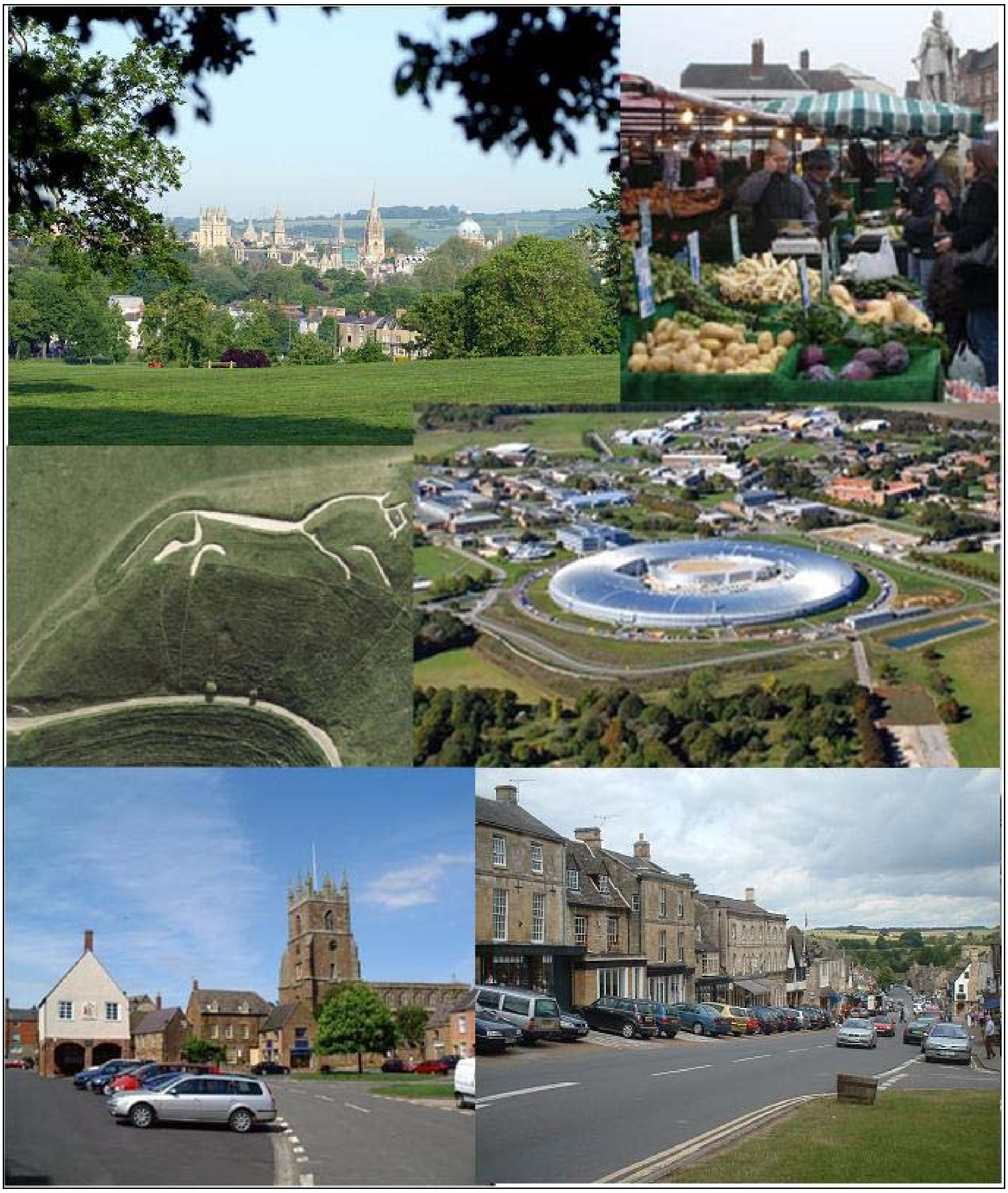
This is Oxfordshire



Oxfordshire County Council, Policy Unit
March 2011

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1 Introduction

This report paints a picture of what it's like to live in Oxfordshire. It looks at the social, economic and environmental conditions in the county using the latest data available at January 2011. It considers trends over time and compares Oxfordshire with other areas. Key trends and challenges are highlighted.

Further information can be found on the Oxfordshire Data Observatory website: www.oxfordshireobservatory.info, including profiles for a number of towns and localities in the county.

2 Summary

Oxfordshire is a place where people want to live

- 87% of residents think that Oxfordshire is a good place to live[1]. Levels of crime are low. Life expectancy in the county is above the national average. Oxfordshire has a strong voluntary sector with over 3,000 community and voluntary groups and an above average number of regular volunteers.
- Oxfordshire has a rich and varied natural environment. Our heritage includes the Blenheim Palace world heritage site, and many listed buildings and monuments. Close to one quarter of the county is in areas of outstanding natural beauty.
- Four of our district councils are classified as rural, and almost 40% of our population lives in settlements of fewer than 10,000 people.

The population is growing rapidly

- Oxfordshire has grown rapidly in recent years and major new housing developments are planned in a number of locations across the county to house continuing population growth.
- This growth will require infrastructure investment to make sure our schools, roads and public transport can continue to function well in response to increased demand.
- Despite recent growth, Oxfordshire remains the least densely populated county in the South East region.

The economy is robust

- Oxfordshire has a successful economy built around the universities and high tech industries and businesses. Education, health and other public sector organisations are major employers in the county.
- Following the recession, the county remains one of the strongest economies in the South East. Oxfordshire still has less unemployment than other parts of the country.
- The county has a wealth of highly skilled residents and high levels of employment in knowledge based industries. Oxfordshire's skills profile and above average labour productivity should continue to attract business investment.

[1] Place Survey 2008/09

But the county faces economic, social and environmental challenges

i) Economic

- Before the recession, Oxfordshire's employment growth rate was the third lowest of the South East counties. Despite improvements in labour productivity, economic growth remains constrained by labour supply.
- Unemployment doubled during the recession and there are concerns nationally that unemployment will remain high for some time. The numbers of young people who have not found jobs and are not in education or training is a particular concern.
- The high proportion of the workforce employed in the public sector in Oxfordshire make the county vulnerable to cuts in government spending.
- Some small urban areas have high levels of deprivation and have been so for many years, although the county is predominantly wealthy.
- House prices are among the highest in the country making it difficult for key workers such as nurses and teachers for example to live and work here.

iii) Social

- The proportion of older people in rural areas is growing as the population ages and younger people move to urban areas. Access to services is more difficult for people in rural communities so meeting the needs of older people is a particular concern.
- The average life expectancy in Oxfordshire is above the national average, but this varies widely across the county: the gap between life expectancy in more and less deprived areas widened slightly from 2007 to 2008.
- There is concern about increasing levels of obesity in the county. Around one quarter of the adult population is obese, and the number of children starting school who are overweight and obese is above the national average.

iii) Environmental

- Rivers form a significant feature of the Oxfordshire landscape, and around 12% of the county lies within the floodplain. Approximately 24,000 properties are at risk of flooding in Oxfordshire, with 9,000 of these at significant risk. The possibility of more severe climate change impacts, particularly flooding, is a major concern for the county.
- The county has relatively high levels of carbon emissions. Domestic energy use is above average and a heavy reliance on commuting to work makes our residents vulnerable to possible future increases in the price of oil and gas.

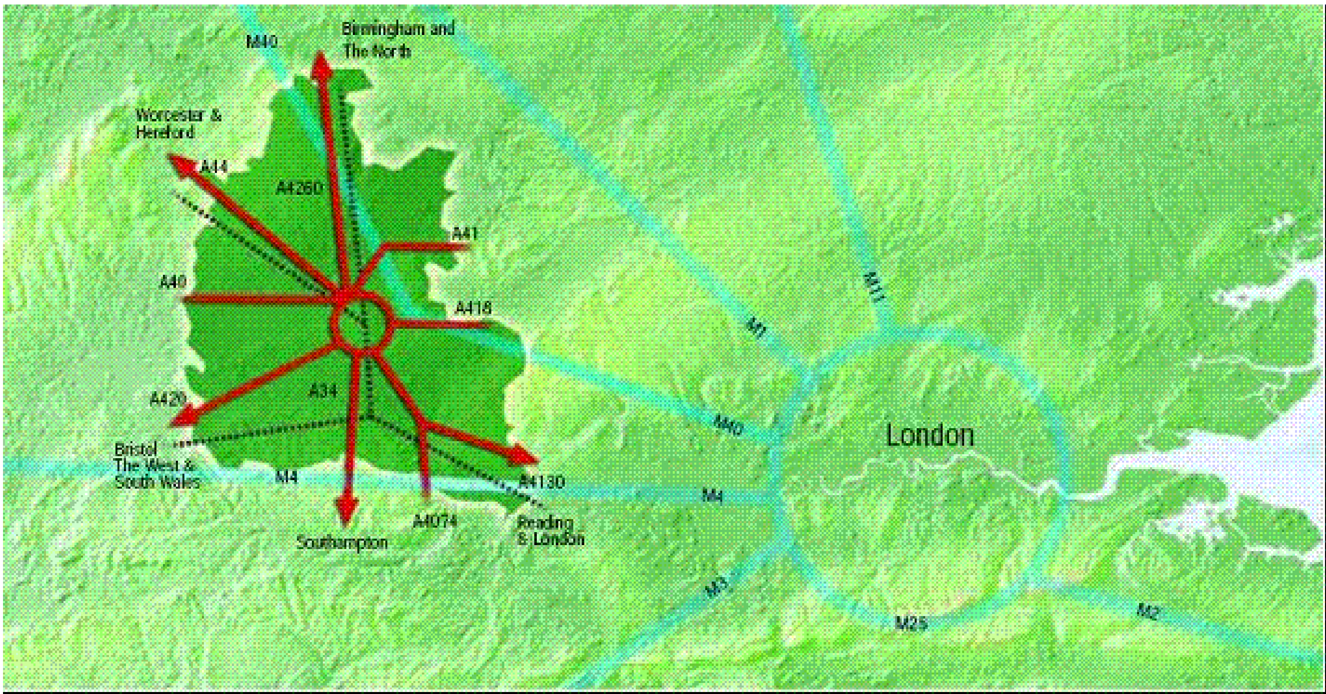
3 About Oxfordshire

3.1 Place

Oxfordshire lies at the north-western edge of the South East region and, with its central location in England, has strong links to London and the Midlands, as well as west to the Cotswolds and along the M4 corridor.

Despite recent population growth, Oxfordshire remains the least densely populated county in the South East region. Four of Oxfordshire’s districts are classed as ‘rural’ and almost 40% of our population lives in settlements of fewer than 10,000 people[2]. The largest settlement is the historic and internationally famous city of Oxford, with a population of close to 150,000 (23% of the county population).

The county has tremendous assets which make Oxfordshire a place that people like to live and work in. Our built heritage includes Blenheim Palace world heritage site and large numbers of historic buildings and sites, many within Oxford City. Our natural environment includes examples of nationally and internationally important wildlife sites, and almost one quarter of the county's area lies within one of three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Cotswolds, Chiltern Hills, North Wessex Downs).



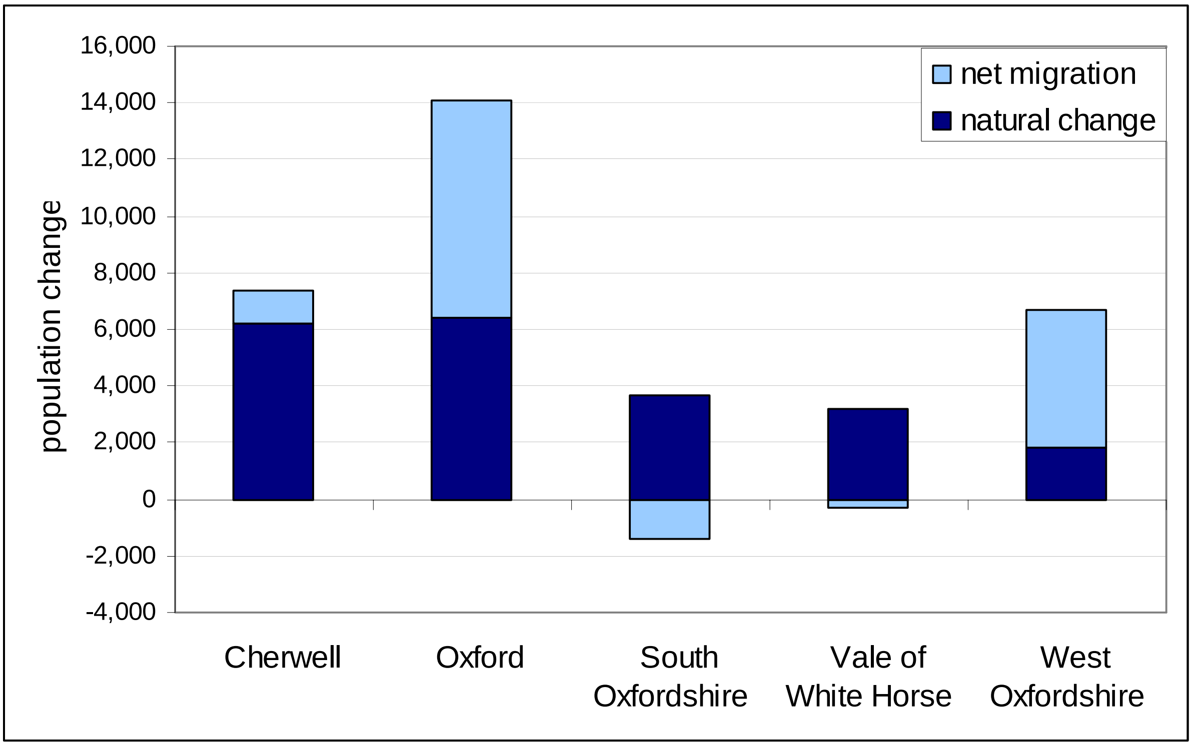
[2] Oxfordshire population and household forecasts by county, district and ward (Oxfordshire County Council, June 2010) and Office for National Statistics urban/rural classification.

3.2 People

Oxfordshire is home to around 640,000 people[3]. This is an increase of 5% since the 2001 Census, rapid growth compared to many parts of the country although Cambridgeshire and Milton Keynes both grew by over 9% during the same period. Oxford City's population has grown by an average of 0.9% per year over the past ten years (1999 to 2009) making it the ninth fastest growing city in the UK by population (England average 0.55%)[4].

Just over half of Oxfordshire's population growth (55%) since 2001 is due to natural change: there have been more births in the county each year than deaths. The remaining growth is due to people moving into Oxfordshire from elsewhere in the UK and from overseas. Oxford and West Oxfordshire have the highest proportions of net inward migration (figure 3.1).

Figure 3-1 Population change by district, 2001/02 to 2008/09



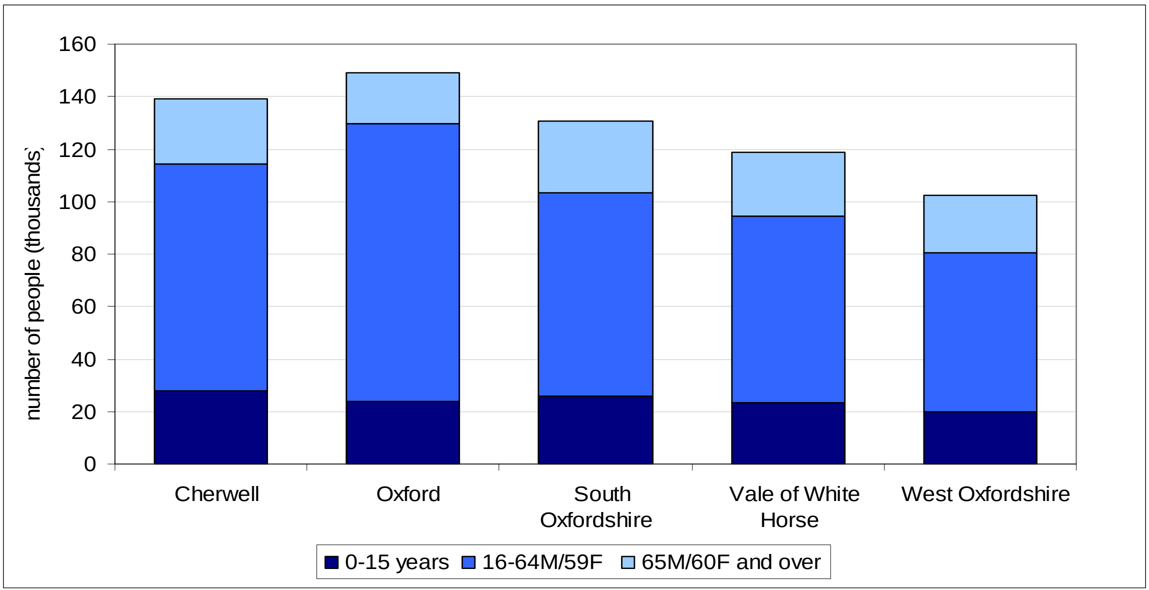
Source: Office for National Statistics, mid year estimates (revised 2010)

Each of the four rural districts has a similar age profile (figure 3.2), with just over 20% of people of pension age, similar to the national average.

Oxford City has a much higher proportion of working age residents (71%) compared to the county average (63%), partly reflecting the large number of students (42,400) studying at The University of Oxford or Oxford Brookes University.

3 Office for National Statistics, mid year estimates, July 2010
4 Centre for Cities, January 2011. Cities Outlook, 2011

Figure 3-2 Population of Oxfordshire Districts by broad age group, 2009



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2009 mid year estimates. July 2010

Projected Population

If recent trends in Oxfordshire's births, deaths and migration continue, there would be an additional 96,500 people living in the county by 2033, an increase of 16% from 2008[5]. West Oxfordshire district would see the greatest change, with an overall increase of 23% between 2008 and 2033, bringing the total population in the district to 125,700.

