

## **Socio-demographic comparison between those UK families with up to two children and those with three or more**

Susanne Whiting

### **Introduction**

The UK population is projected to increase from 62.3 million in 2010 to 67.2 million in 2020, i.e. by 4.9 million, and to 70 million by mid-2027 i.e. a further 2.8 million.

Natural increase i.e. more births than deaths accounts for 56 per cent of the projected increase over the next decade, while net migration accounts for the remainder.<sup>1</sup>

This warrants a closer examination of the dynamics of births in the UK. What are the factors and trends currently affecting family size; who contributes most to this natural increase; where does it occur predominantly, and; what are the projections for the future?

### **Executive Summary**

- Over the last 70 years, the 2 child family has consistently been the most common family size and the proportion of mothers with 3 or more children has remained fairly constant.
- Generally, all age groups of women experience similar trends in the number of births.
- Fertility and the total number of births have been increasing since 2000. Total fertility rates<sup>1</sup> have risen for UK born women, while remaining stable for non-UK born women.
- Due to the rise in the population of foreign-born women in the UK, their relative contribution has increased. A quarter of all births in 2010 were to mothers born outside the UK, up from 13.2 % in 1980.
- Women are increasingly delaying childbirth to older ages. In 2010, nearly half of all babies were born to mothers aged 30 and over.
- Socio-economic class does not seem to impact on family size: the proportion of families with 3 or more children is fairly evenly distributed across all socio-economic categories.
- Ethnicity does impact on family size, with black and Asian ethnic groups having larger families than white and Chinese ones.
- Regionally, families with 3 or more children are most prevalent in Northern Ireland and London.

For a vivid illustration of the increase in the total fertility rate in England and Wales in the last 20 years, see the following interactive map:

<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/dvc10/FertilityMap.html>

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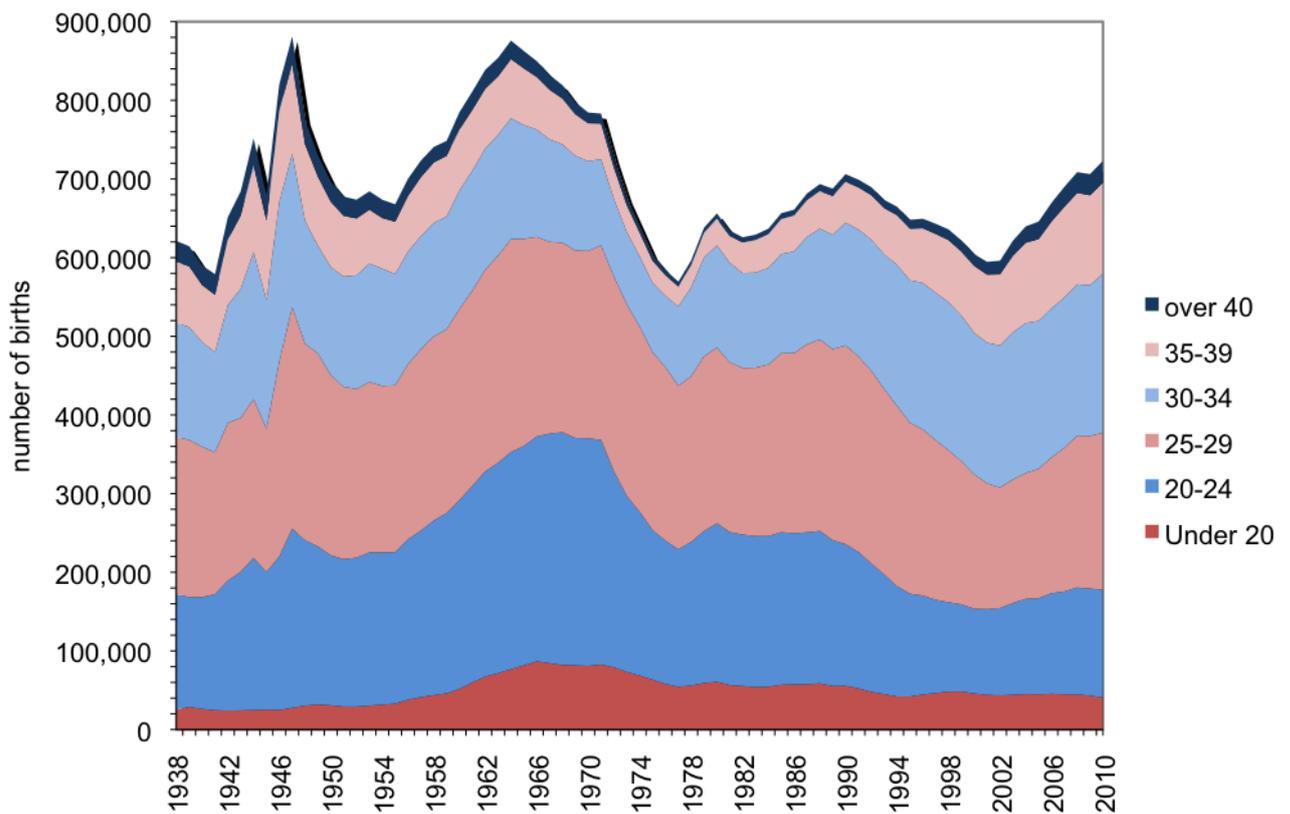
<sup>1</sup> ONS definition of total fertility rate: The TFR is the average number of live children a group of women would have if they experienced the age-specific fertility rates for the calendar year in question throughout their childbearing lifespan..

