

Dorset is an attractive place to live, work and holiday with a unique natural environment, a fascinating cultural offer and archaeological history, and a mix of seaside, rural and urban settings.

An above average proportion of Dorset residents aged 16+ have a high life satisfaction rating and feel that the things they do in their lives are worthwhile. The natural environment and cultural and recreational activities play an important role in this and in making communities feel safer and stronger.

There are about 385,000 people living in the Dorset Council area, with a significant (30%) proportion of 65+ year olds, this is the highest of any unitary authority in England. 44% of the workforce (16 to 64) is aged 50 and over. While older workers have the benefit of experience and skills, this knowledge and skills will need replacing as they retire. The growing number of older people will increase demand for health and social care services.

At the opposite end of the age spectrum; experiences in a child's early years lay a foundation for health and wellbeing. In 2024 67% of pupils achieved a 'Good Level of Development' at the end of Reception year, a decrease of 5% on 2019, but very similar to the national figures.

November  
2024

# State of Dorset Population



Change in Dorset's demographic make-up can have an impact on service demands and provision but can also affect housing demand and business needs.

Changes in our population are shaped by both natural change (births and deaths) and by migration into and out of Dorset.

By projecting future population change, we can plan to target services and resources to the places where they will be needed most.

Big Numbers Box

**3.1%**

projected population change  
2024-2034

**25,650**

Total increase in  
+65's 2024-2034, an  
increase of 2.1%pa

**384,809**

total  
population  
in 2023

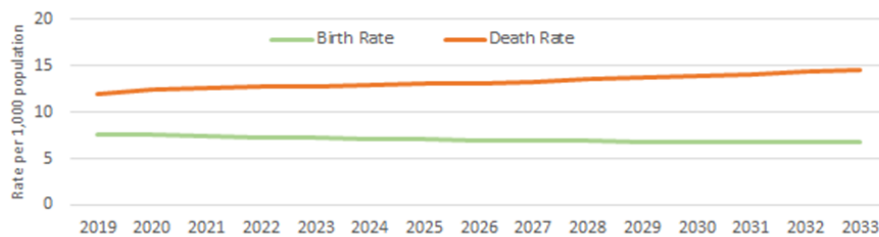
**2.1%pa**

65+ projected pop-  
ulation change  
2024-2034

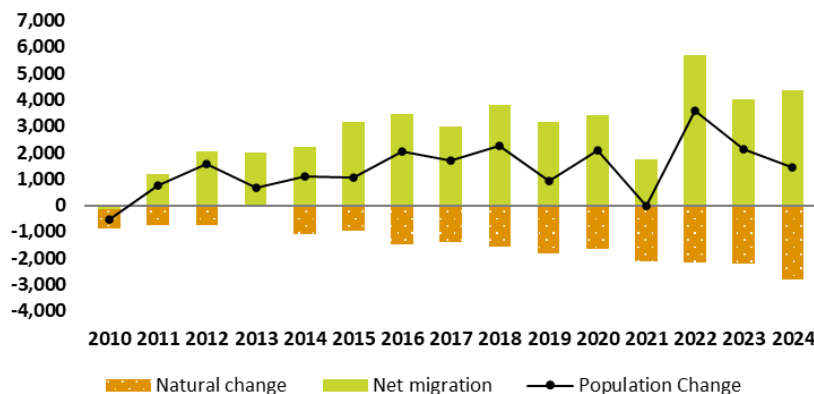
**5,520**

decrease in 0  
to 15 yrs age  
group  
2024-2034

## Box 1: Population Change



In the last five years, the death rate has steadily increased by just under 10%, while the birth rate has decreased by 5% as shown in the graph above. This pattern is projected to continue over the next ten years. Total number of births in the year 2022/23 were 2,459, total deaths were 5,288. Due to the net decline in natural change (births minus deaths) population growth is driven by migration into the area. The graph below shows the contribution net migration makes to population growth. Net migration in the year 2022-2023 was 4,378.



The figure above shows the components of change for each year. Note years 2023 onwards are projected population. Over the period 2013-2023, Dorset's population grew by 17,200, a growth of 4% compared with 7% nationally. Over the period 2023 to 2033, the population is projected to grow by another 3% (12,654) compared to 4% nationally.

## Box 2: Age breakdown of population

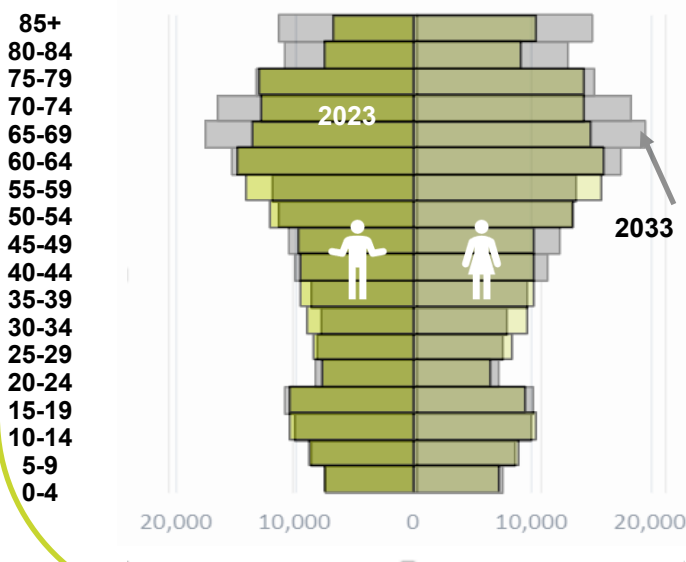
	2013	2023	2033
0-15 yrs	59,600	59,600	53,800
16-64 yrs	211,700	207,200	199,900
65+ yrs	97,200	118,200	144,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>368,600</b>	<b>384,800</b>	<b>397,700</b>

The median age of Dorset council was 46 in 2011. This increased to 51 in 2021 and is projected to increase to 54 by 2031. The current median age for England is 40.5.

Over the period 2013-2023, the number aged 65+ is estimated to grow by 21,000 up by 22% and is projected to further increase by 25,800 up by 22% to 2033. The proportion of the population aged 65+ continues to grow; from 26% in 2013 to 30% in 2023 and a projected figure of 36% in 2033.

In contrast Dorset's working age (16-64) population continues to fall; dropping by 4,500 between 2013-2023 and projected to drop by a further 7,300 by 2033. Similarly the population of Dorset's 0-15 year olds is projected to decline; falling by 5,800 between 2013 and 2033.

Dorset Council 2013, 2023 and 2033 population



The top heavy shape of the population pyramid has changed little in the past 10 years and is projected to expand over the next ten. This is illustrated by the graph to the left which shows proportion of 5yr age groups for 2023 in the light bars, and 2033 the grey bars. Females are on the right of the graph, males the left. Aging of the early 60's baby boomers can be clearly seen - driving the bulge in the population between the ages of 55 to 74. This is further increased by net internal migration which is highest for the 60-64 age group. Migration out of the area by young adults is also clearly illustrated.

## Box 3: Census 2021

- Much of our data and therefore, how we understand the experiences and issues affecting people in Dorset, comes from the Census.
- The Census is carried out every 10 years and Census Day was on 21st March 2021.
- As the Census only happens every 10 years, there is likely to be considerable change in our understanding of the population.
- Census 2021 reflected shifting language and will help with our understanding of marginalised communities, for example asking about Armed Forces service, sexual orientation and gender identity.
- The Census is important not only for understanding communities but for ensuring that funding is directed where it is needed. Many organisations will use it to plan, predict and develop their services, based on population make-up and characteristics represented in the Census.

### Sources

The following datasets have been used throughout the bulletin:  
 2023 Mid-year estimates, Office for National Statistics  
 2023 Components of Population Change, Office for National Statistics  
 2020 based Dorset Council Continuity projections, Experimental, Dorset Council

November  
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# State of Dorset Children



Experiences in a child's early years lay a foundation for health and wellbeing and our services for children and families have an important role in building future resilience.

By identifying those most at risk of poorer outcomes later on, our resources can be targeted where they are needed most so that we can respond to risk and vulnerability.

