

Why Is Gas Still So Expensive in California?

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Business

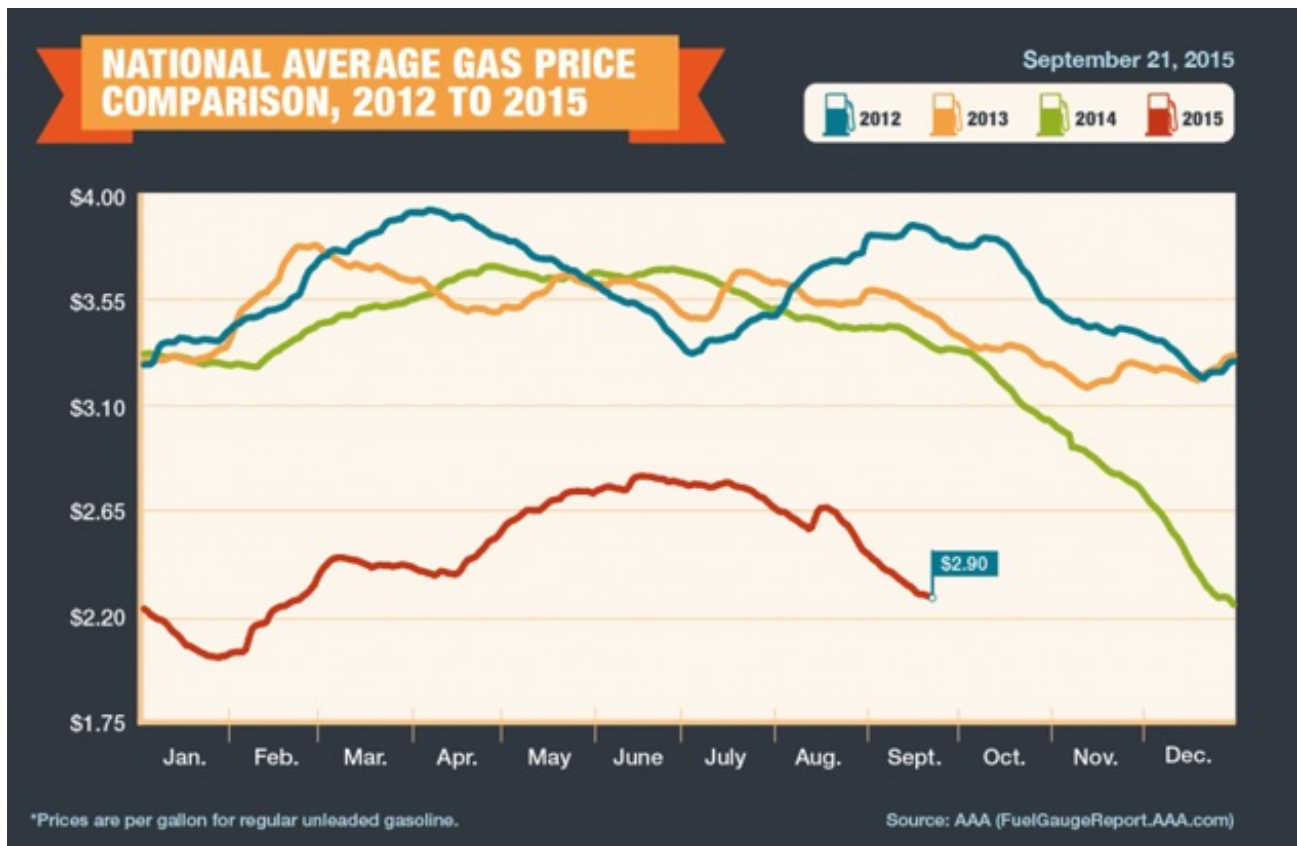
As of today, it's averaging below \$3 a gallon in every other state.



A cyclist rides by a sign at a gas station in Los Angeles posting the latest gas prices on Friday, Feb. 27, 2015. Nick Ut / AP

- 1.4k

Gas prices have been falling across the U.S.: According to the American Auto Association's daily [fuel gauge report](#), average national prices are the lowest they've been since 2004. In two states, prices have fallen to [less than \\$2 per gallon](#):



But those low prices have been [slow to hit the West](#). Part of the explanation is transport costs—refineries are more spread out in the West—which explains why Alaska currently has the most expensive gas prices in the country. But why California is number two in this regard, as opposed to Hawaii, which is arguably harder to get things to, is a different story.

