West Midlands

State of the Region 2026

West Midlands Combined Authority | Research and Insights

Contents

About this report

The West Midlands State of the Region is a high-level, annual review of the condition of the West Midlands. It provides context to help understand the region's performance. It brings attention to the opportunities and challenges in our region.

This report, for 2026, sets out the latest available evidence. Time lags mean that some data will relate to earlier years. Where available, this report uses evidence for the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) area, which covers the seven constituent metropolitan boroughs of the WMCA: Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, and Wolverhampton.

On occasions, data is not available at the WMCA area geography, and the report will use data for the wider West Midlands region, which includes the counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, and Worcestershire. The two geographies are illustrated below: WMCA constituent authorities ("WMCA area") WMCA non-constituent authorities West Midlands Region (ITL1 statistical region).

This is illustrated overleaf.

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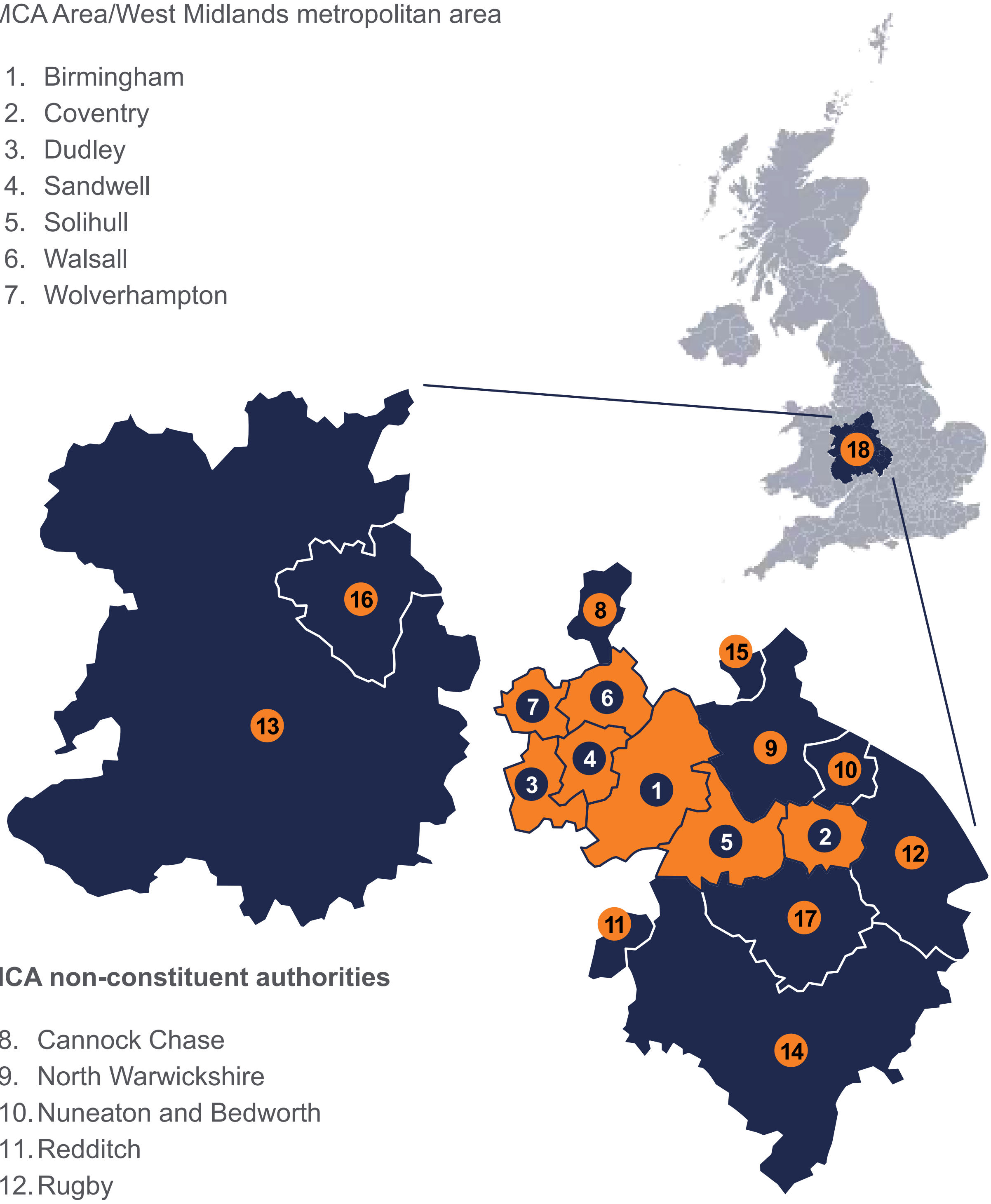
How this report is structured

This report is structured around the four big changes set out in our regional vision. For each big change, it presents a narrative covering the key challenge, key messages, and a series of thematic sections. In the full report, each section considers: Why is this important? What are the current conditions? What can and is being done? The full report concludes with a Table of Metrics and References.

WMCA constituent authorities

WMCA Area/West Midlands metropolitan area

1. Birmingham
2. Coventry
3. Dudley
4. Sandwell
5. Solihull
6. Walsall
7. Wolverhampton



WMCA non-constituent authorities

8. Cannock Chase
9. North Warwickshire
10. Nuneaton and Bedworth
11. Redditch
12. Rugby
13. Shropshire
14. Stratford-on-Avon
15. Tamworth
16. Telford and Wrekin
17. Warwick

West Midlands Region (ITL 1 statistical region)

18. Wider West Midlands

Executive summary

The West Midlands State of the Region 2026 shows a region that has stabilised after a turbulent period, is beginning to strengthen in key parts of the economy, but where deep inequalities are hardening and now pose the central risk to future growth. The evidence shows that the conditions for growth in the region are improving, but the benefits are not yet spreading widely or quickly enough.

What has changed since our last report

Compared with last year's report, the region has moved into a more settled, albeit fragile, position:

- Economic output has recovered to pre-pandemic levels with business confidence and service-sector activity improving.
- Private-sector investment remains a regional strength, with the West Midlands continuing to attract high levels of business-funded research and development (R&D) and inward investment relative to other UK city-regions.
- Labour market participation has begun to improve for some groups, with economic inactivity falling from its pandemic peak and employment rates slowly converging towards national averages.
- Transport, digital and innovation investments are now shifting from commitment to delivery, with new rail stations, Metro extensions, bus improvements, walking and cycling schemes, 5G rollout and innovation assets being foundations for future growth prospects.

At the same time, several pressures that emerged during the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis have not receded and are now becoming more structural.

Where the region is improving

There are clear areas of progress that strengthen the region's long-term outlook:

- The business base is showing renewed momentum. The number of high-growth firms has increased faster than in comparable city-regions, and private R&D intensity remains among the strongest in England.
- Skills performance is mixed but improving at higher levels. Progression into higher education and adult skills achievement support the region's future pipeline of higher-skilled workers.
- Some environmental metrics are moving in the right direction. Mortality linked to air pollution and preventable causes has declined, and digital connectivity is now among the best in the country.

- Major growth corridors and clusters are becoming clearer and more investable, particularly around advanced manufacturing, electric vehicles and batteries, next-generation services, and green energy systems.

These gains confirm that the region's cluster-led, innovation-driven growth model is sound and that foundations for productivity growth are strengthening.

Where problems are deepening

Despite these improvements, the evidence is equally clear that inequality is now the binding constraint on growth:

- Long-term sickness and poor health have become a central economic challenge. Economic inactivity due to ill health has risen sharply since the pandemic and remains well above national levels, directly limiting labour supply and household incomes.
- Child poverty and housing insecurity have worsened, with over a third of children living in poverty across the WMCA area and rising numbers of families in temporary accommodation.
- Educational inequalities remain entrenched. Attainment gaps by disadvantage, special educational needs, ethnicity and place persist from early years through to post-16 transitions.
- Growth is increasingly spatially uneven. Economic gains are concentrating in stronger centres, while parts of the Black Country and other communities have yet to see meaningful improvement in living standards.
- More people are in work but struggling. In-work Universal Credit claims remain high, indicating that job quality and progression are not keeping pace with rising living costs.

These trends risk locking the region into a cycle where economic growth continues, but too many residents are unable to participate in or benefit from it.

What this means for our regional priorities

The evidence in this report strongly validates the direction of the West Midlands Growth Plan — but it also sharpens its priorities.

- First, inclusive growth is essential to delivering growth at all. Without reducing ill health, inactivity, housing insecurity and low pay, productivity gains will remain constrained.
- Second, the challenge is not sector mix, but performance within sectors. Lifting productivity depends on improving leadership, management capability, technology adoption and diffusion across a much broader base of existing firms — including the everyday and social economy.
- Third, place matters more than ever. Growth will continue to concentrate unless transport, regeneration, skills and housing investment are aligned to improve access and connectivity across the region especially for places most disconnected from opportunity.

- Finally, partnership delivery is critical. The scale and interconnection of challenges — from health to housing to skills — cannot be solved by single institutions. A strong, shared regional narrative and coordinated action across local, regional and national partners are essential.

In short, the West Midlands in 2026 has stronger foundations and clearer opportunities, but the next phase of progress depends on turning economic momentum into rising living standards across all communities. The Growth Plan's four big changes — People, Businesses, Places and Story — provide the right framework. The task now is to deliver them at pace, and at scale, where the need is greatest.

Key statistics

People

The West Midlands has one of the youngest and most diverse populations in England, giving the region a strong long-term talent advantage, but also requiring targeted intervention to tackle persistent inequalities.

Educational attainment remains below national averages at key stages, especially for disadvantaged, SEND, and some ethnic minority pupils—highlighting the need for the skills reforms.

Apprenticeship starts remain 31% below a decade ago, with significant disparities by sex and ethnicity, reinforcing the need for a strengthened post-16 technical and vocational offer.

NEET levels (16–17) remain higher than nationally (6.93% vs 5.6%), driven in part by higher levels of "unknown" activity status—supporting the case for a more integrated employment and skills system.

Long-term sickness and poor health are major barriers to work, with economic inactivity due to long-term illness rising sharply since the pandemic. This underscores the importance of the Growth Plan's ambitions to support residents with health conditions back into work.

Healthy Life Expectancy continues to fall, with women living 24 years and men 19 years in poor health—making health equity central to inclusive growth.

Child poverty affects 36% of children, rising to 62% in places such as Ladywood—highlighting the need for a whole-system approach to improving children's outcomes.

Homelessness and temporary accommodation use remain high, with over 7,383 households in temporary accommodation—reinforcing the Growth Plan's goals on housing security and reducing temporary accommodation.

Businesses

The regional economy has recovered to above pre-pandemic output, but growth is uneven across local authorities, with Birmingham driving most of the uplift.

Productivity declined slightly in 2023 (GVA per hour -2.4%, per job -3.0%), reflecting cyclical pressures rather than structural issues, and remains below comparator regions.

Five priority clusters account for nearly half of enterprises and GVA, confirming their pivotal role in the region's future jobs and competitiveness.

Cluster performance is mixed:

- Advanced Engineering saw an increase in output (+9% GVA) and productivity per worker (+8%) between 2022 and 2023.
- Health and Med Tech expanded rapidly between 2022 and 2023 with a 53% increase in output (GVA); however, productivity per worker fell slightly (-3.7%) year-on-year.
- Smart Energy Systems saw overall output and output per worker falling between 2022 and 2023 (-19% and -6% respectively).

These shifts reinforce the need for targeted cluster plans and innovation partnerships.

High-growth firms increased by 11.7% in the last year, outpacing other city regions—demonstrating momentum behind scale-up potential.

Exports fell by 6.2%, underlining the importance of strengthening internationalisation and global competitiveness.

The West Midlands continues to rank highly for FDI job creation, comparable with other major combined authorities—supporting the Growth Plan's investment agenda.

The Everyday Economy is critical, with women and certain ethnic groups more likely to be in low-paid work—strengthening the case for a regional Good Work Charter and social economy investment.

Places

The region's housing market remains highly unequal, with median house prices ranging from £200k (Sandwell) to £329k (Solihull), and affordability worsening across all local authorities.

Households in the WMCA area spend 29.6% of income on rent, rising to 36% in Solihull—reinforcing the need for affordable homes programmes.

Ethnic minority households spend more on both rent and mortgages than White British households—demonstrating structural inequalities in housing affordability.

Transport connectivity is improving, but gaps remain: Metro extensions, new rail stations, and bus franchising align directly with barriers identified in SoTR relating to access to employment.

Digital connectivity is strong (94% gigabit coverage), with the region leading England in 5G access—supporting ambitions for next-generation infrastructure.

Major growth corridors (UK Central Gateway, Investment Zones, Birmingham, and Black Country regeneration) offer opportunities to unlock tens of thousands of jobs and homes—aligned to SoTR evidence of where economic potential is geographically concentrated.

Environmental pressures persist, with falling preventable mortality, declining air pollution mortality, but static adult physical activity levels—highlighting opportunities for creating healthier places.

Story

The region's story is one of youthfulness, diversity, innovation, and globally recognised industrial strengths—core assets for reframing the narrative.

Despite economic challenges, the West Midlands demonstrates resilience and strong foundations for inclusive growth, evidenced by rising skills levels, rising employment, and strong R&D intensity.

The State of the Region reveals clear inequalities across ethnicity, gender, disability, and locality—helping sharpen a narrative focused on fairness and shared prosperity.

Partnership working is essential: The scale of issues facing the region (long-term sickness, NEET levels, child poverty, housing affordability) cannot be solved by a single institution, reinforcing the Growth Plan's call for whole-system collaboration and combined regional voice.

The region's economic opportunities (clusters, growth corridors, investment zones) create a compelling story for investors and government.

Levels of civic participation and volunteering are slightly below the national average, and fewer residents believe they can influence decisions affecting their local area.

The region's identity remains an important strength; residents highlight people as what makes the West Midlands special. However, the desire to remain living locally is lower than the national average.

Delivering our regional vision

The West Midlands is a region of great potential, shaped by its people, places, and economic strengths. Yet it is also a region where deep and long-standing inequalities continue to affect residents' opportunities and wellbeing.

In 2025, the WMCA, alongside its partners in the region, launched the West Midlands Growth Plan. The West Midlands Growth Plan sets out a bold vision to transform the region's economy over the next decade and explains what needs to be done to make it happen.

The vision of the West Midlands Growth Plan is to increase residents' living standards across all parts of the West Midlands. This means bringing more people into good quality jobs, increasing the productivity of the region's economy, and reducing poverty and deprivation, while making further progress towards our journey to net zero.

The West Midlands Growth Plan sets out the outcomes the region needs to achieve in ten years; and the actions we will start to take over the coming three years. It sets out four big changes to realise this vision:

These four big changes are:

- Empowering the people of the West Midlands to get on in life.
- Enabling the businesses of the West Midlands to become more productive and provide good jobs.
- Making the places of the West Midlands more prosperous and resilient.
- Telling the West Midlands' story and strengthening its partnerships.

These are the distinctive building blocks of a better economic future for our region. It will take the combined efforts of our local, regional, and national partners to put them in place. Therefore, this State of the Region report sets out its key messages around the four big changes of the West Midlands Growth Plan – People, Businesses, Places, and Story.

These actions are underpinned by our inclusive growth framework[1]. This states that we are committed to "a more deliberate and socially purposeful model of economic growth, measured not only by how fast or aggressive it is; but also, by how well it is created and shared across the whole population and place, and by the social and environmental outcomes it realises for our people." The eight fundamentals of Inclusive Growth are: climate and environment; inclusive economy; power and participation; affordable and safe places; connected communities; education and learning; health and wellbeing; and equality. We know our economic growth will only deliver meaningful impact if residents can actively contribute to the social, environmental, and economic change happening across the region, so consequently, inclusive growth is the *approach* in which we achieve the four big changes.

[1] Inclusive Growth https://wmca.org.uk/inclusivegrowth

What drives deprivation?

Dan Carins, Policy Manager (Business)

Delivering our regional vision requires a clear understanding of what drives prosperity, and a commitment to ensuring that the benefits of growth are felt by every community across the West Midlands. The WM Theory of Growth provides the underpinning logic: growth happens when businesses can create higher-value jobs, when people have the skills and capabilities to access those jobs, and when places provide the conditions in which businesses and workers can thrive. The task is not simply to generate growth, but to build the ecosystems that sustain it and make it inclusive.

The West Midlands Growth Plan positions the region as an engine of UK prosperity by focusing on four core drivers: raising productivity, attracting investment, supporting innovation, and improving connectivity, both physical and digital. These drivers are mutually reinforcing. Productivity increases when firms invest in technology and people; innovation thrives where universities, industry, and public institutions work in partnership; investment flows to places with strong skills, infrastructure, and business confidence. Our challenge is to activate these drivers systematically across the region.

At the heart of this is people. Prosperity grows when residents can access good work that matches their potential. That means tackling long-standing skills gaps, improving routes into technical education, and ensuring that training provision responds to business need. It also means supporting those already in work to retrain and upskill as the economy transitions, particularly in green technologies, data and AI, and advanced manufacturing.

But prosperity also depends on places that create the right environment for ambition. Town centres, transport hubs, local high streets, and employment sites all shape the lived experience of opportunity. Continued investment in regeneration, paired with affordable, reliable public transport, ensures that growth is not confined to a small number of locations but spreads into every borough and community.

Finally, economic prosperity depends on capital. Without access to finance, businesses cannot scale, innovate, or invest in new markets. The new Access to Finance Action Plan and the establishment of West Midlands Growth Company's Capital Growth Attraction Team are central to this ambition. By strengthening the investment ecosystem, linking lenders, funders, and high-growth firms, we enable more businesses to grow and more residents to benefit from high-quality employment.

Delivering our regional vision means aligning these drivers: people with the right skills, businesses with access to investment, and places that support opportunity. When these conditions come together, prosperity follows, and crucially, it becomes prosperity that is shared.

People

People: empowering residents to get on in life

Empowering the people of the West Midlands to get on in life is fundamental to raising living standards and unlocking the region's long-term potential. The West Midlands is one of the youngest and most diverse regions in the country, representing a major competitive advantage if talent can be fully realised. This big change focuses on improving access to good quality education, skills and employment, supporting people into better jobs and progression. It also aims to tackle barriers such as poor health, long-term sickness and low pay. Growth is only inclusive and sustainable when residents are able to participate in and benefit from economic success, making investment in people central to the region's future.

What are the drivers of youth unemployment?

Mahfia Watkinson, Senior Delivery Manager

Youth unemployment in the West Midlands is driven by a combination of structural labour market factors and persistent barriers facing young people. The West Midlands Works plan highlights that youth unemployment in parts of the region exceeds 20%, reflecting a mismatch between the skills young people hold and the opportunities available in the labour market. Many young people struggle to make effective transitions from education into sustained employment, particularly in areas with weaker labour market demand or limited access to entry-level jobs. These challenges are concentrated in specific places and communities, reinforcing patterns of inequality and limiting social mobility at an early stage in people's working lives.

Health, wellbeing and wider personal circumstances are significant contributors to youth unemployment. West Midlands Works identifies poor mental health, long-term health conditions, caring responsibilities and unstable housing as key barriers preventing many young people from entering or sustaining work. For some, these challenges lead to prolonged periods of economic inactivity rather than short spells of unemployment. The plan emphasises that young people facing multiple and overlapping barriers often require more than standalone skills or employability support, as unmet health or social needs can prevent engagement with training or employment opportunities in the first place.

Fragmented support systems and limited integration between services further exacerbate youth unemployment. The plan notes that nationally commissioned employment programmes are often insufficiently flexible to respond to local labour market conditions or the complex needs of young people. As a result, support can be disconnected across education, skills, health and employment services, leading to gaps in provision and inconsistent outcomes. West Midlands Works frames youth unemployment as a system-wide challenge, arguing that more coordinated, place-based delivery is essential to help young people access work, remain engaged, and build long-term prospects in a changing economy.

Key messages about people

The WMCA area is one of the youngest and most ethnically diverse places in England. However, deep, and long-standing inequalities remain, people's life chances can vary significantly depending on where they live, and who they are, and outcomes for residents vary between different demographic groups and local authorities.

Overall, educational outcomes are lower than the England average at several stages, especially at GCSE level, impacting on social mobility. This is particularly true for disadvantaged children, such as those eligible for free school meals, with special education needs and disabilities, and children from some ethnic minority backgrounds. Apprenticeship numbers have stopped falling after several years of decline, but uptake among young people remains low. There are also clear gaps in achievements by ethnicity and sex.

More young people go into higher education than the national average, and adult skills achievement outperform both England and the wider West Midlands.

Progress in the labour market has been uneven. Employment rates have risen slightly but are still below the England average. Youth unemployment remains high, and more people are unable to work due to long-term health conditions. This has contributed to higher levels of economic inactivity. Universal Credit claimants amongst those in-work suggest that more working households are struggling with the cost of living, even when they are in employment.

Life expectancy is recovering to pre-pandemic levels, but healthy life expectancy is falling. This means people are living longer but spending more years in poor health.

Demographics and communities

Why is this important?

The WMCA area is young and highly ethnically diverse, with almost half of the population from an ethnic minority. Understanding how our demographics and communities are changing is essential for strategic planning and social cohesion.

What are the current conditions?

Population

The WMCA population continues to grow. By mid-2024, it was estimated at just over three million people (3,036,605); an increase of 1.4% in one year (from 2,994,216).[2]

During that year:

[2] Office for National Statistics (2024) Estimates of the population for England and Wales. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales

- There were 35,528 births and 26,297 deaths.
- More people (28,112) moved away to other parts of the UK than moved in.
- However, that was offset by more people (61,417) moving from overseas, leading to overall population growth.
- An internal migration net flow was -28,112 and an international migration net flow was 61,417.

Age

The WMCA has a younger population than England as a whole, with a median age of 37.4 years in mid-2024; 2.8 years younger than the 40.2 years nationally. Birmingham is the youngest area, with a median age of 33.7 years. Solihull is the oldest, with a median age of 42.7 years.

Ethnicity

The WMCA is the second most ethnically diverse area in England, after London. Just over half of residents identify as White British, compared with more than seven in ten nationally. Levels of diversity vary across the area: Dudley has the lowest share of residents from ethnic minority backgrounds (17.6%). Birmingham has the highest (57.1%) and is one of the UK's first "super-diverse" cities, where ethnic minority groups make up the majority of the population. This report uses the term ethnic minority while recognising that it does not fully reflect the rich diversity of communities or the different challenges they face. Where the data allows, we aim to be as specific as possible.

Disability

Around one in five people (19.1%) in the WMCA area are disabled, which is slightly higher than the England average of 17.7%.[3]

Sex

The population is almost evenly split by sex, with 51% women and 49% men. [4]

Gender and gender identity

Around one in 400 people identify as transgender or non-binary.[5] Most people in the WMCA area (93.1%) report that their gender identity is the same as the sex they were registered at birth, which is very similar to the national picture (93.5%). It is important to note that figures on gender identity are likely to be under-reported, as not everyone will feel comfortable sharing this information, even in a census.

Sexual orientation

In terms of sexual orientation, among those who chose to answer this question in the 2021 Census:

- 97.1% identified as straight or heterosexual.
- 2.9% identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or another minority sexual orientation.
- 8.1% did not answer the question.

These figures are broadly in line with those for England as a whole. As with gender identity, it is likely that the true number of LGBT+ people is higher than reported, as some people may not feel able to disclose this information.

Languages

Most people in the WMCA area speak English as their first language (88.1%), although this is slightly lower than the England average of 90.8%. This reflects the area's linguistic diversity, with many residents speaking other languages at home.[6]

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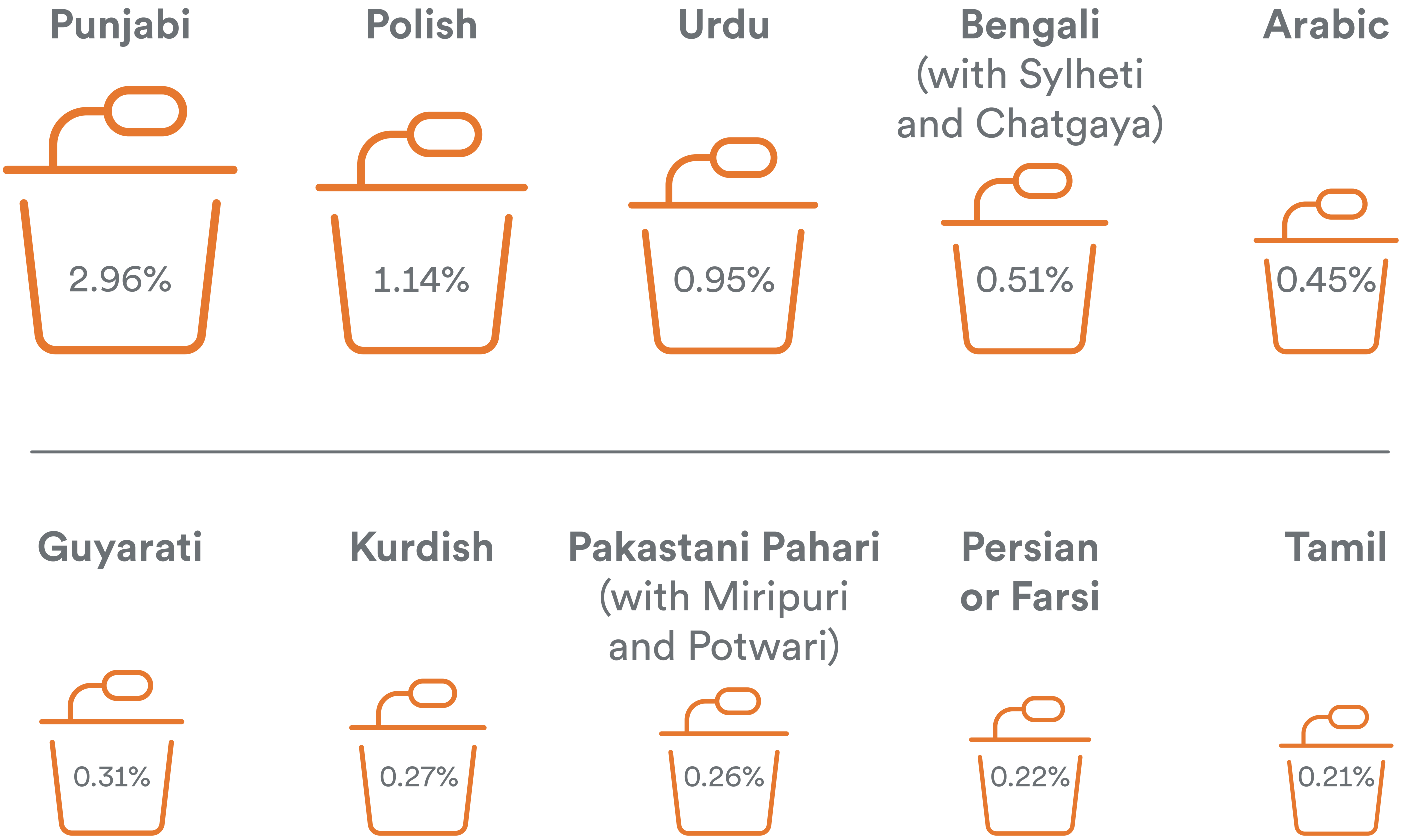
[3] Office for National Statistics (2023) Disability, England and Wales: Census 2021. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability

[4] Office for National Statistics (2023) Gender identity, England and Wales: Census 2021. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/genderidentity/bulletins/genderidentityenglandandwales/census2021

[5] Office for National Statistics (2023) Gender identity, England and Wales: Census 2021. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/genderidentity/bulletins/genderidentityenglandandwales/census2021

[6] Office for National Statistics (2022) Language, England and Wales: Census 2021. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/language/bulletins/languageenglandandwales/census2021

The top ten languages spoken other than English in the WMCA area are:



Religion

Around two-thirds of residents (66.4%) said they followed a religion in the 2021 Census – the highest proportion of any combined authority area in England. The most common religions in the WMCA area are:

- Christianity (40.7%)
- Islam (17.2%)
- Sikhism (5.1%)
- Hinduism (2.3%)

Just over a quarter of people (27.9%) said they had no religion. Although this is an increase compared with previous years, it remains the lowest proportion of people with no religion among combined authority areas.[7]

Inequality and deprivation

While the WMCA's diverse and youthful population brings significant strengths and opportunities, these sit alongside deep-rooted inequalities that continue to affect people's life chances from early childhood onwards.

[7] Office for National Statistics (2022) Religion: Census 2021. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021 Religion - Office for National Statistics

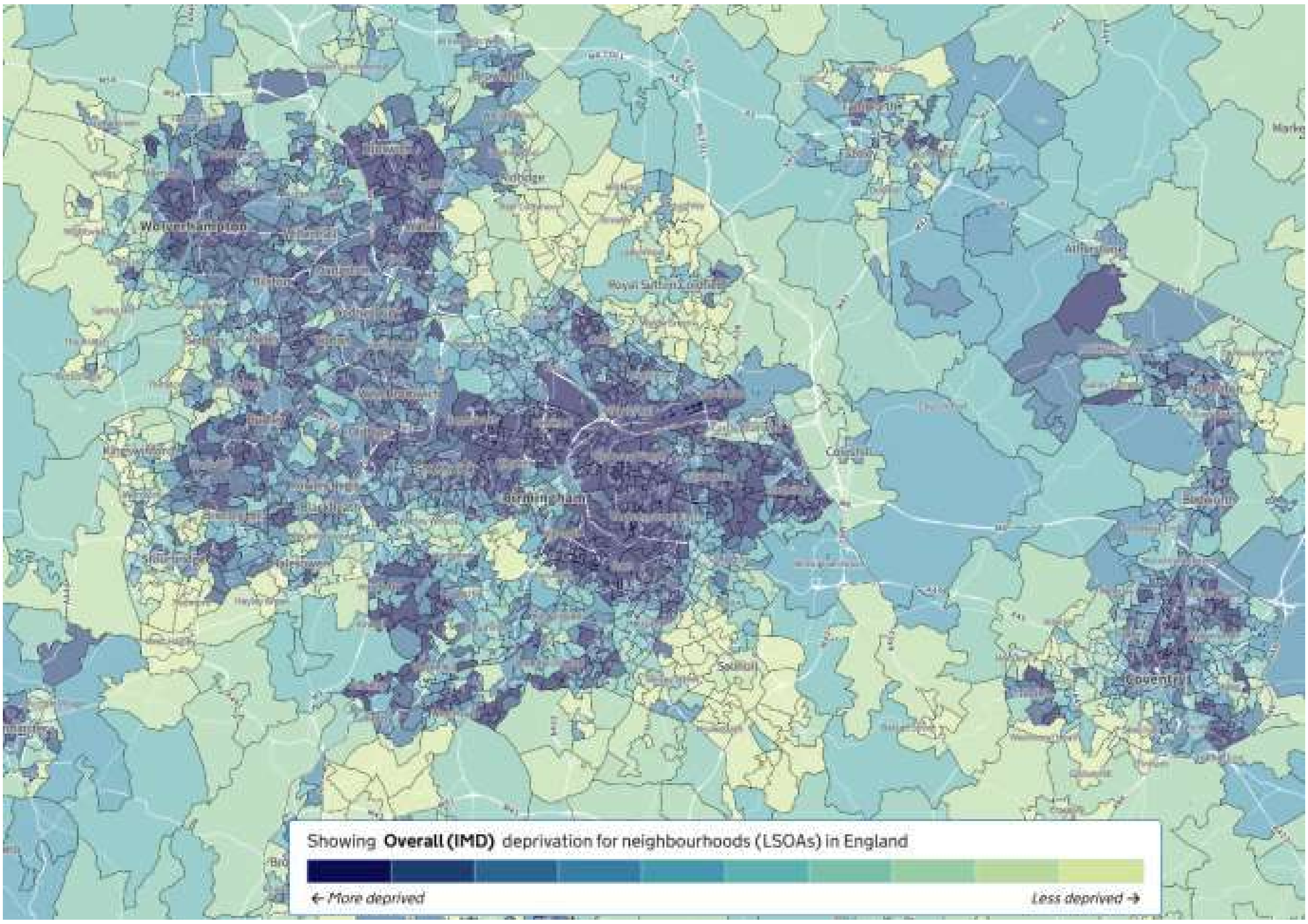
Index of Multiple Deprivation

The 2025 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) shows that:

- Nearly 1.4 million residents live in neighbourhoods among the 20% most deprived in England.
- Over 830,000 residents live in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods.

Four local authorities in the WMCA rank among the 30 most deprived areas in England overall. While IMD data is not directly comparable between years, since 2019:

- The relative position of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton has worsened.
- Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull and Walsall have seen improvements.[8]



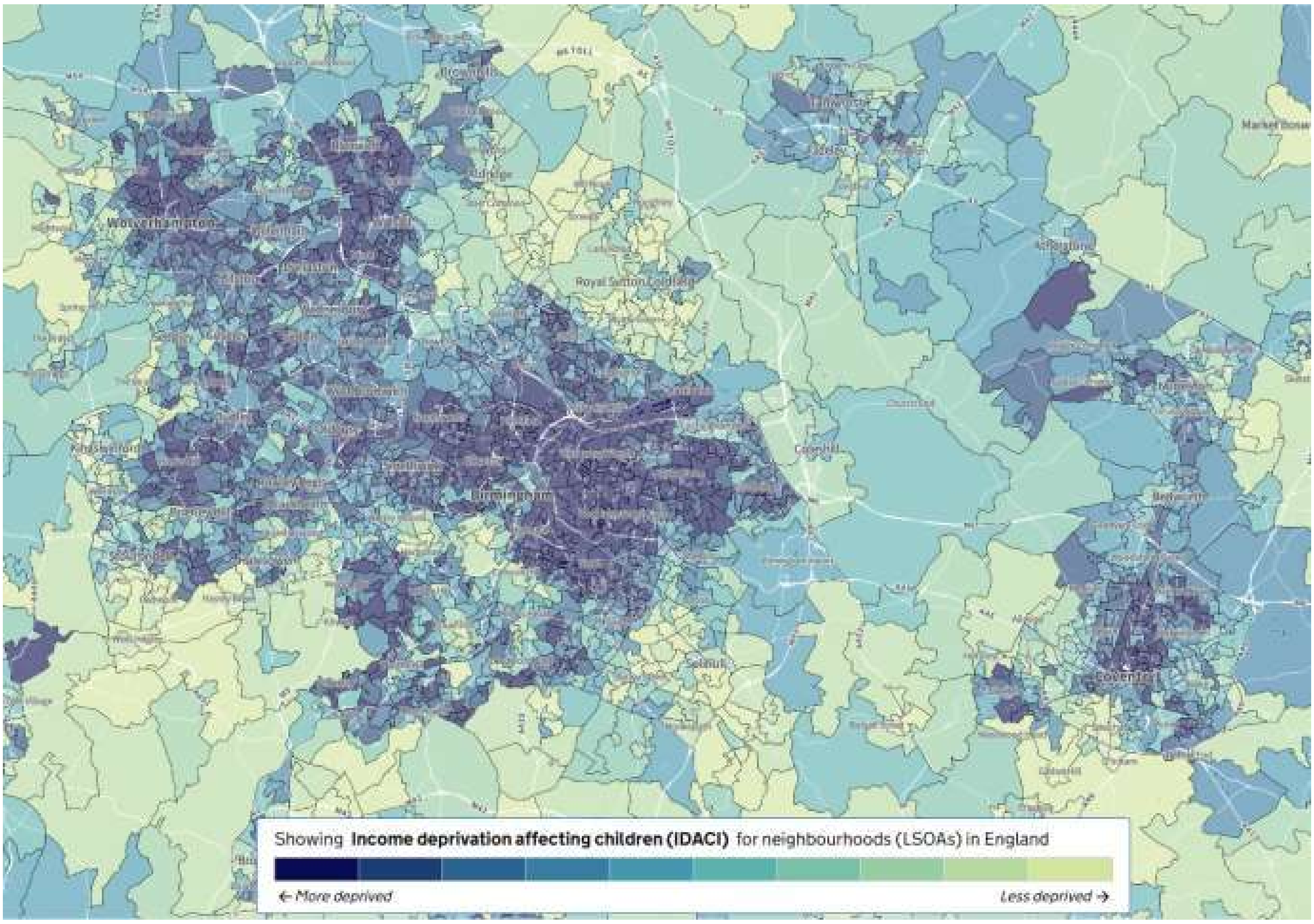
Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index

The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) shows that nearly half of all children in the WMCA area (around 49%) live in households with low incomes. This varies widely between places: Birmingham: around 62% of children; and Solihull: around 30% of children.

In 2023/24, around 280,000 children in the WMCA were living in relative low-income households – an increase of nearly 8,600 children from the previous year.

[8] GOV.UK (2025) English indices of deprivation 2025. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2025

Across the wider West Midlands region, almost one in four people lives in poverty, the second-highest rate in England after London. Within the WMCA, child poverty affects over a third of children (36%), rising to more than 60% in some neighbourhoods, such as Ladywood in Birmingham.[9]



Index of Deprivation Affecting Older People

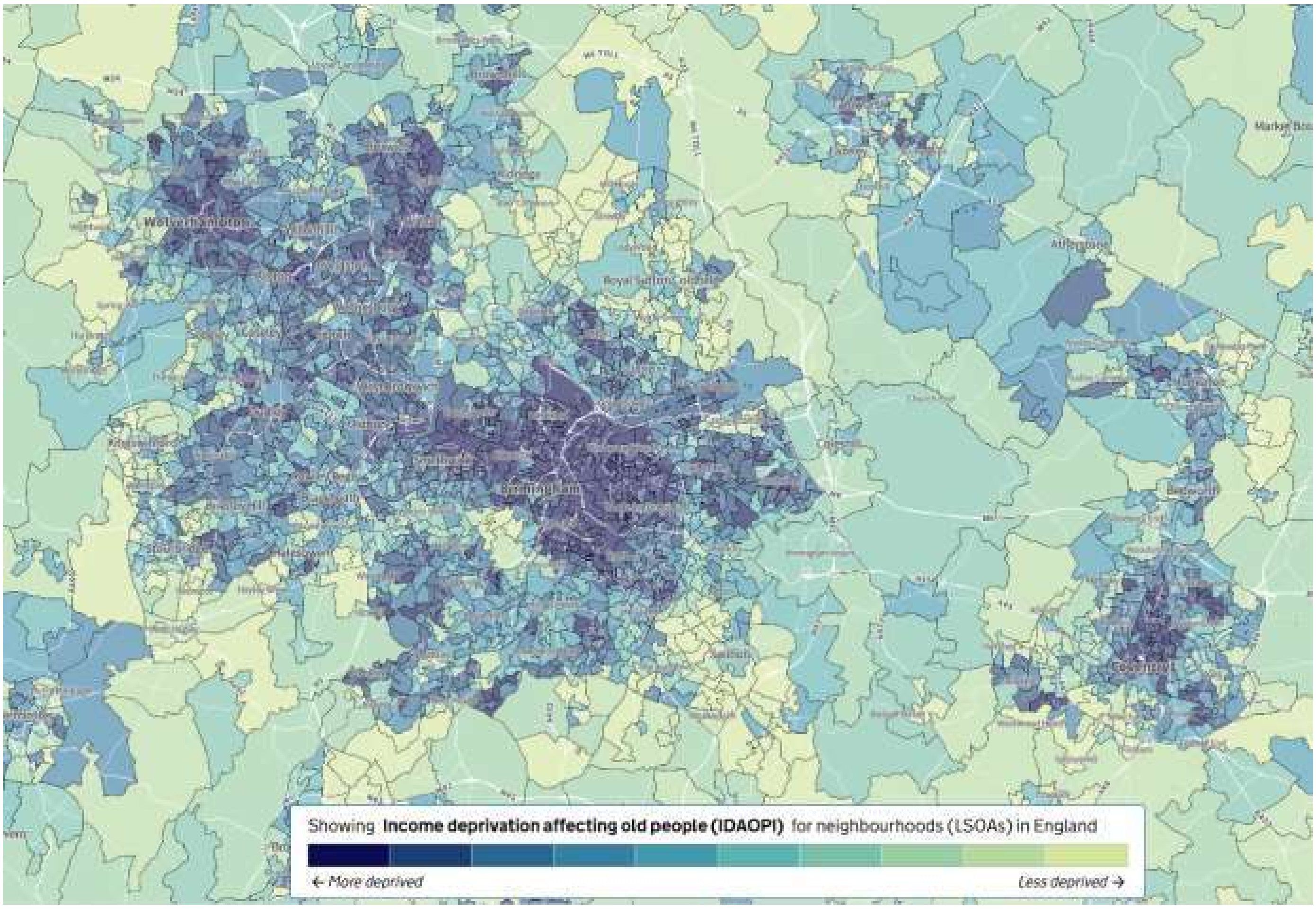
Pensioner poverty is less widespread than child poverty but remains a concern. Around 17% of pensioners in the wider West Midlands live in relative poverty, in line with the national average.

The Index of Deprivation Affecting Older People (IDAOPI) measures income deprivation among those aged 60 and over. It shows that:

- Birmingham has some of the highest levels of older-age income deprivation in England, particularly in inner and east Birmingham.
- Sandwell and parts of Wolverhampton also have high concentrations of older people facing income deprivation.
- Walsall has significant deprivation in some post-industrial communities.
- Dudley has fewer highly deprived areas overall but still contains pockets of deprivation among older residents.
- Coventry shows deprivation in specific neighbourhoods.

[9] Department for Work and Pensions (2026). Children in low-income families: Relative low income. Stat-Xplore. https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/

- Solihull ranks lower overall but still has hidden pockets of deprivation affecting older people.



Education and learning

Why is this important?

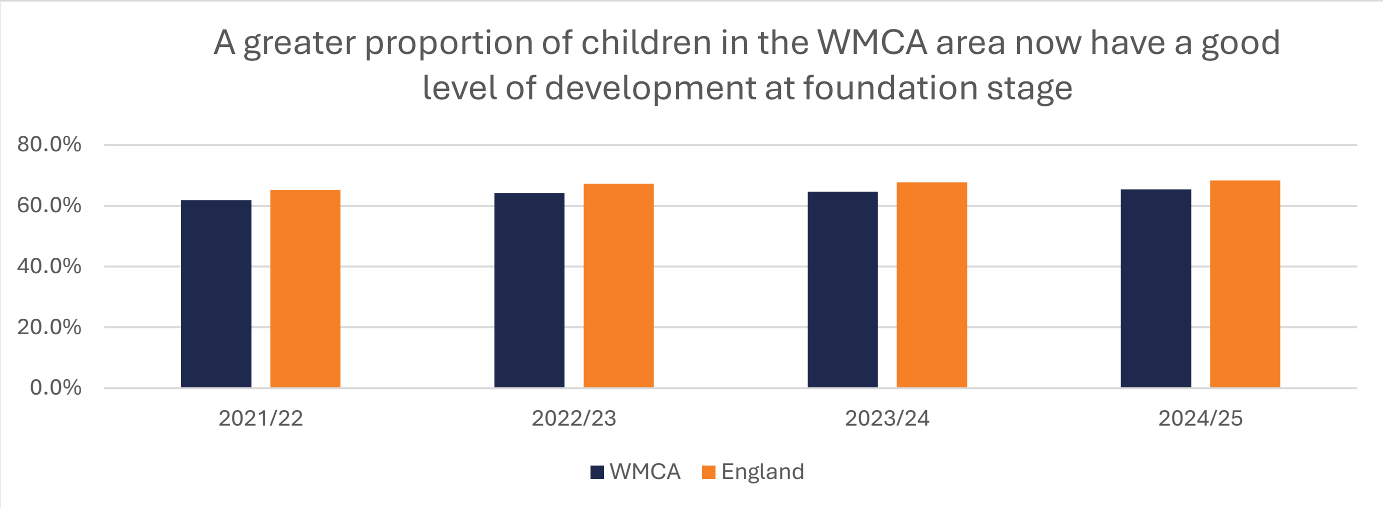
Education and learning opportunities are important for everyone at any age, to enable them to flourish and reach their potential. From giving children and young people the best start in life, to providing opportunities for working aged and older adults to gain new skills, retrain for a new job or just pursue their own interests for leisure. All types of learning are important for an inclusive society.

What are the current conditions?

These patterns of deprivation translate directly into experiences of children and young people, with early disparities in income and neighbourhood conditions reflected in education outcomes from the earliest years.

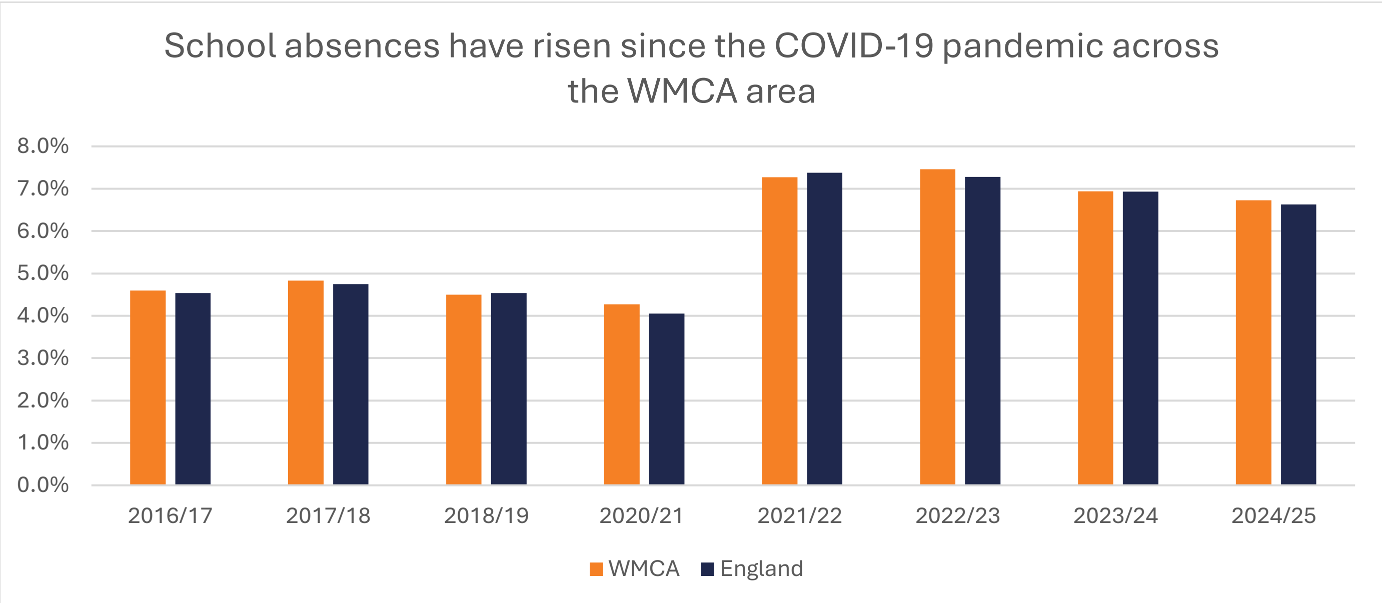
Early years

65.34% of children reached a good level of development at the foundation stage in the WMCA area. Children are expected to meet standards for all 12 Early Learning Goals (ELGs) across the five key areas: communication and language, personal, social, and emotional development, physical development, literacy, and mathematics. There is a yearly increase in the percentage of children achieving a good level of development at the foundation stage. The latest estimate for 2024/25 is 65.34% for the WMCA. However, this is still lower than the wider West Midlands region and England of 66.9% and 68.3%, respectively.[10]



School absences

Regular attendance at school can help a pupil achieve their full potential, secure employment, and achieve better exam results. In the WMCA region it was 6.73% for autumn and spring terms combined in the 2024/25 academic year which is just above the England average of 6.63%.[11] The number of pupils absent from school has risen since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. However, there is a slight improvement in the overall absence rate from 7.46% in 2022/23 to 6.73% in 2024/25 in the WMCA area.



