

# East Sussex Labour Market Briefing

## 2021 Census: Headline Findings

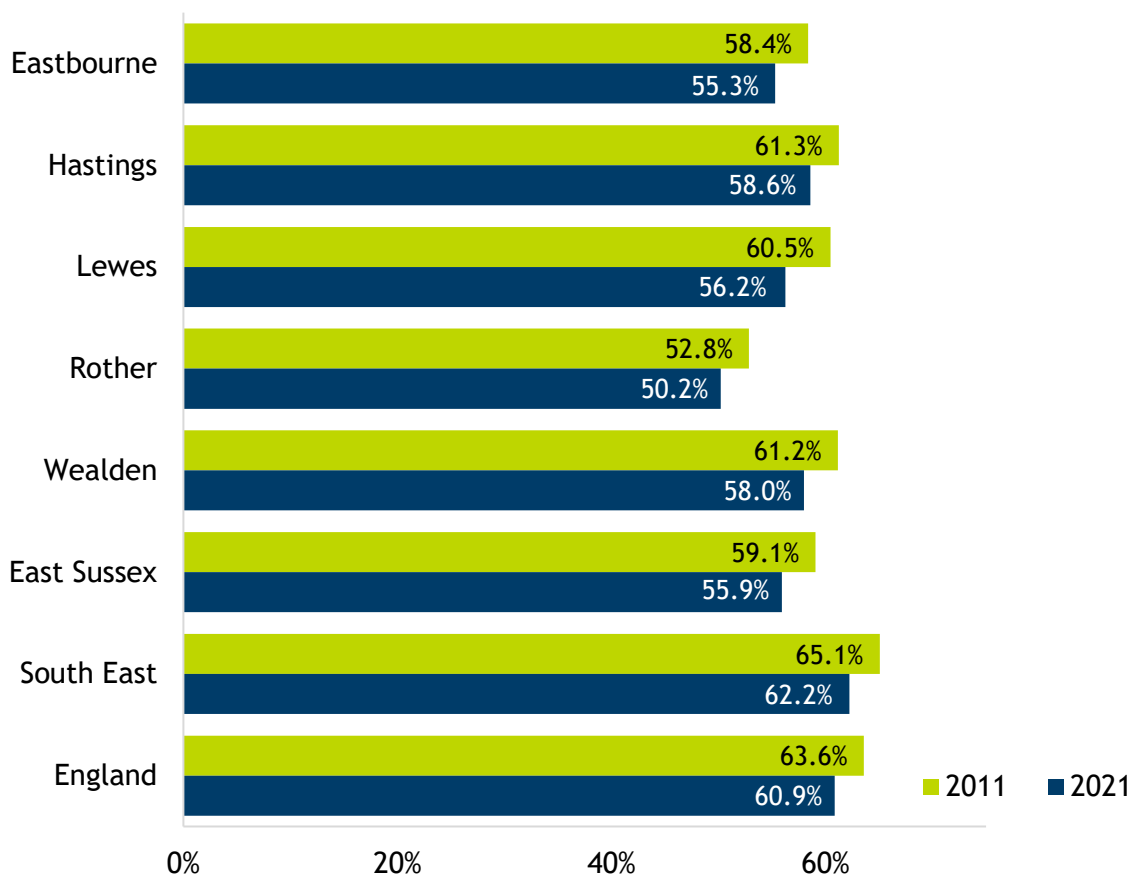
On 8th December 2022, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) released further data from the 2021 Census for England and Wales on the topic of the labour market. The 2021 Census took place during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a period of unparalleled and rapid change; the national lockdown, associated guidance and furlough measures will have affected the labour market topic. Readers are further advised that due to statistical disclosure control measures applied by the ONS and the impact of rounding, there may be small differences between estimated numbers contained in this and other Census briefings and analysis (see [page 19](#) of this briefing for further details).

- In 2021 254,750 people in East Sussex were Economically active (55.9% of all residents aged 16 and over) of whom 241,710 were in Employment (53.0% of all adults aged 16+). This compares with 60.9% of adults in England who were Economically active and 57.4% nationally who were in Employment.
- The county had a higher proportion of people who were self-employed, with 12.5% of adults compared to 9.6% nationally.
- In 2021, 44.1% of the county's adult population were economically inactive, compared to 39.1% in England as a whole. This increased from 40.9% in 2011 (England 36.4%), but part of this increase may reflect the ageing of the population.
- In 2021, people in East Sussex were working fewer hours than in 2011. While the overall number of adults in employment rose by just 0.1%, the number of full-time workers declined by 2.7%; the number of part time workers increased by 5.6%.
- In 2021, the largest sector in the county in terms of employment was Human health and social work, which employed 17.6% of people, up from 15.5% in 2011, whereas the proportion working in Wholesale, retail and motors, which was the largest sector in 2011, fell from 16.0% in 2011 to 14.3% in 2021.

## Economic activity and inactivity

In 2021 there were 254,750 people in East Sussex who were economically active (55.9% of all residents aged 16 and over) of whom 241,710 were in employment (53.0% of all adults aged 16+). This compares with 60.9% of adults in England who were economically active and 57.4% nationally who were in employment. Economic activity rates in the county were lower than the national average in all districts.

Percentage of all people aged 16+ who were economically active in 2011 vs 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

There were 2,470 fewer economically active adults in the county than in 2011 (down 1.0%), and 4,870 fewer employees (down 2.6%) compared to 2011. This compares to a national rise in the numbers of economically active people of 2.4% and a rise in Employees of 2.5%. However, there was a tiny increase in the overall numbers of people in employment in the county (up 160 or 0.1% - compared to a national rise of 4.3%), and there was a significant increase - up 5,030 or 9.8% - in the number of self-employed people over the 10 years, but the national increase was steeper with 14.3% more self-employed adults in the country as a whole

Rother has the lowest economic activity rate in the county with only half of all people (50.2%) aged 16 and over being economically active. This may reflect the fact that the district has the oldest age profile - people aged over the state retirement age (now 66) are less likely to be economically active, and 35% of people aged over 16 in Rother are over age 66.

