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# Child Poverty

## West Sussex Coastal Health Inequalities

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## Key Takeaways

- An estimated 12.9% of children under 16 were living in relative low-income families in West Sussex before housing costs in 2022/23. An estimated 10.2% of children under 16 were living in absolute low-income families in West Sussex before housing costs during the same period.
- Proportion of children under 16 living in relative low-income families in coastal West Sussex was 14.8%, higher than the county (12.9%) and non-coastal areas of West Sussex (12.3%)
- Proportion of children under 16 living in absolute low-income families in coastal West Sussex was 11.6%, higher than non-coastal areas of West Sussex (10.2%) but lower than county (15.6%).
- 24% of coastal LSOAs among areas in West Sussex with the highest proportion (top 20%) of children living in absolute low-income families.

## Background

### What is the definition of child poverty?

In general, the term 'poverty' refers to when people do not have enough resources to meet their minimum household needs (Brown, 2024). In relation to child poverty, a child is living in poverty if they grow up in a household whose income falls below a certain threshold (Corcoran, 2024).

### How is child poverty measured?

In 2020, the children in low-income families' (CiLIF) statistics were introduced with the aim of providing estimates of the number of

children living in low-income families by local area (Francis-Devine, 2024). CiLIF statistics draw data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Registration and Population Interaction Database (RAPID)<sup>1</sup> and provide information on two measures of child poverty: relative and absolute low income (Child Poverty Action Group, 2014; Department for Work and Pensions, 2024).

- **Relative low income** – A family whose equivalised income is below 60% of the median in the reference year.
- **Absolute low income** - a family whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of the 2010/11 median income adjusted for inflation.

These two measures consider all income before housing costs are taken into account (including housing benefit) and after all taxes (including council tax). A family must have claimed one or more of Universal Credit, Tax Credits or Housing Benefit at any point in the year to be classed as low income in the CiLIF statistics (Department for Work & Pensions, 2024).

There are benefits to including both absolute and relative measures of children living in low-income families. Table 1 provides further information of the differences between the two measures and what they tell us.

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<sup>1</sup> The RAPID database provides a view of an individuals' interactions across the DWP, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and local authorities via housing

benefit based on their National Insurance number [Improving international migration statistics using administrative data - Office for National Statistics](#).

*Table 1: Differences between absolute and relative low income*

Measure	What does this measure tell us?
Absolute low income	The measure is useful for tracking changes over time in relation to a fixed reference point and is designed to assess how low incomes are faring with reference to inflation.
Relative low income	This measure is useful for comparing the situation in local areas and measuring the number and proportion of individuals who are currently in low income compared to the current median income.

*Source.* Office for Health Improvement and Disparity (OHID; 2025).

#### Why is measuring child poverty important?

Child poverty is a significant and growing concern within the UK (UNICEF, 2024). In March 2024, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) reported that 3.2 million children lived in relative poverty before housing costs and 4.3 million children after housing costs in 2022/23. However, it is important to note that some communities are more likely to be living in deprivation than others.

By measuring child poverty through measures such as absolute and relative low income, we can increase our knowledge and awareness of the scale of child poverty within the UK (UNICEF, 2017).

#### What data is available?

CiLiF statistics are published annually with the latest data covering the financial year ending 2023. The next release will be in Spring 2025.

## Method

Small area (lower super output area, LSOA) data on the proportion of children living in relative and absolute low-income families were sourced by the children in low-income families' (CiLiF) local area statistics, with current data available up to 2022/23. The count of children refers to the age of the child on 31 March of each year (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2024).

## Results

### Relative Low Income

An estimated 20,300 (12.9%) of children under 16 were living in relative low-income families in West Sussex before housing costs in 2022/23. Nationally, the percentage of children living in relative low-income families before housing costs was higher at 19.8%.

