



The Population of Bristol

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Insight, Performance and Intelligence
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HEADLINES

- The population of Bristol is estimated to be 479,000 people. Bristol is the largest city in the South West and one of the eleven 'Core Cities' in the UK.
- Bristol's population grew by an estimated 45,800 people over the decade 2012-22, a 10.6% increase (England and Wales grew by 6.5%).
- In the 12 months to mid-2022, the population of Bristol grew by 7,740 (1.6%) up from 471,300 (mid-2021) – this is the largest annual increase in population by far since before the EU Referendum in 2016.
- Net international migration was the largest component of population growth in Bristol in the 12 months to mid-2022. For the first time since the expansion of the EU in 2004/5, net international migration to Bristol was almost 5 times higher than natural change (births minus deaths) and was the highest net international migration in almost two decades.
- As seen nationally, there has been a marked change in immigration since 2021. Until 2019 EU nationals were the larger component of total immigration, whereas since 2021 the majority of immigration is now non-EU nationals. This coincides with free movement ending for EU nationals, the introduction of the graduate visa route, the easing of travel restrictions following the COVID-19 pandemic and external developments such as the war in Ukraine.
- Increases in non-EU migration include both international students and workers. Bristol has seen a very significant rise in the number of in-migrants from India in the last 2 years, plus other countries including China, Ukraine, Nigeria, Pakistan and Hong Kong.
- The population of Bristol has become increasingly diverse and some local communities have changed significantly. There are now more than 287 different ethnic groups in the city, more than 185 countries of birth represented, at least 45 religions and more than 90 languages spoken by people living in Bristol.
- The number of births each year are falling gradually. In 2022 the number of births fell to 5,048, a fall of 26% since the recent peak of 6,781 births in 2012 and the lowest number since 2003. This fall in births remains in line with the recent trend of decreasing live births observed before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- In 2021/22 there were 68,700 students registered at the two Bristol universities. In the 5 years up to 2021/22 university student numbers increased by a third (33%, +17,200). Overseas mainly non-EU students make up 29% of all students at the University of Bristol and 21% of all students at UWE.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The population of Bristol is estimated to be 479,000 people¹. Bristol is the largest city in the South West and one of the eleven 'Core Cities' in the UK. Following a period of population decline in the post war years, the population stabilised in the 1990s and increased substantially during the 2000s.

1.2 Since 2016, the population of Bristol has increased annually but at a slower rate than the previous decade. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a large increase in the population, at a level similar to the years before the EU Referendum. This increase was mainly due to high levels of international net migration, including both international students and people coming to work.

1.3 The population of Bristol has become increasingly diverse. The proportion of the population who are not 'White British' has increased over the last two decades from 12% in 2001 to 28% in 2021. In Bristol, there are now at least 45 religions, at least 185 countries of birth represented and at least 90 main languages spoken.

1.4 Estimating and projecting the population of Bristol and areas within Bristol is important in order to meet the needs of our changing society. Population statistics underpin public service finances, strategic planning and the provision of local facilities and services such as schools, hospitals and open space. The particular requirements and characteristics of different population groups also need to be identified, so that inequalities can be addressed.

1.5 This report aims to build a picture of the population of Bristol now and in the future. The report brings together statistics on the current estimated population of Bristol, recent trends in population and future projections. Bristol data in the report refers to the Bristol local authority area unless otherwise stated.

¹ ONS 2022 Mid-Year Population Estimate Bristol local authority

2. POPULATION DEFINITIONS

USUALLY RESIDENT POPULATION

2.1 The usually resident population includes all those people who usually live in an area, regardless of nationality. Arriving international migrants are included in the usually resident population if they remain in the UK for at least a year and emigrants are excluded if they remain outside the UK for at least a year. Students and school boarders are included at their term time address.

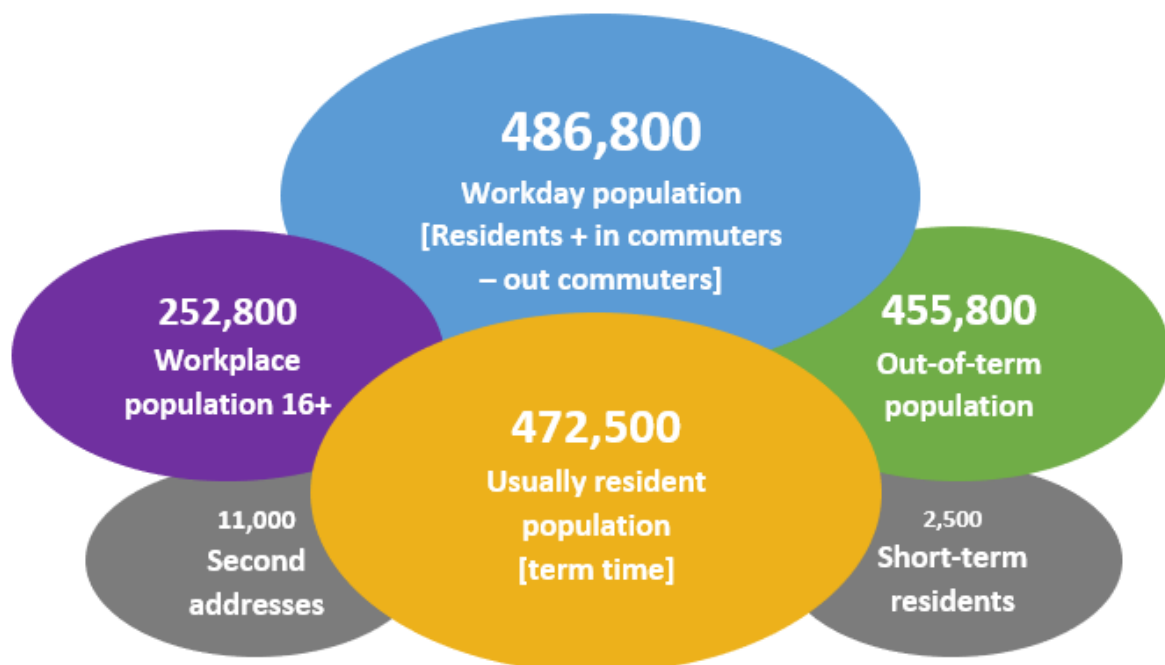
2.2 The majority of population and census statistics are based on the usually resident population of an area, including ONS mid-year estimates of population and population projections.

ALTERNATIVE POPULATION DEFINITIONS

2.3 Alternative population bases are the different geographical locations where individuals could have been counted for Census 2021, other than their usual residence. Figure 1 shows the various population definitions and the size of the population in Bristol at the time of the Census 2021.

Figure 1. Census 2021 Alternative Population Definitions (not to scale)

Source: ONS Census 2021. Crown Copyright



2.4 Alternative populations include:

Out-of-term population

The out-of-term population is the usually resident population, redistributed to their out-of-term address if they have one. As a result, the difference relates to the location of some students and schoolchildren.

Workday population

The workday population is an estimate of the population during the working day. It includes everybody who works in an area, wherever they usually live, and all respondents who live in the area but do not work.

Workplace population

The workplace population is an estimate of the usually resident population aged 16 years and over, working in an area. It includes people who work mainly at or from home, or do not have a fixed place of work, in their area of usual residence.

Short-term residents

The short-term resident population are those who were not born in the UK and who intend to stay in the UK for less than 12 months. Non-UK short-term residents are not included in ONS estimates of the resident population. Estimates of short-term migration give a more complete picture of migration into and out of an area.

Second address

The second address population includes people with a second address in Bristol.

2.5 ONS publish some Census data by these alternative population bases.

3. CURRENT POPULATION

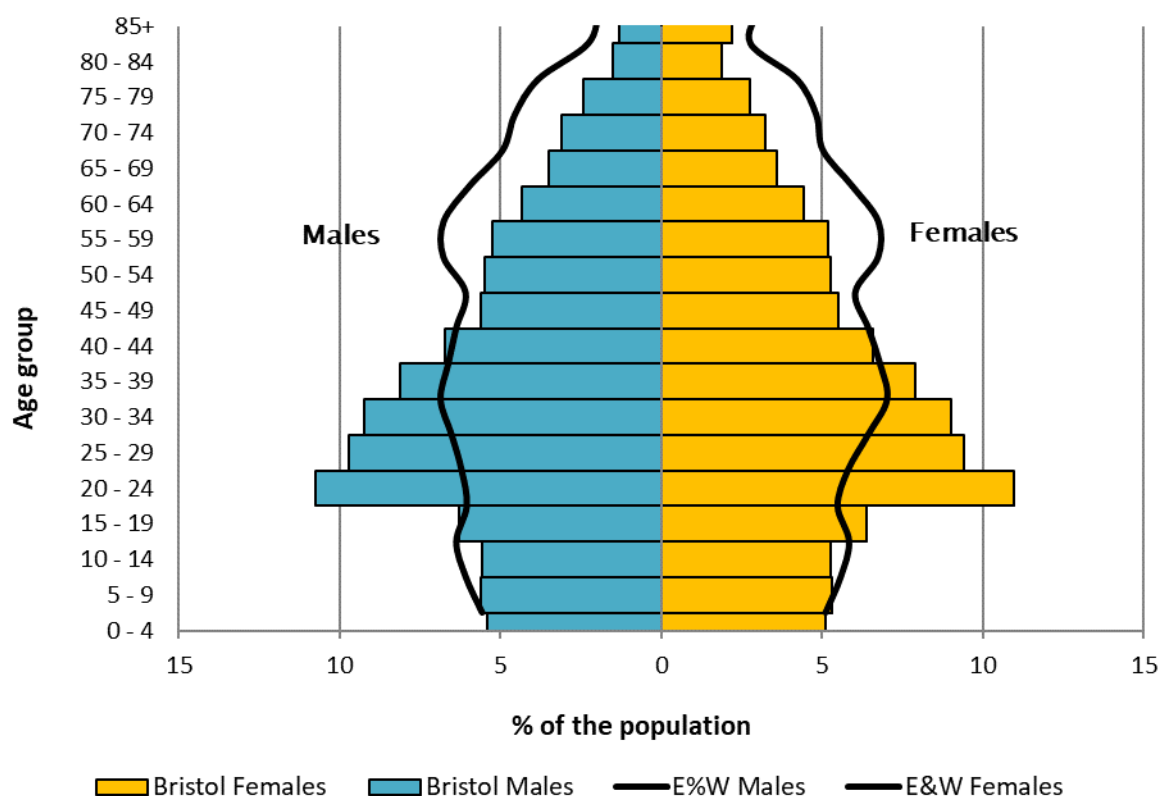
MID-2022 POPULATION ESTIMATES

3.1 The mid-2022 population of Bristol local authority is estimated to be 479,000. Mid-2022 Population Estimates for local authorities were published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on 23 November 2023. Mid-year Population Estimates are produced for all local authorities and updated annually using a combination of registration, survey and administrative data to estimate the different components of population change.

3.2 Bristol is one of the 11 UK 'Core Cities' and the 8th largest city in England and Wales outside of London. Bristol local authority accounts for 73% of the total population of the built-up area of the city, which is often referred to as 'Greater Bristol', or the 'Bristol Urban Area'. The population of the Bristol Urban Area is estimated to be around 656,000 (Census 2021).

Figure 2. Mid-2022 Population pyramid

Source: ONS 2022 Mid-Year Population Estimates. Crown Copyright



3.3 Bristol local authority covers an area of 110 square kilometres – in 2012 there were 3,951 people per sq. km increasing to 4,368 people per sq.km in 2022. Local authorities with similar population density to Bristol include Liverpool, Nottingham, Birmingham, Reading and Southend-on-Sea.

POPULATION BY AGE

3.4 Bristol has a relatively young age profile with more children aged 0-15 than people aged 65 and over. The median age of people living in Bristol in 2022 was 33.9 years old, this compares to the England and Wales median of 40.6 years. The profile of Bristol's population by five year age band and sex is illustrated in Figure 2 and estimates for broad age bands and sex are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. 2022 Population estimates by age and sex

Source: ONS 2022 Mid-Year Population Estimates. Crown Copyright

	Males	%	Females	%	Persons	%
0-15	42,000	17.7	40,200	16.7	82,200	17.2
16-24	38,100	16.0	39,300	16.3	77,400	16.2
25-49	93,800	39.4	92,500	38.4	186,300	38.9
50-64	35,900	15.1	35,900	14.9	71,800	15.0
65 and over	28,300	11.9	33,000	13.7	61,300	12.8
All ages	238,200	100.0	240,900	100.0	479,000	100.0

Children

3.5 Overall, there are more children living in Bristol than people aged 65 and over. Bristol's 82,200 children make up 17.2% of the total population.