## Historical trends

The average family size for women born in 1965 and completing their childbearing in 2010 was 1.91 children per woman. This is half a child lower than their mothers' generation, represented by women born in 1938, who had on average 2.39 children.

Figure 1 gives a historic overview of when in their lives women have children and the magnitude of change over time for the different age groups.

**Figure 1 - Overall number of births by age of mother, 1938-2010, England and Wales**

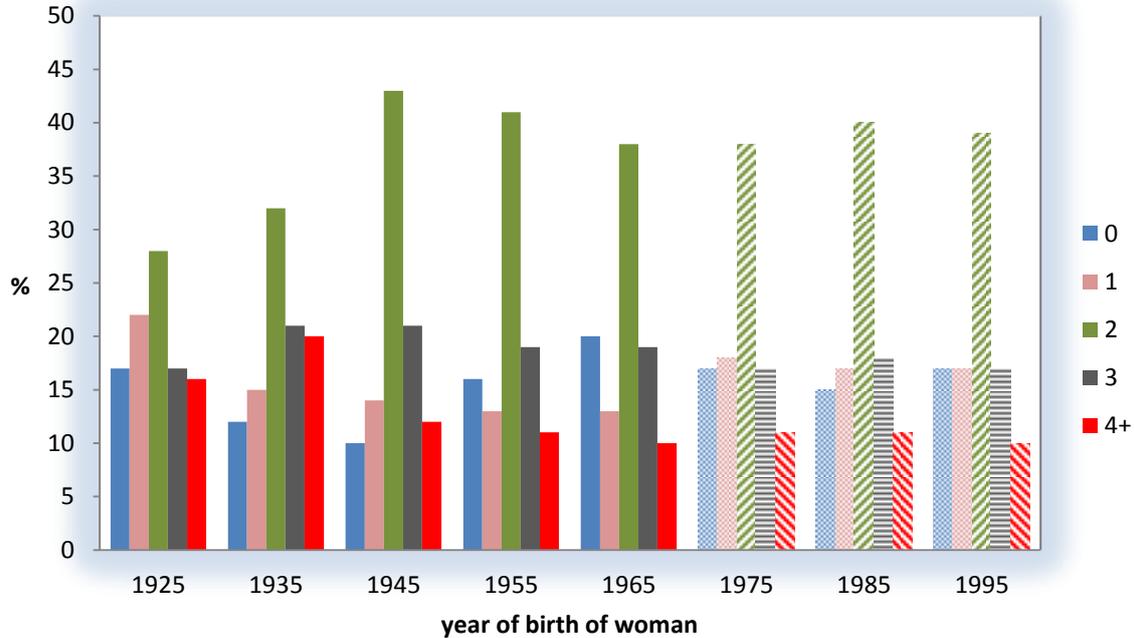


Source: Data from Office for National Statistics, Birth summary tables, England and Wales, 2010, Live births by age of mother, 1938-2010, Table 2a

The figure shows a sharp peak in overall births immediately following the Second World War, followed by another increase during the economic boom of the 60s and a slump during the recession of the 70s. All age groups were affected in similar proportions. In the more recent past, the number of births decreased from the late 80 onwards until the beginning of the millennium. In 2002 the trend reversed, with a steady rise in all age groups apart from teenagers.