Table 3-1 Estimated number of people living in Oxfordshire, 2008 to 2033* (thousands)

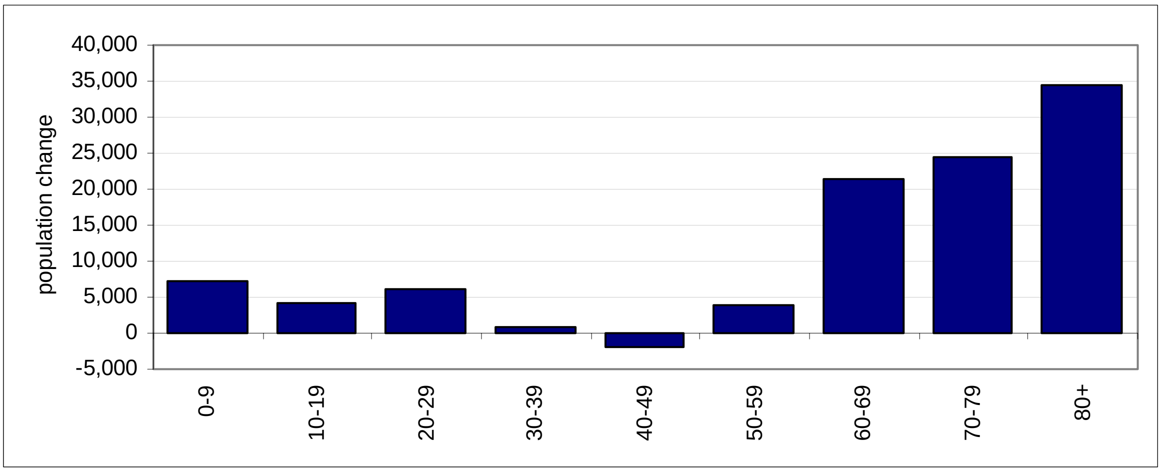
	2008	2018	2028	2033	2008 to 2018 change		2008 to 2033 change	
Oxfordshire	635.5	675	717.7	736.5	39.5	6.2%	101.0	15.9%
Cherwell	138.8	149.1	159.5	164.0	10.3	7.4%	25.2	18.2%
Oxford	146.5	153.7	161.2	164.6	7.2	4.9%	18.1	12.4%
South Oxfordshire	130.0	136.2	144.0	147.6	6.2	4.8%	17.6	13.5%
Vale of White Horse	118.1	124.0	131.3	134.6	5.9	5.0%	16.5	14.0%
West Oxfordshire	102.1	112.0	121.7	125.7	9.9	9.7%	23.6	23.1%

Source: Office for National Statistics, 2008-based subnational population projections
*based on recent trends

5 Office for National Statistics (ONS) long-term subnational population projections. The projections are trend-based and show what might happen if recent trends continue. They take no account of policy or planned developments.

A very significant trend over the next 25 years is the projected increase in the older age groups (65 years and over). The most significant increase will be in the number of people aged 85 and over. This age group is projected to more than double, from 14,200 in 2008 to 37,600 in 2033.

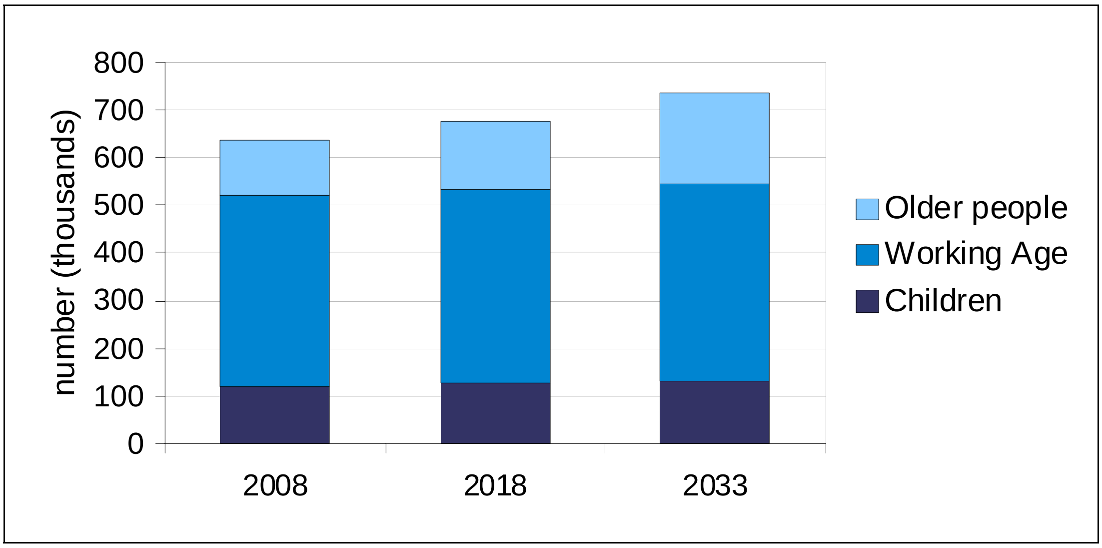
Figure 3-3 Population change by age, 2008 to 2033



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2008-based subnational population projections.

At the same time the proportion of working age people will decrease (figure 3.3): potentially there will be fewer people to provide care.

Figure 3-3 Population increase by broad age band



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2008-based subnational population projections

The number of older people in Oxfordshire is expected to increase significantly over the next 25 years. This presents opportunities as older people are more likely to be actively involved in their communities, carrying with them a wealth of knowledge and experience. However it may also increase demand for public services, including social care (both in supported accommodation and in the wider community) and health care (for conditions such as dementia for example).

3.3 Housing

Significant numbers of new homes will be needed to accommodate the population increase. Major developments are planned around Bicester (including the North West Bicester ecotown), Didcot, Banbury and Wantage, and around 8,000 new homes could be built in Oxford by 2026. Details on preferred development locations are presented in the District Council core strategies.

3.4 Ethnicity

Oxfordshire, particularly Oxford City, attracts people from all over the world. The latest estimates indicate that 8% of Oxfordshire's population are Black, Asian or Other Ethnic Minorities (BAME) and 5% are from Other White groups (the largest ethnic minority group in Oxfordshire) (Table 3.2).

Oxford City is the most ethnically diverse district, with more than one quarter (28%) of its population belonging to Other White or BAME. This compares with 10% of the population in Cherwell, South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse and 7% in West Oxfordshire.

Table 3-2 Population by ethnic group and district, 2007

	All people	White British	White Irish	Other White	Asian / Asian British	Black / Black British	Chinese or Other Chinese	Mixed
Oxfordshire	**635,500**	**543,200**	**7,100**	**33,000**	**19,000**	**9,700**	**13,100**	**10,400**
Cherwell	137,600	122,200	1,400	5,300	3,600	1,600	1,500	2,100
Oxford	151,000	108,300	2,400	14,300	9,400	4,800	7,600	4,200
South Oxfordshire	128,400	114,500	1,300	5,700	2,600	1,400	1,400	1,500
Vale of White Horse	117,000	104,300	1,200	5,100	2,100	1,100	1,700	1,500
West Oxfordshire	101,600	93,900	900	2,600	1,200	900	1,000	1200

Source: Office for National Statistics estimates of ethnicity, mid 2007 (experimental statistics)

4 World Class Economy

The UK officially emerged from recession in January 2010, although economic output and activity remain well below pre-recession levels and growth dipped below zero in the last quarter of 2010. There are still challenges ahead, but the outlook is more positive for cities like Oxford that were already strong before the recession and have both highly skilled residents and high levels of employment in knowledge based industries. In a recent study of UK cities, Oxford was only one of two cities to have more businesses starting up than closing in 2009[6].

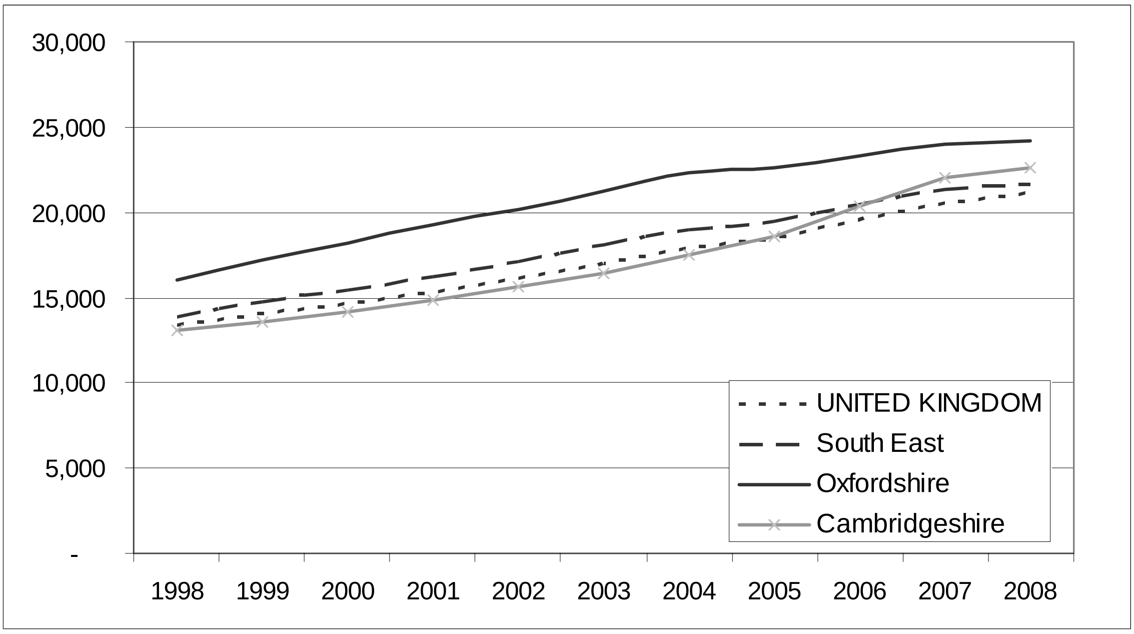
The newly established Oxfordshire City-Region Enterprise Partnership (our Local Enterprise Partnership which includes representatives from the local authorities, businesses and academia) is expected to play a central role in leading local economic priorities and growth. Its focus will be on encouraging innovation and wealth creation in the key employment sectors for the future.

Oxfordshire's contribution to the UK economy

In 2008 (the latest available data), Oxfordshire contributed £15.4 billion to the UK economy. This is 1.2% of the UK's total Gross Value Added (GVA) and slightly more than Oxfordshire's 1.0% share of the UK's working age population (mid year estimates 2008).[7]

Oxfordshire's GVA per head has increased annually during 1998 to 2008. It is consistently above the national and regional figures (figure 4.1).

Figure 4-1 GVA per head, 1998 to 2008



Source: Office for National Statistics

6 Centre for Cities: Outlook 2011
GVA is a measure of the wealth created by industry, including industry profits and salaries paid to employees.

In 2008 the largest sector in the Oxfordshire economy was business services and finance, accounting for 31 per cent of Gross Value Added (GVA). The sector covering public administration, defence, education, health and other services accounted for 27%. This sector accounted for an above average proportion of Oxfordshire's GVA from 1998 to 2008 compared with the South East average.

4.1 Employment by business sector

In 2009, Oxfordshire had 310,000 full time and part time workers[8] employed by organisations in the county. Employment in the 'Education, Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities', 'Manufacturing and Public administration' and 'Defence' is above the regional average (figure 4.2).

In comparison with similar authorities, Oxfordshire has the highest proportion of employment in 'Education', and, like Cambridgeshire, it also has a relatively high proportion in 'Professional, Scientific and Technical activities'.

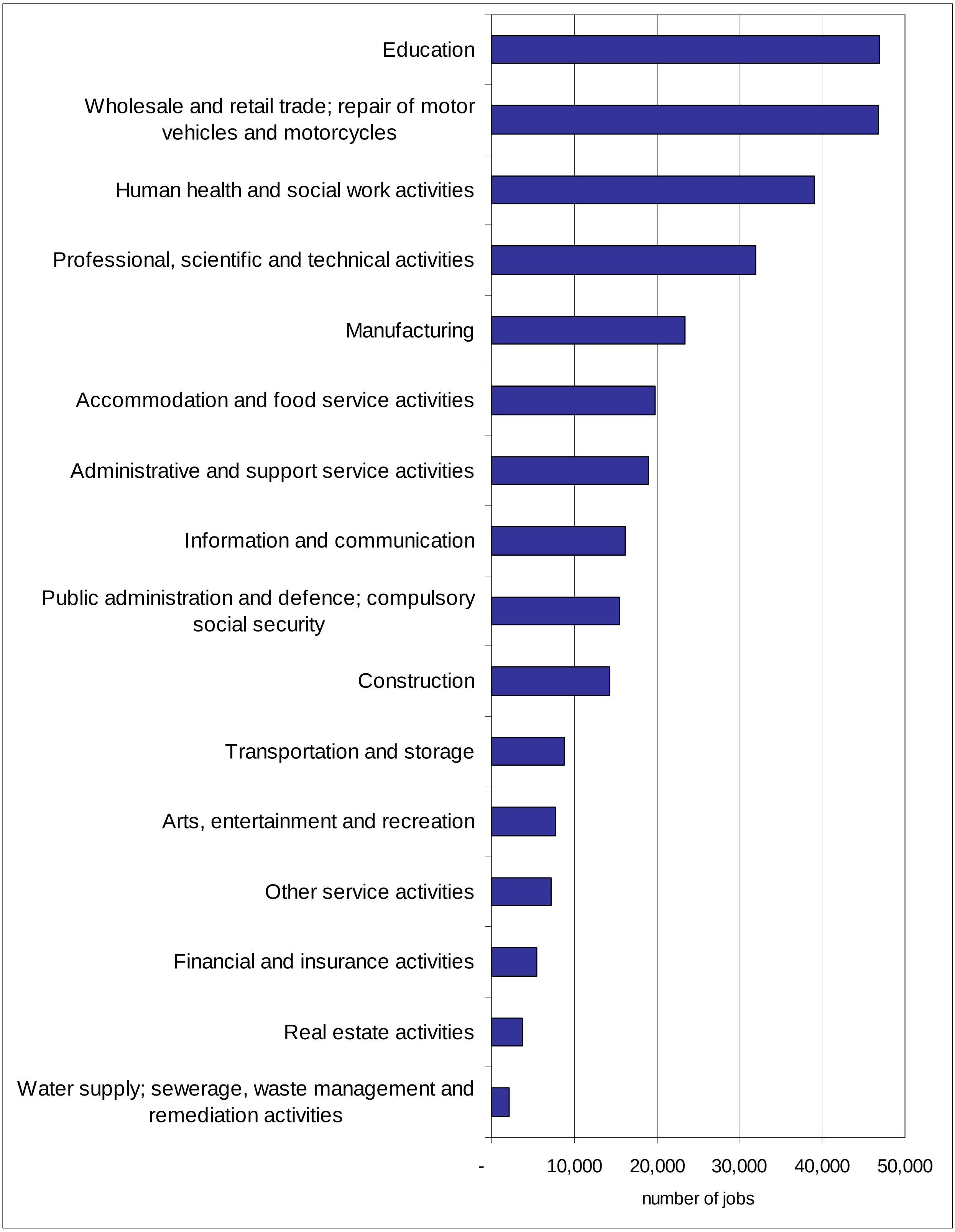
With a large proportion of jobs in the public sector, Oxfordshire could be significantly affected by the large scale public sector cuts announced in the government spending review in October 2010. The job losses that will result from this are likely to lead to a significant reduction in the contribution of the public sector to the economy.

Oxford City could be particularly susceptible, with 46% of its workforce employed in the public sector, higher than any other district in Great Britain. In addition a number of private sector job losses are likely as an indirect result of public sector cuts[9].

Through its role in improving the coordination of investment in economic development, transport and infrastructure, housing and skills in the county, the Oxfordshire City-Region Enterprise Partnership aims to support the creation of additional sustainable private sector jobs and help reduce Oxfordshire's dependency on the public sector for longer-term growth and prosperity.

[8] The ONS Business Register and Employment Survey does not count people who are self-employed
[9] Experian, Index of resilience. September 2010

Figure 4-2 Employment by broad sector, 2009



Source: Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), 2010

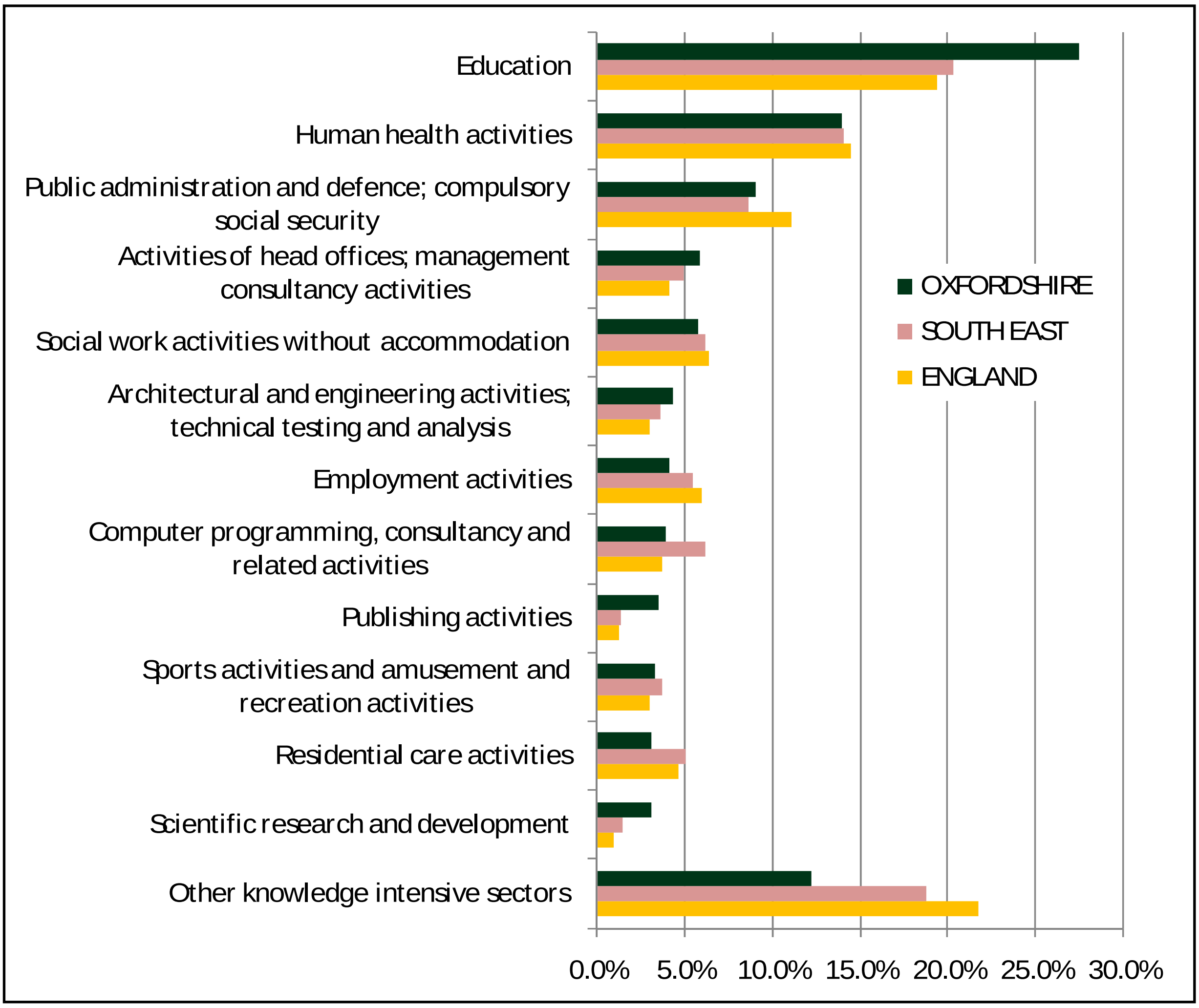
World Class Economy - Employment

The knowledge intensive sector (including professional activities, ICT, scientific research & development, education and health services) plays an important role in Oxfordshire's economy, accounting for more than half (55%) of Oxfordshire's employment (170,600 out of a total of 310,000 employees). This proportion is above the South East (50%) and England (49%) averages.

