



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 483,000 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 44,000 people over the decade 2013-23, a 10.0% increase (England and Wales grew by 6.8%). The greatest increase was in the number of 19-23 year olds, with this age group growing by 12,100 (+28.3%) over the decade. The population increase in this 5 year age band alone accounted for more than a quarter (27%) of the overall population increase in Bristol over the decade.
- Net international migration was the largest component of population growth in Bristol in the 12 months to mid-2023. For the second consecutive year, 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 significant rise in the number of in-migrants from India in the last 3 years, plus other countries including China, Nigeria, Pakistan and Ukraine.
- 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.
- 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.
- In 2022/23 there were 70,920 students registered at the two Bristol universities. In the 10 years up to 2022/23 university student numbers increased by more than half (51%, +24,000). Overseas students make up more than a quarter (27%) of all students at the two universities - of these, 3% come from EU countries and the remaining 24% come from countries outside of the EU.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The population of Bristol is estimated to be 483,000 people¹. Bristol is the largest city in the South West and one of the eleven 'Core Cities' in the UK.

1.2 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. Between 2016 and 2020, the population of Bristol increased annually but at a slower rate than the previous decade. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, 2021/22 and 2022/23 saw larger increases in the population, at levels similar to the years before the EU Referendum.

1.3 The main factor behind this recent 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.

1.4 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.

1.5 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.

1.6 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 2023 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.

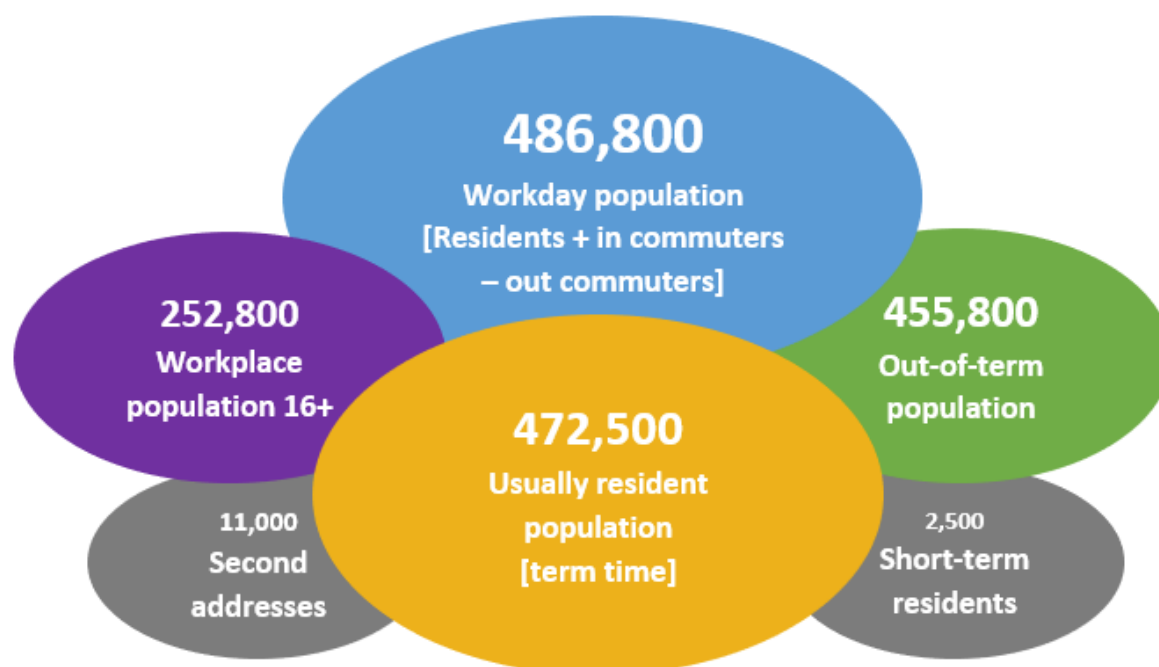
2.2 The majority of population and census statistics are based on the usually resident population of an area, including ONS mid-year estimates of population and population projections.

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-2023 POPULATION ESTIMATES

3.1 The mid-2023 population of Bristol local authority is estimated to be 483,000. Mid-2023 population estimates for local authorities were published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on 15 July 2024. 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. Bristol local authority accounts for 72% 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 667,500 (Mid-2022).

Figure 2. Mid-2023 Population pyramid

Source: ONS 2023 Mid-Year Population Estimates. Crown Copyright



3.3 Bristol local authority covers an area of 110 square kilometres – in 2013 there were 4,003 people per sq. km increasing to 4,404 people per sq.km in 2023. 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 2023 was 33.7 years old, this compares to the England and Wales median of 40.5 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. 2023 Population estimates by age and sex

Source: ONS 2023 Mid-Year Population Estimates. Crown Copyright

	Males	%	Females	%	Persons	%
0-15	41,810	17.4	39,949	16.5	81,759	16.9
16-24	39,208	16.3	40,494	16.7	79,702	16.5
25-49	95,118	39.6	93,445	38.5	188,563	39.0
50-64	35,695	14.9	35,601	14.7	71,296	14.8
65 and over	28,462	11.8	33,216	13.7	61,678	12.8
All ages	240,293	100.0	242,705	100.0	482,998	100.0

Children

3.5 Overall, there are more children living in Bristol than people aged 65 and over. Bristol's 81,800 children make up 16.9% of the total population. The number of children as a proportion of the total population continues to fall due to lower numbers of births.

Working age

3.6 Bristol has a higher proportion of working age (16-64 years) people than nationally – 70.3% of the total population in Bristol is of working age compared to 62.8% in England and Wales. The highest proportions are amongst the 20-34 year olds which make up almost a third (30%) of Bristol's total population compared to just 19% nationally. Many of the people in this age group are students living in Bristol during term time.

Older people

3.7 Bristol's 61,700 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 8,429 people living in Bristol aged 85 years and older.

POPULATION BY WARD

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.

3.9 The number of electors living in each ward per councillor is fairly equal across the city with 5,000 electors per councillor on average in August 2024. 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 for mid-2022. The largest ward in Bristol is Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston with an estimated population of 22,200 people and the smallest is St George Troopers Hill ward with an estimated 6,400 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.

3.12 Hartcliffe and Withywood ward has the largest proportion of children – a quarter (25%) of the total population of the ward are aged under 16. Other local authority housing areas also have high proportions of children, including Filwood (22%), Lawrence Hill (22%), Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston (22%), Southmead (21%), Hillfields (21%) and Henbury and Brentry (21%).

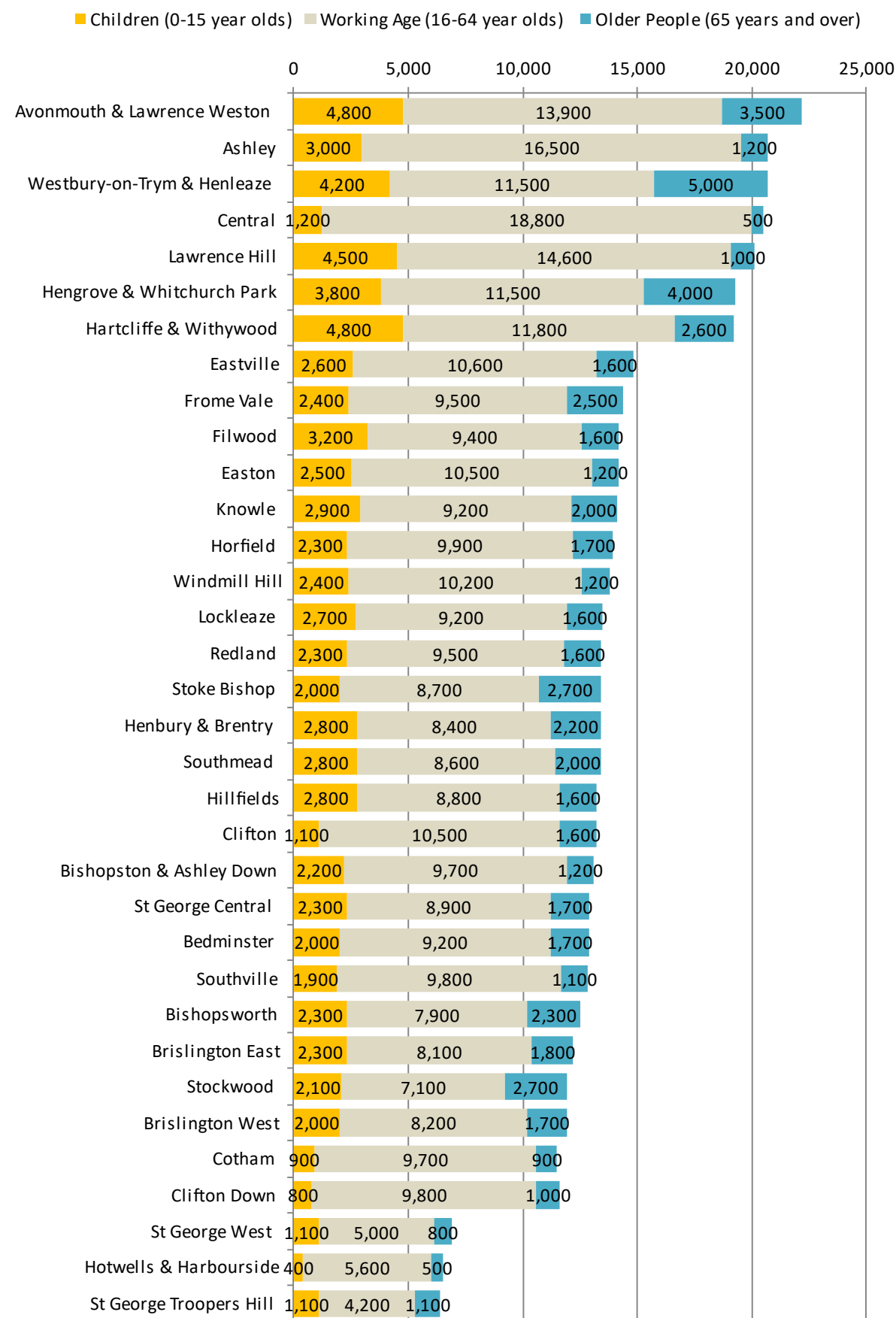
3.13 The wards with the lowest proportions of children are all in areas in the inner west and central areas of Bristol including Hotwells and Harbourside (6%), Central (6%), Clifton Down (7%), Cotham (8%) and Clifton (8%). These wards have the highest proportions of people aged 16-24, due to the large student population, as well as low proportions of people aged 65 and over. In Central ward, more than half (51%) of the usual residents are aged 16-24 years. Other wards, where more than a quarter of the total population are aged 16-24 years include Clifton Down (34%), Cotham (34%), Hotwells and Harbourside (32%), Clifton (29%) and Stoke Bishop (26%).

