



## Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

Issue 15-145

November 12, 2015

Contents this week:

### **CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY**

Exploring the decline in U.S. marriage rates

### **EDUCATION**

Strides in educational success of black children in California schools

New nutrition program standards pose challenges for schools

### **EMPLOYMENT**

A survey of low-wage workers in Santa Cruz county

### **ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT**

Groundwater contamination may be due to surface spills, not fracking

### **GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

City-state partnerships enforcing local minimum wage laws

### **HEALTH**

Rising U.S. white morbidity rates attributed to substance abuse, cirrhosis

### **HUMAN SERVICES**

CalFresh participation at 63%, but ranks second to last nationwide

## **CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY**

*Is There a Shortage of Marriageable Men?* By Isabell Sawhill, et al. Center on Children and Families at Brookings. Sep. 2015. 9 p.

<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/09/ccf-policy-breif/56-shortage-of-marriageable-men.pdf>

“In the last half century, marriage rates have fallen dramatically.... [W]e explore possible drivers of this trend, including declining economic prospects among men, an increase in unwed births that constrain women’s later marriageability, rising rates of incarceration, and a reversal of the education gap that once favored men and now favors women. We estimate that the decline in male earnings since 1970 among both black and less-educated white men can explain a portion of the decline in marriage, but that cultural factors have played an important role as well. We argue that the ratio of marriageable men to women depends critically on how one defines ‘marriageable.’”

## EDUCATION

***Black Minds Matter: Supporting the Educational Success of Black Children in California.*** The Education Trust-West. Oct. 2015. 32 p.

<http://west.edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/10/Ed-Trust-West-Black-Minds-Matter-FINAL-PDF.pdf>

This report outlines the achievement gaps between black students and Asian, Latino and white students in California schools. It discusses the challenges for black students in attending highly segregated and unsafe schools, underrepresentation in advanced placement and UC-required courses and the high dropout rate among black teens. It highlights several state programs that directly address these problems, such as Oakland Unified School District's Office of African American Male Achievement, and Sacramento City Unified School District's Leadership Academies for children of color. The report also highlights several college-level programs designed to support black students in entrance "to and through college."

***School Nutrition: USDA Has Efforts Underway to Help Address Ongoing Challenges Implementing Changes in Nutrition Standards.*** Government Accountability Office. GAO-15-656. Sep. 2015. 51 p.

<http://gao.gov/assets/680/672477.pdf>

While there has been increased participation in the nation's school lunch program, there are still problems due to the changes in nutrition standards: plate waste (not eating all or part of the lunch), students rejecting sodium limits and "whole grain-rich products" served in meals, and increased food costs due to increased use of fruits and vegetables. This report outlines some of the guidance the USDA has offered to schools facing these challenges, such as sharing more best practices and providing peer mentoring.

## EMPLOYMENT

***Working for Dignity: The Santa Cruz County Low-Wage Worker Study.*** By Steve McKay, et al. UCSC Center for Labor Studies, et al. Summer 2015. 43 p.

<http://workingfordignity.sites.ucsc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/192/2015/09/Final-Report-Working-for-Dignity-9-21-15.pdf>

"We found a broad range of serious workplace violations across different industries and occupations—from wage theft, to unhealthy and dangerous conditions, to discrimination, to retaliation for workers trying to speak up for their rights. We also found that those we surveyed [were] older, nearly half are supporting others and nearly 2/3rds are the major income earners in their families." The report found "a large swath of county and state workers continue to struggle in poverty." The authors suggest the number of quality jobs could be positively influenced by raising wages, enforcing labor laws and increasing worker education, representation and bargaining power.

## ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

***"Elevated Levels of Diesel Range Organic Compounds in Groundwater Near Marcellus Gas Operations Are Derived From Surface Activities."*** By Brian D. Drollette, et al. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 112, no. 43 (Oct. 27, 2015) 6 p.

