

GROWTH IN TIMES OF POLITICAL EUPHORIA, EARLY DEMOCRACY AND HOPE FOR FREEDOM

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Background: Improvements in living conditions correlate with substantial long-term trends in height, e.g. of 15 cm/100 years in Japanese males, 21 cm/150 years in Dutch males, and 14 cm/110 years in German males. Recent evidence suggests strong effects of the political background on these trends.

Subjects and methods: Height of more than 14 million men of the German Armed Forces born 1865–1975 was correlated with indicators of economic prosperity, nutrition, health, and income inequality. Coherence analysis was applied to control for time trends in the multiple associations between these indicators.

Results: Mean height of young adult men increased by 0.45 mm/year (before 1916), by 2.15 mm/year (1916–1933), by 1.87 mm/year in the early Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) until 1973, and by 1.45 mm/year in the late FRG. The most substantial height increases in height were associated with declining income inequality during periods of political upheaval, early democratization, and liberation, and during the socially turbulent transition after the mid-1970s from a “national German” to a “modern European” society.

Conclusion: The non-linear pattern of secular height increments in Germany since the late 19th century suggests that democratization, political euphoria and liberation, hope for a better life, and illusions of equity, freedom, justice, and the expectation of social advancement entail competitive growth, strategic growth adjustments and finally, long-term and substantial secular trends in height.

Keywords: Secular trend; Democracy; Freedom; Coherence analysis.