



Community Profile 2023

West Oxfordshire

Researched and compiled August 2022 by Ambrin Shafiq (Summer Intern)

Last revised August 2023 by Rose Poyser (Summer Intern)

Table of Contents

Summary	2
Demographics	3
Ethnicity	4
Gypsies and Travellers	5
Ukrainian refugees	5
Age	5
Housing	7
Household composition	8
Housing market	8
Employment	11
Qualifications	12
Income	13
Poverty	14
Debt	14
Fuel poverty	14
Food insecurity	15

Child poverty	15
Services	17
Health	17
Transport	17
Conclusion	19

Summary

West Oxfordshire is significantly older, wealthier, and more ethnically homogenous than regional and national averages. Unemployment in the district is relatively low and wages are generally above average with a highly qualified workforce engaged in managerial and professional occupations. The district is well-served by its health network, as well as by its policing and main transport services, although rural transport links for those without cars are generally poor. Home ownership is also high, as might be expected from the area's high wealth levels.

Despite this, West Oxfordshire is experiencing many of the trends which are impacting living standards at the national level. The impacts of the pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis have compounded weakening across many key metrics. Rates of fuel poverty and child poverty have increased in recent years, and the use of food banks has increased dramatically throughout the pandemic. In addition, house prices and rents have been rising from already high regional and national levels. This suggests that the district may be more vulnerable than most to the impact of quickly spiralling living costs. Furthermore, the index of multiple deprivation reveals that the district scores poorly on barriers to housing and services, and on education, skills, and training.

West Oxfordshire's demographic profile also presents a current and future challenge to the district. Benefit expenditure in the district is dominated by state pensions, and by Universal Credit, which has increased. Pension credit remains significantly under-claimed across Oxfordshire.

The geographic profile of West Oxfordshire, with a largely rural population distribution and a concentration of the population in a few main towns, has contributed to high levels of inequality. The larger towns of Chipping Norton and Witney exhibit high levels of deprivation, as well as higher house prices. Demand for Citizen's Advice services in these areas is also higher. However, pockets of deprivation exist across the district, masked by the relative affluence of a significant proportion of rural West Oxfordshire.

This profile then suggests that while West Oxfordshire is a relatively affluent district with respect to wealth and employment, it will not be immune to the challenges raised by the aftermath of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Rising levels of poverty, coupled with increasing prices and already expensive housing stock, will lead to significant difficulties for residents of the district. An ageing population can be expected to compound these problems.

Demographics

West Oxfordshire is a small but growing district. In the 2021 Census, the population was recorded at 114,200 people.¹ Population density was also low compared to England as a whole, reflecting West Oxfordshire's rural nature.² Yet the area is seeing a relatively high rate of population growth. The population is growing at a faster rate (9.0%) than the South East (6.5%) and England at large (6.6%).³ This means that population density is also increasing,⁴ which may bring challenges for the housing market.

Internal migration into West Oxfordshire is a key driver of growth, with a net 1.2% inflow from 2019 to 2020. International migration is much lower, with a very small net outflow (-0.02%) from 2019 to 2020.⁵

While international migration is low, in 2020 there were estimated to be 13,000 non-British residents in West Oxfordshire.⁶ Moreover, language barriers affect a significant proportion of the population. The 2021 census suggests that 10.7% of residents cannot speak English well, while 1.7% cannot speak English.⁷ After English, the most common main languages are Polish, Romanian, and Portuguese.⁸

Ethnicity

A significant majority (95.2%)⁹ of West Oxfordshire residents identifies as White. This is much higher than the national average¹⁰ and highlights the extent of ethnic homogeneity in the West Oxfordshire population.

¹ ONS (2022a) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E07000181/>.

² ONS (2022b)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>

³ ONS (2022a).

⁴ ONS (2022b).

⁵ ONS (2021)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2020#local-area-population-change>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ ONS (2022c)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/language/bulletins/languageenglandandwales/census2021>.