The Education sector makes up 28% of the knowledge intensive employment in Oxfordshire (figure 4.3) – above the South East (20%) and England (19%).

A key cluster of knowledge intensive businesses in Oxfordshire is located in Science Vale UK, an area of world class science and innovation located in Vale of White Horse district. Milton Park, part of the Science Vale, is one of the largest business parks in Europe with more than 150 knowledge intensive companies employing more than 6,500 people. Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, also in Science Vale UK) is the home of the Diamond Light Source and other internationally renowned science facilities.

Figure 4-3 Largest knowledge intensive business sectors (KIS), 2008 (employment as a percent of total KIS)



Source: Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), 2010

Tourism also contributes significantly to the county's economy, with an estimated total value of over £1.5 billion in 2008, up 4.4% from 2007. Although hard to measure directly, it is estimated that over 27,800 jobs were supported by tourism across the county in 2008 (including part time and seasonal work and 20,200 full time equivalent jobs). This is about 10% of the working population.[10]

More than 30% of Oxfordshire’s workforce is currently employed in the public sector, making the county particularly vulnerable to the cuts in funding announced in the Government’s comprehensive spending review in October 2010.

[10] Source: the Economic Impact of Tourism on Oxfordshire, estimates for 2008

Broadband access

Good broadband connections and mobile coverage are vital to the local economy. In 2009, the UK was ranked 66th in an international survey of broadband quality, (survey by Said Business School, 2010) and within this context, Oxfordshire compares unfavourably with many areas in the UK.

Whilst some areas in Oxfordshire are already benefiting from next generation superfast broadband, other parts of the county, particularly in rural areas, still do not have an acceptable level of standard broadband or mobile phone networks due to lack of infrastructure (table 4.1). These rural areas are also unlikely to see commercial next generation broadband services (figure 4.4)

To address this, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Economic Partnership (OEP) and the newly-formed Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) have joined forces to find a solution. They are hoping to use the county council's existing fibre-based network to get the rest of the county connected to broadband in a project called 'Oxonline'.

Table 4-1 Average speed of first generation broadband in Oxfordshire districts

Local authority	Average speed (kbps)	Ranking*
Oxford City	5,096	93
South Oxfordshire	4,994	120
West Oxfordshire	4,809	178
Cherwell	4,636	235
Vale of White Horse	4,546	271

*Out of 376 local authorities.
Source: Future Broadband Strategy for Oxfordshire, 2010. A. Wooster and H. Pickering.

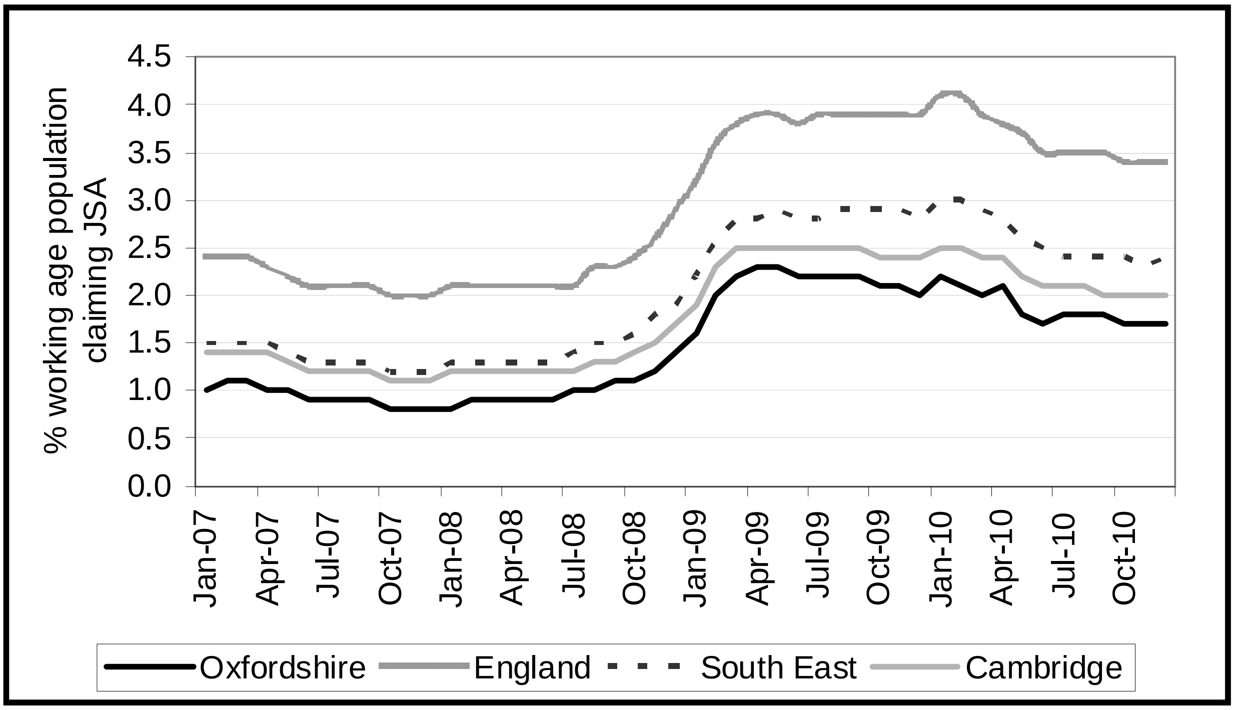
Figure 4-4 Areas unlikely to see commercial next generation broadband services

Source: Future Broadband Strategy for Oxfordshire. A. Wooster and H. Pickering, 2010

4.2 Unemployment

Increased unemployment was one of the most serious impacts of the recession in Oxfordshire. Although not as badly affected as many other areas in the country, the number of people claiming job seekers allowance (JSA) in Oxfordshire doubled during the worst of the recession. Since then the number of claimants has gradually decreased, and Oxfordshire continues to have one of the lowest JSA rates in the South East region. In December 2010 just over 7,100 people, 1.7% of the working age population, were claiming JSA in Oxfordshire (figure 4.5). This is well below the national average of 3.4%, but is still significantly above pre-recession levels.

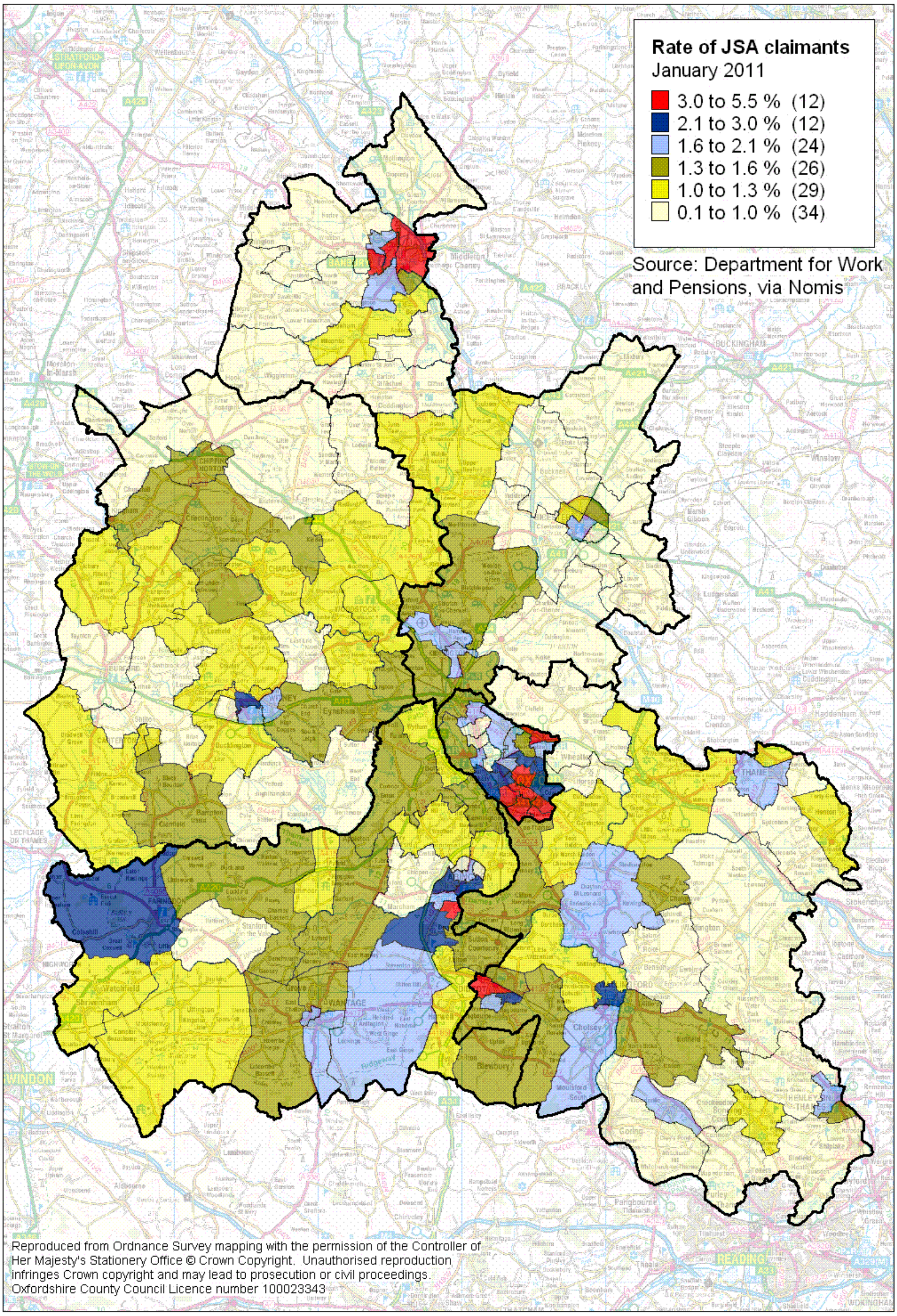
Figure 4-5 Rate of Job Seeker Allowance claimants, January 2007 to December 2010



Source: Department for Work and Pensions via Nomis.

The highest proportion of JSA claimants is in the relatively deprived areas of Oxfordshire (figure 3.6), including Blackbird Leys (5.5%), Northfield Brook (4.7%), Barton and Sandhills (4.1%) and Banbury Ruscote (4.2%). These areas also have some of the highest rates of long term unemployment.

Figure 4-6 Proportion of working age population claiming JSA by ward, December 2010



Source: Department for Work and Pensions via Nomis

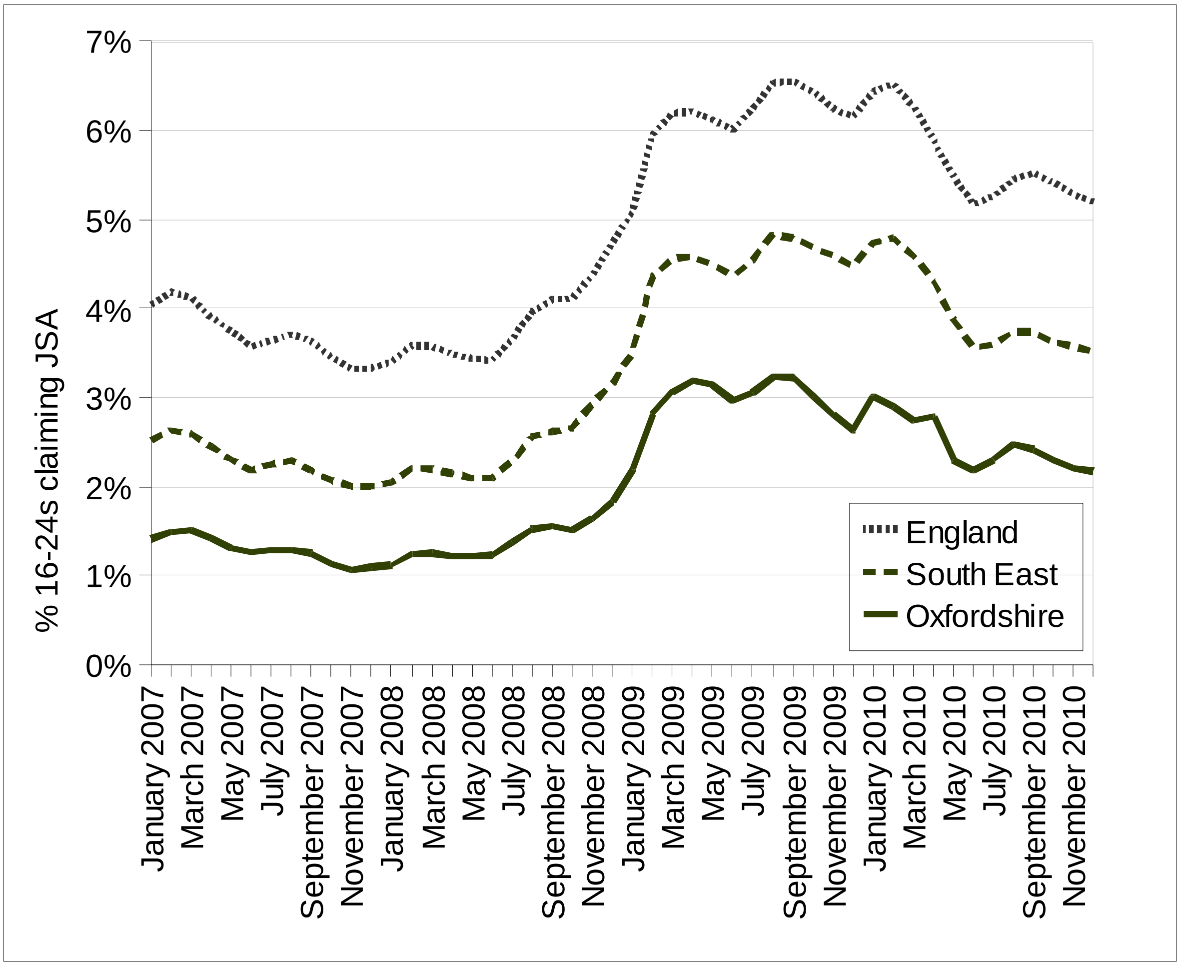
Unemployment – young people

The recession has had a disproportionate impact on young people in the county, with youth unemployment increasing significantly during 2008/09, although consistently below national and regional averages (figure 4.7).

In October 2008, 1.5% of 16-24 year olds were claiming jobseeker allowance (JSA), increasing to 3% in October 2009.

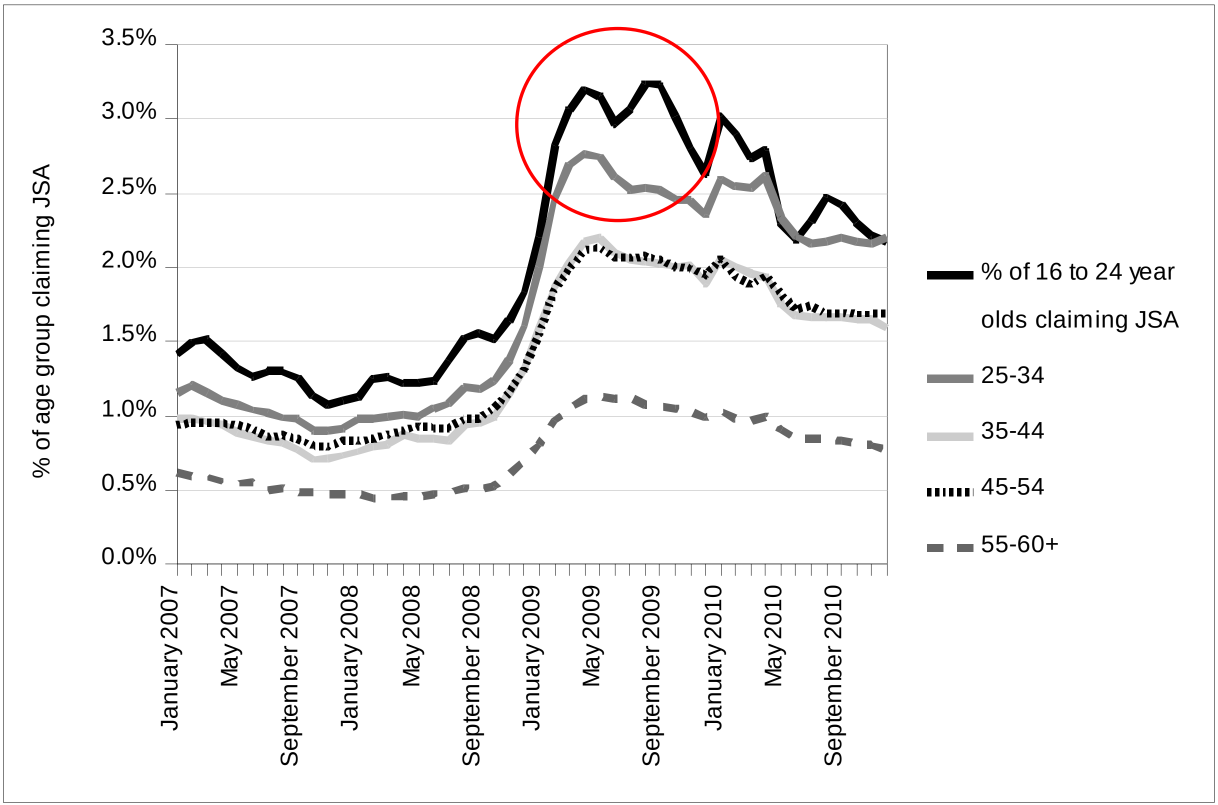
The proportion of 16-24 year olds claiming JSA is now falling (figure 4.8), but the proportion of claimants aged 20 to 24 years claiming JSA (2.5%) remains significantly higher than that of any other age group in the county.

