

Adults Physical Activity Data Overview, Oct 2025

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Introduction:

This briefing has been developed to support decisions to prioritise areas of work for the Healthy Weight Partnership (HWP). The purpose of this briefing is to outline key nationally available data to help set the context for local needs and inequalities relating specifically to physical activity. It collates analysis at an East Sussex level for a range of publicly available data and, where possible, this information has been benchmarked nationally. Where local data on health inequalities is not available, national evidence is presented.

Data are drawn from many sources and vary by time period, population and presentation of values, so care should be taken with interpretation - the data is meant as guidance to complement local knowledge and expertise. Where possible the relationships to national or local benchmarks are marked using the following key: amber - similar to benchmark, green - significantly better than benchmark (95% confidence), red - significantly worse than benchmark (95% confidence).

Key Findings:

East Sussex:

- Physical activity among adults has risen nationally and locally since 2017/18
- Wealden has a significantly higher proportion of physically active adults than nationally
- Wealden has had a lower proportion of physically inactive adults than nationally since 2019/20. It is the only area significantly different to England
- Rother has consistently had significantly lower levels of adults walking for travel than nationally.
- In East Sussex, use of local parks and open spaces (62%) and sports centres (22%) increased slightly between 2015 and 2019, although we do not know how COVID-19 impacted on these figures as there is no more recent data.

England:

- Adults from Asian, Black, Chinese and Other ethnic backgrounds, aged 75+, female, educated to level 2 or below, economically inactive/unemployed, have a disability, more deprived, in intermediate or semi routine/routine jobs or have never worked, are significantly less likely to meet UK physical activity recommendations.
- Those in the most deprived areas are less likely to walk or drive a car as often compared

to least deprived areas.

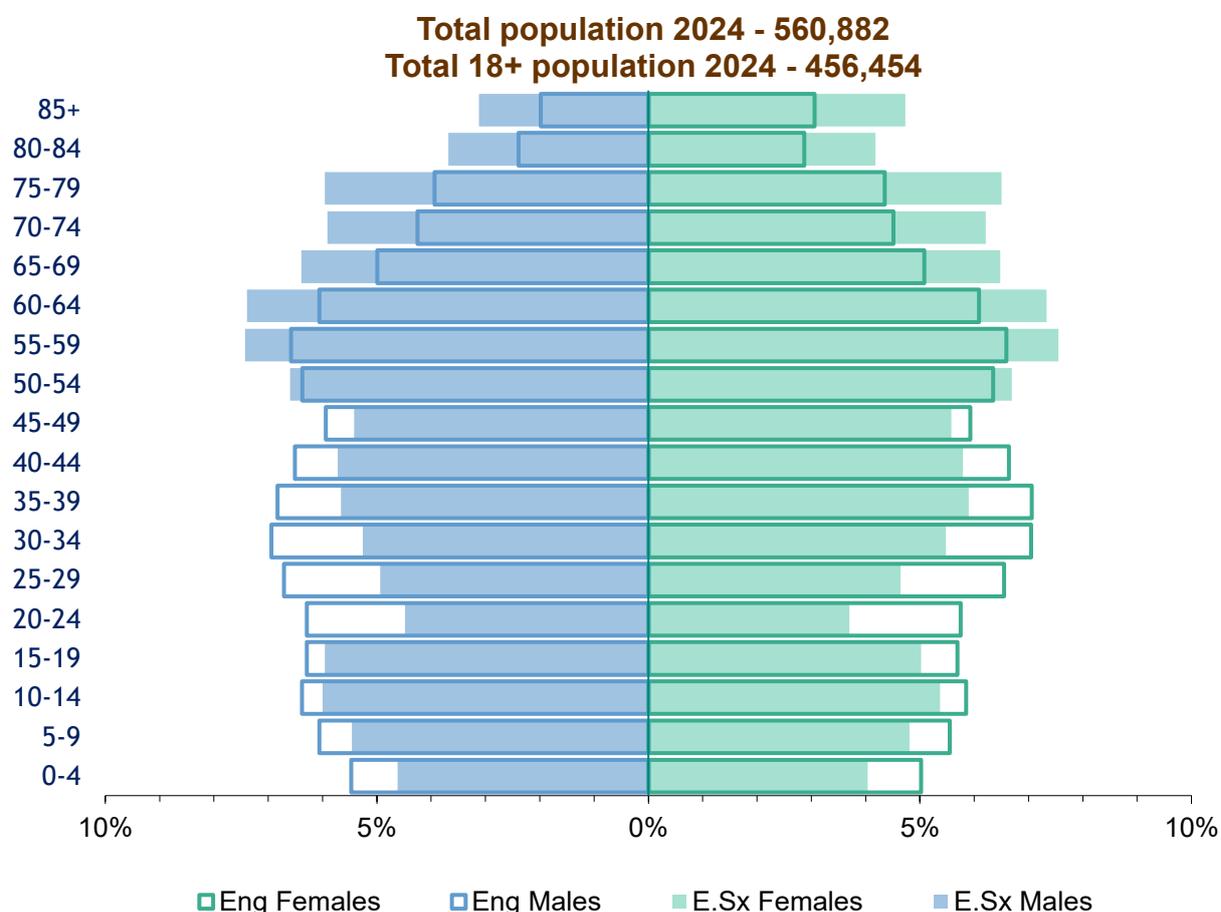
- The average number of local bus trips increases as deprivation increases, while use of bicycles and surface rail is more prevalent as deprivation decreases
- Walking decreases by age group for those under years but increases slightly in older age groups, while the converse is true of car driving.
- Between 2014 and 2024 there has been a marked increase in people (all ages) walking for 20 minutes or more 3 or more times a week

Contextual Factors

- The population of East Sussex was estimated to be 560,882 in mid-2024.
- The number of people has increased by 0.8% (4,244 people) since mid-2023 (England and South East both up 1.2%) and by 4.3% since 2014 (England up 7.8%, SE up 8.4%).
- East Sussex has a much older age profile compared to England and the South East. Over a quarter (26.6%) of the county's population is aged 65 or over (sixth highest of all counties/UAs in the country), compared to 18.7% in England and 19.8% regionally.
- On the other hand, only 16.3% of the county is aged under 16, compared to 18.4% nationally and 18.5% in the South East.
- 52% of the county's population is estimated to be female and 48% male, similar to nationally.