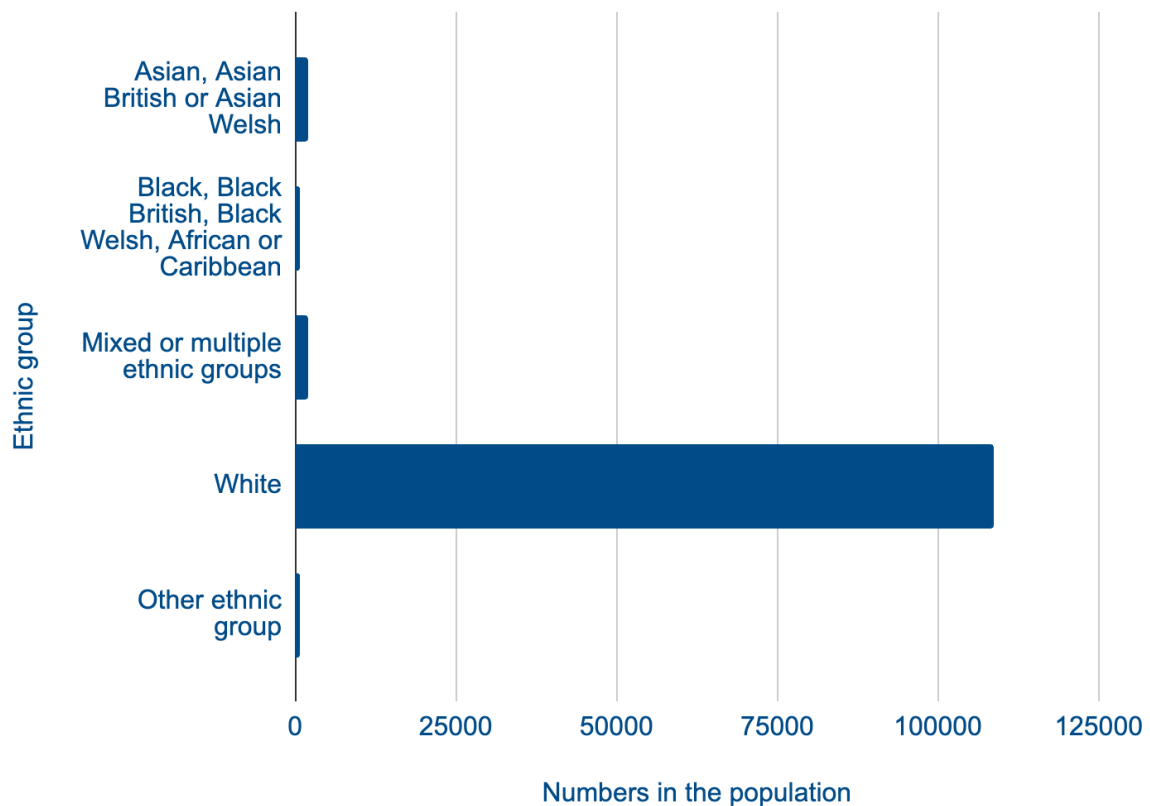
⁸ ONS (2022d) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS024/editions/2021/versions/3>.

⁹ ONS (2022e)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/bulletins/ethnicgroupenglandandwales/census2021>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Figure 1: Ethnic groups in West Oxfordshire.



Source: ONS (2022e).

However, within the White population there is some diversity. After White British,¹¹ the next three largest ethnic groups in West Oxfordshire are European: Mixed, Polish, and Irish. There are also significant numbers of Romanian, North American, Portuguese and South African residents.¹²

The largest non-White groups are White and Asian (mixed ethnicity), Indian or British Indian, White and Black Caribbean (mixed), Chinese, and White and Black African.¹³

¹¹ Census category White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British.

¹² ONS (2022f)

https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS022/editions/2021/versions/1?showAll=ethnic_group_288a#ethnic_group_288a.

¹³ Ibid.

Gypsies and Travellers

There are two distinct ethnic groups within the travelling community. Roma Gypsies form one, and Irish Travellers form the other.¹⁴ Within Oxfordshire there are 6 council-run Traveller sites, and 21 privately-run sites.¹⁵

Gypsies and Travellers experience high average rates of deprivation compared to other groups. The community experiences ill health and unemployment at a high rate, and suffers from low levels of adult literacy and numeracy, contributing to their continued disadvantage.¹⁶

Ukrainian refugees

West Oxfordshire has welcomed some Ukrainian refugees as a result of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict. The government's Homes for Ukraine scheme allows for refugees from the country to be sponsored by a household who agree to house the refugee for at least 6 months. As of 1st August 2023, 472 Ukrainians have had visas approved for travel to West Oxfordshire, and 405 refugees have arrived.¹⁷ As the 6-month period for housing comes to an end, many struggle to find a place to live.

Age

One significant characteristic of West Oxfordshire's demography is that it has a larger elderly population than the national average. The median age in West Oxfordshire was 44 years old in 2021, 4 years above the national median.¹⁸ 21.5% of West Oxfordshire's population was 65 years old or above in 2021, compared to 18.3% in England and Wales.¹⁹

West Oxfordshire also has a lower proportion of working age residents than the national average: 61.6% compared to 64.3% in England and Wales.²⁰ This

¹⁴ Oxfordshire County Council (n.d.)
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/land-and-premises/gypsies-and-travellers/authorised-sites>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ ONS (2022g)
<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/summaries/gypsy-roma-irish-traveller#population-data>.

¹⁷ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022)
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-visa-data-by-country-upper-and-lower-tier-local-authority>.

