



Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

Issue 14-147

November 26, 2014

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CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT

**“State Policy Reports Special Issue: State Prison Population on the Uptick.” *Federal Funds Information for States*, vol. 32, issue 19 (Oct. 2014) 8 p.
(Available at the California State Library)**

This special issue responds to the latest edition of a Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) publication entitled *Prisoner 2013*, which found that after declining the past three years, the population of prisoners under

state jurisdiction rose to 1.3 million people in 2013. Using available data, this report examined factors such as the state prison population versus the general state population, changes in corrections spending (especially during the recession, 2009 to 2012), and changes in state sentencing laws to point out that the rise might be temporary. The report concluded that the “collective impact” of the above factors “will take years to fully coalesce,” but they suggest that prison population rates will continue to decline over time.

CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY

***Family Diversity is the New Normal for America’s Children.* By Philip Cohen. Prepared for the Council on Contemporary Families. Sep. 24, 2014. 8 p.**

<https://contemporaryfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/new-normal-family-diversity.pdf>

In the 1960s, “[w]ith two-thirds of children being raised in male-breadwinner, married-couple families, it is understandable that people ... considered such families to be the norm. Today ... there is no single family arrangement that encompasses the majority of children.... [Among] 100 representative children, just 22 live in a married male-breadwinner family, compared to 23 living with a single mother (only half of whom have ever been married). Seven out of every 100 live with a parent who cohabits with an unmarried partner (a category too rare for the Census Bureau to consider counting in 1960) and six with either a single father ... or with grandparents but no parents....The single largest group of children—34—live with dual-earner married parents, but that largest group is only a third of the total, so that it is really impossible to point to a ‘typical’ family.”

ECONOMY

“Bitcoin and Beyond: The Possibilities and Pitfalls of Virtual Currencies.” Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. *Central Banker* (Fall 2014) 2 p.

<http://www.stlouisfed.org/publications/cb/articles/?id=2554>

“Virtual currencies have taken center stage in the media, with the currency bitcoin making a number of headlines so far this year. In January, the Sacramento Kings of the NBA announced it would accept bitcoin as payment for tickets and merchandise from the team store.... In March, the IRS ruled that bitcoins would be treated as property, not a currency, for tax purposes.” This article explains what bitcoin is and how it works; and whether it is a good investment. It provides an overview bitcoin as a medium of exchange, and whether bitcoin facilitates illegal trading and can be regulated.

EDUCATION

“Women in Academic Science: A Changing Landscape.” By Stephen Ceci, et al. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, vol. 15, no. 3 (Oct. 22, 2014) pp. 75-141.

<http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/women-in-academic-science.html>

“Research investigating the early years of childhood seems to indicate that gender differences in children’s attitudes toward and expectations of math and science careers, rather than gender differences in math ability, are a main factor in an early loss of girls from the sciences.... Interestingly, research has shown that these attitudes can be changed, and that women who enter college not expecting to major in math-based fields can be influenced to do so on the basis of their college experiences.... Once a woman does obtain an advanced degree in a math-intensive field, she is more likely than her male counterparts to be offered a position, and as likely to have her papers accepted by journals, and receive grant funding.”

Restraint and Seclusion of Students With a Disability Continue to Be Common in Some School Districts: Patterns Remain Relatively Consistent Despite Recent Policy Changes. By Douglas Gagnon, et al. The Carsey School of Public Policy at the Scholars' Repository. Oct. 2014. 7 p. <http://scholars.unh.edu/carsey/224/>

“Despite numerous states with revised policies related to seclusion and restraint in schools between 2009 and 2012, trends in the rates of restraint and seclusion of students with a disability in the United States remained relatively consistent from 2009-2010 and 2011-2012. Low-poverty, low-minority districts are more likely to report high rates of restraint than are high-poverty, high-minority districts, although this trend in the most recent data is less pronounced than the trend found in the 2009-2010 data. Restraint and seclusion are most common in cities and least common in rural places.”

EMPLOYMENT

High Potentials in Tech-intensive Industries: The Gender Divide in Business Roles. Catalyst. Oct. 14, 2014. 16 p. <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/high-potentials-tech-intensive-industries-gender-divide-business-roles>

“Women make up a significant proportion of the talent pool, particularly in business roles, and must not be overlooked if tech-intensive organizations hope to remain competitive.... These male-dominated industries have long shown gaps between the experiences and advancement of women and men in technical roles, but what about the women working in business roles in tech-intensive industries?.... [W]omen in business roles in tech-intensive industries experience a gender gap in level from their very first post-MBA job.” The study relates starting out at a lower level to the gender pay gap and observes that there is a dearth of women role models. Suggested strategies to improve the retention of women include senior-level men championing women, transparent evaluation standards, and providing an environment where women feel they fit in.

