

## **Infant mortality and infant feeding in London, c. 1550 to 1720**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the evidence for middle class children being sent out to wetnurse from affluent city parishes in Early Modern London from 1550 to 1720. The analysis derives from family reconstitution and further record linkage to the 1695 Marriage Duty Assessment, a census-like listing of all inhabitants. Particular attention is given to infant mortality, biometric plots of the distribution of mortality over the first year of life, and to the age distribution and proportion of children likely to have been at wetnurse in 1695. The experience of Cheapside residents is contrasted with the poorer suburb of Clerkenwell. A new chronology for the popularity of sending city children out to wetnurse is proposed, and it is observed that by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century sending middle class children outside the parish to nurse was much less prevalent than it appears to have been before 1600. The effect these changes might have had on survival in this hazardous disease environment are considered, in the context of a city-wide rise in infant mortality in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.