

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2023/24

Fuel Poverty

Summary points

- 12.8% (approximately 25,450 households) of all households in Bristol are living in fuel poverty¹
- The sharp rise in energy prices in 2022 is likely to result in more households being pushed into fuel poverty. There has been an increase in people seeking support with energy bills and debt

Background

Fuel poverty is a term that is typically used to describe a person on a low income who's struggling to afford their energy costs. The drivers of fuel poverty are low income, poor energy efficiency and high energy prices.

Living in fuel poverty and experiencing a cold home have been shown to have a significant impact on mental and physical health including:

- increased blood pressure
- suppression of the immune system
- increased airway constriction and mucus production in the lungs
- mental health effects from depression
- reduced educational and employment attainment

Several large-scale evidence reviews have suggested that living in a cold home and coping with unaffordable fuel bills can have significant adverse implications for a range of outcomes, including health, educational and social outcome²³⁴.

Fuel poverty is measured using the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) indicator*. Under this indicator, a household is considered fuel poor if:

- they are living in a property with an energy efficiency rating of band D or below **and**
- when they spend the required amount to heat their home, they are left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

*This definition replaces the Low Income High Costs (LIHC) definition of fuel poverty which does not take account of energy efficiency. EPC ratings can often be inaccurate due to issues with quality control in the industry and does not take account of if a heating system in a property is broken, faulty or not being used. Finally, there is evidence of some very low income households living in EPC C rated homes still struggling to afford their fuel bills. These households face the same negative outcomes, but the root cause is related to a broader context of poverty, not specific to fuel. We recognise households living in poverty who are not covered by this definition still experience the same impacts from living in cold homes, please see the action plan for more details (see page 3).

¹ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), 2023. Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics Report 2023

² Marmot Review Team. 2011. The Health Impacts of Cold Homes and Fuel Poverty.

³ Centre for Sustainable Energy, 2016. Understanding the Characteristics of Low Income Households Most at Risk from Living in Cold Homes.

⁴ NICE. 2015. Excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes.

National picture

Between the 2021 and 2022 fuel poverty datasets gas & electricity prices rose by 45% in real terms. The energy price cap increased in April 2022 by 54% to £1,971 and following the introduction of the Energy Price Guarantee in October 2022, the typical bill increased to £2,500⁵. This increase has been partially offset through a range of government support.

The sharp rise in energy prices in 2022 is likely to result in more households being pushed into fuel poverty which will not be reflected in this data. As part of the cost of living crisis monitoring, we know that there has been an increase in people seeking support with energy bills and debt.

National data

Based on the LILEE definition, there are an estimated 25,450 fuel poor households in Bristol, representing 12.8% of all households (BEIS, 2023)⁶. This is lower than the rate for England (13.1%), as shown in Figure 1 (below).

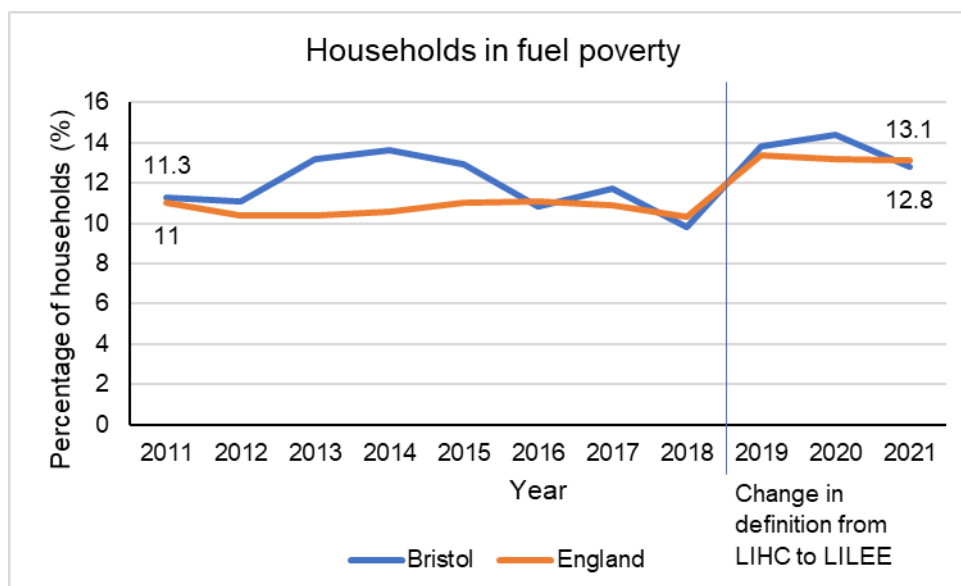


Figure 1: Percentage of households in Fuel Poverty in Bristol (data 2011 – 2018 based on Low Income High Cost (LIHC) metric, data 2019 onwards based on Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) metric)

Source: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), 2023. Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics Report 2023 (2021 Data).