[10] Department for Education (2025) Early years foundation stage profile results, academic year 2024/25. https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results/2024-25
[11] Department for Education (2025) Pupil absence in schools in England: autumn and spring term 2024/25. https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england/2024-25-autumn-and-spring-term

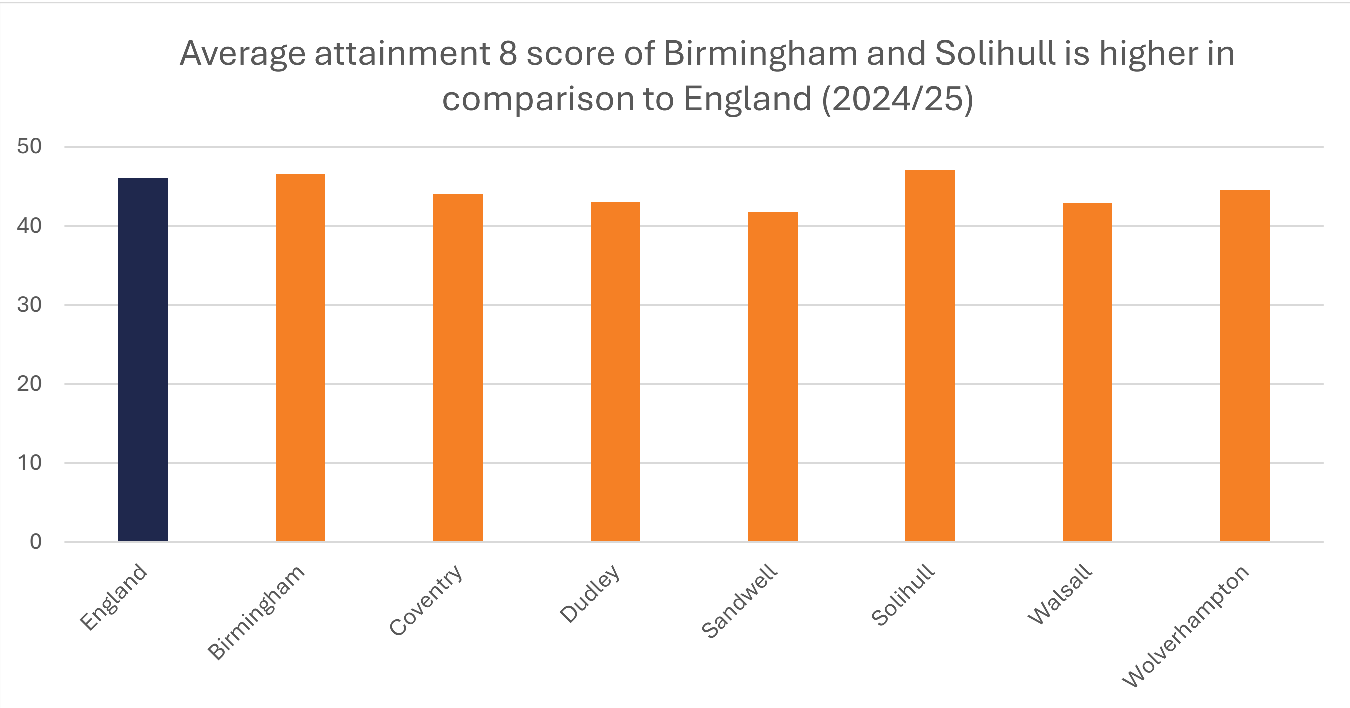
Key Stage 4

Grade 4+ in English and Maths

In the WMCA area, 61% of students achieved a least a grade 4 in both GCSE English and Maths in the 2024/25 academic year. This is slightly lower than the wider West Midlands average of 62%, and below the England average of 65%.[12] Achieving a grade 4 or above in English and Maths is often required for young people to move on to further education, such as T-Levels, to secure employment, or to start an apprenticeship.

Progress 8 scores are not available for the 2024/25 academic year. This is because there is no reliable prior attainment data, as pupils' earlier education was disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic, making it impossible to calculate progress accurately.

Overall, pupils completing secondary school in the WMCA tend to achieve lower results and make less progress than the England average. Performance at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11) is measured using two main indicators: Attainment 8, which reflects average grades across eight GCSE subjects including English and Maths, and Progress 8, which measures progress made from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school. In 2024/25, the average Attainment 8 score across the WMCA was 44 out of a possible 90, compared with the England average of 46.[13] Nevertheless, Birmingham and Solihull both recorded average Attainment 8 scores above the England average. It is also important to note that the England average is strongly influenced by very high results in London, and that six of England's nine regions score below this national average.

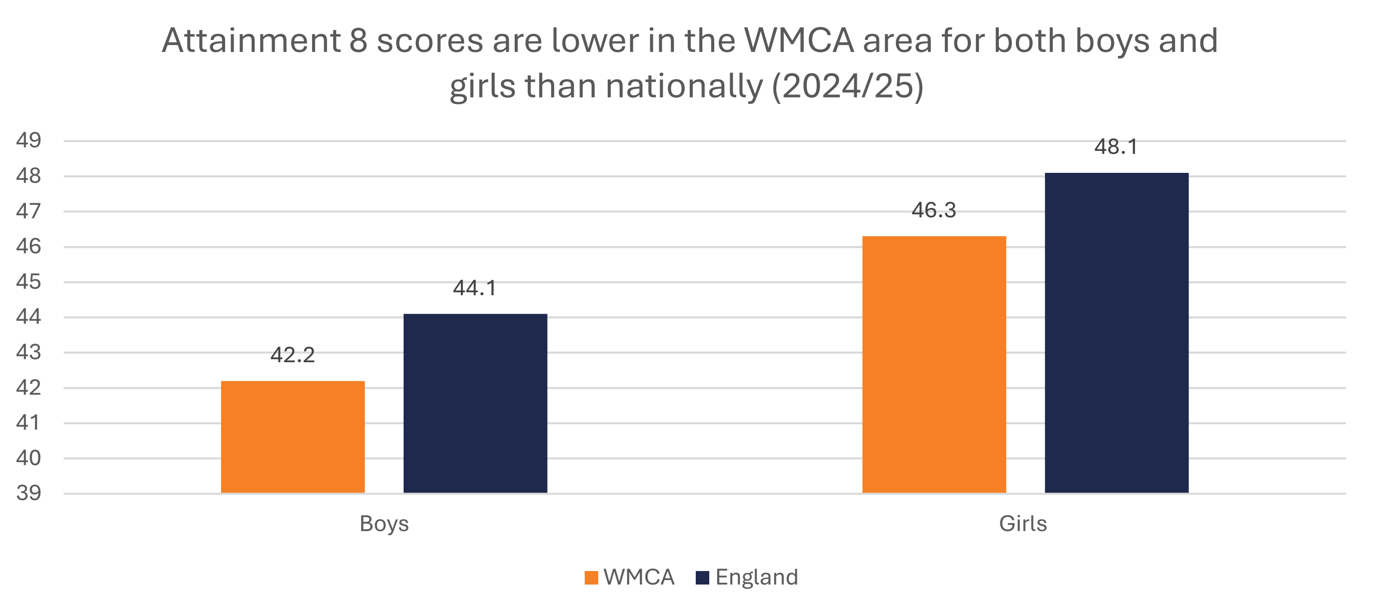


We also know that pupil attainment also varies by pupil characteristics, with not all pupils having equal outcomes. Girls are more likely to have a higher Attainment 8 scores than boys, both in the

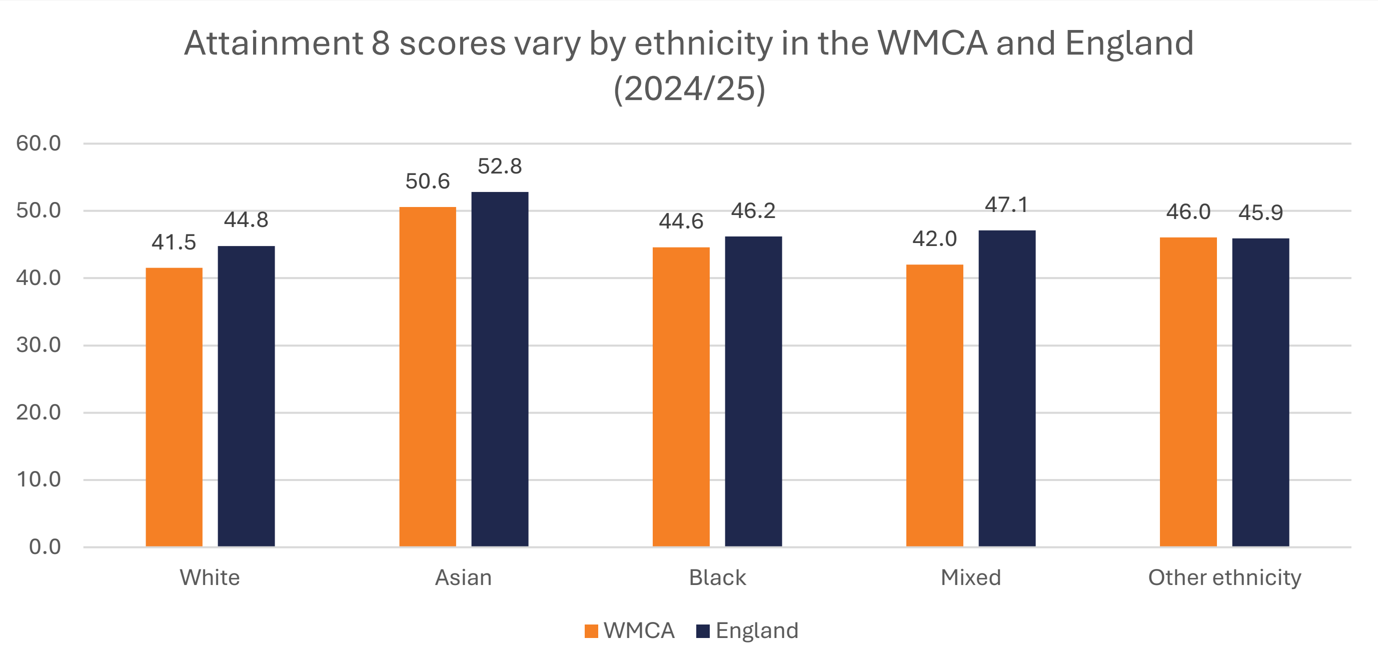
[12] Department for Education (2025) Key stage 4 performance. https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-performance/2024-25

[13] Department for Education (2025) Key stage 4 performance. https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-performance/2024-25

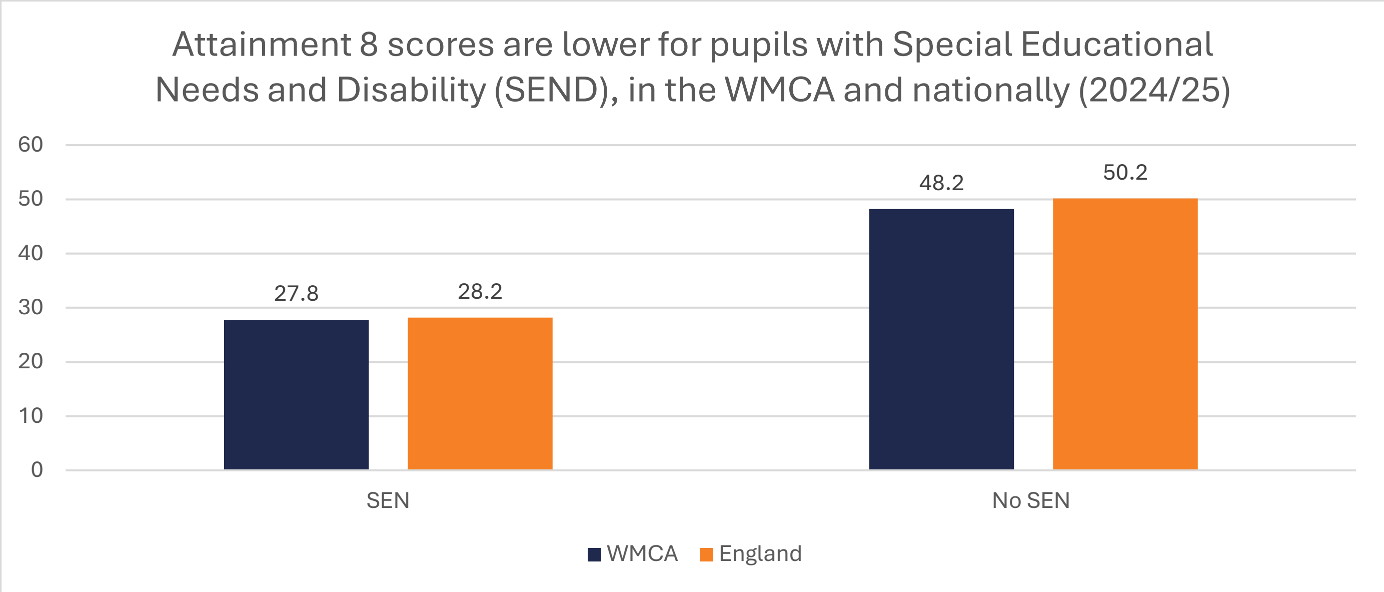
WMCA area and nationally. With boys having an average score of 42.2 and girls having an average of 46.3 in the WMCA area. However, both boys and girls have a lower Attainment 8 score in the WMCA than nationally.



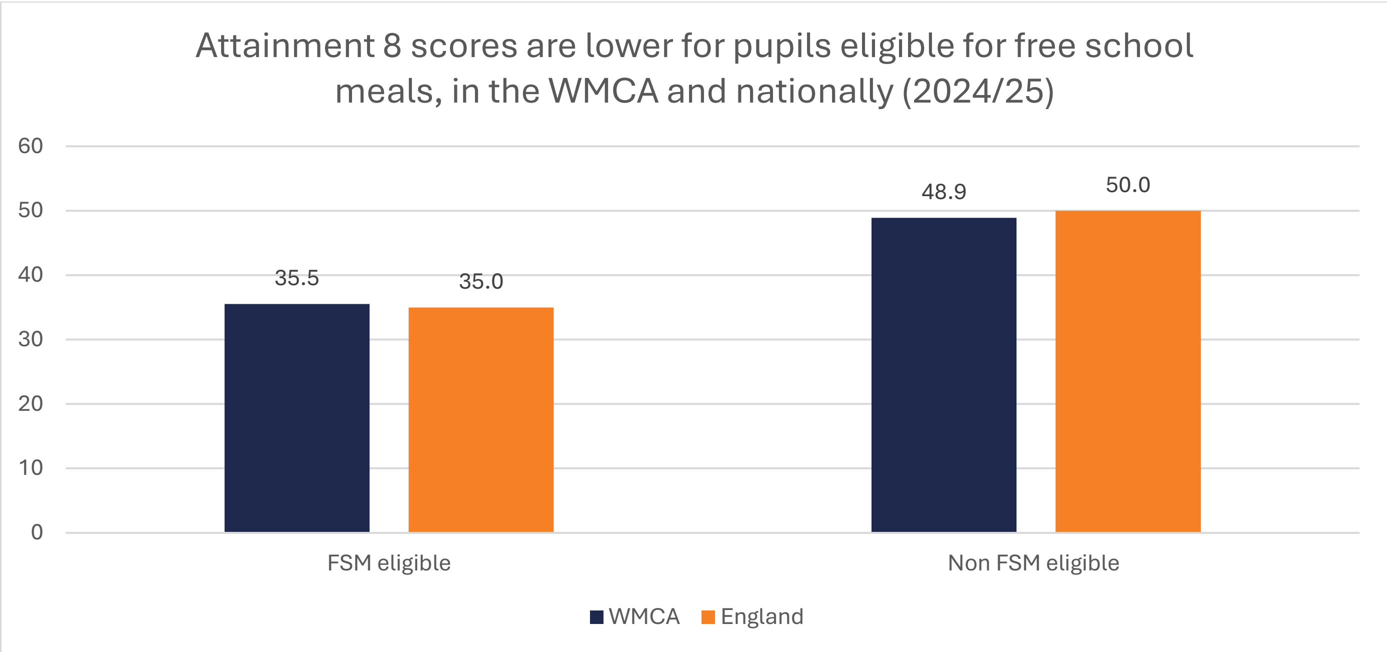
There are also variations in Attainment 8 scores across different ethnic groups in the WMCA area. Pupils of White ethnicity have the lowest Attainment 8 score in the WMCA area, with an average score of 41.5. Pupils of an Asian ethnicity have the highest average Attainment 8 score in the WMCA area, with a score of 50.6. Pupils of all ethnic groups apart from an Other ethnicity have lower average attainment 8 scores in the WMCA area than nationally. Pupils of an Other ethnicity have marginally higher attainment 8 scores in the WMCA area than nationally.



Attainment 8 scores for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) were 27.8 in the WMCA area, much lower than the score of 48.2 for pupils with no SEND. This follows a similar pattern to nationally but scores for both SEND and non-SEND pupils are lower in the WMCA than nationally.



Pupils who are eligible for free school meals have a lower average attainment 8 score in the WMCA area and nationally. In the WMCA area pupils eligible for free school meals have an average attainment 8 score of 35.5, compared to 48.9 for pupils who are not eligible for free school meals.



Participation in post-16 employment, education, and training

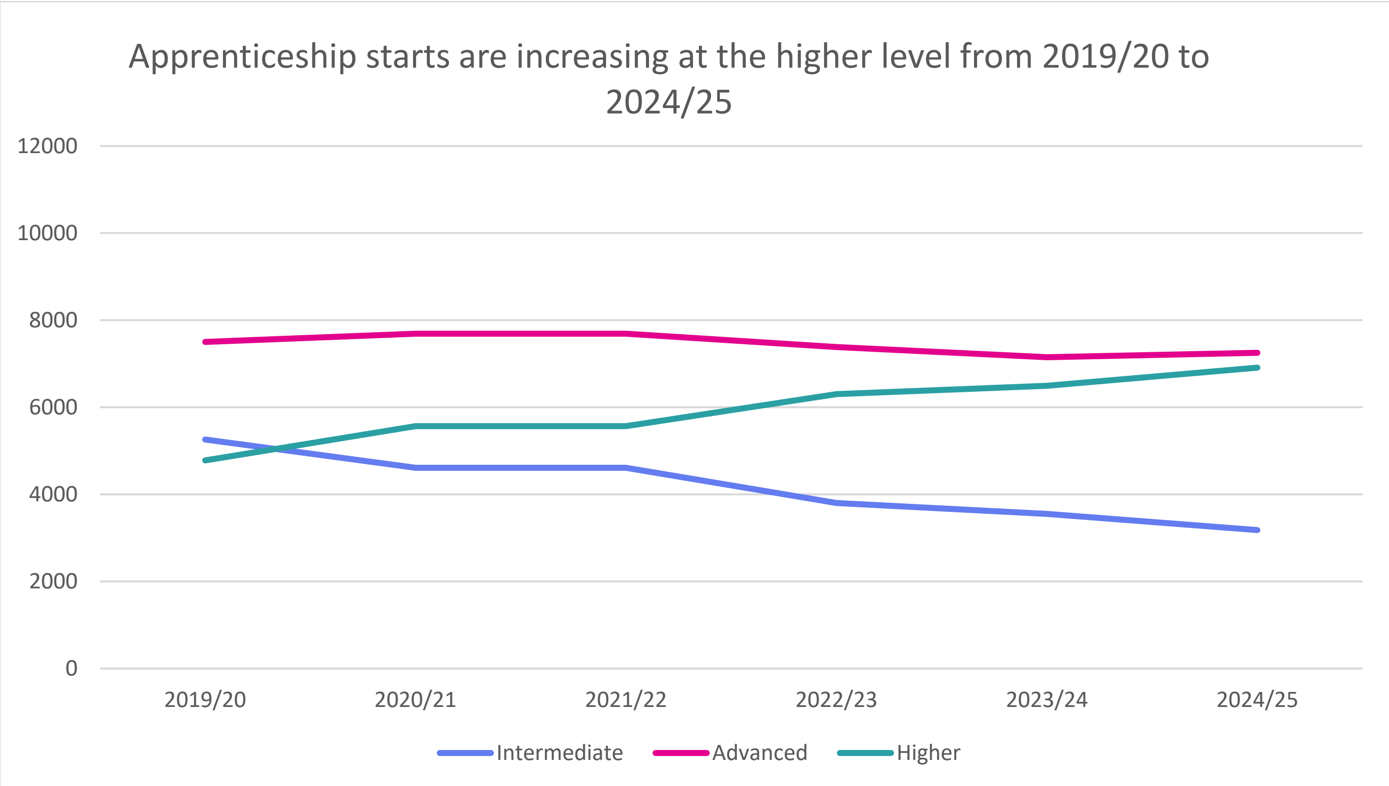
Apprenticeships

Over the last ten years, far fewer people have started apprenticeships across the WMCA area, mirroring national trends. In 2024/25 there were 7,840 fewer apprenticeship starts (-31%) than in 2013/14, falling from 25,190 to 17,350.[14]

That said, there has been a small increase this year compared with 2023/24, when there were 17,190 starts. Overall, apprenticeship numbers have been fairly steady since 2019/20.

This has been a result of the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017, which, despite increasing overall apprenticeship funding, shifted away from recruiting new apprentices and instead used the levy to train existing staff; unintentionally reduced participation by small and medium-sized enterprises; and increased administrative complexity and upfront costs for employers; ultimately leading to fewer apprenticeship starts overall and fewer opportunities for young people aged 19 and under.[15]

Looking at different levels of apprenticeships: Intermediate apprenticeships have continued to fall. Advanced and higher apprenticeships have seen a small increase since 2023/24.



In the 2024/25 academic year, most apprenticeship starts and completions were among learners from a White ethnic background, with 10,830 starts and 6,690 completions.[16] Learners from an

[14] Department for Education (2025) Widening participation in higher education. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education-2025
[15] Dickinson, P., & Hogarth, T. (2021). The Benefits of Hindsight: Assessing the impact of apprenticeship reforms on employer behaviour.
[16] Local Government Association (2026) Apprenticeship starts and achievements by ethnicity (Metric ID 25562, 25568, 25558, 25564,25557, 25563, 25559, 25565, 25565, 25566). https://developertools.esd.org.uk/data?metricType=25562%2C25568%2C25558%2C25564%2C25557%2C25563%2C25559%2C25565%2C25560%2C25566&area=E47000007&period=latest&rowGrouping=area (Accessed 9th March 2026)

Asian background recorded 3,400 starts and 1,720 completions, while those from a Black background had 1,530 starts and 690 completions. There were 1,080 starts and 550 completions among learners of Mixed ethnicity. A further 220 starts were recorded for learners from Other ethnic backgrounds, but completion data for this group has been suppressed, so figures are not available.

In terms of gender, there were more female than male apprenticeship starts in 2024/25, with 9,550 female starts compared to 7,780 male starts. The same pattern is seen for completions, with 5,540 female achievements and 4,290 male achievements.[17]

Not in education, employment, or training (NEET)

In 2025, around 6.9% of 16–17-year-olds in the WMCA were either not in education, employment or training (NEET) or had an unknown activity status.[18] This is higher than the England average of 5.6%.[19] In addition, nearly 10% of people aged 16–64 in the WMCA have no formal qualifications, which is a significant concern. NEET rates among 16–17-year-olds vary by ethnicity, gender and special educational needs and disability (SEND).

Ethnicity

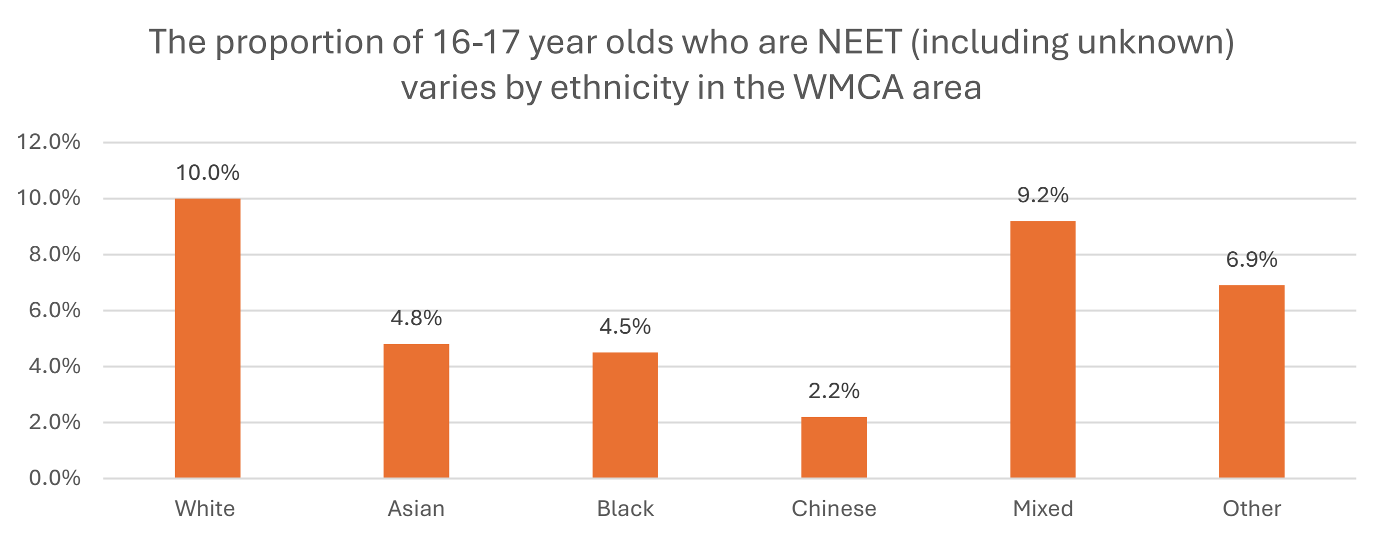
In 2025, White young people had the highest NEET or unknown rate in the WMCA. 10.0% of White 16–17-year-olds were NEET or had an unknown status, compared with:

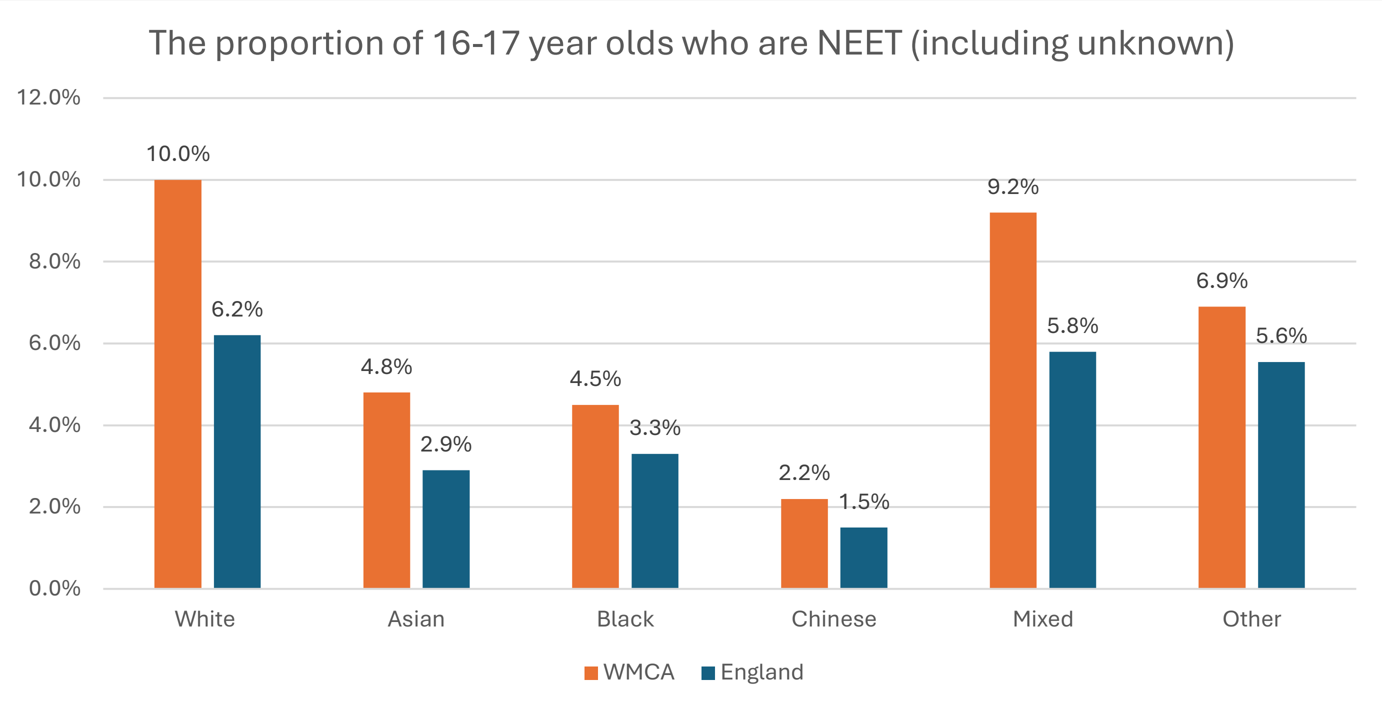
- 4.8% of Asian young people
- 4.5% of Black young people
- 2.2% of Chinese young people
- 9.2% of young people of Mixed ethnicity
- 6.9% of those from Other ethnic backgrounds

Across every ethnic group, the NEET rate in the WMCA area is higher than the national average. The largest gap is for White young people, where the WMCA rate is 3.8 percentage points higher than England.

When looking only at those confirmed as NEET (excluding unknown status), NEET rates are lower across all ethnicities. However, White young people still have the highest confirmed NEET rate. This highlights how important better tracking of young people’s status is, as high levels of “unknown” mask the true picture.

[17] Local Government Association (2026) Apprenticeship starts and achievements by Sex (Metric ID 21297, 2185, 21293, 21281) https://developertools.esd.org.uk/data?metricType=25562%2C25568%2C25558%2C25564%2C25557%2C25563%2C25559%2C25565%2C25560%2C25566&area=E47000007&period=latest&rowGrouping=area (Accessed 9th March 2026)
[18] Department for Education (2025) *Statistics: NEET and participation*. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-neet
[19] Department for Education (2025) Participation in education, training and NEET age 16 to 17 by local authority, academic year 2024/25. https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/participation-in-education-training-and-neet-age-16-to-17-by-local-authority/2024-25





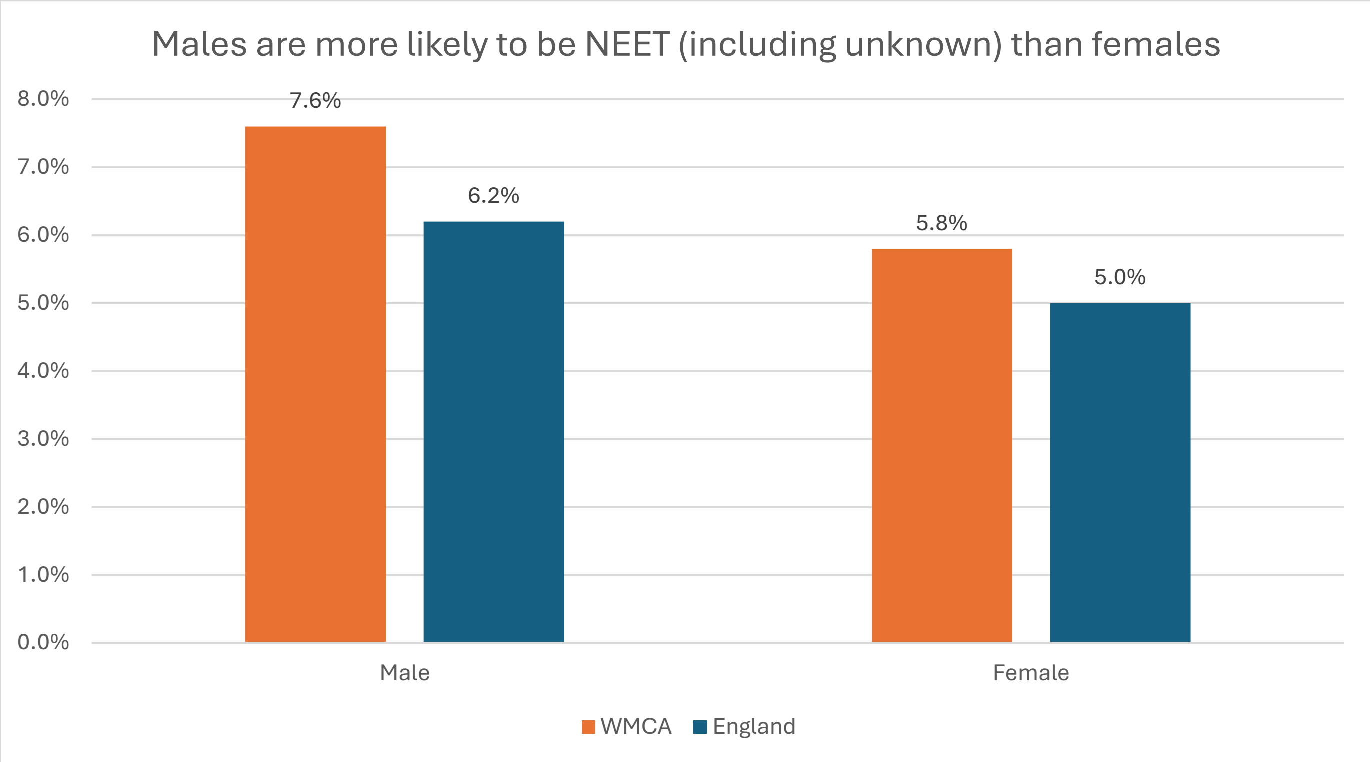
	NEET		NEET including not known	
	WMCA	England	WMCA	England
Asian	2.2%	1.7%	4.8%	2.9%
Black	1.9%	1.8%	4.5%	3.3%
Chinese	0.3%	0.4%	2.2%	1.5%
Mixed	3.9%	3.6%	9.2%	5.8%
Other	2.4%	3.2%	6.9%	5.6%
White	4.0%	4.0%	10.0%	6.2%

Gender

Male 16–17-year-olds are more likely than females to be NEET or have an unknown status, both locally and nationally. In the WMCA:

- 7.6% of males were NEET or unknown;
- 5.8% of females were NEET or unknown.

Both are higher than England averages.



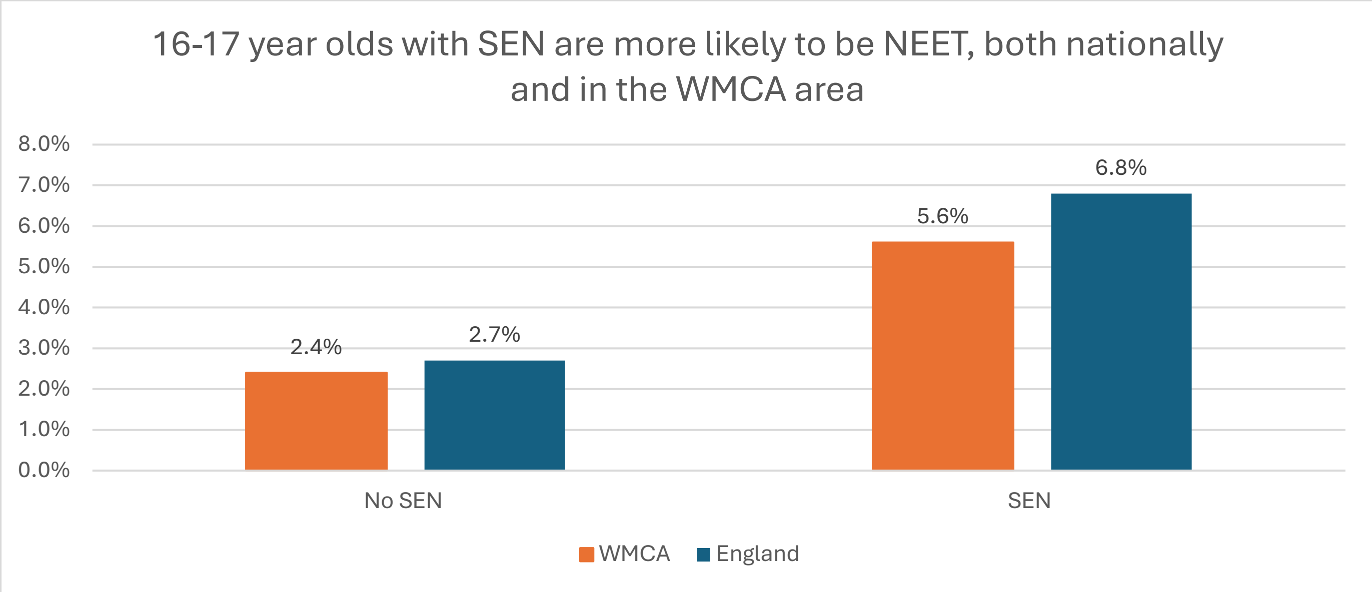
However, when only confirmed NEET cases are included, the WMCA actually has slightly lower NEET rates for both males and females than England. This again reflects the WMCA's higher proportion of young people with an unknown status.

	NEET		NEET including unknown	
	WMCA	England	WMCA	England
Male	3.7%	3.9%	7.6%	6.2%
Female	2.4%	3.0%	5.8%	5.0%

Special educational needs and disability (SEND)

Young people with SEND are much more likely to be NEET than those without, both nationally and in the WMCA. The WMCA has a higher proportion of SEND who are NEET or unknown than England.

When considering only confirmed NEET cases, however, the WMCA has a slightly lower NEET rate among SEND than the national average, indicating that unknown status is again a key issue.



	NEET		NEET including unknown	
	WMCA	England	WMCA	England
No SEND	2.4%	2.7%	6.0%	4.9%
SEND	5.6%	6.8%	10.1%	9.6%

Across ethnicity, gender and SEND status, the WMCA consistently has more 16–17-year-olds with an unknown education or employment status than England. Reducing the number of young people with unknown status would give a clearer understanding of NEET levels and help target support more effectively.

Progression to higher education

In the 2023/24 academic year, 47.4% of school leavers in the WMCA progressed to higher education. This is a small decrease of just over one percentage point compared with the previous year, but it still remains above the England average of 45.8%, showing relatively strong overall performance across the region.

However, progression to higher education varies greatly by background.

Disadvantage (as measured by free school meal eligibility)

Pupils eligible for free school meals are much less likely to progress to higher education than their peers:

- 34.6% of free school meal pupils progressed to higher education, compared with 51.3% of non-free school meals pupils.
- The gap is even wider for entry to high-tariff universities: only 4.6% of free school meal pupils progressed to these institutions, compared with 11.2% of non-free school meals pupils. This means non-free school meals pupils are more than twice as likely to attend high-tariff universities.

Special educational needs and disability (SEND)

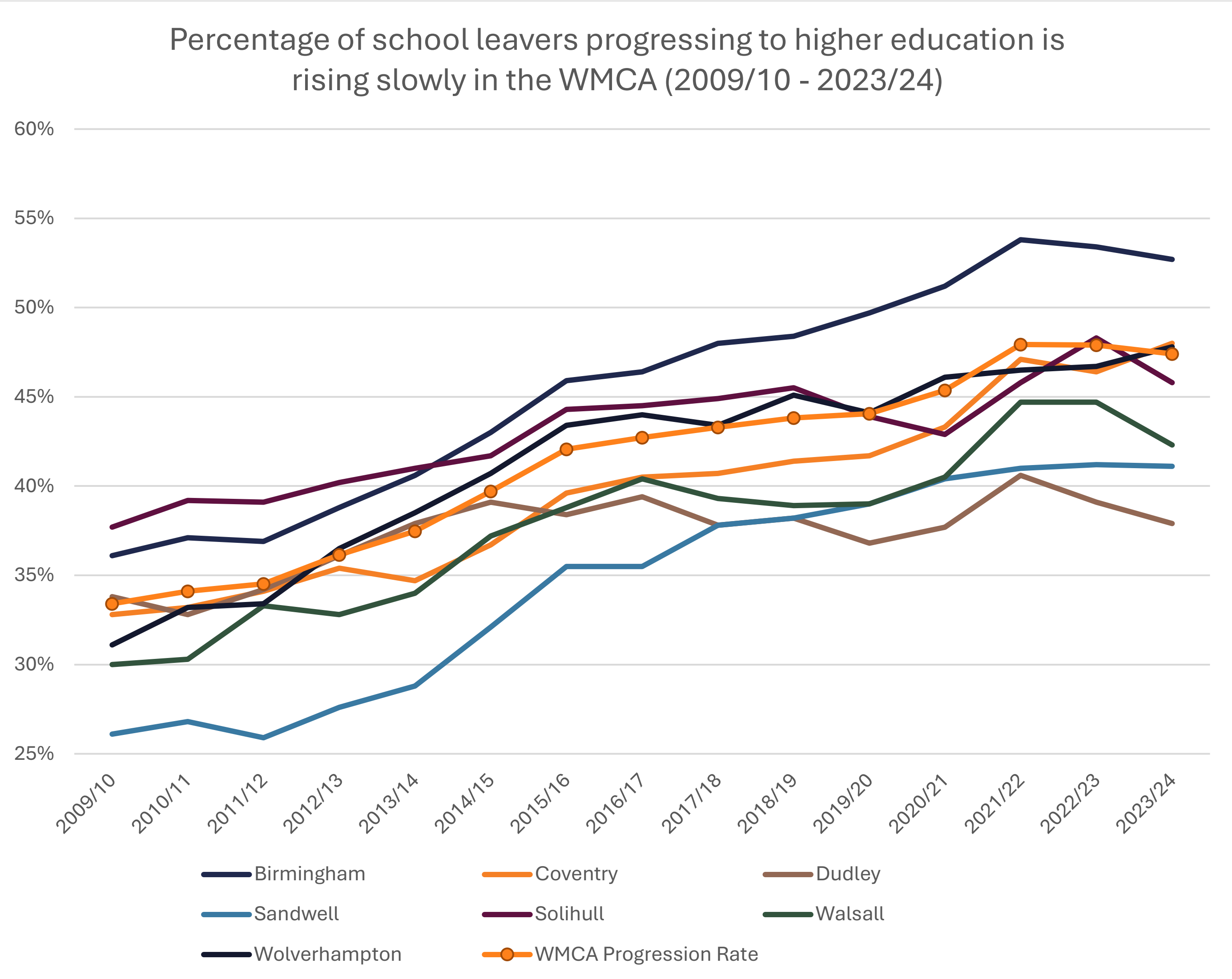
Progression rates are also much lower for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND):

- 21.8% of SEND pupils progressed to higher education, compared with 52.2% of pupils without SEN.
- Only 2.2% of SEND pupils attended high-tariff universities, compared with 11.1% of pupils without SEND — meaning young people without SEND are over five times more likely to access these institutions.

Place-based differences

Education plays a crucial role in social mobility, career opportunities and life outcomes, but participation varies across the region:

- Coventry and Wolverhampton were the only areas to see growth in higher education participation in 2023/24.
- Over the longer term, Sandwell shows the strongest growth in participation since 2009/10, while Dudley has seen the weakest growth.



Further education and skills

The WMCA performs better than both the wider West Midlands and England on participation and achievement in further education for adults aged 19–64:

- The achievement rate in WMCA averages 4.12%, compared with 3.77% in the wider West Midlands and 3.55% nationally.[20]
- Participation in WMCA averages 5.91%, again higher than both the West Midlands (5.50%) and England (5.17%).

Within WMCA:

- Wolverhampton and Birmingham have the highest achievement rates (6.9% and 6.6%).
- Solihull has the lowest achievement rate at 3.23%.

These differences likely reflect population size and the concentration of FE providers.

Progression after Level 3 qualifications

In the WMCA, 67.1% of students who completed Level 3 qualifications progressed to a sustained Level 4 or higher destination within two years. This is higher than the national rate of 65.0%.[21]

Of those who sustained a destination:

- 62.0% progressed to a degree (Level 6);
- 2.4% entered a Level 4+ apprenticeship; and
- 2.7% studied other Level 4 or 5 qualifications.

Nearly one in five (19.5%) progressed to a top-third higher education provider.

Differences by ethnicity

Progression and access to high-tariff universities varies significantly:

- White pupils were the least likely to progress to Level 4 or higher (57.5%).
- Asian pupils had the highest progression rate (78.0%).
- Black pupils were the least likely to attend a top-third university (16.1%).

Disadvantage and gender

- Disadvantaged pupils are less likely to progress to Level 4 or higher (62.0%) than non-disadvantaged pupils (69.2%), and less likely to attend a top-third institution.
- Females are more likely than males to sustain a Level 4+ destination (70.6% vs 63.0%), though access to top-third universities is similar for both genders.

[20] Department for Education, 2026. *Further education and skills, academic year 2025/26: England. UK Government.* https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/further-education-and-skills/2025-26?utm_source=chatgpt.com

[21]

	Sustained a Level 4 or higher destination	Top third HE destination
White	57.5%	14.8%
Asian	78.0%	27.0%
Black	75.6%	16.1%
Mixed	64.6%	18.6%
Any other ethnic group	76.4%	27.4%
Unclassified	65.1%	18.7%

	Sustained a Level 4 or higher destination	Top third HE destination
Disadvantaged	62.0%	14.5%
Not disadvantaged	69.2%	21.5%

Disadvantaged pupils are less likely to sustain a level 4 or higher destination in the two years after completing their level 3 qualification, in the WMCA area. 62.0% of disadvantaged pupils progress into level 4, compared to 69.2% of not disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils are also less likely to attend a top third Higher Education Institute after level, with 14.5% of disadvantaged pupils attending a Top third Higher Education destination compared to 21.5% of not disadvantaged pupils.

