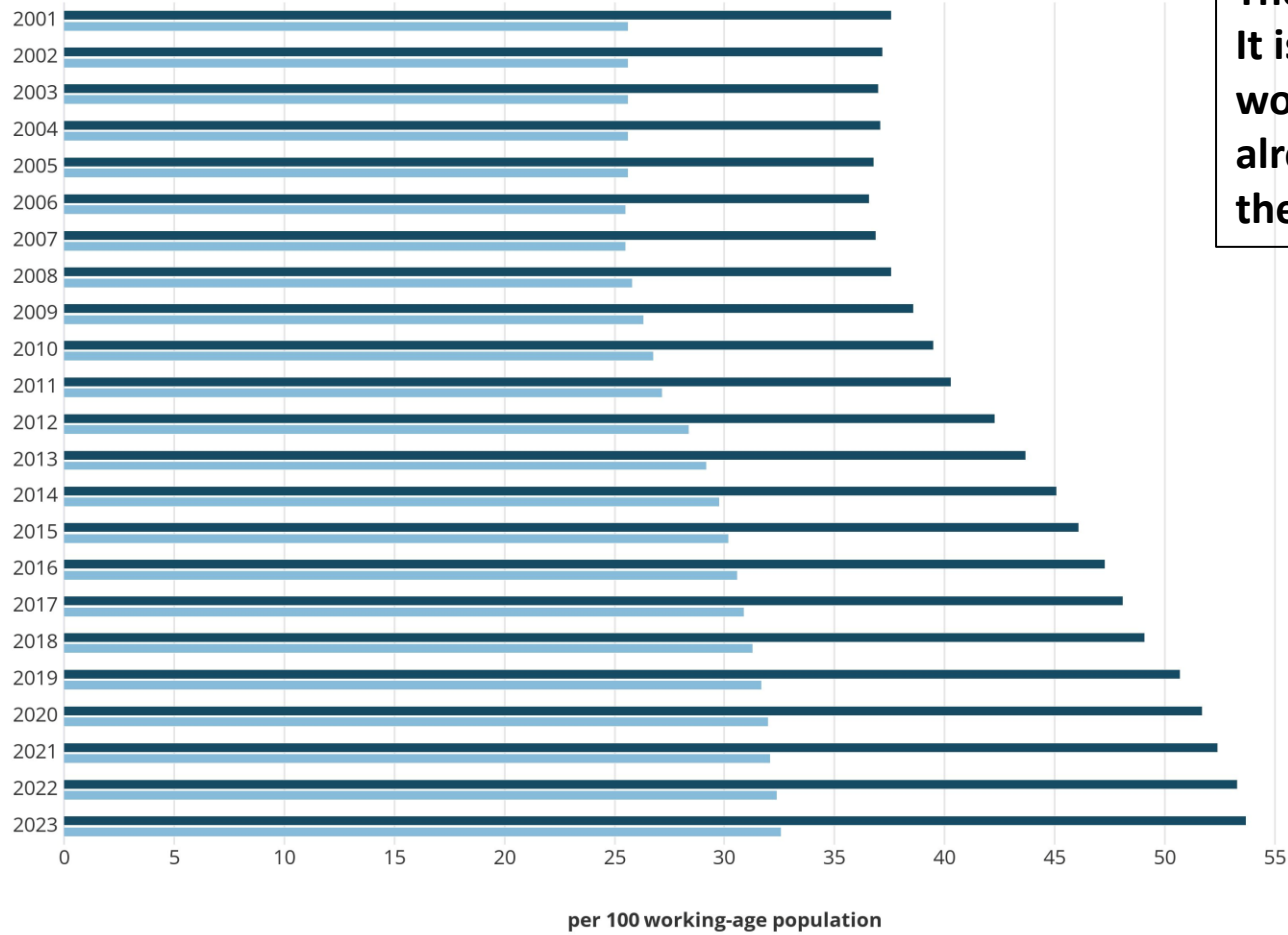




KNOWING THE PROBLEM



Old age dependency ratio (from 2001 to 2023) for Isle of Wight



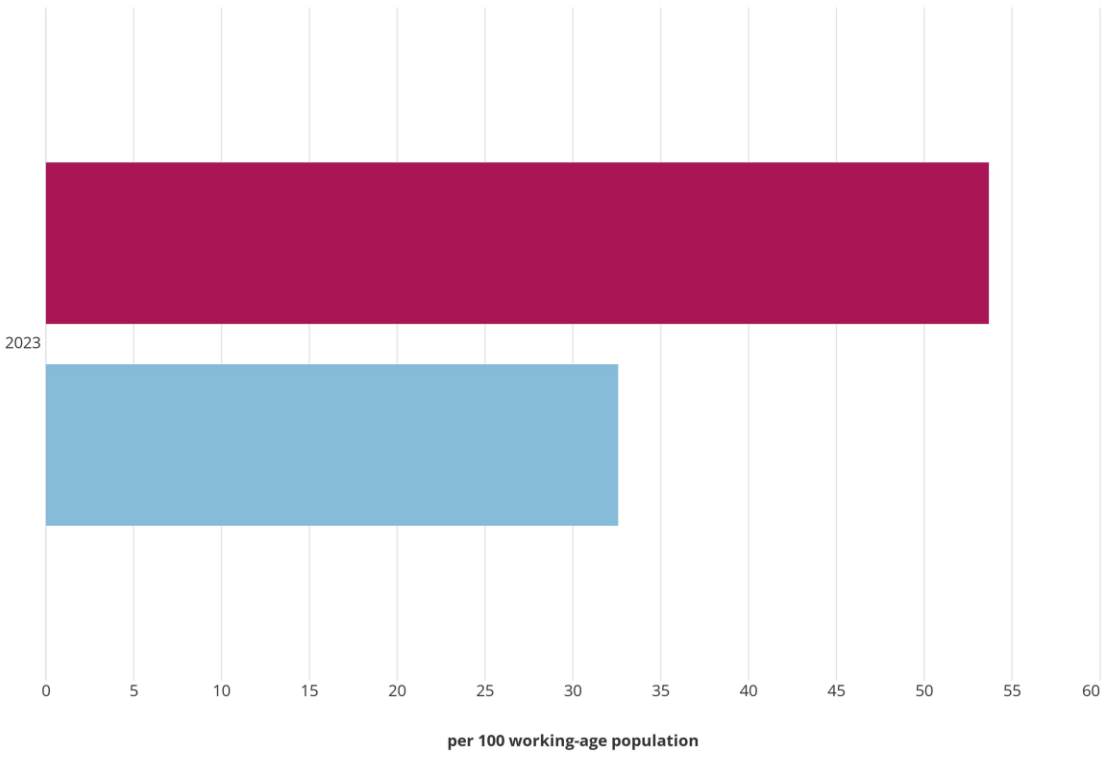
● Isle of Wight Old age dependency ratio ● Mean for All English authorities Old age dependency ratio

Powered by LG Inform

Source:
Office for National Statistics

The Island is losing its young people, at school and working ages. It is a decline that is steepening, a demographic decay that is worsening. The ratio of retired to working age on the Island is already extreme and is becoming more so. The ratio of children to the rest of us is shrinking, the loss is accelerating.

Old age dependency ratio (2023) for Isle of Wight

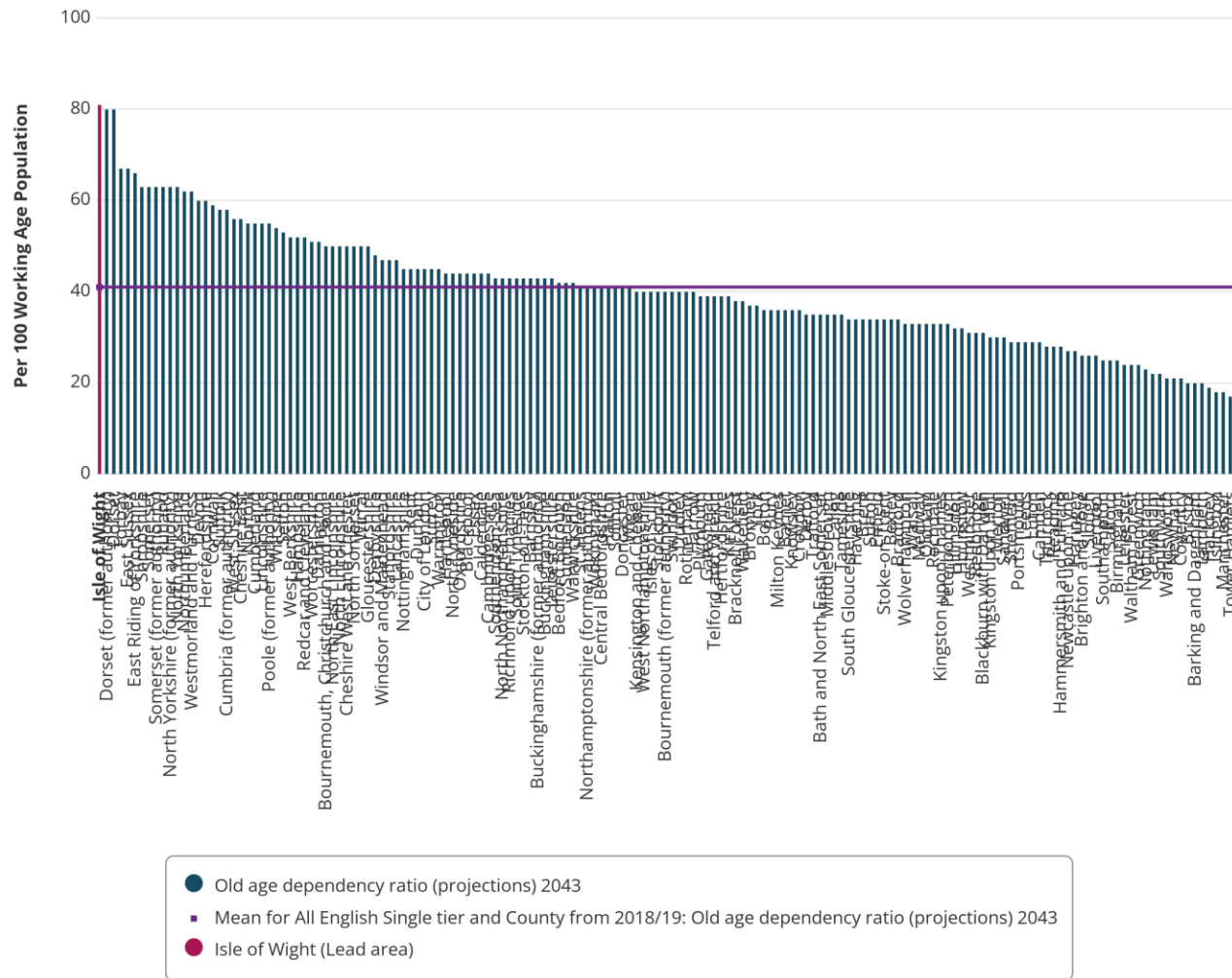


● Isle of Wight Old age dependency ratio ● Mean for All English authorities Old age dependency ratio ● Isle of Wight (Lead area)

Powered by LG Inform

Source:
Office for National Statistics

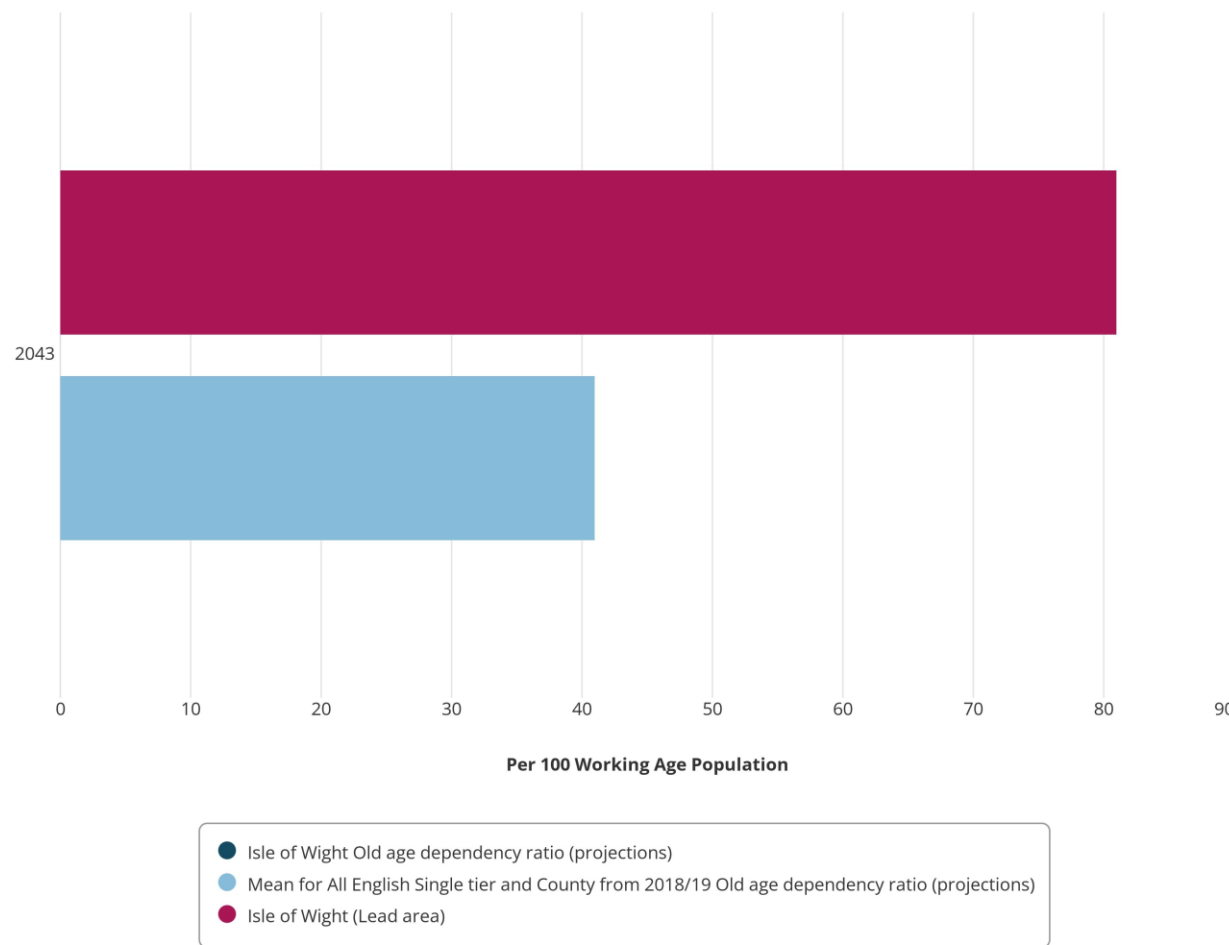
Population projections, old age dependency ratio (2043) for All English Single tier and County from 2018/19



Powered by LG Inform

Source: Office for National Statistics

Population projections, old age dependency ratio (2043) for Isle of Wight



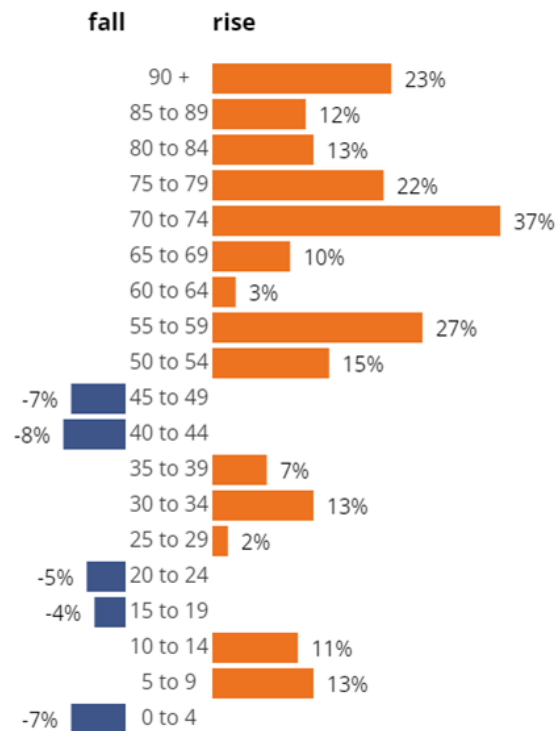
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Source: Office for National Statistics

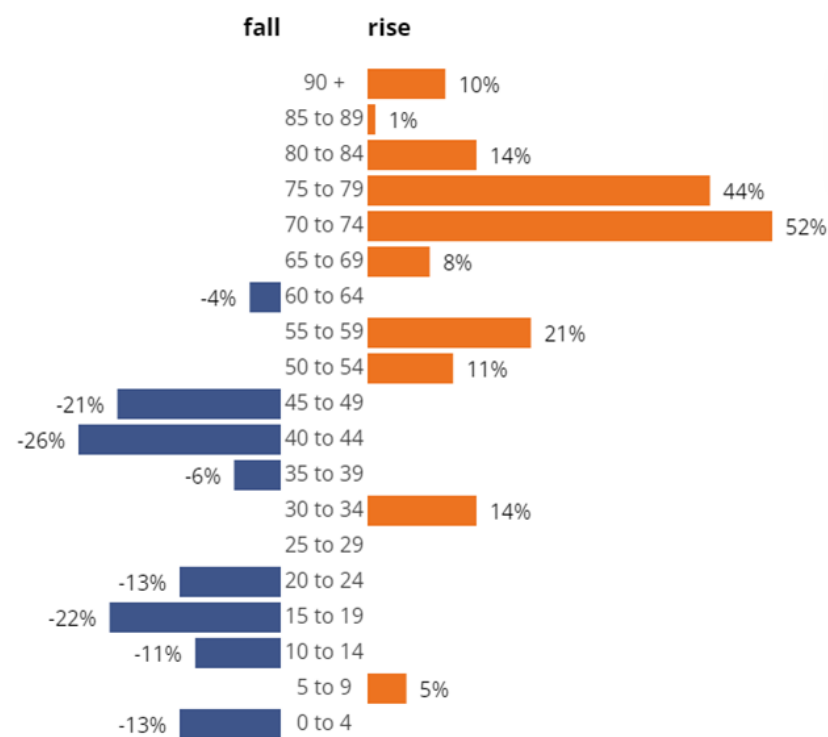
The Island is at a demographic extreme when measured against regional and national averages, and it continues to drift away from the average. By 2043 we will be the most imbalanced demographic in the country.

