



# 2. Population

*Tower Hamlets continues to be one of the fastest growing, youngest, and most diverse populations in the UK.*

## Chapter Summary:

- The borough had 308,000 residents as of June 2017.
- Since 1986, the population has more than doubled – making Tower Hamlets the fastest growing local authority in the UK.
- Our population is projected to reach 365,200 by 2027 – equivalent to around 15 additional residents per day for the next ten years. The population is expected to reach 400,000 by 2041.
- Over 54,000 new homes are expected to be built in the borough by 2030/31.
- An estimated 125,900 households lived in the borough in 2016.
- Tower Hamlets has a relatively complex household composition: one in five households is made up of more than one family and 7 per cent of households have more than six people (compared with 4 per cent in London).
- Tower Hamlets remains the second most densely population local authority in the UK, next to Islington.
- We have the 4<sup>th</sup> youngest population in the UK. Almost half of our residents (46 per cent) are aged 20-39.
- We have around 12,900 more male residents than female residents, putting the Male to Female Ratio at 1.09.
- The borough is ranked as the 16<sup>th</sup> most ethnically diverse local authority in England in terms of the mix of different ethnic group populations. More than two thirds of our residents belong to minority ethnic groups.
- Tower Hamlets is home to the largest Bangladeshi population in the country, making up 32 per cent of our population.
- More than four in ten residents (43 per cent) were born outside the UK. Residents born in Bangladesh are the single biggest migrant group, but the most significant population growth in recent years was among EU nationals.
- 38 per cent of our residents are Muslim – the highest proportion in the UK.

## What is the population of Tower Hamlets?

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated the usual resident population of Tower Hamlets to be 308,000 as at 30 June 2017.<sup>1</sup> In the year to June 2017, the borough gained an estimated 7,000 additional residents. That is equivalent to 20 additional residents every day over the year.

In terms of population size, Tower Hamlets is ranked 11th largest out of the 32 London Boroughs and City (see [Figure 2.1](#)). The borough rankings are largely unchanged in the past year.

## How is our population growing?

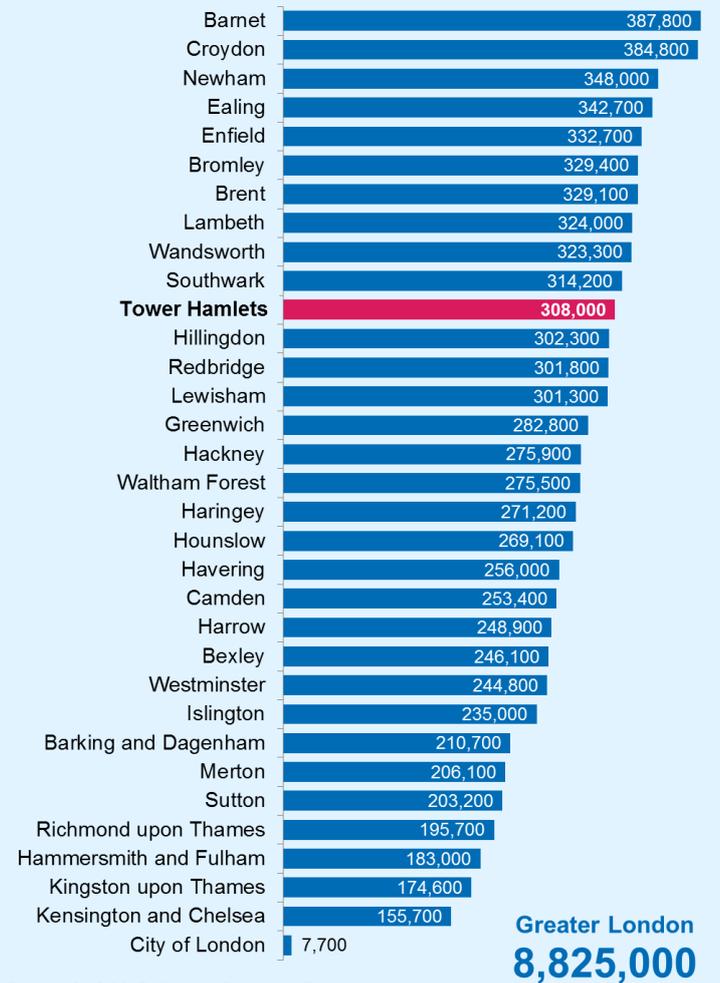
The population of Tower Hamlets has nearly doubled in the past 30 years, rising from 156,000 in 1987 to 308,000 in 2017.<sup>2</sup> Growth has been particularly fast over the last decade. Between 2007 and 2017, the population grew by 82,700 residents – a 37 per cent increase. This was the fastest population

increase out of all 391 local authority areas in the UK. The borough's population growth rate (37 per cent) was also more than double that in London (15 per cent) and more than four times that in England (8 per cent).

Our rapid population growth is expected to continue. For Tower Hamlets, the most important factor for projecting future population growth is housing development. Between 2017/18 and 2030/31, over 54,000 additional homes are expected to be built in the borough. [Map 2.1](#) shows that nearly half of these new homes (49 per cent) will be concentrated in the Isle of Dogs (Canary Wharf and Blackwall & Cubitt Town wards).

