

A summary picture of Older Teenagers & Young Adults in Birmingham

This document provides a summary of the key facts and figures on older teenagers and young adults aged 16-24 years. For detailed information and a wider range of data (including sources), please see the [JSNA Older Teenagers & Young Adults Dashboard](#).

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a critical period of development, marked by profound physical, emotional, and social changes. Whilst this stage of life presents many exciting opportunities, significant challenges may also arise, such as housing instability, financial insecurity, early parenthood, or barriers to education, training, and employment.

Understanding the needs of our older teenagers and young adults is essential for shaping policies and services in Birmingham that promote positive outcomes and reduce inequalities. This chapter of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) explores the health and wellbeing of this age group, examining key trends, risk factors, and social determinants while identifying opportunities for targeted interventions to improve their long-term prospects.

Population

Birmingham is a predominantly young city, with more than half the population aged under 35 years. Between 2022 and 2023, Birmingham's population grew by around 11,900 people, a 1% increase. The 20-24 age group showed the strongest growth, increasing by 3,764 residents, from 96,916 in 2022 to 100,680 in 2023 (4% increase). The city is home to an estimated 171,994 young people (aged 16-24), which is around 15% of all residents. In England, this age group accounts for around 11%.

Demographics

Ethnicity

Ethnic diversity is highest in younger age groups in Birmingham. Around 4 in 10 (67,600 residents) are of white ethnicity and just over one third (57,500) are of Asian ethnicity. Around 20,400 16-24s in the city are of Black ethnicity, 10,400 are mixed ethnicity and the remaining 5% are of 'other' ethnicity (7,800 residents).

Sexual Orientation

In the 2021 Census, more than 8 in 10 (84%) of 16-24 year olds in Birmingham reported they were straight or heterosexual, similar to the England average (84%). Around 8,700 residents (5%) reported as lesbian, gay, or other (LGB+), lower than the England average of 7%.

Disability

According to 2021 Census data, just over 1 in 10 (11%) 16-24 year olds in Birmingham report having a disability, a smaller proportion than the average for England (13%). Using 2023 population estimates, this would be equivalent to around 20,800 young people in Birmingham with a self-reported disability. Of those who reported a disability, around 1,500 said their day-to-day activities were limited a little (7%), lower than in England (8%). Around 800 residents said their activities were limited a lot (4%), very similar to the England average (4%).

Education

Attainment 8

The average Attainment 8 score of Birmingham pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 (aged 15-16 years) is 44.9/90, lower than the England average of 46.3. For children in care, the average score is 21.9/90, higher than the national average (19.3). Among children eligible for free school meals in Birmingham, the average Attainment 8 score is 42.6/90, higher than the England average of 39.1.

Special Educational Needs Primary Care Need

Around 3,250 pupils aged 16-19+ receive special educational needs (SEN) support or have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan in place in Birmingham, representing 14.5% of all Birmingham pupils in this age group. The most common primary care need for pupils receiving SEN support is moderate learning difficulty, affecting around 23% (368) of SEN pupils in this age group, higher than the England average of 9%. For pupils with an EHC in place, the most common primary care need is autistic spectrum disorder, affecting 41% (664) of pupils, higher than the England average of 34%.

Qualification Status

Data from the 2021 Census shows that more than 3 in 10 (36%, 58,500 residents) 16-24 year olds in Birmingham held Level 3 qualifications (2 or more A levels; 4 or more AS levels) as their highest level of qualification. This was higher than the England average of 31%. Around one fifth (22%, 35,700 residents) reported their highest level of qualification as Level 2 (5 or more GCSEs grade A* to C; CSEs grade 1) and a further fifth achieved Level 4 qualifications (including degrees, PhDs and NVQ4.5). Around 11% (17,900) of 16-24 year olds in Birmingham reported having no qualifications at all, similar to the England average (11%).

Employment

Employment

Around 40% of 16-24 year olds in Birmingham are employed, representing around 70,000 young people in the city. This is lower than the England average of 52%, which may reflect the large student population in Birmingham.

According to Census 2021 data, around 20% (32,500) of young people in Birmingham who do work are employed in elementary (unskilled or semi-skilled) occupations. A further 18% (29,200) are employed in sales and customer service, 15% (24,400) in professional roles, and 13% (21,100) in caring, leisure, and service occupations.

Almost 2,000 16-17 year olds in Birmingham (6%) are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), representing 2,037 young people. This is significantly higher than the England average of 5%. The proportion of 16-17 year olds who are NEET has been decreasing significantly in Birmingham over the past few years whilst at the national level, there has been no significant change.

