

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2023/24

Carers

Summary points

- There are nearly 34,000 unpaid carers living in Bristol (Census 2021)
- 9% of primary school pupils and 5% of secondary school pupils in the city's schools, identify as a 'young carer' (Bristol Pupil Voice Survey 2022)
- 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 estimate¹ 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 Carers Strategy 2015–2020: [Carers strategy \(bristol.gov.uk\)](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/carer-strategy)

The Bristol Young Carers Strategy 2021 – 2025 [Bristol's Young 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.
- 38% of carers are providing more care because of local services reducing or closing.

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

Local Research: Older People (February 2021)

BCC commissioned a survey of older people in a caring role, which was carried out 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):

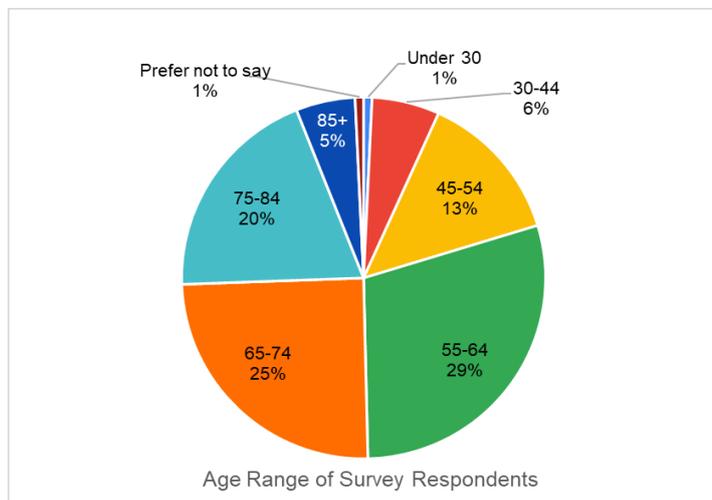


Figure 1: Age range of survey respondents

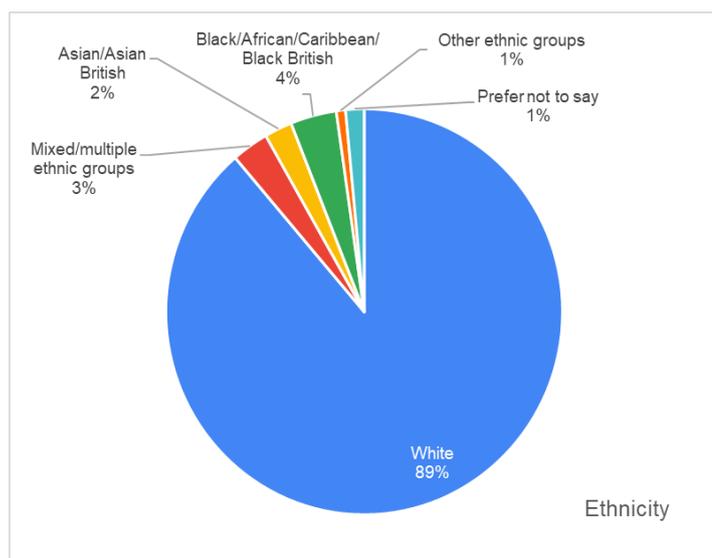


Figure 2: Ethnicity of survey respondents

Key findings:

- a) Carers want to be recognised as ‘partners in care’ and valued, respected and supported.
- b) 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.
- c) 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.
- d) 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.

- e) 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.
- f) The need for different levels of respite was highlighted, including specialist care for complex conditions such as Dementia and Autism.
- g) Respondents also highlighted the need for an improvement in financial support available.
- h) 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.

Young Carers

Data from the recent Census (2021) shows that there are over 1,150 young carers between the ages of 5 and 18, 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 religions²
- A stigma which is sometimes attached to caring for a parent or carer with a substance misuse
- A lack of understand that they may be in a caring role

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.

Findings from the 2022 Bristol 'Pupil Voice'³ Survey indicated that 9% of primary school pupils and 5% of secondary school pupils in the city's schools, identify as a 'young carer'. A further 13% of primary school pupils and 9% 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. More than a third of those identifying themselves as a 'young carer' reported that their school was not aware of their caring responsibilities. These responsibilities

² Bristol Black Carers <https://www.bristolblackcarers.org.uk/>

³ [Data and research \(bristol.gov.uk\)](#)

most often related to the care of a brother or sister (around half of the time) but parents and grandparents were also mentioned in some responses.

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;

- Drunk alcohol during the previous 4-weeks (18% vs Bristol average 12%)
- Typically smokes cigarettes once per week or more (5% vs Bristol average 2%)
- Has ever taken or currently uses illegal drugs (21% vs Bristol average 10%)
- Suffered an unintentional injury during the previous year (45% vs Bristol average 31%)
- Reported ever having a tooth filled or extracted (52% vs Bristol average 46%)
- Reported frequent bullying during the previous month (44% vs Bristol average 31%)
- Has a low mental wellbeing score (15% vs Bristol primary school average 10%, 30% vs Bristol secondary school average 14%)

This may not always be directly related to their caring duties, but young carers are known to suffer with particular health disadvantages⁴ - 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 of primary school age were more than twice as likely to have a special educational need/learning disability and/or a long-standing illness or disability, than the average for primary school respondents in the city's schools. This difference was smaller but present and marked for secondary school pupils also. Thus, the poorer outcomes and higher risks reported above may be the result of several potential disadvantages working together or compounding one another.

