

# Coastal and estuary towns

## Coastal and estuary towns - fragile economies?

Out of Kent's 13 districts, eight of them have a coastline and many of them have significant coastal towns such as Dover, Margate and Folkestone. These towns are all facing economic challenges that apply to many of Kent's, and indeed the UK's, coastal towns. Work in 2003 by Sheffield Hallam University looked at the economic changes for seaside towns. Perhaps most significantly were its findings that there had been employment growth in coastal towns and that unemployment was only marginally higher in these areas than the national average - supported in Kent by the statistics discussed later in this fact sheet. In-migration to these areas was also shown as increasing and was influenced by the location. Such findings may account for the increase in Kent's coastal property prices.

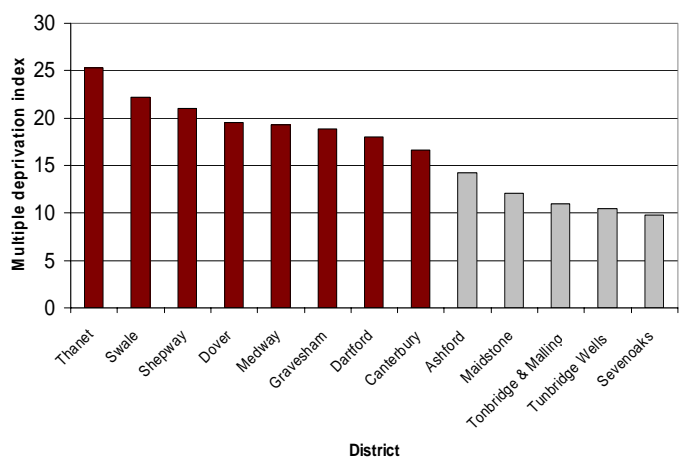


In general, when coastal and estuary towns are compared to those of the hinterland there are a number of contrasting features. Many of these may help to explain the relative decline of coastal and estuary towns over the past several decades in comparison to the prosperous hinterland. The differences may not always be stark but they need to be properly understood and monitored in order to sustain the economies of these coastal and estuary areas.

## Coastal deprivation

The indices of multiple deprivation (IMD) were published in 2004 and define the level of social deprivation. The IMD is based on seven domain scores, including income; employment; health deprivation and disability; education, skills and training; barriers to housing and services; and crime and disorder.

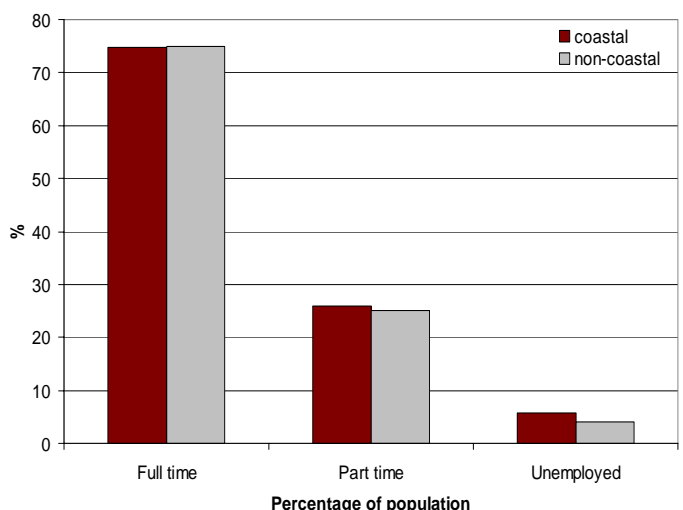
The IMD clearly demonstrates the disparity between coastal (including estuary) and non-coastal towns, with all coastal districts out of the 13 districts showing higher deprivation than the hinterland. The Thanet District is the most deprived area with Kent. The table below illustrates the county's IMD for each district (coastal districts are denoted by a red bar).



## Employment

When looking at employment statistics for coastal and estuary districts the differences between coastal and non-coastal towns is not so apparent.

As demonstrated by the chart below there is a small decrease (0.16%) in full time employment and small increase (0.96%) in part time employment in relation to coastal and estuary areas. The most noticeable difference is in unemployment where 5.74% of the coastal town population is unemployed, compared to 4.05% in non-coastal towns. In general, unemployment in coastal towns is only a little above the national average and is often related to seasonal fluctuations.



## Facts and figures

- Almost a third of Kent's population live in a coastal or estuary district
- The 2004 indices of multiple deprivation showed all of Kent's coastal/estuary districts to have higher deprivation than the non-coastal districts.
- Unemployment in coastal/estuary districts is slightly higher than non-coastal districts - 5.74%.
- Kent's coastal and estuary districts are densely populated - the most highly populated area is Medway at 1308 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>, closely followed by Thanet at 1236 and Gravesham at 1183.
- The average price for a coast located property is £134,607.
- Coastal property prices increased on average by 21% in 2002.
- The Shepway district has the highest percentage of second/holiday homes in Kent at 4.65%, closely followed by Thanet at 4.27%.

