

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2023/24

Teenage Pregnancy

Summary points

- The rate of under 18 conceptions has declined significantly since 2007 and since the beginning of the teenage pregnancy strategy in 1998.
- Although there are fewer teenage mothers, many are vulnerable due to the risk factors they may have experienced, such as adverse childhood experiences, poverty, poor educational attainment, and experience of being in care.
- Under 18 conception data from the Office for National Statistics is not published until approximately 18 months after the end of the calendar year in which the conception occurred. This can mask real time changes in actual pregnancies and reduce the ability to plan timely service provision and health promotion initiatives.
- Under 18 conception data includes live births and abortions per 1000 15-17-year-old females. The measure for under 16s is based on live births and abortions per 1000 13-15-year-old females.

Findings

The rate of teenage conceptions in Bristol has shown a steep decline since 2007. In terms of absolute numbers, teenage conceptions (to under 18s) in Bristol fell from 360 in 2007 to 90 in 2021. In 2021 the Bristol rate was 13.3 conceptions per 1,000 girls aged 15-17, statistically similar to the England average of 13.1 per 1,000 - Figure 1. There has been an increase since 2020 when behaviour was significantly impacted by covid-19 lockdowns. The rates and number of conceptions during 2020 were the lowest since these statistics were routinely collected (10.2 conceptions per 1000 girls aged 15-17 and 66 conceptions). It is too early to determine if the rise in 2021 is part of a longer-term upward trend, or if this is an indication that rates have begun to plateau.

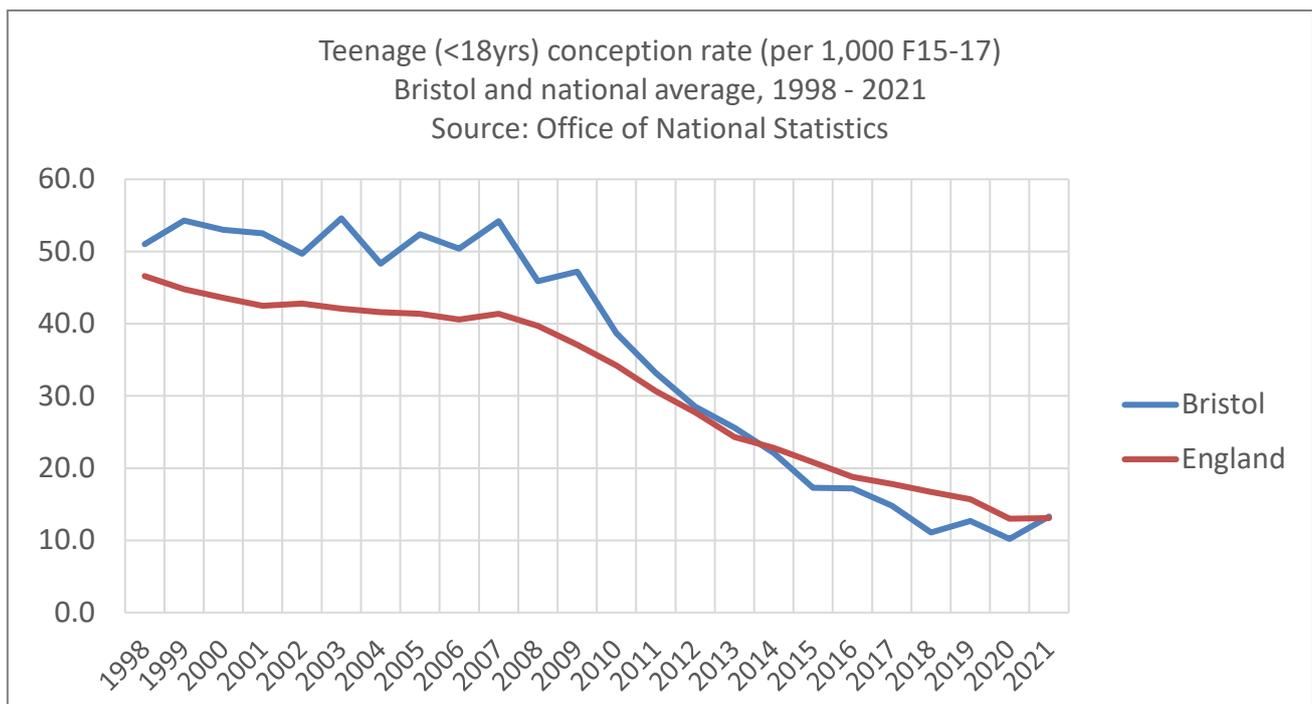


Figure 1: Trends in teenage (<18yrs) conceptions, Bristol and England average 1998 to 2021

