

*Data extracted in February 2025
Planned article update: 6 March 2026*

3.67 million babies were born in the EU in 2023.

The total fertility rate stood at 1.38 live births per woman in the EU in 2023, ranging from 1.06 in Malta to 1.81 in Bulgaria.

29.8 years was the average age of women at the birth of their first child in the EU in 2023, ranging from 26.9 in Bulgaria to 31.8 in Italy.

Source: Eurostat ([demo_find](#))

This article looks at the developments observed for a range of indicators concerning the number of [births](#) and [fertility](#) across the [European Union \(EU\)](#) . Fertility rates have steadily declined from the mid-1960s through to the turn of the century in the EU countries. However, at the beginning of the 2000s, the [total fertility rate](#) in the EU showed signs of rising again. This development stopped in 2010 (when the total fertility rate in the EU was 1.57) and a subsequent decline was observed to a relative low in 2013 (1.51), followed by a slight increase in 2016 (1.57) and another decrease until 2020 (1.51). In 2021 the fertility rate increased to 1.53 coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, the total fertility rate in the EU decreased again (1.46) and in 2023 reached a historic low and was 1.38 live births per woman.

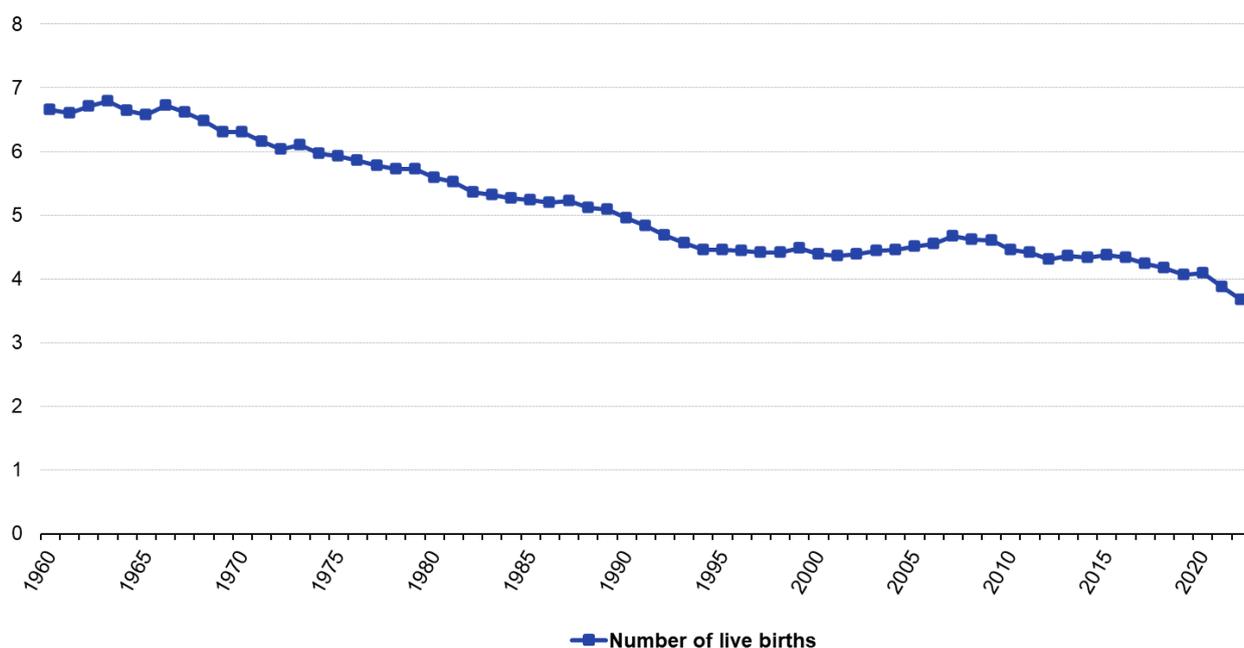
Almost 2 times fewer children born in the EU in 2023 than 6 decades ago

In 2023, 3.67 million children were born in the EU, corresponding to a [crude birth rate](#) (the number of live births per 1 000 persons) of 8.2. For comparison, the EU crude birth rate was 10.5 in 2000, 12.8 in 1985 and 16.4 in 1970.

