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Annual Update: **Births in England and Wales, 2006**

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Annual Update:

Births in England and Wales, 2006

Introduction

This update summarises some of the findings from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) annual reference volume *Birth statistics 2006* (series FM1 no. 35), published in December 2007. It presents data and analysis on recent trends in live births in England and Wales, and focuses on characteristics of births occurring in 2006. Particular attention is given to:

- number of births and total fertility rate
- timing of childbearing
- family size
- births by marital status of mother
- multiple births
- fertility patterns within the United Kingdom, and
- births to mothers born outside the United Kingdom.

The annual reference volume contains more detailed information on these, and other themes. It is available on the National Statistics website: (www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/product.asp?vlnk=5768).

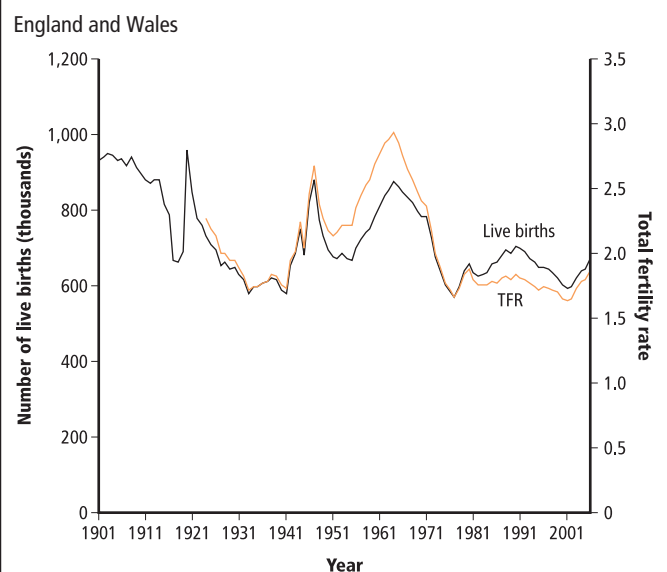
Number of births and total fertility rate

There were 669,601 live births in England and Wales in 2006. This is an increase of 3.7 per cent on the 2005 figure of 645,835, the fifth successive annual percentage rise in live births since 2001. The number of live births in 2006 reached the highest level since 1993 when there were 673,467 live births.

The number of live births and total fertility rate both fluctuated throughout the twentieth century, with very sharp peaks at the end of both World Wars (Figure 1). Live births peaked at near post-war levels again in 1964, when the figure was 875,972, but since then lower numbers have been seen. The lowest recorded annual number of births in the twentieth century was 569,259, in 1977. In more recent years, births reached a low of 594,634 in 2001.

The total fertility rate (TFR) is the average number of children a woman would have if she experienced the age-specific fertility rates for a particular year throughout her childbearing life. It is a useful measure of the current level of fertility as it can be used to examine both changes in fertility over time and between populations by removing the effect of different age distributions. However, changes in the timing of childbearing between generations can distort the TFR, so it may not

Figure 1 Total number of live births and total fertility rate (TFR), 1901–2006



Source: FM1 2006 Tables 1.1a and 1.4

reflect the average number of children that women will have by the end of their childbearing years. For example, if women are delaying their childbearing to older ages, as in England and Wales during the 1980s and 1990s, the TFR is likely to underestimate average family size.

In 2006, the TFR for England and Wales was 1.86 children per woman, an increase of nearly four per cent since 2005 (1.79), consistent with the comparable increase in the number of live births. The TFR was last higher 26 years previously in 1980 when it was 1.88. A continued gradual rise has been observed in the TFR since 2001 when the lowest ever TFR was recorded at 1.63. The increase in the number of births since the upturn in 2002 reflects a rise in underlying fertility rates, whereas the rise in births seen in the 1980s was due mainly to the changing age distribution of the female population rather than a rise in fertility (Figure 1).

Timing of childbearing

Fertility rates increased across all age groups in 2006 compared with 2005. The last time there were increases in fertility rates across all age groups compared with the previous year was in 1988. The trend towards later childbearing has also continued in 2006.

Figure 2 shows that, over the last two decades, fertility rates of women in their thirties and forties have increased, while those of women in their twenties or younger fell during the 1980s and 1990s, but have stopped falling in recent years and started rising. The fertility rate for women aged 30 to 34 first overtook that of women aged 25 to 29 in 2004 and has remained the age group with the highest fertility rate, reaching 104.8 live births per thousand women in 2006. After a period of decline in the 1990s, the fertility rate for women aged 25 to 29 has recovered to 100.6 live births per thousand women in 2006, the highest rate since 1998.

