

East Devon Local Economic Review 2025

East Devon District Council

April 2025

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Introduction

The purpose of the East Devon Local Economic Review (LER) is to provide an overview of the key economic indicators impacting the East Devon district. It is an update to the original LER published in 2023 and should be viewed in conjunction with that document.

Technical Note

This document only covers datasets which update on a yearly basis and therefore have been re-released since the publication of the 2023 LER. The 2023 LER gave preference to 2021 Census data, with additional statistics drawn from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Mostly ONS data has been used in this edition which is more reliant on estimates and less robust than Census data. The only inclusions of Census data are those datasets released since the previous LER was published. Therefore, any comparisons drawn between the two documents should note the source of the data and ensure Census data and ONS data are not being compared.

The most notable omission in this edition is the absence of workspace data. The datasets used in the 2023 edition have not been reproduced, so the figures and analysis presented in the previous LER can be referred to when citing workspace demand.

Data from the 2023 LER excluded from this edition includes:

- Reasons for economic inactivity
- Economic activity amongst students
- Employment statistics by ward
- Forecast employee numbers by 2040
- Hours worked per week
- Travel to Work methods
- Highest level of qualification
- Annual pay by percentiles
- Expected GVA by 2040
- Current Employment Space Demand
- Current demand vs current supply of employment space
- Available vs non-available supply of employment space
- Employment space take up by hectare
- Future Employment Space Demand by Hectare
- Current and Future Employment Space by type of space

Median wage estimates (for both the 2023 and 2025 editions) are drawn from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data. It should be noted that estimates for East Devon are only considered 'acceptable', as opposed to 'precise', so there is a reasonable margin for error in the statistics.

Since the previous edition of the LER, the ONS has revised its methodology for calculating emissions data and previous years have been retrospectively corrected in later editions. This LER uses the revised statistics, so there may be a discrepancy

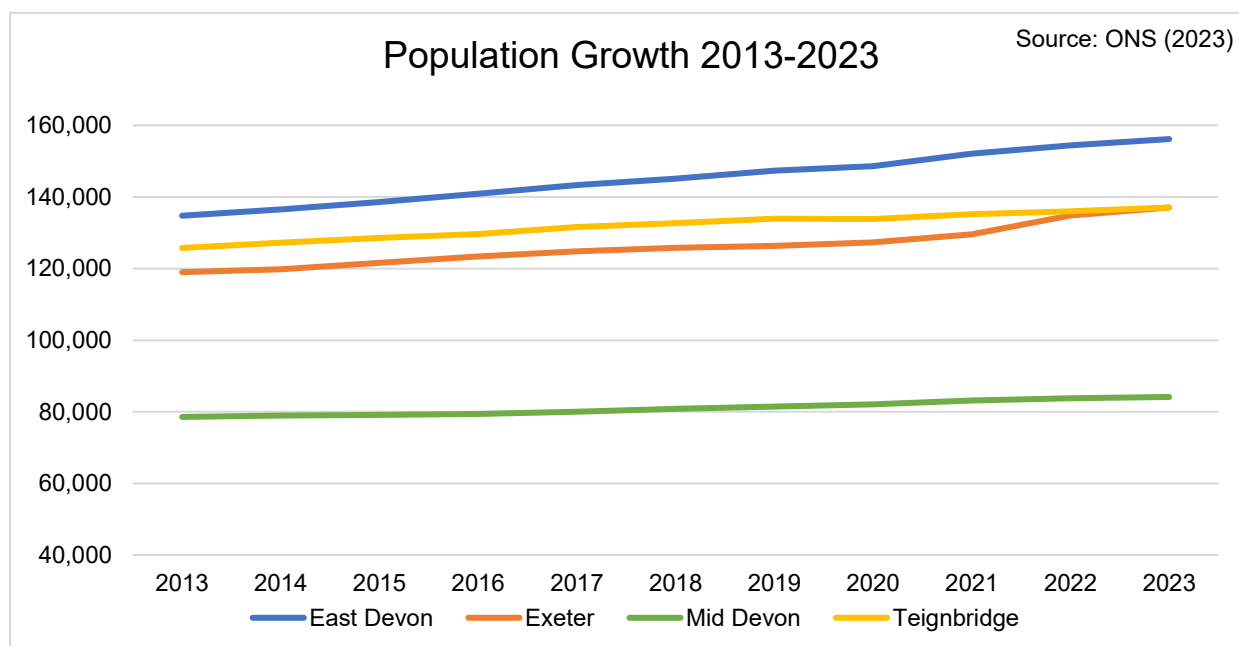
between figures cited in the 2023 edition for total emissions and this document for past years.

Data will be shown primarily in graph format, with East Devon data usually illustrated in blue. Where data is presented in a longitudinal format, a ten-year timespan will typically be used unless there is a more appropriate data-specific baseline or where ten years' worth of data is not available.

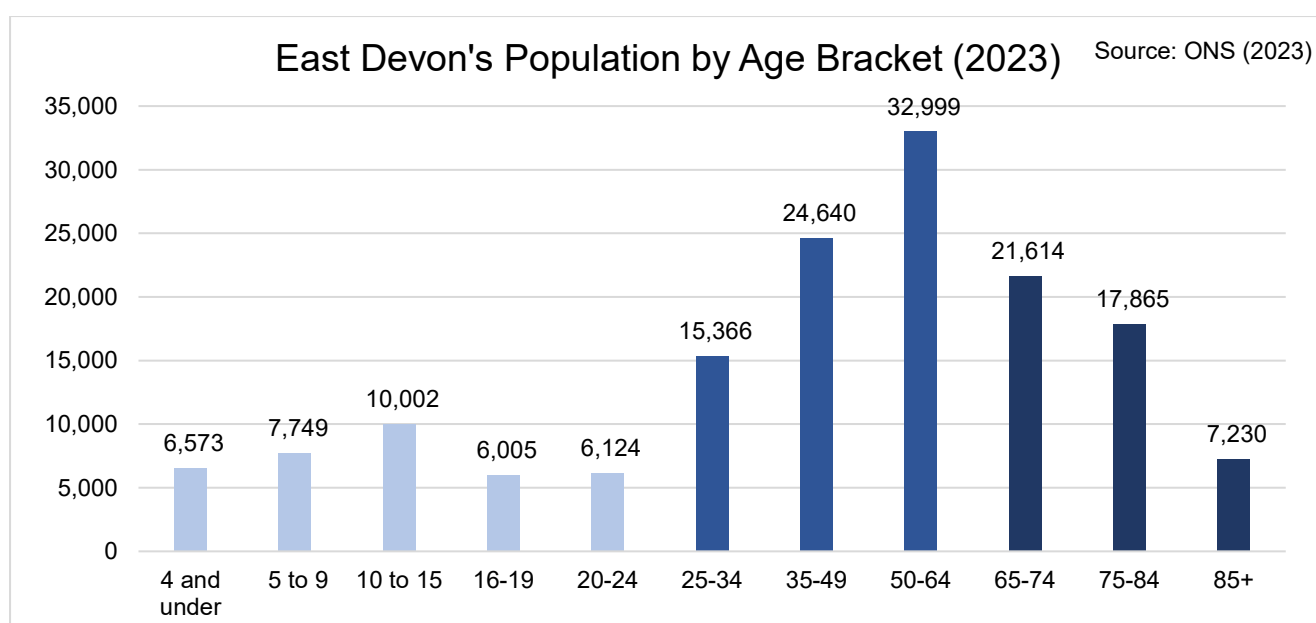
Where data is presented in a geographical format, Exeter, Mid Devon and Teignbridge will be used as the local comparator geographies, as these areas make up the wider Exeter and the Heart of Devon functioning economic market area (FEMA). A regional (South West England) and national comparator will also be displayed, with the UK used as the preferred national comparator, with England as the secondary preference.

Population

Mid-year estimates for 2023 produced from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) (the latest release), place the population of East Devon at 156,167 residents. It remains the most populous Devon district and the fastest growing, with a 14% increase over a 10-year period. This makes East Devon the 14th fastest growing local authority area in the UK and the fastest growing in Devon. The population grew 1.15% between 2022 and 2023 estimates against an average of 0.88% for Devon.

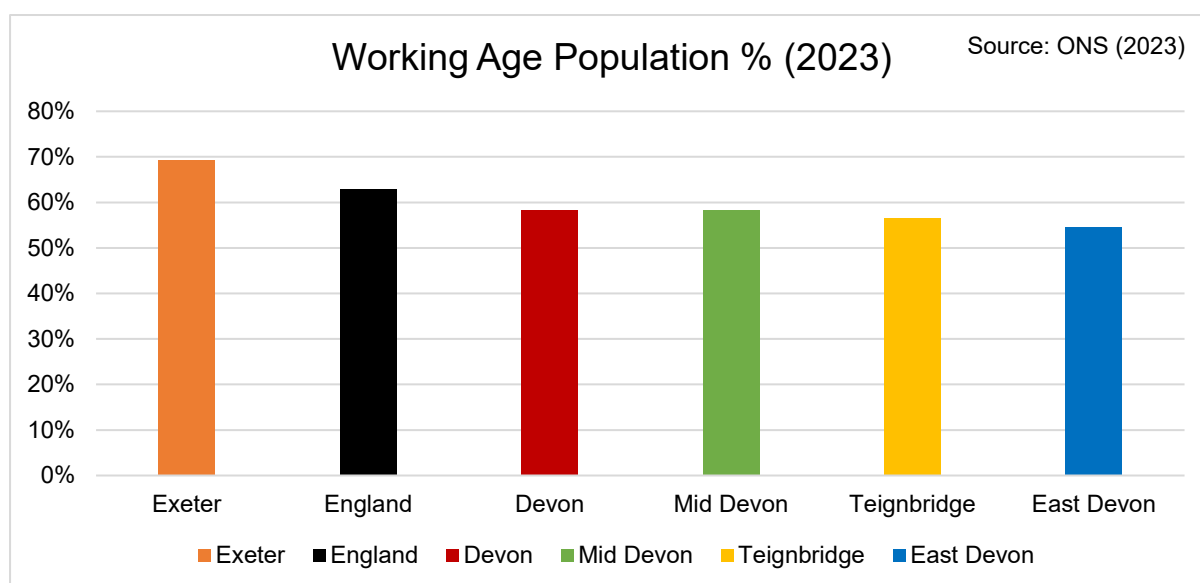


In 2023, East Devon had a working age population (those aged 16 to 64 years) of 85,134, or 55% of the total population. There were 46,709 people of retirement age (65 years of age or above) making up 30% of the population, with those aged 0-15 years of age making up 15% of the population. These percentages are unchanged from the 2021 Census data used in the 2023 LER.



East Devon remains the Devon district with the lowest proportion of working age residents, below both regional and national averages.

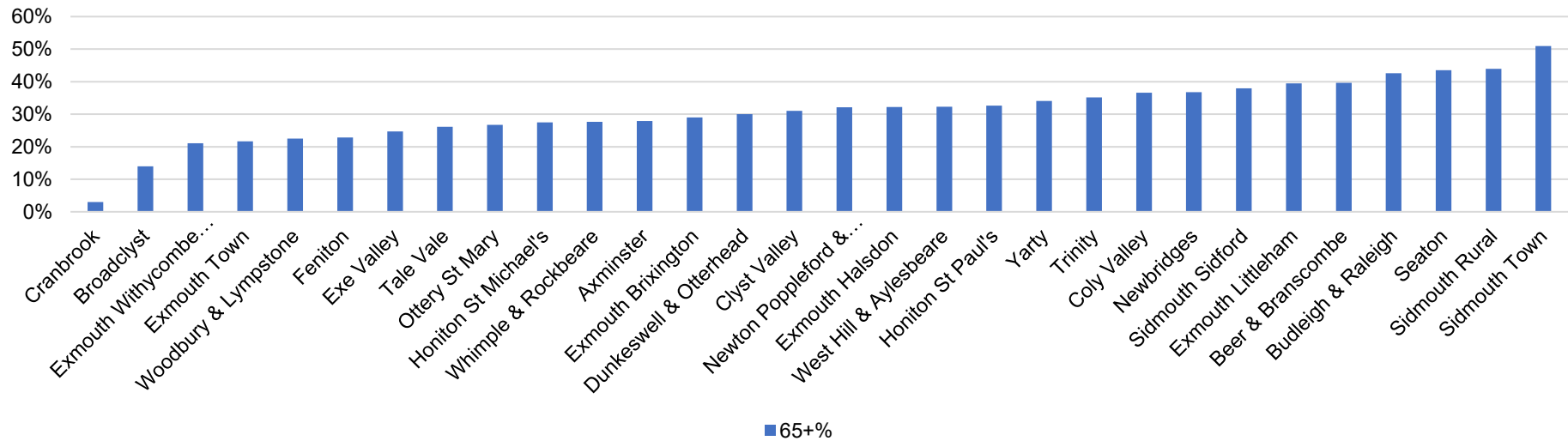
Population estimates from the ONS show that the percentage of working age people in East Devon has been consistently below the national and regional average. When compared against the 332 local authority areas in England, East Devon has the 6th highest proportion of residents over 65 and the 4th lowest proportion of working age people. In 2021, these figures were 4th and 3rd respectively. As the percentage of working age residents in East Devon did not change between 2021 and 2023, this is due to worsening demographic imbalances in comparison areas, rather than an improvement in East Devon’s imbalance.



Demographics vary greatly across East Devon’s wards, with the percentage of residents above working age hugely different in Cranbrook and Sidmouth Town. The level of population growth also varies across each ward, with the new housing developments in the West End responsible for expanding far more rapidly than the remainder of the district. There is some correlation between areas with the fastest growth and a larger number of working age residents, but this is not consistent across all wards.

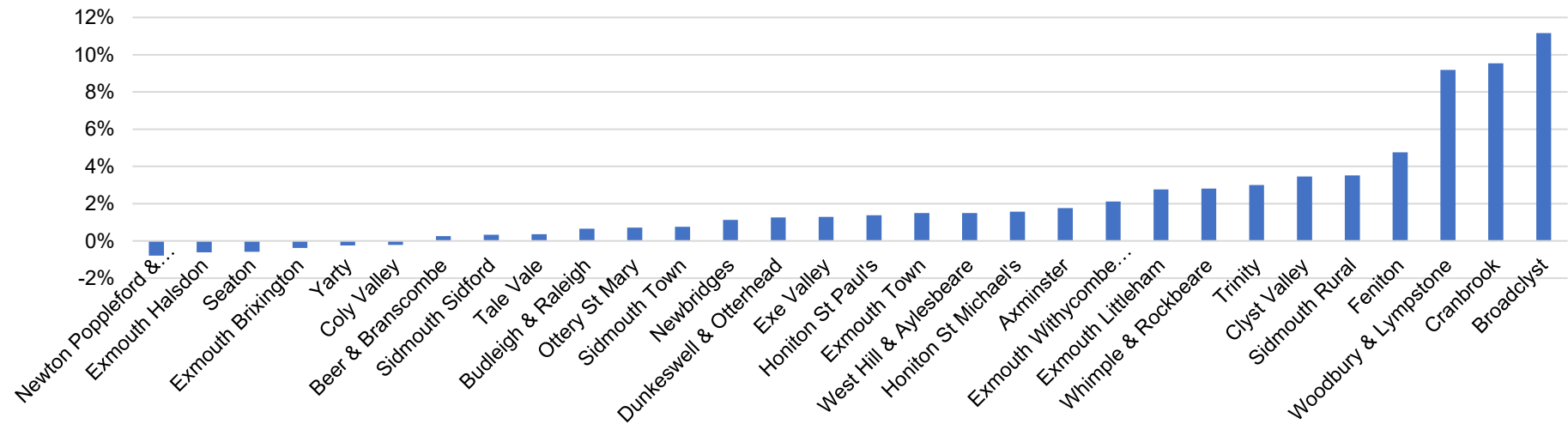
Residents above working age % (2023)

Source: ONS (2023)



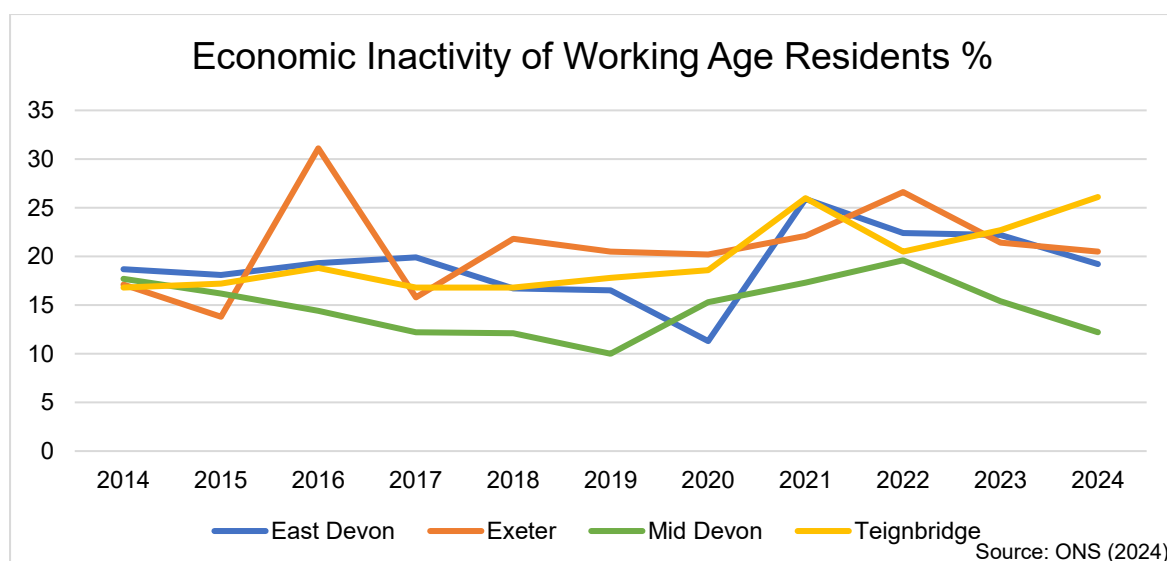
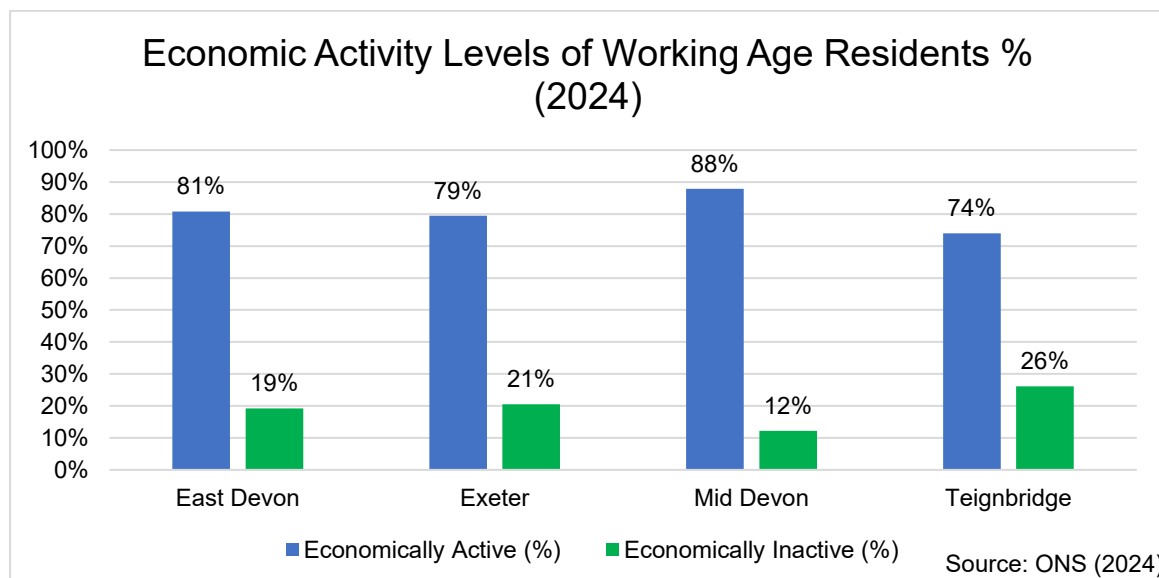
Change in Population 2021-2023 % (2023)

