

Essex Rivers Hub Area Profile





Essex Rivers Hub

Area Profile

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Introduction

This report aims to enhance Essex Rivers Hub engagement and ensure we are reaching a representative of our catchment area. The data here is gathered from the 2021 Census appropriate to the Combined Essex catchment unless otherwise stated. Creating an area profile of our catchment is in our catchment plans' aims and objectives and will help achieve our vision.

This report hopes to provide insights that will inform engagement and fulfil the following aims and objectives laid out by the Essex Rivers Hub:

- Creating a communications plan and EDI Strategy (Aim 2 Objective a)
- Hosting an annual forum (Aim 2 Objective b)
- Engaging citizen scientists and possibly hosting training sessions (Aim 2 Objective c)
- Delivering on-the-ground improvements (Aim 3 Objective a)
- Any other relevant activities that arise in the partnership that help fulfil our vision (Appendix)

Through area profiling, we can set a baseline of our catchment demographic and other relevant data, and what is representative engagement for our catchment.

Essex Rivers Hub's Vision, Aims and Objectives

Our Vision

Our water environments are resilient to the changing climate and population growth, are richer in biodiversity, support a thriving economy and contribute to the wellbeing of the citizens in the Essex Rivers Hub catchment.

From 2025–2030 we will work as a partnership to:

- Restore our rivers and wetlands
- Engage people in our work
- Address the impacts of climate change including droughts and flooding

Aims and Objectives

Aim 1: We will make significant progress towards achieving good ecological status under the Water Framework Directive

- a) Undertake an assessment and monitoring of the WFD to ensure we make evidence-led decisions (*supporting Principle 4 of the Anglian Water River Basin District Management Plan*).
- b) Improve connectivity in fluvial and coastal environments and recognise the journey from source to sea (*as highlighted in Principle 1 of the Anglian Water River Basin District Management Plan*). Using the Essex Fish Migration Roadmap, we will improve 30km worth of migration routes or modify 3 barriers to fish migration by 2030.
- c) Work with appropriate partners to make our vision happen:
 - the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) to improve conditions for native oysters,
 - the Essex Wildlife Trust to eradicate minx in the catchment by 2030,
 - seek a Highways representative in the partnership by 2026 to work together to find solutions to reduce road runoff pollution,
 - foster Farm Cluster relations for the reduction of sewage load entering the watercourse including directing appropriate funding streams (*as recommended in action EWS3, EWS12 and ESW29 in the Essex Water Strategy*),
 - Essex County Council to align the partnership with the *Local Nature Recovery Strategy*:

Aim 2: Raise awareness of and enhance engagement with the water environment

- a) We will work in partnership to increase communications to include advice and behaviour change, *as advised by the Essex Water Strategy (EWS1)*. We will create a communications plan by 2026 and devise roles amongst partners of how they can participate in this. Using the *guidance from CaBA, their National Success Measure A and aligning with Principle 3 of the Anglian Water River Basin District Management Plan* we will prioritise making space for collaboration with underrepresented and often underreached groups by undertaking an area profile and creating an EDI strategy.
- b) Create and maintain links with civil society, foster meaningful relationships and increase the visibility of our partnership. As suggested in our partner catchment planning workshop, we will host an annual public forum towards the end of the year, asking local citizen science and community groups to present, celebrating what ERH has achieved and mostly providing an opportunity for priority projects for the next year to be proposed. This will then be used to inform our action plan in the first meeting of the new year.
- c) We will recruit 100 citizen scientists through the Essex River Watch by the end of 2026.

