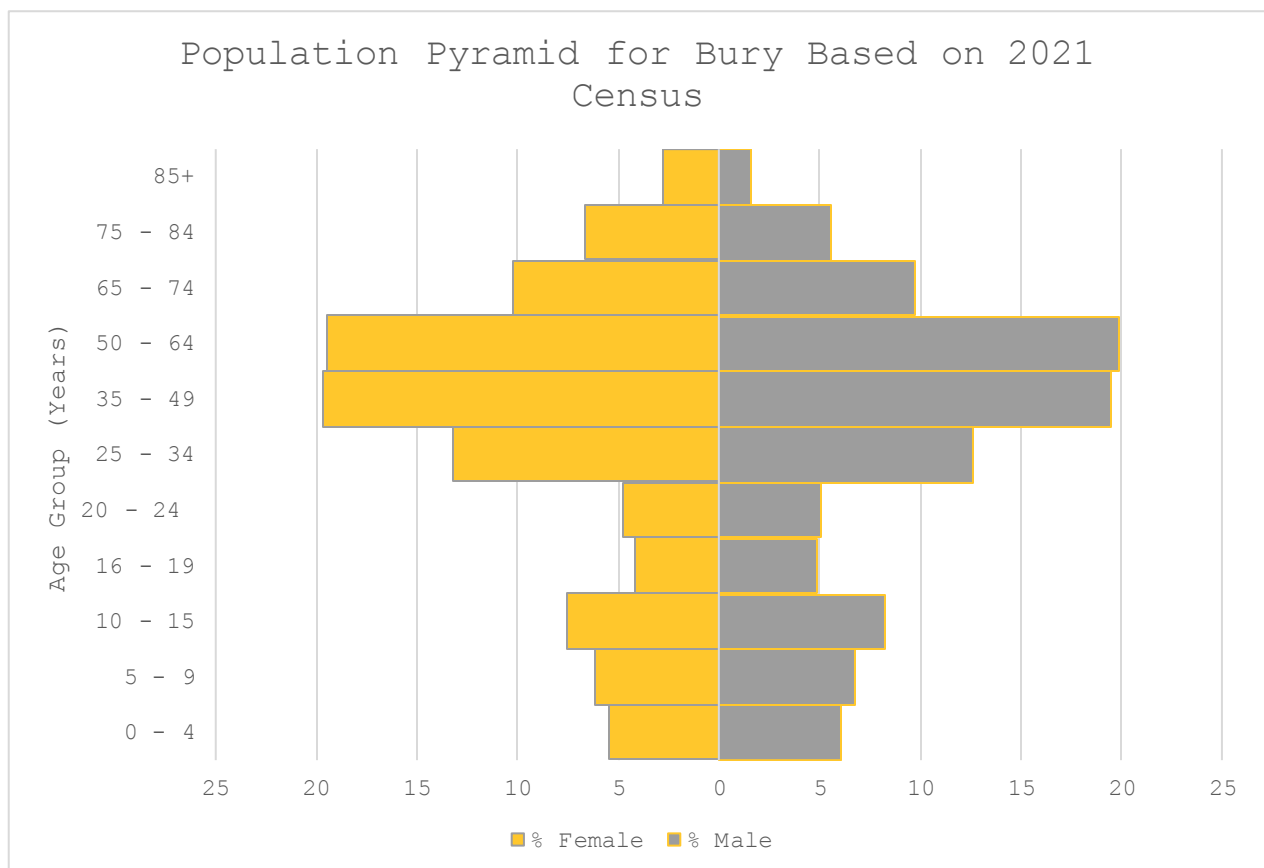
