

Economic update - October 2025

Key points

- Median monthly earnings, at £2,407 in the county (August 2025 - from PAYE), are considerably lower than national (UK=£2,562) and regional (£2,696) averages. The annual increase to August 2025 was slightly higher than the national average (up 7.2% in East Sussex and 6.6% in the UK).
- Employment rates (PAYE employees as a percentage of working age people aged 16-64) are lower in all districts and boroughs of East Sussex than the national and regional averages: lowest in Hastings and Rother and highest in Wealden.
- In East Sussex in 2023 there were 23,670 active businesses, down from 24,015 in 2022. However, there were more business starts (2,145) than business closures (2,095).
- There are now 11,335 people (September 2025) receiving benefits because they are unemployed (JSA or Universal Credit (UC) searching for work) down 2.9% (335 claimants) since September 2024. This compares to a 3.6% decrease in unemployed claimants nationally over the year.
- 61,574 people in East Sussex are now receiving UC (any conditionality), 50,756 of whom are not included in the unemployed Claimant Count above (i.e. not 'Searching for work') in September 2025. This is an increase of 15.3% since September 2024, which is marginally higher than the national rise of 15.1%.
- The economy of East Sussex generated £11.6 billion in 2023, or £20,838 per head (UK £36,632 per head). Total GVA increased by 9.8% between 2022 and 2023, faster than the rise in the UK as a whole (9.2%), and in 2023 GVA was 29.6% higher than in 2018.
- In 2021, 238,540 of working aged people (16-64) in East Sussex were economically active (76.2% of all residents aged 16-64). This compares with 75.4% of working age in England who were economically active.
- In 2021, the county had a higher proportion of people who were self-employed, with 15.7% of working aged people compared to 11.2% nationally. 17.8% of working aged people in Wealden were self-employees, 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.

Contents

Key points	1
Labour market & skills	4
Claimant count.....	4
Claimant rates in East Sussex, September 2022-2025	4
Claimant rates, September 2024 and 2025.....	5
Claimant rates - broad age groups, October 2022-2025.....	5
Male and female claimants of Universal Credit and Claimant Count, 2020-2025.....	6
Wards.....	7
Map showing claimant rate in September 2025 - wards in East Sussex.....	7
Claimant rate in September 2025 -wards at or above the national average	8
Universal Credit.....	8
Universal Credit claimants by district, September 2021-2025.....	9
Number of Universal Credit claimants by conditionality, September 2021-2025	9
Employment indicator of Universal Credit claimants - August 2023, 2024 and 2025 ..	10
Percentage claiming any DWP benefit and Out-of-work benefits in February 2025	10
Universal Credit (UC) Health Journey	11
Percentage claiming UC on the Health Journey, or on ESA/IB, February 2025.....	11
Labour market - Census data	12
Economic activity rates in 2021- percentage of the working age population	12
Employees and self-employed in 2021 (Aged 16-64).....	13
Economic activity and inactivity	13
Employees and self-employment	13
Hours worked in 2021 (Aged 16-64)	14
Economic inactivity.....	14
Economically inactive in 2021 by type (working age 16-64)	14
Industry of employment	15
Percentage of people working in different industrial sectors in 2021.....	15
Industry of employment - change since 2011	16
Actual change in industry of employment in East Sussex, 2011-2021	16
Percentage change in industry of employment 2011-2021.....	17
Small area data on industry sectors from Census 2021	17
Industry of employment from BRES, 2023.....	18
Percentage of people working in different industrial sectors in 2023 (BRES)	18
Skills	19
Qualifications	19

Qualifications (NVQ) of the population aged 16-64, Census 2021.....	19
Census key points	19
Annual Population Survey key points.....	20
Qualifications (NVQ) of the population aged 16-64, December 2021.....	20
Qualifications (RQF) of the population aged 16-64, December 2024.....	20
Apprenticeships	21
East Sussex apprenticeship starts, 2011-2024	21
Apprenticeship starts by age group 2012-2024	21
Apprenticeship starts in 2023/24 by subject.....	22
Apprenticeship achievements by age group 2012-2024.....	22
Workforce projections	23
Actual change in labour force numbers by detailed age group and sex, 2023-2038....	23
Projected number of economically active people aged 16-74.....	23
Wages and employment	24
Median monthly earnings from PAYE RTI, August 2014-2025	24
Employment rate from PAYE RTI, August 2019 - August 2025	25
Number of employees (PAYE RTI), August 2015-2025	25
Median monthly pay by industry (PAYE RTI) in the UK, August 2025	26
Workplace-based median full-time weekly earnings, 2010-2024.....	26
Workplace-based median RT earnings in 2024 and % change since 2020 and 2023	27
Gross Value Added	27
Gross Value Added (GVA) infographic.....	28
5 sectors account for nearly two thirds of total GVA in East Sussex (2023)	28
GVA per head in 2023, by district, including TFSE, SE7 and other geographies	28
Productivity and earnings measures compared - East Sussex indices, UK=100.....	29
Table comparing % of GVA (2023), Businesses (2025) and Employment (2021).....	30
Chart comparing % of GVA (2023), Businesses (2025) and Employment (2021).....	30
Businesses	31
Active businesses per 10,000 population	32
Active businesses in East Sussex	32
Fastest growing sectors in the county (2020-2025)	32
Business births and deaths in East Sussex 2005-23.....	33
Change in number of business units by sector in East Sussex, 2020-2025	33
New business registration rates, 2020-22	34
1- and 5-year business survival rates in of businesses active in 2023	34
Further information and sources.....	35
Contact details	37

Labour market & skills

Claimant count



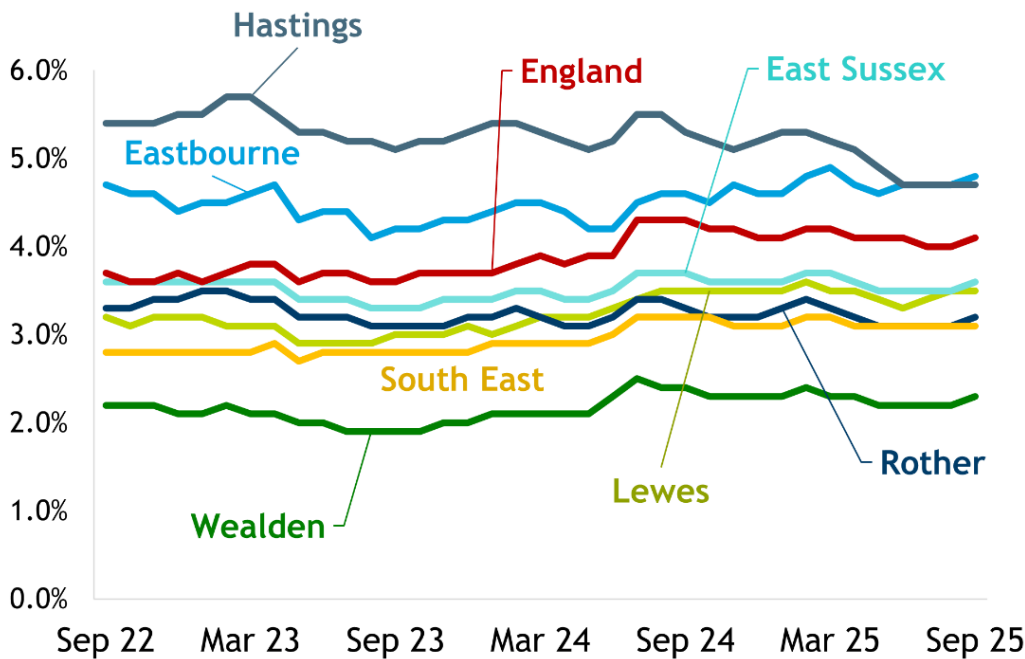
In East Sussex in September 2025 there were:
11,335 Unemployed claimants of JSA and UC
(3.6% of working age people, lower than England at 4.1%)
Down 335 (10.3%) since September 2024
But Up 245 (2.2%) since August 2025

In September 2025 for the first time, Eastbourne had the highest claimant rate in the county with 4.8% of working age people claiming UC/JSA because of unemployment.

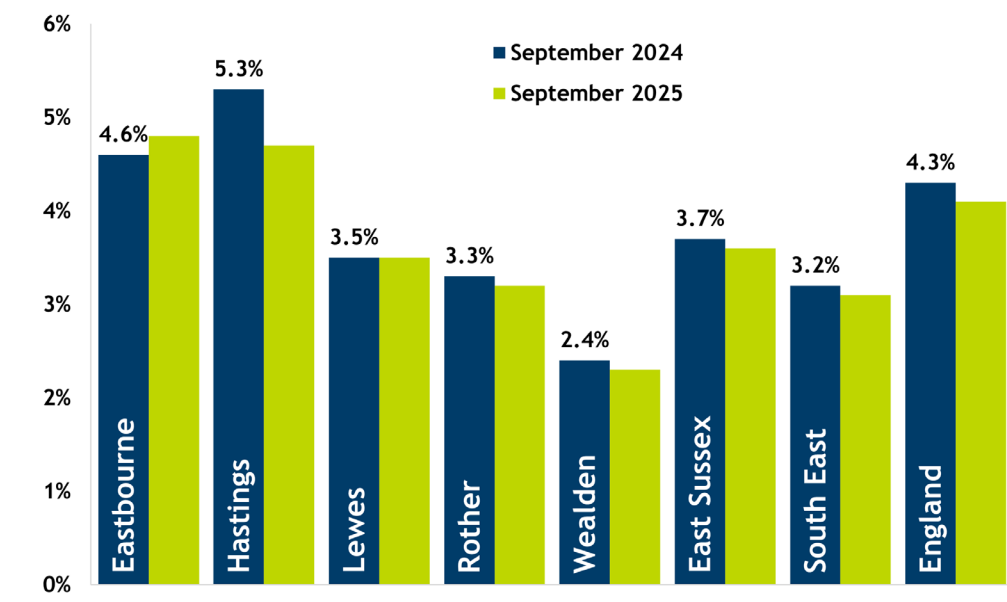
Hastings rates are also still above the national average with unemployed UC/JSA claimants making up 4.7% of the working age population compared to 4.1% nationally.

[See [note 1](#)]

Claimant rates in East Sussex by district, September 2022-2025

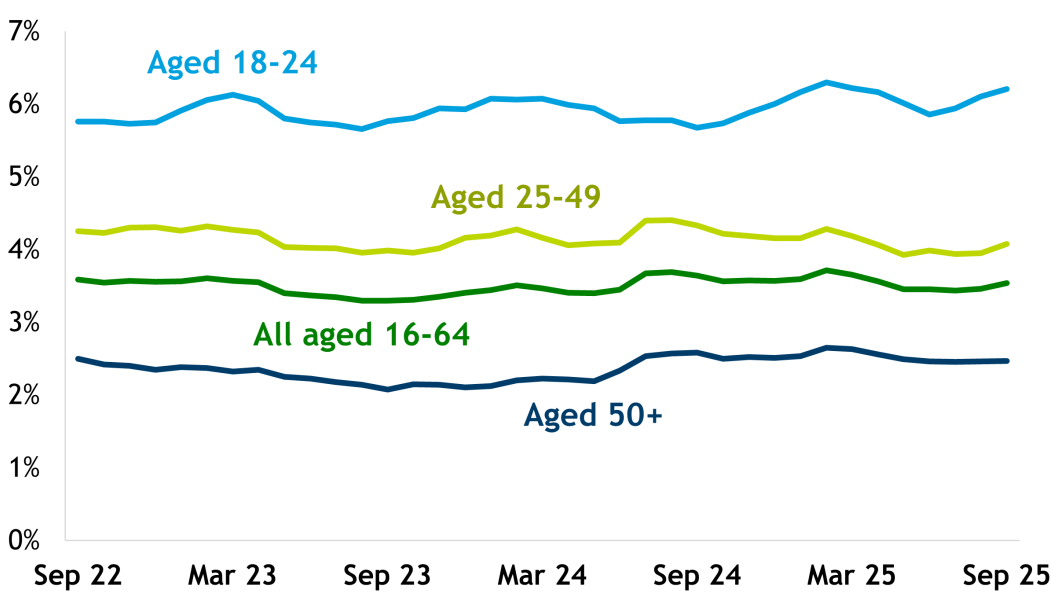


Claimant rates, England, South East, East Sussex and districts, September 2024 and 2025



- In East Sussex, overall claimant numbers have fallen by 2.9% over the past year, from 11,670 in September 2024 to 11,335 in September 2025, with claimant rates declining from 3.7% to 3.6% in the county. This compares to England, where the annual decrease in claimant numbers was 3.6%, and rates fell from 4.3% in September 2024 to 4.1% in September 2025.

Claimant rates in East Sussex, all working age and broad age groups, October 2022-2025

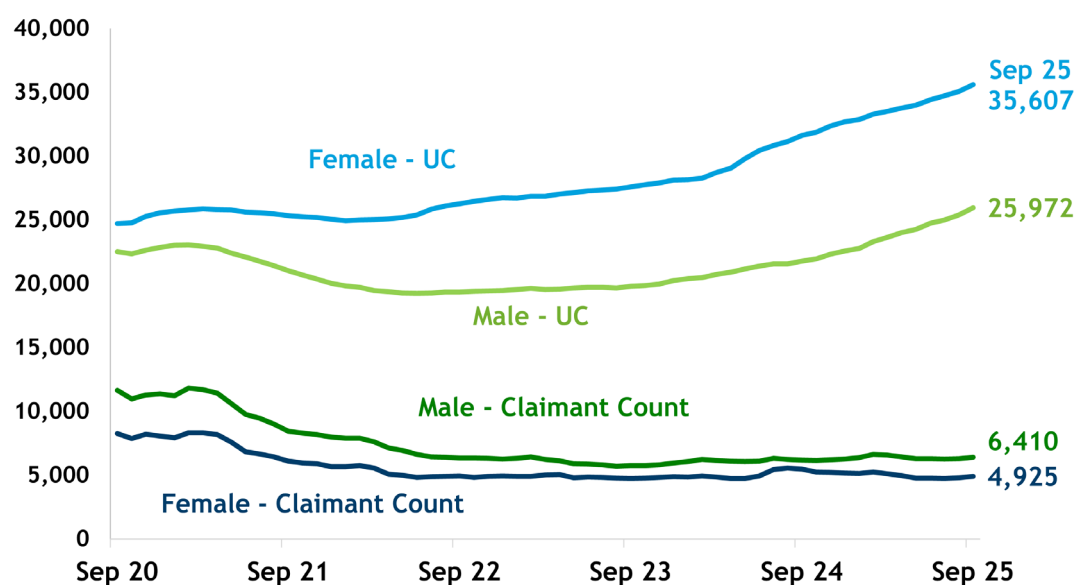


- Youth unemployment saw a significant increase in the year to September 2025 with the number of UC/JSA claimants aged 18-24 in East Sussex rising from 1,925 in

September 2024 to 2,105, an increase of 9.4%. This is slightly lower than the national rise of 10.7% among young claimants over the same period.

- In Lewes, youth claimant unemployment rose by 19.7% over the year, but in Hastings there was a decrease, with 2.9% fewer youth claimants in September 2025 than a year previously.
- 6.2% of people aged 18-24 in East Sussex are now claiming UC/JSA (September 2025), with numbers increasing by 1.7% (35 claimants) in the month to September 2025. The number of young male claimants rose by 0.8% and young female claimants increased by 2.6% over the month.
- The highest levels of youth claiming are seen in Hastings, where 8.6% of young people are claiming UC/JSA, including 10.5% of young males in September 2025.

