



Island Global Research

Island Education Benchmarking Assessment

States of Guernsey Education Department

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Background

The States of Guernsey Education Department provides statutory and non-statutory education, training and support services for Guernsey and Alderney (overall population approximately 64,000).

The Department is responsible for approximately 8,900 children and young adults in

- twelve primary schools,
- one all-age school,
- three high-schools,
- the Guernsey Grammar School & Sixth Form Centre,
- the College of Further Education, and
- three special schools.

It also gives grant aid to three privately run schools and provides support services such as the Special Needs Support Services, Careers Guernsey, School's' Music Service, Schools' Library Service etc.

Education is responsible for the provision of help to students taking courses not directly provided by the Department, primarily through grants for students to study higher education courses in the UK.

Currently, all children in States primary schools have the option to sit the 11 plus examination in year 6 which determines the secondary school they will receive an offer from. Approximately the top 25% are offered positions at one of the grant aided Colleges as special place holders or at The Grammar School while the remainder are allocated to one of the high schools based on their catchment areas.

The Education Department will be launching a public consultation process in September 2015 and requires an education benchmarking and best practice appraisal to be carried out to support the development of its consultation document. The consultation combines four interlinking and interdependent elements:

- **Selection** - Is selection still appropriate to meet the States objectives as set out in the Education Department's vision and what form should it take?
- **Optimal estate size** - Should any changes be made to the number, size and character of the state maintained secondary schools?
- **Tertiary provision** - How can the Vision's aim to 'bring together and rationalise the range of Post 16 educational opportunities' be met?
- **College grants** - What options should be considered for the future College funding model after the end of the current agreement in 2019?

Methodology

The benchmarking research primarily focuses on:

- The structure of public sector education provision (and selection processes (if any))
 - Primary or equivalent
 - Secondary or equivalent
 - Tertiary (on-island)
 - Remote learning (with particular emphasis on smaller island education provision)

- Facts and figures
 - Island demographic profile
 - Number of education establishments
 - Student/teacher ratios
 - Performance levels
 - School density and catchment areas
 - Education funding and breakdown

Additionally, an assessment was undertaken of education strategies and policies within island jurisdictions to identify any initiatives in place which would be useful in a Guernsey context.

The following islands were selected as benchmarking opportunities. However, in addition, a number of other islands were reviewed during the work.

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| • Jersey | • Prince Edward Island |
| • Guernsey | • Tasmania |
| • Isle of Man | • Gibraltar |
| • Bermuda | • Cayman Islands |
| • Shetland Islands | • Malta |

Executive Summary

The following observations from the benchmarking assessment are made in relation to Guernsey.

- Guernsey strategic educational aims and objectives are not radically different from other similar island jurisdictions.
- Guernsey's demographic profile is not too dissimilar to other advanced (mature) economy islands. However, there are over 20% less under 20 year olds now in Guernsey than thirty-five years ago (prior to the expansion of the finance sector) despite the island's population increasing by 10,000 over the period.
- The Island's child-bearing age groups are likely to contract significantly over the next twenty years.
- Expenditure on education in Guernsey both in terms of a percentage to GDP and cost per capita are on a par with/lower than other advanced (mature) economy islands.
- The Island's pupil/teacher ratios are similar to those in other Crown Dependencies but higher than the remaining islands in the sample used. However, the size of an island and school density does have a real bearing on these ratios.
- While facts and figures on academic achievements are very difficult to compare because of different educational and examination systems, Guernsey's performance fares well when compared to other 'mature' island jurisdictions.
- An area of concern identified from other research carried out by Island Global Research is the poor writing, communication, and numerate skills of young people entering the employment market. Other shortcomings are in areas such as inter-personal skills and attention to detail. This was highlighted in a recent Skills Jersey report.

- Guernsey appears to spend more on private education funding as a percentage of overall expenditure. However, data is difficult to obtain and benchmark as it is not recorded in many instances.
- Apart from Guernsey, a selection process between primary and secondary education has either been suspended or has never been in place in the sample of islands used in the paper. It is interesting to note that Malta suspended the 11plus selection process but is now reviewing that decision.
- While some of the larger islands have on-island university facilities, Guernsey's on-island facilities compare well with other similar island facilities.
- There are some excellent examples of Distance (Remote) Learning initiatives in island communities. This could be an option for Alderney or even for the Channel Islands as a whole in the short and medium term. It should be noted that there is some distance learning in Sark for GCSEs which is funded by parents.

Education Strategy

Education, skills and training are fundamentally important aspects of island infrastructure investment. The need for such investment has been recognised increasingly by island governments, with education and training now being the most important aspect highlighted in many island strategic plans. With the continued economic uncertainty worldwide, development and promotion of a locally based, skilled workforce is one of the main routes for ensuring sustainable economic success in the future.

The following elements summarise the core goals which appear in many island education strategies.

1. **Improving teaching quality.** Some specific island action plans include:
 - requiring teaching staff to undertake work experience placements so they can gain first hand experience to pass on to their students;
 - assessing the pay and conditions of teachers to try to attract higher quality staff;
 - stepping up a range of in-service training programmes for all school personnel.
2. **Amending the (national) curriculum to meet specific island needs.** Several islands are looking at developing their own curricula and many are embracing ICT more comprehensively into the school curriculum.
3. **Introducing early childhood educational development initiatives.** The additional cost of such initiatives is considered appropriate to improve both literacy and numeracy skills at primary level.
4. **Recognising the importance of technical and vocational education as being central to the future of island economies.** This is manifesting itself in the breadth of subjects now on offer and the improvements being made in infrastructure and facilities. Some islands are ensuring that college authorities are communicating with employers to ensure that the vocational offerings are relevant. A number of islands are also looking at trying to raise the perception of the status of technical and vocational training as compared with academic education.
5. **Placing ever greater emphasis on higher education with measures being put in hand to try and retain as many students in the education system as possible.** Such measures include trying to reduce the dropout rate before a tertiary qualification is obtained.

Other common features in island education strategies are outlined below:

- Improving achievement levels in the core subjects of literacy, numeracy and technology;
- Achieving equality of access for the marginalised and economically disadvantaged;
- Ensuring schools have adequate and appropriate resources and supplies;
- Recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and support staff, including giving assistance with work permits or similar controls;
- Expanding on-island higher education opportunities;
- Increasing parental and community involvement in education;
- Identifying suitable jurisdictions against which to benchmark performance;
- Supporting those who do not have the island's primary language as their first language;
- Reviewing the sports curriculum to address the problem of obesity;
- Conducting pilot tests in neuro-developmental diagnostics in school;
- Improving careers' guidance in schools.

Demographic Profiles

There are a number of aspects to demographic change which apply to all island communities. These are:

- The ageing process will continue globally and life expectancy is increasing with no signs of it levelling off. By 2050, the percentage of the population over sixty years is estimated to reach 22% of the total world population. However, the percentage for Europe and North America will reach 34% and 27% respectively although the gap between developed and developing countries will narrow. Such percentages are double current levels.
- Increasing life expectancy changes are already impacting on islands. While older people are more healthy than they ever were, the pressure on social services to meet the challenges of an older population are growing.
- Island governments are increasingly concerned about migration trends. This is both the impacts of a growing population or the issue of depopulation. The challenge is to ensure that the economy has the required workforce with the appropriate skills. However, with an ageing population, net immigration may well have to be an option which will inevitably swell population levels and place greater pressure on infrastructure and land use.
- While the fertility rate has increased in a number of islands, in general it is on the decline due to fewer persons of child bearing age, the mean age of which is increasing.

In terms of the core sample of islands used in this assessment the demographic profile is not too different in terms of percentages by age group. Cayman is an exception (Figure 1). However, this jurisdiction's demographic profile is very similar to other Caribbean islands.

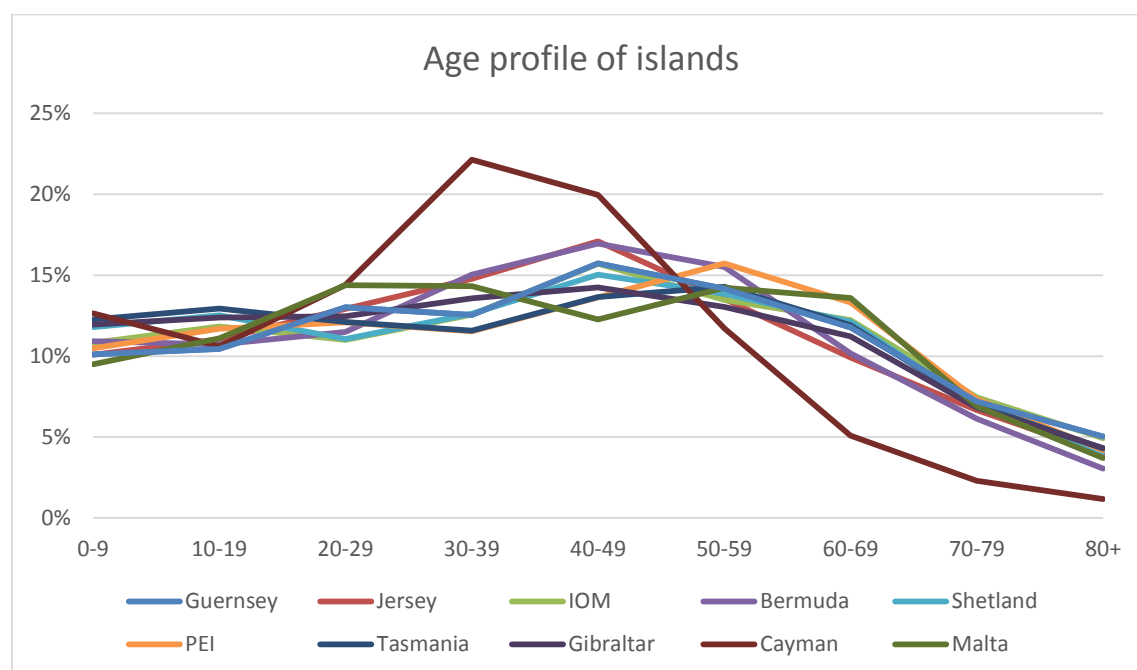
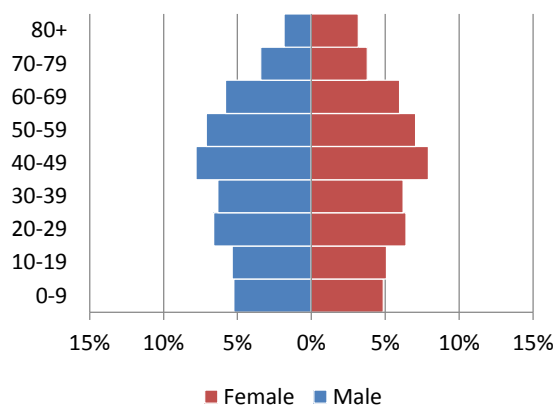
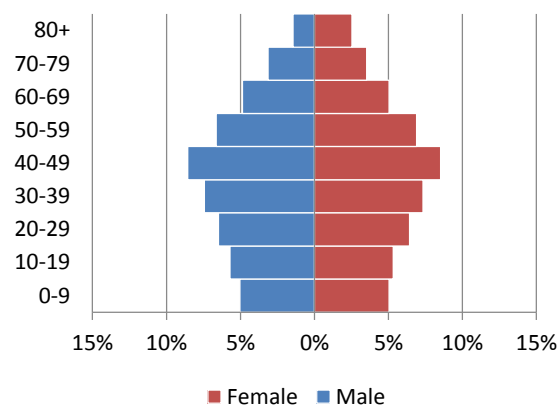


