

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2026/27

Teenage Pregnancy

Summary points

- The rate of under 18 conceptions has declined significantly since 2007 and since the beginning of the teenage pregnancy strategy in 1998.
- Although there are fewer teenage mothers, many are vulnerable due to the risk factors they may have experienced, such as trauma, poverty, poor educational attainment, poor mental health, familial and/or partner domestic abuse and/or violence and experience of being in care.
- Under 18 conception data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is typically not published until approximately 18 months after the end of the calendar year in which the conception occurred, and in recent years has been more delayed than this. This can mask real time changes in actual pregnancies and reduce the ability to plan timely service provision and health promotion initiatives.
- Under 18 conception data¹ includes live births and abortions per 1000 15-17-year-old females. The measure for under 16s is based on live births and abortions per 1000 13-15-year-old females.

Findings

The rate of teenage conceptions in Bristol has fallen substantially since 2007 when there were 360 conceptions among under 18s. Conception rates and numbers reached their lowest level on record in 2020 (10.2 conceptions per 1,000 females aged 15–17 years and 66 conceptions), during a period when behaviours and service access may have been affected by COVID-19 mitigations. Since then, there has been a slight rebound in conception numbers, back up to 90 in 2021, 93 in 2022 and between 78 and 82 in 2023.

In 2023, the Bristol teenage conception rate was 10.9 conceptions per 1,000 female residents aged 15-17, the second lowest rate since 1998 when these statistics began to be recorded routinely in this form. This rate is lower but statistically similar to the England average of 13.5 per 1,000 for 2023.

¹ From 2023 onwards, the ONS has applied rounding to all published conception counts, reporting them to the nearest five in line with updated disclosure guidance. Consequently, 2023 counts in this document are presented as a range of possible values, and any rates or percentages are calculated from the rounded count. These statistics are therefore slightly less precise than those for 1998 to 2022. This should be considered when comparing trends over time, although it is unlikely to affect overall conclusions.

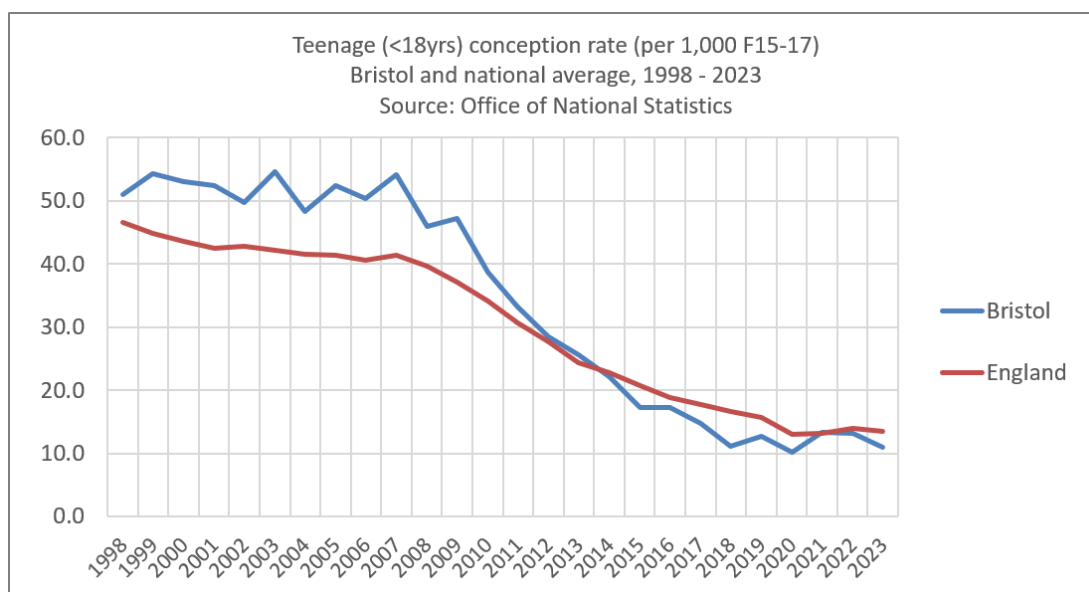


Figure 1: Trends in teenage (<18yrs) conception rates, Bristol and England average 1998 to 2023

