

Statistical bulletin

Births in England and Wales: 2023

Annual live births, stillbirths, maternities, and fertility rates in England and Wales by factors including parent age, ethnicity, deprivation, gestational age, and birthweight.

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To be announced

Notice

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This bulletin contains analysis and data that were previously published in our [Birth characteristics in England and Wales statistical bulletin](#), which has now been discontinued. This is the new location for analysis and data relating to our Births in England and Wales: 2023 release and future releases in this series.

9 January 2025

Following the [Health and Social Care Statistical Outputs consultation](#) commissioned by the [Health and Social Care Statistics Leadership Forum](#), we are improving some of our statistical products, so they are more coherent and efficient. Additionally, we are ensuring that our resources are deployed in producing statistics for maximum possible benefit.

Full details of changes to this product, and our other health and social care products, are available in the [Health and Social Care Statistical Outputs Consultation Response](#). We welcome user feedback on our releases. Please use the contact details on individual publication web pages to share feedback.

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1 . Main points

In 2023:

- There were 591,072 live births in England and Wales, the lowest number of births since 1977 (569,259).
- The total fertility rate (TFR) in England and Wales dropped to 1.44 children per woman, its lowest value since records began in 1938; Wales and the North West of England experienced the largest declines in TFR compared with 2022.
- The average age of fathers increased to 33.8, while mothers' average age remains stable at 30.9 compared with 2022; age-specific fertility rates declined in almost all age groups.
- Stillbirth rates remain stable in England at 3.9 stillbirths per 1,000 births, but in Wales rates have decreased from 4.4 in 2022 to 4.0.
- Stillbirth rates decreased in the Black, Mixed or multiple, and White ethnic groups for England and Wales compared with 2022; however, rates increased in the Asian and "Any other" ethnic groups.
- Boxing Day (26 December) remained the least likely birth date for the 11th year in a row.

2 . Live births

In 2023, there were 591,072 live births in England and Wales, a decrease of 14,407 compared with the previous year (605,479), and the lowest number of live births on record since 1977 (569,259) (Figure 1). It is also the first time the number of live births for England and Wales has dropped below 600,000 since 2002. Records of live births first exceeded 600,000 in 1851 (615,865) and have been recorded below this number for only 11 of the past 172 years.

In more recent trends, there has been an overall decline in births in England and Wales since 2012. Despite a brief increase in live births in 2021, likely because of the effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the number of live births fell again in 2022 and 2023.

In 2023, 563,561 live births occurred in England and 27,374 live births occurred in Wales.

Figure 1: Number of births has dropped below 600,000 for the first time in 21 years

Number of live births, England and Wales, 1838 to 2023

3 . Fertility rates by area

Fertility rates in England and Wales have been in overall decline since 2010 (Figure 2). Between 2022 and 2023, the total fertility rate (TFR) for England and Wales decreased from an average of 1.49 children per woman over their lifetime to 1.44; the lowest rate on record.

Figure 2: Total fertility rate (TFR) at lowest value ever recorded

Total fertility rate, England and Wales, 1938 to 2023

Notes

1. The total fertility rate is the average number of live children that a group of women would bear if they experienced the age-specific fertility rates of the calendar year throughout their childbearing lifespan.

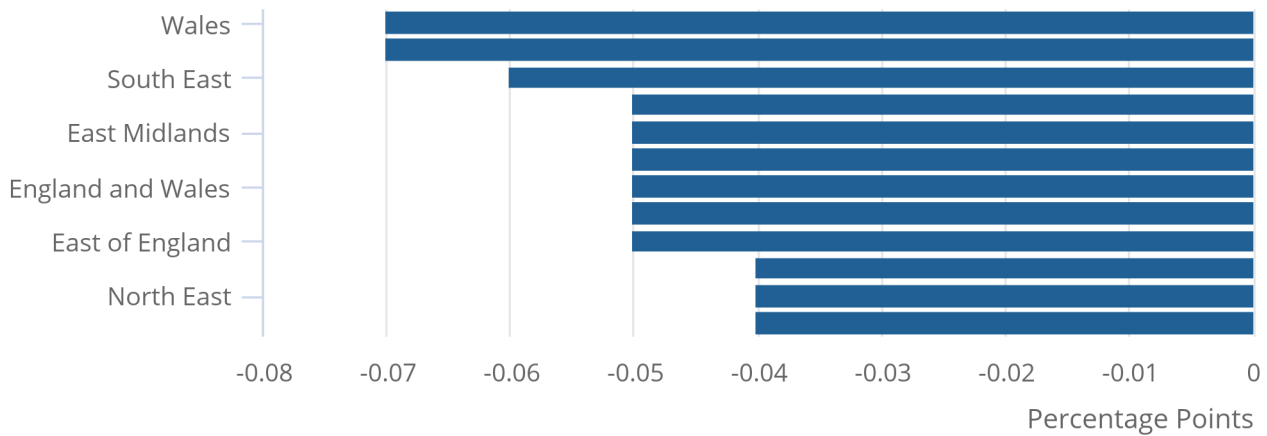
The TFR decreased for all regions of England and Wales, compared with the previous year (Figure 3). Wales and the North West of England saw the largest decrease in TFR (1.46 to 1.39 and 1.53 to 1.46, respectively), whereas London, the North East and the West Midlands saw the smallest decrease (1.39 to 1.35, 1.47 to 1.43, and 1.62 to 1.58, respectively).