Note that the economically active population included people who were on furlough at the time of Census 2021, who were considered to be temporarily away from work. In East Sussex, HMRC data estimated that 32,100 employees were enrolled on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme at 31 March 2021, while 17,000 self-employed people made a claim to the fourth grant of the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (30 April 2021).

	All people aged 16 and over	Economically active	In employment	Unemployed
Eastbourne	84,570	55.3%	51.8%	3.5%
Hastings	74,700	58.6%	54.7%	3.8%
Lewes	83,220	56.2%	53.5%	2.8%
Rother	79,490	50.2%	47.7%	2.5%
Wealden	133,650	58.0%	55.8%	2.2%
<b>EAST SUSSEX</b>	455,640	55.9%	53.0%	2.9%
SELEP area <sup>1</sup>	3,461,910	60.5%	57.4%	3.1%
South East	7,554,590	62.2%	59.2%	3.0%
England	46,006,960	60.9%	57.4%	3.5%

<sup>1</sup> The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) is a partnership of business, government, education and other groups. It covers the local authority areas of East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock

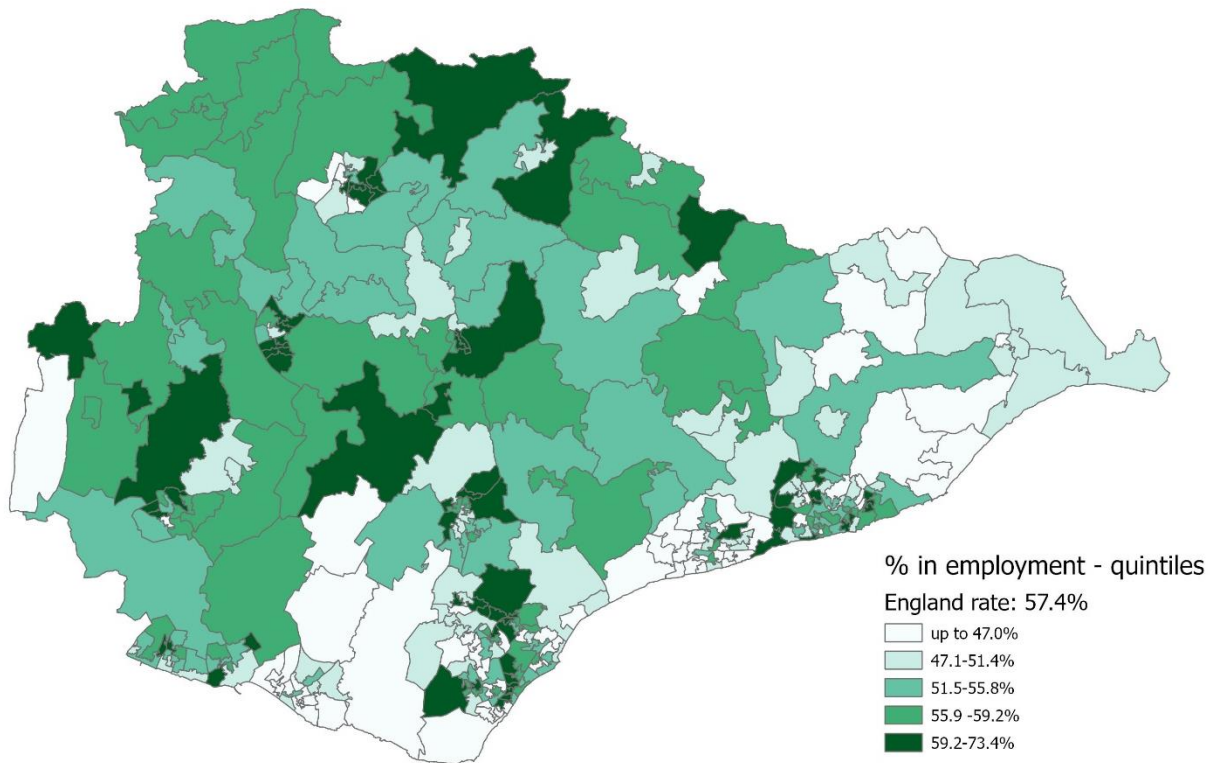
Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

## Employment

In East Sussex in 2021 there were 241,710 people aged 16 and over in employment (53.0%), which compares to 57.4% in the country as a whole. Employment rates were highest in Wealden (55.8%) and lowest in Rother (47.7%), but employment rates in all districts were lower than in England (57.4%) or the South East (59.2%).

The LSOA with the highest employment rate was Wealden 006E (mostly in Crowborough Jarvis Brook ward), where 73.4% of adults were in employment, and the lowest was Eastbourne 012B (in Meads ward) with fewer than a quarter of adults were in employment (23.8%). Detailed LSOA populations by age have not yet been released for the 2021 Census but in the 2020 mid-year estimates, 57% of the population of Eastbourne 012B were aged 65+ which may explain why the employment rate is so low in that LSOA. (see map below).

