



Studies in the News

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

***Stuck in the '70s: The Demographics of California Prosecutors.* By Katherine J. Bies, et al. Stanford Law School and Stanford Criminal Justice Center. July 2015. 52 p.**

<https://media.law.stanford.edu/organizations/programs-and-centers/scjc/Stuck-in-the-70s-Final-Report.pdf>

"Recent events have renewed longstanding concerns about the treatment of racial minorities by the criminal justice system in California and throughout the United States. Part of that attention has focused on prosecutors, the gatekeepers to the criminal justice system and, in many ways, the system's most powerful officials.... Because prosecutors hold so much power and exercise so much discretion, it is cause for concern if they do not reflect the diversity of the public.... [O]ne of the many questions raised by the Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Freddie Gray cases is: How representative are prosecutors of the communities that they serve? In California, the answer is 'not very'.... Whites comprise slightly more than 38% of the population in California, but they are nearly 70% of California prosecutors."

CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY

***15% of Americans Don't Use the Internet. Who Are They?* By Monica Anderson, et al. Pew Research Center. July 28, 2015. 5 p.**

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/28/15-of-americans-dont-use-the-internet-who-are-they/>

“The latest Pew Research analysis ... shows that internet non-adoption is correlated to a number of demographic variables, including age, educational attainment, household income, race and ethnicity, and community type.... Seniors are the group most likely to say they never go online.... [Low] household income and education are also indicators of a person’s likelihood to be offline.... Rural Americans are about twice as likely as those who live in urban or suburban settings to never use the internet. Racial and ethnic differences are also evident. One-in-five blacks and 18% of Hispanics do not use the internet, compared with 14% of whites and only 5% of English-speaking Asian-Americans—the racial or ethnic group least likely to be offline.”

ECONOMY

***Effective Policy for Reducing Inequality? The Earned Income Tax Credit and the Distribution of Income.* By Hilary W. Hoynes, et al. National Bureau of Economic Research. Working Paper No. 21340. July 2015. 60 p.**

<http://www.nber.org/papers/w21340>

(Available at the California State Library)

“Much of the authors’ analysis explores the consequences of Congress’s 1993 decision to increase the credit. Focusing on families led by single women, they find that a \$1,000 increase produced major reductions in the poverty rate—specifically, a 9.4 percentage-point reduction in the share of families below the poverty line.... The EITC has also had a series of secondary benefits. It is associated with reductions in cardiovascular diseases and metabolic disorders among mothers; with significantly reduced levels of premature births and low birth weight; with higher test scores for elementary- and middle-school children; and with increases in the likelihood of college attendance.” (*Bloomberg View*, Aug. 13, 2015).

EDUCATION

***Music Training Alters the Course of Adolescent Auditory Development.* By Adam T. Tierney, et al. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science (PNAS), Early Edition.* June 19, 2015. 6 p.**

http://www.brainvolts.northwestern.edu/documents/Tierney_Krizman_Kraus_PNAS_2015.pdf

Researchers tested the impact of in-school music training on auditory development. They found that “in-school music training begun in high school prolongs the stability of subcortical sound processing and accelerates maturation of cortical auditory responses. Although phonological processing improved in both the music training and active control groups, the enhancement was greater in adolescents who underwent music training. Thus, music training initiated as late as adolescence can enhance neural processing of sound and confer benefits for language skills. These results establish the potential for experience-driven brain plasticity during adolescence and demonstrate that in-school programs can engender these changes.”

EMPLOYMENT

What Works? A Meta Analysis of Recent Active Labor Market Program Evaluations. By David Card, et al. National Bureau of Economic Research. Working Paper No. 21431. July 2015. 53 p.
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w21431>
(Available at the California State Library)

“In the aftermath of the Great Recession there is renewed interest in the potential for active labor market policies ... to help ease a wide range of labor market problems.... Work first programs tend to have larger short term effects, whereas human capital programs have small (or in some cases even negative) short term impacts” but larger impacts in the long run. “[W]e find that female participants and those drawn from the pool of long term unemployed tend to have larger program effects than other groups.... [W]ork first programs are relatively more successful for disadvantaged participants, whereas human capital programs are more successful for the long term unemployed.”