Local data

The Quality of Life survey also provides insight into fuel poverty in Bristol⁷. In 2022:

- 48% extremely or moderately worried about keeping their home warm this winter, rising to 62% in most deprived areas
- 84% of residents were satisfied with the state of repair of their home, reducing to 77% in most deprived areas
- 10% found it difficult to manage financially, rising to 18% in most deprived areas

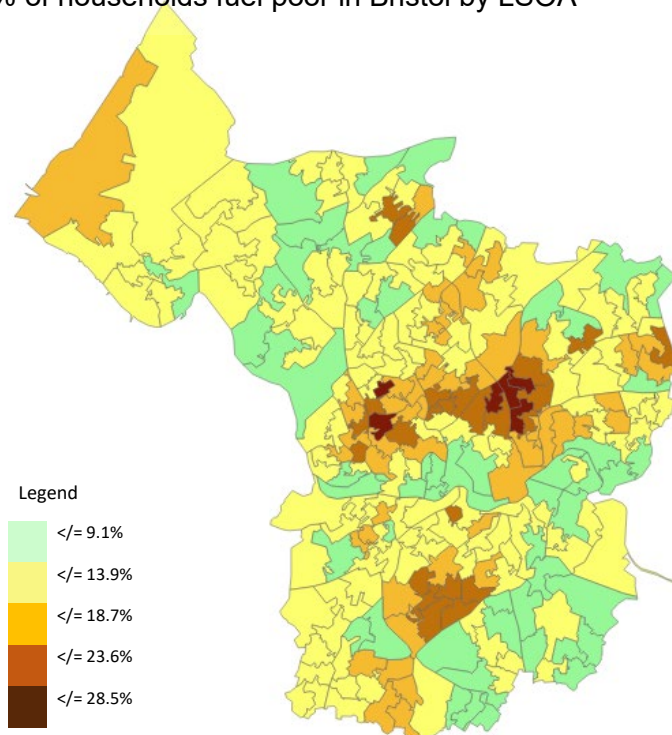
⁵ Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) 2023 Fuel Poverty Statistics report for England

⁶ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), 2022. Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics Report 2022 (2020 Data).

⁷ Quality of Life survey data, Bristol City Council (2023)

Fuel Poverty 2023 (2021 data)

% of households fuel poor in Bristol by LSOA



As displayed in Figure 2, the distribution of fuel poor households varies across the city. A large cluster can be seen around Cotham, Bishopston and Clifton.

The wards showing the highest proportions of fuel poor households contain areas with large student populations and more affluent areas around the centre with old Georgian homes. This is like because these types of properties are more likely to have low energy efficiency ratings.

Figure 2: Percentage of households in Fuel Poverty in Bristol by LSOA (based on Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) metric)

Source: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), 2023. Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics Report 2023 (2021 Data).

COVID-19 has resulted in various impacts on households across the city, including impacts on income and job security.

Equalities data:

Fuel poverty data is assessed at a geographical level. Equalities data is not available at a local level. Nationally, we know households with a higher need to maintain a warm home resulting in higher fuel needs may be at a higher risk to fuel poverty e.g., older people, people with ill health and disabled people. In England, more than **1 in 3** households in fuel poverty are households with children (40.3%), with lone-parents experiencing the highest rates of fuel poverty of 28%. The highest level of fuel poverty was also in the private rented sector in 2020, with 25% of these households being fuel poor⁸.

Further data / links / consultations:

A One City Fuel Poverty Action Plan has been developed by the No Cold Homes Steering group and Bristol City Council. This action plan aims to guide cross-sector, city-wide collaboration to tackle the challenge of cold homes and aims to galvanise action to support vulnerable households. The key goal is that by 2030, nobody in Bristol will suffer from a cold home due to fuel poverty.

To view the action plan visit: [One City Strategies - Bristol One City](#)

⁸ Eat or heat: fuel poverty and childhood respiratory health (2022) [Eat or heat: fuel poverty and childhood respiratory health - The Lancet Respiratory Medicine](#)

Further links:

- [JSNA Chapter on Fuel Poverty](#)
- [Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy \(BEIS\) 2023 Fuel Poverty Statistics report for England](#)
- [Food insecurity JSNA data chapter](#)
- [Deprivation JSNA data chapter](#)

Covid-19 Impact:

Addressed throughout section – Please see local analysis section

Date updated: May 2023

Next update due: May 2024