

# JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2024/25

## Chlamydia (2023 data)

### Summary points

- Chlamydia is the most common STI in Bristol and England.
- The number of chlamydia tests taken up in young people in 2023 was 8349 and remains around half of what it was in 2019.
- The proportion of tests that were positive in young people increased slightly in 2023
- Only 1 in 10 of the population aged 15 - 24 was tested in 2023 – this is significantly lower than England.
- There were 1,079 diagnoses of chlamydia among 15 – 24 year-olds in Bristol in 2023 – a 30% increase since 2021, but still below pre-Covid figures.
- The chlamydia detection rate for young people is low compared to England and very low compared to some other Core Cities, suggesting we are not detecting chlamydia in enough young people.
- Since 2021 the National Chlamydia Screening Programme has focused just on young women who therefore have a higher rate of testing and a higher detection rate than men.
- There were 738 diagnoses of chlamydia in people over 25 in 2023.

### Chlamydia

Chlamydia is the most common Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) in England. It is usually spread through unprotected sex and is most common in young people aged 15-24. The infection has no symptoms for approximately 50% of men and 70-80% of women, and as a result, the majority of infections remain undiagnosed. Without treatment, chlamydia can spread to other parts of the body and lead to serious long-term health problems such as pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility. In 2022/23 there were 305 hospital admissions for pelvic inflammatory disease in Bristol. This rate of 252.1 per 100,000 women aged 15-44 is similar to the England rate of 226.7.

In Bristol there were 3,639 new Sexually Transmitted Infections diagnosed in 2023. Of these, approximately half (1,819) were chlamydia. Of all new STIs just under a third (1,079) of were in 15-24 year olds (made up of approximately two thirds females (707), and one third males (331), where sex was known).

### National Chlamydia Screening Programme

The National Chlamydia Screening Programme was implemented in 2008 to support opportunistic screening for asymptomatic young people aged 24 and under to increase detection, to enable treatment and interrupt spread and thus reduce chlamydia prevalence.

In line with changes nationally, the Chlamydia Screening Programme in Bristol changed in April 2022 to focus on reducing the harms from untreated chlamydia infection. These harms occur predominantly in young women and other people with a womb or ovaries - this includes transgender men, non-binary people assigned female at birth, and intersex people with a womb or ovaries. Therefore, opportunistic screening in primary care is now focused on these groups.

Young men in Bristol are still able to access asymptomatic testing through [Unity Sexual Health’s postal kit service](#).

The detection rate is considered a measure of chlamydia control activity, not a measure of disease and is calculated by dividing the number of positive tests by the size of the relevant population

Given the change in programme, the benchmarking thresholds have been revised by the UK Health Security Agency and are now measured for females only. The new female-only target detection rate is 3,250 per 100,000 female population aged 15-24. Neither England nor Bristol has been achieving this rate. In Bristol the rate in 2023 was 1,693 per 100,000.<sup>1</sup> This is lower than the England average of 1,962 per 100,000 (see fig 1).