The largest increase in fertility in any age group was observed for women aged 35 to 39. Fertility rates of women in their late thirties increased to 53.8 in 2006 from 50.3 in 2005 and were last at this level in 1948 when they reached 56.2. For women aged 40 and over, fertility rates continued a 20-year climb to 11.4 live births per thousand women in 2006, compared with 10.8 in 2005. In contrast, women under 20 are experiencing lower fertility rates compared with the previous three decades. Despite this there was a small increase between 2005 and 2006 where the teenage birth rate rose to 26.6 live births per thousand women.

In 2006, for all live births, the average (mean) age of the mother was 29.5 years, the same as in 2005 and nearly a year older than in 1996 (28.6). When standardised to take account of the changing age structure of the female population structure, the mean age increased from 28.2 years in 1996 to 29.1 in 2006. The average age of women at first birth was 27.6 years in 2006, the same as 2005 but nearly a year older than in 1996 (26.7). When standardised, mean age at first birth increased from 26.1 years in 1996 to 27.4 in 2006 (see background notes).¹

Family size

Changes in family size have a long-term impact on the population structure. Estimates of the average number of children that will be born to women contribute to projections of the future population size. An

average family size of just under 2.1 children per woman is needed for the population to replace itself in the longer term if mortality rates are constant and there is no net migration.²

The average completed family size has decreased for cohorts who have most recently reached the end of their childbearing years, compared with those who finished 20 years earlier (Table 1). Women born in the 1930s had the largest number of children, with an average of just under 2.4 per woman. Those born in 1961 had fewer children, with an average of just under two per woman.

Cohort analysis also shows how the age at which women first become mothers has increased: over 80 per cent of women born in 1940 had given birth by the age of 30, compared with less than 60 per cent of those born in the early 1970s.

Marital status

The growing proportion of births outside marriage (Figure 3) suggests that childbearing has continued to become less strongly associated with marriage, due in part to the greater acceptability of and rise in cohabitation.³

The percentage of live births outside marriage continued to rise in 2006, to 44 per cent compared with 36 per cent in 1996. Figure 4 shows that the percentage of births outside marriage is higher for all age groups in 2006 than in 1996. Women under 30 have a higher percentage of births outside marriage than older women, with the highest proportions at the youngest ages: 93 per cent of births to teenagers occurred outside marriage in 2006, while in 1996 this was 88 per cent.

Over the last decade, the biggest increase in the proportion of births outside marriage has occurred among 25 to 29 year olds, from 30 per cent in 1996 to 40 per cent in 2006. The proportion of births outside marriage to women aged 20 to 24 has also increased markedly, from 57 per cent in 1996 to 69 per cent in 2006. The proportion of births outside marriage to women aged 40 and over has increased by a third from 27 per cent to 36 per cent.

Of the births registered outside marriage in 2006, 64 per cent were registered jointly by parents living at the same address, slightly more than in 2005. Seven per cent of all births in 2006 were sole registrations; only the mother's details are recorded on these birth registrations.