Source: ONS (2023)

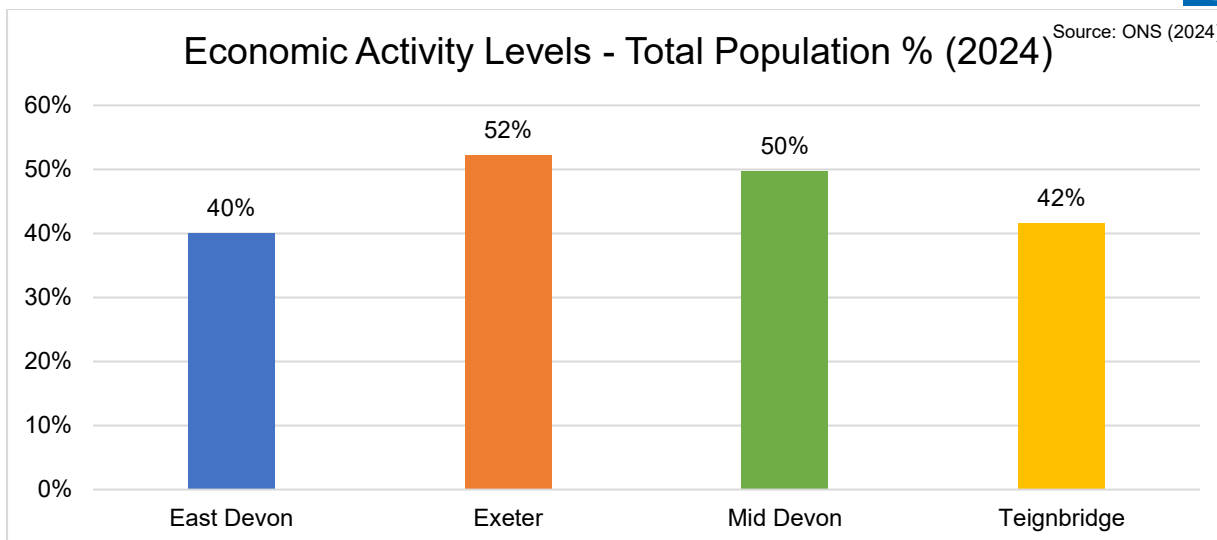


Economic Activity

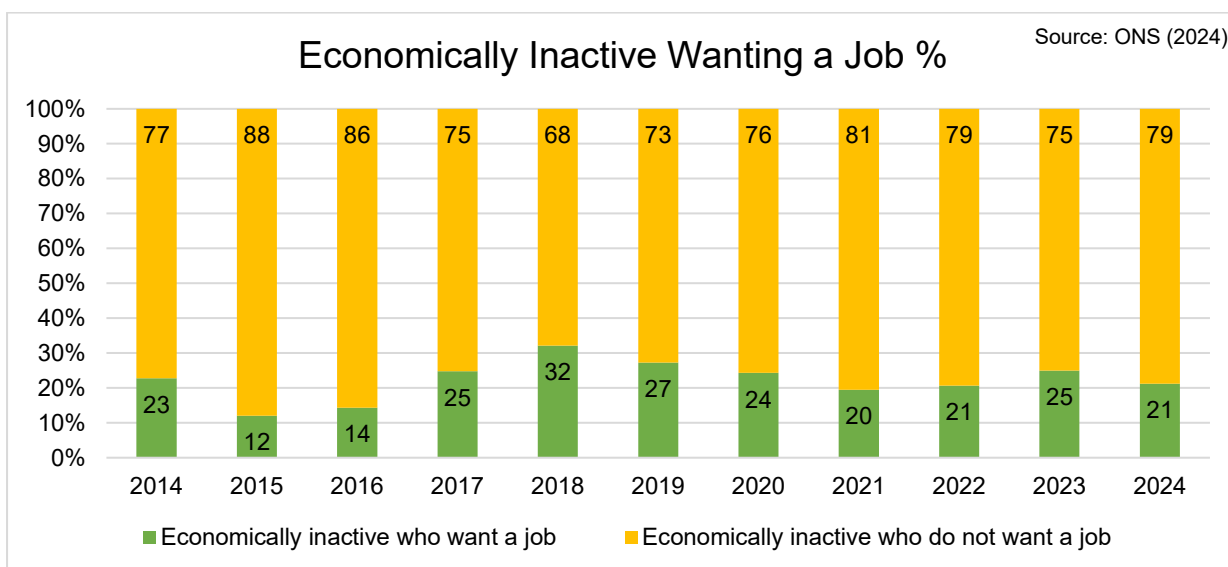
Those who are defined as economically active are those in employment, unemployed but looking for work, or unemployed and waiting to start a job that had been offered and accepted. Those who are economically inactive are neither in employment nor seeking employment. When only working age residents are considered, East Devon’s economic activity levels compare well against other EHoD areas, with economic inactivity amongst 16-64 years olds declining 3% since 2022.



When residents of all ages are considered, East Devon becomes the EHoD area with the lowest levels of economic activity by a considerable margin. As retirees are considered economically inactive, East Devon’s high proportion of retirees significantly impacts levels of economic inactivity.

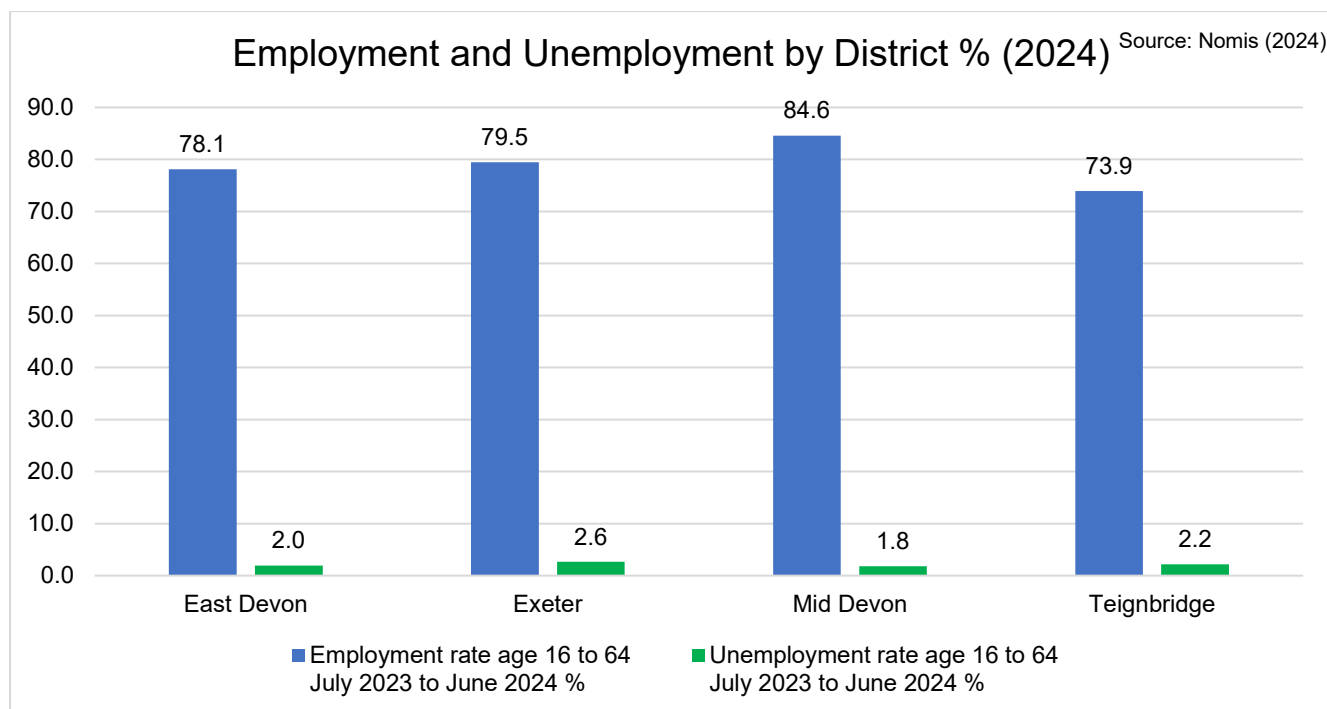


ONS estimates show that the majority of those who are economically inactive and are of working age do not want a job. In 2024 it was estimated that 21% of economically inactive people in East Devon would like a job but are neither in employment nor actively seeking employment. This is unchanged from 2021 data.



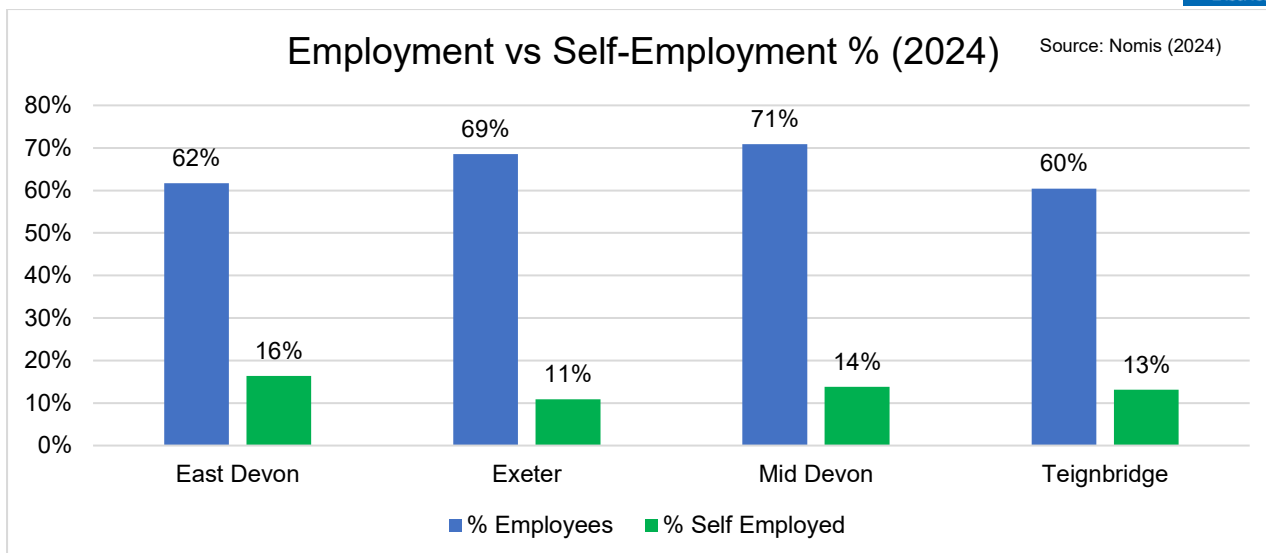
Employment

Those who are economically active can be further categorised into those who are employed and those who are unemployed. Nomis data shows that that 78% of East Devon residents of working age were in employment. Only 2% of East Devon residents were classed as unemployed, the 10th lowest out of 332 local authority areas and below the national and regional average.

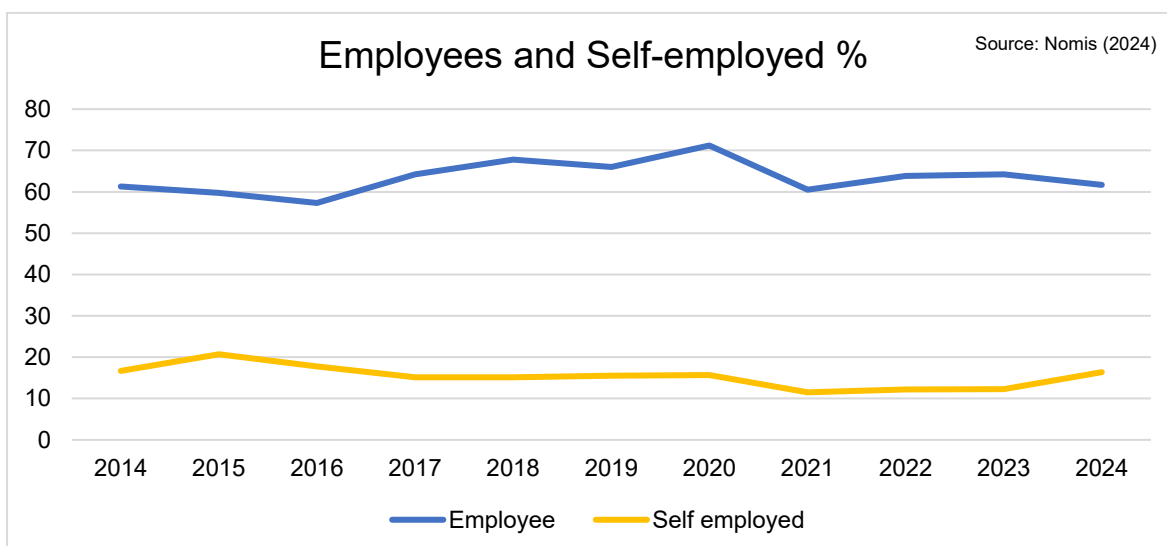


Of those who are in employment, this can be sub-divided further into those who are employed and those who are self-employed. Nomis data shows that there were 47,800 employees and 12,700 self-employed individuals in East Devon in 2024.

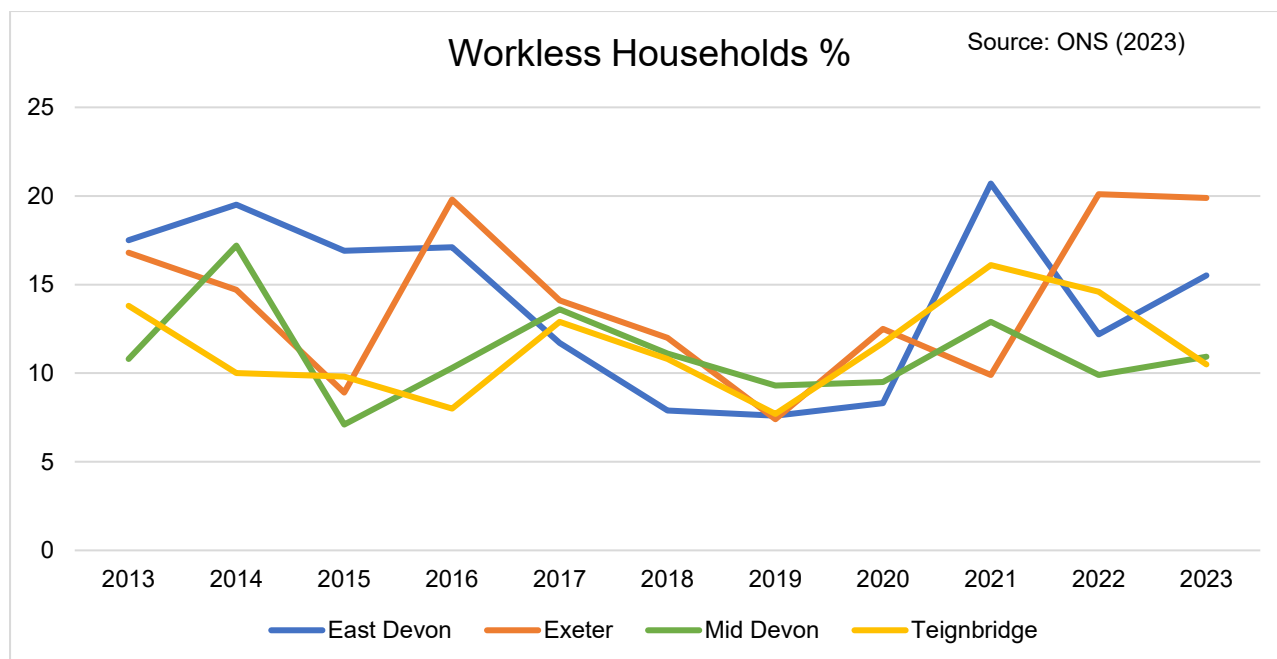
The graph below shows the percentage of employed and self-employed individuals as a percentage of those who are employed. The percentage of those who are self-employed in East Devon is slightly higher than the regional and national average and relatively high in comparison to the number of those who work for an employer.



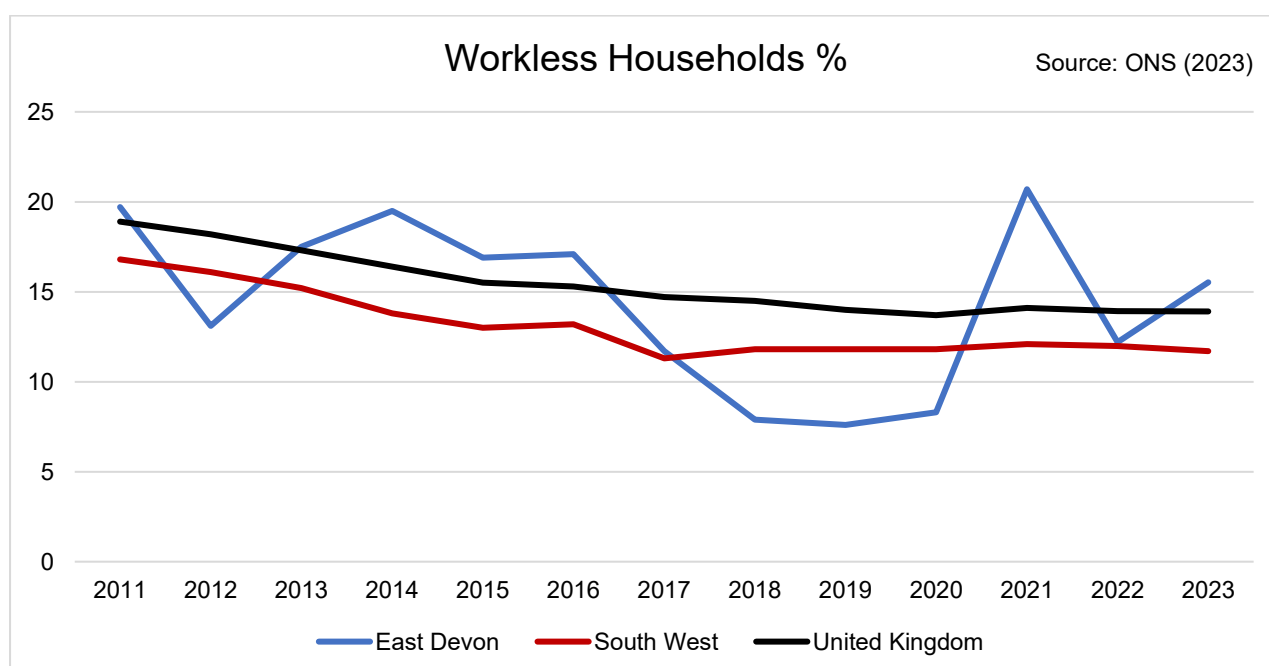
Since the 2023 LER, the percentage of employees has decreased slightly, coupled with a larger increase in the percent of self-employed individuals however it remains below the 2015 peak in self-employment.