During the period 1961–2022, the highest annual total for the number of live [births](#) in the EU was recorded in 1964, at 6.8 million children. From this comparative high until the beginning of the 21st century, the number of live births in the EU declined at a relatively steady pace, reaching a low of 4.36 million in 2002 (see Figure 1). This was followed by a modest recovery in the number of live births, with a high of 4.68 million children born in the EU in 2008, which in turn was followed by a general downward trend, although with modest increases in 2014 and 2016. During the COVID-19 pandemic, live births in the EU firstly declined to 4.07 (in 2020), then slightly increased to 4.09 million in 2021 and again decreased in 2022 to 3.88 million children. In 2023, total number of live births in the EU decreased again, to 3.67 million children.

Number of live births, EU, 1961–2023

(million)



Note: Excluding French overseas departments before 1998. Including Mayotte from 2014.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo_fagec)

eurostat 

Figure 1: Number of live births, EU, 1961–2023 (million) Source: Eurostat (demo_fagec)

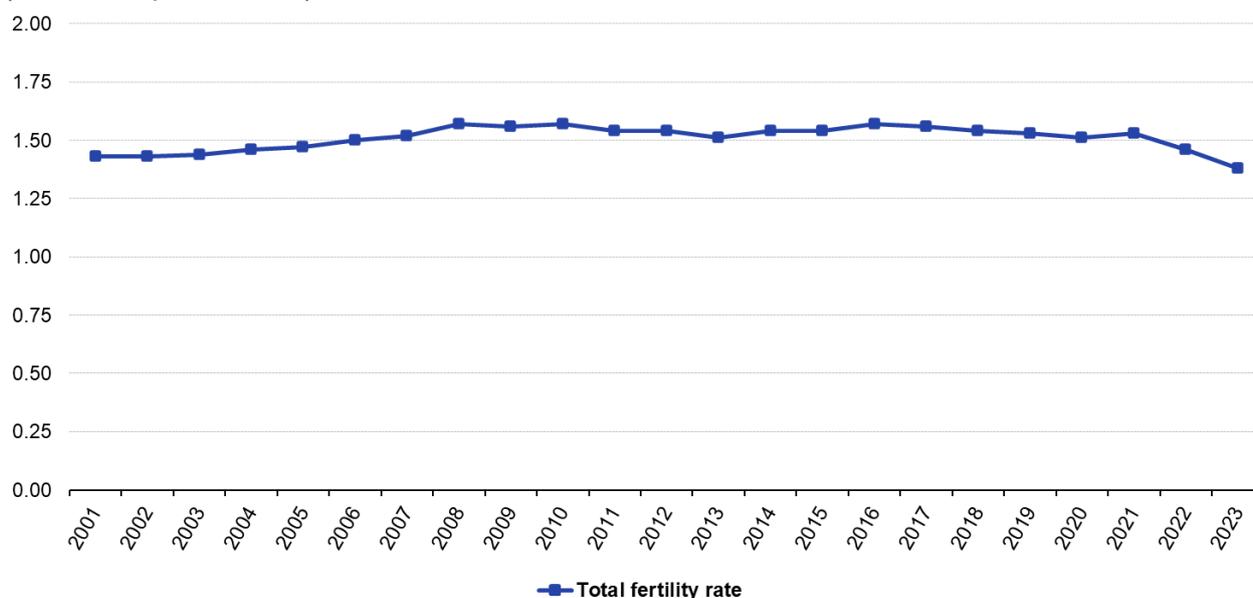
1.38 live births per woman in the EU in 2023

In recent decades, Europeans have generally been having fewer children, and this pattern partly explains the slowdown in the EU's population growth (see [Population and population change statistics](#)). The most widely used 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 developed countries: in other words, the average number of live births per woman required to keep the population size constant in the absence of **migration**. A total fertility rate below 1.3 live births per woman is often referred to as 'lowest-low fertility'. The total fertility rate is comparable across countries since it takes into account changes in the size and structure of the population.

