



Ethnicity in Tower Hamlets

Analysis of 2011 Census data

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Summary of findings

This briefing presents key statistics from the 2011 Census about the ethnic composition of the Tower Hamlets population. The new Census figures provide valuable intelligence about the nature of diversity in the borough and how it is changing. Key findings include:

- **More than two thirds (69 per cent) of the borough's population belong to minority ethnic groups** (ie not White British): 55 per cent belong to BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) groups and a further 14 per cent are from White minority groups.
- The Census provides data about **18 different ethnic group populations**. The borough's three largest groups are the

Bangladeshi, White British and 'Other White' populations. Considered together, people from these three ethnic groups make up around three-quarters of the Tower Hamlets population.

- The **Bangladeshi population** makes up almost one third (32 per cent) of the borough's population – considerably larger than the proportion across London (3 per cent) or England (under 1 per cent). Tower Hamlets has the largest Bangladeshi population in England.
- **White British** residents comprise 31 per cent of the borough's population, far lower than the percentage nationally (80 per cent). Tower Hamlets has the fifth lowest proportion of White British residents in England. Newham and Brent had the lowest rates (17 and 18 per cent respectively).
- The third largest ethnic group in the borough is the '**Other White**' group who comprise one in eight borough residents – close to the London average. This group is very diverse and includes residents from a mix of ethnic backgrounds (eg Europeans, Australians, Americans).
- Residents from **Black ethnic groups** make up 7 per cent of the population comprising: 4 per cent from Black African groups; 2 per cent from Black Caribbean groups; and 1 per cent from Other Black groups. Tower Hamlets has a smaller proportion of Black residents compared to the London average (7 vs. 13 per cent).

- **Somali** was not included as a separate ethnic group in the Census, so it remains difficult to obtain a firm estimate of the number of residents who are 'ethnically' Somali. However, Census data on country of birth provide intelligence on first generation Somali residents – these show that Somali-born residents comprise 1.2 per cent of the population – up from 0.7 per cent in 2001.
- **Chinese residents** comprise 3.2 per cent of the borough's population – this is the third highest percentage in England, after Cambridge and the City of London (both 3.6 per cent).
- Tower Hamlets has a smaller proportion of **Indian** (3 per cent) and **Pakistani** (1 per cent) residents compared with London (7 and 3 per cent respectively).
- Residents from **Mixed** ethnic groups represent 4 per cent of the borough's population, close to the London average (5 per cent) and higher than the national average (2 per cent).
- The 2011 Census is the first Census to include '**Arab**' as an ethnic group. Arab residents represented 1 per cent of the borough's population – the same as the London average.
- Trend data show that the borough's population has grown by 30 per cent since 2001 - the largest rise in England. The population has also **become more ethnically diverse over the last ten years** – consistent with national and regional trends.
- The percentage of the borough's population who are **White British has fallen** from 43 to 31 per cent, while most minority ethnic groups have shown strong growth over the period. There were similar trends across London and England which both saw a fall in the proportion of White British residents.
- In contrast, the borough's '**Other White**' population has shown significant growth over the period and has more than doubled in size between 2001 and 2011. Residents from the Other White group now make up 12 per cent of the borough's population – up from 7 per cent in 2001. The picture was similar across London where the proportion increased from 8 to 13 per cent between 2001-2011.
- A number of other ethnic groups in the borough, though smaller in population size, have also seen quite **fast growth** (relative to the overall growth rate for the borough of 30 per cent). The following groups have more than doubled in size: Mixed ethnic groups (+113 per cent); Indian (+126 per cent); Chinese (+127 per cent); Other Asian (+227 per cent) and Black Other (+312 per cent).
- The Bangladeshi population has grown by 24 per cent since 2001 (an increase in number of 15,824 residents). However, because the population grew at a slower rate than the population generally (30 per cent), the proportion of the Tower Hamlets population who are **Bangladeshi** has fallen marginally from 33 per cent to 32 per cent.
- According to the **Simpson's Diversity Index**, which takes account of the mix and size of the 18 different ethnic groups in the population, Tower Hamlets is the 16th most diverse local authority in England out of 326 local authority areas (ie in the most diverse 5 per cent of local authorities nationally).
- Within the London context, Tower Hamlets emerges as the 15th most diverse borough in London (out of 33 areas) – with a diversity score just above the London average.
- This briefing has analysed the first set of 2011 Census results about ethnicity. More detailed figures about the characteristics of the borough's ethnic group populations are expected in the coming months.