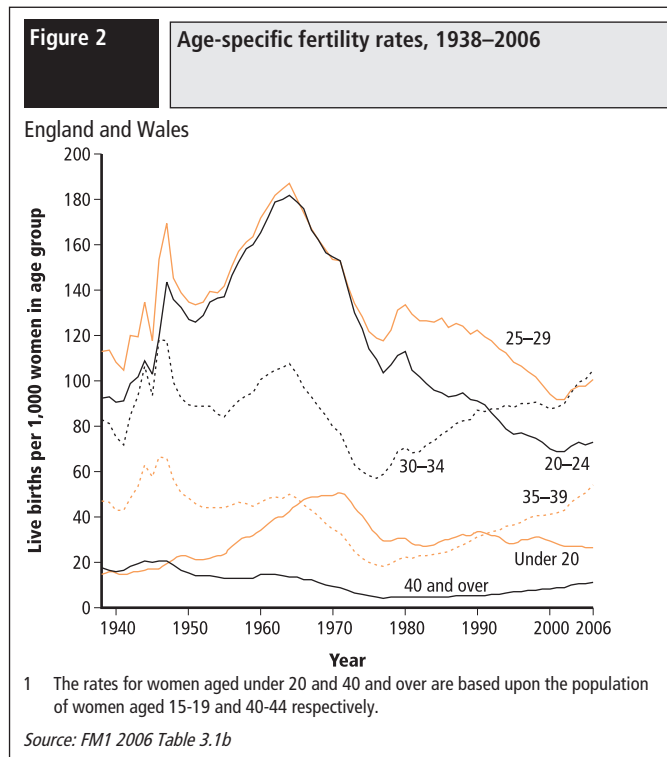


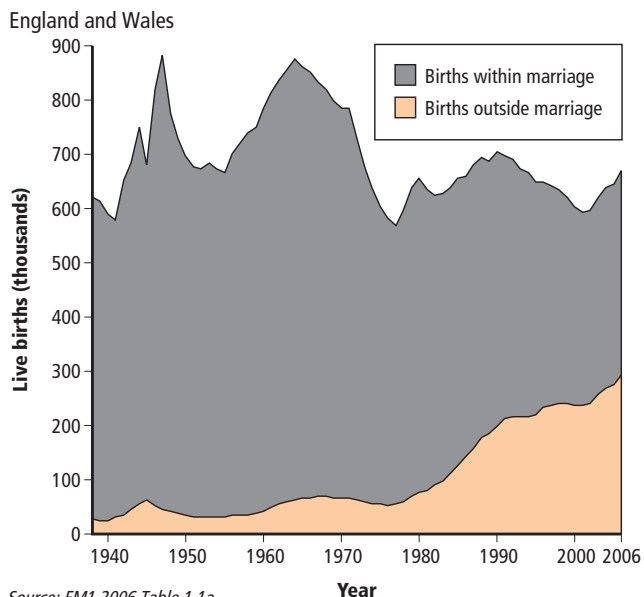
Table 1 Average number of liveborn children per woman by age and year of birth of woman, 1931–1986

England and Wales

Year of birth of woman	Age of woman (completed years)					
	20	25	30	35	40	45 ¹
1931	0.19	0.94	1.70	2.16	2.32	2.34
1936	0.22	1.10	1.93	2.29	2.39	2.40
1941	0.30	1.28	2.00	2.25	2.33	2.34
1946	0.36	1.22	1.82	2.08	2.17	2.19
1951	0.36	1.02	1.61	1.91	2.02	2.04
1956	0.29	0.90	1.51	1.86	1.99	2.02
1961	0.23	0.78	1.39	1.77	1.93	1.96
1966	0.20	0.71	1.28	1.69	1.87	
1971	0.22	0.65	1.17	1.62		
1976	0.21	0.60	1.11			
1981	0.22	0.60				
1986	0.20					

1 Includes births at ages 45 and over, achieved up to the end of 2006.
Source: FM1 2006 Table 10.2

Figure 3 Number of live births within and outside marriage, 1938–2006



Source: FM1 2006 Table 1.1a

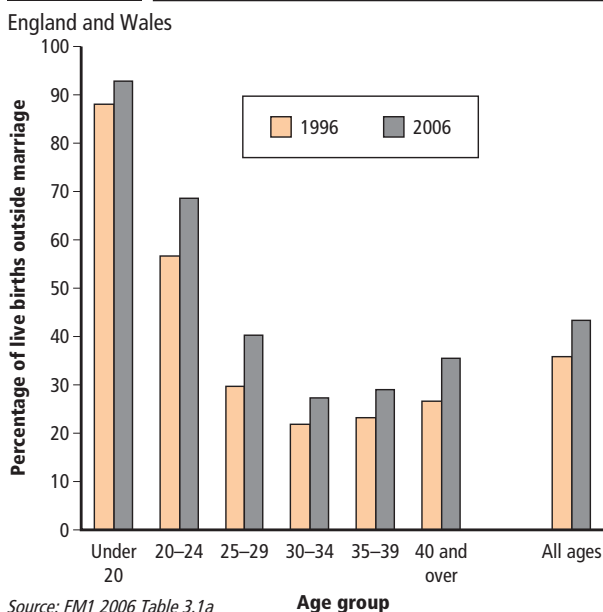
Multiple births

In 2006, 9,992 women gave birth to twins, 138 to triplets and seven to quadruplets. These maternities include both live births and stillbirths. The multiple maternity rate increased to 15.3 maternities with multiple births per 1,000 women giving birth in 2006, compared with 14.9 in 2005. This is an 11 per cent increase since 1996 when the rate was 13.8 maternities with multiple births per 1,000 women giving birth.