The proportion of women with 3 and 4+ children has been relatively stable over the decades. (Figure 2)

**Figure 2 - Percentage of women with 0,1,2,3 and 4+ children by year of birth of woman\***



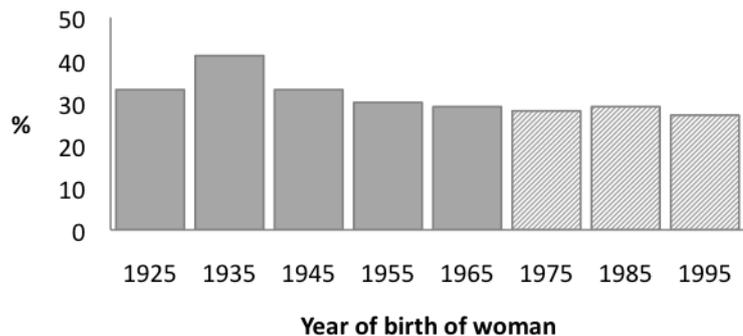
Source: Data from Office for National Statistics, Cohort Fertility, Tables 1 and 3, published December 2011  
 \*Women born before 1970 are assumed to have completed their childbearing, whereas percentages for 1970 to 1995 are ONS projections (patterned bars).

The figure shows that the two-child family remains the most common family size. After two children, childlessness is the second most common family size for the 1965 cohort, though the proportion of childless women is projected to fall for women born in later decades.

On average, ONS projections of family size for women who have not yet finished their child-bearing, i.e. women currently aged 17 to 37 (born between 1975 and 1995), show a completed family size of 1.92 children.<sup>2</sup>

The proportion of families with three or more children has been fairly constant in recent decades and is expected to remain so, with 28 % of women born in 1975 projected to end up having three or more children and 27 % of those born in 1995.<sup>4</sup> (Figure 3)

**Figure 3 - Change in percentage of woman with 3 or more children, per decade since 1925**



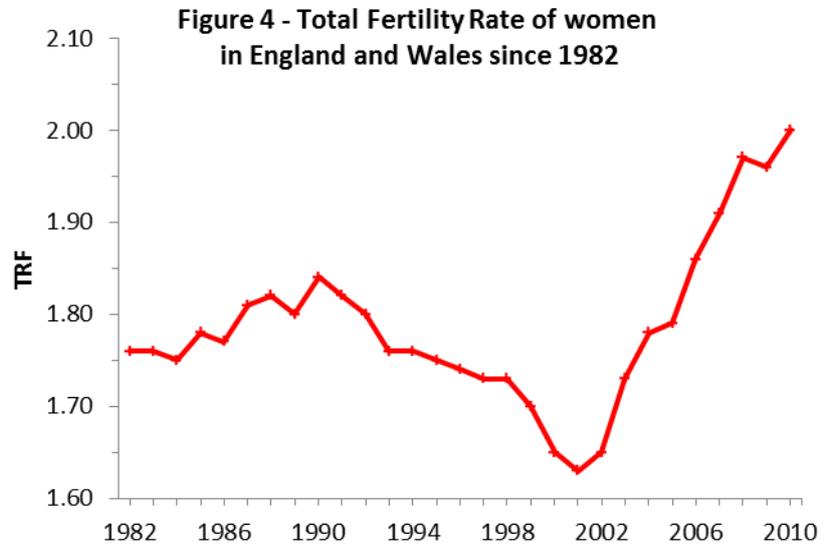
Source: Data subset of Figure 2 above. Patterned bars are projected figures.

## Recent trends

The total number of live births in England and Wales rose to 723,165 in 2010 compared with 706,248 in 2009 (an increase of 2.4 %). This increase in births (16,917) resulted from a rise in the number of births to UK born mothers (9,275 more in 2010 than in 2009) and a continuation of the rise in the number of non-UK born mothers (7,653 more in 2010).<sup>2</sup>

The Total Fertility Rate of women in their childbearing years has been increasing steeply over the last two decades to 2.00 in 2010 (Figure 4).