Male and female claimants of Universal Credit and UC/JSA unemployed claimant count, September 2020-2025, East Sussex

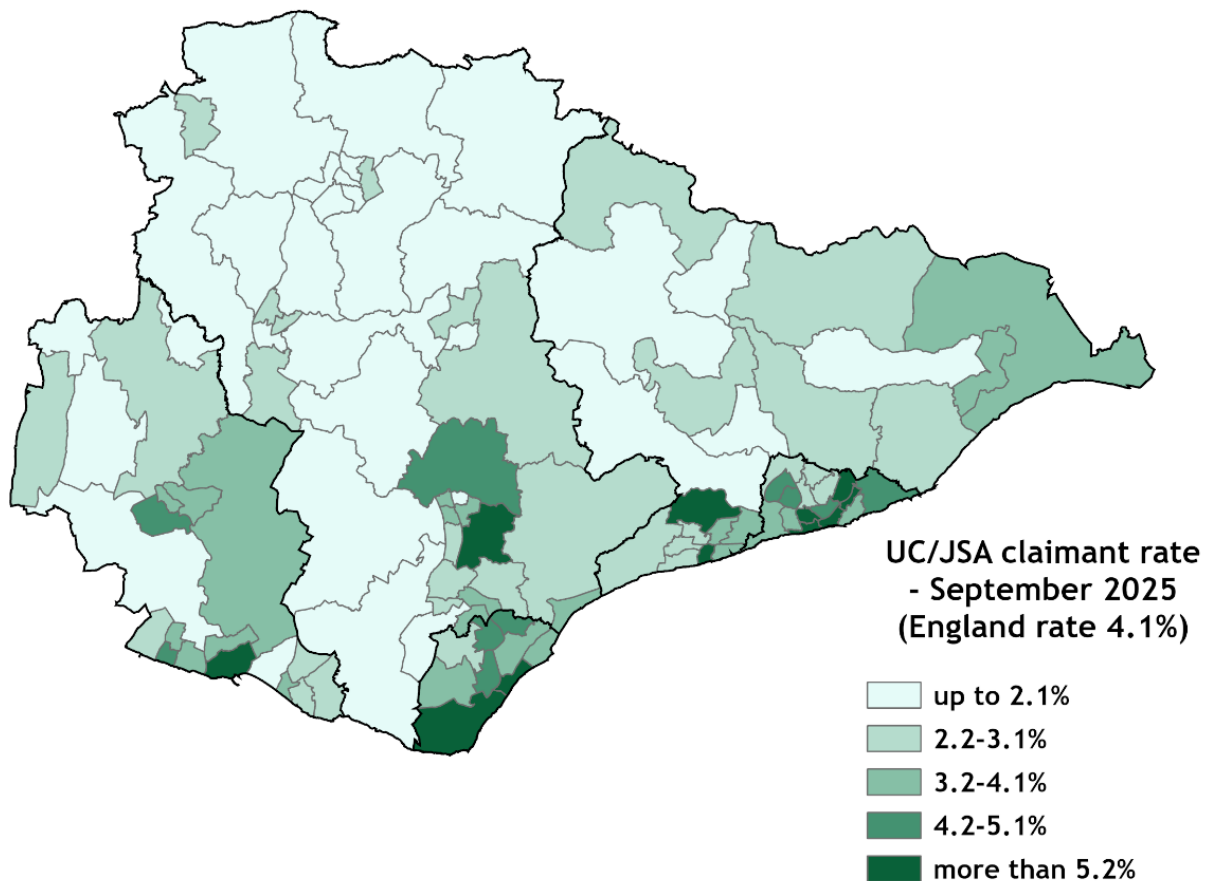


- While the number of male unemployed UC/JSA claimants is higher than the number of female claimants (see dark green - male and dark blue - female lines, labelled 'Claimant count', above), the number of female claimants in all UC conditionality groups (light blue line) is much higher than the number of males (light green line) claiming, with UC claimant numbers of both sexes continuing to rise (see chart above).
- Claimant counts rose in all districts in the month to September 2025, up by 105 in Wealden, 40 in Eastbourne and Rother, 35 in Lewes and 30 in Hastings.
- But over the year numbers fell in all districts except Eastbourne, where there was a 5.2% rise. The largest percentage decrease in claimants since September 2024 was seen in Hastings (down 11.1%), while in Wealden there was a decline of 3.8% and in Rother numbers were 3.3% lower in September 2025. In England as a whole there was a decrease of 3.6% in the year to September, and 1.2% regionally.

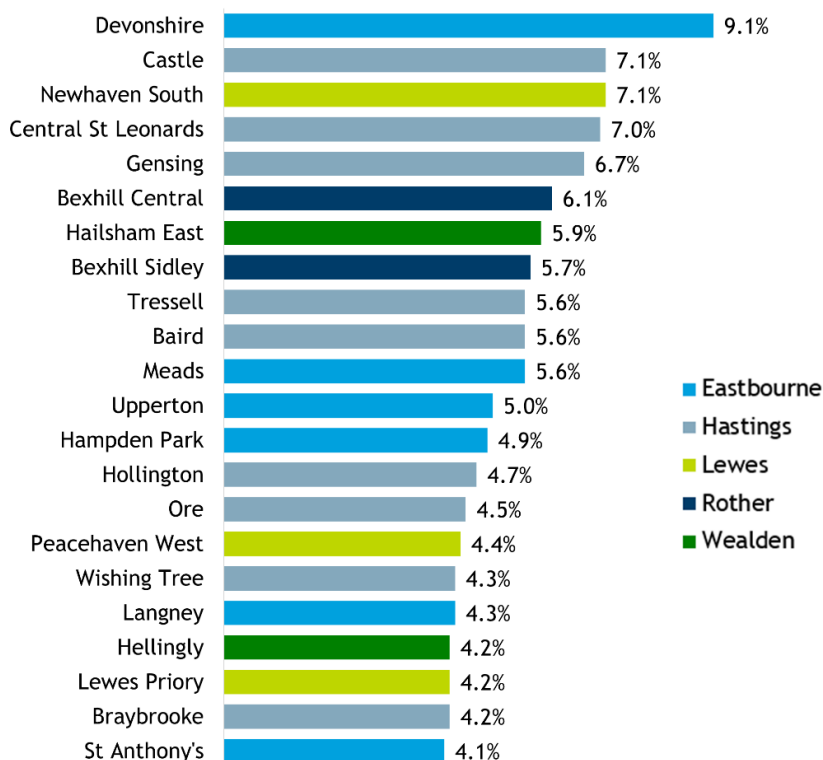
Wards

- 22 East Sussex wards have rates above or equal to the England average (4.1%), with the highest rates in Devonshire (9.1%) in Eastbourne, Castle (7.1%), Central St Leonards (7.0%), and Gensing (6.7%) in Hastings, and Newhaven South (7.1%) in Lewes.
- This includes 9 wards in Hastings, 6 in Eastbourne, 3 in Lewes, 2 in Rother and 2 in Wealden.
- 50 wards saw an increase in claimant numbers in the month to September 2025, while 20 wards saw a decline, and 38 saw no change.

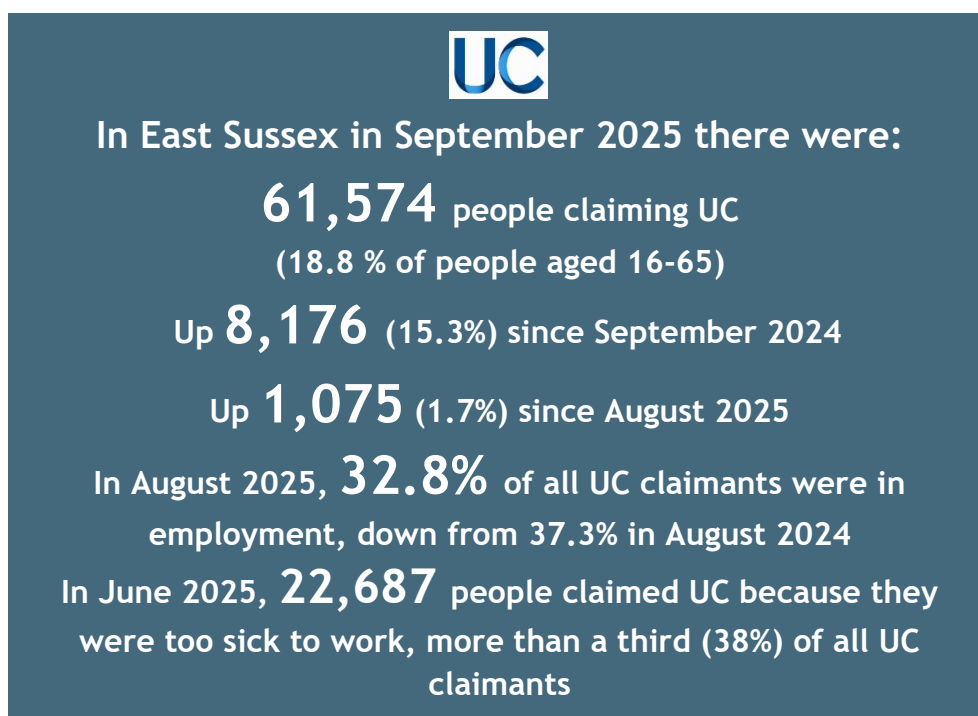
Map showing claimant rate in September 2025 - wards in East Sussex



Claimant rate in September 2025 - East Sussex wards at or above the national average (4.1%)



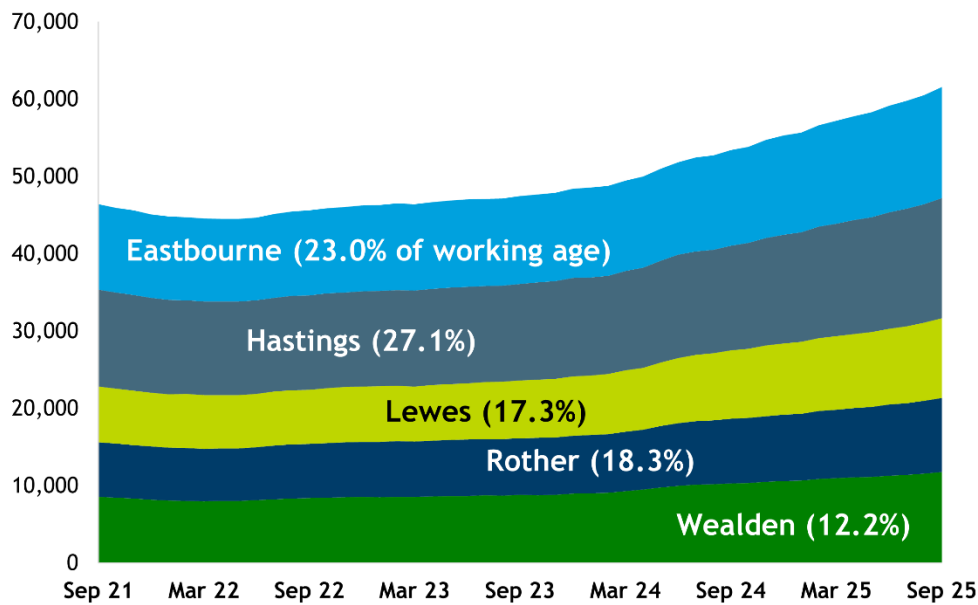
Universal Credit



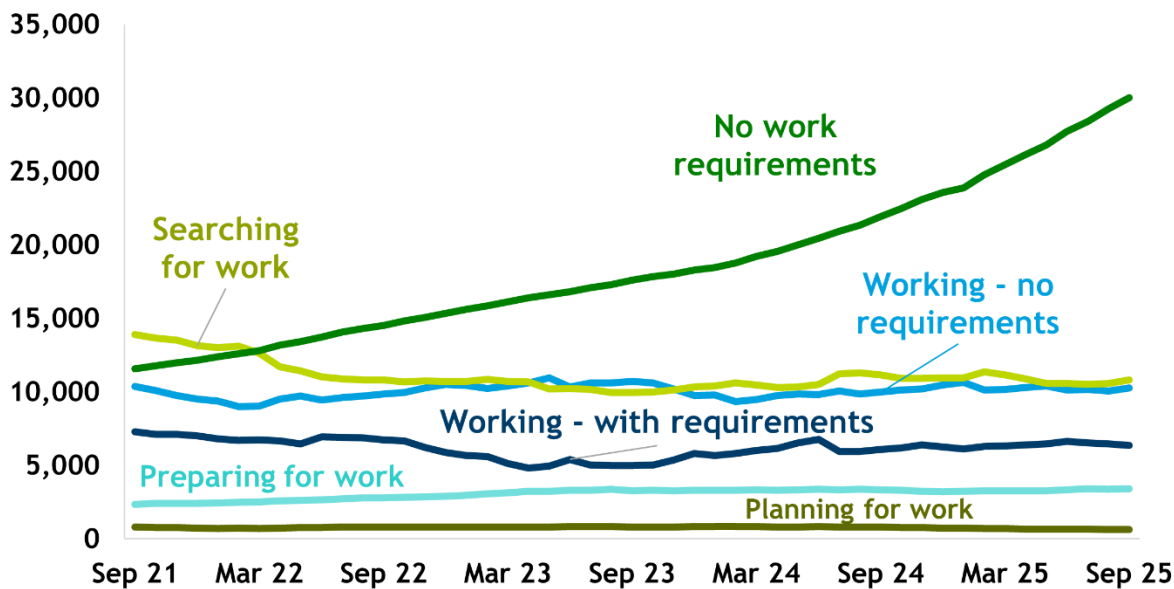
One of the reasons that the number of Universal Credit (UC) claimants is rising is because of the migration of claimants of other benefits such as Tax Credits, Employment and Support

Allowance and Housing benefit, into the UC regime. This migration has been rolled out more assertively this year.