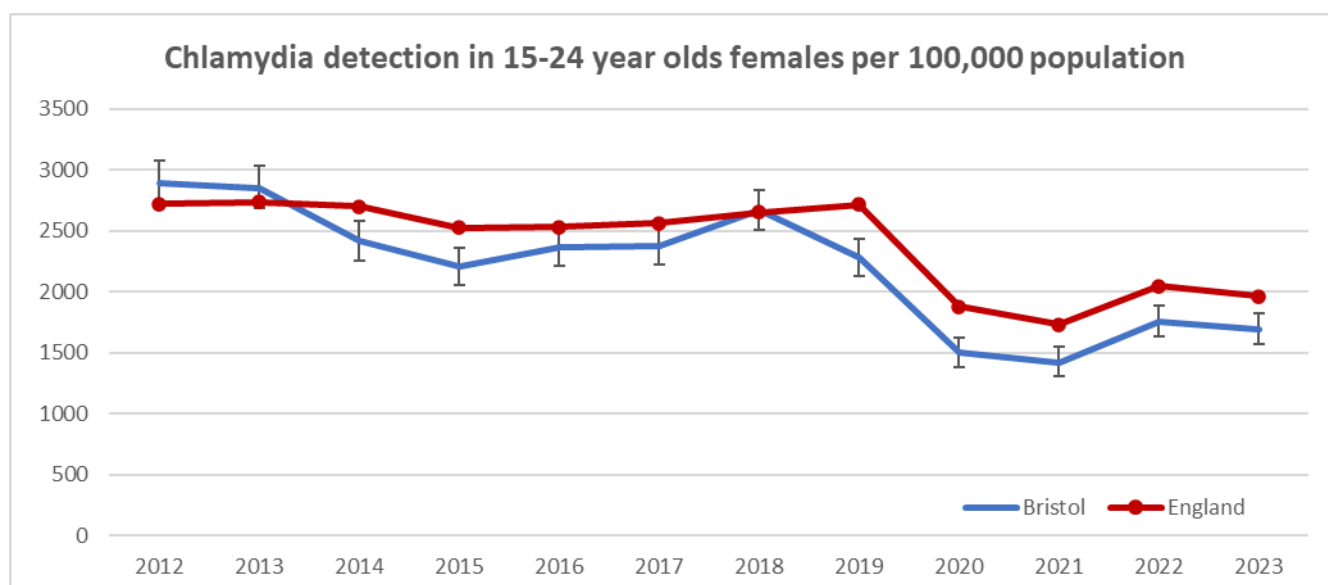


Fig 1: Chlamydia detection rate in females, Bristol v England, via OHID Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles, accessed July 2024

### Chlamydia testing in 15 – 24 year olds

Although the National Chlamydia Screening Programme now focuses on young women, data on chlamydia testing and detection for the whole Bristol population aged 15-24 is available. In 2023, 10.1% of 15–24-year-olds were tested for chlamydia; this was significantly lower than the 14.5% recorded nationally <sup>2</sup>. Whilst the number of tests conducted have decreased since 2020, the proportion of tests that were positive increased (table 1). The number of tests carried out in Bristol in 2023 is almost half the number carried out in 2019.

Bristol has the third lowest detection rate (1,311 per 100,000 aged 15-24) of the English Core Cities (fig 2), where Liverpool has a detection rate of 2,719 per 100,000 aged 15-24 and Birmingham has a detection rate of 989 per 100,000 aged 15-24. The national rate is 1,546 per 100,000

<sup>1</sup> As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020 the Government implemented national and regional lockdowns and social and physical distancing measures. These measures affected sexual behaviour and health service provision, which is reflected in sexual and reproductive health indicator data. Interpreting data from 2020 should consider these factors, especially when comparing with data from pre-pandemic years.

<sup>2</sup> Data sourced from UKHSA chlamydia testing treatment activity dataset (CTAD).

Age 15 - 24		
Year	Number of tests carried out	Proportion of tests that were positive
2017	18,676	6.96%
2018	20,413	7.40%
2019	16,217	8.32%
2020	12,370	7.14%
2021	7,870	10.51%
2022	9,596	12.35%
2023	8349	12.92%

Table 1: Number of chlamydia tests and positivity rate by year in 15-24 year olds in Bristol via OHID Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles, accessed August 2024

Following lower detection results in 2020 and 2021 due to the disruption to Sexual Health Services during the pandemic, chlamydia detection rates for young persons aged 15 to 24 have increased but are not at pre-pandemic levels. .

Since chlamydia is most often asymptomatic, a high detection rate can reflect success at identifying infections that, if left untreated, may lead to serious reproductive health consequences. In order to address the falling number of chlamydia tests taken by 15-24 year olds in Bristol, Unity Sexual Health have developed a chlamydia screening action plan that identifies steps the team will take to improve access to and raise awareness of opportunistic screening of women in the community.