Figure 5 shows that women aged 40 and over experienced the highest multiple maternity rate (25.6 per 1,000 maternities) and also the largest increase in this rate. In 1996, the highest multiple maternity rate was for women aged 35 to 39.

Married women are also more likely to have a multiple birth than unmarried women: in 2006 the multiple maternity rate for married women was 17.1 per 1,000 maternities, compared with 13.0 for unmarried women.

Figure 4 Percentage of live births outside marriage, by age of mother, 1996 and 2006



Source: FM1 2006 Table 3.1a

Fertility patterns within the United Kingdom

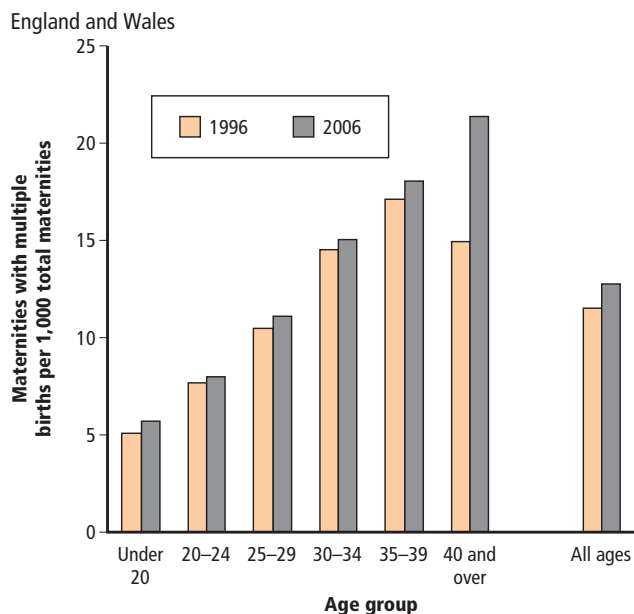
In 2006, Wales remained the only constituent country of the United Kingdom where more than half of births (53 per cent) were outside marriage. Northern Ireland had the lowest proportion of births outside marriage (38 per cent), while in the United Kingdom as a whole, 44 per cent of births were outside marriage (Table 2).

The TFR for the United Kingdom paralleled the trend in England and Wales by increasing for the fifth year running to 1.84 in 2006, the highest level since 1980. Among the constituent countries in 2006, the TFR increased by between three and four per cent on the 2005 figure; for Scotland to 1.67 and for both England and Wales to 1.86. Northern Ireland's TFR remained the highest of the constituent countries at 1.94.

An increase in the TFR was seen in all Government Office Regions (GORs) in England between 2005 and 2006. The biggest increase was observed in the South East where the TFR increased by five per cent to 1.85, up from 1.76 in 2005. The West Midlands remained the GOR with the highest TFR at 1.97 with the North East and South West the lowest at 1.80. Of all the GORs, only in the North East were more than half of births outside marriage (55 per cent); the lowest percentage of births outside marriage was in London (36 per cent).

In eight out of nine Government Office Regions, the birth rate to women aged 40 and over increased between 2005 and 2006. The only exception to this trend was in the North East. In 2006, the North East had the highest teenage birth rate and the South East the lowest, with 34.9 and 20.9 live births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19 respectively. In London, the East, the South East, the South West, Scotland and Northern Ireland the highest fertility rates were among women in their early thirties; in all other English regions and in Wales, women aged 25 to 29 had the highest rates.

Figure 5 Multiple maternity rates, by age of mother, 1996 and 2006



Source: FM1 2006 Table 6.1b

Table 2 Total fertility rate, live birth rates (by age of mother), percentage of births outside marriage, and percentage of births to mothers born outside the United Kingdom, by area of usual residence, 2006

