Live Births in England and Wales by Characteristics of Birth, 2010

Coverage: England and Wales
Date: 10 November 2011
Geographical Area: Region
Theme: Population

Key points

• The percentage of home maternities decreased to 2.5 per cent in 2010, compared with 2.7 per cent in 2009.

• The multiple maternity rate decreased to 15.7 per thousand women giving birth in 2010, compared with 16.4 in 2009.

• Women aged 45 and over had the highest multiple maternity rate (93.6 multiple maternities per thousand maternities).

Summary

This bulletin presents annual statistics on live births in England and Wales in 2010 by characteristics of birth. In particular, it provides statistics for women giving birth at home and for women having multiple births.
Home births

Maternities taking place at home, 1960–2010, England and Wales

In 2010 in England and Wales, 2.5 per cent of women giving birth did so at home. This represents a small decrease from 2.7 per cent in 2009. In 1960, the percentage of women giving birth at home was 33.2 per cent, but this fell to a record low between 1985 and 1988 when only 0.9 per cent of women gave birth at home. Overall, since 1988, there has been a small rise in the percentage of women giving birth at home.

In the 1950s, post-war Britain saw the health service run campaigns to persuade mothers to go into hospital to give birth. At this time housing conditions and general health were quite poor and for many women hospital would have been the safest environment in which to give birth.

The shift away from giving birth at home took place largely between 1963 and 1974, during which time the percentage of women giving birth at home fell from 30 per cent to 4.2 per cent at a rate of two to three percentage points per year. During this time the stillbirth rate fell from 17.2 stillbirths per 1,000 live and stillbirths in 1963 to 11.1 in 1974. The percentage of women giving birth at home hit a record low of 0.9 per cent between 1985 and 1988, but has since risen slightly year-on-year by...
between 0.1 and 0.3 per cent, with the exception of a period of relative stability between 1997 and 2003 and small decreases between 2008 and 2010.

In recent years NHS reforms have encouraged women to exercise greater choice in where they give birth.

The South West had the highest percentage of women giving birth at home in 2010 (3.8 per cent) while the North East had the lowest (1.2 per cent). The South West and the North East also had the highest and lowest percentages of women giving birth at home in 2009.

In 2010 the age group with the greatest proportion of women giving birth at home was women aged 35–39, with 3.5 per cent of women in this age group giving birth at home. In contrast women aged under 20 had the lowest proportion of home births, with 1.0 per cent of women giving birth at home in 2010. A similar pattern was seen in 2000.

Since the early 1990s, and most recently in 2007, government policy in England has been that women should be provided with a choice about where to give birth, and the information they need in order to make the best choice for them. As such, the number of home births is monitored by the NHS and Department for Health. Special interest groups, for example Birth Choice UK, use the statistics to help women decide where they might like to have their baby and promote women’s rights to a home birth.

Maternities taking place at home, by age of mother, 2000 and 2010, England and Wales

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:
1. A maternity is a pregnancy resulting in the birth of one or more children, including stillbirths. The chart therefore shows the percentage of women giving birth at home rather than the number of babies born at home. The
percentage of women giving birth at home is reported within each age group. For example in 2010, 3.0 per cent of all maternities to women aged 30–34 took place at home.

Download chart

XLS format
(27.5 Kb)

Seasonality

In 2010 the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) reached 2.00 children per woman for the first time since 1973. April experienced the lowest monthly TFR (1.92) and September had the highest monthly TFR (2.09). September is usually the month with the highest TFR. In 2010 the monthly TFRs in October (2.03) and November (2.03) were the second and third highest respectively. This is slightly different from recent years when the second and third highest monthly TFRs occurred in July, August or October. Some believe that the TFR was highest in September, October and November in 2010 because people were staying in more due to the bad weather experienced across the UK in the previous winter.

Multiple births

In 2010, 11,053 women gave birth to twins, 169 to triplets and 6 to quads and above. These multiple maternities (see background note 3) include both live births and stillbirths.

The multiple maternity rate in 2010 decreased to 15.7 maternities with multiple births per thousand women giving birth, compared with 16.4 in 2009. Since 2000 the multiple maternity rate (then 14.7) has increased by 6.8 per cent. Overall the multiple maternity rate has increased since the late 1970s. In 1976 there were 9.6 multiple maternities per 1,000 maternities. The largest increase in the multiple maternity rate was recorded between 1990 and 1995 when the rate rose from 11.6 to 14.1, an increase of 22 per cent.

