**Report: Live births in England and Wales, 2007: areas of residence**

This report provides summary statistics of live births in England and Wales during 2007 and compares them with figures for previous years. It also presents numbers and provisional fertility rates by area of residence of the mother. Further details of births in 2007 are planned for publication in the volume *Birth statistics 2007* (Series FM1 no. 36) on the National Statistics website (www.statistics.gov.uk) in December 2008.

**NATIONAL**

- The provisional Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in 2007 was 1.91. This means that if age patterns of fertility were to remain at 2007 levels in the future, women would have on average 1.91 children each. The 2007 TFR represents the sixth consecutive annual increase from the low point in 2001 when the TFR was 1.63. The TFR is now at its highest level since 1973.

- The provisional General Fertility Rate (GFR) for 2007 was 61.9 live births per thousand women aged 15-44, an increase on the 2006 figure of 60.2. The GFR was last higher 13 years previously in 1994 when it was 62.0.

- There were 690,013 live births in England and Wales in 2007 compared with 669,601 in 2006, an increase of 3.0 per cent.

- In 2007, there have been increases in the fertility rates for women in all age groups, except for women aged under 20 (see Figure 1). Women in their early thirties continued to have the highest fertility rates, at 109.5 live births per thousand women aged 30-34, having overtaken women in their late twenties in 2004.

- The average (mean) age of mothers at live birth has been rising steadily since the mid-1970s (see Figure 2). In 2007, the provisional standardised mean age of mothers giving birth increased to 29.3 years, up from 29.1 in 2006. The standardised mean age of mothers at birth in 2007 was 2.9 years higher than when the lowest mean age of 26.4 was seen in 1974. See Explanatory Note 4.

- Fertility rates for women aged 40 and over have been increasing over the past twenty years. In 2007, the provisional rate reached 12.1 live births per thousand women aged 40 and over, more than twice the 1987 rate of 5.1. Birth rates for women aged 40 and over are at their highest level since 1967. In 2007, there were 25,350 live births to mothers aged 40 and over, nearly double the 1997 figure (12,914) and nearly treble the number in 1987 (8,643).

- In the decade since 1997, the fertility rates of women in their late thirties have increased by 45 per cent to 57.0 live births per thousand women aged 35-39.
• Over the past ten years the fertility rates of women in their twenties have fluctuated. However, in 2007 the fertility rates for women aged 20-24 and 25-29 were at their highest since 1998, at 73.3 and 103.5 live births per thousand women respectively.

• The rise in the proportion of live births outside marriage continued: 43.5 per cent of live births were outside marriage in 2006, increasing to 44.3 per cent in 2007.

• The proportion of live births to mothers born outside the United Kingdom continued to rise. In 2007, 3.2 per cent of live births were to mothers born outside the United Kingdom compared with 21.9 per cent in 2006 and 13.1 per cent in 1997.

• In 2007, the number of live births to mothers born outside the United Kingdom was 160,340 compared with 529,655 live births to mothers born in the UK. Between 2006 and 2007 the increase in the proportion of live births to mothers born outside the UK was greater than the increase in the proportion of live births to mothers born in the UK: for mothers born outside the UK the number of live births rose by 9.1 per cent from 146,956 while for mothers born in the UK the number of live births rose by 1.3 per cent from 522,627.

• The increase in the number of births in England and Wales to mothers born outside the UK is due partly to the rise in births to mothers born in countries belonging to the European Union. In 2006, there were 30,304 live births in England and Wales to mothers born in one of the other 26 member states of the European Union as constituted in 2007 (excluding the UK). This was 4.5 per cent of all live births that year. In 2007, this proportion increased to 5.4 per cent, with 37,349 live births to mothers born in the European Union (excluding the UK). See Explanatory Note 6.

• The sex ratio at birth for 2007 was 1,057 live males per thousand live females born. This means that 5.7 per cent more boys than girls were born in 2007. This ratio has increased from 1,047 live males per thousand live females in 2006 (See Figure 3). While the sex ratio at birth varies considerably from year to year, it is currently at its highest since 1979 when it was 1,060 live males per thousand females.

SUBNATIONAL

Variations in fertility by area are shown in Tables 2 and 3, where numbers of live births and provisional GFRs and TFRs are presented for administrative and health areas. TFRs for subnational areas are presented using the current single-year-of-age methodology and also the proposed new five-year age group methodology. See Explanatory Note 3 for further information. The commentary below refers to figures calculated using the current single-year-of-age methodology.
• The highest level of fertility among government office regions of England in 2007, as represented by the GFR, was in London with 68.3 live births per thousand women aged 15-44, followed by the West Midlands (64.7). The lowest GFR was in the North East (57.3).