ENERGY

Drilling Like There's No Tomorrow: Bankruptcy, Insurance, and Environmental Risk. By Judson Boomhower. UC Berkeley—Energy Institute at Haas. Nov. 2014. 61 p. http://ei.haas.berkeley.edu/pdf/working_papers/WP254.pdf

This study of Texas oil and gas producers confirms the “judgment-proof” effect of bankruptcy protection. Theory says that when firms are protected by bankruptcy, they take excessive environmental and public health risks. The study found that a recently introduced insurance requirement in Texas forced small firms with poor environmental records to exit from the industry. Remaining firms internalized the environmental costs of production with a 4% reduction in total output. “Environmental outcomes related to groundwater protection improved sharply.... The study’s results suggest that the judgment-proof problem should be mitigated by public policies that reduce the safety hazards and environmental damages of other sectors, such as landfills, underground storage tanks, small-scale manufacturing, and hazardous materials transportation.”

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Recovering From Volatile Times: The Ongoing Financial Struggles of America’s Big Cities. By Kil Huh, et al. Pew Charitable Trusts. Nov. 2014. 21 p. <http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/Assets/2014/11/RecoveringFromVolatileTimes1114.pdf>

A review of the nation’s major cities finds that decreasing property tax revenue and state and federal aid accounted for most of the revenue loss during the recession in 18 of 30 cities. The continued slump in

property taxes created an ongoing lag in revenues for some cities such as Sacramento and Riverside in California. In contrast, some cities—such as San Francisco—bounced back to their pre-recession peak revenue levels early in 2011, and maintained it thereafter. Despite improvements in the economy, many cities may face other continuous challenges to revenue levels, such as public employee retirement funding and the possibility of further federal budget cuts.

HEALTH

***Little Evidence of the ACA Increasing Part-Time Work So Far.* By Bowen Garrett, et al. Urban Institute. Sep. 2014. 7 p.**

<http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/reports/2014/rwjf415284>

There has been considerable public policy debate and media attention over the employment effects of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). One of the most contentious issues has been whether the ACA has, or will, increase part-time work at the expense of full-time employment. This brief provides new evidence on this question using the latest available data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) of the U.S. Census Bureau. “We find no evidence that the ACA had already started increasing part-time work before 2014. We find a small increase in part-time work in 2014 beyond what would be expected at this point in the economic recovery based on prior experience since 2000. This increase in part-time work is fully attributable to an increase in involuntary part-time work.”

HUMAN SERVICES

***TANF Cash Benefits Have Fallen by More Than 20 Percent in Most States and Continue to Erode.* By Ife Floyd, et al. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Oct. 30, 2014. 18 p.**

<http://www.cbpp.org/files/10-30-14tanf.pdf>

“While eight states raised Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits between July 2013 ... and July 2014, the remaining states did not, allowing inflation to continue to erode the benefits’ value. For 99% of TANF recipients nationally, the purchasing power of their benefits is below 1996 levels, after adjusting for inflation.... In 2013 California raised benefits by 5% effective March 2014, boosting benefits for a family of three from \$638 to \$670. Legislative action in 2014 called for another 5% increase effective March 2015. In future years, California will increase benefits if funds in the state’s new Family Supplemental Support Account exceed the amount of funding needed to pay grant costs in that year.”

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

***Map: How Many Americans Could Lose Subsidies If the Supreme Court Rules for the Plaintiffs in King vs. Burwell?* Kaiser Family Foundation.**

<http://kff.org/interactive/king-v-burwell/>

“This map based on Foundation analysis of Congressional Budget Office estimates of Marketplace enrollment provides a state-level breakdown of the number of Americans who in 2016 could be denied financial assistance to help pay insurance premiums for plans purchased in the Affordable Care Act’s federally operated insurance exchanges.” While more than 13 million enrollees could lose their subsidies, Californians would not be affected.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Highway Trust Fund: DOT Has Opportunities to Improve Tracking and Reporting of Highway Spending. By SusaFleming. Government Accountability Office. GAO-15-33. Oct. 2014. 46 p.
<http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/666442.pdf>

“In recent years, dedicated revenues to the Highway Trust Fund have been eroding, resulting in fewer resources to fund surface transportation projects and requiring, between 2008 and 2014, transfers of over \$50 billion in general revenues.... This report examines what is known about the types of projects, activities, and federal administrative functions and expenses supported by DOT [U.S. Department of Transportation] using Highway Trust Fund monies in fiscal year 2013 ... [and] recommends that the Secretary of Transportation direct the FHWA [Federal Highway Administration] Administrator to explore the costs, feasibility, and options for collecting and publicly reporting consistent aggregate project-level spending data.”

VETERANS

Veterans' Disability Benefits: Improvements Could Further Enhance Quality Assurance Efforts. By Daniel Bertoni. Government Accountability Office. GAO-15-50. Nov. 2014. 43 p.
<http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/667027.pdf>

“This report evaluates (1) the extent to which VBA (Veterans Benefits Administration) effectively measures and reports the accuracy of its disability compensation claim decisions and (2) whether VBA's other quality assurance activities are coordinated and effective.... GAO is making eight recommendations to VA (Veterans Administration) to improve its measurement and reporting of accuracy, review the multiple sources of policy guidance available to claims processors, enhance local data systems, and evaluate the effectiveness of quality assurance activities.”

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