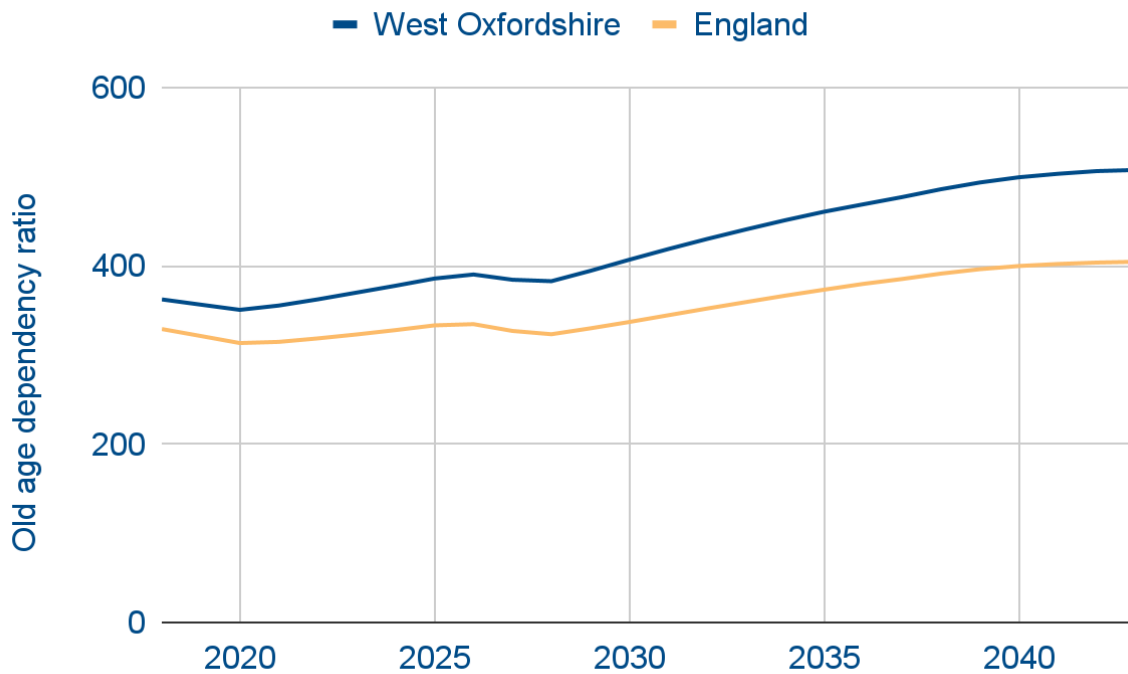
¹⁸ ONS (2022h)
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwales/census2021unroundeddata>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

presents a key challenge for support services in West Oxfordshire in responding to an ageing population.

Figure 2: Old age dependency ratio, West Oxfordshire and England.



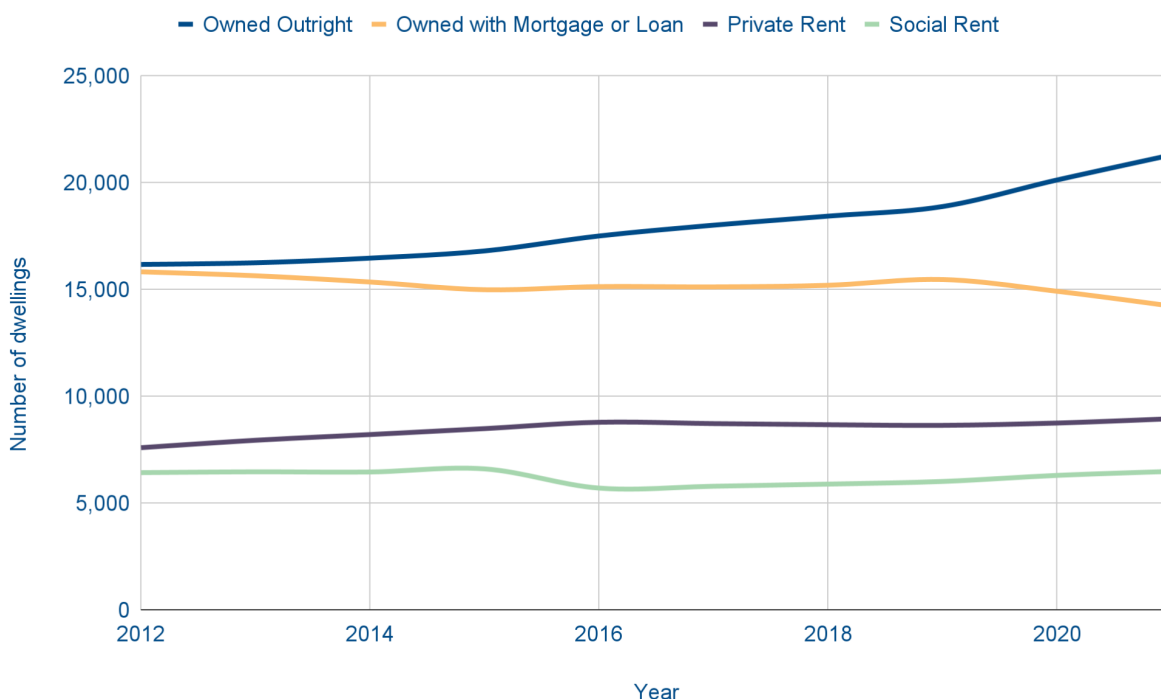
Source: [ONS](#) (2020).

