

Policy Brief

Population policy

Table of Contents

Summary	1
2021 Census statistics	2
Population trends – 2000-2023	3
Births and deaths	4
Policy	7

Population policy has been a contentious issue in Jersey for many years with general concern about the rate of increase of the population. More recently attention has focussed on the ageing population and the falling birth rate.

Summary

- Jersey's population increased from 84,082 in 1991 to 103,267 in 2021, the population growth having been driven primarily by net immigration rather than by natural growth.
- The total population has now been virtually stable since 2018, marking a significant change from the ten previous years when population growth averaged about 1,000 a year. The natural increase in population (births-deaths) has fallen steadily from a peak of 340 in 2012 to -162 in 2024. Net immigration has also sharply reduced.
- 334 births were recorded in the first half of 2025, 4% fewer than in the first half of 2024. 457 deaths were recorded, 4% more than a year earlier. Deaths therefore exceeded births by 123 compared with 76 in 2024.

- The size of the population and immigration are politically important issues. Measures have been implemented designed to constrain the population growth, principally by imposing restrictions on the ability to work and to buy or rent property in Jersey.
- There is a trade-off between the rate of net immigration and the needs of the economy. With net nil migration the population would fall by 2040, but the dependency ratio would increase significantly from 53% to 64%.
- Since 2022 the Council of Ministers has been required to maintain a “common population policy” and to update that policy annually. The first policy, published in February 2022, set out the overarching aim as “to progressively reduce Jersey’s reliance on net inward migration”.
- The 2024 update, published in December 2024, identified three areas of focus: improved data, improving the flexibility of the island’s migration and immigration controls and “Ageing Well” - a move towards an ageing island demographic.

2021 Census statistics

Key figures for population growth from the decennial censuses are –

Year	Population	Increase
1991	84,082	10.6%
2001	87,186	3.7%
2011	97,857	10.2%
2021	103,267	5.5%

The [Report on the 2021 Jersey Census](#) was published in December 2022. Some of key statistics included in the summary of the report are –

Total population

- The total resident population of Jersey on 21 March 2021 was 103,267
- The increase of 5,400 from the 2011 census was due to:
 - natural growth (excess of births minus deaths): 2,100 persons
 - net inward migration: 3,300
- The population density was 859 persons per sq km

Parish populations

- Just over a third (35%) of the total population lived in St Helier
- The smallest parish population was St Mary (2% of the population)
- St Helier had the highest population density (3,716 persons per sq km), Trinity the lowest (267 per sq km)

Age and sex structure

- The average age of residents was 42.3 years

- The dependency ratio was 52%, an increase from 46% in 2011
- The number of people aged 65 and over increased by over a quarter (29%) since 2011
- Females accounted for 51% of the population

Place of birth

- Half (50%) of Jersey residents were born in Jersey
- 29,598 (29%) of residents were born elsewhere in the British Isles
- 8,280 (8%) of residents were born in Portugal/Madeira
- 2,808 (3%) of residents were born in Poland

Population trends – 2000-2023

Population growth has been driven primarily by net immigration rather than by natural growth, the excess of births over deaths. Table 1 shows the official estimates for population change in recent years, published on 25 September 2024, [Population and migration, December 2023](#), together with the official estimates for the annual figures to 2011.

Table 1 Jersey's Population growth, 2000-2023

End-Year	Population	Increase	Natural increase	Net migration
2000	88,400			
2001	88,900	500	190	300
2002	89,300	400	90	300
2003	89,600	300	250	0
2004	90,100	500	220	300
2005	91,000	900	220	700
2006	92,300	1,300	190	1,100
2007	94,000	1,700	320	1,400
2008	95,400	1,400	300	1,100
2009	96,200	800	250	600
2010	97,100	1,000	270	700
2011	97,900	700	330	400
2012	98,560	660	340	320
2013	99,300	740	280	460
2014	100,060	760	270	490
2015	101,210	1,150	240	910
2016	102,240	1,030	180	850
2017	102,730	480	130	360
2018	103,290	560	110	450
2019	103,280	-10	90	-100
2020	103,490	210	110	100
2021	103,190	-300	80	-380
2022	103,300	110	-100	200
2023	103,650	350	-110	470
Total		15,240	4,160	11,030

Note: the figures have been individually rounded so subtotals may not add up to totals.

