

Statistical bulletin

Births by parents' country of birth, England and Wales: 2016

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



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1 . Main points

- Over a quarter (28.2%) of live births in England and Wales in 2016 were to women born outside the UK, the highest level on record.
- Despite a 0.2% decrease in the number of live births between 2015 and 2016, live births to women born outside the UK actually increased by 2.1%.
- The estimated total fertility rate (TFR) for foreign-born women decreased slightly in 2016 to 2.06 children per woman, the lowest level on record; figures are available from 2004.
- The estimated TFR for UK-born women decreased slightly in 2016 to 1.75 children per woman, the lowest level since 2006.
- Poland has been the most common country of birth for mothers born outside the UK since 2010.
- Pakistan has been the most common country of birth for fathers born outside the UK since figures were first produced in 2008.

2 . Statistician's comment

“Despite an overall decline in the number of live births in England and Wales between 2015 and 2016, births to women born outside the UK increased by 2.1%. This is due to foreign-born women making up an increasing share of the female population of childbearing age. The fertility rate for foreign-born women did however decline in 2016 due to decreased fertility rates among women in their twenties and early thirties.”

Nicola Haines, Vital Statistics Outputs Branch, Office for National Statistics.

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3 . Things you need to know about this release

Important information for interpreting these birth statistics:

- birth statistics represent births that 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 . Live births to women born outside the UK continue to rise despite an overall decline in births

There were 696,271 live births in England and Wales in 2016, a small decrease of 0.2% compared with 2015. Despite this decline, the number of live births to women born outside the UK continued to rise by 2.1% in 2016; live births to UK-born women decreased by 1.1%.

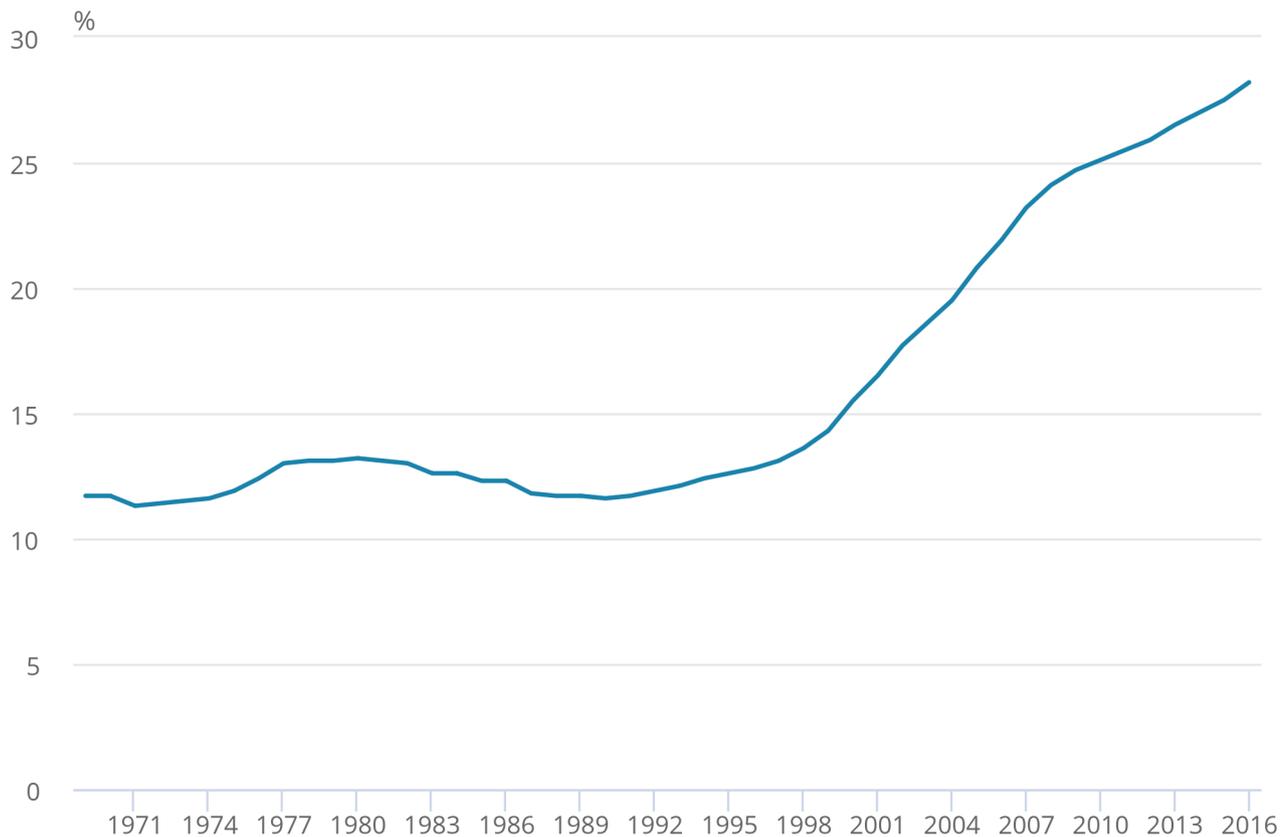
Births to women born outside the UK accounted for 28.2% of all live births in 2016. This is the highest level since 1969, when information on parents' country of birth was first collected at birth registration (Figure 1). In 2016, there were 196,254 live births to women born outside the UK and 499,974 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 2016