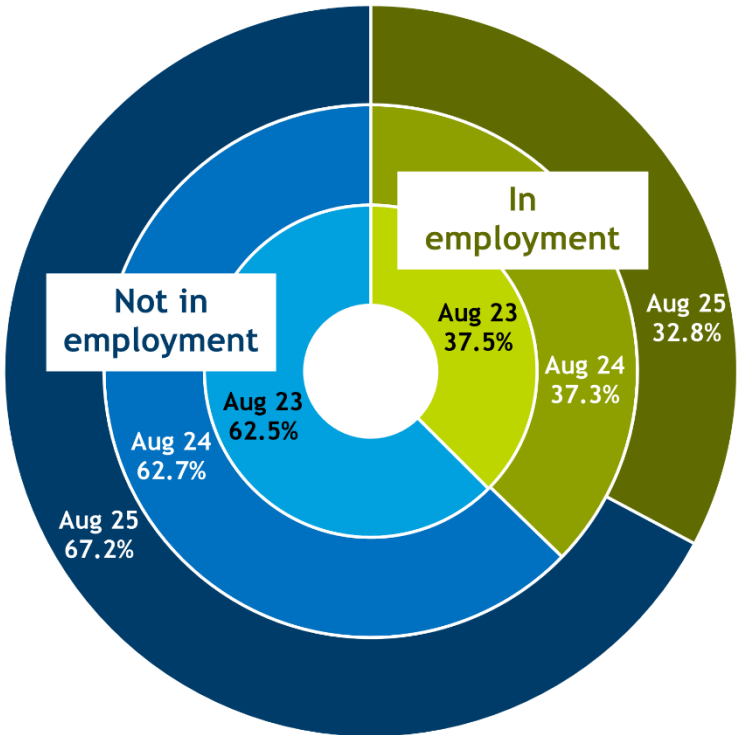
Universal Credit claimants by district, September 2021-2025 (including % working age claiming in September 2025)



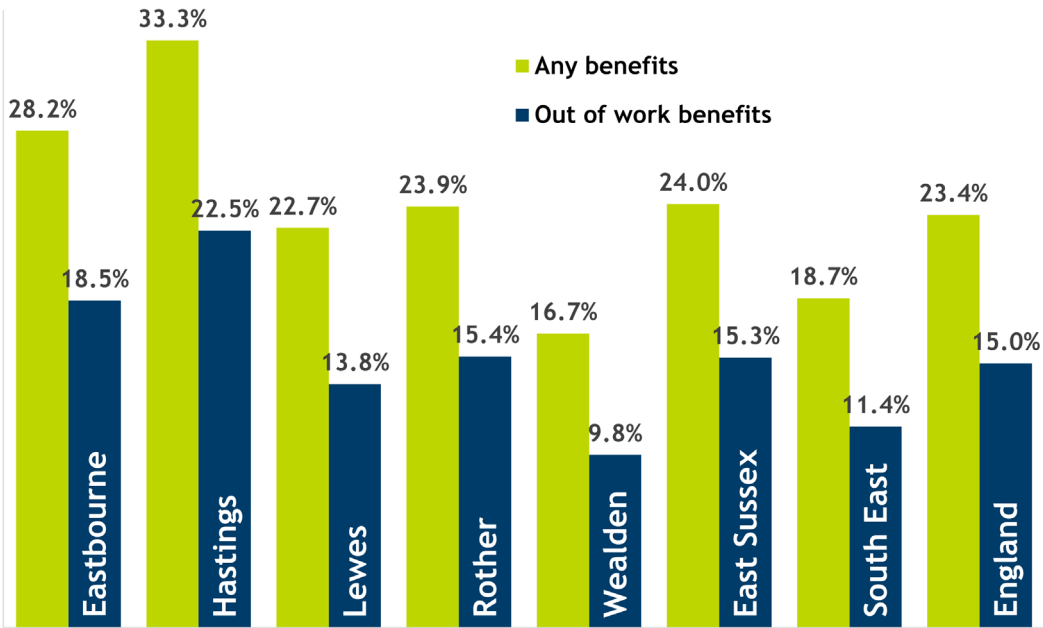
Number of Universal Credit claimants by conditionality, September 2021-2025



Employment indicator of Universal Credit claimants in East Sussex - August 2023, 2024 and 2025



Percentage of working age people claiming any DWP benefit and Out-of-work benefits in February 2025, districts, East Sussex and comparators



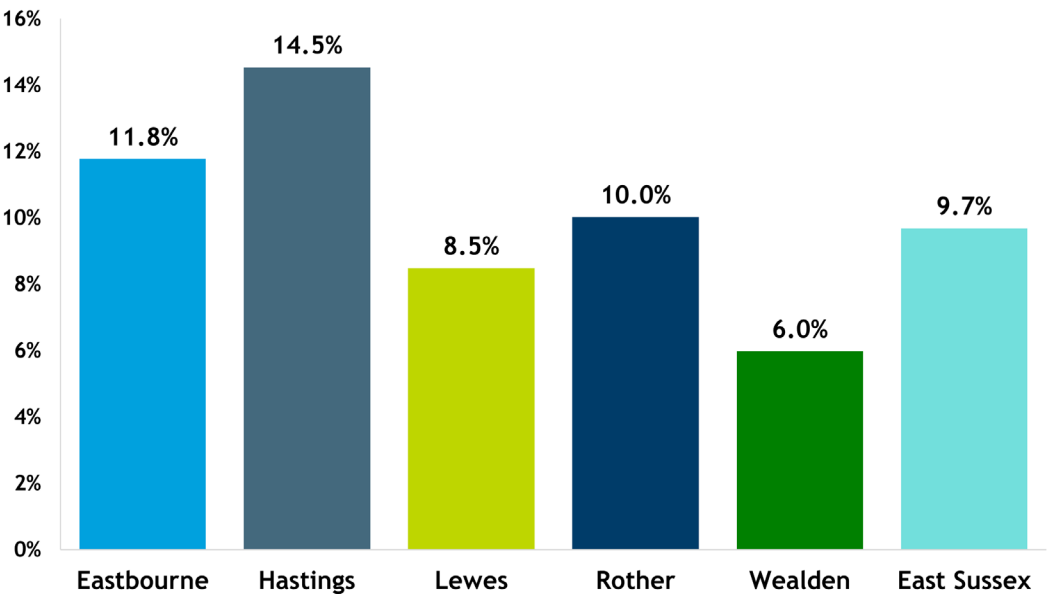
Universal Credit (UC) Health Journey

In order to better understand how many people are economically inactive because of ill health it helpful to understand the proportion of people claiming UC because they are too sick to work or disabled. This group are described as being on the “Universal Credit Health Journey”, which means either they are awaiting a health assessment, or that they have limited capability for work, either with or without a requirement to undertake “work related activity”

The number claiming UC on the health journey has risen from 17,266 in June 2024 to 22,687 in June 2025 (the most recent data available), 38.4% of all UC claimants in East Sussex at that time. Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), the working age benefit for sick and disabled people, is slowly being replaced by UC for new sick claimants who are subject to means-testing due to low income, but is still claimed by sick people who have paid sufficient National Insurance contributions who do not qualify for means tested benefits, because of a partner’s, or other, income, or savings over £16,000. In February 2025, more than half of all ESA claimants were on Contributions-based benefit.

In March 2025 the Annual Population Survey (APS) estimated that 77,200 people, 23.5% of the working age population, were economically inactive. In February 2025, 20,358 people claimed UC because they were too sick to work. In February 2025, 10,636 people were claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Incapacity Benefit (IB). This means that in February 2025 a total of around 31,000 working age people were claiming benefits because they were too sick or disabled to work. This in turn implies that under half (41%) of all economically inactive people are actually claiming benefits due to being too sick to work.

Percentage of working age people who are claiming UC on the Health Journey, or claiming ESA/IB, in February 2025



If we look at these 31,000 as a percentage of all working age people, 9.7% are claiming because they are too sick to work, with the highest rates in Hastings (14.5%) and Eastbourne (11.8%). To compare with Census results, in March 2021, 16,560 people, 5.3% of the county’s

working age population said that they were economically inactive because of a long-term health condition. This implies that some working age people who are claiming because of ill health may well consider that their primary reason for economic inactivity is something else, such as looking after home and family (including caring for another adult), early retirement, or being a student.

Labour market - Census data

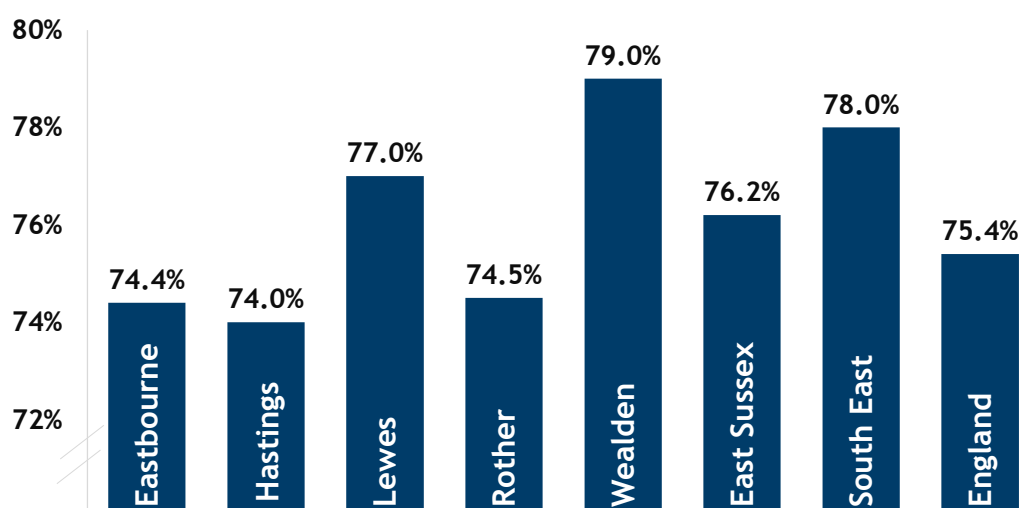
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Census 2021 results are available [see [note 2](#) for useful links]

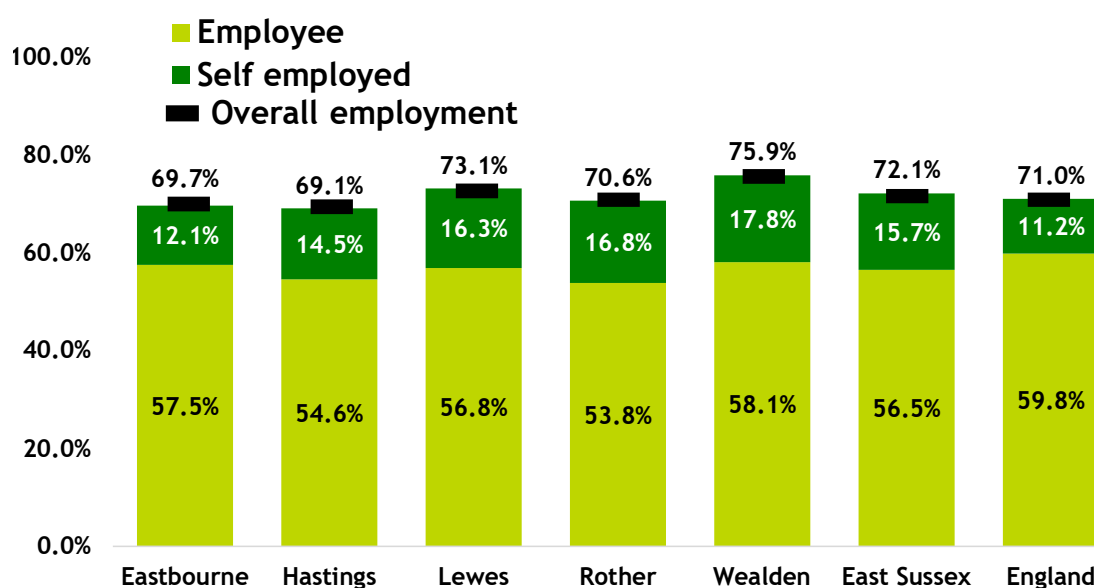
It is important to note that the 2021 Census took place during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a period of unparalleled and rapid change; the national lockdown, associated guidance and furlough measures will have affected the labour market topic.

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).

Economic activity rates in 2021- percentage of the working age population (16-64) (note axis not at zero)



Employees and self-employed in 2021 (Aged 16-64)



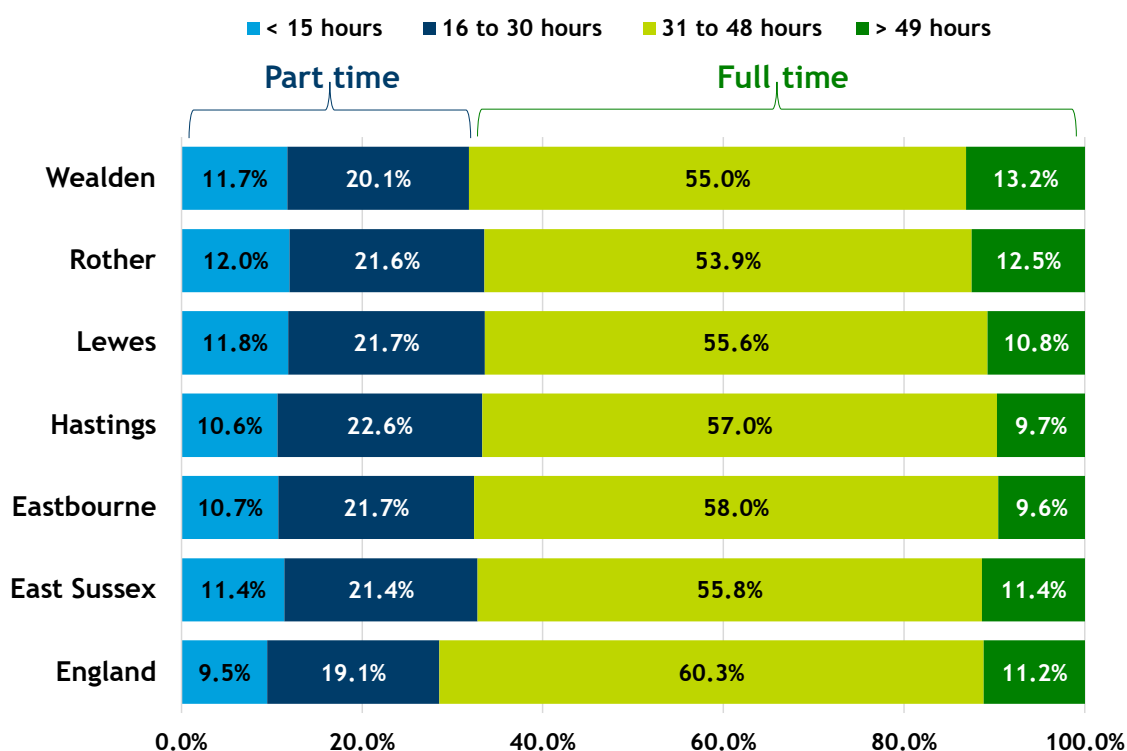
Economic activity and inactivity

- Economic activity rates have fallen in all districts, regionally and nationally since 2011, and economic activity rates are lower across the county than the national average.
- 2021 there were 238,540 working age people in East Sussex who were economically active (76.2% of all people aged 16-64 years) of whom 225,900 were in employment (72.1% of people aged 16-64). This compares with 75.4% of 16-64 year olds in England who were economically active and 71.0% nationally who were in employment. Economic activity rates in the County were higher than the National average in Lewes and Wealden for working age people, but lower than the national average in all other districts.
- Wealden has the highest economic activity rate of the working age population in the County with 79.0% of those aged 16-64 being economically active in the district.

Employees and self-employment

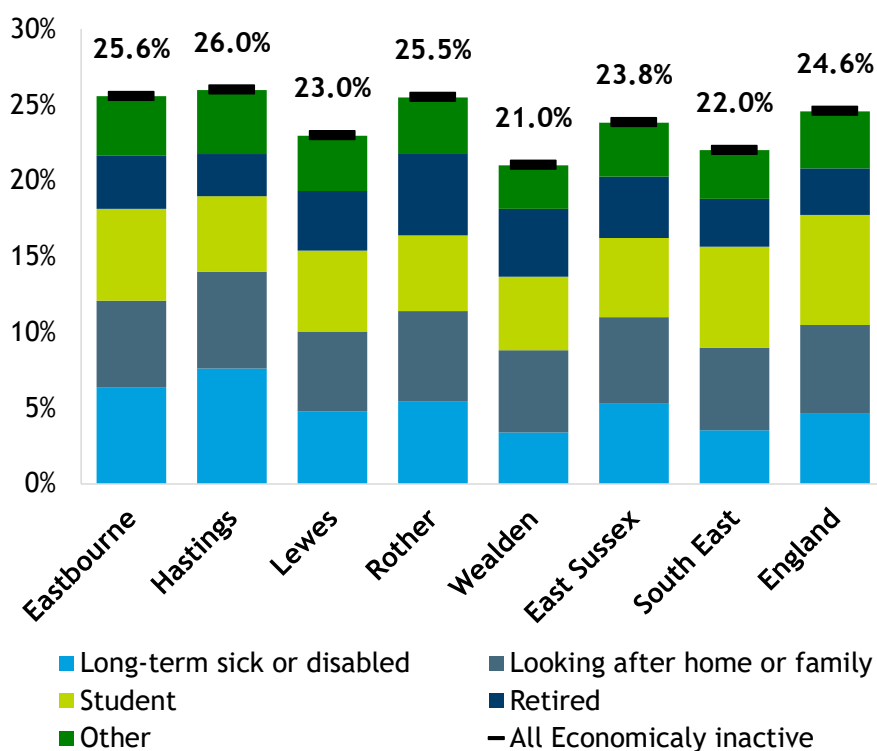
- A higher proportion of working age adults in East Sussex are self-employed (15.7%) compared to the national average (11.2%). Wealden had the highest rate of self-employed people aged 16-64 at 17.8%, but all districts had rates above the national average.
- 48.5% of employed adults (aged 16-64) in the county were working full-time (more than 31 hours per week) (50.8% in England) in 2021. 8.2% of the working age population of East Sussex were working very long hours (48 hours or more), compared to 7.9% nationally.
- There was a higher percentage of part-time workers (23.6%) in the county compared to the national average (20.3%).