	Sustained a Level 4 or higher destination	Top third HE destination
Female	70.6%	19.7%
Male	63.0%	19.3%

Females are more likely than males to sustain a level 4 or higher destination after completing level 3 qualifications however are less likely to attend a top third higher education destination. 70.6% of females sustain a level 4 or higher destination compared to 63.0% of males, in the WMCA area. 19.7% of females attend a top third Higher Education destinations, slightly higher than the 19.3% seen by males, in the WMCA area.

Skills and qualifications in adulthood

Level 3 and Level 4 or above qualifications

In 2024, around 20.2% of WMCA residents aged 16–64 held a Level 3 qualification, while 40.0% held a Level 4 qualification or higher. This represents a slight fall from 2023 and remains below both the West Midlands and England averages.

This matters because evidence shows that people with Level 3 or higher qualifications are more likely to be in work, earn higher wages, and are less likely to rely on out-of-work benefits.[22]

What can and is being done?

The West Midlands is moving towards a more coordinated and demand-led integrated employment and skills system, designed to better align education and training with our regional priorities. Investment through mechanisms such as the devolved Adult Education Budget, Free Courses for Jobs and Skills Bootcamps is helping to support progression into sustained employment, particularly for residents facing structural barriers to work. The West Midlands Works Plan provides a ten-year roadmap to support more than 90,000 residents into employment, with a strong focus on addressing economic inactivity linked to long-term health conditions and disability. And the College Compact sets out a shared framework with our colleges. This aims to reduce fragmentation, strengthen collaboration, and ensure that courses and pathways are more closely aligned with employer needs and local labour market demand.

Alongside this, there is growing investment in more innovative approaches to skills delivery. The Skills Innovation Challenge Fund is supporting new models such as employer-led training, sector-based academies, and programmes focused on emerging areas like artificial intelligence. These initiatives are intended to make the skills system more responsive and adaptable, ensuring it can keep pace with technological change while providing learners with relevant, high-quality opportunities.

New institutions are also being introduced to strengthen provision in key sectors. Technical Excellence Colleges are being developed to support skills in areas such as advanced manufacturing, digital technologies and defence. Together with wider programmes focused on public service innovation, these developments reflect a broader shift towards experimentation, partnership working and long-term system reform—helping to build a more coherent, inclusive and future-ready skills ecosystem.

Inclusive economy

Why is this important?

An inclusive economy is one in which everyone has a part to play. The economy is productive and sustainable, and everyone benefits from it. This contrasts with an economy where a small group of people benefit first, and where wealth is then redistributed later or trickled down.

[22] West Midlands Combined Authority (2023) West Midlands Combined Authority: Improving the level 3 skills offer for adults. https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/employment-and-skills/improvingthe-level-3-skills-offer-for-adults/

What are the current conditions?

Employment

According to the ONS annual population survey, the employment rate (economically active, in employment) in the WMCA area in the year to December 2025 was 69.2%, representing little change from the year to September 2024 (69.7%).[23] The WMCA area had an employment rate of 73.2% for males and 65.1% for females; and 64.9% for ethnic minorities. However, well-documented data quality issues with the annual population survey means that these figures should be treated with caution.[24]

The overall WMCA employment rate of 69.2% remains the lowest of any combined authority area and is well below our primary comparator regions and the England average (75.4%). The current gap (in the year to December 2025) between the WMCA area and England (6.6 percentage points) is narrower than it was in the year to June 2016 (9.5 percentage points); however, it is still worse than over 20 years ago (4.7 percentage points in the year to March 2005).

The employment rate for disabled people in the WMCA area was 46.9% in the year to December 2025; significantly lower than the employment rate seen for non-disabled people of 76.8%, and lower than the national figure of an employment rate of 56.7% for disabled people.

The number of advertised job vacancies has fallen in recent years. While numbers have risen and fallen over the last ten years (values from March each year for comparison), March 2026 new vacancy postings fell to 20,519 for the WMCA area. Interestingly, interest has remained steady and is perhaps even slightly lower than the post-pandemic peak. This suggests that, while there are fewer jobs being advertised, equally fewer people are interested in those jobs.

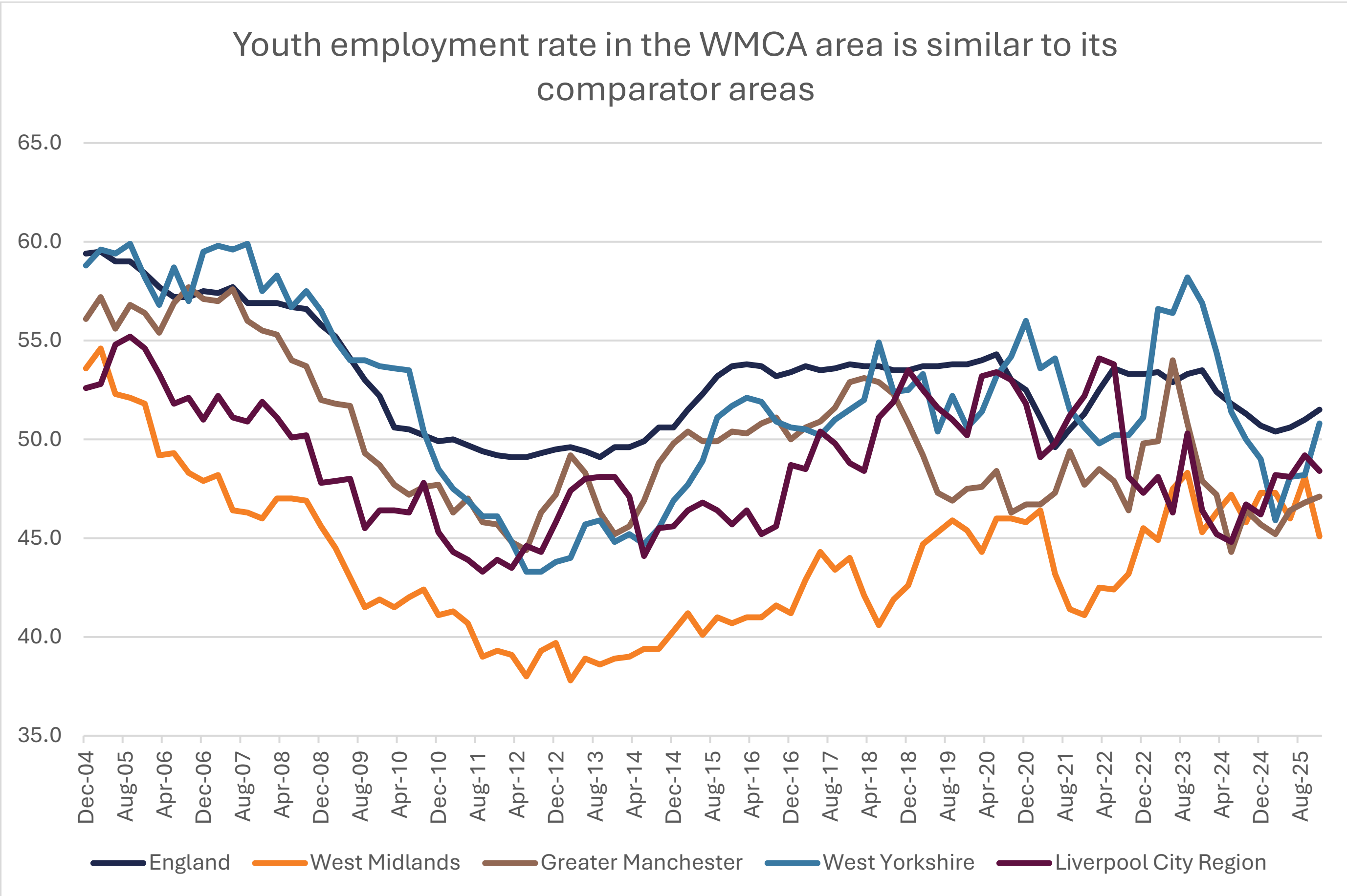
	Overall Demand	New Postings	Interest Quotient	
Mar-17	110,059	66,995	2.1	(high)
Mar-18	81,662	42,991	2.0	(high)
Mar-19	80,566	43,172	2.2	(high)
Mar-20	63,997	29,781	2.2	(high)
Mar-21	68,829	39,326	2.1	(high)
Mar-22	118,478	70,180	2.3	(high)
Mar-23	81,089	45,979	2.4	(high)
Mar-24	56,222	27,803	2.5	(high)

[23] Office for National Statistics (2026) Labour Market Profile - West Midlands Combined Authority. https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/comb/1853882375/report.aspx
[24] Office for Statistics Regulation (2024) OSR's statement on the Labour Force Survey-derived estimates and Annual Population Survey-derived estimates. https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/osrs-statement-on-the-labour-force-survey-derived-estimates-and-annual-population-survey-derived-estimates/

	Overall Demand	New Postings	Interest Quotient	
Mar-25	49,572	24,100	2.3	(high)
Mar-26	42,716	20,519	2.1	(high)

Young people

Youth employment has appeared to be on a similar trajectory. In the year to December 2025, youth employment (16-24) was estimated at 45.1% in the WMCA area.[25] This was similar to all comparable combined authority areas (Greater Manchester: 47.1%; West Yorkshire: 50.8%; Liverpool City Region: 48.4%) and was not statistically significantly different from the estimate for England (51.5%).



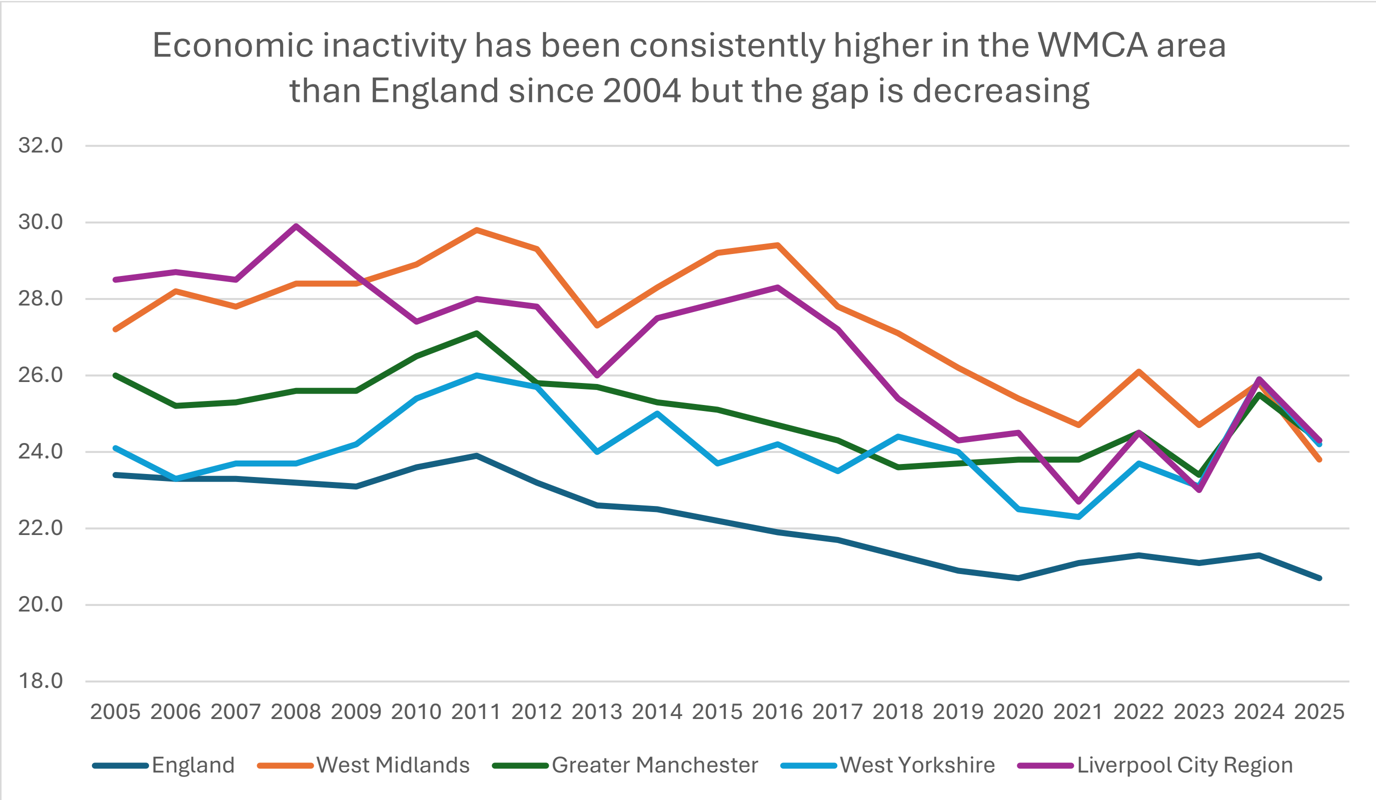
Economic inactivity

According to the ONS annual population survey, 25.1% of people aged 16-64 in the WMCA area were economically inactive in the year to December 2025. This is virtually unchanged from the figure in the year to December 2024 (25.7%).[26] The WMCA area has very similar rates to our comparator regions but is above the England average (20.5%). The WMCA has an estimated economic inactivity rate of 21.0% for males and 29.2% for females. Additionally, the estimated economic inactivity rate in the WMCA was 28.0% for people from an ethnic minority.

[25] Office for National Statistics (2026) Annual Population Survey. https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/
[26] Office for National Statistics (2026) Labour Market Profile - West Midlands Combined Authority. https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/comb/1853882375/report.aspx

Estimates for 2025 suggests the WMCA area now has the lowest overall rate of economic inactivity compared to similar combined authority areas. However, estimates based on surveys should always be treated with caution and data quality issues have been well documented.[27] Of those economically inactive in the WMCA area in the year to December 2025, 84% do not want a job; 6.6% are retired, 29.2% are long-term sick, 22.8% are looking after family or a home, and 30.2% are students (other: 9.0%, temporary sick: 1.9%).

18.1% of households in the WMCA area were workless in 2024 (latest available data), varying from 11.7% in Solihull to 21.3% in Sandwell.[28] Of our comparator regions, the WMCA area had the second lowest rate of workless households in 2024. Rates were falling gradually up until the pandemic but have since started to creep up across the country.



Unemployment-related benefits

The total number of people claiming unemployment benefits as a proportion of residents aged 16-64 in the WMCA area was 7.2% compared to 3.9% for the England in December 2025.[29] Across the Combined Authorities, the WMCA had the highest claimant rates. When compared to December 2024, claimants have now decreased by 4.8% in the WMCA area, with England decreasing by 4.2%. When compared to December 2019, the claimant count has increased by 45.8% in the WMCA area, with England increasing by 42.4%. This compares to an increase in the employment rate over the same 6-year period of 1.5 percentage points (pp) for the WMCA area and 0.1pp drop for England. With only an additional 2.4% of the 16-64 population economically

[27] Office for Statistics Regulation (2024) OSR's statement on the Labour Force Survey-derived estimates and Annual Population Survey-derived estimates. https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/osrs-statement-on-the-labour-force-survey-derived-estimates-and-annual-population-survey-derived-estimates/

[28] Office for National Statistics (2024) Labour Market Profile - West Midlands Combined Authority. https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/comb/1853882375/report.aspx

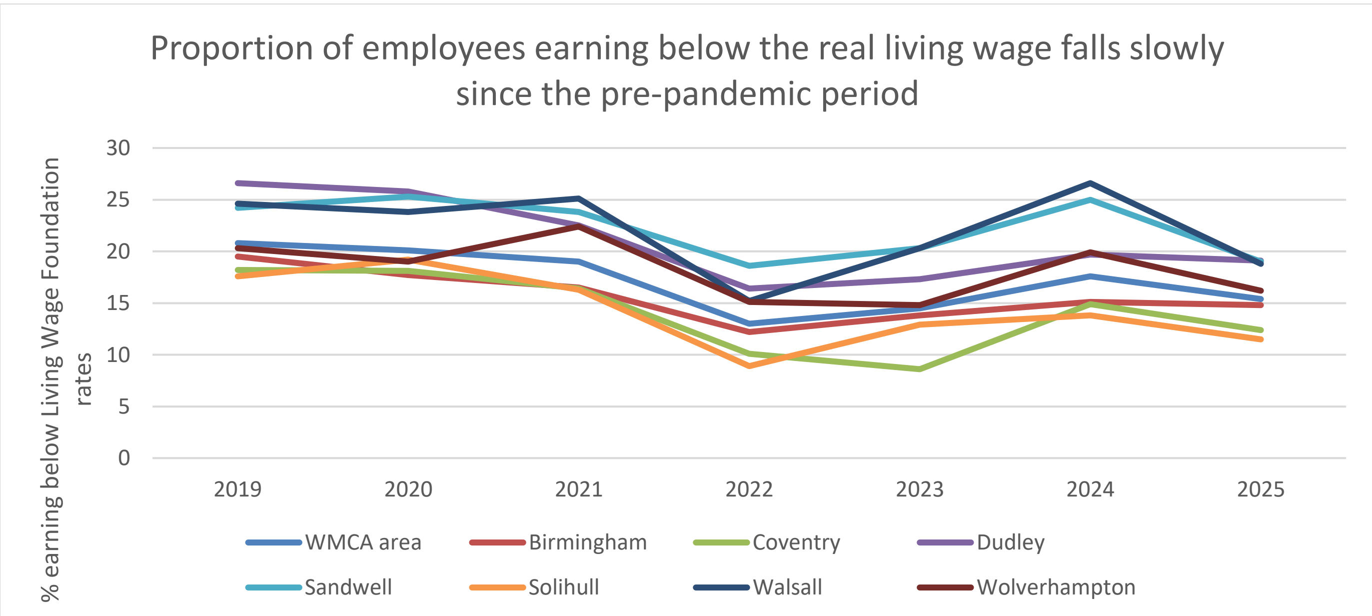
[29] Office for National Statistics (2024) Labour Market Profile - West Midlands Combined Authority. https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/comb/1853882375/report.aspx

active in the WMCA area, the rise in claimants of 3.3% of the 16-64 population can only be explained by an increase in the proportion of the unemployed who are claiming benefits while being unemployed. This is likely being driven by the cost-of-living crisis.

The number of youth claimants as a proportion of residents aged 18-24 in the WMCA area was 9.4% compared to 5.7% for the England in December 2025.[30] As with total claimant count, the WMCA had the highest rates across the Combined Authorities. When compared to December 2024, youth claimants have increased by 9.3% in the WMCA area, with England increasing by 8.7%. When compared to December 2019, youth claimants have increased by 60.3% in the WMCA area, with England increasing by 50.5%.

Pay

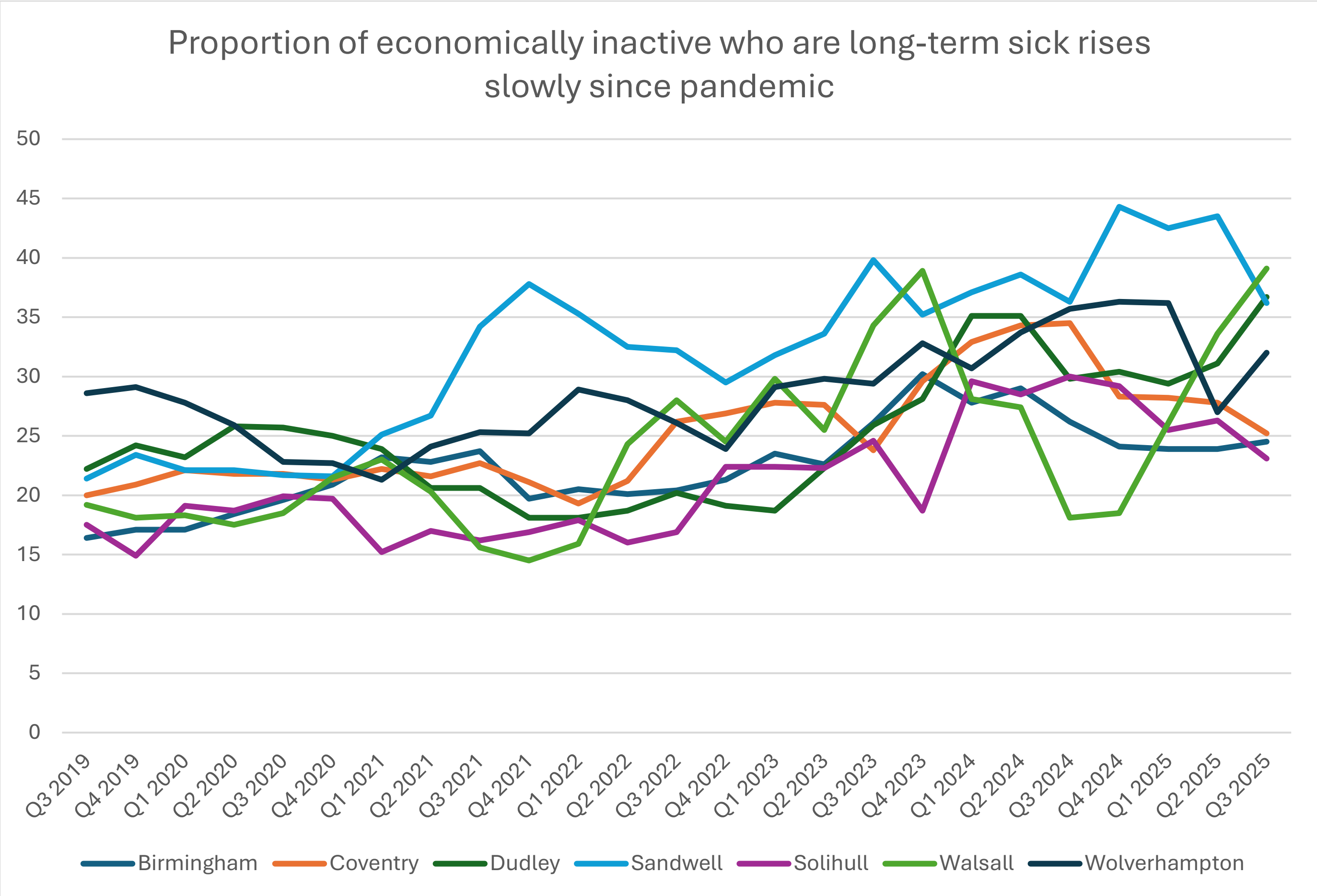
Median weekly pay for full time workers stood at £714 in the WMCA area in 2025, 7.2% below the England average of £770. Real median weekly pay for full time workers has risen above its peak before the financial crisis (2010) in the WMCA area, but not yet for the rest of England on average.



[30] Office for National Statistics (2024) Labour Market Profile - West Midlands Combined Authority. https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/comb/1853882375/report.aspx

The proportion of employees living in the WMCA area earning below the real living wage has fallen slowly since the pre-pandemic period (2019). In the Area as a whole, it has fallen from 20.8% to 15.4%.[31] Rates ranged from 11.5% in Solihull to 19.1% in Dudley in 2025.

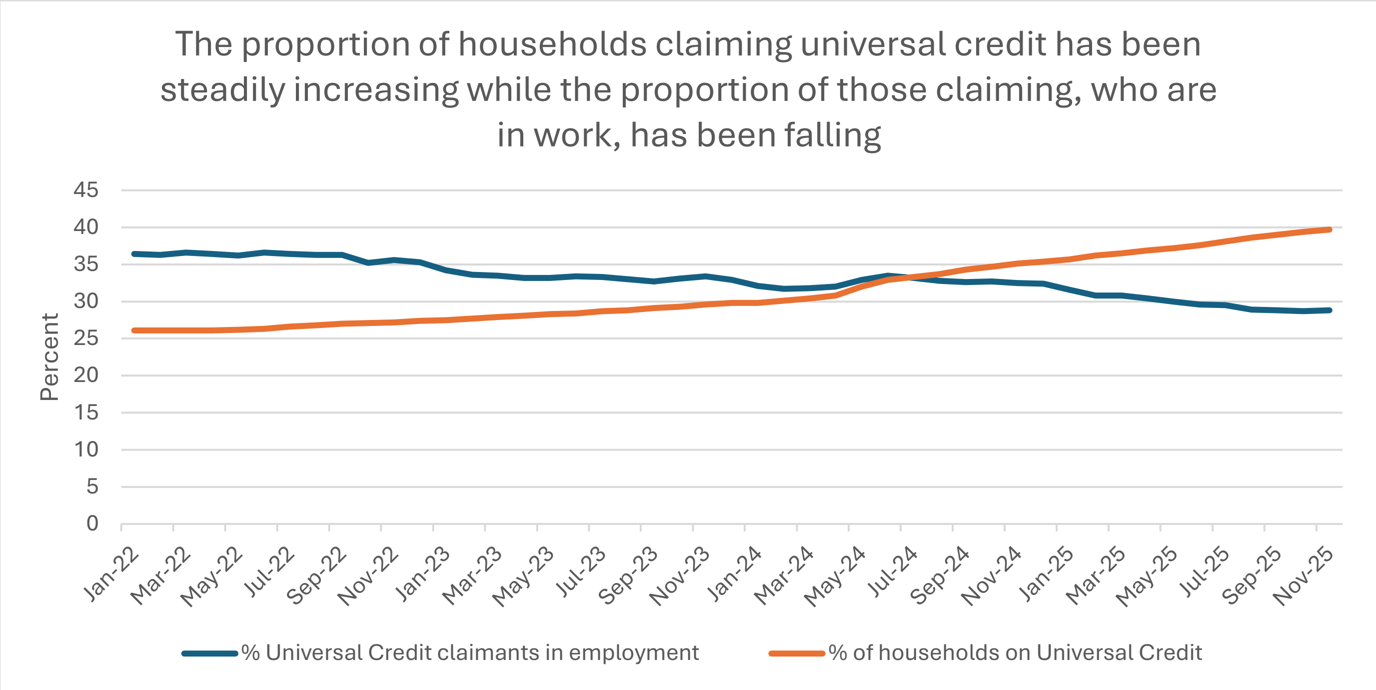
When comparing the proportion of jobs held by men below the real living wage and those held by women, women are more likely to be in low-paid work. In 2025, the proportion of men with jobs below the real living wage was 12.4%; for women it was 18.6%.



The proportion of economically inactive with long-term sickness in the WMCA area has steadily increased since the pandemic. In the year to Q3 2019, the estimate for the proportion of economically inactive with long-term sickness in the WMCA area was 19.4%. By the year to Q3 2025, this estimate had risen to 29.1%. Dudley, Sandwell, and Walsall show the highest increases at 14.5pp, 14.8pp, and 19.9pp, respectively. The trend indicates a persistent rise in individuals declaring a long-term illness across all local authority areas. Over the same period, the number of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claims has also risen. In September 2019, the number of claims stood at 123,437. By September 2025, this had risen to 223,553.[32]

[31] ONS (2025) Number and proportion of employee jobs with hourly pay below the living wage. https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/numberandproportionofemployeejobswithhourlypaybelowthelivingwage

[32] Department for Work and Pensions (2025). Available via LG Inform+, Stat-Xplore.



Over the last four years, the proportion of households in the WMCA area claiming universal credit has risen from 26.1% in January 2022 to 39.7% by November 2025 (latest data).[33] Over the same period, the proportion of claimants in employment has fallen from 36.4% to 28.8%. Taken together, this confirms that a greater proportion and number of people in the WMCA area are on universal credit and out of work.

Graduate and non-graduate roles in employment

The number of people in employment who were graduate roles in 2024 was 1,139,656 (42.1%) while the number of individuals holding employment in non-graduate roles was 1,564,626 (57.8%) in the wider West Midlands region.[34] More non-graduate jobs are found in the West Midlands region which may be due to its high proportion of manufacturing, logistics, construction, and retail industries which offer many non-graduate job opportunities.

There is an apparent difference in the proportion of employment in graduate and non-graduate roles in the West Midlands when compared with London. For example, in 2024, 57.8% of all employment in London is classified as graduate roles, indicating that more than 50% of all employment opportunities in London require degree-level education. Due to the diverse range of job opportunities available in London (including those in the finance sector, professional services, technology, and creative industries) there exists a significant demand for degree-level qualified employees.

The graduate employment rates in the West Midlands and London clearly show the distinctive regional variations in graduate labour market opportunities. Therefore, graduates in the West Midlands may face limitations on securing graduate level employment in their local area and may have to search for graduate level employment in other regions.

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[33] Department for Work and Pensions (2025). Available via LG Inform+, Stat-Xplore.

[34] Office for National Statistics (2025) Graduates and non-graduates employed in graduate and non-graduate roles by UK region, 2024. https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/adhocs/3187graduatesandnongraduatesemployedingraduateandnongraduaterolesbyukregion2024

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap measures the difference between median hourly earnings (excluding overtime) for men and women, expressed as a percentage of men's earnings. It reflects pay across all jobs, not differences for the same role.

Work geography refers to people working in an area, regardless of where they live.

In April 2025, the gender pay gap among full-time employees working in the WMCA was estimated to be 8.6% (up from 5.6% in 2024), while for all employees it was estimated to be 13.2% (up from 12.3% in 2024)[35]. For part-time employees, the gap was estimated to be -3.1%, meaning women earned more than men in part-time roles (previously -5.2% in 2024). The gap is higher for all employees because more women work part-time. The WMCA has a similar pay gap to nationally.

	Median pay gap	
	WMCA	**England**
All	13.2	13.5
Full-time	8.6	7.7
Part-time	-3.1	-2.4

Home geography covers people living in an area, regardless of where they work. Here, the gender pay gap is smaller, an estimated 12.1% for all employees (up from 9.5% in 2024), an estimated 5.7% for full-time (up from 5.5% in 2024), and an estimated 0.0% for part-time (previously -4.5% in 2024).

	Median pay gap	
	WMCA	**England**
All	12.1	13.3
Full-time	5.7	7.6
Part-time	0.0	-2.4

Work geography shows a higher gender pay gap for full-time and all employees, while home geography is lower overall and part-time pay is closer to parity. This indicates residents living within the WMCA area experience less disparity than people who work within the WMCA area.

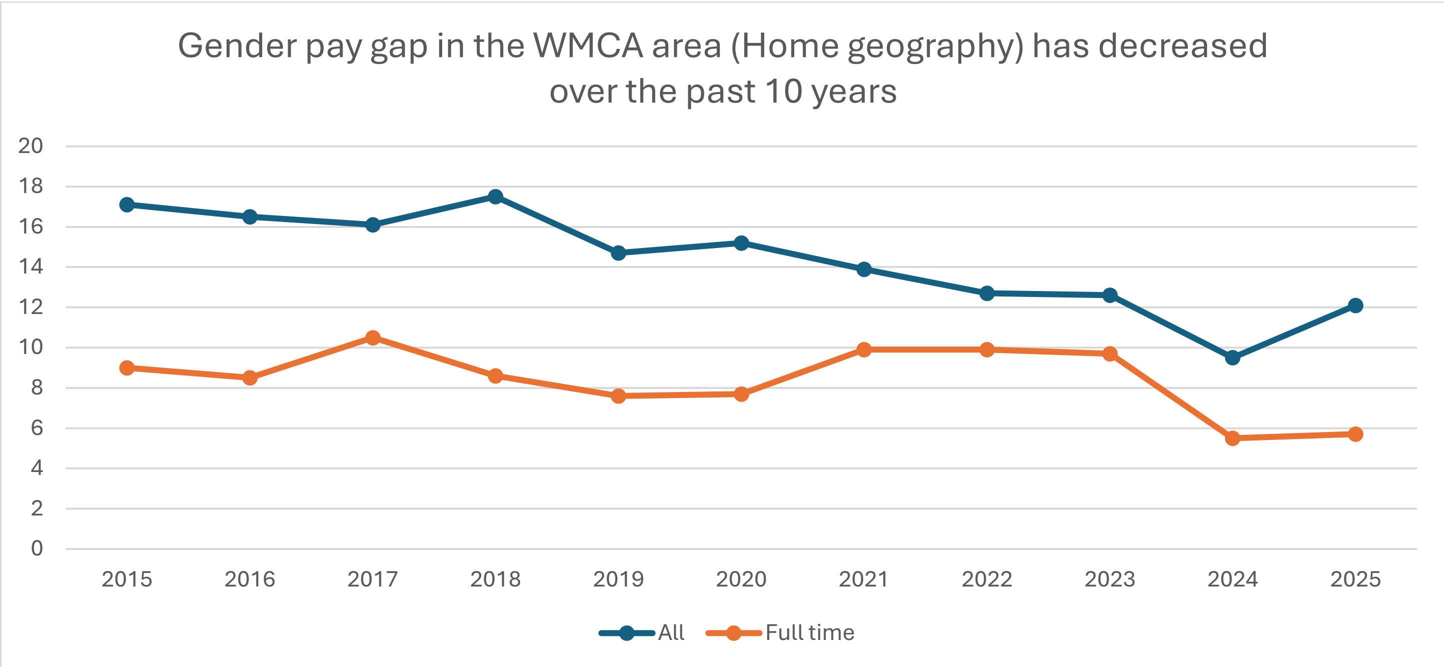
Median pay gap (Home geography)		
	All	**Full-time**
WMCA	12.1	5.7
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	10.0	6.9
West Yorkshire Combined Authority	10.6	6.2
Liverpool City Region	13.9	5.8

[35] Office for National Statistics (2025) Gender pay gap in the UK. https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/genderpaygapintheuk/2025

When comparing the WMCA area to other similar comparator strategic authorities the WMCA has a smaller gender pay gap for full-time employees than Greater Manchester Combined authority, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Liverpool City Region.

However, when considering all employees the WMCA has a greater gender pay gap than Greater Manchester Combined Authority and West Yorkshire Combined Authority, but a smaller gender pay gap than Liverpool City Region.

The gender pay gap in the WMCA area has generally declined over the past decade for both all employees and full-time employees, within their home geography, with some fluctuations. For all employees, the gap fell from 17.1% in 2015 to 12.1% in 2025, with a notable drop to 9.5% in 2024, the lowest in ten years. For full-time employees, the gender pay gap decreased from 9.0% in 2015 to 5.7% in 2025, again reaching its lowest level in 2024 at 5.5%. While the gender pay gap for all and full-time employees show long-term improvement, the reduction for full-time employees has been more pronounced and consistent since 2018, whereas the gender pay gap for all employees saw more pronounced variations, particularly between 2018 and 2024; with a recent rise in 2025.



What can and is being done?

A shift is underway towards a more integrated, place-based approach to supporting residents into work. Programmes such as the Youth Plan, Youth Trailblazer and Connect to Work are combining employer engagement with targeted support for young people, particularly those facing multiple and overlapping barriers. In 2025, the West Midlands Works[36] strategy set out a clear roadmap to support 93,000 residents into employment over the next decade, bringing together employment, health and wider support services into a more coordinated system. A central focus of this approach is to support people with health conditions and disabilities into sustained work, ensuring that all residents who want to work are able to do so.

[36] West Midlands Works https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/employment-and-skills/west-midlands-works/

Alongside this, there is a growing emphasis on providing earlier and more holistic support to help sustain participation in education and employment. Initiatives such as Thrive at College and the Social Innovation Pilot are embedding mental health, physical wellbeing and engagement activities into skills provision. These programmes recognise that barriers to work often sit beyond the labour market itself and aim to support young people in a more joined-up way—particularly those at risk of becoming disconnected from education or employment.

In key sectors, more coordinated pipelines of support are being developed to better align skills provision with labour market demand. For example, the Construction Sector Skills Plan links training directly to industry needs, with initiatives such as teacher–industry exchanges, student placements and employer-led academies. This ensures that workforce development keeps pace with major infrastructure and housing activity, while creating clearer routes into employment.

At a system level, the region is also strengthening coordination across partners to address long-standing fragmentation. Taskforces focused on youth transitions and higher-level skills are helping to align education, employment and employer demand, improving progression pathways into work. Taken together, these developments signal a move away from isolated interventions towards a more integrated, system-wide model of support that better reflects the complexity of the challenges many residents face.

Affordable and safe places

Why is this important?

Affordable and safe places is about everyone having decent homes that they can afford, neighbourhoods where they feel secure, and feel a sense of belonging in the place that they live.

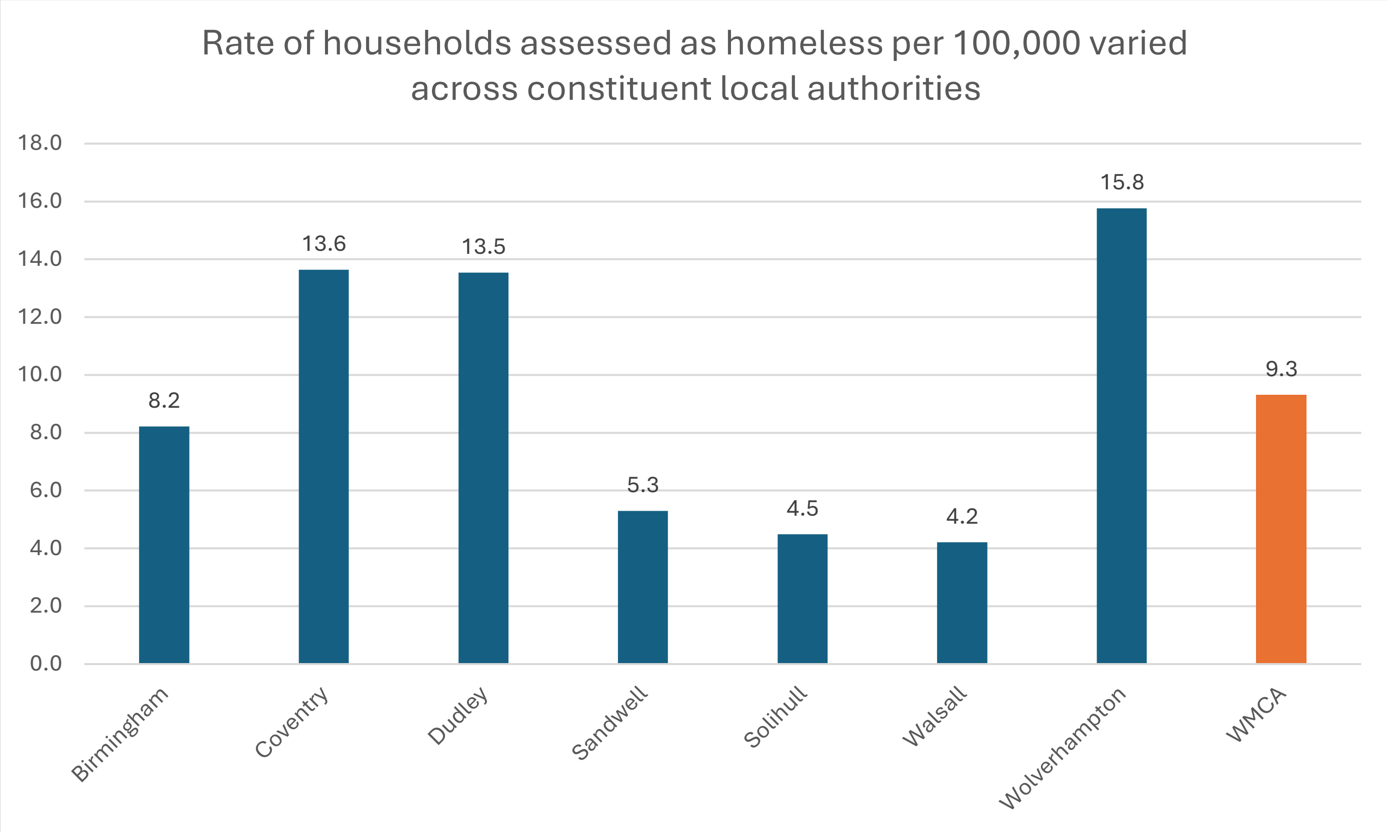
What are the current conditions?

Homelessness, rough sleeping and temporary accommodation

The consequences of economic insecurity extend beyond income and are closely tied to the ability to fully participate in society and have basic needs such as housing being met.

21,915 households in the WMCA area approached local authorities for homelessness support and 81% were owed a duty between April 2024 and March 2025.[37] 17,744 households were owed a statutory homeless duty. Of this, 6,773 (38%) were owed a prevention duty and 10,971 (62%) were owed a relief duty. This means, in the WMCA area, 9.3 households per 100,000 were assessed as being homeless and owed a homeless duty. However, this varied from 4.2 per 100,000 in Walsall to 15.8 in Wolverhampton.

[37] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2026) Tables on homelessness. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness



846 households were homeless due to being served a Section 21 notice, between April 2024 and March 2025. Error! Bookmark not defined.

5,082 households were assessed as homeless; priority need and unintentionally homeless, meaning the local authority had a duty to secure accommodation (a 'main' duty), between April 2024 and March 2025. Error! Bookmark not defined.

Of the households owed a prevention duty, most were homeless due to the ending of Assured Shorthold Tenancy (29%), family or friends no longer able or willing to accommodate (24%) and eviction from supported housing (9%), between April 2024 and March 2025. Error! Bookmark not defined. Of the households owed a relief duty, most were homeless due to family or friends no longer able or willing to accommodate (31%), Domestic Abuse (14%), and the ending of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (13%), between April 2024 and March 2025.

150 households in the WMCA area were homeless due to their home no longer being suitable due to disability or ill health, between April 2024 and March 2025. Error! Bookmark not defined.

50% of households owed a statutory homeless duty had a main applicant that was registered unemployed, higher than the national figure of 36%. Error! Bookmark not defined. 9% were in full-time work and 8% were in part-time work, in the WMCA area.

Private Rented Sector (PRS), living with family, or in the Social Rented Sector (SRS) were the most common types of accommodation at the time of making a homeless application, between April 2024 and March 2025. Of the households owed a prevention duty 38% were in the Private Rented Sector, 22% living with family and 20% in the Social Rented sector. Of the households owed a relief duty, 27% were living with family, 17% were in the Private rented sector and 12% in the Social Rented sector.

The most common household composition of households owed a homelessness duty was single adults with no dependent children, between April 2024 and March 2025. **Error! Bookmark not defined.** Single adult households made up 58% of households owed a statutory homeless duty,

56% of households owed a prevention duty secured accommodation at the end of their duty and 29% of households owed a relief duty secured accommodation at the end of their duty, between April 2024 and March 2025. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

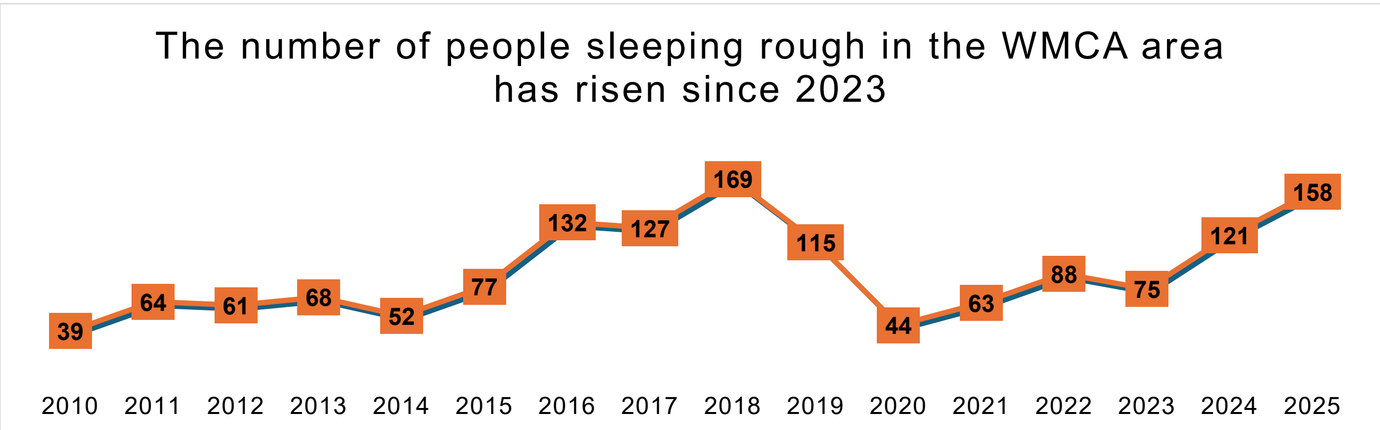
Of the households owed a statutory homeless duty 42% of main applicants were of a White ethnicity, 18% of main applicants were of a Black ethnicity, 14% of main applicants were of an Asian ethnicity, 6% main applicants were of a Mixed ethnicity, 7% of main applicants were of an Other ethnicity and 13% had an unknown ethnicity.**Error! Bookmark not defined.** The following ethnic groups have the greatest proportion of applicants owed a homeless duty; White British (37%), Black African (11%) and Pakistani (6%).

As of 30th September 2025, there were 7,383 households in Temporary Accommodation in the WMCA area, including 6,449 households with children, which equates to approximately 15,350 children in TA.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Of the households in temporary accommodation over a third (38%) were placed in Local authority or Housing association stock (2,836 households), 17% were in nightly paid, privately managed accommodation (1,257 households), 14% B&B hotels (including shared annexes) (1,012 households, 9% were in private sector accommodation, 7% were in hostels (539 households) and 15% (1,018 households) any other type of accommodation.

Approximately 4,532 households with children were in Temporary Accommodation for 6 months or longer (70% of all households with children in Temporary Accommodation).

Of the households in Temporary Accommodation, 22% had a main applicant of a White ethnicity, 28% had a main applicant of a Black ethnicity, 20% had a main applicant of an Asian ethnicity, 5% had a main applicant of a Mixed ethnicity, 14% had a main applicant of an Other ethnicity and 12% had an unknown ethnicity.



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There are an estimated 158 people sleeping rough on a single night in autumn 2025 in the WMCA area, a 31% increase from 121 seen in 2024. [38] Meanwhile Greater Manchester Combined Authority saw a 28% increase from 154 in 2024 to 197 in 2025, West Yorkshire Combined Authority saw a 13% decrease from 162 to 141, and Liverpool City Region saw a 16% increase from 83 in 2024 to 96 in 2025.

This equates to a rate of 5.1 people rough sleeping per 100,000 population, lower than the wider West Midlands region (6.1 people per 100,000) and England (8.2 people per 100,000).

	Rate of people sleeping rough per 100,000 population (2025)
Birmingham	5.7
Coventry	7.9
Dudley	2.1
Sandwell	3.4
Solihull	8.6
Walsall	3.4
Wolverhampton	4.6
WMCA	**5.1**

In 2025, the rate of people sleeping rough in the WMCA area was highest in Solihull at 8.6 people per 100,000 and the lowest in Dudley at 2.1 people per 100,000.

What can and is being done?

Local authorities retain statutory responsibility for preventing and relieving homelessness, while the WMCA provides strategic leadership at a regional level. This is delivered through the Homelessness Taskforce, which brings together partners from across housing, health, and the voluntary sector to coordinate action and support local responses. The Taskforce's overarching ambition is to “design out” homelessness in all its forms by promoting long-term inclusion and stability.