England and Wales

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England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

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5 . Fertility levels decline for both UK-born and non-UK-born women

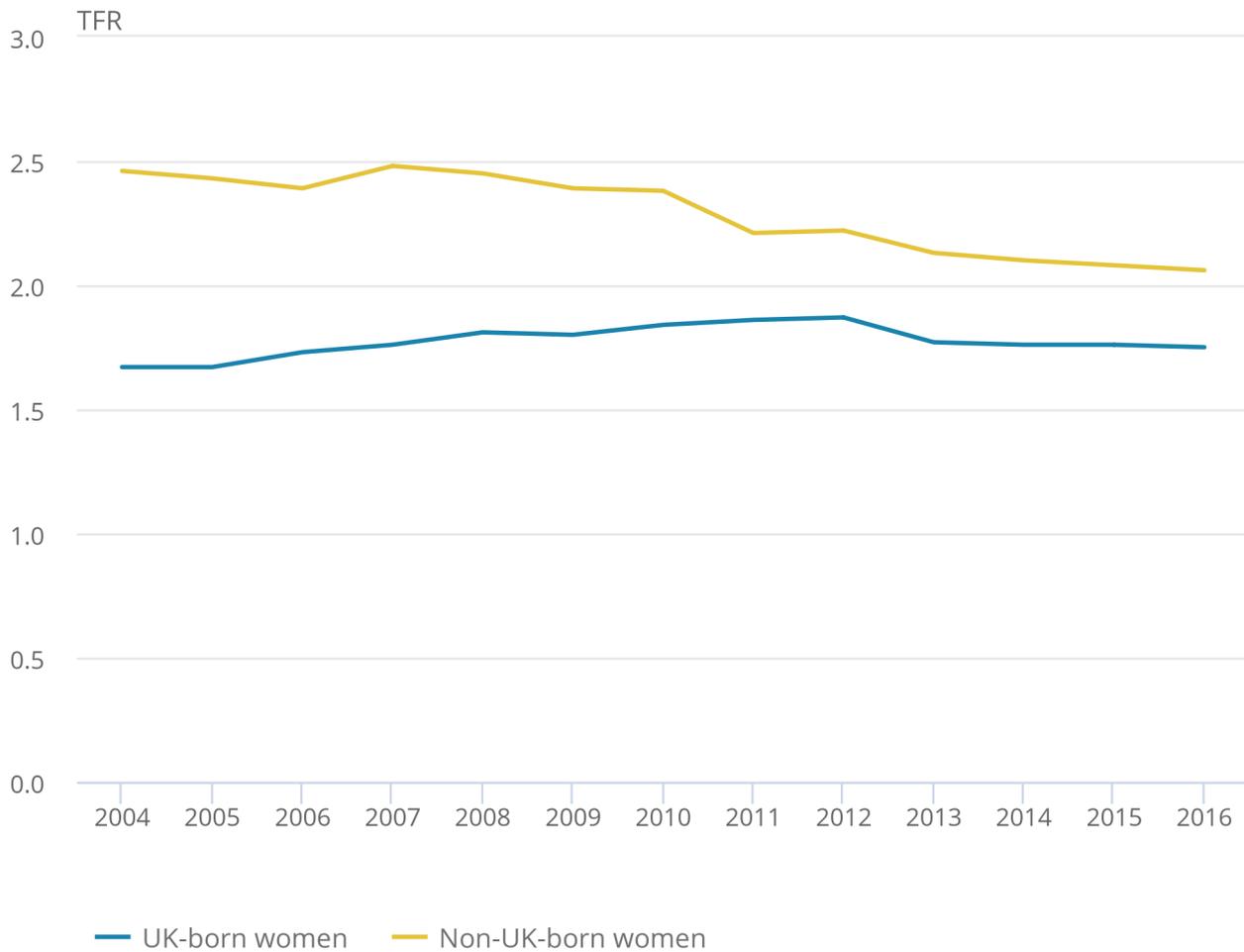
In 2016, the estimated total fertility rate (TFR) in England and Wales declined slightly for both UK-born women and non-UK-born women compared with 2015 (Figure 2). For non-UK-born women the TFR in 2016 was 2.06 children per woman, the lowest value on record based on estimates available back to 2004. The TFR for UK-born women was 1.75 in 2016.

