

December  
2025

# 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 reassignment
- sexual orientation
- marriage & civil partnership
- pregnancy & maternity
- race

Big Numbers Box

**31%**  
aged 65+

**20%**  
disabled

**2.2%**  
LGBQ+

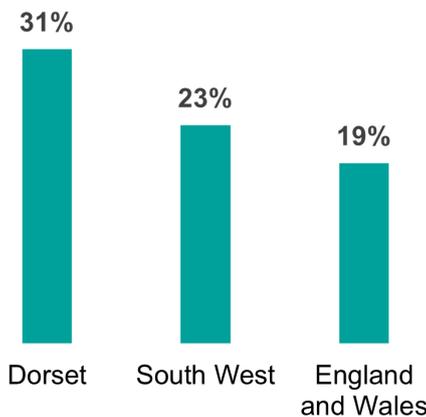
**0.3%\***  
gender diverse

**6.1%**  
ethnic minority

**6,820**  
non-Christian religion

### Box 1: Age & religion

**31% of people in Dorset are 65 or older — much higher than the 19% national average<sup>1</sup>**



- Dorset has a much smaller working age population at 55% compared to 63% in England and Wales.<sup>1</sup>
- The five major non-Christian world religions Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism make up 1% of Dorset's population.<sup>2</sup>
- Dorset's main non-Christian religious groups are mostly found in the county's towns.<sup>2</sup>

#### Sources

<sup>1</sup> Mid-year population estimates (2024), 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<sup>2</sup>

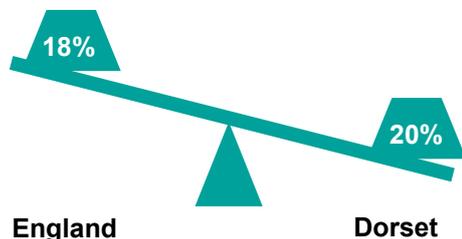
6% of Dorset's residents are from an ethnic minority compared to 20% nationally



- 40% of Dorset's ethnic minority population are 'White Other'—people who identify as white but not as British (for example, Polish or Bulgarian).
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups make up 19% of Dorset's ethnic minorities.
- Asian or Asian British groups account for 18% of the ethnic minority population in the Dorset Council area.

## Box 3: Disability

20% of Dorset residents have a long-term health problem or disability<sup>2</sup>



- 11% of Dorset residents claim a disability benefit—the same as England.<sup>3</sup>
- The number of disabled people varies greatly by neighbourhood.<sup>3</sup>
- Some areas have up to 10 times as many disabled residents as others.<sup>3</sup>

## Box 4: Gender and sexuality<sup>2</sup>

- The 2021 Census included new questions about sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Under the Equality Act 2010, the protected characteristic is gender reassignment, not gender identity. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) collects gender identity data for insight, but classifies it as "statistics in development," advising cautious interpretation.
- 2.2% of Dorset residents (about 7,000 people) identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or another non-heterosexual orientation. This is lower than the national and South West average (3.1%).
- 0.3% of Dorset residents said their gender identity was different from the sex assigned at birth, similar to the national average.
- Both questions were voluntary and only asked of people aged 16 and over.

### Sources

3 Stat-Xplore, Department of Work and Pensions, February & July 2025