

# JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2025/26

## Carers

### Summary points

- There are nearly 34,000 unpaid carers living in Bristol (Census 2021)
- 24.0% of full-time carers in Bristol have an illness or health condition which limits day to day activities a lot, over three times higher than the city average (7.0%)
- 11% of primary school pupils and 5% of secondary school pupils in the city's schools, identify as a 'young carer' (Bristol Pupil Voice Survey 2024)
- Young Carers Mental Health support needs are expected to increase

### Findings

According to the 2021 Census, there are nearly 34,000 unpaid carers living in Bristol (all ages), which is just under 1 in 13 of the population (aged 5 and over). This equates to 7.6% of the population aged 5 and over, lower than both the England average of 8.7% and the England and Wales average of 8.9%. Between the 2011 and 2021 Census, the number of unpaid carers decreased by 6,000 in Bristol, a drop from 9.3% to 7.6%. This has also been experienced nationally decreasing from 10.3% in England to 8.7%, and from 10.3% in England and Wales to 8.9%.

However, a different estimate<sup>1</sup> from 2015 indicates there are almost 42,300 carers in Bristol, an increase of 20.4% since 2001. This report indicates the value of the care provided is £793m per year.

Further 2021 Census detail shows the majority of carers (17,750) are caring under 20 hours a week but just over 9,300 provide unpaid care for 50 hours or more each week.

Of the 34,000 unpaid carers identified in the 2021 Census, 6,660 were over 65 years of age (11% of all people over 65 in Bristol). 45% of people in this age category (2,970 people) provide care for over 50 hours a week, which is disproportionately high.

For further information see:

The Bristol All Age Carers Strategy 2025–2030: [All Age Carers Strategy \(bristol.gov.uk\)](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/all-age-carers-strategy)

### Carers' UK report impact of pandemic nationally (October 2020)

There are up to 9.1 million carers across the UK prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic. There are 4.5 million new carers since the Pandemic started (March 2020), 2.8 million of whom are juggling work and care.

- Number of respondents: 5,583 carers and 321 former carers
- 81% of carers are providing more care since the Pandemic
- 40% of carers are providing more care because the needs of the person cared for have increased.

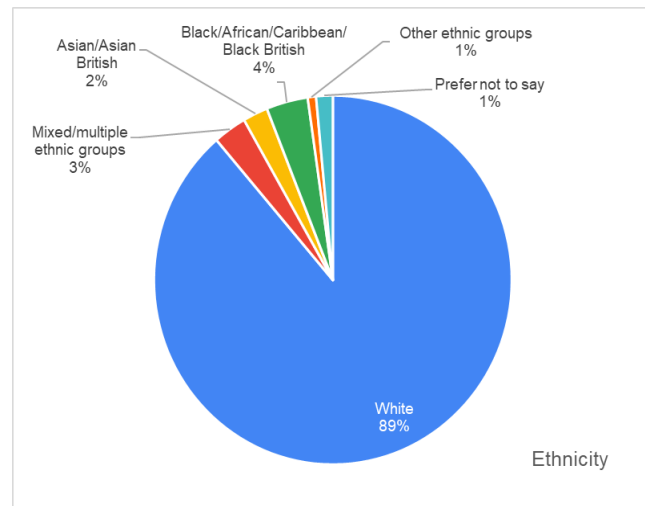
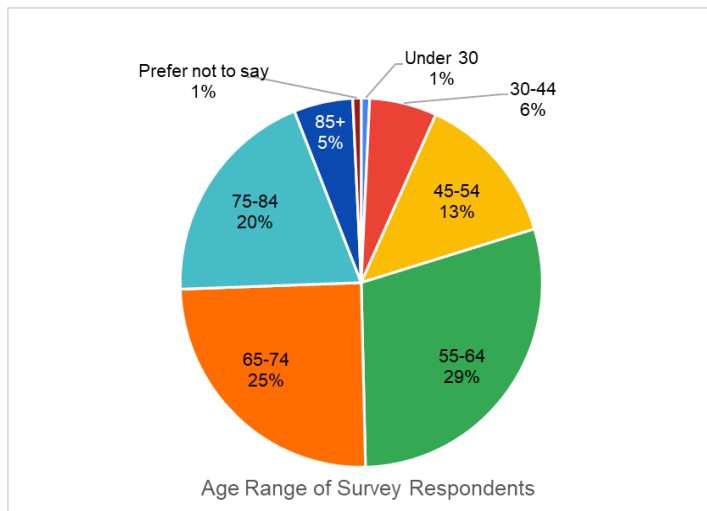
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<sup>1</sup> Carers UK, Valuing Carers 2015 - The rising value of carers' support (via Bristol Carers Support Centre)

- 38% of carers are providing more care because of local services reducing or closing.

