

Ownership of consumer goods in England, 1660-1760

Lorna Weatherill published a major study of consumer behavior in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century England in 1988, *Consumer Behavior and Material Culture, 1660-1760*. The tables below summarize this work. They show the percentages of probate inventories in which the selected goods were recorded. The tables below were published in Lorna Weatherill, "The Meaning of Consumer Behavior in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth century England," John Brewer and Ropy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods*, (London: Routledge, 19939, pp. 206-227. Brewer and Porter's volume contains twenty-five essays on early modern consumption in England, Europe and America. The volume played an important role in encouraging the study of consumption during the period associated with the beginning of industrialization.

Table 10.1 Ownership of goods by region

	No. of inventories	Tables	Cooking pots	Sauce-pans	Pewter	Pewter dishes	Pewter plates	Earthen-ware	Books	Clocks	Pictures	Looking-glasses	Table linen	Window curtains	Knives and forks	China	Utensils for hot drinks	Silver
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
London area	367	92	80	43	91	59	53	41	30	29	37	74	67	40	13	12	15	44
North-east England†	325	93	76	2	95	77	37	26	10	15	25	44	55	14	3	10	3	34
East Kent	390	97	89	11	95	59	39	58	26	36	16	47	81	19	7	3	6	41
Cambridgeshire	390	96	86	6	93	72	33	32	12	14	9	27	44	9	2	3	2	15
North-west England‡	390	83	57*	5*	92	17*	11*	75	20	33	9	31	15*	8	2	1	1	13
Hampshire§	260	93	73	3	97	50	20	13	24	7	3	19	35	7	2	0§	0§	27
North-west Midlands	390	87	62	13	94	42	21	17	15	7	4	14	28	3	1	0	1	8
Cumbria‡	390	75	43*	1*	88	11*	4*	23	17	7	3	6	13*	1	1	2	0	10

See also Table 10.6.

†1725 missing.

‡Some goods (marked*) seem to have been badly listed in these areas.

§1715 and 1725 missing.

Table 10.2 Ownership of goods in town and country

	<i>No. of inventories</i>	<i>Mean value of inventory</i>	<i>Tables</i>	<i>Cooking pots</i>	<i>Sauce-pans</i>	<i>Pewter dishes</i>	<i>Pewter plates</i>	<i>Earthen-ware</i>	<i>Books</i>	<i>Clocks</i>	<i>Pictures</i>	<i>Looking-glasses</i>	<i>Table linen</i>	<i>Window curtains</i>	<i>Knives and forks</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Utensils for hot drinks</i>	<i>Silver</i>	
		£	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
London	319	153	92	81	46	92	58	54	42	31	29	41	77	66	43	14	13	16	46
Major town	217	97	91	72	11	93	67	46	45	21	18	41	58	55	27	6	8	6	44
Other town	291	135	92	70	10	94	56	37	39	23	20	23	50	55	15	4	7	3	37
Villages and rural	2,075	126	88	69	5	93	43	20	35	17	17	5	21	35	6	2	1	2	16
All	2,902	128	89	70	11	93	48	27	37	19	19	37	33	42	13	4	4	4	23

The major towns included are: Durham, Newcastle, Berwick, Carlisle, Southampton, Winchester, Canterbury, Cambridge, Shrewsbury, Liverpool and Manchester.

