

This bulletin covers three questions in the 2001 Census: limiting long-term illness, general health and unpaid care.

Limiting long-term illness

The 2001 Census specified a limiting long-term illness as 'any long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits the work you can do' including 'any problems which are due to old age'. The age reference was new in 2001; the 1991 Census deemed that many older people with limiting health related problems did not record them believing they were due to old age. Hence, within West Sussex the proportion of all people with a limiting long-term illness rose from 12% in 1991 to 17% in 2001.

With the older population of West Sussex, it would be expected that rates of limiting long-term illness would be greater than elsewhere. Perhaps surprisingly then, West Sussex has a lower proportion of its population with limiting long-term illness than England and Wales (E&W) with 18%.

account of differences in the age structures of the areas being compared. A ratio of above 100 indicates that the number of people with a limiting long-term illness is greater than expected while a ratio below 100 indicates the number of people with a limiting long-term illness is smaller than expected. Here E&W is taken as the standard population and so its age specific limiting long-term illness rates are applied to the areas and E&W is given a ratio of 100. The bars indicate the SIR and the lines the 95% confidence limits. Clearly all areas within West Sussex have a significantly lower ratio than E&W and so rates of limiting long-term illness are lower than in E&W. There is also significant variation within the county, Mid Sussex and Horsham have rates of limiting long-term illness significantly lower than all other areas within the county, with SIRs of 67 and 68 respectively indicating they have approximately a third less illness than E&W. Adur has the highest SIR (91) in the county and this is significantly higher than all areas in the county with the exception of Crawley, however it still has approximately 9% less illness than E&W.

Figure 1: Percentage of all people with a limiting long-term illness by age group for West Sussex and E&W

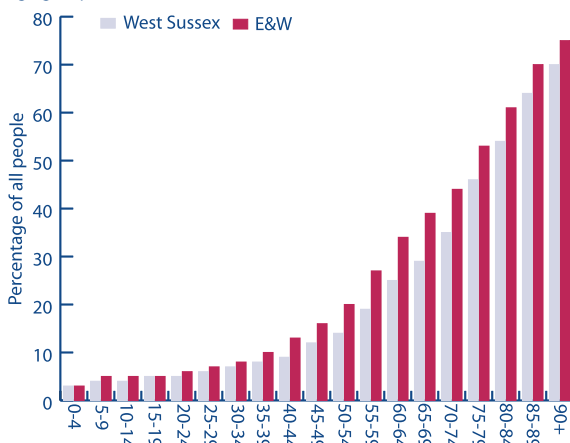
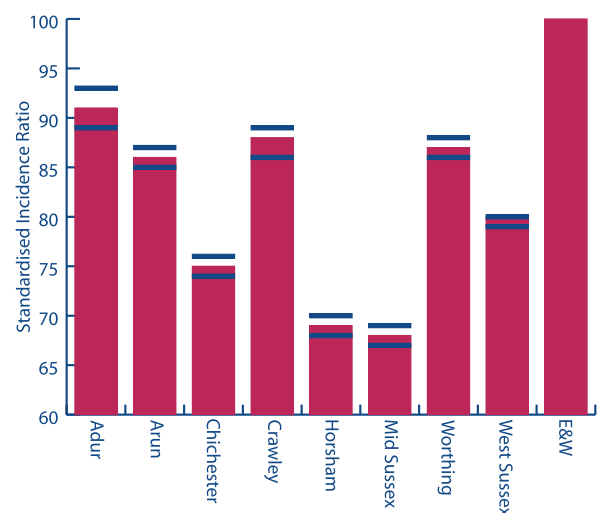


Figure 1 shows the age distribution of limiting long-term illness within West Sussex and E&W. It is hugely age related, with West Sussex proportions ranging from 3% in the 0-4 years age group to 70% in the 90 years and over age group. West Sussex has a lower proportion in each age group than E&W. Looking at the proportion of all people within an area with a limiting long-term illness would therefore be more an indication of the age distribution within that area than illness.

The Standardised Incidence Ratio (SIR) for limiting long-term illness by local authority (LA) and for West Sussex is shown in Figure 2. SIRs compare illness rates while taking

Figure 2: Standardised Incidence Ratio of limiting long-term illness by local authority and for West Sussex. E&W=100



General health

For the first time a question was included in the 2001 Census asking people how they view their health. The question asked people to respond as to whether they considered their general health in the previous 12 months to be 'good', 'fairly good' or 'not good'. This information has been demonstrated to be a good indicator of demand for health services. However, this is obviously a subjective question and consideration has to be given to peoples' differing views on what constitutes 'good', 'fairly good' and 'not good' health.

