



## Studies in the News

California Research Bureau, California State Library

Issue 14-103

January 22, 2014

Contents this week:

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Death penalty executions continued steady decline in 2013

### **CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY**

Public awareness and racial bias

### **EDUCATION**

Mentors have a positive effect on at-risk youths' attitudes toward college

California public education challenges

### **EMPLOYMENT**

Technology may not be the driver of wage inequality

### **ENERGY**

U.S. had record natural gas consumption and production levels in 2012

### **ENVIRONMENT**

A new model of water scarcity under climate change

### **GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

Los Angeles in decline?

### **HEALTH**

Gas-burning stoves create a home pollutant hazard

### **HUMAN SERVICES**

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war on poverty: a review

### **TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

Affordable Care Act: an interactive map

### **TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE**

Economic vitality increases in "rail cities"

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE & LAW ENFORCEMENT**

*The Death Penalty in 2013: Year End Report.* By Richard Dieter, et al. Death Penalty Information Center. Dec. 18, 2013. 8 p.

<http://deathpenaltyinfo.org/documents/YearEnd2013.pdf>

"In 2013 the use of the death penalty continued its steady decline by almost every measure. Executions dropped by about 10% from 2012, from 43 to 39, marking only the second time in the past 19 years their number was below 40. Executions in 2013 were carried out in 9 states: with 59% occurring in Texas (16) and Florida (7). Most death penalty states had no executions in 2013, or 2012.... The number of new

death sentences was near its lowest level since the death penalty was reinstated in the 1970s.... [T]here have been 80 new death sentences, three more than in 2012, and far fewer than in 1996, when there were 315.... Florida (15) and California (24) provided almost half of the death sentences this year.”

## CULTURE & DEMOGRAPHY

***Awareness Reduces Racial Bias.*** By Devin G. Pope, et al. National Bureau of Economic Research. NBER Working Paper No. 19765. Dec. 2013. 16 p.

<http://www.nber.org/papers/w19765>

“Our results suggest that public awareness of racial bias was enough to bring about meaningful change. These results confirm that racial bias is not a fixed characteristic of individual decision making but can be reduced by the efforts of third party observers, particularly those equipped with large and detailed data about past decisions. An open question is whether a similar impact would occur if evidence of racial bias was privately shared with the individual decision makers as opposed to having it publicly disclosed. Our results might encourage organizations to conduct their own racial bias audits as one of several tools available to reduce racial bias in individual decision making.”

## EDUCATION

***The Mentoring Effect: Young People’s Perspective on the Outcomes and Availability of Mentoring.*** By Mary Bruce, et al. The National Mentoring Partnership. Jan. 2014. 58 p.

[http://www.mentoring.org/images/uploads/Report\\_TheMentoringEffect.pdf](http://www.mentoring.org/images/uploads/Report_TheMentoringEffect.pdf)

Seventy-six percent of at-risk young adults (ages 18 to 21) with a mentor reported that they planned to go to and graduate from college, compared with 56% of those without a mentor, according to a National Mentoring Partnership survey. Forty-five percent of at-risk young adults with a mentor said they were enrolled in college or were about to enroll, compared with 29% of those who did not have a mentor. More than one third of at-risk young adults did not have either formal or informal mentors.

***New High Risk Issue: Providing a High Quality and Affordable Public Education Presents Significant Challenges.*** California State Auditor. Dec. 2013. 27 p.

[www.auditor.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2013-604.pdf](http://www.auditor.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2013-604.pdf)

“California recently changed the way it funds K–12 education.... The State intends to invest \$25 billion in new funding over the next eight years to fully implement the new funding formula by fiscal year 2020–21, but reaching that level of funding will require significant and sustained growth in the State’s revenues.... Additionally, California has adopted the common core state standards (common core), which will change the way LEAs [Local Educational Agencies] educate K–12 students.... the implementation of common core requires extensive training for teachers, new curriculum and instructional materials, new assessments of student performance, and increased spending on technology. These requirements represent a considerable investment.”

## EMPLOYMENT

***Don’t Blame the Robots: Assessing the Job Polarization Explanation of Growing Wage Inequality.*** By Lawrence Mishel, et al. Center for Economic and Policy Research. Nov. 19, 2013. 96 p.

<http://s1.epi.org/files/2013/technology-inequality-dont-blame-the-robots.pdf>

“This paper contends that current [skill-based technological change] models—such as the education-focused ‘canonical model’ and the more recent ‘tasks framework’ or ‘job polarization’...do not adequately account for key wage patterns (namely, rising wage inequality) over the last three decades. Principal

findings include: ... Technological and skill deficiency explanations of wage inequality have failed to explain key wage patterns over the last three decades, including the 2000s.... History shows that middle-wage occupations have shrunk and higher-wage occupations have expanded since the 1950s. This has not driven any changed pattern of wage trends.... Evidence for job polarization is weak.... Occupations have become less, not more, important determinants of wage patterns.”

