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Census 2021: Population estimates

Public Health Briefing

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Purpose of briefing

To provide an update of the population estimates from the initial release of 2021 census data released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This briefing focuses on older populations, with comparisons to other areas in the UK and to the previous census in 2011.

What is the issue?

In March 2021, the census was undertaken in England and Wales. While each year the ONS releases an estimate of the resident population in England and Wales, census data are important for understanding how population is distributed. Data are currently available at county and local authority level for five-year age bands. There are also data on the number of households. Small area estimates (wards, MSOAs, LSOAs) are due to be released separately in the Autumn.

Why is this important?

Population estimates are used to support service and financial planning. Data can also provide a benchmark on the local age structure in comparison with other areas and England overall.

What do we know?

- **In 2021 882,700 people were estimated to be resident in West Sussex.** This was 75,800 more than in 2011, **an increase of 9.4%.** In the South East, the population increased by 7.5% and the population of England increased by 6.6%.
- Across the districts and boroughs, **the largest percentage increase in population was in Horsham (11.8%)** and **the lowest percentage increase was in Worthing (6.5%).**
- The most common age group for females was 55-59 years, whilst for men it was 50-54 years.
- From 2011 to 2021, **the largest percentage increase in population was among those aged 70-74 years** for both sexes. There were 44% more people in this age group compared to 2011. The largest percentage decrease in population was among those age 45-49 years (6.5% decrease for females, 9% decrease for males).
- There was a large increase in the number of men aged over 85 (29%, from approximately 8,600 to 11,100).
- At present, only five-year age bands are available. Approximating the working age population as those aged from 15 to 64, this population increased by 30,400 (6%), while population outside of that age range increased by 45,300 (15%). Therefore, **it is likely that the dependency ratio (the ratio of non-working to working age population) has increased.** In 2021 there were 0.65 people aged under 15 or over 65 for every person outside that age range.

Table 1. Population estimates for the West Sussex districts and boroughs in 2011 and 2021. Source: Census 2011 and Census 2021.

District	Adur	Arun	Chichester	Crawley	Horsham	Mid Sussex	Worthing	West Sussex
2011	61,200	149,500	113,800	106,600	131,300	139,900	104,600	806,900
2021	64,500	164,800	124,100	118,500	146,800	152,600	111,400	882,700
Change	3,300	15,300	10,300	11,900	15,500	12,700	6,800	75,800
% Change	5.4%	10.2%	9.1%	11.2%	11.8%	9.1%	6.5%	9.4%

How do we compare?

West Sussex has an older population with a higher percentage of older people and lower percentage of younger working age residents. Figure 1 shows how the West Sussex population has higher proportions of people over 45, with notably higher percentages of men and women at retirement age in comparison to England (shown as lines). It also highlights the significant gap of younger people of working age 16+ in West Sussex compared to England.

Figure 1: Population pyramid for West Sussex and England; 2021 census initial release. Source: Census 2021.

