

# West Midlands State of the Region

2024 – 2025



West Midlands  
Combined Authority

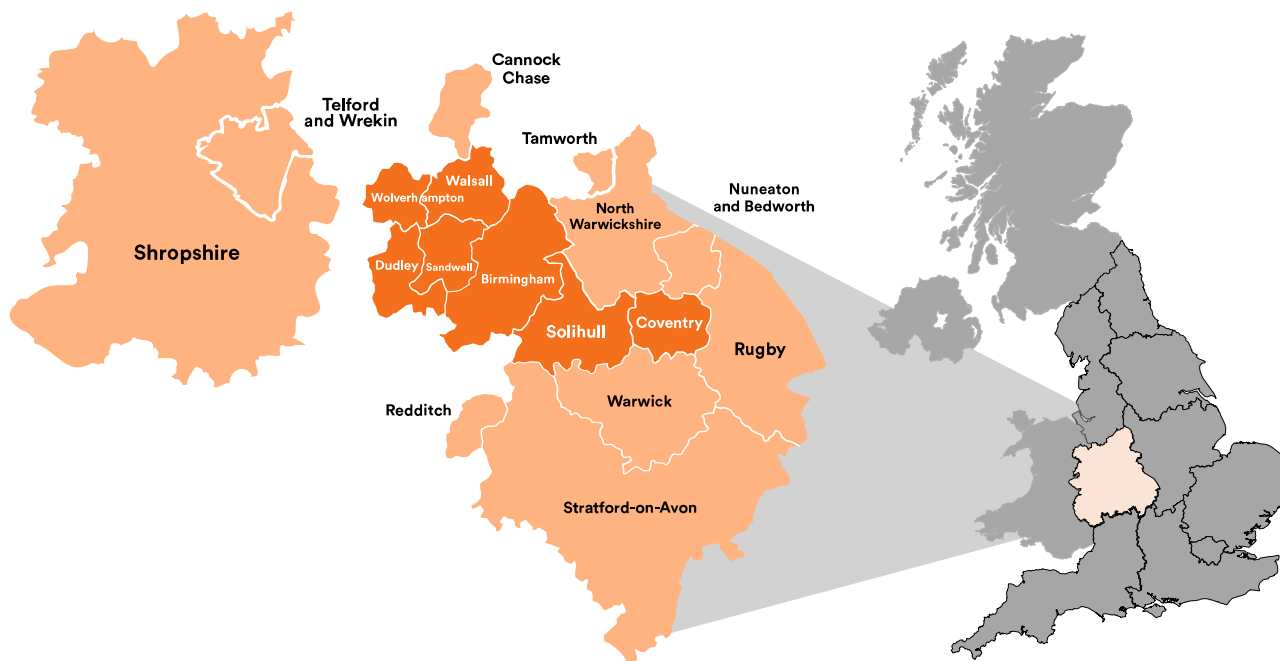
Research  
and Insights

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# Introduction

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 2024/25, sets out the latest available evidence up to January 2025. However, 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 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 (statistical region)

# Executive summary

In 2024, the Mayor of the West Midlands, Richard Parker, set out his four priorities for his mayoral term, which are:

- Jobs for everyone: investing in jobs, skills, training and apprenticeships and reducing youth unemployment and ensuring everyone has a job that pays well.
- Homes for everyone: building social and affordable homes and creating vibrant communities so that everyone will have a place to call home.
- Growth for everyone: helping businesses grow, supporting innovation and creativity and making sure everyone benefits and the environment is protected.
- Journeys for everyone: connecting communities and making travel easier, safer and more affordable for everyone.

Since 2018, the WMCA has adopted an ‘Inclusive Growth’ approach ([wmca.org.uk/inclusivegrowth](https://wmca.org.uk/inclusivegrowth)). 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.

The Mayor’s four key priorities align with the WMCA’s priority of Inclusive Growth, ensuring that investments in jobs, housing, growth and transport benefit all residents, fostering a connected and thriving community across the WMCA area.

To achieve the Mayor’s goals and the vision of the WMCA, we need to understand that the region’s challenges are complex and interconnected. We can’t treat these issues as separate problems; instead, we should see them as part of a larger, dynamic system. This means our solutions must consider how access to housing, jobs, skills, and leisure, along with local politics, history, and culture, all influence each other and the success of any intervention.

As a result of this, the West Midlands State of the Region report sets out its key messages and recommendations around the eight West Midlands Inclusive Growth fundamentals. These considers all types of investment – public, private, capital, revenue, time, attention – against a clear set of missions. These missions – the eight ‘fundamentals’ of inclusive growth – also connect to one another, ensuring that the real people, places, and businesses across the region are not lost in thematic silos.



### Demographics and communities

The WMCA area is home to 2.9 million people. It has one of the youngest populations in Europe; and one of the most ethnically diverse, with nearly four in ten from an ethnicity other than ‘White British’. The latest, mid-2023 population estimate for the WMCA area, is 2,980,936 people. This has increased by 1.1% from the mid-2022 estimate of 2,948,513 .

## Climate and environment

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CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita in the WMCA area have consistently decreased from 2013 to 2022. Over time, differences between local authorities have narrowed, indicating a convergence toward lower emissions. Industry emissions in the West Midlands decreased from 1.5 tonnes per capita in 2018 to 1.2 tonnes in 2020. Domestic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the WMCA area decreased from 1.4 tonnes per capita in 2018 to 1.1 tonnes in 2022, an 18% reduction.

Mortality rates due to particulate air pollution peaked in 2019 but have gradually decreased since, showing consistent progress across the region.

Household waste per 1,000 households in the WMCA area slightly declined between 2013/14 and 2022/23. Dudley had the lowest waste levels, while Solihull had the highest in 2022/23. Although differences in household waste levels are minimal. Household waste generally includes compostable items like food and garden waste, recyclable materials such as plastic, metal, glass, paper, and card, and residual (non-recyclable) waste. Measuring the reduction in residual waste offers valuable insights into the environmental impact of households in the WMCA area and its progress towards achieving net zero.

The WMCA area has seen a significant increase in public electric vehicle EV charging points between January 2022 and June 2024. Coventry showed the greatest increase with a 300% rise, from approximately 500 to 2,000 charging points.

**The development of local growth plans presents an unparalleled opportunity to use the necessary transition to net zero as an opportunity and engine of growth for the WMCA area. However, given that the effects of climate change disproportionately affect our most deprived communities, efforts must be intensified around climate adaptation through nature-based solutions; mitigating against the worst effects of climate change; retrofitting homes; and ensuring that opportunities from the climate transition, such as jobs, benefits our most deprived communities through retraining.**

## Inclusive economy

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From 2021 to 2022, the WMCA economy grew by 3.2% Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 3.3% Gross Value Added (GVA) in real terms, reflecting continued recovery from the pandemic. However, the economy remains slightly smaller than pre-pandemic levels. Growth was uneven across the region, with Wolverhampton experiencing a 5.9% GDP growth, while Sandwell had a GDP growth of 0.9%. Birmingham and, Dudley and Wolverhampton surpassed their pre-pandemic economic sizes, however Coventry, Sandwell, Solihull, and Walsall remain at a lower economic size. Gross disposable household income (GDHI) per capita in the WMCA area was £17,464 in 2022. Productivity indicators show mixed results, GVA per job returned to pre-pandemic levels, yet hourly productivity declined by 1.1% between 2021 and 2022, showing increased work hours without corresponding productivity increases. Median weekly pay for full-time workers in 2024 stood at £673, below the England average of £732. Permanent employment remains strong in the WMCA, with 94.7% of employed working-age individuals in stable jobs in 2022. However, overall employment in the WMCA area, at 69.6% in mid-2024, lags behind regional and national averages, though the gap has narrowed since 2016. Economic inactivity rose slightly to 26.1%. Workless households at 16.0%, are among the highest for all combined authority areas, with significant variation across the WMCA area.

The WMCA has the highest unemployment claimant rate among all combined authority areas. In October 2024, 8.3% of working-age residents claimed unemployment benefits, with youth claimants at 9.5%. Over the past year, the number of businesses in the WMCA area has not grown. However, the smaller number of businesses has pivoted towards export-led growth, defying national trends of decline. Additionally, the WMCA area is successfully attracting new investment, creating over 6,000 jobs in 2023/24, more than any other combined authority area outside of London. Despite a slight 1.1% decrease in active enterprises in 2023, there has been a 3.3% growth since 2018, outpacing national trends. The social economy in the WMCA area is thriving, with approximately 9,300 organisations providing over 100,000 jobs in 2024. Highlighting, the WMCA's resilience and capacity for economic growth and job creation.

**While our economy has grown, it has done so at a slower pace compared to the overall growth in the UK. Moreover, households are not experiencing the benefits of this growth, as their disposable income is increasing at a rate below the UK average. Our inclusive growth approach asserts that to fully unlock the region's economic potential and achieve prosperity for all, everyone must have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from economic growth. Therefore, the development of a local growth plan must not only focus on fostering high-growth clusters but also consider its positive impact on households and improving the quality of life for everyone.**

## Power and participation

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In 2023/24 62% of WMCA residents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live, below the England figure of 74%. Participation in elections remains low, reflecting broader voter disengagement. In 2023, turnout for local elections was below the England average of 32.0%, with figures ranging from 22.8% in Sandwell to 30.1% in Solihull. The 2024 Mayoral election saw a 29.8% turnout, a slight decrease from 31.2% in 2021. While general election participation is higher, turnout in the WMCA area remains below England averages. In 2024, 52.4% of eligible voters participated in the WMCA area, compared to 59.7% in England.

Civic participation in the WMCA area is below the England average, with 36% of WMCA residents engaging in civic participation compared to 41% in England in 2023/24. 51% of WMCA area residents volunteered at least once in the past 12 months, this compared to 54% in England. Volunteering rates varied between local authorities from 55% in Solihull to 46% in Wolverhampton. However, only 29% of WMCA residents would like to be more involved in local decisions.

**In 2024, residents voted in a new Mayor of the West Midlands. However, far too many residents still feel they have no influence over how things are run. The English Devolution White Paper sets out the Government's commitment towards further devolution, which creates opportunities for power and control to be returned to the people that know their places best. As the region regains powers through deeper devolution, and gains opportunities to decide how funding is spent through an integrated settlement, the WMCA and its constituent local authorities must ensure that residents and communities are fully informed, included, and involved in the decision-making process, so that changes to things that affect people's lives are done with people, rather than to people.**



## Affordable and safe places

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Housing costs vary significantly across the WMCA area, with average house prices ranging from £206,000 in Sandwell to £355,000 in Solihull. Rental costs follow a similar pattern, with Birmingham at the higher end at £1,025 per month and Dudley at the lower end at £771 per month. Private rents in the WMCA account for 26.2% of household income, below the England average of 34.2%. However, home ownership has become less affordable, with median house prices 6.61 times average annual earnings in 2023, up from 4.77 in 2013. Solihull is the least affordable area, while Coventry is the most affordable, relative to incomes. Demand for social housing remains high, with 64,382 households on the waiting list. The West Midlands region has 237,373 social housing units, with average weekly rents of £89.69 for local authority properties and £103.94 for private registered properties. Disparities in access persist, with ethnic minorities underrepresented in new social housing allocations in some local authorities.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, intended to make private renting accessible for low-income households, fail to meet rising rental costs. In 2024, only 12% of private rental properties in the WMCA area were affordable within LHA limits, a slight improvement from previous years but still far below the intended coverage of 30%. Homelessness remains a pressing issue, with 19,252 households seeking assistance in 2023/24, a 16% increase from the previous year. Despite this rise, the rate of homelessness per 100,000 households has decreased to 8.44, though it remains above national and regional averages. Coventry has the highest rates of homelessness, while Walsall has the lowest. Crime in the WMCA area has declined by 10 percent between June 2023 and June 2024. With the greatest decreases in crime from public order offences, theft from the person and stalking and harassment. The crime rate in the WMCA area (109.4 crimes per 1,000 people) compares well against other large urban areas such as Greater Manchester (114.6) and Greater London (105.8). However, it is still higher than areas such as Merseyside (97.2) and Somerset (88.9). The main crimes in the WMCA area are for violent offences, possession of weapons, robbery and burglary.

**The increase in the cost of living over the past few years continues to put pressure on household finances for homeowners and renters alike, with increases in monthly rental and mortgage costs. There are disparities in how the cost of living is felt by different population groups and across our towns and cities. Given that the next biggest costs following rent/mortgages are transport costs and food, investments and support with travel costs is also an important consideration in reducing cost pressures for households. There is a need to ensure that homes are of a decent standard, and the work to unlock key housing sites connected to transport networks is a huge opportunity to create more affordable and decent homes for everyone.**

## Connected communities

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In the West Midlands there has been a consistent reduction in the number of bus kilometres travelled by West Midlands Bus service, over the past 14 years. This has decreased from 173.27 million in 2010 to 115.11 million in 2024, representing a 33.6% reduction. There was a noticeable drop between 2020 and 2021, where kilometres travelled fall from 151.52 million to 129.15 million, a reduction of 22.37 million kilometres, a 14.8% reduction. In line with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although 2022 saw an increase, number have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

In terms of our digital infrastructure, the WMCA area saw substantial progress in gigabit internet infrastructure development in four years, with gigabit availability increasing from 49.89% of households in 2020 to 82.75% in 2024.

**The West Midlands relies heavily on bus travel for its public transport network. However, with declining bus patronage, the network has become increasingly dependent on public funding, with approximately £50 million spent annually to sustain it. As a result, the size and scope of the bus network, have decreased. Bus reform holds the greatest potential to revitalise and transform transport in the West Midlands. This includes making the bus network more reliable, raising standards, and enabling residents and communities to access employment opportunities, as well as leisure and cultural events with friends and family. Additionally, many journeys in the WMCA area involve active travel. Integrating walking and cycling with the public transport network is equally important to improve connectivity and reduce traffic. In terms of digital connectivity, the WMCA area has seen significant improvements in its 5G network and access to high-speed gigabit broadband. However, some communities are at risk of digital exclusion. Efforts must be made to ensure that connectivity is inclusive, allowing everyone to access jobs, growth, homes, and journeys.**

## Education and learning

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In 2023, 60.7% of residents in the WMCA area aged 16 to 64 held at least one Level 3 qualification (A-level or equivalent) or higher. This is an increase from 59.3% in 2022, though it continues to lag behind the wider West Midlands region (63.6%) and England (67.4%). Research indicates that individuals with Level 3 qualifications are more likely to be employed, earn higher wages, and are less likely to claim out-of-work benefits compared to those with Level 2 qualifications or below. On average, Level 3 qualifications result in 16% earnings return and a 4% increase in employment likelihood.

In terms of higher education, 47.9% of school leavers in the WMCA area progressed to higher education in the 2022/23 academic year, slightly down from the previous year but higher than both the West Midlands area (45.3%) and England (46.9%). This rate has significantly increased from 36.2% in the 2012/13 academic year. Despite regional disparities, areas like Sandwell have seen notable increases in higher education participation, although some areas like Dudley have experienced declines.

Apprenticeship starts have declined in the WMCA area, with a 32% drop from 25,190 in 2013/14 to 17,190 in 2023/24. This trend aligns with national figures and is partly attributed to the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017, which has particularly impacted intermediate-level apprenticeships.

Pupils in the WMCA area generally achieve lower attainment and progress in secondary education compared to the England average. The average attainment 8 score in the West Midlands region for the 2022/23 academic year was 44.9, below the England average of 46.4. The progress 8 score was -0.09, indicating that pupils are not making as much progress as expected. School absences have increased since the COVID-19 pandemic, with 7.6% of sessions missed in the 2022/23 academic year in the West Midlands, slightly above the England average of 7.4%. However, there are signs of improvement, with the autumn term absence rate for 2023/24 being 6.7%. 63% of students in the WMCA area aged 14-16 achieved at least a grade 4 in English and Maths, which is lower than the wider West Midlands area (64%) and England (67%). These qualifications are crucial for further study, employment, and apprenticeships.

**As more people in the WMCA area gain a level 3 qualification, it opens up opportunities for improvements to their employment opportunities, earnings potential, quality of life, and life outcomes. Ensuring that everyone has opportunities to access qualifications, especially those who have not been adequately served by the education system, will help deliver jobs for everyone; and attract businesses and investors into the region through the provision of a high-quality workforce.**

## Health and wellbeing

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Life expectancy at birth in the WMCA region is slightly below the England average, with a difference of 0.6 years for females and 0.7 years for males. Solihull has the highest life expectancy, while Wolverhampton and Sandwell have the lowest. This disparity highlights the inequalities in health outcomes across the region. The region has also seen an increase in preventable deaths, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The rate of preventable deaths rose from 147 per 100,000 in 2019 to 202.4 in 2021, higher than the England average of 183.1.

Over the last decade, healthy life expectancy (HLE) at birth in England has declined. In the WMCA region, only Solihull has a higher HLE than the England average, highlighting regional disparities. However, disability-free life expectancy (DFLE) at age 65 has generally improved since 2014-2016. Environmental factors significantly impact health, with air quality being a critical indicator. Particulate matter (PM2.5 and ultrafine particles) poses severe health risks, with the highest concentrations observed along major roads like the M6 and Aston Expressway. Despite some improvements, mortality rates linked to air pollution remain higher in the WMCA than the England average. Particulate matter and Carbon dioxide are often emitted from similar sources, such as vehicles. Reducing emissions from these sources can decrease both particulate matter and Carbon dioxide levels.

Smoking rates have declined from 17.5% in 2017/18 to 15.7% in 2021/22. However, drug use remains a concern, with 9.5% of people aged 16 to 59 reporting drug use in 2023. The WMCA area recorded 472 drug misuse deaths in 2020-22. Physical activity levels in the WMCA are slightly below the England average, with 64.0% of adults being physically active in 2022/23. The West Midlands region has the lowest percentage of physically active children and young people at 43.9%. Additionally, obesity rates among reception children are the highest in the country at 10.9%.

Most residents report moderate to high life satisfaction at 94.8%, but 22% of residents experience high levels of daily anxiety.

**By focusing on the socioeconomic causes of health inequalities, the region's below average life expectancy and high levels of preventable deaths can be addressed. This requires public services to be reformed to be more integrated and more strongly focused upon prevention, with interventions built around the way people live their lives so that the socioeconomic causes of health inequalities can be addressed.**

## Equality

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Women earn 9.5% less than men in the WMCA area, lower than England. Disabled employees face a substantial pay gap of 17.7% compared to non-disabled employees.

Households of Black and Other ethnicities are overrepresented in homelessness and Temporary Accommodation. Conversely, White households are underrepresented. Ethnic minorities face higher costs for new social housing, with some groups spending up to 40% of their income on rent compared to 34% for White households.

Academic progress varies significantly by ethnicity and gender in the WMCA area. White and Mixed ethnicity students, especially boys, underperform compared to England. Girls of Asian and Other ethnicities show strong positive progress, whereas Mixed ethnicity girls lag behind England trends with negative progress in the WMCA area.

There are disparities in rates of stop and search, with Mixed and Black ethnic groups subject to searches more frequently than people of other ethnic groups.

Travel patterns differ by ethnicity and gender. Car usage dominates for Asian, Mixed and White groups, while bus travel is the primary mode for people of Black ethnicity. Walking trips are more common among people of Mixed ethnicity compared to other groups.

Infant mortality rates in the West Midlands are higher than the England average for all ethnicities with Black and Other ethnicity infants particularly affected. Similarity, child death rates are elevated across all ethnic groups, with Mixed ethnicity children experiencing the sharpest disparity.

**To deliver opportunities for everyone, the visible and invisible systemic barriers that hold back the people of the West Midlands, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and other protected characteristic must be understood, dismantled, and addressed.**

# In detail

## 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.

### What are the current conditions?

#### Population

The population of WMCA continues to grow. In mid-2023 the estimated population of the WMCA area was 2,980,936; a 1.1% increase from 2,948,513 in mid-2022.<sup>1</sup> Across the WMCA area, Birmingham, Coventry, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton had a greater number of births compared to deaths. However, Dudley and Solihull had a greater number of deaths than births.



## Age

The median age in the WMCA area in mid-year 2023 was 36.6 years, with the youngest median age seen in Birmingham at 34.0 years and the oldest median age seen in Solihull at 42.8 years. The median age in the WMCA is 3.8 years younger than nationally.

33.8% of the population in the WMCA area is under the age of 25 and 23.8% are aged under the age of 18, similar to the same time last year.

People of an ethnic minority group in the WMCA area are, on average, younger than people of a White ethnic group in the West Midlands.<sup>2</sup> Of the under-24 population, 50.7% are from an ethnic minority group and 49.3% from a White ethnic group. In contrast, of the 65+ population, 15.8% are from an ethnic minority group and 84.2% from a White ethnic group.

## Ethnicity

The WMCA area is the second-most ethnically diverse area in the country (after London) with 55.8% of the population in the WMCA area identifying as White British, compared to 71.4% nationally.<sup>3</sup>

This report uses the term ‘ethnic minority.’ However, we acknowledge and recognise that such terms do not fully capture the diverse experiences and cultures of our different communities, nor does it capture the inequality that some minority white communities face. This report sets out to be as specific as possible about communities as data and evidence allows. The latest demographic data was published as part of the 2021 census.

Within the WMCA area, Dudley has the lowest percentage of people from an ethnic minority group, at 17.6%, and Birmingham has the highest, becoming one of the first ‘super diverse’ cities in the UK where ethnic minority groups make up the majority of the population, at 57.1%.

## Disability

Definition: People whose day-to-day activities are limited by long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses are considered disabled. 19.1% of people in the WMCA area are disabled. This is higher than the England national average of 17.7%.<sup>4</sup> Of those with a disability, 74.7% are White, 14.6% are Asian, 5.3% are Black, 3.3% are Mixed and 2.1% are from an Other ethnic group. In the WMCA area, a greater proportion of disabled people have a White ethnicity than the proportion of White people in the general population. Conversely, all ethnic minority groups show a lower proportion of disabled people than the general population. This is because the average age for people from a White ethnic group is higher than the average age for people from an ethnic minority group – disability prevalence increases with age. 34.8% of disabled people in the WMCA area are aged 65+; compared to 7.5% of people aged 15 or under.

## Gender and gender identity

51% of people in the WMCA area are women and 49% are men.<sup>5</sup>

Roughly one in 400 people identify as transgender or nonbinary.<sup>6</sup> In the WMCA area, 93.1% of the population have a gender identity that is the same as their sex that was registered at birth. This falls closely in line with the England national average of 93.5%.<sup>7</sup> Note that it is important to consider the high likelihood that not all LGBT+ people will have disclosed this to their cohabitants and cohabitants may also be unwilling to disclose this in some instances.

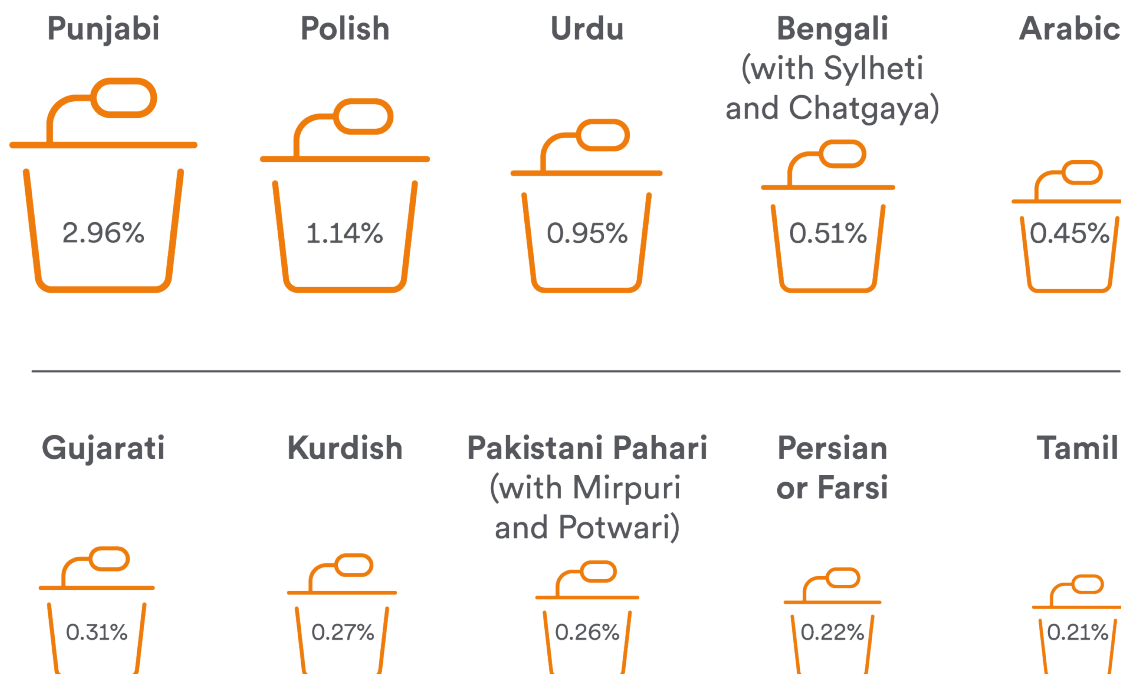
## Sexual orientation

Of those that declared a sexuality in the 2021 census, 97.1% identified as straight or heterosexual, and 2.9% identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other minority sexual orientation, in the WMCA area. 8.1% did not declare an orientation.<sup>8</sup> This is similar to the England figure of 96.6% and 3.4% respectively. It is important to consider the high likelihood that not all LGBT+ people will have disclosed this to their cohabitants and cohabitants may also be unwilling to disclose this in some instances.

## Languages

88.1% of people in the WMCA area speak English as a first language. This is lower than the national average of 90.8%.<sup>9</sup>

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





## Religion

66.4% of people in the WMCA area connected to or identified a religious affiliation in the 2021 Census.<sup>10</sup> This is the highest of any combined authority area.

The top religions in the WMCA area are: Christian (40.7%); Muslim (17.2%); Sikh (5.1%); and Hindu (2.3%). 27.9% described themselves as “no religion” – while this is an increase of 7.6 percentage points, it is the lowest proportion of people with “no religion” in any combined authority area.

The highest proportion of people reporting Sikh as their religion across all local authorities in England were Wolverhampton (12%) and Sandwell (11.5%). Of those with a Christian faith, the greatest proportion are of White ethnicity (81.0%) and the lowest proportion are of Other ethnicity (1.0%). Of those with a Muslim faith, the greatest proportion are of an Asian ethnicity (74.8%) and the lowest proportion are of a White ethnicity (2.0%). Of those with a Christian faith the greatest proportion (26%) was people aged 65+, with the lowest (8.6%) aged 16 to 24. This is likely due to a greater proportion of people with a Christian faith having a White ethnicity coupled with the White ethnicity having an older median age. Conversely, of those with a Muslim faith the greatest proportion (32.9%) were aged 15 and under, with the lowest (4.3%) aged 65+. This is likely due to a greater proportion of people with a Muslim faith being ethnic minorities coupled with ethnic minorities having a younger median age.

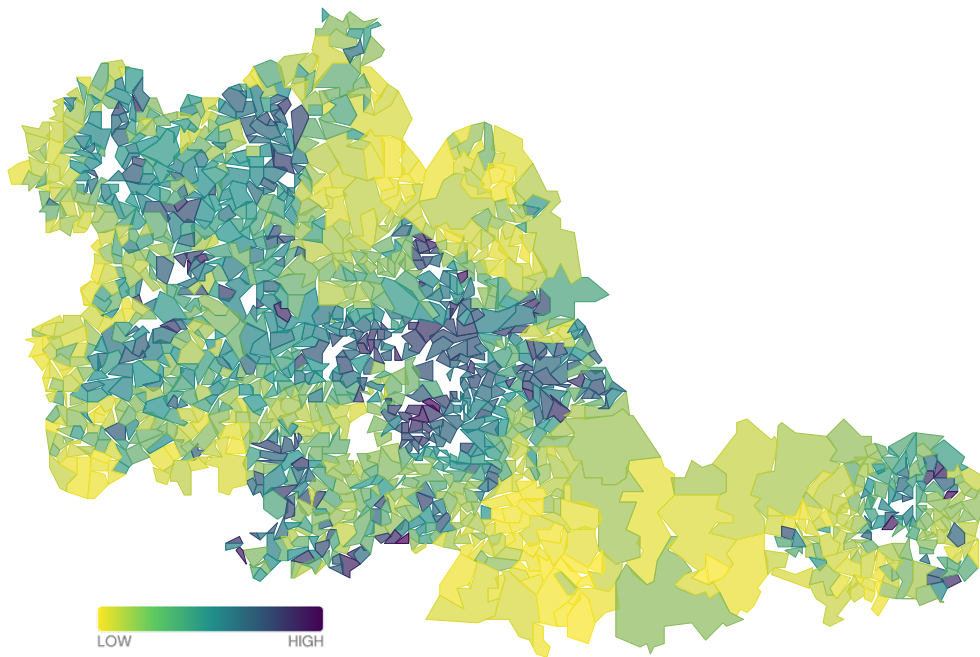
## Deprivation

The English Indices of Deprivation (2019) provide a set of relative measures of deprivation for small neighbourhood areas. It is based on seven different domains of deprivation: income, employment, education/skills/training; health & disability; crime; barriers to housing and services; and living environment.

28% of the West Midlands Combined Authority population are living in England’s top 10% most deprived areas.<sup>11</sup>

35% of children (aged 0-15 years) in the WMCA area are living in England’s top 10% most deprived areas.

## Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, overall score:



There are areas of high levels of deprivation across the WMCA. This includes Stockland Green, Lozells & East Handsworth and Shard End in Birmingham. Foleshill, Sowe Valley and Hillfields in Coventry. Kates Hill, Netherton and Brierley Hill in Dudley. West Bromwich, Smethwick and Tipton in Sandwell. Chelmsley Wood, Kingshursts and Smith's Wood in Solihull. Blakenall, Darlaston and Bloxwich in Walsall and Heath Town, Low Hill and Bilston East in Wolverhampton. With high levels of deprivation seen specifically across East Birmingham and North Solihull. In response to these challenges, the WMCA has identified specific growth zones aimed at stimulating economic development and addressing deprivation. One prominent initiative is the East Birmingham-North Solihull (EBNS) Levelling Up Zone. This zone connects key economic hubs, including the HS2 stations at Curzon Street in Birmingham City Centre and the Interchange station at Arden Cross, as well as the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) and Birmingham Airport. The EBNS area is home to approximately 375,000 residents and exhibits some of the highest concentrations of deprivation in the country, with 72% of its wards ranking in the top 10% most deprived nationally. The establishment of the EBNS Levelling Up Zone aims to unlock public and private investment, fostering economic growth and creating opportunities for local communities. By focusing on these growth zones, the WMCA seeks to tackle the root causes of deprivation, promoting inclusive economic development and improving the quality of life for residents across the region.

# Climate and environment

## Why is this important?

Our climate and environment are under immense pressure due to climate change and the overuse of the planet's natural resources. 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 prioritize a model of Inclusive Growth that values 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?

