

South Downs National Park Authority

# State of the South Downs National Park 2012



## The population of the National Park and its surrounding areas

The population of the National Park is estimated to have increased by 3 per cent over the period between 2002 to 2009, this is an increase of approximately 3,000 people. Figure 8.1 shows how this increase in population has been slower than that in the south east of England where the population has increased by 5 per cent in the same period.

### Key facts: Population

- Around 110,400 people live in the National Park (2009).
- 1.97 million people live in the 16 local authority areas which intersect with the 5km boundary of the National Park. This is known as the 'Wider National Park Buffer'.<sup>117</sup>
- The population density in the south east is 440 people per km<sup>2</sup> but the population density in the National Park is 67 people per km<sup>2</sup>.
- In Petersfield, Midhurst and Lewes the population is much more concentrated than the rest of the National Park, with a density above the regional average although this is still relatively low compared to the urban areas surrounding it.<sup>118</sup>

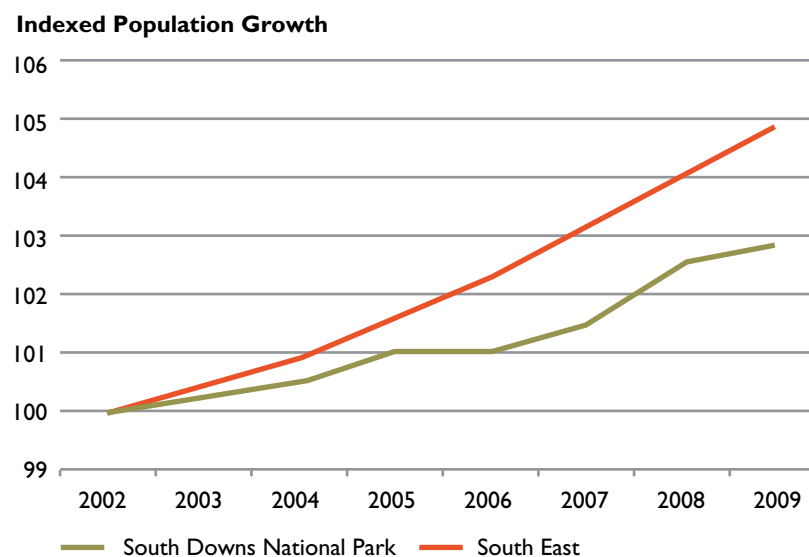
Although other national parks include small market towns, the South Downs National Park has two major settlements in Lewes and Petersfield with populations of 15,998 and 13,303 (Census 2001) respectively. This compares to the next largest settlement population in a national park (Brecon in the Brecon Beacons with a population of 7,901). The market towns, including Midhurst, and the larger villages provide a vital service to the surrounding rural communities, through community services such as banking, post offices, secondary schools and shopping facilities, and access to the public transport network operating throughout the National Park.

<sup>117</sup> See Map 5.1 of the buffer zone

<sup>118</sup> Hampshire County Council (2011) *South Downs National Park Local Economy: Current Economic Indicators for the Local Economy of the South Downs National Park*, Hampshire County Council

The major urban settlements surrounding the National Park also play an important role in the provision of services, housing and transport for rural communities in the National Park.

**Figure 8.1** Population growth in the National Park compared with the south east (2002–09)\*



**Note:** \*This graph shows indexed population growth – a means of comparing relative growth across the south east and the South Downs National Park. This is not a comparison of population totals.