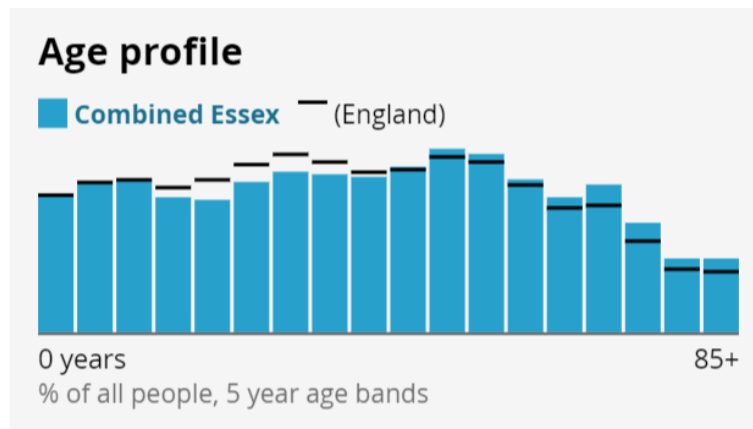
Aim 3: Increase resilience to climate change

- a) We will deliver Nature-based Solutions. We will install 3 in-channel improvements for Natural Flood Management and restore or enhance 100ha of wetland, Eelgrass or saltmarsh by 2030. *This objective supports Principle 8 in the Anglian Water River Basin District Management Plan and the Essex Water Strategy, EWS13.*
- b) We will acknowledge that the nature of the work undertaken by the ERH will change in response to climatic changes and will have documentation, such as the one being consulted on here, be subject to review and change. *This objective supports Principles 5 and 7 in the Anglian Water River Basin District Management Plan.*

Census 2021 Data Analysis and Evaluation by Factor

Age Profile:

The age profile of residents is slightly higher than the national average amount of people aged 50 or older and lower than the average amount of people aged 15–44. For instance, 6% of the population is aged 70–74, compared to the national 5% and only 5% of people are aged 20–24 compared to the national 6%.

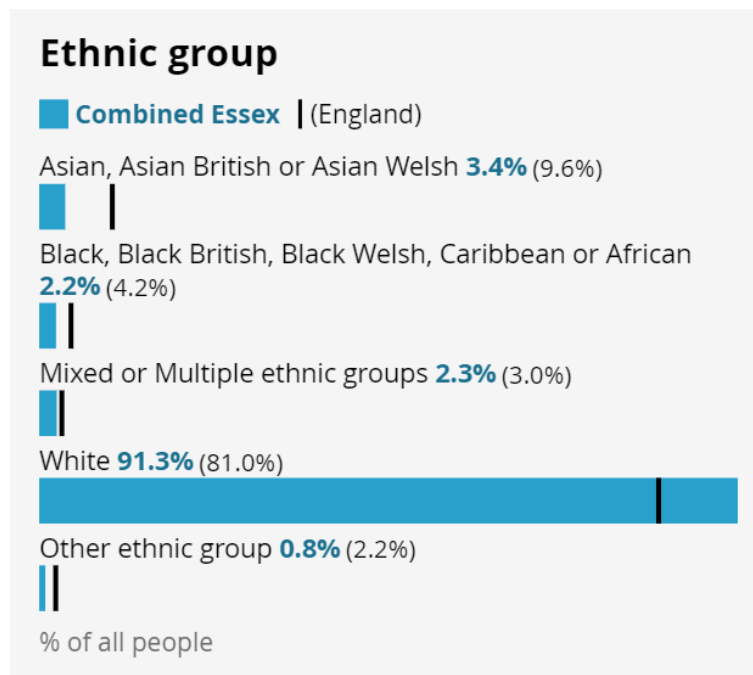


This suggests there are fewer young families and students in Essex than compared to the national age profile and perhaps more older persons immediately engaged in our initial project outreach.

- We can consider contacting retired resident clubs to take part in the Essex RiverWatch.
- Our general residents are of a slightly higher age and so we can consider this with greater weight in our risk assessment and Essex RiverWatch training. Training sheets are printable as well as available on our website which coincides with a multi-generational and inclusive engagement approach. We can also consider this in our social media outreach by advertising for volunteers on Facebook groups and pages.
- When we plan on-the-ground volunteering days we can ensure the physical tasks and non-physical are laid out clearly beforehand.
- We could consider carrying out some primary school engagement under the Essex RiverWatch.

