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Population and population change

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Focus of the briefing

This briefing presents an overview of key population data for children and young people aged 11 to 18 years. Wherever possible, data is presented specifically for this age group. However, if data for 11-18-year-olds is not available, data for the closest available age range is presented instead.

Main points

- Around 9% of the population of West Sussex are aged 11 to 18 equating to around 86,300 young people - a similar proportion to England.
- The youth population (11 to 24s) in West Sussex has grown by 7.6% in the past decade, reflecting growth in the population of 11- to 18-year-olds (+17.3%) rather than young adults aged 19- to 24-years (-6.5%).
- The proportion of young people varies across the district and boroughs. Crawley has the highest proportion of young people (10.5%). Mid Sussex has the largest youth population (around 16,500 people).

Source: ONS, [Mid-year population estimates 2024](#)

West Sussex population overview

West Sussex is a large county of almost 770 square miles, with coastal resorts, market towns, a New Town (Crawley) and large rural areas with smaller towns and villages (WSCC, 2025).

In 2024, there were an estimated 915,000 people living in the county (ONS, 2025). For more details on the overall population based on 2024 mid-year estimates, please refer to this [West Sussex population briefing](#).

Children and young people

Young people aged 11 to 18 make up about 9% of West Sussex's population, which is broadly in line with the national average for England. This represents around 86,300 residents in this age group. The proportion of young people varies across the county's districts and boroughs (Table 1):

- Crawley has the highest proportion of 11-18-year-olds (10.5%)
- Mid Sussex has the largest population of young people, with approximately 16,500 residents aged 11 to 18 years.

Whilst the population of children and young people aged 11 to 18 is similar to England, West Sussex has a smaller proportion of young adults aged 19 to 24 (5.2% compared to 7.2% nationally, see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Proportion of resident population aged 11 to 24 years in West Sussex, by age band

Source: ONS, 2024 mid-year population estimate

Notes: Proportion of total population aged 11 to 24 shown in grey.