Figure 2: Estimated total fertility rate (TFR) for UK-born and non-UK-born women, 2004 to 2016

England and Wales

Figure 2: Estimated total fertility rate (TFR) for UK-born and non-UK-born women, 2004 to 2016

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. The TFRs for 2012 to 2016 are calculated using the latest Annual Population Survey datasets reweighted in 2017. Figures may therefore differ slightly from those published previously.

The TFR depends on the size of the female population of childbearing age and the number of births. TFRs provide a timely measure of fertility levels; they are sensitive to changes in the timing of births within women's lives.

The TFR for UK-born women has remained relatively stable since 2013. Since 2004, the TFR for women born outside the UK has generally decreased, despite the number of live births to non-UK-born women increasing every year except for 2013. This is due to the non-UK-born female population of childbearing age in England and Wales increasing by a greater proportion than the number of births to non-UK-born women (Table 1); this means that non-UK-born women are now having more births as a group, but fewer each on average.

Table 1: Live births and the size of the female population aged 15 to 44, UK-born and non-UK-born women, 2015 and 2016

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
2015	505,588	192,227	8,693,492	2,444,912
2016	499,974	196,254	8,573,171	2,522,288
Percentage change (%)	-1.1%	2.1%	-1.4%	3.2%

Source: Office for National Statistics

The majority of women of childbearing age living in England and Wales were born in the UK (77% in 2016). 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 . Poland and Pakistan remain the most common countries of birth for foreign-born mothers and fathers respectively

Poland, Pakistan and India were the three most common countries of birth for women born outside the UK who gave birth in 2016 (Table 2). Figures for foreign-born mothers for 2003 onwards show that until 2006, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh were consistently the three most common countries of birth. Poland replaced Bangladesh as the third most common country of birth in 2007, rising to second place in 2008 and first place in 2010; a consequence of Poland joining the EU in 2004. Romania entered the top 10 in 2012 after joining the EU in 2007; by 2015 Romania had risen to fourth place. These increases in births to Polish and Romanian-born mothers are driven mainly by the [increasing size of the Polish and Romanian-born population living in the UK](#).

Table 2: 10 most common countries of birth for non-UK-born mothers and fathers, 2016

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	22,382	3.2	Pakistan	19,131	2.9
2	Pakistan	17,367	2.5	Poland	16,956	2.6
3	India	13,883	2.0	India	14,007	2.1
4	Romania	11,721	1.7	Romania	10,684	1.6
5	Bangladesh	8,106	1.2	Bangladesh	8,876	1.3
6	Nigeria	6,635	1.0	Nigeria	8,208	1.2
7	Lithuania	4,912	0.7	Somalia	4,346	0.7
8	Somalia	4,621	0.7	Germany	3,875	0.6
9	Germany	4,560	0.7	South Africa	3,559	0.5
10	China	3,596	0.5	Ghana	3,545	0.5
	Outside the UK	196,254	28.2	Outside the UK	183,764	27.8

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

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 section, point 7.