In recent years, activity has focused on responding to rising pressures, including increases in rough sleeping, temporary accommodation, and more complex needs among households. Alongside addressing immediate challenges, the region has placed greater emphasis on prevention, earlier intervention, and improving outcomes for groups most affected by homelessness, including children and families. This reflects a shift towards a more proactive and system-wide approach.

[38] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) Rough sleeping snapshot. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2025/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2025

Looking ahead, the WMCA will continue to strengthen collaboration across partners to improve how the system functions cohesively. This includes supporting innovation, sharing best practice, building skills and capacity, and aligning services more effectively across organisations. By taking a more coordinated and integrated approach, the region aims to prevent homelessness earlier, improve support for those affected, and create more sustainable pathways out of housing insecurity.

Health and wellbeing

Why is this important?

Health and wellbeing are about people living longer, healthier, and happier lives, regardless of their social circumstances, which has often placed a limit on their prospects for a healthy life.

Health is more than the healthcare system: it is not just about NHS hospitals, doctors, or nurses. Health is about people's lives. People's health is often determined by their social and economic circumstances, such as their communities – access to a good network of family and friends; prospects – access to good jobs and education; housing and environment – living in a good neighbourhood and with access to good quality green spaces; and a safe community in which people are protected from crime and anti-social behaviours.

What are the current conditions?

Life expectancy

The latest statistics suggest that life expectancy in the WMCA area has increased. For females, life expectancy stands at 82 years and 77.6 years for males, both slightly above and aligned with their respective pre-pandemic baseline.[39]

	2018-20		**2020-22**		**2022-24**	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
WMCA	81.9	77.6	81.4	76.9	82	77.6
England	83.1	79.3	82.8	78.9	83.3	79.5

WMCA area continues to sit below the England average by 1.3 years for females and 1.9 years for males highlighting the need to sustain long-term improvement.

39 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/lifeexpectancies/bulletins/nationallifetablesunitedkingdom/2022to2024

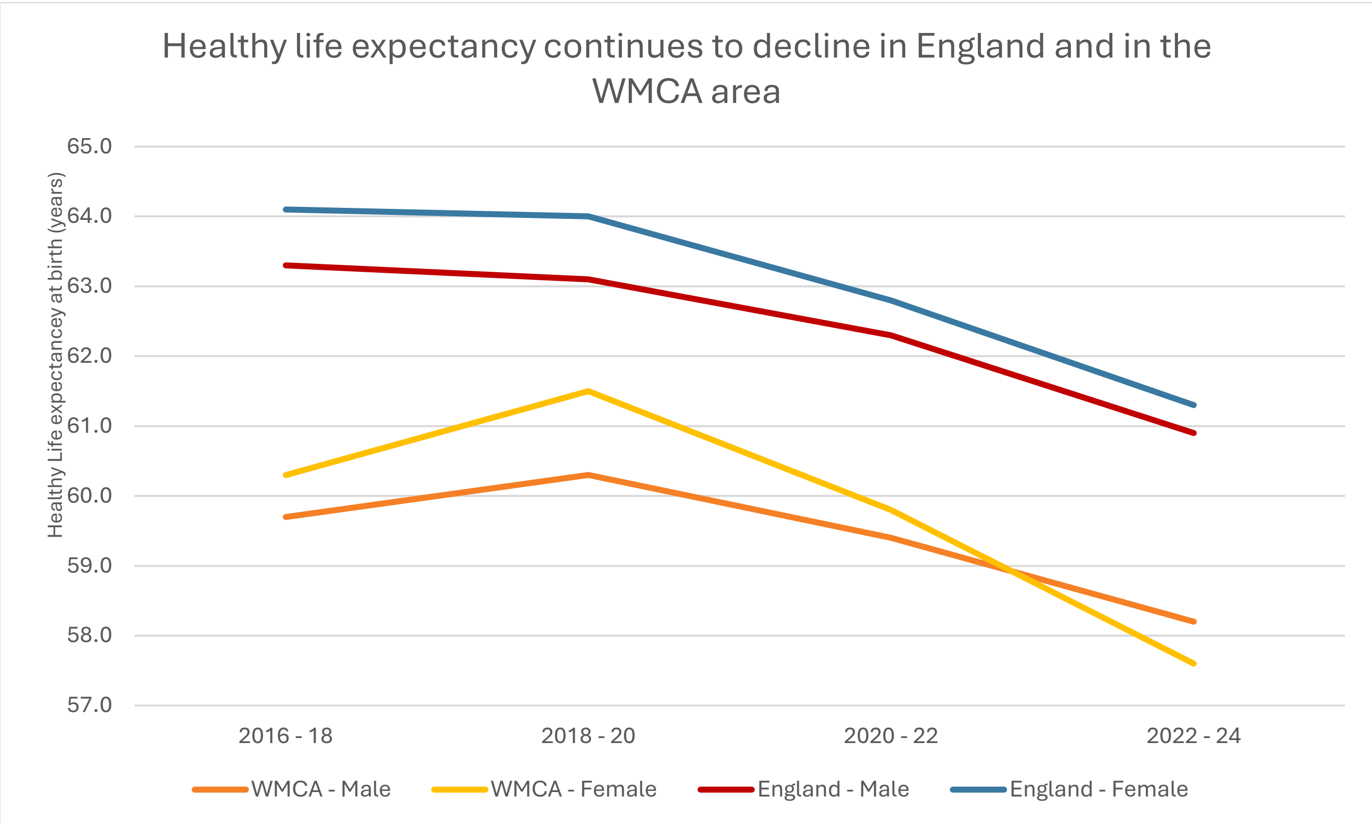
However, the gender gap in life expectancy remains consistent with national patterns. Women in the WMCA area live on average 4.4 years longer than men, a figure that has remained broadly stable over time and closely mirrors the national trend.

Across the seven constituent local authorities, differences remain pronounced. Solihull continues to lead the region and exceeds the England average for both males and females, while Sandwell records the lowest life expectancy. The gap between the highest and lowest local authority is 3.5 years for males and 3.1 years for females, underlining how where someone lives within the WMCA area can be as consequential to health outcomes as wider determinants.

When set against comparable Combined Authority areas, the WMCA performs competitively. It sits marginally above GMCA (81.6 yrs for women; 77.5 yrs for men) and Liverpool City Region (81.2 yrs; 77.4 yrs) and is broadly in line with West Yorkshire (82.1 yrs; 78.0 yrs).

Healthy life expectancy

Healthy life expectancy (HLE) measures the average amount of time a person can expect to live in "very good" or "good" general health[40].

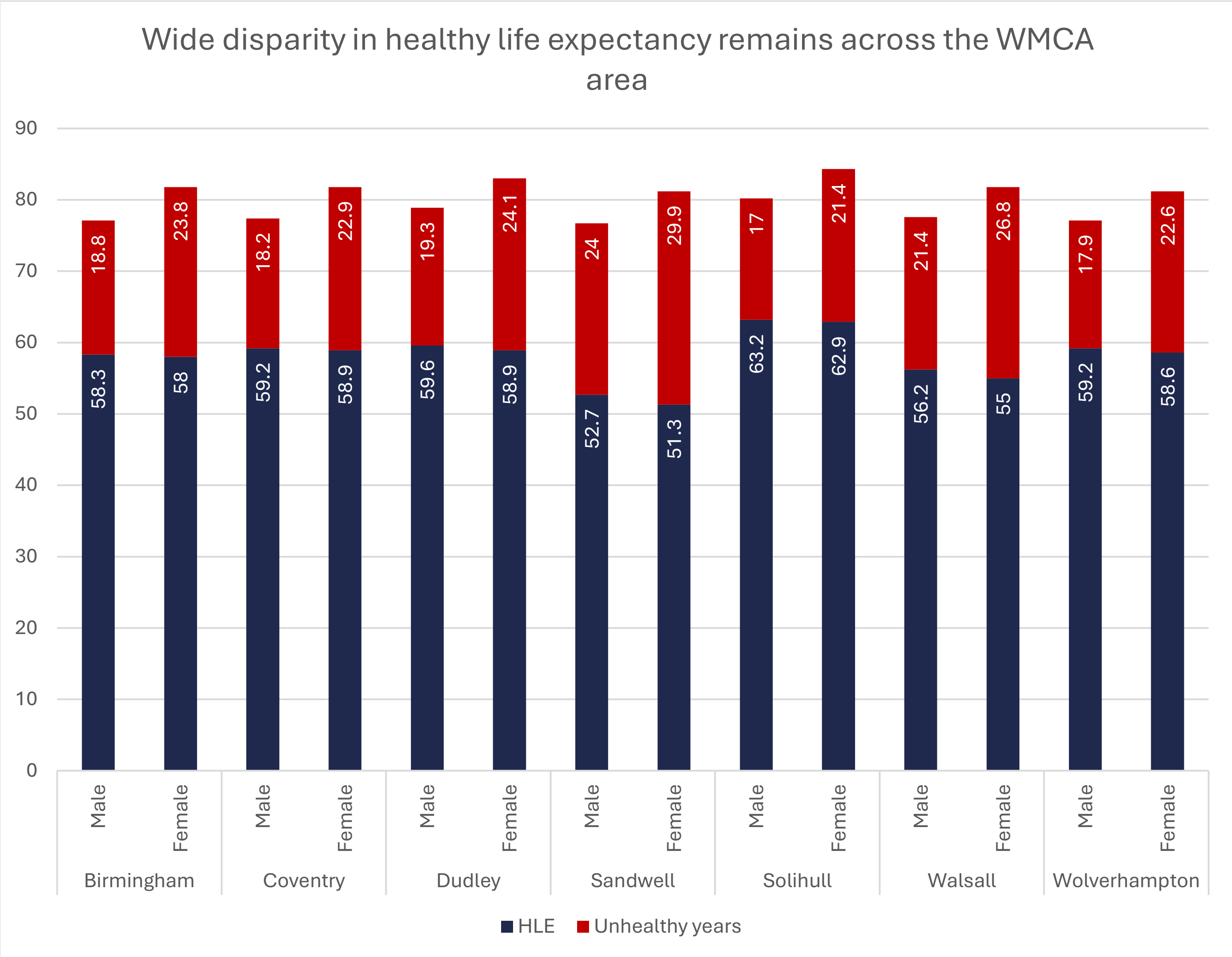


While life expectancy in the WMCA area has increased, healthy life expectancy tells a more complex story. Between 2018–2020 and 2022–2024, HLE in the WMCA area has declined by 3.9 years for females (from 61.5 to 57.6 years) and by 2.1 years for males (from 60.3 to 58.2 years). Meaning that even as people in the region are living as long as they were before the pandemic, they are still spending a greater proportion of those years in poor health. In 2022–2024, females in

[40] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/methodologies/healthylifeexpectancyqualityandmethodsguide

the WMCA area can expect around 24.4 years of their life to be lived with limiting illness or disability; for males, that figure is 19.4 years - both above the national average[41].

Against similar Combined Authority areas, the WMCA performs relatively well. For males, the WMCA area (58.2 years) is joint highest alongside West Yorkshire and ahead of both GMCA (57.0) and Liverpool City Region (56.9). For females, the picture is closer, the WMCA (57.6 years) is level with Liverpool City Region and is lower than GMCA (57.9) and West Yorkshire (58.6), with all areas sitting below the England average of 61.3 years.



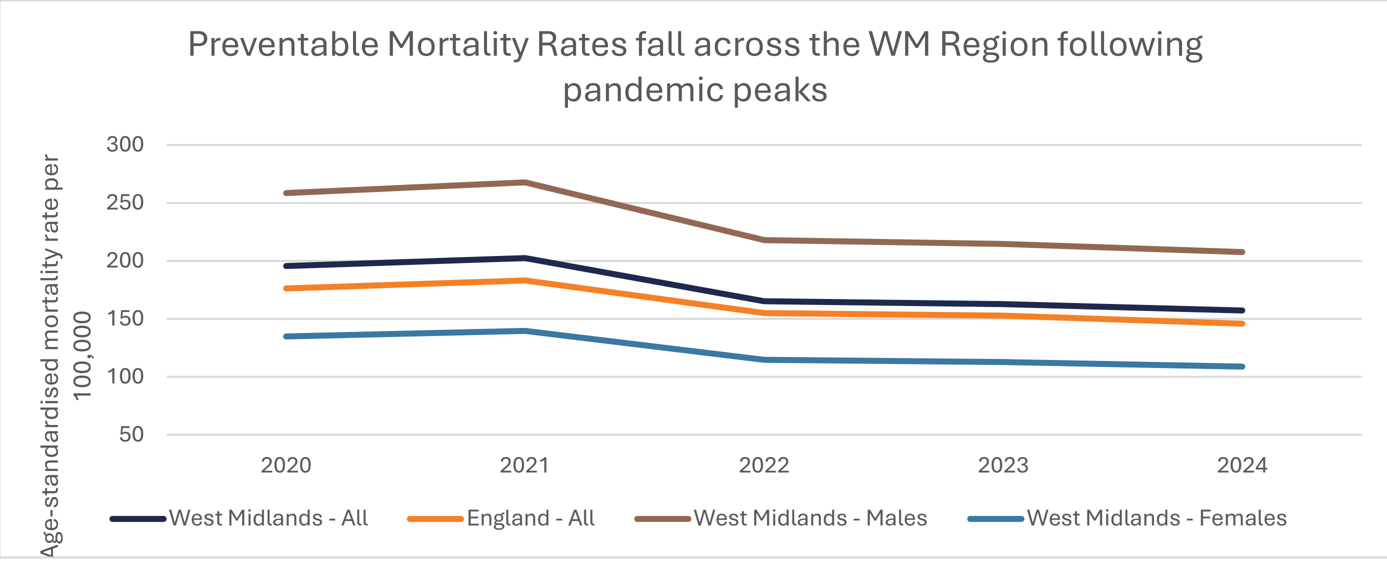
The chart illustrates how years in good health and years in poor health are distributed for both males and females, across the seven constituent LAs, as of 2022-24. Solihull continues to record the highest HLE in the region 62.9 years for females and 63.2 years for males. The gap between the highest and lowest HLE across the region is 11.6 years for females and 10.5 years for males, a stark illustration of health inequality within the WMCA area.

[41] Office for National Statistics (2026) *Healthy life expectancy, UK: between 2011 to 2013 and 2022 to 2024*. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/healthstatelifeexpectanciesuk/between2011to2013and2022to2024 (Accessed: 9th March 2026).

Mortality from causes considered preventable

ONS refers to preventable mortality as the deaths among 75 and under that could potentially have been avoided through effective public health interventions - such as action on smoking, obesity, alcohol, or wider socioeconomic conditions. Indicating how well a population's health is being addressed through primary prevention interventions.

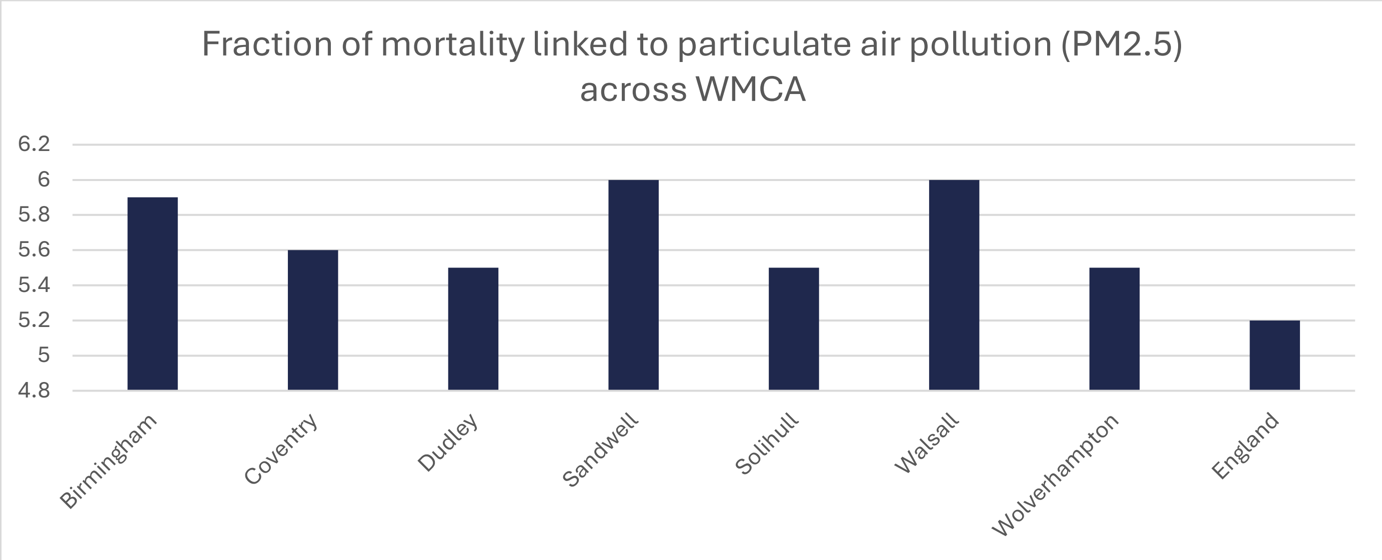
Continuing the positive trend in the region's health outcomes, the rate of mortality from causes considered preventable has fallen significantly from its pandemic peak. In the wider West Midlands region, the rate stood at 157.2 per 100,000 people in 2024, down from 195.5 at its 2020 peak, a reduction of 38 points in three years. The gender breakdown reveals a significant disparity. In 2024, the preventable mortality rate for males in the West Midlands stood at 207.6 per 100,000 nearly double the female rate of 108.8. Though all the numbers are still above the national average in their respective areas[42].



Mortality attributable to particulate air pollution

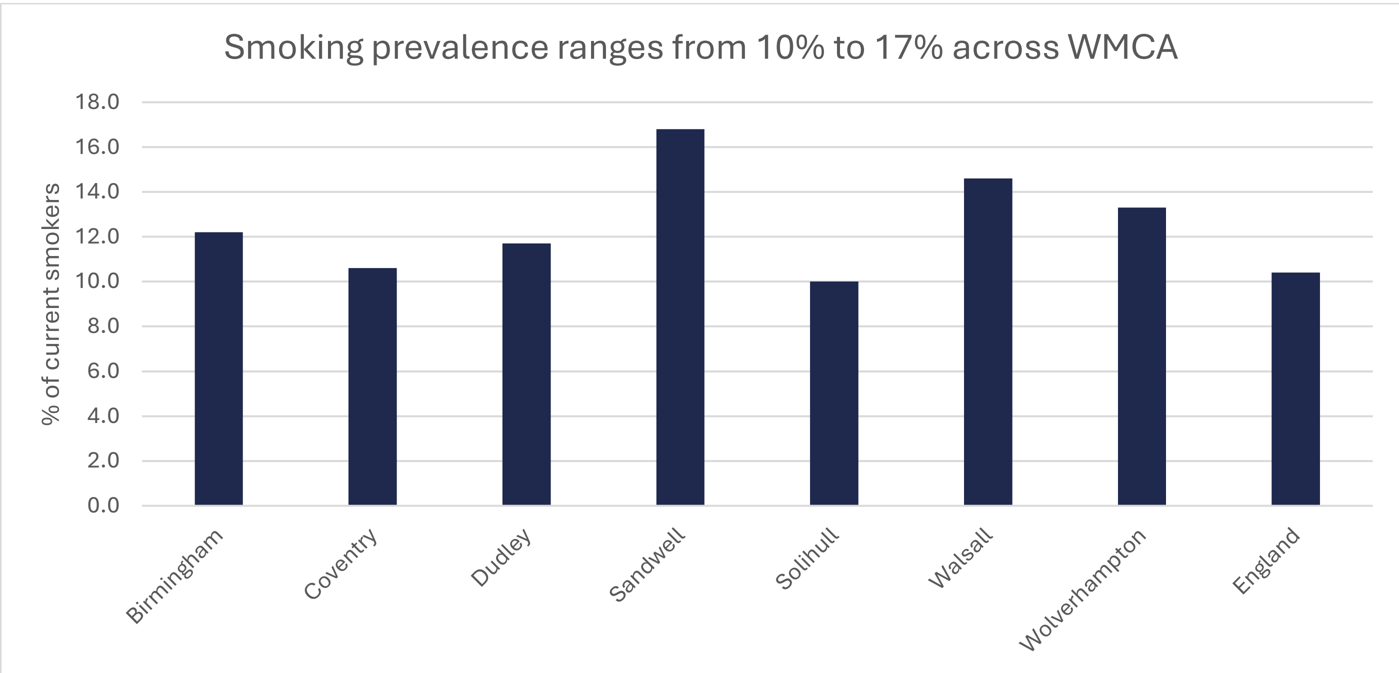
As the region continues its push toward cleaner air and lower emissions, a clear sign of progress is the decline in deaths linked to air pollution. The fraction of mortality attributable to particulate matter across the WMCA area has fallen from 7.4% in 2018 to 5.7% in 2024 - a reduction of 1.7 percentage points over six years. Every local authority has seen improvement during this period, reflecting a sustained and region-wide shift. Coventry has achieved the greatest reduction, with the fraction falling by 2.0 percentage points, followed closely by Sandwell at 1.9 percentage points[43].

[42] Office for National Statistics (2026) *Avoidable mortality in England and Wales: 2024*. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/bulletins/avoidablemortalityinenglandandwales/2024 (Accessed: March 2026).
[43] Birmingham City Observatory. Fraction of mortality attributable to particulate air pollution (new method) - WMCA. https://cityobservatory.birmingham.gov.uk/explore/dataset/fraction-of-mortality-attributable-to-particulate-air-pollution-new-method-wmca/ (Accessed: 9 March 2026).



Smoking rates

Smoking rates across the WMCA area have followed a broadly downward trajectory over the past decade. The WMCA area's mean rate of current smokers has fallen from 14.6% in 2019 to 12.7% in 2024. Solihull records the lowest rate in the region at 10.0%, followed closely by Coventry at 10.6% - both approaching the England average of 10.4%[44]. Notably the gap between WMCA area and England has widened slightly from 0.7 percentage points in 2019 to 2.3 points in 2024, suggesting that smoking prevalence has declined more quickly across England overall.



Across local authorities, six of the seven have seen reductions since 2019. Sandwell is the exception, with its rate rising from 15.3% to 16.8% - the highest in the region. Looking at the gender breakdown for 2024, smoking rates among males are higher than females across most of the region with Dudley a notable exception, where the female rate (12.4%) exceeds the male rate

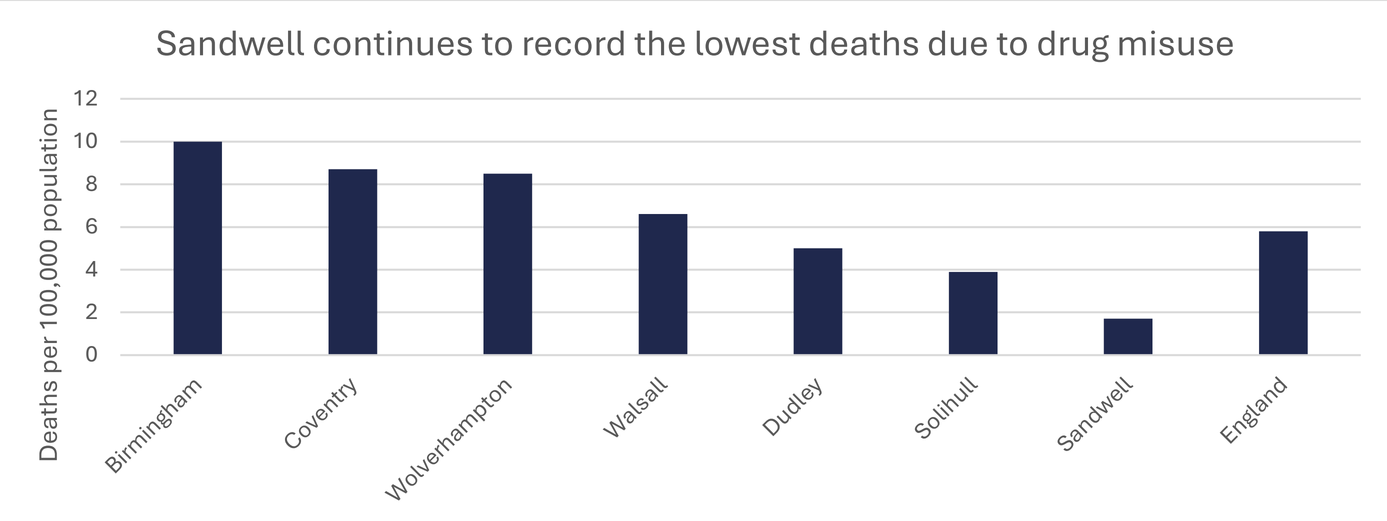
[44] Office for National Statistics (2025) *Adult smoking habits in the UK: 2024*. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/adultsmokinghabitsingreatbritain/2024 (Accessed: 9 March 2026).

(11.0%). A particularly large gender gap is observed in Birmingham, where 16.3% of males are current smokers compared to 8.0% of females.

While tobacco smoking continues its decline, e-cigarette use is moving in the opposite direction - and at pace. Nationally, the proportion of e-cigarette users has more than doubled, rising from 6.6% in 2020 to 15.3% in 2024. The increase is particularly concentrated among men aged 35-49 and women aged 25-34. Adding a further dimension to this trend is the growing number of people who have moved away from tobacco entirely in favour of vaping. The proportion of ex-smokers who are now daily e-cigarette users has risen from 9.7% in 2020 to 17.3% in 2024 raising longer-term questions about the health implications of sustained e-cigarette use[45].

Drug usage and deaths due to drug misuse

Latest data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales indicates that approximately 8.7% of adults aged 16 to 59 (approximately 2.9 million people) reported using drugs in the year ending March 2025. More concerning is the spike in frequent drug use among young people for those aged 16 to 24 the figure rose from 2.5% to 3.5% in just twelve months to March 2025[46]. In England, there were 9,697 deaths attributable to drug misuse in 2022–2024, of which 6.3% (614) occurred within the WMCA area. Across the seven LAs, Birmingham faces the most acute challenge, recording a rate of 10.0 deaths per 100,000. This is 1.7 times the national average and accounts for more than half of all drug misuse deaths in the WMCA[47].

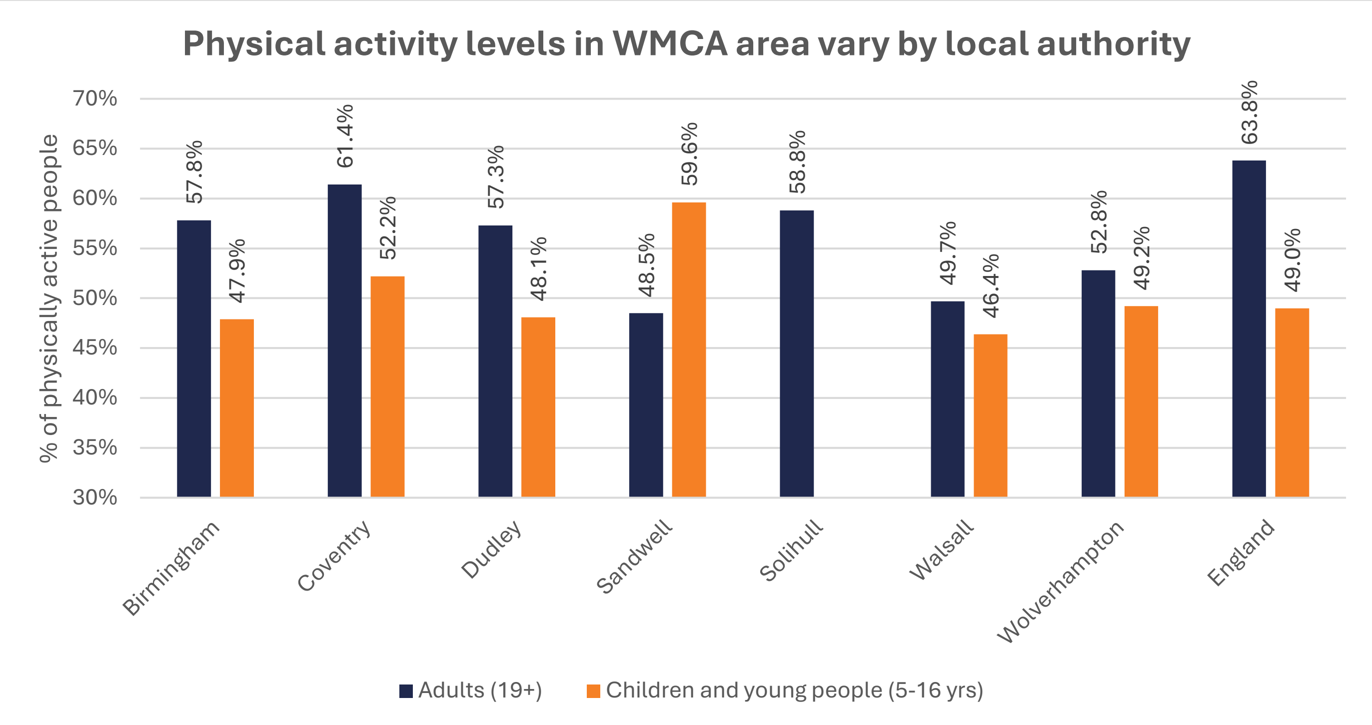


Physical activity

Physical activity levels among adults in the WMCA area have remained flat over recent years having 55.2% in 2024, virtually unchanged from 55.3% in 2019. While England's rate has edged up to 63.8%, leaving a gap of 8.6 percentage points. Across local authorities, Coventry has seen

[45] Office for National Statistics (2024) *E-cigarette use in England*. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/datasets/ecigaretteuseinengland (Accessed: 9 March 2026).
[46] Office for National Statistics (2025) *Drug misuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2025*. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/drugmisuseinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2025 (Accessed: 9 March 2026).
[47] Local Government Association (2024). Deaths from drug misuse per 100,000 population (12070). Powered by LG Inform Plus. http://id.esd.org.uk/metricType/12070 (Accessed: 9 March 2026).

the most notable improvement, rising 7.3 percentage points since 2019 to 61.4%[48]. For children and young people, the picture is more encouraging. The WMCA's mean reached 50.6% in 2024/25 marginally above the England figure of 49.0%. Sandwell stands out with 59.6% of children and young people meeting activity levels, well above both the regional and national averages[49]. However, Obesity rates among children in reception year remains a concern. 12.0% of reception-age children in the WMCA area were recorded as obese, with the England average at 10.5%[50].



Life satisfaction and anxiety

LA level personal wellbeing data from the ONS remains paused pending improvements to the Annual Population Survey. The most recent available figures covering April 2022 to March 2023 show 94.8% of WMCA residents reporting medium or high life satisfaction, while 22% experience high levels of daily anxiety, slightly below the England average of 23.4%[51].

Access to GP services

Across the WMCA area, there are 481 GP surgeries in total, at a rate of 15.84 per 100,000 people. Walsall (17.92) and Wolverhampton (17.42) have the highest rates of GP provision while Dudley (12.95) and Solihull (14.01) sit at the lower end. WMCA leads on GP provision when set against similar CA areas: at 15.84 surgeries per 100,000 people, the WMCA area is ahead of Liverpool

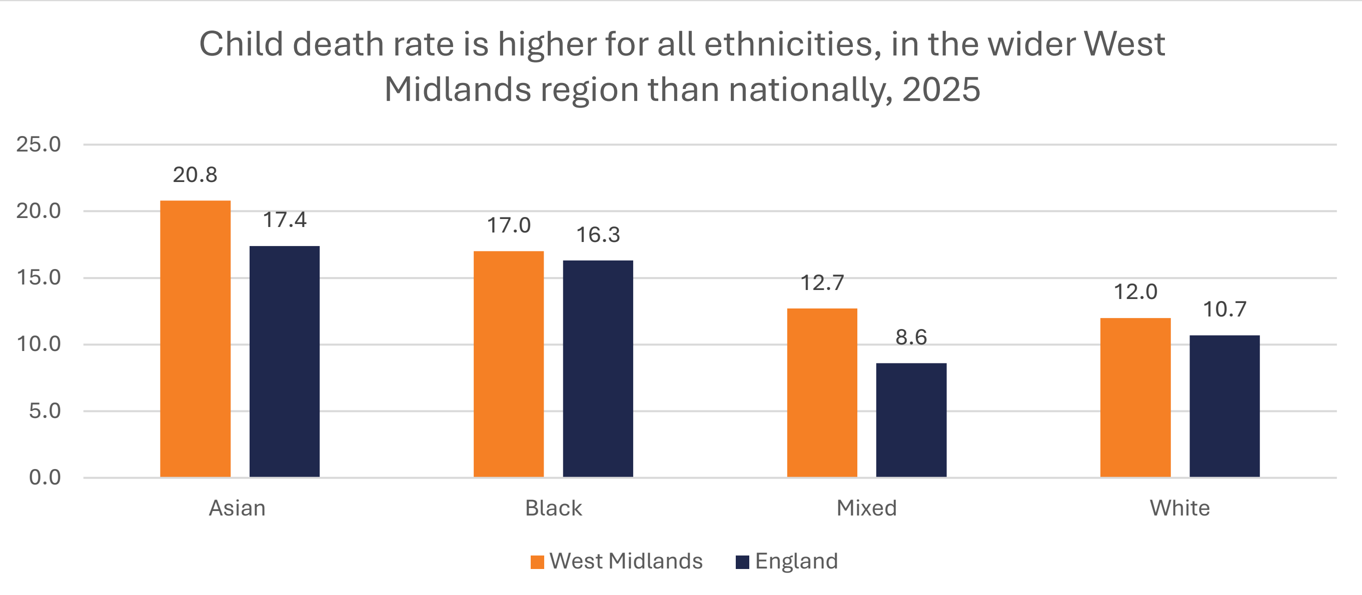
48 Birmingham City Observatory. Percentage of adults who are active - WMCA. https://cityobservatory.birmingham.gov.uk/explore/dataset/percentage-of-adults-who-are-active-wmca/ (Accessed: 9 March 2026).
49 Birmingham City Observatory. Percentage of physically active children and young people - WMCA. https://cityobservatory.birmingham.gov.uk/explore/dataset/percentage-of-physically-active-children-and-young-people-wmca/ (Accessed: 9 March 2026).
50 Birmingham City Observatory. Percentage Obese in reception year - WMCA. https://cityobservatory.birmingham.gov.uk/explore/dataset/percentage-obese-in-reception-year-wmca/ (Accessed: 9 March 2026).
51 Office for National Statistics (2023) *Personal well-being in the UK: April 2022 to March 2023*. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/bulletins/measuringnationalwellbeing/april2022tomarch2023 (Accessed: 9 March 2026).

City Region (15.68), Greater Manchester (15.02), and West Yorkshire (14.13).[52] However, the number of surgeries alone do not fully reflect access, workforce capacity or appointment availability.

Infant mortality

Infant mortality—the death of a child within the first year of life—is a key indicator of population health, reflecting the conditions into which children are born, as well as levels of deprivation and wider social determinants. Across the WMCA area, six of the seven constituent authorities report infant mortality rates above the England average of 3.9 deaths per 1,000 live births. Birmingham has the highest rate in the region at 8.7 per 1,000 live births—more than double the national figure. In contrast, Solihull is the only local authority with a rate below the England average, at 3.4 per 1,000 live births. These disparities reflect wider inequalities in child health across the region.[53]

The estimated child death rate in the wider West Midlands is higher than the national average across all ethnic groups. The highest rate is observed among children of Asian ethnicity, at 20.8 deaths per 100,000 population of the same ethnicity in the region.



Suicide rates

Across the West Midlands, the age-standardised suicide rate stood at 9.8 per 100,000 people in 2022–24, a slight increase from 9.3 in 2020–22. Suicide rates vary across the region's local authorities, ranging from 8.2 in Walsall to 11.8 in Coventry.[54]

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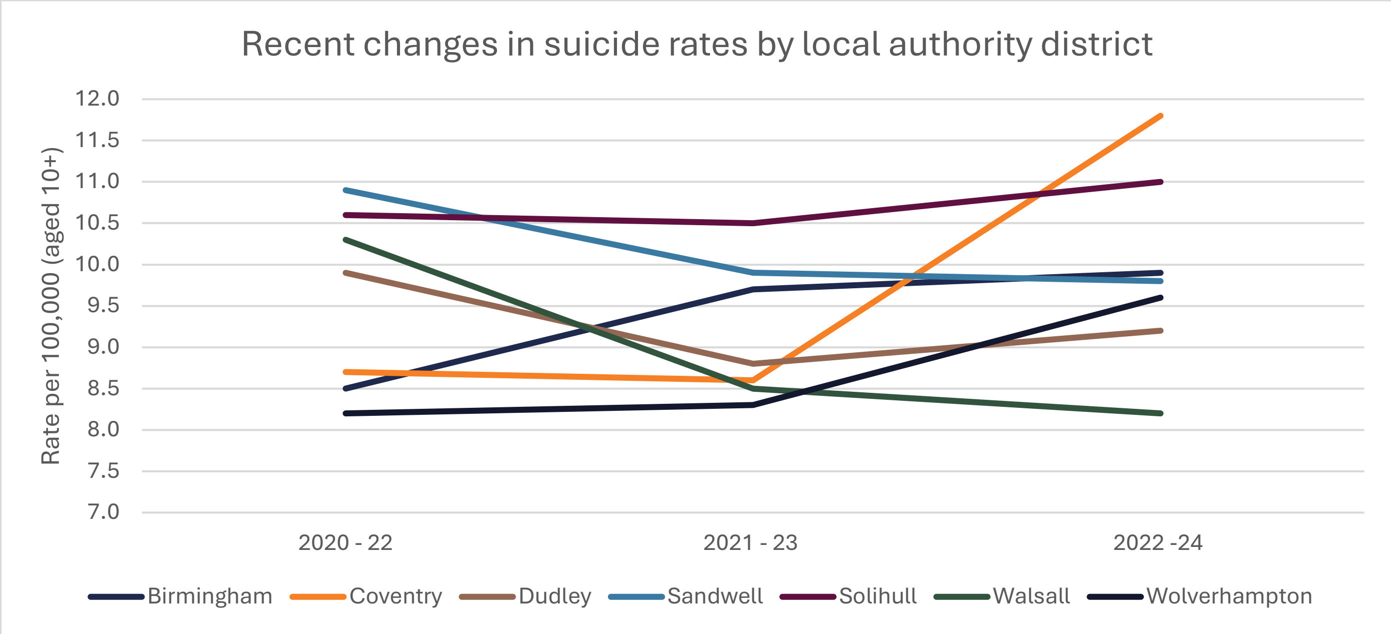
[52] Local Government Association (2024). Number of GP surgeries (27569). Powered by LG Inform Plus. http://id.esd.org.uk/metricType/99 (Accessed: 9 March 2026).

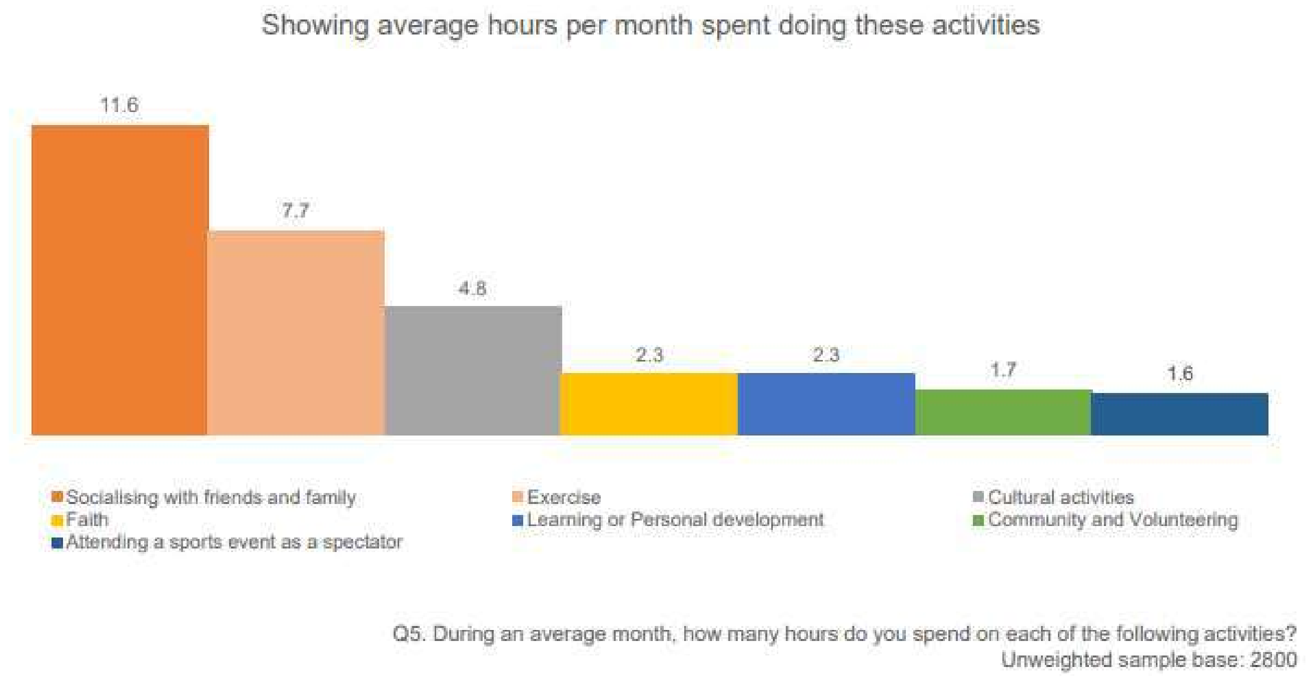
[53] Local Government Association (2024). Infant mortality per 1,000 live births (99). Powered by LG Inform Plus. http://id.esd.org.uk/metricType/12070 (Accessed: 9 March 2026).

[54] Local Government Association (2024). Suicide rate per 100,000 population aged 10 and over (12156). Powered by LG Inform Plus. http://id.esd.org.uk/metricType/12156 (Accessed: 9 March 2026).



Health and wellbeing outcomes are closely tied to how connected and supported people feel in their daily lives, with isolation and social connections playing an important role in residents health and wellbeing. Just under two thirds (65%) of respondents to the WMCA household survey reported feeling positive about their social life, while just over one in ten (11%) feeling negative. With residents saying, "It gives me joy to connect with my family, so I feel confident and positive" and "I feel positive about my social life as I have strong connections with family, friends and my community."

In terms of how residents spend their social time, the greatest number of hours was spent socialising with family and friends, with on average 11.6 hours per month. Exercise and cultural activities were also important to how residents spend their time. With residents spending 7.7 hours on average per month exercising and 4.8 hours on average spent on cultural activities.



People to talk and socialise with is important to WMCA residents, the vast majority of WMCA residents have people they can socialise with. 91% agreed that if they wanted company or to socialise there are people they can call on, in line with the national figure of 92%.[55]

What can and is being done?

The national devolution agenda is reshaping how health and wellbeing are addressed in the West Midlands. Through the *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026*, the WMCA now has a statutory duty to improve health and reduce health inequalities across the region. This marks an important shift, recognising that many of the factors shaping health outcomes sit outside the healthcare system, and placing responsibility for improving health across a wide range of policy areas, including transport, housing, employment and economic development.

This new duty creates a stronger expectation that major policy and investment decisions actively contribute to improving population health and narrowing inequalities. In practice, it is driving a more integrated and preventative approach across the region, reinforcing the WMCA's established "*Health in All Policies*" model. This approach ensures that decisions across the Combined Authority systematically consider their impact on health outcomes, reflecting the importance of the wider social, economic and environmental conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age.

The duty builds on several years of embedding health considerations into regional strategies and programmes, underpinned by the *Inclusive Growth Framework*. This recognises that improving health is fundamental to achieving broader regional ambitions around growth, productivity, sustainability and reducing inequalities.

Later this year, the WMCA will publish an updated *Health of the Region* report, setting out a refreshed regional approach. The report will bring together the latest evidence on population health, outline the scale of the challenge facing the West Midlands, and identify opportunities for action through devolved powers and partnership working. It will provide a framework for implementing the new statutory duty, demonstrating how regional leadership can create the conditions for healthier, longer and more prosperous lives for all residents.

[55] Community Life Survey Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Office for Civil Society (2025), Community Life Survey. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-202425-annual-publication

Businesses

Businesses: enabling productivity & good jobs

Enabling the businesses of the West Midlands to become more productive and to provide good jobs is critical to closing long-standing productivity gaps and driving higher wages. The West Midlands is committed to backing sectors and clusters where the region has clear strengths — including advanced manufacturing, digital and creative industries, health and med tech, professional services, and clean energy — while supporting innovation, research and development, and scale-up activity. By aligning skills, investment, innovation and infrastructure around business needs, this big change aims to create a more dynamic, resilient economy where growth translates into secure, well-paid employment across the region.

What is behind the West Midlands' cluster strengths?

Paul Edwards, Head of Economic Development and Delivery

The West Midlands' cluster strengths are rooted in a unique combination of industrial heritage and forward-looking innovation. For more than 200 years, the region has shaped the global economy and today remains home to globally leading businesses and world-class research across 15 universities. Its strengths lie at the intersection of established industries and emerging technologies, allowing traditional sectors such as manufacturing and logistics to evolve through digitalisation, automation and low-carbon innovation. This depth of capability, combined with scale, gives the West Midlands a distinctive advantage in developing industries that are central to 21st-century growth. The Growth Plan identifies these clusters as having outsized potential to raise productivity and create high-value jobs, even though they currently account for a relatively modest share of the regional economy.

The region's strongest clusters are underpinned by dense supply chains, anchor institutions and applied innovation. Advanced engineering and manufacturing remain a cornerstone of the West Midlands economy, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs and generating tens of billions of pounds in annual economic output. Major firms, specialist SMEs and innovation centres operate within deep and high-value supply chains, increasingly driven by robotics, artificial intelligence and next-generation logistics. Alongside this, the region has established nationally recognised strengths in areas such as electric vehicles and batteries, smart energy systems, and medical technologies, reflecting the ability to translate research and engineering expertise into commercial production. These clusters are supported by dedicated cluster bodies and innovation assets that connect firms to skills, research and markets.

Crucially, the West Midlands' cluster strengths are reinforced by alignment with national priorities and a focus on inclusive growth. The Growth Plan is explicitly aligned with the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, seeking to increase business investment by harnessing regional sector strengths and unlocking local growth opportunities. Many of the region's clusters sit at the heart of major structural transitions, including net zero, digital transformation and health innovation, positioning the West Midlands to capitalise on global demand while strengthening economic resilience. By focusing on targeted cluster development and a connected innovation ecosystem, the region aims not only to accelerate growth, but to ensure that the benefits of innovation and investment are shared more widely across people and places.

Key messages about business

The West Midlands business base enters 2026 with renewed momentum but enduring structural challenges. Recent improvements in business activity, enterprise formation and high-growth firms indicate that the region has moved beyond post-pandemic recovery and into a phase of gradual strengthening. However, uneven spatial performance, weak productivity growth relative to national benchmarks, and persistent gaps in firm-level management capability continue to constrain outcomes.

