# Older peoples migration

# Introduction

The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Professor Chris Whitty, in the 2023 annual report discusses health in an ageing society, highlighting the complexity of the geography of older age in England[[1]](#endnote-1). As people age and start to leave paid employment many move away from large urban areas towards more rural areas and particularly the coast.

West Sussex boasts beautiful coastlines and rolling hills and is a great place for people to grow old in a calmer pace of life outside of bigger cities.

However, adults moving to new areas to grow older often have to start anew with social support networks; which older adults who have lived there for longer will already have established. This can impact the ability for older, particularly those living alone, to stay as independent as possible for as long as possible.

So, in planning services for older people, we need to consider more than just those areas with more older people. Do some areas of West Sussex (or wider) have more older people flowing in.

Coastal communities often have higher numbers of older, retired citizens and unique health and socio-economic challenges (link to WSCC coastal report and to CMO 2021 report[[2]](#endnote-2)).

This report adds to x by considering the moves into and out of West Sussex in older age.

## Available data

Internal migration is defined as residential moves between local authorities and regions in England and Wales, as well as moves to or from the rest of the UK (Scotland and Northern Ireland).

Over the last 15 years there has been an increase in the overall (all age) net migration towards predominantly rural areas[[3]](#endnote-3)[[4]](#footnote-1).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publish counts of moves between local authorities by age. It excludes moves within a single local authority, as well as international moves into or out of the UK. The statistics are based on a combination of several administrative datasets and represent the best available source of information on internal migration. This dataset was published every year until 2020 when it was discontinued as part consolidating population outputs ahead of the release of the 2021 Census.

However, as the Census 2021 asked participants about their address on Census Day compared to one year ago, it is possible to use this to understand internal migration for the latest possible time period, though there are a few differences and caveats to note:

As the Census is a self-report survey asked of people in their address as at Census Day in the UK, we cannot see where people have moved if they moved out the UK. As such, we can see how many people moved to the area from outside of the UK, but we cannot tell how many people moved from West Sussex to abroad.

Unlike the ONS internal moves dataset, the Census tells us any change in address, even if it occurred within the same local authority. An address change, even local, may be unsettling for some older people.

For both datasets, this is a snapshot of where someone lives one year and again the next. It does not account for the number of times people move within the year.

A benefit of using Census data is that it is possible to see moves at a much smaller geographical level (Middle-layer Super Output Area, MSOA), unlike the ONS internal migration dataset which is only available at local authority level. Local authorities are more difficult to classify as urban/rural as there are many different types of area within them. However, the MSOA data is for all ages rather than those aged 65+ and so it is difficult to draw comprehensive conclusions.

Irrespective of dataset, the reason for moving, and the context of who will be locally available to provide support for those in need, is unknown. We do not know if someone moves to an area to be closer to family/friends for example.

Finally, the 2021 Census was conducted during a time of unprecedented uncertainty as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic which changed many people’s behaviours and circumstances. It is possible that the movement of people does not reflect the typical pattern of change we might expect in the county. However, it is our best, most up to date, picture of what is happening; and we can make some assumptions that some areas will experience more inflowing older people with care needs than others based on this data. Where possible we have compared to previous years, though it is slightly different to the usual internal migration dataset provided by ONS.

## The West Sussex population

**Table 1 - Number of residents aged 65+ and 85+; Census 2021; West Sussex local authorities, South East region and England**

| **Area** | **All ages** | **65+ years** | **85+ years** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **West Sussex** | **882,680** | **201,390 (22.8%)** | **30,249 (3.4%)** |
| Adur | 64,536 | 15,236 (23.6%) | 2,204 (3.4%) |
| Arun | 164,893 | 46,889 (28.4%) | 7,067 (4.3%) |
| Chichester | 124,073 | 33,634 (27.1%) | 5,091 (4.1%) |
| Crawley | 118,491 | 15,755 (13.3%) | 2,329 (2%) |
| Horsham | 146,783 | 33,441 (22.8%) | 4,862 (3.3%) |
| Mid Sussex | 152,572 | 31,493 (20.6%) | 4,695 (3.1%) |
| Worthing | 111,338 | 24,950 (22.4%) | 3,996 (3.6%) |
| **South East** | **9,278,068** | **1,804,259 (19.4%)** | **253,377 (2.7%)** |
| **England** | **56,490,059** | **10,401,307 (18.4%)** | **1,372,301 (2.4%)** |

Where do older people live?

Map of over 65s, map of care homes

## Migration

Total all age migration 2a

This gives an idea of the scale we're talking about, new people aged 65+ into the county represent 1.8% of the population of older people in West Sussex, ranging from 1.3% in Crawley to 3% in Chichester.

