

Statistical bulletin

# Birth characteristics in England and Wales: 2022

Annual live births in England and Wales by sex, birthweight, gestational age, ethnicity and month, maternities by place of birth and with multiple births, and stillbirths by age of parents and calendar quarter.



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# 1 . Main points

In 2022:

- The percentage of maternities that took place at home decreased compared with 2021, from 2.5% to 1.9% in England, and from 3.6% to 2.3% in Wales.
- The percentage of full-term live births with low birthweight (under 2.5 kilogrammes) has increased to 2.9% from 2.6% in 2021, in England and Wales; this proportion increased across all English regions.
- The percentage of preterm live births increased to 7.9% from 7.5% in 2021, in England and Wales; this percentage was highest in the North West (8.5%) and lowest in the South West (7.5%).
- Babies from the Black ethnic group continued to have the highest stillbirth rate at 6.5 per 1,000 births, compared with 3.5 for the White ethnic group.
- The stillbirth rate per 1,000 births in the 10% most deprived areas was 5.0 in England and 6.3 in Wales; in the 10% least deprived areas, the stillbirth rate was 3.7 in England and 3.6 in Wales.
- While more births were registered outside (51.4%) than inside (48.6%) a marriage or civil partnership, the majority (69.3%) of those registered outside a marriage or civil partnership were joint registrations by parents living at the same address.

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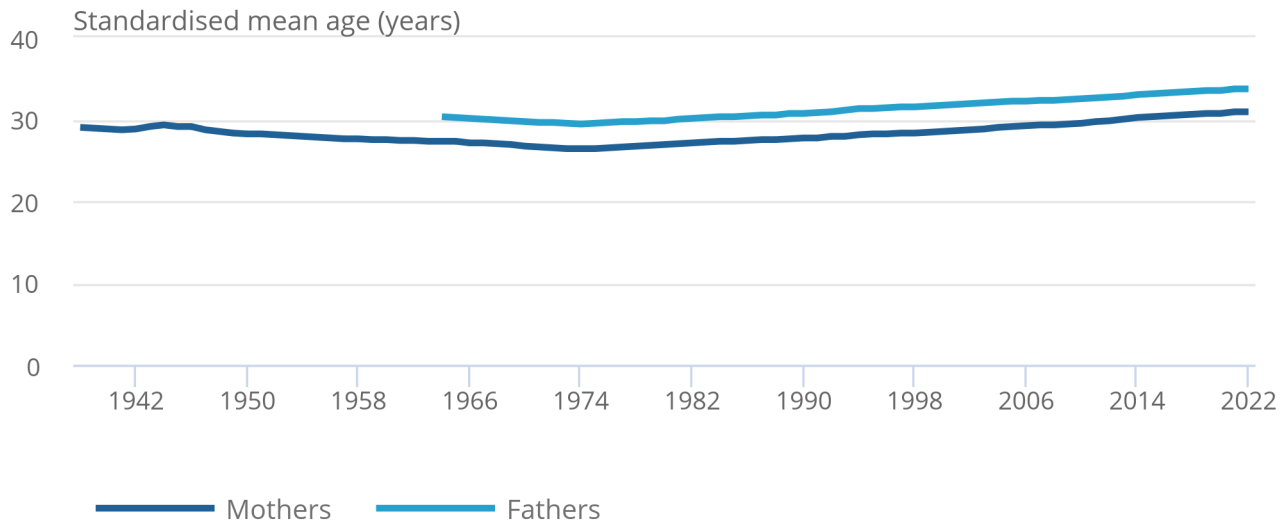
## 2 . Birth characteristics

**Figure 1: Average age of parents remains at a record high**

Standardised mean age of mothers and fathers, England and Wales, 1938 to 2022

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Standardised mean age of mothers and fathers, England and Wales, 1938 to 2022