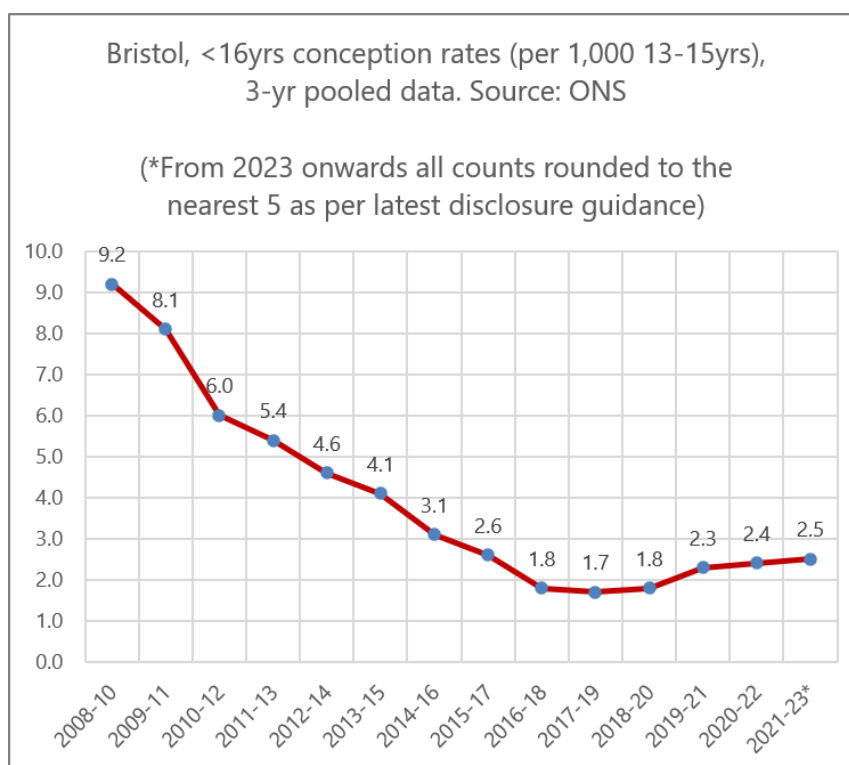


Figure 2: Trends in teenage (<16yrs) conceptions, Bristol, 3-yr averages, 2008-10 to 2021-2023

Figure 2 shows that conceptions in young women under 16 living in Bristol have also fallen markedly since the late 2000s, reaching their lowest point in 2017-2019, at an annual average rate of 1.7 per 1,000 females aged 13 to 15 and a total of 34 conceptions during that pooled three-year period. Since then, and during the pandemic however, there has been an apparent steady increase in conception numbers and rate for this age cohort to a rate of 2.5 per 1,000 and 55 conceptions during the three-year period from 2021 to 2023. These are still much lower numbers than seen for most of the last 15 years or so but are more in line with rates last seen in 2015-17. The Bristol rate for 2021-2023 is statistically similar to the England average of 2.2 per 1,000.

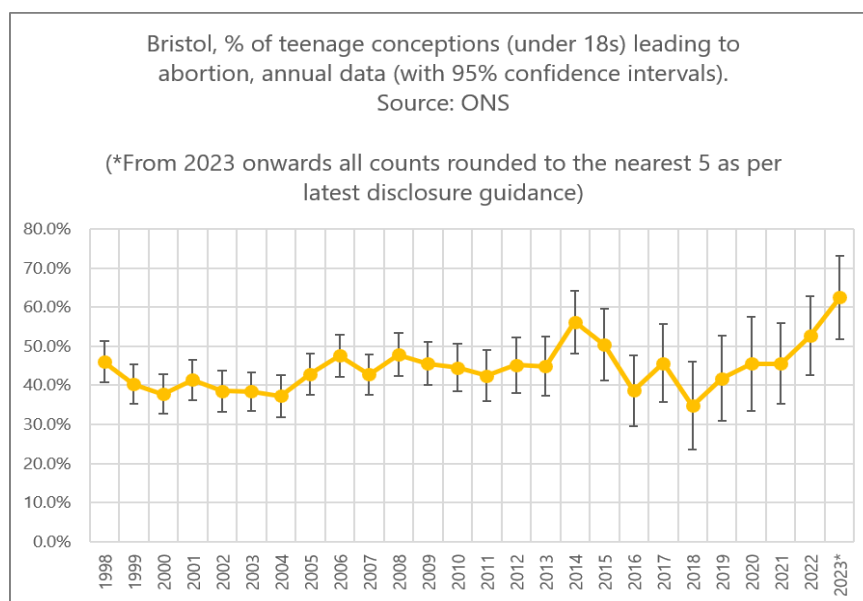


Figure 3: Trends in the proportion of teenage conceptions (to under 18s) that end in an abortion, annual estimates 1998 to 2023.