The number of 0-4 year olds is expected to decrease by about 500, while the number of 5-15 year olds is projected to decrease by about 5,000 between 2024 and 2034<sup>1</sup>.

Big Numbers Box

Sources 2 and 3

**66,000** total children

**63%** Pupils with an EHC Plan educated in mainstream schools

**446\*** Children and young people in care in Dorset

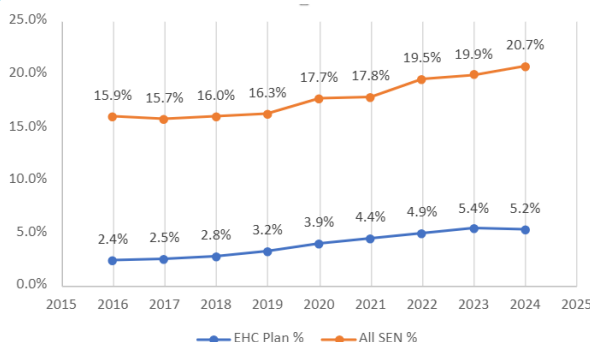
**68** Looked after children in every 10,000 in Dorset

Primary school children with an EHC SEN plan **3.7%**

**18%** Percentage of pupils achieving 9-5 in English and Maths (Free School Meals Gap)

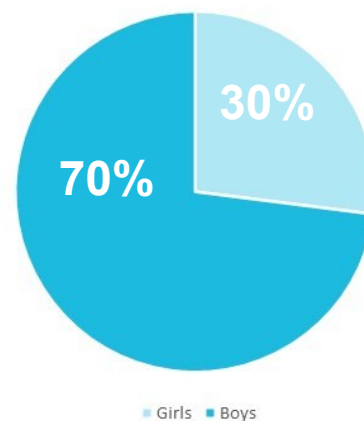
## Box 1: Special Educational Need<sup>3</sup>

### SEN Pupils in Dorset Council Schools



The percentage of children with Special Educational Need has increased in Dorset each year since 2017. The figure has increased from 17.8% in 2021 to 20.7% in 2024. The percentage with either a statement or an EHC Plan has increased every year since 2016, until this year. There has been a more pronounced increase since 2019 where the data has risen from 3.2% to 5.4% in 2023 before dropping to 5.2% in 2024.

### Dorset Council School Pupils Education, Health and Care (EHC Plan)



- One in four of pupils with an EHC plan has an Autistic Spectrum Condition and just over one in five have speech language and communication needs.
- It is likely that a pupil may have more than one special educational need.
- 63% of pupils with an EHC Plan are educated in Mainstream Schools in Dorset.
- 70% of Dorset Council School Pupils with an EHC are boys and 57% with SEN Support are boys. This is very similar to the national picture. The proportion of girls with SEN is increasing.

### Acronyms

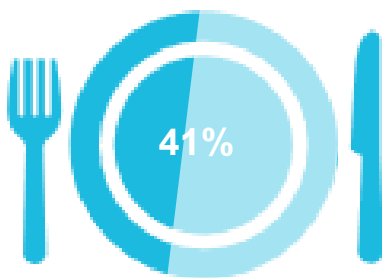
EHC = Education, Health and Care Plan  
FSM = Free School Meals  
SEN = Special Educational Needs  
\* Doesn't include unaccompanied asylum seeking children

## Box 2: Education

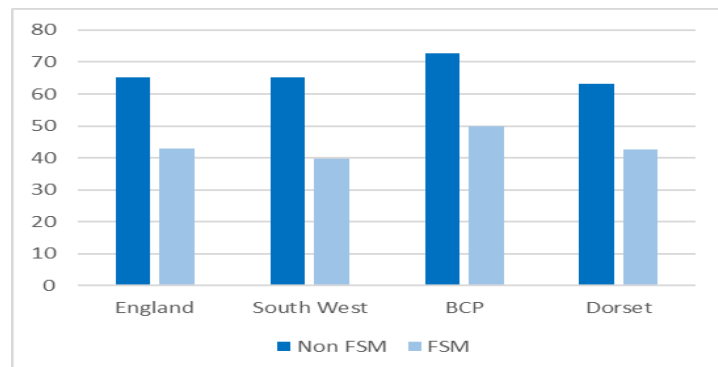
<sup>3</sup> data from 2024 n/a

- In 2024 67% of pupils achieved a 'Good Level of Development' at the end of Reception year, a decrease of 4% on 2019 the figure was very similar to the national figures.
- 63% of pupils achieved the 'Basics' measure (standard pass or higher in English and Maths GCSE). Of those on Free School Meals this figure is 22% lower at 41%.
- 20% of pupils eligible to claim Free School Meals, compared to the national average of 25%<sup>4</sup>.

### Pupils eligible for FSM achieving Basics measure at GCSE



### Percentage of Pupils GCSE pass English and Maths 2023/24



■ % FSM Grade 4 and upwards GCSE  
■ % Total Grade 4 and upwards GCSE

## Box 3: Post 16 opportunities

<sup>4</sup> (2024 data n/a)

- The percentage of 16 and 17 year olds in Dorset in education or training in 2023 was 90.6% this figure is much the same as for the South West 90.5% but lower than England 92.3%
- Accessing services is a considerable issue in rural Dorset, approximately 44% of Dorset residents fall within the top 20% most geographically access deprived in England for accessing a range of services including schools.
- Travel time in minutes to nearest further education college by public transport/walking in Dorset is 31 minutes which is in the top 10 highest of any Unitary Authority in England. This compares to 21 minutes for England and 25 minutes for the South West.

However, apprenticeship rates in Dorset at a 'Higher' level are strong with 1,922 participation rate for under 19s per 100,000 population. This compares to a figure of 382 for the South West and 332 for England. It is in fact the highest of any Unitary Authority in the country.

There are two levels of a 'Higher' apprenticeship Level 4 and Level 5:

- Level 4 apprenticeships are equivalent to the first year of an undergraduate degree, or a Higher National Certificate.

Level 5 apprenticeships are equivalent to a foundation degree, or a Higher National Diploma.

### Sources

- 1 2020-trend based population projections (experimental), Dorset Council
- 2 2023 MYE, 0-17 year-olds, ONS
- 3 Dorset Council, Children's Services 2022/23 and 2023/24
- 4 Local Government Inform 2022/23

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# State of Dorset Older People



The population of Dorset, like the rest of the UK, is ageing. This trend is more pronounced in Dorset due to its larger older population and declining birth rate. The median age in Dorset is now 52.3, an increase of almost 5 years since 2011. In comparison, the median age for England and Wales is 40.5, up by one year.<sup>1</sup>

Typically, 'Older People' refers to those who are no longer of working age, traditionally 65 and older. However, with increased life expectancy, more people are either having to work or choosing to work beyond the traditional retirement age.

Big Numbers Box

33,752

Population of 80+  
year olds in 2023

Aged 65+  
in Dorset 30%

In England  
& Wales 19%

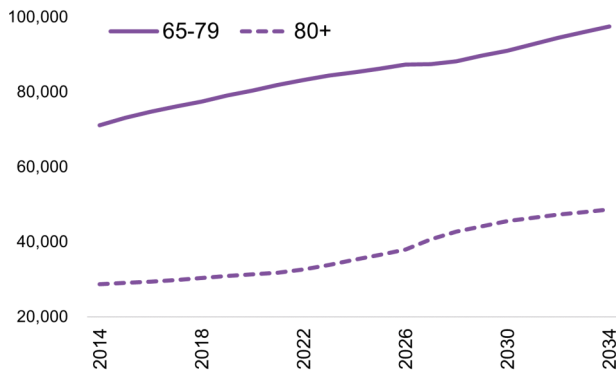
1.9% pa  
Growth in those  
aged 65+ over  
next decade

81 years  
Life expectancy males

85 years  
Life expectancy females

## Box 1: Population

### Population projection of older people



The population aged 65 to 79 increased by 20% from 2014 to 2024 and is expected to grow by another 14% by 2034.

The population aged 80 and older grew by 23% from 2014 to 2024 and is projected to increase by 38% by 2034.<sup>2</sup>



Nationwide migration of older people is driven by movement out of urban areas to rural and coastal areas. Net migration figures in Dorset are highest for the 60-64 yr old age group<sup>3</sup>.

