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State of Dorset Deprivation



Patterns of deprivation vary across Dorset. Areas identified as having higher levels of deprivation are mainly located in urban centres such as Weymouth and Portland, while some rural communities experience deprivation related to housing and access to essential services. The English Indices of Deprivation divide the Dorset Council area into 223 geographic units.

Data from the Indices should not be compared over time. Because they are based on relative rankings, a rise or fall in an area's position does not necessarily indicate improvement or decline; it may instead reflect changes in how other areas are performing.

Big Numbers Box

9 areas of Dorset in most deprived nationally*

Dorset population living in rural areas **47%**

Average house prices

10 times higher than average earnings

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

14,800 workless households

19 areas in the most deprived nationally for **education**

13.5%

7 areas in the most deprived nationally for **income**

workless households

Box 1: Social deprivation

- There are 9 areas (out of a total of 223) in Dorset within the top 20% most deprived nationally for multiple deprivation.¹
- 7 of these are within Weymouth and Portland, one is in Bridport and one in Ferndown.

Life expectancy gap for males in Dorset



9 areas in Dorset suffer high deprivation



Most deprived area

Least deprived area

- The gap in life expectancy between the most deprived and least deprived areas of Dorset is 4.9 years for men and 3.2 years for women.²
- As indicators of social mobility, children on Free School Meals in Dorset achieve below regional and national education standards, and South Dorset ranks third highest in the region for 25–34-year-olds in unskilled employment.⁴
- 47% of Dorset's population live in rural areas³. Barriers to housing and essential services are significant in Dorset reflecting rurality and distance from services. 88 Dorset neighbourhoods fall in the 20% most deprived nationally for this measure: 30 in West Dorset, 20 in North Dorset, 18 in East Dorset, 10 in Purbeck and 10 in Weymouth & Portland.¹

Sources

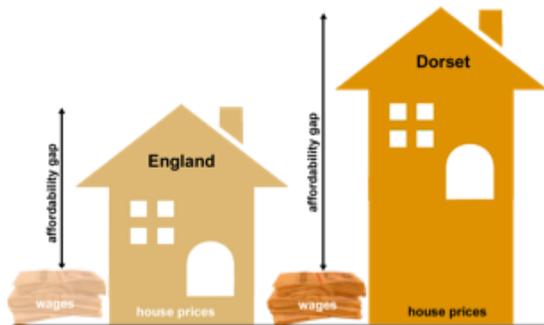
- 1 English Indices of Deprivation (2025), MHCLG
- 2 Office for Health Improvement and disparity, Public Health England, 2023
- 3 Census of Population, 2021
- 4 South-West_Social_Mobility_Commission_2023_Report.pdf (exeter.ac.uk)

*Most deprived = areas fall within the top 20% nationally

Box 2: Economic deprivation

- 7 neighbourhoods in Dorset fall into the top 20% nationally for income deprivation—5 of these are in Weymouth and Portland.¹
- 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.⁶

Average house prices are 10x more than average earnings⁷



Weekly earnings for people living in Dorset are



Box 3: Health inequalities

- Health inequalities include differences in health status (such as life expectancy and prevalence of conditions), access to and experience of care, patient satisfaction, health-related behaviours, and wider determinants like housing quality.
- 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.
- In the last 10 years, female life expectancy at birth has fallen from 85.0 to 84.8 years, while for men it has remained at 80.8 years.
- The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic led to increased mortality in 2020 and 2021. The impact of this is seen in the regional and local area life expectancy estimates⁸



Sources

- 5 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2025), ONS (full time gross weekly earnings)
6 Annual Population Survey (2023), Households by combined economic activity status, ONS
7 Housing affordability in England and Wales QMI - Office for National Statistics
8 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/lifeexpectancyforlocalareasoftheuk/between2001to2003and2020to2022#main-points>