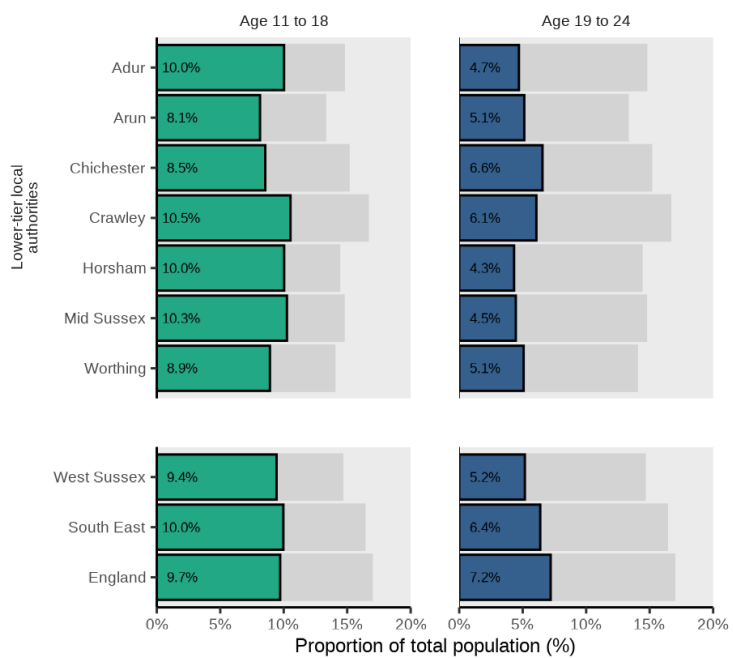
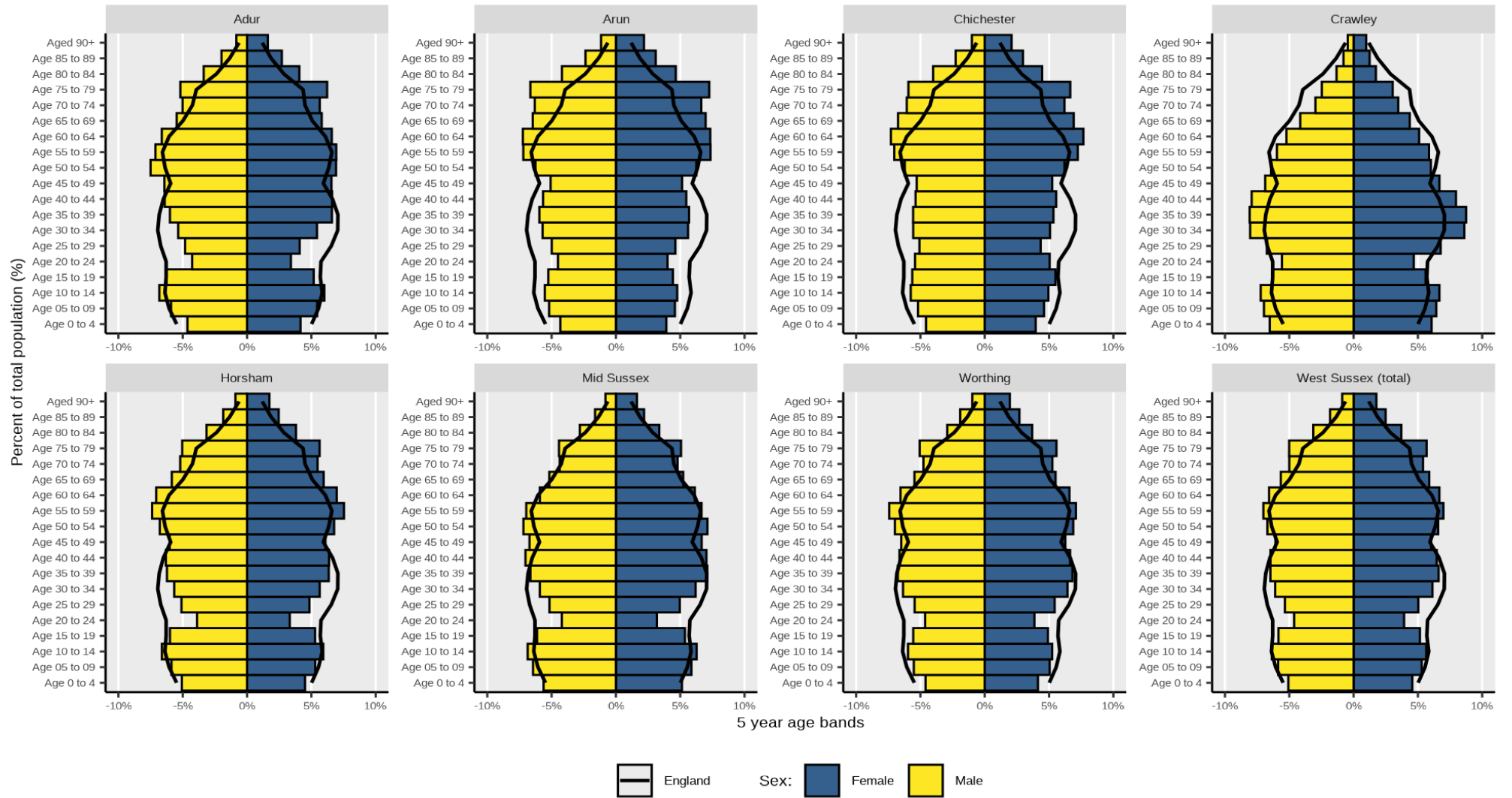


Figure 2: Population pyramids (5-year age bands) for West Sussex district and boroughs; 2024 mid-year estimates



ONS population estimates (accessed via NOMISr)

Table 1: Mid-year population estimate of young people (aged 11 to 24) in West Sussex, 2024

Area	Total: All ages	Population of young people (%)		Total: 11 to 24 yrs	% aged 11 to 24 yrs
		Age 11 to 18	Age 19 to 24		
Adur	64,890	6,505 (10%)	3,050 (4.7%)	9,555	14.7
Arun	170,065	13,830 (8.1%)	8,715 (5.1%)	22,545	13.3
Chichester	128,935	11,020 (8.5%)	8,455 (6.6%)	19,475	15.1
Crawley	124,010	13,060 (10.5%)	7,540 (6.1%)	20,600	16.6
Horsham	151,520	15,205 (10%)	6,550 (4.3%)	21,750	14.4
Mid Sussex	161,755	16,585 (10.3%)	7,205 (4.5%)	23,795	14.7
Worthing	113,865	10,150 (8.9%)	5,775 (5.1%)	15,925	14.0
West Sussex	915,035	86,360 (9.4%)	47,290 (5.2%)	133,650	14.6
South East	9,642,940	961,575 (10%)	615,340 (6.4%)	1,576,915	16.4
England	58,620,100	5,699,500 (9.7%)	4,221,505 (7.2%)	9,921,005	16.9

Source: ONS 2024 mid-year population estimate

Note: Due to rounding (nearest 5) totals may not be the sum of the individual cells.

