Office for National Statistics

Statistical bulletin

Births in England and Wales: 2024 (refreshed populations)

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

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Correction

27 August 2025 11:37

Because of a typing error, the start of total fertility rate (TFR) decline was corrected from 2012 to 2010.

27 August 2025 15:14

We have replaced references to "age-sex fertility rate" with "age-specific fertility rate" throughout this bulletin. We have made this correction because of a human error.

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1 . Main points

- In 2024, the total fertility rate (TFR) was 1.41 children per woman for England and Wales compared to 1.42 in 2023. The 2024 TFR represents the lowest value on record for the 3rd year in a row.
- Two regions experienced an increase in the TFR, the first regional increases since 2021; the West Midlands increased from 1.56 in 2023 to 1.59 in 2024, London increased from 1.33 in 2023 to 1.35 in 2024.
- The standardised mean ages (SMAs) of mothers and fathers both increased by 0.1 years in 2024, placing mothers' SMA at 31.0 and fathers' SMA at 33.9.
- Mothers living in London had the highest standardised mean age across all English regions and Wales (32.5 years) in 2024.
- The age-specific fertility rate for the age group 25 to 29 has decreased the most for both mothers and fathers.

In July 2025, revised population estimates for mid-2022 and mid-2023 were released. Where a back series has been included in this bulletin, we have published rates using these revised estimates. Therefore, numbers in this publication may not align to previous publications.

2 . Total fertility rate

By country

The total fertility rate (TFR) for England and Wales has been in decline since 2010 (Figure 1). Despite seeing an increase in number of births in 2024, the TFR has continued to decrease - from 1.42 children per woman in 2023 to 1.41 in 2024. As the TFR considers changes in population size, we see that the increased adult population in 2024 outweighs the increase in births, resulting in a decrease in the TFR. Since 1938, an increase in births at the same time as a decrease in the TFR has only been observed six times, with four out of six occurring since 2011.

Crude birth rate, general fertility rate and maternity rate have also all decreased in England and Wales. See Section 6: Glossary for definitions.

Figure 1: The total fertility rate decreased in 2024 despite an increase in live births

The total fertility rate and live birth counts, England and Wales, 1939 to 2024

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In England, the TFR has remained stationary for the first time since separate values for England and Wales were first published in 2013, at 1.42. In Wales, there was a decrease of -0.03 from 1.38 in 2023 to 1.35 in 2024.

By region and local authority

Despite four out of nine English regions reporting an increase in the number of live births in 2024, this was not reflected in the TFRs. The West Midlands and London were the only regions where the TFR increased (1.56 in 2023 to 1.59 in 2024 and 1.33 in 2023 to 1.35 in 2024, respectively), while the North West experienced no change, and the remaining regions saw a decrease.

The majority of Local Authorities (LAs) across England and Wales experienced a decrease in the TFR (58.4%), while 33.1% saw an increase, and 8.5% saw no change (Figure 2). In England, Birmingham experienced the largest increase of TFR at 0.14, whereas Maldon experienced the largest decrease at -0.22. City of London had the lowest TFR of all LAs (0.32) and has done since 2021. Luton was the LA with the highest TFR at 2.00.

For Wales, Newport had the highest TFR of Welsh LAs in 2024 at 1.64 and has had the highest TFR of all LAs in Wales since 2022. The capital city, Cardiff, had the lowest TFR at 1.19, and has had the lowest TFR of Welsh LAs for the past 10 years, except in 2020. The scale of change in the TFR between 2023 and 2024 was smaller in Wales than in England; the largest increase was only 0.07 (Ilse of Anglesey) and the largest tied decrease was -0.11 (Carmarthenshire and Caerphilly).

Figure 2: In 2024, the total fertility rate decreased in the majority of English and Welsh local authorities

The total fertility rate by local authority district, England and Wales, 2023 to 2024

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3 . Standardised mean age and true birth order

Standardised mean age

The standardised mean age (SMA) represents the average age of mothers and fathers, taking into account the age distribution for women and men of reproductive age in the general population (see SMA calculation in the user guide). SMA has increased for mothers from 30.9 years in 2023, to 31.0 in 2024. Fathers' SMA saw the same size increase, from 33.8 in 2023 to 33.9 in 2024. Whilst this was only an increase of 0.1, in the last two decades SMA has increased by 2 years for mothers, and just under 2 years for fathers – in 2004, the SMA of mothers was 29.0, and of fathers was 32.1. For mothers, London has the highest SMA (32.5) which was 1.2 years more than the next highest region, a trend consistent with recent years. Only two other regions were above the mean for England and Wales in 2024, the South East (31.3) and the South West (31.2). The lowest SMA for mothers was 30.0 in the North East region. From 2023 to 2024, the SMA for mothers increased for all regions except for the East Midlands and West Midlands which both saw no change.