**Source:** Office for National Statistics (2009) *Mid year population estimates*, Office for National Statistics

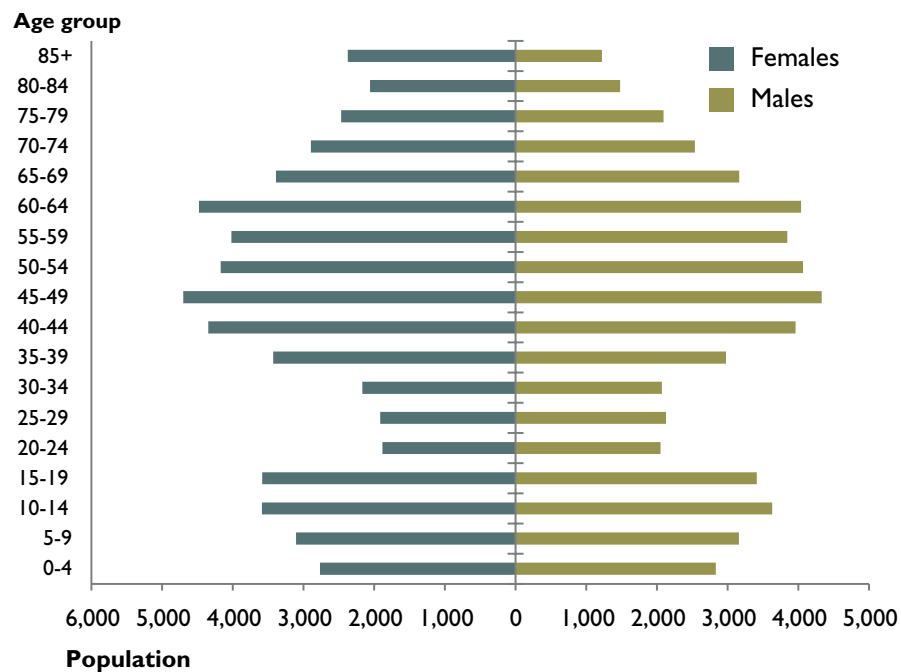
## Population age

The age structure of a population can provide a good indicator of the sustainability of a community, with an ageing population relying more heavily on

services and a decreasing working age population impacting on the availability of people to fill local jobs and provide vital services.

The population age structure of the National Park in Figure 8.2 shows a lower number of young people and a higher proportion of people aged 40–65 years old.

**Figure 8.2** Population age structure of the South Downs National Park



Source: Office for National Statistics (2009) *Mid year population estimates*, Office for National Statistics

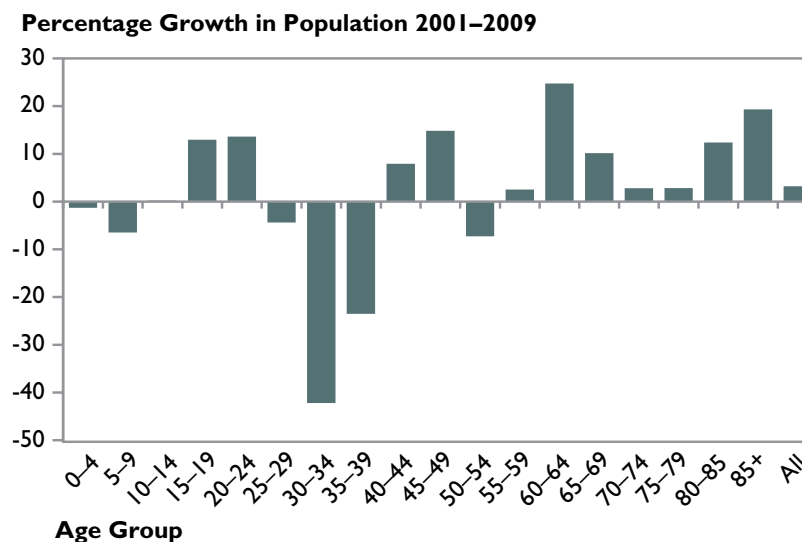
While the total population of the National Park is estimated to have grown by 3 per cent over the last decade, the young and working age population has remained relatively static compared with the south east average increase of 5 per cent. Based on 2009 figures, of the total population of the National Park:

- around 17 per cent are children under 14; (16 in south east);

- 21 per cent are aged 65 and over (17 in the south east); and
- the remaining 62 per cent is the working age population aged 15–64 (65 in the south east).<sup>119</sup>

Figure 8.3 provides a more detailed breakdown of the age of the National Park’s population. It shows an increase in people aged 65 and over and a reduction of those in their thirties.

**Figure 8.3** Percentage growth in population by age<sup>120</sup>



Source: Office for National Statistics (2009) *Mid year population estimates*, Office for National Statistics

<sup>119</sup> Hampshire County Council (2011) *South Downs National Park Local Economy: Current Economic Indicators for the Local Economy of the South Downs National Park*, Hampshire County Council

<sup>120</sup> The largest increase between 2001 and 2009 was recorded for those aged 60–64 (26 per cent), with increases also recorded in the over 85 (17 per cent), 45–49 group (14 per cent) and those aged 80–85 (11 per cent). This reinforces the National Park’s population bias towards older people. The largest decrease was recorded in those aged 30–34 (-39 per cent) and 35–39 (-19 per cent). The population aged 15–19 increased by 12 per cent, which might be associated with the increase in those aged 45–49 as family households

The population of the National Park is therefore ageing, although this mirrors the national trend. The number of people aged over 65 is significantly higher in percentage terms than found in the south east as a whole, though this will be a common pattern in many rural areas.