ENERGY

Less Carbon, Higher Prices: How California’s Climate Policies Affect Lower-Income Residents. By Jonathan A. Lesser. Center for Energy Policy and the Environment at the Manhattan Institute. July 2015. 22 p.
http://www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/eper_17.pdf

“By 2020, California will require that one-third of electricity consumed in the state be generated from renewable sources. California has also pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 and by 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. This paper examines the Golden State’s history of renewable-energy mandates, as well as its carbon cap-and-trade program; its tiered system of electricity pricing; how prices vary by county; and the impact of energy prices on households.” The paper suggests that rising prices have created an energy tax that is regressive and facilitates “energy poverty” (i.e., energy expenditures exceeding 10% of household income). To correct this situation, it suggests a cost-benefit review and changes to the state’s tariff structure.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

The State Pensions Funding Gap: Challenges Persist. Pew Charitable Trusts. July 2015. 10 p.
http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/Assets/2015/07/PewStates_StatePensionDebtBrief_Final.pdf

“The nation’s state-run retirement systems had a \$968 billion shortfall in 2013 ... a \$54 billion increase from the previous year. This report focuses on the most recent comprehensive data and does not fully reflect the impact of recent strong investment returns. Because state retirement systems have historically accounted for investment losses and gains over time, the latest data still include losses from the 2008 Great Recession and do not fully incorporate the strong returns of recent years. As these returns are fully realized under new accounting standards, preliminary data from 2014 point to a reduction in unfunded liabilities for the majority of states. Many states have also benefited from reforms enacted since the financial crisis.”

HEALTH

“School Start Times for Middle School and High School Students—United States, 2011–12 School Year.” By Anne G. Wheaton, et al. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, vol. 64, no. 30 (Aug. 7, 2015) pp. 809-813.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6430a1.htm>

“Adolescents who do not get enough sleep are more likely to be overweight; not engage in daily physical activity; suffer from depressive symptoms; engage in unhealthy risk behaviors such as drinking, smoking tobacco, and using illicit drugs; and perform poorly in school. However, insufficient sleep is common among high school students, with less than one third of U.S. high school students sleeping at least 8 hours on school nights.” The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends middle and high schools have a start time of no earlier than 8:30 a.m. to promote better sleep habits. This report, which analyzed the *2011–12 Schools and Staffing Survey*, found that the average start time for U.S. high schools is 8:03 a.m.

HUMAN SERVICES

America’s Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2015. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. July 2015. 219 p.

http://www.childstats.gov/pdf/ac2015/ac_15.pdf

“This report identifies seven major domains that characterize the well-being of a child and influence the likelihood that a child will grow to be a well-educated, economically secure, productive, and healthy adult. The seven domains are family and social environment, economic circumstances, health care, physical environment and safety, behavior, education, and health. These domains are interrelated and can have synergistic effects on well-being.... Twenty percent of all children ages 0–17 (14.7 million) lived in poverty in 2013, down from 22% in 2012. This was the first time since 2000 that the child poverty rate declined.”

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Wide Differences in Broadband Connectivity Across California Households: Disparities Exist Among Demographic Subgroups. Field Poll. June 16, 2015. 17 p.

<http://www.field.com/fieldpollonline/subscribers/RIs2509.pdf>

“The survey finds that nearly four in five California households (79%) report having high-speed Internet, at home. The large majority (71%) of this group accesses the Internet through DSL, cable, satellite or fiber optic connections to a home desktop, laptop or tablet computer, while 8% connect to the Internet at home only through a smart phone. Home broadband connectivity has increased slightly from last year, up from 75% in 2014, including 8% who connected only through a smart phone.” Sixty-five percent of households with a total annual income of less than \$20,000 and 68% of non-citizens have the lowest levels of broadband connectivity.

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