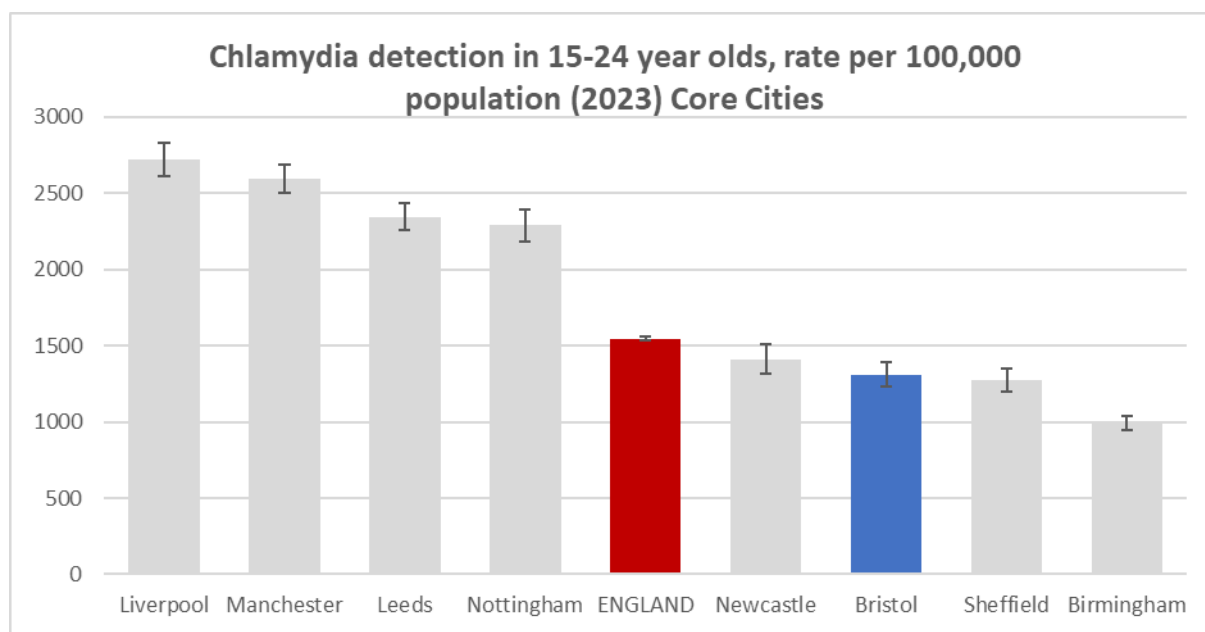


Fig 2: Chlamydia detection rate in people aged 15-24, Bristol v England, via OHID Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles, accessed July 2024

### Chlamydia in 25+ year olds

Chlamydia is much less common in people over 25 and therefore they are not included in the National Chlamydia Screening Programme. The chlamydia diagnostic rate for people aged 25+ had been increasing since 2014 in Bristol and was consistently above the national rate. The rate fell slightly in 2019, despite very high testing rates and continued to fall in 2020 and 2021, probably as a consequence of the pandemic. In 2023, the rate of 231 per 100,000 was similar to the previous year (237 per 100,000) and similar to the national average (223 per 100,000) (fig 3). A total of 738 people aged over 25 were diagnosed with chlamydia in Bristol in 2023.

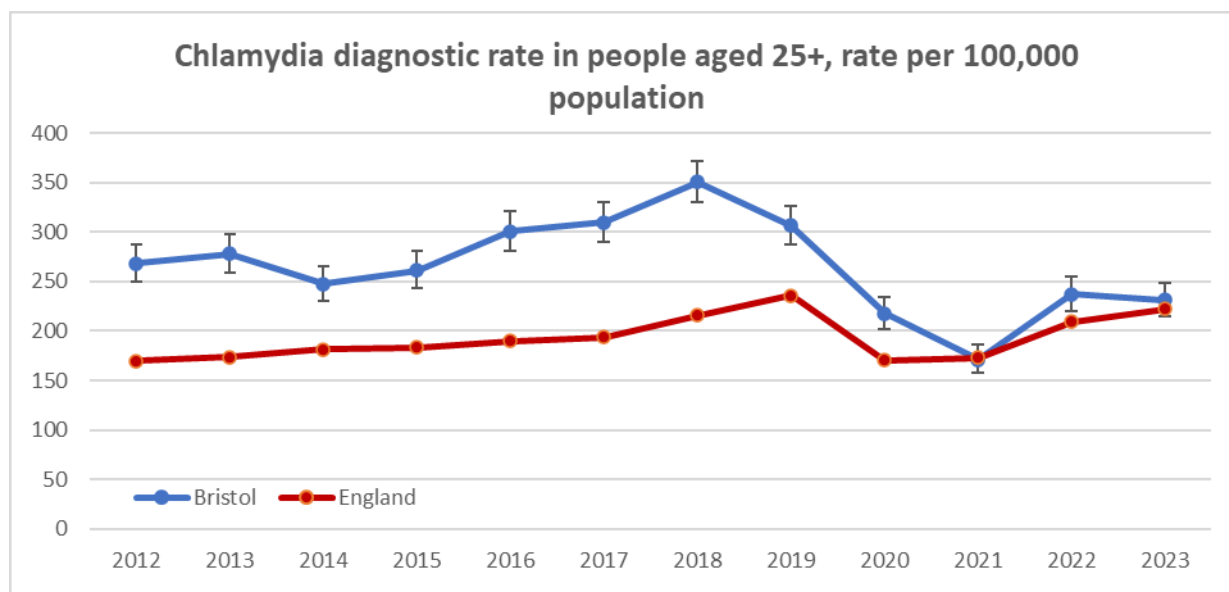


Fig 3: Chlamydia diagnostic rate in people aged 25+, Bristol v England, via OHID Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles, accessed July 2024

### Equalities data

In Bristol the total number of chlamydia tests for all ages in 2023 was 27,922 with 1,819 (6.5%) positive diagnoses recorded. The highest positivity rate in all ages was among 15-24 year olds (12.9%). Within this age range, the 20-24 age group had the highest positivity (13.1%). Across all age categories more females tested for chlamydia (73%) than males (25%) in 2023 (2% had an unknown gender).

