

Weekend links: air conditioning, the GBD Study, behavioural economics, podcasts, poverty and the brain

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Add air conditioning units to the list of [items](#) that can provide unexpected insights into the state of the economy. On the UN Dispatch podcast, Mark Leon Goldberg [interviews](#) Lucas Davis about 'what air conditioners can teach us about international development'. Davis and fellow University of California Professor Paul Gertler's recent [paper](#) in PNAS uses data from Mexico to examine the relationship between temperature, income levels and the adoption of air conditioning – and what burden increased electricity consumption due to air conditioning may have impose on the environment.

Wired Magazine is not normally one of our go-to sources for stories on aid and development, so we missed an interesting [summary](#) published in April about *Epic Measures*, a new book about Christopher Murray and the [Global Burden of Disease \(GBD\) Study](#). Though the GBD Study has much to interest methodology junkies, author Jeremy Smith focuses primarily on the challenging political implications of producing improved health data.

Via [IPA's weekly links on Chris Blattman's blog](#), the *Wall Street Journal* has an [interesting article](#) on behavioural economics and poverty. If it leaves you wanting to say things like "that's interesting, but..." have a listen to [this](#) recent episode of Development Drums, in which Owen Barder grills Varun Gari (the co-director of the 2015 World Bank World Development Report) on what, if anything, behavioural economics can contribute to development work. Barder asks all the right questions and Gari does an excellent job of replying, which makes for great learning. On the subject of Development Drums, the [latest episode](#) has what promises to be a fascinating interview with Morten Jeven on statistics and Africa. And, since we're speaking podcasts, if you've got some spare listening time, you might like, Joshua Angrist [valiantly defending empiricism in economics](#), [David Skarbek on the complicated game-theoretic world of prison gangs](#) and [Joshua Green trying to fashion political philosophy from human psychology](#).

Finally, Madeline Ostrander of *The New Yorker* [looks](#) at research recent on the effects of living in poverty on the developing brain. The findings help to elucidate some of the physiological pathways that lead from exposure to extreme stresses commonly experienced by those living in conditions of poverty ('overcrowding, noise, substandard housing, separation from parent(s), exposure to violence, family turmoil') to long-term cognitive and behavioural outcomes. Importantly, even though the physiological processes are experienced individually, their root causes are located in (and so can be changed by) the broader social environment.