

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 just over half the population aged under 35 years. Between 2022 and 2023, the population of Birmingham increased by around 1%, with the strongest growth seen in the 20-24 age group, which increased by almost 4%. There are an estimated 171,994 young people (aged 16 to 24 years) living in Birmingham, representing around 15% of the population. In England, this age group accounts for around 11% of the population.

Demographics

Ethnicity

Around 4 in 10 (43%) of 16-24 year olds in Birmingham are of white ethnicity and just over one third (35%) are of Asian ethnicity. Around 13% of this age group are of Black ethnicity, 6% are mixed ethnicity and around 1 in 20 (5%) are of other ethnicity.

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 1 in 20 (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%) 15-24 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 20,790 young people in Birmingham with a self-reported disability. Of those who reported a disability, around 7% said their day-to-day activities were limited a little, lower than in England (8%). Around 4% said their activities were limited a lot, 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 44.8/90, lower than the England average of 46.2. For children in care, the average score is 21.9/90, higher than the national average (19.4). Birmingham is in the second highest quintile in the country for this indicator. 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%) of 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%) 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 1 in 10 (11%) 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 one fifth (20%) of young people in Birmingham who do work are employed in elementary (unskilled or semi-skilled) occupations. A

further 18% are employed in sales and customer service, 15% in professional roles, and 13% in caring, leisure, and service occupations.

Around 6% of 16-17 year olds in Birmingham are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), significantly higher than the England average of 5%. The proportion of 16-17 year olds who are NEET has been decreased significantly in Birmingham over the past few years. At a national level there has been no significant change.

Economic Activity

Data from the 2021 Census shows almost half (48%) of 16-24 year olds in Birmingham were full-time students who were economically inactive (i.e. studying and not seeking employment), a larger proportion than in England (38%). Around one quarter (23%) of this age group were employed, less than the national average (36%), and around 6% were seeking employment, more than the national average (5%). Almost one in ten (9%) of 16-24 year olds in Birmingham were NEET, similar to the England average of 9%. The large student population in Birmingham is reflected in these figures.

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.

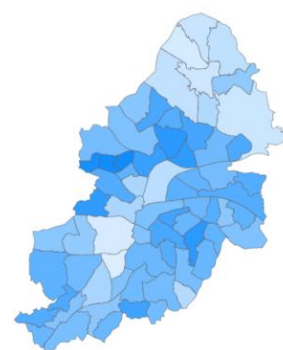


Figure 1: claimant count by ward, January 2025

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 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 a rate of 1,298 per 100,000 population.

Around 13% of females (aged 15-24 years) are screened for chlamydia in Birmingham, significantly lower than the England average of 20%. 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 males aged 15-24 years the detection rate is 477 per 100,000, also significantly lower than England (837 per 100,000).

Sexual Health & Reproductive Services

Around 2% of females aged 16-17 years attend sexual health and reproductive services in Birmingham, lower than the England average of 6%. In older age groups (18-19 and 20-24 years) around 4% of females attended these services, 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, significantly lower than the England rate of 103 per 1,000 population. Trends analysis shows no significant change in rates in Birmingham and 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 around 2 conceptions per 1,000 girls (aged 13-15 years) and in under 18s, there are around 13 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.

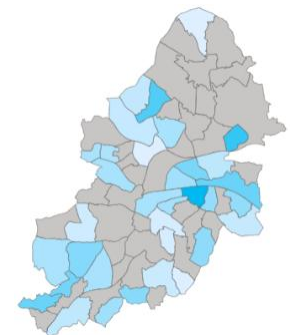


Figure 2: deliveries to teenage mothers by ward, 2016/17-2020/21

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. The Birmingham rate 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

In 2022-23, there were 305 hospital admissions due to self-harm in young people (aged 15-19 years) in Birmingham, equivalent to a rate of 349 admissions per 100,000 population. This was significantly lower than the England rate of 468 per 100,000.

In the same period, there were 185 hospital admissions due to self-harm in young people (aged 20-24 years) in Birmingham, equivalent to a rate of 189 per 100,000 population. Again, this was significantly lower than the England rate of 244 per 100,000.

Admissions for Eating Disorders

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

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), equivalent to a rate of 66 per 10,000 population. This was significantly lower than the England rate of 89 per 10,000.

Road Traffic Accidents

Emergency Admissions for Traffic Accidents

In the period 2016/17-2020/21, the rate of emergency hospital admissions in Birmingham for car occupants aged 0-24 years was around 18 per 100,000 population, higher than the England rate of 14 per 100,000. For motorcyclists (aged 0-24 years), the rate of emergency hospital admissions in Birmingham was 8 per 100,000 population, lower than the England rate of 10 per 100,000.

Road Injuries & Deaths

In the period 2016-20, the rate of car occupants (aged 15-24 years) who were involved in a serious road traffic accident in Birmingham was 24 per 100,000 population, significantly lower than the England rate of 28 per 100,000. For motorcyclists (aged 15-24 years), the rate in Birmingham was 12 per 100,000 population, significantly lower than the England rate of 22 per 100,000.

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 (aged 16-24 years) 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 (aged 16-24 years) 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 2023/24, a total of 1,402 young people (aged 15-17 years) went missing in Birmingham. The breakdown by ethnicity shows around 32% were white, 24% were 'other' ethnicity, 16% were of Black ethnicity, and 13% 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 Homeless Reduction Act where the main applicant is aged 16-24 years is 2.3 per 1,000 households in Birmingham, similar to the England rate of 2.4 per 1,000.