In 2023, the total fertility rate in the EU was 1.38 live births per woman (Figure 2). The EU's total fertility rate rose from a low of 1.43 in 2001 and 2002 to a relative high of 1.57 in 2008 and 2010; this was subsequently followed by a slight decrease to 1.51 in 2013 before modest rebounds until 2017, when the indicator started to decrease again. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU fertility rate declined to 1.51 (in 2020) live births per woman, slightly increased to 1.53 (in 2021) and since 2022 has been decreasing again, from 1.46 (in 2022) to a new low of 1.38 in 2023.

Total fertility rate, EU, 2001–2023

(live births per woman)



Note: break in time series in various years between 2010 and 2023.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo_find)

eurostat

Figure 2: Total fertility rate, EU, 2001–2023 Source: Eurostat (demo_find)

Bulgaria with the highest and Malta with the lowest total fertility rate in 2023

Among the EU countries, Bulgaria reported the highest total fertility rate in 2023, with 1.81 live births per woman, followed by France (1.66) and Hungary (1.55). By contrast, the lowest total fertility rates in 2023 were recorded in Malta (1.06 live births per woman), Spain (1.12) and Lithuania (1.18). Among the EFTA countries, the highest total fertility rate in 2023 was reported by Iceland (1.55) and the lowest by Switzerland (1.33).

Between 2022 and 2023, the total fertility rate decreased in 24 EU countries and decreased in 3 EU countries: the highest increases could be observed in Bulgaria (from 1.78 in 2022 to 1.81 in 2023) and Cyprus (from 1.37 to 1.40) while the highest decrease was recorded in Czechia (from 1.64 in 2022 to 1.46 in 2023).

In the majority of the EU countries, the total fertility rate declined considerably between 1980 and 2000–2003: by 2000, values had fallen below 1.30 in Bulgaria, Czechia, Greece, Spain, Italy, Latvia and Slovenia. After reaching a low point between 2000 and 2003, the total fertility rate increased in many of the EU countries and by 2023, all of them except Greece, Spain, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland and Finland reported total fertility rates that were above 1.30 (Table 1).

In the past 50 years, total fertility rates in the EU countries have, in general, been converging: in 1970, the disparity between the highest rates (recorded in Ireland) and the lowest rates (recorded in Finland) was around 2.0 live births per woman. By 1990 this difference — between a high in Cyprus and a low in Italy — had decreased to 1.1 live births per woman. By 2010, the difference had fallen again to 0.8 live births per woman with a high in Ireland and a low in Hungary. By 2022 the difference narrowed to 0.7, but in 2023 it increased to 0.8 when the highest total fertility rate was recorded in Bulgaria and the lowest rate was recorded in Malta.

Total fertility rate, 1960–2023

(live births per woman)

