

Statistical bulletin

Conceptions in England and Wales: 2022

Annual statistics on conceptions to residents of England and Wales, with numbers and rates by age group including women aged under 18 years.

Contact:
Population Health Monitoring
Group
health.data@ons.gov.uk
+44 1329 444110

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1 . Main points

- There were 834,260 conceptions for women of all ages in England and Wales in 2022, which is the second consecutive annual increase; the conception rate remained unchanged from 2021, at 71.4 conceptions per 1,000 women.
- Women aged 30 to 34 years had the highest number of conceptions and conception rate for the sixth year in a row and the lowest percentage of conceptions leading to abortion.
- The conception rate fell among women aged 30 years and over and rose among women aged under 30 years, compared with the previous year.
- The percentage of conceptions leading to abortion was 29.7%; this is a rise from 26.5% in 2021 and the highest proportion on record.
- The conception rates rose to 2.2 per 1,000 women aged under 16 years and 17.6 conceptions per 1,000 women aged 16 to 17 years in 2022; rates have remained below pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels.
- The West Midlands had the highest (78.3 per 1,000 women) conception rate and the South West had the lowest (64.2 per 1,000 women) of all the English regions, and Wales.

2 . Conceptions numbers and rates

The number of conceptions for women of all ages in England and Wales rose by 1.1% for the second consecutive year, from 824,983 conceptions in 2021 to 834,260 in 2022 (Figure 1). The number of conceptions leading to maternities fell by 3.2%, from 606,060 in 2021 to 586,557 in 2022.

The conception rate per 1,000 women was 71.4 in 2022, which is the same as the previous year. This follows a downward trend from a peak of 80.5 per 1,000 women in 2010.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic national lockdowns and restrictions started in 2020 and gradually eased during 2021. This may have affected the behaviour of certain groups and people living in different regions, and influenced the overall number of conceptions and conception rates from 2020 onwards.

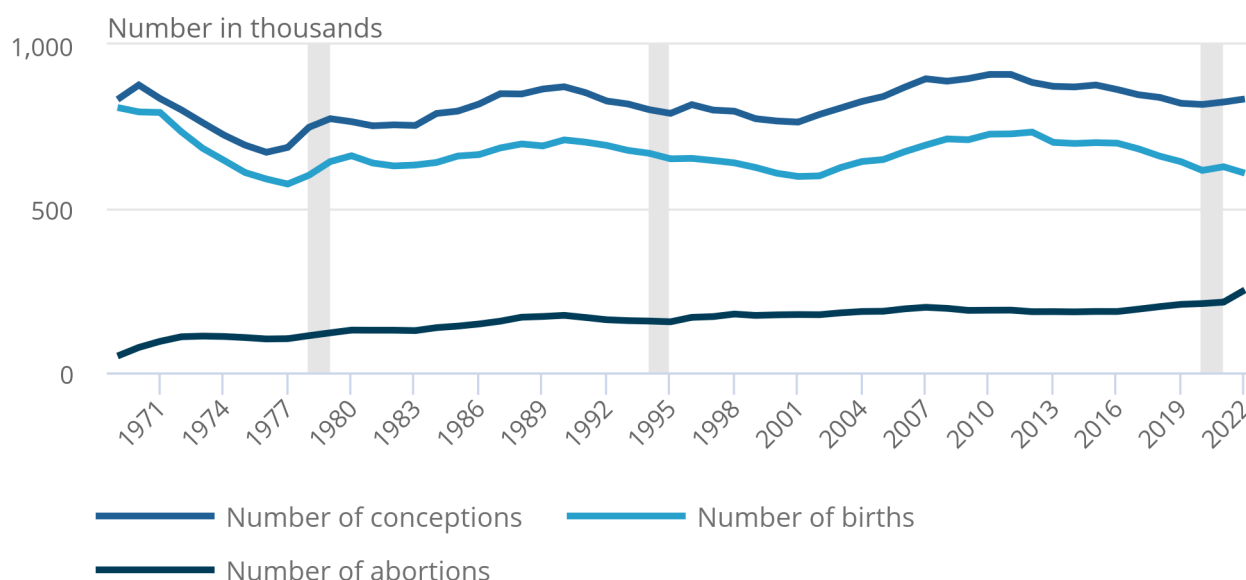
The conception rate was 71.5 conceptions per 1,000 women in England in 2022, which is the same as the previous year. The conception rate was 68.7 in Wales in 2022, which is a small decrease from 70.7 in 2021.

