

East Sussex Population Briefing 1

2021 Census: Headline Findings

- East Sussex recorded a population of 545,800 in the 2021 census, an increase of 19,100 (3.6%) since 2011. With the exception of Wealden (7.5%), all districts in East Sussex registered population growth significantly below the national average (6.6%); Hastings registered the lowest population growth at just 0.9%.
- The census places the population of East Sussex 3.2% lower than the most recent ONS trend-based projection for 2021, and close to the previous mid-year population estimate for 2015.
- The greatest growth occurred in the 70-74 age category, which increased by 46.6% compared to a national average of 36.8%. The greatest decline occurred in the 40-44 age category, which decreased by 19.3% compared to a national average of 7.9% decline.
- The proportion of the population of East Sussex aged 65 and over now stands at 26.1%, up from 22.7% in 2011. Meanwhile, the number of people aged 19 and under fell from 22.1% in 2011 to 20.5% in 2021.
- There were 240,100 households recorded on the census in East Sussex in 2021, an increase of 8,200 (3.6%) since 2011. Most of this increase was in Wealden, where the number of households increased 9% across the decade.

2021 Census: First Release

On 21 March 2021, more than 20 million households across England and Wales (including around 235,000 households in East Sussex) filled in census questionnaires, with a record 89% of responses completed online. The census is a once-in-a-decade survey and provides us with the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales. It has been carried out every decade since 1801, with the notable exception of 1941.

“The census gives us the richest possible picture of society across England and Wales and is hugely important to inform decisions about all of our public services, from education to healthcare, and across the private sector.”

Iain Bell, Deputy National Statistician, Office for National Statistics

Censuses can only ever deliver a snapshot of a population at a specific time, and it is important to keep in mind that the 2021 census took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, and more specifically, during Phase 1 of the UK’s “roadmap out of lockdown”. At a time when many students were still studying remotely - often miles from their university campus - and large numbers of workers were furloughed, there are undoubtedly going to be some anomalies in the results. But this should not detract from the importance of the census in informing where public funding is spent. Data derived from the census helps everyone from central government to local councils plan and fund public services across sectors such as transport, education and health - on cycle routes, schools and GP surgeries, to name but a few.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published the first results from the 2021 Census of England and Wales on 28 June 2021. Further results of the census will be released over the next 12 months, although personal records will be locked away for

100 years, kept safe for future generations. The next set of results is scheduled for release in October 2022.

This first release outlines the estimated population on census day by five-year age band and sex, the number of households, and population density for each Local Authority, with all data rounded to the nearest 100. Future releases will provide unit-level unrounded data providing specific estimates of population at individual level¹. Estimates of response rates for each local area have also been published (98% in East Sussex), with statistical procedures in place to compensate for non-response².

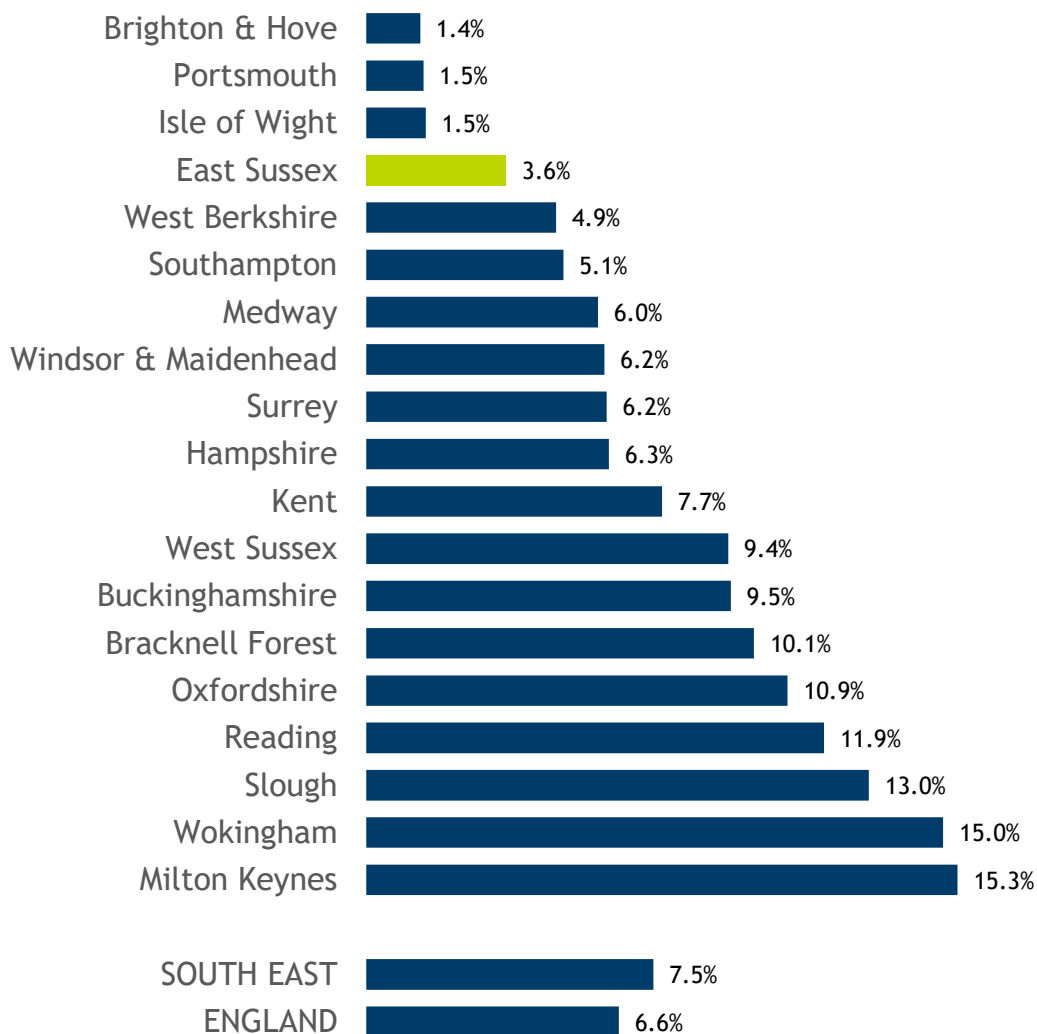
¹ According to the ONS, estimates published during the first release are rounded to the nearest 100 to protect against any changes that might arise from later stages of data processing, such as statistical disclosure control. This ensures that no personal information is disclosed and that no individual can be identified in census results.

² As with any census there will always be a small percentage of people who will have been missed. The ONS uses a statistical imputation method to replace missing values by drawing from a statistical model of the observed data with the aim of accurately estimating the distributional properties of the missing values, thereby enabling them to produce estimates for the whole population.