Economic Activity

Data from Census 2021 shows almost half of 16-24 year olds (48%, 77,900 residents) were full time students who were economically inactive, compared with 38% across England. Almost a quarter (23%, 37,300) were employed, lower than the national average (36%). Around 6% (9,700) were seeking work, slightly higher than England (5%). A further 9% (14,700) of 16-24 year olds were economically inactive (not studying, working, or currently seeking employment), in line with the England average. The data reflects the large student population resident in Birmingham.

Claimant Count

In January 2025, there were 14,090 young people (aged 16-24 years) claiming unemployment benefits in Birmingham, representing around 8% of this age group. This was double the England average of 4%. Of the 69 Birmingham wards, 59 had larger proportions of 16-24 year olds claiming unemployment benefits than the national average. Handsworth and Birchfield had the largest proportions of young people claiming unemployment benefits in Birmingham, both with a claimant count of around 17%, four times the national average.

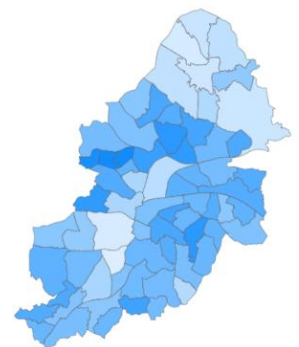


Figure 1: claimant count by ward, January 2025

Sexual & Reproductive Health

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Chlamydia is the most commonly diagnosed sexually transmitted infection (STI) in Birmingham's young people (aged 16-24 years), representing almost 7 in 10 (68%) STI diagnoses, with 6,072 cases in 16-24 year olds in the period 2021-24 (equivalent to a rate of 3,513 per 100,000 population). Gonorrhoea is the second most commonly diagnosed STI in this age group, representing one quarter (25%) of all STI diagnoses, with 2,250 cases in 2021-24 (a rate of 1,298 per 100,000 population).

Around 12% of females (aged 15-24 years) are screened for chlamydia in Birmingham, significantly lower than the England average of 18%. The chlamydia detection rate in Birmingham is 1,156 diagnoses per 100,000 females (aged 15-24 years), significantly lower than the England rate (1,589 per 100,000), and lower than the recommended detection rate of at least 3,250 per 100,000 population. In 2024, there were 1,076

chlamydia diagnoses in Birmingham females (aged 15-24 years) In males, the detection rate is 477 per 100,000 (aged 15-24 years), also significantly lower than England (837 per 100,000) with this rate accounting for 458 diagnoses in 2024.

Sexual Health & Reproductive Services

In 2023-24, 317 (2%) females aged 16-17 years attended sexual health and reproductive services in Birmingham, lower than the England average of 6%. In older age groups, around 771 (aged 18-19 years) and 1,989 (aged 20-24 years) females visited these services, both accounting for around 4% of females in these age groups, lower than the England averages of 10% and 11% respectively.

The rate of unique visits to specialist contraceptive services by females aged under 25 years in Birmingham is around 32 per 1,000 population (2,955 visits in 2023), significantly lower than the England rate of 103 per 1,000 population. Trends analysis shows no significant change in rates in Birmingham or England.

Conceptions & Births

Conception rates in under 16s and under 18s in Birmingham are similar to those in England. For females aged under 16 in Birmingham, there are just over 2 conceptions per 1,000 girls (aged 13-15 years) and in under 18s, there are almost 14 conceptions per 1,000 girls (aged 15-17 years). Almost half (45%) of all conceptions in girls aged under 18 in Birmingham lead to an abortion, significantly lower than the national average of 53%.

In the period 2016/17-2020/21, there were 625 deliveries to teenage mothers (aged 12-17 years), representing less than 1% of all Birmingham births. Of the 69 Birmingham wards, 62 had more teenage births than the national average (0.7%) during this period, with some wards having up to four times as many (Heartlands, 2.9%; Castle Vale, 2.3%). More than half (35) of all Birmingham wards had birth numbers too low to publish (≤ 5), shown in the grey areas in figure 2.

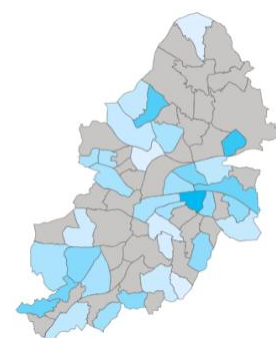


Figure 2: deliveries to teenage mothers by ward, 2016/17-2020/21

Hospital Admissions

Accident & Emergency Attendance

The most commonly coded cause for A&E attendance in Birmingham's 16-24 year olds is for injury/wound, accounting for around 11,500 attendances, equivalent to almost 1 in 5 (18%) of all A&E attendances in this age group.