This pattern of accelerated aging shows no sign of naturally readjusting, it is instead intensifying. These are not sustainable trends and cannot ultimately support a functioning society.

ENGLAND 2011 - 2021



IOW 2011 - 2021



The charts above show the change in population balance between the last two census dates for England and for the Isle of Wight. The table below shows population predictions for age cohorts on the Island up to 2041.

Age group	0-14	15-19	20-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85+	All ages
IOW percentage increase/ decrease in age group by 2041 (2021 = 100%)	-11%	-7%	-5%	-9%	-6%	+22%	+63%	+91%	+8%
England percentage increase/ decrease in age group by 2041 (2021 = 100%)	-4%	+5%	+2%	+3%	+1%	+20%	+51%	+70%	+8%

The upper chart is taken from government Census 21 data, the lower table is from the 2023 Wight Studies paper on population.

The Island has not had a self-sustaining population since 1931. From that time on, annual growth has been driven entirely by inward migration, mainly from the central southern counties. A very rough rule of thumb is that 1000 are born each year (and falling), 2000 die (and rising), 5000 arrive (mainly over-65), and 3500 leave (mainly under 50). The decade between the last two censuses shows a smaller average annual increase of just 220, and of course this fell still further over the Covid years and the subsequent lull, but government projections are clear that this will rise, and age, as we approach 2040.

These data are taken from 'Population of the Isle of Wight 1801-2021, with a projection to 2041' by Paul Bingham, published in Wight Studies 2023, the proceedings of the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society.

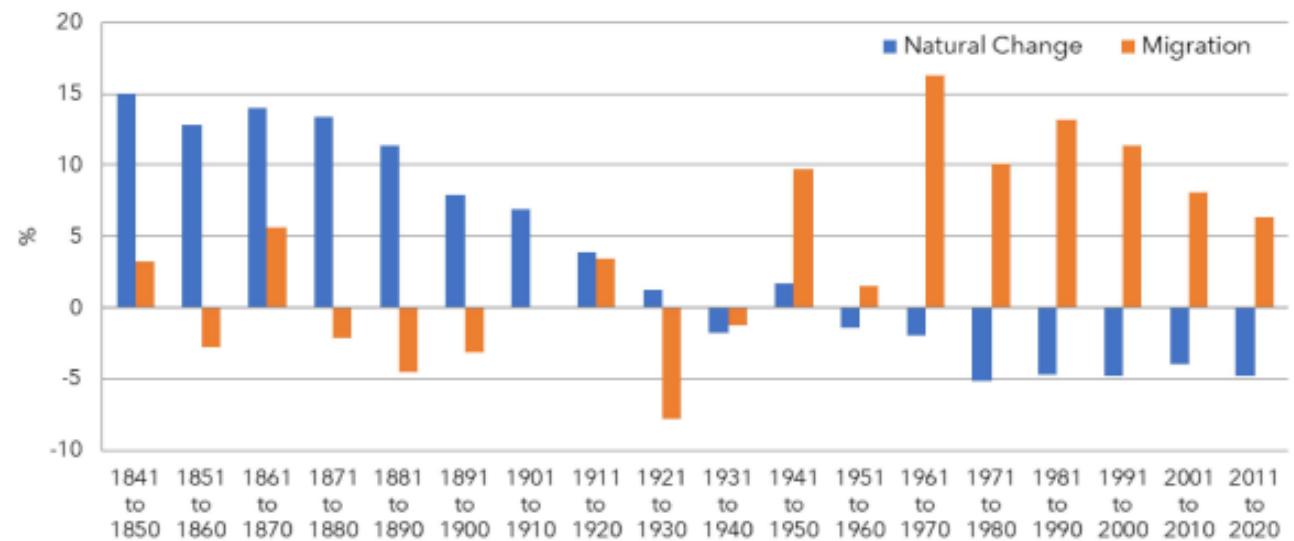


Fig. 4: Isle of Wight - Decennial percentage increase/decrease in population due to natural change (births minus deaths) and migration

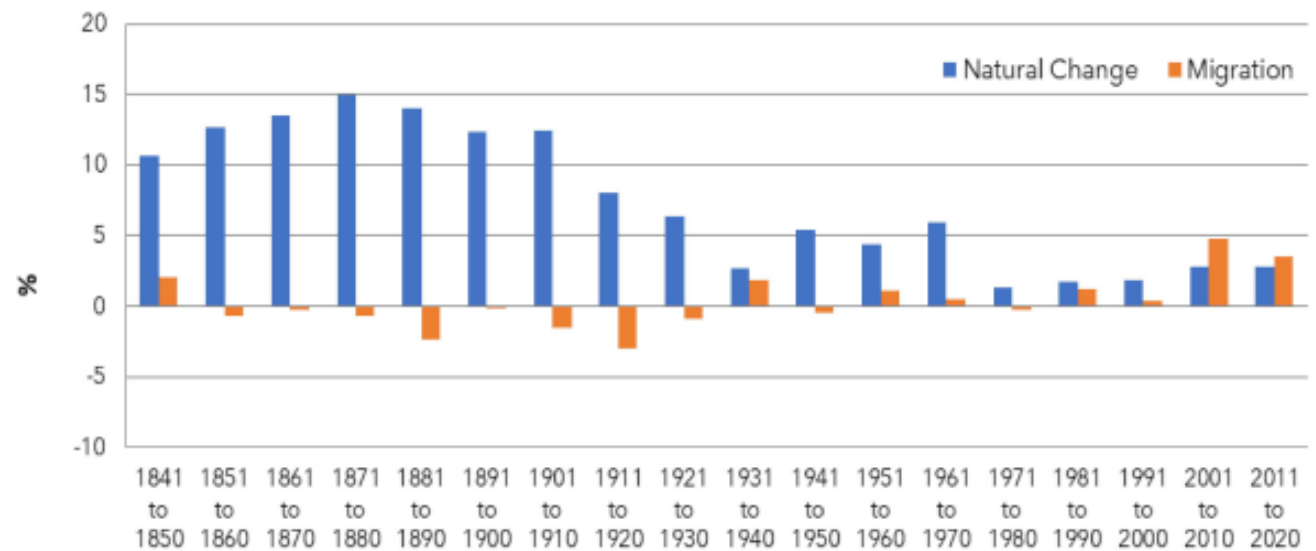
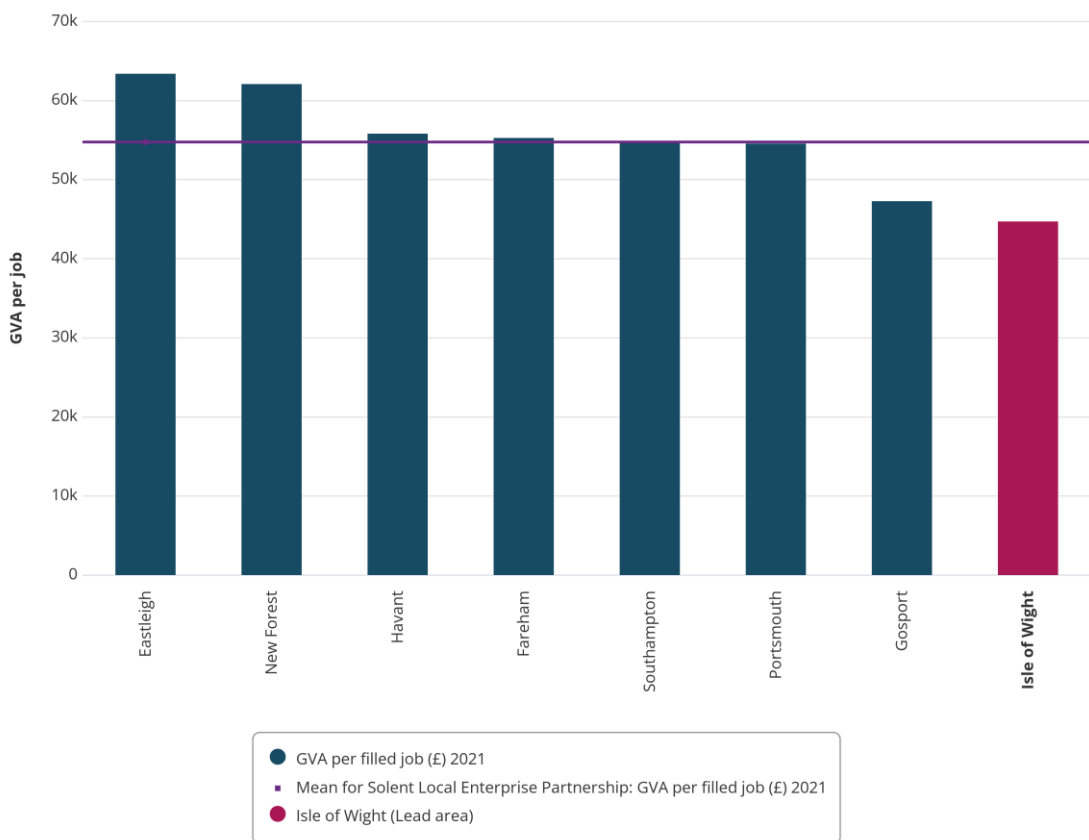


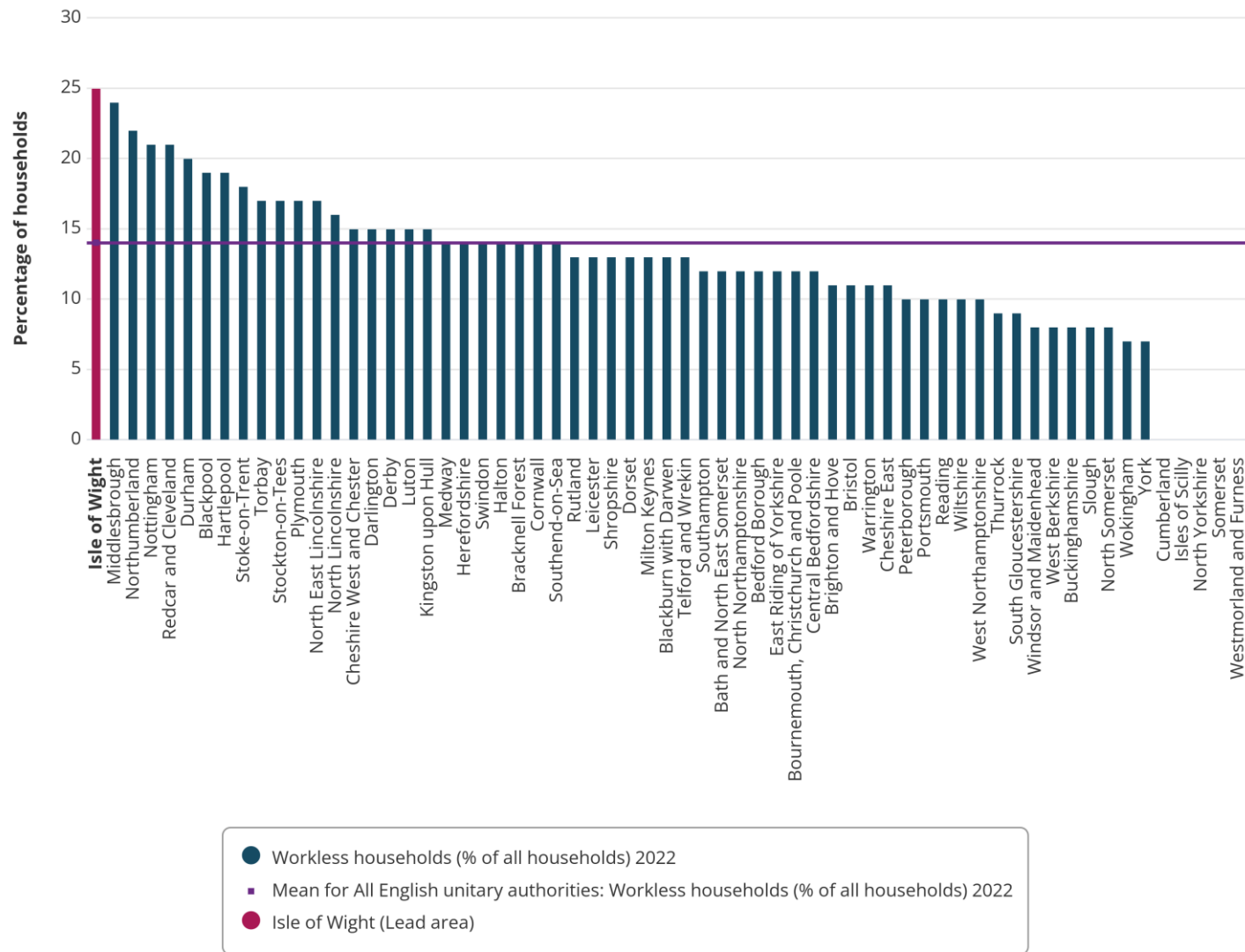
Fig. 5: England and Wales Decennial percentage increase/decrease in population due to natural change (births minus deaths) and migration.

There are economic consequences. The Island's workforce is aging, businesses close through retirement and are not replaced; enterprise and entrepreneurship suffer and stagnate. We are wasting the talent we have.

Current price (smoothed) GVA per filled job (£) (2021) for Solent Local Enterprise Partnership



Workless households (% of all households) (2022) for All English unitary authorities

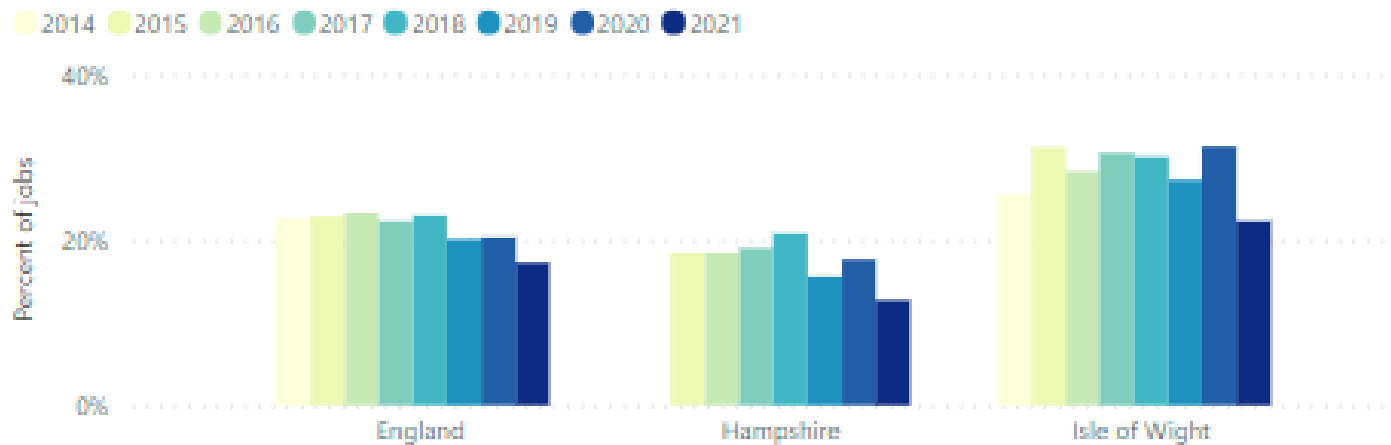


Source:
 Calculated by LG Inform
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Enterprise trends 2010 – 2023 by business count and turnover (£ thousands)

Date	Total	0 to 49 (thousand)	50 to 99 (thousand)	100 to 199 (thousand)	200 to 499 (thousand)	500 to 999 (thousand)	1000 to 1999 (thousand)	2000 to 4999 (thousand)	5000 to 9999 (thousand)	10000 to 49999 (thousand)	50000+ (thousand)
2010	4,295	700	1,045	1,305	585	360	180	80	25	15	5
2011	4,175	765	990	1,225	570	340	155	90	20	15	5
2012	4,220	765	990	1,275	570	320	180	85	20	15	5
2013	4,125	735	975	1,230	550	325	180	85	25	15	5
2014	4,290	765	1,015	1,270	540	360	195	100	25	15	5
2015	4,545	710	1,010	1,445	630	380	215	105	25	20	5
2016	4,555	675	1,010	1,485	625	380	210	120	30	20	5
2017	4,615	695	1,010	1,500	645	375	210	120	30	20	5
2018	4,585	670	965	1,555	625	385	205	120	35	20	5
2019	4,620	665	965	1,580	645	365	210	125	40	20	5
2020	4,545	600	930	1,600	670	370	205	120	40	15	5
2021	4,540	635	930	1,605	630	370	200	110	40	15	5
2022	4,705	705	1,080	1,575	660	345	195	100	30	15	5
2023	4,695	660	925	1,635	660	410	220	115	40	15	5

