

BRISTOL BOROUGH



SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY

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BRISTOL BOROUGH: BALANCING ECONOMIC GROWTH, WORKFORCE BARRIERS, AND INCOME STAGNATION

Bristol Borough has experienced very limited population growth between 2010 to 2022. While population is sustained by in-migration, a strong working-age group and diversifying racial composition present opportunities for cultural and social integration. However, economic challenges persist, including slow income growth, rising poverty, and widening income inequality, particularly affecting Asian and Latino households earning below the borough's median income. Despite a diversifying economy and the emergence of hospitality industries, many struggle to access local jobs, with skill mismatch being one of the potential reasons. While some residents are facing economic challenges, the area's expanding hospitality sector can be leveraged for economic resilience and inclusive growth.

1. Demographics: Very limited population growth sustained primarily by in-migration. The borough has a strong working age population marked by gradually declining older population. Racial proportions are becoming increasingly diverse in Bristol Borough.

2. Income: Slow income growth, increasing poverty rate and growing income inequality with majority Asian and Latino households earning below median Borough income in 2022.

3. Economics & Employment: Bristol Borough's economy is diversifying, with strong service industries and emerging hospitalities industries. However, as service jobs tend to pay lower wages, this economic diversification has not yet led to significant wage increases. The skill gap is one of the contributors to low local employment rates.

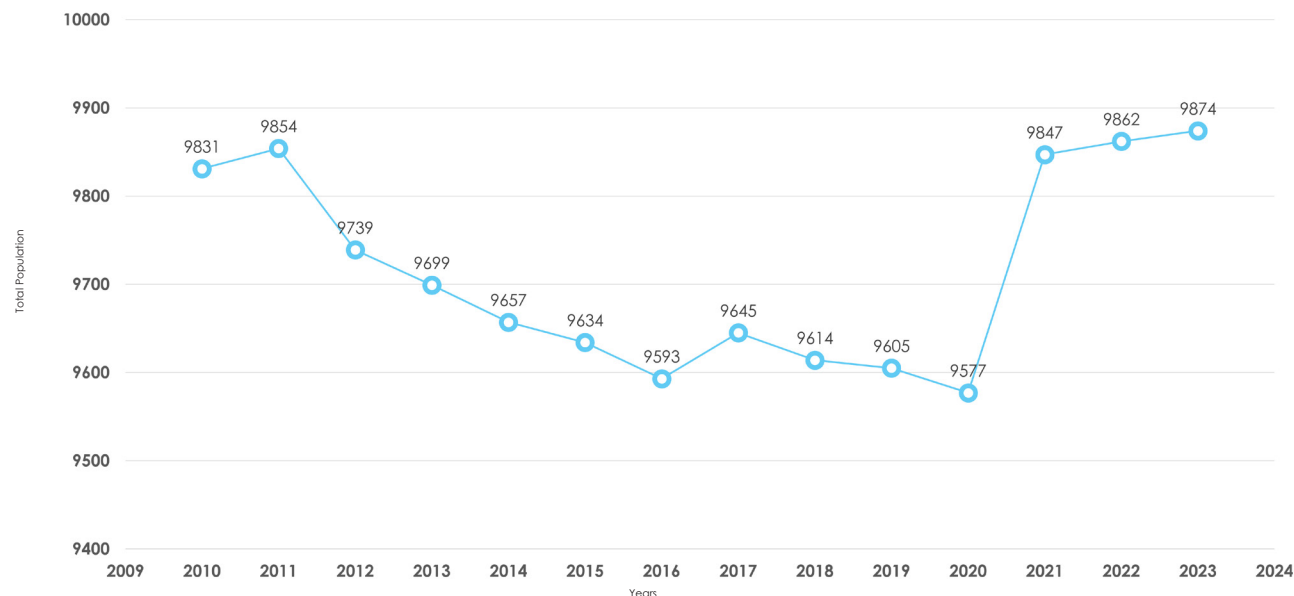


Figure 1: Population trend in Bristol Borough (2010–2023). Bristol Borough saw a decline from 2010 to 2020, followed by a sharp increase from 2020 onward, reaching 9,874 in 2023.

