

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2025/26

Lifestyle behaviours of Young People

Summary points

- Nearly a quarter of school aged children and young people in Bristol eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day while about 12% have none, according to the Bristol Pupils' Voice Survey 2024¹. However, 55% of 16–24-year-olds eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetable each day according to the Bristol Quality of Life survey 2024-25².
- 50% of primary pupils and 43% of secondary pupils are active enough to breathe harder and faster or feel hot and sweaty for at least half an hour on five or more days. Female pupils are less likely to be physically active than male pupils.
- Smoking rates among school aged children and young people continue to fall, with less than 1% of secondary pupils saying that they smoked at least one cigarette during the last 7 days compared to 10% in 2009, but over 20% of secondary pupils had tried vaping in 2024.
- In 2019, 64% of secondary pupils said they did not drink alcohol. By 2024 this had risen to 71%.
- Use of illegal substances by secondary pupils has remained relatively stable over recent years. In 2024, 11% of secondary school respondents said that they had ever taken an illegal substance. The proportion of secondary pupils having been offered a substance increased from 13% in 2019 to 16% in 2024. Cannabis remains the most used illicit substance among Bristol's young people.¹

Diet

5-a-day fruit and veg

In 2024:

- 27% of primary pupils had eaten at least 5 portions of fruit or vegetables the day prior to the Bristol Pupils' Voice Survey 2024, while 12% reported having had none at all
- 18% of secondary pupils had eaten at least 5 portions of fruit or vegetables the previous day, while 12% reported having had none at all
- Nearly a quarter of all pupils said that they had eaten at least 5 portions of fruit or vegetables yesterday, while 12% reported having had none at all.

The results overall are similar to those reported in 2019 and 2022.

Pupils of black ethnicity (85%), pupils in receipt of free school meals (80%), pupils living in lone-parent households (88%) and pupils where a household or family member has been to prison (83%) were more likely to report that they were not eating 5-a-day fruit and vegetables, than the average (77%).¹

Breakfast

11% of primary pupils and 25% of secondary pupils had nothing to eat or drink before lessons on the day of the Bristol Pupil Voice Survey 2024. Within the secondary school response female pupils were more likely to report missing breakfast; this disparity appears to increase with age. Year 10 (Y10) female pupils were almost twice as likely to miss breakfast as Y10 male pupils (35% vs 18%).

The trend since 2019 indicates an increase in pupils having had nothing to eat or drink before lessons. Overall, a lack of time was the most reported cause, followed by reasons that reflected not wanting to eat before school or not really minding if that happened. The option was not offered to primary school respondents, but around 20% of secondary pupils that had missed breakfast cited wanting to lose weight as a motivation (28% of females, 12% of males). A lack of food in the house was the least likely reason cited, and by just a very small proportion of respondents.

Pupils from households where someone had been to prison (28%), young carers (25%), pupils in receipt of free school meals (23%) and pupils with a mixed ethnic background (23%) were more likely on average to have not eaten or drunk anything before their lessons, compared to the all schools average (17%).¹

Physical activity

In 2024, 50% of Bristol's primary pupils and 43% of secondary pupils were active (enough to breathe harder and faster or feel hot and sweaty for at least half an hour) on five or more days. In all year groups, boys were more likely to report being active 5 or more days in the week.

6% of primary pupils and 6% of secondary pupils reported that they weren't active (enough to breathe harder and faster or feel hot and sweaty, for at least half an hour) on a single day in the previous week.

Overall, the following groups of pupils were on average significantly less likely to be active every day than their peers:

- Female or gender-diverse pupils
- Pupils of Black or Black British ethnic groups.
- Pupils reporting that they were LGBTQ+
- Pupils in a lone-parent household
- Young carers
- Pupils for whom a household or family member had been to prison
- Pupils reporting that they have a learning disability or special educational need.

46% of primary pupils and 76% of secondary pupils reported more than three hours screen use during the previous day. More than three hours screen use was found to be associated within the survey respondent group with less sleep, poorer mental and emotional wellbeing scores.

LGBTQ+ pupils (secondary schools only), neurodivergent pupils and children from lone-parent families (secondary schools only) were found to be significantly more likely than the average pupil to report more than 3 hours screen use.¹

73.2% of 16–24-year-olds do enough regular physical activity each week, which is higher than the average rate for Bristol residents aged 16+ overall (67.3%). 5.4% are physically inactive, which is broadly similar to the Bristol 16+ average of 8.1%.²

Smoking and Vaping

Less than 1% of Year 6 (Y6) pupils reported that they had ever tried a cigarette in the Bristol Pupil Voice Survey 2024, and no Y6 pupil reported smoking them regularly (i.e. weekly or more often) compared to approximately 1% in response to the surveys in 2015 to 2022. Less than 1% of Bristol's secondary pupils smoked regularly in 2024, which had fallen since 2022, when approximately 2% of secondary pupils were regular smokers. Cigarette smoking prevalence amongst secondary pupils has declined as an ongoing trend; in 2008, 15% of year 10 pupils in Bristol reported smoking regularly¹.

Children in local authority care, young carers and those with special educational needs and disabilities, were all more likely to report smoking in the week prior to the survey, compared to the average figures¹.