Working age

3.6 Bristol has a higher proportion of working age (16-64 years) people than nationally – 70% of the total population in Bristol is of working age compared to 63% in England and Wales. The highest proportions are amongst the 19-39 year olds which make up 44% of Bristol's total population compared to just 27% nationally. Many of the people in this age group are students living in Bristol during term time.

Older people

3.7 Bristol's 61,300 older people aged 65 years and over make up 12.8% of the total population. The proportion of older people is much lower than in England and Wales as a whole where 18.8% of the population are aged 65 and over. There are 8,456 people living in Bristol aged 85 years and older.

POPULATION BY WARD

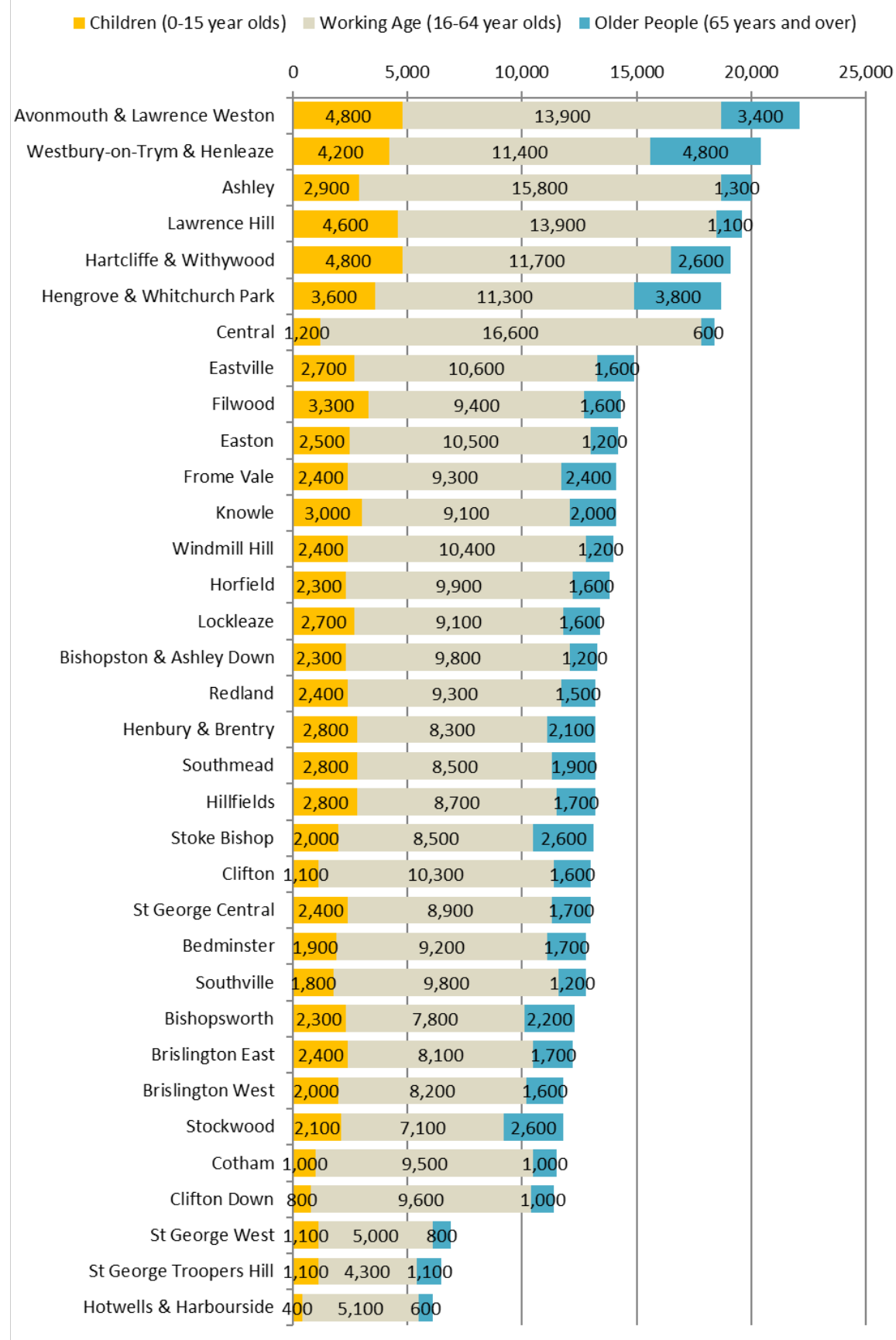
Mid-2022 population estimates and revised mid-2012 to mid-2021 estimates for wards and small geographies will be published by Office for National Statistics in Spring 2024.

3.8 Bristol City Council has 34 wards, represented by 70 councillors. Five wards have 3 councillors, 26 wards have 2 councillors and 3 wards have 1 councillor.

Figure 3. Census 2021 Ward population estimates by broad age band

Source: ONS Census 2021 Crown Copyright 2023

For estimates of the total population see Table 5



3.9 The number of electors living in each ward per councillor is fairly similar across the city with 6,750 electors per councillor on average in 2021. However, the number of residents living in each ward differs substantially. As a result, statistics presented by ward should be treated with care and rates should be used for comparison purposes rather than counts or numbers.

3.10 The latest population estimates by ward are from the Census in 2021. The largest ward in Bristol is Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston with an estimated population of 22,200 people and the smallest is Hotwells & Harbourside with 6,000 people.

3.11 The age profile within each ward also varies significantly. Figure 3 shows the population within each ward broken down by broad age group. Hartcliffe and Withywood ward has the largest proportion of children – a quarter (25%) of the total population in the ward are aged under 16.

3.12 The wards with the lowest proportions of children are all in areas in the inner west and central areas of Bristol including Central (6.3%), Hotwells and Harbourside (6.6%), Clifton Down (7.1%), Cotham (8.3%) and Clifton (8.7%). These wards have the highest proportions of people aged 16-24, including a large number of students, as well as low proportions of people aged 65 and over. Wards where more than a quarter of the total population are aged 16-24 years include Central (49%), Clifton Down (34%), Cotham (32%), Hotwells and Harbourside (28%), Clifton (28%) and Stoke Bishop (25%).

3.13 The wards with the highest proportions of working age people are all in the inner west and central areas of Bristol. In four wards more than 80% of the usually resident population are of working age – Central (90%), Clifton Down (84%), Hotwells & Harbourside (84%) and Cotham (83%).

3.14 Wards with an older population profile, where more than a fifth of the total population are aged 65 years and over include Westbury-on-Trym & Henleaze (23%), Stockwood (22%) and Hengrove & Whitchurch Park (20%).

4. RECENT POPULATION TRENDS

Following the Census in 2021, ONS have revised the population trend between 2011 and 2021 to bring it in line with the Census 2021 results. The revised population estimates for Bristol are higher than those previously published from 2011 until the Covid-19 pandemic. The main change to the Bristol population trend was a higher level of international net migration than previously estimated. These revised estimates replace the previously published mid-year estimates and form the new official estimates for the population 2012 to 2021.

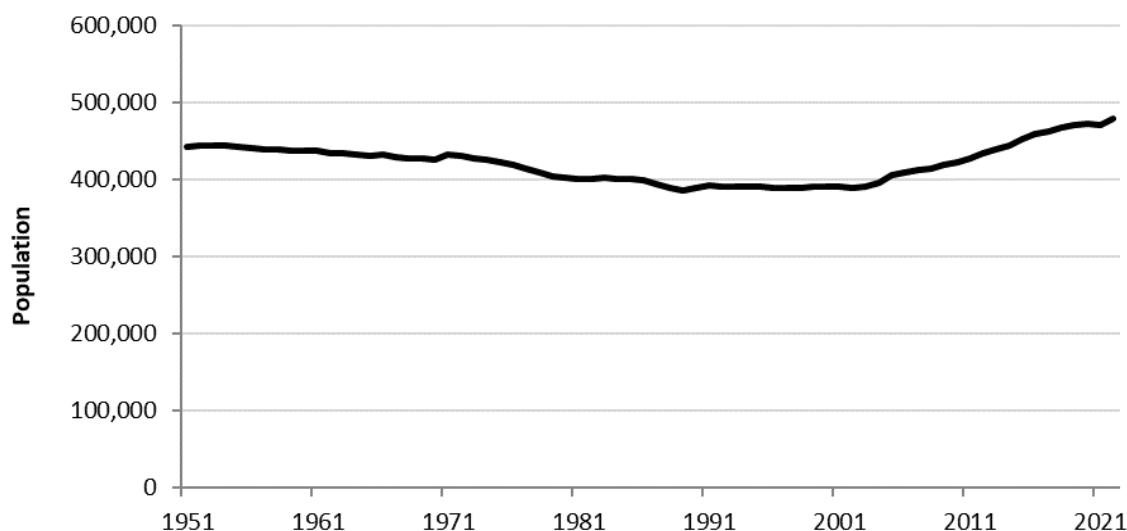
ONS have been working in partnership across the Government Statistical Service to develop new methods using administrative data sources to improve international migration statistics and to produce more regular and timely population statistics at both national and local levels. These 'official statistics in development' based on administrative data provide a more accurate picture of international migration over this period than the previously published estimates based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS), which underestimated migration of some groups.

BRISTOL TRENDS

4.1 Following a period of population decline in the post war years, the population of Bristol stabilised in the 1990s. This was followed by a period of unprecedented population growth until the EU Referendum in 2016 (Figure 4). Since 2016, the population of Bristol increased annually but at a slower rate than the previous decade. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, 2021/22 saw a large increase in the population, at a level similar to the years before the EU Referendum.

Figure 4. Bristol population trend 1951 to 2022

Source: Office for National Statistics. Crown Copyright.

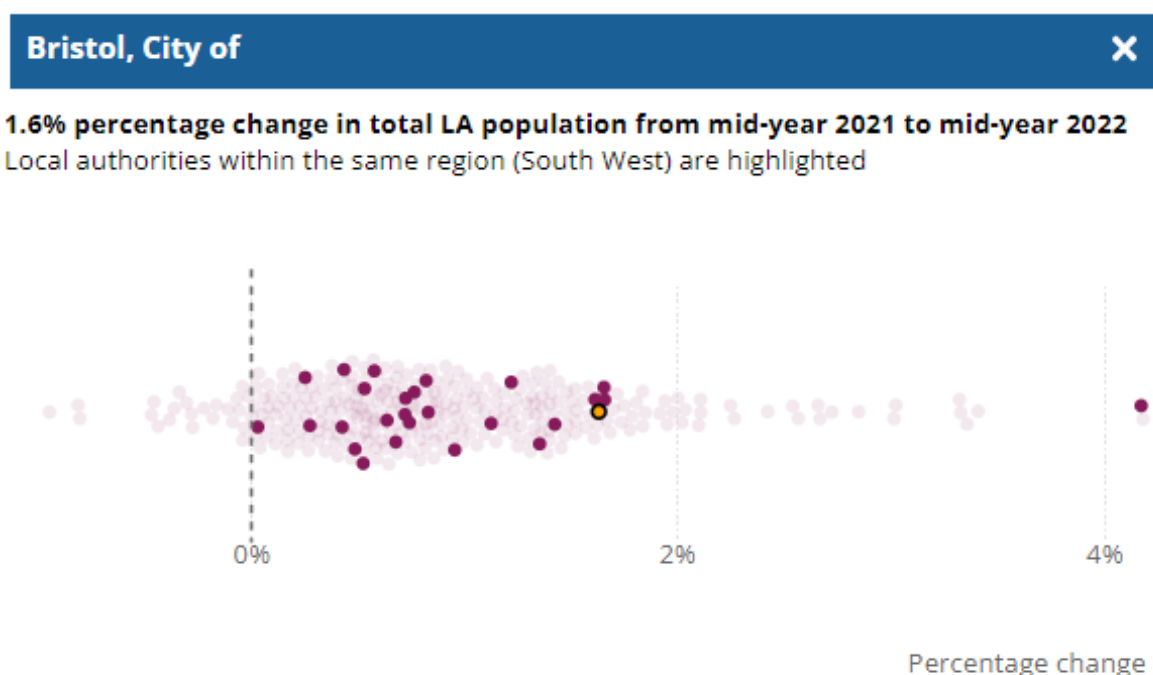


4.2 In the 12 months to mid-2022, the population of Bristol grew by 7,740 (1.6%) up from 471,300 (mid-2021) – this is the largest annual increase in population by far since 2015/16. The main factor behind this growth was a large increase in international migration including students and people coming from abroad to work.