**Local Research: Older People (February 2021)**

BCC commissioned a survey of older people in a caring role, which was conducted by Bristol Older



People’s Forum (BOPF). There were 139 respondents of which 79% were aged 55 and over (Figure 1) and 89% were of white ethnicity (Figure 2):

Figure 1: Age range of survey respondents

Figure 2: Ethnicity of survey respondents

**Key findings:**

- Carers want to be recognised as ‘partners in care’ and valued, respected and supported.
- Older people supply a disproportionate amount of care, and older women are more likely to be looking after loved ones. There were high levels of people in the oldest age range caring for partners, siblings and/or disabled children. Of those people doing full-time care, 40% were aged seventy-five or over.
- Many older carers have underlying health conditions themselves affecting mental and physical health and are worried about their ability to continue to meet the needs of their loved ones and how the longer term care needs will be met.
- The Covid pandemic has increased the number of new carers and highlighted additional challenges around the demand on services, information and social connection. The effects on mental and physical health of carers are evident.
- The Covid pandemic has also led to a significant reduction of services for both carers and the people they care for. Support at present is patchy and compounded by the challenge of finding accessible and useful information.
- The need for different levels of respite was highlighted, including specialist care for complex conditions such as Dementia and Autism.
- Respondents also highlighted the need for an improvement in financial support available.
- In contrast the research also highlighted some of the positive aspects of caring. There were examples where relationships, although challenging, have brought people closer together.

People acknowledged that their role as a carer made them feel useful, valued and improved their well-being.

### Bristol Quality of Life (QoL) survey findings

Quality of Life is an extensive annual residents survey for Bristol covering topics such as health, lifestyles, community, local services and living in Bristol. The [Quality of Life dashboard](#) provides all results for each indicator (by theme) including Bristol overall, Bristol wards, demographic and equality groups and deciles of deprivation.

The most recent survey for 2024, found that for full-time carers there were 97 indicators worse than the city average of which 18 related to health and wellbeing, 14 related to community and living and 11 related to crime and safety. Potential confounders are “10% most deprived” (full-time carers 11.7% vs. city average 5.5%), older people (full-time carers 7.7% vs. city average 5.5%), no qualifications (full-time carers 14.6% vs. city average 5.5%), council tenant (full-time carers 15.9% vs. city average 5.4%). Headlines include:

- 56.5% satisfied with their local area (Bristol average 71.5%)
- 17.1% are uncomfortable using digital services (Bristol average 7.9%)
- 32.9% whose fear of crime affects their day-to-day lives (Bristol average 24.0%)
- 24.0% with illness or health condition which limits day to day activities a lot (Bristol average 7.0%)
- 23.5% have low life satisfaction (Bristol average 13.8%)
- 30% have poor mental wellbeing (Bristol average 19.9%)
- 7.6% households where someone smokes regularly within the home (Bristol average 3.3%)
- 20.9% who are inactive (Bristol average 8.1%)
- 64% overweight or obese (Bristol average 47.7%)
- 9.0% households which have experienced severe food insecurity (Bristol average 3.2%)

### Young Carers

#### National data (School Census)

Since January 2023, schools in England have been required to include data on young carers in the School Census. This applies to State-funded schools (primary, secondary, special schools, and pupil referral units) and Independent schools (from January 2024, via the annual school-level census)

The inclusion of young carers in the census aims to improve **identification** of young carers, enable **monitoring** of their attendance and attainment, support **early intervention** and safeguarding, and ensure schools are aware of and responsive to the needs of young carers

Key Findings from the 2024 Census:

- 53,976 pupils were recorded as young carers (up from 38,983 in 2023)

- However, 72% of schools reported zero young carers, indicating significant underreporting
- If extrapolated, the actual number could be closer to 192,771 young carers in England [[carers.org](https://www.carers.org)]

The impact on young carers is significant with research showing:

- Young carers are missing on average 23 days of school every year
- 31% are frequently late
- Primary aged young carers are performing well below age-related expectations
- Almost half of young carers at secondary school are ‘persistently absent.’
- There is an attainment gap between young adult carers and their peers at GCSE and A Level [[Carers Trust](https://www.carers.org)]

### Local data

School Census data for Bristol identified 614 young carers in 2025, up from 496 in 2024 and 285 in 2023. This represents just over 1% of the school population and suggests significant underreporting.

