



London's Population

Following the Census 2011 there have been a significant number of data and information releases enabling a detailed picture to emerge of London's population and demography. This briefing summarises the wealth of available information providing the latest snapshot of London.

Overview

London's population grew by more than one million people between the censuses in 2001 and 2011 and is projected to increase again to nine million by 2021, and almost 10 million by 2031.

London continues to be a young, dynamic, mobile, diverse and unique city within the UK, and is set to see particular population rises in its very young and working age population. These demographic pressures will mean increases in demand for public services, particularly within housing and education provision.

Scale of change

London's population saw the largest growth of any region between the censuses in 2001 and 2011. It grew by 14 per cent, or just over 1 million, to more than 8 million usual residents. This growth accounted for 26 per cent of the total national population growth.

In comparison, if London had grown at the same rate as the national average between censuses, the capital would have 440,000 fewer residents than it actually had in 2011 – this is the equivalent of two boroughs the size of Camden.

According to the 2011 Census results:

- London's pre-school population grew by 113,000 (24 per cent). 11 boroughs experienced more than 30 per cent growth in their pre-school populations between censuses.
- London saw its school-age population increase by 107,000 (8 per cent) with three boroughs seeing growth in excess of 15 per cent.
- London's working-age population grew by 768,000 (17 per cent), with three boroughs seeing growth rates above 30 per cent (Tower Hamlets, Newham and Hackney).

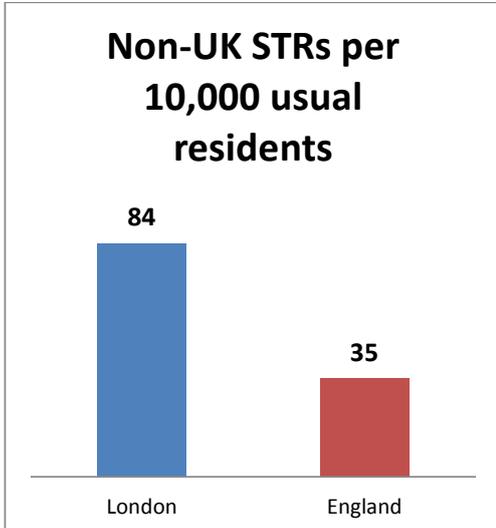
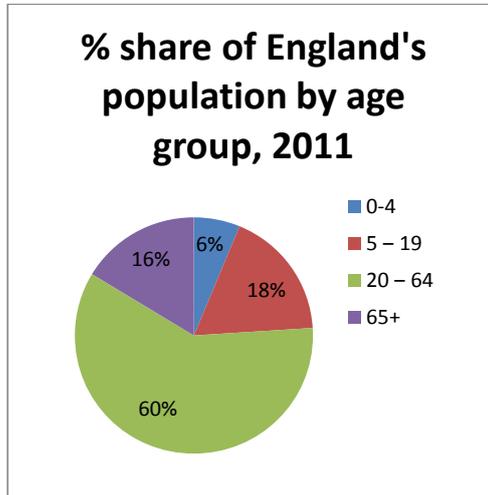
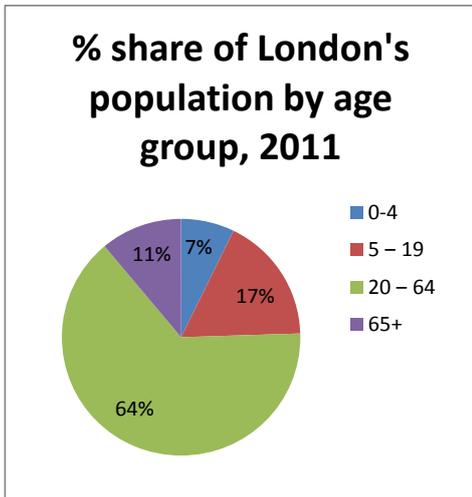
All of these were above the national growth rates. This growth has led to considerable pressures on the need for housing, education and early years' provision in the capital over the decade.

London's population aged 65 and over grew at a relatively slower pace and rose by 13,000 (1 per cent). However, this age cohort is set for considerable growth in the next decade, when it is projected to grow by 21 per cent.

Over the course of the next decade, London's population is projected to increase by around one million, at similar growth levels to that experienced previously. Within this, its school-age population is set for growth at a rate one-and-a-half times greater than was previously experienced between censuses, which will continue to put pressure on the need for sufficient school places.

The graphic demonstrates London's relatively younger population to the national picture:

Over the next decade, London's population is projected to increase by around one million and, within this, its school age population is set for growth at a rate one and a half times greater than previously



Short-Term Residency

Information on short-term non-UK residents was also captured this time round in the census. London had approximately 70,000 short-term residents (STRs) on Census day, which was 37 per cent of the national total and around 1 per cent of its usual resident population.

In London, this translates into 84 STRs per 10,000 usual residents, compared to the ratio of 35 STRs per 10,000 in England and Wales. The majority of these residents were concentrated in inner London boroughs with eight boroughs accounting for 50 per cent of the London total¹. The data represents the snapshot of what was captured on Census day, but this population group by its nature is continually changing in its make-up.

Families and households

Compared to all other English regions and Wales, London is distinct. It has the highest proportion of its adult population single or in a civil partnership. It also has the highest proportion of lone parent households with dependent children and families with at least one dependent child. It also had the lowest proportion of older people living alone and conversely the highest for people living alone under 65.

Average household size increased in London, from 2.35 persons in 2001 to 2.47 in 2011². In contrast the average for England and Wales (excluding London) fell from 2.36 to 2.34 persons.