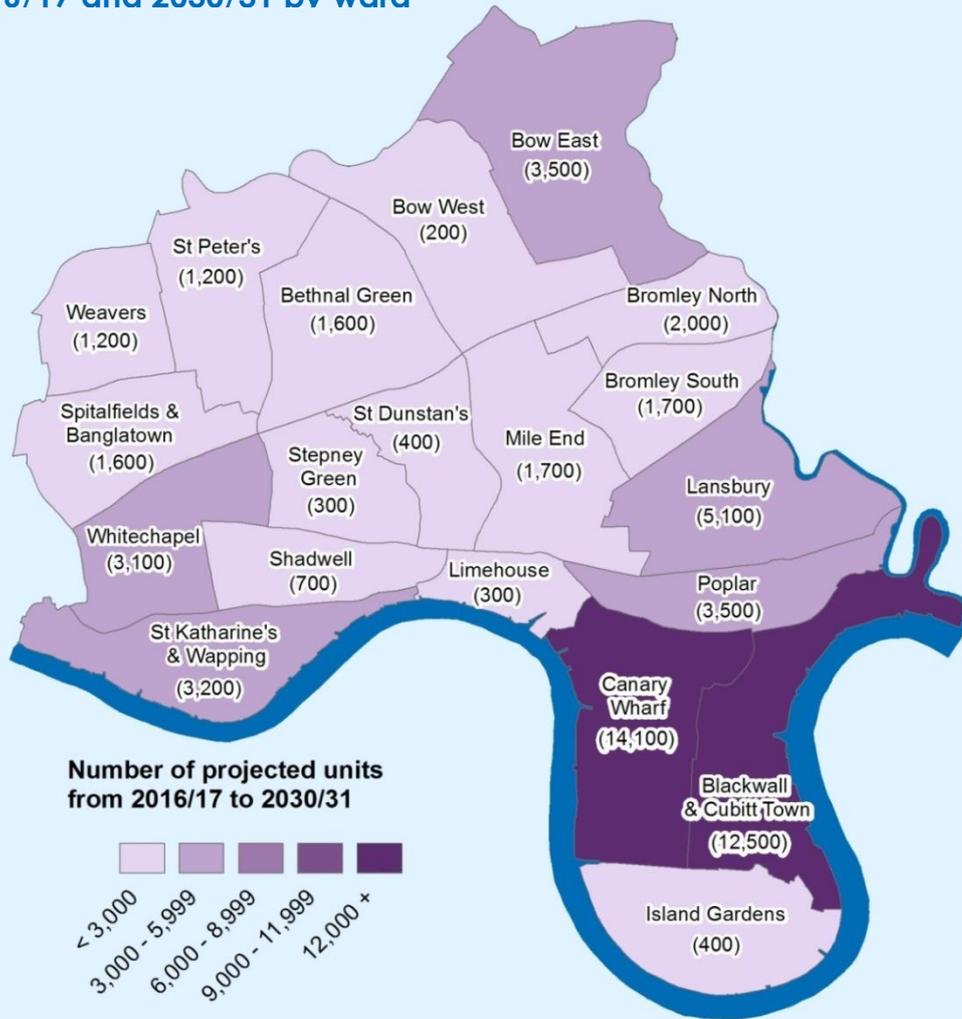
Taking this expected development into account, projections from the Greater London Authority (GLA) expected to reach 365,200 by 2027<sup>3</sup> (see [Figure 2.2](#)). This would be an increase of around 54,000 residents over the next decade – equivalent to an average of around 15 additional residents every day for the next ten years. The borough's population is expected to reach 400,000 by 2041.

Figure 2.1: Population Estimates (Mid 2017)  
London Boroughs



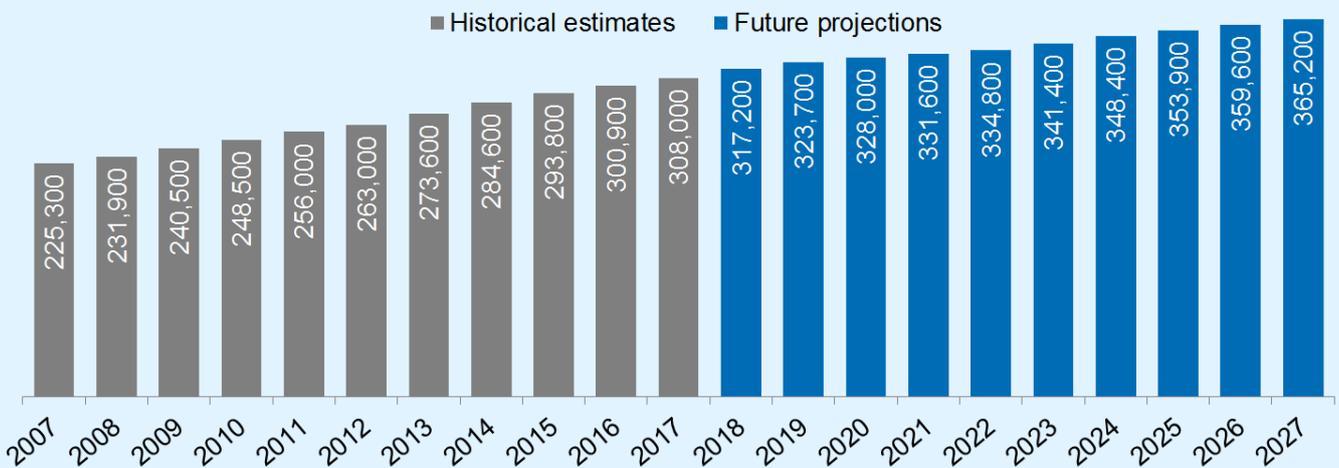
Source: ONS 2017 Mid-year Population Estimates

**Map 2.1: Projected number of new housing units to be built between 2016/17 and 2030/31 by ward**



Source: Local Plan and LLDC development trajectories (September 2017)  
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 Note: The number of units for each ward has been rounded to the nearest 100.

