

Conceptions in England and Wales



2008

Date: 23 November 2010

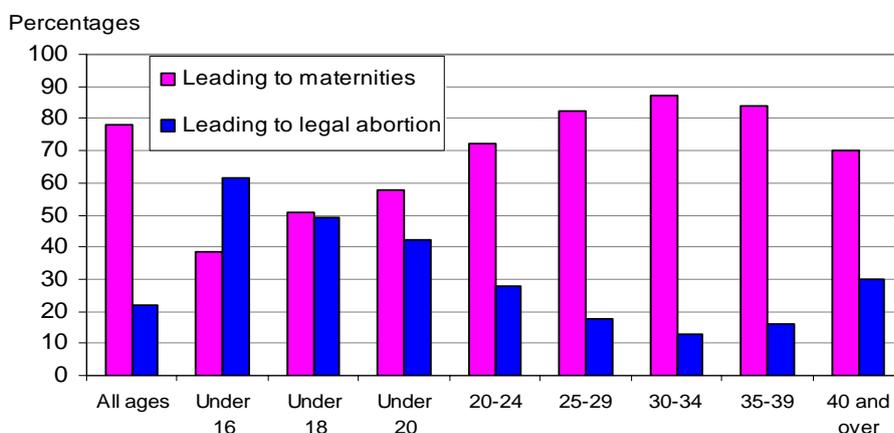
Coverage: England and Wales **Theme:** Health

This statistical bulletin contains final estimated numbers and rates of conceptions for women usually resident in England and Wales in 2008. This release updates provisional figures published on 24 February 2010. Conceptions data combines information from registration of births and notifications of legal abortions for women usually resident in England and Wales.

Key Findings

- In 2008 there were an estimated 888,600 conceptions in England and Wales, compared with 895,900 in 2007, a decrease of 0.8 per cent
- Between 2007 and 2008 conception rates decreased in all age groups with the exception of women aged 40 and over, where the rate remained unchanged
- The number of conceptions to girls aged under 16 was 7,586 in 2008, compared with 8,200 in 2007 (a decrease of 7.5 per cent). Nearly two thirds (61.5 per cent) of conceptions to girls aged under 16 in 2008 led to a legal abortion.
- In 2008 the number of conceptions to women aged under 18 was 41,361 compared with 42,988 in 2007, a decline of 3.8 per cent. Nearly half (49.4 per cent) of conceptions to women aged under 18 in 2008 led to a legal abortion.

Conceptions: Outcome by age of woman at conception, 2008, England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics

Total Conceptions

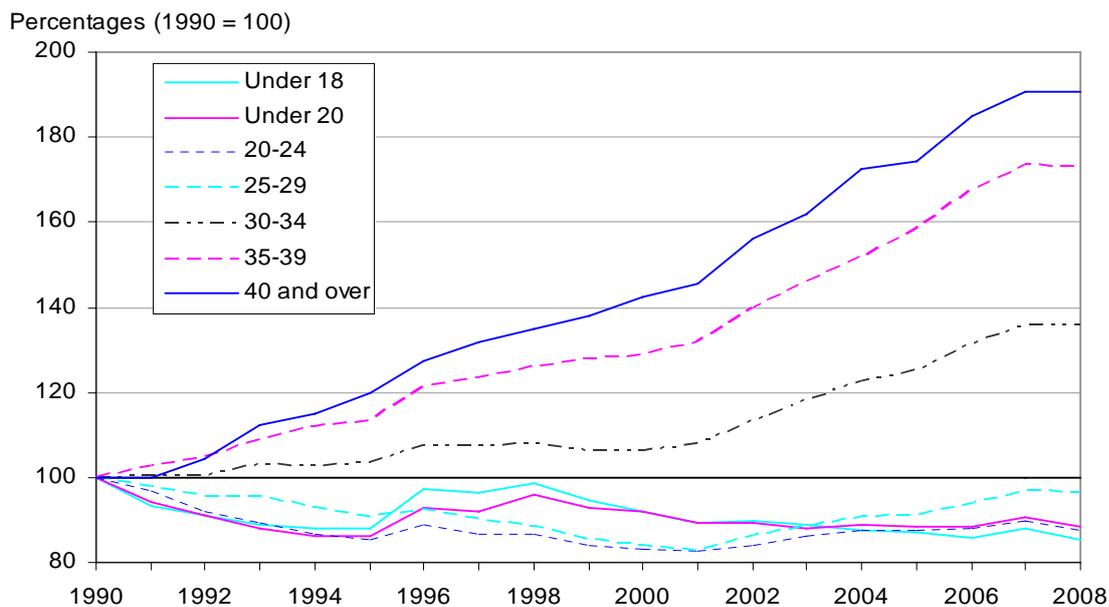
There were an estimated 888,600 conceptions in England and Wales in 2008, compared with 895,900 in 2007 (a decrease of 0.8 per cent). This represents the first annual decrease in conceptions since 2001 when the number of conceptions fell to 763,700 from 767,000 in 2000. The conception rate for 2008 has also fallen slightly to 79.9 conceptions per thousand women aged 15–44, from 80.5 in 2007. The proportion of all conceptions resulting in a maternity in 2008 was 78 per cent. This proportion has remained fairly stable over the last two decades.