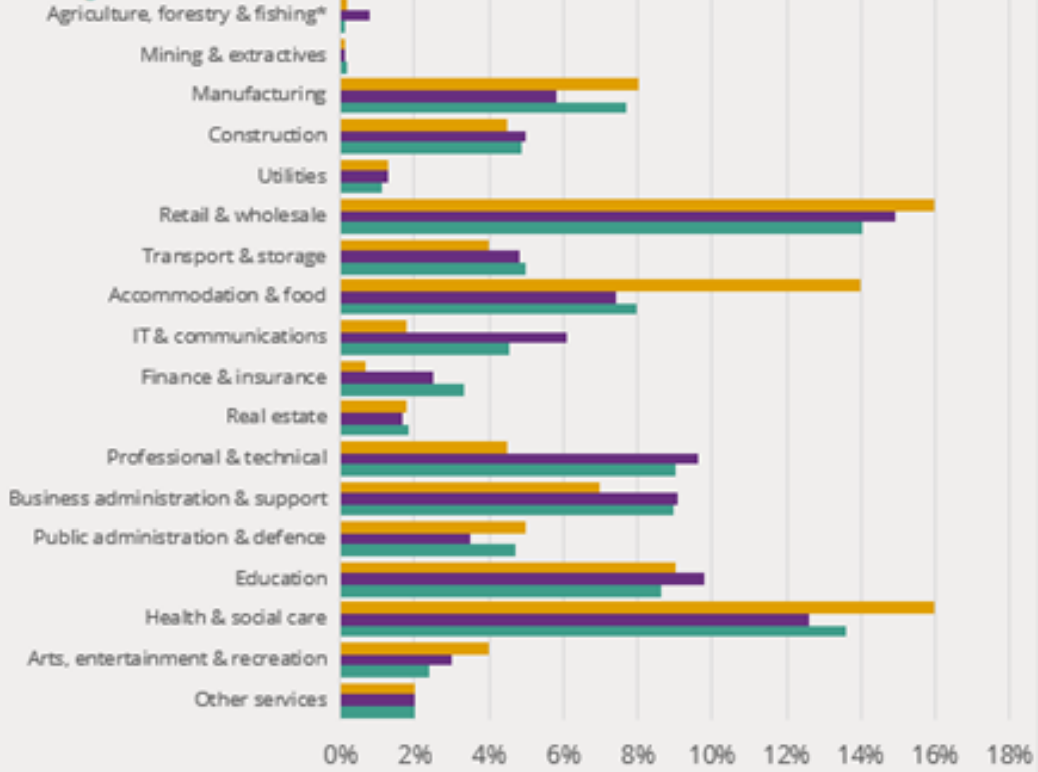
Proportion of people in jobs that pay lower than the living wage, England, Hampshire, Isle of Wight



The relatively flat profile of <£500K turnover enterprise (83% of the business population) leaves it increasingly vulnerable to the stagnating effects of workforce aging, narrow sector range and low-wage precarity.

Proportion of employee jobs by industry, 2022

Isle of Wight
South East
UK average



Data from House of Commons Library Constituency Dashboard

Locality	Region	2019	Rank 2019	2023	Rank 2023
West Devon	South West	83.0	293	81.2	331
North Norfolk	East of England	77.7	352	81.1	332
Sandwell	West Midlands	81.7	310	81.0	333
Scarborough	Yorkshire and the Humber	79.9	333	80.8	334
Caerphilly	Wales	79.3	345	80.8	335
Isle of Wight	South East	80.3	324	80.5	336
County Durham	North East	79.5	341	80.4	337
Fenland	East of England	78.3	349	80.4	338
Castle Point	East of England	79.9	334	80.4	339
Tameside	North West	79.9	335	80.2	340

The UK Competitiveness Index (UKCI) 2023, ranked out of 360 local authority areas

Data from Cardiff University School of Geography and Planning and Nottingham Trent University Nottingham Business School

We can value the industries that have for so long shaped the Island’s economic life now, but which ultimately underpin our low paid, seasonal and precarious employment, without expecting them to also suddenly deliver the new opportunities for enterprise and prosperity that we now urgently need. We must build stronger, more secure and better paid frontline services and at the same time rapidly grow the sectors where the Island has untapped reserves of excellence. We should make it a core objective, for example, to double employment in the creative industries and in scientific professional and technical work, by 2035.

ISLE OF WIGHT EMPLOYMENT 2023/24 (number of jobs) Data source Nomis

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE **11,000**

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL (excluding vehicles) **8000**

EDUCATION AND TRAINING **5500**

FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRIES **5000**

MANUFACTURING AND TECH **4000**

ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS **3500**

PERSONAL AND HOUSEHOLD SERVICES **3500**

CONSTRUCTION AND CIVILS **2500**

VEHICLE INDUSTRIES **2500**

CREATIVE, CULTURAL AND MEDIA **2500**

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION **2500**

LOGISTICS **2000**

SPORT AND RECREATION **1500**

UTILITIES **1000**

LAND-BASED INDUSTRIES **1000**

The Island is overwhelmingly a frontline worker economy, an essential worker economy (as we saw during the pandemic), sectors that, in general, are paid the least, have fewer employment benefits and have the weakest voice for change, yet they underpin social cohesion.

Percentage of people in employment 2023/24

England	→	26,623,000	75.7	
South East region (statistical)	→	4,484,200	79.6	
Reading	→	98,000	87.6	
West Berkshire	→	80,300	83.7	
Windsor and Maidenhead	→	78,400	83.6	
Oxfordshire	→	356,000	83.5	
Surrey	→	603,600	82.4	
Hampshire	→	678,900	81.9	
Buckinghamshire UA	→	265,700	81.2	
Bracknell Forest	→	63,500	80.1	
Portsmouth	↑	114,600	79.7	
Brighton and Hove	→	164,600	79.0	
Medway	→	141,200	78.8	
Wokingham	→	78,000	78.0	
Kent	→	738,000	77.2	
Milton Keynes	→	133,800	76.6	
West Sussex	→	389,000	76.3	
Southampton	→	131,900	76.0	
Slough	→	72,500	75.9	
East Sussex	→	241,800	75.2	
Isle of Wight	→	54,500	71.3	

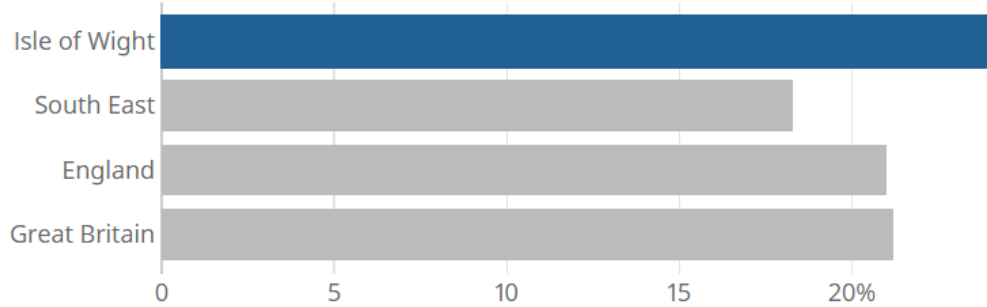
Source: NOMIS, Official Census and Labour Market Statistics

[Indicator Definitions and Supporting Information](#)

As the Island workforce shrinks, the resilience of the small business ecosystem will come under increasing pressure.

Economic inactivity on the Isle of Wight compared with the South East

Residents aged 16 to 64 years (%), year ending December 2023



Source: Annual Population Survey from the Office for National Statistics

England	↑	7,441,300	21.2
South East region (statistical)	→	997,800	17.7
Isle of Wight	→	19,600	25.7
Milton Keynes	→	37,800	21.7
Southampton	→	36,100	20.8
West Sussex	→	103,700	20.3
East Sussex	→	65,400	20.3
Kent	→	191,800	20.1
Wokingham	→	19,200	19.2
Slough	→	17,700	18.5
Medway	→	32,100	17.9
Bracknell Forest	→	13,200	16.7
Portsmouth	↓	23,900	16.6
Hampshire	→	137,100	16.6
Brighton and Hove	→	34,600	16.6
Surrey	→	117,800	16.1
Buckinghamshire UA	→	50,500	15.4
Windsor and Maidenhead	→	13,300	14.2
Oxfordshire	→	59,600	14.0
West Berkshire	→	12,900	13.5
Reading	→	11,200	10.1

Source: NOMIS, Official Census and Labour Market Statistics

[Indicator Definitions and Supporting Information](#)

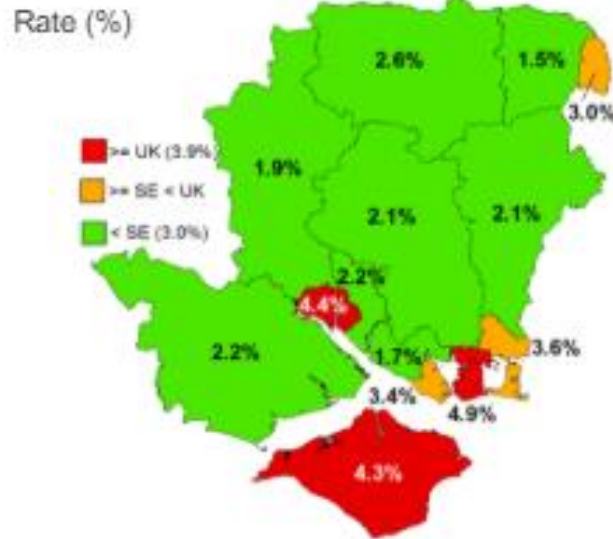
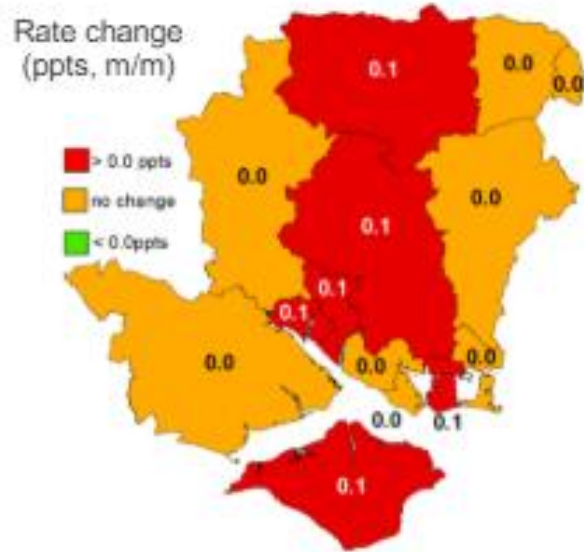
Economic inactivity (Jul 2023-Jun 2024)

	Isle Of Wight (Level)	Isle Of Wight (%)	South East (%)	Great Britain (%)
All People				
Total	19,600	25.5	17.7	21.6
Student	#	#	28.4	26.8
Looking After Family/Home	2,700	13.5	18.6	18.9
Temporary Sick	!	!	1.5	2.0
Long-Term Sick	6,500	33.3	22.2	28.1
Discouraged	!	!	#	0.4
Retired	5,200	26.6	16.1	12.9
Other	2,400	12.2	12.8	11.0

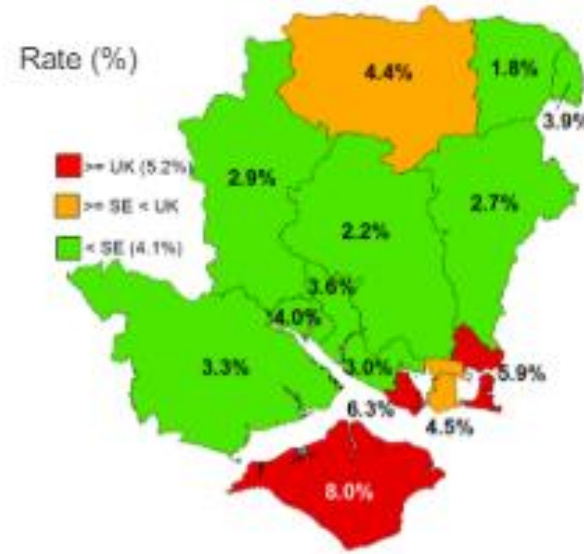
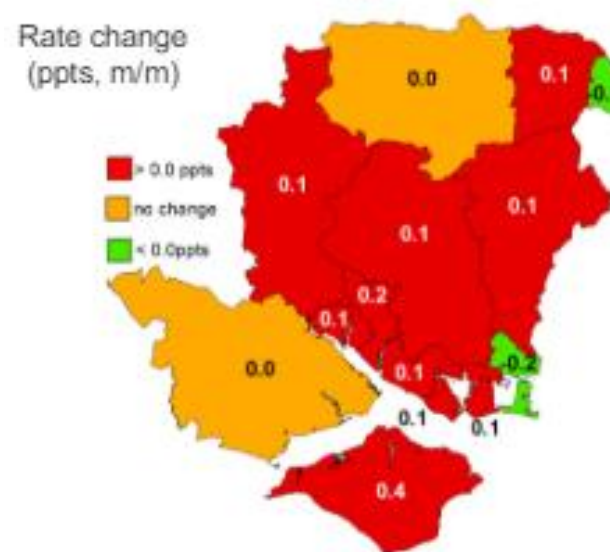
Economic inactivity rate 2023/24

The Island economy is increasingly dominated by inactive wealth in property and pensions

Local Claimants



Local Young Claimants

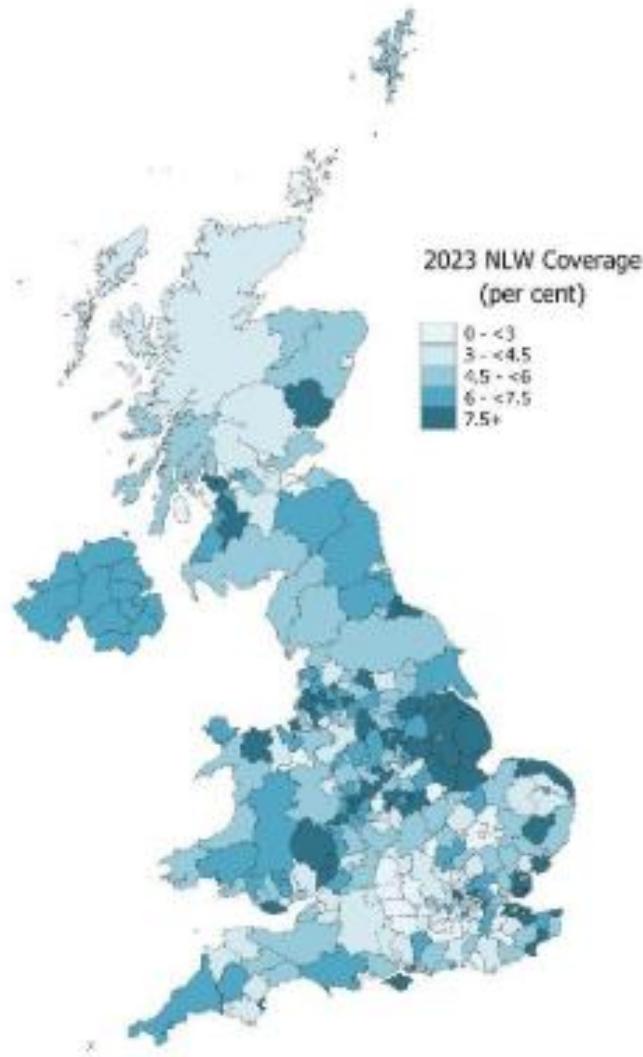


The Island suffers from persistently high dependency on employment-related benefits, and this is especially concentrated in younger age groups.

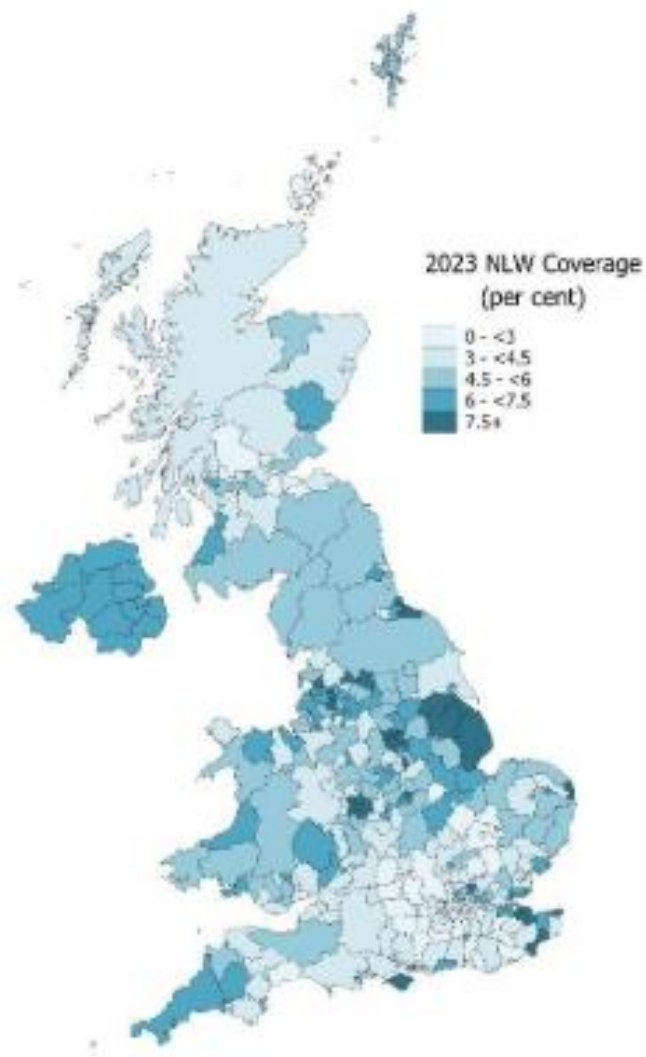
There are also higher than average numbers of claimants for ESA, Incapacity, and Carer support.