Figure 1

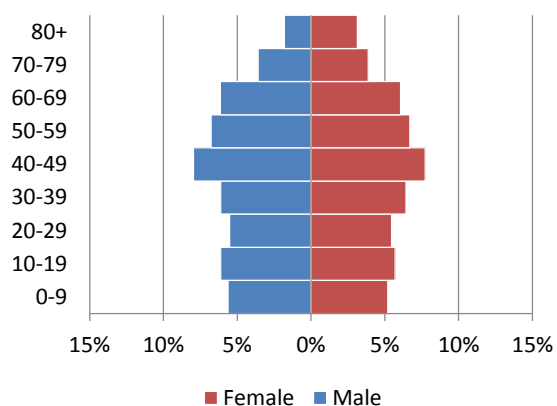
Guernsey



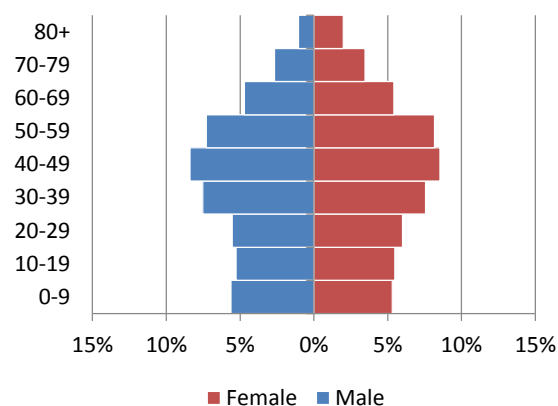
Jersey



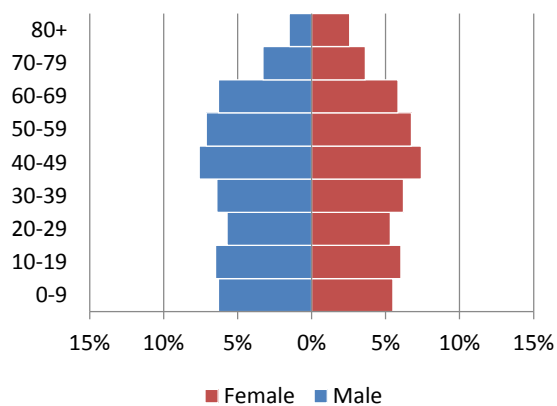
Isle of Man



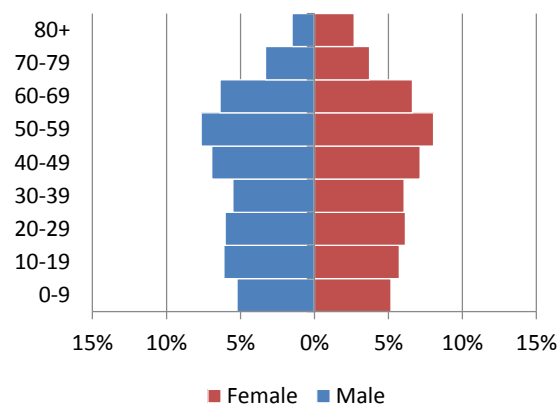
Bermuda



Shetland Islands



Prince Edward Island



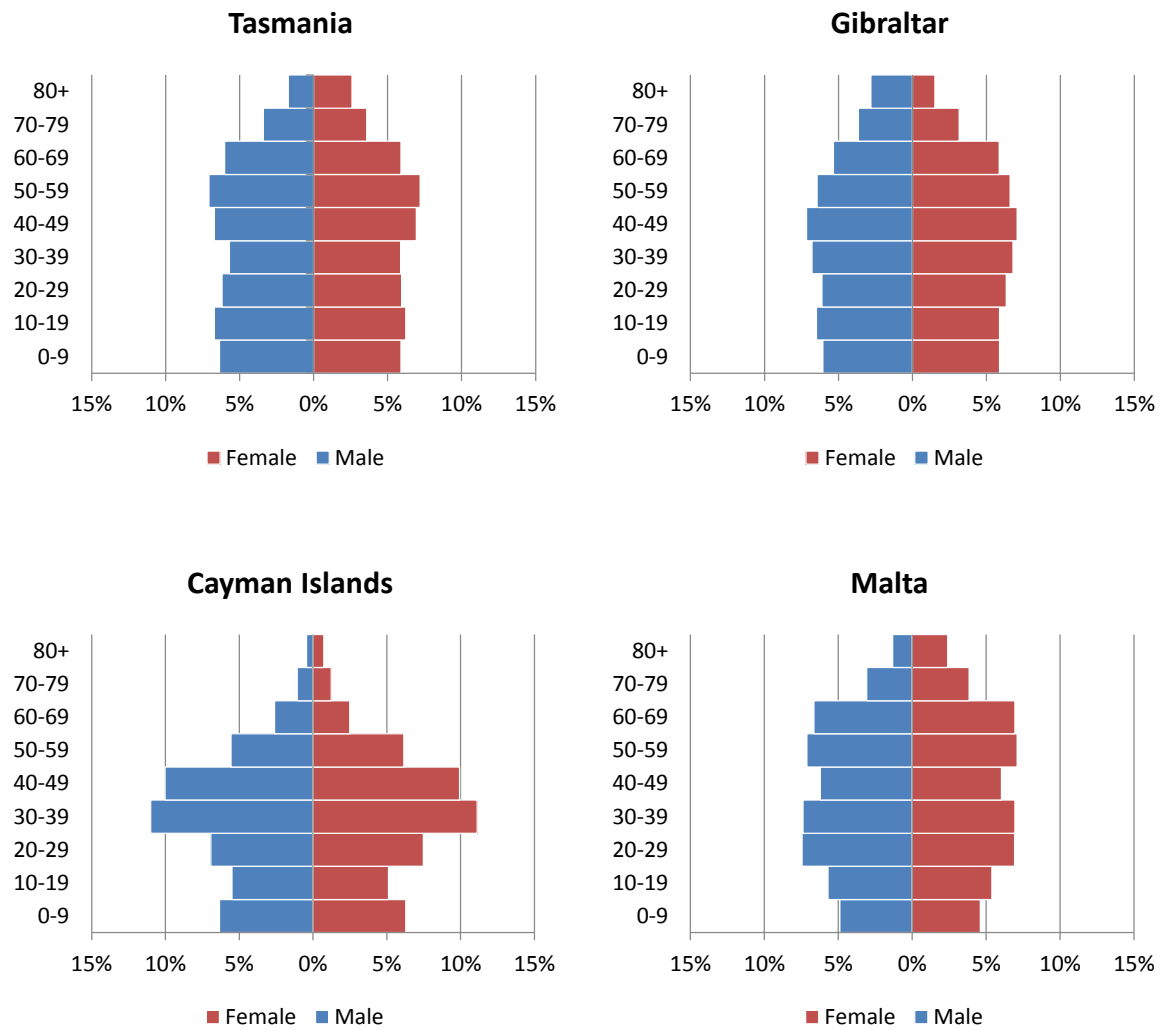


Figure 2

One important aspect to note in Guernsey is the changing population balance between 1981 and 2014. In 1981, the Mare de Carteret School had opened six years previously and the new Grammar School was about to be opened. That year (1981), the 10 to 19 age bandwidth was the Island's peak population age group. Some three decades later, while the Island's population has increased by 10,000, the actual number of under 20 year olds is over 20% less than it was 35 years ago (Figures 3 and 4).

While there is a small increase in the 0 to 4 age group due to the slight increase in the 20 to 34 child bearing age group, this trend is unlikely to continue as the next generation moves through to the child bearing age groups.