4.3 Figure 5 shows the growth in Bristol’s population in the 12 months to mid-2022 compared to all other local authorities in England and Wales. Bristol is highlighted in yellow and the other local authorities in the South West region in purple. The South West outlier with one of the fastest growing populations in the whole of England and Wales is Exeter.

Figure 5. Population change in local authorities of England & Wales, mid-2021 to mid-2022

Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates. Crown Copyright.



4.4 Over the last decade (2012-2022) Bristol was the second fastest growing of all the Core Cities in England and Wales after Manchester (Table 2). Bristol’s population grew by an estimated 45,800 people over the decade – a 10.6% increase. England and Wales grew by 6.5%.

4.5 Annual population change in Bristol since 1951 is illustrated in figure 6. Most years between 1951 and 1990 saw Bristol’s population decrease whilst throughout the 1990s annual population change was more volatile. Since 2002/3 however, Bristol has experienced annual increases in population, with the exception of 2020/21 when population movement was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

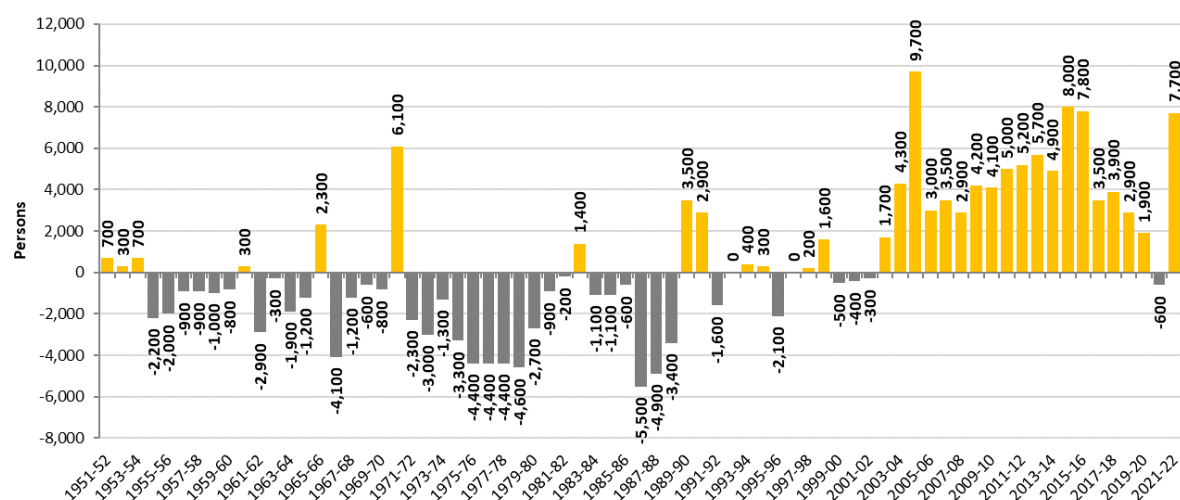
Table 2. Population estimates 2012-2022 West of England and Core Cities

Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates. Crown Copyright.

Area	mid-2012	mid-2022	change mid-2012-2022	% change
Bath & NE Somerset	176,600	195,600	19,000	10.8
Bristol	433,300	479,000	45,800	10.6
North Somerset	204,500	219,100	14,700	7.2
South Gloucestershire	265,700	294,800	29,000	10.9
West of England	1,080,100	1,188,600	108,500	10.0
West of England Combined Authority	875,600	969,400	93,800	10.7
Core Cities				
Birmingham	1,084,700	1,157,600	72,900	6.7
Cardiff	348,100	372,100	24,000	6.9
Leeds	758,000	822,500	64,500	8.5
Liverpool	465,400	496,800	31,400	6.7
Manchester	506,900	569,000	62,100	12.3
Newcastle upon Tyne	280,900	307,600	26,700	9.5
Nottingham	307,400	328,500	21,100	6.9
Sheffield	553,800	566,200	12,400	2.2
England and Wales	56,577,700	60,238,000	3,660,300	6.5

Figure 6. Bristol annual population change 1951 to 2022

Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates. Crown Copyright.



4.6 Notably large increases in the population were in 2004/5 when the A8 Accession countries joined the European Union and in 2014/15 and 2015/16 before the EU Referendum. This was followed by increasingly smaller annual population growth, until most recently in the 12 months to mid-2022 when the population increased by 7,700 people mainly due to a large increase in net international migration.

POPULATION TRENDS BY AGE

4.7 Table 3 shows the estimated population change in Bristol's age structure since mid-2012 by broad age band and Figure 7 shows the change by five year age band.

Table 3. Bristol population change by broad age band 2012 to 2022

Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates. Crown Copyright.

Broad age band	Mid-2012	Mid-2022	% share of total population	Change 2012-22	% change 2012-22
0-15 years	80,523	82,249	17.2	1,726	2.1
16-24 years	65,396	77,425	16.2	12,029	18.4
25-49 years	165,945	186,310	38.9	20,365	12.3
50-64 years	64,232	71,787	15.0	7,555	11.8
65 and over	57,168	61,253	12.8	4,085	7.1
All ages	433,264	479,024	100.0	45,760	10.6

Children

4.8 Over the decade, the overall number of children living in Bristol increased by just 1,726 (2.1%), lower than the England and Wales increase of 4.3%. However, there are different trends for different ages of children. Between 2012-2022, the number of children aged under 5 years old in Bristol fell by 5,500 (-18%), whilst the number of children aged 5-15 years increased by 7,200 (+14%). The trends reflect the fall in the number of births in Bristol in recent years (see section on Components of Population Change for more information).

Working age

4.9 The working age population in Bristol has increased by almost 40,000 people (+14%) since 2012 compared to an increase of 4.2% in England and Wales as a whole. The greatest increase was in the 19-39 year olds which increased by 18%, compared to just 4% nationally. This age group alone accounted for the majority (63%) of the total increase in population in Bristol over the decade.

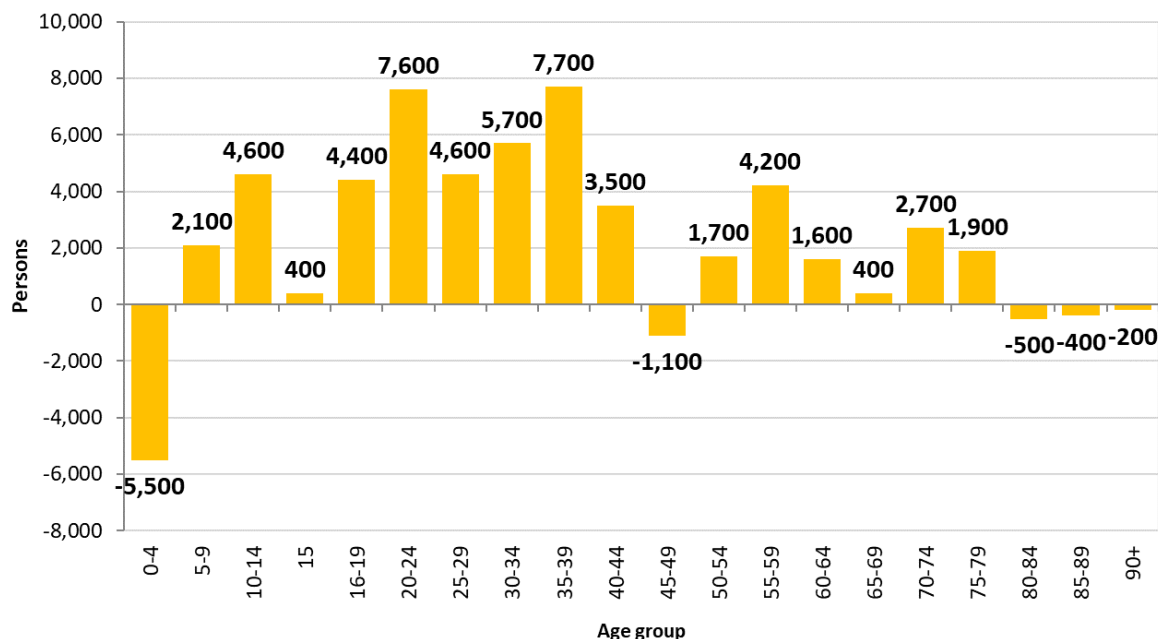
Older people

4.10 Although the number of older people has increased year-on-year, Bristol does not have an aging population according to the official definition² as the median age of the population and the proportion of older people in Bristol has been falling.

² Ageing of the population refers to both the increase in the average (median) age of the population and the increase in the number and proportion of older people in the population.

Figure 7. Bristol population change by five year age band 2012 to 2022

Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates. Crown Copyright.

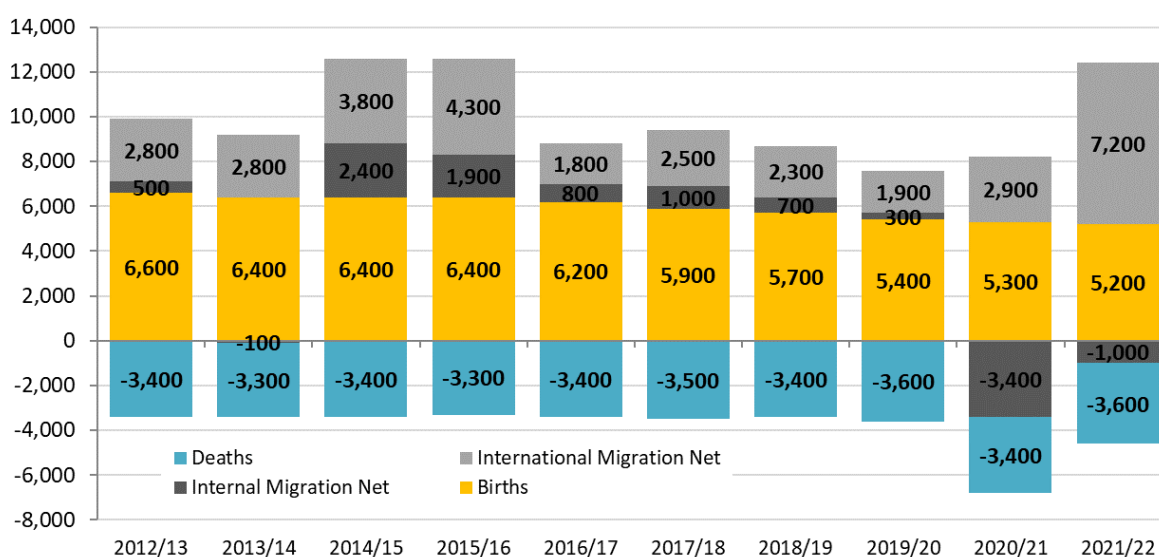


4.11 Overall, over the decade 2012-22 the number of older people aged 65 and over in Bristol increased by just 7.1%, a much lower increase than in England and Wales where there was a 17.4% increase in the number of older people. Over the decade the number of older people aged 65-79 years in Bristol grew by 5,100 (+13%), whilst the number aged 80 years and over fell by just over 1,000 (-6%). Nationally, the number of people aged 65-79 increased by 19% and those aged 80 and over by 14%.

COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE

Figure 8. Components of population change in Bristol 2012/13 to 2021/22

Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates. Crown Copyright.



4.12 Annual population change is driven by births, deaths and migration. Collectively, these are referred to as the 'components of change' (see Figure 8 and Table 4). The difference between the number of live births and the number of deaths is known as 'natural change'.