The transition to Universal Credit is likely to create significant problems for a labour force that is 40% part time, self-employed, and reliant on tax credits.

The challenges and pressures of balancing work with care responsibilities, whether for sick relatives or children out of full-time education, are being faced by an increasing number of working and school age Islanders.

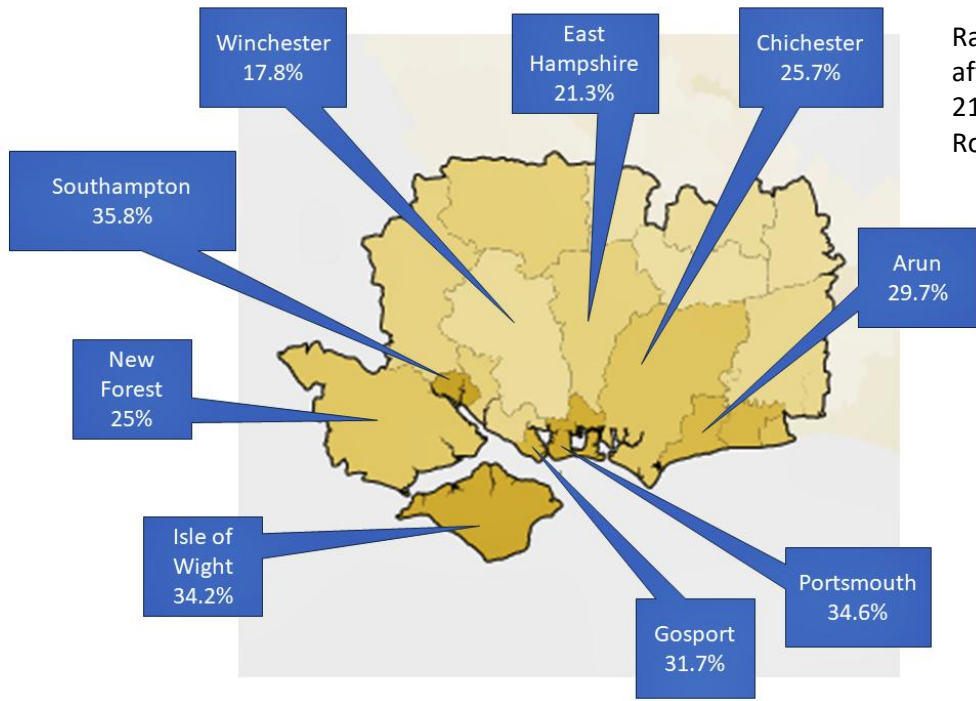


Minimum Wage Coverage by Workforce



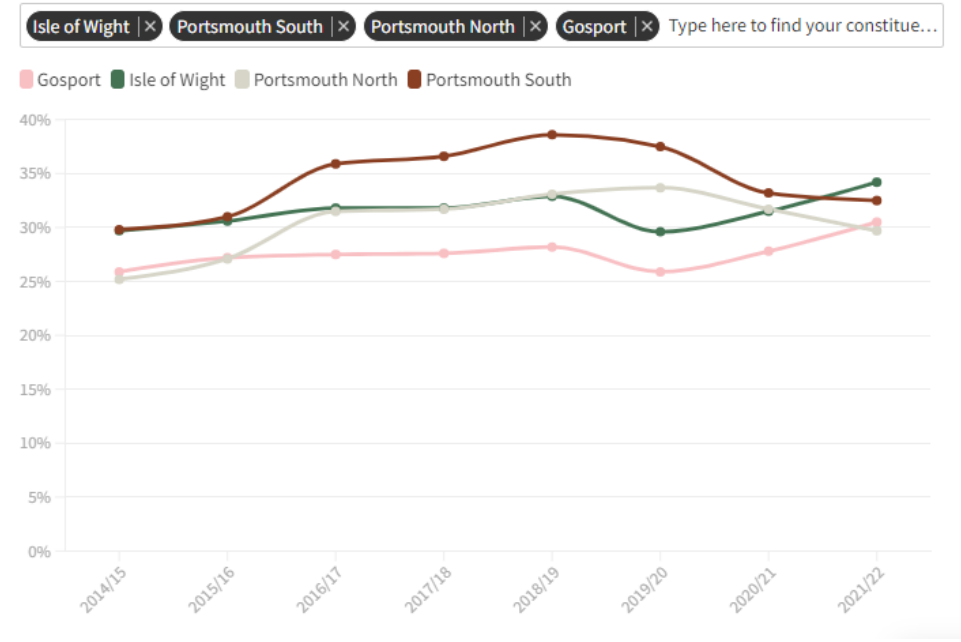
Minimum Wage Coverage by Residence

ONS data ‘live’ data provides pay averages for every local area in country. In March and April 2024, the Island paid the lowest median monthly income of any county in the UK and there is a pattern of very low comparative pay over the past decade. The UK Low Pay Commission, in its report for 2023, identifies the Isle of Wight as a centre of endemic low pay both in its workforce and its residential populations, highlighting the double-bind of minimum-wage income and high-cost Solent travel. This isolates low-paid workers from wider opportunities within the Solent economy and in fact compromises the whole Island’s capacity to play a more active and productive role in the region.



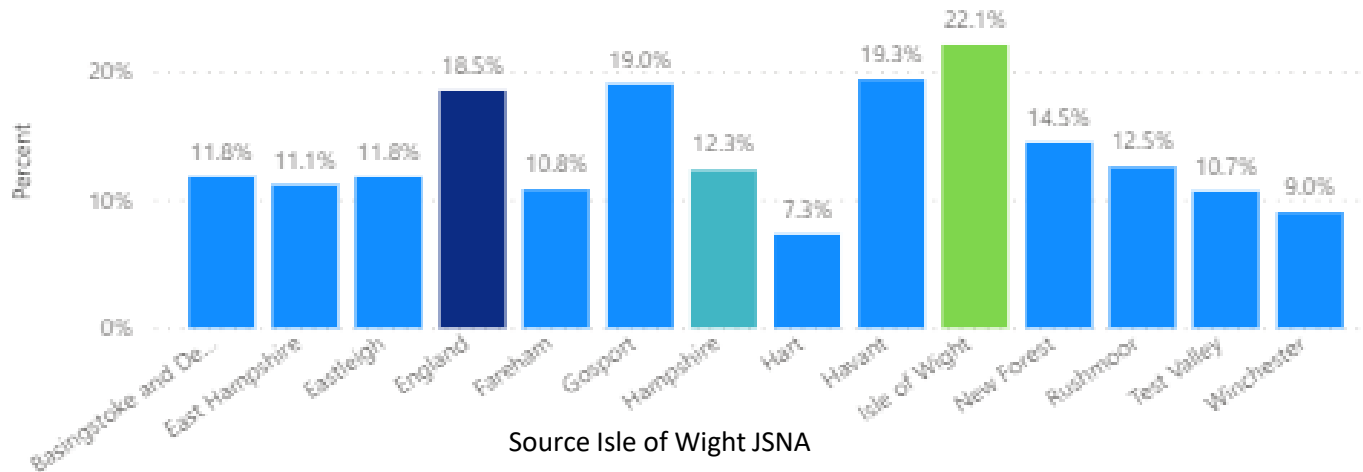
Rates of child poverty after housing costs 21/22. Source Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Trends in child poverty in the Solent region. Source ONS



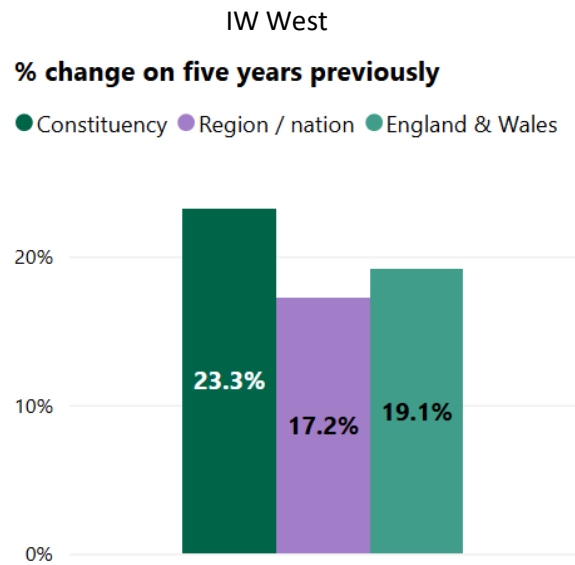
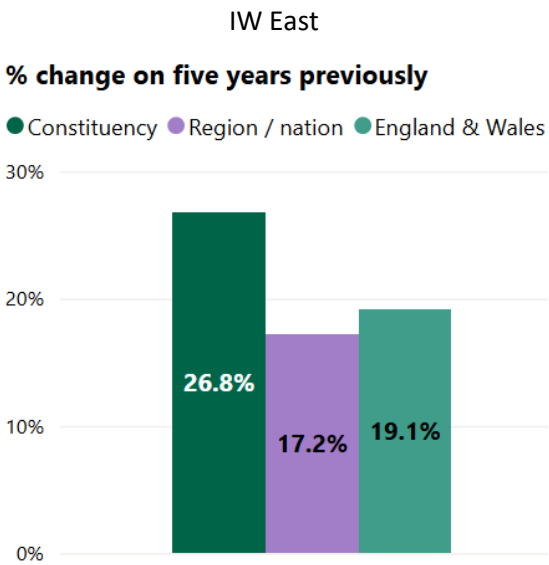
Child poverty leads to poorer mental health, lower educational attainment and poor health outcomes and premature mortality for adults.

Proportion of children living in low income households, 2020/21



The process of demographic decay and societal stagnation inevitably impacts upon opportunity, health, and individual and community wellbeing, exacerbating the Island's existing challenges of low wages, low productivity and rising child poverty.

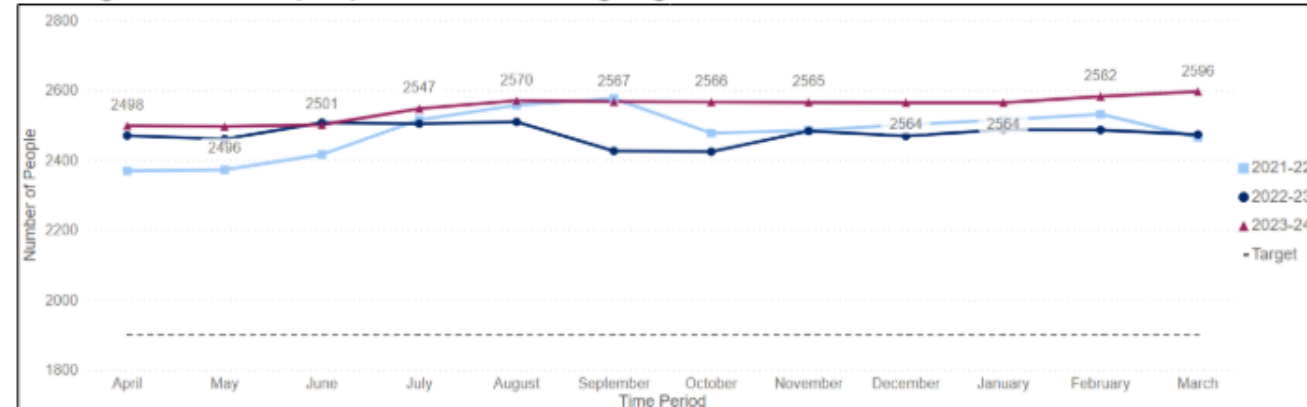
The figures for child poverty on the Island after housing costs published for 2024 (End Child Poverty) show a further rise from those shown here, to 35.9%. This represents a 6.2% increase since 2015, within the top 15% highest of all 360 UK local authorities.



Change in average house prices by constituency

Data from House of Commons Library Constituency Dashboard

Average number of people on the housing register:

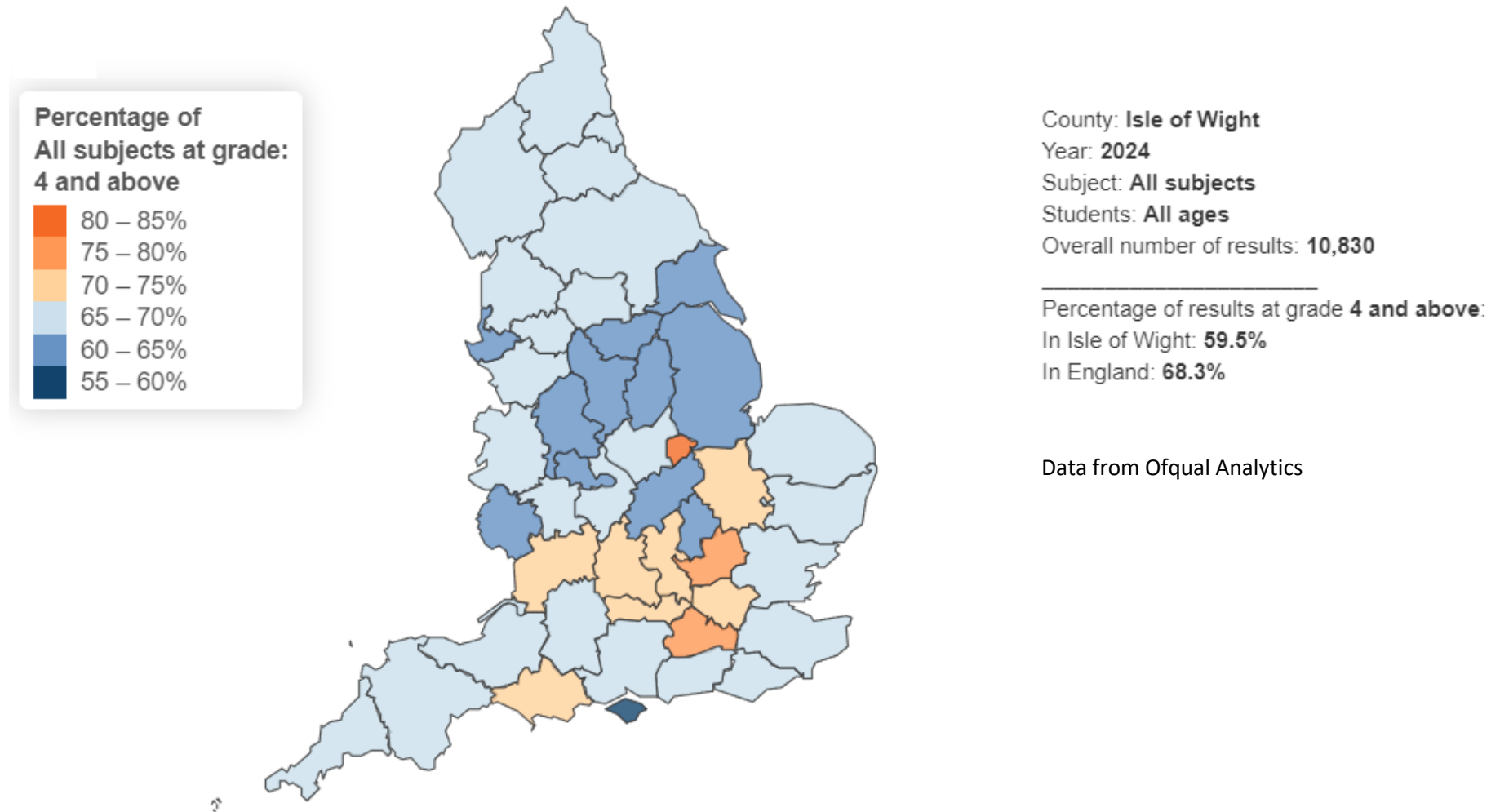


2596 on the housing register at the end of Q4 23/24. Trend rising.

Data from Isle of Wight Council

Access to decent housing on low wages is very challenging. On the Island the rise in average house prices and private rentals, in part driven by the annual inward migration of older homeowners from the near mainland, is pushing more people into temporary accommodation. Although there is perhaps no direct correlation, the fact that the number of second homes currently recorded on the Island is same as the number of people on the council's housing register, is a sobering comparison. Children in these conditions do not prosper, their wellbeing and education suffer. The Island must focus on the provision of affordable housing. All 34 Island councils (the county and the parishes) can and must adopt direct delivery and community-led housebuilding as matters of the greatest urgency, necessity and importance.

