



Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

February 14, 2018

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CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY

***Transforming Orange County: Assets and Needs of Asian Americans & Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.* By Linda Vo, et al. Asian Americans Advancing Justice. Jan. 2018. 150 p.**

<https://transformingoc.advancingjustice-oc.org/>

“People always say that Orange County has the third-largest Asian American population in the country, and that Orange County’s population is 20% Asian American,” said Sylvia Kim, regional director for AAAJ-OC. ‘But what does that really mean?’ The report shows that Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander businesses generated nearly \$26 billion in revenue and more than 100,000 jobs for Orange County in 2012 alone.... At the same time, the study shows that by grouping all Asian Americans together—regardless of ethnicity or immigrant generation—many needs remain invisible. While Asian

Americans in Orange County have a lower poverty rate than the general population—12% compared to 13%—nearly 20% of Thai Americans are poor in Orange County." ([Los Angeles Times](#), Feb. 1, 2018).

ECONOMY

***Computerization and Immigration: Theory and Evidence from the United States.* By Gaetano Basso, et al. NBER. Oct. 2017. 72 p.**
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w23935> (Available at the California State Library)

This report finds that immigration policies that aim to reduce low-skilled migration in order to bolster middle-class labor markets could have the opposite effect. The authors “show that US local labour markets that were more likely to adopt computing technologies, and whose labour productivity increased the most ... also attracted low-skilled immigrants at higher rates ... [fueling] the boom of service occupations whose demand rose because of the increased productivity of the local economy.... US local labour markets underwent polarisation in terms of both employment and wages. However, if we focus just on native workers this is far less so, especially at the very low end of the wage distribution. [Lower wages] contributed to push natives to upgrade their skills and join better paying production occupations [and] professional and managerial occupations.” ([VoxEU](#), Jan. 12, 2018).

EDUCATION

***The Slowdown in Bay Area Charter School Growth: Causes and Solutions.* By Robin Lake, et al. Center on Reinventing Public Education. Jan. 2018. 27 p.**
<https://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/crpe-slowdown-bay-area-charter-school-growth.pdf>

In the 2016-2017 school year, more charter schools closed than opened in the Bay Area, signaling a decline in charter school growth. Researchers have found several reasons for this decline: 1) lack of access to affordable facilities; 2) friction with local school districts; and 3) lack of start-up funding. They suggest one approach, successful in some East Coast cities, which may serve to improve charter school development in the Bay Area. The approach creates “partnership schools,” in which the schools operate as independent charters, but contract with a school district to provide facilities.

EMPLOYMENT

***Americans See Both Good and Bad in Trends That Are Changing the Workforce.* By Nikki Graf. Pew Research Center. Jan. 2018.**
<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/23/americans-see-both-good-and-bad-in-trends-that-are-changing-the-workplace/>

“Among the trends reshaping the U.S. workplace, more Americans see outsourcing of jobs, more immigrant workers and imports as negative rather than positive forces when it comes to their livelihoods.... But U.S. workers also see a bright side in some trends, with more Americans citing the growing emphasis on diversity, the increase of women in the workforce and more U.S.-made products being sold abroad as positive rather than negative. Views on the automation of jobs through new technology are divided.”

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

“Permafrost Stores a Globally Significant Amount of Mercury.” By Paul F. Schuster, et al. *Geophysical Research Letters*. Online ahead of print. Feb. 5, 2018. 9 p.
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/2017GL075571/epdf>

“We already knew that thawing Arctic permafrost would release powerful greenhouse gases.... [I]t could also release massive amounts of mercury—a potent neurotoxin and serious threat to human health.... There are 32 million gallons of mercury, the equivalent of 50 Olympic swimming pools, trapped in the permafrost.... ‘The results of this study are concerning because what we’re learning is that not only is permafrost a massive storage for carbon that will feedback on global climate, but permafrost also stores a globally significant pool of mercury, which is at risk of being released into the environment when permafrost thaws. This is especially concerning, given the predominance of wetland ecosystems in the Arctic.’” (*Washington Post*, Feb. 5, 2018.).

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

League of California Cities Retirement System Sustainability Study and Findings. League of California Cities and Bartel Associates. Jan. 2018. 36 p.
<http://www.cacities.org/2018PensionSurvey>

The California Public Employee Retirement System is currently underfunded, with only 68% of funds required to pay estimated retirement benefits. Increasing pension costs will affect cities more than the state, as employee costs form a larger proportion of spending for cities. Cities’ dollar contributions to pensions are estimated to increase by more than 50% by fiscal year 2024-25. Pension contributions for a majority of cities that employ safety personnel (police, fire) are anticipated to reach 54% or more of payroll. Unfortunately, cities have few options to raise revenue to address these pension liabilities. Without higher than expected investment returns or increased employer contributions, cities may be forced to reduce or eliminate services.

HUMAN SERVICES

The Pass-through of Minimum Wages into US Retail Prices: Evidence from Supermarket Scanner Data. By Tobias Renkin, et al. University of Zurich, Department of Economics. Nov. 19, 2017. 89 p.
https://www.dropbox.com/s/587cigqp57dyt3n/tobias_renkin_JMP.pdf

“When policy wonks call for the minimum wage to rise, they often discuss helping workers at the bottom of the income ladder, or address rising living costs and income inequality. But a new working paper from the University of Zurich finds that the poorest workers, those earning minimum wage, pay the most for the increase. The researchers look at supermarkets in the United States, which tend to employ many minimum-wage earners. Moreover, rather than studying the effect of a wage increase after it is implemented, the authors look at the moment when the legislation mandating an upcoming increase is passed—often months or years before the increase actually takes effect.” (*Journalist’s Resource*, Jan. 18, 2018).

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

WHO Guidelines on Protecting Workers from Potential Risks of Manufactured Nanomaterials. World Health Organization. Dec. 2017. 94 p.

<https://www.nanowerk.com/nanotechnology-news/newsid=48975.php>

“The term nanomaterials refers to materials that have at least one dimension (height, width or length) that is smaller than 100 nanometres (10⁻⁷ metre), which is about the size of a virus particle.... The toxicity of MNMs (manufactured nanomaterials) may largely depend on numerous physicochemical properties, including size, shape (i.e. size in a particular dimension), composition, surface characteristics, charge and rate of dissolution.” The World Health Organization has developed guidelines with recommendations on how best to protect workers from the potential risks of MNMs. This report is intended to help policymakers in making decisions, protecting workers, and supporting employers.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Falling Transit Ridership: California and Southern California. By Michael Manville, et al. UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies. Jan. 2018. 83 p.

http://www.scag.ca.gov/Documents/ITS_SCAG_Transit_Ridership.pdf

“In the last ten years transit use in Southern California has fallen significantly.... [This report] examine[s] patterns of transit service and patronage over time and across the region, and consider[s] an array of explanations for falling transit use: declining transit service levels, eroding transit service quality, rising fares, falling fuel prices, the growth of Lyft and Uber, the migration of frequent transit users to outlying neighborhoods with less transit service, and rising vehicle ownership. While all of these factors probably play some role ... the most significant factor is increased motor vehicle access, particularly among low-income households that have traditionally supplied the region with its most frequent and reliable transit users.”

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