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The effect of the economic crisis on birth outcome in Spain

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The unprecedented post-war European economic crisis which began in 2007 and the resulting fiscal austerity policies are generally considered to have had a negative impact on public health. [A study](#) published in the *Annals of Human Biology* by Carlos Varea and colleagues investigates the impact of the economic crisis on birth outcomes in Spain; specifically detailing temporal changes (from 2003-2012) in underweight at birth, birth weight being an important indicator of health outcomes throughout the life course.

Varea et al. analysed data from the Statistical Bulletin of Childbirth which includes demographic and health information from all births that have occurred in the country, per year, regardless of nationality or legal status of the parents. The results reveal a generalised deterioration of birth outcomes, especially underweight at birth, since 2008. All maternal and newborn outcomes show a similar trend for the same time period.

This negative biocultural scenario, triggered by the economic crisis in Europe has the potential to have a long-lasting detrimental effect on the general health of the whole population and is likely to affect subsequent generations. In conclusion the authors highlight the WHO recommendation of 2006 for interventions to secure optimum foetal development, which can benefit health and development over many decades.

This article is published in a Special Issue of AHB 'Human Biology of Poverty' which is a collection of selected papers presented at the Society for the Study of Human Biology (SSHB) Symposium of the same title, held in Portugal in September 2015. The papers included in this interdisciplinary special issue address how poverty can affect human biology and cover issues including war and forced displacement, minorities and migrants, poverty in both developed and developing countries, health inequalities among girls and women in poverty and the impact of the economic downturn.

You can read the full article for free at

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.3109/03014460.2015.1131847>

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