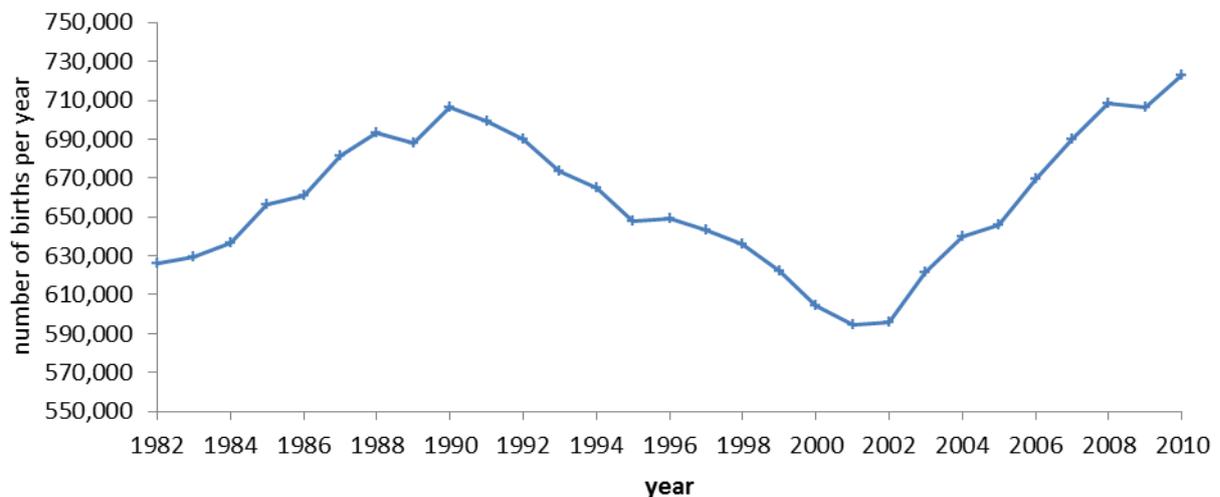
This total TFR of 2.00 is composed of the TFR of UK-born women (1.88 in 2010, up from 1.69 in 2004) and that of non-UK born women (stable at 2.45 in 2010).



Source: Data subset from ONS Statistical Bulletin - Summary of key live birth statistics, 1938-2010, Table 1

In absolute numbers (Figure 5) the above TFR corresponds to a plus of 97,234 births in 2010 (from 623,931 in 1982 to 723,165).

Figure 5 - Absolute number of births per year from 1982-2012 (England and Wales)

