

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2024/25

Physical and Sensory Impairment

Summary points

- Approx 11.0% of the Bristol adult population self-identify as disabled, and 17.2% of all Bristol residents (19.5% of adults 16+) could be considered to be disabled under the Equalities Act
- 61,275 adults in Bristol have some hearing loss and 6,495 have severe hearing loss
- Approximately 5,550 people aged 65+ have a moderate or severe visual impairment and 1,960 people aged 75+ have registrable eye conditions.

Limiting long-term illness or disability

Bristol City Council is committed to the Social Model of Disability which recognises the right to self-identify as a Disabled person and that people are Disabled by barriers in society such as lack of physical access and lack of accessible communication, not by their impairment (including mental, physical, sensory, health conditions, learning difficulties among others). The Equality Act 2010 defines Disability as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on a person's ability to do daily activities.

There are two ways to consider Disability in terms of the data available. One is whether someone considers themselves to be a Disabled person, and the other is whether someone has physical or mental health conditions or illnesses that negatively impact their daily life such that they would be considered Disabled under the definition of the Equality Act 2010.

The first option, based on a persons' self-identified disability, is used in most consultations, surveys and equalities forms via the BCC equalities monitoring question: "Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?", and this option is also closer to the Social Model of Disability.

When benchmarking disability results against the Bristol population, it is important that the same definition is used as in the question asked. Consequently, we are proposing a data source that reflects the first (self-identified) option, as the figures for the two options are quite different.

Disabled (self-identified)	Bristol %
Adults (16 years and over)	11.0%
Working age population (16-64 years)	9.2%

Table 1: Disabled population estimate by age (3-year average 2021/22-2023/24). Source: BCC Quality of Life Survey

The Annual Bristol Quality of Life (QoL) Survey includes the question "Do you think of yourself as a disabled person?". This allows us to estimate the percentage of disabled people in the population, based on a random sample of around 4,000 Bristol residents each year.

In 2023/24, 11.0% of respondents identified as Disabled, in 2022/23 this figure was 11.8% and in 2021/22 it was 9.6%, giving an *estimate* of **11.0% of Bristol residents (over 16) being Disabled**.

However, it should be noted that there may be reasons why Disabled residents are more or less able to participate in a citizen survey than non-Disabled residents. Based on other responses

the QoL figure is likely an *over-estimate*, but is the best comparator we have of self-identified disability in Bristol.

Note - When using any health and disability data, it can be useful to look at the statistics for the working age population or the specific age group that you are interested in rather than all ages, as this will exclude many of the limitations due to old age.

The Census 2021 uses the full definition which includes all people with a health issue or disability that impacts their day-to-day activities to some extent, either a little or a lot. Census 2021 asked the following two-part question:

Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

If yes: Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?

17.2% of people in Bristol assessed that their day-to-day activities are limited by long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses and so could be considered Disabled (Table 2). This approach is closer to the “Medical Model of Disability” and should only be used as a benchmark when the comparator data has been collected based on the same wording as the Census 2021 question.

Long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses	Population	Long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses		
		Bristol	Bristol %	England & Wales %
Children (0 to 15 years)	82,757	5,077	6.1	6.3
Working age (16 to 64 years)	328,950	52,698	16.0	15.5
Older People (65 years+)	60,760	23,386	38.5	35.5
Total population all ages	472,467	81,161	17.2	17.5
Adults aged 16 and over	389,710	76,084	19.5	20.1

Table 2: Population whose day-to-day activities are limited by long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses. Source: ONS 2021 Census

The 2021 Census question on health issues and disability is different to the question asked in earlier Census in order for the results to align more closely with the Equality Act (2010). The potential influence of question changes should be considered when drawing comparisons between Census 2021 and earlier years, particularly for older age groups. Potential impacts may include:

- the visible prompt “include problems related to old age” was removed in the 2021 questionnaire, which may have reduced the percentage of older people who considered that they had a condition or illness
- reference to mental health conditions or illnesses was included in 2021, which may have contributed to the increase in disability seen in younger age groups
- Census 2021 was undertaken during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which may have influenced how people perceived their conditions or illnesses

Note: ONS have also published Age Standardised Percentages (ASPs) for all local authorities. Age-standardised percentages account for differences in age structures in the population and

are more appropriate than crude percentages when drawing comparisons between sexes, over time and across geographical areas. For further information on age standardisation, see the [ONS Blog](#).