Our adult population:

Figure 1: East Sussex population age and gender profile, 18+ years, 2024

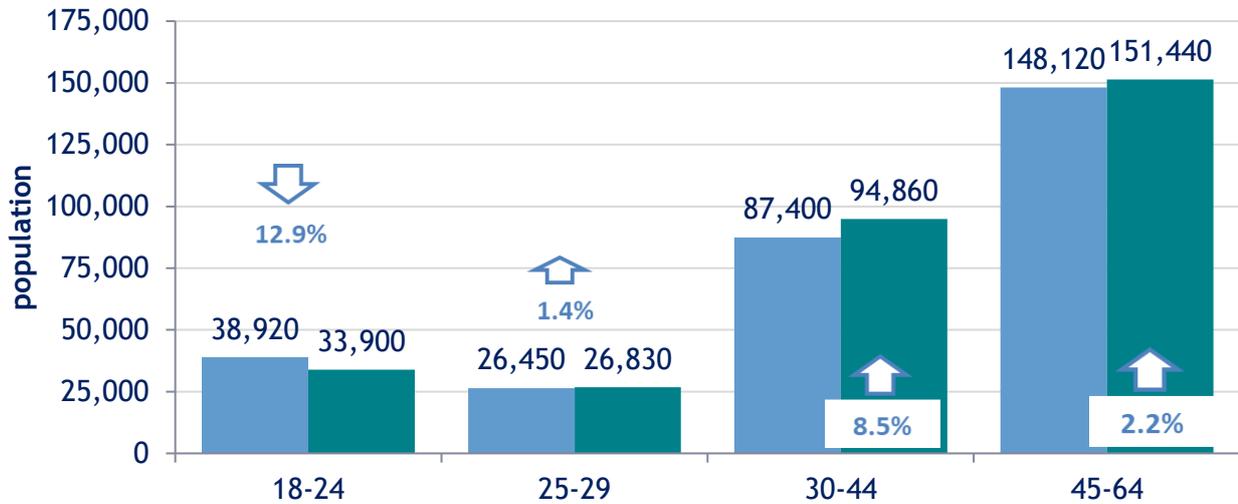


Source: ONS, Mid-year population estimates, 2024

Working Age population (18-64 years old):

- The population of working-age people in East Sussex has increased from 300,885 in 2014 to 307,039 in 2024, an increase of 2% in the decade. This compares to an increase of 6.4% nationally and 6.5% regionally.
- Working-age people make up 54.7% of the total population in East Sussex in 2024. This is lower than the regional (59.2%) and national (60.5%) averages.
- In East Sussex numbers of young working age adults (aged 18-29) fell by 7.1% in the last decade. The decline was focused on the 18-24 age group which saw a net change of 12.9% over the ten years to 2024.
- The age group to see the biggest rise over the decade (8.5%) is 30 to 44 year olds, with an increase of 1.6% in the year to 2024.

Figure 2: Population change among working age people, 2014-2024

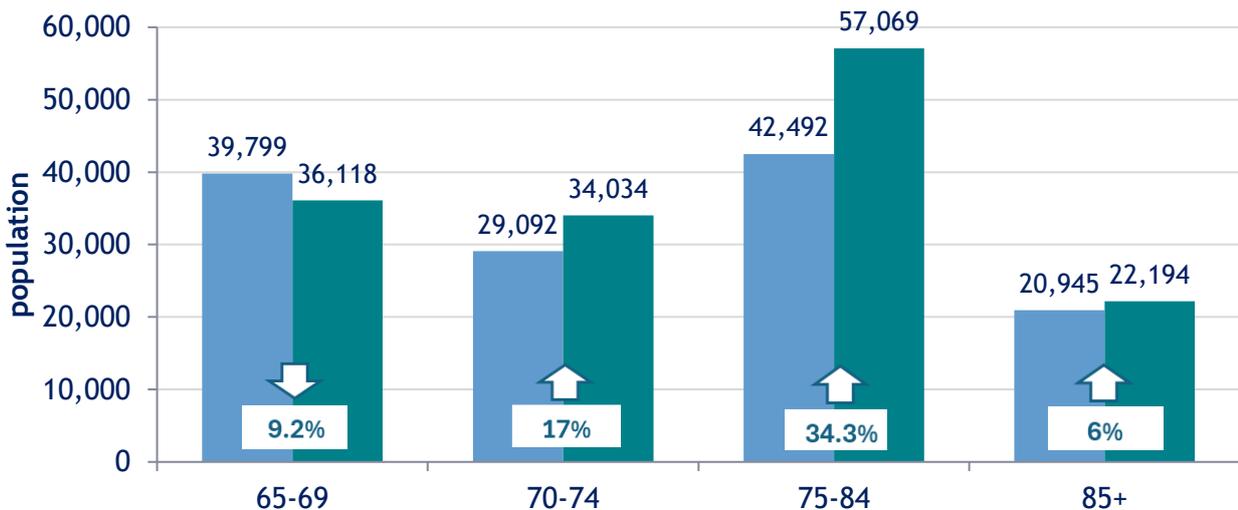


Source: Calculated by East Sussex Research and Intelligence Team, 2025

People aged 65+ in East Sussex:

- The population of people aged 65 and over in East Sussex has increased by 1.5% in the year to 2024 and by 12.9% since 2014, a slightly smaller increase than the change both nationally (15.5%) and regionally (16.2%).
- For those over 65 an estimated 55% of the population is female and 45% male