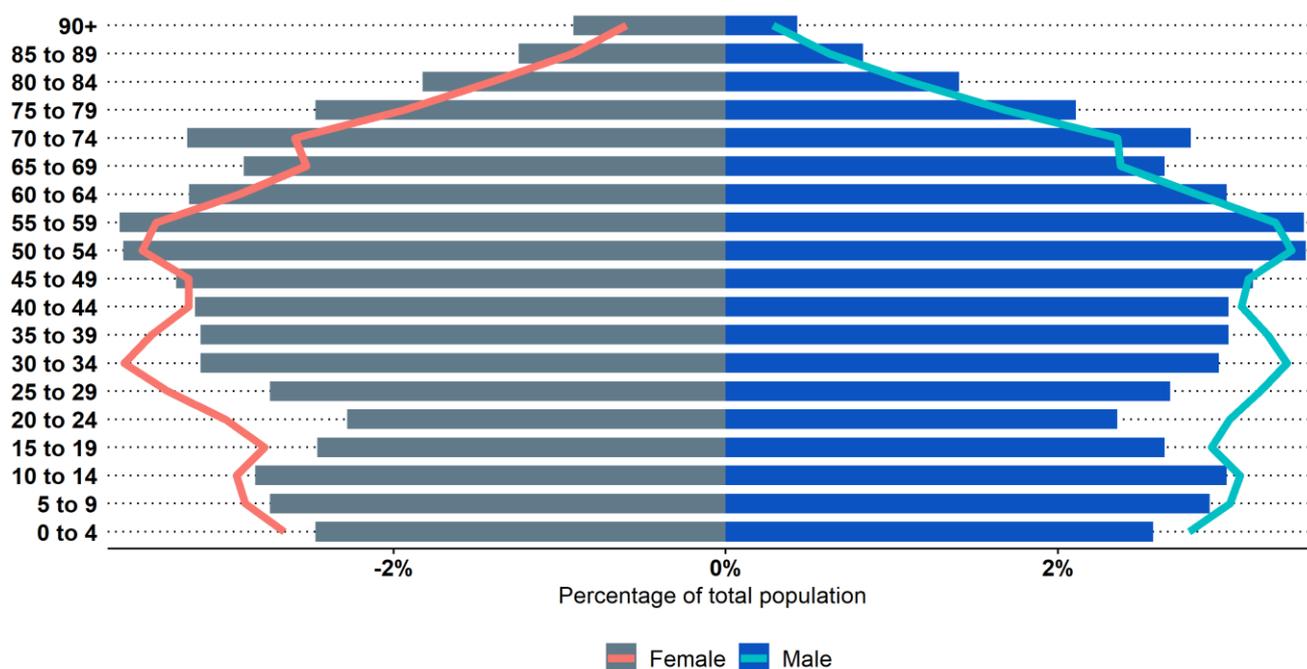


Figure 2 shows the percentage change in population at five-year age bands. Of note are the large increases in both sexes in the 55 to 59 age group, and the 70 to 74 age group. It is possible these increases reflect people moving to the county for retirement.

There is also a notable decrease in the number of people in their forties, which may reflect work patterns and the affordability of housing in the county for families with young children.

Figure 2. Percentage change in West Sussex population by five-year age band, 2021 and 2011. Source: Census 2011 and Census 2021.

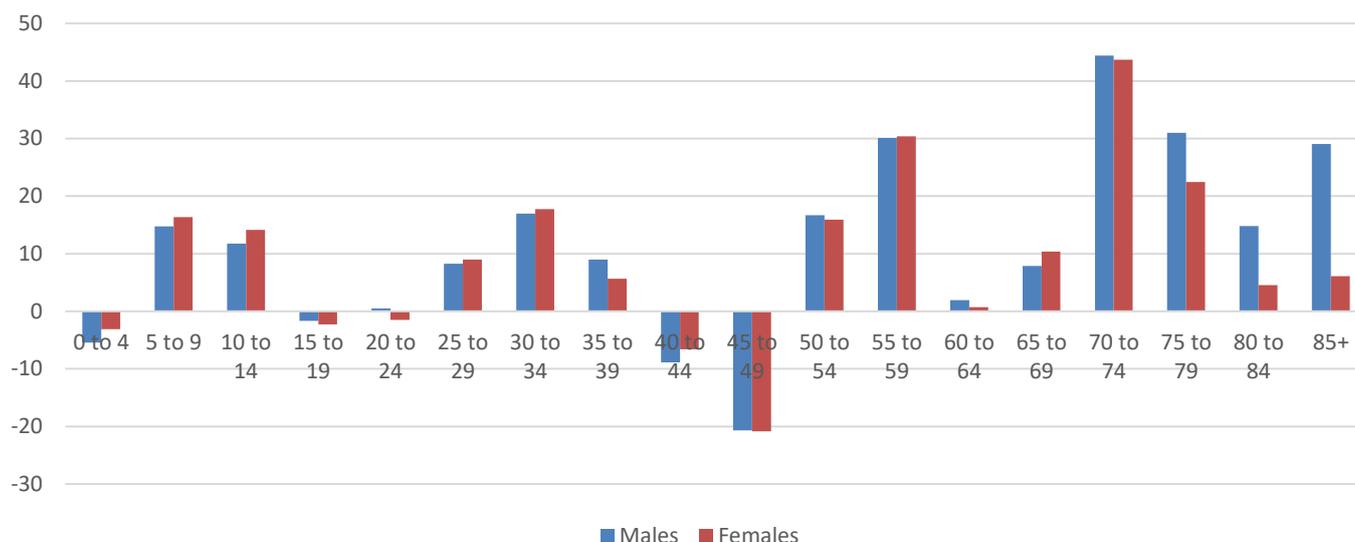


Table 3 shows how West Sussex and its districts and boroughs rank (compared to similar authorities in England) in terms of the proportion of the population aged over 65 and aged over 85. Most areas in West Sussex have fallen in rank for over 65s but have increased in the over 85s. Three districts and boroughs are in the Top 10 in England for proportion of the population aged over 85.

Crawley continues to differ from the rest of the county and has a considerably lower proportion of the population in each of these age groups.

Table 2. National ranking for proportion aged 65+ and 85+ in the West Sussex districts and boroughs. Source: ONS.

District	Adur	Arun	Chichester	Crawley	Horsham	Mid Sussex	Worthing	West Sussex
Rank 65+ (2021)	71	10	22	278	85	128	91	13
Rank 85+ (2021)	47	5	7	251	51	80	30	15
Rank 65+ (2011)	36	5	10	274	84	125	65	17
Rank 85+ (2011)	26	3	10	240	61	68	8	8