[California's traditionally high gas prices](#) are attributed to local taxes and fees—among [the highest in the country](#)—as well as state regulations regarding a special low-pollution blend, which means stations get their supply only from certain refineries. In Southern California, a [damaged Exxon Mobil refinery](#) (it had [an explosion earlier this year](#)) has also decreased already limited supply in the area—leading to higher prices. There have even been [accusations of price gouging](#).

The price of crude oil in the international market has fallen significantly in the last year [due to a global price war](#). But U.S. gas prices have not fallen as much, and some experts say that's [because of a regulatory premium](#)—which means that for Californians solving the supply problem might only do so much.

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Business

What's the Matter, Whole Foods?

The upscale grocery store chain is laying off 1,500 employees as competition mounts and consumers demand lower prices.

About the Author

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Most Popular



- [Why It Was Easier to Be Skinny in the 1980s](#)

There's a meme aimed at Millennial catharsis called "Old Economy Steve." It's a series of pictures of a late-70s teenager, who presumably is now a middle-aged man, that mocks some of the messages Millennials say they hear from older generations—and shows why they're deeply janky. Old Economy Steve graduates and gets a job right away. Old Economy Steve "worked his way through college" because tuition was \$400. And so forth.

We can now add another one to that list: Old Economy Steve ate at McDonald's almost every day, and he still somehow had a 32-inch waist.

MemeGenerator.net

A [study](#) published recently in the journal *Obesity Research & Clinical Practice* found that it's harder for adults today to maintain the same weight as those 20 to 30 years ago did, even at the same levels of food intake and exercise.

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- [Why Did Pope Francis Meet With Kim Davis?](#)

The pope has left the United States, but details are still coming out about his trip. Here's a big one: Last Thursday afternoon, during his time in Washington, D.C., he met with Kim Davis, the Rowan County clerk who has refused to perform same-sex marriages, her lawyers say.

"She left at 1:15 exactly, and she was at the Vatican [embassy] a hour and a half or so, maybe up to two hours, waiting, and that also included the meeting," said Mat Staver, her attorney at the firm Liberty Counsel, said. Davis and her husband, Joe, met with the pope for "under 15 minutes," Staver said. "The pope came out and greeted her, held out his hand, ask Kim to pray for him, and she clasped his hands with her hands, and asked the pope to pray for her."

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- **The Coddling of the American Mind**

Something strange is happening at America's colleges and universities. A movement is arising, undirected and driven largely by students, to scrub campuses clean of words, ideas, and subjects that might cause discomfort or give offense. Last December, Jeannie Suk wrote in an online article for *The New Yorker* about law students asking her fellow professors at Harvard not to teach rape law—or, in one case, even use the word *violate* (as in “that violates the law”) lest it cause students distress. In February, Laura Kipnis, a professor at Northwestern University, wrote an essay in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* describing a new campus politics of sexual paranoia—and was then subjected to a long investigation after students who were offended by the article and by a tweet she'd sent filed Title IX complaints against her. In June, a professor protecting himself with a pseudonym wrote an essay for Vox describing how gingerly he now has to teach. “I'm a Liberal Professor, and My Liberal Students Terrify Me,” the headline said. A number of popular comedians, including Chris Rock, have stopped performing on college campuses (see Caitlin Flanagan's [article](#) in this month's issue). Jerry Seinfeld and Bill Maher have publicly condemned the oversensitivity of college students, saying too many of them can't take a joke.

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- **When Schools Overlook Introverts**

When Susan Cain published *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* nearly four years ago, it was immediately met with acclaim. The book criticizes schools and other key institutions for primarily accommodating extroverts and such individuals' “need for lots of stimulation.” Much to introverts' relief, it also seeks to raise awareness about the personality type, particularly among [those who've struggled to understand it](#).

It seems that such efforts have, for the most part, struggled to effect much change in the educational world. The way in which certain instructional trends—education buzzwords like “collaborative learning” and “project-based learning” and “flipped classrooms”—are applied often neglect the needs of introverts. In fact, these trends could mean that classroom environments that embrace extroverted behavior—through dynamic and social learning activities—are being promoted now more than ever. These can be appealing qualities in the classroom, of course, but overemphasizing them can undermine the learning of students who are inward-thinking and easily drained by constant interactions with others.