Hours worked in 2021 (Aged 16-64)



Economic inactivity

Economically inactive in 2021 by type (working age 16-64)



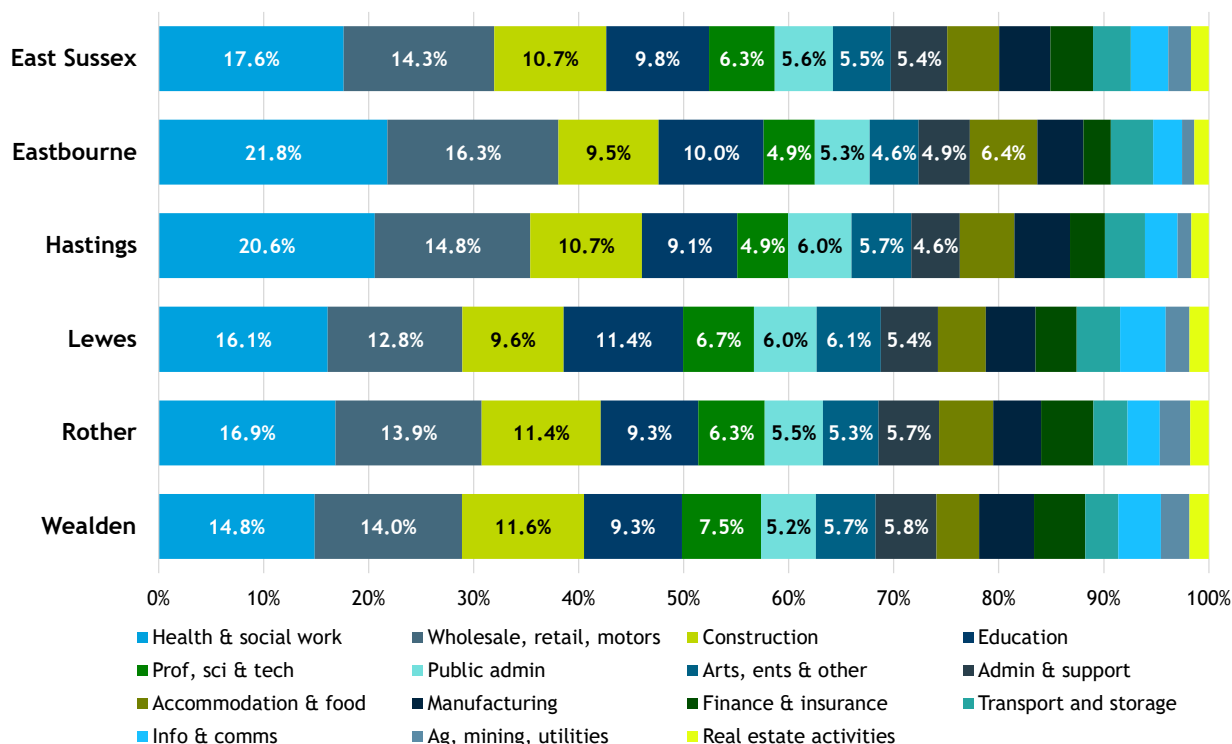
- In 2021, 23.8% of the county's working age population (16-64) were economically inactive, compared to 24.6% in England.

- More than a quarter of the working age population are economically inactive in three of the county's districts (Hastings 26.0%, Eastbourne 25.6% and Rother 25.5%) compared to 24.6% of economically inactive 16-64-year-olds in England.
- In the county in 2021, 4.0% of the working age population was economically active and unemployed, compared to 4.4% nationally. The highest rates are in Hastings (5.0%) and Eastbourne (4.8%).
- While 5.3% of adults 16-64 in the county were inactive because they were long-term sick or disabled, similar to the national average (4.6%), in Hastings 7.6% were inactive for this reason, compared to just 3.4% in Wealden.

Industry of employment

- Employment in Health and social care, and Wholesale, retail and motors dominates in the county.
- 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 maybe 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.

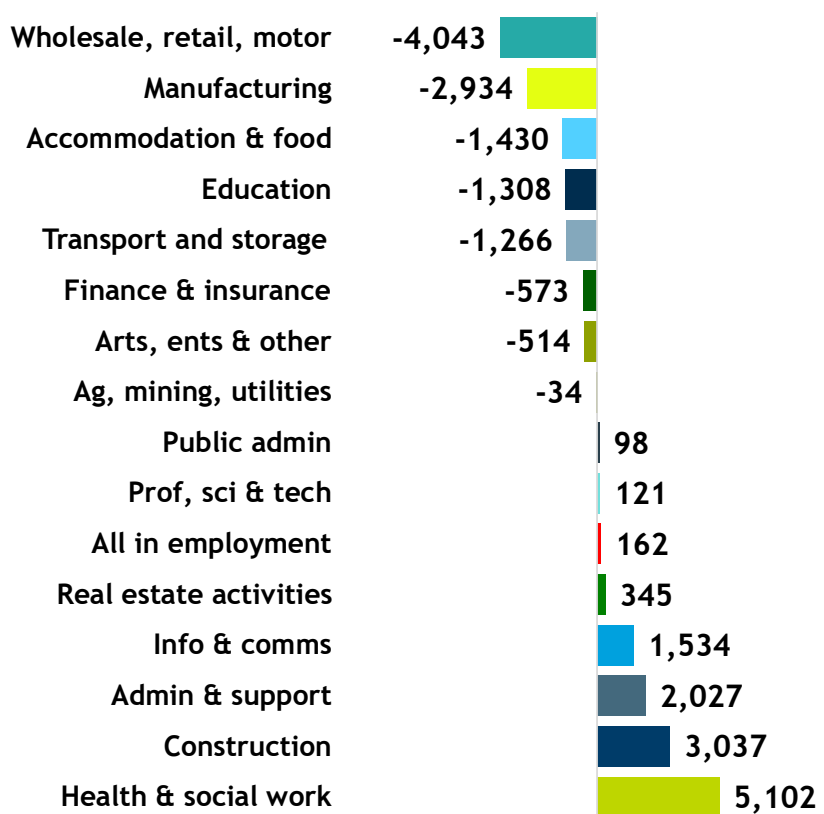
Percentage of people working in different industrial sectors in 2021



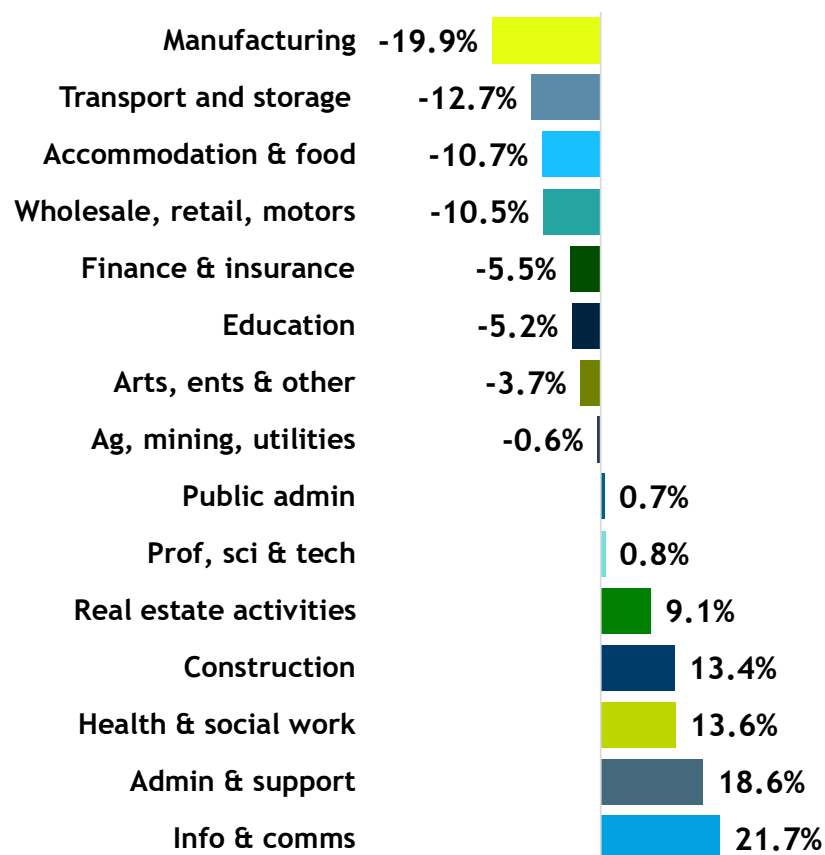
Industry of employment - change since 2011

- 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 below and previous page).
- 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.

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



Percentage change in industry of employment 2011-2021



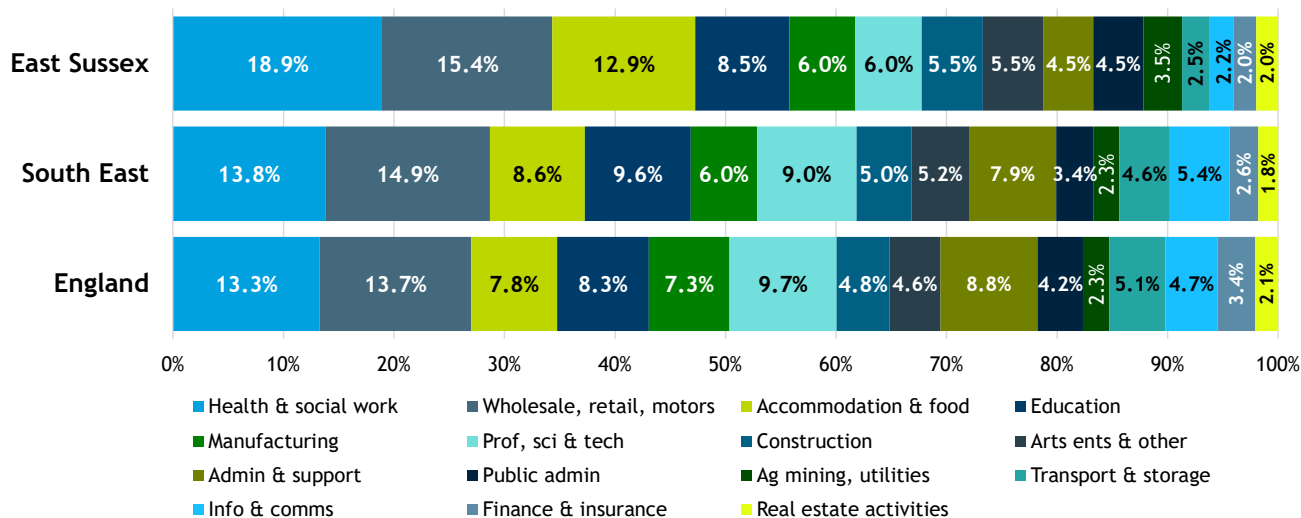
Small area data on industry sectors from Census 2021

- 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 sub-sector is much higher in parts of East Sussex than the rest of the country. The MSOA Eastbourne 010 (Pier) had the highest percentage of people in this sub-sector of all MSOAs in the country at 6.0%, with four MSOAs in the county being among the highest 20 MSOAs nationally for employment in Residential Care.
- Hastings 011 (Central St Leonards) had 5.5% of people employed in the Creative, Arts and Entertainment sector, the highest proportion of any MSOA in the country outside London.
- 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.

Industry of employment from BRES, 2023

- The Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) is a more up to date measure of employment in different industries.
- BRES data estimates that there were 201,000 people in employment in East Sussex in 2023 (the totals exclude many self-employed people and many who work in agriculture).
- BRES also estimates that the Health and Social Care sector employs the largest percentage of people in employment, with 18.9% of people working in the sector in East Sussex in 2023, compared to 13.3% nationally. The sector accounts for well over a quarter of employment in Hastings (29.4%) and Eastbourne (27.5%), where the county's main hospitals are located.
- The second largest sector in terms of employment is Wholesale, retail and motor trades, which accounted for 15.4% of employment in the county in 2023, and 20.0% in Eastbourne. In Rother nearly a quarter of employment in 2023 was in the Accommodation and Food service sector (22.9%), which was the third largest sector in the county (12.9%).

Percentage of people working in different industrial sectors in 2023 (BRES)



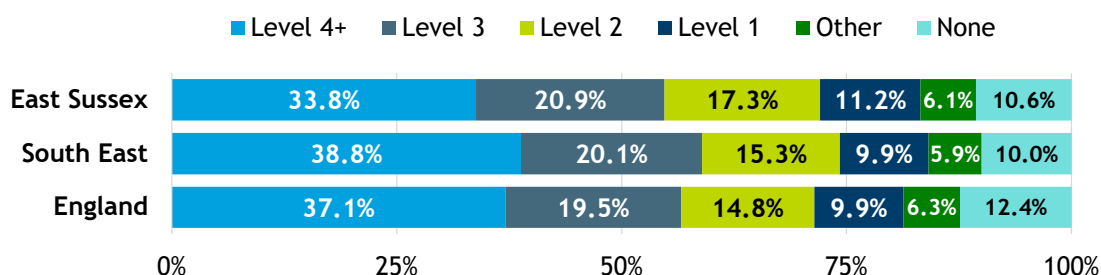
Skills

census2021

Qualifications

- In 2021, a lower proportion of working-age (aged 16-64) people in the county had level 4 qualifications than nationally, whether we look at the Census 2021 data or the Annual Population Survey (APS).
- A slightly lower proportion of working age people had no qualifications compared to England when we look at the data from Census 2021. However, a slightly higher proportion of working-age people in East Sussex appeared to have no qualifications in December 2021 when looking at the APS.

Qualifications (NVQ) of the population aged 16-64 (highest qualification), Census 2021 [see [note 3](#)]



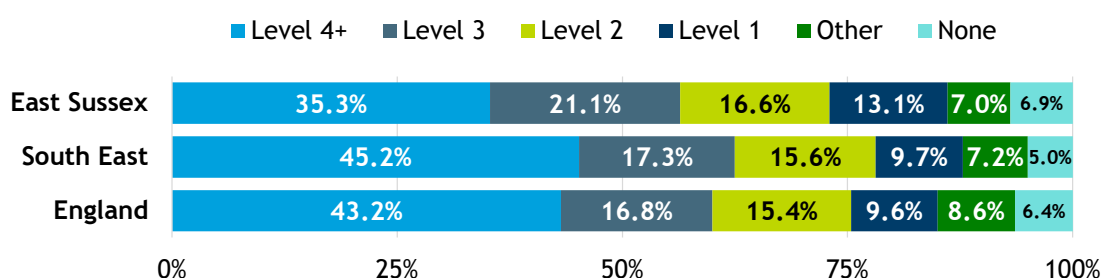
Census key points

- The overall number of schoolchildren and full-time students aged five years and over has decreased since 2011, when it was 88,250. While the proportion of students as a percentage of the total population aged 5 and over has remained largely static in England (20.4% in 2021 vs 20.5% in 2021), in East Sussex, it has fallen from 17.7% in 2011 to 16.8% in 2021.
- 33.8% of residents aged 16-64 years (105,930 people) had NVQ Level 4 or above qualifications (for example, Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's degree and post-graduate qualifications). This is slightly lower than the English national average (37.1%).
- In 2021, 10.6% of the population aged 16 to 64 (33,310 people) reported having no qualifications. This is lower than the English national average of 12.4%.
- Apprenticeships were the highest qualification for 4.3% of working age people (13,610).
- Within East Sussex, the district with the highest percentage of the working age population with Level 4 or above qualifications was Lewes with 37.4% (21,220) and the lowest percentage was Hastings, with 30.6% (17,220).
- Comparisons between 2011 and 2021 data for highest level of qualifications are not possible due to changes in how the questions were asked. (see charts on p.13 and [note 3](#) at end).

