

‘The Last, the Most Dreadful
Resource of Nature’:

Economic-historical Reflections on
Famine

Cormac Ó Gráda
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John MUNDELL, dob 1780 in
Draperstown, Ireland married
Anne *Hipson*, dob 1787 in
Desertmartin, Ireland.

Both John and Anne died in
Belleville, Ontario; dod unknown.

Eating and Other Essays People on Famine Is Wrong Its Past and Its Future



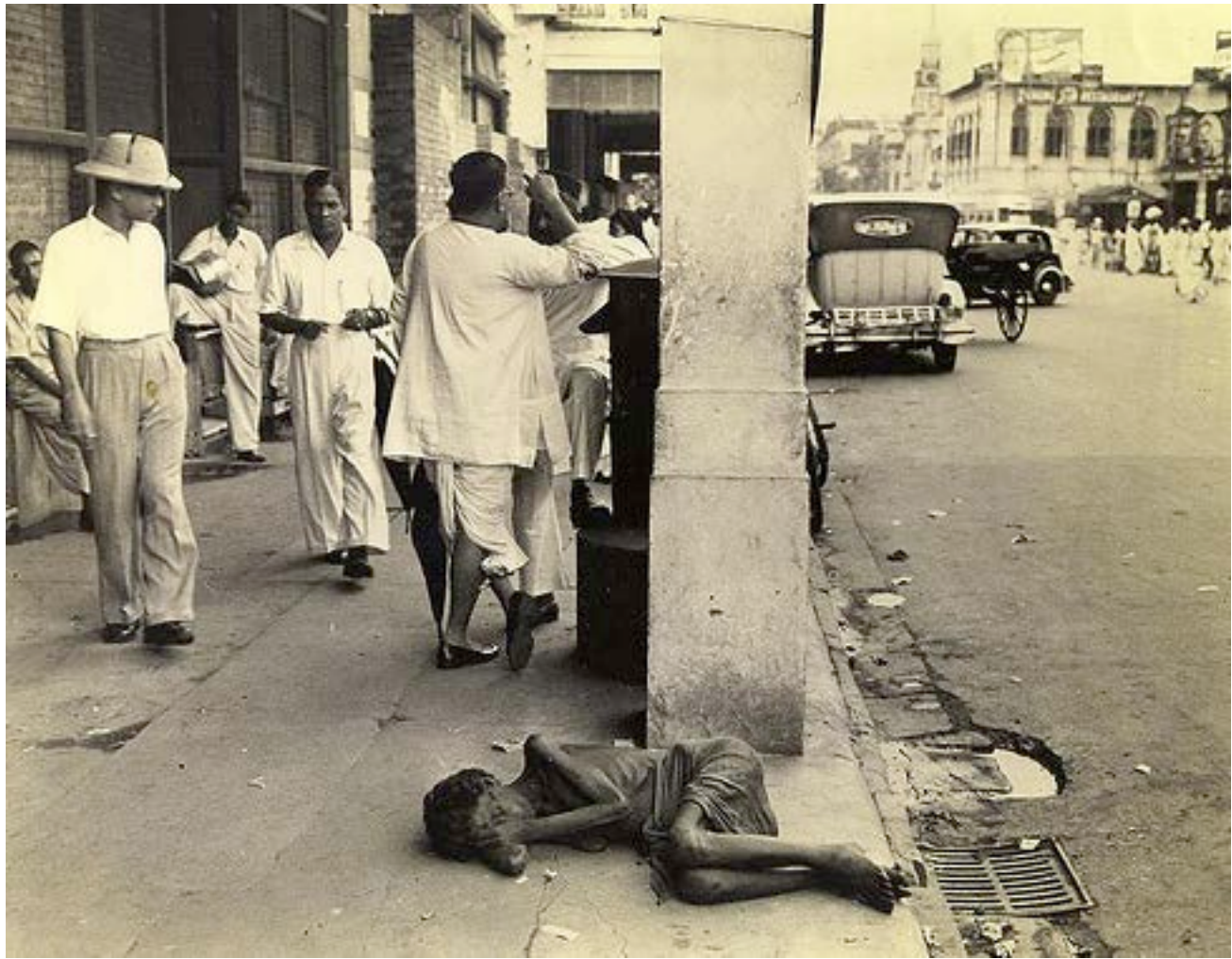
Cormac Ó Gráda

FAMINE

A SHORT HISTORY



CORMAC Ó GRÁDA





Malthus, Smith, and Famine

- Why?
- How often?

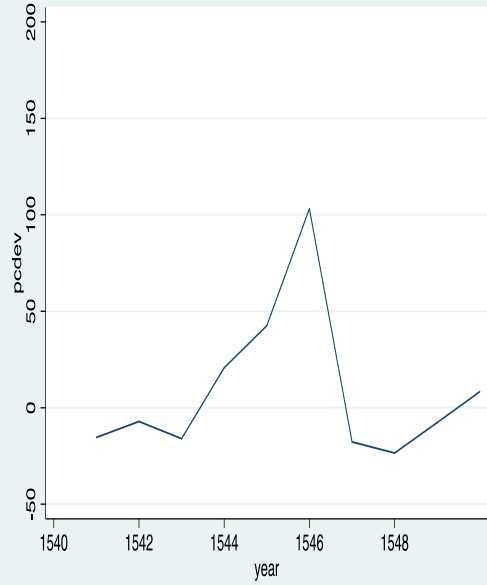
Defining famine

- Not just semantics

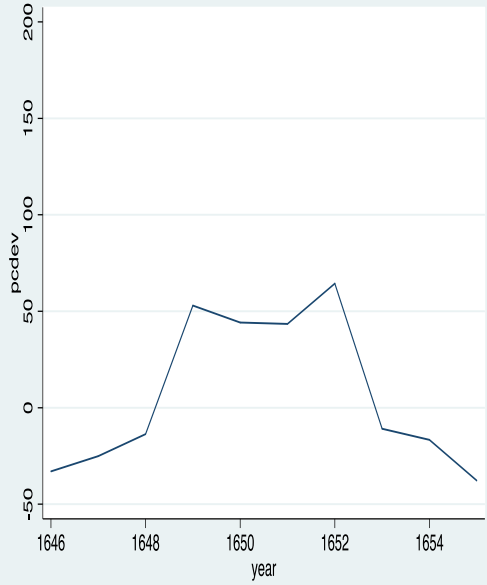
Famine, Harvests, and Food Prices

- Prices vs. Quantities
- How high?

