

Statistical bulletin

# Births in England and Wales by Characteristics of Birth 2: 2011

Home births and multiple births in England broken down by mothers' age group.



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# 1. Key findings

- There were 723,913 live births in England and Wales in 2011, of which 352,939 were female and 370,974 were male
- The percentage of home maternities decreased slightly to 2.4% in 2011, compared with 2.5% in 2010
- The multiple maternity rate increased to 16.1 per 1,000 women giving birth in 2011, compared with 15.7 in 2010
- Women aged 45 and over had the highest multiple maternity rate (99.3 multiple maternities per 1,000 maternities)

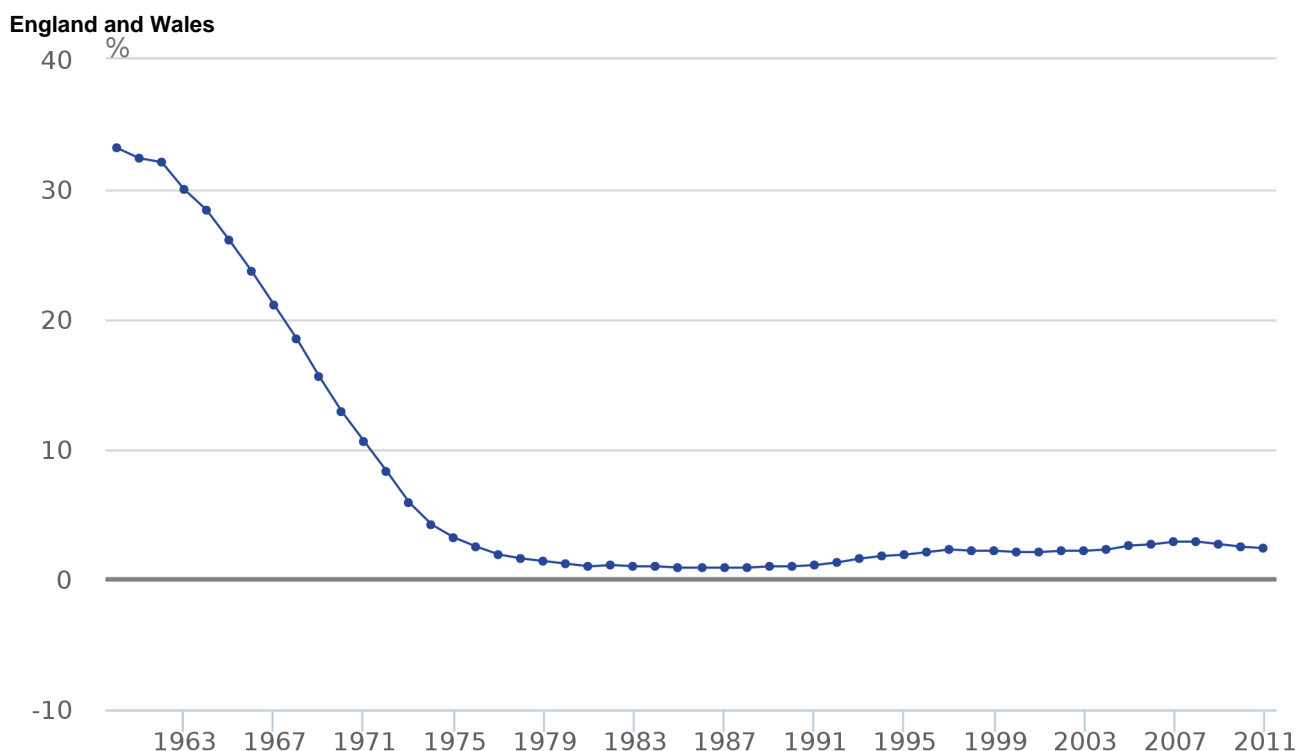
# 2. Summary

This bulletin presents statistics on births in England and Wales in 2011 by characteristics of birth. In particular, it provides statistics for women giving birth at home and for women having multiple births. Some of the key summary figures have been published previously by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This is however the first time that birth statistics for 2011 have been published;

- by quarter and month
- by place of birth
- for multiple maternities

# 3. Home births

Figure 1: Maternities taking place at home, 1960–2011



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 percentage of babies born at home

In 2011 in England and Wales, 2.4% of women giving birth did so at home (figure 1). This represents a small decrease from 2.5% in 2010.

