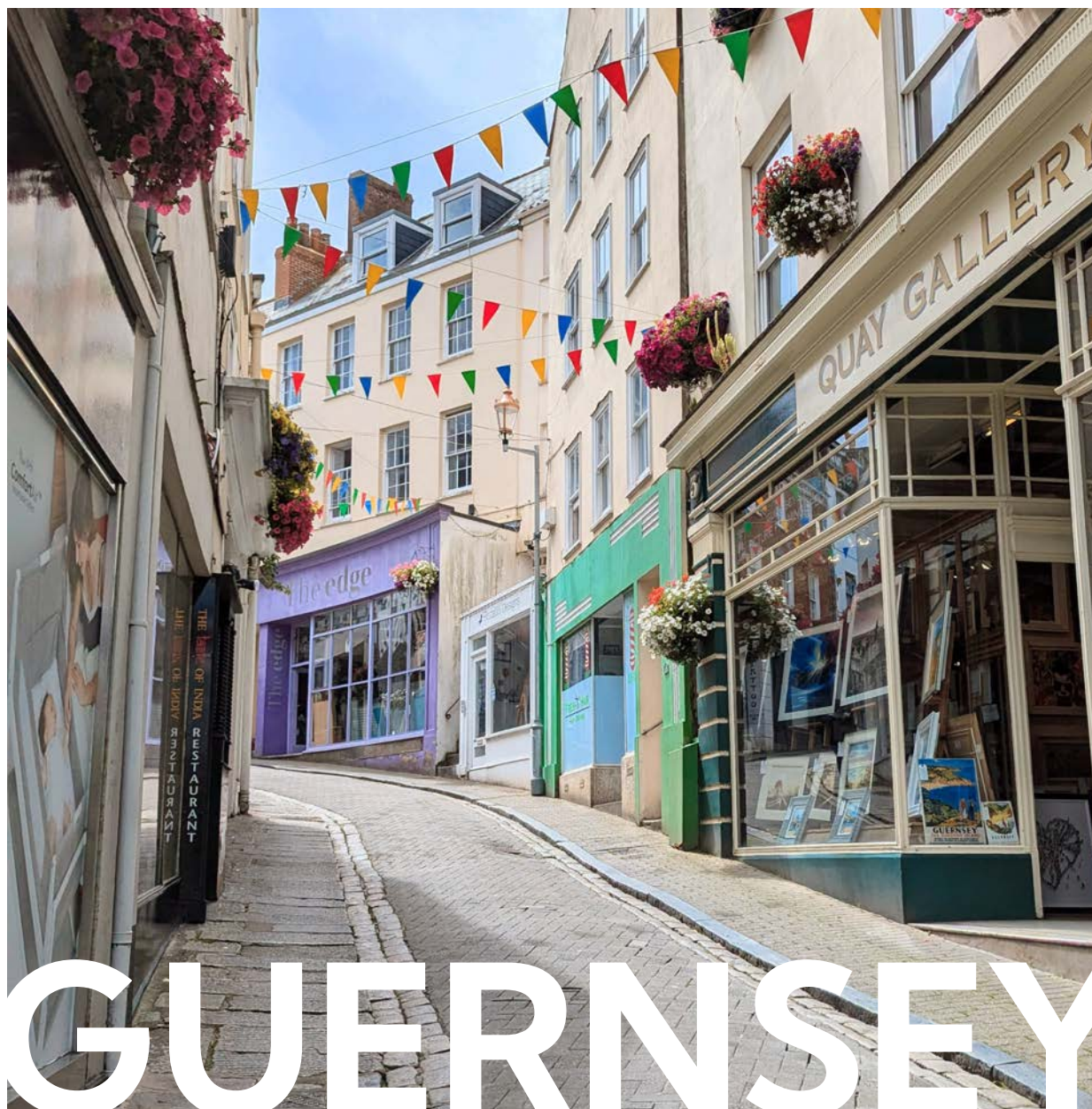# THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN GUERNSEY

The key to economic growth and social wellbeing

GUERNSEY

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FOREWORD

The Institute of Director's mission is to develop, support and represent skilled, knowledgeable and responsible leaders for the benefit of the economy and society at large.

Throughout our 120 years of supporting and nurturing directors, we have become part of the fabric of society, touching the lives of many individuals across the Bailiwick of Guernsey, providing a community for members to learn, develop and grow.

As we navigate the complexities of modern life—marked by rapid technological advancements, shifting socio–economic landscapes, and global interdependence—the need for strong social bonds becomes ever more apparent. In this increasingly interconnected and complex world, the importance of social capital has emerged as a critical strategic imperative and success factor for businesses, communities and society.

Social capital encompasses the networks, relationships, and social norms that facilitate cooperation and collaboration among individuals and groups. It is an intangible asset that fosters trust and engagement, serving as a cornerstone for the effective functioning of societies.

Social capital not only contributes to individual well–being but also underpins the resilience and sustainability of businesses and communities. From enhancing public health outcomes to promoting civic participation and economic growth, the manifestations of social capital are diverse and far–reaching.

The goal of this world–first research report is to encourage a holistic understanding of social capital—one that recognises its value as a vital resource that can spark transformative change, foster collaboration, and build a more cohesive and thriving society in Guernsey.

As you delve into this exploration of social capital, we invite you to reflect on the networks and relationships that shape your life, business and community, recognising that the strength of these connections can empower individuals and unite us in the pursuit of common aspirations.

In the face of significant political and societal changes, we have also recognised the need for stability. The Institute of Directors has remained steadfast in amplifying the voices of our members and staying true to our core principles of Connect, Develop and Influence.

Our purpose–driven ethos, enshrined in our Royal Charter, has served as our North Star as we remain focussed on creating **Better Directors for a Better World.**

Glen Tonks
Chairperson
Institute of Directors Guernsey Branch

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of social capital in Guernsey, emphasising its crucial role in sustaining the island's social cohesion and economic wellbeing. Social capital, broadly defined as the ability and potential for people to cooperate and work together and to interact and exchange positively, is a critical asset for any community. This asset is particularly important in Guernsey, given the island's unique cultural identity, geographic isolation, and longstanding tradition of independence.

The findings reveal that Guernsey boasts exceptionally strong social capital, characterised by high levels of interpersonal trust, community solidarity, and a profound sense of belonging among its residents. This robust social fabric has historically been one of the island's greatest strengths, fostering a high quality of life and enabling a resilient society. The close-knit nature of the community creates an environment where individuals are willing to support one another, actively participate in communal activities, and uphold shared values that are deeply embedded in the island's culture.

However, this research report also identifies several challenges and vulnerabilities that pose significant threats to the continued strength of Guernsey's social capital. Key among these threats are increasing social divides, particularly along generational and socioeconomic lines, which undermine the sense of collective identity and belonging that has traditionally been a cornerstone of life on the island. These divides manifest in various ways, including differing perspectives on key issues, generational tensions, and a growing disparity between the affluent and less well-off segments of the population. Such divisions not only weaken social cohesion but also reduce the potential for collaborative problem-solving and collective action.

Another critical issue highlighted in the report is the widespread perception that the island is stagnating and not enough is being done to address emergent issues, threats, and challenges. This resistance can stifle innovation, limit the community's ability to adapt to new challenges, and create an environment where conformity is valued over creativity. The report underscores the importance of balancing the preservation of Guernsey's unique cultural identity with the need for adaptation in a rapidly changing world.

Moreover, the research reveals growing concerns about rising inequality, increasing social isolation, and a decline in trust in local institutions. These factors are identified as significant risks to the sustainability of Guernsey's social capital. For instance, the widening economic gap between different segments of the population threatens to erode the shared sense of community that has long been a hallmark of Guernsey. Additionally, social isolation, particularly among the elderly and marginalised groups, poses a serious challenge to maintaining strong social networks. Distrust in local institutions, fuelled by perceptions of inefficiency or lack of responsiveness, further exacerbates these issues, leading to disengagement and a weakening of the social fabric.

Despite these challenges, the report offers a hopeful outlook on Guernsey's capacity to safeguard and even enhance its social capital. The island's tradition of self-reliance and its demonstrated ability to adapt and reinvent itself provides a solid foundation for addressing the identified threats. The report emphasises that with the right strategies and collective efforts, Guernsey can strengthen its social capital and leverage it to improve the overall wellbeing of its community.

The report concludes with a series of actionable insights and recommendations designed to preserve and enhance Guernsey's social capital. Key recommendations include fostering intergenerational and cross-cultural dialogue to bridge social divides, improving access to social spaces to encourage community interaction, promoting volunteerism to strengthen communal bonds, and ensuring that local institutions operate with transparency and responsiveness to build trust. Additionally, the report advocates for proactive measures to address inequality and social isolation, recognising that these issues, if left unchecked, could have long-term detrimental effects on the island's social capital.

In summary, this report underscores the importance of social capital as a vital resource for Guernsey's future. By understanding and addressing the current challenges while capitalising on the island's strengths, Guernsey can ensure that its social capital remains a cornerstone of its social and economic prosperity. The recommendations provided are intended to guide the community and its leaders in taking the necessary steps to safeguard this valuable asset, ensuring that Guernsey continues to thrive as a cohesive and resilient society.

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"If you want to go fast, go alone; but if you want to go far, go together."

INTRODUCTION

Social capital is a critical component of any society, serving as the glue that holds communities together and fostering economic prosperity and social wellbeing. In the case of Guernsey, a small island with a rich history and unique cultural identity, social capital is particularly significant. The close-knit nature of Guernsey's communities, characterised by high levels of trust, solidarity, and shared values, has long been one of the island's most valuable assets. However, like many modern societies, Guernsey faces challenges that threaten to erode this social capital, potentially impacting the very fabric of its society.

This report provides a broad examination of social capital in Guernsey, assessing its strengths, identifying its vulnerabilities, and exploring the potential risks and opportunities that lie ahead. The research explores the various dimensions of social capital, including social relationships, community engagement, trust, and networks, to provide a holistic understanding of how these elements interact and influence the island's social and economic landscape.

Guernsey's social capital is unique in many ways. The island's geographic isolation, combined with its strong sense of identity and self-governance, has fostered a community where people are deeply connected to one another and to the place they call home. This sense of connection is evident in the everyday interactions of residents, where trust and mutual support are not just expected but are integral to the way of life. The ability to leave one's home or car unlocked, the willingness of neighbours to look out for one another, and the strong participation in community events are all reflections of the robust social capital that exists in Guernsey.

However, the very strengths that define Guernsey's social capital also present challenges. The island's tight-knit communities, while fostering strong bonds, can sometimes lead to social divides, particularly along generational and socioeconomic lines. These divides create pockets of disconnectedness, where different segments of the population may feel isolated or excluded. Additionally, the strong social norms and expectations within these close communities can sometimes stifle innovation and creativity, as individuals may feel pressured to conform rather than challenge the status quo.

The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed analysis of these dynamics, offering insights into how Guernsey's social capital can be both preserved and enhanced in the face of contemporary challenges. By examining the current state of social capital on the island, this report aims to highlight not only the strengths that can be leveraged but also the vulnerabilities that need to be addressed to ensure that Guernsey remains a resilient and cohesive society.

The report begins by establishing the meaning of the term 'social capital' and outlining its importance and relevance to Guernsey. This is followed by a brief discussion of the methodology used in this research, providing transparency about how the data was collected and analysed. The core of the report presents the findings, offering a detailed examination of the current state of social capital in Guernsey, as provided by the research participants, including the key threats and opportunities identified through the research.

This report is not merely an academic exercise but a practical guide for stakeholders in Guernsey. Whether you are a policymaker, business leader, community organiser, or resident, the insights provided here are intended to inform and inspire actions that will strengthen Guernsey's social capital. By doing so, the island can continue to thrive, maintaining its unique character while adapting to the inevitable changes and challenges of the modern world.

This research underscores the importance of proactive efforts to safeguard and enhance social capital, emphasising that it is not only a critical resource for the present but also a vital foundation for the future. As Guernsey navigates the complexities of the 21st century, the strength and resilience of its social capital will play a crucial role in determining its success and sustainability as a vibrant, connected, and prosperous community.

WHAT IS SOCIAL CAPITAL?

Before we can explore the findings of this research on the strengths and weaknesses of social capital in Guernsey, it is important to establish what social capital is, how it works, and what it does. Although social capital is incredibly important, not everyone knows what the term means and many people who have heard of it may not be sure what it means. In fact, there are many different meanings of the term, so this chapter will make sure we are on the same page about the meaning of social capital.

The general meaning of social capital

While there are many definitions of social capital, they all share the assertion that social relationships are valuable and can be an asset that enables positive and productive action. In a general sense, social capital is the ability and potential for people to cooperate and work together and to interact and exchange positively.

Social capital is "social" because it is fundamentally about social relationships and how we are connected, and it is "capital" because it relates to the ability, capacity, and potential for people to collaborate, interact positively, and work together.

Social capital is fundamental to the functioning of any organisation, social initiative, or society[1]. Social capital involves positive and productive working relationships, effective groups and organisations, and constructive and inclusive institutions. It relates to environments where people are inclined to cooperate, collaborate, and participate in collective action.

As a form of capital, social capital represents a stock of future benefits[2]. We can invest by building relationships, developing trust, establishing effective groups and organisations, and creating strong, cohesive communities. This investment creates the ability, capacity, and potential that is

social capital[3].

The concept of social capital has rapidly grown in popularity over the last 30 years, a testament to its enduring relevance and significance[4]. Although a relatively new term, it is not a new idea since relationships and our ability to work together are fundamental to our everyday lives and the success of any social venture[5]. The term social capital simply gives us a way to understand and communicate their importance and value[6]. Social capital is related to things we are all familiar with, such as relationships with friends, family, coworkers, and acquaintances, as well as the qualities of these relationships[7]. It relates to trust, goodwill, solidarity, inclusion, empowerment, and various other qualities of organisations and communities[8]. This means that social capital is not something new; it is not a new "secret sauce". It is something we use every day and is part of every group and community. For example, we meet people and form relationships, build trust and goodwill, establish norms, and develop shared goals and identity, regardless of whether we are familiar with the concept of social capital.

Why do we care about social capital?

Social capital is crucial to economic and social wellbeing because it represents the foundation of trust, cooperation, and collective action within a community[9]. High levels of social capital facilitate civic engagement, where individuals actively participate in community activities and local governance, leading to more effective and inclusive policies[10]. Strong social networks, built on trust, provide access to information, resources, and opportunities, which support economic mobility and reduce inequality[11]. Additionally, social capital promotes health and wellbeing by enabling emotional and practical support, contributing to lower healthcare costs and a higher quality of life[12]. Communities with robust social capital are also more resilient and able to recover quickly from crises by relying on strong networks for support and resource sharing[13]. Furthermore, social capital

stimulates economic growth by creating a culture of trust that attracts investment, encourages entrepreneurship, and supports innovation[14]. Ultimately, social capital facilitates social action, cooperation, and collective action, making it a key driver of a prosperous, inclusive, and resilient society.

We all need social capital, which provides many important benefits. From your own experience, reflect on times when someone has helped you, introduced you to opportunities, facilitated important outcomes, or supported you during times of need. Consider what you have achieved collectively with others in your personal life, at work, in sports teams, or in voluntary associations. These outcomes are made possible by social capital. The saying,

> **"It's not what you know, it's who you know,"**

highlights its importance, and we all have personal examples of how it has significantly aided us[15]. In fact, social capital is also essential for any community, organisation, or project.

The term "social capital" gives the importance of relationships a name and allows us to discuss it[16].

This opens the possibility of collectively finding solutions and approaches that improve outcomes. It also allows us to evaluate, qualify, and measure it. It allows us to communicate its importance to decision-makers and policymakers alike, having the potential to improve outcomes significantly.

Strong social capital allows people to work together to address common issues, implement positive changes, and achieve shared goals, leading to a more resilient and empowered community.

Social capital is important for a range of other concerns, such as economic development, health and wellbeing, crime rates, and community resilience, to name a few[17,18,19].

Social capital differs from other forms of capital. While human capital pertains to individual capabilities (the ability of people to do things)[11], social capital relates to collective abilities (the ability to do things together). As we all know, we can do far more together than we can alone. Collaboration allows us to achieve far more than we could alone, combining our efforts, abilities, and expertise. Additionally, social support and a sense of belonging are significant benefits derived from connection to groups and people.

One of the key functions of social capital is that it mobilises, enhances, transforms, and activates other forms of capital, such as human and physical capital[20]. For example, strong social capital can enable individuals to identify and leverage available skills, knowledge, and assets to respond effectively to emergent needs, helping individuals and communities to 'get by' and 'get ahead'[21].

The various meanings of social capital

To avoid potential confusion, we must address the different meanings of the term social capital. There are many ideas about what this capital is. Some people say it is networks; others say it is norms, or trust, or resources, or various other concepts[22,23,24]. What everyone seems to agree on is that it has to do with relationships between people and organisations and the nature of these relationships that have the potential to enable positive and productive action[25].

You may have heard social capital described as the configuration of networks and terms such as network ties, structural holes, and bridges[26]. You may have heard it described as resources embedded in social networks that can be mobilised in purposeful actions[27]. Although, you may not be entirely sure what they mean by 'resources'. Or you may have heard it described as networks, norms and trust[1]. Or you may have heard it described differently; there are literally hundreds of different definitions[28].

Although these diverse meanings of social capital sound quite different, they all describe much the same thing, but they frame it differently. To illustrate this point, consider the analogy of electrical transmission lines[16]. Some people regard social capital as the 'wires' (or social infrastructure

such as networks). Others regard it as the 'electricity' (or resources that can be mobilised or transmitted in the network). And others consider it the 'conductivity' of the system (or norms, trust, belonging, etc., that enables or facilitates the flow of benefits).

As discussed later, all these aspects are relevant to producing the outcomes of social capital, just as we cannot enjoy the benefits of electricity without conductive transmission wires and electricity flowing along them. The next section will establish the logic of social capital, including how it works and what it does.

The logic of social capital

Fundamentally, social capital relates to how we are connected and the benefits and outcomes arising from this connectedness. Social capital has two core components[29]. First, people need to be connected, otherwise, there are limited opportunities or abilities to act. And second, people need to be virtuous. You perhaps could think of it as inclinations, or behavioural intentions, or motivations. This report uses the term predispositions since it relates to "the state of being likely to behave in a particular way", which best captures the 'capital' nature of social capital.

All of the commonly recognised aspects of social capital either connect people, such as networks, or predispose people to positive action, such as norms, trust, goodwill, or various other factors. And, both connectedness and predispositions are required for strong social capital.

This is illustrated by the following quote from Professor Robert Putnam in his popular book *Bowling Alone*[1]:

"**A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital**".

And we can understand that similarly, a very well-connected but highly distrusting community is also not rich in social capital.

Theory and research strongly support these two core components of social capital. One of the most popular theories of social capital distinguishes between the structural dimension and the cognitive dimension[30]. The structural dimension connects people and relates to the nature of connectedness, while the cognitive dimension relates to people's beliefs, values, and attitudes that reflect the nature of their predispositions. Often, academic literature distinguishes a third dimension, the relational dimension[8]. There are strong theoretical foundations for these two core components, including the theory of structural and relational embeddedness[31] and the nature of society as involving structure and agency[32]. Regardless of the terminology, there is widespread agreement that social capital is multidimensional[33,34].

Social capital is created by processes that may take the form of deliberate investments or by-products of other activities (refer to Figure 1). In most situations, social capital is created ad hoc as a by-product of everyday activities[35,36]. For example, when you are at work, you likely establish relationships, develop trust, etc., that represents the potential to work together with your colleagues. When you catch the bus to work, you may develop a relationship with the bus driver or other passengers who catch the same bus regularly. Any activity involving social interaction can potentially create (or destroy) social capital.

Social capital is created in the enabling environment, which is a complex interplay of various elements that collectively enable or inhibit the development of social capital. It relates to how institutions enable and constrain people's actions, especially those actions that relate to the formation of social capital, such as social interaction. For example, the availability of adequate collaboration infrastructure, including space, time, and means for social interaction. It can include institutional incentives and support, or disincentives and barriers for activities that create social capital. It can include laws and their enforcement and perceptions of their fairness, especially those laws that relate to social interaction and exchange.

The investment or by-product creates the stock of social capital – the ability, capacity, and potential for people to collaborate, interact positively, and work together (see the middle row in Figure 1). As discussed previously, this potential includes both connectedness (opportunities to act) and the predispositions that influence the nature of this action.

Process

Stock

The *flow* may mobilise, activate, enhance, or transform other forms of capital.

Source | Enabling Environment

Investment or By-product

creates

Social Capital | Capacity, Ability, Potential

Predispositions

Connectedness

facilitates

Outcomes | Activation Context

Actions of individuals

contributes to

Future benefits or returns, including externalities

Examples:
Cooperation, Social introductions, Information sharing, Social support, Reciprocity, Various giving, helping, and caring actions

Examples:
Innovation and creativity, Resilience Improved productivity, Economic development, Disaster preparedness, Public health, Lower levels of crime, Educational attainment, Career success

Figure 1. The logic of social capital and how it works.

Many of the actions facilitated by social capital involve the mobilisation of other forms of capital. For example, sharing information or skills requires human capital and giving or loaning equipment requires physical capital. If other forms of capital are unavailable, social capital cannot be activated in certain ways. For example, if no one possesses the information or the equipment, it cannot be shared, loaned, or given. Therefore, the activation context is important for many outcomes of social capital.

Further details of the social capital framework can be found in Appendix 1.

What is low and high social capital?

To better understand what social capital is, we can explore what it means to have low or high social capital.

We can easily understand high or strong social capital. It occurs in environments where people and organisations are connected by strong relationships characterised by trust and goodwill, where people feel belonging and solidarity with their community, and where people are included to act prosocially toward others.

But what is low social capital? Low social capital may occur in contexts where people are relatively disconnected – where people have small social networks and do not know many people. For example, in communities where people do not know their neighbours, have limited shared knowledge, do not know much about each other, or where there are weakly defined social norms and informal rules or expectations, we could describe it as low social capital. Low social capital represents a low potential for social action, such as cooperation and collective action.

What is negative social capital?

It may seem ironic that capital could produce negative outcomes, but the potential for social action captured in the idea of social capital can be negative[37]. There may be distrust, discrimination, exclusion, exploitation, etc., allowing for the possibility of negative descriptors of social capital.

For example, in a context where it is commonly understood that people are not trustworthy, where there is widespread and pervasive distrust, there are many potential negative or less-than-optimal outcomes. There will likely be various disadvantages, such as additional costs and loss of efficiency, productivity, etc. For example, people may be more likely to act alone rather than risk working with others; people may be less likely to cooperate, collaborate, or act positively towards each other; and there may be various costs associated with additional rules, the enforcement of these rules, and costs associated with betrayals of trust. An environment of distrust clearly represents a lack of potential for positive social action and a greater potential for negative social action. This could be described as negative social capital.

Capital is inherently separate from how it is utilised. Any type of capital can produce negative outcomes when utilised in harmful or unethical ways. For example, financial capital can be used to fund illegal activities such as terrorism or organised crime, causing significant harm to individuals and communities. Similarly, human capital can be utilised to create weapons or other harmful technologies. A frequently cited example is John Kaczynski, a former mathematics professor who became known as the Unabomber. Kaczynki's

human capital was used for negative ends. Even a simple item of physical capital, such as a hammer, can serve both as a construction tool and a weapon.

The use of social capital determines whether it results in positive or negative outcomes, and such an evaluation is subjective. For instance, organised crime rings may view social capital as a means to achieve their objectives, while the broader society may perceive their actions as negative. Defining social capital as inherently producing positive outcomes creates a paradox where the same phenomena may or may not be social capital, depending on the eventual outcomes. Therefore, it is essential to recognise that social capital's impact is determined by how it is employed, and such determinations are dependent on perspective.

Therefore, social capital can be used for positive or negative ends like any form of capital. However, social capital can have negative qualities where the potential for action is negative. For example, where there are strong norms for fraud, corruption, theft, or violence. Even in such situations, social capital tends to still have some degree of positive and negative outcomes. For instance, corruption may be normalised, but people tend to also engage in positive social action, such as sharing information and making social introductions. In general, social capital always involves both positive and negative outcomes. For example, trustworthiness can reduce transaction costs but introduce opportunities for exploitation (theft, fraud, corruption); norms can facilitate beneficial actions but constrain innovation and creativity; and benefits for the in-group can create exclusion of out-group members.

Understanding that social capital can produce positive and negative outcomes allows us to identify and mitigate potential negative results and direct social capital towards positive outcomes.

WHY IS SOCIAL CAPITAL IMPORTANT AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

Social capital has been described as both a glue and lubricant – a *glue* that holds societies together, without which collaboration and cooperation would not be possible and a *lubricant* that facilitates getting things done.

The best way to understand what social capital does is to consider how it enables and facilitates social action. Social action is action that is oriented towards others.

Social capital is 'social' because it relates to connections between people and the resulting actions of individuals that involve or accommodate other people. The outcomes are often described as facilitating cooperation and collective action or as enabling and facilitating positive social interaction and exchange. This covers a wide range of actions of individuals. The word cooperation has at least two meanings. Firstly, the act of working together for a common purpose or benefit. Second, the act of accommodating others' needs, such as being helpful by doing what is wanted or asked for.

As such, the outcomes of social capital can involve acting together with others in the pursuit of shared goals, or it can involve actions that accommodate or assist others in the pursuit of their goals. Social capital can involve giving, sharing, helping, and caring actions. It can involve information sharing, social introductions, favourable terms of exchange, and reduced need for agreements such as contracts and enforcement of these agreements. These are all examples of social actions since they are actions that involve or are oriented towards others. Remember, social capital is the potential, ability, and capacity for social action and involves both the opportunities for action as well as the predispositions that shape whether action occurs and its nature when it does.

To explore the outcomes of social capital in more detail, consider the broad category of outcomes described above as "information sharing." Social capital enables people to share valuable information that can directly impact economic development or social wellbeing. For example, within a community, someone might share job opportunities, such as, "The new firm is hiring an accountant; you should apply." Alternatively, they may share expert knowledge or business advice, such as, "To secure funding, make sure your business plan includes a detailed market analysis." Additionally, social capital facilitates social introductions that can lead to economic collaboration, such as "Connect with Sarah; she has experience in community development and can help with your project." These examples demonstrate how various types of information can be effectively mobilised through social capital to enhance economic and social outcomes.

Groups, organisations, and communities with strong social capital enjoy a variety of improved outcomes. It facilitates improved mobilisation and utilisation of physical and human capital, including better information dissemination, skills and expertise sharing, and improved innovation and problem-solving. There tends to be enhanced productivity and efficiency stemming from cooperation and collective action. There tends to be greater social support, and this significantly improves resilience. Social capital allows us to achieve things together, overcome adversity together, and support others together.

However, social capital cannot replace resources and assets that are not present and available. Social capital lubricates and facilitates the flow of other forms of capital and resources. It is not a silver bullet or cure-all. If the other forms of capital and resources are not available, they cannot be mobilised, activated, and enhanced by social capital.

It is important to recognise that social capital can produce a range of different outcomes. For example, the nature of social capital that facilitates innovation is likely different to the social capital that improves employment opportunities. The potential for one type of social action does not necessarily mean there is also a potential for other types of social action. For example, people may work together to improve a school but not trust each other enough to loan personal belongings. A group of people can be cooperative in certain ways and distrusting simultaneously. This means that different social capital (different predispositions and connectedness) can produce a range of different outcomes. For example, a real estate agent will benefit from different patterns of connectedness and predispositions relative to a procurement officer. Treating social capital as one thing reduces our ability to influence the desired outcomes.

Social capital for different levels of society

Social capital is important for individuals, groups, and communities, and the benefits and importance are different for each. This section briefly describes the properties of social capital for each level and its importance. Understanding the importance of social capital for each different level both improves our understanding of social capital as well as provides us with ways to communicate its importance to decisionmakers and policymakers alike.

Importance for individuals

Social capital is important for individuals because it is a significant source of benefit, support, power, and influence that helps people to 'get by' and 'get ahead'. The adage: "it's not just what you know, but who you know" relates to the powerful effects and importance of social capital. Social capital provides a range of benefits for individuals, including facilitating access to resources, services, and opportunities, supporting emotional and psychological wellbeing, and enhancing career opportunities and social mobility.

Social capital provides individuals with access to various resources, potentially facilitating access to the resources of others through giving, sharing,

and helping types of actions. It allows people to tap into the knowledge, skills, and experiences of others, their physical and financial capital, and even their connections and influence. The value of these resources for the individual should not be underestimated.

For example, how much can it save you to find a reliable mechanic, a good accountant, or a trustworthy carpenter? How much advantage can you receive from finding a good job, a new client, or other opportunities? What if your friend, a structural engineer, noticed a crack in your house that allowed you to prevent expensive repairs later?

Strong social capital can enhance career opportunities by providing access to job leads, mentorship, and professional advice. Social capital can lead to job referrals, promotions, and other career-related benefits. Connections with influential people, mentors, or supportive networks can open doors to educational and economic opportunities that may not be easily accessible otherwise. These points highlight just how important who you know is for our everyday lives, our work, and our projects.

Social capital contributes to wellbeing by fostering a sense of belonging and support. Having social connections and feeling a strong sense of belonging are associated with a range of benefits, including happiness, reducing stress, and promoting mental health.

For individuals, social introductions can provide access to the resources, power, and influence of friends of friends. They can pass reputation and goodwill to others and provide the types of benefits discussed above from and to a wide network. It is hard to underestimate the importance and value of social capital, and it is part of our everyday lives.

Importance for groups and organisations

Social capital is vital for groups' and organisations' success and even existence. Social capital promotes collaboration, employee satisfaction, information flow, innovation, and adaptability. It contributes to a positive workplace culture and enhances an organisation's ability to navigate challenges, attract talent, and build

strong relationships with both internal and external stakeholders. An organisation with low or negative social capital would struggle to be competitive and may be at risk of failure.

Social capital enables people to work together, so it is a fundamental characteristic of any effective organisation. Strong social capital facilitates teamwork, cooperation that improves efficiency and productivity, and collective action that is frequently required in an organisation.

Social capital is critical to mobilising and activating the human capital of members of the organisation and provides access to the human and physical capital of connected individuals and organisations. Social capital facilitates information sharing and the dissemination of knowledge and skills to where it is needed. Social capital contributes to organisational learning by creating an environment where individuals can learn from each other. Knowledge transfer becomes more fluid, allowing organisations to quickly adapt to new technologies, industry trends, and best practices.

Consider how important it is to be able to receive guidance, information, and advice from others in your organisation. For some people, these actions are mandated by their role. But for others, they may or may not help others based on connections, goodwill, etc. That is, because of social capital.

Organisations with strong social capital are often more adaptable and resilient. In times of change or uncertainty, a well-connected workforce is better equipped to navigate challenges, as there is a foundation of trust and cooperation that facilitates effective problem-solving and decision-making. Social capital encourages the exchange of diverse perspectives and ideas. This diversity in thought can lead to increased innovation and creativity within the organisation as employees bring different insights to problem-solving and decision-making processes.

Every group or organisation has social capital. Creating a group or organisation creates a social structure and relationships that allow people to work together; therefore, every group and organisation has social capital. However, this does not mean it has strong social capital. There may not be strong social relationships between individuals, and there may not be strong positive predispositions that facilitate cooperation and collective action. Any organisation that does not consider the importance of social capital is missing an opportunity for improvement and is risking inefficiencies and peril.

Importance for communities and society

Social capital plays a crucial role in the wellbeing and development of communities and society at large. Strong social capital allows people to work together to address common issues, implement positive changes, and achieve shared goals, leading to a more resilient and empowered community. Social capital is important for a range of other concerns, such as economic development, health and wellbeing, crime rates, and community resilience, to name a few.

Social capital contributes to economic development by facilitating cooperation and collective action across civil society, business, and government, particularly in its benefits to entrepreneurial activities. Social capital enables more effective business transactions, partnerships, and sharing economic opportunities within the community. It helps to mobilise resources and capital and connects individuals and organisations with opportunities.

Social capital has positive effects on the health and wellbeing of individuals within a community. Strong social connections provide emotional support, reduce stress, and contribute to a sense of purpose, all of which are beneficial for mental and physical health.

Social capital allows people to engage in action intended to help or benefit another person or group, with a wide range of benefits, from reduced crime and corruption to increased helpfulness and improved cooperation. Strong social capital has been associated with lower crime rates as it represents a sense of collective responsibility for maintaining safety and security. Neighbours who know and trust each other are more likely to work together to prevent crime and address safety concerns.

Communities with strong social capital are often more resilient in the face of crises. Whether dealing with natural disasters, economic

downturns, or public health emergencies, a community with high social capital can mobilise resources, share information, and provide support more effectively.

Further details of what social capital is and how it works can be found in Appendix 1. Now that this report has established what social capital is and what it does, the next chapter will briefly outline the methodology used by this research.

WHAT WAS THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY?

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of social capital in Guernsey and the vital role it plays in economic growth and social wellbeing. The research employed an exploratory mixed-methods approach using a sequential design. This meant the research involved qualitative methods, such as interviews and group discussions, followed by a quantitative method involving a survey.

This exploratory design is an effective way to generalise, assess, and test qualitative exploratory results to see if they can be generalised to a population. It combines theory generation in qualitative research with confirmatory testing in quantitative research to ultimately produce a robust understanding of the research context. It involves taking the initial qualitative findings to inform the design of a subsequent survey study that can confirm the extent to which the initial findings are reflected in the wider community.

Stage 1: Qualitative

The qualitative data was collected in June 2024. The researcher visited Guernsey for nine days, conducted three group discussions and 21 interviews, had various informal meetings, and made observations through informal participation in the community.

The research participants were recruited using a semi-purposeful sampling technique to ensure participants represented a cross-section of the community and had extensive experience interacting and participating in civil society. IoD Guernsey conducted the recruitment, using their contacts and knowledge of the key actors. Participants were over 18 years of age and lived in Guernsey for at least five years. In total, 27 people contributed directly to the qualitative portion of the research.

Before their involvement in the research, participants were given a three-page document outlining what social capital is, what it does, and how it functions. This was important to establish some background understanding of the topic to provide the foundation for the discussion.

Three 90-minute group discussions were conducted, with six participants in each group. The group discussion participants were invited to return for a one-on-one interview to explore their thoughts in more detail. Thirteen of the 18 participants returned for an approximately 60-minute interview. These participants were able to expand on their collective experience in the group discussion and, after further reflection, provide a deeper exploration of the state of social capital in Guernsey. A further nine participants who did not attend a group discussion undertook an interview. In total, 22 people participated in an interview, 18 people participated in a group discussion, and 13 people participated in both a group discussion and an interview.

In both the group discussions and interviews, participants were asked questions about each of the key aspects of social capital to explore the strengths and weaknesses of social capital in Guernsey. A semi-structured format was used,

allowing participants to explore issues that they felt were relevant. They were also provided an opportunity to contribute any other ideas not already explored during the more structured part of the discussion.

Group discussions and interviews were recorded to create transcripts that were then analysed for relevant themes. The data was analysed using the social capital framework to get a detailed picture of the various aspects of social capital's strengths and weaknesses.

Stage 2: Quantitative

The key themes from the first stage of the research were used to develop a survey to explore how they align with the wider population. A total of 24 survey questions were formulated, which included one strength and one weakness related to each of the 12 key themes of social capital (refer to Table 1). Each of the 24 survey questions was a finding from the first stage of the research and represented the views of some or all participants. By surveying the wider population, we are able to assess how widespread these views are. Every individual has different experiences and understands the nature of Guernsey's social capital differently. Everyone's experience is valid and simply reflects the different experiences of people within society. The extent of agreement or disagreement with the initial findings helps to substantiate the relevance of the initial findings to the wider population.

The survey participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the 24 statements on a Likert scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', with the option to indicate they did not know. Participants were also allowed to share any other information they felt was relevant to the research through a free-form question at the end of the survey.

In addition to the 24 confirmatory statements, the survey collected basic demographic data, such as age, employment sector, and annual salary. This data was used to analyse the relevant demographic differences identified by the first stage.

The survey was open for two weeks and received 126 responses. IoD Guernsey branch invited any adult resident of Guernsey to participate in the survey. Invitations were sent to IoD Guernsey members and various other lists and posted on social media platforms.

Overall, there was a high level of agreement with the statements, reflecting a general confirmation of the stage one findings. The average response was 4.1 out of 5, with 5 being "strongly agree" and 1 being "strongly disagree". A few statements received mixed responses from the survey participants, which will be identified and discussed in the findings chapter below. Although there was strong general agreement, only one of the statements received unanimous agreement (with three people indicating they were unsure). The general diversity of responses reflects the vast differences in residents' lived experiences. While there are clear patterns, there are also diverse perspectives.

Approximately half of the respondents were IoD members. Overall, non-members were slightly more likely to agree with the statements, with an average response of 4.18 compared to 3.95 for members. Non-members expressed a similar level of agreement with the strengths and weaknesses overall (4.2 and 4.16, respectively), whereas members were more likely to agree with strengths than weaknesses (4.09 and 3.81, respectively). This difference was most evident in respondents over 65 years old, those working in non-financial sectors, and those with a salary over £90,000. The opposite trend was evident (i.e. more likely to agree with weaknesses than strengths) among respondents who earned less than £20,000 and those who earned between £40,000 and £50,000.

The data analysis suggests this difference is more a function of age than income level, with the age of respondents who were members being slightly higher on average.

There were some differences in responses to the statements based on age and income, which will be identified in the findings chapter.

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

HELEN KELLER

WHAT ARE THE RESEARCH FINDINGS?

The research uncovered a rich picture of the strengths and weaknesses of social capital in Guernsey. Social capital is complex and multidimensional, with many factors contributing to the potential for social action, including aspects related to the two core components of social capital: connectedness and predispositions. The semi-structured nature of the data collection methods meant participants were free to discuss strengths and weaknesses related to every aspect of social capital and identify themes that are unique to Guernsey. From the mountain of qualitative data produced from over 27 hours of discussions with research participants, we compiled a detailed picture of social capital in Guernsey. The social capital framework described in this report was used as the structure for the data collection and to organise and make sense of the results. The initial analysis identified 45 interrelated themes, which were then organised in the social capital framework and described in this chapter.

This chapter outlines the strengths and weaknesses identified by participants for each aspect of social capital. The analysis follows a format similar to a SWOT analysis in strategic planning. This approach helps not only to build on strengths (S) and minimise weaknesses (W) but also to identify and seize opportunities (O) and counteract threats (T).

Although this chapter includes a brief description of the key threats and opportunities related to each aspect of social capital, these are presented only as ideas. The threats and opportunities are best understood by the Guernsey community and leaders, who will be best placed to decide on the appropriate steps to take to improve social capital in Guernsey.

Guide to reading the research findings

The research findings describe a rich and complex social and cultural environment in Guernsey. They are significant, fascinating, and extensive, cutting across a wide range of themes associated with connectedness and predispositions. To aid in the reading of these findings, this chapter is separated into two main sections on connectedness and predispositions, with each section presenting the findings related to each of the key themes. The key themes presented in this chapter are summarised in Table 1.

For each theme, the following structure is used:

› A brief explanation of how the theme relates to social capital.

› A summary of the findings relating to that theme.

› An overview table of the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

› A detailed discussion with quotes from participants illustrating the findings.

  › The strengths related to the theme, starting with a summary, ending with the findings of the survey.

  › The weaknesses related to the theme, starting with a summary, ending with the findings of the survey.

  › The main threats related to the theme.

  › The main opportunities related to the theme.

In the discussion of the research findings, participants are identified by a number to protect their privacy. In this report, you will see a letter P or S followed by a number after participant quotes. P indicates an interview participant, and S indicates a survey participant. For example, P6 indicates the quote was from interview participant number 6.

The rest of this chapter will present the research findings in some detail. Summaries and overviews are provided to make it easier to read and provide context for each theme.

The findings represent the views expressed by participants. They may not reflect the views of all residents in Guernsey and may not be factually true in all instances. They represent the attitudes, opinions, and lived experiences of people who live in Guernsey. This chapter presents the main findings, organised around the core components of social capital, and reflecting the diverse views expressed by participants.

Key themes related to connectedness	Key themes related to predispositions
> Social relationships and network configuration > Knowing about connections > Social spaces > Associational member, participation and engagement > Organisational capacity > Roles, rules and procedures (including law, enforcement, and policies)	> Reputation, including trustworthiness (relational trust) > Social trust > Norms, obligations, and expectations, including culture > Goodwill, solidarity and empathy > Social identity and belonging > Shared goals, purpose, language, codes, narratives

Table 1. Summary of key themes

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF CONNECTEDNESS IN GUERNSEY?

Connectedness describes how people are connected in society. It includes the factors that connect people, such as relationships, networks, and memberships in formal or informal organisations, that provide the ability and opportunity for social action. It is an essential component of social capital because, without connections to individuals and groups, there are limited opportunities to build and use social capital.

Six key themes related to the connectedness component of social capital were explored in this research:

1. Social relationships and network configuration

2. Knowing about connections

3. Social spaces

4. Associational member, participation and engagement

5. Organisational capacity

6. Roles, rules and procedures (including law, enforcement, and policies)

The next sections will explore the findings of each theme related to connectedness.

Connectedness – Social relationships and network configuration

People are fundamentally connected and experience the social world through their social relationships with friends, family, colleagues, team members, and acquaintances. Individuals are the powerhouse of creating and maintaining these connections, which are fundamental to the formation of social capital and its activation. This section explores the nature of social relationships and network configuration in Guernsey.

Summary of findings related to social relationships and network configuration

The nature of social connectedness in Guernsey reveals a high degree of connection within social circles yet significant disconnects between societal groups. Guernsey's small, close-knit community fosters strong interpersonal connections, enabling residents to easily find commonalities and frequently interact in both social and professional settings. This interconnectedness is especially pronounced among long-term residents who benefit from overlapping social, recreational, and professional networks. However, there are notable social divides, particularly based on wealth, and for some individuals and groups, there are barriers to high levels of connectivity.

Socioeconomic differences are a major source of social disconnection in Guernsey. Participants expressed that this division is exacerbated by the island's high cost of living, which creates a greater distance between the haves and have-nots. The poor, including many skilled professionals experiencing in-work poverty, often find themselves isolated and reliant on services like food banks. This reality is hidden from the wealthier segments of the community.

Age also plays a role in these social divides. The youth, for instance, can feel disconnected. Despite the interconnectedness of schools and youth activities, young people lack social spaces where they can gather, especially during bad weather or without spending money. This lack of accessible social spaces contributes to their feelings of isolation. Additionally, older residents who were more mobile in the past and used to socialising in common areas like the High Street now find themselves less connected due to mobility issues.

Newcomers and non-locals, including those on temporary residency, can struggle to penetrate the established social networks. Guernsey's tight-knit community can be intimidating for outsiders, who might perceive it as difficult to integrate into existing social circles. This issue is compounded for people with social anxiety or mental health problems.

Mental health issues add another layer of complexity to the social fabric of Guernsey. Individuals suffering from anxiety or depression face significant barriers to social integration. Although Guernsey has many outdoor social spaces, these are not always suitable for those with anxiety, and there is a lack of indoor spaces that offer the privacy and comfort needed to support their social engagement.

While Guernsey's community is marked by strong internal connectedness, it is clear that substantial disconnects persist between different socioeconomic groups, age cohorts, and between locals and newcomers. These

divides highlight the need for more inclusive social policies and the creation of accessible spaces that can bridge these gaps and foster a more cohesive community.

Table 2 summarises the main findings related to social relationships and network configuration in Guernsey.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
> Easy to meet people. > Easy to find commonalities with people, and it is normatively appropriate to explore these commonalities. > Generally friendly, safe, trusting, and approachable. > Never alone – It is easy to find people you know (or have commonalities), so there are fewer barriers to participation in social events/groups. > Overlapping participation, e.g. in work, sports, groups, etc., creates a rich background understanding of others. > The third sector, sport, professional networks, and more recently, art are strong connectors. > High levels of social interaction and there are fewer barriers to socialisation – good work hours, short commutes, close distances, the feeling of being unlikely to be alone, comfort and familiarity with locations, and more likely to have repeat interactions with people you meet (and therefore feel it is worth investing time and effort in interaction).	> Despite a high level of connectedness, there are some significant disconnects. > Particularly based on socioeconomic characteristics – the negatives are very well hidden, and many people do not know about the problems, including decision-makers. > Some people are isolated, such as newcomers, youth, and those with mental health challenges. > There are some separate communities, such as "foreign workers". > There are deep generational divides. > There are strong disconnects between those who are local and those who are not (and what it means to be "local"). > Some people feel permanently temporary due to the housing licensing system, and this is a barrier to higher connectedness as well as community building and engagement.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
> Form new bridges across social divides. > Address inequality and associated stigma. > Break down the negative aspects of who is local and who is not. > Resolve the experience of new arrivals to improve integration and help them feel part of the community, including resolving disconnects and barriers such as the residency rules. > Celebrate connectedness and encourage more people to engage in the connectedness and strengthen associated norms and beliefs.	> Inequality > Perceptions of non-local > Perceptions of insufficient change > Generational divides > Housing licensing system > Social skills, social anxiety, mental health > Lack of affordable social spaces, including for cross-group interaction

Table 2. Analysis of social relationships and network configuration in Guernsey

The following sections explore the research findings related to the strengths and weaknesses of social relationships and network configuration in Guernsey.

Strengths related to social relationships and network configuration

Guernsey has a high level of social connectedness, which is a major asset that significantly enhances its social capital. Due to Guernsey's small size, people tend to know many others, and even if they do not know someone personally, they often recognise them at events. Research participants overwhelmingly reported that it is easy to meet people in Guernsey. This high level of social interconnectedness is seen as a unique strength, with many participants highlighting the ease of finding common ground through shared acquaintances or memberships. The overlap in social and professional circles fosters a culture of friendliness and openness, making it easy to get to know people. Participants also noted that Guernsey is generally a friendly, safe, and trusting community, attributes that are closely tied to its high level of connectedness and cultural emphasis on community solidarity. The sense of safety is reinforced by the likelihood of seeing familiar faces wherever one goes on the island, contributing to a feeling of never being truly alone.

Associational activity is strong in Guernsey, with a vibrant third sector, active sporting associations, and professional networks playing significant roles in connecting people. The close distances, short commutes, and familiarity with locations reduce barriers to social interaction, allowing residents to have more time for social and networking activities compared to those in large cities.

Ease of meeting people

The research participants overwhelmingly reported that it is easy to meet people in Guernsey. People tend to know a lot of people, and when they attend an event, they tend to recognise the other people, even if they do not know them personally. Similar views were expressed by all the participants, as illustrated by the following quotes:

I think that is quite a unique thing about our island and that lots of people know lots of people for lots of reasons… And that's a massive strength. P6

The six degrees of separation is far fewer. P6

Compared to living in London, living in Guernsey, I'd say that there are 10 times more people in your immediate social network. P9

So, you're talking about vertical through time, connectedness, and, therefore, in a small community when a lot of people stay in relationships and know each other … so whilst you have the organisations that create interconnectedness, you also have the interconnectedness built by this geography and the long-term commitment of the humans on the island. P21

Ease of finding commonalities

Part of the reason for the high level of social connectedness is that there is a lot of overlap in social and professional circles. Even when people do not recognise each other, it is normally easy to find a commonality, such as a shared acquaintance, a joint membership, or another similarity. Not only is it easy to find a commonality, but it is also normal for people to explore their potential commonalities, and this generates a friendliness and openness that makes it easy to get to know people. The following quotes illustrate this:

If you don't know a third party that you might be talking to an acquaintance or a friend about, then they'll quote another reference

point, and you'll find a reference, you'll find something in common. ... and it makes the conversation easier or just makes, I suppose, interactions that bit more real and tangible because you've got that greater context to be able to find common touch points. P15

[When there are commonalities], you get on with people better, don't you? You have common ground. You can talk about something. P22

I think there is a strong connectivity. One of our USPs from a business perspective is the ability to, for somebody coming over, for them to be able to meet the regulator or meet the lawyers or meet the legal advisors or the accountants, and we have set up a number of meetings in fairly short order and to get the face-to-face meetings. P24

Generally friendly, safe, trusting, and approachable

Participants reported a strong sense that people in Guernsey are generally friendly, safe, trusting, and approachable. This is strongly related to the highly connected nature of the community as well as deep cultural beliefs about the importance of community solidarity. Participants described strong empathy for others, and although not felt equally towards everyone, it represents a key strength of social capital in Guernsey.

It's a friendly place where people do care for each other and look out for each other. P25

Guernsey continues to be a safe place. And so, for me, one of the reasons we came back to bring our children up was because Guernsey was, and I believe still is, one of the safest communities you could find. P3

People are way more approachable and keen to do business. P5

Perception of not being alone

Part of the reason for the perception of safety is that people reported that they never really feel alone in Guernsey. For people who have lived in Guernsey for a long time, they are likely to see people they know wherever they go on the island. Several participants expressed similar views, such as:

If you go somewhere, if you go to something on your own, you know you will know someone very likely. P10

No matter where you go, you'll know someone. Or you start talking to them, and you're like, oh, you know, you're my next-door neighbour. You know, or used to be my next-door neighbour or whatever it might be. There's always, even if it's just a finite connection, people do cling on to that a bit. P16

Overlapping participation

Guernsey's geography contributes to the high degree of social connectedness. Being a relatively small island results in overlapping participation in social and professional activities, which contributes to the density of social relationships. Guernsey has great facilities for its population size, but there are generally just one or two of each type of facility. This means there is a greater overlap of activities relative to other locations where, for example, after work, people commute to different parts of the city before attending a local facility. The overlap in Guernsey means that people tend to know more about each other. For example, it is common for coworkers to also play sports together, be members of the same associations or clubs, or frequent the same restaurants and cafes.

I also have loads of interaction with people who I see from work, but then it is also quite helpful cause you do get to know each other, and then when you have those conversations at work, it's not so structured or formal. You can understand each other a little bit more. P20

The Venn diagram, all those different things you could be involved in. They all overlap a bit more here, and I think we end up having more connections than most places I would suggest. ... There's a lot going on, and I think we probably over-index on, you know, groups per head of population or associations per population, and yeah, they just because

it's a discrete place, you know, a stand-alone place, those connections they're all kind of shoved together a little bit. P8

If they don't know them [someone], they know a lot about them. P17

The distance is a big thing as well, isn't it? Because, … when we all leave work, chances are we don't all go home. We go to a sport, or we go to a drama, or we go to a music lesson, or we go to a coffee with somebody or whatever. Yeah. Whereas if you're in London, a big city, chances are you working late anyway. Then, your first intention is to do the commute back home again. So, you tend to just bump into a lot of people. P11

whereas … in the UK, if you're travelling for two hours … you've got to choose what you do in your spare time. P16

Associational activity

Associational activity is also strong in Guernsey. There is a strong third sector as well as active sporting associations and professional networks. There is widespread agreement that sports play an important role in connecting people.

For a place. It's only got 65,000 people. We do have a lot of associations, business associations. P8

Sport, I think is one of the places where it's been done for the longest with the most intentionality and arts is really exploding… It isn't in all areas of the community, but we're very successful at it when it happens. P4

Ease of social interaction

In general, there are fewer barriers to social interaction in Guernsey relative to many modern societies. Participants cited good work hours, short commutes, close distances, the feeling of being unlikely to be alone, comfort and familiarity with locations, and more likely to have repeat interactions with people they meet.

Your commute is 5 minutes, not two hours, so in the evening, I have three to four more hours than my London friends do to socialise and do things. P23

People have more time to do these things [social and networking activities],

Survey results

The following key theme related to the strengths of social relationships and network configuration in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

When you meet someone in Guernsey, it is common and normal to try to find things you have in common, such as shared friends or contacts, common memberships or hobbies, or something in your history that you have in common.

The survey results indicated a very high level of agreement with this statement, with 91.3% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and only 5.6% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. There were no statistically significant differences based on age, income, or industry. This data supports the findings from the first stage of this research.

Legend:
- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
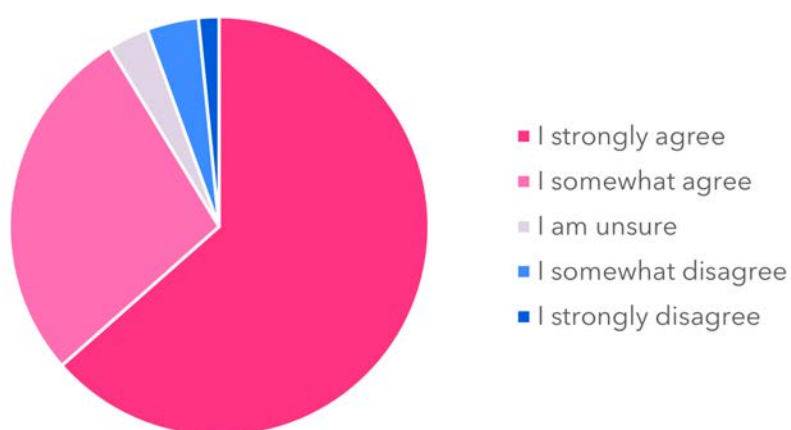
Figure 2. Results from the survey related to the strengths of social relationships and network configuration

Summary of the strengths of social relationships and network configuration

Overall, the geography of the island, combined with a culture that values social connection, makes Guernsey a highly connected society with high levels of social interaction. The high level of connectedness is extremely beneficial for Guernsey and an incredibly strong aspect of its social capital. However, the nature of social connectedness has some weaknesses and downsides, which will be explored in the next section.