1. DEMOGRAPHICS

VERY LIMITED POPULATION GROWTH, POPULATION IS PRIMARILY SUSTAINED BY IN-MIGRATION

Bristol Borough has demonstrated only a 0.32% population growth from 2010 to 2022, reaching 9862 residents in 2022, compared to Bucks County's 3.58% growth during the same period. As Figure 1 shows, Bristol Borough displays an increasing population trend from 2021 onwards after seeing a sharp population decline from 2011 to 2020. However, in 2022, 96.6% of residents in Bristol were native. Since the birthrate of Bristol borough decreased by half from 6.15% in 2010 to 3.12% in 2022, it can be concluded that in-migration of new residents from other counties and states is sustaining Bristol Borough's population. According to the AAC and AAPC methods, Bristol Borough's population is projected to reach 9,888 by 2034, reflecting very minimal growth if current trends continue.

STRONG WORKING AGE POPULATION

Bristol Borough is primarily dominated by working-age residents, as Figure 2 demonstrates, with the largest demographic groups in 2022 being ages 25–34 and 35–44, respectively. These cohorts together account for over 31.39% of the population in 2022, showing a more pronounced concentration compared to Bucks County's relatively lower concentrations in younger age groups. As Figure 2 shows, in 2022, Bristol Borough had a lower concentration of in older age groups (45 to 85 years and over) compared to Bucks County. Additionally, from 2010 to 2022, Bristol Borough saw an overall 5.12% decline in the older age group (45 to 85 years and over), whereas Bucks County saw a 15.42% growth in the older age group population. This indicates loss of older age populations from Bristol Borough, possibly driven by the desire for senior-friendly health care amenities.

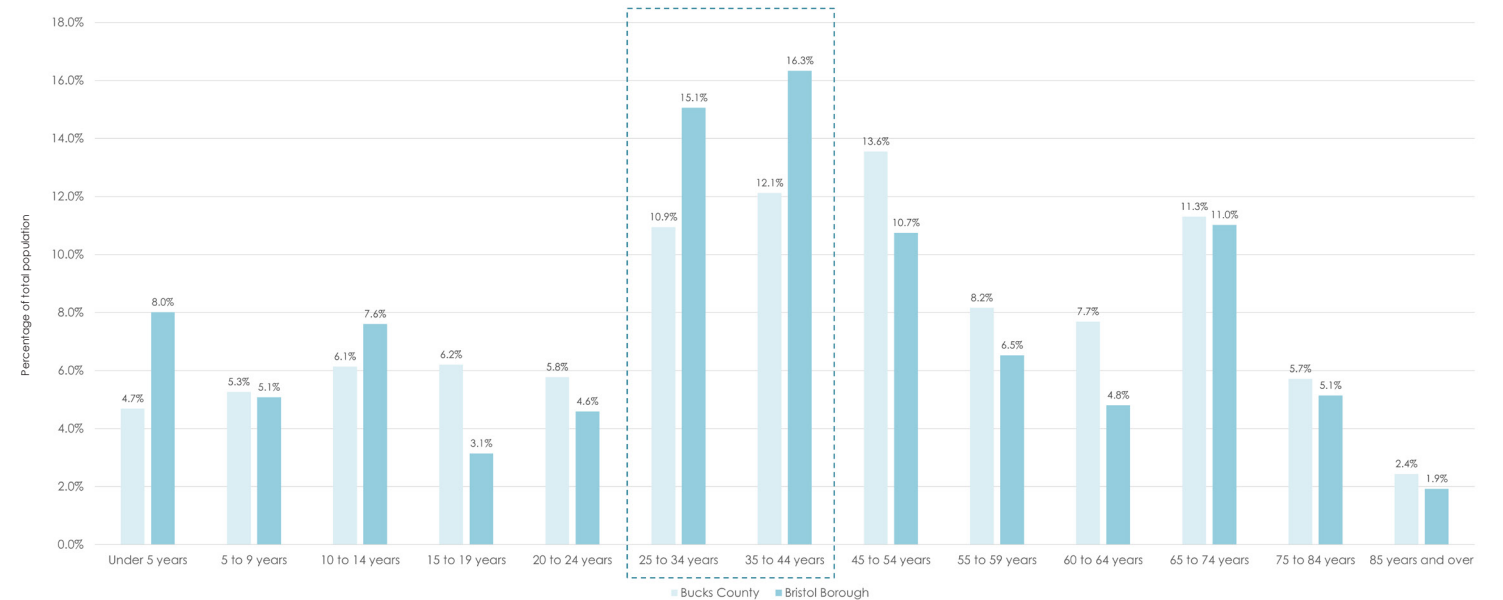


Figure 2: Age Distribution Comparison of Bristol Borough and Bucks County (2022). Bristol Borough has a higher proportion of working-age adults (25–44 years) compared to Bucks County.