1 About this briefing

This briefing presents 2011 Census data about ethnicity and explores what the new data reveal about the Tower Hamlets population.

The Census provides a wealth of data about the characteristics of the local population and the results are being released in stages during 2012-2013. The data in this briefing are based mainly on the second release of Census data which took place in December 2012. At this time, the Corporate Research Unit produced an initial summary report of these results for Tower Hamlets.¹

To follow this report, a series of topic reports is planned to provide more in-depth analysis of the data. This briefing on ethnicity is the first of these reports and covers the following areas:

- An introduction to the new ethnic classification used in the Census;
- A profile of the ethnic composition of the borough's population;
- The ethnic profile in Tower Hamlets compared to that of other areas;
- Analysis of changes in the borough's ethnic group populations since 2001;
- Analysis of the Simpson's diversity index –which quantifies how ethnically diverse Tower Hamlets is compared with other areas.

2 Background about the Census

The Census aims to provide a count of all people and households in the UK and is carried out every ten years by the Office for National Statistics. The 2011 Census took place in March 2011 and the questionnaire collected data on a range of topics including: demography, diversity, labour market circumstances, housing and health.

While the Census aims for complete coverage, in practice it achieved a response rate of 94 per cent across England and Wales and about 91 per cent per cent in Tower Hamlets². To deal with non-response ONS imputes the missing values so the final data accurately reflect the size and composition of the population. Response rates in Tower Hamlets have improved dramatically since the previous Census in 2001 (up 15 percentage points from 76 per cent)³, improving the reliability of the data.

One of the main strengths of the Census is that, unlike sample surveys, it can provide reliable estimates for small groups within the population and for small areas within local authorities. This makes it particularly valuable for analysis of topics like diversity. Furthermore, as it takes place at the same time, in the same way, across the entire country, it enables comprehensive benchmarking of key data.

¹ LBTH, Research Briefing 2012-12, 2011 Census: Second Release - [Headline Analysis](#)

² ONS, [Response rates in the 2011 Census](#)

³ Greater London Authority, [2011 Census quality assurance: London borough's response rates](#)

3 The ethnic group classification

Ethnic classifications are the subject of considerable debate and many different classifications exist. Most classifications tend to reflect a mix of quite different aspects of cultural identity including: skin colour, geography, ancestry and national identity. The ethnic classification used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for 2011 Census purposes took years to develop, and has been subject to various consultations and extensive testing⁴. The Census ethnic classification tends to be one of most widely used for statistical and monitoring purposes.

ONS has asked an ethnic group question on the Census since 1991, and the classification has changed with each Census. ONS takes on board a wide range of factors in determining the final classification, including how the population changes over time, and the changing needs of data users and interest groups – all of which have to be balanced against what is feasible. Of all the Census questions, the development of the ethnic group question is thought to be one of the most complex.

The 1991 Census classification comprised 9 categories and, in 2001, this grew to 16 categories. At the same time, to help respondents navigate the longer list of groups, five summary headings were also added to the question. In the 2011 Census, the classification expanded further to 18 categories with the inclusion of two new categories: ‘Arab’ and ‘Gypsy or Irish Traveller’. In addition, there were also changes to wording and the placement of some groups. Appendix A explores the impact of these changes on comparability between 2001 and 2011. Figure 1 shows the final classification used in 2011.

Figure 1 – 2011 Census: ethnicity question

16 What is your ethnic group?
 ↻ Choose **one** section from A to E, then tick **one** box to best describe your ethnic group or background

A White

- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other White background, write in

B Mixed/multiple ethnic groups

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background, write in

C Asian/Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background, write in

D Black/African/Caribbean/Black British

- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, write in

E Other ethnic group

- Arab
- Any other ethnic group, write in

⁴ Office for National Statistics, Final recommended questions for the 2011 Census in England and Wales: Ethnic group, October 2009. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011-census/2011-census-questionnaire-content/recommended-questions---ethnic-group.pdf>

4 Population by ethnic group in Tower Hamlets - overview

The 2011 Census results re-affirm London’s position as the most ethnically diverse region in England, and in common with many London Boroughs, Tower Hamlets has a relatively high proportion of residents from minority ethnic groups.