Figure 4-7 Number of 16 to 24 year olds claiming Job Seekers Allowance, January 2007 to December 2010



Source: Department for Work and Pensions: via Nomis

Figure 4-8 Proportion of age groups claiming JSA, Jan 2007 to Dec 2010

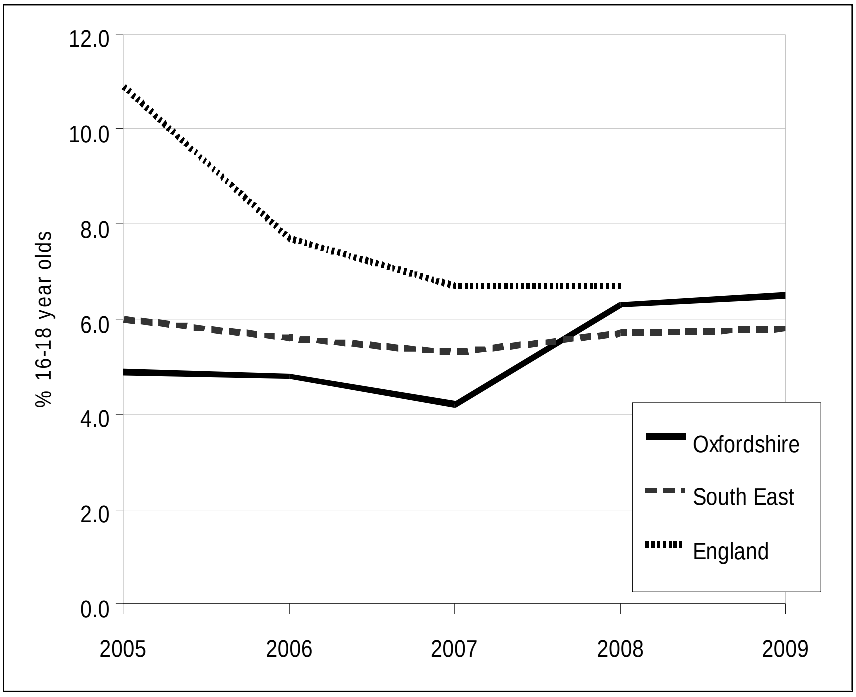


Source: Department for Work and Pensions: via Nomis

16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training

There is concern about the numbers of young people aged 16 to 18 years who are not in employment, education or training (NEET). The percentage of NEETs in Oxfordshire doubled from 2007 to 2008 to 6.3%, a much steeper increase than in much of the South East region over the same period.

Figure 4-9 Proportion of 16 to 18 year olds who are NEET, 2005 to 2009



Source: Department for Education

In November 2010, the percentage of NEETs had fallen to 6.1% of 16-18 year olds, in line with the average for England and other similar local authorities, but remaining above the regional average.

The number of 16-18 year olds in Oxfordshire not in employment, education or training (NEET) increased sharply during the recession and remains above the regional average.

The proportion of 20 to 24 year olds claiming JSA (2.5%) is significantly higher than that of any other age group in the county.

4.3 Income and house prices

Annual earnings in Oxfordshire continued to rise during the recession, to £28,848 in 2009 (median full time earnings[11]). At the same time, house prices fell from a peak of £240,000 (median value) in 2007 to £220,000 in 2009 (figure 4.10), meaning that the gap between earnings and house prices decreased from 9.2 times median salary in 2008 to 8.0 times in 2009 (figure 4.11). This is still well above the national average (6.3). Ten years ago, house prices were just over five times greater than the median full time salary.

South Oxfordshire is the most expensive area in Oxfordshire to buy houses, with house prices more than 10 times median salaries.

Oxford is the UK city with the 11th highest wages in 2010, and the second highest average price house (only London is more expensive).

Figure 4-10 Median house prices, 1997 to 2009

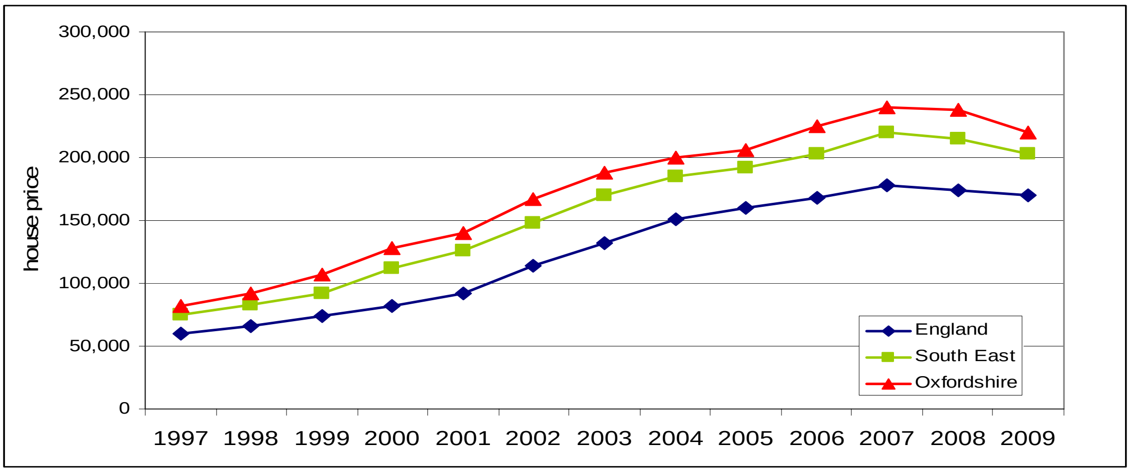
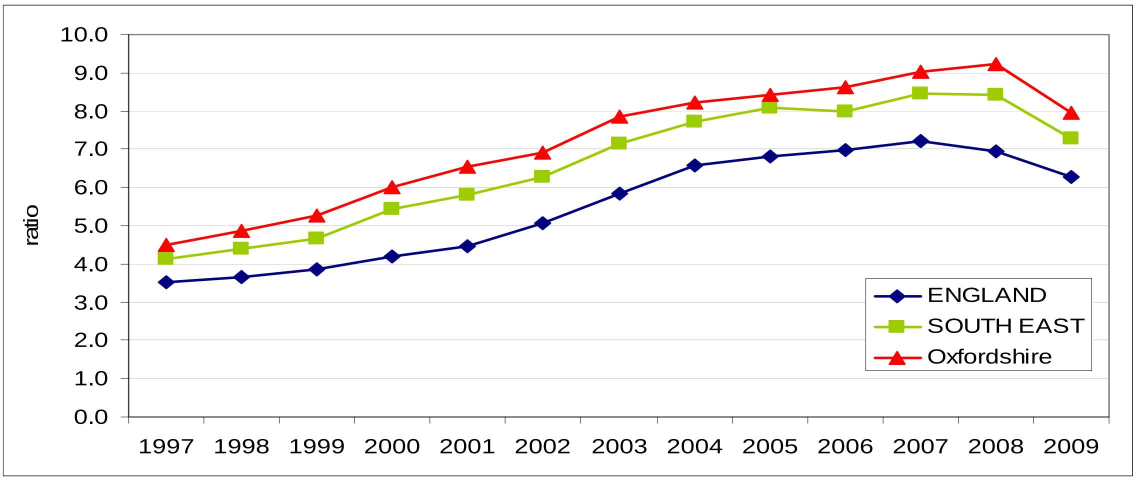


Figure 4-11 House price to income ratio, 1997 to 2009



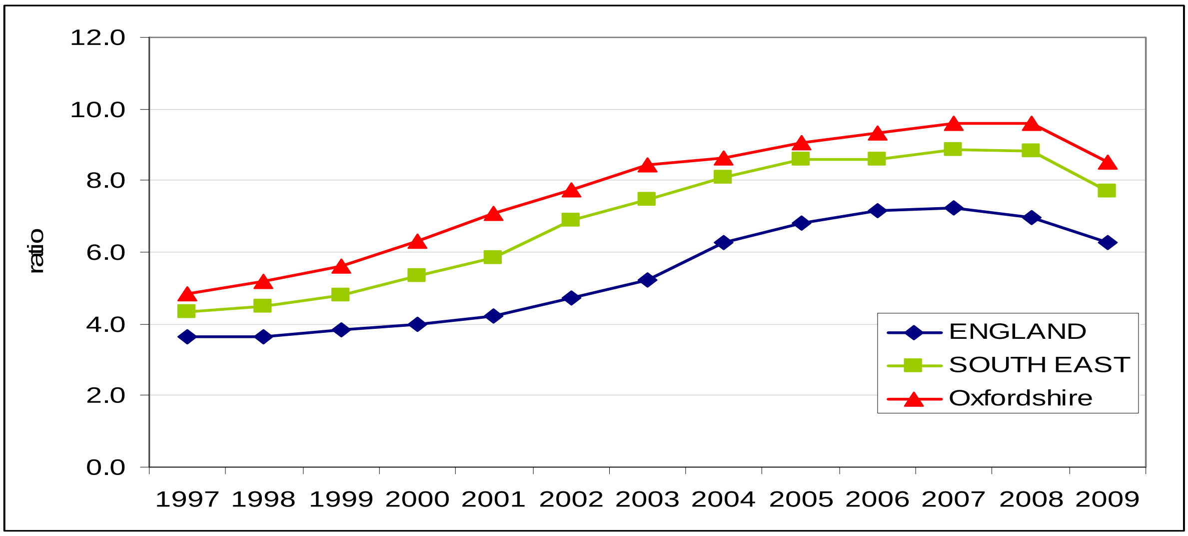
Source: Communities and Local Government, live housing tables

[11] Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings published by the Office for National Statistics

Affordable housing

The cost of the lowest quartile housing in Oxfordshire in 2009 was 8.5 times more than the lowest 25% of incomes (based on workplace earnings). Although this has decreased from a peak of 9.6 times earnings in 2007 and 2008 (reflecting the fall in house prices) it remains above the regional and national ratios.

Figure 4-12 Ratio of Lowest quartile housing to lowest quartile income



Source: Communities and Local Government, live housing tables

Affordable housing remains a key concern for Oxfordshire residents (Oxfordshire Voice survey, September 2010), and an area of high priority in Oxfordshire. It is considered to be important for quality of life by 42% of respondents to the survey and in need of improvement by 39%.

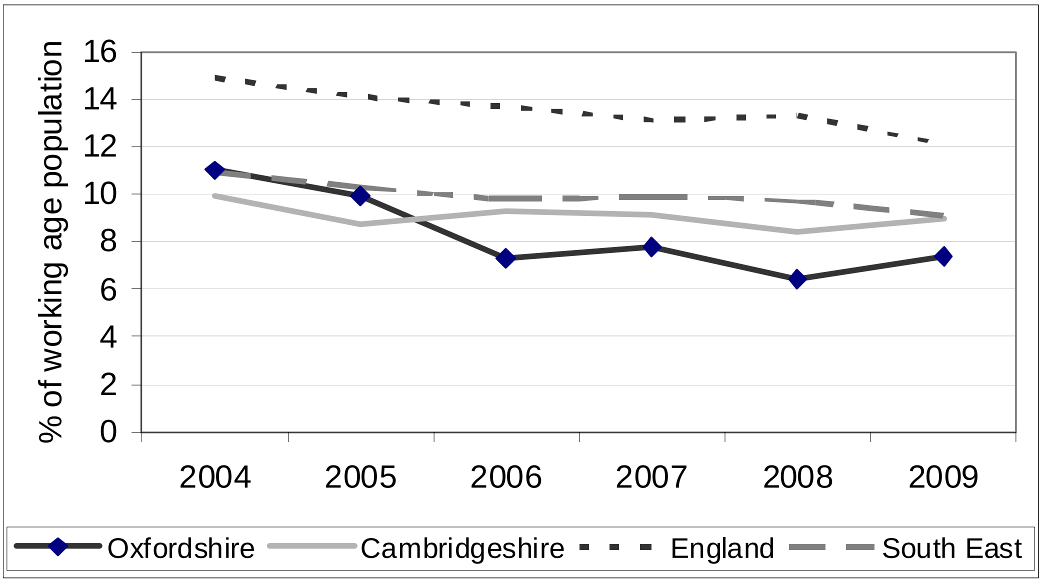
4.4 Education and Skills

More than one in three of the working age population (35%) in Oxfordshire is qualified to degree level (NVQ4), well above the national average of 30%. Oxford City has the second highest proportion of residents with NVQ4 or above of all UK cities (45.7%, highest is Cambridge, with 60% of population qualified to degree level).

56% of residents have the equivalent of two or more A levels (NVQ3), also well above the national average (49%). Over 70% of the working age population is qualified to NVQ2 level or above (5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C or equivalent).

Only 7.4% of working age people in Oxfordshire have no qualifications (figure 4.13). This is well below the national (12%) and regional (9%) averages and below averages of similar areas like Cambridgeshire (9%).

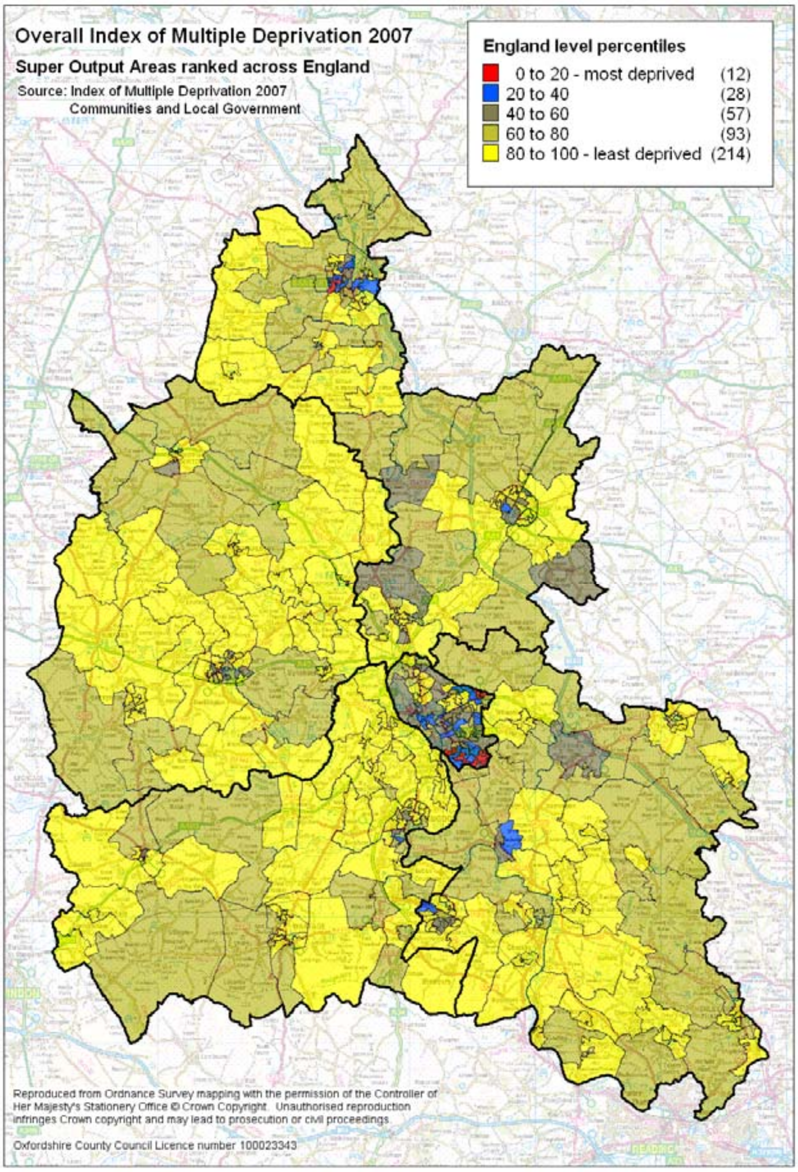
Figure 4-13 Working age residents with no qualifications



Source: Annual Population Survey via Nomis

Levels of education, skills and training vary widely across the county. Although most areas in Oxfordshire rank above average compared with other areas in the UK, there are 37 local areas in the county where levels of education, skills and training are ranked in the worst 20% of areas nationally. Thirteen of these areas are ranked in the 5% worst nationally.

Figure 4-14 Education, skills and training, Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2007



Skills

In June 2010, around one in five (21%) employers responding to an Oxfordshire skills survey said they had skills gaps.[12] This is 5% higher than a previous survey in 2008 which is in line with a growing skills gap across the South East region. This gap is particularly notable in Science Vale UK (4% above the county average) and increasingly in Oxford City (3% above county average).

[12] Oxfordshire Economic Partnership and Oxford Brookes University. Oxfordshire Employer Skills Survey, June 2010.

Oxfordshire has a higher rate of hard to fill vacancies than the average across England. Lack of people with necessary skills is cited by employers as one of the main reasons for this.

Skills gaps are greatest among sales and customer service staff (24% of employers, up from 18% in 2008), while skills gaps among technical and skilled support staff have fallen significantly.[13]

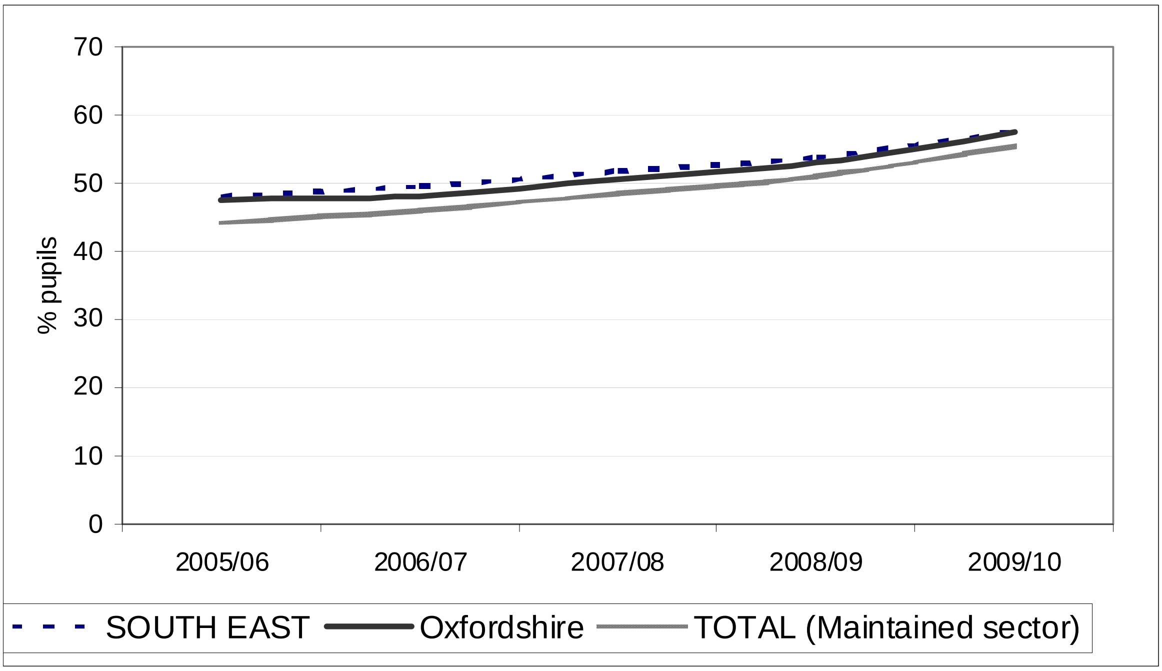
Without access to a skilled workforce, businesses will find it increasingly difficult to compete, and employment opportunities for the lowest skilled could decline. One in five employers in Oxfordshire has skills gaps.