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- **John Boehner's Not Done Yet**

The most immediate consequence of John Boehner's [decision to resign](#) as House speaker likely will be felt in federal offices throughout the country on Thursday morning: They will open as scheduled.

Before announcing his departure, Boehner had been under heavy pressure from conservatives to shut down the government if Democrats did not agree to defund Planned Parenthood. They'd even threatened to throw him out if he didn't go along, using the [possibility of a coup as a “sword of Damocles”](#) over the speaker's head. With Boehner's decision to exit on his own, the House and Senate are expected to pass a stopgap bill on Wednesday to extend federal funding through December 11, avoiding a shutdown that would have begun at midnight.

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- **The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration**

By his own lights, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, ambassador, senator, sociologist, and itinerant American intellectual, was [the product of a broken home and a pathological family](#). He was born in 1927 in Tulsa, Oklahoma, but raised mostly in New York City. When Moynihan was 10 years old, his father, John, left the family, plunging it into poverty. Moynihan's mother, Margaret, remarried, had another child, divorced, moved to Indiana to stay with relatives, then returned to New York, where she worked as a nurse. Moynihan's childhood—a tangle of poverty, remarriage, relocation, and single motherhood—contrasted starkly with the idyllic American family life he would later extol.

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- **The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?**

When Barack Obama [meets this week](#) with Xi Jinping during the Chinese president's first state visit to America, one item probably won't be on their agenda: the possibility that the United States and China could find themselves at war in the next decade. In policy circles, this appears as unlikely as it would be unwise.

And yet 100 years on, World War I [offers a sobering reminder](#) of man's capacity for folly. When we say that war is "inconceivable," is this a statement about what is possible in the world—or only about what our limited minds can conceive? In 1914, few could imagine slaughter on a scale that demanded a new category: world war. When war ended four years later, Europe lay in ruins: the kaiser gone, the Austro-Hungarian Empire dissolved, the Russian tsar overthrown by the Bolsheviks, France bled for a generation, and England shorn of its youth and treasure. A millennium in which Europe had been the political center of the world came to a crashing halt.

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- **What ISIS Really Wants**

What is the Islamic State?

Where did it come from, and what are its intentions? The simplicity of these questions can be deceiving, and few Western leaders seem to know the answers. In December, *The New York Times* published confidential comments by Major General Michael K. Nagata, the Special Operations commander for the United States in the Middle East, admitting that he had hardly begun figuring out the Islamic State's appeal. "We have not defeated the idea," he said. "We do not even understand the idea." In the past year, President Obama has referred to the Islamic State, variously, as "not Islamic" and as al-Qaeda's "jayvee team," statements that reflected confusion about the group, and may have contributed to significant strategic errors.

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- **The Data Are Damning: How Race Influences School Funding**

PHILADELPHIA—In America, schools with a lot of minority students are chronically underfunded. Is that the case because these students are poor, and poor communities have fewer resources for funding their schools? Or, is it because of the color of these students' skin?

Unsettlingly, recent research from data scientist David Mosenkis finds that poverty alone does not explain the underfunding. Mosenkis delved into funding data for 500 school districts in the state of Pennsylvania. Because richer school districts are able to drum up more cash through taxes, they should receive less state funding, and poorer districts should receive more. He looked at how much money they received and sorted those findings based on race and income.

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- **Britain, Jamaica, and the Looming Battle Over Reparations**

The British prime minister's jaunt to Jamaica isn't likely to be a pleasant island sojourn or an easy respite from the refugee crisis plaguing Europe. For David Cameron, who arrived Tuesday and speaks to parliament on Wednesday before leaving, the trip is shadowed by a debate over reparations for slavery and colonialism.

The debate over reparations in the United States remains largely on a theoretical level. When my colleague Ta-Nehisi Coates wrote on the idea last year, he [noted how embryonic the conversation was](#): "A crime that implicates the entire American people deserves its hearing in the legislative body that represents them. ... No one can know what would come out of such a debate."

In the Caribbean, however, the conversation is far past that. In March 2014, a panel commissioned by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) delivered a [plan for seeking reparations](#), and called on Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark to begin negotiations. The preamble states that European governments:

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- **The Enduring Myth of Black Criminality**

In his October cover story, Ta-Nehisi Coates explores how mass incarceration has affected African American families.

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Coming soon: *The Atlantic's* October cover story on the effects of the disproportionate imprisonment of black men

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