

Fertility statistics

*Data extracted in June 2015. Most recent data: Further Eurostat information, Main tables and Database .
Planned article update: June 2016.*

This article looks at the development of a range of indicators concerning the number of [births](#) and [fertility](#) across the [European Union \(EU\)](#) . Fertility steadily declined from the mid-1960s through to the turn of the century in the EU Member States. However, in recent years the [total fertility rate](#) in the [EU-28](#) displayed some signs of rising again, however this development stopped in 2010 and a decline has been observed again since 2011.

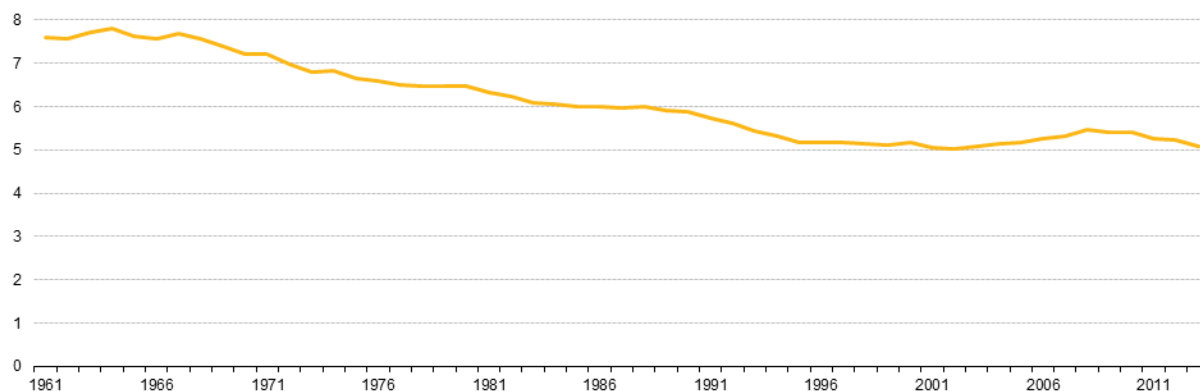
Main statistical findings

In 2013, 5.1 million children were born in the EU-28, corresponding to a [crude birth rate](#) (the number of live births per 1 000 persons) of 10.

The highest annual total of live births for the EU-28 was recorded in 1964, with 7.7 million live births. From the 1960s up to the beginning of the 21st century, the number of live births in the EU-28 declined from 7.5 million to a low of 5.0 million in 2002 (see [Figure 1](#)). This was followed by a modest rebound in the number of live births, with a high of 5.5 million children born in the EU-28 in 2008, in turn followed by further annual reductions during the period 2009–12.

In recent decades Europeans have generally been having fewer children, and this pattern partly explains the slowdown in the EU-28's population growth (see [Population and population change statistics](#)). The main indicator of fertility is the total fertility rate: this is the mean number of children that would be born alive to a woman during her lifetime if she were to pass through her childbearing years conforming to the age-specific fertility rates of a given year. A total fertility rate of around 2.1 live births per woman is considered to be the replacement level in industrialised countries: in other words, the average number of live births per woman required to keep the population size constant in the absence of inward or outward [migration](#) . A total fertility rate below 1.3 live births per woman is described as 'lowest-low fertility'. The total fertility rate is used as an indicator for the fertility level and is comparable across countries since it takes into account changes in the size and structure of the population.

The total fertility rate was 1.47 live births per woman in the EU-28 in 2003. A slight increase was subsequently observed in most EU Member States, with the EU-28 average increasing to 1.62 live births per woman up to 2010, but then decreasing to 1.55 in 2013. One way to explain this slight increase is to attribute it to a catching-up process: following the trend to give birth later in life (witnessed by an increase in the mean age of women at childbirth), the total fertility rate might have declined first, before a subsequent recovery.



(*) Excluding French overseas departments before 1998. 2013: provisional.
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo_gind)

Figure 1: Number of live births, EU-28, 1961–2013 (1)(million)Source: Eurostat (demo_gind)

Table 1 shows the total fertility rate in the EU Member States for selected years. The indicator declined considerably between 1980 and 2000–03 in many Member States: in 2000, values had fallen below 1.30 in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Slovenia and Slovakia. After reaching a low point between 2000 and 2003, the total fertility rate increased in most Member States. By 2013, most EU Member States reported rates of 1.30 or higher, the exceptions being Spain, Poland and Portugal.