Old age dependency ratio is defined as the number of people of state pension age per 1,000 people of working age. As shown, the old age dependency ratio in West Oxfordshire is projected to continue rising over the next decades, and will diverge further from the national average.

Housing

West Oxfordshire presents a mixed picture in terms of housing. While the number of homes owned outright has risen in recent years, there has been a slow upwards trend in the number of social renters since 2016. The number of homes owned with a mortgage or loan has fallen since 2019, but these dwellings still make up 28% of all dwellings in West Oxfordshire.

Figure 3: Dwellings in West Oxfordshire by tenure.



Source: [ONS \(2023\)](#)

Homelessness in West Oxfordshire has increased following the end of the “Everyone In” scheme.²¹ 40 households were registered as homeless in January to March 2023, with 43 households registered as threatened with homelessness.²² This is likely an underestimation of homelessness levels, as government statistics do not include those who do not apply for prevention or relief duty.

²¹

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2023)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>.

²² Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023)

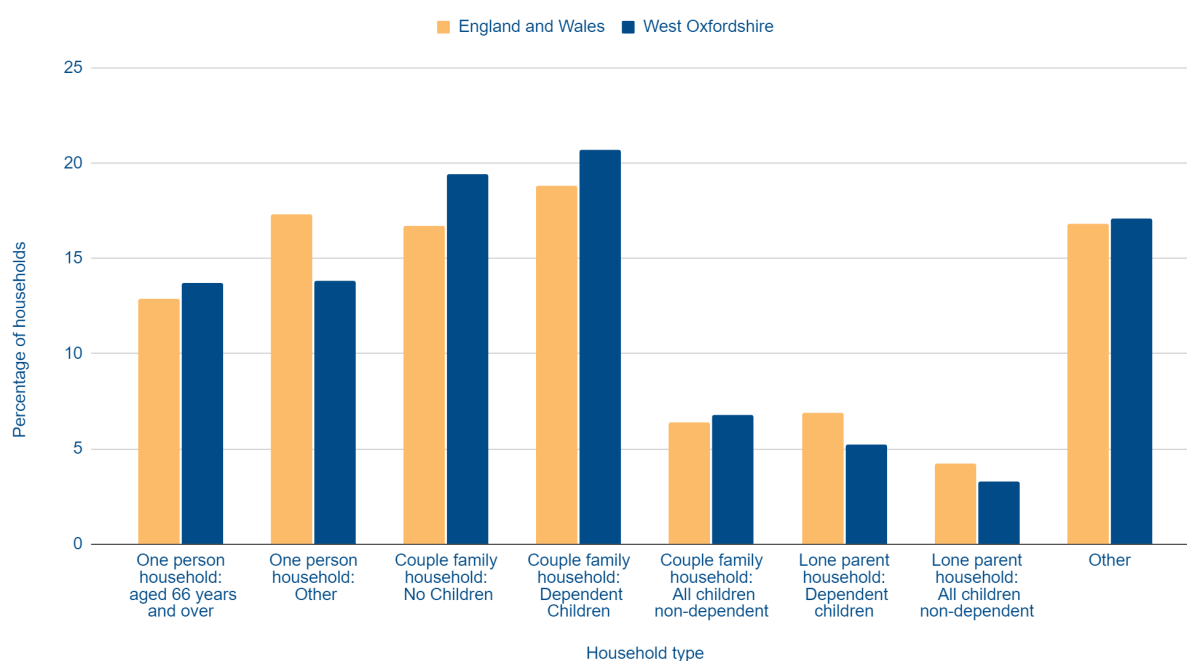
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-january-to-march-2023>.

Household composition

There were 48,000²³ households in West Oxfordshire at the time of the 2021 census. This was an increase of 11% since 2011, and higher than the population increase in the district. The number of households in West Oxfordshire also increased much faster than the rest of the country.

A large proportion of households included a married couple (40.2%), above the English average of 33.2%. There were fewer households which consisted of lone parent families with dependent children (17.0%) compared to 24.5% nationally. Pensioner households (22.8%) were also above the national average of 20.7%.

Figure 4: Household composition in 2021.



Source: ONS (2021).