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2003	2013	2021	2022	2023
EU (*)	:	:	:	:	1.44	1.51	1.53	1.46	1.38
Belgium	2.54	2.25	1.68	1.62	1.67	1.76	1.60	1.53	1.47
Bulgaria	2.31	2.17	2.05	1.82	1.26	1.54	1.80	1.78	1.81
Czechia	2.09	1.92	2.08	1.90	1.18	1.46	1.83	1.64	1.46
Denmark	2.57	1.95	1.55	1.67	1.76	1.67	1.72	1.55	1.50
Germany (*)	:	:	:	:	1.34	1.42	1.58	1.46	1.39
Estonia	1.98	2.17	2.02	2.05	1.37	1.52	1.61	1.41	1.31
Ireland	3.78	3.85	3.21	2.11	1.96	1.93	1.78	1.54	1.50
Greece	2.23	2.40	2.23	1.39	1.29	1.29	1.43	1.32	1.26
Spain	:	:	2.22	1.36	1.30	1.27	1.18	1.16	1.12
France (*)	:	:	:	:	1.89	1.99	1.83	1.78	1.66
Croatia	:	:	:	:	1.41	1.46	1.63	1.53	1.47
Italy	2.40	2.38	1.64	1.33	1.29	1.39	1.25	1.24	1.21
Cyprus (*)	:	:	:	2.41	1.51	1.30	1.39	1.37	1.40
Latvia	:	:	:	:	1.32	1.52	1.57	1.47	1.36
Lithuania	:	2.40	1.99	2.03	1.26	1.59	1.36	1.27	1.18
Luxembourg	2.29	1.97	1.50	1.60	1.62	1.55	1.38	1.31	1.25
Hungary	2.02	1.98	1.91	1.87	1.27	1.35	1.61	1.56	1.55
Malta	:	:	1.99	2.02	1.48	1.36	1.13	1.08	1.06
Netherlands	3.12	2.57	1.60	1.62	1.75	1.68	1.62	1.49	1.43
Austria	2.69	2.29	1.65	1.46	1.38	1.44	1.48	1.41	1.32
Poland (*)	:	:	:	2.06	1.22	1.29	1.33	1.29	1.20
Portugal	3.16	3.01	2.25	1.56	1.44	1.21	1.35	1.43	1.45
Romania (*)	:	:	2.43	1.83	1.30	1.46	1.81	1.71	1.54
Slovenia	:	:	:	1.46	1.20	1.55	1.64	1.55	1.51
Slovakia	3.04	2.41	2.32	2.09	1.20	1.34	1.63	1.57	1.49
Finland	2.72	1.83	1.63	1.78	1.76	1.75	1.46	1.32	1.26
Sweden	:	1.92	1.68	2.13	1.71	1.89	1.67	1.53	1.45
Iceland	:	2.81	2.48	2.30	1.99	1.93	1.82	1.59	1.55
Liechtenstein	:	:	:	:	1.36	1.45	1.53	1.47	1.45
Norway	:	2.50	1.72	1.93	1.80	1.78	1.55	1.41	1.40
Switzerland	2.44	2.10	1.55	1.58	1.39	1.52	1.52	1.39	1.33
Montenegro	:	:	:	:	:	1.73	1.76	1.78	1.76
Moldova (*)	:	:	:	:	:	:	1.72	1.70	1.62
North Macedonia	:	:	:	:	1.77	1.49	1.44	1.58	:
Georgia	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	1.83	1.71
Albania	:	:	:	:	2.06	1.73	1.31	1.21	:
Serbia (*)	:	:	:	:	1.59	1.43	1.52	1.59	1.62
Türkiye	:	:	:	:	:	2.08	:	1.63	1.51

(*) 2023 break in time series/estimated/provisional

Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo_find)

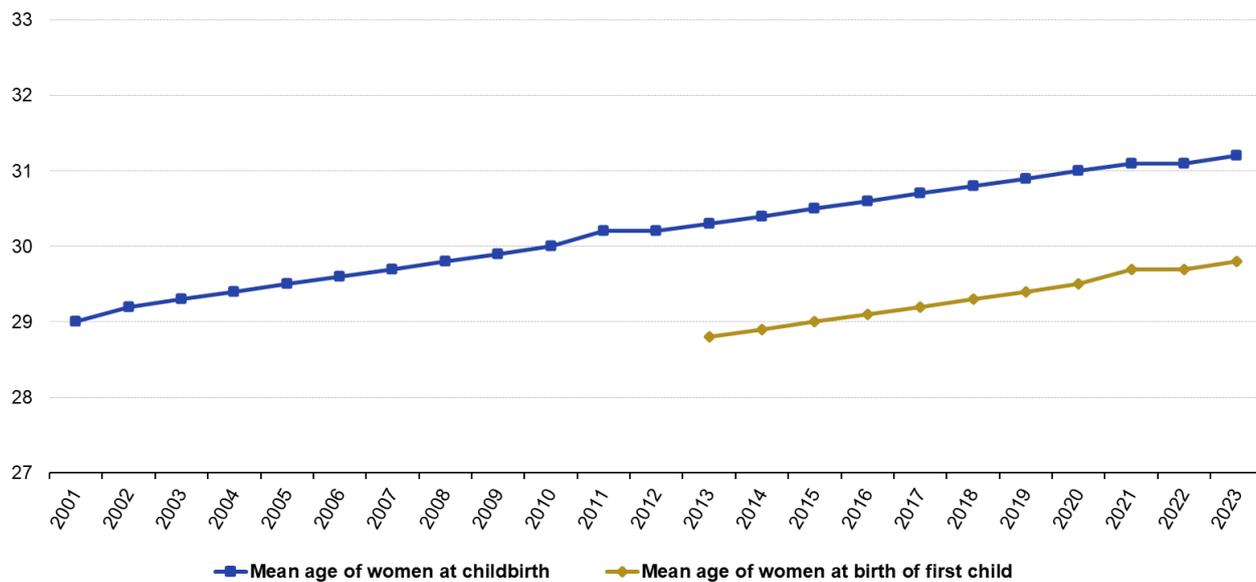
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Table 1: Total fertility rate, 1960–2023 (live births per woman) Source: Eurostat (demo_find)

