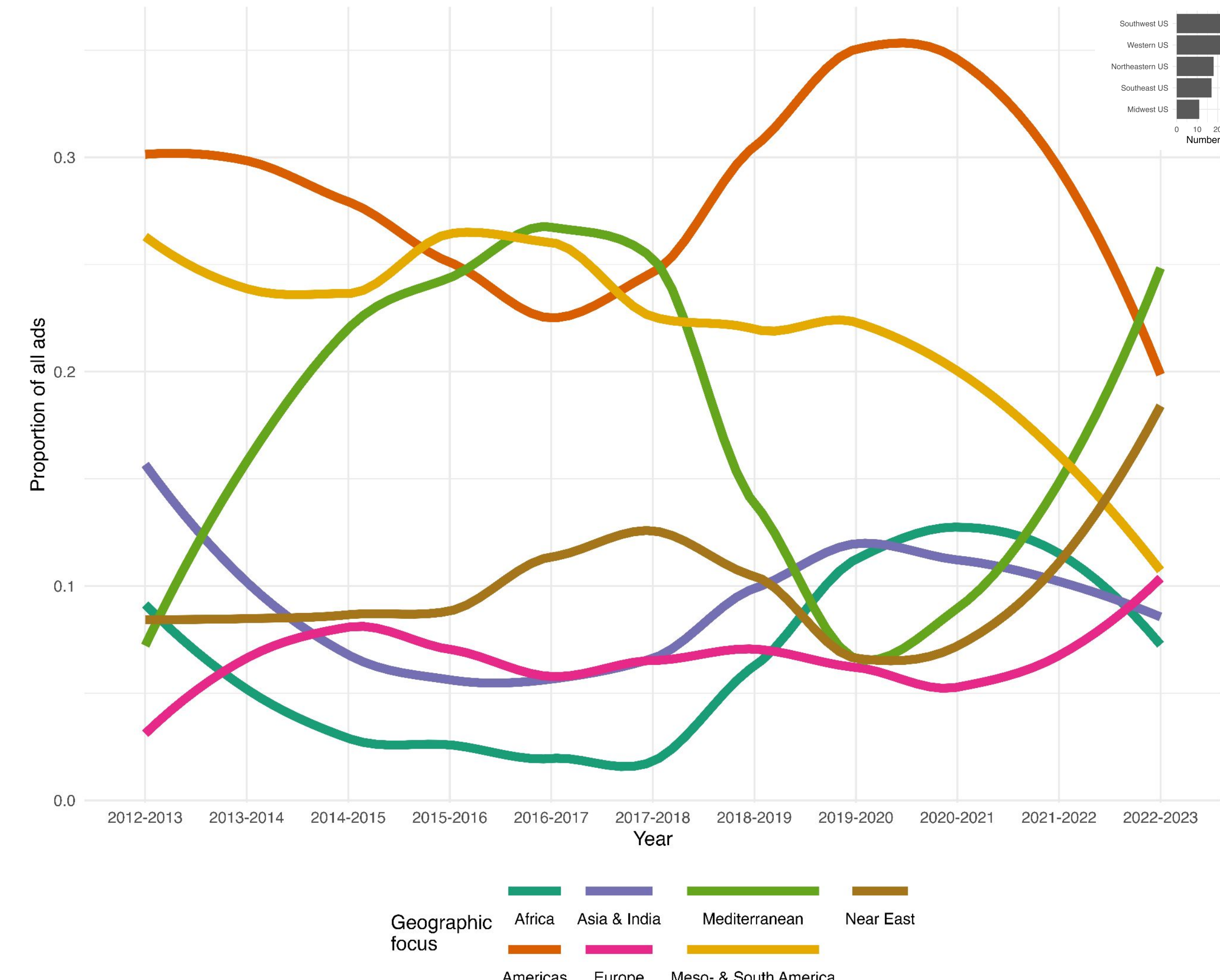
- The proportion of ads with a topical focus on Public Archaeology and Indigenous and Historical Archaeology **increase** substantially from 2012-2023, with local maximums in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 respectively.
- The topic of Environmental Archaeology remains **consistently high** over time.
- The proportion of ads with a topical focus on Archaeological Science or Complex Societies **decrease** from 2012-2023 substantially.
- Digital Archaeology as a topical focus remains **consistently low** over time.