In E&W 9% of the population responded that their health was 'not good' to this question. The percentage within West Sussex is very similar at 8%. Within the county, the proportion ranged from 6% in Horsham to 9% in Arun. Within West Sussex 71% of the population said their health was 'good' and 22% that it was 'fairly good', compared with 69% and 22% respectively in E&W.

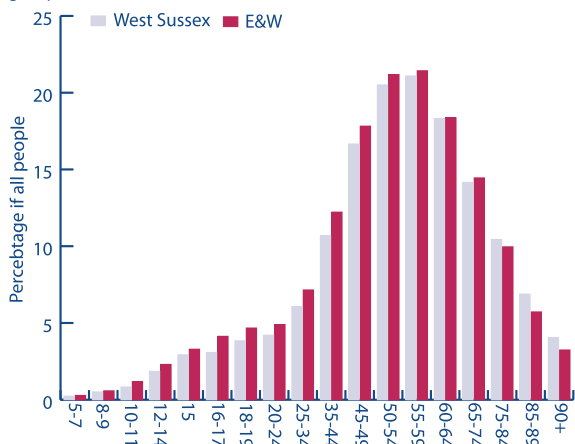
There is a clear link between the percentage of people with a limiting long-term illness and the percentage responding that their health was 'not good'. This would be expected, as the general health question refers to the twelve-month period pre-Census; for health to be considered 'not good' over this period for most people this would mean having a limiting long-term illness. One thing to note is that the proportion of the population with a limiting long-term illness is greater in each area than the proportion responding 'not good' to the general health question, demonstrating that not all people with a limiting long-term illness consider their health to be 'not good' and indicating that many of the conditions are manageable.

When taken together, West Sussex's lower proportion of its population with 'not good' health, and with limiting long-term illness indicate that health in the county is better than in E&W. This holds even when looking at the total population and making no allowance for the higher proportion of older people in West Sussex.

Provision of care

Another new question included in the 2001 Census was about provision of care. It asked whether or not a person looked after, or gave any help or support to family, friends, neighbours or others because of limiting long-term physical or mental health, disability or problems relating to age. Positive responses were grouped into less than 20 hours, 20-49 hours and 50 hours or more per week. Variation will however exist in the intensity of the care given which is not measured in the Census.

Figure 3: Percentage of all people who provide any unpaid care by age group for West Sussex and E&W



The proportion of people who are carers by age is shown in Figure 3 for West Sussex and E&W — this ranges from less than 1% in the 5-7 years age group to 21% in the 55-59 years age group. In each age group up to and including 65-74 years, West Sussex has a lower proportion of carers than E&W, but in each age group beyond this West Sussex has a higher proportion than E&W. Over 70,000 people within West Sussex typically provide some unpaid care each week. Of these almost 17,000 (23%) are aged 65 years or over, a future bulletin on pensioners and older people will look at this more closely. Over 1,000 children aged 5-15 years provide care each week, 134 of these children provide 20 hours or more and 70 provide 50 hours or more a week with significant detriment to their education and life chances. These figures are likely to underestimate the proportion in reality as many people may not wish to state that their child is a carer and many adults, particularly older people, consider caring for a loved one as a duty and so would not say they were an unpaid carer.

In both E&W and West Sussex around one tenth of the population are unpaid carers for some amount of time each week. Within the county there is very little variation in the proportion of all people providing unpaid care. Crawley has the lowest proportion at 9% and Arun the highest at 11%. Between E&W and West Sussex there is no difference when distinguishing between those spending 1-19, 20-49 and 50 or more hours a week caring (both areas having 7%, 1% and 2% respectively). Figure 4 shows that of unpaid carers within West Sussex, 74% spend less than 20 hours per week caring, 9% spend 20-49 hours and 17% spend 50 hours or more per week, compared with 68%, 11% and 21% respectively in E&W. There is some variation across the county; Arun has the lowest proportion of people caring for less than 20 hours per week (70%) and the highest proportion caring for 50 or more hours a week (21%). Crawley has the lowest proportion of people in the most time intensive care group at 13%.

Figure 4: Percentage of all carers by the hours spent caring per week by local authority, for West Sussex and E&W