The proportion of young people is presented at small areas in West Sussex in Figure 3, based on the latest small area population estimates from mid-2022. These small areas are referred to as ‘lower super output areas’ which each represent a resident population of between 1,000-3,000 persons (ONS, n.d.).

In general terms, there is variation in the population of young people locally, with higher proportions towards the East of the county and lower proportions along the coastal strip. Some small areas have notably higher proportions of resident young people. This tends to reflect locations of residential educational settings, such as Christ’s College in Horsham, Lancing College in Adur and student accommodation at the University of Chichester.

Population change

The youth population (11 to 24s) in West Sussex has grown by 7.6% in the past decade (Table 2). This reflects growth in the population of 11- to 18-year-olds (+17.3%) rather than young adults aged 19- to 24-years (-6.5%).

West Sussex has seen higher population growth among 11- to 18-year-olds than England (+17.3% compared to +15.8%). In real terms, the 11- to 18-year-old population has grown by around 12,700 resident young people. Across the district and boroughs, Crawley has seen substantial growth among 11- to 18-year-olds, increasing by 30.4% in the past 10 years (+3,100 young people).

Figure 3: Proportion of young people (aged 11 to 18) in small areas (2021 LSOAs) of West Sussex, 2022 mid-year estimates

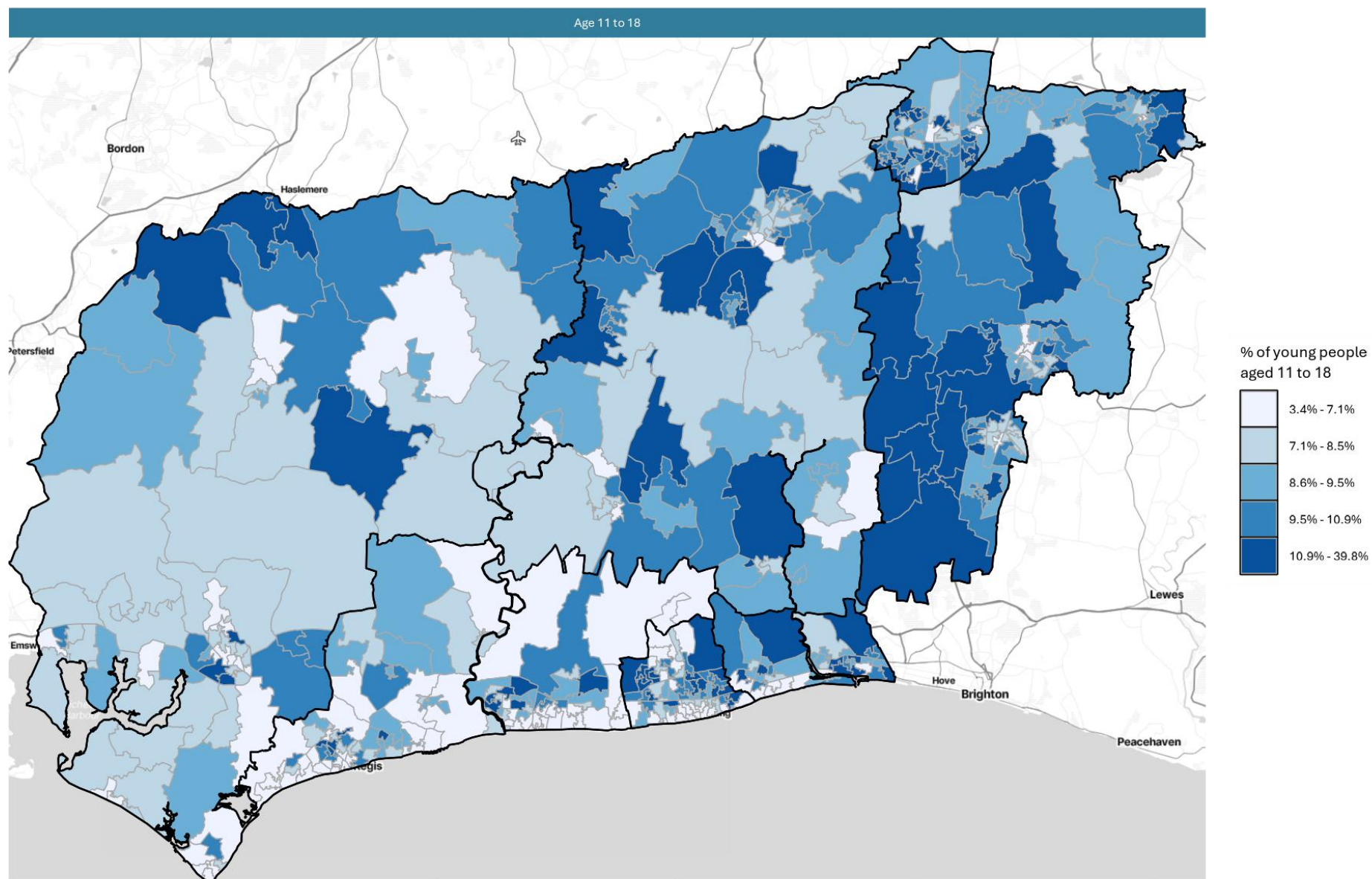


Table 2: Change in size of population of young people (aged 11 to 24) from 2014 to 2024 mid-year estimates in West Sussex

Area	Age bands		Total: 11 to 24yrs	Total: all ages
	Age 11 to 18	Age 19 to 24		
Adur	+19.9%	-15.2%	+5.9%	+2.1%
Arun	+14.1%	-9.7%	+3.5%	+9%
Chichester	+15.1%	-0.9%	+7.5%	+10.3%
Crawley	+30.4%	-3.5%	+15.5%	+11.2%
Horsham	+14%	-5.5%	+7.3%	+12.9%
Mid Sussex	+17.5%	-4.8%	+9.7%	+11.9%
Worthing	+12.4%	-10.9%	+2.7%	+6.1%
West Sussex	+17.3%	-6.5%	+7.6%	+9.7%
South East	+17.4%	-6.6%	+6.7%	+8.4%
England	+15.8%	-2.1%	+7.4%	+7.8%

Source: ONS 2014 and 2024 mid-year population estimates

Note: Does not demonstrate any fluctuations in population size within the 10 year period.

Growth among the population of 11- to 18-year-olds differs from other local authority areas within Sussex, with a higher increase than both Brighton and Hove and East Sussex (see Figure).

Figure 4: Population change of 11-18 year olds between 2014 to 2024 - English Upper Tier and Unitary Authorities

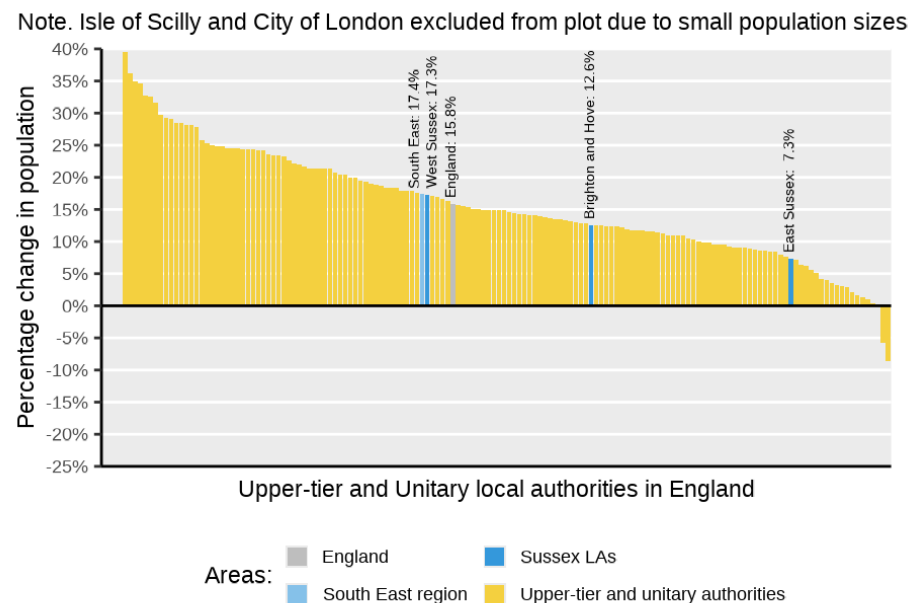


Table 3: Resident population of young people (aged 11 to 18) in West Sussex from 2014 to 2024