For 2022/23, the proportion of children aged under 16 living in relative low-income families in coastal West Sussex was 14.8%, higher than the county proportion (12.9%). This also exceeds the proportion for non-coastal areas of West Sussex (12.6%). Across the coastal towns, Bognor Regis had the highest proportion of children aged under 16 from relative low-income families (16.9%) and Shoreham-by-Sea had the lowest (13.2%). Worthing had the highest number of children from relative low-income families ( $n = 2,569$ ). See Table 2 for further information.

### Small areas

The proportion of children under 16 living in relative low-income families is plotted for small areas (LSOA) in West Sussex in Figure 2. These were split into 5 equal groups (quintiles). Small areas shown in red are among the 20% of areas in West Sussex with the highest proportion of children under 16 living in relative low-income families.

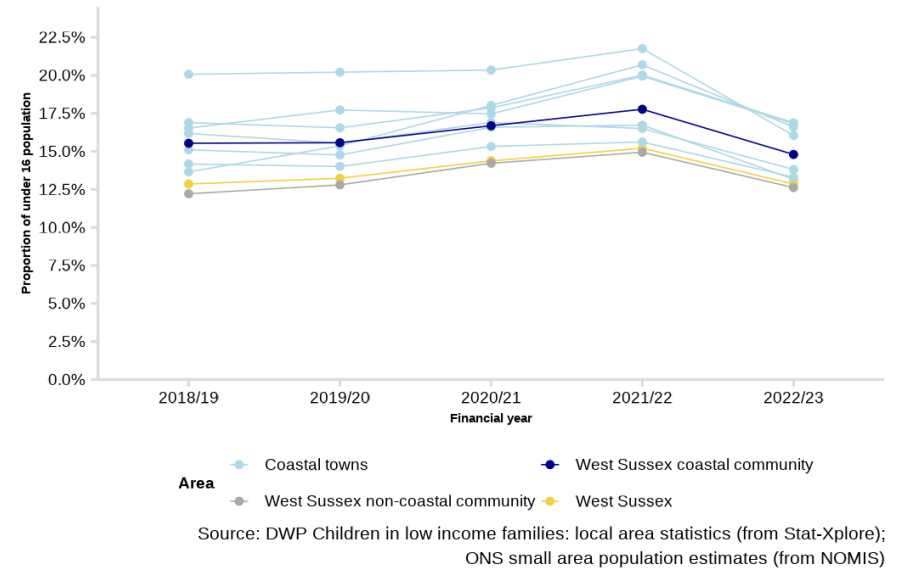
Many of these areas fall among coastal West Sussex, with 26% of coastal LSOAs among areas in West Sussex with the highest proportion (top 20%) of children living in relative low-income families. In non-coastal West Sussex, 18.7% of LSOAs fell within this quintile. More than a quarter of the under 16 population in some small coastal areas of the county were living in relative low-income families (5 LSOAs in Bognor Regis, 4 in Littlehampton, 2 in Worthing and 1 in Shoreham by Sea).

### Trends

Over time, the proportion of children under 16 living in relative low-income families has fallen in coastal West Sussex (Figure 1). In 2018/19, there were around 8,570 children living in relative low income families falling to 8,020 by 2022/23. This has decreased from 15.5% to 14.8% of the under 16 population in coastal West Sussex within the same period, which is lower than the proportion for coastal England (see Appendix A). However, it is important to note that the population of under 16s in coastal West Sussex has decreased by 1.8% from 2018/19 to 2022/23 based on ONS mid-year population estimates. The proportion of children under 16 living in relative low-income decreased across the majority of coastal towns

from 2018/2019 to 2022/23, aside from East Wittering which increased by just under 3% during this time.