INCREASINGLY DIVERSE RACIAL PROPORTIONS

Despite some demographic changes, Bristol Borough remains a predominantly White neighborhood as Figures 3 indicate, 78.82% of residents identify as White in 2022. Figure 4 shows a slight decline of white population from 87.88% in 2010 to 78.82% in 2022. The African American population also decreased slightly from 8.35% to 7.08%. The Asian population experienced a modest increase from 0.29% to 2.24%, and the "Some other race" group grew slightly as well, from 1.46% to 3.69%, largely reflecting a slowly diversifying racial proportions. On the contrary, Bucks County exhibited much less change in racial proportions within 2010 to 2022, with 83.80% of residents identifying as White and 3.90% as African American in 2022.

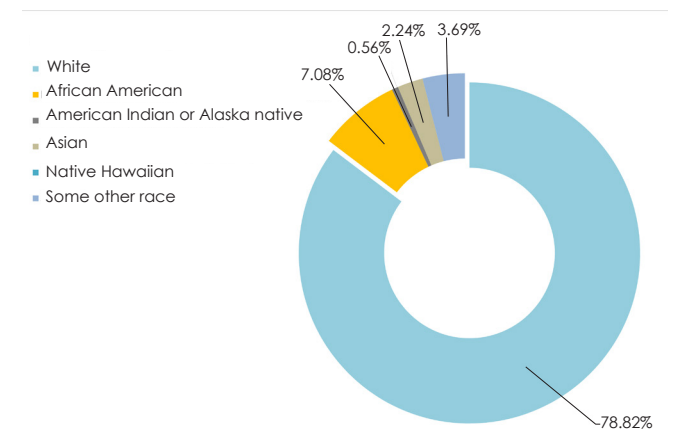


Figure 3: Racial Composition of Bristol Borough (2022). Bristol Borough is predominantly White (79%).