[13] Oxfordshire Economic Partnership and Oxford Brookes University. Oxfordshire Employer Skills Survey, June 2010.

School attainment

School results in Oxfordshire improved significantly in 2010, with 57.3% of pupils gaining 5 GCSEs at A*-C grade (including English and maths) in 2009/10. This is above the national average (53.4%, all schools) and up 4.4% from 2009 (figure 4.15). Oxfordshire now compares more favourably against statistically similar local authorities such as Cambridge (58.9%) and West Berkshire (60.7%).

Figure 4-15 Percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs (including maths and English) at grade A*-C



Source: Department for children, schools and families, November 2010

Ambitions

A recent survey of children and young people in Oxfordshire aged between 11 and 16 years, found that half (52%) plan to stay at school to complete sixth form. A fifth (18%) plan to leave school after their GCSEs, and 8% want to leave as soon as possible[14].

Almost half of secondary age students intend to go to university when they leave school (46%), whilst a third (35%) want to go to college. A further third want to get a job, and 15% want to take a year off. One in ten wants to do an apprenticeship (10%), and only 11% don't know what they want to do yet. (These figures were compiled before the recent announcement of changes to university funding.)

[14] Oxfordshire Children and Young People Survey, 2009. Childwise, Report of Results, July 2009.

4.5 Travel

Traffic congestion is a concern in some areas of Oxfordshire, and was highlighted in a recent employers' survey as a disadvantage to businesses based in the county. [15] Traffic flows on the key access roads in the county show that the average journey time in the 2008/09 academic year was slightly faster than the previous year, however, just 42% of Oxfordshire residents surveyed (National Highways and Transport network satisfaction survey, 2010), said they were satisfied overall with traffic levels and congestion: only four other counties have lower levels of satisfaction with this measure.

Public transport

Results of a survey carried out in August 2010 on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council[16] show that public transport together with health services and affordable housing are the three most important aspects in making somewhere a good place to live, according to over two fifths (40%) of panellists.

Use of public transport in the county is high, and in 2009/10, more than 35 million bus journeys began in Oxfordshire. This is a higher number than recorded in all but four other county council areas.[17] The number of bus journeys originating in Oxfordshire increased by over 9% from 2001/02 to 2008/09, but fell by 2.6% from 2008/09 to 2009/10.

In 2008/09, 76% of rural households could get to a town centre within 30 minutes by public transport, up from 74% in 2007/08.[18]

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[15] Oxfordshire Employer Skills Survey, June 2010

[16] Ipsos-MORI, September 2010. Priorities for local public services. Oxfordshire County Council for Oxfordshire Voice

[17] National Indicator 177: Local bus and light rail passenger journeys originating in the authority area

[18] National Indicator 175: Access to service (definitions vary with local authority: figures are not comparable)

5 Healthy thriving communities

87% of residents think that Oxfordshire is a good place to live (based on responses to the 2008/09 Place Survey. Levels of satisfaction vary across the county (91% of people living in South Oxfordshire satisfied with their area, 83% of people in Oxford City), but are consistently above the national average (80%) and similar to or better than the South East average (83%).

Most (81%) Oxfordshire residents agreed that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well. 59% strongly feel that they belong to their neighbourhood. Those living in South Oxfordshire and West Oxfordshire were more likely to feel that they belong to their neighbourhood (64%), and those in Oxford City less so (50%). The sense of belonging to their neighbourhood increased with age from 35% of those aged 18 – 24 to 81% of those aged over 75.

Oxfordshire has a strong voluntary sector with over 3,000 community and voluntary groups and an above average number of regular volunteers. 29% of people in Oxfordshire give unpaid help to a one or more groups, clubs or organisations at least once a month, above the English average (23%) (Place Survey, 2008/09).

People generally feel safe in their local areas. Levels of crime in Oxfordshire are low, although perception of crime may not reflect this.

Oxfordshire residents enjoy an above average life expectancy, and as people live longer, the proportion of older people in the population is increasing, particularly in rural areas.

Overall levels of deprivation in Oxfordshire are low, but there are areas in Oxford City and Banbury which fall within the 20% most deprived areas in the country. In these areas, residents may have low or no wages or skills, young people may not fulfil their potential at school or residents may not have access to services or affordable housing.

5.1 Voluntary sector in Oxfordshire

The willingness for people to volunteer and to become involved in their local communities is key to the Coalition Government's 'Big Society'. Recent national data from Ipsos MORI shows the challenges around this, with three in ten adults informally volunteering on a monthly basis (down on previous years) and a quarter formally volunteering.

In Oxfordshire, we are fortunate to have a thriving voluntary sector: there are around 3,700 voluntary and community organisations in the county. Total paid employment in the sector is estimated at 27,670 jobs, and there are around 60,000 volunteers. There are a larger proportion of informal neighbourhood organisations in Oxfordshire than elsewhere across the South East region (19% compared with 11%).[19]

Education, research and training is the most common area of voluntary sector work in Oxfordshire. Other major areas include health, welfare and social care, childcare/play or youth work and supporting people with disabilities. Services provided by the voluntary sector include: information, advice and guidance (60%), advocacy (26%), education/research/training opportunities (24%) and emotional/physical support (23%).

Participating in voluntary activities

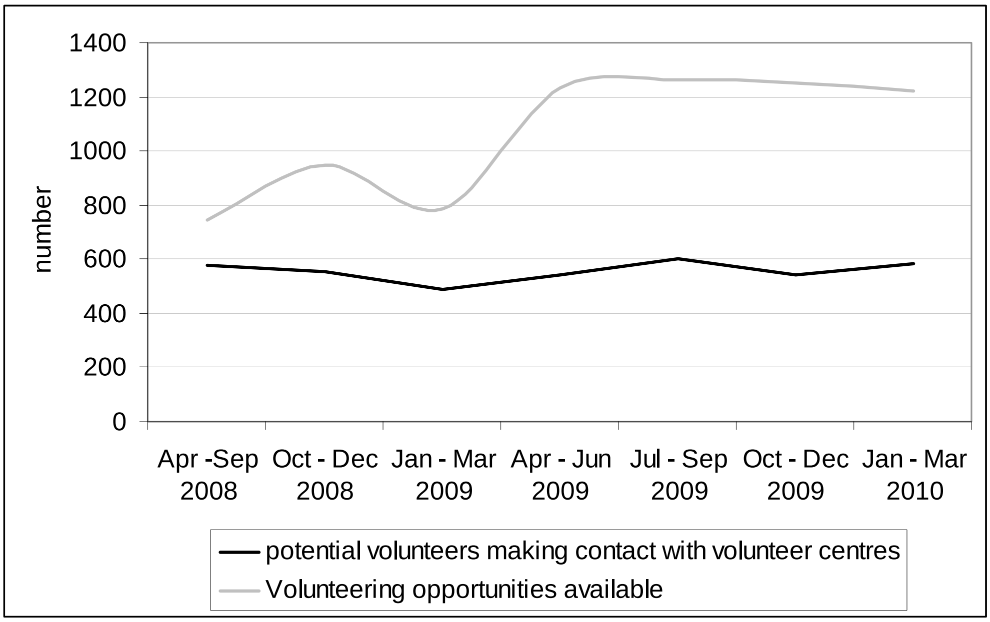
Voluntary activity and participation in social and community groups promotes social inclusion and benefits both those taking part and the recipients.

Based on responses to the Place Survey (2008/09), almost one in three Oxfordshire residents (28.6%) said that they give unpaid help to one or more groups, clubs or organisations at least once a month, above the English and regional averages (23.2% and 24.8%, respectively). Oxfordshire compares favourably with other local authorities, with just nine other county council or unitary authority areas recording higher levels of volunteering.

The number of enquiries to volunteer centres in Oxfordshire increased significantly from 2007/08 to 2008/09 (at the start of the recession) and has remained at over 500 enquiries each quarter since then. Despite the increase, there are currently many more volunteering opportunities available than there are potential volunteers (figure 5.1).

[19] RAISE (Regional Action and Involvement South East), Hidden Assets, 2009. Report by York Consulting, November 2009

Figure 5-1 Numbers of volunteers and volunteering opportunities



Source: Oxfordshire Volunteer Centres

In a recent survey, most Oxfordshire Voice[20] panellists said that they volunteer because they want to improve things or help people (66%), and half say it's because the cause is important to them (50%). Having spare time is a motivating factor for 40% of panellists.

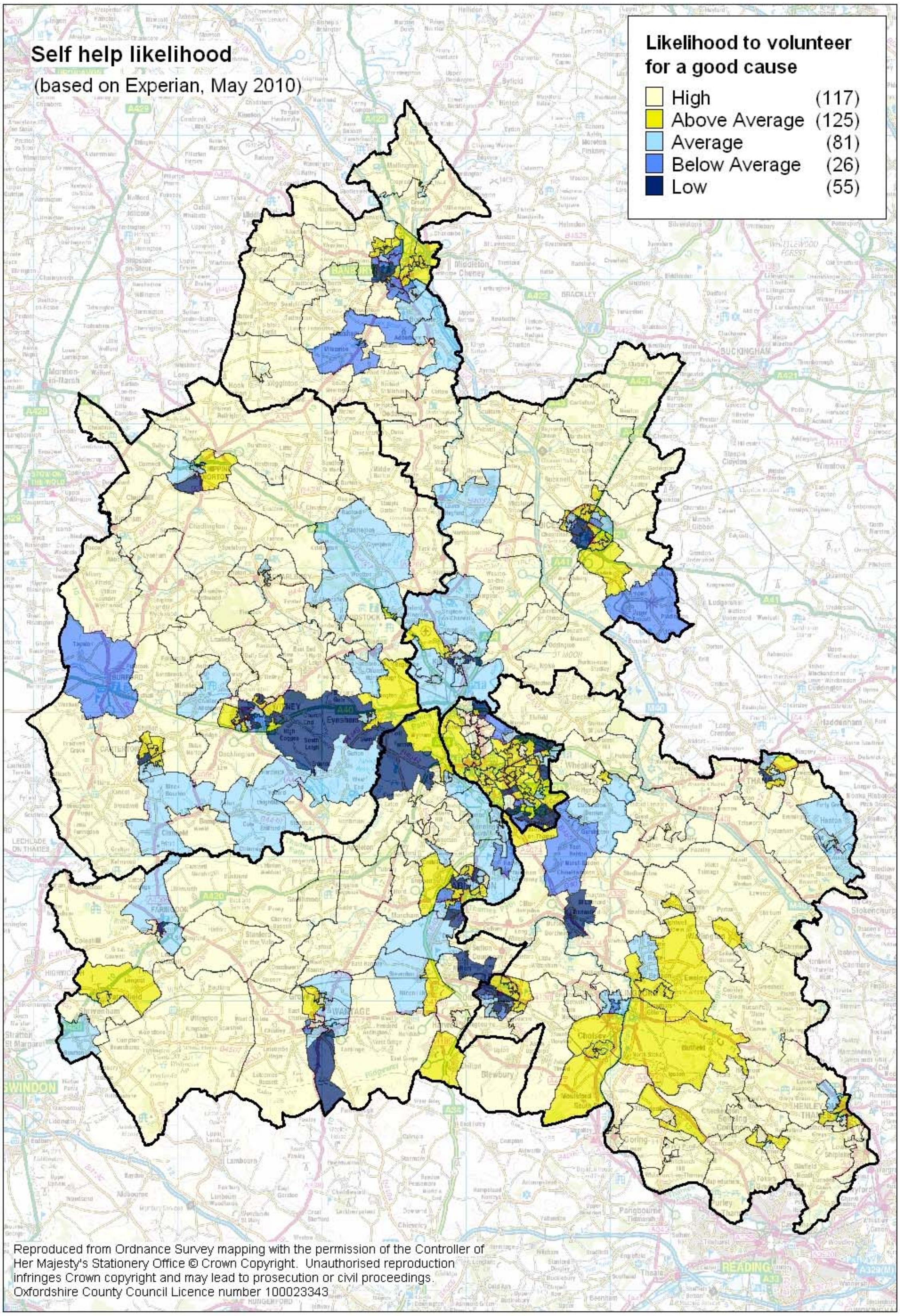
Time, or rather lack of it, is also a key factor in not volunteering, or not volunteering more: 37% of panellists say work commitments/study stops them, and 32% that they do other things with their spare time. Caring responsibilities are also an important factor, with 19% of panellists saying they have to look after their child, an elderly or ill person, rising to 28% of women and 40% of 35-55 year olds.

Likelihood to volunteer

Analysis of Mosaic Experian lifestyle groups[21] show that certain groups are more likely to volunteer than others, including residents of isolated rural communities, wealthy people living in the most sought after neighbourhoods, and successful professionals living in suburban or semi-rural homes. Lifestyle groups which are commonly found in areas of urban deprivation are less likely to get involved, as are groups which are mostly older in nature.

[20] Oxfordshire County Council's consultation panel
[21] Mosaic is a tool for understanding household and customer types, and allocates every household in the county to one of 69 categories. It is built from Experian's UK Consumer Dynamics Database and uses a total of 400 data variables.

Figure 5-2 Likelihood to volunteer map

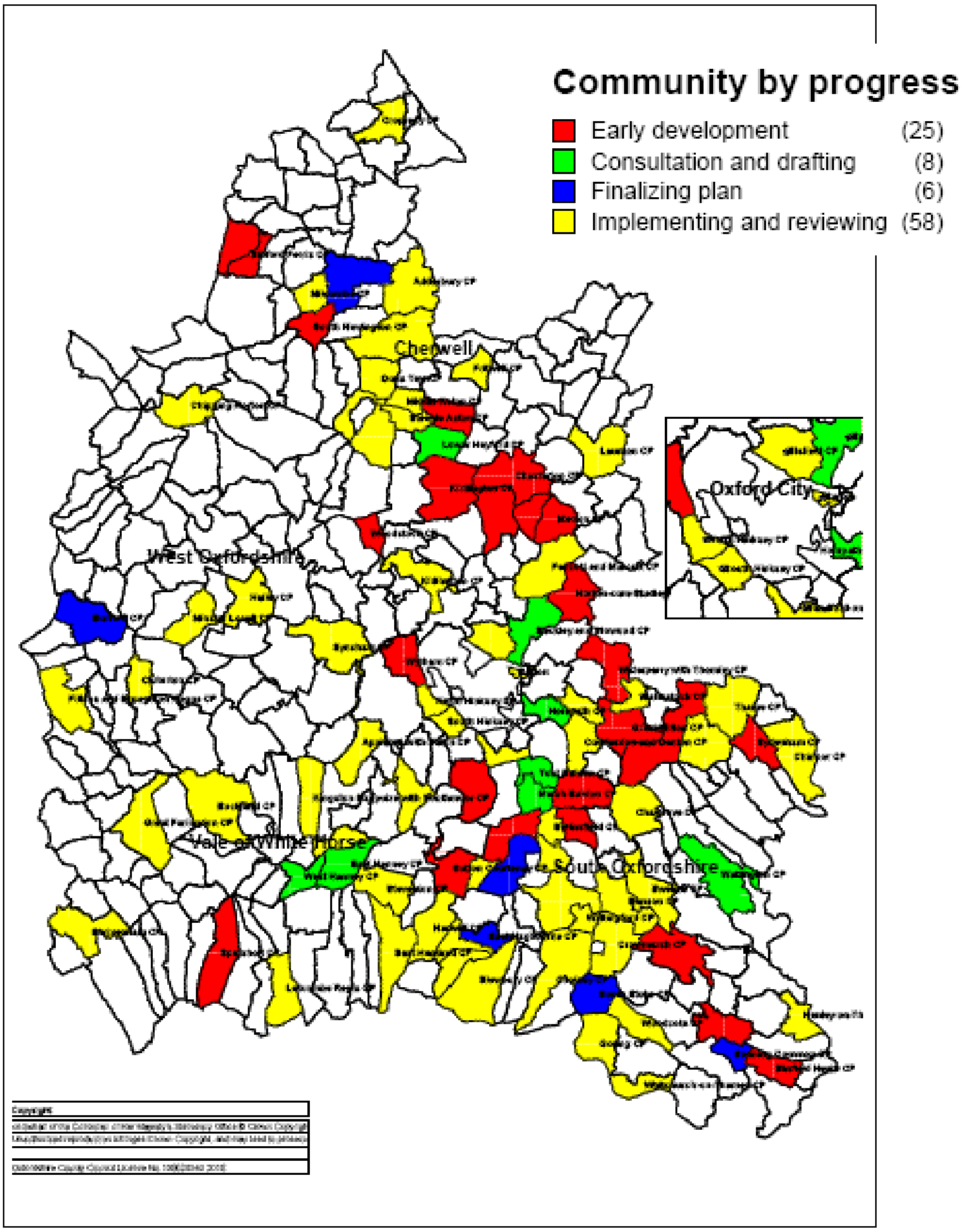


5.2 Community involvement

An increasing number of Oxfordshire communities are becoming involved in their future development by preparing community led plans (figure 5.3). Developing a community plan through local volunteer effort brings people together to discuss what is important for them as a community. Once completed, the community plan sets out a vision for how local people want their area to develop over 5-10 years.

Development of the community led planning approach and building on the previous models of area/neighbourhood planning will be key to creating neighbourhood /community action plans and building capacity within communities in Oxford City.

Figure 5-3 Development of community plans in Oxfordshire at December 2010



Source: Oxfordshire County Council, Partnerships and Communities Team

5.3 Community Safety

More than nine in ten residents in Oxfordshire (92%) feel safe when outside in their local area during the day, above the rate for England (88%) (based on responses to the Place Survey 2008/09). 63% said that they feel safe when out after dark, significantly above the national average (51% across England). Just under one quarter (22%) felt unsafe.