*Walking on Old Winchester Hill © Anne Purkiss*

## Where people live in the National Park

Map 8.1 shows the population distribution in the National Park and its immediate surroundings. The map clearly shows that population density is relatively low in the rural areas of the National Park with higher density of population in the market towns and the urban conurbations surrounding the boundary.

## Economic and social circumstances of the National Park population

While the largest proportion of the National Park's population is relatively well off, there are areas in or around the main market towns with lower incomes and greater unemployment.<sup>121</sup>

The high price of housing in the National Park often means that:

- people on lower incomes are unable to live in the National Park and must travel into it for employment;
- employers face challenges in finding appropriately qualified staff; and
- there is more traffic on the roads within the National Park as people travel to and from work.

Socio-economic information provides a picture of communities based on various characteristics such as age and ethnicity, household composition and type, qualifications, employment status and employment by industry.

### For the distribution of socio-economic characteristics of households in the National Park.

Figure 8.4 shows a comparison of social structures within the National Park and the south east region. With the exception of the high proportion of countryside and low proportion of city living, the National Park is similar in social structure to the rest of the south east. Perhaps more apparent is the under representation of multicultural communities. However, this is generally the case in most rural areas in the south east. The barriers preventing minority groups accessing the National Park are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

---

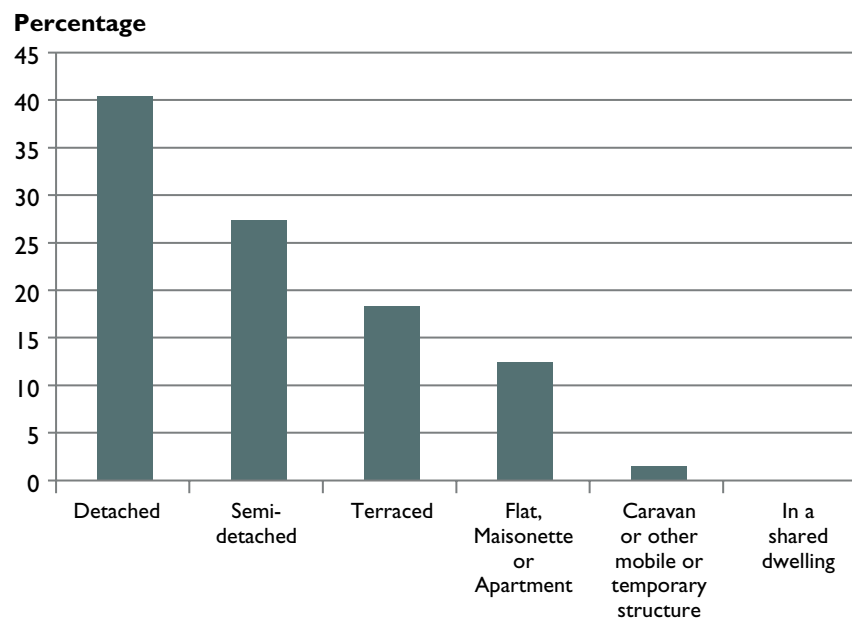
<sup>121</sup> Hampshire County Council (2011) *South Downs National Park Local Economy: Current Economic Indicators for the Local Economy of the South Downs National Park*, Hampshire County Council

## Housing

The comparatively large population of the National Park creates challenges in finding places for people to continue to live in it without impacting on its special qualities.

### Housing types and prices

Figure 8.5 Housing Types



Source: Office for National Statistics (2001) *Census 2001*, Office for National Statistics

The high number of larger homes is a factor in the high average house prices that characterise the area and therefore the difficulty those on average or lower incomes have in buying their own homes.

Map 8.3 shows how house prices vary (using average house prices of houses sold Jan–June 2011).<sup>122</sup> The map clearly shows how lower priced housing is mainly found along the south coast and the southern boundary of the National Park.

