

United Kingdom

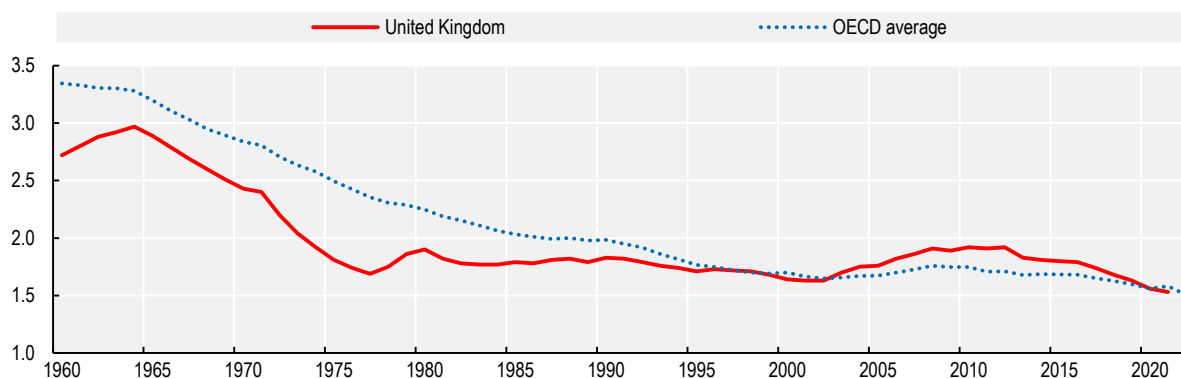
Spotlight on fertility trends

In 2021, 694 685 babies were born in the United Kingdom, corresponding to a total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.53 children per woman, which is slightly below the OECD average of 1.58.

Across the OECD on average, the TFR steadily declined from 1960 until 2002. There was a small fertility rebound in the 2000s until 2008, upon which the TFR dropped to an all-time low of 1.5 in 2022. The trend for the United Kingdom is different as the TFR dropped rapidly until the late 1970s and was stable from the early 1980s till the early 2000s. Compared to the OECD average, the UK experienced a stronger fertility rebound during the mid-2000s and early 2010s, but since then the TFR has dropped to an all-time low.

Figure 1. The TFR has fallen over the decade is now close to the OECD average

Number of children per woman aged 15 to 49, United Kingdom and OECD average, 1960 to 2022



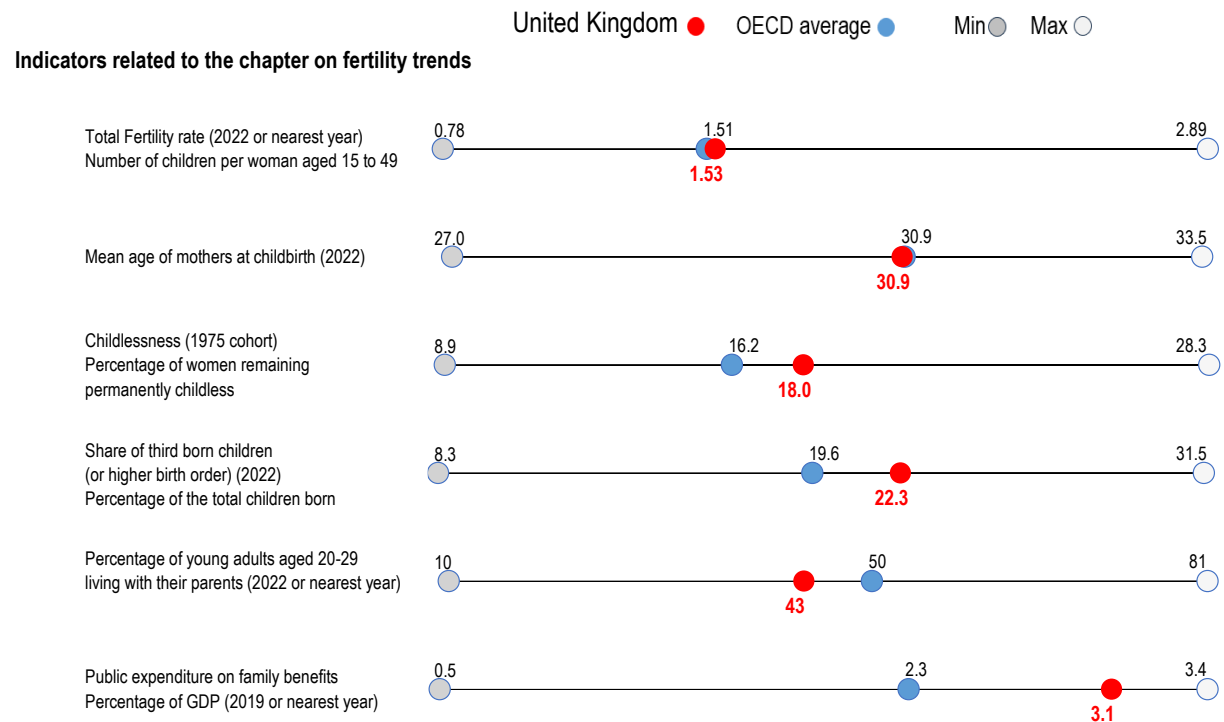
Source: Figure 1.1 in OECD (2024), *Society at a Glance 2024*, <https://stat.link/vxdInc>.