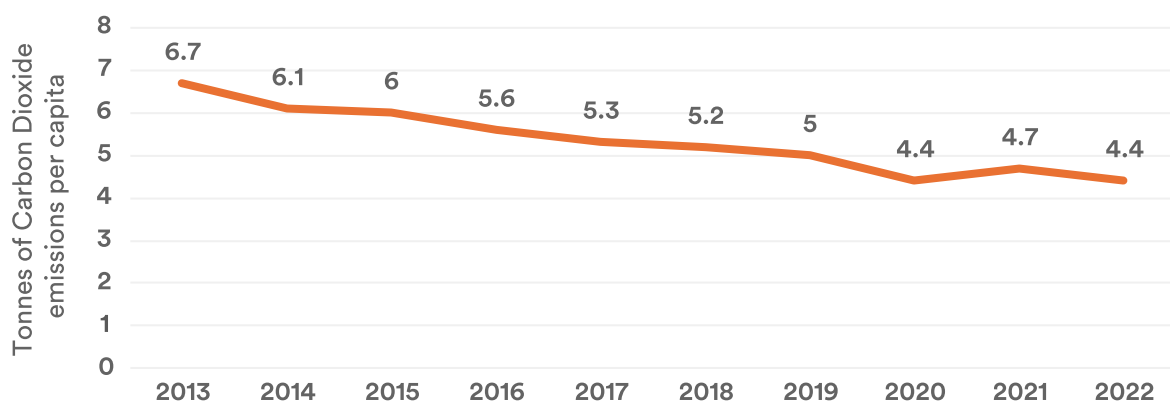
### State of Nature

Nature needs space to live and flourish, but around the globe we humans have decreased and diminished those spaces. This is especially the case in the UK. There are substantial negative consequences of living in a nature-depleted country. These include impacts on human health, and direct costs associated with adaptation to lost and damaged ecosystem services.<sup>12</sup>

### Carbon dioxide emissions

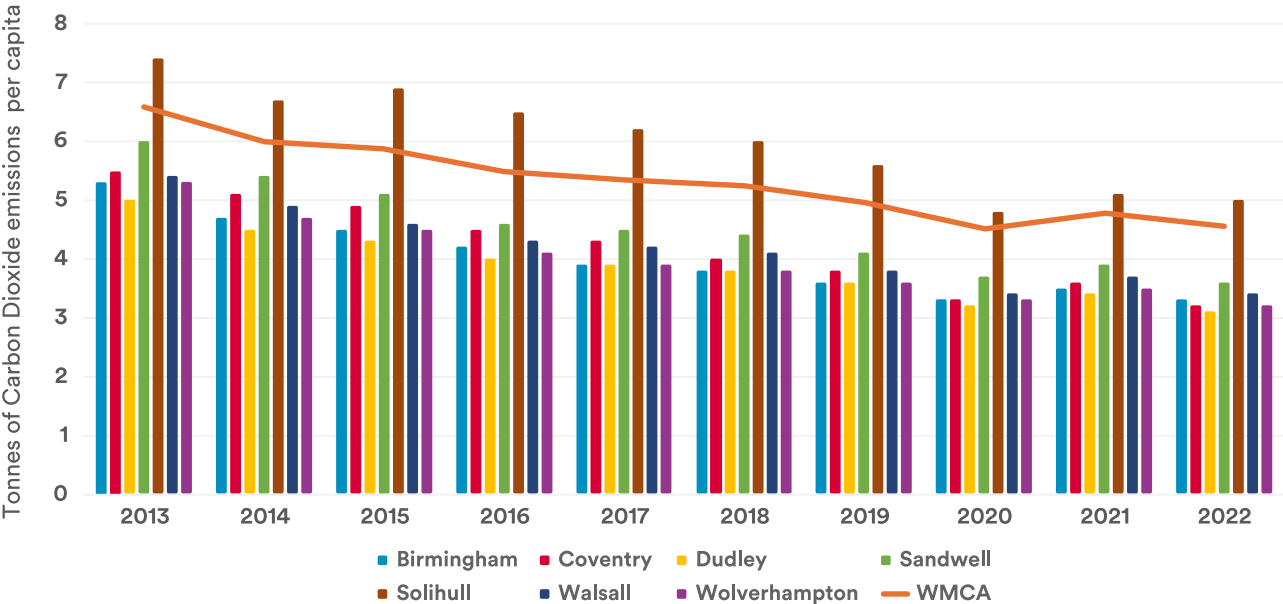
The WMCA area has experienced a consistent reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita from 2013 to 2022, reflecting significant progress in lowering carbon emissions.<sup>13</sup>

#### Carbon dioxide emissions in the WMCA have decreased since 2013



While all areas in the WMCA follow a downward trend in emissions, Solihull consistently has the highest emissions, although the presence of Birmingham International Airport is a major factor in elevated levels of transport emissions in Solihull. The differences in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions between Solihull and the other local authorities appear to grow in percentage terms over time, despite the overall convergence toward lower emissions levels across the region.

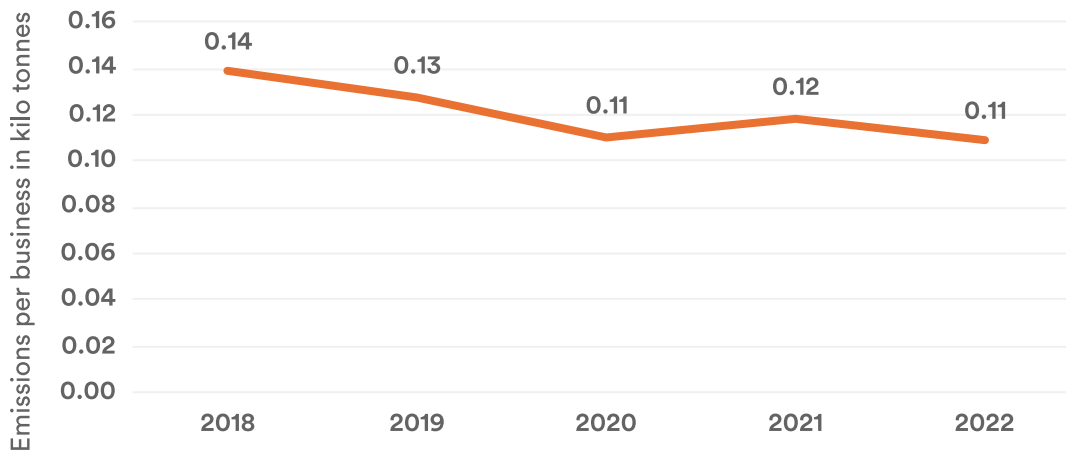
**Carbon dioxide emissions for constituent local authorities have decreased since 2013**



**CO<sub>2</sub> emission estimates per business in kilo tonnes**

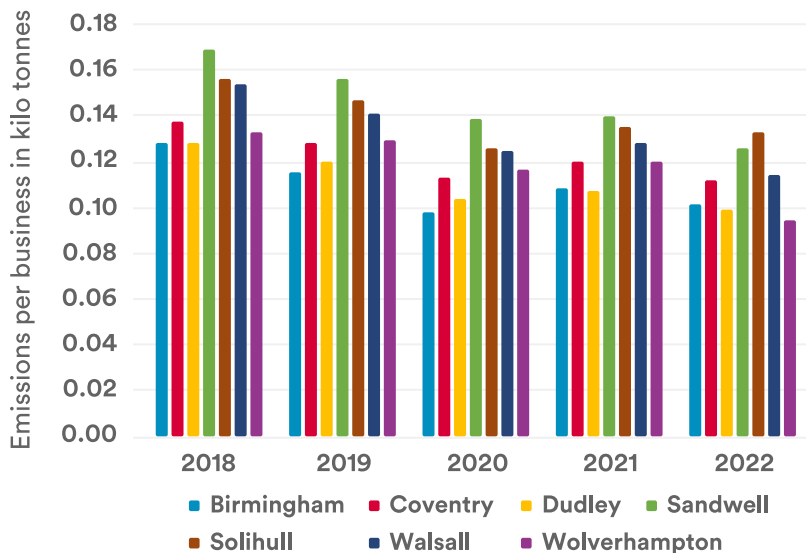
In the West Midlands from 2018 to 2022. Emissions increased from 6.9 kilo tonnes in 2018 to a peak of 8.1 kilo tonnes in 2020, likely due to increased industrial activity. A decline to 7.5 kilo tonnes in 2021 may reflect the economic slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. By 2022, emissions rose again to 7.9 kilo tonnes, indicating a rebound in activity. This trend highlights the need for sustainable business practices to address rising emissions and mitigate environmental impacts.<sup>14</sup>

## Emissions per business in the West Midlands have decreased since 2018



Emissions per business have decreased across all local constituents in the WMCA area since 2018. Sandwell had the highest emissions per business in 2018, exceeding 0.16 kilo tonnes, but saw a decline by 2022. In contrast, Birmingham and Coventry had relatively lower emissions, starting at around 0.12–0.14 kilo tonnes in 2018 and gradually reducing over time. Other local authorities, including Dudley, Solihull, Walsall, and Wolverhampton, followed a similar downward trend, with emissions decreasing by varying degrees. This overall decline highlights progress made in reducing carbon footprints at a local level.

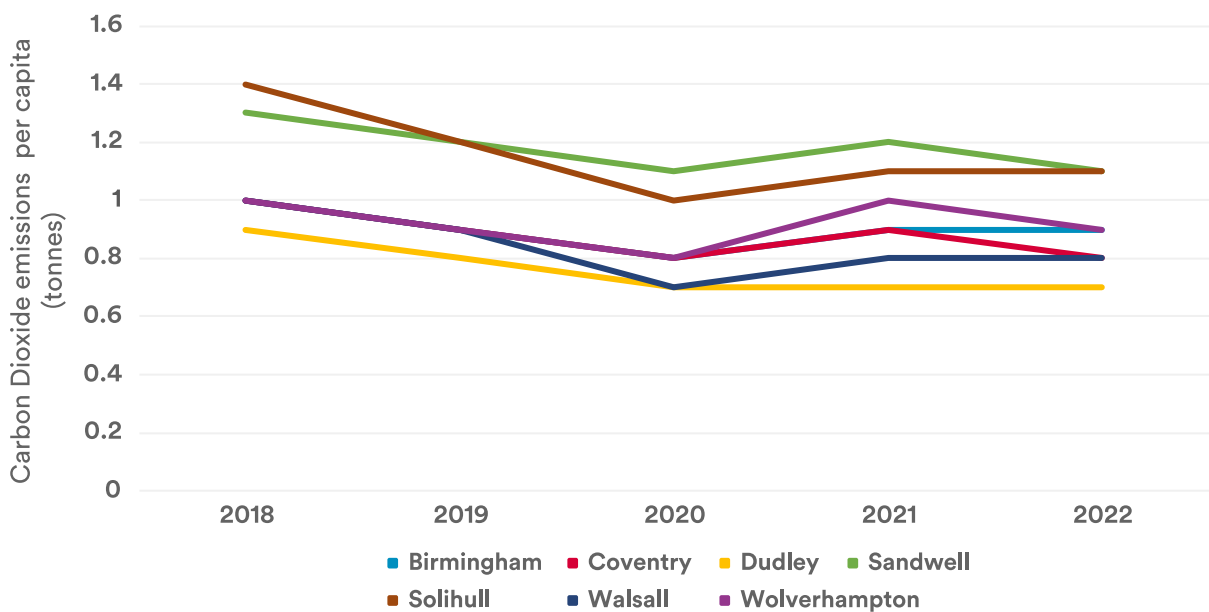
## Emissions per business by constituent local authority have decreased since 2018



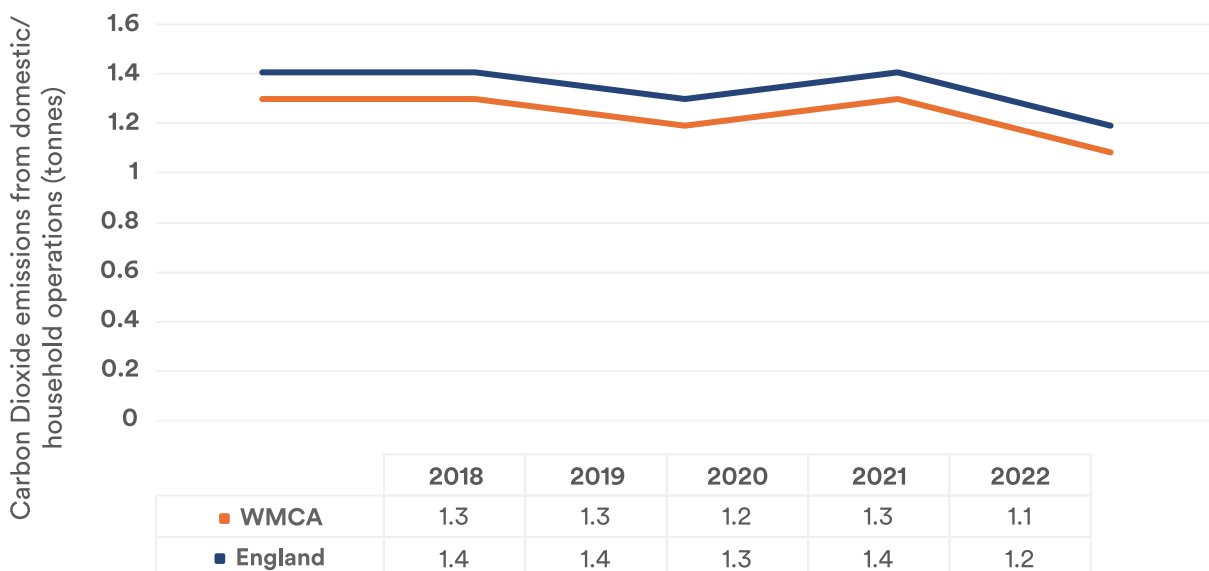
## Domestic emissions

Between 2018 and 2022, Carbon dioxide emissions from domestic/household operations in the WMCA and England showed a general downward trend. In 2018 and 2019, England recorded emissions of 1.4 tonnes per capita, while the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) had slightly lower emissions at 1.3 tonnes per capita. In 2020, both areas saw a slight decline, with England at 1.3 tonnes and WMCA at 1.2 tonnes. Emissions briefly increased in 2021 before dropping again in 2022, with England at 1.2 tonnes and WMCA at 1.1 tonnes. This suggests that the WMCA has made more consistent progress in reducing domestic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions compared to the England average.

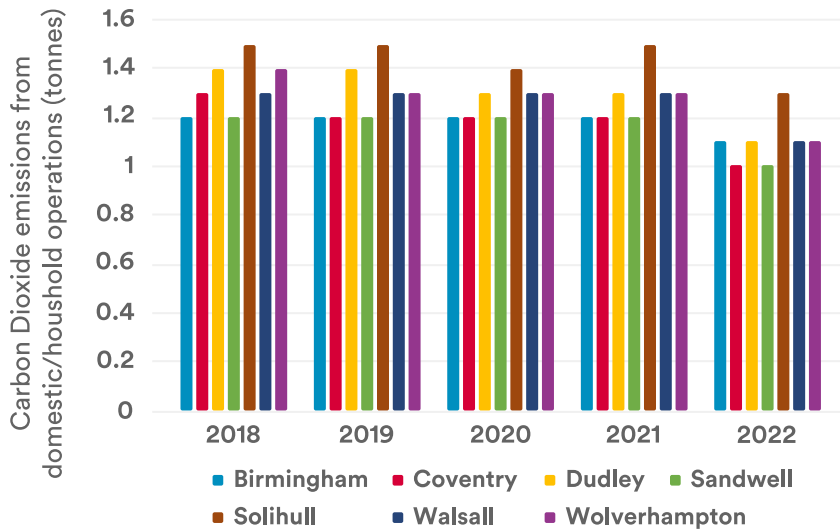
### Carbon dioxide emissions from industrial/commercial operations have decreased for all constituent local authorities since 2018



### CO<sub>2</sub> emission estimates from domestic/household operations in the West Midlands



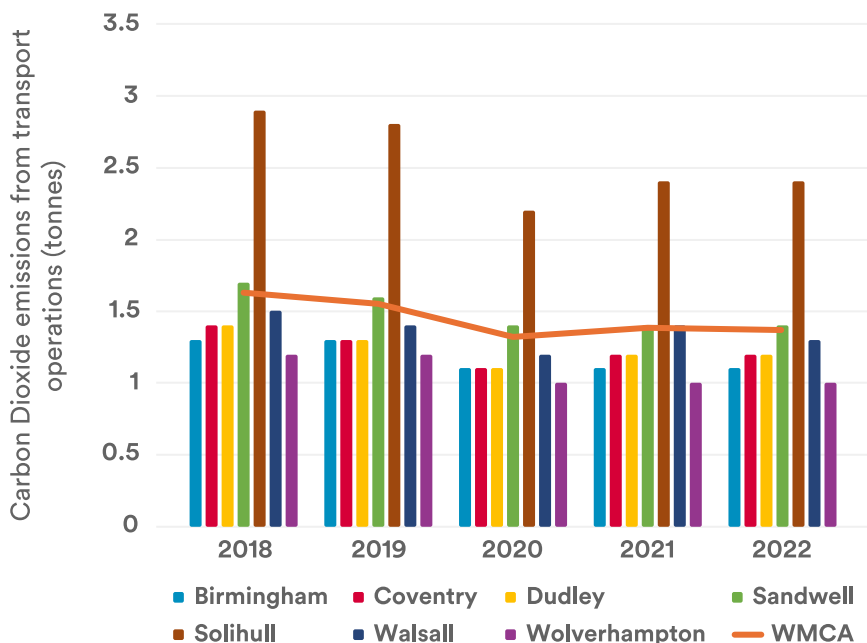
## Carbon dioxide emissions from domestic/household operations have consistently decreased in the West Midlands



## Transport

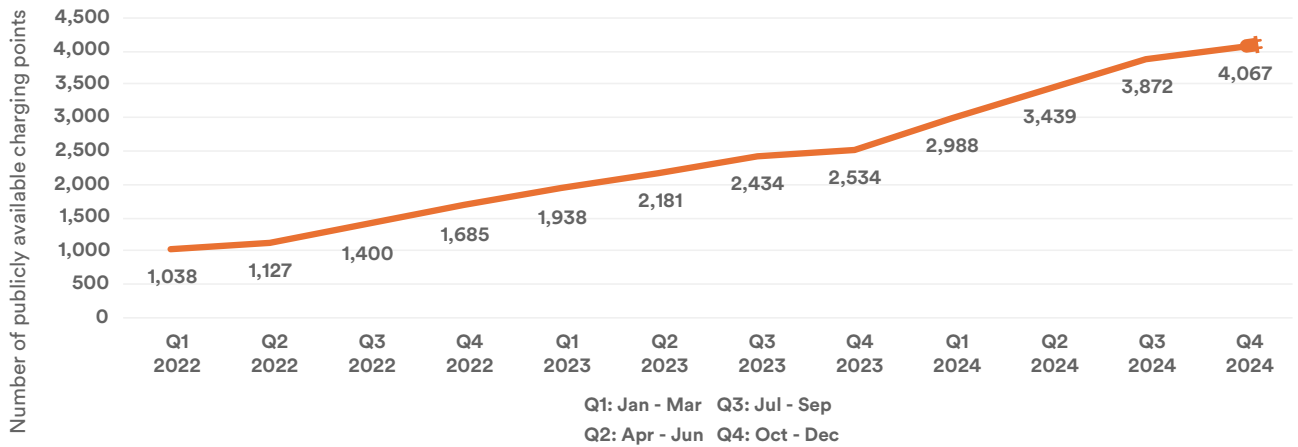
There are differences between local authorities in Carbon dioxide emissions due to transport. Solihull consistently records the highest Carbon dioxide emissions for transport with emissions nearly 70-150% higher than the other areas.<sup>15</sup> This is due to the presence of Birmingham International Airport which sits within the local authority of Solihull. In contrast, the other local authorities, including **Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall, and Wolverhampton**, maintain lower emissions, of between 1.2 and 1.8 tonnes between 2018 and 2022. Most local authorities experienced a minor drop in 2020, possibly due to reduced transportation activity during the pandemic, followed by stabilization or slight recovery in subsequent years.

## CO<sub>2</sub> emission estimates from transport operations in the WMCA



## Public EV charging points

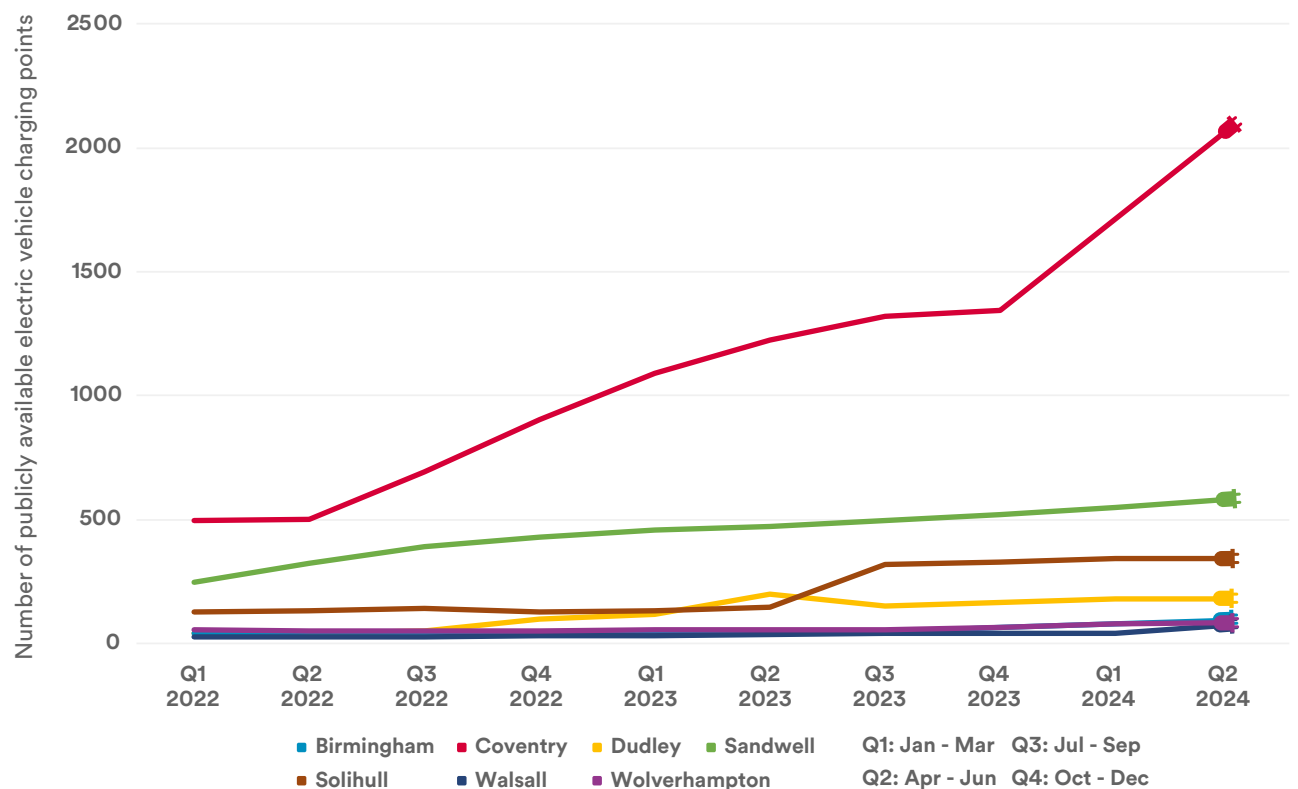
### Number of publicly available electric vehicle charging points over time in the WMCA



The WMCA has seen a further increase in the number of public EV charging points in the past few years, to 5,520 charging points in June 2024.

Coventry has shown a rapid increase in the number of public EV charging points between January 2022 to June 2024, increasing by 300% from approximately 500 to 2,000 charging points.<sup>16</sup> Birmingham follows with a 100% rise, rising from around 300 to just over 600. The number of public EV charging points in Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, and Wolverhampton remained stable but is steadily increasing.

### The number of publicly available electric vehicle charging points has risen in all local authorities, with a rapid rise seen in Coventry



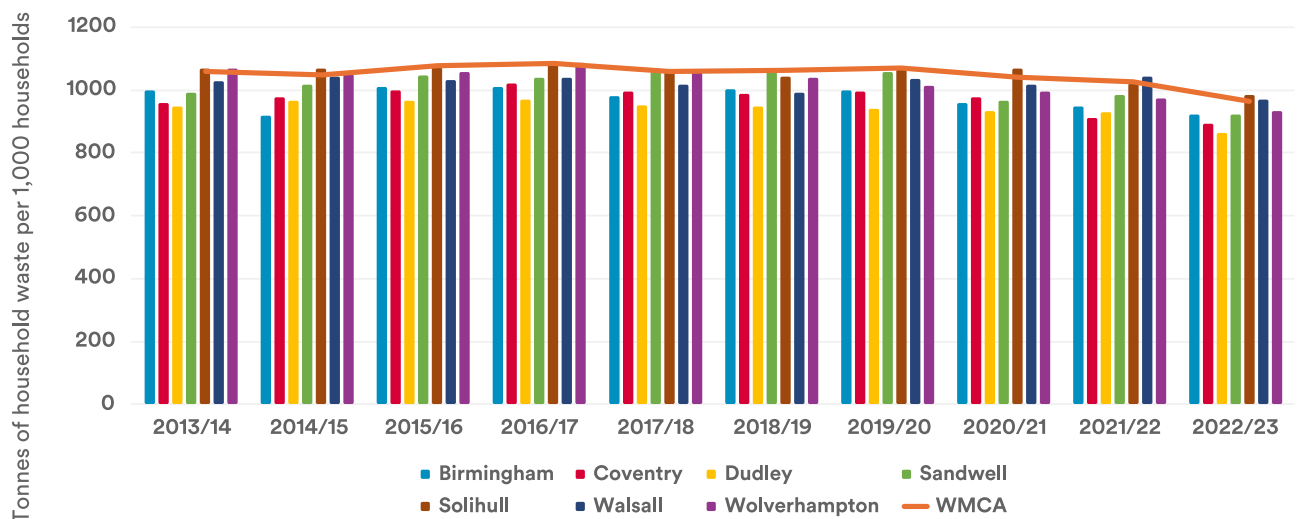


## Household waste

Within the WMCA area, tonnes of household waste per 1,000 households have seen a slight decline between 2013/14 and 2022/23. There are also slight differences in the amount of household waste per 1,000 households across the local authorities.

Overall, the levels of waste remain relatively stable over the period, fluctuating around 1,000 tonnes per 1,000 households, with no substantial year-on-year reductions or increases. Variations between local authorities are minimal, indicating a consistent pattern across the region. The WMCA average closely follows the individual authority data, reinforcing the overall stability of waste levels across the region. However, there is no clear evidence of significant waste reduction efforts leading to long-term declines in household waste production.

### Total household waste per 1,000 households in tonnes in the WMCA



## What can be, and is being done?

The WMCA region has a Net Zero target of 2041, with the WM2041 strategy broken down into a series of Five Year Plans, with the most current [plan](#) running from 2021-2026. The plan sets out the changes required in terms of decarbonising the region's homes, commercial operations, industry and transport.

To tackle the climate emergency and ecological crisis, as well as other environmental issues, the WMCA is working to create a better environment in the West Midlands for people and nature. To improve the critical issue of nature degradation and improve people's access to green space and nature, the WMCA produced the [West Midlands Natural Environment Plan](#). Since the publication of the Plan in 2021, the WMCA has taken on the statutory responsibility to develop the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which is a spatial strategy for nature and environmental improvement, setting out the region's priorities for nature's recovery, as well as mapping areas of nature that need protecting and improving.

The West Midlands Forest Partnership has been established to coordinate tree planting across the region, contributing to an overall stock take of tree planting numbers captured on the [Virtual Forest website](#). The WMCA has secured £1 million of funding from central government for the Local Investment in Natural Capital programme (LINC). The LINC programme is building the capacity and capability of local leaders and partners to attract finance at scale to fund projects that will protect, restore and enhance the region's natural environment.

As the climate continues to change, the West Midlands is projected to experience changing weather patterns including, warmer, wetter winters, hotter, drier summers and more extreme weather events. The WMCA is working to establish the risks to the region, publishing a [Summary of Climate Impacts](#) in 2022, an [Economic Impact Assessment](#), and developing Climate Risk and Vulnerability mapping, which can be found on the [Net Zero and Environment data dashboard](#). As well as increasing understanding of the climate impacts on the region, this work is also seeking to improve resilience across the region, such as through the promotion of nature-based solutions. The WMCA is working with the University of Birmingham through the WM-Adapt programme, funded through the Natural Environment Research Council, to work with regional partners and communities to better coordinate our approach to climate adaptation.

The WMCA is also working to establish a circular economy in the region, publishing a [Circular Economy Routemap](#) in 2021. The route map set out a plan to shift the West Midlands from a linear economy, where products and materials are made, used and then thrown away, to an economy where products and materials are reused and repurposed, to avoid waste and save money. As part of this, the WMCA has created the West Midlands Resource Reuse Network, a regional facilitated programme that will encourage and enable the sharing of waste and resources across the region, with a particular focus on sand, wastewater, and metals. The WMCA has also provided £100,000 of funding, as part of the [Community Environment Fund](#), for the establishment of a Reuse Hub in Wolverhampton. The Reuse Hub is providing a facility where local people are able to buy surplus bricks, tiles, flooring and other building supplies which would have otherwise been thrown away at construction sites, builders' merchants and wholesalers.

Up to 2,300 people die prematurely due to long term exposure to air pollution every year in the West Midlands and the WMCA is working with partners to ensure cleaner air in the region. In November 2023, the WMCA published the Air Quality [Framework](#), outlining a number of key regional actions required to improve air quality. Alongside the Air Quality Framework, the WMCA has secured funding from central government to run a series of behaviour change and engagement campaigns to support people living in the West Midlands, as well as policymakers, with advice on how to improve air quality. The funding has been used to roll out a region-wide sensor network to monitor air pollution across the West Midlands and a website to present key information.

In order to achieve the environmental and climate goals outlined above, it is critical that the public are brought along on the journey. The WMCA established the Greener Together Citizens' Panel, bringing together 30 residents from across the region to deliberate and provide actions for the WMCA to take on areas such as transport, climate adaptation and air quality. Behaviour change cuts across all of the environment programme area, with the WMCA's Environment Behaviour Change [plan](#) published in 2024 to outline the scale and scope of this work.