Women in the EU are becoming mothers later in life

Figure 3 shows that the mean age of women at childbirth in the EU continued to rise between 2001 and 2023, from an average of 29.0 to 31.2 years. The same trend is observed for the mean age of women at birth of the first child during the same period, from a value of 28.8 in the EU in 2013 (the first year for which the EU value is available) to a value of 29.8 in 2023.

Mean age of women at childbirth and at birth of first child, EU, 2001–2023 (years)



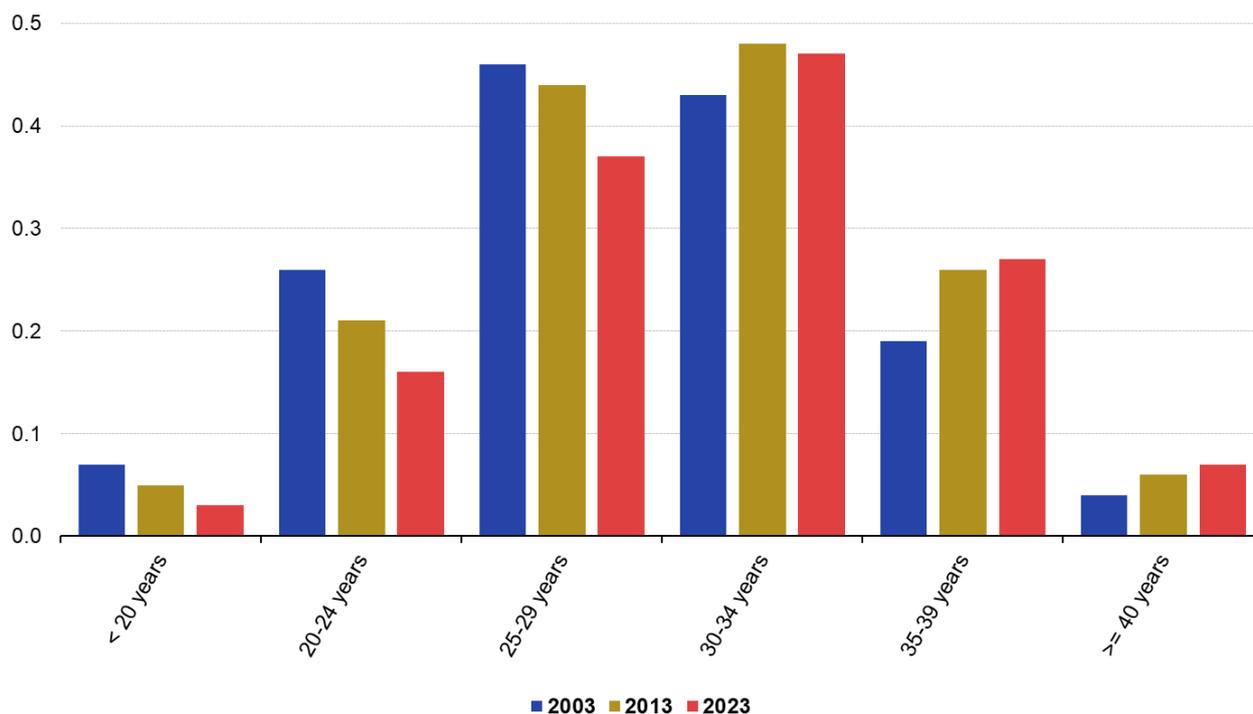
Note: the axes do not start at 0. Break in time series in various years between 2010 and 2023.
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo_find)



Figure 3: Mean age of women at childbirth and at birth of first child, EU, 2001–2023 Source: Eurostat (demo_find)

Indeed, women in the EU appear to be having fewer children while they are young, and more children later in life (see, for example, data for 2023 in Figure 4 at ages higher than 30 years). While the fertility rates for women aged less than 30 years in the EU have declined since 2003, those for women aged 30 years and over have risen. In 2003, the fertility rate for women aged 25-29 years was the highest among all age groups. In 2023, the fertility rate for women aged 30-34 years became the highest. The fertility rate for women aged 35 years and over is also on the increase.