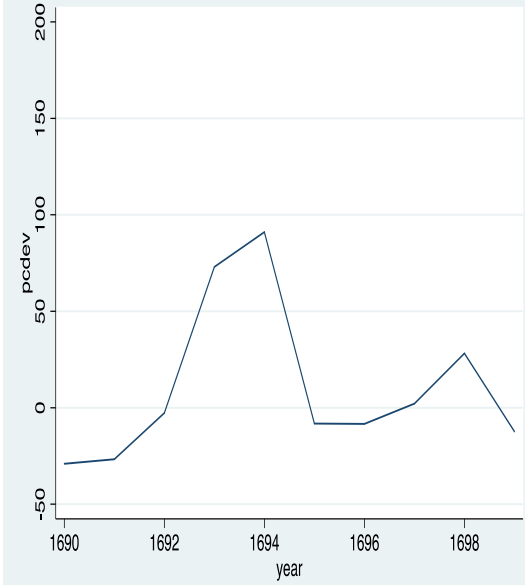
Paris 1541-1550



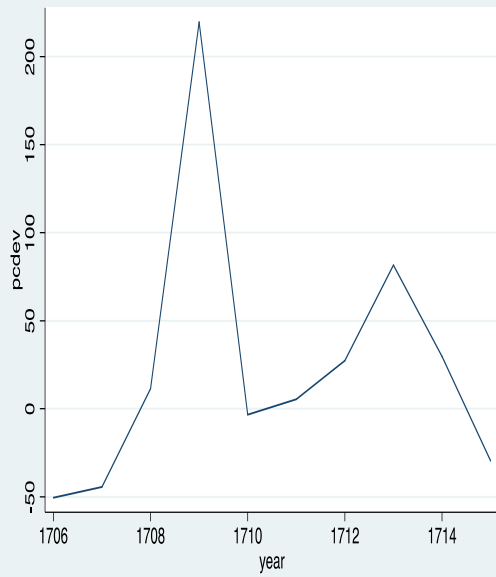
Paris 1646-1655



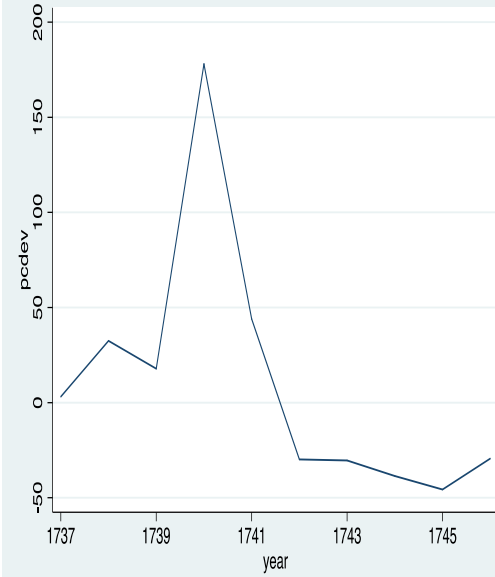
Paris 1690-1699



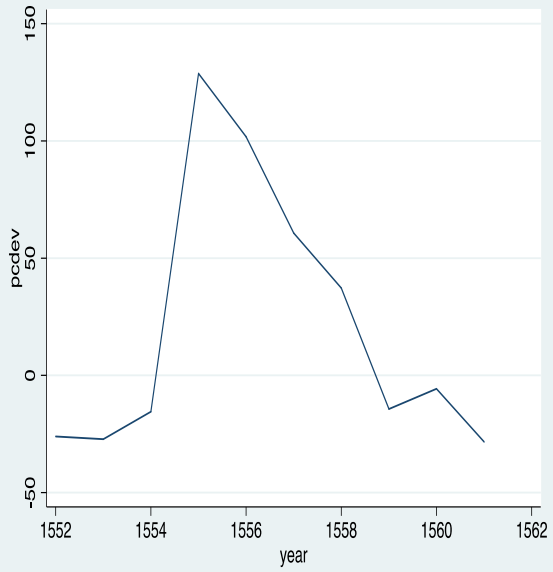
Paris 1706-1715



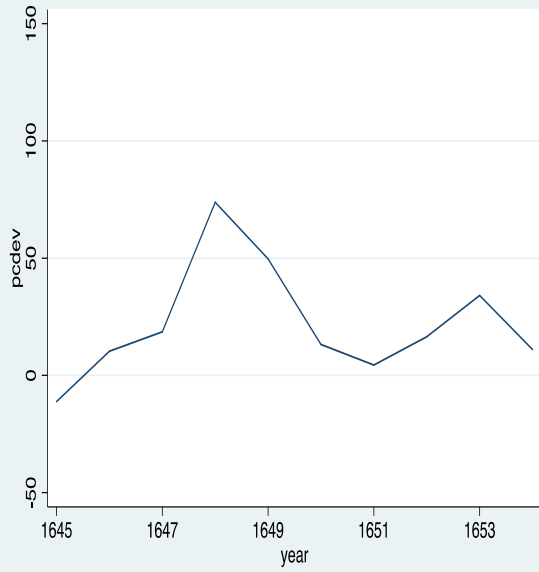
Paris 1737-1746



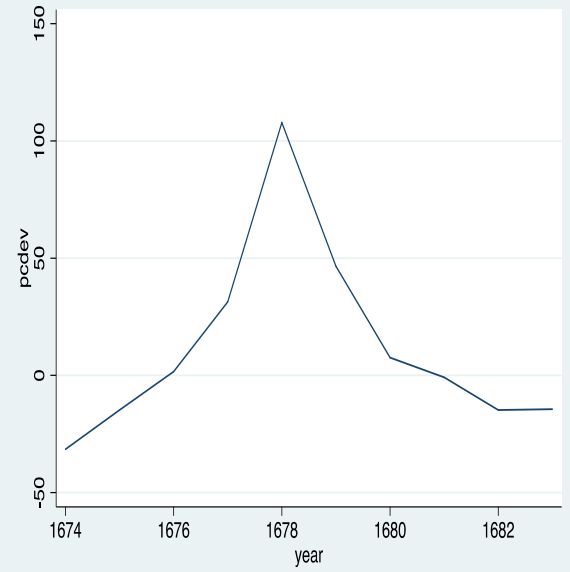
Siena 1552-1561



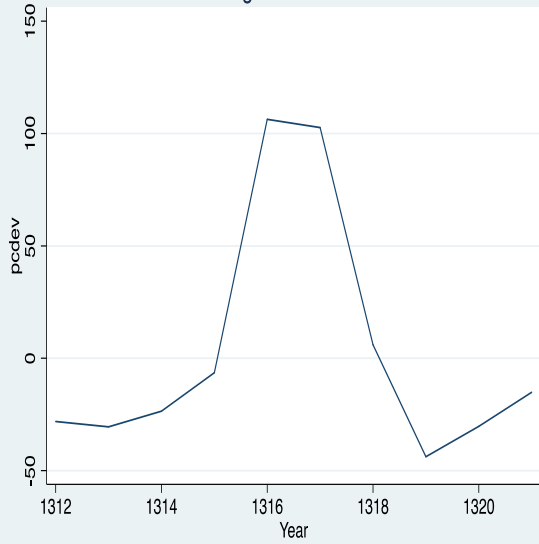
