

Demographic projections...in brief

June 2026

Population projections provide an indication of the future size and age structure of the population. These projections are based on the latest mid-year population estimates for 2024 at district level which were released in June 2025 and small area population estimates which were released in October 2025. They also use a set of assumptions of future fertility, mortality and migration. Fertility rates trends reflect those used in the latest ONS National population projections. They are dwelling-led demographic projections based on planned housing figures provided by the districts and boroughs as at Spring 2026.

The East Sussex population is projected to grow by over 48,000 in the next 15 years, with a large increase in the number of people aged 65+, which compares to modest changes in younger age groups. Wealden is projected to see the most growth, based on the planned level of housing. The number of households is projected to grow faster than the population, as household size continues to decline.

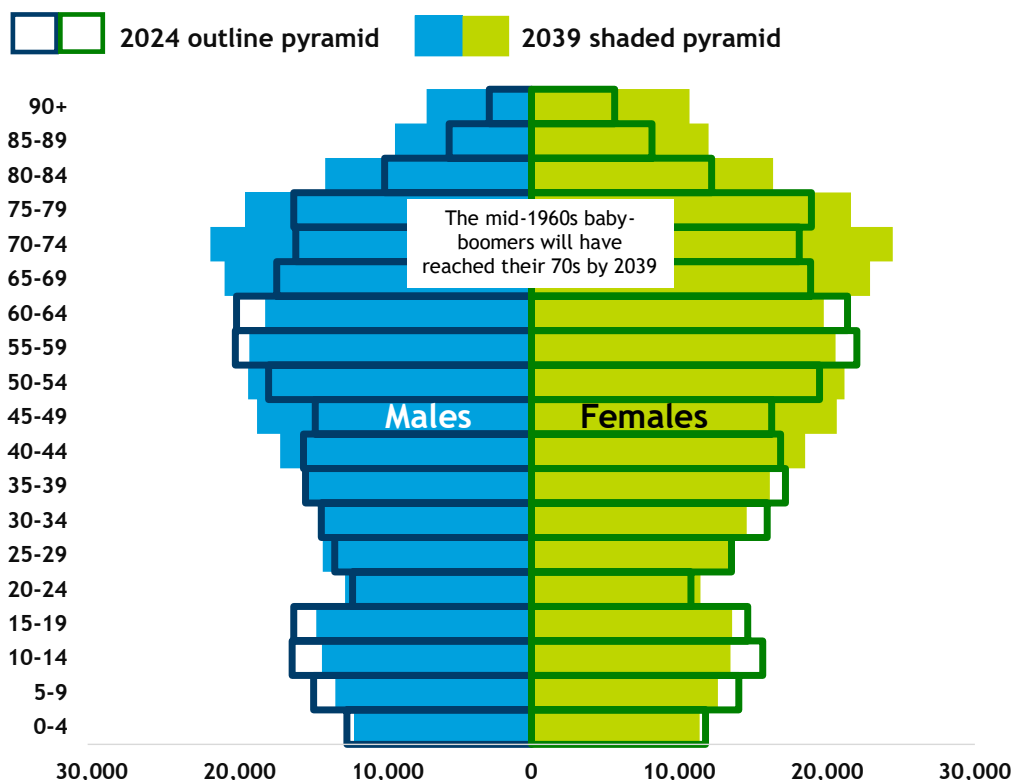
560,900

Population in 2024

609,300

Projected population in 2039

Fig. 1: East Sussex population in 2024 and 2039, by age and sex



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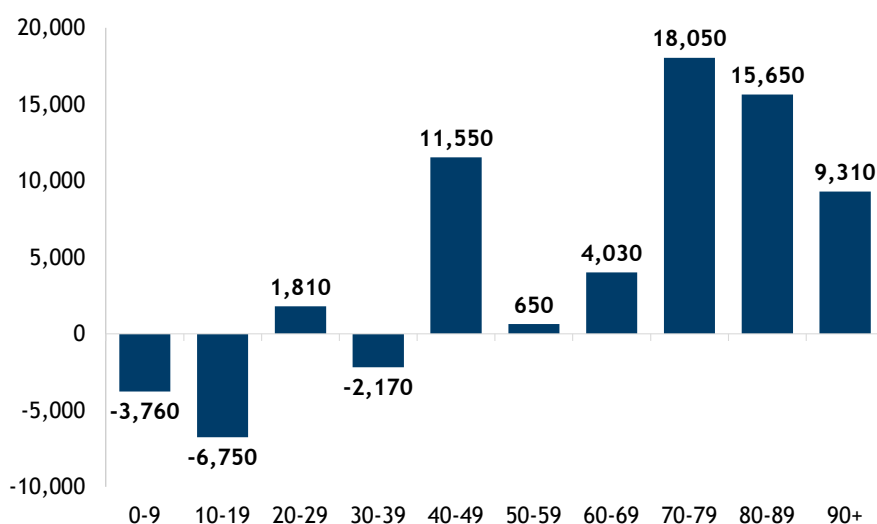
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Key points

- The population of East Sussex is projected to increase by 48,400 to 609,300 between 2024 and 2039. The number of households is expected to increase by 15.4%, while the population is projected to increase by 8.6%, over this 15-year period, as average household size declines from 2.24 people per household in 2024, to 2.10 in 2039.
- The over 65s are projected to see the largest increase in numbers over the projection period, 2024-2039, as the population continues to age. This will be exaggerated because ‘baby boomers’ born in the mid-1960s will be in their 70s by 2039, and those from the post-war baby boom will be in their late 80s/90s.
- The over 65s now represent over a quarter of the county’s population (26.6%) and are projected to make up a third (32.8%) of all people by 2039. All elderly age groups are expected to increase in size (see pyramid in Figure 1), with the number of very elderly people aged 85 and over expected to increase by 76%, from around 22,200 in 2024 to 39,000 in 2039.
- In Rother, which had the second highest proportion of over 85s of all lower tier authorities in the country in 2024, older people (aged 65+) are expected to make up nearly 40% of the population in 2039 (up from 33% in 2024). The proportion of over 85s in Rother is forecast to rise from 4.9% to 7.8% in 2039.
- The number of households is forecast to increase by 15.4%, from 245,000 in 2024 to 282,600 in 2039, with the largest increases among older households, and those with only one person.
- The workforce (the number of economically active people aged 16-74) is projected to rise by 4.5% over the 15 years from 2024 to 2039, an increase of 11,600 to 267,800 in 2039.

Age groups

Fig. 2: Projected actual change in numbers between 2024 and 2039 - 10-year age groups



- The projections suggest that there will be a decrease in the number of children and young people aged 0-17 (down 9.9%), partly because the overall population of women of childbearing age (15 to 44) is expected to fall slightly between 2024 and 2039, by 1.5%, from 88,900 to 87,600, although there is projected to be a slight rise in this age group between 2027 and 2032.
- The model projects that there will be a small rise in the working age population (18-64) of 2.7%, from 307,200 in 2024 to 315,200 people in 2039. There are forecast to be rises among the 18-24 age group (up 3.0%) and the 35-44 group (+3.4%), and among the 45-54 age group (+16.7%) but declines among those aged 25-34 (down 0.9%), and those aged 55-64 (-7.1%).
- The fall in numbers of people in later middle-age (55-64) is explained by the aging on of people born in the baby-boom in the mid-1960s, and this cohort is being followed by a generation with fewer people.
- The number of older people aged 65 and over in the county is projected to increase from 149,400 in 2024 to 200,000 in 2039, an increase of 50,600, or 33.8% (note rounding). Numbers in the oldest age group (aged 85+) are projected to increase most significantly, by 75.6% over the 15 years from 2024-2039, and increase of 16,800.

Change between 2026 and 2030

- When looking at a shorter time frame, the pattern of projected changes over the next few years is slightly different. Over the period 2026-2030, the population is projected to increase by 3.4%, rising from 565,000 in 2026, to 584,200 by 2030. The largest increase is forecast to be among the oldest age group, with the number of over 85s increasing by 21.7% to 28,000 in 2030.

