

# Migration briefing

May 2026

- In 2024, internal migration continued to be the main driver of population growth in East Sussex, with international migration representing a smaller proportion of population change.
- The number of net arrivals from within the UK (internal migration) was just below the average for the last 10 years (4,312), at 3,988 in 2024.
- International net arrivals were lower than last year, with 2,851 net arrivals in 2024, compared to 4,107 net international arrivals in 2023.
- With more deaths than births occurring in the county every year for over 50 years, negative natural change remains very large, with 2,552 fewer births than deaths in 2024. The continuing natural decline of the population is offset by gains from new residents moving in, both from abroad and within the UK.
- There was a sharp fall in new National Insurance numbers (NINos) issued to non-UK nationals in the year to March 2026. 1,050 were issued in East Sussex, 27% lower than 1,439 issued in the year to March 2025, and 71% lower than in 2022/23 (3,587).
- The highest number of NINos were issued to people from India (200), Nigeria (99), and Ukraine (93) in the year to March 2026.
- In the year to the end of March 2026, a total of 2,872 people were being supported in East Sussex as asylum seekers or refugees, including 77% who arrived from Ukraine.
- In addition to this, 75 unaccompanied asylum seeker children arrived in the county in the year to March 2024, and 72 in 2025.
- In 2024, 18% of all births in East Sussex (747 out of 4,252) were to mothers who were not born in the UK. This compares to 35% of all births in England as a whole. Of these non-UK born mothers, 40% were born in Europe, and 31% were from the EU. Another 36% were from the Middle East or Asia.
- According to the 2021 Census, there was net positive internal migration from England and Wales of +3,570 in the 12 months to March 2021. While there were +3,700 from London, and +1,800 net moves from the rest of the South East, there was a net loss of -1,710 to the rest of England.
- 2,950 usual residents moved into East Sussex from outside the UK in the 12 months prior to the Census being taken, down from 3,620 (0.7% of the population) in 2011.

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## Migration and population change in 2024

According to the latest ONS mid-year estimate components of change data, total net migration (internal and international) decreased slightly in 2024 to 6,839 in East Sussex, 18.9% fewer than in 2023. This was made up of +3,988 internal migrants from within the UK, and +2,851 international migrants. Natural change continues to be negative, with 2,551 fewer births than deaths in the county between mid- 2023 and 2024. Losses from natural change are slightly lower than net arrivals from overseas.

International migration was lower than in 2023 but remains significantly higher than in the 10 years from 2012-2021. It still has a smaller impact on the county's migration flows than internal migration (from the UK). In 2024, +4,589 people came into the county from overseas (although some may be British people returning), while -1,738 people left, a net inflow of +2,851.

The country has seen a large number of arrivals from Ukraine over the last few years, with more than 2,200 families currently being supported in the county through the Ukraine sponsorship scheme (as at March 2026). Ukraine refugees also arrived via other routes. Large numbers arrived in 2022 and 2023.

There were also significant numbers being supported in the county through other routes for asylum seekers and refugees, with 293 currently receiving support through the Afghan resettlement programme, and another 373 through the Supported Asylum programme up to March 2026. In addition, there were 75 unaccompanied asylum seeker children recorded as being supported in the county in financial year 2023/24 and 72 in 2024/25.

In 2024, the overall net flow from overseas was 31% lower than in 2023, but 22% higher than in 2022 and contrasts with net outflows to overseas in the county in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Internal migration flows are substantial in East Sussex and the main driver of population change. In 2024, +23,596 people moved to the county from elsewhere within the UK while 19,608 moved elsewhere in the country, a net inflow of +3,988. This was slightly lower than the average number of net moves annually between 2014 and 2023 of +4,510.

Figure 1: Proportion of net migrants to East Sussex from within the UK and overseas, 2024

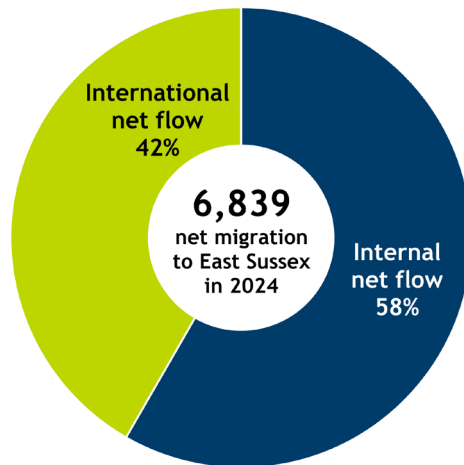
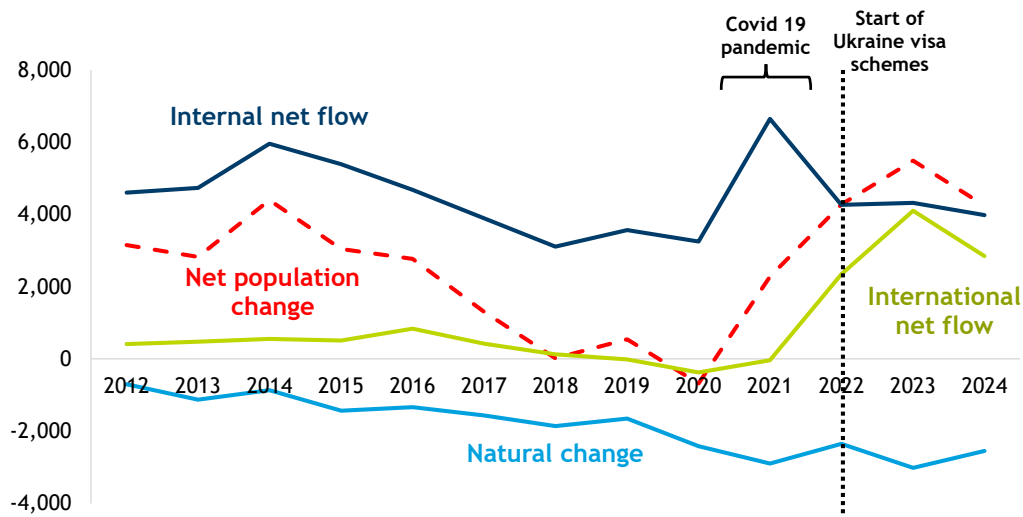


Figure 2: Components of population change in East Sussex, 2012-2024



### Internal and international migration, gross and net migration flows and migration rate in 2024

Table 1: Internal migration from within the UK in 2024

	In flow	Out flows	Total net flow
Eastbourne	+6,674	-6,682	-8
Hastings	+4,833	-5,162	-329
Lewes	+6,679	-5,672	+1,007
Rother	+6,287	-4,968	+1,319
Wealden	+10,130	-8,131	+1,999
<b>East Sussex</b>	<b>+23,596</b>	<b>-19,608</b>	<b>+3,988</b>

Note: In table 1, data for the whole of East Sussex includes only moves into and out of the county, and does not include moves from one district to another.