Siena 1645-54



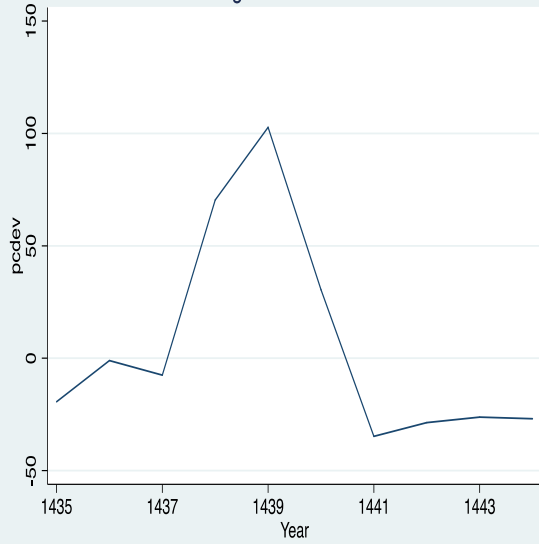
Siena 1674-83



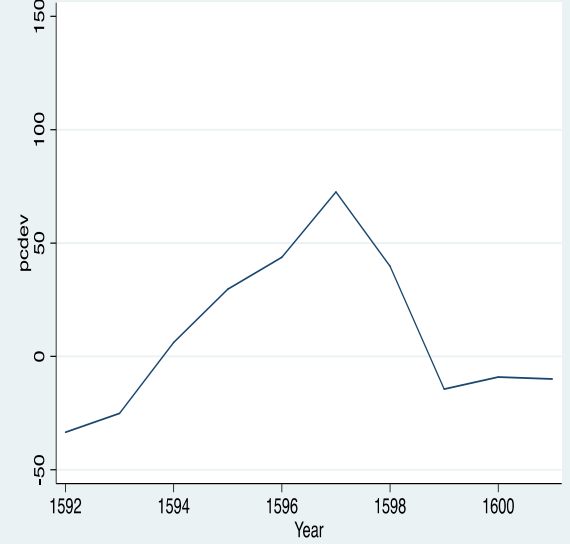
England 1312-21



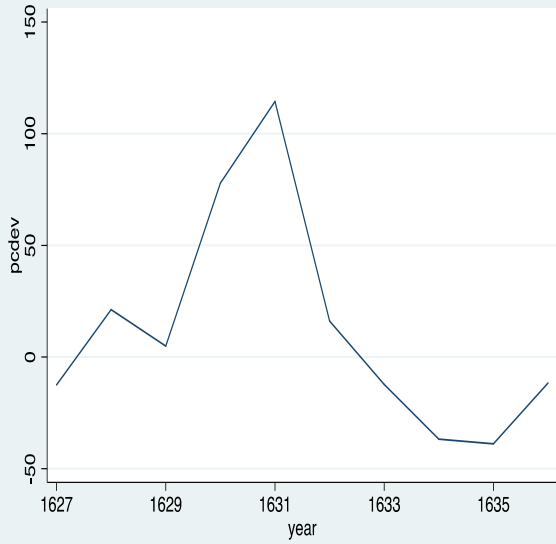
England 1435-1444



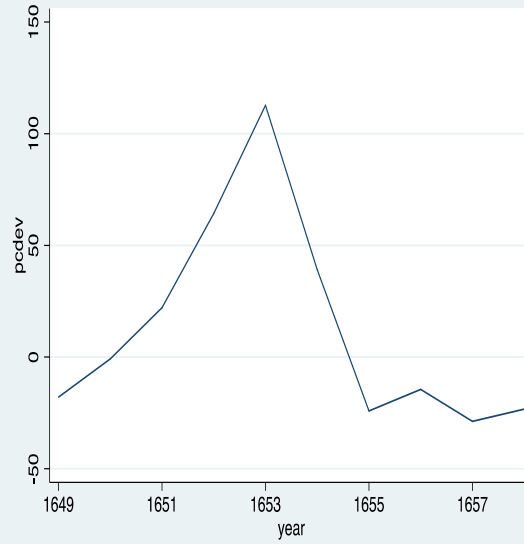
England 1592-1601



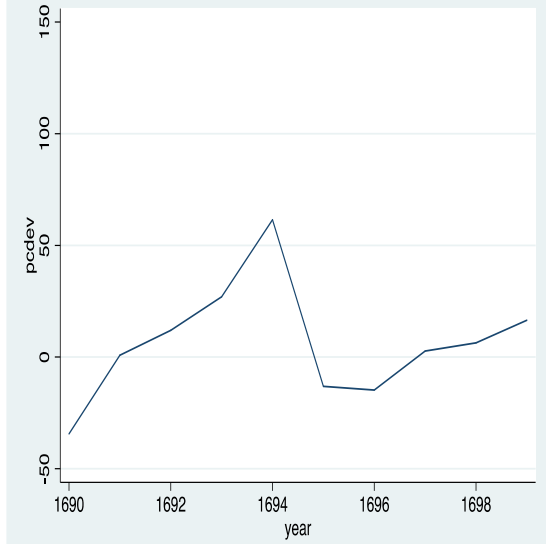
Toulouse 1627-1636



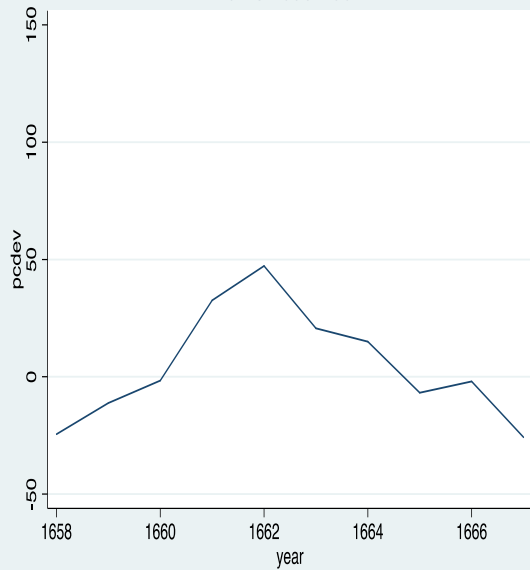
