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Policy Brief

Population policy

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Population policy has been a contentious issue in Jersey for many years with significant discussion and some concern about the population increase. More recently, attention has focussed on the ageing population, falling birth rate and rising dependency ratio.

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 increased only modestly since 2018, marking a significant change from the ten previous years when population growth averaged about 1,000 a year. After four years in which the total population was virtually stable, it increased by 350 in 2023 and 510 in 2024 to 104,540.
- The natural change in population (births minus deaths) has gone from a peak increase of 340 in 2012 to a decrease of 150 in 2024. Net

immigration was minimal between 2018 and 2022 but subsequently has increased to 730 in 2023 and 670 in 2024.

- 698 births were recorded in the first half of 2025, 2% fewer than in 2024. 882 deaths were recorded, similar to the 2024 figure. Deaths therefore exceeded births by 184 compared with 167 in 2024.
- The size of the population and immigration are politically important issues. Measures have been implemented with the intention to constrain population growth, principally by imposing restrictions on the ability to work and to buy or rent property in Jersey.
- Population estimates published in February 2026 suggest that with net nil migration the population would fall to 98,860 in 2040, and the dependency ratio would increase significantly from 52.5% in 2024 to 64.2%.
- 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 recognition of the Island's ageing demographic.
- The 2025 update, published in January 2026, noted that "following Brexit and economic growth across many EU countries, European migrants have now been largely replaced by African and Asian migrants with many more workers now subject to fixed term immigration permissions. These workers bring valuable skills to the island, but they may face increased challenges in adapting to life in Jersey."
- The update stated that ministers "will shortly be setting up a Migrant Safeguarding Board. Work permit policies remain under review, with 2025 seeing the expansion of skilled worker routes that give workers and their families a route to long term residence in Jersey."

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 the 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
  - 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
- 51% of the population is recorded as female

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 – 2000-2024

Population growth has been driven primarily by net immigration rather than by natural growth. Table 1 shows the official estimates for population change in recent years from the report Population and migration, December 2024, together with the official estimates for the annual figures to 2011 from the report Jersey's Resident Population 2011.

Table 1 Jersey's Population growth, 2000-2024

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	104,030	670	-120	730
2024	104,540	510	-150	670
Total		15,870	4,010	11,700

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

The table shows that from 2000 to 2024 natural growth averaged 167 a year while net immigration averaged 487 a year. The total population was stable between 2018 and 2022, 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 103,300 in 2022. The population has subsequently increased modestly.

The change in population (births - deaths) has fallen steadily from a peak increase of 340 in 2012 to 80 in 2021 and then decreases of 100 in 2023, 120 in 2023 and 150 in 2024. 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 and a further modest increase in 2024.

Births and deaths

Table 2 shows annual figures for births and deaths.

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	710	877	-167
2025	698	882	-184
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
2025 Q3	179	191	-15
2025 Q4	185	236	-51

Source: Annual statements of the Superintendent Registrar.
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 2025. 698 births were recorded, 2% fewer than in 2024. The number of deaths has been more stable and at 882 were five more than in 2024. Deaths therefore exceeded births by 184 compared with 167 in 2024. Until 2021 births in Jersey had always exceeded deaths. This has since been reversed, deaths exceeding births by 39, 40, 167 and 184 in the last four years.

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 a limiting impact on the demand to 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. 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 glance 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), alongside emigration and immigration of young people.

There is some useful data on this in the Births and Breastfeeding Profile 2025 published by Public Health Jersey on 12 March. The GFR in Jersey in 2025 was 38 births for every 1,000 women of childbearing age. For comparison, the GFR in England and Wales was higher at 49 births per 1,000 women of childbearing age in 2024. The following graph is reproduced from that report.

Figure 11. General fertility rate (2001 to 2025)

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 partial explanation for 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. 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 also fallen by 6.2% since their peak in 2022 Q3 and in real terms by 19.0%.

A range of other factors influence immigration and emigration of young people, including job opportunities, higher education options and lifestyle issues. It may also be that the period of lockdown during the pandemic has significantly changed attitudes to migration.