Weaknesses related to social relationships and network configuration

Despite strong connections within their social circles, Guernsey's social relationships and network configurations exhibit some notable weaknesses, particularly among certain societal groups. Participants readily acknowledged the existence of social divides, describing Guernsey society as stratified and segregated. Comments highlighted the separation between different economic classes and geographic areas, with the north being less affluent than the south. This stratification is further compounded by divisions between those in the finance sector and other professions, reflecting a deep-seated tension. Newcomers, youth, the economically disadvantaged, and individuals with social anxiety or mental health issues often experience isolation.

Social disconnects

Although people are highly connected within their social circles, there are some significant disconnects between some groups in society, and some individuals, particularly newcomers, youth, the poor and people who experience social anxiety or mental health problems, are much more isolated than the majority. The participants were happy to talk about the social divides that exist in Guernsey. There is a general view that Guernsey society is stratified or segregated, as illustrated by the following comments:

I think we're socially quite stratified. I think people hang out with people they hang out with. P8

Everyone's just very segregated. I think there's massive segregation across the island of, you know, the people who are in that lower bracket and the places that they would frequent, the people are in the higher brackets. They're not rubbing shoulders with, and they don't want to see that we have poverty in Guernsey because it's not visible. P25

One of the perceived divides is between people who work in the finance sector and those who do not. This perception seems to reflect a deep tension related to a social divide between those who have directly benefited from the finance sector and those who have not.

I think there's probably still a massive divide between sort of more corporate jobs and finance-linked sectors than there are to more kind of creative sectors or tech and so on; they're isolated still. P18

The business community and then the local community, I'd say that was probably the division here, and again, that business community may be slightly more international. We've lived off island, have more connections off island, which would be me, whereas for your local community, may be the division there of people who only lived on island. … just a bit disconnected, … maybe weakly polarised, but I wouldn't say no one's ever going to shut me out because you work in finance because so many people on the island do. P23

Socioeconomic divides

The social divide is more complex than these comments would indicate, and several participants elaborated further. They talked about deep socioeconomic divides that one participant described as a subculture. Clearly, the experiences of this group of society are starkly different from the image of Guernsey portrayed by the majority of participants and the image that Guernsey is keen to portray to the world.

There's a subculture … but the reason they won't engage in the system that exists is that they would have to engage at a low-

status point. They would rather disengage and maintain a high-status subculture, which is why you get domestic violence and alcoholism. … I would imagine, then, that you've got at least two cultures that are deeply interconnected and that between the cultures, there's no connection. P21

Almost all the participants identified inequality as a significant social divide in Guernsey, with some participants describing it as a crisis.

At the moment, you know that Guernsey is in crisis; it's quite obvious it's in crisis, and the gap between the richest and the poorest is bigger than ever. … The huge increase in working poverty. Meaning that there are skilled professional people accessing food banks. P19

While some participants were surprised by this description of inequality being a crisis, other participants described the extent of inequality in detail and how it was impacting the middle class and what several participants described as the working poor.

You know, there are nurses and teachers and charity workers, people with degrees all accessing the food bank. And I know that. But people wouldn't believe that because who wants to say, oh, I've got a postgrad, and I'm having to go with my kids to get free food this week. It's humiliating, and it's not spoken about at all. P19

I think it is [disconnected]; I think it is leading to lots of problems over here because I think, you know, we have one group that is living a really lovely affluent lifestyle and then one group that really, really aren't. But I would say the people running the island on their own chart of the island, making decisions for the island from the affluent group. And they've got really no exposure to what's going on over here. P20

[Post COVID], a lot of money is being spent making expensive properties even more expensive, and people have said to me, so sorry, this is anecdote, not data, but there have been remarks about how more than ever. The juxtaposition of the very well-off and the not-very-well-off is more pronounced than ever. P27

Issues with secondary education have caused a bigger social divide with more people who can push themselves financially opting for private education, even from pre school to ensure a secondary school place at one of the colleges. It is driving an even bigger wedge between pupils and families within different school systems. S11

The participants were aware, at least to some extent, that inequality exists in Guernsey but believed it to be largely hidden and misunderstood by the majority of people.

Like a lot of things in Guernsey, the negatives are very well hidden. You know you don't see them when you walk around the streets. … You know, we don't have boarded up shops, we don't have all that sort of thing, and graffiti and all. We don't have people on the street homeless generally. There is absolutely homelessness, I think; on the whole, it takes a slightly different format. People are crashing, sofa surfing, moving from place to place. P10

I see that in London, I think because everyone's much more thrown in together, you see more of the struggle. You know, you've got your very rich people who can kind of avoid the whole thing, but it's, you know, as a moderately well-off person, you can't avoid seeing, you know, evidence of a struggle. Whereas over here I think it's pretty easy to completely ignore it, which means there is quite a disconnect. And when, you know, talking about connecting and virtuousness like, there is a big disconnect there. And I don't think people are inclined to, you know, be virtuous. P26

The island isn't big enough to have discrete, visibly deprived areas. … the social housing is dispersed across the island. I think every parish has got at least some. … and that extends to kind of relatively well-integrated education. … a lot of the ways in which the poverty is manifest can be quite hidden. P27

There is a large poorer section of the population of which many seem unaware of its existence. The incorrect but common label "tax haven" assumes a largely wealthy island. S12

Although all participants were aware that poverty exists, some indicated some people do not know who, where, or how these people experience poverty, which speaks to how hidden it is from many people.

I'm aware there is wealth inequality. It's not something that I see day-to-day because of the people that I spend my time with. … I can recognise that [there are disconnects across a range of social issues in Guernsey]. P23

There's also ignorance towards the homeless, and you know, the needy people who are in need of support and that judgmental. Do they really need that support? I mean, couldn't they just, you know, work that a little bit harder? That's just, that's just sheer ignorance, I think. P5

… all the ills of society. You just don't see it, and you're not exposed to it. P8

Definitely our poorer members of the community feel very forgotten. Well, you're not going to understand us. You know. You don't know anything. But I think it would be that. P10

Many of the participants believed that the problem was not a lack of care but a general ignorance or disconnection from the issues experienced by many members of society.

Guernsey cares, but it doesn't see it [poverty and hardship]. P4

As soon as the problem becomes relevant to them or they, you know, there are a lot of people that care, but on average, I think actually the disconnectedness that there is between those that have and those that don't have is, you know, there's a complete lack of understanding. P26

I think if you got the right information, people are fundamentally decent, and I think if you said to them, actually, here's the evidence, … people are open-minded to give other people a fair whack or to give people a second chance. P27

At least part of the reason that poverty is hidden in Guernsey is due to the close-knit community and the importance of reputation. This view was expressed by numerous participants.

The following quote illustrates this point from their personal experiences.

I was acutely ashamed of it [being in working poverty]. I was really, I don't know if shame was the right word, actually, just so embarrassed I didn't tell anyone. It led to a very solitary way of living because I didn't want to say to someone I can't do that with you because I can't afford it. So I just say I'm busy or I can't do it. P10

There is also a widespread desire to portray Guernsey in a positive light to the outside world, especially to promote the finance sector. Several participants believed that this had widespread impacts on the desire to engage with social problems. One participant described this issue as follows:

Guernsey is highly aware of the need to promote itself internationally to try and attract high net, not just businesses but high net worths. And so, there's not an incentive for the gnarlier side of things. You know, the less desirable things to be publicised. … One of the ways in which that's manifest is in how we don't narrativise unpleasant data or make a big thing about it. So, it is easy in a small island with an incurious press to keep things like that just off the radar. … perhaps some other towns don't have so much or so in so pronounced a way as we do where we want to cultivate a particular personality as an island we want to be seen as, obviously no one says low tax, we all say quality of life … So, anything which muddies that picture is to be avoided. I'm not saying it's done in every case deliberately, but it's almost institutionalised [and deeply engrained]. P27

Another participant described the institutionalised nature of this issue as follows:

We don't have a media that interrogates. You know, they will sort of do a story about an issue and then very quickly move on. … There's no investigative journalism to speak of. … Like, you know, someone dies in a shipping container, even the media aren't asking questions around that. P26

Several other participants suggested that negative issues are often hidden or minimised because people tend to find them unpalatable or uncomfortable and not in keeping with the desired image of Guernsey.

Why would a corporate want to hear that one of their colleagues feels financially excluded? It's not a nice story. And I think that's Guernsey all over. It's like you don't want to hear the stories that feel uncomfortable, but they're the ones that need to be spoken about the most, and there are no people doing that, or the people who are, you know, are quickly shouted down. P19

[When you work in this space] you see that there are these awful things happening that people have no real awareness of but also really don't want to engage with because it's so uncomfortable. P26

The disconnect between different sections of the community has significant consequences, especially when decision-makers are out of touch with the experiences and needs of certain people or groups. The following example from a participant illustrates the depth of some disconnects in Guernsey.

There's one massive one [house estate] that's quite widely renowned for a while ago as having quite a lot of social problems, and we were talking about flattening it. Not just because of that, but for getting more units etc. And everyone's like, yeah, brilliant. It needs to go, but that is not the opinion of the people who live on the housing estate. It's a great community. They love living there. … And they were horrified at us saying that we're going to get rid of their community, that they've built. This is a really stark difference of opinion from outside and inside. … that was a really interesting revelation to me. I assumed that everybody probably didn't like living there, and that's absolutely incorrect. P10

One participant, while acknowledging the social divides, identified a strength of Guernsey's social capital in people's ability to avoid polarisation and othering different people more than perhaps other places have.

Whilst they're huge divides here, there's also a lot of cohesion relative to a lot of places in the world right now, so it's like, I suppose we're able to have the tougher conversations, we're able to hold the polarities like cancel culture, and stuff doesn't work. As well, you know, there is racism, and there is homophobia. There are all of these things,

but we kind of somehow have a culture where we can hold it a bit more. P4

One of the survey participants commented:

The island is both highly connected *and* highly polarised. There are strong, tight connections within peer groups, but few interactions between some peers/ demographics (e.g. wealthy and poor). S1

Newcomers, youth, and people with mental health challenges

In addition to these social divides and examples of social stratification, some people are relatively isolated, including newcomers, youth, and people with mental health challenges. Most participants expressed that they thought people were welcoming of new arrivals to the island and that some businesses, particularly those in the finance sector, make a specific effort to help new people connect with other people and groups.

New people can fall into Guernsey quite quickly, and unlike other small communities that come into, there's a sense of embracing people into the community versus protecting the community from new people, and so, therefore, there's a culture of excitement about the people coming in versus the culture of defensiveness. And that means that people then become interconnected quite quickly into that community. P21

However, some participants reflected on their own experiences and the difficulty of meeting people who already have established networks.

I never thought it was because people were unfriendly and unapproachable, that I wasn't breaking into networks. I just sort of got the feeling that everybody was quite happy with what they had. You know, I've got my friends, I've been friends with for 20 years, and I wouldn't be bothered making a new friend. P10

Everyone knows each other, and you think I can't possibly find my way into this because everybody's already got these solid friendships and networks. I've been in now for 20 years … I will never have the kind of networks that people who grew up here have. … You know, many generations of it in some

cases and all the school connections, so it can be intimidating. It can be a barrier. P1

Participants made similar comments about the connectedness of youth in Guernsey. While many young people are very well connected, others experience significant isolation, particularly if they have a falling out with their friends.

The youth of the island are very interconnected. Like, everyone sort of knows each other, and I don't know if that's because it's a small island and there aren't that many schools. P18

And it can come down to individual characteristics and preferences:

You can still be very lonely in Guernsey despite the great networking opportunities. If you don't like networking, there are a number of members of our community who are very lonely and very vulnerable. P3

Foreign workers

Some participants also identified a significant social divide between locals and foreign workers. They referenced the difficulties of breaking into established social networks and expressed a view that there is a significant social divide.

You do get isolated parts of the community. So it might be that you know we've got a Portuguese supermarket and cafe, for example, whereas I don't think any … local Guernsey people go in there. … you don't necessarily see sort of Portuguese groups or people from Nigeria or Barbados or whatever mixing with Guernsey people in general life in certain settings. So, I think it's probably quite isolating that way. P16

There isn't a connectedness there, I wouldn't say, between Guernsey people and foreign workers. So, there's probably more migration but not more integration. P10

Generational divides

Even among people who have lived in Guernsey for a long time, there are some significant generational divides. Many participants discussed this issue, with one participant describing three tiers of age-related attitudes and values:

I mean, you get the older generation that has a certain view, then you get the next kind of generation, which have a completely different view, and then you get the younger generation, which has a completely different view as well. So, you kind of get the three tiers of very different views, and everyone thinks they're right, and everyone thinks the other person's wrong, and there's no kind of like talking about it and understanding it's just, that's me, that's wrong. P22

These views were particularly apparent when participants discussed a perceived disconnection between politicians, other decision-makers, and younger people.

I just feel that this island is, as I said, there's three tiers. There's the older people which have the say. Everybody listens to them. They are in charge, but their views and opinions aren't necessarily good for the next couple of generations down. So, they're controlling the island … but they're not thinking about, kind of, [people] my age [and younger]. P22

I think the Guernsey Together [slogan], obviously it meant let's all work together to look after each other. But the politicians aren't doing it, are they? The government isn't doing that, and I think that's what the pushback was. It's like, well, we're not all together because people are making decisions about us, and they are not helpful decisions because they're forcing us more down this road of inequality and inequity. And so there is a lot of anger. P19

I think also a bit of a disconnect between the government and politicians, and actually those that grew under, you know, the cost of living crisis and that there's no connection between those groups of people so they're not understanding that. It is actually a problem on the island to the increased cost of living, because those making the decision aren't seeing it or aren't feeling it in the same way. P20

Local and non-local divides

In addition to generational divides, people have strong opinions about what it means to be local. Numerous participants described how you can never be local enough, even if you were

born in Guernsey, and people use claims of their genuine localness to claim status and push their opinions. One participant elegantly expressed this phenomenon as:

People try to out-Guern each other. P2

Several other participants described the challenges they have faced with not being considered local despite living in Guernsey for a long time. For example:

[Someone] who grew up here, but his dad is not local, so he doesn't count either, but he's lived here for 30 years and, like his mum, is 300 years like, but … yeah, nothing is ever local enough. P23

I've lived in Guernsey for almost 30 years, but I'm not a local. I think that's the only place in the world that you could say that. … I don't feel that I have an entitlement to have views on certain things that local people have, and I think that's incredible because I've lived most of my adult life there, and I have always been a contributor. P24

I've been here for 20 years now. You know, I know that. And I have experienced this firsthand over the years. People will be very open and say, oh, but you're not a local. So, what do you know? You know? And it is discrimination. It's not because I've got a different skin colour or religion or whatever it's, you know, I'm British, but I'm not a Guern, so that still does exist. … And particularly concentrated in the upper parishes …, where they've inherited, you know, a lot of wealth or assets over the years. So, they're not really entwined in financial services necessarily because they've never had to properly go out, you know. And that still very much does exist. It's not always visible, you know. P12

Many participants were clear about how this represented a divide within the community.

I would say there's probably quite a divide for those who move here and those who grew up here. I don't think they integrate that well. P20

I'm not local [been in Guernsey 8 years]. I don't have that same level of like always growing up here mindset. I can see that distinction in the finance community and the local community. P23

Some participants thought that this phenomenon may have decreased in recent decades, but it clearly still diminishes social cohesion.

The whole Guernsey for the Guernsey man has definitely faded from 50 years ago. … My parents always talked about them facing Guernsey for the Guernsey. When? What are you doing here? If you're not happy, get on the boat. … There's a lot less of that than there used to be. You just have to look at how multicultural the island is now compared to 20 years ago. P7

Experience of being permanently temporary

The final weakness identified by this research related to social relationships and network configuration is the tendency for some people to feel "permanently temporary". Generally, everyone living in Guernsey requires a Permit or Certificate issued by the Population Management Office under the Population Management Law. Many of the participants expressed how this system can mean many people are granted permission to live in Guernsey for a period of time without the security that they can stay beyond that period or if their circumstances change.

And also, I do wonder if there's a bit of, we have quite a transient workforce, is it worth the effort of getting of investing your time in someone if actually people just keep coming and going and coming and going, and so you've done that a few times? P10

It's not to say that people come over on licences that they don't enjoy it while they're here, but it's I think in the back of their mind, it isn't. It isn't, you know, well, you're never. Yeah. And you're never going to sort of get involved in either if you might have to leave. Sort of committees like this or get involved in communities or different charity work or whatever it might be because you don't want to put your roots down too much. It's set up to [keep Guernsey, Guernsey (white and affluent), and everyone else is permanently temporary.] P16

I don't think Guernsey generally either allows them [essential workers such as hospitality] to stay here permanently. It's

a bit like, you know, you'll come and do your job for three years because that's the only licence that we're giving you, and then you'll have to go back. Yeah. So already, you're kind of not letting people into your community longer term because you're only giving them three years. P16

Survey results

The following key theme related to the weaknesses of social relationships and network configuration in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

Guernsey society is quite segregated, with some broad social divides between locals and newcomers, and based on wealth and generational differences.

The survey results indicated a moderate level of agreement with this statement, with 71.4% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 24.6% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. Overall, young people were more likely to agree with this statement, with no disagreement from anyone younger than 35 years old. The average response for people under 35 was 4.3, compared to 3.6 for people over 35 years old.

- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
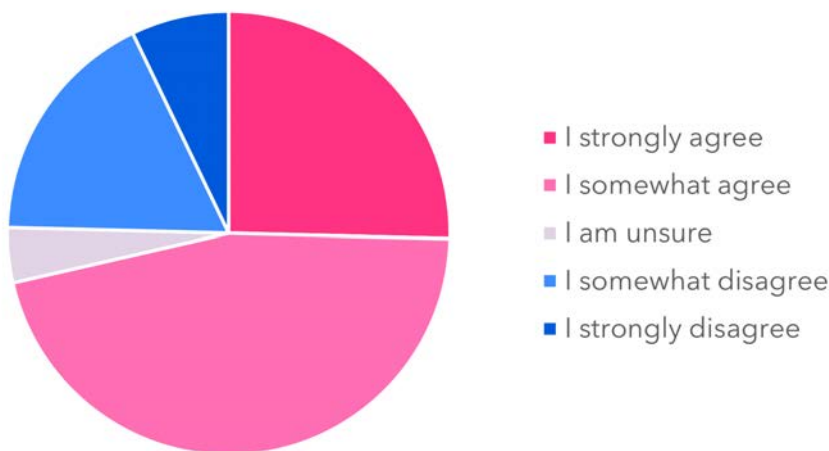
Figure 3. Results from the survey related to the weaknesses of social relationships and network configuration

Summary of the weaknesses of social relationships and network configuration

The participants describe a complex set of divides and disconnects that influence the connectedness of Guernsey society. Many of these issues are experienced differently by each person, but there are some significant structural weaknesses that undermine the strength of social capital. Not all the divides are visible and well understood, and others may be seen by some as harmless and playful, such as the local/non-local perceptions. However, for many people, these divides undermine the sense of collective identity and solidarity, which represent significant weaknesses in Guernsey's social capital.

Opportunities related to social relationships and network configuration

The analysis of social relationships and network configuration presented in this section has highlighted several opportunities to improve social capital in Guernsey by fostering a more inclusive, cohesive, and supportive community. Here are some key areas for improvement.

Form new bridges across social divides

Creating new connections across existing social divides is crucial. Initiatives that bring together individuals from different economic, professional, and geographic backgrounds can help bridge these gaps. Community events, cross-sector collaborations, and inclusive social activities can facilitate interaction and understanding between diverse groups. Encouraging participation in mixed-group projects and initiatives can help break down barriers and foster a sense of unity.

Address inequality and associated stigma

Addressing economic inequality and its associated stigma is essential for enhancing social capital. Implementing policies that support fair wages, affordable housing, and accessible education can reduce the economic disparities that divide the community. Public awareness campaigns that highlight the realities of poverty and the importance of social support can also help to destigmatise economic hardship. Creating platforms for open dialogue about inequality can promote empathy and collective action to address these issues.

Break down the negative aspects of who is local and who is not

Challenging the entrenched notions of who is considered local and who is not can help to create a more inclusive community. Promoting the idea that everyone who contributes to the community is valuable, regardless of their origin, can foster a more welcoming environment. Celebrating the contributions of long-term residents, newcomers, and foreign workers alike can help to diminish the negative aspects of localism. Encouraging inclusive language and practices within social and professional circles can further support this effort.

Resolve the experience of new arrivals to improve integration

Improving the experience of new arrivals is key to their successful integration and participation in the community. Simplifying residency rules and providing clear information about the process can reduce barriers. Establishing mentorship programs where long-term residents support newcomers can help them navigate the social and professional landscape of Guernsey. While there are some great programs already, there is an opportunity to improve integration for all new arrivals. Creating welcoming events and platforms for newcomers to share their experiences can foster a sense of belonging and ease their integration into the community.

Celebrate connectedness and encourage more people to engage

Celebrating the existing connectedness in Guernsey and encouraging more people to engage can strengthen associated norms and beliefs. Highlighting stories of community support, successful collaborations, and acts of kindness can reinforce the value of social capital. Public recognition of individuals and groups who contribute to social cohesion can inspire others to get involved. Promoting volunteer opportunities, social clubs, and community events can encourage wider participation and strengthen the fabric of the community.

By seizing these opportunities, Guernsey can enhance its social capital, fostering a more inclusive, supportive, and cohesive community. This will not only benefit the residents but also contribute to the island's overall social and economic resilience.

Threats related to social relationships and network configuration

Guernsey's social capital faces several significant threats that could undermine the island's strong community bonds and high levels of interconnectedness. The research participants identified these threats, which are elaborated below to provide more context for them and how they are impacting social capital in Guernsey or may impact it in the future.

Inequality

Economic inequality poses a major threat to social capital in Guernsey. The widening gap between the rich and the poor creates a stratified society where social cohesion is weakened by disparities in wealth and opportunities. This inequality is not always visible, leading to misconceptions about the true extent of poverty on the island. The increase in working poverty, where skilled professionals are forced to access food banks, highlights the severity of the issue. This economic divide fosters a sense of disenfranchisement among the less affluent, eroding trust and solidarity within the community.

Perceptions of non-locals

The perception of non-locals, or those not considered 'true locals', also threatens social capital. Long-term residents who were not born in Guernsey, newcomers, and foreign workers often face perceived exclusion. This exclusion is reinforced by the notion that one can never be 'local enough', which creates barriers to full integration and participation in community life. Such perceptions diminish social cohesion and can lead to a segmented society where certain groups feel marginalised.

Perceptions of insufficient change

Resistance to change and a preference for maintaining the status quo are deeply ingrained in Guernsey's culture. This conservatism hampers the adoption of necessary reforms and innovations that could address emerging social and economic challenges. The reluctance to embrace change can result in stagnation, making it difficult for the community to adapt to new realities and undermining efforts to enhance social capital through progressive policies and practices.

Generational divides

Generational divides further threaten Guernsey's social capital. Different age groups often hold conflicting views and priorities, leading to a lack of understanding and communication between them. Older generations may resist changes that younger people advocate for, creating tensions and hindering collaborative efforts to address communal issues. This divide can weaken the sense of unity and shared purpose that is vital for strong social capital.

Housing licensing system

The housing licensing system in Guernsey contributes to social fragmentation by creating a transient workforce. Many residents live on the island temporarily, without the security of long-term residency. This instability discourages people from putting down roots and fully engaging in community life. The perception of being "permanently temporary" prevents deeper social integration and undermines the development of lasting social bonds, which are essential for robust social capital.

Social skills, social anxiety, and mental health

Social skills, social anxiety, and mental health issues present additional challenges. Individuals who experience social anxiety or mental health problems often find it difficult to engage in social interactions and build connections. Without support for these individuals, there can be greater isolation, reducing overall social cohesion. Enhancing mental health support and fostering inclusive social environments are crucial to addressing this threat to social capital.

Lack of affordable social spaces

The lack of affordable social spaces, particularly those that facilitate cross-group interaction, also threatens social capital. While Guernsey has various facilities, they are often limited and can be costly to access. This scarcity of inclusive, affordable spaces limits opportunities for people from different social groups to interact and build relationships. Creating more accessible and affordable social venues would help bridge social divides and strengthen community bonds.

"A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in."

GREEK PROVERB

Connectedness – Knowing about connections

The second theme in the connectedness section is knowing about connections. For there to be strong potential for social action, people need to know about each other. It is not enough to just know people. People need to know about each other, including their reputation, what they do, what they can do and know, who they know, and, importantly, how to find or contact each other in order to realise the benefits of social capital.

Summary of findings related to knowing about connections

In Guernsey, the small size and close-knit nature of the community mean that people not only know each other but also know a great deal about each other. This depth of knowledge extends beyond mere recognition; it includes personal details, shared histories, and mutual connections that enrich social interactions. This is a strength of social capital in Guernsey. However, it comes with some downsides related to privacy, and some of the information sharing can be counterproductive for social capital.

The strong awareness of other people is partly due to the overlapping social and professional circles. Many people engage in multiple roles within the community, such as being part of the same sports teams, professional associations, or social clubs. This multi-faceted engagement means that individuals frequently encounter each other in different contexts, leading to a broader and deeper understanding of each other's lives.

Guernsey also has strong social norms that encourage frequent and open communication. People are generally curious about their neighbours and acquaintances, and this curiosity is reciprocated. This creates a social environment where sharing information about oneself and others is not only common but expected. The high level of social interconnectedness and frequent interactions mean that information is readily available. People often learn about events, news, and personal stories through their extensive networks. This availability of information further encourages sharing, as individuals have a wealth of details to contribute to conversations.

Despite these strengths, the close-knit community and strong norms of information sharing can sometimes feel claustrophobic, particularly for young people who may crave more privacy and anonymity. The pervasive sense of being constantly observed and the limited opportunities for private, personal space can make it difficult for individuals to escape and "turn off" from social interactions. This environment can lead to feelings of social exhaustion and the desire for more personal boundaries. Additionally, while information sharing fosters connectivity, it can also take on a gossipy nature, which can be counterproductive to building genuine social capital and trust. The tendency for some individuals, especially those in positions of power, to be secretive or use non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) can further exacerbate feelings of mistrust and division within the community, as it creates a perception of hidden agendas and unequal access to information.

Table 3 summarises the main findings related to knowing about connections in Guernsey.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
> High levels of social interaction and few barriers to socialisation, including good work hours, short commutes, close distances, the feeling of being unlikely to be alone, comfort and familiarity with locations, and more likely to have repeat interactions with people you meet (and therefore feel it is worth investing time and effort in interaction). > Strong norms of information sharing, with people generally being interested in others and interested in sharing information about others, and the availability of information fuelling more information-sharing.	> Some people, particularly young people, can feel claustrophobic. > Feeling of limited privacy. > It can be difficult to escape and "turn off" from being social. > Some of the information sharing tends to be gossipy and counterproductive for social capital. > There is a perception some people can be secretive due to being in positions of power or using NDAs.
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
> Building trust and transparency > Supporting mental health and wellbeing > Fostering intergenerational and cross-cultural programs > Creating inclusive and accessible social spaces	> Factors that reduce the time and motivation for socialisation, such as cost of living pressures, distrust, social disconnects, social anxiety, mental health, and the availability of appropriate social space.

Table 3. Analysis of knowledge of connections in Guernsey

The following sections will explore the research findings related to the strengths and weaknesses of knowing about connections in Guernsey.

Strengths related to knowing about connections

The participants overwhelmingly reported that Guernsey is characterised by high levels of social interaction, which fuels large social networks and a deep understanding of each other. This high level of connectivity is deeply ingrained in the island's culture, as exemplified by a participant's childhood memory of people using the High Street primarily as a social venue rather than a shopping destination.

Participants highlighted various aspects of social interaction, such as informal gatherings at common spots like seawalls, which have long been a staple of the community's social life. These interactions foster strong connections and a sense of belonging among residents. Additionally, structured group activities, both formal and informal, provide ample opportunities for engagement and relationship building.

One significant factor contributing to this social richness is the abundance of time available for social activities. Short distances and favourable working hours give Guernsey residents several more hours each day to socialise compared to those living in larger, busier cities. This extra time is often spent participating in community activities such as business league hockey matches or sea swimming groups, enhancing the social fabric of the island.

Strong norms of information sharing also play a significant role in Guernsey's high social interaction levels. People are genuinely interested in each other and the community, fostering a culture where information, including personal and professional advice, is readily exchanged. This transparency helps people stay connected and informed about each other's lives.

High levels of social interaction

When asked about the downsides of being highly connected, one participant joked about the problem of "Getting up the High Street" (P13), to which the other participants in the group laughed in agreement. The participants thought that there is generally a high level of social interaction in Guernsey. When asked in the group discussions whether people generally know a lot about others, the participants laughed because they thought it was so obviously true. One participant joked, "If they don't know them, they know a lot about them." (P17). There were many comments about the nature of social interaction in Guernsey, for example:

You know, when I was a kid, the key place for meeting people seemed to be from observations as a kid in the High Street. Everyone needs to stop everyone else and just chat. Coming to town wasn't so much about shopping but just ambling up the High Street and having a natter was the first person you meet … and I think as that generation has gotten older and less mobile, they're not using the High Street as they used to. P9

I am part of [a group activity], it's a lovely bunch of people … and loads of my friends. I also have loads of interaction with people who I see from work, but then it is also quite helpful cause you do get to know each other. P20

That's very common to Guernsey, I think [informal association] because even as a young person living over here, you only needed to go to a seawall where you knew your friends were going to go to the same sea wall and you would just arrive there. I mean, you didn't necessarily need to go with someone. P6

More time

Many of the participants described how there is more time for social interaction in Guernsey relative to other places dues to short distances and good working hours.

I have three to four more hours more than my London friends do to socialise, to do things. … People go to a business league hockey match and talk, or they go to a see swimming group and talk. So, they feel that there's more social time. P23

People have more time to do these things [social and networking activities], whereas … in the UK if you're travelling two hours … you've got to choose what you do in your spare time. P16

Safety

One of the participants, who was in the final year of high school, described how perceptions of safety in Guernsey gave them a level of independence that facilitated higher rates of participation in social activities relative to other places.

I think the difference between, like, growing up and Guernsey and what it would have been like elsewhere is independence. I was able to have it from an early age. I feel like my parents had this like mentality. Like it's a lot safer over here. P18

Norms of information sharing

Not only do people tend to socialise more, but there are also strong norms for sharing information, including information about each other and this results in people getting to know more about each other.

People are just interested in, I don't know if it's not nosiness, just, yeah, interested in what's happening on the island. Interested in other people interested in the community. I think people are quite engaged. And sometimes, you know, that's positive. And yeah, there can be some downsides to that. … Yeah, I think engaged is probably the right word. P16

In Guernsey, people like to know people's stuff. … I feel like people like to be nosey over here. I mean, I'm very lucky because obviously, the job I do has come from people being nosy and people like that, kind of what's the word, the domino effect of people getting or what people saying something to other people and that getting around. So, from my point of view, it's incredible. P22

Some of the participants talked about how it is normal to ask for information or advice about things and how easy it was to get information.

I think especially if I didn't know someone, but, oh, we must know someone. What sport team do you play? Which office do you work in? Hmm. What schools? Your kids go to that kind of question that you'd ask? Try and find that like, oh, yeah, this is how we're connected. P23

If you're entering into some kind of significant thing, you ask around, you ask about that person, you ask about that business, and people will tell you. So I think there's a transparency slash gossipyness to that. P8

It is not always positive information that spreads, and several participants discussed how there is a culture that transmits gossip and potentially some mistruths. This illustrates the strength of information sharing in Guernsey, even if some of it is unhelpful.

It massively snowballs and gets and because the gossip starts and because everybody talks, you know, kind of untruths get passed around. P1

Survey results

The following key theme related to the strengths of knowing about connections in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

There are generally high levels of social interaction in Guernsey, with few barriers to socialisation, including good work hours, short commutes and close distances. There is a feeling of comfort and familiarity with locations, and more likely to have repeat interactions with people you meet; it less likely you feel alone in Guernsey.

The survey results indicated a high level of agreement with this statement, with 81.0% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 11.1% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. There were no significant differences based on age, income, or industry.
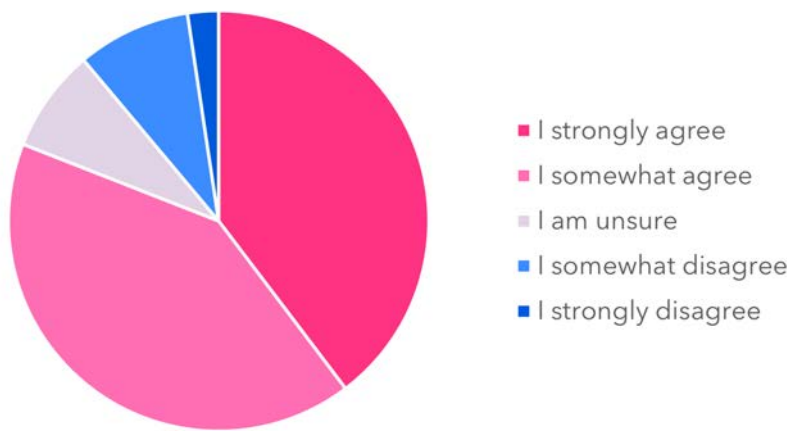
Figure 4. Results from the survey related to the strengths of knowing about connections

Summary of the strengths of knowing about connections

Overall, the ease of social interaction in Guernsey means many people know a lot about others, which opens more opportunities for social action and represents an important strength of social capital. However, there are downsides to these patterns of interaction, such as gossip and falsehoods, which will be explored in the next section.

Weaknesses related to knowing about connections

The close-knit community and high levels of social interaction in Guernsey can lead to feelings of limited privacy and anonymity. This pervasive connectivity means that people often bump into acquaintances or friends of friends, leaving little room for personal boundaries. The lack of anonymity can feel claustrophobic, especially for younger residents, and some people might choose to leave the island to escape this environment.

An undesirable consequence of active information sharing is that there can be a culture of gossip and the transmission of potentially false information, which can damage reputations and reinforce negative narratives. The spread of rumours and inaccurate stories can create an atmosphere where individuals feel they must always be on guard, unable to relax without worrying about public perception. This can impair positive social action, including reducing the incidence of collaboration. This constant scrutiny can be stressful and detrimental to mental wellbeing.

Moreover, the issues of privacy and social exposure are not evenly distributed. Some individuals, particularly those in powerful positions or working in the finance sector, use non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) to prevent certain information from being shared, maintaining a level of secrecy that others do not have. Some participants described the source of the culture of secrecy as emerging from the finance sector.

Gossip and Privacy

Many participants described feeling like they did not have much privacy or anonymity in Guernsey. They described the overlap of their professional and personal lives such that they would likely encounter work colleagues or clients while going about their personal lives. They also expressed that wherever they went, they would likely bump into people they knew. And even when they didn't know anyone, they would encounter friends of friends. For example, one participant described the lack of anonymity as follows:

But it amazes me, you know, how many people say, oh, my friend saw you at whatever. P10

Participants described the lack of privacy and the need to maintain boundaries. For example:

I'd say perhaps that's also why people guard their privacy in the small community, and I'd probably be guilty of that at times as well, because you're quite out there generally a lot of the times. P15

Because it's a small community, you do have to protect your boundaries

as well or it can be 24/7. So, it's about getting that balance right. P24

I do think there's still that slight secrecy and maybe gossipy kind of people going well, you know, do you know what they're doing over there? P25

For several participants, the small tight-knit community could be described as feeling claustrophobic.

It can feel very claustrophobic for you in your 20s, I'm sure. I was very pleased to leave at 18. So, I do sympathise with people from my generation that didn't go away. P6

Clearly, different people experience this differently and someone described how it isn't for everyone and some people who find that difficult may leave Guernsey.

Because everybody's so close, because everybody knows everybody, because you can't get away with anything, you kind of have to be involved... I imagine that some people come to Guernsey and be like, this isn't, you know, I can't live like this. I don't want everybody to know my business, or you know. You feel too claustrophobic. P16

Being a relatively small community with a lot of overlapping participation, people feel that others know about them even if they do not know each other personally.

[You can] pick up the reputation of other people through conversation and through association. I see them hang around with different people, and I have a sense there are there are some people I have never met, but I still know their reputation. P1

Falsehoods and reputational damage

The information that is shared is not always true and can cause reputational damage that, in a tight-knit community, can be harmful. This issue adds to a perception that it is difficult to escape scrutiny and to just relax without having to worry about what people think about what you are doing.

The negative side of things [high level of connectedness] is people have misconceptions about you as a person that might not be true. … You might not have done anything that's actually wrong, but you know, even if you're having a bad year or a difficult time, or whatever it might be, you almost can't drop the ball ever. As in, there's no kind of off switch. … you can't really get away from people. P16

Lies and stuff. Yeah, well, not lies, but stories that are a little bit twisted. That benefit other people more than other people. And I think that's as well quite a thing that plays out over here is people will say something just to benefit them, not because it's the story. They'd twist it to make it better for them than they wouldn't. P22

Once participant reflected on their experience returning to Guernsey and a perception that they needed to be a bit more guarded and careful about what they did and what they said.

It is a strange feeling to be back somewhere small. I'm very conscious of the fact that you can be known without knowing it. You know in London, you're just one little face in a massive sea of faces. … You have to be

a bit more aware and a bit more guarded. I feel here because you have to worry a little bit more about how you will be perceived and how you will be spoken about. P26

Secrecy

Several participants described how the issues related to social exposure and privacy discussed above did not affect everyone equally. They described how some people can use non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) to stop certain information from being shared.

In the corporate world where actually where anything goes wrong, everyone's being paid off with NDAs… Because you know you can't hide it [anything someone may be ashamed of] or whatever you've done wrong. … And somebody's paid off to just be quiet and, you know, especially when it comes to things like discrimination and harassment and things like that within workplaces. P25

Some participants suggest that the finance sector may have a role to play in some of the cultural practices related to secrecy and the consequences that this can have for effective collaboration in Guernsey.

There is a whole industry whose job it is to be secret, right? I mean, there are all the service providers who operate in the finance sector; their job is to maintain confidentiality, … there are some of the biggest employers on the island beyond the government. Or that's what they do. So, you know that they are, by their very nature, not collaborative. P1

I find that certain sectors are really uncollaborative… Like, they struggled to even organise an annual event because no one turns up cause it's all so secretive. They might find out who their clients are or whatever. I don't know what the reason is, but they're super secretive investment people. P8

Survey results

The following key theme related to the weaknesses of knowing about connections in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

The close-knit community and high levels of social interaction in Guernsey can lead to feelings of limited privacy and anonymity. People frequently bump into acquaintances or friends of friends, leaving little room for personal boundaries. The lack of anonymity can feel claustrophobic, especially for younger residents.

The survey results indicated a high level of agreement with this statement, with 77.0% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 19.8% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. Nearly one in five respondents disagreed with this statement, indicating various views in the community. In general, older respondents were less likely to agree. None of the respondents over 65 (n = 8) agreed with the statement. The highest level of agreement was from respondents 25–34, with an average of 4.55 (n = 11).

- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
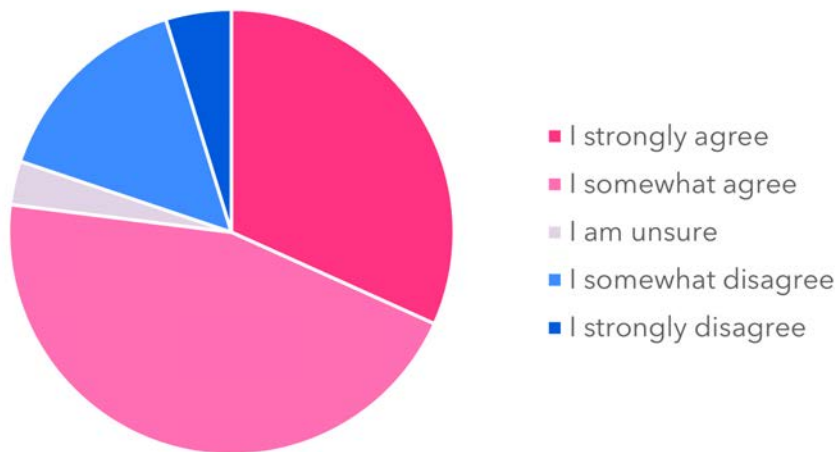
Figure 5. Results from the survey related to the weaknesses of knowing about connections

Summary of the weaknesses of knowing about connections

Overall, while the strong social ties in Guernsey have many benefits, they also present significant challenges related to privacy, gossip, and the unequal distribution of social exposure. These weaknesses can negatively impact social capital when people opt to disengage from social activities. These weaknesses are related to a perceived lack of collaboration in certain areas, which is discussed in another section.

Opportunities related to knowing about connections

The analysis of social interaction and information-sharing patterns has highlighted several opportunities to improve social capital in Guernsey. Here are some key areas for improvement.

Building trust and transparency

Improving trust and transparency within the community is crucial for strengthening social capital. Initiatives that promote open communication, accountability, and fairness can help build trust among residents. Community leaders and institutions should strive to be transparent in their actions and decisions, fostering an environment where people feel confident in engaging and sharing information.

Supporting mental health and wellbeing

Investing in mental health and well-being initiatives can enhance social interaction by reducing the barriers that social anxiety and mental health issues create. Providing accessible mental health services, organising wellness programs, and promoting mental health awareness can help individuals feel more confident and supported in engaging with the community.

Fostering intergenerational and cross-cultural programs

Creating programs that encourage intergenerational and cross-cultural interactions can help bridge social divides and enhance understanding. Initiatives such as mentorship programs, cultural exchange events, and mixed-age group activities can foster connections between different age groups and cultural backgrounds, enriching the community's social fabric.

Creating inclusive and accessible social spaces

One significant opportunity is the creation of more inclusive social spaces that are affordable and accessible to all residents. These spaces should cater to various interests and demographics, encouraging diverse groups to interact and build connections. Community centres, parks, and multipurpose venues can host social, recreational, and cultural activities, providing a physical space for people to meet and engage with one another.

Threats related to knowing about connections

There are several significant threats to the nature and quality of social interaction with implications for how much people know about each other. Knowing about others is an important aspect of social capital since it represents opportunities for social action. The key threats identified by this project are described below.

Cost of living pressures

The high cost of living in Guernsey may put a strain on social interaction and the community's interconnectedness. Financial pressures can limit residents' ability to participate in social activities, reducing opportunities for interaction and weakening community ties. As people become more focused on managing their economic survival, they may have less time and energy to engage in communal activities, diminishing the richness of social interactions that help people stay connected.

Distrust

Distrust, whether between individuals or towards institutions, can severely impact social capital. The spread of misinformation and gossip can lead to suspicion and reduced trust. When residents feel that others are not being transparent or are manipulating information, it can lead to fractured relationships and reduced willingness to engage in community activities. Distrust erodes the foundation of mutual support and collaboration that is essential for strong social capital.

Social disconnects

Social disconnects, particularly across socioeconomic, generational, and cultural lines, pose a significant threat to the unity of Guernsey. Widening social divides can isolate social groups, undermining the sense of common ground. This isolation reduces the sharing of resources and ideas, which are critical for maintaining a vibrant community. Bridging these social divides is essential to fostering inclusive social interactions and ensuring that all residents feel a part of the community.

Social anxiety and mental health

Social anxiety and mental health issues can significantly hinder individuals' ability to engage in social interactions. In a small community where everyone knows each other, the pressure to maintain appearances and the fear of gossip can exacerbate anxiety and stress. Individuals struggling with mental health may withdraw from social activities, leading to isolation and further deteriorating their mental well-being. Without adequate support, these issues can create a cycle of disengagement, reducing overall social capital.

Availability of appropriate social space

A fundamental requirement for social interaction is the availability of appropriate social spaces. Concerns about the accessibility of Guernsey's venues for social, recreational, and cultural activities may restrict opportunities for residents to gather and interact. Adequate social spaces that cater to the needs of diverse groups are essential for fostering inclusive social interactions. Without these spaces, the community's ability to connect and support each other is compromised, weakening social cohesion.

Connectedness – Social spaces

The existence and nature of social spaces are important determinants of social capital since they facilitate social interaction that creates social capital[38]. Although not strictly a component of social capital, social space was a major theme identified by the research data and has a significant impact on the nature of social capital.

Summary of findings related to social spaces

Guernsey offers a variety of excellent social spaces, particularly its outdoor areas such as beaches, headlands, seawalls, and parks, which provide ample opportunities for social interaction. The island also boasts a diverse range of cafes and restaurants that enhance the social landscape. The high-quality facilities for sports and cultural activities, including windsurfing, sailing, hockey, basketball, volleyball, music, dance, and arts, are impressive for a community of Guernsey's size and encourage a vibrant community life.

Despite these strengths, Guernsey faces challenges related to the availability and accessibility of social spaces. There is a notable shortage of affordable indoor social spaces, which is particularly problematic during bad weather. This limitation affects those with limited financial resources, making it difficult for them to socialise without spending money. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness about existing social spaces, and many are not well-known or accessible, especially for people with disabilities or mental health challenges.

Participants also expressed concerns about the lack of suitable and affordable spaces for youth, which has led to a decline in in-person social interaction among young people. The increasing reliance on digital media and social media has further reduced the demand for physical social spaces, contributing to social isolation.

Table 4 summarises the main findings related to social spaces in Guernsey.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
> There are good free outdoor spaces that can be used when the weather is good. > There are diverse sporting facilities. > For the population size, there is a wide range of facilities (although many cost money).	> There are few indoor social spaces outside of associations and hospitality. > Shortage of physical community space, especially accessible spaces. > Lack of free or low-cost social spaces (undercover or indoor). > Lack of suitable social spaces for youth (undercover or indoor).
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
> More spaces could be created using different models, including public-private partnerships, public services, and non-profit services. > Publicise the spaces that already exist. > Make existing spaces more desirable and fit for purpose.	> Increasing costs. > Reduced volunteerism that may weaken spaces provided by the third sector. > Digital technologies and the changing nature of social interaction.

Table 4. Analysis of social spaces in Guernsey

The following sections will explore the research findings related to the strengths and weaknesses of social spaces in Guernsey.

Strengths related to social spaces

Guernsey has many great social spaces, particularly its excellent outdoor areas and diverse facilities. The island is well-endowed with beaches, headlands, seawalls, and parks, which provide ample opportunities for social interaction, especially during pleasant weather. The abundance of cafes, coffee shops, and restaurants further enhances the social landscape, offering numerous spots for residents to meet and socialise.

Participants highlighted the variety and quality of facilities available, especially when compared to other towns of similar size. Guernsey has a range of good sporting facilities, including opportunities for windsurfing, sailing, hockey, basketball, and volleyball. Additionally, the island supports a rich array of cultural activities, with children engaging in music, dance, and other arts. This diversity encourages residents to try different activities, fostering a vibrant community life.

Good facilities and particularly outdoor spaces

Many participants described how Guernsey has good outdoor spaces for social interaction, including beaches, headlands, seawalls, and parks. There are also a great variety of cafes and restaurants.

We have plenty of community and outdoor spaces when the weather's really nice because they're beaches and headlands and [so on]. P2

For me, they [social spaces] do exist. I mean, maybe if you want cafes or coffee shops, there's enough of them. Your restaurants, there's certainly plenty of those. We have got two or three libraries. There's plenty of offices and hotels that would give you spare rooms if you needed. There's plenty of parks for an island of this size. There's plenty of recreational facilities. P11

Diverse facilities

Several participants commented on the variety and quality of facilities in Guernsey, especially compared to a similar sized population elsewhere. For example:

Opportunities and facilities, like were spoilt rotten. You know, if you went to a town in the UK with 64,000 or however many, there's no way you'd have our sporting facility, like you know, you can windsurf, you can sail, you can play hockey… I play basketball before or after, then go to volleyball. Like, you know, like two or three times in one night. So, the opportunities and facilities… Our children, in music are doing Shakespeare at the moment and, you know, like doing dance, doing and… So, I think we have, yeah, lots of opportunity and I think we're encouraged like try a little bit of everything. P14

Although many people felt there is a shortage of community space in Guernsey, they thought that was a normal problem for a small population.

Is there a shortage of physical community space in Guernsey? Then yes. … there's all sorts of constraints. Is that unusual for a town of 63,000 people? We have more facilities than many other places. P3

Good restaurants and cafes

For many people, there is no shortage of the types of social spaces they want. One participant expressed this view as follows:

For me, they do exist [good social spaces]. I mean, maybe if you want cafes or coffee shops, there's enough of them. Your restaurants. There's certainly plenty of those. We have got libraries 2 or 3 libraries. There's plenty of offices and hotels that would give you spare rooms if you needed. There's plenty of parks for an island of this size. There's plenty of recreational facilities. Yeah. For the island's size. So, for me, that bit of it isn't necessarily a problem. Others may have a different view. P11

Survey results

The following key theme related to the strengths of social spaces in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

For its population size, Guernsey has a wide range of facilities and spaces for social interaction.

The survey results indicated a moderate level of agreement with this statement, with 65.9% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 26.2% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. In general, those respondents who were most likely to disagree had a salary of less than £30,000, and older respondents were more likely to agree. The average response for people under 25 was 3.1 compared to 4.4 for people over 65. These numbers strongly support the findings from the first stage of this research.

- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
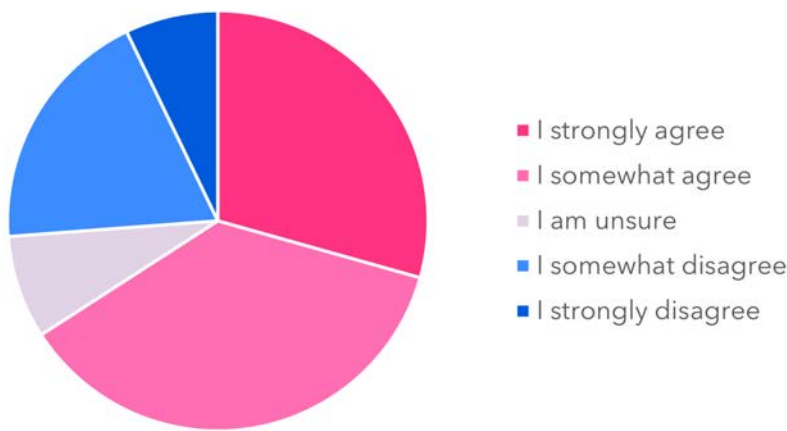
Figure 6. Results from the survey related to the strengths of social spaces

Summary of the strengths of social spaces

Guernsey has many excellent social spaces. The diverse and high-quality facilities, including sports opportunities and cultural activities, are particularly impressive for a community of its size. Despite some concerns about a shortage of community spaces, Guernsey offers more facilities than many similar-sized towns, making these types of social spaces a strength for the development of its social capital.

Weaknesses related to social spaces

Despite having good social spaces for those with disposable income, Guernsey faces a general shortage of suitable and affordable indoor social spaces. Participants noted the lack of free or low-cost options, particularly indoor spaces necessary during bad weather. This limitation affects those with limited financial resources, making it difficult to socialise without spending money.

A key issue is the lack of awareness about existing social spaces. While some suitable spaces exist, they are not well known or easily accessible, especially for those with specific needs, such as people with physical disabilities or mental health challenges. The shortage of accessible spaces and the need for appropriate quiet spaces were also highlighted.

Participants expressed concerns about the lack of spaces for youth, who often have nowhere to go that is affordable and suitable for social interaction. Many traditional youth spaces have closed, and there is a perceived need for large, flexible social spaces that can accommodate various activities.

Social anxiety and the challenge of social interaction in unsuitable spaces further hinder social cohesion. There is a call for more conscious efforts to support individuals with social anxiety and provide spaces that foster a sense of safety and community.

The reliance on digital media and social media among young people is seen as reducing the demand for physical social spaces, contributing to social isolation. Some participants suggested measures such as restricting social media use to encourage more in-person interactions.

Few affordable indoor spaces

While there are many good outdoor spaces in Guernsey, the participants expressed that there is a lack of affordable indoor social spaces that are required when the weather is not good. The participants acknowledged that while there are many options available for those who have money to spend, the options are limited for those who have limited financial resources.

There isn't anywhere [to socialise that doesn't cost money]. P20

It's virtually impossible [socialising without spending lots of money]. … it is, very, yeah, sort of money-oriented, especially if you've got children. I don't even know how some people you know if you weren't working in a high-paying job. I've got no idea how you can survive, bring up kids, and pay rent. P25

Come winter with a 2-year-old or weekend with no money. That's definitely a pinch point [lack of free or low-cost social spaces]. P10

[If you're] into arts or sports, then I think there are lots of spaces. But yes, if you're not into that, then that can be a challenge, sure. P5

Awareness

Part of the problem may be a lack of awareness of the social spaces that exist. The participants identified several suitable and accessible spaces, but that many of these spaces are not well known and some may not be particularly fit for purpose. One participant summarised the issue as follows:

There are lots of spaces, but they're not known by lots of people [and they are mostly outdoors and weather dependent]. P2

Other participants suggested there are options for those who are proactive and seek out the opportunities for engagement in social spaces. However, they did acknowledge that most of the spaces are membership-based and cost money to access them.

I think that there are opportunities to do free things, but that is based on an individual's willingness to take the step forward to do that. … I think that there is a lack of free and independent opportunities for people. … most sporting facilities are membership or based on time allocated, which I guess is because they cost money to maintain, etcetera, etcetera. The government doesn't provide [these spaces or facilities]. P7

The lack of affordable and accessible social spaces is contributing to a lack of social interaction across social divides. One participant described it as follows:

I suspect that [the lack of free indoor social spaces] is maybe why people don't mix because if you are on lower incomes, then you can't afford to do things, and you spend half the year because it's raining, you're inside, you're having your own communities in your own houses and you're not really being able to mix with other people. So maybe that is one of the reasons why there isn't much kind of integration. P16

Shortage of spaces

There is a perception that there is a general lack of community space, particularly as busy times. This point was expressed by several participants.