Figure 3: Population change of over 65s in East Sussex, 2014-2024

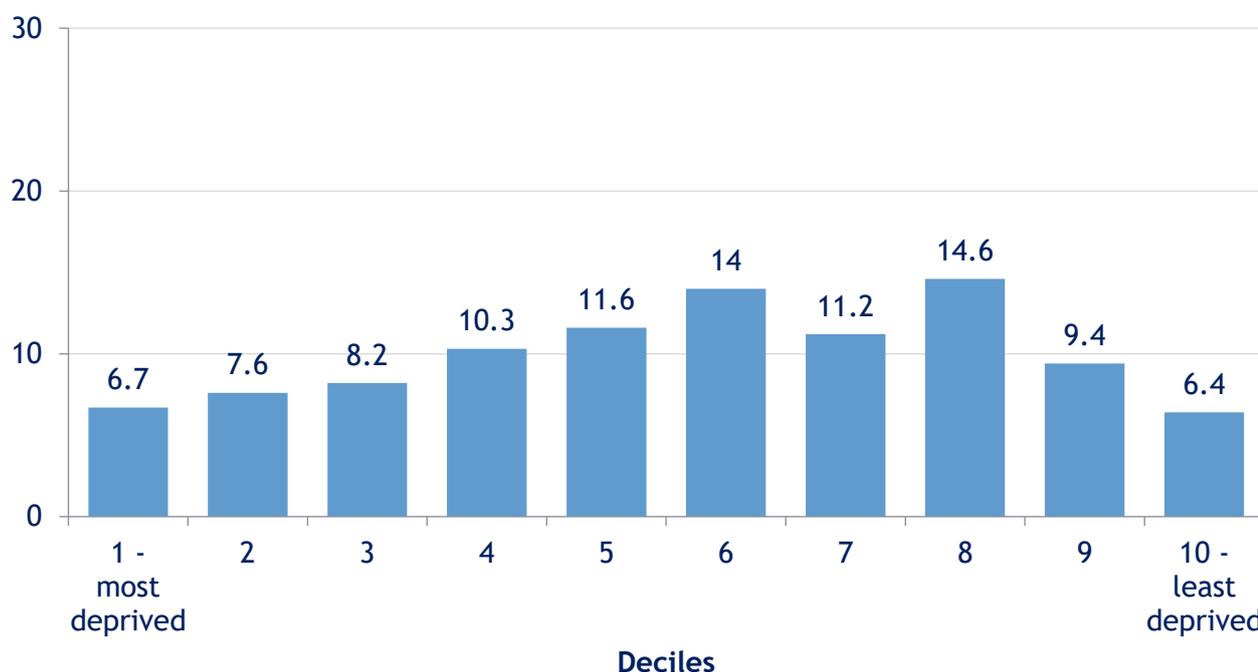


Source: Calculated by East Sussex Research and Intelligence Team, 2025

Deprivation:

- The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas (LSOA's, or neighbourhoods) in England. The IMD combines information from seven domains to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation: Income; Employment; Education; Skills and Training; Health and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing Services; Living Environment.

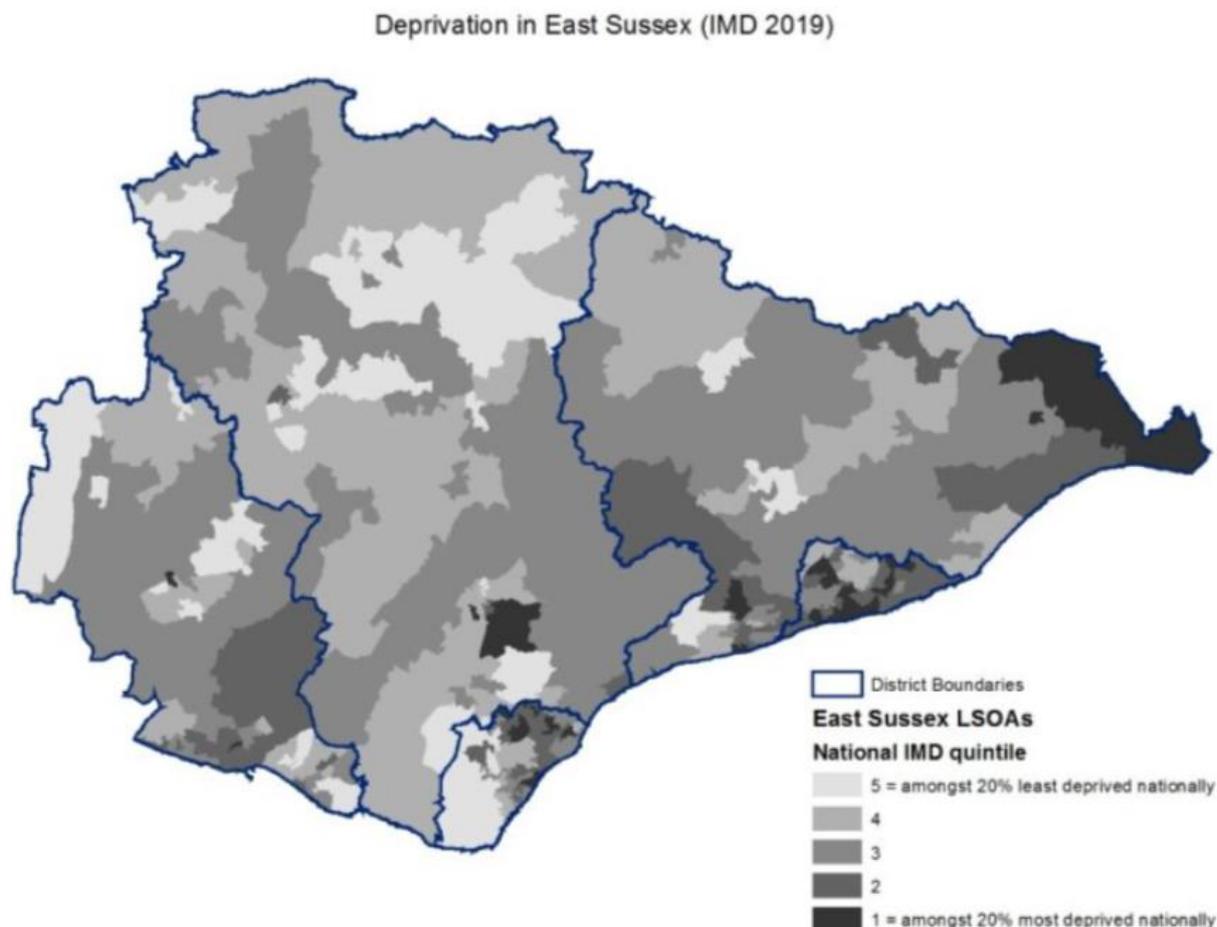
Figure 4: Index of Multiple Deprivation by deciles | 2019



Source: MHCLG, 2019

- In East Sussex there are 329 LSOAs, 22 are in the most deprived 10% nationally. 16 of these are in Hastings, four in Eastbourne, and two in Rother.
- 21 LSOAs are in the least deprived 10%: 13 in Wealden, six in Lewes, and two in Eastbourne.

