



## Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

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## **CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY**

***Characteristics and Mental Health of Gender Nonconforming Adolescents in California.* By Bianca Wilson, et al. Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. Dec. 2017. 4 p.**

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/CHIS-Transgender-Teens-FINAL.pdf>

The 2015-2016 California Health Interview Survey was the first representative survey of California adolescents that included a measure of gender expression. Respondents were classified depending on how they identified themselves on the question of how feminine or masculine they were. About 796,000 youth (or 27% of 12 to 17 year olds) are gender nonconforming. This includes 6.2% identifying as highly gender nonconforming, and 20.8% identifying as androgynous. While gender conforming and nonconforming youth did not differ in lifetime rates of suicide thoughts and attempts, nonconforming youth were more than twice as likely (17% to 7%) as conforming youth to report severe psychological stress in the past year.

## EDUCATION

***Educational Opportunity in Early and Middle Childhood: Variation by Place and Age.* By Sean F. Reardon. Center for Education Policy and Analysis. Dec. 2017. 47 p.**

<https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/wp17-12-v201712.pdf>

“For many parents, judging a local public school comes down to average test scores and the amount of money going into that school. A new Stanford University study of test scores from 45 million students, who populate the about 11,000 US public-school districts, upends that set of assumptions. The study found no correlation between a given district's socioeconomic status and the average test scores of its students. According to Stanford sociologist Sean Reardon, the smartest way to measure a school's effectiveness was to instead look at the students' rate of improvement over time, as measured by their standardized tests. ‘There are many relatively high-poverty school districts where students appear to be learning at a faster rate than kids in other, less poor districts,’ Reardon said in a statement. ‘Poverty clearly does not determine the quality of a school system.’” ([Business Insider](#), Jan. 8, 2018).

## EMPLOYMENT

***Is Occupational Licensing a Barrier to Interstate Migration?* By Janna E. Johnson, et al. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Dec. 2017. 47 p.**

<https://www.minneapolisfed.org/research/sr/sr561.pdf>

“The new study adds to the already substantial evidence indicating that licensing laws are a major obstacle to geographic mobility, particularly for poor and lower-middle class people seeking to move to areas with greater opportunity. We have gotten to the point where some 30 percent of Americans have to have licenses to legally work in their respective fields, including even some states that license florists and tour guides. The evidence also suggests that most of these laws do far more to suppress competition than protect consumers.” ([Washington Post](#), Dec. 12, 2017).

## ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

***Oroville Dam Spillway Incident: Report.* Independent Forensic Team. Jan. 5, 2018. 584 p.**

[http://issuu.com/asdso/docs/independent\\_forensic\\_team\\_report\\_fi?e=16355058/57087615](http://issuu.com/asdso/docs/independent_forensic_team_report_fi?e=16355058/57087615)

“The independent team of experts investigating the dramatic failure of the spillways last February at Oroville Dam that led to the evacuation of 188,000 people has concluded that California water officials were ‘overconfident and complacent’ and gave ‘inadequate priority for dam safety,’ according to [their] final report.... [N]umerous inspections and reviews over almost 50-years failed to recognize the weak construction of the spillway and the lack of durability of their repairs. Although the chair of the review team said it wasn't fair to blame the California Department of Water Resources entirely for the spillway problems, he did note that the incident is a “wake-up call” for the dam industry nationwide to do more thorough inspections of big dams.” ([The Mercury News](#), Jan. 5, 2018).

## GENERAL GOVERNMENT

***Borrowing to Save? The Impact of Automatic Enrollment on Debt.* By John Beshears, et al. Harvard University. Dec. 6. 2017. 52 p. (Available from the California Research Bureau)**

“Automatic enrollment has pushed millions of people who weren’t previously saving for retirement into 401(k)-style plans. But many of these workers appear to be offsetting those savings over the long term by taking on more auto and mortgage debt than they otherwise would have.... [T]he study finds no evidence that people who are auto-enrolled are running up more credit-card debt than employees who are required to sign up for a 401(k) on their own. Nor is the extra debt auto-enrolled employees take on causing their credit scores to deteriorate. Some of the added debt, particularly mortgage debt, may even boost participants’ net worth over the long run, the study says.” ([Wall Street Journal](#), Jan. 5, 2018).

## HEALTH

**“Hydraulic Fracturing and Infant Health: New Evidence from Pennsylvania.” By Janet Currie, et al. *Science Advances*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Dec. 13, 2017) 10 p. <http://advances.sciencemag.org/content/3/12/e1603021>**

“To evaluate the potential health impacts of fracking, we analyzed records of more than 1.1 million births in Pennsylvania from 2004 to 2013, comparing infants born to mothers living at different distances from active fracking sites and those born both before and after fracking was initiated at each site...We found evidence for negative health effects of in utero exposure to fracking sites within 3 km of a mother’s residence, with the largest health impacts seen for in utero exposure within 1 km of fracking sites. Negative health impacts include a greater incidence of low-birth weight babies as well as significant declines in average birth weight and in several other measures of infant health. There is little evidence for health effects at distances beyond 3 km, suggesting that health impacts of fracking are highly local. Informal estimates suggest that about 29,000 of the nearly 4 million annual U.S. births occur within 1 km of an active fracking site and that these births therefore may be at higher risk of poor birth outcomes.”

## HUMAN SERVICES

***Behavioral Insights for Child Support: Lessons from the BIAS Project.* MDRC. Nov. 2017. 5 p. [https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/child\\_support\\_brief\\_508\\_compliant.pdf](https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/child_support_brief_508_compliant.pdf)**

“The Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS) project, launched in 2010, was the first major project to apply behavioral insights to the human services programs that serve poor and vulnerable families in the United States.... The goal of the project was to learn how tools from behavioral science could be used to deliver program services more effectively and, ultimately, improve the well-being of low-income children, adults, and families.... The BIAS team worked with three states [Texas, Washington, and Ohio] to design eight tests related to child support. The interventions focused on two issues: child support order modifications and collection of payments.”

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

**“In Vivo Genome Editing Improves Motor Function and Extends Survival in a Mouse Model of ALS.”** By Thomas Gaj, et al. *Science Advances*, vol. 3, no. 12 (Dec. 20, 2017) 11 p.

<http://advances.sciencemag.org/content/3/12/eaar3952/tab-pdf>

“Most cases of ALS disease are not inherited, but in a small percentage of cases, we know the exact gene responsible for causing its effects. [This study] focuses on one of those genes, SOD1. Dominant mutations to SOD1 are responsible for 20% of genetic ALS cases, and 2% of all ALS cases.... The Berkeley researchers aimed to knock out the mutant SOD1 gene in mice with ALS using the gene-editing tool CRISPR/Cas9.... While it didn’t cure the disease, the treated mice lived about 25% longer and experienced disease onset significantly later. At the end of their lives, they also had about 50% more functional motor neurons.” ([Gizmodo](#), Dec. 20, 2017).

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