There is a shortage of community space, not all of the times, but at the peak times when people want to use them in the evenings, weekends there is a shortage of formal places for sport. Sports currently being pushed around from venue to venue. Youth clubs in particular, other specialists, support groups and that have some constraints. P3

Shortage of accessible spaces

A common theme emerging from this research was the shortage of accessible spaces, particularly social spaces suitable for people with physical disabilities or mental health problems.

Certainly, [there isn't a social space] that's accessible for people with physical disabilities… So, I would agree there isn't a municipal space which is not focused on selling you something. P6

If you're on the edges [have different needs], then often the spaces aren't physically adapted to various needs of various groups within community life. P4

Simply finding a quiet social space can be a challenge, with participants suggesting there are few suitable spaces in Guernsey. There are some spaces, but the lack of awareness of them further indicates the lack of awareness of the options available. The following comment illustrates the demand for quite spaces and that there are a small number of options available.

Of all [the] inquiries … at the Disability Alliance, it [most common] was for a quiet cafe. So, people would think it was for, I don't know, blue badges or disabled parking or something. And it was always, you know, 10 times over anything else, … where can I go that I can hear other people talking? … there's not many places locally, and we can whittle it down to about four on the whole island. You know that you can have a comfortable private conversation. P14

One of the key barriers for some people is social anxiety and the challenge of social interaction in spaces that are not well suited to these individuals. One participant suggested that a more conscious effort should be made to support this group of society.

If I think about social anxiety as one of the primary mechanisms that disconnects people from and then I think about spaces in terms of safety and emotional safety, and how do you support people from isolation into connectedness, I don't think we're as conscious as we could be in terms of the infrastructure that we need to build to support people from isolation into community that bit. … there's a lot of people, anxiety is the barrier rather than the space. P4

Considering the increasing prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression in many modern

societies, many participants believed more should be done to provide suitable social spaces in Guernsey. For example, one participant expressed a concern about not addressing this issue will do to the future of economic progress in Guernsey.

Young people who suffer from stress and anxiety or depression, and it's literally done that [hand gesture indicating an exponential increase]. … If we have a growing number of young people in our community who are suffering in those conditions and it's not being addressed, or they feel isolated and there is nowhere for them to go. …I wonder, actually, if we fast forward and those young people enter the workforce potentially what that looks like, and if that's going to hinder our economic progress because they just don't have the skills or coping strategies to be able to deal with normal life stuff. P12

Several participants could identify that there are some suitable spaces, but there are relatively few spaces and limited awareness of them.

We [a charity] have created those social spaces ourselves because they didn't exist. P25

Participants identified the bathing pools as a great social space with few barriers. The bathing pools are a charity called Vive La Vallette, established in 2019. It was consistently identified as the best such space in Guernsey.

We couldn't really think of somewhere else that was like that [low cost and accessible like the bathing pools] … There weren't any free spaces where you felt like you could go and just be without having to buy something. Yeah, it does feel quite unique [the bathing pools]. P7

Lack of spaces for youth

The availability of suitable spaces for youth was a significant issue for most of the participants. They expressed that there is a lack of suitable and affordable social spaces.

If we were to be a group of 14-year-olds, they almost certainly would be telling us there's nowhere to go. Unless you pay, so they would tell us if you just wanted to go and chill out and talk to your friends, there is nowhere for you to go. And that's probably

the case in St Peter Port. We only have really one youth provision left in town. Our local leisure centre hirers security people to chase you out if you're 13 – 14 [years old]. P3

One of the younger participants described the situation from first-hand experience:

I think that there is a like a lack of areas for young people to meet, particularly. That's what I found growing up, especially if you look outside, it's raining. Like where really is there for you to go and hang out with your friends. Especially like, I don't know, 12, 13 year old on Easter holidays you've you haven't got like loads of money to be like going out for lunch every day with friends, so it's sort of like, what do you actually do apart from going to each other's houses? But it gets a bit boring. That's what I found. P18

Many of the spaces that young people used to utilise for social interaction are no longer available, for various reasons. Some of the participants identified facilities that are no longer available and the changes in the way young people socialise.

You had [in the past] various youth clubs on the island. You had, you know, places where people would identify with social places in various parts of the island. … You know, on The Bridge there used to be a youth centre called Huggie's Pit and it's not, you know, there used to be places but there aren't anymore. P2

One participant suggested what is missing and needed to support improved youth social interaction.

I think we're missing a large building with an atrium with free space with… I think you'll probably all remember leaning up against the Space Invaders machine, waiting to prove that space doesn't exist anymore. P6

The lack of social space is particularly affecting the youth. Some participants discussed the various options that exist for adults, although with a cost.

And funny enough, those social clubs do exist for adults because, you know, a vast proportion of adults will go to the West Legion or the North Legion or the North Social Club [which] has 900 members. You know, it's just spent £50,000 on its snooker room. P2

Several participants had a perception that the problem is the use of digital media and mobile phones by young people. The believed that young people spent their time on social media and there was much less demand for physical social space compared to the past.

One of my fears for the future involves social media, and that's young people just contacting each other and communicating purely through social media. What does that mean as a community? Will we have less of these places for them to physically meet up going forward because they won't want it? They'll just want the social media stuff. That is one of my concerns going forward. P11

One participant suggested there are good options for youth, but they are too busy on their phones.

I think there are some institutions here that actually do good work in this space. So for example, the music centre, the fact that across the island for free, all kids get music training and from all schools, they're getting all their music. Education together collectively. Doesn't matter whether you're, you know, in a state or private, they're all getting, they're in the same orchestra. … is it creating social space like, yes, we could do that. But until you get them off their phone. They are doing loads of social interaction they're doing in their bedrooms. P21

The same participant suggested a solution:

If you asked me one thing that would massively improve social capital, I think it would be Guernsey getting rid of social media on mobile phones for under 16s. And at that point, they'd be bored. And they'd go out and meet each other. Well, you can look at the data; the amount of time people's children spend with their friends in the UK and the US has dropped by, I think, like 80% in the last five years, and all of that is online time. I'm saying just not spending any time with their friends. … Yes, and boredom is like the most fundamental thing in making kids learn stuff or making new connections if they're not bored. They never do it. So if they've got an easier option, so boredom is the basis of by which I get over my anxiety, which all teenagers do have of going out. … It's the only way you get over social

anxiety is by having positive experiences, but they have positive experiences because they're never just uncomfortable enough to pursue them because boredom is the motivator for doing something you don't want, don't want to otherwise do. P21

Other participants talked about the need to improve social skills and decrease social anxiety. This was a few expressed by several participants and is linked to a perception that the education system is not preparing young people for positive social engagement.

There isn't like a social skills GCC or A level. And considering how important it is for life, our kids… if I think about my 13-year-old, he's awkward. He doesn't have the skills. He hasn't learned the skills he needs to actually build a group of healthy friendships around him and to go and do something constructive and healthy, you know? And that isn't really valued or part of the education system. P4

I see the, kind of, kids bored, breaking things during the holidays as a symptom of a skill set we've not fostered. P4

Survey results

The following key theme related to the weaknesses of social spaces in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

Guernsey has a lack of free or low-cost spaces for social activities and interactions that can be used during bad weather, which impacts people on lower incomes and the youth.

The survey results indicated a high level of agreement with this statement, with 84.1% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 11.9% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. The most likely group to agree with this statement was people aged 25–34, with an average response of 4.73. No significant differences by salary level indicated a broad awareness of the weakness across all income levels.

- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
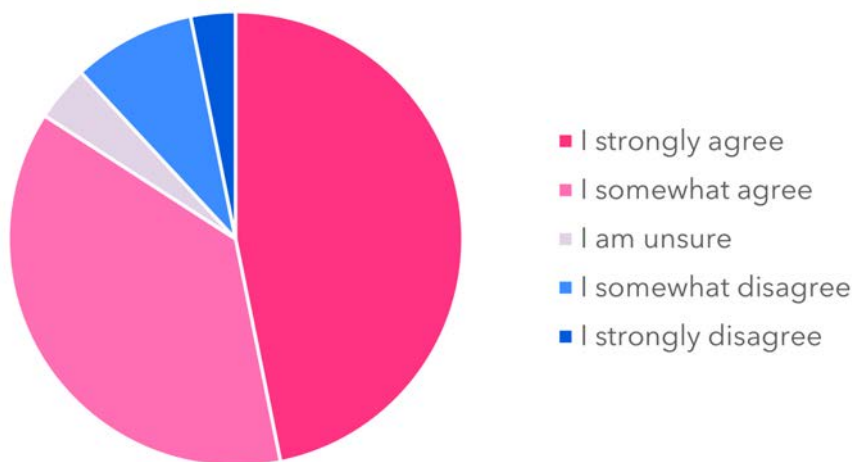
Figure 7. Results from the survey related to the weaknesses of social spaces

Summary of the weaknesses of social spaces

Overall, the limited availability, affordability, and suitability of social spaces hinder social cohesion and weaken community ties in Guernsey. Addressing these issues is crucial for improving social capital and fostering a more inclusive community.

Opportunities related to social spaces

The analysis of findings related to social spaces has highlighted several opportunities to improve social capital in Guernsey. Here are some key areas for improvement.

More spaces and more diverse and accessible low-cost paces

Expanding the availability of social spaces is a crucial opportunity for improving social capital in Guernsey. Developing new community centres, recreational facilities, and indoor venues can provide residents with more places to gather, interact, and engage in various activities. Emphasis should be placed on creating multi-purpose spaces that can host a variety of events and cater to different interests, such as sports, arts, and community meetings. Additionally, ensuring these new spaces are affordable or free to access will help to include residents from all socioeconomic backgrounds, fostering greater community cohesion and participation.

Increase awareness of the spaces that already exist

Raising awareness about the existing social spaces and their offerings is essential for maximising their use and impact. Many residents may be unaware of the available venues and the activities they host. One participant identified the opportunity to introduce children to these spaces through the school system (P2). Implementing a comprehensive outreach strategy, including local advertising, social media campaigns, and community newsletters, can inform the public about these spaces. Organising open days, tours, and introductory events can also help people become familiar with the facilities and encourage them to utilise these resources. Enhanced visibility and knowledge of social spaces can lead to increased participation and stronger community ties.

Modify existing spaces for suitability and accessibility

Modifying existing social spaces to improve their suitability and accessibility is another significant opportunity. Ensuring that community centres, parks, and recreational facilities are accessible to people with disabilities and those with specific needs can make these spaces more inclusive. This includes installing ramps, accessible toilets, and appropriate seating, as well as creating sensory-friendly environments for individuals with mental health issues or sensory sensitivities. Additionally, adapting spaces to better serve different age groups and cultural backgrounds can make them more welcoming and useful to a broader section of the community. These modifications not only improve physical access but also enhance the overall user experience, making social spaces more inviting and functional for everyone.

Threats related to social spaces

There are several threats to the existence and accessibility of social spaces for all members of society. Many spaces are already inaccessible to people with limited financial resources, and this problem has been getting worse in recent years. There are also reports of reduced volunteerism and funding for charitable providers of social spaces. And the dynamics of social interaction are changing with the increasing use of digital technologies.

Increasing costs

Rising costs pose a significant threat to the availability and quality of suitable social spaces in Guernsey. The high cost of living affects the affordability of maintaining and accessing social spaces, from community centres to recreational facilities. As expenses for utilities, maintenance, and staffing rise, organisations that manage these spaces may struggle to keep them open or be forced to increase usage fees. This can make social spaces less accessible to residents, particularly those with limited financial resources, exacerbating social inequalities and reducing opportunities for community engagement.

Reduced volunteerism and funding

A decline in volunteerism and available funding further threatens the sustainability of social spaces provided by the charitable sector. Many community centres, sports clubs, and cultural organisations rely heavily on volunteers for their operations. A reduction in volunteer numbers, due to factors like an aging population or competing personal commitments, can strain these organisations' ability to function. Additionally, reduced funding from government sources, charitable donations, or grants limits the ability of these organisations to cover operational costs, improve facilities, and offer affordable or free access to social spaces. This financial strain can lead to the closure or reduced availability of vital community resources.

Digital technologies

The rise of digital technologies, while offering new forms of connection, also poses a threat to physical social spaces. Increased reliance on social media, online gaming, and virtual meeting platforms can lead to a decline in face-to-face interactions. As more people, especially younger generations, engage in digital rather than physical socialising, the demand for physical social spaces may decrease. This shift can result in underutilised community centres and recreational facilities, reducing their viability and leading to potential closures. Moreover, excessive screen time can contribute to social isolation and a lack of real-world social skills, further diminishing the value and usage of physical social spaces.

Addressing these threats requires proactive measures to manage costs, encourage volunteerism, secure funding, and balance digital and physical social interactions. Ensuring the sustainability and accessibility of suitable social spaces is crucial for maintaining strong social capital and fostering a connected, resilient community in Guernsey.

Connectedness – Associational membership, participation and engagement

People are not just connected by their social relationships. They are connected by their memberships in various associations or organisations, such as sporting or interest groups, charities, advocacy or political groups, and various other organisations. The engagement with groups and organisations can be formal or informal, and can connect people across social divides, creating and facilitating important opportunities for the creation and maintenance of social capital. This section will explore the nature of associational membership, participation and engagement in Guernsey.

Summary of findings related to associational membership, participation and engagement

Guernsey has many significant strengths in associational membership, which is an important part of its social capital. The island has a diverse range of groups and activities, including sports, religion, professional associations, the third sector, and the arts, with high participation rates and accessibility due to its small size, short distances, and favourable work hours. Sports hold a long–standing tradition and are the most important form of associational activity, fostering strong community bonds. The third sector is robust, with high levels of volunteering and charitable work filling gaps not addressed by the government. Arts participation is growing, contributing to the island's vibrant community life.

Despite these strengths, Guernsey faces several issues threatening community engagement. Declining volunteerism is a major concern, attributed to increased busyness, cost of living pressures, and a lack of time among residents. This decline is troubling for the many active charities that rely heavily on volunteer support. New Charity Law regulations add governance pressures, creating administrative burdens that detract from core missions and overwhelm volunteers. The increasing cost of living and related time constraints further exacerbate the problem, particularly among younger generations, who, despite caring about societal issues, find it challenging to engage in volunteer activities.

Table 5 summarises the main findings related to associational membership, participation and engagement in Guernsey.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
> There is a strong third section and philanthropic spirit linked to identity, culture, and collective solidarity > There is a strong history of sporting activities and high rates of participation. > High rates of overlap in associational participation, including in informal associations. > Associational activities are highly accessible (time, distance, familiarity, etc) with relatively few barriers to participation. > There are a large number of active professional networks.	> There is reducing volunteerism, and volunteers are aging, with relatively few young people volunteering. > There are other pressures on associational activity, such as governance, funding, and corporate volunteering.
OPPORTUNITIES	**THREATS**
> Enhance volunteer recruitment and retention > Develop support for administrative processes > Increase funding and resources > Promote a culture of giving and participation	> Aging population > Increasing cost of living > Individualism > Organisational capacity, particularly quality leadership > Availability of funding and space

Table 5. Analysis of associational membership, participation and engagement in Guernsey

The following sections will explore the research findings related to the strengths and weaknesses of associational membership, participation and engagement in Guernsey

Strengths related to associational membership, participation and engagement

Guernsey enjoys numerous strengths in associational membership, contributing significantly to its social capital. The island features a wide range of groups and activities, including sports, religion, professional associations, the third sector, and the arts, with high participation rates and diverse options for residents.

Participation in social activities is highly accessible due to the island's small size, short distances, and good work hours, making it easy for residents to engage in activities even during the workweek. Sports, in particular, have a long tradition and are considered the most important form of associational activity, fostering strong community bonds.

The third sector is robust, with a high level of volunteering and charitable work filling gaps that the government does not address. The arts have also seen significant growth, becoming a major area of participation and collaboration.

The small size of the island and the overlap of activities mean that residents frequently encounter each other, facilitating easy entry into associations and enhancing community life. Informal participation is also important, with activities like swimming creating informal but strong community connections.

Professional networking and business associations are well-developed in Guernsey, providing ample opportunities for career development and social interaction. The availability of numerous networking events further strengthens social and professional ties.

There are lots of groups and high rates of participation

When asked what types of associational activities are most common in Guernsey, participants responded with sports, religion, professional associations, the third sector, and theatre, drama, and the arts. Participants believe there are generally high rates of participation and many options for participation in different types of initiatives and activities.

Highly accessible

The participants generally agreed that participation in formal and informal social activities is highly accessible in Guernsey, being a relatively small island with short distances and good work hours. Several participants described how easy it is to participate, even during the working week.

Sports and some of these other associations are quite strong. I think my experience from working elsewhere is the working day in Guernsey is a bit more likely to be 9:00 to 5:30 than in almost anywhere else I've worked. … Everything's really close, so you can go and play football after work or go to the beach after work or go to the charity after work. All those kinds of things are a massive advantage. When I was working in London, everything was 40 minutes away. And you know, the chance of meeting at 5:30 were approximately zero. P8

We used to say that, like the hockey teams, you can finish work at half-five and literally be doing pushback at six. You know, you've managed to get from work to the hockey place, get dressed and everything, and everyone's ready to go, and then you can fit in three games in a

night or whatever. That definitely helps in terms of the proximity of everything. P10

Sports

There was general agreement that sports had a long tradition and was perhaps the biggest and most important form of associational activity in Guernsey.

Sport is really big over here. P8

There is a strong, on a very small island, a strong tradition of togetherness through an association with sport. P2

Sport, I think, is [very strong] … And now the arts are really exploding. P4

Some participants discussed the changing nature of sports participation. Although children and young people generally have high rates of participation in sports, there are concerns that this may be changing.

I think elderly people are … now the booming market for physical activity in sport because the demographic of the island is that we have an ageing demographic, and so actually the risk is with certain sports is trying to get young people across many different sports. P2

Although sport is important, it is not for everyone, and some people, including young people, may suffer social isolation.

It depends on the area of community because there are very established and well-developed areas of connection through sport and things like that, but then there are areas where isolation still exists, and there isn't that common purpose. P4

Strong third sector

There was strong agreement among participants that the third sector is very strong in Guernsey and accounts for a lot of participation and engagement in group activities.

The third sector is massive in Guernsey. Even though in theory we should be a very rich society and government should be, you know,

very, very have lots of opportunities to invest in that. I think the third sector has stepped in hugely to address lots of areas where the government hasn't addressed [issues]. P24

Third sector and charity work, there's a huge amount of volunteering and charitable groups. P10

What I do know is that the charitable sector is holding Guernsey together. P19

Arts

Art was identified by several participants as a growing area of participation in Guernsey and is now considered one of the strongest sectors of associational participation.

The arts were quite siloed and disconnected … probably 10 years ago, … whereas now it's much more collaborative and open and connected, and that's because people with a set of skills arrived in the system. P4

Overlapping participation

The small size of the island and the overlap of activities mean that people frequently encounter each other, making it straightforward to join associations and participate in community life.

And there's often a lot of overlaps. You might find a Chamber member is an IoD member, is a GIFA member, right? Or a GIBA member. You know. P12

I have a lot more diversity of connections within the people I run into, but the kind of common ground that we have means I'm probably talking to a more diverse set of people. If I lived in London, doing what I do, I think I would have a far less diverse set of contacts than I do here. P1

I think there is overlaps. If I go to a finance event, I'll know 90% of the people, but then they'll also know another 90% from their school crowd as well. So, if you've grown up in Guernsey, you then have your school friends who then work in different sectors etcetera. But yeah, I would generally agree, very connected. P23

That [overlapping participation] is very common to Guernsey, I think, because even as a young person, living over here, you only needed to go to a seawall where you knew your friends were going to go to the same sea wall and you would just arrive there. P6

Some participants identified that informal participation is also important and contributes to the overlap of participation in Guernsey civil society.

There's formal and informal as well, so personally speaking, I seldom join a formal association. My life just isn't structured in such a way that I can do that and commit to and feel part of it. However, I do feel part of the swimming community. Because largely because of the bathing pools, it's not a thing you join; you don't need to commit and join to something you're not a member of, but you go to a place, and you know lots of faces, and you share experiences. And I think that's really important that this isn't just about those formal structures. It's about finding people with common interests, kind of almost, you know, kind of serendipity. It's just kind of, they're out there. P1

I think there's a lot of networking opportunities available in Guernsey. I always talk about the fact that I can easily go to a networking breakfast, meet someone for lunch, go for a quick drink after work at another networking event. I can be home for bath time. So, I think that not having a commute and a lot of these associations really works. P5

Business associations and professional networks

Participants illustrated the importance of professional networking and associations in Guernsey, highlighting how these connections enhance social and professional interactions, support career development, and contribute to the island's social capital. There was a general view that there are a lot of good professional networking opportunities, as illustrated by the following comments:

For a place of only 65,000 people. We do have a lot of associations, business associations. P8

That works as well [business associations], I would say. I mean, for example, with the IoD, Chamber of Commerce, business associations, and so on… Finance purposes and finance related. Yeah. So, there's quite a few of those. There's a builder's association. There's all sorts, of course, all the industries. P11

Survey results

The following key theme related to the strengths of associational membership, participation and engagement in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

Guernsey has a diverse range of groups and activities, including sports, religion, professional associations, the third sector, and the arts, with high participation rates.

The survey results indicated a high level of agreement with this statement, with 92.0% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 2.4% indicating they somewhat disagree. Only three people indicated they somewhat disagreed. Although there is a high level of agreement in general, older residents were more likely to strongly agree with the statement.

- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
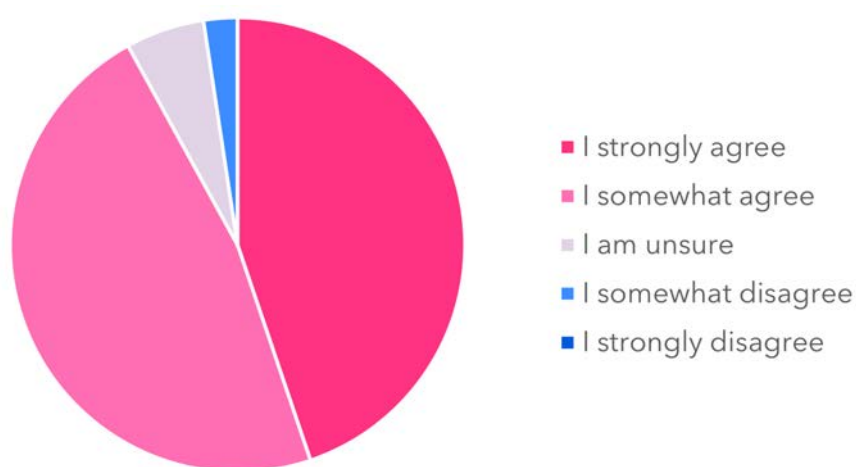
Figure 8. Results from the survey related to the strengths of associational membership, participation and engagement

Summary of the strengths of associational membership, participation and engagement

Overall, the strengths of associational membership in Guernsey, including its accessibility, diverse options, strong tradition of sports, robust third sector, growing arts participation, overlapping activities, and professional networks, contribute significantly to the island's vibrant and cohesive community life.

Weaknesses related to associational membership, participation and engagement

Guernsey faces several issues with associational membership that threaten the strength of its community engagement. One major issue is the declining rates of volunteerism. Participants noted a significant drop in volunteering, attributing this to increased busyness, cost of living pressures, and a general lack of time among residents. This decline is concerning given the high number of active charities on the island, which rely heavily on volunteer support.

Governance pressures from new Charity Law regulations also present a challenge. The administrative burden and the need for compliance with corporate governance standards have made it difficult for many associations to focus on their core missions. These requirements often overwhelm volunteers, who may lack the necessary skills to manage the added bureaucracy.

The increasing cost of living and related time constraints further exacerbate the problem. Many participants highlighted that people have less time to volunteer due to economic pressures and busier lifestyles. This trend is particularly evident among younger generations, who, despite caring about societal issues, find it challenging to engage in volunteer activities.

Reducing volunteerism

Many of the participants viewed reducing rates of volunteering to be one of the biggest weaknesses and threats to associational activity in Guernsey. There were various reasons for this decline cited. For example:

[Guernsey has] 362 [charities] at the moment, live charities, we've got 1600 on the register. … Volunteering, as it has in the UK, has dropped off massively. Something like 40% drop off so because you've either got busier or yeah, it costs a living, totally huge impact. P14

As wonderful as Guernsey is and as well as people have done to varying extents over the years by way of continual investment in infrastructure, education, and health. You can see that the lack or the slowdown of investment in those key areas is now putting more pressure on the third sector to pick up those pieces. So historically, I think that was broadly OK because we're a few gaps to plug, and the third sector did it rather well. Now we've got a lot of gaps to fill. … I think fewer people are less enthusiastic about putting themselves forward and giving their time. P12

But not everyone had a perception that there was a problem with engagement in associations and charities. In response to another participant's suggestion there was a challenge, one participant responded as follows:

Is there an engagement challenge? Well, I think we have a very active community. P10

Overall, many participants felt that there are a finite group of people who do most of the volunteering and generally, people have less time with more things competing for their time.

Governance pressures

When asked about the biggest challenges facing associations, a common response was the administrative and governance pressures coming from the new Charity Law. There is a perception that this relatively new law presents challenges for many groups and detracts from their core mission.

The new charities law and all that, admin and corporate kind of the hoops you have to jump through nowadays. And so, it's kind of part of anti-money laundering regulation, I suppose in essence, but it's created a massive admin burden. A massive skills gap

for people to jump through. You can't just wander around being a charity and meet every now and then. You have to, you know, have proper minutes, you have to have lots of documentation in place, you have to. You have to really tick the box and that's putting a lot of people off and also soaking up a lot of bandwidth or volunteers to do the thing they actually want to do. P8

I think one of the problems is that charities, as you know, are under-resourced, underfunded, they don't have somebody who perhaps has those skills at dealing with a corporate because they're too busy trying to do, you know, the job that they were hired or volunteering to do, like, you know, looking after children who've been abused and giving refuge to people who are trying to flee domestic violence. So you can't expect them to all have all of the other skills as well. P19

Time and cost of living

A key issue expressed by many participants affecting associational participation and engagement was the increasing cost of living and the related lack of time many people now have to engage and volunteer. This issue is illustrated by the following comment:

You know, they the people can't volunteer. They've not got time. I used to volunteer. I haven't got time now. … You know that generation of people who had time to volunteer now don't. Or they're retired or, you know. The younger generation is not stepping up, and that's for, again, lots of reasons. It's not because I don't care. We know young people care. There's a lot of apathy in society now. People want things straight away, and I think it's just not the same world that it was when we had this kind of volunteering economy, and I don't know if it's possible to get that back, and without the volunteers, you know, the services are going to disappear. P19

Survey results

The following key theme related to the weaknesses of associational membership, participation and engagement in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

Guernsey has declining volunteerism due to an aging population, increasing cost of living pressures, and a lack of time.

The survey results indicated a moderate level of agreement with this statement, with 64.7% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 13.4% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. 22% of respondents were unsure, perhaps indicating a lack of awareness of the situation or having mixed views. There were no significant differences based on demographic characteristics.
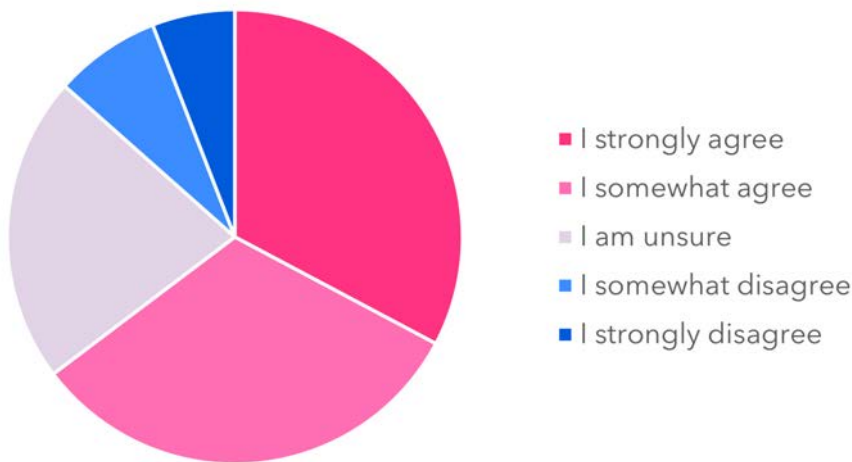
Figure 9. Results from the survey related to the weaknesses of associational membership, participation and engagement

Summary of the weaknesses of associational membership, participation and engagement

Overall, the combination of reduced volunteerism, increased governance pressures, and the impact of cost of living and time constraints pose significant threats to the effectiveness and sustainability of associational activities in Guernsey. Addressing these issues is crucial for maintaining the island's social capital and community cohesion.

Opportunities related to associational membership, participation and engagement

The analysis of findings related to associational membership has highlighted several opportunities to improve social capital in Guernsey. Here are some key areas for improvement.

Enhance volunteer recruitment and retention

Guernsey can implement targeted campaigns to attract volunteers from diverse age groups, especially younger generations who may be less involved. Offering flexible volunteering opportunities that accommodate various schedules and lifestyles can make it easier for people to participate. Recognising and rewarding volunteer contributions can also motivate ongoing engagement and demonstrate the value of their efforts to the community.

Develop support for administrative processes

Providing support for compliance requirements under the Charity Law can significantly reduce the administrative burden on associations, allowing them to focus more on their core missions. Providing training and support to help associations manage governance responsibilities effectively can further ease this burden. This support can include workshops, online resources, and access to expert advice, making it easier for volunteers and staff to navigate the complexities of running an association.

Increase funding and resources

Securing additional funding from public and private sources is essential to support the operational needs of associations. Grants and subsidies can lower cost barriers for participation, making activities more accessible to a broader segment of the population. Encouraging local businesses and individuals to sponsor or donate to associations can also provide much-needed financial support. Additionally, developing partnerships with larger organisations can help associations leverage resources and expertise.

Promote a culture of giving and participation

Cultivating a community culture that values and encourages participation in volunteerism and associational activities is crucial for long-term engagement. Highlighting success stories and the positive impact of community involvement can inspire others to get involved. Public recognition of volunteers, celebrating their contributions through events or media coverage, can further promote a culture of giving. Schools and educational institutions can also play a role by incorporating community service into their curricula, instilling the importance of volunteerism from a young age.

Threats related to associational membership, participation and engagement

Guernsey faces several threats to associational membership and participation. The aging population may reduce the pool of active volunteers, while younger generations are not stepping up to replace them. Rising living costs force residents to prioritise paid work over volunteering, decreasing community involvement. A shift towards individualism further undermines collective responsibility and engagement. Additionally, organisational capacity is threatened by a shortage of skilled leaders, limited funding, and a lack of affordable and suitable spaces for activities, all of which hamper the ability of associations to sustain their operations and attract members.

Aging population

The aging population in Guernsey poses a significant threat to associational membership and participation. As the demographic shifts towards a higher proportion of older residents, the pool of active volunteers and participants may shrink. Older individuals, while often experienced and dedicated, may have limitations in terms of physical ability and energy, reducing their capacity to engage fully in community activities. Additionally, there is a concern that younger generations are not stepping up to replace older volunteers, leading to a potential gap in community engagement and support for various associations and activities.

Increasing cost of living

The rising cost of living in Guernsey is another major threat to associational participation and engagement. As expenses for housing, utilities, and daily necessities increase, residents find themselves with less disposable income and time to devote to voluntary activities. The financial strain forces many to prioritise paid work over volunteering, reducing the number of people available to support community initiatives. This economic pressure affects not only individual participation but also the financial health of associations, which

may struggle to attract members and sustain their activities without sufficient volunteer support.

Individualism

A growing trend towards individualism in many modern societies poses a threat to community engagement in Guernsey. As more people focus on personal goals and individual success, the sense of collective responsibility and community involvement may diminish. This shift can lead to lower participation rates in voluntary associations and a reduced willingness to engage in collaborative efforts for the common good. The cultural shift towards individualism undermines the communal spirit necessary for strong associational membership and active participation in civic life.

Organisational capacity, particularly quality leadership

The capacity of organisations to effectively engage and retain members is closely tied to the quality of leadership. In Guernsey, there is a concern that various pressures may reduce the availability of people with suitable leadership skills to navigate the complexities of modern governance and volunteer management. Effective leadership is crucial for motivating volunteers, securing funding, and ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements. Without strong leadership, associations may struggle to maintain their operations, leading to decreased participation and engagement.

Availability of funding and space

The availability of funding and space is a critical issue for many associations in Guernsey. Limited financial resources constrain the ability of organisations to sustain their activities, provide necessary services, and invest in growth. Competing for scarce funding sources can be challenging, particularly for smaller associations without established donor bases or access to

grants. Additionally, the shortage of affordable and suitable spaces for meetings, events, and activities further hampers the capacity of associations to operate effectively. The lack of physical space limits opportunities for community engagement and reduces the visibility and accessibility of associational activities.

Connectedness – Organisational capacity

Strong social capital is facilitated by organisations, but it is not enough for them to exist; they need to have sufficient capacity to function effectively. This capacity includes leadership and governance, as well as administrative skills and good group dynamics. This section will explore the findings related to organisational capacity in Guernsey.

Summary of findings related to organisational capacity

Guernsey benefits from high levels of community engagement and volunteerism, particularly within the third sector. The willingness of residents to participate in various associations, clubs, and volunteer activities supports strong organisational capacity and helps sustain and grow initiatives, contributing to the island's social capital. Many skilled volunteers, especially from the corporate sector, enhance this capacity. Strong informal networks facilitate quick dissemination of information and collective problem-solving, acting as additional support systems for organisations.

Despite these strengths, there are significant weaknesses in organisational capacity. A primary concern is the shortage of skilled volunteers. Financial pressures and lack of time, particularly due to childcare costs and other obligations, limit availability for volunteering. Founder syndrome leads to overlap and duplication of organisations, reducing collaboration and efficiency. Funding concerns are prevalent, with many organisations facing uncertainty about financial support, affecting their sustainability. Leadership issues also impact organisational focus and member engagement, with some leaders perceived as self-promoting rather than strategically effective. Addressing these weaknesses is essential for enhancing organisational capacity and ensuring the long-term sustainability and impact of associational activities in Guernsey.

Table 6 summarises the main findings related to organisational capacity in Guernsey.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
> There are many highly skilled people who can contribute to associational leadership and governance. > There are strong networks between organisations that can facilitate the sharing of information and advice.	> There is a perception there is a shortage of skilled volunteers and reducing corporate volunteering. > There is a perceived problem with founder syndrome, which may be linked to a desire for power and prestige. > There is a perceived lack of funding and continuity of funding for many organisations. > There is a perceived lack of time and skills required for effective governance. > There are concerns about the nature and quality of leadership in some organisations.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
> Leverage skilled professionals > Invest in leadership development > Adopt new technologies and innovations > Provide capacity building programs > Promote collaboration and networking	> Aging population > Increasing cost of living > Individualism

Table 6. Analysis of organisational capacity in Guernsey

The following sections will explore the research findings related to the strengths and weaknesses of organisational capacity in Guernsey.

Strengths related to organisational capacity

The high level of community engagement and volunteerism supports strong organisational capacity, particularly within the third sector. The willingness of residents to participate in various associations, clubs, and volunteer activities means that organisations can draw on a broad base of support and expertise. This engagement helps sustain and grow organisational initiatives, contributing to overall social capital.

Skilled volunteers

Guernsey has many skilled volunteers with many coming from the pool of talented people working in the corporate sector and other highly skilled individuals who live on the island. Although there were mixed views on this point, the positive views are illustrated by the following comment:

I think there's such a high calibre of, you know, good people over there, good qualifying experienced people that actually, you know, the charities do tend to identify it quite quickly where those gaps lie. … funding is always difficult with charities and sporting associations, but actually, it's, you know, likely … easier than in the UK, because of the networks that we have here. P13

Strong networks

The presence of robust informal networks enables quick dissemination of information and collective problem-solving. These networks can act as informal support systems for organisations, providing additional resources and knowledge that might not be available through formal channels.

By Guernsey standards, larger charities tend to talk to each other, so there is an interconnectedness there, and that overlaps in some respects just with connectedness with government as well. In some cases, that's because certain charities have a grant agreement or an SLA with government. Other times, it's just that they are perhaps lobbying the government for funding, or the service they're providing overlaps with the government service. So, there's a connectedness there. P27

Survey results

The following key theme related to the strengths of organisational capacity in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

Guernsey has many highly skilled people, especially from the corporate sector, leading its associations, clubs, charities, and community groups.

The survey results indicated a high level of agreement with this statement, with 76.9% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 9.9% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. In general, young people responded with marginally more agreement to this statement and there were no significant differences by level of income.

- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
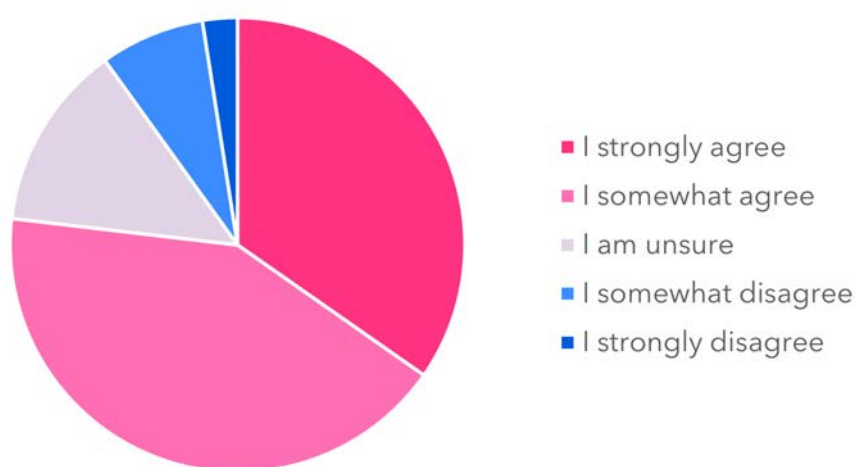
Figure 10. Results from the survey related to the strengths of organisational capacity

Summary of the strengths related to organisational capacity

Guernsey's organisational capacity is bolstered by strong community engagement and skilled volunteerism, particularly within the third sector. Residents actively participate in volunteer activities, providing valuable support and expertise. Additionally, robust informal networks facilitate effective collaboration and information sharing, further enhancing the capacity of organisations across the island.

Weaknesses related to organisational capacity

Despite the strength of associational activity in Guernsey, some significant weaknesses were identified by the research participants. A shortage of skilled volunteers is a primary concern. While the island has a generous and passionate community, there is a struggle to recruit individuals with the necessary expertise. Financial pressures and lack of time further exacerbate this issue. Many individuals, particularly parents, face childcare costs and other financial obligations that limit their availability for volunteering. This results in a loss of potential human capital for both the associational activity in general and the third sector in particular.

Founder syndrome is another challenge, with multiple organisations often overlapping in their missions due to the personal passions of their founders. This can lead to duplication of efforts and a lack of collaboration, as some founders may prioritise their roles and status over collective efficiency.

Funding concerns are prevalent, with many participants worried about decreasing financial support and the lack of guaranteed continuity for charitable organisations. This uncertainty makes it difficult for charities to plan and sustain their operations effectively.

Leadership within organisations also received mixed reviews. While there are capable leaders, some participants felt there was a lack of quality leadership across various sectors. This issue affects organisational focus and member engagement, with some leaders perceived as self–promoting rather than driving meaningful strategic outcomes.

Shortage of skilled volunteers

Not only are rates of volunteering decreasing, but there is also a perception that there is a shortage of skilled volunteers. The following comments illustrate this point:

People here are extremely caring, extremely generous, and really passionate about the island. So we're really, really fortunate. But what we're really missing at the moment is skilled volunteers. … Charities will struggle for finance for a corporate secretariat, and yet we have such a wealth of experience on the island, but somehow, we can't tap into that because people are so busy and time-critical. You know, time short. … So all well-intentioned but amazing with the pool that we have that, that the charity is really, really struggling to get those skilled individuals, and that's what we need our networks like IoD and the others to try and help link those skill sets. … The idea would be to release people and their time. P14

You get quite a wide range of communities. Some people have got the skill set from previous [experience] … and some people who don't necessarily have the right skills or intentions. P4

Lack of time and financial pressures

At least part of the reason why people believe there is a shortage of skilled volunteers is personal financial pressures creating a lack of time for volunteering.

I do find, at the moment, it is around the cost of childcare, so a lot of a lot of mums consciously will go back to work probably much sooner than they would have hoped, because they need to financially, … And I think if there was a better universal … nursery type facility, I think it would help. … I think we lose a lot of human capital potential for the workforce, in particular, from all those bright people who did all sorts of wonderful things before they chose to have a family, and then

they really struggle to balance everything and then layering that with third sector, whatever that might be is really tough. P12

No one thought that highly skilled people did not live in Guernsey, but there seems to be shortage of them participating in civil society.

There are huge areas of need for all of these charities in areas of governance, you know, HR, marketing. And we're sitting on an island with offices stuffed full of people who are experts in governance, HR, marketing. And it's like, how on Earth can we get these two together? I thought it would be really straightforward. I thought people want to do good. They just want to know what they can do. I'll tell them what they can do. And. You know, all our problems will be solved. It just didn't happen. P19

Founder syndrome

Several participants expressed that there is some overlap or duplication of some types of organisations. Two examples were commonly cited, the various arts groups and several different but similar autism charities. Part of the explanation is that for some groups there is a problem with founder syndrome.

We've created a charitable sector, which is, you know, a monster in itself. Is that a measure of success is that we have loads of charities on Guernsey. … I mean oh, we've got another charity. Great, another charity. So, we have founder syndrome. People create charities, create a job, create roles for people and then oh aren't we doing a great job? … It's because personality clashes have happened or we have a charity started up because someone has a particular passion about something. That's fine, but actually, is there a need, and are there loads of charities doing the same things, and could we rationalise, rationalise them? P2

There is a perception that many charities exist because one person is passionate about the work they do. There are some views that often people create and maintain some organisations to give themselves a role and elevate their social status. This can result in multiple organisations with similar mandates and a general lack of collaboration cause by the concern that involving others may detract from the importance of their role.

Lack of funding

There is a concern that funding for charitable organisations may be decreasing and that continuity of funding may not be possible for many organisations.

We have a huge, huge, strong third sector…. it's not supported enough by government and corporations. … there's no continuity of guaranteed funding even for the big charities who have been around for a long time. P25

Leadership

There were mixed perspectives expressed by participants about the nature of leadership of organisations in Guernsey. While there are good people, there were some views expressed about a lack of quality leadership, at least in some areas.

Leadership needs to retain the big picture and make sure that that's not lost in the details. And maybe we, as an island, get too caught up in the details, and the leadership doesn't help us keep focused on the big picture. P1

I think if we can find a way to get to more outcomes-based leadership, I think that would be very exciting. P1

The island doesn't have great leaders across a lot of sectors. And I'm not just talking about government. It doesn't have great leaders across a lot of areas. I think the majority of the areas that I work in are not, we have some great expertise within the island, but it's not at the forefront of where decision-making [happens]. P2

I first came to the island I joined [an association] … [But] the change of leadership or the lack of focus, you know, and to be frank, perhaps the lack of quality of individual at the top of the tree, whatever tree that might be really, really, really does matter in engaging or disengaging a membership… I surrendered my membership … when the new [leader started] because I could see exactly what the strategy was. It was a self-promotion. P12

Survey results

The following key theme related to the weaknesses of organisational capacity in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

Many groups and organisations in Guernsey suffer from founder syndrome, where people seek or create roles for prestige and social status.

The survey results indicated a moderate level of agreement with this statement, with 49.6% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 22.6% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree, with a high rate of people indicating they are unsure at 28%.

Legend:
- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
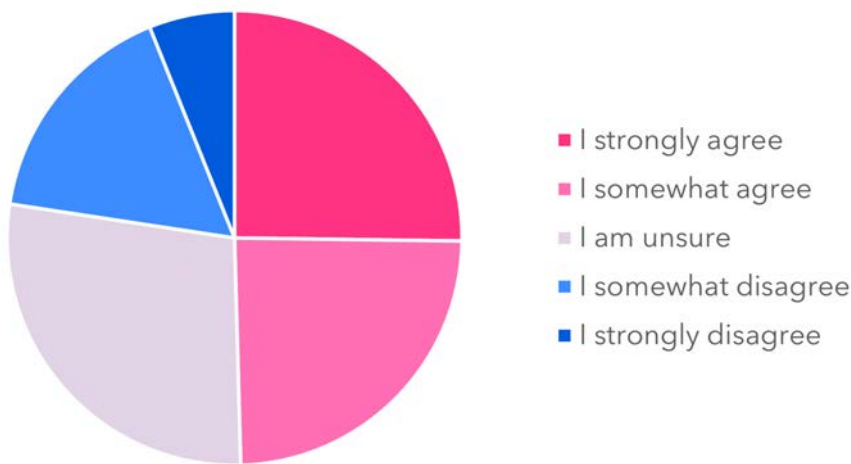
Figure 11. Results from the survey related to the weaknesses of organisational capacity

Summary of the weaknesses related to organisational capacity

Despite strong community engagement in Guernsey, organisational capacity faces challenges. There is a shortage of skilled volunteers due to financial pressures and time constraints, particularly for parents. "Founder syndrome" leads to overlapping organisations, causing inefficiencies. Funding uncertainty makes it difficult for charities to plan long-term. Additionally, leadership quality varies, with some leaders seen as self-promoting rather than focusing on strategic outcomes. These issues weaken the overall effectiveness of Guernsey's organisations.

Opportunities related to organisational capacity

The analysis of findings related to organisational capacity has highlighted several opportunities to improve social capital in Guernsey. Here are some key areas for improvement.

Leverage skilled professionals

Tapping into the pool of skilled professionals on the island can address the shortage of expertise in community organisations. Encouraging corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives where companies allow employees to volunteer their skills can be highly beneficial. Professional networks and associations can also facilitate pro bono work and skill-based volunteering. By leveraging the expertise of skilled professionals, organisations can improve their operational efficiency and effectiveness, enhancing their contribution to social capital.

Invest in leadership development

Developing strong leadership within community organisations is vital for their success. Providing training and mentorship programs for current and emerging leaders can build their capacity to manage and grow their organisations. Leadership development initiatives can focus on strategic planning, governance, fundraising, and community engagement. Strong leaders can drive their organisations to achieve greater impact, thereby contributing to the overall social capital of Guernsey.

Threats related to organisational capacity

Guernsey's organisational capacity faces several threats. An aging population reduces the pool of active volunteers and increases demand for services, straining resources and weakening social capital. Rising living costs leave individuals with less disposable income and time for volunteering, limiting the human and financial resources available to organisations. Additionally, a growing trend towards individualism diminishes the collective ethos necessary for strong organisational capacity, reducing participation in communal activities and weakening social networks and social cohesion. These factors collectively threaten the sustainability and effectiveness of community and charitable organisations in Guernsey.

Aging population

Guernsey's aging population poses a threat to strength and capacity of associational organisations. As more residents enter retirement, the pool of active volunteers diminishes, reducing the availability of individuals who can contribute their time and skills to various organisations. This demographic shift can also increase the demand for services provided by charitable and community groups, further straining their resources. The reduced volunteer base impacts the sustainability and effectiveness of these organisations, weakening the overall social capital of the community.

Increasing cost of living

The rising cost of living in Guernsey exacerbates financial pressures on individuals and families, leaving less disposable income and time for volunteerism and participation in community activities. People are increasingly preoccupied with meeting their basic needs, which diminishes their capacity to engage in volunteer work or support charitable organisations. This financial strain limits the human and financial resources available to organisations, hindering their ability to function effectively and diminishing the community's social capital.

Individualism

The growing trend of individualism threatens the collective ethos necessary for strong organisational capacity. As people become more focused on personal achievements and individual pursuits, their willingness to engage in communal activities and volunteerism decreases. This shift undermines the sense of community and shared responsibility that is crucial for the success of charitable and community organisations. Reduced participation in group activities weakens social networks and diminishes the social cohesion that underpins Guernsey's social capital.

"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."

HENRY FORD

Connectedness – Roles, rules and procedures (including law, enforcement, and policies)

The structures of social organisations, such as roles, rules, and procedures, enable people to collaborate more efficiently, predictably, and productively, making it an important aspect of social capital. Roles create interaction patterns that incentivise and motivate people to engage and cooperate in pursuit of shared objectives, and roles enhance the coordination of activities, mobilisation of resources, decision–making processes, and resolution of conflicts. Rules, guidelines, precedents, and procedures, along with their application and enforcement, create expectations for the nature of social action and shape what people do and how they relate to each other.

Summary of findings related to roles, rules and procedures

The nature of roles, rules, and procedures in Guernsey's civil society impact social capital in various ways. On the strength side, Guernsey benefits from a strong community spirit where many people feel empowered to take on roles that can make a tangible impact. This is bolstered by prosocial attitudes reflected in local rules, such as the informal "Guernsey Way" of community cooperation, and the island's political independence, which allows for flexible and locally tailored decision–making.

However, weaknesses also exist. Some individuals seek roles primarily for social status, leading to competition and reduced collaboration, especially within the third sector. There are negative perceptions of leadership, particularly in politics, where leaders are often seen as self–serving or ineffective. The political system's resistance to change, driven by nostalgia and a conservative mindset, further hampers progress. Additionally, the legal system is perceived by some as opaque and inaccessible, which undermines trust and exacerbates social inequality. These factors collectively weaken Guernsey's social capital, making it more challenging to foster a cohesive and inclusive community.

Table 7 summarises the main findings related to roles, rules and procedures in Guernsey.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
> People are motivated to participate in civil society and take on roles. > Many rules and procedures are aligned with the Guernsey Way. > Guernsey's independence and ability to self-govern provide the option of being nimble to changing requirements, which gives many people optimism.	> There is a perception many people seek roles for social status and prestige. > There are strong negative perceptions of politicians and the mechanisms of government. > The desire for status and prestige can be a barrier to collaboration. > There is a perception that the law and advocacy support is out of reach for many members of society. > There is a feeling many laws and legal systems need to be modernised. > Many people feel they cannot speak out due to their role.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
> Promoting collaboration and reducing overlap > Encouraging inclusivity and diversity in roles > Enhancing leadership development > Fostering a culture of continuous improvement > Building trust through transparency and accountability	> Individualism > Deepening social divides > Social isolation > Slow or lack of change

Table 7. Analysis of roles, rules and procedures in Guernsey

The following sections will explore the research findings related to the strengths and weaknesses of roles, rules and procedures in Guernsey.

Strengths related to roles, rules and procedures

Participants did not have a lot of things to say about the strengths of roles, rules and procedures. However, this does not mean that there are no strengths, just that they were not at the forefront of participants' awareness. This is not unusual, because most people do not think too much about the ways in which social structures and their associated roles, rules, and procedures influence the nature of our actions.

Some key findings did emerge related to the strengths of roles, rules, and procedures in Guernsey's civil society. Participants described how many people are motivated to take on community development and support roles within society, the prosocial nature of many local rules, and the island's political independence. Strong and committed leadership was also identified as crucial to driving positive change.

Although there are many notable exceptions, many of the established ways of life in Guernsey reflect the community's prosocial values. The "Guernsey Way," which emphasises community cooperation without the need for rigid rules, exemplifies this attitude, although it was acknowledged that such an approach has its limitations and should not be used as excuse for changes to legislation and procedures.

Guernsey's political independence and ability to self-govern were seen as major strengths, providing the flexibility and autonomy to make decisions tailored to local needs. However, there was a shared sentiment that this potential is not fully realised, with participants expressing frustration that necessary changes are not happening quickly enough. Despite the island's capacity to be agile and innovative, many believe that it is not taking full advantage of these strengths.

Motivation to take on roles in civil society

People feel that they can take on a role and have an impact, including being seen for the work they do. Participants indicated that people feel empowered by the potential to achieve meaningful outcomes through the work they do in the community.

If you feel like you're a bigger part of a smaller community, then you've got more impact, whereas, in the UK, we probably have no, you know, kind of no one person. You need more people together. P16

Some participants talked about the importance of having strong and committed leaders.

So having that leader at the top who is absolutely committed to the cause [relative to self-promotion], whether

that be in the public, private or third sector, is so, so important. P12

Prosocial rules and laws

Several participants talked about the anti-discrimination legislation that was passed recently.

We brought in discrimination legislation in October. We were one of the last places in the modern world that didn't have any [anti-discrimination legislation] and the fight we had to get that in was ridiculous. … [what was the reason?] Because we can all be nice to each other. P25

This represents a common trend in Guernsey. For example, we don't need stop signs because we're Guernsey people, we can just get along. We can filter in turn, which is emblematic of an attitude that exists across many areas of society. An attitude that we don't need rules because

we're nice and friendly we get along and we can make it work. We have the "Guernsey Way".

While this attitude is not always effective, just how filter in turn does not always work well, it is a prosocial attitude that permeates the rules, laws, and processes of Guernsey society. This does not mean that the current legislation does not need to be changed or updated. However, it is not difficult to see the spirit of community solidarity embedded in roles, rules and procedures of daily life in Guernsey.

Independence

There was a common view that Guernsey's political independence and the ability to self-govern is a strength, but perhaps underrealised currently.