**Figure 2.2 Estimated and projected population - Tower Hamlets 2007 to 2027**



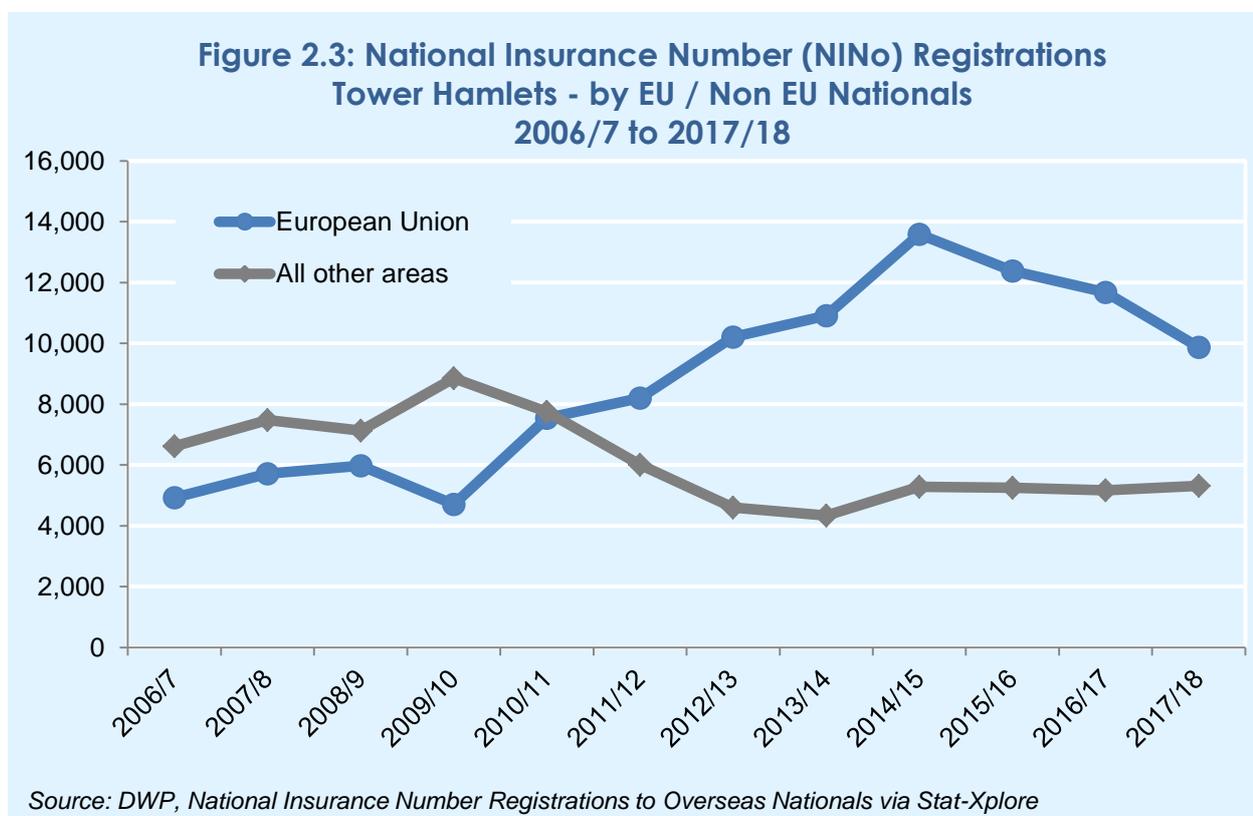
Sources: ONS Mid-year Estimates 2007-2017 via NOMIS; GLA 2016-based Housing-led Population Projections

However, it should be noted that these projections are based on recent trends and do not attempt to take into account the impact of the UK leaving the European Union (known as 'Brexit'). This will likely have an impact on the UK economy, labour market, and migration patterns, which will consequently affect the population of Tower Hamlets.

The borough's population growth has largely been driven by international migration. Over the past ten years, it is estimated that net international migration increased our population by around 62,300 residents because more people from abroad moved to the UK than those who left the UK from Tower Hamlets.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, more people left Tower Hamlets to move elsewhere in the UK than those moving into the borough from other local authorities, leading to a loss of around 11,400 residents.

A significant proportion of the borough's international migration has come from the European Union. In 2011, one in ten of the borough's residents were born in EU countries (other than the UK).<sup>5</sup> EU nationals have accounted for seven in ten of the borough's economic migrants over the past five years.<sup>6</sup>

