

December
2025

State of Dorset Population



Population projections and changes in Dorset's demographic profile support planning by indicating how service demands and provision, housing demand, and business needs may evolve. Population change is influenced by natural change (births and deaths) and by migration into and out of the area.

Big Numbers Box

5.1%

projected population change
2025-2035

389,950

total est.
population in
2024

2.3%

per
year

65+ projected
population change
2025-2035

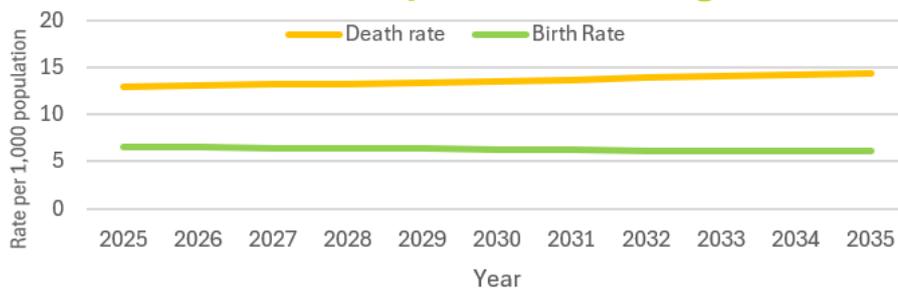
27,700

Total increase in
+65 2025-2035, an
increase of 2.3%pa

6,540

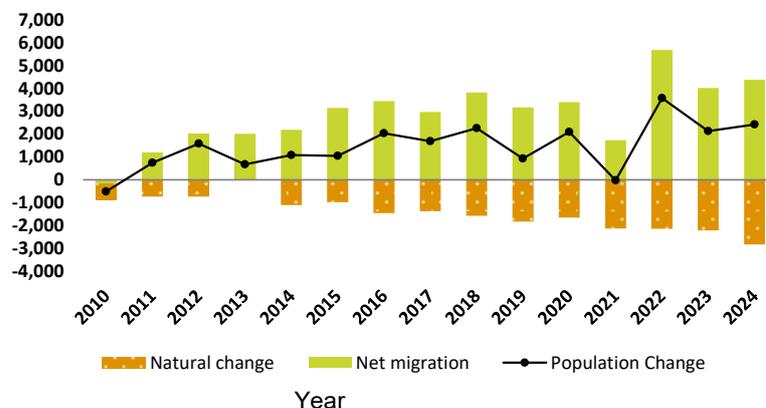
decrease in 0
to 15 yrs age
group
2025-2035

Box 1: Population Change



The birth rate in Dorset is projected to fall from 6.6 per 1,000 population in 2025 to 6.1 per 1,000 population in ten years' time. Total number of births in the year 2024/25 were 2,660, total deaths were 4,877.

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 that net migration makes to population growth. Net migration in the year 2023-2024 was 5,100. Mostly internal migration.



The figure above shows the components of change for each year. Note: from 2022 onwards, figures are projected.

Over the period 2011-2021, Dorset's population grew by 14,400, a growth of 4% compared with 7% nationally. Over the period 2025 to 2035, the population is projected to grow by another 5% which is the same as the national population.

Box 2: Age breakdown of population

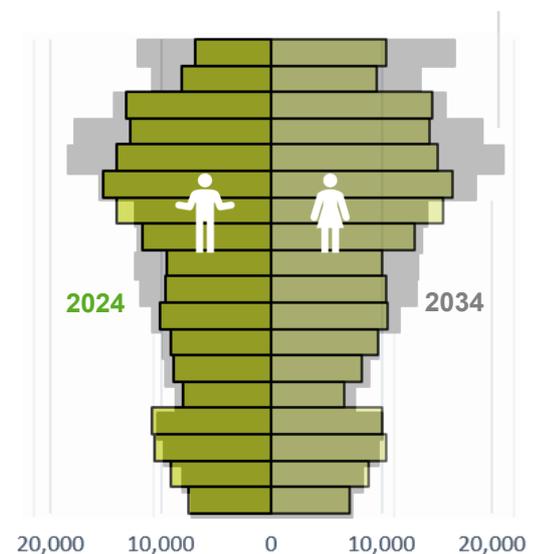
	2013	2023	2033
0-15 yrs	59,600	57,600	50,400
16-64 yrs	211,700	210,300	211,000
65+ yrs	97,200	117,000	145,400
Total	368,600	384,800	406,800

The median age of the Dorset Council area was 46 in 2011. This is estimated to increase to 52 in 2025 and is projected to be 54 by 2035. For comparison, the median age for England in 2025 is estimated to be 40.

Between 2013 and 2023, Dorset's 65+ population grew by 19,800 (20%) and is projected to rise by 28,400 (24%) by 2033. Its share of the total population is increasing—from 26% in 2013 to 30% in 2023, and an estimated 36% by 2033.

Dorset's working-age population (16–64) has remained almost static—down 1,400 between 2013 and 2023, and projected to rise by just 700 by 2033. Meanwhile, the 0–15 age group is expected to fall by 9,200 over the same period.

85+
80-84
75-79
70-74
65-69
60-64
55-59
50-54
45-49
40-44
35-39
30-34
25-29
20-24
15-19
10-14
5-9
0-4



The population pyramid remains top-heavy and has changed little over the past decade, with further expansion projected by 2034 (grey bars) compared to 2024 (coloured bars).

The aging of early-1960s baby boomers creates a bulge between ages 55–74, amplified by high net internal migration among 60–69-year-olds.

Out-migration of young adults is also evident. From age 85+, the chart groups more than five years, making the pyramid appear wider at the top.

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 vital for understanding communities and directing funding where it's needed. Organisations use Census data to plan, predict, and develop services based on population characteristics.

Sources

The following datasets have been used throughout the bulletin:
 2024 Mid-year estimates, Office for National Statistics
 2021 Components of Population Change, Office for National Statistics
 2022 based Dorset Council Continuity projections, Experimental, Dorset Council