



Under-18 conceptions in Guernsey and Alderney

Including data up to 2021

READER INFORMATION	
Title	Under-18 conceptions in Guernsey and Alderney including data up to 2021
Document Purpose and key uses	To provide an update on the number and rate of young conceptions for the purpose of Public Health monitoring; to inform the Sexual Health Strategy and key stakeholders and to gauge the effect of the introduction, in 2017, of free contraception for Guernsey and Alderney residents aged <21
Publication date	August 2022
Target audience	Public
Circulation list	www.gov.gg
Data sources	Abortion notifications (Public Health, HSC); live and still birth records (Maternity Services, HSC); Guernsey and Alderney population numbers (Data and Analysis Unit, States of Guernsey)
Reporting frequency	Interim ad hoc update
Accuracy	Considered accurate. This report contains estimates based on small numbers of events. Results determined using small numbers are considered to be less reliable. Three-year averages are used to counteract the effects of random fluctuation.
Completeness	Considered complete; a cross-check of terminations against HSC clinical codes yielded no 'missed' notifications for the relevant age groups, a cross-check of births against the Greffe birth register also showed no births missing.
Value types	Numbers; rates per 1,000; 95% confidence intervals
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Introduction and methods

Under-18 conception rates have been adopted as indicators in several States of Guernsey strategies and work streams as general measures of child health and inequality.

The conception statistics presented in this report bring together birth registrations collected under *The Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) (Guernsey) Law, 1969* and abortion notifications received by the Medical Officer of Health under *The Abortion (Guernsey) Law, 1997*¹. The estimates include all pregnancies to young women where the outcome of pregnancy was:

- A live or still birth attended by staff of the Princess Elizabeth Hospital, Guernsey
- A termination of pregnancy occurring in Guernsey

In line with Office for National Statistics reporting for England and Wales, these statistics do not include conceptions that may have ended in a miscarriage or an illegal abortion. In addition they do not include conceptions that may have ended in a live or still birth outside of Guernsey or a legal abortion performed outside of Guernsey.

Findings

Under-18 conceptions

There were twelve under-18 conceptions in Guernsey and Alderney during the three-year period 2019-21; an average of 4 per year. This equates to a rate of 4.3 per 1,000 women aged 15-17 (95% CI 2.2 to 7.6). Fifty per cent of these conceptions ended in a termination (95% CI 25 to 75%).

Figure 1 shows the change in rate of under-18 conceptions over time with comparison data from England and Wales and Jersey. In all areas there has been a secular decline in under-18 conceptions over time. Jersey's conception rates for this age group were notably lower than those of Guernsey/Alderney for the ten years from 2008. A difference in service provision was cited as a possible explanation for these inter-island differences² — in Jersey contraception was available for free, whereas in Guernsey and Alderney contraception was paid for out-of-pocket by the user.

In an attempt to bring the under-18 conception rate for Guernsey and Alderney into line with that of Jersey, free contraception for islanders aged under-21 was made available from December 2017.