Figure 5: Index of Multiple Deprivation, East Sussex, 2019

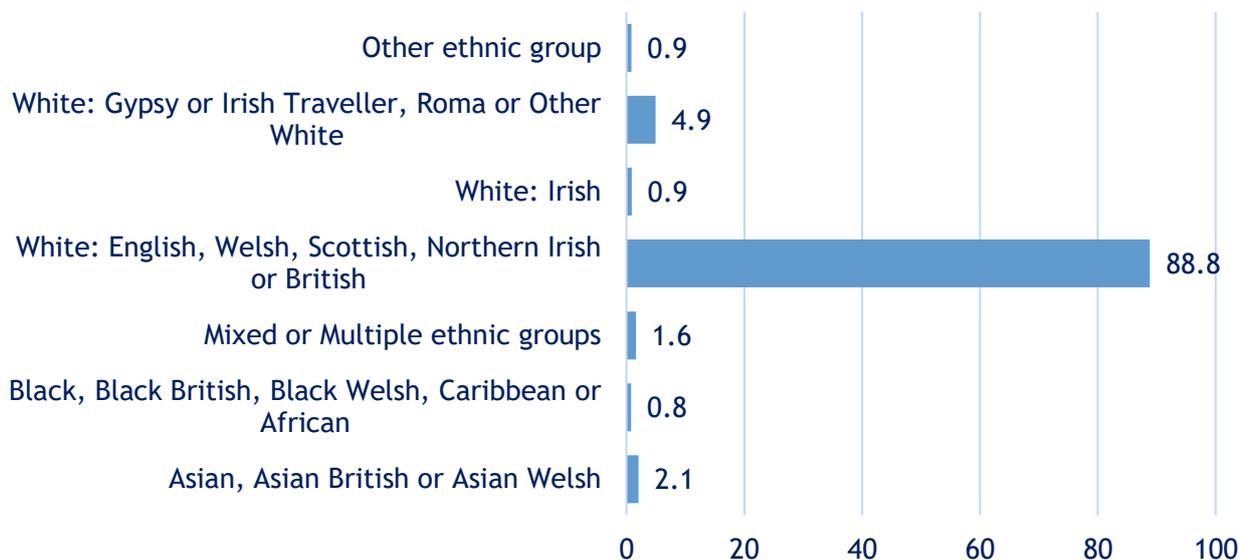


Source: MHCLG, 2019

Ethnicity:

- 89% of the East Sussex 16+ population identified as White British (White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British) in the 2021 Census, followed by 4.9% White Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Roma or Other White. This compares to 88.3% people of all ages in East Sussex identifying as White British and 4.8% as White Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Roma or Other White.
- A smaller portion of the 16+ population belong to Mixed or Multiple Ethnic groups (1.6%) than in the 0-19 population in East Sussex (5.5%).

Figure 6: East Sussex 16+ population by broad ethnic group, 2021



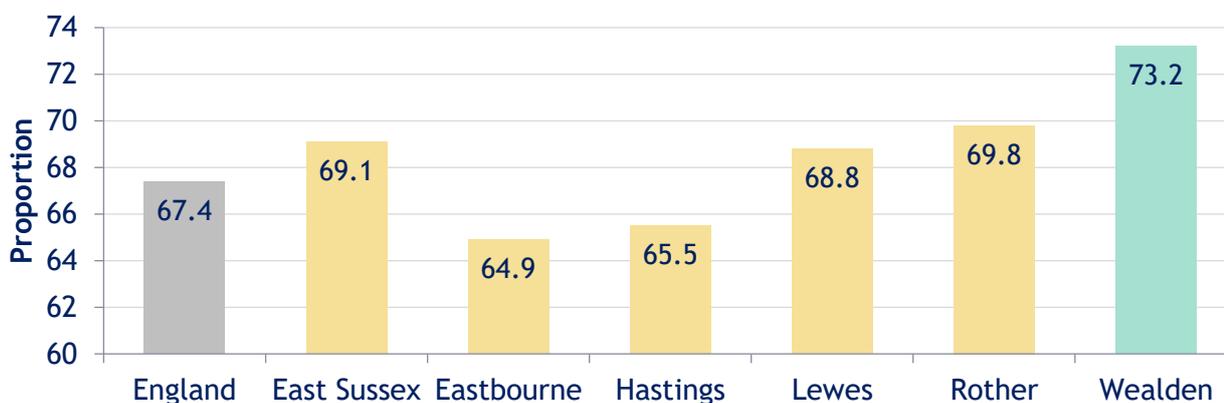
Source: ONS, Census 2021

Physical Activity:

Physical activity in East Sussex:

- A similar proportion of adults are physically active (69.1%) than nationally (67.4%)
- Wealden has a significantly higher proportion of physically active adults than nationally
- Between 2017/18 and 2023/24 physical activity among adults rose nationally by 1.1%, while East Sussex saw a slightly higher rise of 1.7%.
- Physical activity increased in adults in Rother (+5%), Wealden (+2.2%) and Lewes (+1.2%) between 2014 and 2024, but decreased in Eastbourne (-0.3%) and Hastings (-0.6%)

Figure 7: Percentage of physically active adults 2023/24



Source: OHID, based on Sport England data

Table 1: Percentage of physically active adults, 2017/18 to 2023/24

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
England	66.3	67.2	66.4	65.9	67.3	67.1	67.4
East Sussex	67.4	67.8	69.4	69.7	72.3	72	69.1
Eastbourne	65.2	69.2	64.2	66.1	66.8	68.7	64.9
Hastings	66.1	65.9	67.5	70.7	67.1	69.7	65.5
Lewes	67.6	69.6	73.3	73	75.5	70.8	68.8
Rother	64.8	65.1	66.2	70	72.7	69.2	69.8
Wealden	71	68.4	73.4	69	76.4	77.9	73.2

Source: OHID, based on Sport England data

- A similar proportion of adults are physically inactive (20.6%) than nationally (22%)
- Physical inactivity is highest in Eastbourne (24%) and lowest in Wealden (17.8%) which is the only area with significantly lower inactivity compared to England

Figure 8: Percentage of physically inactive adults 2023/24



Source: OHID, based on Sport England data

- Physically inactivity in adults in East Sussex increased between 2022/23 and 2023/24 so it is now statistically similar to nationally. However, between 2019-20 and 2022/23 East Sussex had significantly lower proportions than nationally

