

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2025/26

Disabled people

Summary points

- Approx 11.5% 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

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)	11.5%
Working age population (16-64 years)	9.6%
Older people (65 years and over)	20.4%

Table 1: Disabled population estimate by age (3-year average 2022/23-2024/25). 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 2024/25, 11.7% of respondents identified as Disabled, in 2023/24 this figure was 11.0% and in 2022/23 it was 11.8%, giving an *estimate* of **11.5% 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%).

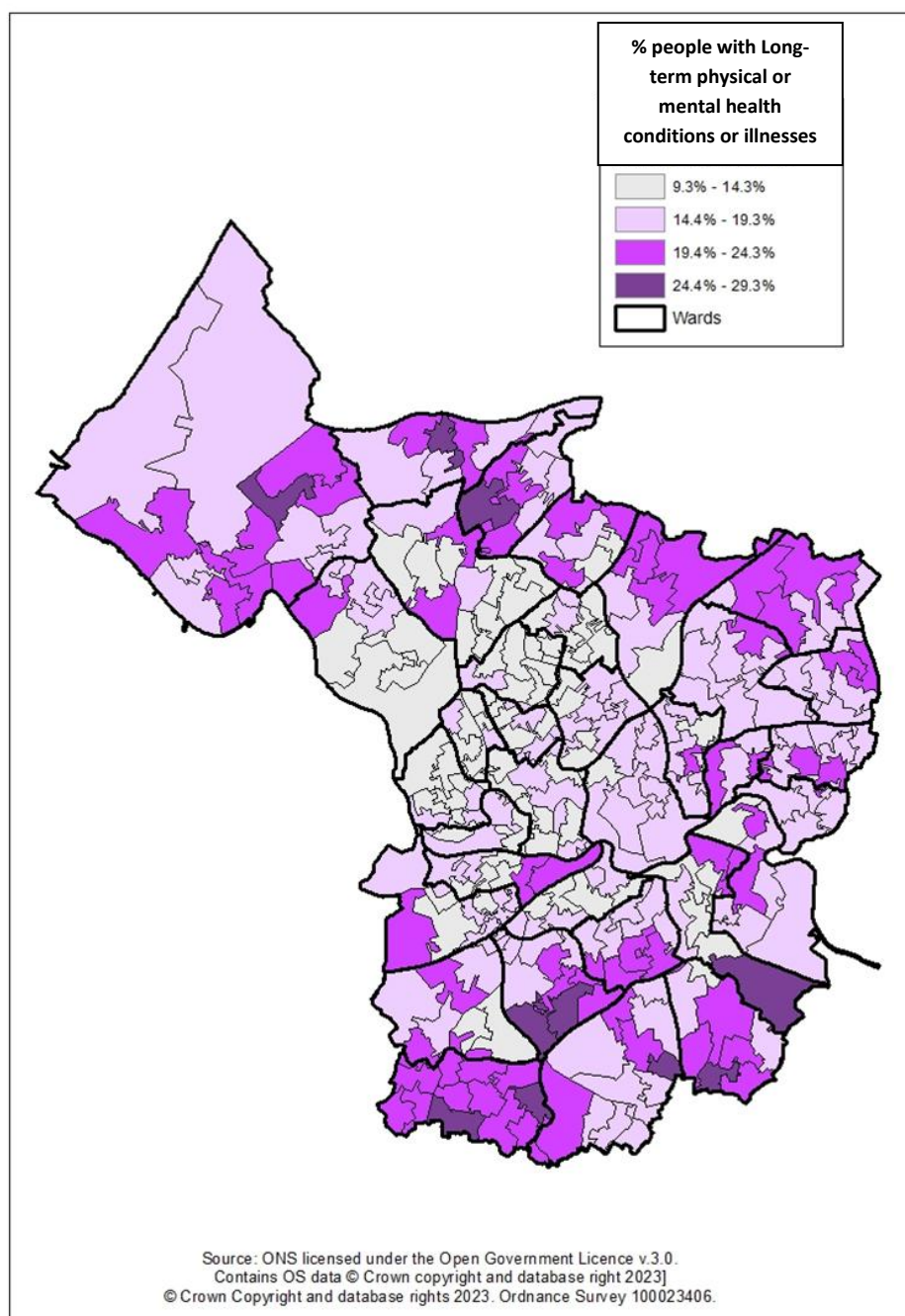


Figure 1: Population whose day-to-day activities are limited by long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses. Source: 2021 Census ONS Crown Copyright Reserved (BCC Insight, Performance & Intelligence).