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% to 4.2% 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 births (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% between 1985 and 1988, but has since risen slightly year-on-year by between 0.1% and 0.3%, with the exception of a period of relative stability between 1997 and 2003 and small decreases between 2008 and 2011. In recent years the National Health Service (NHS) have encouraged women to exercise greater choice in where they give birth ([Department of Health, 2007](#)).

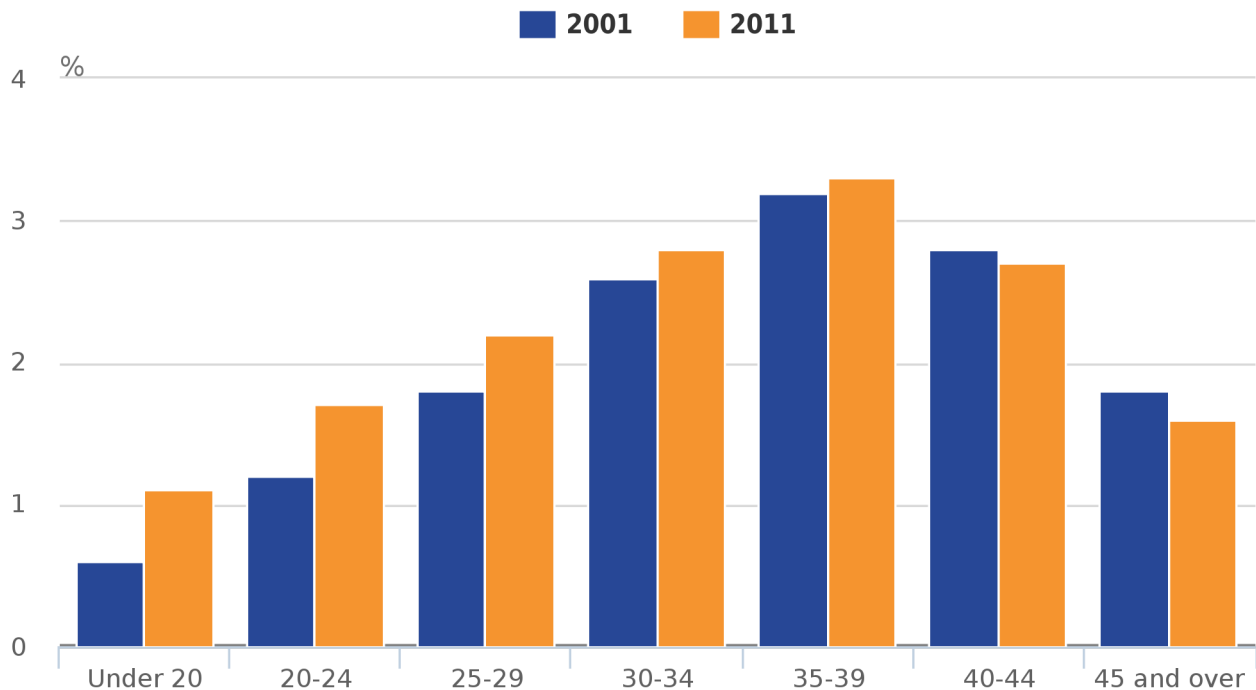
The South West had the highest percentage of women giving birth at home in 2011 (3.5%) while the North East had the lowest (1.0%). The South West and the North East also had the highest and lowest percentages respectively, of women giving birth at home in 2010.

In 2011, the age group with the greatest percentage of women giving birth at home was women aged 35–39, with 3.3% of women in this age group giving birth at home. In contrast women aged under 20 had the lowest percentage of home births, with 1.1% of women giving birth at home in 2011. Figure 2 shows how the percentage of women giving birth at home varies by age group and provides a comparison between 2001 and 2011.

Since the early 1990s, 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 of 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.

**Figure 2: Maternities taking place at home, by age of mother, 2001 and 2011**

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 percentage of babies born at home
2. The percentage of women giving birth at home is reported within each age group. For example in 2011, 2.8% of all maternities to women aged 30–34 took place at home

[Nove et al \(2008\) \(819.1 Kb Pdf\)](#) provides a detailed analysis of home births in the UK, from 1955 to 2006. The article examines how home maternity levels vary according to mother's age, number of previous live births within marriage, country of birth and local authority.

## 4. Multiple births

In 2011, 11,330 women gave birth to twins, 172 to triplets and 3 to quads and above. These multiple maternities (see background note 5) include both live births and stillbirths.