- Both Eastbourne and Rother have improved from significantly worse proportions of physically inactive adults than England in 2017/18, to similar proportions in 2023/24
- Wealden has had a significantly lower proportion of physically inactive adults than nationally since 2019/20

Table 2: Percentage of physically inactive adults, 2017/18 to 2023/24

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
England	22.2	21.4	22.9	23.4	22.3	22.6	22
East Sussex	22.6	20.6	19.7	19.9	18.5	17.9	20.6
Eastbourne	26.5	20.9	25.9	24.5	22.4	19.3	24
Hastings	23.1	23.3	19.6	20.4	21.5	20.5	21.9
Lewes	20.9	19.2	16.4	17.8	15.8	20.6	20.4
Rother	26.4	19.7	20.7	19.9	19.4	20.1	20.9
Wealden	18.5	20.1	17.4	18.2	15.4	12.6	17.8

Source: Department for Transport

- 17.6% of adults in East Sussex walk for travel at least three days per week, similar to nationally (18.6%).
- Rother is the only district or borough significantly worse than nationally, at 10.3%

Figure 9: Percentage of adults walking for travel at least three days per week 2022/23



Source: Department for Transport

- With the exception of 2019/20-2020/21 when national levels of walking for travel fell to similar levels, Rother has consistently had significantly lower levels of walking for travel than nationally.
- Wealden also had significantly lower levels compared to nationally until 2021/22

Figure 10: Percentage of adults walking for travel at least three days per week, 2017/18 to 2022/23

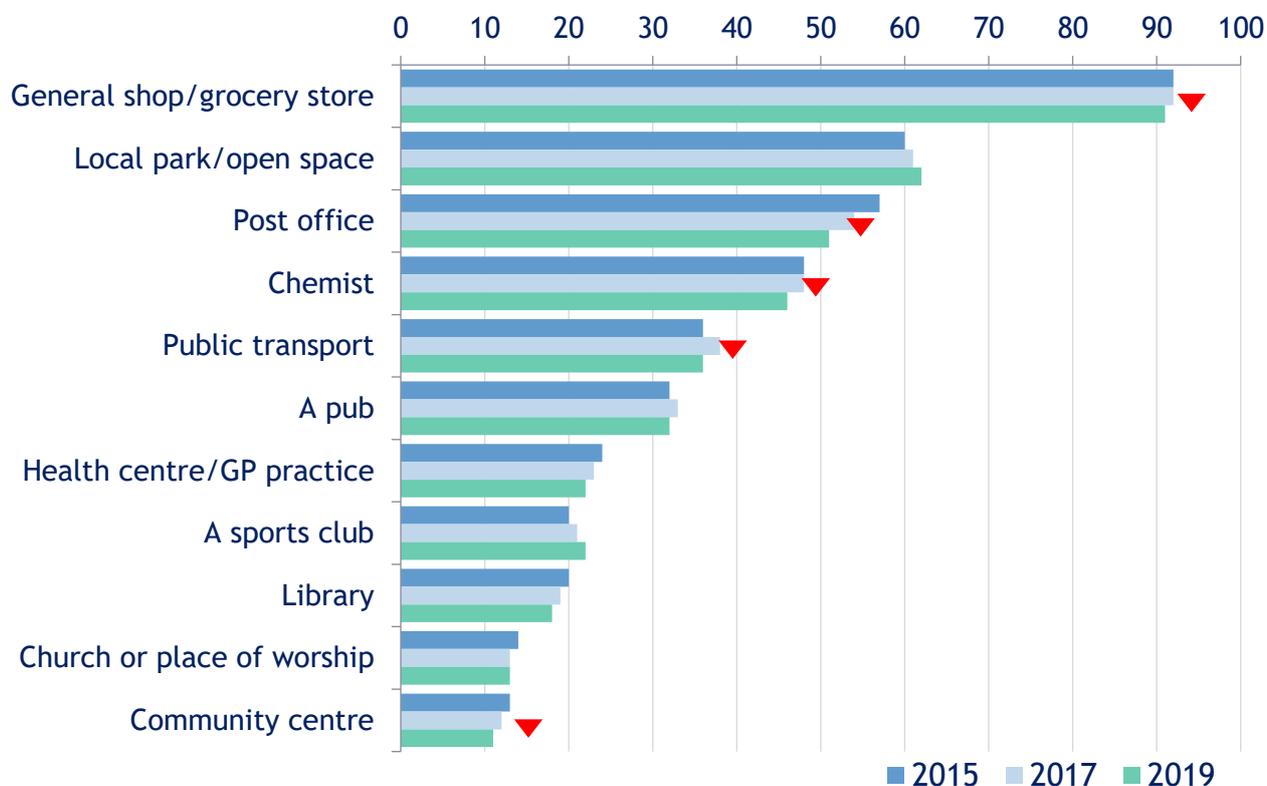
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
England	23.1	22.7	15.1	13.1	17.4	18.6	23.1
East Sussex	19.6	20	15.5	13.1	15.7	17.6	19.6
Eastbourne	19.1	22.7	17.7	19.4	19.5	21	19.1
Hastings	23.9	22.5	12.4	18.1	16.6	18.6	23.9
Lewes	21.2	22.4	21.2	11.8	18.2	21.2	21.2
Rother	17.6	16.6	13.1	10.1	12.6	10.3	17.6
Wealden	17.6	17.5	13.7	8.9	13	17.1	17.6

Source: Department for Transport

Use of local services (within a 15-20 minute walk from home)

- In East Sussex, use of local parks and open spaces (62%) and sports centres (22%) increased slightly compared to 2017 and 2015, although this is not a statistically significant rise and we do not know how COVID-19 impacted on these figures.
- In 2019, those most likely to use a local park or open space at least once a month were: people living in Lewes (67%), those aged 18-34 (69%) or 35-64 (67%), women (63%), homemakers/others (71%), those who were working (68%), owner occupiers (63%) and households with children (77%)
- In 2019, those most likely to use a sports club at least once a month were: people living in Lewes (25%), those aged 35-64 (26%), those who were working (27%), owner occupiers (24%) and households with children (31%)
- Please note, on the following chart, a triangle indicates a finding that is statistically significant (upwards or downwards) compared to the previous year.

