

Statistical bulletin

Births by parents' country of birth, England and Wales: 2018

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



Contact:
Kathryn Littleboy
vsob@ons.gov.uk
+44 (0)1329 444110

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1 . Main points

- In 2018, the proportion of live births in England and Wales to mothers born outside the UK fell for the first time since 1990, decreasing from 28.4% in 2017 to 28.2%.
- There were 471,476 live births to women born in the UK, and 185,569 live births to women born outside the UK, decreasing by 3.1% and 3.7% respectively compared with 2017.
- In England and Wales in 2018, the number of deaths of people born in the UK exceeded the number of live births to UK-born mothers for the first time since comparable datasets were first available in 2008.
- The estimated total fertility rate (TFR) for women born outside the UK rose slightly from 1.97 children per woman in 2017 to 1.99 in 2018, the first increase since 2012
- The TFR for UK-born women decreased from 1.71 children per woman in 2017 to 1.63 in 2018, reaching the lowest level since 2004 when figures were first calculated.
- Poland and Pakistan remained the most common countries of birth for mothers born outside the UK, although the percentage of live births to women born in these countries fell in 2018.
- Pakistan has been the most common country of birth for fathers born outside the UK since figures were first produced in 2008, however Romania rose up the rankings and replaced Poland as the second most common country of birth for foreign-born fathers in 2018.

2 . Statistician's comment

"In 2018, just over one in three children born in England and Wales had at least one parent who was born outside the UK. These parents could be long-time residents who moved here when they were younger, or those who moved to the UK more recently. However, today's figures also show the first decrease in the proportion of live births in England and Wales to non-UK-born mothers since 1990. And the first decrease for non-UK-born fathers since our time series for them began in 2008.

"Poland and Pakistan remain the most common countries of birth for non-UK-born mothers and fathers respectively. Romania is now the second most common country of birth for non-UK-born fathers and the third for non-UK-born mothers."

Kathryn Littleboy, Vital Statistics Outputs Branch, Office for National Statistics

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3 . Things you need to know about this release

Important information for interpreting these birth statistics:

- Birth statistics represent births that occurred in England and Wales in the calendar year, but include a very small number of late registrations from the previous year
- Figures are compiled from information supplied when births are registered as part of civil registration, a legal requirement
- Country of birth is collected at birth registration, unlike ethnicity or migration history; not all women born outside the UK will be recent in-migrants; similarly, the UK-born will include the children of earlier in-migrants (the second and third generation)

4 . The percentage of live births to women born outside the UK declined for the first time since 1990

The total number of live births in England and Wales fell by 3.2% in 2018 to 657,076. Live births to UK-born women fell by 3.1% (14,941 fewer births) while live births to non-UK-born women fell by 3.7% (7,082 fewer births). The proportion of live births to non-UK-born women was relatively stable from 1969 (when our time series began) until 1998, fluctuating between 11.3% and 13.6%. A period of sharp increases followed, with the proportion of live births to non-UK-born women reaching 24.1% by 2008. From 2009 the rate of increase began to slow (Figure 1).

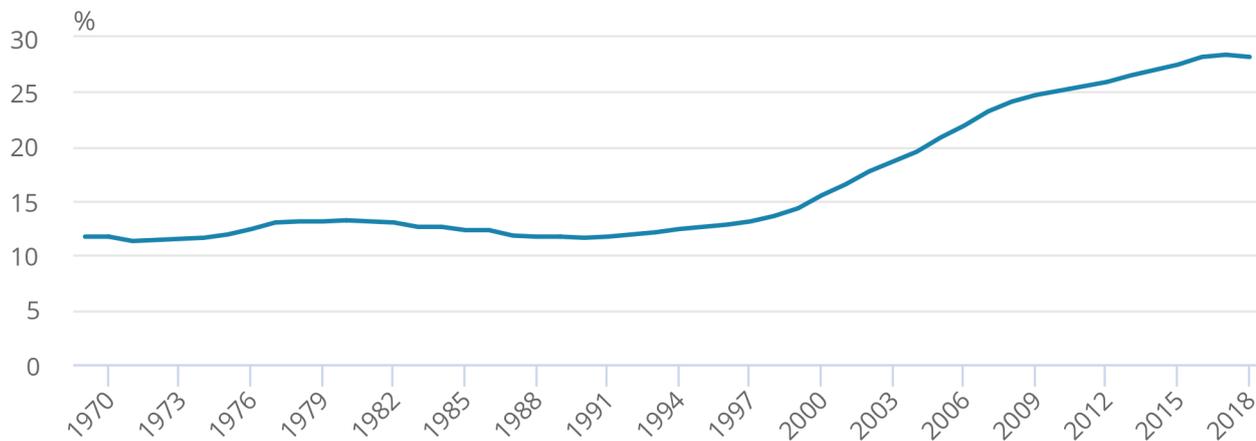
In 2018, births to non-UK-born mothers accounted for 28.2% of all live births, compared with 28.4% in 2017. This is the [first drop in the proportion of births to mothers born outside the UK since 1990](#). Despite the decline, the proportion was still high in comparison to previous years. In addition, the proportion of births to non-UK-born fathers decreased for the first time since 2008 when the data were first available (28.0% of all live births in 2018 compared with 28.1% in 2017).

