

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2023/24

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Efforts to improve the sexual health of the population are a public health priority. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are preventable but can have lasting long-term health implications if not treated (including pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility and ectopic pregnancy).

Prevention of unintended pregnancies and control over reproductive choices preserves good mental and psychosexual health and leads to better outcomes for babies. Poor relationships can have a lasting effect on an individual's mental wellbeing, self-esteem, and confidence.

In Bristol, STI rates remain relatively high and teenage conceptions have increased for the first time in over a decade.

Bristol has a young population compared to England. The city is ethnically diverse with areas of high deprivation and a large lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) community giving rise to greater needs around sexual health and wellbeing.

Summary points

- Bristol has high crude rates of STIs which are significantly higher than England's rates. This is reflective of a relatively young, diverse, urban population.
- In 2022, rates of STIs increased but are still not as high as they were before Covid.
- In 2022 there were 2,761 new diagnoses of STIs (excluding chlamydia aged <25) in Bristol, a 36% increase in the rate since 2021. Some of this will be due to increasing testing.
- Chlamydia is the most commonly diagnosed STI in England and in Bristol- and accounted for almost 2,000 of the STIs in 2022.
- There were 673 diagnoses of gonorrhoea reported in 2022- triple the number and rate in 2021
- There were 62 diagnoses of syphilis, a 24% increase since 2021.
- Prescriptions of long-acting reversible contraception (coils and implants) increased in 2021, following a significant drop in 2020 due to Covid, but abortion rates remained stable and lower than England in 2021
- Teenage (aged 15-17) conception rates increased in 2021

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Bristol has a large proportion of young people and continues to have relatively high crude rates of diagnosed STIs. In 2022, 2,761 new STIs were diagnosed in sexual health services (excluding chlamydia in under 25-year-olds¹). This reflects a 36% increase in the rate to 586 per 100,000 population. This is still significantly higher than the national average (496 per 100,000, an increase of 23% since 2021). When age is taken into account, however, Bristol's age standardised rate is lower than England's rate for both males and females.

The decrease in the overall rate of new STI diagnoses during 2020 and 2021 was likely to be due to the impact of the national Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 and the resulting reduction in socialising and the reduction in STI testing which was more apparent in Bristol. Although

¹ Chlamydia data for 15 – 24 year olds can be accessed in the following JSNA Health Profile:
<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/3849453/JSNA+2019+-+Chlamydia+%28updated+Oct+2019%29.pdf/22fe3162-74d5-d948-8d55-7c93860274ee>

testing rates have increased, they are considerably lower than before the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2019, 31,218 STI tests (excluding chlamydia screening tests in under 25-year-olds) were undertaken in Bristol. Only 5,692 STI tests were recorded in 2021 and 7,576 in 2022; this is under further investigation as it doesn't correspond with local service data.

STI rates remain highest in young heterosexuals aged 15 to 24 years, black ethnic minorities and men who have sex with men.

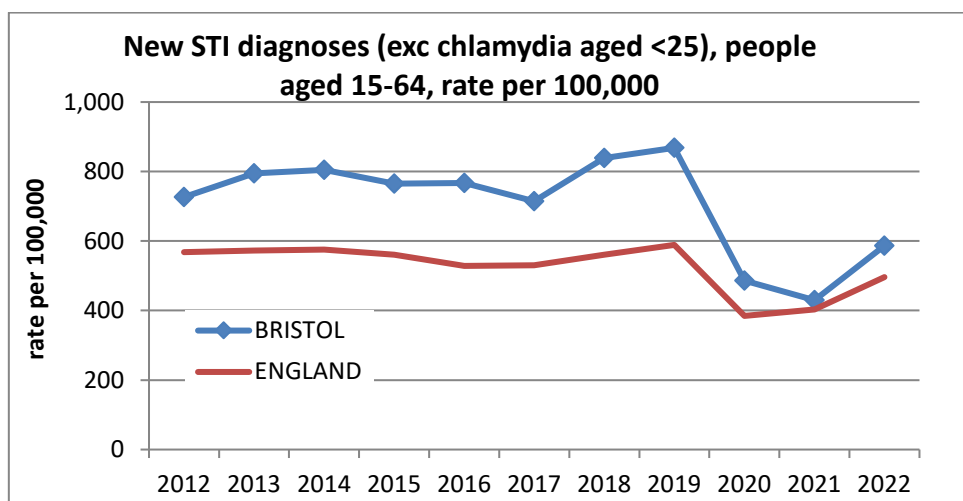


Figure 1: New STI diagnoses (exc chlamydia aged <25) crude rate per 100,000 population all, OHID Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles, November 2023