Table 1: Projected population in East Sussex in 2026 and 2030, by age group

	2026	2030	Actual change	% change
0-17	102,300	99,200	-3,100	-3.0%
18-64	307,200	313,000	5,800	1.9%
65-84	132,500	144,000	11,500	8.7%
85 and over	23,000	28,000	5,000	21.7%
Total	565,000	584,200	19,200	3.4%

Median age

- The average (median) age of East Sussex residents is forecast to rise to 51 years and 7 months in 2039, from 48 years and 4 months in 2024 as the population continues to age.

Children and young people aged 0-17

104,500

Population in 2024

94,100

Projected population in 2039

- The population of children and young people in East Sussex is projected to decrease by 9.9% over the period 2024-2039, from 104,500 to 94,100, a decline of 10,400 children.
- When we look at the shorter period from 2026-2030, the population of children and young people is projected to fall by 3.0%, from 102,300 to 99,200, a fall of 3,100.
- The decline in the number of children is projected to begin in 2024, and then continue fairly steadily over the next 14 years.

Fig. 3: Projected population of children and young people aged 0-17, 2024-2039

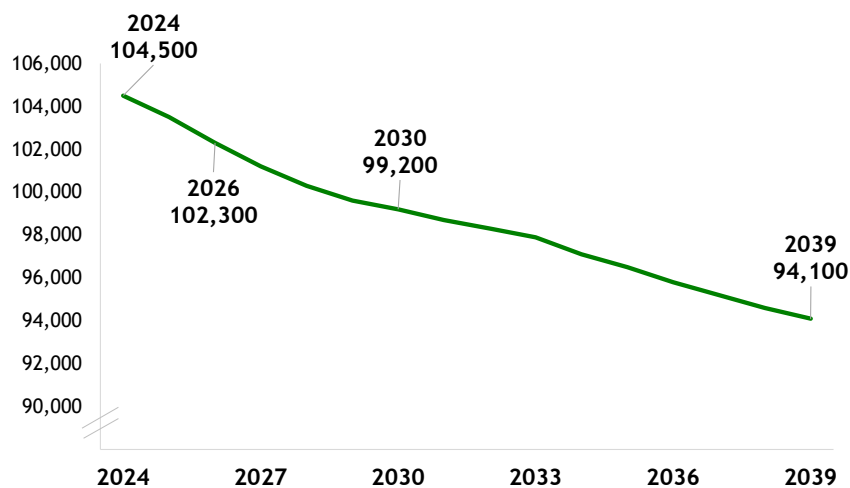
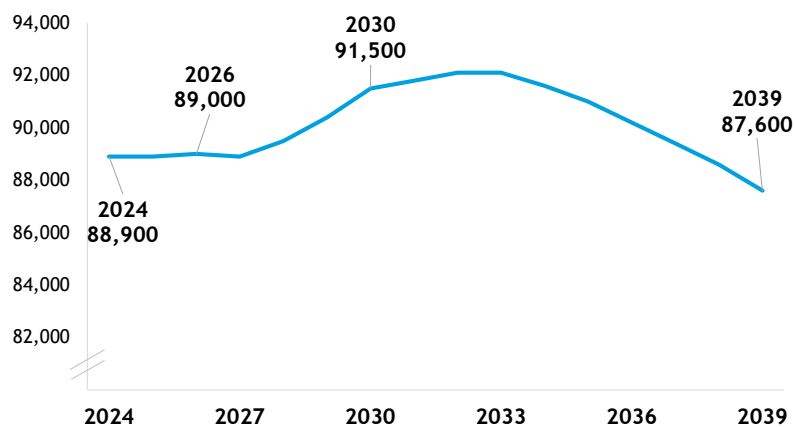
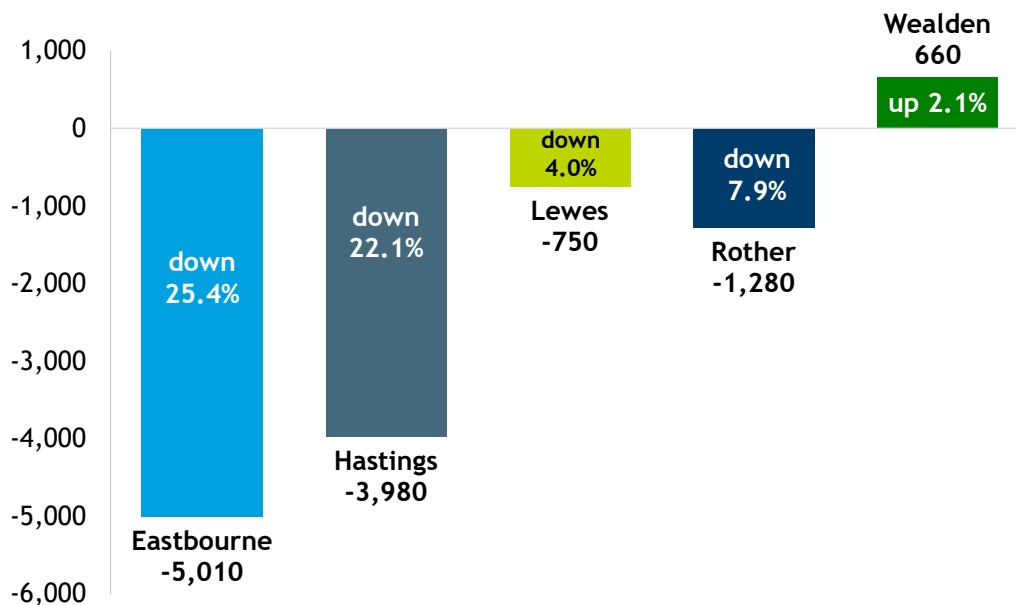


Fig. 4: Population of females aged 15-44, 2024-2039



- The projections suggest that there will be a decrease in the number of children and young people aged 0-17 (down 9.9%), partly because the overall population of women of childbearing age (15 to 44) is expected to fall slightly between 2024 and 2039, by 1.5%, from 88,900 to 87,600, although there is projected to be a slight rise in this age group between 2027 and 2032.
- Looking at the 15 years 2024-2039, there is projected to be a decline in the number of households with children of 24.3% (14,400), from 59,200 to 44,800.
- Whilst the total number of 0-17 year olds is expected to fall significantly in East Sussex (by 9.9%) between 2024-2039, there will be a large variation between the districts, with Wealden seeing a rise of 2.1%, and numbers in Eastbourne declining by 25.1% and in Hastings 22.1%.

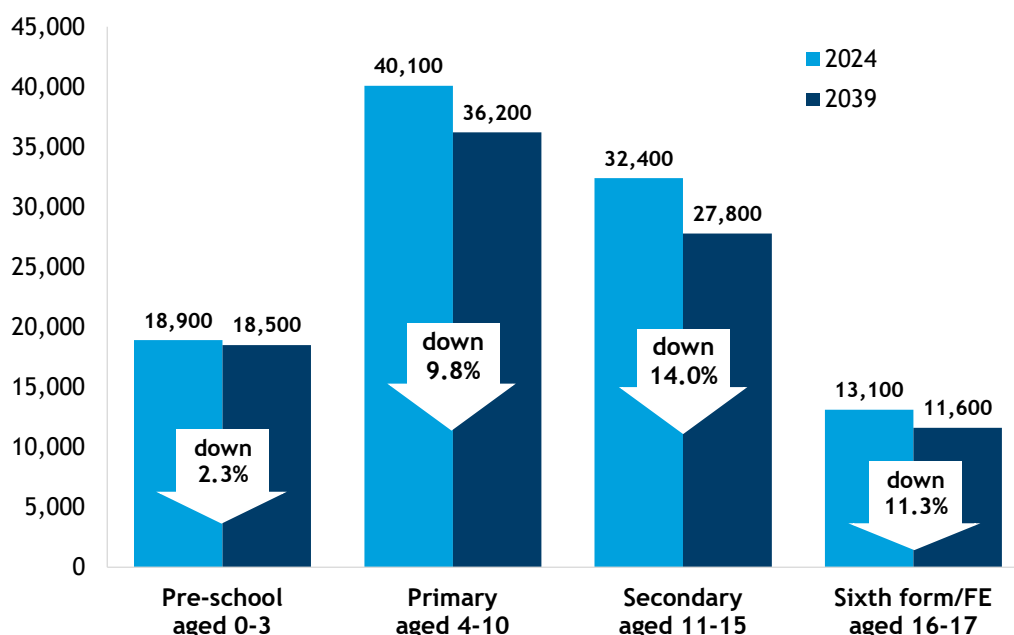
Fig. 5: Projected change in the number of children aged 0-17 by district, 2024-2039



