

Summary of Changes - Population growth of Sussex towns

TEACHERS' NOTES

Learning Objectives

The census figures and graphs can be used to illustrate the main trends in population growth in West Sussex from 1831 to 1901, and the rates at which different towns grew.

The timeline information can be used to stimulate discussion on some of the reasons for the different growth rates.

Sources



Source 1a. Population table and graph for different towns from 1831 to 1901, as listed in the census returns of the Victorian period



Source 1b. Population graph for different towns from 1831 to 1901, as listed in the census returns of the Victorian period



Source 2. Population graph for seaside towns 1831 - 1901



Source 3. Population graph for market towns 1831 - 1901



Source 4. Population graph for rural towns 1831 - 1901



Source 5a. Timeline for the featured seaside towns



Source 5b. Timeline for the featured market towns

The graphs comparing the population growth of different towns are quite striking. It is particularly interesting to see how the more rapid growth in towns such as Horsham and East Grinstead, Worthing and Littlehampton is directly linked to the development of the railway and public health issues.

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For example:

- Worthing station opens 1845, but growth is not rapid until c1861 - after the new Board of Health provided mains water and sewers. Growth slows significantly between 1891 and 1901, due to the typhoid epidemic in 1893.

- Littlehampton's growth rate increases 1861-1871 (railway station opened 1863) and again 1891 - 1901 (faster connection to London opened 1887). Slower growth rate 1871 - 1891 could be linked to the decline of Littlehampton as a port once the canal closed, the decline of shipbuilding, and the closing of the cross-channel boat service.

- Horsham and East Grinstead both start to grow after their railway stations are opened, and continue at the same rate as more train connections are added. As well as stimulating trade and industry, their early links to London turned them into early commuter towns.

- Chichester was connected by train to Brighton in 1846 but did not get a faster connection to London until 1881. The town was also subject to health problems through the 1880s and the drainage and sewage disposal problems were not solved until late in the decade. The growth line on the graph, much flatter than Horsham and East Grinstead, reflects these problems.

The decline of small rural towns is also interesting, but there is little local information to support this except the general decline in agriculture and the movement towards more lucrative employment in larger towns.

Children could be split into groups, each group to study one kind of town: seaside towns, market towns, or small rural towns.

Using the table and graph for their category, and the timeline, each group discusses why they think the population of the towns changed as it did.

They could also be asked to suggest which events contributed to growth or lack of it (railway, public health problems, decline in industries such as shipbuilding) and which were caused by the changes in population (Worthing pier was built in 1862 - was this done to encourage more people to visit, or built because more people were visiting?)