Figure 11: % residents using local services in East Sussex at least once a month, 2015, 2017 and 2019



Source: East Sussex Community Survey, 2015, 2017 and 2019

Physical activity in England: Health Inequalities in physical activity

- Adults from Asian, Black, Chinese and Other ethnic backgrounds, aged 75+, female, educated to level 2 or below, are economically inactive or unemployed, who have a disability, who are in the most deprived four deciles or who are in intermediate or semi routine/routine occupations, or have never worked, are significantly less likely to meet UK physical activity recommendations compared to the England average.

Table 3: Percentage of physically active adults in England by health inequalities

England average	2023/24	67.4
Ethnicity	Asian	55.9
	Black	56.8
	Mixed	71.2
	Chinese	61.3
	White British	69.5
	White Other	68.9
	Other	61.9
	Age	19-24
25-34		69.3
35-44		67.6
45-54		69.4
55-64		68.7
65-74		69.3
75-84		56.2
85+		32.4
Sex		Male
	Female	64.9
Level of Education	No qualification	41.8
	Another type of qualification	56.9

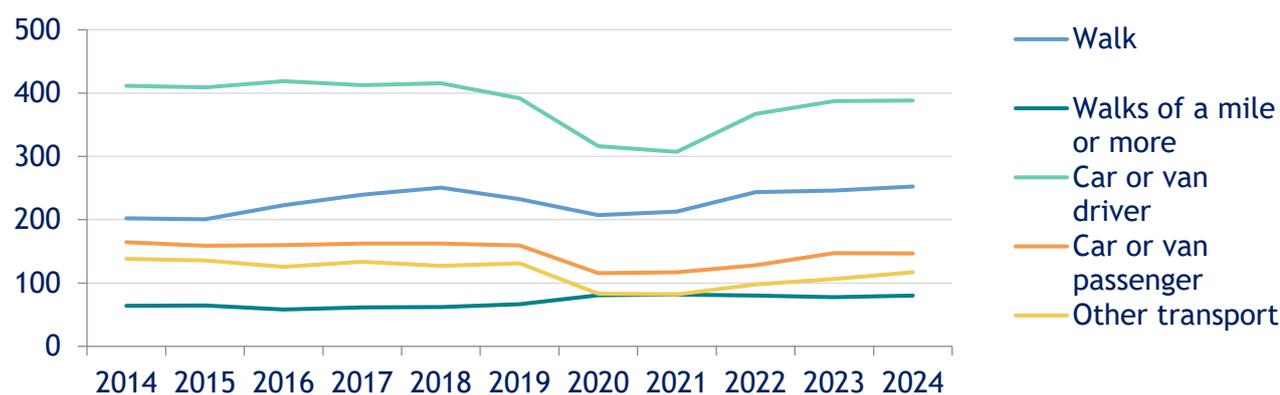
	Level 1 and below	52.7
	Level 2 and equivalent	60.5
	Level 3 and equivalent	59.3
	Level 4 and above	75.2
Working Status	Inactive	60.5
	Unemployed	52.6
	working	71.5
Disability	Disabled	53.6
	Non-disabled	72.2
Deprivation deciles	Most deprived	53.8
	2 nd most	59.1
	3 rd most	62.1
	4 th most	66.6
	5 th most	67.4
	5 th least	69.6
	4 th least	70.3
	3 rd least	71.2
	2 nd least	72
	Least deprived	75.1
Socio-economic class	Managerial, administrative and professional occupations	75.9
	Intermediate occupations	66.1
	Self-employed and small employers	68.9
	Lower supervisory and technical occupations	66.9
	Semi-routine and routine occupations	58.1
	Long term unemployed or never worked	45
	Students	77.7
	Other/unclassified	57.9

Source: OHID, based on Sport England data

Mode of Transport

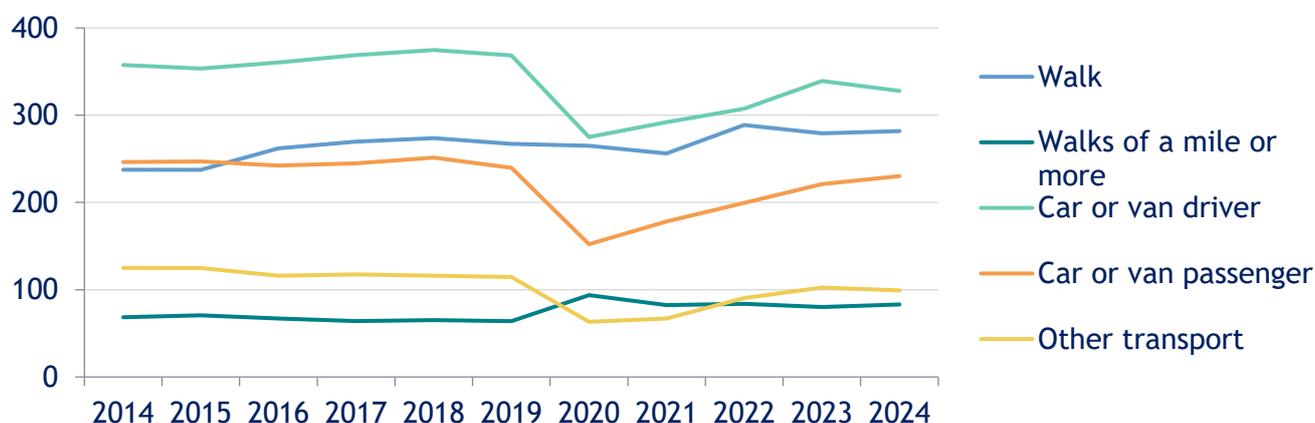
- The National Travel Survey shows that the most common mode of transport for all ages is as a car driver (39%), followed by walking (29%) and being a car passenger (21%).
- The average number of walking trips has increased by 47 trips per person per year since 2014, with walks over a mile increasing by an average of 15 trips per person per year.
- Average trips by all modes of transport, with the exception of walking fell for both males and females during the 2020 COVID pandemic, although all travel modes have been consistently rising since 2021.