3.14 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 (92%), Hotwells & Harbourside (87%), Clifton Down (85%), and Cotham (84%).

3.15 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 (24%), Stockwood (23%) and Hengrove & Whitchurch Park (21%).

Figure 3. Mid-2022 (revised) ward population estimates by broad age band

Source: ONS Small Area Population Estimates Crown Copyright 2024



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.

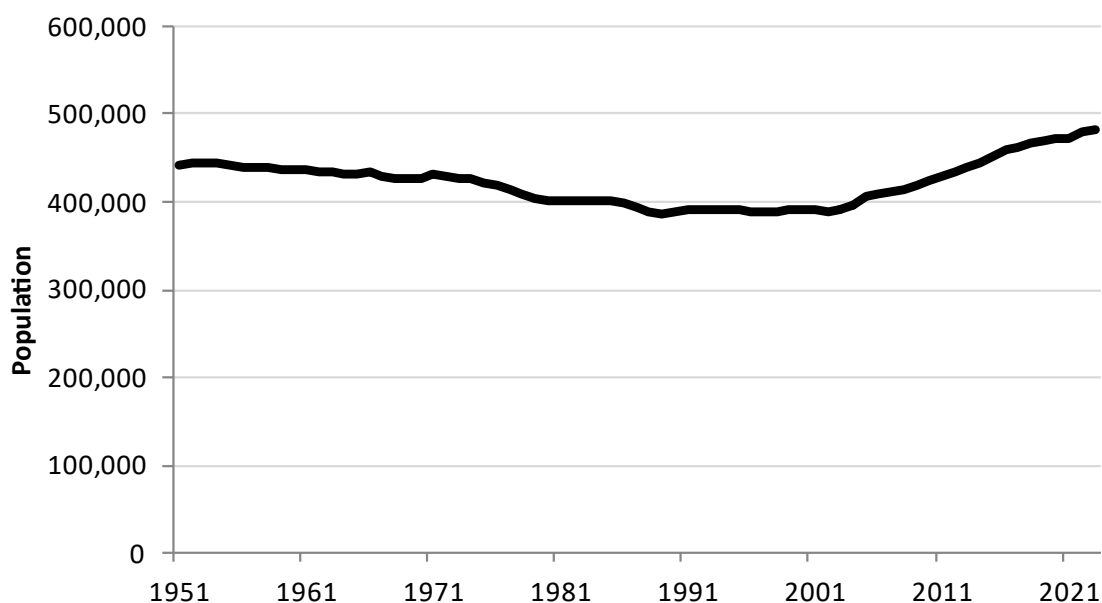
ONS have been working in partnership across the Government Statistical Service to develop new methods using administrative data sources to improve international migration statistics and to produce more regular and timely population statistics at both national and local levels. These 'official statistics 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. Between 2016 and 2020, the population of Bristol increased annually but at a slower rate than the previous decade. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, 2021/22 and 2022/23 saw larger increases in the population, at levels similar to the years before the EU Referendum (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Bristol population trend 1951 to 2023

Source: Office for National Statistics. Crown Copyright.

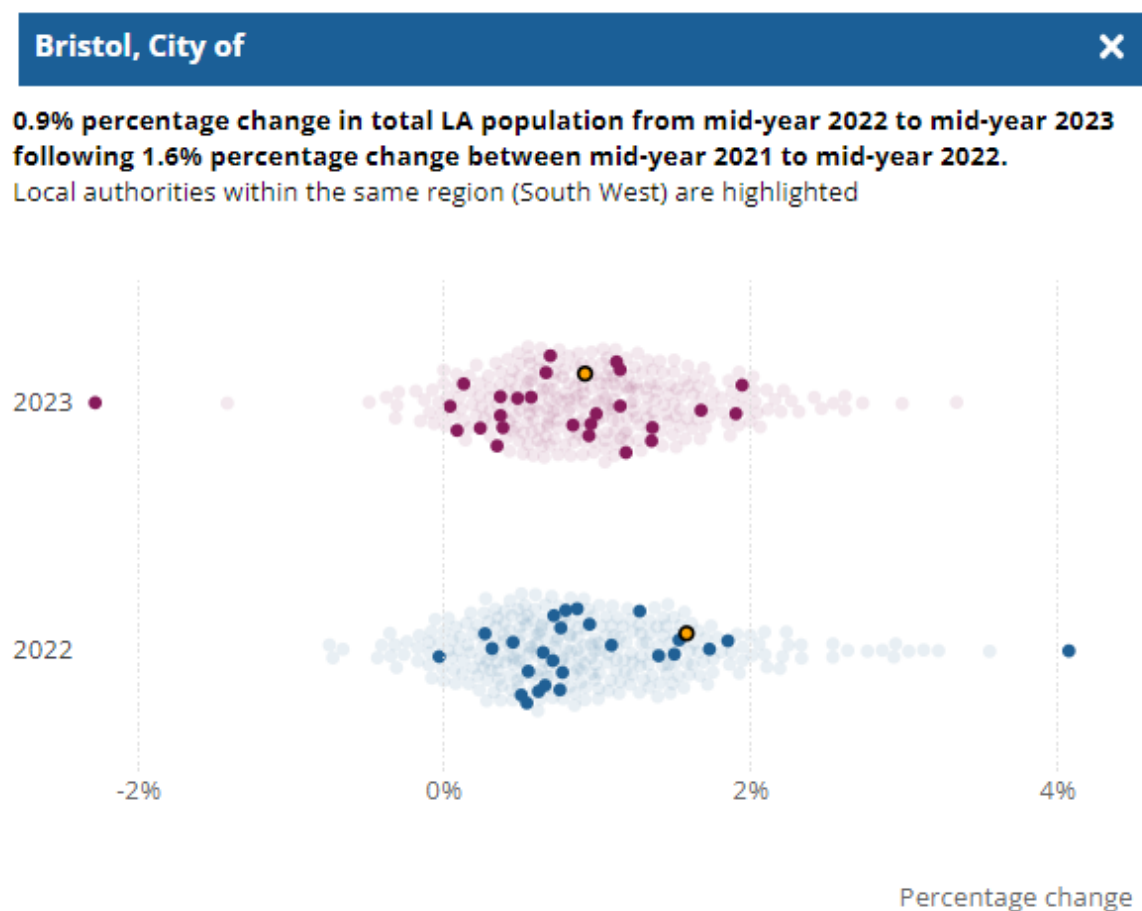


4.2 In the 12 months to mid-2023, the population of Bristol grew by 4,362 (0.9%) up from 478,600 (mid-2022). The main factor behind this growth was the continuing increase in international migration including students and people coming from abroad to work.

4.3 Figure 5 shows the growth in Bristol's population 2021-22 and 2022-23 compared to all other local authorities in England and Wales. The South West outlier in mid-2022 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 and mid-2022 to mid-2023

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



Yellow = Bristol local authority

Highlighted = South West local authorities

4.4 Over the last decade (2013-2023) Bristol was the second fastest growing of all the Core Cities in England and Wales after Manchester, whose population increased by 13.5% (Table 2). Bristol's population grew by an estimated 44,000 people over the decade – a 10.0% increase. England and Wales grew by 6.8%.

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.

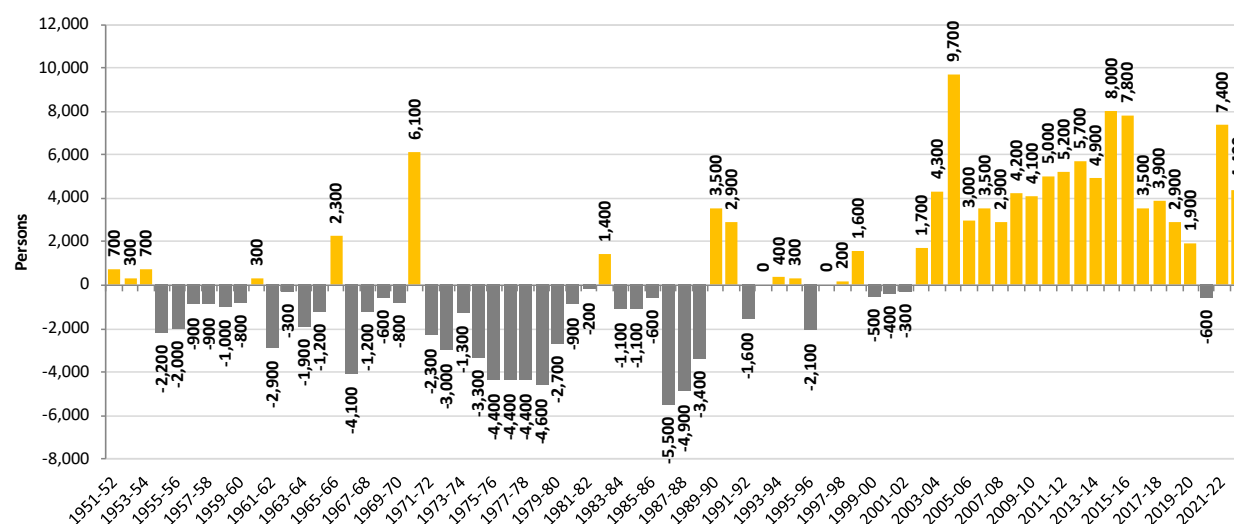
Table 2. Population estimates 2013-2023 West of England and Core Cities

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

Area	mid-2013	mid-2023	change mid-2013-2023	% change
Bath & NE Somerset	178,700	199,800	21,100	11.8
Bristol	439,000	483,000	44,000	10.0
North Somerset	206,400	221,100	14,700	7.1
South Gloucestershire	268,200	299,400	31,300	11.7
West of England	1,092,300	1,203,400	111,100	10.2
West of England Combined Authority	885,900	982,300	96,400	10.9
Core Cities				
Birmingham	1,094,500	1,166,000	71,500	6.5
Cardiff	350,000	383,500	33,600	9.6
Leeds	764,400	829,400	65,000	8.5
Liverpool	465,800	503,700	37,900	8.1
Manchester	510,800	579,900	69,100	13.5
Newcastle upon Tyne	284,400	312,000	27,600	9.7
Nottingham	308,700	329,300	20,600	6.7
Sheffield	555,300	573,300	18,000	3.2
England and Wales	56,989,700	60,854,700	3,865,000	6.8

Figure 6. Bristol annual population change 1951 to 2023

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 7,400 people and to mid-2023 with an increase of 4,400 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-2013 by broad age band and Figure 7 shows the change by five year age band.