Detailed age groups

- Among pre-school aged children (aged 0-3) there is projected to be a modest decline of 2.3% (400) over the period from 2024-2039.
- Other age groups are projected to decrease more significantly. Primary school-age children (aged 4-10) are expected to fall by 9.8% (down 3,900) over the 15 years 2024-2039. Secondary age (11-15) numbers are expected to fall by 14.0% (down 4,500).
- Among Sixth form/FE aged young people (aged 16-17) there is also projected to be a considerable decline of 11.3% (1,500) over the 15 years.

Fig. 6: Projected population change among children and young people in East Sussex, by age group, 2024-2039



- When looking at the period 2026-2030, there is projected to be a decline of 3,100 children and young people aged 0-17 (3.0%) with numbers going from 102,300 to 99,200 over this time frame.
- During this time, the number of those aged 0-3 is projected to see a rise of 1.0% (190), but all other age groups are projected to fall: there is projected to be a significant decline among those aged 4-10 of 5.6% (-2,200) and more modest declines among 11-15 year olds of -2.6% (down 800) and those aged 16-17 of -2.2% (300 fewer young people) over the 5 year period 2026-2030.

Table 2: Projected population of children in East Sussex by age group, 2026-2030

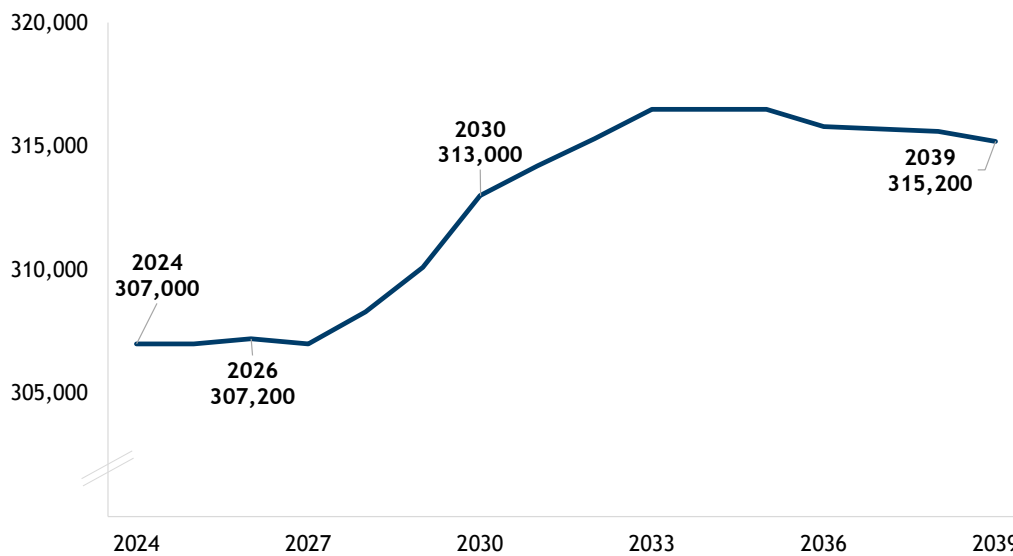
	2026	2030	Change 2026-2030	% change 2026-2030
0-3	18,300	18,500	200	1.0%
4-10	39,100	36,900	-2,200	-5.6%
11-15	31,700	30,800	-800	-2.6%
16-17	13,300	13,000	-300	-2.2%
0-17	102,300	99,200	-3,100	-3.0%

Working-age people (aged 18-64)