Conceptions in young women under 16 have also fallen markedly during the last 10 years but there appears to have been a levelling out of this decline and a slight rise in the last couple of years. The rate of teenage conceptions per 1,000 females aged 13-15 years old was 2.3 per 1,000 between 2019-2021, an increase from 2018-2020 (1.8 per 1,000), and more in line with rates seen in 2015-17. The Bristol rate for 2019-2021 is statistically similar to the England average of 2.2 per 1,000. There were 50 conceptions within this age-group in Bristol between 2019 and 2021, compared to 37 during 2018 and 2020.

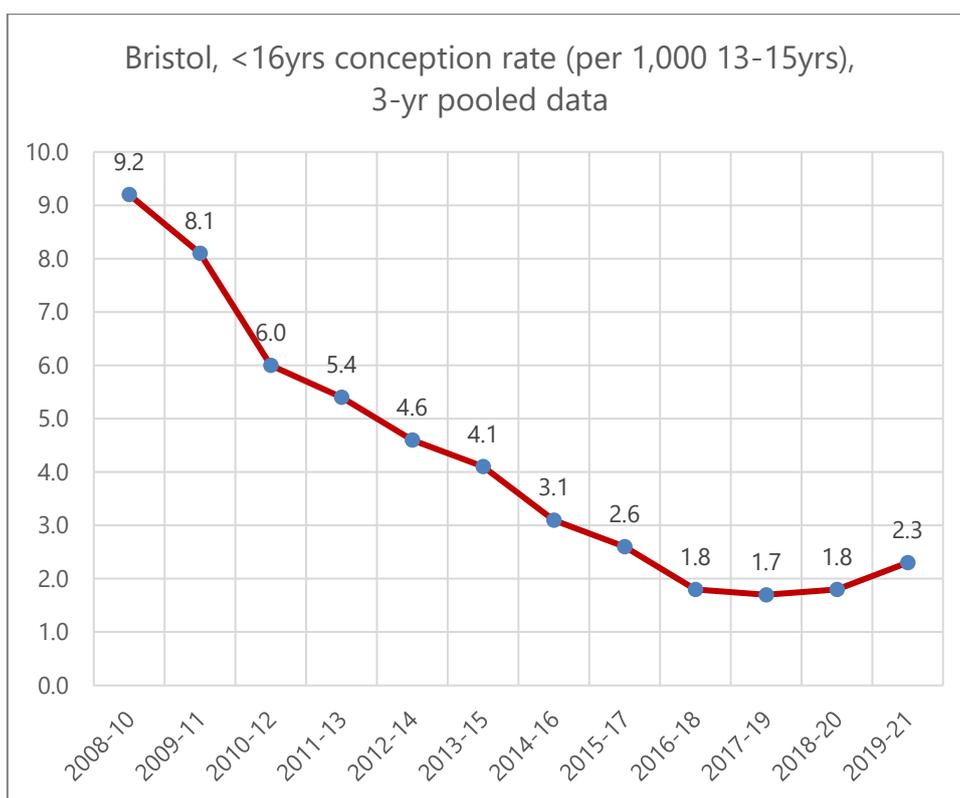


Figure 2: Trends in teenage (<16yrs) conceptions, Bristol, 3-yr averages, 2008-10 to 2019-2021

Just under half (45.6%) of all teenage conceptions in Bristol in 2021 ended in an abortion, very similar to the proportion in 2020 (45.5%) but a slight increase over 2019 (41.8%). Bristol’s statistic for 2021 is considerably lower than the national average (53.4%). This rate is higher for under 16s; in Bristol in 2019-2021 this rate was 54.0%, slightly lower than the equivalent statistic for 2018-2020 (56.8%), and also lower than the equivalent national average (61.6%).