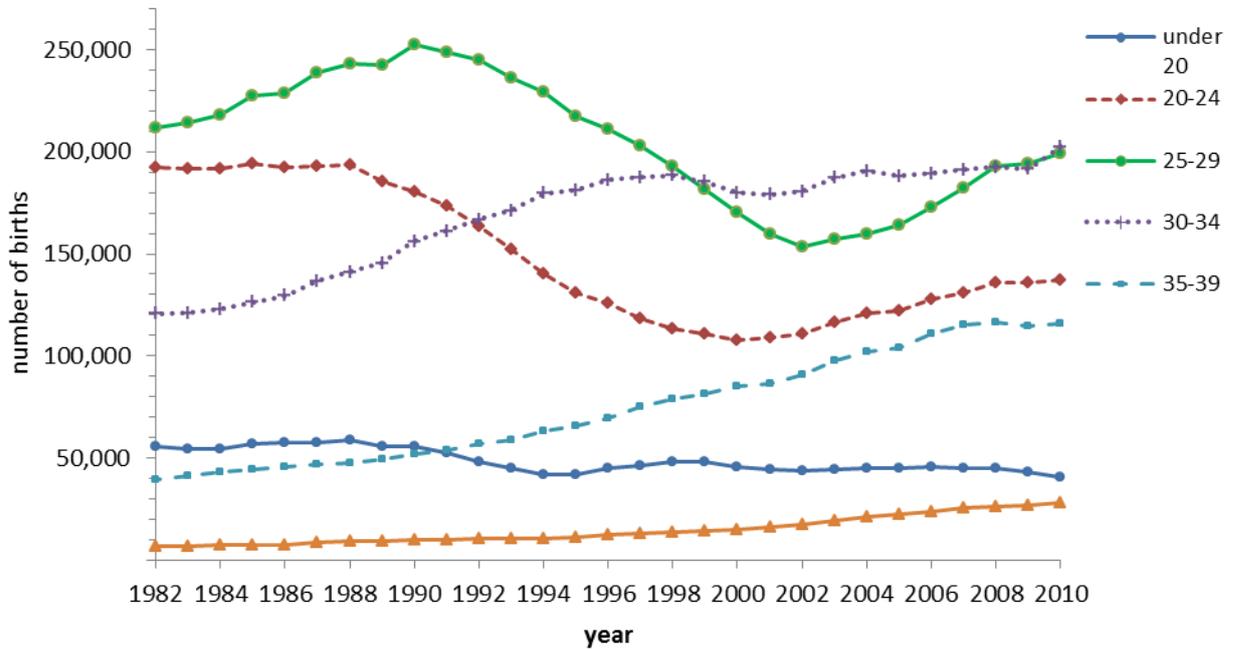


Source: Data subset from ONS Statistical Bulletin - Birth summary tables, England and Wales 2010, Summary of key live birth statistics1, 1938-2010, Table 1

<sup>2</sup> ONS, Statistical Bulletin, Births in England and Wales by parents' country of birth, 2010

Women of all age groups apart from teenagers contributed to this increase in births, with the largest increases in fertility seen among older women aged 35-39 and 40+. (Figure 6),

**Figure 6 - Births by age of mother, 1982-2010, England and Wales**



Source: Data subset from ONS - Birth Summary tables, England and Wales 2010, Table 2, Live births by age of mother, 1938–2010 (Note: the lowest line relates to 40+)

Regarding this trend towards later childbearing, the standardised mean age of mothers at childbirth in the UK has been increasing since the mid-1970s, from 26.5 years in 1975 to 29.6 in 2010. This reflects women delaying childbearing to older ages in recent years, with fertility rates for women in their thirties and forties rising faster than those of younger women. In 2010, nearly half (48 %) of all babies born were to mothers aged 30 and over.

From 2004 to 2010, fertility rates have been highest in the 30-34 age group for both UK born and non-UK born women (in England and Wales).

The mean age of fathers at birth of child has also increased by nearly two years over the last two decades (from 30.7 years in 1990 to 32.6 in 2010).

According to the ONS, these increases in fertility are likely to have resulted from a combination of factors, including:

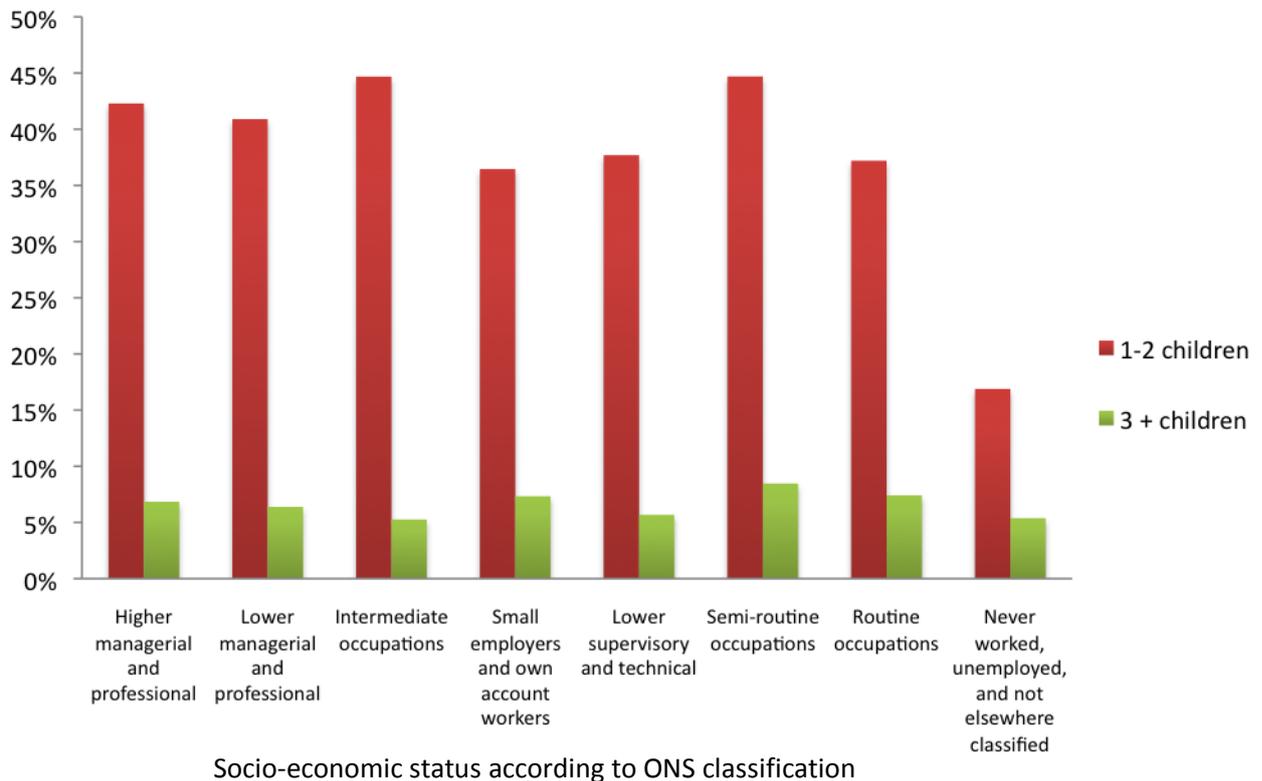
- Women born in the 1960s and 1970s who delayed their childbearing to older ages and are now catching up in terms of completed family size
- Changes in support for families (for example maternity and paternity leave and tax credits)
- Increases in the numbers of foreign born women with above average fertility

