State of the City

Cambridge City Portrait

2026 Update

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce the 2026 update to the State of the City report, which presents the latest trends in social, environmental and economic data about Cambridge and how it compares with national data. The first report was commissioned by Cambridge City Council and published in July 2023 and update reports were produced in 2024 and 2025. Now we have the latest data to consider.

I would like to thank Cambridge Econometrics for their professional and innovative approach to the original report, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority for funding the initial project, and all the colleagues, partners and stakeholders who contributed insights and data during the development of the reports and the online tools.

Reading this 2026 update it is hard not be struck by the contrasts it shows. Cambridge is a wealthy, successful city with a fast-growing and highly productive economy. It has the third highest rate of employment in Research and Development intensive industries out of all 55 cities in England. Most residents enjoy a high quality of life, with good employment, good incomes, and good health outcomes. The workforce is highly skilled and highly educated, and social inequality has reduced on some key measures.

If we look at sustainability and the environment, energy consumption per person is lower than the national city average and solar energy capacity is more than three times the national average. We have a lot of EV charge points.

And yet things are far from good for many residents. Housing remains significantly less affordable for low earners in Cambridge than the rest of the country while rates of homelessness increased. At GCSE level, the gap in educational attainment widened between children who receive Free School Meals and those who do not. And while life expectancy increased notably from 2024 to 2025 there is still a significant gap between the most and least deprived wards in the city.

This tells me that whatever we are achieving for the city as a whole is not reaching everyone, and that we need to consider what we can do to address the areas where people are failing to benefit or falling behind. The growth of Cambridge depends on many factors, some of which are in the control of the City Council while most are not. But how that growth serves everyone is something we can influence much more directly, and we will work to do that. We can see where the gaps are, where the work is needed, and so we have no excuse for failing to address these hard questions.

We want to ensure that Cambridge is a great place to live, and that everyone who lives, works, studies or visits is able to enjoy all that we have to offer. We will continue to focus

our efforts on reducing inequalities and do all we can as a local authority to build on the successes we have observed.

I hope everyone will find the report as valuable as I have done. Please use the dashboard and the many links to detailed source data to build your own picture of our amazing city. Over the years we have built up a detailed picture not only of the current state of Cambridge but how it is changing, and this is of enormous value as we assess policy interventions, talk to residents and businesses, and seek to influence government initiatives that will shape the future of the city.

Katie Thornburrow, Leader Cambridge City Council

Executive Summary

The State of the City report, produced in 2023, provided a portrait of Cambridge as a place. It used nationally comparable data to identify and illustrate key economic, social and environmental trends in the city.

This update report suggests that the key trends identified in the original report are broadly still visible in Cambridge in 2026, although there have been noticeable changes in some areas.

Economy – Business and Enterprise

Cambridge continues to have a high growth, highly productive and knowledge-intensive economy:

- Cambridge has the second highest rate of high growth businesses (0.92% in 2023) of all 55 English cities, with only Oxford having a higher rate.
- Cambridge has the third highest rate of employment in Research and Development (R&D) intensive industries out of all 55 cities in England.
- High turnover businesses increased from 11.6% of all businesses in Cambridge in 2024 to 12.3% in 2025.

However, the metrics in the report indicate that it can be harder to start and sustain a new business in the current climate in Cambridge:

- Business start-up and closure rates remain worse in Cambridge than the national average and the average for English cities. However, Cambridge's start-up rate improved slightly (from 10.2% in 2023 to 10.3% in 2024) and the business closure rate decreased (from 11.3% in 2023 to 10.3% in 2024).
- The proportion of start-ups surviving for 3 years decreased significantly in Cambridge between 2023 and 2024 but still remains marginally above the national and city averages.

Economy – Workforce and Jobs

Cambridge's workforce remains one of the most highly-skilled and highly-educated in the country:

- 70.1% of Cambridge's workforce were employed in 'high-skill' occupations, which was the third highest of all English cities. Only Oxford and Brighton had a higher rate.
- 75.9% of working age residents in Cambridge were educated to NVQ3+ (A-level or equivalent and above) in 2025, the sixth highest of all English cities.

However, having been relatively steady for a five-year period, apprenticeship starts fell from 515 starts per 100,000 adult residents in 2024 to 320 in 2025.

Society – Wellbeing and Prosperity

Most residents in Cambridge continue to enjoy a high quality of life, with good employment, good incomes, and good health outcomes:

- Average full-time pay in Cambridge (£634.90 per week) remains significantly above the national city average (£532.70) and national average (£555.50) in 2025.
- The average disposable household income in Cambridge (£25,800 per resident per year in 2023) remains above the national city (£21,722) and national averages (£25,150).
- The employment rate and the economic activity rate both increased in Cambridge from 2024 to 2025, although both rates remained below the national city average.
- Cambridge has the second highest life expectancy for men and the fourth highest for women out of all 55 English cities. Life expectancy increased notably from 2024 to 2025, from 84.0 to 84.5 years for women and from 80.6 to 81.3 years for men.

Housing affordability has improved, but it remains a significant challenge in Cambridge. The city has the second highest housing affordability ratio of all English cities, with the median house costing 10.8 times the median pay in 2025.

Rates of housing delivery have fluctuated significantly over the past 20 years in Cambridge, but the number of new homes delivered increased from 4.3 per 1,000 existing to 9.1 in 2025. Affordable housing delivery decreased over the same period, but it remained higher than the national city average.

Society - Social Equity

Previous State of the City reports have highlighted that while Cambridge is prosperous overall, there is inequality in social outcomes, with some households experiencing low pay, food poverty and fuel poverty.

The most recent data suggests that some measures of inequality have reduced:

- the proportion of employees in low pay in Cambridge fell sharply from more than 9% in 2023 to 6.6% in 2025. This is less than half the overall national rate (14.8%).
- pay inequality also reduced, with employees at the 80th percentile earning 2.1 times what workers at the 20th percentile earned in 2025, compared to 2.3 in 2024.
- child poverty rates in Cambridge (11.6% in 2025) were the third lowest of all 55 English cities and significantly below the national rate (19.3%).
- the gender pay gap decreased in Cambridge from 18% to 11% from 2024 to 2025.
- the employment rate for people with disabilities has increased very sharply in Cambridge, from 49.3% to 78.2%. This was the highest rate out of all 55 English cities.

However, some indicators of inequality remain, such as:

- The ethnic minority employment rate is 4.5% lower than the employment rate for all other ethnic groups in 2025.
- housing is less affordable for low earners in Cambridge than the rest of the country. The lower quartile house price was 11.2 times the lower quartile pay in 2025 in Cambridge, compared to a national average of 6.8 and a city average of 7.1.
- Rates of homelessness increased, with 17.5 households per 1,000 households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness.

There continues to be inequality in educational attainment, with students that are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) - an indicator of lower household incomes - achieving significantly poorer grades than non-FSM peers. The attainment gap between the two groups at GCSE level widened in Cambridge from 32% in 2023 to 35% in 2024, while the gap at A-level remained constant at 34%.

There continues to be a gap in life expectancy between the most and least deprived wards in Cambridge, but the gap for women reduced from 10.3 years in 2023 to 9.2 years in 2024, while the gap for men increased slightly. The life expectancy gap for both men and women was narrower than the average for English cities.

Environment - Sustainability, Wildlife and Nature

A number of key sustainability metrics have improved since the last report and show Cambridge performing well against national comparators:

- Greenhouse gas emissions have remained constant between 2023 and 2024 in Cambridge but reduced significantly over the past 20 years from 8.4 tonnes of carbon

dioxide equivalent (tCO2e) per person to 3.6 in 2023 and 2024. This was below both the national and city averages for 2024.

- Energy consumption per person has continued to decrease in Cambridge and is lower than the national city average and the national average.
- Solar energy capacity increased in Cambridge between 2023 and 2024 and was nearly double the national city average and more than three times the national average.
- Electric vehicle charging capacity has increased significantly from 2023 to 2024 in Cambridge and the city has the third highest rate of charge points (per 100 licensed EVs) out of 58 cities in England and Wales, behind only Coventry and Brighton.

However, the report presents a mixed picture in relation to other environmental measures:

- The percentage of adults in Cambridge who engage in active travel (at least twice a week in the past 28 days) in Cambridge (70.3%) was far higher than the national average (46.0%).
- Bus, bike and pedestrian journeys into the city from outside Cambridge decreased by 0.5% from 2023 to 2024, while car and motorbike journeys increased by 2.5%.
- Air pollution levels remained static between 2023 and 2024 in Cambridge, but air pollution mortality decreased slightly. Both measures were above the national city and national average.
- Storm overflows (sewage discharges) into the River Cam doubled from 2024 to 2025 but were significantly below the peak in 2021.
- The waste recycling rate in Greater Cambridge reduced slightly from 48% in 2024 to 47.8% in 2025, but the waste footprint per person also reduced slightly over the same period. The recycling rate has remained fairly constant from 2015 to 2025, but the waste footprint has reduced by 9.5% over the past decade.

Introduction

This report is the 2026 update to Cambridge City Council's "State of The City" report. The first State of the City report, published in July 2023, illustrated key trends in social, environmental and economic data about Cambridge, using the most meaningful, nationally comparable data available at the time. Update reports were also produced in 2024 and 2025.

The original report sought to capture a wide range of metrics to help identify the characteristics of Cambridge as a place and was intended to provide a shared evidence base for data informed discussions about key trends in the city. The report was structured into six lenses which speak to three distinct areas, as follows:

- Environment
    - Environment and Sustainability
    - Wildlife & Nature
- Society
    - Wellbeing & Prosperity
    - Social Equity
- Economy
    - Business & Enterprise
    - Workforce & Jobs

This update report is structured around these six lenses. It presents the most recent data available for the metrics included in the original 2023 report, together with a narrative description of key changes since the original report. It does not attempt to explain these trends, aside from providing context to aid in the interpretation of the presented data.

Central government has recently developed the Local Outcomes Framework, which provides a set of outcomes-based measures of local performance against national priorities. There is some overlap between the State of the City metrics and the Local Outcomes Framework measures. Some aligned metrics have been adopted into this report.

Data limitations

While care has been taken to preserve as much continuity with the data presented in the original 2023 report, not all metrics have been updated for this release. Some are due to timing: this report has been compiled earlier in the year than the 2025 update report, meaning that some indicators and metrics have not yet been updated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and other national data sources. Some are due to metrics being discontinued, with data no longer published by national data owners. Others cannot be

updated as they were drawn from one-off studies, or releases with an infrequent release cycle, such as the national Census which was last conducted in 2021.

It should also be noted that some of the metrics in this report use ONS data that is based on sample surveys. For example, the ONS Annual Population Survey (APS) is based on a random sample of household addresses, while the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) is based on a 1% sample of employee jobs using Pay As You Earn (PAYE) tax data from HMRC.

While both surveys are intended to support local-area analysis, the sampling approach does not guarantee a sufficiently large sample for every local authority area, or every population group within an area. As a result, some data points used in this report which are taken from these sources will carry a larger margin of error than others. City-level data from sample surveys can fluctuate considerably from year-to-year, but changes between years should be interpreted cautiously due to this sampling uncertainty.

Environment

Environment & Sustainability

Narrative

This section reports on the environmental conditions of Cambridge, including the wider environmental impacts and sustainability of the city, and our path towards a Net Zero Cambridge. It considers emissions, energy efficiency and sustainable transport.

Greenhouse Gas emissions per resident are unchanged from 2023 to 2024. It remained at 3.6 tonnes of CO2 equivalent (tCO2e) across both years. This still represents significantly lower per-capita carbon emissions than the national average, which fell by 0.2 tCO2e from 2023 to 2024, to 5.1 tCO2e. Cambridge had the 25th lowest carbon emissions per head out of 58 cities in England and Wales and remains below the national city average and national average. The overall trend in Cambridge has seen a decline in per capita emissions over the past 20 years.

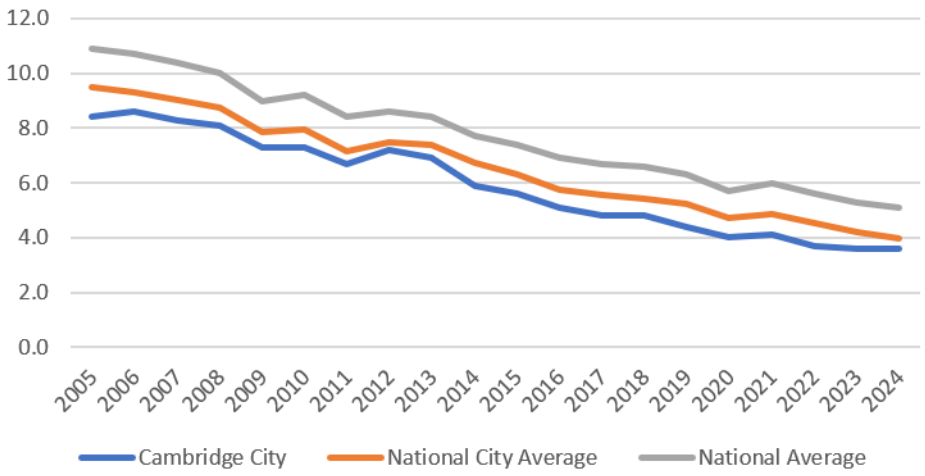

Figure 1- Greenhouse Gas Emissions (tCO2e per resident).