307,000
Population in 2024

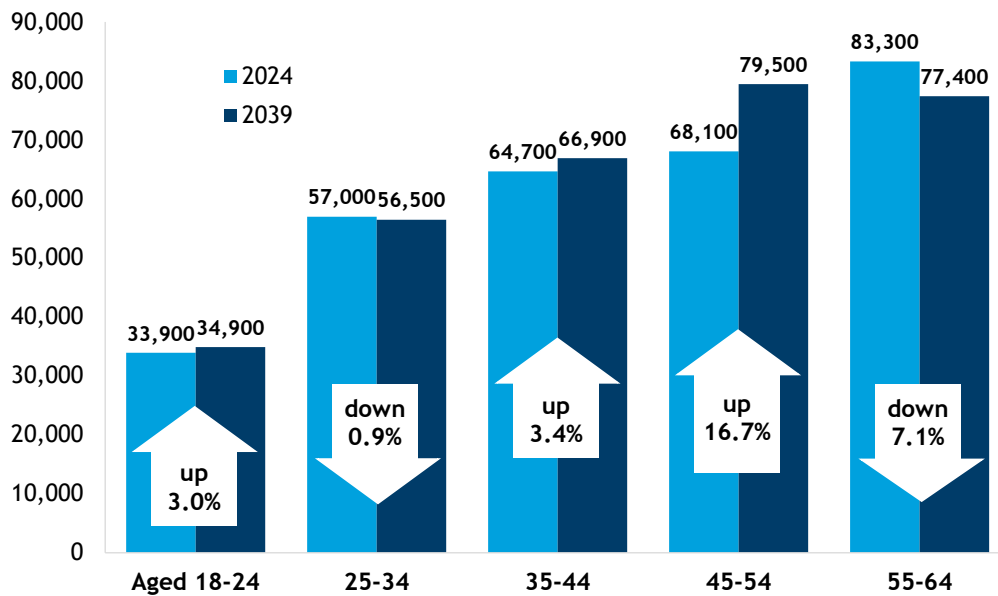
315,200
Projected population in 2039

Fig. 7: Projected population of working-age people (aged 18-64), 2024-2039



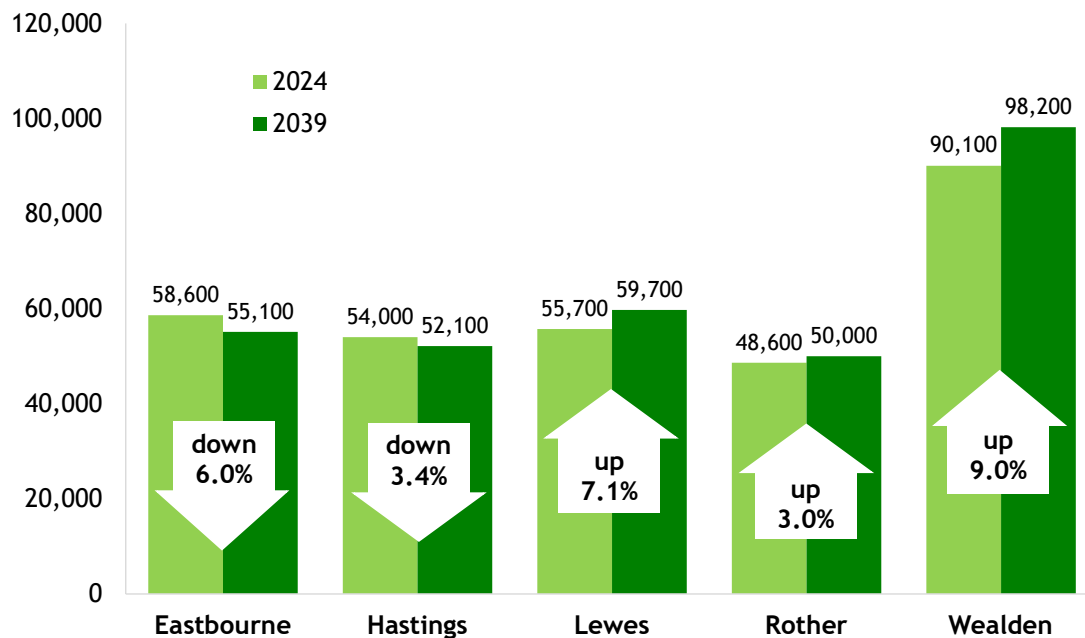
- The model projects that there will be an increase in the working age population (18-64) of 2.7% or 8,200, from 307,000 in 2024 to 315,200 people in 2039. However the change is not evenly distributed across the age groups. The largest rise is projected among the 45-54 age group (up 16.7%). The 35-44 age group are projected to rise by 3.4% and the youngest working-age group (18-24) is projected to see an increase of 3.0%.
- But there will be a modest decline among people aged 25-34 (down 0.9%), and among those aged 55-64, numbers are projected to decrease by -7.1%, as the population numbers from the baby-boom in the mid-1960s get older, and are followed by a generation with fewer people.

Fig. 8: Projected working-age population by age group, 2024-2039



- The number of working age people in Wealden is projected to increase by 9.0% in the period 2024-2039. Lewes is projected to see a rise of 7.1%, and Rother is projected to see 3.0% more working aged people. However there are forecast to be significant declines in Eastbourne (down 6.0%) and in Hastings (down 3.4%).

Fig. 9: Population of working age (18-64) by district, 2024 and 2039

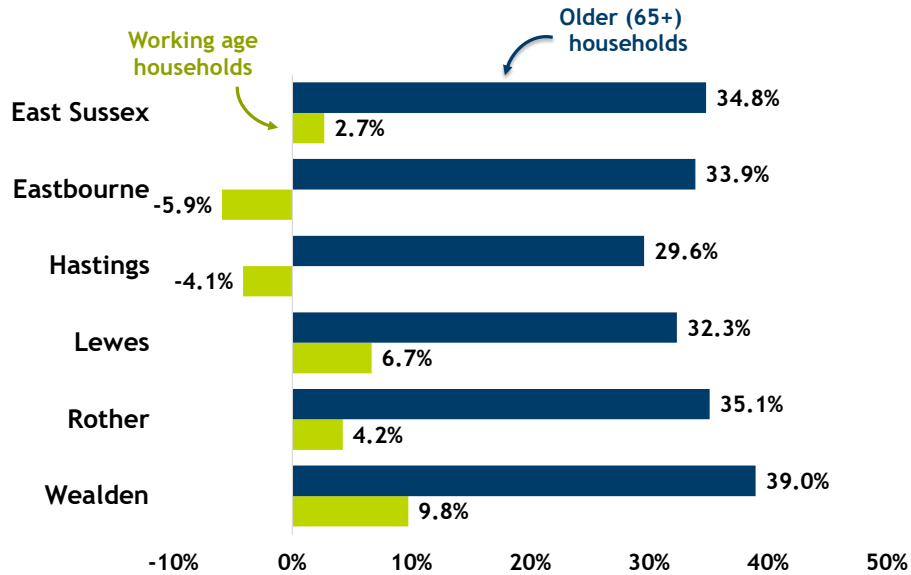


Working age households

- The number of households headed by people of working age (16-64) is set to increase by 2.7% over the period 2024-2039, the same rate as the increase in population of this age group. This compares to a projected rise of 34.8% among households headed by older people (aged 65+) over the same period.

- Within the working age (16-64) group, households with children are projected to decrease by 24.5% over the 15 years to 2039, but one person households are projected to rise by 22.3% and other households by 19.0%.

Fig. 10: Percentage change in number of households by age group, 2024-2039



Change in the number of working age people 2026-2030

- When looking at the period 2026-2030, there is projected to be an increase of 5,800 (1.9%) from 307,200 to 313,000 in the number of working-age people aged 18-64. But while the number of those aged 18-24 is projected to see a rise of 9.7% (3,400), there is projected to be a smaller rise among those aged 25-44 (up 2,400 or 2.0%), and no change among those aged 45-64.

Table 3: Projected population of working age people in East Sussex by age group, 2026-2030

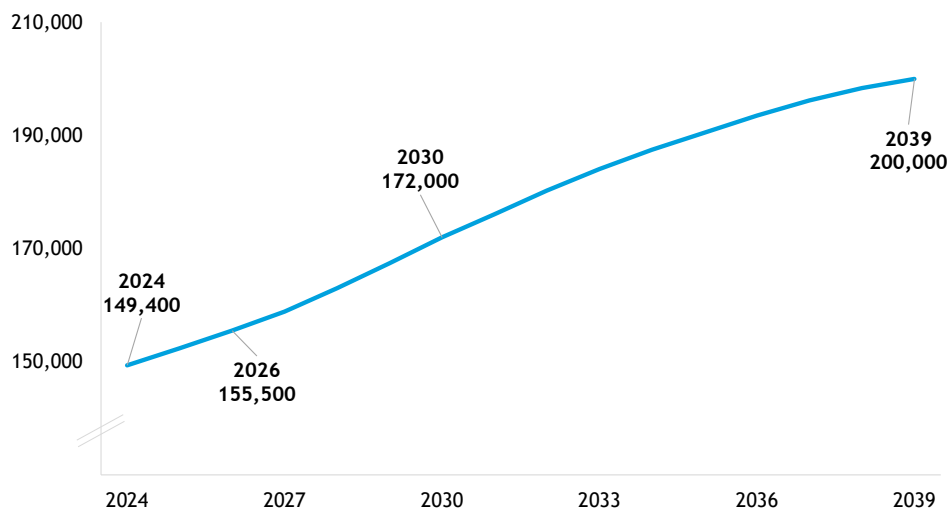
	2026	2030	Change 2026-2030	% change 2026-2030
18-24	34,700	38,000	3,400	9.7%
25-44	120,600	123,100	2,400	2.0%
45-64	151,900	151,900	-100	0.0%
All working age: 18-64	307,200	313,000	5,800	1.9%

Note data rounded to the nearest 100 in this table. Change and percentage change calculated before rounding, so some numbers may not sum.

Older population (aged 65 and over)

