



Conceptions in England and Wales, 2008

2008

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Coverage: England and Wales **Theme:** Health

This statistical bulletin contains provisional estimated numbers and rates of conceptions for women usually resident in England and Wales in 2008. Conceptions data combine information from registration of births and notifications of legal abortions occurring in England and Wales for women who are usually resident there.

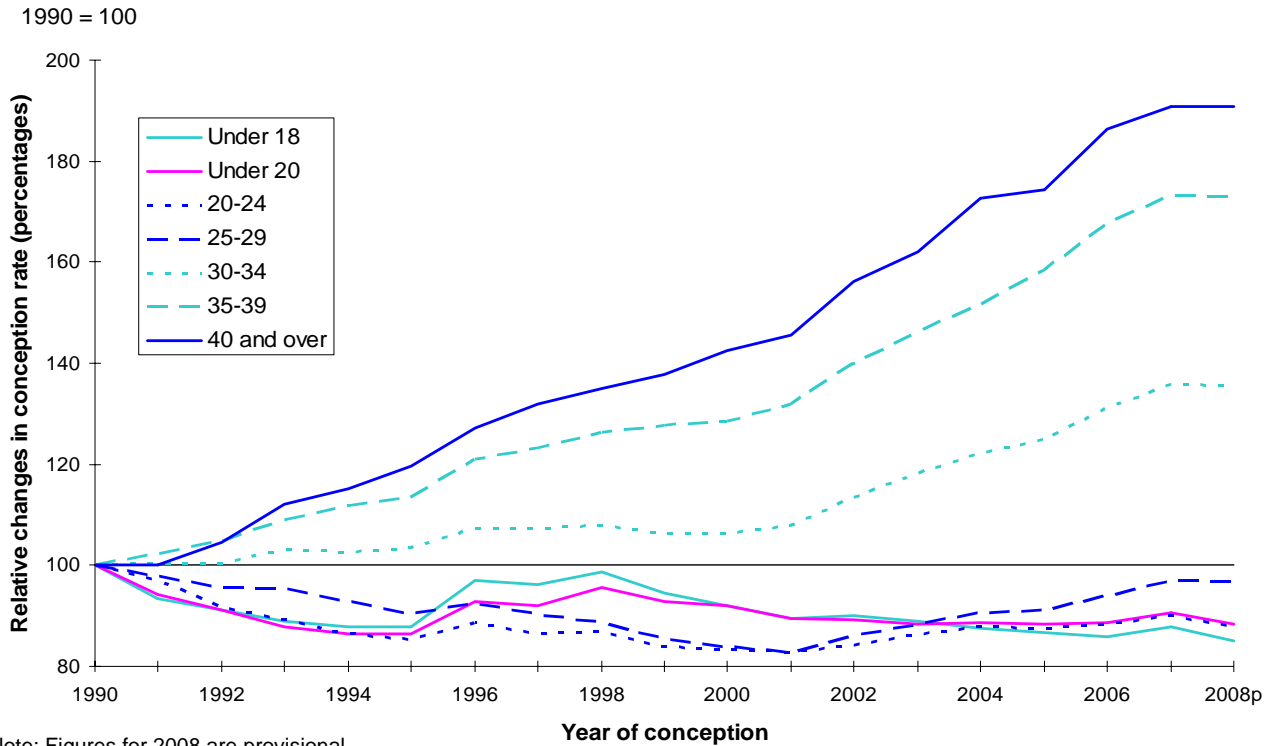
In 2008 there were an estimated 887,800 conceptions in England and Wales, compared with 895,900 in 2007, a decrease of 0.9 per cent. This represents the first fall in the number of conceptions since 2001. The provisional conception rate for 2008 has also fallen slightly to 79.9 conceptions per thousand women aged 15–44, from 80.5 in 2007.

The proportion of all conceptions resulting in a maternity in 2008 was 78 per cent. This proportion has remained fairly stable over the last two decades.

The relative proportions of conceptions inside and outside marriage have been changing for some time. In 2008, conceptions outside marriage accounted for 57 per cent of all conceptions in England and Wales, a small increase from 2007 (56 per cent). This continues the long term rise in the proportion of conceptions occurring outside marriage. In 2008, the proportion of conceptions outside marriage which resulted in a maternity was 67 per cent, compared with 93 per cent of conceptions inside marriage.