The table shows that from 2000 to 2023 natural growth averaged 173 a year while net immigration averaged 459 a year. The total population has

now been virtually stable since 2018, marking a significant change from the ten previous years when population growth averaged about 1,000 a year. The population was estimated at 103,290 in 2018 and 103,650 in 2023. The natural increase in population (births - deaths) has fallen steadily from a peak of 340 in 2012 to 80 in 2021, -100 in 2023 and -110 in 2023. Net immigration has also sharply reduced. The figures for the last few years have been distorted by the effects of covid, with significant net emigration in 2021 followed by the highest net immigration figure since 2016 in 2023.

Births and deaths

The [Annual Statement](#) of the Superintendent Registrar, published on 31 January 2025, showed that births in 2024 were 715, a 10% fall on the 2023 figure and a 36% fall on the peak figure of 1,123 recorded in 2012. The number of deaths in 2024 was 877, so the natural decrease in population was 162.

Table 2 shows births and deaths recorded in Jersey since 2011.

Table 2 Jersey's births and deaths, 2011-2025

Period	Births	Deaths	Natural increase
2011	1,102	716	386
2012	1,123	762	361
2013	1,017	719	298
2014	989	682	307
2015	997	778	219
2016	1,008	795	213
2017	949	816	133
2018	933	831	102
2019	880	795	85
2020	863	718	145
2021	890	827	63
2022	835	874	-39
2023	795	835	-40
2024	716	877	-161
2024 Q1	173	223	-50
2024 Q2	176	202	-26
2024 Q3	173	204	-31
2024 Q4	194	234	-40
2025 Q1	151	256	-105
2025 Q2	183	201	-18

Source: Annual statements of the Superintendent Registrar for the annual figures, Freedom of Information responses, 24 April and 28 July 2025, for the quarterly figures.

Note: the figures for natural increase differ from those in the previous table which record births and deaths of people estimated to be resident in Jersey rather than births and deaths in Jersey.

The number of births fell to a new low in the first half of 2025. 334 births were recorded, 4% fewer than in the first half of 2024. Deaths have shown the opposite trend. 457 deaths were recorded, 4% more than a year earlier. Deaths therefore exceeded births by 123 compared with 76 in 2024. Until 2021 births in Jersey always exceeded deaths. This has since been reversed, deaths exceeding births by 39, 40 and 161 in the last three years. With the figure of 123 in the first half, a reasonable estimate for the year as a whole is over 200.

These figures continue a trend that has applied for some years but which has accelerated markedly since 2021. The reduction in births is already having an impact on the demand for early years services and primary school enrolment, which will require structural changes in the school system.

Jersey's experience is similar to that of the other Crown Dependencies but different from that in England and Wales. The following table shows the key data. **Table 3 shows the key data.**

Table 3 Crown Dependencies and England and Wales, births, 2016-2024

Period	Jersey	Guernsey	Isle of Man	England & Wales
Births 2016	1,008	537	740	696,271
Births 2021	890	519	675	624,828
Births 2024	716	422	574	594,677
Decline 2016-2021	11.7%	3.3%	8.8%	10.3%
Decline 2021-2024	20.3%	18.7%	15.0%	4.8%
Decline 2016-2024	29.0%	21.4%	22.4%	14.5%

Note: Neither Guernsey nor the Isle of Man publish annual figures for births in a consistent and accessible way. Different sources give slightly different figures.