Source: Uk Local Authority and Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions Statistics; Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

Greenhouse gas **emissions by source** reveals domestic and commercial sources as the highest emitters in Cambridge, though commercial emissions have continued to fall steadily from 1.0 tCo2e per resident in 2021 to 0.7 tCO2e in 2024. Emissions from the industrial and public sectors increased moderately from 2023 to 2024.

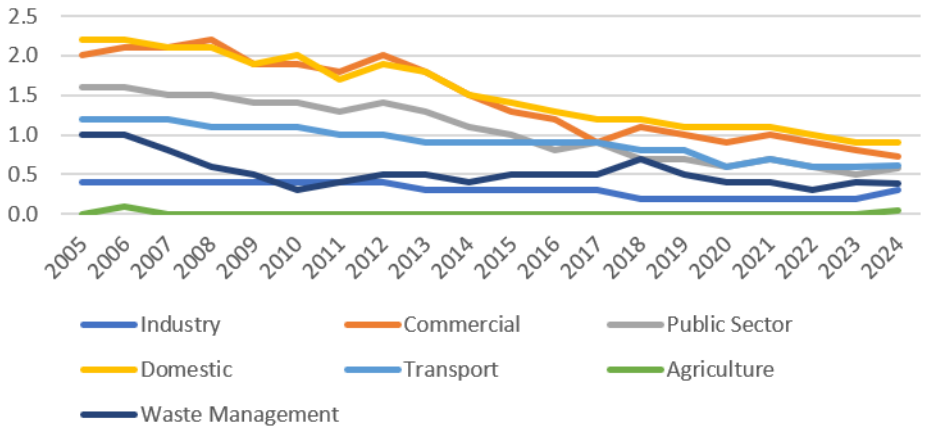

Figure 2 - Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Source (tCO2e per resident).

Source: Uk Local Authority and Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions Statistics; Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

Energy consumption per capita has continued to decrease in Cambridge, falling to 1.36 kilotonnes of oil equivalent (kTOe) per 1,000 residents in 2023. This represents a small decrease of 0.1 kTOe per 1,000 residents from 2022. Cambridge has a consistently lower consumption rate than the national city average (1.45 kTOe in 2023) and a significantly lower rate than the overall national average (1.68 kTOe in 2023).

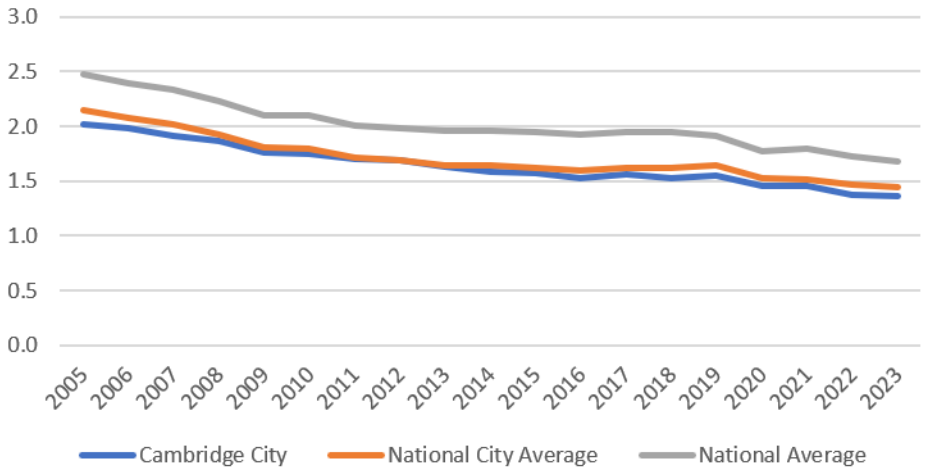

Figure 3 - Energy Consumption (tKTOe per 1,000 residents).

Source: Sub-National Total Final Energy Consumption; Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

Renewables capacity (solar PV) has increased significantly in Cambridge in recent years. Cambridge's installed capacity density (megawatts per 100km^2) increased by 4.18 from 40.5 in 2023 to a total of 44.7 in 2024. This is nearly double the national city

average of 23.5, and over 3 times the overall national average of 14.0. The pace of increase has been dramatically higher for Cambridge than national averages, since a major divergence in the late 2010s.

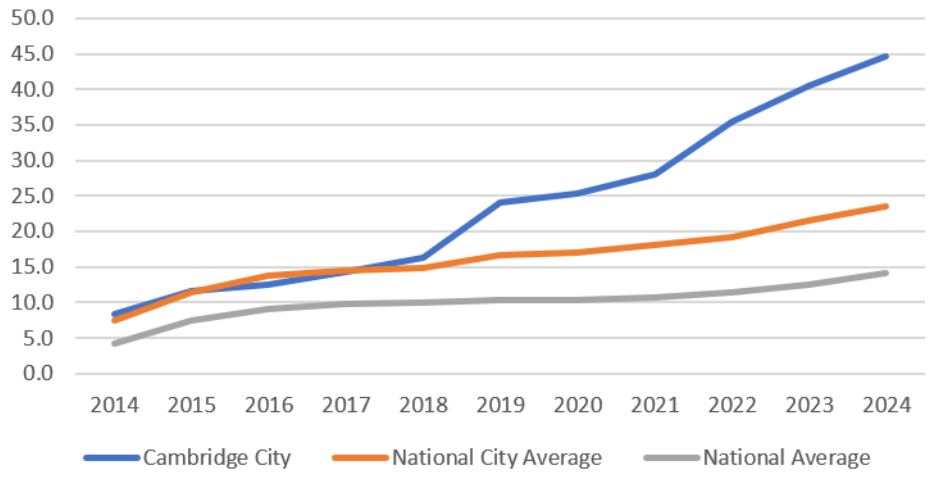

Figure 4 – Renewables – Solar PhotoVoltaic Capacity (MW).

Source: Regional Renewable Statistics; Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

Electric Vehicles charging capacity has also increased in Cambridge, with 10 charging points per 100 licenced EVs in 2025. This is a significant increase of 3.7 since 2023.

Cambridge has the third highest rate of charge points (per 100 licensed EVs) out of 58 cities in England and Wales, behind only Coventry and Brighton. Charging capacity in Cambridge in 2025 is double the national city average (4.4), and 3 times the overall national average (3.0). Nationally, charging capacity has not kept up with EV take-up, resulting in a reduction in per vehicle capacity. This is not the case in Cambridge.

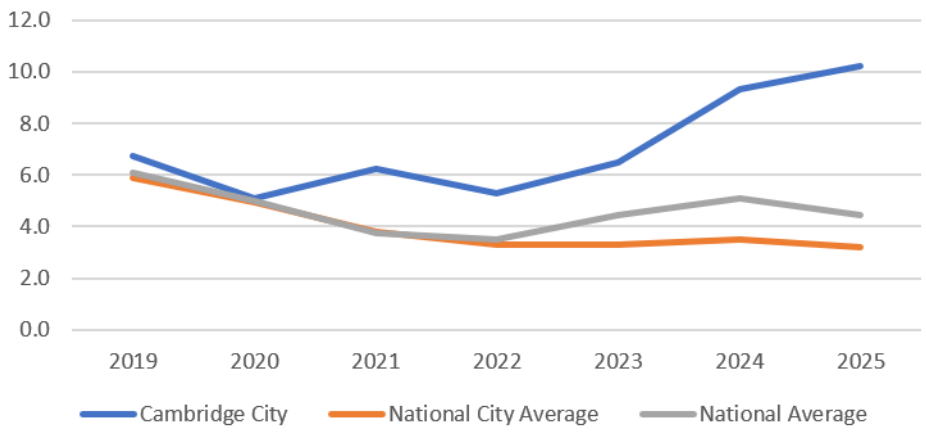

Figure 5 - Electric Vehicle Charging Capacity (Charging points per 1,000 licenced EVs).

Source: Electric Vehicle Charging Device Statistics; Department for Transport, Vehicle Licencing Statistics; Department for Transport

Trips into the city by cars and motorcycles increased by 2.5%. However, trips by **bus, pedestrian and pedal cycle** decreased, albeit by a very small amount (0.5%). **HGV and LGV** trips decreased by 2.5%. Trips by car and motorcycle make up 79% of trips into the city. It should be noted that this metric relates to trips from outside the Cambridge City boundary into the city. It does not include shorter trips that start and finish within the city boundary[i].

Residents using active travel and **travel time to essential services** were not updated for this report. However, the Local Outcomes Framework contains two comparable metrics. The percentage of adults who engaged in active travel at least twice in the last 28 days was 70% in Cambridge in 2023, well above the national average of 46%[ii]. The Department for Transport's public transport connectivity tool ranks Cambridge as "High", with a connectivity score of 72.51 out of 100[iii].

Air pollution (PM2.5 concentrations) remained static in Cambridge between 2023 and 2024 at 7.4, which was above the national city average (6.9) and the overall national average (7.1) in 2024. However, **air pollution mortality** decreased slightly, from 5.6% to 5.5% of mortality related air pollution. This is similar, but slightly above the national city (5.2%) and overall national (5.3%) averages. Cambridge has the 15th highest air pollution concentration and air pollution mortality rates out of 55 cities in England.

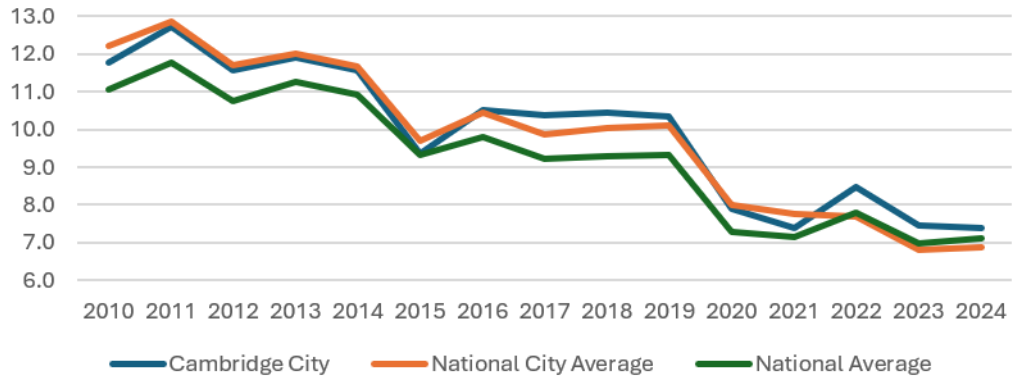

Figure 6 - Air Pollution (Average annual population weighted PM2.5 concentration - µg/m^2).

Source: Modelled Background Pollution Data; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

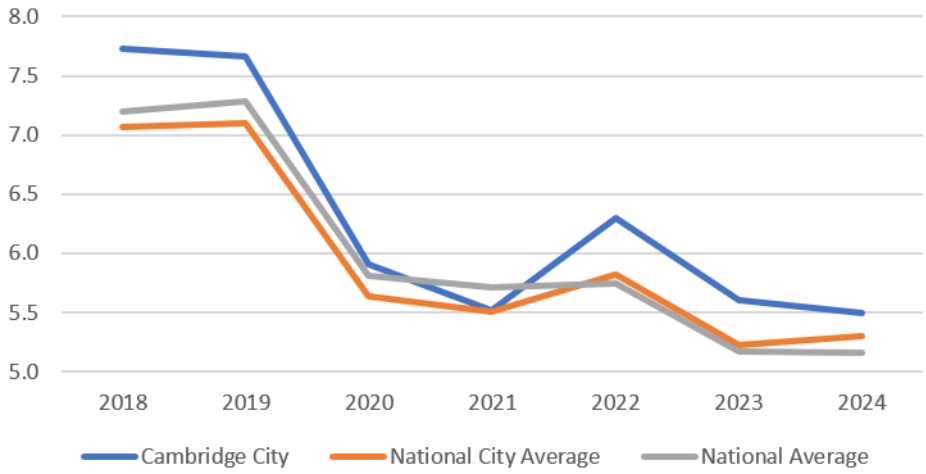

Figure 7 - Air Pollution Mortality (% of total mortality).

Source: Estimated Fraction of Mortality Attributable to Particulate Air Pollution; Office for Health Improvement and Disparities

Non-Updated Measures

- Travel time to essential services
- Poor air quality days
- Fuel poverty rate
- Licensed EVs
- Residents using active travel

Wildlife & Nature

Narrative

This section of the report presents data on the experience of wildlife in Cambridge, and the ecological conditions in the city. Reported metrics are habitat composition, water levels, water pollution (sewage discharges), noise complaints, recycling rates and waste collection. Data was not available for metrics relating to biodiversity and tree canopy coverage.