Housing market

The long-run affordability of housing stock is central to housing security in West Oxfordshire. Across West Oxfordshire house prices vary significantly. The most expensive ward in the year ending December 2022 was Burford, with a median house price of £918,750. In contrast, the least expensive was Carterton North East, at £260,000. The median ward was Brize Norton and Shilton, with a median price of £405,000.

²³ ONS (2022h).

Table 1: Median house prices by ward, year ending December 2022.

Ward	Median price (£)
Alvescot and Filkins	907,500
Ascott and Shipton	682,650
Bampton and Clanfield	384,270
Chipping Norton	330,000
Witney North	400,000
Kingham, Rollright and Enstone	643,750
Charlbury and Finstock	400,000
Woodstock and Bladon	518,750
Ducklington	394,975
Eynsham and Cassington	429,000
Freeland and Hanborough	450,000
The Bartons	490,000
Carterton North East	260,000
Witney Central	310,000
Witney East	323,000
Carterton South	318,000
Milton-under-Wychwood	375,000
Hailey, Minster Lovell and Leafield	492,500
Witney South	321,000
Burford	918,750
North Leigh	545,000
Standlake, Aston and Stanton Harcourt	490,000
Stonesfield and Tackley	485,000
Brize Norton and Shilton	405,000
Carterton North West	282,500
Chadlington and Churchill	710,000

Witney West	327,498
-------------	---------

Source: [ONS](#) (2023).

Housing affordability has continued to worsen in West Oxfordshire. The housing affordability ratio (the ratio of average workplace annual earnings to house prices) in West Oxfordshire was 11.4 in 2022. This means that a full-time employee in West Oxfordshire could expect to spend 11.4 times their annual earnings on a home. This is compared to a ratio of 8.3 in England.²⁴

Renters also face challenges. Average rent is currently much higher in West Oxfordshire than in England as a whole. The average private rent for a 2-bed property in 2021 to 2022 was £970 per month, 12% higher than the national average.²⁵

Moreover, the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) has not kept pace with rising rents. Nationally, this has meant that recipients of housing benefit were forced to take other measures, like buying fewer essential or non-essential items, drawing on other benefits, or borrowing. Some had even had to move home in order to make up a shortfall. Around 1 in 5 respondents suggested they would look at lower rent properties, including those outside their local area, if there were further LHA cuts.²⁶

Figure 5: Median rent pcm and LHA in West Oxfordshire, April 2020 to March 2023



Source: (2023).

²⁴ ONS (2023a) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/bulletins/housingaffordabilityinenglandandwales/2022>.

²⁵ Oxfordshire County Council (2023) <https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/new-jsna-bitesize-cost-renting>.

²⁶ Beatty *et al.* (2012) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/193477/rrep798.pdf.

Significant increases in population and reductions in household size in West Oxfordshire, combined with rising house prices, suggests that secure and affordable housing will remain a concern in West Oxfordshire over the coming years. As is noted in the West Oxfordshire District Council 2021 Affordable Housing Plan, this means that existing housing stock will be placed under increasing pressure.²⁷

²⁷ West Oxfordshire District Council (2018)
<https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/feyjmpen/local-plan.pdf>.

