Children in the youth justice system

Summary points

- The rate of first-time entrants to the youth justice system in Bristol in 2025 was 127.7 per 100,000 population. The gap between Bristol and England rates has narrowed significantly since 2014 marking the city average as statistically similar to the national average (127.1 per 100,000).

Findings

Young people in the criminal justice system are more likely to make unhealthy life style choices and are less likely to succeed in education and are more likely to have adverse health outcomes in adulthood. The Bristol Youth Justice Service is a multi-agency team who work with young offenders.

First time entrants to youth justice system

The rate of first-time entrants to the youth justice system[1] in Bristol is 127.7 per 100,000 (12 months to December 2025) (Figure 1). Rates for both Bristol and England have gradually been decreasing since 2010 and whilst the Bristol rate has historically been significantly higher the gap has significantly reduced and for the second year in a row Bristol's rate is statistically similar to the England average.

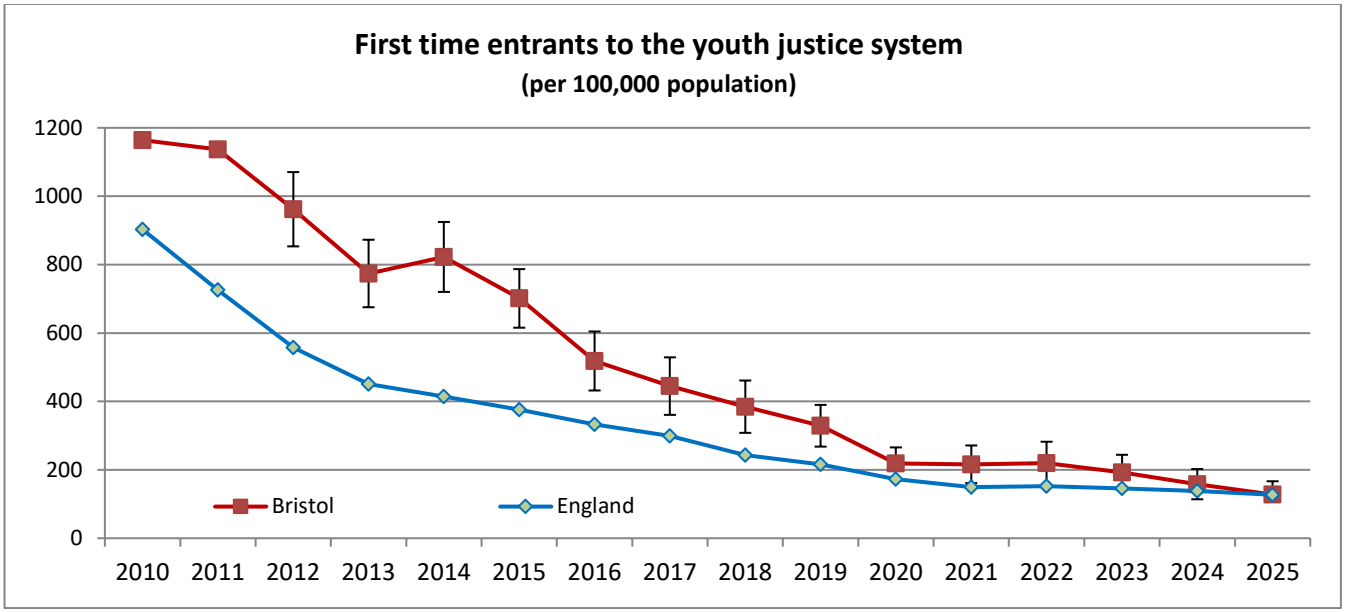


Fig 1: Rate of first-time entrants to the Youth Justice System. Source: Ministry of Justice – August 2026

Figure 2 overleaf shows how Bristol compares to the other English core cities over the last ten years. Most cities show a decrease in 2025 compared to the previous year, with the exception of Birmingham and Nottingham. Birmingham (210.4 per 100,000) had the highest rate of first-time entrants to the youth justice system of all core cities in 2025 whilst Bristol had the lowest rate of all core cities for the first time – Figure 3.

[1] 10-17 year olds receiving their first reprimand, warning or conviction. Figures calculated by PHE's Population Health Analysis team using crime data supplied by Ministry of Justice and population data supplied by Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Over the last ten years Bristol has successfully reduced the rate of first-time entrants by three-quarters (75.4%), the highest improvement of all core cities, followed closely by Nottingham (70.7%) and Newcastle (70.0%), and higher than the England average of 61.9%.