**Table 2: International migration from overseas in 2024**

	In flow	Out flows	Total net flow
Eastbourne	+1,514	-621	+893
Hastings	+843	-259	+584
Lewes	+581	-269	+312
Rother	+731	-197	+534
Wealden	+920	-392	+528
East Sussex	+4,589	-1,738	+2,851

**Table 3: Total net and gross migration flows (includes both internal and international migration), and migration rate in 2024**

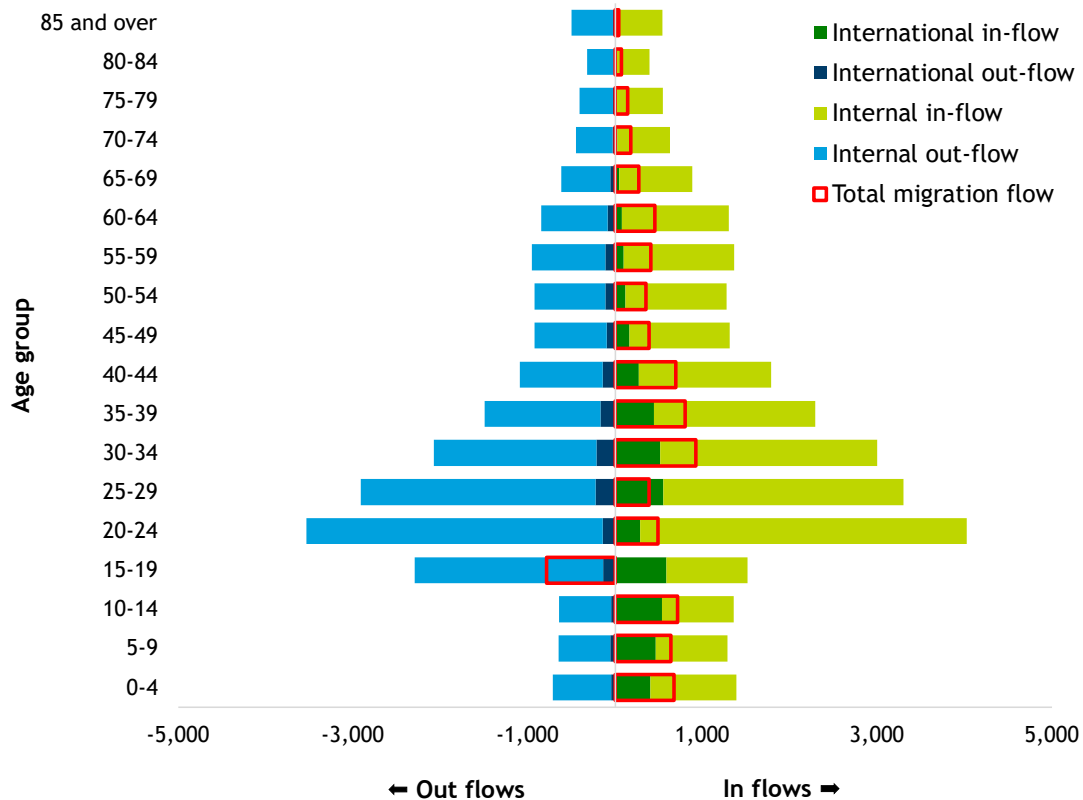
	Total net migration	Population turnover (Gross migrant flows)	Migration rate (gross flow per 1,000 people)
Eastbourne	+885	15,491	148.6
Hastings	+255	11,097	121.7
Lewes	+1,319	13,201	129.0
Rother	+1,853	12,183	126.7
Wealden	+2,527	19,573	117.3
East Sussex	+6,839	71,545	127.6

We look at gross flows and migration rates to measure population ‘churn’ - the volume of population turnover compared to the population as a whole.

### Age groups, sex and migration

In 2024, 46.8% of the net inflow of migrants to the county were male and 53.2% were female, and while 46.0% of net internal migrants were male, males accounted for 48.1% of international net migration flows. In the districts, 57.6% of total net arrivals to Lewes were female, compared to only 47.7% in Rother.

**Figure 3: Internal and international migrant flows to and from East Sussex by age group in 2024**

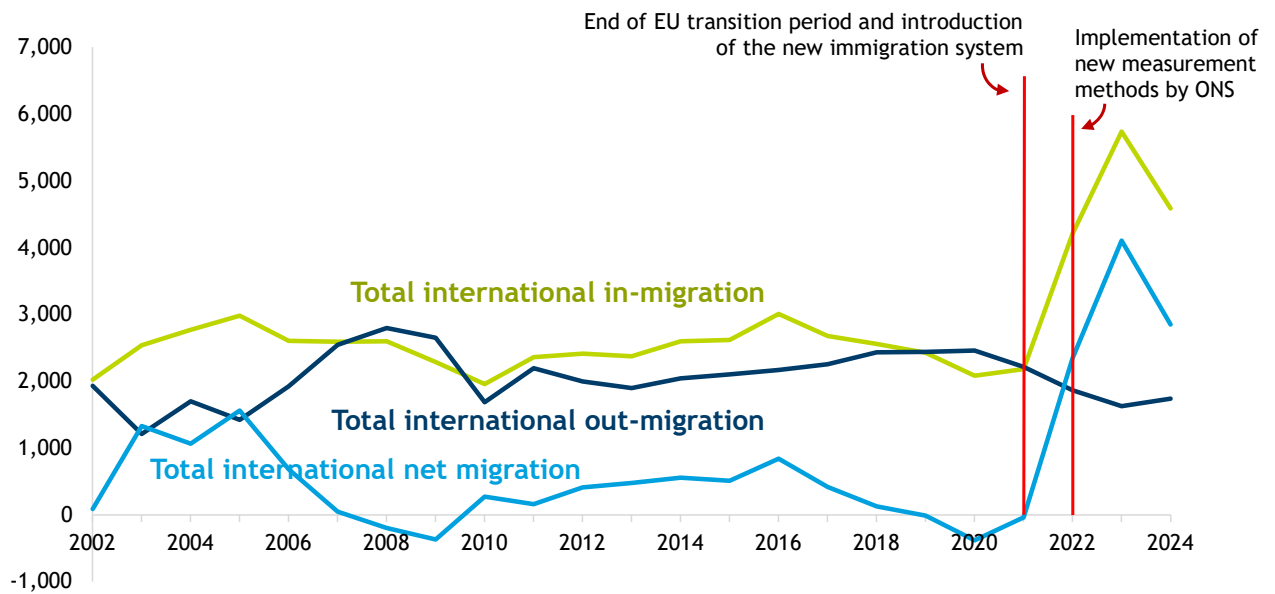


Younger working age people are generally more likely to move in or out of the area and to and from abroad. In East Sussex in 2024, 46% of all moves into and out of the county (gross flows) were made by people in their 20s and 30s.