Many factors affect fertility choices, including employment of both men and women, unemployment, financial support for families (e.g. paid parental leave and childcare supports) and housing costs (Figure 1.7, <https://stat.link/8zu7m3> and Figure 1.14, <https://stat.link/ois3k8>). However other factors such as (financial) uncertainty as well as norms and attitudes also play a role. In many OECD countries, the desire to establish oneself in labour and housing markets have contributed to a delay of childbearing. In the United Kingdom, the mean age of mothers at childbirth rose from 28.5 years in 2000 to 30.9 years in 2021, just around the OECD on average (Figure 1.5, <https://stat.link/163n2d>).

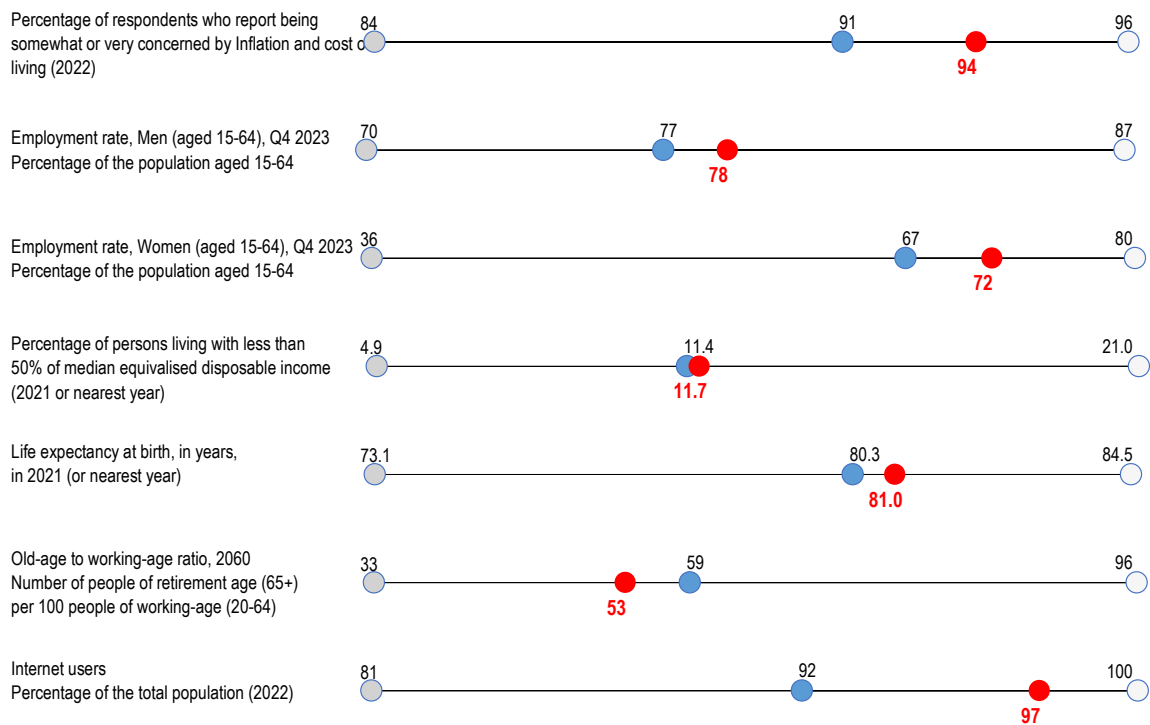
The fall in TFRs is related to women having fewer children and/or none at all. Childlessness has been on the rise across the OECD, but there is cross-national variation in timing and extent. In the United Kingdom, permanent childlessness increased from 16% for women born in 1951 to 18% for women born in 1975 (Figure 1.3, <https://stat.link/mykw3b>).

How does the United Kingdom compare?

Selection of indicators related to the chapter on fertility trends and other social indicators



Other social indicators



Source: OECD (2024), *Society at a Glance 2024*, <https://stat.link/vxdInc>.