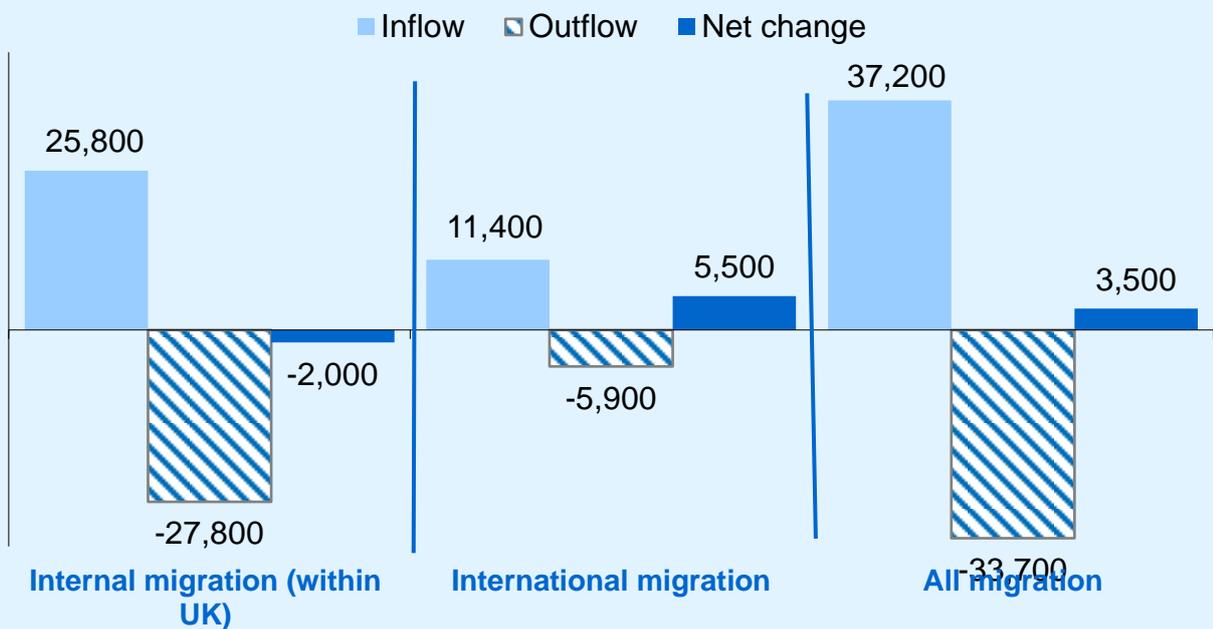
Brexit is likely to reduce migration from EU countries, so our population growth may well be lower than what is projected. [Figure 2.3](#) shows that while economic migration - measured through registration for new National Insurance Numbers (NINo) to overseas nationals - is still high for EU nationals, there has been a fall over the past three financial years.



## Population Turnover

Net migrations figures, such as those presented in the section above, disguise even higher levels of movement of people into and out of the borough which is often referred to as 'population turnover' or 'population churn'. Figure 2.4 demonstrates this for movements into and out of the borough between 2016 and 2017. While net migration in 2016/17 was a gain of around 3,500 people, an estimated 37,200 people moved in and an estimated 33,700 moved out of the borough. Figure 2.4 also shows that while internal migration to and from other local authorities in the UK contributes the majority of this population turnover, it is the net gain in International Migration which has contributed to most of the resulting net gain.

**Figure 2.4: Internal and International Migration - Tower Hamlets (2016-17)**



Source: ONS 2017 Mid-Year Population Estimates, Table MYEB2 (components of change)

Note: All calculations have been made using unrounded figures and may differ from calculations using rounded figures shown.

This level of population mobility, relative to the size of our population, gives Tower Hamlets the 11<sup>th</sup> highest population turnover rate in the UK.<sup>7</sup> Areas with higher population turnover include other inner London boroughs (such as Hammersmith & Fulham and Camden) and university towns (such as Oxford and Cambridge).

## How many households live in Tower Hamlets?

At the time of the 2011 Census, there were 101,247 households living in Tower Hamlets.<sup>8</sup> This was a 29 per cent increase on the 78,525 households in the 2001 Census – the fastest household increase of all local authorities in England & Wales.

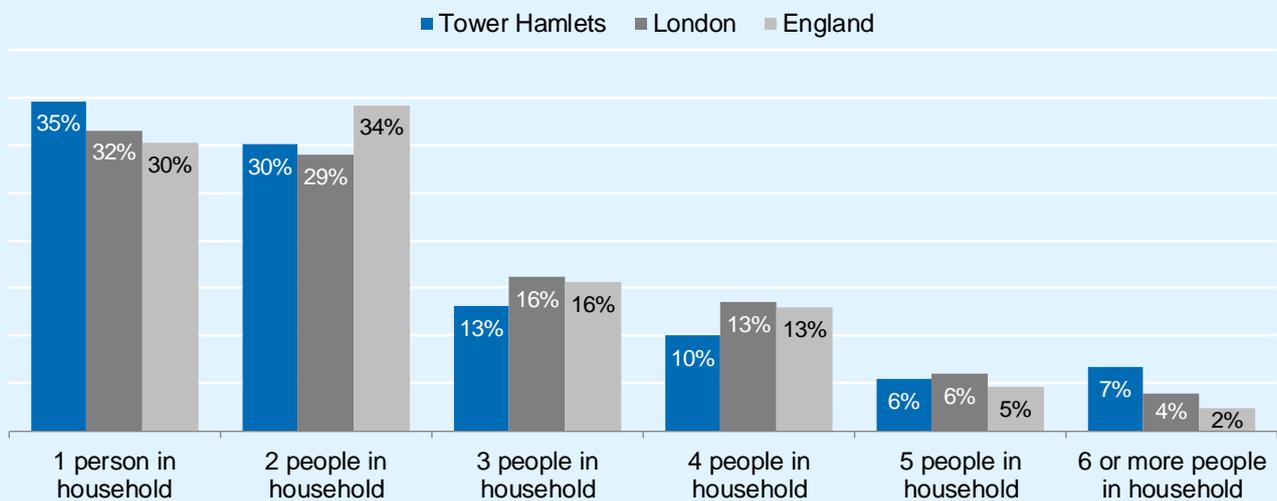
More recent projections from the GLA estimate that the number of households in 2018 reached 132,100.<sup>9</sup> By 2028, the number of households is projected to reach 160,100 – an increase of 28,000 households over the next decade.

## Average household sizes

In both the 2001 and 2011 Census, the average household size in Tower Hamlets was 2.47 people per household.<sup>10</sup> This is slightly higher than the average in England (2.36 people per household) but the same as the London average in 2011 (also 2.47 people per household).