The Old Age Dependency Ratio (OADR) measures the number of people over 65 per 1,000 people aged 16 to 64. In England and Wales, the OADR is 297, while in Dorset, it is 537<sup>1</sup>.



Nationally, 29% of household growth from 2018 to 2043 will involve householders over 75. In Dorset, this figure is 110%. This suggests that Dorset will see a doubling in households in this age group whilst for age groups under 55 household growth will fall.

## Box 2: Life expectancy & work

Life expectancy has been increasing at a slower rate in recent years. People aged 65 in Dorset can expect to live for a further 22.5 years for women and 19.8 years for men.<sup>5</sup>

People are living longer and healthier lives. In Dorset, healthy life expectancy at 65 is above average. Women can expect 19 more years in good/fairly good health, and men 16 years.

The life expectancy gap between Dorset's most and least deprived areas is 6.3 years for males and 5.3 years for females.<sup>7</sup>

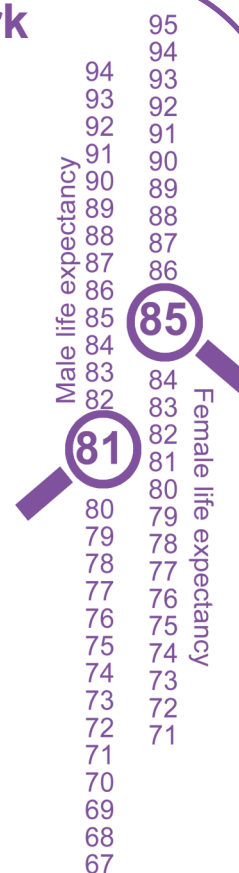


In Dorset, around 12,000 people aged 65+ are economically active and employed. This represents nearly 11% of this age group, indicating later retirement trends.

Additionally, 7% of the economically active population in Dorset are 65 or older, compared to 4% in England and Wales. This highlights a growing reliance on older individuals within the workforce.<sup>8</sup>



According to Census 2021, 32% of the 35,500 unpaid carers were aged 65 and over compared to 23% for England & Wales. As the population ages there will be increased need for informal care.



## Box 3: Living well<sup>9</sup>

- Some areas of Dorset experience higher levels of Living Environment deprivation. Older people and disabled people are more likely to need adaptations to enable them to live independently. Higher numbers of Listed properties and Conservation Areas can restrict the feasibility of making necessary changes.
- Dorset's older people account for almost one third of its population. Levels of internal net migration are highest in older age groups, particularly those aged 55 to 69 years, while levels of net out migration are particularly high for 18 to 29 year olds. This means there will be fewer people to work in the economy and care for our ageing population.
- As the population ages and more older people experience disabilities and health issues, the need for specialist housing will increase. It's estimated that 20% of all housing will need to be for older people. By 2038, there will be a projected shortfall of 2,800 specialist bedspaces.

### Sources

1. 2023 Mid-year estimates, Office for National Statistics
2. 2020-based trend population projections, DC
3. 2021 MYE Internal Migration Estimates, ONS
4. 2018 based Household Projections, ONS
5. Life expectancy at 65 (3 year range 2020-2022), ONS /PH
6. Healthy Life Expectancy (2020-20), ONS/PH
7. Office for Health Improvement and disparity (2020), Public Health England
8. Census 2021
9. Dorset and BCP Local Housing Needs Assessment, 2021



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# State of Dorset Deprivation



Deprivation has a significant impact on health and wellbeing. The Dorset Council areas of significant deprivation are largely located in the urban areas - in particular the former borough of Weymouth & Portland - but many of Dorset's rural communities could also be considered deprived in terms of barriers to housing and essential services. The English Indices of Deprivation divides the Dorset Council geography into 219 areas.

As the number of older people living in rural areas grows, the challenge of access to facilities and pressure on health and care services will accelerate.

Big Numbers Box

**11** areas of Dorset in most deprived nationally\*

Dorset population living in rural areas **46%**

Average house prices

**10** times higher than average earnings

**66** areas in most deprived nationally for **access to housing and services**

**25** areas in most deprived nationally for **education**

**9** areas in most deprived nationally for **income**

**14,800**

workless households

**13.5%**

live in workless households

## Box 1: Social deprivation

- There are 11 areas (out of a total of 219) in Dorset within the top 20% most deprived nationally for multiple deprivation, up from 10 in 2015.<sup>1</sup>
- 10 of these are within the former borough of Weymouth and Portland, one is in the former West Dorset District area.

11 areas in Dorset suffer high deprivation



Weymouth & Portland

West Dorset

### Life expectancy gap for females in Dorset



Most deprived area

Least deprived area

- The gap in life expectancy between the most deprived and least deprived areas of Dorset is 6.3 years for men and 5.3 years for women.<sup>2</sup>
- As indicators of social mobility, children receiving Free School Meals in Dorset achieve lower than the regional and national average education standard. South Dorset is third highest in the region for people aged 25-34 in unskilled employment.<sup>4</sup>
- 46% of Dorset's population live in rural areas<sup>3</sup>. Barriers to housing and essential services are significant in Dorset reflecting rurality and distance from services. 66 Dorset neighbourhoods fall in the 20% most deprived nationally for this measure: in the former council areas, 21 in North Dorset and 19 are in West Dorset.<sup>1</sup>

### Sources

- 1 English Indices of Deprivation (2019), DCLG
- 2 Office for Health Improvement and disparity, Public Health England, 2020
- 3 Census of Population, 2011
- 4 South-West Social Mobility Commission 2023 Report.pdf (exeter.ac.uk)

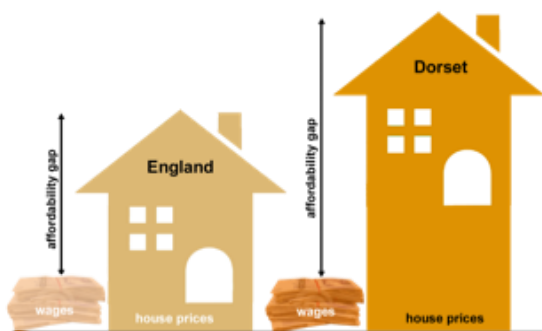
\*Most deprived = area fall within the top 20% nationally



## Box 2: Economic deprivation

- 9 neighbourhoods in Dorset fall into the top 20% nationally for income deprivation (up from 7 in 2015) - 7 of these are in the former borough of Weymouth and Portland<sup>1</sup>.
- In Dorset, about 17,200 people aged 16-64, plus 4,800 children live in 14,800 workless households. 13.5% of Dorset households were workless, very similar to the national figure.<sup>6</sup>

**Average house prices are 10x more than average earnings<sup>7</sup>**

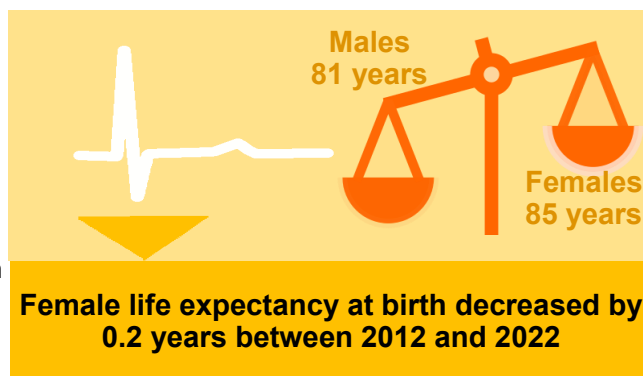


**Weekly earnings for people living in Dorset are**



## Box 3: Health inequalities

- Health inequalities are avoidable, unfair and systematic differences in health between different groups of people.
- Health inequalities can involve differences in health status such as: life expectancy and prevalence of health conditions; access to and experience of care. They can also alter levels of patient satisfaction; behavioural risks to health; and wider determinants of health, including quality of housing.
- Health inequality isn't just about the place you live or how much disposable income you have. Some people identify with several protected characteristics and may face multiple barriers.
- In the last 10 years, female life expectancy at birth has fallen from 85.0 years to 84.8 years, while male life expectancy has stayed the same at 80.8 years.
- The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic led to increased mortality in 2020 and 2021, and the impact of this is seen in the regional and local area life expectancy estimates<sup>8</sup>