Some groups of young people are still very likely to be cigarette smokers despite the declining trends observed overall. An analysis of young people (aged 11 to 18) in contact with the Youth Justice Team in Bristol in 2020 and 2021 indicated that more than half of them were regular smokers. 75% of those aged 14 or 15 (i.e. approximately comparable to the Y10 respondents to the Bristol Pupil Voice survey) were regular or occasional smokers.

27% of Y6 pupils and 31% of secondary pupils reported that their parents/carers smoke cigarettes, and an analysis of the 2024 survey response indicates an association between the prevalence of parental/household smoking and the pupil reporting that they are a smoker themselves. Nationally, it is understood that children and young people with parents who smoke are three times more likely to start smoking themselves³.

8% of Y6 pupils and 13% of secondary pupils said that someone regularly smokes indoors at home in rooms that they use. Similar proportions, 8% of Y6 pupils and 13% of secondary pupils, told us that someone smokes in a car when they are also in it (this is illegal).

A very small number (<1%) of pupils regularly or occasionally participated in the use of shisha¹.

In 2015 around 16% of secondary pupils reported they had tried vaping and that proportion has increased to 20% or more since 2022¹. This is in line with national estimates of vaping prevalence, which have identified that 20% of secondary school age pupils have ever tried vaping, a prevalence which has maintained since 2023⁴. In 2024, 5% of Y6 pupils reported that they had tried vaping. 5% of secondary pupils reported that they regularly vaped (weekly or more often)¹.

Alcohol

In 2024, 7% of Y6 pupils reported that they had drunk alcohol in the last 4 weeks. 17% of secondary pupils drank alcohol in the last 4 weeks. These data are similar to the 2022 findings. However, the prevalence of alcohol use amongst primary and secondary pupils has fallen significantly since 2008.

Compared to the secondary pupil average (17%); LGBTQ+ pupils (22%) and neurodivergent pupils (27%) were significantly more likely on average to have drunk an alcoholic drink in the previous 4-weeks.

The Bristol Pupil Voice Survey 2024 also found that male pupils were more likely to drink alcohol than female pupils.¹

26.5% of 16–24-year-olds in Bristol would be more likely to visit venues and events more often if there were alcohol-free alternatives. This is compared to 17.8% of the Bristol average population aged 16+.²

Between 2021/22 and 2023/24, hospital admission episodes for alcohol-specific conditions (under 18 years) was 35.3 per 100,000, which is poorer than the national average of 22.6 per 100,000⁵.

Substance Use

Data from the Bristol Pupil Voice Survey 2024 suggests that Bristol secondary pupils continue to be offered a wide range of illegal drugs; the two most frequently used substances are cannabis and nitrous oxide (known as laughing gas).

13% of secondary pupils had been offered cannabis. 8% said they had ever used cannabis, 6% had used it during the last year and 7% had used it in the last month.

5% of secondary pupils said they had been offered nitrous oxide. 4% said they had ever used it, 2% had used it in the last year and 1% in the last month.

In 2024, 16% of secondary pupils reported that they had been offered one or more illegal substances (up from 15% in 2022 and 13% in 2019).

Pupils with a mixed ethnic background (18%), LGBTQ+ pupils (15%), pupils with a family/household member that has been to prison (21%), pupils with special educational needs/learning difficulties (18%) and neurodivergent pupils (17%), were on average more likely to report substance use than the secondary school average (11%).

21% of primary school respondents reported that they worry 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' about someone in the family using drugs.¹

Between 2021/22 and 2023/24, hospital admissions due to substance use (15 to 24 years) was 101.6 per 100,000, which is poorer than the national average of 47.4 per 100,000⁵.

335 young people in Bristol received support for their use of substances either from the Bristol Young People's Specialist Substance Use Treatment Service, provided by CAMHS, from Bristol Drugs Project (now part of the Horizons Partnership), or from Bristol's Drugs and Young People's Project in 2024-2025⁶. Bristol's Drugs and Young People's Project is for children and young people who also have Social Care support in relation to child protection concerns.

Further data / links:

The findings reported in this section on the health-related behaviours of young people in Bristol have been derived from:

- 1) Bristol City Council (2024). [Bristol Pupil Voice Report 2024](#). [Accessed 11 July 2025].
This survey asks detailed questions on a wide range of topics of interest to public health, school staff and colleagues working in Bristol City Council. The Pupil Voice Survey was first

commissioned in Bristol in 2008 and repeated in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2019, 2021/2022 and 2023/2024. All primary and secondary schools in the city are invited to take part. During 2023-24 we received over 4000 pupil responses from 35 primary, specialist provision and secondary schools in the city (22% of the schools). An estimated 14% of all pupils in the focus year groups (4, 6, 8 and 10) participated.

- 2) Bristol City Council (2025). [Bristol Quality of Life survey 2024/25 Dashboard](#). [Accessed 11 July 2025]. The findings of this survey provide an annual snapshot of the quality of life in Bristol for residents aged 16 and over.
- 3) Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) (2024). [Young People and Smoking](#).
- 4) Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) (2025). [Use of vapes \(e-cigarettes\) among young people in Great Britain - ASH](#)
- 5) Department of Health and Social Care (2025). [Child Health Profiles](#). [Accessed August 2025]
- 6) Data extracted from quarterly monitoring reports from providers. Note that Bristol Drugs Project and Drugs and Young People's Project also provide a service for children affected by parental substance use and we have not included this data in this report.

Date updated: September 2025

Date of next update: February 2027 (Next Pupil Voice survey due 2026 with results available from early 2027)