

Statistical bulletin

# Births by parents' country of birth, England and Wales: 2017

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



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## Table

### of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Statistician's comment](#)
3. [Things you need to know about this release](#)
4. [The percentage of live births to women born outside the UK continues to rise despite an overall decline in the total number of births](#)
5. [Fertility levels decline for both UK-born and non-UK-born women](#)
6. [Poland and Pakistan remain the most common countries of birth for foreign-born mothers and fathers respectively](#)
7. [Women born outside the UK are more likely to have babies at older ages](#)
8. [The percentage of births to women born outside the UK varies considerably between areas](#)
9. [Rising percentage of live births to foreign-born women in the UK](#)
10. [Changes to annual birth statistics](#)
11. [Links to related statistics](#)
12. [Quality and methodology](#)

# 1 . Main points

- In 2017 in England and Wales, 28.4% of live-born babies had mothers who were born outside the UK, up from 28.2% in 2016; this is the highest percentage on record since 1969 when country of birth was first collected at birth registration.
- In 2017, there were 486,417 live births to women born in the UK and 192,651 live births to women born outside the UK, decreasing by 2.7% and 1.8% respectively compared with 2016.
- The estimated total fertility rate (TFR) for foreign-born women decreased in 2017 to 1.95 children per woman, the lowest level on record; figures are available from 2004.
- The estimated TFR for UK-born women decreased in 2017 to 1.71 children per woman, the lowest level since 2005.
- Poland has been the most common country of birth for mothers born outside the UK since 2010, with 10.8% of non-UK-born mothers in 2017 born in Poland.
- Pakistan has been the most common country of birth for fathers born outside the UK since figures were first produced in 2008; with 10.2% of non-UK-born fathers in 2017 born in Pakistan.
- Just over a third (33.9%) of babies born in England and Wales had at least one parent born outside the UK in 2017.

## 2 . Statistician's comment

“Just over a third of the babies born in England and Wales in 2017 had at least one parent who had been born outside the UK. This will include parents who moved to the UK as children and have lived here most of their lives as well as those who have recently migrated. The proportion of live births to non-UK-born parents has been growing since 1990 and is now the highest on record.

“Our birth statistics also show that, since 1975, babies born to mothers aged 45 years and over have been most likely to have a mum who was born outside the UK. This is influenced by the proportion of non-UK-born women of childbearing age in the population, which is higher at ages 30 years and over than at younger ages.”

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 . The percentage of live births to women born outside the UK continues to rise despite an overall decline in the total number of births**

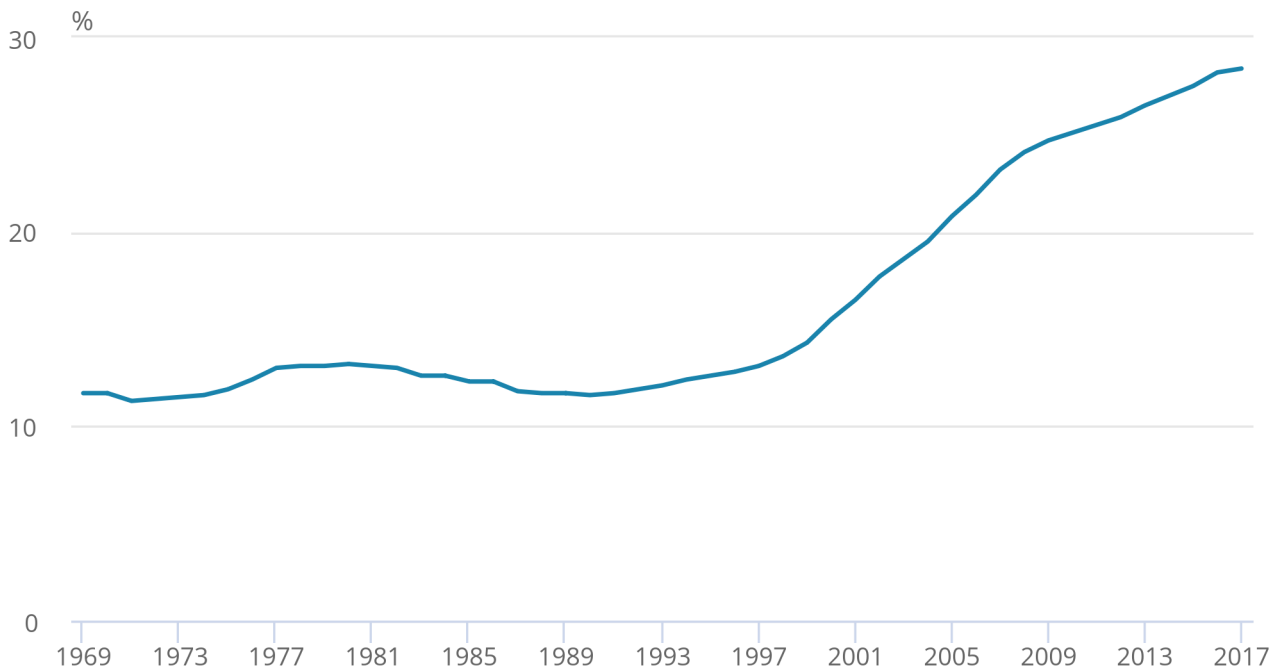
In 2017, there was a total of 679,106 live births in England and Wales, a decrease of 2.5% compared with 2016. The number of live births to women from outside the UK also fell by 1.8% to 192,651 in 2017. Despite this decline, the proportion of live births to women born outside the UK continued to rise, increasing 0.2 percentage points to 28.4% in 2017. This is the highest proportion since 1969, when information on parents' country of birth was first collected at birth registration (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Percentage of live births to women born outside the UK, 1969 to 2017**

