

A summary picture of the lives of older people living in Birmingham

This document provides a summary of the key facts and figures on older adults (those aged 65 years and over) living in Birmingham. For detailed information and a wider range of data (including sources), please see the [JSNA older adults chapter dashboard](#).

For many, the older ages are a period of great happiness and freedom to live as they please, enjoy being a grandparent and take on a respected role in families and society. At the other extreme, older age can bring a time of great difficulty with dignity impaired, independence curtailed, encroaching frailty, discomfort, and loneliness. The difference between these two realities is largely determined by health, both physical and mental. Those who enter older age in good health and maintain it to the end, have a very different experience to those who rapidly accumulate multiple debilitating or degenerative conditions and live with them for many years. Sometimes this can mean an increased reliance on health and social care services. Whilst aging is a normal part of life, aging in poor health is not. There is much that can be done to prevent or delay or ill health and enable older people to maintain healthy and independent lives for longer.

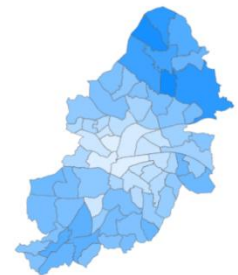
Population

Although Birmingham is predominantly a young city, like many cities in the UK it has a growing number of older people. Around 153,000 of Birmingham citizens are aged 65 and over, representing 13.1% of the population. This is forecast to grow to around 180,000 by 2033, including 4,000 people aged 85 years and over. With higher average life expectancy for females, more than half of the 65+ group are female (54.3%) and 45.7% are male. The northern and southern areas of Birmingham have the largest numbers of older residents, including those aged over 80 years of age.

More older people live in the north of the city. They make up a greater proportion of the population in the wards to the north (e.g. Sutton Wylde Green, Sutton Four Oaks) and south (e.g. Northfield, Bournville and Cotteridge, Kings Norton North) of the city (Figure 1).

Life expectancy

People in Birmingham live shorter lives than the England average, with average life expectancy at birth being almost 2 years shorter for females and 2.5 years shorter for males. At 65 years, life expectancy for Birmingham residents is an additional 20.2 years for women (around 1 year shorter than England) and 17.4 years for men (1.3 years shorter than England). Women and men in Birmingham also experience disability sooner and can expect only 9.5 and 8.5 years respectively free from disability from the age of 65 years. Life expectancy at 65 years varies hugely across the city, with greatest length seen for residents of Sutton Four Oaks (26.8 female; 22.7y male) and shortest for females in Castle Vale (15.7y) and males in Balsall Heath West (12.9y)

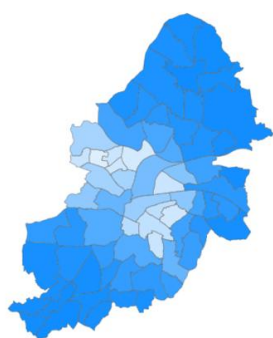


Source:
2021 Census (TS007)

Figure 1. Percentage of population who are 65 years and over

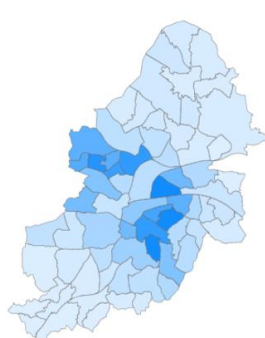
Demographics

Whilst Birmingham's population overall is over 50% minority ethnic groups, this is less than a quarter (24%) among Birmingham's older residents (65+). The ethnicity breakdown of older adults differs across the city (Figures 2-4), for example, 70% of the older adult population in Small Heath, Sparkhill and Alum Rock are of Asian and Asian British ethnicity, whilst in Newtown nearly 50% are of Black or Black British ethnicity. There are also generational differences in the country of birth, reflecting changing patterns of migration; with higher proportions of older adults born in Ireland and in The Americas and the Caribbean, than in younger population. A greater proportion of older adults identify as Christian and fewer identify as Muslim or no religion compared with the younger population. English is the first language of around 87% of older adults in Birmingham, with Asian languages accounting for around 11%.



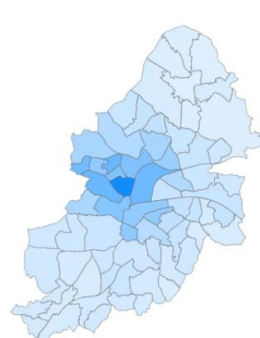
Source:
2021 Census (RM032)

Figure 2: Percentage of 65+ population of White/White-British ethnicity



Source:
2021 Census (RM032)

Figure 3: Percentage of 65+ population of Asian/Asian-British ethnicity



Source:
2021 Census (RM032)

Figure 4: Percentage of 65+ population of Black/Black-British ethnicity

Economic Inequalities

Across the city, 26% of over 60-year-olds (49,400 people) are living in poverty, based on the Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI, 2019). This is significantly higher than England average of 14%. There is great variation across the city, with the highest levels of poverty in older people seen in Lozells, Sparkbrook and Balsall Heath East and Alum Rock (each with over 60% of older people living in poverty). Homelessness (households owed a duty under the homelessness reduction act) in those over 55 years in Birmingham is lower than England. This is due to the available housing stock for those over 55 years which makes it possible for people to be housed quickly from the housing register, meaning the number presenting for homelessness support is lower.