<http://www.pnas.org/content/112/43/13184.abstract>  
(Available at the California State Library)

This study looks at whether subsurface groundwater contamination is the result of chemicals used in high-volume hydraulic fracturing. "Using analyses of organic compounds coupled with inorganic geochemical fingerprinting, estimates of groundwater residence time, and geospatial analyses of shale gas wells and disclosed safety violations, we determined that the dominant source of organic compounds to shallow aquifers was consistent with surface spills of disclosed chemical additives. There was no

evidence of association with deeper brines or long-range migration of these compounds to the shallow aquifers. Encouragingly, drinking water sources affected by disclosed surface spills could be targeted for treatment and monitoring to protect public health.”

## GENERAL GOVERNMENT

***Enforcing City Minimum Wage Laws in California: Best Practices and City-State Partnerships.***  
By Tia Koonse, et al. UC Berkeley Labor Center. Oct. 23, 2015. 20 p.  
<http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2015/minimum-wage-enforcement.pdf>

Several California cities have recently raised the local minimum wage. “As cities begin to implement these minimum wage laws, the critical question of how best to enforce them rises to the forefront. Delivering on the promise of higher wages hinges on our ability to put robust enforcement systems in place to fight the chronic wage theft that low-wage workers experience far too often.... We ... discuss in detail the three pillars of an effective enforcement system: strong legal tools in the minimum wage laws themselves; where possible, a well-staffed local agency that is committed to proactive enforcement strategies; and ongoing partnerships with community-based organizations.”

## HEALTH

***Rising Morbidity and Mortality in Midlife among White Non-Hispanic Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*** By Anne Case, et al. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Published ahead of print Nov. 2, 2015. 6 p.  
<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2015/10/29/1518393112.full.pdf>

“Something startling is happening to middle-aged white Americans. Unlike every other age group, unlike every other racial and ethnic group, unlike their counterparts in other rich countries, death rates in this group have been rising, not falling.... [The authors] concluded that rising annual death rates among this group are being driven not by the big killers like heart disease and diabetes but by an epidemic of suicides and afflictions stemming from substance abuse: alcoholic liver disease and overdoses of heroin and prescription opioids.... In contrast, the death rate for middle-aged blacks and Hispanics continued to decline during the same period, as did death rates for younger and older people of all races and ethnic groups.” (*New York Times*, Nov. 3, 2015).

## HUMAN SERVICES

***Lost Dollars, Empty Plates: The Impact of CalFresh on State and Local Economies.*** By Jared Call, et al. California Food Policy Advocates. Oct. 2015. 32 p.  
<http://cfpa.net/CalFresh/CFPAPublications/LDEP-FullReport-2015.pdf>

“In recent years, California has eliminated several long-standing barriers to CalFresh participation by removing the finger-imaging requirement and the asset test, repealing the lifetime ban for individuals with prior drug-related felony offenses, and enacting modified categorical eligibility.... These changes, among others, have improved the statewide CalFresh participation rate. The most recently available data shows that CalFresh reached 63% of eligible Californians in 2012, compared to 57% in 2011. While state and local administrators are to be commended for their progress toward simplifying and improving the CalFresh program, California still ranks second to last among states for this measure.” This low rate of participation harms state and local economies, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

### **About *Studies in the News***

*Studies in the News* (SITN) is a service provided by the California Research Bureau (CRB), a division of the California State Library. CRB provides independent, nonpartisan research and analysis for the Governor, Legislature, and State Constitutional Officers.

SITN lists of current studies related to public policy issues are e-mailed weekly. Archived issues are available at <http://www.library.ca.gov/sitn/crb/>.

To add or remove your name from the SITN distribution list, or to update your e-mail address, please contact us at [crb@library.ca.gov](mailto:crb@library.ca.gov), or (916) 319-2691.

SITN is available as an RSS feed at <http://www.library.ca.gov/sitn/crb/>.