Figure 1: The percentage of live births to foreign-born women decreased for the first time in 28 years

Percentage of live births to women born outside the UK, England and Wales 1969 to 2018

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Percentage of live births to women born outside the UK, England and Wales 1969 to 2018



Source: Office for National Statistics – Births in England and Wales

In 2018, births in England and Wales to mothers born in the European Union (EU), excluding the UK, represented 10.6% of all live births compared with 10.5% in 2017. This was the 10th annual increase in a row, although the rate of the increase has slowed since 2015. In contrast, the percentage of births to mothers born in the Middle East and Asia or in Africa continued to decline. They now account for 9.2% and 4.7% of all live births respectively. Meanwhile, the percentage of babies whose mothers were born in the Americas and Caribbean (1.7%) increased slightly in 2018.

Taking a wider UK focus, Scotland also experienced a decrease in the proportion of live births to women born outside the UK (17.3% in 2018 compared with 17.4% in 2017). In contrast, in Northern Ireland, provisional figures show that 13.6% of live births were to women born outside the UK in 2018, an increase from 13.0% in 2017.

As a result, in the UK as a whole, the percentage of live births to non-UK-born mothers fell to 27.0% (provisional) in 2018, compared with 27.1% in 2017.

5 . The number of deaths of people born in the UK surpassed the number of births to UK-born mothers in England and Wales in 2018

A comparison of trends in births and deaths in England and Wales over time shows a natural increase (more births than deaths) in every year since records began in 1838, with the exception of 1976 and 1977. However, the difference between the total number of births and deaths has been [decreasing in the last decade](#). In 2018 there were 115,487 more births than deaths, while in 2012 there were 230,343 more.

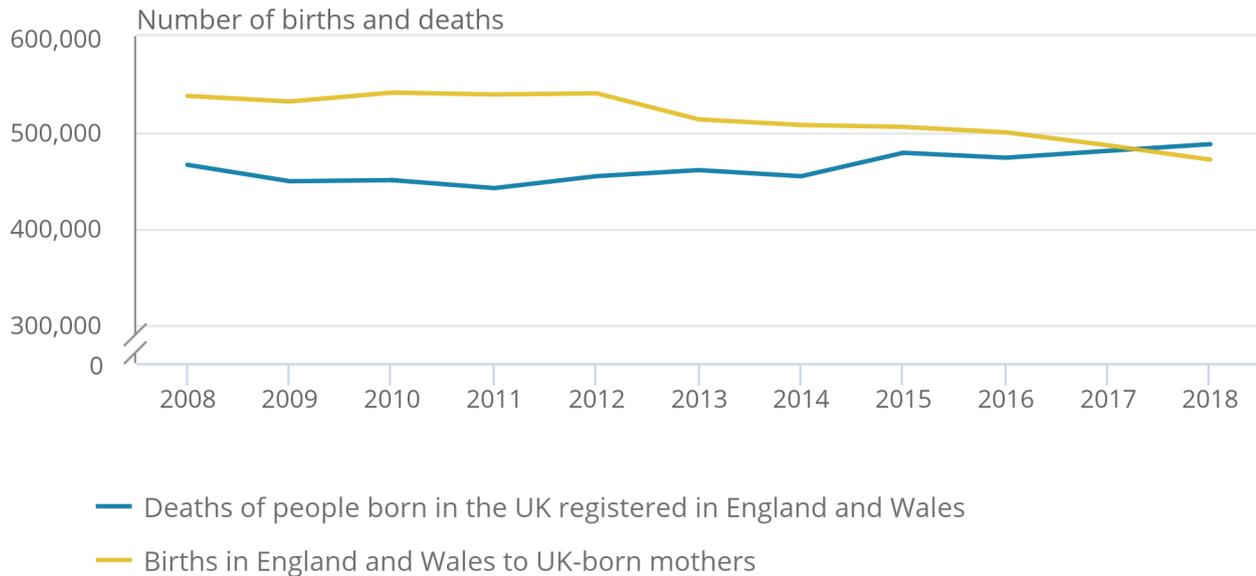
But when comparing births to UK-born mothers only, against the deaths of people born in the UK, we see the first natural decrease (more deaths than births) since comparable datasets were first available in 2008 (Figure 2). In 2018, there were 471,476 live births to UK-born mothers and [487,618 deaths of UK-born persons](#) registered in England and Wales.