Percentage of people in employment in 2021, lower layer super output areas



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

### Employees

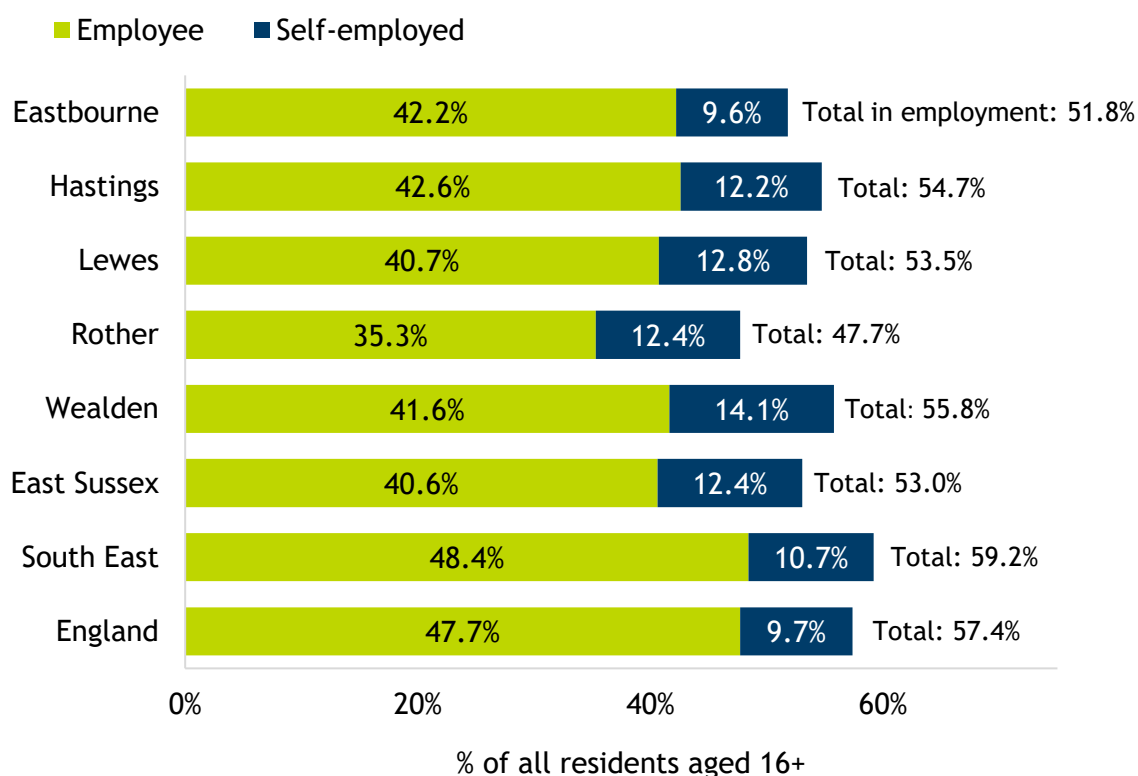
In 2021, 40.6% of people aged 16+ in East Sussex (185,120 people) were employees (i.e. those who did paid work for a private individual, organisation or business), which compares to 47.7% of people in England and 48.4% of people in the South East region. The rate is lowest in Rother where only just over a third (35.3%) of adults are employees, and highest in Hastings (42.6%).

Hastings 001D (mainly in Conquest ward) was the LSOA with the highest rate of adults who were employees (59.3%), and the lowest was Eastbourne 012B, where only 18.5% of adults were employees (see note about population age there on page 3).

## Self-employment

The county had a higher proportion of people who were self-employed, with 12.5% of adults in self-employment, compared to 9.6% nationally. In Wealden 14.1% of people were self-employed and one LSOA, Wealden 014A (in Horam and Punnett's Town ward) had the third highest proportion of adults who were self-employed out of all LSOAs in England, 26.0%.

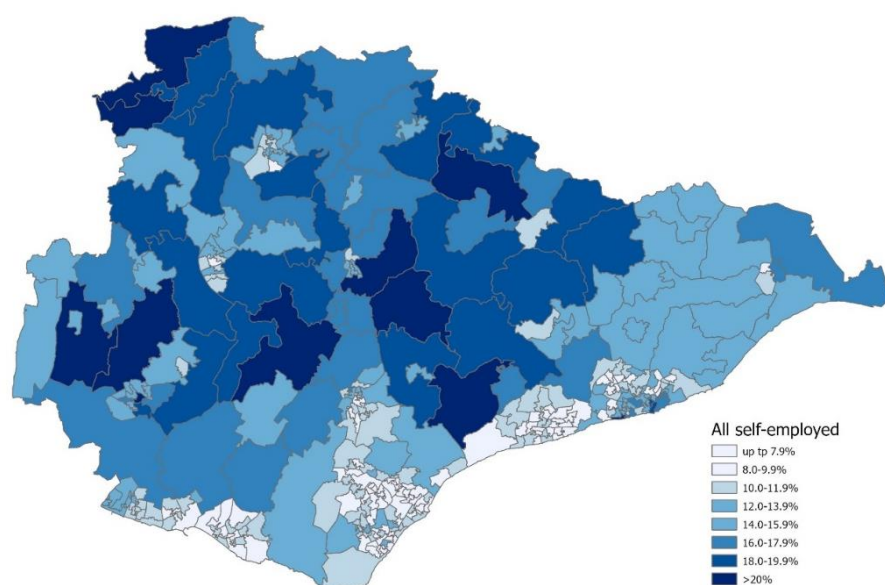
Employees and self-employed in 2021  
(percentage of all people aged 16+)



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

The lowest level of self-employment in the county was seen in Eastbourne, where 9.6% of adults are self-employed, but even here the rate is only slightly below the national average (9.6%).

### Percentage of adults who are self-employed in 2021, by LSOA



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

### Unemployment

In March 2021, 2.9% of all people aged 16 and over were Unemployed in the county, compared to 3.5% nationally. But if we look at unemployment measured by the official International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition (the percentage of economically active people who are unemployed and ready to start work, the ONS monthly quoted 'Unemployment rate'), 5.1% of people were unemployed in East Sussex (5.7% in England and 6.6% in Hastings).

The LSOA with the highest proportion of unemployed adults was Hastings 005D (in Tressell ward) with 8.7%, and the lowest were Lewes 012E (Seaford South ward),

Wealden 021D (Polegate South and Willingdon Watermill ward) and Wealden 014E (Herstmonceux and Pevensy Levels ward) where only 0.9% of adults were Unemployed.