The ONS collates data from workless households, where no-one aged 16 or over is in employment, whether due to unemployment or economic inactivity. District level data shows huge swings in the percentage of workless households, with a plummet in the late 2010s accompanied by a sharp spike between 2020 and 2021. No clear local trends emerge by comparing East Devon to other EHoD areas.



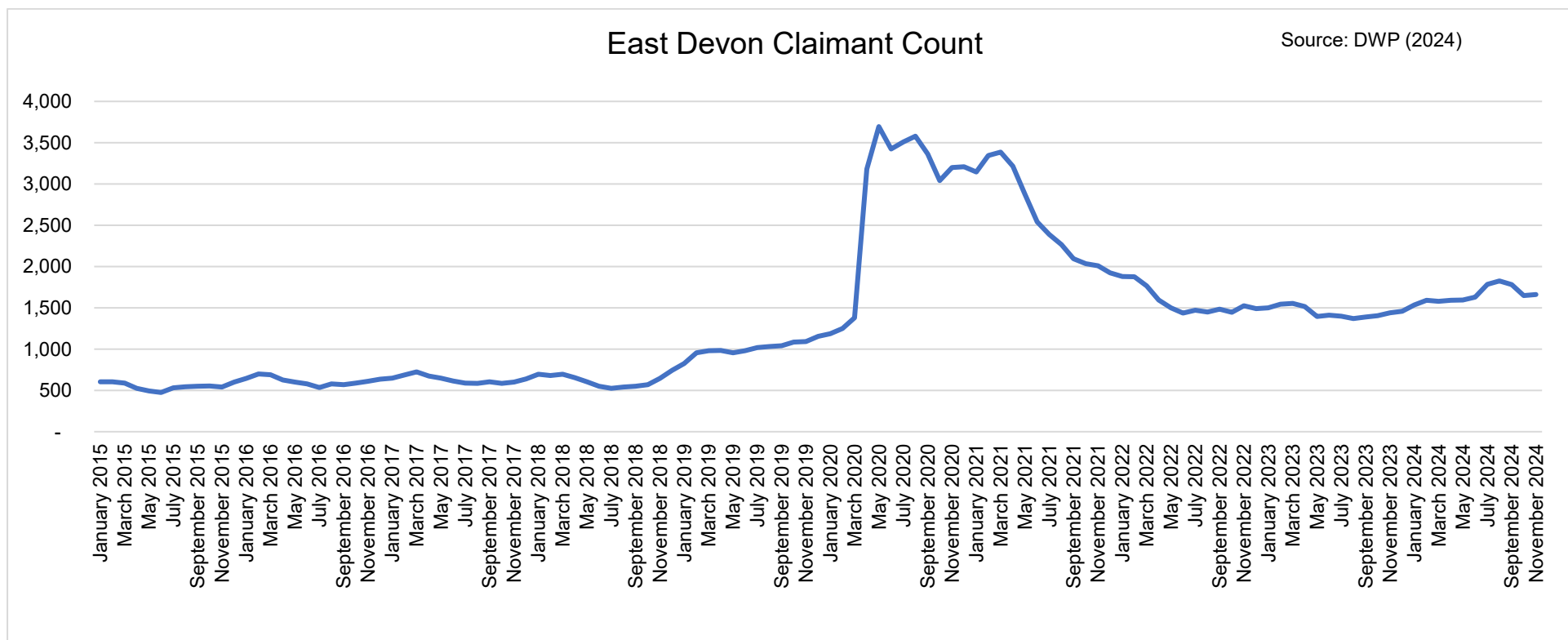
However, when the percentage of workless households is viewed on larger geographies, local fluctuations even out and demonstrate a steady decline in the overall percentage of workless households. This is likely due to the small sample sizes from which the local authority estimates are produced.



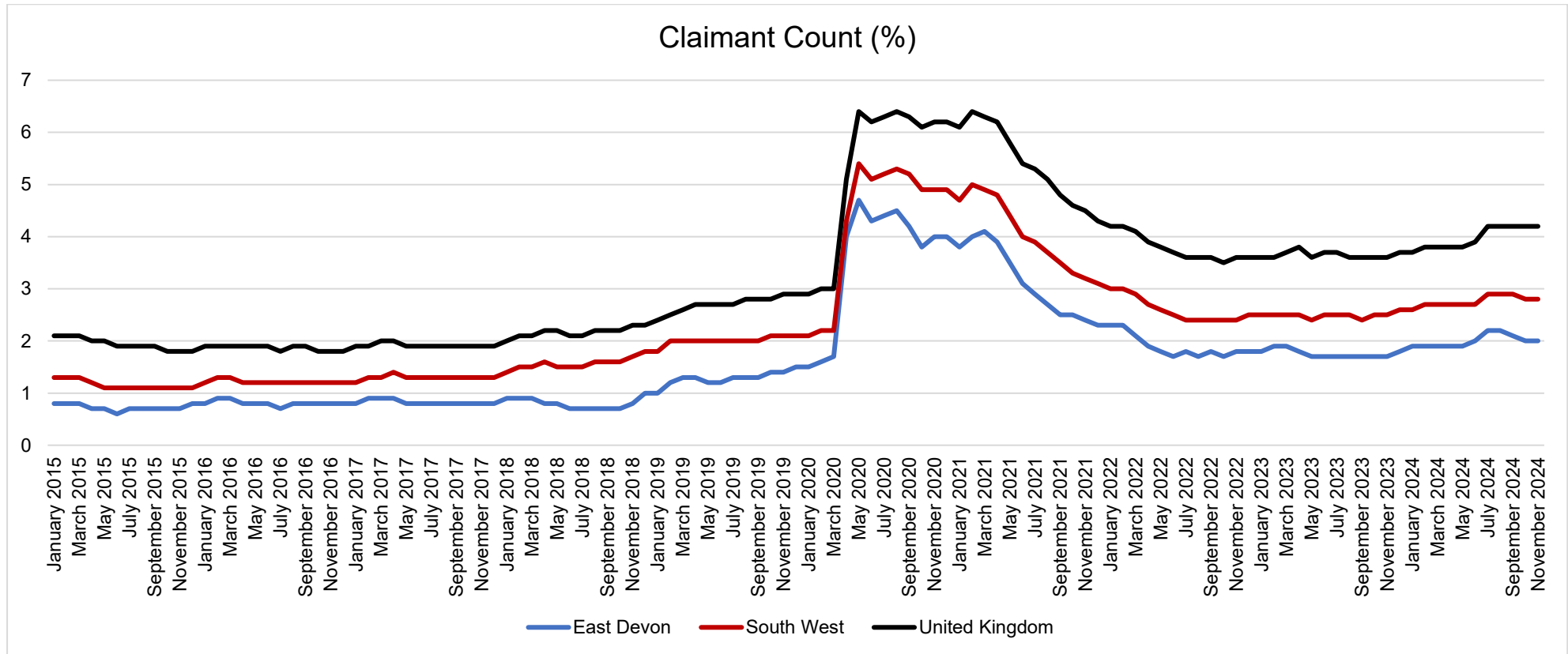
A more reliable source of data for tracking those who are unemployed is the claimant count statistics published by the Department for Work and Pensions. This data is published monthly and removes the annual swings frequently observed in ONS data.

The Claimant Count is the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed. This is measured by combining the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and National Insurance credits with the number of people receiving Universal Credit principally for the reason of being unemployed.

The latest figures for East Devon (November 2024) show the claimant count standing at 1,660 individuals, or around 2% of the working population. Although figures have generally stabilised since the pandemic, they remain higher than the pre-pandemic levels, and 2024 figures are slightly above those from 2023.



The claimant count in East Devon has remained consistently below both the regional and national average and has remained broadly in line with neighbouring local authority areas. District trends map closely to those seen at a regional and national level, indicating fluctuations in East Devon figures are related to the wider economic conditions.



Jobs

Data is also available on the types of filled jobs by both occupation and sector.

The table below displays jobs by occupation as a percentage of all filled jobs, with the South West and UK averages displayed as a comparison. The table has been colour coded to show which occupations made up the largest share of the workforce in 2024. As these figures are based on estimates, a # is used to indicate where the sample size was too small to provide a reasonable estimate.

Occupation	East Devon %	South West %	UK %
Managers, directors and senior officials	15.6	10.9	11.1
Professional occupations	19.9	26.3	26.8
Associate professional occupations	11.8	15	15.4
Administrative & secretarial occupations	#	8.2	9.3
Skilled trades occupations	15.1	10.4	8.7
Caring, leisure and Other Service occupations	12.6	8.5	8.3
Sales and customer service occupations	#	5.8	6.1
Process plant & machine operatives	#	5.5	5.5
Elementary occupations	#	9.3	8.8

East Devon has fewer professional occupations than the regional and national average, albeit with a larger percentage of managers and senior officials. This is balanced with a higher percentage of skilled tradespeople and those in service occupations.

The table below shows the number of employees per sector, based on 2023 figures. These figures are produced based on estimates and rounded to the nearest 50, so should only be taken as indicative figures.

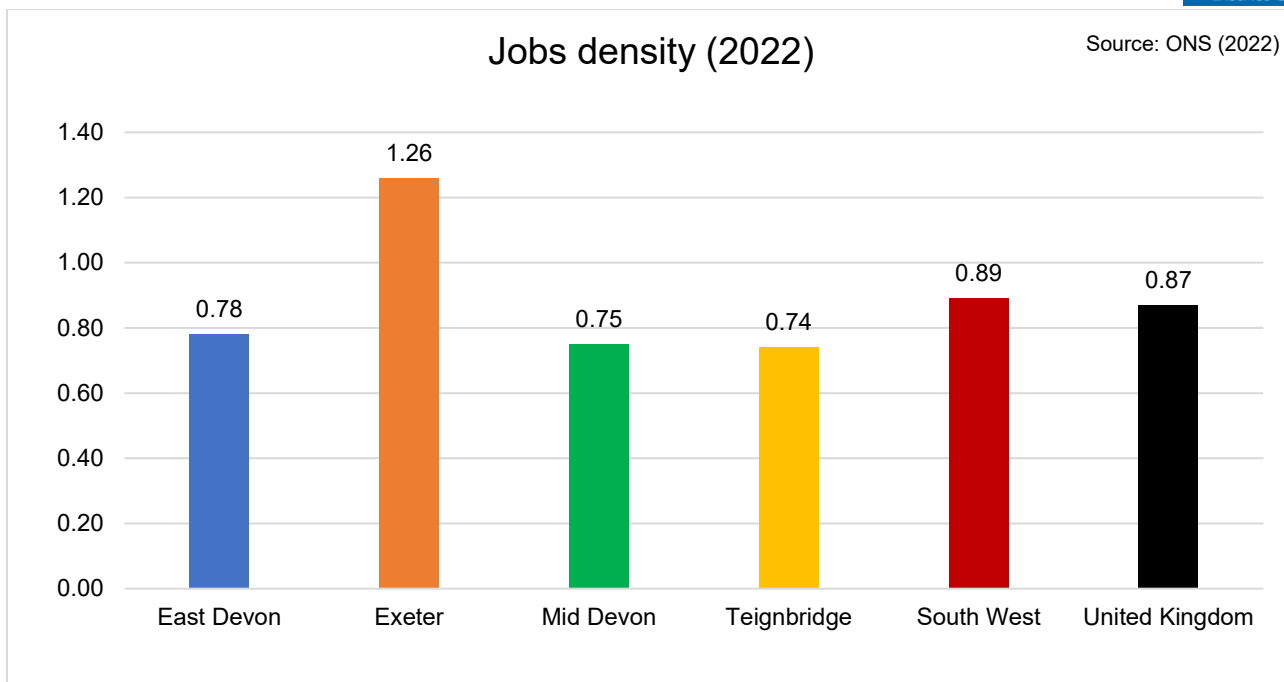
Sector	East Devon (number)
Agriculture, forestry & fishing (A)	900
Mining, quarrying & utilities (B,D and E)	700
Manufacturing (C)	3,000
Construction (F)	4,000
Motor trades (Part G)	1,250
Wholesale (Part G)	2,500
Retail (Part G)	6,000
Transport & storage (inc postal) (H)	3,000
Accommodation & food services (I)	6,000
Information & communication (J)	1,500
Financial & insurance (K)	350
Property (L)	2,000
Professional, scientific & technical (M)	3,000
Business administration & support services (N)	2,500

Public administration & defence (O)	1,500
Education (P)	4,500
Health (Q)	6,000
Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services (R,S,T and U)	3,000

The table below shows jobs by sector as a percentage of all jobs, with the South West and UK displayed as comparisons. This shows that East Devon's sectoral distribution of jobs is mostly aligned with regional and national averages, but with higher percentages in farming, accommodation and food services, and retail, and lower percentages of jobs in manufacturing, financial and professional services.

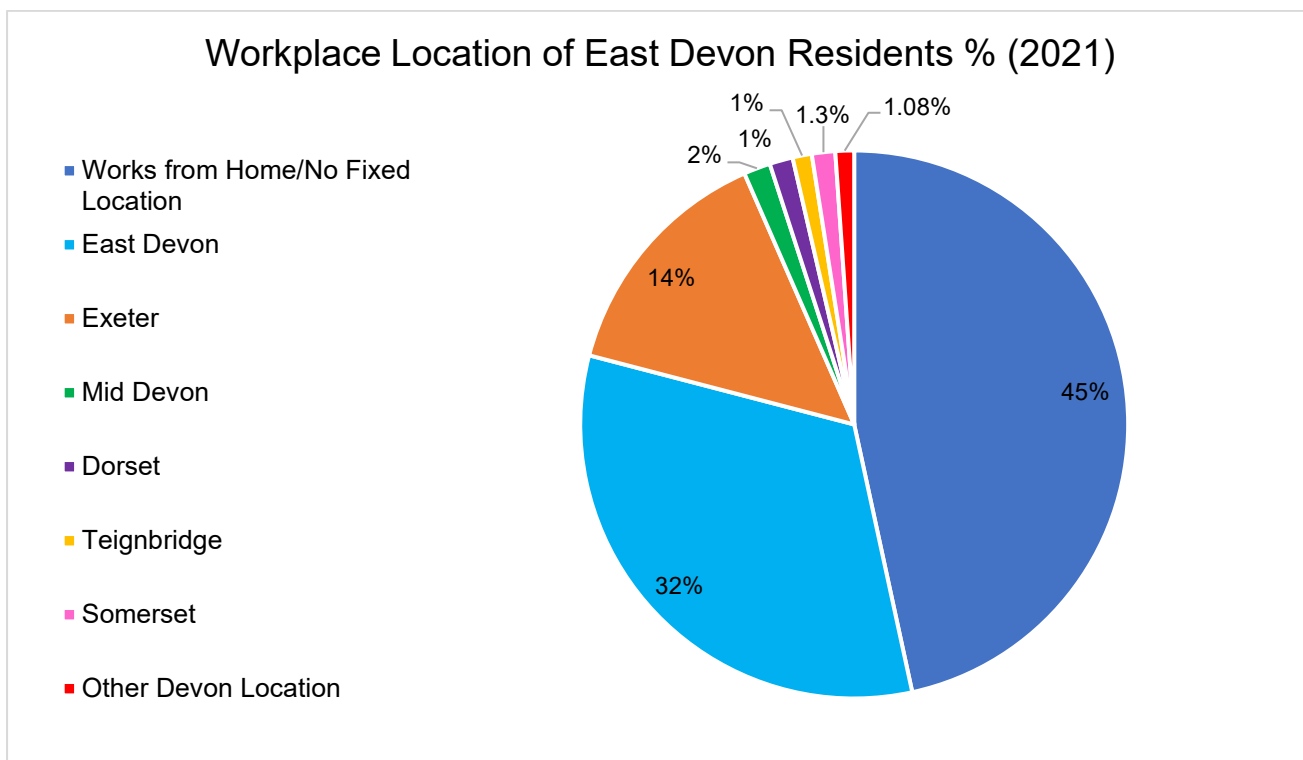
Industry	East Devon	South West	UK
Agriculture, forestry & fishing (A)	1.7	0.9	0.7
Mining, quarrying & utilities (B,D and E)	1.3	1.6	1.2
Manufacturing (C)	5.8	8.1	7.5
Construction (F)	7.7	5.9	4.8
Motor trades (Part G)	2.4	1.9	1.7
Wholesale (Part G)	4.8	3.4	3.7
Retail (Part G)	11.5	9.3	8.3
Transport & storage (inc postal) (H)	5.8	3.9	5
Accommodation & food services (I)	11.5	9.5	7.9
Information & communication (J)	2.9	3.8	4.5
Financial & insurance (K)	0.7	2.8	3.4
Property (L)	3.8	1.8	1.9
Professional, scientific & technical (M)	5.8	8	9.2
Business administration & support services (N)	4.8	7	8.7
Public administration & defence (O)	2.9	4.5	4.7
Education (P)	8.7	8.5	8.5
Health (Q)	11.5	14.9	13.9
Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services (R,S,T and U)	5.8	4.2	4.5

Jobs density figures can be useful to understand how many jobs are occupied in a given area compared to the overall working age population. For example, a job density of 1.0 would mean that there is one job for every resident aged 16-64. ONS data for East Devon in 2022 shows a job density of 0.76, below both national and regional averages.



Census data provides the work location of all employed East Devon residents. The majority of East Devon residents (77%) work in the district, either from a fixed location (32%) or work primarily from home or do not have a fixed work location (45%).

