

Physical Activity

Summary points

- Just over two-thirds of people living in Bristol are physically active (QoL 2024/25)¹
- Bristol has the highest proportion of physically active adults (19+ years) of all English Core Cities and the 7th highest proportion of all English local authorities (Active Lives Survey 2024/25)²
- Bristol has the 6th lowest proportion of physically inactive adults (19+ years) of all English local authorities and the lowest proportion of all English Core Cities (Active Lives Survey 2024/25)

Findings - Adults

People who have a physically active lifestyle have a 20-35% lower risk of cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease and stroke compared to those who have a sedentary lifestyle. Regular physical activity is also associated with a reduced risk of diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and colon/breast cancer and with improved mental health. In older adults physical activity is associated with increased functional capacities³.

The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) currently recommends:

- For good physical and mental health, adults should aim to be physically active every day. Any activity is better than none, and more is better still.
- Adults should do activities to develop or maintain strength in the major muscle groups. These could include heavy gardening, carrying heavy shopping, or resistance exercise. Muscle strengthening activities should be done at least two days a week, but any strengthening activity is better than none.
- Each week, adults should accumulate at least 150 minutes (2 1/2 hours) of moderate intensity activity (such as brisk walking or cycling); or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity (such as running); or even shorter durations of very vigorous intensity activity (such as sprinting or stair climbing); or a combination of moderate, vigorous and very vigorous intensity activity.
- Adults should aim to minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary, and when physically possible should break up long periods of inactivity with at least light physical activity.

Local data

Results from Bristol's Quality of Life (QoL) survey 2024/25 found that 67.3% of people are physically active¹ (taking at least 150 mins a week of moderate or 75 mins a week of vigorous exercise). Since 2019 when 71.2% of residents were physically activity, levels have reduced

¹ Source: Bristol Quality of Life survey 2024/25 www.bristol.gov.uk/qualityoflife

² Source: Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (based on the Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England)

³ Source: Public Health England (PHOF)

year on year to its lowest rate of 63.7% in 2022, however the last two years of data evidence an upturn in performance, with activity levels increasing to 66.6% in 2023 and 67.3% in 2024.

Physical activity decreased to 51.6% for people living in the 10% most deprived areas and varies by ward from 44.8% in Hartcliffe & Withywood to 83.1% in Clifton Down (Figure 1).