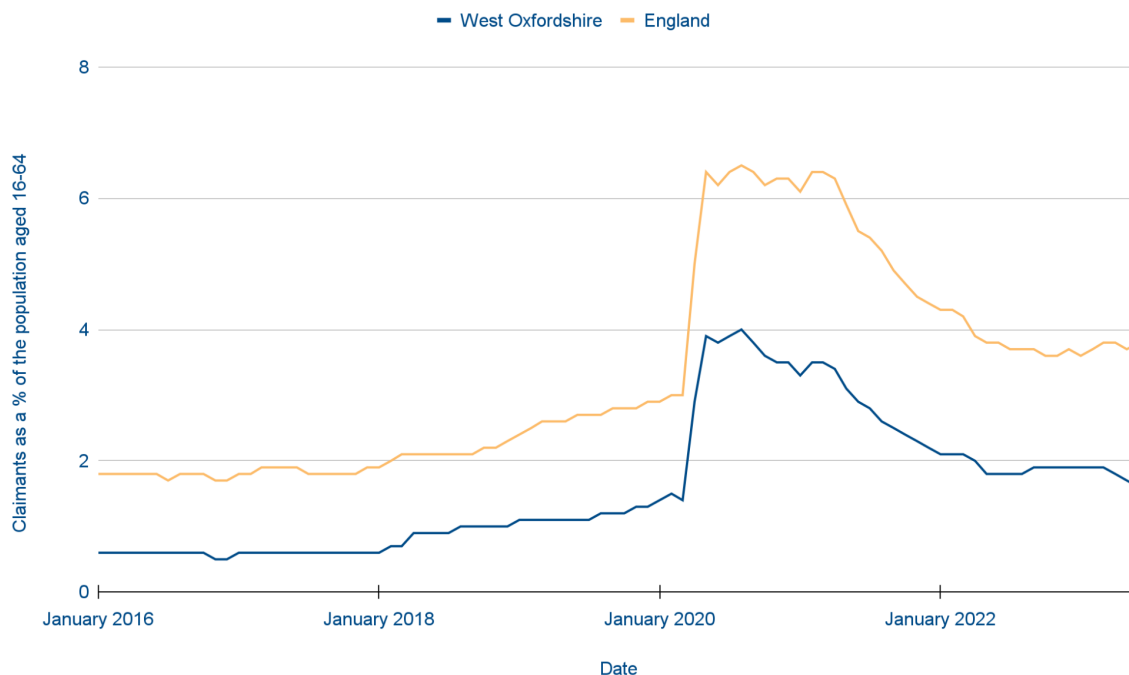
Employment

West Oxfordshire enjoys relatively high rates of employment. The West Oxfordshire employment rate was 86.3% in January to December 2022, higher than the English average (75.8%).²⁸

However, unemployment claims have increased since the pandemic. Figure 5 shows the Claimant count, the number of people claiming benefits primarily because they are unemployed, as a percentage of the working-age population. The Claimant count peaked at 2,670 in August 2020, comprising 4.0% of the working-age population.

Despite this dramatic increase during the pandemic, unemployment claims remained relatively low throughout 2020 to 2021, and have been falling since early 2021. By June 2023 the Claimant count as a percentage of the population remained slightly above pre-pandemic levels. However, it is still far below the average for England.

Figure 6: Claimant count as a proportion of the working-age population, January 2016 to June 2023.



Source: [NOMIS](#) (n.d.).

²⁸ NOMIS (n.d., a)

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157327/report.aspx?c1=2092957699&c2=2092957698>

Qualifications

West Oxfordshire is extremely well-qualified when compared regionally and nationally. This is reflected by the high proportion of the workforce engaged in managerial or professional employment.²⁹ While 27.5% of people in England and Wales had at least a Bachelor’s degree or equivalent in 2021, 31.4% of people in West Oxfordshire met this standard.³⁰ The proportion of those with no qualifications was 3.4% lower in West Oxfordshire than in England and Wales as a whole.³¹

Table 2: Highest level of qualification, 2021.

Highest level of qualification	West Oxfordshire	England and Wales
Does not apply	17.9%	18.5%
No qualifications	11.4%	14.8%
1 to 4 GCSEs grade A* to C or equivalent	7.8%	7.9%
5 or more GCSEs grade A* to C or 9 to 4 or equivalent	11.0%	10.9%
Apprenticeship	4.4%	4.3%
2 or more A levels or equivalent	14.1%	13.8%
Degree (BA, BSc) or equivalent	31.4%	27.5%
Other	1.9%	2.2%

Source: [ONS](#) (2023).

West Oxfordshire is near to the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes, contributing to the high proportion of qualified residents. Moreover the Abingdon and Witney College has a campus in Witney town centre, providing vocational and technical training.

Income

Another positive indicator for employment in West Oxfordshire includes higher average pay. Pay for full-time workers resident in West Oxfordshire is around 5% higher than the national average, with median weekly pay at £676.20 in 2022.³²

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ ONS (2023b)

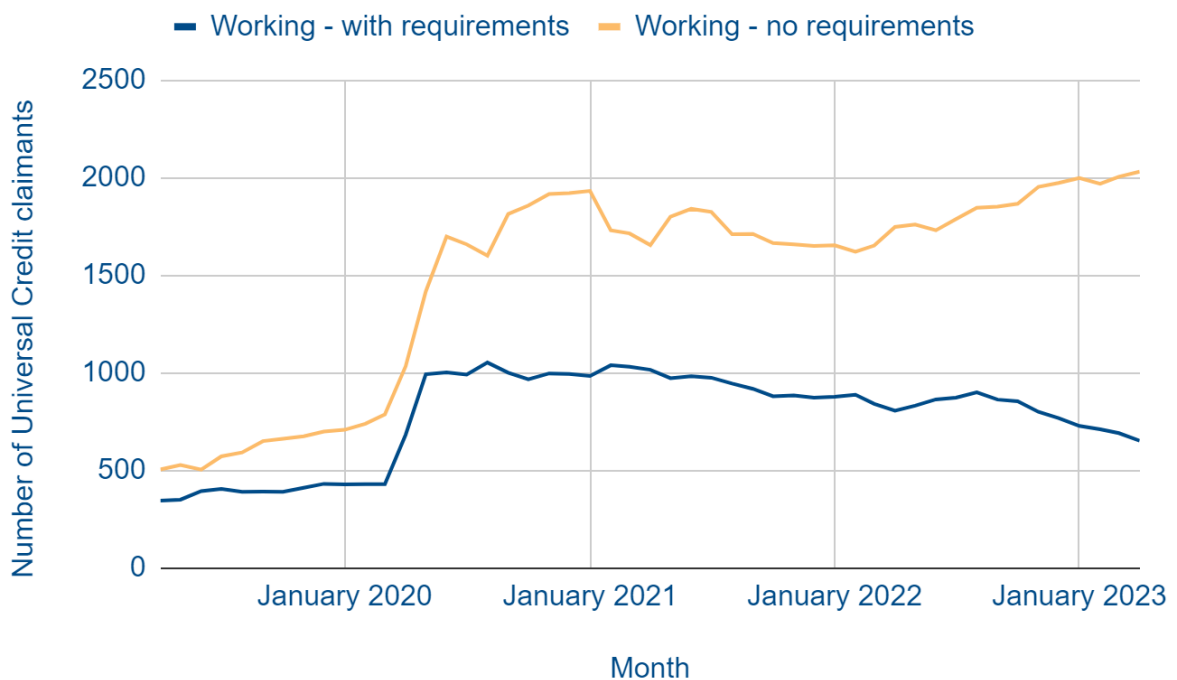
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS067/editions/2021/versions/3/filter-outputs/146acf7d-1412-4ce4-89f8-e61ad1ed77f5>.