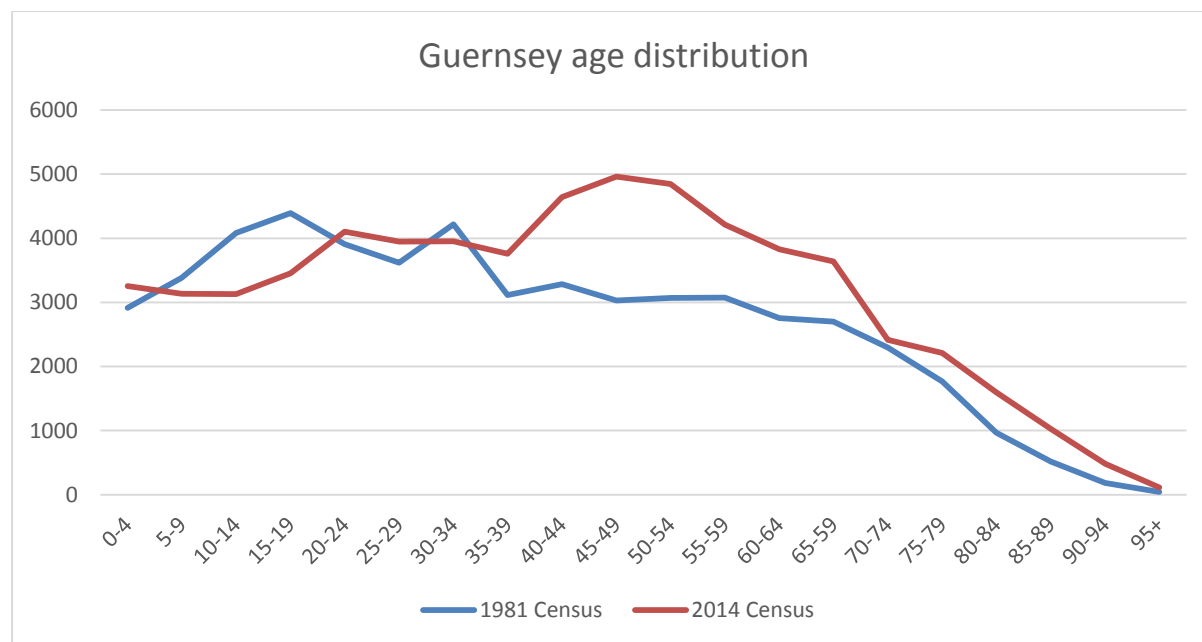


Figure 3

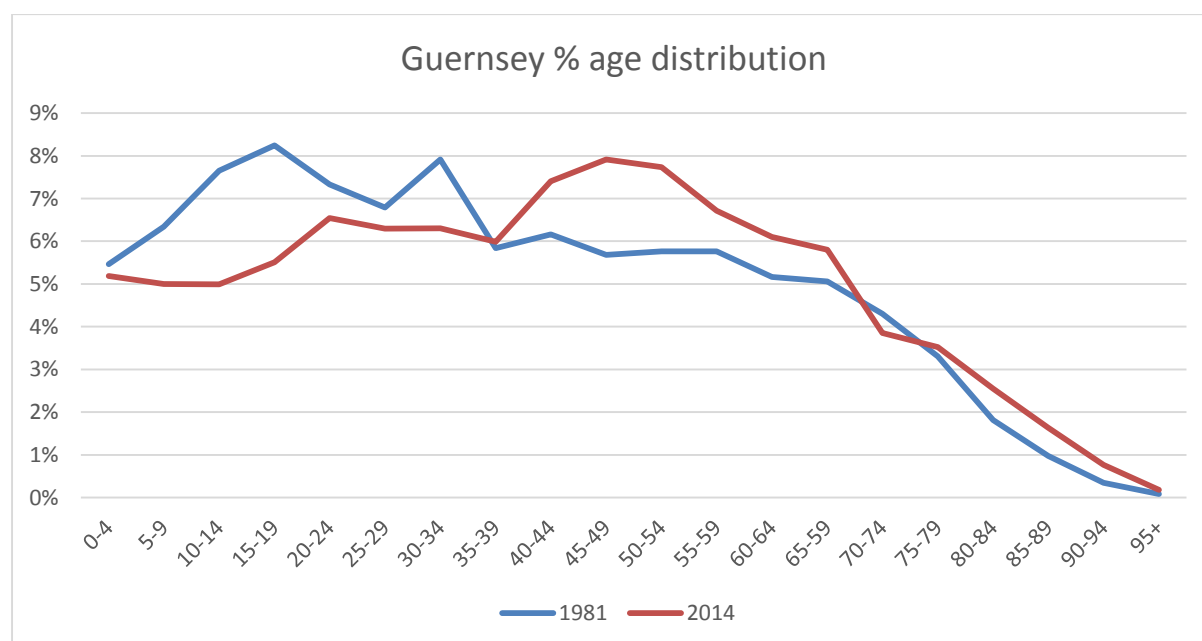


Figure 4

Decline in the Under 20 Age Groups

The following two charts (Figures 5 and 6) clearly show that the percentage of children and young people in the 0 to 9 and 10 to 19 age groups as a percentage of the overall population is falling in the majority of islands. This fall is quite significant in several islands and has ramifications on the facilities that are provided on each island and the level of government spending on primary and secondary education or equivalent systems.