Table 4. Components of population change in Bristol 2017/18 to 2021/22

Numbers may not add to total due to rounding

Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates. Crown Copyright.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Births	5,900	5,700	5,400	5,300	5,200
Deaths	3,500	3,400	3,600	3,400	3,600
Natural Change	2,400	2,300	1,900	1,900	1,500
Internal Migration In	38,900	40,500	37,300	42,000	41,000
Internal Migration Out	37,900	39,900	37,000	45,400	42,000
Internal Migration Net	1,000	700	300	-3,400	-1,000
International Migration In	9,200	9,900	9,000	7,200	12,200
International Migration Out	6,600	7,600	7,100	4,300	5,000
International Migration Net	2,500	2,300	1,900	2,900	7,200
Other changes	-2,000	-2,400	-2,200	-2,000	0
Migration & Other changes	1,600	600	100	-2,500	6,200

4.13 Following the Census in 2021, ONS revised the population trend between 2011 and 2021 to bring it in line with the Census 2021 results. The revised population estimates for Bristol are higher than those previously published from mid-2011 up until the Covid-19 pandemic. The main change to the Bristol population trend was a higher level of international net migration than previously estimated.

BIRTHS AND DEATHS

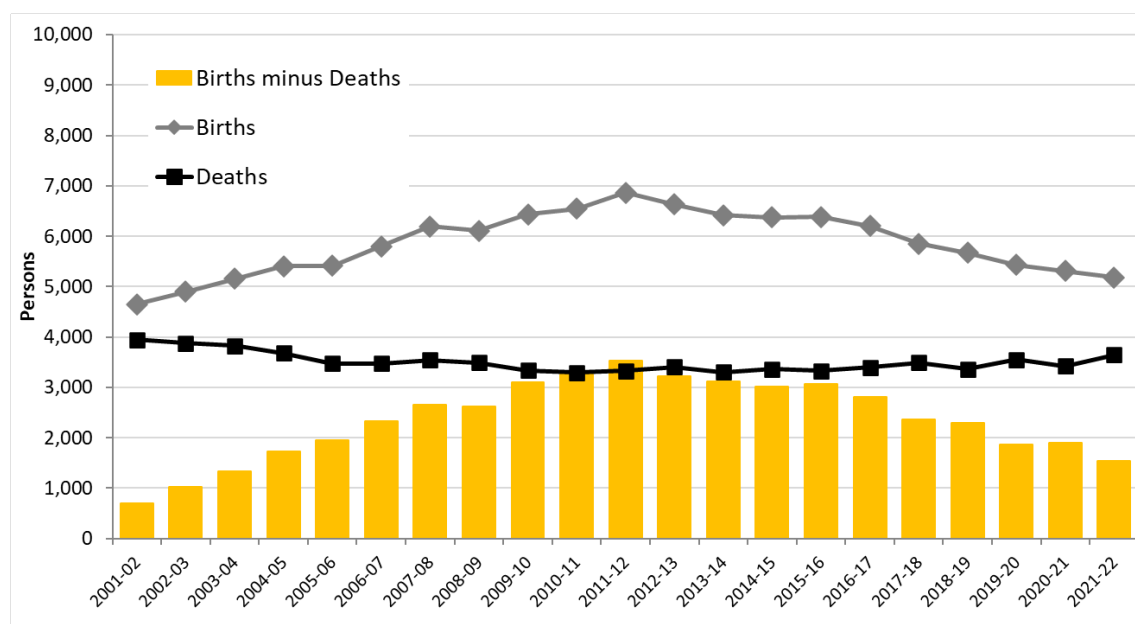
4.14 In Bristol, there are more live births than deaths each year resulting in an increase in the population due to natural change (see Figure 9). Over the last decade (2012-2022) in Bristol, there were a total of 59,500 births and 34,300 deaths, resulting in a population increase of 25,200 due to natural change alone. Natural change accounts for just over half (55%) of the total population change in Bristol over the decade. In the 12 months to mid-2022 however, natural change accounted for just 20% of the population change in Bristol.

4.15 The number of births in Bristol gradually increased from the year 2000 onwards, reaching a peak of 6,781 births per annum in 2012 (calendar year). Since then births in Bristol have fallen gradually. In 2022 (calendar year) the number of births fell to 5,048, a fall of 26% since the recent peak in 2012 and the lowest number since 2003. This fall in births

remains in line with the recent trend of decreasing live births observed before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Figure 9. Natural change (births minus deaths) in Bristol mid-2001 to mid-2022

Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates. Crown Copyright.



4.16 Nationally, the story of births is one of decreases and record lows, with the total number of births continuing the fall. Fertility rates have been decreasing in all age groups, including for women aged 40 years and over for the first time since 2013. Fertility rates for those aged 40 years and over had generally been increasing since the late 1970s.

4.17 The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for England and Wales in 2021 was 1.55 children per woman, the lowest since records began in 1938.³ The Total Fertility Rate in Bristol in 2021 was 1.32 children per woman, down from 1.35 in 2020.

4.18 The average age of mothers at childbirth in England and Wales in 2021 was 30.9 years. The average age of mothers in Bristol is older than nationally at 32.8 years.

4.19 Possible reasons for the decrease in TFRs in recent years could be due to improved access to contraception, the reduction in mortality rates of children aged under five years (resulting in women having fewer babies) and lower levels of fertility, or difficulties conceiving due to postponement in childbearing.

4.20 Changes in total fertility rate are driven mainly by women born in the UK as they make up the majority of the population of childbearing age (see Figure 10). However, non-UK born women made up an increasing share of the population, which also acted to push fertility rates upwards. The percentage of births in Bristol to non-UK born-mothers has increased from 13% in 2001 to 31.7% in 2022.

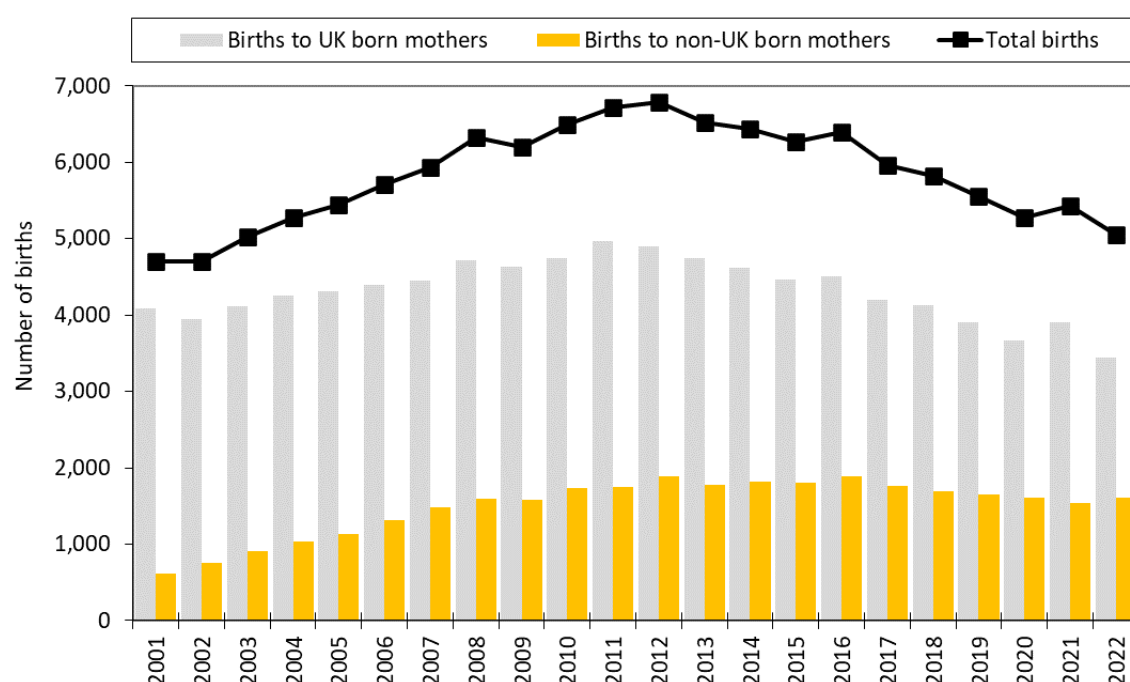
³ [ONS Statistical Bulletin: Births in England and Wales: 2022](#)

Total Fertility Rates will be recalculated and updated following the publication of revised population estimates 2011-2021

4.21 In 2021, the Total Fertility Rate for non-UK born women in England and Wales was estimated to be 2.03 children per woman, compared to 1.54 for women born in the UK⁴.

Figure 10. Live births by mother's country of birth Bristol 2001-22

Source: ONS Annual District Birth data by calendar year



4.22 The number of deaths in Bristol in the year to mid-2022 was 3,646, the highest number of annual deaths since 2004/5.

MIGRATION - NATIONAL CONTEXT

4.23 Net migration to the UK has been running at record levels. Driven by a rise in people coming for work, increasing numbers of students and world events, the patterns of migration have changed with more arrivals from outside of the EU than in the previous decade⁵.

4.24 Before the pandemic, migration was relatively stable, but patterns and behaviours have been shifting considerably since then. ONS estimates show a marked change in immigration since 2021 because of a rise in non-EU immigration driven by a range of factors including:

- free movement ending for EU nationals in January 2021 as part of the introduction of the new immigration system
- the easing of travel restrictions in July 2021 following the coronavirus pandemic
- world events including the war in Ukraine and British National (Overseas) scheme

⁴ [ONS Statistical Bulletin: Births by parents' country of birth, England and Wales: 2022](#)

⁵ [Behaviour shifts and the implications for migration statistics | National Statistical](#)

4.25 The places people are coming from are also changing. Instead of migration to the UK being driven by arrivals from the European Union, as was the case up until 2019, more people are now coming from further afield, especially China, India and Nigeria. The government's new immigration system means more people are moving here with their family to fill skilled jobs, as well as an increase in non-EU students.

4.26 Patterns of behaviour resulting from urgent international crises are even harder to predict. The most recent data shows that the UK is now seeing fewer Hong Kong British Nationals arriving and even fewer people from Ukraine than a year ago⁶.

4.27 More recent ONS estimates indicate a slowing of immigration coupled with increasing emigration but it is too early to say if this is the start of a new downward trend.

MIGRATION – BRISTOL CONTEXT

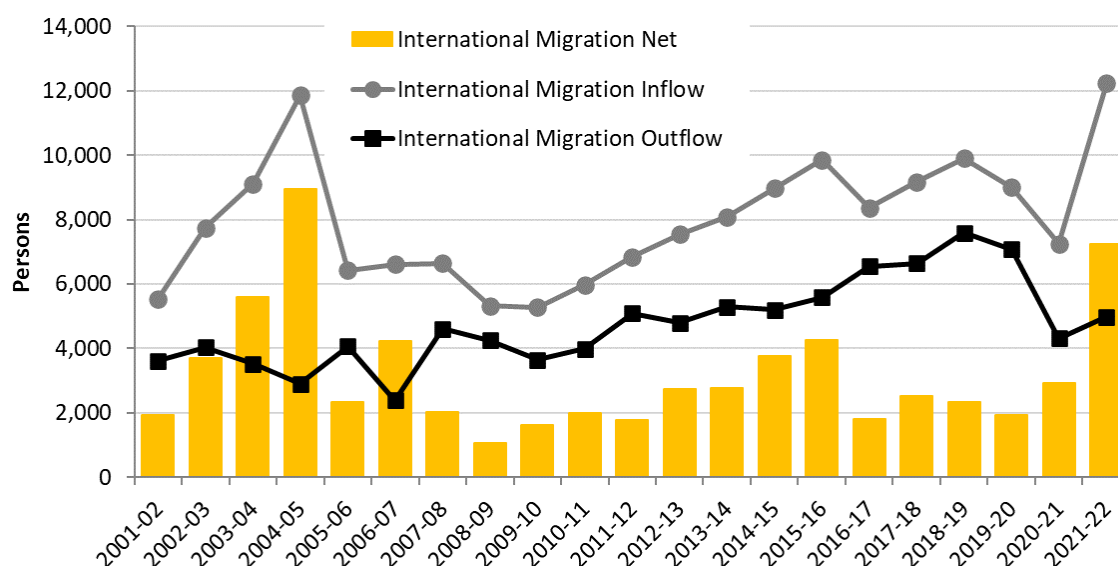
4.28 Over the last decade, the population of Bristol has increased by 20,600 people due to overall net migration and other changes, accounting for 45% of all population change in Bristol in that period. Migration is split into international migration and internal migration (moves to/from other parts of the UK).