Table 10.3 Ownership of goods by farmers and tradesmen in town and country

	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>No. of inventories</i>	<i>Mean value of inventory</i>	<i>Tables</i>	<i>Cooking pots</i>	<i>Sauce-pans</i>	<i>Pewter dishes</i>	<i>Pewter plates</i>	<i>Earthen-ware</i>	<i>Books</i>	<i>Clocks</i>	<i>Pictures</i>	<i>Looking-glasses</i>	<i>Table linen</i>	<i>Window curtains</i>	<i>Knives and forks</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Utensils for hot drinks</i>	<i>Silver or gold</i>	
			£	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
London	All trades	199	177	93	80	45	91	61	58	48	31	30	43	78	68	44	16	14	17	42
	Farmers	7	103	100	86	57	100	100	100	43	14	43	43	86	71	43	0	14	14	43
Major town	All trades	125	109	94	70	14	95	72	49	51	22	20	43	63	58	30	7	10	9	46
	Farmers	10	106	80	90	0	100	70	40	30	0	20	30	40	40	10	0	10	0	40
Other town	All trades	144	137	97	74	9	97	62	42	39	19	20	26	53	65	14	3	8	3	40
	Farmers	43	118	93	65	9	95	33	23	37	12	16	5	30	35	7	2	5	0	9
Rural or village	All trades	443	109	93	74	8	96	52	28	46	19	22	9	29	46	9	3	3	3	22
	Farmers	1,224	132	89	66	3	94	38	16	31	14	15	2	17	30	4	1	1	1	10
All	All trades	911	128	92	75	17	95	58	40	46	22	23	24	48	55	21	6	7	7	3
	Farmers	1,284	131	89	66	4	94	47	17	32	14	15	3	18	30	4	1	1	1	10

Table 10.4 Changing ownership of goods in town and country

	<i>Saucepans (%)</i>						<i>Earthenware (%)</i>						<i>Books (%)</i>					
	1675	1685	1695	1705	1715	1725	1675	1685	1695	1705	1715	1725	1675	1685	1695	1705	1715	1725
London	11	36	43	57	55	73	14	19	33	52	59	75	18	17	19	41	34	56
Major town	3	3	8	10	13	35	37	26	39	44	54	74	23	23	16	13	23	30
Other town	2	7	5	8	31	37	36	38	35	26	54	74	18	22	24	23	23	42
Rural/village	1	2	5	5	9	12	26	26	34	34	43	51	18	18	16	16	17	13

	<i>Clocks (%)</i>					<i>Pictures (%)</i>					<i>Looking-glasses (%)</i>							
	1675	1685	1695	1705	1715	1725	1675	1685	1695	1705	1715	1725	1675	1685	1695	1705	1715	1725
London	11	15	19	24	52	51	9	26	21	57	60	60	58	74	79	81	91	80
Major town	7	3	8	28	33	26	30	20	32	49	60	48	50	59	47	67	62	61
Other town	17	16	19	15	31	43	21	24	21	6	43	47	36	45	49	51	69	74
Rural/village	8	8	13	19	29	31	2	3	3	5	9	10	11	16	20	25	30	28

	<i>Window curtains (%)</i>					<i>China (%)</i>					<i>Utensils for hot drinks (%)</i>							
	1675	1685	1695	1705	1715	1725	1675	1685	1695	1705	1715	1725	1675	1685	1695	1705	1715	1725
London	23	30	43	39	60	62	0	0	0	7	33	35	0	0	2	7	22	60
Major town	20	20	13	31	33	52	0	0	11	13	13	9	0	0	3	3	12	22
Other town	6	13	17	11	29	26	0	7	8	8	17	11	0	0	2	0	17	16
Rural/village	4	5	5	6	7	10	0	1	1	2	2	4	0	0	0	1	3	6

Table 10.5 Changing ownership of goods

	<i>No. of inventories</i>	<i>Tables</i>	<i>Cooking pots</i>	<i>Sauce-pans</i>	<i>Pewter dishes</i>	<i>Pewter plates</i>	<i>Earthen-ware</i>	<i>Books</i>	<i>Clocks</i>	<i>Pictures</i>	<i>Looking-glasses</i>	<i>Table linen</i>	<i>Window curtains</i>	<i>Knives and forks</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Utensils for hot drinks</i>	<i>Silver or gold</i>	
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
1675	520	87	66	2	94	39	9	27	18	9	7	22	43	7	1	0	0	23
1685	520	88	68	6	93	46	18	27	18	9	8	28	45	10	1	1	0	21
1695	497	89	69	8	93	44	21	34	18	14	9	31	41	11	3	2	1	24
1705	520	90	71	11	93	47	34	36	19	20	14	36	41	12	4	4	2	23
1715	455	91	74	17	95	56	42	47	21	33	24	44	44	19	6	8	7	29
1725	390	91	76	23	91	55	45	57	22	34	21	40	37	21	10	9	15	21
All	2,902	89	70	11	93	48	27	37	19	19	13	33	42	13	4	4	4	23