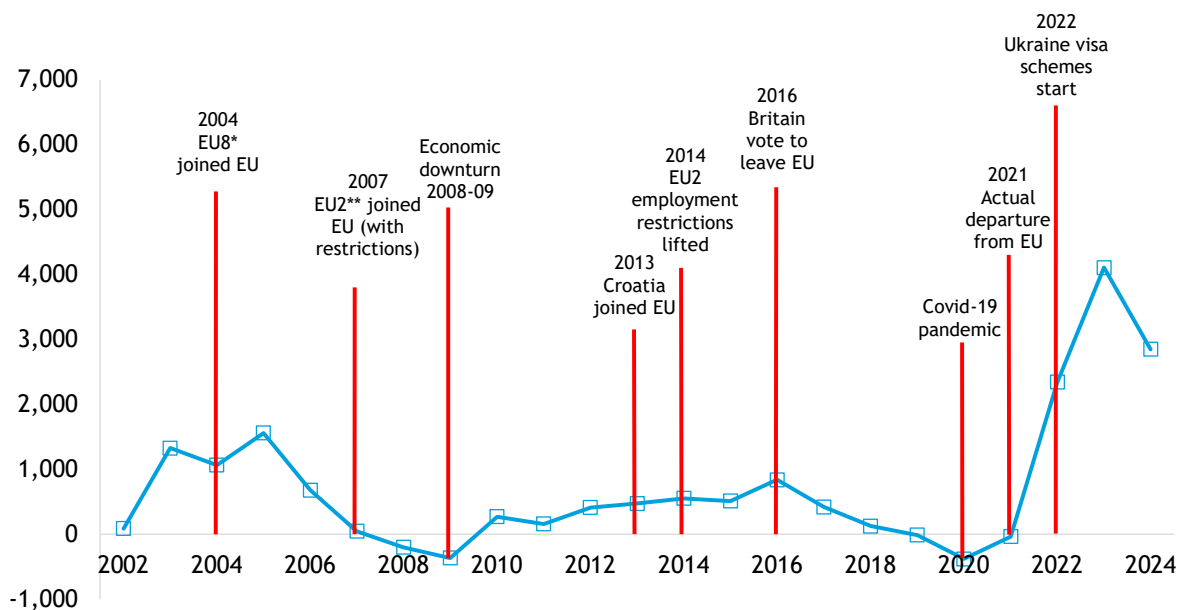
There was an overall net flow of -244 young people aged 18-29 out of the county in 2024. There has been a net outflow of young people in every year since at least 2012, but in 2024 this flow was at its lowest for many years, contrasting with net outflows of -1,731 in 2018 and -1,548 in 2019.

This net outflow was made up of a net outflow of -780 to elsewhere in the UK and a net inflow of +536 from overseas for young people aged 18-29, and while the outflow to the UK was at its lowest since 2014, the net inflow of young people from abroad into East Sussex was the second highest in 2024.

**Figure 4a: In-, out- and net flows of international migrants to East Sussex, 2002-2024, timelines with ONS dates**



**Figure 4b: Net flow of international migrants to East Sussex, 2002-2024 with other key dates**



**Glossary of terms for discussing EU migration:**

The 27 countries of the European Union (excluding the UK) are grouped as follows:

- 1) **European Union EU14** - includes countries who joined the EU prior to May 2004. These are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden.

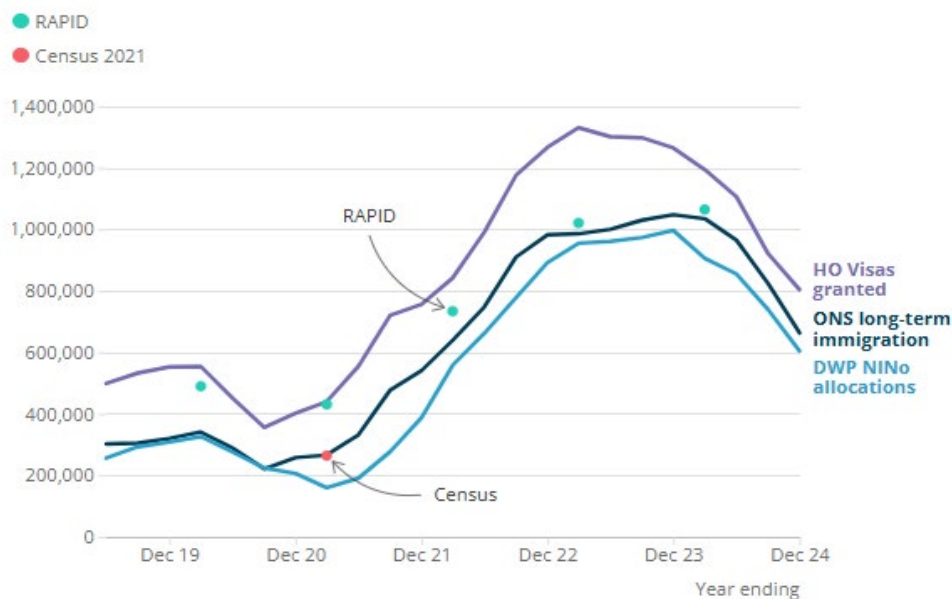
- 2) **European Union EU8** (sometimes called EU Accession Countries) - countries that joined the EU on 1st May 2004: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia.
- 3) **European Union EU2** - Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU on 1st January 2007. The UK imposed restrictions on access to labour markets of these EU2 citizens in 2007, which were lifted in January 2014, when citizens of these countries gained the same rights as all other EU citizens to live and work in any country in the union.
- 4) **European Union Other** - comprising Cyprus and Malta (which joined the EU on 1st May 2004) and Croatia (joined the EU in July 2013) which are not part of the EU8.

## Other evidence on international migration

In order to better understand international migration, we can look at other data sources. These include the National Insurance numbers to non-UK nationals (NINos), data on live births by mother's country of birth, Home Office data on Asylum seekers and Refugees, and Department for Education data on Unaccompanied asylum seeker children.

The ONS have produced this useful chart to show how estimates of non-EU+ immigration compare with other available data sources which they use in their analysis. Note that some of these sources, such as the RAPID database, and the Home Office Visa data are not published at county or district level.