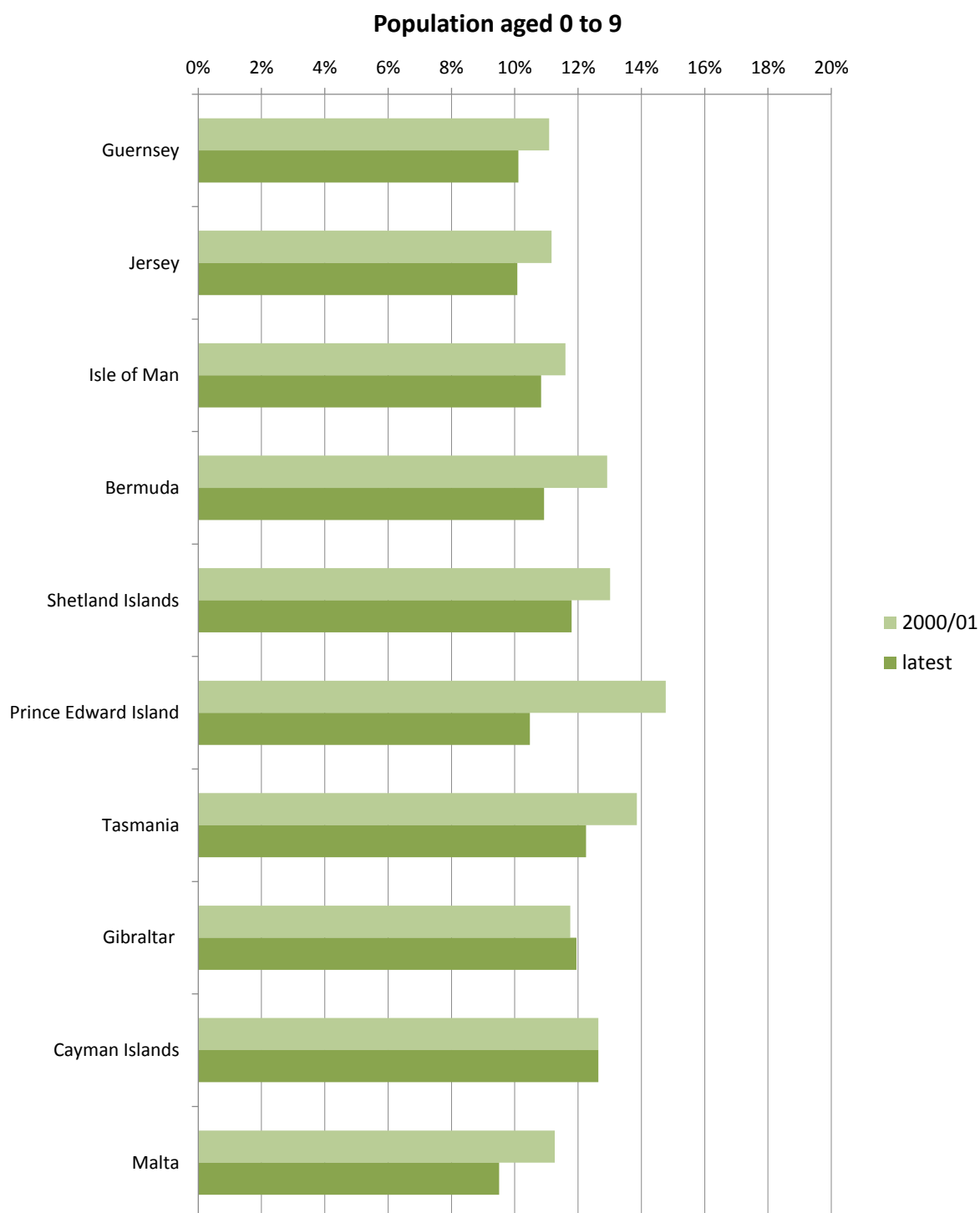


Figure 5

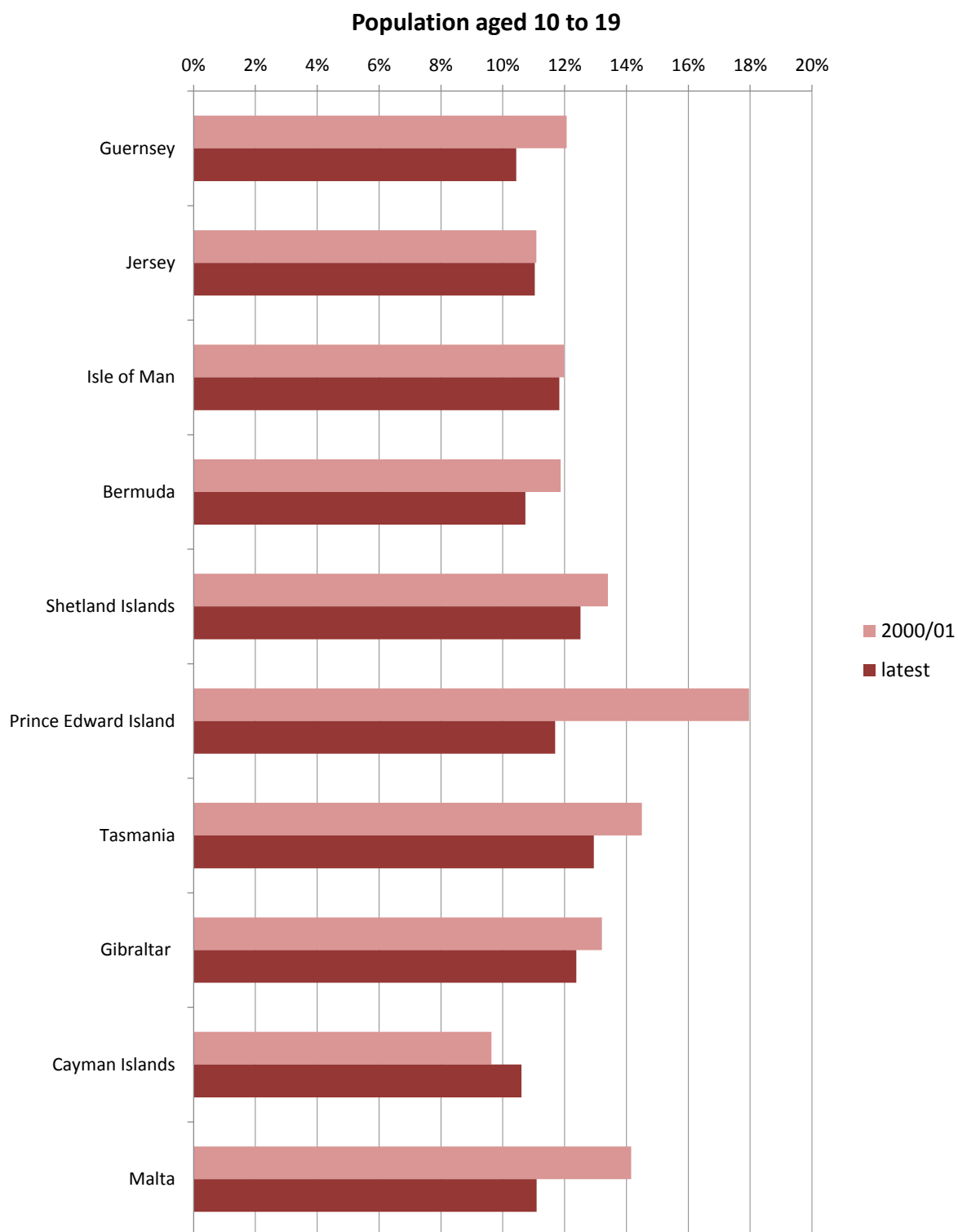


Figure 6

Pupil/Teacher Ratios

Pupil teacher ratios are set out in Figure 7. Jersey ratios are difficult to compare but are not too dissimilar to those in Guernsey and Isle of Man.

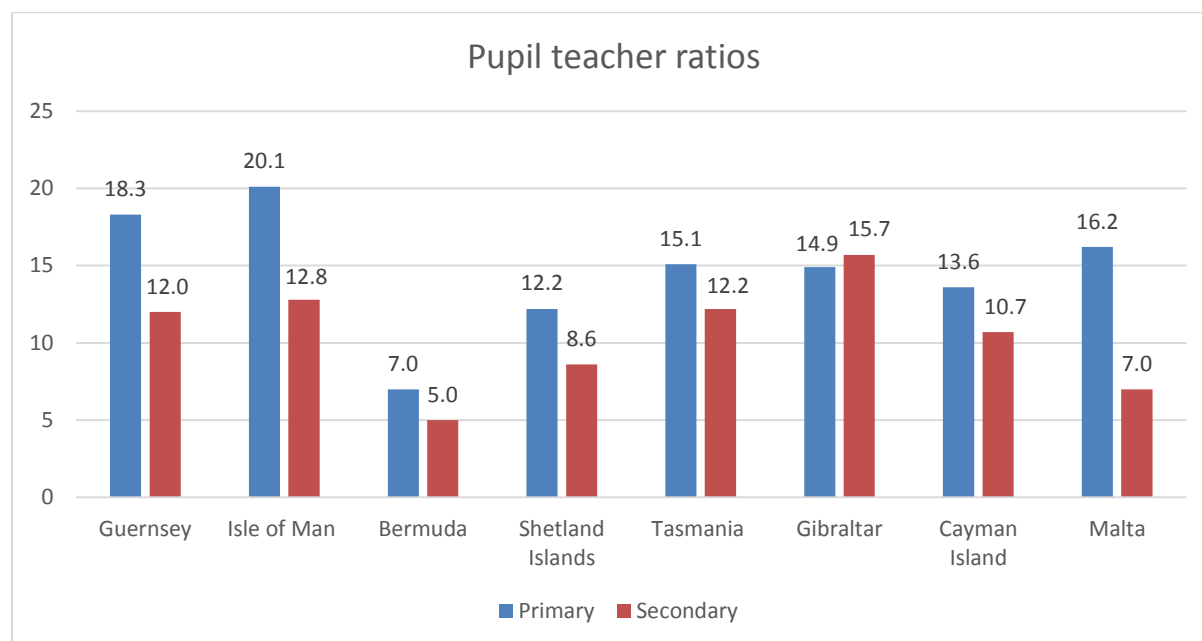


Figure 7

School Population

The average number of students per school (Figures 8a and 8b)) is very dependent upon the size of the island and on what is an acceptable distance for a pupil to travel to and from school each day. Another factor to take into account is the quality of public transport available to students in each jurisdiction.

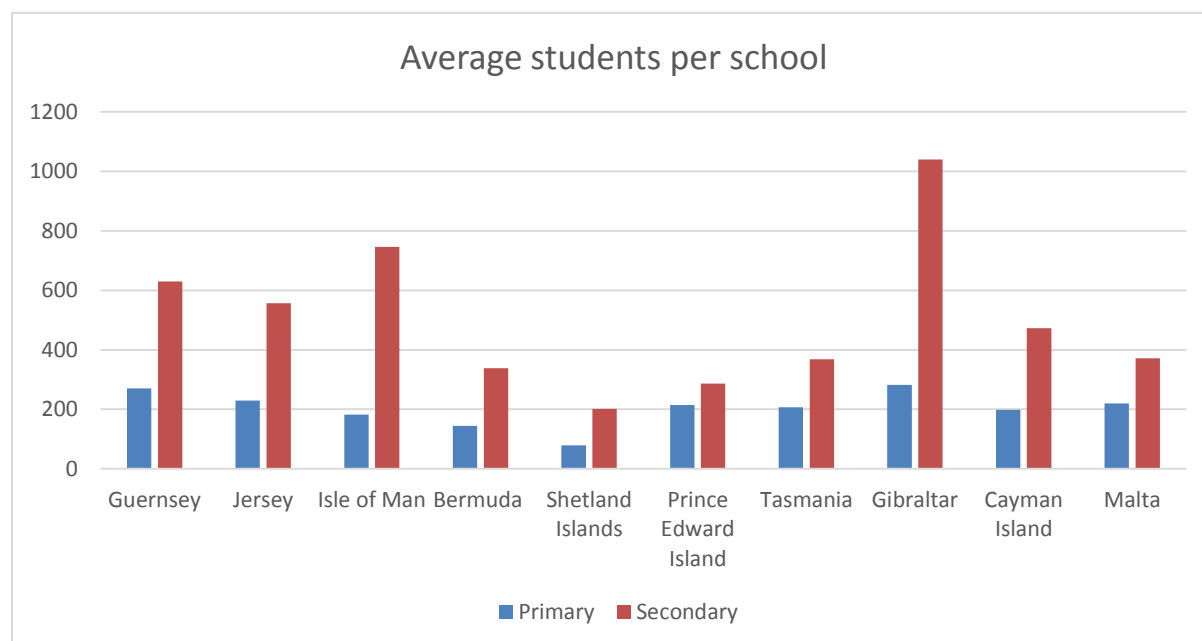


Figure 8a

		Number of schools		Schools per square mile	
	Area (square miles)	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
Guernsey	24	16	7	0.67	0.29
Jersey	45	31	9	0.69	0.20
Isle of Man	221	35	6	0.16	0.03
Bermuda	21	18	7	0.86	0.33
Shetland Islands	566	23	7	0.04	0.01
Prince Edward Island	2,190	50	33	0.02	0.02
Tasmania	26,410	213	100	0.01	0.004
Gibraltar	2.5	11	2	4.40	0.80
Cayman Island	102	20	8	0.20	0.08
Malta	122	107	63	0.88	0.52

Figure 8b

Education Funding

Apart from the funding of health care and social services, education is one of the primary expenditure areas incurred by island governments and generally ranging between 10% and 20% of annual operating expenditure. A more important measure is the annual expenditure level as a percentage of GDP. In general, this ranges between 3% and 5%.

The majority of islands have capital funds allocated to education within their budgets. Some of the larger projects undertaken include:

- Antigua & Barbuda are spending US\$10m on the expansion of their university;
- Singapore is planning to improve their school sports infrastructure as well as ICT facilities;
- Mauritius are building new university parks and have a four year plan to improve ICT facilities;
- The Bahamas have put aside B\$30m for the transition of its college to university status;
- Jersey had an £8m primary school expansion programme in 2014;
- Gibraltar hopes to have two new schools by this year;
- The British Virgin Islands' technical and vocational school was opened in 2014.

A common theme in education is the need to make higher investments in the related technology infrastructure in order to secure the benefits for island communities. Most islands will not be able to

afford to make the necessary increased scale of infrastructure investments without a combination of strong budgets, difficult investment prioritisation and creative financing.

As many islands make the necessary investments in broadband technology, school servers and laptop/tablet computers for pupils (providing the financing for all or poorer pupils for social inclusion purposes), the necessary changes are beginning to take place in school curricula, creative teaching skills, and pupil work monitoring. But the coming wave of 'distance learning' offerings is set to further revolutionise teaching methods.

In the Shetlands, a report presented in 2014 to the Education and Families Committee and entitled 'Annual Cost of Secondary Education per Pupil in Shetland: A comparison with Scotland's other Island Authorities', highlighted that Shetland Islands Council appeared to be spending over twice the Scottish average per pupil in secondary education and provided the most expensive secondary education in Scotland.