If we look at ILO unemployment at small area level, the LSOA with the highest ILO unemployment in the county was also Hastings 005D (Tressell), where 17.1% of economically active adults were Unemployed. Other areas with high ILO unemployment were Eastbourne 012A (Meads, 13.4%), Hastings 005A (Baird, 13.0%), Hastings 009B (Castle, 11.1%) and Hastings 011A (Central St Leonards, 10.9%).

### **Economically inactive people**

In 2021, 44.1% of the county's adult population were economically inactive, compared to 39.1% in England as a whole. This is up from 40.9% in 2011 (England 36.4%), but part of this increase may reflect the aging of the population.

In Rother, half of all adults were economically inactive (49.8%, the fourth highest of all districts/UAs in England), but in Hastings only 41.4% were.

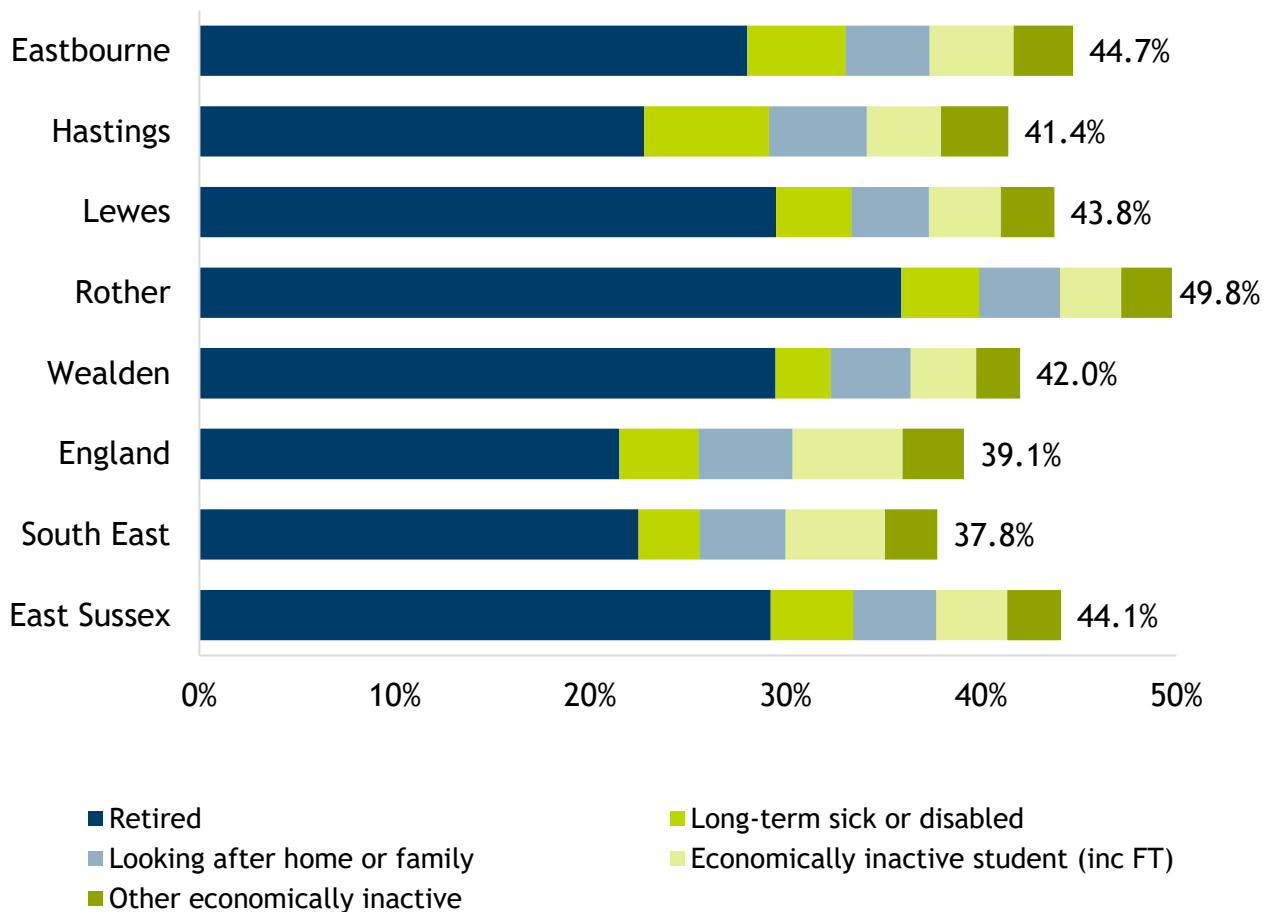
The vast majority of economically inactive adults in the county were retired - 29.2% of all adults (compared to 21.5% nationally). This was highest in Rother where 35.9% of adults were retired (the second highest of all districts/UAs in England). In Hastings, only 22.8% of adults were retired but this is still higher than the national (21.5%) and regional (22.5%) averages.

While 4.2% of adults in the county were inactive because they were long-term sick or disabled, similar to the national average (4.1%), in Hastings 6.4% were inactive for this reason. Hastings was the joint 21st highest district/UA in England and highest in the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) - an area encompassing the local authority areas of East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock. By contrast, just 2.8% of adults in Wealden were economically inactive.



Hastings also had higher than average levels of people inactive because of looking after home and family - 5.0%, although the county as a whole had a slightly lower proportion in this category (4.3%) compared to the national average (4.8%).