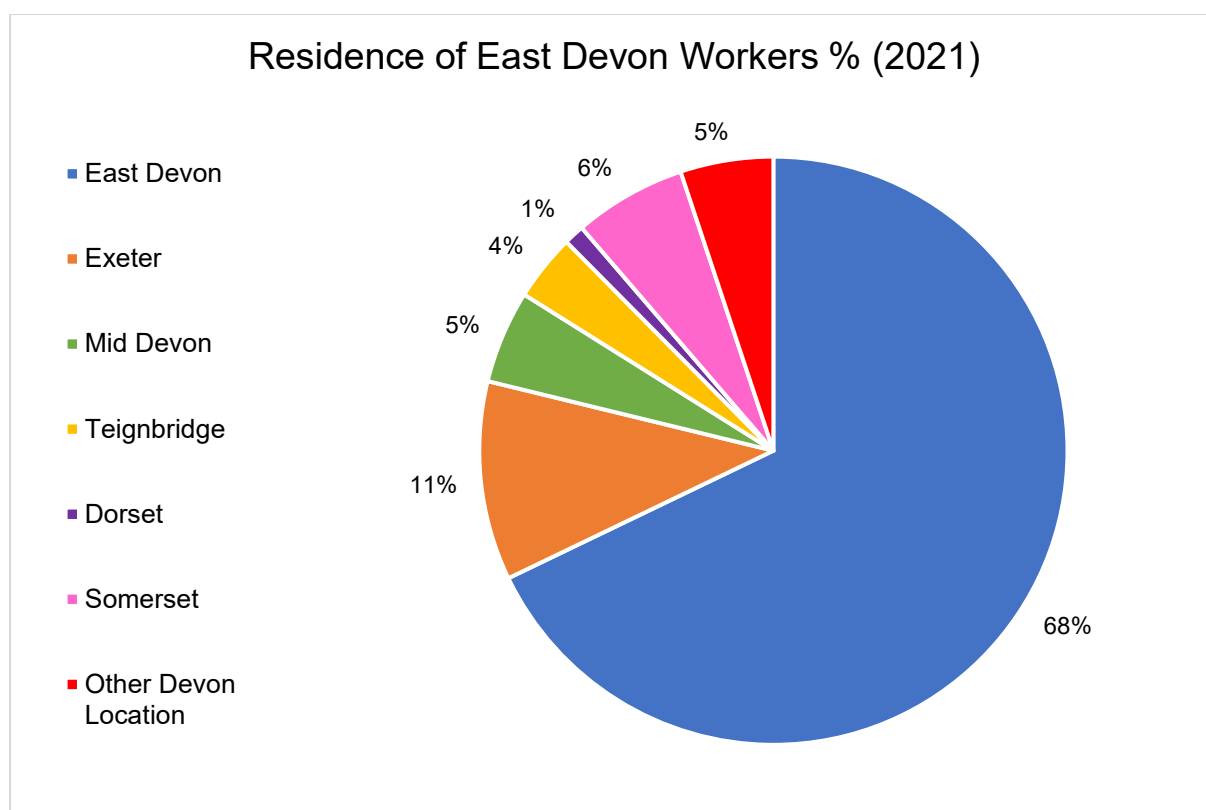
Of the 54% of residents who work in a fixed location outside their home, 58% work in East Devon. The most common work location outside of the district is Exeter, where 26% of this group commute. No other workplace location stands out as a significant source of out commuting.



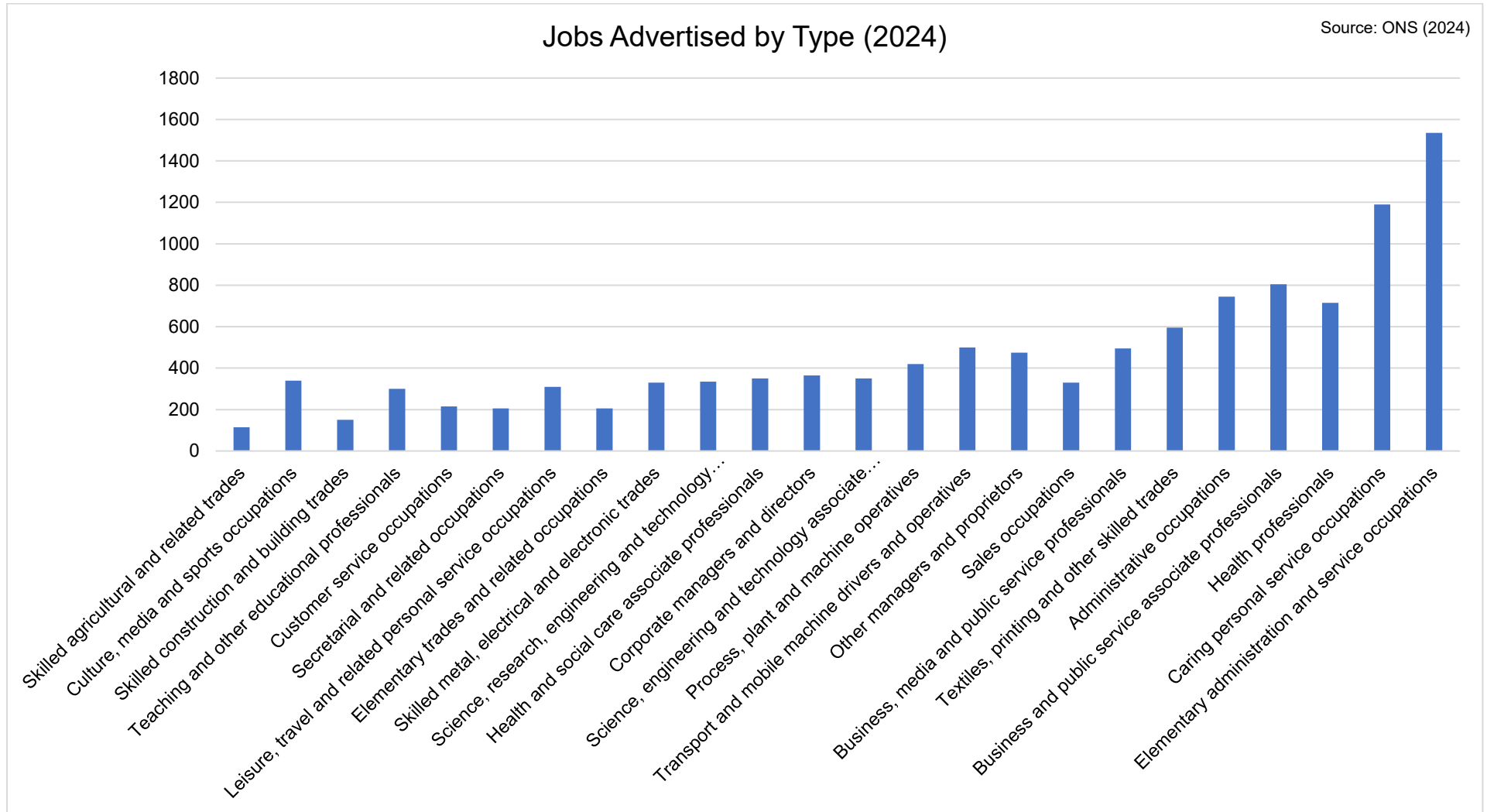
Not everyone who works in East Devon lives in the district. Census data shows the areas in which East Devon’s workers reside. 84% of East Devon’s workforce is comprised of East Devon residents, although this includes the 49% who work from home or from no fixed location.

Even when homeworkers are removed from the data, it remains the case that the majority (68%) of East Devon’s workers are also residents. As a higher percentage of residents work outside the district than workers come from outside the district, East Devon experiences more out-commuting than in-commuting.

At 11%, more workers come from Exeter than any other location outside the district, but other locations such as Mid Devon, Teignbridge, and Somerset provide higher numbers of workers for East Devon than jobs for East Devon residents.



The ONS also produces data on the types of jobs advertised. The graph below shows the number of jobs adverts posted by occupation, which shows high demand in healthcare and care professions, administration and service occupations, and business professionals.



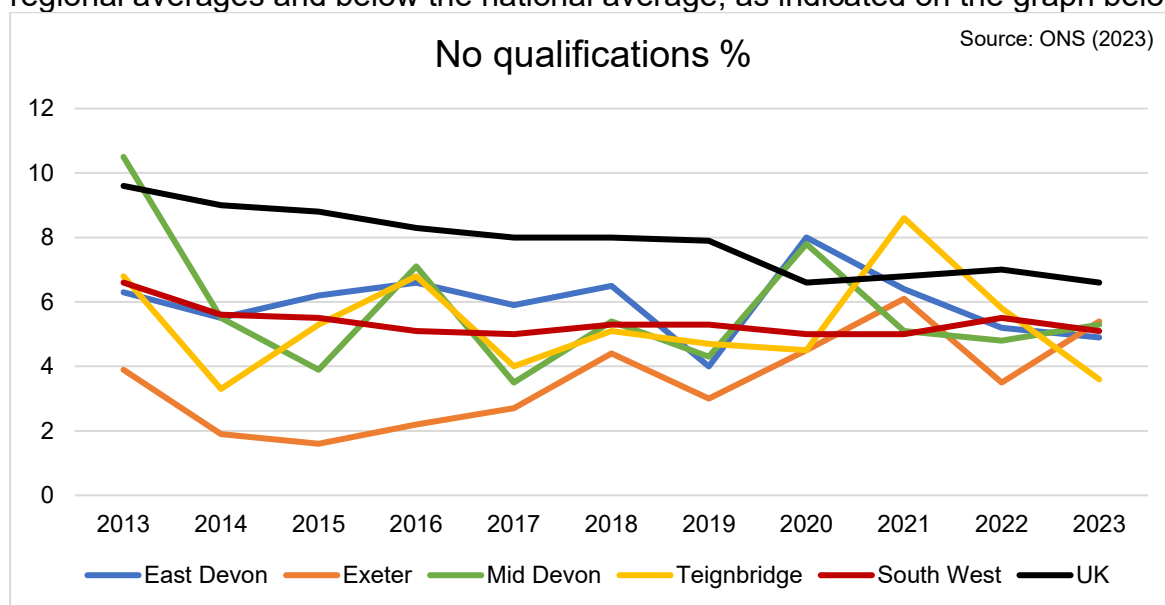
Skills

ONS data records the qualification levels for East Devon residents aged 16 and over.

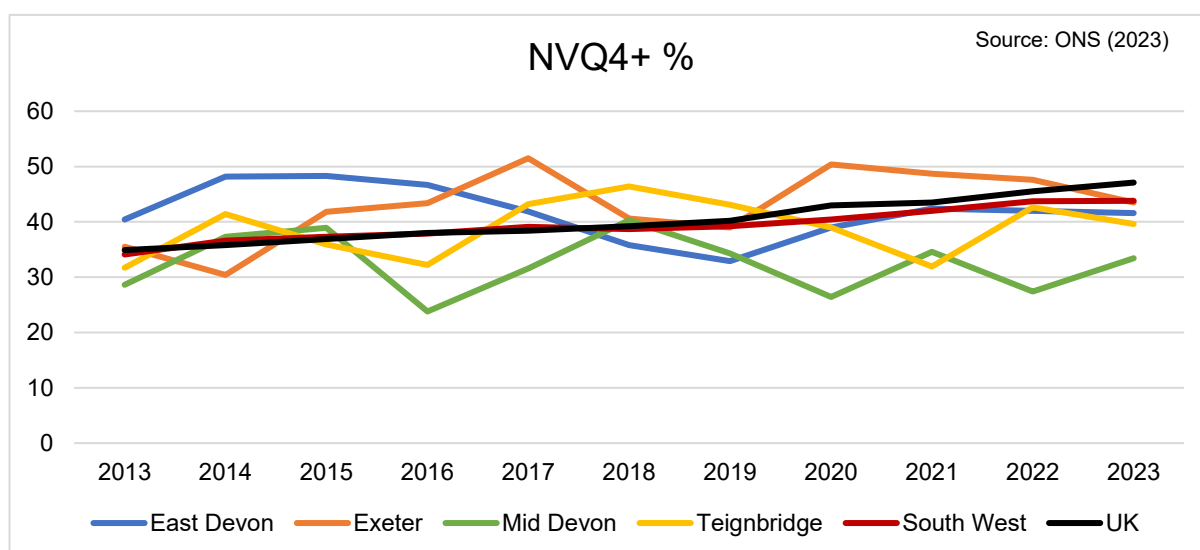
Levels of qualifications are defined as follows:

- Level 1: fewer than 5 GCSEs at grades A-C or equivalent.
- Level 2: 5 or more GCSEs at grades A-C or equivalent.
- Level 3: 2 or more A levels or equivalent.
- Level 4 or above: degree or equivalent, higher degree, professional qualifications

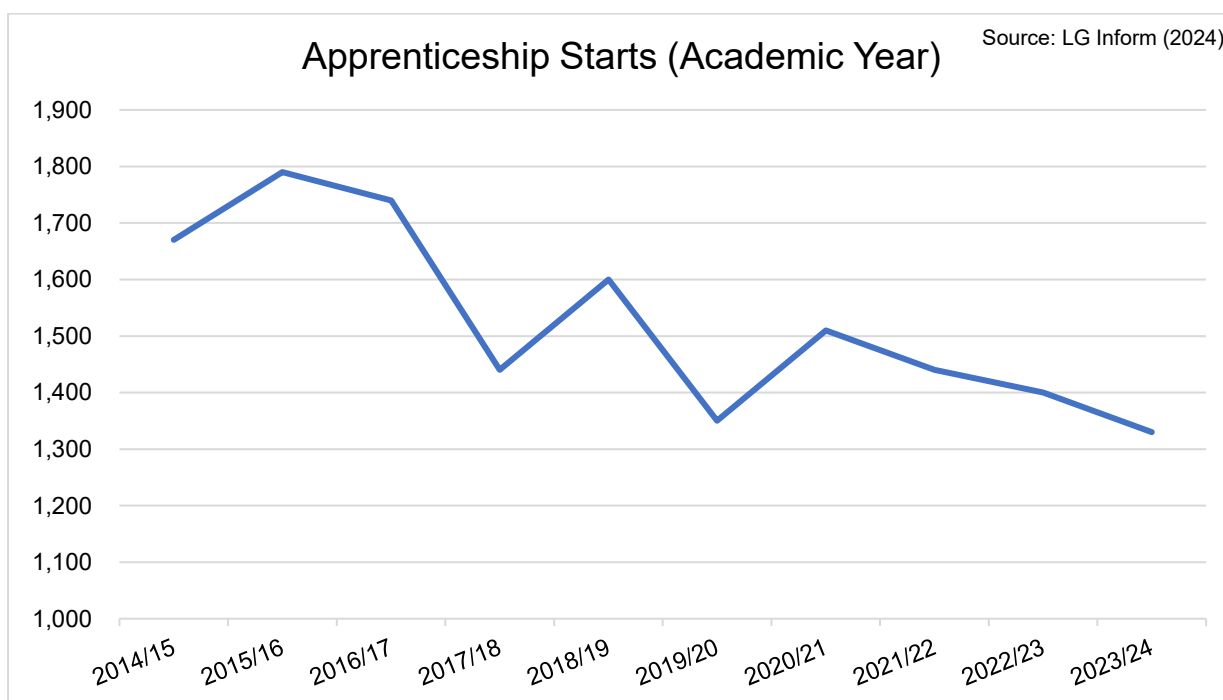
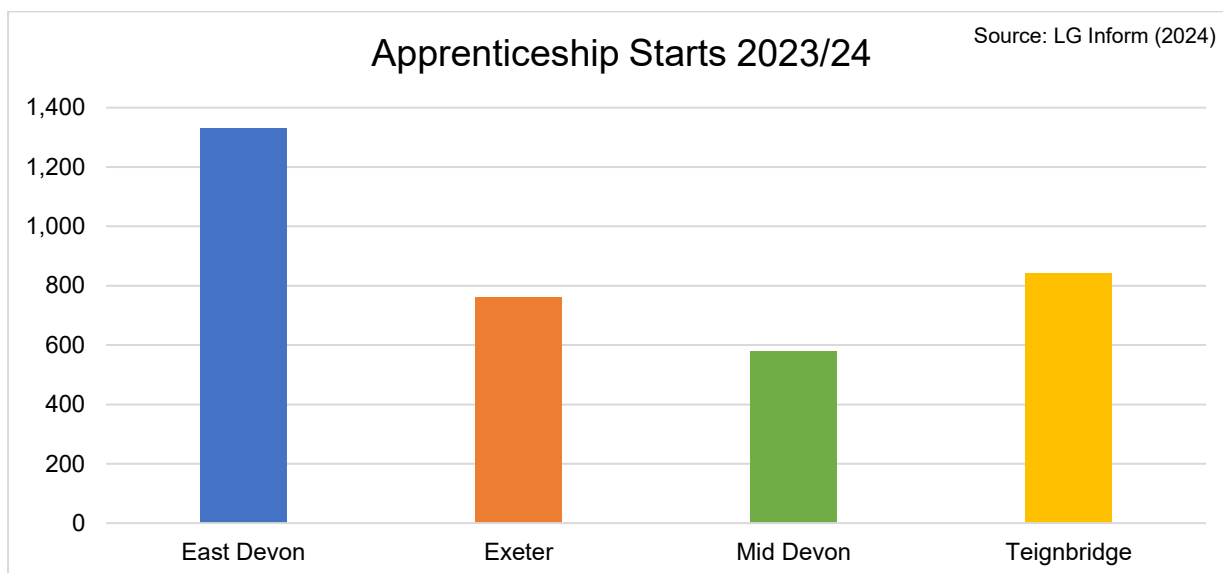
The percentage of East Devon residents with no qualifications remains in line with regional averages and below the national average, as indicated on the graph below.



The proportion of East Devon residents qualified to Level 4 or higher is also similar to the regional average, although the South West remains slightly below the national average.