Figure 12: Average number of trips by males and main mode (trips per person per year): England, 2014-2024



Source: National Travel Survey, 2024

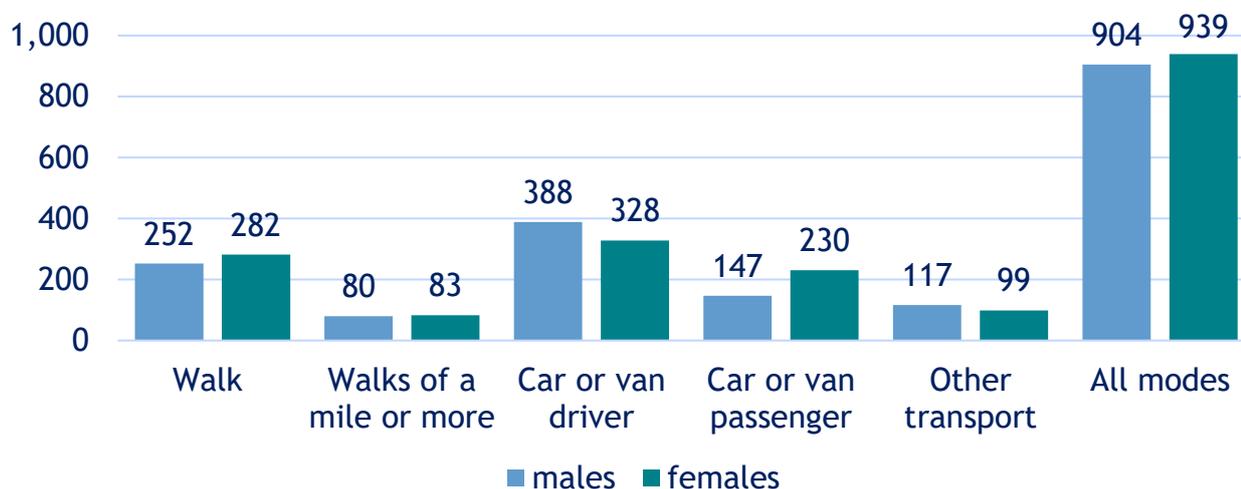
Figure 13: Average number of trips by females and main mode (trips per person per year): England, 2014-2024



Source: National Travel Survey, 2024

- On average, males make fewer trips per year than females and make more trips as a car driver. Females are more likely to walk or be a car passenger than males.

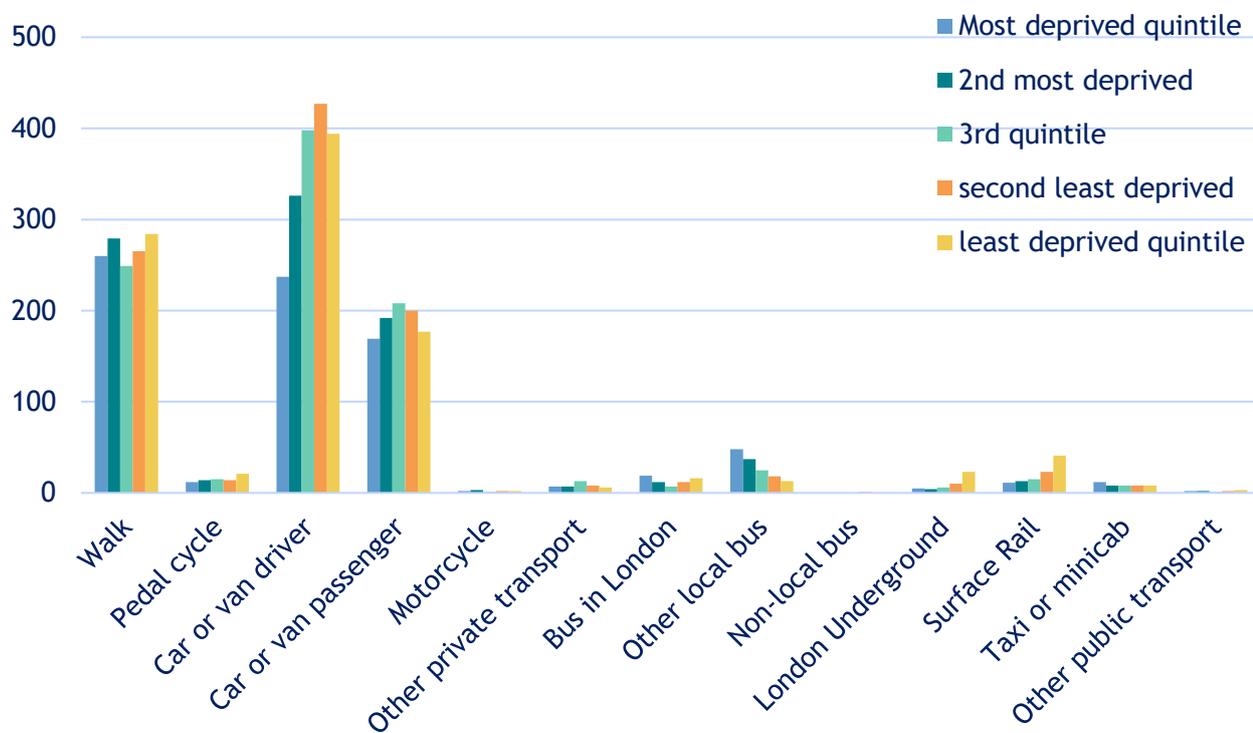
Figure 14: Average trips made per person, per year, by sex and mode of transport, 2024



Source: National Travel Survey, 2024

- Compared to those in the least deprived quintile, those in the most deprived areas are less likely to walk or drive a car as often.
- Average number of local bus trips increases as deprivation increases, while use of bicycles and surface rail is more prevalent as deprivation decreases.

Figure 15: Average number of trips by household income quintile and main mode (trips per person per year): England, 2024



Active Travel

- Walking decreases by age group between 0-49 years before increasing slightly for older age groups, while car driving increases from 22% of 17-20 year olds to 55% of 40-49 year olds before decreasing in older age groups. Bus use is most prevalent among 17-20 year olds, and increases with age in those over 50.