Population growth

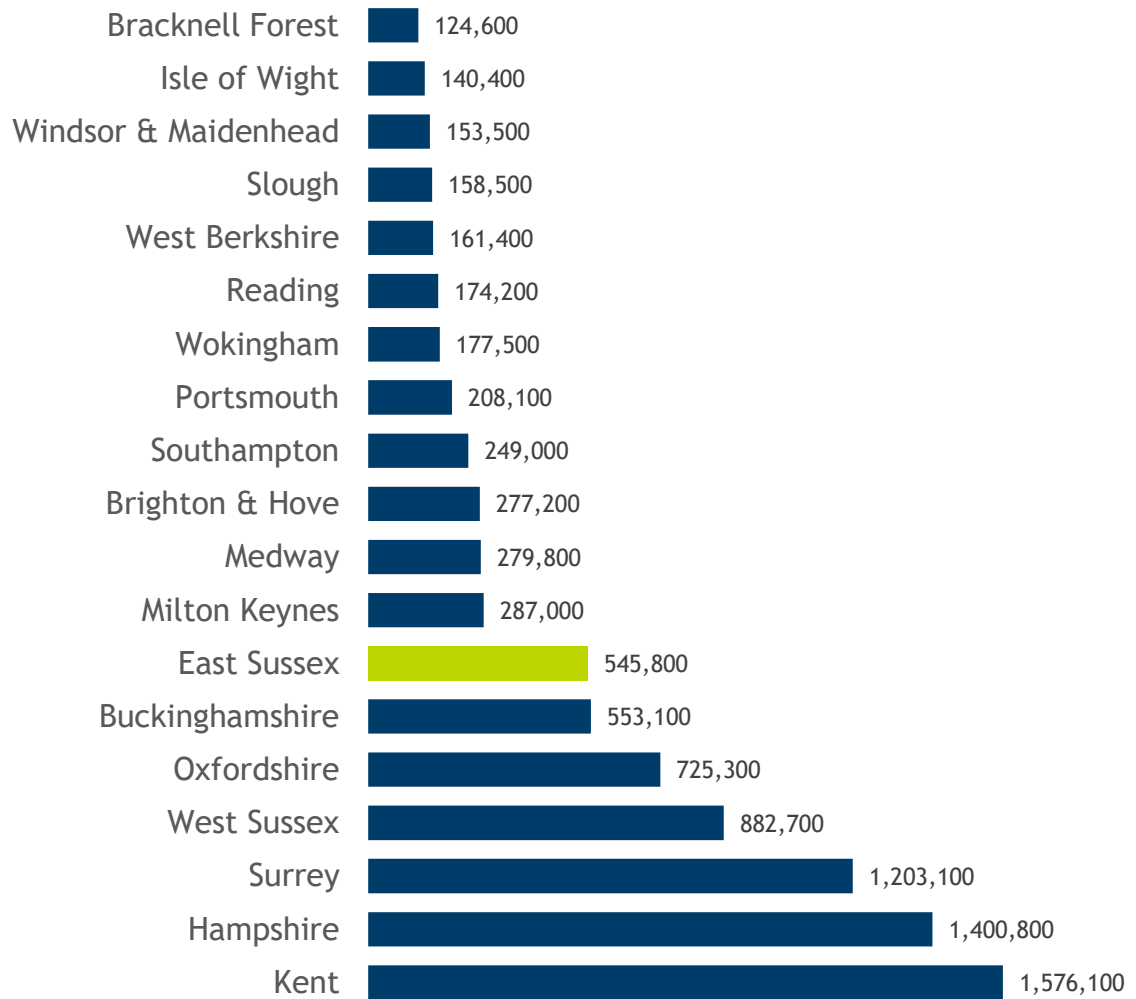
The total population of East Sussex as recorded in the 2021 census was 545,800. The population rose by 19,130 persons in the decade between the 2011 and 2021 censuses, representing a growth rate of 3.6%, which is lower than both the national average for England (6.6%) and the average for the South East (7.5%). In the whole of the South East region, only Brighton and Hove (1.4%), Portsmouth (1.5%) and the Isle of Wight (1.5%) recorded lower population growth than East Sussex.

Population Growth from 2011-2021



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

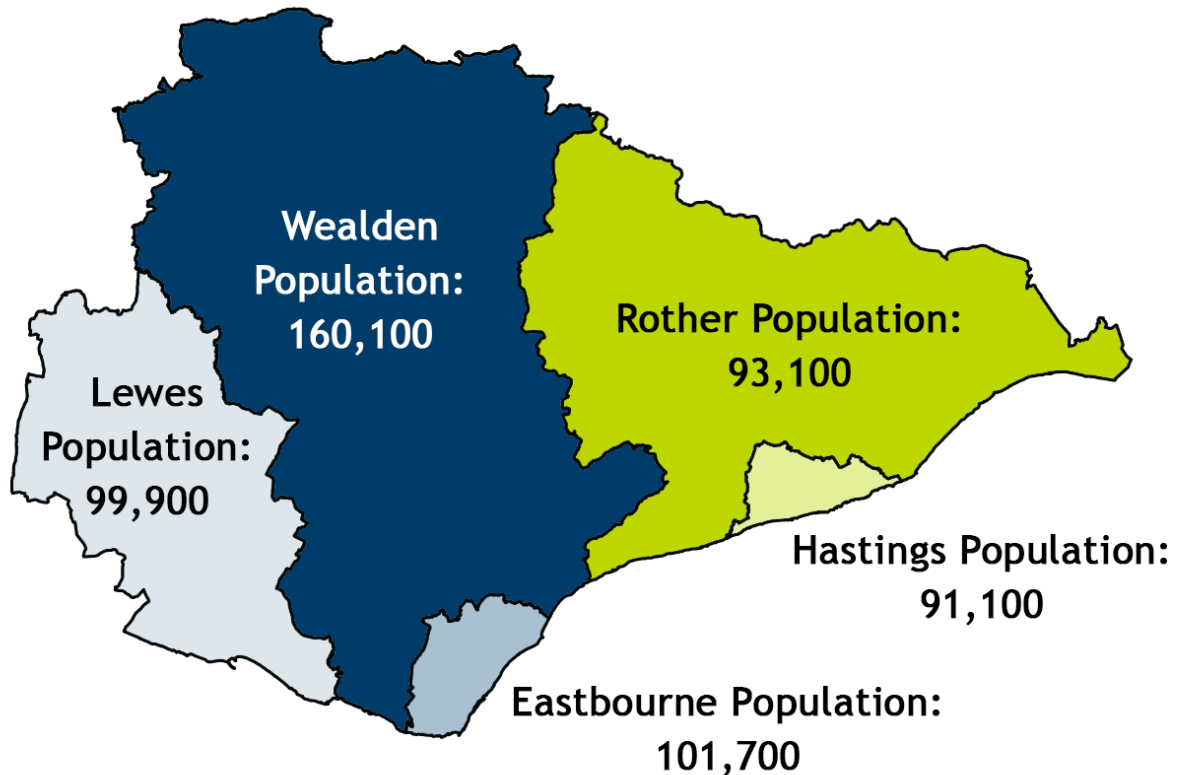
South East Local Authorities by Population