### Percentage of adults who are economically inactive by type in 2021

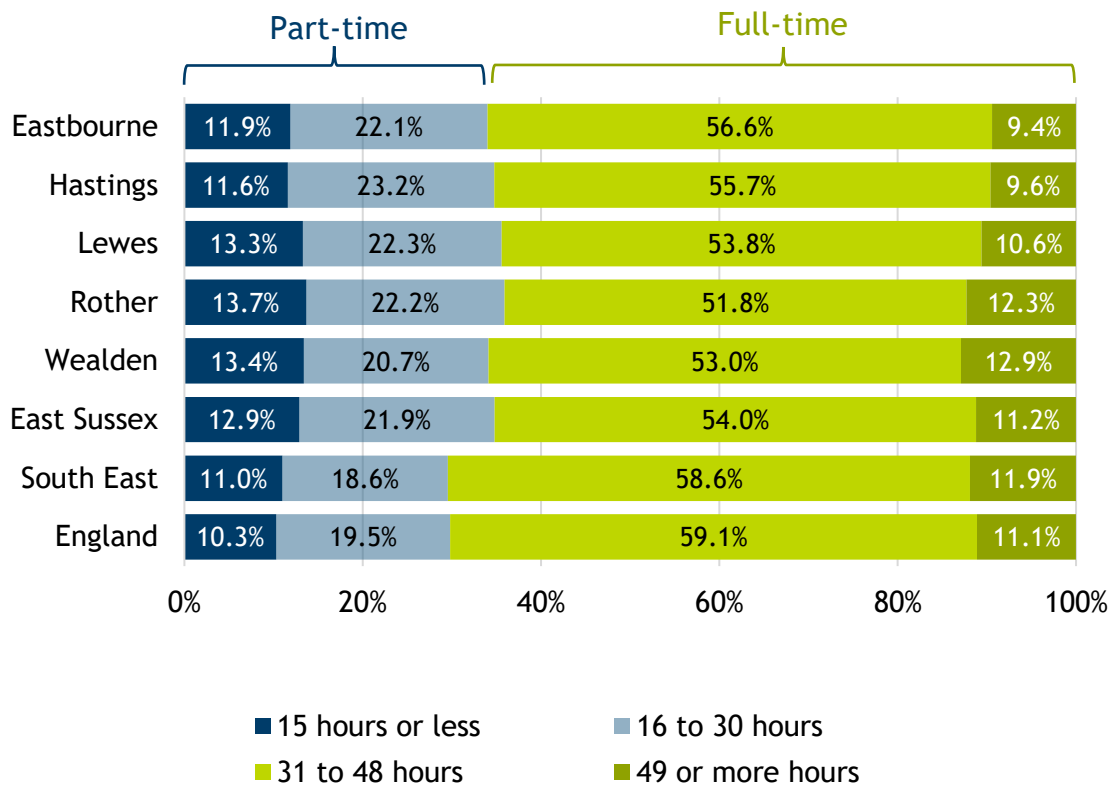


Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

## Hours worked

In 2021, people in East Sussex were working fewer hours than in 2011. While the overall number of adults in employment rose by just 0.1%, the number of full-time workers declined by 2.7%. However, the number of part time workers increased by 5.6%.

Percentage of adults in employment by hours worked in 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

65.2% of employed adults (aged 16+) in the county were working full-time in 2021 (more than 31 hours per week) compared to 70.2% in England. This is down from 2011, when 67.1% of employed adults were classified as full-time (70.8% in England in 2011). Additionally, fewer people in the county were working very long hours (more than 48 hours per week) - 11.2% of adults in 2021, compared to 14.0% in 2011.

It is important to remember that the Census 2021 took place during the Covid 19 pandemic, and that people may have been on furlough or working limited hours from home, or in hospitality industries, for example. This means that the reduction in the number working longer hours maybe be partly due to this, rather than a general move to working less hours.

## Industry of employment

The structure of the labour force has changed since 2011. In 2021 the largest sector in the county in terms of employment was Human Health and Social work, which employed 17.6% of people, up from 15.5% in 2011, whereas the proportion working in Wholesale, Retail and Motors, which was the largest sector in 2011, fell from 16.0% in 2011 to 14.3% in 2021. Once again, the pandemic may be a factor in these changes.

Eastbourne had the highest percentage of employed adults working in the Human Health and Social work sector (21.8%) of all districts/UAs in the country. It also has the highest proportion (3.5%) of people working in the Residential Care sub-sector.

Hastings (2.2%) and Lewes (1.9%) had the highest proportion of people working in the Creative, Arts and Entertainment activities sub-sector outside of the London boroughs and Brighton and Hove.

The sector that grew the most in East Sussex was Information and Communication, where the number of people employed grew by 21.7% between 2011 and 2021, although this sector still only represents 3.6% of overall employment, (up from 2.9% in 2011). (See charts on [page 13](#) and [page 14](#)).