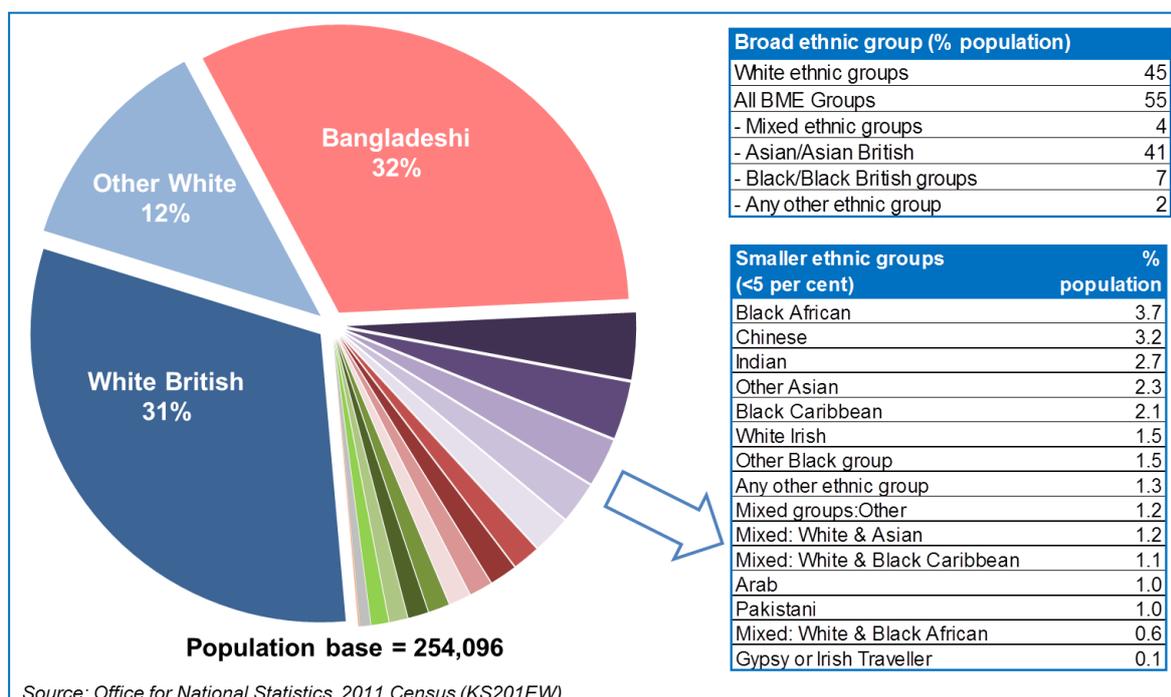
More than two thirds of the borough’s population belong to minority ethnic groups (ie not White British): 55 per cent⁵ belong to BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) groups⁶ and a further 14 per cent are from White minority groups.

Figure 2 shows the detailed ethnic composition of the borough’s population according to the 2011 Census classification into 18 different ethnic groups – the chart illustrates the borough’s rich ethnic diversity and its distinct ethnic profile.

The borough’s two largest single ethnic groups are the Bangladeshi and the White British populations who each comprise just under one third of residents (32 and 31 per cent respectively).

The ‘Other White’ group is the third largest group comprising 12 per cent of the population. Considered together, people from these three ethnic groups make up around three-quarters of the Tower Hamlets population. The remaining quarter of residents belong to 15 different ethnic groups – which are smaller in size.

Figure 2 Population by ethnic group, Tower Hamlets, 2011 Census



⁵ In the report narrative, most percentages have been rounded to the nearest percentage point.

⁶ The term BME (Black and minority ethnic groups) is used throughout this report to refer to all ethnic groups except the four White groups.

Table 1 Population by ethnic group, Tower Hamlets, London & England, 2011

	Tower Hamlets Numbers	Tower Hamlets	London	England
		Percentage totals (%)		
All residents	254,096	100	100	100
White ethnic groups	114,819	45	60	85
- White British	79,231	31	45	80
- Irish	3,863	2	2	1
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller*	175	0	0	0
- Other White	31,550	12	13	5
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	10,360	4	5	2
- White and Black Caribbean	2,837	1	1	1
- White and Black African	1,509	1	1	0
- White and Asian	2,961	1	1	1
- Other Mixed	3,053	1	1	1
Asian/Asian British	104,501	41	18	8
- Indian	6,787	3	7	3
- Pakistani	2,442	1	3	2
- Bangladeshi	81,377	32	3	1
- Chinese	8,109	3	2	1
- Other Asian	5,786	2	5	2
Black ethnic groups	18,629	7	13	3
- African	9,495	4	7	2
- Caribbean	5,341	2	4	1
- Other Black group	3,793	1	2	1
Any other ethnic group	5,787	2	3	1
- Arab*	2,573	1	1	0
- Any other ethnic group	3,214	1	2	1
All BME Groups	139,277	55	40	15

Source: ONS, 2011 Census (Table KS201)

* New ethnicity categories introduced in 2011 Census for the first time.