# 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.

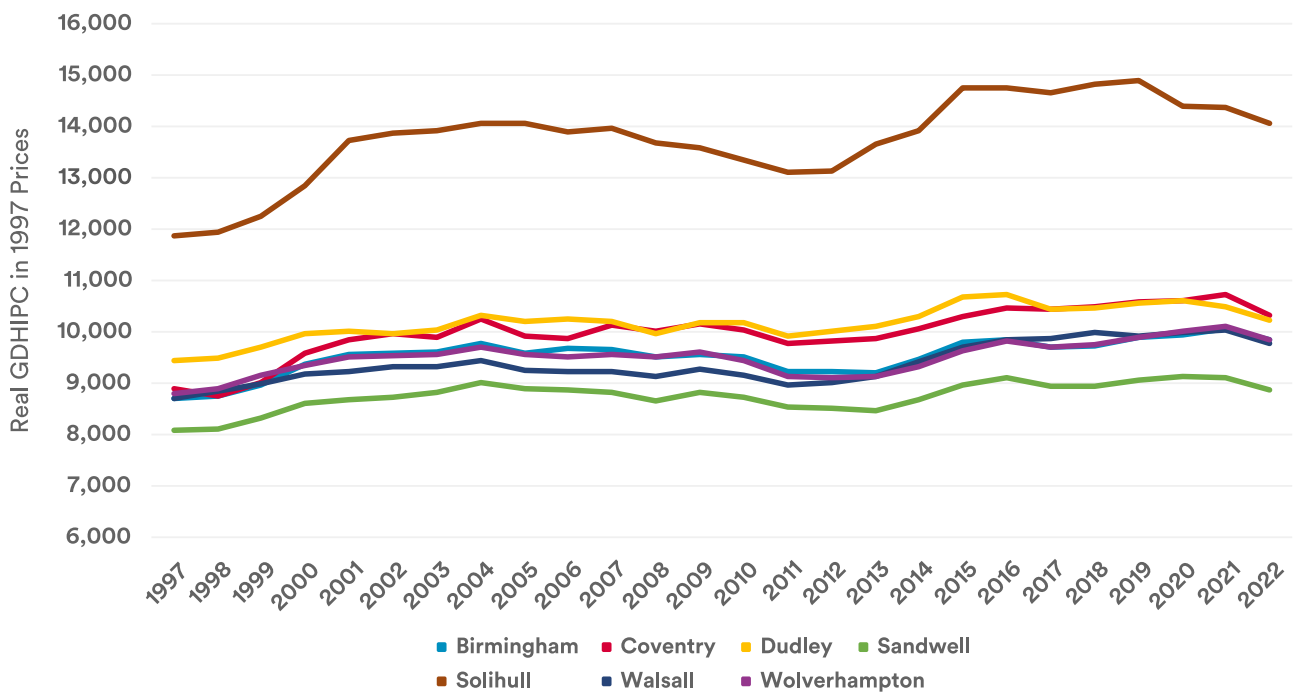
## What are the current conditions?

From 2021 to 2022 (latest data), the WMCA economy grew in real terms by 3.2% (Gross Domestic Product [GDP]<sup>17</sup>) or 3.3% (Gross Value Added [GVA]<sup>18</sup>). However, the economy remained smaller than it was before the pandemic (GDP: -0.9%, GVA: -1.1%). GDP growth varied across the region from 0.9% in Sandwell to 5.9% in Wolverhampton, reflecting continued pandemic recovery during 2022. While strong growth in 2022 pushed Birmingham, Dudley, and Wolverhampton past their pre-pandemic sizes, Coventry, Sandwell, Solihull, and Walsall, continued to lag behind 2019 figures. When looking at growth per person across the region, Coventry saw no growth in 2022, while Birmingham and Wolverhampton grew by 4.0% and 4.6% growth respectively. Nevertheless, Solihull remained the richest part of our region with per capita GDP of £48,712 in 2022.

	GDP per capita (current prices, 2022)	Real GDP growth since 2021	Change since 2019 (GDP)	Real GDP growth per capita since 2021
<b>Birmingham</b>	£30,552	5.3%	2.1%	4.0%
<b>Coventry</b>	£33,117	3.3%	-4.9%	0.0%
<b>Dudley</b>	£21,145	3.7%	1.2%	3.2%
<b>Sandwell</b>	£22,691	0.9%	-2.8%	0.2%
<b>Solihull</b>	£48,712	2.5%	-8.6%	2.0%
<b>Walsall</b>	£20,665	1.9%	-1.7%	1.3%
<b>Wolverhampton</b>	£25,595	5.9%	2.9%	4.6%

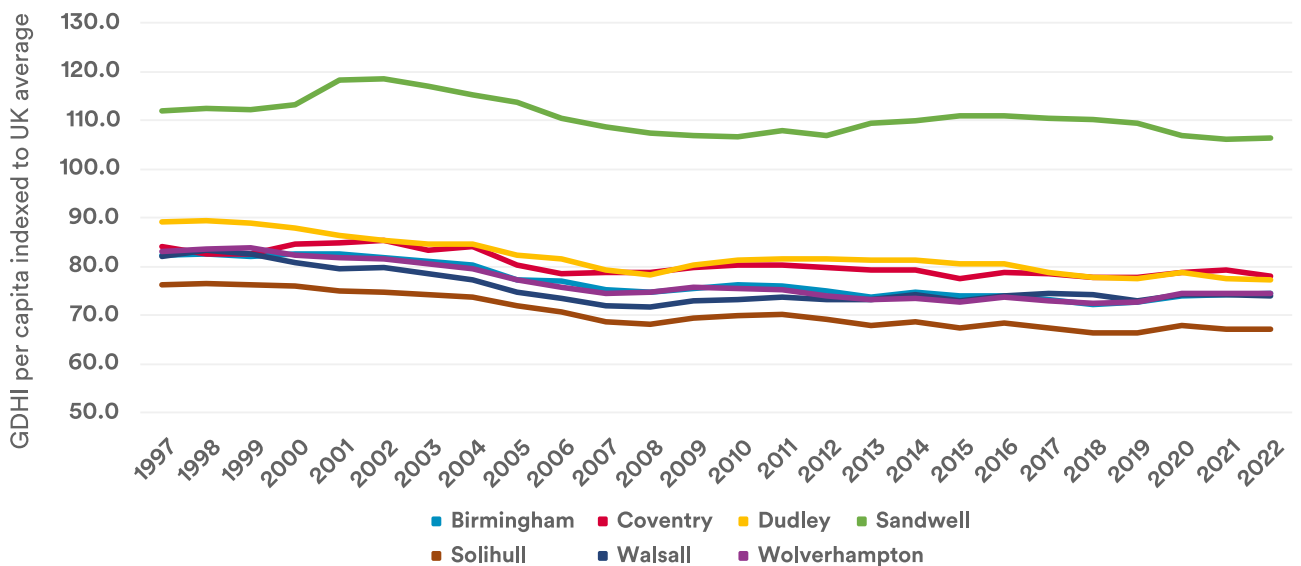
In comparison to GDP, Gross disposable household income (GDHI) per capita is a stronger reflection of money earned in the area that stays in the area. GDHI per capita in 2022 was £17,464 in the WMCA area.<sup>19</sup>

## Real Gross Disposable Household Income per capita has risen slowly in local authorities over the past 25 years



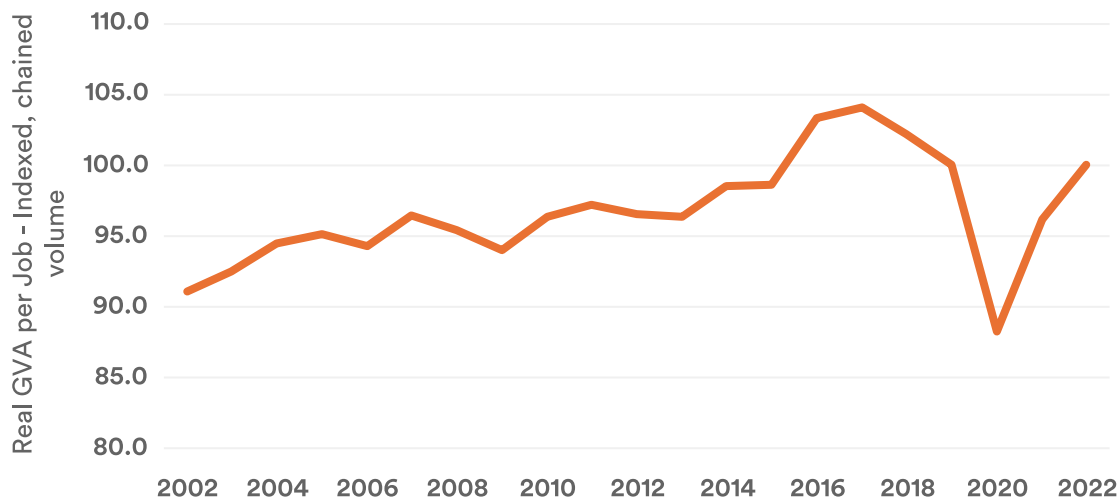
Real GDHI measures the amount of money households have available for spending and saving after accounting for taxes and social contributions. GDHI reflects the economic wellbeing of households by indicating their real purchasing power. Across the area, real GDHI per capita has grown slowly over the past 25 years.<sup>20</sup>

## Gross Disposable Household Income per capita has fallen across all local authorities over the past 25 years



However, compared to the UK average, it has fallen across all local authority areas over the same period.

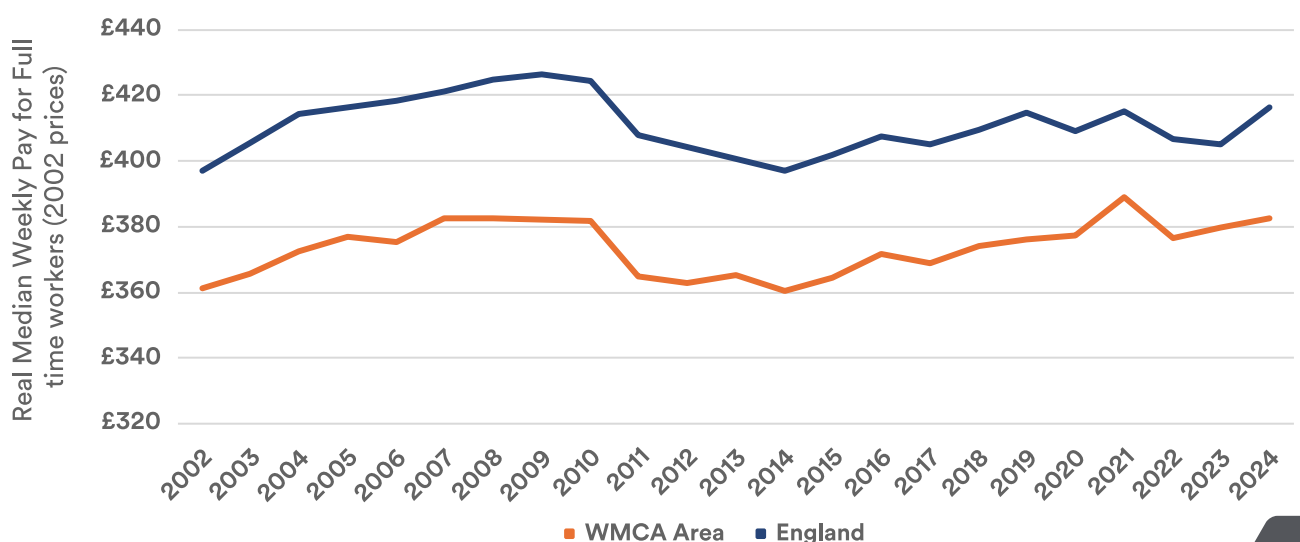
### Real GVA per job in the WMCA is returning to its long-term positive growth trajectory post-pandemic



Gross Value Added (GVA) per job is a measure of productivity. Rising total GVA but falling hourly rates, suggests that the people of the WMCA area worked more hours in 2022 than 2021 but with reduced productivity.

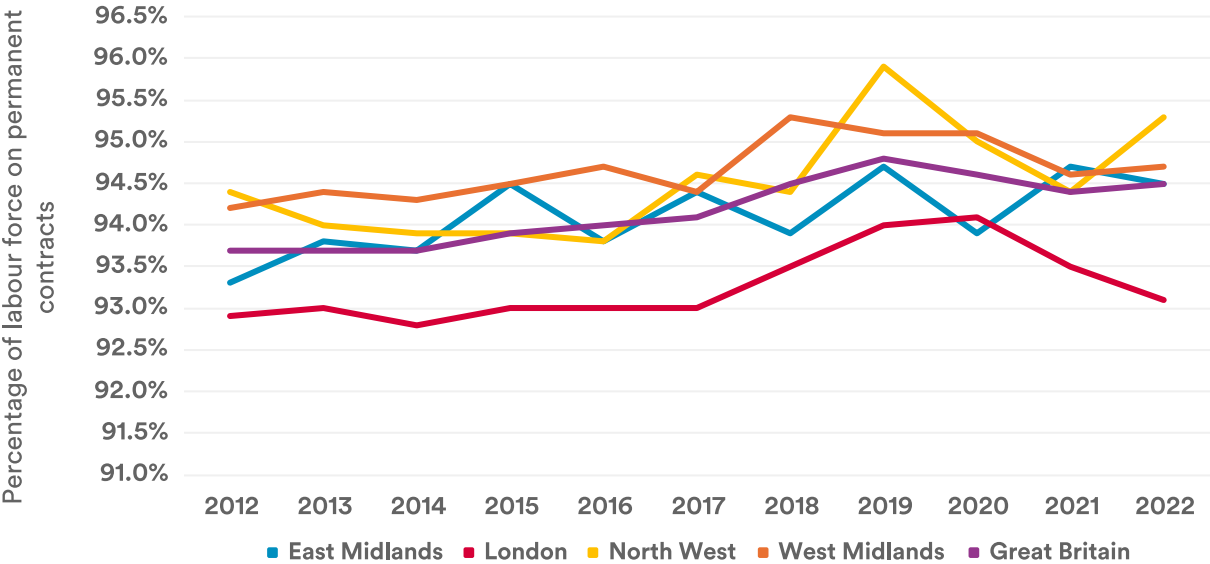
GVA per hour worked surpassed the 2019 rate by 0.3% in 2022, but fell 1.1% on the year since 2021. GVA per job returned exactly to pre-pandemic levels in 2022 (difference: 0.0%).<sup>21</sup> This was a 4.0% increase since 2021. While it remains below the 2017 peak for our region, this growth post-pandemic suggests the WMCA area is returning to its long-term positive growth trajectory. Whilst the WMCA's GVA per job was the same in 2022 as 2019 when adjusting for inflation, Greater Manchester Combined Authority's has increased by 7.0%, whilst Greater London Authority's has fallen by 4.1%, highlighting the varied pandemic recovery across the economy.

### The real median weekly pay for full time workers (2002 prices) has been consistently lower in the WMCA than England since 2002



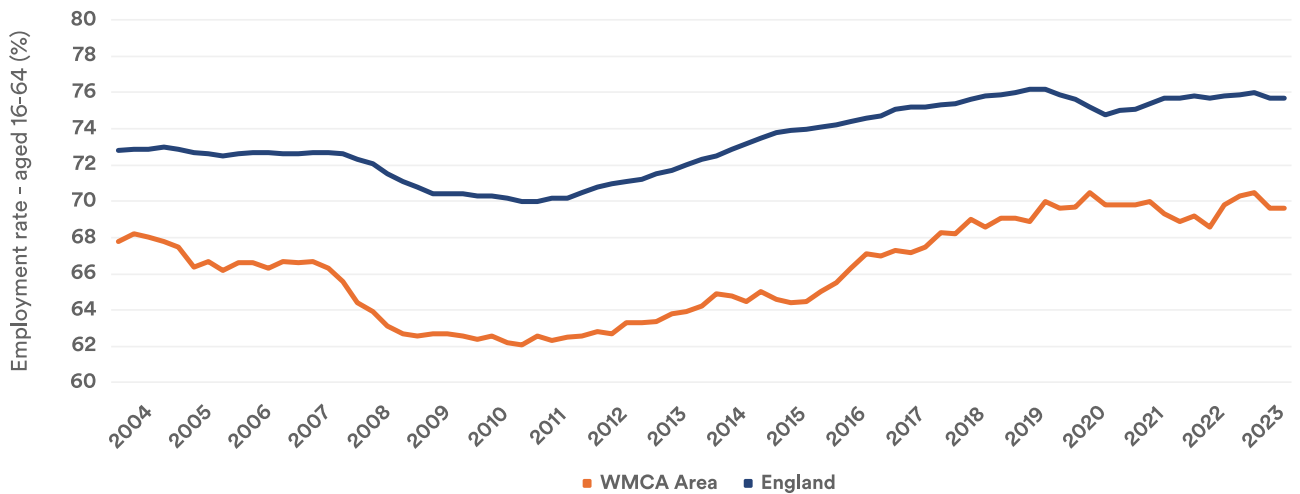
Median weekly pay for full time workers stood at £673 in the WMCA area in 2024, 8.1% below the England average of £732. Real median weekly pay for full time workers has returned to its pre-financial crisis peak in the WMCA area, while remaining slightly below on average across England. However, we know there are differences in pay for people from an ethnic minority and for women and disabled employees.

**The percentage of the labour force on permanent contracts varies between regions**



94.7% of all working age people (16- to 64-year-olds) employed in in the West Midlands region in 2022 were in permanent employment.<sup>22</sup> This was 0.3 percentage points higher than 2022. Figures vary little year to year but there are more significant differences between regions. The London region, for example, has a percentage of the working age population employed in permanent employment regularly 1-2% lower than the West Midlands region. As a region, the West Midlands has a marginally higher rate of working age people employed than the British average.

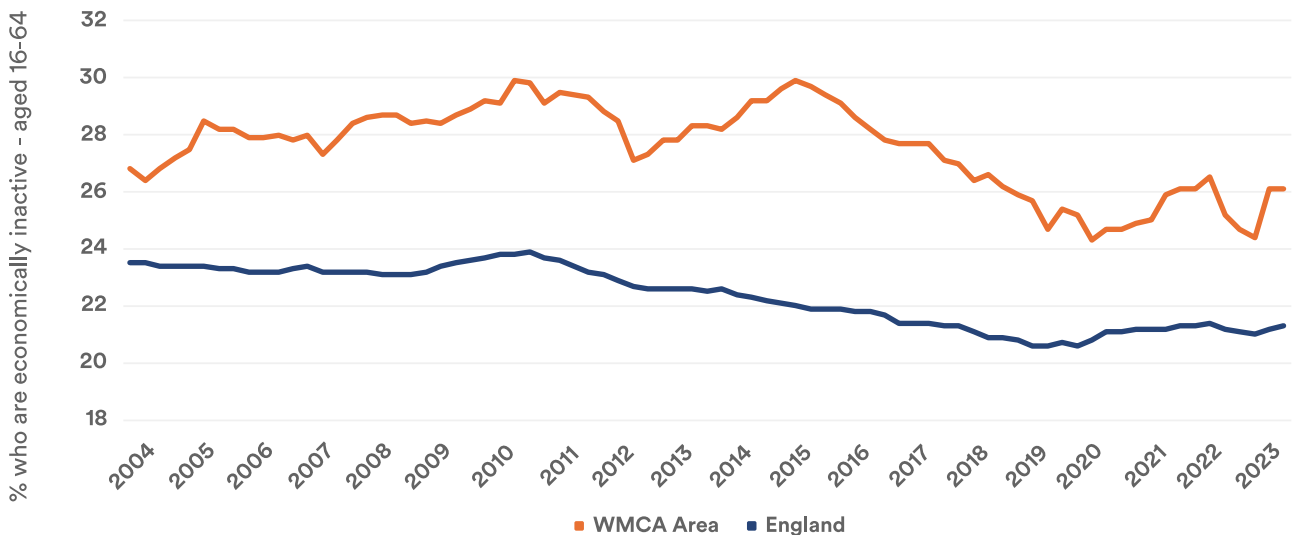
## The employment rate in the WMCA area has been consistently lower than England since 2004



Employment in the WMCA area in the year to June 2024 was at 69.6%, representing little movement since the year to June 2023 (69.8%).<sup>23</sup>

This rate remains well below the West Midlands region (74.7%) and the England average (75.7%). While a gap remains between the WMCA area and the England average, this gap has been closing over the past eight years with the gap now standing at 6.1% compared to 9.5% during 2016. With a UK Government target of 80% employment, the Government could make large strides towards this goal by focussing on regions such as the WMCA area.

## Economic inactivity has been consistently higher in the WMCA area than England since 2004

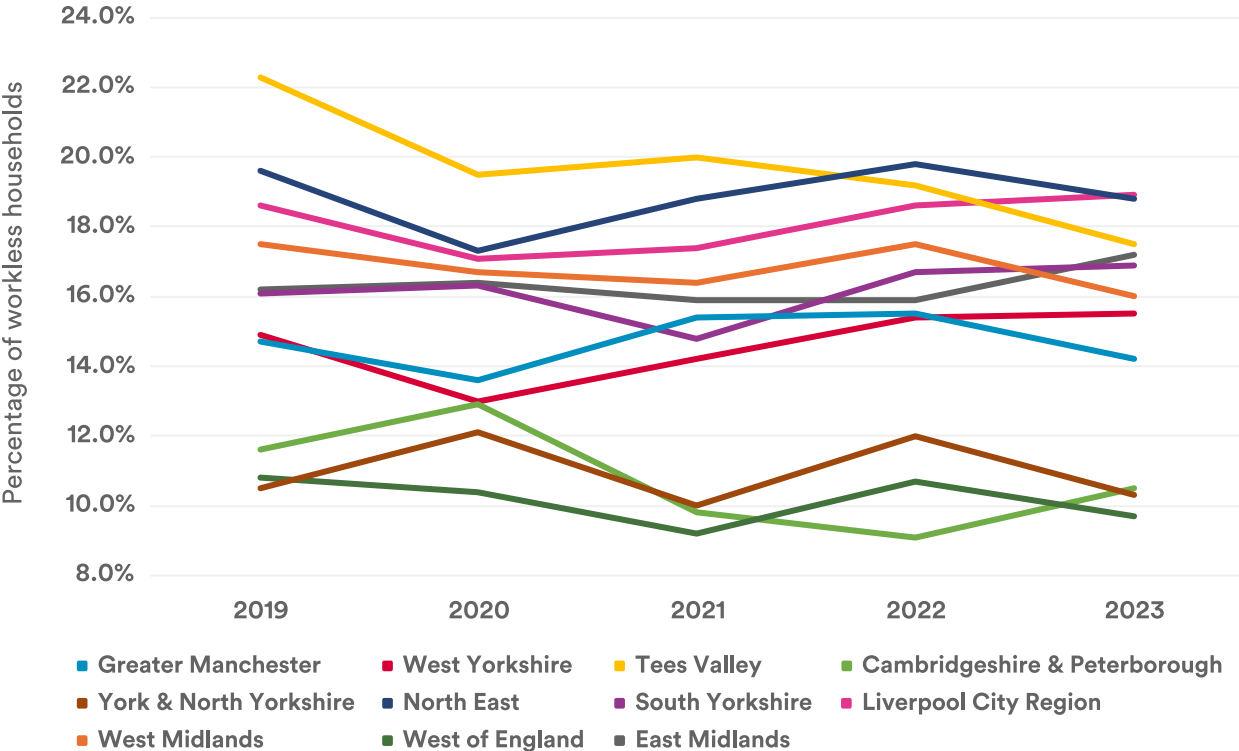




Economic inactivity in the WMCA area has risen and fallen over the past 20 years. It was at 26.1% in the year to June 2024 – finishing the 20-year period 0.7 percentage points below where it started. This was up from 25.2% in the year to June 2023 but remains significantly below a peak of 29.9% in 2011.<sup>24</sup>

This was significantly above the regional average (22.3%) and the England average (21.3%). Of those economically inactive in the WMCA area, 81.1% do not want a job; 5.6% are retired, 31.7% are long-term sick, 24.6% are looking after family or a home, and 28.7% are students (other: 7.8%, temporary sick: 1.2%). We also know there are differences in economic inactivity rates across different ethnic groups. However, there is limited data for economic inactivity rates at a WMCA area geography broken down by ethnicity which makes evidence based decision making difficult.

**The WMCA area has the sixth highest percentage of workless households of all combined authority areas**



16.0% of households in the WMCA area were workless in 2023, varying from 9.6% in Dudley to 19.5% in Birmingham.<sup>25</sup> Of the 11 combined authority areas, the WMCA area had the 6th highest rate of workless households. Rates varied from 9.7% in West of England in 2023 to 18.9% in the Liverpool City Region.

The total number of people claiming unemployment benefits as a proportion of residents aged 16-64 in the WMCA area was 8.1% compared to 4.2% for the UK in October 2024.<sup>26</sup> Across the Combined Authorities, the WMCA had the highest claimant rates. When compared to October 2023, there has been a 1.4 percentage point increase in the number of claimants, this is an increase of 26,135 people.

This is also a greater increase than the 0.6 percentage point increase seen in England.

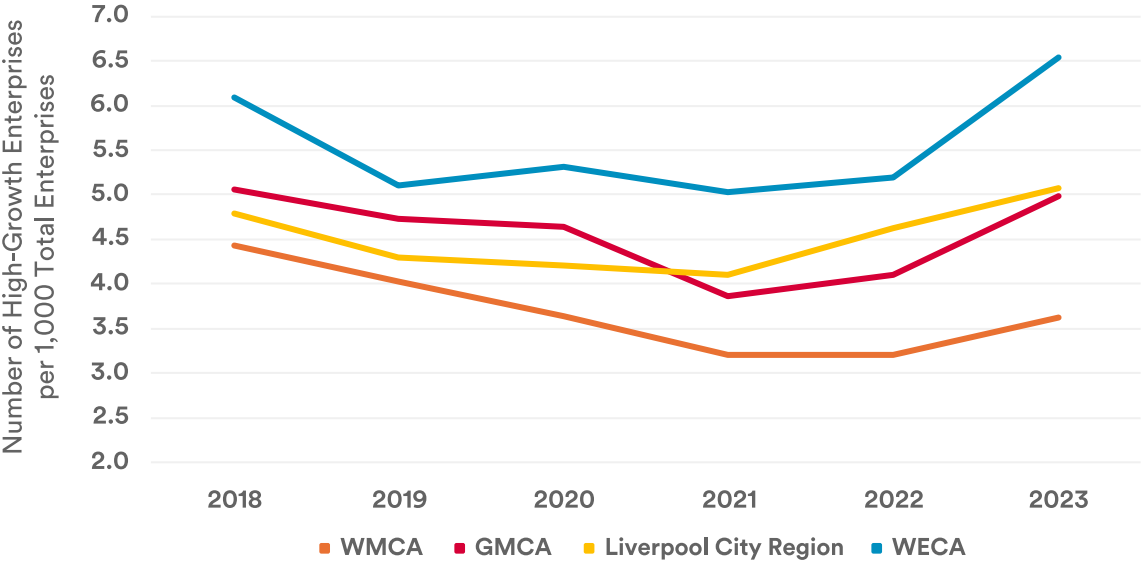
The number of youth claimants as a proportion of residents aged 18-24 was 9.5% compared to 5.4% for the UK in October 2024.<sup>27</sup> As with total claimant count, the WMCA had the highest rates across the Combined Authorities. When compared to October 2023, youth claimants have increased by 13.5% in the WMCA area, with the UK increasing by 9.6%. When compared to October 2019, youth claimants have increased by 48.0% in the WMCA area, with the UK increasing by 33.2%. In 2023, 55.4% of job adverts in the WMCA area could have been filled by local people (meeting all criteria in the advert’s person specification).<sup>28</sup> Compared with other areas, the WMCA area placed 13th out of 37 UK areas.

Latest business demography figures confirm a mixed picture in the regional business landscape. In 2023, the WMCA area recorded 106,200 active enterprises, a 1.1% decrease from 2022, less than the England decline of 1.9%.<sup>29</sup>

And compared to 2018, active enterprises rose by 3.3%, outpacing the UK’s 1.0% growth. On the other hand, high-growth enterprises in the WMCA area have increased by 11.6% since 2022, but trailed behind the England growth of 19.7%. Since 2018, high-growth enterprises in the WMCA have declined by 15.4%, significantly more than the England decrease of 1.3%, highlighting regional challenges in fostering business growth.

When looking at the long-term trend of high-growth enterprises, it is clear that other comparable city-regions have also seen a decline in the number of high-growth enterprises as a proportion of total enterprises, but have rebounded faster than the WMCA area in 2022 and 2023.

**Comparable city regions have shown a greater growth in the proportion of high-growth enterprises since the pandemic**



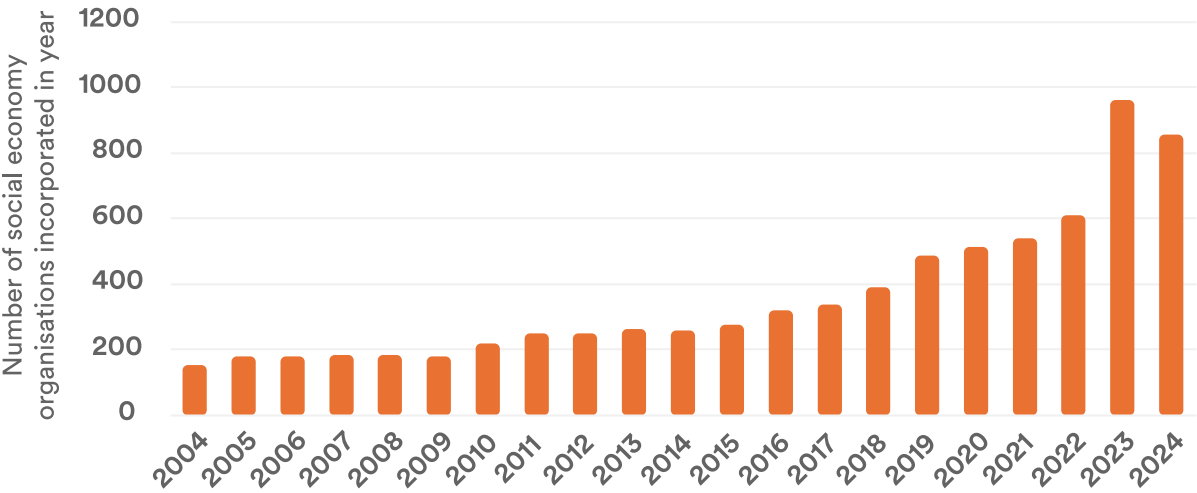
In positive news, the region has continued to increase its exports in the year to June 2024 over 2023 – reaching a new record. The regional export of goods in the year to June 2024 grew by 3.9% in real terms over the year to June 2023.<sup>30</sup>

Even more positively for the region, this compares to an England average of -6.4% and UK of -8.6%.

Further to this, new statistics from the Department for Business and Trade provided at the combined authority level showed that in 2023/24, inward investment projects in the WMCA area totalled 70, creating 6,082 jobs.<sup>31</sup>

This was significantly higher than other combined authority areas outside London. For Greater Manchester it was 61 and 3,493, for Liverpool 30 and 561, and for the West of England it was 38 and 1,342.

**The number of social economy organisations incorporated in year has consistently risen since 2004 in the WMCA area**



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.<sup>32</sup>

The number of new businesses registered in 2024 was 857. This is slightly lower than a peak of 961 in 2023 but remains high compared to historic standards.

## What can be, and is being done?

The WMCA is committed to delivering an integrated, impactful and long-term approach to local economic development and inclusive growth; one that empowers residents, especially our young people and those most disadvantaged, to develop their technical, vocational and transferable skills that lead to good jobs.

The WMCA is in the midst of preparing a local growth plan, part of the UK Government's growth mission. The local growth plan builds on the existing [Plan for Growth](#), which ensures continuity and stability in policy for our region's businesses. The WMCA has secured commitment from the Chancellor of the Exchequer to fund the region's innovation accelerator programme through 2025-26.

The WMCA has also successfully secured a new investment zone for the region. The [West Midlands Investment Zone](#) will draw on an unprecedented range of tools to support growth in the region's Advanced Manufacturing sector – broadly defined to encompass electric vehicle and battery technology, green industries, health-tech and the critical underpinning digital platforms. These sub-sectors intersect and overlap, creating a fertile ecosystem for new investors to land in the region and flourish, creating new jobs and skills opportunities for all our communities and securing the West Midlands' position as a key driver of national economic success.