Figure 3 (above) shows that just over 60% of all teenage conceptions in Bristol in 2023 ended in an abortion. This proportion is statistically similar to that observed since 2019, but significantly higher than in 2018 and 2016. Between 1998 and the mid-2010s, the proportion of teenage conceptions ending in abortion increased from around 40% to around 50%, during a period of considerable decline in teenage conception rates overall. Between the mid 2010s and 2018, overall teenage conception rates continued to fall albeit at a slightly slower rate while the proportion ending in abortion reduced to around 40% again. Since 2018, the proportion of teenage conceptions ending in abortion has increased steadily, exceeding 60% in 2023. Over the same period, teenage conception rates continued to fall until 2020 before stabilising and fluctuating at a fairly steady level. Bristol's figure for 2023 was similar to the England average (61.5%).

The proportion of conceptions ending in an abortion for under 16s; in Bristol in 2021-2023 was 54.5%, higher than the 50.9%, recorded for 2020-2022, but lower than the equivalent national average (62.4%) for 2021-2023, although not to a statistically significant extent. Since 2008-2010, this proportion has fluctuated between 50% and 60% with no clear long-term trends.

Given the relatively small numbers of teenage conceptions, and lack of access at present to detailed demographics for all young women who have conceived, it is not possible at present to report on the precise variation in conception rates within the population of the city based on deprivation or ethnicity. However, three-year pooled under-18 conception rates are available by Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) of residence, allowing geographical variation across Bristol to be explored (Figure 4).

Previous research using data reported by specialist pregnancy and contraception staff working with young mothers in the city indicated that many teenagers conceiving have complex needs and require a high level of support. Figure 4 suggests that higher rates of teenage conception continue to be found where deprivation is higher, and at the population scale, teenage

conception remains on average both a cause and symptom of disadvantage, and can tend to perpetuate poorer outcomes, generation to generation. However, these associations reflect average patterns observed across populations and should not be interpreted as applying to all individuals. Many young parents and their children achieve positive outcomes, particularly when they have access to appropriate support, resources and opportunities.