Ethnicity:

Ethnicity in the catchment shows a larger percentile (10% more) of White people compared nationally at 91% vs 81%. There is a lower proportion of Asian persons compared to the national average: 3% residents to a 10% average. Similarly, there is a lower proportion of Black individuals: 2% in reflection nationally at 4%. There is a lesser gap between Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups in the catchment and nationally with 2% locally and 3% nationwide.



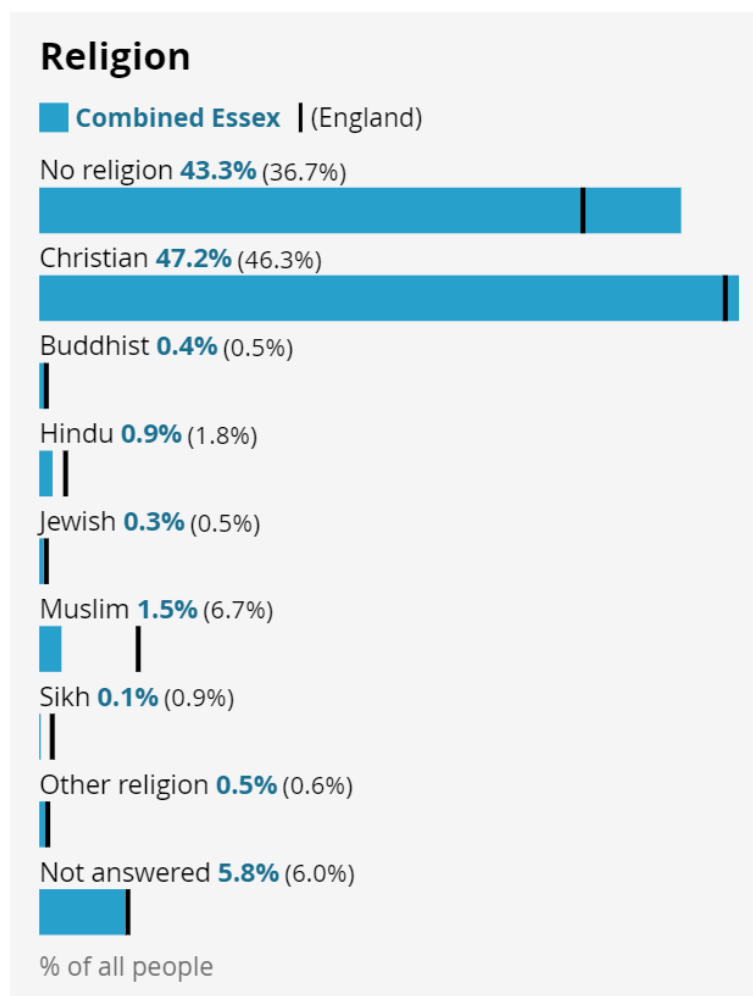
Ethnicities in order of prevalence after the largest percentile: Asian persons, individuals with Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups, Black persons, and then other ethnic groups. This is important to note because non-white ethnic groups are often underrepresented across the environmental sector. For instance, 3.1% of environment professionals identify as non-white minorities compared to 19.9% of all occupations identify as non-white minorities ([Sustainability Exchange, 2018](#)).

- We can make a wide feedback form for the Essex RiverWatch so we can monitor if we are achieving a representative of our catchment, possibly using the data capture storing and analysis platform Plinth. This should include a comprehensive (but still practical) breakdown of ethnic groups, not just clustered groups.
- We can ensure the representation of a diverse range of ethnic groups in all our comms materials to attract a diverse range of groups and provide an open environment.
- We should be more active in reaching out to communities that are often under-reached in environmental work and volunteering: this should be ongoingly assessed. Possible use of the Census analysis by Essex County Council could be explored (Appendix: [Essex County Council Demographic Analysis, Census 2021](#)).

Religion:

The majority of this population area are non-religious, 43%, a significant difference to the national 37%. Christians reflect just 1% more than the national average sitting at 47% of the population. There is a significantly low number of Muslim residents, 1% of the population which is almost 6% lower than the average. Buddhist individuals sit 0.1% less than average ($\leq 1\%$). Hindu communities make up 1% of the catchment population, just 1% lower than nationally. There are few Jewish and Sikh persons in the catchment ($\leq 1\%$ compared to about 1% nationally) although only a 0.2% difference in Jewish persons to the average compared to a 0.8% difference in Sikhs nationally.