The ratio of A&E attendances in young people (aged 16-24 years) in Birmingham is 91.7, significantly lower than the England benchmark of 100. This is around 8% lower than the England benchmark, which translates to Birmingham having around 6,000 fewer A&E attendances in 2023/24 compared with the national rate.

Admissions for Self-Harm

Birmingham has significantly lower hospital admission rates for self-harm than the England averages for young people. In the 15-19 years age group, there were 305 admissions in Birmingham in 2022-23, a rate of 349 per 100,000 population, compared with the national average of 468 per 100,000.

A similar pattern was seen in young adults aged 20-24 years. Birmingham recorded 185 admissions in 2022-23, a rate of 189 per 100,000, significantly lower than the England rate of 244. Per 100,000.

Admissions for Eating Disorders

Emergency hospital admissions for eating disorders in young people (aged 16-24 years) are also lower in Birmingham than the national average. In the period 2019/20-2023/24, the admissions rate for eating disorders in young people was 45 per 100,000 population in Birmingham compared to 86 per 100,000 in England.

Admissions for Injuries

In 2023-24, there were 1,255 hospital admissions due to unintentional and deliberate injuries in young people (aged 15-24 years). This was equivalent to a rate of 66 per 10,000 population, significantly lower than the England rate of 89 per 10,000.

Road Traffic Accidents

Emergency Admissions for Traffic Accidents

The rate of emergency hospital admissions for car occupants (aged 0-24 years) is higher in Birmingham (18 per 100,000 population) than in England (14 per 100,000). For motorcyclists in this age group, the rate of hospital admissions is lower in Birmingham (8 per 100,000) than in England (10 per 100,000). Using 2024 population estimates, these rates would represent around 79 emergency admissions for car occupants and 35 for motorcyclists.

Road Injuries & Deaths

For serious road traffic accidents involving young people (aged 15-24 years), rates in Birmingham are lower than England for car occupants and motorcyclists. In the period 2016-20, for car occupants the rate in Birmingham was 24 per 100,000 population, significantly lower than the national rate (28 per 100,000) and for motorcyclists the rate was 12 per 100,000, also significantly lower than the rate in England (22 per 100,000). Using 2024 population estimates, these rates would represent around 43 serious car accidents and 21 serious motorcycle accidents.

Health Behaviour

Unhealthy Behaviours

Local data is not available on behaviours for the Birmingham population. Therefore, estimates have been made based on 2022 national data. It is important to note that in some cases Birmingham will do better or worse than the England average.

The prevalence of young people (aged 16-24 years) in who consume more than 14 units of alcohol per week (increasing or higher risk consumption) is estimated to be around 19% in England. Applied to the Birmingham population of 16-24 year olds, this is equivalent to 32,679 young people with increasing or higher risk alcohol consumption.

The prevalence of young people who are current smokers is estimated to be around 10% in England. Applied to the Birmingham population of 16-24 year olds, this is equivalent to 17,199 young people who are current smokers.

The prevalence of young people who currently use e-cigarettes or vapes is estimated to be around 15% in England. Applied to the Birmingham population of 16-24 year olds, this is equivalent to 25,154 young people who are current users of e-cigarettes or vapes.

Physical Activity

Just over two thirds (68%) of 16-24 year olds in Birmingham are physically active for the recommended 150 minutes or more per week, lower than the England average of 73% and equivalent to around 116,100 active young people in Birmingham. Almost one quarter (24%) of 16-24 year olds in Birmingham complete less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week, higher than the England average of 18% and equivalent to around 42,000 inactive young people in Birmingham.

Vulnerabilities

Missing Young People

In 2024/25, a total of 1,294 young people (aged 15-17 years) went missing in Birmingham. The breakdown by ethnicity shows around 35% were white, 20% were 'other' ethnicity, 15% were of Black ethnicity, and 14% were of Asian ethnicity. The proportion of Asian young people reported missing in Birmingham is under-represented compared to the whole population, suggesting that children of Asian ethnicity are less likely to go missing than children of other ethnicities.

Exploitation & Modern Slavery

In 2023/24, a total of 156 young people (aged 16-24 years) were victims of exploitation and modern slavery in Birmingham. Of these, 73% were male and 27% were female. The breakdown of victims by exploitation type shows criminal exploitation accounts for more

than half (51%), with labour accounting for almost one fifth (19%), and sexual exploitation accounting for 13%.

Homelessness

The rate of households owed a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act where the main applicant is aged 16-24 years is similar in Birmingham (2.3 per 1,000 households) to the rate in England (2.4 per 1,000). In 2020-22, this represented 978 households in Birmingham.