³¹ Ibid.

³² NOMIS (n.d., a)

However, there is evidence that residents of West Oxfordshire are increasingly finding that their income is insufficient to make ends meet. Since increasing during the pandemic, the number of people claiming Universal Credit while in work has not fallen to previous levels. For those in work with no requirements (i.e. individual or household earnings are above the level at which conditionality applies), the number of claimants rose after January 2022. For those in work with requirements, the number of claimants is close to pre-pandemic levels and continues to trend downwards. This pattern indicates that earnings are not keeping pace with prices.

Figure 7: Universal Credit claimants in work, April 2019 to June 2023.



Source: [Department for Work and Pensions](#) (2023).

Poverty

West Oxfordshire is a relatively affluent area. In 2019, 26 of the 66 neighbourhoods in West Oxfordshire were among the 20% most affluent neighbourhoods in the country. None were in the 20% least affluent.³³

Moreover, deprivation in West Oxfordshire tends to be spread across neighbourhoods. West Oxfordshire is the 5th most inter-mixed local authority in England,³⁴ meaning that those of different incomes tend to be interspersed throughout neighbourhoods, rather than living in different parts of the area.

Debt

The Money Advice Service has estimated that the rate of over-indebtedness, the proportion of people who find keeping up with bills a heavy burden and/or who regularly fall into arrears,³⁵ in West Oxfordshire is 12.7%.³⁶ West Oxfordshire's figure is significantly lower than the British (16.1%) and South-Eastern (14%) averages.

Fuel poverty

Fuel poverty in West Oxfordshire is relatively low. 7.3% of West Oxfordshire households were in fuel poverty in 2020, meaning these households had poor fuel efficiency (band D or below) and residents were left below the official poverty line after heating their home. This is compared to an average of 13.2% in England.³⁷

However, while fuel poverty had been trending down in England up until 2020, rates in West Oxfordshire were increasing.³⁸ The cost-of-living crisis is widely predicted to push further people into fuel poverty both in West Oxfordshire and

³³ ONS (2023c) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/dvc1371/#/E07000181>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ More rigorously defined as the proportion of individuals who find keeping up with bills and/or credit payments a heavy burden, or who have fallen behind on such payments in 3 or more months out of the last 6.

³⁶ The Money Advice Service (2016)

<https://moneyandpensionsservice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/a-picture-of-overindebtedness.pdf>

³⁷ Department for Energy, Business & Industrial Strategy (2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sub-regional-fuel-poverty-data-2022>.

³⁸ Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, and Department for Energy, Business & Industrial Strategy (2022) <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics>

in the rest of England.³⁹ In addition, while West Oxfordshire performs slightly better than the English average, over half of housing in West Oxfordshire was ranked at a band D or below for fuel efficiency in 2022.⁴⁰ This suggests that the effects of rising fuel prices and a cost-of-living crisis on fuel prices can be expected to profoundly affect West Oxfordshire residents.