Education Expenditure per Capita (latest available)

The expenditure per capita on education for a wider sample of islands is set out below (Figure 9):

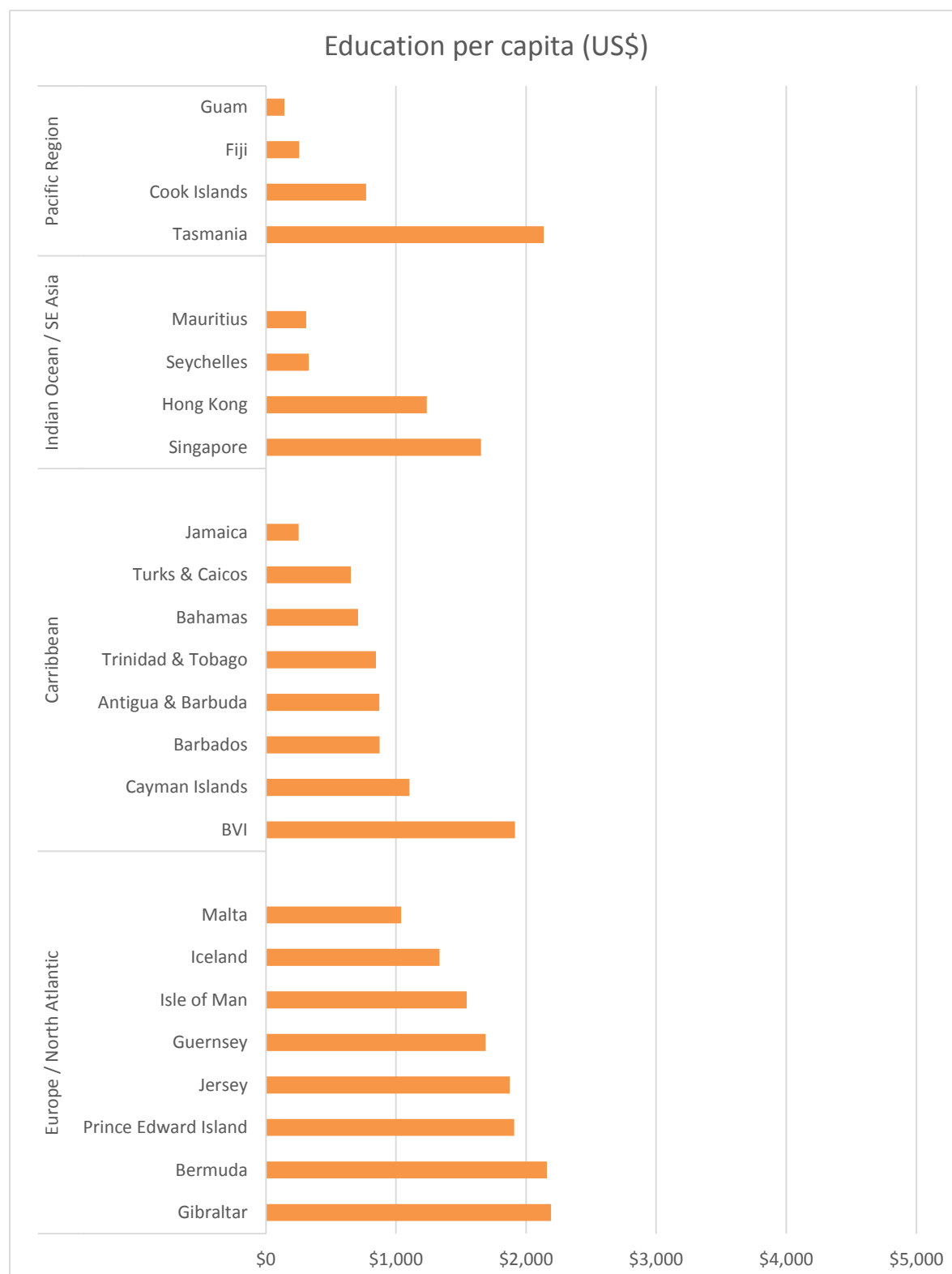


Figure 9

Education Expenditure as a percentage of GDP

As far as education expenditure as a percentage of GDP, the latest results are as follows (Figure 10):

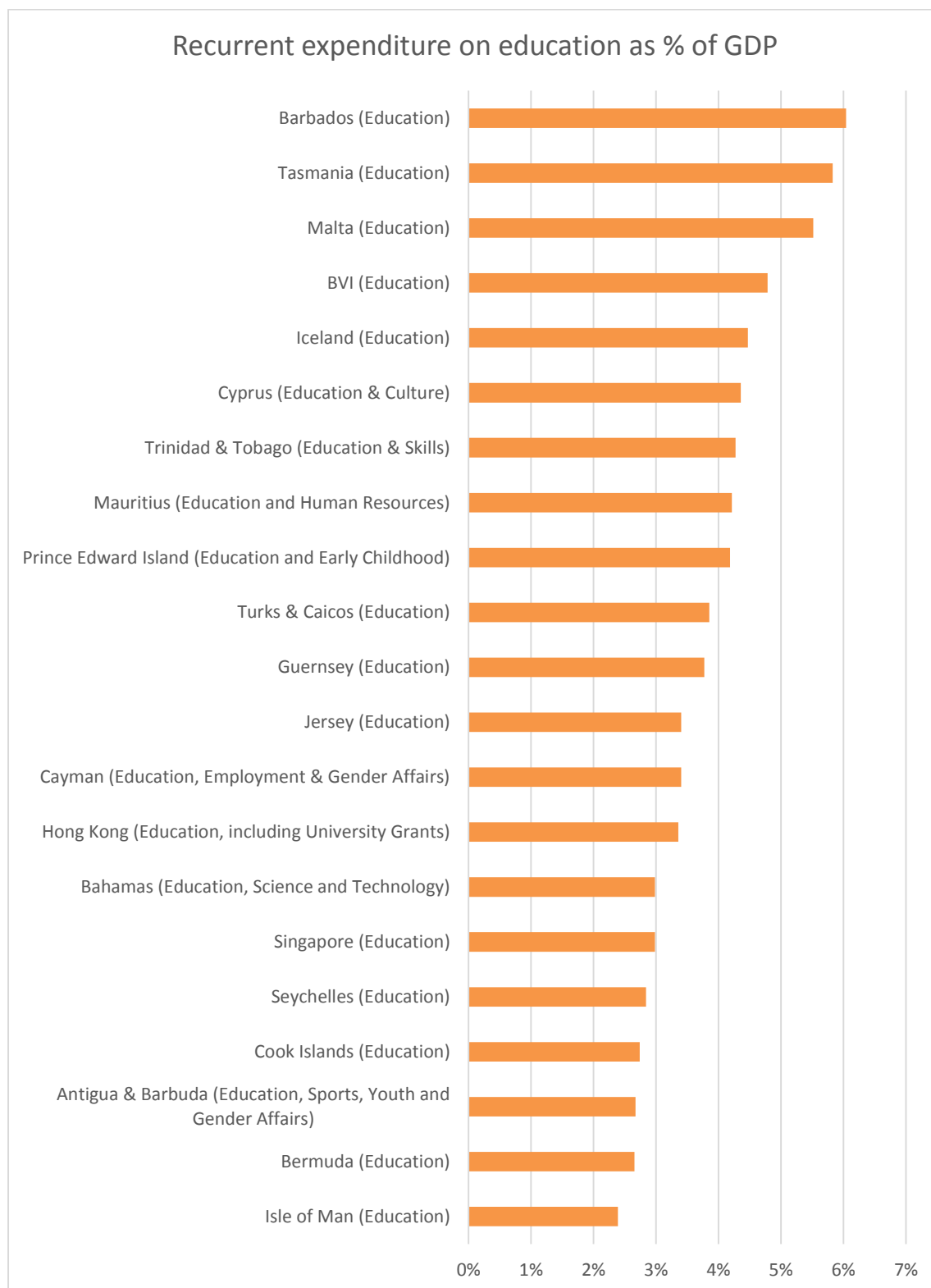


Figure 10

Breakdown of Selected Island Government Education Budgets

Comparisons between government education budgets can be challenging. However, the following illustrates the different approaches to education budgeting between four islands (Figures 11 to 14).