Source: Births in England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

**Notes:**

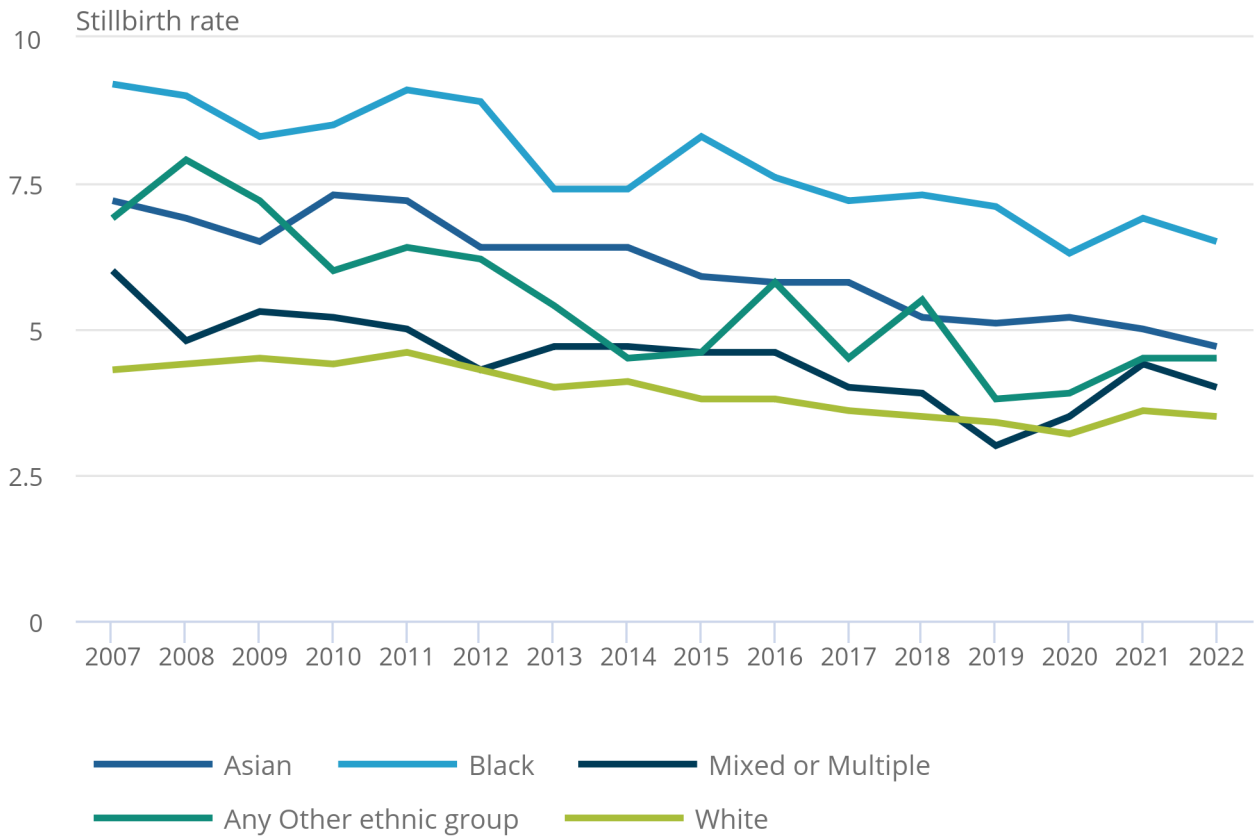
1. Electronic data on the standardised mean age of father are not available before 1964.
2. For births registered under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, 2008, the age of second parent has been included with age of father. See [Section 4: Glossary](#) for more information.

## Figure 2: Stillbirth rates continue to be highest in babies from the Black ethnic group

Stillbirth rate by ethnicity of the baby, England and Wales, 2007 to 2022

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Stillbirth rate by ethnicity of the baby, England and Wales, 2007 to 2022



Source: Births in England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

## Figure 3: September is the most popular month for births

Average daily live births, England and Wales, 2012 to 2022

[Download the data](#)

## 3 . Births data

### [Birth characteristics](#)

Dataset | Released 17 May 2024

Annual live births in England and Wales by sex, birthweight, gestational age, ethnicity and month, maternities by place of birth and with multiple births, and stillbirths by age of parents and calendar quarter.