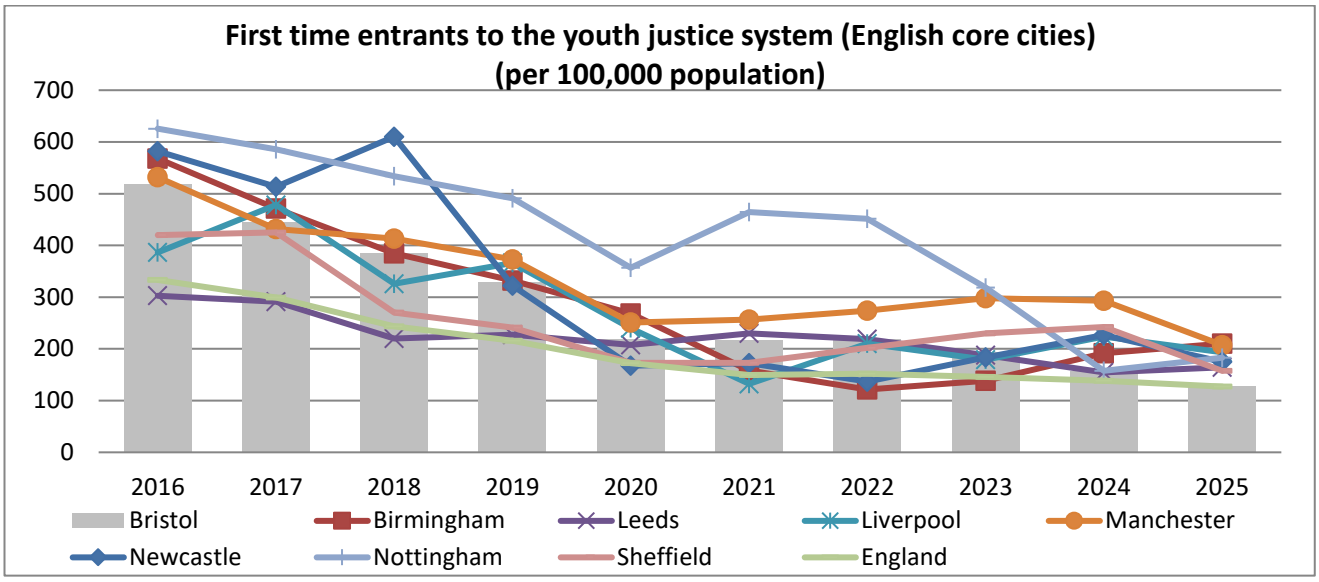


Fig 2: Rate of first-time entrants to the Youth Justice System – English core cities 2016-25. Source: Ministry of Justice - August 2026

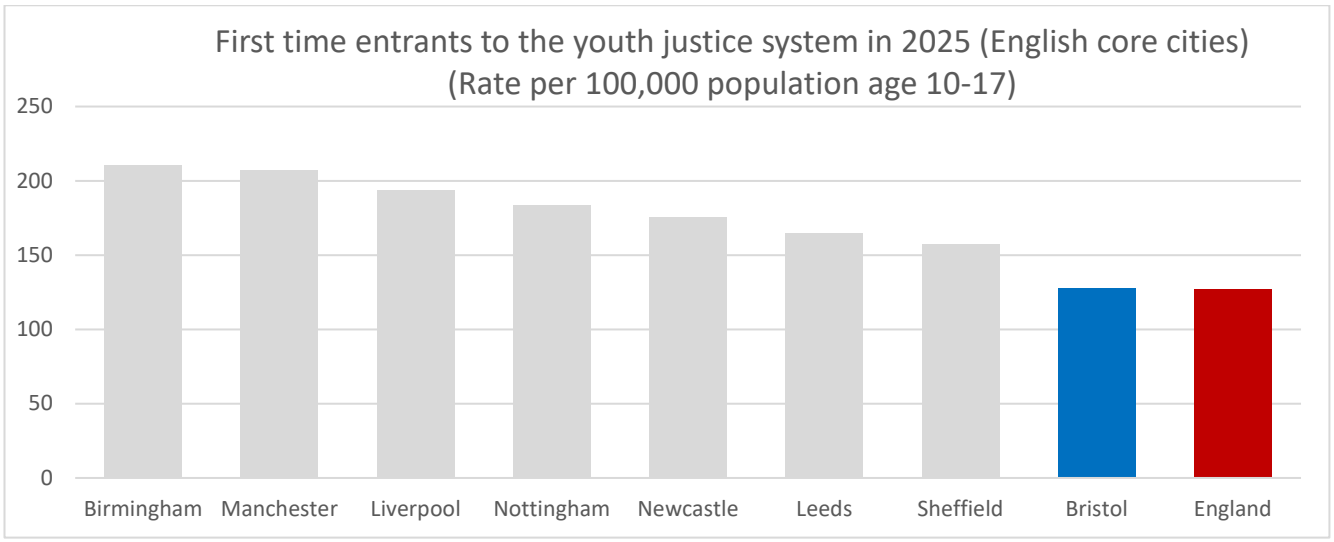


Fig 3: Rate of first-time entrants to the Youth Justice System – English core cities 2025. Source: Ministry of Justice - August 2026

Children in the youth justice system by ward

The data is based on the child's address when they committed the crime and not the location of the crime itself.