International migration

4.29 Net international migration was the largest component of population change in Bristol in the 12 months to mid-2022. For the first time since the expansion of the EU in 2004/5, net international migration was almost 5 times higher than natural change (births minus deaths) and was the highest net international migration in almost two decades (figure 11).

Figure 11. International migration in Bristol mid-2001 to mid-2022

Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates. Crown Copyright.



⁶ [Long-term international migration, provisional - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/migration/articles/long-term-international-migration-provisional)

4.30 In the 12 months to mid-2022, there were 12,200 international in-migrants and 5,000 international out-migrants, so a net gain of 7,250 people. Nearly all the net increase was in people aged under 45, in particular 18-29 year olds.

4.31 As seen nationally, there has been a marked change in immigration in Bristol since 2021. Until 2019 EU nationals were the larger component of total immigration, whereas since 2021 the majority of immigration is now non-EU nationals. Increases in non-EU migration include both international students and workers.

4.32 Notably, Bristol has seen a very significant rise in the number of in-migrants from India in the last 2 years, plus other countries including China, Ukraine, Nigeria, Pakistan and Hong Kong (for more information on individual countries see section on National Insurance Number registrations).

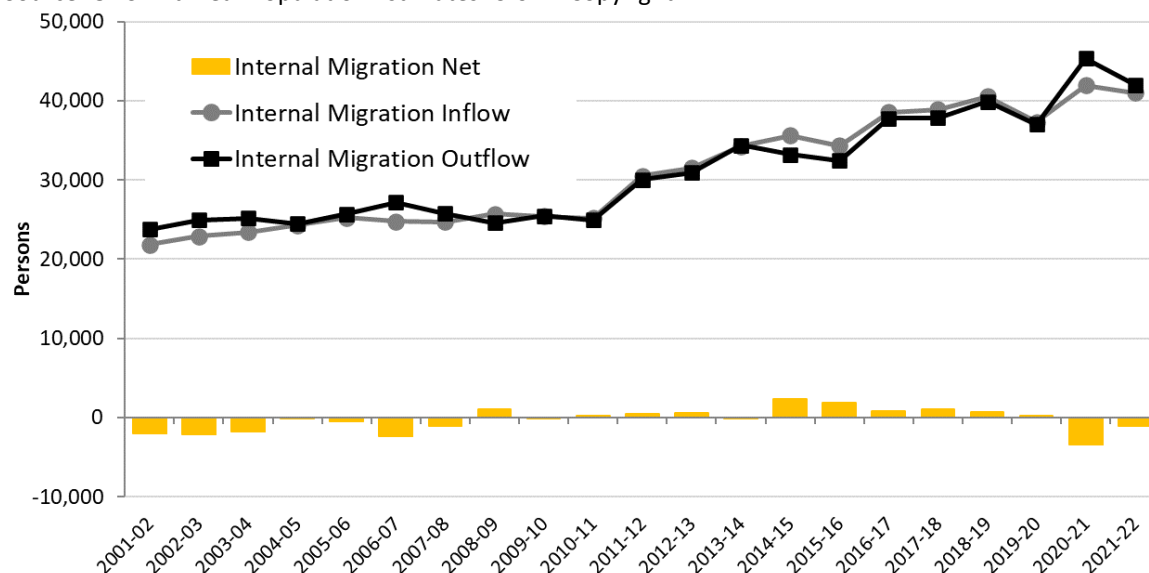
Internal migration

4.33 For the last two years, net internal migration has seen more people move out of Bristol to other parts of the UK than moved into Bristol from other parts of the UK. The 12 months to mid-2022 saw a net loss of 1,000 people. All age groups saw a net loss except 18-29 year olds where there was a large net gain.

4.34 The main moves to/from Bristol were to/from the surrounding local authorities plus London, Somerset, Wiltshire, Cardiff and Cornwall. More people moved from London to Bristol (6,100) than from moved out of Bristol to London (5,800).

Figure 12. Internal migration in Bristol mid-2001 to mid-2022

Source: ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates. Crown Copyright.



4.35 It is important to note that the flows of people moving in and out of Bristol to other parts of the UK (population flows) are considerably greater than the numbers of international migrants to and from Bristol. In the 12 months to mid-2022, 41,000 people moved into Bristol from other areas of UK whilst 42,000 moved out of Bristol to other areas of UK. In contrast, 12,200 people moved into Bristol from outside the UK and 5,000 people moved out of Bristol to go abroad.

4.36 Estimates of migration are subject to higher levels of uncertainty than numbers of births and deaths. ONS estimates of long-term international migration are the best possible given the available data sources, however, they remain in development. Users should be aware that they are likely to be revised as new sources of information become available and ONS refine the methodology for measuring migration.

Summary: Following the EU Referendum in June 2016, the population of Bristol increased annually but at a slower rate than the previous decade. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a large increase in the population, at a level similar to the years before the EU Referendum. The main factor behind this growth was the highest level of international net migration in almost two decades. The majority of immigration is now non-EU nationals including both international students and people coming to work.

SMALL AREA POPULATION TRENDS

4.37 Figure 13 and Table 5 show population change between 2011 and 2021 by ward. The areas of highest population growth have been in central areas of Bristol.

4.38 Whilst there have been increases in population across all but one ward over the decade 2011 to 2021, the greatest increases have been in Central ward where the population has increased by almost 6,000 people (+48.1%) over the decade and Hotwells and Harbourside ward with an increase of +28.7%.

Figure 13. Population change 2011 to 2021 by ward

Source: Census 2011 and Census 2021 Office for National Statistics © Crown Copyright 2023

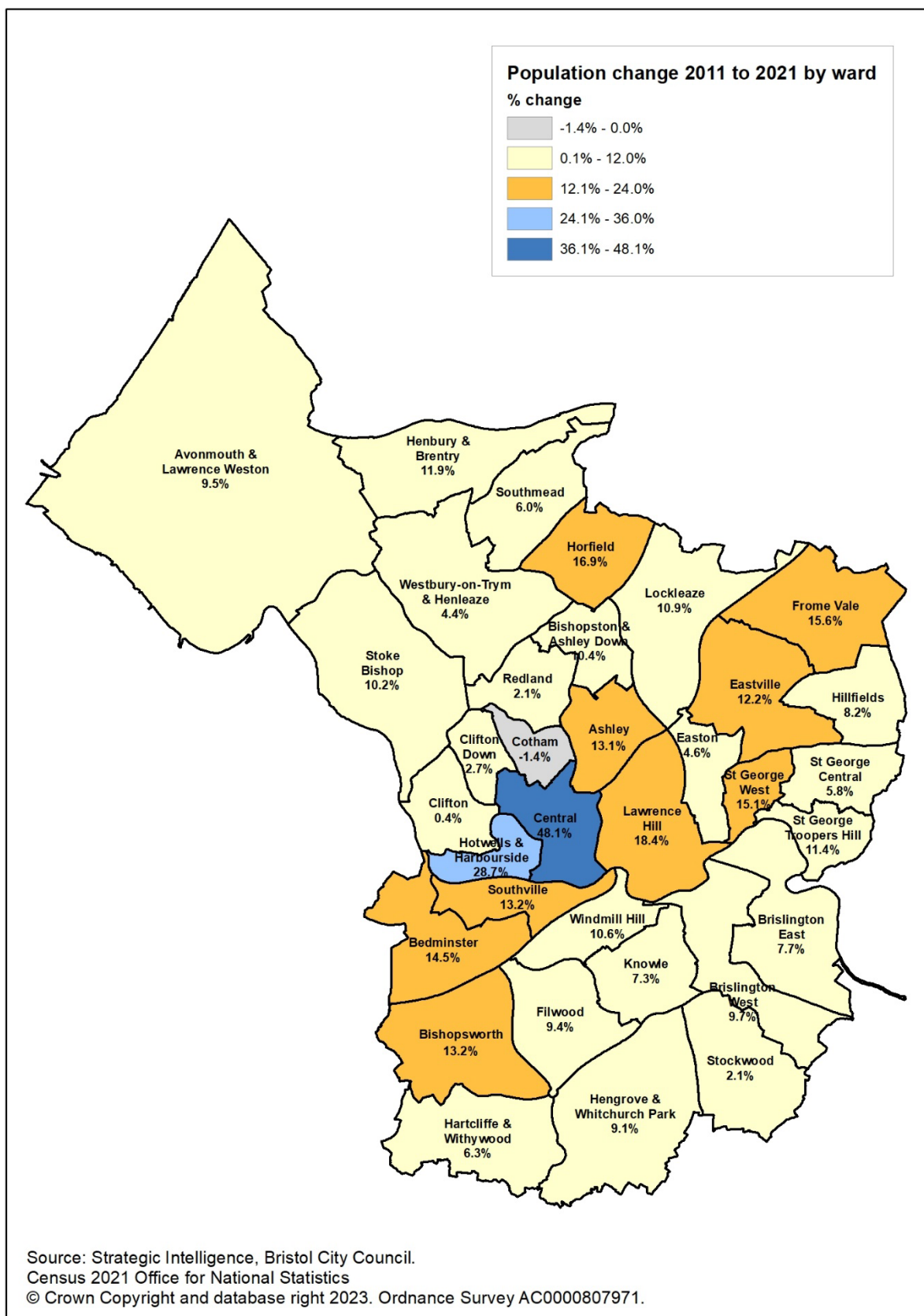


Table 5. Population estimates 2011-2021 by ward

Source: Census 2011 and Census 2021 Office for National Statistics © Crown Copyright 2023

Ward	2011	2021	Change 2011-2021	
			number	%
Central	12,415	18,390	5,975	48.1
Hotwells & Harbourside	4,689	6,035	1,346	28.7
Lawrence Hill	16,556	19,604	3,048	18.4
Horfield	11,832	13,838	2,006	17.0
Frome Vale	12,164	14,057	1,893	15.6
St George West	5,986	6,891	905	15.1
Bedminster	11,280	12,916	1,636	14.5
Southville	11,384	12,882	1,498	13.2
Bishopsworth	10,848	12,274	1,426	13.1
Ashley	17,685	20,003	2,318	13.1
Eastville	13,255	14,865	1,610	12.1
Henbury & Brentry	11,802	13,208	1,406	11.9
St George Troopers Hill	5,798	6,459	661	11.4
Lockleaze	12,080	13,396	1,316	10.9
Windmill Hill	12,626	13,958	1,332	10.5
Bishopston & Ashley Down	12,048	13,304	1,256	10.4
Stoke Bishop	11,854	13,067	1,213	10.2
Brislington West	10,833	11,880	1,047	9.7
Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston	20,237	22,166	1,929	9.5
Filwood	13,067	14,299	1,232	9.4
Hengrove & Whitchurch Park	17,152	18,711	1,559	9.1
Hillfields	12,156	13,153	997	8.2
Brislington East	11,274	12,146	872	7.7
Knowle	13,085	14,046	961	7.3
Hartcliffe & Withywood	17,923	19,059	1,136	6.3
Southmead	12,451	13,193	742	6.0
St George Central	12,268	12,984	716	5.8
Easton	13,541	14,167	626	4.6
Westbury-on-Trym & Henleaze	19,558	20,420	862	4.4
Clifton Down	11,121	11,420	299	2.7
Stockwood	11,634	11,880	246	2.1
Redland	12,984	13,253	269	2.1
Clifton	12,967	13,022	55	0.4
Cotham	11,681	11,521	-160	-1.4
Bristol	428,234	472,467	44,233	10.3

5. POPULATION PROJECTIONS

UNCERTAINTY OF POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD PROJECTIONS

New ONS 2022-based population projections will be published in February 2025. These new projections will take into account recent events including the Covid-19 pandemic, leaving the EU and the most recent changes in international migration patterns.

Due to the uncertainties outlined and because the population projections for Bristol have been shown to be too low, the 2018-based population and household projections should be used and interpreted with care.

5.1 Sub-national population projections provide estimates of the future population of local authorities, assuming a continuation of recent local trends in fertility, mortality and migration. The projections do not attempt to predict the impact that future government or local policies, changing economic circumstances, local development policy, the capacity of an area to accommodate population or other factors might have on demographic behaviour.