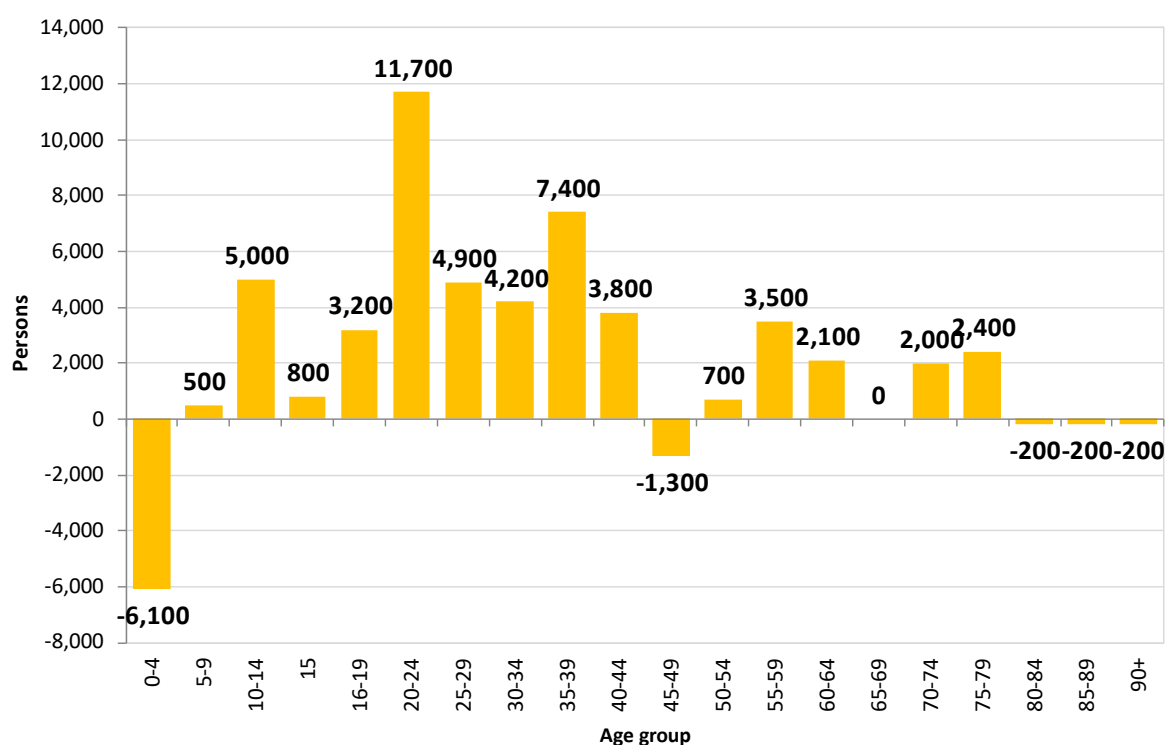
Table 3. Bristol population change by broad age band 2013 to 2023

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

Broad age band	Mid-2013	Mid-2023	% share of total population	Change 2013-23	% change 2013-23
0-15 years	81,644	81,759	16.9	115	0.1
16-24 years	64,844	79,702	16.5	14,858	22.9
25-49 years	169,572	188,563	39.0	18,991	11.2
50-64 years	64,967	71,296	14.8	6,329	9.7
65 and over	57,957	61,678	12.8	3,721	6.4
All ages	438,984	482,998	100.0	44,014	10.0

Figure 7. Bristol population change by five year age band 2013 to 2023

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



Children

4.8 Over the decade, the overall number of children living in Bristol increased by just 115 (0.1%), much lower than the England and Wales increase of 4.3%. However, there are different trends for different ages of children.

4.9 Between 2013-2023, the number of children aged under 5 years old in Bristol fell by 6,140 (-20%). Over the same period, the number of children aged 5-9 years increased by +1.8% and the number of 10-15 years increased by +23%. 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

4.10 The working age population in Bristol has increased by 40,200 people (+13.4%) since 2013 compared to an increase of just 5% in England and Wales as a whole.

4.11 In Bristol, the greatest increase was in the number of 19-23 year olds, with this age group growing by 12,100 (+28.3%) over the decade; nationally this age group fell by 5.5%. The population increase in this 5 year age band alone accounted for more than a quarter (27%) of the overall population increase in Bristol between 2013 and 2023.

Older people

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

4.13 Overall, over the decade 2013-23 the number of older people aged 65 and over in Bristol increased by just 6.4%, a much lower increase than in England and Wales where there was a 16.0% increase in the number of older people. Within this large age group, the number of older people aged 65-79 years in Bristol grew by 4,390 (+10.8%), whilst the number aged 80 years and over fell by 669 (-3.8%). Nationally, the number of people aged 65-79 increased by 16.2% and those aged 80 and over by 15.4%.

COMPONENTS OF POPULATION CHANGE

4.14 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'.

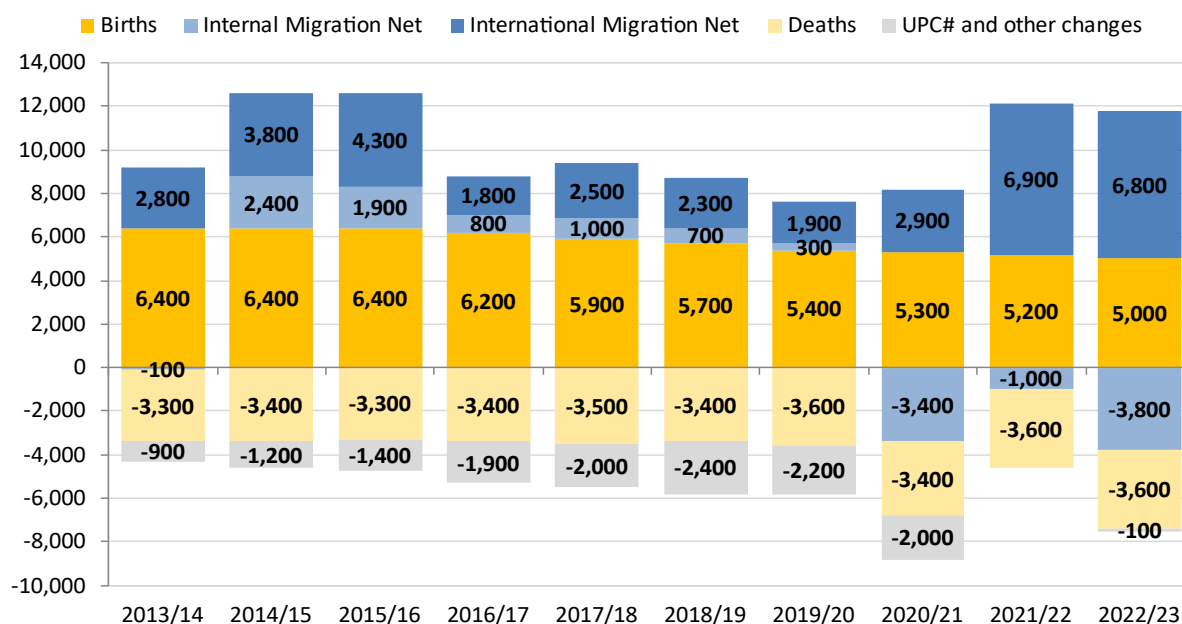
4.15 Following the Census in 2021, ONS revised the population trend between 2011 and 2021 to bring it in line with the Census 2021 results. The revised population estimates for Bristol are higher than those previously published from mid-2011 up until the Covid-19 pandemic. The main change to the Bristol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

4.16 Not all of the change between censuses can be explained by natural change or migration. Unattributable Population Change (UPC) is the remaining population change that can be seen between the census-based and the rolled-forward population estimates, which cannot be explained by any of the components of change.

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 8. Components of population change in Bristol 2013/14 to 2022/23

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



Unattributable Population Change (change not attributed to a specific cause) and other changes to special populations including prisoner, armed forces and their overseas based dependent populations

Table 4. Components of population change in Bristol 2018/19 to 2022/23

Numbers may not add to total due to rounding

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

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Births	5,700	5,400	5,300	5,200	5,000
Deaths	3,400	3,600	3,400	3,600	3,600
Natural Change	2,300	1,900	1,900	1,500	1,400
Internal Migration In	40,500	37,300	42,000	41,000	38,700
Internal Migration Out	39,900	37,000	45,400	42,000	42,500
Internal Migration Net	700	300	-3,400	-1,000	-3,800
International Migration In	9,900	9,000	7,200	12,500	13,100
International Migration Out	7,600	7,100	4,300	5,700	6,300
International Migration Net	2,300	1,900	2,900	6,900	6,800
UPC# and other changes	-2,400	-2,200	-2,000	0	-100
Migration & Other changes	600	100	-2,500	5,800	3,000

Unattributable Population Change (change not attributed to a specific cause) and other changes to special populations including prisoner, armed forces and their overseas based dependent populations

4.17 Unattributable population change is a normal feature of rebasing the population estimates following a census and represents uncertainty affecting the components and the base population estimates. UPC is allocated across the decade to create a plausible distribution of change.