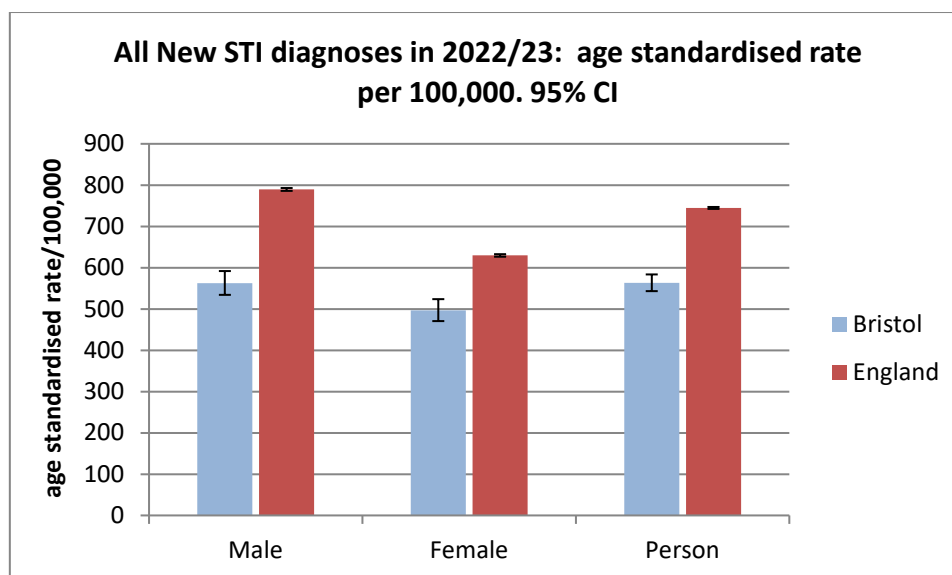


Figure 2: All new STI, age standardised rate per 100,000; 95% confidence intervals. Source: GUMCAD report, ONS population estimates 2021

Syphilis

There were 62 diagnoses of syphilis in 2022- a rate of 13.2 per 100,000, which is lower than England's rate but reflects a 24% increase since 2021. Although absolute numbers are

relatively low in comparison to other STIs, syphilis can cause serious long-term problems if left untreated.

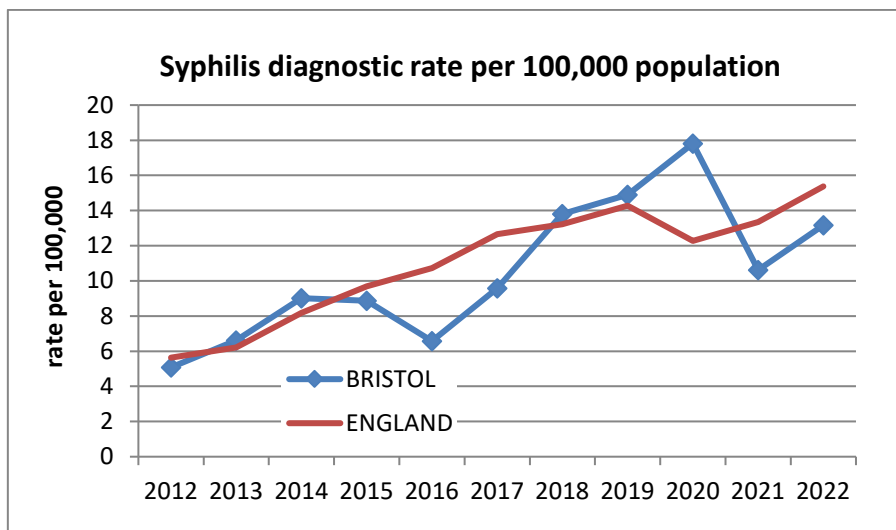


Figure 3: Syphilis diagnostic crude rate per 100,000 population, OHID Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles, November 2023

Gonorrhoea

The diagnostic rate for gonorrhoea (143 per 100,000) significantly increased in Bristol in 2022 and is similar to the national rate (146 per 100,000).