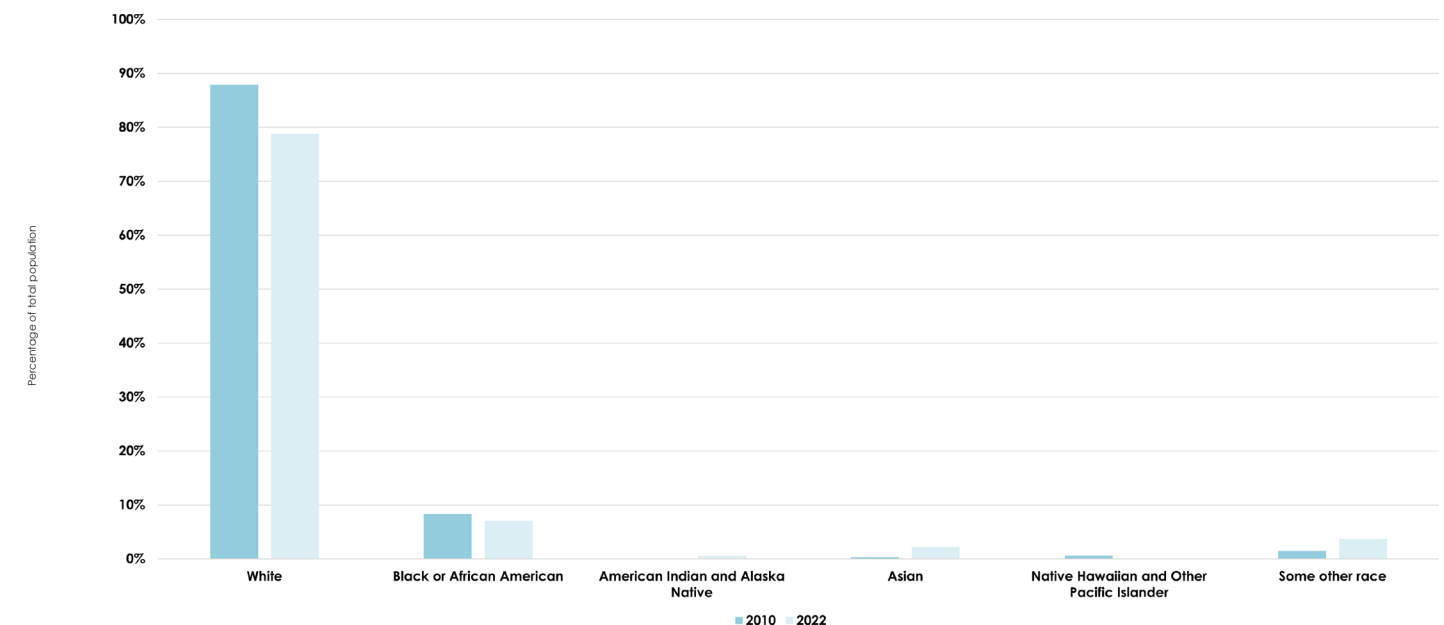


Figure 4: Change in Racial Composition in Bristol Borough (2010–2022). Bristol Borough saw a decrease in the White population while other racial groups, including Asian and "Some Other Race" show modest growth, reflecting slow but increasing racial diversity.

BRISTOL BOROUGH
\$ 67,490

VS
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD
INCOME IN 2022

BUCKS COUNTY
\$ 107,826

2. INCOME

LIMITED GROWTH IN MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Bristol Borough's median household income grew by only 1.1% between 2010 and 2022, reaching \$67,490, significantly lagging behind Bucks County, where the median household income grew by 5.2% during the same period, reaching \$107,826. For Bristol Borough, the slower median growth highlights challenges, such as reliance on low-wage sectors, and potential struggles to attract higher-income residents or industries.