Table 2b – West Sussex district and borough internal migration; Persons aged 65+; Census 2021

| **Area** | **Inflow** | **Outflow** | **Net migration** | **Migration turnover** | **Turnover of population** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **West Sussex** | **3,691** | **2,080** | **1,611** | **5,771** | **1.8%** |
| Adur | 319 | 277 | 42 | 596 | 2.1% |
| Arun | 1,269 | 703 | 566 | 1,972 | 2.7% |
| Chichester | 1,022 | 621 | 401 | 1,643 | 3% |
| Crawley | 204 | 316 | -112 | 520 | 1.3% |
| Horsham | 935 | 600 | 335 | 1,535 | 2.8% |
| Mid Sussex | 706 | 523 | 183 | 1,229 | 2.2% |
| Worthing | 657 | 471 | 186 | 1,128 | 2.6% |

## Which Local Authority has the highest number of 65+ moving into the area, from non-neighbouring areas?

In the year leading up to Census day 2021, 37,463 people moved into West Sussex county from elsewhere (table 3a).

**Table 3a - Number of people moving into West Sussex and its district and boroughs – including between district and boroughs in West Sussex; Census 2021**

| **Area** | **Total moves into area** | **1-64 years** | **65+ years** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **West Sussex** | **37,463** | **33,772 (90.1%)** | **3,691 (9.9%)** |
| Adur | 3,230 | 2,911 (90.1%) | 319 (9.9%) |
| Arun | 7,980 | 6,711 (84.1%) | 1,269 (15.9%) |
| Chichester | 9,319 | 8,297 (89%) | 1,022 (11%) |
| Crawley | 5,647 | 5,443 (96.4%) | 204 (3.6%) |
| Horsham | 8,792 | 7,857 (89.4%) | 935 (10.6%) |
| Mid Sussex | 8,809 | 8,103 (92%) | 706 (8%) |
| Worthing | 5,696 | 5,039 (88.5%) | 657 (11.5%) |

This excludes those who moved in the last year but from another address in the same local authority (e.g. inflows capture those becoming a new resident of responsibility for the local authority). As you can see, the sum of the number of people moving into each of the lower tier local authority is greater than the number of people moving into West Sussex from outside of the county suggesting that a large number of moves between the local authorities of West Sussex rather than new people into the county.

Table 3b, below, shows the same movement data but this time also excludes moves at lower tier local authority level from other local authorities within West Sussex.

**Table 3b - Number of people moving into West Sussex and its district and boroughs from outside of West Sussex; Census 2021**

| **Area** | **Total moves into area** | **1-64 years** | **65+ years** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **West Sussex** | **37,463** | **33,772 (90.1%)** | **3,691 (9.9%)** |
| Adur | 2,402 | 2,163 (90%) | 239 (10%) |
| Arun | 4,980 | 4,118 (82.7%) | 862 (17.3%) |
| Chichester | 7,788 | 6,945 (89.2%) | 843 (10.8%) |
| Crawley | 4,662 | 4,501 (96.5%) | 161 (3.5%) |
| Horsham | 6,453 | 5,767 (89.4%) | 686 (10.6%) |
| Mid Sussex | 7,410 | 6,862 (92.6%) | 548 (7.4%) |
| Worthing | 3,755 | 3,386 (90.2%) | 369 (9.8%) |

Comparing the two tables, you can see that Arun has almost 8,000 moves into the local authority area, with 3,000 (38%) of these coming from outside of West Sussex county. Similarly, Worthing has a total of 5,700 moves into the area (from outside Worthing) in the year leading to Census day 2021; and around 2,000 (34%) of these were from other local authorities in West Sussex. However, for Chichester moves into the local authority from other parts of West Sussex account for just 16% of moves (1,500 of 9,300 moves) and for Crawley it is slightly higher at 17% (980 new to county of 9,300 new to Crawley). Some of the longer distance moves for Chichester might be explained by the university campus and incoming students staying in residential halls or other student accomodation.

However, for those aged 65 and over, the pattern across the county is the same, and more pronounced. For Worthing, 44% (370 of 660) over 65s moving to the local authority originated outside of West Sussex compared to 18% of over 65s new to Chichester who are also new to West Sussex.

Of course, we do not know the history of moves for individuals (some may have lived in West Sussex for most of their lives, gone away and then returned), and we don't know the reasons for moving recently. Nor do we know if family and friends are in place where movers are going to. It is not unreasonable, however, to suggest that for a large number of these movers, they will be going to an area where they do not have established social contacts and crucially informal support for activities of daily living, such as shopping or social support.

1. [Chief Medical Officer’s annual report 2023: health in an ageing society - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chief-medical-officers-annual-report-2023-health-in-an-ageing-society#:~:text=The%20focus%20of%20this%20report,the%20end%20of%20their%20life.) [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. [Chief Medical Officer annual report 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chief-medical-officer-annual-report-2021) [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/population-statistics-for-rural-england/d-internal-migration> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Local authorities usually cover vast areas (West Sussex is around 2,000 square kilometres, ranging from 33km2 in Worthing to 786km2 in Chichester. Within these local authorities there will be many different types of neighbourhoods and communities, some of which urban and some very rural. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)