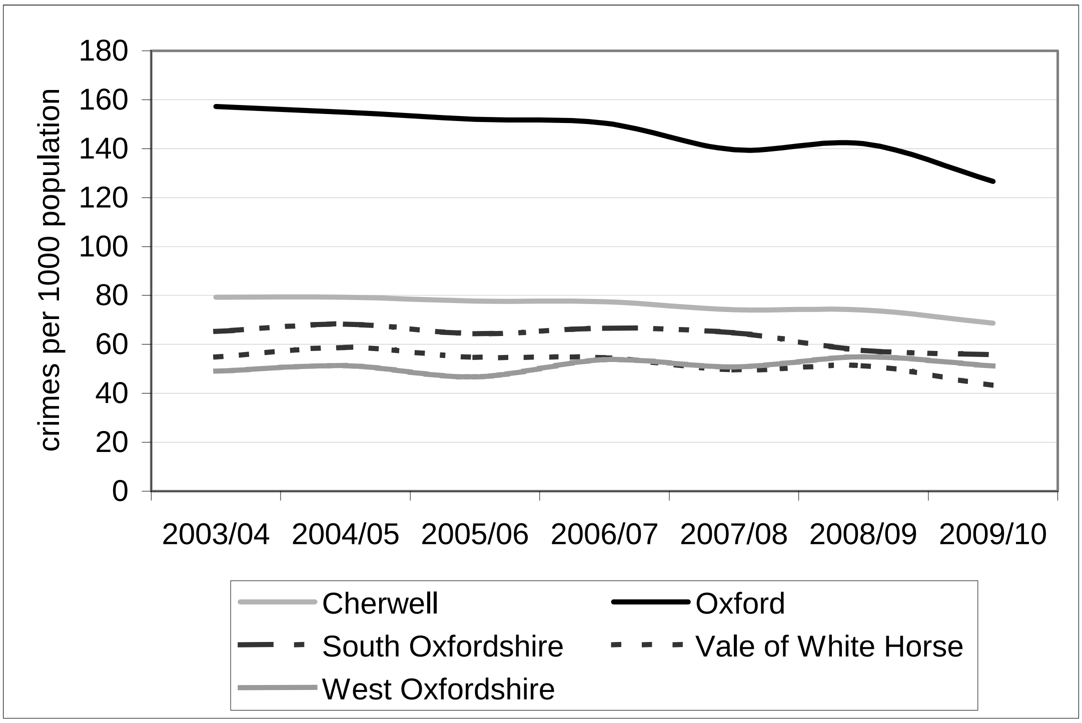
A higher percentage of respondents felt unsafe in Oxford (29%) and Cherwell (26%) after dark than in the other districts.

More than half of Oxfordshire residents responding to the 2008/09 Place Survey said that level of crime was an important factor influencing whether an area was a good place to live.

Recorded Crime

Fewer crimes were recorded in Oxfordshire in 2009/10 than in 2008/10. Rates vary significantly across the county: (figure 5.4) 126.6 crimes per 1,000 people were recorded in Oxford in 2009/10, above the regional and national averages. Recorded crime rates in the other four districts are below the regional and national averages. Keeping rates low and continuing to reduce crime from these already low rates will be as challenging as tackling the higher crime rates in Oxford City.

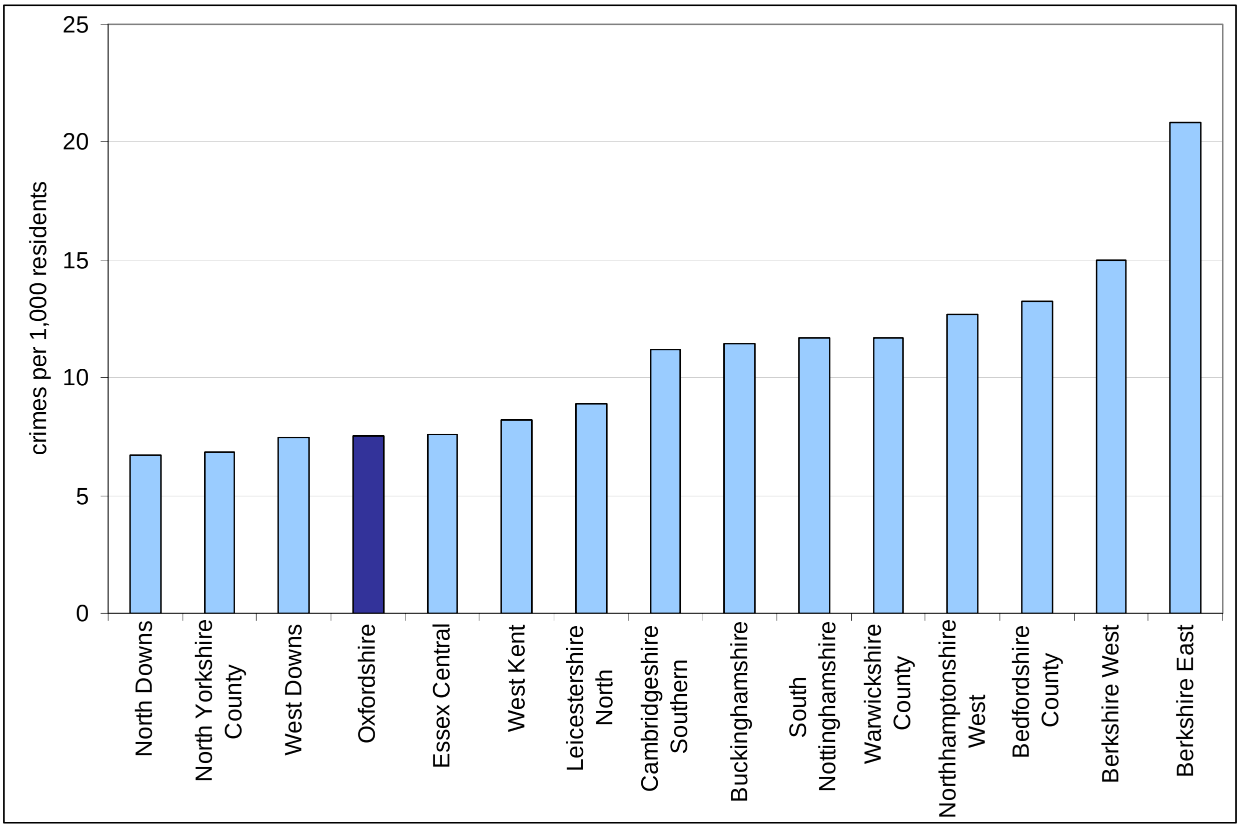
Figure 5-4 Total recorded crime (rate per 1000 people) 2003/04 to 2009/10



Source: Home Office Research Development Statistics, Local statistics, police recorded crimes

Oxfordshire compares well against other counties on a range of measures, including serious acquisitive crime (figure 5.5) and criminal damage. Rates of both crime types fell from February 2010 to January 2011.

Figure 5-5 Serious acquisitive crime, Oxfordshire and English Counties (February 2010 to January 2011)



Source: Thames Valley Police, iQuanta

Rates of domestic burglaries and car-related crimes in Oxfordshire are lower now than five years ago, and are below the national and regional averages. The number of violent crimes has increased slightly over the same period and is slightly above the national average (18.1 crimes per 1,000 people in Oxfordshire compared with 16.4 per 1,000 nationally).[22]

Figure 5-6 Rates of vehicle crime, 2003/04 to 2008/09

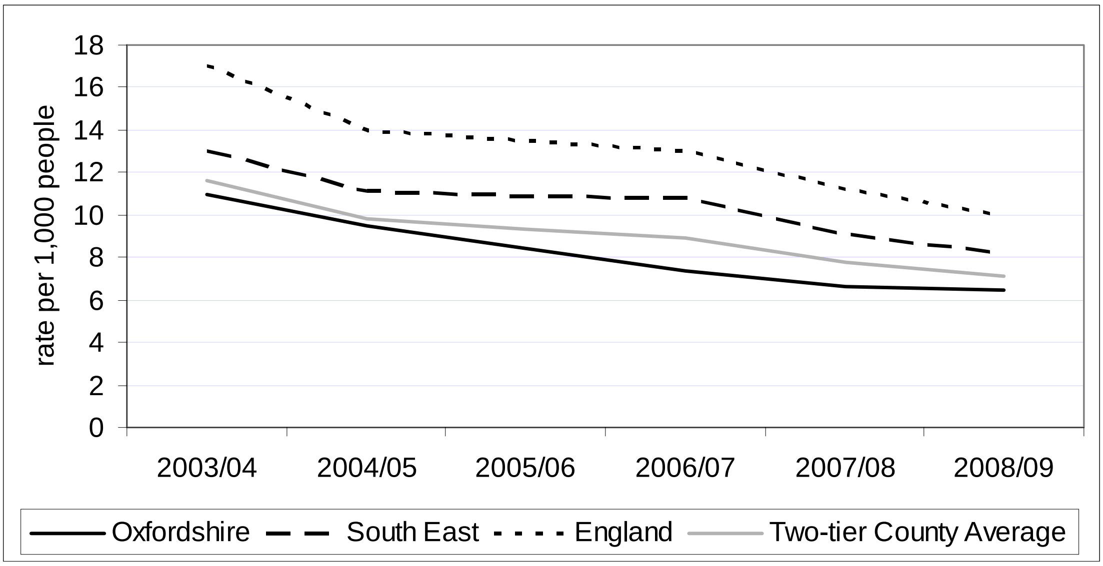
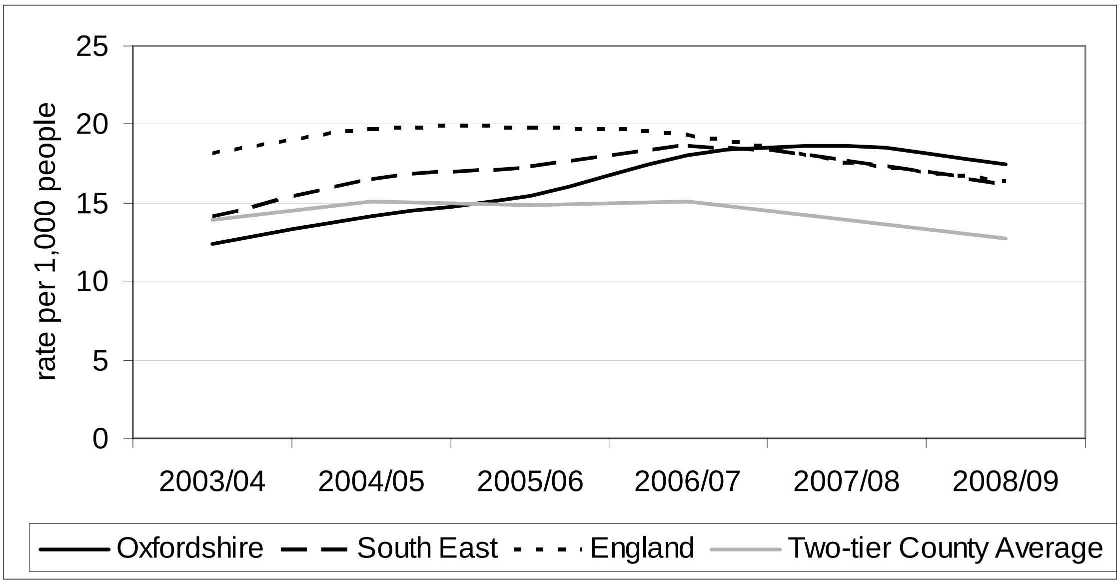


Figure 5-7 Rates of violent crime, 2003/04 to 2008/09



Source: Home Office Research Development Statistics, Recorded crime, 2008/09.

[22] Source: Home Office Research Development Statistics, Local Authorities, recorded crime, 2008/09.

Hate crime

Police dealt with 412 cases of hate crime[23] in Oxfordshire in 2008/09, but there is concern that this type of crime is under-reported (both in Oxfordshire and nationally).

Oxfordshire MANTRA is bringing statutory and voluntary agencies together to provide the framework to develop an equitable, confidential service to meet the needs of victims and witnesses who choose not to report to the police.

The first reporting centres will open from April 2011, and the recording and supporting system will cover all six strands of diversity (age, gender, sexuality, faith/religion, disability and race). The scheme is likely to be the first in the country.

Antisocial behaviour

14% of residents in Oxfordshire think that antisocial behaviour is a problem (Place Survey 2008/09), below the 20% average across England. Residents living in Oxford City had the highest level of perceived anti-social behaviour (21%) and those living in West Oxfordshire the lowest (10%).

The biggest problems were perceived as being teenagers hanging around the street (35%) and rubbish or litter lying around (32%).

27.4% of residents agree that the police and other public services are successfully dealing with anti-social and crime in their local area.

[23] A hate crime is a criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's Race, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Religion and/or Belief or because they are Transgender (Home Office, 2009).

5.4 Life expectancy

Oxfordshire residents enjoy a longer life expectancy than the national average: 79.7 years for males and 84.1 years for females, compared with 78.3 years for males, and 82.3 years for females across England, 2007/09.

There are differences across the county, with the Vale of White Horse ranking amongst the top 5% of local authorities in the UK for both male and female life expectancy, whilst Oxford City ranks 206th out of 404 local authorities in the UK for male life expectancy at birth.

Table 5-1 Life expectancy in Oxfordshire (2007-09)

	Males Life expectancy at birth	Rank order*	Females Life expectancy at birth	Rank order*
England	78.3		82.3	
South East	79.4		83.3	
Oxfordshire	**79.7**		**84.1**	
Cherwell	78.8	171	83.7	71
Oxford	78.3	206	83.4	96
South Oxfordshire	79.8	82	84.1	32
Vale of White Horse	81.0	17	85.2	8
West Oxfordshire	80.2	61	84.1	37

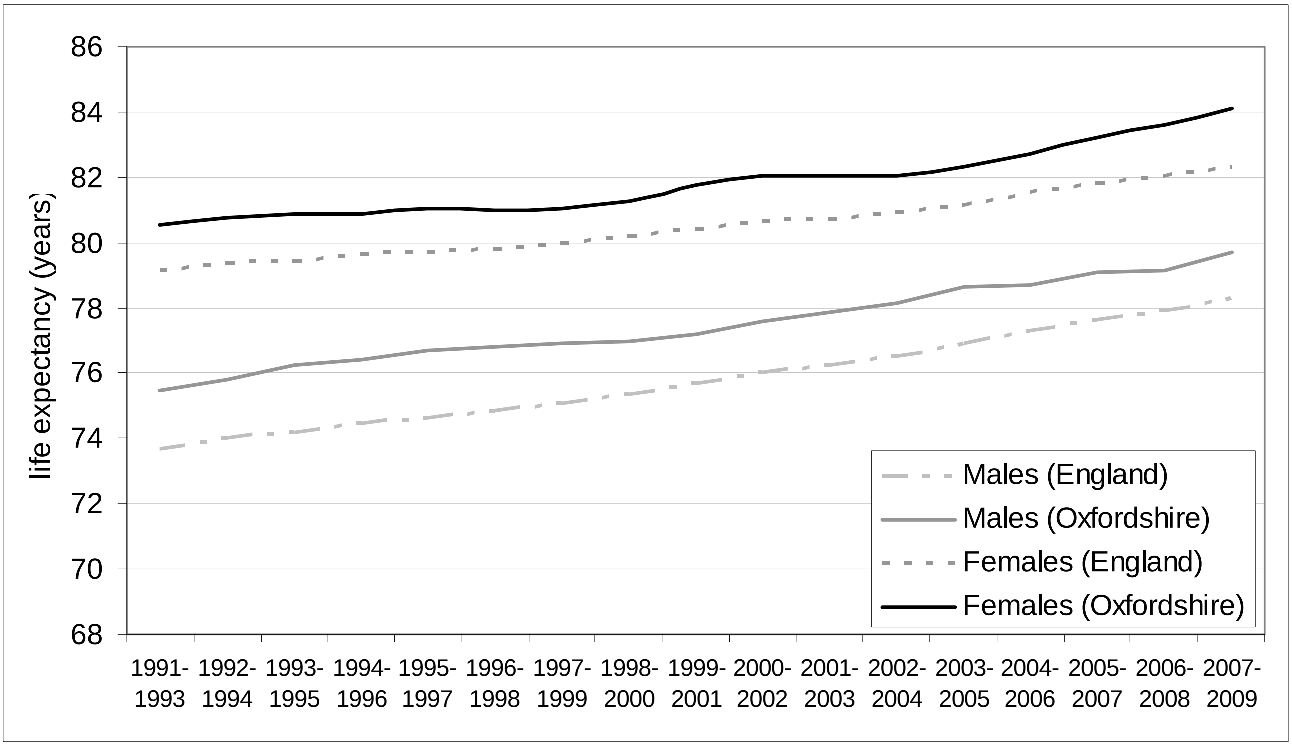
*highest = 1, lowest = 404

Source: Office for National Statistics

People in deprived areas are more likely to suffer from poor health and to have a shorter life expectancy than people in less deprived areas. There is concern that the difference between death rates in the most and least deprived areas of Oxfordshire increased slightly during 2007 and 2008. *

*Director for Public Health, Oxfordshire. Annual Report, 2010.

Figure 5-8 Life expectancy trends, 1991 to 2008



Source: Office for National Statistics

With people living longer, the number of older people (particularly the number of very elderly) in the population is increasing. At the same time, the proportion of working age people is expected to decrease, and there could be fewer people to provide care for the ageing population.

The number of age related health issues is likely to increase. There are currently around 7,000 people in Oxfordshire diagnosed with dementia, this is expected to increase by about 20% over the next ten years.*

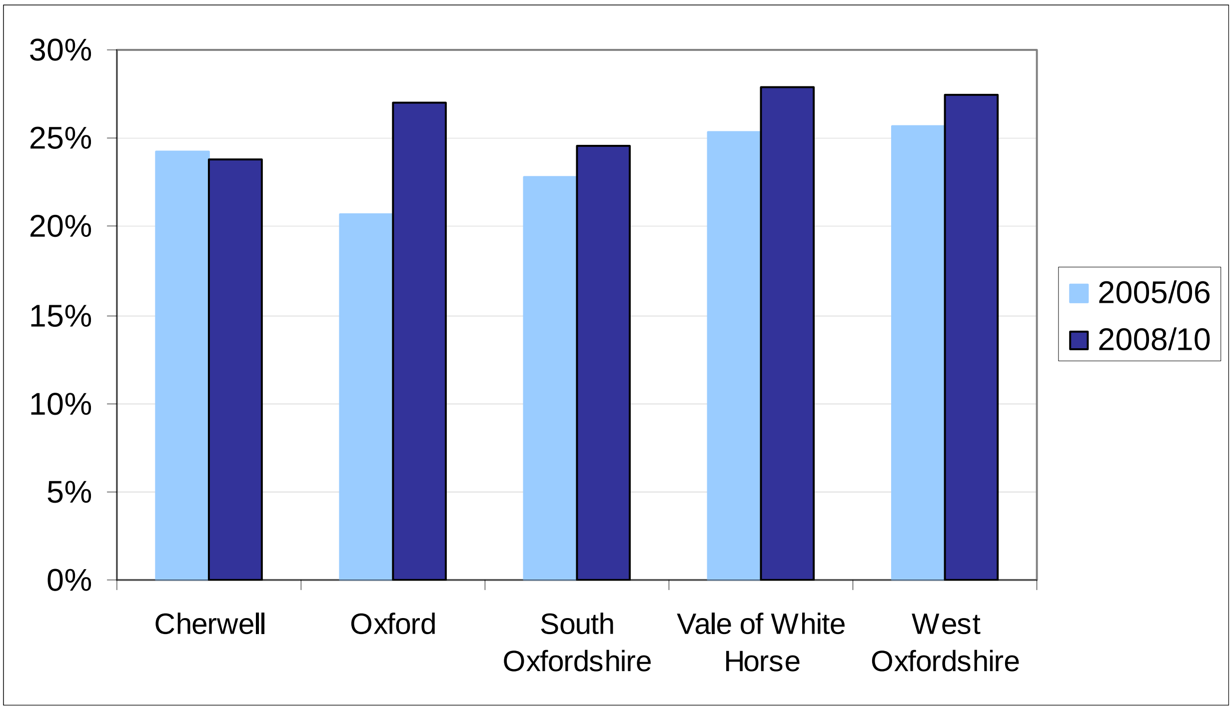
*Director for Public Health, Oxfordshire. Annual Report, 2010.

