

## Summary

This doctoral dissertation aims to examine the impact of adverse early-life conditions on social mobility. Exposure to environmental stressors, such as infectious diseases or malnutrition, during critical phases of development – specifically prenatal life and early childhood – has a detrimental impact on later health. Consequently, this may result in lower socioeconomic outcomes in adulthood.

The research question was analysed using individual-level data on residents of nineteenth-century Poznań, collected in the Poznań Historical Population Database. For the birth cohort 1830-1855, indicators of living standards were assigned to specific developmental stages. The prenatal period was characterized using the sex ratio at birth, the occurrence of floods, and rye prices. Infancy was measured using the infant mortality rate and rye prices, conditions between the first and third birthdays were captured by the crude death rate and rye prices.

The study examined the effects of exposure to adverse conditions on the probability of entering a first marriage and on social mobility between birth and the time of marriage.

The findings indicate that exposure to adverse conditions during the prenatal period (proxied by the sex ratio at birth in the year of conception) and to infectious diseases in early childhood (measured by the crude death rate) had a statistically significant negative effect on the likelihood of marriage in the 1830–1855 Poznań birth cohort. By contrast, elevated rye prices during pregnancy were associated with a higher probability of marriage later in life.

With respect to social mobility between birth and marriage, exposure to the disease burden in the second and third year of life had a statistically significant effect, reducing the probability of downward mobility from the middle or higher social strata into the lowest group.

These findings suggest the simultaneous operation of both selection and scarring mechanisms in the nineteenth-century population of Poznań.

The results are embedded in a broad historical context of nineteenth-century Poznań, encompassing its social structure and income inequality, the demographic transition, and patterns of infant and child mortality.

**Keywords:** historical demography, Poznań, early life, social mobility