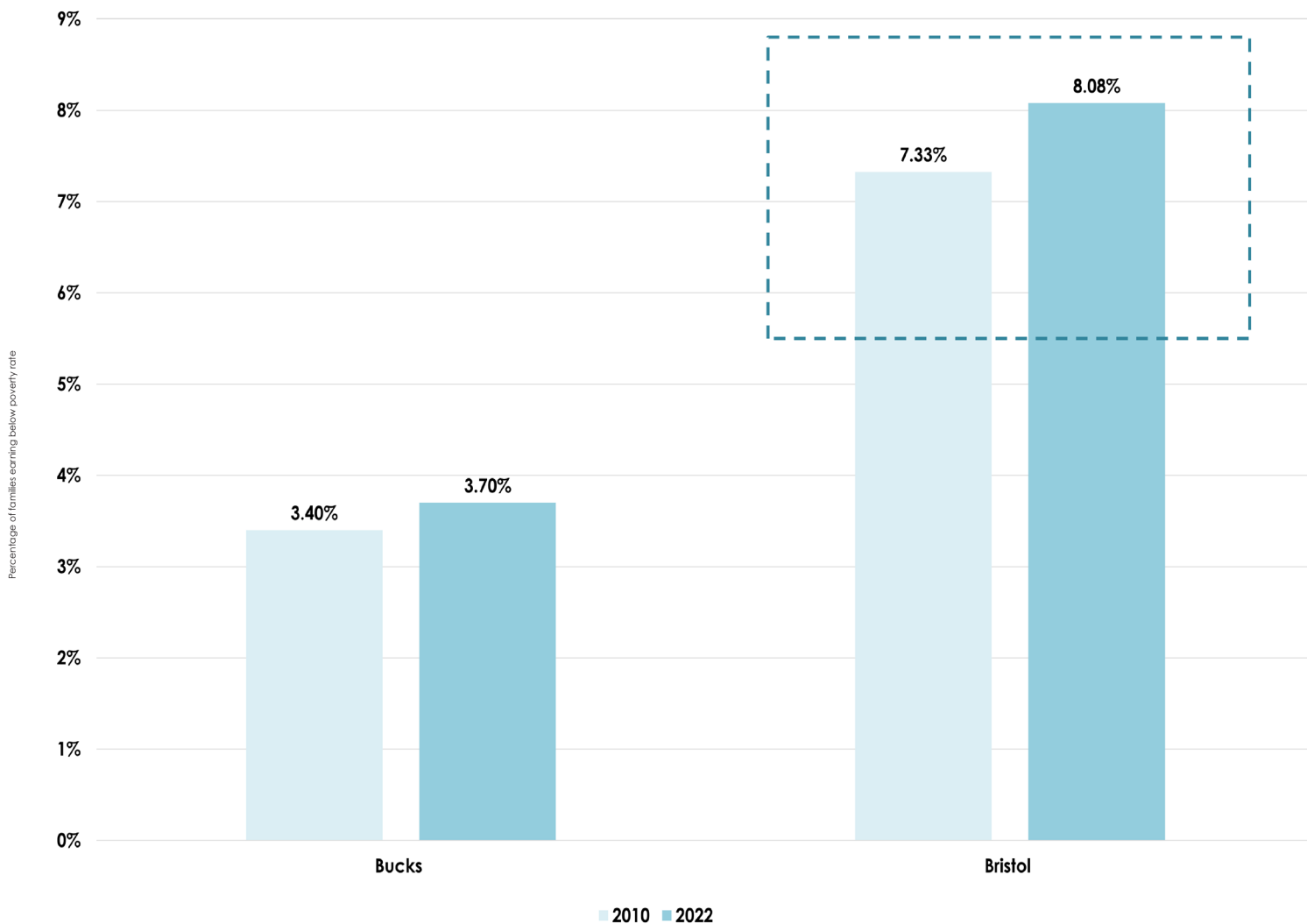
GROWING INCOME INEQUALITY

One consequence of this slow median household income growth is the increase in income inequality in Bristol Borough, as reflected in the Gini index rising from 0.39 to 0.44 between 2010 to 2022. The Gini index measures income inequality, with values closer to 1 indicating greater inequality. An increase from 0.39 to 0.44 suggests that income is becoming more unevenly distributed. Limited growth in median income often means that while the average resident's income stagnates, higher-income households may still experience faster growth, widening the income gap.

INCREASING POVERTY RATE

As seen in Figure 5, Bucks County experienced a modest 0.3 percentage point increase in poverty rate from 3.40% in 2010 to 3.70% in 2022, whereas Bristol Borough's poverty rate rose from 7.33% to 8.08% within the same duration. Bristol Borough experienced a 0.75 percentage point increase, reflecting a larger rise in the proportion of families below the poverty level compared to Bucks County. While 8.08% of families below poverty level is lower than national average in 2022, it is significant enough to warrant attention, especially in comparison to Bucks County's lower rate of 3.7%. The poverty rate in Bristol Borough is more than double that of Bucks County in both 2010 and 2022, which points to Bristol Borough facing more challenges in addressing poverty within its local context. Addressing this issue should be a priority to ensure economic stability and reduce disparities within the region.

**68% OF ASIAN
HOUSEHOLDS EARN
BELOW
\$60,000**



MAJORITY OF ASIAN AND LATINO HOUSEHOLDS EARNED BELOW THE MEDIAN INCOME IN BRISTOL BOROUGH IN 2022

Figure 6 shows disparities in income levels, with Asian and Latino households disproportionately represented in the lower-income bracket compared to White and African American households. 68% of Asian households earned below \$60,000, the highest percentage among all racial groups, while 54% of Latino households have an income below \$60,000, the second-highest percentage. This indicates economic disparities for the Asian and Latino population, which may be tied to employment in lower-wage industries.