In the past 50 years, total fertility rates in the Member States have in general been converging: in 1960 and in 1980, the disparity between the highest (Ireland) and the lowest (Estonia in 1960, Luxembourg in 1980) was around 1.8 live births per woman, while in 1970 it was around 2.0. By 1990 this difference (between Cyprus and Italy) had decreased to 1.1 live births per woman. Since 2000 it has been around 0.7 to 0.8 live births per woman. Ireland and France reported the highest fertility rates for the most recent period available (2013), with slightly below 2.00 live births per woman. In contrast, the lowest fertility rates in 2013 were recorded in Poland (1.29), Spain (1.27 live births per woman) and Portugal (1.21 live births per woman). Among the Member States for which 1990 data are available, only Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Slovenia had a 2013 total fertility rate higher than their 1990 rate, while in Denmark and the United Kingdom they were the same. On the other hand, the total fertility rate fell by more than 30 % between 1990 and 2013 in Cyprus, Malta, Poland and Slovakia; note that there is a break in series for Poland. In absolute terms, the decline in the total fertility rate was largest in Cyprus, from 2.41 in 1990 to 1.30 in 2013.

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2011	2012	2013
EU-28 (*)	.	.	.	.	.	1.62	1.58	1.58	1.55
Belgium (*)	2.54	2.25	1.68	1.62	1.67	1.86	1.81	1.79	1.75
Bulgaria	2.31	2.17	2.05	1.82	1.26	1.57	1.51	1.50	1.48
Czech Republic	2.09	1.92	2.08	1.90	1.15	1.51	1.43	1.45	1.46
Denmark	2.57	1.95	1.55	1.67	1.77	1.87	1.75	1.73	1.67
Germany	.	.	.	.	1.38	1.39	1.36	1.38	1.39
Estonia	1.98	2.17	2.02	2.05	1.36	1.72	1.61	1.56	1.52
Ireland	3.78	3.85	3.21	2.11	1.89	2.05	2.03	2.01	1.96
Greece	2.23	2.40	2.23	1.40	1.27	1.47	1.40	1.35	1.30
Spain	.	.	2.20	1.36	1.23	1.37	1.34	1.32	1.27
France (*)	.	.	.	.	1.89	2.03	2.01	2.01	1.99
Croatia	.	.	.	.	.	1.55	1.48	1.51	1.46
Italy	2.37	2.38	1.64	1.33	1.26	1.46	1.44	1.43	1.39
Cyprus	.	.	.	2.41	1.64	1.44	1.35	1.39	1.30
Latvia	.	.	.	.	1.25	1.36	1.33	1.44	1.52
Lithuania	.	2.40	1.99	2.03	1.39	1.50	1.55	1.60	1.59
Luxembourg (*)	2.29	1.97	1.50	1.60	1.76	1.63	1.52	1.57	1.55
Hungary (*)	2.02	1.98	1.91	1.87	1.32	1.25	1.23	1.34	1.35
Malta	.	.	1.99	2.04	1.70	1.36	1.45	1.43	1.38
Netherlands	3.12	2.57	1.60	1.62	1.72	1.79	1.76	1.72	1.68
Austria	2.69	2.29	1.65	1.46	1.36	1.44	1.43	1.44	1.44
Poland (*)	.	.	.	2.06	1.37	1.41	1.33	1.33	1.29
Portugal	3.16	3.01	2.25	1.56	1.55	1.39	1.35	1.28	1.21
Romania	.	.	2.43	1.83	1.31	1.59	1.47	1.52	1.41
Slovenia	.	.	.	1.46	1.26	1.57	1.56	1.58	1.55
Slovakia	3.04	2.41	2.32	2.09	1.30	1.43	1.45	1.34	1.34
Finland	2.72	1.83	1.63	1.78	1.73	1.87	1.83	1.80	1.75
Sweden	.	1.92	1.68	2.13	1.54	1.98	1.90	1.91	1.89
United Kingdom	.	.	1.90	1.83	1.64	1.92	1.91	1.92	1.83
Iceland	.	2.81	2.48	2.30	2.08	2.20	2.02	2.04	1.93
Liechtenstein	.	.	.	.	1.57	1.40	1.69	1.51	1.45
Norway	.	2.50	1.72	1.93	1.85	1.95	1.88	1.85	1.78
Switzerland (*)	2.44	2.10	1.55	1.58	1.50	1.52	1.52	1.53	1.52
Montenegro (*)	.	.	.	.	.	1.70	1.65	1.72	1.73
FYR of Macedonia	.	.	.	.	1.88	1.56	1.46	1.51	1.49
Serbia (*)	.	.	.	.	1.48	1.40	1.40	1.45	1.43
Turkey	.	.	.	.	.	2.04	2.03	2.09	2.08

(*) 2011 and 2012: break in series.