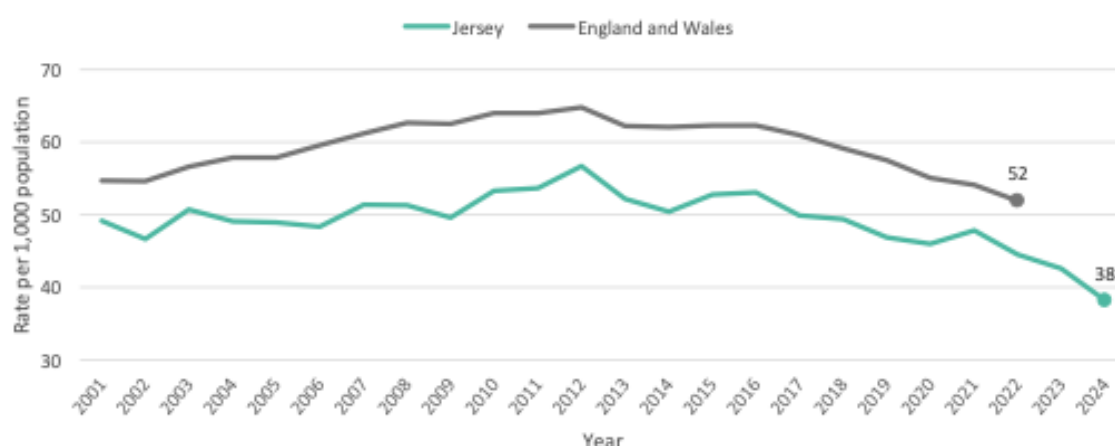
Between 2016 and 2021 the number of births in Jersey declined by 11.7%, similar to the England & Wales figure of 10.3%. However, between 2021 and 2024 the number of births in Jersey fell by 20.3% compared with just 4.8% in England and Wales. And in 2024 alone births fell by 9.9% in Jersey but actually increased by 0.6% in England and Wales.

Births in Guernsey and the Isle of Man have fallen much more than in England and Wales although less than in Jersey.

At first sight it is difficult to explain what has happened since 2021 that has caused such a marked divergence between the Crown Dependencies and England and Wales. Any decline in births must be caused by one or both

of two factors – a fall in the general fertility rate (GFR), the number of live births per woman of childbearing age (typically 15-44), and emigration and immigration of young people.

There is some useful data on this in the [Births and Breastfeeding Profile 2024](#) published by Public Health Jersey on 3 July 2025. The GFR in Jersey in 2024 was 38 births for every 1,000 women of childbearing age. For comparison, the GFR in England and Wales was higher at 52 births per 1,000 women of childbearing age in 2022. The following graph is reproduced from the report.



Unfortunately, there are no figures for England and Wales for 2023 and 2024 but generally the trend in Jersey seems similar to that in England and Wales. (A slight note of caution here. It is not clear that accurate figures exist for the number of women of child-bearing age. This is significant because of the impact of migration.)

Other things being equal an increase in net immigration of young people is likely to lead to an increase in the number of births even if the GFR remains unchanged. Conversely, a rise in net emigration of young people is likely to lead to a fall in the number of births. This seems a plausible explanation for part of the different experiences of the Crown Dependencies and England and Wales since 2021.

While this might be attributed, as it is anecdotally in Jersey, to high housing costs this is not a new phenomenon and indeed in nominal terms average house prices have fallen by 14.3% since the peak in 2022 Q3. Inflation in that period has been 15.9% so in real terms house prices have fallen by 26.1%. Average rents have fallen by 6.2% since their peak in 2022 Q3 and in real terms by 19.0%.

It may be the period of lockdown during the pandemic has significantly changed attitudes to migration.

Policy

As in many other jurisdictions the size of the population and immigration are politically important issues. This is particularly the case for Jersey given the very high rate of population growth in the post-War period. A series of measures has been implemented designed to constrain the population growth, principally by imposing restrictions on the ability to work and to buy or rent property in Jersey by those without an existing residential qualification. The current legal requirements are set out in the [Control of Housing Work \(Jersey\) Law 2012](#).