Area of usual residence	Total fertility rate	Age-specific fertility rates ¹							Percentage of births outside marriage	Percentage of births to mothers born outside the UK
		All ages	<20	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40+		
North East	1.80	56.5	34.9	78.0	106.3	92.2	40.1	6.7	55	9
North West	1.90	60.0	30.4	78.7	109.8	101.6	48.4	9.2	50	14
Yorkshire and The Humber	1.86	59.4	32.5	77.2	108.2	98.8	45.2	8.5	48	15
East Midlands	1.83	57.4	26.8	71.8	106.7	102.0	46.4	9.6	46	15
West Midlands	1.97	62.5	29.8	85.5	114.1	104.2	48.5	10.0	44	19
East	1.88	59.9	21.6	71.2	104.5	111.2	53.6	11.1	41	18
London	1.85	65.8	23.8	70.2	82.2	103.4	72.4	19.2	36	53
South East	1.85	59.2	20.9	62.9	97.2	113.9	60.0	12.6	39	18
South West	1.80	56.1	21.6	65.3	101.6	107.0	51.9	10.7	43	11
United Kingdom ²	1.84	59.7	26.4	72.0	100.1	104.6	53.4	11.1	44	21
England ²	1.86	60.3	26.3	72.9	100.3	105.0	54.3	11.6	43	23
Wales ²	1.86	58.1	31.5	78.2	106.7	99.4	45.1	8.4	53	8
Scotland	1.67	52.7	25.8	61.9	90.2	97.1	47.8	8.7	48	9
Northern Ireland	1.94	62.5	22.5	63.6	112.0	119.2	58.2	11.3	38	11

1 The rates for women of all ages, under 20, and 40 and over are based upon the population of women aged 15-44, 15-19 and 40-44 respectively.
 2 Figures for England and Wales separately exclude events for persons usually resident outside England and Wales (225 in 2006). These events are included in the totals for the United Kingdom.
 Source: Office for National Statistics (FM1 2006 Tables 7.1, 7.3 and 9.2), General Register Office for Scotland, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

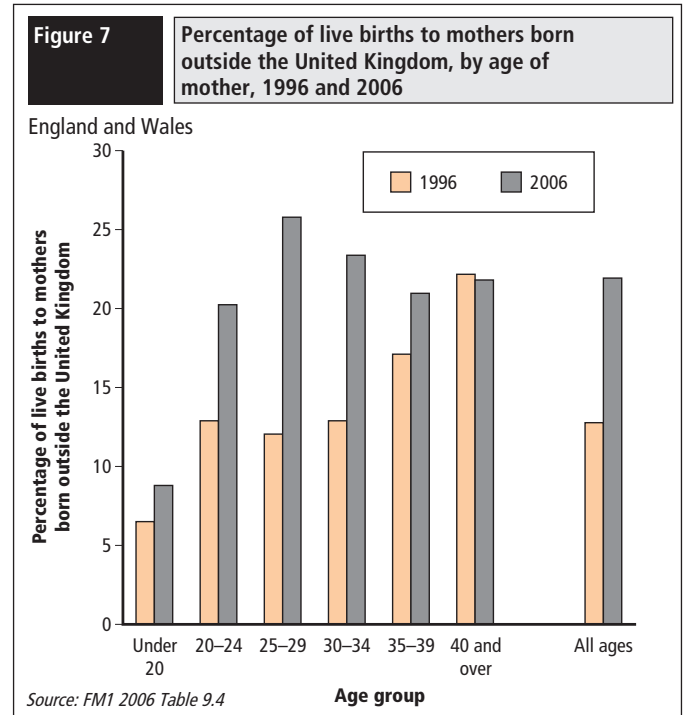
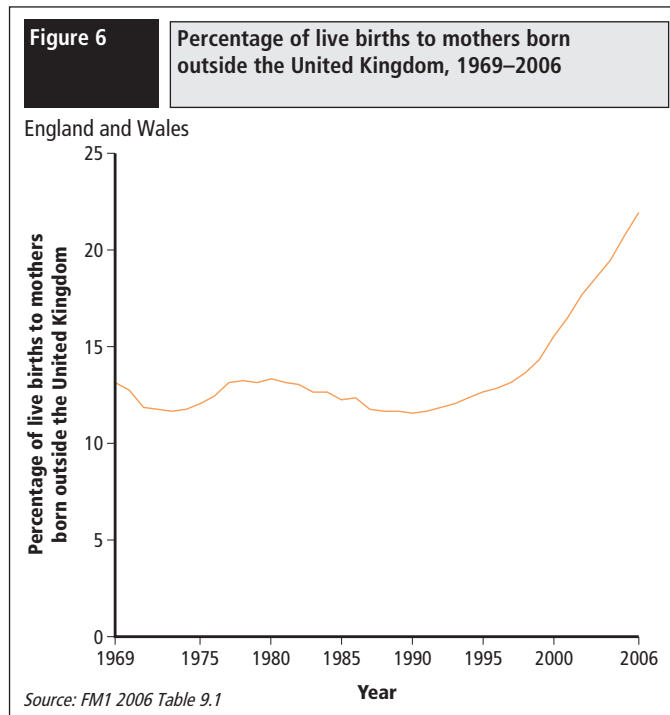
Births to mothers born outside the United Kingdom