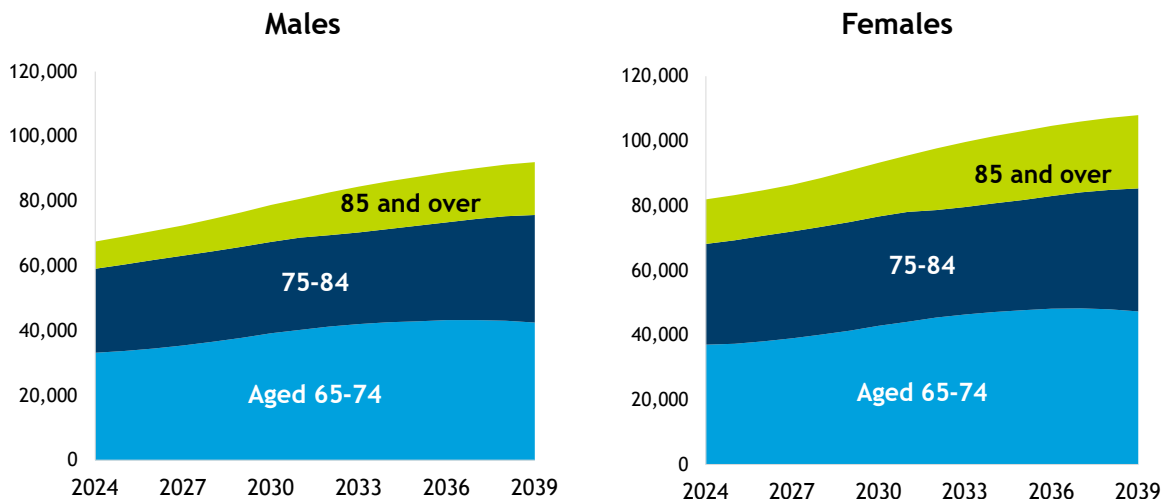


Fig. 11: Projected population of older people aged 65 and over, 2024-2039



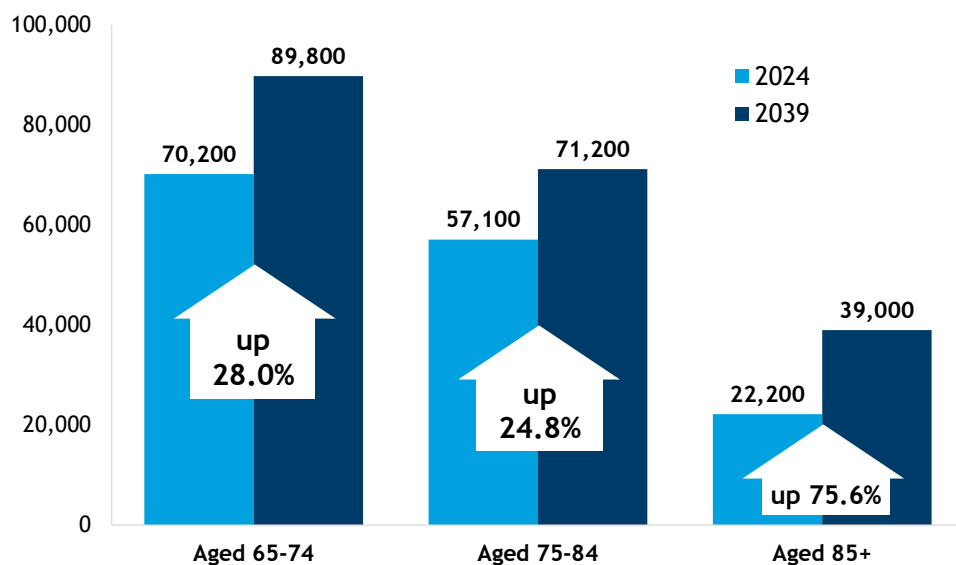
- The number of older people aged 65 and over in the county is projected to increase from 149,400 in 2024 to 200,000 in 2039, an increase of 50,600, or 33.8% (note rounding).
- The number of men aged 65+ is projected to rise by 36.3% (24,500) to 92,000 in 2039, while the number of women is projected to increase by 31.8% (26,100) to 108,000.

Fig. 12: Projected population of older people aged 65 and over, males and females, 2024-2039



- Numbers of the oldest group (aged 85+) are projected to increase fastest, by 76% over the 15 years from 2024-2039, an increase of 16,800, as the postwar baby boomers reach their mid-80s. This change will be most acute among the oldest men with an increase of 94% (7,900) among men aged 85+ compared to a 64% (8,900) rise among women aged 85+ over this period.
- There is also forecast to be more than double the number in the very oldest group (aged 90 and over), increasing from 8,500 in 2024 to 17,800 people in 2039. There are projected to be 4,300 more males aged 90+ (up 160%), and 5,000 more females (up 89%) in this age group.
- Other older age groups will also increase steeply, with the 65-74 age group projected to increase by 28%, and 75-84 year-olds projected to rise by 25% over the 15 year period.

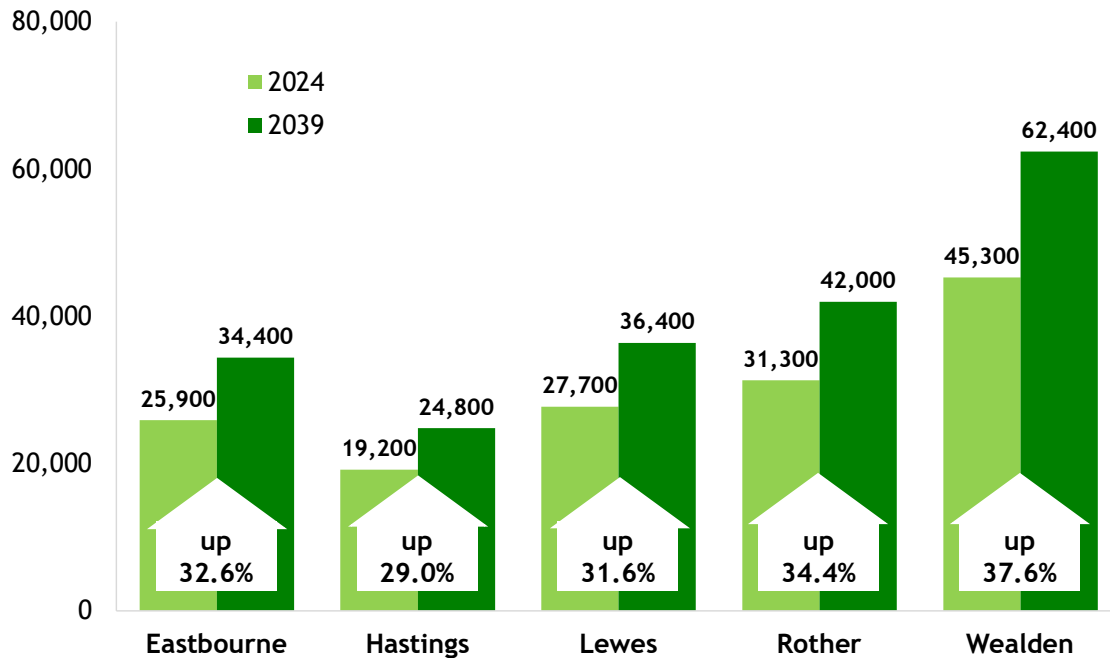
Fig. 13: Projected older population by age group, 2024-2039



- Wealden is projected to see the fastest rise in the population of older people aged 65 and over among the districts, with a rise of 38% over the 15 years from 2024-2039. Rother will see the second largest increase of 34%, with the smallest increase seen in Hastings of 29%.
- Wealden will also see the largest rise among the very old with an increase of 82% (5,800) among the over 85 group over this period.
- The increases in Eastbourne (33%), and Lewes (up 32%) in the period 2024-2039 will also be very significant, especially when compared to the changes among other age groups.
- In 2024, one third of Rother's population (33%) were aged 65+, ranking second highest of all districts/UAs in the country (just behind the district of North Norfolk). This is projected to increase to 39% of the population by 2039, with 7.8% of the population projected to be 85 and over in Rother by that time.

- Just 21% of Hastings population was aged 65+ in 2024, but even here, the proportion is forecast to rise to 27% in 2039.