Like we can make any decision we want, you know, we can be really flexible. We can be really agile. There's no reason why we couldn't be ******* epic. Everything, like, we're holding ourselves back. P20

You can go and talk and influence any of our member of Government. We're a sovereign state. We can do our own legislation, we can make it slightly different to anywhere we want. We can we have agency over our schools and our school system. You know we currently choose the UK system but, like, why would we choose that? You know why? Why would we not go for something that is considered better? P8

Survey results

The following key theme related to the strengths of roles, rules and procedures in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

Guernsey has a strong community spirit where many people feel empowered to take on roles that can make a tangible impact.

The survey results indicated a high level of agreement with this statement, with 75.4% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 11.9% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. There were no statistically significant differences between different demographic characteristics.
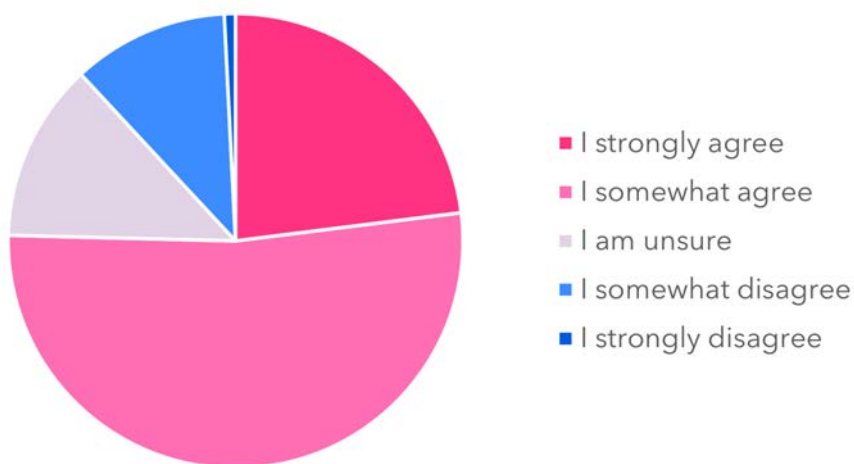
Figure 12. Results from the survey related to the strengths of roles, rules and procedures

Summary of the strengths related to roles, rules and procedures

Participants identified some strengths in roles, rules, and procedures, though these were not widely discussed. Key strengths include strong community motivation to take on roles, reflecting the island's prosocial values and the "Guernsey Way" of cooperation without rigid rules. Guernsey's political independence and self-governance are also seen as significant strengths, providing flexibility to address local needs. This strength was typically expressed while commenting that the opportunity is not being grasped. The participants believed that changes are required, and Guernsey has the opportunity to be agile and flexible to changing circumstances, but that changes are not happening enough and fast enough. The perceived lack of change is explored further in the next section.

Weaknesses related to roles, rules and procedures

The weaknesses of roles, rules, and procedures in Guernsey's civil society highlight several issues that can undermine social capital. One concern was the tendency for individuals to seek roles in associations and charities primarily for social status, rather than genuine commitment to the cause. This motivation can lead to competition, lack of collaboration, and the proliferation of overlapping organisations with similar missions, ultimately diluting efforts and creating barriers to engagement.

Negative perceptions of leadership, especially in the political and third sectors, were also prevalent, with many participants expressing distrust in leaders who are seen as self-serving or ineffective. This distrust, combined with a political system that is perceived as resistant to change, contributes to a slow pace of progress and a reluctance to address pressing issues such as economic diversification and social welfare reforms.

Governance challenges, including a perceived lack of decisive action and a tendency to "kick the can down the road," further exacerbate these weaknesses. The resistance to change is often attributed to a nostalgic attachment to the past and a conservative mindset, particularly among the older and wealthier segments of the population.

Additionally, the legal system in Guernsey is viewed by some as a barrier to social cohesion, with concerns about the lack of transparency, accessibility, and fairness. The high cost of legal advocacy and the influence of powerful networks are seen as factors that undermine trust in the rule of law, particularly among less affluent residents. These issues collectively weaken the social capital of Guernsey, making it more challenging to foster a cohesive and inclusive community.

Tendency to seek roles for status

Although many people feel empowered to take on roles in Guernsey society, some participants highlighted a tendency for people to seek roles to obtain higher social status and prestige. Roles within associations, charities and other organisations garnish a positive social image and status, and some participants suggested that these motivations undermine the effectiveness of some groups.

People again value their own kind of reputation and so on. And there's, if you are in those industries, if let's say you are appointed as a head of one of the committees, know you, you will get in the local paper, you will get in local magazines people have read. P16

That's all it is [people want to carve out a space and a role and an identity for themselves and to be seen]. The power

trip kind of thing. They want to look, and they want to be seen, obviously, because Guernsey is so small as well. P22

The tendency to seek roles for social status was believed to be common in the third sector and related to several problems, including creating barriers to engagement and collaboration.

It's definitely true [each of the leaders of those charities will have a different vision for how things will be done, and they don't want to… if they join forces, then they would no longer be the leader, and they would lose that role and therefore that identity, that status, that ego.] … And it creates sort of barriers and negativity to getting involved in some of this stuff. …It feels negative because it feels competitive. It feels confrontational. It's not great. P1

It does seem like particularly maybe within the third sector, there's a lot of that going

on, that people create their role and their position, and they see their importance within society based on that. Yeah. And then someone else creates something different. And then, you know, but hang on, you'd be taking away my importance if we were to work together. P21

Participants indicated people are not always taking on roles for the right reasons.

You have to either feel passionately about something enough to want to give your skills and your time to be on the board … or want to still have that position of power and authority. So, you might be a retired CEO, you still want to be in charge of people. So, you know, you become a board and trustee, and you're the chair, which doesn't always mean that the most helpful person is there. P19

Participants described situations where there are multiple organisations with similar missions. For example, several participants said there are several Alzheimer's charities.

There's a lot of overlap in things that go on here, particularly in the third sector. That's where my mind went, and I don't think that comes from a lack of desire to collaborate. It just comes from people thinking they're not doing it how I want to do it. So, I'm going to do it better and perhaps that is a lack of collaboration. So, you end up with a lot of charities looking very similar. P10

So, we have founder syndrome. People create charities, create a job. Create roles for people, and then oh, aren't we doing a great job? But it's usually come out through if we have four Alzheimer's charities, I don't know if we do. But, it's because personality clashes have happened or we have a charity started up because someone has a particular passion about something. That's fine, but actually, is there a need, and are there loads of charities doing the same things, and could we rationalise them? P2

Negative perceptions of leaders

A common theme was distrust of politicians and negative perceptions of leaders in general. While some participants had positive things to say, most expressed negative perceptions.

There's a little bit of an ego thing that comes into it. So, it sort of drives itself to a certain extent. So, people who stand for government quite like the idea of going in and solving these problems. They quite like the idea of being the name who went in and they're kind of putting themselves up. … They're really happy to go in and fly the flag and say, "I'm the saviour, I'm going to fix this". It's kind of a dangerous thing to do [considering the reputational risk and the importance of that in Guernsey]. P1

Government incompetence is "burning" some individuals the willingness to step up and contribute to society is being eroded. I write re my own feelings - I am 5th generation local, father lived here in the occupation, etc - but law changes have hurt us financially, the poor culture re productivity within the civil service vs. business offends my sense of what's right and wrong for the island (I've worked in it and have a relative who still does - this is not purely anecdotal) and I find myself less and less determined to stay and contribute. This makes me sad, but I reluctantly admit that the deep disillusionment is real. S3

There is a general frustration that the civil service is an obstacle rather than an enabler of business. S8

Good politicians are crucial. However, how can laypersons voting for self-promoting laypersons who have no political background and quite likely do not possess the required skills to effectively run an Island work? S9

Some participants described a gender imbalance in leadership and a tendency for men to take on roles for status while not undertaking the work required to progress the association's mission.

It's full of women [engagement events], but if you go to any third-sector higher-level boards, it's all men, and you don't see them at the other events doing the actual donkey work. You've got these people that sit above trying to take all the kind of kudos and praise and that. And then they actually never do [the work]. P25

Governance and perceived lack of change

Participants expressed a widespread perception that there is a deep-seated resistance to change in Guernsey and that change is happening too slowly to adapt to new challenges and opportunities. Almost all participants had something to say about this issue, with many of them speaking passionately about challenges. This can have significant impacts on social capital when people feel that social structures do not represent their needs and interests.

Many participants pointed to a strong nostalgia for the past, where the "good old days" are idealised, leading to a preference for maintaining the status quo rather than embracing new ideas or innovations.

There is, of course, this idea that the old days were the good days. And therefore, if you do nothing, you stay still, and that's good. P1

I think there's a bit of an ideology as well, but actually, we loved Guernsey when we had lots of green spaces, and the roads weren't so busy, and we were very happy as a community. … some people who actually didn't really like … [what] the evolution of the world has done to Guernsey, and they quite liked it when it was a more tight-knit local community. P24

Some participants believed the issue to be generational:

We're not listening to anybody else [other than the older generation]. … Everybody listens to them. They are in charge, but their views and opinions aren't necessarily good for the next couple of generations down. … It's like hitting your head against a brick wall sometimes. Like you're never going to get through to them. P22

Although not everyone thought it was about the good old days, instead citing mistrust in government.

I think there is a historic mistrust in government. … I think it's about making sure decisions are clear, well-evidenced and articulated… I think that's where the mistrust comes from. … I don't think it's about the good old days. I think actually

people recognise it needs to change, it needs. Just we don't trust the people who are actually at the steering wheel. P17

The political system in Guernsey, which operates largely on consensus, is seen as both a strength and a weakness.

[Guernsey has] pretty much a consensus government, which leans towards small C conservativism, but with some, the scale of the island makes this unusual and sometimes, from our perspective, quite good decisions… The way decisions are made in government, it is sometimes easier to get relatively progressive policies over the line because we don't have 620 whatever MPs to convince. We don't have an opposition party tearing you to shreds. Through consensus arguments, you can't get the number of people on your side. And actually, get some quite progressive policies through. P27

And what happens is nothing happens, and that is the problem. It's just nothing happens because, well, you just never get collaboration between 38 people. P7

The current political system can lead to a situation where necessary actions are continually deferred, and bold initiatives are avoided in favour of maintaining a cautious, low-risk approach.

I think Guernsey is quite, they're really good in a crisis, but not necessarily good with daily problems. They like to kick it down. They can until it becomes like something that they can't avoid, and then they'll get on it, and then they'll probably do a good job of fixing it, but I like to leave it till it become yeah, making those decisions early …Like they are quite risk-averse. P20

But not everyone saw it the same way. Some participants celebrated the successes and things that have been achieved.

Well, where there is consensus, there is action. … It's not as if we're in the dark ages, you know? So, this notion that we don't get things done just isn't true, right? Like it's a vibrant modern… But we still fight the perception versus reality are quite different here, because we're always frustrated about what we can't get done but not realising how far we've come. P4

Guernsey Finance … is pivotal to the success of a lot of financial organisations over here and goes to finance. I think all round people will say they do a bloody good job. Yeah. And that is a government sort of funded sort of promotional body…. this is a success story. You know, if it wasn't the government that would not be working. The digital greenhouse, which I think is not a success story as what it should be. But the very fact that the government invested in got that off the ground. That is definitely putting their head above the parapet. P17

The situation is complicated, as illustrated by the following comment from a survey participant:

I think the island is insular in its thinking at some levels ("the Guernsey Way" can be cited as a reason to not change) *and* in other areas, the historic determination to take advantage of pseudo-independence from mainland UK / Europe leads to significant innovation (even if mostly tax-driven). S1

There were widespread views that there is resistance to addressing major issues such as economic diversification, taxation, housing affordability, and social welfare reforms, where the inclination is to delay decisions rather than take proactive measures.

We should be raising more tax. We should be investing in education and we should be solving some of these economic black spots more creatively, and we're not. Or are anywhere close to that because the politicians don't trust each other. P9

Social cohesion was great during the pandemic but has dissipated. Housing is a key issue. The lack of affordable housing particularly affects the young people in our community. These people represent Guernsey's future. My university educated children have moved to the UK. Incomers, including my colleagues, who are late twenties to mid-thirties are unlikely to stay because of the housing situation. However, the Government is paralysed and appears to be taking no steps to deal with this issue. S7

Not everyone thought change was necessary:

Guernsey is a stunning island where the essence of community thrives on accountability and shared values. While it might seem insular at first glance, this very characteristic fosters a sense of belonging. We may be quick to judge, but with time, it's easy to understand why locals hold their way of life in such high regard. Perhaps the island doesn't need much change—it's unique just as it is. To truly thrive here, however, we must focus on elevating our standards, particularly in education and affordable travel. The freedom to move and explore is crucial, yet many local families find themselves unable to afford it. Prioritizing quality education and accessible travel is essential to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. Ultimately, Guernsey's imperfections contribute to its charm. By enhancing educational opportunities and travel options while preserving our core community values, we can make this island an even better place for all its inhabitants. S2

Participants talked about the need for change and the emergent risks and forces that necessitate change.

I think the biggest risk to Guernsey is complacency about all the risks that face us out there in the wide world. There are risks. And if and we know, we know that what we know, what the one thing we do know is every single leading industry that has been the core of our economy has been of finite length in time. Yeah. So there's no reason to think that the finance won't be the same and, you know, diversifying our economy and having more strings to our body just seems to be really important. … I think there's a complacency about what risk it is and what is seen as prudent. P8

Moreover, there is a perception that the island's leadership, including both political figures and civil servants, is often driven by self-interest or a desire to avoid controversy and potential reputational damage.

I mean, but if you think about it, if you're a civil servant and you lose your job, you have to leave. So the costs are high. P4

People [are] not sticking their neck out. People don't want to be the face of asking for change. … people don't want to be the person rocking the boat and asking for it, it's like just you know you've got a good life; just carry on. P25

The barriers are self-interest, and that self-interest takes over. Yeah. self-interest of a particular group, certainly a particular ideology. And the unwillingness to either compromise or work together for in a joint purpose. P2

Lack a bit of the cultural will to make change happen, everyone's quite comfortable. All the haves are quite comfortable. We have some quite comfortable, you know, do they want to make any changes? You know, what's in it for them? P20

He [a civil servant] didn't want to, you know, be seen as being doing anything too radical in the eyes of his mates. P9

I think to some extent that culture [simple, easy route to get a job for life] within the public sector still exists. You know, they think there's no performance measurement management. You know the bonuses that the pension is eye wateringly generous. Salaries are now on par with finance. You know, you don't have to do 14 hour days necessarily, you know. P12

I worry, you know, the classic issue that the political cycle is X number of years and that is a barrier to change because your reputation is always kind of your number one consideration because there's always the next election. P1

One participant provided a specific example:

They've been worked through [changes to taxation], and they've been very sensibly thought through by experts, and the politicians have just wimped. P9

This can result in a lack of decisive action and a tendency to "kick the can down the road" until problems reach a crisis point.

Guernsey is very reluctant to change very. … there is stuff that has been talked about in Guernsey since I came to Guernsey [30 years ago], and it hasn't happened. … inaction doesn't necessarily mean we're keeping the status quo. P24

There is, I'd say, probably the core political philosophy on Guernsey is, let's wait and see. … the best example at the moment of

a really huge issue that isn't going to go away, and yet we keep on finding ways to defer decision-making is around taxation or really around revenue raising. P27

We have an ageing demographic, and we have people who are reluctant to change, and there's probably not enough people who are enticed by the government to go and sit in there and actually feel as though they can make a change. It's pretty irrelevant what deputies we have anyway. If you put 38 cardboard cutouts, it probably wouldn't make too much difference because the island is not run by that legislator; it's run by the civil service, and that is who runs the island, right? And that is the protection because they're not going to upset the apple cart. Because life is too good for them. P2

There's been this perception of, well, it's always been done that way. So we just carry on doing it that way. … Guernsey's known as being like a, you know, a stubborn place. And to me, stubbornness is about not changing. P25

Many participants described Guernsey as conservative with a small C. The aging population and the influence of wealthy, conservative residents further entrench this resistance to change, as these groups often prioritise preserving the status quo over pursuing innovative solutions that could benefit the broader community.

I think Guernsey as a place is conservative with the small C and more risk averse. And as it's a finance centre and like wealth management place, like you know, that's probably to be expected, but it means that we're not as dynamic as we want to in the past about doing new things and having the confidence to do new and exciting things and be world leaders at stuff like you know there's no reason why we can't be. P8

There is like this want for change in some quarters but still a real grip on tradition, and I think most people probably would describe Guernsey as conservative with a small C yeah, possibly I'd possibly say that with a capital, but I think there is quite a fear of doing bold things. … the concept of those bolder ideas is absolutely just mind boggling to some people. P10

One participant described the frustration of constantly running into barriers against meaningful change.

And maintaining the energy ... The sense that you're trying to do good. You've got a vision for the future. You're putting all of your effort into it in the best way that you can, with the best of intentions. And it keeps being dragged back. It keeps being dragged back whether it's by the detail or whether it's by sort of preconceptions historical bias things were better as they were. Whatever there's 1000 reasons why. This gets dragged back and maintaining the energy through that is hard. P1

Additionally, there is concern that the island's focus on the finance sector has led to a narrow, backward-looking perspective that stifles creativity and entrepreneurship. Participants noted that while Guernsey has been innovative in the past, particularly in developing its horticulture and finance industries, there is now a sense of complacency. This reluctance to take risks and explore new opportunities is seen as a significant threat to the island's future, particularly as global economic conditions evolve.

If we embraced change at the start of the finance industry and at the start of horticulture, both Post World War II, then it [being prepared to change] wasn't lost from the occupation. That's not what squashed entrepreneurship. It's something that's more recent. Maybe it's the men with the grey shoes, the finance wonks. P8

I think the evidence suggests that we are more conservative than we have been in the past. ... the stuff that happened with growing [the horticulture industry] in the early years was quite radical, like fundamental change of land use. Going all in, like scaling cooperatives. ... there was a kind of rapid change with shared values, shared direction, shared vision. ... All those things [big historical changes in Guernsey], there was a kind of seizing the day. And I think if whatever comes after finance turned up today, said hi, I'm here. I'm the new thing. Here's some data. I don't think we'd seize the day. I think we've lost that. ... And actually, interestingly, it's always the finance people who are going no, no, no. ... maybe they're skewing towards finance people who are intrinsically backward

looking, all they do is look backwards at what's happened in the past. Maybe that is a factor. Maybe that is what's weighing it down, that you won't accept a new thing because you don't have the data points. P8

Several participants discussed how Guernsey has the potential for great things but that it has not realised these opportunities. One participant described it as mediocrity or "beigeness":

I think Guernsey has this kind of complacency acceptance that being as good as or a little bit worse than something in the UK is fine when actually we have all the cards in our hand that we could be exceptional, all this stuff. And why are we accepting? Not quite mediocrity, but a certain beigeness about things when we could have something so much cooler. And I think education is one of those things. P8

Overall, just about every participant had poignant views about politicians, the mechanisms of government, and the lack of change or slow speed of change in Guernsey.

Perceptions of the legal system

Several participants talked about rights in Guernsey society and concerns about how the legal system presents barriers for community solidarity and prosocial actions.

We've only just got discrimination laws in October last year. And so we don't have a very rights based society at all. P25

The way people view humans on this island, and when I say people, you know, the people who make the decisions, politicians. You know, [there is] no [attention to] human rights. I'm actually kind of speechless because there is so much prejudice. P19

Some participants described a lack of trust in the legal system and the ways in which the current system undermines social capital.

I've lost my trust in the law. And you know, from a social perspective, I just think how I just think trust in the law, and I, I don't think it's there to help social cohesion. I think it's they're doing more harm than good, and that's a real thing to say, but that I've... You know, that's my experience. P9

They described the costs associated with legal advocacy and how it is out of reach for certain sectors of society, creating disconnects, reinforcing inequality, and weakening trust in social systems.

I just think the disconnect … that people, you know, in the lower salary bounds would absolutely feel that the law and advocacy support is absolutely out of their reach, and there is a complete disconnect there. P10

A lot of our laws remain from, you know, far too long ago. I feel just propping up our lawyer businesses. There are heaps of things here that you have to go to court. For that in the UK, you could have just done it, you know, with probably a £30 form or something. … So whether it's child maintenance, name changes, really simple things like that, you're then looking at people with hardly, you know, enough money to put food on the table. How? How do you go to court to get the maintenance that you need? P10

Survey results

The following key theme related to the weaknesses of roles, rules and procedures in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

There are strong negative perceptions and concerns in the community relating to the system and mechanisms of government and politicians generally.

The survey results indicated a very high level of agreement with this statement, with 90.4% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 3.2% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. There were no statistically significant differences between different demographic characteristics.
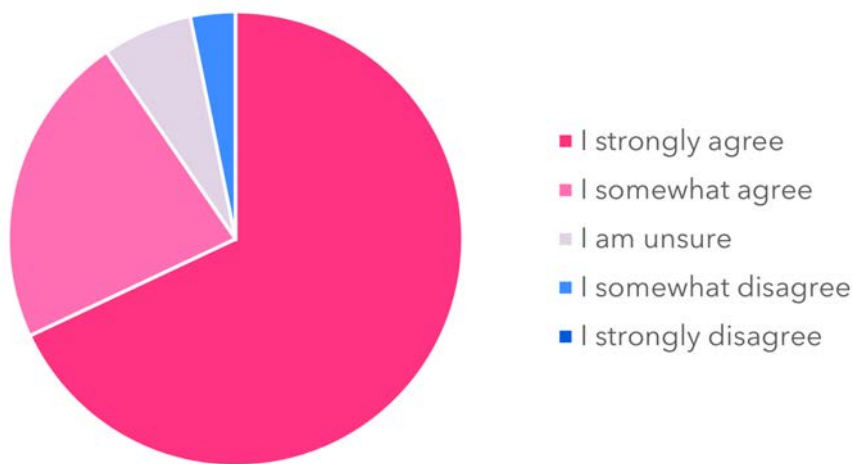
Figure 13. Results from the survey related to the weaknesses of roles, rules and procedures

Summary of the weaknesses related to organisational capacity

The weaknesses related to roles, rules, and procedures in Guernsey's civil society stem from several key issues that impact social capital. Participants highlighted the tendency for individuals to seek roles within organisations for social status rather than genuine commitment, leading to competition, a lack of collaboration, and overlapping organisations with similar missions. Negative perceptions of leadership, especially in politics and the third sector, were common, with many viewing leaders as self-serving and ineffective. This distrust, coupled with a perceived resistance to change, slows progress on important social and economic reforms. Governance challenges, such as indecisiveness and a nostalgic attachment to the past, further contribute to a lack of action on pressing issues. The legal system also faces criticism for being inaccessible, costly, and lacking transparency, which undermines trust and exacerbates social divides. These factors collectively weaken the overall social capital in Guernsey, making it harder to foster a cohesive and inclusive community.

Opportunities related to roles, rules and procedures

The analysis of findings related to roles, rules and procedures has highlighted several opportunities to improve social capital in Guernsey. Here are some key areas for improvement:

Promoting collaboration and reducing overlap

Fostering greater collaboration between organisations with similar missions has significant potential to improve social capital. Encouraging partnerships and reducing the overlap of roles and organisations can lead to more efficient resource use and more effective community outcomes. While work has already started on this issue, more can be done.

Encouraging inclusivity and diversity in roles

By actively promoting inclusivity and diversity in leadership and participation within government and non-government organisations, Guernsey can better reflect the needs and values of its entire population. This could involve targeted outreach to underrepresented groups, offering leadership development programs, and creating more accessible pathways to involvement. Broadening participation helps to break down social divides and ensures that a wider array of perspectives and skills are brought into community initiatives.

Enhancing leadership development

Investing in leadership development is crucial to improving the quality and effectiveness of those who take on roles within Guernsey's leadership. This could include leadership training programs emphasising community-building, ethical governance, and strategic thinking. Strong, committed leaders are essential for driving positive change and inspiring others to contribute to the community, ultimately strengthening social capital.

Fostering a culture of continuous improvement

Cultivating a mindset of continuous improvement within government and non-government organisations can encourage ongoing adaptation and innovation. A culture that values learning, feedback, and adaptation will help Guernsey stay resilient and responsive to emerging social and economic challenges.

Building trust through transparency and accountability

Strengthening trust in Guernsey's institutions can significantly enhance social capital. This can be achieved by increasing transparency in decision-making processes, ensuring accountability for those in leadership roles, and maintaining clear and open communication with the public. Trust is a foundational element of social capital, and by reinforcing it, Guernsey can foster a more engaged and cohesive community.

By adopting these types of opportunities, Guernsey can enhance its social capital, ensuring that its community remains strong, connected, and capable of facing future challenges together.

Threats to social capital related to roles, rules and procedures

Threats to Guernsey's social capital include rising individualism, deepening social divides, social isolation, and resistance to change. As people prioritise personal goals over community engagement, social bonds can weaken. Economic disparities undermine trust and collaboration, and social isolation reduces meaningful interactions, which are essential for community solidarity.

Individualism

Individualism is seen as increasingly prevalent in many parts of the world, including Guernsey, leading to a focus on personal achievements and goals rather than collective efforts. This shift can erode the sense of community and shared responsibility that underpins strong social capital. As people prioritise their own interests, the willingness to engage in community activities and volunteer roles diminishes, weakening the fabric of Guernsey's civil society.

Social divides

Deepening social divides are another critical threat, exacerbated by economic disparities and the tendency of certain roles and organisations to cater to specific social groups. When roles within associations or community organisations are sought for status rather than genuine commitment, it can create barriers to engagement for those outside these circles. This not only limits collaboration but also reinforces existing social inequalities, leading to a more fragmented community where trust and mutual support are eroded.

Social isolation

Social isolation is closely linked to both individualism and deepening social divides. As people become more disconnected from one another, whether due to economic pressures, lack of time, or a focus on personal goals, the opportunities for meaningful social interaction decrease. This isolation is particularly concerning in a small community like Guernsey, where strong interpersonal connections are vital for maintaining social capital. When people feel isolated, they are less likely to participate in community activities, further weakening the bonds that hold society together.

Slow or lack of change

The slow or lack of change within Guernsey's political and social systems presents a significant threat to social capital. Resistance to change, driven by nostalgia, conservatism, or fear of reputational damage, prevents the community from adapting to new challenges and opportunities. This stagnation can lead to frustration and disengagement among residents, particularly younger generations, who may feel that the current systems do not address their needs or reflect their values. Without timely and effective change, Guernsey risks falling behind in addressing critical social and economic issues, further weakening the cohesion and resilience of its society.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PREDISPOSITIONS IN GUERNSEY?

The predispositions component of social capital includes people's values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and understandings that influence the potential for social action and the nature of social action when it occurs. For strong social capital, people must be virtuous and inclined to act prosocially towards others.

Six key themes related to the predispositions component of social capital were explored in this research:

1. Reputation, including trustworthiness (relational trust)

2. Social trust

3. Norms, obligations, and expectations, including culture

4. Goodwill, solidarity and empathy

5. Social identity and belonging

6. Shared goals, purpose, language, codes, narratives

The next sections will explore the findings of these themes related to predispositions.

Predispositions – Reputation including trustworthiness (relational trust)

Trust and trustworthiness are fundamental to the nature of social capital since they are vital for any form of social interaction or exchange. While social trust is important at a societal level (which is explored in another section), the nature of people's reputation is essential at the level of relationships and everyday social interaction within their social circles. People's reputation, particularly their reputation for trustworthiness, represents an important stock of potential social action at the individual level.

Summary of findings related to reputation and relational trust

In Guernsey, reputation plays a significant role in fostering relational trust and prosocial behaviour within the close-knit community. The importance of maintaining a good reputation encourages accountability and better behaviour, as individuals are highly visible and their actions are subject to scrutiny. This dynamic is reinforced by frequent interactions within the community, media coverage, and the potential for reputational damage, which motivates people to act responsibly. Reputation also aids in conflict resolution and the maintenance of long-term relationships, both personal and professional, as there is a collective understanding of the need for harmonious interactions in such a small community.

However, the strong emphasis on reputation also has its downsides. The lack of anonymity can lead to risk aversion and a tendency to guard privacy, as failures and indiscretions can have lasting consequences. While some participants noted that the fear of reputational damage might be greater than the actual consequences, the perception persists, making people hesitant to take risks. Once a reputation is damaged, it can be difficult to rehabilitate, as the community tends to hold onto past mistakes, making it challenging for individuals or organisations to move beyond their history.

This persistence of reputational issues also contributes to a reluctance to collaborate, as people fear the potential negative consequences of failed partnerships. Despite a desire to work together, the perceived risks often inhibit collaboration. Additionally, some community sectors may lack the social and emotional skills necessary to build strong relationships, further complicating efforts to foster trust and cooperation in Guernsey.

Table 8 summarises the main findings related to reputation and relational trust in Guernsey.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
> Relational trust tends to be strong, which is linked to the importance of reputation. > Due to the level of connectedness and information–sharing patterns, reputation is incredibly important. > People are interested in others, and there is generally regard for others. > Information is readily shared. > The strong desire to maintain a positive reputation often drives prosocial action.	> Risk aversion and fear of judgement. > People have a long memory, and reputational problems can persist, making it difficult to move past failures, mistakes, and conflicts. > There is often a desire to conform to the group, including opinions. > People feel they need to be careful and suspicious of unknown individuals and organisations – people are cautious to "get involved", linked to reputation.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
> Break down perceptions of reputational risk and fear of judgement > Celebrate and acknowledge the prosocial action that stems from a connected community > Reduce polarisation and establish platforms for constructive dialogue	> Polarisation > Legal system > Naming and shaming practices and cultures > Distorted perceptions of reputational risk and outcomes

Table 8. Analysis of reputation in Guernsey

The following sections will explore the research findings related to the strengths and weaknesses of reputation and relational trust in Guernsey.

Strengths related to reputation and relational trust

In Guernsey, reputation plays a crucial role in both personal and professional spheres, deeply influencing behaviour and social interactions due to the island's close-knit community. The importance of maintaining a good reputation fosters relational trust and prosocial behaviour, as individuals are highly visible and accountable within their community. The lack of anonymity and the interconnectedness of residents encourage better behaviour and discourage antisocial actions, as negative behaviours can quickly lead to reputational damage. This social dynamic is reinforced by media coverage and the inevitability of repeated interactions with others in public and professional settings. Additionally, there is a perception that the importance of one's reputation aids in conflict resolution and maintaining long-term relationships, whether in friendships or business dealings, as there is a collective understanding of the need for harmonious interactions in a small community.

Relational trust and the importance of reputation

Being a small, close-knit community, people's reputations are incredibly important for their personal and professional wellbeing.

Yeah [you can trust people], your reputation is everything. … So, I think the fact that we are a community where services are based on word of mouth, you just want to do your absolute best. P6

One participant described their experience of moving to Guernsey and not having a reputation and then the benefits that they enjoyed once they developed a reputation.

Over a six-year period, we went from 4 clients to 200. But it took someone having that will to risk to put our name forward, and once we were de-risked, there was no social capital at risk by recommending us. P9

Some participants described the reasons for strong relational trust:

[What is it about Guernsey that makes it trusting?] Too small to lie. P7

[What is it about Guernsey that makes it trusting] Two degrees of separation. You can find out fairly quickly. P10

I think you probably have to be more trustworthy here because you just can't, like, you just see people more. P16

Prosocial action linked to reputation and close-knit community

Many of the participants talked about the link between the close-knit community and positive social actions. They described how the lack of anonymity, risk of reputational damage, and interconnectedness tend to make people better behaved.

In a smaller community, there's possibly, there's sort of social constraints that mores and behaviours and expectations, social codes. Possibly, and to that extent, I guess it keeps you honest because you know you're more visible and exposed. P15

I think so [better behaviour due to connectedness]. There's a lot more accountability here as, again goes back to that lack of anonymity. You're not doing something, just getting away with it. No way. … You could get pretty easily sort of shunned. P10

I like the fact that we tend to treat each other at least politely, if not kindly

- the woman you've just cut up at the filter could turn out to be the nurse when you take your child to A&E! S6

This is linked to a reputation as well as a sense of collective solidarity and the sense of togetherness with others in the same space.

We have these social feedback loops of accountability that you have to walk the same streets as the people you've done something to, and that has its own self-regulating dynamics. P4

Some participants were very clear about the reputational damage that can occur from negative behaviours and how the media institutions reinforce the spread of such information.

If you steal something from a shop and you know your name goes in the paper, or you haven't, you know, paid your parking fines or whatever your name, you know, your name does go in the paper. So there's just none of that because you just can't. I mean, there's. Yes, there's still a bit of that. But kind of, you know, industry standards, there's, you can't have your name in the paper. P16

The following comment illustrates the connection between connectedness and behaviour.

I mean, as an example, in terms of road rage, there is no point in getting ragey on the road. People do, and in fact, it alarms me if I see someone gesturing to me. Because I think. How? Why would you gesture at me? I know that I'm going to see you next week in the supermarket, you know, and I would never. P6

Some people talk about specific examples of close connections and the likelihood of knowing the other person directly or indirectly.

I've definitely gone across the road. Somebody's almost hit me, and I've shouted out something. And then, oh, it's XXXX. P17

For some participants, they have personally realised the consequences of antisocial actions. The following comical example illustrates this point:

The other day, I was cycling on The Front when somebody cut me off. I flipped them the Vs, but then I realised it was actually the ex-chief executive I used to work with. It was probably a bad move, but yeah, that

sort of stuff, you know, like that you do. You do need to be more mindful because it is a really small island, yeah, but it will sort of come back to bite you. … I think it probably does [make people better behaved]. P20

And some participants directly connected these types of experiences to empathy since the other person in these encounters is often a known individual and often one with whom they share empathy.

If I'm badly overtaken on my bike, I still might shout at them and tell them about [it], but I probably would be like, oh God, maybe I shouldn't have done that. Yeah, in case they are someone I work with, or… Maybe it sounds like it comes out of like a censorship view, but I think it comes out more of a kindness view of like, oh God, actually, that person who overtook me, I actually know them. I know they're quite a nice person. P23

The importance of reputation is not just related to positive social actions but is linked to conflict resolution.

[You have to] at least get it [conflict] amicable or whatever. Yeah, because you can't. You can't get away from that. … you've still got the same group of friends, or you both still like to go swimming at the bathing pools. … you can't behave as badly as you probably could in the UK. Because there are implications, and people hear about it, and people, yeah, you can get yourself a reputation. P20

And this relates to all types of relationships, not just friendships but also business relationships.

*I think there is a little bit of that [forgiveness]. I think there is that sort of forgiveness, and also, I think because it is a smaller island and you haven't got the luxury of being like, well, I'm not going to use that company anymore because I think there are a bunch of ***** like, well, there isn't another company that offers that service. So, you do need to retain those relationships. P20*

Survey results

The following key theme related to the strengths of reputation and relational trust in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

> **It is important to maintain a good reputation in Guernsey. I am more likely to act carefully and less likely to be antisocial towards others.**

The survey results indicated a high level of agreement with this statement, with 88.8% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 6.4% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. In general, younger people agreed with this statement a little more than people over 55.

- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
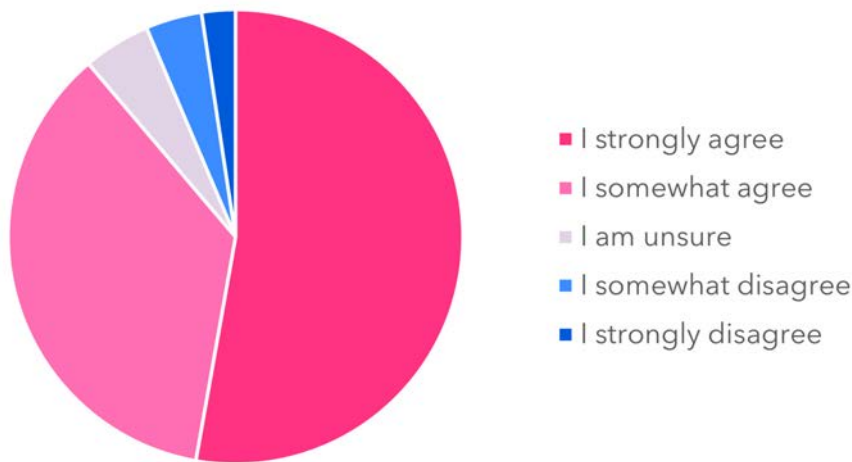
Figure 14. Results from the survey related to the strengths of reputation and relational trust

Summary of the strengths related to reputation and relational trust

In Guernsey, reputation plays a vital role in shaping social interactions and fostering relational trust within the close-knit community. The high visibility and accountability inherent in such a small society encourage prosocial behaviour, as individuals are aware that negative actions can lead to swift reputational damage. This dynamic is reinforced by the interconnectedness of residents and the media's role in publicising such behaviours. Maintaining a good reputation aids in conflict resolution and ensures the sustainability of long-term relationships, whether in personal or business contexts. As a result, the emphasis on reputation strengthens the social fabric of Guernsey, promoting a community where trust and positive social norms are upheld. The participants discussed various aspects of trust and reputation that have direct implications for social capital in Guernsey. The examples above illustrate many of the benefits. However, there are also downsides to reputation that will be explored in the next section.

Weaknesses related to reputation and relational trust

For many people, Guernsey's social life is characterised by a strong risk aversion and a need for privacy due to the close-knit nature of the community. This lack of anonymity can make failures and indiscretions more impactful, leading people to be more guarded and cautious in their actions. While some participants noted that the fear of reputational damage might be greater than the actual consequences, the perception persists, making people hesitant to take risks. Reputational problems are seen as long-lasting, with the community often holding onto past mistakes, making it difficult for individuals to rehabilitate their image. This persistence of reputation can also lead to reluctance to collaborate, as people fear the potential negative consequences of failed partnerships. The importance placed on reputation can inhibit trust and collaboration, even though there is a desire to work together. Additionally, some participants pointed out that certain community sectors lack the social and emotional skills needed to build strong relationships, further complicating efforts to foster trust and collaboration in Guernsey.

Risk aversion and the need to guard privacy

Although reputation can be a positive thing that drives positive social action, it can also cause people to be risk averse and to guard their privacy. Participants described how the lack of anonymity in Guernsey's social and professional life can mean failures and indiscretions can have significant implications.

In a bigger environment like London, I think it's easier to sort of move on from that [reputational damage] without any collateral damage. P9

Fear can be a reason not to take action.

[It is] important to look at the power of "shame" in a small community such as ours - the risk of being found out, being called out, being wrong is what holds us back... S5

However, the perception may not reflect reality. Several participants discussed the actual consequences of indiscretions may not be as bad as people think. Although undoubtedly, it can feel devastating even if the actual outcomes are not as bad.

The reality is the fear does not match the situation [civil servants are never actually fired for anything]. P4

I feel the perception of that [permanent damage to reputation] is more than the actual reality of it. Because people are nice here, and it got pretty much zero unemployment and the stuff that he's doing, and yeah. I mean, I think that's the main factors like people, people just need people with expertise. And so I think that will help [your reputation] get rehabilitated more easily than people might expect. P8

Several participants described how they feel people can be quite forgiving of indiscretions, at least initially, but repeated issues tend to damage reputations.

I think goodwill actually carries over, which is if you've done only good things and then you make a mistake. I think people tend to give you the benefit of the doubt. And they're generous in their viewpoint of what you do. … People do tend to be given second chance, certainly, but I suspect 3rd, 4th, and 5th chances just wouldn't cut it in Guernsey just because everyone is so well connected. And yeah, I say the rumour mill would, or the Grapevine would catch up with you. There's no way they're escaping that. P6

Persistence of reputational problems

There is a widespread view that it is difficult to rehabilitate a damaged reputation in Guernsey. Some participants described people as having a long memory and a perception that once you are known for something, it is difficult for people to see you differently. One participant described how you have to live with your past actions for life in Guernsey.

When someone fails here publicly. There isn't a lot of people come around them. … If you're born here, you live with everything you've ever done for life. P4

I think it's very difficult to have a Renaissance, I think that you are once tarred by a certain brush. I think that you keep that stigma. … If you were a troubled youth, as an example. There is a chance that you would feel that would follow you throughout your life in Guernsey if you were, you would have to have pretty thick skin to stay here. P6

Participants described situations where the reputation may not be entirely justified and deserved, but it can still persist and have significant consequences for the individual or organisation.

We're not very good at letting go. And I suppose … once I know you're a nasty man, you're a nasty man, right? Once you've done something wrong, you will not shift that perception easily. And as you say, everybody knows everybody that the lines are short. So even if I don't know, you're a nasty man. They've told me you are. And they've told me you are. And they've told me, so now I believe it. P7

Like a company might have a reputation for something that happened a long time ago. Yeah. And people get unfairly represented. P20

And that's hard [having a negative reputation], right. Cause how do you break a reputation that you've probably actually not got? It's a reputation you think you've got because of the small community. P7

Reluctance to collaborate

The importance of reputation in Guernsey and the perceived risks and consequences of reputation damage can create a reluctance to collaborate. This issue has important implications for the nature of trust in Guernsey. While the Guernsey Way signifies trust with your car keys, there may be significant distrust that inhibits collaborative action.

Collaboration is sometimes unnecessarily hard because people worry. And they're not prepared to sort of take that leap of faith. P9

People are going to be more cautious to commit to collaboration than are just to have a conversation. … Any more concrete connection that's made is going to be remembered and will become part of the kind of fabric of history. So whereas if two companies in London decide to collaborate and it doesn't work out, nobody's going to remember that, they're just going to go their separate ways, and it will all be forgotten. And whatever damage was done will have to be undone in some way. If it happens here, it's going to have a bigger impact. It's going to, you know, the gossip will spread. The he said this, she said that, and it was their fault. P1

The perceived reluctance to collaborate was not universally expressed. Some participants were very happy to collaborate with others. However, there were comments that suggested that invitations to collaborate are not very common, but when received, people tended to react positively.

I would say that Guernsey is very high on cooperation, and has no history of collaboration and isn't expecting it. I would also say that when I've moved into a space and created an opportunity for collaboration, people generally, almost all of them, delight in it, but it isn't culturally normal. P21

This suggests that there is a complex dynamic of perceived risk but also a desire to collaborate that may not be currently being realised.

Social and emotional skills to build strong relationships

Several participants discussed people's capacity to build and maintain strong social relationships. Pointing to certain community sectors, one participant indicated the necessary skills may be lacking:

You can see lots of unhealthy social interactions happening all of the time, and there isn't necessarily the skill set to foster and develop healthy relationships. P4

Take a look at where healthy social interactions don't take place within the community and then what systems are kind of broken. I mean, there isn't like a social skills A Level, and considering how important it is for life, our kids … And that isn't really valued or part of the education system. P4

Survey results

The following key theme related to the weaknesses of reputation and relational trust in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

> **In Guernsey, most people tend to be cautious about collaborating and working with others on joint initiatives, especially if they are unknown individuals or organisations.**

The survey results indicated mixed levels of agreement with this statement, with 44.7% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 39.0% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. People with salaries between £50,000 and £90,000 were most likely to agree – 4.1 average compared to 3.1 for lower and higher salaries combined. The mixed response indicates a variety of lived experiences in Guernsey.

- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
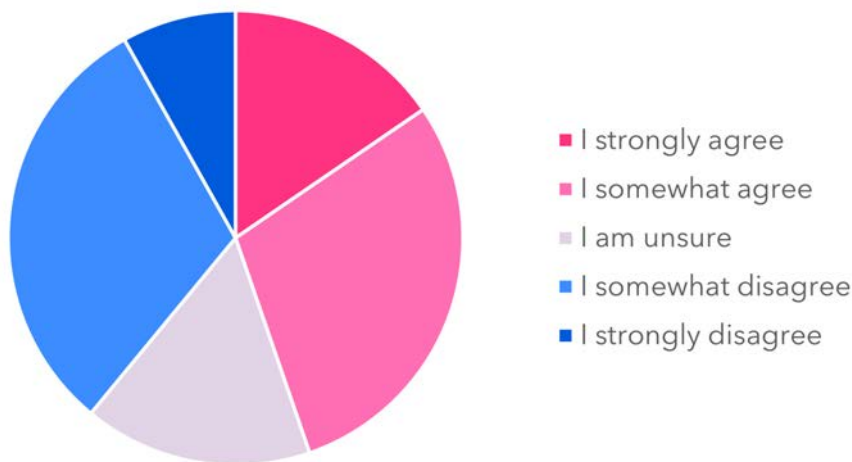
Figure 15. Results from the survey related to the weaknesses of reputation and relational trust

Summary of the weaknesses related to reputation and relational trust

In Guernsey, the close-knit nature of the community fosters a strong emphasis on reputation and relational trust, but this can also lead to significant weaknesses. The lack of anonymity means that individuals are often highly risk-averse and guarded, fearing the long-lasting consequences of reputational damage. While the fear of reputational harm may be greater than the actual outcomes, the perception persists, leading to hesitancy in taking risks and collaborating. Once tarnished, a reputation is difficult to rehabilitate, and this can hinder collaboration as people fear the potential negative consequences of failed partnerships. Furthermore, certain sectors of the community may lack the social and emotional skills necessary to build strong relationships, complicating efforts to foster trust and collaboration. This dynamic, while protective of social norms, can also inhibit the full potential of social capital in Guernsey.

Opportunities related to reputation and relational trust

The analysis of findings related to reputation and relational trust has highlighted several opportunities to improve social capital in Guernsey. Here are some key areas for improvement.

Break down perceptions of reputational risk and fear of judgement

One opportunity to improve social capital in Guernsey lies in breaking down the perceptions of reputational risk and the fear of judgment. In a small, close–knit community like Guernsey, the fear of damaging one's reputation can often lead to excessive caution, inhibiting people from taking risks, engaging in new initiatives, or participating fully in community life. By promoting a more forgiving and supportive environment where mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning rather than reasons for condemnation, the community can encourage greater participation and innovation. This shift in perception would empower individuals and organisations to contribute more actively to the social fabric without the paralysing fear of judgment.

Celebrate and acknowledge the prosocial action that stems from a connected community

Another opportunity is to celebrate and acknowledge the prosocial actions that naturally arise from living in a connected community. Guernsey's small size and close connections can be powerful assets when it comes to fostering positive social behaviour. By highlighting and rewarding the everyday acts of kindness, cooperation, and community support that occur, the island can reinforce the value of these behaviours and inspire others to follow suit. Public recognition of prosocial actions can strengthen the sense of collective responsibility and pride in the community, further enhancing social capital.

Reduce polarisation and establish platforms for constructive dialogue

Reducing polarisation and establishing platforms for constructive dialogue also present crucial opportunities for improving social capital in Guernsey. Polarisation, whether along political, social, or economic lines, can create significant barriers to community cohesion. To counter this, creating spaces where people with differing views can come together to engage in open, respectful, and constructive conversations is essential. These platforms could be formal, such as community forums or public debates, or informal, such as social gatherings that encourage diverse participation. By facilitating dialogue and understanding across different segments of the community, Guernsey can bridge divides, build relational trust, and foster a more inclusive and united society.

Threats related to reputation and relational trust

In Guernsey, reputation and relational trust are integral to the social fabric, but several threats pose significant challenges to maintaining these essential aspects of social capital.

Polarisation

Polarisation can create deep divides within the community. As opinions become more entrenched and opposing sides less willing to engage in dialogue, the communal bonds that rely on mutual respect and understanding begin to fray. This polarisation can erode relational trust, making collaboration and collective problem-solving more difficult and ultimately weakening the social capital that binds the community together.

Legal system

The legal system in any community plays a crucial role in shaping reputation and trust. However, there are concerns that the system may sometimes exacerbate reputational risks rather than mitigate them. The perceived lack of transparency and fairness in legal proceedings can undermine trust in the system, particularly if individuals or organisations feel that outcomes are influenced by factors other than justice. This mistrust can lead to a reluctance to engage fully in community life, as people may fear that any legal misstep could have long-lasting consequences for their reputation.

Naming and shaming practices and cultures

Naming and shaming practices further amplify the risks associated with reputation in Guernsey. In a small community where anonymity is limited, the public exposure of an individual's or organisation's failings can lead to significant social and professional consequences. This culture of naming and shaming can deter people from taking risks or engaging in activities that could potentially lead to public scrutiny, stifling innovation and discouraging active participation in community affairs. The fear of being publicly shamed can also inhibit open communication and the willingness to admit mistakes, which are essential for building and maintaining trust.

Distorted perceptions of reputational risk and outcomes

Distorted perceptions of reputational risk and outcomes can compound these issues. While the fear of reputational damage is pervasive, the actual consequences may not always be as severe as anticipated. However, the perception of risk often outweighs reality, leading to excessive caution and a reluctance to engage in actions that could benefit the community. This distorted view can create a cycle of fear and inaction, where individuals and organisations are more focused on avoiding potential reputational harm than on pursuing positive contributions to social capital.

"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main."

JOHN DONNE

Predispositions – Social trust

Social trust is a belief in the honesty, integrity and reliability of others in a social group or society. Social interaction and exchange without trust would be virtually impossible, and all economic activity requires at least a minimum level of trust. Without trust, people would not have the confidence that others would uphold their expectations and obligations and would be unwilling to participate with others. This section will explore the nature of social trust in Guernsey.

Summary of findings related to social trust

Social trust is a cornerstone of Guernsey's cultural identity, deeply embedded in the island's history and culture. The community enjoys a strong sense of safety and security, with low crime rates and a general feeling of trust among residents. This high level of trust allows people to feel comfortable leaving their homes and cars unlocked, reflecting the deep-rooted confidence in their neighbours' respect for personal property. This trust is part of the "Guernsey Way," a cultural narrative that emphasises trust and reputation as fundamental to social interactions. The strong social ties and interconnectedness of the community foster a self-regulating environment where individuals are held accountable for their actions, promoting prosocial behaviour.

Despite strong social trust in day-to-day life, Guernsey also faces significant areas of distrust, which undermine the strength of its social capital. Trust in Guernsey is complex and contingent, varying across different contexts and groups. While trust is strong in personal interactions, there is notable distrust toward unknown individuals, many organisations, politicians and the government in general, the corporate sector, and the legal system. This distrust often leads to hesitation, caution, and a reluctance to engage in collective action or collaboration, particularly when individuals or groups lack a well-established reputation.

Guernsey also tends to experience pervasive negativity within the community, often amplified by social media and local gossip, further eroding trust. Negative perspectives and stereotypes, particularly around the local vs. non-local divide, can also deepen distrust and inhibit collaboration. This cultural tendency to focus on the negatives, combined with the community's close-knit nature, means that issues can be magnified, creating barriers to building and maintaining trust.

Table 9 summarises the main findings related to social trust in Guernsey.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
> There are widespread perceptions that Guernsey is safe and friendly and that it is okay to leave everything unlocked. > Trust is highly valued by Guernsey people, and it is strongly linked to a sense of identity. > There are strong positive narratives reinforcing perceptions of trustworthiness. > The "Guernsey Way" is an important part of the culture and is linked to reputation, collective responsibility, and identity.	> Despite being very trusting, safe, and friendly, there is significant distrust in certain respects. > There is significant distrust across some social divides and a general distrust of politicians and the political process. > People feel they need to be careful and suspicious of unknown individuals and organisations – people are cautious to get involved, which is linked to reputation > There are some negative stereotypes about locals vs non–locals.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
> Promoting inclusivity and reducing inequality > Enhancing transparency and accountability in the legal system > Facilitating constructive dialogue and reducing polarisation > Addressing stereotypes and fostering a culture of acceptance	> Inequality > The legal system > Polarisation > Deepening social divides

Table 9. Analysis of social trust in Guernsey

The following sections will explore the research findings related to the strengths and weaknesses of social trust in Guernsey.

Strengths related to social trust

In Guernsey, trust is deeply embedded in the community's identity. Safety and trust are widely acknowledged as defining features of life on the island. Participants universally agreed that Guernsey is a safe environment, with low crime rates and a strong sense of security. This sense of safety is closely tied to the high levels of trust that exist within the community, where people feel comfortable leaving their homes and cars unlocked and trusting others to respect their belongings.

Social trust in Guernsey is not only a product of the island's small size and isolation but also a key aspect of its identity, often referred to as the "Guernsey Way." This concept embodies the idea that trust and trustworthiness are fundamental to social interactions, with reputation playing a significant role in maintaining trust. The importance of reputation and the interconnectedness of the community create a self–regulating environment where people are accountable for their actions, reinforcing prosocial behaviour.

The finance industry, which is a major part of Guernsey's economy, also contributes to the culture of trust. The industry emphasises integrity and trustworthiness, which are values that permeate the broader community. Historical narratives, such as the perception of Guernsey as a respectable and decent community even during challenging times like WWII, further reinforce the strong positive image of trustworthiness that is central to Guernsey's social fabric.

Overall, social trust is a significant strength in Guernsey, deeply embedded in its cultural identity, and it plays a crucial role in fostering a safe, cohesive, and supportive community.

Safety and trust

There is a strong and widespread view that Guernsey is a safe place where people can be trusted. When it was mentioned in group discussions, the comments received unanimous agreement.

I always think we are so lucky to live in this little bubble called Guernsey where it's safe. There's hardly any crime. There's no terrorism. I've never been burgled. … You know, it's completely safe. Whereas in any one of those places and many more. You know, I'm definitely, you know, street-wise, I'm thinking constantly. P12

It's a certain privilege, isn't it? I mean. You're fortunate to live in a beautiful place that's safe and where generally most needs are provided. P15

For us safety, more [important] than anything, trust in the island, trust in the people around you. P5

Several participants talked about Guernsey being a good place to raise children because it is safe.