Majority of persons in the catchment are non-religious or Christian. There is a low comparison of Muslim and Sikh communities to the national average whereas there is a similar percentage to the national average of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jewish individuals.

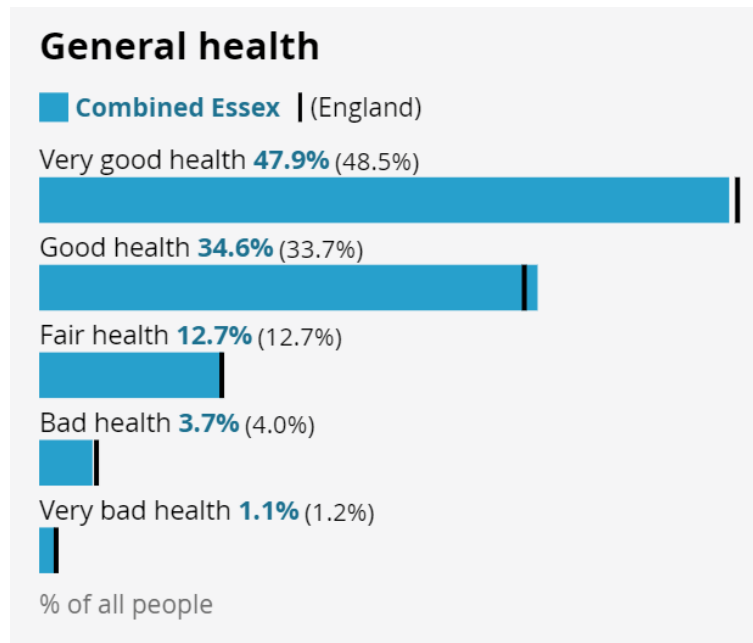


- ➔ We should reach out to religious and non-religious community leaders when promoting the Essex RiverWatch.
- ➔ Due to the high population of non-religious persons in the Essex Rivers Hub catchment, non-religious community centres will be a valuable area to target when promoting the annual forum and when building the communications plan.

- ➔ A knowledge gap assessment for the catchment partnership should be undertaken. We should assess the need to reach out to community leaders to become part of the catchment partnership and attend local meetings. Muslims consider water as sacred and so may be already considering river health within their community – they could be a valued member of the partnership. In the Jewish community, many Shabbats incorporate water (for instance, Tashlikh).
- ➔ Further area profile mapping on ArcGIS can help show where religions are most prevalent to help indicate what religious or community buildings are best to advertise the annual end-of-year forum (eg, local churches, Mandir, Vihara, and Synagogues). Despite lower-than-average populations of Muslims and Sikhs, Gurudwara and mosques should also certainly be considered. Current mapping by Essex County Council can show us trends for Greater Essex (Appendix: [Essex County Council Demographic Analysis, Census 2021](#))
 - Brentwood, Thurrock and Uttlesford have a high proportion of Christians so Churches should be reached out to in these locations.
 - Southend, Rochford, Braintree and Colchester all have high amounts of non-religious people so community centres should be focused on in these areas.
 - Harlow and Thurrock have a high proportion of Muslim residents so Mosques can be reached out to in these areas.
 - Brentwood, Chelmsford, and Basildon have a high proportion of residents who are Hindu, so the local Mandir in these areas can be contacted.
 - Epping Forest and Castle Point have high amounts of Jewish people so Synagogues and Rabbis can be reached out to here.
 - Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford have the highest residency of Buddhists so Viharas' can be contacted.
 - Thurrock, Brentwood and Epping Forest have a high number of Sikhs so the local Gurudwara will be a good place to start engaging residents.
- ➔ When hosting events that include catering, religious dietary requirements should be taken into consideration and all food clearly labelled.
- ➔ When reaching out to religious communities, ensure you and your colleagues research common customs to ensure you are being respectful and modest.