4.18 Over the decade 2011 to 2021, Bristol had an Unattributable Population Change estimate of just over 14,000 people (around 10,000 males and 4,000 females). This means that the ONS mid-year population estimates rolled forward to mid-2021 based on the 2011 Census would result in a population estimate 14,000 higher than the mid-2021 population estimate based on the results of the Census 2021.

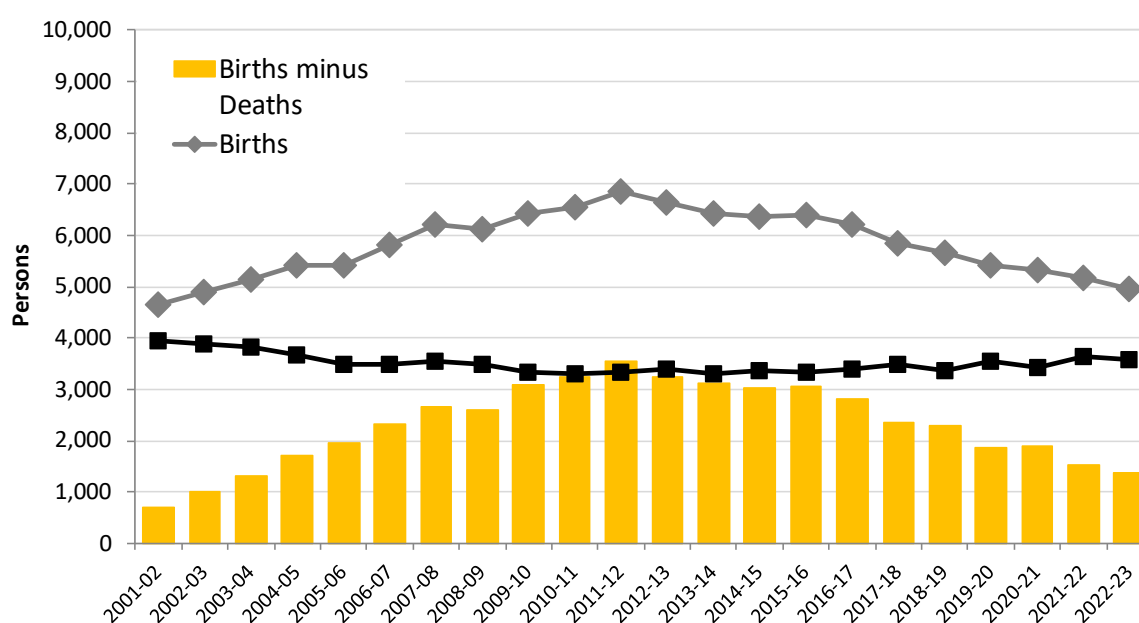
BIRTHS AND DEATHS

4.19 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 (2013-2023) in Bristol, there were a total of 57,800 births and 34,450 deaths, resulting in a population increase of 23,350 due to natural change alone. Natural change accounted for just over half (53%) of the total population change in Bristol over the decade. In the 12 months to mid-2023 however, natural change accounted for just a third (32%) of the population change in Bristol.

4.20 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 2023 (calendar year) the number of births fell to 4,771, a fall of 30% since the recent peak in 2012 and the lowest number since 2002. 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-2023

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



4.21 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.

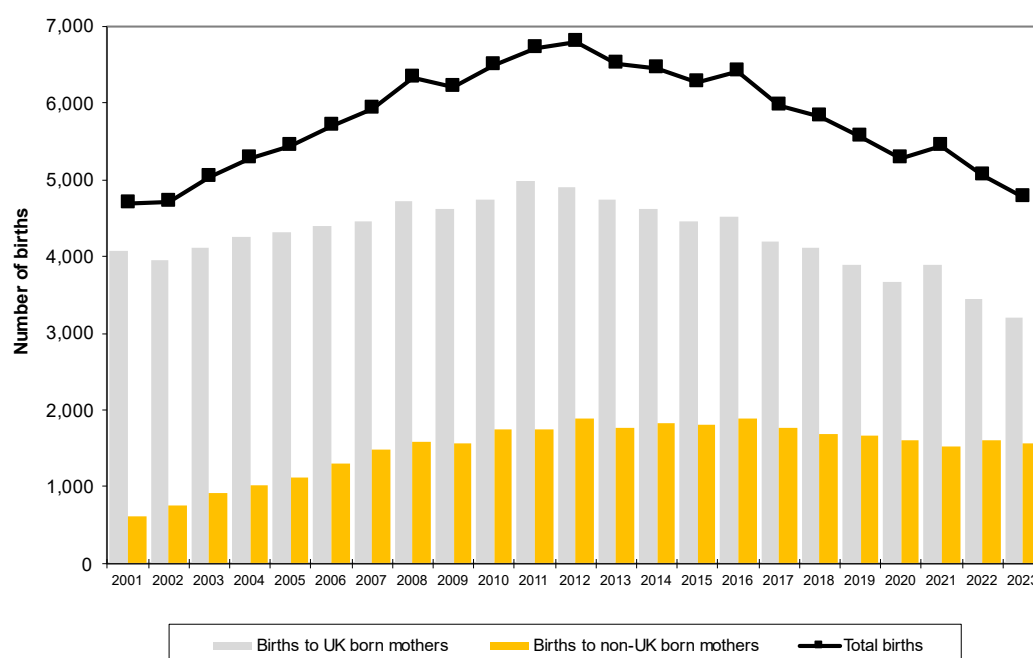
4.22 The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) for England and Wales dropped to 1.44 children per woman in 2023, its lowest value since records began in 1938³. The Total Fertility Rate in Bristol in 2023 was 1.14 children per woman, down from 1.22 in 2022.

4.23 The average age of mothers at childbirth in England and Wales in 2023 was 30.9 years. The average age of mothers in Bristol is older than nationally at 33.0 years.

4.24 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.

Figure 10. Live births by mother's country of birth Bristol 2001-23

Source: ONS Annual District Birth data by calendar year



4.25 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 live births in Bristol to non-UK born mothers has increased from 13% in 2001 to 32.7% in 2023.

4.26 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.

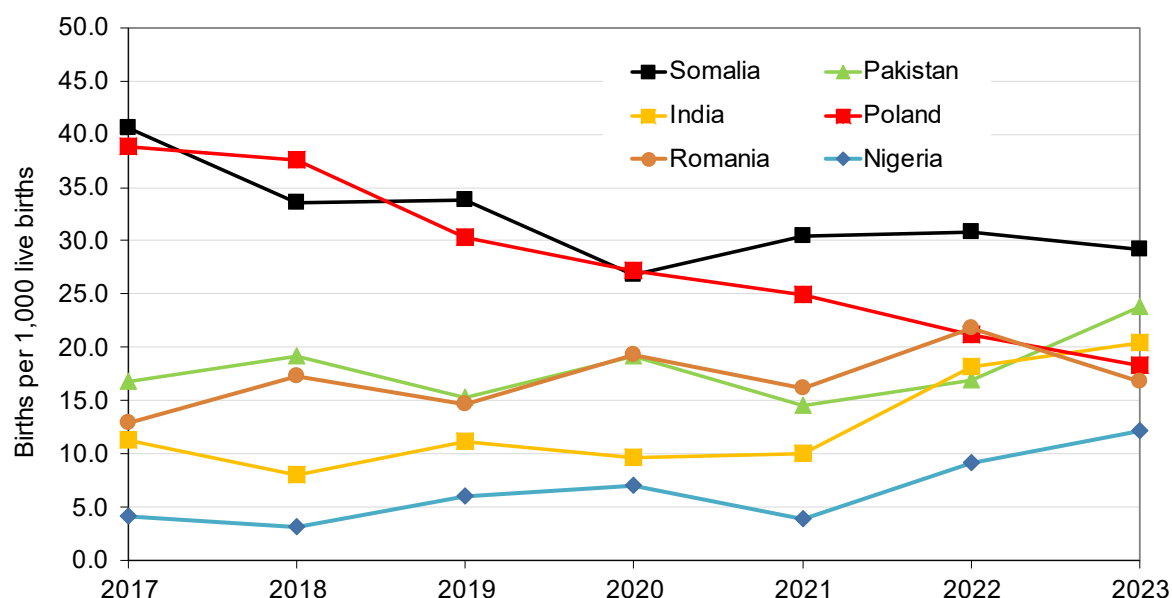
³ [ONS Statistical Bulletin: Births in England and Wales: 2023](#)

⁴ [ONS Statistical Bulletin: Births by parents' country of birth, England and Wales: 2023](#)

4.27 Statistics are also available on the country of birth of the mother. Figure 11 shows the number of live births per thousand births in Bristol since 2017 for the top six countries (not including UK born mothers).

Figure 11. Births to non-UK born mothers per thousand live births in Bristol 2017-2023
Six highest countries of birth

Source: Public Health, Bristol City Council based on NHS Digital birth registrations data



4.28 Births to Somalia-born mothers are the highest of all non-UK countries but continue to fall as this group of migrants gets older. Births to Poland-born mothers are also declining, whilst births to Romanian-born mothers increased post Covid but the latest data shows that the numbers have since fallen.

4.29 Mirroring the changing population trends in the years since Covid (see Migration section), births to Indian, Pakistani, and Nigerian-born mothers have risen for the last two years.

4.30 The six countries shown in figure 11 clearly reflect the change from mainly EU migrants coming to Bristol up until 2021 to now mainly non-EU migrants who have come to Bristol to study or work.

MIGRATION - NATIONAL CONTEXT

4.31 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.

4.32 Before the pandemic, migration was relatively stable, but patterns and behaviours have shifted 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

4.33 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.

4.34 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.

4.35 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 trend⁶.

MIGRATION – BRISTOL CONTEXT

4.36 Over the last decade, the population of Bristol has increased by 20,700 people due to overall net migration and other changes⁷, accounting for 47% of the total 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

4.37 Net international migration was the largest component of population change in Bristol in the 12 months to mid-2023. For the second consecutive year since the expansion of the EU in 2004/5, net international migration was almost 5 times higher than natural change (births minus deaths) and the highest net international migration in almost two decades (figure 12).