It's a safe place to raise a family. P15

It is safe and trusting. I think a lot of us return with young children. It's fairly common. Or people move here with young children cause you feel safe. P14

When my daughter was born and we really, really thought about right where do we want to live? [the options had pros and cons, but] it came down to safety. And it [Guernsey] is just such a wonderful place to bring up children, you know, to not worry about the crime rate, to not worry about her being snatched from the street to not, you know, all those things. P5

Some people talked about the contrast to other places.

I think it's safe, but I've never really feared. Sometimes when I've gone away, that hasn't been very good cause I kind of forget I can't leave my stuff. P18

The strength of social trust

I don't know if it's a personal characteristic or a Guernsey characteristic, but I see people behaving in an open and trusting manner. P6

I think you get to form trusting relationships easier because people are a lot more open. P5

One participant described a common saying that reinforced the view that Guernsey is, or at least was, a trusting place.

In 1986, the saying was "My word was my bond" in the city, and if you dealt with other people in the city, you literally didn't have contracts. It was all on a handshake. [But, in the finance industry, contracts are now required for good governance, but outside of the finance industry, contracts are often not required]. P11

The perceptions of trustworthiness have direct implications for day-to-day life in Guernsey, as illustrated by the following comment:

People are quite relaxed about when you're going to pay them, so the bakery across the road from me, if I don't have the change, they'll say, do it another time, and they don't write it down. It's just there's a social contract. P8

Trust as identity

When asked about Guernsey's identity, responses were dominated by comments about high levels of trust and related themes of safety, low crime rates, and helpfulness. It is clear that some of the patterns of trust and trustworthiness in Guernsey are completely different to many modern societies. Participants talked about not locking their car or house and trusting others to not steal their belongings. One participant joked about not even knowing where their house

keys were, illustrating how they do not lock their house (P20). In the group discussions, there was widespread agreement on this point, with many participants chiming in with their perceptions. For example:

Like my car wouldn't be locked. My house is unlocked. P7

My bike is unlocked, my house is unlocked. P8

People leave their keys in the ignition of their car. P10

We've got it really great. Look, I never take the keys out of my car. I leave them in the car, and I never lock my bike. I just leave it wherever it is because I trust people not to steal my bike. P20

One participant described the extent to which people look out for each other and how trusting they felt they could be in Guernsey:

I leave my wallet in the front seat, you know, notes out, window down, key in the front seat. [One day] someone very kindly moved my cape so it's covering my wallet. P9

The sense of social trust is deeply engrained in Guernsey's identity and what is commonly referred to as the "Guernsey Way". One participant described it as follows:

It's called the Guernsey Way, so I'll explain the Guernsey Way. If I met you for the first time today and said, "Give me your phone, your wallet and your keys", you probably would think not. I think Guernsey people hand over their family and their children, and they hand over certain things in trust because it's the Guernsey way, and I think that sometimes people take advantage of that, and they take advantage of it in a slight way, and they take advantage of it in a very, very serious way as well. P2

Participants were aware of the mechanisms that maintain social trust, meaning trust stems not only from identity but also from the importance of reputation and ongoing social interests.

Here [in Guernsey], we have these social feedback loops of accountability that you have to walk the same streets as the people you've done something to, and that has its own self-regulating dynamics. P4

Others pointed to the physical geography of the island and the important beliefs and perspectives that creates. Several participants commented on the significance of Guernsey being "moated" from the rest of the world. For example:

We have a moat [being an island, it is surrounded by water]. And so, you know, there's a natural thing that creates that dynamic more here than when you haven't got a moat. So, trust levels are at the extremely good end. It's a real strength. But do we trust everyone by default? No, but is trust one of our assets for social and economic development. … I mean, if you drop your wallet on the floor. You know, nine times out of 10, and if not 99 times out of 100, it will end up at the police station or someone post it on Facebook. Yeah, and we take that for granted. P4

Some participants also connected trusting behaviour to the significance of the finance industry in Guernsey. Although trustworthiness is deeply engrained in Guernsey's culture and history, the finance industry may have an influence on current attitudes towards social trust.

I think most people have integrity anyway, but the biggest industry on the island, which employs 20% of the workforce and 40% of GDP, is finance and the whole finance is based on integrity and trust. It's drilled into you from very early training days onwards. P11

Strong positive narratives of trustworthiness

One participant commented that during WWII, the Germans referred to Guernsey as the most decent and respectable community they had encountered (P15). Participants talked about the strong narratives that reinforce trustworthiness in Guernsey and how beliefs about trust and safety are deeply engrained in the identity and culture of the island.

Survey results

The following key theme related to the strengths of social trust in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

There are widespread perceptions that Guernsey is safe and friendly and that it is okay to leave everything unlocked.

The survey results indicated a very high level of agreement with this statement, with 96.0% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 3.2% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. Only three people somewhat disagreed, and one person strongly disagreed. Over half of respondents (56%) strongly agreed. In general, younger respondents were more likely to strongly agree with the statement.

- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
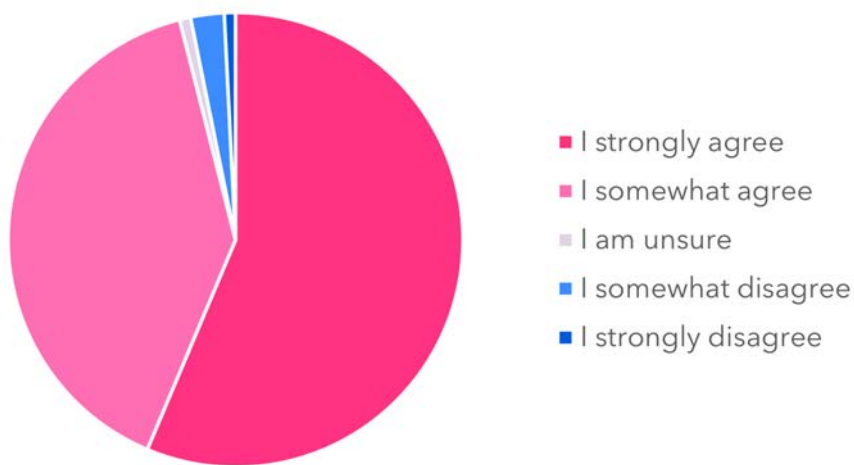
Figure 16. Results from the survey related to the strengths of social trust

Summary of the strengths related to social trust

In Guernsey, social trust is a core aspect of the community's identity, fostering a strong sense of safety and security. The "Guernsey Way" emphasises trustworthiness and the importance of reputation, reinforced by the island's close-knit, self-regulating environment. The finance industry's focus on integrity further strengthens this culture of trust. Together, these elements make social trust a key strength in Guernsey, supporting a cohesive and supportive society.

Weaknesses related to social trust

Despite incredibly strong social trust in areas of everyday life, such as leaving property unsecured, there are significant areas of distrust. Trust is complex since it is both contextual and contingent. People can be trusting in one area of life or with specific people or groups but distrusting in other contexts. In Guernsey, there are surprisingly high levels of distrust in certain respects. This is surprising considering the strength of everyday trust described in the previous section. The nature of the distrust is somewhat illusive but seems to relate to the importance of reputation and a degree of hesitation or uncertainty about unknown individuals and organisations. The most significant implication of this distrust is a lack of collaboration and collective action.

Lack of trust

One participant was clear about the lack of trust and described the situation as a tipping point.

I think the trust … across various groups is very much lacking in the island at the moment. It's at a tipping point. The island where you know the island doesn't have great leaders across a lot of sectors. And I'm not just talking about government. It doesn't have great leaders and across a lot of areas and people who I think in the majority of the areas that I work in are… we have some great expertise within the island, but it's not at the forefront of where decision-making. It's so I think the island is on a tipping point, education significantly, but also, the village aspect. … I see it, I see it probably on a daily basis where people are striving … to get to that point, but the barriers that are put in their way are remarkable. P2

Areas of distrust

One area of distrust has a clear relationship with perceptions of privacy and the importance of reputation. Several participants described a need to be careful and guarded in dealings with people and the perceived problems with information being shared with others.

That dynamic of "be careful" is really high here. … I do think there's a lot of "be careful who hears that", and I like

to watch the actual… I'm not worried about what they can do with it. Like there's no power in them having them open. There's no, I don't find vulnerability most of the time from being open. P21

One participant described how trust is not immediately present, but it can be built by being open and trustworthy. This indicates that, in a general sense, the preconditions for trust exist, but people are cautious and distrustful initially.

If you're open with somebody, they're open with you, and it's just a case of building up that trust of them, knowing that, OK, we're working together, and we've said, "we'll do this", or "we won't do that", or "we won't speak to these people" and stuff. P25

The hesitation to put yourself out there was described as follows:

I think there's a real hesitation of people just to ask questions, especially, and this is something I've, you know, we get a lot, and it's like somebody will go out. How did you manage to get that to happen? I was like, well, I just asked. … 9 out of 10 times, people are like, oh, yeah. OK. Yeah. We just never thought about it before. P25

A significant area of distrust is in government and the corporate sector. This was a recurring theme, with many participants expressing similar views. This issue is also discussed in the roles, rules, and procedures section.

There is no trust between government and the community and business and the community. I would say there's not a lot of trust there either in the eyes of the community. P3

I think it's the frustrations of government, and actually, nothing's been executed or done in the way they've done, whether it's in relation to planning and building, whether it's in relation to education, particularly health care. I think that there's a lot of frustration. P24

A few participants also discussed a profound lack of trust in the legal system and how this affects societal trust.

Trust in society evaporates [when the legal system fails to protect people]. … In Guernsey, it's a very, very high-risk financial situation [resolving issues through the legal system]. P9

Lack of reputation can be a barrier

The distrust described above, which tends to manifest in hesitation and caution, can be a barrier for people who lack a reputation or have a negative reputation. One participant described the suspicion people tend to have for unknown individuals and how this can represent a significant barrier to collaboration.

Why don't I know you? Almost like, why have we not crossed over if you're a trusted person? We cross in similar circles, and I've never met you before. Why? Why not? P23

If I'm about to embark on a new … project, I would want to ensure that everyone I'm working with I do trust. P23

Negative perspectives

Some participants described the tendency for negative perspectives to be widely shared and how this practice is embedded in the media culture. This is common in many modern societies. However, the cultural tendency to focus on the negatives can significantly erode trust in Guernsey.

Being small islands, you know everything negative that happens, and that can maybe then you've sort of catastrophise that you

know. One burglary that wouldn't even make you know you don't have the local news in the UK. They wouldn't even make the news at all. You wouldn't even know about it. Suddenly, everyone on the island knows about it. Isn't it horrendous? And everyone on the island is going to the dogs. You know, it's because of one instance that maybe sort of ruins trust a bit. P23

Negative stereotypes

One participant talked about the negative stereotypes that further erode trust. One such stereotype is the local vs non–local issue.

I think people from Guernsey are fiercely loyal to the brand… The brand is we belong here, and I think that's what it comes down to. It's this is our rightful place. This is where I am from. This is where my family are from. You perhaps… and the unwritten kind of implication that you perhaps aren't as important as me. P19

Breach of trust will come very quickly if they are allowed to be entertained [stereotypes about locals vs non-locals]. … I probably hear a little bit more of that now than I used to. … I'm not sure that the trust level is there in the way it should be. P24

Survey results

The following key theme related to the weaknesses of social trust in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

> **In Guernsey, you often need to be careful and guarded about what you say and who you say it to because information tends to get overheard and shared around.**

The survey results indicated a very high level of agreement with this statement, with 92.1% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 5.6% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. In general, younger people were more likely to strongly agree with the statement.
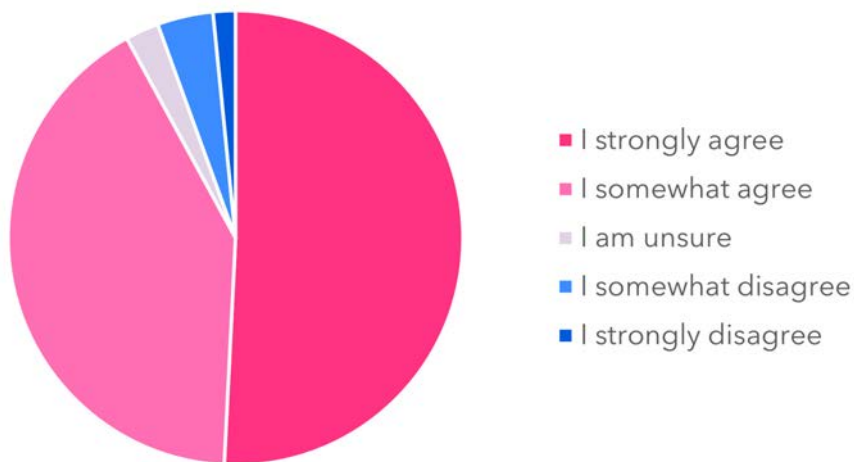
Figure 17. Results from the survey related to the weaknesses of social trust

Summary of the weaknesses related to social trust

Despite strong everyday social trust in Guernsey, there are significant areas of distrust that undermine collaboration and collective action. This distrust often stems from concerns about reputation and privacy, leading people to be guarded and hesitant, especially when dealing with unknown individuals or organisations. A profound lack of trust exists in government, the corporate sector, and the legal system, contributing to a general sense of frustration. The small community size amplifies negative events, which are often widely shared and can erode trust further. Additionally, negative stereotypes, such as the divide between locals and non-locals, exacerbate these issues, making it difficult to foster a cohesive and trusting community.

Opportunities related to social trust

The analysis of findings related to social trust has highlighted several opportunities to improve social capital in Guernsey. Here are some key areas for improvement.

Promoting inclusivity and reducing inequality

Addressing economic and social inequality is key to building trust in Guernsey. By promoting policies and initiatives that ensure equitable access to resources, education, and opportunities, the island can create a more inclusive environment where all residents feel valued and supported. Efforts to reduce disparities can help bridge divides, fostering a greater sense of fairness and mutual respect. This inclusivity can enhance trust across different social groups, making it easier to build stronger, more cohesive communities.

Enhancing transparency and accountability in the legal system

Improving trust in the legal system is another crucial opportunity for building social capital. Ensuring that the legal process is transparent, accessible, and fair to all residents, regardless of their financial status, can help restore confidence in this vital institution. Initiatives such as community outreach programs, legal education, and simplified legal processes can make the legal system more approachable and understandable. When people feel that the law is on their side and that justice is accessible, trust in the broader social system is strengthened.

Facilitating constructive dialogue and reducing polarisation

Creating platforms for open and constructive dialogue is essential for reducing polarisation and building social trust. Encouraging conversations that bring together diverse perspectives can help bridge gaps between different groups within the community. Initiatives such as community forums, town hall meetings, and collaborative projects can promote understanding and empathy, allowing residents to find common ground on shared issues. By fostering a culture of respectful dialogue, Guernsey can reduce the divisions that undermine trust and encourage a more united community.

Addressing stereotypes and fostering a culture of acceptance

Actively challenging negative stereotypes and promoting a culture of acceptance can help build trust in Guernsey. By encouraging open-mindedness and reducing prejudice, particularly around issues like the local vs non-local divide, the community can foster a more inclusive environment where trust can flourish. Education campaigns, diversity training, and inclusive policies can all play a role in building a culture that values and respects all individuals, regardless of their background.

Threats related to social trust

Social trust is a crucial component of social capital in any community, and in Guernsey, several factors threaten to undermine this trust, thereby weakening social cohesion and the overall social fabric.

Inequality

Economic and social inequality can significantly erode trust within a community. In Guernsey, disparities in wealth and access to resources can create divisions between different social groups, leading to resentment and a sense of injustice. When people perceive that the system is unfairly weighted in favour of certain groups—whether that be due to wealth, status, or other factors—they are less likely to trust not only those who are better off but also the institutions that allow such inequalities to persist. This lack of trust can inhibit cooperation and collective action, further exacerbating social divides and reducing the overall social capital of the island.

The legal system

Trust in the legal system is fundamental to maintaining social order and ensuring that individuals feel protected and fairly treated. In Guernsey, however, there is a significant distrust of the legal system, with many residents perceiving it as inaccessible, overly complex, and biased towards those with greater financial means. This distrust can lead to a breakdown in the social contract, where individuals no longer feel that their rights are adequately protected or that justice will be served. When people lose faith in the legal system, it not only undermines trust in that institution but also has broader implications for societal trust, as people may become more wary and less willing to engage with others or participate in community life.

Polarisation

Polarisation, whether political, social, or economic, poses a serious threat to Guernsey's social trust. As different groups within the community become more entrenched in their views and less willing to engage with those who hold opposing perspectives, the potential for collaboration and mutual understanding diminishes. Polarisation can lead to a breakdown in communication and a reluctance to engage in dialogue, further deepening social divides. This environment of division and hostility makes it difficult to build or maintain trust, as individuals become more focused on defending their own interests rather than working towards common goals.

Deepening social divides

The combination of inequality, polarisation, and distrust in key institutions such as the legal system contributes to deepening social divides in Guernsey. As these divides grow, different segments of the population may become increasingly isolated from one another, leading to a breakdown in the sense of community and shared identity. This fragmentation weakens the bonds that hold society together, making it harder to build the social capital necessary for collective action and community resilience. When social divides deepen, the ability of the community to come together in times of need or to address common challenges is severely compromised, leading to a more fragmented and less cohesive society.

If left unaddressed, these issues could lead to a decline in social capital, making it more difficult for the community to maintain the strong sense of connectedness and mutual support that is essential for a healthy and vibrant society.

"Since the dawn of time, the survival of human beings has depended on the level of their integration into one or more mutually helpful communities. Those with social support and links with others live better than those who remain isolated"

NORMAN SARTORIUS

Predispositions – Norms, obligations, and expectations, including culture

Social norms are the unwritten codes specifying what is considered appropriate or inappropriate in a given context. They are fundamental to the functioning of communities and organisations. As the bedrock of social order, they define acceptable behaviour and contribute to the overall cohesion. They are an essential part of social capital and are inescapably linked to culture and history. This section will explore the nature of norms, obligations, and expectations in Guernsey.

Summary of findings related to norms, obligations, and expectations

The social norms, obligations, and expectations in Guernsey play a significant role in shaping the community's identity and social capital. On the positive side, Guernsey is characterised by a strong sense of community, where helping others and cooperation are deeply ingrained in the culture. Residents are quick to assist one another, and there is a pervasive expectation that people will step forward to help when needed. These norms foster a supportive and cooperative atmosphere, which enhances social trust and cohesion. The culture of information sharing, social introductions, and accessibility to decision-makers further strengthens these positive dynamics, making it easier for individuals to connect, collaborate, and engage with those in power.

However, these strengths are counterbalanced by several weaknesses. A pervasive negativity among residents, often expressed through complaints and pessimism, can quickly snowball within the close-knit community. This negativity, sometimes attributed to a sense of entitlement and lack of perspective, undermines the positive aspects of the community. Additionally, stereotypes and prejudices, particularly towards certain ethnic groups or those perceived as different, contribute to a reluctance to speak out and challenge the status quo. This can lead to conformity, where individuals feel pressured to align with dominant views, stifling open dialogue and preventing meaningful change.

Moreover, while cooperation is strong, true collaboration is hindered by mistrust, fear of reputational damage, and a reluctance to take risks. The close-knit nature of the community can create a sense of claustrophobia and lack of privacy, further exacerbating these challenges. These dynamics collectively hinder the potential for collective action and the building of social capital in Guernsey.

Table 10 summarises the main findings related to norms, obligations, and expectations in Guernsey.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
> There are many strong positive social norms that are deeply linked to Guernsey's culture and identity. > There are widespread norms related to regard for others and accommodation of their needs, with the "filter in turn" being emblematic. > People generally feel that others would help them if they were in need. > There are strong norms of information sharing and asking for guidance, advice, recommendations, etc. > It is normal and appropriate to ask for social introductions and, when people meet, to look for commonalities that can form the foundation for a new relationship.	> Can feel claustrophobic – limited sense of privacy, information flows, and importance of reputation – difficult to escape and "turn off" from being social. > High connectedness can be a barrier to collaboration. > Groupthink can be a problem, and pressures to conform. > Complications associated with reputation and perceptions of risk. > There are strong norms to spread negativity and "pile-on".
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
> Address and reduce negativity > Celebrate cultural diversity and integration > Foster intergroup dialogue and collaboration > Promote inclusivity and equity	> Inequality > Deepening social divides > Perceptions of changing culture and the role of newcomers > Social isolation

Table 10. Analysis of norms, obligations, and expectations in Guernsey

The following sections will explore the research findings related to the strengths and weaknesses of norms, obligations, and expectations in Guernsey

Strengths related to norms, obligations, and expectations

In Guernsey, social norms, obligations, and expectations are strongly tied to the island's identity and culture, fostering a sense of community and cooperation. Positive social norms, such as helping others and showing respect, are prevalent and contribute to the community's supportive atmosphere. Participants highlighted how people in Guernsey are quick to assist others, whether it's helping someone whose car has broken down or offering directions to a lost visitor. These behaviours reflect a deeply ingrained sense of cooperation and helpfulness that is seen as a defining characteristic of the island.

Strong norms related to information sharing and social introductions reinforce the community's cooperative spirit. People in Guernsey are often willing to share knowledge and make connections, which enhances social trust and cohesion. Access to decision-makers is also more open and accessible than in larger places, allowing for more direct engagement with those in positions of power.

However, while there is a strong expectation that people will help each other, there are barriers to engagement that can hinder this helpfulness, such as a lack of awareness of how to help or frustration with bureaucratic obstacles. Despite these challenges, the overall sense of community and willingness to help remains a significant strength in Guernsey's social fabric.

Positive norms linked to identity

There are various positive social norms in Guernsey that are inseparably linked to the sense of Guernsey's social identity and culture. Many participants described different aspects of positive norms as illustrated by the following comments:

I think, in terms of help, you see it all the time in Guernsey. You know, if someone falls down, someone will pick them up. P19

I mean, if your car broke down in the road, you would look around and people would leap out of their cars and help you push into the side. I mean, I think that that is something that in our community, people would do, I think. I actually think sometimes you don't need to ask. I think people will step forward. P6

There is this very courteous or respectful way of driving that you stop for people that, they're just stood at the side of the road… a fairly unique quality of the island. So, I think that probably is reflective of the value system, which did get quoted by Lord Digby Jones saying that it was decent and respectful as a community, and I think the way that people drive here embodies that. P15

Strong norms of cooperation

Participants described how there are strong norms of cooperation in day-to-day interactions.

I think people are really quite keen to offer their help and their opinion. P6

I really firmly believe that the majority of people want to help others. In Guernsey, I think that is particularly true because of the sense of community here and the close community. P19

People are really quite happy to ask other people about things and lean on their social connections. Or even, you know, [ask for] advice on how would you tackle this problem or challenge or whatever? I think there's quite

a lot of sort of… interfirm relationships are quite good… Everybody's very supportive. P16

As has been discussed in various sections of this report, participants believe that cooperation is commonplace and normal in Guernsey but not necessarily collaboration.

I would say that Guernsey is very high on cooperation, and has no history of collaboration and isn't expecting it. I would also say that when I've moved into a space and created an opportunity for collaboration, people generally, almost all of them, delight in it, but it isn't culturally normal. P21

Helpfulness

The participants described the strong norms of helpfulness and the expectations that people would help them if needed.

People are really willing to help, and it's a great community for that. P20

We [Guernsey people] would do things like, if you see a visitor lost or whatever, we absolutely, the people were just, "Are you right? Do you need some help?". I did it the other day; the people were flabbergasted that I was offering my help. P10

From my personal experience, I think there's that trust that anybody will help out, and [they] will do the right thing. P17

Personally, I've got a very strong expectation that someone would. Anybody would help… It's like, [if you] ever get in trouble, just say something and they will help you. I've got a strong belief that that would be the case. P17

Familiarity probably helps and gives people a sense of security and well-being and the ability to ask for help. P15

Where there is a lack of engagement, some participants thought the problem was that people didn't know what to do, not that they didn't want to help others.

I do firmly believe people in Guernsey do want to help other people; they just need to know what they need to do, and they need to be able to have time and

resources to be able to do it. I do firmly believe in the good of people. P19

However, there may be barriers to engaging in helping behaviours in Guernsey.

I think a lot of people do want to try to help in some way, shape or form. But if you keep running into these barriers. It's like, oh, why do I bother? You know? I'll just go retire in France. P12

Information sharing

A consistent theme emerging from this research is that there are strong norms of information sharing in Guernsey. One participant described it as follows:

You can always very quickly get an answer to anything by putting it out there to the network, you know, and it's remarkable what is possible in the island. It's very good. P1

Social introductions

Participants described the importance and value of social introductions.

Because it is such a small island, if you do need to get hold of somebody, like somebody will know them. Yeah. And somebody will have their contact details and be able to give you that introduction and I think also I think people are, business wise, people are more willing to give their time. And meet for a coffee. And have those conversations that I think more than you would get in the UK like you can just be like, "Hi, chief executive of wherever, can I meet you for five minutes?". P20

Because of those connections and networks, you can open more doors than you would anywhere else. P20

Access to power and decision-makers

There are also strong norms of openness and access to people in positions of power. Participants talked about how it is normal to be able to meet with busy and important people in positions of

power or authority within the social, business, or political system.

From a business point of view, I used to work in Jersey as well as Guernsey and calling for an appointment to go and meet someone in Jersey, it was always, "Oh, let me check my diary". Like, you know, I'll have to speak to this person. Whereas if you wanted to have an appointment in Guernsey, say it would be, "Just pop along". There's much more of an open-door policy and people are willing to make introductions and chat. P5

[We] are able to be connected, to be able to reach out to government, to be able to reach out to big business leaders, have those conversations face to face. This has been really interesting that we have that opportunity to be able to do that. You couldn't do that necessarily in the UK, you know, you can't just pick up the phone to the sports minister or, you know, whatever it may be. But you can do that in Guernsey pretty much, you know, if you've got the connections, you know, people are willing to talk to you. P25

[In] Guernsey, it's very much. Yeah, sure, when can you come? You know, and it's very much an open-door policy that I've experienced anyway. I think that helps build trusting relationships. P5

Some participants described how vertical connections are more common and accepted in Guernsey than in many other places.

[In Guernsey], you're kind of seen as more familiar or approachable or whatever, but you've got junior members of staff speaking to very senior people, whereas I don't think if you went into a firm in London, you probably might know the name of the head of the business. … there's loads of other connections outside of the workplace that people build on. Yeah. Whereas you don't think you'd get the same thing anywhere else. P16

Survey results

The following key theme related to the strengths of norms, obligations, and expectations in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

People in Guernsey are generally helpful. For example, if I were in town and needed help, I am confident people would help me.

The survey results indicated almost unanimous agreement with this statement, with 97.6% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 0.0% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. Over two-thirds (69%) of respondents strongly agreed. In general, people between 35 and 64 were most likely to strongly agree with the statement. There were no significant differences based on salary or industry.
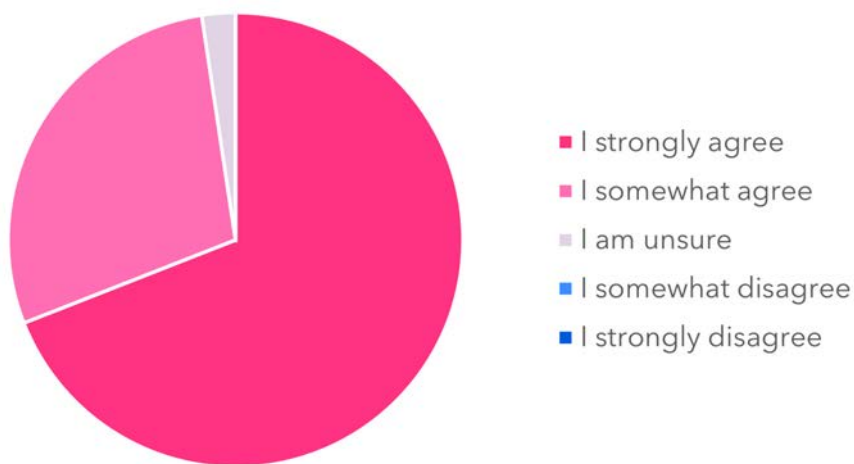
Figure 18. Results from the survey related to the strengths of norms, obligations, and expectations

Summary of the strengths related to norms, obligations, and expectations

In Guernsey, social norms, obligations, and expectations are strongly tied to the island's identity, fostering a close-knit and cooperative community. Positive norms such as helping others, sharing information, and making social introductions are prevalent, contributing to a supportive and connected environment. Residents often go out of their way to assist others, and there is an expectation that help will be readily available when needed. These behaviours reflect a deeply ingrained sense of cooperation and helpfulness that is central to Guernsey's culture. Additionally, access to decision-makers is more open and direct than in larger places, allowing for greater community engagement and influence. However, there are some barriers to engagement, such as a lack of awareness of how to help or frustration with bureaucratic obstacles, but the overall willingness to help remains a significant strength in the island's social fabric.

Weaknesses related to norms, obligations, and expectations

The participants highlighted several challenges that impact the community's social dynamics and cohesion. A prominent theme is the pervasive negativity among residents, where complaints and pessimism can quickly snowball within the close-knit community. This negativity, often seen as unjustified, is seen as part of the local culture, with some participants attributing it to a sense of entitlement and lack of perspective among those who have never lived outside the island. Despite this, the same residents who complain internally may still promote the positives of Guernsey to outsiders, indicating a cultural duality.

Stereotypes and prejudices are also significant issues, with some participants noting a lack of understanding and deep-seated biases, particularly towards certain ethnic groups or individuals perceived as different. This prejudice often leads to a reluctance to speak out or challenge the status quo, as people fear being on the wrong side of collective opinion or facing social backlash.

Groupthink and conformity are other concerns, with individuals feeling pressured to align with dominant views rather than expressing their own opinions. This conformity can stifle open dialogue and prevent meaningful change. The reluctance to speak out is particularly pronounced among those in vulnerable positions, such as ethnic minorities or employees of major institutions, who fear reputational damage or professional repercussions.

Barriers to collaboration further exacerbate these issues. While there is a strong norm of cooperation in day-to-day interactions, true collaboration is hindered by mistrust and a reluctance to take risks. This dynamic is compounded by a culture of caution and a sense of claustrophobia due to the lack of privacy in such a small, interconnected community. These challenges collectively hinder the potential for collective action and the building of social capital in Guernsey.

Negativity

A common theme discussed by participants was a tendency for people in Guernsey to be quite negative and to complain about things.

There is quite a lot of negativity in the islands. … Because of the tight-knit community, when there is a negative, it snowballs. It massively snowballs and gets, and because the gossip starts and because everybody talks, you know, kind of untruths get passed around and turn into truths, and you end up with this huge ball of kind of negativity around stuff. … that's just a slow build [the positive stuff], harder to build thing, whereas negativity can burst up really quickly. P1

I think it's interesting how much Guernsey tends to talk itself down, though… And it's a really great place to live. Like Guernsey people do love a moan, they love a moan. Oh, it's awful. Everything's awful. P8

Guernsey has a habit of talking itself down. That's not really helping us. P8

Guernsey people love a good moan. And I think it can be quite catching as well, even if you're not a Guernsey person, but you live here. When I say Guernsey people, I think it's quite a trait of indigenous Guernsey people. But I do think that it can be quite catching. P10

There seems to be some vocalness about the bad stuff, especially in social media channels. And I think perhaps there's a reticence to talk about the good stuff tied back to that kind of philosophy of, you know, of perhaps not wanting to be showy or whatever. P8

Participants talked about how the negativity is often unjustified and not reflective of reality.

There is a remarkable amount of positive things that are going on as well. They just won't get as much airtime as the negativity. … It is sort of misguided, you know, first world problem, you know, that I can't get from A to B and that again there is a sense of huge sense of entitlement. P2

Other participants also talked about the lack of perspective that some people have and the sense of entitlement that may come from having grown up and lived in Guernsey.

We're probably quite a spoiled community. I mean, in a sort of an entitled way, we don't actually realise how good we've got it, probably because of that lack of perspective. Many people haven't ever lived anywhere else or moved away. P10

50-55% of our population are locals. A lot of those people have never lived and worked away from the island, so they only see it from an inward perspective. They don't know how challenging it is when they live else elsewhere. P11

I see from lots of our people that when people have been away, they come back with a whole new appreciation of stuff they had taken for granted in Guernsey. P24

Several participants described a tendency to not appreciate the good things about Guernsey and to focus on the negatives.

We talk about what things we don't have. Which is the little brother syndrome. We don't have a big enough airport. But I'm like, we have trust on a level that is so rare everywhere else. It is breaking down everything else, and we don't sell this. Like in a world that's going crazy and destabilising things like that. We don't need a longer runway. We just need to say you realise we still don't lock our doors. P4

I think we're not appreciating it [how good things are in Guernsey], celebrating it. Understanding how lucky and different it is. … it feels like something we should lean into more… Guernsey has a habit of talking itself down. P8

The tendency for negative was described by some participants as "a moan", "a good complain", and as a "pile-on".

The political sphere, but the business sphere as well, it's a community that does like a pile-on. You know, if there's one there. And it feels very close quarters. … it's great for connectivity, but there is no anonymity here. P10

One participant described how entrenched in the culture and history of Guernsey the tendency for negativity can be.

I think that's a genetic, cultural thing. I think Guernsey people do love to complain because I think they're quite entitled, they sort of and I don't know if that's recent, you know, since the introduction of the finance industry. So there's just a lot more money floating around, and they've had it really good for ages. … Structure is so flat, so we can complain about stuff because you do actually know more about stuff than you really should. … people love to sort of hate on stuff, even when actually, we've got it really great. P20

The negativity seems to be reserved for internal conversations with other Guernsey people, while at the same time people like to talk about how great Guernsey is to outsiders.

Like the rest of the world comes here, and it's like, and we sell it, you know, we flip into that, but it isn't Guernsey great. But amongst ourselves, we're like grumbling about this or grumbling about that. And it's cultural. P4

Stereotypes and prejudices

There are some strong stereotypes and prejudices in Guernsey. Some of the participants described some of the common ones as follows:

There's a real lack of understanding around the issues there that you just think people lazy or you know if you've seen all satellite

dishes down the boa or whatever, you know, as if people are spending their they're bunking off work for the heck of it. You know, so there's quite a distrust of people not working. Yeah, or claiming social benefits. P14

There is so much prejudice. I mean, Guernsey is like living in the 50s. It really is in terms of attitudes towards people. So, there is a lot of prejudice. There is a lot of antipathy. There's a lot of fear as well. A lot of charities can't speak out because they're not allowed to be seen to lobby. P19

I'm also very aware that people who need to tell their stories are often silenced. And I think that's a big shame. P19

Some participants described prejudices towards some ethnic groups.

I was in Waitrose, literally two or three days ago, queuing to pay, and I heard an older couple behind me talking about, "Have you seen the number of black people on the streets now? It's ridiculous. You know, I don't feel safe in my own home anymore" and that's very typical of the entrenched Guernsey view. P12

However, other participants thought it was more of a disconnection than prejudice and that, instead, there was greater openness and acceptance.

In the level of diversity that we have in terms of ethnicity and different people from different countries living here is people with different colour skin, you know, has changed a lot. And I think openness and acceptance of that has changed with it. But there isn't a connectedness there, I wouldn't say. P10

Groupthink and conformity

There is a tendency for individuals to check with each other about what people think before they voice an opinion because they don't want to be wrong side of the collective views or actions.

I do feel quite a strong sense of you need to conform here in a way that I didn't used to feel before I moved back. P26

I think it is almost like keeping up with the Joneses. Like if somebody says something, you have to agree with them…. Some people may be too scared to say something or have an opinion because they don't want to be wrong. P22

Perceptions of not being able to speak out

Participants discussed how, for many people in Guernsey, speaking out about issues or difficulties is not normal or acceptable.

There is a lot of prejudice. There is a lot of antipathy. There's a lot of fear as well. A lot of charities can't speak out because they're not allowed to be seen to lobby… There is a lot of good that goes on in Guernsey, but there's also a lot of rot. P19

[A lot of people feel like they can't speak out about anything.] For example, if you work for the State, who are the largest employer, you're not allowed to speak out about anything, you know, like you can't. You know, you're essentially gagged from talking. And I would imagine it's the same in a lot of the finance houses. You know, if you're not allowed to take positions on charity boards and will be chairs and things like that, you know, so, you know, you can't spearhead social causes. So, it leaves very few people who will have, you know, the knowledge, the willpower and will be willing to do that. So, you know, which then creates a lack of people being able to push for change. P25

It does not necessarily impact everyone equally. One participant described how ethnicity can impact perceptions of being able to speak out.

We have found it impossible virtually to have anybody of colour to come and or even actually anybody of a different ethnicity and to come and join the group and speak vocally out. They'll sit behind the scenes on it, but they're too worried about, you know, being seen as a troublemaker or, you know, damaging their reputation. P25

Barriers for collaboration

As alluded to in the previous section, there are strong norms of cooperation, but not necessarily collaboration. The participants described the existence of barriers to collaboration in Guernsey.

I don't think that [lack of collaboration] comes from a lack of wanting to collaborate. It just comes from people thinking they're not doing it how I want to do it. So, I'm going to do it better and perhaps that is a lack of collaboration. P10

Collaboration is sometimes unnecessarily hard because people worry and they're not prepared to, sort of, take that leap of faith. P9

[There is] definitely that dynamic of like be careful, be careful, is really high here. P21

Privacy and feeling claustrophobic

As discussed in the section on knowing about connections, the strong norms of personal sharing information can create a sense of claustrophobia and lack of privacy.

Survey results

The following key theme related to the weaknesses of norms, obligations, and expectations in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

> Guernsey can feel like a "glass half empty place to live". Complaints and pessimism, especially local issues, can quickly snowball with the community.

The survey results indicated a high level of agreement with this statement, with 82.4% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 10.4% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. In general, young people were less likely to strongly agree with the statement, and people between 45 and 64 had more mixed responses, with a lot of people strongly agreeing but some disagreeing.

- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
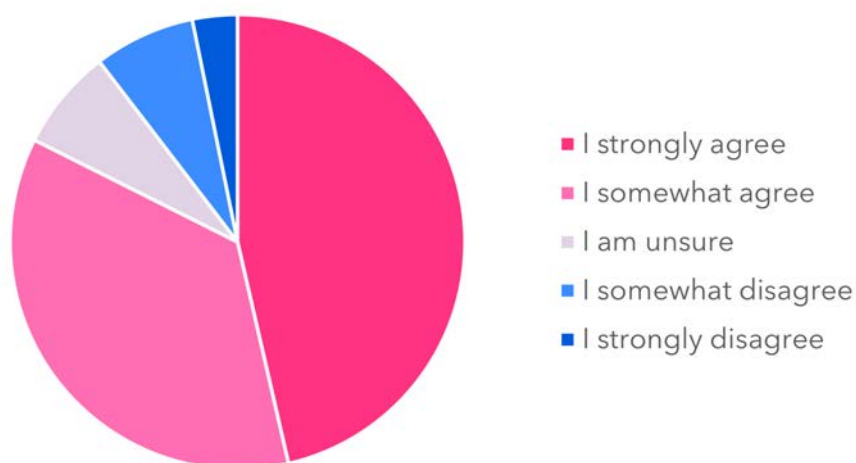
Figure 19. Results from the survey related to the weaknesses of norms, obligations, and expectations

Summary of the weaknesses related to norms, obligations, and expectations

Despite the strong social norms, obligations, and expectations that foster a sense of community in Guernsey, several weaknesses challenge these dynamics. A pervasive negativity, characterised by complaints and pessimism, often snowballs within the close-knit community, exacerbating a culture of entitlement and lack of perspective, particularly among those who have never lived elsewhere. While internally pervasive, this negativity contrasts with the positive image residents promote to outsiders. Additionally, deep-seated stereotypes and prejudices, especially towards certain ethnic groups, contribute to a reluctance to speak out or challenge the status quo, as people fear social backlash. This fear fosters groupthink and conformity, stifling open dialogue and preventing meaningful change. Barriers to collaboration also exist, as mistrust and a culture of caution hinder collective action. Moreover, the lack of privacy in such a small, interconnected community can create a sense of claustrophobia, further complicating efforts to build social cohesion and trust. These challenges collectively undermine the potential for a more cohesive and supportive community in Guernsey.

Opportunities related to norms, obligations, and expectations

The analysis of findings related to norms, obligations, and expectations has highlighted several opportunities to improve social capital in Guernsey. Here are some key areas for improvement.

Address and reduce negativity

There is an opportunity to counteract the pervasive negativity that some participants noted by promoting positive narratives and celebrating successes within the community. Highlighting and sharing stories of positive contributions, achievements, and the unique strengths of Guernsey can help shift the collective mindset towards a more optimistic and constructive outlook. This can enhance the overall morale and cohesion of the community.

Celebrate cultural diversity and integration

Embracing and celebrating the cultural diversity that newcomers bring to Guernsey can enrich the community's norms and expectations. By valuing the contributions of all residents and facilitating the integration of newcomers, the island can foster a more dynamic and adaptable community. This approach not only helps preserve core aspects of Guernsey's identity but also ensures that the community remains vibrant and resilient in the face of change.

Foster intergroup dialogue and collaboration

Encouraging open dialogue and collaboration between different social groups can help bridge divides and build stronger connections across the community. Creating platforms for constructive conversation where people from various backgrounds can share their perspectives and work together on common goals can reduce social divides and enhance mutual understanding. This collaborative approach can help break down barriers and build trust, ultimately strengthening the community's social fabric.

Promote inclusivity and equity

There is a significant opportunity to strengthen social capital by promoting inclusivity and equity within the community. This can be achieved by ensuring that all groups, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or background, have equal access to resources, opportunities, and social recognition. By addressing disparities and fostering a more inclusive environment, Guernsey can enhance the sense of belonging and shared responsibility among its residents, which are key components of social capital.

Threats related to norms, obligations, and expectations

Commonly held beliefs such as norms, obligations, and expectations are fundamental to the functioning of communities and organisations. As the bedrock of social order, they define acceptable behaviour and contribute to the overall cohesion. While there are many strong positive norms in Guernsey, there are significant threats that may undermine Guernsey's strong social capital.

Perceptions of changing culture and the role of newcomers

The perception of a changing culture, particularly with the arrival of newcomers, can threaten social capital in Guernsey. Long-standing residents may feel that the influx of new people with different values and expectations is diluting the traditional norms that have defined the community for generations. This can lead to a sense of cultural loss and a fear that the established way of life is under threat. If not managed carefully, these perceptions can lead to tensions between long-time residents and newcomers, reducing the willingness to engage in cooperative and collaborative efforts. The integration of newcomers into the community is essential for maintaining social cohesion, but it requires an open-minded approach and a willingness to adapt and evolve while preserving core aspects of the island's identity.

Inequality

Inequality presents a significant threat to social capital in Guernsey, particularly when norms, obligations, and expectations fail to address the needs of all community members. When certain groups feel excluded or disadvantaged, it undermines the sense of community and shared responsibility that is vital for strong social capital. Inequality can manifest in various forms, including economic disparities, access to resources, and social recognition. As inequality deepens, the bonds of trust and mutual support that hold the community together may weaken, leading to increased tensions and reduced social cohesion.

Deepening Social Divides

The deepening of social divides in Guernsey is another critical threat to social capital. These divides can occur along various lines, such as socioeconomic status, education, ethnicity, and access to opportunities. As these divides grow, they create distinct groups within the community that may have differing values, expectations, and obligations. This separation can lead to a breakdown in communication and understanding between groups, further entrenching divisions and fostering an environment of mistrust and resentment. When social divides are allowed to deepen, the collective sense of identity and purpose that is essential for a healthy, cohesive society is eroded.

Social Isolation

Social isolation, whether due to geographic, economic, or social factors, poses a significant threat to social capital in Guernsey. When individuals or groups become isolated, they are cut off from the support networks and community interactions that are vital for fostering trust and mutual aid. Social isolation can lead to a sense of alienation and disconnection from the broader community, which in turn can result in decreased participation in communal activities and a reluctance to engage with others. Over time, this can weaken the fabric of social capital, as fewer people are involved in the shared obligations and expectations that sustain community life. Addressing social isolation requires targeted efforts to ensure that all members of the community feel included and valued, regardless of their circumstances.

These issues can erode the norms, obligations, and expectations that underpin a strong and cohesive community, making it essential to address them proactively to preserve and strengthen the island's social fabric.

"The strength of the team is each individual member.
The strength of each member is the team."

PHIL JACKSON

Predispositions – Goodwill, solidarity and empathy

Goodwill involves positive sentiments towards others characterised by benevolence and positive intentions that represent the potential for positive social actions such as cooperation and collaboration. It shapes shared values, attitudes, and expectations, creating an environment that encourages prosocial behaviour. Individuals with positive intentions are more inclined to engage in collective efforts, share resources, and work towards common goals. Communities characterised by goodwill are better equipped to navigate difficulties, relying on the strength of their social bonds to overcome adversity. As a driving force behind positive relationships and collaborative efforts, goodwill emerges as a vital element that underpins the social and emotional vitality of a community.

Summary of findings related to goodwill, solidarity and empathy

Guernsey has incredibly strong community goodwill, solidarity, and empathy that are deeply rooted in a strong sense of community and collective responsibility. The island's culture promotes a "pay–it–forward" mentality, where residents exhibit goodwill, decency, and respect towards each other. This collective spirit was particularly evident during the COVID–19 pandemic when the community adhered to guidelines to protect one another, reinforcing the idea that Guernsey prioritises collective well–being. The sense of solidarity is also tied to a positive collective image of Guernsey, with residents feeling a strong connection to the island and a desire to maintain its special character.

However, there are also significant weaknesses that undermine this sense of solidarity. Many participants noted a disconnect between the rhetoric of collective action, exemplified by the "Guernsey Together" slogan, and the reality of political inaction and decisions that exacerbated inequality. This disconnect led to cynicism and a perception that the slogan was merely symbolic without genuine commitment. The gap between political rhetoric and meaningful action has created frustration among residents, highlighting a broader disconnect between the government and the community's lived experiences.

These strengths and weaknesses collectively impact Guernsey's social capital, influencing the level of trust, cooperation, and collective action within the community.

Table 11 summarises the main findings related to goodwill, solidarity and empathy in Guernsey.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
> There is a strong sense of solidarity and willingness to come together for the common good. > There is a strong desire to represent the island in a positive way and do right by others. > The majority of people feel that they are part of something special. > The sense of connection and closeness with others results in a general sense of empathy for others.	> There are some significant disconnects and people who see outside of the Guernsey Way, as evidenced by the backlash to the Guernsey Together slogan. > There are some significant divides that diminish or limit goodwill, solidarity and empathy.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
> Encouraging intergenerational and cross–cultural connections > Celebrating and amplifying acts of kindness and solidarity > Enhancing leadership and governance > Promoting inclusivity and reducing inequality	> Inequality > Individualism > Deepening social divides > Factors that impact solidarity, including the ability to feel part of the community and valued and respected.

Table 11. Analysis of goodwill, solidarity and empathy in Guernsey

The following sections will explore the research findings related to the strengths and weaknesses of goodwill, solidarity and empathy in Guernsey.

Strengths related to goodwill, solidarity and empathy

Guernsey is characterised by a strong sense of community solidarity, which stands out in a world that is increasingly fragmented and individualistic. This solidarity is deeply embedded in the island's culture, where people feel a strong sense of collective responsibility and care for one another. Participants emphasised the "pay-it-forward" culture in Guernsey, where goodwill, decency, and respect are prevalent, and people are generally supportive and helpful to each other.

This collective spirit is closely tied to the belief that Guernsey is a special place, with residents feeling a strong connection to the island and a desire to maintain its positive image. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a powerful testament to this solidarity, as the community collectively adhered to rules and acted in the best interest of everyone on the island. The sense of unity and responsibility was evident in how people followed guidelines to protect others, reinforcing the idea that Guernsey is a place where collective well-being is prioritised.

Participants also noted that the island's governance, based on consensus democracy, plays a significant role in strengthening this sense of solidarity. The collective identity of Guernsey is reflected in the pride people take in their community and the desire to represent the island positively. Many feel fortunate to be part of such a cohesive community, which fosters a strong sense of connection and belonging.

Overall, the strengths of goodwill, solidarity, and empathy in Guernsey contribute significantly to its social capital, creating a supportive and connected community where people feel a deep sense of responsibility for one another.

Solidarity

Participants widely agreed that Guernsey has a uniquely strong community solidarity in an increasingly disconnected, fragmented, and individualistic world.

I think in a world that has become increasingly individualistic, there is a sort of Western sense of collectivism here that doesn't exist that much in other cultures. This is more of a collectivist culture in a capitalist context of unbelievable levels of individualism. P21

Participants talked about the goodwill, care, and empathy entailed in Guernsey's pay-it-forward culture and the view that people are generally good, decent, and respectful.

I don't think it [self-interested behaviour] would work here. No. No. Like, there's a pay-it-forward culture here. P4

[Guernsey is] decent and respectful as a community, and I think the way that people drive here embodies that, actually. P15

For some participants, the strong sense of community solidarity is closely linked to the feeling that Guernsey is a good and special place.

The people that come to Guernsey and Guernsey life works for you. You tend to stay. So, you want to give back to the island, and you want to encourage people to stay and help somebody. P16

COVID-19 presented serious challenges for communities around the world. For some, such as Guernsey, it highlighted the strength of community solidarity.

[The togetherness] always was there to start with because I think if we hadn't been like that already, we probably wouldn't have been so successful through COVID. The

fact that, you know, we were told to stay in our houses and only go out for like half an hour a day or whatever, and no one did anything but that. Whereas anywhere else people were kind of breaking the rules and that kind of thing. We were following the rules for the benefit of everybody. It's not a dictatorship here, so it wasn't like we were forced to do it as we would be in other countries. But I think people wanted to do it because if everybody does this and puts other people first as opposed to their own interests, we'll all benefit together. P16

I think that the solidarity, the sticking together, is something we're really good at. The latest example is COVID, right. … Absolutely, there was a collective responsibility there, you know, people followed the rules because they cared about others and they wanted the same. … Adults were allowed to come back for Christmas, but they had to do two weeks isolation, and my daughter came and lived in my bedroom ensuite for two weeks so that she could have Christmas with us for two weeks. And again, on that Facebook group [people said], "We should not be letting the students come home for Christmas because I do not believe that mothers will not hug their children", well, hold on. I'm living in this. I'm part of the collective responsibility. I will not hug my daughter. P7

Other participants talked about the importance of rule–following and its connection to collective wellbeing.

People don't want a dodgy finance industry because you have one dodgy person with a dodgy client. It gets in a Daily Mail headline in the UK, and laws change, which impacts the entire community. I think people have that microcosm of that, that feeling of, you know, one bad impact does impact the whole community. And like with COVID, one person breaks the COVID rules. That locks down our entire island. I think people, for you, see on a much smaller scale how one negative impact can impact other people in the community around you and the island. You want to protect that. … I think we have a very compliant culture in Guernsey. You know, if there is a rule, people will follow it. P23

One participant connected the strength of solidarity to the nature of Guernsey's system of governance.

People realised that in a consensus democracy, you have to do the work to persuade people why we do it. You can't just tell people we're doing it, and that's the most amazing thing about our form of democracy. … look at the kickback in New Zealand [following COVID solidarity], it's like if you don't bring people along, you get this visceral response and complete swing the other way, and I think naturally, because the nature of consensus is that our swings are not as wide. We still get swings, but because you can't ever. You don't have to wait four years to have kickbacks. P4

Positive collective image

The strength of collective solidarity is linked to a collective image of Guernsey and a desire to maintain and uphold that positive collective image. Collective identity is a common theme that is discussed in other sections of this report. Participants described it as follows:

I think most people want to represent the island in a positive way. P16

Guernsey does feel that way [united as a community]. I think people are very proud of the island, which is a united, you know, pride, which I think is great. P5

The perception that Guernsey is special

Many participants talked about how Guernsey is a special place. They described feeling a connection to the place and the people. and they want others from outside to see Guernsey in a positive light. They want the best for Guernsey in a way that is not all that common around the world anymore. Some participants talked about how, during COVID, that was very evident because people would follow the rules; they'd stay home, and they'd be socially responsible. They wanted the best for everyone in Guernsey, and other people have talked about how you cross the road, and people will stop for you to cross the road. There are many different manifestations of

that social responsibility that are very strong in Guernsey.

> *What's different here is the individuals and the organisations feel very lucky to be in Guernsey and want to give their time and their company's resources to Guernsey. In a way that's not performative, that's authentic. P21*

> *I think the majority feel that they are part of something. So they want to make sure that it's been kept the same way. You know, there's not much litter and that kind of stuff because everybody wants to be able to walk through the High Street and look nice. Everybody, you know, there's loads of people that do beach cleans and all of this kind of stuff because they want to keep the island as nice as it is. P16*

One participant made a pop culture comparison to the movie Barbie (2023, Warner Bros.):

> *Did you see that Barbie movie, and there's sort of this Barbie world, and then she sort of goes to the real world? I'm starting to feel more and more like, we're in some kind of Barbie world? P9*

Several participants discussed a phenomenon where people come to Guernsey intending to stay for a short time and end up staying permanently. They described how if it works for you, it grabs you, and you never want to leave.

> *I came here for six months and 20 odd years later. I'm still here … and there are hundreds like me, probably thousands that were only coming for a bit or people that leave and end up coming, that there if it meshes with you, you never leave. It grabs you, and you leave a piece of your heart here. P10*

Sense of connection

Some participants discussed how the solidarity and goodwill is inseparably linked to the strong sense of connection with the community that many people in Guernsey experience.