## The impact of socio-economic status

ONS statistical tables compiled for Population Matters give the number of dependent children in the eight different socio-economic classifications of families in the UK. These data show that socio-economic class, perhaps contrary to popular belief, does not affect family size. (Figure 7)

The highest socio-economic classes are as likely – or unlikely – to have large families as the lowest ones: 6.8 % and 6.4 % of the highest-ranking managerial and professional occupations have 3+ children, versus 7.4 % and 5.4 % for those in routine occupations and the unemployed.

**Figure 7 - Percentages of families of different socio-economic classes with 1-2 children and 3+ children, UK, 2010**



Source: ONS data compilation for PM “Families by number of dependent children and socio-economic classification, UK, 2010” based on the Annual Population Survey 2010.

Note: Families with no children were omitted from the graph, as the “household unit” on which the survey was based, would also include single male householders. The category “1-2 children” was therefore felt to give a better representation of actual family sizes.

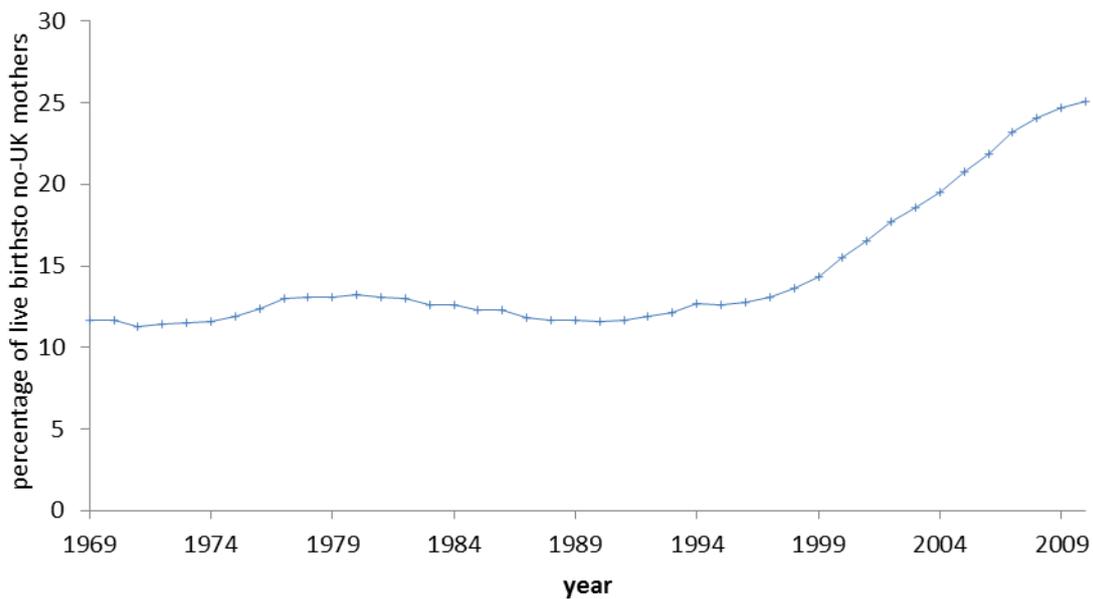
### UK born versus non-UK-born mothers<sup>3</sup>

82 % of all women of child-bearing age were born in the UK, while 18 % were born outside. UK-born women therefore make the largest contribution to the overall TFR.