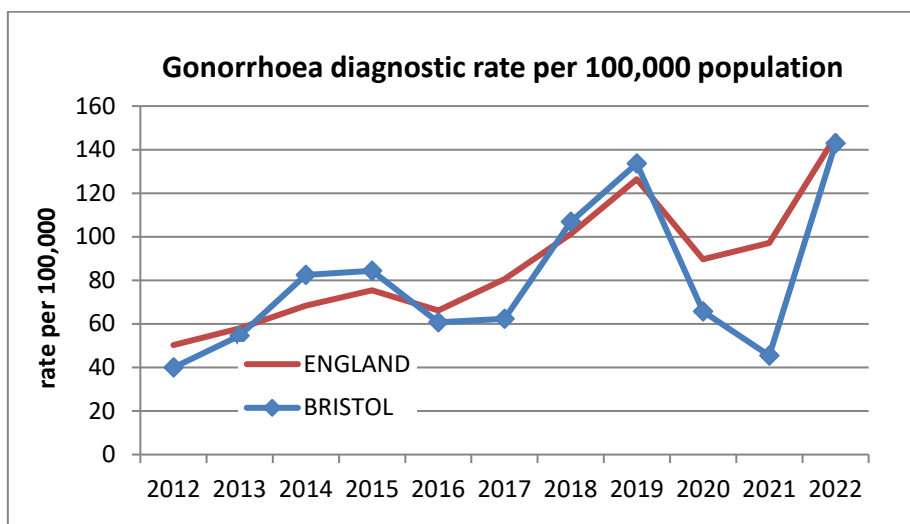


Figure 4: Gonorrhoea diagnostic crude rate per 100,000 population, OHID Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles, November 2023

There are discrepancies in the number of syphilis and gonorrhoea cases reported by the local sexual health provider compared to the national data above, which are being investigated further.

Genital Herpes

The diagnostic rate for genital herpes in 2022 was 49 per 100,000 (231 diagnoses), which was a 16.7% increase in Bristol since 2021 and is similar to the national average (44 per 100,000).

Chlamydia in over 25s

There were 755 cases of chlamydia detected through sexual health services in the Bristol population aged over 25 in 2022, giving the diagnostic rate of 238 per 100,000 – an increase of 38% and higher than the national average (217 per 100,000).

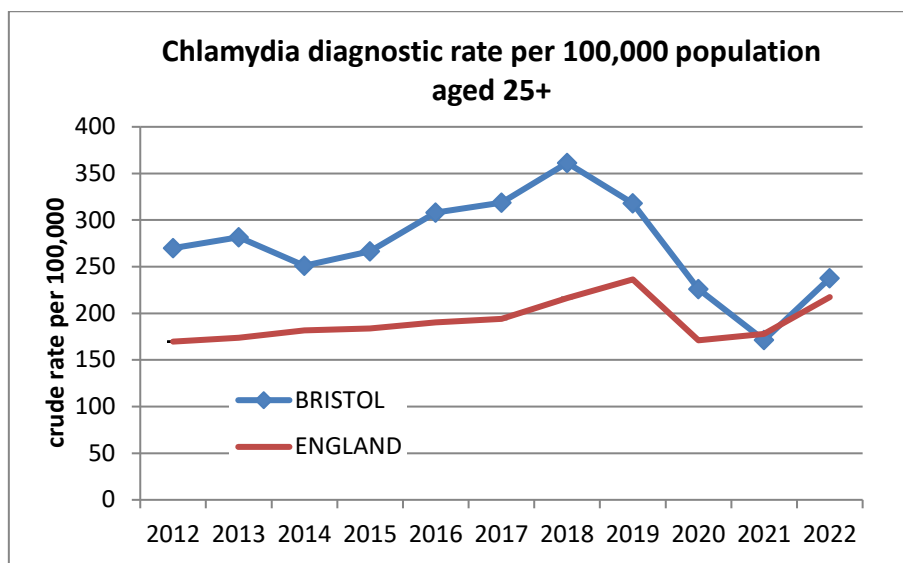


Figure 5: Chlamydia diagnostic crude rate per 100,000 population, OHID Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles, November 2023

Pelvic inflammatory disease

Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) is an infection of the upper female genital tract which may lead to serious complications such as ectopic pregnancy, infertility and chronic pelvic pain. Chlamydia, gonorrhoea and other STIs are common causes of PID.²

In 2021/22 there were 275 hospital admissions for PID in Bristol. This rate of 236 per 100,000 women aged 15-44, reflecting a 19% increase since 2020/21. This is similar to the England rate of 224 per 100,000.