Fertility rate by mother's age group, EU, 2003, 2013 and 2023 (live births per woman)



Note: The fertility rate by mother's age group is the sum of the single age fertility rates.
Break in time series in various years between 2010 and 2023.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo_frate)

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Figure 4: Fertility rate by mother's age group, EU, 2003, 2013 and 2023 Source: Eurostat (demo_frate)

Total fertility rate and age of women at birth of first child

Figure 5 shows a plot of the total fertility rate against the mean age of women at the birth of their first child in 2023. Some of the countries with the highest total fertility rates also had a relatively high mean age of women at the birth of their first child.

Four different groups of EU countries can be broadly identified based on their position with respect to the EU averages (as identified by the quadrants defined by the blue lines).

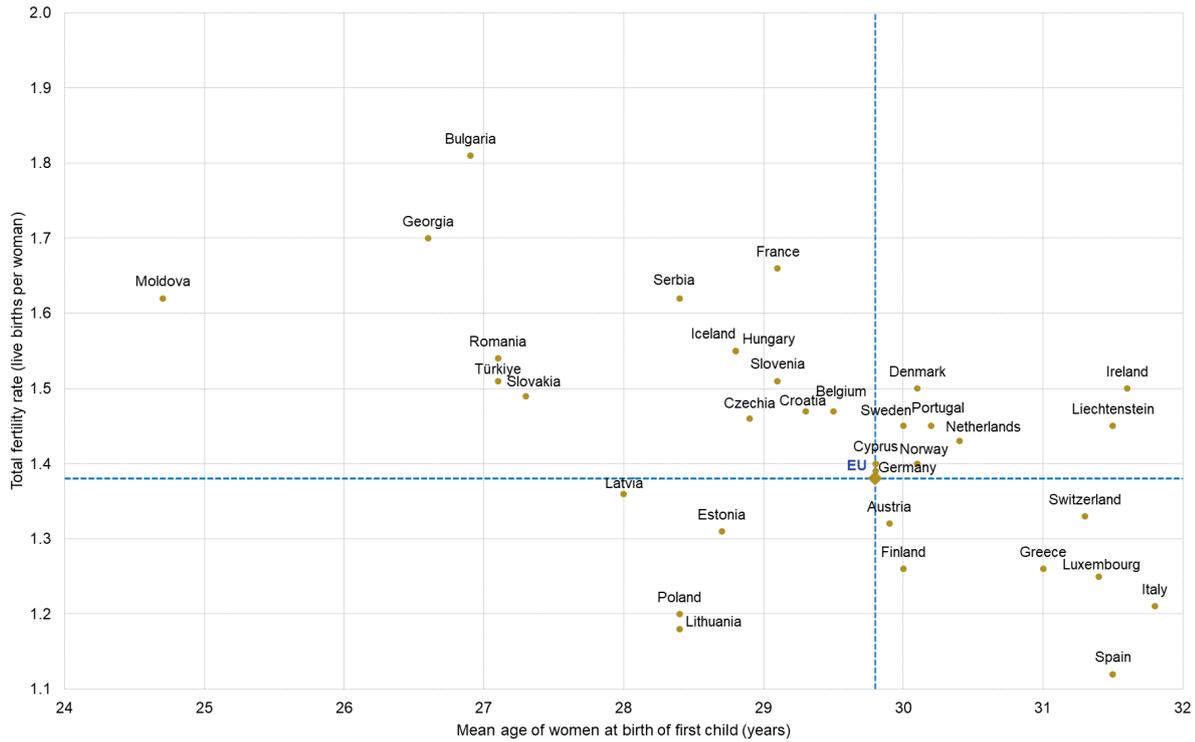
The first group (top right quadrant) is composed of Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden, as well as Liechtenstein and Norway where both the total fertility rate and the mean age of women at the birth of their first child were above the EU average.

A second group (bottom left quadrant) is made up of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland: both their total fertility rates and mean ages of women at the birth of their first child were below the EU averages.