Health:

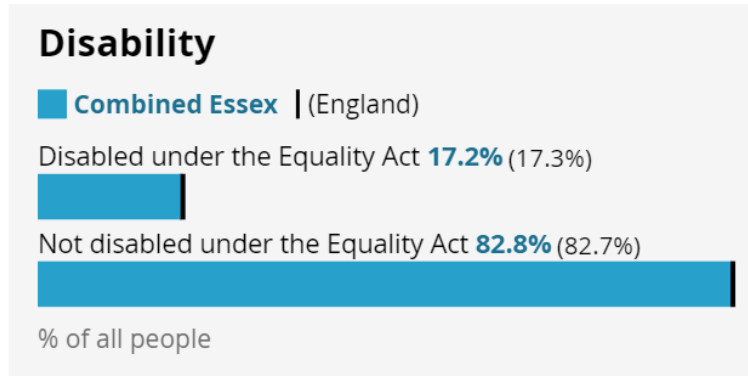
General health is very good or good, rating similarly to the nation with a slight (1%) higher rate of good health at 35%. Of the population. There is a correlation of disabled residents to the national average at 17%.



➔ Wellbeing benefits of time spent in nature and in the vicinity of rivers can be promoted in our news articles.

Disability:

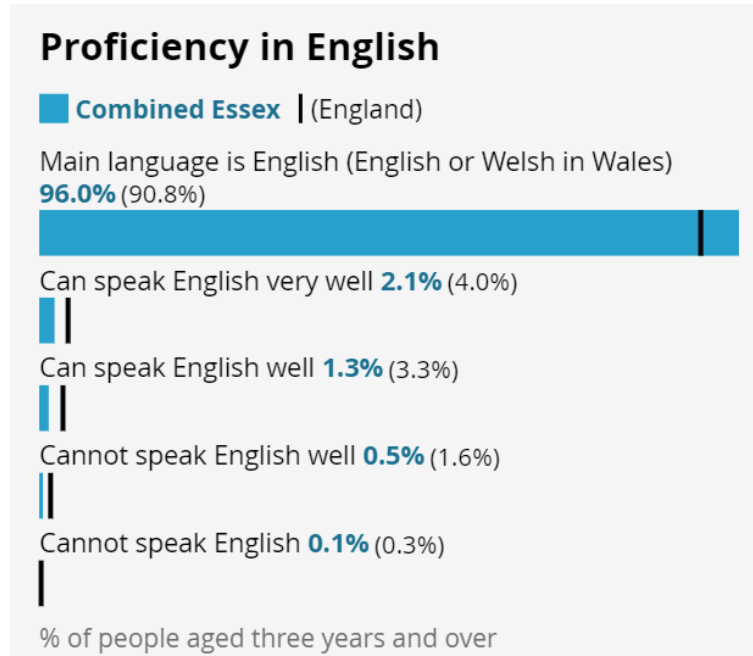
Disability in the Combined Essex catchment aligns nationally at 17% of the population defining themselves as Disabled under the Equality Act, and 83% of the population described as not disabled.



- We can explore inclusive labelling and ALT Text functions for pictures and news articles on our website and in materials we produce.
- We can consider engaging with disabled persons groups for Essex RiverWatch volunteering. For instance, Level Best, a charity that helps adults with learning disabilities get work skills in Colchester who are very proactive in the community.

Proficiency in English:

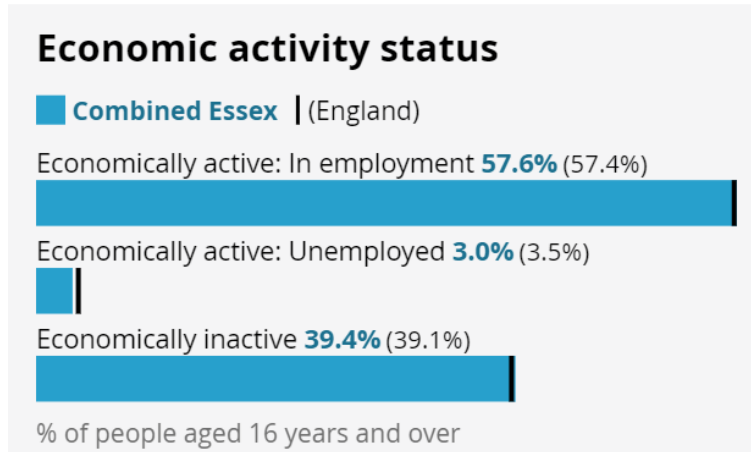
There is a 5% higher rate than the average of individuals whose main language is English in the Essex Rivers Hub catchment but also a slightly lower amount (2%) of individuals who can speak English very well compared to the national 4%.



- ➔ When hosting engagement events, depending on the area it might be helpful to present multi-lingual posters or word clouds to help draw people in. The EA might have resources we can use – when appropriate, we can liaise with our catchment coordinators to find out.
- ➔ A geographical GIS analysis similar to Essex County Council's work could be considered to identify locations in the catchment that have a lower proficiency. Essex County Council analysis has identified areas in Essex that are in the top 10% nationally for low English proficiency (Slide 15 [Essex County Council Analysis, Census 2021](#)):
 - 4.5% of residents in Grays Chafford Gorges & Orsett Road (Thurrock)
 - Harlow (Nettlewell at 2.3% and Passmores & The High at 2.6%)
 - Grange Hill in Epping Forest (3.4%).
 - Parts of Basildon and parts of Thurrock (Greys Town and West Thurrock)

Economic Activity:

There is an average amount of economically active and employed residents (57%) and economically inactive residents (39%). There is a similar to average amount of economically active and unemployed residents (3% vs nationally 4%).



- When hosting events, we can explore possible funding for the subsidising of travel tickets for low-income households or individuals.
- Engagement opportunities with housing associations and food banks can be considered where appropriate.
- We could consider providing volunteering opportunities to homeschooled kids (and ensure we advertise these opportunities).

Summary

The data here is gathered from the 2021 Census appropriate to the Combined Essex catchment unless otherwise stated (Appendix). Through area profiling, we can set a baseline of our catchment demographic and other relevant data, and what is representative engagement for our catchment. There are many practical interventions we can take in the Essex Rivers Hub to be more representative of our working area.

Our catchment has a slightly older population than the national average. We may encounter more older participants in our volunteering than in other catchments.

We have already created multi-generational friendly engagement packs for the Essex RiverWatch with printable and digital sheets. When doing further outreach we can advertise the scheme on a spectrum of social media to appeal to more generations. These measures will contribute to our aims to create a communications plan and EDI Strategy (Aim 2 Objective a).

The Essex Rivers Hub Catchment has a high proportion of white residents compared to the national average found in the 2021 Census, Asian persons are the next most prevalent ethnicity followed by individuals with Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups and Black residents.

It is important to note what a representation of ethnicities in our catchment is so that when we monitor engagement we can assess if we are reaching this representation. Furthermore, it is important to note that non-white ethnic groups are often underreached and consequently underrepresented across the environmental sector. For instance, 3.1% of environment professionals identify as non-white minorities compared to 19.9% of all occupations identify as non-white minorities ([Sustainability Exchange, 2018](#)). We can commit to being more active in reaching out to communities that are often under-reached in environmental work and volunteering: an EDI strategy can be created (Aim 2a) and this can be ongoingly assessed.

To monitor if we are engaging a local demographic representative, we are making a feedback form for the Essex RiverWatch. This can then be paired against the above Census 2021 data and assessed if any actions are needed to make the scheme more inclusive. This could involve advertising the scheme on different platforms, forming an ERH working group comprised of a range of levels in seniority, enrolling staff and facilitators in training programmes such as the CIPD course in People Management, and exploring funding for more EDI work. Feedback forms will also provide a space for constructive criticism which can further help improve the scheme. We will also commit to showing inclusive imagery in all of our comms where appropriate to contribute to encouraging an open, safe and inclusive space for all.