Through a streamlined funding structure for Adult Skills, encompassing the Adult Education Budget, Free Courses for Jobs, and Skills Bootcamps, The WMCA aims to align investments across employment, skills, communities and health. Our ambition is to establish an integrated employment and skills ecosystem that stimulates economic growth and delivers better outcomes for residents and businesses.

Growth for everyone cannot be achieved if inequality continues at its current record levels. The Social Economy provides a resource that can help address inequality and support inclusive growth. The Social Economy suffers from decades of underinvestment and so WMCA is committed to grow and strengthen this sector by creating an ecosystem that will support growth. The Social Economy comprises over 9,000 organisations (businesses) who employ over 102,000 people and exist to tackle inequality in its various forms through a trading model. Key investments by the WMCA to date have included building business skills through a dedicated learning program, strategic investments in 9 locations across the region where there is high levels of deprivation but evidence of social economy activity, raising awareness of the contribution and impact these organisations have through the Social Economy Drive and providing a small grant pot to pilot some RnD investment.

# 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.

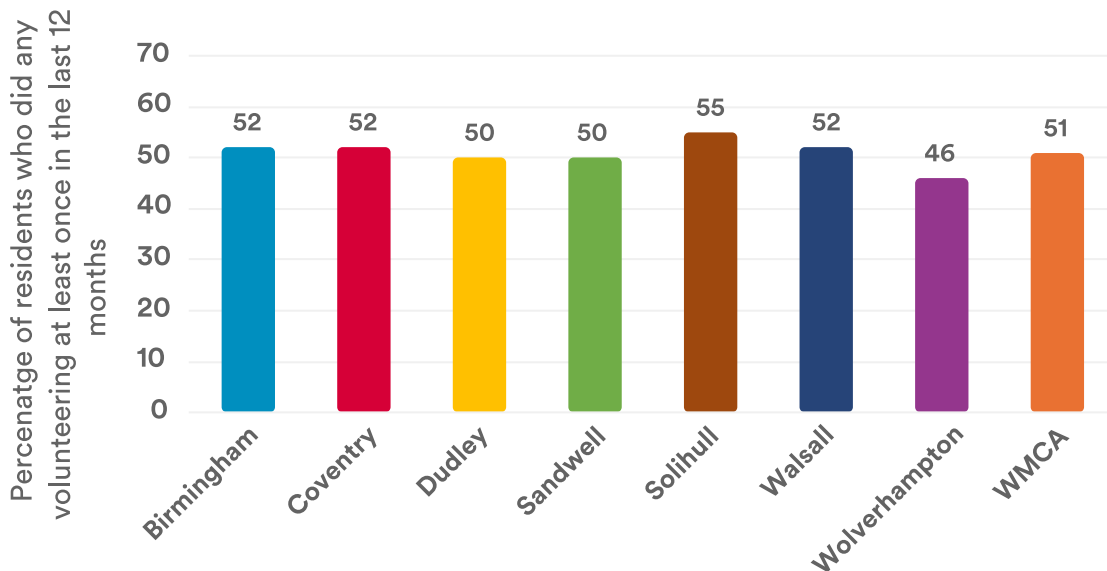
## What are the current conditions?

In the West Midlands region, the belief among our residents that they can influence decisions affecting their local area is low. A key concern is voter turnout at elections which is lower across the region than the national average for both local and general elections.

## Volunteering

51% of WMCA area residents volunteered at least once in the past 12 months, this compared to 54% in England. Volunteering rates also varied between local authorities from 55% in Solihull to 46% in Wolverhampton.

**The percentage of residents who volunteered at least once in the last 12 months varied between 46% and 55% across constituent local authorities (Oct 2023 - March 2024)**

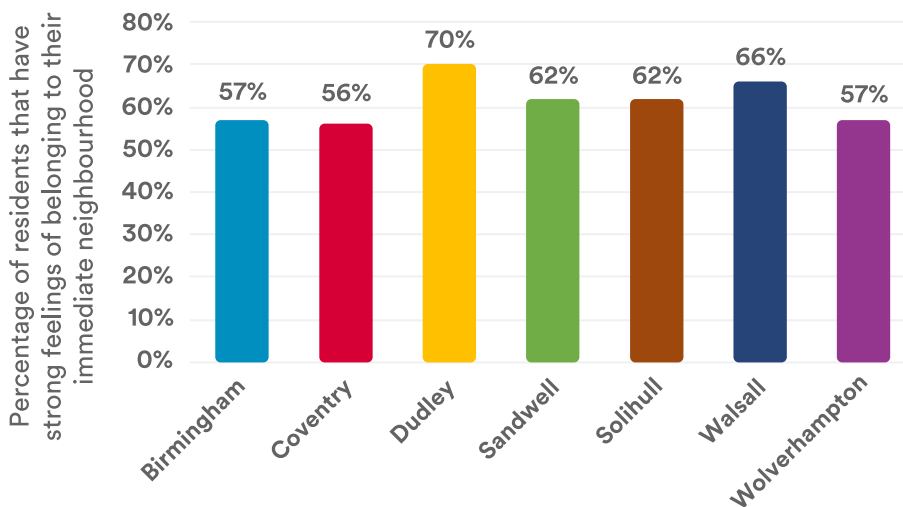


Formal volunteering refers to those who have given unpaid help to groups or clubs for example, leading a group, providing administrative support or mentoring people. Whereas informal volunteering is defined as giving unpaid help to individuals who are not a relative, for example helping with household tasks or keeping in touch with someone who has difficulty getting out and about. A greater proportion of WMCA residents volunteer informally compared to formally. 23% of WMCA residents volunteered formally at least once in the past 12 months, compared to 44% of residents who volunteered informally at least once in the past 12 months.

## Satisfaction with local area

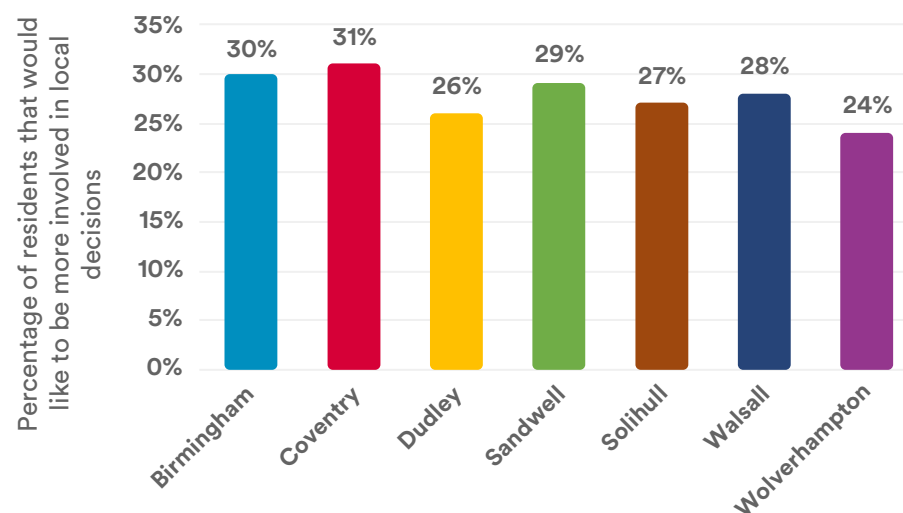
62% of residents in the WMCA area are satisfied with their local area as a place to live between 2023-24.<sup>32</sup> This is lower than the wider West Midlands figure of 70% and lower than the figure for England of 74%. However, satisfaction with green and natural spaces in the local area was slightly higher with 64% of residents in the WMCA satisfied with green and natural spaces in their local area. 60% of WMCA residents have very or fairly strong feelings of belonging to their immediate neighbourhood. This varies from 66% of residents in Walsall to 56% of residents in Coventry. The WMCA figure is also slightly below the England figure of 60%.

### Residents' feelings of belonging varies across local authorities



89% of people in the WMCA area agree that if they wanted company or to socialise there are people they can call on. This is below the England figure of 92% and the wider West Midlands region figure of 91%. This also varies across the WMCA area from 84% in Wolverhampton to 93% in Walsall. 29% of WMCA residents would like to be more involved in local decisions, this varies across the WMCA area from 24% in Wolverhampton to 31% in Coventry. The WMCA figure is slightly higher than the England figure of 28%.

### Residents' desire to be more involved in local decisions varies across local authorities



# Voting

Less than one-third of eligible voters in the WMCA area exercised their democratic right to vote in local elections. Turnout in local council elections in 2023 (latest data) fell slightly on the previous year, remaining relatively low as it has done for the last decade.<sup>33</sup>

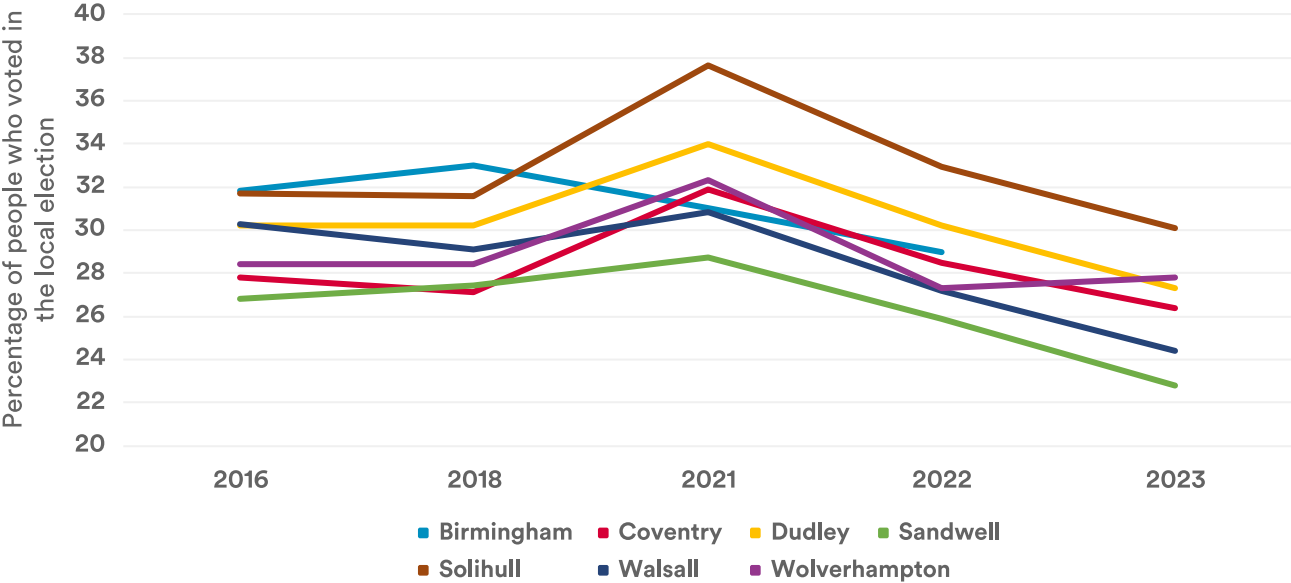
Whilst participation in local council elections is low across the UK, every part of the WMCA area continues to see lower turnout than the national average of 32.0%.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, turnout across the WMCA area for the mayoral election in 2024 was at 29.8%, down from 31.2% in 2021 but up from the inaugural election in 2017 at 26.7%.<sup>35</sup> While broadly in line with the rest of the UK, voter turnout is a sign of the vitality of democracy, and the low turnout may reflect voter apathy and mistrust of the political process.<sup>36</sup> In 2023/24, only 25% of residents in the WMCA area region agreed that they personally can influence decisions affecting their local area.<sup>37</sup> This is similar to the UK average of 23% which was down significantly from 27% from 2020/21.

The picture improves somewhat for general elections, with over 60% of eligible voters in the WMCA area showing up on polling day in elections from 2010 to 2019. However, participation dipped in 2024 with a voter turnout of only 52.4%.<sup>38</sup>

This was below the national average of 59.7% in 2024 and continues the trend of lower-than-average turnout at national elections (WMCA area compared to national).

Election turnout in the region varied from 22.8% in Sandwell to 30.1% in Solihull in 2023.

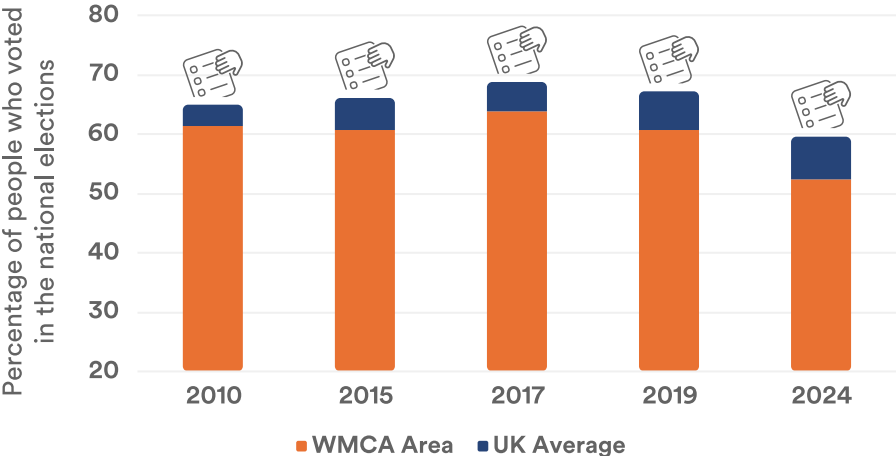
## Local election voter turnout has decreased in all constituent local authorities since 2016



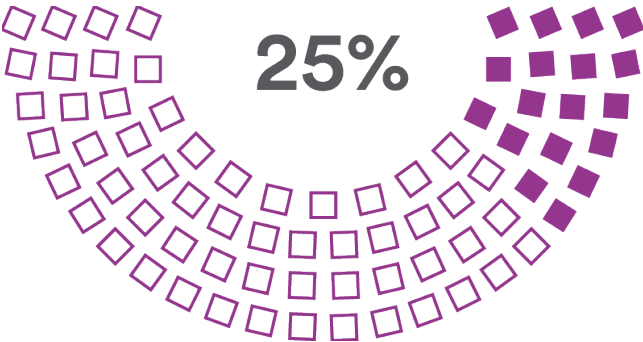


Turnout is typically higher in national elections – however the WMCA area average is below that of the UK average.

### Election turnout in the WMCA is below that of the UK average



A quarter of residents feel they can personally influence decisions affecting their local area. This is slightly higher than the England national figure of 23%. However, it varies across the WMCA area from 22% in Solihull to 27% in Birmingham.



In 2023/24 36% of WMCA residents engaged in democratic processes outside of voting, such as signing a petition or attending a public rally.<sup>39</sup> This is slightly below the England figure of 41% and the wider West Midlands figure of 37%.

### What can be, and is being done?

The deeper devolution deal brings power and control to make decisions that matter to local people back to the West Midlands. This opportunity cannot be squandered by merely recreating the structures of Whitehall in the West Midlands. Devolution provides an opportunity for the region to radically improve the relationship between local governments and people it serves. Examples where the West Midlands is leading in this area include the establishment of independent taskforces around homelessness, race equality; as well as the use of citizens panel, for instance, around Greener Together.

# Affordable and safe places

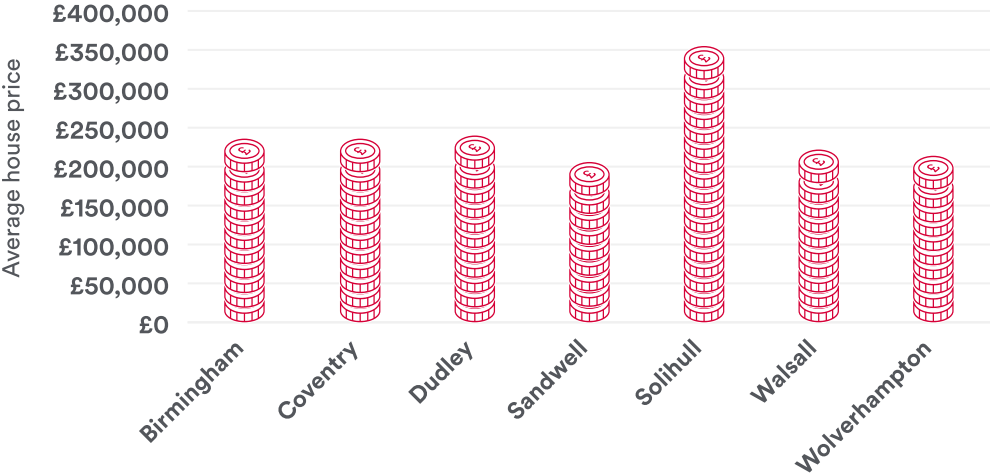
## Why is this important?

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?

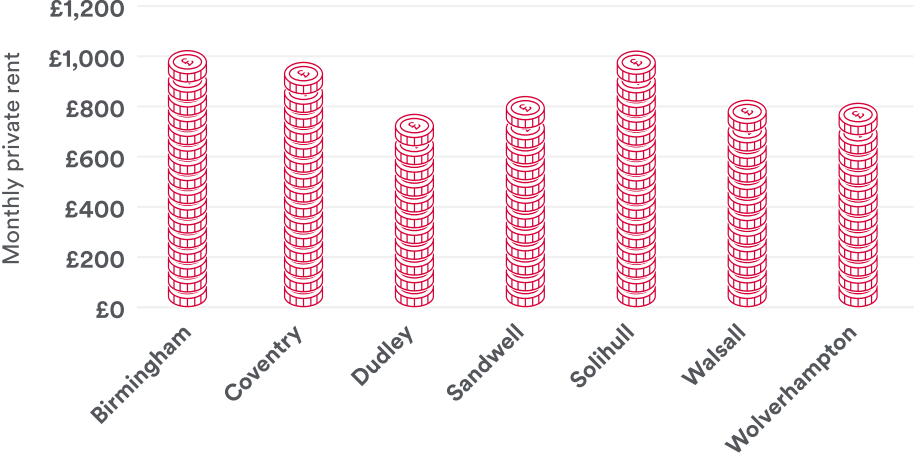
The cost of housing varies significantly across the WMCA area, with the average house price ranging from £206,000 in Sandwell to £355,000 in Solihull.<sup>40</sup>

### Average house prices vary across constituent local authorities



Monthly rents also differ across the region from £1,025 in Birmingham to £771 in Dudley.<sup>41</sup> Private rent in the WMCA area takes up 26.2% of a household’s income, lower than the England national figure of 34.2%.<sup>42</sup>

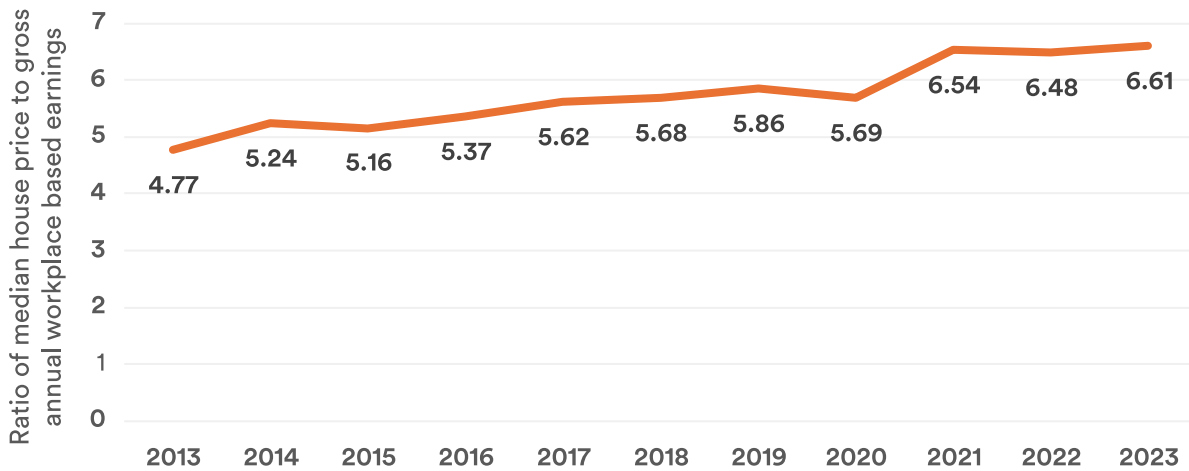
### Monthly private rent prices vary across constituent local authorities



## Affordability

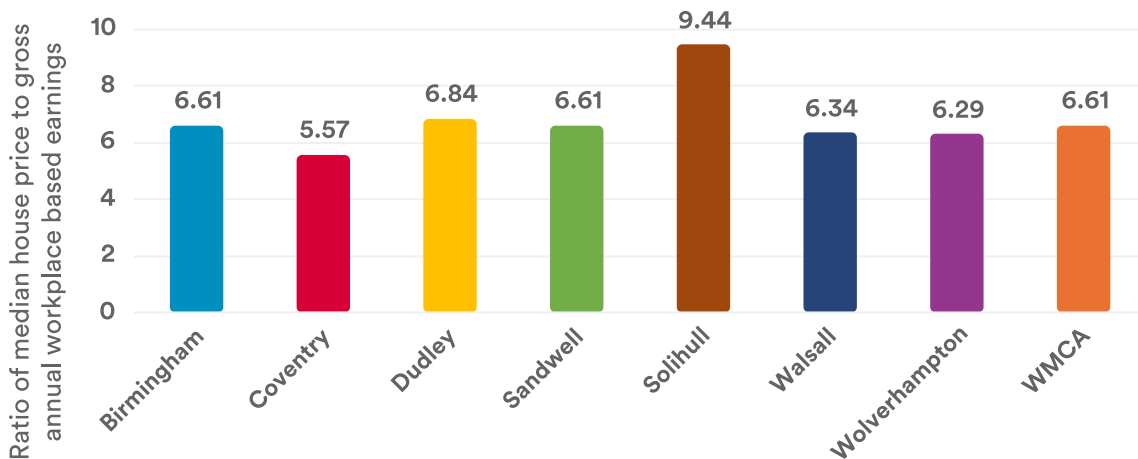
The affordability of homeownership is decreasing in the WMCA area. In 2023, the median house price was 6.61 times the average annual workplace earnings, an increase from 4.77 ten years ago in 2013.<sup>43</sup>

### The ratio of median house price to gross annual workplace-based earnings has increased between 2013 and 2023 in the WMCA area



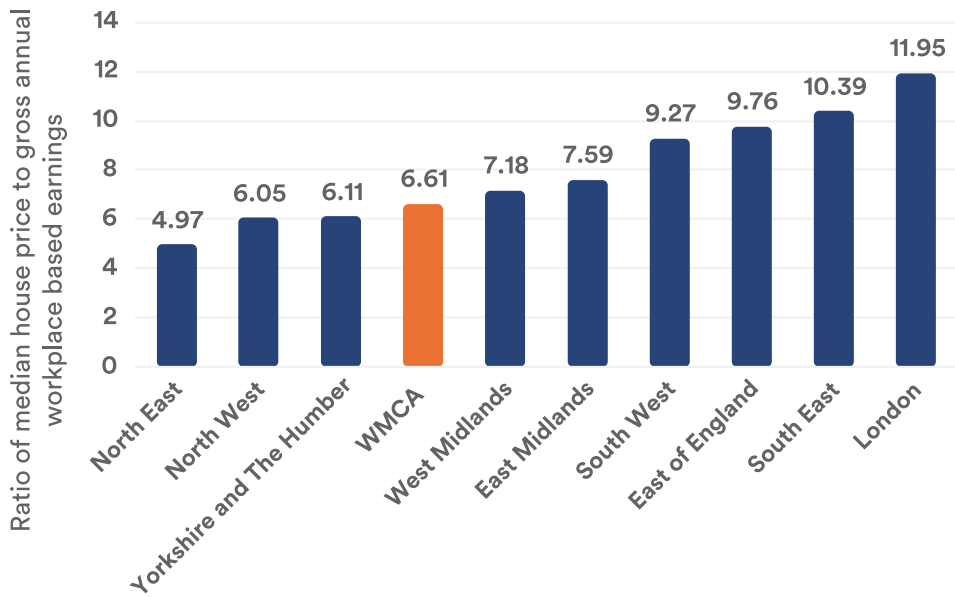
Solihull is the least affordable area with a ratio of 9.44, compared to Coventry at 5.57, making it the most affordable in the region.

### The ratio of median house price to gross annual workplace-based earnings varies across constituent local authorities in 2023



In 2023, the WMCA's median house price was 6.61 times the average annual workplace earnings, making it the fourth most affordable region in England and more affordable than the England average of 8.26. Nationally, on average mortgage offers are approximately 4.5 times the average salary, therefore without significant savings for a deposit the average house price is out of reach for many residents.<sup>44</sup>

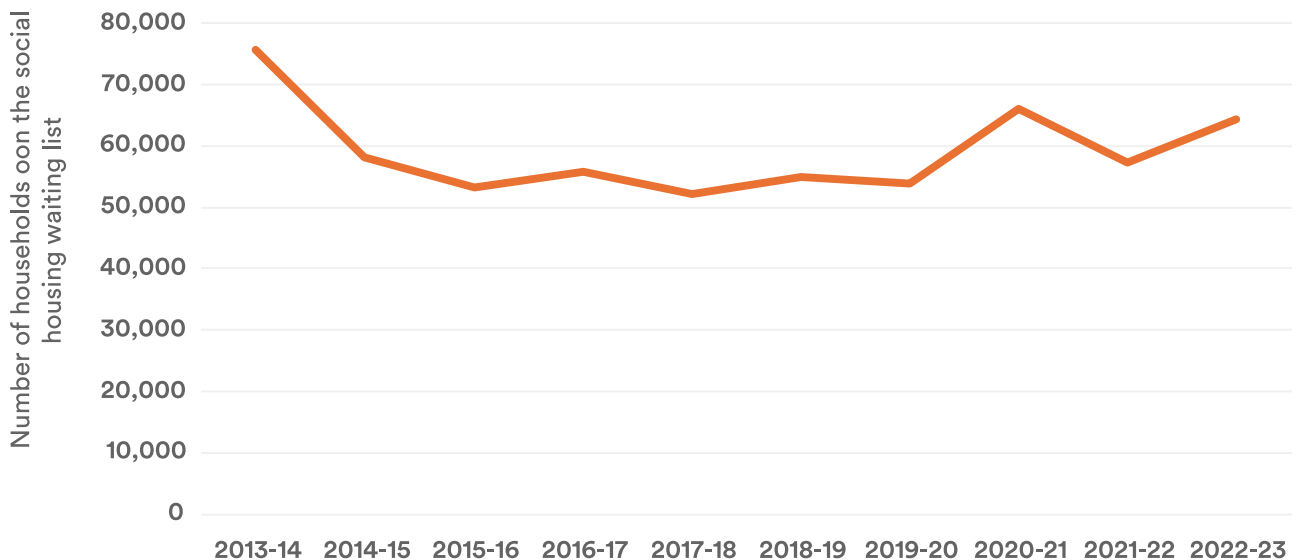
## Ratio of median house price to gross annual workplace based earnings varied across England regions



## Social Housing

64,382 households are waiting for social housing in the WMCA.<sup>45</sup> The number of households on the social housing waiting list has varied over the past 10 years from a high of 75,741 in 2013/14 to a low of 52,175 households in 2017/18.

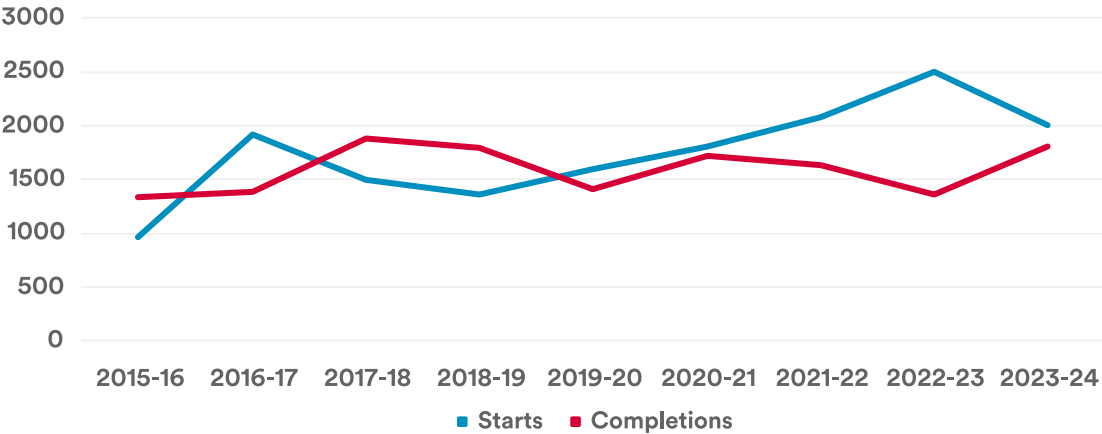
### The number of households on the social housing waiting list in the WMCA area has decreased from a high in 2013-14



Within the WMCA area there are 237,373 social housing units, with weekly rents averaging £89.69 for local authority properties and £103.94 for private registered properties.<sup>46</sup>

There were 2,010 starts and 1,805 completions in the WMCA area.<sup>47</sup> There is variability in the number of starts and completions from 2015-16 to 2023-24, with affordable housing starts generally outpacing completions. However, there has been a recent rise in the number of affordable housing completions.

**Affordable housing completions lag behind starts in the WMCA area**



**Local Housing Allowance rates**

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) was originally designed to help make the private rented sector accessible and sustainable for households on benefits and low incomes. The LHA rate was set with the aim that the rent element of benefits would cover the full rental cost of 30% of private sector properties in any given area, with LHA rates varying by property size and area.

Over recent years LHA rates have been frozen, with sporadic one-off uplifts, against a context of rising rents, significantly reducing the number of properties that are affordable within LHA rates. Data released before the most recent uplift in LHA<sup>48</sup> in 2024 indicated that in the WMCA area only 3% of homes in the private rented sector were available to rent at LHA levels. Furthermore, more recent research taking account of the uplift in LHA from 1st April 2024 suggested that circa 12% of properties in the WMCA area will be affordable at the new LHA rates.<sup>49</sup> In the WMCA area, LHA rates range from £60.18 in the Black Country for shared accommodation to £276.16 for a four-bedroom property in the Solihull.<sup>50</sup>

**Crime rate**

Crime in the WMCA area has declined by 10 percent between June 2023 and June 2024. The crime rate in the WMCA area (109.4 crimes per 1,000 people) compares well against other large urban areas such as Greater Manchester (114.6) and Greater London (105.8). However, it is still higher than areas such as Merseyside (97.2) and Somerset (88.9).

Violent offences both with and without injury and possession of weapons offences, is the highest in the West Midlands Police Force Area out of 38 Police Force Areas across England. The West Midlands Police Force Area also ranks second highest out of all England Police Force Areas in England for robbery, theft offences, burglary and vehicle offences.

However, theft from the person, bicycle theft, drug offences and public order offences all have lower rates in the West Midlands Police Force Area than the England national figure.

Stop and search is a power used by Police Forces to tackle crime. However, there are differences in rates of stop and search across ethnic groups.<sup>51</sup> This is explored in more detail in the Equalities section of this report.

## Homelessness

The top three reasons for households presenting as homeless, with a known reason, in 2023/24 were:

- Family and friends no longer able or willing to accommodate (30%; 4,908 households)
- Ending of Assured Shorthold Tenancy (18%; 2,994 households)
- Domestic abuse (12%; 2,054 households)

19,252 households approached WMCA local authorities for help between April 2023 – March 2024; of these 17,310 (90%) households were owed a homelessness duty<sup>52</sup>, representing a 16%\* increase from 12,007 households in the previous year\*\*. A homelessness duty is a legal obligation of local authorities to assist households who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless.