### Sources

<sup>5</sup> Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2023), ONS (full time gross weekly earnings)

<sup>6</sup> Annual Population Survey (2023), Households by combined economic activity status, ONS

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/housingpriceslocal/E06000059/>; Annual Survey of Hours of Earnings (2023), ONS (full time gross weekly earnings)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/lifeexpectancyforlocalareasoftheuk/between2001to2003and2020to2022#main-points>

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October  
2024

# State of Dorset Economy



The UK grapples with a productivity gap, trailing behind G7 counterparts in output per hour.<sup>14</sup> In Dorset, our local productivity lags, producing 12% less per hour compared to the national average.<sup>3</sup>

Big Numbers Box

20,000 businesses

£1.6bn Value of Dorset's productivity gap<sup>3</sup>

145,000 employees

44% of workforce aged 50+

£616

weekly pay for full-time employees working in Dorset

Expected fall in the working age population over the next 10 years

-7,300

## Box 1: Businesses

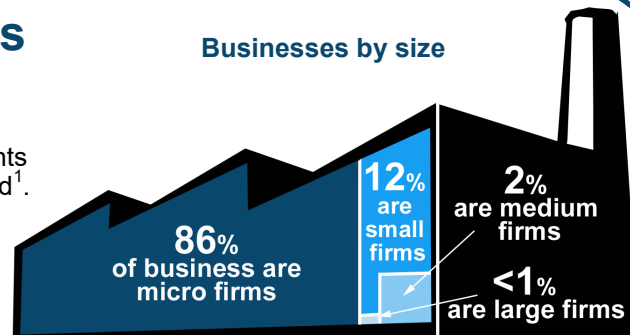
- Although business survival is good, we have fewer than average new business startups, with 73 to every 10,000 residents aged 16-64 compared with 84 in England<sup>1</sup>.

- And we have smaller business units: just 7 employees per unit compared with 10 in England<sup>2</sup>.

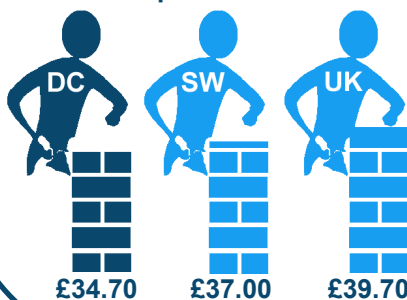
- Whilst large firms represent less than one per cent of Dorset's business stock, they employ about a fifth of the workforce. Ensuring the availability of suitable employment land, such as the Dorset Innovation Park with larger sites and units, provides a growth opportunity for local businesses. This not only prevents the outflow of existing firms but also attracts new businesses, creating additional job opportunities.

- Dorset's competitiveness, though improving, currently ranks 209 out of 362 local authorities. This marks an advance from 2019 when the ranking stood at 222.<sup>4</sup>

### Businesses by size



### GVA per hour worked<sup>3</sup>



- While Dorset boasts above-average representation in advanced engineering and manufacturing, it lags behind in businesses associated with high productivity<sup>5</sup> and high R&D spending sectors.<sup>6</sup>

- Self-employment among economically active residents has risen to 20%, up from 13% in 2011, compared to 16% in England.<sup>7</sup>

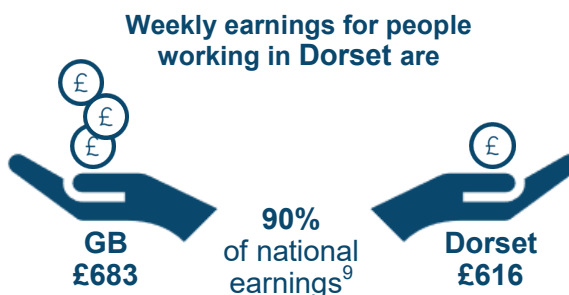
## Sources

- 1 Business Demography 2022, ONS
- 2 UK Businesses 2023 and BRES 2022, ONS
- 3 Gross Value Added - GVA per hour worked (provisional) 2022, ONS
- 4 UK Competitiveness Index 2023, Centre for International Competitiveness

- 5 UK Businesses 2023
- 6 As defined in UK Gross domestic expenditure on research and development: 2017, ONS
- 7 Census 2011 & 2021, ONS

## Box 2: People

- Manufacturing, health, retail, education and hospitality are all big employers in Dorset.<sup>10</sup>
- 14 neighbourhoods in Dorset are in the most deprived 20% nationally for employment<sup>8</sup> - 10 of these are in the former borough of Weymouth & Portland.



- 44% of the Dorset workforce is aged over 50 compared with 34% in England.<sup>10</sup> This is an increase of 22% in ten years. Older workers have experience and skills and, as more people retire, other workers need training to fill the gaps.



- Over the next decade, the population in Dorset aged 16-64 will shrink by -0.4% per annum. That's a net loss of over 7,300 people in this age group. The old age dependency ratio, is expected to increase from 570 per 1,000 in 2023 to 720 per 1,000 in 2033.<sup>11</sup>
- Around 2,390 apprenticeships were started in Dorset in 2023/24.<sup>12</sup> It is estimated that for every £1 of public money spent on apprenticeships, an economic benefit of £21 is generated.<sup>13</sup>

## Box 3: The national economy

- The economy experienced a modest growth of 0.5% in the three months leading up to July 2024, reflecting a gradual recovery.<sup>15</sup>
- Inflation rates have remained a concern, with consumer prices falling steadily. The annual inflation rate was recorded at 3.1% in the 12 months to August 2024.<sup>16</sup>
- The job market showed resilience, with employment levels remaining stable. The unemployment rate hovered around 4%, indicating a relatively healthy labour market.<sup>17</sup>
- The economy is estimated to have grown by 0.5% in the three months to June 2024, driven mainly by the service sector. In contrast, manufacturing output declined during this period.<sup>18</sup>

### Sources

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 8 English Indices of Deprivation (2019), DCLG   | 13 The Economic Impact of Apprenticeships, 2014, Centre for Economic and Business Research |
| 9 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2022), ONS                                       | 14 International comparisons of UK productivity (ICP), final estimates: 2021               |
| 10 Census of Population (2021), workplace statistics                                    | 15 GDP monthly estimate, UK: July 2024, ONS  |
| 11 2020-based experimental continuity population projections, 2023-2033, Dorset Council | 16 Consumer price inflation, UK: August 2024, ONS  |
| 12 Apprenticeship starts 2023-24, The Department for Education                          | 17 Labour market overview, UK: September 2024, ONS   |
|   | 18 GDP quarterly national accounts, April to June 2024                                     |

December 2024

# State of Dorset Housing



Decent homes can result in a better quality of life. Good housing can improve health and financial well-being, helping residents feel safe and secure. It helps to support thriving communities and access to a safe and suitable home provides children with the best start in life.

Housing plays a key role in economic growth and employment opportunities for individuals and businesses.

Big Numbers Box

**70.4%**

of Dorset homes are owner-occupied.