### [Births by parents' characteristics](#)

Dataset | Released 17 May 2024

Annual live births in England and Wales by age of mother and father, type of registration, median interval between births, number of previous live-born children and National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC).

### [Births in England and Wales: summary tables](#)

Dataset | Released 23 February 2024

Live births and stillbirths annual summary statistics, by sex, age of mother, whether inside marriage or civil partnership, percentage of non-UK-born mothers, birth rates and births by mothers' area of usual residence.

## Filter these data

[Live births in England and Wales: birth rates down to local authority areas \(2013 onwards\)](#)

[Live births in England and Wales by sex and characteristics of mother: national and regional \(2013 onwards\)](#)

[Live births in England and Wales by characteristics of mother and father \(2013 onwards\)](#)

[Live births in England and Wales down to local authority local area \(2013 onwards\)](#)

[Live births in England and Wales for small geographic areas \(2013 onwards\)](#)

## 4 . Glossary

### Age-specific fertility rate (ASFR)

The number of live births to mothers of a particular age per 1,000 women of that age in the population. Useful for comparing fertility of women at different ages or women of the same age in different populations. The rates for women under 20 years, and 40 years and over are based on the female population aged 15 to 19 years and 40 to 44 years, respectively. Age-specific fertility rates for 1981 are based on a 10% sample because of the late submission of some birth registrations caused by a registrars' strike. The population estimates used to calculate fertility rates from 1938 to 1980 are rounded to the nearest hundred and are therefore of a slightly lower level of accuracy than the fertility rates for 1981 onwards.

### General fertility rate (GFR)

The number of live births in a year per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 years. Measure of current fertility levels.

### Gestational age

A measure of how far along a pregnancy is in weeks at the time of birth.

### Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, 2008

For births registered under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, 2008, the age of second parent has been included with age of father, and therefore included in the production of the standardised mean age of father. Given the relatively small number of births registered to same-sex couples, this has a negligible impact on the statistics.

## Index of Multiple Deprivation

Deprivation within areas in England and Wales is measured using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). There are different measures for England and Wales, which are not comparable. IMD is measured in deciles ranging from 1 to 10, with 1 being the most deprived and 10 being the least deprived.

### Live birth

A baby showing signs of life at birth.

### Notification

A document completed by the doctor or midwife present at the birth. It includes information that is not on the birth registration like birthweight, gestation length and ethnicity of the baby. We link birth registrations and birth notifications to produce some of our statistics, as it enables us to provide breakdowns by these factors. The registrar also receives birth notification information so they can check whether all births have been registered or not.

### Preterm birth

A preterm birth is a birth that takes place before 37 weeks' gestation. We use the following [classifications of preterm live births from the World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#):

- extremely preterm (under 28 weeks)
- very preterm (28 to 31 weeks)
- moderate preterm (32 to 36 weeks)

### Standardised mean age

The standardised mean (average) age (for example, at birth or marriage) is a measure that eliminates the impact of any changes in the distribution of the population by age and therefore enables trends over time to be analysed. Standardised mean age of mother (or father) is calculated using rates per 1,000 female (or male) population by single year of age.

### Stillbirth

A stillbirth is a baby born after 24 or more weeks completed gestation and which did not, at any time, breathe or show signs of life. On 1 October 1992 the [Still-Birth \(Definition\) Act 1992](#) came into force, altering the definition of a stillbirth to 24 or more weeks completed gestation, instead of 28 or more weeks completed gestation. The stillbirth rate is defined as the number of stillbirths per 1,000 live births and stillbirths.

### Total fertility rate (TFR)

TFR is the average number of live children that a group of women would have if they experienced the age-specific fertility rates for the calendar year in question throughout their childbearing lifespan. It is a better measure of trends than the number of livebirths, because it accounts for the size and age structure of the female population of childbearing age. The rate provides a timely measure of fertility levels and can be affected by changes in the timing of childbearing, completed family size and the population structure.

## 5 . Measuring the data

Birth statistics represent births that occur and are then registered in England and Wales. Figures are derived from information recorded when live births and stillbirths are registered as part of civil registration, a legal requirement. These data represent the most complete data source available.