Healthy lifestyles

Taking part in regular activity can benefit our health. In 2008/10, just over one quarter of adults in Oxfordshire (26.3%) took part in the recommended amount of exercise for health benefits (moderate activity sport or active recreation equivalent to 30 minutes on three or more days a week). This is the highest rate in the English counties, and a significant increase from 2005/06.

The biggest increase has taken place in Oxford City, bringing levels up from well below those of other districts in 2005/07 (figure 5.9). These results are good compared with other areas, but still show that almost three quarters of adults in Oxfordshire are not getting the recommended level of activity for health benefits.

Figure 5-9 Participation in sport and active recreation



Source: Sport England

Obesity

The number of children in reception classes in Oxfordshire who are overweight and obese was significantly higher in 2009 than in 2008, and the incidence of obesity also increased in year six children. Local obesity levels are now worse than the national levels.

Around one quarter of the adult population (116,000 people) in Oxfordshire is obese (similar to the national average). If current trends continue the estimated annual costs too Oxfordshire NHS of diseases related to overweight and obesity are set to rise from £143 million in 1997 to £159 million in 2015.[24]

Further information on health in Oxfordshire can be found in the Director of Public Health's Annual Report, May 2010 and in Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (available on the Oxfordshire Data Observatory website, www.oxfordshireobservatory.info).

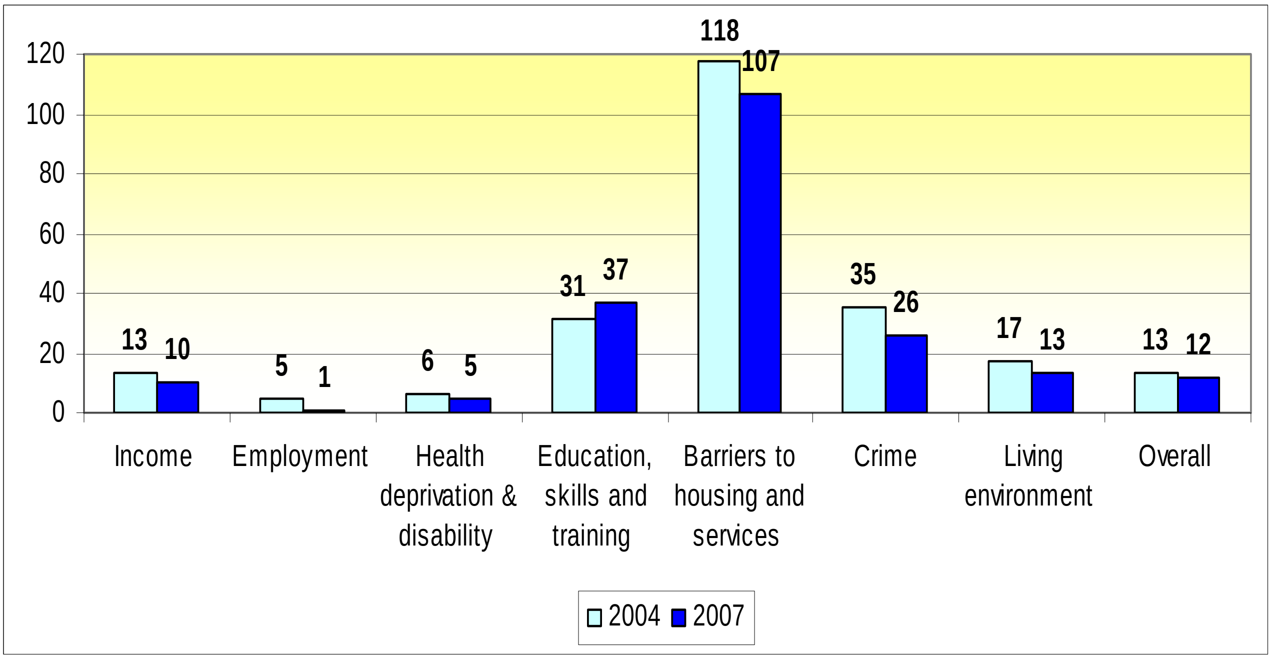
24 *Director for Public Health, Annual Report, 2010

5.5 Deprivation

Oxfordshire has generally low levels of deprivation, ranking 137th out of 149 counties in the 2007 index of multiple deprivation (IMD). However, there are ten areas in Oxford City (areas within Northfield Brook, Barton and Sandhills, Blackbird Leys, Rosehill and Iffley and Littlemore) and two in Banbury (both in Banbury Ruscote) which fall within the 20% most deprived areas nationally.

Other areas in Oxfordshire rank amongst the 20% most deprived nationally for some of the seven measures which make up the overall index (figure 5.10): thirteen areas in Oxfordshire rank in the 5% most deprived nationally on the education, skills and training index (see also section 3.2).

Figure 5-10 Number of areas in Oxfordshire ranked in the 20% most deprived nationally for each area of life, 2004 and 2007



Source: Communities and Local Government, Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2007

Deprivation can have a disproportionate effect on particular groups, including children. The latest data from HM Revenue & Customs show that 11.7% of children in Oxfordshire are living in poverty[25]. Oxfordshire ranks seventh lowest out of 41 authorities on this measure (lowest is 9.9% in Surrey is lowest, 9.9%, Greater London highest, 31%), but there are big differences across the county. In Oxford City, almost one in four children are living in poverty (5,800 children, 23%), with the highest rates in the relatively deprived areas on the outskirts of the city.

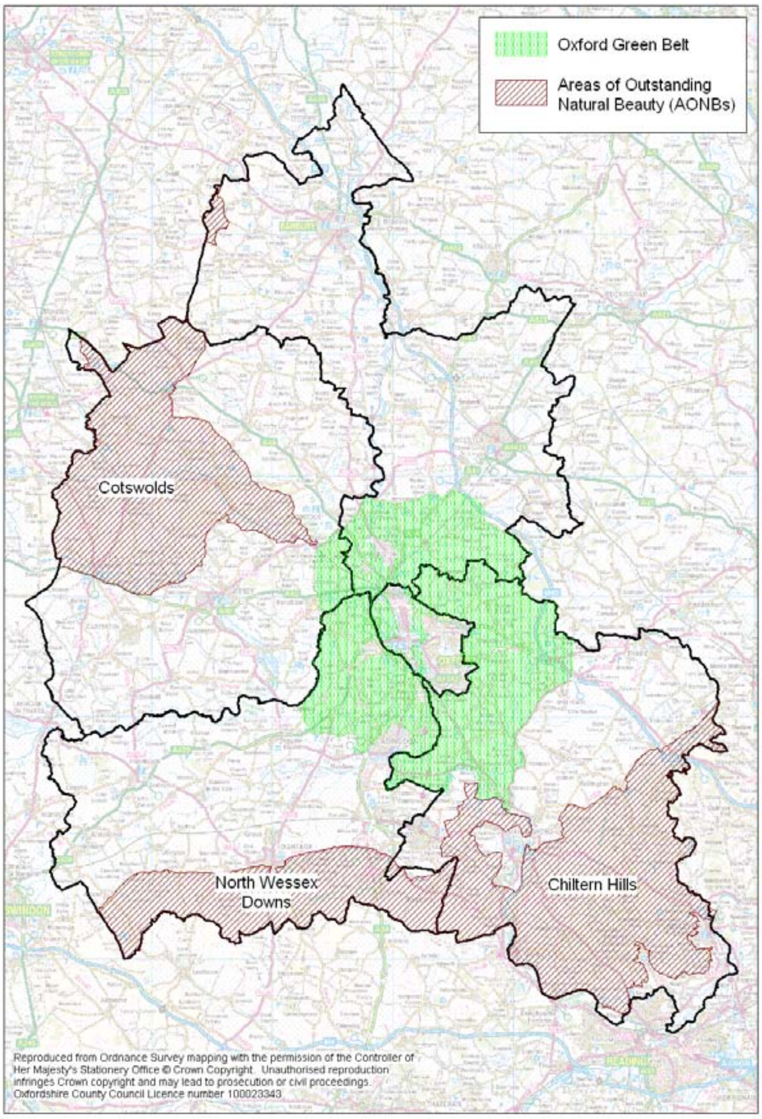
[25] living in households with income below 60% of the median income

6 Environment and climate change

The quality of Oxfordshire's environment makes it an attractive place to live and work and significantly contributes to the continuing success of the county's economy.

Oxfordshire has a wide variety of habitats and species, and there are four National Nature Reserves, more than one hundred Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and many local nature reserves. There are also seven sites of international importance which are designated as European Special Areas of Conservation. Just under one quarter of the county falls within one of three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Cotswolds, Chilterns and North Wessex Downs).

Figure 6-1 Landscape designations in Oxfordshire, 2009



Source: Oxfordshire County Council

6.1 Habitats and biodiversity

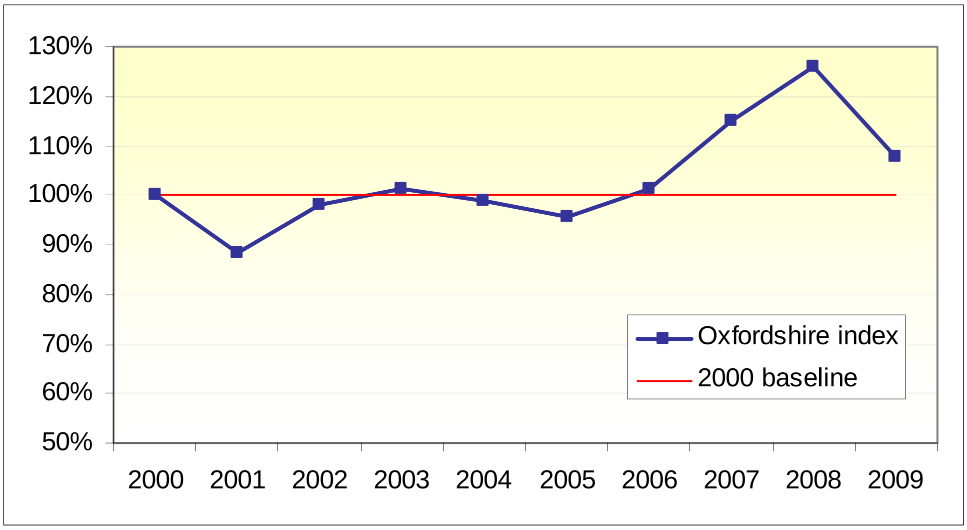
Almost all of the area in Oxfordshire designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (98.1%) is in favourable or recovering favourable condition (October 2010), up from 89% in 2008.

The farmland bird index

Bird populations are considered to be a good indicator of the broad state of wildlife. With around three quarters of Oxfordshire's land area managed for agriculture (just over half of this managed under agri-environment schemes), farmland birds give the best indicator of biodiversity in the county.

Oxfordshire's farmland bird index[26] slowly increased during 2001 to 2008 (figure 6.2). This may be linked to the increasing uptake of agri-environment schemes over this period. Numbers of birds fell in 2009 relative to the 2000 baseline, the biggest drop in figures since 1995. This is consistent with national trends, and may be a result of the cold wet summers in 2007 and 2008.

Figure 6-2 Oxfordshire farmland bird index, 2000-2009



Source: Thames Valley Environment Record Centre

[26] The farmland bird index is compiled by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds using records for 19 species commonly found on farmland

6.2 Water Quality

Rivers form a significant feature of the Oxfordshire landscape, and include the Thames, Cherwell, Evenlode and their tributaries. Chemical water quality in Oxfordshire's rivers has improved significantly since 1990[27].

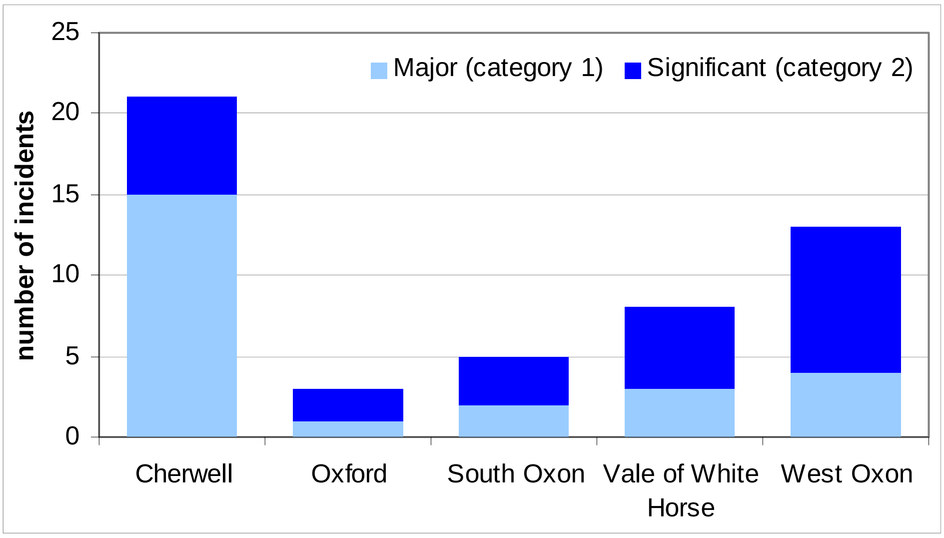
- 88% of river length was graded as very good or good quality in 2009, compared with 56% in 1990.
- The length of river classified as grades E and F (poor quality) has decreased from 16% in 1990 to just 1% in 2009.

The General Quality Assessment for water quality has now been replaced with the assessment of water body status under the Water Framework Directive. In Oxfordshire, the majority of water bodies are currently classified as having moderate ecological status or potential. Under the Directive, they all have to achieve good ecological status or potential by 2027.

The total number of water pollution incidents in Oxfordshire has declined over the past six years. Those with major or significant impact (categories 1 and 2) have decreased from 9 in 2005 to 2 in 2010, accounting for just 1% of the total incidents reported. Cherwell has the largest number of serious incidents to water since 2005, and Oxford has the lowest (figure 6.3).

Much of Oxfordshire's water (both rivers and groundwater) is at low to moderate risk from nitrate pollution. The whole county has been designated as a nitrate vulnerable zone, and farms within the zone area must follow guidelines to reduce nitrogen losses from agriculture to water.

Figure 6-3 Serious water pollution incidents in Oxfordshire, 2005 to 2010



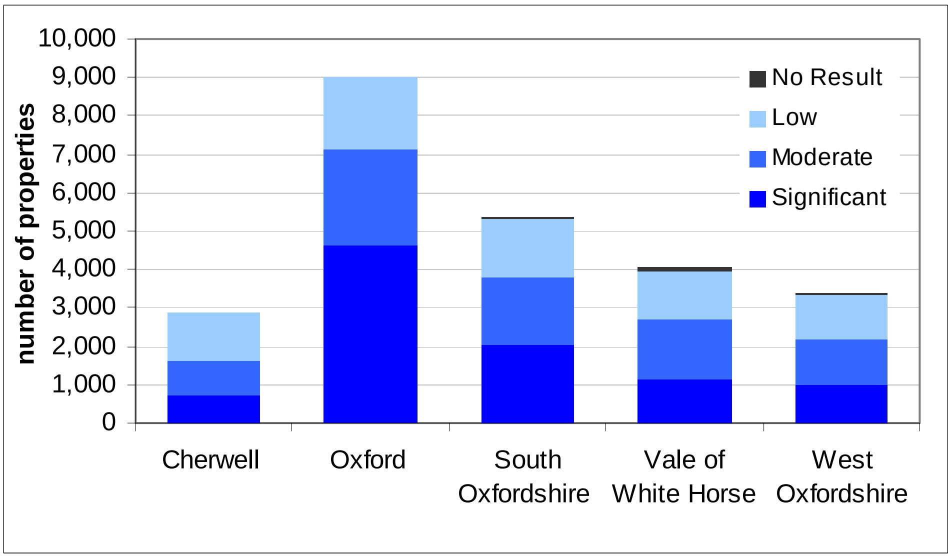
Source: Environment Agency, 2011

27 Environment Agency, Chemical general quality assessment, 2009

6.3 Flooding

Since the flooding across the county in July 2007, a range of mitigation measures has been put in place, but with around 12% of the county lying within the floodplain, the latest estimates from the Environment Agency (2009) indicate that there are approximately 24,000 existing properties at risk of flooding in Oxfordshire (figure 6.4). Around 9,000 of these have a significant likelihood of flooding (more than 1 in 75 chance of flooding in any one year).