Equalities data: The Census 2021 data tells us that there are more females (18.9%) than males (15.5%) in Bristol who could be considered disabled under the Equality Act. This is mainly due to women living longer. In terms of ethnicity by gender, over a quarter of Caribbean females (25.7%) and White Gypsy / Irish Traveller females (25.9%) could be considered disabled under the Equality Act compared to 5.0% of White Other females and 7.6% of Chinese females. For males the highest prevalence is also in the White Gypsy / Irish Traveller ethnic group (29.5%) followed by the Caribbean ethnic group (19.8%) and lowest in the White Other ethnic group (5.6%) and the Chinese ethnic group (5.9%).

Data on people whose day-to-day activities are limited by long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses and so could be considered disabled under the Equality Act can be cross-tabulated by many topics in the census as well as being available for small geographies. By Lower Super Output Area (LSOA), the Census 2021 data highlights that the % of people who could be considered disabled under the Equality Act ranges from 29.3% in Burnbush (Stockwood ward) to 9.3% in Bishop Road (Redland ward) – see Figure 1.

Figure 1 also illustrates that nearly a quarter of people living in Hartcliffe and Withywood could be considered disabled under the Equality Act - 11.7% of residents day to day activities are limited a lot and 12.1% activities are limited a little. Other wards where more than 1 in 5 residents could be considered disabled under the Equality Act include Filwood (22.3%), Southmead (21.3%) and Frome Vale (20.7%).