Toulouse 1649-1656



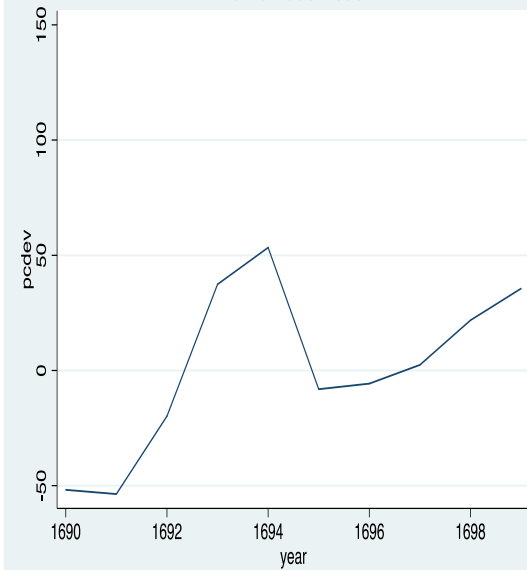
Toulouse 1690-1699



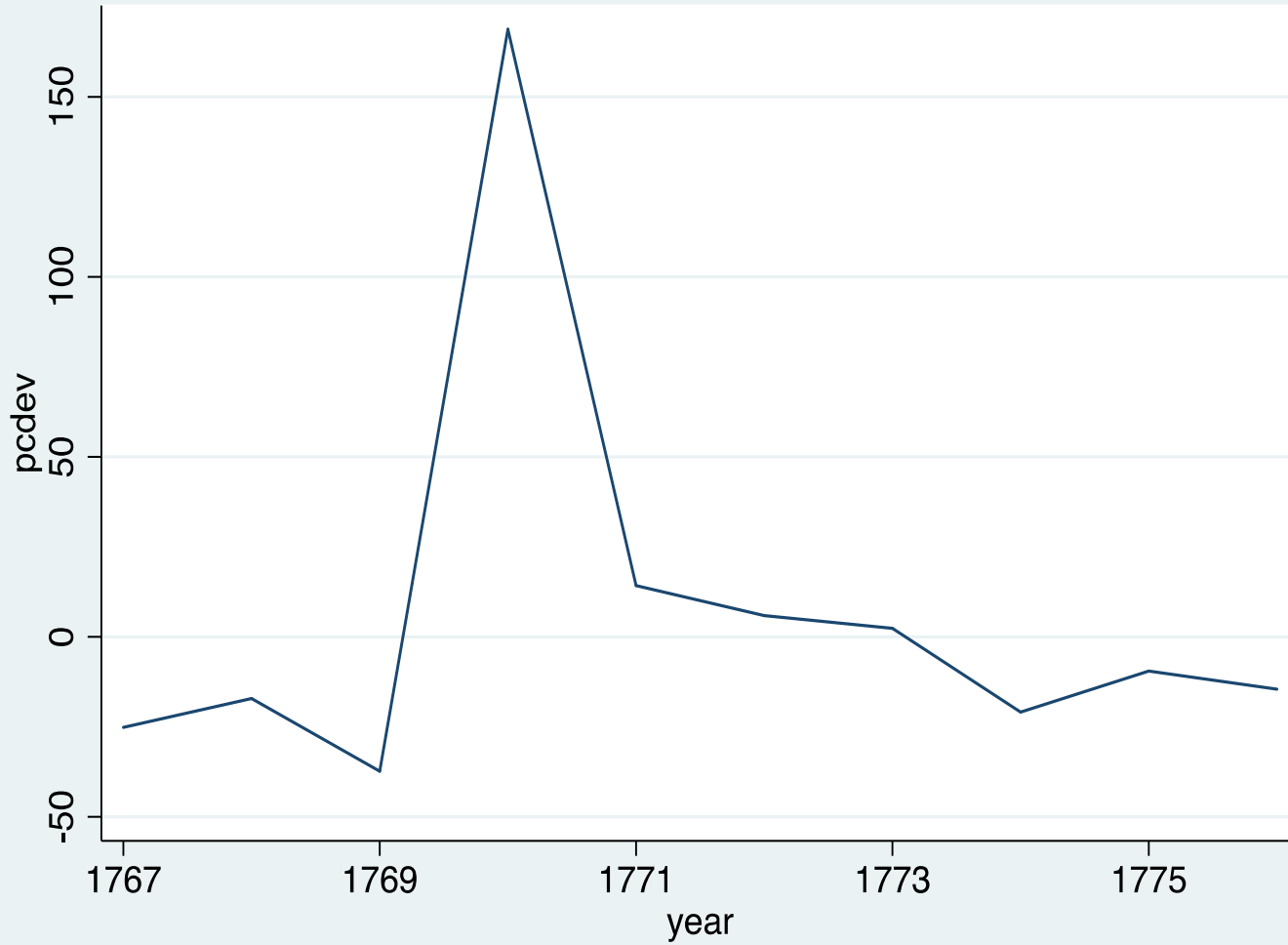
Tours 1658-1667

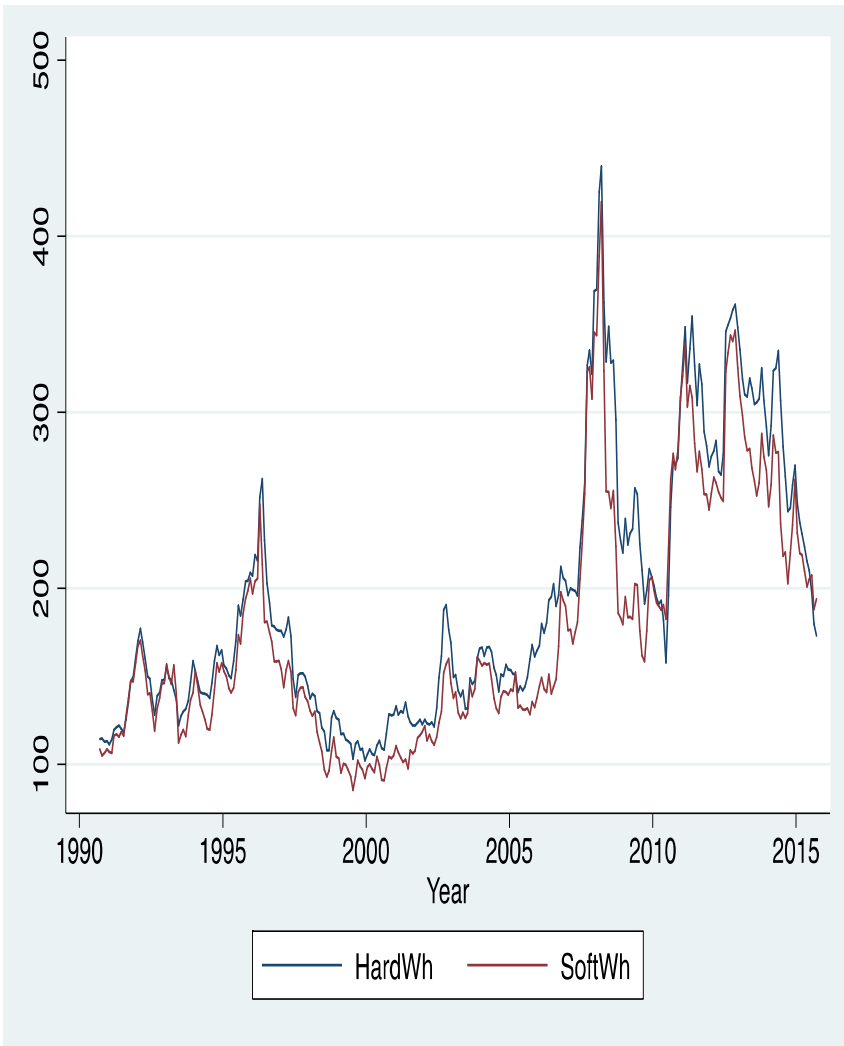


Tours 1690-1699

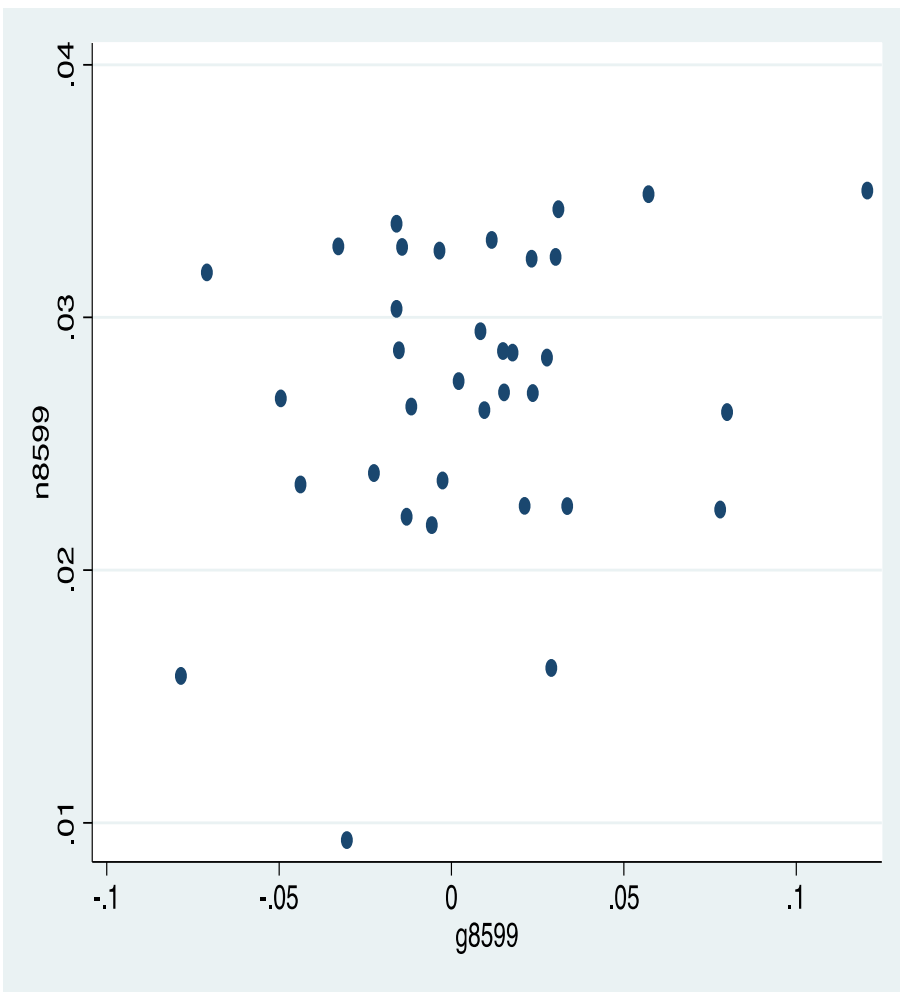


Calcutta 1767-1776 [Rice]

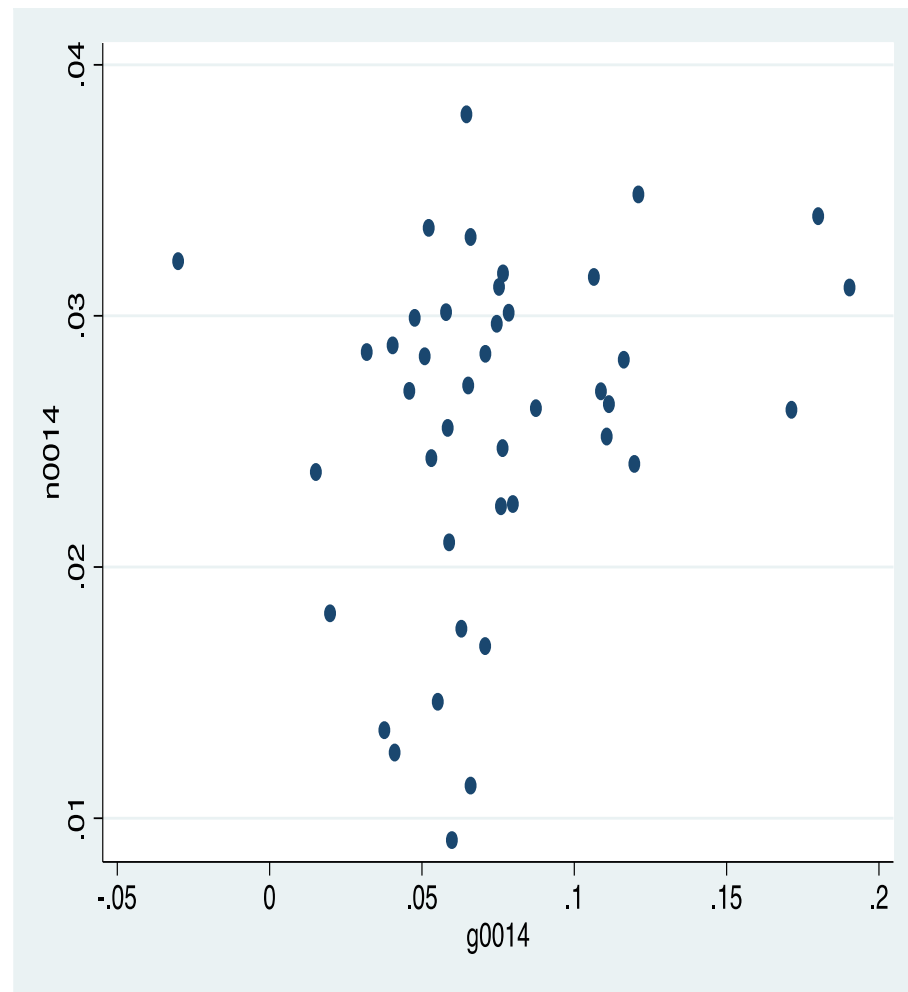




Monthly Wheat and Rice Prices 1990-2015 (US\$ per metric ton)