The TFR for England and Wales of 2.00 in 2010 shown previously in *Figure 1* includes both UK-born and non-UK mothers. A closer look at this figure reveals that while there was a 0.8 % decline in the UK born female population of child-bearing age, their TFR rose (from 1.69 in 2004 to 1.88 in 2010), resulting in an increased number of births. In contrast, the population of foreign-born women of child-bearing age rose by 4.2 %, while their TFR remained more or less unchanged (2.45 children/woman).

Births to non-UK born mothers accounted for 25.1 % per cent of all live births in 2010 (Figure 8). *“This is the highest proportion of births to mothers born outside the UK since the collection of parents’ country of birth was introduced at birth registration in 1969. This proportion has increased every year since 1990, when it was just under 12 %, with a marked rise over the last decade.”*<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 8 - Percentage of live births to mothers born outside the UK, 1969-2010 (England and Wales)**

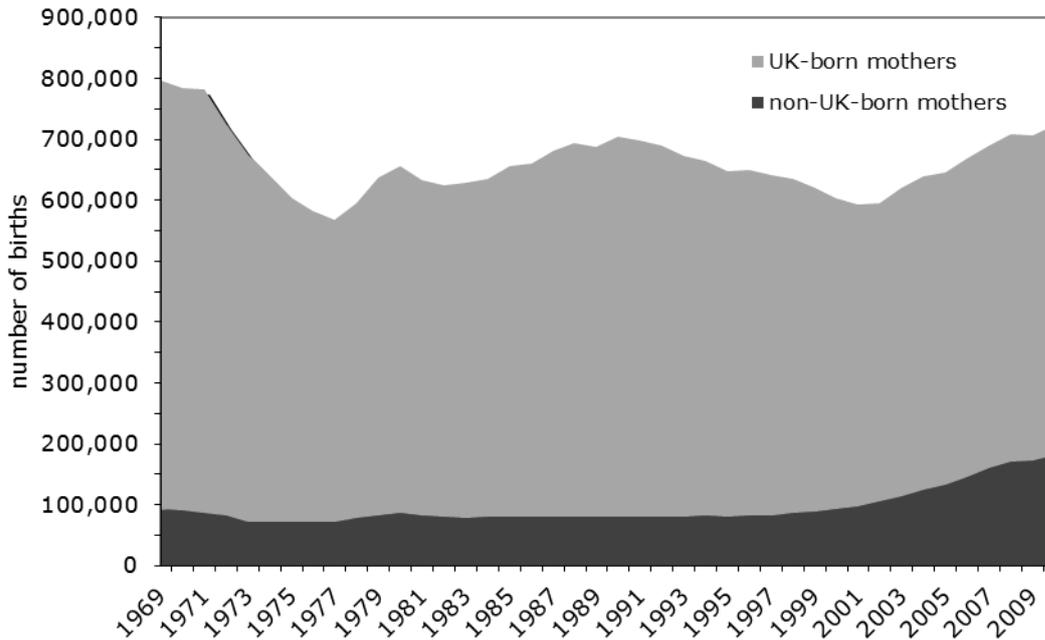


Source: ONS Statistical Bulletin – Births in England and Wales by parents’ country of birth

<sup>3</sup> ONS, Statistical Bulletin, Births in England and Wales by parents’ country of birth, 2010

Figure 9 shows the relative contribution of UK-born and non-UK-born mothers to the number of births per year over time.

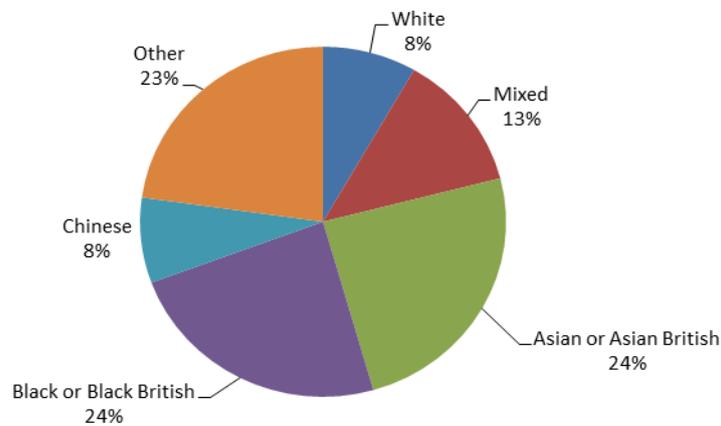
**Figure 9 - Number of births per year from 1969 - 2010 by UK-born and non-UK-born mothers**



Source: Data from ONS Birth summary tables, England and Wales 2010, Table 1, Summary of key live birth statistics, 1938-2010

Black and Asian or Asian British are more likely to have a larger family. (Figure 10)

**Figure 10 - Distribution of families with 3 or more children within different ethnicities**



Source: ONS data compilation for PM “Families by number of dependent children and ethnicity, UK, 2010” based on the Annual Population Survey 2010.