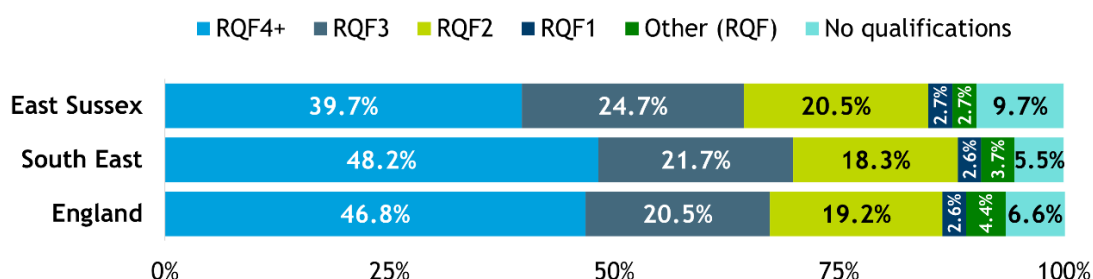
Annual Population Survey key points

- Note that the qualification data published in the Annual Population Survey (APS) has changed and since 2022, data is no longer published for National Vocational Qualifications framework (NVQ) qualifications and has been replaced by data which measures qualifications using the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), which is similar to, but not identical to the National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQ).
- APS qualifications data, on either measure, estimates that the proportion of the working age population with higher qualifications is considerably higher than were estimated in the Census 2021.
- The RQF measure, which is available for 2024, estimates that a much lower proportion of working age people have low or no qualifications compared to the 2021 NVQ.

Qualifications (NVQ) of the population aged 16-64 (highest qualification), December 2021 (from Annual Population Survey (APS))



Qualifications (RQF) of the population aged 16-64 (highest qualification), December 2024 (from APS)

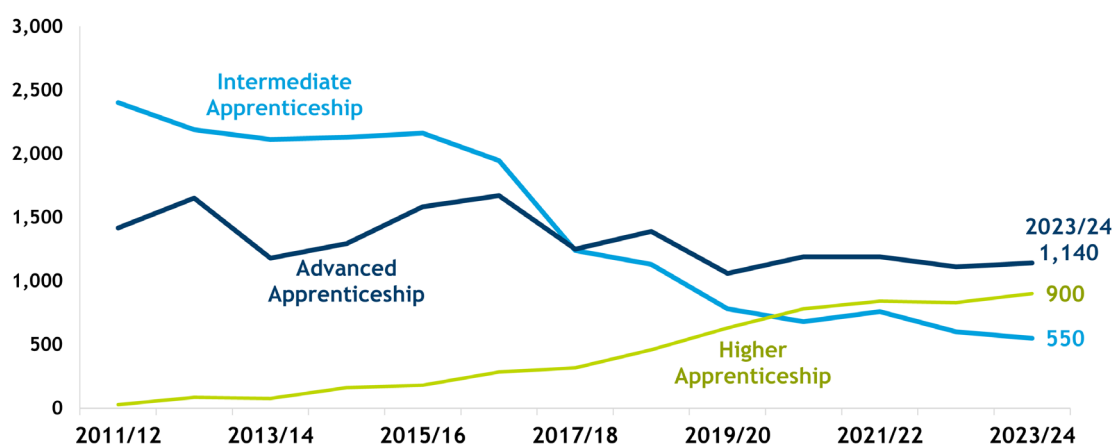


Note that Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) has replaced the NVQ framework for the measurement of people's qualification level in the APS, since the December 2022 release.

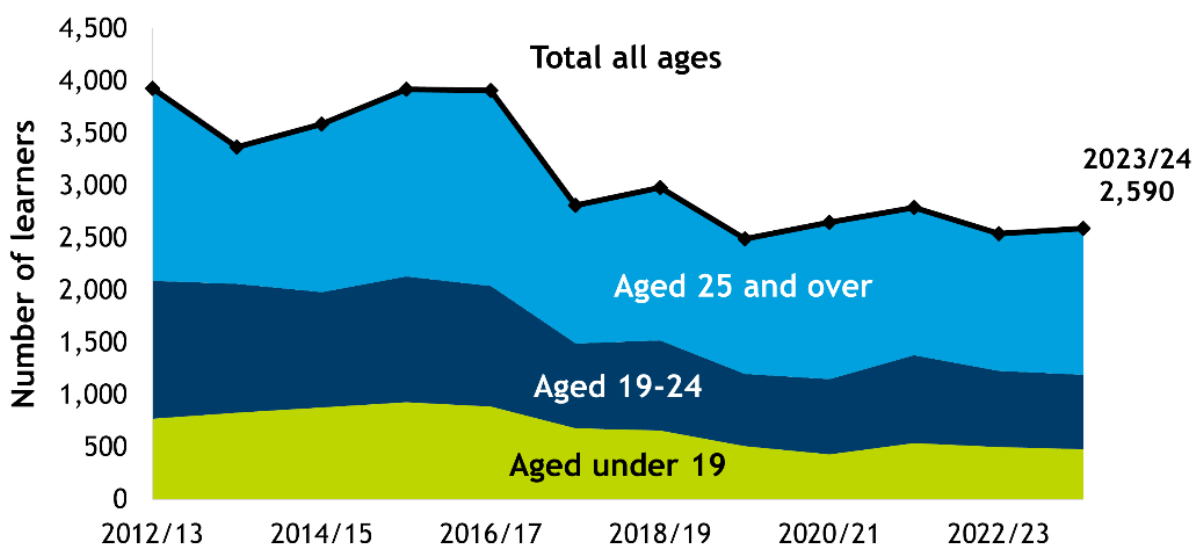
Apprenticeships

- There were 2,590 apprenticeship starts in East Sussex in the year 2023/24, 2% more than the previous year.
- Intermediate apprenticeships have been in decline since 2015/16, whereas Advanced apprenticeships have been fairly stable since 2019/20 and Higher apprenticeships have been rising consistently since 2011/12. [see [note 4](#)].
- Apprenticeships are increasingly being undertaken by older adults aged 25+ rather than school and college leavers.

East Sussex apprenticeship starts, 2011-2024



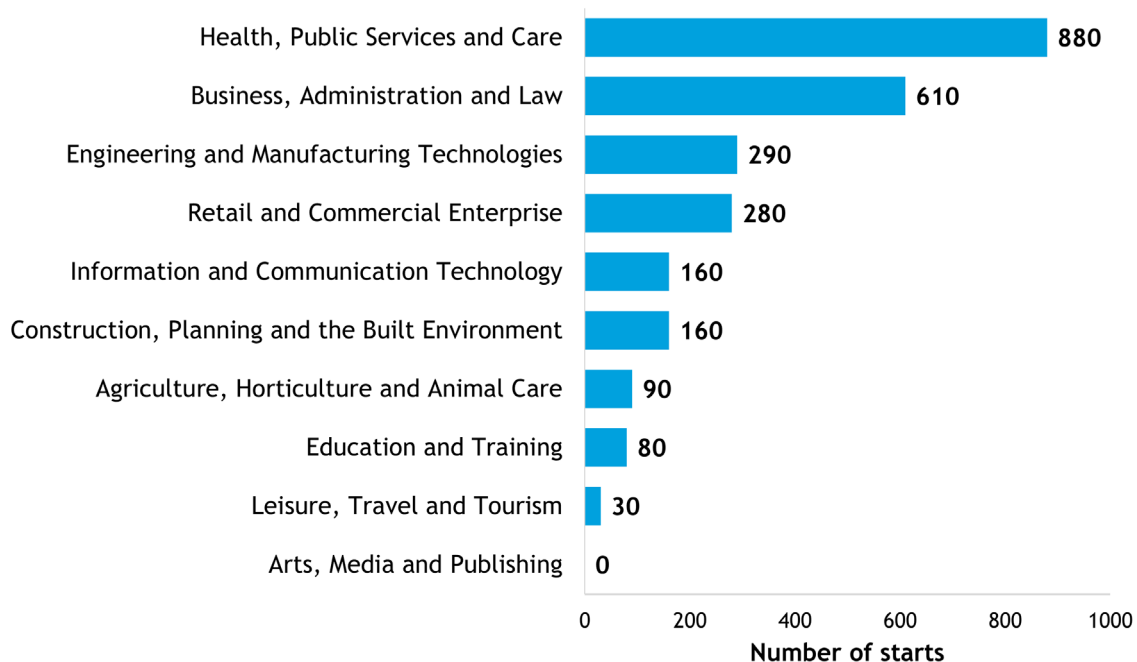
Apprenticeship starts by age group 2012-2024



- Health and care, and Business Administration and Law were the most popular subjects started in 2023/24, with Health making up more than a third of all apprenticeship starts, and Business and Law nearly a quarter.

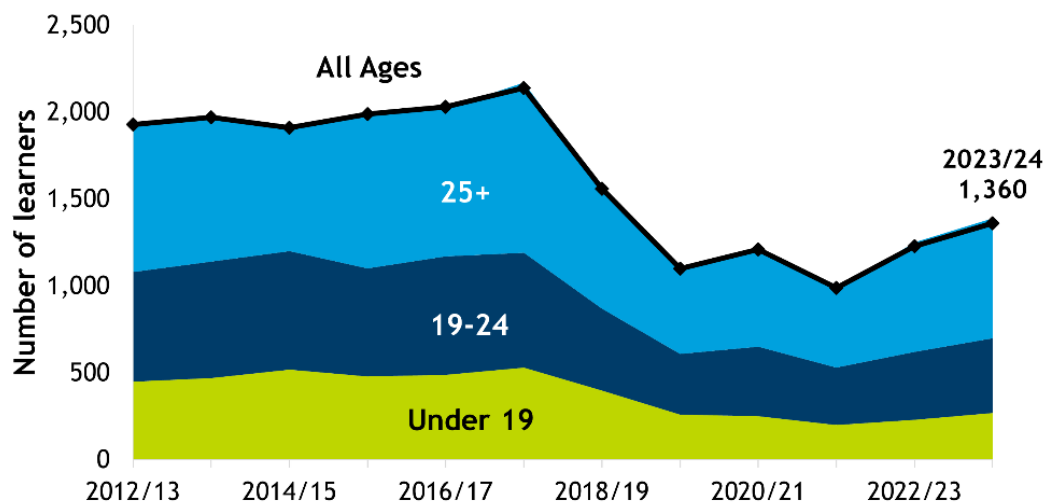
- Engineering and Retail (both 11% of starts) were the next largest subjects taken, and Construction and ICT were each just 6% of starts, which implies that the traditional role of apprenticeships mainly being a route into a trade such as plumbing or bricklaying is changing.

Apprenticeship starts in East Sussex 2023/24 by subject



- Apprenticeship achievements have been rising for the last two years among all age groups.

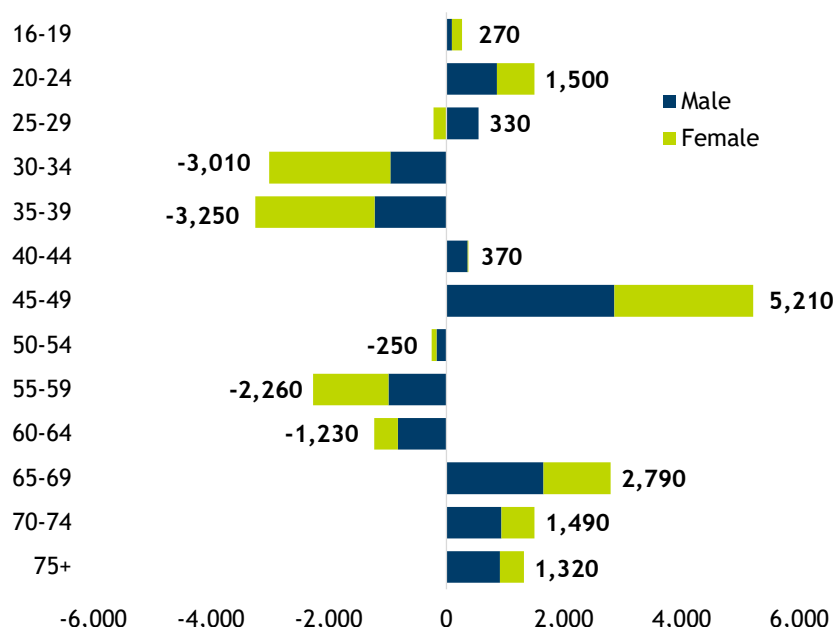
Apprenticeship achievements by age group 2012-2024



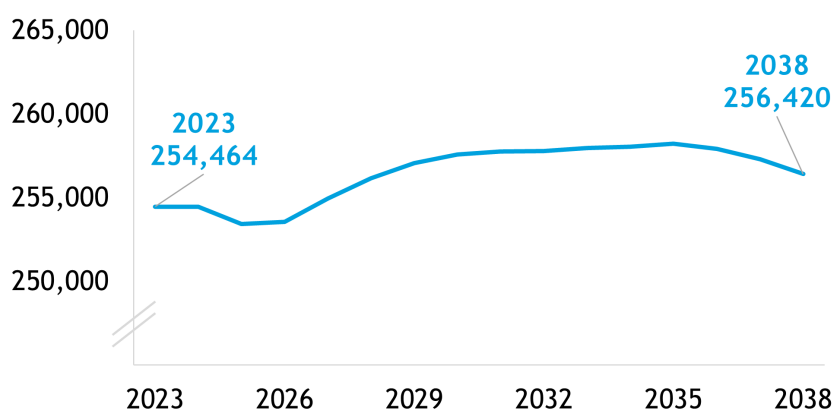
Workforce projections

- The labour force (economically active people aged 16-74) is expected to increase by just 0.8% (by 2,000) to about 256,400 people in 2038, but while there is projected to be a small decline in younger workers up to age 64 of 1.0%, there is expected to be a 32% increase in the labour force aged 65-74, reflecting changes to pension ages and increasing female participation in the workforce as well as rising numbers of older people due to the ageing of the baby boom generations.
- When we look at detailed age groups the largest rises are projected among the 45-49 age group (up 5,210) and the older age group (aged 65-74 - up 4,280) and with smaller rises among the youngest workers (aged 16-29) and a decline among the 30-39 age group and big falls among those aged 55-64 (down 3,490) (see [note 5](#))