The multiple maternity rate in 2011 increased to 16.1 maternities with multiple births per 1,000 women giving birth, compared with 15.7 in 2010. Since 2001 the multiple maternity rate (then 14.8) has increased by 8.8%. 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%.

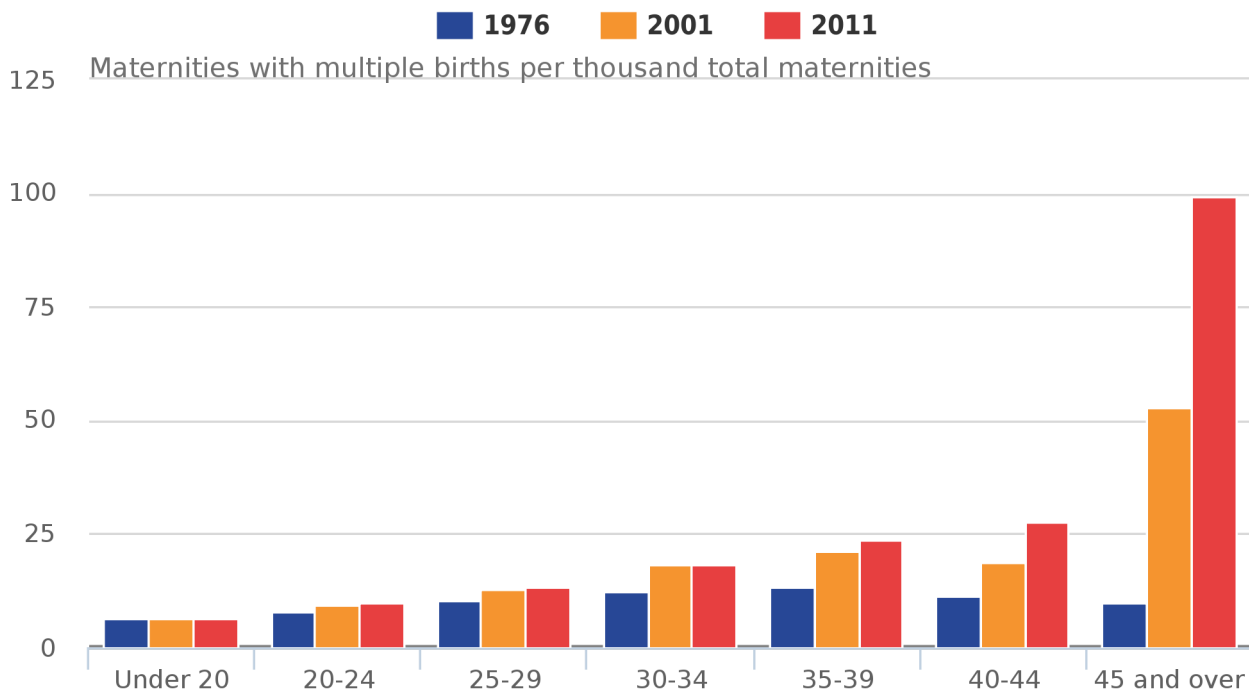
In 1976, women aged 35–39 had the highest multiple maternity rate (13.4 per 1,000 maternities). Since 1976 the multiple maternity rate has increased for all ages but most notably for women aged 30 and over (figure 3). The greatest increase was among women aged 45 and over where the multiple maternity rate rose from 9.8 in 1976 to 99.3 in 2011, peaking at 105.8 in 2009.

The multiple maternity rate increased for all age groups in 2011, compared with 2010 with the exception of women aged 35–39 where the rate remained unchanged. Women aged 45 and over had by far the highest multiple maternity rate in 2011 (99.3 per 1,000 maternities).

Women aged under 20 had the lowest multiple maternity rate in 2011 (6.5 per 1,000 maternities) while the multiple maternity rate for women aged 25–29 has shown the smallest percentage increase since 2001 (2.3% increase). There was a 1.6 % decrease in the multiple maternity rate over the decade for the women aged 30-34.

**Figure 3: Maternities with multiple births by age of mother, 1976, 2001 and 2011**

**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

On average, multiple births tend to have lower birthweights than singletons ([Office for National Statistics, 2011](#)) 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 [Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority \(HFEA\)](#).

Although multiple births occur naturally, many occur as a result of fertility treatment. On average, 25% of In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) pregnancies result in either twins or triplets compared with 1% for women who conceive naturally ([HFEA](#)). 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, with the aim to reduce the UK IVF multiple pregnancy rate to 10% over a period of years ([HFEA, 2013](#)).

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.