Figures for foreign-born fathers, available for 2008 onwards, show that Pakistan has continually been the most common country of birth for non-UK-born fathers, followed by Poland and then India. The 10 most common countries of birth for non-UK-born fathers in 2016 are similar to those for non-UK-born mothers, with the exceptions of South Africa and Ghana replacing Lithuania and China.

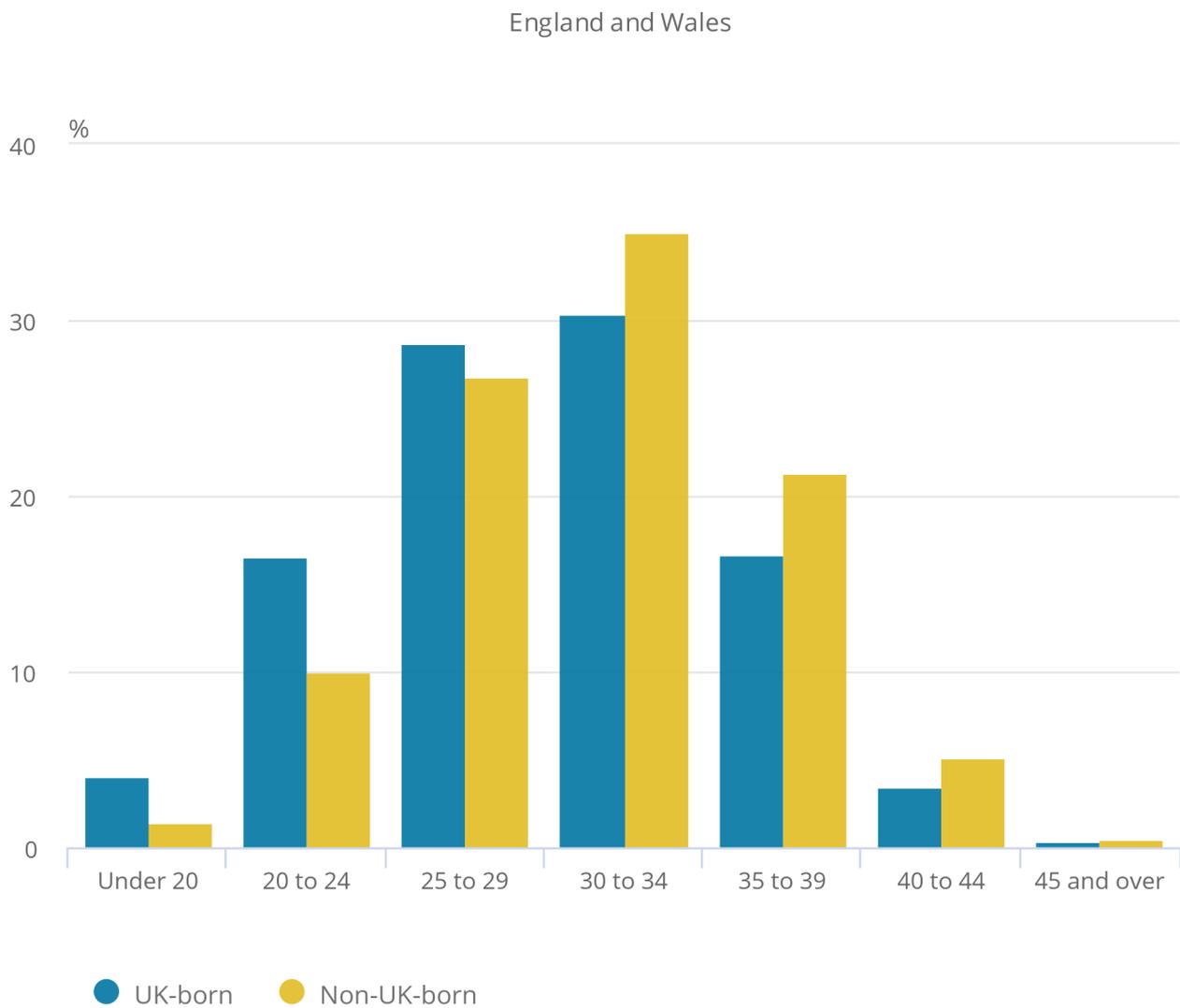
7 . Women born outside the UK are more likely to have babies at older ages

In 2016, the most common age group for both UK-born and non-UK-born women giving birth was 30 to 34 years (Figure 3); 20% of UK-born mothers were aged 35 and over, compared with 27% of mothers who were born outside the UK.