² OHID: Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles, [Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles - Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](https://www.phe.org.uk/data/sexual-reproductive-health-profiles)

Reproductive Health

Teenage pregnancies

The under 18s conception rate in Bristol had been falling since 2007 to reach its lowest rate in 23 years in 2020, but in 2021 there was a rise from 66 to 90 conceptions in under 18s (15-17 years olds). There were an additional 21 conceptions in under 16s (women aged 13-15) in Bristol in 2021. Data for 2022 is not yet published.

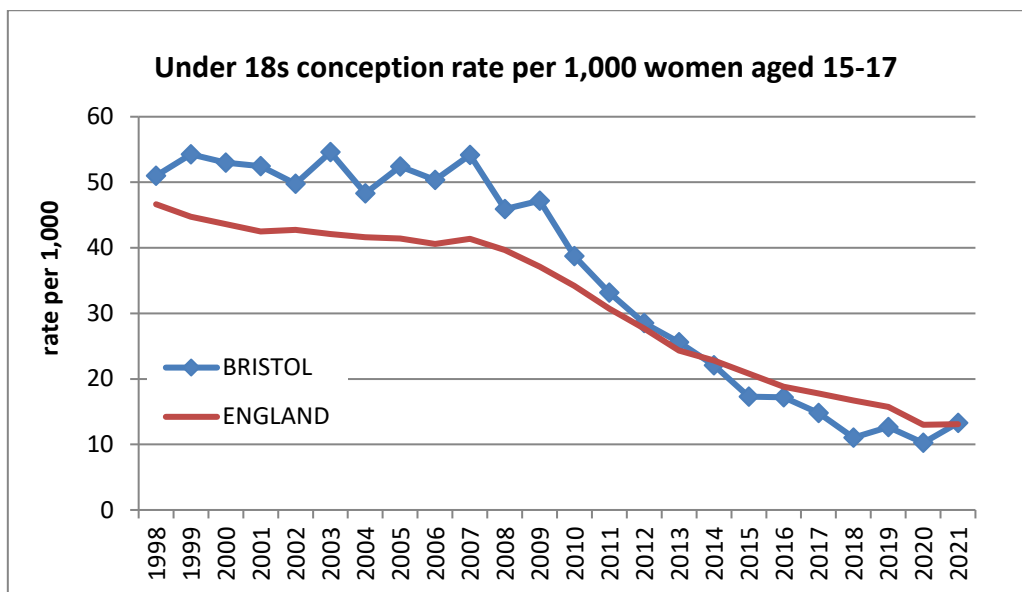


Figure 7: Under 18s conception rate per 1,000 women aged 15-17, OHID Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles and ONS Conception Statistics, England and Wales, 2021. November 2023

Contraception

Long acting reversible contraception (LARC), such as coils and implants, is the most effective form of contraception. Bristol has had high rates of LARC predominantly within primary care, but like the rest of the country, saw very significant reductions in 2020. In 2019, there were 8,360 prescriptions for LARC. This fell to 5,850 in 2020, but 2021 saw an increase to 7,180.