### Key facts: Housing

- There are roughly 50,000 homes in the National Park (2001).
- 40 per cent detached.
- 27 per cent semi-detached.
- House prices are highest in the western part of the National Park – in the Winchester City, East Hampshire and Chichester Districts.
- There is a significant difference in price between the towns and their surrounding rural areas in the National Park. The average rural house price is £400,300, while in the towns it is £265,400.

### Affordability

The 'affordability ratio' indicates how many average annual salaries (national average) it costs to buy an average priced house (national average) in a given area. In 2010 the average English ratio was 7.0, while the south east region was 8.2. Eastbourne Borough is the only area in the National Park where houses are closer to the national average (at 7.1). The other 11 districts have a much lower housing affordability for residents of:

- East Hampshire – 11 times the average annual salary;
- Chichester – 10.5 times the average annual salary; and
- Winchester – 10.2 times the average annual salary.

<sup>122</sup> Based on Land Registry data



In general, housing is more affordable outside the National Park to the south in places such as Worthing, Eastleigh and Havant, whereas to the north it is far higher, reflecting proximity to London and the M25 corridor.<sup>123</sup>

With relatively high house prices and jobs that tend to be lower paid, it can be difficult for people to live and work in the National Park. This impacts on the availability of people to fill lower paid jobs and means increased traffic moving through the National Park. (See the Transport Fact File for more information.)

 For a detailed picture of housing affordability across the National Park.

### Household composition

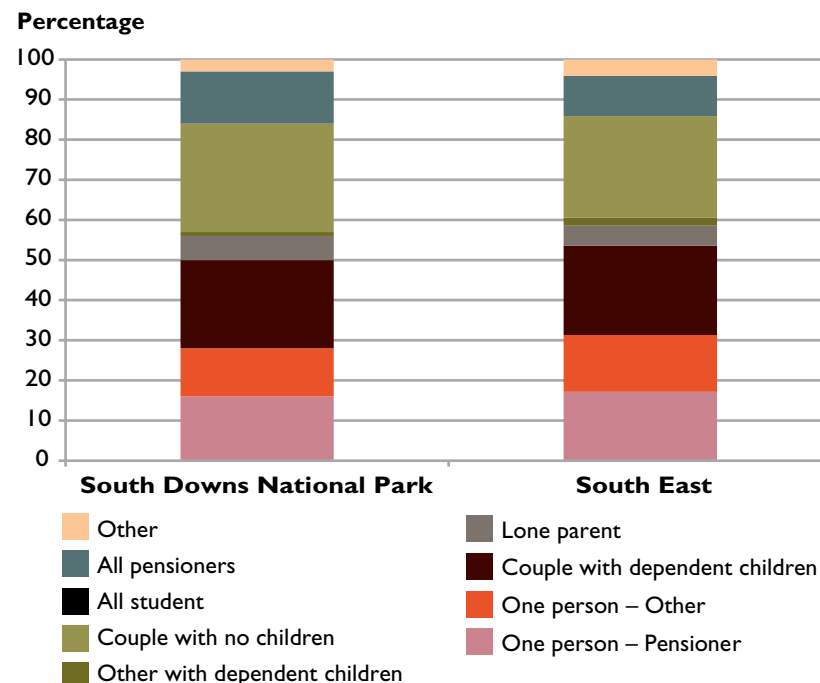
The household composition of the National Park is broadly similar to the south east region:

- 49 per cent of households are couple households (47 in the south east)
- 16 per cent are one person pensioner households (17 in the south east)
- 12 per cent are other single households (14 in the south east)

Public consultation has highlighted concerns that many large homes are under-occupied, with only one or two people living in homes which could accommodate a large family. The data collected on household composition does reveal that there are a high proportion of single and couple households and, given the proportion of detached and semi detached homes, it may be that under-occupation is an issue for parts of the National Park.

 We need data on under-occupation of homes.

Figure 8.6 Comparison of household composition



Source: Office for National Statistics (2001) *Census 2001*, Office for National Statistics

### Housing need

Given the high proportion of larger houses and the associated high prices of housing, access to affordable housing is a key issue facing many local communities. Young people and young families, in particular, find it difficult to get low-cost housing and therefore to continue living in the area.

<sup>123</sup> HCC Report (2011) *South Downs National Park Local Economy: Current Economic Indicators for the Local Economy of the South Downs National Park*