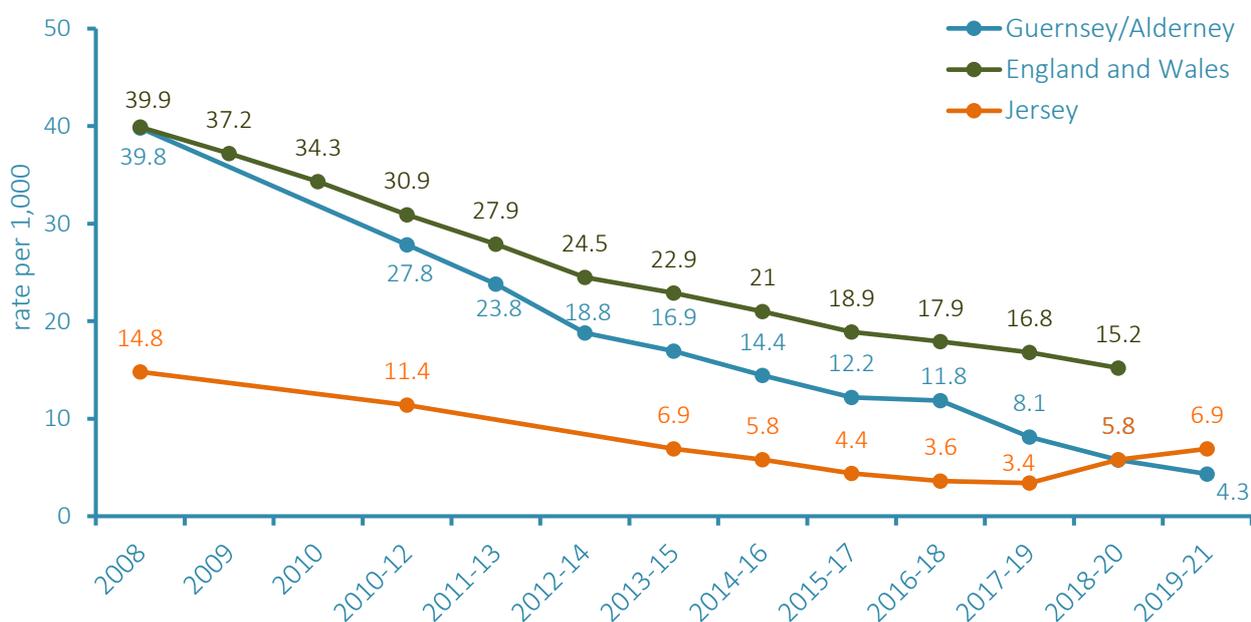
Figure 1 shows that for Guernsey/Alderney there has been a reduction in the rate of conceptions in each three-year reporting period since, i.e. 2017-19, 2018-20 and 2019-21. This reduction appears to have been more rapid than the existing downward secular trend observed over the earlier years. The introduction of free contraception for under-21s may well explain the accelerated reduction in the rates observed. The rates for Guernsey for 2018-2020 were the same as Jersey's figure, then fell below Jersey's for the first time for 2019-21.

¹ New legislation in the form of the *Abortion (Guernsey) (Amendment) Law, 2021* came into force on 2 February 2022.

² *Young Conceptions; Under-18 and Under-16 conceptions in Guernsey and Alderney including data up to 2015*. Internal, unpublished report of the Health and Social Service Department, States of Guernsey from 2016.

The 2018 single-year rate did not show an immediate reduction on the introduction of free contraception for under-21s although this was to be reasonably expected due to the data used in the calculations e.g. the majority of births in 2018 were from conceptions during 2017 before the programme had begun. The rates for 2019, 2020 and 2021 however, have been much lower than earlier years showing us the anticipated reduction. The latest 3-year average (2019-21) now only includes years where free contraception was available to under-21s. Future rates may plateau and fluctuate around the new low level as there is limited scope for further reduction and the effects of chance fluctuation in numbers of events will have a larger impact on calculated rates.

Figure 1. Under-18 conceptions in Guernsey and Alderney 2008 to 2019-21, with comparisons from England and Wales³ and Jersey^{4, 5}



Notes

In line with Office for National Statistics methodology:

- Under-18 conceptions are reported as rates per 1,000 women aged 15–17

Dates of conception and maternal age at conception are estimated from pregnancy outcome data (i.e. date of baby’s birth or date of termination) by following the Technical Method guidance given by the Office of National Statistics in the ‘Cover_sheet’ tab of their 2020 data spreadsheet³.

³Conception Statistics, England and Wales, 2020 (xls 0.9 MB)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/conceptionandfertilityrates/datasets/conceptionstatisticsenglandandwalesreferencetables> [Accessed 30/06/2022].

⁴ Health Profile for Jersey 2016, States of Jersey. Those from 2013–15 onwards were related as a personal communication.

⁵ The Guernsey rate for 2008 is a single-year estimate whilst all other data points for Guernsey are three-year averages. The England and Wales rates are all single-year estimates. Please note the England and Wales rate for a calendar year relates to the year in the middle of the three-year average stated for Guernsey and Jersey e.g. England and Wales 2011 rate is aligned with Guernsey and Jersey’s 2010-12 rate.

All Jersey figures are three-year averages.