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

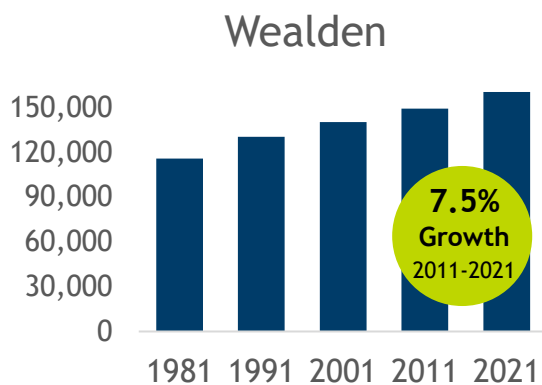
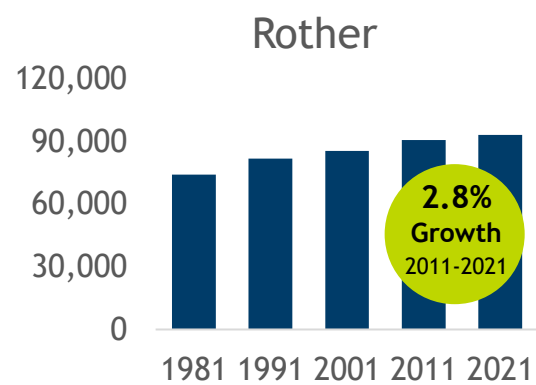
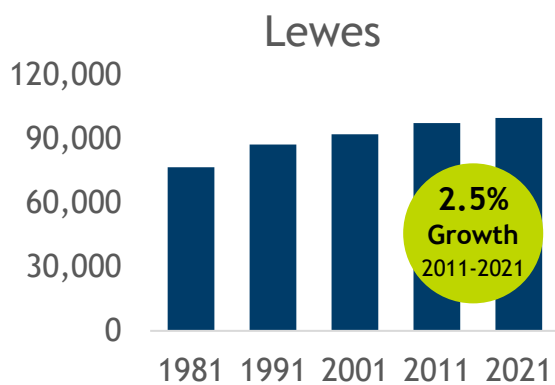
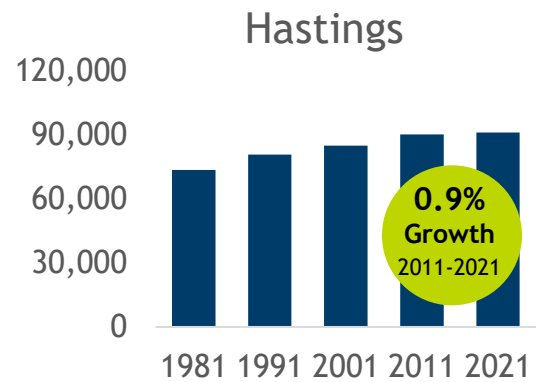
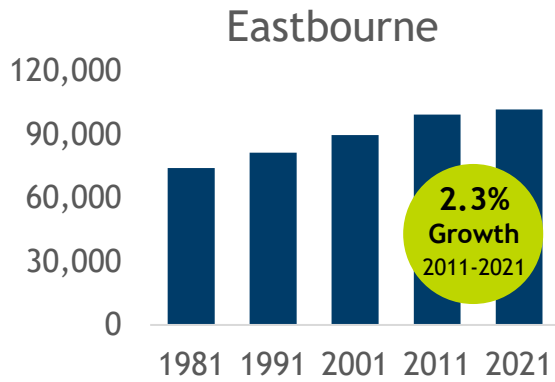
Among the 7 county councils within the South East region, East Sussex has the smallest population.

Population by District



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

Within East Sussex, Wealden grew the most between 2011 and 2021, adding around 11,200 people to their population, which equates to 7.5% growth, in-line with the average for the whole of the South East. Hastings, by contrast, grew by just 0.9%, only adding around 800 people to their population across the decade.



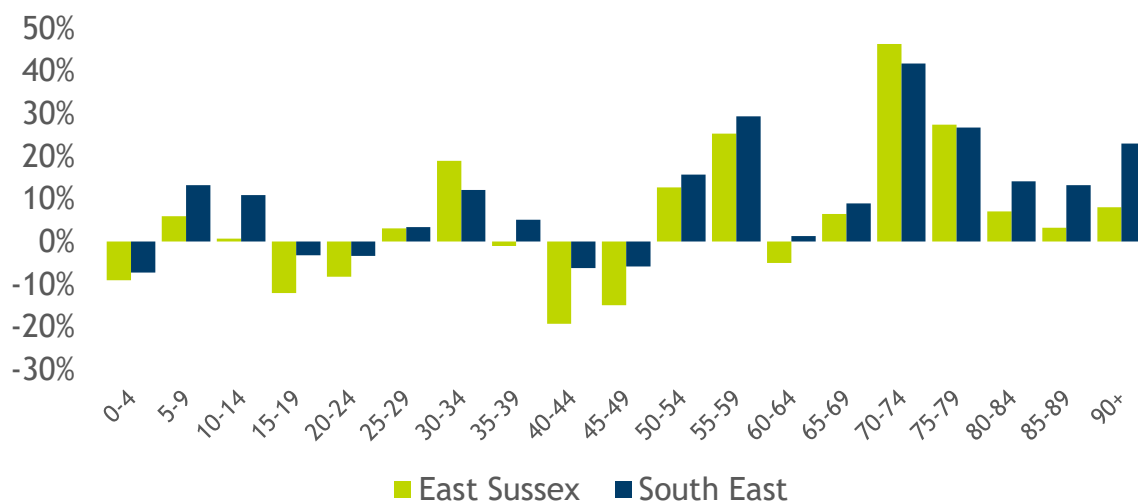
Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

Age structure

East Sussex’s population growth over the decade is concentrated in the 70-79 age group, which grew 37.7% between 2011 and 2021. People in their 70s now account for approximately one in eight (12.3%) of all residents of East Sussex, up from around one in eleven (9.3%) in 2011.

By contrast, the growth in the number of over 85s was relatively small at just 4.7%. This stands in stark contrast to other local authorities within the County Council Network (CCN), which, without exception, all recorded double-digit growth in their number of over 85s (Appendix A).

