

Religion and Child Death in Early-Twentieth Century Ireland (1911)

The paper studies the influence of religious affiliation on child mortality in Ireland in the early twentieth century. Using the 1911 full count IPUMS Irish census, indirect techniques (i.e., mortality index as proposed by Preston and Haines, 1991), and regression analysis, we aim to explore the relationship between child mortality and religious affiliations for the entire island of Ireland around 1911 after controlling for several explanatory variables (e.g., socioeconomic status, literacy, place of residence) at the individual and contextual level. Early results indicate significant differences in child mortality rates among Ireland's major religious denominations. Catholics suffered the most from high child mortality, Church of Ireland families had slightly better outcomes, while the largest Protestant denomination, the Presbyterians, had the best child mortality outcomes. The analysis results also confirm that Jewish communities had lower child mortality rates than any of the other religious denominations, however, they accounted for very low numbers. Such differences were shaped by the socioeconomic conditions for each religious group, such as literacy, SES (measured by husband's occupation) and female occupational status, among others. The results confirm that these were important indicators or predictors for the survival prospects of infants. In this paper, we will specifically also examine whether being a Catholic had a negative outcome in those geographical units (i.e., county and/or district electoral division) were majority Protestant areas. Finally, the breakthrough of this paper is that instead of focusing on a certain geographical unit (i.e., a city, a town or even a county) as in most previous studies, it relates to the entire population of Ireland.