**£350,000** Average house price

**16.3%** Private rent

Shared Ownership 1%

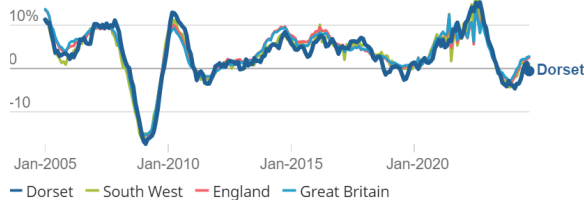
**23,414** Units of social housing

**12.3%** Social Housing

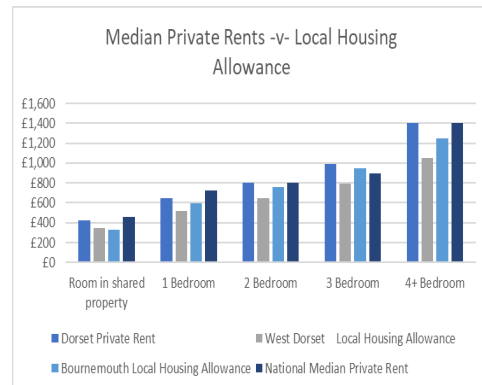
## Box 1: Housing Costs

### Annual change in house prices in Dorset

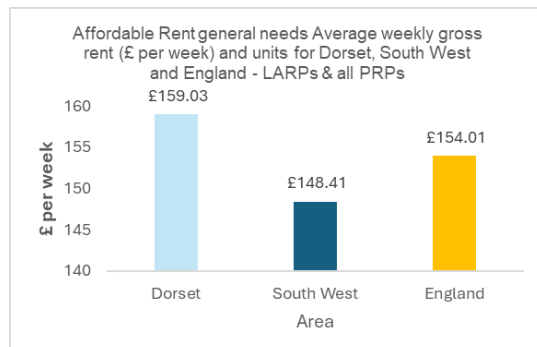
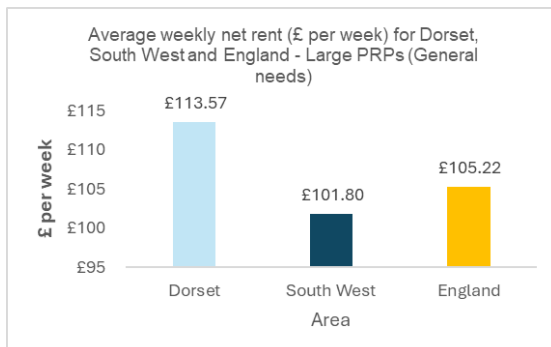
House price annual inflation, Dorset, January 2005 to September 2024



Source: UK House Price Index from Office for National Statistics and HM Land Registry



In the last twenty years, annual house prices have, in general, been on the rise, apart from a significant drop during the economic crash of 2008 and recent economic uncertainty. Dorset prices are higher than both the national and regional prices. Whilst median private rental costs are on par with the national rents, the gap between local housing allowance and rents has widened. Local Housing Allowance is used to calculate the maximum amount people renting from a private landlord can claim in Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. Local Housing Allowance was capped in 2016 but is due to increase in 2024.



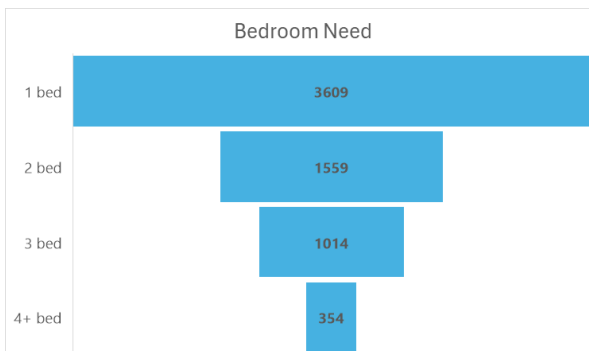
The figures above show the average cost to rent a housing association property at either a social rent or an affordable rent. Affordable rents are calculated based on 80% of the market rent in our area. As market rent increases, so does the affordable rent cost.

## Box 2: Housing Needs

Housing Register	2024
Band A Emergency Need	333
Band B High Need	984
Band C Medium Need	1,620
Band D Low Need	3,599

As at 31st October 2024 6,536 households were registered for housing through Homechoice Dorset, the register for those people seeking a move to social housing.

Bedroom Needs data



Across Dorset, 77.9% of homes are under-occupied by one or more bedrooms. With 64.2% of Dorset homes having 3 or more bedrooms.

The census says that 3,496 households with dependant children live in overcrowded conditions. 970 of these have applied to join the waiting list for social housing.

Whilst the biggest need is for smaller properties, families needing larger homes often wait longer to move. This is because larger homes rarely become available. During the 12 months to March 2023, 20 properties with 4 or more bedrooms were let through Homechoice Dorset.

The top heavy shape of the housing need for those who have applied to the housing register is reflected in the homeless approaches made to the Council.

Over half of emergency homeless households have a one bedroom need.

Approximately a quarter are waiting for a two bedroom property.

## Box 3: Homelessness Demand

There was a 3.5% increase in homeless approaches in the year to March 2023.

The service receives:

- Average 583 calls per month. Each call lasting up to 30 minutes.
- Average of 2,250 emails each month
- More than 4,200 contacts from the online portal
- Initial enquiries resulted in 2,394 homeless assessments

### Main reasons given for homelessness

Evicted by family
End of private rented accommodation
Relationship breakdown
Victim of domestic abuse
Friends no longer willing to accommodate
Loss of social housing
Home no longer suitable

### Sources

The following datasets have been used throughout the bulletin:  
Regulator of Social Housing—RP Social Housing by Local Authority Area 2023-2024  
Huume Housing Register Data  
Office for National Statistics Housing Data

November  
2024

# State of Dorset Health and Wellbeing



Dorset residents are generally healthy, have a high life satisfaction rating and feel that the things they do in their lives are worthwhile. Dorset has a growing number of older people which will increase demand for health and social care services so it is important to use local evidence to anticipate need and target service provision as effectively as possible.

Health and wellbeing can be influenced by where we live, our behaviours, our work and our leisure activities. Health behaviours impact on both physical and mental health - and many people may be affected by more than one. Healthy populations live longer, and are more productive making a contribution to the economy as well as maintaining personal wellbeing.

## Big Numbers Box

**12,000** Dorset residents likely to be living with dementia by 2035

**32%** Dorset year 6 children overweight or obese

**3,965** domestic abuse incidents in Dorset last year

**65%** Dorset adults overweight or obese

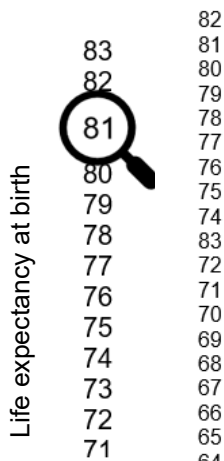
Every **£1** invested in Live Well Dorset, generated a public return of £12 in prevented ill-health

**16 years** difference between male healthy and overall life expectancy

Smoking prevalence in Dorset **10%**

## Box 1: Health

### Male life expectancy in Dorset



- Healthy life expectancy is the number of years a person would be expected to live in good health. In Dorset, there is a difference of 16 years between healthy life expectancy and overall life expectancy for males and 19 years for females<sup>1</sup>.

### % year six children who are overweight or obese



- 65% of adults in Dorset are classified as overweight or obese; worse than the national average (64%) and a great concern due to the life-threatening conditions it can lead to<sup>2</sup>.

- Residents in Dorset are more likely to be unpaid carers: 10% of residents compared to 9% in England<sup>3</sup>. There are now around 35,500 unpaid carers in Dorset.

- Smoking prevalence continues to fall both nationally and locally, . 10% of adults in Dorset currently smoke compared to 12% in England<sup>2</sup>.

- 162 people were killed or seriously injured on Dorset's roads in 2023, possibly due to Dorset's high proportion of rural roads<sup>4</sup>. Nationally more than half of all fatal collisions occur on rural roads.

## Sources

1 Health state life expectancy at birth by local areas, Public Health Fingertips 2024 and ONS 2004  
2 Public Health Fingertips 2023 (3 year range) <https://www.rospa.com/road-safety/advice/road-users/rural/> [26/09/2024]  
3 2021 Census, TS039

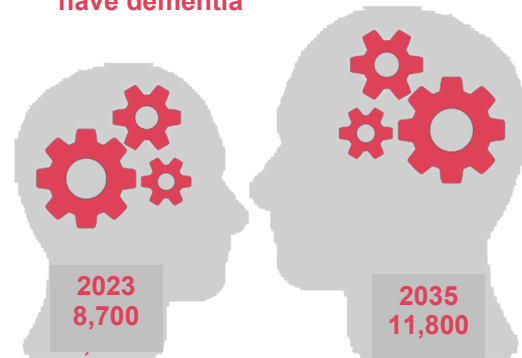
4 Dorset Council, 2014



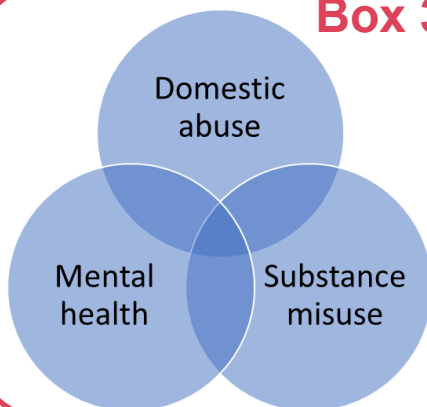
## Box 2: Mental health

- By 2035, we expect to see almost 12,000 people aged 65+ living with dementia in Dorset<sup>5</sup>. It is estimated one million unpaid carers nationally provide care to people with dementia<sup>6</sup>.
- National rates of probable mental health conditions have stabilised, affecting roughly 20% of children<sup>7</sup>.
- A similar stabilising picture has been seen in national armed forces personnel, with 1 in 8 being seen in military healthcare for a mental health related reason<sup>8</sup>.
- In 2022-3, almost 5 million people were receiving talking therapies or secondary mental health services<sup>9</sup>.