However, the overall average masks differences in the size of households across the borough. [Figure 2.5](#) shows that Tower Hamlets has a higher than average proportion of both small households (one or two people) and large households (6 or more people).

**Figure 2.5: Proportion of households by household size, Tower Hamlets, London & England, 2011**



Source: ONS 2011 Census, Table DC4404EW.

## Household composition

Tower Hamlets has relatively complex household composition compared to other local authorities. One in five households (20 per cent) in the borough are made up of more than one family which is higher than the London average (14 per cent) and the second highest proportion in the country, next to Newham.<sup>11</sup>

[Figure 2.6](#) compares the household composition of the population in Tower Hamlets and London. It shows that Tower Hamlets also has a higher proportion of single person households than London (35 per cent vs. 32 per cent) and a smaller proportion of single family households with children (28 per cent vs. 36 per cent).

**Figure 2.6: Household composition in Tower Hamlets and London, 2011**



Source: ONS Census 2011, Table KS105EW

## What is the population density of Tower Hamlets?

The borough's fast population growth has led to increasing population density in Tower Hamlets. In 2007, the borough had a population density of around 11,300 people per square kilometre and was the 4<sup>th</sup> most densely populated local authority in the UK.<sup>12</sup> Ten years later in 2017, our population density was around 15,600 people per square kilometre, ranking Tower Hamlets as the 2<sup>nd</sup> most densely populated local authority in the country, next to Islington.

However, population density varies across the borough. Shadwell is our most densely populated ward with around 224 residents per hectare. Our least densely populated ward, Bow East, has a population density less than half that of Shadwell – 97 residents per hectare.

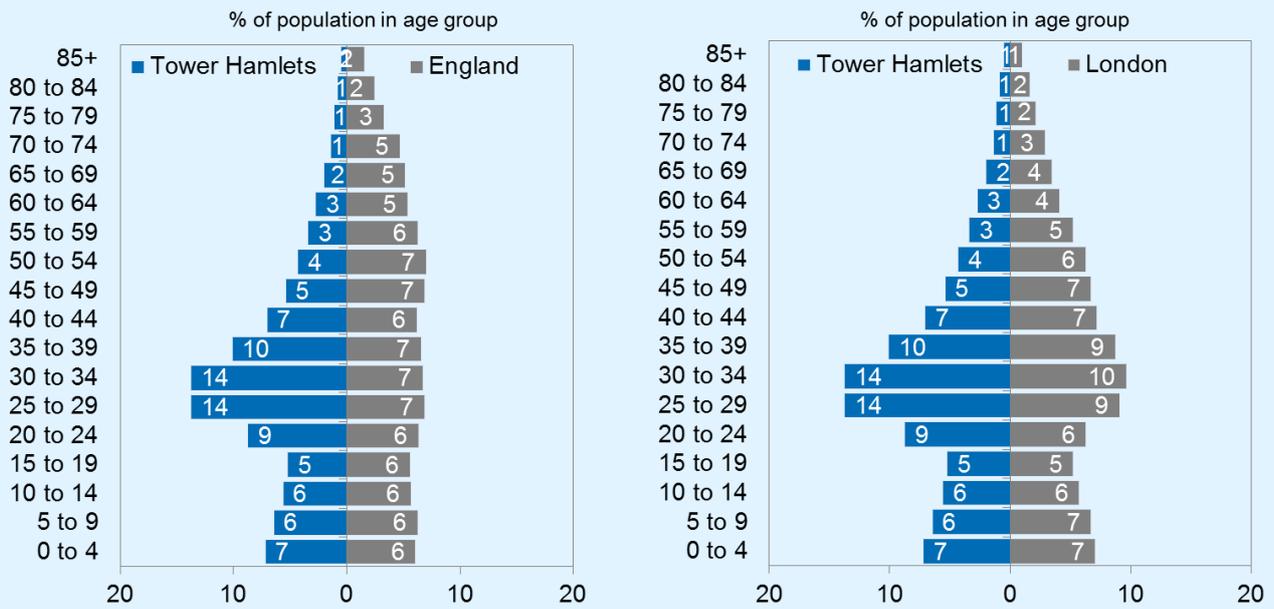
## What is the age profile of the population?

Tower Hamlets has a relatively young population compared with the rest of the country. Our median age in 2017 was 31.0 years which was the 4<sup>th</sup> youngest median age out of all local authorities in the UK.<sup>13</sup> The median age was 35.1 in London (4.1 years older), 39.8 in England (8.8 years older) and 40.1 in the UK (9.1 years older).

Figure 2.7 shows the difference between the age profile in Tower Hamlets and that in England and London. Almost half of all borough residents (46 per cent) are aged 20-39, the highest proportion in the UK, and well above the London average (34 per cent).

Conversely, Tower Hamlets has proportionately fewer older residents compared with other areas: 9 per cent of Tower Hamlets residents are aged 60 or over, compared with 16 per cent in London and 23 per cent in England. Tower Hamlets has the lowest proportion of over 60s in the UK.