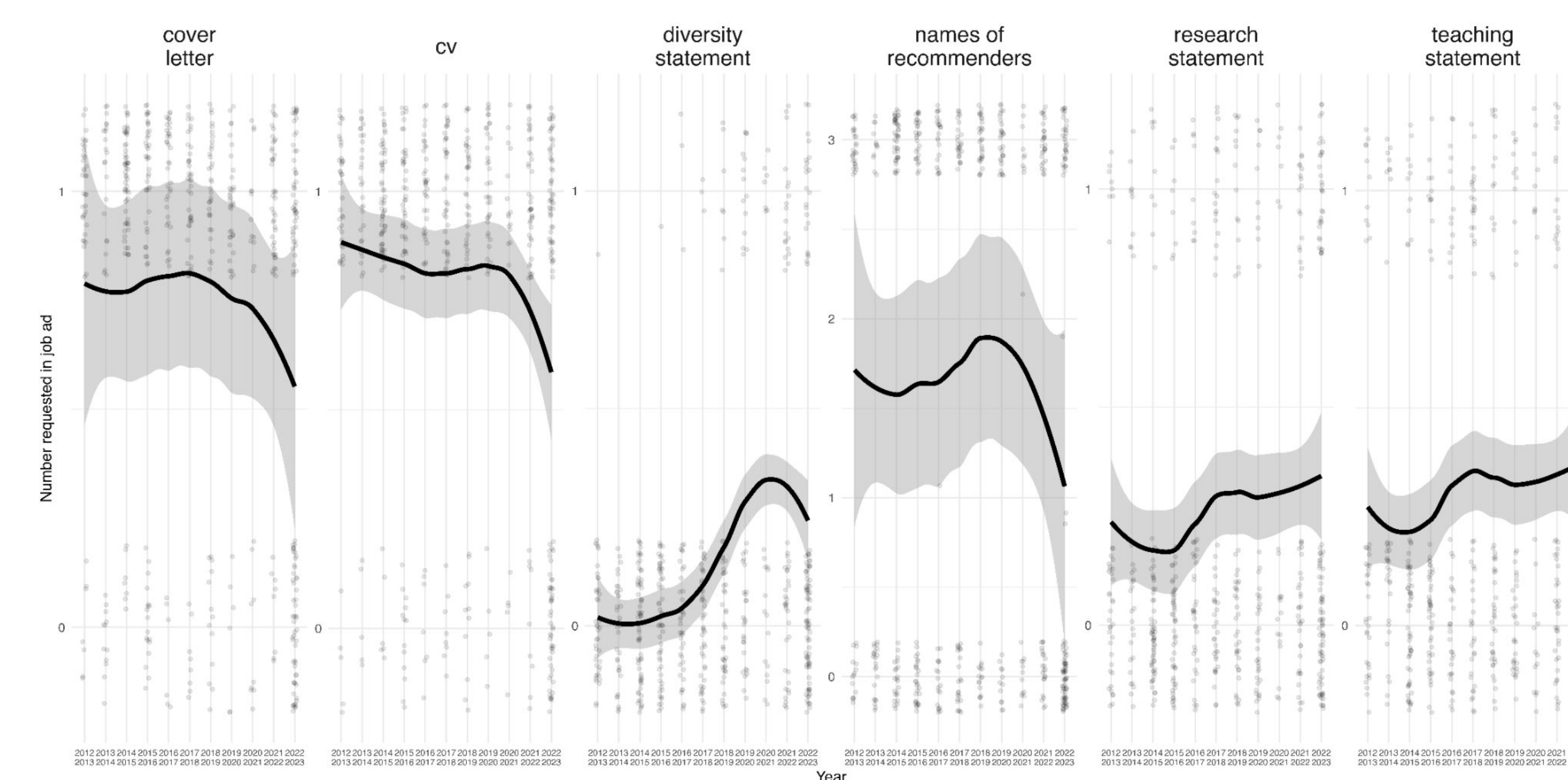
**Fig. 2** Topical focus of tenure-track job ads over time, for topics that appear in >20 ads. A locally weighted smoother has been applied to the raw data.

### Geographic trends over time

- Demand for jobs focusing on **North and South America** is generally **high**, with a peak in 2019-2020, and a **decrease** since then.
- Demand for jobs focusing on **Africa** was low until 2019-2020, peaking in 2020-2021.
- The proportion of ads with a geographic focus on the **Mediterranean** has varied substantially, peaking at 2016 and at its lowest in 2019.
- **Asia** and **India**, the **Near East** and **Europe** are consistently rare as a topical focus in job ads.
- Within the US, demand for expertise in the **Southwest** is consistently higher than any other region.



