

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2020/21

Fuel Poverty

Summary points

- 9.8% (approximately 19,572 households) of all households in Bristol are living in fuel poverty (BEIS, 2020)
- The impact of COVID-19 on employment and income for many across the city could result in higher amounts of households in fuel poverty

Fuel poverty is a term that is typically used to describe a person on a low income who's struggling to afford their energy costs. The drivers of fuel poverty are low income, poor energy efficiency and high energy prices. Living in fuel poverty and experiencing a cold home have been shown to have a significant impact on mental and physical health. Several large scale evidence reviews have suggested that living in a cold home and coping with unaffordable fuel bills can have significant adverse implications for a range of outcomes, including health, educational and social outcomes (Marmot Review Team, 2011; CSE. 2016; NICE. 2015).

The measure of Fuel Poverty has been determined using the Low Income High Cost (LIHC) indicator, where a household is fuel poor if:

- they have required fuel costs above national median level;
- were they to spend that amount, their remaining income would be below the official poverty line.

Based on the LIHC definition, there are an estimated 19,572 fuel poor households in Bristol, 9.8% of all households (BEIS, 2019)¹.

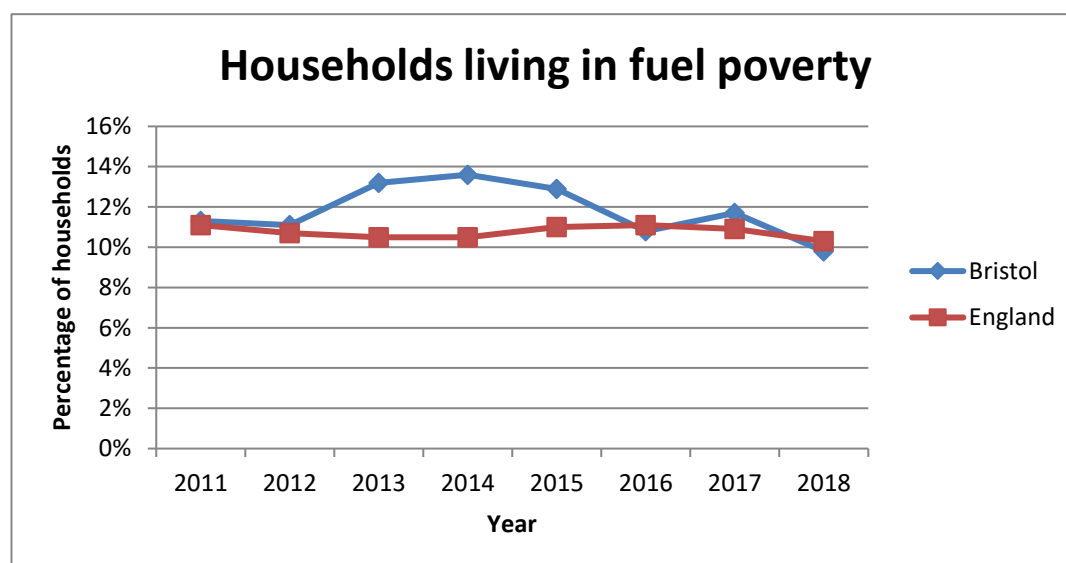


Fig 1 Percentage of households in Fuel Poverty in Bristol (based on low income, high cost), Source Business for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy 2018 data

¹ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). 2020. Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics Report, 2020 (2018 Data).

As displayed in figure 2, the percentages of fuel poor households can vary across the city. The wards showing the highest proportions of fuel poor contain areas with large student populations and more affluent areas around the centre with older Georgian homes i.e. those areas with households that have the highest total fuel bill. The largest cluster is seen around Cotham, Bishopston and Clifton.

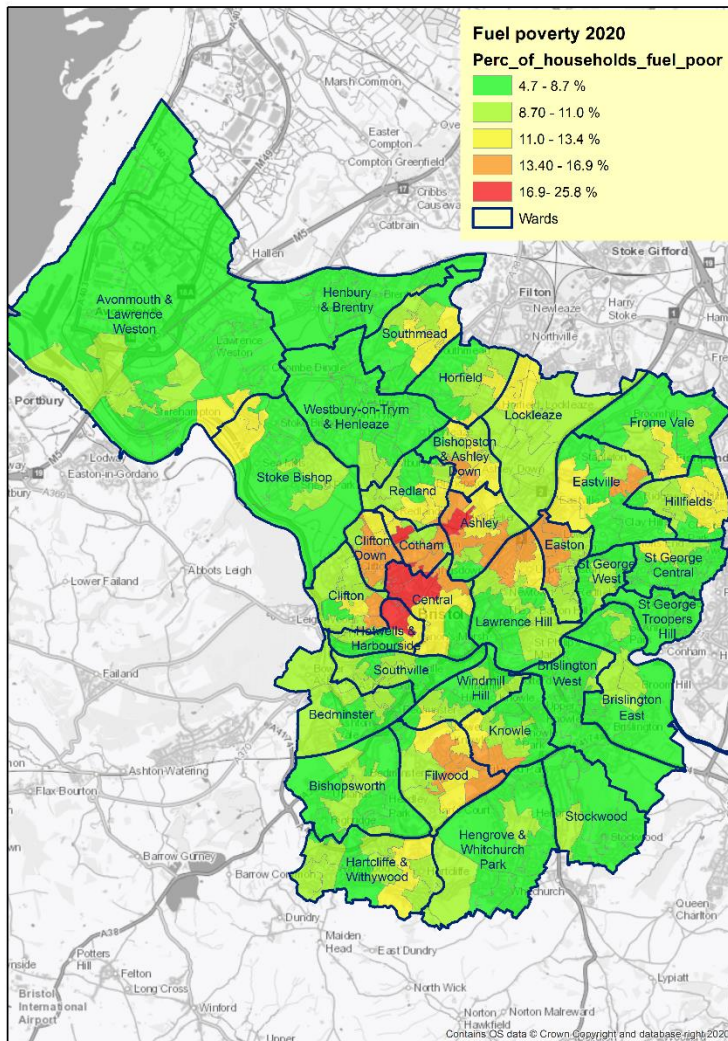


Fig 2 Percentage of households in Fuel Poverty by LSOA (based on low income, high cost), Source Business for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy 2018 data

The [JSNA chapter on Fuel Poverty](#) combines LSOA data on poor health, poor efficiency housing and low incomes to highlight areas most at risk from fuel poverty in Bristol.

Living in a cold home can have various physiological and mental health impacts^{2 3 4} including:

- Increased blood pressure
- Suppression of the immune system

² Marmot Review Team. 2011. The Health Impacts of Cold Homes and Fuel Poverty.

³ CSE. 2016. Understanding the Characteristics of Low Income Households Most at Risk from Living in Cold Homes

⁴ NICE. 2015. Excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes.

- Increased airway constriction and mucus production in the lungs
- Mental health effects from depression
- Reduced educational and employment attainment

COVID-19 has resulted in various impacts on households across the city including impacts on income and job security. Additionally, with lockdown restrictions more individuals and families are having to spend more time in their homes than usual, which likely results in higher energy usage and costs. Subsequently with increased financial hardship and higher fuel costs in a property with poor energy efficiency, more households could be pushed into fuel poverty.

Bristol is publishing a Fuel Poverty Action Plan in 2021, which brings together organisations from across the city to support vulnerable households and tackle fuel poverty.

Equalities data:

Fuel poverty is assessed at a geographical level and does not include any equalities data.

Further data / links:

- JSNA Chapter on Fuel Poverty - [see JSNA chapters](#)

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