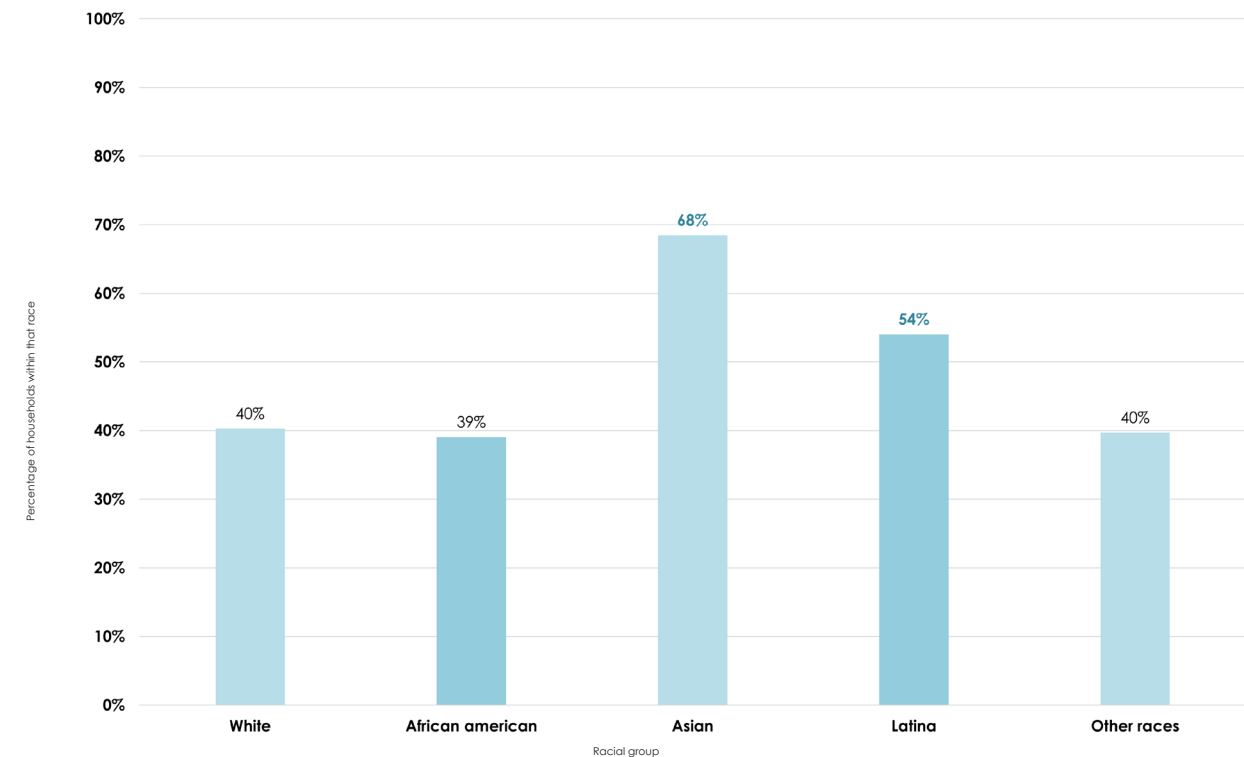


Figure 5: Percentage of Families Below Poverty Level (2010–2022). The graph shows a modest increase in poverty rates for Bucks County and a more significant rise in Bristol Borough indicating higher economic challenges in Bristol Borough compared to the county.

Figure 6: Percentage of Households Below \$60,000 Income by Race (2022). The graph highlights income disparities in Bristol Borough, with 68% of Asian and 54% of Latino households earning below \$60,000.

3. ECONOMICS AND EMPLOYMENT

DIVERSIFYING ECONOMY SHIFTING TOWARDS LOCAL SERVING INDUSTRIES

By 2022, the number of basic industry jobs decreased to 2,216 from 2740 in 2010. While total jobs increased slightly to 4,200 in 2022 from 4,110 in 2010, leading to an increased multiplier of 1.9 in 2022 from 1.5 in 2010. Meaning, 1 new job is generating additional 0.9 jobs in Bristol Borough in 2022. The increase in multipliers due to increase in non-basic jobs reflects that each basic industry job is now supporting more non-basic (service-oriented or local-serving) jobs in the economy. This shift often indicates that the local economy is becoming more dependent on local-serving industries rather than export-driven industries.

Bristol Borough's economy is likely shifting from being heavily reliant on basic industries to a more service-oriented economy. A diversified economy with a higher multiplier may be more resilient to external shocks affecting basic industries. However, non-basic jobs tend to have lower wages, and less stability compared to basic industry jobs. This shift could contribute to slower income growth or economic inequality.

Basic Industries in Bristol Borough, 2022	2022 LQ: Bristol Borough vs. Bucks County
Management of companies and enterprises	2.93
Educational services	2.42
Wholesale trade	2.11
Finance and insurance	1.67
Manufacturing	1.53
Administrative and Support and Waste Mang and Remediation Services	1.02
Other services (except public administration)	1.01

Table 1: Basic Industries in Bristol Borough (2022). The highest Location Quotients are in Management, Educational Services and Wholesale Trade. (Industries with LQs above 1 are considered as basic industries)

EMERGING HOSPITALITY INDUSTRIES

Retail trade is not listed as a basic industry in Bristol Borough as seen in Table 1, meaning it primarily serves local demand rather than generating external revenue. Despite this, 8% of total jobs in 2022 are in retail trade as seen in Figure 7, showing its significant role as a growing employer. Similar to retail, accommodation and food services occupies 6% of total jobs in 2022. These sectors are important employers, likely due to increased local tourism, population growth, or lifestyle changes leading to higher demand for dining and lodging options. The increasing prominence of hospitality sectors could signal opportunities for tourism development, which may bring additional external revenue to Bristol Borough.