Figure 3: Total fertility rate (TFR) has decreased in Wales and all English regions

Total fertility rate, England and Wales, changes from 2022 to 2023

Figure 3: Total fertility rate (TFR) has decreased in Wales and all English regions

Total fertility rate, England and Wales, changes from 2022 to 2023



Source: Births in England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

Figure 4: Total fertility rate (TFR) by local authority district, England and Wales 2023

4 . Fertility rates by parental age

The average age of mothers and fathers has been generally increasing steadily for the last 50 years. For 2023, the average age of mothers remained at 30.9 years. For fathers, it increased from 33.7 years in 2022, to 33.8 years in 2023.

To understand why average parental age is increasing, we can look at age-specific fertility rates (ASFRs). For those aged under 20 years, we see that, despite a slight increase in fertility throughout the 1960s, this age group's ASFR has been dropping steadily for both sexes (Figure 5 and Figure 6). This downward trend is most evident in the 20 to 24 and 25 to 29 age groups for both men and women. Specifically, the ASFR for women aged 20 to 24 years has decreased from 181.6 live births per 1,000 women of this age group in 1964 to 38.6 in 2023 (79% decrease).

Fertility in males aged 30 to 34 years has remained relatively consistent throughout this period, whereas the ASFR for women in the same age group increased steadily from 1976 (57.2 children per 1,000 women) until a peak of 113.4 children per 1,000 women in 2012; the highest rate for this group since the mid-1940s. After 2012, rates began to fall again, reversing this 36-year upward trend. Similarly, men and women in the 35 to 39 age group reached their lowest ASFR in 1977, steadily increasing to peak in 2016 for women (65.6 live births per 1,000 women), and 2012 for men (83.1 live births per 1,000 men).

For parents over the age of 40, the picture is more mixed. Where ASFR for men in their early 30s has remained relatively stable, the most stable group for women was those aged 40 years and over, reaching their peak fertility rate of 16.1 in 2019. The ASFR of women aged 40 years and over decreased to 14.9 in 2023, the lowest since 2014. Reflecting the increase to the average age of fathers in 2023, ASFRs for men have been decreasing in age groups under 45 and remained more stable in older age groups. For men aged 60 years and over, ASFR in 2023 has remained the same for the fourth year in a row, at 0.5.

Overall, our fertility statistics suggest that men and women of all age groups, excluding women aged 40 years and over, are having fewer babies than they were a decade ago. Of those individuals who did have a child born in 2023, they were on average almost a year older than their 2013 counterparts (30.0 to 30.9 for women and 32.8 to 33.8 for men).