Figure 2: The number of deaths of people born in the UK exceeded the number of births to UK-born mothers in 2018

Number of births to UK-born mothers and deaths of people born in the UK, England and Wales 2008 to 2018

Figure 2: The number of deaths of people born in the UK exceeded the number of births to UK-born mothers in 2018

Number of births to UK-born mothers and deaths of people born in the UK, England and Wales 2008 to 2018



Source: Office for National Statistics – Births and Deaths in England and Wales

Notes:

1. Figures for births include live births to UK-born mothers, in England and Wales. These represent births that occurred in the calendar year, but may include some late registrations from the previous year.
2. Figures for deaths represent the number of deaths of UK-born persons registered in England and Wales each calendar year.
3. Births and deaths where the country of birth was not specified have been excluded from the counts for the UK-born population.

6 . The estimated total fertility rate (TFR) for non-UK-born women increased for the first time since 2012

The total fertility rate (TFR) depends on the size of the female population of childbearing age and the number of births. TFRs provide a timely measure of fertility levels. They are sensitive to changes in the timing of births within women's lives.

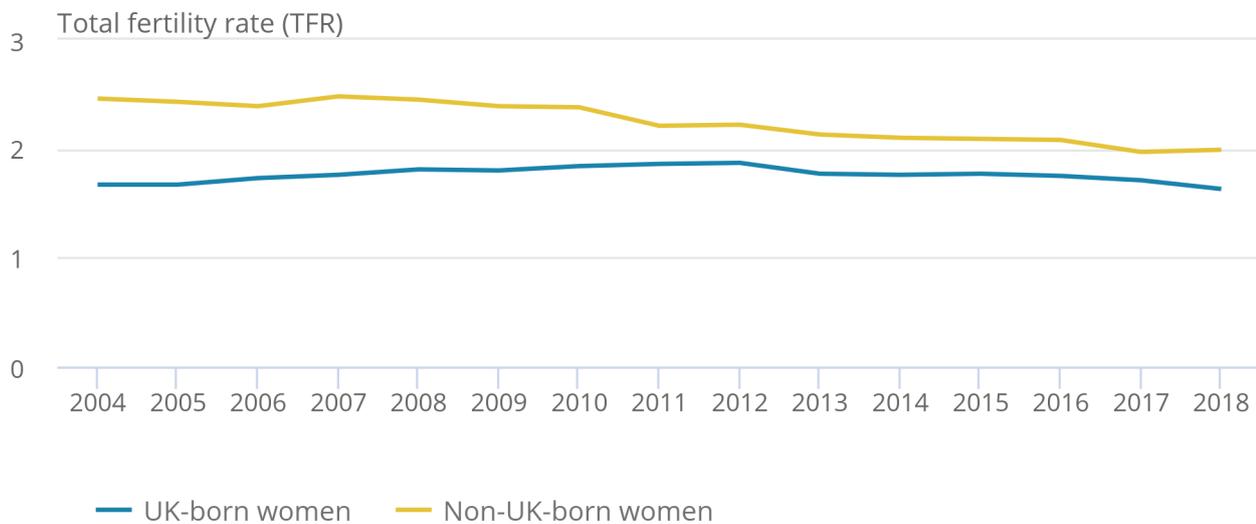
The estimated TFR for women born outside the UK rose slightly from 1.97 children per woman in 2017 to 1.99 in 2018, the first increase since 2012. However, the rate remains much lower than the rate of 2.48 in 2007, the highest value on record. In contrast, the estimated TFR for women born in the UK continued to decline and reached a record low of 1.63 children per woman (Figure 3).