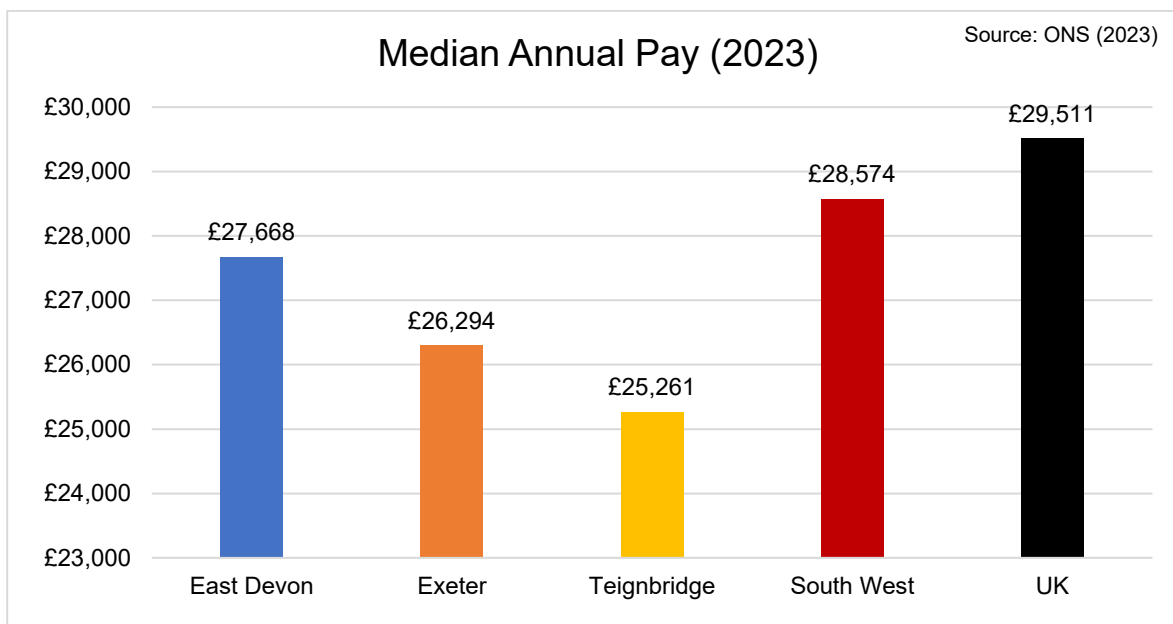


Data is also available on the number of residents starting an apprenticeship each year. As in the previous LER, apprenticeship starts in East Devon far exceed those of neighbouring authorities. Despite this, the overall number of people beginning an apprenticeship remains in decline.

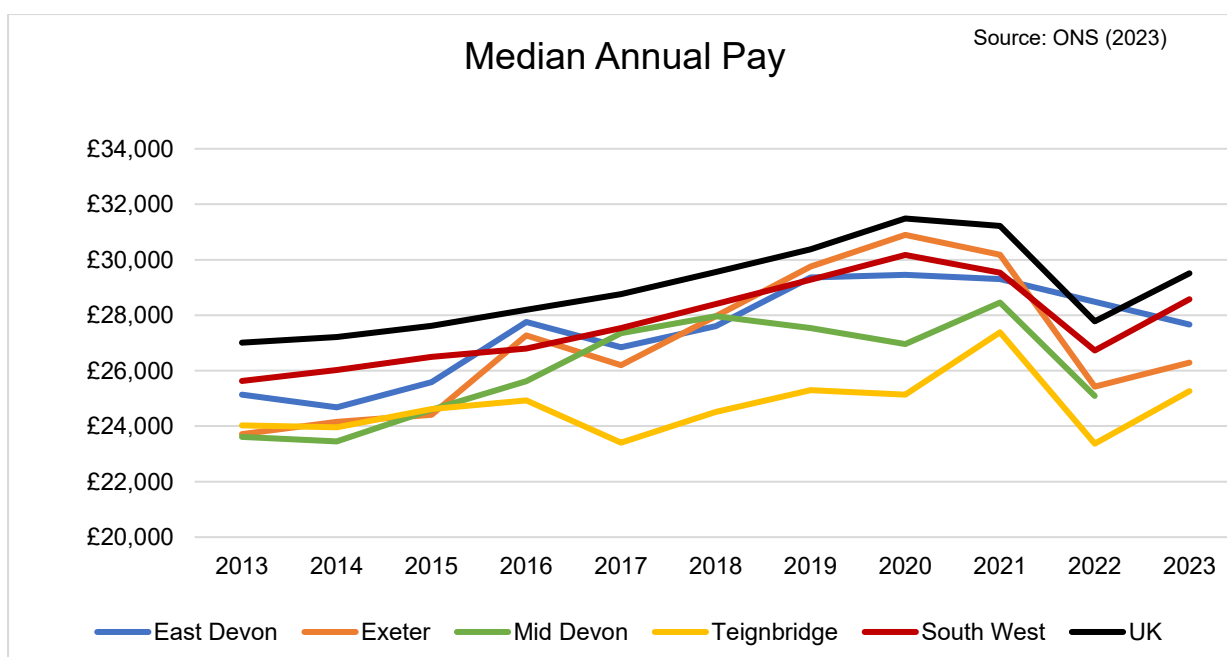


Wages

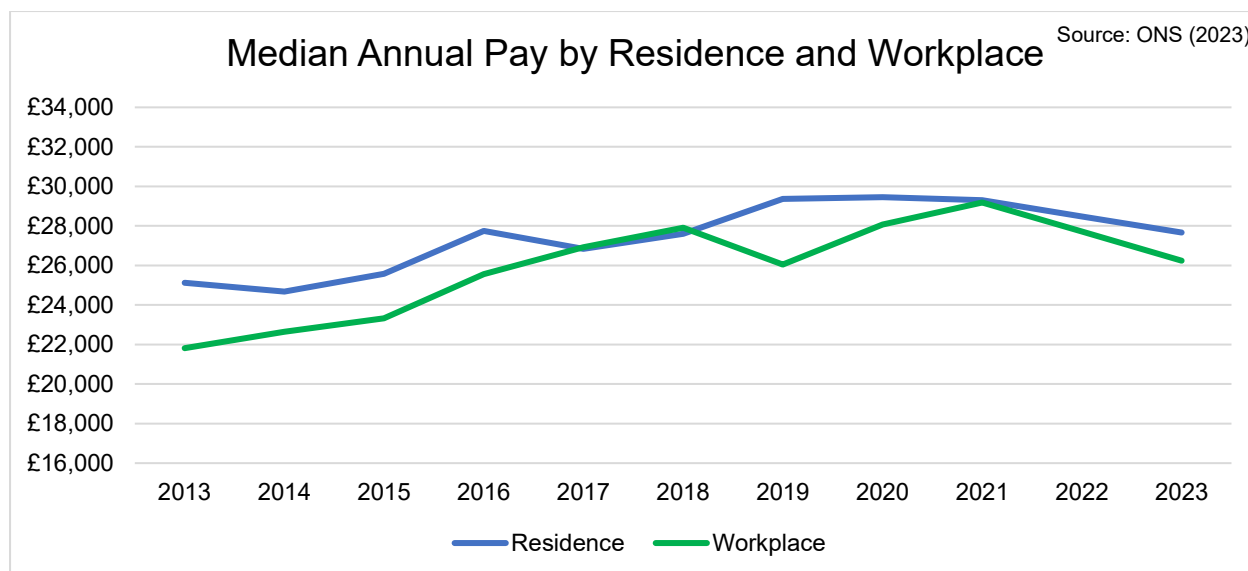
The ONS regularly publishes average and median wage data by both place of residence and place of work. The graphs below compare the median annual wage (by place of residence) between different areas. It shows that East Devon residents are typically earning lower wages than both the regional average and national average. However, median salaries are higher than both Exeter and Teignbridge. No median wage data was available for Mid Devon for 2023.



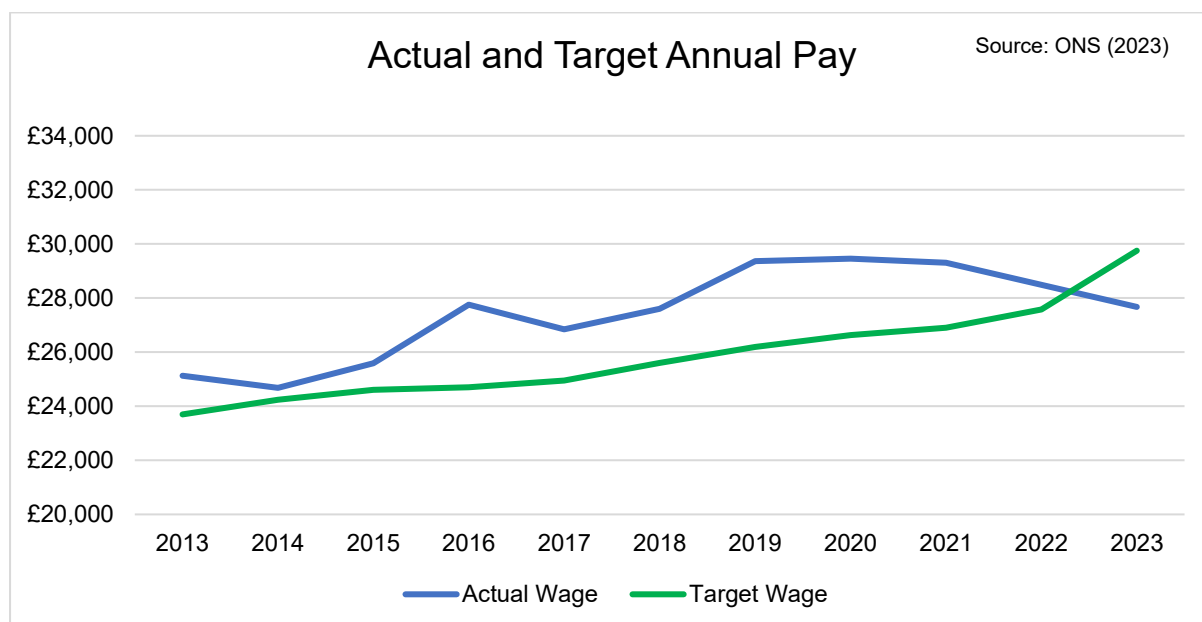
As the graph below indicates, the median annual pay has reduced slightly after a trend of steady increases and East Devon does not follow the same pattern observed in other areas between 2021 and 2023. However, the sharp decrease in median annual pay in Exeter means that East Devon residents now have the highest median wage of any EHoD residents.



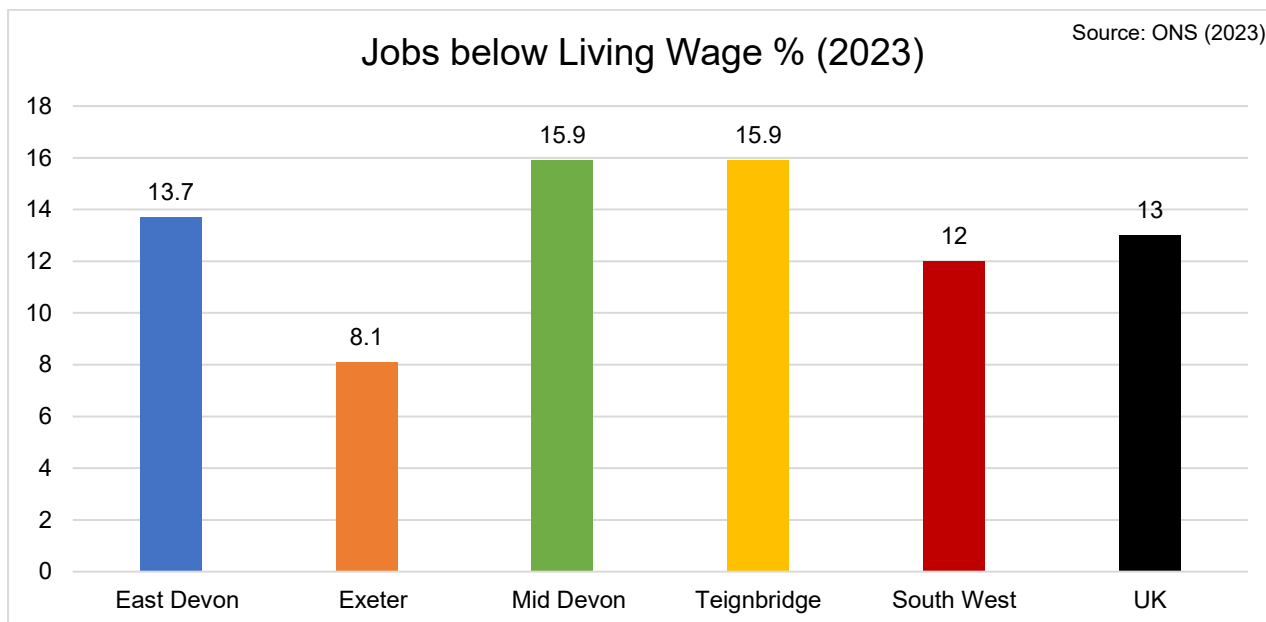
The graph below shows East Devon wages for those who reside in East Devon and those who work in East Devon. It shows that those who live in East Devon are typically earning a slightly higher wage than those who work in the district. This gap has narrowed in recent years, likely to due to declining median wages in the other EHoD areas.



East Devon’s median annual pay can also be compared against an inflation-adjusted rate of pay, or a ‘target’ annual wage. The target wage takes the actual annual salary from 2014 and increases it each year by the rate of inflation, as measured by the Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers’ housing costs (CPIH). For most of the last decade, East Devon residents experienced a real-terms pay increase, with wages rising higher than inflation. However, with the sharp increase in inflation between 2021 and 2022, the median resident is now experiencing a reduction in real-terms wages.



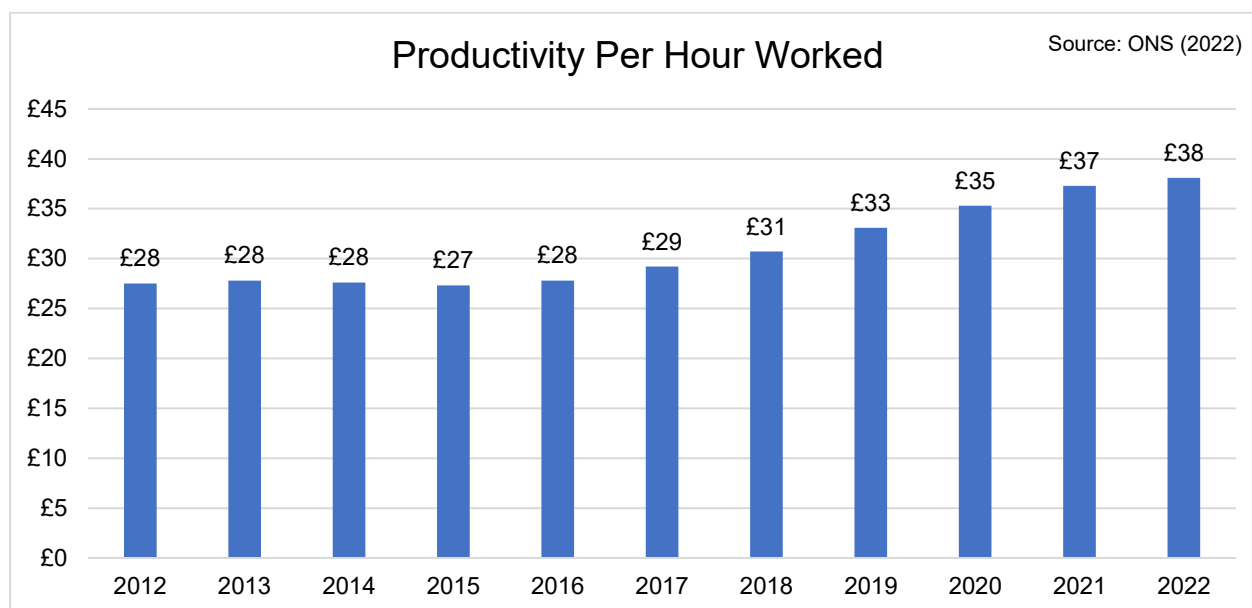
The ONS also produces statistics on the percentage of jobs which do not provide a real living wage, as defined by the Living Wage Foundation. These statistics relate to the percentage of jobs (rather than residents) in each area which pay below the living wage. East Devon is above both regional and national averages for the percentage of jobs below the living wage, though has fewer than Teignbridge and Mid Devon.



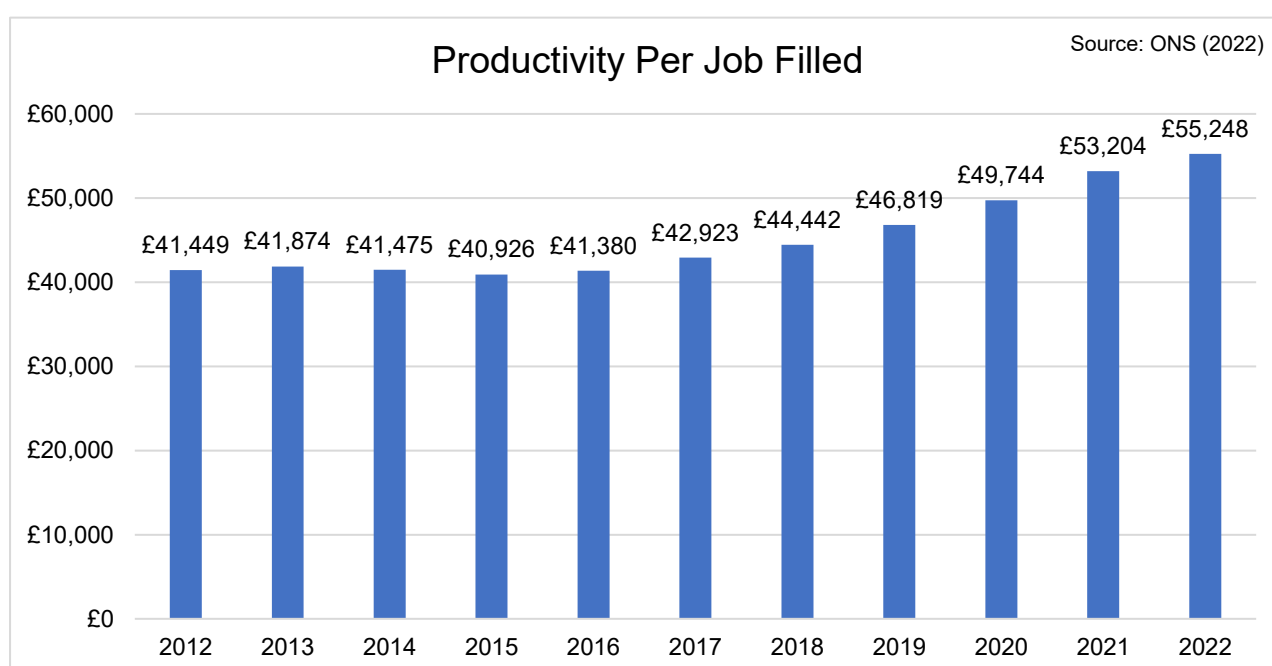
Productivity

One way to measure the economic performance of a given area is by analysing gross value added (GVA) data, otherwise simply referred to as productivity data. GVA measures the value generated in the production of goods and services, with the ONS' GVA(B) metric used to reveal productivity at a local district level.