Population projections

On 25 February 2026 Statistics Jersey published Jersey population projections 2025 to 2080. The report provides data on the projected future size and structure of Jersey's resident population that would arise for particular scenarios of migration and assumptions of fertility and mortality. The headlines in the report are –

- With annual net migration of +400, and mid-range fertility and mortality assumptions, the total population is projected to be fairly stable in size until around 2050, before beginning to decline.
- A net migration of around +700 per year would be needed to maintain a stable size of working age population in the long term, for mid-range fertility and life expectancy assumptions.
- For all net migration scenarios projected (up to +800 per year), the number of people aged under 16 will decrease from 2024. Natural change will continue to decline for all the projected migration scenarios.
- For all migration scenarios, the number of people aged 65 and over will be around, or greater than, 28,000 by 2040, an increase of 36% from 20,600 at the end of 2024.
- For all migration scenarios, the number of people aged 80 years and over will be more than 11,000 by 2050, almost double the number estimated at the end of 2024 (5,770).
- With annual net migration of +400, the dependency ratio, the number of non-working age people for every 100 people of working age, will rise from 52.4 at the end of 2024 to 60.9 by 2040.

Key tables from the report are reproduced below.

Table 2: Total population for different migration scenarios

Net migration	2024*	2030	2040	2050	2060	2070	2080
+800	104,540	108,050	112,580	116,220	118,520	120,350	122,330
+600	104,540	106,820	109,150	110,460	110,370	109,790	109,400
+400	104,540	105,580	105,720	104,700	102,230	99,230	96,460
+200	104,540	104,350	102,290	98,940	94,080	88,670	83,520
Net nil	104,540	103,120	98,860	93,180	85,930	78,110	70,590

*Baseline figure from latest population estimates.

Table 6: Working age population for different net migration scenarios

Net migration	2024*	2030	2040	2050	2060	2070	2080
+800	68,530	70,080	71,240	71,760	72,720	73,070	72,450
+600	68,530	69,030	68,480	67,270	66,530	65,390	63,430
+400	68,530	67,970	65,720	62,770	60,350	57,710	54,410
+200	68,530	66,920	62,950	58,280	54,170	50,030	45,380
Net nil	68,530	65,870	60,190	53,780	47,980	42,340	36,360

*Baseline figure from latest population estimates.

Table 16: Population aged under 16 for different net migration scenarios

Net migration	2024*	2030	2040	2050	2060	2070	2080
+800	15,410	13,850	12,640	12,970	12,780	12,520	12,600
+600	15,410	13,720	12,170	12,160	11,720	11,210	11,060
+400	15,410	13,590	11,690	11,350	10,650	9,900	9,510
+200	15,410	13,460	11,220	10,540	9,580	8,590	7,970
Net nil	15,410	13,330	10,740	9,730	8,510	7,280	6,430

*Baseline figure from latest population estimates.

Table 28: Dependency ratio for different net migration scenarios

Net migration	2024*	2030	2040	2050	2060	2070	2080
+800	52.5	54.2	58.0	61.9	63.0	64.7	68.8
+600	52.5	54.7	59.4	64.2	65.9	67.9	72.5
+400	52.5	55.3	60.9	66.8	69.4	72.0	77.3
+200	52.5	55.9	62.5	69.8	73.7	77.3	84.0
Net nil	52.5	56.5	64.2	73.3	79.1	84.5	94.1

*Baseline figure from latest population estimates.

The dependently aged population is defined as the number of people aged under 16 plus the number aged 65 and over. The working age population is those aged between 16 and 64 years inclusive.

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 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 and 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 which was 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 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.

The Common Population Policy Annual Report 2025 was published on 28 January 2026. The executive summary is reproduced below –

> The Council of Ministers has a statutory obligation to maintain a common population policy and keep it under regular review. This

report presents a summary of policy actions taken in 2025 and planned for 2026. It also provides an analysis of some of the extensive statistics that are now produced by Statistics Jersey drawing on data from administrative sources.

A cross ministerial group called, the Housing and Work Advisory Group+ (HAWAG+), meets regularly to discuss population related policies. In addition, a States Members' workshop was held in July 2025 to discuss population issues focused on: birth rates, children and young people, the working age population and the ageing population. This report considers each of these areas.