**Figure 2.7: Age Profiles of Tower Hamlets, England and London, mid-2017**

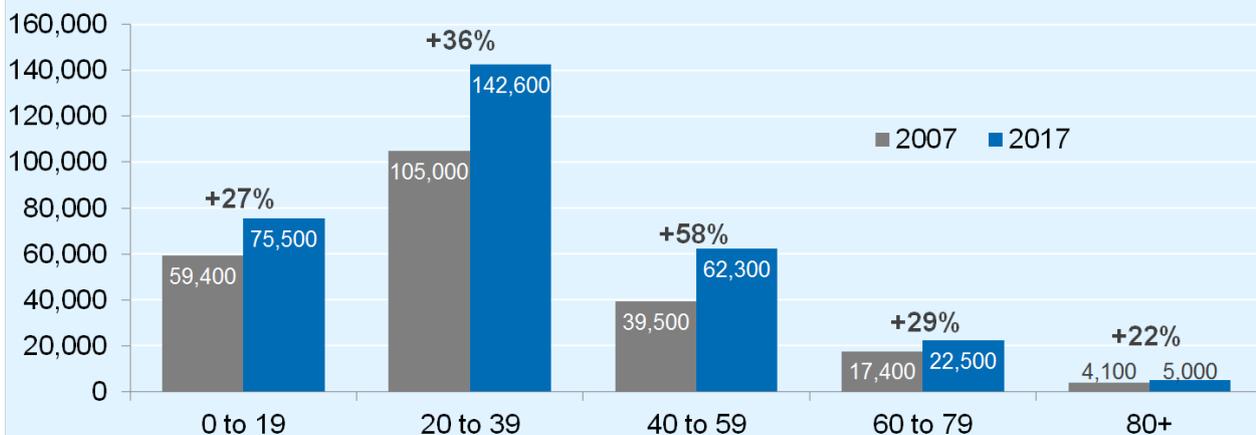


Source: ONS 2017 Mid-Year Population Estimates

The borough’s relatively young age profile reflects the fact that over the past ten years, the borough’s working age population has increased much more quickly than the child population or older age groups (see [Figure 2.8](#)). In addition, nearly eight in ten (77 per cent) residents who have lived in the borough for less than 5 years are aged between 18 and 34<sup>14</sup>, and 88 per cent of our economic migrants in 2017/18 were aged 18 to 34<sup>15</sup>.

While the borough’s population is projected to age slightly in the coming years, it is expected to retain its distinctive young population.

**Figure 2.8: Population growth in Tower Hamlets by age group, 2007 to 2017**



Source: ONS Mid-year estimates 2007-17 via NOMIS.

## Population sex ratio

Tower Hamlets has 109 male residents for every 100 female residents (or 52.1 per cent males and 47.9 per cent females).<sup>16</sup> This is the 5<sup>th</sup> highest proportion of male residents in the UK, and is higher than the sex ratios in London (99 males to 100 females) and England (98 males to 100 females), where overall there are slightly more female residents than male residents. Overall, our sex ratio gives the borough around 12,900 more male residents than female residents.

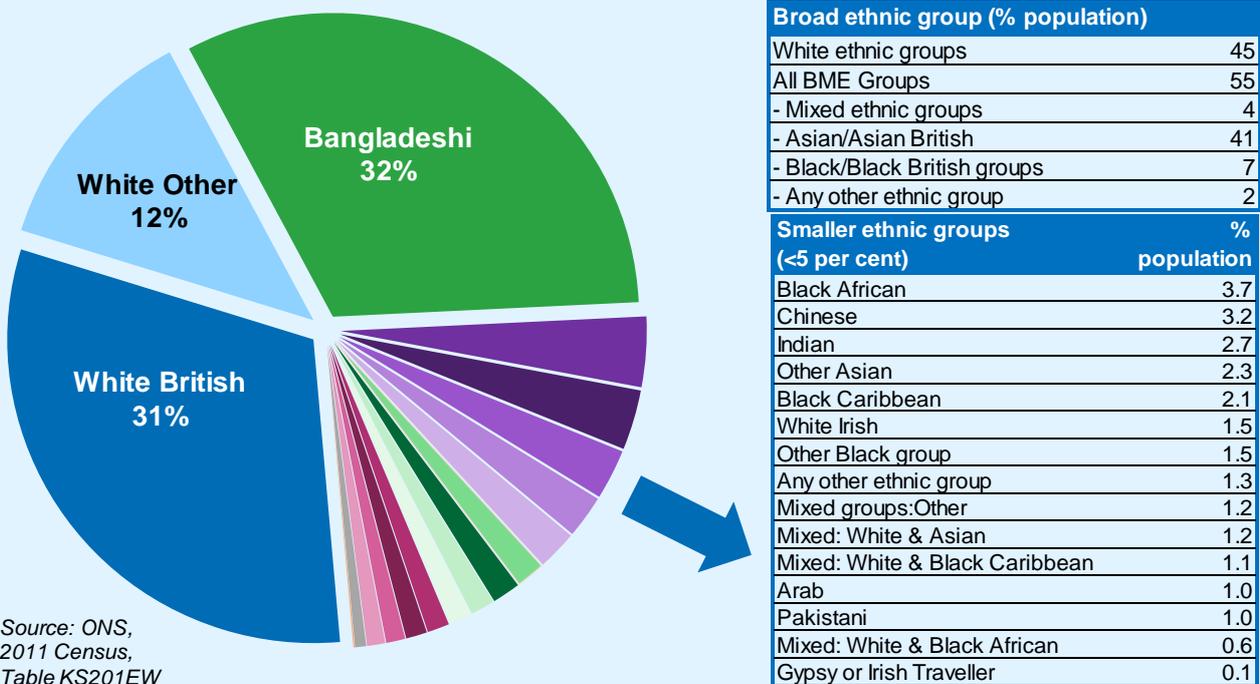
## What is the borough's ethnic profile?