Actual change in labour force numbers by detailed age group and sex, 2023-2038



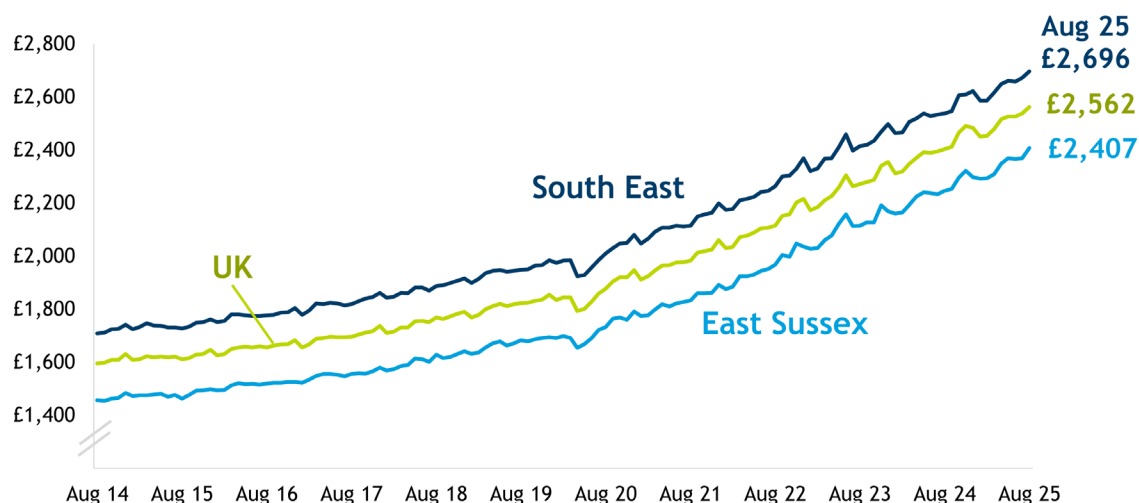
Workforce projections for East Sussex (dwelling-led) - projected number of economically active people aged 16-74 [[see note 6](#)]



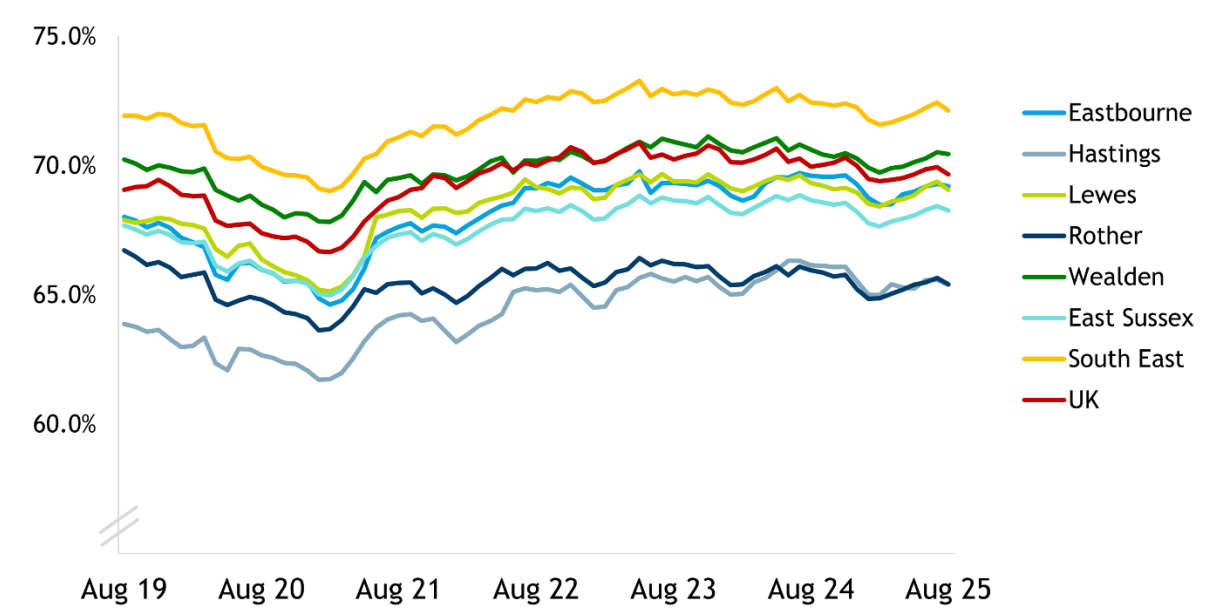
Wages and employment £

- At £668pw, there is comparatively low full-time workplace pay in the county (from ASHE - England £732pw, SE region £754 pw) but it has increased significantly, by 6.3% between 2023 and 2024, slightly faster than the national average (England FT pay up by 6.1%). [see [note 7](#) for more information and see charts on page 22].
- Employment rates (PAYE employees as a percentage of working age people aged 16-64) are lower in all districts and boroughs of East Sussex than the national and regional averages: lowest in Hastings and Rother (both 65.4%) and highest in Wealden (70.5%). The rate in East Sussex at 68.3% compares to the UK: 69.7% and the South East: 72.1% in August 2025 [see [note 8](#)].
- At 218,580, the number of employees in August 2025 is lower than the peak seen in July 2024 (220,456) and 0.6% lower than in August 2024.
- Median monthly earnings at £2,407 in the county (August 2025) are lower than national (UK=£2,562) and regional (£2,696) averages (see chart below) but saw an annual increase just above the average - up 7.2% in East Sussex and 6.6% in the UK since August 2024. PAYE pay data is now designated an official National Statistic.
- Wages are lower than average because some of dominant sectors for employment in the county: Wholesale, retail and motors; and Accommodation and Food are all below the national average wage and are lowest in the Accommodation and Food sector (excl. Household sector - see chart p.21).

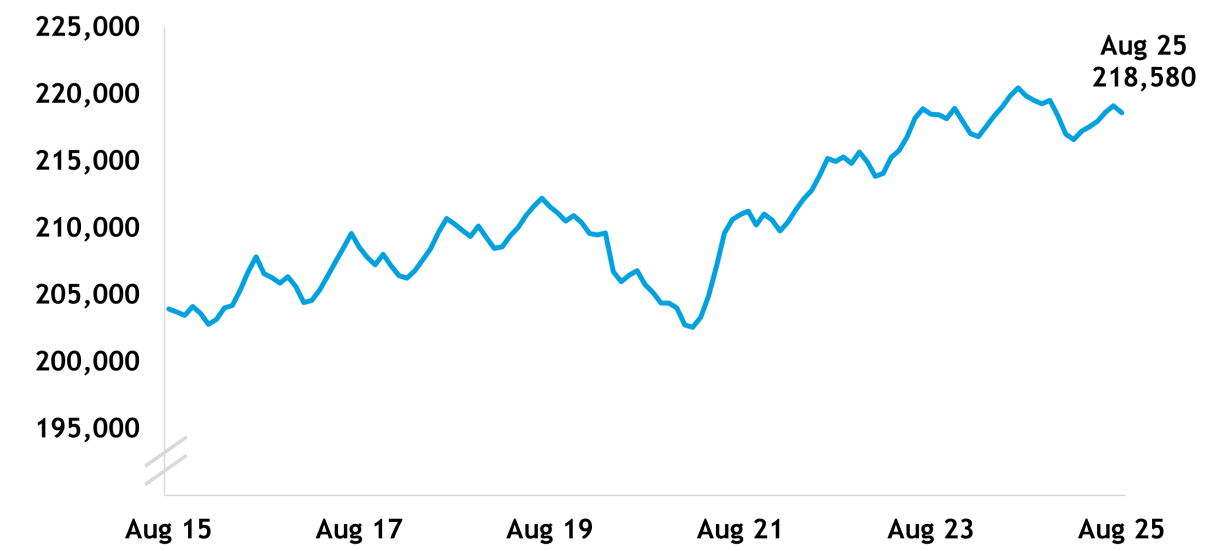
Median monthly earnings from PAYE Real Time Information (RTI), August 2014-2025 (note axis not at zero)



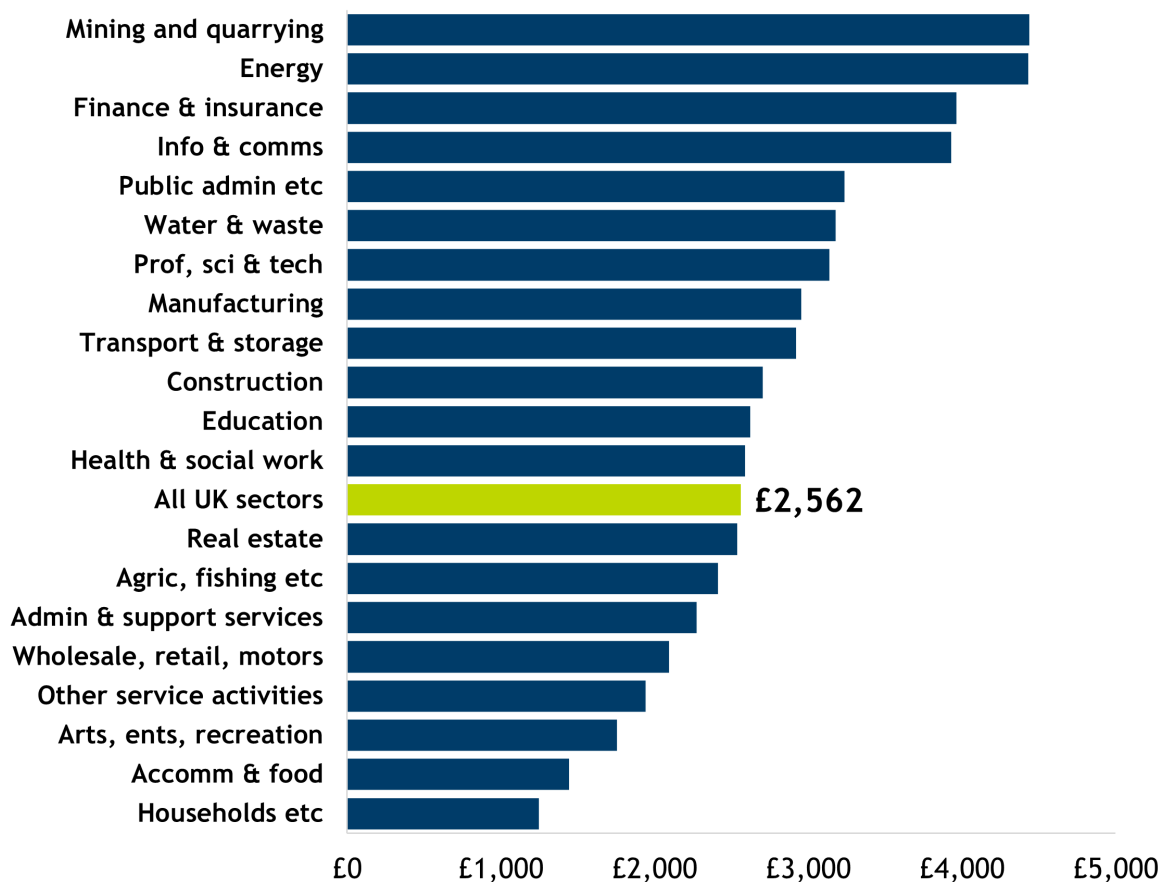
Employment rate from PAYE RTI (employees per working age, 16-64), August 2019 - August 2025 (note axis not at zero)



Number of employees (PAYE RTI), August 2015-2025, East Sussex (note axis not at zero) [see [note 8](#)]

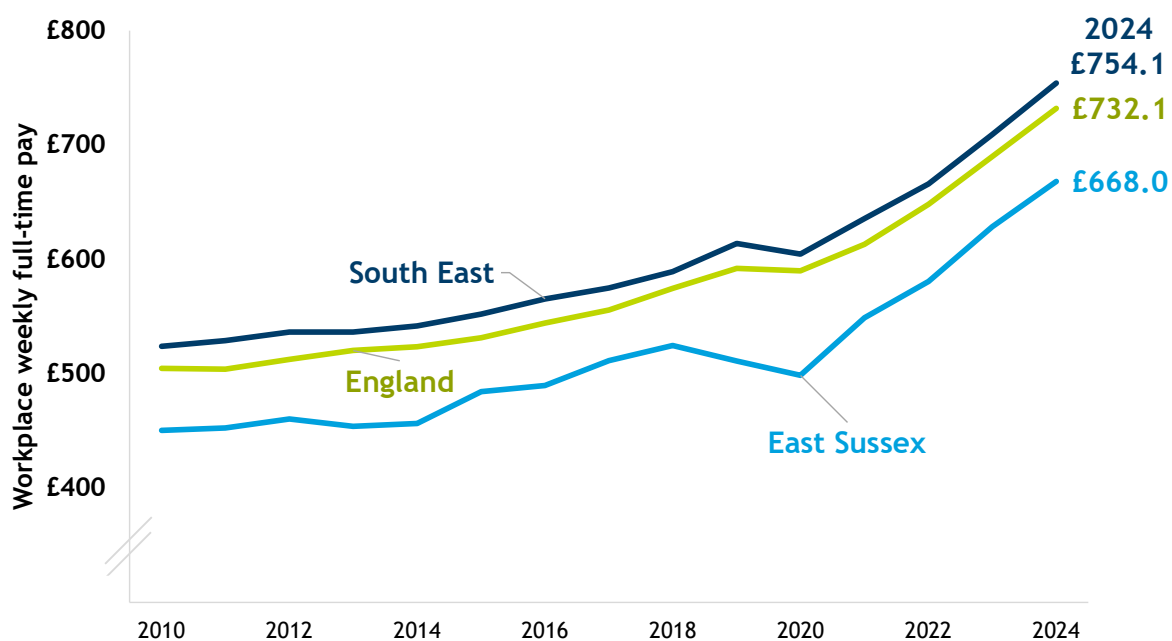


Median monthly pay by industry (PAYE RTI) in the UK, August 2025



Workplace-based median full-time weekly earnings, 2010-2024

[from ASHE - see [note 7](#)] (note axis not at zero)



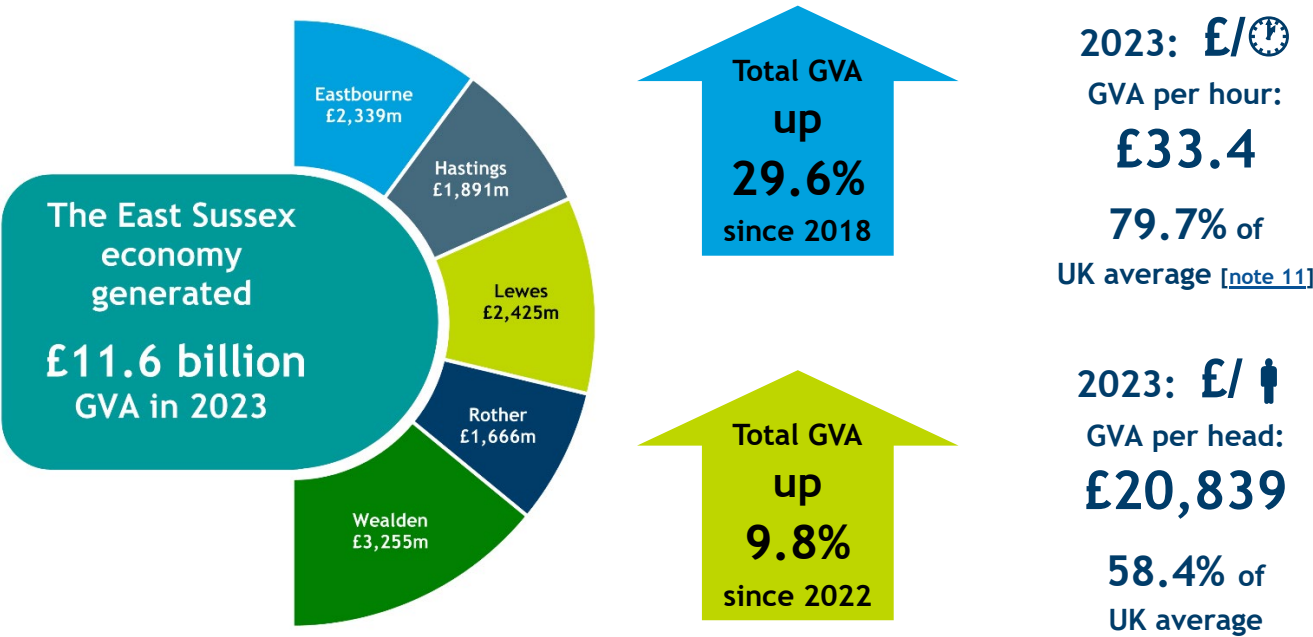
Workplace-based median full-time weekly earnings in 2024 and percentage change since 2020 and 2023 - East Sussex, districts and comparators

	2024	% change 2020-2024	% change 2023-2024
Eastbourne	£667	30.8%	2.6%
Hastings	£671	50.6%	18.5%
Lewes	£670	24.9%	0.3%
Rother	£614	41.7%	5.1%
Wealden	£672	29.9%	3.9%
East Sussex	£668	34.0%	6.3%
South East	£754	24.7%	6.3%
England	£732	24.1%	6.1%

Gross Value Added

- Total GVA grew by 60.3% in the county between 2013 and 2023, slightly higher than growth of 55.2% in the UK as a whole and 50.4% in the SE region [see [note 9](#)].
- GVA per head in the county grew from £19,136 in 2022 to £20,839 in 2023. In 2023 it was just 58.4% of the UK figure of £35,661. The annual rise of 8.9% was slightly larger than the national increase (UK up 8.2%) in GVA per head.
- While Real estate was the largest sector in the county at 25% of GVA in 2023, if we take out 'Owner-occupied imputed rental' (OOIR - [see [note 10](#)]), which reflects property prices in an area, Health (14.7%), Wholesale, retail and motors (11.8%), Construction (10.8%) and Education (10.1%) are the largest sectors
- There is much variation at district level, especially when OOIR is not included. For example, in 2023, Health and Social work made up 23% of the GVA of Eastbourne (not including OOIR) and 22% in Hastings compared to 9% in Lewes and 10% in Wealden.
- Finance and Insurance activities (up 44% from £69m to £99m), Energy, water and Waste (up 32% from £270m to £356m) and Construction (up 19%, from £828m to £982m) were the industries seeing the largest GVA growth in the county in 2022-23.