The relative proportions of conceptions inside and outside marriage have been changing for some time. In 2008 conceptions outside marriage accounted for 57 per cent of all conceptions in England and Wales a small increase from 2007 (56 per cent). This continues the long-term rise in the proportion of conceptions occurring outside marriage (20 per cent in 1969). In 2008 the proportion of conceptions outside marriage which resulted in a maternity was 63 per cent, compared with 93 per cent of conceptions inside marriage.

Age at conception

Between 2007 and 2008 conception rates decreased in all age groups with the exception of women aged 40 and over which remained at 12.6 conceptions per thousand women aged 40-44. The conception rate for women under 20 decreased by 2.6 per cent between 2007 and 2008 from 61.7 to 60.1 conceptions per thousand women aged 15–19. Conception rates for women aged under 20 have generally fallen over the last decade with the exception of slight increases in 2004, 2006 and 2007.

Relative changes in age-specific conception rates, England and Wales, 1990–2008



Source: Office for National Statistics

Women aged 20–24 experienced a similar fall in conception rate between 2007 and 2008 (2.4 per cent). There were small decreases in the conception rates for women aged 25 to 39 with the rates in each five-year age group falling by less than 0.3 per cent. The conception rate for women aged 35–39 showed the smallest decrease falling by 0.17 per cent from 58.2 in 2007 to 58.1 in 2008.

The number of conceptions to girls aged under 16 decreased by 7.5 per cent from 8,200 in 2007 to 7,586 in 2008. Nearly three-quarters of those conceptions were to girls aged 15. A similar decline can also be seen in the conception rate for girls aged under 16. In 2008 there were 7.8 conceptions per thousand girls aged 13–15 compared with 8.3 in 2007, a decrease of 6.0 per cent. Overall, the under-16 conception rate has decreased over the last decade from 9.0 conceptions per thousand girls aged 13–15 in 1998 despite a slight rise in 2007.

In 2008 the number of conceptions to women aged under 18 was 41,361 compared with 42,988 in 2007, a decline of 3.8 per cent. Of these, 49 per cent led to a legal abortion compared with 50 per cent in 2007. The under-18 conception rate for England and Wales was 40.7 conceptions per thousand women aged 15–17 compared with 42.0 per thousand in 2007, a decrease of 3.1 per cent. This continues the overall downward trend in conception rates for women aged under 18 since 2002 when there were 42.9 per thousand women aged 15–17, despite a slight increase in 2007. Since 1998, the conception rate for women aged under 18 has decreased by 14 per cent from 47.1 conceptions per thousand women aged 15–17.