## 5. Planned changes to birth statistics

During May 2012 changes were made to the Population Statistics Act 1938, which means that information on i) the number of previous children and ii) whether previously married is now collected from all mothers at birth registration and not just from married women. This will have an impact on a number of tables and [proposals for changes \(66.2 Kb Pdf\)](#) to outputs for 2012 and 2013 data are available on the ONS website. Feedback from users is welcome.

Changes to the tables included within [Live Births by socio-economic status of father](#) are also being considered including the possible implementation of the combined method for deriving the National Statistics Socio-economic classification (using the higher NS-SEC of both parents rather than the NS-SEC of the father). A proposal for changes to outputs for 2012 data will be available on the ONS website alongside the release of 2011 data.

## 6. Further information

This statistical bulletin provides supporting commentary for the '[Characteristics of birth 2](#)' package which includes data tables on births in England and Wales in 2011, 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 data file also contains information on the other birth statistics packages released throughout the year and provides links to these packages on the ONS website.

The '[Characteristics of birth 1](#)' package was published on 31 October 2012. 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

Further packages providing 2011 birth statistics will be published on 7 March 2013. These packages are:

- Characteristics of mother 2, England and Wales
- Cohort fertility, England and Wales
- Further parental characteristics, England and Wales
- Live births by socio-economic status of father, England and Wales

A [quality and methodology information document \(275.2 Kb Pdf\)](#) for births provides information on statistical quality and the methods used to compile the data.

Further information on data quality, legislation and procedures relating to births is available in the [Births metadata \(439.7 Kb Pdf\)](#).

An [interactive mapping](#) tool which enables trends in fertility to be analysed at the local level is available. The tool will be updated in Summer 2013 to include revised rates for 2002–2010 which take account of the 2011 Census and rates for 2011.

For data for other UK countries please see the [latest birth statistics for Northern Ireland](#) and the [latest birth statistics for Scotland](#).

## 7. References

Department of Health (2007) [Maternity matters: Choice access and continuity of care in a safe service](#).

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority [Multiple births – Background and statistics](#).

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (2013) [Multiple births and single embryo transfer review](#).

Nove A, Berrington A, Matthews Z (2008) [Home births in the UK, 1955-2006 \(819.1 Kb Pdf\)](#). Population Trends 133 pp 20-27.

Office for National Statistics (2011) [Live births, stillbirths and infant deaths: babies born in 2009 in England and Wales](#).

## 8. Background notes

1. There were 723,913 live births in England and Wales in 2011, compared with 723,165 in 2010, a rise of 0.1%. The rise in 2011 represents a continuation of the increasing numbers of live births recorded since 2001. During this period the number of live births has risen by 22% from 594,634 in 2001 despite a small fall between 2008 and 2009.
2. Birth figures are based on births occurring in the data year, but incorporate a small number of late registrations from births occurring in the previous year. More information can be found in the [births metadata \(439.7 Kb Pdf\)](#).
3. There is a large degree of comparability in birth statistics between countries within the UK. However, there are some differences although these are believed to have a negligible impact on the comparability of the statistics. These differences are outlined in the [quality and methodology information \(275.2 Kb Pdf\)](#) document for births.
4. 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.
5. 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).
6. In the data tables associated with this release, fertility rates for 2011 have been calculated using mid-year population estimates based on the 2011 Census. Rates for 2002–2010 have been calculated using mid-year population estimates revised to take account of the 2011 Census and therefore may differ from previously published rates.
7. A list of the names of those given pre-publication access to the statistics and written commentary is available in [pre-release Characteristics of Birth 2 \(28 Kb Pdf\)](#). The rules and principles which govern pre-release access are featured within the [Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008](#).
8. Special extracts and tabulations of births data for England and Wales are available to order (subject to legal frameworks, disclosure control, resources and agreement of costs, where appropriate). Such enquiries should be made to:  
  
Vital Statistics Output Branch Life Events and Population Sources Division Office for National Statistics  
Segensworth Road Titchfield Fareham Hampshire PO15 5RR Tel: +44 (0)1329 444110 E-mail: [vsob@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:vsob@ons.gsi.gov.uk)
9. We welcome feedback from users on the content, format and relevance of this release. The Health and Life Events user engagement strategy is available to download from the ONS website. Please send feedback to the postal or e-mail address above.
10. Follow ONS on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).
11. Next publication date: November/December 2013.

12. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting [www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html) or from the Media Relations Office email: [media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs
- are well explained and readily accessible
- are produced according to sound methods
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.