*Figure 1: Proportion of children under 16 living in relative low-income families in coastal areas of West Sussex; 2018/19 to 2022/23.*





*Table 2: Number and proportion of children from relative low-income families of population aged under 16, 2022/23*

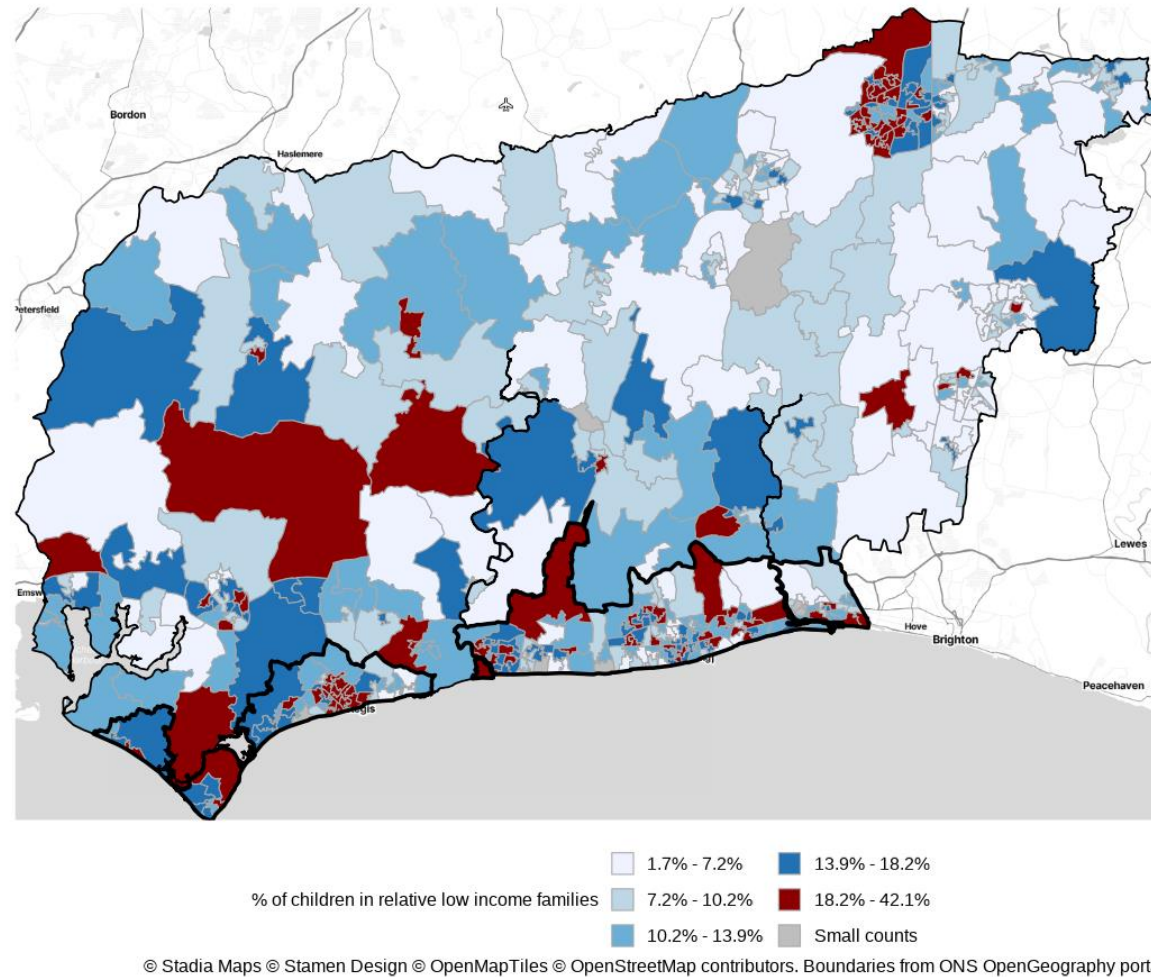
Notes. Counts in areas that contained missing/suppressed data at LSOA level will be incomplete, these are denoted with an \*. Counts may vary from published data and data taken Stat-Xplore at larger geographies. This is due to suppression and disclosure control processes.