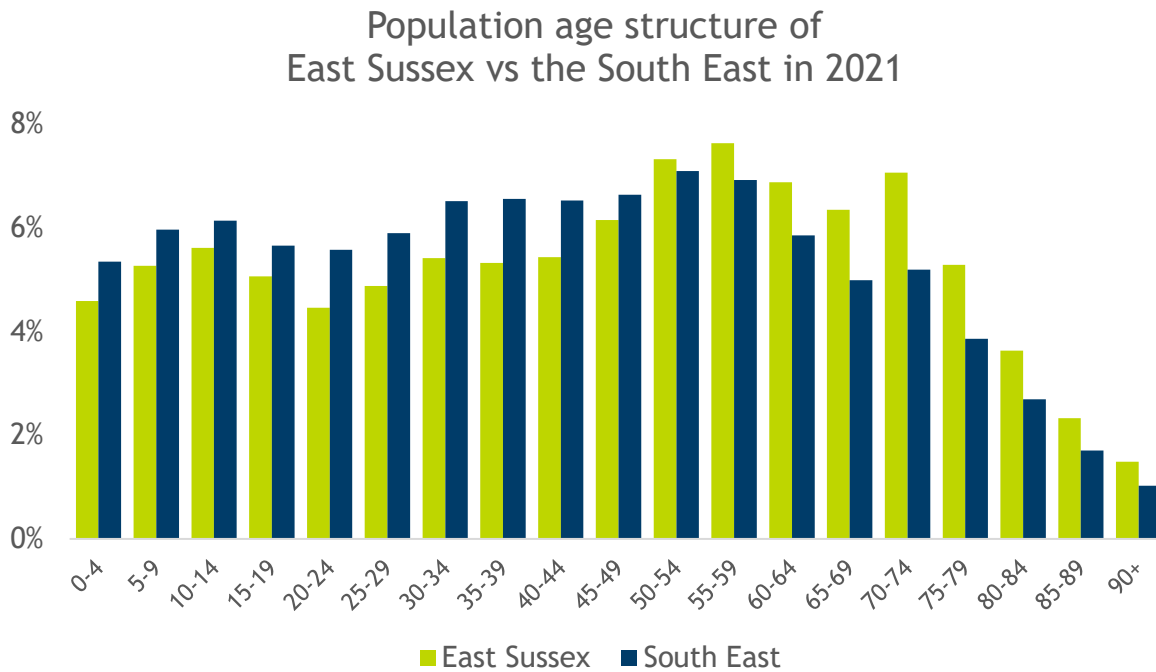
Population growth by 5-year age category for East Sussex vs. the South East 2011-2021



Source:

Office for National Statistics - Census 2021.

The 30-34 age category also saw greater than average growth, growing from 24,800 persons to 29,500 (19.0% growth), while the 15-24 and the 40-49 age categories saw a larger than average decline compared to the rest of the South East, falling by 10.3% and 17.1%, respectively.



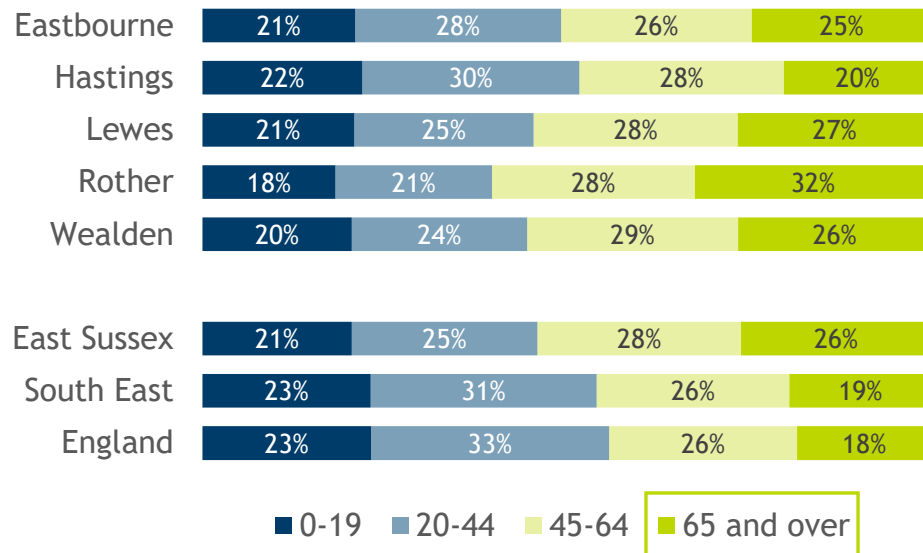
Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

While growth in the over-85s population in East Sussex was comparatively low, this should not detract from the fact that at county/unitary authority level, East Sussex continues to have the second-highest proportion of over-85s in the country, just behind Dorset.

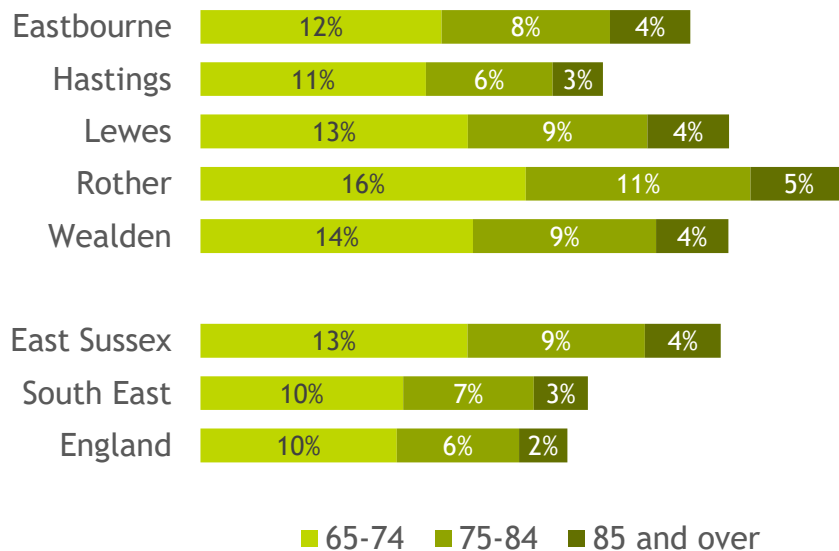
Persons aged 65 and over make up 26.1% of the county’s population, while under-20s account for just 20.5% of the total East Sussex population. 32.4% of Rother residents is aged 65 and over, while just 18.3% is under the age of 20.

Hastings has the youngest population in East Sussex, with just 20.2% of their population aged 65 and over, and 22.0% under the age of 20.