Figure 6-4 Properties at risk of flooding in Oxfordshire



Source: Environment Agency; National flood risk assessment 2009

6.4 Air Quality

Air quality across Oxfordshire is generally good, but there are some areas in our towns where traffic can lead to increased levels of nitrogen oxides. In these areas, district councils have designated local air quality management areas, and have put in place plans to reduce emissions to within acceptable levels. There are nine air quality management areas (AQMA) in Oxfordshire:

- Oxford AQMA (City Centre)
- Green Road Roundabout AQMA (Oxford City)
- Henley AQMA (South Oxfordshire
- Wallingford AQMA (South Oxfordshire)
- Watlington AQMA (South Oxfordshire
- Abingdon AQMA (Vale of White Horse)
- Botley AQMA (Vale of White Horse)
- Chipping Norton AQMA
- Witney AQMA (West Oxfordshire)

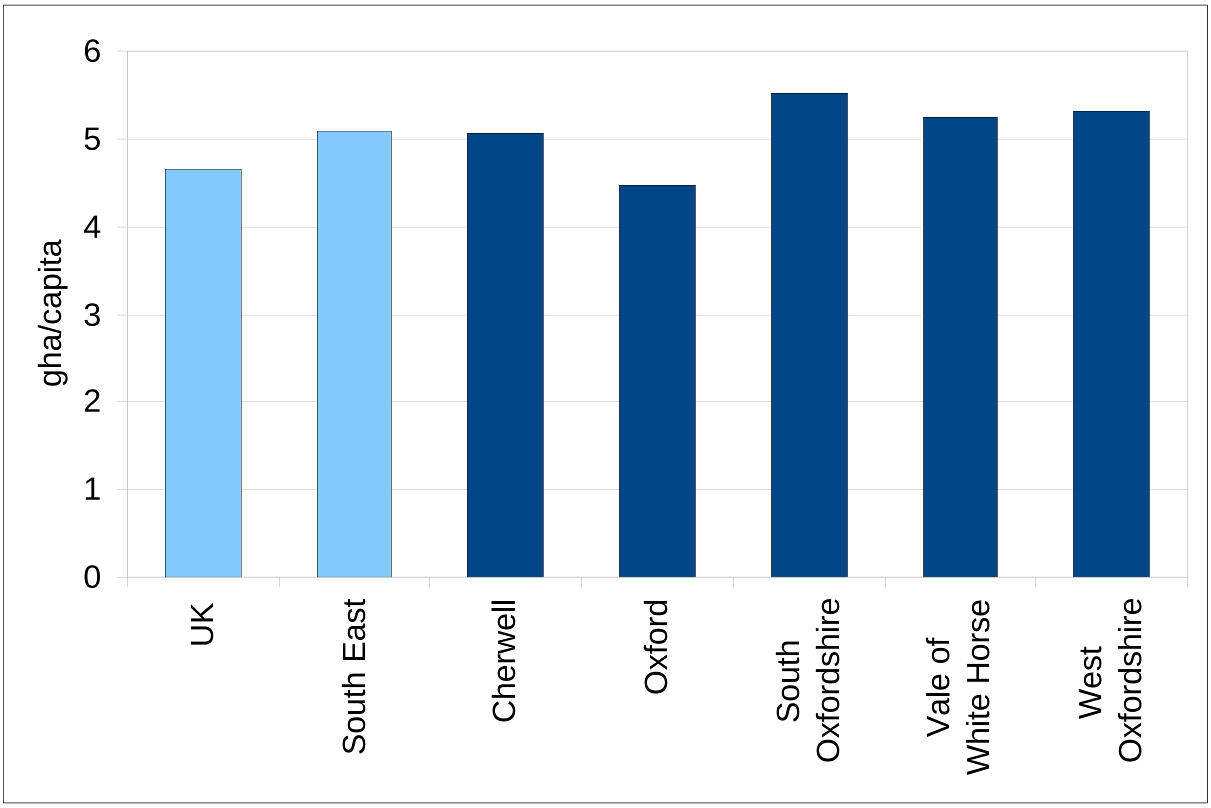
6.5 Ecological footprint

An ecological footprint is a broad indicator of sustainability. It measures the amount of land that would be needed to meet our demand for food, transport, housing and other fundamentals of daily life. It also includes the land needed to dispose of waste and absorb carbon emissions.

The UK ecological footprint is 4.64 global hectares per person (gha/capita). If everyone in the world lived this way, we would need three planets to support the current global population.

Oxford City's ecological footprint is lower than the regional and national footprints, but the footprints of the rural districts are above the national average, and in West Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire are also above the regional average (figure 6.5).

Figure 6-5 Ecological footprints by District, 2006



Source: Stockholm Institute, Resource and Environmental Accounting

6.6 Water use

Oxfordshire lies within the Thames Water area, which includes London. Daily average water use in this area is significantly higher than the industry average. Average annual use is strongly influenced by weather: hot, dry summers tend to lead to higher water consumption, eg due to use of hoses, sprinklers, but there is a clear upward trend over the past four years which contrasts with the decreasing average use across the industry (figure 6.6).

Figure 6-6 Average annual domestic water use, 2001/02 to 2009/10

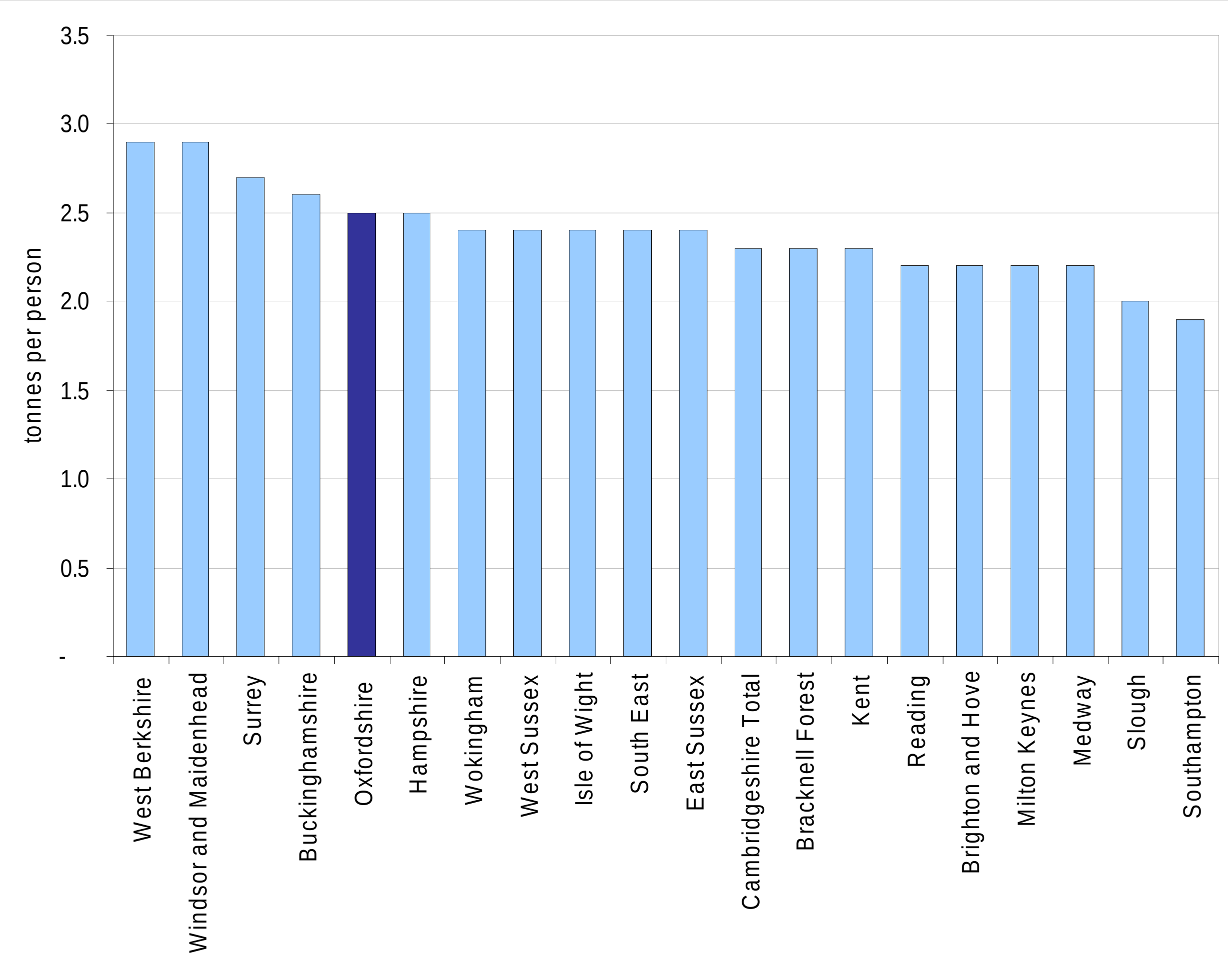
6.7 Energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions

Households in Oxfordshire used less gas and electricity in 2009 than in 2008, but more than the regional and national averages. Domestic energy use is generally higher in the four rural districts than in Oxford City, where gas and electricity consumption is below the regional and national averages.

The higher levels of energy use in homes in Oxfordshire are reflected in the slightly above average emissions of carbon dioxide (CO_2) from domestic sources in the county (2.5 tonnes per person, compared with 2.4 tonnes per person across the South East and nationally) (figure 6.7).

CO_2 emissions vary across the county, from 2.9 tonnes per person in West Oxfordshire to 2.0 tonnes per person in Oxford, the second lowest emissions of all district councils and unitaries in the South East (only Portsmouth and Southampton are lower at 1.9 tonnes per person).

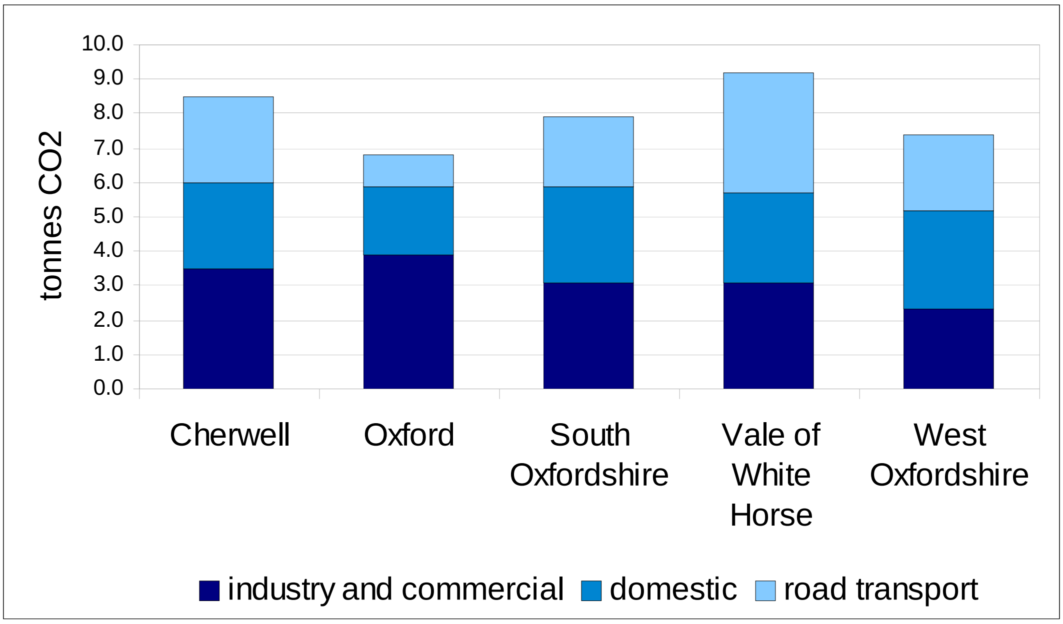
Figure 6-7 Domestic carbon dioxide emissions in the South East and other comparator counties, 2008



Source: Department for Energy and Climate Change

Domestic sources accounted for almost one third (31%) of carbon dioxide emissions in Oxfordshire in 2008, slightly more than from transport (28%), whilst 40% came from industrial sources. Road transport contributes more to total emissions in the rural districts.

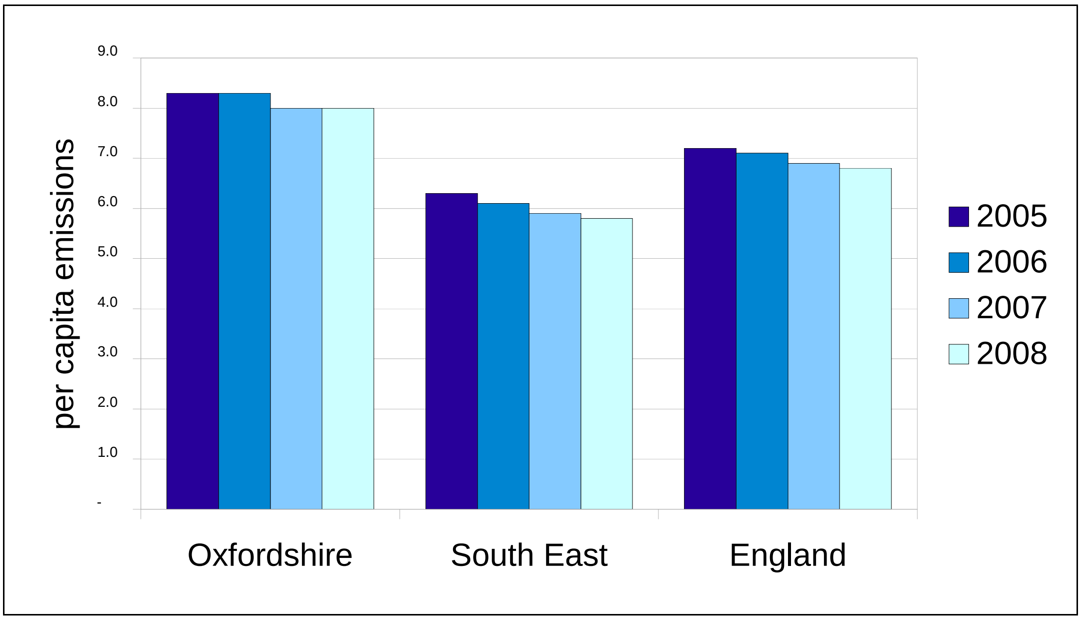
Figure 6-8 Carbon dioxide emissions by sector, 2008



Source: Department for Energy and Climate Change

Total CO_2 emissions from Oxfordshire in 2008 (latest data) remain unchanged from the previous year at 8.0 tonnes of CO_2 per person. This is a 3.6% decrease since 2005 (8.3 tonnes per person), but is still well above the South East average (5.8 tonnes) and national average (6.8 tonnes), and is the smallest percentage decrease of any county or unitary authority in the South East over this time.

Figure 6-9 Total carbon dioxide emissions, 2005 to 2008



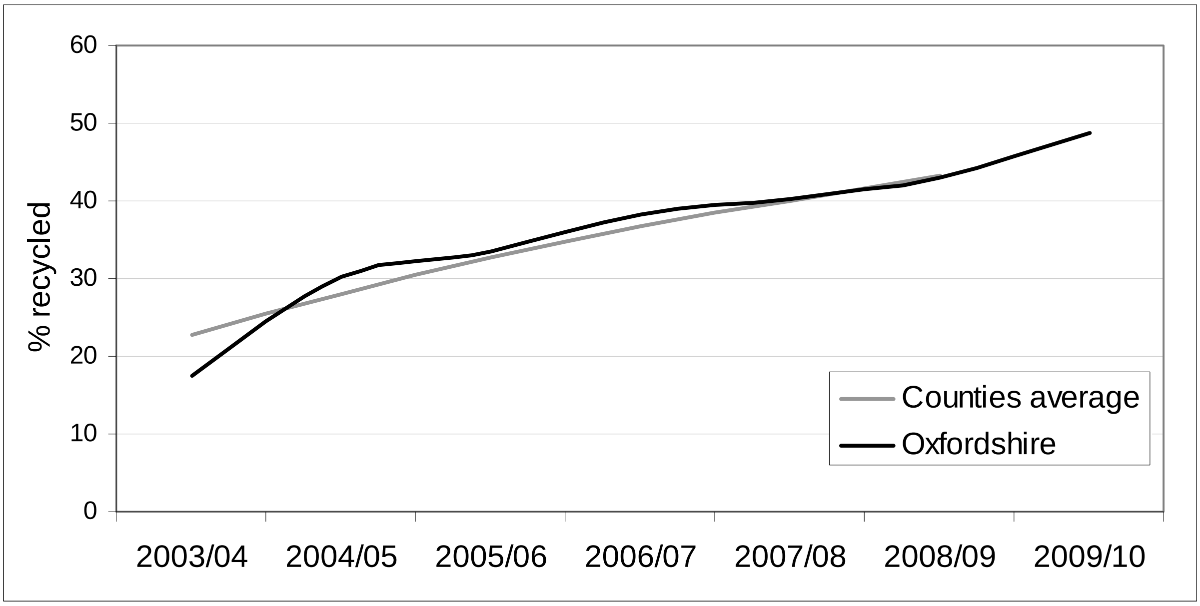
Source: Department for Energy and Climate Change

An increasing amount of household waste in Oxfordshire is being recycled: 48.7% in 2009/10, up from 43.1% in the previous year and from just 17.5% in 2003/04 (figure 6.10). The amount of household waste sent to landfill fell from 467 kg per person in 2008/09 to 452 kg per person in 2009/10 (figure 6.11).

South Oxfordshire district council had the second highest rate of household waste recycling and composting in England in 2009/10 (61.4%). This was an increase from 42.8% in 2008/09 – the second highest increase across England during this time.

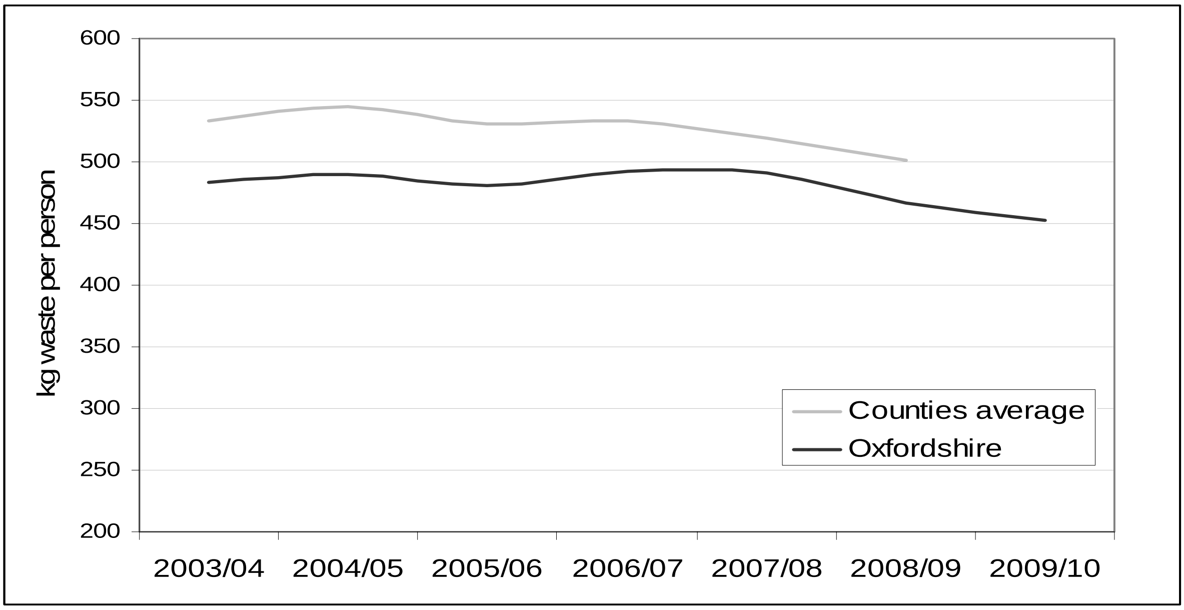
The amount of household waste collected per person in Oxford City in 2009/10 was the second lowest of all local authorities across England.

Figure 6-10 Recycling rates in Oxfordshire, 2003/04 to 2009/10



Source: Oxfordshire County Council Waste Management Group; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Figure 6-11 Household waste collected, 2003/04 to 2009/10



Source: Oxfordshire County Council Waste Management Group; Audit Commission
2009/10 figures are provisional.

Domestic energy use and carbon dioxide emissions are above national and regional averages.

The amount of household waste recycled has increased significantly.

Further details on Oxfordshire's environment are available in the Environment Agency's report, The environment in Oxfordshire, published October 2009 *http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/static/documents/Business/Oxon_factsheet_FINAL_-_External.pdf*