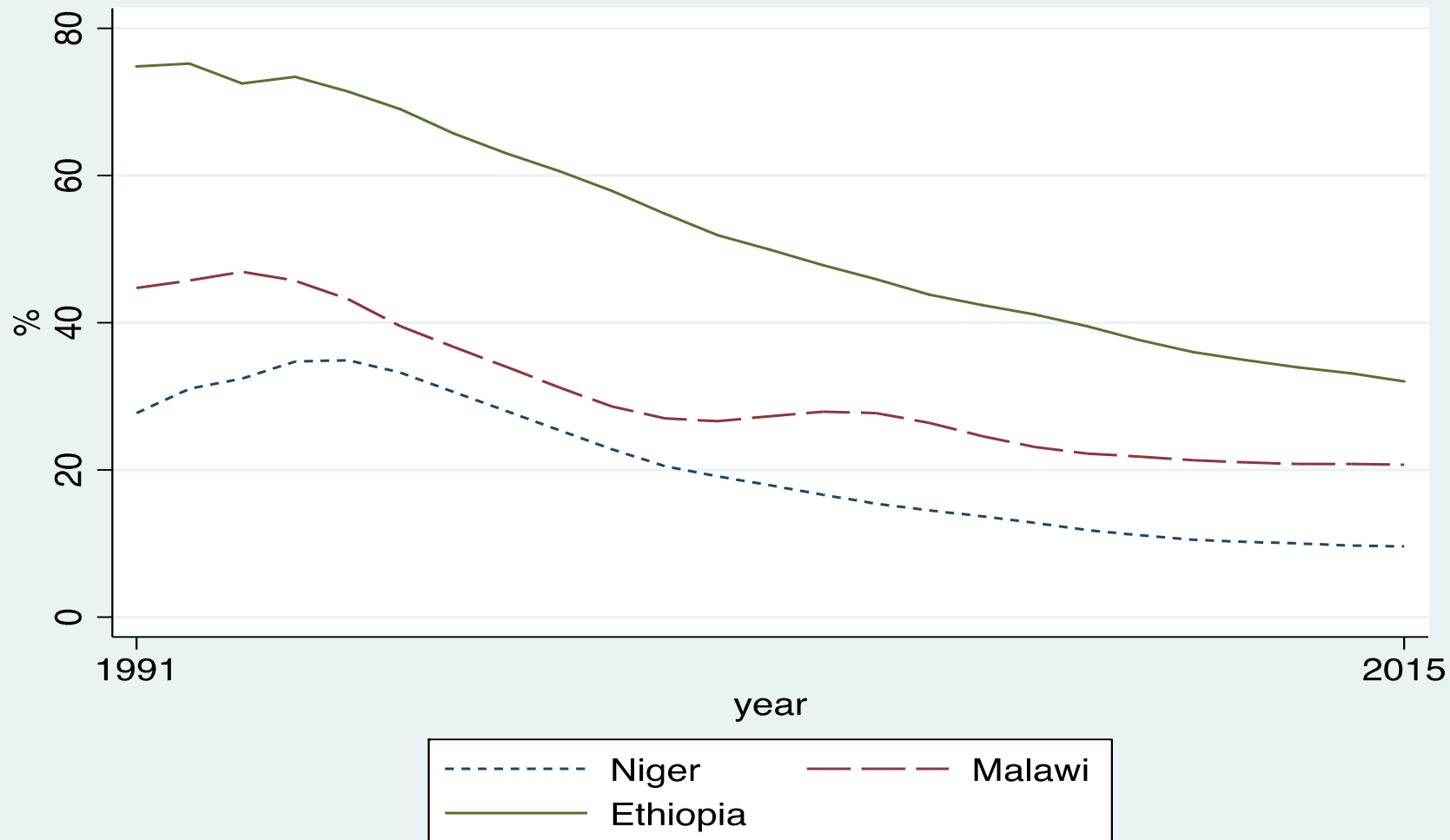


[a] 1985-99



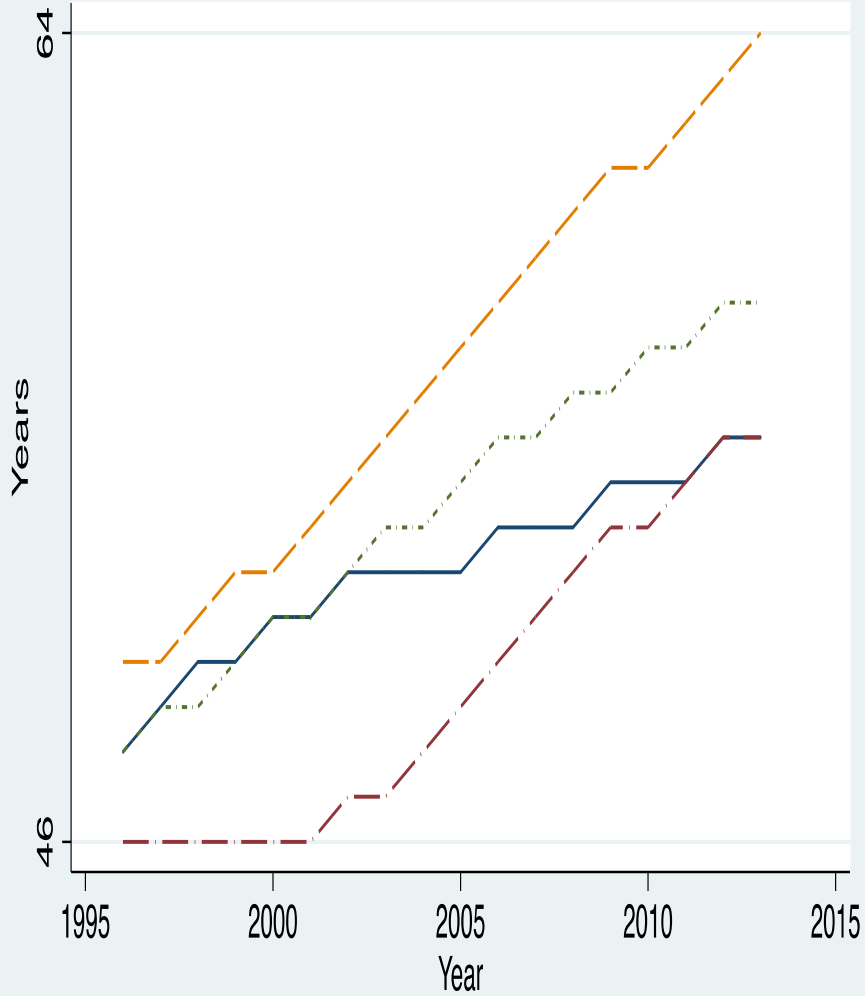
[b] 2000-14

Population growth and GDP per capita growth across sub-Saharan Africa

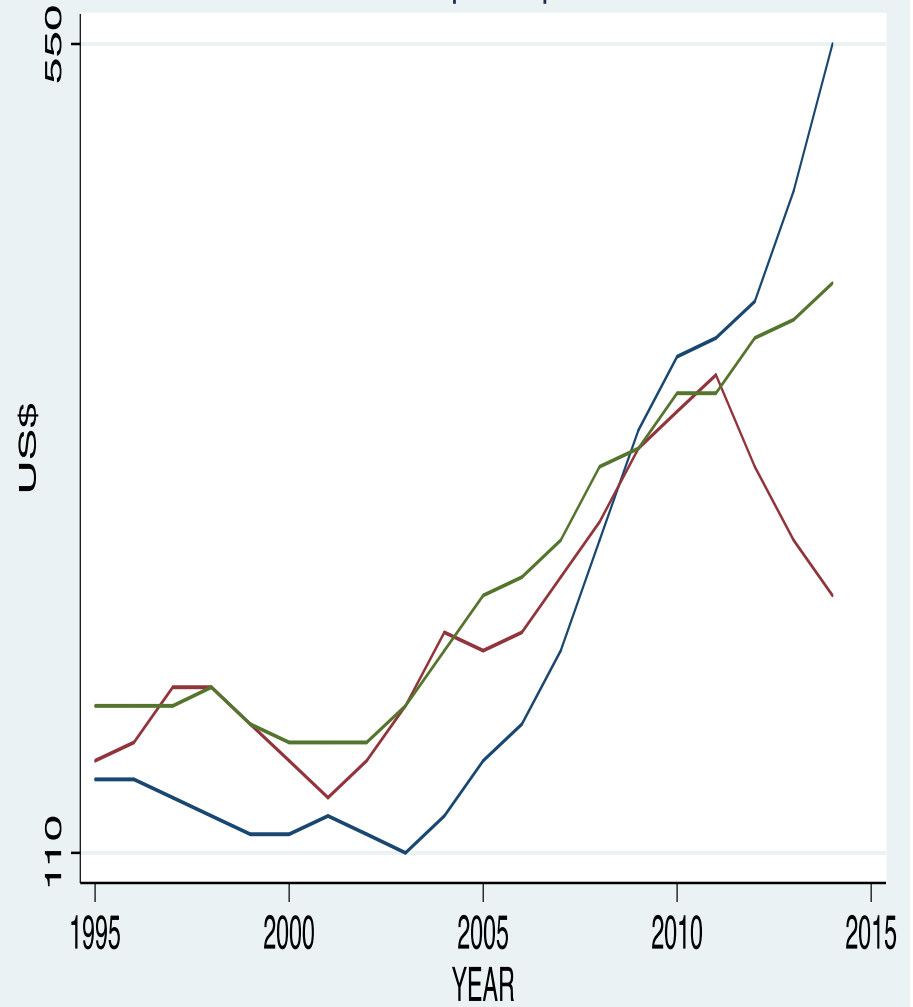


Malnutrition rates, 1991-2015(3-yr moving averages)

e[0]



