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# State of Dorset Health and Wellbeing



Healthy life expectancy varies across the county. Health and wellbeing are influenced by a range of factors, including where people live, how they travel, diet, employment, and use of leisure time. These behaviours affect both physical and mental health and are often interconnected.

Nine areas in Dorset are within the top 20% most deprived for Health Deprivation in the latest Indices of Deprivation 2025, seven are in Weymouth and Portland, one in Dorchester and one in Bridport.

## Big Numbers Box

**12,000** residents living with dementia by 2035

**32%** Year 6 children overweight or obese

**4,328** domestic abuse incidents last year

**62%** adults overweight or obese

**12x** LiveWell Dorset's return on prevention

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

## Box 1: Health

- Healthy life expectancy shows how long people live in good health. In Dorset, there is a difference of 17 years between healthy life expectancy and overall life expectancy for men and 21 years for women.<sup>1</sup>
- 62% of Dorset adults are overweight or obese—slightly better than the national average (65%), but still a major health concern.<sup>2</sup>
- 1 in 10 Dorset residents are unpaid carers—more than the national average.<sup>3</sup> That's around 35,500 people providing vital support without pay.
- On average, 10% of adults in Dorset smoke; however the rate rises to over 20% for certain social groups. This compares to 12% across England.<sup>2</sup>

**Adults in Dorset are increasingly inactive—22%, which is similar to England<sup>2</sup>**



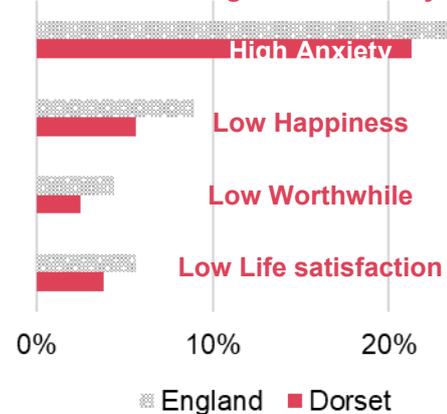
## Sources

- 1 Healthy life expectancy & life expectancy at birth, Public Health Fingertips 2023
- 2 Public Health Fingertips 2023/2024 (3 year range)
- 3 2021 Census, TS039

## Box 2: Mental health

- The suicide rate in the Dorset area is currently similar to England at 12.8 per 100,000. The suicide rate is higher for males (20.1 per 100,000) than females (6 per 100,000).<sup>15</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 reason<sup>8</sup>.
- In 2022-3, almost 5 million people were receiving talking therapies or secondary mental health services<sup>9</sup>.

Fewer Dorset residents report low levels of wellbeing than nationally:<sup>2</sup>



## Box 3: Major Health Conditions<sup>14</sup>

- Cancer is a major cause of premature death. Early cancer diagnosis rates are lower in the most deprived areas, and cancer mortality in turn is significantly higher in the most deprived areas at 63 per 100,000 compared to 36 per 100,000.
- Of Dorset's 60+ population, 10% are frail (15,034), with 59% of these classed as having very high frailty. The rate of hip fractures in ages 65+ are significantly higher in the most deprived areas compared to the least at 593 per 100,000 compared to 502 per 100,000.
- The number of people living with long-term conditions (LTCs) in Dorset is rising. In 2025, around 73,300 residents had one LTC, and over 150,000 were living with two or more.

## Box 4: Improving outcomes

- A Movement for Movement - is a new social movement to help people living in Dorset to 'sit a little less and move a little more'. Managed by Active Dorset - one of 42 regional Active Partnerships in England<sup>13</sup>.
- NHS Health Checks are free midlife assessments for adults aged 40–74 that screen for risks like heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, and stroke, helping identify problems early and support lifestyle changes to improve long-term health outcomes.
- Neighbourhood health approaches are important because they tailor support to local needs, reduce health inequalities, and bring services closer to communities—making prevention and care more effective and accessible.

### 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 Admission episodes for alcohol-specific conditions (under 18 years) (Persons)2021/22 - 2023/24, Crude rate - per 100,000, Public Health Fingertips
- 11 Alcohol and drugs prevention, treatment and recovery: why invest?, Public Health England, 12/02/18
- 12 Dorset Community Safety Partnership Performance Reporting, 2025
- 13 <https://www.activedorset.org/>
- 14 Dorset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment November 2025, Public Health Dorset