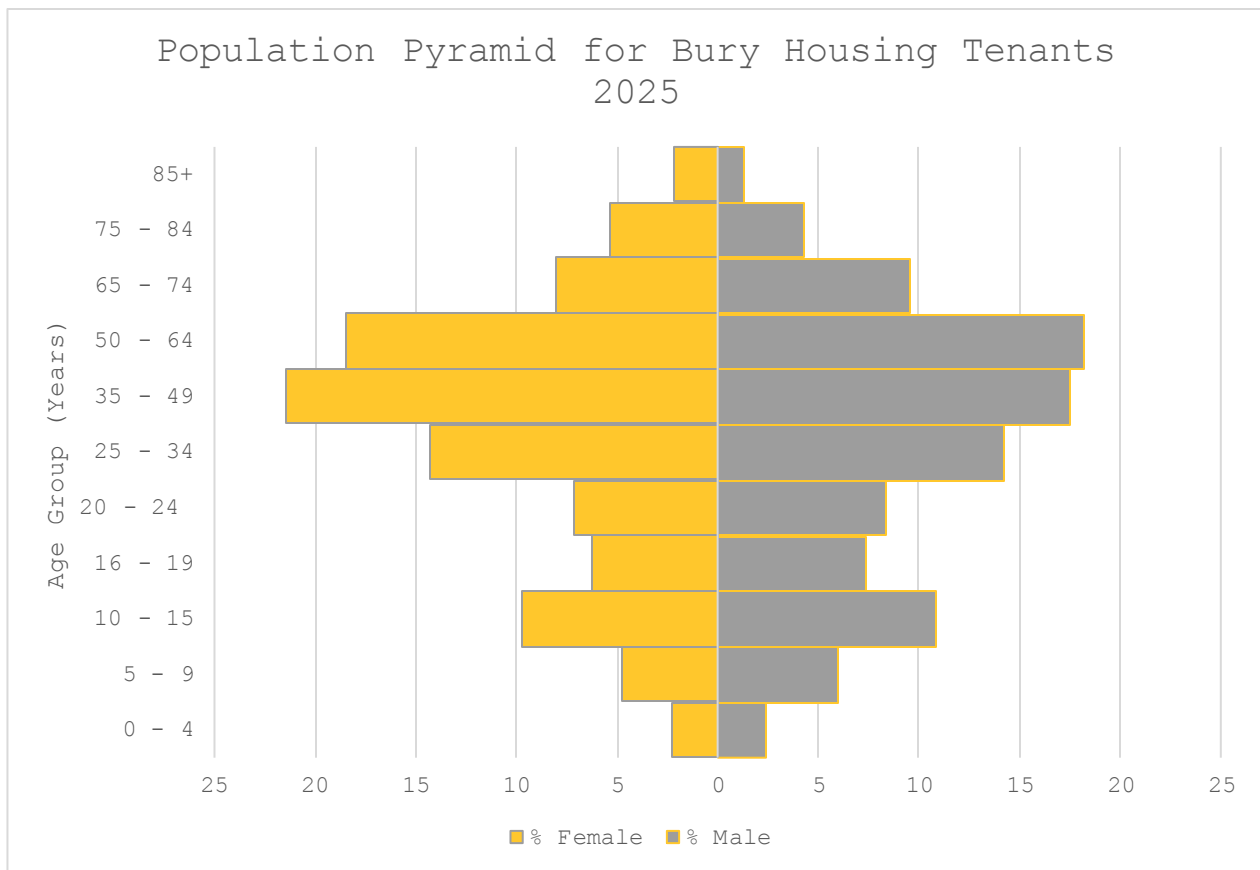