Tower Hamlets ranks as the 16<sup>th</sup> most ethnically diverse local authority in England in terms of the mix of different ethnic group populations in the borough.<sup>17</sup> More than two thirds (69 per cent) of the borough's population belong to minority ethnic groups (i.e. not White British), while just under one third (31 per cent) are White British – the fifth lowest proportion in England & Wales.<sup>18</sup>

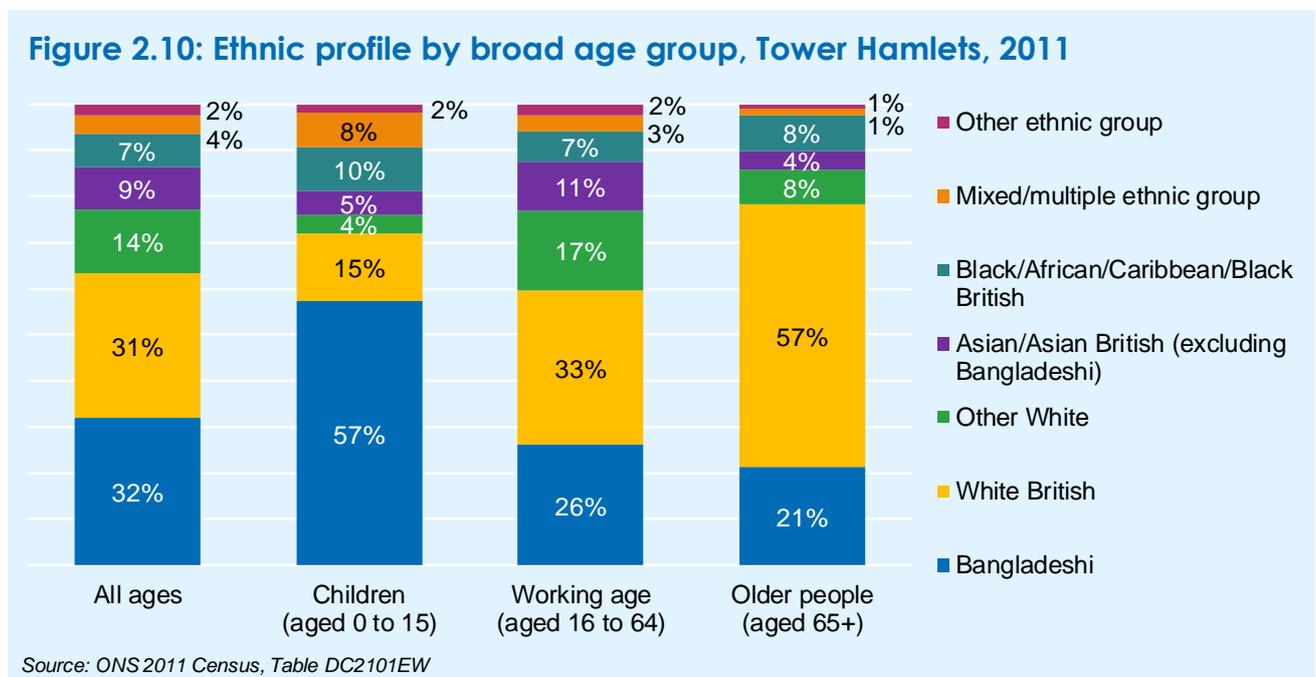
Bangladeshi residents are the largest single ethnic group in Tower Hamlets, accounting for around one in three residents (32 per cent) at the time of the 2011 Census. This was the largest Bangladeshi population in the country, by far.

Figure 2.9 provides a full breakdown of the ethnic profile of the borough's population. The second largest ethnic group was White British, making up 31 per cent of the population. 'White Other' was the third largest ethnic group, at 12 per cent of the population. This group includes people from a wide range of backgrounds including Western and Eastern Europeans, Australians and Americans.

**Figure 2.9: The population of Tower Hamlets by ethnic group, 2011**



There are large differences in the ethnic profile of different age groups, as shown in Figure 2.10. The working age population (aged 16 to 64) is the most diverse age group, with no single ethnic group making up the majority of the population. On the other hand, 57 per cent of the borough's children (aged 0 to 15) are Bangladeshi and 57 per cent of the borough's older people (aged 65+) are White British.



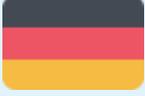
The ethnic profile of our population has changed considerably in recent years. Between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses, the proportion of the population who were White British fell from 43 per cent to 31 per cent.<sup>19</sup> The proportion of White Other residents grew from 7 per cent in 2001 to 12 per cent in 2011. Evidence from the council's Annual Residents survey suggests that this trend has continued after the Census: over half (54 per cent) of residents who have lived in the borough for less than five years are from White ethnic groups.<sup>20</sup>

However, it is difficult to predict how the ethnic profile of the borough will change in future years. It is unlikely that the borough's White Other population, which includes EU nationals, will continue to grow at the same pace after the UK leaves the European Union.

## Country of birth

The borough's migrant population is hugely diverse, with residents born in over 200 countries. At the time of the 2011 Census, 43 per cent of the borough's residents were born outside the UK, up from 35 per cent in 2001.<sup>21</sup> The migrant population includes residents who migrated to London decades ago alongside more recent arrivals.

**Figure 2.11: Top 10 countries of birth of the migrant population in Tower Hamlets, 2011**

Rank	Country	% of migrant population
1	 Bangladesh	35.5
2	 India	3.6
3	 China	3.2
4	 Italy	2.8
5	 France	2.8
6	 Somalia	2.7
7	 Ireland	2.6
8	 Poland	2.4
9	 Australia	2.4
10	 Germany	2.1

Source: 2011 Census Commissioned Table CT0048

Figure 2.11 provides the top ten countries of birth of the migrant population. Residents born in Bangladesh are, by far, the largest single migrant group in Tower Hamlets, who make up over one third of the total migrant population (35.5 per cent).<sup>22</sup> The next largest migrant group – residents born in India – is a nearly a tenth of the size of the Bangladeshi population, making up 3.6 per cent of all migrants in the borough.