Figure 1: The number of conceptions rose for the second consecutive year

Number (in thousands) of conceptions, births, and abortions for women of all ages, England and Wales, 1969 to 2022

Figure 1: The number of conceptions rose for the second consecutive year

Number (in thousands) of conceptions, births, and abortions for women of all ages, England and Wales, 1969 to 2022



Source: Conception and birth statistics from the Office for National Statistics and Abortion statistics for England and Wales from the Department of Health and Social Care

Notes:

1. The number of conceptions was equivalent to the number of maternities before 1969 - the first full year for which abortions data were available.
2. Sharp decreases in number of conceptions and births between 1970 and 1976 could be explained by the increased use of contraception, as explained in Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine's [Trends in teenage pregnancy article](#).
3. Vertical grey lines between 1976 and 1996 show public scares about the safety of the contraceptive pill, which may have led to increased numbers of conceptions because less reliable contraception methods, if any, were being used. Vertical grey lines in 2020 and 2021 show the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
4. Year refers to the year of birth or year of abortion, not the year of conception for the birth or abortion. These figures differ to conceptions leading to abortion and conceptions leading to maternity used elsewhere in this bulletin.

3 . Age at conception

Women aged 30 to 34 years had the highest number of conceptions (249,991) and the highest conception rate (115.7 per 1,000 women) in 2022. The conception rate for this group exceeded the rate for those in the 25 to 29 years age group for the first time in 2017 and has remained higher ever since.

Women aged over 40 years had a conception rate of 17.2 per 1,000 women in 2022. This is slightly below the record high of 17.3 per 1,000 women in 2021.

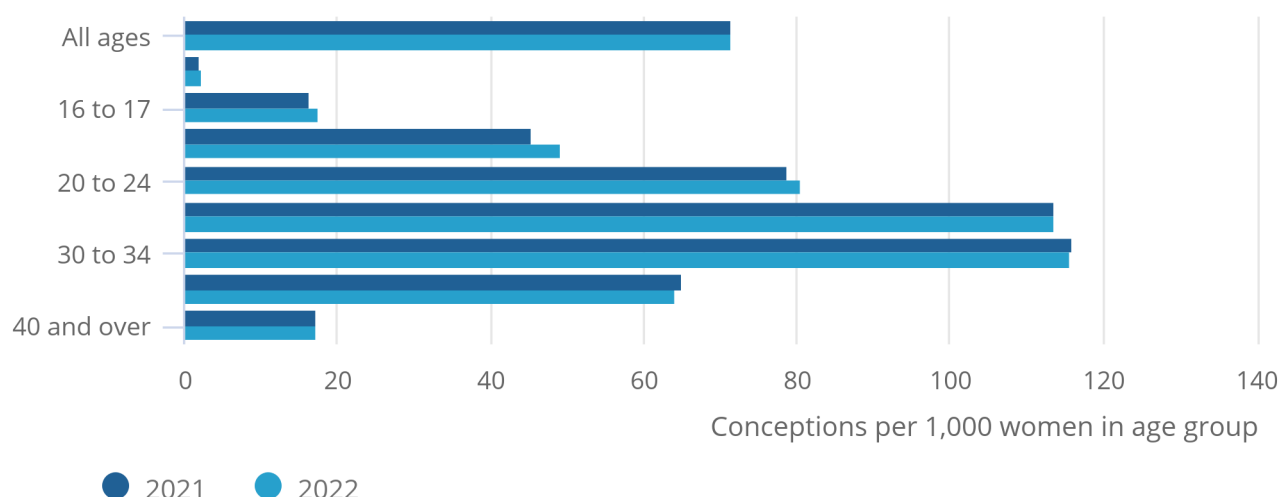
The conception rate fell for all age groups aged 30 years or over and rose for all age groups aged under 30, compared with 2021 (Figure 2). This reflects the long-term trend in conception rates by age. The 20 to 24 years age group had a conception rate 3.7 times higher than the 35 to 39 years age group in 1990. However, it was only 1.3 times higher by 2022.