Proportion of Population by Age Range



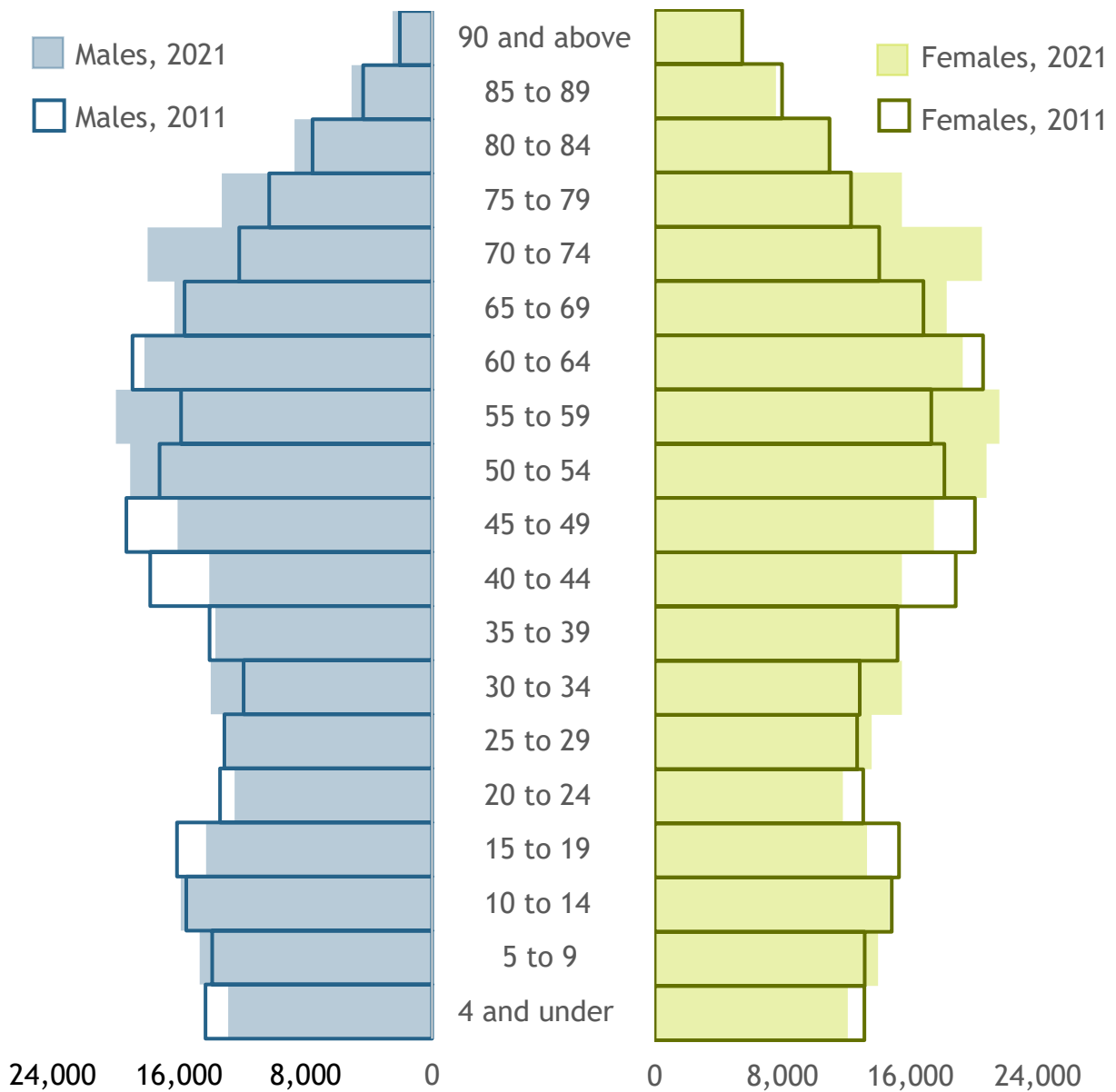
Further Breakdown of 65 and Overs by Age Range



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

Note: Totals may not add up exactly due to data in the first census release being rounded to the nearest 100.

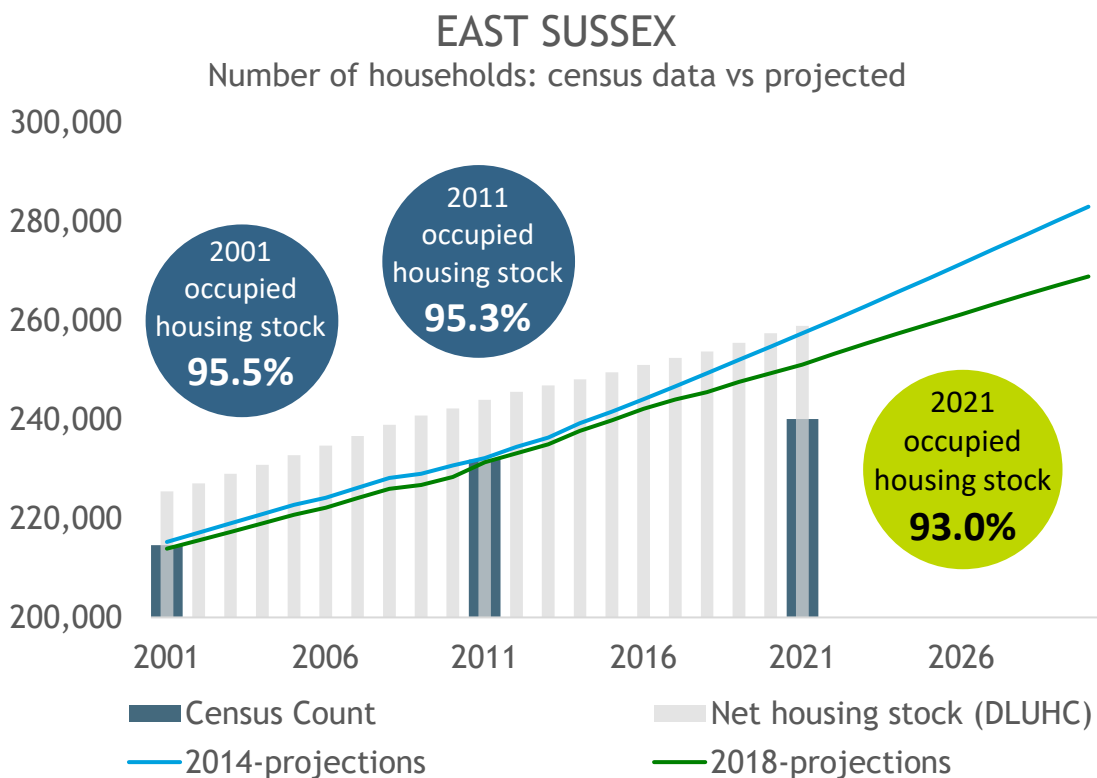
East Sussex Population in 2011 and 2021 by Age and Sex



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

Households

The total number of households recorded in the 2021 census in East Sussex was 240,100 - an increase of 8,200 over the 2011 census. Household growth in East Sussex was lower than the South East as a whole over the decade, at 3.6% vs 7.5% respectively. It also fell short of both the 2014 and 2018 projections of 10.9% and 8.6% growth, respectively.