## ENERGY

***Natural Gas Annual.*** U.S. Energy Information Administration. Dec. 12, 2013. 213 p.  
<http://www.eia.gov/naturalgas/annual/pdf/nga12.pdf>

The Natural Gas Annual 2012 provides information on the supply and disposition of natural gas in the United States. Production, transmission, storage, deliveries, and price data are published by state for the current year. Summary data are presented for each state for the previous five years.

## ENVIRONMENT

**“Multimodel Assessment of Water Scarcity Under Climate Change.”** By Jacob Schewe, et al. In *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Early Edition*. Aug 13, 2013. 6 p.  
<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2013/12/12/1222460110.full.pdf+html>

Even small changes in global average temperatures can wreak havoc on the global pattern of water supply. The resulting water scarcity would have dramatic impacts on the quality of life in California as well as on the food security and economic prosperity of the region. This study uses a “large ensemble of global hydrological models (GHMs) forced by five global climate models and the latest greenhouse-gas concentration scenarios (Representative Concentration Pathways) to synthesize the current knowledge about climate change impacts on water resources.” The study finds that a 2°C increase in global average temperature would result in approximately a 15% increase in the number of people facing a severe decrease in water resources, including increasing by 40% the population living under “absolute water scarcity.”

## GENERAL GOVERNMENT

***A Time for Truth.*** By Norman Emerson, et al. Los Angeles 2020 Commission. Dec. 2013. 50 p.  
<http://www.la2020reports.org/reports/A-Time-For-Truth.pdf>

Fiscal challenges, slow job growth, stagnant wages, and tremendous traffic congestion, among other problems, are leading Los Angeles into an era of decline. A greater focus on government leadership, regional cooperation and economic development are some of the steps needed to secure a successful future for the City of Los Angeles.

## HEALTH

***Pollutant Exposures from Natural Gas Cooking Burners: A Simulation-Based Assessment for Southern California.*** By Jennifer M. Logue, et al. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. Nov. 5, 2013. 37 p.  
<http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/wp-content/uploads/121/11/ehp.1306673.pdf>

This report looks at pollutant concentrations that derive from the use of natural gas cooking burners, and suggests that regular use of venting hood ranges would reduce concentration levels in homes using gas

stoves. "After testing gas ranges to determine their pollution output, researchers used data on more than 6,000 Southern California households and their cooking habits to estimate people's exposure to air pollutants in the kitchen during a typical week in the winter.... In all, the scientists estimate that as many as 12 million Californians are exposed to levels of nitrogen dioxide above health standards as a result of cooking with gas burners." (*Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 6, 2013).

## HUMAN SERVICES

***Chart Book: The War on Poverty at 50.* By Arloc Sherman, et al. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Jan. 7, 2014. 24 p.**

<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=4069>

Marking the 50th anniversary of President Lyndon Johnson's declaration of an unconditional War on Poverty, "the nation has made substantial progress against poverty and poverty-related conditions over the last half-century.... Today's safety net—which includes important programs and improvements both from the Johnson era and thereafter—cuts poverty nearly in half.... Yet poverty, inequality, and racial disparities remain high." This chart book, comprised of three sections, discusses the progress that has been made over the last 50 years, key factors pushing poverty down or keeping poverty high, and safety net programs contributed to keep millions out of poverty.

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

***State Profiles: How Will the Uninsured Fare Under the Affordable Care Act?* Kaiser Family Foundation. 2014.**

<http://kff.org/state-profiles-uninsured-under-aca/>

This link provides an interactive map and searchable database that includes information on how the 2010 Affordable Care Act could expand coverage to the uninsured individual states. "With California deciding to implement the Medicaid expansion, over six in ten (63%) uninsured nonelderly people in the state are eligible for financial assistance to gain coverage through either Medicaid or the Marketplaces.... [W]ith over four in ten (43%) of uninsured Californians eligible for either Medicaid or CHIP [Children's Health Insurance Program] as of 2014.... One in five (20%) of all uninsured people in California are eligible for premium tax credits to help them purchase coverage in the Marketplace."

## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

***A New Partnership: Rail Transit and Convention Growth.* By Darnell C. Grisby. American Public Transportation Association. Nov. 2013. 36 p.**

<http://www.apta.com/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/APTA-UST-New-Partnership.pdf>

"Cities with rail transit service or 'rail cities' direct from the nearby, heavily trafficked airport to hotels realize increased economic vitality and competitiveness to attract large meetings and events compared to similar cities that do not, or 'non-rail cities.' In fact, when examining rail cities' hotel performance in contrast to non-rail cities over the past six years (from 2006 into 2013), including during the Great Recession, hotel performance was on average 10.9% better in terms of both average daily rate charged for hotel rooms and revenue earned per available room."

## **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/>.