Although the numbers of under 18 conceptions has fallen since 2007, almost a quarter of all conceptions were to under 16 year olds in 2021. Previous research using data reported by specialist pregnancy and contraception staff working with young mothers in the city showed that it was likely that many of those teenagers conceiving have complex needs and require a high level of support. Higher rates of teenage conception continue to be found where deprivation is higher, and teenage conception remains both a cause and symptom of disadvantage, helping to embed and perpetuate poorer outcomes, generation to generation.

Given the relatively small numbers of teenage conceptions for analytical purposes, and lack of access at present to detailed demographics for these young women, it is not possible at present

to report on the precise variation within the population of the city based on deprivation or ethnicity. It is possible to estimate approximate rates for wards, as shown in Figure 3.

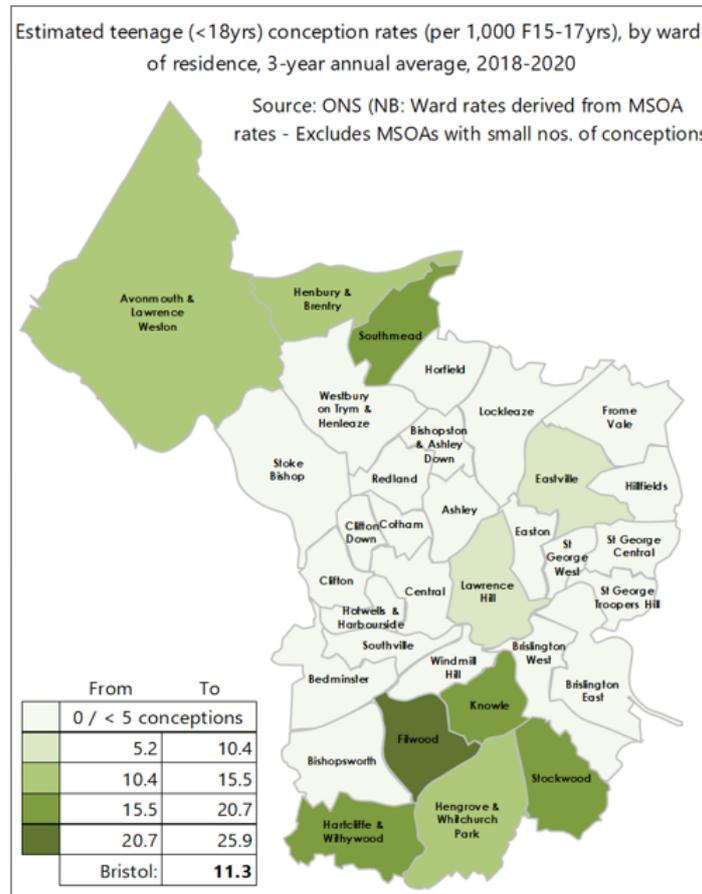


Figure 3: Ward map of approximate teenage conception rates (<18yrs) in Bristol

Relationships and sex education

Teenage pregnancy is a complex issue that is linked to many different factors, including, but not limited to relationships and sex education. Bristol’s ‘Pupil Voice’ survey (2022) reports that:

- 26% of year 10 pupils found school lessons on focused on sex and relationships ‘quite’ or ‘very useful’ and just over 15% of pupils found these lessons ‘not at all useful’.
- 47% of Year 10 pupils said they know where they would go if they needed a contraception/sexual health service (54% in 2019).
- 24% of all year 10 pupils were aware of the local sexual health service provided for young people (41% in 2019), and less than 10% of the population-wide sexual health service for Bristol (new for the 2019 questionnaire).

Further data / links / consultations:

- [SPLASH Bristol 2022-01-27 \(phe.org.uk\)](https://www.phe.org.uk)
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/good-progress-more-do-teenage-pregnancy-and-young-parents>
- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/quarterlyconceptionstowomenagedunder18englandandwales>
- [Teenage pregnancy prevention framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Child and Maternal Health - PHE](https://www.phe.org.uk)

Covid-19 impact:

The rates of teenage conceptions fell nationally by almost a third during the first covid-19 lockdown (April to June 2020). Because the numbers of teenage pregnancies in Bristol are low drawing any firm conclusions regarding the longer-term impact of the pandemic on local trends is difficult at this stage, more data is needed for the full picture to emerge.

Date updated: July 2023**Next update due:** May 2024