Between 2007 and 2008, conception rates decreased in all age groups with the exception of women aged 40 and over, which remained at 12.6 conceptions per thousand women. The conception rate for women under 20 decreased by 2.8 per cent between 2007 and 2008 from 61.7 to 60.0 conceptions per thousand women aged 15–19. Conception rates for women aged under 20 increased between 1995 and 1998, while over the last decade rates have generally fallen with the exception of slight increases occurring in 2004, 2006 and 2007 (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Relative changes in age-specific conception rates, England and Wales, 1990-2008



Note: Figures for 2008 are provisional
Source: Office for National Statistics

Women aged 20–24 experienced a similar fall in the conception rates between 2007 and 2008 (2.5 per cent). There were small decreases in the conception rates for women aged 25 to 39 with the rates in each five-year age group falling by less than 0.3 per cent. Conception rates for women aged 25 to 29 showed the smallest decrease falling by 0.15 per cent from 133.7 in 2007 to 133.5 in 2008.

The estimated number of conceptions to girls aged under 16 decreased by 7.6 per cent from 8,200 in 2007 to 7,577 in 2008. Nearly three-quarters of those conceptions were to girls aged 15. A similar decline can also be seen in the conception rate for girls aged under 16. In 2008, there were 7.8 conceptions per thousand girls aged 13–15 compared with 8.3 in 2007, a decrease of 6.0 per cent.

In 2008, the estimated number of conceptions to women aged under 18 was 41,325 compared with 42,988 in 2007, a decline of 3.9 per cent. Of these, 49 per cent led to a legal abortion compared with 50 per cent in 2007. The under 18 conception rate for England and Wales was 40.6 conceptions per thousand women aged 15–17, compared with 41.9 per thousand in 2007, a decrease of 3.1 per cent. This continues the overall downward trend in conception rates for women

aged under 18 since 2002 when there were 42.9 per thousand women aged 15–17, despite a slight increase in 2007.

For women usually resident in England, the under 18 conception rate fell by 3.1 per cent from 41.7 conceptions per thousand women aged 15–17 in 2007 to 40.4 in 2008. Comparison of rates by Strategic Health Authorities in England, shows that the North East had the highest under 18 conception rate in 2008 at 49.0 per thousand women aged 15–17. The North East also had the highest under 18 conception rate in 2007 (53.2 conceptions per thousand women aged 15–17). The East of England had the lowest rate for women aged under 18 in 2008 at 31.4 per thousand women aged 15–17, compared to 33.1 in 2007 when it had the second lowest under 18 conception rate. South Central had the lowest under 18 conception rate in 2007 with 32.1 conceptions per thousand women aged 15–17.

More detailed data for conceptions can be found at:

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15055>

Background Notes

1. Figures for 2008 are provisional. Final 2008 conception figures will be published in the annual reference volume, *Conception statistics 2008*, in Autumn 2010.
2. Conception statistics include pregnancies that result in either one or more live births or stillbirths (a maternity) or a legal abortion under the Abortion Act 1967 (an abortion). They do not include miscarriages or illegal abortions.
3. Under arrangements made following implementation of the *Abortion Act 1967*, the Office for National Statistics and its predecessors processed and analysed the abortion notification forms (HSA4) sent to the Chief Medical Officers of England and Wales. From 1 April 2002, the Department of Health took over this work and the system has been redesigned to process the new abortion notification forms that were introduced from 18 April 2002. The *Abortion Act 1967* also enables the Chief Medical Officers to supply information about abortions to the UK Statistics Authority.
4. Conception rates are based on mid-year population estimates for the relevant data year.
5. The date of conception is estimated using recorded gestation for abortions and stillbirths, and assuming 38 weeks gestation for live births.

6. A woman's age at conception is calculated as the number of complete years between her date of birth and the date she conceived. In many cases her birthday will occur between conception and the birth or abortion; a woman may conceive, for example, at age 19 and give birth at age 20. The conception and birth may also occur in different calendar years. For these reasons the number of conceptions to women of a given age in a given year does not match the number of maternities and abortions to women of the same given age in the same given year.

7. In the provisional 2008 conceptions dataset, in 0.69 per cent of all maternities records the mother's date of birth was not stated at the birth registration. This compares with 1.1 per cent in 2007. Where the mother's date of birth was not stated, if the birth record was successfully matched to the corresponding NHS birth notification, the mother's date of birth was taken from this source (0.53 per cent of all maternities). Where this matching was unsuccessful and the birth was in 2008, the mother's age was imputed using the CANCEIS imputation software (0.08 per cent of all maternities). Where the birth was in 2009, the record has been excluded from the provisional 2008 conceptions dataset (0.07 per cent of all maternities) as CANCEIS imputation is not run until the final data extract for 2009 births is taken. The final annual 2008 conceptions dataset will include all maternity records because all records relating to 2008 conceptions where mother's date of birth is not stated at registration and not obtained from the notification record will then have been imputed using CANCEIS.

8. Numbers and rates of conceptions are given by mother's usual area of residence based on boundaries as at 1 October 2009. The postcode of the woman's address at the time of the maternity or abortion was used to determine the health authority she was living in at the time of the conception. Direct comparisons with conceptions data by area published in previous years are not always possible because of boundary changes.

9. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the media office.

10. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.
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