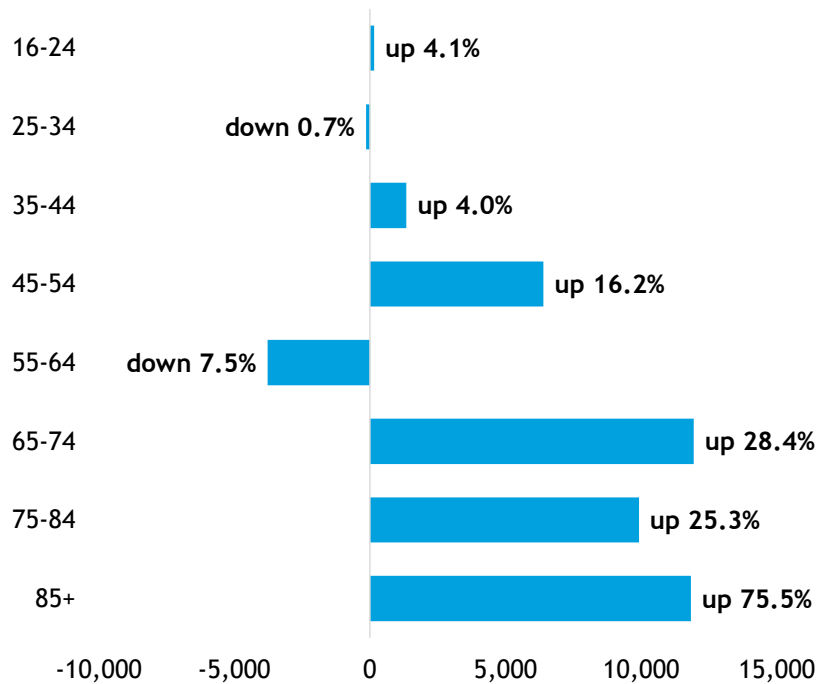
Fig. 14: Projected older population (aged 65+) by district, 2024-2039



Older households

- While the total number of households is projected to increase by 15.4%, from 245,000 in 2024 to 282,600 in 2039, the number of older households (aged 65 and over) is forecast to increase by 34.8%, from 96,800 to 130,400 in 2039, an increase of 33,700.
- The largest increase in older households is projected to be in Wealden, where older household numbers are projected to rise by 39% from 28,800 to 40,000 over this time period.
- But all the other districts are also projected to see large rises in older household numbers, with Rother projected to see a rise of 35% from 19,700 to 26,600, and Eastbourne 34%. The lowest rise in older household numbers will be seen in Hastings, which will see a 30% increase in households headed by someone aged 65 or over.

Fig. 15: Change in household numbers by age in East Sussex, 2024-2039



- As the older population rises, there will be little change in the working age population. This means that dependency ratios for all dependents and for older people will rise significantly. The change in the elderly dependency ratio will be most significant in Rother where the ratio will rise from 62 in 2024 to 81 older people aged 65+ for every 100 working age people (aged 16-64) in 2039.

Fig. 16: Number of dependents aged 65+ per 100 working age people, 2024 and 2039

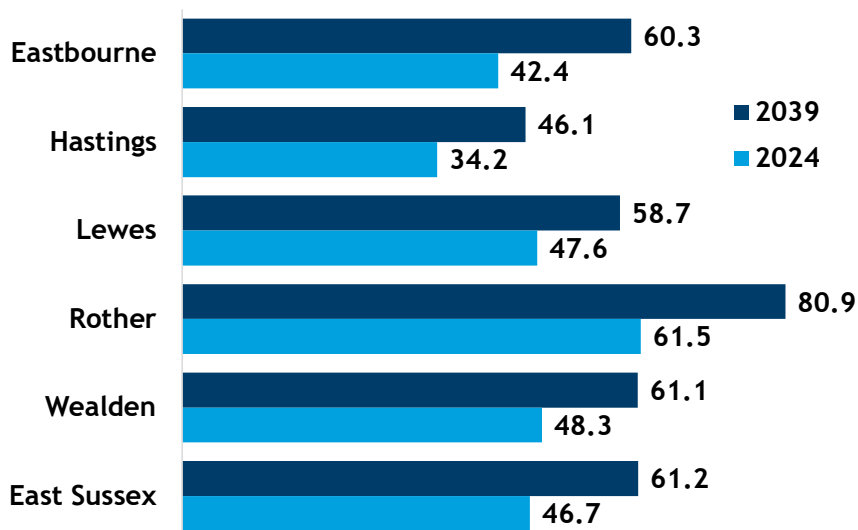
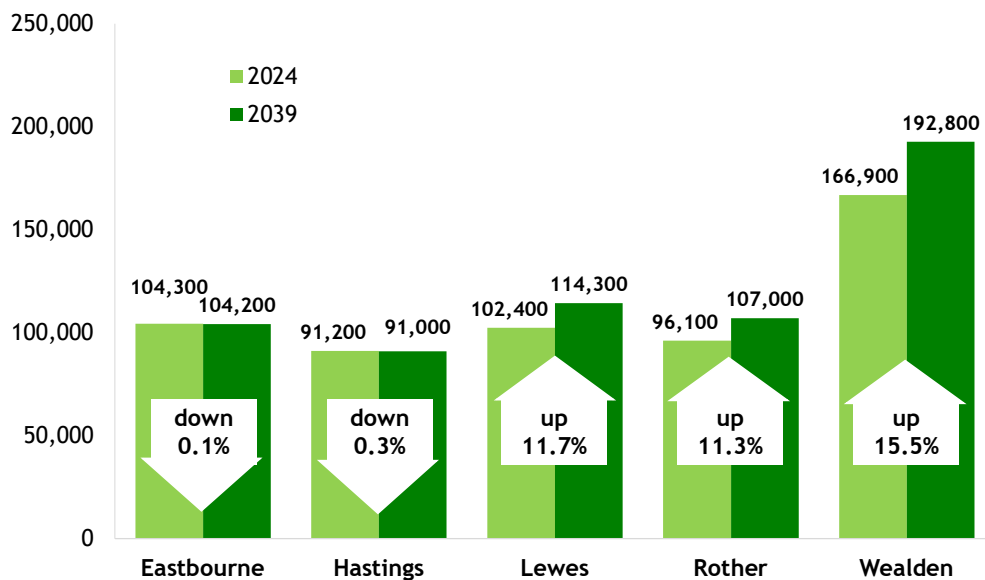


Table 4: Projected population of older people in East Sussex by age group, 2026-2030

	2026	2030	Change 2026-2030	% change 2026-2030
Aged 65-74	72,500	82,000	9,500	13.1%
75-84	60,000	62,100	2,000	3.4%
85 and over	23,000	28,000	5,000	21.7%
All people aged 65+	155,500	172,000	16,500	10.6%

Districts

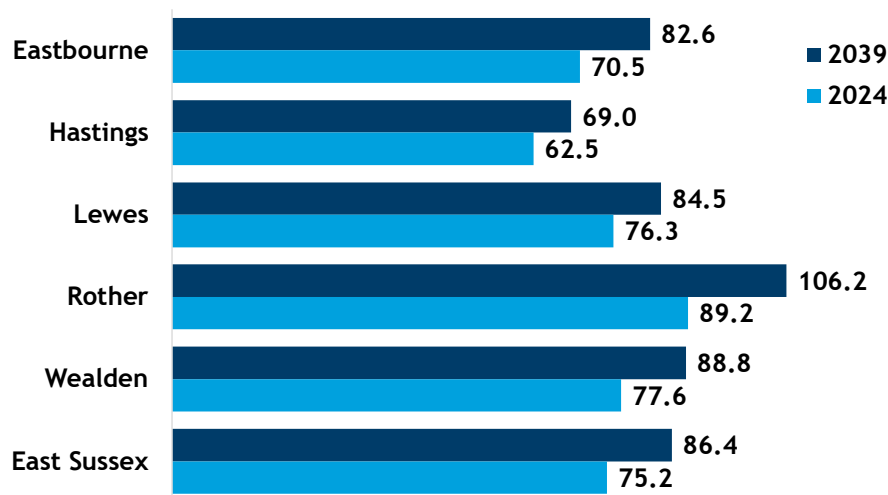
Fig. 17: Projected total population in East Sussex districts, 2024-2039, with projected change



- The population is projected to increase in Wealden, Rother and Lewes, with the largest rise forecast in Wealden (15.5%) where substantial new housing development is being planned.
- There are also forecast to be significant rises in Lewes (11.7%) and Rother (11.3%).
- Marginal declines are projected in Eastbourne (-0.1%) and Hastings (-0.3%) over the projection period from 2024-2039.