> *I think a certain willingness to sort of come together for the common good. … I think there is a, you know, feeling of that we do have to sort of find our way in the world, and then*

> *we're small, so we've got to keep shoulder to shoulder of fighting the good fight. P15*

Survey results

The following key theme related to the strengths of goodwill, solidarity and empathy in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

Guernsey has a strong sense of community spirit and collective responsibility, and people tend to look out for each other and want the best for Guernsey.

The survey results indicated a high level of agreement with this statement, with 83.3% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 10.3% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. There were no significant differences based on demographic characteristics.

- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
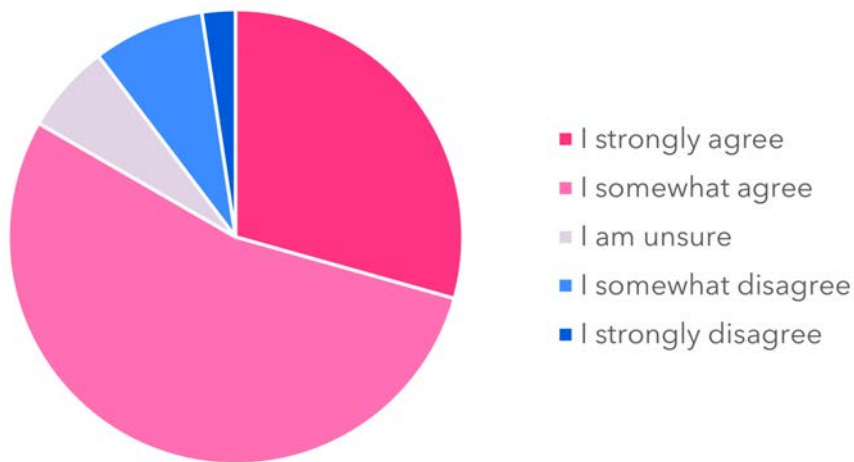
Figure 20. Results from the survey related to the strengths of goodwill, solidarity and empathy

Summary of the strengths related to goodwill, solidarity and empathy

Guernsey is characterised by a strong sense of community solidarity, deeply rooted in the island's culture and reflected in the residents' collective responsibility and care for one another. This solidarity manifests in a "pay-it-forward" culture where goodwill, decency, and respect are common, and people are generally supportive and helpful. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted this solidarity, as the community adhered to guidelines for the collective well-being, reinforcing the idea that Guernsey is a place where communal interests are prioritised. The island's consensus-based governance further strengthens this sense of unity, with residents taking pride in their community and working to maintain its positive image. The strong sense of connection to Guernsey and the belief in its uniqueness contribute to a cohesive and supportive community, where people feel a deep sense of belonging and responsibility to each other.

Weaknesses related to goodwill, solidarity and empathy

In Guernsey, despite the strong sense of community, there are notable disconnects that undermine collective solidarity, goodwill, and empathy. A recurring theme among participants was the backlash against the "Guernsey Together" slogan used during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many felt the slogan did not reflect their reality, particularly due to perceived inaction and decisions by politicians that exacerbated inequality. This led to cynicism and a sense that the slogan was merely symbolic without a genuine commitment to collective action. Participants expressed frustration with the gap between political rhetoric and meaningful action, highlighting a disconnect between the government and the people's experiences.

Disconnects

Many of the participants described disconnects that undermine the sense of collective solidarity, goodwill, and empathy in Guernsey. A consistent theme was the reaction to a slogan "Guernsey Together". Many participants believed there was pushback from certain sectors of society because the slogan was not indicative of their experiences.

I think the Guernsey Together, obviously it meant let's all work together to look after each other. But the politicians aren't doing it, are they? The government isn't doing that, and I think that's what the pushback was. It's like, well, we're not all together because people are making decisions about us and they are not helpful decisions because they're forcing us more down this road of inequality. P19

During COVID, there was a strapline which was Guernsey Together, and you know, a lot of people [became] very cynical about that afterwards. P6

Solidarity undermined by a lack of action

Some participants indicated that the pushback against the slogan was due to a lack of action. They felt it was little more than window dressing and that real and meaningful action was lacking.

We're very sometimes good in this island of saying something [like the Guernsey Together slogan], which is supposedly going to bring people collectively together. But the action is just not behind it. … It's that worst form of we're all in this together. As long as I'm just going to be a little bit more ahead of you. P2

These issues relate to a general view that was expressed by many participants, reflecting a disconnect between politicians and the political system and the interests and experiences of individuals in Guernsey.

I think sometimes it's very clear that the island has a view, but the politicians will then go and talk about something completely different. P5

Survey results

The following key theme related to the weaknesses of goodwill, solidarity and empathy in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

Guernsey is not adapting quickly enough to the evolving economic, social, and environmental challenges it faces.

The survey results indicated a high level of agreement with this statement, with 87.2% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 8.8% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. The highest levels of agreement were from people aged 35–44 and 65–74. Young people aged 18–24 had the lowest level of agreement, with an average response of 3.63.
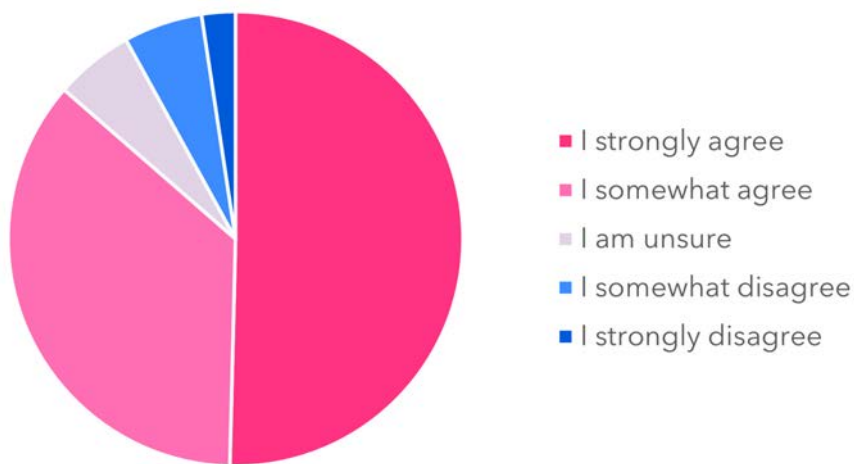
Figure 21. Results from the survey related to the weaknesses of goodwill, solidarity and empathy

Summary of the weaknesses related to goodwill, solidarity and empathy

Despite Guernsey's strong community spirit, disconnects undermine solidarity, goodwill, and empathy. The "Guernsey Together" slogan during COVID-19 sparked cynicism, as many felt it didn't reflect their experiences, particularly due to perceived inaction and deepening inequality. This led to frustration over the gap between political rhetoric and meaningful action, highlighting a disconnect between the government and the people's real-life challenges.

Opportunities related to goodwill, solidarity and empathy

There are several key opportunities in Guernsey to enhance goodwill, solidarity, and empathy, which are crucial for strengthening the island's social capital.

Encouraging intergenerational and cross-cultural connections

Creating opportunities for different generations and cultural groups to interact and learn from each other can help break down barriers and foster empathy. Programs that encourage mentorship, cultural exchanges, and intergenerational activities can build stronger, more understanding relationships across the community. These connections can help reduce social divides and enhance the sense of unity and mutual respect within the island.

Celebrating and amplifying acts of kindness and solidarity

Recognising and publicising acts of goodwill, cooperation, and empathy can reinforce positive social norms and inspire others to contribute to the community. By highlighting stories of community support, volunteerism, and collective achievements, Guernsey can cultivate a culture that values and rewards solidarity. This could involve community awards, social media campaigns, or local media coverage that shines a light on the positive actions of individuals and groups within the community.

Enhancing leadership and governance

Strengthening the connection between the community and its leaders by fostering transparent, responsive, and inclusive governance can help build trust and reinforce solidarity. When community members feel that their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed, they are more likely to engage in collective action and support communal initiatives. Efforts to improve communication between the government and the public, as well as initiatives that involve citizens in decision-making processes, can help align leadership with the community's needs and aspirations.

Promoting inclusivity and reducing inequality

Addressing social and economic disparities is vital to fostering a more inclusive community. By ensuring that all individuals have access to opportunities, resources, and services, the island can reduce the sense of division and resentment that inequality fosters. Initiatives focused on economic support, equitable access to education, and inclusive community planning can help bridge these gaps, allowing more people to feel valued and engaged within the community.

Threats related to goodwill, solidarity and empathy

In Guernsey, several threats undermine goodwill, solidarity, and empathy, significantly impacting the island's social capital.

Inequality

One of the most pressing threats is inequality. As disparities in wealth, opportunities, and access to services become more pronounced, they create rifts within the community. Inequality fosters resentment and a sense of injustice among those who feel marginalised, which weakens the bonds of solidarity. When individuals or groups perceive that they are not being treated fairly or that they do not have the same opportunities as others, it can erode trust in the community and diminish the collective sense of responsibility that is vital for maintaining social cohesion.

Individualism

Individualism also poses a significant threat to solidarity in Guernsey. While a strong sense of community has traditionally characterised the island, the increasing influence of individualistic values can weaken this collective spirit. When people prioritise personal success and individual goals over the wellbeing of the community, it can lead to a decline in cooperative behaviours and mutual support. This shift towards individualism can result in a more fragmented society, where people are less willing to engage in the collective actions necessary to address common challenges and support those in need.

Deepening social divides

Deepening social divides exacerbate these issues, further fragmenting the community. As social, economic, and cultural differences become more pronounced, they can lead to the formation of distinct groups that are less likely to interact with each other. These divides can be based on wealth, education, ethnicity, or even long-standing local versus newcomer dynamics. When these divisions deepen, they erode the shared identity and common values that underpin social solidarity. People may begin to see themselves as part of smaller, more insular groups rather than as members of a broader, united community, reducing their willingness to work together for the common good.

Weakening sense of community

Several factors impact solidarity, including the ability of individuals to feel part of the community and to feel valued and respected. When people do not feel included or appreciated, they are less likely to engage with others or contribute to the community's well-being. This lack of inclusion can be particularly damaging in a small, close-knit community like Guernsey, where social connections are critical to both personal and communal well-being. If individuals or groups feel excluded or devalued, it can lead to disengagement, social isolation, and a decline in collective action, all of which undermine the overall social capital of the island.

These threats, if left unaddressed, can lead to a more fragmented and less cohesive society, weakening the island's social fabric and diminishing its capacity for collective action and mutual support.

Predispositions – Social identity and belonging

The sense of shared identity within a group or community has important implications for a range of social capital aspects and outcomes. Social identity serves as a guiding force, directing individuals toward common objectives, amplifying the likelihood of social support, heightening commitments to the group or community, fostering collective efficacy, and emboldening collective action. Embedded in a shared social identity are the feelings of belonging and solidarity, encapsulating the notion that others are integral parts of the same collective, facilitating trust and cooperation. Shared identity cultivates a sense of unity, togetherness, solidarity, and community spirit. The shared social identity becomes a cornerstone for the development of social bonds, creating an environment where collaborative endeavours can flourish.

Summary of findings related to social identity and belonging

Guernsey's social identity and sense of belonging are strongly rooted in a deep connection to place, community solidarity, and positive narratives about life on the island. Participants emphasised the island's beauty, safety, trust, and the close-knit nature of the community, where frequent encounters with familiar faces foster a strong sense of belonging. This identity is closely tied to intangible qualities like stubbornness, symbolised by the "Guernsey donkey," and pride in the island's history, particularly its resilience during the German occupation in WWII. Several key historical events have shaped Guernsey's collective resilience, pride, and sense of independence, contributing to a strong, positive social capital.

The island's community solidarity and shared values create a feeling of being part of something special, where residents are committed to maintaining Guernsey's positive image. This collective identity is often expressed through stories and narratives that connect people to the physical geography and cultural history of the island. Despite occasional feelings of claustrophobia, particularly among younger people, there is a

strong pull for many to stay or return to the island, reinforcing a deep-rooted connection.

Guernsey's identity is also shaped by its relationship with its larger Channel Island neighbour, Jersey. Pride in independence and self-governance and its distinctiveness from Jersey contributes to a strong sense of social identity. Overall, this identity is a source of pride, resilience, and solidarity, which significantly bolsters Guernsey's social capital.

However, these same strengths can also present challenges. While fostering resilience, a strong sense of independence and stubbornness can also lead to resistance to change and a reluctance to accept new ideas or external influences. This insular mindset can make it difficult for Guernsey to adapt to global changes and limit collaboration with outsiders, potentially hindering economic and cultural diversification.

The strong collective identity, while fostering community solidarity, can also lead to the exclusion or marginalisation of those who do not fit the traditional mould, such as newcomers or socially diverse groups. This

can deepen social divides and limit social mobility, threatening the overall cohesion of the community.

The lingering effects of historical trauma, particularly from the German occupation, contribute to a conservative and risk-averse mindset. This risk aversion, along with the "tall poppy syndrome", where individuals are discouraged from standing out, can stifle innovation and progress, limiting the community's ability to embrace new opportunities and grow.

Table 12 summarises the main findings related to social identity and belonging in Guernsey.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
> Many aspects of identity are positive, based on pride, respect, and solidarity. > There is a strong connection to place, which results in many positive actions towards the natural and built environment. > There are strong positive beliefs about community belonging. > People perceive themselves as stubborn, proud, quiet and understated (especially relative to Jersey), relaxed and competent, conservative, and high performing	> There are some attachments to the historical identity of Guernsey that may present barriers to change. > There are some negative aspects of stubbornness, pride, and the tendency to focus on negatives.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
> Evolving the identity to reflect contemporary values > Fostering inclusivity and embracing diversity > Addressing inequality and bridging social divides > Promoting positive narratives and shared identity	> Inequality > Deepening social divides > Social isolation > Perceptions of changing culture and the role of newcomers > An inability to evolve the identity to suit a changing world.

Table 12. Analysis of social identity and belonging in Guernsey

The following sections will explore the research findings related to the strengths and weaknesses of social identity and belonging in Guernsey.

Strengths related to social identity and belonging

Guernsey's social identity and sense of belonging are characterised by a strong connection to place, community solidarity, and positive narratives about life on the island. Participants overwhelmingly spoke of Guernsey's beauty, safety, trust, and the close-knit nature of its community, where familiarity and frequent encounters with known faces reinforce a sense of belonging. The island's identity is closely tied to intangible qualities such as stubbornness, symbolised by the "Guernsey donkey," and pride in its history and resilience, particularly related to the German occupation during WWII. This historical event is seen by many as shaping Guernsey's collective resilience, pride, and sense of independence, although some also noted lingering effects of caution and risk aversion.

Participants highlighted the strong community solidarity and shared values, where people feel part of something special and are committed to maintaining the island's positive image. This collective identity is often expressed through narratives and stories that connect residents to the physical geography and cultural history of Guernsey. Despite the island's small size and occasional feelings of claustrophobia among younger people, there is a strong pull for many to stay or return, creating a deep-rooted connection to the island.

The island's identity is also shaped by its relationship with Jersey, its larger Channel Island neighbour. Guernsey residents often express pride in their independence and distinctiveness. Overall, Guernsey's social identity is a source of pride, resilience, and solidarity, contributing to a strong sense of social capital on the island.

Positive identity

When asked about Guernsey's identity, participants overwhelmingly talked about positive things. They talked about connection to place and how beautiful it is on the beaches and the work-life balance. They talked about safety, trust, and connectedness and how you never really feel alone because you walk down the High Street because you're bound to bump into people you know. And they talked about stubbornness and the symbol of the Guernsey donkey with a sense of pride. Although they could easily talk about the Guernsey identity, it was mostly intangible qualities, and it was overwhelmingly positive.

[Guernsey identity] is [about connectedness, trust, safety, belonging]. It certainly is the fact that you may not know somebody, but they are recognisable faces, much like the landscape. I mean, I feel very, very connected to the landscape and the familiarity of the spring flowers and the seasons... It is a place of enormous natural beauty, and that is very precious to me. So, I would feel very protective of our coastline and our landscape and our... It's just certain rocks and formations you there are, you know, the visual of the Pea Stacks or the symbol of Fort Grey. There are places in Guernsey. You know, even just the way that the slipways are built and the way that they absorb the heat throughout the day, and you can lean up against them at the end of the day. The boat ride to Herm. There are, I think, because we're such a small place, there are lots and lots of common experiences. P5

Community solidarity

The strong sense of community and the solidarity that people feel with the community is an important part of Guernsey's identity.

[People] just love that they can feel part of something… They feel part of something, they're always inextricably linked. P2

Participants described how their identity is relatively intangible.

It grabs you, and if you leave, you leave a piece of your heart here… It's quite intangible, but so many people like me were only coming for a year. And they're here and have built their lives in their home here. And it's really hard to put their finger on what that is. P10

People are proud of it. They are proud of it and proud of what a nice place it is. But yeah, I don't think we have a strong national identity. P20

Guernsey has many strong narratives and stories that define its cultural identity. As discussed in other sections, these narratives are not always factually accurate, but when it comes to its sense of social identity, it is generally positive and often connected to the physical geography of the island.

It's the basis of storytelling for a lot of us. There are lots and lots of stories that we can tell that emanate from a rock in the sea, and that's really quite nice. P2

Strong connection to place

Many participants described their connection to Guernsey and how they feel a pull to return home if they leave.

There was something deeper that returned me back home, the calling to the soul. There's something deeply rooted within this place, within its land, within its canvas, within its community, in between the people. P4

People talk about the elastic band, as in, you get pinged back here. And for those that haven't pinged back here yet, there is a yearning. If I were living in London, I would be yearning to be back again. P6

Although many young people can feel claustrophobic in the close-knit Guernsey community, some participants expressed a perspective that young people are less likely to leave than small towns or isolated areas.

People have a very, very strong value in living in Guernsey, like even young people, which is really surprising to me. Most young people want to leave where they're grown up, particularly small town or isolated areas…. [People in other places] come in, and they leave. That is much less the case here. People will really commit to the island, either because they've been here multiple generations. … I don't know, another school in the UK that will have as many multiple generation students [in their schools]. P21

The following comment illustrates how a sense of identity is embedded into Guernsey's culture.

COVID was really interesting. It was the first time we collectively saw what we had. … because they slowed down enough, and it was like, oh, we're actually in heaven. P4

Identity relative to Jersey

Part of Guernsey's identity is shaped relative to its larger Channel Island neighbour, Jersey. Strong narratives about the differences between Guernsey and Jersey powerfully shape Guernsey's social identity. Participants often described it as friendly or just jokes, but there are clearly strong undercurrents that shape people's sense of place, community, and identity.

I think there is the element of always being in Jersey's shadow, and there's a little bit of that being the smaller island, but where we want to be fiercely independent, never wanting to be seen to be part of. We never talk to talk, you know, as England being the mainland. … So, loyalty to the crown rather than the UK Government. There's an element of over history of people being quite private over here, you know, you've had privateers and pirates and people making money over here and being very cautious about it but wanting to keep everything. You know, close to their chest about how they're doing it. I think you have an element where, like the rock that we're on, the granite that we're on, we're quite stubborn and resilient and tough, and we reject anybody giving us advice. P2

The comment above highlights many of the key themes related to identity, including pride,

stubbornness, resilience, independence, and the tendency to be private and reserved.

A strong sense of pride was evident in many comments, and it was often linked to historical events, such as the German occupation and the finance sector.

I certainly think there's a pride in the way that Guernsey came through [the German occupation during WWII]. And I think the way that Guernsey's adapted; it's been quite agile and adaptive, and it's had other industries in the past; horticulture was the big one. … So, I think there's a there is a sort of collective pride in that they've had, I think it was referenced. They've had people that have punched above their weight and become quite esteemed and established. P15

Influence of the German occupation during WWII

The German occupation was a recurrent theme that continues to influence Guernsey's identity. Some participants discussed the relatively intangible nature of the occupations continuing influence.

There is this collective mindset which is affecting us, but we don't realise it or we're not necessarily there, I mean. There are issues which are because you're an island, but there's also issues because you're an island and you're occupied in WWII. … There was a collective memory, and I don't have a direct experience of it, but I've sort of inherited this sort of… There's a collective culture. P9

For many participants, the occupation was still seen as having a significant influence on Guernsey's identity. However, there is a perception that the event was so long ago it should no longer have a strong influence on Guernsey.

It's weird, isn't it [the ongoing influence of the German occupation]? Because 80 years on, that, that wave of feeling towards Germany and Germans, I still feel it. I still kind of feel that shadow and that flicker. … there are still people who have, you know, very, very strong feelings…. and the way that women who had relationships with German soldiers were treated as collaborators and just those narratives haven't gone away,

I still hear some people. I think my mum saying, oh, you know, so and so from down the road who works in that shop. They are the grandson of, you know, so and so who was with the German officer, why? P19

That's probably the most momentous thing in history that's ever happened here [the German occupation]. … I'm not sure that's true [the occupation having an ongoing impact on the tendency to have negative views]. There's a pride and a resilience that comes out of that. So perhaps there's a perhaps there's a stubbornness that comes out of it. And we all have. We do have a reputation for being, the Guernsey-born and bred people, have a reputation for being stubborn. But again, it's not. It's not, we're not … I mean, we're a generation on now. There are very few, but they're all elderly. P1

There were mixed views on whether the occupation had a lingering positive or negative impact on Guernsey's sense of social identity.

I've heard both perspectives [the German occupation resulted in a lot of pride as to how Guernsey came through it, and others say it absolutely squashed civil society altogether, and that still hasn't even recovered]. I'm not really sure. I mean, I think it can be both. … There's something going on where we don't want to take a risk. We can't imagine ourselves being a world leader in stuff. And I think partly because we're the smaller of the two Channel Islands as well. Yeah, I think that also has a bearing. P8

The majority of the views were that it had a positive influence related to resilience, pride, strength, and stubbornness.

I think the lingering effect of World War II and the occupation is that we can get through this. I think it's a resilience. I think that's positive. P6

Well, I definitely think, well, certainly the occupation and, you know, listen to interviews with people who survived this and who lived through it. I definitely think that has shaped Guernsey and made it feel quite a special place for people who do live here and I mean, the building I work in, when the island was occupied, was a soldier's headquarters and lots of history, and it's

that's something to be very proud of as well that people have lived through that. P5

However, other participants discussed the negative impacts, particularly those related to fear of standing out, the desire to be reserved, and risk aversion.

There is this, I would say, cultural trauma or cultural conditioning [from the German occupation] that we have to face. Somehow, because fear is probably the largest barrier in government, really. Or in community, the fear of getting it wrong or the fear of standing out. Or the, you know, the crap mentality where you pull everyone back into the negativity or anything because it's safety. P4

Independence and self-governance

Many participants commented on how Guernsey's independence is an important part of its identity.

Guernsey was kind of independent, isolated, kind of on its own. It hasn't really let anybody else in. … This is kind of the stubborn thing. We do everything ourselves. We don't need external influence. We're quite happy. You know, we don't need other political parties telling us what to do from the UK? We're quite happy to do everything ourselves. Yeah, so maybe it's a positive thing because we've got control over it, but I don't think it lets necessarily other groups or influences come in very easily. P16

Survey results

The following key theme related to the strengths of social identity and belonging in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

Guernsey's social identity is somewhat intangible but strongly connected to the strong, tight-knit community and the history and geography of the island.

The survey results indicated a high level of agreement with this statement, with 80.8% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 6.4% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree, with 13% indicating they were unsure. Only eight people indicated they somewhat disagreed and no one strongly disagreed with the statement.
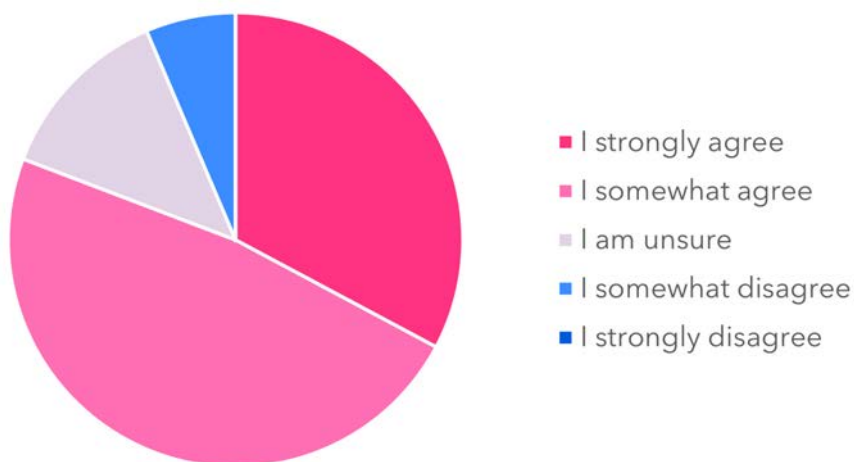
Figure 22. Results from the survey related to the strengths of social identity and belonging

Summary of the strengths related to social identity and belonging

Guernsey's social identity and sense of belonging are strongly connected to the island's beauty, safety, and close-knit community. Residents take pride in their shared history, particularly the resilience stemming from the German occupation during WWII. This collective identity is marked by stubbornness, symbolised by the "Guernsey donkey," and a deep connection to place, with many feeling a strong pull to stay or return. Community solidarity and shared values further reinforce this identity, with positive narratives about life on the island contributing to a strong sense of belonging. Guernsey's identity also includes a distinct sense of independence and pride, especially in relation to its larger neighbour, Jersey. Despite some challenges, this collective identity fosters a strong sense of social capital and community cohesion on the island.

Weaknesses related to social identity and belonging

While Guernsey's strong identity and social fabric are sources of pride and community strength, they also can foster insularity, resistance to change, social pressure, and exclusion, which can hinder the island's adaptability and inclusiveness.

The island's strong independence and stubbornness can foster resistance to change and create an insular mindset, making it difficult to adapt to new ideas and external influences. This can hinder collaboration with outsiders and limit economic and cultural diversification. Similarly, the strong collective identity, while fostering community solidarity, can lead to the exclusion or marginalisation of those who do not fit the traditional mould, such as newcomers or socially diverse groups, thereby deepening social divides and limiting social mobility.

Historical trauma, particularly from the German occupation during WWII, also contributes to a conservative and risk-averse mindset, stifling innovation and progress. The concept of "tall poppy syndrome" further discourages individuals from standing out or being successful, reinforcing a cautious and conservative culture.

Inequality is seen as the greatest threat to Guernsey's positive identity, with the stark contrast between wealth and poverty undermining the sense of community and solidarity. The island's reputation on the global stage as a tax haven also conflicts with its local identity, creating tension between how locals perceive themselves and how the outside world perceives them. This negative perception pressures the community to defend its identity and push back against external criticisms.

Negative aspects of identity

Many of the positive aspects of Guernsey's identity tend to also have downsides. For example, the strong sense of independence and stubbornness can lead to resistance to change and a reluctance to accept new ideas or external influences. It can create an insular mindset, making it difficult for the island to adapt to global changes or to be open to different perspectives and innovations. This insularity may also hinder collaboration with outsiders and limit the island's ability to diversify its economy and culture.

I also think we are backwards. I think we're a good few years behind the UK in the sense of everything we don't… we're very close-minded here. We don't think outside the box. P22

Another example is the strong collective identity, which can lead to the exclusion or marginalisation of those who do not fit the traditional mould or are perceived as outsiders. It may create social divides between locals and newcomers or between different social groups, potentially deepening inequalities and limiting social mobility.

A further example is the tendency for the lingering effects of historical trauma, such as risk aversion and fear of standing out, to create a conservative and cautious mindset. This might limit the willingness to embrace new opportunities, take risks, or innovate, potentially stifling progress and growth.

There's the whole tall poppy thing here as well. It's not somewhere that kind of really embraces or accept people to be showy about money or anything like this. P4

Inequality

Some participants described the impact of inequality on the sense of social identity and belonging in Guernsey. This issue was seen as the greatest threat to the positive aspects of Guernsey's identity.

We do have this hugely, you know, loving supportive island, that which is you're probably your general populace, but then it's really bashed about by this huge wealth and disparity between the two sides. … it's a friendly place where people do care for each other and look out for each other. But I think the culture clash of the wealth that then stops that actually being able to happen for everybody is a shame. P25

Seen by the outside world

There is a tension between the positive identity experienced by most locals and the perception of how the outside world sees Guernsey. Many participants described how outsiders sometimes associate Guernsey with being a tax haven and linked to tax evasion and money laundering. There is a strong desire to push back against those perceptions and this has an influence on the nature of Guernsey's sense of identity.

The fact that we are a place where people sometimes silo their cash from all the places in the world, I think that can reflect badly on us, as an island, you know, I know. When I went to London and I mentioned that I was from Guernsey, there was that immediate response was about tax evasion. P6

Survey results

The following key theme related to the weaknesses of social identity and belonging in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

Guernsey's strong sense of independence and stubbornness can foster resistance to change and create an insular mindset, making it difficult to adapt to new ideas and external influences.

The survey results indicated a high level of agreement with this statement, with 86.4% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 8.0% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. Half of the respondents indicated they strongly agreed with the statement. The highest level of agreement was among people aged 25–34, with an average response of 4.64.

- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
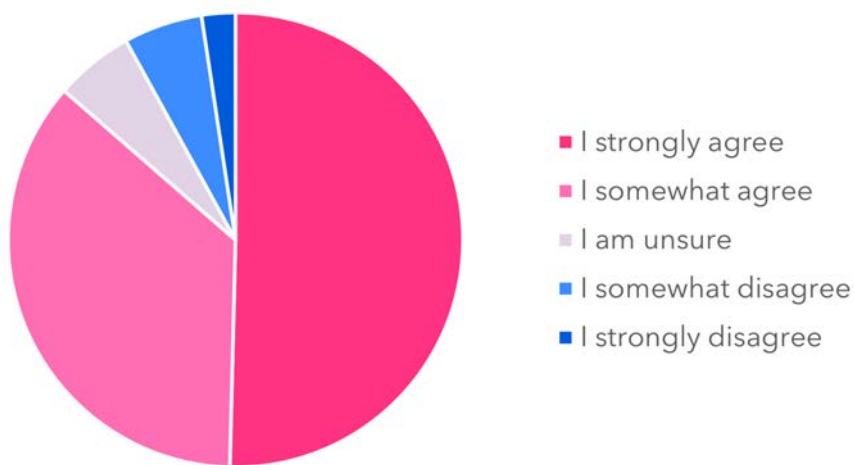
Figure 23. Results from the survey related to the weaknesses of social identity and belonging

Summary of the weaknesses related to social identity and belonging

Guernsey's strong social identity, while fostering pride and community strength, can lead to resistance to change, an insular mindset, and exclusion of outsiders. This limits adaptability, collaboration, and social mobility. There are various factors that contribute to Guernsey's identity, including perceptions of historical trauma, the impacts of inequality, beliefs about the nature of the finance industry and how Guernsey residents believe they are seen by the outside world and their position relative to the Channel Islands and the UK.

Opportunities related to social identity and belonging

The analysis of findings related to social identity and belonging has highlighted several opportunities to improve social capital in Guernsey. Here are some key areas for improvement.

Evolving the identity to reflect contemporary values

Guernsey can evolve its identity to reflect contemporary values while preserving the core elements that make it unique. This evolution could involve reinterpreting traditional values such as independence and resilience in ways that are relevant to today's challenges. For instance, embracing innovation and sustainability as part of the island's identity can help position Guernsey as a forward-thinking community that values both its heritage and its future. This adaptation can attract new talent and ideas, enriching the community and enhancing its social capital.

Fostering inclusivity and embracing diversity

One of the most significant opportunities for improving social capital in Guernsey lies in fostering a more inclusive community that embraces diversity. By actively working to integrate newcomers and diverse groups into the social fabric, Guernsey can enhance its collective identity and strengthen social cohesion. Promoting initiatives that encourage cross-cultural exchanges and mutual understanding can help bridge the gaps between different social groups, ensuring that everyone feels valued and included. This inclusivity can lead to a more vibrant and dynamic community where diverse perspectives and shared experiences bolster social capital.

Addressing inequality and bridging social divides

Addressing the growing inequality and bridging social divides is crucial for reinforcing Guernsey's sense of belonging and social identity. By implementing policies and programs aimed at reducing economic and social disparities, the community can work towards a more equitable society. This could include initiatives such as affordable housing, improved access to education, and support for lower-income families. By narrowing the gap between different social and economic groups, Guernsey can foster a stronger sense of unity and shared purpose, which is essential for building and sustaining social capital.

Promoting positive narratives and shared identity

Promoting positive narratives and reinforcing a shared identity can help counteract negative perceptions and divisive attitudes within the community. By celebrating Guernsey's unique strengths—such as its safety, natural beauty, and strong community spirit—residents can develop a deeper pride in their identity. This can be achieved through public campaigns, educational programs, and community storytelling initiatives that highlight the island's rich history and collective achievements. A strong, positive identity can serve as a unifying force, bringing people together and enhancing social capital by reinforcing a shared sense of purpose and belonging.

Threats related to social identity and belonging

Social identity is a critical component of Guernsey's social capital. The strong sense of collective identity binds people and communities together, providing strength and unity. There are several threats to the strength of Guernsey's social identity and belonging.

Inequality

Inequality poses a significant threat to the social identity and sense of belonging in Guernsey, directly impacting social capital. The widening gap between the wealthy and less affluent residents creates tension and undermines the cohesive community spirit that Guernsey is known for. This disparity not only diminishes the collective sense of identity but also erodes trust and mutual respect within the community. As the gap between rich and poor widens, it leads to feelings of exclusion among those who are less well-off, making it difficult for them to feel a sense of belonging. This growing inequality can hinder the development of social capital by weakening the social bonds that typically unite the community.

Deepening social divides

Alongside inequality, deepening social divides further threaten Guernsey's social identity. These divides can manifest in various forms, such as the separation between locals and newcomers, generational gaps, or disparities between different social or economic groups. Such divides weaken the shared sense of identity and community, creating factions that operate in isolation rather than as part of a cohesive whole. When social divides deepen, they limit the opportunities for collaboration and collective action, essential components of strong social capital. The resulting fragmentation can lead to a more polarised society, where mutual understanding and cooperation become increasingly difficult to achieve.

Social isolation

Social isolation is another significant threat to Guernsey's social identity and its implications for social capital. As people become more isolated, whether due to physical, social, or economic factors, their connection to the broader community weakens. This isolation diminishes their sense of belonging and can lead to a breakdown in the informal networks of support and trust that are crucial for maintaining strong social capital. When individuals feel isolated, they are less likely to engage in community activities or contribute to collective well-being, leading to a decline in social cohesion and weakening the overall social fabric of the island.

Perceptions of changing culture and the role of newcomers

The perception of a changing culture, particularly with the influx of newcomers, poses a complex challenge to Guernsey's social identity. While diversity can enrich a community, it can also lead to tensions if not managed inclusively. Some residents may perceive newcomers as threatening the traditional way of life, leading to resistance or even hostility. This perception can create a divide between long-term residents and newcomers, undermining the inclusive identity that is crucial for building social capital. If newcomers are not fully integrated or accepted into the community, it can lead to a fragmented society where trust and cooperation are diminished, ultimately weakening the community's social capital.

An inability to evolve the identity to suit a changing world

Guernsey's strong attachment to its traditional identity, while a source of pride, can also be a significant limitation. In a rapidly changing world, an inability to adapt this identity can result in stagnation and a reluctance to embrace new ideas or innovations. This resistance to change can prevent the community from evolving in ways that would enhance social capital. If Guernsey's identity remains rigid, it risks becoming outdated and irrelevant, leading to a potential decline in the island's social cohesion and its ability to respond effectively to new challenges. Without evolution, the identity that once united the community may become a barrier to progress, ultimately weakening the social capital that is essential for the island's long-term prosperity and resilience.

Predispositions – Shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives

Shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives are forces that hold groups and societies together and allow people actors to coordinate their efforts and work together for mutual benefit. Shared narratives are commonly understood stories, metaphors, or myths of a social group or society. They allow social groupings to construct shared understandings such as shared values, attitudes, beliefs, and shared goals, purpose, and vision. These create a sense of belonging and solidarity linked to trust and facilitate collective action. They allow people to develop a common perspective that enables them to perceive and interpret events in similar ways. These shared perspectives allow people to anticipate and predict the actions of others, which is essential for collective action.

Summary of findings related to shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives

Guernsey's shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives play a significant role in shaping its social identity and social capital. On the positive side, the island benefits from strong, positive narratives that foster a collective identity, resilience, and a sense of belonging among its residents. Common themes include Guernsey's pride, resilience, and the ability to "punch above its weight," despite its small size. These narratives contribute to a strong community spirit, a shared sense of purpose, and a deep connection to the island's unique language and cultural codes. This shared understanding and pride in local identity help to reinforce social cohesion and create a sense of solidarity among residents.

However, there are also significant weaknesses tied to Guernsey's shared narratives and communication practices. Negative narratives, such as distrust in politicians, dissatisfaction with the education system, and fears about the declining finance industry, are pervasive and tend to dominate public discourse. These narratives are often reinforced by social media, where negative perspectives are amplified, and positive views are frequently dismissed. The lack of proper forums for constructive dialogue exacerbates these issues, leading to a culture of complaint and a focus on the negative aspects of life in Guernsey.

The spread of untrue narratives, particularly concerning government efficiency, the national airline, and healthcare services, further distorts public understanding and fosters a climate of fear and resistance to change. This environment makes it challenging to address the island's socio–economic issues effectively and to enact meaningful reforms. Overall, while Guernsey's strong shared identity has many strengths, the prevalence of negative and false narratives presents a significant threat to the island's social cohesion and progress.

Table 13 summarises the main findings related to shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives in Guernsey.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
> Many of the shared narratives are positive and reinforce positive aspects of social capital. > There are shared language and codes that contribute to the sense of identity and belonging. > There are strong common goals of preserving the island's environment, supporting the local community and economy, and representing Guernsey in a positive light.	> There are many shared narratives that may not be true or at least not true anymore. > There can be challenges in reaching consensus across different interest groups and sections of society. > Some of the narratives reinforce conservativism and a desire to hold on to their unique cultural heritage.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
> Promoting inclusive narratives > Encouraging constructive dialogue > Leveraging shared language and codes > Aligning shared goals and purpose	> Inequality > Deepening social divides > Social isolation > Lack of forums for constructive dialogue

Table 13. Analysis of shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives in Guernsey

The following sections will explore the research findings related to the strengths and weaknesses of shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives in Guernsey.

Strengths related to shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives

Guernsey's social fabric is woven with strong, positive narratives that shape the collective identity and sense of belonging among its residents. Many participants highlighted the common understanding of these narratives, which are deeply ingrained in the local culture. Key themes include Guernsey's resilience, pride, and conservative nature, as well as the island's close-knit community, safety, and friendliness. Phrases like "punching above our weight" and "Guernsey is conservative with a small C" are frequently mentioned, reflecting a shared sense of identity and values. These narratives, though not always universally true, are central to how people perceive life in Guernsey.

A recurring theme is the island's sense of strength and high performance despite its small size. Participants believed that Guernsey is capable of great achievements, often exceeding expectations for a place of its size. This belief in the island's ability to "punch above its weight" fosters optimism and a strong sense of community pride.

Reinvention and resilience are also key components of Guernsey's identity. Participants discussed the island's ability to adapt to economic and societal changes over the years, reinforcing the narrative of resilience. This adaptability is seen as crucial to the island's future, with a collective belief that Guernsey can continue to thrive despite global challenges.

Shared language and codes further strengthen the community's solidarity. Guernsey's unique words, phrases, and place names are known by locals and contribute to a sense of belonging. These linguistic quirks create a playful sense of insider knowledge that distinguishes locals from outsiders and reinforces the island's cultural identity.

Overall, the shared narratives, language, and goals in Guernsey play a significant role in fostering social cohesion and strengthening social capital on the island. They provide a common framework through which residents connect with each other, reinforcing a strong sense of identity and belonging.

Positive shared narratives

People in Guernsey commonly understand and speak about many strong positive narratives. Many different participants said common phrases, and these narratives are an important part of the collective understanding of life in Guernsey. Below are some of the most discussed narratives. Not all of them are necessarily positive, and some participants noted that not all of them are necessarily true, or at least may not be true anymore.

› We're stubborn, proud, and resilient

› We punch above our weight

› We're conservative with a small C

› We're quiet and understated (especially relative to Jersey), relaxed and competent

› We know everyone, and we never really feel alone

› If someone needs help, someone will help them (especially crossing the road)

› Guernsey is safe and friendly

› You can leave everything unlocked

› We are open and accessible, you can talk to power easily

› Good work-life balance, shorter work hours

› Everything is close, and commutes are short

› Guernsey is special and pulls you back if you leave

> › You can never be enough of a Guern
> › The Guernsey Way is fundamental to our way of life
> › Outsiders should not come in and tell us what to do
> › If you go somewhere, you'll know someone or easily find people with something in common
> › There is a great safety net and strong third sector

Many of these narratives are deeply ingrained in people's understanding of life in Guernsey. For example, eight different participants said, "Guernsey is conservative with a small C", or something very similar.

The participants talked about many of the common narratives, such as the German occupation and COVID that have been discussed in other sections of this report.

Sense of strength and high performance, despite being small

A common theme discussed by participants was the idea that Guernsey "punches above its weight", a phrase that was said by six participants and a sentiment echoed by many others.

There's something about strength being greater than size. You know, there's something about… kind of the expression, we're "greater than the sum of its parts" or we're "punching above our weight". P1

We're all wildly optimistic P6

Reinvention and resilience

Participants talked about a narrative related to reinvention and the major changes in economic activities in Guernsey over the last 70 years. There was a strong sense that Guernsey could adapt and reinvent itself as required, and there was a strong belief in the resilience of Guernsey's economy and society.

One of our narratives over the centuries in terms of growth and change, and we're all holding on for this next industry that might be learned after, but I'm hopeful

that reinvention is a good narrative for us and opportunity globally, for where we are positioned in the world, I mean we're a tiny rock, but good things have happened here. P6

Shared language and codes

Guernsey has many unique words and phrases that are known by locals, which contributes to the sense of community and solidarity.

There's a real memory… but this kind of almost pride in history and pride in memory that the island has and, you know, referring to places by their old place names or the shops that used to be there or whatever. P1

We've got all these names for everywhere that bear no… it is what they used to be… Like, we refused to change the name of anywhere that changed its name. And this is this timeless property. P4

Participants talked about language that is unique to Guernsey and that only locals would know. Words such as "Pushang" for bicycle, "The Front" for the port area, "Town" for St Peter Port, "Shanker" for a local crab, and "Wotcher" for hello were discussed. Many other phrases were difficult to even decipher for an outsider.

Many of the place names are often pronounced by locals in an English way, despite being French names.

How you pronounce names as well. So, French written, but often English pronounced. P1

Participants talked about how outsiders and newcomers to Guernsey get it wrong, and locals laugh. It's playful, but it is a source of togetherness and solidarity.

There's a funny anecdote that my dad talks about, which is about La Fourchatte, La Fourchette and different pronunciations of a fork in around all the parishes, and the punch line is, well, what do they call it in town? A fork. P6

When participants talked about their shared language and codes, there was a strong sense of pride and solidarity. Because they knew the shared language, they felt a strong sense of belonging to Guernsey.

Common goals

There is a strong sense of collective solidarity in Guernsey. Participants described the desire to portray Guernsey positively to outsiders and the importance of maintaining the finance sector, including not doing anything that may jeopardise it. Many of these themes have been discussed in other sections of this report.

Survey results

The following key theme related to the strengths of shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

> **Guernsey's social fabric is woven with strong, positive narratives that shape the collective identity and sense of belonging among its residents. For example, it is commonly understood that Guernsey "punches above its weight".**

The survey results indicated a high level of agreement with this statement, with 71.5% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 15.4% indicating they strongly or somewhat disagree. There were no significant differences based on demographic characteristics except a low level of agreement from people with a salary between £40,000 and £50,000 (average response 2.57, n = 8).

- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
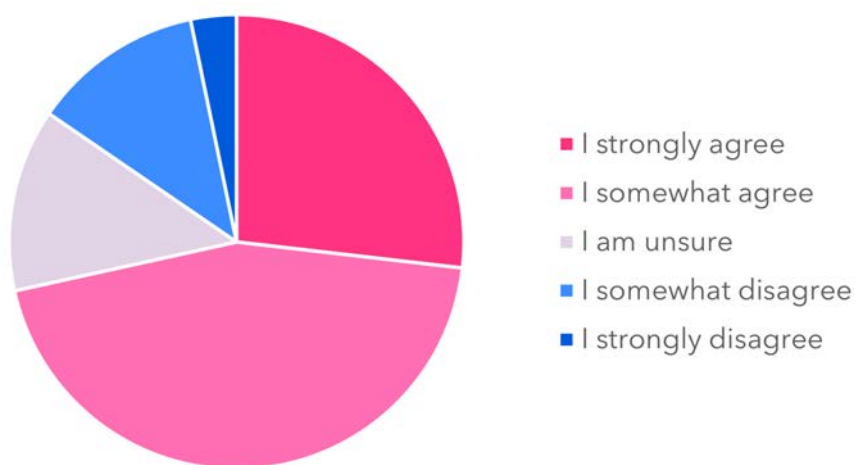
Figure 24. Results from the survey related to the strengths of shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives

Summary of the strengths related to shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives

Guernsey's social fabric is strengthened by shared narratives, language, and goals that foster a strong sense of identity and belonging. Common phrases and beliefs, such as being "stubborn, proud, and resilient" or "punching above our weight," reflect the island's collective pride and optimism. The community's ability to adapt and reinvent itself, especially in response to historical challenges, reinforces a narrative of resilience. Unique local language and codes, like specific place names and phrases, further enhance the sense of togetherness and distinguish locals from outsiders. This shared identity and purpose contribute significantly to the social cohesion and collective strength of the island.

Weaknesses related to shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives

Despite the many positive narratives that shape Guernsey's identity, there are several pervasive negative narratives that undermine the community's cohesion and hinder progress. Commonly discussed negative narratives include distrust in politicians, a belief that the political system is broken, dissatisfaction with education, and fears about the declining finance industry.

Participants highlighted the tendency for these negative narratives to be reinforced within the community, particularly through social media platforms. These forums often amplify negative perspectives, creating a culture where positive views are quickly dismissed or attacked. This reinforcement of negativity makes it difficult to change perceptions, even when the negative views are objectively untrue.

There is a perception that there are few appropriate forums for constructive dialogue and consensus-building. Without spaces where people can voice their concerns and be heard, many turn to social media, where discussions can quickly become toxic. This lack of proper communication channels exacerbates feelings of frustration and disempowerment among residents, further entrenching negative narratives.

False narratives about various issues, such as the financial performance of the national airline Aurigny or the effectiveness of the healthcare system, contribute to a distorted public discourse. These misconceptions, fuelled by a cultural tendency to focus on the negative, create a climate of fear and resistance to change. The perception that the government is wasteful, despite data showing otherwise, is another example of how false narratives can dominate public opinion and hinder meaningful reform.

Overall, the prevalence of negative and untrue narratives in Guernsey undermines social cohesion and stalls progress. These narratives perpetuate a cycle of negativity and inaction, making it challenging for the community to address pressing socio-economic issues effectively and to build a more positive and united future.

Negative shared narratives

In addition to the many positive narratives, there are also a number of negative narratives that are commonly talked about in Guernsey.

› Politicians are not trustworthy, and the political system is broken

› Aurigny loses money

› Education is terrible and broken

› Change isn't happening (enough and fast enough)

› Old people are out of touch

› The rest of the world often sees us as a tax haven, we're not

› The finance industry is in decline

› We need something else in case the finance industry declines or collapses

› People love to moan and love a pile-on

Participants discussed how some of these narratives are objectively untrue but are perpetuated by the tendency for Guernsey people to take a negative perspective. There is a deeply engrained cultural trait linked to the sense of identity that tends to see the glass half empty rather than half full.

Reinforcing narratives

Several participants discussed the tendency for negative narratives to be reinforced within the community. They generally believed that once a person is tarred with a negative brush, it is very difficult to correct perceptions. One participant described it like magnetism back to the old truths:

You know, there's like a magnetism back to the old truths. Which is tough, tough, tough to shake… The problem with social media, right, is people just don't censor at all. They just splurge. So, it comes up very negative. So that's very glass half empty. And if anybody comes in with the positive view on it, they are shot down very quickly. P1

The role of social media was also a common theme, with many participants describing the role of Facebook in general.

There seems to be some vocalness about the bad stuff, especially in social media channels. And I think perhaps there's a reticence to talk about the good stuff tied back to that kind of philosophy of, you know, of perhaps not wanting to be showy or whatever. P8

That [social media group] is the most toxic. I cannot be part of that. It's so toxic… Oh my God, I'm so glad I don't need to be part of that… just shouting about everything… they're not interested in the detail, or the truth. P20

The negativity seems to come from a relatively small number of very active contributors, and there is a strong resistance to any challenge to the negativity.

If you say anything good, people will beat you up. P7

Some participants thought it was far more negative than their experience of conversations they had with people face-to-face.

[It is] more divisive on social media. There's more negativity on social media than there is in real life. But I just caution that I suppose with a perhaps that's who you've talked. P1

One participant described the amount of influence some social media groups have on decision-making in Guernsey.

[Some social media groups are] an absolute cesspit. And you know, a lot of that community, you know, really aggressively post stuff and have rung their Deputies, and they have a huge amount of political clout in Guernsey. And I think if you're rational and reasonable, you've actually got less political clout in Guernsey. Because the politicians are very thin-skinned, they're worried about their trust and their relationship with the public. P8

Lack of forums for consensus-reaching

A few participants indicated they thought there were not enough appropriate forums for people to express their views and concerns.

There doesn't seem to be a place for people to voice their concerns. The only place seems to be on these Facebook groups and they turn from very simple kind of questions like what do you think about this to? You know, you get the people on there who are just who are just rolling in toxicity, but at the same time, you can kind of understand people are angry because people. People are scared. I think people are scared because the poverty is increasing here, and when you have poverty, you're your options are taken away from you, aren't they? You know, those doors are closed. Those barriers go up. Your dignity becomes slowly stripped away. It's not a nice place to be, and people are working twice as hard for half as much, and it that there's a kind of desperation, I think. When you look at some of the comments as well and people turn against the wrong people that I think there is, I say there's a great community spirit, but I don't think that's always true. P19

One participant described how Guernsey people will generally listen to an argument but indicated that there is a lack of spaces for people to be heard.

A key Guernsey character, which is perhaps summed up as "we'll give you a listen". We'll give your argument to listen. And if it's persuasive. It's persuasive. And a lot of the problems we've talked about here are because there isn't the space to have that argument heard. Whether consciously or not, it's foreclosed on very early on. P27

The problem may not be that people don't care, but that people do not have all the

information so jump to conclusions or fill in the blanks, which tends to result in negative views and opinions.

There is a feeling sometimes that people don't care. I think people want to care. But they are really giving the tools or the means to do that. They're not given the information, and they're not given a thing to do about it. P26

One participant described how social media groups can be a place for people to express genuine grievances and to be heard.

I would say a lot of useful stuff gets surfaced in that thing [a social media group]… There's always signal in the noise. P4

One of the survey participants identified the tendency for discourse to focus on discontent and the need for forums to be focused on solutions.

There is a lot of criticism in the social discourse but more resistance to taking responsibility for finding solutions. People want to raise where they are discontent and the issues they see, but don't seem to be keen to do the harder psychological work of figuring out where we need to compromise or work or absorb change… Forums, therefore, would have to be well structured to be solution-focused rather than just spaces for collective discontent. S4

Untrue narratives

Some participants described how people in Guernsey like to talk and tell stories about things that are happening, and when information or detail is missing, there is a tendency to make up the details and this can perpetuate untrue narratives.

Mud sticks. So yeah, people can really be very particular, and I get that. But it's where I think the perception of what may or may not have happened can override the factual reality of what actually happened. Because Guernsey, you know, you made the comment earlier about, you know, we go get too dragged into the details, and we start to look at things for half empty instead of glass half full going to is absolutely engrossed in that mindset and where they can't plug the gaps with factual stuff, they will fill them with hearsay or gossip. … I think, on the whole, there's too

much "my best friend doesn't like him, so we're not going to do anything with him". P12

Some of the most pervasive untrue narratives relate to the national airline Aurigny. Participants described a widespread belief that the airline loses money and, therefore, costs taxpayers. However, according to the participants, this narrative is not true.

The same is true of facts about those sorts of things. So, the whole, "Isn't it terrible that we've got an airline that loses money", for instance. Not true. We used to lose money. Not true now…. [Lots of things] aren't true anymore, and the memory is so deep set, so it's just, I mean, it's properly entrenched, and that is both the power of the islands because it creates a pride in the islands and a pride in the history and a belonging and a collective memory that marks out those who belong, from those who don't, or I knew or whatever, but it. But it's really hard to chip through. It's really hard to change perceptions of this stuff. … there's like a magnetism back to the back to the old truths. P1

Some of the participants described how these types of narratives are created and maintained by the cultural tendency to complain about issues. Other participants described a lack of perspective and an inclination of people in Guernsey to overlook the positives and focus on the negatives.

Actually, what's more important is the connectivity piece, because if the world suddenly realises that Guernsey is not connected anymore for whatever reason, we've got much, much, much bigger problems… For me personally, if Aurigny make a profit, great if they make a loss, I'm not going to lose any sleep over it as long as the airline keeps flying planes. But if you talk to other people, they think the board should resign, it's a shambles, Guernsey's doomed, you know, and it's like naught to 100 in three seconds… It's too extremist, and it's not proportionate. P12

Healthcare was another issue that participants believed involved untrue narratives and people expressing views that indicated a lack of perspective for what healthcare services are like in other parts of the world.