An alternative source, the 2024 Bristol ‘Pupil Voice’<sup>2</sup> Survey, indicated that 11% of primary school pupils and 5% of secondary school pupils in the city’s schools, identify as a ‘young carer’. A further 14% of primary school pupils and 8% of secondary school pupils responded that they were not sure whether they were or not or did not want to disclose their response so the true proportions may be considerably higher. Just under a third of those identifying themselves as a ‘young carer’ reported that their school was not aware of their caring responsibilities, and only 21% were confident they were aware. These responsibilities most often related to the care of an immediate family member; brother, sister or parent (for nearly 70% of those identifying as a young carer).

Young carers are among the pupil groups identified within the Pupil Voice findings with the worst results for health outcomes and highest health risks in many instances. There is a clear association between being a ‘young carer’ and a significantly higher risk on average of a number of negative findings and outcomes for Bristol children, for example;

- Suffered an unintentional injury during the previous year (42% vs Bristol average 32%)
- Reported ever having a tooth filled or extracted (53% vs Bristol average 43%)
- Reported frequent bullying during the previous month (51% vs Bristol average 36%)
- Has a low mental wellbeing score (18% vs Bristol primary school average 13%,
- Reported 5 or more days absence from school in the month prior to the survey (32% vs Bristol average 21%)
- To be less physically active (70% active on three or more days in the past week vs Bristol average 76%)
- To not be getting the recommended duration of sleep (57% vs Bristol average 45%)

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<sup>2</sup> [Every Child Matters in Bristol](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/jsna)

This may not always be directly related to their caring duties, but young carers are known to suffer with particular health disadvantages<sup>3</sup> - mainly mental health and wellbeing including social isolation and the negative impacts of poorer educational attainment. The findings from the Pupil Voice Survey showed that young carers were significantly more likely to report than the relevant all pupils average, that; they were in receipt of free school meals, live in a single parent household (known for secondary pupils only), living with someone family that has been in prison, disabled, have a long term illness, have a special educational need and/or learning difficulty, or have a neurodivergent condition (known for secondary pupils only) – all of these characteristics are typically associated on average with a range of poorer outcomes and higher risks for the individual. Thus, the poorer outcomes and higher risks reported above may be the result of several potential disadvantages working together or compounding one another.

An additional source of data from the latest Census (2021) shows that there are over 1,150 young carers between the ages of 5 and 18 in Bristol, and nearly 10% of these provide 50 or more hours unpaid care a week. However, this is a hidden group, and numbers are expected to be much higher, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic was declared in 2020.

According to local research, young carers are hidden for a range of reasons including:

- A lack of awareness and recognition within the family where they have caring responsibilities
- Different expectations on children within different cultures or religions<sup>4</sup>
- A stigma which is sometimes attached to caring for a parent or carer with a substance misuse
- A lack of understanding that they may be in a caring role
- Professionals often lack training or awareness to spot signs of caregiving

Young carers have also told us (Bristol City Council) that they often do not wish to access Council services due to a range of misconceptions of what support they are legally entitled to and a fear that they may get themselves or the cared-for person into trouble.

The new all-age Carers Strategy for Bristol has highlighted common issues in identifying and supporting children who are in caring roles and will set out a range of actions to reduce the 'hidden' nature of this group, including raising awareness in schools.

### **Equalities data:**

The current BCC commissioned Young Carers Support Service contract monitoring supports our understanding of young carers in Bristol.