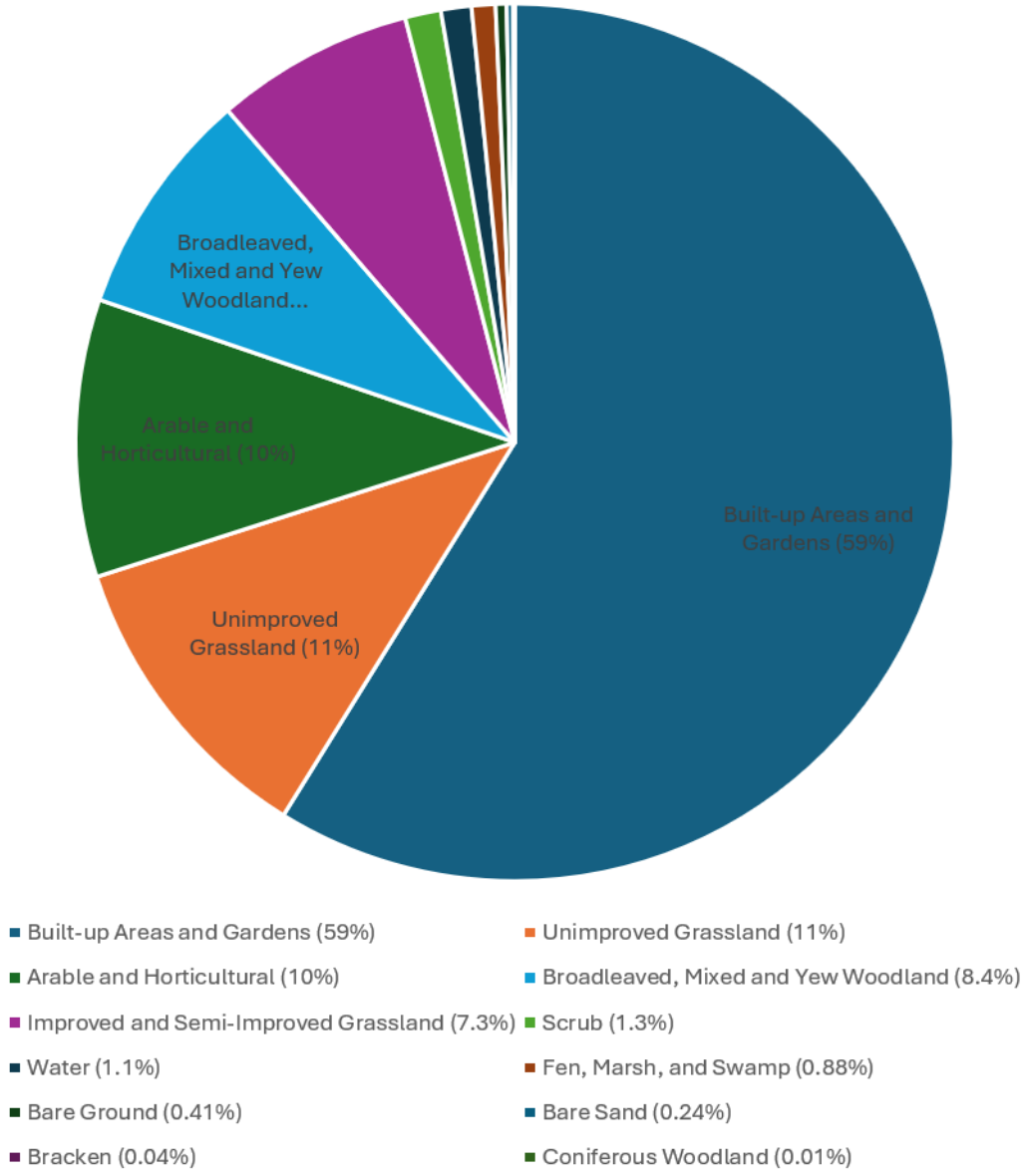

Figure 8 - Habitat Composition (% of total area).

Source: Natural England

The **habitat composition of Cambridge** is predominantly built-up area and gardens – 59% of the city total. However, roughly 11% of the city area is unimproved grassland, referring to natural use. A further 10% is arable and horticultural land, 8.4% is broadleaved woodland, and 7.3% is improved/semi-improved grassland.

There has been no significant change in the River Cam's **water levels** from 2024 to 2025 (0.71 in both years). A mildly lower summer average figure in 2025 (0.66) is counterbalanced by a slightly raised rest-of-year average (0.71). Typical high and low measurements are virtually unchanged from the previous measure[iv].

Storm overflows (sewage discharges) into the River Cam increased sharply from 2024 to 2025, from a cumulative 251 hours to 516 hours. This represents a significant increase in **water pollution** between the two years, and a continued upward trend since a low in 2023. However, all figures are still significantly below the peak of nearly 1,400 hours in 2021.

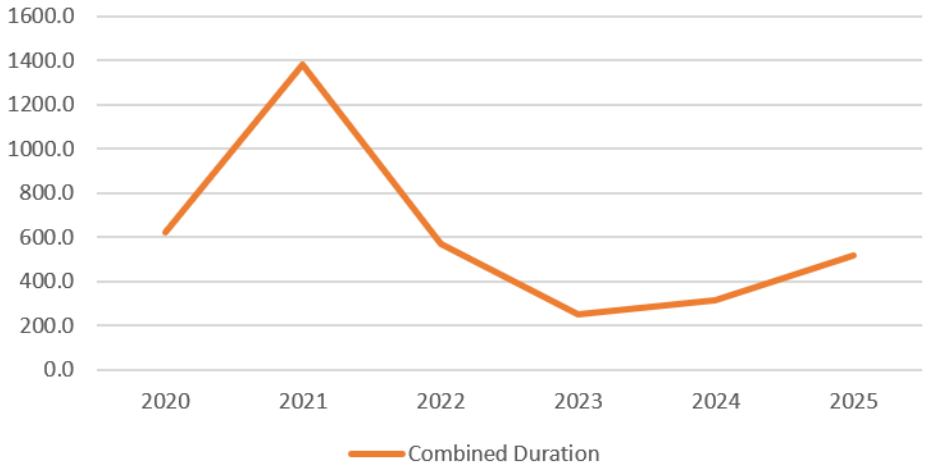

Figure 9 - Duration of Storm Overflow (Hours).

Source: Anglian Water

Noise complaints have increased, representing a consistent upwards post-Covid trend. Between financial years 2024-25 and 2025-25, reported noise complaints in Cambridge City increased by 35%. From 2021-22 to 2025-26, the increase has been 58%[v].

The waste **recycling rate** in Greater Cambridge (Cambridge City and South Cambridge districts) decreased very slightly from 48.0% in 2024 to 47.8% in 2025, Greater Cambridge's rate remains above the national average, which stood at 41.2% in 2025. The national city average has not been updated for 2025. Neither metric has significantly changed since 2015.

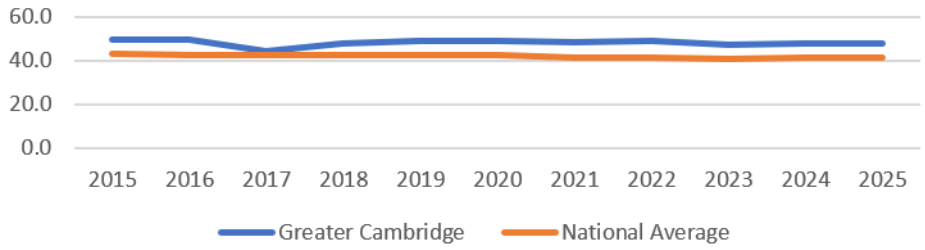

Figure 10 - Recycling Rate (%).

Source: Local Authority Collected Waste; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The waste footprint - representing the amount of **waste collected** per 1,000 residents - decreased slightly in Greater Cambridge from 2024 to 2025. 357.5 tonnes per 1,000 residents was collected across Greater Cambridge in 2025, compared with 358.9 tonnes in 2024. Greater Cambridge remains below the national average of 429.1 tonnes in 2025.

Over the past 10 years in Greater Cambridge there has been a reduction in the waste footprint, from 395.2 tonnes in 2015 to 357.5 tonnes in 2025, a decrease of approximately 9.5%. This mirrors the national trend, where the 10-year change to 2025 was a 9.3% decrease.

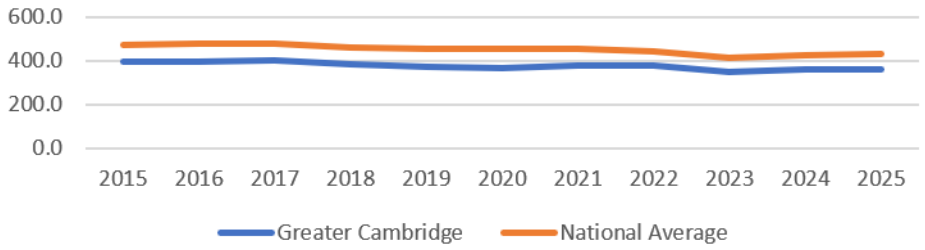

Figure 11 - Waste Footprint (Tonnes collected per 1,000 residents).

Source: Local Authority Collected Waste; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Non-Updated Measures

- Tree canopy coverage
- Land managed for biodiversity & greenspace
- Water body status (% rated poor)
- Insect-friendly wildflower meadows and long grass area
- Heavy rainfall & heatwave days

Society

Wellbeing and Prosperity

Narrative

This lens examines the wellbeing, prosperity and inclusiveness of Cambridge and its communities, including economic activity, wealth and poverty, unemployment, crime rates and the housing and homelessness picture in the city. This lens can be seen as measuring similar issues as the national Index of Multiple Deprivation, which was updated in 2025. A full analysis of how Cambridge is reflected in this latest IMD release can be found here.

Overall, Cambridge is the third least deprived city in England, with particularly low deprivation in the Employment and Education domains. In both of these areas, Cambridge is the least deprived City in the country. However, inequality within the city is stark, with neighbourhoods in Abbey, King's Hedges and Arbury wards being notably more deprived than national averages, while Newnham, Queen Edith's and Castle wards have some of the least deprived neighbourhoods in England[vi].

Gross disposable household income was approximately £25,800 per resident per year in 2023 (adjusted for inflation – 2020 baseline). While this is above national averages, there has been a general trend of decline since 2019 that is not matched by the overall national average. Figures remain significantly below the pre-2008 trend.

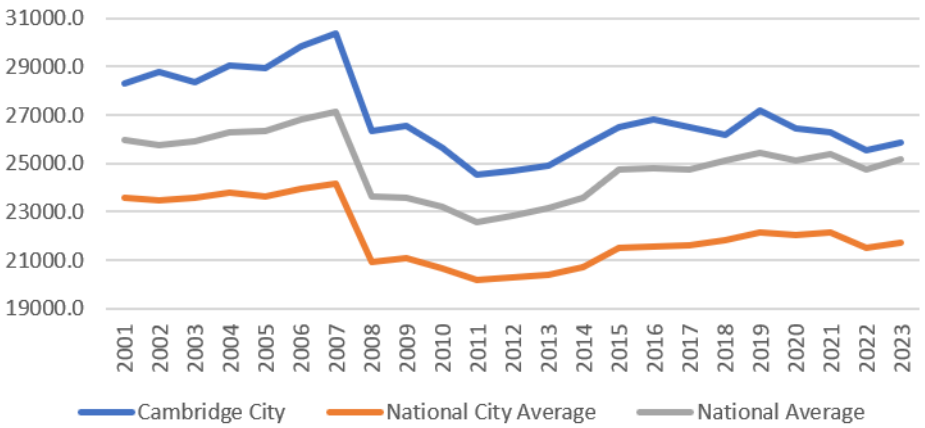

Figure 12 - Gross Disposable Household Income (£ per resident per year, 2020 baseline).

Source: Regional Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) at Current Basic Prices; Office for National Statistics

The **unemployment rate** (amongst those of working age who are economically active, including the hidden unemployed**)** decreased by 5.4 percentage points from 14.5% in

2024 to 9.2% in 2025. This puts Cambridge below the national average of 9.7% in 2025. While this is a positive change, it is important to note Cambridge, as an individual area with a smaller sample size, is more susceptible to fluctuation in the data than national averages. The 3-year rolling average unemployment rate is above the equivalent national figure.

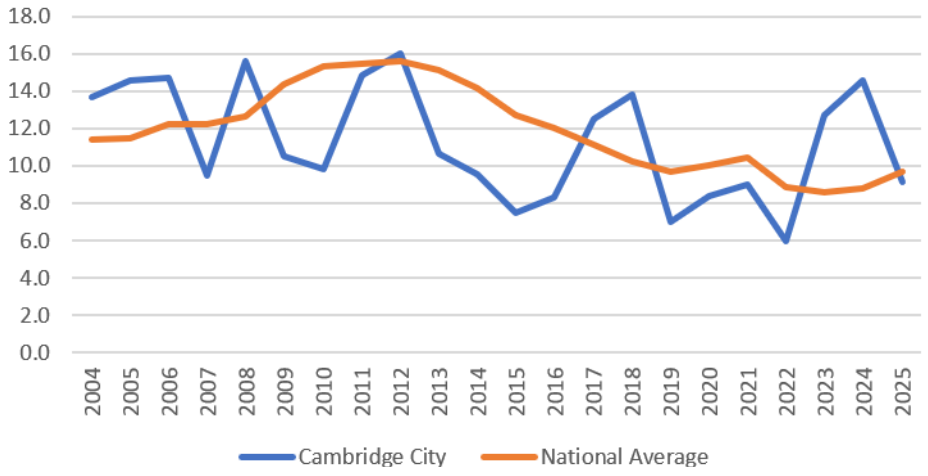

Figure 13 - Unemployment Rate (%).