5 Ethnic profile: Tower Hamlets compared with other areas

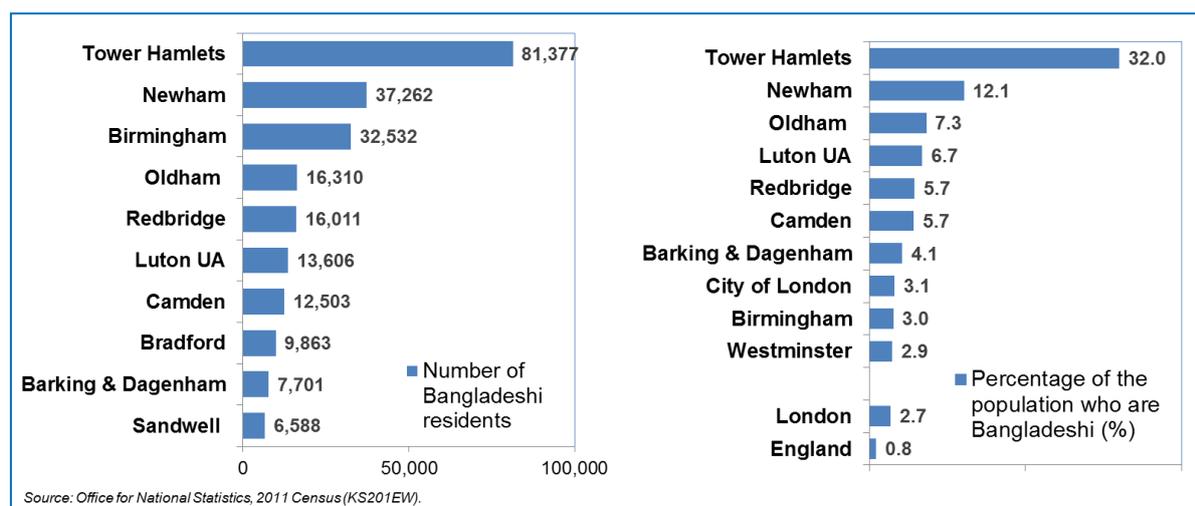
Table 1 compares the borough's ethnic profile to that of London and England.

The borough's **Bangladeshi population** makes up almost one third (32 per cent) of the population – far larger than proportion across London (3 per cent) or England (< 1 per cent). Tower Hamlets is unusual in its large concentration of Bangladeshi residents and has - by far – the largest Bangladeshi population in England, in terms of both numbers and as a proportion of the population.

After Tower Hamlets, Newham has the second largest Bangladeshi population nationally comprising 12 per cent of Newham residents. Other areas with significant Bangladeshi populations are shown in Figure 3. These include Birmingham, Oldham, Redbridge, Luton and Camden – all of which have populations numbering more than 10,000.

Bangladeshi residents in Tower Hamlets make up 37 per cent of the entire Bangladeshi population in London and 19 per cent of the Bangladeshi population in England.

Figure 3 Local authorities with the largest Bangladeshi populations (top 10), by size and percentage, 2011 Census



The Census also collected data on country of birth. The data show that in 2011, residents who were born in Bangladesh numbered 38,877 compared with 81,377 of residents whose ethnic group was Bangladeshi – this indicates that around half (48 per cent) of the Bangladeshi population in the borough are first generation migrants.