- Age and transition into adult service
- The service works with children in caring roles from the age of 8, and up to the age of 18. Numbers within the service significantly reduce as a young carer reaches adulthood (Figure 3)

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<sup>3</sup> [Children's Society: Hidden from view report](#)

<sup>4</sup> Bristol Black Carers <https://www.bristolblackcarers.org.uk/>

- Ethnicity, the service works with a high proportion of young carers from diverse backgrounds in comparison with local population data (Figure 4)

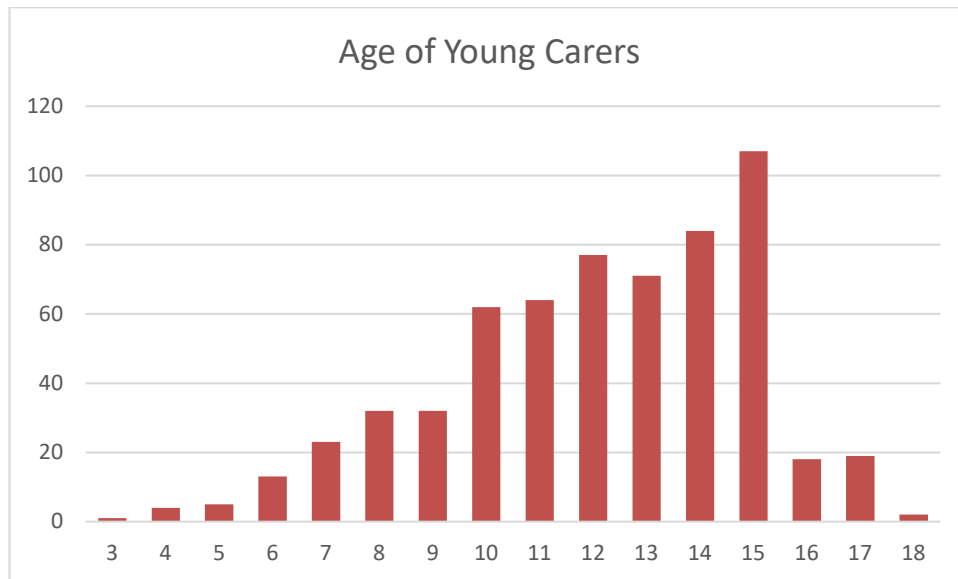


Figure 3: Young Carers Age June 2025. Source: Carers Support Bristol and South Glos.

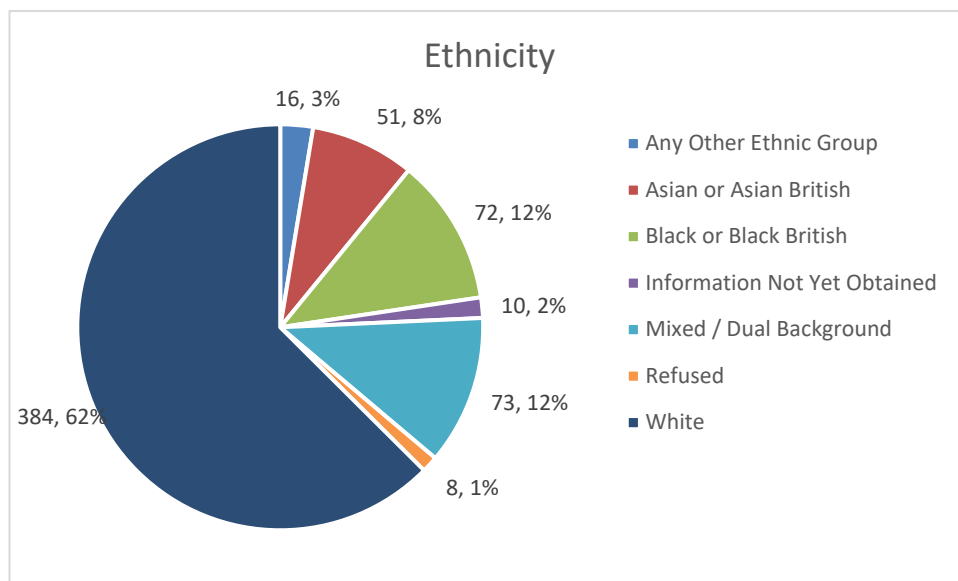


Figure 4: Young Carers Ethnicity June 2025: Source Carers Support Bristol and South Glos.

**Further data / links / consultations:**

- [Young Carers Voice](#)
- [Carers Support Centre](#)
- [Bristol City Council carers support](#)

**Date updated:** October 2025

**Next update due:** October 2026