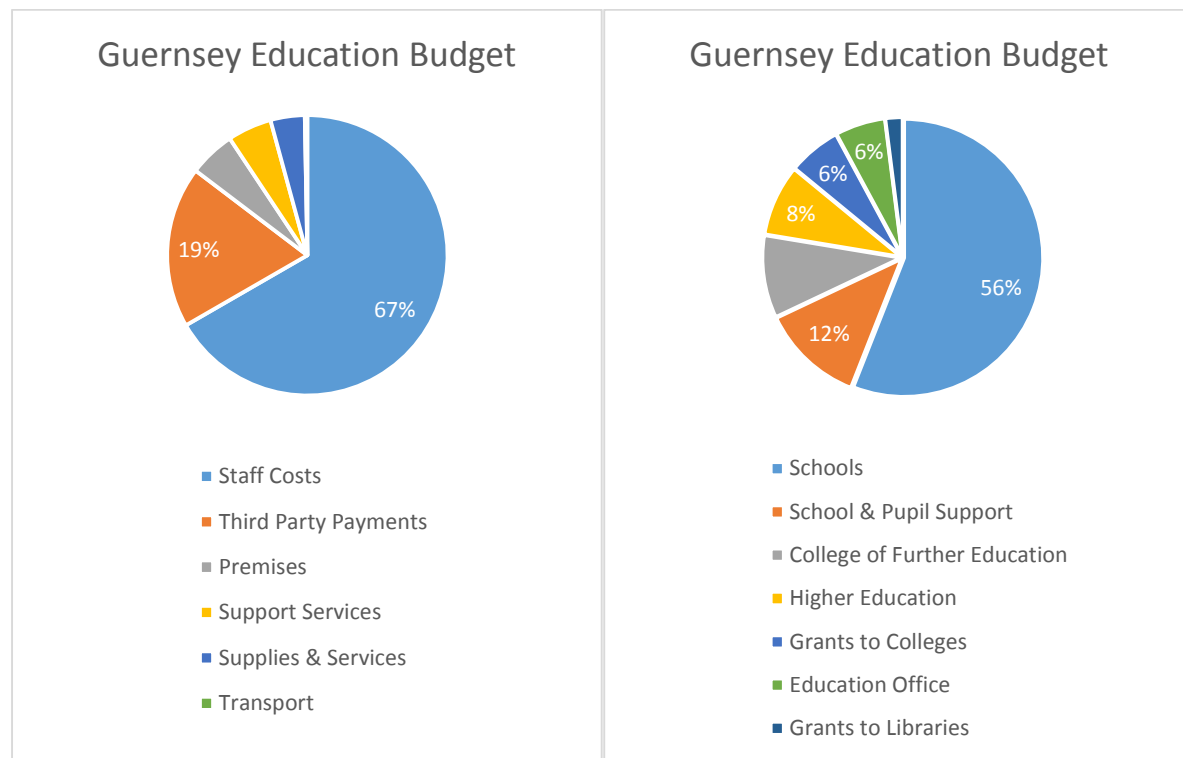


Figure 11

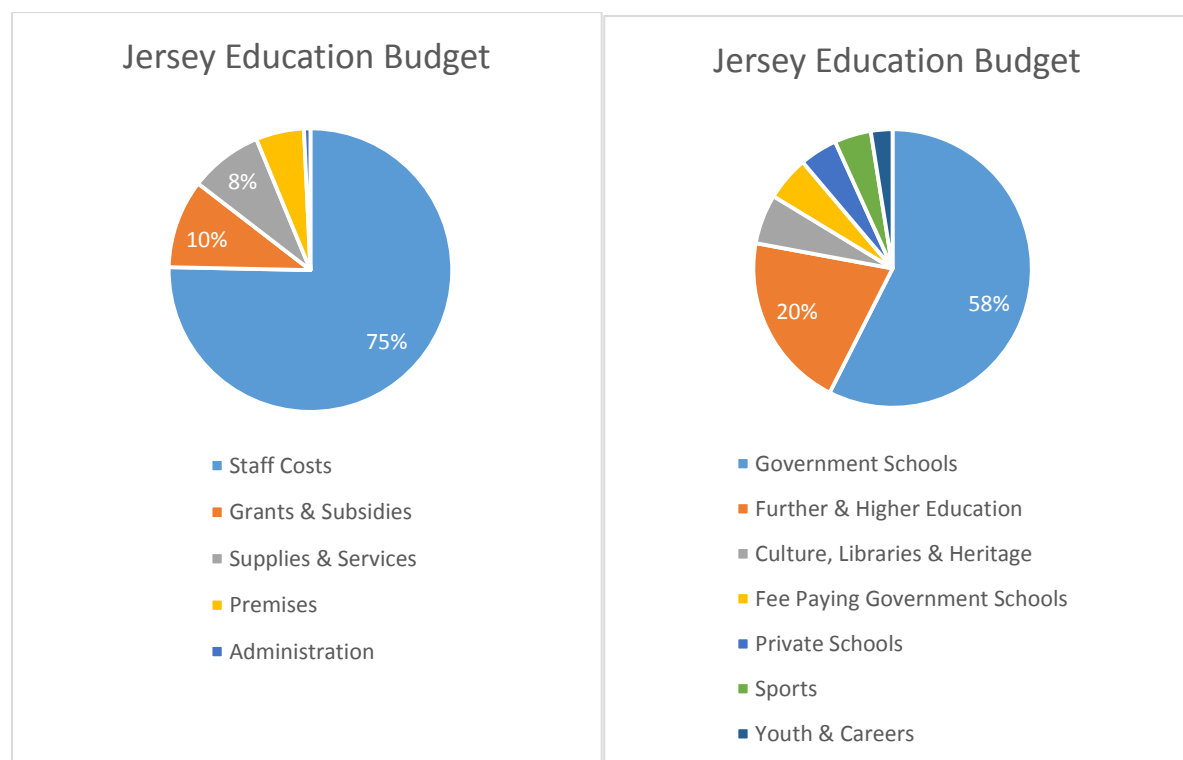


Figure 12

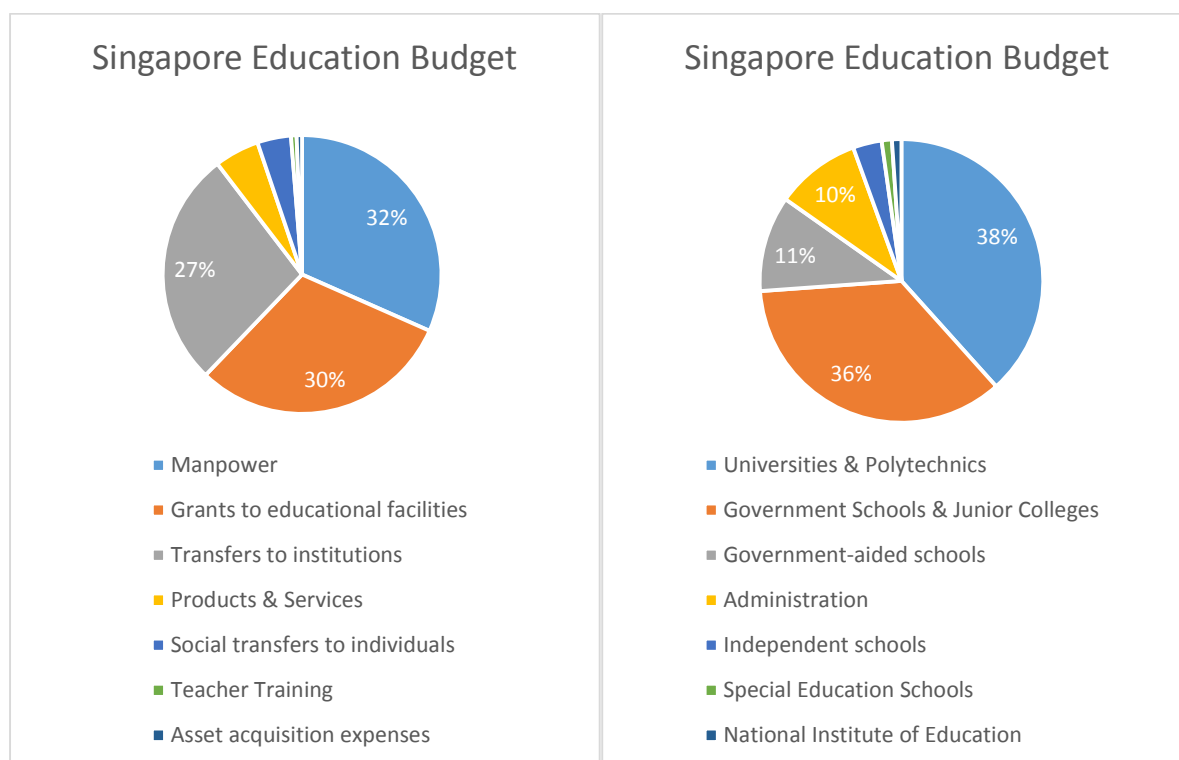


Figure 13

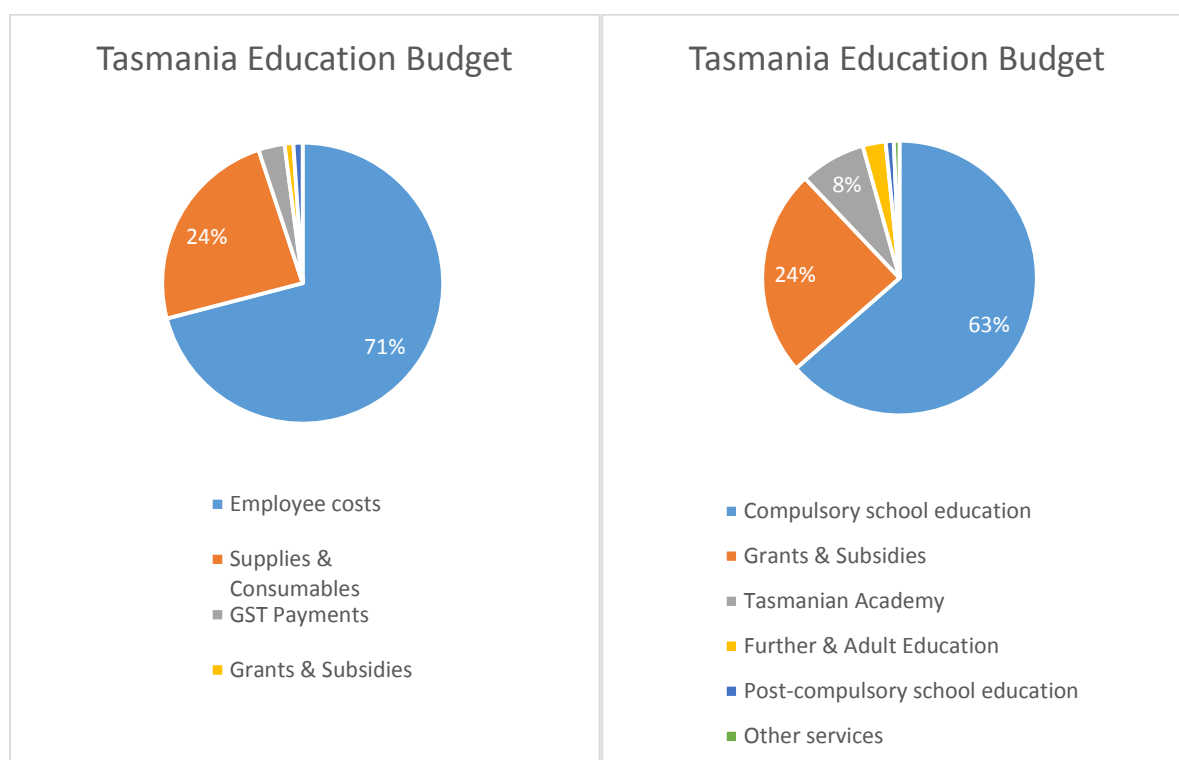


Figure 14

Selection Systems

The following section highlights the fact that there are generally no primary/secondary selection processes now in place in the sample of islands covered in this paper.

Cayman Islands

Caymanian students have the option to go to a government school (this is decided by catchment area) or a private school.

There is no selection process. All three government high schools end at Year 11 (age 16), but the government mandates that education is compulsory to Year 12. Many children move to a private high school where they do a two-year course of A Levels (the UK system) and, depending on the child's exam results, the parents can apply for the school fees or part of the school fees to be paid by the Ministry of Education. Alternatively, they can go to the Cayman Islands Further Education Centre (CIFEC) and take a BTEC vocational course or, depending on their GCSE results and age (must be 17+), apply to attend the University College of the Cayman Islands (UCCI) and take an Associate's degree.