Source: Annual Population Survey; Office for National Statistics

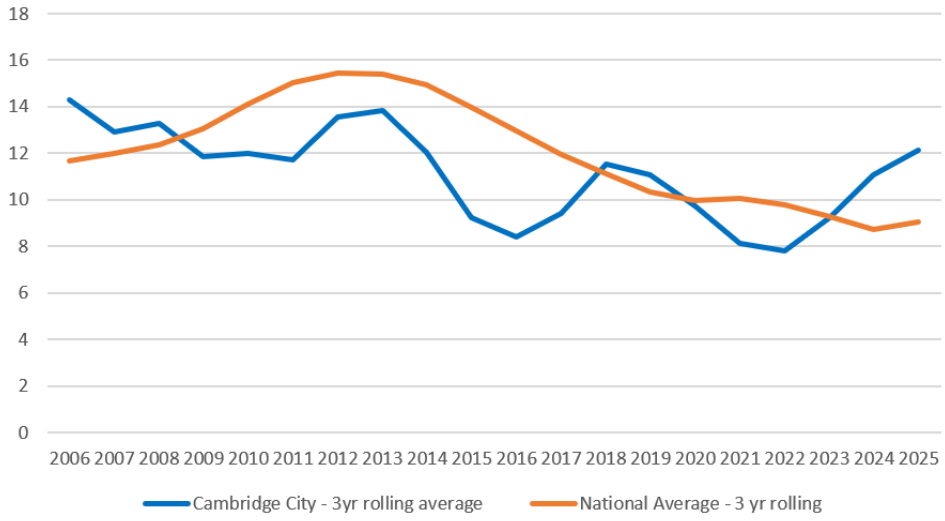

Figure 14 – 3 Year Rolling Average Unemployment Rate (%).

Source: Annual Population Survey; Office for National Statistics

Cambridge's **economic activity rate** improved from 2024 to 2025. 76.8% of working age residents were economically active in 2025, compared to 74.8% in 2024. However, this is below both the national city (78.7%) and overall national (79.0%) averages[vii].

The **employment rate** increased significantly, from 70.2% to 74.8% from 2024 to 2025. This remains slightly below the national city average of 75.4%. It is important to note that these metrics fluctuate significantly in Cambridge due to a smaller sample size at city level in the ONS Annual Population Survey. The 3-year rolling average employment rate, shown in the chart below, smooths out some of these fluctuations.

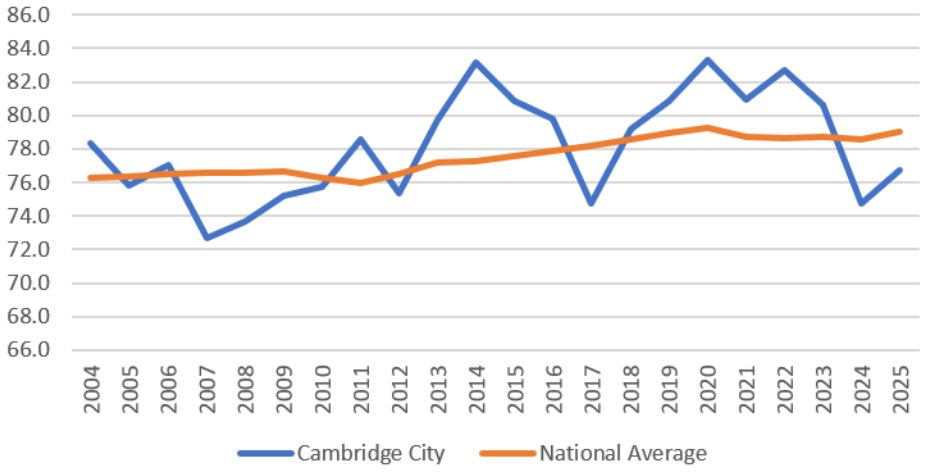

Figure 15 - Economic Activity Rate (%).

Source: Annual Population Survey; Office for National Statistics

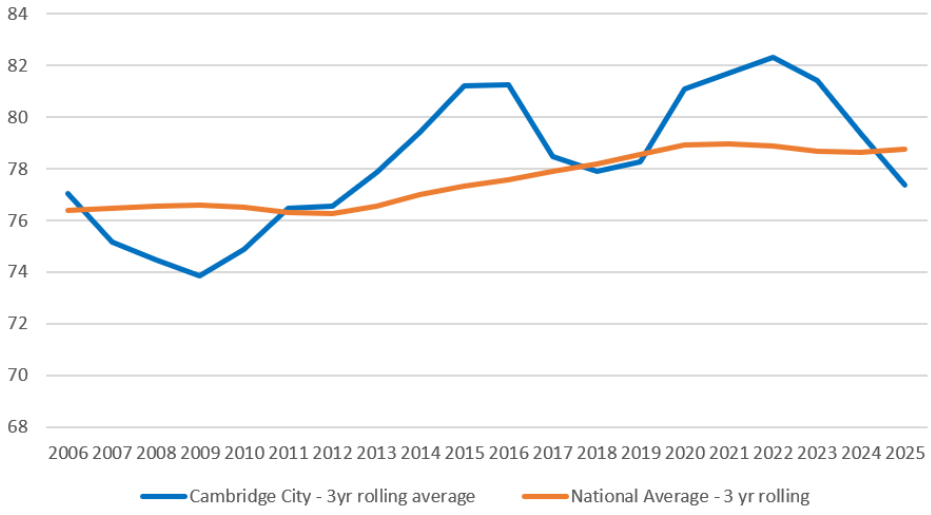

Figure 16 - 3 Year Rolling Average Economic Activity Rate (%).

Source: Annual Population Survey; Office for National Statistics

84.4% of people who **are economically inactive** and of working age in 2025 in Cambridge **do not want a job**. This is a significant increase of 6.2 percentage points from 2024, and places Cambridge above both the national city (78.6%) and overall national (77.7%) averages. This may in part be due to Cambridge's large student population, with students being less likely to want or able to work than other working age residents[viii].

Child poverty increased slightly in Cambridge from 2024 to 2025 by 0.1 percentage point. The 2025 figure of 11.6% is the third lowest out of all 55 English cities and is significantly below the national rate (19.3%). These figures are calculated from a different source and thus methodology than in previous releases[ix].

Housing affordability in Cambridge has improved slightly in 2025, but Cambridge remains one of the least affordable places for buying or renting a home in the country and homelessness has continued to rise in the city:

- **Housing affordability** remains an issue in Cambridge, with the median house costing 10.8 times the median pay in 2025. This figure has decreased from 11.3 in 2024 and a peak of 13.5 in 2017, However, by this measure, Cambridge is the second most unaffordable out of 55 cities in England, with only London having a higher housing affordability ratio. Cambridge is still significantly above the national city average (7.0) and the overall national (7.6) average[x].
- **Housing affordability for lower earners** remains challenging. The lower quartile house price was 11.2 times the lower quartile pay in 2025, though there was a steeper decrease from 2024, where the figure stood at 12.1. This is worse relative to the rest of the nation than the overall housing affordability ratio – the low-income housing affordability average for cities was 7.1, and the overall average was 6.8[xi].
- The number of households that were assessed as **homeless or threatened with homelessness** has increased significantly from 14.1 cases per 1,000 in 2022 to 17.5 in 2025. Rates of homelessness in Cambridge are significantly above the national city average (15.6) and overall national average (13.6) in 2025, though it is important to note that both averages also rose significantly since 2022[xii].

The number of **new homes delivered** per 1,000 existing dwellings in Cambridge improved from 4.3 in 2024 to 9.1 in 2025. Housing delivery in Cambridge has fluctuated significantly over the past 20 years, but overall, there has been a decline from a peak of 27 new homes per 1,000 existing homes in 2014. The 2024 figure was the lowest recorded delivery rate since 2002.

However, as the chart below shows, the 3-year rolling average housing delivery rate in Cambridge has generally been above the national city and national averages. The 3-year rolling average rate for Greater Cambridge (covering Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire districts) has been significantly higher than national averages.

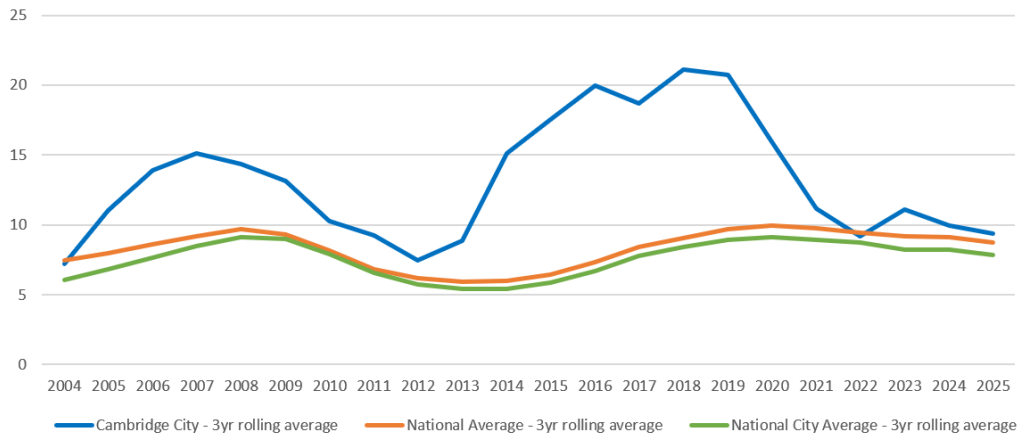

Figure 17 - Cambridge City 3 Year Rolling Average of Housing Delivery (Units added per 1,000 existing dwellings).

Source: Live Tables on Dwelling Stock; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

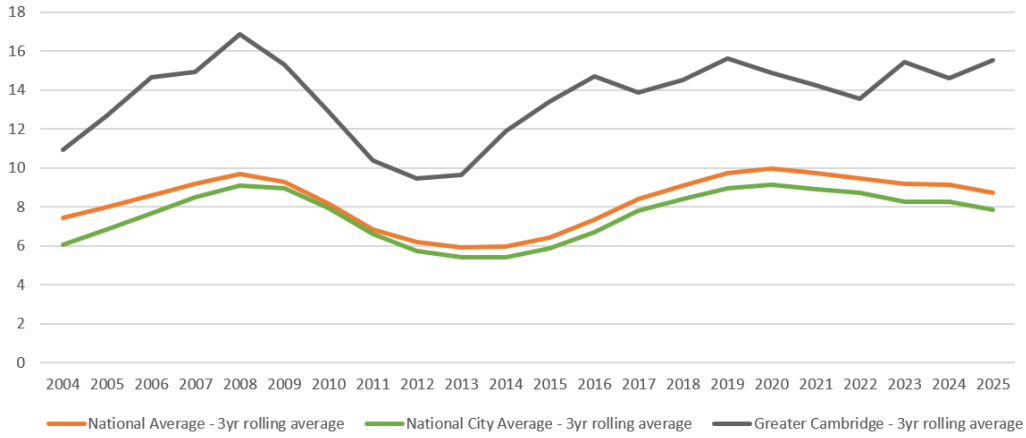

Figure 18 - Greater Cambridge 3 Year Rolling Average of Housing Delivery (Units added per 1,000 existing dwellings).

Source: Live Tables on Dwelling Stock; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Affordable housing delivery fell in Cambridge from 174.1 new homes per 10,000 residents in 2024 to 123.2 in 2025. However, as the chart below shows, the rolling 3-year

average shows that affordable housing delivery was consistently higher in Cambridge than the national city average for the preceding 10 years (2014-2024).

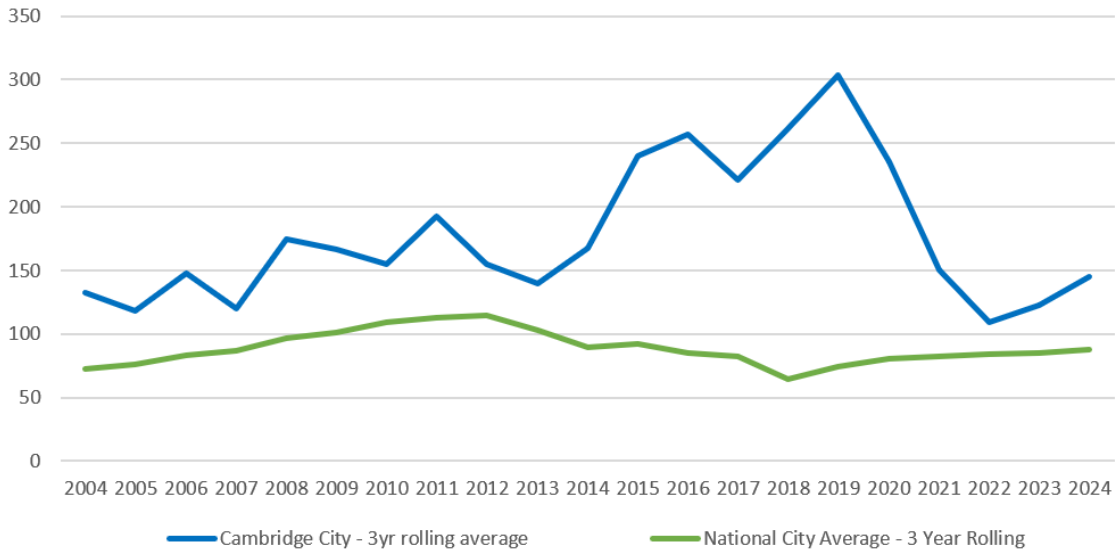

Figure 19 - 3 Year Rolling Average of Affordable Housing Delivery (per 1,000 residents).

