



Birmingham

the digital city

Size and population

- The City of Birmingham is the second biggest city in the UK and economic hub of the West Midlands region. Birmingham enjoys a strategic geographical location, being at the centre of the UK's road and rail network, with excellent international air connections.
- It has a population of just over one million people.
- The city has the youngest profile of any major city in Europe with 37% of residents under 25 years of age.
- In 2005, it was estimated that 32.2% of its population was non-white - indicative of Birmingham's long history of welcoming migrants.
- The wider West Midlands region has a population of 5.3 million.

Economy, employment and infrastructure

- Birmingham is a city built on innovation and technology and, today, is also home to a dynamic creative and service industry.
- Whilst still having a considerable manufacturing base, the city boasts a rapidly expanding financial and service sector, has become a fast-growing centre for hi-tech industry, and is one of Europe's foremost conference and event destinations.
- The 2008 European Cities Entrepreneurship Ranking report (ECER) placed Birmingham above London as the top UK business environment, and above European locations including Paris, Rome, Madrid and Berlin. Birmingham came top out of all 21 cities surveyed when it came to the 'economic environment, infrastructure and the quality of life provided'. Birmingham came third behind the Swedish cities of Gothenburg and Stockholm as one of the best places in Europe to encourage entrepreneurship.
- Birmingham is the economic hub of the West Midlands with 31,000 companies and an available workforce of 2.5 million people.
- 42.6% of the workforce in Birmingham is employed in the sectors classified as knowledge-intensive by Eurostat. Birmingham now has the largest professional services sector outside London, employing over 90,000 people. The city has 200 law firms, 19 out of the top 20 British accountancies, 50 major property services firms and Europe's second largest insurance market. The city also has a fast growing and well-regarded creative and digital media sector.

- The City is investing some £20 billion in one of the boldest 21st Century regeneration plans that include the New Street Gateway, City Park, the £25 million Digital Media Academy and the New Library of Birmingham, set to be the hub of the region's knowledge economy, all of which will be underpinned by a first class digital infrastructure.
- Birmingham is recognised as one of the world's top 21 'Intelligent Communities' by global thinktank, The Intelligent Community Forum. Birmingham is the only UK city to be included and only one of four European cities to make the coveted top Smart 21 2011.

A connected city

- Birmingham became the first of twelve BT Wireless Cities offering on-street wi-fi cover for the whole of the city centre and is recognised as the most successful outside Westminster.
- A wi-fi cloud covering a quarter of the Aston area was installed as part of the Aston Pride ICT project. This along with the provision of computers and connectivity through the Computers in the Home scheme and Home Access grants means that over 6000 homes have been connected to the internet to date in one of the city's most socially excluded areas. This and other projects have trained around 1400 people in pre-qualification and NVQ level ICT use.
- The digital district testbed in Digbeth and surrounding areas will act as a catalyst to encouraging the uptake of superfast broadband.
- Birmingham's Interactive Digital Television (idTV) channel has over 50,000 hits per month, making it the most visited local government TV information service in the country.

Digital innovation and creativity

- The Birmingham media economy employs over 17,000 people and supports over 1000 businesses.
- Birmingham's digital sector has particular strengths in gaming, social media and ICT.
- Over 25% of the UK's games workforce is employed in the West Midlands.
- The ICT business cluster in the West Midlands comprises more than 3,000 businesses generating a turnover of £10 million and is host to global brands including IBM, Oracle, Fujitsu, AT&T and Ricoh.

- Birmingham Island, in virtual world environment Second Life, incorporates a revolutionary mapping tool, b-scape, developed for the application by Daden, based at Birmingham Science Park Aston. The technology won a prestigious US Government Award for Daden and Birmingham Island is regularly used by Second Life creators Linden Labs as an exemplar demonstration of the power of the virtual world. The virtual New Library of Birmingham is revolutionising the planning and design of the physical build.
- Midlands-based TV production company, Maverick, is one of Europe's leading digital media production companies, winning a BAFTA for its TV series 'Embarrassing Bodies'. It has been granted £15 million to deliver a groundbreaking digital project with the NHS.