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

⁶ [Long-term international migration, provisional: year ending December 2023](#)

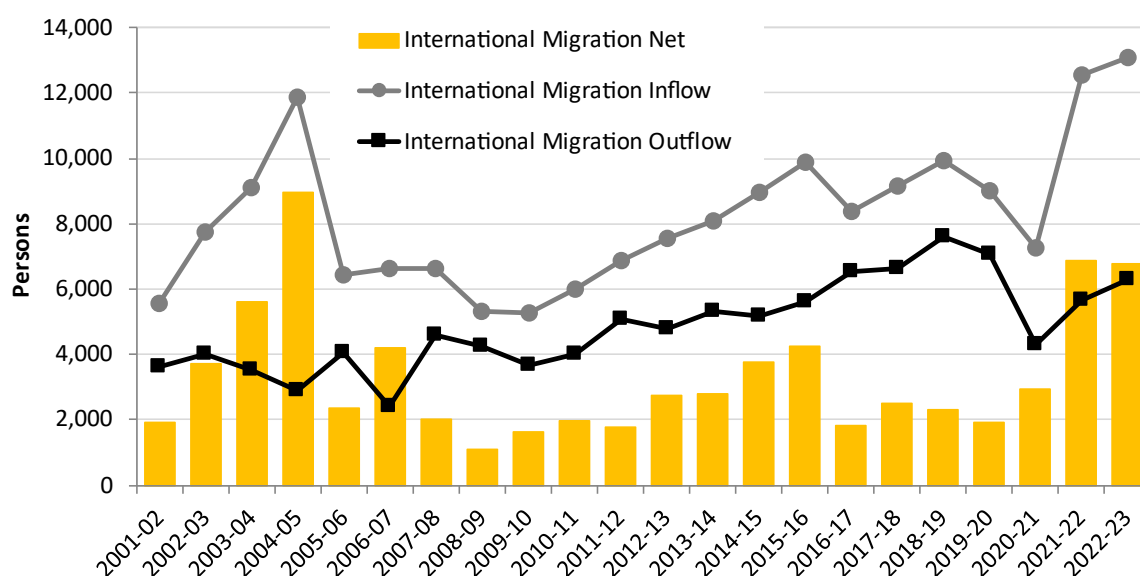
⁷ Other changes include Unattributable Population Change

4.38 In the 12 months to mid-2023, there were 13,100 international in-migrants and 6,300 international out-migrants, a net gain of 6,800 people. The majority of the change was due to people aged 18-39 years, accounting for 70% of the overall net gain due to international migration.

4.39 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.

Figure 12. International migration in Bristol mid-2001 to mid-2023

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



4.40 Notably, Bristol has seen a significant rise in the number of in-migrants from India in the last 3 years, plus other countries including China, Nigeria, Pakistan and Ukraine (for more information on individual countries see section on National Insurance Number registrations).

Internal migration

4.41 Since 2011, both the number of people moving out of Bristol to other parts of the UK and the number of people moving into Bristol from other parts of the UK have gradually increased resulting in an increasingly transient population.

4.42 For the last three years, the long-term trend of little net change annually due to internal migration has altered, with more people now moving out of Bristol than moving into Bristol from other parts of the UK. The 12 months to mid-2023 saw a net loss of 3,800 people (Figure 13).

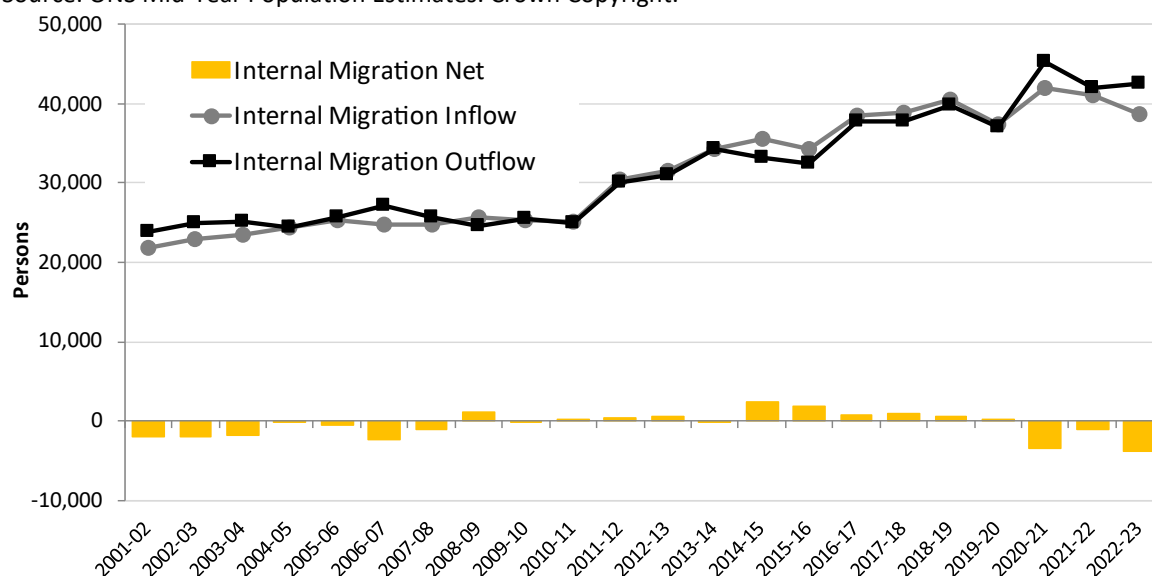
4.43 All age groups saw a net loss except 18-21 year olds, where there was a large net gain, with 10,800 in-migrants aged 18-21 years from other parts of the UK and 5,200 out-

migrants aged 18-21 years resulting in a net gain of 5,600 people in this age group alone. The largest losses due to net internal migration were in the 30-44 year age group and babies (under 1 year).

4.44 In 2021-22, the main moves to/from Bristol were to/from 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 13. Internal migration in Bristol mid-2001 to mid-2023

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



4.45 It is important to note that the flows of people moving in and out of Bristol to other parts of the UK are considerably greater than the numbers of international migrants to and from Bristol. In the 12 months to mid-2023, 38,700 people moved into Bristol from other areas of UK whilst 42,500 moved out of Bristol to other areas of UK. In contrast, 13,100 people moved into Bristol from outside the UK and 6,300 people moved out of Bristol to go abroad.

4.46 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 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

4.47 Figure 14 and Table 5 show population change between 2012 and 2022 by ward. The areas of highest population growth have been in central areas of Bristol.

4.48 Whilst there have been increases in population across all wards over the decade, by far the greatest increases have been in Central ward where the population has increased by 7,750 people (+61%) and Hotwells and Harbourside ward with an increase of +33%.

Figure 14. Population change 2012 to 2022 (revised) by ward

Source: Mid-2012 and Mid-2022 revised population estimates ONS © Crown Copyright 2024

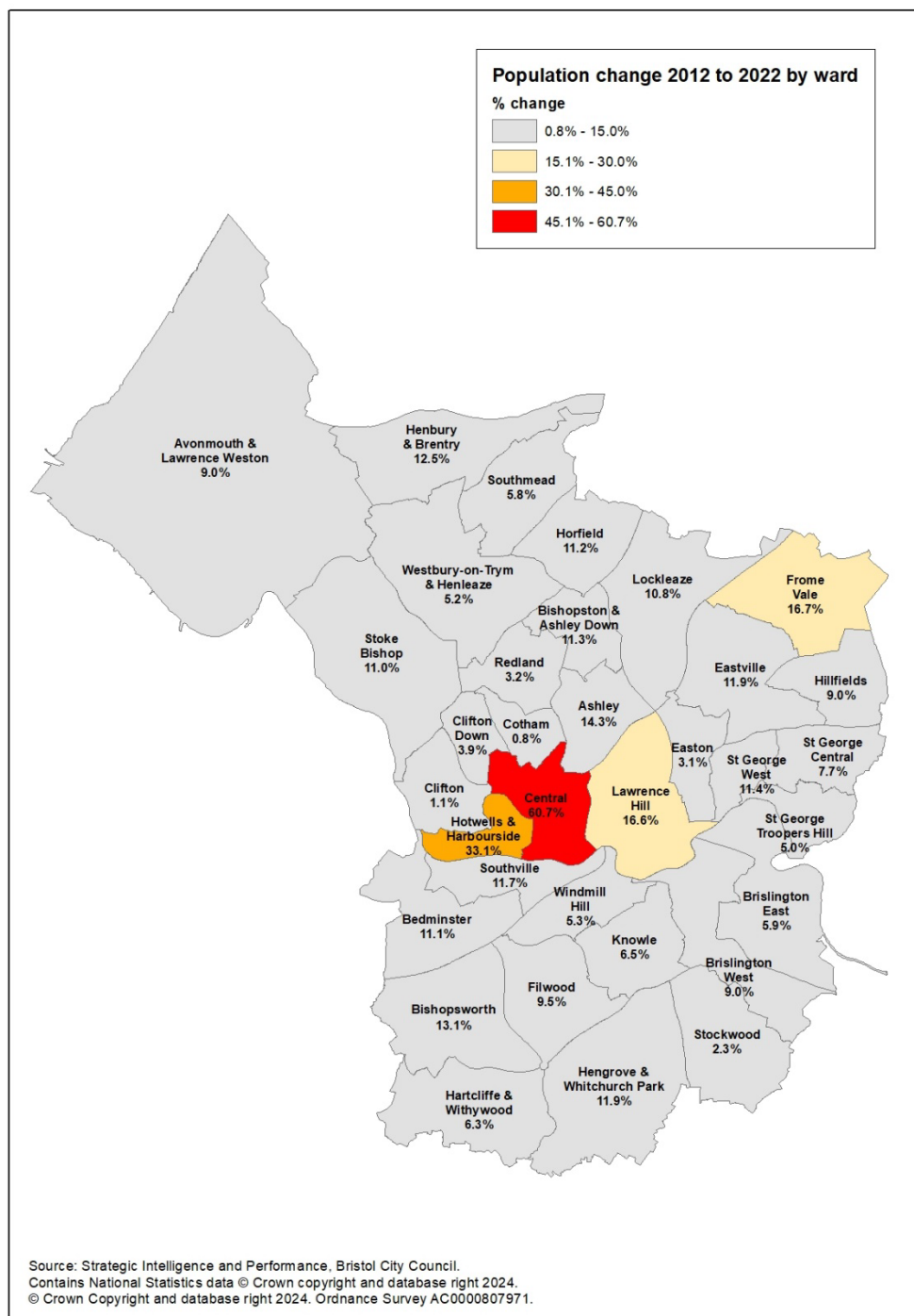


Table 5. Population estimates 2012-2022 (revised) by ward

Source: Mid-2012 and Mid-2022 revised population estimates ONS © Crown Copyright 2024