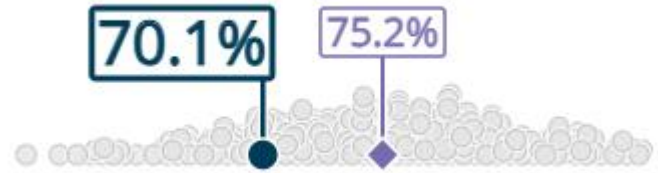
The Isle of Wight faces very significant challenges in educational performance. It has ranked lowest of all English local authorities for level 4 above at GCSE and grades C and above at A-level in every year since 2018. There are 153 Local Education Authorities in England; Island primary schools were placed last in 2022. By the age of 11 children should reach an expected standard in maths, reading and writing; 71% achieve the standard in maths, 74% in reading and 69% in writing. 59% of children reached the expected standard in all three areas; the best LEA, Richmond Surrey, scored 75% on this measure, the Isle of Wight scored lowest with 47%. The situation remains the same in 2024.



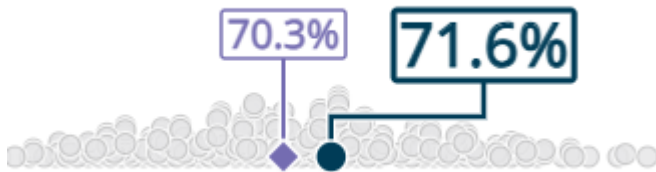
National average pale, Isle of Wight bold



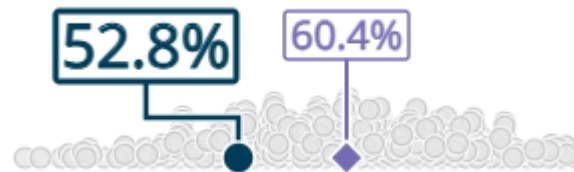
Communication and language skills by the end of Early Years foundation stage



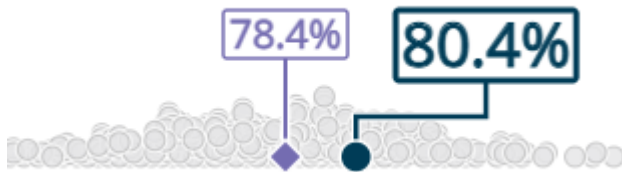
GCSEs in English and Maths



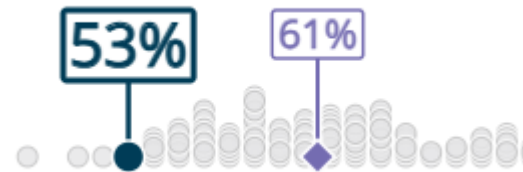
Literacy skills by the end of Early Years foundation stage



Level 3 or above qualifications



Maths skills by the end of Early Years foundation stage



Pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2

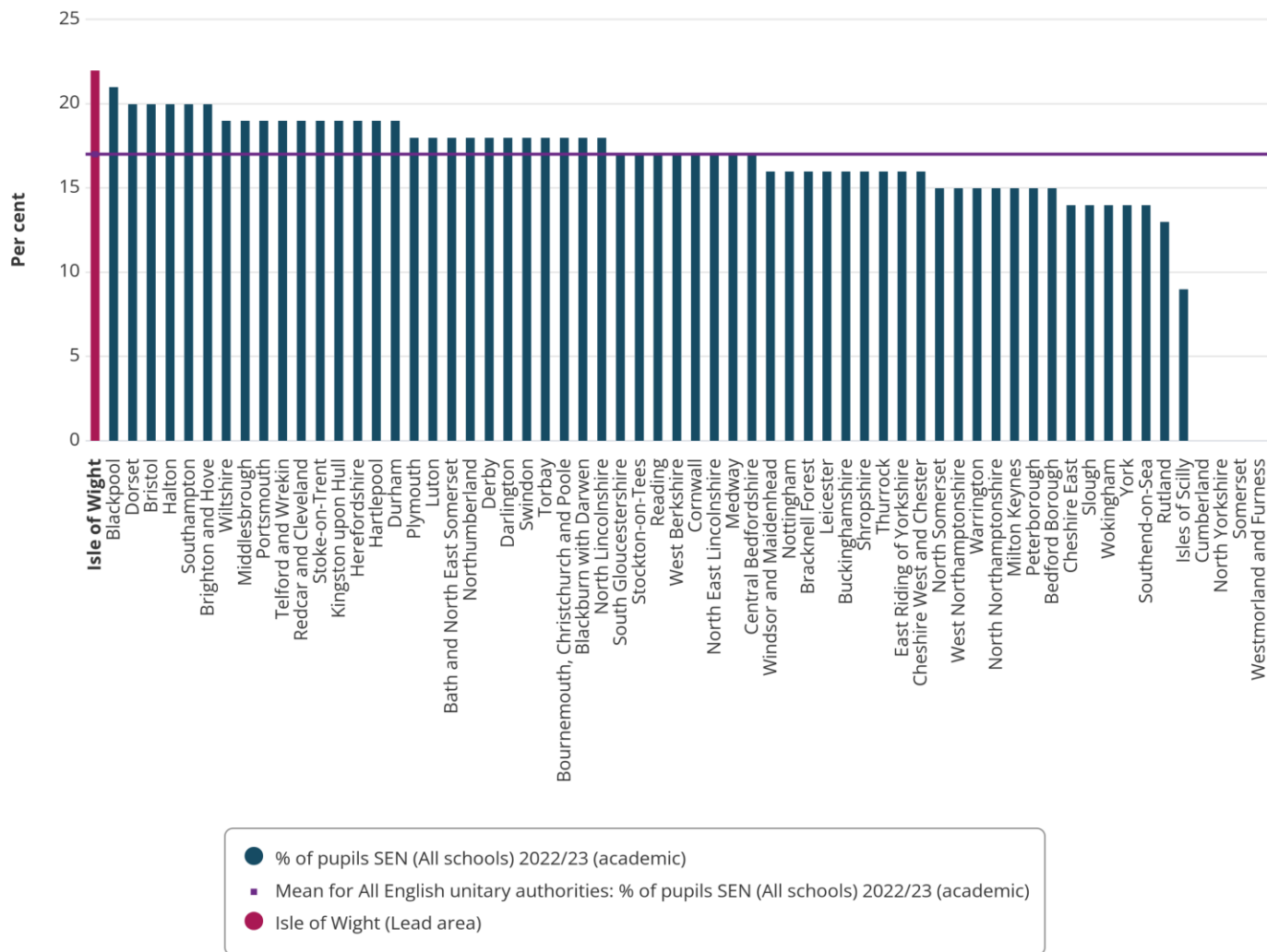
The Island performs well, above the national averages, at Early years foundation stage.

But something then happens to erode this progress as young people move on through Key Stages 1 to 4.

The combination of cuts to school funding, falling pupil numbers, rising levels of special needs, child poverty and household economic disadvantage are likely to combine to wear away at attainment.

77% Island schools have lost funding since 2010, a total of almost £3M with an average reduction of £350 per pupil.

% of pupils SEN (All schools) (2022/23 (academic)) for All English unitary authorities



The Island is characterised by an exceptionally high concentration of special educational needs putting enormous pressure on the school system and on support services. Research by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) suggests that :

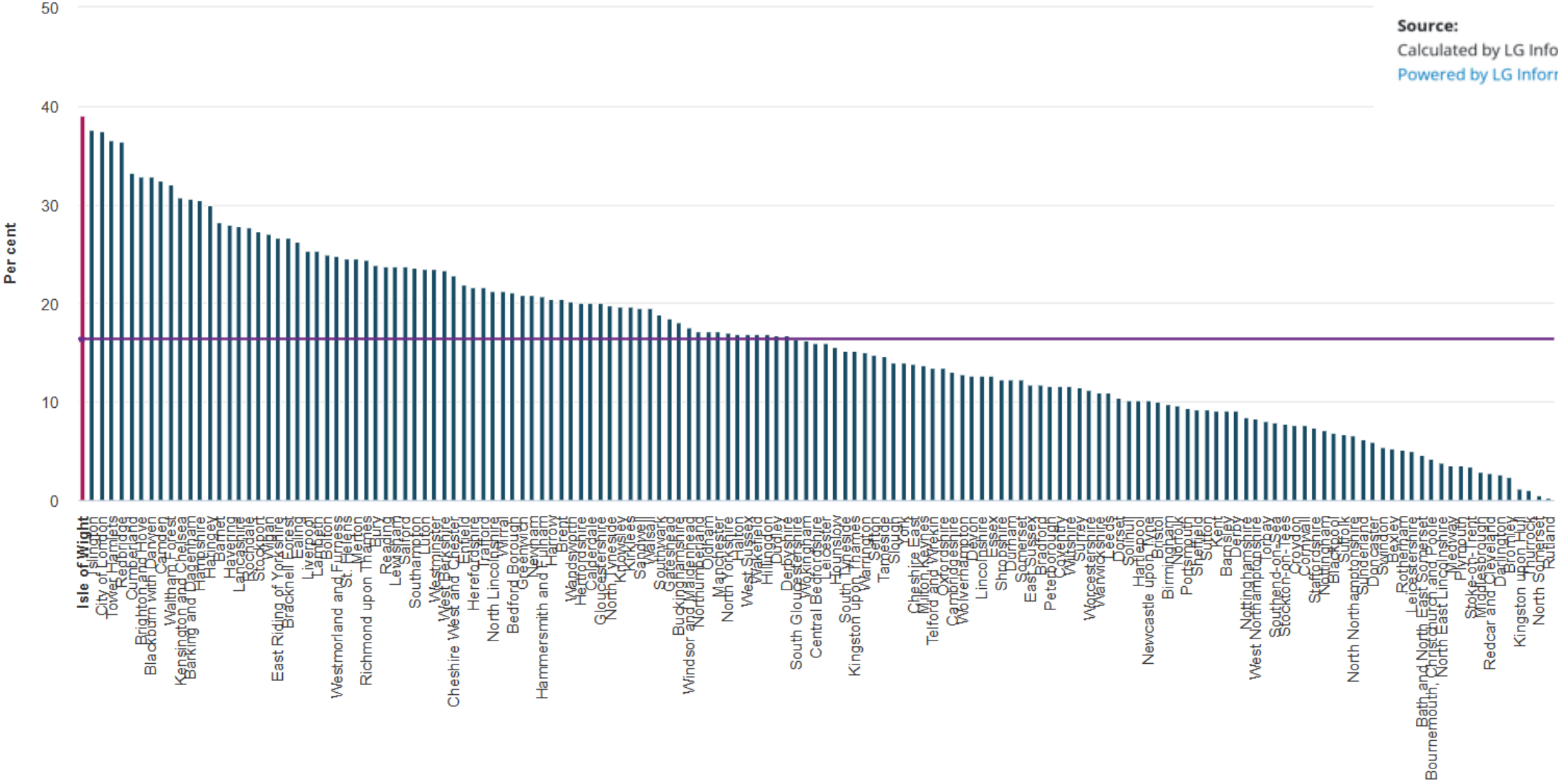
- many vulnerable pupils are likely to remain unidentified and without the help they need.
- there is a rationing of what support is available in areas with the greatest need.
- academy schools are associated with depressed chances of being identified with SEND.
- which primary school a child attends makes a significant difference to their chances of being identified with SEND.

The fragmentation of local authority schools, driven by a rapidly falling child population, decreases our ability to provide sufficient educational services to the whole Island. We need to be doing much more to support our most vulnerable young people.

Source:
 Calculated by LG Inform
 Powered by LG Inform

Proportion of children and young people with a statement or Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan placed in: LA maintained mainstream schools (including foundation schools) (2023/24 (academic)) for All English authorities

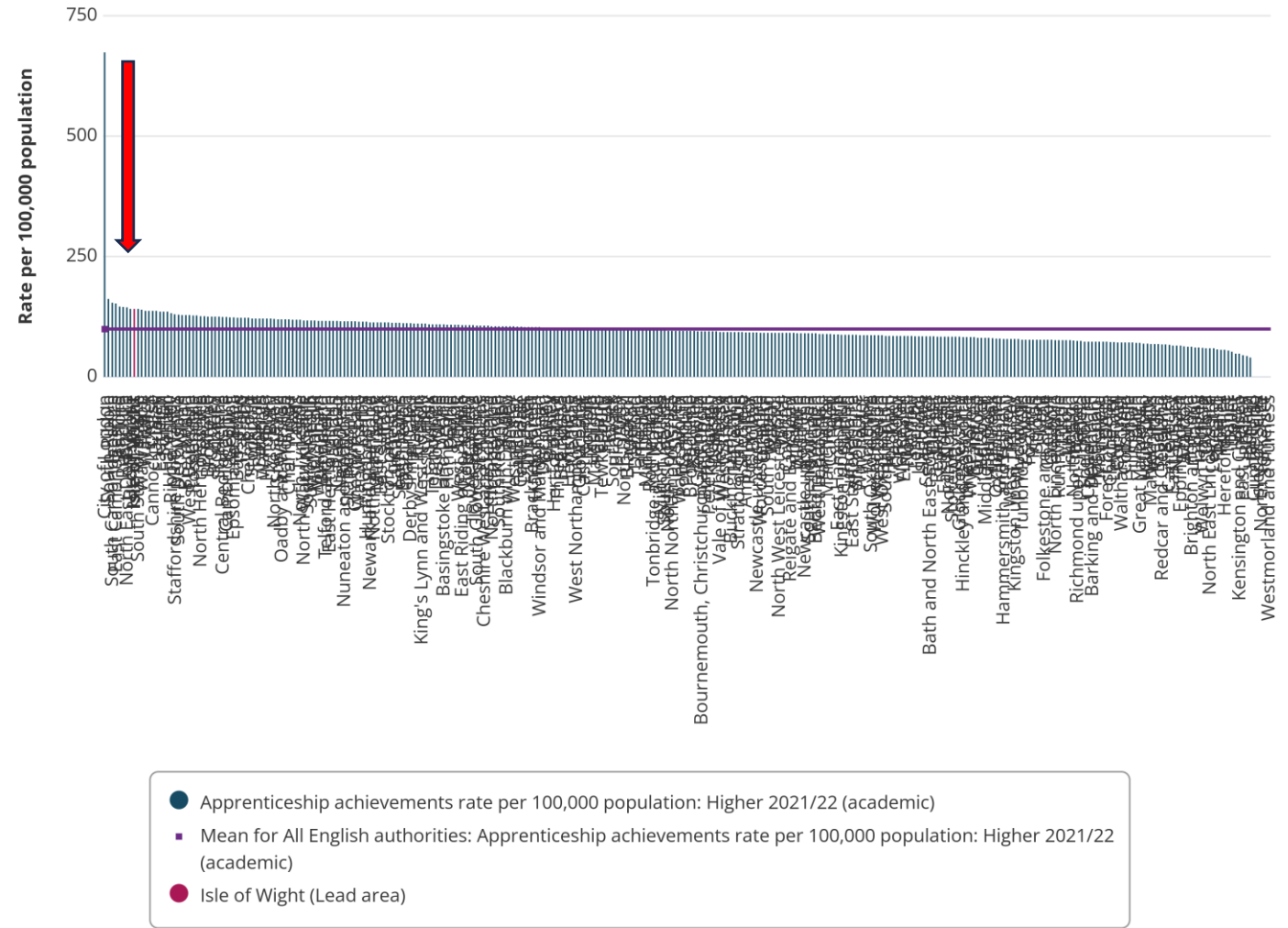
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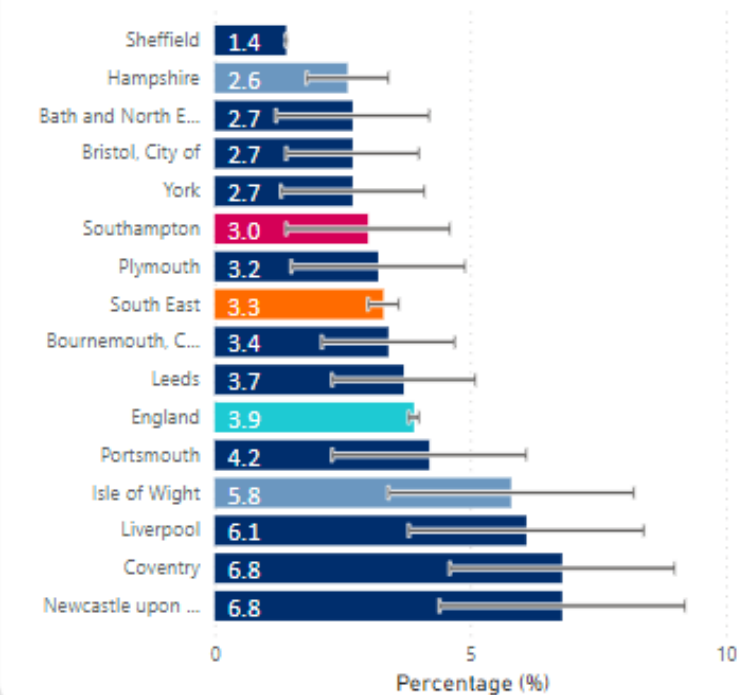
The Island has the highest proportion of EHCP provision of any local authority in the country

There are some bright spots, the Island performs at a high level for apprenticeship take-up and achievement, but apprentice wages are too often below minimum wage and the hope of employment too often disappointed.