People aged 65+ predicted to have dementia



## Box 3: Substance use



- In Dorset, admission rates for alcohol related harm for under 18s were almost double the national average, at 45.4 per 100,000, compared to 26 per 100,000<sup>10</sup>.
- Nationally £1 invested in adult drug treatment services, generates a social return of £4<sup>11</sup>.
- Just under 4,000 domestic abuse incidents were reported in Dorset last year<sup>12</sup>.

## Box 4: Improving outcomes

- Social determinants are a diverse range of social, economic and environmental factors which impact on people's health and strongly link with disparities in health outcomes, being widely considered as the 'causes of the causes'.
- Since 2015, LiveWell Dorset has been supporting residents to improve their health and wellbeing through targeted activity, weight, alcohol and smoking support<sup>13</sup>. For every £1 spent through the service, a public return of £12 was generated in prevented ill health<sup>13</sup>.
- Fewer children accessing Free School Meals (FSM) achieved a good level of development at the end of Reception in Dorset than nationally<sup>14</sup>. And a much lower proportion of children (20% less) received a standard pass or higher in GCSE English or Maths than those not on Free School Meals. This highlights the disparity of educational attainment between pupils from lower income backgrounds and other pupils.
- Every school in the country receives a financial premium based on each child who is eligible for FSM, nationally it is thought that a significant proportion of families whose children are eligible do not claim, meaning schools miss out on funding that could help those schools fund support to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.

### Sources

- 5 POPPI, 2024
- 6 2023 Dementia Carers Count
- 7 Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2023 - wave 4 follow up to the 2017 survey, NHS Digital
- 8 UK armed forces mental health annual statistics: financial year 2023/24, Gov.UK
- 9 Mental health statistics: prevalence, services and funding in England, UK Parliament, 2024
- 10 Hospital admissions episodes for alcohol specific conditions, under 18s, Public Health Fingertips, 2021-2023
- 11 Alcohol and drugs prevention, treatment and recovery: why invest?, Public Health England, 12/02/18
- 12 Domestic abuse in Dorset Council – Dorset Police 2023/24
- 13 Director of Public Health Report 2022/23
- 14 Dorset Council, Children's Services 2023/24



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# State of Dorset Diversity



There are many definitions available for the term 'diversity' but they all cover the same fundamental issues. These include the recognition of differences, respecting those differences and appreciating the fact that different perspectives are valuable and can bring real benefits to society in general. There are nine protected characteristics to which the General public sector equality duty apply.

- age
- disability
- sex
- religion & belief
- gender identity
- sexual orientation
- marriage & civil partnership
- pregnancy & Maternity
- ethnicity

We also have local protected Characteristics:

Armed Forces Personnel, Rural Isolation, Carers, Social and Economic Deprivation and Lone Parents

Big Numbers Box

**30%** of Dorset's population is aged 65+

**20%** of all residents have a health condition that limits their day to day activities

**2.2%** identify as LGBTQ+

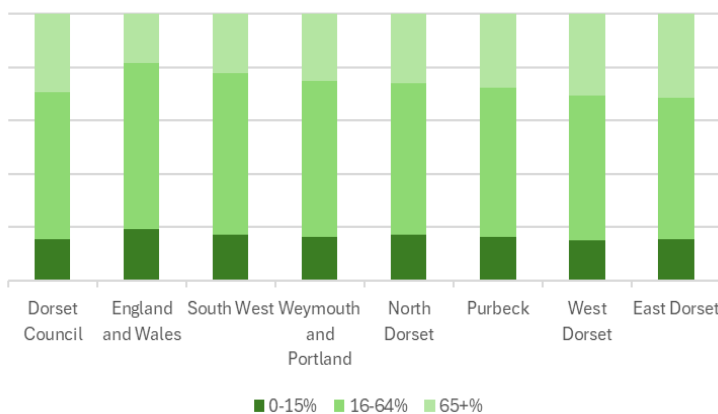
**0.3%\*** have a gender identity that is different from that assigned at birth

**6.1%** of Dorset's residents are from an ethnic minority

**6,820** follow a non-Christian religion

## Box 1: Age & religion

Age Structure in the former District Council areas, 2023



- Dorset has a much greater proportion (**30%**) of the population aged 65 and over than England and Wales (**18%**)<sup>1</sup>.
- West and East former districts have almost one in three residents aged 65 and over<sup>1</sup>.
- The five major non-Christian world religions Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism constitute **1%** of Dorset's residents' religious beliefs<sup>2</sup>.

- Dorset's main non-Christian religious groups are concentrated in Dorset's towns. 0.5% of Weymouth's residents are of Muslim faith. There are also concentrations around military establishments such as Blandford Camp where the Gurkhas and their families live who are predominantly Buddhist or Hindu in their religious belief<sup>2</sup>. This combines nationally and locally recognised protected characteristics.

### Sources

<sup>1</sup> Mid-year population estimates (2023), ONS

<sup>2</sup> Census 2021, ONS

\* Please note this data has been reclassified by the ONS as Official Statistics in development

## Box 2: Ethnic Minorities

### Breakdown by % of Dorset's ethnic minority residents

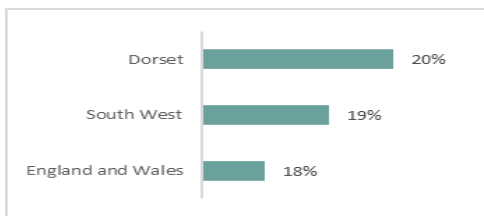


- **(6.1%)** of Dorset residents are from an ethnic minority, much lower than the country as a whole **(19.5%)<sup>2</sup>**. The graphic above illustrates the make-up of Dorset's ethnic minorities by proportion.
- The highest proportion (40%) of Dorset's ethnic minority population are classified as 'White Other'<sup>2</sup>. This includes people who identify as white but who do not have a British national identity (English, Welsh Scottish, Northern Irish). An example would be Polish or Bulgarian. The next highest are Mixed Multiple ethnic groups which make up 19% of ethnic minorities followed by Asian, Asian British that make up 18% of the ethnic minority groups in Dorset Council area.

## Box 3: Disability

- 20% of Dorset's population are classified as disabled under the Equality Act 2010 definition<sup>2</sup>.
- Another method for looking at the number of residents with a disability is to consider those claiming either Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments or Attendance Allowance<sup>3</sup>.

### % of Dorset residents with long-term health problem or disability



### % of Dorset residents claiming a disability benefit



## Box 4: Gender, sexual and relationship diversity

- The Census 2021 asked new questions about sexual orientation and whether an individual's gender identity\* differed from how they were assigned at birth<sup>4</sup>.
- The new Census questions reflects how our understanding of different experiences and the language that goes with these changes over time. In recent years there has been an increase in the terminology surrounding gender identity and expression.
- In Dorset, 2.2% of our population shared they were gay, lesbian, bisexual or had another, non-heterosexual, sexual orientation, approximately 7,000 residents. This compared to 3.1% in both England and Wales and the South West<sup>5</sup>.
- Between 0.3-0.4%\* of residents in Dorset, the South West and England and Wales shared their gender identity differed from how they were assigned at birth\*. Dorset residents identifying as gender diverse were lowest at 0.3%\*. Both questions on sexual orientation and gender identity were voluntary, for those aged 16 and over only.