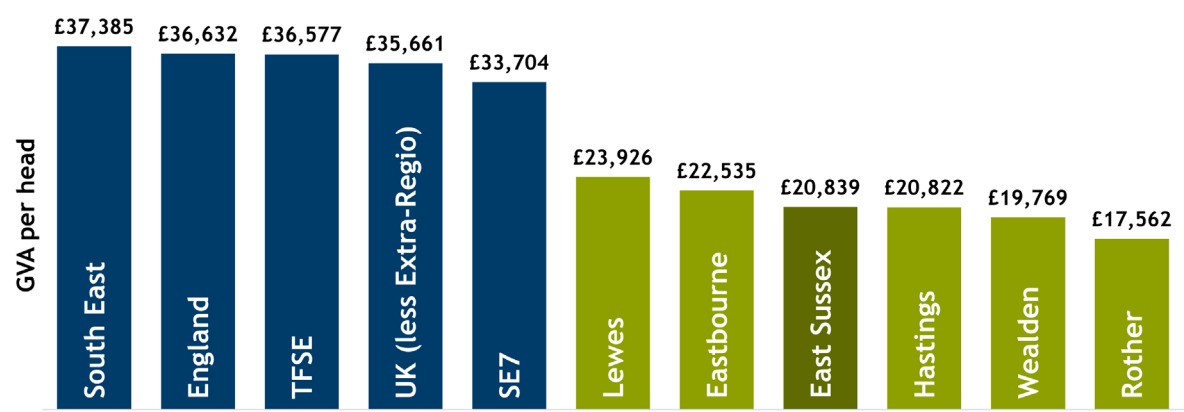
Gross Value Added (GVA) infographic



5 sectors account for nearly two thirds of total GVA in East Sussex (2023):

-  Real Estate - including owner occupiers imputed rental (25%) (OOIR accounts for 21%)
-  Health (12%)
-  Wholesale, retail & motors (9%)
-  Construction (9%)
-  Education (8%)

GVA per head in 2023, by district, including TFSE, SE7 and other geographies



If we exclude OOIR [see [note 10](#)], different sectors make a higher than average contribution to GVA in the districts:

Eastbourne: Health and Social work (22.9%); Wholesale, retail etc. (14.0%); Education (9.5%)

Hastings: Health (22.0%); Manufacturing (16.7%); Wholesale, retail etc. and Public administration (11.5%)

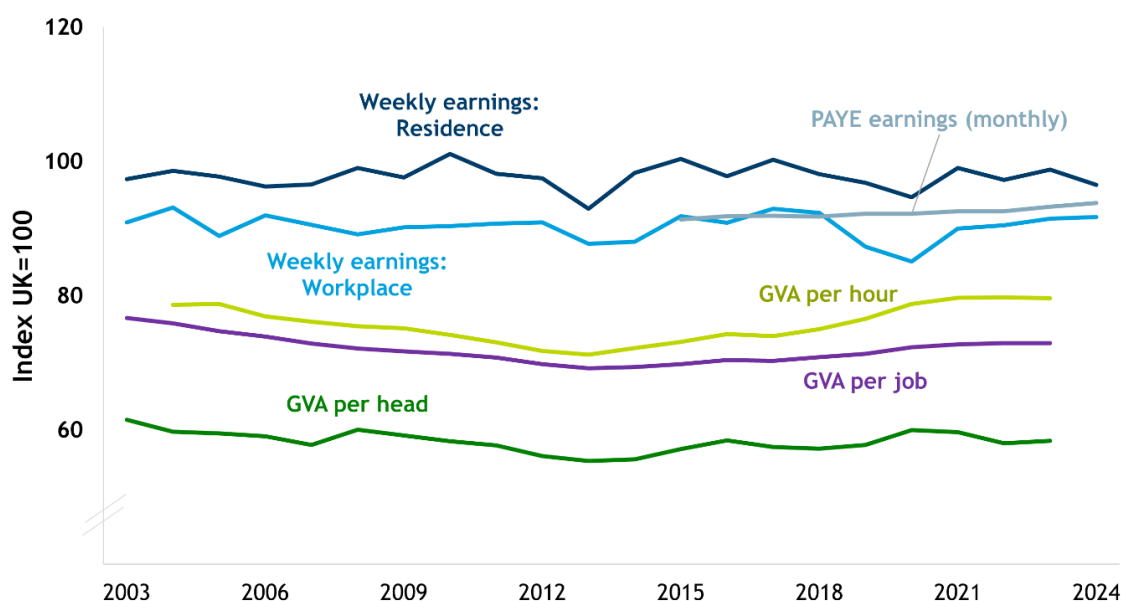
Lewes: Public admin (17.6%); Agriculture, mining and utilities (14.8%); Education (9.2%)

Rother: Education (13.2%); Construction (13.1%); Health (11.5%);

Wealden: Construction (16.8%); Education (12.5%); Wholesale, retail etc (12.4%); Manufacturing (11.6%)

- Excluding OOIR, if we look at the total contribution to GVA, the biggest numerical increase over the period 2013-2023 in East Sussex was seen in Health (£489m), closely followed by Construction (£483m), and then Wholesale, retail and motors (£377m), Public administration and defence (£327); Utilities and Waste (£266m) and Education (£254m).

Productivity and earnings measures compared - East Sussex indices, where UK=100 [see [note 11](#) and [note 12](#)] (note that axis does not start at zero)



- Weekly workplace full-time earnings have fluctuated around 90% of the UK average and rose to 91.7% in 2024. Weekly residence-based full-time earnings are just below the UK average (96.5%) reflecting high levels of out-commuting by East Sussex residents.
- The GVA per head index fell slightly to 58.4% of the national average in 2023. The GVA per hour index (79.7% of the UK in 2023), and GVA per filled job index (73.0% of UK figure in 2023) both remained steady between 2021 and 2023 and have been on the increase since 2013.

- PAYE monthly earnings are below the UK average (93.8% in April 2024)

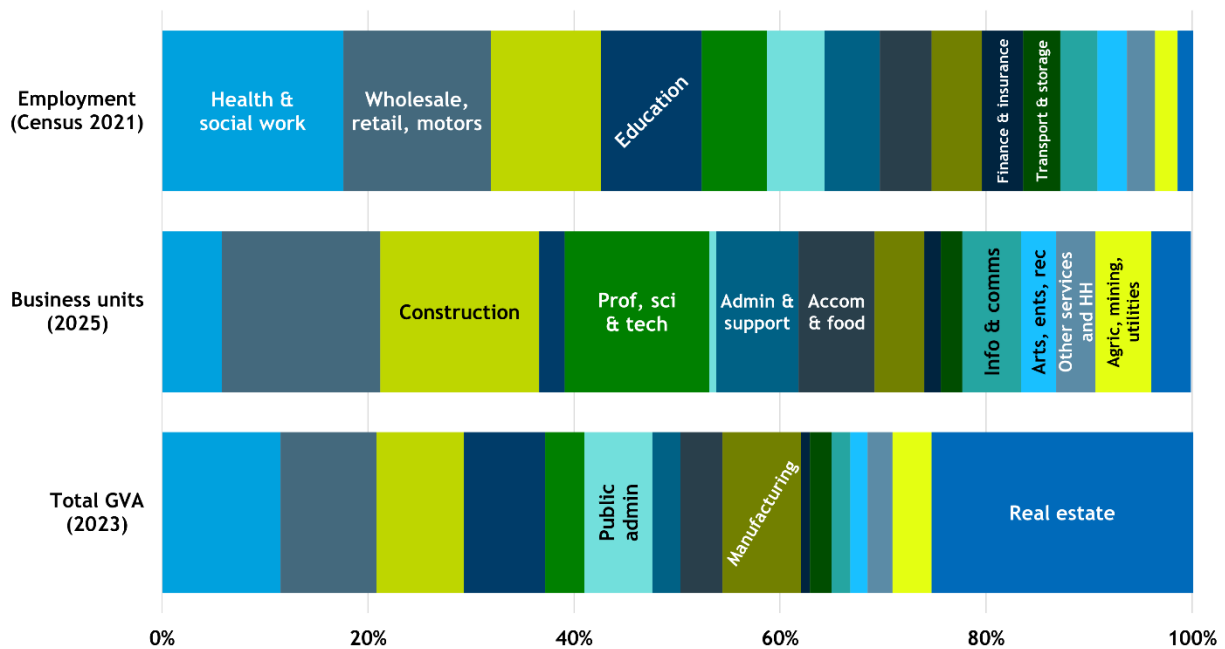
Table comparing percentage of GVA (in 2023), Local business units (in 2025) and Employment (from Census 2021) (ordered by SIC section)

Highest percentages highlighted in turquoise

	Total GVA (2023)	Business units (2025)	Employment (Census 2021)
Agriculture, mining, utilities	3.8%	5.4%	2.2%
Manufacturing	7.6%	4.8%	4.9%
Construction	8.5%	15.4%	10.7%
Wholesale, retail, motors	9.3%	15.4%	14.3%
Transportation and storage	2.1%	2.1%	3.6%
Accommodation and food services	4.1%	7.4%	5.0%
Information and communication	1.8%	5.7%	3.6%
Finance and insurance	0.9%	1.6%	4.0%
Real estate activities	25.4%	3.9%	1.7%
Professional, scientific and technical	3.8%	14.0%	6.3%
Administrative and support services	2.7%	8.0%	5.4%
Public administration and defence	6.6%	0.7%	5.6%
Education	7.9%	2.5%	9.8%
Human health and social work activities	11.5%	5.8%	17.6%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1.7%	3.4%	2.9%
Other services and HH	2.4%	3.8%	2.7%

Chart comparing percentage of GVA (in 2023), Local business units (in 2025) and Employment (from Census 2021) (ordered by largest employment sector)

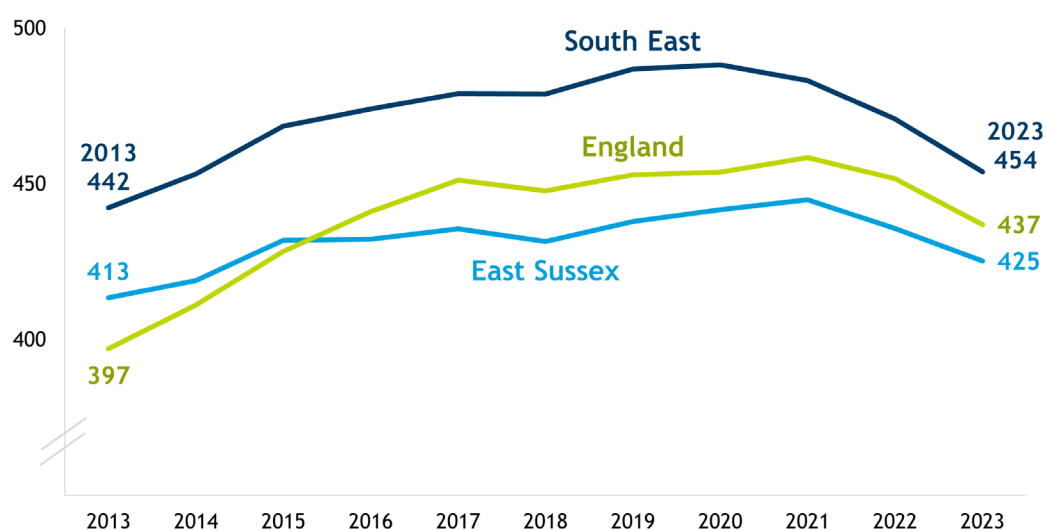
Labels on largest sectors (see blue highlighted sectors in table above) Horizontal bar chart comparing percentage of GVA (in 2023), Local business units (in 2025) and Employment (from Census 2021) (ordered by largest employment sector). Human health and social work is the largest sector for employment, whereas Wholesale, retail and motors and Construction are the largest sectors in terms of local business units, and Real Estate is the largest sector for GVA.



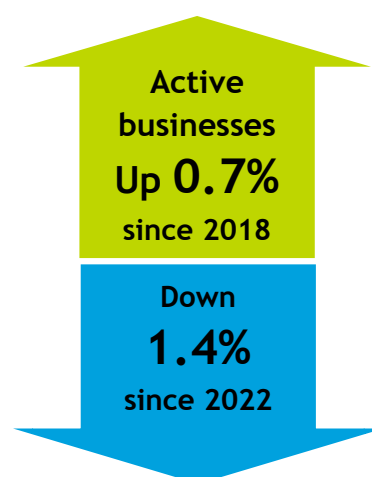
Businesses

- East Sussex had fewer businesses per head than average for the region. The number of active businesses fell in 2023 to 23,670 [see [note 13](#)].
- In terms of local business units, the dominant sectors in the county in 2025 are Wholesale, retail and motor trades and Construction (both 15.4% of local business units) and the Professional, scientific and technical sector (13.9%) [see [note 14](#)].
- 86.3% of business units in the county have fewer than 10 employees (2025, England 84.5%). 74.3% have fewer than 5 employees (England 72.3%).
- East Sussex has relatively few medium and large businesses (50+ employees) - 2.1% compared to 3.0% nationally (2025).
- There were fewer business closures (2,095) than business starts (2,145) in East Sussex in 2023. There were 40 fewer new business starts in 2023 than in 2022, and 260 fewer business closures.
- At 2,145 in 2023, the number of business births was the second lowest since 2012, with the lowest number seen in 2018 (2,100).
- Of 2,245 business enterprises with more than 10 employees in 2023 in East Sussex, 90 (4.0%) were classed as 'high growth' businesses (England 4.8%).
- 45.7% of businesses in East Sussex started in 2018 survived their first five years. 5 year business survival rates for the county are higher than the England average (39.4%).

