



Studies in the News

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Contents this week:

CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

CA violent and property crime rates dropped in 2014

CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY

Survey: religion is becoming less important to the U.S. public

ECONOMY

Budget reserves will help guard CA against economic downturn

EDUCATION

Student loan snapshot—average debt for some growing faster than inflation

EMPLOYMENT

CA workforce skills gap remedy will require college education

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Groundwater recharge effective in CA San Joaquin Valley

CA faces 67% risk of decreased snow supply, unmet human water demand

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Underground regulations: a look at the impacts on public policy

HEALTH

Flavored tobacco products popular among U.S. youth

HUMAN SERVICES

Despite declining child poverty rates, race-based gaps persist

CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

***Crime Trends in California.* By Magnus Lofstrom, et al. Public Policy Institute of California.**

Sep. 2015. 2 p.

http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_show.asp?i=1036

California has seen a recent reduction in violent crime and property crime rates. In 2014, the violent crime rate dropped 1% to a 47-year low of 393 per 100,000 residents and property crime dipped 7.7% to 2,459 per 100,000. Crime rates varied significantly in different regions of California, with the Sierra region (small rural counties from Alpine to Inyo) experiencing the lowest rates of violent and property crime, to the highest rates in the poorer regions of the San Joaquin Valley. Thirty of the 58 counties in California experienced decreases in violent crime rates. Property crime rates dropped in 52 counties, 29 of which were double-digit decreases ranging from 10% to 20%.

CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY

U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious. By Alan Cooperman, et al. Pew Research Center. Nov. 3, 2015. 266 p.

<http://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious/>

“An extensive new survey of more than 35,000 U.S. adults finds that the percentages, who say they believe in God, pray daily and regularly go to church or other religious services all have declined modestly in recent years.... The falloff in traditional religious beliefs and practices coincides with changes in the religious composition of the U.S. public. A growing share of Americans are religiously unaffiliated, including some who self-identify as atheists or agnostics as well as many who describe their religion as ‘nothing in particular.’... At the same time, the vast majority of Americans (77% of all adults) continue to identify with some religious faith. And this religiously affiliated population ... is, on the whole, just as religiously committed today as when the study was first conducted in 2007.”

ECONOMY

The 2016-17 Budget: California's Fiscal Outlook. Legislative Analyst's Office. Nov. 2015. 60 p.

<http://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Detail/3305>

“California's state budget is better prepared for an economic downturn than it has been at any point in decades. Under the main economic scenario ... 2016-17 would end with reserves of \$11.5 billion, assuming the state makes no new budget commitments through the next year. If the economy continues to grow through 2019-20, annual operating surpluses and larger reserves could materialize, and there may be capacity for some new budget commitments.... The more new budget commitments are made in 2016-17, the more likely it is that the state would face difficult choices—such as spending cuts and tax increases—later.”

EDUCATION

Student Debt and the Class of 2014. By Debbie Cochrane, et al. The Institute for College Access and Success. Oct. 2015. 35 p.

http://ticas.org/sites/default/files/pub_files/classof2014.pdf

“At the national level, 2014 graduates were a little more likely to have student debt than their peers in 2004 (69% of graduates compared to 65%), and those who borrowed left school with a lot more debt. Average debt at graduation rose 56%, from \$18,550 to \$28,950, more than double the rate of inflation (25%) over this 10-year period. The rate of growth varied widely between states. While the majority of states saw the average debt of new graduates with loans rise two to three times faster than inflation, in five states it grew even faster—at more than triple the inflation rate, and in four states the growth was at or below the inflation rate.” California is considered a “low-debt” state, with the average student debt level at \$21,382.

EMPLOYMENT

***Will California Run Out of College Graduates?* By Hans Johnson, et al. Public Policy Institute of California. Oct. 2015. 11 p.**

http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_quick.asp?i=1166

“Today’s college graduates have better economic outcomes than those who do not hold a bachelor’s degree. Over time, college graduates have seen lower rates of unemployment and higher wages than other workers—even through the Great Recession—suggesting that college degrees have become increasingly valuable in California’s labor market. The future workforce skills gap looms large. But California and its higher education institutions can take several practical steps to close it. The core of a new plan for higher education should include increasing access to the state’s four-year institutions, improving college completion rates, expanding transfer pathways from community colleges, and being smart about aid programs.”