It is fair to say that Jersey has struggled to develop a coherent population policy. For many years there were “targets” for the total size of the population or for population growth. However, there are no policy instruments capable of meeting such targets, given that Jersey has no control over the number of births and deaths, emigration or the number of people returning to the Island with residential qualifications, and that the Island needs to attract immigrants to do the jobs for which local people either are not qualified to do or choose not to do. These factors apply in many other developed nations but are particularly sensitive in a small island.

Policy has recently moved away from numerical targets, with a recognition of the need to ensure that the economy is supported in the face of an ageing population. The issues are well described in a paper prepared for a debate in the States Assembly in March 2021 [Developing a common population policy](#).

In 2021 the States Assembly amended the States of Jersey Law to include a requirement for the Council of Ministers to maintain a common population policy and to update that policy annually.

On 8 February 2022 the States Assembly approved the first [Common Population Policy](#). This policy document included an overview of the then current position and identified actions for 2022 that fell within the published Government Plan 2022-2025. It also set out a proposed format and content for future reports. The document stated that the overarching aim of the common population policy of the then Council of Ministers was:

to progressively reduce Jersey’s reliance on net inward migration within the currently agreed Common Strategic Policy”

The policy is based on two clear principles:

The population of Jersey lives on a small island and an ever-growing population would put more and more pressure on finite land resources. As such, the government will take action to reduce the

need to grow the population further through net inward migration whenever this is feasible. The long-term aim of the population policy should be to achieve a sustainable rate of population change, to ensure that current generations do not pass on a growing problem to future generations while ensuring that Jersey remains open for business.

Within the long-term aim of reducing reliance on continued inward migration, the Government will always face new challenges and there may be situations in which the long-term aim of reducing the need for net inward migration will need to be paused or even reversed in order to address specific challenges from time to time. Notwithstanding any such temporary challenges, the underlying principle and vision remains a long-term reduction in reliance on net inward migration.

On 12 June 2023 the Government published [Common Population Policy Annual report 2023](#). This report was largely a summary of existing policies relevant to the population and listed “actions and themes” under the headings of “develop a sustainable economy”, “plan for changing demographic” and “promote equity”.

The most important new information in the report was estimates of Jersey’s population under different assumptions about population growth, using the 2021 census figures as the base. (More detailed modelling of population projections was published in December 2023 [Population projections 2023 - 2080](#).)

The key statistics were –

- With net nil migration the population will be relatively stable until 2040. With net migration of 325 a year the population will increase to about 111,000 and with net migration of 700 a year to 120,000.
- Like most countries the population of Jersey is ageing. The working population is currently about 67,000. With net nil migration the working population will fall to 61,000 in 2040. With net migration of 325 a year it will fall to 66,000 and with net migration of 700 a year it will increase to 73,000.
- In 2021 there were 1.93 people of working age for every person of non-working age. With net nil migration the ratio will fall to 1.42 in 2040. With net migration of 325 a year it will fall to 1.50 and even with net migration of 700 a year it will fall to 1.56.
- The estimated population required to maintain living standards is calculated to be 128,000 in 2030 and 150,000 in 2040.

The Executive Summary of the report stated that –

The policy intent of Ministers is that our community thrives, success should see living standards – defined as real GVA/person - to rise. However, indicative modelling suggests that to simply maintain current living standards, the total population could need to be as high as 150,000 by 2040. Ministers are not prepared to accept this scenario.

Sustained economic growth would enable living standards to be maintained with lower levels of inward migration and a smaller population. The Council of Ministers' policy direction is to support economic growth both through increasing productivity in existing Island sectors and developing new, highly productive sectors. This will help to maintain the 2040 population level well below the 150,000 level.

