

Infants less than one year old most impacted by famine of the Dutch Hunger Winter with highest mortality rate

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During the Dutch Hunger Winter Famine, infants experienced the highest absolute and relative mortality of all children under 14 years of age.

These are the findings from a new study at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, Wageningen University & Research and the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute in the Hague, the Netherlands.

In the famine cities, [infant mortality](#) increased to 1% or 922 deaths per 10,000 compared to 109 deaths per 10,000 [children](#) between the ages of one and four, and 27 deaths per 10,000 deaths at ages five to 14. Over 60% of deaths between the [ages](#) 0 to 14 took place in the first year of life. The results are published in the journal *Population Studies*.

"Our findings show that the impact of the famine was largest among infants less than one year of age, where diseases of the digestive system showed a tenfold mortality increase," said L.H. Lumey, MD, professor of Epidemiology at Columbia Mailman School.

"Most deaths in this category were from enteritis, [diarrhea](#), and ulceration of the intestines, all of which are important complications of famine. We examined absolute and relative mortality changes combined with age-specific causes of death to better understand the impact of a famine at the population level and to identify the most vulnerable populations."

Compared to the pre-war years 1935–1940, infant deaths (

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