56.3 % of all births to non-UK mothers occur in London (highest percentage), 10.3 % in North East (lowest). These two regions have consistently shown the highest and lowest percentages of births to non-UK mothers for the last 10 years. In 2010, Poland became the most common country of origin for non-UK born mothers (19,762 births in 2010), followed by Pakistan and India. Pakistan remains the most common country of origin for non-UK born fathers.

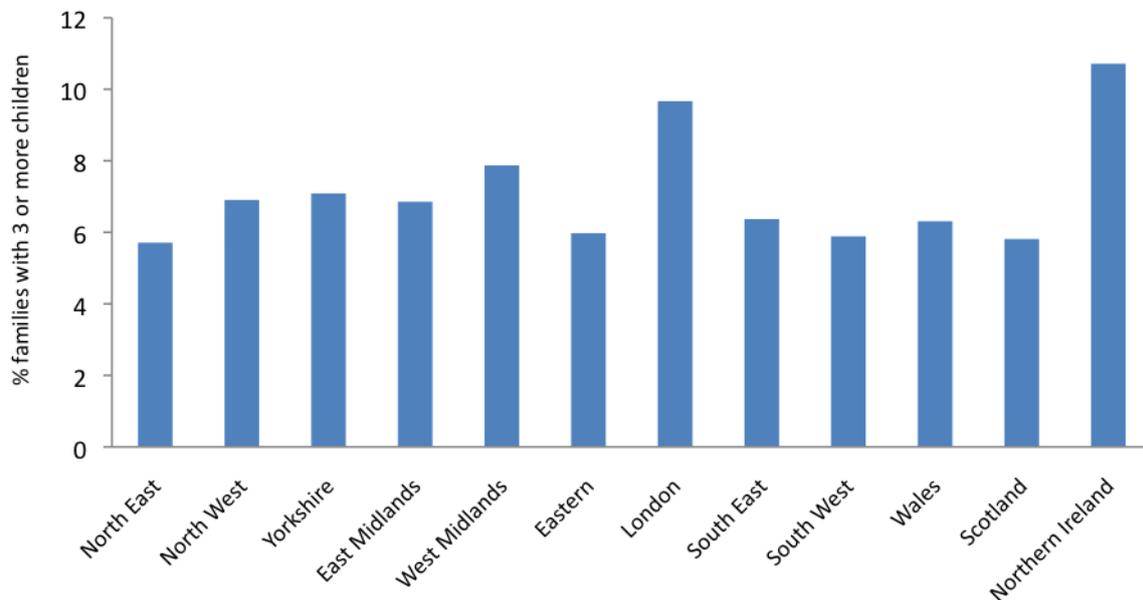
## Religion

A quarter of Muslim households contained three or more dependent children, compared with 14% of Sikh, 7% of Hindu and 5% of Christian households. (Census, April 2001, ONS) The average intended number of children amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi women was 3.4 and 3.6 respectively, compared with 2.4 amongst Indian women and 2.1 amongst White women. (Population Trends 112, ONS)

## Regional distribution

Apart from N. Ireland (10.7 %) and London (9.7 %), regions range between 5.7 % (North East) and 7.8 % (West Midlands) for three or more children (Figure 11).

**Figure 11 - Percentage of families with 3 or more children in different UK regions**



Source: ONS data compilation for PM “Families by number of dependent children and UK country/English region, UK, 2010”

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/npp/national-population-projections/2010-based-projections/stb-2010-based-npp-principal-and-key-variants.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/fertility-analysis/cohort-fertility--england-and-wales/2010/cohort-fertility-2010.html#tab-Projected-future-family-size>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/parents--country-of-birth--england-and-wales/2010/births-in-england-and-wales-by-parents--country-of-birth--2010.html>