Area	Population of young people (aged 11 to 18 yrs)										
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Adur	5,400	5,300	5,300	5,300	5,400	5,400	5,600	5,800	6,100	6,300	6,500
Arun	12,100	12,100	12,100	12,200	12,300	12,600	12,800	12,900	13,100	13,500	13,800
Chichester	9,600	9,600	9,600	9,800	9,700	10,000	10,200	10,300	10,600	10,900	11,000
Crawley	10,000	10,200	10,300	10,500	10,800	11,100	11,300	11,700	12,200	12,800	13,100
Horsham	13,300	13,500	13,700	13,600	13,600	13,600	13,800	14,100	14,600	14,900	15,200
Mid Sussex	14,100	13,900	14,000	14,000	14,100	14,300	14,500	14,900	15,500	16,100	16,600
Worthing	9,000	9,100	9,100	9,100	9,200	9,400	9,500	9,600	9,900	10,000	10,200
West Sussex	73,600	73,800	74,000	74,400	75,100	76,400	77,600	79,400	81,900	84,500	86,400
South East	819,300	820,700	823,000	828,100	836,200	851,200	865,600	882,400	908,700	937,500	961,600
England	4,920,400	4,914,600	4,923,300	4,957,900	5,012,400	5,111,700	5,204,700	5,307,700	5,443,900	5,583,800	5,699,500

Source: ONS 2014 to 2024 mid-year population estimate

Note: Due to rounding (nearest 100) totals may not be the sum of the individual cells.

Projected population

The 2022-based subnational population projections from the ONS show how the population of local authorities, such as West Sussex, may change in size and age structure in the future. The latest population projections use the 2022 mid-year population estimates as a starting point and extend to 2047.

This section will focus on the projected population change for West Sussex and its district and boroughs from mid-2022 and mid-2032, using the ‘migration category variant’ projections. This variant is recommended by the ONS as it considers the most recent long-term migration estimates available at the time of publication in June 2025 (Bristol City Council, 2025).

Good to know

Population projections are not forecasts. This is because they are based on assumptions of current trends in births, deaths and international migration. All three of these are unpredictable and can be affected by factors that projections do not account for, such as population health, world events and policy decisions (Barton, Sturge, & Harker, 2024). This means these projections will inevitably differ to a greater or lesser extent from the actual future population (ONS, 2025).

The overall population of West Sussex is projected to increase by 7.3% between mid-2022 and mid-2032 compared with 6.4% for England and the Southeast. The projected population increase varies across the county's districts and boroughs from 2.3% (Adur) to 10.6% (Horsham).

Children and young people

The projected population of 11–18-year-olds in West Sussex remains at 82,000 between mid-2022 and mid-2032 (Table 4). However, when interpreting this analysis, it is important to bear in mind the impact of rounding effects (as rounding to the nearest 100 can mask small fluctuations) and cohort stability (the population of this age group is projected to grow in some district and boroughs across the county e.g., Crawley and Mid Sussex and fall in others e.g., Chichester and Worthing).

Table 4: Projected population of young people (aged 11 to 18) in West Sussex from mid-2022 to mid-2032

Area	Population of 11-18s in mid-2022	Population of 11-18s in mid-2032
Adur	6,100 (9.4%)	6,000 (9.1%)
Arun	13,100 (7.9%)	13,200 (7.4%)
Chichester	10,600 (8.4%)	10,100 (7.4%)
Crawley	12,200 (10.2%)	12,600 (10%)
Horsham	14,600 (9.8%)	14,800 (9%)
Mid Sussex	15,500 (10%)	15,900 (9.4%)
Worthing	9,900 (8.8%)	9,300 (7.9%)
West Sussex	82,000 (9.2%)	82,000 (8.6%)

Source: Subnational population projections for England from Office for National Statistics – Migration category variant

Note: Due to rounding (nearest 100) totals may not be the sum of the individual cells.

Protected characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 consolidated and replaced previous legislation for a single Act. Public bodies have a duty to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

There are nine protected characteristics (Table 5). It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of a protected characteristic (Pyper & Uwazuruike, 2024).

Table 5: Description of Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

Characteristic	Description
Age	A person belonging to a particular age (for example 32-year-olds) or range of ages (for example 18- to 30-year-olds)
Disability	A person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
Gender reassignment	Where a person undergoes, or proposes to undergo, a process for the purpose of reassigning their sex.
Marriage and civil partnership	Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).
Pregnancy and maternity	Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
Race	A race is a group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship) ethnicity or national origins. A racial group can be made up of more than one distinct racial group, such as Black British.
Religion or belief	Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
Sex	A man or a woman.
Sexual orientation	Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Source: [Protected characteristics | EHRC](#)

