

Statistical bulletin

Births by parents' country of birth, England and Wales: 2015

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



Contact:
Elizabeth McLaren
vsob@ons.gsi.gov.uk
+44 (0)1329 444110

Release date:
25 August 2016

Next release:
August to September 2017
(provisional)

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1 . Main points

Over a quarter (27.5%) of live births in England and Wales in 2015 were to women born outside the UK, the highest level on record.

The small increase in live births between 2014 and 2015 resulted from a 2.5% rise in births to women born outside the UK; births to UK born women decreased by 0.4%.

The estimated total fertility rate (TFR) for UK born women remained unchanged, with 1.76 children per woman in 2015; for non-UK born women the estimated TFR decreased to 2.08 compared with 2.10 in 2014.

Poland was the most common country of birth for mothers born outside the UK, followed by Pakistan and India.

Pakistan was the most common country of birth for fathers born outside the UK, followed by Poland and India.

2 . Statistician's quote

“The rising percentage of births to women born outside the UK is largely due to foreign born women making up an increasing share of the female population of childbearing age in England and Wales. Part of the reason for this is that migrants are more likely to be working-age adults rather than children or older people. Alongside their increasing share of the population, higher fertility among women born outside the UK has also had an impact.”

Elizabeth McLaren, Vital Statistics Outputs Branch, Office for National Statistics. Follow [@StatsLiz](#) on Twitter.

3 . Things you need to know

Important information for interpreting these statistics:

- birth statistics represent births which occurred in England and Wales in the calendar year, but include a very small number of late registrations from the previous year
- figures are compiled from information supplied when births are registered as part of civil registration, a legal requirement
- country of birth is collected at birth registration, unlike ethnicity or migration history; not all women born outside the UK will be recent in-migrants; similarly, the UK born will include the children of earlier in-migrants (the second and third generation)

4 . Overall rise in births driven by women born outside the UK

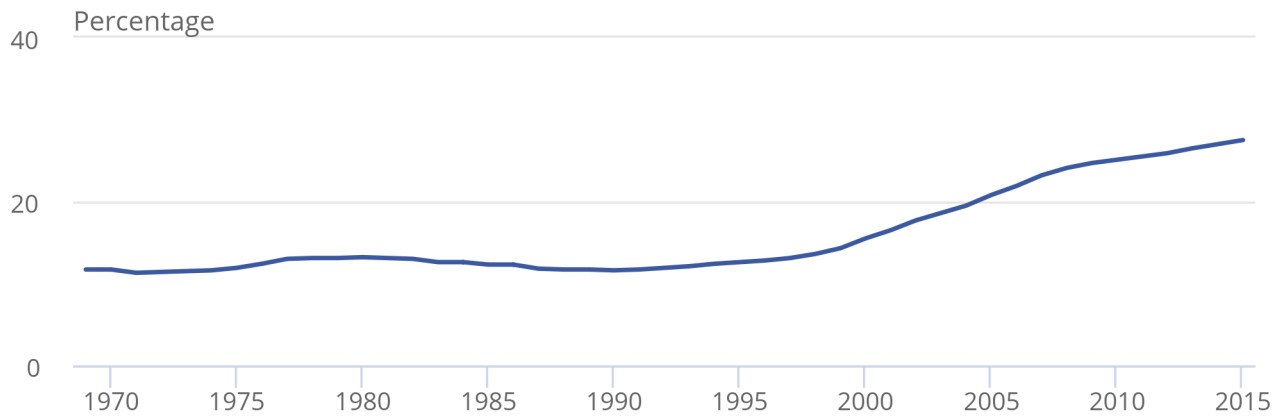
Births to women born outside the UK accounted for 27.5% of all live births in 2015. This is the highest level since 1969, when information on parents' country of birth was first collected at birth registration (Figure 1). In 2015, there were 192,227 live births to women born outside the UK and 505,588 to UK born women. A very small number of birth registrations have no country of birth stated for the mother.

Figure 1: Percentage of live births to women born outside the UK, 1969 to 2015

England and Wales

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England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

In 2015, the total number of live births in England and Wales increased by 0.4% to 697,852, compared with 2014. This increase resulted from a 2.5% rise in live births to women born outside the UK; live births to UK born women decreased by 0.4%.