Source: Live Tables on Affordable Housing Supply, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

During the Covid period from 2021 to 2022, the number of homes owned outright in Cambridge reduced significantly, while the numbers of homes that were privately rented or owned with a mortgage increased significantly. **Housing by tenure type** has remained largely stable from 2022 to 2024, with slight increases in all four tenure types. The total number of social rental homes has increased steadily and consistently from 11,500 in 2012 to 13,500 in 2024 and remained largely unaffected by Covid.

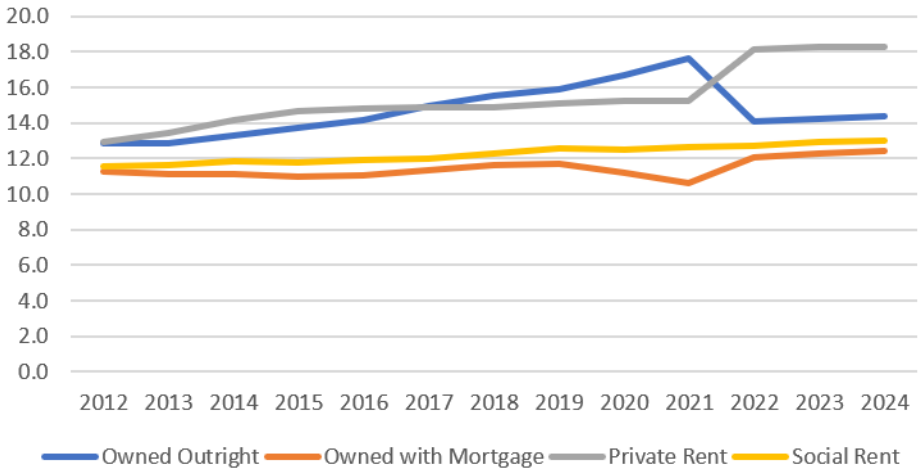

Figure 20 - Housing by Tenure (thousand homes).

Source: Subnational Estimates of Dwellings by Tenure; Office for National Statistics

Crime rates decreased from 107.6 offences per 1,000 residents in 2023 to 101.6 offences per 1,000 residents in 2024. This is a decrease of 6.0 from 2023. However, this rate still remains above the national city average of 95.6 offences.

Re-offending rates increased significantly in Cambridge from 32.7% in 2023 to 37.3% in 2024. This was significantly above national city (29.8%) and overall national (28.1%) averages[xiii].

While Cambridge had the 22nd highest crime rate out of 55 cities in England in 2024, it had the third highest reoffending rates.

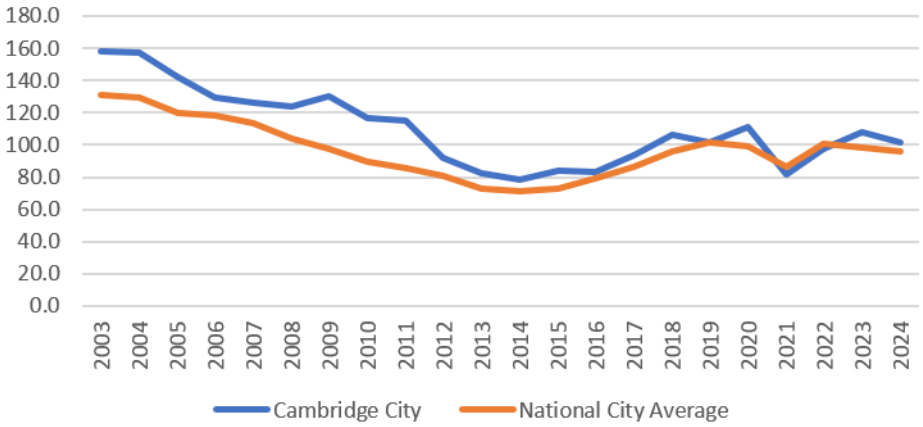

Figure 21 - Crime Rates (Police recorded offences per 1,000 residents).

Source: Recorded crime data by Community Safety Partnership Area; Office for National Statistics

Non-Updated Measures

- Quality of life ranking
- Food bank use
- Local inflation rate
- Private rental affordability
- Self-reported wellbeing
- Specific crime rate categories
- Census data: Housing, jobs, population growth

Social Equity

Narrative

The social equity lens examines the experience and quality of life of residents and different social groups in Cambridge, the barriers they face and the inequalities that arise. It considers the size, growth and diversity of the city population, and looks at income and employment gaps, barriers to equality, educational attainment, and health outcomes.

Cambridge's overall educational attainment is still significantly above national city and overall national averages, with the **proportion of working age residents educated to NVQ3+** (A-level or equivalent and above) remaining high at 75.9%. This is the sixth highest rate of all 55 English cities and is significantly above the national average of 68.6%. However, the Cambridge rate decreased by 3.9 percentage points between 2024 and 2025[xiv].

Educational attainment still shows significant inequalities. Students that are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) – an indicator of lower household incomes - achieve significantly poorer grades than non-FSM peers:

- At GCSE level, 43% of FSM pupils achieved benchmark grades in English and maths, while 78% of non-FSM pupils achieved these grades or above. The gap at GCSE widened between 2023 and 2024, going from 32% to 35%. Overall attainment fell for both cohorts, but more sharply for FSM pupils.
- At A-level, the gap is unchanged between 2024 and 2025 at 34%. Attainment rose slightly at A-level (or equivalent).

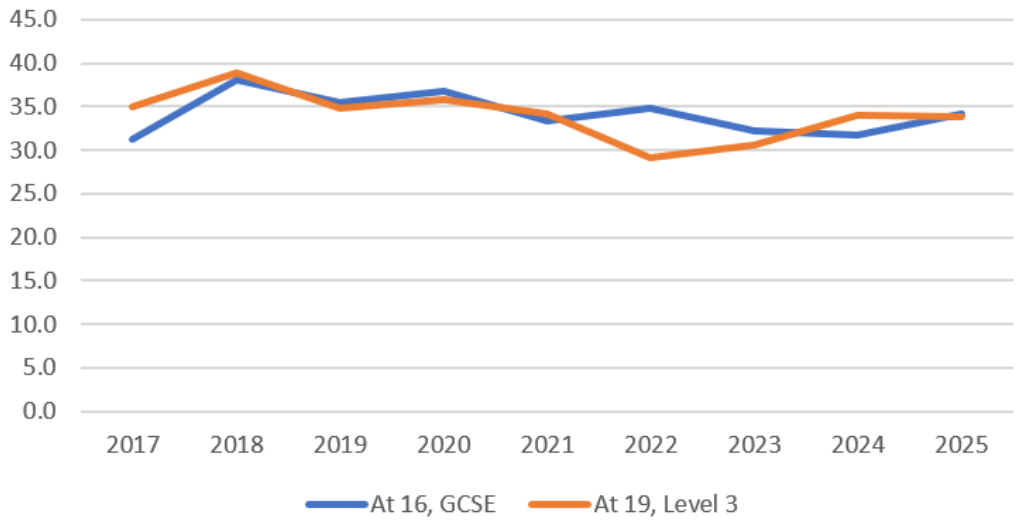

Figure 22 - Educational Attainment Gaps Between FSM and Non-FSM Pupils (percentage point difference).

Source: Explore Education Statistics; Department for Education

The **ethnic minority employment rate** (as a proportion of working age residents) in Cambridge has remained largely constant at 73.4% in 2024 and 2025. This is 4.5 percentage points lower than the employment rate for all other groups, which was 77.9% in 2025. The ethnic minority employment rate in Cambridge is above the national city (69.5%) and overall national (69.7%) averages in 2025.

As explained in the introduction, due to the sampling approach used in the Annual Population Survey (APS), data at the local authority level tends to fluctuate and can be subject to a wide margin of error. The chart below shows three-year rolling averages, which smooth out some of the fluctuations in the data. The three-year rolling average employment rate for ethnic minority workers in Cambridge was 73.3% in 2025, which was 1.2% lower than the employment rate for all other groups in employment in the city in 2025 (74.5%)

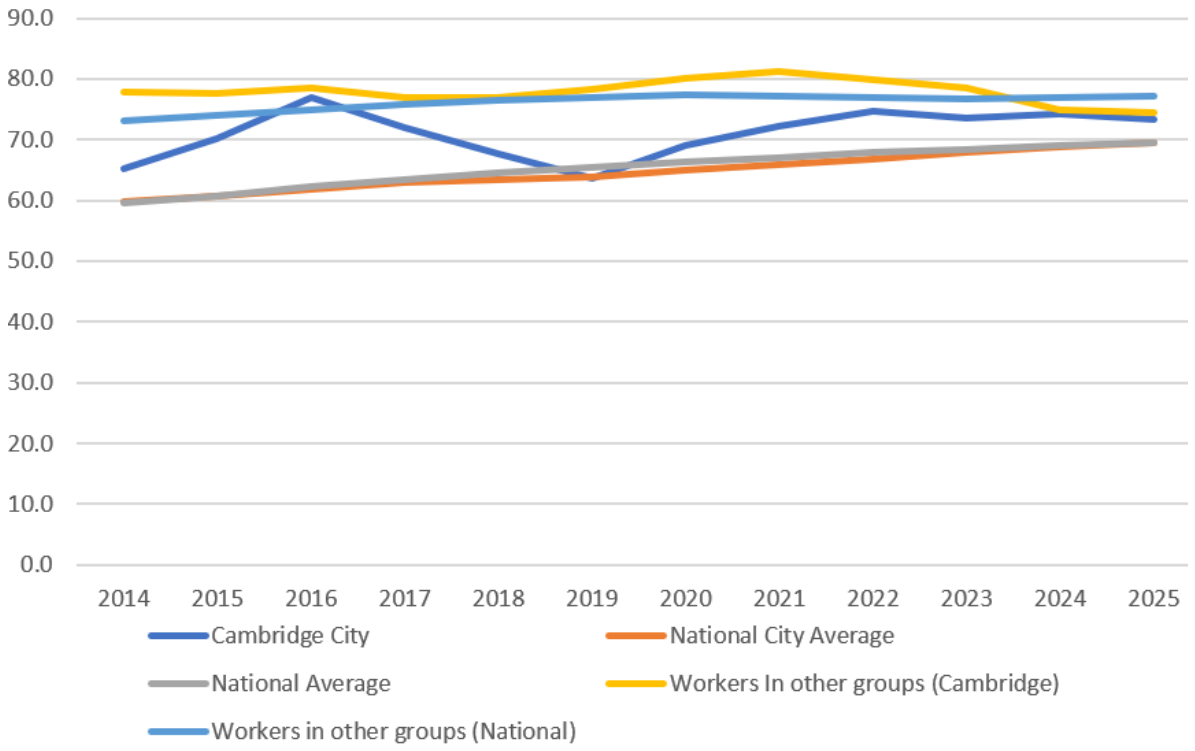

Figure 23 - 3 Year Rolling Average Ethnic Minority Employment Rate (%).

Source: Annual Population Survey, Office for National Statistics

The **gender pay gap** decreased from 18% to 11% from 2024 to 2025. This represents a return to the norm from an unusually high figure in 2024 – which was possibly caused by a significant increase in the number of men employed in the banking, finance and insurance sector from 2023 to 2024 and a reduction in the number of women in the same sector. However, the 3-year rolling average has increased steadily over the past decade.