In relation to ethnicity, in 2023 41% of all age tests were taken by people identifying as White British, while 39% were taken by people whose ethnicity was either unknown or not stated. The lack of ethnicity data makes it impossible to draw any conclusions around the scale of chlamydia by ethnicity.

There were 1,079 diagnoses of chlamydia among 15-24 year olds in Bristol in 2023. Of these, gender was known for 1,038 diagnoses (96%) with 32% of positives in males, and 68% in females. The chlamydia detection rate in females aged 15-24 year olds was 1,693 per 100,000 compared to 816 per 100,000 for males aged 15-24 (fig 4). This is likely to reflect different levels of engagement with health services and the change in focus of the chlamydia screening programme

to young females only. There are more long-term health implications for females than males if chlamydia is left untreated.

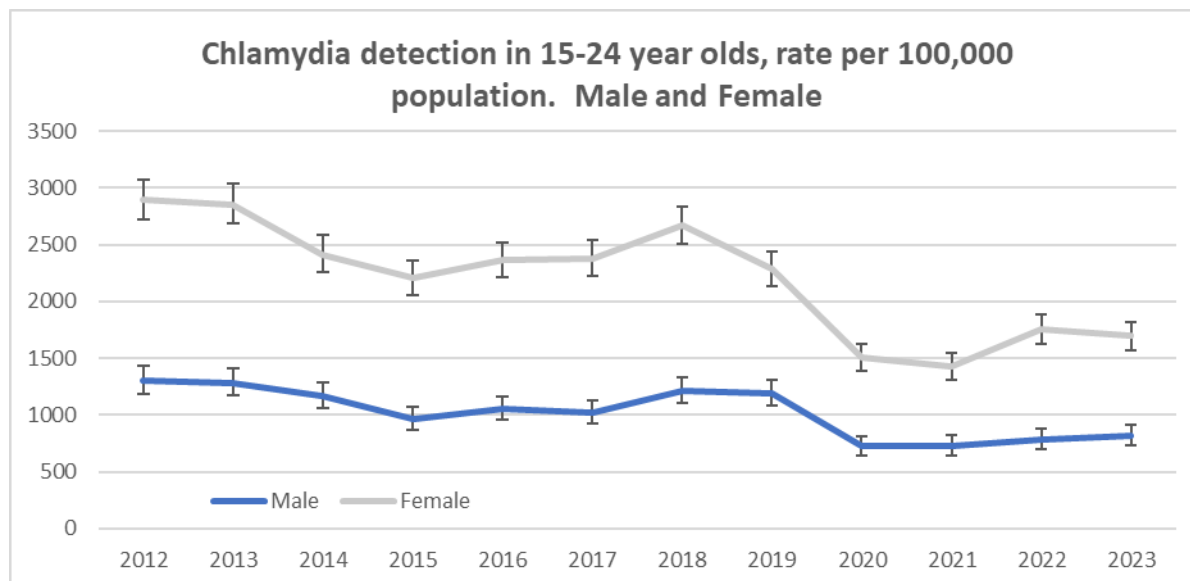


Fig 4: Chlamydia detection rate in people aged 15-24, Bristol, via OHID Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles, accessed July 2024

**Covid-19 impact:**

The introduction of national Covid-19 lockdowns in March 2020, with their focus on social and physical distancing and staying at home, led to a marked reduction in the capacity for face to face consultations at sexual health clinics. This resulted in a rapid reconfiguration of local services to increase access to STI testing online and via telephone consultations.

It’s unclear why there was such a reduction in chlamydia diagnoses reported between 2018 and 2019 for young women. However, the drop between 2019 and 2020 is likely due to the impact of Covid-19 and the combination of reduced testing due to sexual health service disruption and changes in behaviour. Nonetheless the considerable numbers of diagnoses in 2020 and 2021 is clear evidence of sustained chlamydia transmission despite the lockdown restrictions, driven largely by the young population of Bristol. In 2022 the diagnosis rate in all ages started to increase following the reductions seen during Covid-19, however, the rate decreased slightly in 2023. The number of people being screened for chlamydia remains considerably below pre-Covid-19 levels.

**Further data / links:**

- Public Health England Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles:  
<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/sexualhealth>
- Chlamydia: surveillance, data, screening and management  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/chlamydia-surveillance-data-screening-and-management>
- Sexually transmitted infections (STIs): annual data tables  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sexually-transmitted-infections-stis-annual-data-tables>

**Date updated:** September 2024**Date of next update:** July 2025