

Impacts of the Green Revolution on Infant Mortality in the Developing World

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Abstract

There is considerable debate on the potential for modern staple seed varieties (MVs) to advance nutrition, and little is known about the contribution of MV diffusion during the “Green Revolution” to the global reduction in mortality achieved during the 20th century. Here we provide global scale estimates of the relationship between MV diffusion and infant mortality between 1960–2000 by constructing a novel, spatially-precise indicator of MV diffusion and leveraging child-level data from over 600,000 children across 21,604 sampling locations in 37 developing countries. Results indicate that the diffusion of MVs reduced infant mortality by 2.4–5.3 percentage points (from a baseline of 18%), with stronger associations for male infants. These findings are unaffected by adjusting the statistical model to control for a wide range of potential confounders. The sizable contribution of MV adoption to improved welfare should inform global food and development policy.

Speaker Profile

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