People say, oh, healthcare here is so bad. I'm like, I called up at 9:00 in the morning

and was offered four different GP slots, like my friends and family in London are on three-year waiting lists for health conditions that would never happen here. P23

Wasteful government

Another powerful narrative expressed by participants was a perception that Guernsey's government is wasteful.

If you look at the data, we've probably got one of the best, if not the best performing government in the world from an efficiency point of view. No one or hardly anyone … would understand that frame of reference. But if you look at the data in terms of percentage of governance as a percentage of GDP and how much it delivers human thriving. There is nowhere as efficient as this, but there is not a single person that would understand that. So, perception and reality are [different]. P4

There's a lot of that kind of misinformation that floats around in public discourse online and stuff, and some of those things are. Everyone [politicians] is corrupt. They're all in it for themselves. All of that kind of stuff. But you know, I know all the people in there like, you know, they're doing it for the love, even the ones they don't like because it pays it. They're generally trying to do things. And another one that swirls around is that our civil service is bloated. It costs too much money that's we need to cut everything. All that kind of stuff. It's wasteful. And while obviously there is some waste, as with all things and it's a bit complacent as with a lot of things in Guernsey are a bit complacent, I would suggest. When you look at the data per head of population, you might remember government is less than almost everywhere in the Western world, so it's good value. But it's a kind of meme that just goes on and on and on and it stops meaningful. You know it holds everything back because we're talking about the wrong thing. P8

These types of false narratives tend to foster a climate of fear and negativity, hindering constructive dialogue and the adoption of necessary reforms. Consequently, the prevalence of false narratives not only distorts public understanding but also perpetuates a cycle of inaction and stagnation, making it increasingly difficult to address the island's pressing socio-economic issues effectively.

Survey results

The following key theme related to the weaknesses of shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives in Guernsey was selected to be included in the survey:

Few appropriate forums exist in Guernsey for constructive dialogue and consensus–building. Without spaces where people can voice their concerns and be heard, many turn to social media, which tends to be negative and polarising.

The survey results indicated a high level of agreement with this statement, with 78.2% of respondents indicating that they either strongly or somewhat agree and 9.7% indicating they somewhat disagree. None of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, although 12 people indicated they somewhat disagreed. People with higher incomes (over £80,000) were somewhat less likely to agree, and younger people were somewhat more likely to agree. This supports the findings of the first stage of this research.

- I strongly agree
- I somewhat agree
- I am unsure
- I somewhat disagree
- I strongly disagree
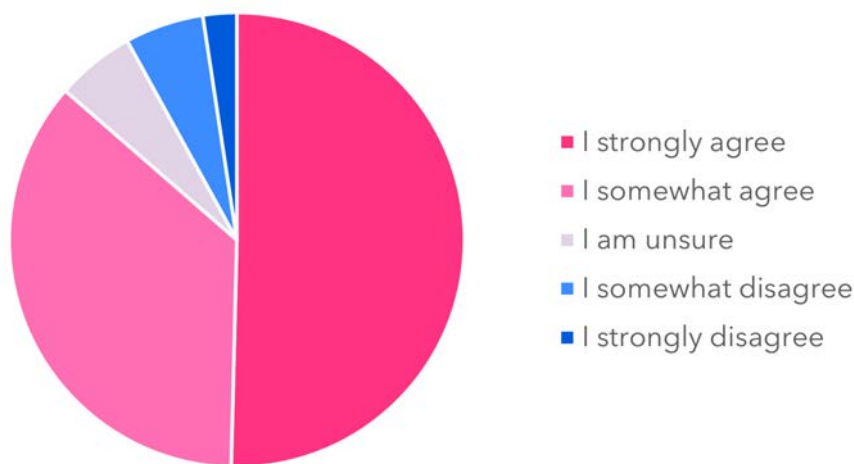
Figure 25. Results from the survey related to the weaknesses of shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives

Summary of the weaknesses related to shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives

Despite Guernsey's strong positive narratives, several negative and false narratives undermine social cohesion and progress. These include widespread distrust in politicians, perceptions of a broken political system, and concerns about the decline of the finance industry. Social media platforms amplify these negative perspectives, making it difficult to challenge or correct them. The lack of appropriate forums for constructive dialogue exacerbates frustration, leading to a reliance on social media for discussions that often turn divisive. False narratives, such as the belief that the national airline Aurigny consistently loses money or that the government is wasteful, further contribute to a distorted public discourse. These misconceptions hinder meaningful reform and reinforce a culture of fear and resistance to change, making it challenging to address Guernsey's socio–economic issues effectively.

Opportunities related to shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives

Several opportunities exist to improve social capital related to shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives. Particularly, shared narratives are an important part of Guernsey's social capital, and there is scope to resolve and move on from some of the less helpful narratives.

Promoting inclusive narratives

One of the main opportunities lies in promoting narratives that are inclusive and reflective of the diverse experiences of all residents in Guernsey. By expanding the shared narratives to include the voices and experiences of newcomers, younger generations, and marginalised groups, the community can create a more inclusive identity. This can help bridge social divides and foster a greater sense of belonging for everyone. Emphasising the positive aspects of Guernsey's culture, such as its history of resilience and community spirit, while also being open to new influences can strengthen social cohesion and unity.

Encouraging constructive dialogue

Creating more forums and spaces for constructive dialogue is another opportunity to improve Guernsey's social capital. By establishing platforms where community members can openly discuss their concerns, share ideas, and collaborate on solutions, Guernsey can address social divides and reduce polarisation. These forums can be physical spaces like community centres or digital platforms designed to facilitate respectful and productive discussions. Encouraging participation from all segments of society, especially those who feel isolated or unheard, will enhance trust and cooperation, which are vital components of social capital.

Leveraging shared language and codes

Guernsey's unique language and cultural codes offer an opportunity to strengthen social bonds and reinforce a collective identity. Celebrating and preserving these aspects of local culture, while also making them accessible to newcomers, can foster a deeper sense of connection among residents. Initiatives such as cultural events, educational programs, and community projects that highlight Guernsey's linguistic and cultural heritage can help to unify the community and promote a shared understanding of what it means to be part of Guernsey.

Aligning shared goals and purpose

Aligning the community around shared goals and purposes that address the island's current and future challenges is a significant opportunity to enhance social capital. Initiatives focused on sustainability, economic diversification, and social inclusion can serve as rallying points for collective action. By engaging the community in these shared goals, Guernsey can harness the collective energy and creativity of its residents to build a more resilient and adaptable society. This alignment can also help counteract negative narratives and foster a more optimistic and forward-looking community mindset.

Threats related to shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives

The analysis of findings related to shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives has highlighted several opportunities to improve social capital in Guernsey. Here are some key areas for improvement

Lack of forums for constructive dialogue

The lack of adequate forums for constructive dialogue in Guernsey undermines the formation and maintenance of shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives. Without proper spaces for open, inclusive, and respectful conversations, grievances and concerns go unaddressed, leading to frustration and disengagement. This void is often filled by social media platforms, which can amplify negative narratives and deepen divisions rather than foster understanding and consensus. The absence of constructive dialogue stifles the community's ability to collectively solve problems, share knowledge, and build a shared vision for the future. It also hampers the development of social capital, as trust and cooperation are undermined when people feel their voices are not heard or valued.

Inequality

The inequality between the wealthy and the less affluent threatens the shared sense of purpose and collective identity that has traditionally united the island. As inequality deepens, it creates feelings of resentment and disconnection among those who feel left behind. This undermines the shared narratives of community solidarity and mutual support, replacing them with a sense of exclusion and unfairness. If left unaddressed, inequality can erode trust in institutions and weaken the bonds that hold the community together, ultimately diminishing social capital.

Deepening social divides

Related to inequality, deepening social divides exacerbate the threat to shared goals and collective purpose in Guernsey. These divides can manifest along various lines, including wealth, age, and social status. For instance, the generational gap, where younger people feel disconnected from the decisions made by older generations, particularly those in power, highlights a fragmentation of shared values and goals. When different segments of the population no longer see eye to eye on key issues, it becomes harder to maintain a cohesive community. These divides can lead to increased polarisation, where groups retreat into their own echo chambers, further weakening the shared language and narratives that have traditionally unified Guernsey.

Social isolation

Social isolation is another significant threat to the island's social capital. While Guernsey is known for its close-knit community, not everyone feels included in this sense of belonging. Newcomers, those who do not fit the traditional social mould, and individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds can often feel isolated. This sense of exclusion not only impacts individuals' well-being but also weakens the overall community fabric. Social isolation reduces opportunities for social interaction and the building of mutual trust, essential components of social capital. As people become more isolated, they are less likely to participate in community activities or contribute to shared goals, further fracturing the community.

Social capital relies on trust, shared values, and a sense of belonging, all of which are undermined by the threats identified above. If left unchecked, these threats create a more fragmented, polarised, and less cohesive society, where individuals are less likely to work together towards common goals. If these threats are not addressed, the rich social fabric that has historically defined Guernsey could fray, leading to a less resilient and more divided community.

"We rise by lifting others."

ROBERT INGERSOLL

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research presents a thorough examination of social capital in Guernsey, offering a detailed analysis of the factors that contribute to the island's social fabric and those that pose challenges to its cohesion. The findings reveal a complex interplay between the island's unique cultural identity, the strength of community bonds, and the emerging challenges of a changing world which have the potential to significantly impact Guernsey's social capital.

One of the most significant strengths highlighted by the research is the ease with which social relationships are formed and maintained in Guernsey. The island's small size and close-knit community create an environment where people frequently encounter familiar faces, fostering a deep sense of connectedness. This sense of familiarity extends across different aspects of daily life, from casual interactions in public spaces to more structured community events, contributing to a high level of social trust. Trust is a crucial component of social capital, and in Guernsey, it is bolstered by the overlapping and interwoven nature of social networks and the importance of reputation. Residents often have multiple connections with the same individuals through different social circles, which strengthens the bonds of trust and reinforces a sense of safety.

The research also emphasises the strong shared narratives that play a pivotal role in shaping Guernsey's collective identity. These narratives, deeply ingrained in the local culture, revolve around themes of resilience, pride, and a conservative approach to change. The island's history, including the need for reinvention and resilience and the lasting impacts of the German occupation during World War II, has left an indelible mark on the collective consciousness of the community. Historical events are frequently referenced in discussions about Guernsey's identity, symbolising the island's resilience and ability to withstand adversity. The occupation narrative, along with others, such as the idea of "punching above our weight," fosters a strong sense of community pride and a belief in the island's capacity to achieve great things despite its small size. These narratives are not only important for individual identity but also serve as a unifying force that brings the community together, reinforcing a collective sense of belonging.

Another major strength of social capital in Guernsey is the availability of high-quality outdoor social spaces. The island's natural beauty, with its beaches, coastal paths, and parks, provides ample opportunities for residents to engage in social activities that strengthen community ties. These outdoor spaces are integral to the social life of the island, serving as venues for both informal interactions and organised community events. The accessibility of these spaces ensures that they are used by a wide cross-section of the population, from families and children to the elderly, thus promoting inclusivity. The shared experience of enjoying Guernsey's natural environment contributes to a collective sense of place and identity, further enhancing social cohesion.

In addition to these strengths, the research highlights the importance of Guernsey's unique language, codes, and place names, which contribute to the island's cultural identity. The use of local phrases, the preservation of traditional place names, and the common understanding of local customs all reinforce a sense of belonging among residents. These linguistic and cultural markers create a sense of insider knowledge that distinguishes locals from outsiders, fostering a strong sense of community solidarity. The pride that residents take in their unique cultural

heritage is evident in their everyday interactions, where these codes and narratives are frequently referenced and celebrated.

However, the research also uncovers significant challenges that undermine social capital in Guernsey. One of the most pressing issues identified is the presence of social divides, which are exacerbated by socioeconomic differences and generational gaps. These divides manifest in various ways, including unequal access to resources, differences in life experiences, and varying levels of engagement in community life. While older generations might feel a strong connection to traditional narratives and social practices, younger people may feel more disconnected or even alienated from these aspects of Guernsey's identity. This generational divide can lead to tensions and a lack of understanding between different age groups, weakening the overall social fabric.

Another critical weakness is the lack of suitable and affordable indoor social spaces. While Guernsey benefits from an abundance of outdoor spaces, the limited availability of indoor venues poses a significant barrier to social interaction, particularly during the colder months or for activities that require a more controlled environment. This lack of indoor spaces affects various groups differently but is particularly challenging for those with limited financial means or mobility issues, who may find it harder to participate in social activities without accessible venues. The absence of these spaces can lead to social isolation, particularly among vulnerable groups, and diminish the opportunities for community building that are essential for maintaining strong social capital.

The research also points to the impact of negative narratives and the role of social media in reinforcing social divides. In Guernsey, as in many other places, social media platforms can amplify negative perspectives, creating echo chambers where discontent and criticism dominate the discourse. These negative narratives often overshadow the positive aspects of community life and can lead to a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction and disillusionment. The rapid spread of misinformation or skewed perceptions through social media can deepen existing divides, making it harder to achieve consensus or foster collaborative efforts to address community challenges. The influence of these negative narratives is further compounded by the lack of appropriate forums for constructive dialogue. Without suitable forums where people can voice their concerns and be heard, many turn to social media, where discussions can quickly become toxic, exacerbating feelings of frustration and disempowerment among residents.

Another significant issue highlighted by the research is the tendency for Guernsey's strong collective identity to foster insularity and resistance to change. While the island's close-knit community and shared narratives provide a sense of belonging, they can also create an environment that is resistant to new ideas and external influences. This insularity can hinder collaboration with outsiders and limit the island's ability to diversify its economy and culture. The strong emphasis on tradition and the preservation of established ways of life can make it difficult to adapt to the rapidly changing global environment, posing a risk to Guernsey's long-term sustainability and resilience. Cultural conservatism, while protective in some ways, can limit the community's ability to embrace change and seize new opportunities.

Finally, the research identifies inequality as one of the greatest threats to Guernsey's positive identity. The stark contrast between wealth and poverty on the island undermines the sense of community and solidarity that residents so highly value. The visible disparities in income and access to resources can create social tensions and erode trust in the community. Additionally, concerns about how Guernsey is seen on the global stage can conflict with its local identity, creating tension between how locals perceive themselves and how the outside world views them. This negative perception pressures the community to defend its identity and push back against external criticisms, which can sometimes lead to further insularity and resistance to change.

In conclusion, the research provides a thorough and nuanced understanding of Guernsey's social capital, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses. The island's strong sense of community, rich cultural identity, and shared narratives are significant assets that contribute to social cohesion and a high quality of life. However, these strengths are counterbalanced by challenges such as social divides, the scarcity

of accessible indoor spaces, the prevalence of negative narratives, and a tendency toward insularity and resistance to change. Addressing these challenges will be crucial for ensuring that Guernsey can continue to thrive as a cohesive and supportive community, capable of adapting to future changes and challenges while preserving the positive aspects of its identity and social fabric.

The next chapter will explore what these findings mean and what can be done to strengthen social capital in Guernsey for the benefit of its economic and social wellbeing.

WHAT DO THE FINDINGS MEAN, AND WHAT CAN BE DONE?

This chapter explores the implications of the findings on social capital in Guernsey and explores potential actions to safeguard and enhance it. With a detailed understanding of the current state of social capital on the island, we can now assess the broader picture and identify actionable steps that can be taken to address existing challenges and threats.

Guernsey's social capital is a remarkable asset, characterised by strong social trust, community solidarity, and a deep sense of connection among its residents. However, this strength is not without its weaknesses and vulnerabilities. The chapter will highlight the risks posed by factors such as social divides, inequality, and resistance to change, all of which could undermine the island's social capital if not addressed.

Despite these challenges, Guernsey's social capital has exhibited resilience, largely due to its strong collective identity. This chapter will explore how acknowledging and addressing the threats to social capital will allow Guernsey to maintain and even strengthen this critical asset, ensuring long–term economic and social wellbeing for its residents. Any social capital initiatives must align with the island's unique cultural values and priorities. The active involvement of Guernsey's community in designing and implementing these initiatives will be crucial to their success, fostering a sense of ownership and ensuring that actions taken are both relevant and impactful.

What is the big picture of social capital in Guernsey?

Summary

› Guernsey has exceptionally strong social capital.

› However, there are several weaknesses and downsides.

› There are numerous threats to the strength of Guernsey's social capital.

› Guernsey's social capital has been relatively resilient to the mounting pressures and threats.

› However, there are widespread views that not enough is being done to address Guernsey's evolving challenges.

› Concerns about losing Guernsey's unique culture and the strengths of its social capital must be balanced against the need for change.

› A decline in social capital could have widespread negative impacts on Guernsey's economic and social wellbeing for decades.

› Fortunately, Guernsey has the ability and opportunity to avoid declining social capital.

Guernsey has exceptionally strong social capital characterised by high levels of social trust, community solidarity, and regard for fellow community members. Guernsey's identity is closely linked to its strong social capital. Most people believe Guernsey to be a safe, friendly, trusting community, and these views are deeply embedded in its history and culture. Guernsey's high level of social capital is rare in modern societies. There are not many places in the world where you can leave your car or house unlocked with little concern that your belongings will be stolen and where you have high confidence others will come to your assistance if required. Many people in Guernsey consider it a special place and have a deep sense of connection to the community, geography, and history of the island.

However, Guernsey's social capital has several weaknesses and downsides. While there are very strong and dense connections between people within social circles, there are some significant disconnects between social groups, particularly based on generational and socioeconomic characteristics. These social divides result in different perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs that undermine social capital in Guernsey. It results in a lack of bridging relationships, social trust, and empathy for fellow community members across the social divide, increasing the likelihood of antipathy and antisocial behaviour. The social divides undermine collective solidarity, belonging, and identity, with significant consequences for Guernsey's social capital.

There are also some downsides and consequences arising from the strength of some aspects of Guernsey's social capital. For example, Guernsey's tight-knit community can result in some people feeling claustrophobic and lacking privacy. There can also be a tendency for people to conform to group expectations, limiting innovation, creativity, and problem-solving. The tight-knit community can also create perceptions of reputational risk that can hinder collaboration and progressive action. All this leads to insularity and resistance to adapting to the new challenges and threats of a changing world.

This research identified numerous threats to the strength of Guernsey's social capital. The most significant threats identified were inequality, distrust, social isolation, individualism, polarisation, and social and generational divides. Table 18 presents the key threats and indicates which aspects of social capital are most likely to be impacted. The aspects of social capital are highly interrelated, meaning changes to one aspect tend to influence others. This means threats can undermine an aspect of social capital that has flow-on impacts on other aspects.

The evidence suggests Guernsey's social capital has been relatively resilient to the mounting pressures and threats. Community members' deep sense of connection to people and place and the strong historical and cultural roots in the island have helped Guernsey weather the forces acting to undermine its strong social capital. Fortunately, societal-level social capital tends to change slowly, especially where it is rooted in a strong cultural identity. The threats described above have likely been having negative influences for some time, yet this research still found strong social capital, albeit with some cracks appearing. It is difficult to say from this single research project how Guernsey's social capital has changed in recent decades. However, there are widespread views, expressed by almost every participant, that not enough is being done to address Guernsey's evolving challenges. As a result, Guernsey's social capital may be approaching a tipping point, a belief held by several participants.

One reason for the resilience of Guernsey's social capital is likely to be its relative immunity to the rampant individualism and polarisation facing other modern societies. As one participant put it, "that just doesn't work here" (P4). However, many aspects of social capital are highly interrelated, creating the potential for negative feedback loops. For example, as widening inequality and social divides undermine social trust and community solidarity, increasing polarisation can create shared antipathy, resulting in powerful forces undermining unity and further eroding trust and solidarity.

The concern over the loss of social capital is particularly important because, unfortunately, social capital is generally easier to damage than to build. For example, it takes many trustworthy actions to build trust, but one betrayal of trust can severely damage it. Once damaged, social capital can be difficult to repair, and societal-level social capital tends to change slowly. Social capital is essential to Guernsey's economic and social wellbeing, as discussed in Chapter 2, and declining social capital could have widespread negative impacts for decades.

Fortunately, many participants believe that Guernsey has the ability and opportunity to avoid declining social capital. Guernsey can strengthen the positive aspects of its social capital, mitigate its weaknesses and break down the challenges and barriers, reducing the risk of social capital decline. Participants cited Guernsey's independence, self-governance, isolation, and culture of reinventing itself. If this optimism is shared by enough people, including the island's leaders, Guernsey can take the actions necessary to safeguard one of its greatest assets.

The island's ability to adapt and reinvent itself, coupled with the strong collective identity of its residents, suggests that with the right efforts to address the existing challenges, Guernsey's social capital can be strengthened and better utilised to enhance the overall wellbeing of its community.

What are the threats to Guernsey's social capital?

Social capital is weakened or damaged by anything that undermines social connectedness or positive predispositions related to how people interact and exchange in social and economic contexts. For example, threats are issues that create social divides, reduce social interaction, undermine collective identity and solidarity, foment distrust, suspicion, fear, or conflict, or contribute to social exclusion or isolation. Anything that reduces opportunities for social action by making people less connected and anything that makes people less predisposed to act positively, cooperatively, and collaboratively with others.

This research identified a range of threats, challenges, and barriers that weaken Guernsey's social capital. Few of the factors are unique to Guernsey since most are forces acting on all modern societies to some extent, such as increasing inequality, distrust, social isolation, individualism, and polarisation. Other threats are specific to Guernsey and relate to the nature of its history, culture, geography, or economic or political systems.

The top 25 threats to Guernsey's social capital are outlined in Table 17. The table indicates the main aspects of social capital that each issue threatens. Major threats are indicated with an uppercase X and minor threats with a lowercase X. As discussed previously, the aspects of social capital are highly interrelated, meaning changes to one aspect tend to have impacts on other aspects.

It is important to understand these threats to social capital. Mitigating or resolving these threats will allow Guernsey to strengthen its social capital or minimise the risk of damage or loss of social capital. A brief description of each of the threats can be found in Appendix 2. Many of these threats are complex and multidimensional issues. Understanding them and how they impact social capital will allow Guernsey to identify opportunities to improve social capital.

The people who participated in this research were aware of many of these threats to social capital and talked openly and passionately about their concerns that Guernsey is not doing enough to adapt and mitigate their impacts. This was a consistent theme and lack of action is itself a major threat to social capital.

Many of the threats to social capital relate to community members' opinions or perceptions. Some are supported by empirical evidence, such as increasing inequality or the cost of living, while others may be more subjective or perhaps not supported by evidence. Regardless, the impacts on social capital are real since social capital is fundamentally about what people think, feel, and believe. For example, the legal system in Guernsey may be incredibly accessible and fair, but if people believe the opposite, it will negatively impact social capital.

Key threats

- **increasing inequality**
- **distrust**
- **social isolation**
- **individualism**
- **polarisation**

	Connectedness						Predispositions					
	Social relationships	Knowing about others	Social spaces	Associational membership	Organisational capacity	Roles, rules, and procedures	Reputation and relational trust	Social trust	Norms, obligations and expectations	Goodwill, solidarity, and empathy	Social identity and belonging	Shared goals, language, codes, narratives
Inequality	X	x		x	x			X	X	X	X	X
Social disconnects/divides			X			X		X	X	X	X	X
Generational divides	X							x	x	x	x	x
Social isolation	x	X		x		X			X		X	X
Individualism				X	X	X		x	x	X	x	x
Polarisation	x	x					X	X	x	x	X	x
Distrust		X	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
Perceptions of non-locals	X	x					x	x		x	x	x
Perceptions of insufficient change	X					X		x		x	x	x
Aging population				X	X							
Housing licensing system	X							x	x	x	x	x
A weakening sense of community	x	x		x	x			x	x	X	x	X
Social skills, social anxiety, and mental health	X	X		x	x							
Lack of affordable social spaces	X	X		x	x							
Increasing costs and cost of living pressures		X	X	X	X							
Reduced volunteerism and funding				X								
Digital technologies			X									
Organisational capacity, particularly quality leadership				X	X							
Availability of funding and space				X	X							
Perceived problems with the legal system							X	X		x	x	x
Naming and shaming practices and cultures							X	x	x	x	x	x
Distorted perceptions of reputational risk and outcomes							X		x	x	x	X
Perceptions of changing culture and the role of newcomers									X		X	
An inability to evolve the identity to suit a changing world								x	x	x	X	
Lack of forums for constructive dialogue								x		x	x	X

Table 14. Matrix of threats to the various aspects of social capital

How can social capital be improved?

Understanding the nature of social capital makes it clear how it can be improved. Social capital involves both connectedness that provides opportunities for social action and predispositions that influence the nature of social action when it occurs. Therefore, social capital is improved when people have more opportunities for social action through improved connections with others AND are predisposed to more positive social action. This includes contexts where people have more reasons to be prosocial and where there are fewer barriers and less risk and uncertainty related to acting positively with others.

There are many ways to improve social capital since it is complex and involves multiple aspects across its two dimensions. The social capital framework (see Appendix 1) can be used to identify various broad actions to improve social capital, such as:

Improve connectedness, including knowing people from a variety of backgrounds and positions in society.

Create or strengthen social organisations, including their capacity.

Build trust and attitudes related to trustworthiness.

Develop and strengthen norms and social sanctions that support positive actions.

Develop and strengthen a sense of belonging and social identity that supports positive actions.

Break down undesirable in-group and out-group attitudes and any prejudices.

Develop and strengthen a sense of solidarity and goodwill with others.

Develop and strengthen positive reputations (and knowing about others).

Develop and strengthen empathy and resolve antipathy.

Develop and strengthen empowerment.

The list above provides many broad categories of actions that can improve social capital. The most relevant and appropriate actions are dependent on the context. This research has identified numerous specific opportunities to improve social capital in Guernsey, which will be discussed in another section of this report.

There is no simple blueprint for improving social capital that can be rolled out and implemented in every community. Every community is unique and has different strengths and weaknesses related to different aspects of social capital.

Trying to create more of something that is already a strength tends to provide diminishing returns, meaning it is often not the best use of resources and effort. In fact, for many aspects of social capital, more or stronger is not necessarily better. For example, close-knit social groups tend to develop strong norms that can create conformity, limit innovation and creativity, and result in the exclusion of outsiders. Another example is trust; more trust is good, but too much trust without safeguards can create opportunities for free-riding, fraud, corruption, and exploitation.

Protecting and nurturing social capital's strengths is important, but a generic approach to improving it is ill-advised.

It is also important to take care when attempting to improve negative aspects of social capital. There can be a risk of doing more damage than good if the change initiative inadvertently reinforces negative or unhelpful beliefs or attitudes. For example, if there is a general sense of distrust, conducting activities that make people more aware of this can reinforce these beliefs. However, if people become more aware of them as part of collective activities that aim to resolve the underlying issues, it is more likely they will be changed in a positive direction. Therefore, top-down initiatives should embrace participatory methods to engage and involve the community with meaningful input and co-design principles.

While the intention of change initiatives is clearly important, what is more important is how the action, change, or initiative is perceived. An example discussed by participants of this research was the use of the Guernsey Together slogan. Although well-intentioned, some community members perceived it as disingenuous, reinforcing divides and distrust.

The rest of this section will explore how to improve social capital in a general sense, which is important to the design of any intervention. A later section will outline the specific opportunities to improve social capital.

Who can affect change?

Anyone and everyone can impact social capital. Generally, leaders and influential individuals have a greater ability to influence social capital, and institutions can powerfully influence social capital through their policies and programs. Different actors play important roles in improving social capital and using it to improve the desired outcomes. Institutions and policymakers are largely responsible for shaping the enabling environment (see Figure 26 in Appendix 1). Organisations are the powerhouse of shaping predispositions, influencing connectedness, and making resources accessible. Individuals are the powerhouse of making connections and building and maintaining goodwill and reputation, often empowered by organisations and enabled by institutions.

For example, the government can powerfully influence social capital through its policies, allocation of resources, and messaging of issues, challenges, and actions. Organisations of all types influence how members connect and interact to undertake the organisation's activities, and how they communicate with other stakeholders and the community. And every person in society contributes to social capital through how they build relationships and participate in civil society, as well as through their words and actions in everyday social interactions and exchanges.

The best results are achieved when all levels take an active role in building and using social capital. However, any individual or organisation can have significant impacts regardless of the actions of others. The following sections will explore the role of individuals, organisations, and institutions in influencing the nature of social capital.

Role of individual actors – the micro level

Individuals are the powerhouse of social capital creation and use. Individuals are responsible

for making connections and building and maintaining goodwill and reputation. Individuals act within the context created by organisations and institutions. They can be empowered by organisations and enabled by institutions, or they can be disempowered and inhibited by policies and procedures that relate to social action. Regardless, it is the actions of individuals that shape the nature of both connectedness and predispositions at both the individual and collective levels.

Any individual can improve (or damage) 'their' social capital. They can build new relationships to improve their connectedness and portray positive personal characteristics such as respect, loyalty, compromise, patience, tolerance, compassion, honesty, and trust to shape positive predispositions. They can attend networking events, join community or interest groups, or they can volunteer their time in the community. These activities will help them to meet new people and form new relationships. They can be friendly, offer assistance, do favours for others, and be trustworthy and kind. This will build goodwill and a positive reputation. They can spend time with their network connections and share experiences and perspectives.

While individuals can invest in or destroy 'their' social capital, they do not own it per se. Instead, it resides in their social relationships, or more specifically, it resides in the beliefs and attitudes of others. To illustrate this point, consider how the outcomes of social capital are realised. For me to benefit from 'my' social capital, it requires someone to be inclined or predisposed to help or support me. It is the result of their predispositions towards me, which resides in their beliefs and attitudes.

To illustrate ownership and the wider impacts of social capital, consider the following reflection.

I am proud of my social capital because I have worked hard to build it. I have invested time, energy, and, in some cases, money in my social capital. I know how to build more of it, and I know that if I am not careful, I could destroy much of it by a single action. I am confident I am significantly better off because of my social capital, and I can cite numerous examples of how I have benefited from it. I know I don't fully own it, and I cannot fully control it. I know others benefit from my investment in social capital, in some cases more than I do. I feel that investing in social capital makes my life better, my community better, and the world better. It may sound like it is exploitative of social relationships, but I invest in social capital because it is mutually beneficial. In fact, I give as much as I can where appropriate. I give time, information, skills, and any other resource I have that is useful to other people. Often, a small investment results in a large return. A minute of my time may save someone an hour. A small piece of information may save someone hundreds of dollars. A few kind words may brighten someone's day. By acting in this way, there is a positive return on investment for my social groupings and society more generally, and in the long run for me as well.

This highlights how the appropriate building and use of social capital benefits others. Anyone and everyone in society can contribute to the improvement of social capital.

One of the biggest opportunities to improve social capital is to help people understand what it is, its importance and value, and one's stock of social capital. This is because when people reconnect with the value and importance of social capital, they naturally prioritise investment in social relationships. And when people are more aware of their social capital, they are better able to utilise it for improved individual and collective outcomes.

Another big opportunity to make general improvements in the individual properties of social capital is to improve people's skills and abilities for building social capital. It is important to acknowledge that people have different abilities, interests and needs for social engagement. For many people, they may want to build more and stronger relationships, but they lack the know-how to do it effectively. There are various individual competencies, such as communication skills and

emotional intelligence, that can make a significant improvement in the individual properties of social capital.

Some participants of this research project expressed that the education system in Guernsey is not preparing young people to positively create and contribute to social capital development.

Role of organisations – the meso level

Organisations, including government, non-government, and business organisations, have a profound impact on the nature, quality, and effectiveness of social capital. They play a critical role in shaping a community's connectedness and the nature of various predispositions, as well as making resources accessible in the activation context.

Organisations influence the nature of connectedness since they shape how individuals come together, interact, and cooperate towards mutual and societal benefits. Organisations create networks among members, stakeholders, and the community. These networks are essential for the flow of information, resources, and support, allowing the outcomes of social capital to occur.

Organisations provide structured settings where individuals can meet, interact, and collaborate. This could be through formal meetings, conferences, training sessions, or social events. Each of these platforms offers members and stakeholders a chance to form and strengthen relationships, fostering a network of connections that might not have formed in less structured environments. Organisations often bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds, professions, and geographical locations. By doing so, they create cross-boundary linkages that are essential for the diffusion of ideas and innovations. These linkages expand the social and professional horizons of individuals, enabling access to new resources, skills, and knowledge that are outside their immediate environment.

Organisations also powerfully shape various predispositions. Fundamentally, any organisation creates shared goals among members that align with the organisation's purpose or mission. Organisations create and reinforce a set of shared values, beliefs, and norms that dictate acceptable behaviours and practices within the organisation. By consistently promoting and upholding these norms, organisations can create an environment where positive predispositions are more easily established and maintained among members and stakeholders.

Organisations create and maintain predispositions in various ways. Perhaps the most important is their leadership in their field of operation, the nature of their policies and practices, and the communication channels they create within the organisation and with stakeholders. Organisations that encourage and facilitate regular and constructive communication channels help create an atmosphere of openness and mutual respect. These feedback mechanisms ensure that all voices are heard and valued, which is essential for maintaining trust and reinforcing social norms.

Organisations also play a critical role in the activation context of social capital by making resources accessible within the organisation and, in some cases, to other stakeholders and the community. These resources and the way they are controlled and deployed are vital for many outcomes of social capital. Organisations regulate collective action, and the extent and deployment of their resources have significant implications for outcomes.

Organisations have various and complex impacts on social capital. The social capital framework (see Appendix 1) provides a structured way to understand these impacts and tangible ways to implement changes to improve outcomes.

Role of institutions and policymakers – the macro level

In general, the social capital of large social groups, such as large organisations and communities, tends to change more slowly than the social capital of smaller groups and organisations. The social capital literature has documented the long-term impacts of historical events, economic patterns, and culture. For example, some countries are still affected by colonialism, and in some cases, this has continued negative impacts on their social capital. This is because these macro-scale values, beliefs, and attitudes tend to be difficult to change and generally change slowly. However, powerful and influential institutions have the greatest

ability to influence these aspects of social capital. For example, governments and large media organisations have the greatest influence on society-level social capital. Policymakers, such as governments in the context of society and senior management in the context of large organisations, have the ability to influence the enabling environment of social capital and, therefore, the potential to positively influence the development and use of social capital.

For example, policymakers have the ability to shape incentives or disincentives for processes that create and maintain social capital, such as social interaction. There are many different policies that may impact the frequency of social interaction and the nature of that interaction when it occurs. It may be as simple and fundamental as providing suitable space for interaction, whether it is at the neighbourhood level, such as green space, or within the built environment, such as pleasant and inviting lunchrooms in offices. Various policies can influence the enabling environment with significant implications for social capital. Often, policies that dictate the way activities are to be conducted have implications for social capital creation and maintenance. A greater awareness of social capital and the processes that create and maintain it allows us to identify changes to policy to improve outcomes.

Macro-level actors also have important roles in shaping the nature of the activation context. Although macro-level properties of social capital tend to change slowly, some aspects of the activation context can be changed in the short term. Some other aspects of the activation context can be more difficult to change. Regardless, the macro-level actors, such as institutions and policymakers, have an important role to play in ensuring the activation context is primed for social capital to produce the desired outcomes.

How can the concept of social capital help?

The concept of social capital holds two key values. Firstly, it brings to light something that is often overlooked or undervalued in conventional policy and program design, implementation, analysis, and reporting. By giving social processes a name, we can discuss them collectively and find solutions and approaches that enhance outcomes. It allows us to evaluate, qualify, and measure social capital. This ability to quantify its impact enables us to communicate its importance to decision-makers and policymakers, potentially leading to significant improvements in outcomes.

The second main value of social capital is that it provides a framework to understand the benefits and importance of social and cultural processes and tangible ways to improve practice and outcomes. An understanding of social capital allows us to do the following:

› Identify and maximise the strengths and opportunities to build and use social capital.

› Identify and mitigate the limitations, weaknesses, challenges, and barriers to the development and use of social capital.

› Identify and mitigate potential damage or loss of social capital.

› Identify and mitigate downsides or negative social capital.

This allows us to do more of the strengths and implement opportunities. It allows us to overcome limitations and weaknesses and break down challenges and barriers. It allows us to do less damage and to develop strategies to reduce the risk of loss. It allows us to change the nature of social capital to reduce downsides. Often, efforts to maximise or mitigate only require simple, no-cost, or low-cost changes to existing activities. Understanding social capital allows us to be purposeful and deliberate about how we build and use social capital and reduces the risk of loss of social capital and the likelihood of negative outcomes.

Capitalising on strengths and opportunities

Social capital exists in every community and every social grouping. As discussed previously, social capital is not a new idea; it is just a relatively new term for the social aspects that are an important part of every social grouping. This means we are not starting from zero and trying to build social capital from scratch. Social capital is created from everyday processes, including the organisations we form and the social relationships we develop through the course of our everyday lives.

This research has highlighted many key strengths of social capital in Guernsey. We should naturally nurture these strengths and take care not to damage them. Often, even where there is strong social capital, it tends to be underutilised in our efforts to progress our goals. For example, we may have strong connections, but we may not reach out to them or involve them in collective action. In Guernsey, the research identified that the preconditions for collaboration are strong, but there are perceived barriers to greater collaboration, such as normative expectations.

When we are more aware of the nature and strengths of the social capital in our context, we can more effectively utilise it to improve our desired outcomes. Of course, we need to be careful not to exploit our relationships, but when it is done right, using social capital tends to strengthen social capital, not diminish or damage it.

The framework of social capital can reveal opportunities to build, maintain, and use social capital more effectively. There are often simple and low-cost opportunities that can have significant impacts. Even subtle changes to existing activities can be important. Often, there will be unrealised opportunities for social interaction to facilitate the building or use of social capital. Other common opportunities relate to simply providing the resources to be mobilised, providing the space and time for social interaction, or helping collectives to develop or strengthen shared goals.

Overcoming limitations and weaknesses and breaking down challenges and barriers

Limitations, challenges, and barriers to building and using social capital within any particular context always exist. These often relate to the wider social and institutional setting, such as aspects of culture that limit participation, aspects of the economic or legislative environment, or the nature of physical geography, such as being an island. This research has identified many weaknesses of social capital in Guernsey.

The limitations and weaknesses may be aspects of the enabling environment, such as the physical setting and lack of social spaces or challenges associated with distance and time. They may be aspects of social capital, such as a lack of shared understandings, high levels of diversity that may present challenges for reaching

shared understandings, or competing interests that can undermine collective goals. Or they may be aspects of the activation context, such as the availability of resources and other forms of capital that impede beneficial outcomes.

Reducing the risk of loss of social capital

An important characteristic of social capital is that it can be easily damaged by actions such as social network disruptions or perceived betrayals of trust. Unfortunately, damage can often be caused accidentally as a result of well-intentioned actions.

When undertaking an activity, policy change, or other initiative, an understanding of social capital can help to identify the potential impacts on the social aspects to avoid harm and diminished outcomes. The identification of the potential impacts of an activity can be done informally or could be achieved through a more formalised assessment process such as a Social Capital Impact Assessment.

The next section will discuss the actionable insights that emerged from this research project. This report presents a rich picture of social capital that can inform appropriate actions for Guernsey.

What can be done in Guernsey?

Guernsey has a great opportunity to enhance and safeguard its social capital for improved economic and social wellbeing. Many research participants believed the island's independence, self-governance, and culture of reinvention provide a solid foundation for strengthening social capital. With a shared commitment from the community and its leaders, Guernsey can address existing challenges, mitigate weaknesses, and take the necessary actions to protect and enhance its social capital, ultimately improving the overall wellbeing of its residents. This is not a simple task, and there is no blueprint for a generic solution. Guernsey's challenge is to maintain the good things about its social capital and unique cultural character while adapting to a changing world.

This research thoroughly evaluated the current nature of social capital in Guernsey and provided numerous actionable insights. Table 15 provides a summary of these opportunities and the aspect of social capital to which they relate most.

The most appropriate and impactful actions to improve social capital are best determined by Guernsey's leadership in consultation with residents because they have an intimate understanding of the island's unique social, cultural, and economic context. Guernsey's social fabric is deeply intertwined with its history, traditions, and the values held by its residents. Locals are best positioned to identify which initiatives will resonate most with their community, ensuring that any actions taken to enhance social capital are relevant and respectful of the island's collective identity and way of life.

The current priorities and realities facing Guernsey, such as economic pressures, demographic shifts, or specific social challenges, are best understood by people who are embedded in the social and economic reality of Guernsey. By aligning social capital initiatives with these existing priorities, the community can ensure that efforts to strengthen social bonds complement other important goals. This alignment increases the likelihood of community buy-in and sustained engagement, which are crucial for the success of any social capital initiative.

Involving Guernsey people in the decision-making process also fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment, which can further strengthen social capital. When residents feel that their voices are heard and their values are respected, they are more likely to actively participate in and support initiatives, leading to more meaningful and lasting impacts. Ultimately, actions to improve social capital in Guernsey will be most effective when they are rooted in the community's own experiences, priorities, and values, ensuring that they are both appropriate and impactful.

A strategy to improve and safeguard social capital in Guernsey will require a suite of actions to address the various weaknesses and threats to social capital. Some may require the involvement of the institutions of government, others can be championed by community organisations or industry bodies, and individuals can drive others.

Opportunities – Connectedness

Opportunity to improve social capital	Aspect of social capital	Component of social capital
Form new bridges across social divides	Social relationships and network configuration	Connectedness
Address inequality and associated stigma		
Break down the negative aspects of who is local and who is not		
Resolve the experience of new arrivals to improve integration		
Celebrate connectedness and encourage more people to engage		
Build trust and transparency	Knowing about connections	
Support mental health and wellbeing		
Foster intergenerational and cross-cultural programs		
Create inclusive and accessible social spaces		
More spaces and more diverse and accessible low-cost paces	Social spaces	
Increase awareness of the spaces that already exist		
Modify existing spaces for suitability and accessibility		
Enhance volunteer recruitment and retention	Associational membership, participation and engagement	
Develop support for administrative processes		
Increase funding and resources		
Reduce barriers to participation		
Promote a culture of giving and participation		
Leverage skilled professionals	Organisational capacity	
Invest in leadership development		
Adopt new technologies and innovations		
Provide capacity building programs		
Promote collaboration and networking		
Promote collaboration and reduce overlap	Roles, rules and procedures	
Encourage inclusivity and diversity in roles		
Enhance leadership development		
Foster a culture of continuous improvement		
Build trust through transparency and accountability		

Table 15. Summary of the identified opportunities to improve social capital in Guernsey

Opportunities – Predispositions

Opportunity to improve social capital	Aspect of social capital	Component of social capital
Break down perceptions of reputational risk and fear of judgement	Reputation and relational trust	Predispositions
Celebrate and acknowledge the prosocial action that stems from a connected community		
Reduce polarisation and establish platforms for constructive dialogue		
Promote inclusivity and reduce inequality	Social trust	
Enhance transparency and accountability in the legal system		
Facilitate constructive dialogue and reduce polarisation		
Address stereotypes and foster a culture of acceptance		
Address and reduce negativity	Norms, obligations, and expectations	
Celebrate cultural diversity and integration		
Foster intergroup dialogue and collaboration		
Promote inclusivity and equity		
Encourage intergenerational and cross-cultural connections	Goodwill, solidarity and empathy	
Celebrate and amplifying acts of kindness and solidarity		
Enhance leadership and governance		
Promote inclusivity and reduce inequality		
Evolve the identity to reflect contemporary values	Social identity and belonging	
Foster inclusivity and embrace diversity		
Address inequality and bridge social divides		
Promote positive narratives and shared identity		
Promote inclusive narratives	Shared goals, purpose, language, codes, and narratives	
Encourage constructive dialogue		
Leverage shared language and codes		
Align shared goals and purpose		

Table 15. Summary of the identified opportunities to improve social capital in Guernsey

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Associational Membership: Participation in formal or informal groups, organisations, or clubs that provide opportunities for social interaction and cooperation.

Agency: The capacity of individuals or groups to act independently and make choices that impact their environment and lives.

Altruism: The selfless concern for the wellbeing of others, often resulting in actions that benefit others without expectation of personal gain.

Belonging: A deep sense of connection and acceptance within a group or community. It reflects the feeling of being valued and included, which strengthens social identity and cohesion within the community.

Bonding Social Capital: Strong ties within a close–knit group, such as family or close friends, that provide support and solidarity.

Bridging Social Capital: Connections that link people across social divides, such as those of different socioeconomic backgrounds, cultures, or communities.

Capacity Building: Efforts to enhance the skills, resources, and capabilities of individuals or organisations to improve their effectiveness and sustainability.

Civic Engagement: Participation in activities intended to influence public policy or contribute to community welfare, such as voting, volunteering, or activism.

Cohesion: The degree of unity, cooperation, and solidarity within a group or society.

Collaboration: Working together with others to achieve a common goal or complete a task.

Collective Action: Actions taken together by a group of people to achieve a common objective or goal.

Collective Efficacy: The shared belief among members of a community that they can work together to achieve common goals and address challenges.

Community Engagement: The process by which individuals and organisations actively participate in activities and initiatives that benefit their community.

Community Resilience: The ability of a community to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adverse situations such as economic downturns or natural disasters.

Connectedness: The state of being linked or associated with others in a community through relationships, networks, and interactions. Connectedness fosters social capital by providing opportunities for collaboration, cooperation, and mutual support.

Consensus: General agreement or shared understanding among members of a group.

Coordinating Institutions: Organisations or systems that facilitate collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders, groups, or sectors to achieve common goals, ensuring that resources, information, and efforts are effectively aligned.

Cultural Competency: The ability to understand, communicate, and interact effectively with people across different cultures.

Cultural Identity: The identity or sense of belonging to a particular culture, often shaped by shared heritage, language, and customs.

Culture: The shared values, beliefs, practices, and norms that define a community and influence the behaviour of its members. Culture plays a crucial role in shaping social capital by providing the foundation for trust, solidarity, and collective identity.

Demographic Shift: Changes in the composition of a population, such as age, ethnicity, or migration patterns.

Disempowerment: A process where individuals or groups lose the power or ability to influence decisions that affect their lives, leading to social exclusion.

Distrust: A lack of confidence in individuals, institutions, or societal systems. Distrust erodes social capital by diminishing cooperation, weakening relationships, and increasing conflict.

Empathy: The ability to understand and share the feelings of others. Empathy enhances social capital by fostering goodwill, compassion, and support among community members.

Empowerment: The process by which individuals or groups gain the ability, confidence, and authority to make decisions and take actions that influence their lives and communities. Empowerment often involves increasing access to resources, knowledge, and opportunities.

Exclusion: The act of isolating or marginalising individuals or groups from social, economic, or cultural opportunities.

Facilitation: The process of guiding discussions, meetings, or group activities in a way that encourages participation, communication, and decision-making.

Generational Divide: Differences in values, perspectives, and priorities between older and younger members of a community. These divides can weaken social capital by reducing communication and understanding across age groups.

Goodwill: Positive feelings of kindness, generosity, and support within a community. Goodwill promotes cooperation and mutual aid, enhancing social capital by fostering trust and solidarity.

Governance: The framework of rules, processes, and institutions that guide how decisions are made and implemented within a community or organisation.

Grassroots Movement: A community-driven initiative or campaign, typically focused on social, political, or environmental change, originating from ordinary citizens rather than authorities.

Inclusivity: The practice or policy of including people from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that they have equal opportunities to participate and contribute.

Inequality: The unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges within a community. Inequality can fragment social capital by creating divisions and reducing social cohesion.

Informal Networks: Social ties or connections that are not formally structured but play a significant role in communication, support, and resource sharing within communities.

In-group/Out-group Dynamics: The social distinctions made between groups where members of the in-group are favoured over those in the out-group.

Institutional Trust: Confidence in formal institutions such as government, legal systems, and public services to act fairly and effectively.

Institutions: Established systems or structures, including formal and informal rules, norms, and organisations, that govern social, political, and economic behaviour within a society. Institutions provide frameworks for cooperation, interaction, and decision-making.

Marginalisation: The process by which certain individuals or groups are pushed to the edges of society, limiting their access to resources, opportunities, and social participation.

Mediation: The process of intervening in a conflict or dispute to facilitate a resolution that is acceptable to all parties involved.

Mutual Aid: Voluntary reciprocal exchange of resources and services for mutual benefit, often within a community or social network.

Organisational Capacity: The ability of organisations, whether governmental, non-governmental, or community-based, to mobilise resources, coordinate actions, and engage effectively with the community. Strong organisational capacity is crucial for building and maintaining social capital.

Polarisation: The process by which a group or society becomes divided into opposing factions with little common ground or mutual understanding.

Predispositions: Tendencies or inclinations that shape how individuals behave within their social relationships. These attitudes, such as trust or distrust, affect how people engage with each other and contribute to the overall social capital of a community.

Prosocial: Actions or behaviours that are intended to benefit others or society as a whole. Prosocial behaviour strengthens social capital by promoting cooperation, generosity, and collective wellbeing.

Public Good: Resources or services that are available to all members of a community or society, often provided or regulated by governments.

Reciprocity: The practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit, often based on a social or moral expectation of returning favours.

Relational Dynamics: The patterns of interaction, trust, and communication between individuals or groups that shape social relationships and community cohesion.

Relational Networks: The interconnected social ties that bind individuals and groups, facilitating communication, support, and resource exchange.

Reputation: The general perception of an individual or organisation's trustworthiness and reliability within a community. Reputation is a key element of relational trust and contributes to social capital by influencing cooperation and collaboration.

Resilience: The ability of individuals, groups, or communities to adapt, recover, or thrive in the face of challenges or adversity.

Resource Mobilisation: The process of gathering and deploying resources, such as time, money, or people, for a specific purpose or goal.

Resource Scarcity: A situation in which the resources necessary for social or economic well-being are limited or unevenly distributed, leading to competition or conflict.

Roles, Rules, and Procedures: The established structures, policies, and guidelines that govern behaviour within communities and organisations. These elements ensure social order, trust, and cooperation, all essential for the development of social capital.

Social Capital: The ability and potential for people to cooperate and work together and to interact and exchange positively. Although not a precise definition, this is the general meaning of the term.

Social Cohesion: The degree of social integration, unity, and trust that exists within a community or society.

Social Disconnects: The breakdown of relationships, networks, and communication within a community. Social disconnects threaten social capital by reducing interaction, trust, and cooperation.

Social Entrepreneurship: The practice of creating enterprises or initiatives that address social issues or contribute to community wellbeing while also being financially sustainable.

Social Exclusion: The process of excluding or marginalising individuals or groups from participating fully in social, economic, or political life.

Social Fragmentation: The breakdown or weakening of social bonds, leading to a divided or disconnected community or society.

Social Identity: The sense of belonging to a group, shaped by shared characteristics, values, or experiences. Social identity helps individuals feel connected to their community and contributes to social cohesion and collective action.

Social Inclusion: Ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background, have equal access to opportunities, resources, and participation in society.

Social Integration: The process by which individuals are fully included and active participants in their communities and social networks.

Social Isolation: The state of being disconnected from others, often leading to loneliness and exclusion. Social isolation is a threat to social capital, as it diminishes opportunities for interaction and weakens community bonds.

Social Mobility: The ability of individuals or groups to move within a social hierarchy, often based on economic or educational achievement.

Social Networks: The web of relationships and connections among individuals and groups that facilitate communication and cooperation.

Social Norms: Unwritten rules and expectations that guide behaviour within a community. Social norms play a vital role in maintaining social capital by promoting cooperation, trust, and shared values.

Social Reciprocity: The expectation that positive actions, such as helping others, will be returned in kind, reinforcing trust and cooperation.

Social Spaces: Physical or virtual environments where people come together to interact, build relationships, and engage in collective activities. These spaces are essential for creating opportunities for social capital to thrive.

Social Structures: The complex framework of social relationships, roles, norms, and institutions that shape society. Social structures determine how individuals and groups interact, influence power dynamics, and define social hierarchy.

Solidarity: Unity and mutual support among members of a community, particularly in times of need or crisis. Solidarity strengthens social capital by fostering collective action and a sense of shared responsibility.

Stakeholder Engagement: The process of involving individuals, groups, or organisations that have a vested interest in the outcomes of a project, policy, or initiative.

Stakeholders: Individuals or groups with an interest or investment in the outcomes of a project, organisation, or community initiative.

Stereotyping: The oversimplified and often inaccurate belief about a group of people based on certain characteristics, such as ethnicity or age. Where a stereotype is negative it can be described as a prejudice.

Stigma: A negative perception or label attached to an individual or group that leads to discrimination or exclusion.

Structural Inequality: Systemic disparities in resources, opportunities, and power based on class, race, gender, or other social divisions, often perpetuated by institutions or policies.

Sustainability: The ability to maintain social, economic, or environmental systems over time without depleting resources or causing harm.

Tall Poppy Syndrome: A cultural phenomenon where individuals who achieve success or stand out from the group are resented, criticised, or cut down. In some contexts, this can discourage innovation or leadership, potentially weakening social capital.

Trust (Relational): The belief in the reliability, honesty, and integrity of individuals within personal or professional relationships. Relational trust is crucial for forming strong social bonds and networks within a community.

Trust (Social): The broader trust in the reliability and integrity of societal institutions, leaders, and members of the community as a whole. Social trust is essential for fostering cooperation and collective action within a society.

