

TITLE: Did Physical Stature Diminish During Spain's Early Industrialisation? The Case of Alcoy, 1840–1915

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Abstract: This paper looks at the effects of early industrialisation in Spain on biological living standards. The case study focuses on Alcoy, one of the towns that pioneered Spanish industrialisation in the nineteenth century. Based on anthropometric data for the height of military conscripts between 1860 and 1936 (cohorts born between 1840 and 1915), the study shows that average stature diminished among the generations born in the 1860s and 1870s, coinciding with the early stages of mechanisation in the textiles industry and accelerating urbanisation. However, poor diet among the inhabitants of Alcoy's rural hinterland was a further contributing actor to this decline in stature. The anthropomorphic evidence suggests that early industrialisation in Alcoy worsened health conditions and the net nutritional status of the town's working class.

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