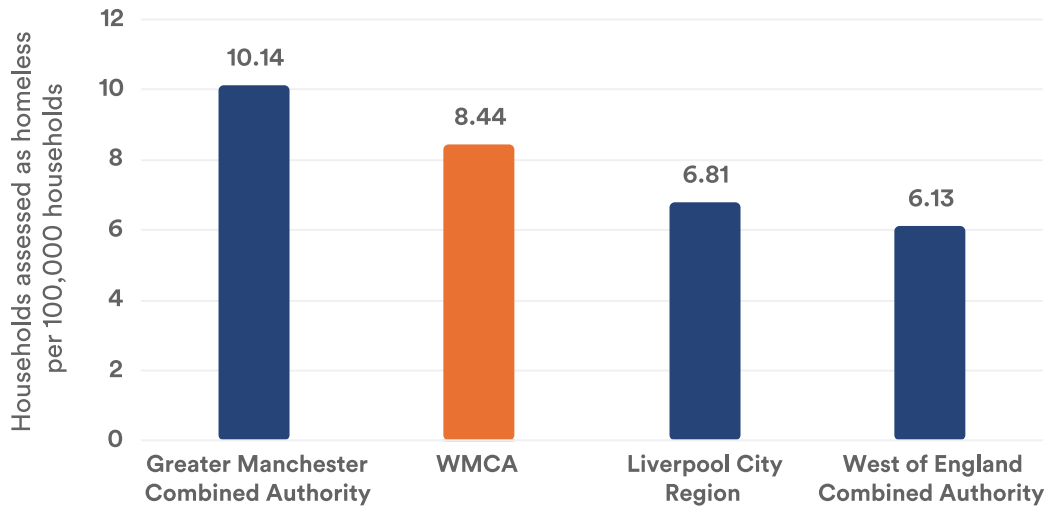
Despite this rise, the rate of households assessed as homeless per 100,000 households in the WMCA dropped significantly from 18.9 in 2022/23 to 8.44 in 2023/24. This is due to large drops in the rates of homelessness seen in Birmingham, Coventry and Sandwell. However, this figure still higher than both the England figure (7.38) and the wider West Midlands region (7.75).

Rates of homelessness in the WMCA area are lower than in Greater Manchester Combined Authority. However, are higher in the WMCA area than in Liverpool City Region and West of England Combined Authority.

\* The 16% increase is calculated excluding data from Dudley and Wolverhampton for both 2022/23 and 2023/24 as data was not available for 2022/23.

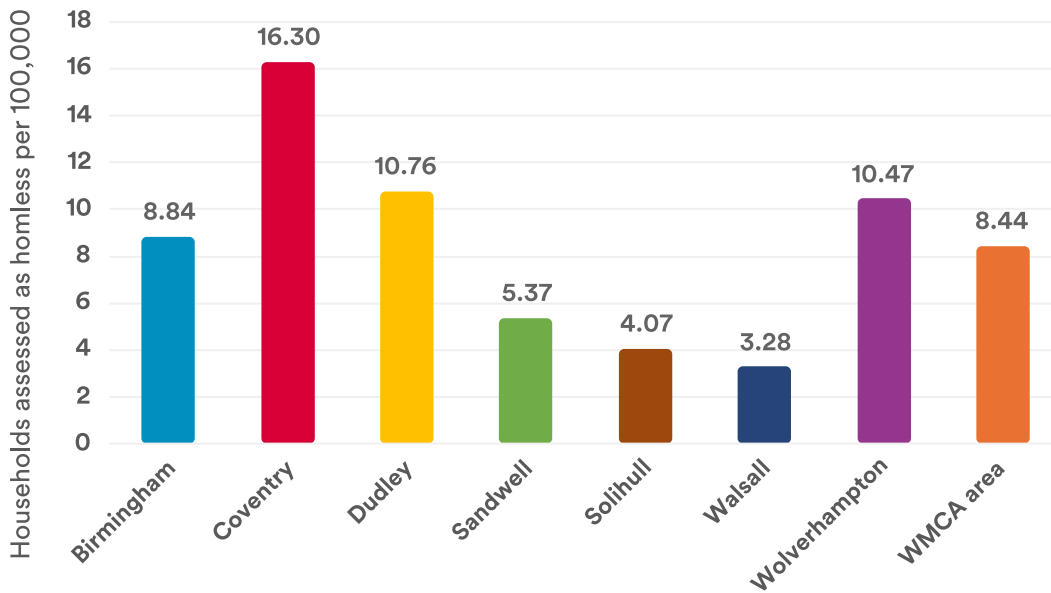
\*\* Data from Dudley and Wolverhampton is not available for the period April 2022 to March 2023.

**The WMCA has fewer households assessed as homeless per 100,000 than Greater Manchester Combined Authority but more than Liverpool City Region and West of England Combined Authority (2023/24)**



Furthermore rates of homelessness vary across local authority areas in the WMCA, with Coventry having the highest rate at 16.30 households assessed as homeless per 100,000 compared to Walsall who have the lowest rate at 3.28 households assessed as homeless per 100,000.

**The number of households assessed as homeless per 100,000 varies greatly between constituent local authorities**



Households of Black, Mixed and Other ethnicity are overrepresented within statutory homelessness figures, whilst households of White and Asian ethnicity are underrepresented. For more details, see the Equalities section.

## Temporary Accommodation

At the end of March 2024, there were 6,520 households living in Temporary Accommodation in the WMCA area.<sup>53</sup>

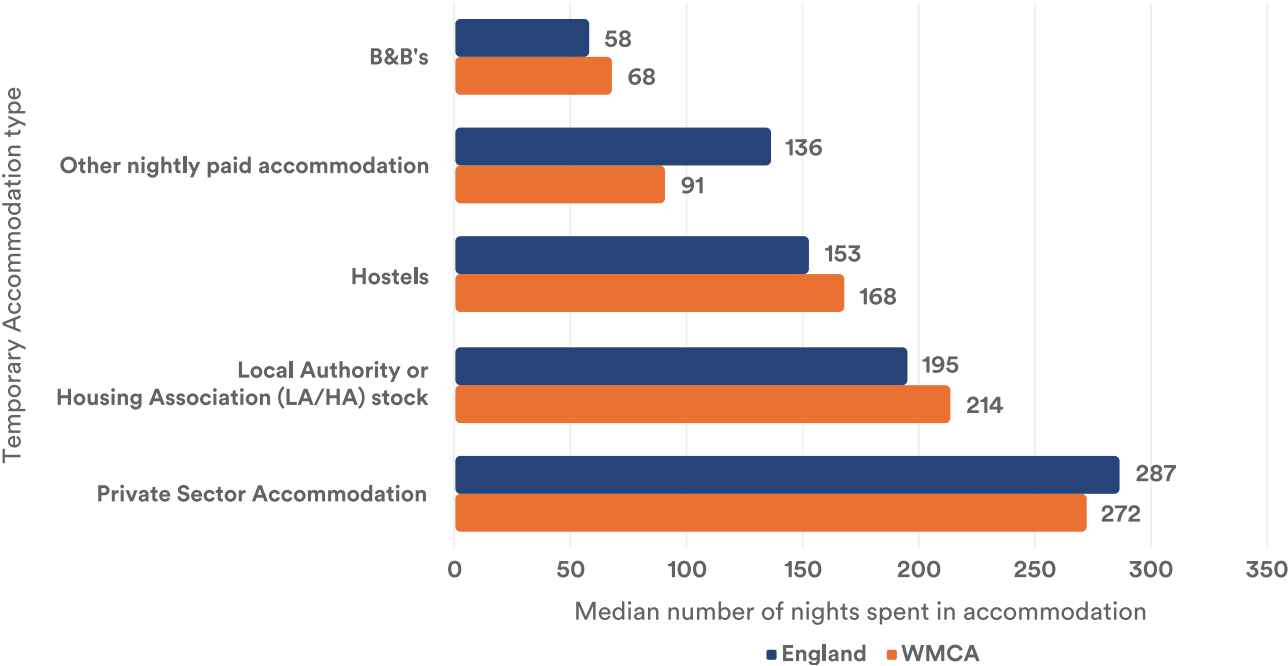
This figure includes 5,537 households with children, equating to 12,630 children (aged under 18), and including 3,998 children aged 5 and under. We also know households from ethnic minorities are overrepresented within Temporary Accommodation. The equalities section explores this in more detail.

In the WMCA area households generally spend fewer nights in Temporary Accommodation across the different forms of Temporary Accommodation than in England.

3,731 households with children (67%) were in Temporary Accommodation for longer than 6 months. The average length of stay varied across Temporary Accommodation type, with the longest length of stay seen in private sector accommodation averaging 9 months.

Households staying in private sector accommodation, Local Authority or Housing Association accommodation, Hostels and B&B's had longer stays on average in the WMCA area compared to the England figures.

### The average (median) number of nights spent in Temporary Accommodation varies by accommodation type

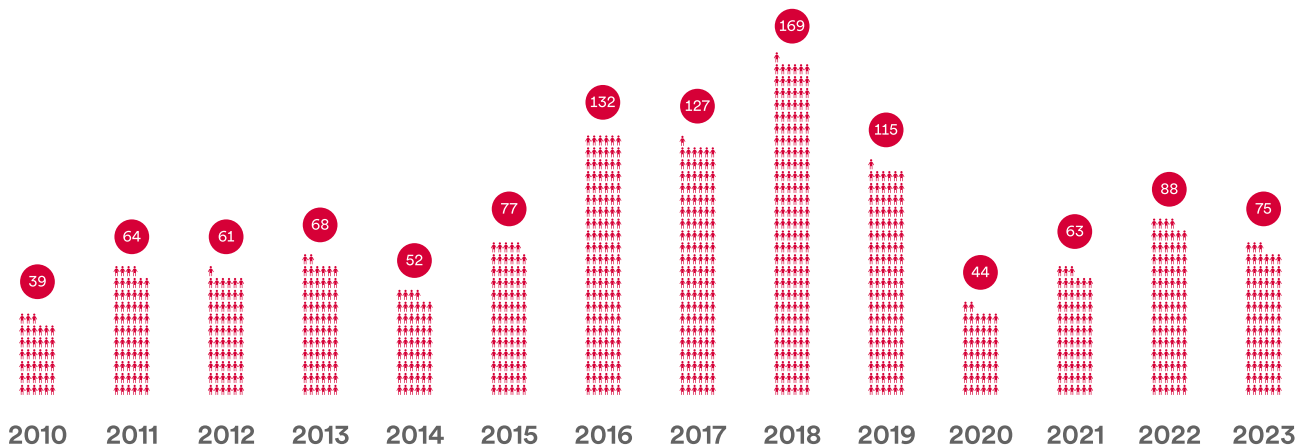




## Rough sleeping

The annual rough sleeping snapshot provides information about the number of people sleeping rough on a single night between 1 October and 30 November each year. In 2023, 75 people were seen sleeping rough on a single night. This is 13 fewer people were seen rough sleeping compared to 2022 figures, representing a 15% decrease from the year before. Comparatively figures for all regions and the England figure increased.

**The number of people seen sleeping rough on a single night in the WMCA has varied between 2010 and 2023, peaking in 2018**



There is growing intelligence that the situation on the streets has changed considerably in 2024. It is likely that the annual snapshot across the region will come in higher than last year. Our work with other regions indicates that it is highly likely that we will also see a significant increase in rough sleeping across England.

## What can, and is being done?

WMCA's devolved housing & land funds are deployed in collaboration with our partners to address challenges faced in housing delivery and provide the necessary intervention to unlock residential-led schemes that provide safe, well-designed and affordable homes and places. Developers and investors accessing funding are required to make a minimum of 20% of the new homes in a development affordable, and through working with organisations who share our values we have achieved and well exceeded this target in investments made to date. In 2024, the country and region saw an increase in the support for the delivery of social rent homes, seen as a key tool to tackle long social housing waiting lists and reduce the number of people living in temporary accommodation. In 2024/25, WMCA's devolved housing & land funds saw an increase in the proportion of homes funded that were social rent tenure, including 141 social rent homes at Digbeth announced in December 2024 and 103 social rent homes in the latest phase of the Port Loop development announced in January 2025.

Affordable housing devolution to the West Midlands, announced in March 2023 as part of the Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal, is the key tool for WMCA to influence social housing delivery on a greater scale. Within Phase 1, we are working closely with Homes England, local authorities, housing associations and other partners to deliver more of the homes our communities need within the current Affordable Homes Programme for 2021-26. Through the close partnership working set out in the West Midlands Strategic Place Partnership with Homes England, officers have taken a joined-up approach to tackle barriers on stalled schemes and enable key affordable housing developments to secure the funding they need. Phase 2, in which WMCA will be responsible for setting the strategy and direction of the Affordable Homes Programme from 2026, provides a huge opportunity to equip the region with the tools and flexibility it needs to deliver the right homes in the right places for local communities and people.

The Collaborative Partnering Agreement between WMCA and the Homes for the West Midlands Limited Liability Partnership launched in 2024 is another step forward in enhancing and accelerating affordable housing delivery through a new and innovative method of sector collaboration. The partnership seeks to identify land appropriate for affordable housing and progress these opportunities through a simplified and cost-effective process for development in 2025 and beyond. As well as its potential to increase delivery by numbers, the partnership represents a unique opportunity for greater local input into the design and development of projects from an early stage, helping to make sure schemes align with the priorities of LPAs and embed broader policy objectives.

The [WMCA Homelessness Taskforce](#) was set up in 2017 to bring organisations, people and resources together across the region to support and add value to the work of our local authorities and other partner organisations that are involved in the prevention and relief of homelessness, and to promote sustainable and meaningful inclusion for all of our citizens. The Taskforce's ambition to design out homelessness, in all its forms, is based on the principle that we need a shared cross sectoral approach to tackling structural inequalities focussing on how service systems respond to people's needs and how service systems inter-relate with each other so that service systems are inclusive of everyone, regardless of life circumstances.

The Devolution White Paper announced the transfer of Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) functions to the Mayor of the WMCA in 2028. This shift aims to promote greater collaboration in tackling crime and public safety. With these new powers, the Mayor will have direct oversight of policing strategies, ensuring that efforts to reduce crime contributes to the region's inclusive growth agenda. This integrated approach aims to create safer, more resilient communities, fostering a fairer and more prosperous West Midlands.

# Connected communities

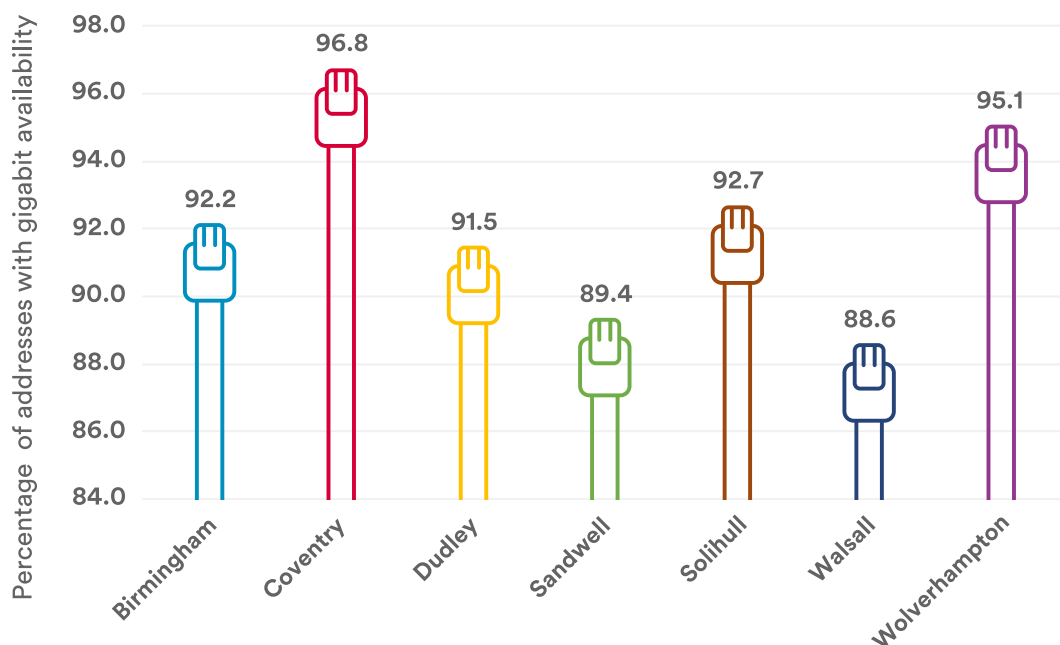
## Why is this important?

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.

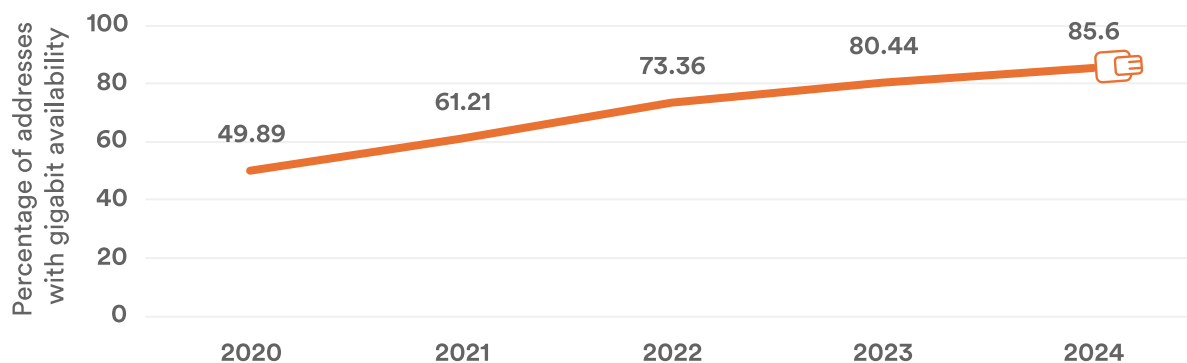
## What are the current conditions?

Coventry leads in gigabit broadband availability at 96.8%, followed by Wolverhampton at 95.1%. Solihull (92.7%), Birmingham (92.2%), and Dudley (91.5%) are in the mid-range, while Sandwell (89.4%) and Walsall (88.6%) fall slightly behind. Most areas exceed 90%, highlighting strong progress, though Walsall and Sandwell may require further investment to improve connectivity<sup>54</sup>.

### Gigabit availability varies between constituent local authorities, 2024

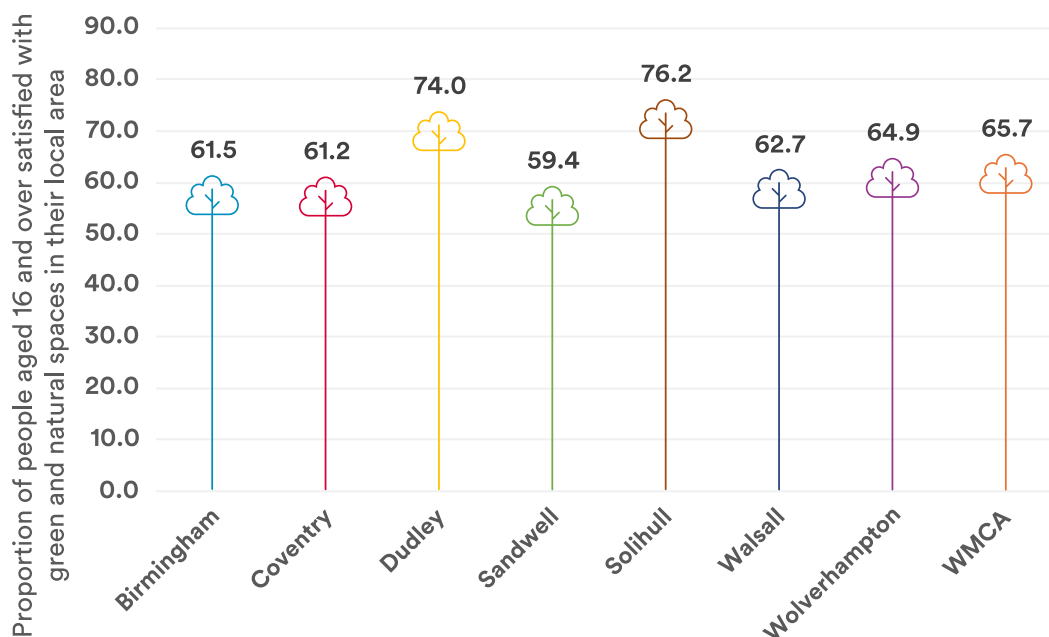


## Gigabit availability has consistently increased in the West Midlands between 2020 and 2024



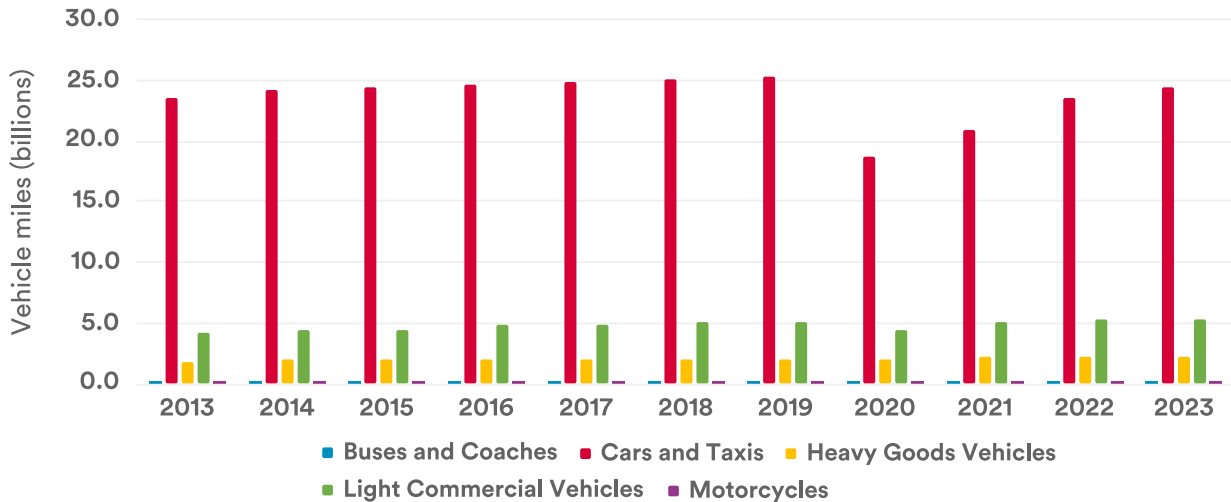
The West Midlands region shows a consistent increase in the proportion of addresses with gigabit availability, starting at 49.89% in 2020 and rising to 85.60% in 2024. The largest growth occurred between 2020 and 2022, with an increase of 23.47 percentage points, reaching 73.36% in 2022. From 2022 to 2024, growth slowed but remained steady, with a rise of 12.24 percentage points. Overall, the WMCA experienced significant progress in gigabit availability, improving accessibility for a larger proportion of its addresses over this period.<sup>55</sup>

## The proportion of people satisfied with green and natural spaces in their local area varies across constituent local authorities



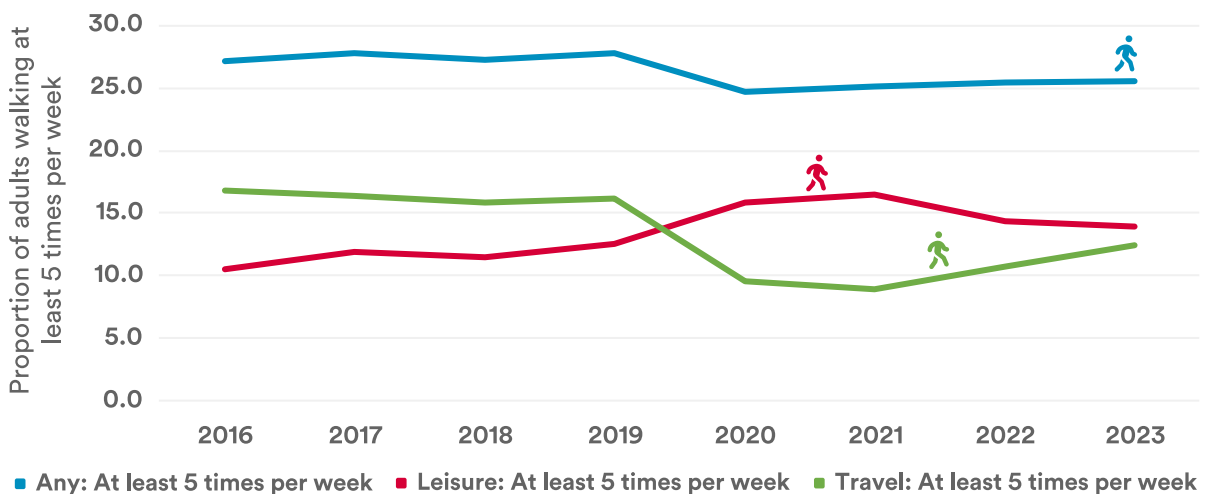
66% of people aged 16 and over in the WMCA area are satisfied with green and natural spaces in their local area. However, satisfaction varies across local authorities in 2023/24, with **Solihull** having the highest satisfaction (around 76%) and **Sandwell** the lowest (around 59%). Most other local authorities, including Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall, and Wolverhampton, fall between 60% and 70%.<sup>56</sup>

## Vehicle miles by cars and taxis consistently overshadow other vehicle types in the West Midlands region



Cars and taxis dominate motor vehicle traffic miles in the wider West Midlands region between 2013 to 2023, with consistently high levels compared to other vehicle types. In 2023 cars and taxis constituted 24.4 billion motor vehicle miles compared to 5.3 billion miles for light commercial vehicles and 2.1 billion miles for heavy good vehicles<sup>57</sup>. Light commercial vehicles have seen an increase between 2013 and 2023, likely driven by the growth of delivery services, while buses, motorcycles, and heavy goods vehicles contribute minimally and remain stable. A noticeable dip in 2020 reflects the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel, followed by a recovery in subsequent years.

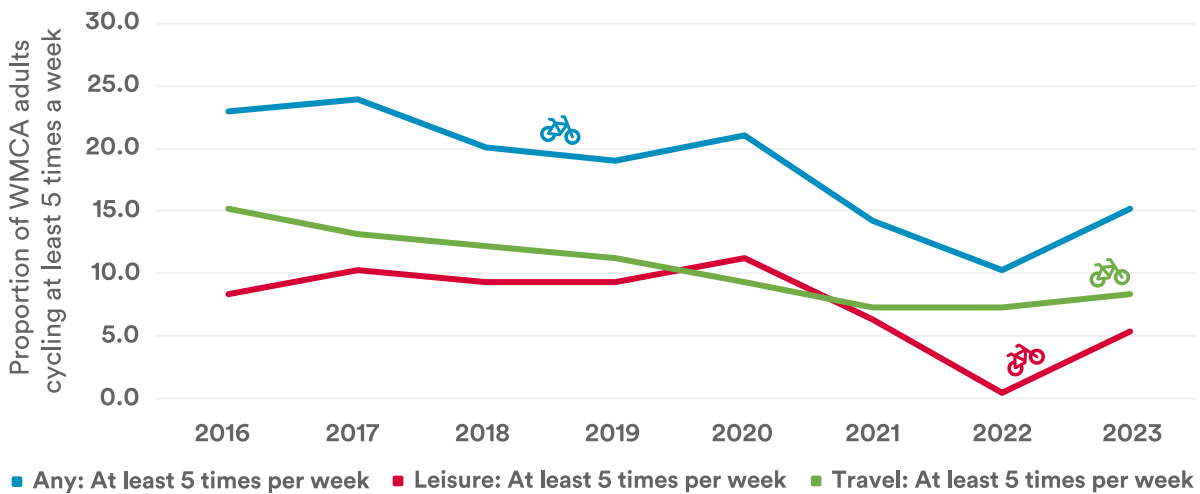
## Since 2020 the proportion of WMCA adults walking, at least 5 times per week for leisure has overtaken people walking for travel



In the WMCA area in 2023, 25.5% of adults walked at least 5 times a week, this could be for any reason. 13.9% of these walked at least five times a week for leisure and 12.4% for travel. Between 2016 to 2023, the proportion of adults walking at least five times per week for any reason remained relatively constant, ranging from a high of 27.8% in 2017 and 2019 to a low of 24.7% in 2020<sup>58</sup>, likely influenced by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

An inverse trend was observed between walking for “travel” and “leisure,” with “leisure” surpassing “travel” in 2020, further reflecting changes in behaviour during the pandemic.

**The proportion of WMCA adults cycling at least 5 times per week has decreased since 2016**

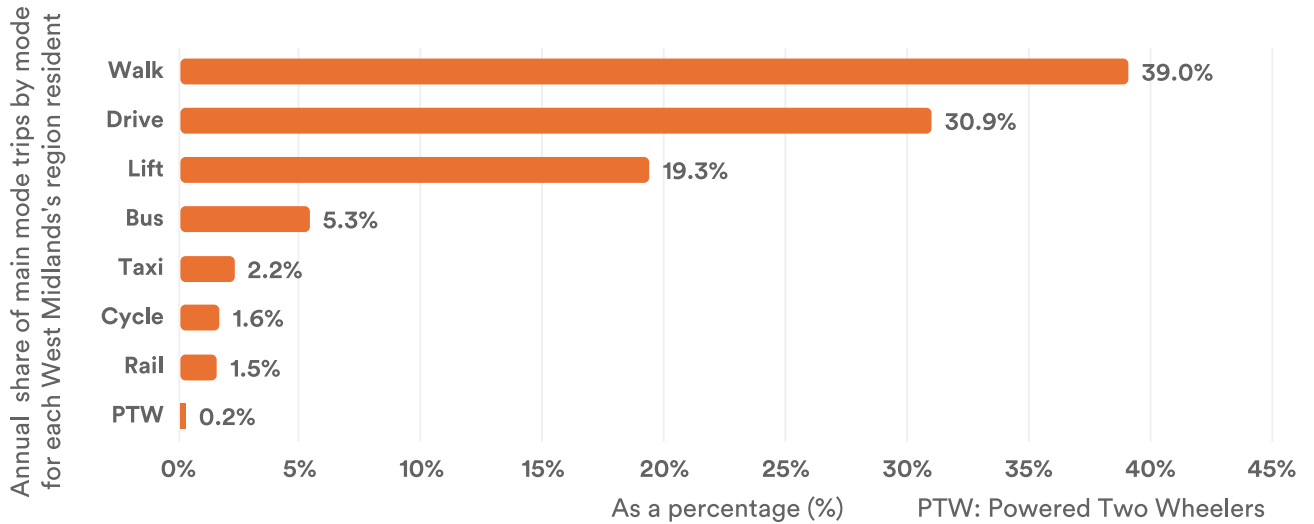


1.5% of WMCA adults cycle at least five times a week in 2023 for any purpose. The proportion of adults cycling at least five times per week has experienced an overall decline across all purposes, including “any,” “travel,” and “leisure,” with “leisure” showing the most significant decrease. Notably, cycling for “leisure” dropped sharply from approximately 0.7% in 2021 to nearly 0.0% in 2022. However, a recovery trend is observed after 2022<sup>59</sup>, with all purposes, including “any,” “travel,” and “leisure,” showing an increase in cycling rates.