Active businesses per 10,000 population [see [note 13](#)] (note axis not at zero)



Active businesses in East Sussex



Fastest growing sectors in the county (2020-2025) (in terms of number of local business units)



Property - up 11% to 1,025 businesses (lower than England rise - up 18%)



Construction - up 11% to 4,050 (higher than England - up 10%)



Health - up 5% to 1,520 (lower than England - up 10%)

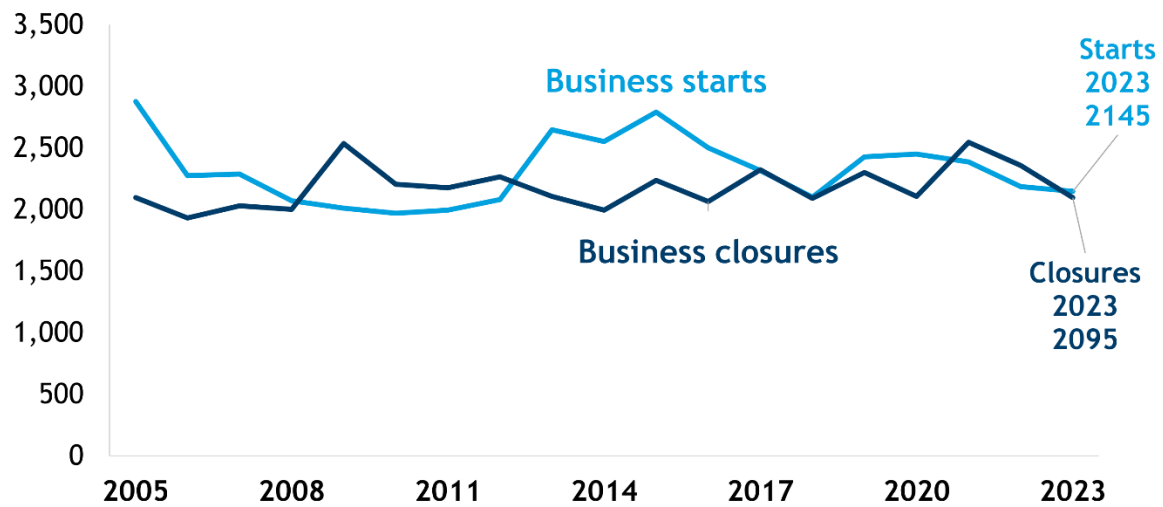


Arts, Entertainment and Recreation - up 5% to 890 (lower than England - up 7%)

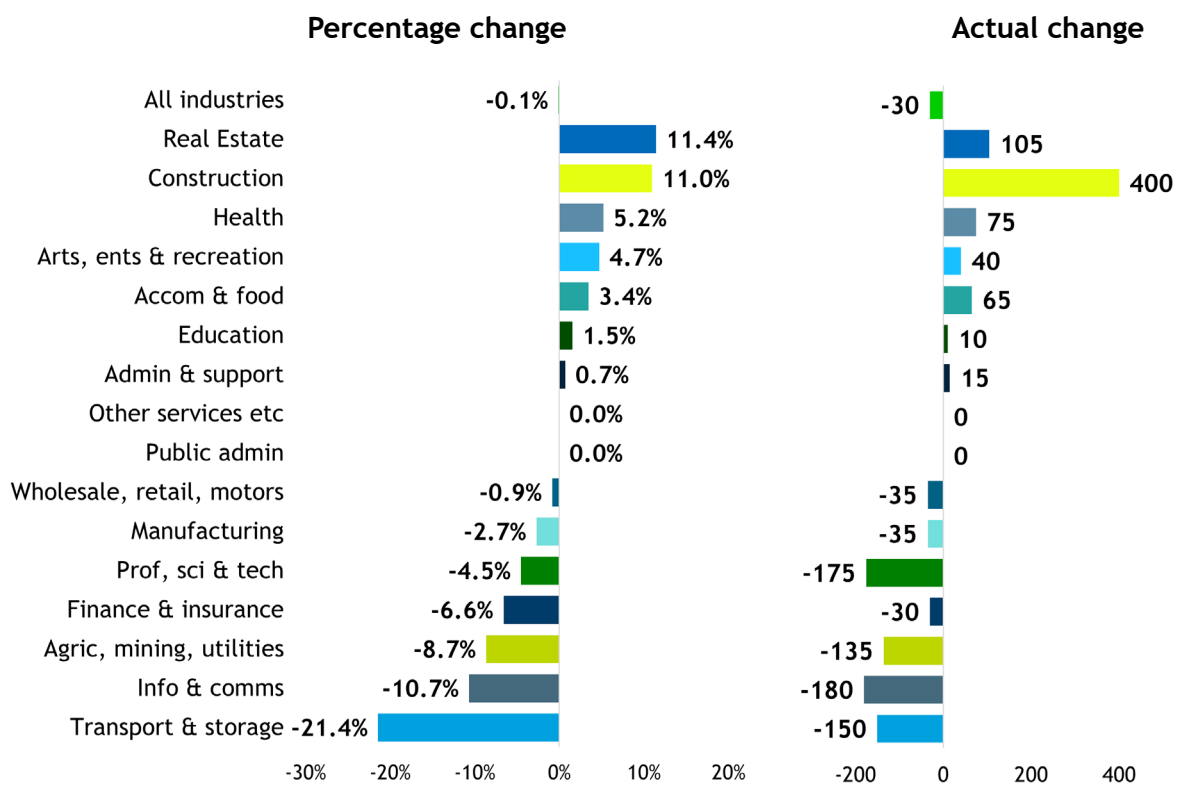


Accommodation and food services - up 3% to 1,950 (lower than England - up 6%)

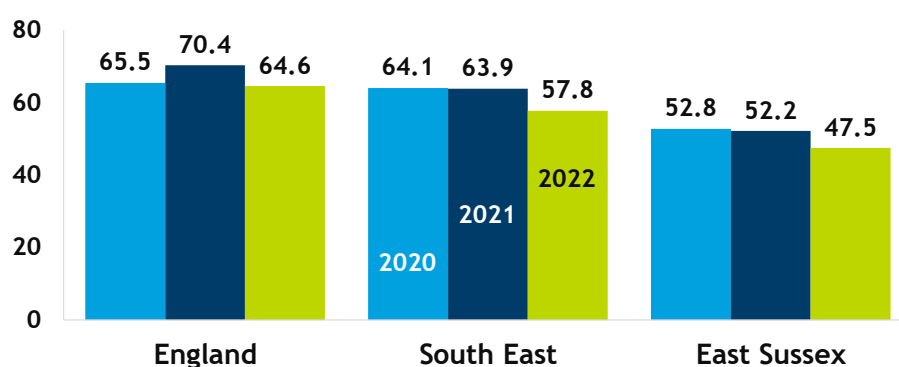
Business births and deaths in East Sussex 2005-23



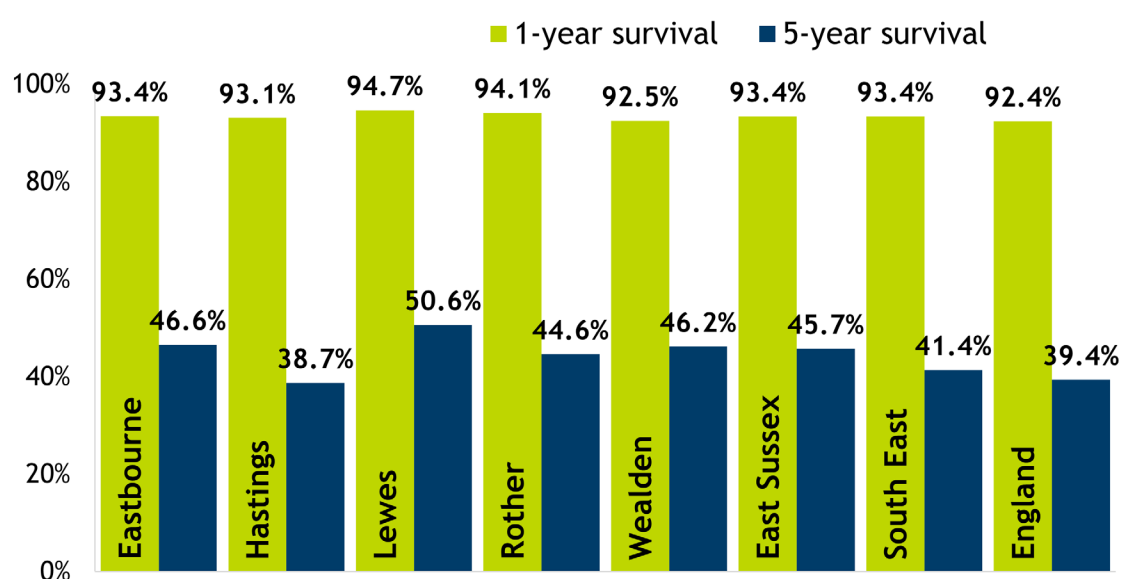
Change in number of business units by sector in East Sussex, 2020-2025



New business registration rates, 2020-22



1- and 5-year business survival rates in of businesses active in 2023



Local business units and micro businesses in 2025, East Sussex, districts and comparators

	Total	Micro businesses (0-9 employees)	% of businesses which are micro
Eastbourne	3,780	3,100	82.0%
Hastings	3,440	2,875	83.6%
Lewes	4,860	4,170	85.8%
Rother	4,705	4,110	87.4%
Wealden	9,520	8,450	88.8%
East Sussex	26,300	22,710	86.3%
South East	464,910	395,450	85.1%
England	2,741,405	2,317,070	84.5%

Further information and sources

This publication is produced as an aid to understanding the mechanisms at work in the economy of East Sussex. The sources for all the data are given in this section.

Labour Market and Skills

Note 1

The Claimant Count of people claiming JSA and Universal Credit because they are searching for work is considered to be the most reliable and up to date source for unemployed claimant data.

Note 2

Data is now available for the labour market variables from the 2021 Census, and more detailed information is available through the ONS [Census “Create a custom data set” tool](#).

It is important to note that 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.

Further data is available from the [ONS](#), including [Census maps](#) showing how the districts and small areas in the county compare to the country as a whole.

Note 3

Qualifications data for working age people is taken from the Census 2021 and also from the Annual Population Survey (APS), which is published by the ONS on the [Nomis](#) website. Note that sample variability means that some APS data is not very reliable, which may explain the wide variation between years.

With the release of the data from the 2021 Census, it has become apparent that even the APS data at national level is quite inaccurate. In the year to December 2021, the APS reported that the proportion of working age people with Level 4+ qualifications in England was 43.1%, whereas in fact the proportion in March 2021 (Census) was 37.1%. When looking at those with low or no qualifications, APS said that 16.0% had no or level 1 qualifications in England but the Census put this proportion at 22.3% in England. This suggests that the sample used for the APS generally overestimates those with better qualifications.

Note 4

Broader participation data for FE and apprenticeships comes from the [Explore education statistics](#), on the Gov.UK website.

Workforce projections

Note 5

The County Council's own workforce projections show how the workforce is anticipated to change in the years to 2037. These projections take into account such variables as future levels of planned housing development as well as expected changes in economic activity rates and retirement ages. They also use the most up to date mid-year population estimates, and rebased 2012-2021 estimates from the ONS.

Note 6

The dwelling-led demographic projections are produced by the East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Research and Information Team, at county and district levels, using the POPGROUP model and local housing plans supplied by each district. The latest 2022-based ESCC projections are based on the mid-2022 population estimates released by ONS in November 2023 and future house building trajectories provided by each district in Spring 2023. Projections are also produced for the number of households and the number of people in the workforce (that is, economically active people aged 16-74).

Earnings

Note 7

Earnings data is from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings which is published by ONS and is available on the [Nomis](#) website. We have mostly used workplace-based median earnings which gives earnings for jobs based in the area, but residence-based data is also available, which is the earnings of those living in the area.

Note 8

ONS now release administrative data from PAYE records giving the number of employees, median and mean pay down to district level. Data for ITL3 (formerly NUTS3, including East Sussex county) and higher geographies are [published monthly](#), and data for districts is released quarterly. The data was designated “Accredited official statistics” in July 2025.

Gross value added

Note 9

[Gross value added \(GVA\)](#) data is released annually by the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#), and GVA per head is calculated using [ONS mid-year-estimate data](#). GVA is a measure of the increase in the value of the economy due to the production of goods and services. Estimates are measured at current basic prices, which include the effect of inflation. The GVA data for 2021 was released in May 2023, and data is now also available for district level Gross Domestic Product. GVA per head in this bulletin is calculated using the latest revised mid-year population estimates for 2022 which were released with the 2023 data in July 2024.

Note 10

Owner-occupiers’ imputed rental (OOIR) is part of the GVA data that gives an estimate of the housing services consumed by households who are not actually renting their residence. It can be thought of as the amount that non-renters pay themselves for the housing services that they produce. For the purposes of assessing the county’s economic productivity it is sometimes preferable to exclude this from the data. See [ONS website](#) for more information.

Note 11

GVA per hour worked data is obtained from the [ONS’ Sub-regional productivity](#) tables. When assessing regional economic performance, it is recommended that the best measure of productivity is this data, rather than GVA per head or per job. This is particularly important when there are large net commuting flows into or out of an area, as is the case in East Sussex.

Note 12

GVA per head relates the value added by production activity in an area to the resident population of that area, and thus is subject to distortion due to effects of commuting and variations in the age distribution of the population. Small areas, such as local authorities, can be subject to very large distortions and this should be borne in mind when interpreting the statistics as an indicator of relative economic prosperity. GVA per head is thus not the best measure of productivity. GVA per job is also not the best measure of productivity because we have to consider the impact of a higher proportion of part-time jobs.

For further information about GVA, sub-regional productivity, Business Demography and UK BASL data, visit the [ONS website](#).

Businesses

Note 13

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) provide data on active businesses, start-ups and closures in the annual '[Business Demography](#)' series. These national statistics are compatible with EU wide business demography data. 1-5 year survival rates are also included with this data. All new business registration rates are calculated by the Research and Intelligence Team using the latest available mid-year estimate population data from the ONS.

Note 14

The [UK Business: Activity, Size and Location](#)+ (UK BASL) dataset from the ONS uses data from the Inter-departmental Business Register (IDBR) to report the total number of businesses. This is the most up-to-date source for data about business activity at local authority level and gives details of both the number of business enterprises and the number of local units. Data is available by industrial sector, business size (in terms of number of employees), annual turnover and age of business (years of trading). Some of the data is also published as 'UK business counts' in the [Nomis](#) website.

Business Demography counts differ from those given in UK BASL because the Business Demography methodology takes into account businesses that were active at any time during the reference calendar year, whereas UK BASL numbers are based on a snapshot taken from the IDBR on a specific date at the end of March of the relevant year. As a result, numbers in the Business demography dataset are higher than those given in UK BASL. Business demography data is currently available for 2022, whereas UK BASL data on business enterprises and local business units is now available for 2023.

There are a number of other sources of business data available. For more information about business data sources and how the data can be used, see our [data note](#).

Contact details

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.

The Council's [East Sussex in Figures](#) website is the trusted source of data on key topics such as population, deprivation and the economy. The website has undergone some exciting changes and now has a new look. The website has been updated to meet accessibility requirements and replace outdated software.

The web address for the new East Sussex in Figures is still www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk, but if you have links saved to data or resources on the old site, they will no longer work.

For further information about labour market and economic data, or for help using the new East Sussex in Figures website and finding the data you may need, please contact us on esif@eastsussex.gov.uk