Comparison of Population Pyramid Charts of The Borough of Bury and Tenants of Social Housing Within The Borough

A population pyramid is a graphical representation that shows the distribution of a population by age and sex. It typically consists of two back-to-back bar charts—one for males and one for females—arranged by age groups, usually in five-year intervals. The youngest age group is at the bottom, and the oldest at the top.

This comparison is an attempt to test the validity of data held on social housing tenants. While we hold a substantial amount of data on tenants, assessing whether our services are truly representative of their needs requires careful consideration of both the quality and completeness of that data.





Population Pyramid Analysis

The population pyramids reveal a strong alignment between the age distribution of tenants in council housing and that of the overall Borough population. While we are unable to isolate council tenants within the census data, the housing population represents a subset of the wider Borough demographic.

However, two notable differences emerge between the two pyramids:

1. **Underrepresentation of Young Children (Ages 0–4):** There are significantly fewer children aged 0–4 living in council housing—around 50% fewer—compared to the Borough overall. This trend is consistent across both male and female groups.
2. **Overrepresentation of Young Adults (Ages 20–24):** In contrast, the 20–24 age group is more prevalent in council housing than in the general Borough population, indicating a higher concentration of young adults in social housing.

Proposition 1: - Children in the age group 0-4 year olds are underrepresented in social housing in Bury.

Evidence: -

There is limited publicly available data that directly breaks down council or social housing occupancy by specific age groups such as 0–4 year olds. However, based on broader demographic and housing data, we can draw some informed insights:

1. Social Housing Tenants Tend to Be Older

The social housing sector in England is disproportionately occupied by older adults. Households headed by someone aged 65+ are significantly more likely to live in social housing than younger households. This skews the overall age distribution toward older age groups.ⁱ

2. Families with Children Are Present but Not Dominant

Lone parent households and families with dependent children do have higher representation in social housing compared to other family types. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that children aged 0–4 are proportionally represented. The data often aggregates children under 16, making it difficult to isolate the youngest age groupⁱⁱ

3. Housing Allocation Prioritises Need, Not Age

Council housing allocation is based on need—such as homelessness, overcrowding, or medical conditions—not age. While families with young children may qualify for priority, there's no specific mechanism that ensures representation of 0–4 year olds.ⁱⁱⁱ

4. Low-Income Families with Young Children Are at Risk

Data from the Department for Work and Pensions shows that children under 16—especially in areas like Pendle (North West)—are disproportionately affected by low income and poor housing conditions. However, many of these children may live in private rented or temporary accommodation rather than council housing.^{iv}

5. Housing Conditions for Young Children Are Often Poor

Around 1.5 million children live in homes that fail to meet the decent homes standard, and children are more likely than other age groups to live in damp or mouldy conditions. This suggests a gap in suitable housing provision for young children, which may include underrepresentation in council housing^v

If we take a closer look at the Greater Manchester area based on the latest available data we can form the following conclusions about the representation of 0–4 year olds in council housing in Bury: -

1. Under-5 Population in Bury

According to the Bury Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, there are approximately 11,157 children aged 0–4 in Bury, making up 5.8% of the total population. This figure is in line with the 2021 Census data used to create the borough population pyramid above.

2. Council Housing Demand and Occupancy

- Bury Council has 3,035 applications on its housing register. Of these:

- 799 require a two-bedroom property
- 565 require a three-bedroom property
- These are the most likely to be suitable for families with young children.
- There are 179 families with a total of 369 children currently in temporary accommodation in Bury. However, this figure includes all children, not just those aged 0–4^{vi}

3. Regional Trends

Across Greater Manchester, the number of children aged 0–4 decreased by 4.3% between 2011 and 2021, despite an overall increase in the population of children and young people. ^{vii}

4. This decline may reflect broader demographic shifts, such as falling birth rates or migration patterns, which could influence housing demand for families with very young children.

Proposition 2: - young adults in the age group 20-24 are overrepresented in social housing in Bury.

Evidence: -

The Bury Housing Needs and Demand Assessment (HNDA) from August 2020 provides detailed insights into housing needs across different age groups and household types in the borough. Here's what it reveals in relation to young adults aged 20–24:-

1. Household Formation Trends

Young adults (especially those aged 20–24) are part of the age group most likely to form new households, but many face affordability barriers.

The assessment notes that younger single-person households and young families are among those with the highest need for affordable housing.

2. Tenure Preferences and Constraints

Many young adults prefer private renting or owner occupation but are constrained by income, leading to increased demand for social housing.

The report highlights that social housing is often the only viable option for young adults on low incomes or those experiencing housing insecurity.

3. Demographic Pressure

The 20–24 age group is not the largest demographic in Bury, but they are disproportionately affected by housing affordability, which may lead to overrepresentation in social housing applications relative to their population share.

4. Specific Needs

Young adults leaving care, experiencing homelessness, or with support needs are identified as priority groups for social housing.

The assessment includes projections showing continued demand from younger age groups, especially in areas with higher deprivation.