Across all the wards, data shows that there were 466 individual children committing 1,300 offences[2] in Bristol during the three year period April 2023 to March 2026. During this three year period the number of individual children committing offences was lowest in 2025/26 with the lowest number of offences committed.

[2] Source: Police National Computer database via BCC Youth Offending Team, 2026

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Across Bristol the rate of offenders per 1,000 of the population (aged 10-17) was 11.1 for the three year period (i.e. April 2023 to March 2026), a decrease on the previous period (12.5 per 1,000).

Of the thirty-four wards in Bristol, sixteen had a higher rate in offenders than the citywide figure. The wards ranged from no children committing offences in Clifton Down and Bishopston and Ashley Down to 0.8 per 1,000 population (aged 10-17) in Westbury-on-Trym and Henleaze to 23.5 per 1,000 population in Eastville (Figure 4).

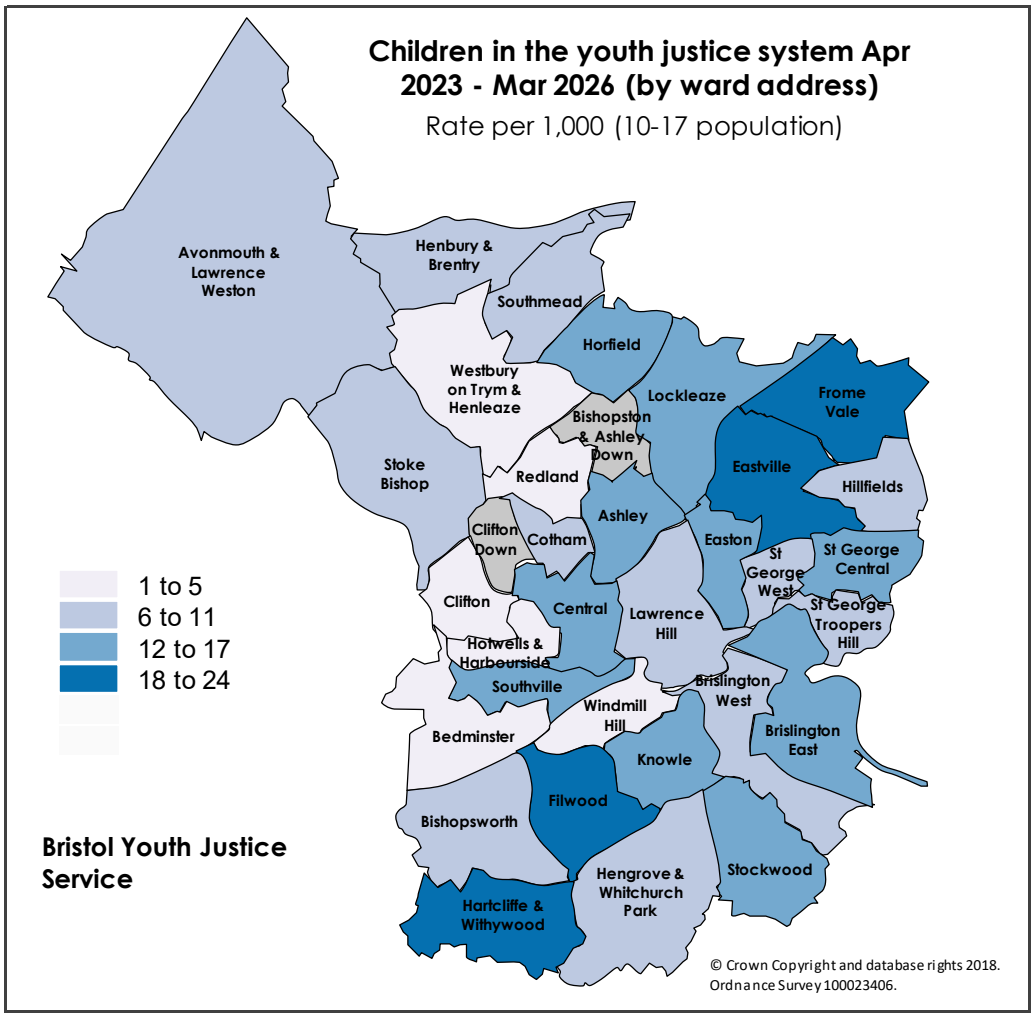


Fig 4 Rate of individual children in the youth justice system 2023-26 (Youth Justice Service)

Equalities data:

Over the period April 2023 to March 2026, 63.3% of children who have offended were of white ethnicity, 13.7% of black ethnicity, 15.5% of mixed ethnicity, 1.7% of Chinese ethnicity and 2.4% were of unknown ethnicity. In terms of gender for the same 3 year period, a total of 79.6% were male and 20.4% were female.

Further data / links:

- Children in the Youth Justice System data – Wider Determinants of Health Profile

Date updated: August 2026 **Date of next update**: September 2027