Bermuda

Prior to 1996, the Bermuda public school system was a two-tier system with 18 primary and 6 secondary schools. There were four other secondary public schools which closed during this period. In the 1960s, a national Secondary School Entrance Examination (SSEE), commonly referred to as the 11+ examination and based on a British assessment, was administered to all public school students at the end of seven years of primary school. It was on the basis of these examination results that students were admitted to one of the public secondary schools for the next five years of study. The school system was a selective one at that time, with two of the six public secondary schools admitting students performing in the upper quartile on the SSEE.

In 1996, the Government removed the 11+ examination and introduced a three-tier public school system that included five middle schools with two senior schools, and the school system became comprehensive. A new local curriculum was developed for middle and senior schools, and this time it was aligned with North American models with senior schools introducing a credit system. The graduation certification was renamed the Bermuda School Certificate (B.S.C.).

Jersey

Jersey offers comprehensive primary and secondary education in non-fee paying States' schools. There are a number of private schools with their own application processes and entrance examinations and two fee paying States' schools that have entrance examinations in Mathematics and English. Hautlieu School operates for students in years 10 to 13 and requires high standardised test scores and predicted grades from applicants.

Gibraltar

Compulsory education in Gibraltar starts at age 4 with primary education through to age 12. Students then enter one of the two comprehensive single-sex secondary schools available on the island. There is no selection process in place.

Isle of Man

In the Isle of Man, primary and secondary school places are allocated based on catchment areas. Requests for out of catchment places are usually only granted where there are sound educational needs and are assessed on an individual basis. There is one notable exception which allows siblings to attend the same secondary school even if their place of residence has changed to a different catchment area.

Malta

Between 1972 and 1981, the Maltese government attempted to introduce comprehensive education, but this led to an increase in students attending the church and independent schools that had retained selection. As a result, streaming and the 11-plus examination were re-introduced. The 11-plus examination has since been discontinued in all schools, but the 'backlash' against mixed-ability teaching has led to the (temporary) introduction of 'banding' in 2014.

Prince Edward Island

The education system in Prince Edward Island covers elementary, secondary and post-secondary education. The government provides universal, free elementary and secondary schooling for 12 years. Education is compulsory to the age of 15. There is no selection process and school attendance is by catchment area. There are private schools in the Island for which students have to pay.

Shetland Islands

There is no selection process in the Shetland Islands. Parents of a child who is to transfer from primary to secondary education at the end of Primary 7 will receive information regarding the relevant secondary school. Each primary school will also arrange a transition programme to assist pupils through the transfer from primary to secondary education. If a parent decides that they do not want to send their child to the local catchment area school, then the parent can make a placing request for the child to attend a different school.

Tasmania

In Tasmania, there is no selection process in primary or secondary education. Primary and secondary school placement is based on catchment area.

Performance

A wide range of educational performance measures are applied depending upon the educational system that is applicable. However, when comparisons can be made (e.g. Crown Dependencies), Guernsey performance levels are reasonable (Figure 15).

	5+ A* to C (incl. Maths & English)	5+ A* to C (any subject)	A* to G (all subjects)	A* to C (all subjects)	A* to A (all subjects)
Guernsey	67.2%	75.3%			
Jersey	58.7%	71.0%			
Isle of Man	50.8%	63.9%	99.3%	69.2%	19.3%
Gibraltar	55.0%		99.0%	63.0%	20.9%

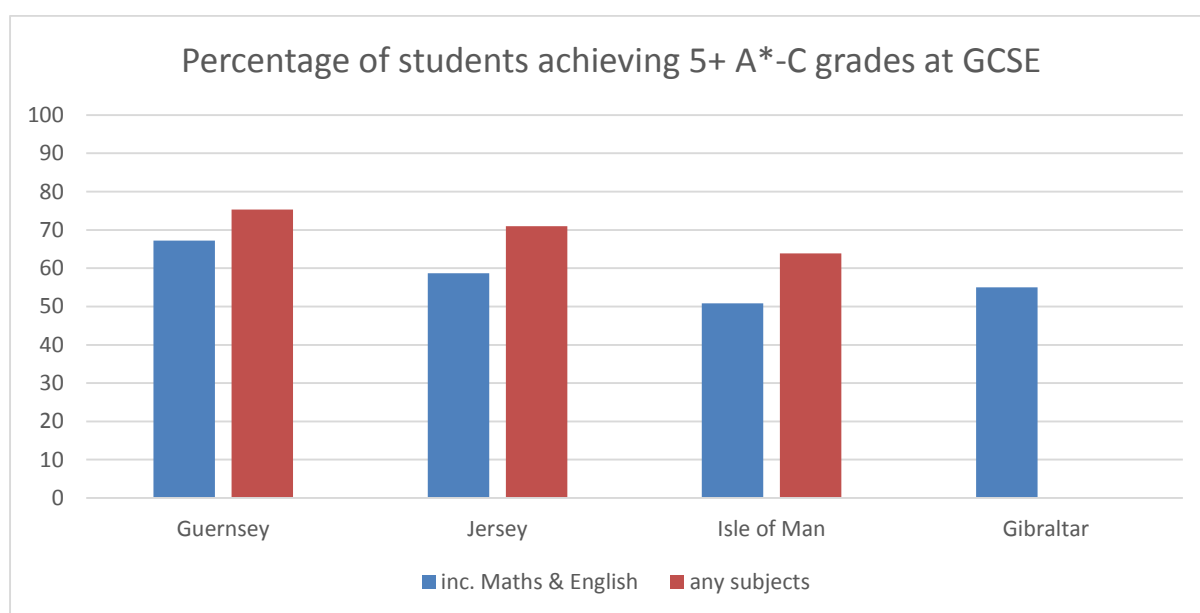


Figure 15

Other island performance levels are set out below:

Bermuda

The percentage of students who attain International General Certification of Secondary Education (IGCSE) to grade of 80% is as follows:

	Primary 6 (year 6)	Middle 3 (year 9)
Maths	41%	43%
Science	64%	51%
English	66%	27%

Shetland Islands

Secondary 4 results (GCSE school leaving equivalent)

	Shetland Islands	Scotland
pupils achieving 5+ at level 5	54%	39%
pupils achieving 5+ at level 4	89%	77%
pupils achieving 5+ at level 3	92%	83%

Prince Edward Island

A report on the progress of Canadian students as demonstrated by PISA stated that Canadian students continued to perform well in a global context, but repeatedly singled out P.E.I. as the exception. P.E.I. students performed below the OECD average in all three categories. No other Canadian jurisdiction performed below average in any of them.

International PISA test results

	Prince Edward Island	Canada	OECD
Results in maths	479	518	494
Results in science	490	534	497
Results in reading	490	525	501

Tasmania

Attainment levels against Australia National Minimum Standard (NMS = 0)

	1 below	NMS	1 above	2 above	3 above	4 above
Year 5 achievement	6	16	28	27	15	6
Year 7 achievement	4	18	29	26	15	8
Year 9 achievement	5	21	32	24	12	5

Cayman Islands

Secondary 4 results (GCSE school leaving equivalent)

Level 2 is equivalent to A*-C

- Pupils achieving 5+ at level 2: 70%
- Pupils achieving 5+ at level 1: 95%

Malta

Grade 7 is a pass

Grade 5 is required for sixth form

- Pupils achieving 5+ grades at 1-7: 74.9%
- Pupils achieving 5+ grades at 1-5: 62.2%

Other Issues - Soft Skills

From experience gleaned from other research projects carried out by Island Global Research in the three Crown Dependencies and, also, recently highlighted in the Skills Jersey report, the shortage of basic skills amongst young people is a growing concern for all economic sectors within the three islands.

This research identified that many young people are increasingly reluctant to use traditional communication methods such as 'telephoning someone' or 'talking to a person on a face-to-face basis'. The basic use of English (grammar, spelling, simple report drafting etc.) and the lack of numeracy skills are also shortcomings even amongst graduates. In addition, 'attention to detail', 'accuracy' and 'concentration levels' are areas of concern.

Remedying these critical shortcomings is not something that can be addressed in the short or even in the medium term. As highlighted in the Skills Jersey report, the need for excellent client-facing communication skills will become increasingly important in the local finance sector as the demand for business development skills and the management of more specific client-tailored products and services become the norm.

On-Island Tertiary Education

The following overview of on-island tertiary provision has been set out below. In addition, examples of government tuition support has been compared between the three Crown Dependencies.

- **Jersey**

Jersey Highlands College - University centre subjects:

- Accounting & Finance FdA & BA
- Business & Management FdA & BA
- Childhood studies FdA & BA
- Financial services FdA & BA
- Information Technology for Business FdSc & BSc (£6830 pa)
- Social sciences BSc
- Sports & Management FdA & BA

Yearly fees for 2014/15 are £5,830 for classroom based subjects, e.g. Financial Services and £6,830 for workshop based subjects, e.g. IT for Business. Fees for overseas/UK students are £7,880 pa.

The Highlands College also offers many courses of vocational training and community education.

- **Isle of Man**

IOM College of Further Education offers vocational training and community education.

IOM College at 'Associate College Status' with University of Chester:

- Computer science BSc
- Business Studies BA
- History & Heritage Management with Manx Studies BA
- Public Health BSc

IOM College with Liverpool John Moore's University:

- Aerospace Manufacturing Engineering BEng
- Building Surveying Studies BSc
- Construction Management BSc
- Fine Art BA

- **Bermuda**

Bermuda College offers professional & career education

Distance education online requires students to meet at least three times during semester.

- Partnership with Georgia State University College of business – BBA Finance or Risk Management & Insurance
- Partnership with Miami University Masters in Education
- Partnership with Mount Saint Vincent University BA in Child & Youth Studies BBA Bachelor of Business Administration

- **Shetland Islands**

'Train Shetland' supplies vocational training and apprenticeship training with education costs funded by Skills Development Scotland while Skills Training Shetland offers higher education courses.

University of the Highlands and Islands - Shetland College offers part time and full time courses including BA & BSc.

