



Live births in England and Wales by characteristics of mother

2009

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Coverage: England and Wales **Theme:** Population

This bulletin presents statistics on live births in England and Wales in 2009 by characteristics of the mother. In particular, it provides birth statistics by age of mother, type of registration (within marriage, joint registration or sole registration), and average (mean) age of mother for all births and first births.

Key Findings:

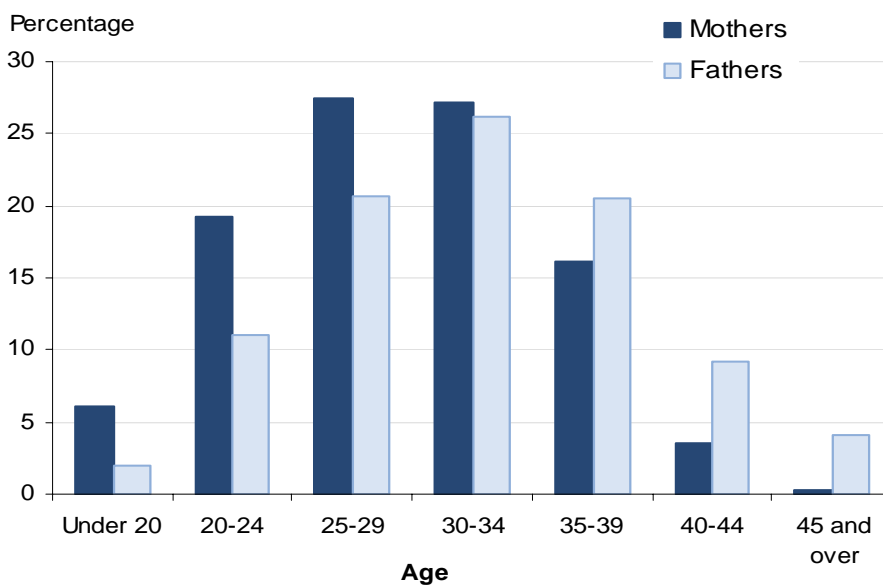
- Nearly half (47 per cent) of all babies born in 2009 had mothers aged 30 and over, but over two-thirds (64 per cent of babies) had fathers aged 30 and over (excluding sole registered births where the father's information is not available)
- The standardised average (mean) age of mother for all births increased marginally to 29.4 years in 2009 from 29.3 in 2008
- The standardised average (mean) age of mother at first birth also increased marginally to 27.6 years in 2009 from 27.5 in 2008
- The percentage of babies registered by two parents living at the same address, whether married or cohabiting was 84 per cent in 2009. This percentage has remained relatively unchanged over the last decade.

Timing of childbearing

Babies born in England and Wales in 2009 were most likely to have a mother aged 25–34, with over a half (55 per cent) of mothers being in this age group. A further quarter (25 per cent of babies) were born to younger mothers, aged under 25, while a fifth (20 per cent) had mothers aged 35 and over at the time of birth. Compared with the previous decade, this represents an increase in the contribution of mothers aged 35 and over (15 per cent in 1999) and a decrease in the contribution of mothers aged 25–34 (59 per cent in 1999).

Fathers tend to be older than mothers. Nearly half of all babies born (47 per cent) had mothers aged 30 and over, but over two-thirds (64 per cent of babies) had fathers aged 30 and over (sole registered births, where the father's information is not available have been excluded). The percentage of fathers aged 30 and over has remained relatively unchanged over the last decade (63 per cent of babies were fathered by men in this age group in 1999).

Live births by age group of mother and father, 2009, England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

In 2009 the standardised average (mean) age of women giving birth in England and Wales was 29.4 years, a small increase compared with 29.3 years in 2008. This compares to 28.4 years in 1999. These figures refer to all births; however, the standardised average age of women having a first birth in 2009 was estimated to be 27.6 years of age, compared with 27.5 in 2008 and 26.4 in 1999.