GDP per capita



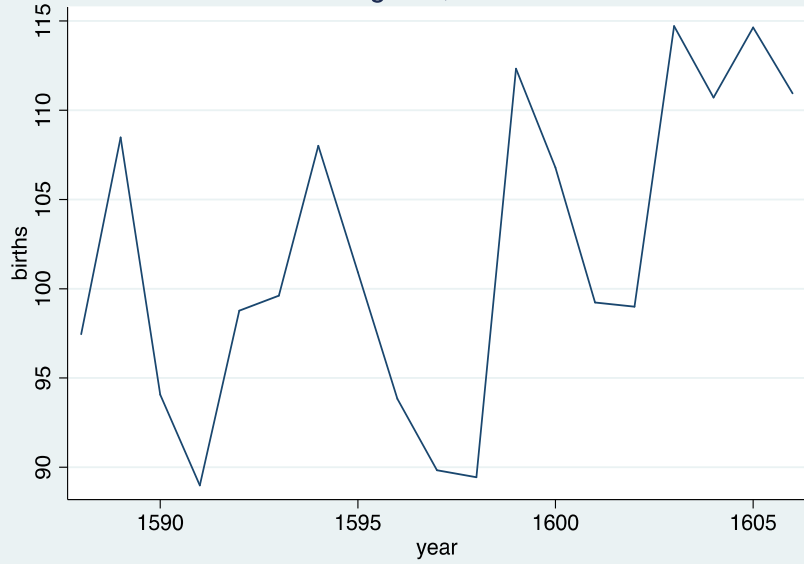
Births and Famine

DR *rises*

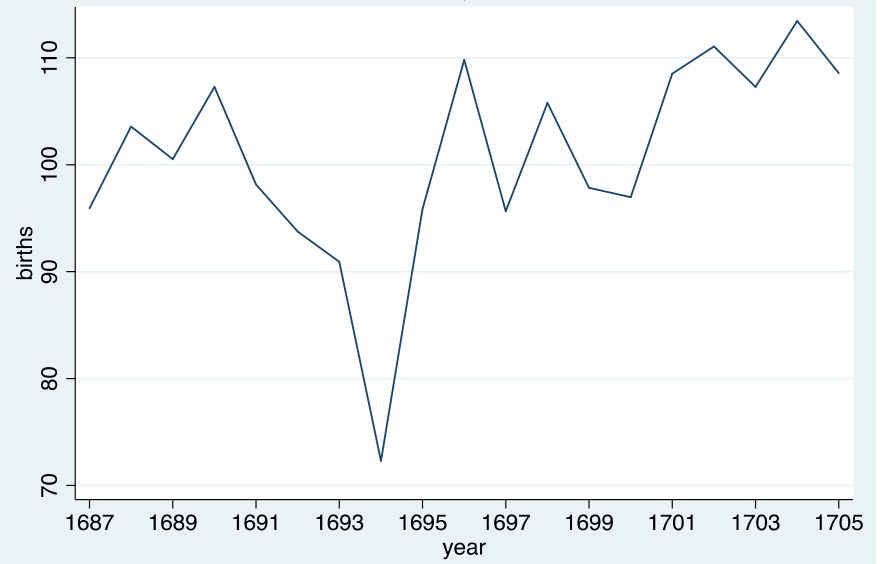
BR *falls* with lag

- Migration
- Amenorrhea
- Loss of Libido
- Prevention

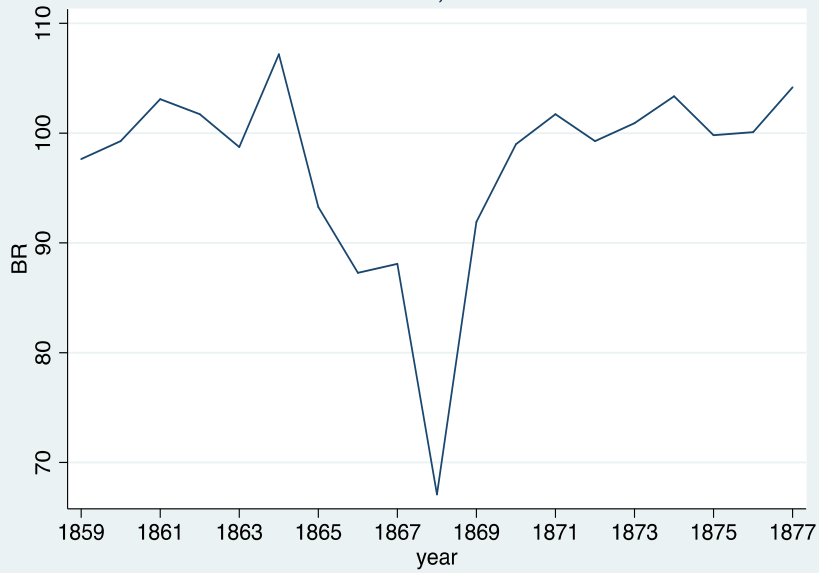
England, 1590s



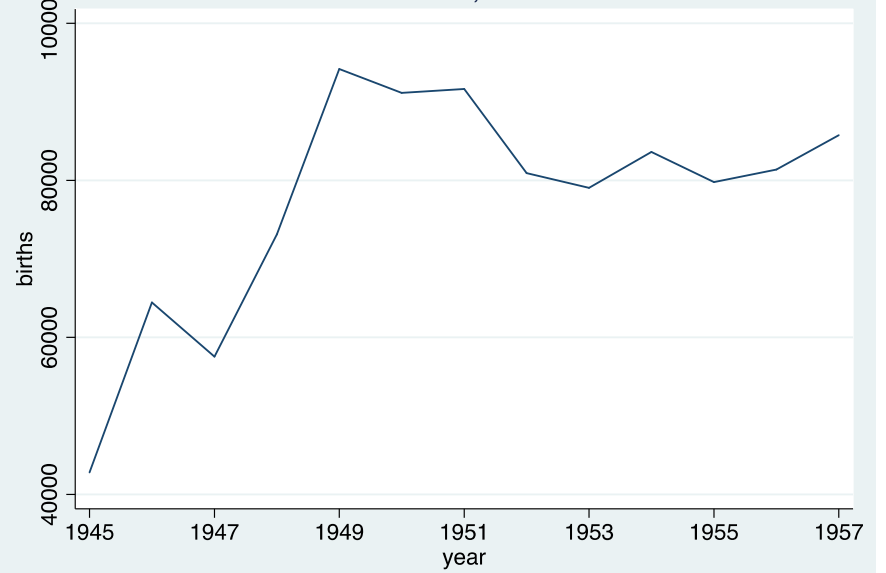
France, 1690s



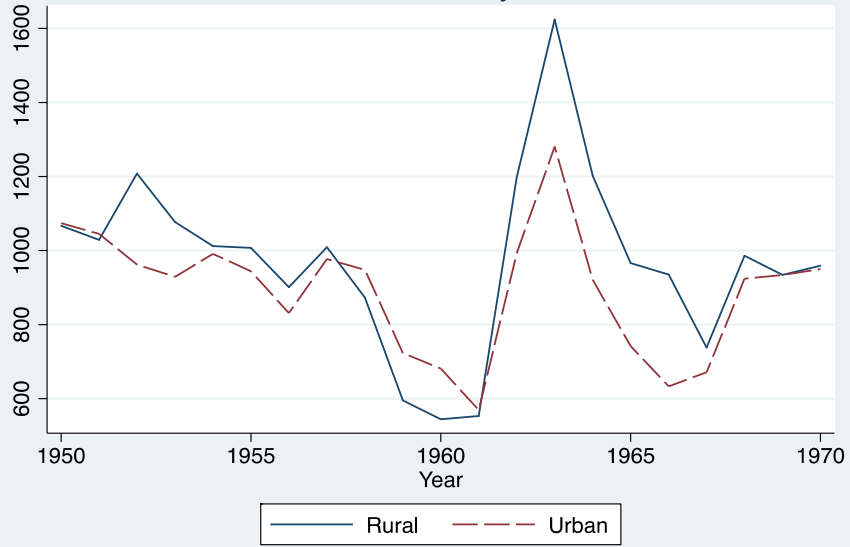
Finland, 1860s