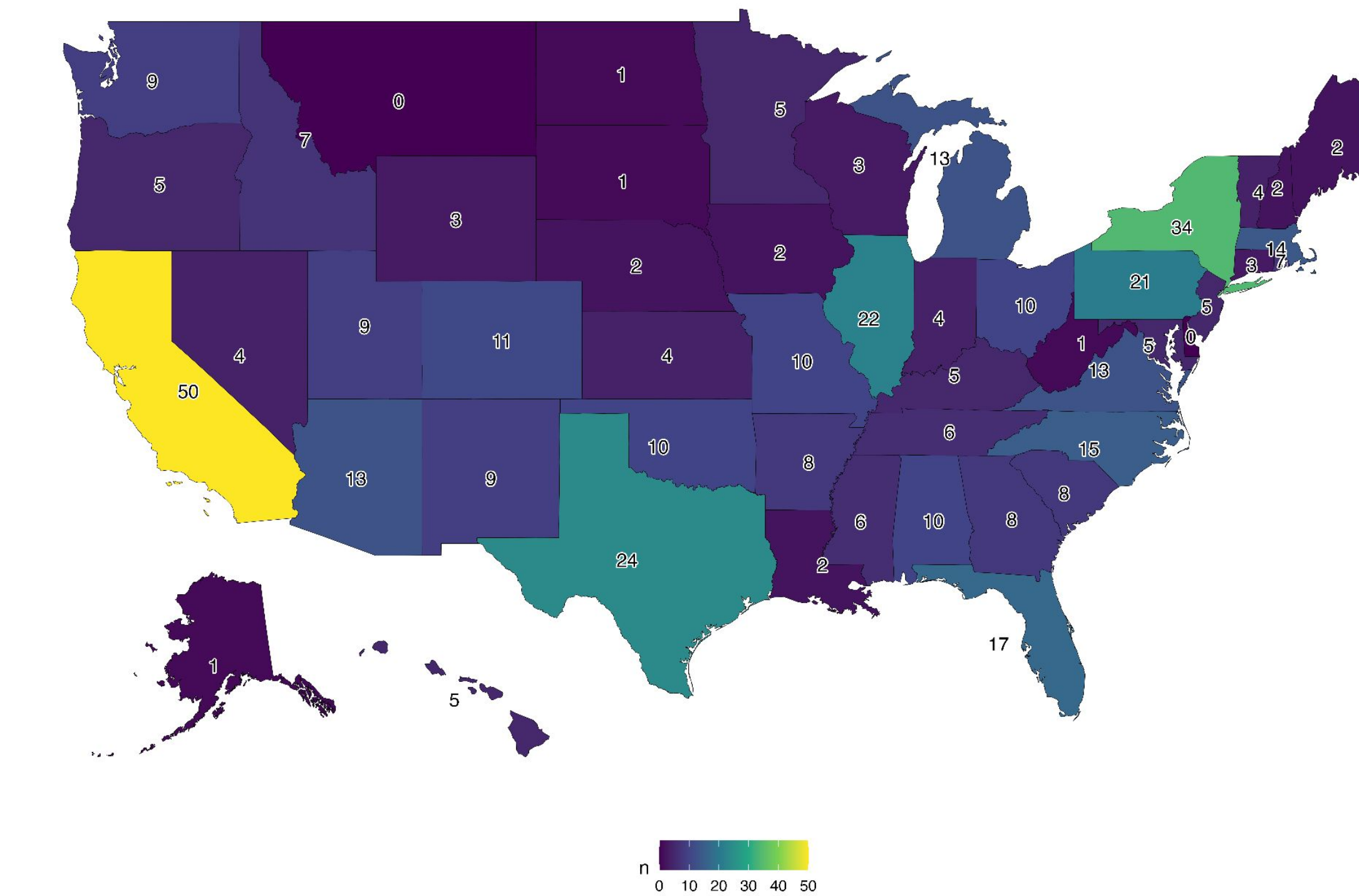
**Fig. 3** Geographical focus of tenure-track job ads over time, for locations that appear in >20 ads. A locally weighted smoother has been applied to the raw data.



**Fig. 4** Number of supporting documents requested in archaeology job advertisement by year.

### Instructions to applicants

- A cover letter and CV are **less requested** in more recent years, especially after 2018.
- The requirement for a diversity statement is rare until 2019-2020, **peaks** around 2020-2021, then **decreases** towards the present.
- The requests for names of recommenders (either zero or three names) reaches a local maximum during 2019-2020 then **decreases** towards the present.
- The requirement for a research statement and teaching statement **increases** after 2015-2016, and becomes more frequent in job ads in more recent years.
- Request for course descriptions, syllabus samples, teaching evaluations, transcripts and writing samples are **consistently low** over time (not shown here).



**Fig. 5** Total counts of job ads per state from 2012-2013 to 2022-2023.

## Discussion and Conclusion

- Trends in job ads likely reflect broader shifts in intellectual and practical priorities about archaeology, undergraduate education, and the process of hiring professors.
- California and Texas have high counts of job ads (Fig. 5) and both rank among the top five states with highest number of degrees awarded in Anthropology (U.S. Department of Education nd).
- The downward trend in tenure-track positions during 2013-2019 (Fig. 1A & C) may be related to decline in undergraduate enrollment in anthropology fields since 2013 and decline in archaeology PhDs from 2011-2019 (Cramb et al., 2022).
- 2019-2020 was a major inflection point in the popularity of topics and regions (Fig. 2 & 3), likely reflecting changes in broader cultural priorities (Gershon & Rachok, 2021). Our results show Indigenous and historical archaeology and the Americas strongly increase in popularity at this time, while archaeological science, complex societies, the Mediterranean and Near East and show declines. In this case, shifts in topics in job ads may have been influenced by broader cultural movements such as Black Lives Matter, protests about racial injustice, and efforts to amplify Indigenous voices.
- Application complexity has increased with a growing demand for a diversity, research, and teaching statements (Fig. 4). The decline in recent years for names of recommenders may be due to criticisms of the burden on the applicant of preparing numerous complex job applications (Dennis et al., 2022).
- A key limitation of our research is that it does not include an analysis of the academic profiles of those who were eventually hired from the job ads. Our results reveal collective aspirations for the future of the field, but do not show how these worked out in the topical and geographic foci of the people who were eventually hired.

### References

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**R code & data openly available at**  
<https://github.com/benmarwick/archyjobads>