True birth order

True birth order refers to whether the baby is the mother's first, second, third or fourth born. Fifth births or more are not included in the analysis. For 2024, the SMA of mothers in England and Wales having their first born (29.4) was noticeably lower than those having later born children (31.8 for second, 32.9 for third, and 33.9 for fourth), suggesting that mothers on average tend to leave larger gaps between their first and second children than for subsequent children (Figure 3). The SMA of mothers also becomes less variable for children born later in the birth order – the regional difference between the highest and lowest SMA for mothers of firstborns was 3.0 years, contrasted with those having their fourth child where the difference was only 2.2 years.

London had the highest SMA of any region for all true birth orders (32.5), and it was the only region where the SMA for first time mothers (31.1) was above the average for all births in England and Wales (31.0).

England, its regions, and Wales all experienced an increase in SMA for first time mothers from 2023 to 2024, apart from the East Midlands which had a decrease of -0.1, and West Midlands and South East which saw no change.

Figure 3: The difference in standardised mean age of women is highest between mothers of first and second born children. London mothers have a consistently higher SMA than other English regions and Wales

Standardised mean age of mothers by true birth order and region, England and Wales, 2024

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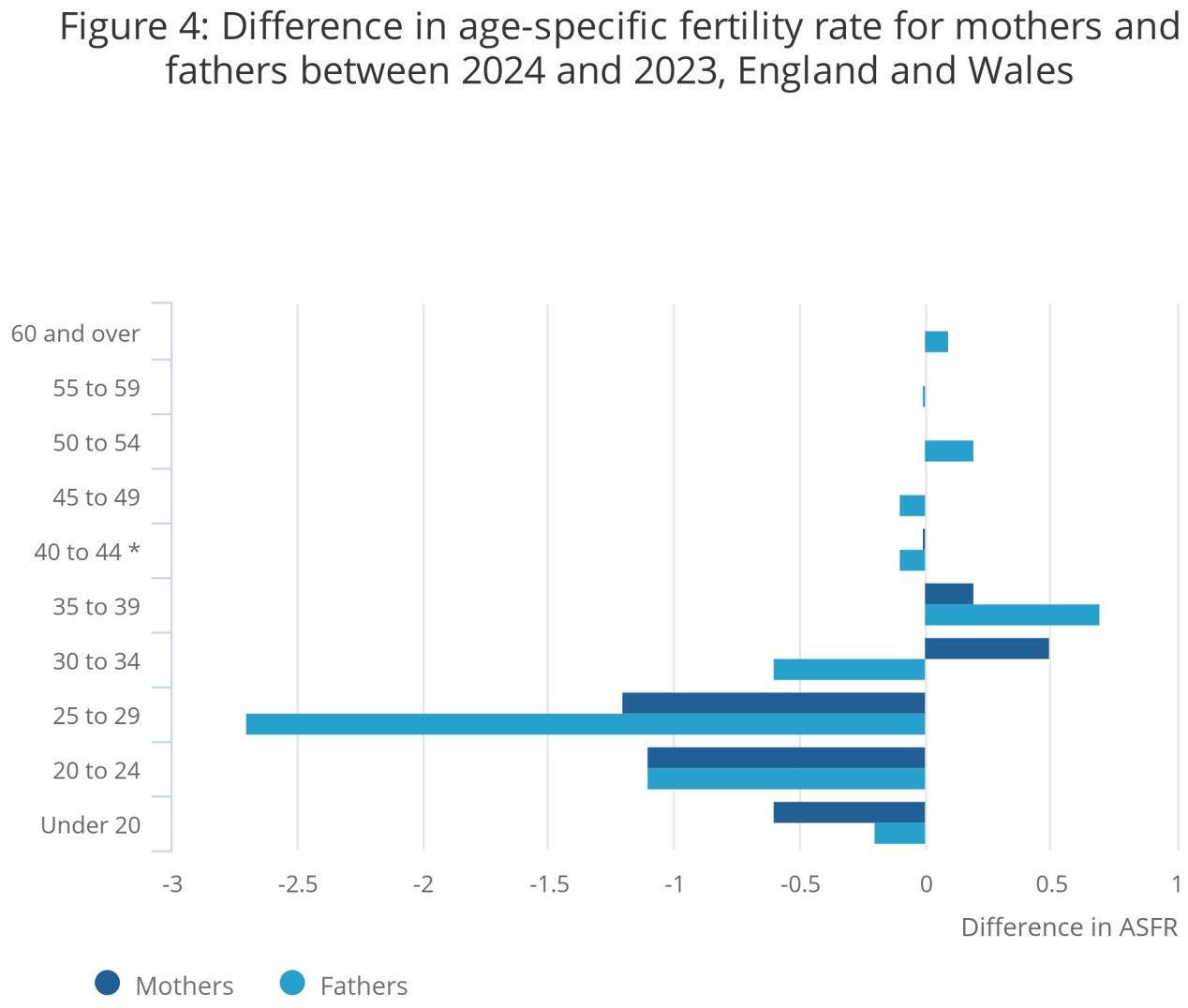
4 . Age-specific fertility rates