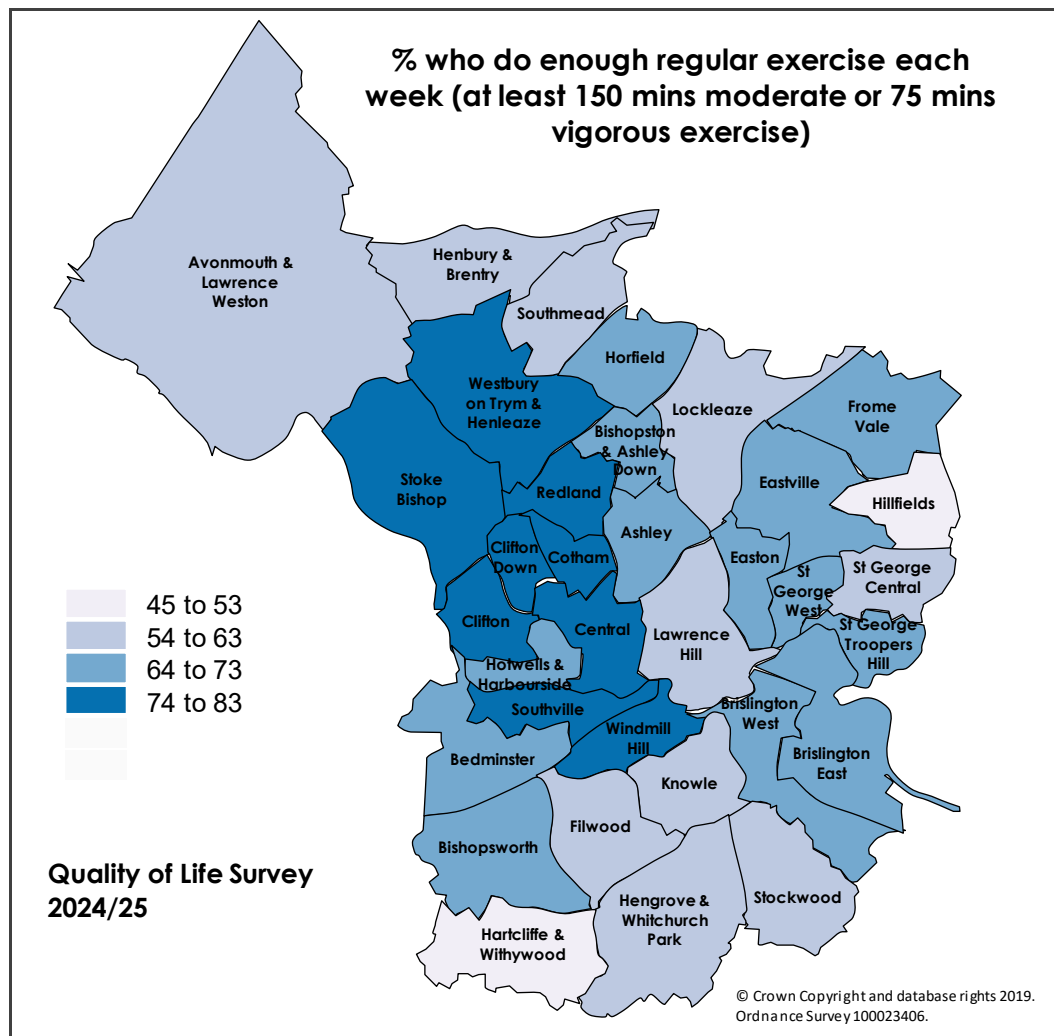


Figure 1: Physically active people. Source: Quality of Life survey 2024/25

Equalities data:

Further population breakdowns available through the Bristol Quality of Life survey 2024/25 include:

Gender: Women (65.3%) are less likely to be physically active than men (69.2%), although the gap between them is gradually decreasing.

Ethnicity: Black / Black British residents (45.6%) are significantly less likely to be physically active than the city average whilst White British residents (68.5%) and residents of mixed / multiple ethnicities (69.8%) are more likely to be physically active.

Age: 73.2% of young people aged 16 to 24 years old undertake regular exercise, compared to 47.4% of older people aged 65+.

In addition, 55.4% of people in Bristol stated they play sport at least once a week. This ranges from 69.4% for those living in the 10% least deprived areas to 40.6% for those living in the 10% most deprived areas of Bristol. By ward, nearly three quarters of residents living in Westbury-on-Trym and Henleaze (72.5%) play sport at least once a week compared to just over a quarter of residents living in Hartcliffe & Withywood (26.0%).

A national ‘Active Lives Adult’ survey⁴ asks a similar question to the QoL survey but has a different population group and approach to weighting the results which may not be an accurate picture for Bristol. However, it is useful for comparing to other places and analysing direction of travel. For 2024/25, 76.3% of Bristol adults (age 19+) were physically “active”, significantly higher than the national average (68.0%) (Figure 2) and the 7th highest of all English local authorities including Core Cities.

Bristol has been consistently significantly higher than the England average since 2015/16, ranging from 72.5% of physically active adults (lowest proportion) in 2017/18 to 76.3% (highest proportion) in 2024/25.