Ward	2012	2022	Change 2012-2022	
			number	%
Central	12,764	20,511	7,747	60.7
Hotwells & Harbourside	4,839	6,441	1,602	33.1
Frome Vale	12,357	14,421	2,064	16.7
Lawrence Hill	17,209	20,067	2,858	16.6
Ashley	18,214	20,826	2,612	14.3
Bishopsworth	10,940	12,369	1,429	13.1
Henbury & Brentry	11,856	13,334	1,478	12.5
Eastville	13,282	14,858	1,576	11.9
Hengrove & Whitchurch Park	17,191	19,230	2,039	11.9
Southville	11,491	12,831	1,340	11.7
St George West	6,245	6,956	711	11.4
Bishopston & Ashley Down	11,817	13,156	1,339	11.3
Horfield	12,514	13,911	1,397	11.2
Bedminster	11,583	12,866	1,283	11.1
Stoke Bishop	12,017	13,337	1,320	11.0
Lockleaze	12,148	13,459	1,311	10.8
Filwood	13,008	14,239	1,231	9.5
Hillfields	12,167	13,268	1,101	9.0
Brislington West	10,884	11,865	981	9.0
Avonmouth & Lawrence Weston	20,402	22,228	1,826	9.0
St George Central	12,046	12,971	925	7.7
Knowle	13,260	14,117	857	6.5
Hartcliffe & Withywood	17,961	19,096	1,135	6.3
Brislington East	11,480	12,159	679	5.9
Southmead	12,561	13,286	725	5.8
Windmill Hill	13,072	13,759	687	5.3
Westbury-on-Trym & Henleaze	19,667	20,699	1,032	5.2
St George Troopers Hill	6,109	6,417	308	5.0
Clifton Down	11,150	11,585	435	3.9
Redland	13,008	13,428	420	3.2
Easton	13,780	14,205	425	3.1
Stockwood	11,704	11,969	265	2.3
Clifton	13,031	13,170	139	1.1
Cotham	11,507	11,602	95	0.8
Bristol	433,264	478,636	45,372	10.5

5. POPULATION PROJECTIONS

UNCERTAINTY OF POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD PROJECTIONS

New ONS 2022-based population projections will be published in Spring 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, 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 15 shows the population trend in Bristol between mid-2011 and mid-2023, alongside the 2011 Census and 2021 Census results, together with the 2018-based population projections.

5.5 Figure 16 shows levels of annual population change between 2001 to 2023 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 15. Population trend 2011 to 2031

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

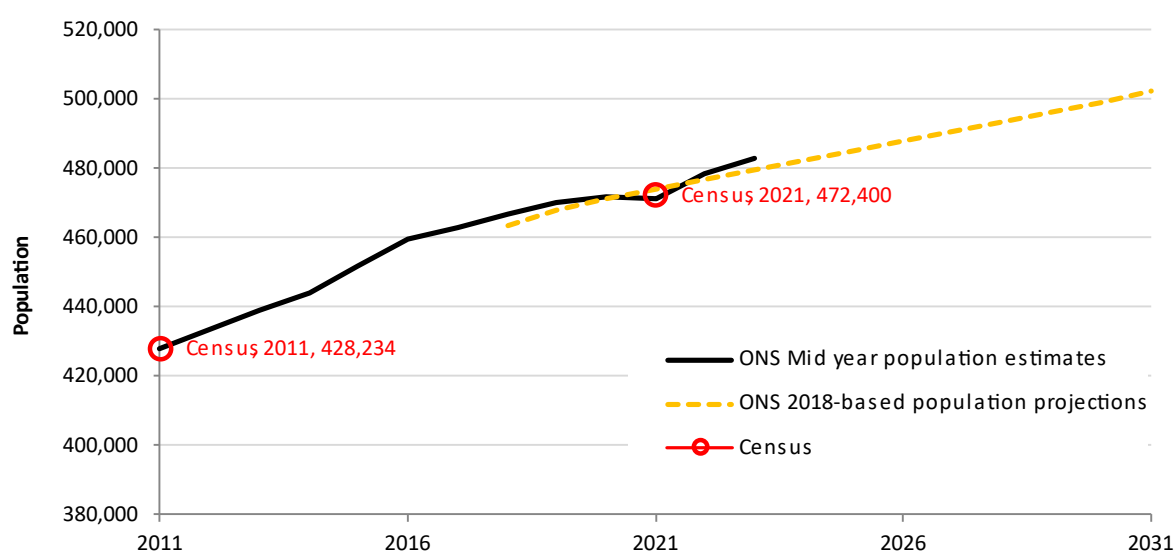
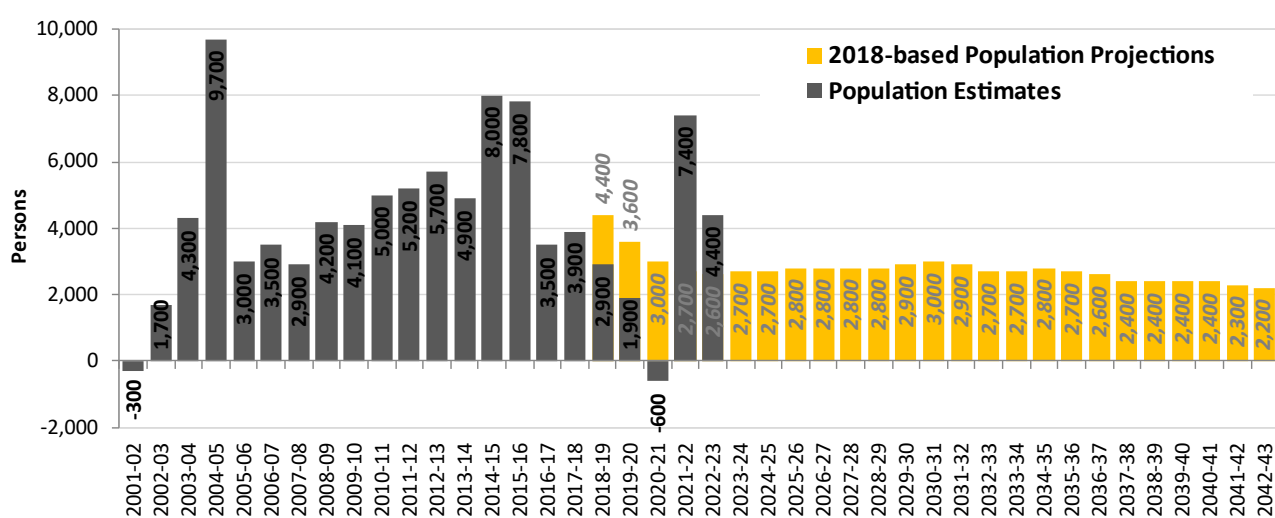


Figure 16. Annual population change 2001-2043

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 was lower than the 2018-based projected trend up to mid-2021 but has been higher in the last two years.

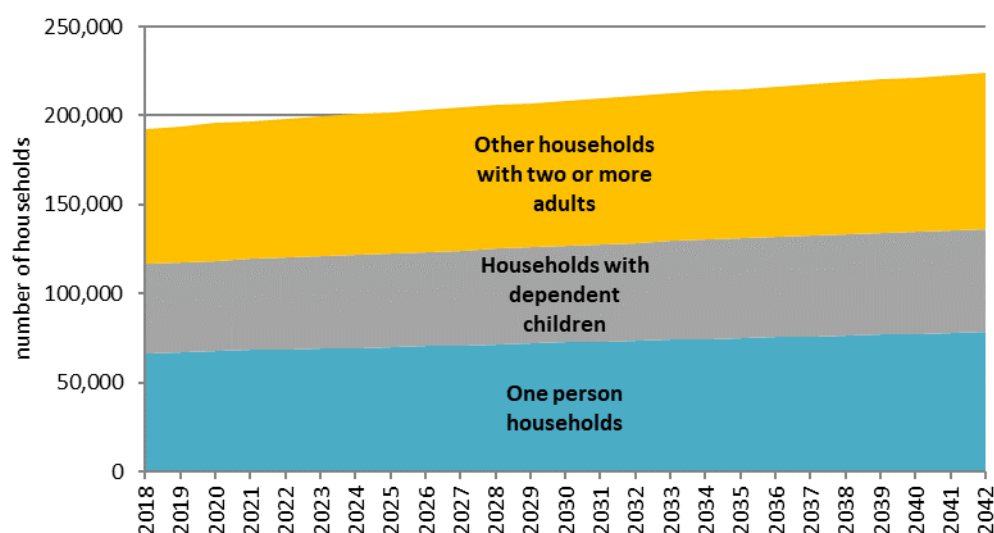
5.7 Between 2018 and 2023, births in Bristol have been lower each year than the projected trend, whilst deaths have been higher. Net international migration meanwhile, has been considerably higher than projected, especially in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

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 17. 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 17).

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.