Conceptions by area of usual residence

For women usually resident in England, the under-18 conception rate fell by 3.1 per cent from 41.8 conceptions per thousand women aged 15–17 in 2007 to 40.5 in 2008. A comparison of rates by Strategic Health Authorities in England, shows that the North East had the highest under-18 conception rate in 2008 at 49.0 per thousand women aged 15–17. The North East has had the highest under 18 conception rate since 2007 (53.2 conceptions per thousand women aged 15–17). The East of England had the lowest rate for women aged under 18 in 2008 at 31.4 per thousand women aged 15–17, it previously had the second lowest under-18 conception rate. South Central had the lowest under-18 conception rate in 2007 with 32.1 conceptions per thousand women aged 15–17.

Further information

Conceptions data released today and the latest quarterly data are available at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/conception-statistics--england-and-wales/2008/index.html>

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/all-releases.html?definition=tcm%3A77-27492>

For more information on data quality, legislation and procedures relating to conception statistics see the information at the front of the annual reference volume 'Conception Statistics 2008' found at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/conception-statistics--england-and-wales/2008/index.html>

In Scotland, conception figures are available for women aged under 16, under 18 and under 20. The definition of a conception in Scotland includes maternities (pregnancies ending in a live birth or stillbirth) and pregnancies resulting in a therapeutic abortion. Figures are available at: www.isdscotland.org/isd/2071.html

In Northern Ireland, abortion is illegal and is only considered lawful in exceptional circumstances where the life of the pregnant woman is at immediate risk or if there is a risk of serious injury to her physical or mental health. Due to the small numbers of abortions carried out in Northern Ireland each year, and in order to protect patient confidentiality, information on abortions is only released as a Northern Ireland total and as such cannot be broken down for comparative analysis. Consequently there are no comparable conception figures for Northern Ireland.

Background Notes

1. Figures for 2008 are final. Provisional figures for 2009 will be published in Spring 2011.
2. Conception statistics include pregnancies that result in either one or more live births or stillbirths (a maternity) or a legal abortion under the Abortion Act 1967 (an abortion). They do not include miscarriages or illegal abortions.
3. Conception rates are based on the latest mid-year population estimates for the reference year at the time of publication. Conception rates for 2002 to 2008 have been calculated using the revised mid-2002 to mid-2008 population estimates published on 13 May 2010. Rates may therefore differ from those previously published.
4. Under arrangements made following implementation of the *Abortion Act 1967*, the Office for National Statistics and its predecessors processed and analysed the abortion notification forms (HSA4) sent to the Chief Medical Officers of England and Wales. From 1 April 2002, the Department of Health took over this work and the system has been redesigned to process the new abortion notification forms that were introduced from 18 April 2002. The *Abortion Act 1967* also enables the Chief Medical Officers to supply information about abortions to the UK Statistics Authority.
5. The date of conception is estimated using recorded gestation for abortions and stillbirths, and assuming 38 weeks gestation for live births.
6. A woman's age at conception is calculated as the number of complete years between her date of birth and the date she conceived. In many cases her birthday will occur between conception and the birth or abortion; a woman may conceive, for example, at age 19 and give birth at age 20. The conception and birth may also occur in different calendar years. For these reasons the number of conceptions to women of a given age in a given year does not match the number of maternities and abortions to women of the same given age in the same given year.
7. Maternities data collected at registration and relating to conceptions occurring in 2008 contained 0.7 per cent of records where mother's date of birth was not stated. This compares with 1.1 per cent in 2007. Where the mother's date of birth was not stated it was

obtained from the corresponding birth notification record. This was the case for 0.5 per cent of all maternities. Where this was not possible the mother's age was then imputed using CANCEIS (Canadian Census Edit and Imputation System). This system works by selecting the most appropriate donor record from the entire annual dataset. This was the case for 0.2 per cent of all maternities.

8. Numbers and rates of conceptions are given by mother's usual area of residence based on boundaries as at 1 October 2009. The postcode of the woman's address at the time of the maternity or abortion was used to determine the health authority she was living in at the time of the conception. Direct comparisons with conceptions data by area published in previous years are not always possible because of boundary changes.
 9. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the media office.
 10. 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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Next publication: Spring 2011

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