Area	Number of children in relative low-income families	Proportion of population under 16s			Versus non-coastal West Sussex	Versus West Sussex	Versus England
		%	LCL	UCL			
Bognor Regis BUA	1,816	16.9%	16.2%	17.6%	Higher	Higher	Lower
East Wittering BUASD	174	16.6%	14.5%	19.0%	Higher	Higher	Lower
Littlehampton BUASD	1,693	16.8%	16.1%	17.6%	Higher	Higher	Lower
Selsey BUA	208	16.0%	14.2%	18.1%	Higher	Higher	Lower
Shoreham-by-Sea BUASD	1,213*	13.2%	12.5%	13.9%	Similar	Similar	Lower
Southwick BUASD	344	13.8%	12.5%	15.2%	Similar	Similar	Lower
Worthing BUASD	2,569	13.3%	12.8%	13.8%	Similar	Similar	Lower
West Sussex coastal community	8,017*	14.8%	14.5%	15.1%	Higher	Higher	Lower
English coastal community	165,886*	20.6%	20.5%	20.7%	Higher	Higher	Higher
West Sussex non-coastal community	9,225*	12.6%	12.4%	12.9%	Not compared	Similar	Lower
English non-coastal community (excluding London)	997,001*	19.5%	19.4%	19.5%	Higher	Higher	Lower
West Sussex	20,268*	12.9%	12.7%	13.0%	Similar	Not compared	Lower
England	2,092,244*	19.8%	19.8%	19.8%	Higher	Higher	Not compared

Source: DWP Stat-Xplore

Figure 2: Proportion of children from relative low-income families amongst under 16s in small areas of West Sussex (2011 Lower Super Output Areas); 2022/23.

Notes. LSOAs are shaded based on the proportion of children from relative low-income families, with data for LSOAs within West Sussex split into 5 equal groups (quintiles). Areas within the top quintile (highest proportion of claims) are shown in red. Data sourced from the DWP. The boundary for Coastal West Sussex is illustrated with a thicker black border.



### *Other characteristics*

Small area (LSOA) breakdowns by other characteristics (e.g. family type, work status etc.) are unavailable due to disclosure control processes. The provisional number (and proportion) of children in relative low-income households by other characteristics have been described for England and lower-tier authorities in West Sussex to provide context.

This section of the briefing will focus on additional information provided by the most recent CiLIF statistics from 2022/23.

### *Family Type*

Family type is defined as either a single adult or a married or cohabitating couple with dependent children. Any changes across the year are accounted for by tracking changes in benefit claims and associated personal income of claimants and their partners (Department for Work and Pensions, 2023).

In 2022/23, 47.5% of children living in relative low-income households in West Sussex were from lone parent families. This is lower than regional (49.8%) and national figures (50.1%).

Arun and Worthing had the highest proportion of children living in relative low-income households from lone parent families (49.6%). Crawley had the highest proportion of children living in relative low-income households with a married or cohabitating couple (57.3%).

### *Work Status*

In-work families are defined as a family where the adult claimant of Child Benefit and any partner(s) have worked for at least 26 weeks (either paid employment or self-employment) within the tax year (Department for Work and Pensions, n.d.).

In 2022/23, 23.7% of children living in relative low-income households in West Sussex were from non-working families. This is lower than regional (26.6%) and national figures (34.3%).

Adur had the highest proportion of children living in relative low-income households with working families (78.2%). Chichester had the highest proportion of children living in relative low-income households with non-working families (26%).

### *Age*

In 2022/23, 27% of children living in relative low-income households in West Sussex were aged 0-4, 7,288 (35.9%) aged 5-10 and 7,527 (37.1%) aged 11-15 years. The proportion of children aged 11-15 was lower than regional (36.2%) and national figures (35.5%).

Crawley had the highest proportion of 0-4s living in relative low-income households in West Sussex across the districts (28.6%), Adur had the highest proportion of 5-10s (36.3%) and Horsham had the highest proportion of 11-15s (38.8%).

### Absolute Low Income

An estimated 16,100 (10.2%) of children aged under 16 were living in absolute low-income families before housing costs in 2022/23. Nationally, the percentage of children living in absolute low-income families before housing costs was higher at 15.6%.

For 2022/23, the proportion of children aged under 16 living in absolute low-income families in coastal West Sussex was 11.6%, higher than the county (10.2%) proportion. This also exceeds the proportion for non-coastal areas of West Sussex (10.1%).