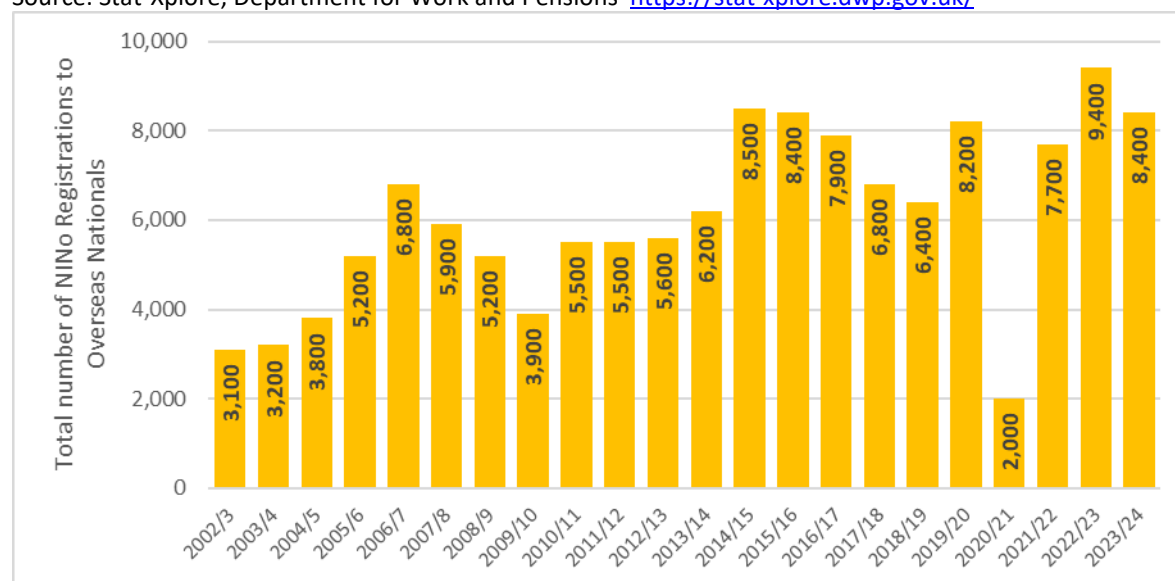
NATIONAL INSURANCE NUMBER REGISTRATIONS (NINOS)

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 18. Total National Insurance Registrations in Bristol for non-UK Nationals 2002/3-2023/24

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

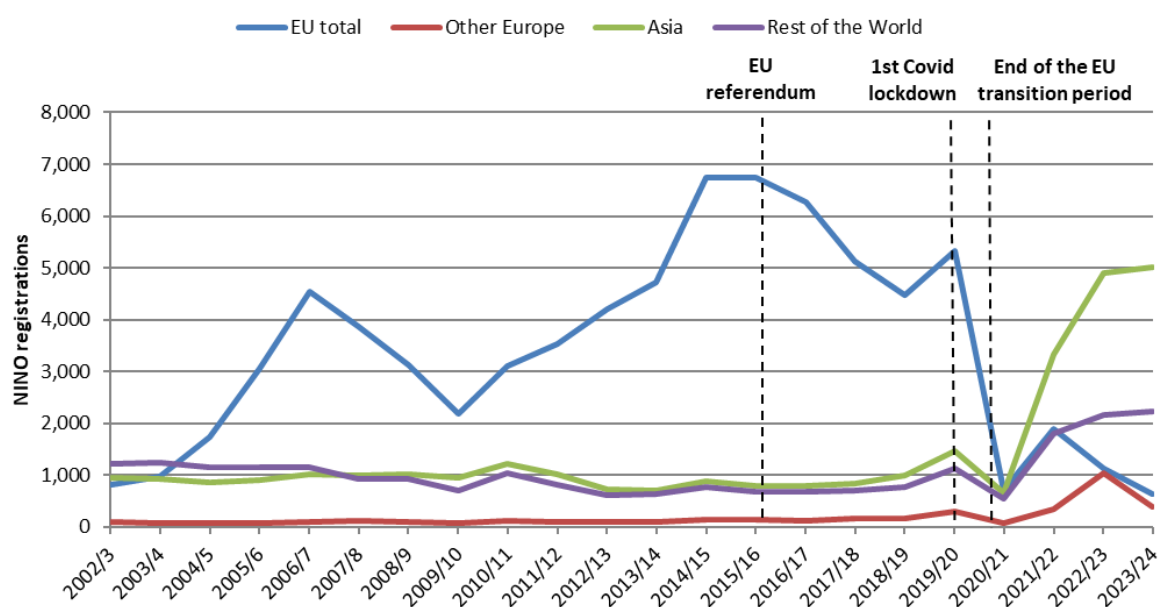


6.4 Figure 18 shows that the total number of NINO registrations in Bristol each year since 2002/3. Following the expansion of the EU in 2004, the number of registrations increased up to 2006/7. Numbers again increased reaching a peak at 8,500 registrations in 2014/15. A sharp drop in registrations can be seen in 2020/21 during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the three years since, registrations have returned to pre-pandemic levels. In 2023/24 there were 8,400 registrations – slightly lower than in 2022/23 which saw the largest 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 19 shows the trend in Bristol registrations of EU nationals, other Europe nationals, Asian nationals and people from the rest of the World.

Figure 19. National Insurance Registrations for non-UK Nationals in Bristol 2002/3-2023/24 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 20 shows countries with a total of 1,000 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.

Figure 20. National Insurance Registrations for non-UK Nationals in Bristol
Countries with a total of 1,000 or more NI registrations since 2009/10

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

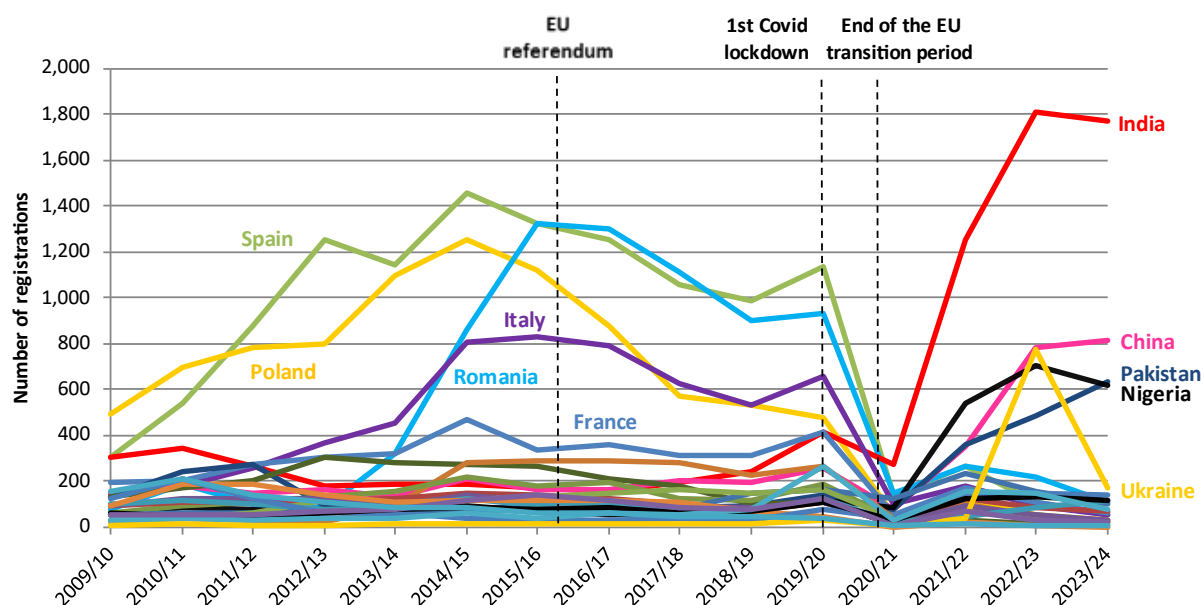
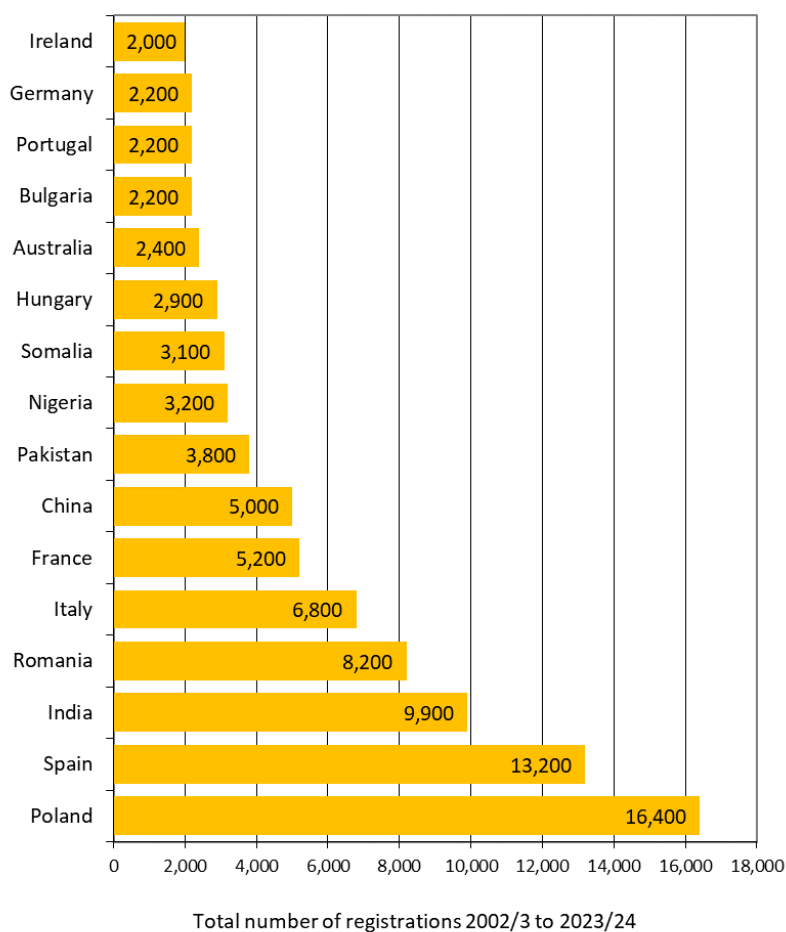


Figure 21. National Insurance Registrations for non-UK Nationals by Nationality in Bristol
Chart only shows countries with more than 2,000 registrations in total since 2002/3

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



6.8 Following the Covid pandemic and the end of the EU transition period, NINo registrations in Bristol have been dominated by registrations of Indian nationals. In 2023/24 there was almost 1,800 registrations by Indian nationals alone, accounting for more than a fifth (21%) of all registrations in Bristol in the 12 month period. High numbers of NINo registrations were also made by people from China (814), Pakistan (630) and Nigeria (617).