¹ Westminster, Camden, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Kensington and Chelsea, Southwark, Islington, Ealing

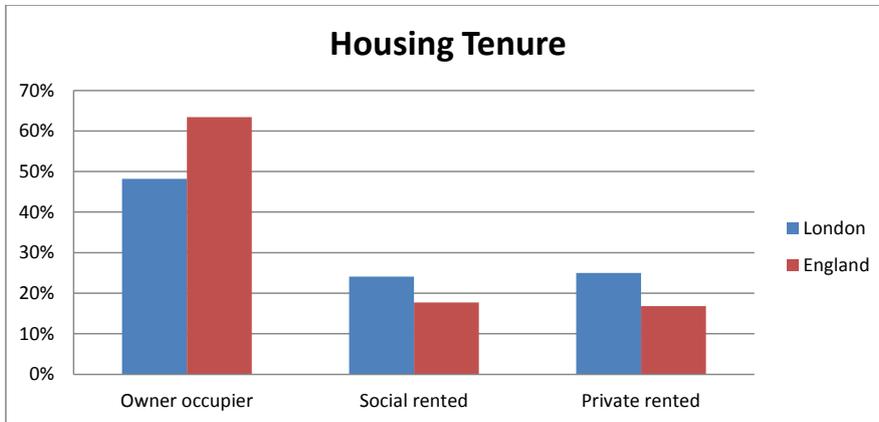
² GLA Intelligence Update 13-2012

Within London, all boroughs bar one experienced growth in this measure (the other a negligible -0.1 decline). Census 2011 suggests that London is the most overcrowded region for households in England and Wales.

In terms of housing tenure, the biggest change has been growth in the share of its private rented sector and a decline in owner-occupiers.

The table below shows the relative shares for London and the national picture from Census 2011:

“
Census 2011 suggests that London is the most overcrowded region in England and Wales
”



Issues with the Census

While the Census is undoubtedly a rich source of demographic information, there are continued concerns that it is inadequate in capturing London’s population accurately. There are two main areas of concern:

1. Response rates to the Census continue to be lower in London than the national average. Although rates are improved from those achieved in 2001, the majority of London boroughs still experienced some of the lowest response rates nationally.
2. The new mid-year population estimate for London using Census 2011 data is significantly higher than the equivalent estimate using the previous census data. This suggests an under-count during the previous decade and potential lost funding to London local government.

Future demographic pressures

The GLA has recently released two sets of projections incorporating data from the latest Census. The following table shows that the biggest rise in population in London is projected to be in the 65+ age group. Within this group, growth in those aged 90+ is projected to see the greatest rise of all with a threefold increase by 2031. Increases in the older age group are due to falling mortality rates and rising life expectancy.

	2001-11	2011-21	2021-31	2031-41
Population at end of period (000s)	8,204	9,221	9,953	10,541
Cumulative increase from 2011		1,017	1,748	2,337
% change - cumulate from 2011		12%	21%	28%
Age (% change):				
0-4	-	8%	-2%	4%
5-19	-	12%	8%	-1%
20-64	-	11%	6%	5%
65+	-	21%	27%	18%

Births in London are predicted to continue to rise through to 2016 and to remain above 2011 levels for the duration of the projection period to 2041. Deaths are predicted to increase slightly, despite declining mortality rates, due to the increasing numbers of older people in the population. The GLA projections also suggest that population mobility is set to increase over time, by 12 per cent to 2031 and 17 per cent to 2041³, with it holding roughly constant as a proportion of the projected population over time.

Beyond 2011

For the next potential census exercise in 2021, it is highly unlikely that it will take place in the same shape and form as previous processes. The Beyond 2011 project is looking at options to modernise or replace it, including the greater use of electronic surveys and the potential use of administrative data. There is likely to be a public consultation held in November 2013 with final recommendations to Parliament in summer 2014. The options will aim to balance user needs, cost, statistical quality, and the public acceptability of these. They will have implications for all population-based statistics in England and Wales and, potentially funding allocations using the data. It will be vital that the issues around under-counting for London are addressed.

Commentary

London's population continues to present unique challenges to public service provision due to its size, growth, characteristics and mobility. Accurate population figures are vital as the financial impact of an undercount is felt for a decade with many central government grants allocated through use of population figures. London Councils has previously estimated this loss of funding to be £580 per person not counted from core local government funding for 2012/13⁴.

London's greater reliance on ONS calculations for its final population estimate (due to its lower response rates) puts it at a distinct disadvantage relative to other areas of the country. There are considerable risks that a) the population is underestimated and b) incorrect characteristics are applied to those estimated. This is less than optimal and continues to result in a 'double whammy' for London local government. Those not responding to the Census, and therefore estimated, are often those with the greatest need for local authority support.

In addition to this is the issue of churn in its population. It is clear from the Census results that London's population is young and mobile with almost one in five arriving within the last 10 years (excluding domestic migration flows) and the capital is a key destination for short-term residents. This adds to the complexity and cost of delivering public services.

London Councils will provide further information as more details emerge from Census 2011 and the Beyond 2011 project.

³ Aggregating projected gross migration flows for domestic and international movements

⁴ London Councils '2011 Census statistics release' briefing 17 June 2012

Author: John Bray, Finance and Policy Manager (T: 020 7934 9662)

[Click here to send a comment or query to the author](#)

Links:

[Office for National Statistics - Census 2011](#)

This member briefing has been circulated to:

Portfolio holders and those members who requested policy briefings in the following categories: Leadership, devolution and democracy; Local government finance