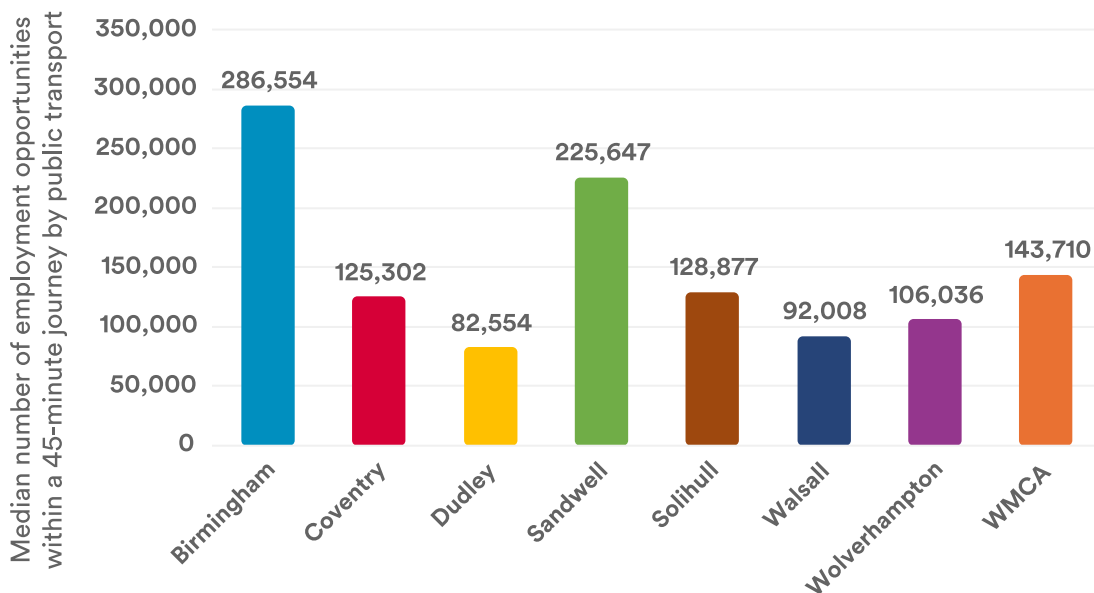
The wider West Midlands region, highlights walking as the most prominent mode of sustainable transport, accounting for 39.0% of trips. Driving is the second-largest category at 30.9%, reflecting a significant dependence on private vehicles. Shared car trips (“Lift”) make up 19.3%, indicating some level of car sharing. Public transport options, such as buses (5.3%) and rail (1.5%), represent relatively small proportions, while active travel modes like cycling (1.6%) are minimally utilised. Smaller modes include taxis at 2.2% and powered two-wheelers (PTWs) at just 0.2%.<sup>60</sup> Demonstrating the reliance on driving and the underuse of sustainable transport modes in the West Midlands, despite walking being the most popular form of active travel. This highlights the need to enhance other public and active travel options in the region.

We also know there are differences in the usage of public transport across different ethnic groups in the WMCA area. This is explored in more detail in the equalities section of this report.

## Nearly 4 in 10 journeys in the WMCA area are made by cycling

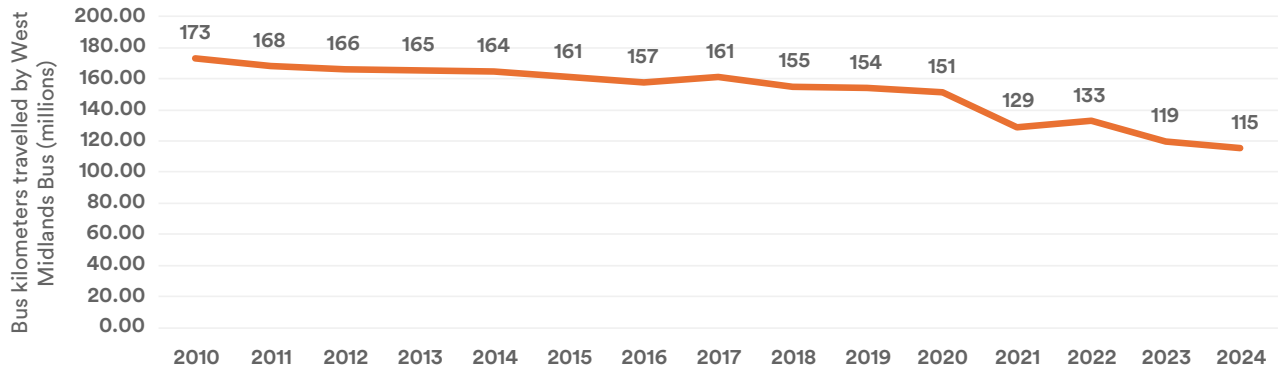


## There is variation in the median number of employment opportunities within a 45-minute journey by public transport across the WMCA, 2024



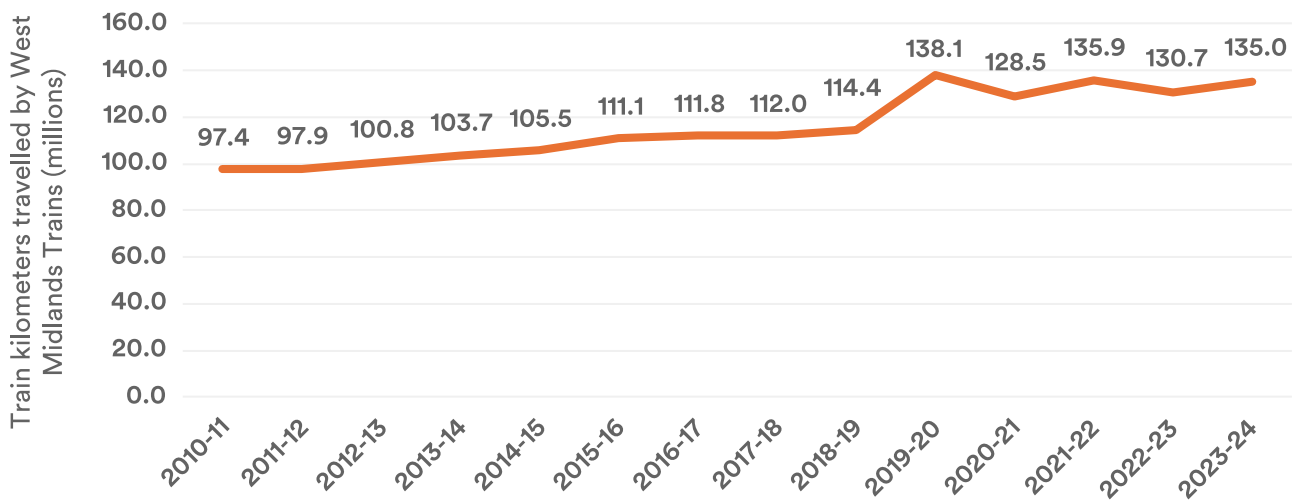
There is great variation between local authorities in the number of employment opportunities available within a 45-minute journey by public transport in 2024. Birmingham has the highest number of job opportunities within a 45-minute journey by public transport, with 286,554 jobs. This compares to 82,554 jobs in Dudley<sup>61</sup>. Access to a larger number of job opportunities is crucial for economic growth, reducing unemployment, and improving residents' quality of life.

## Bus kilometres travelled have consistently declined between 2010 and 2024



In the West Midlands there has been a consistent reduction in the number of bus kilometres travelled by West Midlands Bus service, over the past 14 years. This has decreased from 173.27 million in 2010 to 115.11 million in 2024, representing a 33.6% reduction. There was a noticeable drop between 2020 and 2021, where kilometres travelled fall from 151.52 million to 129.15 million, a reduction of 22.37 million kilometres, a 14.8% reduction<sup>62</sup>. In line with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although 2022 saw an increase, number have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

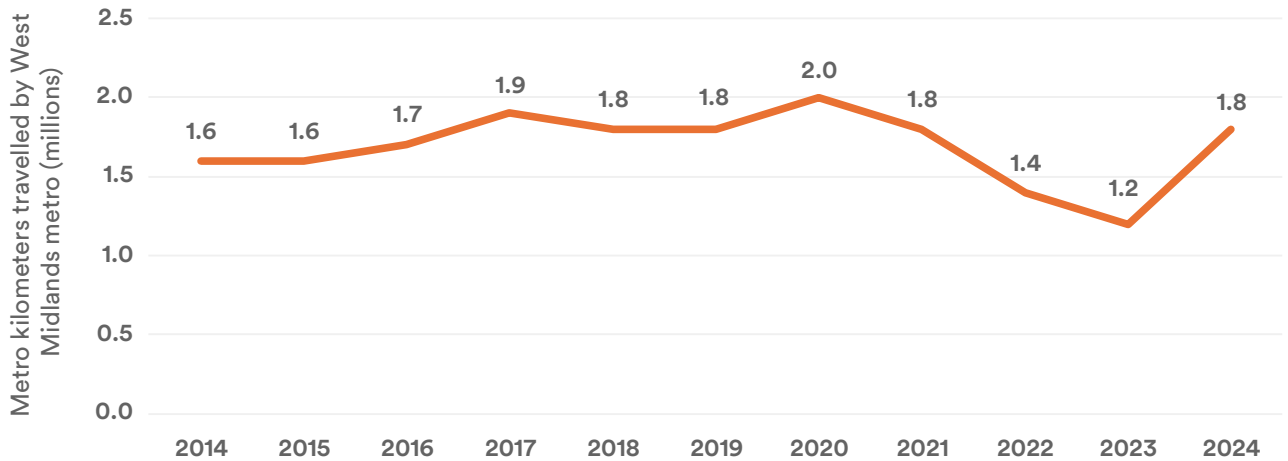
## Train kilometres travelled have risen since 2010/11, peaking in 2019/20



In the West Midlands, there has been an increase in train kilometres travelled, increasing from 97.4 million in 2010–2011 to 135.0 million in 2023–2024, representing an increase of 38.6%. From 2010–2011 to 2018–2019, train kilometres consistently increased, reaching a peak of 138.1 million in 2018–2019<sup>63</sup>. There was a decrease in train kilometres travelled in 2020-21 in line with the COVID pandemic. From 2022 onward, the kilometres rose again rising to 135.0 million in 2023–2024.



## Metro kilometres travelled have varied between 2014 and 2024, dropping to their lowest in 2023



In the West Midlands, from 2014 to 2020, there is an increase in the number of metro kilometres travelled by West Midlands metro, peaking in 2020 at 2.0 million metro kilometres. However, post-2020, there is a decline with a low of 1.2 million miles in 2023, followed by an increase in 2024 to 1.8 million miles<sup>64</sup>.

## What can, and is being done?

Continued investment into public transport and road networks to help create our 45-minute region of well-connected neighbourhoods, as outlined in the Local Transport Plan, is essential to deliver journeys for everyone and unlock the economic potential of the region, enabling residents and communities to access employment opportunities as well as leisure and cultural events with friends and family.

The Local Transport Plan sets out actions across ‘six big moves’ to improve connectivity to access key services and shift travel behaviours to be more sustainable and to support the transition to net zero. The bus network is the backbone of the public transport network in the West Midlands, accounting for around 80% of public transport trips. As such it has an indisputable role in the economic success of the region. Analysis, underpinned by economic research undertaken by Steer, on behalf of TfWM, demonstrates that for every £1 invested into buses - a further £12 is generated back into our economy - showing its importance as an employer and investor in the local, regional, and national economy. The region is currently progressing proposals to bring bus services back into public control with a final decision to be made in Summer 2025.

The WMCA has launched a [consultation](#) on a major overhaul of the West Midlands bus services. The plan proposes replacing the current private operator-led system with a franchised network managed by the Transport for West Midlands (TfWM). The goal is to improve service reliability, reduce traffic congestion, and support economic growth

The WMCA is also working on the region's rapid transit network with further expansion of the West Midlands Metro network such as from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill, rail improvements such as the work to reopen the Camp Hill Line and studies exploring opportunities for improvements in a number of other corridors.

Active travel continues to be an important part of the overall transport choice – ensuring that walking and cycling is an option for anyone wanting to make short trips is critical – given 60% of all journeys by car in the region are under 2 miles.

WMCA and authorities are working together to develop regional and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) which prioritise and target investment to key areas and corridors to support walking and cycling. The new LTP sets out a target for 50% of urban trips to be made by active travel by 2020. We will also refresh the regional LCWIP and develop a new pipeline of schemes running up to 2030.

Encouraging more walking and cycling will require a sustained effort to make our roads safer in line with our regional aim of reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured on the Strategic Route Network and the Key Route Network, seeking to achieve the United Nations General Assembly target of reducing road deaths by 50% by 2030.

Alongside improvements to the transport network, the way that new developments are planned and designed is also key to supporting a shift to more sustainable travel behaviours and improving accessibility. The Integrated Settlement provides an opportunity to maximise the impact of WMCA's investment, ensuring that transport enables inclusive growth.

# 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?

### Level 3 qualifications

In 2023, it was estimated that 60.7% of residents in the WMCA area aged between 16 to 64 held at least one qualification at level 3 (A-Level or equivalent) or above.<sup>65</sup> This is an increase on the rate for 2022 of 59.3% but still trails the rate for the wider West Midlands region and England of 63.6% and 67.4% respectively. Research shows that people with a level 3 qualification are more likely to be employed, earn more when employed and less likely to claim out of work benefits than those qualified at level 2 or below.<sup>66</sup>

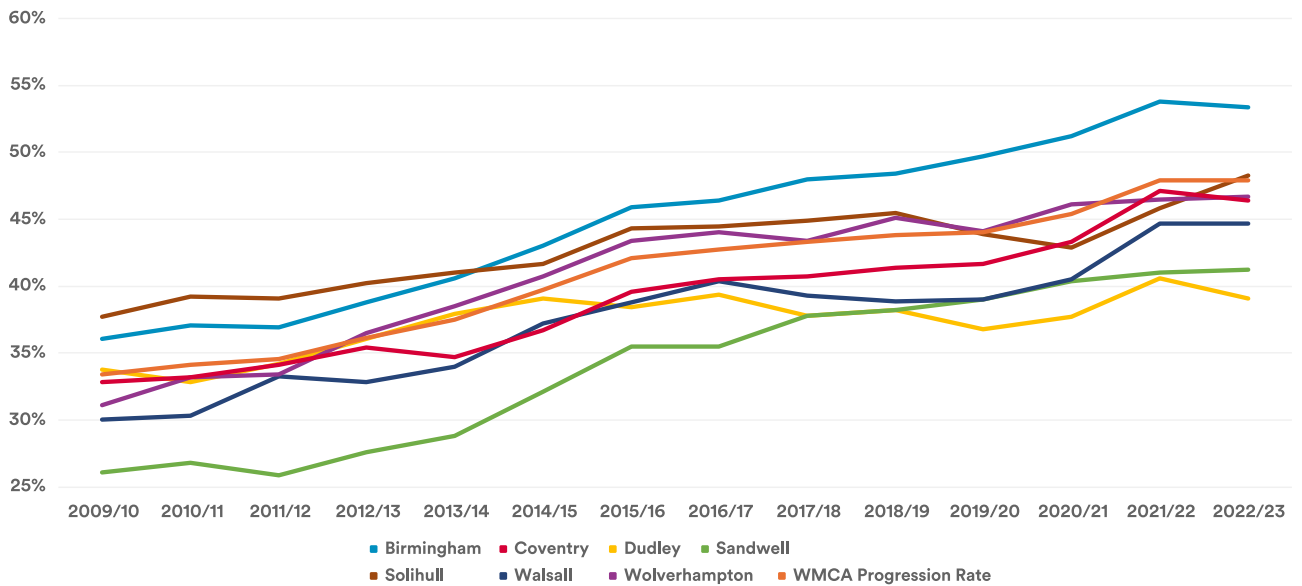
On average, level 3 qualifications result in a 16% earnings return and a 4% increase in the likelihood of being employed.<sup>67</sup> The WMCA is focused on improving the level 3 skills offer, with a focus on getting our residents into employment; upskilling and reskilling to respond to the regional economy and to net zero; providing a good basic education up to Level 2 for those who need it; and supporting our communities to be stronger and to benefit from inclusive growth.

It is estimated that 164,000 residents in the WMCA area aged between 16 and 64 have no qualifications, this is 1.1% of residents aged 16 to 64. This is higher than the wider West Midlands figure of 0.7%.

### Higher education participation

The percentage of school leavers progressing to higher education in the WMCA area was 47.9% for the 2022/23 academic year, a less than 0.1 percentage point decrease on the previous year.<sup>68</sup> This a higher level than in both the West Midlands area, where it is 45.3%, and England, where it is 46.9%. The 47.9% rate for the WMCA area is a significant increase from the 36.2% who progressed to higher education in the 2012/13 academic year. Education is a critical driver of social mobility, meaningful careers, and life satisfaction. Regional disparities exist in higher education participation, but areas such as Sandwell have seen significant increases in recent years, with the participation rate consistently increasing since 2016/17. These inequalities are still pronounced though, with the participation rate in Dudley falling for 2022/23 to the same level it was in 2014/15.

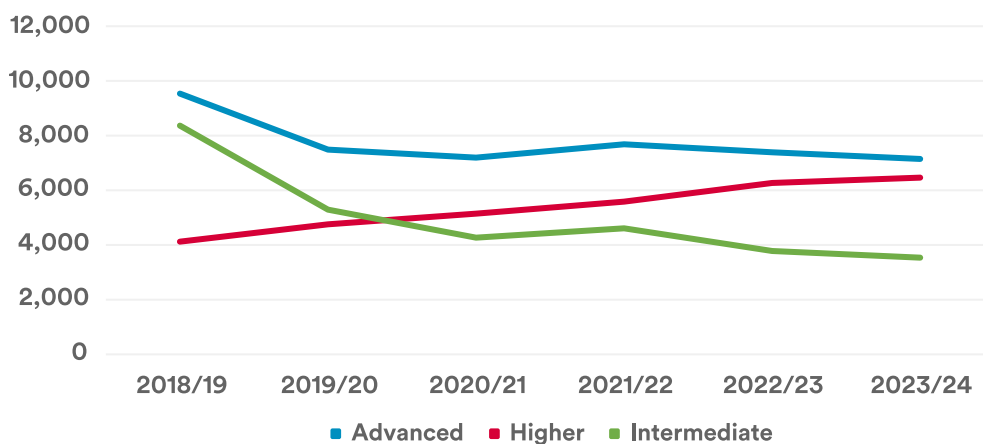
## The percentage of school leavers progressing to higher education remained stable in the WMCA Area in 2022/23



## Apprenticeship starts

There has been a decline in the uptake of apprenticeships across the WMCA area, with 2023/24 seeing a decrease of 8,000 (32%) on the enrolment figures seen in 2013/14, from 25,190 to 17,180 apprenticeship starts.<sup>69</sup> This level has remained quite stable in the WMCA area since 2019/20. This correlates with national figures and can partially be explained by the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017 which has resulted in falls in apprenticeship starts and the proportion of apprenticeships reaching young people aged 19 or below.<sup>70</sup> Significantly, intermediate level apprenticeships have been much more adversely impacted than advanced apprenticeships, but both levels have seen sizeable declines in their uptake across the region.

## Advanced and Intermediate apprenticeship starts have fallen in the WMCA area since 2018



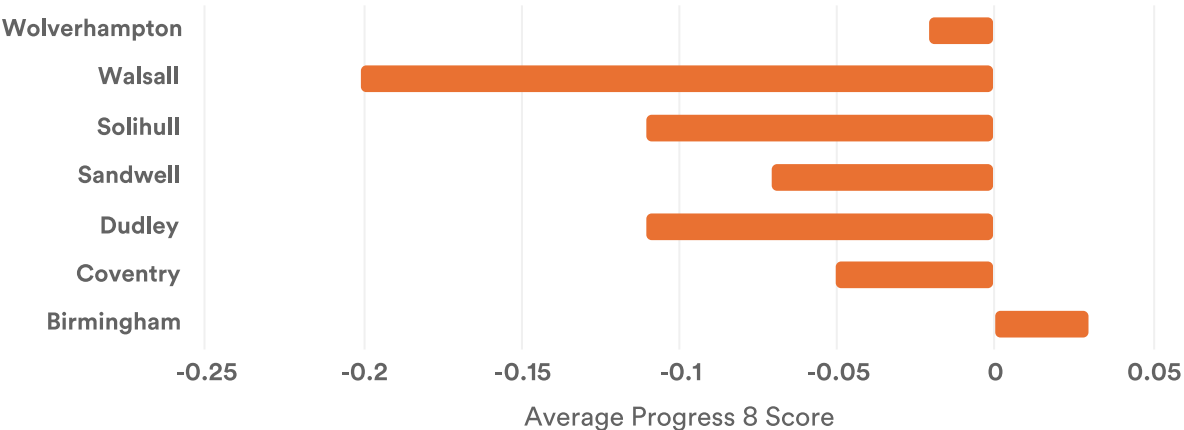
## Attainment 8 & Progress 8

Pupils finishing secondary school in the West Midlands region generally end up with lower levels of attainment and make less progress than expected overall compared to London or the average for England. Outcomes at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11) are measured using the attainment 8 benchmark (an average of pupils’ grades across 8 qualifications including English and Maths at GCSE); and the progress 8 benchmark (a measure of the progress made between Year 6 and Year 11).

Across the West Midlands region, the average attainment 8 benchmark is 44.9 out of a possible 90 for the 2022/23 academic year, 1.5 points below the average for England.<sup>71</sup> This score reduced by 2.7 on the previous academic year, slightly more than the decrease at an England level of 2.5. In the West Midlands region, only schools in Warwickshire achieved an average attainment 8 score at or above the England average. The England average is larger due to high scores achieved in London, meaning that 6 out of 9 England regions fall below the average. The score of 44.9 for the West Midlands is larger than the North East, North West, Yorkshire and Humber, and is slightly less than the East Midlands.

In terms of our progress 8 benchmark, the average in the West Midlands region is -0.09 for the 2022/23 academic year down from -0.06 in the previous year.<sup>72</sup> This is a negative figure which suggests that pupils are completing Year 11 with lower grades than they would otherwise be expected to get, given their progress at the end of Year 6 (primary school). In the WMCA area, average progress 8 scores have gone down in each of the 7 constituent local authorities for the 2022/23 academic year compared to the previous year. Only Birmingham retained a positive score. There are multiple reasons why pupils in the West Midlands region may not be doing as well as those in other parts of England, many of which bear no reflection on the quality of education they receive. Neither attainment 8 nor progress 8 can account for all the effects of factors such as socioeconomic circumstances which impact a child’s learning. We also know that there are differences in the Progress 8 scores of boys and girls and differences are also evident across different ethnic groups. This is explored in more detail in the equalities section of this report.

### Average progress 8 scores vary by local authority in the WMCA area



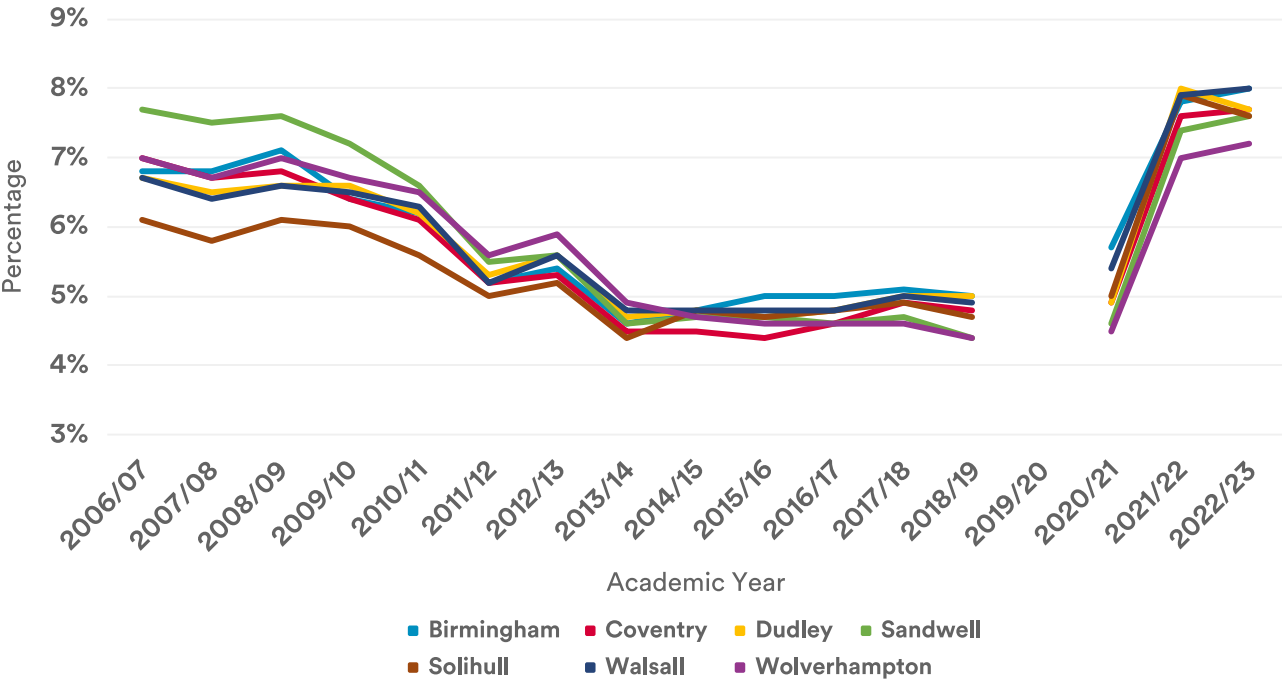
### School Absences

School absences have increased nationally since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and the West Midlands region is no different; with 7.6% of morning and afternoon sessions missed in the 2022/23 academic year, slightly more than the National average of 7.4%.<sup>73</sup> Absences have reduced slightly on the 2021/22 academic year, from 7.8% in the West Midlands. Pupils who regularly attend school are more likely to do well in exams, get a better job, and reach their potential as adults. Before the pandemic, in the 2018/19 academic year, across state-funded primary, secondary, and special schools, around 4.8% of school sessions were missed in the West Midlands region, and 4.7% nationally.

The initial signs are that the absence rate may reduce again for the 2023/24 academic year, with the autumn term rate being 6.7% for the West Midlands region, down from 7.6% in the previous year, and the spring term rate being 7.3%, a slight increase from 7.2% in the previous year.

School absence figures were not recorded at an annual level for the 2019/20 academic year due to disruption to schools caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, causing a gap in the time series data.

**School absences have risen in the WMCA area since the Covid-19 pandemic**



## **Grade 4+ in English and Maths**

The percentage of students in the WMCA area aged 16 years achieving at least a grade 4 GCSE qualification in maths and English is 63%.<sup>74</sup> This is lower than the rate of 64% for the wider West Midlands region and the average of 67% for England. Maths and English attainment are often necessary for students to progress into further study (such as T-Levels), a good job or to be accepted onto apprenticeships.

## **What can be, and is being done?**

Recently announced plans in employment, health and skills policy outlined in the Industrial Strategy Green Paper and Get Britain Working and English Devolution White Papers create a lot of new opportunities for the WMCA to act on. Likewise, the Integrated Settlement will allow us greater flexibility in funding and provision. To capitalise on these opportunities, the WMCA will continue to work with local employers and education providers to create a skills ecosystem which allows our residents to gain skills and training that they need to progress into work and within work, prioritising those with no or low qualifications. Supporting our residents to gain qualifications at level 3 or higher is a key priority, as it enables them to enter good employment or progress to further or higher education. To that end, we will also continue to support the region's young people to help them transition from education to employment or progress to further or higher education to further reduce the number of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). We will also continue to expand ESOL provision in the region to support residents with no or low levels of English into education and employment.

# 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.







Health Behaviours 30%	Socio-economic Factors 40%	Clinical Care 20%	Built environment 10%
Smoking 10%	Education 10%	Access to Care 10%	Environmental Quality 5%
Diet/Exercise 10%	Employment 10%	Quality of Care 10%	Built Environment 5%
Alcohol use 5%	Income 10%		
Poor sexual health 5%	Family/Social Support 5%		
	Community Safety 5%		

## What are the current conditions?

### Life expectancy

Life expectancy at birth in the WMCA area remains slightly below the national average, with a difference of 0.6 years for females and 0.7 years for males in 2021-2023.<sup>75</sup> Encouragingly, the trend in life expectancy for both males and females in the WMCA area has slightly increased from previous years, indicating positive developments in regional health outcomes. Within the WMCA, Solihull, the least deprived area, has the highest life expectancy, while Wolverhampton and Sandwell among the most deprived areas, record the lowest. This highlights the existing inequalities in health outcomes across the area.



	2016 - 18		2018 - 20		2021 - 23	
						
WMCA	82.2 years	78.0 years	81.9 years	77.6 years	82.5 years	78.4 years
England	83.2 years	79.6 years	83.1 years	79.4 years	83.1 years	79.1 years

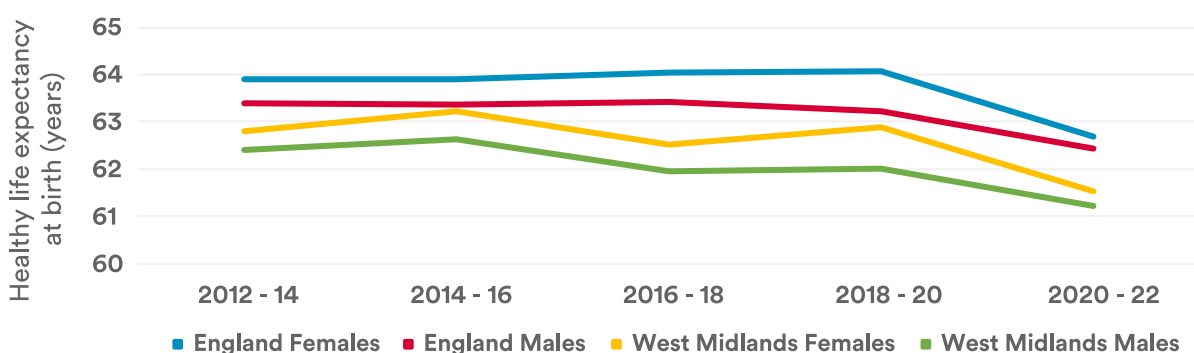
Despite this positive trend in Life expectancy, the West Midlands region has faced a significant health challenge in recent years, with a notable increase in number of preventable deaths. Data reveals a concerning trend, particularly during the covid pandemic. In 2019, the region had a rate of 147 preventable deaths per 100,000, which surged to 202.4 in 2021, significantly higher than the England average of 183.1.<sup>76</sup> This spike shows the underlying health disparities of the region, highlighting the gap in its preparedness.

As well as geographical differences in life expectancy amongst WMCA residents we also know ethnicity plays a key role in determining a person life expectancy. However, there is lack of timely and granular data on life expectancy and ethnicity at a WMCA area geography.

### Healthy life expectancy

Over the last decade, healthy life expectancy at birth in England has seen a decline, with males living 9.3 months less and females 14 months less in 2020–2022 compared to 2011–2013.<sup>77</sup> In the WMCA area, Solihull remains the only local authority where residents enjoy a higher HLE than the England average, further highlighting the disparities across the region. In contrast to the HLE, disability-free life expectancy (DFLE) at age 65 in the West Midlands Region has shown a general improvement since 2014–2016,<sup>78</sup> reflecting some positive trends in later life outcomes.

