

17 February 2004

Coverage

England and Wales

Theme

Population and Migration

Births in England and Wales, 2002

The proportion of multiple births has increased by 20 per cent in the last 10 years. In 2002, the multiple birth rate was 15.0 maternities with multiple births per 1,000 women giving birth, compared with 12.5 in 1992, according to detailed birth statistics published today by the Office for National Statistics*.

Women in their late thirties and forties are most likely to have a multiple birth. Women aged 35-39 had 21.9 maternities with multiple births per 1,000 women giving birth in 2002, and for women aged 40-44 this rate was 21.1. Other key statistics include:

- There were 596,122 live births in 2002 compared with 594,634 in 2001, an increase of 0.25 per cent.
- The average age of women giving birth continued to increase to 29.3 years in 2002 from 29.2 in 2001. The average age of women having their first baby increased to 27.3 years.
- The total fertility rate (TFR) was 1.65 children per woman of childbearing age, a slight increase on the 2001 figure of 1.64, which was the lowest ever recorded. The TFR varied across England and Wales from 1.75 in the West Midlands to 1.62 in the South West and North East of England.
- Fertility continues to increase for women in their thirties and early forties, while it is declining for women in their twenties. Women aged 25-29 have the highest fertility rate at 91.6 births per 1,000 women in 2002. However, this rate is decreasing, while for women aged 30-34 it has increased to 89.9 births per 1,000 women. Fertility rates for women in their late thirties and early forties have risen fastest, with both age groups experiencing a 4 per cent rise between 2001 and 2002.

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***Birth Statistics, England and Wales, 2002**

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- Just over 40 per cent of live births were outside of marriage in 2002, more than four times the proportion seen 25 years earlier. Nearly 90 per cent of births to teenagers in 2002 were outside of marriage. The percentages for women aged 20-24 and 25-29 were 63 and 36 per cent respectively.
- The highest teenage birth rate was in the North East of England, with 34.2 live births per 1,000 women aged 15-19, compared with the low of 21.2 births per 1,000 women aged 15-19 in the South East of England.

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. An annual update summarising recent trends in births in 2002 will be contained in Population Trends 115 (Spring 2004) published on 25 March 2004.
2. Headline statistics on births in 2002 appeared in Population Trends 112 published in June 2003.
3. The population estimates used for the calculation of fertility rates are the latest consistent estimates (at the national level) available at the time of its production. These estimates are based on the 2001 Census. 2001 and 2002 estimates were published on 26 September 2003 (23 October for the revised estimates for 1992 to 2000).
4. The mean ages presented in this release are not standardised and therefore take no account of the age structure of the population.
5. The total fertility rate is the sum of the age-specific fertility rates expressed per woman. It may be interpreted as the number of children that would be born to a woman if the current age-specific patterns of fertility persisted throughout her childbearing life. It can be used to examine changes in fertility over time and between populations by removing the effect of different age distributions.
6. Figures for multiple maternities include maternities where one or more of the babies were stillborn.
7. Unlike previous editions, *Birth statistics, England and Wales, 2002* (Series FM1 no.31) does not include tables on conceptions. Data on conceptions in England and Wales in 2001 will be published separately later this year in a supplementary volume.



8. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
9. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2004.