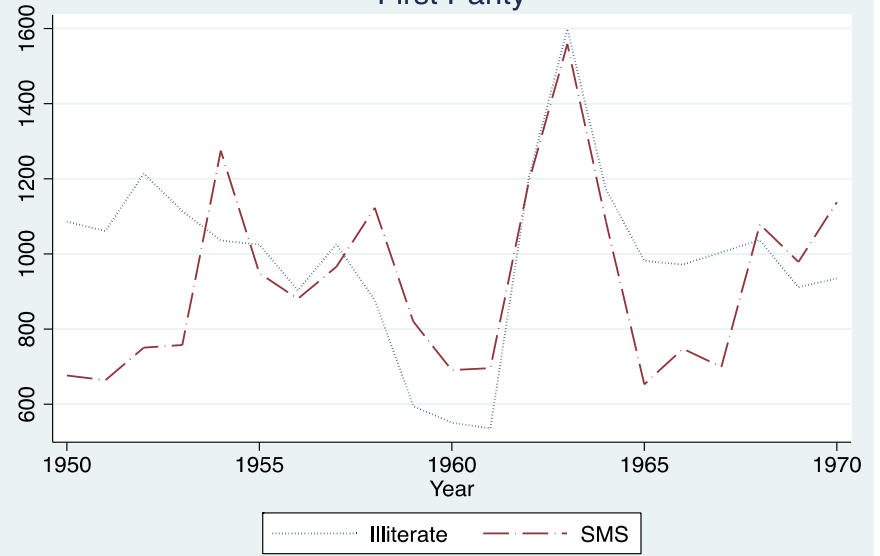
Moldova, 1940s



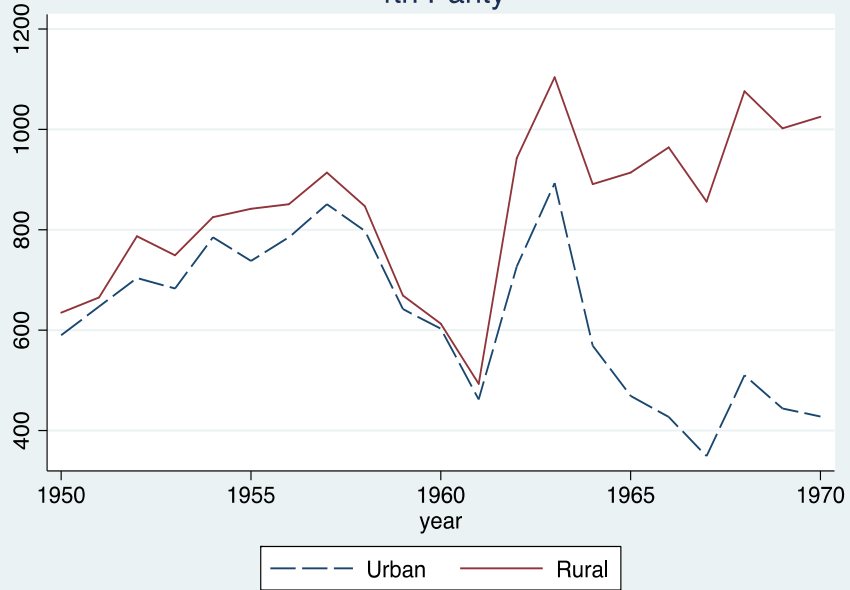
First Parity



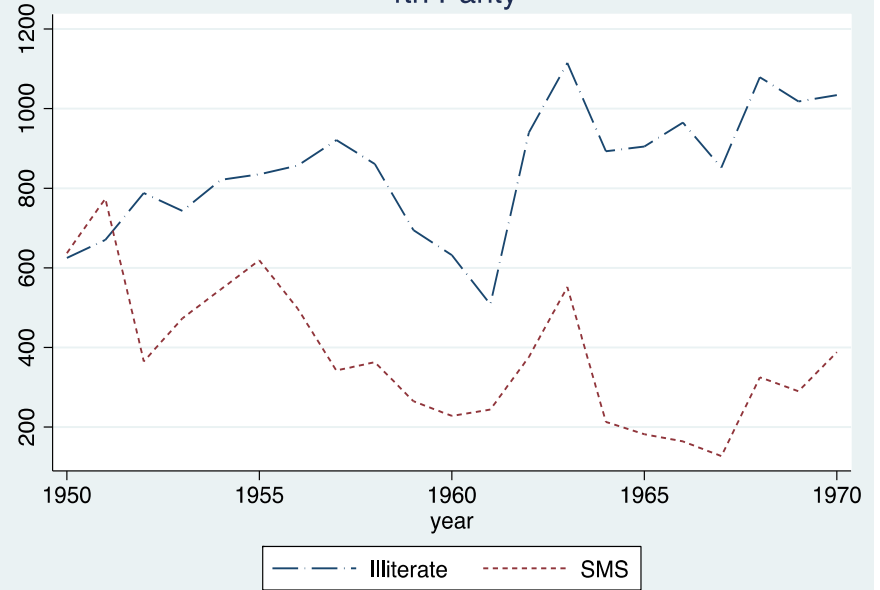
First Parity

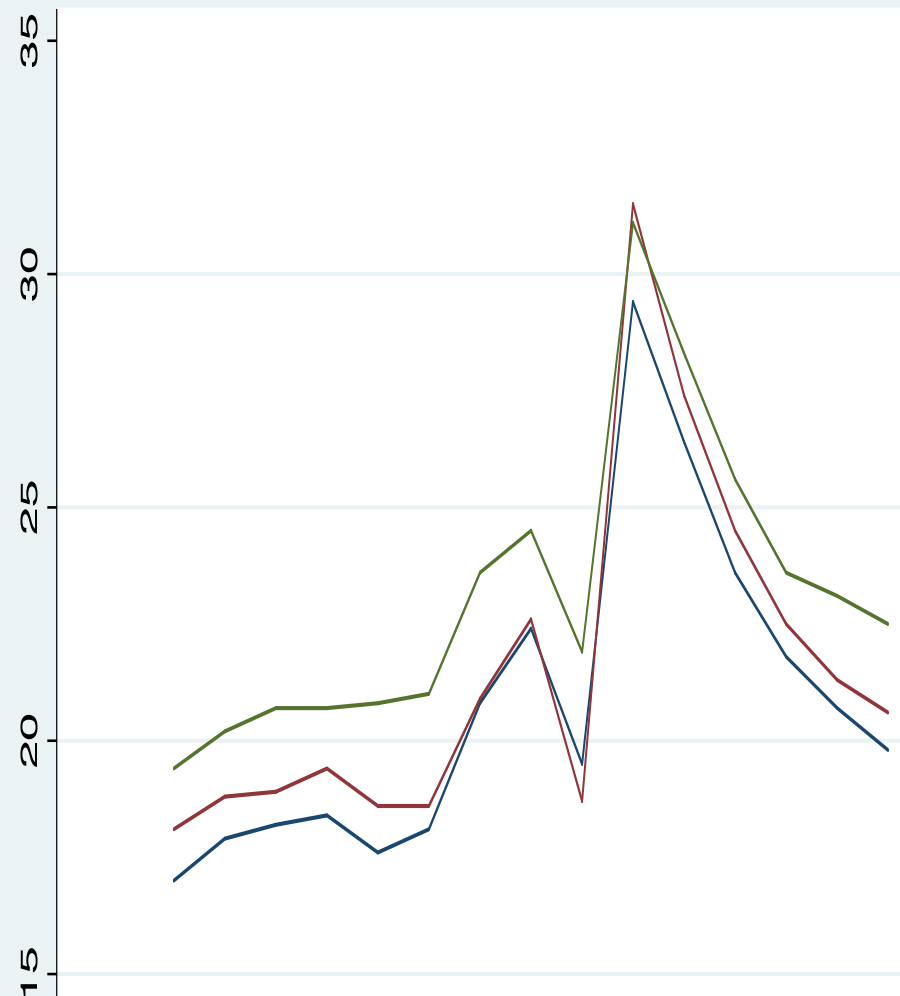
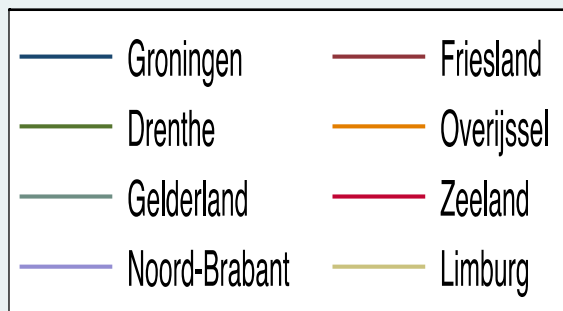
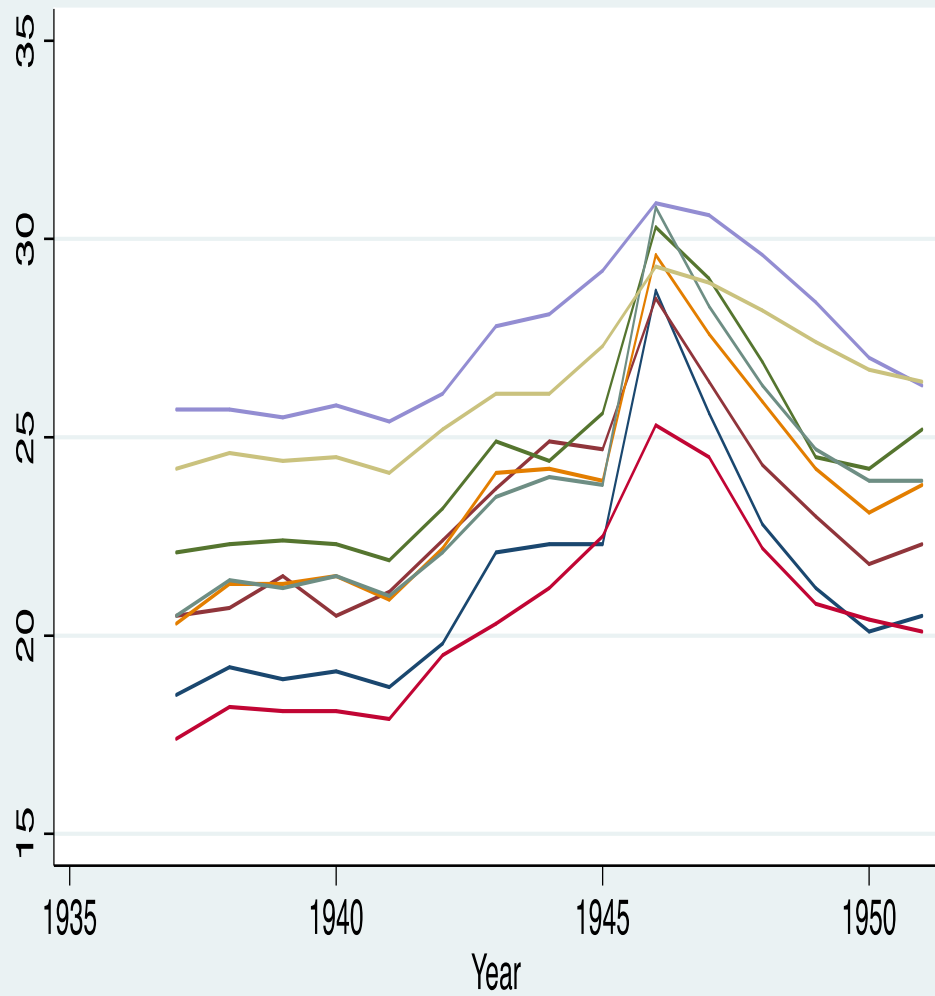


4th Parity



4th Parity





$$RECOVERY = 5.13 - 1.81FALL$$

(0.39) (0.21)