(*) 2011: break in series.

(*) Breaks in series: 2011 and 2012.

(*) 2012: break in series.

(*) 2000 and 2010: break in series.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo_frate)

Table 1: Total fertility rate, 1960–2013 (live births per woman) Source: Eurostat (demo_frate)

As noted above, another reason that partly explains the downward development of fertility rates within the EU Member States is the decision of many parents to delay starting a family. While only a relatively short time series is available for the EU-28 aggregate, Table 2 shows that the mean age of women at childbirth continued to rise between 2001 and 2013, from 29.0 to 30.3 years.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	1.46	1.46	1.47	1.50	1.51	1.54	1.56	1.61	1.61	1.62	1.58	1.58	1.55
Mean age of women at childbirth (years)	29.0	29.1	29.2	29.3	29.4	29.5	29.6	29.7	29.8	29.9	30.1	30.1	30.3

(*) Breaks in series: 2007, 2011 and 2012.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo_find)

Table 2: Fertility indicators, EU-28, 2001–13 (1) Source: Eurostat (demo_find)

Data sources and availability

Eurostat compiles information for a large range of demographic data, including statistics on the number of live births by sex, by the mother's age, education and marital status. Fertility statistics are also collected in relation to the number of births by the rank of the child (first, second, third child and so on). A series of fertility indicators are produced from the information collected, including the total fertility rate and fertility rates according to the mother's age, the mean age of women at childbirth, the crude birth rate or the relative proportion of births outside of marriage.

Context

The EU's social policy does not include a specific strand for family issues. Policymaking in this area remains the exclusive responsibility of EU Member States, reflecting different family structures, historical developments, social attitudes and traditions from one Member State to another. Nevertheless, policymakers may well evaluate fertility statistics as a background for family policymaking. Furthermore, a number of common demographic themes are apparent across the whole of the EU, such as a reduction in the average number of children being born per woman and the increasing mean age of mothers at childbirth.

See also

- [Fertility statistics in relation to economy, parity, education and migration](#)
- [Marriage and divorce statistics](#)
- [Mortality and life expectancy statistics](#)
- [Population and population change statistics](#)
- [Population structure and ageing](#)

Further Eurostat information

Publications

- [EU Employment and Social Situation — Quarterly Review — March 2013 — Special Supplement on Demographic Trends](#)
- [Highly educated men and women likely to live longer](#) — Statistics in focus 24/2010
- [The greying of baby boomers](#) — Statistics in focus 23/2011
- [Towards a 'baby recession' in Europe?](#) — Statistics in focus 13/2013

Main tables

- [Births and fertility data](#) , see:

Fertility (t_demo_fer)

Total fertility rate (tsdde220)

Mean age of women at childbirth (tps00017)

Share of live births outside marriage (tps00018)

Database

- [Births and fertility data](#) , see:

Fertility (demo_fer)

Live births (total) by month (demo_fmonth)

Live births by mother's age and newborn's sex (demo_fasec)

Live births by mother's age and birth order (demo_fordagec)

Live births by mother's year of birth (age reached) and birth order (demo_fordager)

Live births by mother's age and legal marital status (demo_fagec)

Live births by mother's year of birth (age reached) and legal marital status (demo_fager)

Live births by mother's age and educational attainment (demo_faeduc)

Live births by mother's age and activity status (demo_faemplc)

Live births by mother's age and citizenship (demo_faczc)
Live births by mother's age and country of birth (demo_facbe)
Legally induced abortions by mother's age (demo_fabort)
Legally induced abortions by mother's age and number of previous live births (demo_fabortord)
Fertility indicators (demo_find)
Fertility rates by age (demo_frate)

Dedicated section

- [Population](#)

Methodology / Metadata

- [Fertility](#) (ESMS metadata file — demo_fer_esms)
- [Population](#) (ESMS metadata file — demo_pop_esms)

Source data for tables and figures (MS Excel)

- [Fertility statistics, main figures: tables and figures](#)

External links

- [The European Perinatal Health Report 2010](#)

View this article online at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Fertility_statistics