This is mirrored in recent national research⁵ carried out in July 2020 by Carers Trust on the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on young carers mental health and wellbeing. The research indicated that there has been a steep decline in the mental health and wellbeing of the hundreds of thousands of young people across the UK who provide unpaid care at home for family members or friends. The restrictions of lockdown and the anxiety related to the risks associated with COVID-19 have been central to young carers' difficulties, increasing their caring load, preventing them from getting a break or from turning to their established coping strategies such as spending time with friends, going to school or engaging in a hobby. The pandemic appears to have increased pressures on young carers with (*below taken directly from the Carers Trust website*):

- 40% of young carers and 59% of young adult carers say their mental health is worse since Coronavirus.
- 67% of young carers and 78% of young adult carers are more worried about the future since Coronavirus.

⁴ Source: Children's Society Report 'Hidden From View', via Bristol Carers Strategy 2015–2020; www.bristol.gov.uk/policies-plans-and-strategies/carer-strategy

⁵ [Our survey on the impact of Coronavirus on young carers and young adult carers - Carers Trust](https://www.carers-trust.org.uk/our-survey-on-the-impact-of-coronavirus-on-young-carers-and-young-adult-carers)

- 66% of young carers and 74% of young adult carers are feeling more stressed since Coronavirus.
- 69% of both young carers and young adult carers are feeling less connected to others since Coronavirus.
- 11% of young carers and 19.7% of young adult carers report an increase of 30 hours or more in the amount of time they spend caring per week.
- 58% of young carers who are caring for longer since Coronavirus are spending on average ten hours a week more on their caring responsibilities. Among young adult carers the proportion is even higher at 63.6%.
- 7.74% of young carers and 14.94% of young adult carers who responded to the survey, said that they are now spending over 90 hours a week caring for a family member or friend.

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

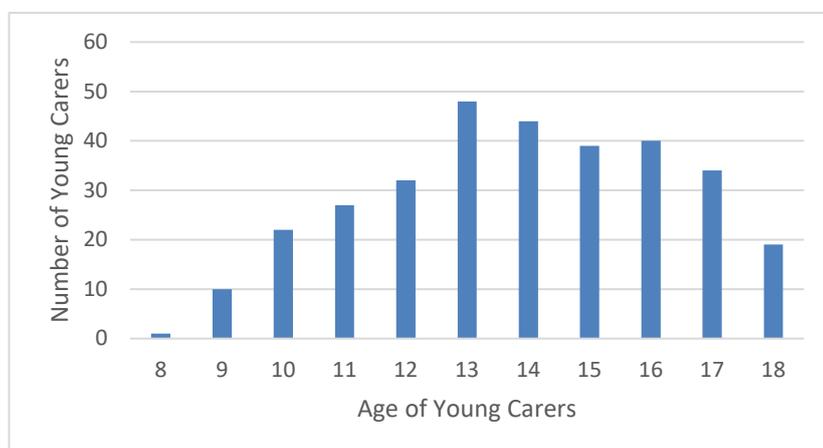


Figure 3: Young Carers Age December 2022. Source: Carers Support Centre

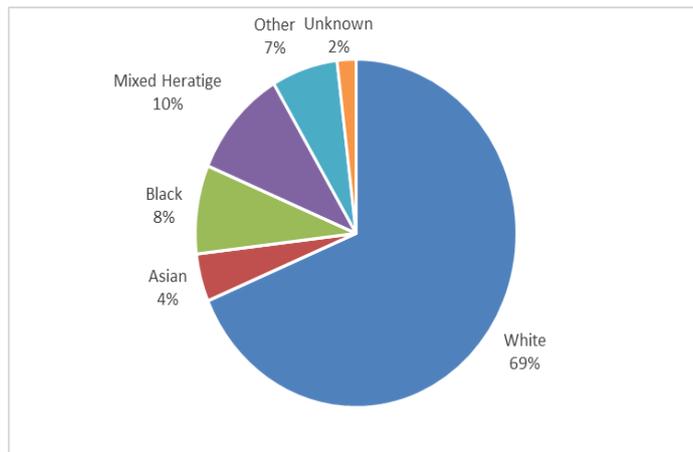


Figure 4: Young Carers Ethnicity December 2022: Source Carers Support Centre

Further data / links / consultations:

- Outcomes for Young Carers: [Young Carers Voice](#)
- Carers Support Centre: [Carers Support Centre](#)
- Bristol City Council: [Carers - support](#)

Date updated: May 2023

Next update due: April 2024