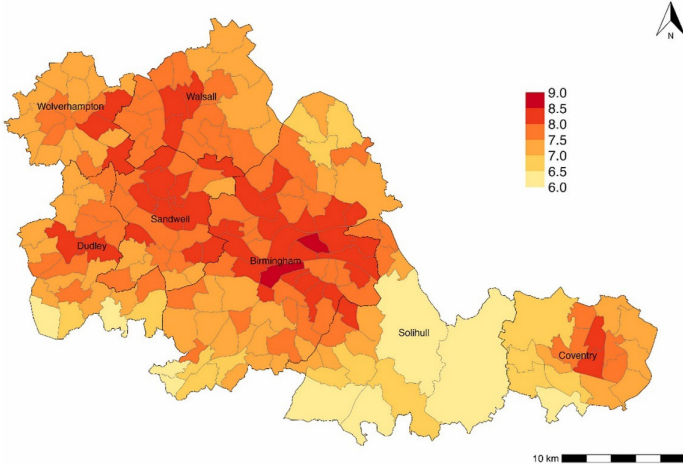
### Healthy life expectancy has decreased for females and males in England and in the WMCA



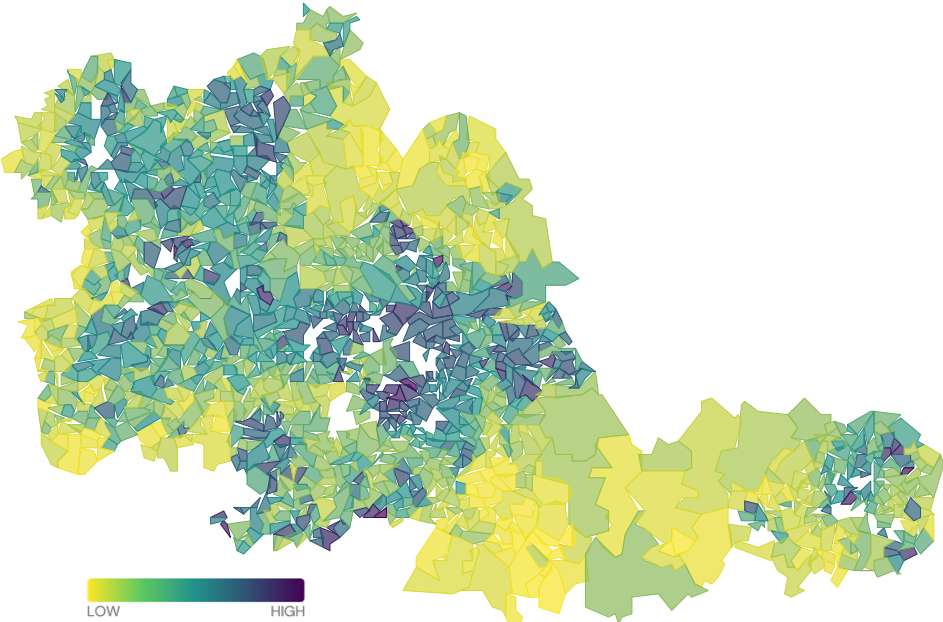
# Air quality related deaths

Environmental factors have a notable impact on people’s health, with air quality being a critical indicator of individual’s wellbeing. Among these factors Particulate Matter, especially ultrafine particles (PM0.1) and PM2.5 pose severe health risks. PM2.5 are particulate matters with a diameter around 2.5 micrometres, while ultrafine particles are even smaller, with a diameter of less than 0.1 micrometres. These are small enough to penetrate deep into the respiratory system and enter the bloodstream, contributing to respiratory and cardiovascular conditions. The concentrations of PM2.5 are directly linked to the vehicles and industrial emissions. The highest concentrations of PM2.5 have been observed along the M6 and Aston Expressway, calling for sustainable transportation solutions including EV adoption, increased public transits, and initiatives prioritising green mobility In light of these challenges, there has been some decline in deaths attributed to particulate air pollution, within WMCA area from 7.5% in 2018 to 6.2% in 2022.<sup>79</sup> Despite this progress, all seven local authorities of WMCA continue to experience higher mortality rates linked to air pollution compared to the national average of 5.8% in 2022.

## Percentage of mortality attributable to air pollution in the WMCA area

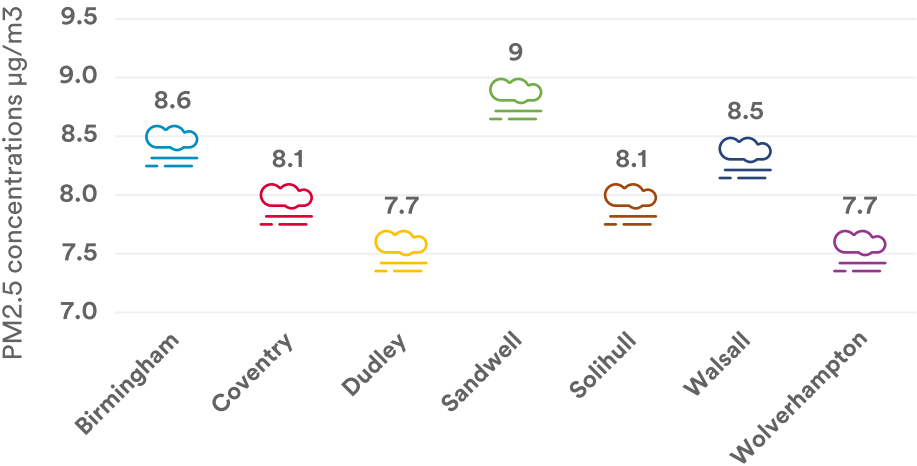


## WMCA Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, overall score<sup>80</sup>



The annual mean of particulate matter concentration reveals significant variations across the West Midlands region, with most local authorities on the verge of exceeding recommended air quality standards. While the statistical average for the West Midlands region stands at 7.6 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, compared to the England average of 7.8 µg/m<sup>3</sup>,<sup>81</sup> individual areas show marked differences. Looking at the maps, it's evident that the most deprived areas also tend to have poorer air quality, highlighting the intersection of environmental and social inequalities in the region.

**Air quality in the WMCA area varies widely, with Dudley and Wolverhampton having cleaner air**

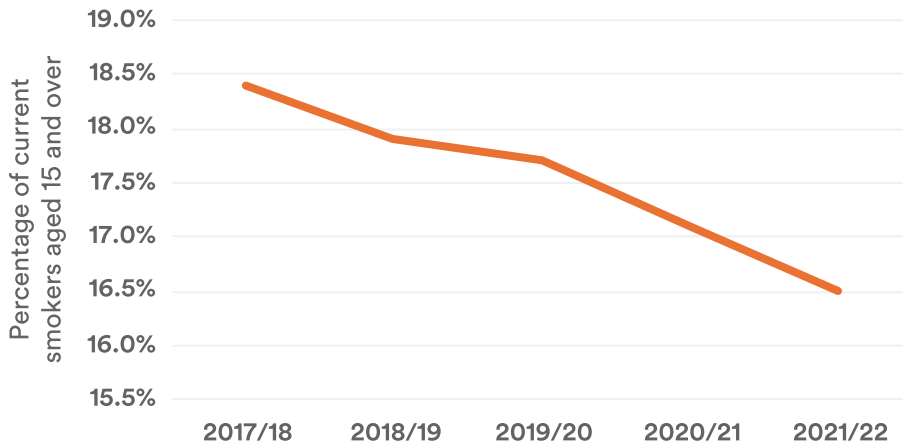


**Smoking and drug use**

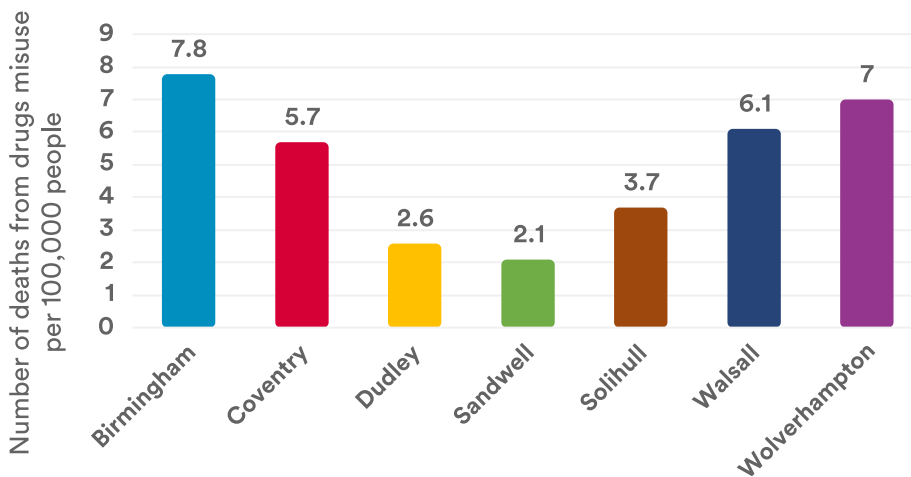
Smoking rates in the WMCA area have been declining gradually in recent years. The tobacco use is less prevalent among the population with the percentage of smokers decreasing from 18.4% in 2017/18 to 16.5% by 2021/22.<sup>82</sup> Smoking rates in 2022/23 vary across local authorities from 17.1% in Walsall to 12.8% in Solihull. Whereas the drug usage statistics reveal a complex picture, in the year 2023 an estimated 9.5% of people aged 16 to 59 years (~ 3.1 million) reported using drugs in the country. There were 8583 deaths due to drug misuse in 2020-22 in England of which 5.5% was in WMCA area.<sup>83</sup>

According to the Opinions and Lifestyle survey (OPN), the use of e-cigarettes by people aged 16 and over in England is on the rise, increasing from 3.7% in 2020 to 5.8% in 2023.<sup>84</sup> This equates to an estimated 3.35 million people in the country using vapes, with the majority (8.4%) being aged 16 to 25. While there is no official data available at the regional level, West Midlands is likely to follow the national trend of increased vaping among adults.

## Smoking prevalence among adults in WMCA area is in decline



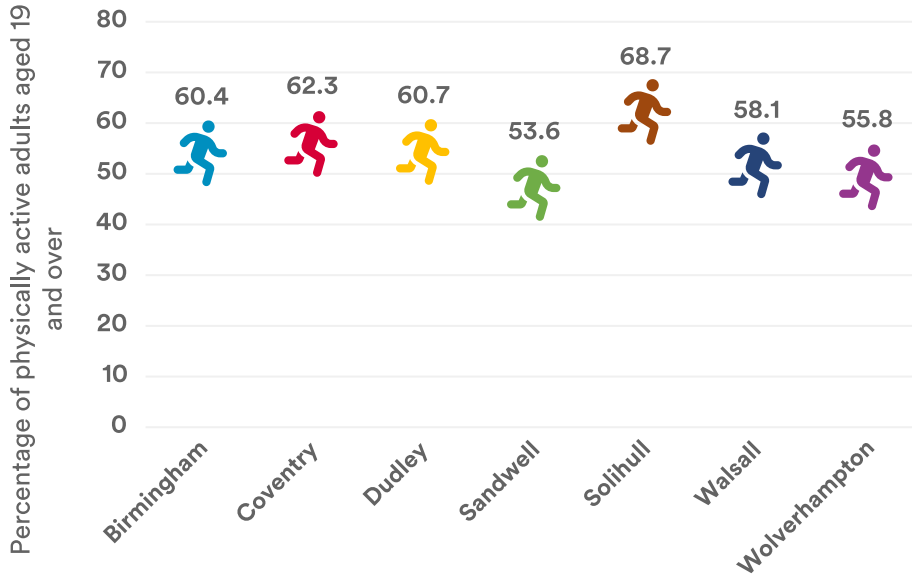
## Deaths due to drug misuse is highest in Birmingham across WMCA area



## Physical activity

The physical activity levels in the West Midlands region have remained steady in recent years. In 2022/23, 64.0% of adults in the region were physically active, slightly below the England average of 67.1%.<sup>85</sup> The percentage of physically active children and young people in 2022/23 was the lowest among all regions, with the West Midlands at 43.9%, marginally lower than the national average of 47.0%. In 2023 to 2024, the prevalence of obesity among reception children was the highest in the West Midlands region (10.9%) across the country, with deprivation and ethnicity being major contributing factors.<sup>86</sup> The West Midlands region has some of the highest deprivation levels with a significant proportion of the population living in areas ranked among the most deprived in England. And the region is one of the most ethnically diverse in the country, with minoritised communities often facing barriers to improve their physical activity levels and healthy lifestyles.

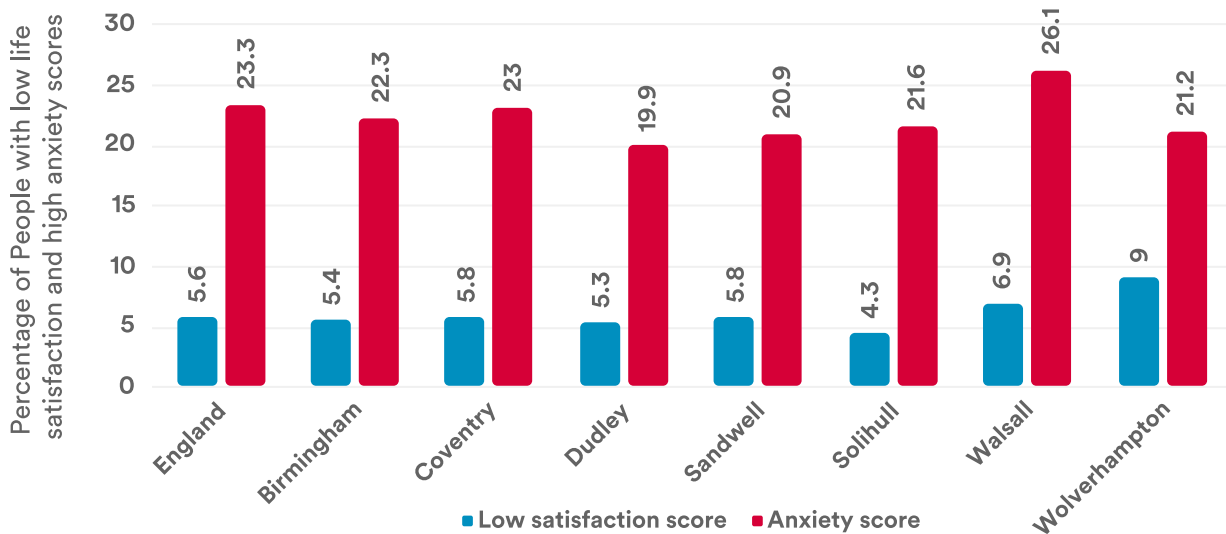
## Physical activity levels in WMCA area are mixed, with only Solihull above the England average



## Life satisfaction

The majority of residents in the West Midlands region report being satisfied with their lives, with 94.8% indicating moderate to high levels of life satisfaction, consistent with other UK regions in 2023.<sup>87</sup> But the anxiety levels among the population is in the raise. In West Midlands region, 22% of the population experience high levels of daily anxiety, a figure unchanged since 2022. Notably, Wolverhampton has the highest proportion of residents with low life satisfaction (9%) and high anxiety (26.1%) compared to other areas in the region.

## Self-reported wellbeing metrics indicate that residents of Dudley have the best wellbeing across the WMCA area



## What can be, and is being done?

The draft WMCA Supporting Healthier Communities Strategy has identified three long term strategic aims to focus on in order to support healthier communities in the WMCA area;

- Promoting health equity ensuring everyone gets an equal chance to live a healthy life.
- A focus on the building blocks of health, ensuring that places that people live, work, travel and play are supportive of a healthy life.
- Economic growth through health improvement, ensuring that healthier communities drive economic growth.

By working with system partners, data and intelligence and our communities we will work to address the inequalities in health outcomes and influence the development of our region.

In the next year we will:

Focus on the Building blocks of health by delivering [Health in all Policies](#) across the WMCA developing a bespoke framework for its implementation, influencing the single settlement to consider health benefits and outcomes and incorporate complex health modelling to inform delivery across different directorates programmes. This work will also support our ambitions for wider public sector innovation, with a focus on prevention and early intervention to improve overall health. WMCA is also a key partner in initiatives like [Policy Modelling for Health](#), which focuses on developing computer models to simulate, analyse the impacts of economic and social policies on population health outcomes and inequalities. This enables the integration of health considerations into policy decisions, ensuring that interventions are evidence-based and targeted to build healthier communities.

**Promote health equity** through the work of the Health Foundation Funded Mayoral Regions Programme, with its focus on reducing health inequalities, build our health research and insights to inform delivery, continue to drive forward our Disability Needs Assessment, Taskforce and Implementation Plan and support colleagues across the WMCA to carry out Health Equity Impact Assessments (HEqIA). We will also work with our system colleagues to embed physical activity into the Child and Adolescent Mental Health pathway.

**Drive economic growth through health improvement,** we will continue to work with employers on employee health and productivity and support vulnerable residents into employment through the Thrive at Work and Thrive into Work programmes. We will support FE college student's mental health and wellbeing through the Thrive College programme, enabling them to better engage with studies and increase their employment opportunities. We will develop a specialist Young Person's Neurodiversity Pathway to support neuro-divergent young people into employment opportunities.

The Devolution White Paper outlines a new health duty for the Mayor of the WMCA, integrating their role within the region's Integrated Care System (ICS) from 2028. This change aims to enhance coordination between health services and local government, ensuring health initiatives are aligned with broader regional priorities. By leveraging these new powers, the Mayor aims to address inequalities in health access and outcomes across the region.

# Equality

## Why is this important?

We have a duty to tackle inequality and make sure that everyone has the chance to reach their potential. This means addressing the additional barriers to success that a person may face because of their characteristics and backgrounds.

Under the Equality Act, people's protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. In addition, intersectionality ensures that we understand how people's characteristics shape their experiences and identities. Therefore, the characteristics that make us who we are will not be considered in isolation from one another by this approach.

The public sector equality duty places a duty on public bodies to: eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

## What are the current conditions? What can, and is being done?

The WMCA area faces persistent inequalities in education, employment, pay, housing and transport, disproportionately affecting ethnic minorities, women and disabled people. Educational attainment is lower in the WMCA than England across all groups, with boys, White and Mixed ethnicities showing the least progress. Employment rates are lower for women, ethnic minorities and disabled people, compounded by significant pay gaps, particularly for people of Mixed ethnicity and disabled people.<sup>88</sup> There are also stark inequalities in housing, with ethnic minorities and disabled people more likely to live in overcrowded housing and live in socially rented housing, whilst homeownership is lower in the WMCA area than England. Public transport usage is also higher for people from ethnic minorities, exacerbating challenges in access to opportunities. The State of the Region 2023-2024 report outlines this in more detail.<sup>89</sup>



# Inequalities in the West Midlands



## Infancy

Infant Death Rate is higher in the wider West Midlands region for all ethnicities.

**Highest for Black infants:** 8.8 per 1,000

**Lowest for White infants:** 4.4 per 1,000

**Infants of Other ethnicity show the greatest disparity:**

7.0 per 1,000 in West Midlands vs 4.3 per 1,000 in England



## Childhood

Childhood Death Rate is higher in the West Midlands region for all ethnic groups.

**Highest for Black children:** 23.5 per 100,000

**Lowest for White children:** 13.5 per 100,000

**Mixed children show the greatest disparity:**

16.1 per 100,000 in the West Midlands vs 10.6 in England



## Education

Progress 8 scores lower in the WMCA for most ethnic groups.

**Boys:** White (-0.42), Mixed (-0.41), Black (-0.03), Asian (0.23), Other (0.38)

**Girls:** White (-0.19), Mixed (-0.10), Black (0.36), Asian (0.60), Other (0.71)



## Pay

**Gender pay gap:** 9.5%

**Disability pay gap:**

- **Disabled employees:** £12.49 (-17.7% gap)
- **Non-disabled employees:** £15.18

**Ethnicity pay gaps:**

- **Black:** £11.55/ hour (-11.9% from White employees)
- **Mixed:** £9.82/ hour (-25.1% gap)
- **Other:** £12.50/ hour (-4.7% gap)
- **Asian:** £13.33/ hour (+1.7% higher than White employees)



## Stop & Search

**Highest:** Mixed (19.1 per 1,000 people), Black Caribbean (23.7 per 1,000 people), White & Black African (21.9 per 1,000 people)



## Housing

Black and Other ethnic groups are overrepresented in homelessness and Temporary Accommodation.

**Black households:**

18% of homeless households and 26% of households in Temporary Accommodation (vs 7% of population)

**Other ethnicity:** 11% of Temporary Accommodation households (vs. 3% of population)



## Transport

**Car:** Most common for White, Asian and Mixed ethnicities

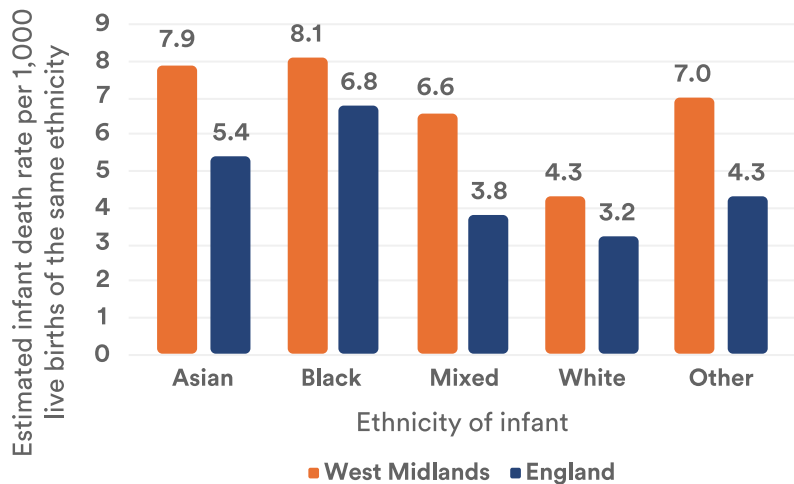
**Bus:** Most common for Black ethnicity

**Walking:** Most common for Mixed ethnicity

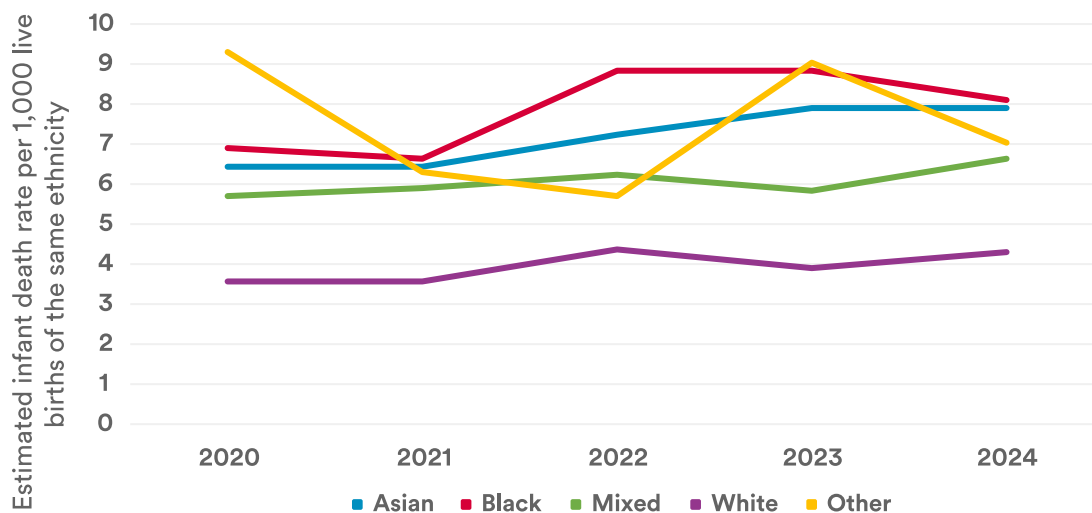
## Infant death rate

Infant death rate is higher in the West Midland region than England, for all ethnic groups.<sup>90</sup> The greatest difference is seen for infants of Other ethnicity (Other ethnicity is a category used to identify people that are not-represented by the other ethnic categories – Asian, Black, White and Mixed ) which have a death rate of 7.0 per 1,000 live births of the same ethnicity in the wider West Midland region, compared to 4.3 in England.

**The infant death rate was higher for all ethnic groups in the West Midland region than England in 2024**



**The infant death rate in the West Midland region is consistently higher for ethnic minorities than those of White ethnicity from 2020 to 2024**

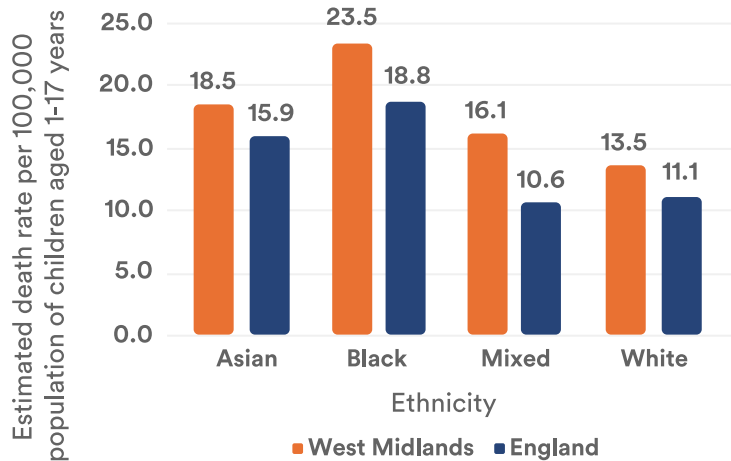


Infants from ethnic minorities have higher death rates than those of White ethnicity. Infants of Black ethnicity consistently have the highest infant death rate of all ethnic groups, with a high of 8.8 deaths per 1,000 live births of the same ethnicity in 2022 and 2023. In contrast infants of White ethnicity consistently have the lowest infant death rate, with a high of just 4.4 deaths per 1,000 live births of the same ethnicity in 2022.

## Child death rate

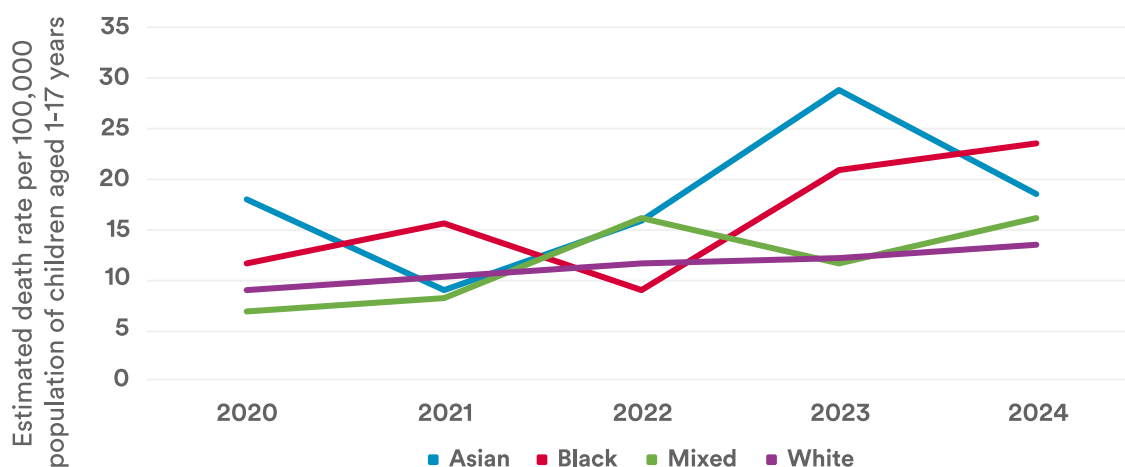
Child death rate is higher in the wider West Midland region than England, for all ethnic groups. The greatest difference is seen for children of Mixed ethnicity which have a death rate of 16.1 per 100,000 population of children of the same ethnicity in the wider West Midland region compared to 10.6 in England.

### The child death rate is higher in the West Midlands than England for all ethnicities



The death rate of Asian children shows the highest peak in 2023 but declines in 2024. However, the death rate children of Black and Mixed ethnicity show steady increases. The death rate for children of Mixed ethnicity starts out lower than children of White ethnicity and the lowest of all ethnic groups in 2020 but by 2024 have a higher death rate children of a White ethnicity. The death rate for Black children showing the sharpest growth by 2024. Children of White ethnicity have the lowest death rates in 2024, with a slight increase.

### The child death rate in the West Midlands increased for all ethnic groups between 2020 and 2024

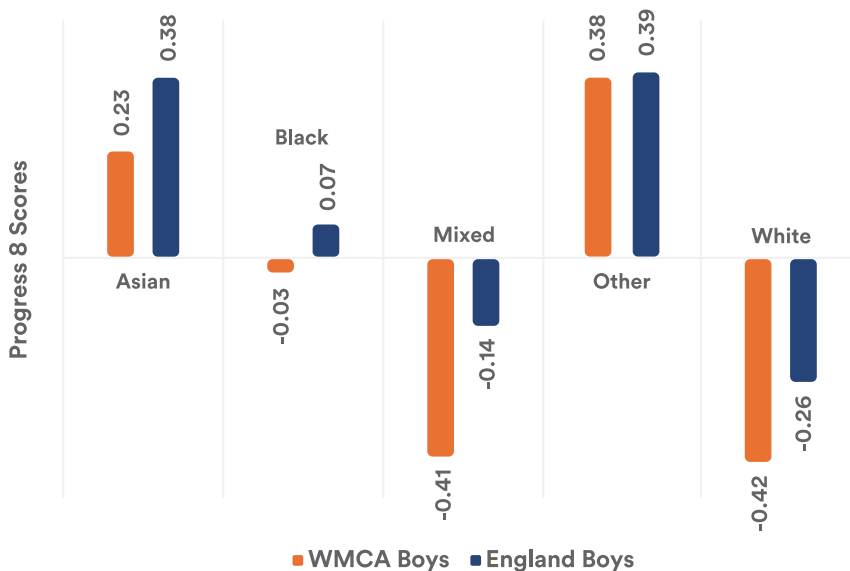


## Progress 8

Progress 8 scores measure academic progress between the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6) and the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11). There are differences in academic progress between ethnic groups. For boys, progress 8 scores are lower in the WMCA area than England, with the largest difference seen for White boys. For girls, pupils of Mixed and White ethnicity face the greatest challenges in the WMCA area. Whilst girls of Other and Asian ethnicity show the strongest performance.<sup>91</sup>

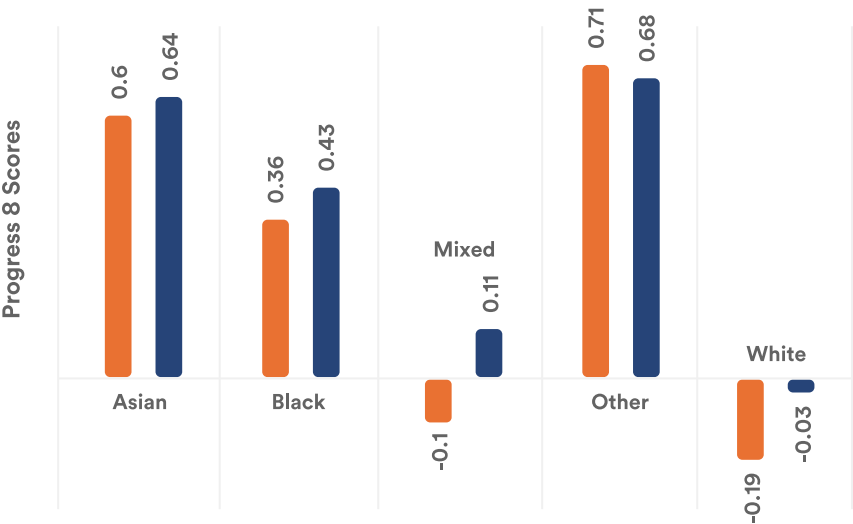
Asian boys in the WMCA area perform slightly worse than England, 0.23 compared to 0.38. However, in the WMCA area and England Asian boys show positive progress. In the WMCA area Black boys perform worse than England, -0.03 compared to 0.07. Boys of Black ethnicity make less progress in the WMCA and England. Boys of Mixed ethnicity in the WMCA significantly underperform compared to England, -0.41 compared to -0.14. Boys of Mixed ethnicity show negative academic progress in the WMCA area and England. In the WMCA area boys of other ethnicity perform almost equally to England, 0.38 compared to 0.39, with boys of other ethnicity showing strong positive progress in the WMCA and England. White boys in the WMCA underperform compared to England, -0.42 compared to -0.26. White boys show negative academic progress in the WMCA and England, with White boys in the WMCA area lagging further behind.