In England and Wales, the registration of births is a service carried out by the Local Registration Service in partnership with the General Register Office (GRO).

When a birth is registered, birth registration data are linked to NHS birth notification data to obtain birthweight data.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) also links birth registration data to NHS birth notification data to obtain the age of the mother, where this was missing on the birth registration, and to enable the analysis of characteristics such as ethnicity of the baby and gestation of live births.

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in the [Births Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#).

### Coronavirus and birth statistics

Delays in birth registrations because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic affected 2020 and 2021 data. In normal circumstances, births should be registered within 42 days and our annual data extract only includes births registered before 25 February.

Birth registration services in England and Wales were temporarily suspended in March 2020. From June 2020, registration services restarted where it was safe to do so. In 2020, 42% of registrations came in after 42 days (the usual legal limit) and in 2021, 26% came in after 42 days. Therefore, we decided to include all births registered up to 12 August 2021 in the 2020 dataset and all births up to 15 May 2022 in the 2021 dataset, to ensure that our birth statistics are as complete as possible and comparable with previous years. For more information, please see our [Births in England and Wales explained: 2020 article](#) and our [User guide to birth statistics](#).

### Population estimates revisions and impact on rates

Mid-year 2022 population estimates have been used in this release to calculate fertility rates. These are the latest population estimates at the time of production and are Census 2021-based estimates. These estimates have also been used to revise rates in the back series to 2012, in line with normal practice following the decennial census.

For more information on our population estimates revisions, see our [Rebasing and reconciliation of mid-year population estimates following Census 2021 article](#), and our [Revisions policy for population and international migration statistics methodology](#).

### Stillbirths by cause of death

From the 2021 data year, the hierarchical classification used to classify ONS cause of death groups for stillbirth and neonatal deaths has been updated to align with changes to the cause of death coding software. For this reason, ONS cause groups from 2021 onwards are not directly comparable with 2014 to 2020 data. More information on ONS cause groups can be found in our [User guide to child and infant mortality statistics](#) and [User guide to birth statistics](#).

## 6 . Strengths and limitations

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

## National Statistics status for Births in England and Wales

[National Statistics](#) status means that our statistics meet the highest standard of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

Our [Letter of Confirmation as National Statistics](#) (September 2011) can be found on the United Kingdom Statistics Authority (UKSA) website. Details of our most recent [Assessment report](#) (September 2011) can be found on the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) website.

We have made several improvements since our last review, including:

- ensuring that revisions to the way statistics are produced are explained in the [User guide to birth statistics](#), detailing the year the change took place and the reason why
- ensuring that corrections are accompanied by an explanation of the change and the reason why
- adding background information to our User guide and [Births Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#), to inform the user of the differences in methods between the UK countries and the reasons underlying these differences
- making changes to the way that birth statistics are published, in 2018, following [a consultation on proposed changes to statistics](#); five [explorable datasets](#) are now released in July alongside the first release of annual births data, which means more detailed birth data are now available in a timelier manner
- following [guidance from the Government Statistical Service \(GSS\)](#) to improve the digital accessibility of our published datasets from the 2020 to 2021 data year

## 7 . Related links

### [Births in England and Wales: 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 23 February 2024

Annual summary statistics of live births, stillbirths and fertility rates.

### [Births by parents' country of birth, England and Wales: 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 17 August 2023

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

### [Provisional births in England and Wales: 2021](#)

Article | Released 22 March 2022

Provisional analysis of births occurring between January and December 2021 in England and Wales using NHS birth notifications.

### [Births and infant mortality by ethnicity in England and Wales: 2007 to 2019](#)

Article | Released 26 May 2021

Live births, stillbirths, infant deaths by ethnicity of the baby occurring annually in England and Wales.

### [Baby names in England and Wales: 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 5 October 2022

Most popular first names for baby boys and girls in 2021 using birth registration data.

### [Births in Scotland](#)

Web page | Updated as new data become available

National Records of Scotland's (NRS's) statistics on births.

### [Births in Northern Ireland](#)

Web page | Updated as new data become available

Births statistics from 1887 onwards, and baby names statistics from 1997 onwards for Northern Ireland.



## 8 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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