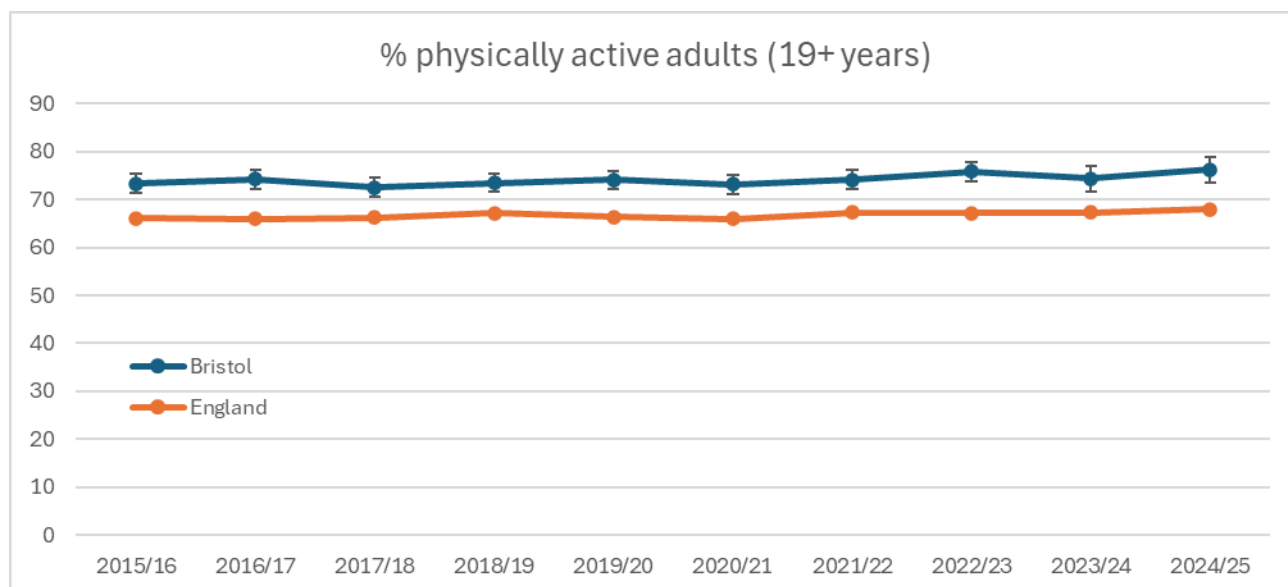


Figure 2: % physically active adults (19+). Source: PHOF – May 2026

Although 14.4% of adults in Bristol are physically inactive (undertaking less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week), this is significantly lower than the national average of 21.8%, and 6th lowest of all local authorities in England (2024/25)⁵.

Findings – Children and Young People

For 5 to 18 year olds, the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) currently recommends:

- At least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity every day (on average across the week)
- Including a variety of activities across the week - Aerobic activity (most of the 60 mins) e.g. running, cycling, games
- Muscle and bone strengthening activities (e.g. jumping, climbing, sports) across the week

⁴ Source: Active Lives Adult survey 2024/25, Sport England.

⁵ Source: Public Health England (PHOF)

A national ‘Active Lives Children and Young People’ Survey for 2024/25 found that 49.1% of 5 to 16 year olds are physically active (averaging 60 minutes or more a day), 22.5% are fairly active (averaging 30-59 minutes a day) and 28.4% are less active (less than an average of 30 minutes a day).

Data for Bristol indicates that 40.8% of children (5 to 16 years) are active, continuing a decreasing trend over the last three years from a peak of 54.8% in 2021/22, and lower than the national average (Figure 3). Inactivity (less active) has nearly doubled in three years from 19.4% in 2021/22 to 37.1% in 2024/25.

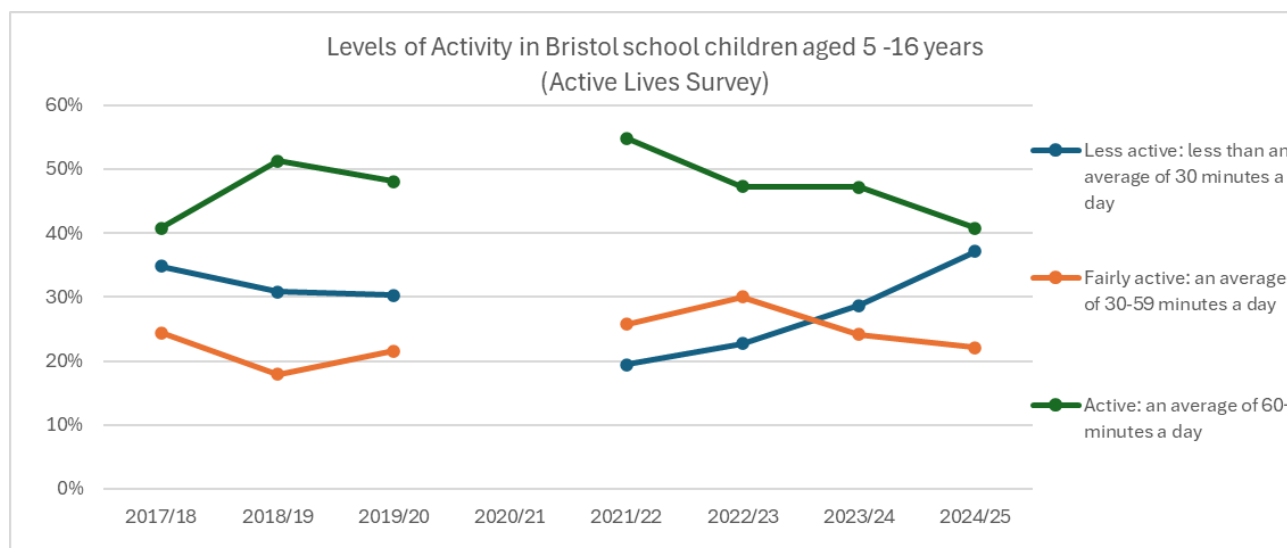


Figure 3: Levels of activity in Bristol school children age 5 to 16 years. Source: ALS – May 2026

Further data / links / consultations:

- Sport England: [Active Lives Survey](#)
- [Public Health Outcomes Framework - Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#)
- Bristol Physical Activity and Health Profiles – [Mapping tool](#) - An analysis of activity levels in different MSOAs including health, wellbeing and wider determinants and comparisons of the data with Bristol and England.

Date updated: May 2026

Date of next update: May 2027