Source: ONS Census Records; ONS Household Projections; DLUHC Dwelling Stock Live Table 125 (accessed 15/7/22)

The Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) reported 15,000 net additional dwellings were completed over the same period. By comparing census results (which only captures homes occupied on Census Day) with DLUHC data, we can start to see how many dwellings are not people's primary residences, i.e. second homes or empty dwellings.

Overall, 93% of dwellings stock in East Sussex was occupied on Census Day, down from 95% in the previous two censuses, which may be indicative of the increasing number of second homes and Airbnbs that have materialised over the past decade. At district-level, Hastings and Rother showed the greatest change in terms of their primary dwelling to housing stock ratio.

	Total Population in 2021 (census)	2011-2021 Population Growth Rate	Number of Households in 2021 (census)	2011-2021 Household Growth Rate	Net Dwellings Stock (DLUHC) ¹	Primary Dwelling Occupancy Rate ²
Eastbourne	101,700	2.3%	45,600	1.3%	49,355	92.4%
Hastings	91,100	0.9%	40,500	-1.6%	44,647	90.7%
Lewes	99,900	2.5%	43,700	3.6%	46,449	94.1%
Rother	93,100	2.8%	42,100	3.0%	46,024	91.5%
Wealden	160,100	7.5%	68,300	9.0%	71,787	95.1%
EAST SUSSEX	545,800	3.6%	240,100	3.5%	258,262	93.0%

SOUTH EAST	9,278,100	7.5%	3,807,700	7.1%	4,023,442	94.6%
ENGLAND	56,489,800	6.6%	23,436,300	6.2%	24,873,321	94.2%

Source: ONS Census Records; ONS Household Projections; DLUHC Dwelling Stock Live Table 125 (accessed 15/7/22)

¹ The Valuation Office Agency's definition of a dwelling for council tax purposes differs from that used in the census. DLUHC's net additional dwelling statistics and dwelling stock estimates statistics use the census definition that does not include communal dwellings although these are included in the council tax list. For more information, see https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1074409/Dwelling_Stock_Estimates_2021_Technical_Notes.pdf

² Primary dwelling occupancy rate refers to proportion of homes that were occupied at the time of the census, and excludes second homes and holiday rentals that were unoccupied on 21 March 2021.

Note: Census data in the first release of the 2021 results has been rounded to the nearest 100, which can lead to differences in published totals

Population density

Population density in East Sussex in 2021 was 319 persons per km², making it the third most sparsely populated local authority in the South East, behind West Berkshire (229 persons per km²) and Oxfordshire (278 persons per km²).

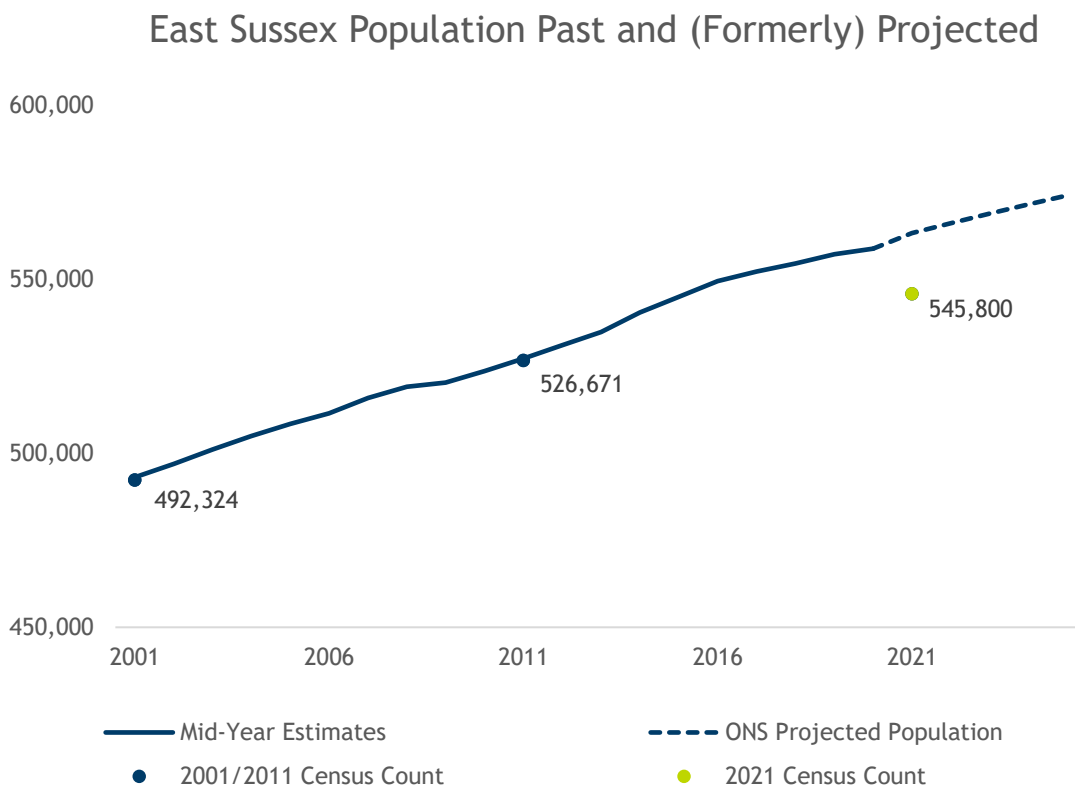
	Number of persons per km ²	Population in 2021
West Berkshire	229	161,400
Oxfordshire	278	725,300
East Sussex	319	545,800
<i>Eastbourne</i>	2,303	101,700
<i>Hastings</i>	3,057	91,100
<i>Lewes</i>	342	99,900
<i>Rother</i>	183	93,100
<i>Wealden</i>	192	160,100
Buckinghamshire	353	553,100
Isle of Wight	370	140,400
Hampshire	381	1,400,800
West Sussex	443	882,700
Kent	445	1,576,100
Surrey	724	1,203,100
Brighton & Hove	3,346	277,200
SOUTH EAST	486	9,278,100
ENGLAND	434	56,489,800

Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

Differences between the census and mid-year population estimates, and the impact of the pandemic

Annual population estimates produced by the ONS provide the basis of much of our understanding of population change between census years. Prior to the census, the most recent official population estimates available were based on the 2020 mid-year estimates released in June 2021.

As can be seen from the chart below, the results of the 2021 census suggest that at 545,800, the population of East Sussex is around 3.2% smaller than anticipated, and closer to the 2015 mid-year estimate of 545,021 than to recent estimates.