England and Wales

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England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

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

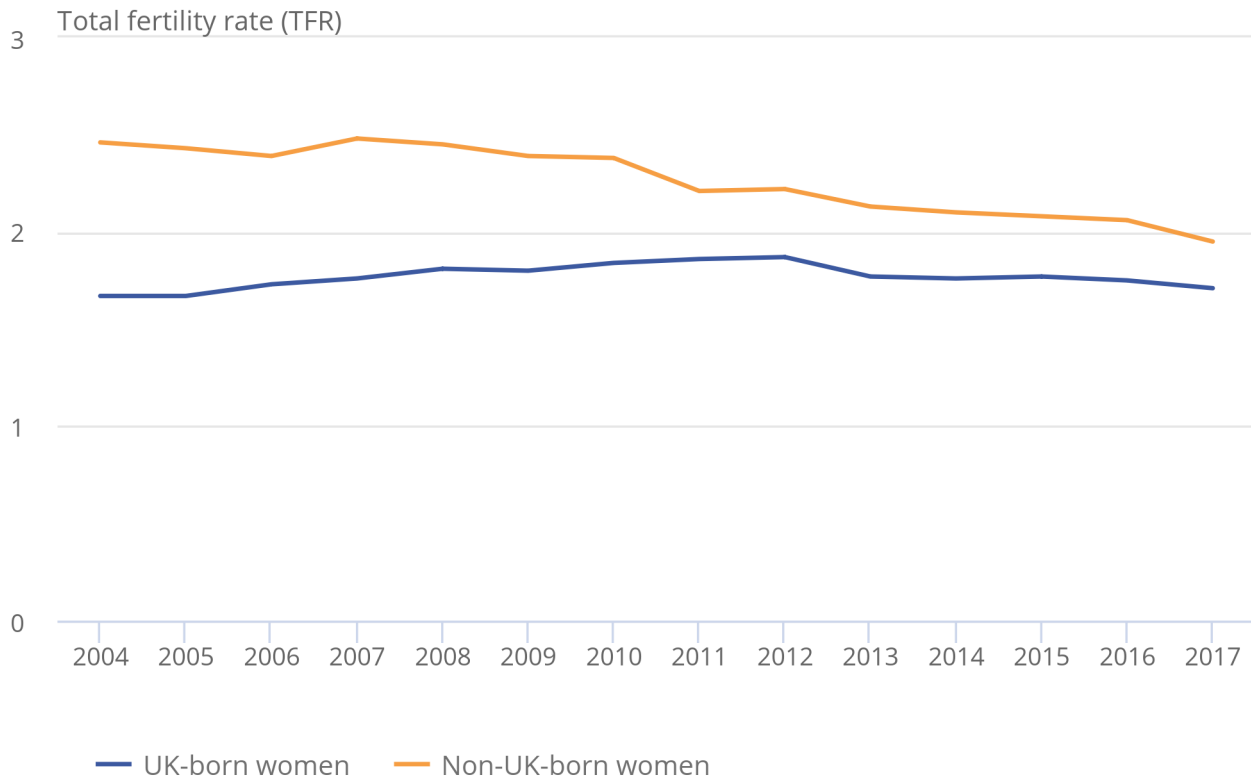
In 2017, the estimated total fertility rate (TFR) in England and Wales declined for both UK-born women and non-UK-born women compared with 2016 (Figure 2). The TFR for non-UK-born women in 2017 was 1.95 children per woman; this represents the lowest value on record and the greatest annual percentage decrease (5.3%) since figures were first calculated in 2004.