**Figure 5: Estimates of non-EU+ immigration compared with other available data sources - England and Wales**



Source: ONS

RAPID represents the Registration and Population Interaction Database

## National insurance registrations

For detailed data about which countries new international migrants are coming from, we can look at registrations for National Insurance numbers issued to non-UK nationals (NINOs). The NINO registration data has drawbacks: there is no data on people leaving and some people might register for an NI number (NINO) and then quickly move on out of the area to another part of the UK. But it has the advantage that the data is more timely - data to the end of March 2026 is now available and shows a rapidly changing picture. A NINO is generally required by any overseas national looking to work in the UK, including the self-employed or students working part time. All adult overseas nationals allocated a NINO are included, regardless of their length of stay in the UK.

In the year to March 2026, there were 1,050 NINO registrations in East Sussex. This was down from 1,439 in the year to March 2025 (27% fewer) and considerably lower than the peak figure for the year ending March 2023 of 3,587. It was the lowest annual number of NINO registrations to non-UK nationals since records began in the year to March 2003, except for 2020/21 during the Covid 19 pandemic.

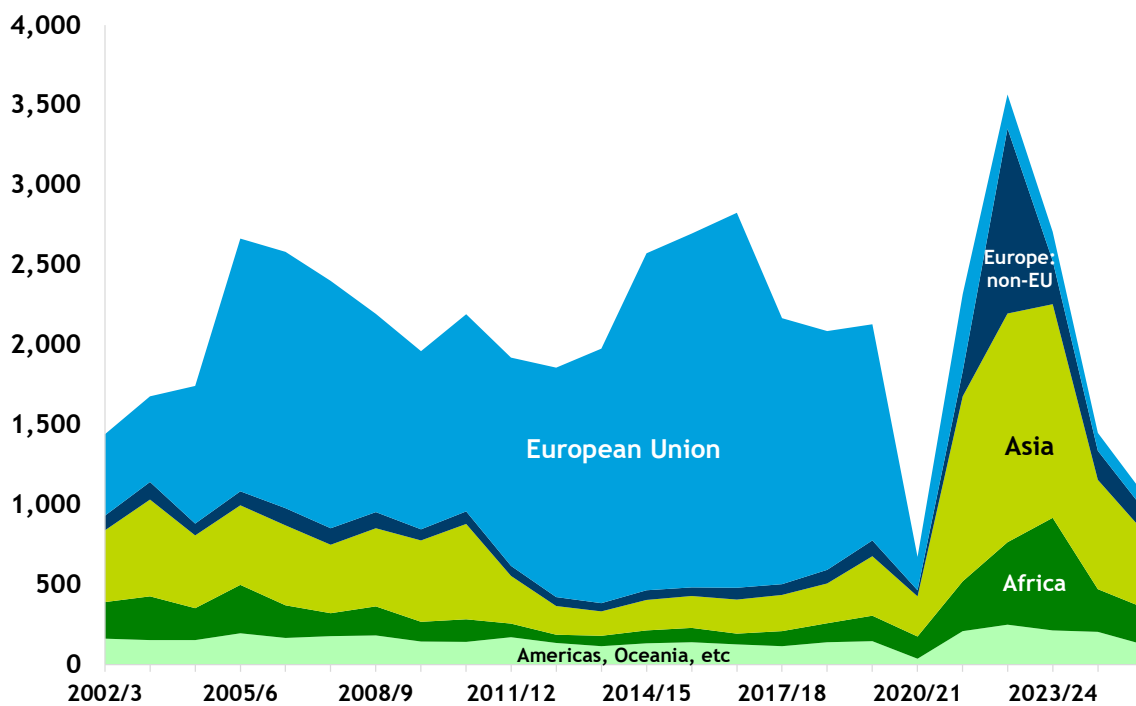
In the year ending March 2026, slightly more NINOs were issued to females (52.3%) than males (47.7%) in East Sussex, but this contrasts with the year to March 2023 when 60.3% of NINOs were issued to females. In 2025/26, Lewes saw the highest proportion of females arriving (54.2%), but distribution was more even in Rother (49.6%).

45% of new international migrants measured by the NINO registration data came from Asia (480 people). The largest groups within the Asia category were from India (200), Pakistan (36) and Philippines (33), but the numbers arriving from India have fallen from a peak of 692 in 2022/23 and from Philippines have fallen from 256. The second largest continent of origin in 2025/26 was Africa (232) with the majority of African NINOs issued to people from Nigeria (43%), which saw the second highest number of arrivals in 2025/26 (99).

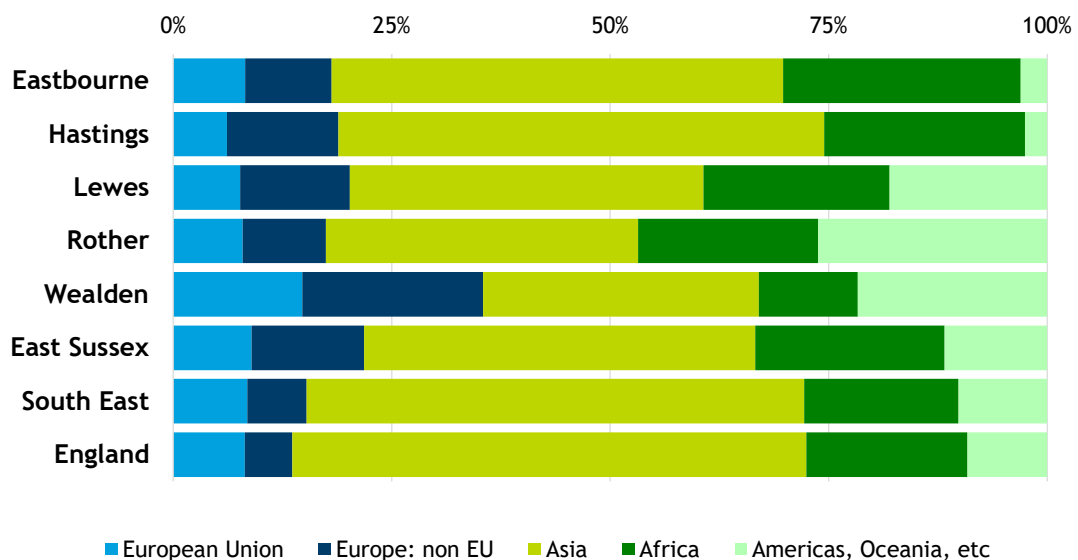
NINO registrations from foreign nationals peaked in the year to March 2023 when there were 3,387 registrations, reaching their highest level since the records began in 2002, but there has been a decline of 71% since then, contrasting with an 50% fall in England.