The central issue is not sector mix but firm-level performance within sectors, shaped by leadership, management capability, technology adoption and access to markets. Evidence presented in this chapter supports the hypothesis that lifting productivity and living standards requires helping a large proportion of existing firms move up value chains, rather than attempting wholesale sectoral restructuring.

Business performance also reflects the region's polycentric economic geography. Strong growth in Birmingham has not consistently translated into improved outcomes across the Black Country and other centres, reinforcing the importance of functional connectivity, place-based investment and spatially targeted business support.

Encouragingly, the region is showing early signs of progress against several Growth Plan priorities: business confidence has improved, service exports are expanding, high-growth firms are increasing faster than in comparable city-regions, and private-sector R&D investment remains a national strength. These trends suggest that, with the right enabling conditions—skills, infrastructure, finance and coordinated institutional support—the West Midlands can convert its business dynamism into sustained productivity gains.

The “so what” for policy is clear: accelerating inclusive growth requires aligning business support, innovation, skills and place-based investment to strengthen firm-level capability, reduce spatial frictions and ensure that productivity gains translate into higher household incomes across all parts of the region.

Inclusive economy

Why is this important?

An inclusive economy is one in which everyone has a part to play. The economy is productive and sustainable, and everyone benefits from it. This contrasts with an economy where a small group of people benefit first, and where wealth is then redistributed later or trickled down.

What are the current conditions?

The WMCA economy has recovered its output position following the pandemic (GDP: +0.3% on 2019, GVA: -0.2%) driven by growth in Birmingham. Annual GDP growth in 2023 varied across the region from -3.3% in Dudley to +2.5% in Birmingham. Pre-COVID comparisons show all local authority areas other than Birmingham and Wolverhampton still yet to recover, except for Dudley, which had surpassed its pre-pandemic peak in 2022 but has since fallen back. When looking at growth per person across the region, Birmingham again saw the strongest growth at 1.4% in 2023. Still, Solihull remained the richest part of our region with per capita GDP of £53,082 in 2023.

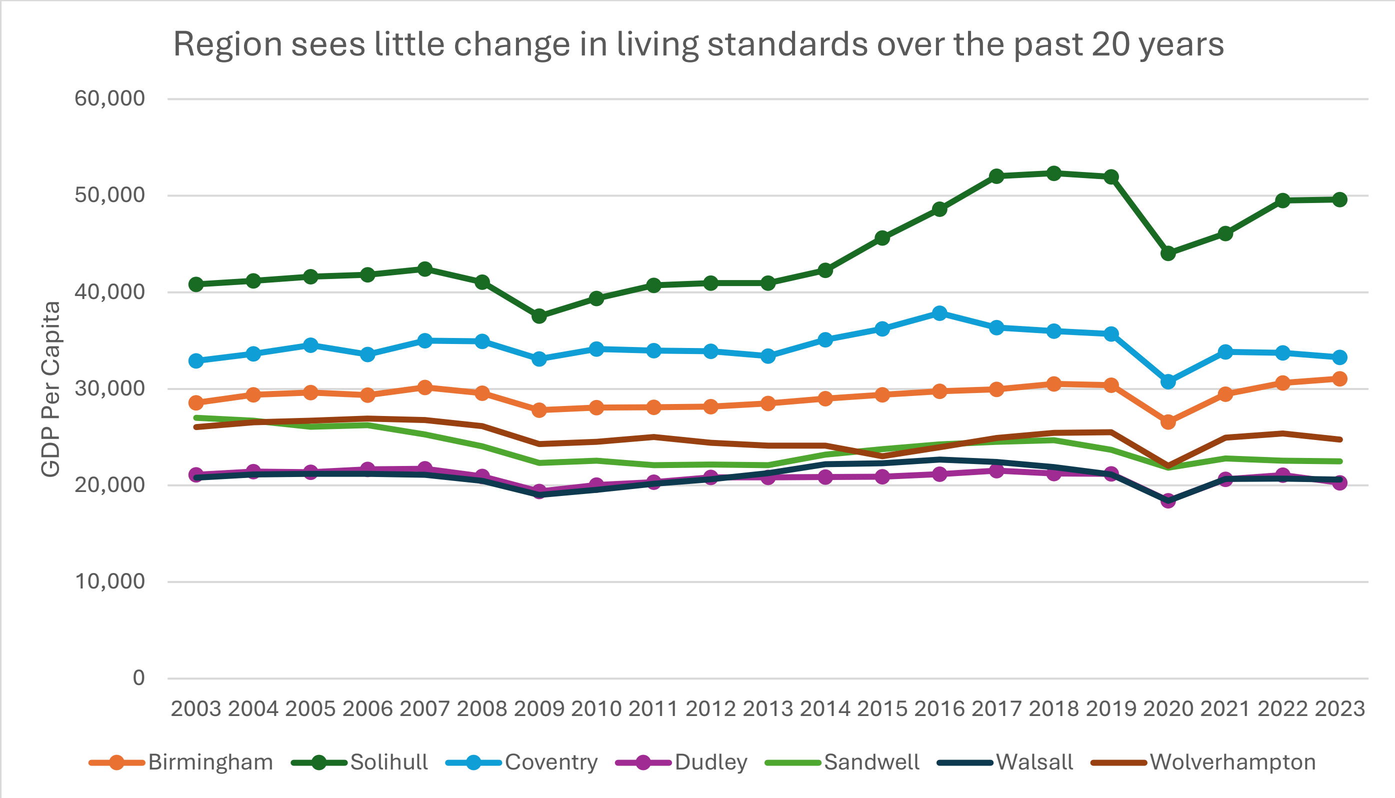
	GDP per capita (current prices, 2023)	Real GDP growth since 2022	Real GDP growth since 2019	Real GDP growth per capita since 2022
Birmingham	£33,362	2.5%	3.6%	1.4%
Coventry	£35,719	0.8%	-2.1%	-1.4%
Dudley	£21,766	-3.3%	-3.0%	-3.8%
Sandwell	£24,012	0.5%	-3.1%	-0.3%
Solihull	£53,082	0.6%	-3.5%	0.2%
Walsall	£21,986	0.3%	-1.2%	-0.6%
Wolverhampton	£26,574	-0.8%	0.3%	-2.4%

Recent Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) and business sentiment data show that the West Midlands region has entered 2026 with consistently expansionary business conditions, following volatility during the post-pandemic and inflationary period.[56,57] Improvements in output, new orders and expectations point to strengthening demand rather than short-term volatility.

When looking at long-term trends, living standards (GDP per capita) have changed little in the WMCA area since 2003. The only area to see a significant improvement is Solihull.

[56] NatWest (2026) NatWest UK Regional Growth Tracker report for January 2026. https://www.natwest.com/business/insights/economics/economic-outlook/purchasing-managers-index-reports/regional-growth-tracker-report-for-january-2026.html

[57] Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce (2025) Q4 Business Report. https://www.greaterbirminghamchambers.com/campaigns-and-insights/quarterly-business-report.html

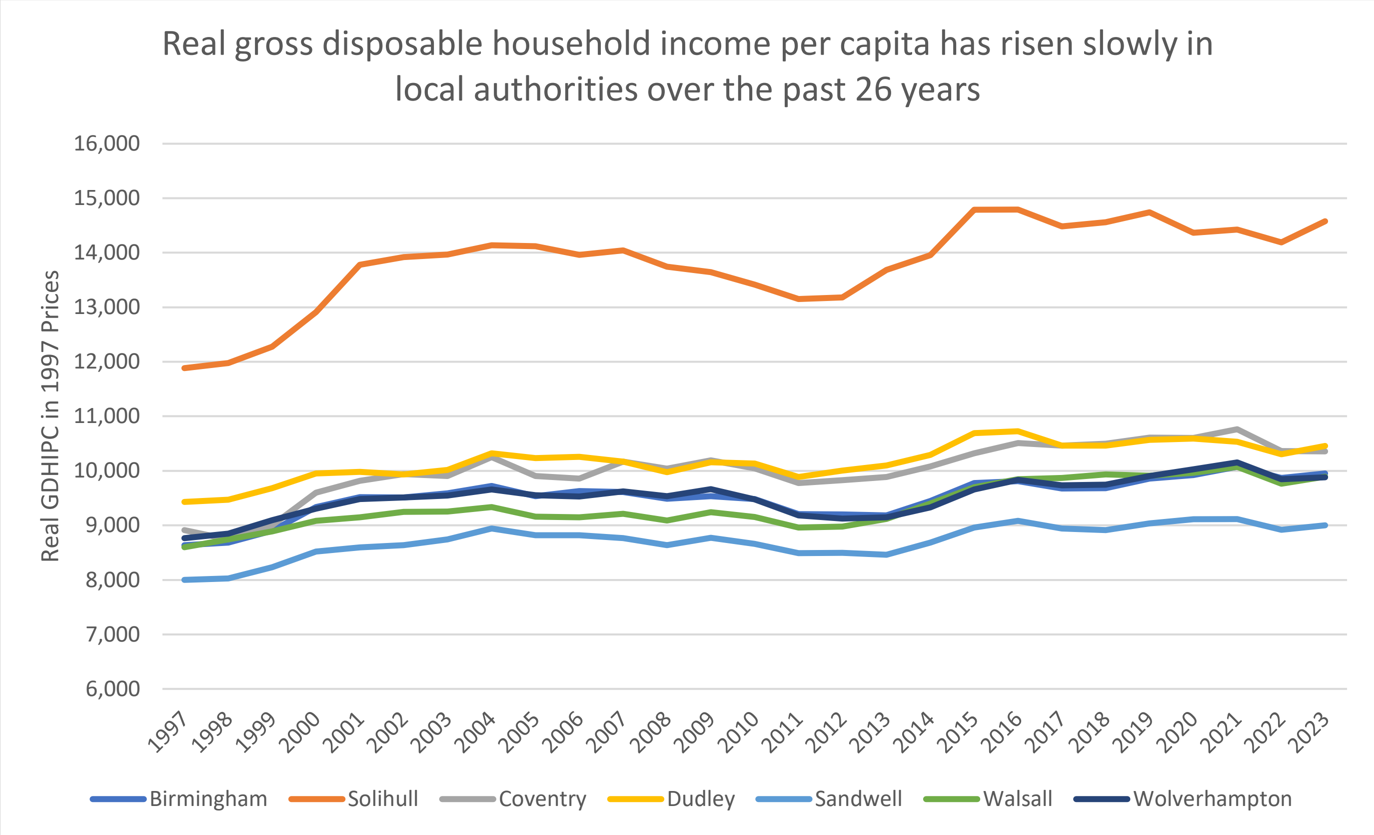


The uneven pandemic recovery and output across local authority areas highlights that growth in the West Midlands is spatially concentrated rather than region-wide. This reinforces the Theory of Growth hypothesis that economic geography shapes outcomes: stronger centres can pull away unless functional connectivity and diffusion mechanisms are strengthened. From a Growth Plan perspective, this underlines the importance of targeting regeneration, transport and business support to help weaker-performing areas better access high-value economic activity.

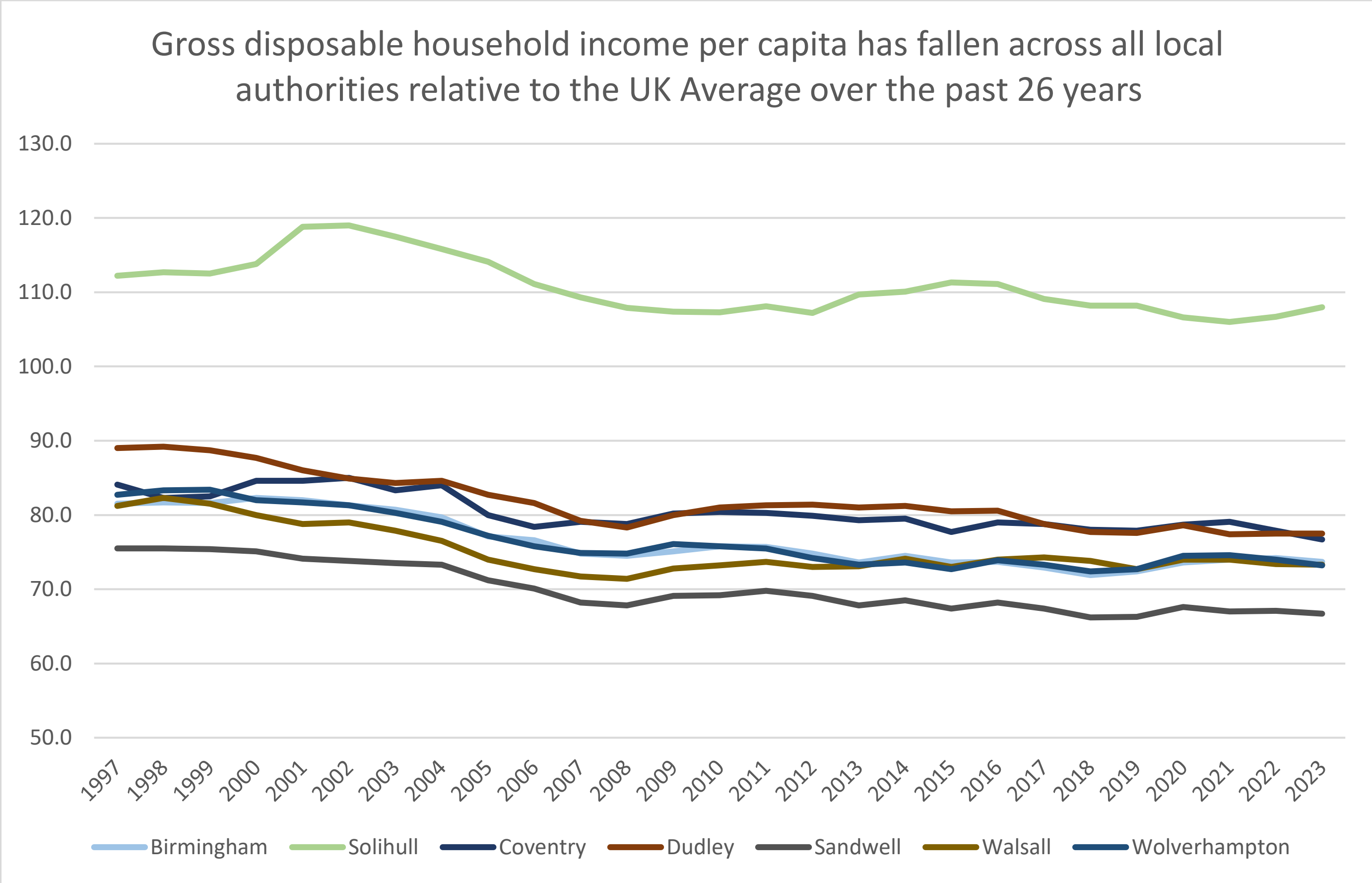
In comparison to GDP, Gross disposable household income (GDHI) per capita is a stronger reflection of money earned in the area that stays in the area. GDHI per capita in 2023 was £18,900 in the WMCA area.[58] GDHI measures the amount of money households have available for spending and saving after accounting for taxes and social contributions. GDHI reflects the economic wellbeing of households by indicating their real purchasing power. Across the area, estimated real GDHI per capita has grown slowly over the past 26 years.[59] Notably, it has also risen or stayed the same across the region while GDP growth has been less consistent.

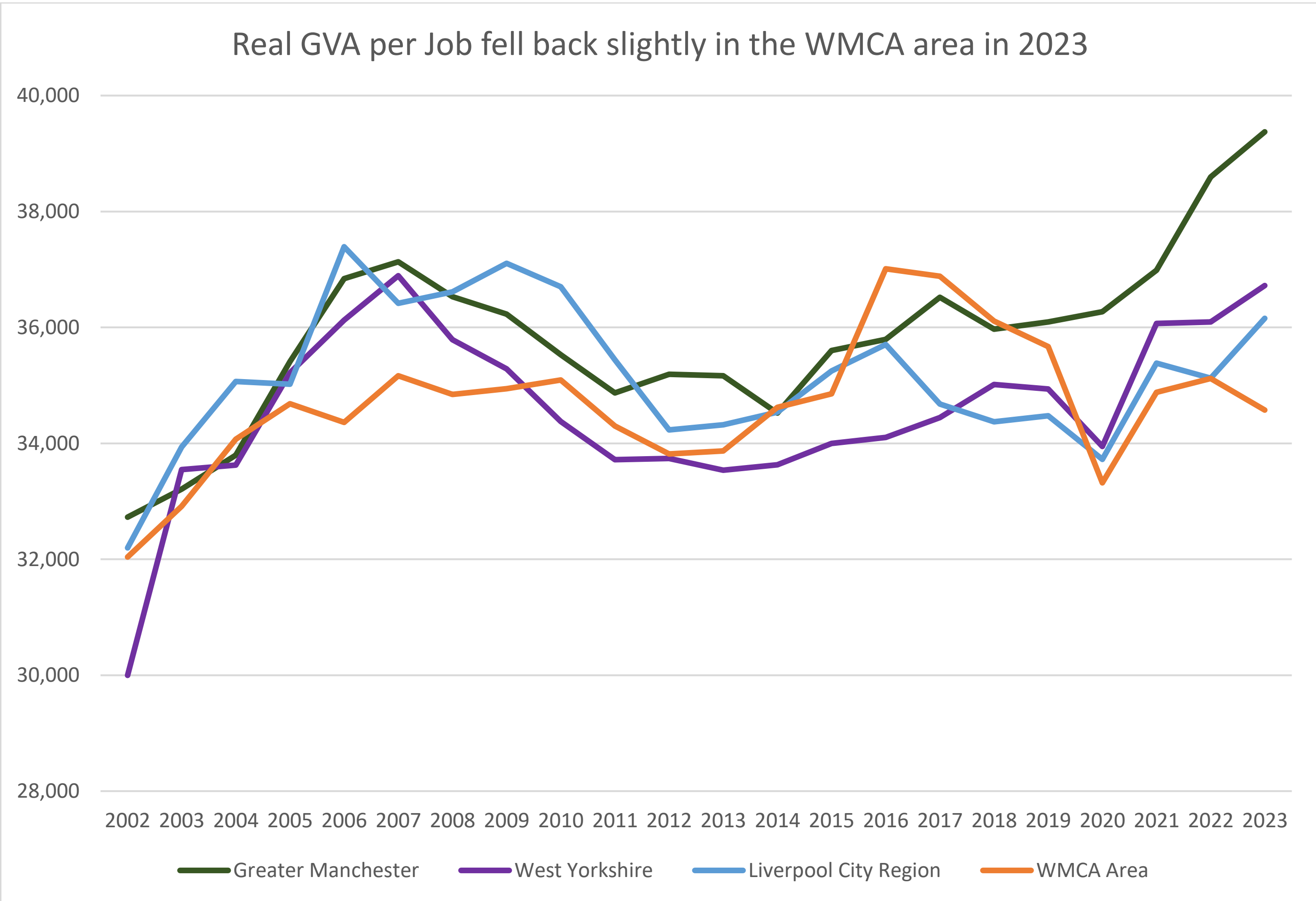
[58] Office for National Statistics (2024) Regional gross disposable household income: city regions. https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/regionalaccounts/grossdisposablehouseholdincome/datasets/regionalgrossdisposablehouseholdincomebycombinedauthorityandcityregionsoftheuk

[59] Real figures calculated using annual inflation data from the World Bank for the UK. It should be noted that UK-wide price changes do not capture any regional variation in the cost of living. Thus, a WMCA area real GDHI figure may differ slightly from the estimate. Original GDHI source: Office for National Statistics (2024) Regional gross disposable household income: local authorities by ITL1 region. https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/regionalaccounts/grossdisposablehouseholdincome/datasets/regionalgrossdisposablehouseholdincomelocalauthoritiesbyitl1region



Compared to the UK average, GDHI per capita has fallen across all local authority areas over the same 26-year period. Of the region, only Solihull saw GDHI per capita growth relative to the UK average between 2022 and 2023. In all other areas, it stayed the same or declined relative to the UK average. This means that, even though real GDHI per capita grew widely across the WMCA area between 2022-2023, it grew more slowly than the UK average in all areas except Solihull.


Gross disposable household income per capita has fallen across all local authorities relative to the UK Average over the past 26 years
130.0
120.0
110.0
100.0
90.0
80.0
70.0
60.0
50.0
1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023
Birmingham
Solihull
Coventry
Dudley
Sandwell
Walsall
Wolverhampton


Real GVA per Job fell back slightly in the WMCA area in 2023
40,000
38,000
36,000
34,000
32,000
30,000
28,000
2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023
Greater Manchester
West Yorkshire
Liverpool City Region
WMCA Area

GVA per hour worked fell back slightly in 2023 compared to 2022 – by 2.4%. GVA per job also fell back by 3.0%.[60] While this is an obvious minor regression, one year should not be interpreted as a trend and there is a strong probability that productivity will revert to a rising trend again in 2024.

The recent dip in productivity should be interpreted as cyclical (result of short-term economic conditions) rather than structural, reflecting inflationary pressures and post-pandemic adjustment. Over the medium term, the trend remains one of gradual improvement. The Theory of Growth emphasises that productivity gaps in the West Midlands are driven primarily by firm-level performance within sectors, not the sector mix itself. This means productivity policy must focus on management quality, technology adoption and innovation diffusion rather than sector switching.

When looking at the drivers of growth, expenditure on research and development (R&D) can be a good indicator. As a region of England, the West Midlands has the fourth highest expenditure on R&D performed by businesses per capita (£725).[61] There was a 9.9% increase in business expenditure on R&D between 2022 and 2023 in real terms[62].

High levels of private-sector R&D confirm that the West Midlands has strong innovation capacity, particularly in applied and engineering-led sectors. However, the Theory of Growth highlights a structural imbalance: innovation is deep but narrow, concentrated in a small number of large firms. Public R&D, translational infrastructure and diffusion mechanisms are essential to spread innovation benefits across the wider business base, consistent with Growth Plan commitments on innovation adoption.

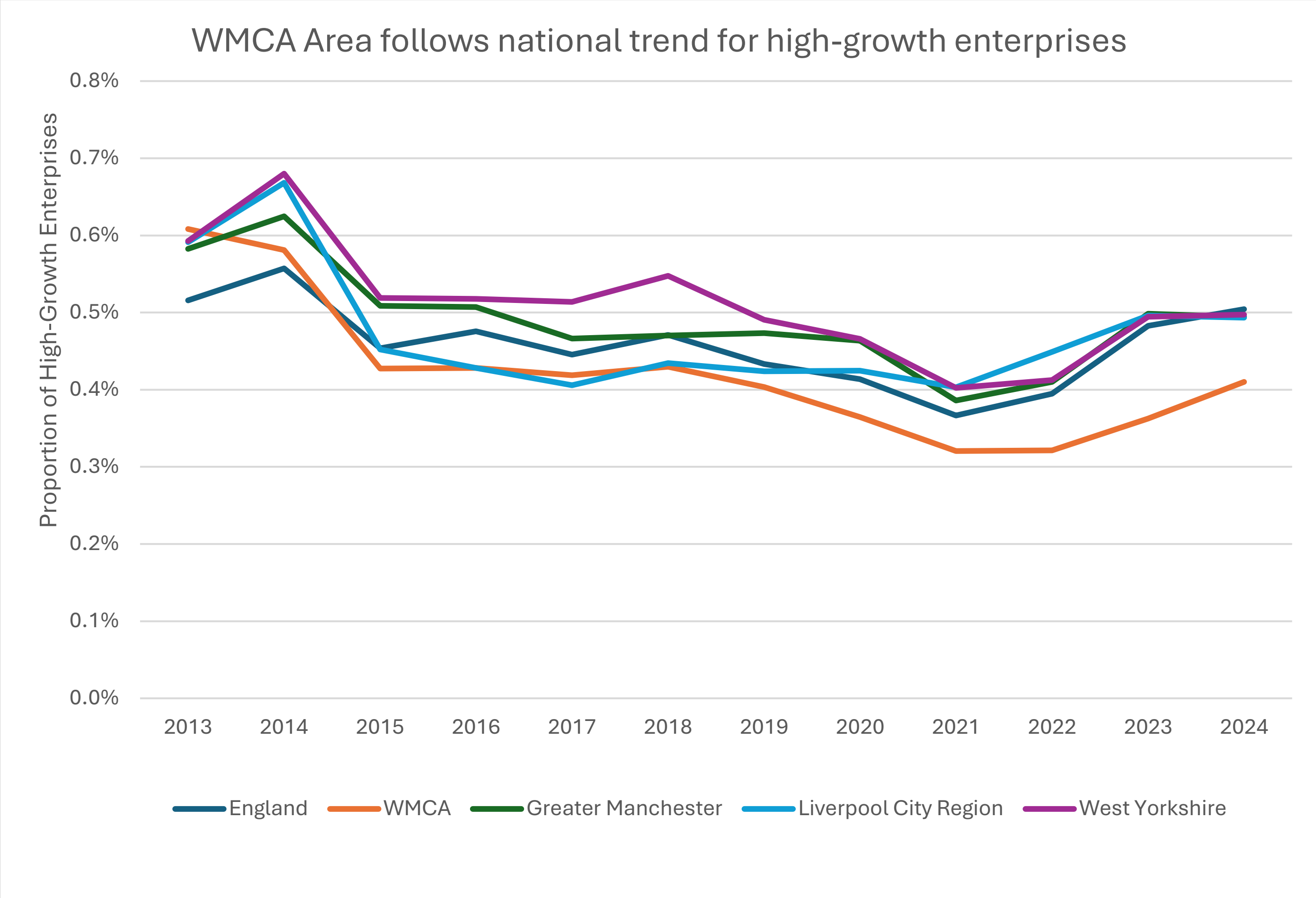
Business demography figures confirm a mixed picture in the regional business landscape. The number of high-growth enterprises in the WMCA area increased by 11.7% between 2023 and 2024, (England +4.0%).[63] When looking at the long-term trend of high-growth enterprises, it is clear that other comparable city-regions (as with England as a whole) have also seen a decline in the number of high-growth enterprises as a proportion of total enterprises over the last eleven years. They also appear to have initially rebounded faster than the WMCA area in 2022 and 2023 (following the pandemic), but the WMCA area has continued its positive growth trajectory, outpacing growth in the number of high-growth enterprises in similar city-regions in 2024.

[60] Office for National Statistics (2024) Subregional productivity: labour productivity indices by city region. https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/productivitymeasures/datasets/subregionalproductivitylabourproductivitygvaperhourworkedandgvaperfilledjobindicesbycityregion

[61] Office for National Statistics (2025) UK gross domestic expenditure on research and development (designated as official statistics). https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/governmentpublicsectorandtaxes/researchanddevelopmentexpenditure/datasets/ukgrossdomesticexpenditureonresearchanddevelopment2021designatedasofficialstatistics

[62] Real figures calculated using annual inflation data from the World Bank for the UK.

[63] ONS (2025) Business demography, UK. https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/datasets/businessdemographyreferencetable/current



The faster growth of high-growth enterprises relative to England and comparator city-regions is a leading indicator of improving firm capability. This supports the Theory of Growth hypothesis that strengthening leadership and management is critical to breaking the low-productivity equilibrium. For the Growth Plan, the implication is that scale-up support, access to finance and peer networks should be prioritised to convert this momentum into durable productivity and employment gains.

19.7% of companies in the West Midlands region were female-led in 2024.[64] This fell from 20.9% in 2023 but remains above the 2021 level of 16.7%.

When looking at the space for businesses in the WMCA, there was 33.2m m^2 of floorspace in 2025.[65] This was a decrease of 358,000 m^2 since 2015. This drop was primarily driven by a steady decline in Birmingham (-519,000 m^2), but Coventry, Dudley, and Wolverhampton also saw falls (-132,000 m^2, -189,000 m^2, and -189,000 m^2 respectively). Sandwell, Solihull, and Walsall all saw increases in total floorspace for business over the same 10-year period (+95,000 m^2, +264,000 m^2, and +313,000 m^2).

The Growth Plan outlined our five key priority cluster areas. These are Advanced Engineering, Light Electric Vehicles & Batteries, Digital Tech & Creative, Health and Med Tech, Next Generation Services, and Smart Energy Systems. Collectively, these clusters comprise 47% of the WMCA area's active enterprises, 31% of employment, and 49% of the region's economic output (GVA).

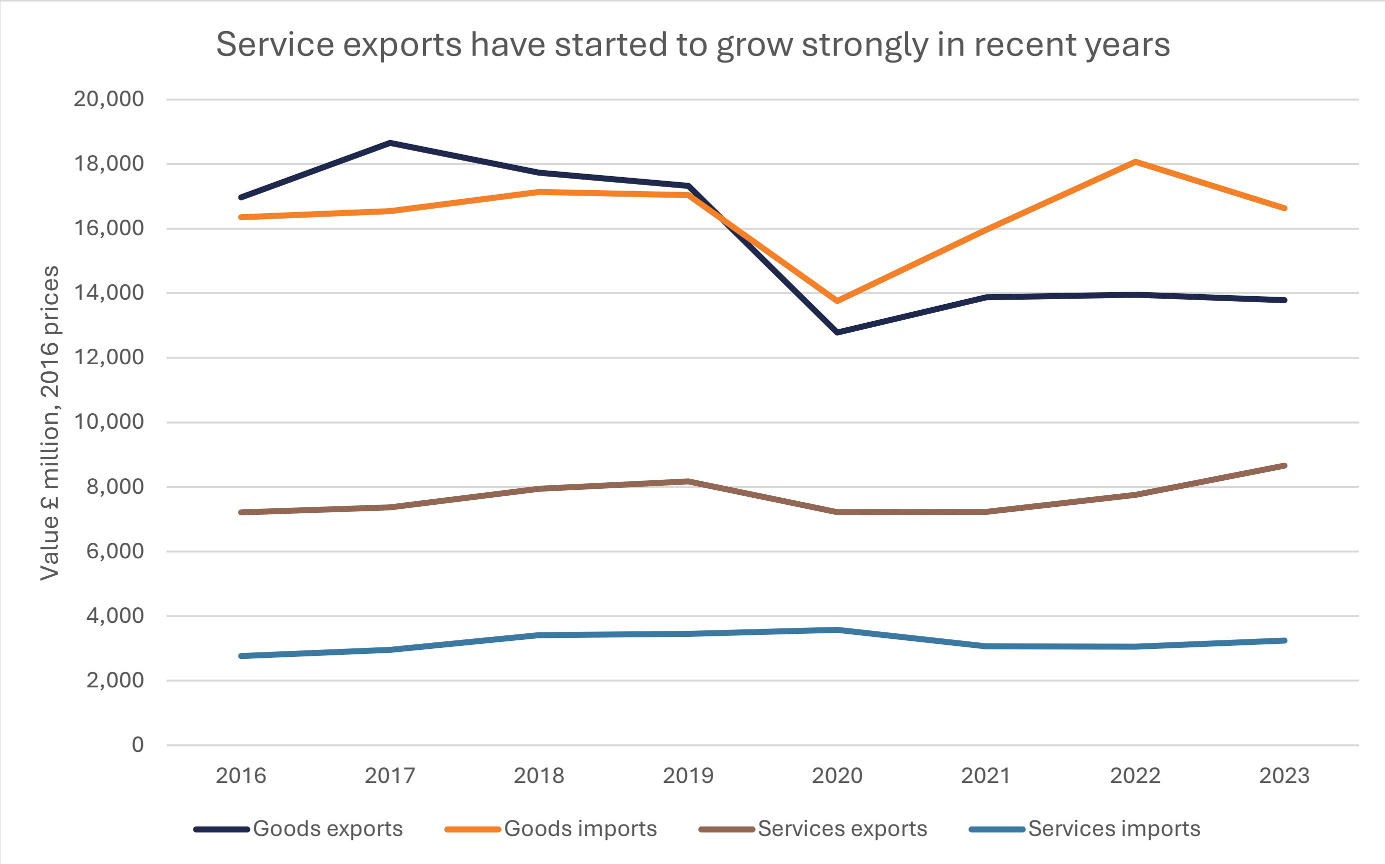
[64] The Gender Index (2025) TGI 25 report. https://www.thegenderindex.co.uk/reports
[65] Valuation Office Agency (2025). Non-domestic rating: business floorspace statistics. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/non-domestic-rating-business-floorspace-statistics

Cluster Employment	2017	2022	2023	2024	Change vs previous year	Proportion of total WMCA
Advanced Engineering, Light Electric Vehicles & Batteries	190,267	196,350	197,568	188,389	-5%	14%
Digital Tech & Creative	31,195	36,630	38,950	34,720	-11%	3%
Health and Med Tech	6,215	3,625	5,750	5,045	-12%	0%
Next Generation Services	153,445	178,340	169,020	163,185	-3%	12%
Smart Energy Systems	24,225	22,015	18,885	20,675	9%	2%

Cluster Gross Value Added (GVA, £million)	2017	2022	2023	Change vs previous year	Proportion of total WMCA
Advanced Engineering, Light Electric Vehicles & Batteries	£14,384	£11,510	£12,527	9%	16%
Digital Tech & Creative	£2,379	£2,996	£3,088	4%	4%
Health and Med Tech	£295	£268	£410	53%	1%
Next Generation Services	£19,682	£19,935	£19,874	0%	26%
Smart Energy Systems	£2,137	£1,691	£1,370	-19%	2%

Cluster Productivity (GVA per job)	2017	2022	2023	Change vs previous year
Advanced Engineering, Light Electric Vehicles & Batteries	£75,600	£58,622	£63,404	8.2%
Digital Tech & Creative	£76,688	£82,296	£80,263	-2.5%
Health and Med Tech	£47,414	£74,011	£71,243	-3.7%
Next Generation Services	£128,265	£111,780	£117,583	5.2%
Smart Energy Systems	£88,234	£76,822	£72,526	-5.6%

Across the comparator city-regions, the WMCA area was the only net exporter before the pandemic – a case that is unusual in the UK, which is a net importing nation.[66] Since the pandemic, exports were yet to recover their position in 2023. When looking at services, the WMCA area has consistently been a net exporter, reflecting the national pattern in which services trade is a UK strength. In recent years, services exports have increased significantly, with growth in 2023 helping to offset weaker performance in goods exports.



The shift towards stronger service exports alongside weaker goods performance reflects a structural transition towards knowledge-intensive activity. For a polycentric region, this is especially important: service exports are less tied to single industrial sites and can generate wider spatial spillovers if connectivity and skills pipelines are effective. This aligns with the Growth Plan's focus on next-generation services and digital capability as engines of inclusive growth.

Further to this, statistics from the Department for Business and Trade provided at the combined authority level showed that in 2024/25, inward investment projects in the WMCA area totalled 58, creating 2,758 jobs.[67] These figures are comparable to our comparator regions. For Greater Manchester it was 75 and 5,147, for Liverpool 17 and 1,390, and for West Yorkshire it was 56 and 2,988.

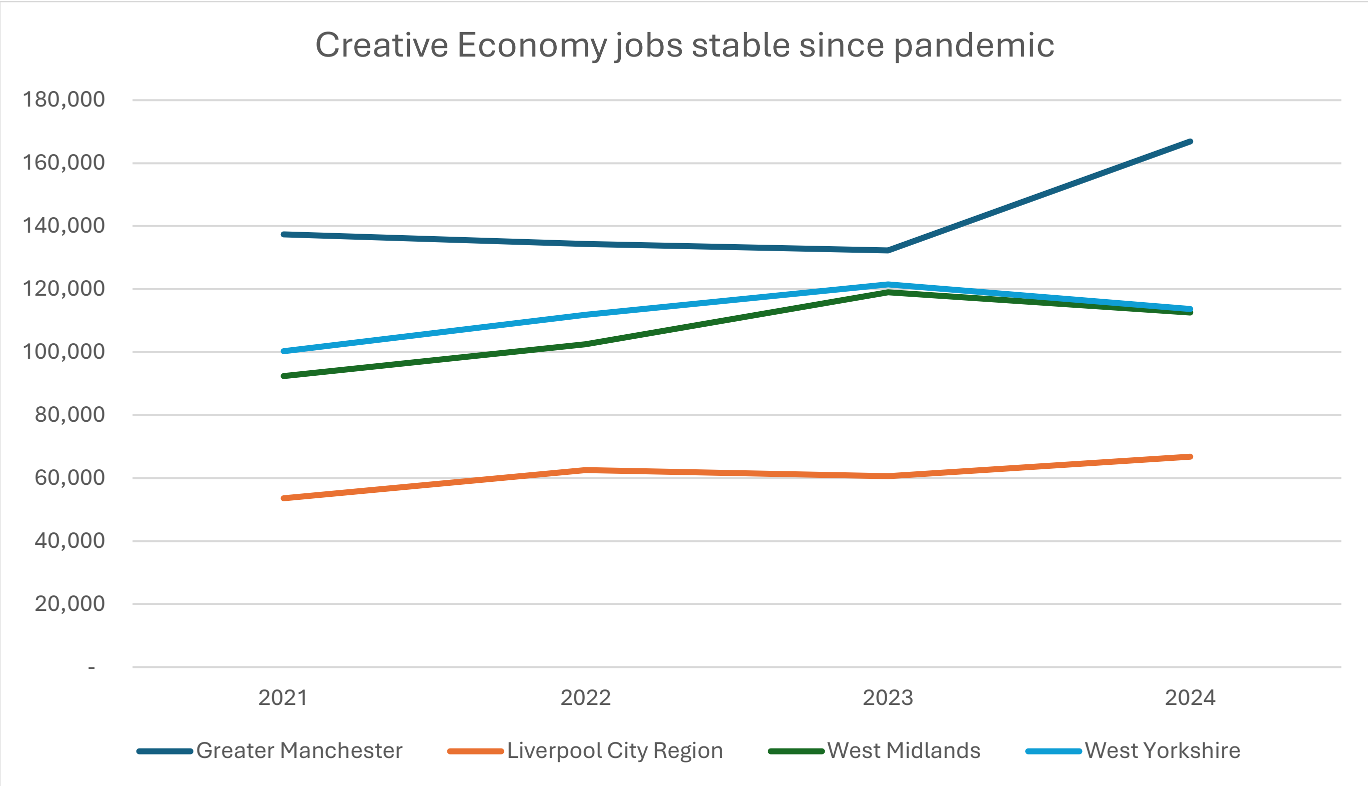
Year-to-year volatility in inward investment should not be over-interpreted (see Story section for further discussion of WMCA investment attractiveness and foreign direct investment stock). Our Theory of Growth expects that investment follows perceived long-term returns, which depend on productivity, skills and institutional coherence. The implication is that inward investment policy must

[66] Real figures calculated using annual inflation data from the World Bank for the UK. Original trade data source: ONS (2025) Subnational trade time series. https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/internationaltrade/datasets/subnationaltradetimeseries
[67] Department for Business and Trade (2024), Inward investment results. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/inward-investment-results

be tightly linked to spatial development, innovation ecosystems and workforce capability—not treated as an isolated objective.

The social economy is a collective term for all 'not for personal profit' organisations that exist to improve disadvantaged communities, support disadvantaged people, and address social or environmental issues but do so using a trading (business) model to generate the majority or all the funds they need. In 2024, there were approximately 9,300 social economy organisations in operation in the WMCA area, directly providing over 100,000 jobs.[68] Most of these are small organisations with 1-4 employees, but we do have some with over fifty employees.[69]

The scale of the social and everyday economy highlights its role as a stabiliser during economic shocks, but also its exposure to low productivity business models. Our Theory of Growth argues that improving leadership, management and job quality in the everyday economy is essential for raising living standards. With respect to the Growth Plan, this strengthens the case for using procurement, skills and place-based interventions to encourage a "high-road" model of business growth.



The estimated number of creative economy jobs in the WMCA area has remained stable since the pandemic.

What can and is being done?

The evidence in this report highlights both the scale of opportunity in the West Midlands and the persistent challenges that continue to limit residents' life chances. Economic growth alone has not been sufficient to reduce inequality or improve living standards for all. In response, the region is taking a more coordinated, whole-system approach to growth—one that is inclusive by design and aligned across policy areas.

[68] CLES (2024), *West Midlands Social Economy*. Report prepared for the WMCA.
[69] CLES (2025), *West Midlands Social Economy Survey*. Report prepared for the WMCA.

A renewed approach to growth

In 2025, the West Midlands Combined Authority and its partners launched the West Midlands Growth Plan, setting out a long-term vision to raise living standards across all parts of the region. The Plan focuses on four mutually reinforcing priorities: empowering residents to get on in life, improving business productivity and job quality, making places more prosperous and connected, and strengthening the region's partnerships and identity. This reflects growing recognition that delivering better outcomes requires aligning economic development with skills, health, housing, transport and community capacity, rather than treating these challenges in isolation.

Driving productivity and innovation-led growth

Efforts to improve productivity are increasingly focused on strengthening firm-level capabilities, particularly in sectors where the region already has a competitive advantage. Business support programmes are being delivered at scale, reaching a significant share of the regional business base, alongside more intensive engagement with high-potential firms. These interventions aim to improve performance, support scaling, and increase value added.

A combination of funding and delivery programmes is supporting this approach. The Local Innovation Partnership Fund builds on earlier innovation investments, while the West Midlands Investment Zone is using a targeted mix of infrastructure, skills and incentives to unlock growth in advanced manufacturing and associated technologies. At the same time, the Access to Finance Action Plan is strengthening the regional funding ecosystem, improving coordination between businesses and investors.

Together, these programmes are designed to accelerate growth in sectors such as electric vehicles, battery innovation, digital technologies, health tech and low-carbon industries, while ensuring that this growth translates into high-quality jobs and opportunities for local residents.

A central pillar of this approach is the delivery of major long-term programmes aligned with the Growth Plan. The West Midlands Growth Company is leading coordinated activity across investment promotion, business support and internationalisation, while complementary funds are supporting innovation, commercialisation and cluster development. This helps businesses translate research strengths into economic activity and job creation.

Attracting investment and strengthening global connections

The region is also taking a proactive approach to attracting inward investment and strengthening its global profile. Through international engagement activities—including investment conferences and trade missions—the West Midlands is positioning itself as a leading destination for innovation and investment. At the same time, strengthened collaboration between businesses, universities and the public sector—through mechanisms such as cluster leadership bodies and innovation partnerships—is helping to ensure that growth is driven by a shared regional agenda.

Supporting inclusive and place-based growth

Ensuring that growth reaches all communities remains a central challenge. The WMCA's approach therefore places increasing emphasis on place-based interventions, recognising the persistence of geographic inequalities across the region. Alongside support for high-growth sectors, there is a growing focus on the everyday economy, where productivity levels are often lower and improvement could have a broad-based impact.

Through business support, advice and local initiatives, more firms are being encouraged to adopt new technologies, improve practices and access growth opportunities. This reflects a shift from focusing solely on high-growth sectors towards raising performance across the wider business base. In parallel, work with local authorities is aligning regeneration, housing, transport and skills investment in areas facing long-term disadvantage, including parts of the Black Country and inner-city neighbourhoods.

Strengthening the social economy and social value

The social economy plays an important role in tackling inequality in the West Midlands, with thousands of organisations delivering social, environmental as well as economic impact. The region is taking steps to strengthen this sector through targeted business support, place-based investment in areas of high deprivation, and funding to support innovation and growth.

At the same time, there is increasing emphasis on ensuring that the wider economy delivers greater social and environmental impact. Businesses are being encouraged to adopt circular economy practices, support inclusive labour markets, and contribute to net zero. By embedding social value more strongly into procurement, supply chains and business support, the region aims to shift towards a model of growth that delivers better outcomes for communities, the environment and economic growth.

Places

Places: more prosperous and resilient places

Making the places of the West Midlands more prosperous, resilient and connected recognises that economic opportunity is unevenly distributed across the region. The West Midlands has adopted a place-based approach, focusing on transforming cities, towns and neighbourhoods through investment in housing, transport, regeneration and green infrastructure. Improving connectivity — both physical and digital — is essential to linking people to jobs, services and opportunities, while creating attractive, healthy, and sustainable places. This big change reflects the understanding that thriving places are a precondition for inclusive growth and long-term economic resilience.

How is the role of the high street changing?

Clive Fletcher, Programme and Engagement Lead - High Streets and Markets

The role of the high street is shifting from a predominantly retail-focused function towards a more diverse mix of economic activity. In the past decade, retail employment fell more sharply in central high streets and shopping centres than in non-central high streets and retail parks. In central locations, the composition of employment changed significantly, with a substantial decline in retail jobs accompanied by growth in other sectors, particularly accommodation and food services. This indicates that high streets are increasingly functioning as places for leisure, hospitality and services rather than traditional retail alone.

Alongside changes in employment, high streets are becoming more closely integrated with residential life. There is relatively little overall change in the proportion of people living on or around high streets in the last ten years, suggesting a stable residential presence. However, the characteristics of these populations vary by type of high street. Small town centre high streets tend to have higher proportions of older residents, while major regional centres are more likely to be home to younger adults. This growing importance of high streets as places where people live as well as work and socialise is reshaping their role within local communities.

The changing role of the high street also reflects differences in local economic structure and function across our cities and towns. In cities, high streets increasingly support knowledge-intensive activities alongside consumer services, with high streets increasingly are evolving into multifunctional spaces, combining employment, housing and services, with their role shaped by location, scale and connectivity rather than retail dominance alone.

Key messages about place

Housing pressures continue to intensify across the West Midlands, with variable house prices across the West Midlands. Demand for affordable housing continues to outstrip supply, reflected in a growing number of households on local authority registers. These affordability challenges disproportionally affect lower-income and ethnic minority households, contributing to widening inequalities.

While overall recorded crime has fallen, concerns about safety persist, particularly around knife crime and hate crime. The perception of safety on board public transport is a key issue: while the overall rate of crime on public transport is quite low, many young people, particularly young women, report feeling unsafe at night and report having either experienced or witnessed incidents on buses; undermining confidence in sustainable transport options and highlighting the importance of targeted safety interventions.

Environmental quality and access to green space also varies widely across the region. Fewer than half of homes meet EPC standards, limiting progress towards decarbonisation and reducing household energy costs. Satisfaction with green and blue spaces is well above average in some areas but significantly lower in some areas. These disparities underscore the ongoing need to create more resilient, high-quality places where all residents can thrive.

Affordable and safe places

Why is this important?