**Figure 2: Estimated total fertility rate (TFR) for UK-born and non-UK-born women, 2004 to 2017**

England and Wales

Figure 2: Estimated total fertility rate (TFR) for UK-born and non-UK-born women, 2004 to 2017

England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. The total fertility rate (TFR) is the average number of live children that a group of women would each bear if they experienced the age-specific fertility rates of the calendar year in question throughout their childbearing lifespan.
2. The TFRs for 2012 to 2016 are calculated using the latest Annual Population Survey datasets reweighted in 2017.

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 and 2017. 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 on average having fewer births each.

**Table 1: Live births and the size of the female population aged 15 to 44, UK-born and non-UK-born women, 2016 and 2017**

England and Wales

	Number of live births		Population		TFR	
	UK-born women	Non-UK-born women	UK-born women aged 15 to 44 years	Non-UK-born women aged 15 to 44 years	UK-born women	Non-UK-born women
2016	499,974	196,254	8,573,171	2,522,288	1.75	2.06
2017	486,417	192,651	8,424,357	2,641,677	1.71	1.95
Percentage change	-2.7%	-1.8%	-1.7%	4.7%	-2.3%	-5.3%

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. There are a small number of records where the mother's country of birth was not stated, therefore live births to UK-born and non-UK-born women do not sum exactly to the total number of live births.

The majority of women of childbearing age living in England and Wales were born in the UK (76.1% in 2017). 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 Romania were the three most common countries of birth for women born outside the UK who gave birth in 2017 (Figure 3). 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 has been first place since 2010; a consequence of Poland joining the EU in 2004.

Romania entered the top 10 most common countries of birth of mothers from outside of the UK in 2012, after joining the EU in 2007, then rose to fourth place by 2015. Romania overtook India as the third most common country of birth of non-UK-born mothers in 2017. 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](#).