The areas people are coming from have changed drastically since the UK officially exited the EU in 2021 and free movement of EU citizens ended. While in the year to March 2017, 83% of NINOs were issued to people from the EU, by 2025/26, this had fallen to 9%. By contrast in 2025/26, 46% of NINOs were issued to people from Asia, and 22% from Africa, whereas these two continents together accounted for only 10% of registrations in 2016/17.

**Figure 6: National insurance registrations in East Sussex, 2002/03-2025/26 by broad area group**



**Figure 7: Percentage of new national insurance registrations in 2025/26 by broad nationality group**



Changes can be seen when we compare the top 10 countries of arrival in 2025/26 to the top 10 countries of arrival in 2015/16.

In 2025/26, India saw the highest number of arrivals, with 200 NINOs issued, with 99 issued to people from Nigeria, and 93 to people from Ukraine.

This compares with 2015/16 when Romania (670) Poland (305), and Spain (210) saw the highest number of arrivals.

Following the opening of new visa schemes in March 2022, Ukraine saw large numbers registering for NINOs in 2022/23 (1,051), but although numbers declined significantly in 2023/24 (169) and 2024/25 (116), in 2025/26 they were still the third largest country group (93 NINOs issued).

**Table 4: NINOs issued in East Sussex: top 10 countries of origin in 2025/26 (2015/16 and 2022/23 for comparison)**

	2015/16	2022/23	2025/26
India	40	692	200
Nigeria	17	185	99
Ukraine	8	1,051	93
Australia	47	30	37
Pakistan	9	43	36
Philippines	18	256	33
United States	30	33	30
Sri Lanka	13	62	27
Bangladesh	15	71	25
Ghana		84	25

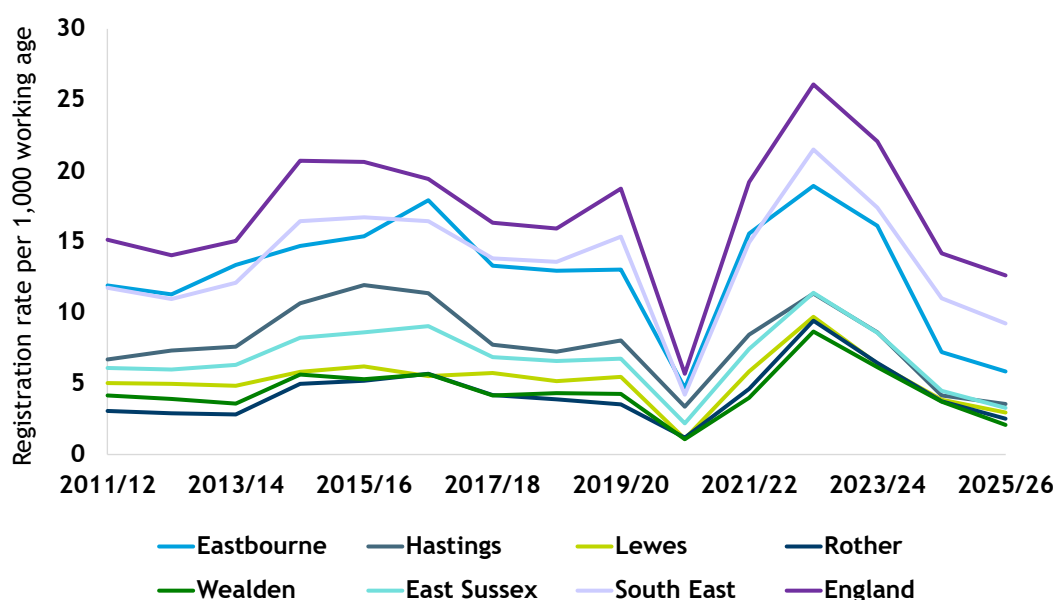
**Table 5: NINOs issued in East Sussex: top 10 countries of origin in 2015/16 (2022/23 and 2025/26 for comparison)**

	2015/16	2022/23	2025/26
Romania	670	59	16
Poland	305	9	7
Spain	210	19	7
Italy	162	6	11
Bulgaria	161	19	8
Portugal	159	13	7
Hungary	98	7	
France	83	12	6
Greece	52	6	
Australia	47	30	37

Eastbourne and Hastings have consistently seen larger volumes of NINo registrations from foreign nationals, compared to other districts. This reflects work available in the health service and the hospitality sector. But it may also reflect the greater availability of services and lower cost rented housing, and existing migrant communities, in urban areas.

When we look at registration rates per 1,000 working age people, we can see that Eastbourne and Hastings consistently see much higher rates than other districts in the county. The registration rate in East Sussex, at 3.3 per 1,000 working age people in the year to March 2026, is consistently below the rates for England (12.6) and the South East region (9.2). Eastbourne has the highest rate at 5.8, with Rother (2.5) and Wealden (2.1 per 1,000) having the lowest rates.

**Figure 8: National insurance registration rates per 1,000 working age people (aged 16-64), 2011/12 to 2025/26**



In the year to March 2026, Wealden saw the largest fall in the volume of NINo registrations, with 44% fewer than in 2024/25, while Hastings saw the smallest decline where numbers fell by 15%.

## Asylum seeker and refugee data from the Home Office

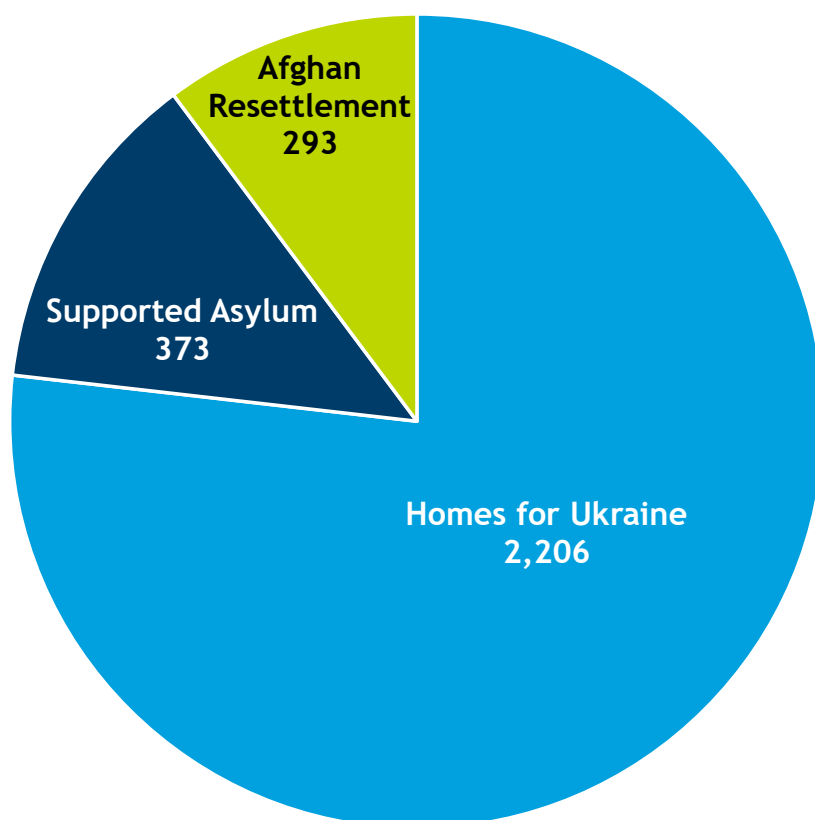
The Home Office publish annual data on the number of people who are provided with support by local authorities because they are asylum seekers or refugees. In the year to March 2026, 2,872 people were being supported by local authorities in East Sussex because they were asylum seekers or refugees in East Sussex, 77% of whom came via the Homes for Ukraine scheme (2,206 people), with 293 people (10%) being supported in the county via the Afghan resettlement scheme and a further 373 via Supported asylum schemes (13%).