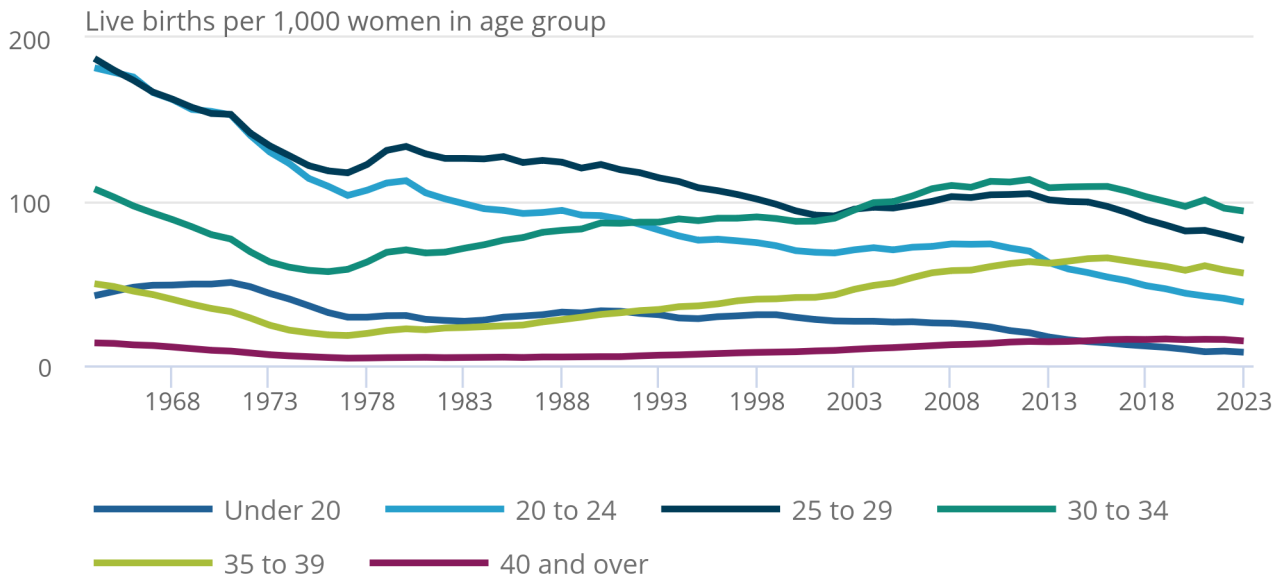
However, it is worth reiterating that ASFR represents a snapshot in time, and the rates may change again in the future. For more information on how fertility rates relate to completed family size, see our article [How is the fertility rate changing in England and Wales?](#)

Figure 5: Age-specific fertility rates for women in England and Wales

Age-specific fertility rate, England and Wales, 1964 to 2023

Figure 5: Age-specific fertility rates for women in England and Wales

Age-specific fertility rate, England and Wales, 1964 to 2023



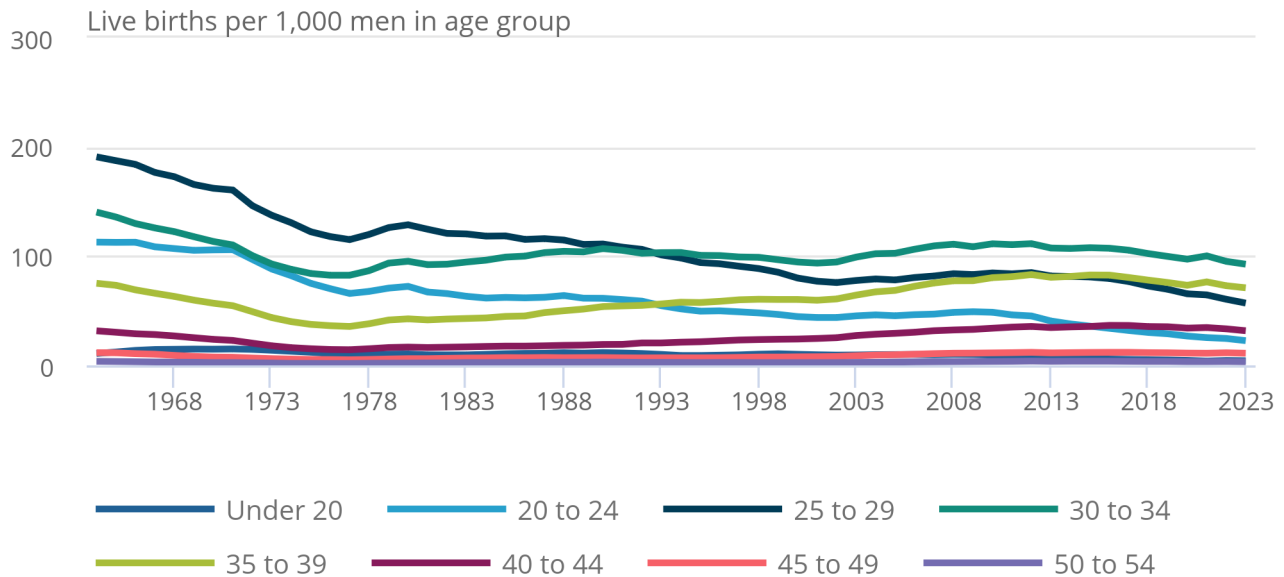
Source: Births in England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

Figure 6: Age-specific fertility rates for men in England and Wales

Age-specific fertility rate, England and Wales, 1964 to 2023

Figure 6: Age-specific fertility rates for men in England and Wales

Age-specific fertility rate, England and Wales, 1964 to 2023



Source: Births in England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Data for men aged 55 to 59 and 60 and over are not included in this figure due to the values being too small to visualise. The values can be found in Table 10 of our [Birth registrations dataset](#).