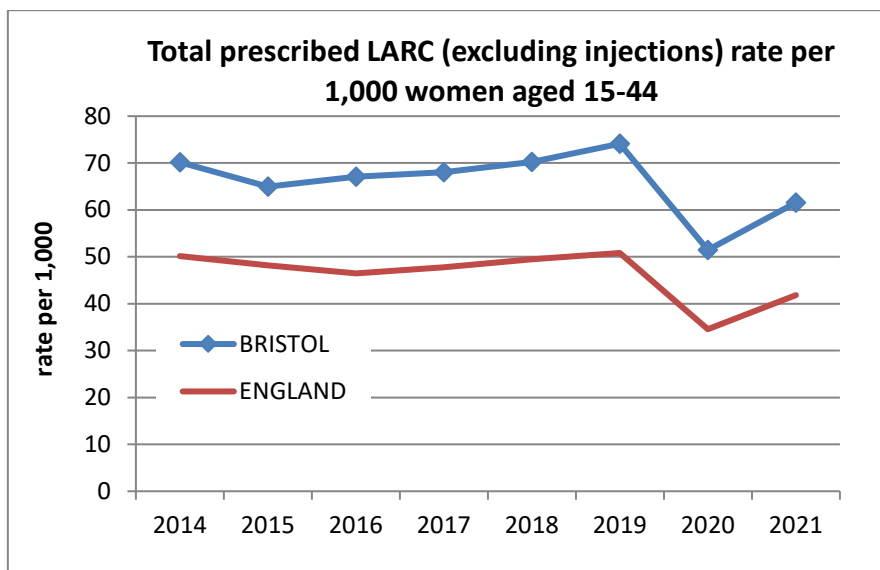


Figure 8: Total prescribed LARC (excluding injections) rate per 1,000 women aged 15-44, OHID Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles. November 2023

Abortion

Total abortion rates remained relatively static in 2021 and below the England rate. Data for 2022 is not yet available.

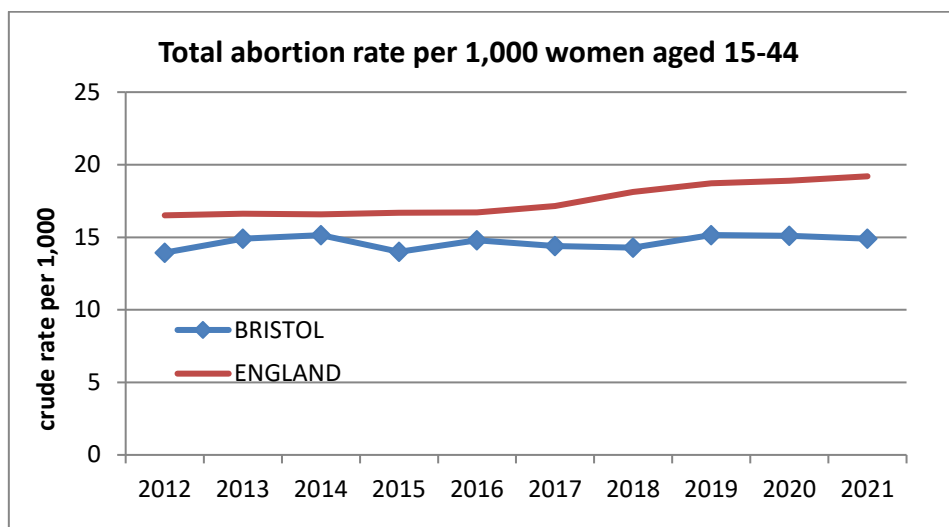


Figure 9: Total abortion rate per 1,000 women aged 15-44, OHID Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles. November 2023

Equalities data

Poor sexual health contributes to health inequalities in Bristol. Strong links exist between deprivation and STIs, teenage conceptions and abortions, with the highest burden borne by women, men who have sex with men (MSM), the trans community, young people, certain black and minority ethnic groups, people involved in sex work, people with learning difficulties and homeless people. Young people in care and care leavers are also at increased risk. Many of the

groups at higher risk of poor sexual health face stigma and discrimination, which can influence their ability to access services.

In the South West region and England, the highest rates of new STI diagnoses are among Black and Mixed ethnic groups. Our local (unpublished) data does not appear to reflect this difference so clearly and this may be due to under representation of people of Black ethnicity attending our services.