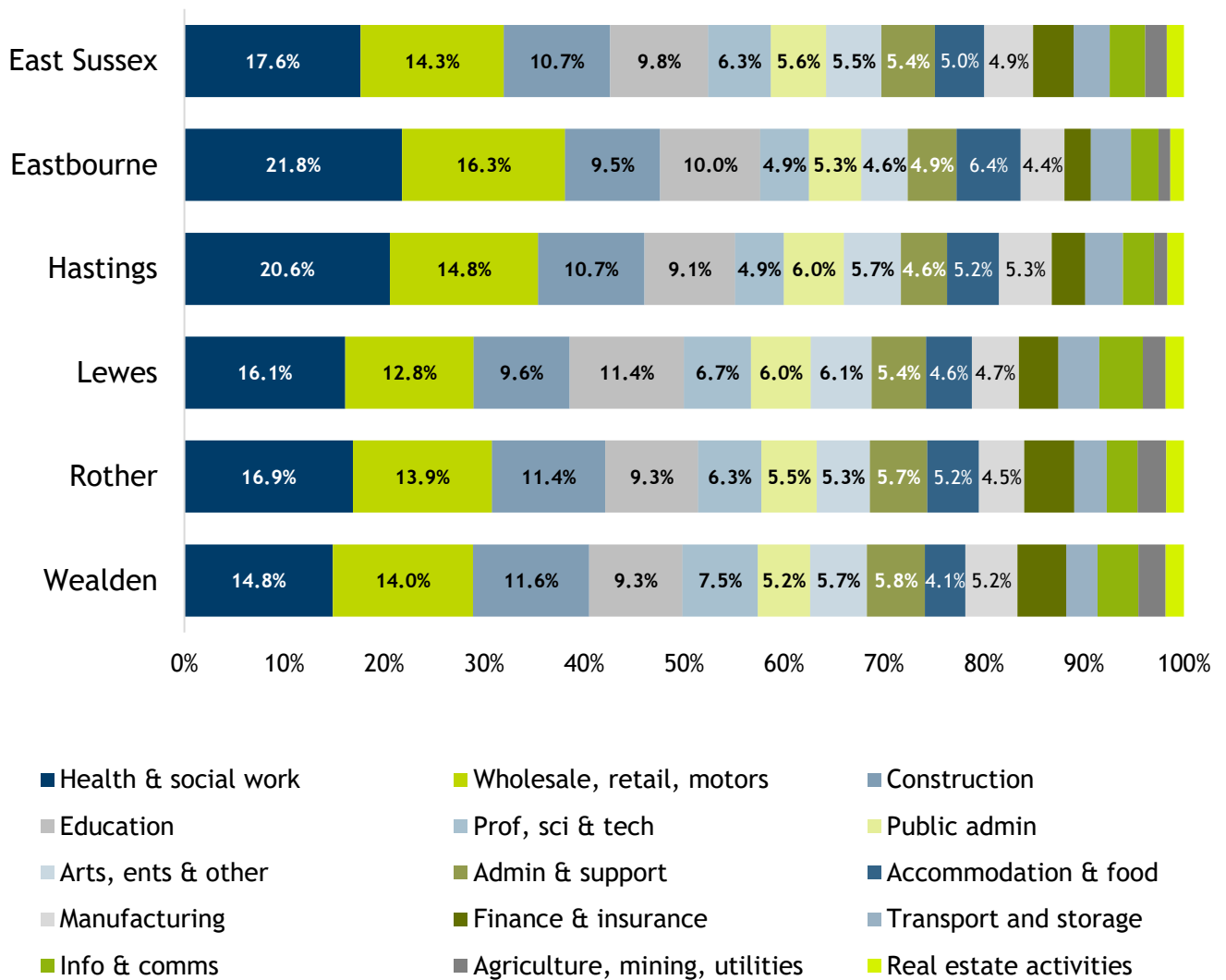
The biggest fall was seen in the manufacturing sector where the number employed declined by 19.9% over the 10 years (a steeper decline than in England where numbers fell by 14.3%). 4.9% were employed in manufacturing in 2021, compared to 6.1% in 2011. The fall in manufacturing was greatest in Lewes, where 25.4% fewer people were employed in manufacturing in 2021 than in 2011.

At small area level (MSOA) some sectors are much larger in some parts of the county than in the country as a whole. Employment in the residential care sector is much higher in parts of the county than the rest of the country. The MSOA Eastbourne 010 (Pier) had the highest percentage of people in this sector in the country at 6.0% with four MSOAs in the county being among the highest 20 MSOAs nationally. Hastings 011 (Central St Leonards) had 5.5% of people employed in the Creative, Arts and Entertainment sector, the highest proportion in the country outside London.

Wealden 017 (Hailsham East) had 7.9% employed in the 'Social work activities without accommodation' sector, among the top 20 in England.

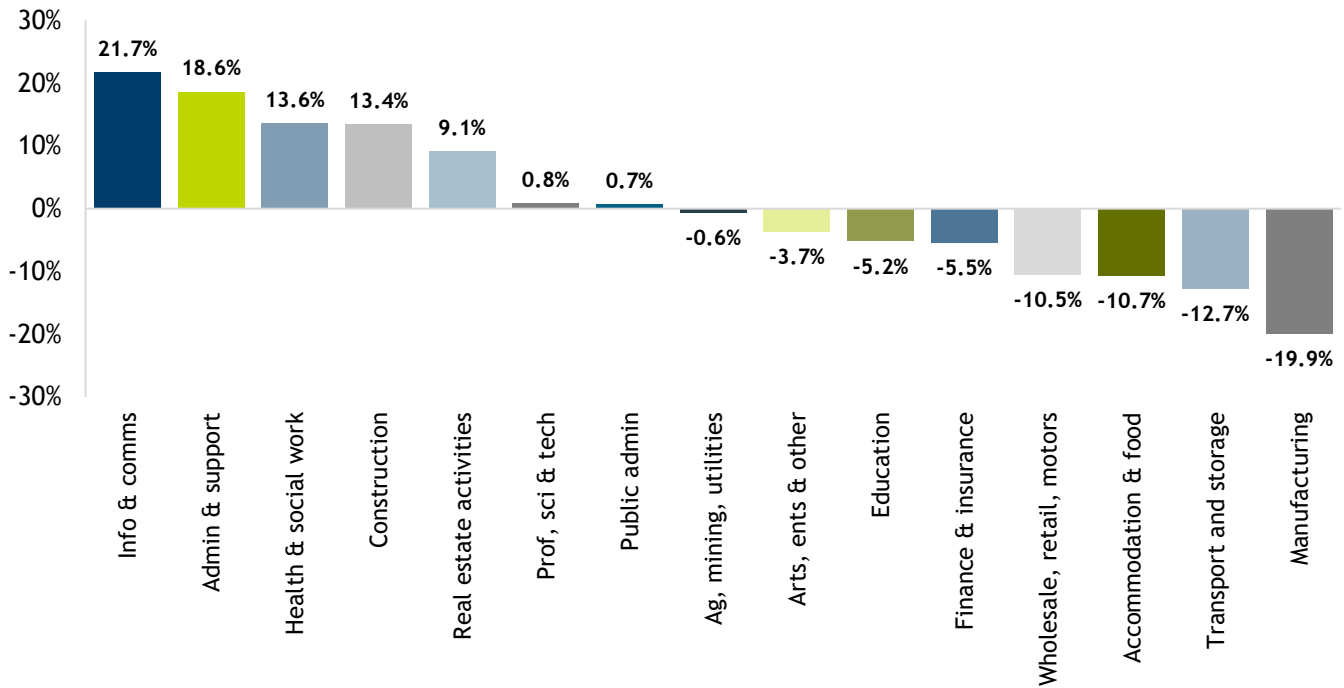
In broad industry sections, more than a quarter of adults in Eastbourne 010 (Pier) and Eastbourne 008 (Upperton) were working in the Human Health and Social Work sector.