6.9 In total between 2002/3 and 2023/24, almost 133,700 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 (13,200) nationals. Other countries with more than 5,000 allocations over this time period include: India 9,900, Romania 8,200, Italy 6,800 and France 5,200 (Figure 21). Overall, people registering for a NI number in Bristol come from more than 140 different countries.

STUDENTS

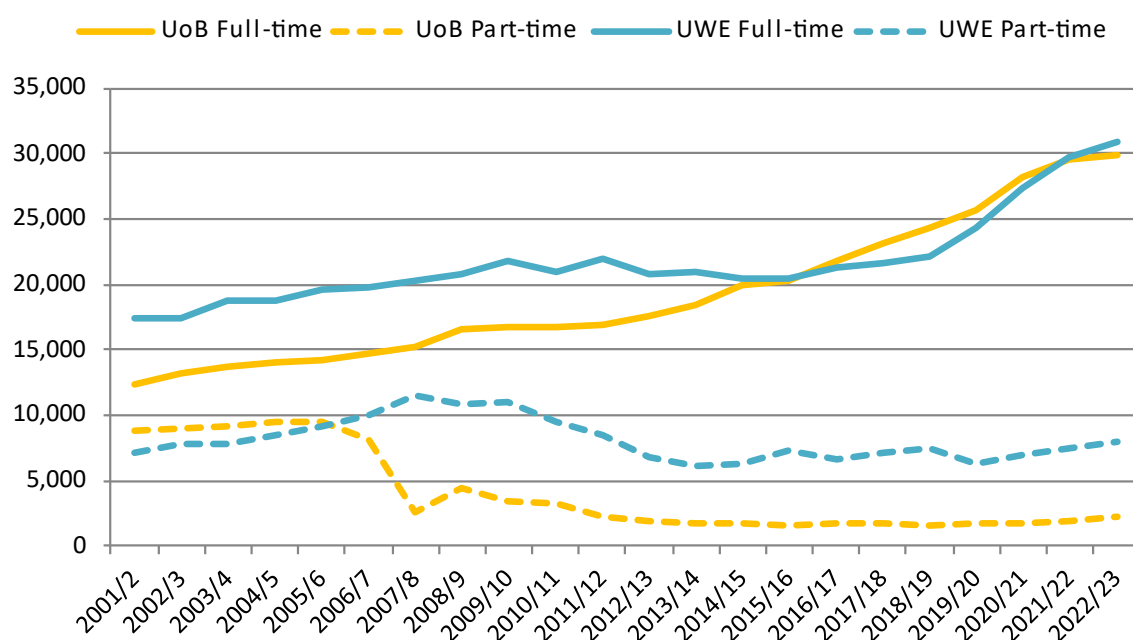
University registrations

6.10 In 2022/23 there were 70,920 students in total registered at the two main Bristol universities - 32,100 at the University of Bristol and 38,820 at the University of the West of England (UWE). *Not all of the university students registered live in the Bristol local authority area.*

6.11 In the 10 years up to 2022/23 university student numbers increased by 51% (+24,000). The majority of this increase can be accounted for by an increase in full time students at both universities (Figure 22).

Figure 22. Higher Education students at the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England

Source: Higher Education Statistics Authority 2024



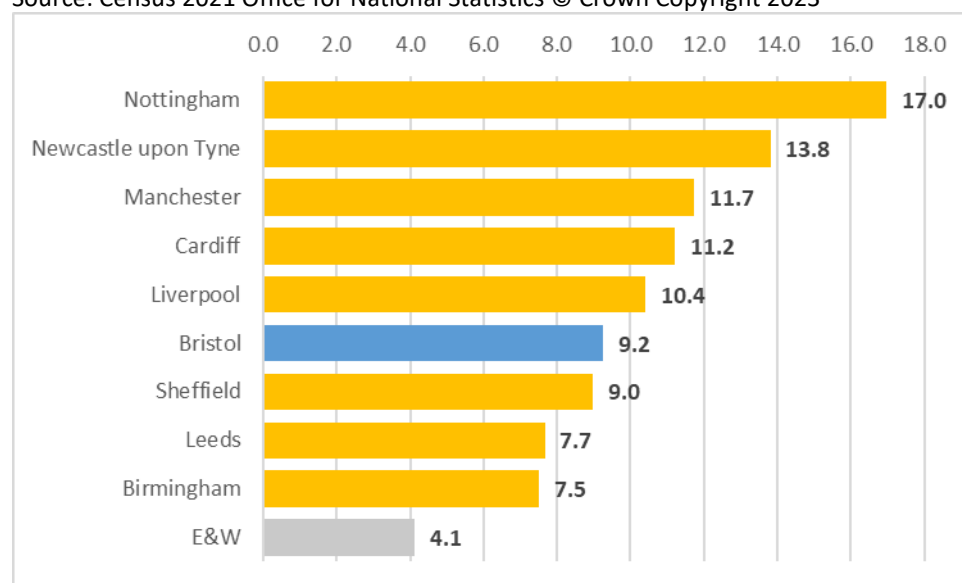
6.12 The number of overseas students studying at the two Bristol universities has tripled over a twenty year period and now make up more than a quarter (27%) of all university students. Of these, 3% come from EU countries and the remaining 24% come from countries outside of the EU.

Full-time students living in Bristol during term-time

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

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



6.14 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.

6.15 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 23).

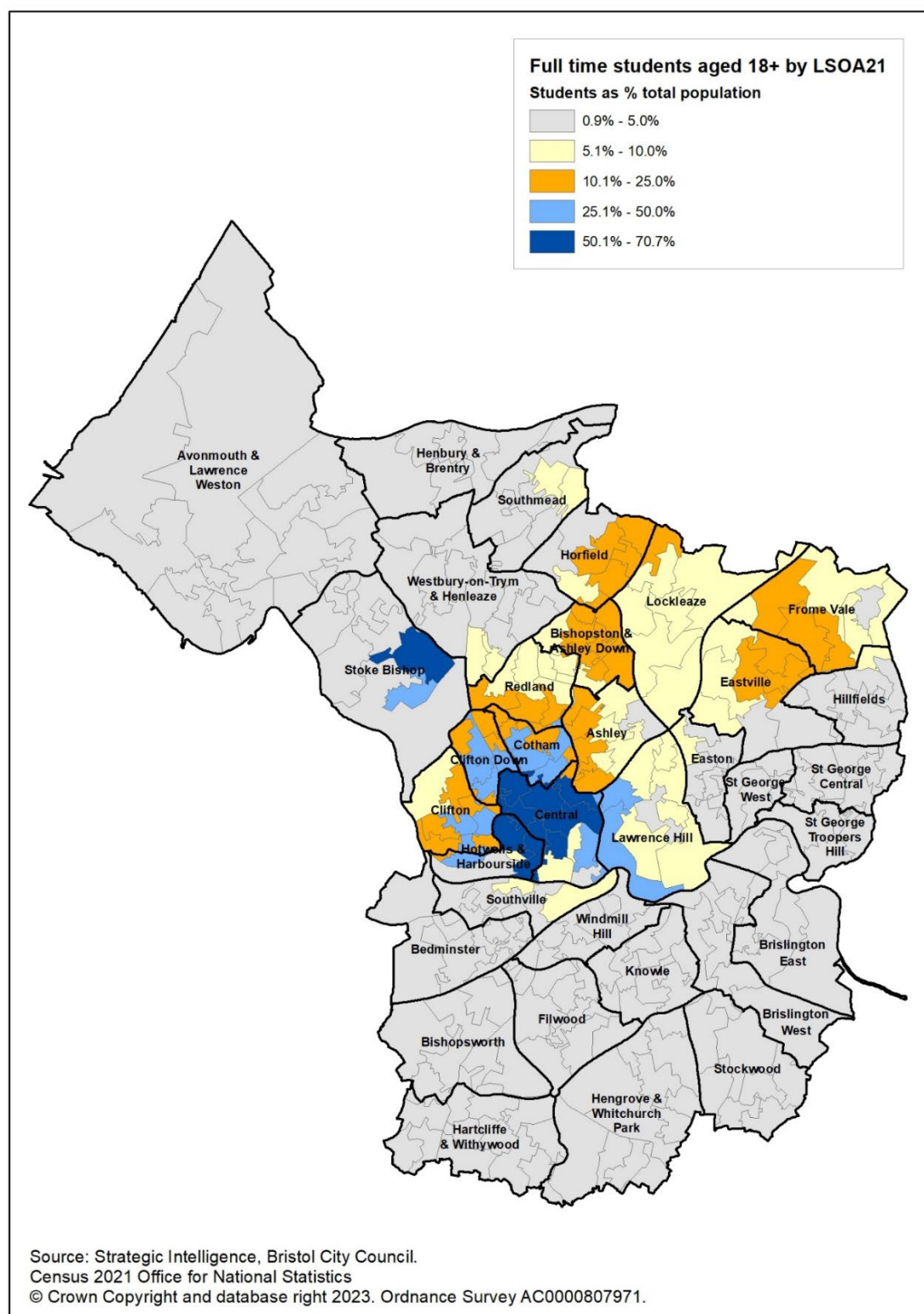
6.16 Students living in Bristol are concentrated in particular areas of the city. More than half (52%) of all full-time students aged 18 and over live in just six wards and account for more than a fifth of the total ward population, including:

- 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%)

6.17 Figure 24 maps students as a percentage of the total population by small neighbourhood (Lower Layer Super Output Area⁸).

Figure 24. Full-time students aged 18 and over living in Bristol during term-time

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



⁸ 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.

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 long-term health conditions, 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 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.

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

The 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, Disabled population, sexual orientation, Trans population, Somali population and older people. 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 dashboards:

1. Headline Census 2021 results for Bristol overall in the **Census 2021 Dashboard**
2. 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](#) and are also 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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