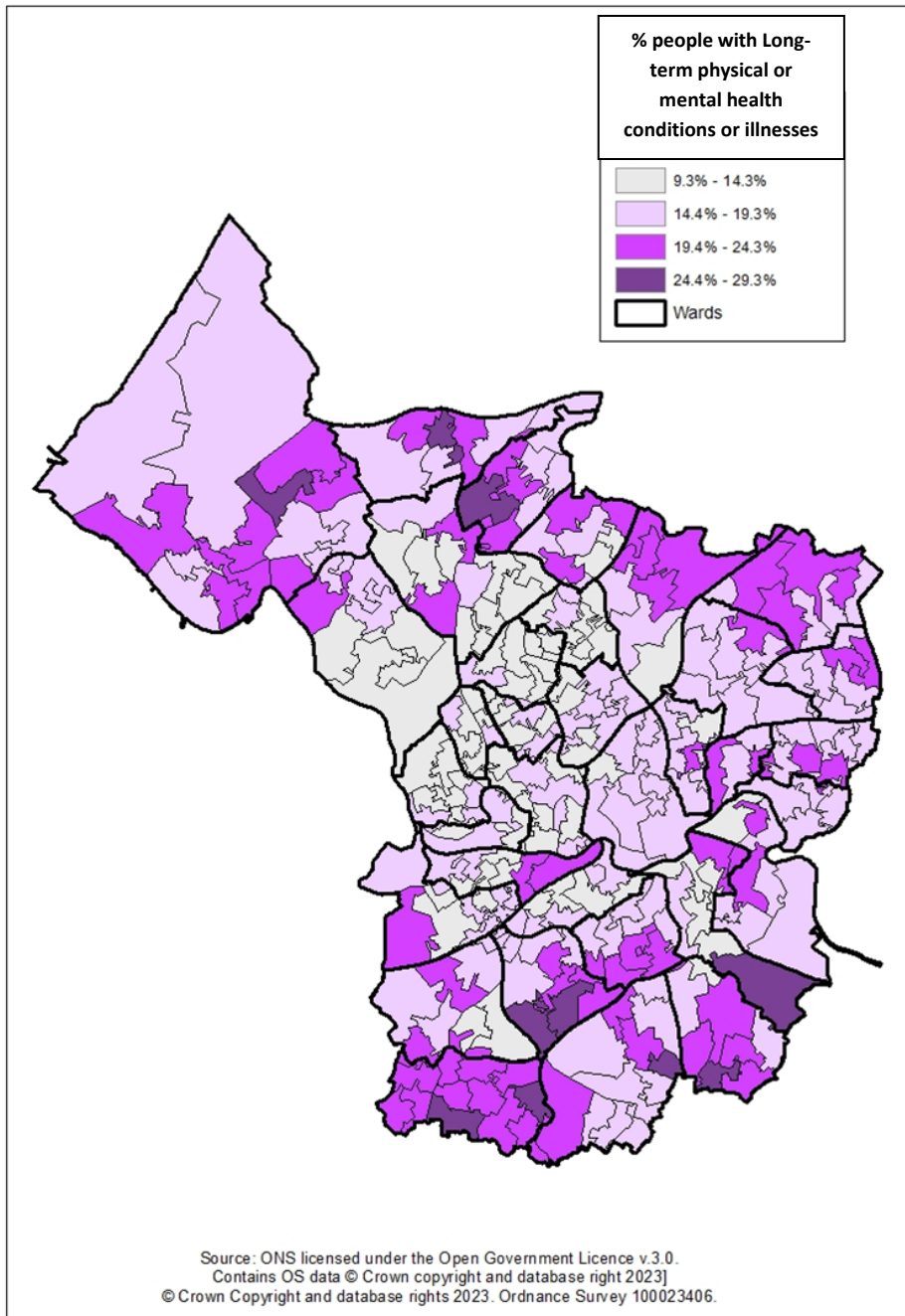


Figure 1: Population whose day-to-day activities are limited by long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses. Source: 2021 Census ONS Crown Copyright Reserved (BCC Insight, Performance & Intelligence).

Mobility impairment

According to the Institute of Public Care¹, 13,365 people in Bristol aged 18-64 were predicted to have impaired mobility in 2023, equal to 4.1% of the working age population, forecast to increase to 13,635 by 2030. This is defined as experiencing either moderate, severe or complete difficulty with mobility, and certain activities are limited in any way as a result, such as walking or climbing stairs.

¹ Institute of Public Care, POPPI and PANSI tools, www.pansi.org.uk: accessed July 2024

A further 11,650 people aged 65 and over were unable to manage at least one mobility activity on their own in 2023, forecast to increase to 12,711 in 2030. Activities included: going out of doors and walking down the road; getting up and down stairs; getting around the house on the level; getting to the toilet; getting in and out of bed. This represents 19.0% of the 65+ population, with twice the number of females with mobility issues than males (66.4% V 33.6%).

Sensory impairment

Overall population estimates² for adults in Bristol indicate around 210 people of working age had a serious visual impairment in 2023 and approximately 5,550 people aged 65 and over were predicted to have had a moderate or severe visual impairment, increasing to 6,000 in 2030. In addition, 1,960 people aged 75 and over were predicted to have registrable eye conditions in 2023.

In terms of hearing impairment 61,275 people aged 18 and over were predicted to have some hearing loss in 2023 (forecast to rise to 64,955 in 2030) and a further 6,495 were predicted to have severe hearing loss. This represents 15.8% and 1.7% of the adult population accordingly.

School age pupils

According to the Bristol school census carried out in January 2024:

- 1.4% (176) of pupils had a hearing impairment
- 0.7% (85) of pupils had a visual impairment
- 2.5% (307) of pupils had a physical disability

Further information on the primary needs of school age children is available in the '[Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\)](#)' JSNA section.

Further data / links / consultations:

- Projecting Older People Population Information: [POPPI](#)
- Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information: [PANSI](#)
- Bristol City Council: [Equalities Statistics: What is available and where to get it](#)
- Learning Disabilities and Autism JSNA section
- RNIB – [Registering as sight impaired](#)
- [Census 2021 results - Census 2021](#)

Covid-19 impact:

The Census 2021 was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and may have influenced how people perceive and rate their health and so may have affected how people chose to respond to the health questions.

Date updated: July 2024

Date of next update: April 2025

² Institute of Public Care, POPPI and PANSI tools, www.poppi.org.uk : accessed July 2024