A third group (bottom right quadrant) composed of Greece, Spain, Italy, Luxembourg, Austria, and Finland, as well as Switzerland recorded a higher than average mean age of women at the birth of their first child but a lower total fertility rate than the EU average.

The final group (top left quadrant) was composed of Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, France, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia, as well as Iceland; in each of these, the total fertility rate was higher than the EU average but the mean age of women at the birth of their first child was below the EU average.

Total fertility rate and the mean age of women at birth of first child, 2023



Note: the axes do not start at 0.
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo_find)



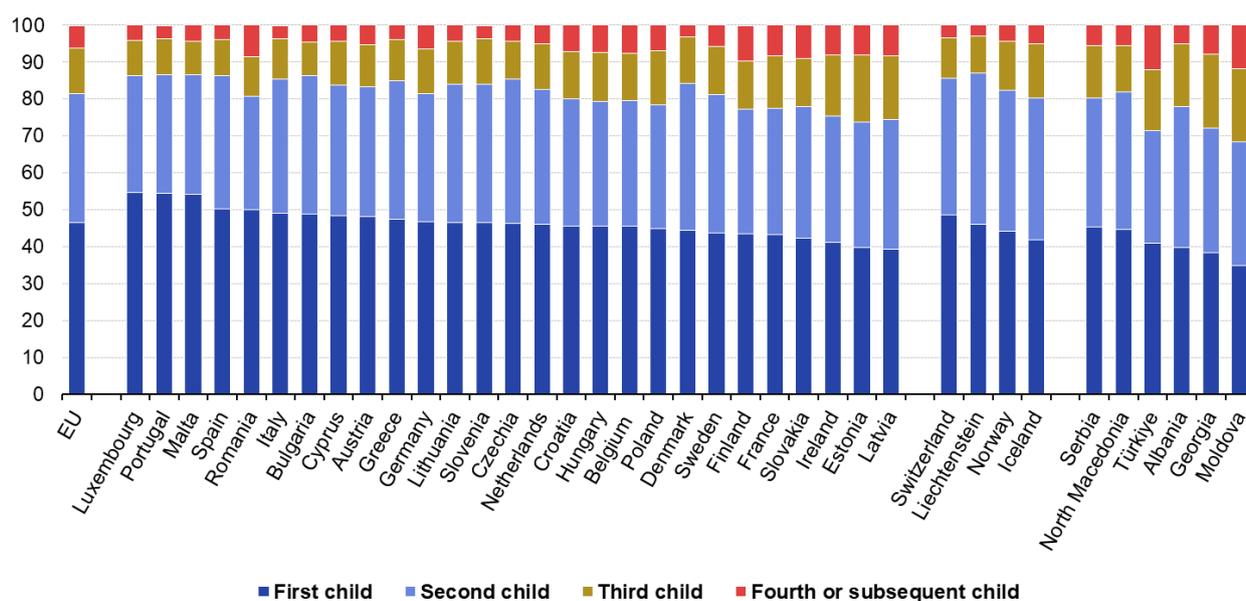
Figure 5: Total fertility rate and the mean age of women at birth of first child, 2023 Source: Eurostat (demo_find)

In 2023, women in the EU who gave birth to their first child were on average aged 29.8 years

As can be seen in Map 1, on average in the EU, women who gave birth to their first child in 2023 were aged 29.8 years. The lowest mean age at birth of a first child can be found in Bulgaria (26.9 years) and Romania (27.1 years); the highest values can be observed in Italy (31.8 years) and Ireland (31.6 years).

Share of live births by birth order, 2023

(%)



Note: sorted on first child data.