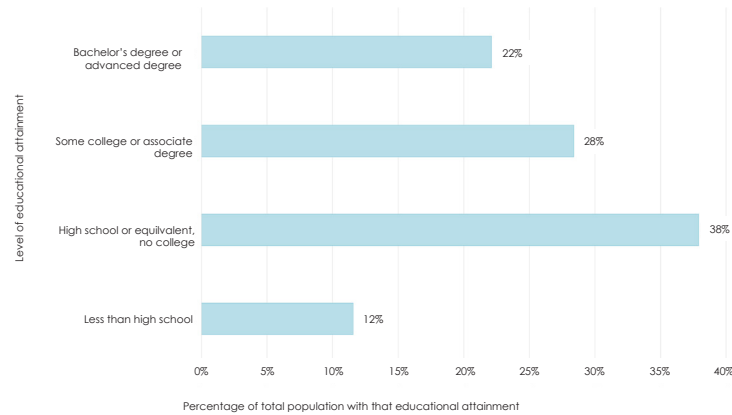


Figure 7: Jobs by Worker Educational Attainment for population 25 years and older in Bristol Borough (2022). The majority, 26% of jobs require a bachelor's degree or higher.

INCREASING EMPLOYMENT TREND

67.2% of the population over 16 years old are employed in Bristol Borough, demonstrating a strong employment rate close to the national average. However, as seen in Figure 9, Bristol Borough's employment levels showed sensitivity to broader economic changes, such as recessions and the COVID-19 pandemic. Recovery from 2020 may be supported by the growth of local-serving industries like retail and accommodation, which are becoming important employment sectors. While the AAAC and AAPC methods projected employment growth to 4,300 jobs by 2034, it highlights the need for further investment opportunistic hospitality industries.

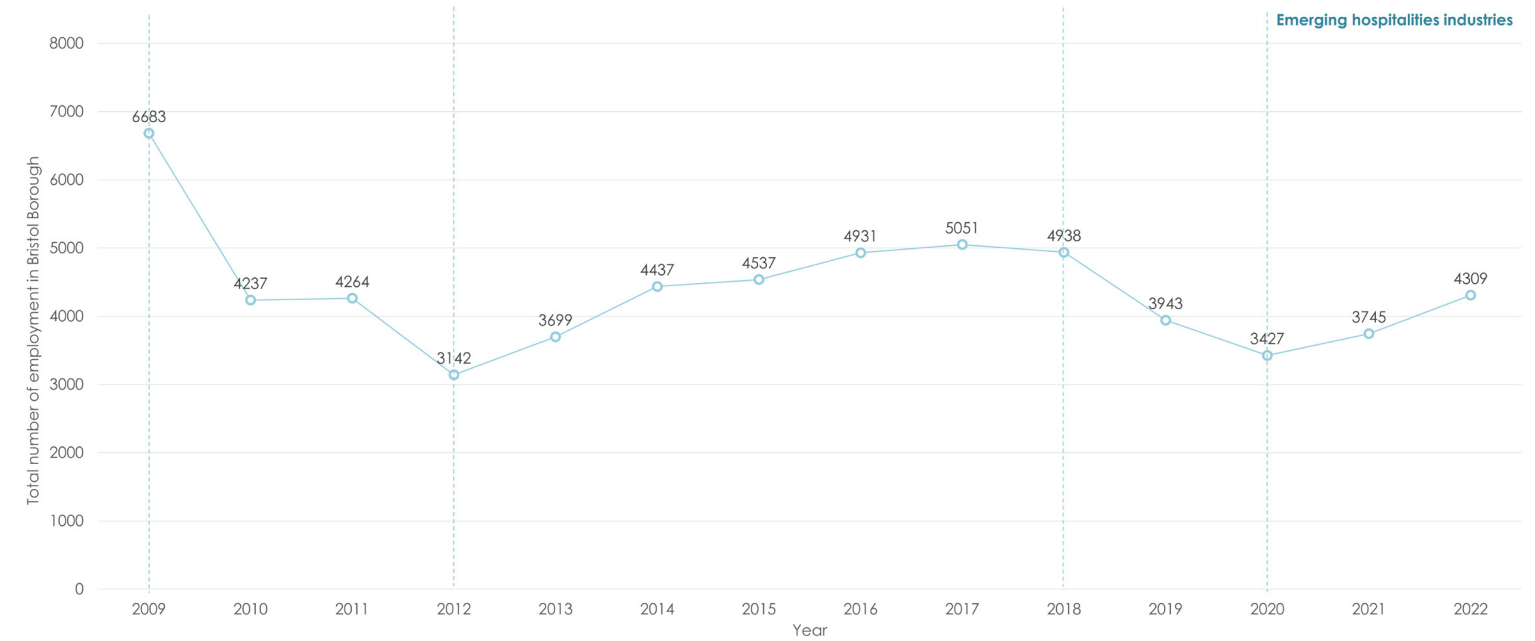


Figure 9: Total Employment Trend in Bristol Borough (2009-2022). Bristol Borough is seeing a gradual recovery to 4,309 jobs from 2020 onwards, driven by emerging hospitality industries and other locally servicing industries.