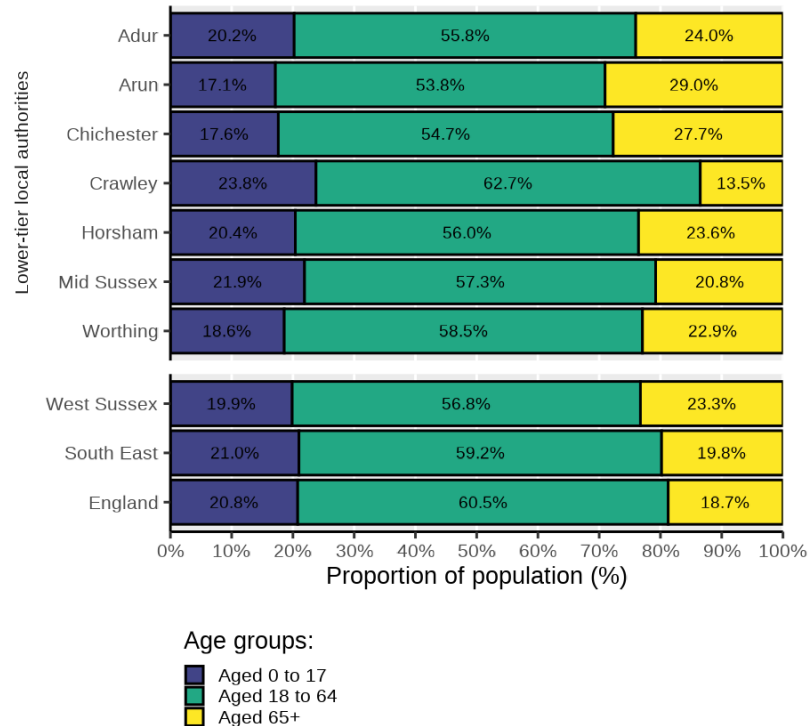
Age and sex

West Sussex has an older than average population. Based on the latest mid-year estimates for 2024, a greater proportion of the population in West Sussex is aged 65 years and over (23.3%) compared to the Southeast (19.8%) and England (18.7%).

Among children and young people, Crawley has a far younger age structure, with 23.8% of the population aged under 18 compared to 20.8% nationally (Figure 4). Mid Sussex also has a greater proportion of under 18s than England at 21.9%. The population of 11- to 18-year-olds is described in greater detail in the 'Children and young people' [section](#) of this briefing.

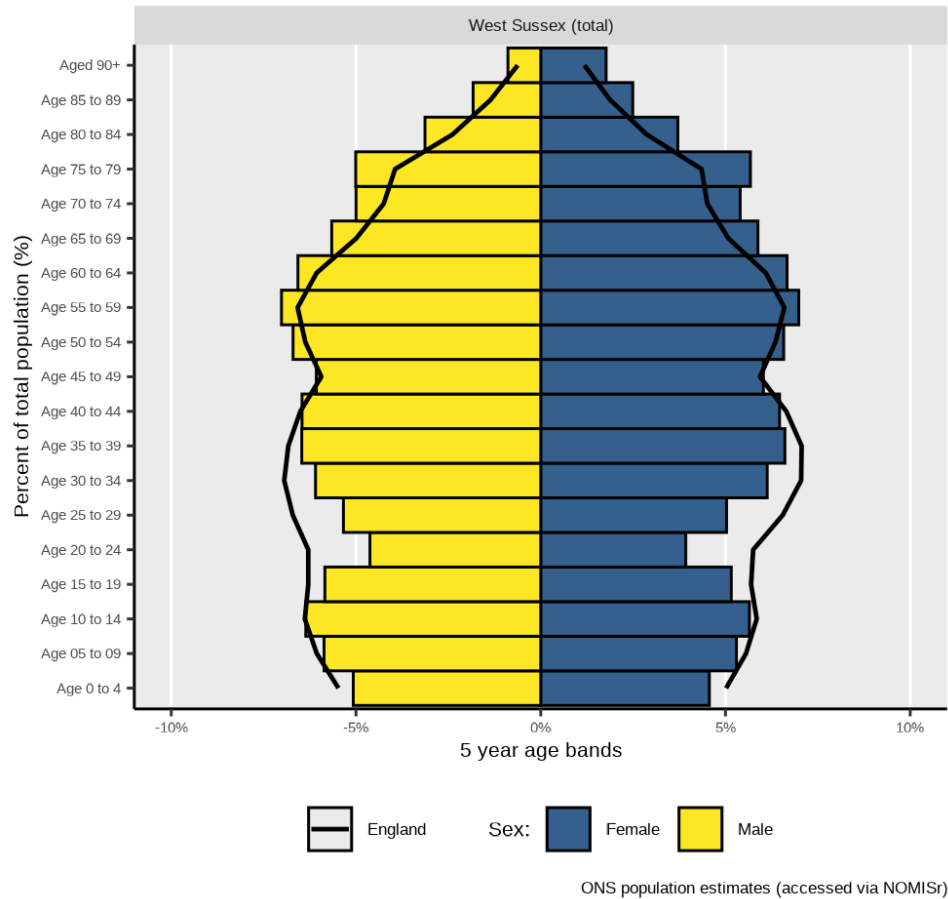
Figure 4: Population age profile of West Sussex local authorities