Apprenticeship achievements rate per 100,000 population at Higher level (2021/22 (academic)) for All English authorities



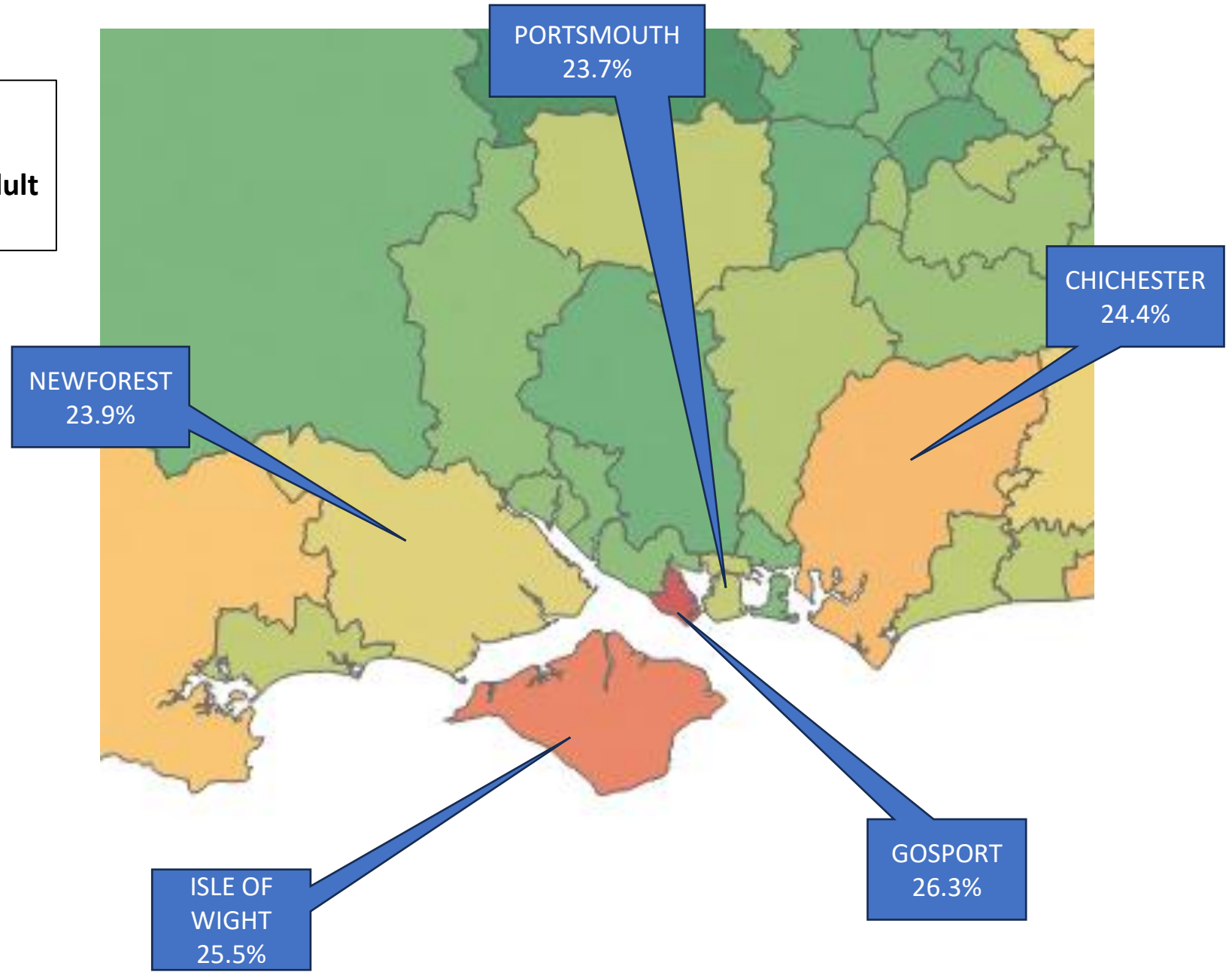
% of economically active with no qualifications (NVQ) - aged 16-64 - Southampton and ONS comparators: 2021



Data from Southampton City Council

Source:
Department for Education
Powered by LG Inform

The Island suffers from entrenched deficiency in foundation skills in its adult and working population.



Data sourced from OECD Survey of Adult Skills

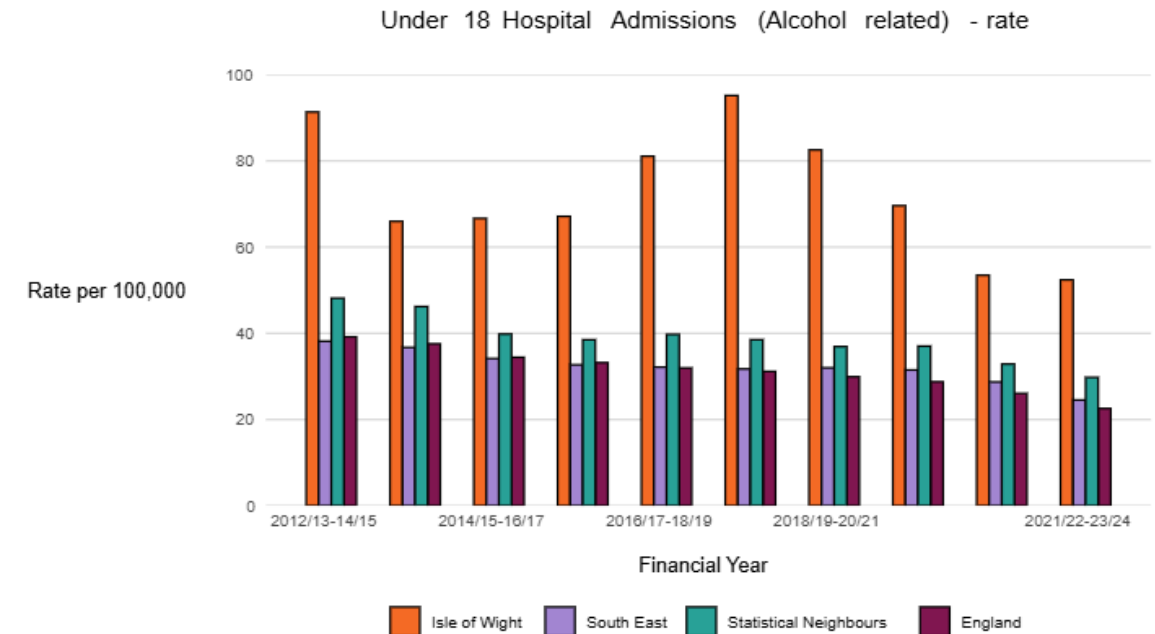
As the Island ages, its decision makers, and its decision making, become more remote from the lived experience of young people. There is a political drift away from prioritising their wellbeing and indeed from any hopeful vision of the future. Instead, there is an increasingly hollow fetishization of the past, a toxic nostalgia. The consequences of this systemic failure are starkly apparent in the data.

Hospital admissions alcohol-specific conditions (< 18 yrs) 2022/23

England	-	9,226	26.0	
South East region (statistical)	-	1,670	28.6*	
Southampton	-	105	70.5	
Brighton and Hove	-	80	56.4	
Isle of Wight	-	40	56.3	
East Sussex	-	125	40.7	
Hampshire	-	295	35.0*	
West Sussex	-	170	32.3	
West Berkshire	-	30	28.8	
Kent	-	245	24.2	
Portsmouth	-	30	23.9	
Medway	-	45	23.3	
Oxfordshire	-	100	22.7	
Reading	-	25	22.7	
Wokingham	-	25	20.2*	
Milton Keynes	-	40	19.1	
Bracknell Forest	-	-	*	
Buckinghamshire UA	-	-	*	
Slough	-	-	*	
Surrey	-	-	*	
Windsor and Maidenhead	-	-	*	

Source: OHID, based on NHS England and Office for National Statistics data

[Indicator Definitions and Supporting Information](#)



ALCOHOL

Hospital admissions for self-harm (10 – 14 yrs) 2022/23

England	↑	8,782	251.2	
South East region (statistical)	↑	1,410	240.7*	
Brighton and Hove	↑	65	457.6	
East Sussex	↑	135	432.6	
Isle of Wight	→	30	418.6	
Hampshire	↑	300	355.3*	
Southampton	→	50	348.9	
West Sussex	↑	185	347.3	
Portsmouth	→	40	333.3	
West Berkshire	↑	30	275.3	
Wokingham	→	30	225.0*	
Medway	→	40	212.2	
Reading	→	20	193.3	
Milton Keynes	→	30	140.1	
Kent	→	120	118.0	
Oxfordshire	→	50	113.4	
Bracknell Forest	→	-	*	
Buckinghamshire UA	↑	-	*	
Slough	→	-	*	
Surrey	→	-	*	
Windsor and Maidenhead	→	-	*	

Source: OHID, based on NHS England and Office for National Statistics data

[Indicator Definitions and Supporting Information](#)

Data from PHE/ONS

SELF HARM 10-14 yrs

Hospital admissions for self-harm (15 – 19 yrs) 2022/23

England	↓	15,445	468.2	
South East region (statistical)	→	2,990	557.7*	
Southampton	→	200	1,179.7	
Isle of Wight	→	65	992.5	
West Sussex	→	370	794.2	
Reading	→	85	790.7	
East Sussex	→	225	786.7	
Hampshire	→	540	716.6*	
Medway	→	115	696.7	
Brighton and Hove	→	125	682.6	
West Berkshire	→	50	526.5	
Portsmouth	↓	65	483.3	
Wokingham	↓	50	461.2*	
Kent	→	385	428.4	
Oxfordshire	↓	155	349.6	
Milton Keynes	→	50	290.6	
Bracknell Forest	→	-	*	
Buckinghamshire UA	→	-	*	
Slough	→	-	*	
Surrey	↑	-	*	
Windsor and Maidenhead	→	-	*	

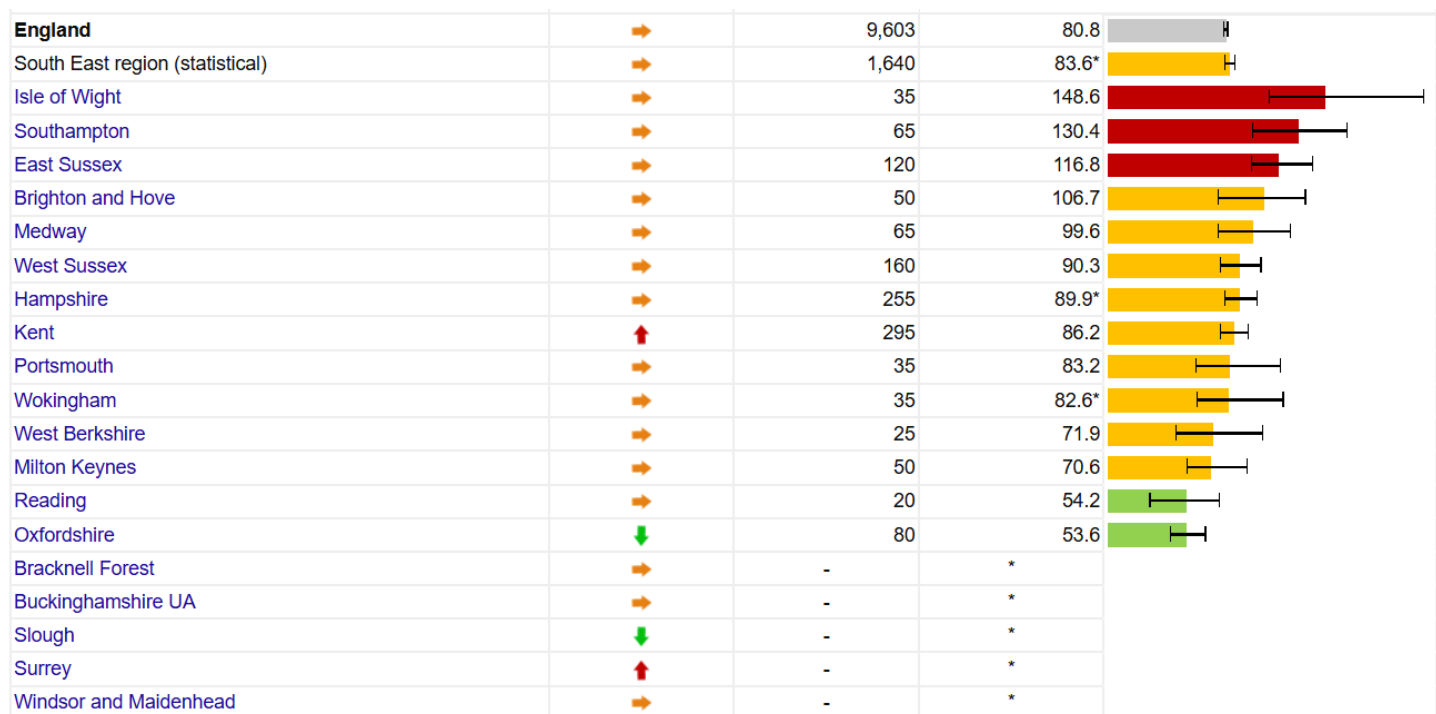
Source: OHID, based on NHS England and Office for National Statistics data

[Indicator Definitions and Supporting Information](#)

Data from PHE/ONS

SELF HARM 15–19 yrs

Hospital admissions for mental health conditions (< 18 yrs) 2022/23

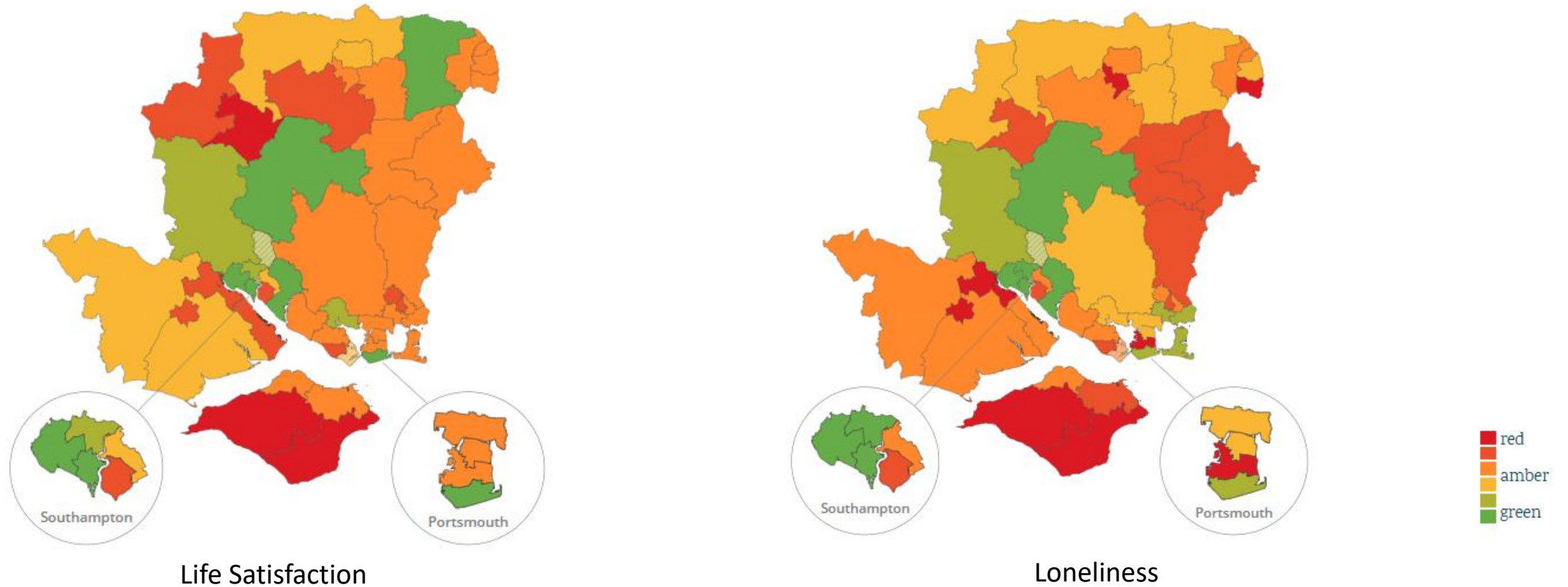


Source: OHID, based on NHS England and Office for National Statistics data

POOR MENTAL HEALTH

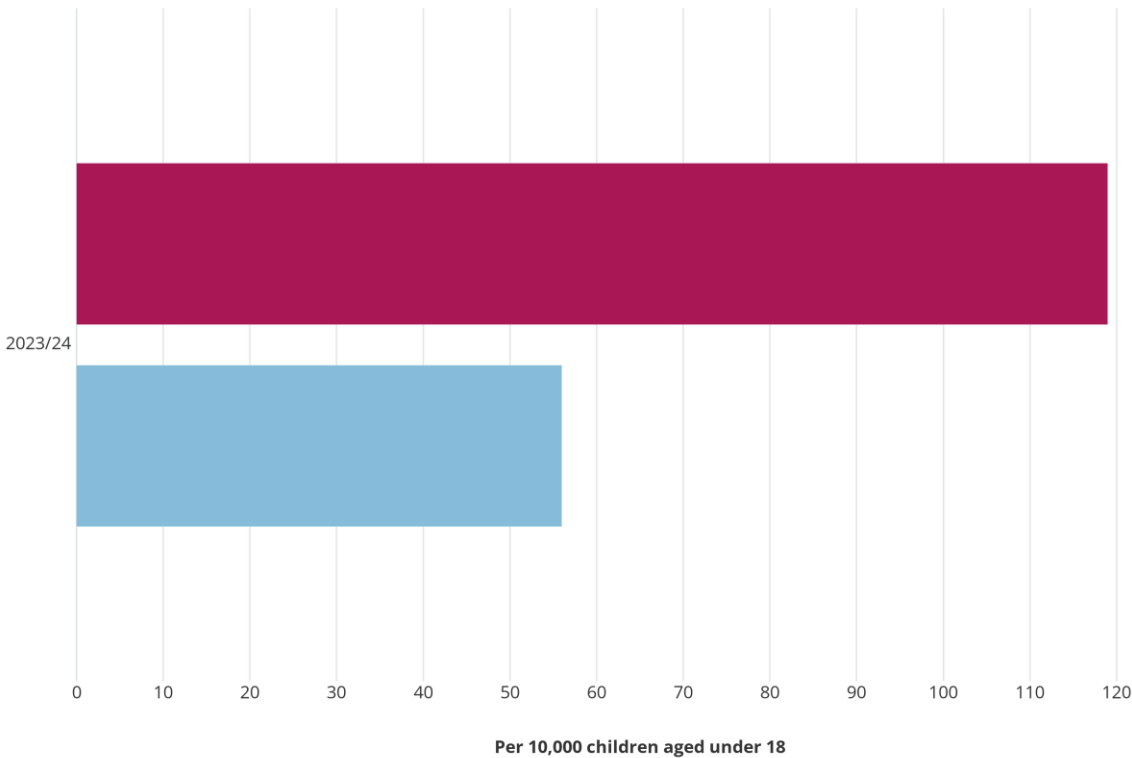
Inpatient admission rate for mental health disorders (0-17 yr olds)





The BeeWell survey was completed by 22,400 pupils in Years 8 and 10 in 102 secondary schools across Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, and Southampton in 2023. In collaboration with a team of experts, 200 young people from 15 pathfinder schools co-designed the survey to ensure it captured what matters to them. The Island results in some key indicators of health and wellbeing are stark. In the categories Life Satisfaction and Loneliness, for example, the whole of the Isle of Wight scored red, a warning that we are failing our young people.