- **Prince Edward Island**

University Prince Edward has approximately 4,400 students studying programmes and degrees across four faculties (arts, education, science, and veterinary medicine) and two schools (business and nursing).

Holland College offers many programmes in adult and community education.

Collège Acadie PEI is a French college offering language and vocational training.

- **Tasmania**

University of Tasmania has approximately 30,000 students and 1,200 academic staff.

- **Gibraltar**

University of Gibraltar is opening in September 2015 and will offer:

- Short Courses –
 - Chartered Institute of Legal Executives
 - Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT)
 - Courses in hospitality management from Oxford Brookes University
- Certificates –
 - Certificate in Gibraltar Tax
 - Certificate in Gibraltar Law
- Degree courses –
 - BSc Accounting & Finance
 - BSc Banking & Finance
 - BSc Business & Management
 - BSc Adult Nursing
- Language centre for teach English using TEFL system.

- **Malta**

University of Malta has approximately 11,300 students and 600 academic staff. Its undergraduate courses to Maltese people are currently free of charge.

- **Cayman Islands**

International college of Cayman islands offers undergraduate and graduate degrees including BSc in:

- Business Administration
- Human and social services
- Liberal studies
- Office administration

Other tertiary education establishments in the Cayman Islands include the University college of Cayman Islands, the St Matthews University School for Medicine and Veterinary Medicine and the Truman Bodden Law School.

Government Contribution to Tuition - Examples

	Guernsey	Isle of Man	Jersey
Tuition fees:			
Typical cost	£9,000	£9,000	£9,000
Maximum parental contribution	£8,900	£6,500	£7,500
Student contribution	£0	£2,500	£1,500
Maintenance and Travel:			
Maximum amount of grant	£6,935 to £8457	£4680 to £5190	£5,500
Calculation methodology:			
Allowable income before parents must contribute towards tuition	£38,900	£100,000	£26,750
Percentage applied to residual income	25%	35%	20.25%
Other applicable calculation	2.1% of assets in excess of £100,000 (excluding main residence and pension)	n/a	Maintenance grant is subject to sliding scale of payments, for income up to £38,000
Example 1:			
Tuition costs	£9,000	£9,000	£9,000
Maintenance and travel costs	£6,935	£4,680	£5,500
Parental income £50,000	25% x (50,000 - 38,990)	£0	20.25% x (50,000 - 26,750)
Parental assets below £100,000	£0	£0	£0
Parental contribution to maintenance and travel	£2,753	£4,680	£4,708
Government contribution to maintenance and travel	£4,182	£0	£792
Parental contribution to tuition	£0	£0	£0
Student contribution to tuition	£0	£2,500	£1,500
Government contribution to tuition	£9,000	£6,500	£7,500
Example 2:			
Tuition costs	£9,000	£9,000	£9,000
Maintenance and travel costs	£6,935	£4,680	£5,500
Parental income £110,000	25% x (110,000 - 38,990)	35% x (110,000 - 100,000)	20.25% x (110,000 - 26,750)
Parental assets £150,000	2.1% x 50,000	£0	£0
Parental contribution to maintenance and travel	£6,935	£4,680	£5,500
Government contribution to maintenance and travel	£0	£0	£0
Parental contribution to tuition	£8,900	£3,500	£7,500
Student contribution to tuition	£0	£2,500	£1,500
Government contribution to tuition	£100	£3,000	£0

Distance Learning

The provision of a wide on-island curriculum base for Alderney and Sark is a growing challenge. However, there are many island examples where such a challenge has been or is being met.

It is becoming clear from the research undertaken by Island Global Research that the cost of providing higher education facilities on an island is now being questioned by many island governments which are faced with funding issues and small and, sometimes, diminishing numbers of potential home-based students. In addition, the cost of travel to and from mainland and nearby higher education centres as well as accommodation and tuition fees can be far too much from both a student's and government's point of view in terms of the grants and subsidies that can be available.

Therefore, most island universities and many mainland educational institutions now offer some kind of distance learning programmes. The means of accessing course material, fellow students and lecturers are broadly similar.

The University of the Highlands & Islands in Scotland offers video-conferencing, a twenty-four hour help desk, online ability to submit coursework, discussion boards, and live chat forums. The University of Tasmania also allows distant learners to listen in to lectures online.

The University of the South Pacific's Centre for Flexible Learning which opened in 2013, uses satellite communications for secure, reliable links. It has 350 courses available online and 50% of its students choose to study wholly or partly away from campus. It utilises a mix of printed materials, audio and video conferencing and online access. Its fourteen centres across the Pacific include Kiribati, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and the Cook Islands.

Primary and secondary schools in more remote islands may include some aspect of remote learning. Children living away from the main town in the Falkland Islands, for example, have a travelling teacher stay with them for two weeks out of six and also have lessons via radio and telephone.

Schools in Kodiak Island (Alaska) are piloting a new 'robotic' teacher – a Segway-type base with an attached iPad so teachers can move around the classroom and interact more realistically. Alaska is a pioneer in digital teaching with video broadcasting, podcasts, transportable internet and satellite communications.

The University of the West Indies has an Open Campus which serves seventeen Caribbean territories with 44 centres. 6,000 students are enrolled online, primarily from Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica. It is reliant on external funding to supplement government funding from bodies such as the Department of Foreign Trade and Development in Canada and from philanthropic donations or scholarships. The Open Campus student body is a little older than many university student bodies – (80% are over 25, with 13% of those being over 45).

Another area of remote learning which has been growing is the massive open online course ("MOOC"). The term was first coined in 2008 and the idea gained popularity in 2012, with many top US universities launching MOOCs, as well as universities in Asia, Europe and Australia. The University of Tasmania's Understanding Dementia MOOC is a free nine week course and has one of the highest completion rates of MOOCs – 39% in 2013 (many have a completion rate of less than 10%). Most courses are free for the basics with small fees for specialised subjects and certification.

In a recent article in the Economist, the writer suggested that MOOCs may be strong competition for regular university learning, although a blend of the two may be an attractive option. As governments struggle to pay for university education, either directly or through scholarships and grants, more people may find themselves unable to afford to attend university and a MOOC may be an alternative.

The University of Hawaii offers a range of distance learning courses primarily for students in neighbouring islands utilising different techniques of delivery. Online course material is accessed by students on their PCs via the university's own management and collaboration system. Other courses are available via interactive television into classroom facilities which are attended by students. A wide selection of distance learning courses is available covering subjects such as Business Administration, Social Sciences, Public Administration, Health Care, Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management.

Education designed for people in remote areas of Australia who cannot attend classes or who cannot find school providing subjects they wish to take is available. Australian universities and State websites list schools which can offer this education www.side.wa.edu.au – schools of isolated and distance education.

Some Latest Education Initiatives

Many island governments are giving increased consideration to tailoring aspects of education to the skills required by employers. This is particularly the case in Information Technology:

- The Manx Educational Foundation, a charitable organisation launched in 2011, has been raising funds both on and off island as part of plan to create an International Centre of IT Excellence on the island. Final approval is being sought from government.
- All students in Trinidad & Tobago from age 11 to 16 now have a laptop provided to them.
- 2015 will be the final year of a three year, £3m ICT in schools infrastructure upgrade in line with Jersey's ICT Skills Strategy.
- The latest Hong Kong budget announced that IT education at school will be more closely matched with the needs of employers.
- The government scholarship scheme in Antigua & Barbuda is being expanded to allow students to study in particular IT areas in other countries (including Cuba, China and the USA).
- In Mauritius, students across two school years will be given tablets (with small parental contribution for insurance); investment is being made to ensure free Wi-Fi in all secondary schools; poorer families with school children will get free internet access; additional qualifications will be introduced in schools in areas of ICT.
- E-Skills Malta Foundation is looking for 'further reform in the ICT educational offerings'.

Some governments are looking at how higher education is funded:

- The Barbadian government will cut back on university funding (to spend more on other education funding) by asking students to fund the tuition fees at the University of the West Indies (government will continue to fund all other expenses)
- The Singapore government announced increased grant funding for higher education in their latest budget.
- In Mauritius, extra funding is being given to tertiary education to employ new lecturers, construct more campuses and improve research facilities.

Schools in islands including Prince Edward Island and Malta will be looking at ways of improving the careers' education in schools and making the transition from secondary school to vocational/further education or employment easier for school leavers.

Malta's Framework for the Education Strategy 2014-2024 has recently been released. The four main goals are:

1. Reduce gaps in education between genders and schools,
2. Support education for children at risk of poverty,
3. Increase participation in lifelong learning,
4. Raise student retention and attainment rates in vocational and tertiary education.

Case Study - Prince Edward Island Early Years

The government considers early learning as much a labour-force strategy as a childcare issue. In order to compete with emerging economies in the future, when the working age population will be smaller in PEI, focus on high-quality education for children is seen to be key. The government undertook a major review of its early childcare system in 2010. The Preschool Excellence Initiative moved all early childcare and education from the Social Services department to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Early Childhood Development. Other changes included:

- Kindergarten (for children aged 5) became a full school day programme
- Staff at kindergartens were to be fully trained educators
- Staff at Early Years Centres (for ages 0 to 4) were to be trained and certified
- Fees at Early Years Centres were to be regulated and the Centres were to be non-profit
- Salaries for Early Years staff were to be regulated and improved
- Guidelines for play-based curriculum were set by educators
- A plan was created to develop or fund Early Learning Centres where they were most needed
- All Early Learning Centres were required to have a parental advisory committee

Case Study - Malta

Overall, the education system in Malta has been characterised by:

- formal structures (including selection, competition and banding/streaming),
- traditional teaching methods,
- strict discipline, and
- 'high stakes' examinations.

The firm belief that homogenous groups provide the best learning environment persists among many island stakeholders and there has only recently been a move to co-educational schooling in the state sector (to be phased in over five years from 2013).

Between 1972 and 1981, the government attempted to introduce comprehensive education, but this led to an increase in students attending the church and independent schools that had retained selection. As a result, streaming and the 11-plus examination were re-introduced. The 11-plus examination has since been discontinued in all schools, but the 'backlash' against mixed-ability teaching has led to the (temporary) introduction of 'banding' in 2014.

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