

Econ 494 - Final Project

Due

October 8, 2019

Background

The 1918-1919 influenza pandemic is thought to have infected over 500 million people, or approximately one third of the world's population. Virulent and highly pathogenic, the fatality rate is estimated to have exceeded 2.5 percent, compared to less than 0.1 percent in earlier influenza outbreaks. Death toll estimates range from 50 to as many as 100 million people.

Historically, the pandemic began in the fall of 1918 and ended in January 1919. The socioeconomic impact however may have extended well into the late 20th century. Economist Douglas Almond suggests that individuals *in utero* during the pandemic display reduced educational attainment, lower income, and lower socioeconomic status when compared to other cohorts.

“And now we slow down, to show the impact of the First World War & the Spanish flu epidemic. What a catastrophe” —Hans Rosling, 1948-2017.

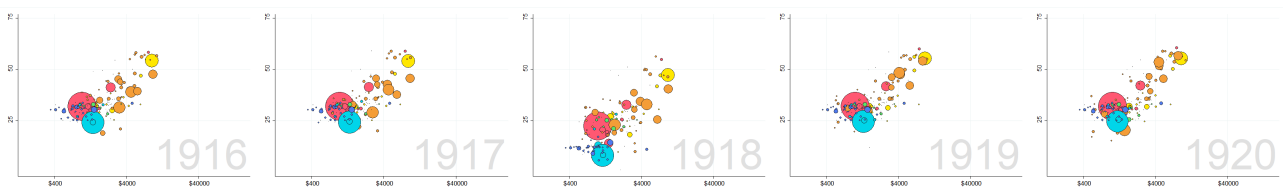


Figure 1: Life Expectancy & Income, 1916-1920.

Assignment

Use IPUMS to access data from the 1960-80 decennial U.S. Census. Replicate Almond's natural experiment, and test the hypothesis that investments in fetal health may increase human capital.

Almond, Douglas. "Is the 1918 Influenza Pandemic Over? Long-Term Effects of *In Utero* Influenza Exposure in the Post-1940 U.S. Population." *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 114, no. 4, 2006, pp. 672-712., www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/507154.

Data Source

The Integrated Public Use Microdata Series ([IPUMS](https://www.ipeds.org/)) dataset includes every census after 1850, and every ACS after 2000. Combined with uniform codes and documentation across samples, IPUMS is a valuable source of information on long-term trends in the American population.