ECONOMY
Risks, returns of cryptocurrency compared to traditional asset classes

EDUCATION
Pew: 61% Americans believe higher education headed in “wrong direction”
Study: No significant increase in high school bullying following 2016 presidential election

EMPLOYMENT
Women’s participation rate in labor force increased in about half of world’s advanced economies

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT
Caltech tracks how South Cal ground rises, falls as groundwater is pumped in, out of aquifers

HEALTH
Immigrants paid more toward medical expenses than they withdrew

HUMAN SERVICES
18% fewer homeless veterans on L.A.’s streets

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
Higher-speed internet linked to sleep deprivation

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE
Water main break rates in North America increased 27% in past 6 years

ECONOMY

http://papers.nber.org/tmp/66221-w24877.pdf

There has been some debate as to whether or not cryptocurrencies have similar returns to more traditional asset classes, such as stocks, currencies and commodities. Three major cryptocurrencies—Bitcoin, Ripple, and Ethereum—are compared to traditional asset classes through their relative markets, as well as their returns to major currencies, precious metal commodities and macroeconomic factors. The findings suggest that cryptocurrency returns have low exposures to traditional asset classes. In addition, returns can be predicted by momentum and investors’ attention to their financial markets.
EDUCATION


“A new survey of the U.S. public suggests continued problems regarding the image of higher education…. A solid majority of all adults (61%) believe that higher education is headed in the wrong direction…. But that view is much more likely to be held by Republicans or those who lean Republican than by Democrats or those who lean Democrat. While both Republicans and Democrats express skepticism about higher education, they do so for different reasons—Democrats are more concerned about tuition rates, and Republicans are more concerned about their perceptions of campus politics.” (Inside Higher Ed, July 27, 2018).


“With the release of the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey data, which include an item on bullying experienced within the previous 12 months, the question of whether the election was associated with increases in bullying can finally be answered. The data show that, contrary to claims that bullying increased as a result of the election, bullying in fact remained steady: Approximately one in five 9th through 12th grade students reported being bullied; the difference between the 2015 (20.2%) and 2017 (19%) rates is not statistically significant. This finding holds across racial and sexual orientation subgroups. In both years, high school students who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) were almost three times more likely than their straight peers to report being bullied.” (Child Trends, June 26, 2018).

EMPLOYMENT


“This paper documents that, despite the acceleration in population aging over the past decade, many advanced economies have been successful in counteracting its downward pressure on labor force participation. In about half of advanced economies, the aggregate labor force participation rate increased after the global financial crisis. Yet, these aggregate developments mask strikingly different shifts in the workforce attachment of men and women. In most countries, the aggregate participation rates of men declined over this period, broadly in line with the changes in the age structure of populations. Aging can explain almost the entire change in male participation since 2008 in advanced Europe, and around 70 percent of the especially pronounced decline in the United States. Women's participation, on the other hand, increased in most countries, despite aging and the drag from the crisis, with the United States being an important outlier.”
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT


“Using an unprecedented number of satellite radar images, geophysicists at Caltech have tracked how the ground in Southern California rises and falls as groundwater is pumped in and out of aquifers beneath the surface. Their findings are presented in a study that tracks deformation of the earth’s surface over an 18-year period. The work can be used by water management districts to assess the precise shape and size of the aquifers and the impact of the region’s water on those aquifers. The work also reveals what could be a previously unmapped fault running across northeast Orange County…. When all the images are stitched together, they show the ground beneath Southern California rising and falling annually, like a giant breathing in and out…. [T]he study … and other surveys like it … will help water districts make sure that their water management strategies are effective at avoiding … soil compaction in California.” (Pasadena Now, Aug. 9, 2018).

HEALTH


“[This] report … examined all peer-reviewed studies since 2000 on immigrants’ health-care costs in the United States. It found that immigrants’ health-care expenditures were one-half to two-thirds those of people born in the U.S…. The researchers found that immigrants make up 12% of the population but only account for 8.6% of total U.S. health-care spending. Among immigrants in the country illegally, the study finds the group makes up 1.4% of U.S. health-care spending but is 5% of the population. Even when examining only immigrants who had health insurance, the study found they lower health spending than U.S.-born people with insurance. Spending of insured immigrants was 52% lower than that of insured U.S.-born individuals.” (The Hill, Aug. 8, 2018).

HUMAN SERVICES


“The lack of affordable housing is at the forefront of the homeless crisis in Los Angeles County. But the city’s annual point-in-time homeless count, released on June 1, showed that the veteran homeless population had declined [18%].... Although the previous year’s veteran homeless count turned out to be not as high as initially reported, it did serve as a call to action for the VA.” Efforts to decrease homeless veterans include: 1) established a Countywide Veterans Benefit Advocacy Program, 2) redesigned VA programs to target chronically homeless veterans, 3) enhanced direct-service staff collaboration and 4) coordinated VA housing resources through the Coordinated Entry System. (NPR, July 16, 2018).
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY


“The so-called ‘digitalization of the bedroom,’ defined by our inability to part with our phones/laptops/televisions before bed, has already been linked to various sleep disorders. The light from our smartphones and computers suppresses the production of melatonin, which regulates our sleep cycles; late night text messages disturb our sleep; and internet addiction has been cited as a major cause of sleep deprivation. But does the quality of that internet connection also play a role?” The study concludes that high speed internet access makes it easier to watch electronic devices for a longer time, and that this “promotes excessive electronic media use.” (Vice, Aug. 3, 2018).

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Water Main Break Rates in the USA and Canada: A Comprehensive Study. By Steven Folkman. Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Faculty Publications. Paper 174. Mar. 2018. 49 p. https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1173&context=mae_facpub&hsCtaTracking=a8799eb-017e-4c65-8631-06e20f84c7b%7C8e1fb9a-3c23-412a-afc5-89739c9e12d1

“A critical component to public health and economic well-being is our drinking water which is brought to the tap through an elaborate network of underground pipe distribution systems. Since most of this infrastructure is underground, it is out of sight and often neglected…. This report documents the survey results of water main breaks and operating characteristics at utilities located in the US and Canada.” Findings include: break rates have increased 27% in the past six years; 82% of cast iron pipes are over 50 years old and are experiencing a 43% increase in break rates; and smaller utilities have twice the number of main breaks as large utilities. California and Nevada were surveyed together as Region 2, but the survey did not identify the California cities or utilities that were part of the survey.

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