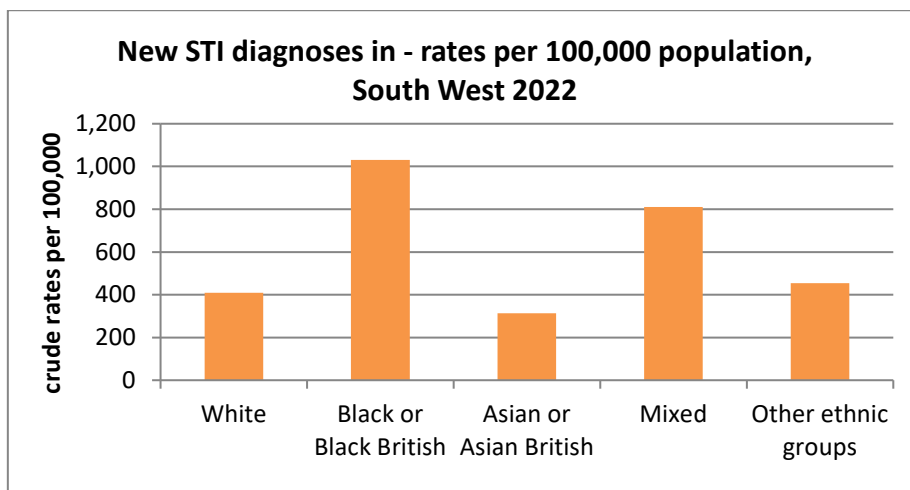


Figure 10: New STI diagnoses crude rates per 100,000 population by ethnic group, UK Health Security Agency: New STI diagnosis numbers and rates in England and regions by gender, sexual orientation, age group and ethnic group, 2012 to 2022 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sexually-transmitted-infections-stis-annual-data-tables>

The highest rates of new STI diagnoses are experienced by young men and young women both nationally and locally.

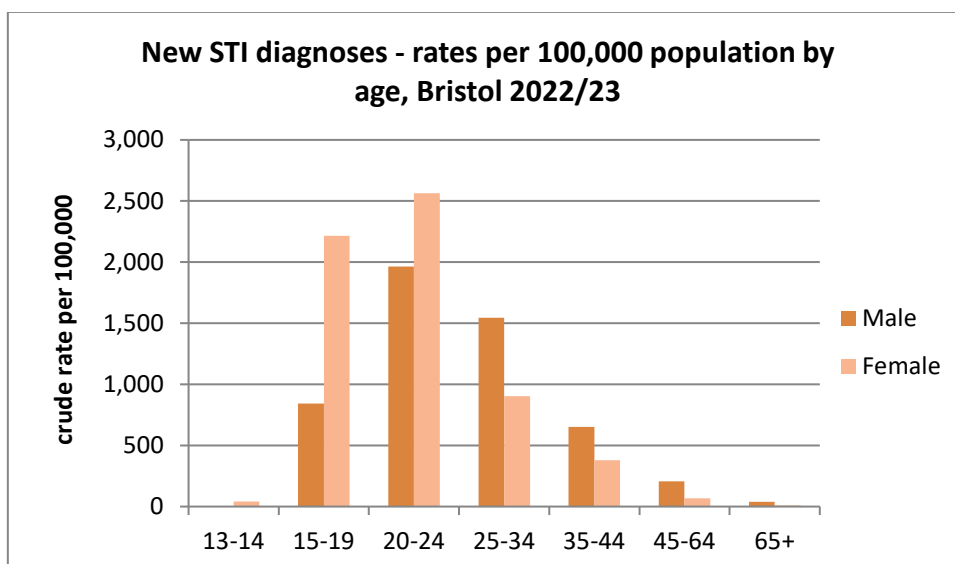


Figure 11: New STI diagnoses crude rates per 100,000 population by age, Bristol, 2020. Source: GUMCAD report 2021/22

Covid-19 impact

Covid-19 had a significant impact upon sexual health data for 2020 and 2021 in Bristol due to lockdowns prohibiting close socialising outside of immediate households as well as people less likely to access testing. Whilst sexual health services were open during the pandemic, people were no longer permitted to walk in. Public confusion around the perceived availability of services may have had a negative impact upon access to services and it is likely that some of our more vulnerable populations were disproportionately impacted. Some ongoing consequences of Covid are still apparent in the 2022 data shown above.

Further data / links / consultations:

- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: Sexual and Reproductive Health Profiles <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/sexualhealth>
- Sexual and reproductive health in England: local and national data <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-and-reproductive-health-in-england-local-and-national-data>
- Teenage Pregnancy <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/teenage-pregnancy>
- Department of Health - 'Abortion statistics, England and Wales' <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales>
- [Public Health England – ‘Covid-19: Understanding the Impact on BAME Communities’](#)
[COVID-19: understanding the impact on BAME communities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Date updated: November 2023

Next update due: November 2024