# An Introduction to Sussex

Sussex, a historic county in South East England, is known for its picturesque landscapes, vibrant communities, and rich cultural heritage. It is divided into three council areas: West Sussex and East Sussex Counties, and the unitary city of Brighton and Hove.

## Towns, Cities, and Villages

Sussex is home to a diverse range of settlements, with two cities (Brighton and Hove, and Chichester), a variety of towns, and a number of villages. Brighton and Hove is a lively coastal hub known for its arts scene, historic pier, and progressive culture. Major towns include Crawley, a key economic centre; Eastbourne, a popular seaside resort; and Hastings, famous for its connection to the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

Other market towns, such as Chichester (which has city status) with its Roman origins and stunning cathedral; Horsham with its thriving Carfax; Lewes with its medieval charm; and Rye, one of the original Cinque Ports—to name but a few—all add to Sussex’s character. The county also boasts numerous picturesque villages, such as Alfriston, Amberley, and Cuckfield.

## Demographics

Sussex has a population of approximately 1.7 million people with a mix of urban and rural communities. In the 2021 census, East Sussex had a population of 545,800, West Sussex 882,700, and Brighton and Hove 277,100.

The age profile varies across the county, with more rural areas recently seeing an increase in the number of older residents. In 2021, 14.6% of the Brighton and Hove population, 10% of West Sussex, and 6.1% of East Sussex identified as belonging to a minority ethnic group.

## Political Makeup

Politically, Sussex has a mix of representation. Traditionally, parts of Sussex have leaned towards the Conservatives, particularly in rural areas. However, Brighton and Hove has recently been a stronghold for Labour and Green Party politics, reflecting its progressive and younger population. There are three “higher tier” levels of Council: Brighton and Hove unitary, East Sussex County Council, and West Sussex County Council. In East and West Sussex, there are also District councils, though these may be subject to future local government reorganisation. A large part of the South Downs National Park Authority is in Sussex, which has powers, including planning, for large parts of the county.

Recently, Sussex has seen a significant shift in its political representation, with five Liberal Democrat MPs now serving the region. These are Alison Bennett in Mid Sussex, Josh Babarinde in Eastbourne, Jess Brown-Fuller in Chichester, James MacCleary in Lewes, and John Milne in Horsham. There was also a strong result for the Liberal Democrats in the 2023 local elections, with significant gains across East and West Sussex, and Lib Dem council leaders elected in Horsham, Chichester, Mid Sussex, Wealden (rotating with the Green Party), and Eastbourne.

In recent weeks, the Liberal Democrats have won 9 out of 11 council by-elections and have seen an average increase in their vote share.

## Poverty Levels

While Sussex is generally considered a prosperous region, pockets of deprivation exist. Areas such as Hastings, Crawley, and parts of Eastbourne and Brighton and Hove experience higher levels of poverty and social disadvantage. Coastal communities, in particular, face challenges related to employment, housing affordability, and access to healthcare. Inflationary pressures and an ageing population contribute to financial hardship in some areas.

Overall, Sussex is a county of contrasts—thriving urban centres alongside tranquil countryside, and affluence alongside economic challenges. It has a rich history, diverse communities, and a varied political landscape.

## In numbers:

### Brighton and Hove:

* [Brighton & Hove City Council - Demographics](https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/brighton-hove-city-council-plan-2023-2027/brighton-hove-demographics): Provides population statistics, ethnicity breakdown, deprivation levels, and other key demographic insights.
* [Brighton & Hove City Council - Data and Finance](https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-data-and-finance/council-data-and-finance): Includes city statistics, financial data, and open datasets related to the local authority.
* [Office for National Statistics - Brighton and Hove Census 2021](https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E06000043/): Offers population change data and comparisons with other regions.

### East Sussex:

* [East Sussex County Council - Facts and Figures](https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/community/local-information/facts-figures-about-east-sussex): Provides data on population, health, housing, education, deprivation, economy, transport, and crime.
* [East Sussex in Figures](https://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk/population-estimates-in-brief/): Offers detailed population estimates and demographic trends.
* [Office for National Statistics - East Sussex](https://www.ons.gov.uk/explore-local-statistics/areas/E10000011-east-sussex): Contains local indicators on health, education, economy, and life satisfaction.

### West Sussex:

* [West Sussex County Council - Census 2021](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/census-2021/): Includes population and household data from the 2021 census.
* [West Sussex JSNA - Population Estimates](https://jsna.westsussex.gov.uk/core/population-data/estimates/): Provides annual population estimates and demographic trends.
* [West Sussex County Council - Information and Data](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/): Covers population forecasts, census records, and council performance data.

## Political Makeup

The table on the next page shows the current constituency MPs and their parties alongside their nearest competitor at the July 2024 General Election. And the table on the page following that shows the make-up of Borough, District, Unitary and County Councils in Sussex.

A table with numbers and a number of candidates

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