

Imagine you are...

- a research assistant for Chad Jones preparing for a big public lecture, *or*
- on staff at the World Bank preparing the latest *World Development Report*, *or*
- an associate at [McKinsey Global Institute](#) preparing a slidedeck for business and policy leaders.

You've been tasked with finding a new (or little known) fact about economic growth and development that is interesting, puzzling, or surprising.

Conditional on having a fact, this assignment is quite simple. All you have to do is write up a short memo (1–2 pages) describing...

- what the fact is (*with a graph or table illustrating it*),
- where you got the fact (data source, method used),
- why you think the fact is interesting, and
- a few potential explanations for the fact.

The difficult part is *finding* the fact—**welcome to research!**

Here are the datasets I referred to in class, but you are welcome to use any other data source you find interesting:

- [Penn World Tables \(PWT\)](#): comparable measures of GDP across countries
(Feenstra, Inklaar, and Timmer, 2015)
- [Maddison Project Database](#): long-run (1870 and prior) growth and income
(Bolt and van Zanden, 2020)
- [GGDC Historical National Accounts](#): industry-level companion to Maddison
- [Our World in Data](#): quick visualizations of economic and social data

Your fact can be about any country or time period. It can be about particular industries or regions. It can be about income levels, growth rates, or other measures of welfare or productivity. The only hard restriction is that it can't be a fact we've already discussed in class.

As a final note: **Remember how these problem sets are graded.** At minimum, I just want to see that you've looked at the data, can write about and visualize that data clearly, and can think critically about what you see.

Bolt, Jutta and Jan Luiten van Zanden. 2020. “Maddison style estimates of the evolution of the world economy: A new 2020 update.” The Maddison Project, Tech. Rep. 15.

Feenstra, Robert C., Robert Inklaar, and Marcel P. Timmer. 2015. “The next generation of the Penn World Table.” *American Economic Review* 105 (10):3150–3182.