The majority of people in our catchment are non-religious or Christian. There is a low comparison of Muslim and Sikh communities to the national average whereas there is a similar percentage to the national average of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jewish individuals.

When promoting volunteering or our annual forum (Aim 2b) we will reach out to religious and non-religious groups using the Essex County Council analysis of the Census (Appendix: [Essex County Council Demographic Analysis, Census 2021](#)) to help focus on geographical areas with higher proportions of said religion. However, this does have limitations as it does not include the whole Essex Rivers Hub Catchment. Extraction of the detailed geographical census data for the Essex River Hub catchment and

subsequent analysis for religion should be considered. However, it is important to note this is a timely and detailed process. Some key points have been pulled from the Essex County Council Analysis of the 2021 Census data below.

Brentwood, Thurrock and Uttlesford have a high proportion of Christians so Churches should be reached out to in these areas. Southend, Rochford, Braintree and Colchester have the highest proportion of non-religious residents so community centres will be very appropriate to contact in these areas. Furthermore, Harlow and Thurrock have a high proportion of Muslim residents so Mosques can be reached here. Brentwood, Chelmsford, and Basildon have a high proportion of residents who are Hindu, so in these areas the local Mandir can be contacted. Epping Forest and Castle Point have high amounts of Jewish people so Synagogues and Rabbis can be reached out to in these areas. Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford have the highest residency of Buddhists so Viharas' can be contacted. Thurrock, Brentwood and Epping Forest have a high number of Sikhs so the local Gurdwara will be a good place to start engaging residents.

The above insights will help inform our Essex Rivers Hub communications strategy (Aim 2a).

The Essex Rivers Hub Catchment aligns similarly to the national average for General Health. The catchment partnership can uphold and improve this by including the promotion of wellbeing benefits of spending time by rivers on our news page, incorporating accessibility needs into our content with tools like alt text, and engaging disabled adult work skills groups such as Level Best Colchester in our citizen science scheme (Aim 2c).

In some areas of Thurrock, Harlow, Epping Forest and Basildon residents have a low English proficiency compared to nationally (Appendix: [Essex County Council Demographic Analysis, Census 2021](#)). Extraction of the detailed geographical census data for the Essex River Hub Catchment, not just Essex, and subsequent analysis for proficiency in English should be considered. Yet, in the currently known areas, when hosting engagement events it might be helpful to present multi-lingual posters or word clouds to help draw people in. The EA have resources we can use that might be appropriate for different events and we can liaise with our catchment coordinator to find out.

When incorporating economic factors, our catchment has similar rates to the national average at 58% (1%< national) of residents being economically active and employed and 39% economically inactive. In our engagement, we could explore funding possibilities to subsidise train travel to events or on-the-ground volunteering opportunities. The possibility of engaging with housing associations and food banks can also be explored where appropriate.

This area profiling has helped identify some practical measures that will enhance Essex Rivers Hub engagement and help us reach a representative of our catchment area. The insights here will help the partnership fulfil our vision (Appendix), aims and objectives (Page 2). In particular, this is the first step of many towards making space for collaboration with underrepresented and often underreached groups in the environmental sector (Aim 2a). The insights gathered through this area profiling have already started to help inform practical measures to boost sustainable and inclusive engagement on the ground. We understand the value of asking the community what they want from engagement and hope to build on this learning as an ongoing process, continually welcoming constructive feedback and acting on it.

Appendix

Item 1 – Essex Rivers Hub Vision

Our water environments are resilient to the changing climate and population growth, are richer in biodiversity, support a thriving economy and contribute to the wellbeing of the citizens in the Essex Rivers Hub catchment.

From 2025–2030 we will work as a partnership to:

- Restore our rivers and wetlands
- Engage people in our work
- Address the impacts of climate change including droughts and flooding

Item 2 – [Essex County Council Demographic Analysis, Census 2021](#)

References

Sustainability Exchange, 2018 [PowerPoint Presentation \(sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk\)](#)

Essex County Council Census 2021 Data analysis [Census 2021 – Demography, Households, Migration | Essex Open Data](#)