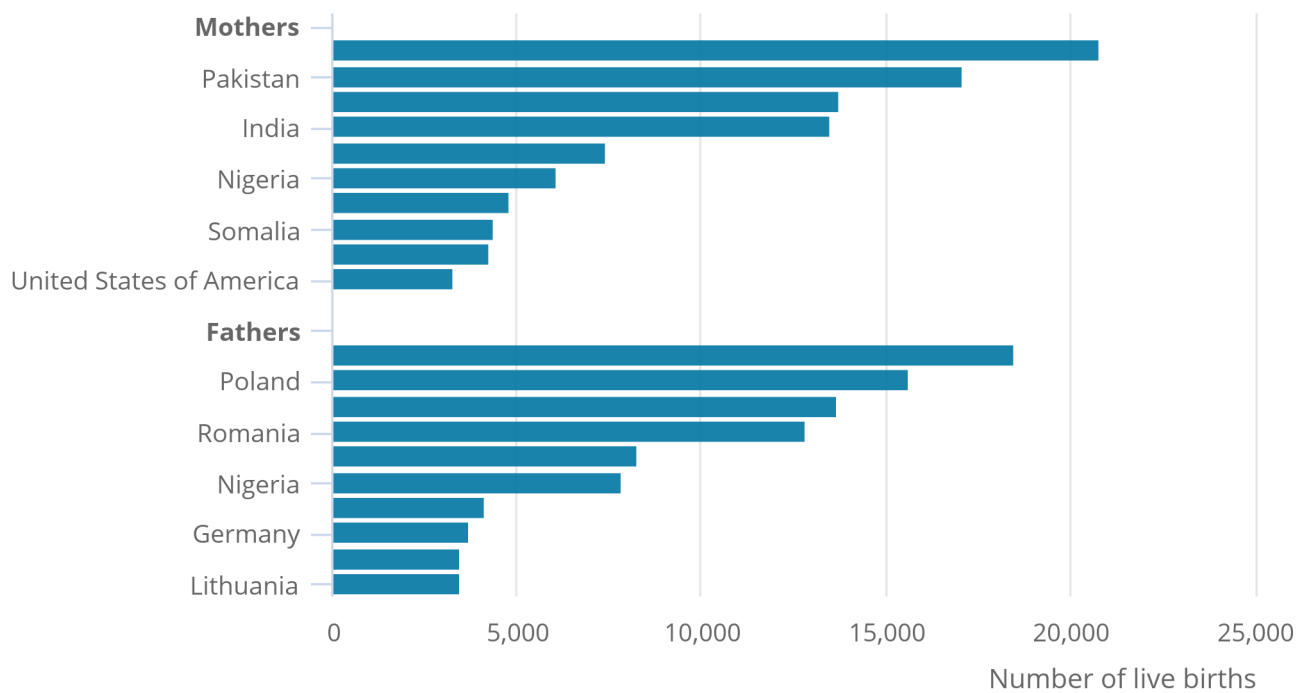
Figures for foreign-born fathers, available for 2008 onwards, show that Pakistan has continually been the most common country of birth for non-UK-born fathers, followed by Poland and then India. The 10 most common countries of birth for non-UK-born fathers in 2017 were similar to those for non-UK-born mothers, with the exception of South Africa replacing United States of America (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Ten most common countries of birth for non-UK-born mothers and fathers, number of live births, 2017**

**England and Wales**

Figure 3: Ten most common countries of birth for non-UK-born mothers and fathers, number of live births, 2017

England and Wales



**Source: Office for National Statistics**

**Notes:**

1. Figures include mothers and fathers whose usual residence is outside England and Wales.
2. Figures for fathers include a very small number of births to second female parents. See Quality and methodology section.

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

In 2017, the most common age group for both UK-born and non-UK-born women giving birth was 30 to 34 years; 51.5% of UK-born mothers were aged 30 years and over, compared with 62.8% of mothers who were born outside the UK. This reflects the higher proportion of women aged 30 years and over in the non-UK-born population of childbearing age, compared with those under 30 years.

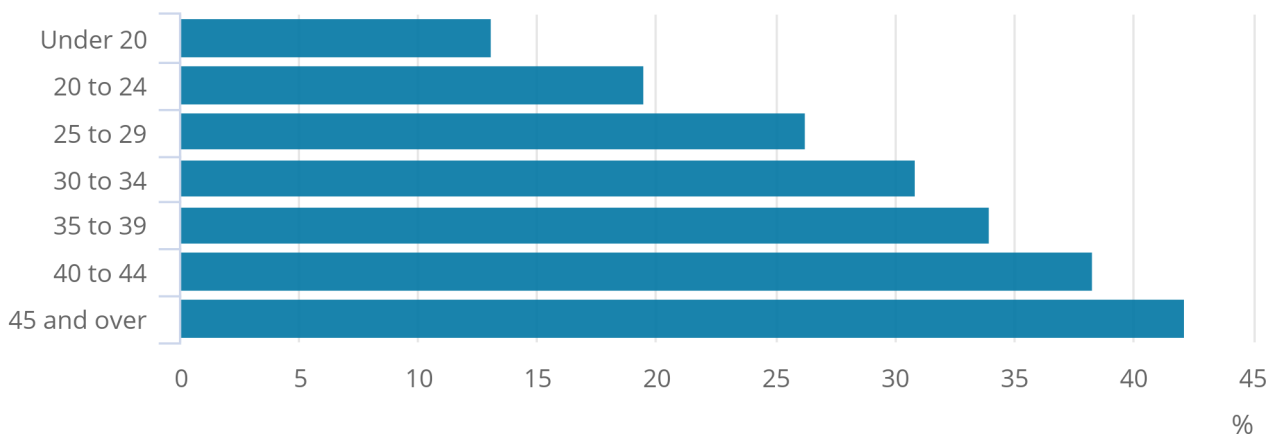
The percentage of live births to women born outside the UK varies notably by mother's age (Figure 4). In 2017, the highest percentage was recorded among mothers aged 45 years and over – 42.2% of babies had a mother who was born outside the UK; for women aged under 20 years, only 13.1% of babies had a mother who was born outside the UK.