5 . Fertility levels decline for women born outside the UK

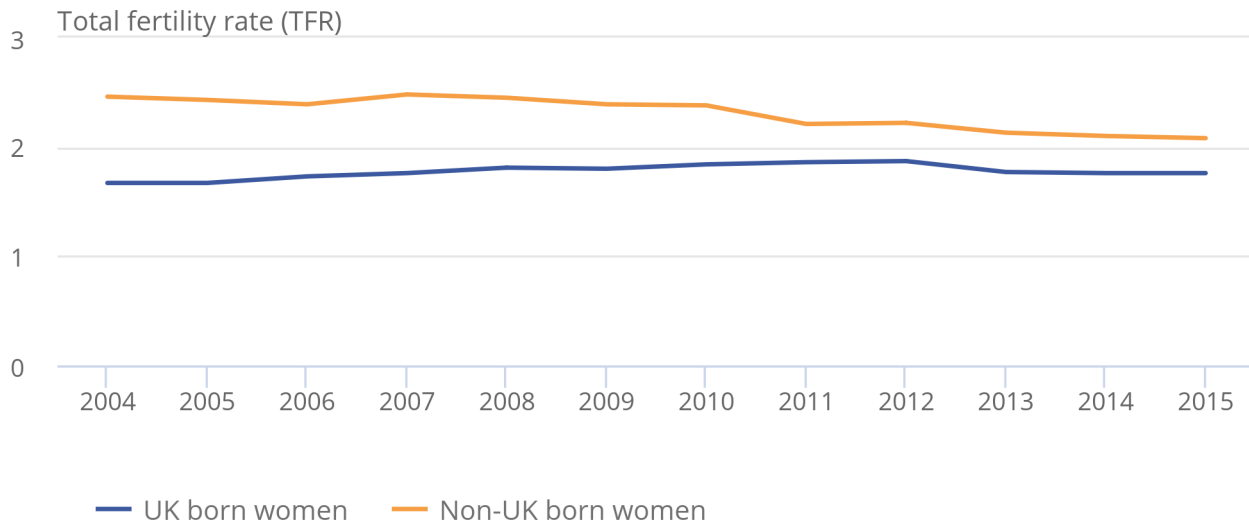
In 2015, the estimated total fertility rate (TFR) in England and Wales remained unchanged for UK born women compared with 2014, but continued its gradual decline for non-UK born women (Figure 2). The TFR for UK born women was 1.76 children per woman in 2015. For non-UK born women the TFR in 2015 was 2.08, the lowest value on record based on estimates available back to 2004.

Figure 2: Estimated total fertility rate (TFR) for UK born and non-UK born women, 2004 to 2015

England and Wales

Figure 2: Estimated total fertility rate (TFR) for UK born and non-UK born women, 2004 to 2015

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. The TFRs for 2012 to 2015 have been calculated using the latest Annual Population Survey datasets reweighted in 2016. Figures may therefore differ from those previously published.

TFRs provide a timely measure of fertility levels; they are sensitive to changes in the timing of births within women's lives. For example, immigrant women typically have low fertility prior to immigration, followed by high fertility immediately after immigration.

The TFR depends on the size of the female population of childbearing age and the number of births. The TFR for UK born women remained stable between 2014 and 2015 – a consequence of relatively small decreases (less than 1%) in the number of births to UK born women, and the size of the UK born female population of childbearing age (Table 1).

The fall in the non-UK born TFR in 2015 compared with 2014, was driven by the increased size of the non-UK born female population aged 15 to 44. This outweighed the increase in the number of births to non-UK born women.

Table 1: Live births and the size of the female population aged 15 to 44, UK and non-UK born women, 2014 and 2015

England and Wales

	Live births		Population	
	UK born women	Non-UK born women	UK born women aged 15 to 44	Non-UK born women aged 15 to 44
2014	507,587	187,610	8,778,530	2,348,355
2015	505,588	192,227	8,702,515	2,447,139
% change	-0.4%	+2.5%	-0.9%	+4.2%

Source: Office for National Statistics

The majority of women of childbearing age living in England and Wales were born in the UK (78% in 2015). As a result, UK born women continue to make the largest contribution to the overall TFR, by a large margin.

TFRs for women born in different parts of the world but living in England and Wales vary widely, from very low levels such as those for women born in Australasia (TFR of 1.3 in 2011) to much higher levels such as those for women born in North Africa (3.9 in 2011). These TFRs for individual countries of birth are calculated using population denominators from the 2011 Census.

6 . Most common countries of birth for foreign born mothers and fathers

Poland, Pakistan and India were the 3 most common countries of birth for women born outside the UK who gave birth in 2015 (Table 2). Between 2001 and 2006, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh were consistently the 3 most common countries. However, in 2007, Poland replaced Bangladesh as the third most common country, rising to second place in 2008 and first place in 2010.