Dependency Ratios

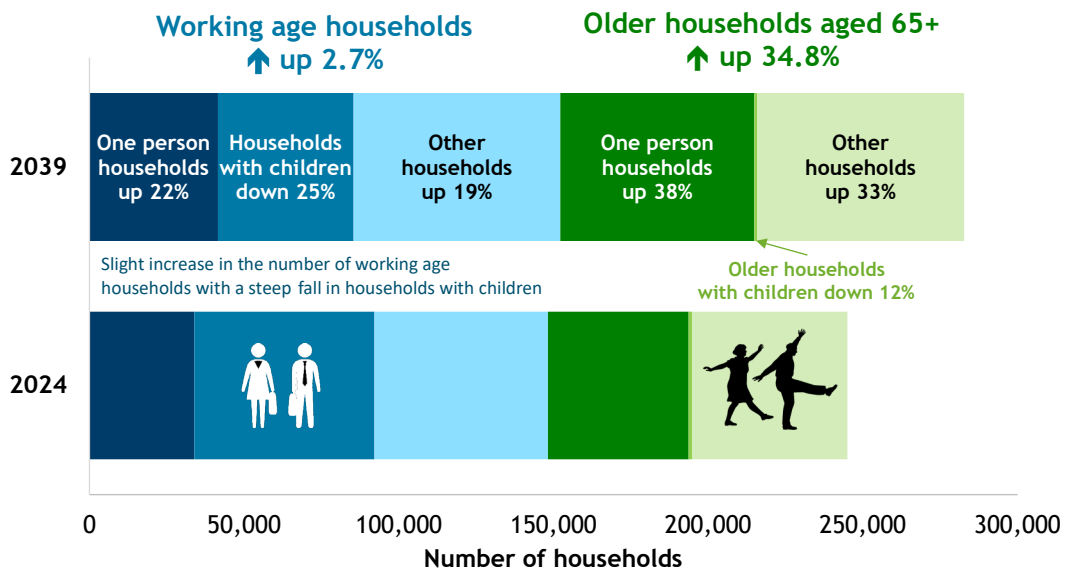
Fig. 18: Dependency ratios in 2024 and 2039 - districts



- The overall dependency ratio (the number of dependents for every 100 working age people, aged 16-64) is expected to rise to 86 in 2039, from 75 in 2024. For elderly people (see previous page for chart), in 2039 there are projected to be 61 people aged 65+ for every 100 of working-age, up from 47 in 2024. This change will be most extreme in Rother where the ratio will rise from 62 in 2024 to 81 in 2039.

Household projections

Fig 19: Household numbers in East Sussex by age and household type, 2024 and 2039



- Over the period 2024-2039, the number of households in East Sussex is projected to increase by 15.4%, faster than the 8.6% growth in population expected for the same period. This is mainly because the average number of people living in each household (household size) is expected to fall from 2.24 in 2024 to 2.10 in 2039.

- Of all household types, One-person households are expected to increase by the largest proportion (31.3% - 24,800 more households) by 2039. ‘Other’ households, which includes couples without children and other types of adult-only households, are expected to increase by 25.6% (27,200 more), reflecting predicted changes in how people will live, with more shared households and adult children staying with parents.
- While the overall number of households is projected to increase by 15.4%, from 245,000 in 2024 to 282,600 in 2039, the number of older households (aged 65 and over) is forecast to increase by 34.8%. However, working aged households (aged 16-64) will rise by only by 2.7%.
- Single female households and single male households are also expected to see large increases, of 32% and 31% respectively - but this increase will be even greater among older households (38% increase in single households of both males and females aged 65 and over) but even among single working age households, considerable increases are projected - with a 25% increase in single male households and 19% increase in single females households of working age of this period.
- Over the period 2024-2039, the total number of families with children are projected to decline by 24%. Households with one child are projected to decline by 25%, with two children by 23%, and households with three or more children by 26%.

Table 5: Average household size

	2024	2039
Eastbourne	2.20	2.01
Hastings	2.22	2.07
Lewes	2.25	2.14
Rother	2.18	2.04
Wealden	2.32	2.20
East Sussex	2.24	2.10

Table 6: Projected population change, 2024-2039

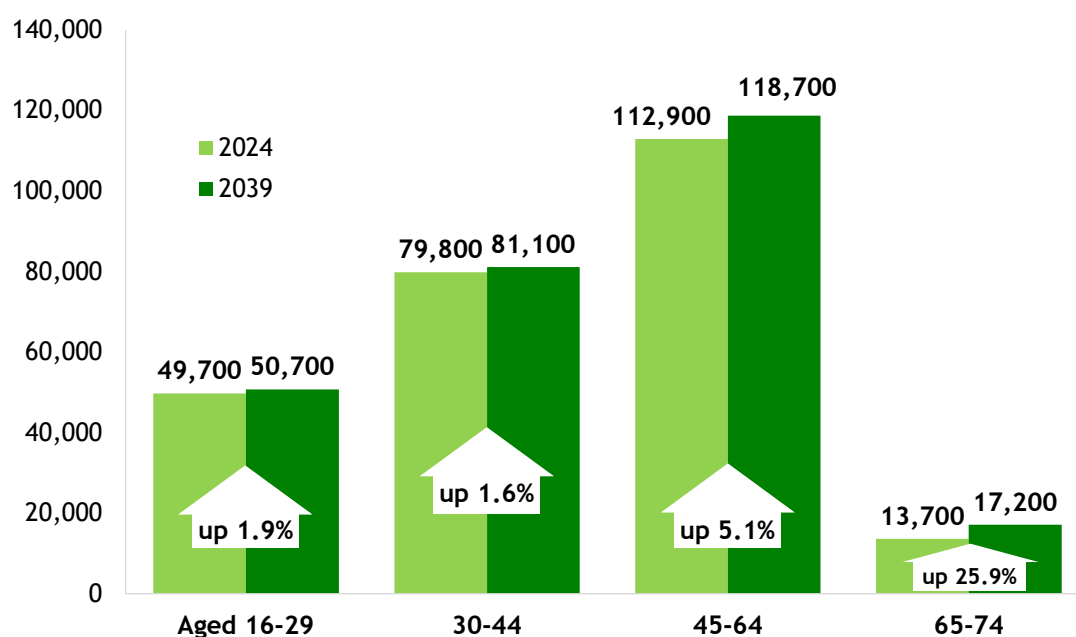
	2024	2039	Change 2024-39	% change 2024-39
Eastbourne	104,300	104,200	-100	-0.1%
Hastings	91,200	91,000	-300	-0.3%
Lewes	102,400	114,300	12,000	11.7%
Rother	96,100	107,000	10,900	11.3%
Wealden	166,900	192,800	25,800	15.5%
East Sussex	560,900	609,300	48,400	8.6%

Table 7: Projected household change, 2024-2039

	2024	2039	Change 2024-39	% change 2024-39
Eastbourne	46,500	50,700	4,200	9.0%
Hastings	40,400	43,100	2,600	6.5%
Lewes	45,000	52,700	7,600	17.0%
Rother	42,600	50,400	7,900	18.5%
Wealden	70,500	85,800	15,300	21.7%
East Sussex	245,000	282,600	37,600	15.4%