Table 10.6 Regional change in ownership of goods

	<i>Books (%)</i>						<i>Earthenware (%)</i>					
	1675	1685	1695	1705	1715	1725	1675	1685	1695	1705	1715	1725
London area	18	15	19	38	31	52	15	18	33	46	57	74
North-east England	9	9	12	8	14	–	23	18	22	28	38	–
East Kent	28	25	29	25	23	28	38	49	62	52	62	88
Cambridgeshire	11	12	6	18	14	9	11	14	28	42	43	55
North-west England	17	26	20	18	25	15	82	74	82	69	80	65
Hampshire	29	26	23	18	–	–	14	8	14	15	–	–
North-west Midlands	22	15	15	11	17	9	20	12	15	14	18	20
Cumbria	14	17	15	17	22	15	11	18	18	22	29	38

	<i>Pictures (%)</i>						<i>Utensils for hot drinks (%)</i>					
	1675	1685	1695	1705	1715	1725	1675	1685	1695	1705	1715	1725
London area	54	69	79	77	89	78	0	0	2	6	22	57
North-east England	26	45	42	48	58	–	0	0	5	2	9	–
East Kent	37	31	48	48	52	68	0	2	0	3	16	15
Cambridgeshire	6	18	18	42	34	45	0	0	0	2	0	12
North-west England	20	28	35	32	38	34	0	0	0	2	2	3
Hampshire	18	15	20	23	–	–	0	0	0	0	–	–
North-west Midlands	11	8	14	14	29	11	0	0	0	0	2	3
Cumbria	3	6	6	8	9	3	0	0	0	0	2	0

Table 10.7 Social position and ownership of goods

<i>Social status</i>	<i>No. of inventories</i>	<i>Mean Total inventory £</i>	<i>value Household goods £</i>	<i>Tables %</i>	<i>Cooking pots %</i>	<i>Sauce-pans %</i>	<i>Pewter %</i>	<i>Pewter dishes %</i>	<i>Pewter plates %</i>	<i>Earthen-ware %</i>	<i>Books %</i>	<i>Clocks %</i>	<i>Pictures %</i>	<i>Looking-glasses %</i>	<i>Table linen %</i>	<i>Window curtains %</i>	<i>Knives and forks %</i>	<i>China %</i>	<i>Utensils for hot drinks %</i>	<i>Silver %</i>
Gentry	122	320	55	93	84	13	93	55	43	39	39	51	33	62	60	26	11	6	7	61
Trades of high status; clergy; professions	152	193	39	97	75	11	95	54	40	53	45	34	35	62	63	21	7	11	7	51
Trades of intermediate status	344	157	32	93	77	25	94	62	50	49	24	25	29	56	58	29	11	9	10	38
Yeomen; large farmers	952	165	23	91	69	5	95	41	20	33	18	19	4	21	35	5	1	1	1	13
Trades of low status	435	92	19	92	74	12	96	56	31	42	17	18	15	37	50	12	3	3	4	23
Husbandmen; small farmers	332	32	8	83	57	2	89	33	9	28	4	4	0	9	16	2	0	0	1	2
Labourers	28	16	5	79	79	11	89	57	14	43	4	0	4	4	18	4	0	4	0	0
Widows and spinsters	217	82	18	77	66	12	89	47	22	33	18	13	12	36	46	17	4	4	2	37
Tradesmen; trade unknown	56	115	31	98	82	27	88	55	32	50	32	29	32	57	61	38	9	11	13	46
Occupation or status unknown	264	62	17	83	70	16	88	48	31	27	17	14	18	36	40	16	5	5	6	23
Total	2,902	128	23	89	70	11	93	48	27	37	19	19	13	33	42	13	4	4	4	23