Table 2: 10 most common countries of birth for non-UK born mothers and fathers, 2015

England and Wales

	Country of birth of mother	Number of live births	Percentage of all live births	Country of birth of father	Number of live births	Percentage of all live births
1	Poland	22,928	3.3	Pakistan	19,236	2.9
2	Pakistan	17,342	2.5	Poland	17,704	2.7
3	India	13,780	2.0	India	13,798	2.1
4	Romania	8,734	1.3	Bangladesh	8,699	1.3
5	Bangladesh	7,752	1.1	Nigeria	8,339	1.3
6	Nigeria	6,829	1.0	Romania	7,857	1.2
7	Lithuania	4,872	0.7	Somalia	4,286	0.6
8	Germany	4,667	0.7	Germany	3,972	0.6
9	Somalia	4,636	0.7	South Africa	3,618	0.5
10	South Africa	3,537	0.5	Lithuania	3,512	0.5
	Outside the UK	192,227	27.5	Outside the UK	179,795	27.2

Source: Office for National Statistics

1. Figures include mothers and fathers whose usual residence is outside England and Wales.
2. Total outside the UK excludes births where the mother or father's country of birth was not stated.
3. The percentage of births to fathers born outside the UK has been calculated excluding births where the father's country of birth was not stated - the vast majority of these were births registered solely by the mother where no information on the father is provided.
4. Figures for fathers include a very small number of births to second female parents. See Quality and methodology note 8.

The number of live births in England and Wales, to Polish-born mothers, was 12.5 times higher in 2015 than in 2004, when Poland joined the EU. [Poland accounts for more than half of the total population of the A8 countries which joined the EU in 2004](#) (Poland, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia). This partially explains why the Polish-born population in the UK has increased so much more than other countries.

Romania joined the EU in 2007; the number of live births to Romanian born mothers was nearly 7 times higher in 2015 compared with 2007.

These increases in births to Polish and Romanian born mothers are mainly driven by the [increasing size of the Polish and Romanian born population living in the UK](#).

The 10 most common countries of birth for non-UK born fathers in 2015 are the same as those for non-UK born mothers, with some differences in rankings.

The 10 most common non-UK countries of birth of mother have remained fairly similar across the 10-year period since 2004, with 6 countries remaining constant: Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Germany and Somalia. The United States, Ireland, Ghana and China have appeared in the top 10 over the last decade.

The top 10 most common countries of birth of non-UK born fathers consisted of the same countries between 2008 and 2015, with the exception of Romania, which replaced Ghana in 2012 and Lithuania, which replaced Sri Lanka in 2015 after gradual increases in rankings.

7 . Women born outside the UK are more likely to have babies at older ages

In 2015, the most common age group of both UK born and non-UK born mothers was 30 to 34 years (Figure 3); 20% of UK born mothers were aged 35 and over, compared with 26% of mothers who were born outside the UK.

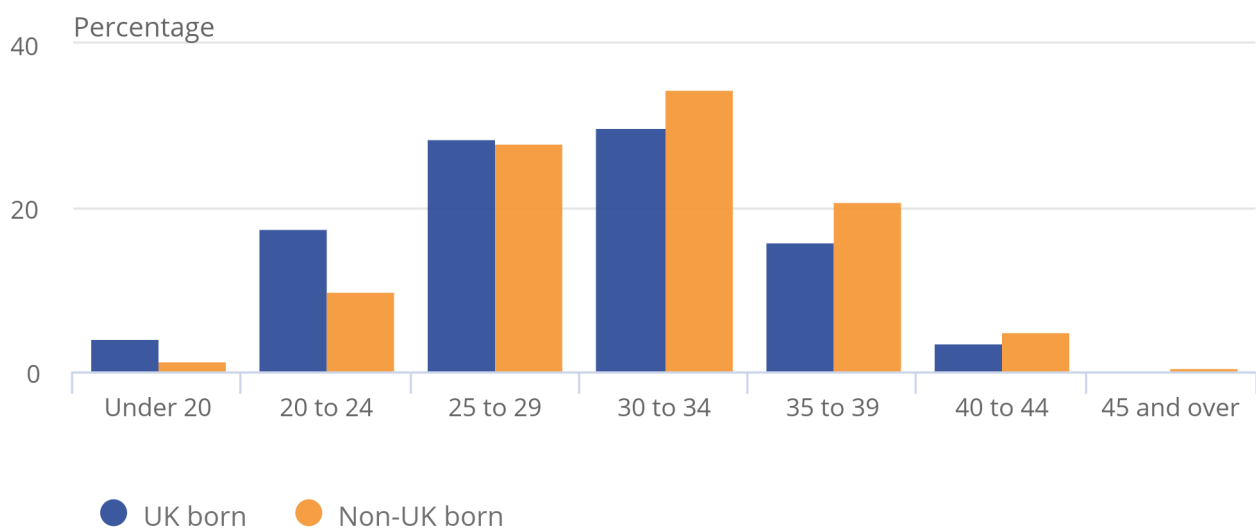
Just over a fifth (22%) of UK born mothers were aged under 25 compared with only 11% of non-UK born mothers; a similar pattern to recent years, reflecting the lower proportion of women aged under 25 in the non-UK born population of childbearing age.