LOCALS ARE UNABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MOST JOBS CREATED WITHIN THE BOROUGH

In 2022, as seen in Figure 8, the largest share of jobs in Bristol Borough (26%) required a bachelor's degree or higher. However, only 22% of the borough's population held a bachelor's degree or higher, indicating a potential skill gap. The largest share of the population (38%) had only a high school diploma, yet only 20% of jobs required this level of education, showing a lack of jobs that match local skill level. While the proportion of jobs requiring higher skills is only slightly greater than the share of the population qualified at this level, this skill mismatch indicates a reliance on higher-skilled workers commuting from outside into the borough.

As LODES data show, in 2022 only 10% of the workforce living in Bristol Borough were employed within the area. While limited job opportunities, wages, and commuting habits might also influence low local employment rates, this skill gap can be one of the factors behind low local employment patterns. While the service economy is growing, many of the new service jobs require specialized skills (e.g., finance). Traditional low-skill service jobs (e.g., retail, food service) are not growing fast enough to match the needs of the large high-school-educated population. Increasing local employment opportunities in these low-skill industries and expanding these industries to export their services beyond the borough could boost consumer spending within the borough, leading to higher incomes for residents.

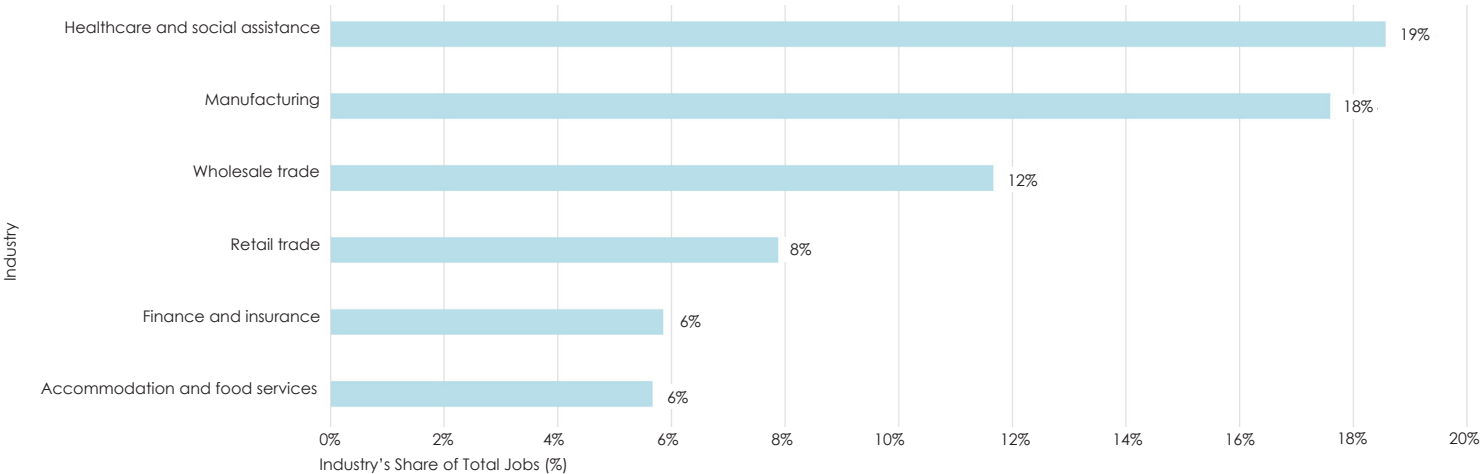


Figure 8: Top 5 Industries by Employment in Bristol Borough (2022). The graph highlights the leading industries by employment share, showing Retail Trade and Accommodation and Food Services, which are hospitality industries, as growing employers, even though these are not basic industries.

CHALLENGES

1. Very limited population growth
2. Stagnant income growth, increasing poverty rate and income inequality
3. The skill gap is one of the factors behind low local employment patterns

OPPORTUNITIES

1. The strong working-age population and diversifying racial makeup can create opportunities for economic growth, as well as cultural and social integration.
2. Investing in emerging industries like retail, accommodation and food services to create accessible jobs for residents.
3. Upskilling Initiatives can help residents to attain the qualifications needed for higher-skilled local jobs.

References:

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