Across the coastal towns, Bognor Regis had the highest proportion of children aged under 16 from absolute low-income families (13.5%) and Shoreham-by-Sea had the lowest (10.2%). Worthing had the highest number of children from absolute low-income families ( $n = 1,998$ ). See Table 3 for further information.

### Small areas

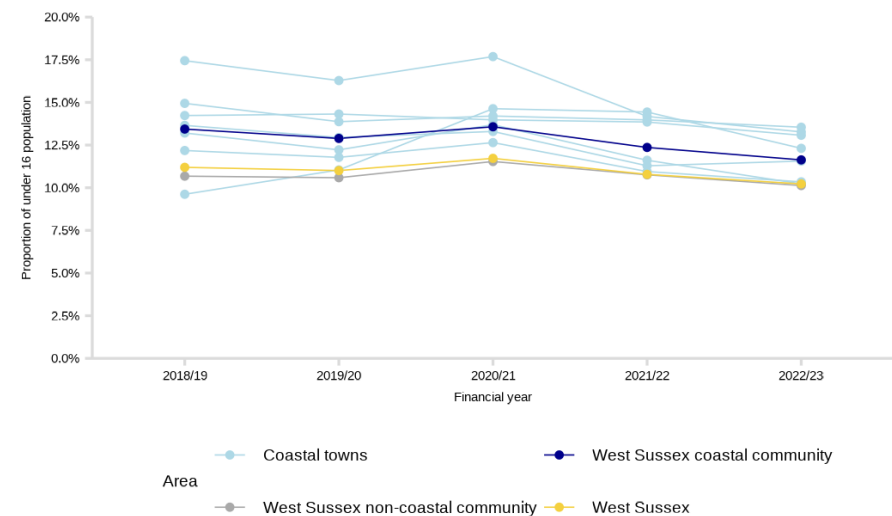
The proportion of children aged under 16 living in absolute low-income families (amongst under 16 population) is plotted for small areas (LSOA) in West Sussex in Figure 4. These were split into 5 equal groups (quintiles). Small areas in red are amongst the 20% of areas in West Sussex with the highest proportion of children aged under 16 living in relative low-income families.

Many of these areas fall among coastal West Sussex, with 24% of coastal LSOAs among areas in West Sussex with the highest proportion (top 20%) of children living in absolute low-income families. In non-coastal West Sussex, 20.6% of LSOAs fell within this quintile. More than a quarter of the under 16 population in some small coastal areas of the county were living in absolute low-income families (3 LSOAs in Bognor Regis, 2 in Littlehampton).

### Trends

Overtime, the proportion of children under 16 living in absolute low-income families has fallen in coastal West Sussex (Figure 3; indicated by the dark blue line). In 2018/19, there were around 7,410 children living in absolute low-income families in coastal West Sussex falling to 6,300 by 2022/23. The proportion of children under 16 living in absolute low-income families during this period has fallen from 13.4% to 11.6%. This is lower than the proportion for coastal England (see Appendix B).

*Figure 3: Proportion of children under 16 living in absolute low-income families in coastal areas of West Sussex; 2018/19 to 2022/23*



Source: DWP Children in low income families: local area statistics (from Stat-Xplore); ONS small area population estimates (from NOMIS)