Figure 3: Percentage of live births by age of mother for UK and non-UK born mothers, 2015

England and Wales

Figure 3: Percentage of live births by age of mother for UK and non-UK born mothers, 2015

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

8 . The percentage of births to mothers born outside the UK varies considerably between areas

In 2015, the region with the highest percentage of live births to women born outside the UK was London (58.0%); the North East had the lowest (11.0%). London and the North East have consistently had the highest and lowest percentages respectively since 2001.

Newham has been the local authority with the highest percentage of births to non-UK born women since 2004. In 2015, over three-quarters of births (76.5%) were to non-UK born women. Outside of London, Slough had the highest percentage (62.0%), followed by Luton (56.4%). Slough has had the highest percentage of births to non-UK born women outside of London for over 11 years; Luton has had the second highest percentage since 2007.

In Wales, the percentage of live births to women born outside the UK was 11.4% in 2015. Of the local authorities in Wales, Cardiff had the highest percentage (26.8%) and Caerphilly had the lowest (4.3%).

These variations in the percentage of births to women born outside the UK are due to local area differences in the percentage of women born outside the UK and the diverse fertility levels of migrants born in different countries. The composition of the foreign born population, in terms of individual countries of birth, varies considerably between local authorities.

9 . Rising percentage of live births to foreign born women in the UK

In the UK, the percentage of live births to women born outside the UK rose to 26.3% in 2015, compared with 25.7% in 2014.

In Scotland, 16.3% of live births in 2015 were to women born outside the UK, a small rise from 16.2% in 2014. In Northern Ireland, provisional figures show that 12.6% of live births were to women born outside the UK, down from 12.7% in 2014.

10 . Links to related ONS statistics

More detailed data on [live births by parents' country of birth](#) are available on our website.

International comparisons of live births and the crude birth rate are available in the [Vital Statistics: Population and Health Dataset Tables](#).

[Childbearing of UK and non-UK born women living in the UK, 2011 Census data](#) provides detailed fertility estimates for 2011 for women's individual countries of birth.

Further 2015 birth statistics will be published later in 2016; see the [GOV.UK release calendar](#) for more details.

Special extracts and tabulations of birth data for England and Wales are available to order (subject to legal frameworks, disclosure control, resources and our [charging policy](#), where appropriate). Enquiries should be made to Vital Statistics Outputs Branch (vsob@ons.gsi.gov.uk or telephone: +44 (0)1329 444110). User requested data will be published onto [our website](#).

11 . Quality and methodology

1. This is the first time that detailed country of birth statistics for England and Wales have been published for 2015. The headline figure, 27.5% of [live births in England and Wales in 2015](#) were to foreign born mothers, was published on 13 July 2016.
2. Birth statistics are used for planning maternity services, to inform policy decisions and resource allocation, for example deciding numbers of school places required. They also enable the analysis of social and demographic trends.
3. The [Births Quality and Methodology Information](#) document contains important information on:
 - the strengths and limitations of the data
 - the quality of the output, including the accuracy of the data and how it compares with related data
 - uses and users
 - how the output was created
4. Our [User guide to birth statistics](#) provides further information on data quality, legislation and procedures relating to births and includes a glossary of terms.
5. The [Revisions policy for birth statistics](#) is available on our website.
6. The total fertility rate (TFR) is the average number of live children that a group of women would each have if they experienced the age-specific fertility rates of the calendar year in question throughout their childbearing lives. It provides a timely measure of the current intensity of childbearing. Our [User guide to birth statistics](#) provides further information. The estimated TFRs for UK and non-UK born women have been produced using estimated populations from the [Annual Population Survey](#) (APS) for the denominators.
7. Live births to UK born mothers and non-UK born mothers do not sum to total live births because a small number of records do not have mother's country of birth stated. In 2015, there were 37 records where the mother's country of birth was not stated.
8. The [Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008](#) contained provisions enabling 2 females in a same sex couple to register a birth from 1 September 2009 onwards. Due to the small numbers, births registered to a same sex couple (1,220 in 2015) are included in the figures, with the country of birth of the second female parent being included under the country of birth of father.