

A snapshot of East Sussex

The county of East Sussex is located on the south coast of England. Its coastal towns - of which Eastbourne and Hastings are the largest - contain 58% of the county's total population. Public sector employment plays a significant part in the county's predominantly service-based economy, as do financial services and tourism. The county has a mild climate, many cultural, historic and literary connections, and is located only about an hour's train journey from London, while the Newhaven-Dieppe ferry provides a direct link to France. Nearby Gatwick Airport operates services worldwide.

Our communities

The County is home to just over half a million people, of whom:

- 26% are over pensionable age (national average is 19%)
- 43% are over 50 (national average is 34%)
- 55.8% are of working age (national average 62.1%)
- 17.9% are under 16 (national average of 18.9%)

We have the highest levels of the very elderly of any County in England (over 85 and over 90 years old). Life expectancy stands at 78.3 years for men (against a national average of 76.9 years) and 82.1 years for women (against a national average of 81.1 years).

The Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population represented 4.9% of the total population in East Sussex in 2006. The proportion is significantly lower than that for England at 11.3% and the South East at 7.4%. BME residents are dispersed across the County with the highest proportion in Hastings and Eastbourne.

The resident population grew by 15,100 (3.1%) between mid-2001 and mid-2007, with the populations of Eastbourne and Wealden growing the fastest over that period. More people move into East Sussex than out of it, and population projections suggest that planned new housing over the period 2006-2026 will result in population growth of around 13,100 people (2.6%). Almost all of this change is projected to occur within the post-retirement age groups, with the very elderly aged 85+ projected to increase by 61%.

Our countryside and coast

East Sussex covers an area of more than 1,725 square km, 64% of which is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Sussex Downs and High Weald). A county of contrast with the unspoilt natural beauty of the South Downs, the wetland areas, rural villages, historic market towns and coastal resorts all of which make it a wonderful place in which to live, visit and work.

Much of the Sussex Downs has been designated an Environmentally Sensitive Area. Ashdown Forest is the largest area of heathland vegetation in South East England and is one of the most important semi-natural wildlife habitats in the county. It is held in trust by East Sussex County Council and is open to public access for quiet recreation and enjoyment. The county also has 5 country parks: Seven Sisters; Ditchling Common; Stoneywish; Forest Way; and Hastings.

East Sussex has 47 miles of coastline, 6 of which are designated as Heritage Coast. As the main towns lie along the coast, the few places where the countryside meets the sea - between Seaford and Eastbourne, the Pevensey Levels and the Rye Harbour area - are especially precious, and are protected and managed to ensure they can accommodate public access.

East Sussex is one of the most wooded counties in England. Approximately three quarters of all the woodland in the county is classified as "Ancient Woodland". While the county is still relatively rich in wildlife habitats, only 8% has statutory protection, with 543 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, 5 National Nature Reserves and 12 Local Nature Reserves.

Our towns and villages

The development of East Sussex's coastal resorts in the nineteenth century set the framework for today's settlement pattern of large coastal towns and small inland market towns and villages. It also changed an agricultural economy to one of the first predominantly service sector economies in the country. The coastal resorts now offer residents and visitors entertainment, shopping, accommodation and cultural activities, as well as providing employment. Inland, small market towns and villages provide local services, often in picturesque and historic settings, and historic houses and gardens provide an attraction to residents and visitors alike.

East Sussex has 86 Conservation Areas and nearly 5,700 listed buildings (or groups of buildings) designated as being of special architectural or historic interest. It also has 308 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and a further 670 sites which the County Council has designated as Archaeologically Sensitive Areas.

Culture and recreation

Many artists and writers have made East Sussex their home, including Rudyard Kipling, Henry James and members of the Bloomsbury Group, most notably Virginia Woolf. The theatres of Eastbourne, Hastings and Bexhill attract national and international companies, while Glyndebourne offers world-class opera in a country-house setting. The coastal towns all provide a wide range of shops, restaurants, museums and cinemas.

The local economy

Despite being in the prosperous South East, Gross Value Added (GVA) per head in East Sussex is 75% of the UK average and 71% of the regional average. In addition it has pockets of severe deprivation, particularly evident in coastal towns.

The unemployment claimant rate, as at April 2009, was 3.7% compared to a national average of 4.1% and a South East average of 3.0%. Across the County, 31 wards have unemployment levels equalling or exceeding the national average, with these being mostly located in the coastal towns of Hastings, Bexhill, Newhaven and Eastbourne. In 2007, 11% of working age residents in the County had no qualifications (against a regional average of 9.6% and a national average of 13.1%).

Local government

East Sussex is made up of six local authorities – the County Council and five district and borough councils (Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother and Wealden).

Some local services are provided by the borough and district councils. These include rubbish collection, environmental health, tourism, leisure and amenities, planning permission, housing needs services and collection of council tax. The majority of services, over 80%, are provided by the County Council. These include: education, social services, roads and transport, waste disposal, economic development, county-wide planning and the environment, protecting the public and libraries.

Local planning

The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designation, whilst making East Sussex a beautiful place to live, means that sites for waste disposal, housing and economic development are difficult to find and there are sensitive environmental issues to consider during consultation about improvements to the County's infrastructure. The County Council maintains 1,984 miles of road. There are only 18.9 miles of dual carriageways (11.5 miles of which are maintained by the Council) in the County which represents 0.95% of the road network. There are no motorways and rail infrastructure is also poor.

Further information

[East Sussex in Figures \(ESiF\)](#)

ESiF is free and flexible source of information and statistics about East Sussex. It has over 300 datasets, including results from surveys and an area profile function.

[East Sussex County Council Key Data](#)

The latest available statistics defining the social, economic and demographic character of East Sussex.

[Focus on East Sussex](#)

East Sussex County Council report presenting vital information on significant socio-economic, demographic, housing and transport trends and issues affecting the county.

[Neighbourhood statistics](#)

Find statistics for a specific geographic area or a summary report about the neighbourhood you live or work in.

[2001 Census – East Sussex summary](#)

Summary information produced by East Sussex County Council about East Sussex, derived from data from the latest census, carried out on 29 April 2001.