eurostat

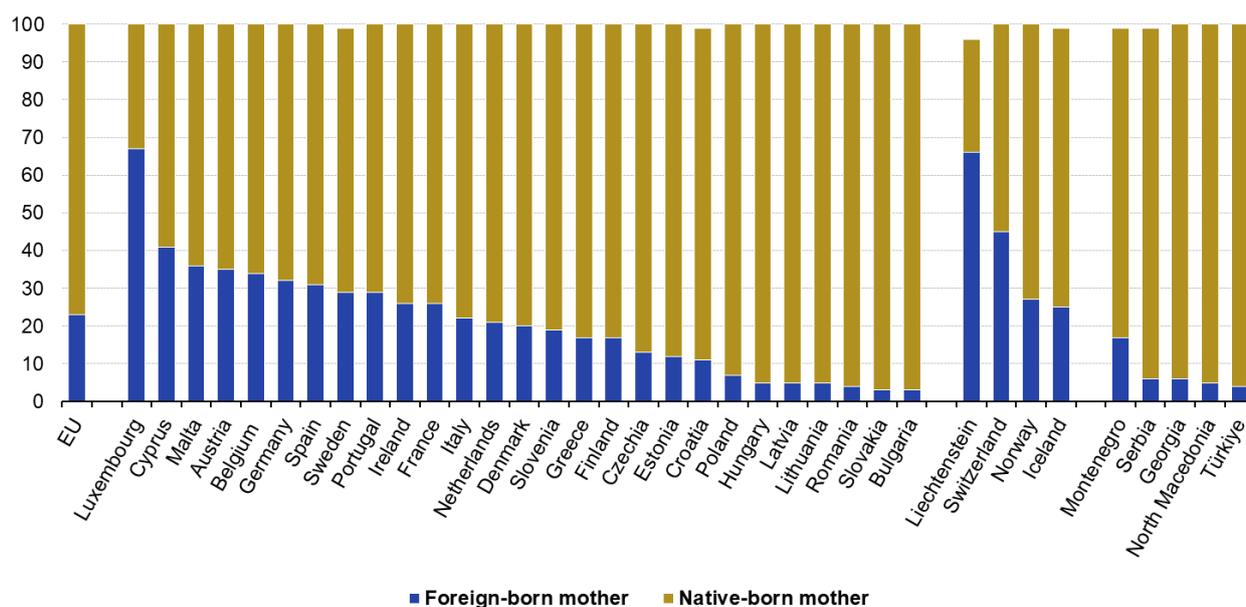
Figure 6: Share of live births by birth order, 2023 (%) Source: Eurostat (demo_find)

In 2023, the share of children born to foreign-born mothers stood at 23%

The foreign-born mothers shown in the Figure 7 concern mothers who were not born in the reporting country, but in another EU country or outside the EU. 67% of the children born in Luxembourg in 2023 were from foreign-born mothers. The second highest share of births to foreign-born mothers was in Cyprus with 41%. In Malta (36%), Austria (35%), Belgium (34%) and Germany (32%) around one-third of children were born to foreign-born mothers and two-thirds were born to native-born mothers. Conversely, 97% of live births in 2023 in Bulgaria and Slovakia were born to native-born mothers. Compared with 2013 (the first year for which data are available for all EU countries), most of the EU countries in 2023 showed an increase in live births from foreign-born mothers. Malta recorded the highest increase in live births from foreign-born mothers (25 **percentage points (pp)** from 11% in 2013 to 36% in 2023) followed by Portugal (13 pp from 16% to 29%), and Spain, Slovenia, Cyprus and Czechia for which increases of around 8 pp were recorded.

Share of live births from foreign-born and native-born mothers, 2023

(%)



Note: mothers of unknown country of birth are not included. Sorted on foreign-born mother.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: demo_facbc)

eurostat

Figure 7: Share of live births from foreign-born and native-born mothers, 2023 (%) Source: Eurostat (demo_facbc)

Source data for tables and graphs

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

Data sources

Eurostat compiles information for a large range of demographic data, including statistics on the number of live births by sex (of newborns), by the mother's age, citizenship, country of birth, level of educational attainment and marital status. Fertility statistics are also collected in relation to the number of births and by birth order (in other words, the rank of the child — first, second, third child and so on). A series of fertility indicators is 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.

The EU has been going through a period of demographic and societal change. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic will leave a lasting impact on the way we live and work together. The outbreak came at a time when Europe had already been going through a period of profound demographic and societal change. On 17 January 2023, the European Commission published the Staff Working Document on [The impact of demographic change – in](#)

[a changing environment](#) which provides further analysis of the demographic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the June 2023 European Council conclusions, on 11 October 2023, the Commission put forward a toolbox to support Member States in addressing demographic challenges and their impact on Europe's competitive edge. More information on the work of the European Commission 2019-2024 to tackle the impact of demographic change in Europe can be found in the [European Commission dedicated pages](#).

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Methodology

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