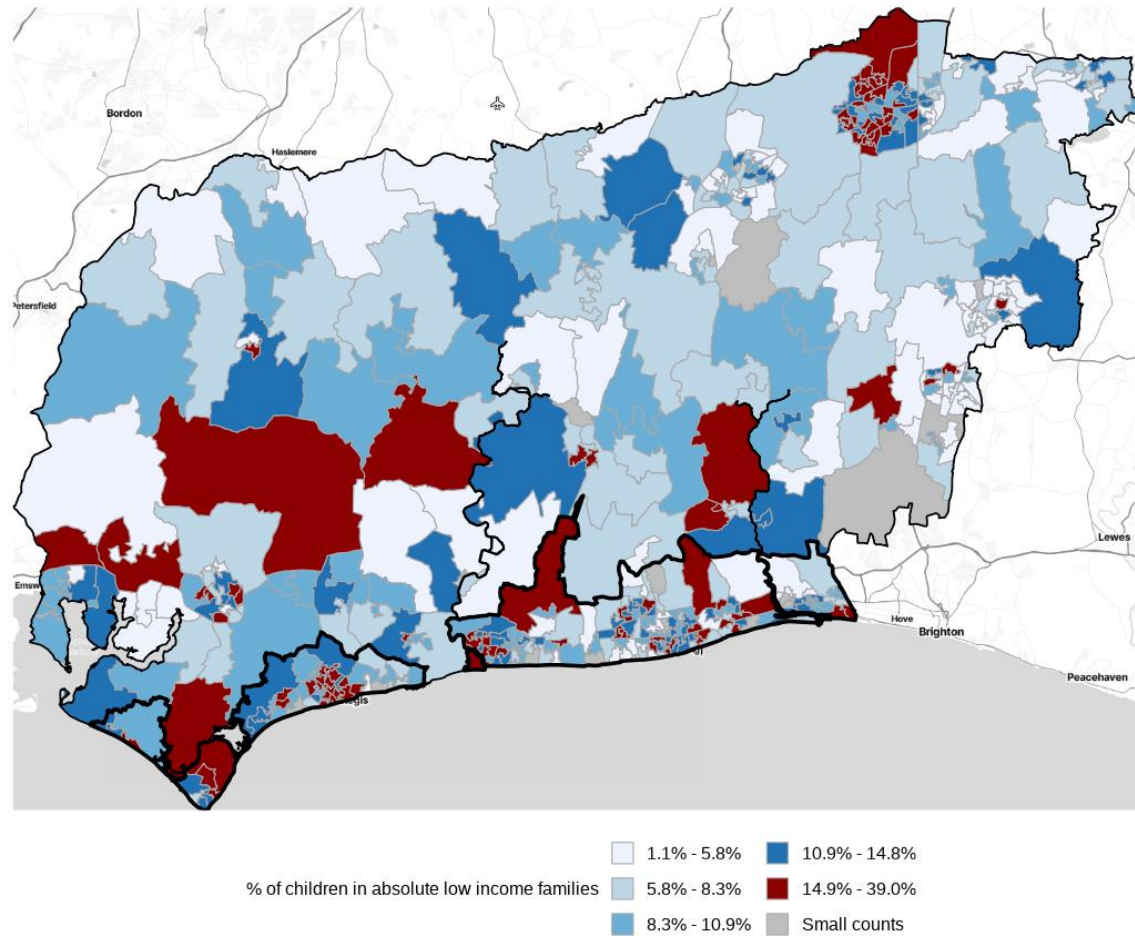
*Table 3: Number and proportion of children aged under 16 from absolute low-income families, 2022/23*

Notes. Counts in areas that contained missing/suppressed data at LSOA level will be incomplete, these are denoted with an \*. Counts may vary from published data and from data taken Stat-Xplore at larger geographies. This is due to suppression and disclosure control processes. In general, counts derived from LSOA were within 1% of counts presented at a national or county level.

Area	Number of children from absolute low-income families	Proportion of population under 16s			Versus non-coastal West Sussex	Versus West Sussex	Versus England
		%	LCL	UCL			
Bognor Regis BUA	1,457	13.5%	12.9%	14.2%	Higher	Higher	Lower
East Wittering BUASD	129	12.3%	10.5%	14.4%	Higher	Higher	Lower
Littlehampton BUASD	1,316	13.1%	12.4%	13.7%	Higher	Higher	Lower
Selsey BUA	172	13.3%	11.5%	15.2%	Higher	Higher	Lower
Shoreham-by-Sea BUASD	942	10.2%	9.6%	10.9%	Similar	Similar	Lower
Southwick BUASD	288	11.6%	10.4%	12.9%	Higher	Similar	Lower
Worthing BUASD	1,998	10.3%	9.9%	10.8%	Similar	Similar	Lower
West Sussex coastal community	6,302	11.6%	11.4%	11.9%	Higher	Higher	Lower
English coastal community	124,906	15.5%	15.4%	15.6%	Higher	Higher	Similar
West Sussex non-coastal community	7,403	10.1%	9.9%	10.3%	Not compared	Similar	Lower
English non-coastal community (excluding London)	781,115	15.2%	15.2%	15.3%	Higher	Higher	Lower
West Sussex	16,118	10.2%	10.1%	10.4%	Similar	Not compared	Lower
England	1,645,974	15.6%	15.5%	15.6%	Higher	Higher	Not compared