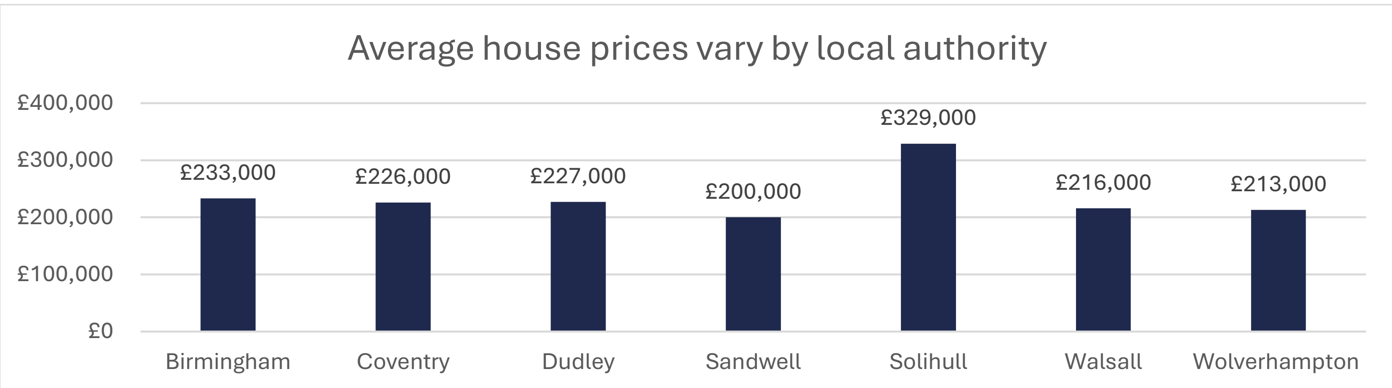
Housing is central to improving quality of life, supporting regeneration, and delivering inclusive growth across the West Midlands. Outcomes for the region and its communities can be improved by making it easier for people to access safe, affordable, and well-located homes that support healthier, more secure lives.

What are the current conditions?

Housing affordability & access

House prices

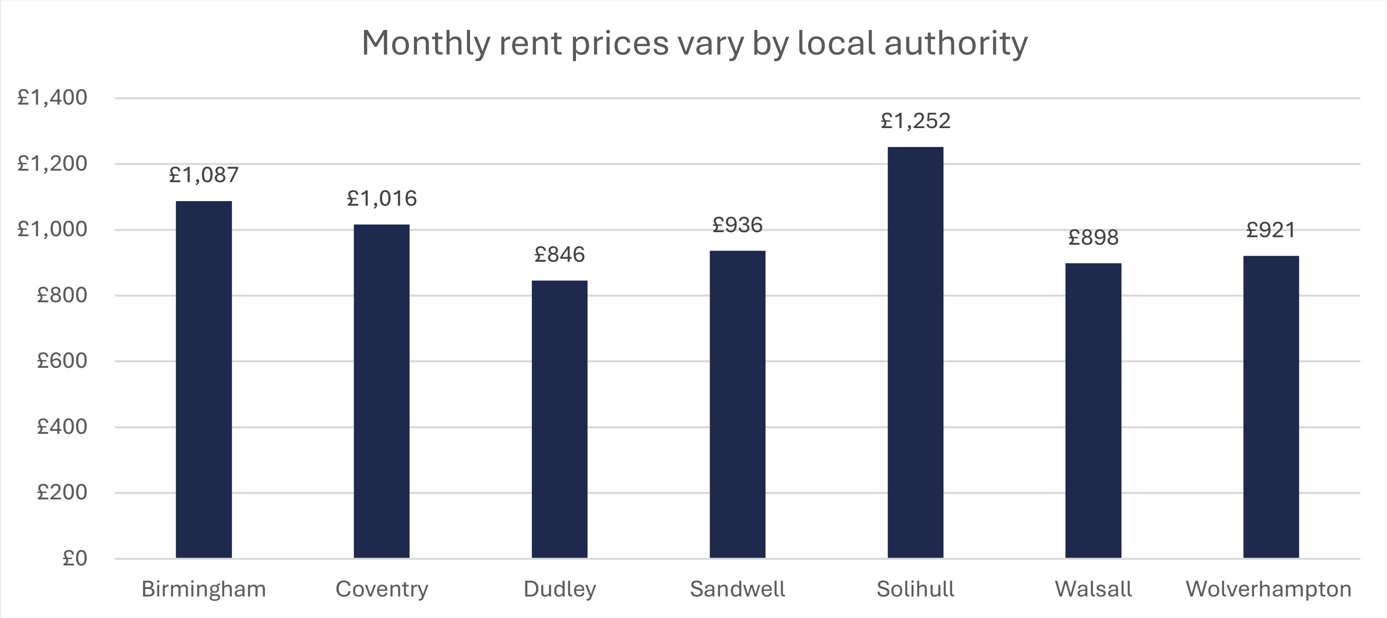
The cost of housing varies significantly across the WMCA area, with the average house price ranging from £213,000 in Wolverhampton to £329,000 in Solihull.[70]



[70] Office for National Statistics (2026) UK House Price Index. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-house-price-index-reports

Monthly rents

Monthly rents also differ across the West Midlands, from £846 in Dudley to £1,252 in Solihull.[71]



Home ownership

The affordability of home ownership also varies across the WMCA area.[72] In 2024, the median house price was between 8.62 and 5.86 times the average annual workplace earnings across the WMCA area. This is less affordable than ten years ago (2014), when the median prices were 7.16 and 4.83 respectively.

	Ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings
Birmingham	6.01
Coventry	5.86
Dudley	6.53
Sandwell	6.39
Solihull	8.62
Walsall	6.16
Wolverhampton	5.90

[71] Office for National Statistics (2026) Price Index of Private Rent. https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/datasets/priceindexofprivaterentsukmonthlypricestatistics
[72] Office for National Statistics (2025) House price to workplace-based earnings ratio. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoworkplacebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian

The average proportion of household income spent on rent across local authorities of the WMCA area was estimated at 29.6% in 2023/24.[73] This varies from 36.1% in Solihull to 26.6% in Wolverhampton.

However, spending on rent and mortgage payments varies across different demographic groups within the West Midlands.

Homeowners from ethnic minority backgrounds spend a greater proportion of their gross household income on mortgage payments than people from White British ethnicity, over the two-year period from 2021 to 2023. Estimates suggest homeowners from an ethnic background spend 19.0% of their gross household income on mortgage payments, compared to 17.1% for homeowners of a White British ethnicity, in the wider West Midlands region.[74]

Homeowners in the wider West Midlands region spend the sixth highest percentage of household income on mortgage payments or homeowners of White British ethnicity, compared to fourth highest for homeowners from an ethnic minority, across all English regions.

Proportion of gross household income spent on mortgage payments by region (2021/22 and 2022/23)

	White British	Ethnic minority
North East	14.3%	12.2%
North West	16.4%	17.8%
Yorkshire and the Humber	16.2%	16.2%
East Midlands	20.0%	17.7%
West Midlands	17.1%	19.0%
East	18.6%	22.2%
London	20.9%	26.4%
South East	19.9%	20.1%
South West	19.2%	18.8%

Rental affordability

People from ethnic minority backgrounds spend a greater proportion of their gross household income (including housing benefit) on rent than people from White British ethnicity, in the wider West Midlands region over the two-year period of 2021 to 2023. It was estimated that people from

[73] Office for National Statistics (2025) Private rental affordability. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/privaterentalaffordabilityengland
[74] GOV.UK (2025) Ethnicity facts and figures, Spending on renting or buying a house. https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/housing/owning-and-renting/spending-on-renting-or-buying-a-house/latest/

ethnic minority backgrounds spend on average 29.0% of their gross household income on rent, compared to 26.8% for people of a White British ethnicity, in the wider West Midlands region.[75]

In the wider West Midlands region people of a White British ethnicity spend the fifth highest proportion of their household income on rent, across all English regions. Whereas people from ethnic minority spend the sixth highest proportion of income spent on rent, across all English regions.

	White British	Ethnic minority
North East	25.4%	25.1%
North West	26.8%	29.1%
Yorkshire and the Humber	26.4%	27.5%
East Midlands	26.6%	25.5%
West Midlands	26.8%	29.0%
East	27.2%	31.0%
London	36.5%	37.4%
South East	30.4%	34.5%
South West	26.5%	30.1%

Incomes after housing costs

Weekly incomes after housing costs vary from £180.68 in Sandwell to £294.12 in Solihull, in the financial year ending 2023.[76]

	Equivalised household consumption after housing costs
Birmingham	£209.05
Coventry	£206.70
Dudley	£208.89
Sandwell	£180.68
Solihull	£294.12
Walsall	£211.78
Wolverhampton	£181.95

[75] GOV.UK (2025) Ethnicity facts and figures, Spending on renting or buying a house. https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/housing/owning-and-renting/spending-on-renting-or-buying-a-house/latest/
[76] Institute for Fiscal Studies (2026) Rank of local authorities by average household income compared to rank by average consumption after housing costs. https://ifs.org.uk/data-items/rank-local-authorities-average-household-income-compared-rank-average-consumption-after

Decent homes

In the wider West Midlands region, 120,000 private rented sector dwellings were non-decent, this equates to approximately 24.6% of private rented sector properties being non-decent.[77] This is the fourth highest of all English regions and is a decrease from 25.4% the previous year.

Affordable and social homes

Within the WMCA area there are 267,969 owned social housing stock, with weekly rents for general needs social housing varying from £95.98 in Sandwell to £105.04 in Walsall. [78]

	Average general needs social rent
Birmingham	£103.55
Coventry	£104.85
Dudley	£98.41
Sandwell	£95.98
Solihull	£103.64
Walsall	£105.04
Wolverhampton	£98.16

In the financial year 2024/25 there were 2,449 additional affordable dwelling completions provided by local authorities.[79] This consists of 1,008 affordable rent dwellings, 786 social rent dwellings, 509 shared ownership, 137 affordable home ownership and nine first homes.

There are 73,577 households on local authority housing registers (commonly known as waiting lists) as of 31st March 2025.[80] An increase of 13% (8,222 households) compared to 2024.[81]

Energy performance certificates (EPC) ratings

The average proportion of dwellings that have an EPC rating of C or above across the local authorities of the WMCA area was 47.9% in the financial year 2024/25. With over half of properties having an EPC of C or above in Coventry and Solihull.

However, EPC ratings vary by property tenure. When looking at the latest available data, from the previous year to above, it shows that social rent dwellings are far more likely to have an EPC rating of C and owner-occupied dwelling were least likely to have an EPC rating of C or above.

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77 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (20256) Annex tables for English Housing Survey 2024 to 2026. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annex-tables-for-english-housing-survey-2024-to-2025-headline-findings-on-housing-quality-and-energy-efficiency

78 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) Registered provider social housing stock and rents. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/registered-provider-social-housing-stock-and-rents-in-england-2024-to-2025

79 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) Registered provider social housing stock and rents. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply

80 The number of households on local authority housing registers (commonly known as waiting lists) is not the same as the number of households waiting for social housing. Local authorities periodically review their registers to remove households who no longer require housing, and the frequency of these reviews varies between local authorities. In addition, some households may be counted on the housing register of more than one local authority. It is therefore likely that the total number of households on housing registers will overstate the number of households who still require social housing at any one time.

81 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) Number of households on local authority housing registers (waiting lists) (2025). https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fmedia%2F691338a18c90b927c818ad85%2FLive_Table_600.ods&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

	Percentage of properties with an EPC rating of C or above (2023/24)
Owner occupied	32.4%
Private rented	38.8%
Social rented	58.8%

Crime

Crime (excluding fraud) in the WMCA area has declined by 7% percent between September 2024 and September 2025. The crime rate in the WMCA area (98.6 crimes per 1,000 people).[82] This is lower than other comparative areas such as Greater Manchester (104.8) and West Yorkshire (111.8), but higher than Merseyside (92.3). Eight percent of offences involved a knife or sharp instrument between September 2024 to September 2025. This is the second highest proportion, behind only the London Metropolitan Police (11%) however, this is a 18% reduction compared with the previous year. The West Midlands Police Force are saw a 14% increase in shoplifting, 22% increase in drug offences, a 5% increase in sexual offences, a 2% increase in possession of a weapon. All other crime types saw a decrease. The West Midlands Police Force had the second highest rate of violence without injury and possession of weapons offences across 38 Police Forces in England.

In the year ending March 2025 there were 8,468 Police Force recorded Hate Crime offences in the West Midlands Police Force area. It is possible for a crime to have more than one motivating factor. Therefore, in the year ending March 2025 there were 8,468 offences and 9,212 motivating factors.

6,930 offences were race motivated hate crimes, 1,172 offences were sexual orientation motivated hate crimes, 667 offences were religion motivated hate crimes, 271 offences were disability motivated hate crimes, and 172 offences were transgender identity motivated hate crimes.[83]

However, reporting of hate crime is complex, with many cases unreported due to mistrust. Increased reporting of hate crime can signify increased feeling of safety and trust and may not reflect actual increases incidents.

[82] Office for National Statistics (2025) Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area tables. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/policeforceareadatatables

[83] Home Office (2025) Hate Crime, Year ending March 2025 Appendix Tables. https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.publishing.service.gov.uk%2Fmedia%2F68e4bafdc487360cc70ca189%2Fhate-crime-england-and-wales-2024-to-2025-appendix-tables.ods%23%3A~%3Atext%3DProportions%2520based%2520on%2520number%2520of%2Crecorded%2520in%2520the%2520same%2520year.%26text%3DIncludes%3A%2520racially%2520or%2520religiously%2520aggravated%2Cracially%2520or%2520religiously%2520aggravated%2520harassment.%26text%3DBased%2520on%2520self%252Ddefined%2520ethinicity%2CONS%2520for%2520the%25202021%2520Census.%26text%3D%255D%255Bnote%25202%255D-%2CThis%2520worksheet%2520contains%2520one%2520table.%2Crepresent%2520a%2520geographical%2520area%2520code.&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

What can and is being done?

Affordable and safe places

Increasing the supply and mix of affordable homes to address longstanding, unmet need can reduce overcrowding, homelessness and reliance on temporary accommodation. In turn, families gain stability, which is essential for good health, education, and employment. Better quality, energy efficient homes help reduce fuel poverty, and long-term health issues. Locating more affordable housing closer to jobs, services, and transport also helps everyday workers stay connected to opportunity, while well planned developments strengthen communities and create places where people can thrive.

WMCA continues to work with partners to lead a transformative housing agenda to deliver more affordable, sustainable, and well connected homes, responding to rising demand and affordability pressures while enabling economic growth.

With at least 12,200 new homes needed each year and strong demand for social and affordable housing, we are focusing on increasing supply, supporting everyday workers, and creating more prosperous, resilient places by aligning housing growth with transport, jobs, regeneration, and net zero ambitions.

Improving housing affordability and access

A range of interventions are being deployed to increase the supply of affordable housing and improve access to genuinely affordable homes. The Social Housing Accelerator Fund is a key mechanism, providing targeted funding to convert homes to social rent and deliver immediate benefits for residents. This is complemented by the longer-term Social and Affordable Homes Programme, which is expected to significantly increase the supply of affordable homes over the next decade.

Partnership working is central to accelerating delivery. Collaborative arrangements with housing associations and developers are enabling a more coordinated approach to identifying and bringing forward sites, alongside streamlined processes that help unlock development more quickly. These approaches aim to increase the pace of delivery while ensuring that new homes are aligned with local needs.

Alongside this, the region is testing innovative approaches to affordability and access. For example, models such as Help to Own provide alternative routes into home ownership for households who may be excluded from traditional pathways. Work is also underway to maximise the effectiveness of housing allocations and rehousing chains, helping to make better use of existing stock. Together, these initiatives reflect a broader effort to address both the supply of homes and the affordability challenges facing residents.

Improving housing standards and tenant outcomes

Action is also being taken to improve conditions in the private rented sector and strengthen tenant protections. The WMCA is funding a regional cohort of apprentices to support enforcement teams within local authorities, increasing capacity to uphold new standards set out in the Renters Reform framework. This approach not only strengthens enforcement but also supports the development of a longer-term, locally rooted enforcement workforce.

In parallel, the WMCA is working to raise awareness of tenants' rights through community-led engagement, including partnerships with voluntary, community, faith and social economy organisations. A regional tenant survey and further research are also being developed to improve understanding of the private rented sector and inform more targeted interventions. These measures aim to ensure that improvements in housing supply are matched by better quality and security for renters.

Delivering more coordinated, place-based growth

Beyond housing, a more coordinated and place-based model of regeneration is emerging across the West Midlands. Programmes focused on high streets and town centres are combining business support, public realm improvements and the reuse of vacant buildings to revitalise local areas. These initiatives are being delivered through locally tailored approaches, recognising that different places face distinct challenges and opportunities.

A long-term spatial framework for growth

The development of a Spatial Development Strategy is providing a clearer long-term framework for how the region grows. This brings together housing, transport, infrastructure and environmental priorities into a single, integrated approach, helping to ensure that future development is better planned and more sustainable. Guiding principles such as "brownfield-first" and "infrastructure-first" are intended to support more efficient use of land while improving connectivity and quality of place.

Addressing spatial inequality

There is also a growing emphasis on tackling spatial inequality by targeting investment towards communities that are currently less well connected to opportunity. By aligning regeneration, skills, transport and housing interventions in specific locations, the region is seeking to create more balanced patterns of growth. This reflects a recognition that economic potential exists across all parts of the West Midlands but requires sustained and coordinated action to unlock it.

Connected communities

Why is this important?

Connected communities are essential for fostering social cohesion, support networks, and resilience. These communities are characterised by inclusive accessibility—encompassing physical, digital, and social connections—that enable individuals to access essential resources, participate in active travel, and enjoy public green spaces. Strong, interconnected communities promote higher life satisfaction, happiness, and equitable access to opportunities, supporting a healthier, more prosperous society. By prioritising better connectivity across transport modes, digital infrastructure, and inclusive community design, we can address inequalities, enhance mobility, and create environments where everyone can thrive.

What are the current conditions?

Transport and mobility

The number of jobs accessible within a forty-five-minute public transport journey in the WMCA and its surrounding areas has increased from 135,475 in 2023 to 153,348 in 2024, and 168,606 in 2025.[84]

Journeys

With new monitoring agreed through the Integrated Settlement, mode share across all trips is now assessed using the National Travel Survey, enabling comparison with other Mayoral Strategic Authorities. Data for the WMCA constituent area shows that between 2021-22 and 2023-24, car use declined slightly (66% to 64%), while public transport increased from 7% to 8% and walking rose from 23% to 25%. This represents a relative increase of 14% in public transport mode share and 9% in walking. This is set out in the table below:

[85]:

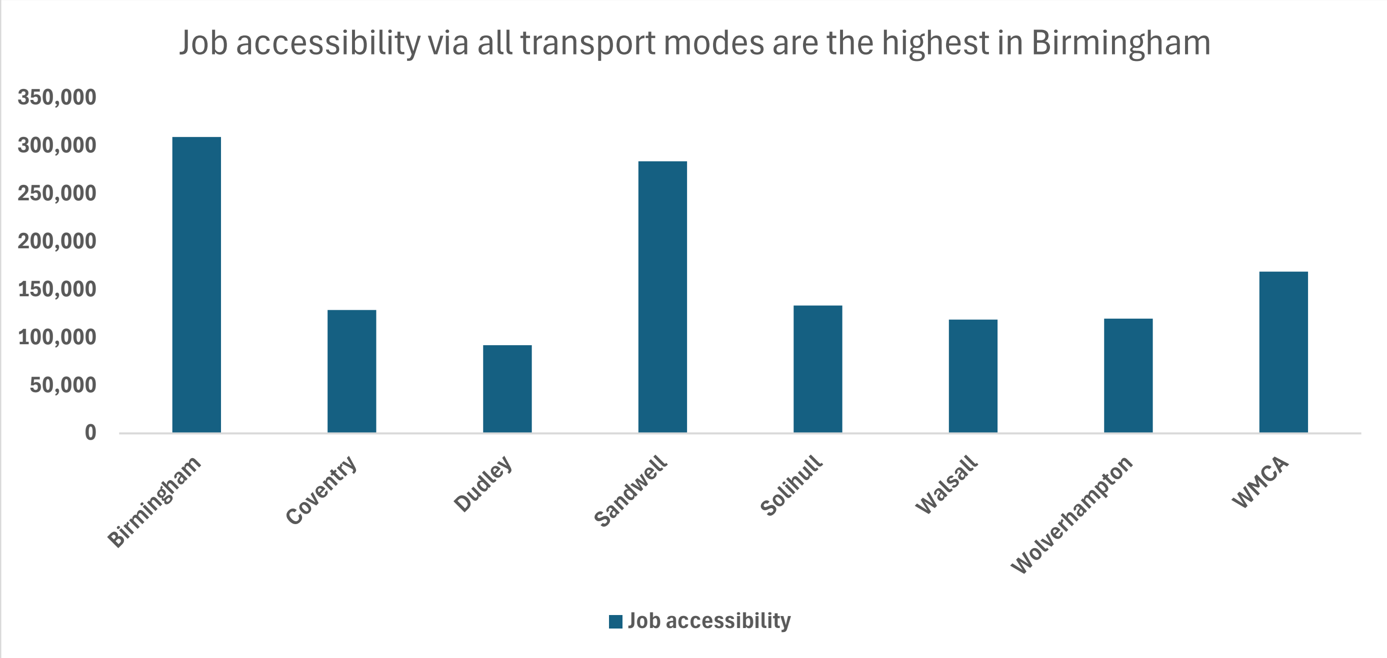
	Car	Public Transport	Cycle	Walk	PTW/other private transport	Taxi
2021-22	66%	7%	1%	23%	2%	2%
2023-24	64%	8%	1%	25%	1%	2%

The increase in annual bus, tram, and rail boardings has all increased between 2021-22 and 2024-25, as set out below:[86]:

	Bus	Tram	Rail
2021-22	175m	5m	45m
2024-25	247m	9m	66m

[84] Transport for West Midlands (2025) Job availability in a 45-minute journey by public transport
[85] NTS 2024 table 0601a https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2024
[86] https://community-engagement-tfwm.hub.arcgis.com/pages/patronage

Job accessibility



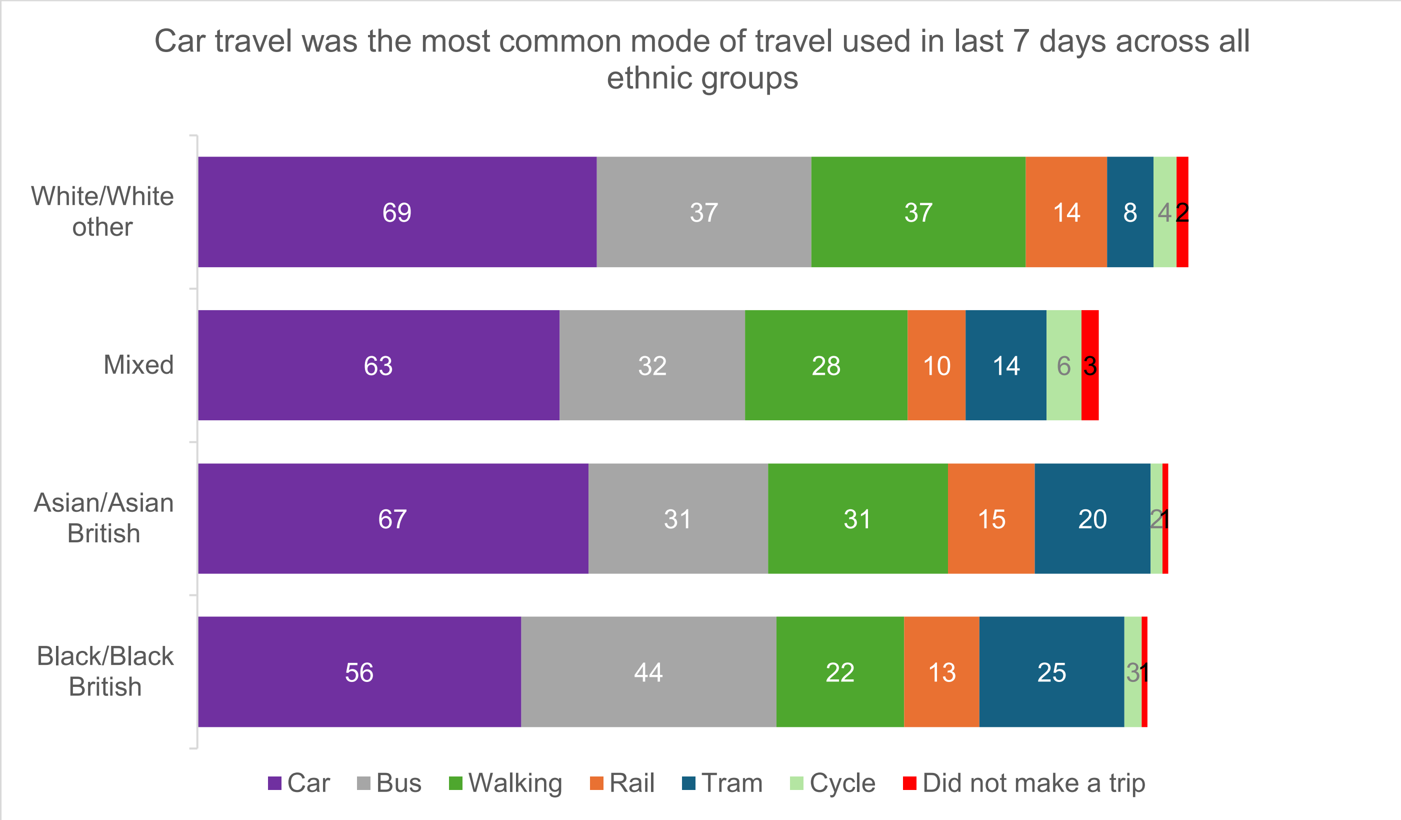
So far in 2026, job accessibility across the West Midlands remains uneven, with employment opportunities heavily concentrated in the regional core. Birmingham has the highest median number of accessible jobs (309,071), around 83% above the WMCA average (168,606), followed by Sandwell (283,998), approximately 68% above average. In contrast, Dudley has the lowest accessibility (91,926), around 45% below the regional benchmark. Coventry (128,567), Solihull (133,552), Walsall (118,640) and Wolverhampton (119,818) also fall 20–30% below the WMCA average, highlighting persistent spatial inequalities in access to employment[87].

Customer satisfaction

A West Midlands Metro 2025 customer satisfaction survey showed that 93% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their Metro journey[88]. For bus, the Transport Focus 2026 survey with 2025 data showed that overall journey satisfaction for bus in the West Midlands was 81%.

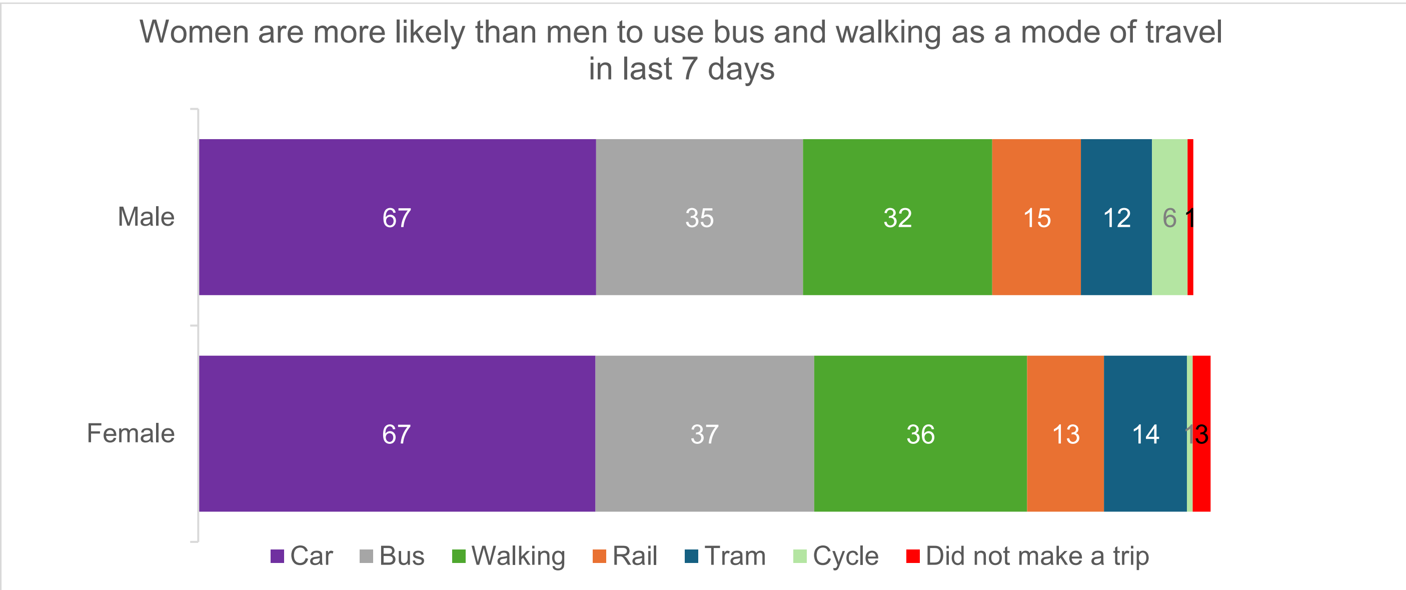
Customer satisfaction remains high, with 93% satisfaction for Metro (2025 survey) and 81% for bus journeys[89] 69% of White respondents used this mode of travel, compared to 56% of Black respondents. Bus travel was most common amongst respondents of a Black ethnicity (44%), compared to 31% of Asian. Walking was most common amongst respondents of a White ethnicity and least common amongst Black respondents (22%).[90]

[87] Transport for West Midlands (2026) Median employment opportunities
[88] https://www.westmidlandsmetro.com/metro-customer-satisfaction-reaches-new-high-ahead-of-network-expansion/
[89] Transport for West Midlands (2025) TfWM Travel Trends and Behaviours Survey Q3 2025/26 (not published)
[90] Percentages exceed 100 due to use of multiple modes of travel



Modal share

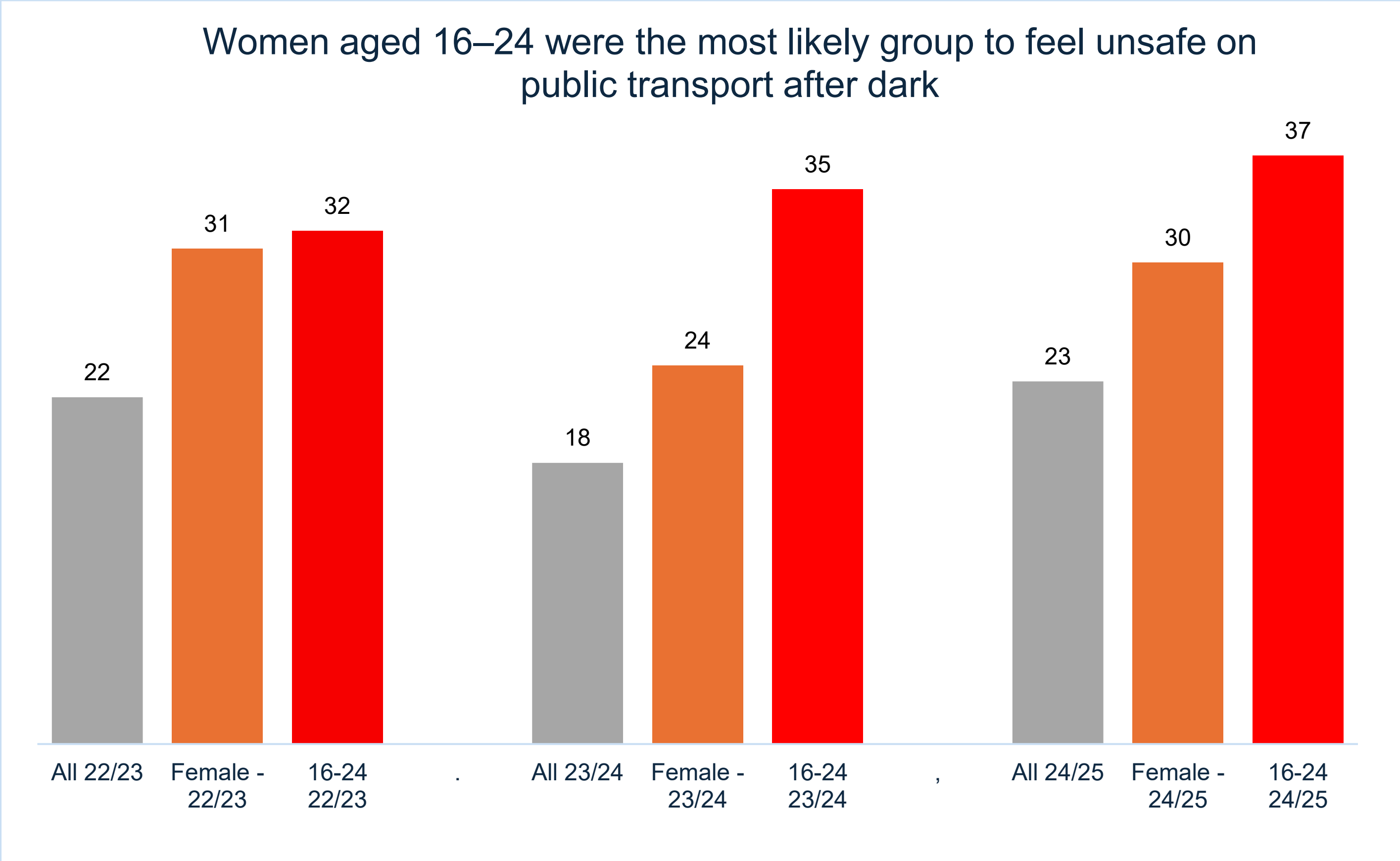
While both men and women reported using cars as their most common mode of travel (67%), women were slightly more likely to use the bus or walk.



Perceptions of safety

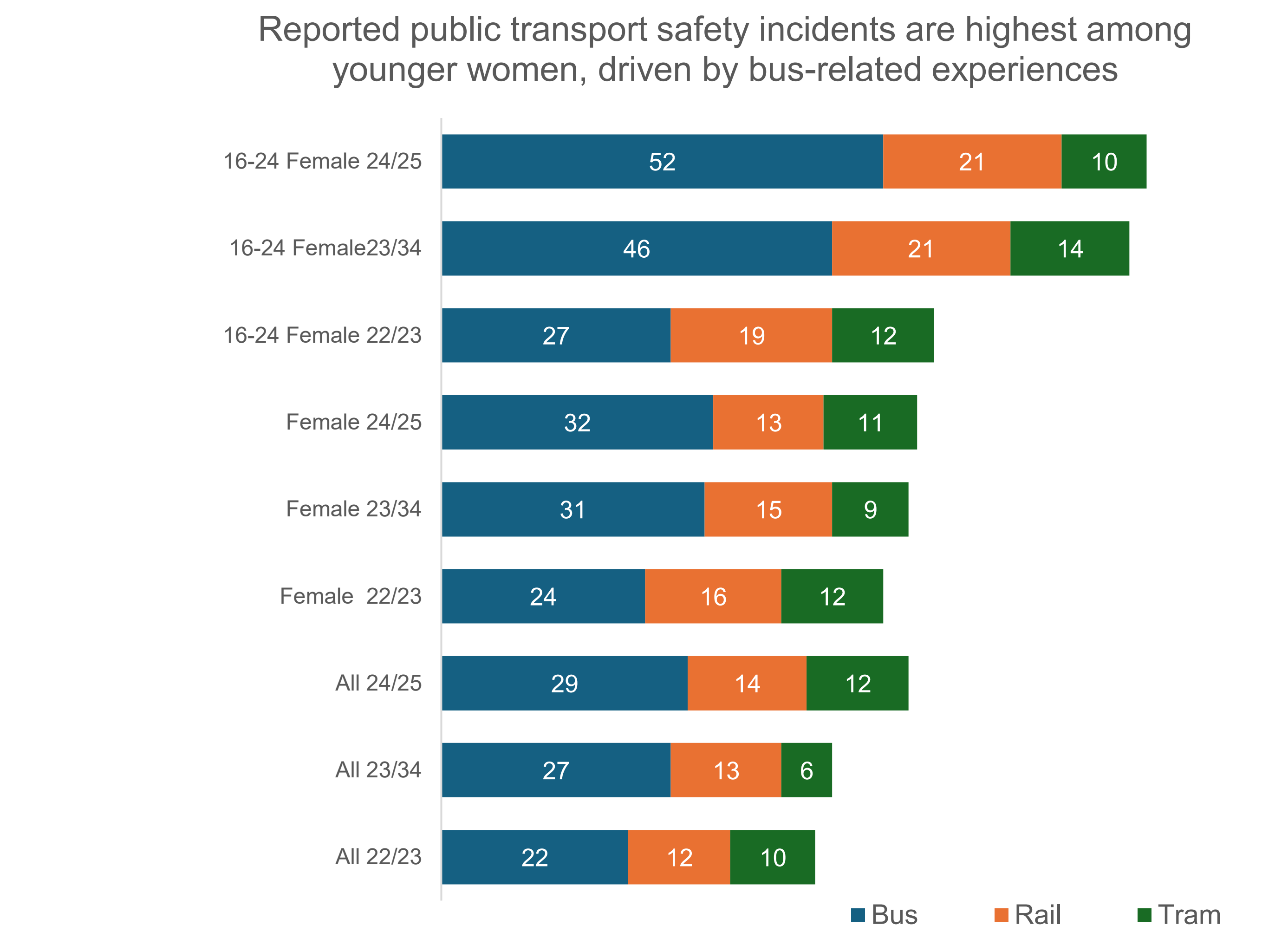
Women, particularly young women aged 16-24, were most likely to feel unsafe when using the public transport network. On average, 37% of young women feeling unsafe at night compared to 23% of the whole sample.[91]

[91] Transport for West Midlands (2024) TfWM Personal and Road Safety Tracking 2024/25 (not published)



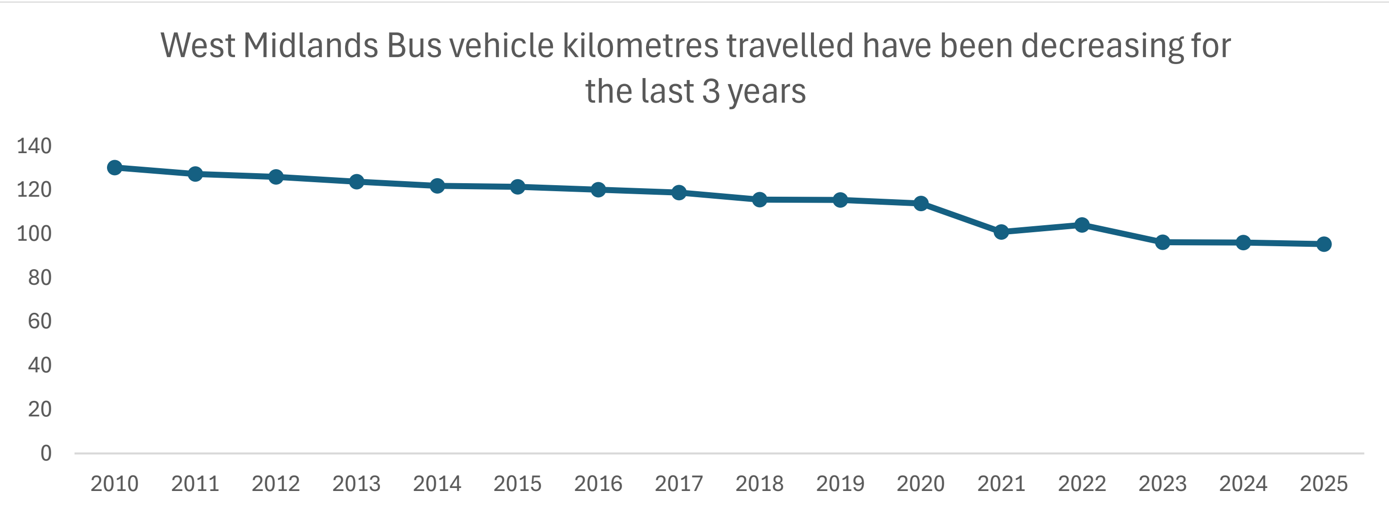
A Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) study shows that women aged 16–24 are significantly more likely to experience incidents that make them feel unsafe on public transport. In 2024/25, 52% of those surveyed reported such an incident on a bus, a substantial increase from 27% in 2022/23. Among women of all ages, reported bus incidents also rose from 24% to 32% over the same period, while changes for rail and tram were more limited. Across all respondents, bus-related incidents increased from 22% to 29%, with rail and tram remaining comparatively stable.

Overall, buses continue to account for the highest share of incidents, with the most pronounced increases observed among younger women. During the same period, there has also been a general rise in incident reporting among women—particularly younger women—partly reflecting increased confidence in reporting. Reporting rates are highest for tram incidents, reaching 81% among women aged 16–24 and 72% among all women in 2024/25. In comparison, reporting of bus incidents remains lower but stable, at 49% among women aged 16–24 and 41% among all women.