In Eastbourne, Hastings and Wealden, a larger proportion of asylum seekers and refugees being supported were from schemes other than the Ukraine scheme, compared to the other 2 districts. Lewes and Rother were supporting very few asylum seekers and refugees outside those from Ukraine in March 2026. Rother had just 1 on the Supported Asylum route, and Lewes, 2. Wealden were supporting the highest number through the supported asylum scheme in March 2026, 265, but Hastings (61) and Eastbourne (44) both had significant numbers through this scheme. All districts were supporting some people through the Afghan Resettlement Programme, with Wealden having 78, Hastings 76, and Eastbourne 70 while there were fewer in Rother 50, and Lewes had 19.

Lewes, Rother and Wealden were supporting larger numbers of people through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. 95% of asylum seekers and refugees supported in Lewes, and 89% in Rother came via the Ukraine scheme, compared to 74% in Wealden, 70% in Eastbourne and 60% in Hastings.

If we exclude arrivals from Ukraine, in the year March 2026, East Sussex was supporting around 670 asylum seekers and refugees, which equates to 11.9 per 10,000 population.

**Figure 9: Chart showing refugee and asylum seekers being supported by local authorities in East Sussex, year to March 2026**



**Table 6: Number of asylum seekers and refugees being supported by local authorities in East Sussex in the year to March 2026 by resettlement schemes**

	Homes for Ukraine*	Supported Asylum	Afghan Resettlement Programme
Eastbourne	266	44	70
Hastings	205	61	76
Lewes	396	2	19
Rother	393	1	50
Wealden	946	265	78
<b>East Sussex</b>	<b>2,206</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>293</b>
South East	29,041	6,929	6,091
England	137,346	85,162	35,235

\* not including super sponsors

**Table 7: Total number of people who were supported in the year to March 2026 via various resettlement schemes, rate, and percentage from Ukraine**

	All 3 pathways	Rate per 1,000 people	% Ukraine
Eastbourne	380	3.6	70.0%
Hastings	342	3.7	59.9%
Lewes	417	4.1	95.0%
Rother	444	4.6	88.5%
Wealden	1,289	7.7	73.4%
<b>East Sussex</b>	<b>2,872</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>76.8%</b>
South East	42,061	4.4	69.0%
England	257,743	4.4	54.7%

## Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker children

The Department for Education publish data on the number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children who are placed in the county. In the year to end March 2025, 72 children came to East Sussex as unaccompanied asylum seekers.

**Table 8: Number of unaccompanied Asylum Seeker children, 2021-2025**

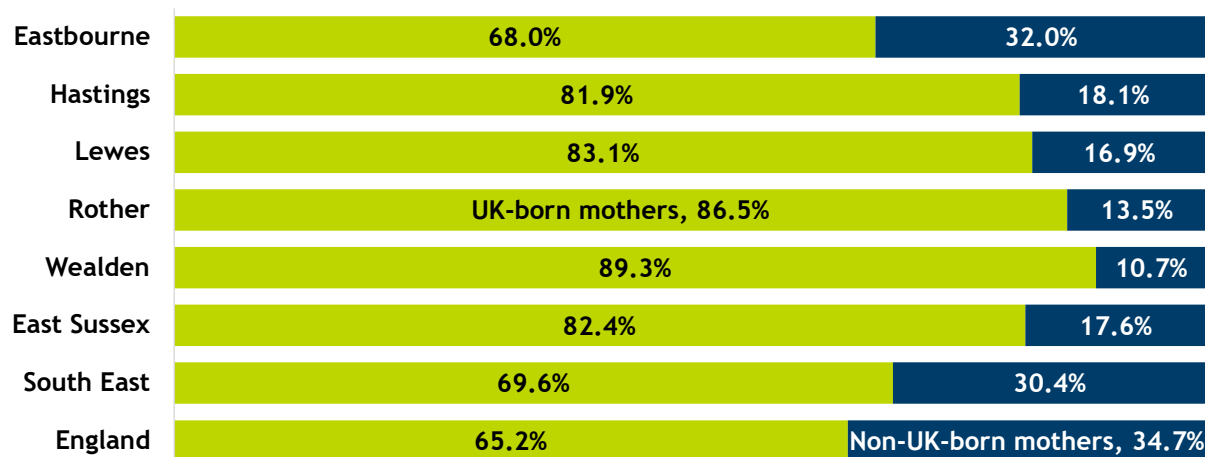
	East Sussex	South East	England
2021	56	820	4,150
2022	59	1,160	5,680
2023	71	1,560	7,410
2024	75	1,610	7,440
2025	72	1,440	6,540

## Mother’s country of birth

Another measure of overseas migration is the number and proportion of babies who are born to mothers who themselves were born outside the UK. In 2024 there were 4,252 live births in East Sussex (the lowest number of births since at least 1991), and 747 of these (18%) were to mothers who were born overseas. This compares to 35% of births in England as a whole, which were historically also very low.

The district with the highest proportion of new mothers born outside the UK was Eastbourne, where 32% of babies were born to mothers born overseas.

