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Over the past couple of decades there have been episodes of particularly rapid growth in output per head In a number of countries throughout the world, in particular in the UK since the early 1980s. To understand this phenomenon requires a detailed analysis of these productivity changes using data for individual firms. These changes in average performance for the economy as a whole can be related to changes in the spread between the productivity leaders and laggards. Drawing on research carried out under the leadership of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research in London, and with the help of the Fulbright Commission, the contributors to this volume provide a comparative analysis of data for a number of different countries. Chapters cover the UK, the USA, Canada, Japan, Australia, Belgium, Norway and Sweden, and comparisons also include Germany and the Netherlands. Using a variety of the most up-to-date methods of analysis, the contributors estimate the importance of a variety of different factors. Changes in competitive conditions, skills, innovation and the growth of small firms each have their part to play, as does the closure of the least productive establishments.The research in the UK was financed by the ESRC.

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