Children looked after rate, per 10,000 children aged under 18 (2023/24) for Isle of Wight

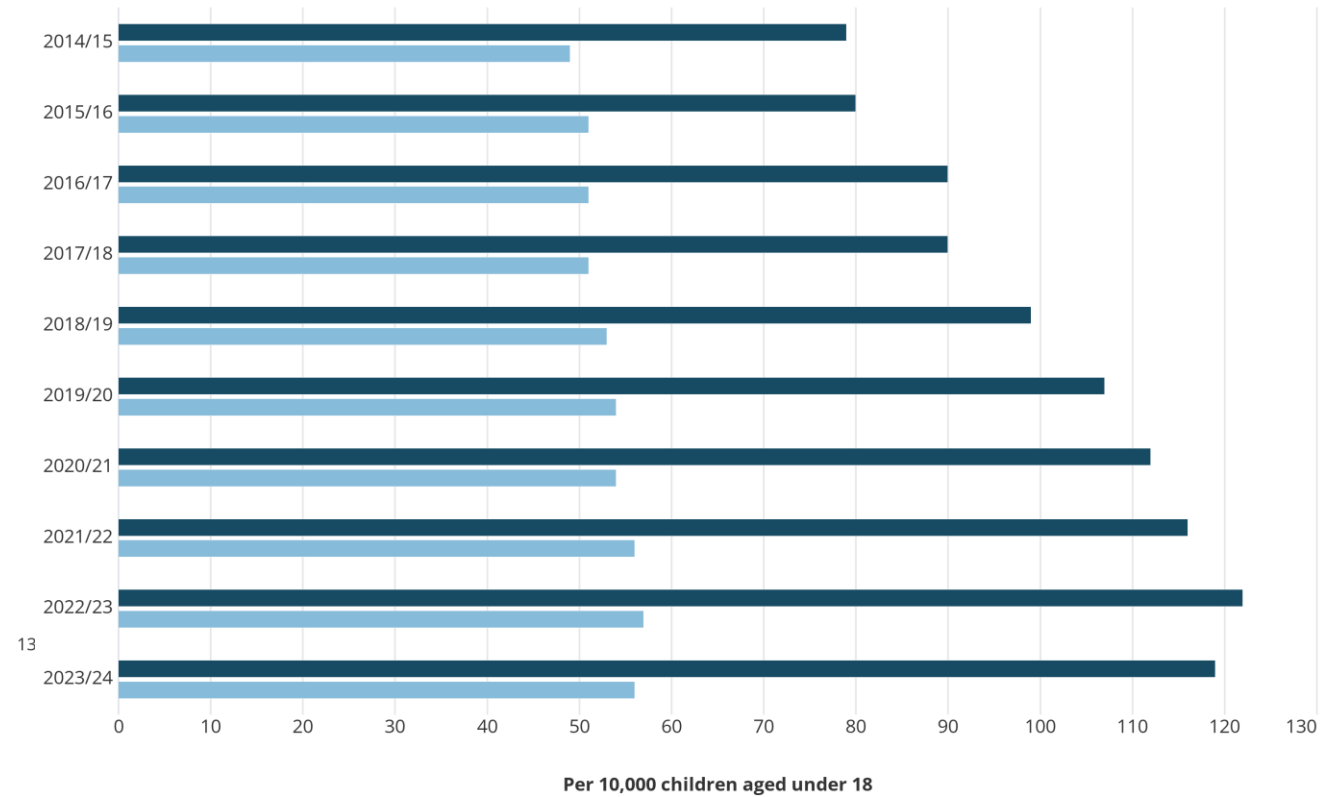


- Isle of Wight Children looked after rate, per 10,000 children aged under 18
- Mean for Isle of Wight region Children looked after rate, per 10,000 children aged under 18
- Isle of Wight (Lead area)

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Source:
Department for Education

Children looked after rate, per 10,000 children aged under 18 (from 2014/15 to 2023/24) for Isle of Wight



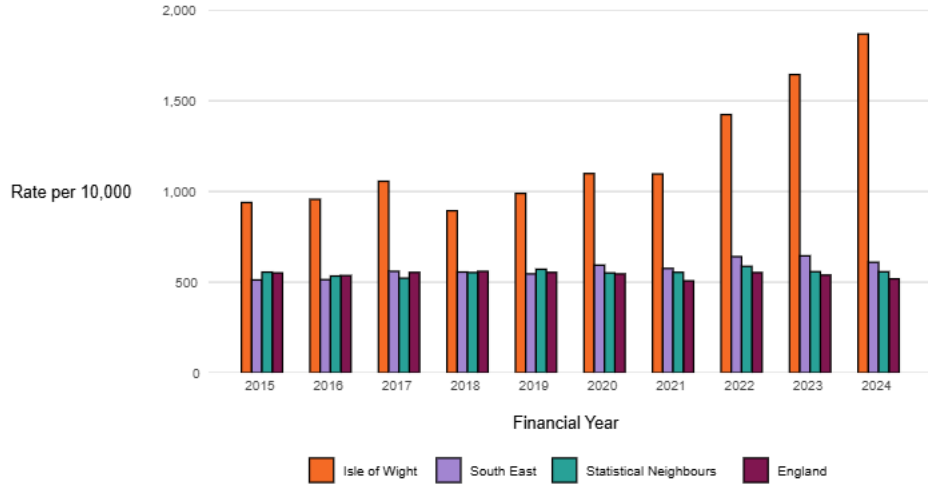
- Isle of Wight Children looked after rate, per 10,000 children aged under 18
- Mean for Isle of Wight region Children looked after rate, per 10,000 children aged under 18

Powered by LG Inform

Source:
Department for Education

The Island is becoming increasingly problematic in its need for child protection interventions in comparison with its region and the wider country. There is something going badly wrong in the way we nurture and support our own future generations.

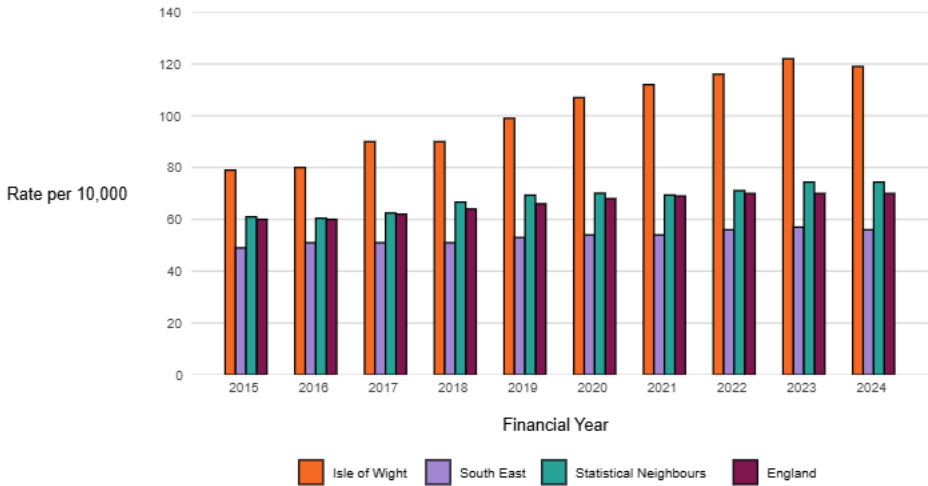
Rates per 10,000 of referrals to Children's Social Services



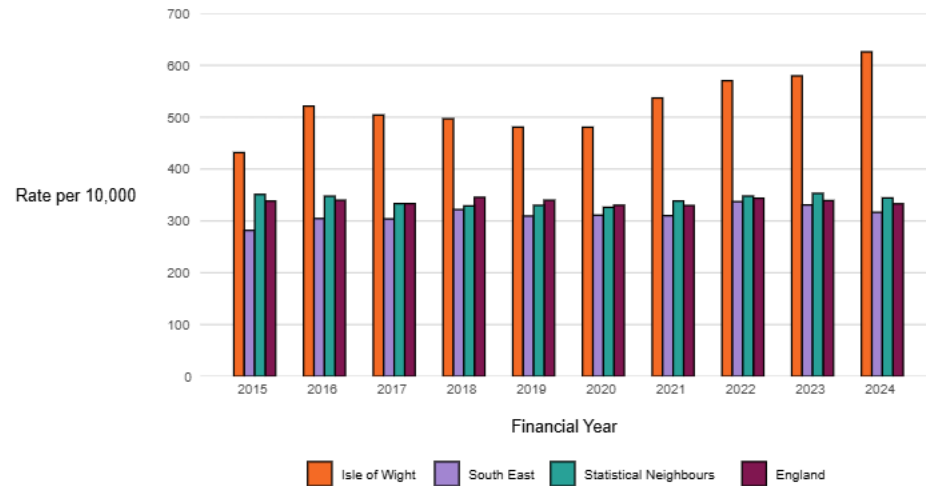
Re-referrals to children's social care within 12 months of the previous referral (%)



Children looked after rate per 10,000

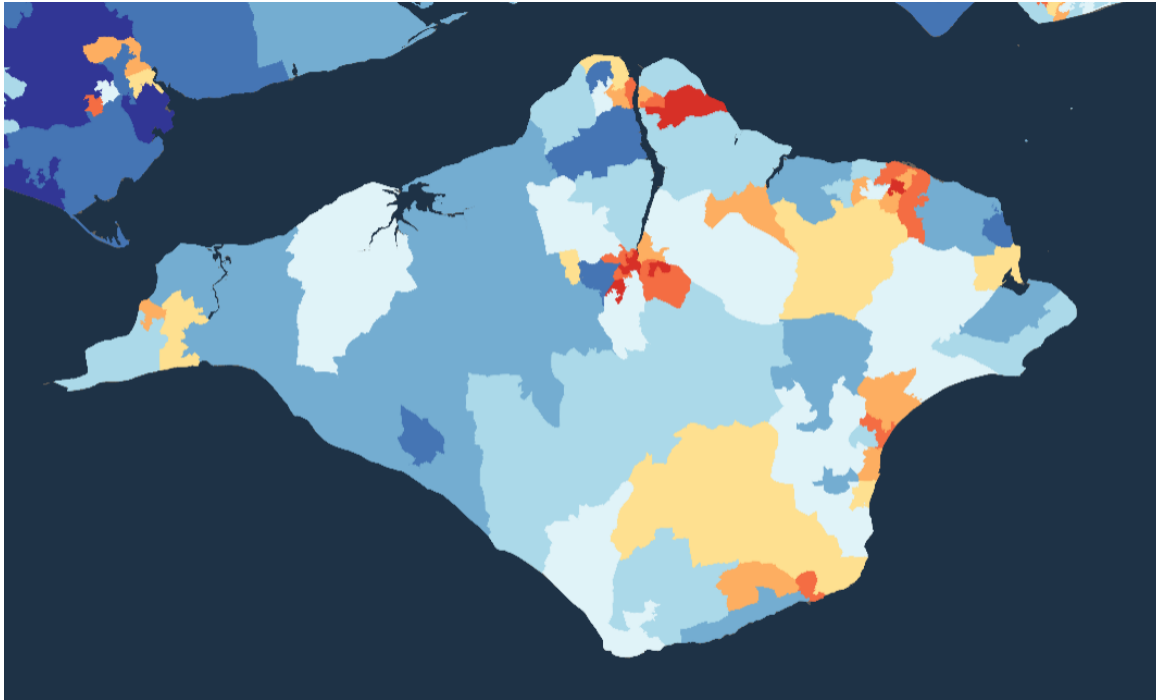


Children in Need (rate)

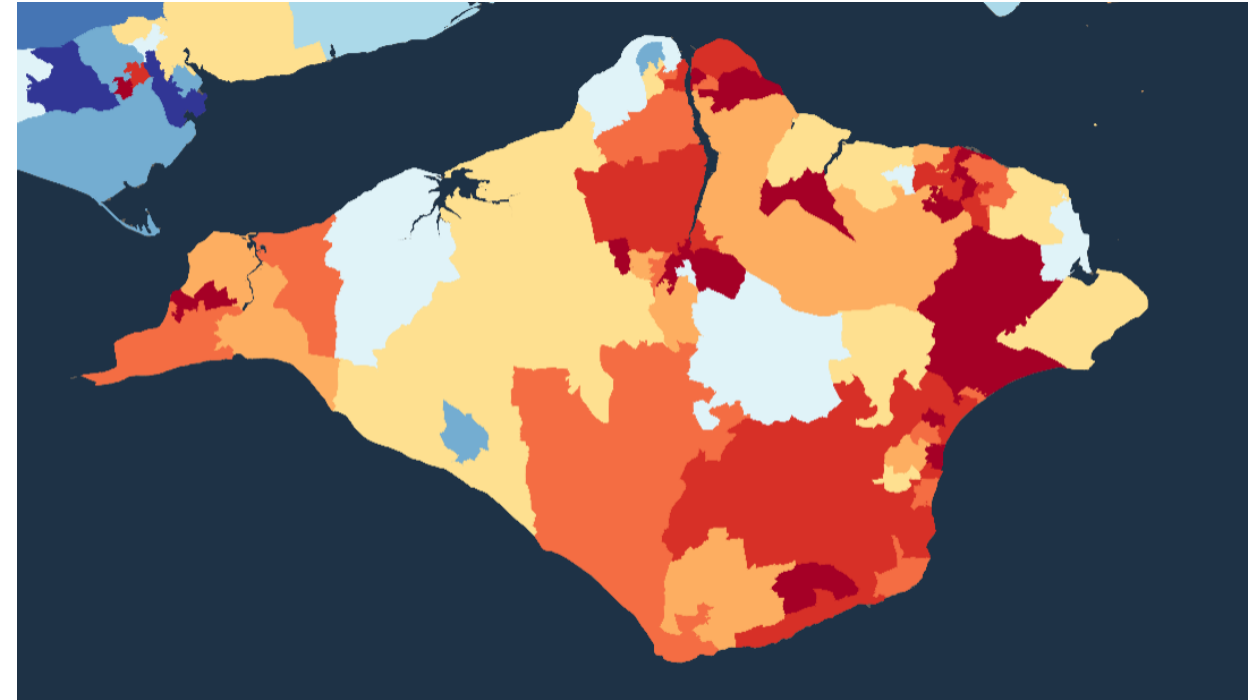


Data from Department of Education Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)

2019 INDICES OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION
Highest levels of deprivation in red and orange, lowest levels in blue and grey