**Figure 10: Percentage of live births to UK-born and non-UK-born mothers in 2024**

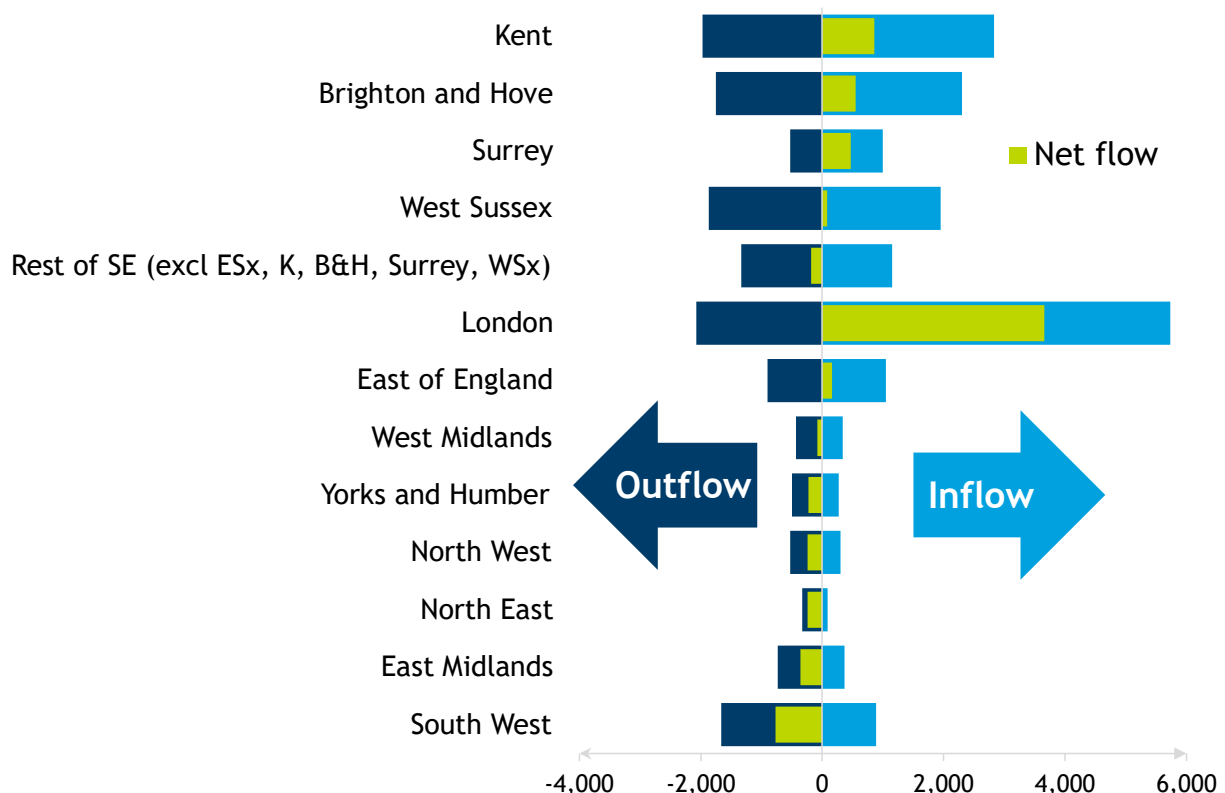


## Migration data from the 2021 Census

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 had a significant impact on the migration topic.

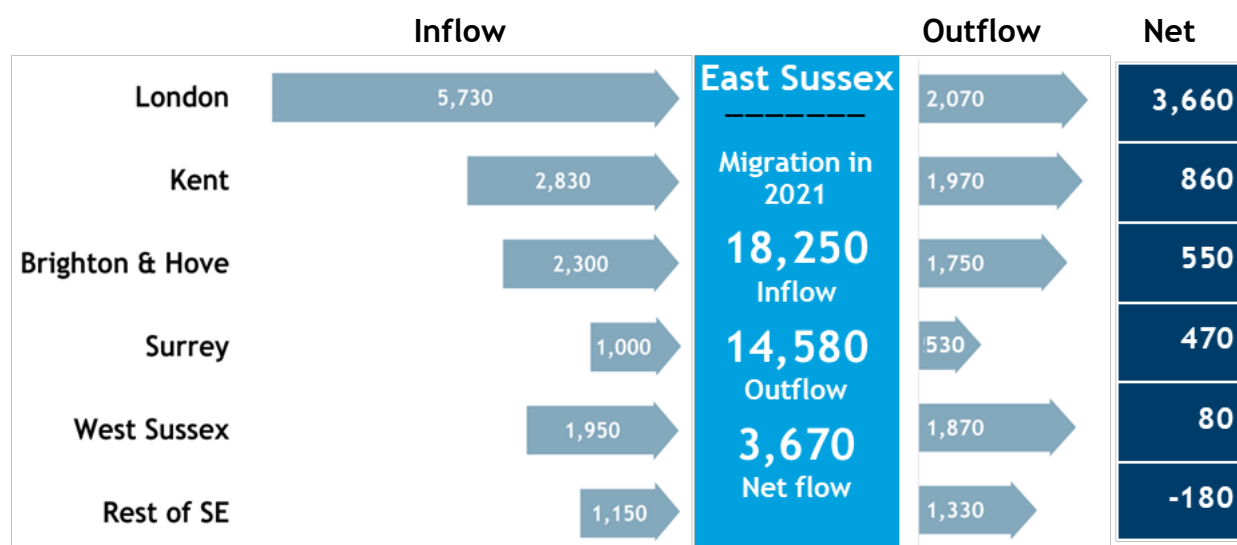
- In 2021, 18,610 people moved into East Sussex from other parts of the UK, of whom 18,280 moved from England and 330 moved from other countries of the UK, including 180 who moved from Wales.
- 14,500 people moved out of East Sussex to other parts of England, and 390 moved to Wales (there is no data for moves to Scotland and Northern Ireland).
- So, there was net positive internal migration from England and Wales of +3,570 in the 12 months to March 2021, with +3,780 from England alone, but net loss of 210 to Wales. While there were +3,700 from London, and +1,800 net moves from the rest of the South East, there was a net loss of 1,710 to the rest of England.

Figure 11: Migration to and from East Sussex by location in England, 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

**Figure 12: Top areas within the UK for internal migration flows to and from East Sussex**



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

- Within the county there were 32,610 moves, with 24,360 people moving from one district of East Sussex to another and 8,260 people moving within the district where they already live.
- 2,950 usual residents (0.5% of the total population) moved into East Sussex from outside the UK in the 12 months prior to the Census being taken, down from 3,620 (0.7% of the population) in 2011.
- Of these 2,950 international arrivals, only 1,340 said that they intended to stay more than 12 months.
- When we look at net migration from England, while there was a net in-flow of 6,900 owner-occupiers, there were net losses of 980 private renters and 150 social tenants to other parts of England.