Percentage of people working in different industrial sectors in 2021

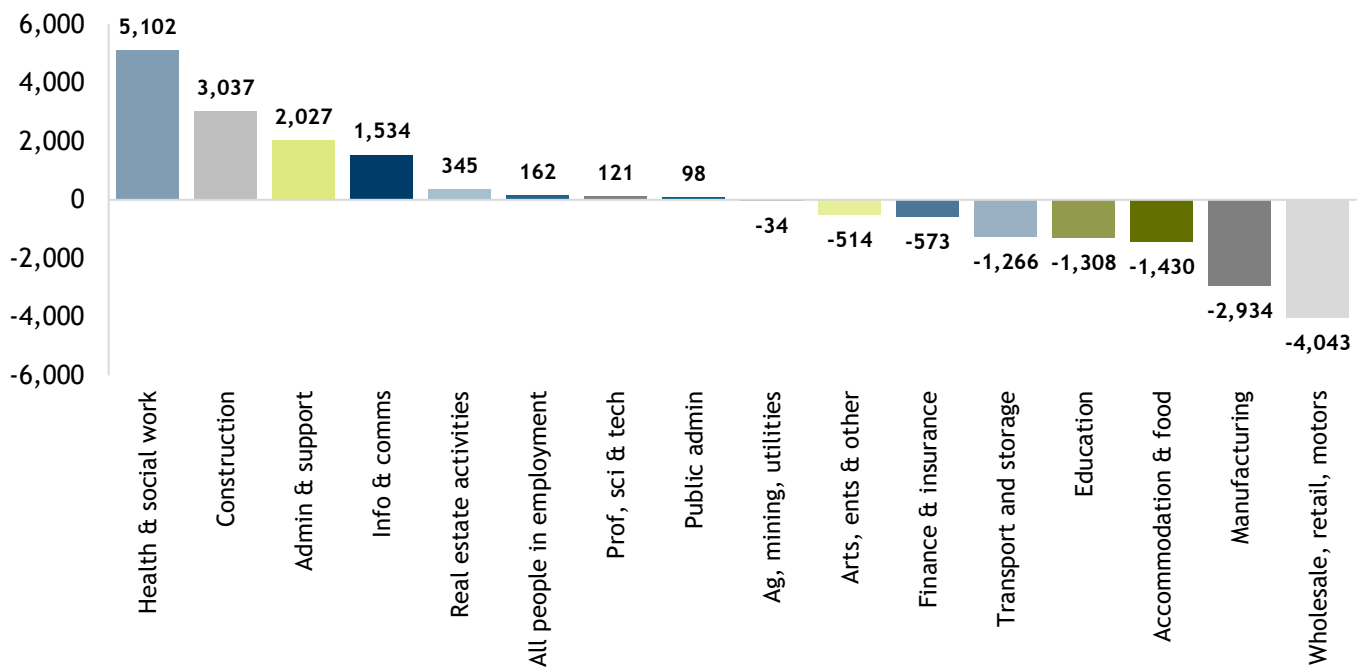


Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

Percentage change in industry of employment in East Sussex, 2011-2021



Actual change in Industry of employment in East Sussex, 2011-2021



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

## Occupations

Note that the categories used to define different occupation groups changed between 2011 and 2021. In 2021, the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 2020 was used whereas the data from 2011 uses SOC 2010, and so is not comparable.

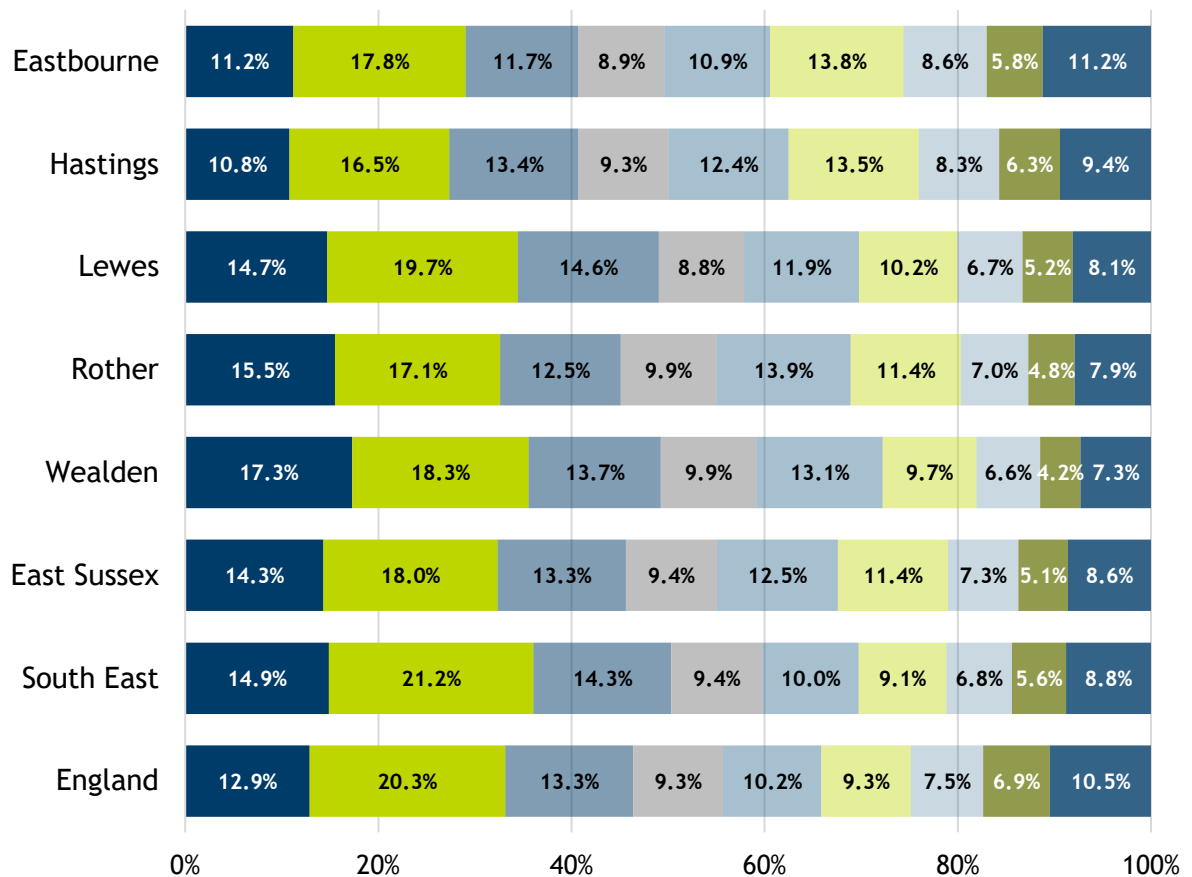
In 2021, 18.0% of people in employment in the county worked in professional occupations, which was the largest occupation group, but this is lower than the England average of 20.3%. 14.3% worked as Managers, directors and senior officials, a higher proportion than the national average (12.9%) in this occupation group.