Table 4: Percentage of average trips made per person per year, by mode of transport and age, England 2024

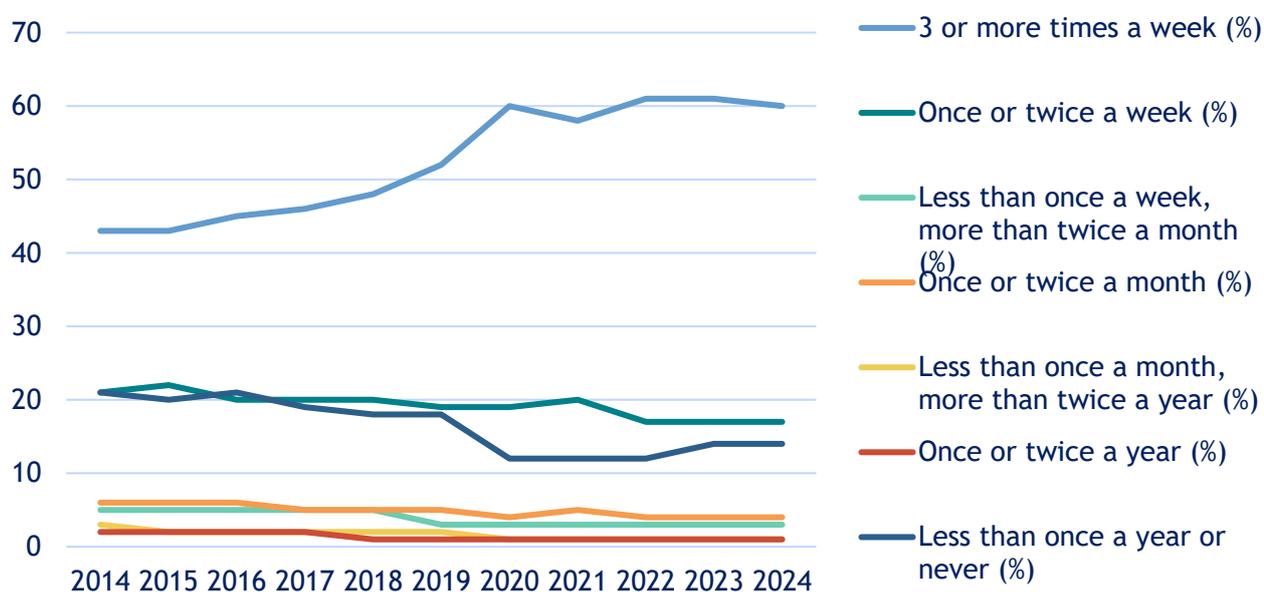
	All ages	0-16	17-20	21-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
Walk	29%	33%	32%	31%	29%	25%	26%	28%	28%
Bicycle	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Car / van driver	39%	0%	18%	36%	47%	55%	54%	49%	44%
Car/van passenger	21%	55%	27%	15%	11%	9%	10%	14%	18%

	All ages	0-16	17-20	21-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
Bus	4%	5%	12%	6%	4%	3%	3%	4%	6%
Other	6%	5%	10%	10%	7%	5%	5%	4%	3%

Source: National Travel Survey, 2024

- Between 2014 and 2024 there has been a marked increase in people (all ages) walking for 20 minutes or more 3 or more times a week, from 43% in 2014 to 60% in 2024. The most marked increase was in 2019 and 2020.
- This increase can be seen across all age groups, with the greatest increase seen in those aged 21-29 and 40-49 years (20% increase in each age group since 2014)
- There has been a corresponding decrease in those walking for 20 minutes or more less than once a week, with the largest decrease in 21-29 year olds (-16%), 30-39 year olds (-15%) and over 70s (-15%).

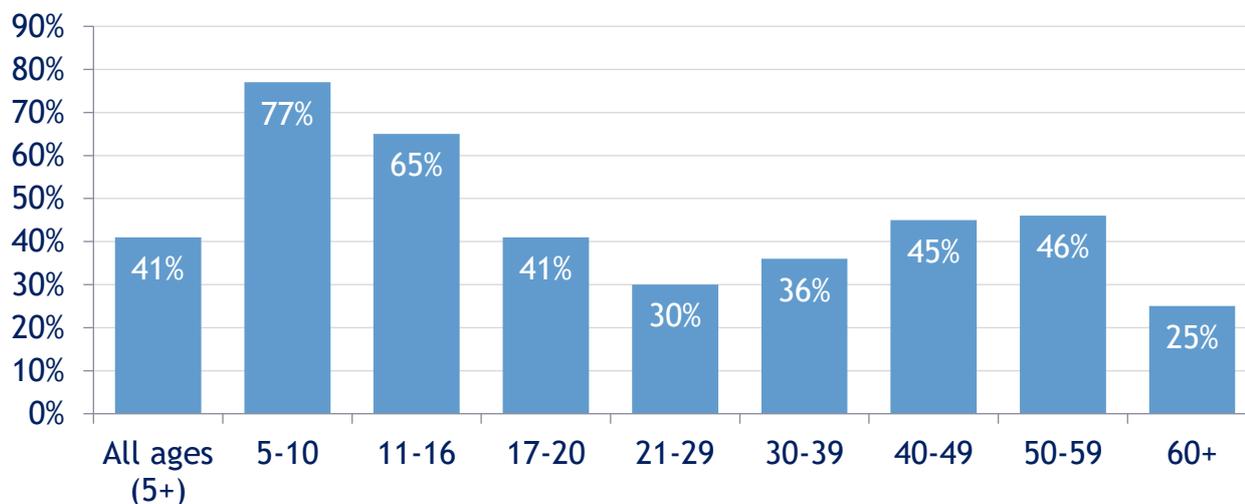
Figure 16: Walks of 20 minutes or more by age and frequency: England, 2014-2024



Source: National Travel Survey, 2024

- Bicycle ownership is highest among 5-16 year olds. It is lower in 17-39 age groups compared to the 40-59 age groups.
- Bicycle ownership or access has decreased in all age groups since 2020, except for the 50-59 and 60+ age groups where it has remained at similar levels.

Figure 17: Percentage of people who own or have access to a bicycle, by age group, England 2023/2024



Source: National Travel Survey, 2024

Key information sources

- [East Sussex in Figures - Data Observatory - Population estimates in 2024 \(August 2025\)](#)
- [East Sussex Community Survey](https://www.eastsussexjsna.org.uk/resources/my-health-my-school-survey-2023-2024/)<https://www.eastsussexjsna.org.uk/resources/my-health-my-school-survey-2023-2024/>
- [Obesity, physical activity and nutrition - Data | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)
- [Mode of travel - GOV.UK](#)