Digital health

- Birmingham's new £545 million acute Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which opened in June 2010, is one of the biggest buildings in the UK to have a 3D virtual environment on the hospital's intranet for staff training and to provide scenario-based training for fire drills, major incidents and cardiac teams, as well as a virtual ward wayfinding system for patients and visitors. The wayfinder integrates with the hospital's self check-in system and allows people to view routes on the internet before they come into the hospital.
- University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHBFT) has developed an interactive tool which enables clinical and managerial staff to evaluate the quality of healthcare delivery and operational efficiency in comparison to acute and mental health trusts in England. The tool uses Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) data and applies an advanced methodology which accounts for casemix and other variables, incorporates all care delivered and can drill down to a patient level (anonymised). The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is currently reviewing the tool and UHBFT has already entered into commercial contracts to provide the tool to a range of interested providers.
- NHS Local (<http://www.nhslocal.nhs.uk/>) is a multi-channel digital service, with content developed by Birmingham-based Maverick TV, designed both to provide self-help and learning for citizens and to support the training of front line staff. It brings together existing online information with a local focus and provides news, stories, videos, blogs, patient's opinions, learning materials, maps by postcode about health provision and open data, for example referral times for hospitals.

A science city

- Birmingham is one of six cities nominated by Government as a science city, with a focus on medical, transport, manufacturing and digital applications.
- £3.3 million has been invested by Birmingham Science City in demonstrator projects, with the funding coming from a mix of sources. In addition to the demonstrator projects there are also a number of larger capital projects planned, focused on increasing the potential of the knowledge base; with the biggest of these projects being the Science City Research Alliance.
- Led by the University of Birmingham and Warwick University, £57 million has been invested in world-class R&D facilities leveraging over £29 million investment, with over 80 academics engaged in 6 projects.

Efficient delivery of public services

- Business Transformation is the largest change programme in the UK public sector and is increasingly recognised as an exemplar (both nationally and internationally) including the CHAMPS2 change methodology it developed.
- Birmingham City Council's ICT-driven Business Transformation programme has, since 2006, achieved £151 million of savings; money which used to be spent within the council's £3+ billion annual budget in less effective ways has been redirected into new and improved services and in other essential areas where there are budgetary pressures.
- Over the ten years to 2016, the council is on track to realise almost £1 billion of savings.
- The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) has awarded £30,000 to an open data project jointly developed between Digital Birmingham and local digital production company Mudlark, to fund the creation of a Birmingham 'Civic Dashboard' to help Birmingham City Council share the information held on its contact database in a way that benefits its citizens. A web tool that will provide an online 'heat map' of requests raised by local residents, colour coded according to requests, will enable Birmingham people and the council to interact with live data and provides a forum for discussion.

A knowledge city

- Birmingham's three universities, The University of Birmingham, Aston University and Birmingham City University, together have over 17,000 new graduates each year. Over 68,000 students are in higher education in the city.
- Birmingham now receives the fastest growing number of university applications of any UK city. It is the most popular big city for undergraduates with applications up 13% in 2009, and has more research students than any other major UK city.
- In December 2008, the University of Birmingham was chosen to host the National Higher Education Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Programme, an initiative to increase the number of graduates in these disciplines to fulfill employers' needs.
- Birmingham has a strong research base and facilities, notably Birmingham Science Park Aston, which is a high-spec destination for both new and established knowledge-based businesses; and the University of Birmingham Research Park, which offers purpose-built accommodation to companies and projects seeking to work with the University in research, development or training.
- Birmingham is a leader in the nanotechnology and photonics clusters.
- From 2003 to 2009 the percentage of Year 11 pupils achieving five GCSEs at grades A* - C in Birmingham rose from 49.5% to 66%.
- The Aston Pride Computers in the Home initiative received several awards and helped close the 'digital divide' in a socially disadvantaged area. Key stage 2 results in English improved by 19% over the last five years compared to a Birmingham average improvement of 6%, and in Maths 5% compared to 1%.