



## American Economic Review

ISSN 0002-8282 (Print) | ISSN 1944-7981 (Online)

≡ Menu

# The Quantity and Quality of Life and the Evolution of World Inequality

Gary S. Becker

Tomas J. Philipson

Rodrigo R. Soares

AMERICAN ECONOMIC REVIEW  
VOL. 95, NO. 1, MARCH 2005  
(pp. 277–291)

Download Full Text PDF

### Article Information

#### Abstract

GDP per capita is usually used to proxy for the quality of life of individuals living in different countries. Welfare is also affected by quantity of life, however, as represented by longevity. This paper incorporates longevity into an overall assessment of the evolution of cross-country inequality and shows that it is

#### This website uses cookies.

By clicking the "Accept" button or continuing to browse our site, you agree to first-party and session-only cookies being stored on your device to enhance site navigation and analyze site performance and traffic. For more information on our use of cookies, please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

Accept

changes traditional results; countries starting with lower income tended to grow faster than countries starting with higher income. We estimate an average yearly growth in "full income" of 4.1 percent for the poorest 50 percent of countries in 1960, of which 1.7 percentage points are due to health, as opposed to a growth of 2.6 percent for the richest 50 percent of countries, of which only 0.4 percentage points are due to health. Additionally, we decompose changes in life expectancy into changes attributable to 13 broad groups of causes of death and three age groups. We show that mortality from infectious, respiratory, and digestive diseases, congenital, perinatal, and "ill-defined" conditions, mostly concentrated before age 20 and between ages 20 and 50, is responsible for most of the reduction in life expectancy inequality. At the same time, the recent effect of AIDS, together with reductions in mortality after age 50—due to nervous system, senses organs, heart and circulatory diseases—contributed to increase health inequality across countries.

---

## Citation

Becker, Gary, S., Tomas J. Philipson, and Rodrigo R. Soares. 2005. "The Quantity and Quality of Life and the Evolution of World Inequality." *American Economic Review*, 95 (1): 277–291.

DOI: 10.1257/0002828053828563

Choose Format:



---

## Additional Materials

[Replication Package \(119.43 KB\)](#)

---

## JEL Classification

**I12** Health Production

**I31** General Welfare; Well-Being

### This website uses cookies.

By clicking the "Accept" button or continuing to browse our site, you agree to first-party and session-only cookies being stored on your device to enhance site navigation and analyze site performance and traffic. For more information on our use of cookies, please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

Accept