Table 10.8 Ownership of goods by selected occupation

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>No. of inventories</i>	<i>Mean Total inventory £</i>	<i>value House-hold goods £</i>	<i>Tables %</i>	<i>Cooking pots %</i>	<i>Sauce-pans %</i>	<i>Pewter %</i>	<i>Pewter dishes %</i>	<i>Pewter plates %</i>	<i>Earthen-ware %</i>	<i>Books %</i>	<i>Clocks %</i>	<i>Pictures %</i>	<i>Looking-glasses %</i>	<i>Table linen %</i>	<i>Window curtains %</i>	<i>Knives and forks %</i>	<i>China %</i>	<i>Utensils for hot drinks %</i>	<i>Silver %</i>
Shoemakers	45	63	17	91	64	8	93	58	33	51	16	8	8	38	47	2	2	4	2	16
Tailors	32	56	16	91	78	16	100	69	41	44	22	16	16	34	44	6	0	0	13	17
Carpenters	32	70	18	90	81	6	97	56	22	38	9	16	3	22	56	13	0	0	0	19
Weavers	48	85	13	88	67	8	96	48	19	44	15	17	2	27	29	4	0	0	2	8
Blacksmiths	49	56	15	82	63	14	90	41	18	35	10	22	8	33	39	12	0	4	0	8
Butchers	37	129	24	97	76	8	97	59	41	32	16	19	19	46	59	11	0	3	3	43
Shopkeepers	87	124	29	98	86	25	95	64	53	48	37	25	34	67	68	40	15	13	11	45
Innkeepers and victuallers	101	151	43	99	81	37	98	72	67	57	19	30	39	70	65	40	21	9	17	46
Mariners	40	85	30	98	70	8	98	68	45	60	18	25	48	70	73	20	3	23	25	60
Merchants	16*	223	46	100	75	6	81	44	38	56	50	38	44	75	56	38	19	25	19	75
Drapers and mercers	21*	303	34	95	81	19	95	43	38	48	43	24	43	67	43	24	5	5	10	43

*Sample too small to be meaningful.

Table 10.9 Ownership of goods by the valuation of the whole inventory

<i>Total inventory valuation</i>	<i>No. of inventories</i>	<i>Tables %</i>	<i>Cooking pots %</i>	<i>Sauce-pans %</i>	<i>Pewter %</i>	<i>Pewter dishes %</i>	<i>Pewter plates %</i>	<i>Earthen-ware %</i>	<i>Books %</i>	<i>Clocks %</i>	<i>Pictures %</i>	<i>Looking-glasses %</i>	<i>Table linen %</i>	<i>Window curtains %</i>	<i>Knives and forks %</i>	<i>China %</i>	<i>Utensils for hot drinks %</i>	<i>Silver %</i>
£		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1-5	84	80	52	7	76	50	20	17	6	0	5	14	19	0	2	1	1	0
6-10	150	81	67	7	86	50	17	28	7	4	9	20	28	6	1	3	3	5
11-25	500	86	67	7	89	48	22	31	11	6	9	27	35	8	1	2	1	11
26-50	552	87	64	10	93	47	23	34	12	11	12	28	39	10	3	3	3	19
51-100	628	90	69	9	93	43	24	39	19	18	11	28	40	11	3	3	4	21
101-250	627	93	78	13	97	49	34	43	26	28	14	41	48	17	5	6	5	31
251-500	234	94	81	15	97	53	38	42	33	44	23	50	60	21	9	7	6	44
Over 500	127	95	85	18	98	50	45	44	46	51	39	61	65	29	15	9	10	67