### Sources

3 Stat-Xplore, Department of Work and Pensions, February 2024 & LG Inform 2024, 2021 Census, ONS

4 Preparing for the 2021 census (England and Wales), UK Parliament

5 Census 2021, ONS \* Please note this data has been reclassified by the ONS as Official Statistics in development

December  
2024

# State of Dorset Leisure and Culture



Recent data reveals that 89% of adults engaged in the arts at least once in the past year, highlighting the widespread appeal and importance of cultural activities. Additionally, 67% of people visited a heritage site, and 33% visited a museum or gallery.<sup>16</sup>

While activity rates among Dorset's young people have improved over the last five years, nearly half are physically inactive and nearly a third are overweight. Physical activity is associated with reduced health risks and improved mental health.<sup>3</sup>

Big Numbers Box

£333m

Value of the arts and entertainment sectors to the Dorset economy<sup>4</sup>

£1.8m

Funding rec'd from Arts Council England 2023/24

76%

Of older people say that arts & culture helps them feel happy

65%

Of Dorset's adults are overweight<sup>3</sup>

3,000

Young people play in the Dorset Youth Football League

73%

Of Dorset's adults are physically active<sup>3</sup>

## Box 1: Health and wellbeing value

- Arts and cultural intervention can have a positive impact on specific health conditions such as dementia, Parkinson's and depression<sup>1</sup>. The BSO and arts in hospital partnership saw the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra performing live to patients living with dementia to increase their wellbeing. The project found that dementia patients benefitted through fewer falls, reduced medication, and reduced hospital stays<sup>7</sup>.
- Nearly half of older people (43%) say that accessibility is an important factor when they choose arts venues to attend<sup>2</sup>.
- Overall 76% of people aged 65+ say that arts & culture is important to making them feel happy. And nearly as many (69%) say that arts and culture is important in improving their overall quality of life<sup>2</sup>.

76% of older people say arts & culture makes them feel happy



## Sources

1 Create, Arts Council England, December 2015

2 <http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/arts-council-england-older-people-poll/> [Accessed 03/07/18]

3 PHE Public Health Outcome (PHOF) Indicators, 2022/23

4 Regional gva (balanced) by industry in current prices, Table 3b, Office for National Statistics, 2022

5 BRES, Employees, 2022, ONS, 2015 to 2022

## Box 2: Engagement & Economic Value

- Research has shown that Artsreach, a Dorset-based arts organisation, enhances public funding by an estimated 93%. This significant impact is largely due to the 'volunteer multiple,' which brings additional time, commitment, and expertise to arts administration in Dorset.<sup>6</sup>
- There are 11 competitive youth football leagues operating across Dorset. Five leagues for girls and six mixed leagues from Under 12 to under 16s. There are also hundreds of youngsters playing in non-competitive leagues from under 7 through to under 11.<sup>12</sup>
- Dorset was awarded just under £2.2m across 29 awards from Arts Council England for 2023/24.<sup>11</sup>
- Employment in the Creative Industries in Dorset has also been growing - up by over 40% between 2015 and 2022.<sup>5</sup>
- For every £1 invested in the Arts Development Company by the council there is a return of £4 secured in external investment into the area.<sup>7</sup>
- Dorset Art Weeks is one of the longest-established art events in the country, having first started in 1992. This year saw over 260 venues featured, with activities and exhibitions celebrating fine art, craft, and making across the county.<sup>15</sup>



**Every £1 spent locally is matched four times over in external benefit to Dorset**

## Box 3: Tourism

- Whilst Dorset has seen a strong recovery in post-pandemic tourism spending, it remains around 15% below 2019 figures.<sup>9</sup>
- Overseas visitor numbers have rebounded strongly since Covid with English attractions reporting an 80% increase in 2023.<sup>14</sup>
- Leisure and Culture Consumption Expenditure Per Head was £2,300 for Dorset in 2018.<sup>8</sup>
- Dorset was successful in round two of the Levelling Up Fund, securing over £19m for Weymouth Waterside Regeneration.<sup>10</sup>
- Dorset's Jurassic Coast, a World Heritage site, featured in the BBC documentary 'Attenborough and the Giant Sea Monster', telling of the discovery and excavation of a Pliosaurus skull. The skull is now on show at the Etches Collection museum in Kimmeridge.<sup>13</sup>

### Sources

6 Artsreach

7 The Arts Development Company

8 Regional Household Final Consumption Expenditure (Experimental statistics), ONS, 2018

9 The Economic Impact of Dorset's Visitor Economy 2022, The South West Research Co Ltd

10 Levelling Up Round Two Successful Bids, The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

11 National Investment Dashboard, Arts Council England, (Accessed 30/09/24)

12 <https://www.dorsetyouthfootballleague.co.uk/> (Accessed 30/09/24)

13 <https://www.theetchescollection.org/giant-sea-monster> (Accessed 02/10/24)

14 Visitor Attraction Trends in England 2023, Visit England (p.37)

15 <https://dorsetvisualarts.org/about-us/daw> and <https://dorsetvisualarts.org/about-us> (Accessed 02/10/24)

16 Participation in the arts, culture and heritage, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 23/02/24

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# State of Dorset

## Natural and Historic Environment



Dorset's natural and historic environment makes a huge contribution to health and personal wellbeing, as well as to the economy.

Our natural systems provide a wide range of essential goods (food, fuel, productive soil, clean air and water) and beneficial services (pollination, flood alleviation, climate regulation and tranquillity).

The high quality natural environment that is so cherished by people living and working in Dorset means that we work hard to deliver mechanisms such as the Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework to ensure that development is led sustainably.

Big Numbers Box

**0.5%** of waste is sent to landfill compared to 35% 10 years ago

**20%** Local renewable generation as % of total electricity consumption<sup>12</sup>

**5%** of England's ancient monuments are in Dorset

**90%**

of residents prioritised the environment in choosing to live here

**56%**

of county covered by two National Landscape designations

Listed Buildings in Dorset **9,216**

### Box 1: Landmarks & Landscapes

- 90% of Dorset's\* residents surveyed said the environment was an important, very important or crucial factor in their decision to live in Dorset. In addition, businesses report a demonstrable positive impact from both the Jurassic Coast and the National Landscape.<sup>1</sup>
- Dorset contains part of England's only natural World Heritage Site and two National Landscapes, covering 56% of the Dorset Council area.<sup>2</sup>
- Dorset is home to 9,216 Listed Buildings of which 245 are Grade I.<sup>3</sup> 5% of all national protected monuments are in Dorset.
- Dorset's coast is recognised in national and international designations for its unique landscape, scenic quality, wildlife and geological formations.<sup>2</sup>

Dorset is home to...



84% Reptiles & Amphibians



63% Birds



90% Land mammals



79% Butterflies



76% Dragonflies

#### Sources

\*includes Christchurch

- 1 'Dorset's Environmental Economy', Ash Futures for Dorset County Council, Dorset AONB, Jurassic Coast WHS, Dorset LNP, 2015
- 2 Dorset Databook 2011, Dorset County Council (recalculated)
- 3 The National Heritage List for England (NHLE), Historic England, 2024
- 4 The Clean Growth Strategy, Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 12/10/2017
- 5 Public Health and Landscape, Creating healthy places, Landscape Institute, November 2013

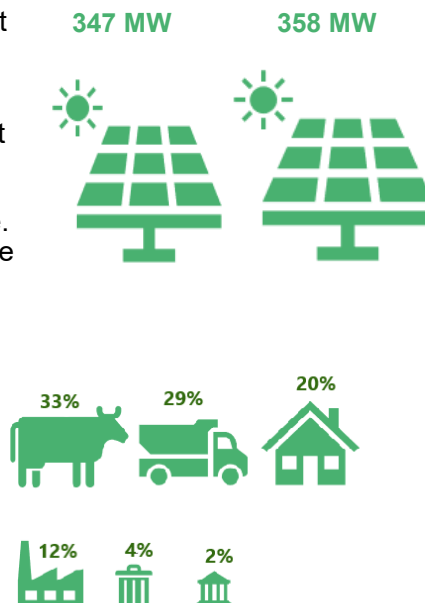
## Box 2: Economy and wellbeing

- Dorset's\* environmental economy is worth between £0.9bn and £2.5bn per annum. It also supports between 17,000 and 61,000 jobs in the economy.<sup>1</sup>
- The low carbon economy could grow by 11% per year between 2015 and 2030 - four times faster than the rest of the economy.<sup>4</sup>
- A green job is one that protects or restores the environment, including those that mitigate or adapt to climate change. This is a new area of research, but the ONS estimates that around 4% of jobs nationwide fall within this category.<sup>9</sup>
- Access to nature has physical and mental health benefits, so improving access is important in reducing environmental inequality.
- The landscape can reduce the need for expensive public health interventions. Local public health spending on the landscape can be 27 times more cost effective than clinical interventions<sup>5</sup>.