Figure 2: Conception rates rose among younger age groups and fell among older age groups

Conception rate for women by age group, England and Wales, 2021 and 2022

Figure 2: Conception rates rose among younger age groups and fell among older age groups

Conception rate for women by age group, England and Wales, 2021 and 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics

4 . Teenage conceptions

There had been a long-term decreasing trend in conception rates among those aged under 18 years before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. There were 19.8 conceptions per 1,000 women aged 16 to 17 years and 2.5 per 1,000 women aged under 16 years in 2019. These rates fell further to lows of 16.2 and 2.1, respectively, in 2020 (the first year of the pandemic).

Conception rates rose to 17.6 for women aged 16 to 17 years and 2.2 for women aged under 16 years in 2022 (the first year after pandemic restrictions lifted). Despite these increases, rates remained below pre-pandemic levels. This is consistent with the long-term trend of decreasing conception rates among those aged under 18 years.

5 . Conceptions leading to legal abortions

The percentage of conceptions leading to legal abortion reached a record high of 29.7% in 2022. This percentage has generally been increasing for all age groups since 2015. There were 247,703 conceptions leading to a legal abortion in 2022. This is 13.1% higher than the 218,923 recorded in 2021.

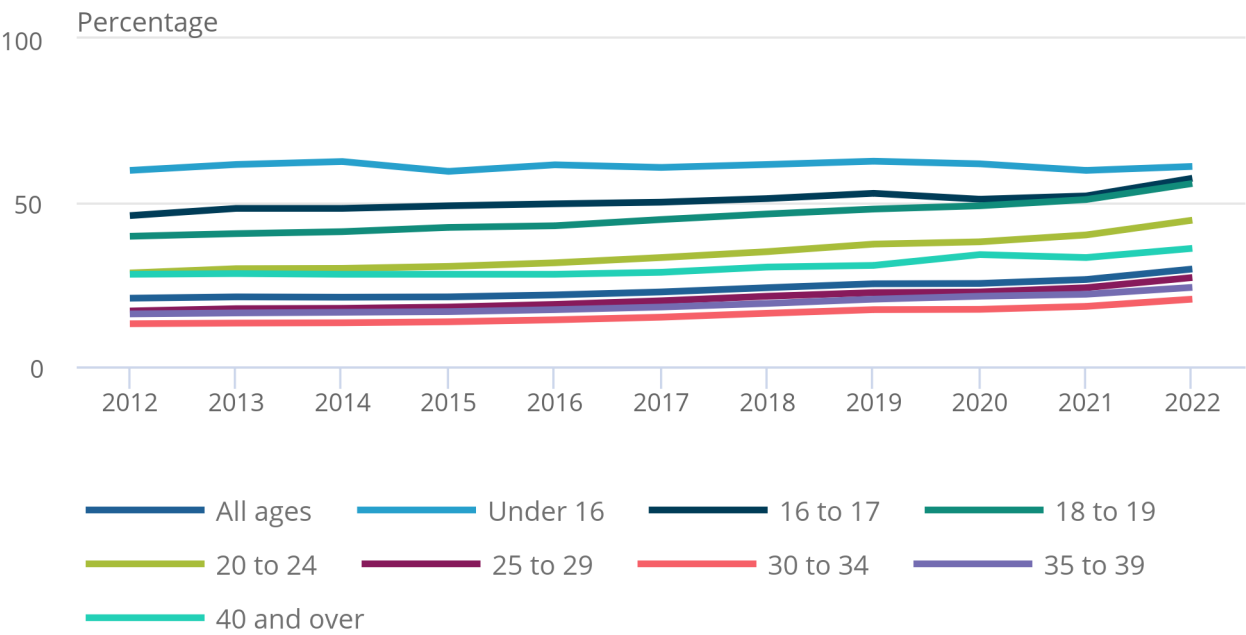
Women aged under 16 years remained the age group with the lowest number of conceptions (2,369) and the highest percentage of conceptions leading to abortion (61.0%). Women aged 30 to 34 years, who had the highest number of conceptions (249,991), also had the lowest percentage of conceptions leading to abortion in 2022 (20.5%).