The Future Economy Programme is developing a range of positive measures to improve current levels of economic activity, identify new economic sectors and create high quality, sustainable growth. The Economic Strategy is due to be published in September 2023. At this stage it is anticipated that inward migration will still be required but at a reasonable and sustainable level.

Integral to the identification of economic policies will be the capacity of Jersey's infrastructure and the extent to which this may act as a constraint on population growth, or the rate of population growth.

On 20 December 2024 the Government published [Common Population Policy Annual Report 2024](#). The executive summary is reproduced below .

The Council of Ministers has identified the following three areas of focus for this year's annual report on population issues.

- **Data.** The improved levels of analysis provided in the Statistics Jersey reporting on population issues are giving us a more detailed understanding of our resident and temporary population. Continuing to improve the collection and analysis of data to track population trends is a key priority.
- **Flexibility.** The Council of Ministers is committed to improving the flexibility of the island's migration and immigration controls, to ensure that Jersey has the required workforce to maintain and build on our current standards of living.
- **Ageing Well.** The data clearly show a move towards an ageing island demographic. The fact we are living longer is a positive one. In this report, we lay out an Ageing Well Roadmap.

The report identifies actions and objectives under these themes to guide work across government, to ensure that population issues are fully considered within policy and decision-making. In addition to these formal themes, this Council is also clear in its aim to ensure that all workers in the Island are well supported and valued, paying particular attention to migrant workers and their specific needs.

Data

The Council of Ministers believes it is important that considerations around population policy are informed by detailed and accurate data. The significant progress made in this area allows access to much richer and more timely data assisting decision making. The analysis in respect of 31 December 2023 has highlighted that:

- Jersey's overall population has remained stable in the last 5 years. A marked difference from the high levels of population growth seen in the preceding 5 years.
- Jersey has required inward migration to maintain its working age population, which has also remained stable over the last 5 years.
- Jersey's population is getting older, both in the population aged 65 or over, and those aged 80 and older.
- There has been an increase in the number of people in Jersey from outside the United Kingdom and Europe ('rest of the world nationality'), while the number of people with a European nationality has reduced.

Flexibility

Ensuring that controls are flexible and can adapt quickly to support changing market conditions is a key priority for this government. Work to improve flexibility is well advanced: the Work Permit Policy has recently been updated; and changes to the operation of the Control of Housing and Work Law (CHWL), will be proposed in the new year.

Work permits – improved flexibility

- Expand the roles eligible for the long-term work permit, to provide more options for individuals and businesses.
- Grant permissions to carry out supplementary part-time work, to increase the productivity of those already on the island.
- Revise the salary thresholds, to ensure fair pay for those moving to the island for work.
- Permit workers able to seek new employment after 6 months, to create flexibility for employees.

CHWL legal framework – improved flexibility

- Update the CHWL Regulations, to allow legal controls to be updated quickly in light of changing circumstances.
- Consider the expansion of roles eligible for Licensed permissions, to improve the supply of workers into key sectors.
- Consider the number of years required to access the qualified rental market, to ease barriers to workers finding accommodation.

Flexible workforce – Skills and productivity

As part of the Common Strategic Policy 2024-2026, the Council of Ministers pledged to bring the minimum wage to two-thirds of the median wage. Alongside this, the Government will provide employers with a package of financial support measures worth £20 million over the next 2 years to improve their skills, productivity and competitiveness. The ongoing Future Economy Programme also emphasises the importance of creating a skilled workforce to enable long-term sustainable economic growth.

Ageing well roadmap

People in the western world can now expect to live almost twice as long as they would have 100 years ago. Many governments are taking action to prepare for the changes that this will bring.

Ministers consider that the Better Later Life strategy set out by the New Zealand government provides a useful basis for the Ageing Well roadmap for Jersey.

Issues and actions will be embedded across all government activity and will be considered across 5 areas:

1. Financial Security and Economic Participation
2. Healthy Ageing and Access to Services
3. Diverse Housing Choices and Options
4. Participation and Social Inclusion
5. Accessible environments.