Source: ONS 2024-mid year population



Of the 11 to 18 population in West Sussex, 51.6% are male and 48.4% female.

Figure 5: West Sussex population pyramid (2024 mid-year estimates)



Disability

The Equality Act defines disability as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Data on disability is taken from the 2021 Census.

In West Sussex, approximately 7,530 (9.6%) young people aged 11 to 18 identified themselves as disabled. This proportion is similar to England (9.8%). Across the county, the proportion of young people aged 11 to 18 who identified themselves as disabled ranged from 8.5% in Horsham and Mid Sussex to 11.6% in Adur.

Ethnicity and race

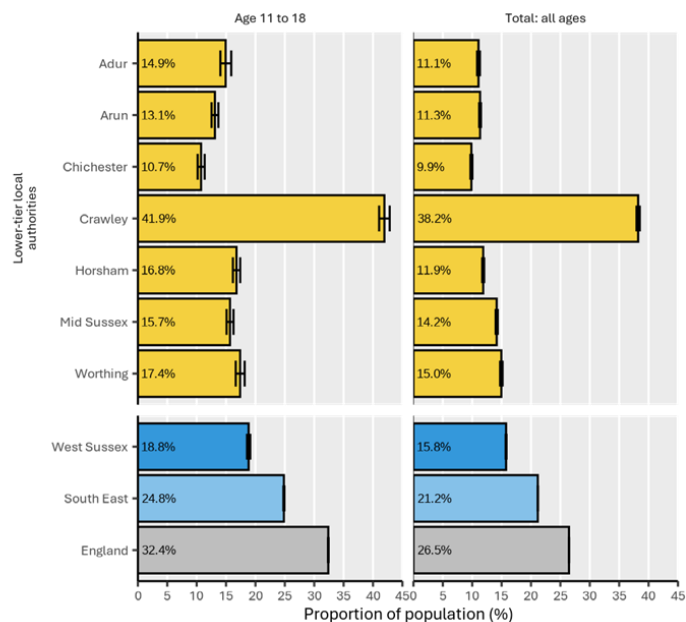
The Equality Act 2010 defines race as a group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship) ethnicity or national origins. A racial group can be made up of more than one distinct racial group, such as Black British (EHRC, 2025). The Census provides the most comprehensive picture of ethnicity in the UK.

West Sussex has a lower percentage of people from minority ethnic backgrounds¹ than England (15.8% compared to 26.5% - Figure 6). However, there are considerable differences within the county, with far greater ethnic diversity in Crawley (38.2%) when compared to other areas.

This picture is also true for young people in West Sussex, with 18.8% of young people aged 11- to-18 from a minority ethnic group - a lower proportion than England (32.4%). This equates to around 15,000 young people in the county. Again, there are differences within the county, with two-fifths of the youth population in Crawley from an ethnic minority background – a far higher proportion than the other district and boroughs within the county and higher than England at around a third.

Among young people, the largest minority ethnic group is White: Other (4.3% of young people) in West Sussex. At lower-tier authority level, this is true for all areas except Crawley, where Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Pakistani is the largest group (7.2% of young people), followed by White: Other (6.9% of young people). Among the lower-tier authorities, Crawley has the highest proportion of young people from a White: Other background (6.9%), despite not being the largest minority group in that area.

Figure 6: Proportion of young people from a minority ethnic background in West Sussex; 2021 Census



¹ Defined as all ethnic groups other than White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British

Sexuality

The Equality Act 2010 defines sexual orientation as a person's sexual orientation towards people of the same sex, people of the opposite sex, or people of either sex. Data on sexual orientation was gathered in the 2021 Census. This was the first time a voluntary question on sexual orientation among people aged 16+ was included.