Age-specific fertility rates (ASFRs) are used to understand fertility rates for men and women of different age groups. In 2024, ASFRs decreased for mothers in age groups 25 to 29 and under, increased for age groups between 30 and 39, and saw no change in 40 and over. ASFRs for fathers had a more varied pattern, decreasing in age groups 45 to 49 and below, apart from 35 to 39 which saw the largest increase (0.7) in ASFR. The largest decreases in ASFRs for both mothers and fathers were in the 25 to 29 age category (-1.2 and -2.7 respectively). The largest increase for mothers' ASFR was in ages 30 to 34 (0.5).

Figure 4: Difference in age-specific fertility rate for mothers and fathers between 2024 and 2023, England and Wales



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

Notes:

1. *40 and over for mothers.

5 . Data on births

Births in England and Wales: birth registrations
Dataset | Released 1 July 2025
Annual live births, stillbirths, maternities, and fertility rates in England and Wales by factors including registration, place of birth, and deprivation.

6 . Glossary

Age-specific fertility rate (ASFR)

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.

Crude birth rate

The number of live births in a year per 1,000 mid-year population.

General fertility rate (GFR)

The number of live births in a year per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 years. Measure of current fertility levels.

Maternity rate

The number of maternities per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 years.

Standardised mean age (SMA)

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 female population by single year of age of mother (see SMA calculation in the user guide).

Total fertility rate (TFR)

The TFR is the average number of live children a group of women would have if they experienced the age-specific fertility rates for the calendar year in question throughout their childbearing lifespan.

True birth order

The number assigned to a birth based on the number of previous live births to that mother, counting all births inside or outside of marriage.

7 . 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 are "England, Wales and elsewhere". In this context, "elsewhere" refers to a birth to a mother whose usual residence is outside England and Wales.

Population estimates impact on rates and timeliness

For the foreseeable future, publication of counts of live births, stillbirths and maternities, and stillbirth rates will be published in the first instance, with fertility rates including total fertility rate and age-specific fertility rates being published as soon as mid-year population estimates are made available. All workbooks will be published in the same data series as this publication.

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 where appropriate to aid with more efficient analysis. These data are now published in three data series: Births in England and Wales: birth registrations, Births in England and Wales: linked births, and Births in England and Wales: births by parents' country of birth. A lookup table has been added to the data downloads, explaining where statistics from previous editions can be found in the new table format

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

More quality and methodology information

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created 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.

Accredited official statistics

These accredited official statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and should be labelled "Accredited official statistics".

For more on accredited official statistics, read the Office for Statistics Regulation guidance.

8 . Related links

Births in England and Wales: 2024
Statistical bulletin | 1 July 2025
Annual live births, stillbirths, maternities, and stillbirth rates, in England and Wales by factors including parent age, parent country of birth, ethnicity, deprivation, gestational age and birthweight.

Conceptions in England and Wales: 2022
Statistical bulletin | 9 July 2025
Annual statistics on conceptions to residents of England and Wales, with numbers and rates by age group including women aged under 18 years.

Child and infant mortality in England and Wales: 2023
Statistical bulletin | 22 April 2025
Stillbirths, infant and childhood deaths occurring annually in England and Wales, and associated risk factors.

Quarterly births in England and Wales, provisional
Dataset | 4 July 2025
Quarterly live births, stillbirths, maternities and stillbirth rates by gestational age, age of mother, ethnicity, and area deprivation, for England and Wales.

9 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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