Table 10.10 Ownership of goods by value of the household goods

<i>Value of household goods</i>	<i>No. of inventories</i>	<i>Tables</i>	<i>Cooking pots</i>	<i>Saucepans</i>	<i>Pewter</i>	<i>Pewter dishes</i>	<i>Pewter plates</i>	<i>Earthen-ware</i>	<i>Books</i>	<i>Clocks</i>	<i>Pictures</i>	<i>Looking-glasses</i>	<i>Table linen</i>	<i>Window curtains</i>	<i>Knives and forks</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Utensils for hot drinks</i>	<i>Silver</i>
£		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1-2	107	61	54	0	66	28	6	23	3	0	0	5	7	0	0	1	0	0
3-5	343	76	56	5	83	38	11	22	7	1	3	10	15	1	1	1	1	2
6-10	598	85	63	5	94	47	18	28	8	6	7	16	29	5	1	2	1	6
11-15	435	92	68	9	94	46	25	38	14	13	7	29	40	9	2	1	1	13
16-25	571	94	73	10	95	50	28	36	18	20	12	31	46	9	2	2	2	23
26-100	772	97	82	18	98	53	42	50	35	39	26	58	64	26	9	8	8	50
Over 100	76	100	91	33	99	59	63	59	3	67	50	84	74	57	29	26	22	84

Table 10.11 Women and men

	<i>No. of inventories</i>	<i>Tables</i>	<i>Cooking pots</i>	<i>Saucepans</i>	<i>Pewter</i>	<i>Earthen-ware</i>	<i>Books</i>	<i>Clocks</i>	<i>Pictures</i>	<i>Looking-glasses</i>	<i>Table linen</i>	<i>Window curtains</i>	<i>Knives and forks</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Utensils for hot drinks</i>	<i>Silver</i>
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Women	430	80	68	13	91	34	19	16	16	36	45	17	4	4	3	34
Men	2472	91	71	10	93	37	19	20	13	32	41	12	4	4	4	22
All	2902	89	70	11	93	37	19	19	13	33	13	42	4	4	4	23

Table 10.12 Women and men in the same occupations

	<i>No. of inventories</i>	<i>Tables</i>	<i>Cooking pots</i>	<i>Sauce-pans</i>	<i>Pewter</i>	<i>Earth-ware</i>	<i>Books</i>	<i>Clocks</i>	<i>Pictures</i>	<i>Looking-glasses</i>	<i>Table linen</i>	<i>Window curtains</i>	<i>Knives and forks</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>Utensils for hot drinks</i>	<i>Silver</i>
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Retail trades																
women	31	97	65	32	93	61	32	19	39	58	77	32	13	6	3	48
men	113	93	81	19	94	39	32	25	29	61	63	35	11	8	8	38
Drink trades																
women	9	100	89	33	100	44	11	44	33	89	67	56	22	0	0	56
men	92	98	79	37	97	58	20	28	39	67	64	38	20	10	18	45
Dealers																
women	4	100	75	25	100	50	50	50	75	100	25	25	25	25	25	100
men	39	97	72	8	97	62	18	26	46	69	74	21	3	23	5	56
Services																
women	4	100	100	50	100	100	25	50	75	100	50	100	0	25	25	25
men	12	92	67	33	92	58	17	17	50	58	42	17	0	8	8	42
Crafts																
women	9	89	78	10	100	56	22	22	33	67	78	44	11	22	11	56
men	91	87	71	10	92	34	8	22	7	33	45	12	1	2	1	14
Trade not known																
women	6	83	100	50	83	33	50	33	50	67	50	83	0	0	17	50
men	32	100	88	19	84	50	31	16	25	53	56	28	6	13	13	41
Totals																
women	63	95	79	32	95	57	30	29	43	70	71	46	13	10	8	54
men	379	94	77	20	94	46	21	24	28	56	59	27	9	9	9	39
All	2902	89	70	11	93	37	19	19	13	33	13	42	4	4	4	23