Interpretation

Families with Young Children in Council Housing

While it's evident that families with children are present in both council housing and temporary accommodation, there is a lack of granular data identifying how many of those children are aged 0–4. This absence of specific age breakdowns makes it difficult to assess the extent to which the youngest children are represented in social housing.

However, two key indicators suggest that children aged 0–4 may be underrepresented relative to their housing needs:

- **Declining Proportion of Under-5s in the General Population:**
National and local demographic trends show a gradual decline in the proportion of children under five. This could reflect broader societal shifts such as lower birth rates, delayed family formation, or migration patterns. In the context of council housing, it may also indicate that fewer young families are accessing or being allocated social housing.
- **Lack of Targeted Housing Data for This Age Group:**
The absence of detailed housing data focused on the 0–4 age group limits our ability to understand their living conditions and housing outcomes. Without this data, it's challenging to identify whether their needs are being met or if they are disproportionately affected by issues such as overcrowding, poor housing quality, or insecure tenancies.

This potential underrepresentation is particularly concerning given the vulnerability of young children to the impacts of poor housing. Children in the 0–4 age range are at a critical stage of physical and cognitive development, and exposure to inadequate housing—such as damp, cold, or overcrowded conditions—can have long-term consequences for their health and wellbeing.

Addressing this gap in data and representation is essential for ensuring that housing policy and service provision are responsive to the needs of young families. Improved data collection, targeted support, and early intervention strategies could help ensure that the youngest residents in council housing receive the safe, stable environments they need to thrive.

Young Adults and Social Housing Demand

While the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment (HNDA) does not explicitly state that individuals aged 20–24 are overrepresented in social housing, the available evidence strongly suggests that this age group faces heightened housing challenges. Affordability constraints, limited access to private rental markets, and barriers to home ownership contribute to a disproportionate level of housing need among young adults.

This age group is often at a transitional life stage—leaving education, entering the workforce, or moving out of family homes—yet they frequently lack the financial stability or income required to secure housing independently. As a result, many turn to social housing as one of the few viable options available to them.

The overrepresentation of 20–24-year-olds in social housing applications may also reflect broader socioeconomic trends, such as rising rental costs, stagnant wages, and limited availability of affordable housing in the private sector. These factors combine to create a situation where young adults are more likely to seek support through council housing, even if they are not yet fully captured in tenancy data.

Understanding this dynamic is crucial for future housing strategy and service planning. It highlights the importance of targeted interventions—such as affordable housing schemes, supported accommodation, and employment support—that can help young adults transition successfully into stable housing and independent living.

Confidence in Tenant Data and Service Representation

In wider reflection, we can be reasonably confident that the data we hold on our tenants is valid and meaningful. The demographic profile of our tenant population closely mirrors that of the wider Borough, and where differences do exist, there is strong evidence to explain and understand the reasons behind them. This suggests that the data is not only accurate but also contextually reliable.

While our current analysis focuses on one facet of tenant demographics—such as age distribution—the fact that this data aligns well with broader population trends gives us confidence in the integrity of other data collected at the same time. It's reasonable to assume that if one aspect of the dataset is robust, other facets (e.g.

household composition, income levels, or support needs) are likely to be similarly reliable, provided they are collected consistently and systematically.

This underscores the importance of **ongoing data collection and maintenance**. Regular updates ensure that our understanding of tenant needs remains current and that our services continue to be representative and responsive. As tenant demographics evolve, so too must our data systems and analytical approaches, enabling us to adapt services accordingly and maintain equity in provision.

ⁱ <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/siteassets/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/safe-at-home/building-for-an-ageing-population-november-2024.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/householdcharacteristicsbytenureenglandandwales/census2021>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://contend.legal/housing/council-housing/council-housing-eligibility/>

^{iv} <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-2014-to-2024/children-in-low-income-families-local-area-statistics-financial-year-ending-2024>

^v <https://www.if.org.uk/2024/07/30/the-number-of-children-living-in-below-minimum-standard-housing-is-an-intergenerational-unfairness/>

^{vi} <https://www.bury.gov.uk/housing/housing-demand>

^{vii} <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/9833/census-2021-briefing-children-and-young-people.pdf>