Mobility impairment

According to the Institute of Public Care¹, 13,490 people in Bristol aged 18-64 were predicted to have impaired mobility in 2025, equal to 4.1% of the working age population, forecast to increase to 13,730 by 2035. 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 2025

A further 11,838 people aged 65 and over were unable to manage at least one mobility activity on their own in 2025, forecast to increase to 13,602 in 2035. 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 19.3% of the 65+ population, with nearly twice the number of females with mobility issues than males (66.1% V 33.9%).

Sensory impairment

Overall population estimates² for adults in Bristol indicate around 210 people of working age had a serious visual impairment in 2025 and approximately 5,675 people aged 65 and over were predicted to have had a moderate or severe visual impairment, increasing to 6,325 in 2035. In addition, 2,015 people aged 75 and over were predicted to have registrable eye conditions in 2025.

In terms of hearing impairment 62,220 people aged 18 and over were predicted to have some hearing loss in 2025 (forecast to rise to 67,555 in 2035) and a further 6,655 were predicted to have severe hearing loss. This represents 16.1% and 1.7% of the adult population accordingly.

School age pupils

According to the Bristol school census carried out in January 2025:

- 1.4% (179) of pupils had a hearing impairment
- 0.7% (90) of pupils had a visual impairment
- 2.4% (315) 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.

Findings from the Quality of Life Survey – Disabled People

Quality of Life³ is an extensive annual resident's survey for Bristol that has been running, in different formats, since 2001. The 2024 survey included around 70 questions producing over 250 indicators, on topics including health, lifestyles, community, local services and living in Bristol. The survey received approximately 4,100 useable responses and allowed findings to be analysed by demographic and equality groups. The following headline issues for respondents who have self-certified as disabled (approximately 500 people) has been extracted from the [Quality of Life Survey 2024/25 final report](#):

For Disabled people there are 136 indicators worse than the city average, 53 where the figure is more than double (or less than half depending on the polarity) the Bristol average and 11 indicators more than quadruple (or less than a quarter) the Bristol average. Headlines:

² Institute of Public Care, POPPI and PANSI tools, www.poppi.org.uk : accessed July 2025

³ [Quality of life in Bristol](#)
www.bristol.gov.uk/jsna

- Thirty-five Crime and Safety indicators are worse for Disabled people. 28 of these indicators concern discrimination or harassment. Half (50.1%) of Disabled people were subject to discrimination or harassment, over a quarter (27.6%) saying this was due to them being a Disabled person, a similar percentage as the previous year. Disabled people are also more likely to experience other types of discrimination due to their sex, sexual orientation or age. For instance, 12.8% of Disabled people report being victims of sexual orientation discrimination, more than two and a half the city average (4.5%).
- Lack of accessibility remains a barrier to many Disabled people to participate fully in the life of the city with 18.1% being prevented from getting involved in their community; 28.7% find accessibility issues stop them getting involved in cultural activity; and 8.1% unable to travel to local shops or services using public transport. Nearly a quarter (23.6%) say having accessible venues would encourage them to visit venues and events at night.
- Less than two-fifths (39.2%) of Disabled people report being in good health, less than half the city average. For many (44.6%), illness or their health limits their daily activity a lot, over six times the city average. For over half (52.1%), their wellbeing or health conditions restrict their involvement in the community and for over two-fifths (41.3%) their involvement in cultural activity (both nearly four times the city average).
- Nearly three-tenths (27.7%) of Disabled people are physically inactive, over three times the city average. Only three out of ten (27.5%) can walk, wheel or cycle to local shops or services, less than half the city average (58.5%).
- Disabled people are the most likely demographic group to suffer from poor mental wellbeing, at 42.2% more than double the city average

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](#)
- JSNA section - [Learning Disabilities and Autism](#)
- JSNA section – [Emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people](#)
- JSNA section – [Mental wellbeing](#)
- 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 2025

Date of next update: May 2026