5 . Stillbirths

The overall rate of stillbirths for England and Wales in 2023 was 4.0 stillbirths per 1,000 total births; no change from 2022. This is likely because of a lack of change in England's stillbirth rates (3.9 in both 2022 and 2023); however, Wales saw a drop of 0.4 points on the previous year, from 4.4 in 2022 to 4.0 in 2023.

Stillbirth rates are mixed when broken down by ethnic group. Stillbirths, per 1,000 total births, decreased in:

- the Black ethnic group (Black African and Black Caribbean and Any other Black background), from 6.5 to 6.3
- the Mixed or multiple ethnic group, from 4.0 to 3.8
- the White ethnic group (White British and White Other), from 3.5 to 3.4

Stillbirths, per 1,000 total births, increased in:

- the Asian ethnic group (Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani and Any other Asian background), from 4.7 to 5.2
- the "Any other ethnic group", from 4.5 to 4.7

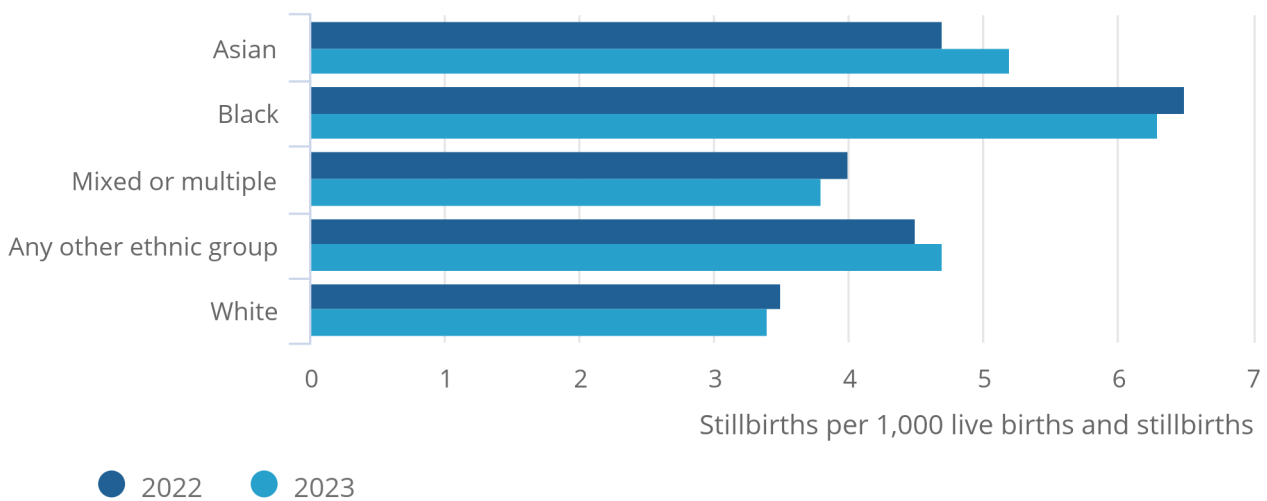
Overall, stillbirth rates for Asian, Black, and "Any other" ethnic groups remain above the England and Wales overall rate.

Figure 7: Stillbirth rate has decreased since 2022 for some ethnicities but increased for others

Stillbirth rate, England and Wales, changes from 2022 to 2023

Figure 7: Stillbirth rate has decreased since 2022 for some ethnicities but increased for others

Stillbirth rate, England and Wales, changes from 2022 to 2023



Source: Births in England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

6 . Birth date

In 2023, the date with the most live births was the 28 September, which has been in the top 10 most populous birth dates since 2021. The date with the least live births was the 26 December, known in the UK as Boxing Day, the day following Christmas Day. Boxing Day has seen the lowest number of live births of any date 11 years in succession.

7 . Data on births

[Births in England and Wales: birth registrations](#)

Dataset | Released 28 October 2024

Annual live births, stillbirths, maternities, and fertility rates in England and Wales by factors including registration, place of birth, and deprivation.

[Births in England and Wales: linked births](#)

Dataset | Released 28 October 2024

Annual live births and stillbirths in England and Wales by factors including socio-economic classification, gestational age, birthweight, and ethnicity.

8 . Glossary

Live birth

A baby showing signs of life at birth.

Age-specific fertility rate

Age-specific fertility rate (ASFR) is the number of live births to mothers or fathers of a particular age per 1,000 women or men of that age in the population. Useful for comparing fertility of women or men at different ages, or women or men of the same age in different populations.