Trust–building: The process of fostering trust between individuals, groups, or institutions through consistent, reliable, and transparent actions.

Volunteer Capacity: The ability of individuals and organisations to recruit, retain, and effectively utilise volunteers for community initiatives.

Volunteerism: The act of offering one's time and effort to help others or contribute to community activities without financial compensation.

Vulnerability: The susceptibility of individuals or groups to harm, marginalisation, or exclusion, often due to economic, social, or environmental factors.

Wellbeing: The state of being healthy, happy, and prosperous, both physically and mentally, within a community or individual context.

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APPENDIX 1 – THE SOCIAL CAPITAL FRAMEWORK

The social capital framework is grounded in academic theory and extensive literature from across the social sciences. It connects with the deeper meaning of being social and engaging in positive social action. It is based on the logic of capital and how investment can create a stock of future benefits and returns. It is based on extensive research but goes beyond narrow academic definitions to outline a general approach capable of incorporating the complexity of social capital in a relatively easy way to understand and apply to the real world. Social action is complex, but our approach provides a framework for understanding and applying the concept of social capital in purposeful and deliberate ways.

As discussed previously, social capital has two core components. First, people need to be connected. Otherwise, there are limited opportunities or abilities to act. And second, people need to have predispositions to act prosocially. Both are required for strong social capital. A disconnected community or organisation has limited social capital because there is limited ability and opportunity to engage in the social actions that bring about outcomes. Similarly, if negative predispositions, such as distrust dominate a well–connected community, there may be opportunities for social action, but the action is less likely to occur and less likely to be positive when it does.

Since both connectedness and predispositions are essential for strong social capital and the associated desirable outcomes, the next sections will explore each of them and how they fit into the logic of how social capital works.

Predispositions

The predispositions component of social capital includes people's values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and understandings that influence the potential for social action and the nature of social action when it occurs.

As mentioned earlier, you could think of predispositions as inclinations, behavioural intentions, or motivations. We use the word "predisposition" because it means "the state of being likely to behave in a particular way". There are many different reasons for the "state of being". For example, social norms are behavioural expectations that influence people to act as expected. Norms are not the only reason for people to behave in a particular way, but they can have a strong influence. The existence of norms in a particular context reflects a "state of being likely to behave in a particular way". Another reason for a "state of being likely to behave in a particular way" is empathy. When you have empathy for someone, you are likely to behave in particular ways towards them; for example, you are predisposed to help them in times of need. Another example is perceptions of trustworthiness. In contexts where people are believed to be trustworthy, people are likely to engage in actions that require trust. There are many different reasons for people to be inclined to act in particular ways. Our use of "predispositions" allows any relevant reason to be included.

Predispositions include concepts such as social norms, trust, social identity, solidarity and other factors that shape the nature of social action. They all reflect or influence the way people are inclined or likely to act in any given situation.

We find it beneficial to group all the various factors that influence the nature of people's actions together and call them predispositions. This does not limit the reasons that may be relevant in any given context and connects each factor, such as social identity, with what it does. For example, social identity influences our predispositions towards people who share our identity and those who do not.

Various factors, collectively called predispositions, can influence people's values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and understandings. Some of the most frequently identified ones in the context of social capital include:

› Norms, including norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness.

› Goodwill, obligations, and expectations.

› Social identity, belonging, and solidarity, including various shared understandings.

› Reputation, including trustworthiness.

› Regard, including beliefs and feelings about others.

› Empathy and antipathy.

› Empowerment.

Predispositions are important because they represent the stock of potential that makes certain actions more likely. For example, if people are predisposed to trust others, during an interaction with someone, they would need to identify a reason or reasons not to trust the other person. Therefore, trusting actions are more likely. On the other hand, if people are predisposed to not trust others, then the opposite would be true, and they would need to interpret reasons to overcome the predisposition in order to engage in trusting actions. There are no guarantees people will act in line with their predispositions, but it means they are likely to act in certain ways.

The notion of predispositions is consistent with the capital nature of social capital. Processes, whether resulting from by-products of other activities or deliberate investment, lead to the development of predispositions that shape the nature of future action. As such, they are a vital part of the potential for social action.

Many predispositions span the range from positive to negative. For example, norms can drive prosocial or antisocial actions, trust can be positive or negative, belonging and identity can drive in-group and out-group effects, and people can be empathetic or less than or even have antipathy towards others.

Predispositions tend to be contextual. They often apply to specific people, or people with specific characteristics or memberships, or in specific locations. In different cultures, various types of predispositions may be more or less important, and some may be grounded in history, religion, and culture.

Different predispositions are important for different types of actions. If you want people to exchange freely, then trust is important. If you want people to work collectively, solidarity and shared goals are important. Often, all or many of the predispositions listed above play a role to some degree.

Predispositions are shaped by communication, mostly in the form of social interaction. When people spend time interacting, they tend to develop all manner of predispositions. The nature of this interaction can be facilitated to help develop positive predispositions. It should also be noted that one-way communication, such as observations of social activity and consumption of media, can also be important. Organisations frequently communicate various expectations and obligations by one-way communication forms such as policy documents, procedures, contracts, etc.

The next section will explore connectedness and the related opportunity and ability to act, which is the other major component of social capital.

Connectedness

People may be predisposed to positive social action, but if people are not connected by relationships, networks, or membership in formal or informal organisations, there are limited opportunities for social action and, therefore, limited social capital. If people are not connected, there can only be unplanned and incidental outcomes, regardless of peoples' predispositions for social action. For example, if you do not have friends, you cannot socialise with or call upon them, which limits the potential for social action. People in your social grouping may be strongly predisposed to help, but if you do not know them, you cannot call upon them, limiting the potential of social capital to unplanned and incidental social action only.

Imagine living in a community full of extremely generous, caring, and trustworthy people, but you do not know many people. The potential for positive social action exists, but there are few opportunities for this action to occur. If you needed help with something, you could walk out on the street and randomly ask people for help. However, this is inefficient and likely ineffective. You would not know who has the requisite skills, abilities, and predispositions to help you.

Opportunities for social action come from connectedness (both informal and formal) and from knowing. It is not enough to just know people.

For there to be strong potential for social action, you need to know how to find or contact them and know about them, including their reputation, what they do, what they can do and know, who they know, etc.

The following narrative example illustrates the importance of connectedness in enabling the potential that is social capital:

> **Mike lives on my street. He is an elderly man who lives alone and cannot do simple tasks around the home. He is a retired accountant with a lifetime of experience. I would love to help him with odd jobs around his house, and he would love to give me advice about my business accounting…. But we do not know each other. I may bump into him on the street, but I could not know he was an accountant and happy to help. And he would not know I needed help. Instead, there could only be unplanned and incidental outcomes resulting from chance interactions. Taking this illustration further, Mike may have a son whose company needs the services I provide. But again, because we do not know each other, neither Mike nor I know that the opportunity exists.**

Many of these ideas are associated with the concept of "relationships" or "networks" since the existence of a relationship is often associated with knowing, as discussed above. It should also be noted that knowing reduces uncertainty and associated fear that can be a significant barrier to action. The concept of knowing also includes knowing we belong to a shared world and that we are capable of understanding the reasons of others. As such, predispositions and connectedness should not be considered separate and unrelated. Connections cannot exist without predispositions, and most predispositions are developed through communication with connections.

The pattern or configuration of connections is also important because it can represent a potential for different types of action and different outcomes. For example, if you work in a factory and all your friends also work in the same factory, there may be limited potential for your social

capital to help you find employment in a different industry. This idea is reflected in the popular distinction between bonding, bridging, and linking functions of social capital. Bonding social capital describes a close-knit community with strong relationships. It is important for social support and "getting by".

On the other hand, bridging social capital describes connections that 'bridge' across social groupings that tend to provide opportunities to "get ahead" by providing access to resources and connections that are not normally part of your social setting. Linking social capital connects you with people in different positions in the social hierarchy, giving you potential access to power and influence. In this way, having a lot of connections with similar people who know similar things and have access to similar resources may not provide as much potential for the desired outcomes as knowing a smaller number of people from different social circles and positions in the social hierarchy.

We can summarise the main aspects of each component of social capital as follows and this can be used as a framework for understanding practical applications of the concept.

Activation context

Many outcomes of social capital involve mobilising, activating, enhancing, or transforming other forms of capital. This means social capital may have limited capacity in the absence of other forms of capital, particularly human and physical capital, depending on the desired outcomes. Social capital facilitates and lubricates, helps to improve effectiveness and efficiency, and makes collective action possible but cannot replace other forms of capital, assets, and resources. For example, a rural farming community may be well connected with strong relationships of trust, belonging, and regard, but if no one possesses a tractor, it cannot be loaned or shared. Information about support programs cannot be shared if no one knows how to access government programs. If no one knows an agricultural scientist, then a social introduction cannot be made to help improve practices. There are many examples of how a lack of capital, assets, and resources, including social resources, can reduce the potential of social capital to produce the desired outcomes.

CONNECTEDNESS	PREDISPOSITIONS
Opportunity and ability	**Inclination, motivation, or predisposition**

> Social relationships and the configuration of networks.
> Knowing related to social relationships.
> Associational membership.
> Social structures, including roles, rules, precedents, and procedures.
> Coordinating institutions.
> Institutional relationships.
	> Norms, including norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness.
	> Goodwill, obligations, and expectations.
	> Social identity, belonging, and solidarity, including various shared understandings.
	
	    › Shared goals and purpose.
	    › Shared language, codes, and narratives.
	    › Shared values, attitudes, and beliefs.
	
	> Reputation, including trustworthiness.
	> Regard, including beliefs and feelings about others.
	> Empathy and antipathy.
	> Empowerment.

Table 16. Aspects of social capital

Why this approach?

The academic literature is full of different meanings of social capital: networks, the configuration of networks, trust, norms, goodwill, etc. Each of these meanings provides insight into the nature of social capital, and the practical application based on any academic meaning of social capital would likely produce positive results. However, the approach outlined in this course incorporates the various theories into a logically consistent and theoretically grounded approach. It connects each of the various aspects or dimensions of social capital to a logical framework that improves our understanding of how to be more purposeful and deliberate about the application of social capital.

Individual and collective properties of social capital

Social capital has individual and collective properties, representing two very important avenues for building and using social capital. The following will discuss the individual and collective properties of each of the two core components of social capital: connectedness and predispositions. These ideas will be brought together in the following section.

The opportunity and ability to engage in social action come from connectedness. If people are not connected, there is limited opportunity for social action because social encounters are limited, and people cannot call upon others. The most obvious aspect of connectedness is social relationships – individuals having mutual recognition with others, including friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances. We call this the individual properties of connectedness. But there are also collective properties of connectedness, which are the ways in which organisations shape and regulate connections between individuals due to membership, roles, procedures, etc. Put simply, social groups, such as clubs, teams, companies, organisations, etc., connect people to each other, which creates opportunities to engage in social action.

Predispositions influence the potential for social action and the nature of social action when it occurs. Where these predispositions (values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and understandings) are related to specific people and relationships, we consider them individual properties of social capital and call them relational predispositions. People's actions are also influenced by predispositions widely held by members of the collective that do not relate to specific individuals.

Collective or shared predispositions influence the nature of social action toward people within and external to the collective.

The distinction between individual and collective properties of social capital can be explored further by considering the nature of ownership and control of these properties. Social capital has individual properties because individuals can build and use "their" social capital. An individual can invest in personal relationships to build their social capital. They can make new friends and connections, provide assistance, do favours for others, and be trustworthy and kind. These actions build "their" social capital. They have some level of control over it since their actions can build and damage it, and they can benefit from it. But an individual cannot fully own their social capital because, by its nature, it requires others for it to be built and realised.

To understand this point, consider where your social capital resides. Your ability to access the outcomes of social capital (reciprocity, social support, information flows, etc.) lies in the beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge of others. That is, what your connections think and feel about you. An individual's social capital relates to their social relationships, including family, friends, acquaintances, and networks. It includes their connectedness as well as the predispositions others have towards them.

Social capital also has collective properties since the potential for social action also relates to the nature of the social groupings and society to which they belong. Widespread beliefs influence the nature of action towards everyone, including both known and unknown individuals, to a greater or lesser extent. For example, if an organisation is dominated by distrust, this will influence the potential for positive social action across the organisation.

We not only engage in social action with people we know; we also act socially towards strangers (even not acting is a social action in many situations). We may stop to help a stranger with directions, hold a door open for a stranger, or stop to pick up a hitchhiker. These actions are not based on an existing relationship but on the collective properties of the group or society to which we belong. The nature of social structures, including any laws or rules, may influence these actions. It may be influenced by various predispositions based on social trust, norms, expectations, shared goals, shared narratives, and social identity and belonging.

Most individuals have limited control or influence over the collective properties of social capital, depending on the size of the social group and their role. For example, leaders tend to have more influence over collective properties of social capital than non-leaders.

The following table outlines the key properties of social capital for the individual and the collective.

INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES	COLLECTIVE PROPERTIES
> Relationships and knowing > Reputation, including trustworthiness > Goodwill and obligations > Interpersonal norms, including reciprocity > Roles and memberships	> Social structures > Social trust > Norms, obligations, and expectations, including culture > Shared goals, purpose, language, codes, narratives > Social identity and belonging

Table 17. The individual and collective properties of social capital

As previously identified, social capital's individual and collective properties represent two important opportunities for building and using social capital. Individuals can be empowered or coerced to build their social capital, and actors can attempt to influence the nature of the collective properties. It can be relatively easy to change the collective properties in a small social group such as a work team or small organisation. However, it can be more difficult and take more time to influence

The logic schema of social capital

From the previous sections, we now know that social capital has two main components – connectedness and predispositions – and these components relate to individual and collective properties. Table 18 combines the four different broad areas of social capital.

We call the individual properties of predispositions relational predispositions. They are predispositions (values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and understandings that influence the potential for social action) that relate to specific people. They are predispositions developed over time from the experiences of that person. They are relational in that they relate to specific relationships. As such, reputation is an important component of relational predispositions, including reputation for trustworthiness and reciprocity. It also includes goodwill and obligations, various interpersonal norms that develop over time and relate to the specific relationship (within the context of wider social norms). It also includes predispositions related to feelings of empathy, regard, and solidarity towards the individual.

In Table 18, shared predispositions are predispositions that are widely shared by people in a social group, organisation, or community. They are understandings about what is normal and appropriate, how most people will act, what it means to belong, and the nature of shared goals.

Social action is the result of both relational and shared predispositions. In general, strong relationships are dominated by relational predispositions and actions towards strangers and weak relationships are dominated by shared predispositions.

All relationships are influenced by shared predispositions to some extent since they are widely held beliefs about what is normal, appropriate, and expected. In weak relationships, with people we do not know very well, we have little previous experience to rely on, so our actions tend to be shaped by shared predispositions. Recognising that our shared predispositions are not the same for everyone is important. We hold different predispositions towards people based on recognised or interpreted characteristics such as age, race, gender, and various other qualities, memberships or affiliations. We often call these types of predispositions stereotypes, and where they are negative, we may call them prejudices. A community or organisation where negative shared predispositions, such as prejudices, are common would not be described as having strong social capital.

Connectedness and predispositions are inseparable – you should not focus on one and ignore the other. For example, it is possible to have a very well-connected but highly distrusting organisation. They are also interrelated. Relationships cannot exist without relational predispositions. Therefore, efforts to build social relationships will inevitably create or change predispositions (relational predispositions and shared predispositions). In Table 18, social relationships inevitably influence relational predispositions and can contribute to shared predispositions (the degree of contribution depends on a range of factors, including the size of the social group, organisation, or community). Changes to social structures tend to influence social relationships and, therefore, relational predispositions and shared predispositions. This highlights the highly interconnected nature of social capital components.

Now we can bring all of these components of social capital together in a single logic schema. Figure 26 illustrates our approach to social capital. It combines the logic of social capital with the four-way matrix of components (connectedness and predispositions) and levels (individual and collective properties) and the primary agents of change.

Figure 26 identifies six broad areas for the practical application of social capital:

1. Build and strengthen individual social relationships (individual connectedness)

2. Develop improved relational predispositions (individual predispositions)

	CONNECTEDNESS Ability and opportunity	PREDISPOSITIONS Values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and understandings
Individual properties	**Social Relationships** › Relationships and network configuration › Knowing about connections › Roles and memberships	**Relational predispositions** › Reputation including trustworthiness (relational trust) › Goodwill and obligations › Interpersonal norms including reciprocity › Empathy and solidarity
Collective properties	**Social structures** › Organisational capacity › Roles and procedures › Participation and engagement	**Shared predispositions** › Social trust › Norms, obligations, and expectations including culture › Shared goals, purpose, language, codes, narratives › Social identity and belonging › Stereotypes and prejudices

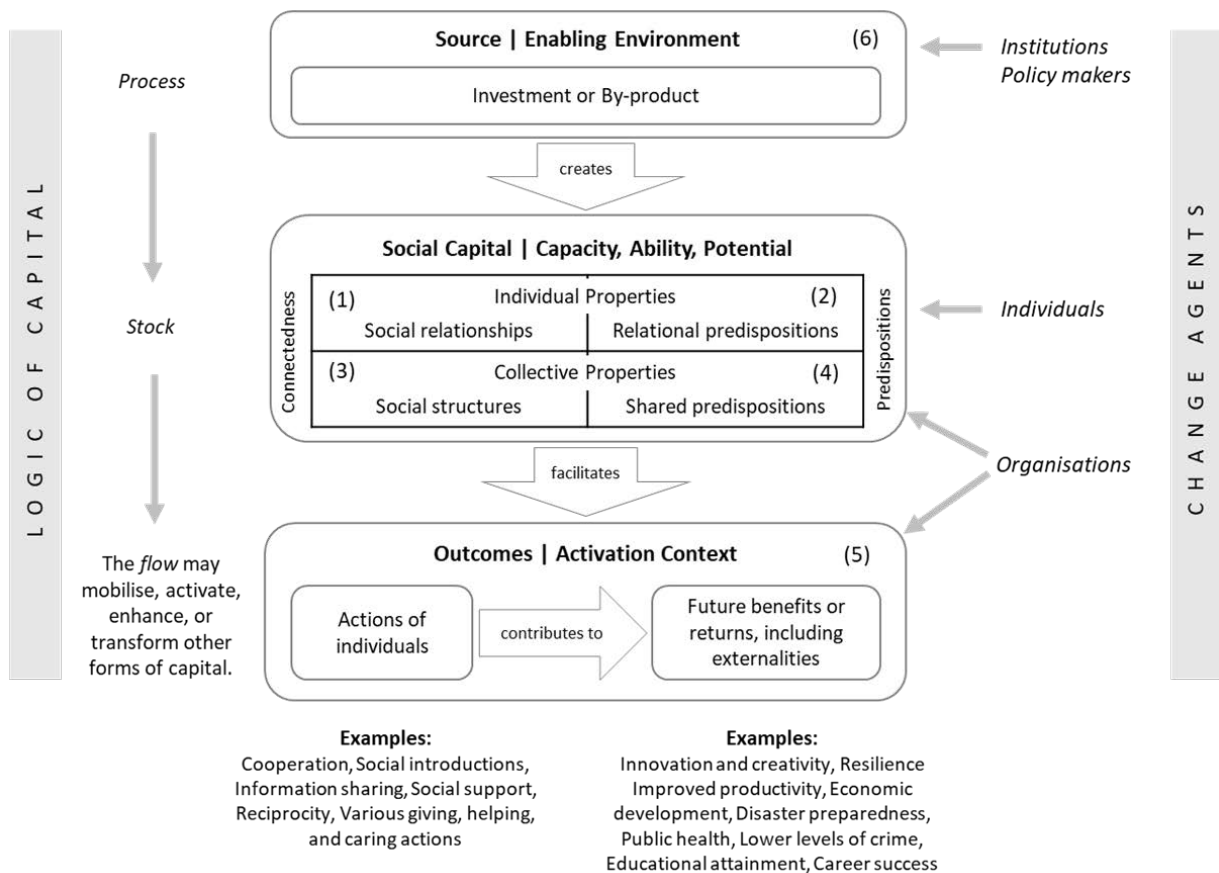*Table 18. Matrix of aspects and properties of social capital*

Figure 26. Schema for the application of social capital

3. Establish and strengthen social structures (collective connectedness)

4. Develop improved shared predispositions (collective predispositions)

5. Improvements to the activation context

6. Changes to the enabling environment

Depending on the context of your application and what you are trying to achieve, one or more of these areas may be important, and, in some cases, all of them. Because the individual and collective properties of connectedness and predispositions are interrelated, positive changes to one have flow–on effects on the others.

It is helpful to consider which actors tend to create and maintain the different properties of social capital.

› Individuals are the powerhouse of individual properties (often empowered by organisations and enabled by institutions).

› Organisations are the powerhouse of collective properties.

› The activation context is primarily the result of institutions and organisations.

› Institutions and policymakers are the powerhouses of the enabling environment.

Your role or position in the overall social system may mean that you or your organisation are best suited to develop strategies to target certain aspects of social capital. When you evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the different aspects in your context, you will likely find opportunities for interventions that can have significant positive impacts.

The logic schema described above provides a logically consistent and theoretically grounded framework for improving social capital and its associated outcomes. It helps to connect lists of factors (such as networks, shared norms, values and understandings) with the logic of how social capital functions. It illuminates how social capital is both an input and an output of preparedness and resilience. It highlights how the activation context contributes to desirable outcomes and the role of the enabling environment in shaping and forming social capital. This illuminates policy implications and tangible actions for actors throughout the system to build social capital.

APPENDIX 2 – THE THREATS TO SOCIAL CAPITAL IN GUERNSEY

Inequality

Inequality in Guernsey is increasingly becoming a significant threat to the island's social capital. It deepens social divides and undermines the traditionally strong sense of community that has long been a hallmark of life on the island. Growing inequality reduces social connectedness as the haves and the have–nots find it increasingly difficult to engage in social interaction. It tends to foster resentment and contribute to alienation among the less privileged, who may feel excluded from the benefits of the island's prosperity. This is exacerbated by the perception they are not being represented in the island's leadership and that not enough is being done to address their concerns.

The impact of this inequality is profound. As economic divides widen, trust within the community erodes, and the collective solidarity that once held the community together weakens. People from different economic backgrounds find it harder to engage in the same social spaces, and they may struggle to relate to each other's experiences. This can lead to a reduction in social interactions and a decline in community engagement. Those who feel marginalised or left behind by the economic system are less likely to participate in community activities and civil society, including charitable ventures, further fragmenting the social fabric.

This fragmentation poses a serious risk to the island's social capital. The shared sense of purpose and collective identity, which has been central to maintaining Guernsey's social capital, is increasingly at risk as inequality grows. When people no longer feel a sense of belonging or shared destiny, they are less likely to invest in the community or in relationships with others. This decline in social capital can lead to a cycle of disconnection and mistrust, making it more difficult for the community to come together to address common challenges.

These issues can be magnified by perceptions that not enough is being done to address inequality and the needs of the poor. This can be further exacerbated by the cultural tendency in Guernsey to focus on negatives and the potential for polarisation, particularly through the use of digital communication technologies, such as Facebook.

Social disconnects/divides

Social disconnects and divides pose a significant threat to social capital in Guernsey, as they create fractures within the community and undermine the sense of cohesion that is essential for maintaining a strong, unified society. These disconnects manifest in various ways, ranging from generational divides to cultural and economic disparities, each contributing to a growing sense of alienation among different segments of the population.

One of the key aspects of social disconnects in Guernsey is the generational divide. Younger residents often feel disconnected from the older generation, who tend to hold more conservative views and are resistant to change. This resistance can create friction, particularly as younger people seek to modernise and adapt the island's culture and practices to better align with contemporary values and global trends. The lack of understanding and communication between generations leads to a weakened sense of community, as the different age groups find it increasingly difficult to relate to each other.

There tends to be social divides between people who are considered locals and newcomers. For many people who move to Guernsey, they feel as though they can never be fully accepted and belong to the community. Even people who have lived in Guernsey for decades and contributed extensively to the economic and social prosperity of the island can feel that their views are

undervalued or invalid in some way because they are not a "true Guern". This creates a social divide and undermines the sense of community and solidarity, which has negative consequences for a range of aspects of social capital, including trust, belonging, identity, and goodwill.

Another key social divide is inequality, which is discussed in another section. As economic disparities increase, there are reduced opportunities and abilities for different income groups to interact and engage in prosocial action with each other.

These social disconnects and divides are compounded by a lack of effective communication and engagement across different segments of the population. Without adequate forums for dialogue and collaboration, misunderstandings and mistrust are likely to grow, further eroding the social capital that has traditionally bound the community together. If these issues are not addressed, the island risks becoming increasingly fragmented, with weakened social cohesion and a diminished capacity to collectively address common challenges.

Generational divides

Generational divides in Guernsey present a significant threat to social capital, as they contribute to a growing disconnect between different age groups within the community. These divides are characterised by differences in values, priorities, and approaches to change, which can create friction and reduce the sense of cohesion that is essential for a strong and unified society.

The older generation in Guernsey is often seen as more conservative and resistant to change, holding onto traditional values and practices. They tend to prioritise maintenance of the "good old days" and do not want to risk changes that may undermine Guernsey's unique culture. This is at odds with many younger people who increasingly find the status quo not working for them. Older residents, who may have benefited from a more stable and prosperous economy in the past, often have different expectations and levels of security compared to younger people, who face challenges such as higher living costs, job insecurity, and the need to adapt to a rapidly changing world. These differing experiences can lead to misunderstandings and a lack of empathy

between the age groups, weakening the bonds that traditionally hold the community together.

Moreover, the generational divide can hinder effective communication and collaboration across age groups. Younger people may feel that their voices are not heard or valued by the older generation, who are perceived to dominate leadership roles and have an unequal influence on politics in Guernsey. Many older residents struggle to understand the perspectives and concerns of the younger population. This lack of communication can prevent the community from coming together to address shared challenges, thereby weakening social capital.

If left unaddressed, these generational divides could lead to a more fragmented society where mutual understanding and cooperation are diminished. To preserve social capital, it is crucial for the community to find ways to bridge these divides, fostering dialogue and collaboration across generations to ensure that all members of society feel connected and valued.

Social isolation

Social isolation poses a significant threat to social capital in Guernsey, as it undermines the strong sense of community and belonging that is essential for a cohesive society. The issue of social isolation in Guernsey is multifaceted, affecting various groups within the population, including the elderly, individuals with mental health challenges, and those living in poverty.

For the elderly, social isolation often results from a combination of factors such as retirement, loss of mobility, and the passing of peers. As older residents become more isolated, they may experience a decline in mental and physical health, which further exacerbates their sense of loneliness. This isolation diminishes their ability to participate in community activities, weakening the intergenerational bonds that are vital for maintaining social capital.

Individuals with mental health challenges also face a heightened risk of social isolation. They may experience or perceive prejudices and may have limited opportunities for suitable social interaction, including suitable social activities and social spaces. Without a strong social network, they may struggle to find the resources and connections

needed to improve their well-being, leading to a cycle of isolation that is hard to break.

Poverty is another significant factor contributing to social isolation in Guernsey. Those living in poverty may be marginalised and excluded from social activities due to financial constraints, limiting their opportunities to interact with others and build meaningful relationships. This economic divide can create a sense of alienation and exclusion, further weakening the social fabric of the community.

The effects of social isolation extend beyond the individuals directly affected. When large segments of the population are disconnected from the community, it erodes the overall sense of trust, cooperation, and mutual support that underpin social capital. This fragmentation can lead to a more divided society, where the bonds that traditionally hold the community together are weakened.

Individualism

Individualism poses a significant threat to social capital in Guernsey, as it challenges the collective spirit and shared responsibilities that have traditionally been the bedrock of the island's community. The rise of individualism can erode the bonds of trust, mutual support, and cooperation that are essential for maintaining a cohesive and resilient society. Many participants described inequality and the increasing cost of living as the primary drivers of individualistic values and priorities.

In Guernsey, individualism manifests in various ways, such as a growing focus on personal success and material wealth, often at the expense of community-oriented values. This shift towards individual priorities can lead to a decrease in community involvement as people become more focused on their own goals and less willing to participate in collective activities or contribute to the common good. As a result, the shared sense of responsibility for one another's wellbeing, which is a key component of social capital, begins to weaken.

The rise of individualism can undermine the traditional support networks that have long been a source of strength in Guernsey. As people become more self-reliant and less dependent on community support, the bonds that tie people together weaken. This erosion of social networks can lead to a decrease in trust and cooperation, making it harder for the community to come together in times of need.

The cultural shift towards individualism also poses a challenge to the transmission of communal values across generations. As younger generations are increasingly influenced by global trends that prioritise individual success, there is a risk that the values of community solidarity, cooperation, and mutual support will be lost. This generational shift can further weaken the social fabric, as the values that have traditionally underpinned social capital in Guernsey become less prominent.

Polarisation

Polarisation in Guernsey represents a significant threat to social capital, as it exacerbates divisions within the community and undermines the unity essential for maintaining a strong and cohesive society and Guernsey's consensus democracy. Political polarisation is particularly concerning, as it leads to a lack of consensus and collaboration on key issues affecting the island. This can further stifle change initiatives, leading to stagnation and exacerbating many of the other threats discussed in this section.

Participants indicated that polarisation is not yet a major problem in Guernsey and is most prevalent on social media platforms. However, there are views that other threats, such as inequality, are contributing to increasing polarisation.

The entrenched positions of different groups create barriers to effective dialogue and decision-making, making it difficult to address the community's needs in a unified manner. This divide is often mirrored in public discourse, where opposing views are not only debated but also demonised, further deepening the rift between different factions of the community.

As people become more entrenched in their views and less willing to engage with those who think differently, opportunities for building understanding and empathy are lost. This lack of empathy further deepens divisions and makes it more challenging to foster the kind of inclusive, cooperative environment that is necessary for

strong social capital.

Addressing the threat of polarisation requires efforts to bridge divides and promote a culture of dialogue and understanding. Encouraging open communication and creating spaces for people with differing views to come together can help to rebuild trust and cooperation. By focusing on common goals and shared values, Guernsey can work towards overcoming polarisation and strengthening the social capital that is vital for its long-term resilience and unity.

Distrust

Distrust is a significant threat to social capital, as it undermines the foundational elements of trust and cooperation that are essential for a cohesive community. In Guernsey, distrust manifests in various areas of society, creating barriers to effective collaboration and eroding the sense of unity that is crucial for maintaining strong social ties.

One of the key areas where distrust is prevalent is in the relationship between the community and its political leaders. There is a widespread perception that politicians are not acting in the best interests of the public, leading to a lack of confidence in the political system. This distrust is exacerbated by a belief that the government is inefficient or corrupt, which further alienates citizens from their leaders and reduces their willingness to engage in civic activities or support collective initiatives.

Distrust also extends to interactions within the community, where individuals and groups may be wary of each other's intentions. This lack of trust hinders the development of strong social networks and reduces the likelihood of people working together to achieve common goals. When individuals do not trust one another, they are less likely to participate in community activities or support social causes, leading to a decline in social cohesion and a weakening of the community's social fabric.

The economic sphere is another area where distrust poses a threat to social capital. Disparities in wealth and access to resources can lead to a perception that the system is unfair, fostering resentment and further eroding trust. This distrust can create divisions within the community, as those who feel disadvantaged may withdraw from social interactions or become less willing to contribute to the collective good.

Social media and public discourse also play a role in perpetuating distrust. Misinformation and negative narratives can spread quickly, fuelling suspicion and deepening divisions within the community. When people are constantly exposed to negative portrayals of others or are led to believe that their leaders and institutions are untrustworthy, it becomes increasingly difficult to rebuild the trust that is essential for a strong and united community.

Addressing the threat of distrust requires concerted efforts to rebuild confidence in institutions and foster greater transparency and accountability. Encouraging open and honest communication between leaders and the public can help to bridge the gap and restore faith in the political system. Additionally, promoting positive social interactions and providing opportunities for people to work together on common projects can help to rebuild trust within the community and strengthen the bonds that hold it together. By tackling the root causes of distrust, Guernsey can work towards preserving and enhancing its social capital, ensuring that it remains a resilient and cohesive society.

Perceptions of non-locals

Perceptions of non-locals and the dynamics associated with newcomers to Guernsey present a threat to social capital. When community members are considered outsiders, this contributes to social divisions and hinders the development of a cohesive and inclusive community. Due to the importance of reputation and the tendency toward risk-aversion, newcomers can sometimes be viewed with suspicion or treated as outsiders, which can lead to their marginalisation within the community. This is more likely to occur in certain employment sectors and for certain ethnic groups. There is a strong sense of local identity and a preference for preserving the traditional social fabric of the island, but it also fosters exclusionary attitudes that can weaken social cohesion.

Non-locals may experience challenges integrating into the community, as they are often seen as not fully belonging to the island. This perception can manifest in various ways, such

as being excluded from social networks, facing barriers to participation in local activities, or being subject to negative stereotypes. The tendency to view non-locals as outsiders creates an "us versus them" mentality, which can prevent the formation of strong social ties between locals and those who move to the island.

This lack of integration not only affects the well-being of non-locals but also undermines the overall social capital of the community, as it limits the diversity of perspectives and the potential for new ideas and collaborations.

To address this threat to social capital, it is essential to foster a more inclusive and welcoming environment for non-locals. Efforts to promote understanding and dialogue between locals and non-locals can help to break down stereotypes and build mutual respect. Encouraging the participation of non-locals in community activities and decision-making processes can also help to integrate them more fully into the social fabric of the island. By embracing diversity and recognising the valuable contributions that non-locals can make, Guernsey can strengthen its social capital and create a more resilient and unified community.

Perceptions of insufficient change

The perception of insufficient change in Guernsey poses a threat to social capital as it fosters frustration, disengagement, and a sense of stagnation within the community. Many residents feel that the island is not adapting quickly enough to the evolving economic, social, and environmental challenges it faces, leading to a growing dissatisfaction with the status quo. This sentiment is particularly strong regarding issues such as economic diversification, infrastructure development, and social services, where there is a widespread belief that necessary reforms are either delayed or not happening at all.

The perceived inaction can erode trust in local institutions, particularly the government, which is often seen as being slow to respond to the needs of the population. When people feel that their concerns are not being addressed or that the pace of change is too slow, they may lose faith in the ability of their leaders to effectively manage the island's future. This distrust can lead to decreased civic participation, as individuals

become disillusioned with the idea that their voices can make a difference, further weakening the social fabric.

Moreover, the perception of insufficient change can deepen social divides, particularly between those who are pushing for progress and those who are more resistant to change. This division can lead to conflicts within the community, where different groups become polarised over the direction in which they believe the island should be heading. The resulting tension can make it more challenging to build consensus on important issues, reducing the community's ability to work together toward common goals.

The frustration over the lack of change also impacts younger generations, who may feel that their future prospects are being limited by the island's reluctance to adapt and evolve. This can result in a sense of disenchantment among younger residents, potentially driving social isolation and disengagement or for them to seek opportunities elsewhere, which further diminishes the island's social capital.

Addressing the perception of insufficient change requires a proactive approach from local leaders to demonstrate that progress is being made and that the community's concerns are being heard. Transparent communication about ongoing efforts and a willingness to involve residents in the decision-making process can help to rebuild trust and foster a more engaged and cohesive community. By showing that change is possible and that it can lead to positive outcomes, Guernsey can strengthen its social capital and ensure that it remains a vibrant and resilient society.

Aging population

The aging population in Guernsey presents a challenge to the continuity of associational membership and active participation in community activities. As the demographic balance shifts towards a higher proportion of older residents, the pool of active volunteers and participants may diminish. While older individuals often bring valuable experience and dedication, their capacity to engage fully in community activities can be limited by physical constraints and reduced energy levels. This natural decline in participation poses a risk to the vitality of community associations,

which rely heavily on active involvement.

Moreover, there is growing concern that younger generations are not sufficiently stepping up to fill the roles vacated by aging volunteers. This reluctance or inability to engage at the same level as their predecessors creates a potential gap in community support and participation. Without a steady influx of younger volunteers, many associations may struggle to maintain their activities, leading to a weakening of community bonds and a decline in the social capital that is vital for a cohesive society. Participants expressed how many younger people have barriers to participation in the third sector, particularly the increasing cost of living.

This trend highlights the importance of encouraging intergenerational engagement and fostering a culture of volunteerism among younger residents. If this issue is not addressed, the weakening of associational life due to an aging population could have lasting impacts on the social fabric of Guernsey, reducing the community's ability to support its members and address local needs effectively.

Housing licensing system

The nature of the housing licensing system in Guernsey contributes to social fragmentation by fostering a transient workforce, which undermines the development of robust social capital through the inclusion of all residents. Guernsey has challenges in managing migration to the island. However, there are concerns that the current system creates barriers for many newcomers. Many residents, due to the restrictive nature of the licensing system, live on the island temporarily without the security of long-term residency. This sense of instability discourages them from putting down roots and fully engaging in community life, as they often perceive themselves as "permanently temporary."

This transient status prevents deeper social integration, as individuals who lack the assurance of staying on the island are less likely to invest in building lasting relationships or participating in community activities. As a result, the social bonds that are essential for a cohesive and supportive community are weakened. The inability to foster strong, long-term connections among residents erodes the social fabric of Guernsey, making it

challenging to cultivate the trust and cooperation necessary for maintaining a vibrant and engaged society. Ultimately, the housing licensing system threatens to fragment the community, diminishing the island's social capital and its ability to sustain a strong, united population.

A weakening sense of community

A weakening sense of community in Guernsey poses a threat to the island's social capital. As social connections and communal bonds become increasingly strained, the collective identity that has traditionally held the community together begins to erode. This decline in communal spirit is exacerbated by factors such as growing individualism, social isolation, and generational divides, which undermine the shared values and mutual support that are essential for a cohesive society.

The diminishing sense of community leads to a reduction in collective engagement, with fewer people participating in local activities, associations, and volunteer efforts. As participation declines, the structures that support social interaction and cooperation weaken, further eroding the social capital that underpins the community. This lack of engagement not only reduces the sense of belonging among residents but also hampers the community's ability to respond collectively to challenges and opportunities.

Moreover, as the sense of community weakens, trust and solidarity among residents may also diminish, leading to increased social fragmentation and a decline in the overall quality of life. Without a strong sense of community, Guernsey risks losing the social cohesion that has been a defining feature of the island, making it more difficult to maintain the social capital necessary for a thriving, resilient society.

Social skills, social anxiety, and mental health

There are concerns that increasing rates of social anxiety and mental health issues as well as a general decline in social skills, particularly among some youth, presents a threat to social capital in Guernsey. As more individuals struggle with these challenges, their ability to engage in meaningful

social interactions diminishes, leading to weaker community bonds and reduced participation in communal activities. Social skills are fundamental to building and maintaining relationships, fostering trust, and ensuring effective communication within a community. When these skills are lacking, it becomes difficult for individuals to connect with others, collaborate, and contribute to the collective well-being of the community.

Lack of affordable social spaces

The lack of affordable and appropriate social spaces for the diverse population in Guernsey is a threat to the island's social capital as it limits opportunities for community interaction and engagement. Social spaces, such as community centres, affordable cafes, and recreational facilities, are essential for fostering connections among residents, providing venues for social activities, and strengthening communal bonds. When these spaces are unavailable, inaccessible, too costly, or inappropriate for complex needs, it creates barriers to participation, particularly for those from lower-income backgrounds or marginalised groups.

Without accessible social spaces, the ability for diverse groups to come together and engage in shared activities is diminished. This not only hinders the development of new relationships but also weakens existing ones, as people have fewer opportunities to interact outside of their immediate circles. The absence of such spaces can lead to increased social isolation, as residents may have limited options for socialising, leading to a decrease in overall community cohesion.

In the long term, the scarcity of affordable social spaces could erode the social capital that has traditionally held the community together, leading to a more fragmented and less engaged population. Addressing this issue is vital for ensuring that all residents have the opportunity to participate fully in the social and communal life of Guernsey.

Increasing costs and cost of living pressures

Increasing costs and cost of living pressures in Guernsey can reduce social interaction, exacerbate economic disparities and strain community bonds. Financial pressures can limit residents' ability to participate in social activities, reducing opportunities for interaction and weakening community ties. As people become more focused on managing their economic survival, they may have less time and energy to engage in communal activities, diminishing the richness of social interactions that help people stay connected.

Rising costs pose a threat to the availability and quality of suitable social spaces in Guernsey. The high cost of living affects the affordability of maintaining and accessing social spaces, from community centres to recreational facilities. As expenses for utilities, maintenance, and staffing rise, organisations that manage these spaces may struggle to keep them open or be forced to increase usage fees. This can make social spaces less accessible to residents, particularly those with limited financial resources, exacerbating social inequalities and reducing opportunities for community engagement.

Reduced volunteerism and funding

Reduced volunteerism and funding in Guernsey weaken associational activities, particularly the strength of the charitable sector. Declining participation in volunteer activities has led to fewer people contributing their time and skills to local organisations, charities, and events. This decline not only diminishes the capacity of these organisations to serve the community but also reduces opportunities for people to connect, collaborate, and build trust.

Participants described increasing challenges of securing stable and sustainable funding for community and charitable activities. Many community organisations and charities rely heavily on financial support to sustain their operations and initiatives. As funding decreases, these organisations may struggle to maintain their services, leading to a reduction in the support networks that are vital for community cohesion. Without adequate funding, it becomes increasingly difficult to organise events, provide services, and create spaces where people can come together, all of which are essential for maintaining and building social capital.

This combination of reduced volunteerism

and funding can create a vicious cycle, where the lack of resources and participation leads to weakened community structures, which in turn discourages further engagement and support. Over time, this can result in a more fragmented and disconnected society, with fewer opportunities for individuals to develop the relationships and trust that are the bedrock of social capital. Addressing these challenges is crucial to preserving the social cohesion and resilience of the Guernsey community.

Digital technologies

Digital technologies, while offering many benefits, alter the way people interact and engage with their community. The increasing reliance on digital communication and social media platforms has led to a decline in face-to-face interactions, which are essential for building trust, understanding, and a strong sense of community. There is a growing risk of isolation and reduced participation in community activities, weakening the bonds that hold the community together. As more people, especially younger generations, engage in digital rather than physical socialising, the demand for physical social spaces may decrease. This shift can result in underutilised community centres and recreational facilities, reducing their viability and leading to potential closures.

Digital technologies can also exacerbate social divisions and contribute to the spread of misinformation. Online platforms often create echo chambers where individuals are exposed primarily to viewpoints that reinforce their existing beliefs, leading to increased polarisation and a fragmented social fabric. The anonymity and distance provided by digital communication can also lead to less civil discourse, with people more likely to engage in negative or harmful behaviour online than they would in person. This shift can undermine the trust and mutual respect that are crucial for strong social capital.

Organisational capacity, particularly quality leadership

Strong organisations and effective leadership are crucial for fostering community engagement, driving collective action, and maintaining the vitality of local organisations. When leadership is weak or lacking in vision, organisations may struggle to inspire participation, manage resources efficiently, or respond effectively to the needs of the community.

The absence of strong leadership can lead to organisational stagnation, where initiatives falter and members become disengaged. This can result in a decline in volunteerism and community involvement, as people may feel that their efforts are not being effectively utilised or that the organisation lacks direction. Additionally, without competent leadership, organisations may fail to adapt to changing circumstances or to innovate, further reducing their relevance and impact.

Poor leadership can exacerbate issues of trust within the community. When leaders are perceived as ineffective, self-serving, or disconnected from the concerns of the community, it can lead to disillusionment and cynicism among members. This erosion of trust undermines the social cohesion necessary for a strong and vibrant community.

The perceived lack of quality leadership in Guernsey threatens the social capital by diminishing community engagement, reducing organisational effectiveness, and eroding trust. Strong leadership is essential for maintaining the health and vitality of political systems and community organisations, which are key to fostering social connections and collective action.

Perceived problems with the legal system

Perceived problems with the legal system in Guernsey can undermine trust and confidence in the rule of law, which are foundational to a cohesive community. When residents feel that the legal system is inaccessible, unfair, or biased, it erodes their trust in societal institutions and the broader community. This distrust can lead to a sense of disenfranchisement and alienation, where individuals feel that they are not adequately protected or represented within the legal framework.

Concerns about the legal system include issues such as high costs, perceived lack of transparency, and the influence of powerful networks, which can disproportionately affect

less affluent residents. These factors can create a perception that justice is not equally available to all, fostering social divisions and reducing the willingness of individuals to engage in community life. When people believe that the legal system does not serve their interests or that it favours certain groups over others, it can lead to resentment and a weakening of social bonds.

The perception of an ineffective or unjust legal system can discourage civic participation and cooperation, as individuals may feel that their efforts to improve the community will be undermined. This can result in lower levels of volunteerism, reduced participation in community organisations, and a general decline in social cohesion.

Naming and shaming practices and cultures

Naming and shaming practices and cultures in Guernsey can foster an environment of fear, mistrust, and social exclusion. These practices can be important forms of social sanctions that encourage people to act appropriately but can also amplify perceptions of reputational risk and reinforce tendencies to avoid engagement and collaboration.

In a small community where anonymity is limited, the public exposure of an individual's or organisation's failings can lead to significant social and professional consequences. Naming and shaming practices can deter people from taking risks or engaging in activities that could potentially lead to public scrutiny, stifling innovation and discouraging active participation in community affairs. The fear of being publicly shamed can also inhibit open communication and the willingness to admit mistakes, which are essential for building and maintaining trust.

The fear of being singled out can lead to increased social anxiety and reluctance to voice opinions or take actions that might be controversial, even if they are in the community's best interest. This stifles open dialogue and reduces the diversity of perspectives, which are essential for healthy community development and problem-solving. Moreover, the practice can deepen social divides, as those who are publicly shamed may feel alienated or rejected by the community, leading to decreased trust and

cooperation among residents.

Distorted perceptions of reputational risk and outcomes

In a close-knit community like Guernsey, where reputation plays a crucial role in both personal and professional wellbeing, the fear of damaging one's reputation can lead to excessive caution and risk aversion. However, participants indicated that the perception of reputational risk and outcomes does not match reality. These distorted perceptions can create a cycle of fear and inaction, where individuals and organisations are more focused on avoiding potential reputational harm than on pursuing collaboration that positively contributes to social capital.

These exaggerated fears can create a culture of conformity, where individuals avoid expressing dissenting opinions or proposing innovative ideas that might challenge the status quo. This stifles creativity and progress, making it difficult for the community to adapt to new challenges or embrace necessary changes. The reluctance to take risks or stand out due to reputational concerns can also hinder collaboration and collective action, as people may be unwilling to associate with initiatives or individuals perceived as controversial. Over time, the focus on reputational risk can create a climate of fear and suspicion, where individuals are more concerned with protecting their image than contributing to the common good.

Addressing these issues requires promoting a more balanced and supportive approach to reputation, where individuals feel safe to take risks, engage in open dialogue, and contribute to the community without undue fear of negative consequences.

Perceptions of changing culture and the role of newcomers

Perceptions of changing culture and the role of newcomers in Guernsey can amplify divisions and foster a sense of unease within the community. As the island experiences demographic shifts with an influx of new residents, long-standing locals may perceive these changes as a threat to their

traditional way of life. This perception can lead to tensions between established residents and newcomers, as well as a reluctance to embrace cultural diversity and new ideas.

The feeling that newcomers may alter or dilute Guernsey's cultural identity can result in social fragmentation, where different groups within the community become isolated from one another. This division can weaken the sense of belonging and shared purpose that are essential for strong social capital. Instead of a unified community, there may be a growing divide between those who wish to preserve the traditional culture and those who represent or support the evolving cultural landscape.

Additionally, not allowing newcomers to integrate into the community can lead to a lack of trust and cooperation between different social groups. This can hinder collective action and reduce the overall cohesion of the community. New residents may feel excluded or unwelcome, which can prevent them from fully participating in community life and contributing to the social capital of the island.

Addressing these perceptions requires fostering inclusivity, open dialogue, and a shared understanding of how cultural change can enrich rather than diminish the community's identity.

An inability to evolve the identity to suit a changing world

An inability to evolve Guernsey's identity to suit a changing world threatens the island's social capital. As global dynamics shift and external influences become more pervasive, there is a growing need for communities to adapt and redefine their identities in ways that embrace both tradition and innovation. In Guernsey, however, there is a strong attachment to traditional values and a reluctance to embrace change, which can lead to social stagnation and a disconnection from the broader world.

When a community clings too tightly to its historical identity without adapting, it risks becoming insular and resistant to necessary changes that could enhance its social, economic, and cultural vitality. The lack of change can

create tensions between different generations and groups within the community. Younger residents and newcomers may feel alienated if they perceive that the island's identity is too rigid and unwelcoming to new perspectives. This can lead to a weakening of social cohesion as various segments of the population become disengaged from the community's shared goals and values.

Addressing this issue requires a balance between preserving cherished traditions and embracing the opportunities that change can bring, ensuring that Guernsey remains a vibrant and inclusive community.

Lack of forums for constructive dialogue

In any community, open and accessible spaces where individuals can express their views, engage in meaningful discussions, and collaborate on solutions are crucial for building trust, fostering understanding, and enhancing social cohesion. In Guernsey, participants identified an absence of such forums. This has led to a communication gap where important issues are not adequately addressed, and diverse perspectives are not fully heard.

Without proper channels for dialogue, frustrations and grievances can fester, leading to increased negativity and a sense of alienation among residents. This can exacerbate divisions within the community, as people may turn to less constructive outlets, such as social media, where discussions can quickly become toxic and polarised. The lack of suitable spaces for debate and consensus-building also hampers the community's ability to address complex challenges collectively, making it more difficult to find common ground and implement effective solutions.

The relative absence of constructive dialogue forums can undermine the development of social trust and mutual respect, as individuals may feel that their voices are not valued or that decisions are made without adequate input from the broader community. This can lead to a weakening of social capital as people become disengaged and less willing to participate in community activities or support collective initiatives.

Addressing this issue requires the creation

and promotion of inclusive spaces where all residents can come together to discuss, deliberate, and collaborate on the issues and where they feel like their views will be heard and respected.

Summary of the main threats to social capital in Guernsey

The threats to social capital in Guernsey are numerous and multifaceted, posing significant risks to the island's strong sense of community and collective wellbeing. One of the primary threats is increasing inequality, which deepens social divides and erodes the trust and solidarity that have traditionally united the community. Economic disparities lead to alienation and reduced social interaction, particularly among those who feel excluded from the island's prosperity. Social disconnects, including generational and cultural divides, further weaken social cohesion as different segments of the population struggle to relate to one another, exacerbating misunderstandings and reducing opportunities for collective action.

Generational divides are particularly concerning, as they create friction between younger and older residents who have differing values and expectations. This disconnect can hinder effective communication and collaboration, making it difficult to address shared challenges. Social isolation, affecting the elderly, those with mental health challenges, and individuals living in poverty, also poses a significant threat. It undermines the strong social networks that are essential for a cohesive society, leading to a more divided and fragmented community.

The rise of individualism in Guernsey is another critical threat, as it challenges the collective spirit and shared responsibilities that have historically been the bedrock of the island's community. As people become more focused on personal success and material wealth, community involvement diminishes, weakening the bonds of trust and cooperation. Polarisation is also a growing concern, as it deepens divisions within the community and stifles the ability to reach consensus on important issues.

Distrust, particularly in local institutions and among community members, further undermines social capital by creating barriers to effective collaboration and reducing the willingness to engage in civic activities. Perceptions of non-

locals as outsiders also contribute to social fragmentation, preventing the formation of strong social ties and limiting the diversity of perspectives within the community. Similarly, the perception of insufficient change fosters frustration and disengagement, deepening social divides and eroding trust in local leadership.

The aging population presents challenges to the continuity of community participation, as older residents' capacity to engage diminishes and younger generations are not sufficiently stepping up to fill the gaps. The housing licensing system exacerbates social fragmentation by creating a transient workforce that struggles to fully integrate into the community, further weakening social bonds. A weakening sense of community, driven by factors such as social isolation and individualism, threatens the collective identity and mutual support that are crucial for social capital.

The lack of affordable social spaces limits opportunities for community interaction, while rising costs and cost of living pressures strain community bonds and reduce participation in social activities. Reduced volunteerism and funding weaken the capacity of local organisations to support community cohesion, and the increasing reliance on digital technologies undermines face-to-face interactions that are vital for building trust and understanding.

Organisational capacity, particularly the quality of leadership, is crucial for fostering community engagement and maintaining the vitality of local organisations. However, poor leadership can lead to organisational stagnation, reduced participation, and a decline in trust. Perceived problems with the legal system, such as inaccessibility and lack of transparency, further erode trust in societal institutions and contribute to social divisions.

Naming and shaming practices, along with distorted perceptions of reputational risk, create a climate of fear and risk aversion, stifling innovation and reducing active participation in community affairs. Finally, perceptions of changing culture and the role of newcomers amplify divisions and foster unease, while an inability to evolve the island's identity to suit a changing world risks social stagnation and disconnection from broader global dynamics. The lack of forums for constructive dialogue exacerbates these issues, as frustrations

and grievances go unaddressed, leading to increased negativity and a weakening of social capital.

Addressing these threats requires proactive efforts to foster inclusivity, open dialogue, and a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing Guernsey. By doing so, the island can strengthen its social capital, ensuring that it remains a cohesive and resilient society.

"Social capital has such widespread resonance because it provides a name for an intuitive, transcultural recognition that we are inherently social beings, and that this has significant consequences for a host of other substantive issues we care about"

MICHAEL WOOLCOCK

THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN GUERNSEY

The key to economic growth and social wellbeing