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021; ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates and Projections

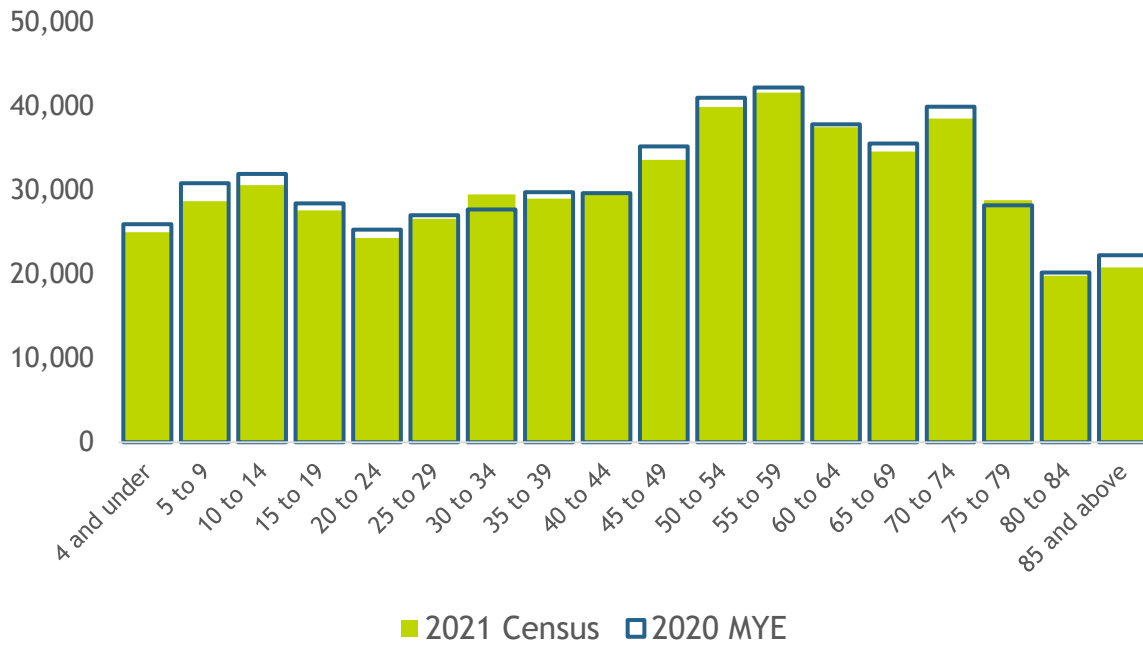
Comparing the results of the census with recent mid-year estimates highlights the difficulties associated with accurately estimating population trends. Both the mid-year estimates and census statistics are estimates rather than counts, and therefore have measures of uncertainty associated with them. This is especially true for the 2021 census, which took place at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and during Phase 1 of the UK's "roadmap out of lockdown".

The census presents a snapshot of a particular moment in time, with respondents required to answer questions based on their current place of residence on Census Day. Nationwide, this will have had a significant impact on census data, with large numbers of university students studying remotely from their family home, people moving temporarily into their second homes or moving in with friends and family etc.

However, while it is tempting to attribute differences between the results of the 2021 census and the 2020 mid-year population estimates to the COVID-19 pandemic, one should be cautious in doing so, with simple comparisons between the two likely to overstate the impact of the pandemic on local population trends. Forecasting population trends is far from an exact science, and it would be highly unusual for the census data to mirror the previous mid-year's estimate, even in the absence of a pandemic. The results of the 2021 Census supersede previous estimates of the size and age structure of the population, and we can expect to see revised figures for the mid-year population estimates for the period 2012-2020 being released by the ONS later in the year, so that the data aligns and is consistent with the 2011 and 2021 census results.

Two areas where the mid-year estimates appear to deviate from the results of the 2021 census are in the number of children aged 0-9, as well as the number of over-85s. While the smaller number of over-85s may in part be due to excess deaths caused by the pandemic, the explanation behind the smaller number of 0-9 year olds is likely to be due in part to how the mid-year estimates have been calculated in recent years. Further analysis will be conducted later in the year once more detailed census data becomes available.

Differences between the 2021 Census and ONS 2020 Mid-Year Population Estimates for East Sussex by Age



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021; ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates

Census response rates

Census response is the number of people who returned a census form as a proportion of the total population. In East Sussex, the response rate was 98%, with the highest rates in Lewes and Rother (both 99%) and the lowest rate in Hastings (97%). This compares favourably with England and Wales as a whole, where the overall response rate according to the ONS was 97%.

Where no responses are registered, data is estimated and imputed by the ONS.

	Response Rate
Eastbourne	98%
Hastings	97%
Lewes	99%
Rother	99%
Wealden	98%
EAST SUSSEX	98%
SOUTH EAST	98%
ENGLAND AND WALES	97%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

Limitations and mitigations

The first results from Census 2021 provide early rounded population and household estimates for England and Wales; figures may not add exactly because of this rounding. Unrounded figures will be released in autumn 2022. Figures may differ slightly in future releases because of the impact of removing rounding and applying further statistical processes. Unrounded historical census data is used for all comparisons with previous censuses.

Census statistics are estimates rather than counts, and therefore have measures of uncertainty associated with them. As with all self-completion questionnaires, some forms will have contained incorrect, incomplete, or missing information about a person or household. While the ONS takes numerous steps to correct and minimise possible sources of error, as described in their [Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#) report, no census is perfect.

Appendix A: Population growth of all local authorities in the County Council Network (CCN) by age from 2011 to 2021

	Total Population Growth (All Ages)	Growth in number of people aged 0-19	Growth in number of people aged 20-44	Growth in number of people aged 45-64	Growth in number of people aged 65-84	Growth in number of people aged 85 and over
Buckinghamshire	9.5%	5.7%	4.9%	9.8%	22.0%	31.1%
Cambridgeshire	9.2%	3.9%	5.1%	9.1%	27.3%	19.7%
Central Bedfordshire	15.7%	11.7%	14.5%	11.2%	32.5%	33.7%
Cheshire East	7.7%	1.4%	2.1%	6.7%	25.2%	23.9%
Cornwall	7.1%	0.9%	1.7%	3.7%	26.6%	15.7%
Cumbria	0.0%	-7.5%	-6.4%	-1.0%	18.6%	15.2%
Derbyshire	3.2%	-5.1%	-3.7%	4.4%	24.5%	12.2%
Devon	8.7%	3.1%	4.4%	4.8%	26.3%	13.4%
Dorset	4.0%	-5.6%	-4.9%	0.9%	25.8%	19.4%
Durham	1.7%	-1.3%	-5.6%	0.4%	20.8%	18.2%
East Riding of Yorkshire	2.4%	-6.6%	-6.6%	-0.4%	26.7%	26.4%
East Sussex	3.6%	-3.8%	-2.8%	3.4%	21.8%	4.7%
Essex	7.9%	4.2%	4.5%	5.8%	21.7%	18.8%
Gloucestershire	8.1%	2.9%	1.7%	7.7%	27.0%	17.5%
Hampshire	6.3%	-0.5%	0.8%	5.7%	24.9%	25.3%
Herefordshire, County of	2.0%	-7.1%	-6.9%	0.8%	24.4%	22.1%
Hertfordshire	7.4%	4.8%	2.2%	10.7%	16.8%	21.2%
Kent	7.7%	2.4%	4.0%	7.5%	23.0%	14.0%
Lancashire	5.5%	1.7%	-0.8%	5.4%	22.2%	15.9%
Leicestershire	9.5%	4.3%	5.1%	6.8%	29.0%	23.6%
Lincolnshire	7.7%	2.8%	3.6%	5.1%	22.3%	18.5%