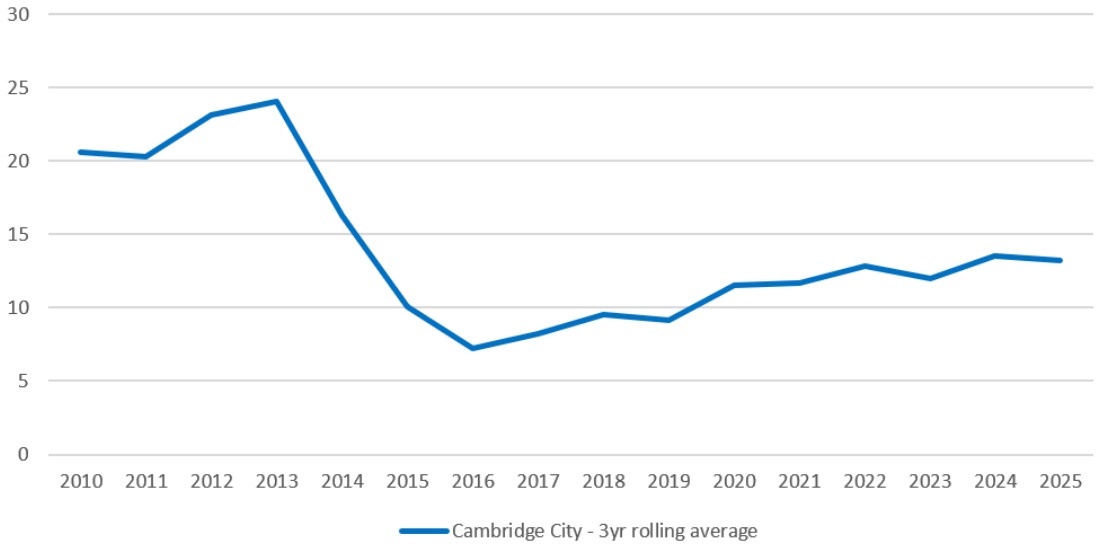

Figure 24 - 3 Year Rolling Average of Gender Pay Gap (% difference in full-time pay).

Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings; Office for National Statistics

The **employment rate for working aged people with disabilities** has increased very sharply, from 49.3% to 78.2%. This figure was the highest rate out of all 55 English cities and was above the national rate (56.4%). This is the highest figure recorded for Cambridge since data began being collected in 2014, though this data is historically unstable. The chart below shows 3-year rolling average figures, which smooths out some of the fluctuation in local data for this measure.

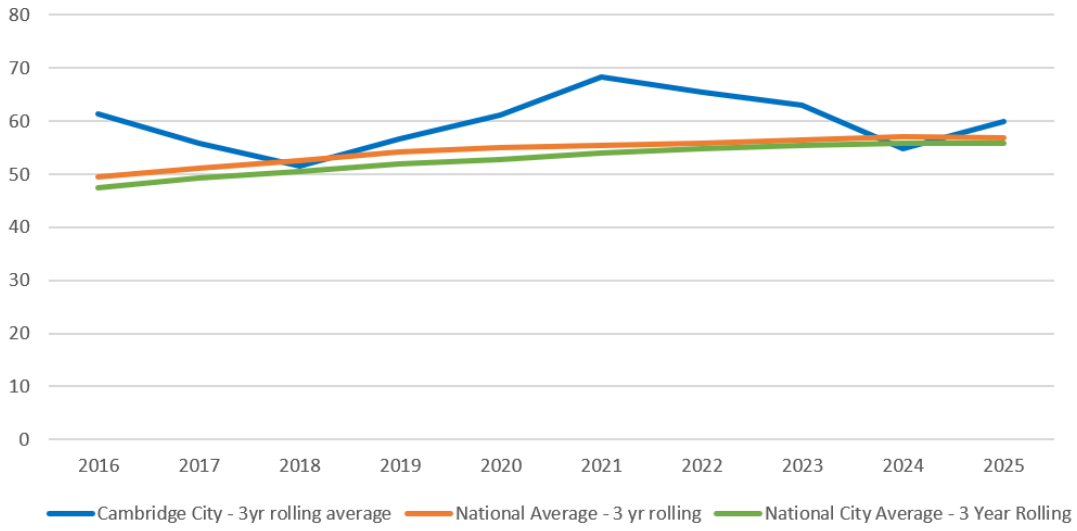

Figure 25 - 3 Year Rolling Average of Disability Employment Rate (%).

Source: Annual Population Survey; Office for National Statistics

Cambridge has the second highest **life expectancy** for men and the fourth highest for women of out of all 55 English cities. Life expectancy in the city increased notably from 2024 to 2025, to 84.5 years for women and 81.3 for men. This is an increase of 0.5 and 0.7 years respectively and is above both the national city average (82.8 years for women, 78.8 years for men) and overall national average (83.5 years for women, 79.7 years for men).

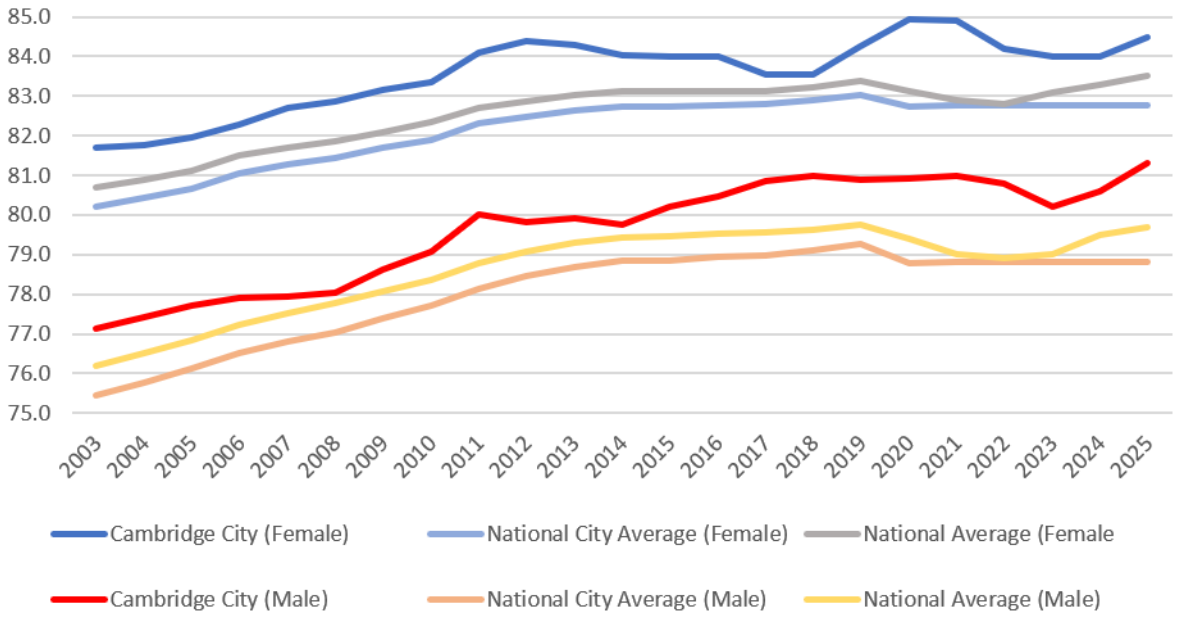

Figure 26 - Life Expectancy at Birth (Years).

Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework; Office for Health Improvement and Disparities

The **life expectancy gap** between the most and least deprived wards is still significant:

- Women in the most deprived ward in Cambridge live 9.2 years less on average than their peers in the least deprived wards in 2024. This gap has reduced by 1.1 years from 2023 in Cambridge, when it was 10.3 years. The gap for women is higher than the national average (8 years), but lower than the national city average (10.5).
- For men, the gap increased from 9.5 years in 2024 to 9.7 years in 2025. However, this was below the national city average of 10 years and the national average of 10.4 years in 2025.

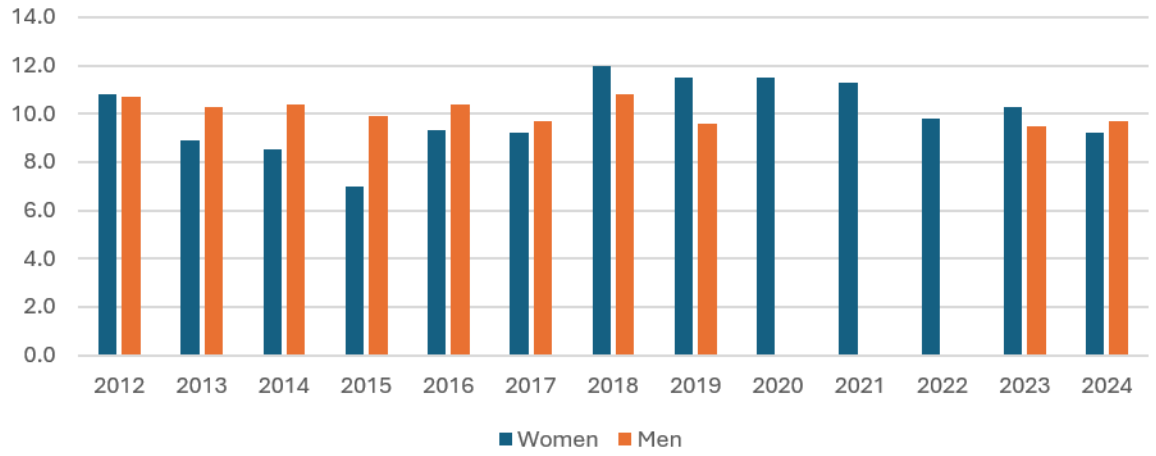

Figure 27 - Life Expectancy Gap (Years difference between most and least deprived wards).

Source: Public Health Outcomes Framework; Office for Health Improvement and Disparities

Physical activity rates fell, by a significant 6.8 percentage points from 2024 to 2025, with 73.5% of residents aged over 19 physically active in 2025. However, Cambridge has the fifth highest physical activity rate of all 55 English cities, and the Cambridge physical activity rate was above the national average (68.0%)[xv].

Non-Updated Measures

- Census figures – non-UK born residents, non-White ethnic group residents, population growth, residents with disability, working age residents
- Income inequality
- Avoidable mortality rate
- Low and unskilled employment rate

Economy

Business & Enterprise

Narrative

This lens looks at data on the experience and performance of businesses and entrepreneurs in Cambridge. It takes into consideration business competitiveness and productivity, business enterprise, business infrastructure and property, alongside key economic drivers more specific to Cambridge.

The proportion of businesses classed as **high growth** in Cambridge increased from 0.75% to 0.93% from 2023 to 2024. Cambridge has the second highest rate of high growth businesses of all English cities after only Oxford. The Cambridge rate is significantly above the national city average (0.53%) and the national average (0.50%)[xvi].

High turnover businesses as a proportion of all businesses in Cambridge increased again from 11.6% in 2024 to 12.3% in 2025. This is above the national city (11.8%) and overall national (11.5%) averages. This represents a continued strong post-Covid performance for Cambridge.

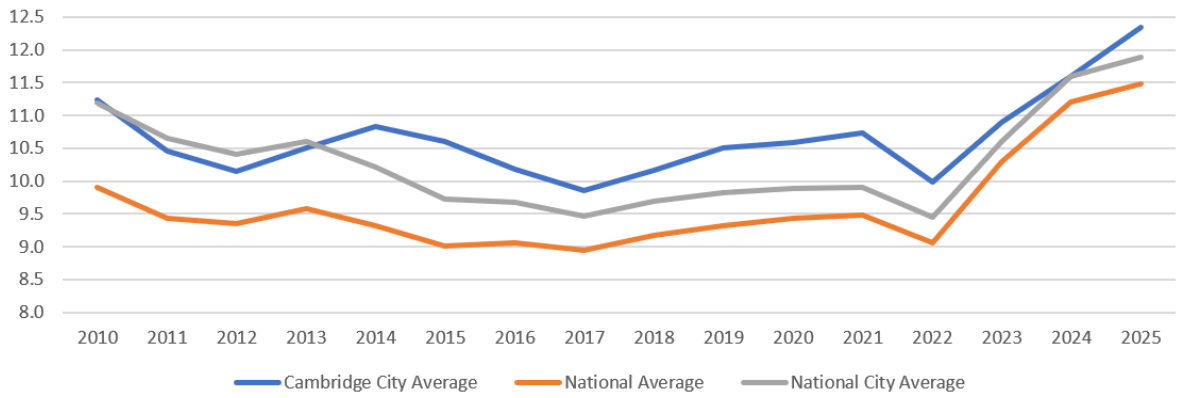

Figure 28 - High Turnover Businesses (% of total businesses).

Source: UK Business Counts; Office for National Statistics

Cambridge has the third highest rate of employment in **Research and Development (R&D) intensive industries** out of 55 cities in England, below only Reading and Aldershot. 14.1% of employees in the city were employed in these industries in 2024, increasing from 11.5% in 2023. This was nearly double the national average (7.5%) and national city average (7.7%).

However, analysis by the Centre for Business Research (CBR) suggests that the challenging macroeconomic backdrop has had some impact on Greater Cambridge businesses. CBR's analysis of employment data for 5,5000 companies in the area

suggests that there was slowdown in overall employment growth in Greater Cambridge from 4.5% in 2023/24 to 0.7% in 2024/25. The slowdown was sharper for knowledge intensive companies from 4.8% employment growth in 2023/24 to 0.1% in 2024/25.