5.2 Future population projections are uncertain. Recent events – including the Covid-19 pandemic, leaving the EU, the new Hong Kong British National Overseas visa and the global climate emergency – and their potential impacts on our economy and society, are not reflected in the current 2018-based population projections.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR BRISTOL

5.3 Future population projections are uncertain, however, in the event that pre-pandemic trends were to continue, the total population of Bristol would be projected to increase by 69,300 people over the 25 year period (2018-2043) to reach a total population of 532,700 by 2043. This would be a projected increase of 15%, higher than the projection for England of 10% and the highest percentage increase of the other eight English Core Cities. By mid-2031 Bristol local authority is projected to have a population of more than half a million usual residents.

5.4 Figure 14 shows the population trend in Bristol between mid-2011 and mid-2022, alongside the 2011 Census and 2021 Census results, together with the 2018-based population projections.

5.5 Figure 15 shows levels of annual population change between 2001 to 2022 together with projected levels of annual population change up to 2043. The projections are trend-based projections, which mean that assumptions about future levels of births, deaths and migration are based on observed levels mainly over the 2013 to 2018 period.

Figure 14. Population trend 2011 to 2031

Source: ONS population estimates and 2018-based Sub-national Population Projections ONS

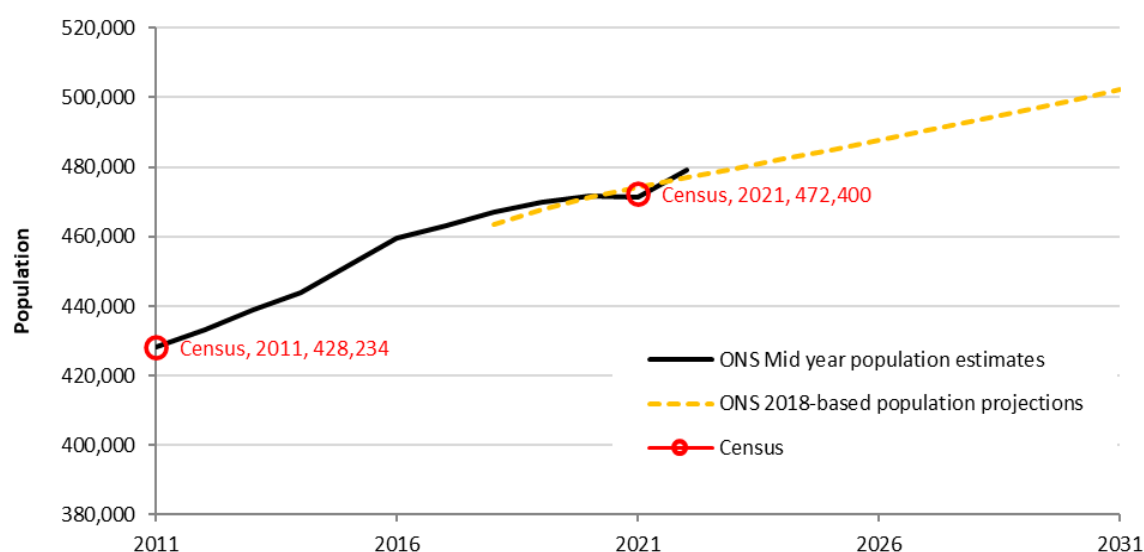
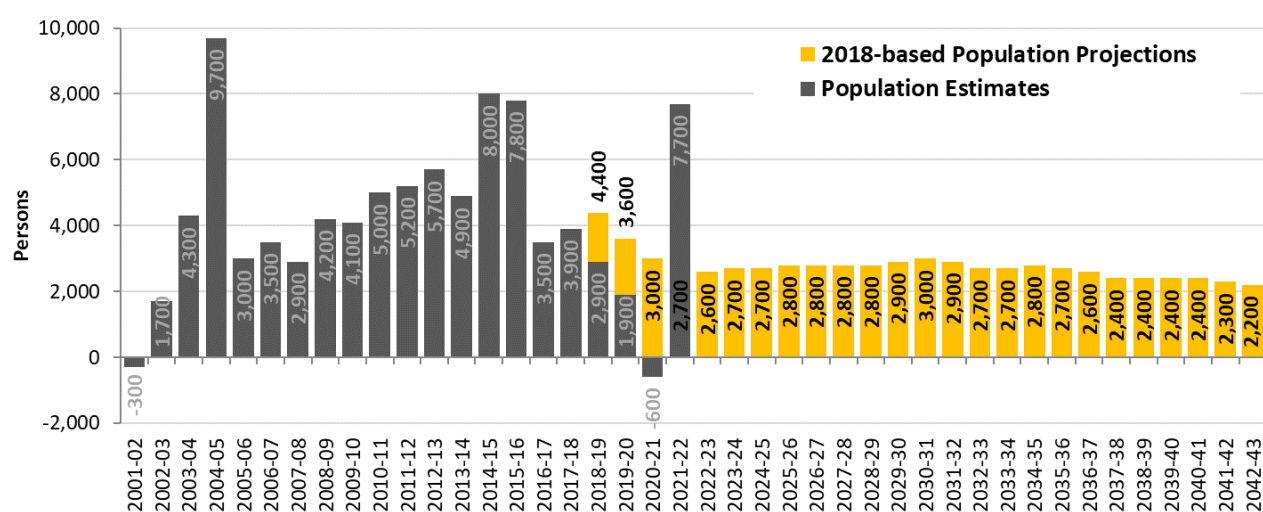


Figure 15. Annual population change 2001-2043

Source: ONS population estimates and 2018-based Sub-national Population Projections ONS



5.6 There are now five years of estimates which overlap with the 2018-based projections. The estimates show that Bristol's population has been higher than the 2018-based projected trend, with the exception of mid-2021 when population change was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

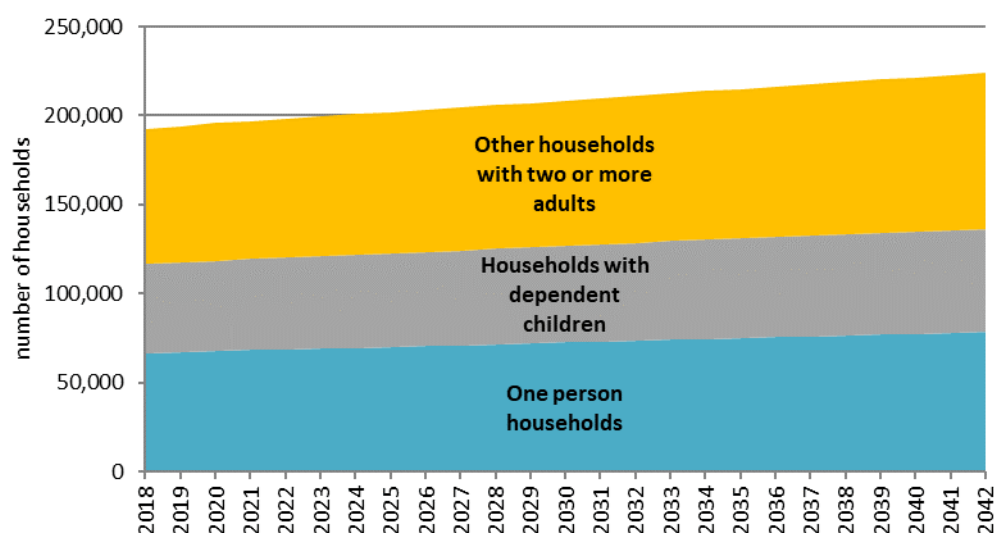
5.7 Between 2018 and 2022, births in Bristol have been lower each year than the projected trend, whilst deaths have been higher. Net international migration meanwhile, has been considerably higher than projected.

HOUSEHOLD PROJECTIONS

5.8 2018-based household projections were published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on 29 June 2020. They provide the projected number of households in England and local authorities up to 2043. The projections are based upon the 2018-based sub-national population projections and are subject to the same caveats as outlined at the start of this section.

Figure 16. Household Projections by type of household in Bristol 2018-2043

Source: Office for National Statistics © Crown copyright 2020



5.9 The number of households in Bristol is projected to increase by 32,400 over the 25 year period, from 192,700 in 2018 to 225,000 in 2043. This is a 17% increase and similar to the projected increase of 16% in England as a whole.

5.10 All household types are projected to increase – one person households by 19%, households with dependent children by 16% and other households with two or more adults by 16% (Figure 16).

6. OTHER SOURCES OF POPULATION STATISTICS

6.1 There are a number of additional sources of population statistics that can be used to supplement estimates from the Office for National Statistics. These include administrative sources such as National Insurance records and student registration statistics. Although not able to give definitive counts of the number of people in particular groups, other sources can be used to substantiate ONS population estimates and often to provide pointers towards the most recent demographic trends.

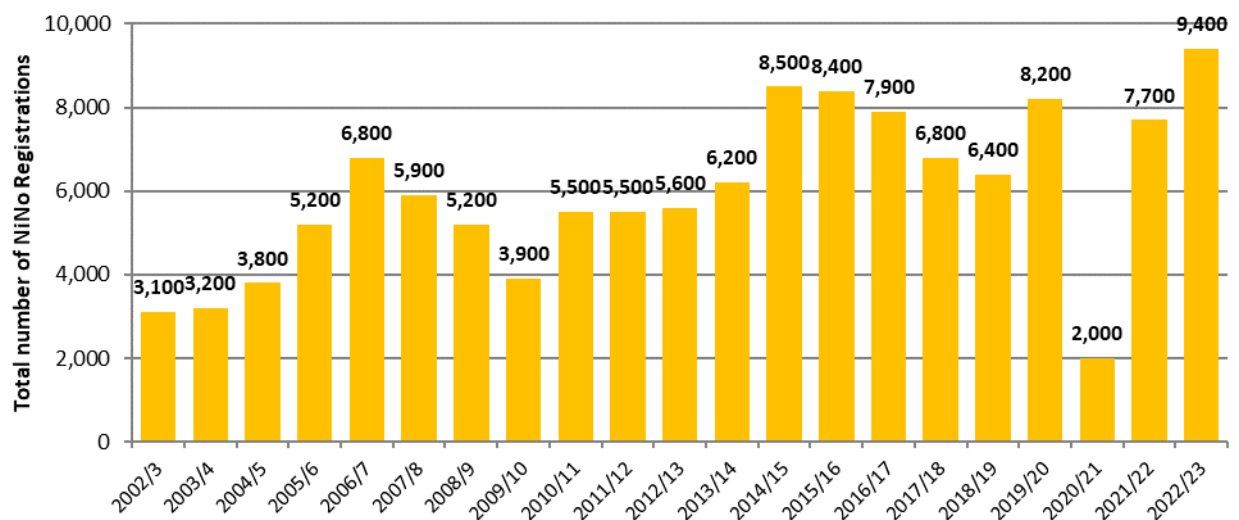
NATIONAL INSURANCE NUMBER REGISTRATIONS (NINOS)

6.2 National Insurance Number registrations to adult overseas nationals entering the UK (NINOs) are produced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The DWP NINO data covers people allocated a NINO for all types of work – including the self-employed and students working part-time – and whatever the length of stay in the UK. It also covers adult overseas nationals allocated a NINO to claim benefits or tax credits.

6.3 The DWP NINO data does not show when overseas nationals subsequently depart the UK, nor does it show length of stay in the UK. The DWP figures are therefore a measure of inflow of overseas nationals registering for a NINO. For this reason, the figures do not show the number of foreign nationals working or claiming benefit at any given point nor do they distinguish between long and short-term migrants.