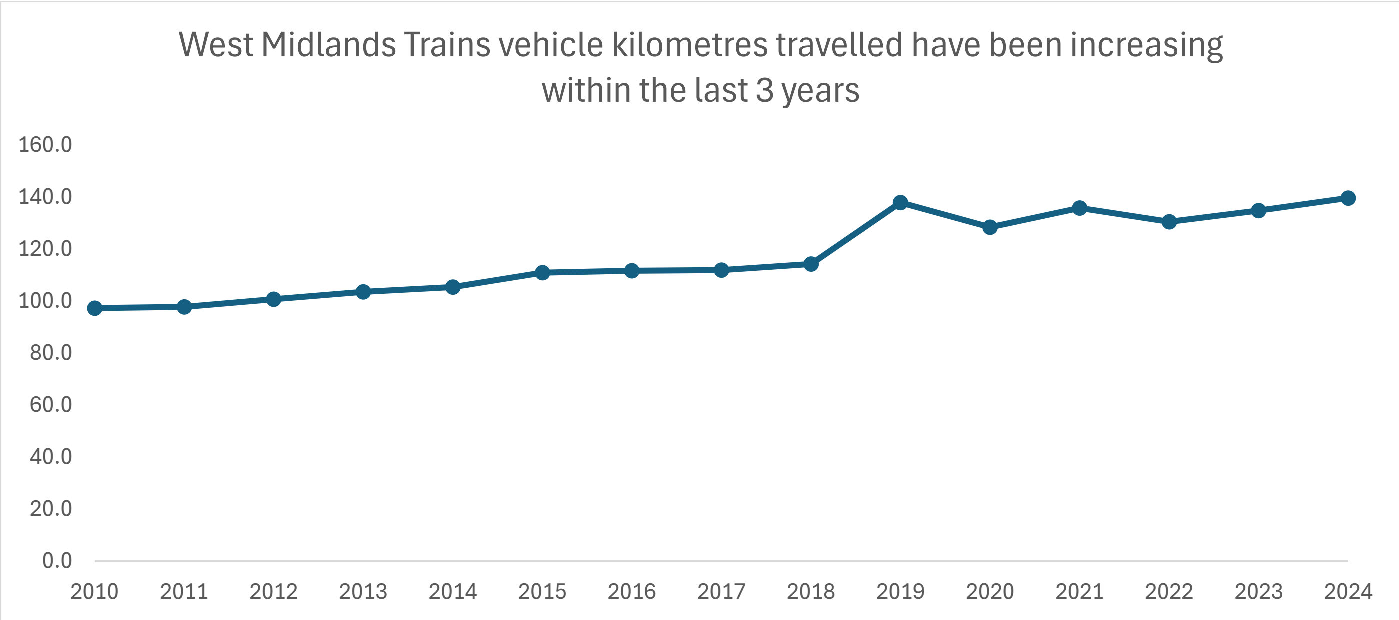
Public transport vehicle kilometres travelled

Over the past five years, bus vehicle-kilometres in the WMCA have shown a sustained downward trend. Following a sharp decline in 2021 from 113.88 million in 2020, activity recovered only partially in 2022 before falling again to 95.14 million by 2025. This represents an overall reduction of around 16%, pointing to a continued contraction in service provision rather than a recovery to pre-pandemic levels.[92]

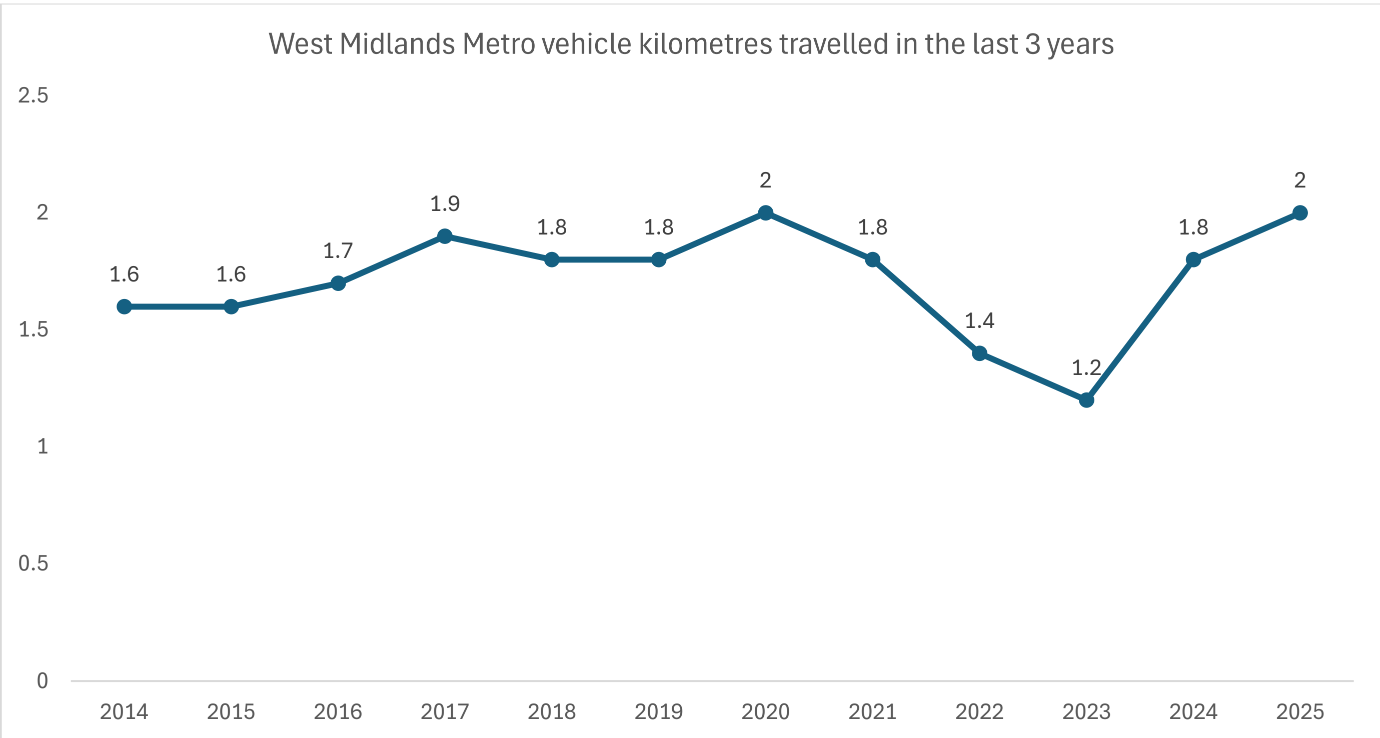


[92] Vehicle Kilometres travelled by West Midlands Bus (2025) Gov.Uk

Over the past decade, the vehicle kilometres travelled by West Midlands trains in the WMCA have generally followed an upward trajectory. Although there was a modest decline between 2021 and 2022, levels have since continued to rise steadily. In 2023, total train vehicle-kilometres stood at 130.7 million, increasing to 139.8 million by 2025. This represents a 6.96% increase over the two-year period, indicating a return to growth and a strengthening of train service provision across the region.[93]

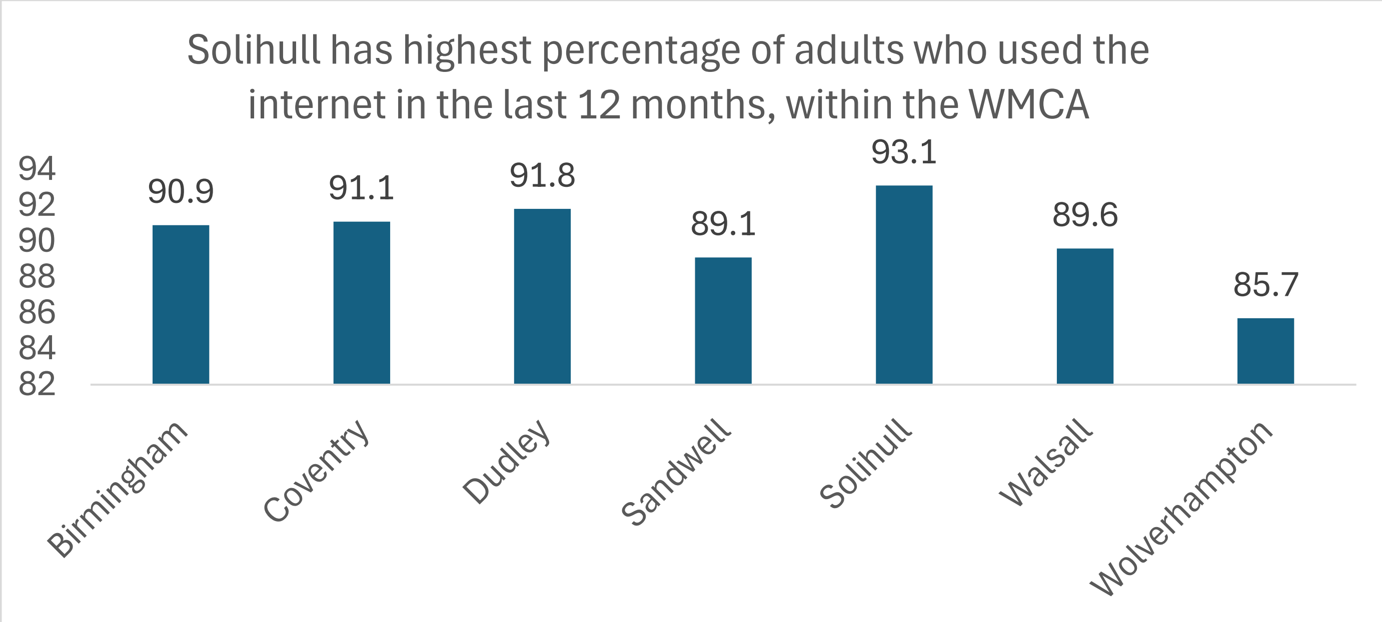


West Midlands Metro vehicle-kilometres have grown strongly between 2023 and 2025, increasing from 1.2 million to 2.0 million—an uplift of 66.7%. This indicates a rapid expansion of Metro service provision driven by the increase in the network size over a short period.[94]

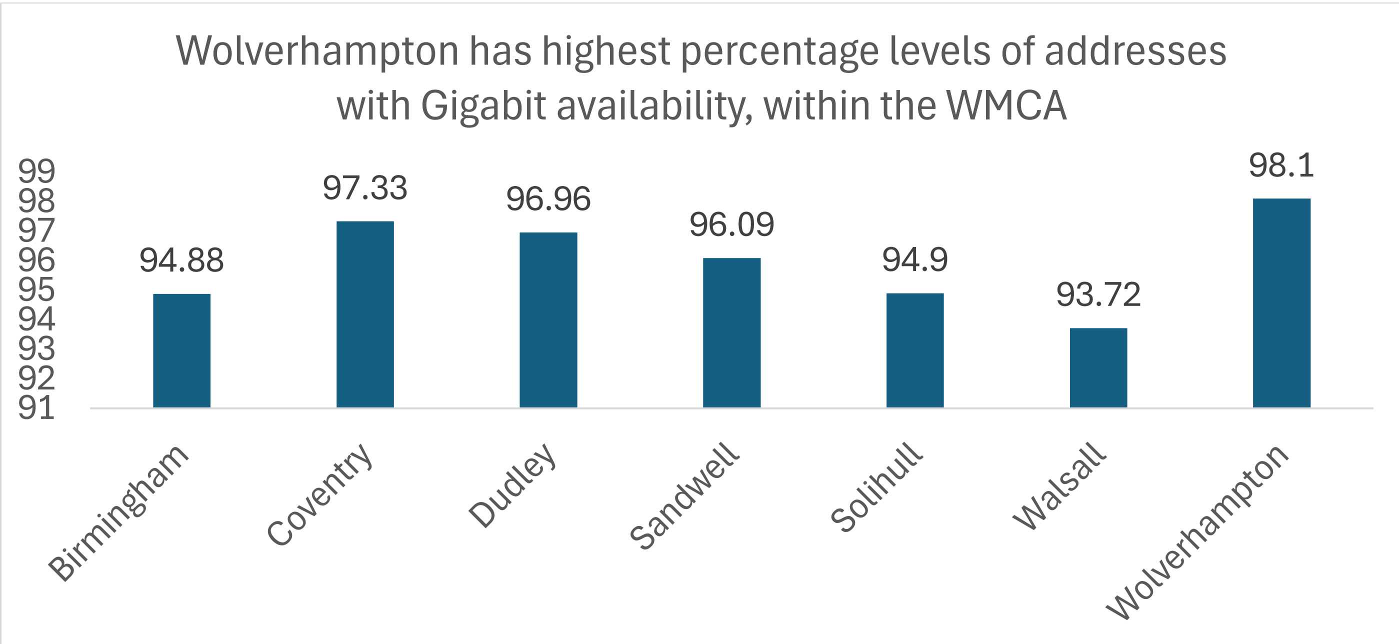


[93] Vehicle kilometres travelled by Train (2025) ORR Data Portal
[94] Vehicle kilometres travelled by West Midlands Metro (2025)

Digital connectivity

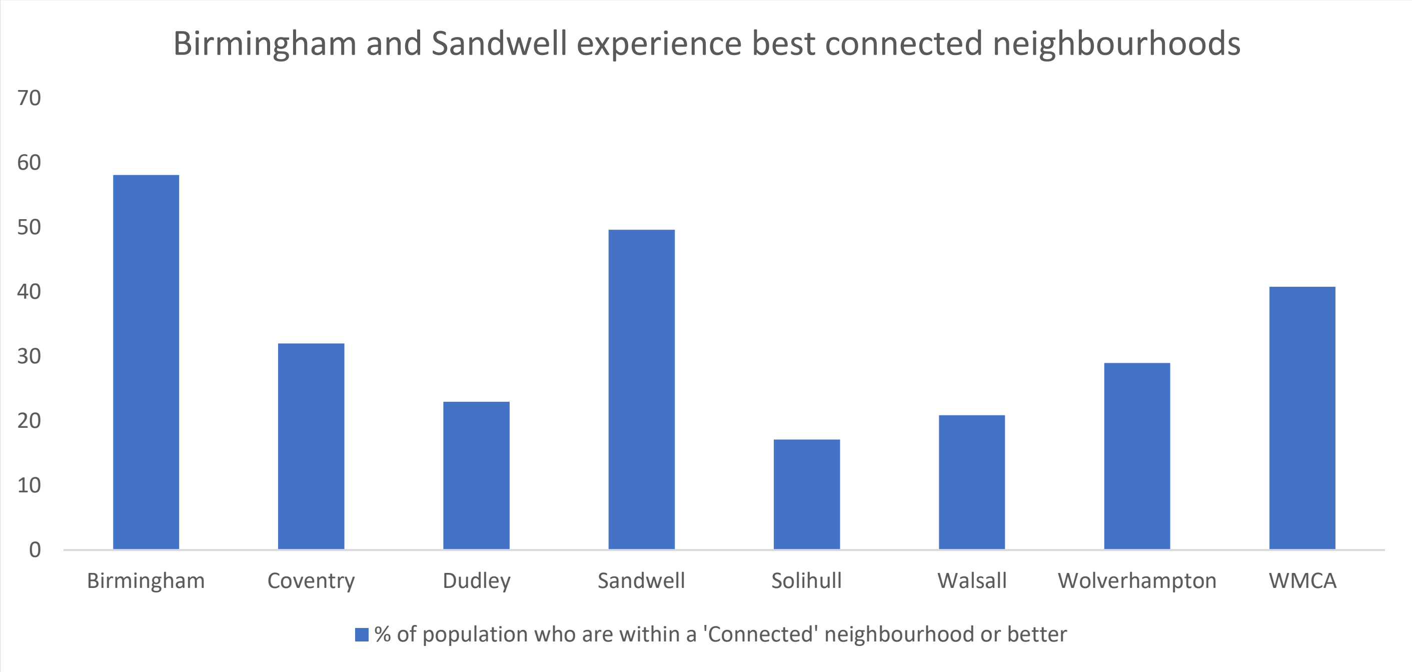


In 2024, Solihull recorded the highest proportion of adults who had used the internet within the last 12 months, with usage reaching 93.1%. In contrast, Wolverhampton reported the lowest rate at 85.7%. This represents a substantial difference of 7.4 percentage points between the two areas. The gap highlights notable variation in digital engagement across the West Midlands, suggesting that while internet use is widespread, there remain pockets where adoption is comparatively lower[95]



In 2025, Wolverhampton recorded the highest proportion of addresses with Gigabit availability at 98.1%, while Walsall had the lowest at 93.72%. This represents a difference of 4.38 percentage points between the two local authorities[96]

[95] Percentage of adults who used the internet in the last 12 months (2024) LG Inform +
[96] Percentage of addresses with gigabit availability (2025) LG Inform +



So far in 2026, the data highlights clear differences in access to connected neighbourhoods across the WMCA area. Birmingham (58.1%) and Sandwell (49.6%) have the highest shares of residents living in a ‘Connected’ neighbourhood or better, both above the WMCA average of 40.8%. In contrast, Solihull (17.1%), Walsall (20.9%) and Dudley (23.0%) show much lower coverage, while Coventry (32.0%) and Wolverhampton (29.0%) sit below the regional average[97].

What can and is being done?

Significant investment is underway to transform transport infrastructure and strengthen connectivity across the West Midlands, with a clear focus on improving access to jobs and supporting inclusive economic growth. The Local Transport Plan 5, alongside the Growth Plan and emerging Spatial Development Strategy, sets out a long-term vision for a more integrated and accessible transport system. Central to this is the ambition of a “45-minute region”, enabling residents to access employment, education and essential services within a reasonable travel time without relying on a car.

Investment is being accelerated through the Integrated Settlement, enabling the region to plan and allocate significant funding to improve transport networks and services while aligning with wider place-based priorities. Progress is measured through the outcomes framework, with a target for 50% of all trips to be made by sustainable modes by 2035.

Major programmes include the expansion of rapid transit corridors, further development of the West Midlands Metro, enhancements to the rail network—including new stations—and continued investment and reform of bus services, including the transition to a franchised system from 2027. Together, these interventions aim to increase capacity while improving reliability, affordability and integration across modes, creating a more joined-up public transport system.

97 Transport for West midlands (2026) % of population who are within a 'Connected' neighbourhood or better

Alongside investment in core networks, innovation is broadening transport choices. Shared mobility schemes, such as bikes and e-scooters, are improving first- and last-mile connectivity and supporting more sustainable travel behaviours. Active travel is also a key priority, supported by the development of a regional Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, recognising that a large proportion of everyday journeys are short and could be made by walking or cycling.

Delivery is underpinned by strong partnership working across local authorities, transport operators and national bodies, ensuring a coordinated regional approach. Taken together, these actions aim not only to enhance connectivity but also to reduce inequalities in access to opportunity, improve health and wellbeing, and unlock the region's economic potential.

Climate & environment

Why is this important?

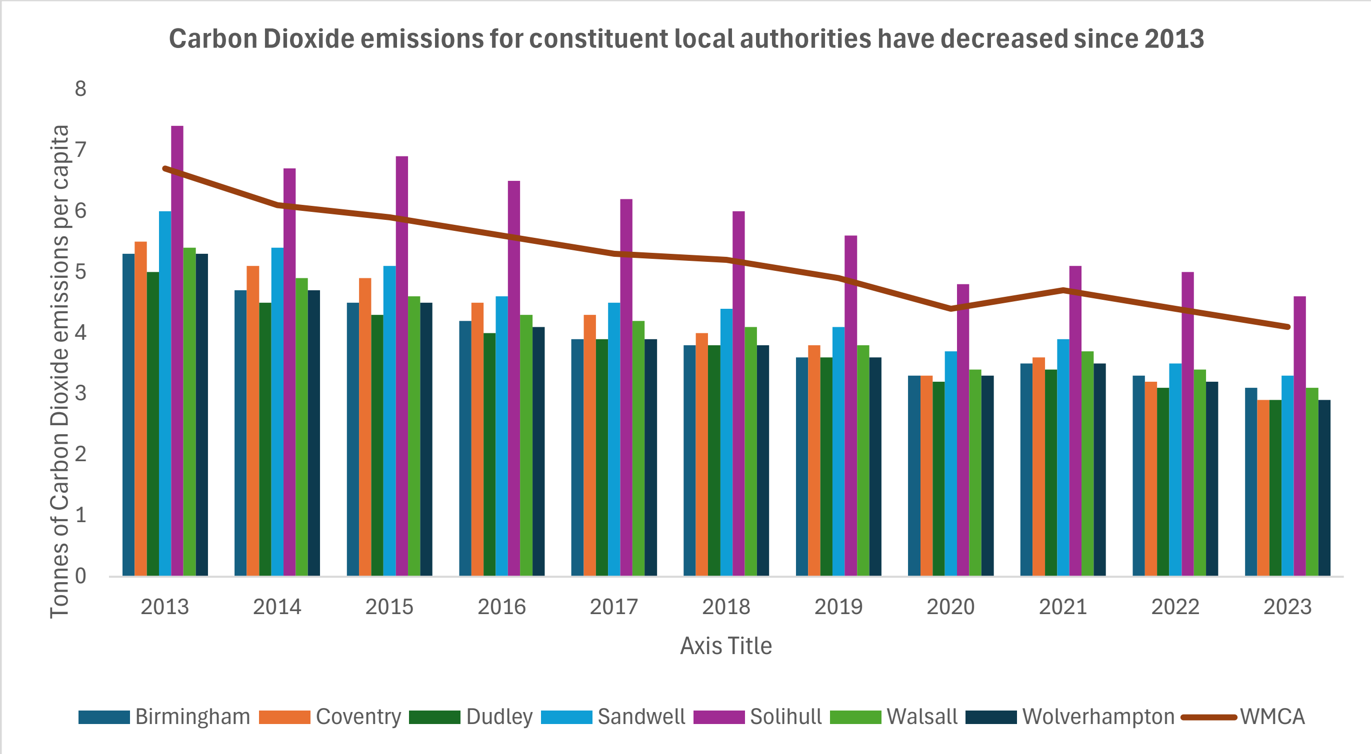
Our climate and environment are under immense pressure due to human activity, affecting air quality, polluting water courses and contributing to climate change. At the same time overuse and degradation of the planet's natural resources and its ability to replenish itself is undermining the wellbeing of future generations. Addressing these challenges is critical for creating a thriving planet, which is essential for a flourishing society and a prosperous economy. To achieve this, we must transform our social and economic systems to operate within the planet's limits while building resilience to the risks, uncertainties, and threats posed by climate change.

Continuous economic growth is not sustainable if it comes at the cost of depleting natural resources faster than the Earth can renew them. Instead, we must prioritise a model of Inclusive Growth that quality, equity, and sustainability, ensuring the benefits of progress are shared across all communities while protecting ecosystems for future generations.

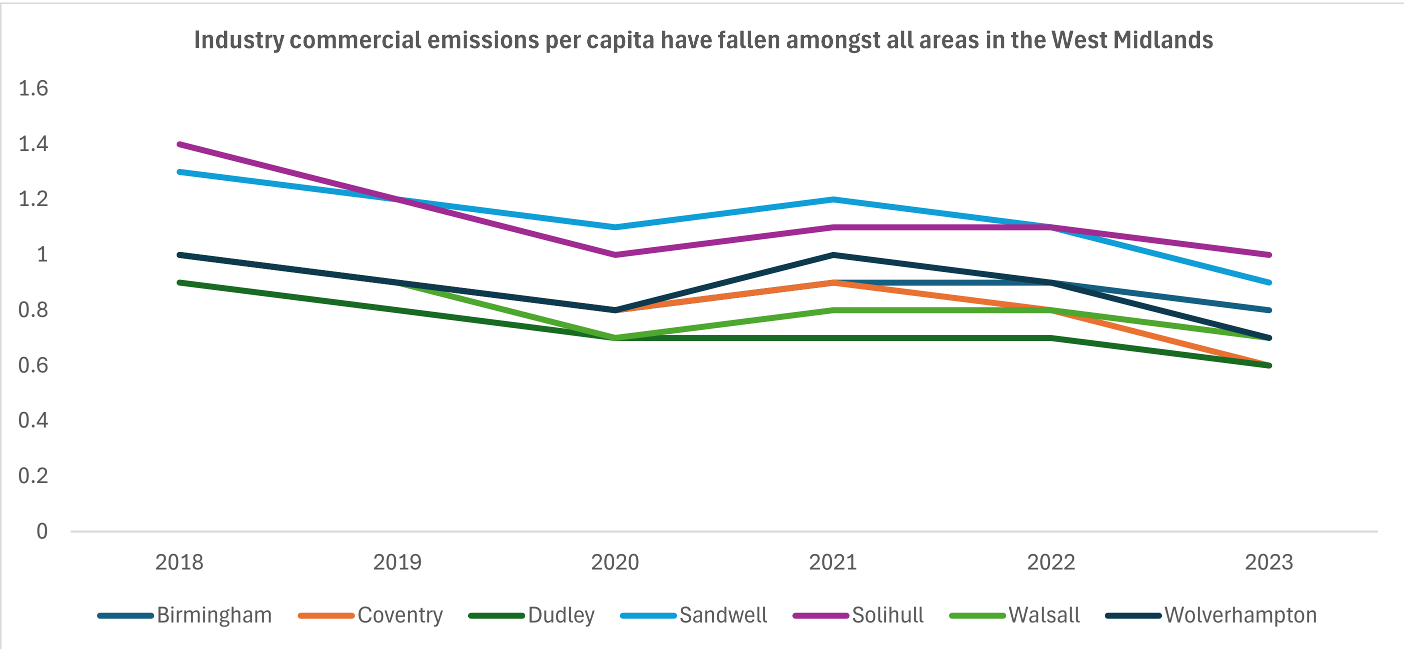
What are the current conditions?

For more than a decade, carbon dioxide emissions per capita across the West Midlands have followed a broadly downward trend, reflecting progress towards decarbonisation. However, significant differences persist between local authorities. Solihull consistently records much higher emissions per capita than other areas, partly due to the inclusion of Birmingham Airport within its boundaries. In 2023, the latest available year, Solihull recorded emissions of 4.6 tonnes of CO_2 per capita. By contrast, Wolverhampton and Coventry had the lowest emissions, at 2.9 tonnes per capita each.[98]

[98] Percentage of adults who used the internet in the last 12 months (2024) LG Inform +



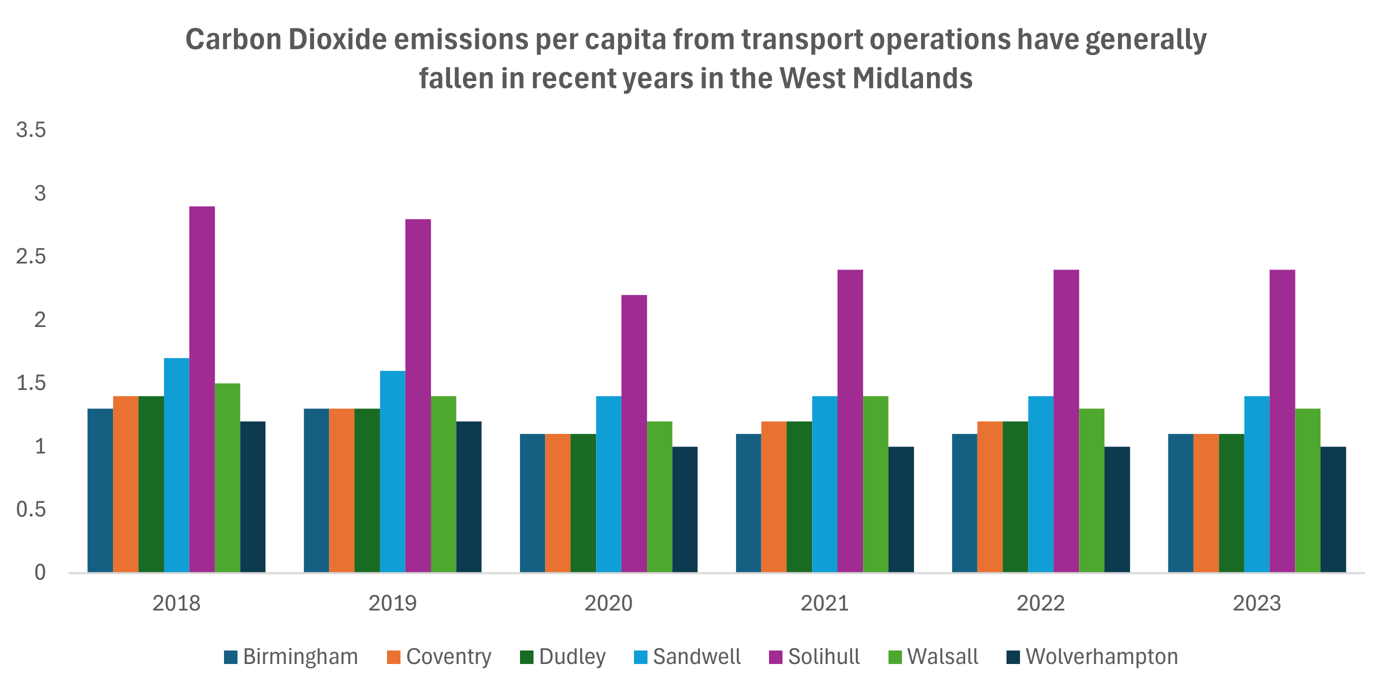
Between 2018 and 2023, carbon dioxide emissions across all industrial sectors in the West Midlands have shown a consistent downward trajectory, reflecting ongoing regional efforts to reduce environmental impact and support wider decarbonisation goals. Despite this overall decline, variation between local authorities remains evident. In 2023, Solihull continued to record the highest emissions at 1 kiloton of CO_2 per capita, while Coventry and Dudley reported the lowest levels at 0.6 kilo tonnes per capita[99] .



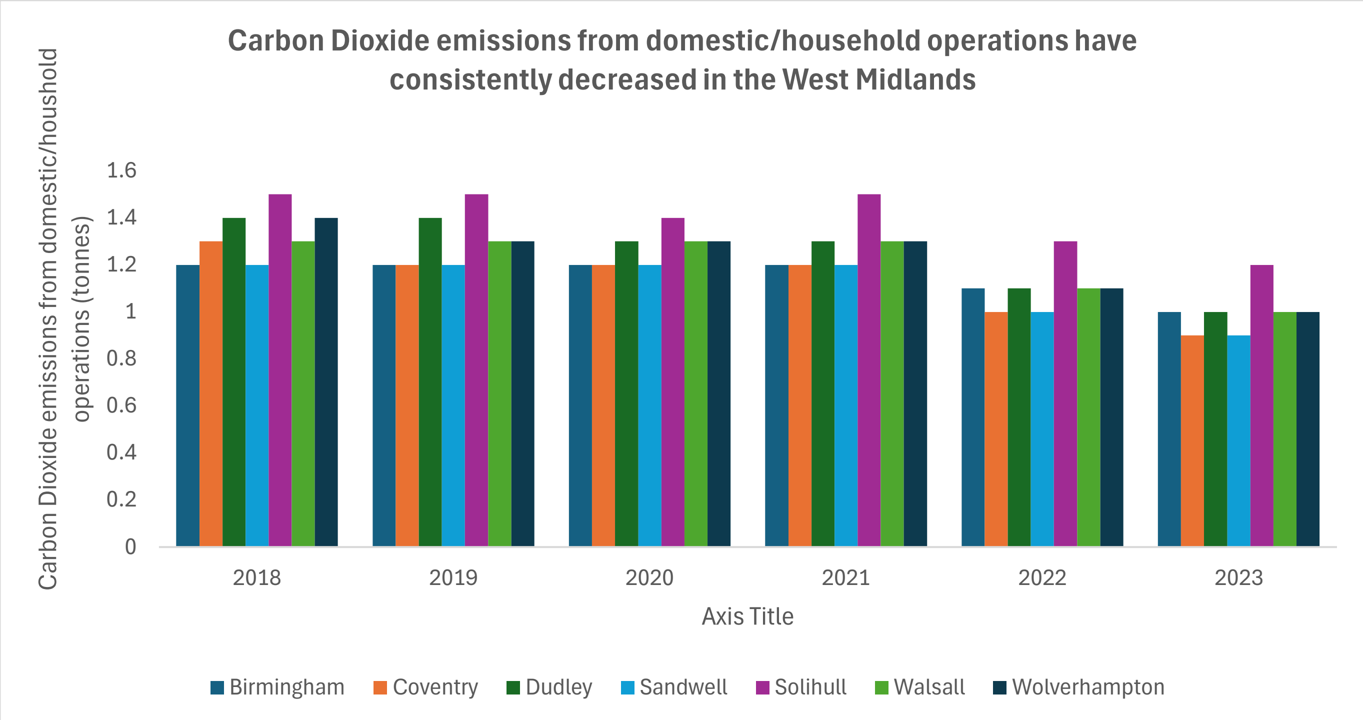
Transport-related carbon dioxide emissions in the West Midlands have generally declined in recent years. However, Solihull stands out as an exception to this regional trend; this is partly due to Birmingham Airport falling within the bounds of the district. Over the last three years of available

[99] Industry commercial CO2 per capita (2023) LG Inform

data, emissions in Solihull have remained unchanged at 2.4 tonnes per capita, showing no reduction between 2021 and 2023[100].



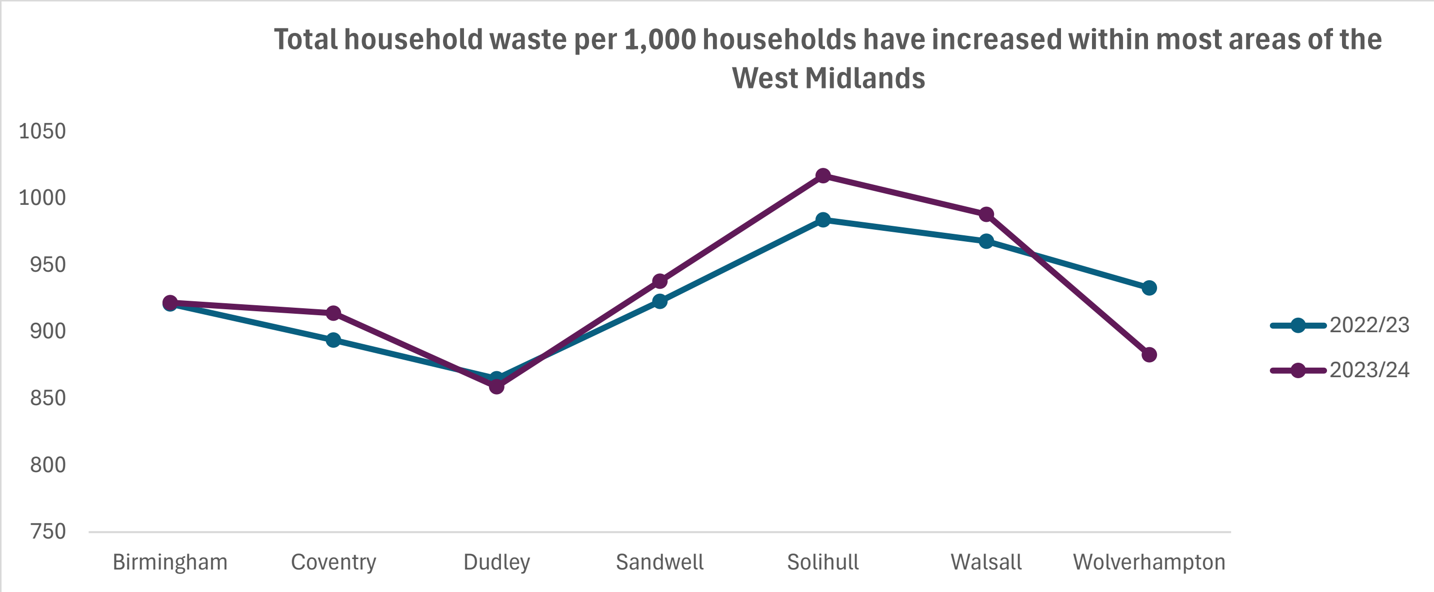
Domestic carbon dioxide emissions have continued to decline across the West Midlands, with every local authority reporting a reduction of 0.1 kilo tonnes in the most recent year of data. This consistent decrease across all areas reflects steady progress in improving household energy efficiency and reducing residential carbon output throughout the region[101].



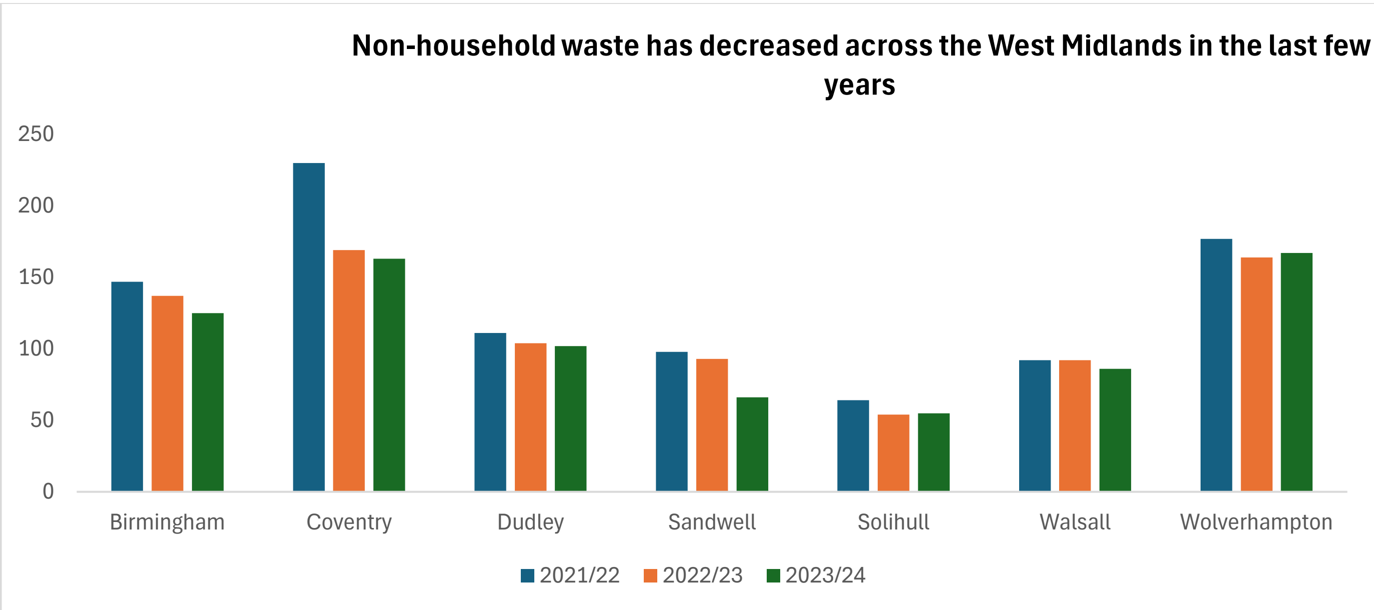
Total household waste per 1,000 households in 2023/24 was higher than in the previous year across most WMCA constituent local authorities. This upward pattern is particularly evident in Birmingham, Coventry, Sandwell, Solihull, and Walsall. Solihull recorded the most significant increase, with total household waste rising from 984 tonnes per 1,000 households in 2022/23 to

[100] Transport emission (2023) LG Inform
[101] Domestic emissions (2023) LG Inform

1,017 tonnes in 2023/24, an increase of approximately 3.35%. This highlights a notable year-on-year growth in household waste generation within the area[102].

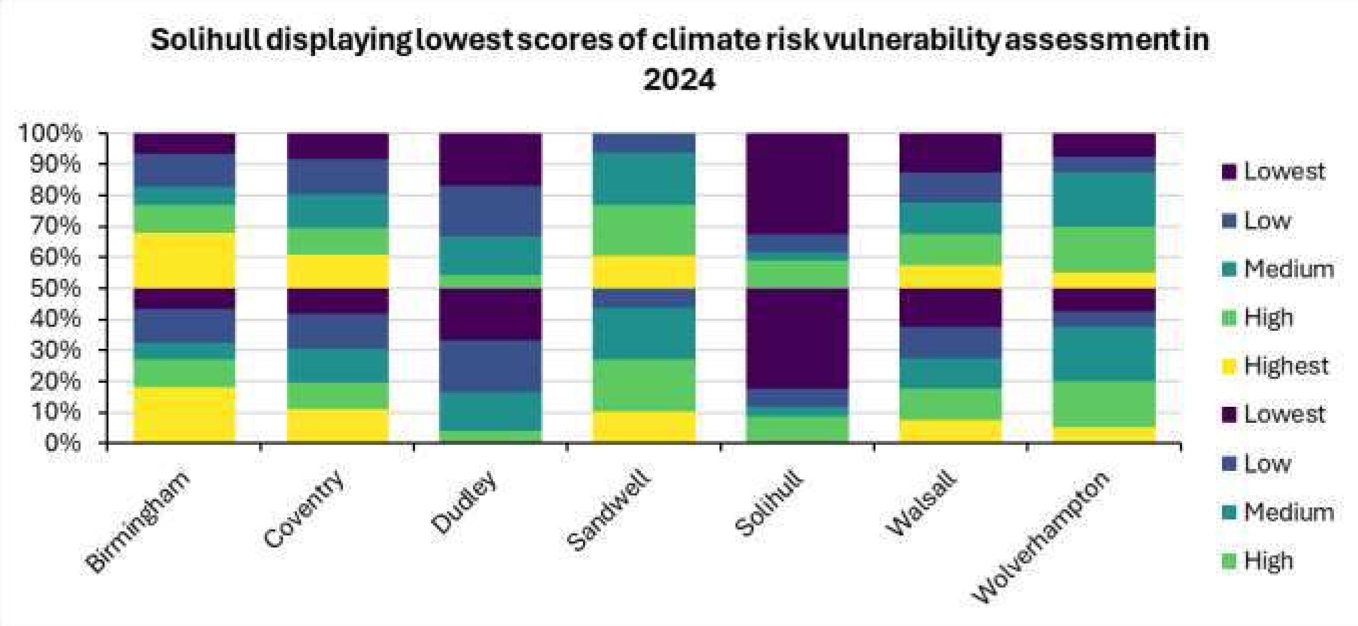


Total non-household waste per 1,000 households has decreased across every local authority in the WMCA area. The most significant reduction over the period was observed in Coventry, where levels fell from 230 tonnes per 1,000 households to 163 tonnes in 2023/24. This represents a substantial decrease of approximately 29.13%, highlighting meaningful progress in reducing non-household waste generation within the area[103] .



Within the WMCA area, the Climate Risk Vulnerability Assessment shows that Solihull has the lowest rates of climate risk in 2024, which aligns with its 65% share of households in the Lowest need category and 0% in the highest category. In contrast, Birmingham demonstrates significantly greater vulnerability, with 36% of households falling into the highest need band and only 13% in the Lowest band[104] .

[102] Total household waste per 1,000 households (2023/24) LG Inform
[103] Total non-household waste per 1000 households (2023/24) LG Inform +
[104] WM-CRVA Summary (2024) Internal within the CA



What can and is being done?

The West Midlands is developing a more coordinated approach to accelerating the transition to net zero while ensuring it supports inclusive economic growth. This reflects the growing recognition that climate action, energy security and affordability are closely linked. The region is therefore focusing not only on reducing emissions, but also on lowering costs for households and businesses, improving energy resilience, and supporting the creation of new jobs and industries.

A central part of this approach is the development of new financing and delivery models to unlock investment at scale. Work is underway to aggregate individual energy and infrastructure projects into larger programmes that are more attractive to private investors. This includes proposals for a commercial solar investment fund and wider mechanisms that use blended finance and cross-subsidy to support projects that would not otherwise be commercially viable. These approaches are intended to reduce reliance on grant funding over time and create a more sustainable, long-term model for delivery.

Alongside this, there is a strong emphasis on accelerating retrofit and improving energy efficiency across homes and buildings. Proposed neighbourhood-based approaches would deliver upgrades at scale, including insulation, low-carbon heating and energy systems, through coordinated, street-by-street programmes. This place-based model can reduce costs, improve delivery efficiency, and ensure that benefits reach a wider range of communities, including those not eligible for existing grant schemes.

More broadly, climate action is increasingly being embedded across wider economic and spatial strategies. Investment in low-carbon technologies, energy infrastructure and innovation is supporting the growth of sectors such as clean energy, advanced manufacturing and green construction. At the same time, these interventions are contributing to wider objectives around reducing fuel poverty, improving health outcomes and strengthening local economies.

Story

Story: strengthening our voice & partnerships

Telling the West Midlands' story and strengthening its partnerships is essential to securing investment, influence, and confidence in the region's future. The region is developing a clearer, more confident narrative that reflects the region's innovation, diversity, industrial heritage and future ambition. By aligning public, private and community partners around a shared vision, and presenting a compelling offer to government, investors and global markets, this big change ensures that growth ambitions are understood and supported. A strong, shared story helps attract capital, retain talent, and reinforce the West Midlands's role as a national and international engine for inclusive, sustainable, and equitable growth.

What are residents' connections to the West Midlands?

Dan Yale, Project Manager

Our connection to the West Midlands starts with the places, people and pride we experience day to day. It is felt in our towns and city centres, in the communities people belong to, and in the region's long tradition of making, creating and getting on with things. Creating a stronger regional story is about helping more people see themselves in the future of the West Midlands and feel that growth, change and opportunity are happening with them and for them.

We have the foundations of a compelling story shared across the region: a young and diverse population, a distinctive industrial and cultural heritage, world class strengths in growth sectors, and a central location that connects us to the rest of the country. But that connection to the region does not build itself and for many residents, identity is felt more strongly at a neighbourhood or local authority level, and moments of national or international attention have not always translated into a lasting sense of shared direction or momentum.

That leaves us a clear task for the years ahead: building a narrative about the region, our industrial heritage, our food, our music, our culture, our connectivity, one that people can recognise in their working lives, their journeys, their high streets and their ambitions for their families. And then it means presenting that regional narrative as part of our offer to investors, government, talent and visitors.

For the WMCA and our partners, getting the "story" of the West Midlands right can, itself, be a lever for growth. It will help us attract investment, support cluster development, strengthen business confidence and turn awareness of the region into jobs, opportunity and higher living standards for residents.

By embedding our story as part of our delivery of the Growth Plan, it will strengthen the region's visibility with investors and visitors, lead to more investment and better jobs for residents, and help align more of the region's collective effort behind shared priorities.

Residents' connections to the West Midlands are currently weak and uneven, with many people expressing low emotional attachment to the region. Research evidence suggests that the West Midlands has one of the lowest levels of regional attachment in the country. This compares unfavourably with regions such as London and the North East, indicating that the West Midlands lacks a strong, shared sense of belonging at regional scale. For many residents, the idea of the West Midlands exists as an abstract administrative geography rather than a lived or emotionally resonant identity.

Where connections do exist, they are primarily local rather than regional. Residents are far more likely to identify with towns, cities or sub-regional identities such as being a "Brummie" or "Yam Yam" than with the West Midlands overall. This is reflected in perception research showing that the most distinctive things residents associate with the West Midlands are its accent and its cities or urban areas, while a significant proportion report "not knowing" what defines the region at all. These strong local identities are not a barrier in themselves, but the absence of a unifying narrative means they have not been successfully connected into a broader, shared regional identity.

As a result, residents' connections to the West Midlands are often ambiguous or negative, with implications for civic engagement and legitimacy. The region has one of the poorest self-perceptions in England, with a sizable share of residents believing it is a worse place to live compared with the rest of the country. This weak internal connection limits residents' sense of ownership over regional institutions and strategies, including the Combined Authority. The research emphasises that strengthening residents' connection to the West Midlands depends not on replacing local identities, but on developing a shared, inclusive narrative that reflects lived experience and allows multiple identities to coexist within a broader regional story.

When we speak more clearly about where we are heading, what we are good at, and our strengths, we stand a better chance of attracting investment in ways that support stronger places, better work and wider opportunity.

Key messages about story

Residents' experience of place and opportunity remains uneven across the West Midlands. Levels of civic participation and volunteering are slightly below national average, and fewer residents believe they can influence decisions affecting their local area. While most residents report that people from different backgrounds get on well together, fewer than half of residents would describe the region as offering opportunities, activities, or jobs for 'for people like them.'

Perceptions of place also vary significantly. Solihull residents are most positive about local quality of life, while other areas show lower satisfaction. Only a small minority of residents feel that their local area has improved over the past two years.

The region's identity remains an important strength, residents frequently highlight community, diversity, and people as what they value most. However, the desire to remain living locally is lower than the national average.

Power and participation

Why is this important?

Power and participation are about people having a voice in influencing the things that matter to them. People who have power over their own personal circumstances can shape the places that they live and spend time in. Those who feel that they actively participate and shape the places in which they live and work, will feel a greater sense of belonging.

What are the current conditions?

According to the Community Life Survey 2024/25, it's estimated that 37% of residents were engaged in civic activities at least once in the last 12 months, lower than the 41% seen nationally.[105] Estimates suggest just under a third of residents were involved in civic engagement at least once in the last 12 months in Sandwell and Walsall (32%).

A quarter of surveyed residents agreed that they can personally influence decisions affecting their local area (25%), in line with 24% seen nationally.[106] Residents in Solihull (19%) were less likely to agree that they could personally influence decisions than residents in Birmingham (28%).

WMCA residents were less likely to report a desire to be involved in local decision making than nationally. Forty-six percent of surveyed residents felt it was important that they can personally influence decisions in their local area. Residents in Solihull had the greatest desire for involvement with over half of residents (51%) wanting to be involved, compared to 42% in Coventry and Dudley, although these differences are small enough that they could be due to chance.

Twenty-seven percent of residents would like to be more involved in the decisions their council makes that affect their local area, in line with the national figure of 28%. However, estimates vary from 22% in Dudley to 30% in Solihull.

Half of residents in the WMCA area were involved in volunteering at least once in the last 12 months (50%), a slightly smaller proportion than seen nationally (54%). The WMCA 2025 Household Survey finds that more time volunteering in the community is associated with greater positive sentiment about social life.[107]

[105] Community Life Survey Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Office for Civil Society (2025), Community Life Survey. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-202425-annual-publication
[106] Community Life Survey Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Office for Civil Society (2025), Community Life Survey. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-202425-annual-publication
[107] WMCA (2025) Household Survey. https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/research-and-insights/reports/household-surveys/

The 2024/25 Community Life Survey estimated that just over half of residents in the WMCA area would recommend their local area as a good place to live (52%).[108] This is substantially lower than the national average, where two thirds of residents (66%) would recommend their local area as a good place to live. There is also significant variation across local authorities, with 73% of survey respondents in Solihull recommending their area, compared with just 44% in Walsall. Perceptions of place were further explored in the WMCA 2025 Household Survey, which found that fewer than half of respondents (44%) felt that the WMCA area offers the groups, clubs and activities, jobs, and overall quality of life needed for people like them.[109] Only 37% of respondents felt that there are jobs available in the WMCA area for people like them, while 43% agreed that the region offers opportunities for a fulfilling life for people like them.

WMCA residents who responded to the Community Life Survey were less likely to want to still be living in their local area in 5 years' time than the national average. Half of respondents (50%) in the WMCA area would still like to still be living in their local area in 5 years' time, compared to 61% nationally.[110] Respondents in Solihull were most likely to still want to be living in their local area in 5 years' time, with over two thirds of residents agreeing (67%). This compares to 46% in Birmingham, Sandwell, and Walsall.

Although half of WMCA respondents want to still be living in their local area in 5 years' time, a greater proportion felt they strongly belonged to their immediate neighbourhood. Sixty percent of respondents in the WMCA felt they strongly belonged to their immediate neighbourhood.[111]

Just 9% of WMCA respondents believed that over the past two years their local area had gotten better to live in, although this figure is only slightly below with the national figure of 11%.[112] Promisingly Wolverhampton had a greater proportion than the national average, with 14% of residents believing that their local area had gotten better to live in over the past two years. This compares to just 5% of residents agreeing in Dudley. Although these differences are small enough that they could be due to chance.

