



Economic Strategy

2025–2035

Bristol's Economy of Tomorrow: Our Missions

A thriving city economy



A thriving city economy



£15.5bn in economic output in 2021, but less productive now than in 2004.⁶⁹



58% of working age population are educated to degree level or higher, exceeding the national rate of 45%.⁷⁰



10% population increase between 2013 – 2023, making Bristol the second fastest growing core city.⁷¹



High employment rate (78.6% as of March 2024) but lower than the regional average.⁷²

Home to 483,000 people, we have a growing, young and increasingly diverse population, representing over 287 ethnic groups, 45 religions and 91 main languages spoken by residents⁷³. This includes a substantial student population which has grown by approximately 8,000 over the last ten (census) years and makes up 9.2% of the usual resident population; many of whom choose to stay and work in the city after completing their studies at one of our world-leading Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) or from our range of high-quality Further Education provision.⁷⁴

Our universities are anchor institutions and have a key role in shaping city and regional economic development leading to wider societal and economic impact. They provide local employment in a range of occupations, research and innovation capabilities which attract investment and support business growth. Through the Civic University Agreement, we will continue to work with our higher and further education partners to deliver meaningful opportunities and benefits for Bristol and ensure that we are maximising the positive impact we can have as key anchor organisations in the city.

Our highly qualified workforce is the engine of our local economy and a key driver for inward investment into the city. Over half of

those employed (52%) work in managerial, professional and technical occupations⁷⁵, contributing to the median annual resident wage in Bristol (£35,100) being higher than both the national and regional averages.⁷⁶

Despite high average earnings, Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) per head in Bristol is the lowest among neighbouring Local Authority areas, at £21,084.77. GDHI measures how much money individuals have left to spend or save after accounting for taxes, pensions, and property costs. Lower GDHI per head is indicative of the significant costs of living in Bristol, which are most evident in rising housing costs: in the decade to 2022, house prices have risen by 90% and rental costs are at an all-time high at an average of £1,286 per month as of March 2022.⁷⁸ The city's population growth creates pressure on existing infrastructure, specifically housing and transport, as well as increasing demand for public services.

Bristol also has a productivity challenge. Whilst our growth in GVA has largely outperformed regional trends, since 2016 we have a widening productivity gap with England. In 2021, output per hour in Bristol was £34.31, no higher than it was in 2004.⁷⁹ 10 out of the 17 broad sectors in Bristol note productivity gaps with England averages, and 9 have seen a fall in productivity between 2016-2021.

69 ONS, Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: all ITL regions (2021).

70 ONS, Annual Population Survey (2022).

71 ONS, Population estimates- local authority based by single year (2021).

72 ONS, Annual Population Survey (2023).

73 Bristol City Council, Population of Bristol (2023).

74 ONS, Census Data (2021) – 9.2% student population in Bristol, lower than other core cities for example Nottingham 17%, Newcastle 13.8% and Manchester and Cardiff over 11%.

75 ONS, Census Data (2021).

76 ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2023).

77 ONS Regional gross disposable household income (GDHI): local authorities by ITL1 region (2023).

78 ONS, House price statistics for small areas in England and Wales, (2021).

79 ONS. Subregional productivity: labour productivity indices by local authority district and UK ITL2 and ITL3 subregions (2021).

A range of factors are contributing to Bristol’s productivity slowdown, which if not addressed, threatens the longer-term economic vitality of the city, and could further entrench disparities in opportunity for our residents. By addressing our

productivity gap and unlocking economic growth, we can tackle inequalities across our city and create the conditions for greater health and wellbeing, ensuring all our communities are able to thrive.

We want Bristol to be a thriving city economy.

A thriving Bristol is one where businesses and people prosper. Where we have the right infrastructure in place to enable innovation and growth – from workspaces to digital connectivity, transport to housing – and build on our strengths in Clean Energy, Cyber & Tech, Creative Industries and R&D. It is a Bristol that supports people to achieve their full potential and take advantage of the opportunities we have here, and where communities are recognised as key partners in our economic success. A Bristol that builds on our international reputation for innovation and disruptive thinking, celebrates its rich cultural sector, and attracts visitors and investment to the city.

Our mission is to deliver the most productive economic growth of all regional cities



Our measures of success for a thriving Bristol are:

- Increased productivity
- Maintained levels of employment in tradeable jobs
- Increased business innovation
- Increased innovation support for our sector specialisms
- Increased jobs created through inward investment
- Increased entrepreneurship and early growth of SMEs
- Increase in employment & cultural space across the city