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

***Creating an Opportunity: Groundwater Recharge through Winter Flooding of Agricultural Land in the San Joaquin Valley.* By Ali Taghavi, et al. California Water Foundation. Oct. 2015. 105 p.**

<http://californiawaterfoundation.org/resources/>

“Using surface water to replace groundwater during rainy seasons, which a recent study proposes, is in reality what the Friant Water System was designed to do, said a local irrigation district manager. A study commissioned by the California Water Foundation shows the potential to significantly improve groundwater levels in San Joaquin Valley by directing excess river flows from winter storms to active farmland. Research results indicate that groundwater overdraft in San Joaquin Valley’s eastside could be reduced by 12 to 20% each year using this approach.” (*The Porterville Recorder*, Nov. 2, 2015).

“The Potential for Snow to Supply Human Water Demand in the Present and Future.” By Justin S. Mankin, et al. *Environmental Research Letters*, vol. 10, no. 11 (Nov. 12, 2015). pp. 1-10.

<http://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/10/11/114016/pdf>

In this study, researchers looked at basins throughout the Northern Hemisphere to investigate “where present spring and summer snowmelt has the greatest potential to supply human water demand that would otherwise be unmet by instantaneous rainfall runoff. Using a multi-model ensemble of climate change projections”, they found that there is a 67% risk of decreased snow supply this century. Three basin areas in California are identified with significant snow sensitivity, resulting in a high risk of human water consumption demand potentially unmet by future snowmelt estimates: Sacramento, Coastal California, and San Joaquin.

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

***The Fourth Branch & Underground Regulations.* NFIB Small Business Legal Center. Sep. 2015. 44 p.**

<http://www.nfib.com/pdfs/fourth-branch-underground-regulations-nfib.pdf>

“Our concern is that ‘underground regulations’ obscure political accountability, and diminish the possibility of broad-based social consensus on public policy—meaning that influential factions (i.e., interest groups) may have disproportionate influence in setting regulatory policy when their ‘pick’ is in the White House.... What follows is a white paper ... explaining the problem of underground regulations in greater detail, and identifying numerous examples of executive actions that we think should have undergone some form of notice-and-comment—as a matter of good governance.”

HEALTH

“Flavored Tobacco Product Use Among Middle and High School Students—United States, 2014.”
By Catherine G. Corey, et al. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* vol. 64, no. 38 (Oct. 2, 2015)
pp. 1066-1070.

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/wk/mm6438.pdf> (Available at the California State Library)

“Among U.S. middle and high school students who used a tobacco product in the preceding 30 days in 2014, an estimated 3.26 million used a flavored tobacco product ... including 1.58 million e-cigarette users, 1.02 million hookah users, 910,000 cigar smokers, and 900,000 menthol cigarette smokers.... The popularity of flavors across the range of tobacco products suggests that flavoring might have broad appeal to young tobacco users. Therefore, it is important that comprehensive tobacco prevention and control strategies for youths address all forms of flavored tobacco products and not just cigarettes.”

HUMAN SERVICES

Although Child Poverty Declined in 2014, Persistent Racial and Ethnic Disadvantages Remain.
By Marybeth J. Mattingly, et al. Carsey Research. Summer 2015. 6 p.

<http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1253&context=carsey>

“In 2014, 21.7% of children were poor, representing a modest, but statistically significant decline since 2013 (by 0.6 percentage point), but still 1.7 percentage points higher than in 2009, at the end of the Great Recession. Though cities and rural places remain home to the highest rates of child poverty, child poverty declined in all place types, with the largest declines in rural America.... With an overall poverty rate of 38.4%, black children are the most disadvantaged. This rate is nearly three times the non-Hispanic white child poverty rate (13.0%) and 6.3 percentage points higher than the Hispanic child poverty rate (32.1%).”

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