The multiple maternity rate decreased for all age groups in 2010, compared with 2009, except for the 40–44 age group where the rate increased slightly from 25.3 to 25.5 per thousand maternities. Women aged 45 and over had by far the highest multiple maternity rate in 2010 (93.6 per thousand maternities) and also the largest percentage increase in this rate over the previous decade (141 per cent increase). In 2000 the multiple maternity rate for women aged 45 and over was 38.8 per thousand maternities.

Women aged under 20 had the lowest multiple maternity rate in 2010 (6.2 per thousand maternities) while the multiple maternity rate for women aged 25–29 has shown the smallest percentage increase since 2000 (1.6 per cent increase). There were decreases in the multiple maternity rate over the decade for the under 20s (4.6 per cent decrease) and the 30–34 age group (1.1 per cent decline).
Maternities with multiple births by age of mother, 2000 and 2010, England and Wales

Source: Office for National Statistics

Notes:
1. Multiple births arising from a single pregnancy are counted as one maternity. The number of maternities indicates the number of women having babies (including stillbirths) rather than the number of babies born.

Download chart

Although multiple births occur naturally, many occur as a result of fertility treatment. On average, one in four In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) pregnancies result in either twins or triplets compared with one in eighty pregnancies to women who conceive naturally. With approximately 11,000 IVF babies being born each year this contributes significantly to the multiple birth rate.

In 2009 the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act launched the elective single embryo transfer (eSET) policy, which allowed centres to develop their own eSET strategy, to reduce the UK IVF multiple pregnancy rate to 10 per cent over a period of years.

On average multiple births tend to have lower birthweights than singletons which is one reason why the infant mortality rate is around five times higher for multiple births than for singleton births. Multiple pregnancies are also associated with a higher risk of stillbirth, neonatal death (death under 28 days) and child disability.

Multiple birth statistics are monitored by the NHS and Department of Health to help ensure that adequate maternity and support services are available. Other organisations, such as the Multiple
Birth Foundation, who provide advice, information and support to multiple birth families and health professionals, use multiple birth statistics to monitor trends.

**Further information**

This statistical bulletin provides supporting commentary for the ‘Characteristics of birth 2’ package which includes data tables on live births in England and Wales in 2010, by month and quarter of occurrence, multiple births and place of birth. Further information relating to the tables and this bulletin can be found on the metadata tab at the front of the data tables.

The ‘Characteristics of mother 1’ package was published on 20 October 2011. This provides summary statistics by age of mother, type of registration (within marriage/civil partnership, joint, sole), and mean age of mother by birth order.

The ‘Characteristics of birth 1’ package was published on 15 September 2011. This provides summary statistics on:

- stillbirths by age of parents and quarter of occurrence,
- birthweight data for live and stillbirths by mother’s area of usual residence,
- maternities, live births, and stillbirths in hospitals by area of occurrence.

The ‘Live births by area of usual residence of mother’ package was published on 15 September 2011. This provides summary statistics on births for local authorities and health areas including figures by age of mother.

The ‘Parent’s country of birth’ package was published on 25 August 2011. This provides summary statistics on:

- country of birth of mother,
- country of birth of father,
- country of birth of mother by local authority,
- total fertility rates for UK born women and non-UK born women.

Further packages providing 2010 birth statistics will be published on 16 December 2011. These packages are:

- Characteristics of mother 2, England and Wales,
- Cohort fertility, England and Wales,
- Further parental characteristics, England and Wales,

For information on data quality, legislation and procedures relating to birth statistics, please see [Births Metadata 2010](#) and [the Births Summary Quality Report (257.9 Kb Pdf)](#).

There is also a [frequently asked questions on births and fertility document (198 Kb Pdf)](#).
For data for other UK countries please see the latest birth statistics for Northern Ireland and the latest birth statistics for Scotland.

Footnotes

2. Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority Multiple births – Background and statistics.

Background notes

1. There were 723,165 live births in England and Wales in 2010, compared with 706,248 in 2009, a rise of 2.4 per cent.

2. Statistics on home births show the number of women giving birth at home rather than the number of babies born at home. A maternity is a pregnancy resulting in the birth of one or more children, including stillbirths.

3. Multiple births arising from a single pregnancy are counted as one maternity, although each child born is counted separately in analyses of birth statistics (the number of maternities indicates the number of women having babies rather than the number of babies born).

4. Areas previously referred to as Government Office Regions (GORs) are now designated as 'regions' for statistical purposes only. GORs were abolished on 31st March 2011 after the Government Comprehensive Spending Review.

5. Special extracts and tabulations of births data for England and Wales are available to order for a charge (subject to legal frameworks, disclosure control, resources and agreements of costs, where appropriate). Such enquiries should be made to:

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