Living Arrangements & Social Isolation

Around a third of people of state pension age (66 and over) live alone in Birmingham. Living alone in older age can have significant social, psychological, and health impacts. Older adults living alone are more likely to experience loneliness, which can negatively impact mental health. They often have fewer opportunities for social interaction, which can lead to a sense of isolation

Just over half of 64 to 84-year-olds are living in a couple (Census 21). For those 85 and over, this decreases to just over a quarter, and nearly 60% of them are widowed or are surviving partners.

Just under half of adult social care service users (aged 65+), and under a third of registered carers in Birmingham report they have as much social contact as they would like (responding the annual Adult Social Care Survey). Whilst both are higher than the England average, more than half of respondents are potentially socially isolated which is a real challenge for both social care and other support organisations.

Care and Support

Unpaid Care

Around 8,000 older people in Birmingham are providing unpaid care, with the 7,500 of them providing more 50 hours or more care per week. This represents around 5% of all older adults, compared to around 1% in younger age groups. This is significant as older carers are more likely to find the physical demands of caring more difficult and may also need support for their own health and wellbeing.

Social Care

More older residents using social care receive self-directed support or direct payments in Birmingham than England (98.5% and 93.2% respectively 2021/22).

Following discharge from hospital, 1,730 older adults (7.4% of discharges) were offered reablement services. This is significantly higher than England average and is a sizeable increase on a couple of years ago, when the service was redesigned to improve capacity, hours covered and support timely discharge. 2021/22 has also seen the percentage of older adults who were discharged from hospital into reablement services who were still at home 91 days later improve to almost meet the England average (80%). This is the first time in 7 years that this has not been significantly worse than average suggesting real improvements in reablement outcomes

Birmingham has 7,547 care home beds of which 4,047 are nursing home beds (10.6 and 5.7 per 100 people over 75 years respectively). In 2020/21, 624 people were permanently admitted to a care or nursing home (rate of 418 per 100,000 people 65+, which is lower rate than England).

Just over half of older adult social care service users report they are satisfied with care and support services (Adult Social Care Survey 2021/22) and two-thirds feel they have control over their daily lives

Illness and Disability

Self-Perceived Poor Health

Overall, 17% of older Birmingham residents reported their health to be 'bad' or 'very bad' in Census 21. But this varied across the city, with 30% older adults in Bordesley Green and Lozells reporting such poor health, compared to only 8% in Sutton Four Oaks. The differences seen reinforce the association between poor health and deprivation.

Illness and Disability

Around 40% of older adults have a long-term health problem or disability with 18% reporting that it affects their daily activities 'a little', and 22% 'a lot'.

Some key health problems affecting older adults in Birmingham are:

- **Dementia:** The recorded prevalence of dementia is 4% (6,720 people) in Birmingham, the same as England (latest data 2020). However, it is estimated that only 64% of the population expected to have dementia have a diagnosis (i.e. there are approximately 4,000 people living with dementia without a diagnosis in the city), which is not significantly different to the England average of 66%.
- **Common Mental Disorders:** 13% of the older adult population have depression or anxiety (Modelled estimate) which is almost 19,000 people.
- **Osteoporosis:** Around 3,100 people age 50+ live with osteoporosis.
- **Visual Impairment:** In Birmingham 5,790 older adults are registered as blind or partially sighted. As a rate, this is a significantly higher than England. The reasons for the higher rate in Birmingham are not clear but could potentially be due to the associations with deprivation or different level of risks by ethnicity.

Hospital Admissions

- **Falls:** In 2023/24, there were 3,345 emergency admissions among people aged 65 and over for falls, the majority being in those 85 and over. As a rate this is significantly higher than England but is declining.
- **Dementia:** There were almost 8,000 emergency admissions for dementia and the rate has always been significantly higher than England average. (2019/20 is the most recent national benchmarking data for this indicator)
- **Alcohol:** Birmingham has similar admission rates to England for alcohol related conditions which are primarily due to alcohol consumption, with 1,250 admissions of adults aged 65+ in 2022/23
- **Hip Fractures:** There were 905 emergency hospital admissions for hip fractures among older adults in 2023/24 with around two thirds among those 80 and over.

As a rate, emergency admissions for hip fractures in older adults are over 50% higher in some areas of the city (Erdington, Perry Common and Druids Health & Monyhull).

Preventative Healthcare

Screening and immunisation:

Uptake of screening and immunisation programmes for older adults is lower in Birmingham than England for all programmes, i.e. abdominal aortic aneurysm (men over 64), breast cancer (women 53-70), bowel cancer (60-64), and cervical cancer (women 50-64), as are flu (65+) and shingles vaccinations (65+).

NHS Health Checks:

NHS health checks are offered to everyone between the ages of 40 and 74, without pre-existing long term conditions. In the last three-year period, around 43.6% of eligible people in this age group received one (124,506 health checks) which is significantly higher than the England average (28.1%).

Mortality

For the period 2016/17 to 2020/21, the standardised mortality rate from causes considered preventable for people aged under 75 years in Birmingham was 127 i.e. 27% greater than would be expected if the rate was the same as the national average. This varied by ward, with some areas more than a 100% higher than expected (Newtown 219, Shard End 207 and Castle Vale 203). Between August 2021 and July 2022, there were 14.4% more deaths in adults aged 85-years and over during the winter months in Birmingham, compared to non-winter months.

Overall, a higher proportion of older adult deaths for Birmingham residents occur in hospital (~50% in 2022), compared to England, although the proportion of deaths that occur at home has been increasing over time. NHS and BCC are working together to provide quality end of life care including enabling people to die with dignity in a place of their choice.