Figure 17. Total National Insurance Registrations in Bristol for non-UK Nationals 2002/3-2022/23

Source: Stat-Xplore, Department for Work and Pensions <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>



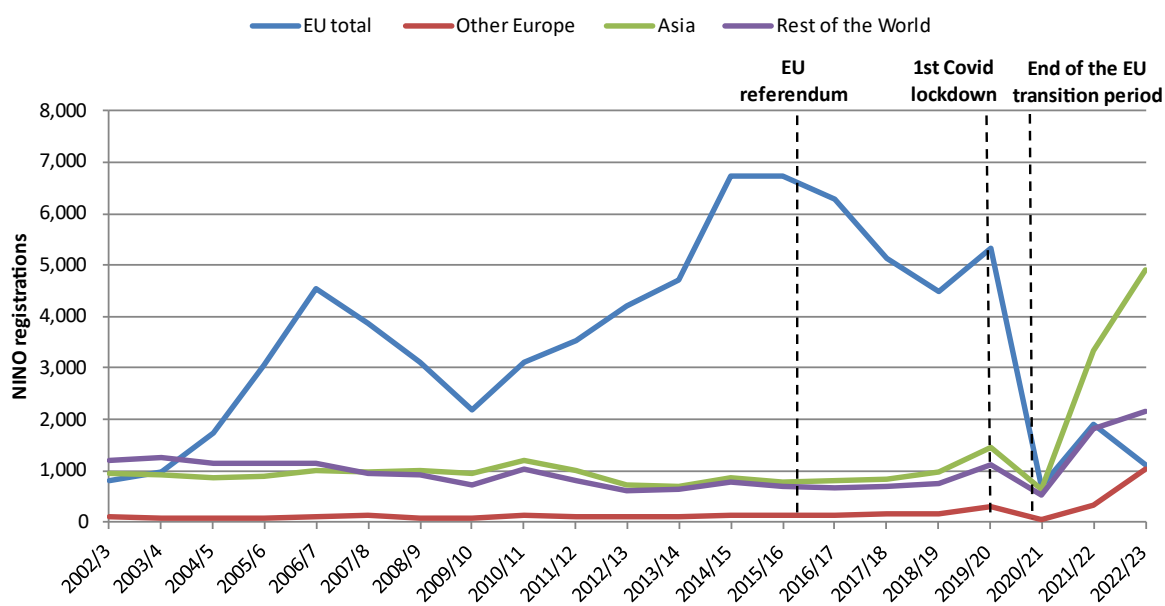
6.4 Figure 17 shows that the total number of NINO registrations in Bristol each year since 2002/3. Following the expansion of the EU in 2004, the number of registrations increased up to 2006/7. Numbers again increased reaching a peak at 8,500 registrations in 2014/15. A

sharp drop in registrations can be seen in 2020/21 during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the two years since, registrations have returned to pre-pandemic levels. In 2022/23 there were 9,400 registrations – the highest annual number since records began.

6.5 The trend in the number of NINO registrations can be broken down by broad World area of origin and country of origin. Figure 18 shows the trend in Bristol registrations of Europe nationals, other Europe nationals, Asian nationals and people from the rest of the World.

Figure 18. National Insurance Registrations for non-UK Nationals in Bristol 2002/3-2022/23 by Broad World Area

Source: Stat-Xplore, Department for Work and Pensions <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>



6.6 NINO registrations clearly show the fundamental change from EU nationals to nationals from other parts of the World, in particular Asia. The decline in the number of EU nationals registering for National Insurance in Bristol after the EU Referendum is clear, together with the affect of the Covid-19 pandemic first lockdown in March 2020 and the end of the EU transition period and the introduction of the new immigration system at the start of 2021.

6.7 A more detailed breakdown is possible by country of origin. Figure 19 shows countries with a total of 400 or more NI registrations since 2009/10. In the period before the first Covid pandemic lockdown in March 2020, the majority of NI registrations were people from EU countries, in particular Polish, Spanish, Romanian and Italian nationals - although numbers had been declining following the EU Referendum in June 2016.

6.8 Following the Covid pandemic and the end of the EU transition period, NINO registrations in Bristol have been dominated by registrations by Indian nationals. In 2022/23 there was just over 1,800 registrations by Indian nationals alone, accounting for almost a fifth (19%) of all registrations in Bristol in the 12 month period. High numbers of NINO registrations were also made by people from China (780), Ukraine (774), Nigeria (702), Pakistan (482) and Hong Kong (300).

Figure 19. National Insurance Registrations for non-UK Nationals in Bristol
Countries with a total of 400 or more NI registrations since 2009/10

Source: Stat-Xplore, Department for Work and Pensions <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

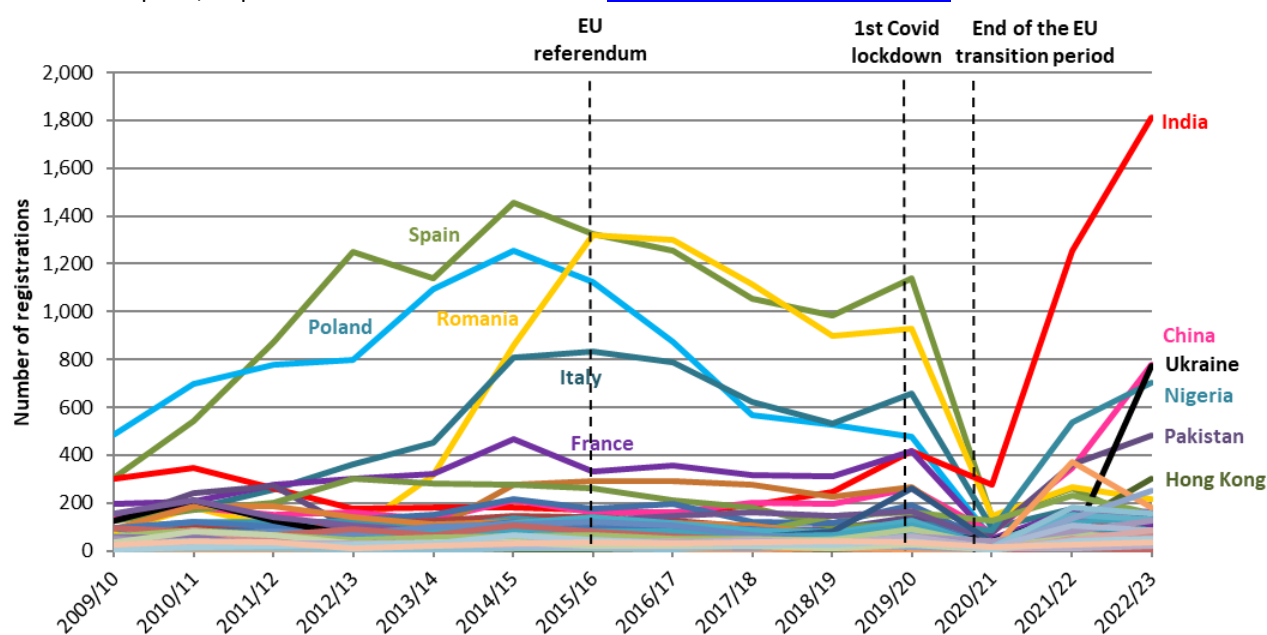
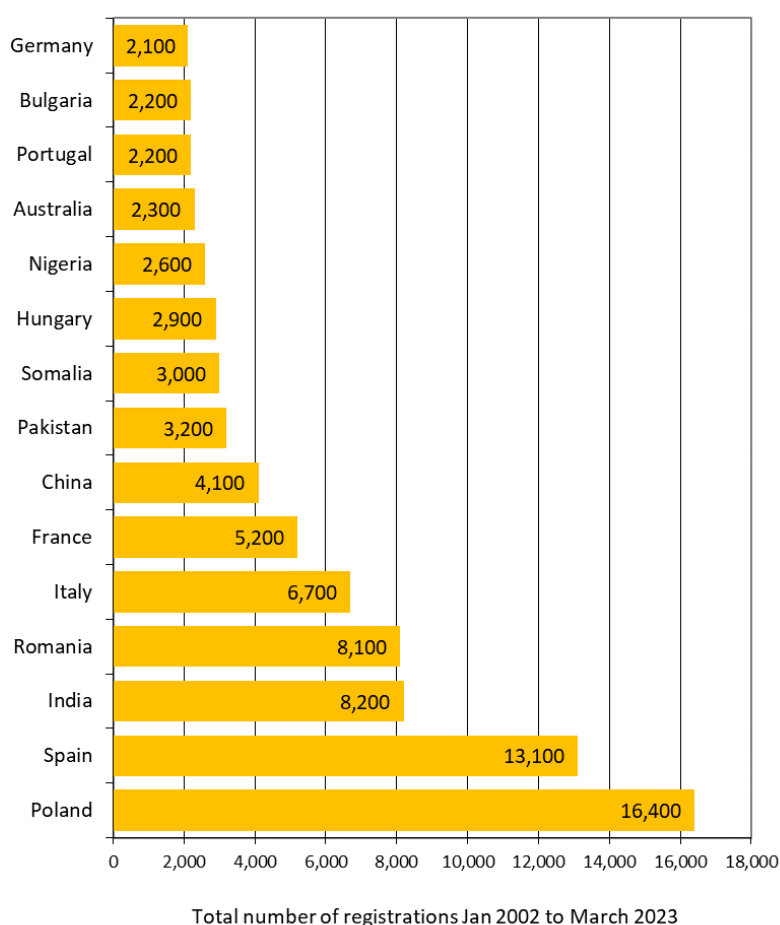


Figure 20. National Insurance Registrations for non-UK Nationals by Nationality in Bristol
Chart only shows countries with more than 2,000 registrations in total since January 2002

Source: Stat-Xplore, Department for Work and Pensions <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>



6.9 In total between January 2002 and March 2023, more than 125,000 National Insurance numbers were issued to non-UK nationals in Bristol. Of these, almost a quarter were issued to either Polish (16,400) or Spanish (13,100) nationals. Other countries with more than 5,000 allocations over this time period include: India 8,200, Romania 8,100, Italy 6,700 and France 5,200 (Figure 20). Overall, people registering for a NI number in Bristol come from more than 150 different countries.

STUDENTS

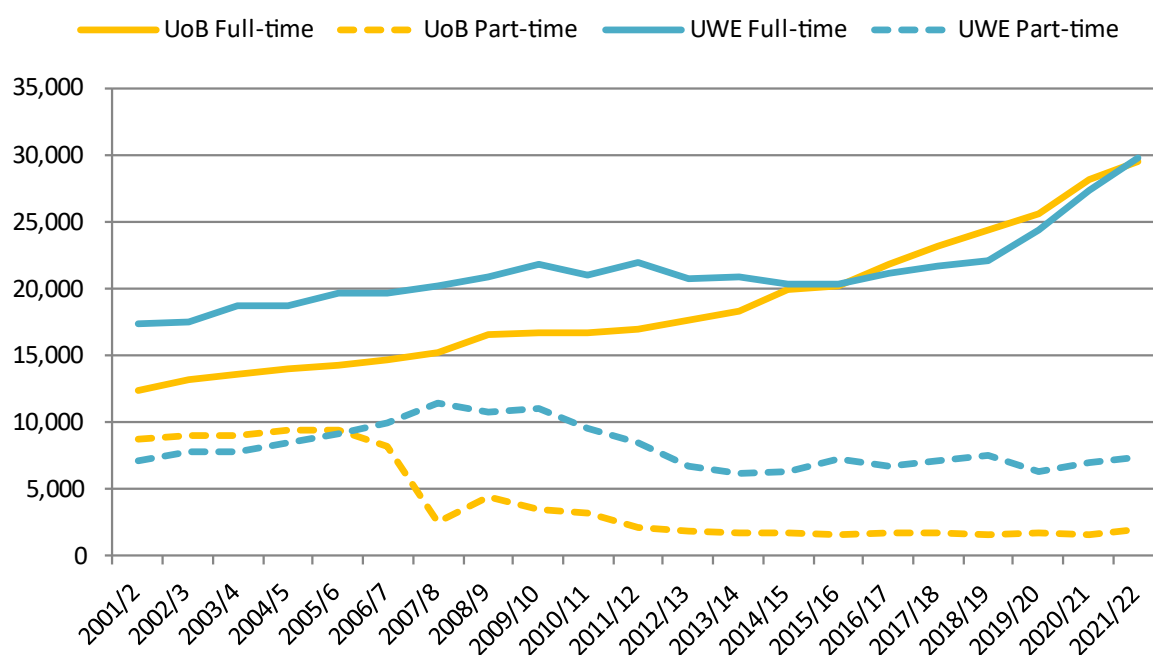
University students

6.11 In 2021/22 there were 68,700 students in total registered at the two main Bristol universities - 31,500 at the University of Bristol and 37,200 at the University of the West of England (UWE).