There were 146,956 births in England and Wales in 2006 to mothers born outside the United Kingdom, accounting for 22 per cent of all live births in England and Wales. This is the highest proportion since the collection of the parents' country of birth at birth registration was introduced in 1969. The increase continues the marked rise seen over the last decade: the proportion of births to mothers born outside the United Kingdom has risen from 13 per cent in 1996 (Figure 6).

When only those births that include the father's details on the registration are considered, 22 per cent of births were to mothers born outside the

United Kingdom and 15 per cent of births had both parents born outside the United Kingdom. These two proportions indicate that for one-third of foreign-born mothers, the child's father was born in the United Kingdom.

Figure 7 shows that the majority of the increase over the last ten years in the proportion of live births to mothers born outside the United Kingdom is among women in their twenties and early thirties. The percentage of live births to mothers aged 25 to 29 born outside the United Kingdom has more than doubled since 1996 to 26 per cent in 2006. Births to women in their early twenties and early thirties born outside the United Kingdom have also risen considerably: the proportions for both have increased by more than a half since 1996, to 20 per cent for 20 to 24 year olds and to 23 per cent for 30 to 34 year olds.



Background notes

The unstandardised mean age is the average age of mothers who give birth in a particular year. Comparisons of unstandardised mean ages do not take into account the changing age distribution of the female population over time.

The standardised mean age is a measure which allows fertility trends to be separated out from the effects of changes in the population's age structure over time. It is therefore more useful for comparing mean ages across population subgroups and over time.

At registration, the number of previous births is only collected for births within marriage. The average age at first birth is based on the estimated true birth order for all births whether inside or outside marriage. True birth order refers to the number assigned to a birth based on the number of previous live births to that mother. Complete information on birth order is not collected at registration. The partial information on birth order from registration data is supplemented with data from the General Household Survey.

The population estimates used to calculate the fertility rates in this update were the most up-to-date at the time of publication. Population estimates for mid-2006 were published on 22 August 2007. Birth rates for 2002 to 2005 have been updated to include the latest revised mid-year population estimates that take into account improved estimates of international migration.

More information on population estimates can be found on the National Statistics website: www.statistics.gov.uk/popest.

References

1. For an explanation of how true birth order is calculated see Smallwood, S (2002), New estimates of trends in births by birth order in England and Wales. *Population Trends* 108, pp 32–48. True birth order estimates for 2006 births have been produced by combining 2006 birth order information from registration data with General Household Survey data up to 2004. See Table 1.7: Mean age of mother by true birth order in *Birth statistics* series FM1 no. 35.
2. Smallwood, S and Chamberlain, J (2005). Replacement Fertility, what has it been and what does it mean? *Population Trends* 119, pp 16–27.
3. Chamberlain, J and Gill, B (2005). Chapter 5: Fertility and Mortality, *Focus on People and Migration* ONS, pp 71–90.

Key Findings

- There were 669,601 live births in England and Wales in 2006, an increase of nearly four per cent compared with 2005, and the highest annual number of births since 1993
- The TFR for England and Wales was 1.86 in 2006, a four per cent increase from 1.79 in 2005
- Women in their early 30s continued to have the highest fertility rate: 104.8 live births per thousand women
- The average (mean) age of women giving birth remained at 29.5 years, while the average age for women at first birth remained at 27.6 years
- The percentage of live births outside marriage continued to rise, to 44 per cent of live births in 2006
- The multiple maternity rate increased to 15.3 per 1,000 maternities in 2006. Multiple maternity rates increased in all age groups compared with 1996
- The TFR increased in all nine Government Office Regions between 2005 and 2006. Fertility rates remained highest in the West Midlands at 1.97
- In 2006, the North East was the only Government Office Region where over half of all births occurred outside marriage. It also had the highest teenage birth rate, the lowest TFR (jointly with the South West), and the lowest proportion of births to mothers born outside the UK
- Births to mothers born outside the UK accounted for 22 per cent of all live births in 2006. This proportion has increased every year since 1990 when it was just under 12 per cent