Figure 3: Percentage of live births by age of mother for UK-born and non-UK-born mothers, 2016

England and Wales

Figure 3: Percentage of live births by age of mother for UK-born and non-UK-born mothers, 2016



Source: Office for National Statistics

Source: Office for National Statistics

Just over a fifth (21%) 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.

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

In 2016, the region with the highest percentage of live births to women born outside the UK was London (58.2%); the North East had the lowest (11.1%). London and the North East have consistently had the highest and lowest percentages respectively since 2001.

Brent local authority had the highest percentage of births to non-UK-born women (76.0%). Previously Newham had been the local authority with the highest percentage of births to non-UK-born women since 2004. Outside of London, Slough had the highest percentage (64.5%), followed by Luton (57.8%). Slough has had the highest percentage of births to non-UK-born women outside of London for over 12 years; Luton has had the second highest percentage since 2007.

In Wales, the percentage of live births to women born outside the UK was 11.6% in 2016. Of the local authorities in Wales, Cardiff had the highest percentage (26.7%) and Isle of Anglesey had the lowest (4.6%).

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.

In 2016, just over a third (33.7%) of babies born in England and Wales had at least one parent born outside the UK. London was the region with the highest percentage of births where at least one parent was born outside the UK (66.6%); the North East had the lowest (14.8%). In Wales, 14.8% of babies born in 2016 had at least one foreign-born parent. [Table 7a](#) provides the number and percentage of live births where one or both parents were born outside the UK, for all local authority areas in England and Wales.

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 26.9% in 2016, compared with 26.3% in 2015.

In Scotland, 17.1% of live births in 2015 were to women born outside the UK, a rise from 16.3% in 2014. In Northern Ireland, provisional figures show that 13.0% of live births were to women born outside the UK, up from 12.6% in 2014.

10 . Proposed changes to annual birth statistics

We are planning to change the way in which birth statistics are published from the 2017 data year onwards. We plan to make explorable datasets for live births available in [NOMIS](#) – these will provide detailed birth statistics; [marriage, divorce and mortality data](#) are currently available as explorable datasets. We plan to make four explorable datasets available for live births; the specification for these and consequential proposed changes to our annual publication tables are detailed in our consultation [Proposed changes to ONS birth statistics](#). We welcome feedback on these proposals and will take account of all feedback received before making any changes. The consultation closes on 21 September 2017.

11 . Links to related statistics

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

International comparisons of live births and the crude birth rate are available in the [Vital Statistics: Population and Health Reference 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 2016 birth statistics will be published later in 2017; 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 by email to vsob@ons.gsi.gov.uk or telephone on +44 (0)1329 444110. [User-requested data](#) will be made publicly available.

12 . Quality and methodology

This is the first time that detailed country of birth statistics for England and Wales have been published for 2016. The headline figure, 28.2% of [live births in England and Wales in 2016](#) were to foreign-born mothers, was published on 19 July 2017.

1. 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.
2. The [Births Quality and Methodology Information](#) document contains important information on:
 - the strengths and limitations of the data and how it compares with related data
 - uses and users
 - how the output was created
 - the quality of the output including the accuracy of the data
3. Our [User Guide to Birth Statistics](#) provides further information on data quality, legislation and procedures relating to births and includes a glossary of terms.
4. The [Revisions policy for population statistics \(including birth statistics\)](#) is available.
5. 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.
6. 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 2016, there were 43 records where the mother's country of birth was not stated.
7. The [Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008](#) contained provisions enabling two females in a same sex couple to register a birth from 1 September 2009 onwards. Due to the small numbers, live births registered to a same sex couple (1,404 in 2016) are included in the figures, with the country of birth of the second female parent being included under the country of birth of father.