### Progress 8 scores are lower in the WMCA than England for all ethnic groups



Girls of Asian ethnicity slightly underperform in the WMCA area compared to England, 0.60 compared to 0.64. However, in the WMCA area and England girls of Asian ethnicity show strong positive academic progress. Girls of Black ethnicity in the WMCA area underperform compared to England, 0.36 compared to 0.43. Girls of Black ethnicity show positive academic progress, but the gap indicates a disparity between the WMCA and England. Girls of Mixed ethnicity in the WMCA underperform compared to England, -0.10 compared to 0.11. Girls of mixed ethnicity show negative academic progress in the WMCA compared to the positive progress seen in England for mixed girls. Girls of Other ethnicity in the WMCA outperform England, 0.71 compared to 0.68. Girls of other ethnicity show strong positive academic progress, with slightly greater progress seen in the WMCA than England. Girls of White ethnicity in the WMCA area underperform compared to England, -0.19 and -0.03. Girls of White ethnicity show negative academic progress in the WMCA area and England, with worse progress seen in the WMCA.

**Progress 8 Scores For Girls Are Lower In The WMCA Than England For Ethnic Groups Apart From Other Ethnicity**



**Economic Inactivity**

At the time of writing, there is a lack of reliable data that provides economic inactivity rates by ethnicity, this is due to low response rates to the Annual Population Survey. Due to large uncertainty in the data it is difficult to infer meaningful differences between economic inactivity of different ethnic groups.

## Pay gaps

### Ethnicity pay gap

Ethnicity pay gap data has not been updated since it was released in 2023, with the latest 2022 data showing that employees of Black, Mixed and Other ethnic groups are paid less than White employees in the West Midlands region.<sup>92</sup> Whilst employees of Asian ethnicity are paid more than White employees in the West Midlands region. There is a need for more timely data on the ethnicity pay gap to help tackle inequalities in pay.

Ethnic group	Median pay	Pay gap
White	£13.11	
Asian	£13.33	-1.7
Black	£11.55	11.9
Mixed	£9.82	25.1
Other	£12.50	4.7

### Gender pay gap

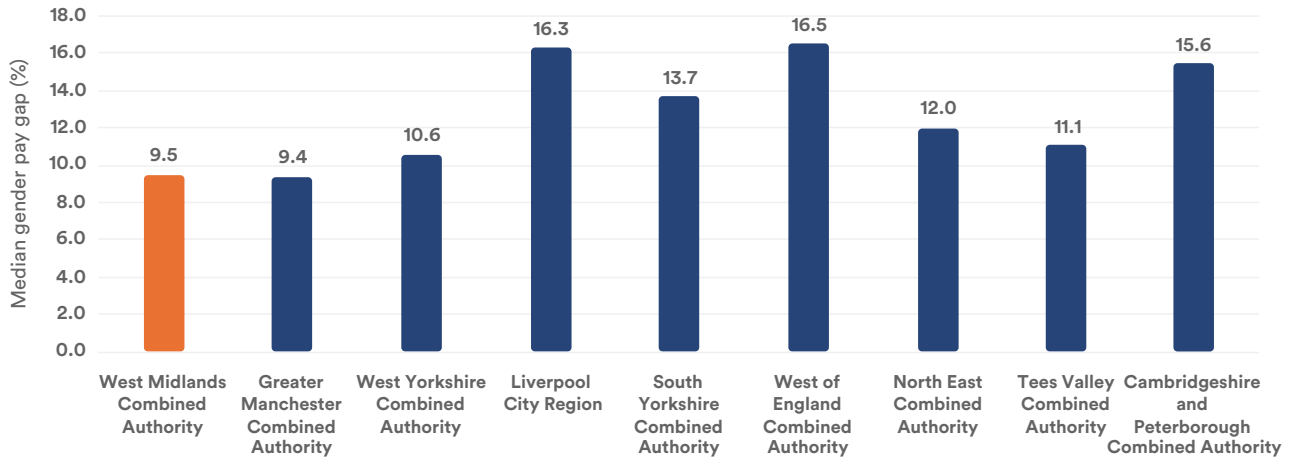
Women in the WMCA area and disabled people in the West Midlands region are on average paid less than their counterparts.

The estimated median sex/gender pay gap between men and women was 9.5% in the WMCA area in 2024. This means that on average women earn less than their male counterparts in the WMCA area.<sup>93</sup>

In 2024, the estimated median pay gap was lower for full-time employees at 5.9% compared to 9.5% for all employees. The gender pay gap is higher among all employees than full-time employees because women fill more part-time jobs. This presents an important opportunity to target the gender pay gap for part-time employees to decrease the overall pay gap.

The WMCA gender pay gap for all employees was 9.5% compared to 14.1% for the England average. The gender pay gap for all employees was one of the lowest in the WMCA area of all combined authority areas in England, only slightly behind Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

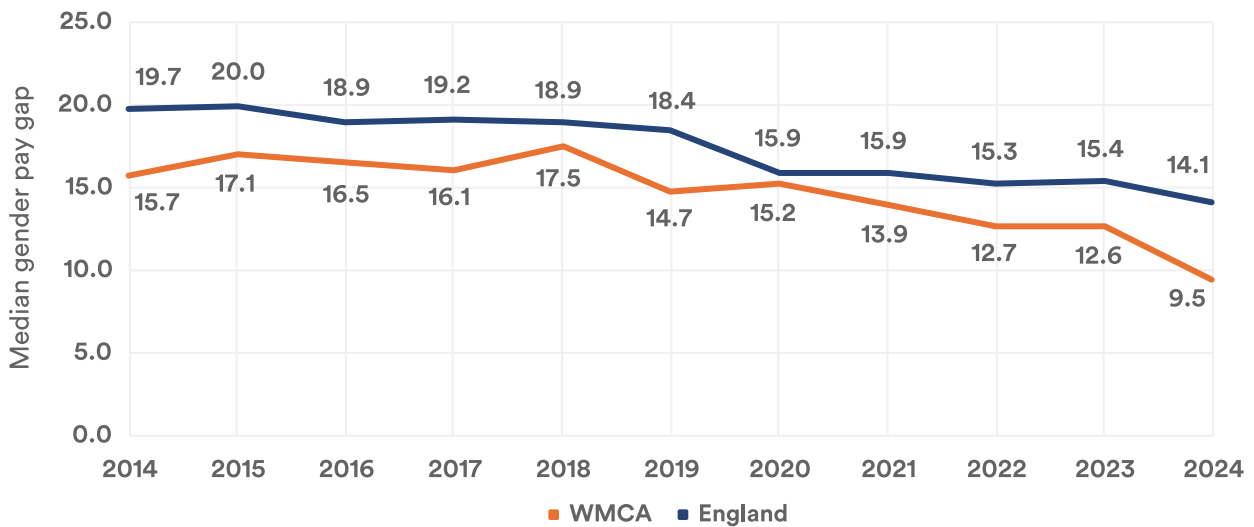
## The gender pay gap was one of the lowest in the WMCA area of all combined authority areas (2024)



The gender pay gap for full-time employees in the WMCA area was 5.9% in 2024, lower than the England figure of 8.3%.

The median gender pay gap for all employees has been consistently lower in the WMCA than England since 2014. With the median pay gap in the WMCA decreasing since 2014, to the lowest it has been over the past 10 years to 9.5%, in line with the pattern seen in England. The median pay gap was highest in 2018 in the WMCA area at 17.5%.

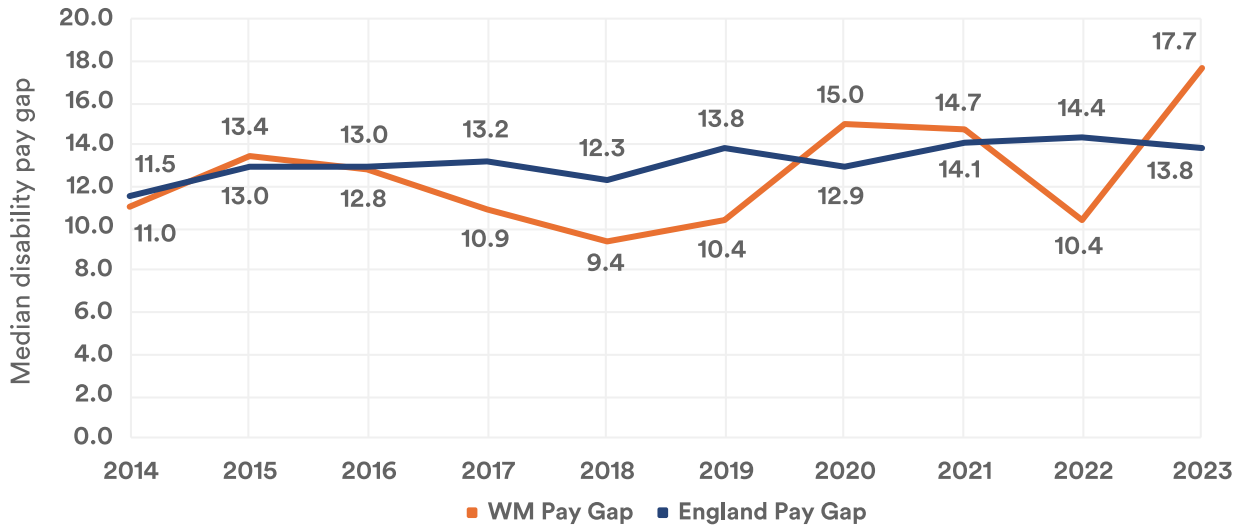
## The gender pay gap has decreased in the WMCA and England between 2014 and 2024



## Disability pay gap

The estimated disability pay gap between disabled people and non-disabled people was in the West Midlands region was 17.7% in 2023 for all employees. This is higher than the England national figure of 13.8%. The median pay of disabled employees is £12.49 compared to £15.18 for non-disabled employees in the West Midlands region in 2023.

## The disability pay gap in the West Midlands region rose to its high level in almost 10 years in 2023



Between 2014 and 2023 the pay gap between disabled employees and non-disabled employees fluctuates over time in both the West Midlands region and England. Varying between a high of 15.0% in 2020 and a low of 9.4% in 2018. However, in 2023 the disability pay gap in the West Midlands rose to the highest in almost ten years to 17.7%, this was noticeably higher than 13.8% seen in England and a significant rise from 10.4% in 2022.

The consistent pay gap between disabled employees and non-disabled employees suggests a need for more consistent measures to tackle inequalities in pay between disabled employees and non-disabled employees. The pay gaps indicate a persistent issue in achieving equity for disabled employees.

### Stop and search

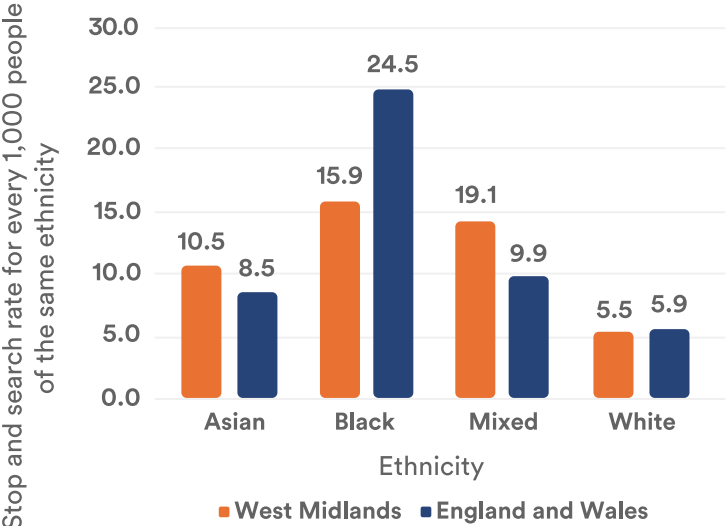
Stop and search is used by Police Forces to search people who they suspect to be in possession of unlawful items, including illegal drugs, weapons or stolen goods. However, there are noticeable differences in rates of stop and searches between different ethnic groups.

In the West Midlands Police Force area there were 8.7 stop and searches for every 1,000 people for people of all ethnicities, similar to that of 8.9 within the rest of England and Wales Police Forces in 2022/23.<sup>94</sup> However, across different ethnic groups the rate of stop and search varies between 19.1 stop and searches for every 1,000 people of Mixed ethnicity, and 5.5 stop and searches for every 1,000 White people.



In the West Midlands Police Force area there were a greater number of stop and searches per 1,000 people for people of Asian and Mixed ethnicity, compared to England and Wales. There were fewer stop and searches for people per 1,000 people of Black and White ethnicity in the West Midlands Police Force Area, compared to England and Wales.

**The rate of stop and search was higher for people of Asian and Mixed ethnicity in the West Midlands Police Force Area than in England and Wales (2022/23)**



When breaking ethnicity categories down further the rate of stop and search per every 1,000 was highest for people of other mixed ethnicity at 28.9 per 1,000 people of other ethnicity.

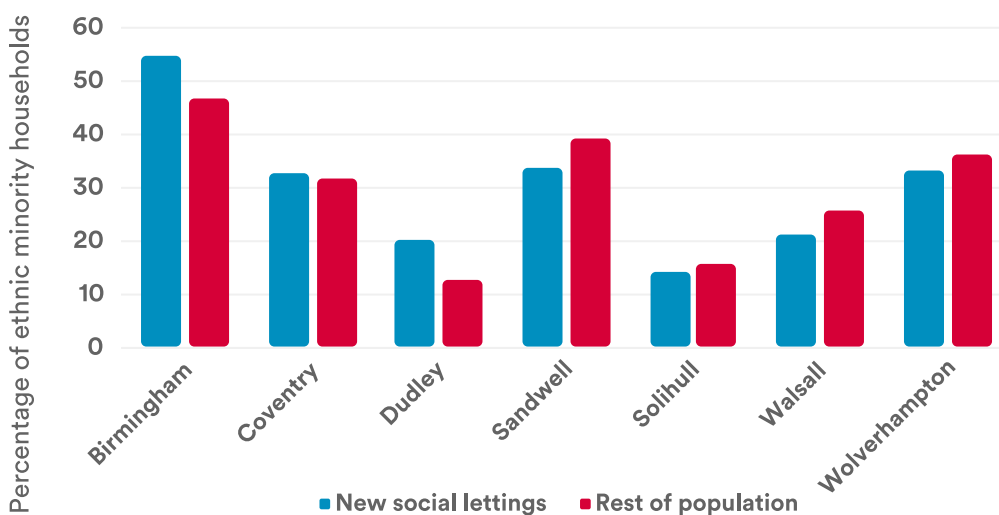
<b>Stop and Search rates in the West Midlands Police Force area 2022/23 - Rate per 1,000 people of that ethnicity</b>		
<b>Asian</b>	Bangladeshi	6.4
	Chinese	1.8
	Indian	4.9
	Pakistani	15.0
	Any Other Asian Background	18.7
<b>Black</b>	Black African	9.7
	Black Caribbean	23.7
	Any Other Black Background	21.1
<b>Mixed</b>	Mixed White and Asian	10.9
	Mixed White and Black African	21.9
	Mixed White and Black Caribbean	18.8
	Any Other Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Background	28.9
<b>White</b>	White British	4.9
	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	13.7
	White Irish	6.3
	Roma	0.0
	Any Other White Background	12.9
<b>Other</b>	Arab	0.0
	Any Other Ethnic Background	0.5

## Housing inequality

New social housing can play a crucial role in reducing wider inequalities by providing affordable and stable homes, which are essential for improving access to education, employment and services. However, the proportion of people from ethnic minorities living in new social homes varies across the WMCA area.

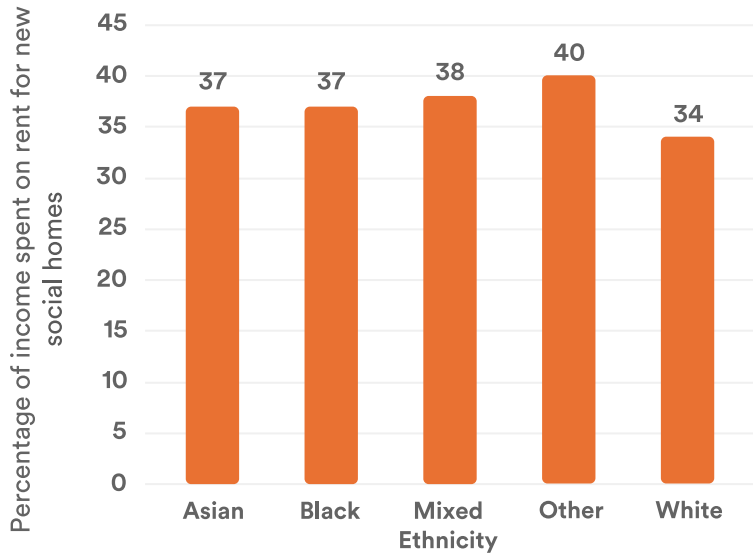
In the year ending March 2023, households with a lead tenant from ethnic minorities made up 50.2% of new social housing lettings, in line with people from ethnic minorities making up 50.1% of the population.<sup>95</sup> However, across the WMCA area there are differences in the proportions of new social lettings and the population for ethnic minorities. Within the WMCA area, Sandwell, Solihull and Walsall have lower proportions of people from ethnic minorities in new social lettings compared to the wider population. Conversely, Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton have a greater proportions of people from ethnic minorities in new social housing than the population.

### There is variation among constituent local authorities in the representation of ethnic minority households in new social lettings



Within new social homes, people of 'other' ethnicity spend the greatest proportion of income on rent in the WMCA area, spending 40% of their income. This compares to people of White ethnicity who spend 34% of their income on rent for new social homes. It is difficult to infer if differences between ethnicities in the percentage of income spent on rent for new social housing, are due to higher incomes or a higher number of working- adults living in the same household.

## The percentage of income spent on rent for new social homes varies by ethnic group in the WMCA area



When breaking down ethnic group further people of Other Asian, White & Black African spend the greatest proportion of their income on rent for new social homes, at 40%.

Ethnicity	Percentage of income spent on rent for new social housing (%)
Bangladeshi	39
Chinese	31
Indian	36
Other Asian	40
Pakistani	35
African	37
Caribbean	35
Other Black	37
Other Mixed	36
White & Asian	39
White & Black African	40
White & Black Caribbean	38
Arab	39
Other	40
White British	35
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	31
Irish	35
Other White	30

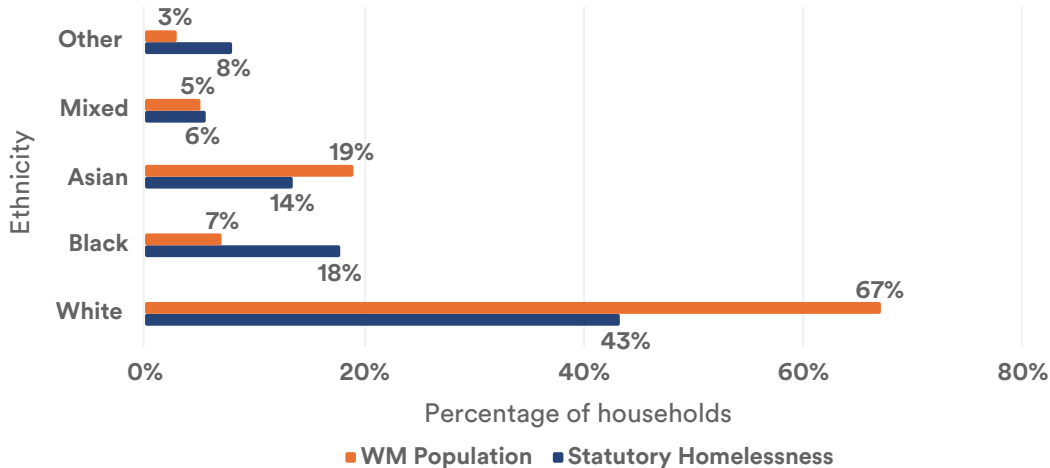
## Statutory Homelessness

When a homeless application is made the ethnicity of the main applicant within the household is recorded. This reflects the ethnicity of one person within the household and therefore if there any additional members within the household their ethnicity is not recorded and may differ to the main applicant.

Households of Black, Mixed and Other ethnicity are overrepresented within homelessness, when compared to the wider WMCA population. With the greatest overrepresentation seen for households of Black ethnicity, which make up 18% of all households owed a homelessness duty however are only 7% of the wider WMCA population.

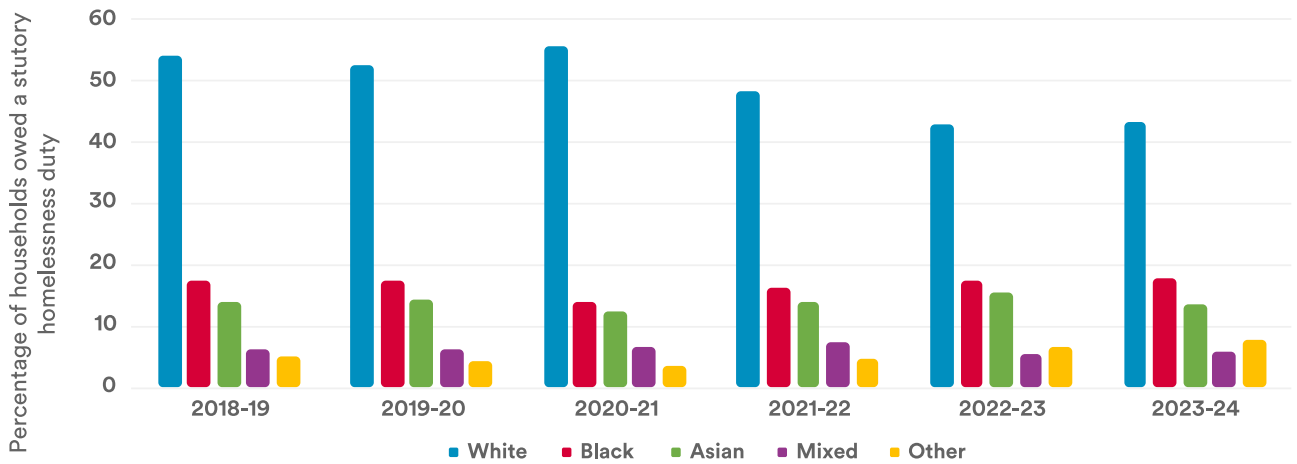
Households of Asian and White ethnicity are underrepresented within homelessness, with households of a White ethnicity making up 43% of homeless households compared to 67% of the wider WMCA population.

### Households of Black, Mixed and Other ethnicity are overrepresented in homelessness (2023/24)



Between 2018 – 2023, White households as a proportion of all homeless households consistently represent the largest group, as reflected by their larger population share. However, the proportion of White households have gradually declined over time. Black households as a proportion remain relatively stable over time as the second most affected group, indicating an entrenched and consistent problem. Asian, Mixed and Other ethnic groups show a slight variation over time, with the proportion for households of Other ethnicity increasing over time.

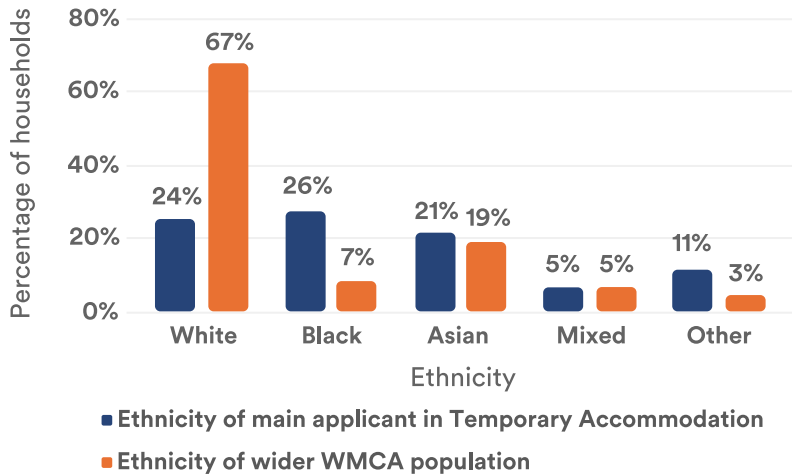
The proportion of White households owed a statutory homelessness duty has decreased, whilst other ethnic groups have increased between 2018/19 to 2023/24



### Temporary Accommodation

Within Temporary Accommodation people from ethnic minorities are overrepresented in the WMCA area, with differences in the representations of people of different ethnicities in Temporary Accommodation compared to the population. The most significant overrepresentation in the WMCA area is for applicants of Black and Other ethnic groups in the WMCA area. Black applicants constitute 26% of those in Temporary Accommodation but only 7% of the wider population in the WMCA area. People of Other ethnicity represents 11% of Temporary Accommodation applicants, compared to just 3% of the general population in the WMCA area. There is also a slight overrepresentation of Asian and Mixed groups. Asian applicants make up 21% of people in Temporary Accommodation slightly above their 19% share of the population, while Mixed show a similar level in Temporary Accommodation as in the WMCA population at 5%. Applicants of White ethnicity are underrepresented in Temporary Accommodation, constituting 24% of Temporary Accommodation applicants and 67% of the wider population.

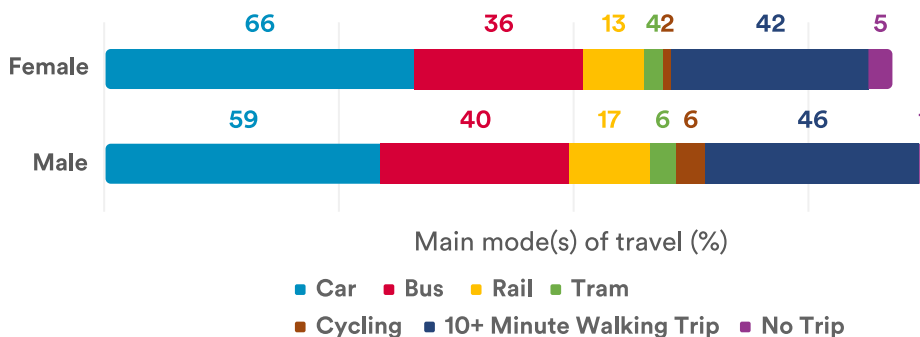
## Households of black, asian and other ethnicity are overrepresented in temporary accommodation in the WMCA area



## Regular Public Transport Usage

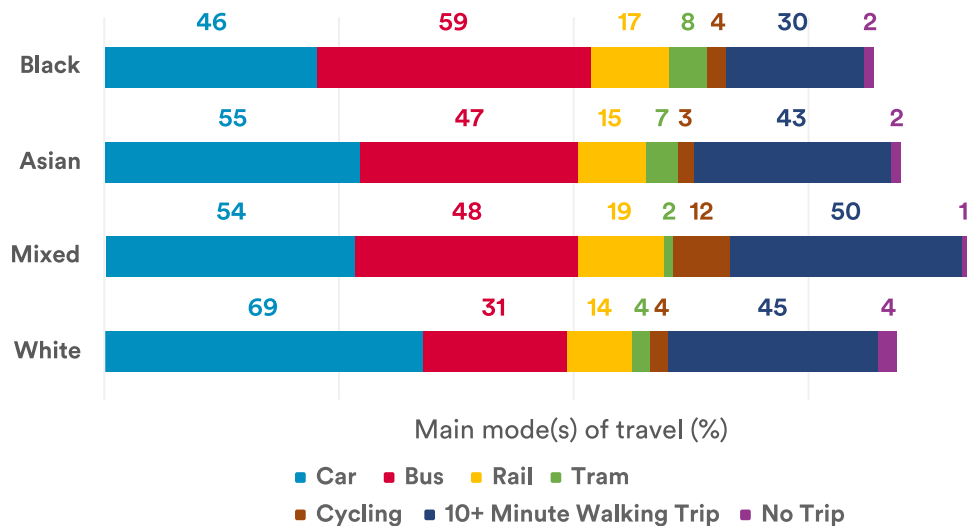
When looking at methods of travel for journeys made in the last 7 days, females are more likely to have used a car than males and less likely to have used any other form of public transport or walking.<sup>96</sup>

## The main mode of travel in the WMCA area was car for both females and males, July - September 2024/25



Car travel is the main mode of travel amongst Asian, Mixed and White ethnic groups. However, for people of Black ethnicity the most common form of travel was bus, this is noticeably below bus usage for people of White ethnicity which makes up. People of Mixed ethnicity are the most likely to have made a journey that was a walking trip of 10 minutes or more.

## The main mode of travel in the WMCA varies by ethnicity, July - September 2024/25



### What can, and is being done?

In the WMCA Equalities Scheme 2025-28, two of its the four objectives address some of the equalities challenges in the State of the Region report.

- Objective 2 - To provide accessible, affordable, safe and inclusive transport services to our wide range of customers and
- Objective 3 - Deliver schemes, strategies and programmes across the WMCA that help deliver positive equality and inclusion outcomes, reducing socio-economic disadvantage and poverty for our region’s diverse communities

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Board launched the region’s independent Race Equalities Taskforce in 2022, to bring a wide range of partners together to tackle race inequality and improve opportunities for all. The Taskforce has recently published a review of its progress to date:

[Race Equalities Taskforce - Annual Progress Report](#)

The Mayor has additionally committed the WMCA to Birmingham Race Impact Group’s pledge to create an anti-racist region.



The Devolution White Paper announced the transfer of Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) functions to the Mayor of the WMCA in 2028. This shift aims to promote greater collaboration in tackling crime and public safety. With these new powers, the Mayor will have direct oversight of policing strategies, ensuring that efforts to reduce crime contributes to the region's inclusive growth agenda. This integrated approach aims to create safer, more resilient communities, fostering a fairer and more prosperous West Midlands.

There is limited data that provides a breakdown by ethnicity, gender or disability at a West Midlands geography, at a timely frequency. Improved access to data that provides granular breakdown into protected characteristics and at a geographic scale would help improve evidence-based decision making and help tackle inequalities.

# Further Information

The latest and previous versions of the West Midlands State of the Region and interactive dashboard resources is available at [wmca.org.uk/sotr](https://wmca.org.uk/sotr)

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