N = 11

F(1, 9) = 72.11

Adjusted R² = 0.877

Standard errors in parentheses

Modern famines => postponed births

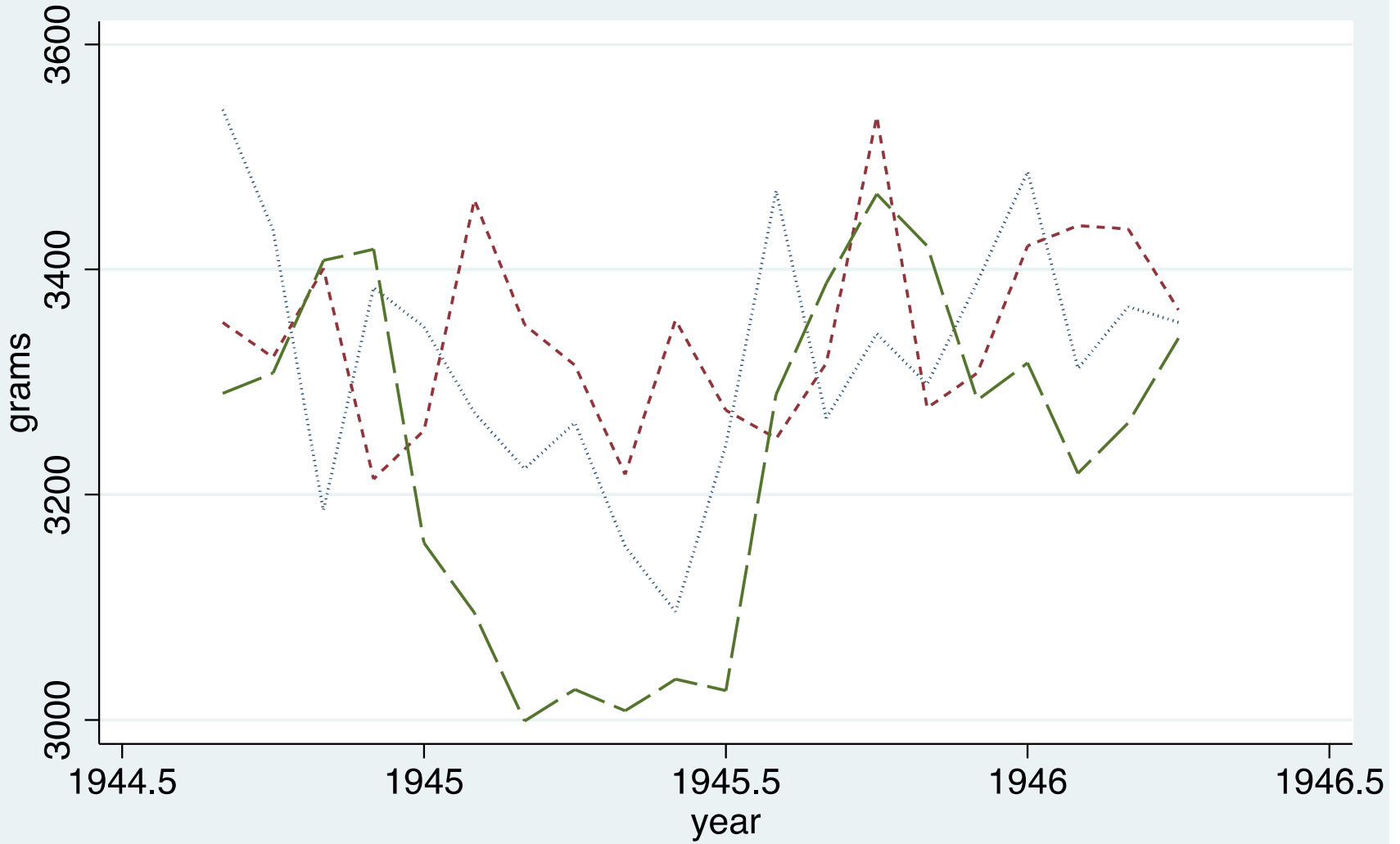
Fetal Origins Hypothesis

- Stein, Susser et al. [1975]
- >150 publications by 2016
- Mostly medical [Incl. Barker]
- Big claims



Op zoek naar etensresten





Selection the original sin of FOH

Lumey and van Poppel [2013]:

- cognition
- self-reported health
- depression
- heart disease
- blood pressure
- height, diabetes, schizophrenia
- epigenetic effects

Fetal Origins Hypothesis

More recently

China; World War 2

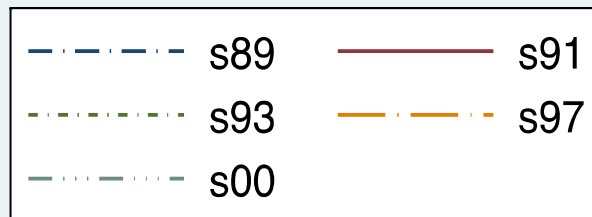
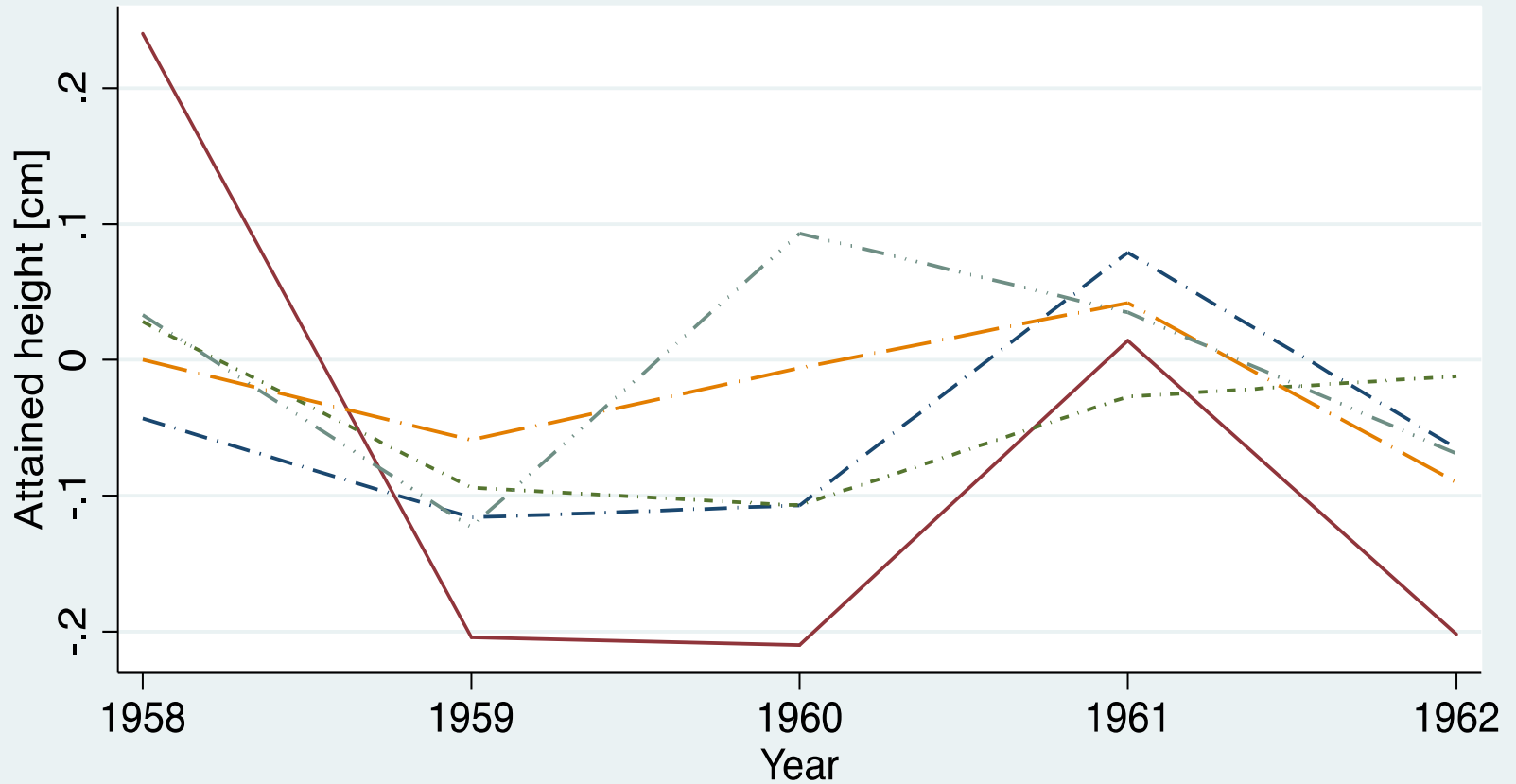
Economists

Focus on Selection Bias

Initial claims exaggerated [Xu *et al.* 2015]

Famines as natural experiments?

Effect of Birth-Year on Height by Survey



Source: Chen and Zhou 2002

Authors	Data	Region	Selection
1. Chen and Zhou [2002, 2007]	China Health and Nutrition Surveys; over 3,500 households	Rural parts of 8 provinces	Uses measures of how famine varied across cohorts and regions to construct a d-in-d estimator; aware that selection in births may result in 'a lower-bound estimation of long-term effects of famine'.
2. Liu et al. [2003]	579 inpatients with schizophrenia (<i>APOE</i>) gene in large mental hospital.	Shanghai	No correction
16. Xu et al. [2015]	2011 China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study		Selection issues central

Short Term: Famine as 'History'

Medium Term: Global Warming

=>Drought=>Famine?

- Elkin, Jones, Dell [2008]; Burke, Hsiang, Miguel [2015]
- Olmstead and Rhode [2013]

Obrigado!

Gura Maith Agaibh!

Thank You!