## Box 3: Climate and Renewable Energy

- Dorset's greenhouse gas emissions fell by 6% from 2021-2022, and by a 37% since 2005. But much more is required, and reductions in county emissions are off target to get to net zero by 2050.<sup>7</sup>
- Dorset generates far more renewable electricity than most local authorities in England, at 355,574 MWh in 2023.<sup>6</sup>
- Dorset's renewable energy capacity continues to increase. It now stands at 358 MW (2023), an increase of 25% in the last five years.<sup>6</sup>
- While renewable energy production has increased, Dorset continues to lag behind Cornwall and Devon who are the leaders in the SW.<sup>7</sup>
- Our county footprint is comprised of agriculture (33%), transport (29%), homes (20%), commercial and industrial buildings (12%), waste (4%) and public sector buildings (2%).<sup>10</sup>



### Sources

\*includes Christchurch

6 Renewable electricity by local authority 2014 - 2023, Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ)

7 UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005-2022, (DESNZ)

8 Recycling Team, Dorset Council

9 Experimental estimates of green jobs, UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

10 Sustainability Team, Dorset Council



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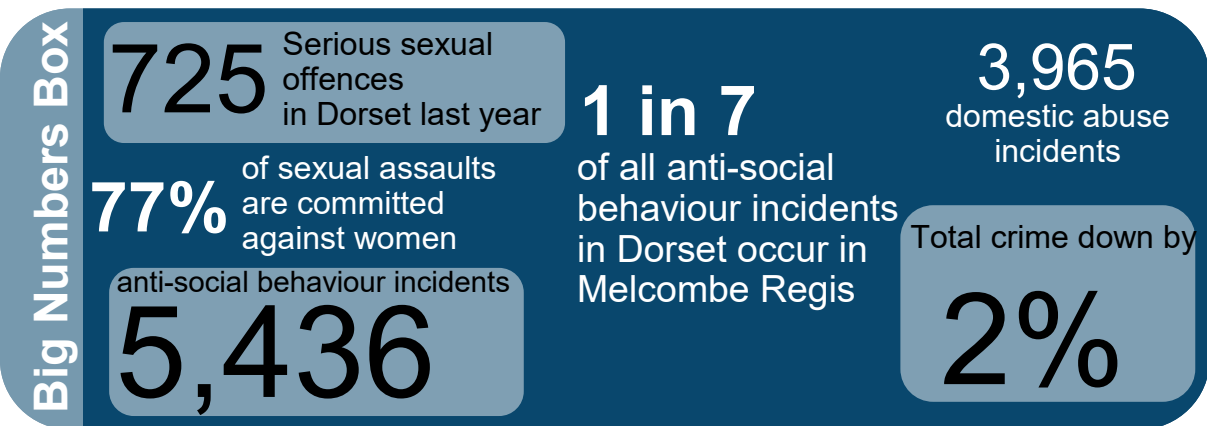
# State of Dorset Crime



In a national context, crime in the Dorset Council area is consistently very low, well below the average in England.

Data relates to the 2023/24 fiscal year unless stated otherwise.

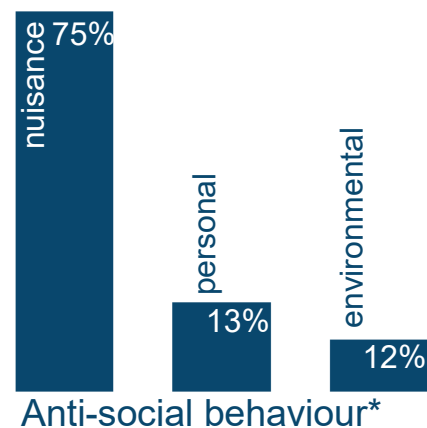
Total recorded crime has fallen by 2% in this fiscal year compared to last year<sup>1</sup>, and anti-social behaviour incidents have decreased by 14% from last year. The number of domestic abuse incidents have increased by 2% since the last financial year.



## Box 1: Dorset Community Safety Partnership Priorities<sup>1</sup>

- Sexual Offences
- Domestic Abuse and Stalking
- Serious and Public Place Violence
- Fraud
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Rural Crime

- In 2023-24 there were 5,436 incidents of **anti-social behaviour** in the Dorset Council area.
- 75% of these were classified as nuisance, 13% personal and 12% environmental.
- Weymouth has the highest rate of anti-social behaviour across the Dorset Council area.
- There were 725 serious **sexual offences** in the Dorset Council area last year.
- There were 3,965 **domestic abuse** incidents in the Dorset Council area last year.



\* 'directed towards a community' 'directed towards a person' or 'directed at the local area'

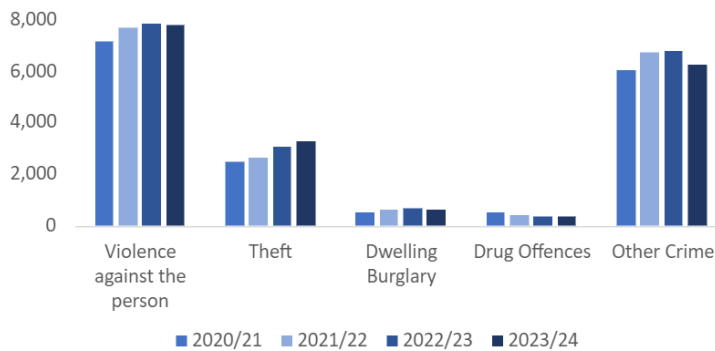
### Sources

1 Community Safety Partnership Performance Reporting, 2023/24



## Box 2: Other Crime

Crimes in the Dorset Council Area



- Total crimes were slightly lower this year than in the previous year.
  - East Dorset is the former district with the lowest crime rate in Dorset...and Weymouth and Portland has the highest.
  - Crime is highest in Dorset between April and June each year, which could be because of the better weather and the longer daylight hours.
  - In 2023 68% of residents surveyed across Dorset said that they felt safe in their local area after dark a significant drop since 2019 (77%).
- In the last year<sup>1</sup>:**
- Residential Burglary accounts for 87% of acquisitive crimes
  - While Robbery accounts for 13%
  - Most Robbery took place in Weymouth
  - While most Burglaries occurred in East Dorset
  - Compared to other areas, crime in the Dorset Council area is consistently low. Last year, Dorset had a lower crime rate than most council areas<sup>3</sup>.

## Box 3: Hate Crime<sup>4</sup>

- A hate crime or incident is any criminal offence or non-criminal incidence, perceived by the victim or any other person, as being motivated by prejudice or hate towards a person's protected characteristic.
- One of the focuses of local policing when tackling Hate Crime is on building trust and confidence in reporting and ensuring that everyone knows how to report a hate crime or incident. Third-party reporting centres and trusted community partners are key to this.
- Hate crimes are reported separately to racially and religiously aggravated crimes, the number of hate crimes and incidents for the financial year 2023/24 across Dorset Council were 27. The number of racially/religiously aggravated crime fell from 90 last year to 85 this year.
- The council is a member of Prejudice Free Dorset, a partnership group made up of local agencies that seeks to promote inclusive communities and challenge prejudice cross Dorset, so everyone can go about their daily lives safely and with confidence<sup>5</sup>.

### Sources

<sup>3</sup> [Compare your area | Police.uk \(www.police.uk\)](https://www.police.uk)

<sup>4</sup> Dorset Police, 2023/24

<sup>5</sup> Prejudice Free Dorset