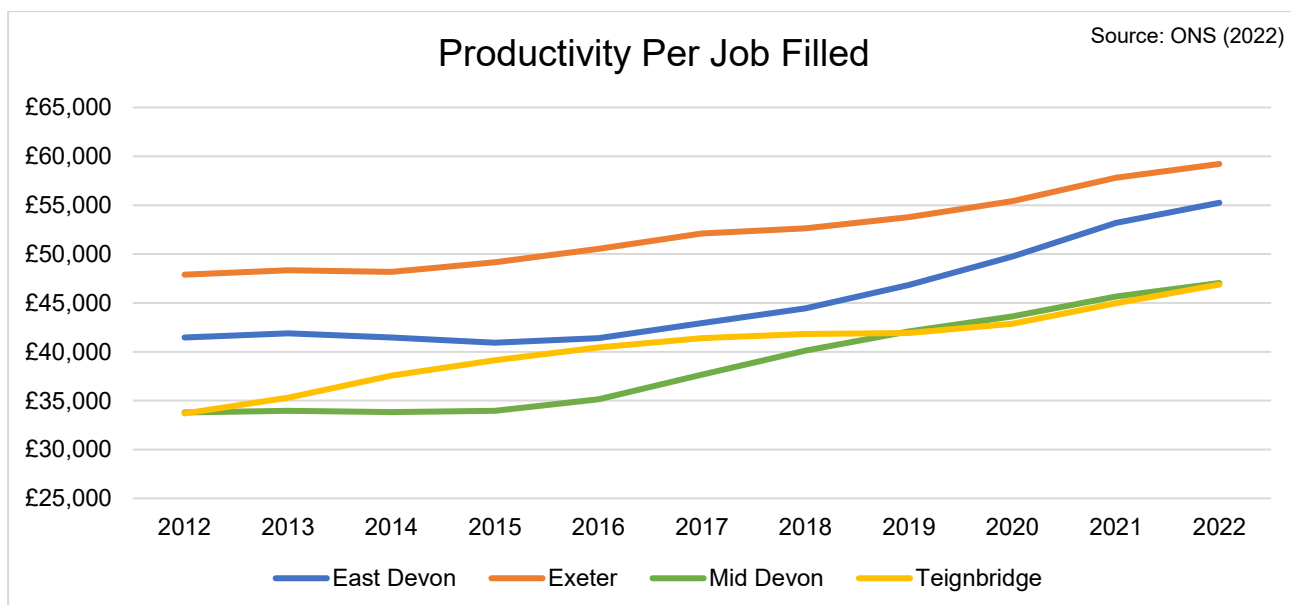
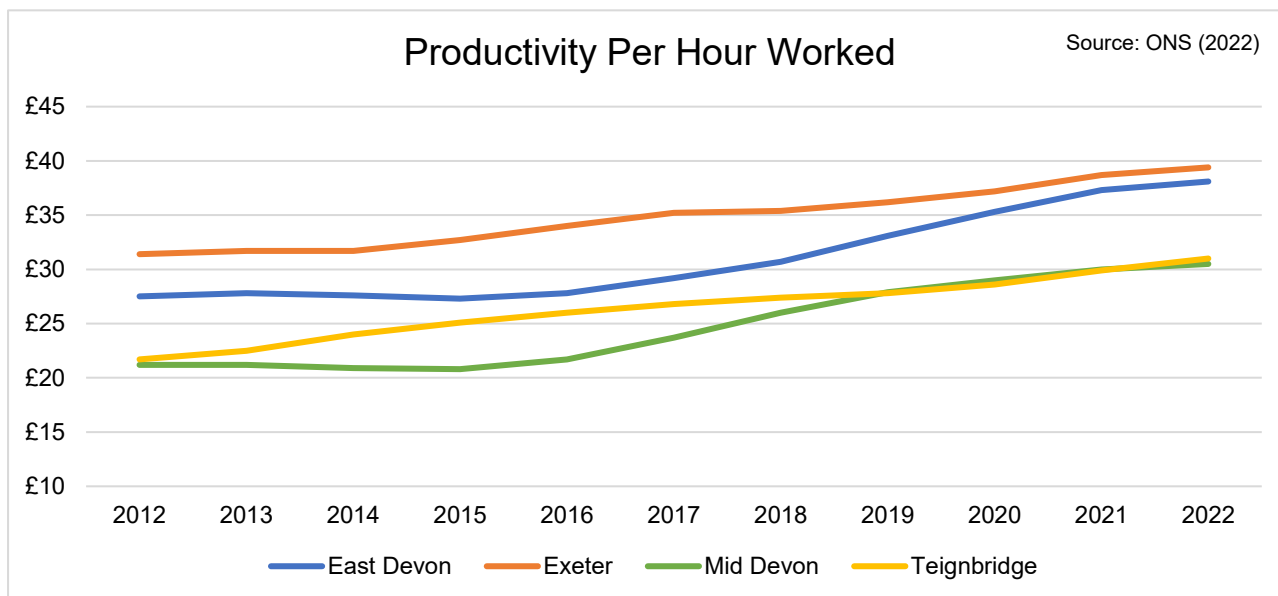
The graph below shows the average value added per hour worked in East Devon. As of 2022, the average worker produced £38 per hour worked. Local authority datasets are not adjusted for inflation, so although it appears as though productivity is increasing, this could be due to the effect of inflation.



The graph below shows the average value added per job in East Devon. As of 2022, the average worker produced £55,248 of added economic value.

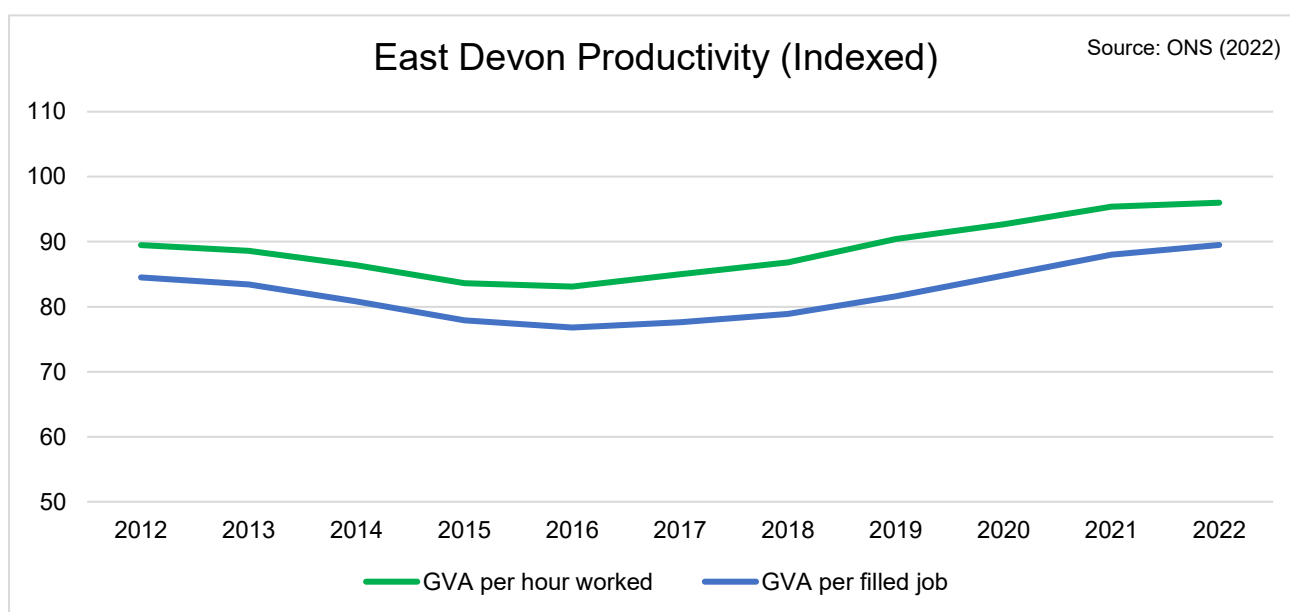


The graphs below compare East Devon’s productivity to the other EHoD areas. The productivity per hour worked and per job filled both continue to follow previous trends, with East Devon slightly behind Exeter but well above both Mid Devon and Teignbridge.



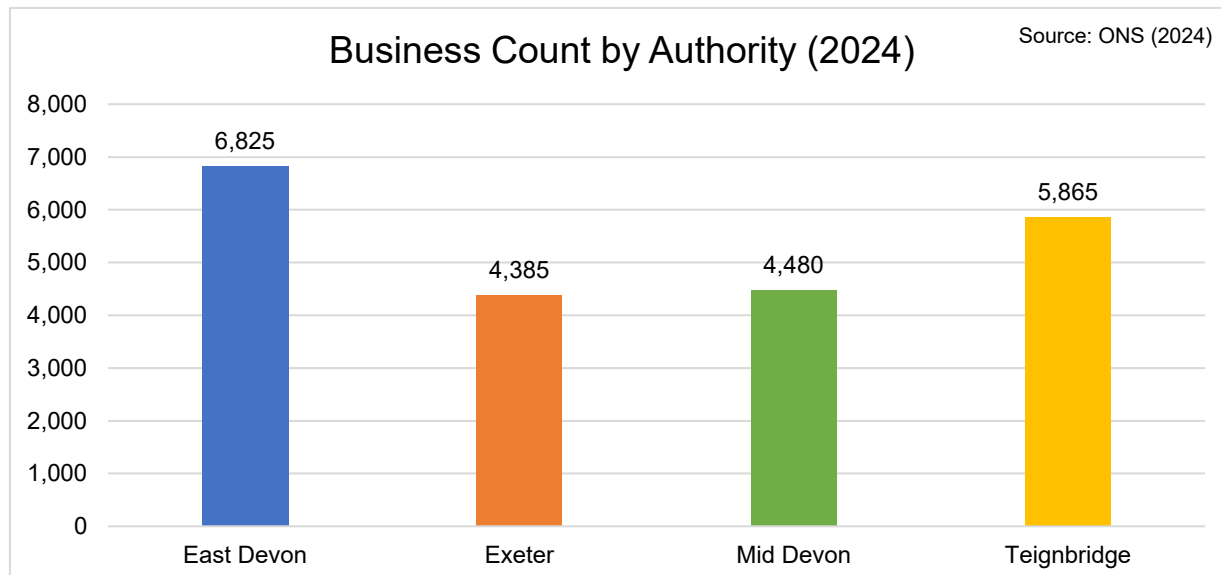
Current price indexed data from the ONS can be used to show how levels of productivity differ from the UK average for any region for a given year. For example, if an area’s productivity index is 115, its labour productivity is estimated to be 15% higher than the UK average, while an area with a productivity index of 85 is estimated to be 15% lower than the UK average. It should be noted that when used in this context, a decrease in the productivity index number does not necessarily mean that the productivity has decreased in actual terms; it rather means that the area has seen lower growth than the rest of the UK over the period. In other words, its actual productivity level may have improved, but at a slower rate than the UK overall.

The graph below shows that East Devon’s productivity per hour worked and per job filled has consistently remained below the national average, despite recent increases.

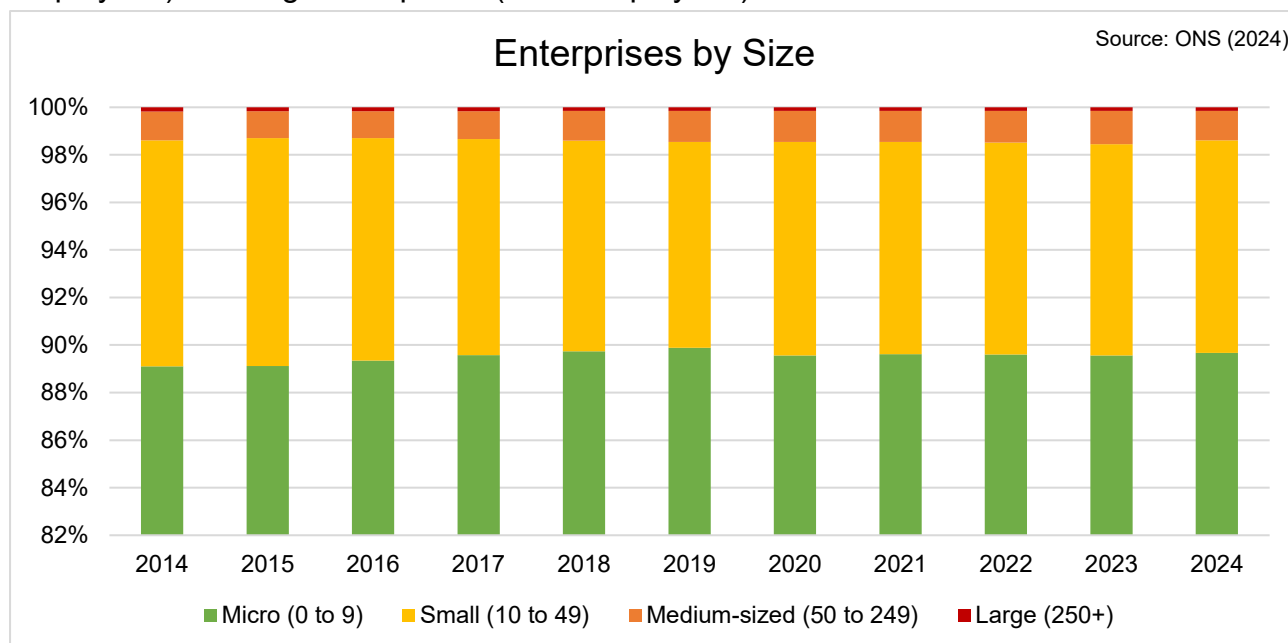


Businesses

ONS business counts can be used to understand the number and different types of enterprise operating within local authority areas. The graph below shows that East Devon has the largest base of the EHoD authorities, as seen in the previous edition of the LER.



The ONS also record the size of enterprises at a district level, distinguishing between micro enterprises (0-9 employees), small (10-49 employees), medium (50-249 employees) and large enterprises (250+ employees).

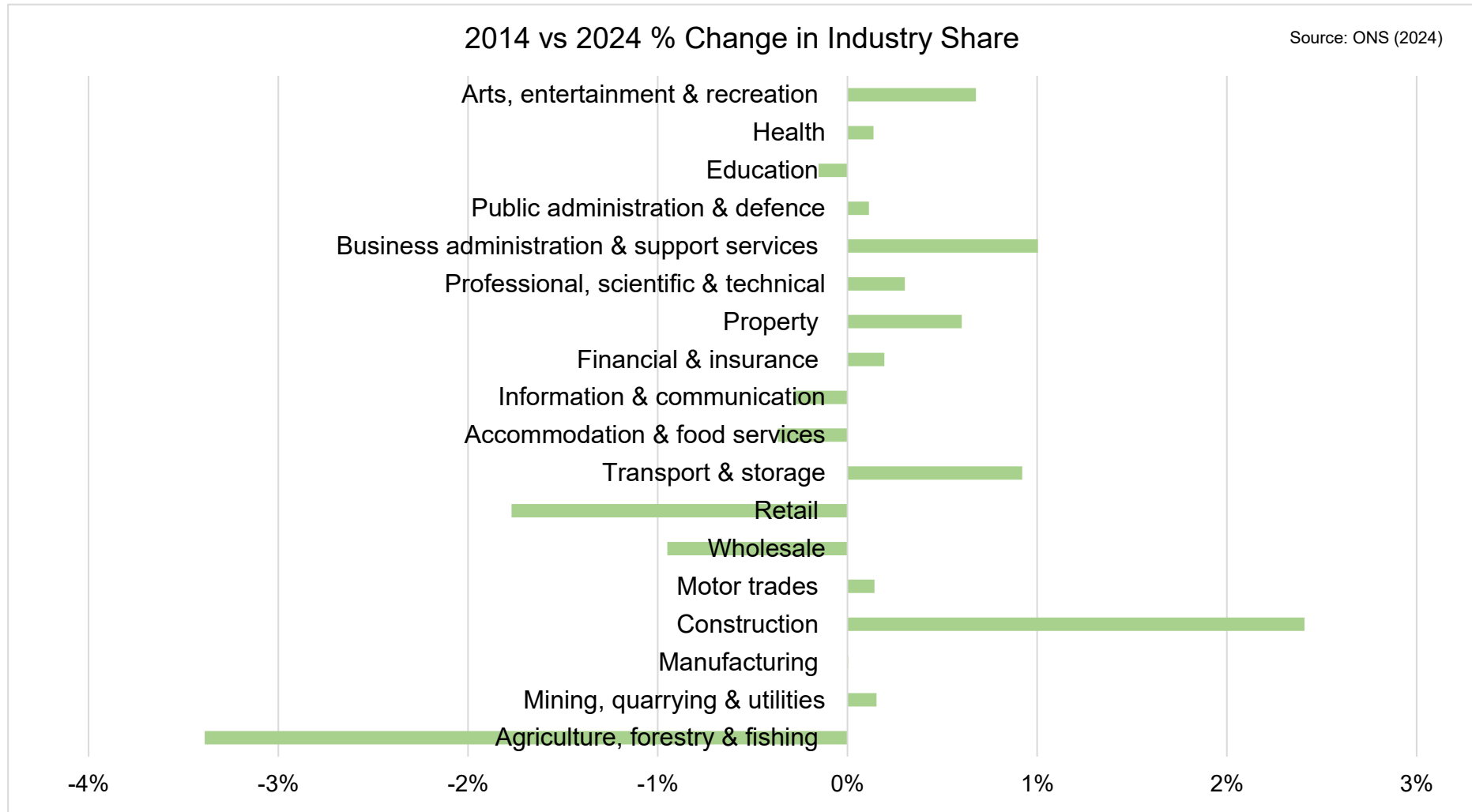


As of 2024, over 98% of East Devon's businesses fell into the small or micro category, with 90% having fewer than 10 employees. As the graph above indicates, this had changed little over the last decade. Only 10 businesses are considered 'large', a figure which has remained consistent since 2014.