### Internal migration in 2021 by age and sex

- There was net positive migration from England among the under 16 age group (+860), and among those aged over 25 (+5,210), with the largest net in-flow from those aged 35 to 44 (+1,850). However, there was a net out-flow of people aged 16-24 (-2,350).
- 54% of the net in-flow of migrants from the rest of England were women, with a higher proportion (61%) of those in the 25-34 age group being female. In the districts, 60% of net migrants to Hastings were female, with Rother seeing 51% of net migration from males.
- When looking at net flows by location and age, there were net out-flows to all other locations in England among the 16-24 age groups, with the region outside the South East seeing the largest net out-flow of the 16-24 group

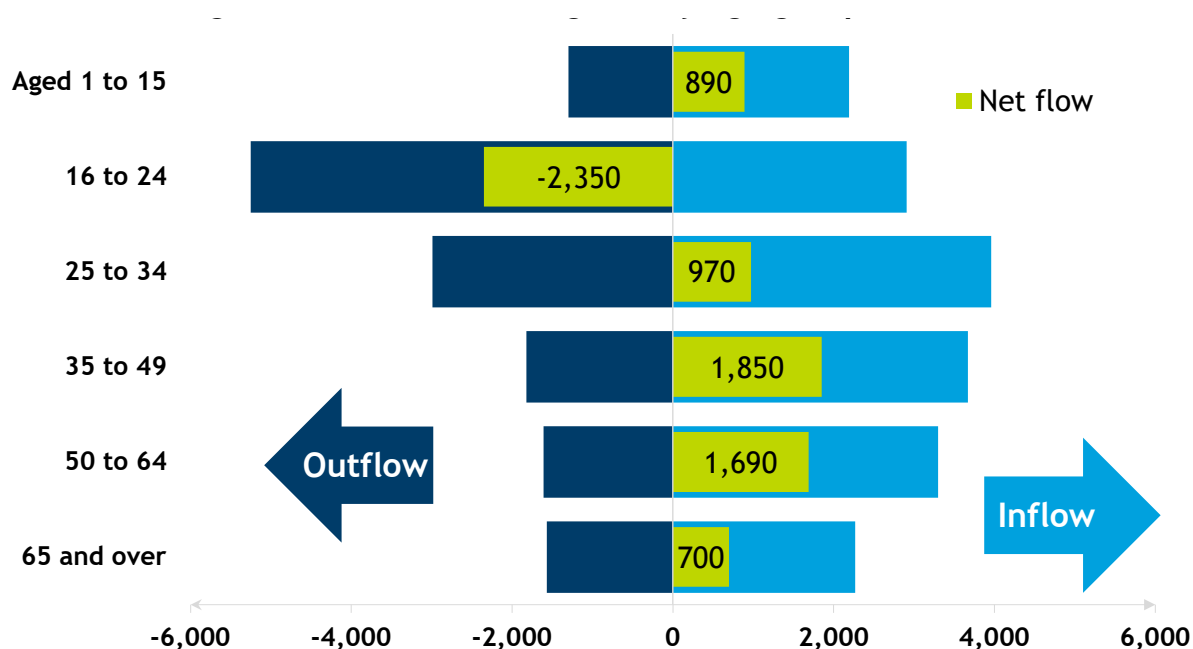
being the South West: -460 people, and a net flow of -1,330 young people aged 16-24 to all the regions of the UK outside the South East and London.

**Table 9: Migrants to and from East Sussex by age group**

	In migration from England	Out migration from England	Net flow
Aged 1 to 15	2,190	1,300	890
16 to 24	2,910	5,250	-2,350
25 to 34	3,960	2,990	970
35 to 49	3,670	1,820	1,850
50 to 64	3,300	1,610	1,690
65 and over	2,270	1,570	700
<b>All ages (1+)</b>	<b>18,300</b>	<b>14,550</b>	<b>3,750</b>

Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

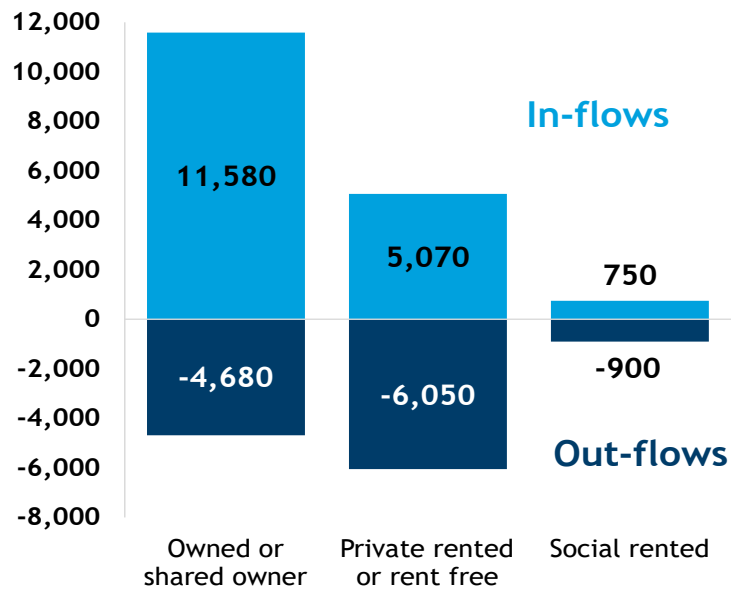
**Figure 13: Migration to and from England by age group - East Sussex**



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

## Internal migration in 2021 by tenure

Figure 14: In- and out-flows from East Sussex to England, by tenure



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

## Further information

There are two broad types of migration. International migration measures the number of people moving into an area from overseas and out of an area to overseas. Internal migration looks at the number of people who move within the UK. The total movement of people, both into and out of an area, is known as population turnover or gross migration flow. This measures the ‘churn’ of population.

Migration flow data is released by the Office for National Statistics. The internal and international migration data are released every year as part of the components of population change data, with the [Mid-Year Population Estimates](#). Age group information is also available by district.

Detailed migration data was also released for the 2021 Census, which has details of where people have moved to and from in the previous year, if it is within England and Wales. These detailed origin-destination tables can be found on [Nomis](#).

In addition, the [Department for Work and Pensions](#) (DWP) publish data on the number of National Insurance numbers issued to foreign nationals who wish to work in the UK.

The [Home Office](#) releases data on the number of Asylum Seekers and Refugees who receive support from local authorities, and the Department for Education publish data on the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker children.

Further information and more up-to-date data is available from the ONS:

[Long-term international migration, provisional - Office for National Statistics](#)

[UK emigration explained: what we know about Brits moving abroad - ONS](#)

[What is international migration and how do we estimate it? - ONS](#)

The ONS have recently changed the way they measure international migration see: [Implementing new methods for estimating the international migration of British nationals, progress update - Office for National Statistics](#)

- For more information about migration estimates see the [ONS website](#).
- For further information about migration in East Sussex contact [esif@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:esif@eastsussex.gov.uk)

## 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. Visit [www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk](http://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk) or e-mail [esif@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:esif@eastsussex.gov.uk) for more information.