

THE SUSSEX PROFILE



WEST SUSSEX

EAST SUSSEX

BRIGHTON & HOVE

The Sussex Profile

Some risks in Sussex will be different compared to other parts of the Country.

To understand why some risks are more significant in Sussex, we need to look at the profile of the area including social, economic and geographical factors. These factors also influence how we can prepare for and manage emergencies in the county.



SOCIAL

Between 1991 and 2001 the population of the whole of Sussex increased by about 5%, slightly above the national rate.

Several pockets around the county such as Crawley and Horsham in the West and Eastbourne in the East report rises well above the national rate.

Whilst in the past many people moved to Sussex to retire, it now has a very healthy birth rate. Sussex has seen an increase in the minority ethnic population. Although much less ethnically diverse than either the region or nationally, Sussex has become more diverse since 2001 and at a faster rate. There is a range of minority ethnic groups represented within the county, and for that reason, identifying specific needs can be difficult.

HEALTH

Nearly two thirds of the residents of Sussex considered their health to be good.

This is slightly lower than the figures for England & Wales but we have a high percentage of people reporting limiting long-term illness particularly in Brighton.

Just under one in ten people provide unpaid health care to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of long-term physical or mental health, disability, or problems related to old age.

Around 1% of the population live in residential care or nursing homes.

ENVIRONMENT

The physical geography of Sussex relies heavily on its lying on the southern part of the Wealden anticline. The major features of that are the high lands which cross the county in a west to east direction: the Weald itself, and the South Downs. The former consists of clays and sands; the latter chalk. Between those two ridges, mainly in West Sussex, lies the "Vale of Sussex"; at the eastern end of the county is the valley of the River Rother, which flows into what was a long sea inlet to reach the sea at Rye Bay.

The Weald is what remains of the vast forest that existed between the North and South Downs. It can be split into three parts, the High Weald, the Low Weald and the Greensand Ridge. The High Weald runs in an easterly direction from St Leonard's Forest, south-west of Crawley, and continues to Ashdown Forest. Its eastern extremity is in two sections, divided by the River Rother valley. The northern arm reaches the sea at Folkestone (in Kent); the southern at Fairlight Down east of Hastings. Sussex's highest point, Black Down, is close to the Surrey border at 305metres. Another high point is in the part called Forest Ridges: a height of 242metres is reached at Beacon Hill in the neighbourhood of Crowborough.

The South Downs start from near Petersfield in Hampshire. They are now officially designated a 'National Park'. On entering Sussex, their summit is about 16km from the sea. They run east for some 80km, approaching the coast, and terminating at Beachy Head. Their average height is about 152metres though Ditchling Beacon is 248metres (the third highest summit) and many other summits exceed 212 metres.

The Vale of Sussex is the lower undulating land which came into being when the softer clays between the Weald and the Downs were worn away. Crossing the Vale are most of the rivers in Sussex: those rising on the slopes of the Weald and cutting through the Downs to reach the sea (see Drainage). The Coastal plain is a fertile narrow belt from Chichester to Brighton. It is now heavily built up into a sprawling coastal conurbation.

The beaches along the coast vary from sandy to shingle: that factor, together with the mild climate of the coast, sheltered by the hills from north and east winds, has resulted in the growth of numerous resort towns, such as Hastings, Bexhill, Eastbourne, Seaford, Brighton, Shoreham-by-Sea, Worthing, Littlehampton and Bognor Regis.

Marshland There are several areas of low-lying marshland along the coast; these are in the west of the county, south of Chichester, between Chichester Harbour and Pagham Harbour; beyond Beachy Head, the "Pevensey Levels"; beyond Hastings, the "Pett Levels"; and beyond Rye, the "Walland Marsh" part of Romney Marsh. All were originally bays; natural coastal deposition and man-made protective walls have given rise to alluvial deposition.

Drainage The rivers wholly within the county are relatively short. All rise in the Weald (St Leonard's Forest area) and, apart from the eastern Rother, flow south to the English Channel, some using gaps in the South Downs to do so. The mouths of all have been affected by longshore drift. From west to east they are:

Arun: and its tributary the western River Rother: source of Arun near Horsham; entering the sea at Littlehampton

Adur: source near Cuckfield; mouth near Shoreham-by-Sea

Ouse: source near Lower Beeding; mouth at Newhaven

Cuckmere: rising near Heathfield; mouth Cuckmere Haven between Eastbourne and Seaford

Eastern River Rother and its many tributaries including the Rivers Brede and Tillingham; source, Rotherfield in the High Weald; it flows in an easterly direction and enters the sea at Rye Bay. A section known as the Kent Ditch forms the boundary between East Sussex and Kent.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Despite being in the most populous region of the Country, Sussex remains essentially rural with 90% of East Sussex classified as 'Green Space'.

There is a well developed rail network throughout, mostly serving the capital for commuters and London Gatwick, the second busiest airport in the country which sees over 34million passengers per year.

The area of Sussex comprises 934,900 acres much of which is still agricultural.

The road network is surprisingly underdeveloped with only 8 miles of motorway (M23) and very few trunk roads.

There are still working harbours at Rye, Hastings, Newhaven and Shoreham, whilst Pagham and Chichester Harbours cater for leisure craft as does Brighton Marina.

Brighton and Chichester are the two cities within the county with other major towns already alluded to.

The county has a healthy student population and 3 Universities, as well as numerous FE colleges.

ECONOMY

As well as a continuing strong agricultural base, Sussex has many commuter routes to London, as well as many of its own service industries.

West Sussex alone has over 100 major international companies, including Virgin Atlantic, Invensys, Body Shop International, Aviva, Rolls Royce, and American Express.

Tourism is the greatest service industry in the county and is set to thrive with London 2012 on the horizon.

The county has superb business support services provided by Sussex Enterprise, and The Learning and Skill Council.

As for the labour force, the wage levels remain lower than in the South East as a whole.