Figure 3: In 2018, fertility levels increased for non-UK-born women but continued falling for those born in the UK

Estimated total fertility rate (TFR) for UK-born and non-UK-born women, England and Wales, 2004 to 2018

Figure 3: In 2018, fertility levels increased for non-UK-born women but continued falling for those born in the UK

Estimated total fertility rate (TFR) for UK-born and non-UK-born women, England and Wales, 2004 to 2018



Source: Office for National Statistics – Births in England and Wales and the Annual Population Survey (APS)

Notes:

1. The total fertility rate (TFR) is the average number of live children that a group of women would each bear if they experienced the age-specific fertility rates of the calendar year in question throughout their childbearing lifespan.
2. TFRs are calculated using the estimated population of women of childbearing age from the Annual Population Survey (APS). The TFRs for 2012 to 2017 are calculated using the latest APS datasets reweighted in 2018.

The population of UK-born women of childbearing age increased slightly (0.8%) in England and Wales in 2018, while the number of live births to UK-born mothers declined by 3.1%. As a result, estimated TFRs for UK-born mothers in 2018 decreased by 4.7% compared with 2017 and 12.8% compared with 2012 (where we saw the highest value since it was first recorded in 2004).

Both the non-UK-born female population of childbearing age and the number of live births to non-UK-born women decreased in 2018, while the estimated TFR for non-UK-born women rose by 1.0% (Table 1). This can be explained by the increases in the age-specific fertility rates for non-UK-born mothers aged under 20 years, 20 to 24 years and 30 to 34 years.

Table 1 : Live births and the size of the female population aged 15 to 44 years , UK-born and non-UK-born women, England and Wales, 2017 and 2018

| | Number of live births | | Population | | Total fertility rate | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| | UK-born women | Non-UK-born women | UK-born women aged 15 to 44 years | Non-UK-born women aged 15 to 44 years | UK-born women | Non-UK-born women |
| 2017 | 486,417 | 192,651 | 8,436,470 | 2,612,833 | 1.71 | 1.97 |
| 2018 | 471,476 | 185,569 | 8,501,679 | 2,536,655 | 1.63 | 1.99 |
| Percentage change | -3.1% | -3.7% | 0.8% | -2.9% | -4.7% | 1.0% |

Source: Office for National Statistics – Births in England and Wales and the Annual Population Survey (APS)

Notes

1. There are a small number of records where the mother's country of birth was not stated, therefore live births to UK-born and non-UK-born women do not sum exactly to the total number of live births. [Back to table](#)

7 . Despite a continued increase of births to Romanian-born parents, Poland and Pakistan remain the most common countries of birth for foreign-born mothers and fathers respectively

The top 10 non-UK countries of birth of mother remained fairly similar in 2018. Poland, Pakistan and Romania remained the three most common countries of birth for women born outside the UK who gave birth in England and Wales in 2018. However, the percentage of births to mothers born in Poland (2.9%) and Pakistan (2.4%) fell by 0.2 and 0.1 percentage points respectively. Meanwhile, the proportion of babies whose mothers were born in Romania continued increasing, from 2.0% in 2017 to 2.3% in 2018.

Romania has been the highest climber since 2012, when it appeared for the first time in the top 10 (figure 3). In 2007 (when Romania joined the EU) there were only 1,248 live births in England and Wales to Romanian-born mothers. Despite the overall decrease in the number of births to foreign-born women in recent years, the number of births to Romanian-born mothers rose from 13,717 in 2017 to 15,196 in 2018. As a result of the recent increases in births to Romanian-born mothers, Romania became the sixth most common country of birth for non-UK-born mothers in England and Wales in 2013, before rising to fourth in 2015 and third in 2017.

Figure 4: Since entering the top ten most common countries of birth for non-UK-born mothers in 2012, Romania has been the highest climber, but Poland remains the most common

Ten most common countries of birth for non-UK-born mothers, England and Wales, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018

Notes

1. Figures include mothers whose usual residence is outside England and Wales.

The number of Romanian-born fathers has also been rising consistently since 2008, whereas the number of fathers born in Poland or Pakistan have been gradually decreasing in recent years. As a result, Romania has been increasing in the ranking of most common countries of birth for non-UK-born fathers in England and Wales, reaching fourth position in 2016, and then second in 2018 (Figure 4). However, despite 1,179 fewer births in 2018 compared to 2017, Pakistan remained the most common country of birth of non-UK-born fathers. In contrast, Poland (1,772 fewer births) fell to the third position, the lowest since records began in 2008.

Increases in births to Romanian-born parents are caused mainly by the [increasing size of the Romanian-born population living in the UK](#).