Partnership status of parents

The proportion of births registered to married couples has been falling steadily for the last three decades however, marriage remains the most common family setting for births in England and Wales as a whole. In 2009 over half of births occurred within marriage (54 per cent) compared with 61 per cent in 1999 and 89 per cent in 1979.

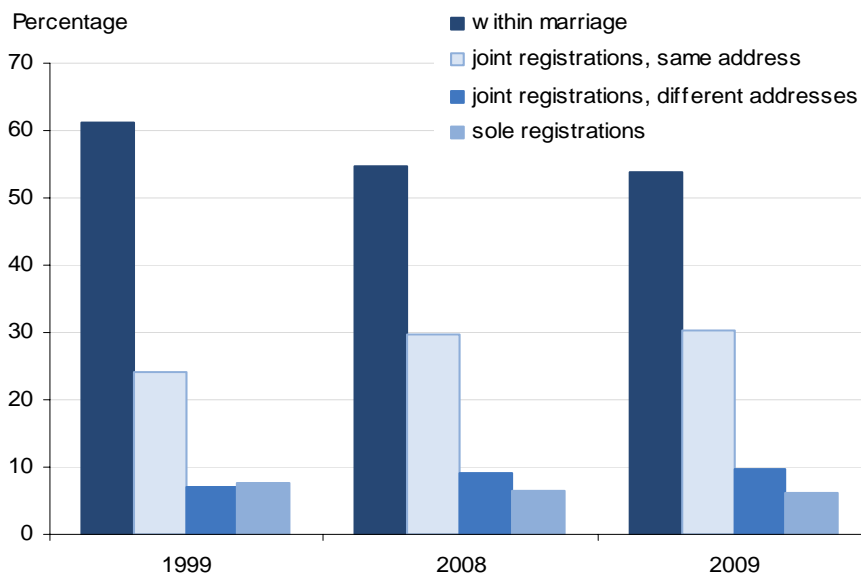
The percentage of births occurring outside marriage (46 per cent overall in 2009) varies considerably by age. Among women aged under 20 who gave birth in 2009, a very high

percentage were not married (95 per cent). In contrast, at age 30–34 the majority of women giving birth were married, with only 29 per cent of births outside marriage, the lowest of any age group.

In 2009, the percentage of births outside marriage was higher for all age groups compared with 1999 and 2008, with the exception of women aged 40–44. In this age group, the percentage of births outside marriage was similar in 2008 and 2009.

Births outside marriage can be registered jointly by both the mother and father, or solely by the mother. Where the birth is jointly registered and the parents give the same address, it can be inferred that they are cohabiting. The proportion of births registered to cohabiting parents has increased in recent years, reaching 30 per cent of all births in 2009, compared with 24 per cent in 1999. In contrast, the percentage of births registered solely by the mother has fallen very slightly over the last ten years reaching 6.2 per cent in 2009 compared with 7.8 per cent in 1999.