In West Sussex, 7.8% of young people aged 16 to 24 identified with a lesbian, gay, bisexual or 'other' (LGB+) sexual orientation, similar to England (7.6%). Across the county, the proportion of young people who identified with an LGB+ orientation ranged from 6.1% in Crawley to 9.8% in Chichester. Chichester also had the largest population of young people stating an LGB+ sexual orientation at just over 1,050 young men and women.

Gender identity

Along with sexual orientation, the 2021 Census asked people about gender identity for the first time. This question was asked to provide the first official data on the size of the transgender population in England and Wales to support anti-discrimination duties under the Equality Act 2010. This was a voluntary question for people aged 16 years and over. People were asked: "Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?".

Of those who answered the question, an estimated 0.97% of young people (aged 16 to 24 years) in West Sussex stated that their gender identity was different from their sex registered at birth. Nationally, this proportion was 1.08%. Across the district and boroughs, the proportion of young people with a different gender identity from sex at birth ranged from 0.71% in Adur to 1.30% in Worthing.

There are caveats to be aware of when interpreting these estimates. For example, the statistical uncertainty with these estimates will be higher for relatively small population groups, and when broken down by geographical area or other characteristics such as age (e.g., 16-24 years). In addition, the ONS stated that there are patterns in the data which suggested that some respondents may not have interpreted the question as intended, notably those with lower levels of English language proficiency. This may result in an increase in estimates of trans population at smaller geographic levels, particularly where there are higher levels of non-English speakers.

Religion and belief

In the Equality Act (2010), religion refers to any religion including a lack of religion, and belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. The 2021 Census included a voluntary question on religious belief for those aged 16 and over.

In West Sussex, a higher proportion of young people aged 16 to 24 said they had no religious affiliation (60.1%) compared to England (51.3%). Crawley had a larger proportion of young people identifying as Muslim (12.6%) and Hindu (4.1%) than other areas in West Sussex.

Pregnancy and maternity

It is against the law to discriminate against someone who is pregnant or until the end of their maternity leave.

Age-specific fertility rates (ASFR) are a measure of fertility specifically related to the age of the mother, which is calculated by dividing the number of live births to mothers of a particular age (e.g., under 18, under 20s and 20-24s) per 1,000 women of that age within the population. This measure helps compare fertility of women of the same age in different populations.

In 2024, the ASFR for women aged under 18 in West Sussex was 2.0 live births per 1,000 women aged under 18, lower than England (2.8 live births per 1,000 women under 18). Crawley and Adur had the highest ASFR for women aged under 18 (3.5 births per 1,000 women under 18) in West Sussex.

Table 6: Age-specific fertility rates per 100,000 women aged under 18, under 20 and 20-24 in West Sussex, Southeast and England; 2024

Area	Under 18	Under 20	20-24 years
Adur	3.5	7.5	34.1
Arun	0.8	4.9	43.7
Chichester	1.5	3.2	26.3
Crawley	3.5	8.1	46.5
Horsham	0.7	3.4	29.5
Mid Sussex	2.3	4.9	32.1
Worthing	2.7	6.2	34.8
West Sussex	2.0	5.2	35.6
South East	2.1	5.7	34.6
England	2.8	7.3	36.9

Source: ONS Live births in England and Wales: birth rates down to local authority areas.

Note: The rates for women under 18 and under 20 have been calculated using mid-year population estimates for the female population aged 15 to 17 and 15 to 19 respectively.

In 2024, there were 7,648 live births in West Sussex. Of those, 126 (1.6%) were among women aged under 20 years. This is a lower percentage of live births compared to England (2.2%). See Table 7 for further breakdowns.

Table 7 for further breakdowns.

Table 7: Number of live births by age of mother in West Sussex, the South East and England; 2024

Area	Total	Age of mother							Age of mother unknown or not stated
		Aged under 20	Aged 20-24	Aged 25-29	Aged 30-34	Aged 35-39	Aged 40-44	Aged 45 and over	
Adur	477	13	39	103	174	122	21	5	0
Arun	1,224	19	155	340	436	224	45	5	0
Chichester	957	12	89	231	369	210	44	2	0
Crawley	1,424	28	135	363	543	277	67	11	0
Horsham	1,214	14	76	263	509	292	54	5	1
Mid Sussex	1,457	22	85	308	582	376	76	8	0
Worthing	895	18	79	210	321	224	40	3	0
West Sussex	7,648	126	658	1,818	2,934	1,725	347	39	1
South East	88,148	1,597	8,499	20,453	32,426	20,147	4,573	449	4
England	567,708	12,508	63,470	144,764	197,846	119,147	27,355	2,560	58

Source: ONS, Births in England and Wales 2024

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