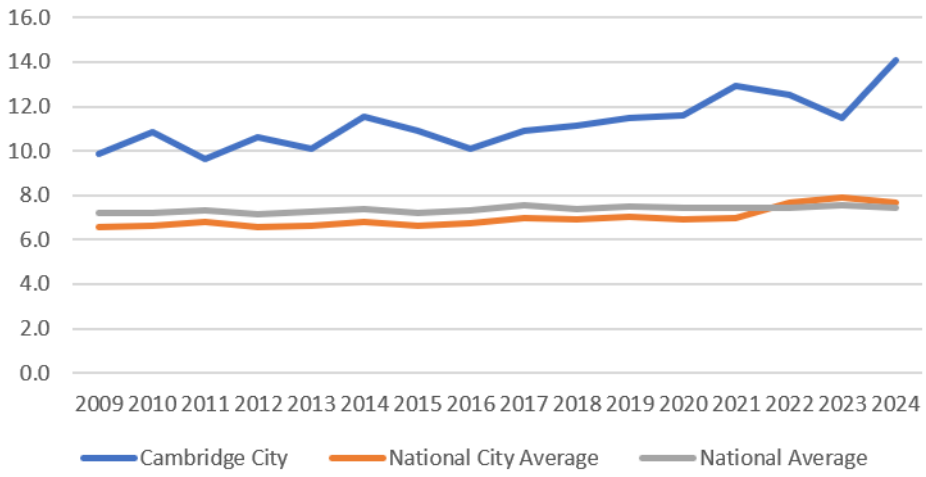

Figure 29 - Employees in R&D Intensive Industries (% of total employees).

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey; Office for National Statistics

Employment in tourism industries fell from 10.5% in 2023 to 9.8% in 2025 but remains above the national city average of 9.5%[xvii]. Despite a decrease in tourism employment share, Cambridge has continued to attract more tourists. The rolling average number of **overnight international visitors** increased by 35,000 from 444,000 in 2023 to 479,000 in 2024. While not as high as some pre-Covid figures, this represents a continued recovery[xviii].

Cambridge's **start-up rate** improved slightly from 10.2% in 2023 to 10.3% in 2024. However, Cambridge's rate remains below the national city (10.6%) and overall national (11.2%) averages. However, the **proportion of start-ups surviving for 3 years** decreased notably from 62.2% in 2023 to 54.3% in 2024 but still remains marginally above national (53.2%) and city averages (53.8%)[xix].

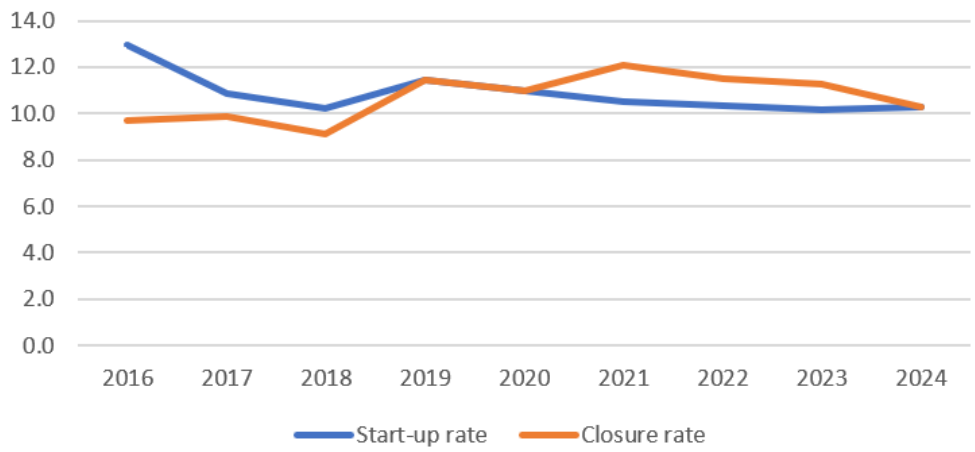

Figure 30 - Business Start-Up and Closure Rate (% of businesses).

Source: ONS Business Demography; Office for National Statistics

The **business closure rate** decreased by 1 percentage point, from 11.3% in 2023 to 10.3% in 2024, in a continued post-COVID reduction in closures. However, this was higher than the national city average (9.6%) and the national average (9.8%).

Relative commercial property costs rose slightly from 2024 to 2025, though still remain below 2010s rates. Property in Cambridge now costs roughly 137.3% of the national average.

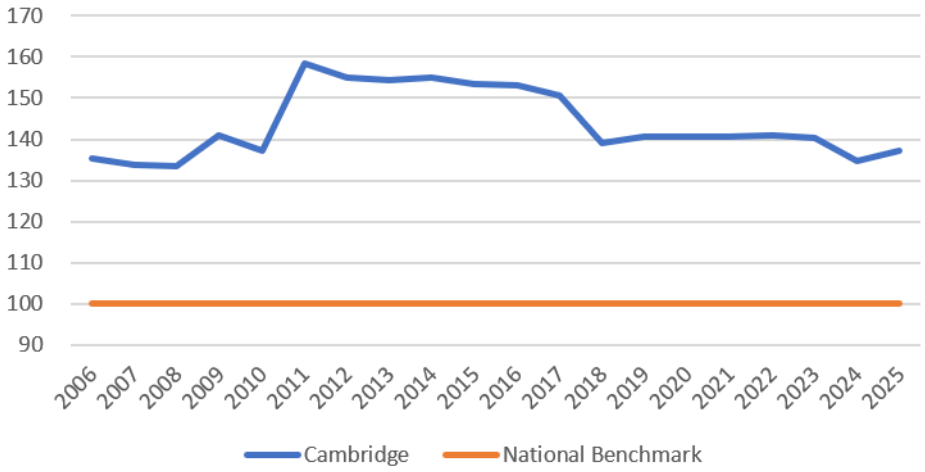

Figure 31 - Relative Property Costs (% of national average).

Source: Non-Domestic Rating: Stock of Properties Collection; HM Revenue and Customs & Valuation Office Agency

Gigabit broadband coverage remained largely static between 2024 and 2025, increasing from 94.0% to 94.1%. This follows extremely rapid rollout between 2019 and 2022, where coverage increased from 6.0% to 9.0%. The current figure for Cambridge is above national city (92.4%) and overall national (85.9%) averages[xx].

Non-Updated Measures

- Available lab space
- Patent filings
- Productivity per capita
- Commercial floorspace delivery
- GVA growth
- Night-time economy workforce
- Scientific publications and patent filings
- City Centre footfall

Workforce & Jobs

Narrative

This lens examines labour market conditions, and the experience of people working in the city. Key metrics include job opportunities, earnings and pay, workforce skills and training, and job quality.

Cambridge's workforce is one of the most highly skilled in the country, reflecting the skills needs of Cambridge's education sector and its knowledge-intensive industries. 70.1% of Cambridge's workforce were employed in **'high-skill' occupations**, which was the third highest out of 55 cities in England. Only Oxford and Brighton had a higher proportion of high-skilled employment.

However, the 2025 figure in Cambridge was significantly below the peak in 2024, when 84.7% of employees were in high-skilled occupations. This perhaps suggests that the sharp increase in 2024 was not reflective of the overall trend. The percentage for Cambridge in 2025 is still significantly above the national city (57.0%) and overall national (61.9%) averages. Only Oxford and Brighton had a higher percentage amongst all English cities.

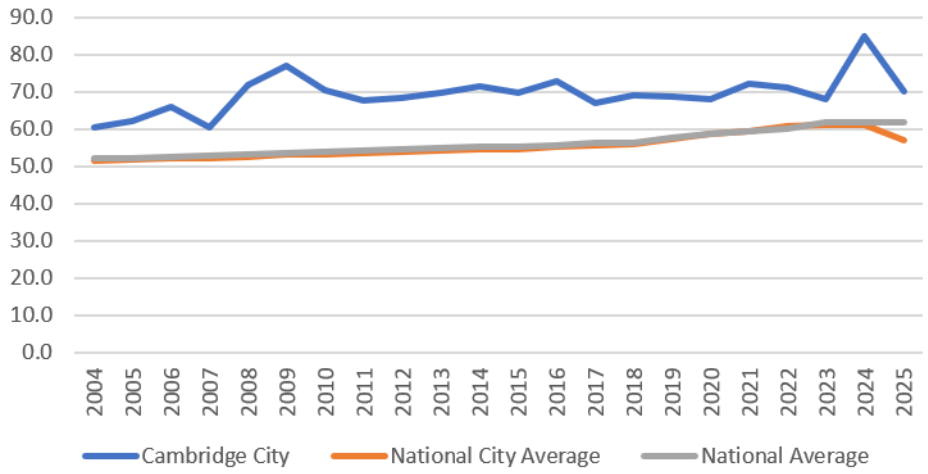

Figure 32 - Workforce in 'High-Skill' Occupations (%).

Source: Annual Population Survey; Office for National Statistics

Apprenticeship starts have decreased from a peak of 515 starts per 100,000 adult residents in 2024 to 320 in 2025. This is significantly below both the national average and national city averages. The proportion of the **workforce receiving job-related training** in the last 13 weeks has increased from a 2024 low of 12.7% to 20.2% in 2025. This is above the national city (19.1%) and overall national (19.3%) averages.

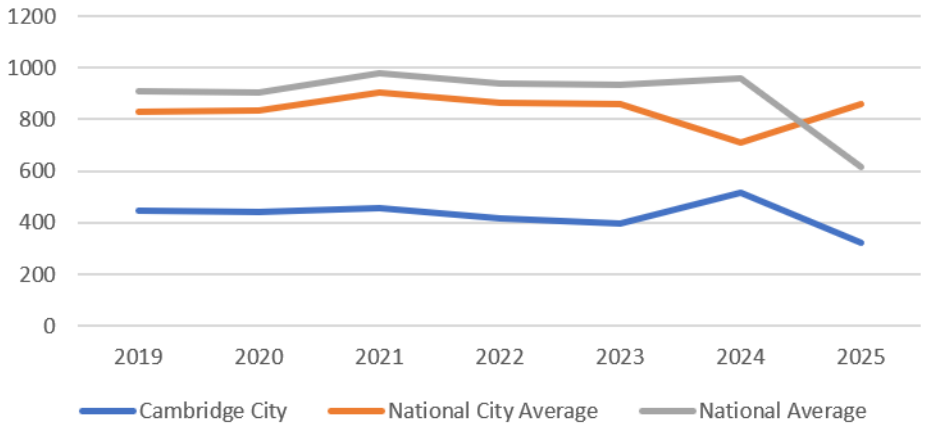

Figure 33 - Apprenticeships Starts (per 100,000 adult residents).

Source: Explore Education Statistics; Department for Education

The **median full-time pay** in real terms increased by £9 per week from £625.50 per week in 2024 to £634.90 per week in 2025. This was significantly above the national city average (£532.70) and national average (£555.50) in 2025. The **median part-time pay** in real terms increased also, by £7.61 per week from £223.60 per week in 2024 to £231.2 per week in 2025.

The overall trends show that full-time earnings in Cambridge have consistently been significantly above national averages since 2008, while part-time earnings have remained closer to comparators.

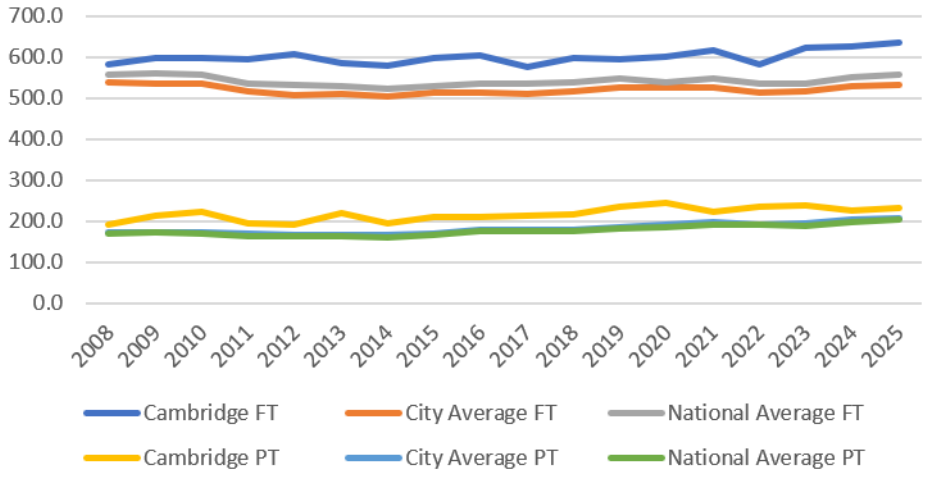

Figure 34 - Median Wages (Weekly £, normalised to 2022).

Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings; Office for National Statistics

After a steady reduction from 2014-2022, the proportion of **employees in low pay** in Cambridge has fluctuated over the past four years. Having been above 9% in 2023 and

2024, 6.6% of employees in Cambridge were in low pay in 2025. This is less than half the overall national rate (14.8%).