Live births by type of registration, England and Wales, 1999, 2008 and 2009



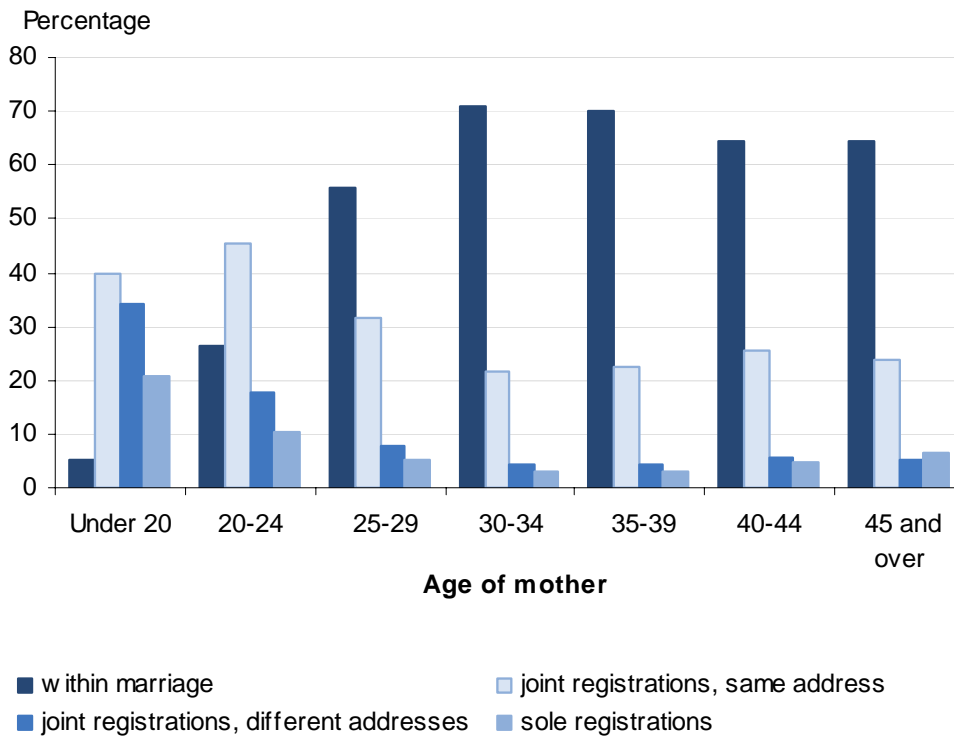
Source: Office for National Statistics

Overall, 84 per cent of births in 2009 were to parents living together, whether married or unmarried. Of the remainder, a further 10 per cent of births were registered jointly by parents living at separate addresses, while only 6 per cent were registered by the mother alone.

Births to mothers aged under 25 are the most likely to be jointly registered by cohabiting parents, while for women aged 25–29 and older, marriage is the most common family setting for births, followed by cohabitation. Sole registrations and joint registrations to parents living at different

addresses are also more common among younger mothers aged under 25 than among older mothers.

Live births by type of registrations and mother's age group, 2009, England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Further information

Tables on live births in England and Wales by characteristics of mother (age of mother including mean age by birth order and type of registration) are available at:

www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=14408

The 'Characteristics of mother 2' package will be published later in the year (the release date can be found at: www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/index.html). This package will contain:

- fertility rates by marital status
- live births within marriage by age of mother and number of previous live-born children
- first live births within marriage by marriage duration.

For frequently asked questions on births and fertility, please see

www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/FAQbirthsfertility.pdf

Background Notes

1. There were 706,248 live births in England and Wales in 2009, compared with 708,711 in 2008, a fall of 0.3 per cent. This is the first annual decrease in births since 2001 when there were 594,634 live births (down from 604,441 in 2000) and represents a change from the rising numbers of births observed over the past seven years.
 2. Births outside marriage can be registered jointly by both the mother and father, or solely by the mother. No information on the father is available for sole registered births.
 3. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 contained provisions enabling two females in a same-sex couple to register a birth from 1st September 2009 onwards. Due to the small numbers in 2009, births registered to a same-sex couple in a civil partnership (22 in 2009) are included with marital births while births registered to a same-sex couple outside a civil partnership (2 in 2009) are included with births outside marriage. For these 24 births registered to a same-sex couple in 2009, the age of the second female parent, who is not the birth mother, is included under the age of the father.
 4. The standardised mean age is a measure which allows fertility trends to be separated out from the effects of changes in the population's age structure. It is therefore useful for comparing mean ages across population subgroups and over time.
 5. At birth registration, the number of previous births is only collected for births within marriage. This partial information on birth order from registration data is supplemented with data from the General Lifestyle Survey (formerly known as the General Household Survey) to give estimates of true birth order. The average age at first birth is based on the estimated true birth order for all births whether inside or outside marriage.
 6. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the media office.
 7. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.
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