Labour force projections

Fig. 20: Workforce projections for East Sussex by age group, 2024-2039

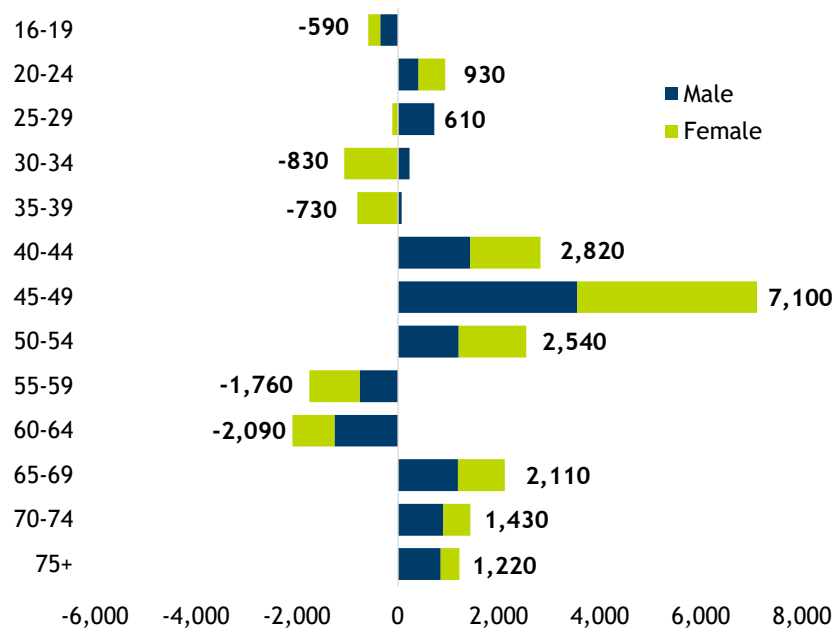


- The labour force (economically active people aged 16-74) is expected to increase by 4.5% (11,600 people) to about 267,800 people in 2039, but while there is projected to be a small rise in the number of in younger workers up to age 64 of 3.3%, there is expected to be a 26% increase in the labour force 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 5,810) and the older age group (aged 65-74 - up 3,550) and with smaller rises among the youngest workers (aged 16-29 - up 1.9%) and a among the 30-44 age group (up 1.6%) and while the 45-54 is projected to see a significant increase (9,650 - 17.0%) and big falls among those aged 55-64 (down 3,840, 6.8%).

Table 8: Projected workforce (aged 16-74) by districts, 2024-2039

	2024	2039	Change 2024-39	% change 2024-39
Eastbourne	47,300	44,900	-2,300	-4.9%
Hastings	43,100	42,100	-1,000	-2.4%
Lewes	47,200	51,300	4,200	8.9%
Rother	40,200	42,200	2,100	5.2%
Wealden	78,500	87,100	8,600	11.0%
East Sussex	256,200	267,800	11,600	4.5%

Fig.21: Actual change in labour force numbers by detailed age group and sex, 2024-2039



- There is a difference between projected changes to the male and female workforce, with males projected to increase by 7,300 (up 5.6%), compared to a smaller rise among females (up by 4,200 or 3.4%), over the period 2024-2039.

Further information

The demographic projections are produced by the East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Research and Intelligence team, Governance Services, at county and district levels, using the POPGROUP model. The model uses a 'cohort component method', where the starting point is an existing estimate of the population which is projected forward taking account of the impact of births, deaths and migration (within the UK and international migration) as well as the number of extra units of housing being planned for the future ('dwellings-led' - see detailed explanation below). Assumptions about future fertility, mortality and migration trends are derived from recent historical evidence, and the latest housing provision figures are provided by districts and boroughs giving estimated trajectories for when housing will be built.

The latest 2024-based ESCC projections are based on the national, county and district level mid-2024 population estimates released by ONS in June 2025. They are also based on small area population estimates to 2024 which were released in November 2025.

These projections use the household formation rates from the 2022-based Household Projections released by ONS in 2025.

Data from the 2001, 2011 and 2021 Censuses is used in the model to provide household/dwelling conversion rates and economic activity rates.

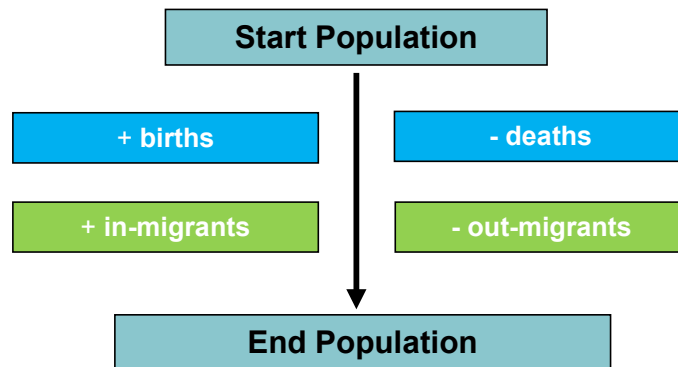
These projections also differ from previous ESCC projections released in May 2025 because we have revised the fertility rate trends, which now more closely reflect those used by the ONS in their latest 2022-based national population projections, and also reflect the latest births data. In 2024, the number of births in East Sussex was at the lowest level since 1982, with just 4,252 births recorded. In East Sussex, the total fertility rate was 1.44 births per woman in 2024, just above the national rate of 1.42. We have used the average rates for the last 5 years in each district as the basis for future births in the model. In addition to this, the latest projections use revised house-building trajectories provided by the districts and boroughs in Spring 2026.

The state pension age is currently 66 for both men and women and now increases every few months, and will be 67 by 2039. In this analysis 'pensioners' and 'older people' are assumed to be all those over the age of 65, right up to 2039. In the workforce projections, all economically active people up to age 74 are included.

Methodology

These population projections are based on a 'cohort component method', where the starting point is the existing estimate of the population, by single year of age and gender, in a particular area. The projection for the first year is produced by ageing on the estimated population by one year, adding births and subtracting deaths and adjusting for migration (either by adding on inflows and subtracting outflows or simply adding on a projected net flow - see illustration below).

Population Projections



The starting population is therefore projected forward, one year at a time, taking account of the impact of births, deaths and migration (internal and international migration). Assumptions about future fertility, mortality and migration trends are derived from recent historical evidence from the ONS components of change released with the latest mid-year population estimates (2024 estimates released in July 2025).

We have assembled some more up-to date data to give readers some additional information which may affect how they use these projections.

Deaths

In 2024, there were 7,075 deaths registered in East Sussex. This was lower than the peak pandemic year of 2021 (7,450) but somewhat higher than the average of 6,600 deaths per year for the period 2015-2019. However as there is a growing number of older people in the county, the age standardised mortality rate is declining and in 2024 was at its lowest level since 2019.

Births

The number of births has been in decline for a number of years, and was at its lowest since at least 1991 in 2024 when there were 4,252 births. In 2024, around 18% of births in the county have been to women born outside of the UK. This means that when there are changes to international migration this is likely to affect birth rates.

Internal migration

It has been suggested that changes to work styles due to the pandemic, particularly the ability to work from home, might have resulted in more people migrating from urban areas to quieter, more rural areas, such as many parts of East Sussex. The components of change which accompanied the latest ONS mid-year estimates, released in June 2025, estimated that in the year to June 2021, there was net in-migration from the UK to the county of around 6,600 people, but that this number decreased to around 4,000 in 2024, which is slightly lower than the average for the 10 years 2010-2019 (4,300 per year), suggesting that this “pandemic effect” was somewhat temporary.

International migration

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic had a major impact on travel and migration patterns. Brexit and other world events, such as changes to the Ukraine visa scheme also had a significant impact on international migration into and out of the county. So while net international migration was negative in the period from 2019-2021, there were net flows from overseas of an average of +340 per year over the 10 year period 2009-2018. In 2022, net international migration was +2,300, in 2023, there was a net inflow of +4,100, but this may partly reflect a large number of refugees who arrived into the county through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. By 2024, net international flow had fallen to 2,900, still very high, but considerably lower than the previous year. The latest national international migration data shows another significant decline in net international migration. See our [Migration Briefing](#) for more information about evidence on migration patterns into East Sussex.

- East Sussex in Figures contains further details and data on [population projections](#), [household projections](#), and [workforce projections](#).
- Read the latest analysis of the [mid-2024 population estimates](#) produced by the Research and Information Team.

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.

ESiF is a web-based information system that contains detailed, up-to-date and reliable information on a very wide range of topics.

Visit www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk or e-mail esif@eastsussex.gov.uk for more information.