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CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY


“The Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account (ACPSA) released today … show that arts and cultural economic activity nationwide increased an inflation-adjusted 4.9 percent in 2015…. Arts and cultural economic activity accounted for 4.2% of gross domestic product (GDP), or $763.6 billion, in 2015…. Information services was the leading contributor to the national growth in 2015…. In California, the top industries are motion pictures, other information services, and broadcasting.” The average compensation in ACPSA industries was $113,618 in 2015, compared to $76,307 for all salaried jobs.

ECONOMY

https://academic.oup.com/economicpolicy/article/33/93/5/4833996

“We find, however, that declining dynamism cannot be explained by growing federal regulation. The reason turns out to be simple: the decline in dynamism is widespread across many different industries and, in particular, it is widespread across heavily and lightly regulated industries. Our finding does not imply that regulation is necessarily good—regulations could fail a cost-benefit test and yet not have much of an effect on dynamism …. Frankly, it’s difficult to publish a paper that fails to reject the null hypothesis. A positive or negative effect is a natural stopping point—ok, they got it, let’s move on—but a zero-effect always leads to complaints …” (Marginal Revolution, Feb. 5, 2018).

EDUCATION


“The analysis proceeds in three sections: the first explores the current US context of increasing college costs and reliance on debt to finance higher education; the second section works through the balance sheet mechanics required to liberate Americans from student loan debt; and the final section simulates the economic effects of this debt cancellation using two models…Student debt cancellation results in positive macroeconomic feedback effects as average households’ net worth and disposable income increase, driving new consumption and investment spending. In short, we find that debt cancellation lifts GDP [gross domestic product], decreases the average unemployment rate, and results in little inflationary pressure (all over the 10-year horizon of our simulations), while interest rates increase only modestly. Though the federal budget deficit does increase, state-level budget positions improve as a result of the stronger economy.”

http://educationnext.org/lessons-learned-from-indiana-forum-private-school-choice/

This study is an assessment of the nation’s largest tuition voucher program—the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program, which started in 2011. The researchers found that this program had “statistically significant negative effects on student achievement”: in students’ early years, as they made the transition from private to public schools. However, they found that “voucher students begin to recoup their academic losses in their third and fourth years of attending a private school. Students transitioning to a private school may need time to acclimate to what are usually more-rigorous academic standards and higher expectations for homework and schoolwork. Our findings also speak only to the achievement gains of students using vouchers to switch to a private school in grades 5-8. Starting students in private schools in earlier grade levels, and thus giving them more time to adjust, might produce better outcomes.”
EMPLOYMENT


“Only weeks after Walt Disney Co. reported better-than-expected profit, a survey at the company's Anaheim theme parks found that 73% of employees questioned don't earn enough to pay for such expenses as rent, food and gas…. Disney called the survey inaccurate, noting that it was only offered to union workers at the resort and claiming there were no controls preventing disgruntled employees from answering multiple times…. The union responded to Disney's critique, saying it required the union workers taking the survey to provide their membership number to ensure none responded more than once.” ([Los Angeles Times](https://www.latimes.com), Feb. 28, 2018).

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT


“The ‘patch’ is not an island or a single mass…. [I]nstead, it's a large area with high volumes of plastics, one in which concentrations increase markedly as you move towards its center. The debris ranges from tiny flecks to enormous discarded fishing nets, which make up 46% of the material, the study found…. The study finds that, based on prior examinations dating back to the 1970s, the amount of plastic in the patch is steadily growing as more flows in than flows out…. [T]he study itself says that in light of how much plastic is being dumped (in the ocean, overall), they would have expected the volumes to be even higher (in the patch). Clearly, much plastic is sinking and doing its damage at the seafloor, or in lower depths of the ocean.” ([Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com), Mar. 22, 2018).

GENERAL GOVERNMENT


“Los Angeles County's homeless population is increasing faster than the supply of new housing, even with the addition of thousands of beds in the last two years and millions of dollars beginning to flow in from two ballot measures targeting the crisis…. As a result, a $73-million annual shortfall in funding for the county's comprehensive homelessness program could more than triple…. [A previous] report projected a reduction of 14% each year. If that had occurred, the total homeless population—including unsheltered and sheltered—would have dropped to 41,323 last year. Instead, it climbed to nearly 59,000.” ([Los Angeles Times](https://www.latimes.com), Feb. 19, 2018).
HEALTH


“Prescription drug overpayments (also known as ‘clawbacks’) occur when commercially insured patients’ copayments exceed the total cost of the drug to their insurer or pharmacy benefit manager…. We use pharmacy claims data from a large commercial insurer, combined with data on national average drug reimbursements, to identify claims that likely involved overpayments…. Overpayments are more likely on claims for generic versus brand drugs (28% vs. 6%), but the average size of the overpayment on generic claims is smaller ($7.32 vs. $13.46). In 2013, total overpayments amounted to $135 million in our sample, or $10.51 per covered life. With over 200 million Americans commercially insured in 2013, these findings suggest the practice of overpayments may account for a non-negligible share of overall drug spending and patient out-of-pocket costs.”

HUMAN SERVICES


This brief looks at the relationship between unemployment rate and utilization of long-term care. “The utilization of long-term information care services by Americans over age 65 is estimated to have declined by 6.75 % during the Great Recession. This decrease was driven by a drop in informal care provided at home for free, usually by adult children or spouses.” However, the study did not find “a significant change in utilization in either paid home care provided by non-relatives or nursing home care…. The cause of a reduction in informal home care is not immediately obvious. One contributing factor could be an unexpectedly positive health effect of the recession for the elderly.”

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