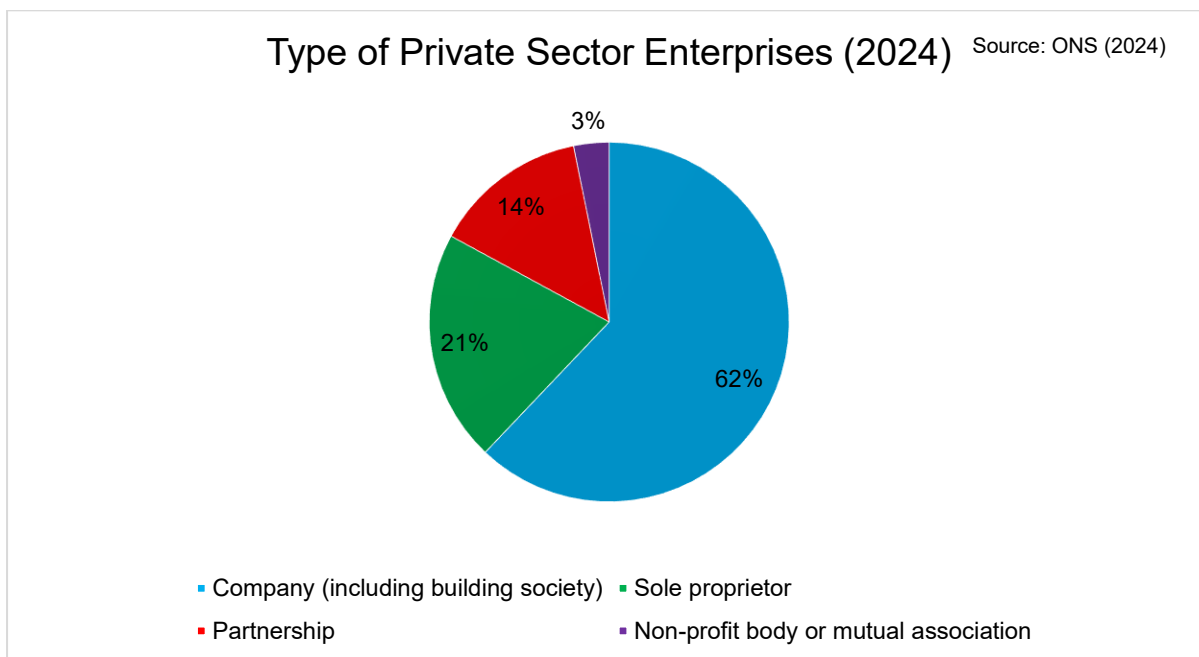
The graph below shows the percentage change in the number of enterprises by broad industry type over the ten-year period 2014-2024. As the overall number of businesses has grown, the majority have recorded a significant increase, with retail, wholesale, and agriculture, forestry, and fishing as notable outliers.



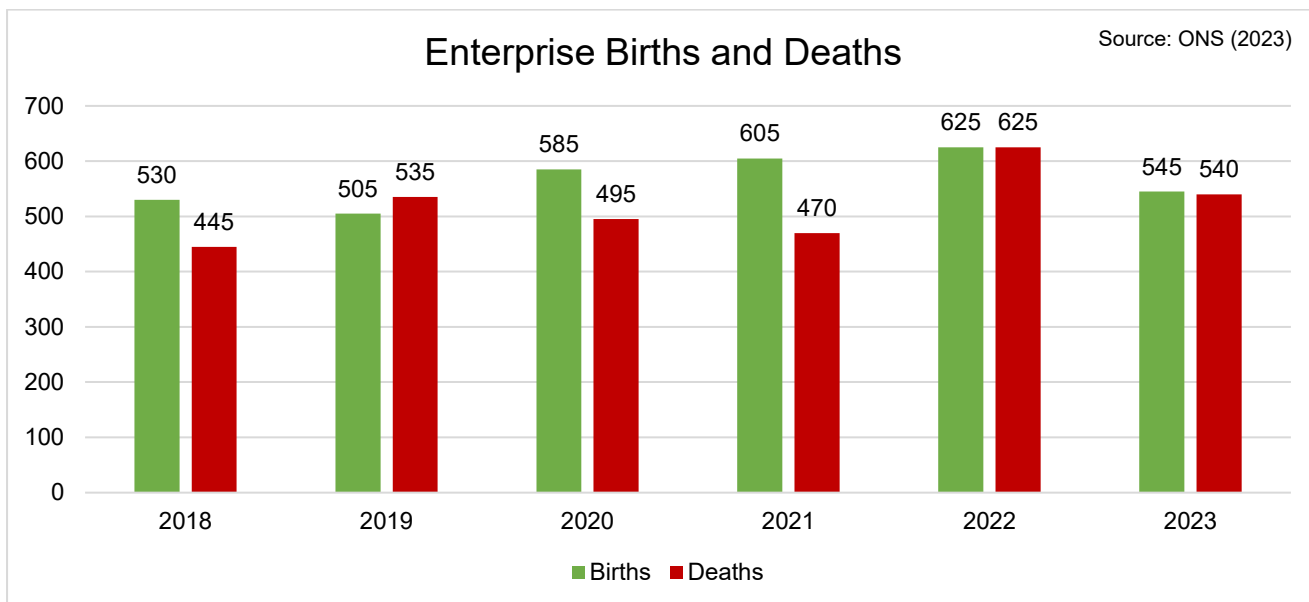
The number of businesses by industry can also be presented as a percentage of all businesses. The graph below shows the change over the 2014-2024 period in the percentage of all East Devon businesses of each broad industry type. As above, the decline in retail, wholesale, and agriculture, forestry, and fishing businesses is evident.



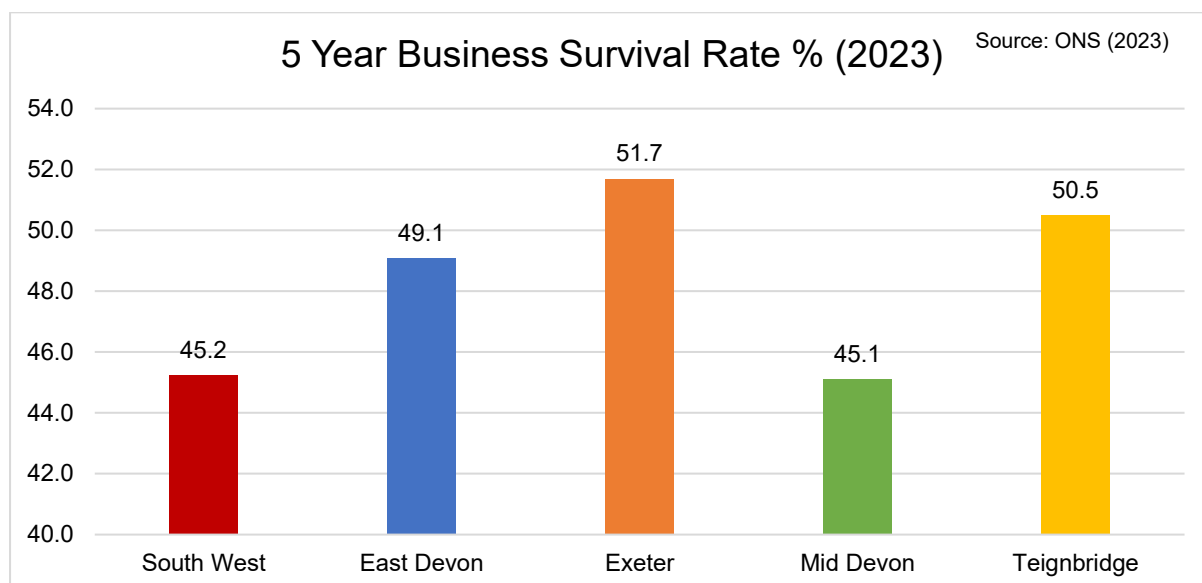
The pie chart below shows the type of private sector enterprises as a percentage of the total. The majority of enterprises (4,200) are conventional businesses, with 1,410 sole proprietors and 940 partnerships making up 21% and 14% of enterprises respectively. 215 enterprises are classed as non-profit or mutual organisations.



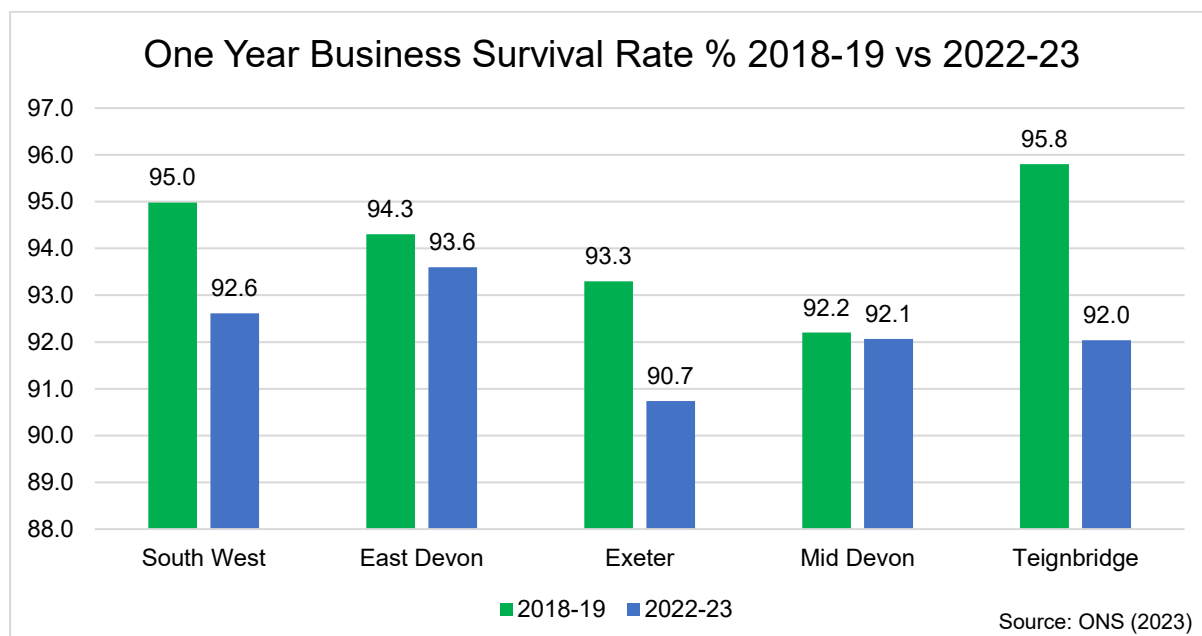
Since 2018, ONS data has provided the number of new businesses created (births) and businesses ceasing to operate (deaths) each year. Until 2021, most years recorded a number of births far higher than the number of deaths, however, this gap has closed in the last two years.



Counts of business births and deaths also provide the five-year survival rate of businesses in East Devon. As the graph below shows, just under 50% of businesses born in 2018 were still operating in 2023, above the regional average but on par with the other EHoD areas.



The graph below compares the percentage of businesses surviving after one year for those born in 2018 versus those born in 2022. The general trend shows a lower one year survival rate for businesses started in 2022, although the difference in East Devon is noticeably smaller than both the regional average, Exeter, and Teignbridge.



Wellbeing

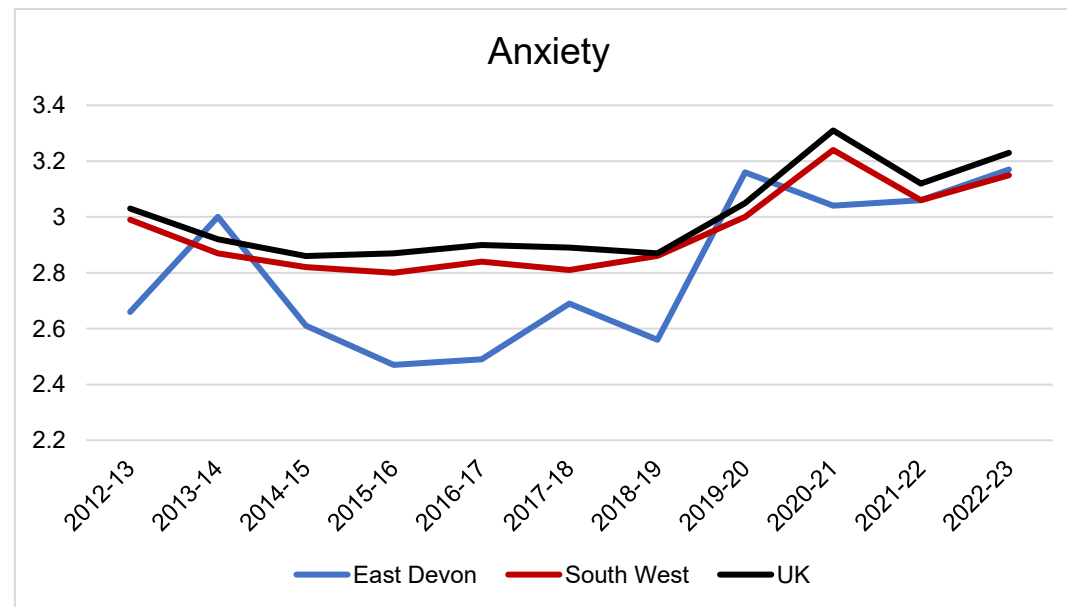
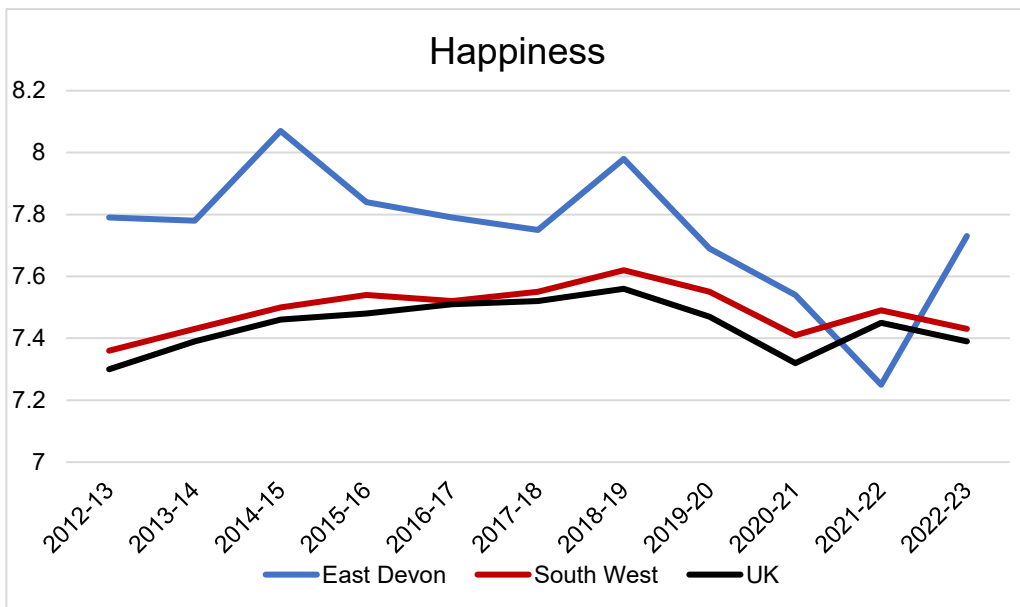
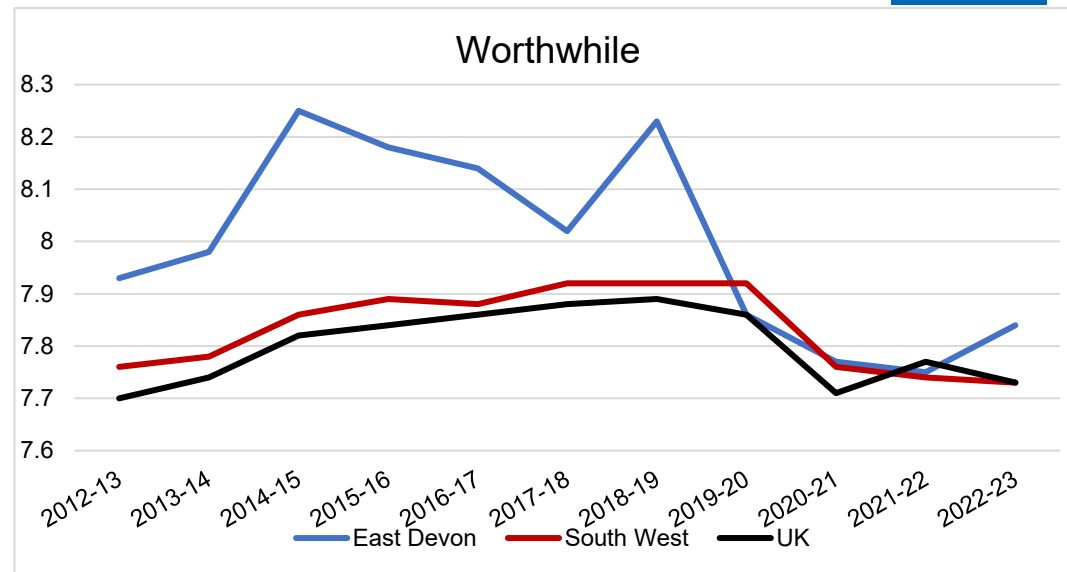
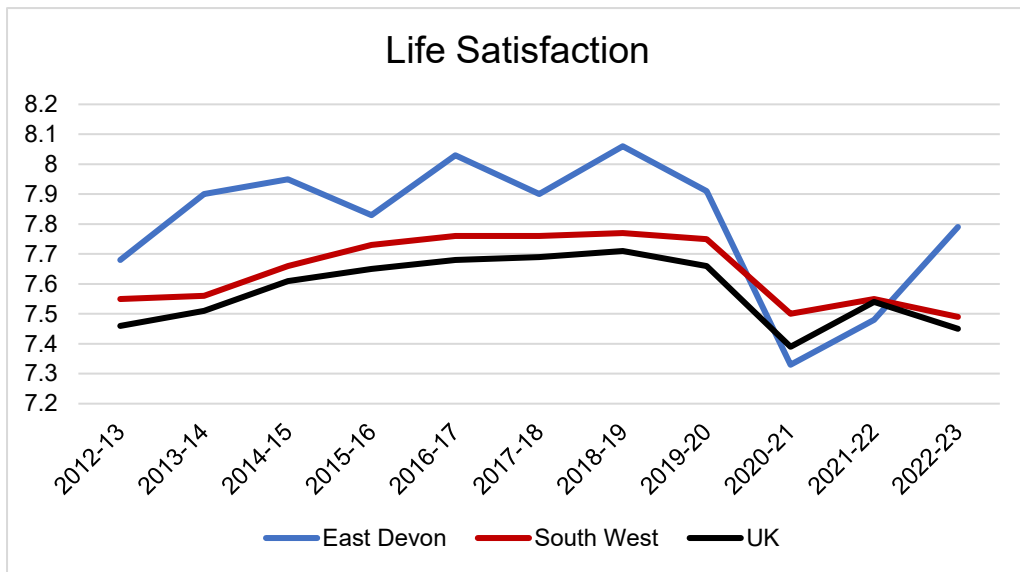
ONS data is available providing estimates of wellbeing within a given local authority area. Respondents are asked the following question on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”.

- **Life satisfaction:** Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- **Worthwhile:** Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
- **Happiness:** Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
- **Anxiety:** On a scale where 0 is “not at all anxious” and 10 is “completely anxious”, overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

Figures for life satisfaction, worthwhileness, and happiness in East Devon have traditionally been above the national and regional averages. When the previous LER was published, East Devon had experienced a steep decline in these metrics and was in line with or below the national average.

