

Title: Health and welfare in 19th-century France

Jean-Yves Duclos

Josée Leblanc

Gilles Postel-Vinay

David Sahn

This paper uses body-height data on potential conscripts into the army to explore the evolution and the distribution of health in France during the nineteenth century. The population distributions corresponding to the sample data (which are only available in aggregated form) are estimated by solving systems of equations. The indices chosen for this study, the mean and the poverty headcount, are then calculated from the estimated distributions and compared respectively by difference-of-means tests and restricted first-order stochastic dominance tests. These methods of estimation and analysis were chosen for their robustness. The results show an increase in the body-height of French men throughout the century, do not support a statistically significant impact of the crises that occurred during that period, but support some negative effects of living in Paris or in the south-western region.