Total fertility rate

Total fertility rate (TFR) is the average number of live children that a group of women would have if they experienced the age-specific fertility rates for the calendar year in question throughout their childbearing lifespan. It is a better measure of trends than the number of live births, since it accounts for the size and age structure of the female population of childbearing age. The rate provides a timely measure of fertility levels and can be affected by changes in the [timing of childbearing](#), [completed family size](#) and the population structure. More information is available in our article [How is the fertility rate changing in England and Wales?](#)

Stillbirth

A stillbirth is a baby born after 24 or more weeks completed gestation and which did not, at any time, breathe or show signs of life. On 1 October 1992 the [Still-Birth \(Definition\) Act 1992](#) came into force, altering the definition of a stillbirth to 24 or more weeks completed gestation, instead of 28 or more weeks completed gestation.

Stillbirth rate

The stillbirth rate is defined as the number of stillbirths per 1,000 live births and stillbirths.

Standardised mean age

The standardised mean (average) age (for example, at birth or marriage) is a measure that eliminates the impact of any changes in the distribution of the population by age and therefore enables trends over time to be analysed. Standardised means are calculated using rates per 1,000 population by single year of age of mother or father.

A more complete [glossary](#) is available from our [User guide to birth statistics methodology](#).

9 . Data sources and quality

Measuring the data

The birth registrations dataset represents live births and stillbirths occurring in the calendar year, plus a small number of late registrations from the previous year.

Birth statistics represent births that occur and are then registered in England and Wales. Figures are derived from information recorded when live births and stillbirths are registered as part of civil registration, which is a legal requirement. Figures include mothers and fathers whose usual residence is outside England and Wales. These data represent the most complete data source available.

The registration of births is a service carried out by the Local Registration Service in partnership with the General Register Office (GRO), in England and Wales. Birth registration is linked to the NHS birth notification within the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to obtain the age of the mother where this was missing on the birth registration. It also enables the analysis of further characteristics such as birthweight, ethnicity of the baby and gestation of live births.

Following previous procedures on birth statistics, when referencing England and Wales in this bulletin, the data in the corresponding data tables is "England, Wales and Elsewhere". In this context, "Elsewhere" refers to a birth to a mother whose usual residence is outside England and Wales.

Public consultation and our data

The ONS, together with the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, and UK Health Security Agency conducted a [public consultation into our health statistics](#), which closed in March 2024. This consultation collected views on how these organisations' health statistics are used, including a proposal to combine and reformat the ONS' annual birth statistics, improving three bulletins: [Births in England and Wales](#), [Birth characteristics in England and Wales](#), and [Births by parents' country of birth, England and Wales](#).

All of the data from our [Births in England and Wales](#) and [Birth characteristics in England and Wales](#) bulletins have been preserved, alongside the addition of some new statistics, and data are now presented in a long-format to aid with more efficient analysis. These data are now published in two data series: Births in England and Wales: birth registrations and Births in England and Wales: linked births. A lookup table has been added to the data downloads, explaining where statistics from previous editions can be found in the new table format. Our [Births by parents' country of birth, England and Wales](#) bulletin will be published separately this year.

The ONS, Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, and UK Health Security Agency will publish a full response to the consultation, summarising feedback on all proposals, later this year. Further improvements will be made in future releases.

More quality and methodology information

More quality and methodology information on the strengths, limitations and accuracy of the data is available in our [Births Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#).

Our [User guide to birth statistics methodology](#) provides further information on data quality, legislation and procedures relating to births, and includes a glossary of terms.

10 . Related links

[How is the fertility rate changing in England and Wales?](#)

Article | Released 28 October 2024

An explanation of how we measure fertility, how the number of births and fertility rates have changed, and some factors that affect fertility.

[Births in England and Wales: 2022 \(refreshed populations\)](#)

Bulletin | Released 23 February 2024

Annual summary statistics of live births, stillbirths and fertility rates.

[Birth characteristics in England and Wales: 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 17 May 2024

Annual live births in England and Wales by sex, birthweight, gestational age, ethnicity and month, maternities by place of birth and with multiple births, and stillbirths by age of parents and calendar quarter.

[Births by parents' country of birth, England and Wales: 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 17 August 2023

Annual statistics on live births including countries of birth for non-UK-born mothers and fathers.

[Child and infant mortality in England and Wales: 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 31 May 2024

Stillbirths, infant and childhood deaths occurring annually in England and Wales, and associated risk factors.

11 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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