*Figure 4: Proportion of children from absolute low-income families amongst under 16s in small areas of West Sussex (2011 Lower Super Output Areas); 2022/23.*

Notes. LSOAs are shaded based on the proportion of children from absolute low-income families, with data for LSOAs within West Sussex split into 5 equal groups (quintiles). Areas within the top quintile (highest proportion of claims) are shown in red. Data sourced from the DWP. The boundary for Coastal West Sussex is illustrated with a thicker black border.



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### *Other characteristics*

This section of the briefing will focus on additional information provided by the most recent CiLIF statistics from 2022/23.

#### *Family type*

As mentioned in [relative income - family type](#), family type is defined as either a single adult or a married or cohabitating couple with dependent children. In 2022/23, 47.6% of children living in absolute low-income households in West Sussex were from lone parent families. This is lower than regional (50%) and national figures (48.3%).

Arun had the highest proportion of children living in absolute low-income households from lone parent families (50%). Crawley had the highest proportion of children living in absolute low-income households with a married or cohabitating couple (57.7%).

#### *Work status*

As mentioned in [relative income – work status](#), an in-work family is defined as a family where the adult claimant of Child Benefit and any partner(s) have worked for at least 26 weeks (either paid employment or self-employment) within the tax year **Error! Bookmark not defined..**

In 2022/23, 29.3% of children living in absolute low-income households in West Sussex were from non-working families. This is lower than regional (32.1%) and national figures (35%).

Arun had the highest proportion of children living in absolute low-income households with working families (71%). Chichester had the highest proportion of children living in absolute low-income households with non-working families (32%).

### *Age*

In 2022/23, 28.1% of children living in relative low-income households in West Sussex were aged 0-4, 35.5% aged 5-10 and 36.4% aged 11-15 years.

Crawley had the highest proportion of 0-4s living in absolute low-income households in West Sussex across the districts (29.6%), Crawley had the highest proportion of 5-10s (36.4%) and Mid Sussex had the highest proportion of 11-15s (38.3%).

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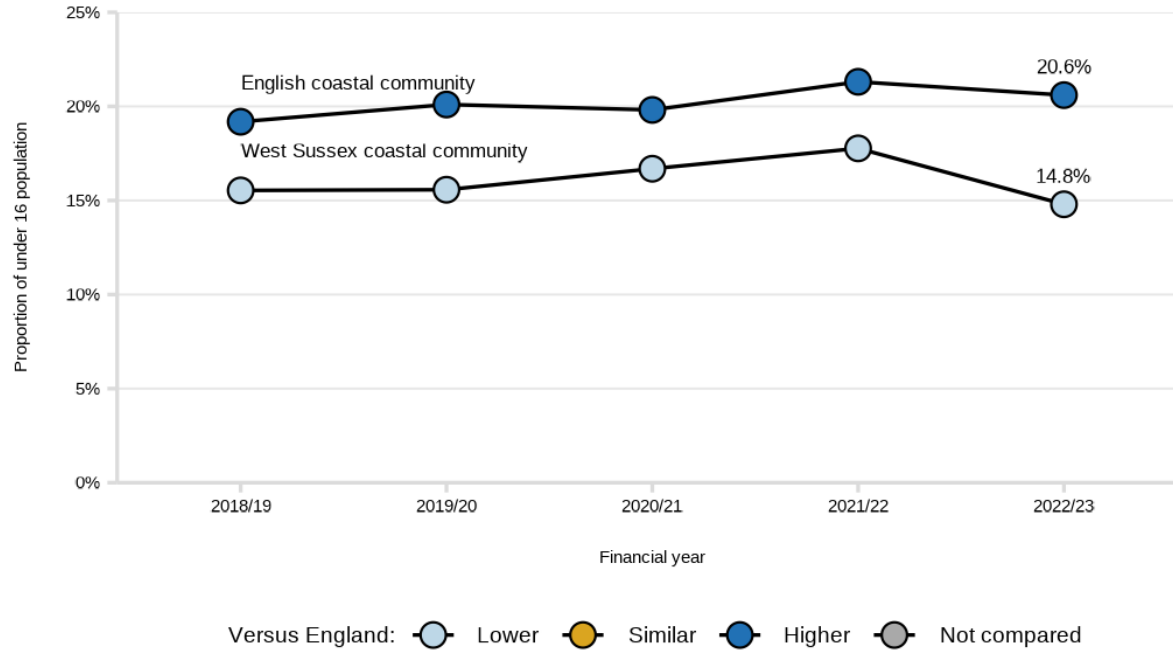
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## Appendix A