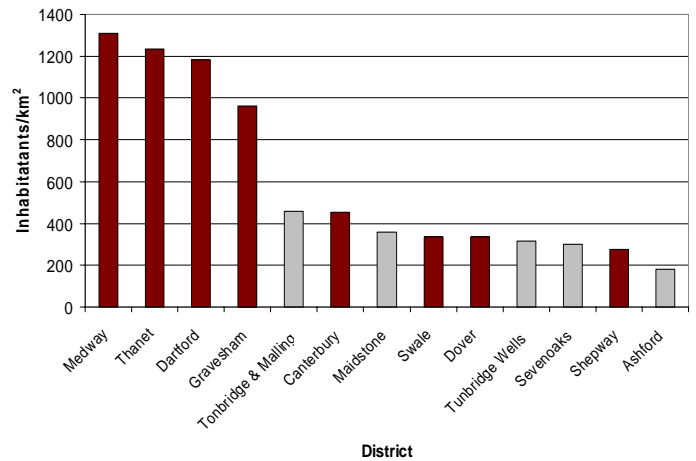
## Population density and age structure

Almost a third of Kent's population live in a coastal or estuary district, so it is perhaps not surprising that the county's coastal towns are densely populated, putting further pressures on areas that are already suffering from deprivation related issues. As the chart across shows, the more densely populated districts are those on the coast (including estuaries), with Medway, Thanet, Dartford and Gravesham having the highest population per km<sup>2</sup>.

Statistics on Kent's age population also shows differences between coastal and non-coastal districts. In coastal districts, 23% of the population is 20 or under compared to 26% in non-coastal.

Contrastingly, 28% of coastal population is from the 60 and over age bracket, whereas the percentage for non-coastal areas is 20%. These differences can dictate the age-related demands of the area and can play an important part in determining the dynamics of the local economy.

It is important to monitor population densities and age structures as these will determine the requirements for land, housing, employment, public services and transport. It can also help to identify areas of conflict where increasing demands may be in areas important for natural coastal biodiversity which need to be preserved.



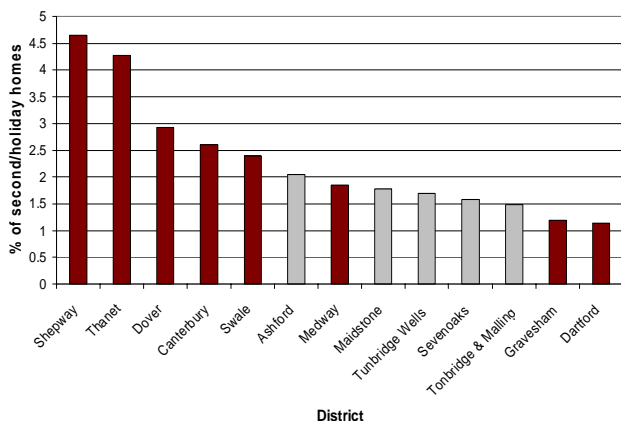
## Property prices and second/holiday homes



When the Kent coastal (including estuaries) districts are viewed as a whole, the average price for coastal properties is £51,000 less than non-coastal properties (£134,607 compared to £185,773) (2002). However, property prices are on the increase in coastal towns and average increases between 2001 and 2002 showed a larger increase in prices for coastal properties than for non-coastal (21% compared to 17%). In fact, average property prices for the coastal districts show Medway and Thanet to be two of the three areas for highest property prices.

This increase can be attributed to two possible reasons. Firstly, in the case of the Medway district, commuting distances to London may be affecting the usual trend of lower property prices by the coast. Secondly, as more second/holiday homes are taken up on the coast, the price of property is driven up.

As can be seen from the chart across, the majority of second/holiday homes are to be found on the coast, with the largest percentages in Shepway, Thanet and Dover. The resulting increased property prices has an effect on the local communities as this often creates a shortage of affordable housing for residents that are then forced to move away.



### Sources of information:

- [www.kent.gov.uk/sp/lutp/spig/Bulletins/crime-and-deprivation/dep1-04-revised-id2004-briefing.doc](http://www.kent.gov.uk/sp/lutp/spig/Bulletins/crime-and-deprivation/dep1-04-revised-id2004-briefing.doc)
- [www.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/downloads/publications/5.%20The%20Seaside%20Economy%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf](http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/downloads/publications/5.%20The%20Seaside%20Economy%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf)
- [www.vliz.be/projects/SAIL/](http://www.vliz.be/projects/SAIL/)