The county had higher than average proportions of adults working in Skilled trade occupations (12.5% v 10.2% in England), and Caring, leisure and other service occupations (11.4% v 9.3% nationally).

At 17.3% Wealden had a higher than average (12.9%) proportion of adults who were managers, directors and senior officials. Lewes had the highest proportion who were in professional occupations (19.7%), but even this was lower than the national average (20.3%).

11.2% of adults in Eastbourne were in elementary occupations, higher than the national average (10.5%). The ONS defines elementary occupations as jobs that involve "mostly routine tasks, often involving the use of simple hand-held tools and, in some cases, requiring a degree of physical effort". They usually do not require educational qualifications, but will often involve short formal training.

### Percentage of adults in employment in different occupations in 2021



- Managers, directors and senior officials
- Professional occupations
- Associate professional and technical occupations
- Administrative and secretarial occupations
- Skilled trades occupations
- Caring, leisure and other service occupations
- Sales and customer service occupations
- Process, plant and machine operatives
- Elementary occupations

Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021



## Appendix A: Glossary

### Economic activity

People aged 16 years and over are economically active if, between 15 March and 21 March 2021, they were:

- in employment (an employee or self-employed)
- Unemployed, but looking for work and could start within two weeks
- Unemployed, but waiting to start a job that had been offered and accepted

It is a measure of whether or not a person was an active participant in the labour market during this period.

### Employee

An employee is a person aged 16 years and over in employment doing paid work for an individual or organisation. This relates to people's main job or, if not working at the time of the census, their last main job.

### Self-employed

Self-employed people aged 16 years and over who own and operate their own business, professional practice or similar enterprise, including those operated with a partner.

This relates to people's main job or, if not working at the time of the census, their last main job. This can include people who work freelance, which means someone who is self-employed and works (or worked) for different companies on particular pieces of work.

Self-employed people who are not freelance can have employees who work for them.

### Hours worked

The number of hours worked per week before the census includes paid and unpaid overtime. This covers the main job of anyone aged 16 years and over.

### Economically inactive

People are described as economically inactive if they are aged 16 years and over and did not have a job between 15 March to 21 March 2021 and had not looked for work between 22 February to 21 March 2021 or could not start work within two weeks.

The census definition differs from International Labour Organization definition used on the Labour Force Survey, so estimates are not directly comparable.

### **Industry**

Classifies people aged 16 years and over who were in employment between 15 March and 21 March 2021 by the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code that represents their current industry or business.

The SIC code is assigned based on the information provided about a firm or organisation's main activity.

### **Occupation**

Classifies what people aged 16 years and over do as their main job. Their job title or details of activities they do in their job and any supervisory or management responsibilities form this classification. This information is used to code responses to an occupation using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 2020.

It classifies people who were in employment between 15 March and 21 March 2021, by the SOC code that represents their current occupation.

## Limitations and mitigations

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produces census data for a range of different output geographies. This includes census statistics for small areas/neighbourhoods right up to statistics for large administrative units. When added together, detailed census results for smaller areas may not exactly match the same data for larger areas. This is because the ONS uses statistical disclosure control methods which swap very small numbers between areas, and/or add small changes to some counts (cell key perturbation). For example, they might change a count of four to a three or a five, to make sure that it is impossible to identify specific individuals. This means that data for small areas may not sum to the totals for higher geographical levels.

For this reason, in any discussion of the census results, we have chosen to round numbers to the nearest 10. Where percentages have been provided, these are based on unrounded numbers. Tables published in this report and on East Sussex in Figures website contain unrounded data as supplied by the ONS, but come with the caveat that individual numbers and totals may vary slightly between tables depending on the selected output geography, as detailed above.

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.

## Future publications

The ONS will be releasing more detailed data and analysis relating to the labour market over the coming months, alongside the release of multivariate data. This will enable us to delve into the statistics in more detail and look at things such as employment status by age.

## 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](mailto:esif@eastsussex.gov.uk).

Full methodology and definitions can be found in the ONS' publication [Labour market quality information for Census 2021 - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#).

2021 Census data can be found on East Sussex in Figures:

[Economic activity and inactivity](#)

[Industry of employment](#)

[Occupations](#)

[Hours worked](#)

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](http://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk) for more information.

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