**Figure 4: Percentage of live births to non-UK born mothers, by age of mother, 2017**

England and Wales

Figure 4: Percentage of live births to non-UK born mothers, by age of mother, 2017

England and Wales



**Source: Office for National Statistics**

**Notes:**

1. The percentage of live births to non-UK-born women is reported within each age group. For example, in 2017, 42.2% of all babies born to women aged 45 and over had a mother who was born outside the UK.



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

In 2017, the English region with the highest percentage of live births to women born outside the UK was London (57.9%); the North East had the lowest (11.4%). London and the North East have consistently had the highest and lowest percentages respectively since 2001. Brent was the local authority of England with the highest percentage of live births born to non-UK-born women (75.7%), while Redcar and Cleveland had the lowest (3.7%).

In Wales, 11.7% of live births were to women born outside the UK in 2017. Of the local authorities in Wales, Cardiff had the highest percentage (27.9%) and Torfaen had the lowest (4.1%).

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 (Figure 5).

### Figure 5: Percentage of live births born to non-UK-born mothers by local authority district, 2007 to 2017

#### Notes:

1. The Isles of Scilly has been combined with Cornwall for all years because of the very small number of births in this area.
2. Figures are based on boundaries as of February 2018

In 2017, just over a third (33.9%) 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 (66.4%); the North East had the lowest (14.9%). In Wales, 14.8% of babies born in 2017 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 27.1% (provisional) in 2017, compared with 26.9% in 2016.

In Scotland, 17.4% of live births in 2017 were to women born outside the UK, a rise from 17.1% in 2016. In Northern Ireland, provisional figures show that 13.0% of live births were to women born outside the UK in 2017, no change from 2016.

## 10 . Changes to annual birth statistics

Following our [consultation on changes to birth statistics](#), which ran between 19 July 2017 and 26 September 2017, alterations are being made to published birth statistics for the 2017 data year onwards. [Explorable datasets](#) are now available in NOMIS providing detailed birth statistics for 2013 to 2017; these datasets will be updated annually alongside the first release of annual data in July. Given the availability of these explorable datasets, some changes are also being made to our published datasets; these changes were outlined in the [consultation response](#) published on 4 December 2017. As a result, we are now publishing more detailed birth statistics for England and Wales than previously whilst also improving the timeliness of more detailed birth statistics. A lookup showing the tables that used to be published and where data can now be found is contained within the [dataset](#) for this release.

## 11 . Links to related statistics

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

Five [explorable datasets](#) providing more detailed birth statistics are available. These explorable datasets include statistics based on characteristics of mother and father, as well as live birth figures for small geographical areas such as Lower Layer Super Output Areas and wards. These explorable datasets have been specially designed to protect the confidentiality of individuals.

The number of births, birth rates and mean age of mother for the UK and constituent countries can be found in the [Vital statistics: population and health reference tables](#). Figures for 2017 are due to be published in October to November 2018.

Eurostat data have been compiled for [Live birth rates to women aged under 18 and under 20 years in EU28 countries, 2006, 2015 and 2016](#).

[Childbearing of UK and non-UK-born women living in the UK, 2011 Census data](#) provides detailed fertility rates for foreign-born women within England and Wales (around 150 different countries analysed).

Further 2017 birth statistics will be published later in 2018; 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.gov.uk](mailto:vsob@ons.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 2017. The headline figure, 28.4% of [live births in England and Wales in 2017](#) were to foreign-born mothers, was published on 18 July 2018.

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.

The [Births Quality and Methodology Information](#) report 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

Our [User guide to birth statistics](#) provides further information on data quality, legislation and procedures relating to births and includes a glossary of terms.

The [Revisions policy for population statistics \(including birth statistics\)](#) is available.

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](#).

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 2017, there were 38 records where the mother's country of birth was not stated.

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 (1,587 in 2017) are included in the figures, with the country of birth of the second female parent being included under the country of birth of father.