Figure 4: Proportion of children (under 16) living in relative low-income families in coastal areas 2018/19-2022/23



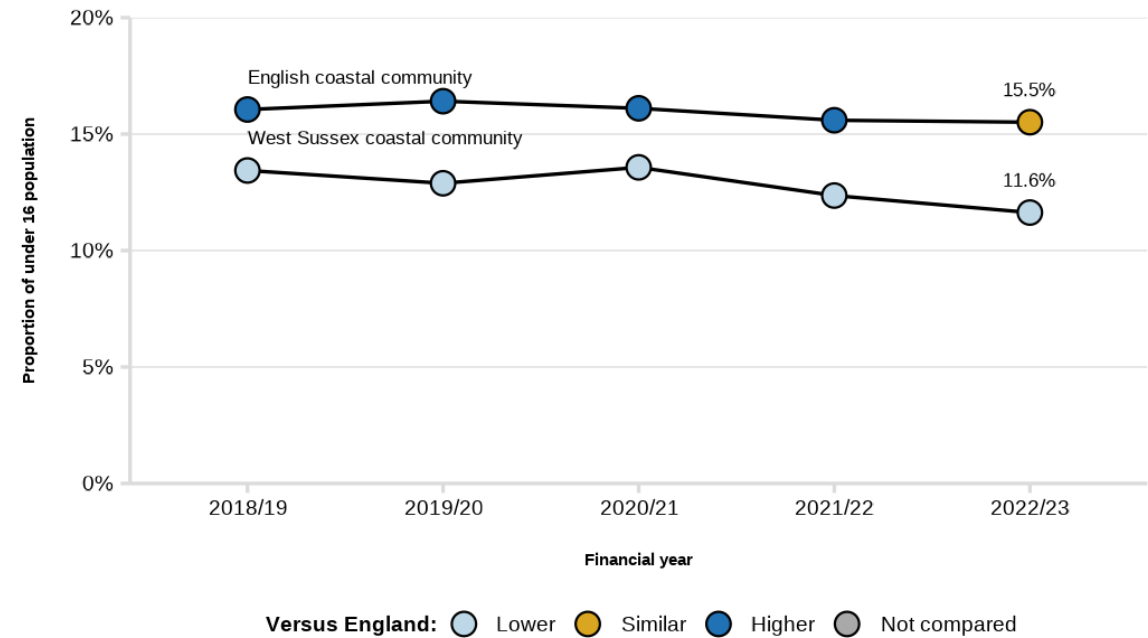
Versus England: Lower Similar Higher Not compared

Source: DWP Children in low income families: local area statistics (from Stat-Xplore);  
ONS small area population estimates (from NOMIS)



Appendix B

Figure 5: Proportion of children (under 16) living in absolute low-income families in coastal areas 2018/19-2022/23



Source: DWP Children in low income families: local area statistics (from Stat-Xplore);  
ONS small area population estimates (from NOMIS)