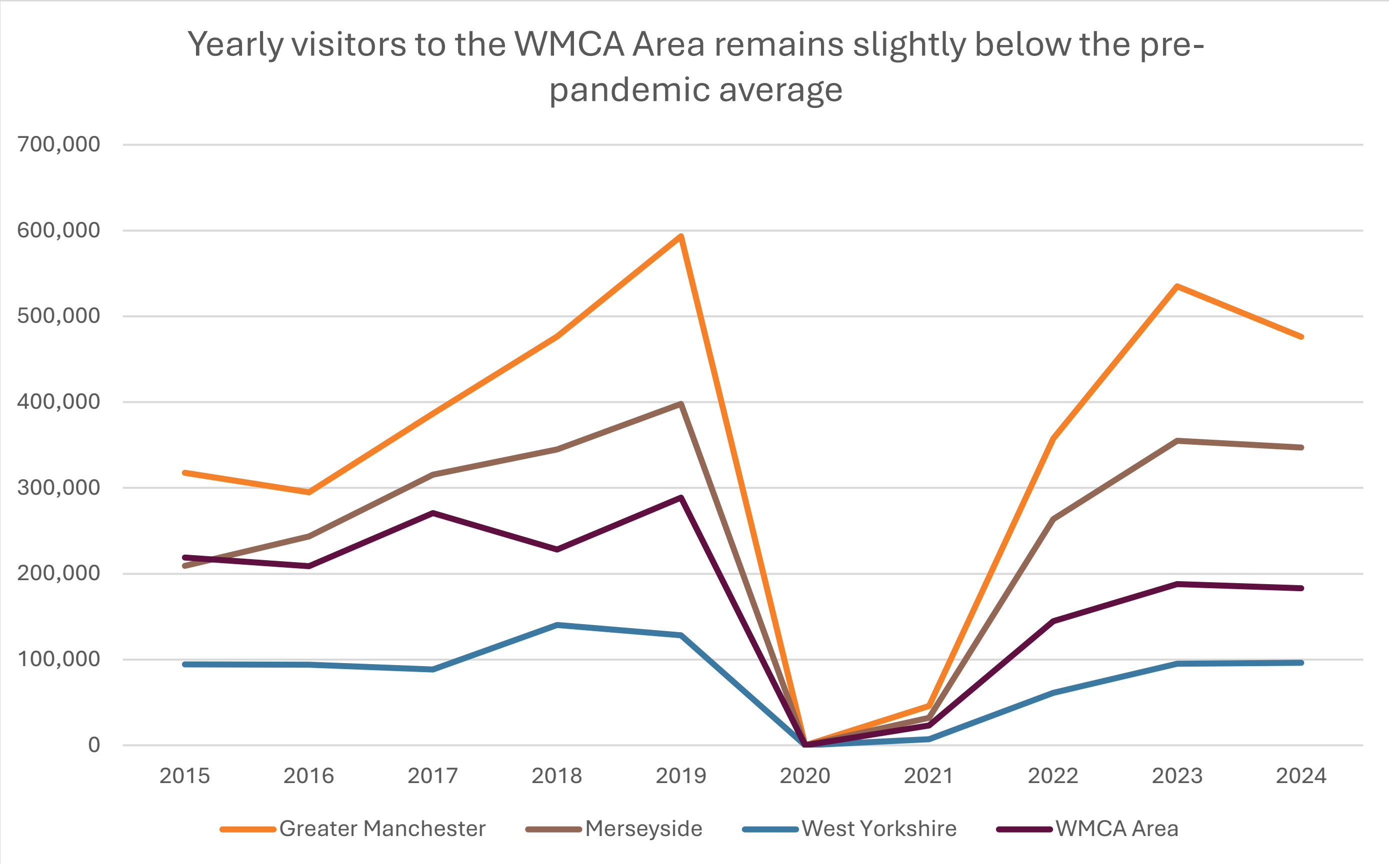
Just under two-thirds of respondents were satisfied with green and natural spaces in their local area, in the WMCA. This is substantially lower than the 75% seen nationally.[113] However, respondents in Solihull were more likely to be satisfied with green or blue spaces, with 81% satisfied. This compares to 58% seen in Sandwell and Walsall.

Over three-quarters of residents agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. Positive relationships with other people living in the region was also identified as a strength of the West Midlands by the WMCA 2025 Household survey. When asked, the residents of the WMCA find people to be the most special thing about their local area. The WMCA Household survey 2025 explored what residents in the WMCA believe is special about

[108] Community Life Survey Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Office for Civil Society (2025), Community Life Survey. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-202425-annual-publication
[109] WMCA (2025) Household Survey. https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/research-and-insights/reports/household-surveys/
[110] Community Life Survey Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Office for Civil Society (2025), Community Life Survey. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-202425-annual-publication
[111] Community Life Survey Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Office for Civil Society (2025), Community Life Survey. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-202425-annual-publication
[112] Community Life Survey Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Office for Civil Society (2025), Community Life Survey. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-202425-annual-publication
[113] Community Life Survey Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Office for Civil Society (2025), Community Life Survey. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-202425-annual-publication

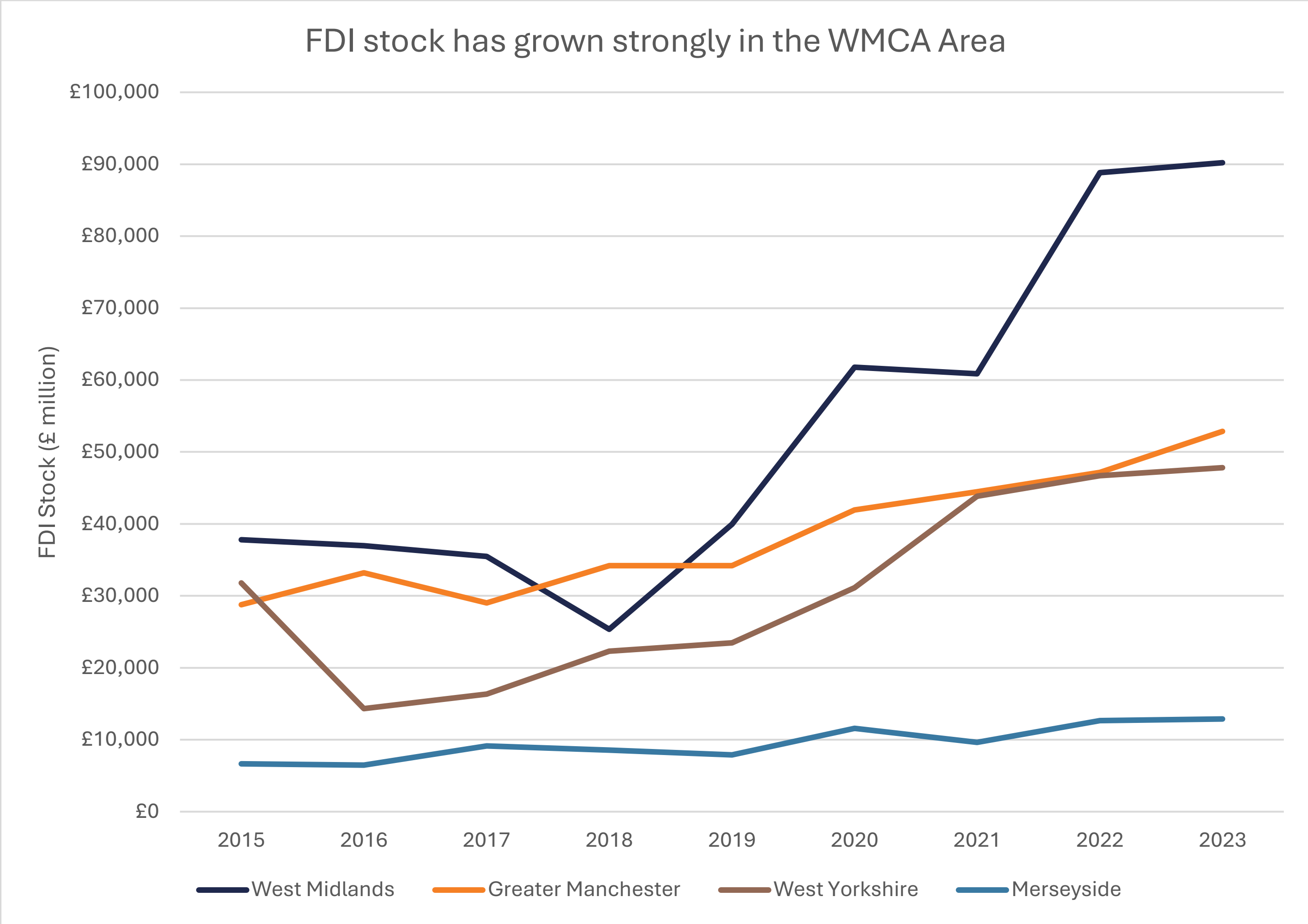
their local area and the people was most commonly cited, 29% of the time.[114] With residents saying "People from different backgrounds have integrated", "Feels like family" and "It's a very supportive society, we all wave and greet each other whenever we see each other outside the house." However, one in five respondents (21%) said there was nothing special about their area.

When we consider the attractiveness of the WMCA area as a place to visit and invest in, we can look to visitor data for the first element. Latest data shows that the WMCA area is yet to recover its pre-pandemic visitor levels.[115] Before the pandemic, visitor levels averaged 243,000 per year (2015-2019). In 2024 (latest data), the WMCA area saw 183,000 visitors. This is significantly lower than places with distinct identities and regional brands such as Manchester and Liverpool, but above places like West Yorkshire.



Another common measure of attractiveness is investments by foreign nationals or companies into a region. In 2023 (latest data) the WMCA area had the highest level of foreign direct investment (FDI) stocks of any combined authority area outside London.[116] Indeed, stocks grew strongly over the preceding five years. This suggests that the WMCA area is an attractive place in which to invest – because it is getting more than comparator regions.

[114] WMCA (2025) Household Survey. https://www.wmca.org.uk/what-we-do/research-and-insights/reports/household-surveys/
[115] ONS (2025) Travel trends estimates: overseas residents in the UK. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/leisureandtourism/datasets/overseasresidentsvisitstotheuk
[116] ONS (2025) Foreign direct investment involving UK companies by UK country and region, (directional): inward. https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/balanceofpayments/datasets/foreigndirectinvestmentinvolvingukcompaniesbyukcountryandregiondirectionalinward



What can and is being done?

Over the past year, the West Midlands has continued to strengthen how residents are engaged in shaping public services, building on its inclusive communities approach as a core way of working. There has been a growing focus on public service innovation, using citizen insight to design services that are more responsive, better aligned with lived experience, and deliver improved value for public money. This complements wider regional mechanisms, including independent taskforces on homelessness and race equality, the Young Combined Authority, and ongoing partnership working with the faith sector. Together, these approaches are helping to embed citizen voice more consistently across policy and service delivery.

The WMCA's collaborative community engagement approach represents a shift from one-off consultation towards a more sustained and embedded model of engagement. By combining regional data with inclusive, deliberative approaches—such as resident conversations, co-production and a regional residents' assembly—the aim is to build a deeper and more consistent understanding of lived experience across all seven constituent authorities. Developed in partnership with local authorities, this approach seeks to reduce duplication, align insight across local and regional levels, and support more informed and trusted decision-making. In doing so, it will help to strengthen public confidence in devolved governance and shape a more shared regional future.

Delivery of this approach relies on strong system leadership and partnership working. Governance structures such as taskforces, boards and strategic partnerships are bringing together local authorities, public services, businesses and community organisations to coordinate activity and align priorities. This reflects the complexity of the challenges being addressed, which cut across multiple policy areas and require collective action to achieve meaningful change.

At the same time, improved use of data and evidence is strengthening decision-making across the region. Shared analytical tools and platforms are helping partners build a common understanding of need, identify opportunities, and track progress over time. This is enabling more targeted interventions and supporting a more consistent, evidence-led approach to delivery.

Engagement with residents is also becoming increasingly central to how strategies are developed. Initiatives such as the West Midlands Residents Assembly are helping to shape key policies, including the Spatial Development Strategy, while also building a stronger shared narrative for the region. Taken together, these developments point towards a more collaborative, transparent and adaptive approach to delivery; placing partnership, evidence and citizen voice at the heart of how the West Midlands works.

Table of metrics

People

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Demographics and communities	Mid-year population estimate	3,036,605 (Mid-2024)	2,994,216 (Mid-2023)	57,932,470 (England)
Demographics and communities	Internal migration net flow	28,112 (Mid-2024)	31,844 (Mid-2023)	-18,404 (England)
Demographics and communities	International migration net flow	61,417 (Mid-2024)	56,983 (Mid-2023)	667,467 (England)
Demographics and communities	Median age	37.4 years (Mid-2024)	38.2 years (Mid-2023)	40.2 years (England)
Demographics and communities	Ethnicity	55.8% of the population is White British (2021)	NA	71.4% White British (England)
Demographics and communities	Disability	19.1% disabled (2021)	NA	17.7% disabled (England)
Demographics and communities	Sex	51% women 49% men (2021)	NA	NA
Demographics and communities	Gender identity – transgender or non-binary	1 in 400 people identify as transgender or non-binary (2021)	NA	NA
Demographics and communities	Gender identity – sex registered at birth	93.1% gender identity that is the same as their sex registered at birth (2021)	NA	93.5% (England)
Demographics and communities	Sexual orientation	97.1% identified as straight or heterosexual, 2.9% identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other minority sexual orientation (2021);	NA	NA
Demographics and communities	Speak English as a first language	88.1% (2021)	NA	90.8% (England)
Demographics and communities	Religion	66.4% religious (2021)	NA	NA
Demographics and communities	IMD 2025	1.4 million residents living in top 20% most deprived LSOAs.; 832, 463 residents live in the top 10% most deprived LSOAs (2025)	NA	NA
Demographics and communities	Children living in income-deprived households	49% (2023/24)	NA	NA
Demographics and communities	Children living in relative low-income households	279,643 (2023/24)	271,051 (2022/23)	NA

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Demographics and communities	Poverty rate	24% (2023/24)	NA	22% (England); 26% (London); 23% (North West); 23% (Yorkshire and the Humber); 21% (North East); 20% (East Midlands); 19% (South West); 19% (South East); 18% (East of England)
Demographics and communities	Child poverty rate	36% (2023/24)	NA	NA
Demographics and communities	Pension poverty rate	17% (2023/24)	NA	NA
Education and learning	Good level of development at the foundation stage	65.34% (2024/25)	64.60% (2023/24)	66.9% (England); 68.3% (wider WM region)
Education and learning	School absences	6.73% (Autumn and Spring terms, 2024/25 academic year)	6.94% (2023/24)	6.63% (England)
Education and learning	Grade 4+ in English and Maths	61.01% (2024/25 academic year)	NA	61.9% (wider WM region); 64.8% (England)
Education and learning	Attainment 8	44.3 (2024/25 academic year)	44.2 (2023/24 academic year)	46.0 (England)
Education and learning	Attainment 8 – Sex	42.2 boys; 46.3 girls (2024/25 academic year)	41.7 boys; 46.8 girls (2023/24 academic year)	44.1 boys, 48.1 girls (England)
Education and learning	Attainment 8 – Ethnicity	41.5 White; 50.6 Asian; 44.6 Black; 42.0 Mixed; 46.0 Other (2024/25 academic year)	41.5 White; 50.7 Asian; 44.7 Black; 41.9 Mixed; 47.0 Other (2023/24 academic year)	44.8 White; 52.8 Asian; 46.2 Black; 47.1 Mixed; 45.9 Other (England)
Education and learning	Attainment 8 – Special Educational Needs (SEN)	27.8 SEND pupils; 48.2 No SEND (2024/25 academic year)	27.6 SEND pupils (2023/24)	28.2 SEND (England); 27.7 SEND (wider WM region)
Education and learning	Attainment 8 – free school meal (fsm) eligible pupils	35.5 free school meal eligible pupils; 48.9 non-free school meal eligible pupils (2024/25 academic year)	35.4 fsm eligible pupils; 48.3 non fsm eligible pupils (2023/24 academic year)	35.0 free school meal eligible; 50.0 non- free school meals eligible (England)

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Education and learning	Apprenticeship starts	17,350 (2024/25 academic year)	17,190 (2023/24 academic year)	NA
Education and learning	Apprenticeship starts – Intermediate	3,180 (2024/25 academic year)	3,550 (2023/24 academic year)	NA
Education and learning	Apprenticeship starts – Advanced	7,250 (2024/25 academic year)	7,150 (2023/24 academic year)	NA
Education and learning	Apprenticeship starts – Higher	6,910 (2024/25 academic year)	6,490 (2023/24 academic year)	NA
Education and learning	Apprenticeships – White	10,830 starts; 6,990 achievements (2024/25 academic year);	NA	NA
Education and learning	Apprenticeships – Asian	3,400 starts; 1,720 achievements (2024/25 academic year)	NA	NA
Education and learning	Apprenticeships – Black	1,530 starts; 690 achievements (2024/25 academic year)	NA	NA
Education and learning	Apprenticeships – Mixed	1,080 starts; 550 achievements (2024/25 academic year)	NA	NA
Education and learning	Apprenticeships – Other	220 starts; Data supressed for unknown (2024/25 academic year)	NA	NA
Education and learning	Apprenticeships – Male	7,780 starts; 4,290 achievements (2024/25 academic year)	NA	NA
Education and learning	Apprenticeships – Female	9,550 starts; 5,540 achievements (2024/25 academic year)	NA	NA
Education and learning	No formal qualifications 16-64-year-olds	9.89%	NA	NA
Education and learning	NEET or unknown 16-17-year-olds	6.93% (2025)	NA	5.6% (England)
Education and learning	NEET or unknown 16-17-year-olds – Ethnicity	10.0% White; 4.8% Asian; 4.5% Black; 2.2% Chinese; 9.2% Mixed; 6.9% Other (2025)	NA	6.2% White; 2.9% Asian; 3.3% Black; 1.5% Chines; 5.8% Mixed; 5.6% Other
Education and learning	NEET 16-17-year-olds – Ethnicity	4.0% White; 2.2% Asian; 1.9% Black; 0.3% Chinese; 3.9% Mixed; 2.4% Other (2025)	NA	4.0% White; 1.7% Asian; 1.8% Black; 0.4% Chinese; 3.6% Mixed; 3.2% Other
Education and learning	NEET or unknown 16-17-year-olds – Sex	7.6% Male; 5.8% Female (2025)	NA	6.2% Male; 5.0% Female (England)
Education and learning	NEET 16-17-year-olds – Sex	3.7% Male; 2.4% Female (2025)	NA	3.9% Male; 3.0% Female

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Education and learning	NEET or unknown 16-17-year-olds – SEND	6.0% No SEND; 10.1% SEND (2025)	NA	4.9% No SEND; 9.6% SEND
Education and learning	NEET 16-17-year-olds – SEND	2.4% No SEND; 5.6% SEND (2025)	NA	2.7% No SEND; 6.8% SEND
Education and learning	Progression to higher education	47.4% (2023/24 academic year)	NA	45.8% (England)
Education and learning	Progression to higher education – free school meal	34.6% free school meal eligible; 51.3% non-free school meal eligible (2023/24 academic year)	NA	NA
Education and learning	Progression to higher education – SEND	21.8% SEND; 52.2% non-SEND	NA	NA
Education and learning	Higher tariff – free school meals		NA	NA
Education and learning	19+ achievement rate (formerly success rates) for further education and skills	4.12%	NA	3.77% (WM region); 3.55% (England)
Education and learning	19+ participation rate for further education and skills	5.91%	NA	5.50% (wider WM region); 5.17% (England)
Education and learning	Level 3 pupils continued to a sustained destination at level 4 or higher	67.1% (2021/22)	NA	65.0% (England)
Education and learning	Level 3 pupils continued to a sustained destination at level 4 or higher – Ethnicity	57.5% White; 78.0% Asian; 75.6% Black; 64.6% Mixed; 76.4% Other; 65.1% Unclassified (2021/22)	NA	59.8% White; 80.8% Asian; 78.6% Black; 69.5% Mixed; 79.3% Other; 66.5%; Unclassified
Education and learning	Level 3 pupils continued to a sustained destination at level 4 or higher – Disadvantaged	62.0% Disadvantaged; 69.2% Not disadvantaged (2021/22)	NA	58.0%; Disadvantaged; 66.6% Not disadvantaged (England)
Education and learning	Level 3 pupils continued to a sustained destination at level 4 or higher – Sex	70.6% Female; 63.0% Male (2021/22)	NA	68.1% Female; 61.3% Male
Education and learning	Progression to a top third higher education institution	19.5% (2021/22)	NA	NA

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Education and learning	Progression to a top third higher education institution – Ethnicity	25.7% White; 34.6% Asian; 21.3% Black; 28.8% Mixed; 35.9% Other; 28.7% Unclassified (2021/22)	NA	17.7% White; 24.1% Asian; 16.7% Black; 22.3% Mixed; 21.6% Other; 21.3% Unclassified (England)
Education and learning	Progression to a top third higher education institution – Disadvantaged	14.5% Disadvantaged; 21.5% Not disadvantaged (2021/22)	NA	10.8% Disadvantaged; 20.8% Not disadvantaged (England)
Education and learning	Progression to a top third higher education institution – Sex	19.7% Female; 19.3% Male (2021/22)	NA	19.8% Female; 17.9% Male (England)
Education and learning	Level 3 qualifications aged 16-64	20.24% (2024)	NA	NA
Education and learning	Level 4 or higher qualification aged 16-64	39.98% (2024)	40.32% (2023)	42.9% (wider WM region); 46.8% (England)
Inclusive economy	Employment rate	69.2% (December 2025)	69.7% (2024)	75.4% (England)
Inclusive economy	New vacancy postings	20,519 (March 2026)	24,100 (March 2026)	47,629 (Greater Manchester); 17,593 (Merseyside); 32,436 (West Yorkshire)
Inclusive economy	Employment rate – Sex	73.2% Males; 65.1% Females (December 2025)	NA	NA
Inclusive economy	Employment rate – Disability	46.9% Disabled; 76.8% Non-disabled (December 2025)	NA	56.7% Disabled (England)
Inclusive economy	Employment rate – Ethnic minority	64.9% (December 2025)	NA	NA
Inclusive economy	Youth employment rate (16-24)	45.1% (December 2025)	NA	51.5% England; 47.1% Greater Manchester; 50.8% West Yorkshire; 48.4% Liverpool City Region
Inclusive economy	Economic inactivity (16-64)	25.1% (December 2025)	25.7% (December 2024)	20.5% (England)

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Inclusive economy	Economic inactivity – Sex	21.0% Males; 29.2% Females (December 2025)	NA	NA
Inclusive economy	Economic inactivity – Ethnic Minority	28.0% (December 2025)	NA	NA
Inclusive economy	Reason for economic inactivity	84% do not want a job; 6.6% retired; 29.2% long-term sick; 22.8% looking after family or home; 30.2% students; 1.9% temporary sick; 8.1% other (Sept. 2025)	NA	NA
Inclusive economy	Workless households	18.1% (2024)	NA	NA
Inclusive economy	People claiming unemployment benefits aged 16-64	7.2% (Dec. 2025)	NA	3.9% (England)
Inclusive economy	Youth claimants 18-24 years	9.4% (Dec. 2025)	NA	5.7% (England)
Inclusive economy	Median weekly pay	£714 (2025)	NA	£770 (England)
Inclusive economy	Employees earning below the real living wage	15.4% (2025)	NA	NA
Inclusive economy	Jobs below the real living wage – Sex	12.4% Male; 18.6% Female (2025)	16.0% Male; 22.7% Female (2023/24)	NA
Inclusive economy	Economically inactive with long term sickness	29.1% (Q3 2025)	NA	NA
Inclusive economy	Personal Independence Payments (PIP)	223,553 (Sept. 2025)	NA	NA
Inclusive economy	Households claiming Universal Credit	39.7% (Nov. 2025)	35.1%	NA
Inclusive economy	Households claiming Universal Credit in employment	28.8% (Nov. 2025)	32.5%	NA
Inclusive economy	People in employment who were in graduate roles	1,139,656 (42.1%) (2024)	NA	57.8% London
Inclusive economy	People in employment who were in non-graduate roles	657,563 (57.9%) (2024)	NA	NA
Inclusive economy	Gender pay gap (median) – Work geography	13.2% All; 8.6% Full-time; -3.1% Part-time (2025)	12.3% All; 5.6% Full-time; -5.2% Part-time (2024)	13.5% All; 7.7% Full-time; -2.4% Part-time (England)
Inclusive economy	Gender pay gap (median) – Home geography	12.1% All; 5.7% Full-time; 0.0% Part-time (2025)	9.5% All; 5.5% Full-time; -4.5% Part-time; (2024)	13.3% All; 7.6%; -2.4% Part-time (England); 10.0% All; 6.9% Full-time (Greater Manchester); 10.6% All; 6.2% Full-time (West Yorkshire); 13.9% All; 5.8% Full-time (Liverpool City Region)

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Affordable and safe places	Households that approached local authorities for homelessness support	21,915 (April 2024 – March 2025)	19,252 (April 2023 – March 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Households that approached local authorities for support and were owed a statutory homeless duty	17,744 (81%) (April 2024 – March 2025)	17,310 (April 2023 – March 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Households that were owed a prevention duty	6,773 (April 2024 – March 2025)	6,825 (April 2023 – March 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Households that were owed a relief duty	10,971 (April 2024 – March 2025)	10,485 (April 2023 – March 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Households per 100,000 assessed as homeless and owed a duty	9.3 (April 2024 – March 2025)	8.4 (April 2023 – March 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Households that were homeless due to being served a Section 21 notice	846 (April 2024 – March 2025)	758 (April 2023 – March 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Households owed a main duty	5,082 (April 2024 – March 2025)	4,987 (April 2023 – March 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Households homeless due to their home no longer being suitable due to disability or ill health	150 (April 2024 – March 2025)	179 (April 2023 – March 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Households owed a statutory homeless duty with a main applicant that was registered unemployed	50% (April 2024 – March 2025)	49% (April 2023 – March 2024)	36% (England)
Affordable and safe places	Top 3 reasons for households owed a prevention duty	Ending of Assured Shorthold Tenancy (29%), family or friends no longer able or willing to accommodate (24%) and eviction from supported housing (9%) (April 2024 – March 2025)	End of Assured Shorthold Tenancy (30%), Family or friends no longer able or willing to accommodate (24%), Evicted from supported housing (9%) (April 2023 – March 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Top 3 reasons for households owed a relief duty	Family or friends no longer able or willing to accommodate (31%), Domestic Abuse (14%), and the ending of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (13%) (April 2024 – March 2025)	Family or friends no longer able or willing to accommodate (33%), Domestic abuse (15%, Evicted from accommodation provided by Home Office as asylum support (10%) (April 2023 – March 2024);	NA
Affordable and safe places	Top 3 accommodation types at the time of application for households owed a prevention duty	38% were in the private rented sector, 22% living with family and 20% in the social rented sector (April 2024 – March 2025)	40% Private rented sector, 22% living with family, 19% Social rented sector (April 2023 – March 2024)	NA

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Affordable and safe places	Top 3 accommodation types at the time of application for households owed a relief duty	27% were living with family, 17% were in the Private rented sector and 12% in the Social Rented sector.	28% living with family, 16% Private Rented Sector, 13% Social Rented Sector (April 2023 – March 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Households owed a prevention duty secured accommodation at the end of their duty	56% (April 2024 – March 2025)	53% (April 2023 – March 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Households owed a relief duty secured accommodation at the end of their duty	29% (April 2024 – March 2025)	30% (April 2023 – March 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Ethnicity of households owed a statutory homeless duty	42% of main applicants were of a White ethnicity, 18% of main applicants were of a Black ethnicity, 14% of main applicants were of an Asian ethnicity, 6% main applicants were of a Mixed ethnicity, 7% of main applicants were of an Other ethnicity and 13% had an unknown ethnicity. (April 2024 – March 2025)	43% White, 18% Black, 14% Asian, 6% Mixed, 8% Other, 12% unknown ethnicity (April 2023 – March 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Households in Temporary Accommodation	7,383 (Sept. 2025)	7,148 (excluding Dudley) (Sept. 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Households in Temporary Accommodation with children	6,449 (Sept. 2025)	6,138 (excluding Dudley) (Sept. 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Children in Temporary Accommodation	15,350 (Sept. 2025)	14,229 (excluding Dudley) (Sept. 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Accommodation type for households in temporary accommodation	38% were placed in Local authority or Housing association stock (2,836 households), 17% were in nightly paid, privately managed accommodation (1,257 households), 14% B&B hotels (including shared annexes) (1,012 households), 9% were in private sector accommodation, 7% were in hostels (539 households) and 15% (1,018 households) any other type of accommodation (Sept. 2025)	38% were placed in Local authority or Housing association stock (2,687 households), 12% were in nightly paid, privately managed accommodation (849 households), 19% B&B hotels (including shared annexes) (1,329 households, 7% were in private sector accommodation, 8% were in hostels (565 households) and 17% (1,217 households) any other type of accommodation (Excluding Dudley) (Sept. 2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Households with children in temporary accommodation for 6 months or longer	4,532 (Sept. 2025)	NA	NA

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Affordable and safe places	Ethnicity of main applicant in temporary accommodation	22% had a main applicant of a White ethnicity, 28% had a main applicant of a Black ethnicity, 20% had a main applicant of an Asian ethnicity, 5% had a main applicant of a Mixed ethnicity, 14% had a main applicant of an Other ethnicity and 12% had an unknown ethnicity. (Sept. 2025)	NA	NA
Affordable and safe places	Rough Sleeping snapshot count	158 (Autumn 2025)	121 (Autumn 2024)	197 Greater Manchester; 141 West Yorkshire; 96 Liverpool City Region
Affordable and safe places	Rate of people rough sleeping – snapshot count	5.1 (Autumn 2025)	3.8 (Autumn 2024)	6.1 (wider WM region); 8.2 (England)
Health and wellbeing	Life expectancy	82 Female; 77.6 Male (2022-24)	81.4 Females; 76.9 Males (2020-22)	83.3 Females; 79.5 Males (England); 81.6 Females; 77.5 Males (Greater Manchester); 81.2 Females; 77.4 Males (Liverpool City Region); 82.1 Females; 78.0 Males (West Yorkshire)
Health and wellbeing	Healthy life expectancy	57.6 Female; 58.2 Male (2022-24)	59.8 Female; 59.4 Male (2020-22)	61.3 Female; 60.9 Male (England); 57.9 Females; 57.0 Male (Greater Manchester); 57.6 Females; 56.9 Males (Liverpool City Region); 58.6 Females; 57.0 Males (West Yorkshire)

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Health and wellbeing	Mortality from causes considered preventable	157.2 per 100,000 – All; 207.6 per 100,000 – Males; 108.8 per 100,000 – Females (2024);	162.6 per 100,000 – All; 214.7 per 100,000 – Males; 112.7 per 100,000 – Females (2023)	145.8 per 100,000 – All (England)
Health and wellbeing	Fraction of mortality attributable to particulate matter	5.7% (2024)	NA	5.2% (England)
Health and wellbeing	Smoking rates	12.7% (2024)	NA	10.4% (England)
Health and wellbeing	Deaths attributable to drug misuse	614 (2022-24)	NA	NA
Health and wellbeing	Physical activity amongst adults (aged 19+)	55.2% (2024)	NA	63.8% (England)
Health and wellbeing	Physical activity amongst children and young people	50.6% (2024/25)	NA	49.0% (England)
Health and wellbeing	Obesity rates amongst reception age children	12.0%	NA	10.5%
Health and wellbeing	Residents reporting medium or high life satisfaction	94.8% (2022-2023)	NA	NA
Health and wellbeing	Residents experiencing high levels of daily anxiety	22% (2022-2023)	NA	23.4% (England)
Health and wellbeing	Number and rate of General Practitioner (GP) services	481; 15.84 per 100,000 (2024)	NA	15.68 per 100,000 (Liverpool City Region); 15.02 per 100,000 (Greater Manchester); 14.13 per 100,000 (West Yorkshire)
Health and wellbeing	Infant mortality	5.63 per 1,000 live births (2022-24)	5.64 per 1,000 live births (2021-2023)	4.2 per 1,000 live births
Health and wellbeing	Child death rate – Ethnicity	20.8 Asian; 17.0 Black; 12.7 Mixed; 12.0 White (2025)	18.5 Asian; 23.5 Black; 16.1 Mixed; 13.5 White (2024)	17.4 Asian; 16.3 Black; 8.6 Mixed; 10.7 White (England)
Health and wellbeing	Suicide rates	9.8 per 100,000 people (2022-24)	9.3 per 100,000 (2020-22)	NA
Health and wellbeing	Residents feeling positive about their social life	65% (2025)	NA	NA
Health and wellbeing	Residents feeling negative about their social life	11% (2025)	NA	NA

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Health and wellbeing	Average hours spent per month doing activities	11.6 Socialising with friends or family; 7.7 Exercise; 4.8 Cultural activities; 2.3 Faith; 2.3 Learning or personal development; 1.7 Community and volunteering; 1.6 Attending a sports event as a spectator (2025)	NA	NA
Health and wellbeing	Residents that feel that if they wanted company or to socialise there are people they can call on	91% (2025)	NA	92% (England)

Businesses

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Inclusive economy	Gross domestic product (GDP) (current prices)	£92.4bn (2023)	£85.4bn (2022)	Greater Manchester: £110.2bn; Merseyside: £49.2bn; West Yorkshire: £81.3bn
Inclusive economy	Gross value added (GVA) (current prices);	£83.4bn (2023)	£76.1bn (2022)	Greater Manchester: £100.4bn; Merseyside: £43.3bn; West Yorkshire: £73.6bn
Inclusive economy	GDP per capita (current prices)	£31,012 (2023)	£28,960 (2022)	Greater Manchester: £37,357; Merseyside: £31,016; West Yorkshire: £33,836
Inclusive economy	Real GDP growth	1.0% (2023)	3.9% (2022)	Greater Manchester: 1.3%; Merseyside: 0.9%; West Yorkshire: 0.5%
Inclusive economy	Real GVA growth	1.0% (2023)	3.4% (2022)	Greater Manchester: 11.7%; Merseyside: 4.4%; West Yorkshire: 6.5%
Inclusive economy	Real GDP growth since 2019	0.3%	NA	Greater Manchester: 10.6%; Merseyside: 4.8%; West Yorkshire: 5.6%
Inclusive economy	Real GDP growth per capita since 2022	-0.1%	NA	Greater Manchester: 0.0%; Merseyside: -0.2%; West Yorkshire: -0.6%
Inclusive economy	GDHI per capita (current prices)	£18,900 (2023)	£17,519 (2022)	Greater Manchester: £20,813; Merseyside: £20,431; West Yorkshire: £20,272

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Inclusive economy	GVA per hour worked (current prices)	£35.7 (2023)	£35.2 (2022)	Greater Manchester: £39.80; Merseyside: £37.30; West Yorkshire: £37.30
Inclusive economy	GVA per job (current prices)	£56,319 (2023)	£54,693 (2022)	Greater Manchester: £62,480; Merseyside: £57,573; West Yorkshire: £58,776
Inclusive economy	Expenditure on research and development (R&D) per capita (current prices)	£725 (WM region, 2023)	£626 (WM region, 2022)	England: £786
Inclusive economy	High growth enterprises	430 (2024)	385 (2023)	580 (Greater Manchester); 435 (West Yorkshire); 215 (Merseyside);
Inclusive economy	High growth enterprises as a proportion of total enterprises in the area	0.4% (2024)	0.4% (2023)	Greater Manchester: 0.5%; Merseyside: 0.5%; West Yorkshire: 0.5%
Inclusive economy	Female-led companies	19.7% (WM region, 2024)	20.9% (WM region, 2023)	UK: 19.1% (No England available)
Inclusive economy	Floorspace for businesses	33.2 million square metres (2025)	33.3 million square metres (2024)	Greater Manchester: 33.8 million square metres; Merseyside: 14.5 million square metres; West Yorkshire: 30.9 million square metres
Inclusive economy	Collective five key priority clusters areas (Advanced Engineering, Light Electric Vehicles & Batteries, Digital Tech & Creative, Health and Med Tech, Next Generation Services, and Smart Energy Systems)	47% Active enterprises; 31% Employment; 49% GVA	48% Active enterprises; 32% Employment; 48% GVA	NA
Inclusive economy	Five key priority cluster areas – Enterprises	Advanced Engineering, Light Electric Vehicles & Batteries: 16,573; Digital Tech & Creative: 4,755; Health and Med Tech: 365; Next Generation Services: 18,550; Smart Energy Systems: 3,370 (2025)	Advanced Engineering, Light Electric Vehicles & Batteries: 17,226; Digital Tech & Creative: 4,825; Health and Med Tech: 370; Next Generation Services: 18,445; Smart Energy Systems: 3,295 (2024)	NA

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Inclusive economy	Five key priority cluster areas – Employment	Advanced Engineering, Light Electric Vehicles & Batteries: 188,389; Digital Tech & Creative: 34,720; Health and Med Tech: 5,045; Next Generation Services: 163,185; Smart Energy Systems: 20,675 (2024)	Advanced Engineering, Light Electric Vehicles & Batteries: 197,568; Digital Tech & Creative: 38,950; Health and Med Tech: 5,750; Next Generation Services: 169,020; Smart Energy Systems: 18,885 (2023)	NA
Inclusive economy	Five key priority cluster areas – GVA	Advanced Engineering, Light Electric Vehicles & Batteries: £12,527; Digital Tech & Creative: £3,126; Health and Med Tech: £410; Next Generation Services: £19,874; Smart Energy Systems: £1,370 (2023)	Advanced Engineering, Light Electric Vehicles & Batteries: £11,510; Digital Tech & Creative: £3,014; Health and Med Tech: £268; Next Generation Services: £19,935; Smart Energy Systems: £1,691 (2022)	NA
Inclusive economy	Five key priority cluster areas – Productivity	Advanced Engineering, Light Electric Vehicles & Batteries: £63,404; Digital Tech & Creative: £80,263; Health and Med Tech: £71,243; Next Generation Services: £117,583; Smart Energy Systems: £72,526 (2023)	Advanced Engineering, Light Electric Vehicles & Batteries: £58,622; Digital Tech & Creative: £82,296; Health and Med Tech: £74,011; Next Generation Services: £111,780; Smart Energy Systems: £76,822 (2022)	NA
Inclusive economy	Goods exports (current prices)	£17.5bn (2023)	£16.6bn (2022)	Greater Manchester: £7.3bn; Merseyside: £6.5bn; West Yorkshire: £7.1bn
Inclusive economy	Goods imports (current prices)	£21.2bn (2023)	£21.5bn (2022)	Greater Manchester: 33.8 million square metres; Merseyside: 14.5 million square metres; West Yorkshire: 30.9 million square metres
Inclusive economy	Services exports (current prices)	£11.0bn (2023)	£9.2bn (2022)	Greater Manchester: 33.8 million square metres; Merseyside: 14.5 million square metres; West Yorkshire: 30.9 million square metres
Inclusive economy	Services imports (current prices)	£4.1bn (2023)	£3.6bn (2022)	Greater Manchester: 33.8 million square metres; Merseyside: 14.5 million square metres; West Yorkshire: 30.9 million square metres

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Inclusive economy	Inward investment projects	58 projects, 2,758 jobs (2024/25)	70 projects, 6,082 jobs (2023/24)	75 projects, 5,147 jobs (Greater Manchester); 17 projects, 1,390 jobs (Liverpool City Region); 56 projects, 2,988 jobs (West Yorkshire)
Inclusive economy	Number of social impact economy organisations	9,300 (2024)	NA	NA
Inclusive economy	Creative economy jobs	112,600 (2024)	119,000 (2023)	166,900 (Greater Manchester) 66,800 (Merseyside) 113,700 (West Yorkshire)

Places

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Affordable and safe places	Median house prices	£234,857 (Dec 2025)	NA	NA
Affordable and safe places	Monthly private rent	£994 (Dec 2025)	NA	NA
Affordable and safe places	Ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings	6.50 (2024)	NA	NA
Affordable and safe places	Proportion of income spent on private rent	29.6% (2025)	NA	NA
Affordable and safe places	Proportion of gross household income spent on mortgage payments	17.1% – White British; 19.0% – Ethnic Minority (2021/22 and 2022/23)	NA	North East; 14.3% White British; 12.2% Ethnic minority; North West; 16.4% White British; 17.8% Ethnic minority; Yorkshire and the Humber; 16.2% White British; 16.2% Ethnic minority; East Midlands; 20.0% White British; 17.7% Ethnic minority; East of England; 18.6% White British; 22.2% Ethnic minority; London; 20.9% White British; 26.4% Ethnic minority; South East; 19.9% White British; 20.1% Ethnic

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
				minority; South West; 19.2% White British; 18.8% Ethnic minority
Affordable and safe places	Proportion of gross household income spent on rent	26.8% – White British; 29.0% – Ethnic minority (2021/22 and 2022/23)	NA	North East; 25.4% White British; 25.1% Ethnic minority; North West; 26.8% White British; 29.1% Ethnic minority; Yorkshire and the Humber; 26.4% White British; 27.5% Ethnic minority; East Midlands; 26.6% White British; 25.5% Ethnic minority; East of England; 27.2% White British; 31.0% Ethnic minority; London; 36.5% White British; 37.4% Ethnic minority; South East; 30.4% White British; 34.5% Ethnic minority; South West; 26.5% White British; 30.1% Ethnic minority
Affordable and safe places	Equivalised household consumption after housing costs	£213.31 (March 2023)	NA	NA
Affordable and safe places	Non-decent private rented dwellings	120,000 (24.6%) (2024/25)	127,000 (25.4%) (2023/24)	North East: 29,000 (14.1%); North West: 132,000 (21.9%); Yorkshire and the Humber: 122,000 (27.4%); East Midlands: 98,000 (24.9%); East of England: 105,000 (20.1%); London: 178,000 (16.9%); South East: 194,000 (28.0%); South West: 116,000 (22.9%)
Affordable and safe places	Social housing stock	267,969 (2025)	NA	NA
Affordable and safe places	General needs social rent	£101.38 (2025)	NA	NA
Affordable and safe places	Additional affordable dwelling completions	2,449 (financial year 2024/25)	NA	NA
Affordable and safe places	Households on local authority housing registers	73,577 (2025)	65,355 (2024)	NA
Affordable and safe places	Dwellings with an EPC rating C+	47.9% (2025)	43.8% (2024)	NA

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Affordable and safe places	Crime rate	98.6 crimes per 1,000 people (Sept 24 – Sept 25)	NA	104.8 (Greater Manchester); 111.8 (West Yorkshire); 92.3 (Merseyside)
Affordable and safe places	Offences that involved a knife or sharp instrument	8% (Sept 24 – Sept 25);	NA	11% (London Metropolitan Police)
Affordable and safe places	Hate crime	8,468 Police Force recorded Hate Crime offences and 9,212 motivating factors; 6,930 Race motivated hate crimes, 1,172 sexual orientated motivated hate crimes, 667 religion motivated hate crimes, 271 disability motivated hate crimes, and 172 transgender identity motivated hate crimes. (March 2025);	NA	NA
Connected communities	Jobs accessible within a 45-minute public transport journey	153,348 (2024)	135,475 (2023)	NA
Connected communities	Vehicle kilometres travelled by West Midlands buses	95.14 million (2025 revised)	94.52 million (2024 revised)	NA
Connected communities	Vehicle kilometres travelled by West Midlands trains	139.8 million (2025)	139.8 million (2024)	NA
Connected communities	Vehicle kilometres travelled by West Midlands metro	2.0 million (2025)	1.8 million (2024)	NA
Connected communities	Mode of travel in the last 7 days – Ethnicity	White: 69% car; 37% bus; 37% walking; 14% rail; 8% tram; 4% cycle; 2% did not make a trip; Asian; 67% car; 31% bus; 31% walking; 15% rail; 20% tram; 2% cycle; 1% did not make a trip; Black: 56% car; 44% bus; 22% walking; 13% rail; 25% tram; 3% cycle; 1% did not make a trip; Mixed: 63% car; 32% bus; 28% walking; 10% rail; 14% tram; 6% cycle; 3% did not make a trip (Q1 2025-26)	NA	NA
Connected communities	Mode of travel in the last 7 days – Sex	Male: 67% car; 35% bus; 32% walking; 15% rail; 12% tram; 6% cycle; 1% did not make a trip; Female: 67% car; 37% bus; 36% walking; 13% rail; 14% tram; 1% cycle; 3% did not make a trip (Q1 2025-26)	NA	NA

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Connected communities	Feeling unsafe on public transport in darkness	23% – All; 30% – Female; 37% – 16–24-year-olds (Q1 2025-26)	18% – All; 24% – Female; 35% – 16–24-year-olds	NA
Connected communities	Incidents on public transport	All: 29% bus; 14% rail; 12% tram; Female: 32% bus; 13% rail; 11% tram; Female aged 16-24: 52% bus; 21%; Tram; 10% tram (Q1 2025-26)	All: 27% bus; 13% rail; 6% tram; Female: 31% bus; 15% rail; 9% tram; Female aged 16-24: 46% bus; 21%; Tram; 14% tram	NA
Connected communities	Adults who used the internet in the last 12 months	89.2% (2024/25)	90.3% (2023/24)	92.4% (England)
Connected communities	Addresses with gigabit broadband availability	95.75% (2025)	94.93% (2024)	86.73% (England)
Climate and environment	Carbon dioxide emissions per capita	3.1 tonnes (2023)	NA	NA
Climate and environment	Total household waste per 1,000 households	Published at local authority level only; not available or aggregable to a WMCA level	NA	NA
Climate and environment	Non household waste per 1,000 households	Published at local authority level only; not available or aggregable to a WMCA level	NA	NA

Story

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Power and participation	Residents’ engagement in civic activities in the last 12 months	37% (2025)	35% (2024)	41% (England)
Power and participation	Residents’ agreement that they can personally influence decisions affecting their local area	25% (2025)	25%	24% (England)
Power and participation	Residents desire to be involved in local decision making	46%	NA	NA
Power and participation	Residents that would like to be more involved in the decisions their council makes that affect their local area	27%	28%	28% (England)

Theme	Metric	Current Value (Date)	Previous Value (Date)	Comparators
Power and participation	Residents volunteering at least once in the last 12 months	50% (2025)	51%	54% (England)
Power and participation	Residents that would recommend their local areas as a good place to live	52% (2025)	54%	66% (England)
Power and participation	Residents that agree there are groups, activities and clubs available for people like them in their local area	44% (2025)	NA	NA
Power and participation	Residents that agree that that there are jobs in the West Midlands region available for people like them	37% (2025)	NA	NA
Power and participation	Residents that agree that the West Midlands region offers opportunities for a fulfilling life for people like them	43% (2025)	NA	NA
Power and participation	Residents that want to still be living in their local area in 5 years' time	50% (2025)	52%	61% (England)
Power and participation	Residents that felt they strongly belonged to their immediate neighbourhood	60% (2025)	61%	NA
Power and participation	Residents who believed that over the past two years their local area had gotten better to live in	9% (2025)	NA	11% (England)
Power and participation	Residents satisfied with green and natural spaces in their local area	64% (2025)	66%	75% (England)
Power and participation	Residents agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together	77% (2025)	77%	81% (England)
Inclusive economy	Annual number of international visitors	183,000 (2024)	188,000 (2023)	535,000 (Greater Manchester) 355,000 (Merseyside) 95,000 (West Yorkshire)
Inclusive economy	Foreign direct investment (FDI)	£90,211 million (2023)	£88,828 million (2022)	£52,866 million (Greater Manchester); £12,888 million (Merseyside); £47,818 million (West Yorkshire)

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