Figure 3: The percentage of conceptions leading to legal abortion has generally been increasing for most age groups

Percentage of conceptions for women of all ages leading to legal abortion by age group, England and Wales, 2012 to 2022

Figure 3: The percentage of conceptions leading to legal abortion has generally been increasing for most age groups

Percentage of conceptions for women of all ages leading to legal abortion by age group, England and Wales, 2012 to 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics

6 . Conceptions by area of usual residence

The West Midlands had the highest conception rate of all the English regions, and Wales, with 78.3 conceptions per 1,000 women in 2022. The South West had the lowest conception rate, with 64.2 conceptions per 1,000 women in 2022.

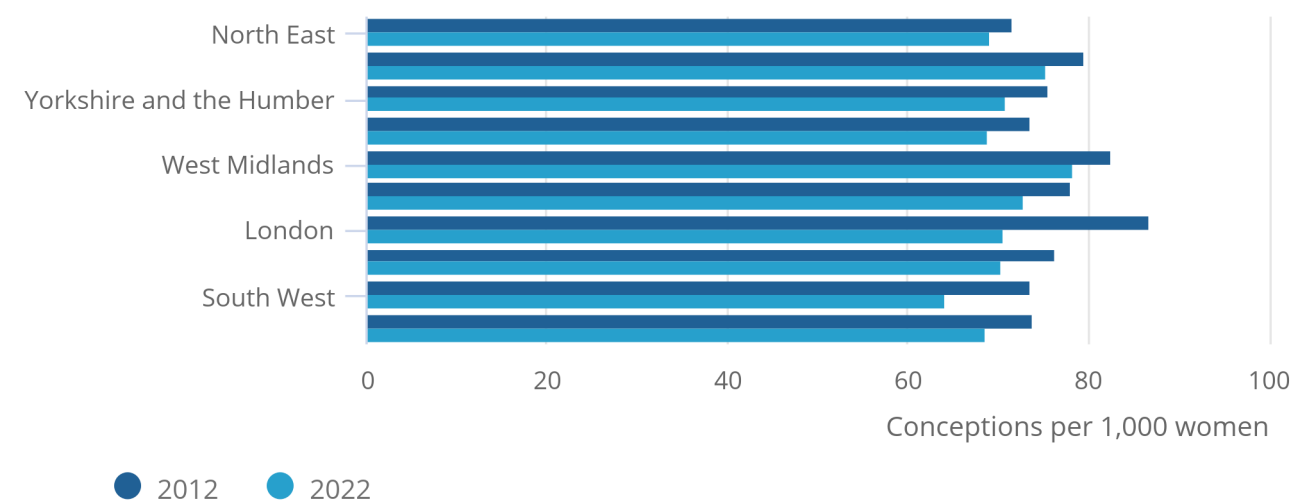
The conception rate fell in every region between 2012 and 2022. The largest decrease was in London. The conception rate in London fell by 18.5%, from 86.7 conceptions per 1,000 women in 2012 to 70.7 per 1,000 women in 2022.