Figure 2.11 also shows that several of the borough's largest migrant populations come from EU countries (Italy, France, Ireland, Poland, Germany). The most significant population growth between 2001 and 2011 was among Europeans: the number of our residents who were born in European countries (other than the UK) trebled in size, rising from 10,269 in 2001 to 29,363 in 2011. EU nationals made up more than one in ten Tower Hamlets residents in 2011.<sup>23</sup>

### What is the faith profile of the borough's population?

Tower Hamlets has the highest proportion of Muslim residents in the country. In 2011, 38 per cent of borough residents were Muslim compared with 5 per cent in England and 13 per cent in London (see Figure 2.12).<sup>24</sup> Conversely, the borough had the lowest proportion of Christian residents nationally: 30 per cent of borough residents were Christian compared with 59 per cent in England & Wales. Around one in five (21 per cent) of residents had no religion and 7 per cent chose not to state their religion on the Census form. Other smaller, but significant, faith groups represented in the borough include: Hindu (1.8 per cent), Buddhist (1.2 per cent) Jewish (0.6 per cent) and Sikh (0.4 per cent).

**Figure 2.12: Faith profile of Tower Hamlets compared with London and England, 2011**



Source: ONS 2011 Census, Table KS209EW & GLA corrected tables for Tower Hamlets and London via London Datastore. Note: Original published Census data on religion had errors for three local authorities: Tower Hamlets, Camden and Islington which was corrected in 2015.



### Find out more

This report was produced by the council's Corporate Research Unit as part of the [Borough Profile 2018](#). For more in-depth analysis about Tower Hamlets, please visit the [Borough Statistics](#) page on the council's website or get in touch with the team at [cru@towerhamlets.gov.uk](mailto:cru@towerhamlets.gov.uk).

You can also find out more about the borough's population in our full research briefings:

- [Mid-2016 population estimates for Tower Hamlets](#)
- [Population projections for Tower Hamlets](#)
- [Profile of the migrant population in Tower Hamlets](#)
- [Ethnicity in Tower Hamlets](#)
- [Residents by country of birth](#)
- [Religion in Tower Hamlets](#)

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics, [2017 Mid-year Population Estimates](#). See table MYE2. This estimate includes all residents who are expected to live in the borough for at least 12 months, including migrants and term-time students. This estimate does not include short-term visitors or migrants who may live in the borough for less than a year.
- <sup>2</sup> Office for National Statistics, *1987 to 2017 Mid-year Population Estimates* via [NOMIS](#).
- <sup>3</sup> Greater London Authority, *2016-based Housing-led Population Projections* via [GLA Datastore](#).
- <sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics, [2017 Mid-year Population Estimates](#). See Table MYEB2 (detailed components of change time series). Figures relate to 2008 to 2017.
- <sup>5</sup> ONS Census 2011, [Table QS203EW](#).
- <sup>6</sup> Department for Work and Pensions, *NINO Registrations To Adult Overseas Nationals Entering The UK* via [Stat-Xplore](#).
- <sup>7</sup> Office for National Statistics, [2017 Mid-year Population Estimates](#). See Table MYEB2 (detailed components of change time series). Population turnover rates are the total volume of population flows into and out of an area, relative to the size of its resident population (on a per 1,000 population basis).
- <sup>8</sup> Office for National Statistics, Census 2011, [Table KS105EW](#).
- <sup>9</sup> Greater London Authority, [2016-based Household Projections \(Central Trend\)](#).
- <sup>10</sup> ONS Census 2001, [Table TT008](#) (households) and [Table ST001](#) (people in households); ONS Census 2011, [Table KS105EW](#) (households) and [Table QS112EW](#) (people in households).
- <sup>11</sup> ONS Census 2011, [Table KS105EW](#).
- <sup>12</sup> Office for National Statistics, [2016 Mid-year Population Estimates](#). See Table MYE5.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* See Table MYE6.
- <sup>14</sup> Tower Hamlets Council, *Annual Residents Survey 2017* (unpublished data tables).
- <sup>15</sup> Department for Work and Pensions, *NINo Registrations to Adult Overseas Nationals Entering the UK (2017/18)* via [Stat-Xplore](#).
- <sup>16</sup> Office for National Statistics, [2017 Mid-year Population Estimates](#). See Table MYE2.
- <sup>17</sup> Greater London Authority, 2012. [2011 Census Snapshot: Ethnic Diversity Indices](#).
- <sup>18</sup> ONS Census 2011, [Table KS201EW](#). Note: Minority ethnic groups refers to all ethnic groups except the White British group, including White minority groups.
- <sup>19</sup> ONS Census 2001, [Table KS006](#); ONS Census 2011, [Table KS201EW](#)
- <sup>20</sup> Tower Hamlets Council, *Annual Residents Survey 2017* (unpublished data tables).
- <sup>21</sup> ONS Census 2001, [Table UV08](#); ONS Census 2011, [Table KS204EW](#)
- <sup>22</sup> Office for National Statistics, Census 2011 [Table QS203EW](#).
- <sup>23</sup> Tower Hamlets Council, [Residents by country of birth](#).
- <sup>24</sup> ONS Census 2011, revised data released in 2015 available via [London datastore](#).