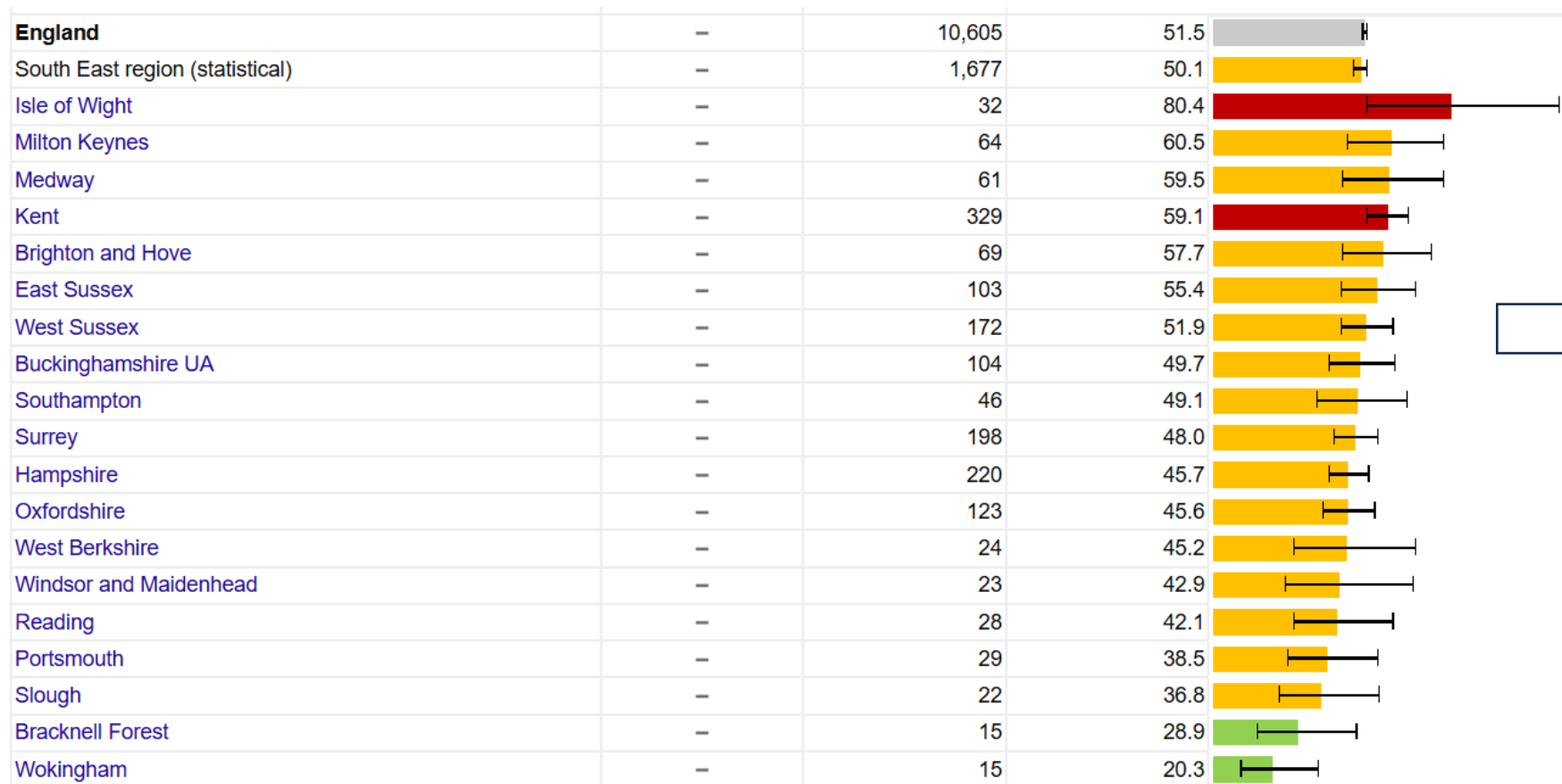
OUTCOMES FOR OLDER PEOPLE



OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Though there is of course economic hardship in older cohorts, it is inarguable that conditions for young people on the Island are much worse, a divide that continues to widen. As stated in the Local Government Association's 2024 publication, 'A report on the proposals of the Isle of Wight Council for rationalising primary schools to raise achievement for all' : *"This would suggest that the relative wealth of the Island's older populations hides a relatively highly deprived child population."*

Years of life lost due to suicide (Male, 15-74 yrs) 2020-22

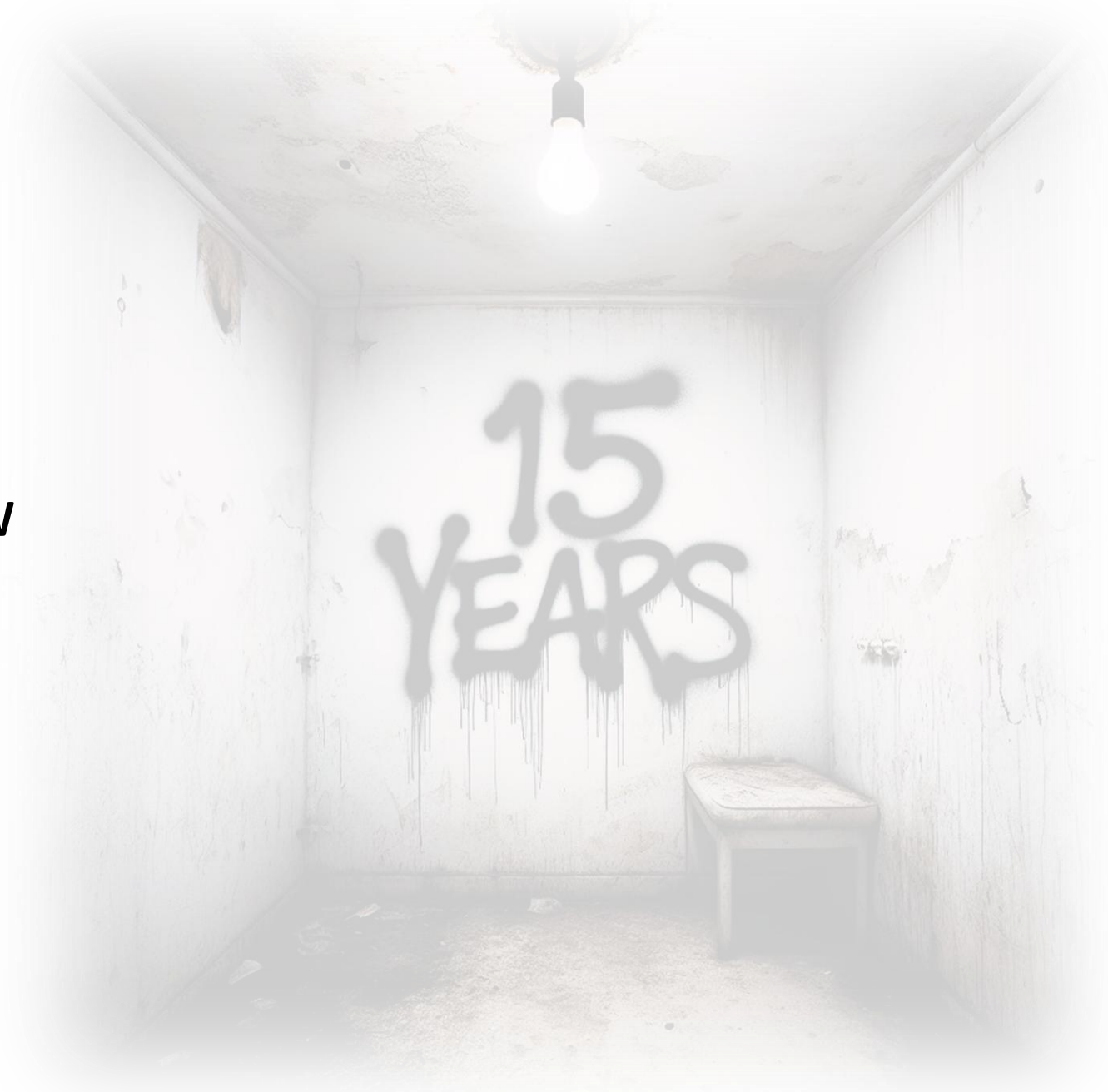


Source: Office for National Statistics

[Indicator Definitions and Supporting Information](#)

But despair, the loss of hope for a better future, can and does affect any age

A FUTURE WE CANNOT ALLOW



If we take no decisive action these symptoms of stagnation will inevitably intensify. Within 15 years it will set into a sclerotic and fully stratified society fracturing between a minority of economically active, suffering low wages and precarious employment, and a majority of economically inactive secured by property and pensions. Mobility between these factions will decline, inequalities will increase, and the Island will become divided and sectarian, a residual society with no future.

These divisions in the Island's population will lead to:

- 1. > 45% retired, with the very wealthy at the top and the struggling at the bottom but, driven by inward homeowner migration broadly characterised by 'comfortable' living, a cohort significantly insulated against cost-of-living shocks and public service restrictions.**
- 2. < 20% aging 55+ small business owners and workforce, diminishing as businesses close through retirement.**
- 3. < 20% young working age, young families, young people leaving care, living with endemic poverty, reliant on in-work benefits to supplement part-time and seasonal low wage work, much of it services provided to the strata above; or simply not working.**
- 4. < 15% school age and under, facing concentrated impacts of complex and unmet learning and health needs, many not in any form of education at all.**

The consequences of high inequality and reduced social mobility will include:

- 1. The replacement of public social infrastructure with private, the spread of gated communities and opposition to social housing.**
- 2. The loss of council-run educational premises (and the rise of private and semi-privatised and selective academized provision) with rising unemployment amongst teachers, as the student population shrinks.**
- 3. An increase in private healthcare provision and a reduction in access to NHS and public health services.**
- 4. Increasing outsourced services, a frontline workforce delivered by agencies and gangmasters with accompanying labour abuse, declining care quality, poverty wages, homelessness and modern slavery.**
- 5. A divided 'Us And Them' society.**

We can work together to pool experience and skills, propagate new ideas that will build our capability to fight back against socio-economic decay. The Island has extraordinary natural and cultural resources and a proud history of innovation and enterprise, it cannot be left to wither. This does not mean resurrecting the past, propping up nostalgic facades instead of forging new prospects; it means designing the future now, building Island 2.0, an epochal shift away from visions of Island life that have barely changed since the middle of the 19th Century. It would be facile not to acknowledge the scale of the challenge, in the face of global environmental stresses driven by climate change, international economic shocks, the malaise of failing government and the constant threat of critical underfunding that hangs over every local authority. But this is not enough to justify the absence of leadership, imagination and determination that holds the Island back, it doesn't have to be this way. The gap between what we have and what is feasible, between the hardships of the present and the better future that is realisable, is a failure of vision and not an inescapable law.

We have a £2.7Bn business ecosystem and a £1Bn public and social economy, deeply interconnected through chains of procurement and service supply; we have a high density of charitable and social purpose organizations and robust and well-established networks of mutual aid and community solidarity, and in our parishes, towns and neighbourhoods we have repositories of civic and municipal agency that we have barely begun to effectively deploy. These are all the ingredients necessary to build a model of social enterprise, an Island-wide collaboration that charts a better course for all.

We are not powerless. We can take action for change. But it requires political will and a shared vision for a better Island. It needs a spirit of collaboration and social enterprise across all sectors to succeed. We must focus on education, training, and the creation of an Island-wide, lifelong learning environment that generates opportunities from centres of real excellence. The Island's internationally acknowledged environmental quality and its legacy of creative production provide all the raw materials we need to align skills and learning with the accelerating global transition to a nature-positive and culturally productive economy. Our transition to this new future must start now.

TRANSITIONS FOR CHANGE



1. EMBED THE BIOSPHERE

- The Island was awarded World Biosphere status in 2019, connecting us to a global network of states, territories, cities, governments and economies, all committed to pursuing new models of sustainable development.
- Biospheres are predicated on two foundational stores of value: biophysical ecosystem services (species, habitats, their functions and interactions), and cultural ecosystem services (the relationship between people, the places where we live and work, and the natural world within which we exist). By virtue of their designation, Biospheres are ideally resourced to use both to design new routes to prosperity.
- Integral to Biosphere economics are the new investment priorities of regenerative agriculture, landcare, cultural and creative industry, and place-based sustainability. The UNESCO Biosphere network brings a progressive, transnational culture of solidarity that can connect global influence to support for local needs, stimulating placemaking and community-making, and shielding against predatory interests.
- The global green economy is projected to be worth £10 Trillion by 2030. The global creative/creator economy will reach £5 Trillion by the same time. Both are amongst the fastest growing sectors on the planet. Our task is to apply the investment that the Biosphere can bring to the creation of localised environments in which we can flourish, in which we can support each other and generate networks of belonging. We need to invest in the conditions that enable us to act collaboratively to create communities that both support our abilities and nurture our interdependencies.
- If Island leaders do not commit to wholesale transition to a Biosphere-led economic strategy, we will be left behind . We cannot squander the Island's outstanding USP.



2. A NEW EDUCATIONAL SETTLEMENT

- Both educational outcomes for young people, and the level of qualification in the adult population remain stubborn Island deficits. The Island must provide, and become expert in, a whole-life education service. We need an inter-related, coherent and life-long process consisting of pre-school, school, and the varied forms of adult and continuing education, including non-formal education at all stages but especially during adolescence and young adulthood.
- We have an opportunity to rethink citizenship teaching in schools and beyond, to deliver lifelong development in our communities through a new and revitalized 'Island literacy' – a familiarity with how local decision-making works, where power lies, and how to intervene for positive change. We must equip people with new skills and collaborative mindsets, so they can navigate changing employment, and build social purpose. This means reimagining what our young people need and deserve in their education, and supporting everyone through the societal, environmental, demographic and technological changes to come.
- The Island must aim to continually improve the quality of education at all phases of life, help its citizens adapt to changing needs and circumstances, and achieve the higher educational standards that will be needed to take advantage of the possibilities, and cope with the challenges of a better future in the 21st century. These are framed and revealed by the UNESCO Biosphere, bringing together new Island opportunities for learning, development, skills and progress.
- We must develop global centres of excellence in ecological design, cultural production, and the sustainability sectors, the eco-cultural economies that Biosphere status exemplifies, and which underpin accelerating patterns of global change, away from unsustainable and senseless over-consumption.
- By focussing on these competencies, we can begin to build a new and enhanced offer to young people here, and across the world, simultaneously rejuvenating and regenerating Island prospects. The Biosphere, with its international networks of states and territories, creates opportunities for an Island education, an Island skills foundation, to be a global passport in a changing world.



unesco
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3. A CARE AND REPAIR COALITION

- Employment on the Island is dominated by care. Health, social and youth services, including education, account for 20,000 jobs, 30% of all Island employment.
- We must add to this the Island's significantly above-average dependency on long hours of unpaid, informal and voluntary care (including reliance on young carers) which must compensate for critically impoverished frontline services, the consequence of 14 years of Treasury austerity and cuts to local authorities, exacerbated by predatory high-cost/low-pay outsourced care provision too readily embraced by over-stretched local government.
- We are in urgent need of a local politics that puts care front and centre as a quality of Island life, not a burden, as a route to future possibilities, not a constant regret. By care, however, we mean more than 'hands-on' care, or the work people do when directly looking after the physical and emotional needs of others – critical and urgent as this dimension of caring remains. 'Care' is also a social capacity and activity involving the nurturing of all that is necessary for the welfare and flourishing of life (human and non-human). Above all, to put care centre stage means recognising and embracing our interdependencies, repairing social cohesion within and between our communities, and between our society and the natural world.
- A Biosphere-led Care Coalition would make active, imaginative and progressive care, for people, place and wildlife, the dominant shared Island enterprise. More than this, because it is so deeply rooted in the ideas of The Commons, the roots of a society that believes in itself, a Care Coalition moves the Island immediately into the fast-moving territory of place-based impact investment, and the well-being economy, including in-sourcing and the public ownership and management of key social services. This is future-focussed financial strategy every bit as much as it is social solidarity activism.



4. BETTER PAY, BETTER WORK

- Island earnings are significantly lower than regional and national averages, characterized by high levels of minimum wage, part-time and precarious employment. ONS ranks the Island at or near the bottom of the UK NUTS3 league tables (covering 179 counties and groups of unitary authorities) for mean earnings, almost every month.
- Rising Island GDP is driven by the annual increases in public expenditure on frontline provision combined with a 'household' economy of trades and services to a slowly growing (and increasingly retired) homeowner population. The reduction in central government funding to local councils, through the period of austerity that continues today, has removed over £100 Million from the Island since 2010. This has had the effect of stripping out community social support and access to regenerative public services at the level of Island neighbourhoods and replacing these with emergency and critical blue-light response combined with expensively outsourced high-profit low-wage contracts.
- But as government funding falls, and social need grows, the annual uplift in spending required to maintain even a minimum standard of service can only come from local taxation: council tax, business rates, fees and charges. There is therefore a growing burden on local wages to prop up the core services that are increasingly needed by those in conditions of poverty reproduced by low wages. This is a spiral of decline.
- It is essential that Island leaders prioritise better pay and better options for work, focusing on the new and emerging economic opportunities in social solidarity, cultural development and ecological health. All of these can, and should, become distinctive centres of excellence, driving Island regeneration, imagining and realizing a positive future, and accumulating lasting value in Island social, economic and environmental infrastructure.

BOTTOM 10 MONTHLY MEAN PAYE EARNINGS FOR NOVEMBER 2024 FROM THE 179 UK NUTS3 AREAS (COUNTIES AND GROUPS OF UNITARY AUTHORITIES)

North & West Norfolk £2198

Newry, Mourne & Down (NI) £2198

Derry City & Strabane (NI) £2196

Causeway East & Glens (NI) £2193

Bradford £2189

Blackburn & Derwen £2188

Cornwall £2172

Leicester £2163

Torbay £2156

Isle of Wight £2128

UK average £2489 Data from ONS



**15
YEARS**

We must begin immediately and commit to seeing positive change against these demographic, cultural, and socio-economic trends by Census 2031.

We must have accelerated and intensified that work such that a reversal in the decay of the Island is indisputably visible by Census 2041.

If we have not set these measures actively in motion by midway between these two milestones, then it may simply be too late.

Ready?