Figure 5: Romania rose in the ranks to become the second most common country of birth for non-UK-born fathers in 2018, overtaking Poland

Ten most common countries of birth for non-UK-born fathers, England and Wales, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018

Notes

1. Figures include fathers whose usual residence is outside England and Wales.
2. Figures for fathers include a very small number of births to second female parents. See Quality and methodology section.

8 . Over a third of live births to non-UK-born mothers were to women aged 30 to 34 years

In 2018, the most common age group for both UK-born and non-UK-born women giving birth was 30 to 34 years with 31.5% and 34.6% of births to women in this age group respectively (Figure 6).

A higher proportion of UK-born mothers were aged under 30 years (47.4%) in comparison to foreign-born mothers (36.4%). When we look at country of birth by continent, the proportion of those giving birth who were aged under 30 years varies a lot. For those giving birth and born in the EU, 40.8% were under 30 years, and for those born in the rest of Europe, it was 43.4%. In contrast, this proportion was 31.1% for mothers born in Africa, and 24.8% for mothers born in the Americas and Caribbean.

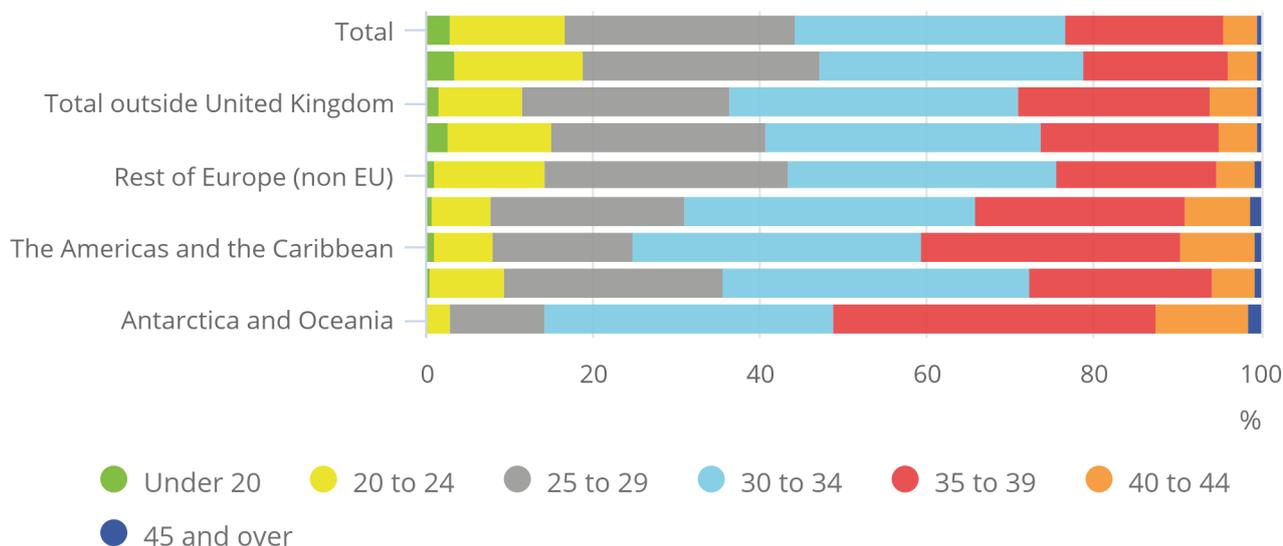
This could be explained by looking at differences in the age distribution of the populations of women of childbearing age in England and Wales, where a greater proportion of non-UK-born women are aged 30 years and over, compared with UK-born women.

Figure 6: The most common age of UK-born and non-UK-born women who gave birth in 2018 was 30 to 34 years.

Live births by mothers' country of birth and age of mother, England and Wales 2018

Figure 6: The most common age of UK-born and non-UK-born women who gave birth in 2018 was 30 to 34 years.

Live births by mothers' country of birth and age of mother, England and Wales 2018



Source: Office for National Statistics – Births in England and Wales

Notes:

1. The percentage of live births in each mothers' age group is reported within each country of birth. For example, in 2018, 31.5% of all babies born to UK-born women had a mother aged 30 to 34 years.

9 . The percentage of births to women born outside the UK varies considerably at regional and local level

In 2018, the English region with the highest percentage of live births to non-UK-born mothers was London (57.1%), and the North East had the lowest (11.9%). This is in line with long-standing trends since 2001.

For the third year in a row, Brent was the local authority of England with the highest percentage of live births to non-UK-born mothers (75.4%), while Copeland had the lowest (3.0%). The local authority outside of London with the highest proportion of non-UK-born mothers was Slough with 65.2%.