6.12 In the 5 years up to 2021/22 university student numbers increased by a third (33%, +17,200). The majority of this increase can be accounted for by an increase in full time students at both universities (Figure 21).

Figure 21. Higher Education students at the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England

Source: Higher Education Statistics Authority 2023



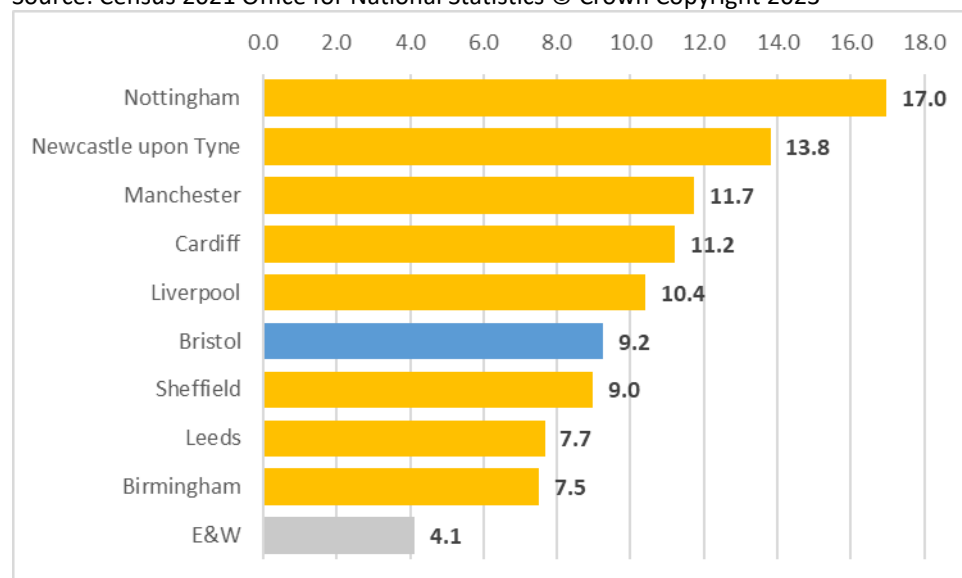
6.14 The number of overseas students studying at the two Bristol universities has tripled since 2001/2 and now make up a quarter (25%) of all university students. Of these, 3% come from EU countries and the remaining 21% come from countries outside of the EU.

Full-time students living in Bristol during term-time

6.15 In 2021, there are 43,700 full-time students aged 18 and over living in Bristol, making up 9.2% of the total usually resident population (England and Wales 4.1%). *This includes all full-time students not just university students.*

Figure 22. % Full-time students aged 18 and over by Core City (England and Wales only)

Source: Census 2021 Office for National Statistics © Crown Copyright 2023



6.16 Over the decade 2011 to 2021, the number of full-time students aged 18 and over living in Bristol increased by 8,000 – this is a 22.5% increase and compares to a 0.9% increase in England and Wales as a whole.

6.17 Of the Core Cities in England and Wales, full-time students make up a higher proportion of the total population in Nottingham (17.0%), Newcastle (13.8%), Manchester (11.7%), Cardiff (11.2%) and Liverpool (10.4%) (Figure 22).

6.18 Students living in Bristol are concentrated in particular areas of the city. More than half (52%) of all full-time students aged 18 and over live in just six wards and account for more than a fifth of the total ward population, including:

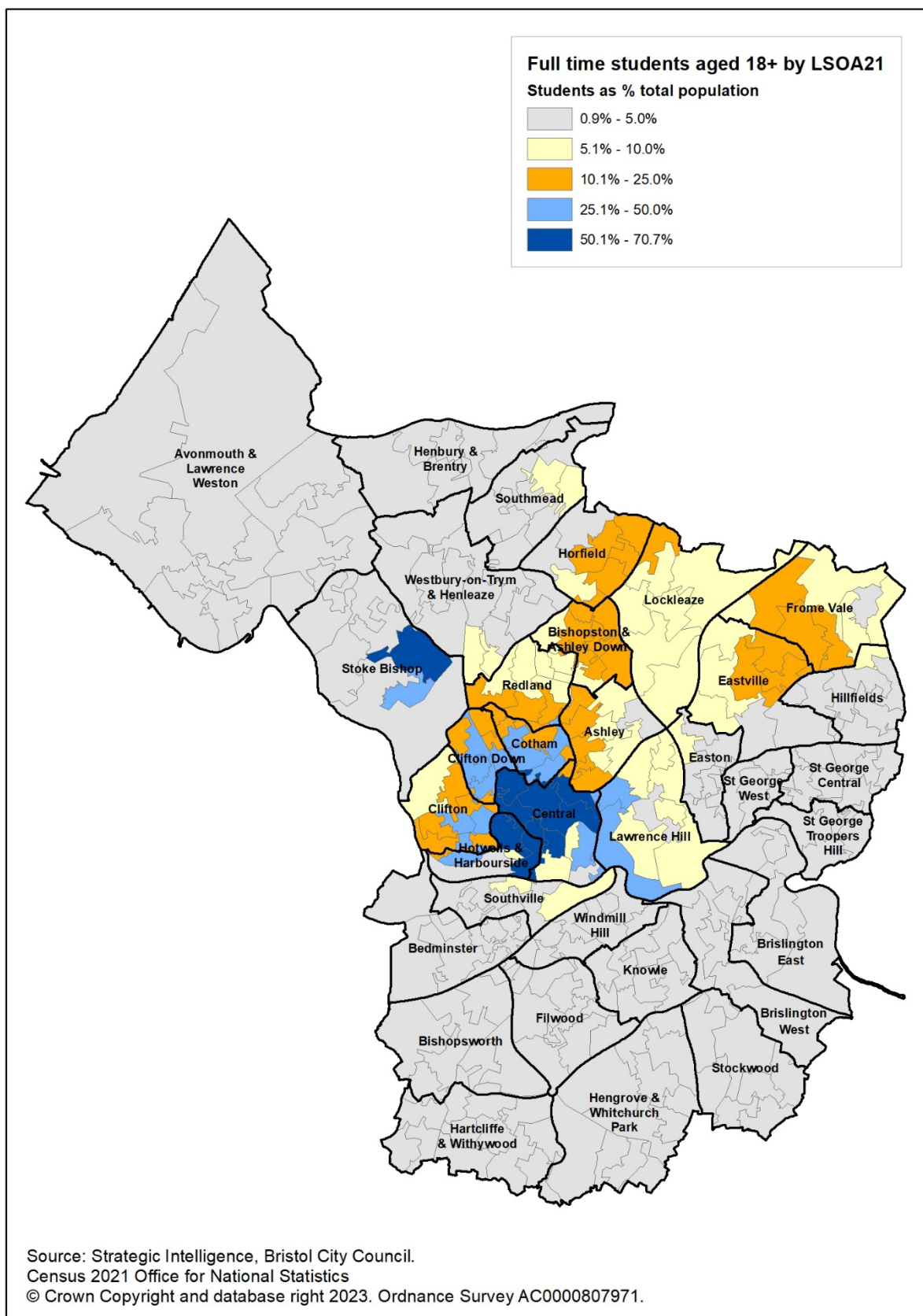
- Central - 8,634 (47%)
- Clifton Down - 3,363 (29%)
- Cotham - 3,218 (28%)
- Hotwells and Harbourside (1,570 (26%))
- Clifton - 3,062 (24%)
- Stoke Bishop - 2,692 (21%)

6.19 Figure 23 maps students as a percentage of the total population by small neighbourhood (Lower Layer Super Output Area⁷).

⁷ Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are a statistical geography created by the Office for National Statistics for presenting small area data in England and Wales. LSOAs include between 400 and 1,200 households and have a usually resident population between 1,000 and 3,000 persons.

Figure 23. Full-time students aged 18 and over living in Bristol during term-time

Source: Census 2021 Office for National Statistics © Crown Copyright 2023



7. POPULATION CHANGE AND POLICY

7.1 The last 100 years or so witnessed unprecedented change in the UK population. Estimating exactly how the population will look in the future is not possible to say with certainty. However, recent trends in births, deaths and migration can help to form a set of assumptions about how they will shape the future population.

7.2 Understanding the size and characteristics of the population and how it is changing is important to our understanding of society and the economy. Population estimates and projections are used for planning, resource allocation, business decisions and a broad range of public policy purposes. They provide key contextual information for research and analysis and in calculating rates for key demographic measures, performance targets and economic indicators such as employment rates.

7.3 Below are some policy implications of the changing population of Bristol:

- Population growth in Bristol and the wider sub-region can help support a growing economy through increasing demand for goods and services and moderate the impacts of an ageing labour supply. The relative economic growth of Bristol together with new housing provision will, to some extent, generate additional migration into the area. However a range of other factors will influence migration patterns both into and out of the area, including education, retirement, lifestyle, etc.
- The increase in population has service delivery implications. Concentration of this growth on particular population groups in certain areas of the city, will have localised implications.
- New communities bring both advantages and new challenges around cohesion, integration and equality of opportunity.
- Increasing numbers of new dwellings to accommodate additional households is likely to have an impact on a wide range of environmental, social and economic issues.
- The recent rise and then fall in Bristol's birth rate will have implications for health and education provision in the city. The projected growth or decline in the school age population has significant implications for education provision.
- Large numbers of young people move into and out of the city each year. Provision of purpose-built student accommodation can help accommodate future increases in student numbers without adding to demand on the private housing stock. Over concentrations of people living in multi-occupied households, including students, can lead to particular localised amenity issues.
- Bristol has increasing numbers of older people, although the future changes in the age structure of the population are not as acute as other local authorities. An older population will have implications for primary and secondary health care services and social care provision. A range of health issues, including disabilities and limiting long-term illnesses, will be more prevalent in a more elderly population.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 Following a period of population decline in the post war years, the population of Bristol stabilised in the 1990s. This was followed by a period of unprecedented population growth until the EU Referendum in 2016.

8.2 Since 2016, the population of Bristol has increased annually but at a slower rate than the previous decade. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a large increase in the population, at a level similar to the years before the EU Referendum. The main factor behind this growth was the highest level of international net migration in almost two decades. The majority of immigration is now non-EU nationals including both international students and people coming to work.

8.3 The population of Bristol has become increasingly diverse and some local communities have changed significantly. There are now more than 287 different ethnic groups in the city, more than 185 countries of birth represented, at least 45 religions and more than 90 languages spoken by people living in Bristol.

8.4 Future population projections are uncertain. Recent events – including the Covid-19 pandemic, leaving the EU, the new Hong Kong British National Overseas visa and the global climate emergency – and their potential impacts on our economy and society, are not reflected in the current 2018-based population projections.

8.5 A combination of factors is likely to influence future population change. These include economic performance, health and well-being, household dynamics and finances, the potential impact of conflict, cultural change, social developments, and political and policy responses to these factors, or interventions that affect them.

9. USEFUL LINKS & MORE INFORMATION

Bristol City Council [population page](#) includes the latest version of this report and the most recent **population estimates** and **projections** for Bristol.

Recently updated **population profiles for equalities groups** on the [population page](#) include ethnic group, religion, the Disabled population and the Somali population. The profiles analyse Census 2021 data, looking at the differences between groups in characteristics, health, work and housing.

Census 2021 results on the Bristol City Council [census page](#) are presented in two new dashboards:

- Headline Census 2021 results for Bristol overall in the **Census 2021 Dashboard**
- Detailed data for areas within Bristol are in the Bristol Census Data Profiles dashboard which include **Area Profiles** and **Topic Profiles**

Topics presented in the dashboards include:

- Population and migration
- Country of birth, ethnicity, religion and language
- Sexual orientation and gender identity
- Health, disability and carers
- Economic activity status and hours worked
- Socio-economic groups, industry and occupation
- Mode and distance travelled to work
- Qualifications
- Veterans
- Housing type and tenure
- Central heating and car availability
- Occupancy and bedrooms
- Household composition, size and deprivation

Bristol Ward Profiles include demographic information for Bristol wards. The profiles can be accessed using our interactive [Bristol Ward Profiles](#) or are available in pdf format.

Most information in this report is based on **Office for National Statistics** data which is available here [Population and migration - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

More information

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Bristol City Council
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