Figure 4: London’s conception rate decreased most out of all English regions, and Wales, over the last decade

Conception rates for women of all ages, English regions and Wales, 2012 and 2022

Figure 4: London’s conception rate decreased most out of all English regions, and Wales, over the last decade

Conception rates for women of all ages, English regions and Wales, 2012 and 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics

Figure 5: There are noteworthy regional variations in conception rates among women aged under 18 years

Conception rates for women aged under 18 years, by local authority, England and Wales, 2022

Notes:

1. We have combined counts for Hackney with City of London, and for Isles of Scilly with Cornwall, to maintain confidentiality.

[Download the data](#)

7 . Conceptions by marital status

Most conceptions have occurred outside of marriage or civil partnership since records began in 1998. This proportion has been generally increasing, with 61.7% of conceptions occurring outside of marriage or civil partnership in 2022. This was slightly below the record high of 62.4% in 2021.

The proportion of conceptions leading to a legal abortion rose for both groups, compared with the previous year. Conceptions within marriage or civil partnership rose from 10.4% to 11.1%. Conceptions outside of marriage or civil partnership rose from 33.0% to 36.0%.

8 . Data on conceptions

[Conceptions in England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 9 July 2025

Annual statistics on conceptions to residents of England and Wales, with numbers and rates by age group including women aged under 18 years, inside and outside marriage or civil partnership, and area of usual residence.

[Quarterly births in England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 3 February 2025

Quarterly live births, stillbirths, maternities and stillbirth rates by gestational age, age of mother, ethnicity, and area deprivation, for England and Wales.

9 . Glossary

Abortion

Abortion is the legal termination of a pregnancy under the [1967 Abortion Act](#). The information presented is based on abortion notification forms (HSA4) submitted by clinics and hospitals to the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) at the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and to the Welsh CMO.

Births

Births include live births and stillbirths, unless otherwise stated.

Conception

Conception is a pregnancy that leads either to a maternity or a legal abortion. We do not hold data on pregnancies that lead to miscarriage or pregnancies ending in illegal abortions.

Conception rate

Conception rates are calculated by dividing the number of conceptions to women in an age group by the female population in the same age group.

Live birth

Live birth is a baby showing signs of life at birth.

Maternity

Maternity refers to a pregnancy resulting in the birth of one or more live-born or stillborn children. The number of maternities represents the number of women giving birth rather than the number of babies born (live-born and stillborn).

10 . Data sources and quality

Conception statistics bring together records of birth registrations collected under the [Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953](#) and of abortion notifications supplied under the [Abortion Act 1967](#).

They include all the pregnancies of women resident in England and Wales that lead to one of the following outcomes:

- a maternity from which one or more live births or stillbirths occur that is registered in England and Wales
- a termination of a pregnancy by abortion under the 1967 Act that takes place in England and Wales (pregnancies that lead to miscarriages are not included)

Conceptions in 2022 may result in maternities or abortions in 2022 or 2023. Maternities that result in one or more live births or stillbirths are counted once only. Conception statistics do not include miscarriages or illegal abortions.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and conceptions statistics

Birth registration services in England and Wales were suspended in March 2020, in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Birth registrations restarted in June 2020, where it was safe to do so. However, the 2020 and 2021 birth registration data used in this bulletin were delayed to some extent.

Abortion coherence and comparability

Abortion data used in conception statistics are not directly comparable with abortion statistics published by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID). This is because OHID abortion statistics are published by date of abortion and we use abortion data based on the date of conception. Some abortions will relate to conceptions that occurred in the previous calendar year.

More quality and methodology information

Further information on data quality, legislation, procedures relating to conceptions, and a glossary of terms are provided in our [User guide to conception statistics](#).

More quality and methodology information (QMI) on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [Conception statistics QMI](#).

11 . Related links

[Births in England and Wales: 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 1 July 2025

Live births, stillbirths, and the intensity of childbearing, measured by the total fertility rate.

[Birth characteristics in England and Wales: 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 17 May 2024

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

[Abortion statistics for England and Wales: 2022](#)

Bulletin | Last updated 23 May 2024

Statistics on abortions carried out in 2022 from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

12 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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