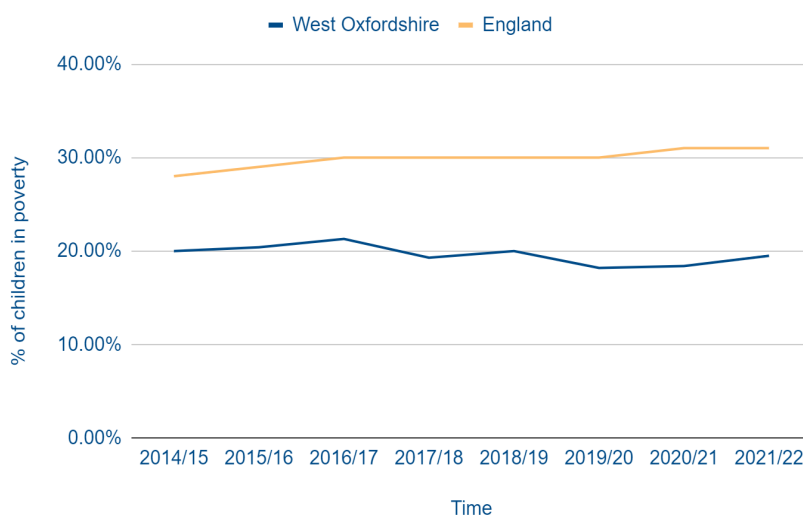
Food insecurity

Food bank usage in West Oxfordshire continues to rise. Witney and West Oxfordshire Food Bank distributed 6,234 parcels in 2022/23, a 34% increase since 2021/22. Of these parcels, 2,558 were for children.⁴¹ This increase underscores the impact of the cost of living crisis on food insecurity.

Child poverty

While child poverty has been rising over the past decade,⁴² West Oxfordshire has seen relatively low and falling levels of child poverty with levels at 18.4% (after housing costs in 2020/21).

Figure 8: Child poverty estimates, West Oxfordshire and England.



Source: [End Child Poverty UK \(2022\)](#).

³⁹ Bradshaw and Keung (2022) <https://www.york.ac.uk/media/business-society/research/CPAG-Poverty-173-rising-fuel-poverty.pdf>.

⁴⁰ ONS (2022i) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/energyefficiencyofhousingenglandandwaleslocalauthoritydistricts>.

⁴¹ Trussell Trust (2022) <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats/>.

⁴² End Child Poverty UK (2022) <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/child-poverty/>.

While child poverty has been increasing uniformly in England since 2014/15, West Oxfordshire saw a gradual decline in child poverty until 2019/20. Since then, rising prices have put pressure on household incomes, pushing greater numbers of children into poverty.

Services

Health

West Oxfordshire remains a relatively healthy district in comparison to the national average, despite its older population. West Oxfordshire performs significantly better or similar to the rest of England for most health indicators.⁴³

Healthcare in West Oxfordshire is provided by a network of 16 local GP practices and two hospitals, the Witney Community Hospital and the War Memorial Hospital in Chipping Norton.⁴⁴ Primary care is provided in tangent with other Oxfordshire districts across 4 primary care networks: NORA (North Oxfordshire Rural Alliance), KIWY (Kidlington, Islip, Woodstock, Yarnton), Rural West, and Eynsham and Witney.⁴⁵ Performance across all these networks is relatively high, with the best performance for overall experience seen in the Rural West PCN.⁴⁶ However, performance has also fallen in recent years, with good ratings falling by an average of just under 10 points across the 4 PCNs.⁴⁷ Secondary care also ranks well in West Oxfordshire, with both services ranked good by the CQC.⁴⁸

Transport

Roads in West Oxfordshire provide good connectivity throughout the area. Main roads such as the A40, A44, A361 and A4095 provide access to larger centres outside of the district, including Oxford, Swindon, Cheltenham, and Banbury. The Cotswold and Cherwell Valley railway lines pass through the area, and there is a network of bus services and community transport schemes. These services are currently seeing new investment; a new park and ride designed to reduce congestion on the A40 is being built in Eynsham, and new bus lanes on the A40 will also be built.⁴⁹ A feasibility study into possible new rail links to Witney and

⁴³ Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (n.d.) <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles/data#page/1/gid/1938132701/pat/6/par/E12000008/ati/301/are/E07000181/yr/1/cid/4/tbm/1>.

⁴⁴ West Oxfordshire District Council (2018).

⁴⁵ Healthwatch Oxfordshire (n.d.) <https://healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Oxfordshire-Primary-Care-Networks.pdf>.

⁴⁶ GP Patient Survey (2021) <https://gp-patient.co.uk/practices-search>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ <https://www.cqc.org.uk/>

⁴⁹ Oxfordshire County Council (2023)

<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/feasibility-study-for-rail-link-between-oxford-witney-and-carterton-is-published/>.

Carterton has been published, with the project found to be feasible despite significant environmental and planning issues.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Conclusion

West Oxfordshire is older, less deprived, and more highly qualified than the UK as a whole. However, it is not exempt from the national challenges. The aftermath of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis have led to rising levels of poverty and increasing pressure on district funding. High house prices mean the district is especially at risk from these negative trends.

Citizens' Advice West Oxfordshire is then presented with a mixed picture. While West Oxfordshire is relatively fortunate in its population profile, these challenges can be expected to put more pressure on the service.