	Total Population Growth	Growth in number of people aged 0-19	Growth in number of people aged 20-44	Growth in number of people aged 45-64	Growth in number of people aged 65-84	Growth in number of people aged 85 and over
Norfolk	6.8%	0.9%	2.4%	5.2%	21.1%	19.3%
North Northamptonshire	13.5%	8.7%	9.4%	13.1%	32.2%	17.8%
North Yorkshire	2.8%	-5.8%	-6.3%	2.8%	25.7%	19.1%
Northumberland	1.4%	-6.6%	-8.0%	-2.3%	30.0%	21.2%
Nottinghamshire	5.0%	-1.1%	0.4%	3.3%	23.3%	21.7%
Oxfordshire	10.9%	6.4%	6.3%	12.8%	25.2%	24.6%
Shropshire	5.7%	-4.8%	-4.1%	6.6%	29.7%	28.5%
Somerset	7.9%	-0.8%	3.0%	5.2%	28.9%	16.8%
Staffordshire	3.3%	-3.5%	-3.5%	2.7%	23.6%	25.1%
Suffolk	4.4%	-3.6%	-1.8%	4.0%	24.4%	18.2%
Surrey	6.2%	5.0%	-0.4%	8.6%	16.5%	18.2%
Warwickshire	9.4%	5.9%	5.0%	8.1%	23.8%	22.4%
West Northamptonshire	13.5%	8.9%	10.8%	11.9%	32.1%	18.4%
West Sussex	9.4%	5.3%	4.4%	9.5%	22.2%	13.7%
Wiltshire	8.4%	-1.2%	1.6%	9.6%	31.1%	27.1%
Worcestershire	6.6%	1.0%	0.1%	4.5%	27.7%	18.9%
CCN (ALL)	6.7%	1.3%	1.4%	5.9%	24.0%	19.0%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

Appendix B: Population and age breakdown by policy geographies

SOUTH EAST 7 (SE7)	Population in 2021 (All Ages)	Proportion of population aged 0-19	Proportion of population aged 20-44	Proportion of population aged 45-64	Proportion of population aged 65-84	Proportion of population aged 85 and over
Brighton & Hove	277,200	20.5%	39.0%	26.4%	12.1%	2.0%
Medway	279,800	24.9%	33.1%	25.5%	14.6%	1.9%
East Sussex	545,800	20.5%	25.5%	27.9%	22.3%	3.8%
West Sussex	882,700	21.6%	28.6%	27.0%	19.4%	3.4%
Surrey	1,203,100	23.8%	30.2%	27.2%	15.9%	3.0%
Hampshire	1,400,800	22.0%	28.9%	27.4%	18.6%	3.1%
Kent	1,576,100	23.4%	29.9%	26.4%	17.6%	2.7%
SE7 (All)	6,165,500	22.6%	29.7%	27.0%	17.8%	3.0%

SOUTH EAST LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (SELEP)	Population in 2021 (All Ages)	Proportion of population aged 0-19	Proportion of population aged 20-44	Proportion of population aged 45-64	Proportion of population aged 65-84	Proportion of population aged 85 and over
Thurrock	176,000	27.2%	35.1%	24.3%	11.9%	1.6%
Southend-on-Sea	180,700	22.9%	31.5%	26.4%	16.3%	2.8%
Medway	279,800	24.9%	33.1%	25.5%	14.6%	1.9%
East Sussex	545,800	20.5%	25.5%	27.9%	22.3%	3.8%
Essex	1,503,300	22.7%	30.1%	26.5%	17.8%	2.8%
Kent	1,576,100	23.4%	29.9%	26.4%	17.6%	2.7%
SELEP (All)	4,261,700	23.0%	29.9%	26.5%	17.8%	2.8%

TRANSPORT FOR THE SOUTH EAST (TfSE)	Population in 2021 (All Ages)	Proportion of population aged 0-19	Proportion of population aged 20-44	Proportion of population aged 45-64	Proportion of population aged 65-84	Proportion of population aged 85 and over
Bracknell Forest	124,600	24.2%	34.1%	26.6%	13.2%	1.8%
Isle of Wight	140,400	18.5%	24.0%	28.3%	25.5%	3.8%
Windsor & Maidenhead	153,500	23.9%	29.8%	27.9%	15.7%	2.7%
Slough	158,500	29.8%	38.3%	22.2%	8.5%	1.2%
West Berkshire	161,400	23.4%	28.6%	28.4%	17.1%	2.5%
Reading	174,200	24.1%	41.5%	22.3%	10.3%	1.7%
Wokingham	177,500	25.2%	30.8%	26.8%	14.8%	2.4%
Portsmouth	208,100	23.8%	37.9%	23.5%	12.7%	2.0%
Southampton	249,000	23.6%	40.9%	21.7%	11.9%	1.8%
Brighton & Hove	277,200	20.5%	39.0%	26.4%	12.1%	2.0%
Medway	279,800	24.9%	33.1%	25.5%	14.6%	1.9%
East Sussex	545,800	20.5%	25.5%	27.9%	22.3%	3.8%
West Sussex	882,700	21.6%	28.6%	27.0%	19.4%	3.4%
Surrey	1,203,100	23.8%	30.2%	27.2%	15.9%	3.0%
Hampshire	1,400,800	22.0%	28.9%	27.4%	18.6%	3.1%
Kent	1,576,100	23.4%	29.9%	26.4%	17.6%	2.7%
TfSE (All)	7,712,700	22.9%	30.7%	26.6%	17.0%	2.8%

Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

Further Information

For more information about the census data visit the [ONS website](#). For queries specifically relating to East Sussex, please contact the Research and Intelligence Team via email at esif@eastsussex.gov.uk.

Data can be found on East Sussex in Figures:

[Population](#)

[Households](#)

[Population Density](#)

The Research and Intelligence Team, Governance Services, provides demographic and socio-economic data, intelligence and insight to support East Sussex County Council and other East Sussex Partners. The Team also manages East Sussex in Figures (ESiF), the Local Information System for East Sussex. ESiF is a web-based information system that contains detailed, up-to-date and reliable information on a very wide range of topics. Visit www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk for more information.