In line with many other countries, Jersey continues to see a declining birth rate. The experience of other countries is that direct intervention to increase birth rates has relatively limited results and can be very costly.

Ministers are instead focusing their efforts on supporting parents and ensuring that Jersey is a safe, attractive and affordable place to bring up a family. The Investing in Jersey programme, launched in August 2025, sets out an ambitious plan to build more affordable family homes, improve sport and leisure facilities and upgrade schools and colleges. The 2026 budget provides extra support for parents with childcare costs and 5,357 children in 22 primary schools now have access to a nutritious school lunch.

Maintaining a well skilled and productive workforce is vital for our economic future and 2025 saw a significant investment in local businesses through the Better Business Support Package.
A further £10 million is allocated for additional schemes in 2026.

The working age population is ageing, and more than a quarter of all workers are now aged 55 and above. The "baby boom" generation is now becoming a generation of pensioners and there are fewer young people entering the workplace. Today, Jersey relies on inward migration to maintain its labour force and there was a small increase in the number of working age residents last year.

Following Brexit and economic growth across many EU countries, European migrants have now been largely replaced by African and Asian migrants with many more workers now subject to fixed term immigration permissions. These workers bring valuable skills to the island, but they may face increased challenges in adapting to life in Jersey.

Ministers understand the importance of this workforce and took action in 2025 to support migrants through the relaunched

International Cultural Centre and will shortly be setting up a Migrant Safeguarding Board. Work permit policies remain under review, with 2025 seeing the expansion of skilled worker routes that give workers and their families a route to long term residence in Jersey.

The Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law 2012 (CHWL) is used to control access to the housing and job markets. The CHWL controls have also been relaxed to support more licensed jobs in key areas such as health, education and nursery care. There are planned changes for early 2026 to open up new routes to encourage high earning individuals to relocate to Jersey.

The population aged 65 and above has grown by 12% in the last 5 years, against an overall population increase of 1%. This trend will continue for some time with an even sharper rise in the number of people aged 85 and above, a cohort which has increased by 43% in the last 10 years.

Last year the Council of Ministers launched their Ageing Well Roadmap which sets out aims under 5 main headings, covering economic, health, housing, social inclusion and accessible environments. The accessible environments aim was strengthened in July 2025 when the States Assembly agreed to create an accessible, age-friendly infrastructure framework (P.50/2025 as amended). Actions also continue across all areas of government to prepare for and support an older population. In 2025, health was a particular focus of activity.

The report includes some new data and analysis including –

- Jersey's birth rate mirrors the global trend, being below the level required to maintain the current population and decreasing. The total fertility rate (TFR) in Jersey in 2022-2024 was 1.20 births per woman, the lowest number recorded in the data held from 2001 to 2024. This is significantly lower than the figures for England and Wales and other countries.
- The number of primary schoolchildren fell from 8,431 in 2019/20 to 7,677 in 2024/25 and is projected to fall to 6,435 in 2034/45 following which it will stabilise.
- The proportion of the population of working age is projected to fall from 65.9% in 2021 to 58.7% in 2024, significantly below the UK figure 62.5% and the EU figure of 65.8%.
- The number of people with 'rest of world' (outside British Isles and EU) nationality in Jersey and aged over 20 years increased between 2019 and 2024 by 3,190. Filipinos and Kenyans account for most of the increase; the number with Polish and Portuguese nationality has fallen.

- In 2020 there were 5,120 registered workers of whom only 60 were subject to a temporary work permit. The remaining 5,070 people were able to remain in Jersey without restriction and could build up residency to 5 and then 10 years, gaining access to first the labour market and then the local housing market.
- At the end of 2024, the total number of registered workers had risen to 5,430 (6.4% of the 20+ population) but of these 1,710 were also subject to a temporary work permit and would not be able to build up residence and status under the Control of Housing and Work Law (CHWL)(unless moving on to longer term visas). The number of registered workers who can still build up to CHWL Entitled status has fallen to 3,720.