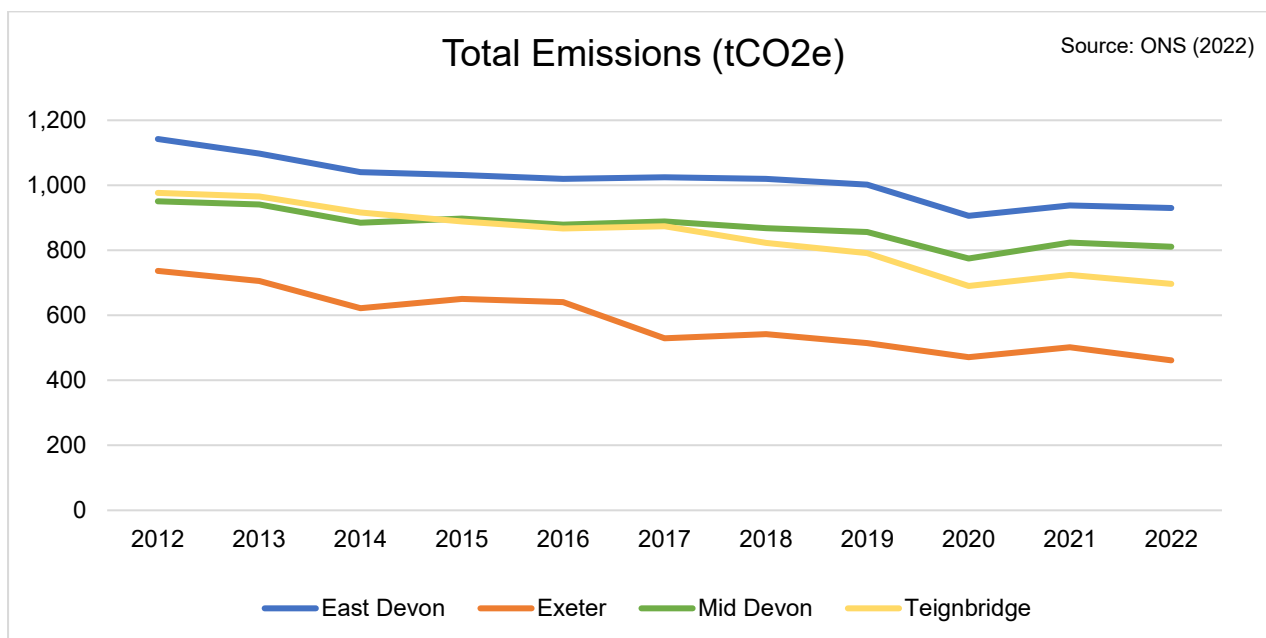
However, all three saw an increase in 2022-23, bringing average sentiment back above the national and regional averages. Despite these increases, all remain below than pre-pandemic levels. It is worth noting that all variations are within a range of 7.2 and 8.2, implying that rates are relatively stable over time.

Anxiety is the only wellbeing indicator that has remained in line with the regional and national averages after increasing in 2019-20.

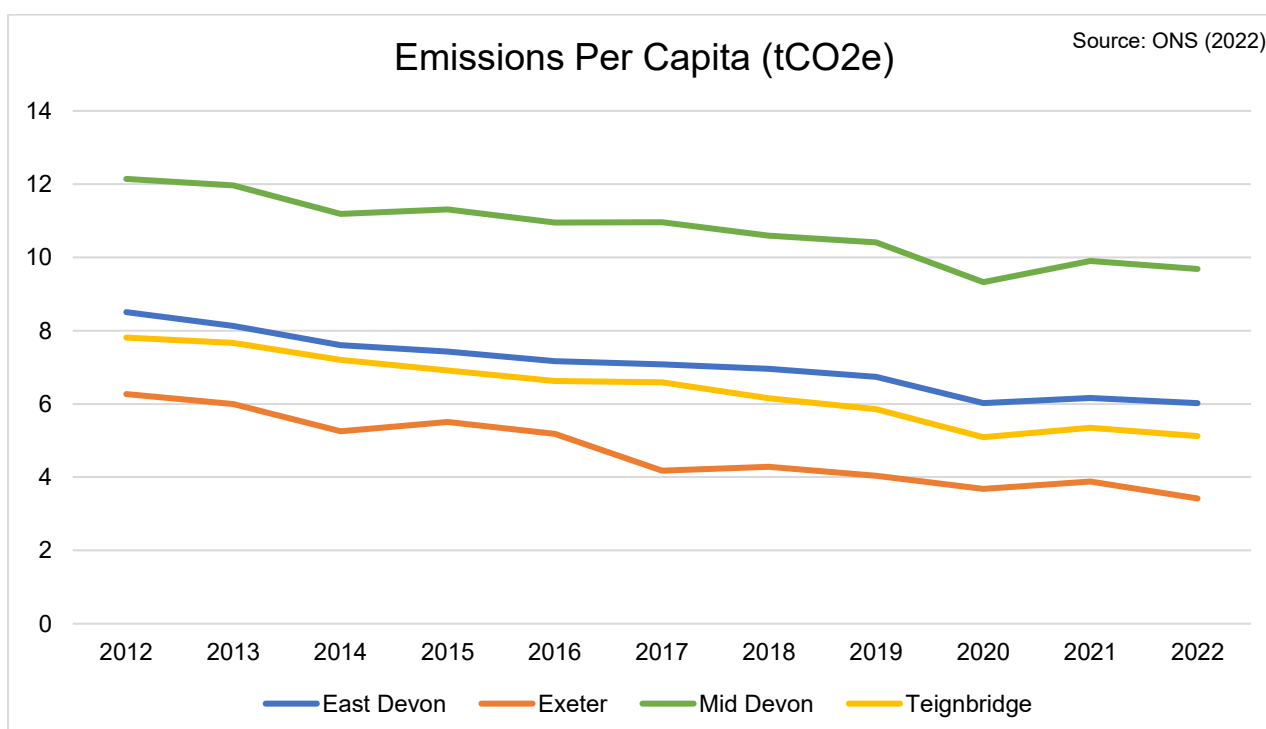


Emissions

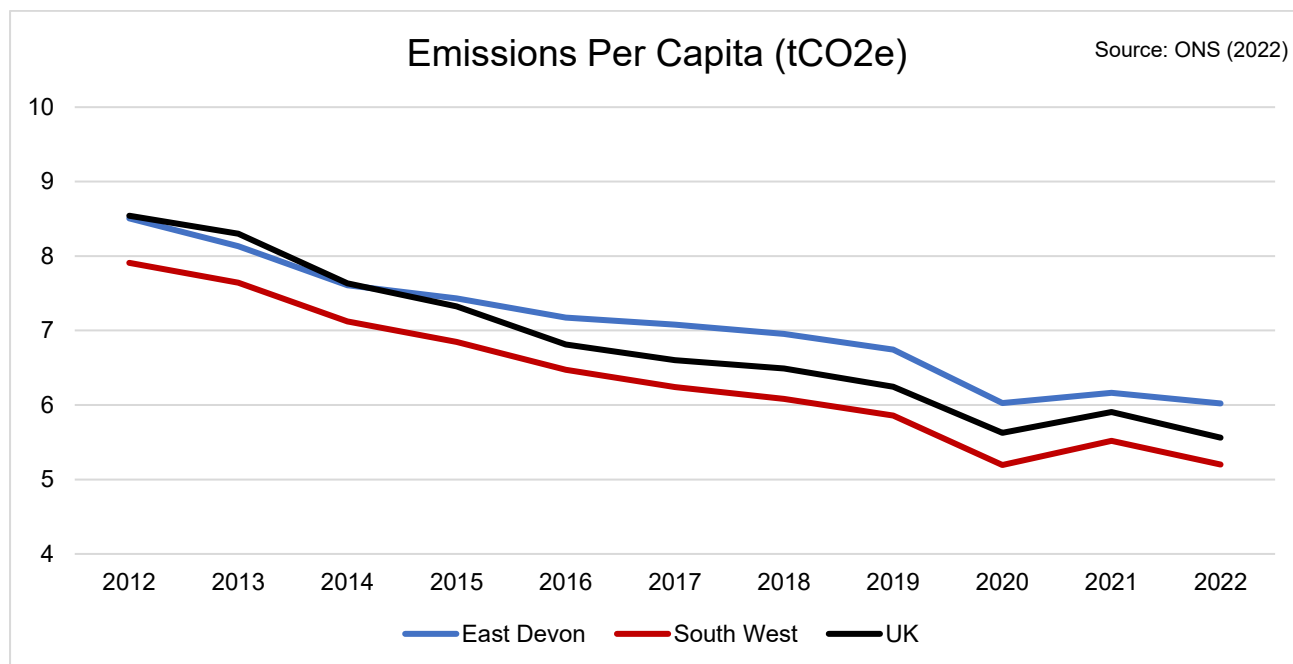
ONS data is available to track carbon emissions at a local authority level. The graph below shows that tonnes of carbon equivalent in East Devon have decreased from 1,142 tonnes in 2012 to 880 tonnes in 2022. This amounts to a 23% reduction in tCO₂e.



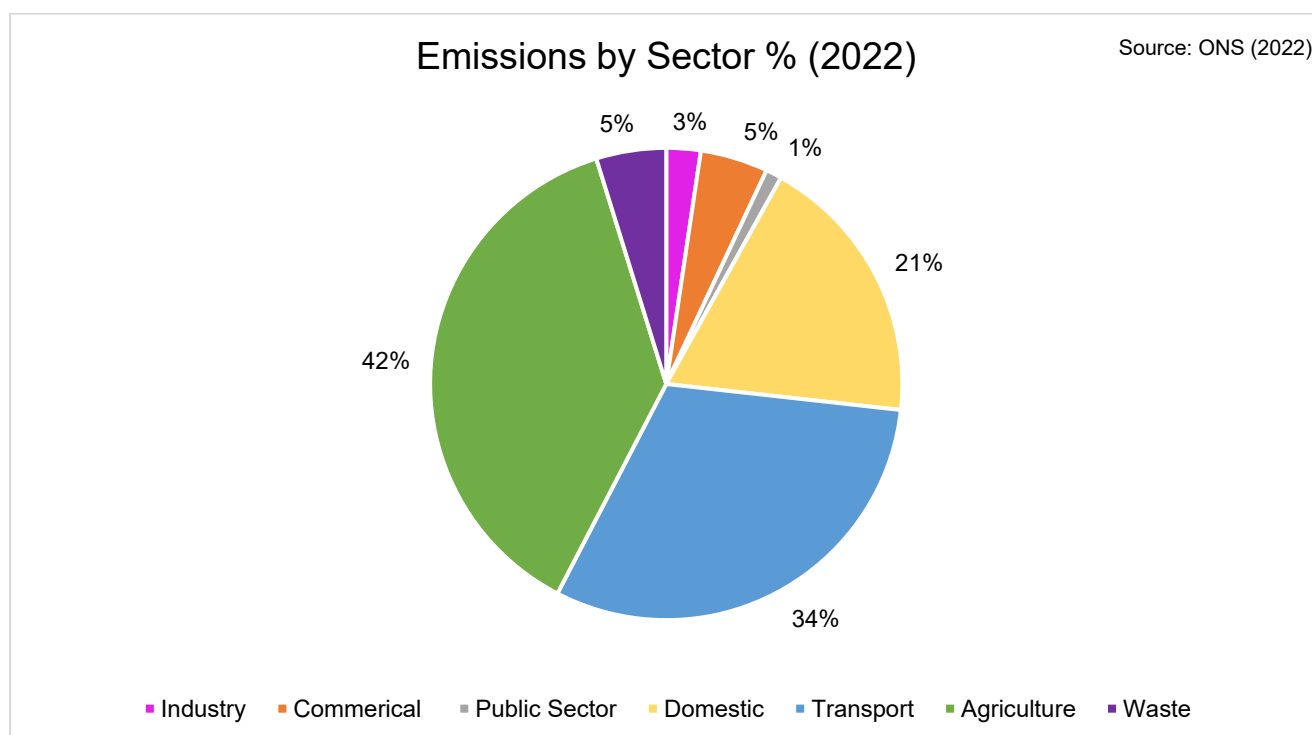
Carbon emissions can also be measured on a per capita basis, showing the average carbon emitted per person. Carbon per capita has decreased from around 8.5 tonnes per person in 2012 to 6 tonnes in 2022. Whilst East Devon has the highest overall emissions of all the EHoD areas, when the larger population is accounted for it becomes the second largest emitter.



As the graph below illustrates, carbon emitted per capita is on average higher in East Devon compared to the national and regional average.



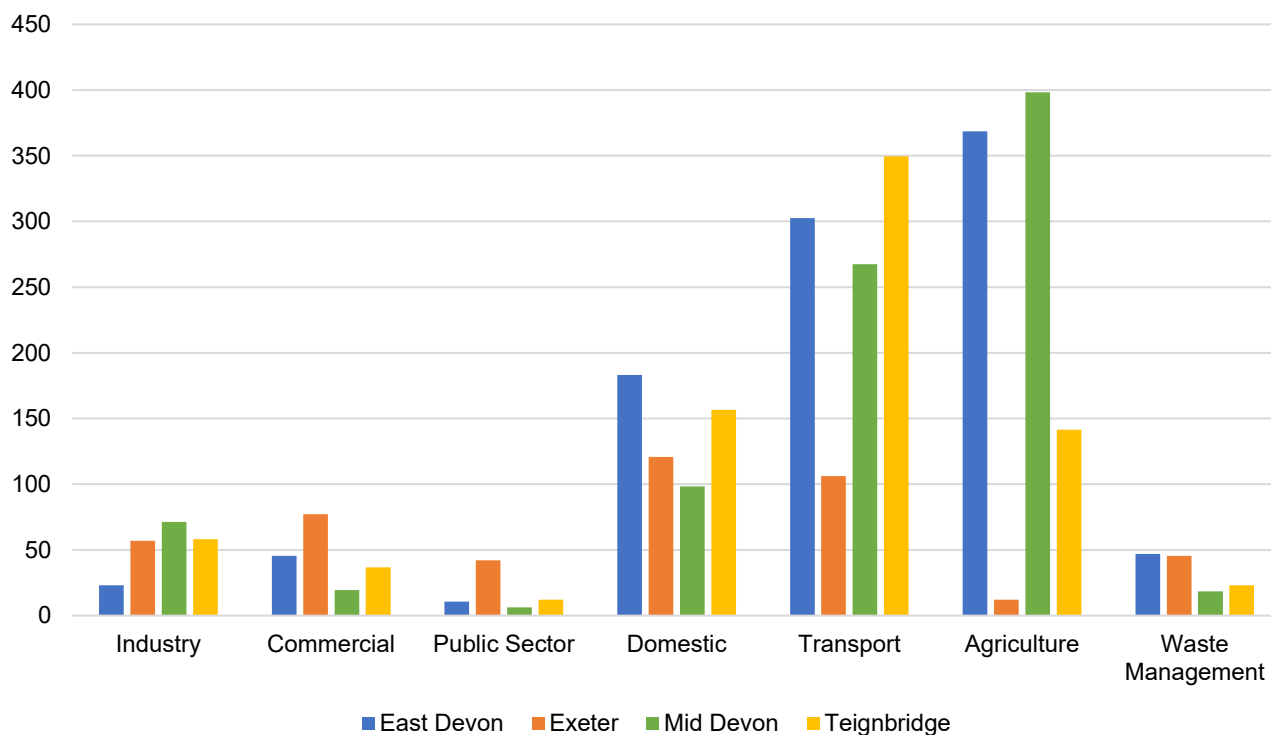
The graphs below show emissions by sector as a percentage of total emissions in East Devon. It shows that the majority of carbon is emitted from agriculture, transport and within domestic residences.



When compared against the other EHoD areas, both in terms of total emissions and emissions per capita, East Devon's largest emitters are relatively similar to the other rural districts (Mid Devon and Teignbridge).

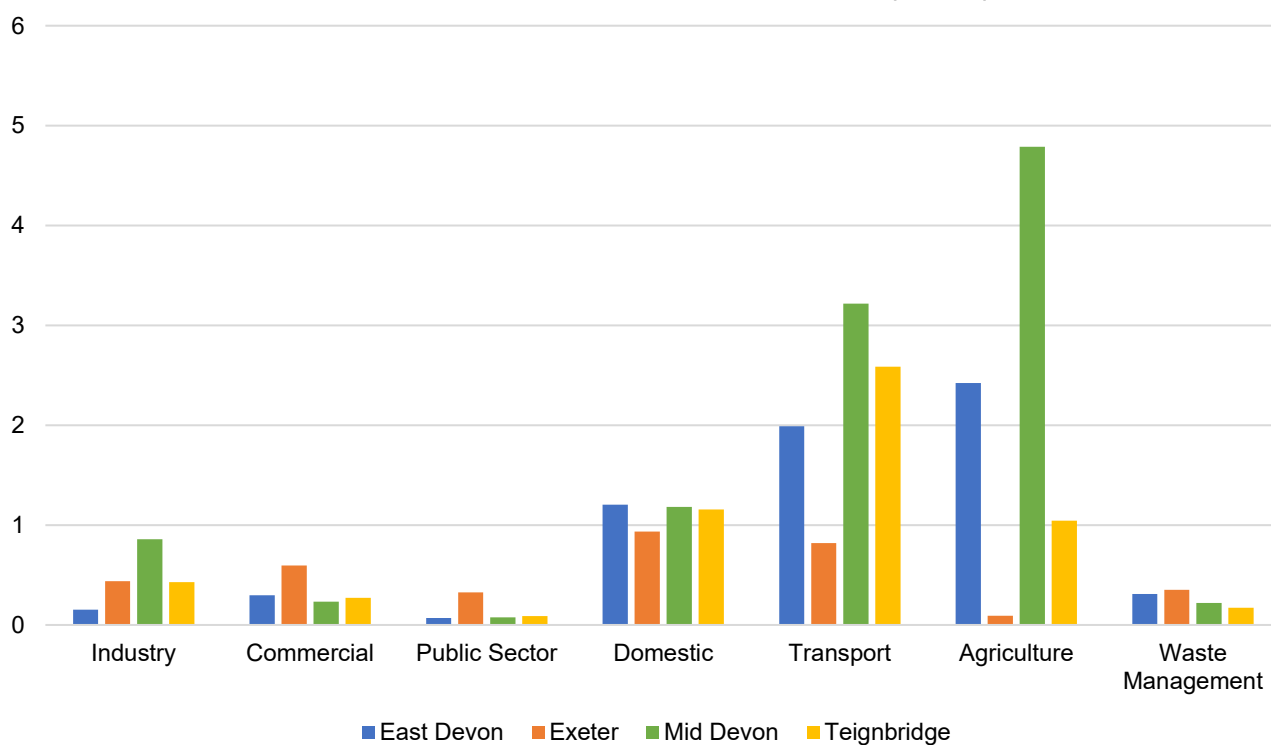
Emissions Per Sector in tCO2e (2022)

Source: ONS (2022)



Emissions Per Capita in tCO2e (2022)

Source: ONS (2022)



By analysing previous years of emissions data for East Devon, a trend line can be produced for the next 18- year period. The graph below shows how much carbon equivalent will be emitted in the next 18 years should the current rate of carbon reduction continue. The Target line shows the rate of reduction required over an 18- year period to reach net zero by 2040.

