

BIRTHS Fact Sheet

Background

Along with migration and mortality, changes in fertility and in the number of births over time contribute significantly to shifts in the profile of the population. The Total Period Fertility Rate (TPFR, the average number of children)¹ in England and Wales declined steadily during the 1990s to reach a low of 1.63 in 2001. It then gradually increased through to 2008 and since that time has remained relatively stable, at 1.85 children per woman in 2013.

This increase is likely to be due to a combination of factors including increased fertility among older women, less postponement of childbearing among younger women, the impact of international migration, and government policy in support for childbearing (i.e. maternity and paternity leave).²

The Local Picture

Fertility

Fig. 1 shows that birth numbers and rates in Sutton have increased since 2002. In 2014, there were 2,751 live births in Sutton, an increase of 29% since 2002.

The Total Period Fertility Rate (TPFR) for Sutton (children per woman) was 1.85 in 2013, higher than London (1.74) but the same as England.

Fig. 1: Trend in Birth Rates in Sutton

The General Fertility Rate³ in Sutton (66.9 per 1,000 female population aged 15 – 44) is significantly higher than for London (63.3) and England (62.2). **Fig. 2** profiles the birth rate for Sutton in comparison with other London boroughs, indicating that it ranks in the top half.

Fig. 2: Birth rate, Sutton compared to London boroughs

Geography

Fig. 3 profiles fertility rate by electoral ward in Sutton for 2008-12. Some of the highest rates are in those wards that are more deprived, though this does not apply to all.

Fig. 3: Map - Where newborns live by ward

Country of birth of mother

Fig. 4 shows the number and rate of babies born by the country of birth of mother in 2014 and indicates that 40.2% were to non-UK born mothers. Of these, the highest groups are Middle East and Asia (14%), and EU excluding the UK (13%).

Fig. 4: Live births by country of birth of mother, 2014

¹ The TPFR is the average number of live children that a group of women would bear if they experienced the age-specific fertility rates of that calendar year throughout their childbearing lifespan.

² ONS. Why has the fertility rate risen over the last decade in England and Wales? June 2013. <http://www.ons.gov.uk>

³ General fertility rate is the number of live births per 1,000 females of childbearing age, 15-44.

Issues - Low Birth Weight

Low Birth Weight is defined as babies weighing under 2,500gm, and Very Low Birth Weight babies as less than 1,500gm. The Marmot Review, Fair Society, Healthy Lives, noted that low birthweight is associated with poorer long-term health outcomes.⁴ Research cited by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation indicates that children born into poverty have a higher chance of low birth weight.⁵ The Office for National Statistics cites low birth weight as a known risk factor for infant deaths.⁶ (See the Factsheet on Mortality. Sutton's Infant Mortality Rate is statistically lower (better) than both London and England at 2.5 deaths per 1,000 live births).

For the years 2008-12, Sutton had a significantly lower level of low birth weight babies (6.7% less than 2,500gm) than the national rate (7.4%). However, there is significant variation within the borough as shown in **Fig. 5**. The proportion of babies born with a low birth weight ranged from 4.5% in Carshalton Central to 8.2% in Beddington North.

Fig. 5: Percentage of low birth weight babies by ward

Modification of Low Birth Weight

The two main modifiable risk factors for low birth weight are maternal smoking and poor nutrition. Therefore interventions to promote smoking cessation and improve nutrition for pregnant women will reduce the risk of low birth weight.

Links to further information

- See Factsheets on **Mortality** for Infant Mortality Rates, **Tobacco Control** for Smoking in Pregnancy, **Population** for projections by age group and **Teenage Pregnancy** for teenage conceptions and abortions
- Sutton Maternity Pathway Profile, NHS London Health Programmes (2011 data) <http://www.londonhp.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Sutton.pdf>
- Public Health England. Child Health Profile for Sutton published by ChiMat – Child and Maternal Health Intelligence Network. <http://www.chimat.org.uk/resource/view.aspx?RID=101746®ION=101634>

⁴ Marmot M. Fair Society Healthy Lives. The Marmot Review 2010.

⁵ Griggs J, Walker R. The costs of child poverty for individuals and society. Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2008.

⁶ ONS. Statistical Bulletin. Childhood, Infant and Perinatal Mortality in England and Wales, 2012. January 2014.