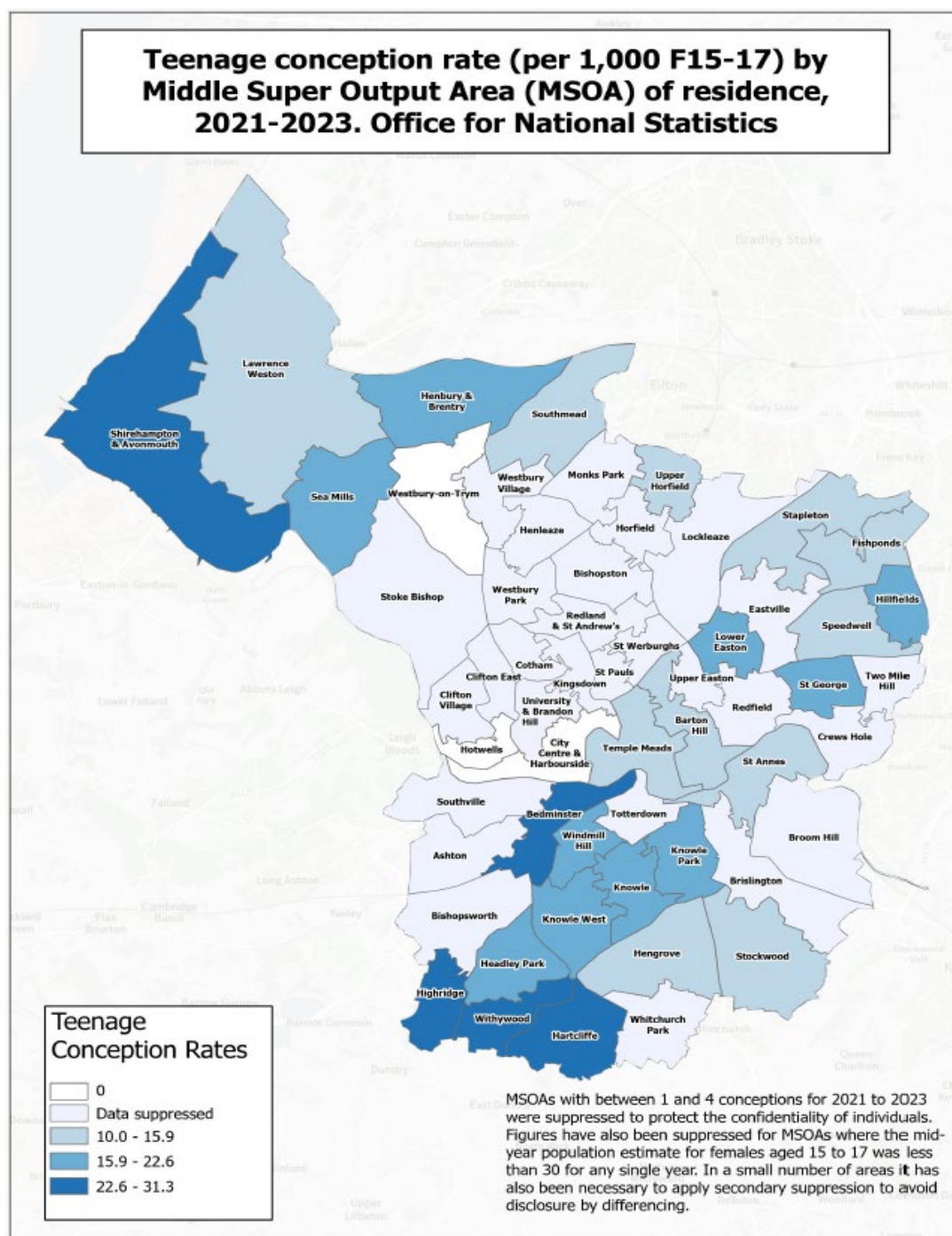


Figure 4: Map of teenage conception rates (<18yrs), by Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) in Bristol

Relationships and sex education

Bristol's 'Pupil Voice' survey (2024) reports that most year 10 pupils found their lessons focused on contraception and pregnancy, and sex and relationships more broadly, to have been of at least some use to them:

- 46% of year 10 pupils found school lessons focused on contraception and pregnancy 'quite' or 'very useful', a further 32% found them to be of 'some use'. 11% of pupils found these lessons 'not at all useful', and another 11% could not recall the lessons at all.
- 41% of year 10 pupils found school lessons focused on sex and relationships 'quite' or 'very useful', a further 34% found them to be of 'some use' but 12% of pupils found these lessons 'not at all useful', and another 13% could not recall the lessons at all.
- 44% of Year 10 pupils said they know where they would go if they needed a contraception/sexual health service, slightly lower than the 47% reported in 2022 (54% in 2019).
- 25% of all year 10 pupils were aware of the local sexual health service provided for young people, which was similar to the 24% recorded in 2022 (41% in 2019), and only 13% were aware of the population-wide sexual health service for Bristol.

Covid-19 impact:

Nationally, teenage conception rates fell by almost a third during the first Covid-19 lockdown (April to June 2020). In Bristol, the pandemic coincided with the lowest teenage conception levels seen since 2018. However, rates were already close to this low point before the pandemic, so the reduction cannot be attributed solely to Covid-19 and its wider social and economic impacts. Since the easing of restrictions and reopening of society in late 2021, conception rates and numbers for both under 16s and under 18s have increased. While it is not possible to know whether this would have occurred without the pandemic, it appears to have coincided with a turning point in these trends.

Further data / links / consultations:

- [SPLASH Bristol 2022-01-27 \(phe.org.uk\)](https://phe.org.uk)
- Case studies and practical information: [Good progress more to do: teenage pregnancy and young parents](#)
- [Conception and fertility rates in England and Wales: 2023](#)
- [Teenage pregnancy prevention framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Child and Maternal Health - PHE](#)

Date updated: July 2026

Next update due: July 2027