When making comparisons between 2007, when data were first available, and 2018, Boston and Tower Hamlets are the local authorities with the biggest change in the proportion of live births to non-UK-born mothers. In Boston it increased from 23.2% to 42.3%. In contrast, Tower Hamlets had the greatest decrease, from 67.5% in 2007 to 60.4% in 2018.

In Wales, 11.7% of babies born in 2018 had a mother born outside the UK. Cardiff remained the Welsh local authority with the highest percentage of live births to non-UK-born mothers (28.2%) and the Isle of Anglesey had the lowest (3.5%). Newport is the local authority in Wales where the proportion of non-UK-born mothers has increased the most, from 15.2% in 2007 to 24.6% in 2018. Meanwhile, the largest decrease was recorded in Ceredigion where it fell from 10.3% in 2007 to 6.3% in 2018.

These variations in the percentage of births to women born outside the UK are because of local area differences in the percentage of resident women born outside the UK, and to different fertility levels of migrants born in different countries. The composition of the foreign-born population in terms of individual countries of birth, varies considerably between local authorities (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Boston has seen the largest increase in the percentage of live births to non-UK-born mothers since 2007

Percentage of live births born to non-UK-born mothers by local authority district, England and Wales 2007 to 2018

In 2018, 34.7% of babies born in England had at least one parent born outside the UK, a small decrease from 34.8% in the previous year. Similarly in Wales, 14.7% of babies had at least one non-UK-born parent in comparison with 14.8% in 2017. [Table 7a](#) provides the number and percentage of live births where one or both parents were born outside the UK, for all local authority areas in England and Wales.

10 . Links to related statistics

More detailed data on [live births by parents' country of birth](#) are available.

Five [explorable datasets](#) providing more detailed birth statistics are available alongside this first release of annual births data. These explorable datasets include statistics based on characteristics of the mother and father, as well as live birth figures for small geographical areas such as lower layer super output areas and wards. These explorable datasets have been specially designed to protect the confidentiality of individuals.

The number of births, birth rates and the mean age of mothers for the UK and constituent countries can be found in the [Vital statistics in the UK: births, deaths and marriages - 2018 update](#). Figures for 2018 are due to be published October to November 2019.

Eurostat data have been compiled for [Live birth rates to women aged under 18 years and under 20 years in EU28 countries, 2007, 2016 and 2017](#).

[Childbearing of UK and non-UK-born women living in the UK, 2011 Census data](#) provides detailed fertility rates for foreign-born women within England and Wales (around 150 different countries analysed).

Further 2018 birth statistics will be published later in 2019; see the [GOV.UK release calendar](#) for more details.

Special extracts and tabulations of birth data for England and Wales are available to order (subject to legal frameworks, disclosure control, resources and our [charging policy](#), where appropriate). Enquiries should be made to Vital Statistics Outputs Branch by email to vsob@ons.gov.uk or telephone on +44 (0)1329 444110. [User requested data](#) will be made publicly available.

11 . Quality and methodology

This is the first time that detailed country of birth statistics for England and Wales have been published for 2018. The headline figure, 28.2% of [live births in England and Wales in 2018](#) were to foreign-born mothers, was published on 1 August 2019.

Birth statistics are used for planning maternity services, to inform policy decisions and resource allocation, for example, deciding numbers of school places required. They also enable the analysis of social and demographic trends.

The [Births Quality and Methodology Information](#) report contains important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data and how it compares with related data
- uses and users
- how the output was created
- the quality of the output, including the accuracy of the data

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

The [Revisions policy for population statistics \(including birth statistics\)](#) is available.

The total fertility rate (TFR) is the average number of live children that a group of women would each have if they experienced the age-specific fertility rates of the calendar year in question throughout their childbearing lives. It provides a timely measure of the current intensity of childbearing. Our [User guide to birth statistics](#) provides further information. The estimated TFRs for UK- and non-UK-born women have been produced using estimated populations from the [Annual Population Survey](#) (APS) for the denominators.

Live births to UK-born mothers and non-UK-born mothers do not sum to total live births because a small number of records do not have the mother's country of birth stated. In 2018, there were 31 records where the mother's country of birth was not stated.

The [Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008](#) contained provisions enabling two females in a same-sex couple to register a birth from 1 September 2009 onwards. Because of the small numbers, live births registered to a same-sex couple (1,791 in 2018) are included in the figures, with the country of birth of the second female parent being included under the country of birth of father.