• The highest fertility level among government office regions of England in 2007, as represented by the TFR was in the West Midlands where there was an average of 2.04 children per woman. The lowest was in the North East with 1.82. See Explanatory Note 7.

• Two London boroughs recorded the highest GFRs in England and Wales. The borough of Newham was highest with 97.7 live births per thousand women aged 15-44, followed by Barking and Dagenham (89.1). The lowest GFR was in Durham county district (41.7).

• Newham had the highest TFR of 2.71 children per woman, followed by Barking and Dagenham (2.65). The lowest TFR was in Westminster (1.24) followed by Kensington and Chelsea (1.30).

• In Wales, the national GFR was 59.5 live births per thousand women aged 15-44 and the TFR was 1.90 children per woman.

• In Wales, the unitary authority with the highest GFR was the Isle of Anglesey (65.0); the highest TFRs were recorded at 2.15 in Powys and the Isle of Anglesey. The lowest fertility was seen in Ceredigion where the GFR was 44.8 and the TFR was 1.68.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

1. In this report, all fertility rates and standardised mean ages of mothers for 2007 are provisional. At subnational level they have been calculated using mid-2006 population estimates and at the national level the 2006-based population projections for 2007 have been used. These are available on the Government Actuary’s Department website www.gad.gov.uk/Population/index.asp. The population figures used to calculate national level fertility rates for 2006 and earlier years are ONS mid-year population estimates. The population estimates used were the most up-to-date at the time of writing of this report. Further information on population estimates can be found at www.statistics.gov.uk/popest.

2. Numbers of births, GFRs and TFRs are given by mother’s usual area of residence, based on 2007 Local and Strategic Health Authority area boundaries (local health boards in Wales).

3. Provisional TFRs have been calculated using the number of live births and population estimates by single year of age, as in previous years. TFRs for subnational areas are also presented using the proposed new five-year age group methodology (see In Brief for further details), so that users can compare figures produced using the two methods.
Users are advised to continue to use subnational TFRs calculated using the existing single-year-of-age method until TFRs for 2008 are published in 2009.

In 2007, the two methods give similar results in the majority of subnational areas (GORs counties, UAs and Las), with over three-quarters of all areas showing an absolute difference of 0.02 or less (TFR reported to two decimal places). TFRs calculated using the current and proposed new methodology were the same in 10 per cent of subnational areas. The proposed five-year age group methodology gives a lower TFR in 85 per cent of subnational areas, while in 4.9 per cent the TFR was slightly higher.

Any differences in the two methods generally result from sharp gradients in the female population by single year of age within five-year age groups. These may relate to local population characteristics (such as an upwards gradient in the female population from age 15 to age 19 in areas with high student populations) or features of the national population age structure in a particular year (for example the upwards gradient from age 30 to age 34 in 2007, that results from the falling number of births during the mid-1970s).

4. The standardised mean age is a measure which removes the effects of changes in the population’s age structure over time.

5. Data collected on the number of births for 1981 were affected by a registrars strike. Figures for this year are based on a 10 per cent sample of registrations.

6. For comparability, the definition of the European Union, as constituted in 2007, was applied to 2006 data. The percentage of births to mothers born in the European Union excludes births where the mother was born in the United Kingdom. In 2007 there were 27 member states of the European Union. Bulgaria and Romania joined the European Union on January 1st 2007. A full breakdown of the country groupings as constituted in 2007 can be found here: www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Produce.asp?vlnk=14408 under FMI Chapter 9: Parents’ Birthplace.

7. The GFR and TFR show difference results for fertility rate rankings by area. This is because the TFR controls for the age structure of the population.

8. Further information on live births in 2007 can be found in Reference Tables 2.1 and 3.1 to 3.3 in this publication and at the births topic-based summary at: www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=369.
9. 2007 births data collected at registration contained 2.0 per cent of records where mother’s date of birth was not stated. For records where mother’s date of birth was not stated and the birth was successfully linked to birth notification records, the mother’s date of birth was taken from this source (1.6 per cent of all births). Where linkage with the birth notification was unsuccessful, mother’s age was imputed (0.4 per cent of all births).