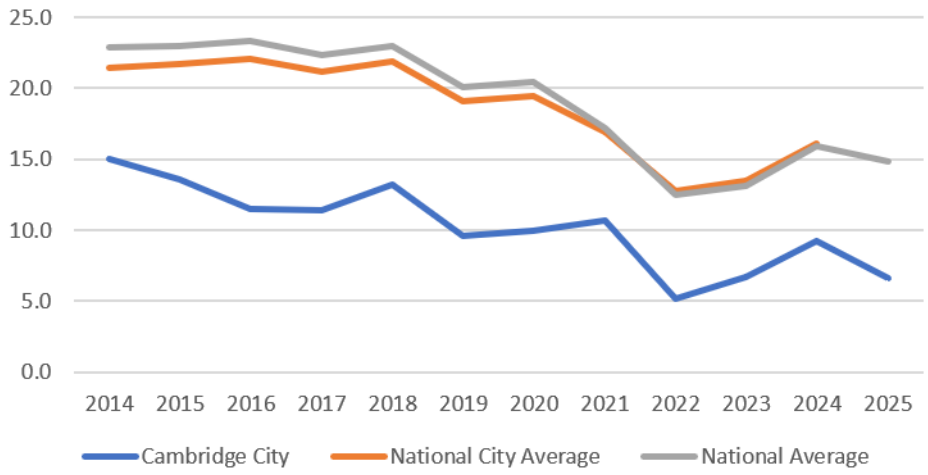

Figure 35 - Employees in Low Pay (% of employees).

Source: Number and Proportion of Employee Jobs with Hourly Pay Below the Living Wage; Office for National Statistics

Pay inequality has also reduced from 2024 to 2025. Workers at the 80th percentile of pay earned 2.1 times what workers at the 20th percentile earned in 2025, compared to 2.3 in 2024. This is above the national city average, of 1.99, but below the overall national average of 2.09[xxi].

Non-Updated Measures

- Job vacancies (online)
- Workforce in insecure employment
- Workforce receiving in-work universal credit
- Total employees

Appendix 1: Headline Data

Environment

Indicator	Measure Units	Date of most recent Measure	Change from previous measure	Cambridge City	National average	National City Av.	Previous Measure
Air pollution (PM2.5 concentrations)	Average annual population-weighted concentrations (ugm-3)	2024	0%	7.4%	7.1%	6.9%	7.4%
Air pollution mortality	As a proportion of mortality (%)	2024	-0.1%	5.5%	5.3%	5.2%	5.6%
Energy consumption	Per 1,000 residents (ktoe)	2023	-1%	1.36	1.68	1.45	1.37
EPC registrations C+	Proportion of domestic and non-domestic EPC registrations (%)	2025	3%	70%	64%	65%	67%
Killed or seriously injured road traffic casualties	Per 10,000 residents	2023	0.00	4.3	4.3		4.3
Renewables (Solar PV) capacity	Installed capacity (MW per 100 sq km)	2024	4.18	44.7	14.0	23.46	40.5
Waste footprint	**Local authority collected waste per 1,000 residents (tonnes)**	2025	-3.00	357	429.09		360
Waste recycling rate	Proportion of local authority collected waste recycled (%)	2025	0.7%	48	41		47.3
EV charging points	Per 100 licensed EVs	2025	0.90	10	3	4.43	9.3
Greenhouse gas emissions	tCO2e per resident	2024	0.00	3.6	5.1	4.0	3.6

Indicator	Type	Measure Units	Date of most recent Measure	Change from previous measure	Measure	Previous Measure
Water pollution (storm overflows)		Duration of discharged storm overflows (hours)	2025	202.43	516.43	314
Water levels	Summer Average	Annual average level (m)	2025	-0.03	0.66	0.68
	Rest of Year			0.03	0.71	0.68
	Typical High			0	0.74	0.74
	Typical Low			0	0.64	0.64
Greenhouse gas emissions by source	Agriculture	tCO2e per resident	2024	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Commercial			-0.1	0.7	0.8
	Domestic			0.0	0.9	0.9
	Industry			0.1	0.3	0.2
	Public Sector			0.1	0.6	0.5
	Transport			0.0	0.6	0.6
	Waste Management			0.0	0.4	0.4
Trips into the City	Buses, Pedestrians & Pedal Cycles	Daily trips (through Cambridge radial cordon)	2024	-75	13997	14072
	Cars and Motorcycles			3878	161490	157612
	HGVs and LGVs			-700	27960	28660

Society

Indicator	Measure Units	Date of most recent Measure	Change from previous measure	Cambridge City	National average	National City Average	Previous Measure
Life expectancy at birth (Females)			0.5	84.5	83.5	82.8	84
Life expectancy at birth (Males)	Years (3-year average)	2025	0.7	81.3	79.7	78.8	80.6
Life expectancy inequality (Females)	Years difference, at		-1.1	9.2	8.0	10.5	10.3
Life expectancy inequality (Males)	birth (2-year average)	2024	0.2	9.7	10.4	10.0	9.5
Residents educated to NVQ3+	As a proportion of working age residents (%)	2025	-3.9%	75.9%	68.6%	65.2%	79.8%
Participation rates post-18	Percentage of pupils entering a sustained education, apprenticeship or employment destination (%)	2022	3.6%	89.6%	82.6%	82.0%	84.2%
Gender pay gap	Difference, full-time pay (%)	2025	-7.2%	10.8%	13.4%	13.0%	18.0%
Physical activity rates	As a proportion of residents (aged 19+, %)	2025	-6.8%	73.5%	68.0%	66.1%	80.3%
Disability employment rate	As a proportion of working age residents with a long-term health problem or disability (%)		28.9%	78.2%	56.4%	55.9%	49.3%
Non-Disability Average		2025		75.0%			77.1%
Ethnic group employment rate		2025	-3.4%	73.4%	69.7%	69.5%	73.4%

Non-Ethnic Group Average	As a proportion of working age residents (%)	74.8	70.2%

Indicator	Measure Units	Date of most recent Measure	Change from previous measure	Cambridge City	National average	National City Average	Previous Measure
Crime rate	Police-recorded offences (per 1,000 residents)	2024	-6.0	101.6		95.6	107.6
Re-offending rates	As a proportion of offenders (%)	2024	4.6%	37.3	28.1	29.8	32.7
Economic activity rate	As a proportion of working age residents (%)	2025	2.0%	76.8%	79.0%	78.7%	74.8%
Economically inactive not wanting a job	As a proportion of working age economically inactive (%)	2025	6.2%	84.4%	79.7%	78.6%	78.2%
Employment rate	As a proportion of working age residents (%)	2025	4.6%	74.8%	75.6%	75.4%	70.2%
Gross disposable household income	Per resident, real terms (£, 2020 prices)	2023	£271	£25,834	£25,150	£21,722	£25,563
Unemployment rate	Including hidden unemployed, as a proportion of working age economically active (%)	2025	-5.4%	9.2%	9.7%		14.5%
Child poverty	As a proportion of child residents (%)	2025	0.1%	11.6%	19.3%	22.0%	11.5%
Homeless or threatened with homelessness	Assessed households, per 1,000 households	2025	14.1	17.5	13.6	15.6	14.1 (2022)
Rough sleeping	Individuals verified as sleeping rough in Cambridge	2026	-3.0	259.0			262
Housing delivery	Delivery per 1,000 existing dwellings	2025	4.8	9.1	8.1	7.5	4.3
Housing affordability	Annual median house price - pay ratio	2025	-0.5	10.8	7.6	7.0	11.3

Housing affordability (low-earners)	Annual lower quartile (LQ) house price - pay ratio	2025	-0.86	11.2	6.8	7.1	12.1
Affordable housing delivery	Delivery per 10,000 residents	2025	-50.9	123.2			174.1
Citizens Advice crisis support	Support provided per 1,000 residents	2025	-1.3	4.8			6.1

Indicator	Type	Measure Units	Date of most recent Measure	Change from previous measure	Measure	Previous Measure	Other
VCS organisations	Micro-sized (0 to 9 employees)	Non-profit and mutual association businesses	2025	-10	380	390	
	Small (10 to 49)			5	155	150	
	Medium-sized (50 to 249)			0	100	100	
	Large (250+)			0	20	20	
Housing by tenure	Owned Outright	Homes, 000s	2024	0.2	14.4	14.2	
	Owned with Mortgage or Loan			0.1	12.4	12.3	
	Private Rent			0.0	18.3	18.3	
	Social Rent			0.1	13.0	12.93035714	
Deprivation domain ranking	Overall	Measure: Relative to other cities in England **(1 = least deprived, out of 55 Cities)**	2025	0	3	3 (2019)	255
	Income			-2	2	4 (2019)	260
	Employment			-3	1	4 (2019)	279
	Education, Skills and Training			0	1	1 (2019)	270
	Health and Disability			0	3	3 (2019)	237
	Crime	Other: Relative to other Local Authorities in England **(1 = most deprived,**		-8	15	23 (2019)	126
	Housing and Services			-39	6	45 (2019)	263
	Living Environment			-4	42	46 (2019)	97

		out of 296 Local Authorites)					
Attainment and attainment gaps at ages 16 and 19	FSM eligible (at 16, GCSE)	Proportion achieving grades 4 or above in English and maths at GCSE / Level 3 qualifications	2025	-5%	43%	38%	
	Not FSM eligible (at 16, GCSE)			-2%	78%	80%	
	FSM eligible (at 19, Level 3			2%	32%	30%	
	Not FSM eligible (at 19, Level 3)			2%	66%	64%	

Economy

Indicator	Measure Units	Date of most recent Measure	Change from previous measure	Cambridge City	National average	National City Average	Previous Measure
Workforce receiving job-related training	In the last 13 weeks, as a proportion of workforce (%)	2025	7.5%	20.2%	19.3%	19.1%	12.7%
Apprenticeship starts	Per 100,000 adult residents	2025	-195	320	615	859	515
Workforce working long working (>45) hours	As a proportion of workforce (%)	2025	-4.3%	11.3%	18.7%	16.3%	15.6%
Workforce in 'high-skill' occupations	As a proportion of workforce (%)	2025	-14.6%	70.1%	61.9%	57.0%	84.7%
Employees in 'low-pay'	As a proportion of employees (%)	2025	-2.6%	6.6%	14.8%		9.2%
Pay inequality	20th-80th percentile pay ratio (full-time workers)	2025	-0.21	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.289547
Median worker pay (full-time)	Weekly pay, real terms (£, 2015 prices)	2025	9.35	634.9	555.5	532.7	625.5079
Median worker pay (part-time)	Weekly pay, real terms (£, 2015 prices)	2025	7.61	231.2	202.1	205.9	223.62679

Indicator	Measure Units	Date of most recent Measure	Change from previous measure	Cambridge City	National average	National City Average	Previous Measure
Business start-up rate	As a proportion of businesses (%)	2024	0.1%	10.3%	11.2%	10.6%	10.2%
Business closure rate	As a proportion of businesses (%)	2024	-1.0%	10.3%	9.9%	9.6%	11.3%
High-growth businesses	As a proportion of businesses (%)	2024	0.18%	0.93%	0.53%	0.51%	0.75%
High-turnover businesses	As a proportion of businesses (%)	2025	0.7%	12.3%	11.5%	11.9%	11.6%
Independent businesses	As a proportion of businesses (%)	2025	0.9%	75.4%	86.5%	82.7%	74.5%
Start-up survival rate	Proportion of start-ups still active after 3-years (%)	2024	-7.9%	54.3%	53.2%	53.8%	62.2%
Employees in R&D-intensive industries	As a proportion of employees (%)	2024	2.6%	14.1%	7.5%	7.7%	11.5%
Employees in tourism industries	As a proportion of employees (%)	2024	-0.6%	9.8%		9.5%	10.5%
Gigabit broadband coverage	Proportion of premises covered by gigabit broadband (%)	2025	0.1%	94.1%	85.9%	92.4%	94.0%
Overnight visitors - International	Overnight visitors to Cambridge (000s, three year average)	2024	35	479			444
Relative Commercial property costs	% relative to national average benchmark	2025	3%	137%			134%

Indicator	Type	Measure Units	Date of most recent Measure	Change from previous measure (SECOND ORDER CHANGE)	Measure	Previous Measure
Contributions to GVA growth	Education, health and public admin	Annual change, real teams (£ millions, 2019 prices)	2023	3.7	18.4	14.7
	Knowledge industries			-22	-6.9	15.1
	Other industries			393.8	155.3	-238.5
Contributions to growth in employees	Education, health and public admin	Annual change in headcount in these industry types	2024	1,100	3,100	2,000
	Knowledge industries			-205	1,600	1805
	Other industries			-2410	-820	1590

[i] Annual Traffic Monitoring Reports; Cambridgeshire County Council
[ii] Active Travel Participation; Sport England
[iii] Connectivity Score, Department for Transportation
[iv] River Levels Monitor, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
[v] Cambridge City Council
[vi] Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025 Release; Office for National Statistics
[vii] Annual Population Survey; Office for National Statistics
[viii] Annual Population Survey; Office for National Statistics
[ix] Local Area Statistics; Department for Work and Pensions
[x] Housing Affordability in England and Wales; Office for National Statistics
[xi] Housing Affordability in England and Wales; Office for National Statistics
[xii] Statutory Homelessness in England; Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
[xiii] Public Health Outcomes Framework; Office for Health Improvement and Disparities
[xiv] Annual Population Survey; Office for National Statistics
[xv] Public Health Outcomes Framework; Office for Health Improvement and Disparities
[xvi] Business Demography; Office for National Statistics
[xvii] Business Register and Employment Survey; Office for National Statistics
[xviii] International Passenger Survey; Office for National Statistics
[xix] Business Demography; Office for National Statistics
[xx] Connected Nations; Ofcom
[xxi] Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings; Office for National Statistics