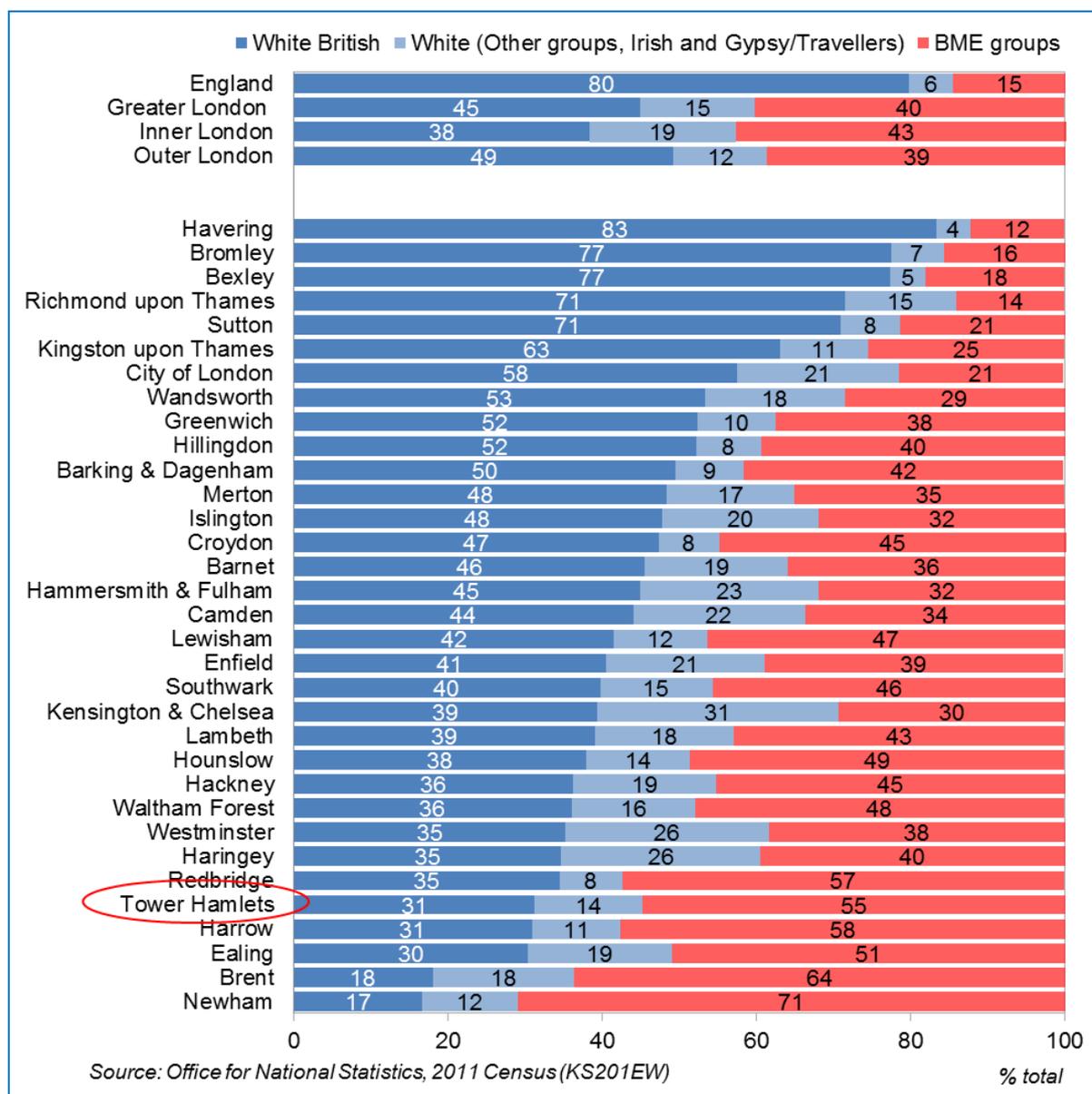
The **White British** group make up 31 per cent of the borough's population, lower than the proportion in London (45 per cent) and England (80 per cent). Tower Hamlets has the fifth lowest proportion of White British residents in England. Newham and Brent had the lowest rates nationally at 17 and 18 per cent respectively (Figure 4).

The third largest ethnic group in the borough is the '**Other White**' group who comprise one out of every eight borough residents (12 per cent) – similar to the

London average (13 per cent). Kensington & Chelsea has the largest percentage of residents from the Other White group in England (29 per cent).

The Other White ethnic group is extremely diverse and includes residents from a mix of ethnic backgrounds including residents from areas such as Western and Eastern Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Turkey, North and South America⁷.

Figure 4 Composition of population by ethnicity, London Boroughs, 2011



White Irish residents are counted as a distinct ethnic group and they comprise 2 per cent of the population, the same as the London average. In 2011, a new white ethnic category was introduced into the Census: ‘**Gypsy or Irish Traveller**’. In Tower Hamlets, this group were small in size - numbering 175 people.

⁷ Examples based on analysis of 2011 Census table QS211 which provides analysis of the write in responses provided by residents who ticked Other White.

All White ethnic groups, considered together, make up 45 per cent of the borough's population, lower than the London average (60 per cent) and almost half the national average (85 per cent).

Residents from **Black ethnic groups** make up 7 per cent of the population comprising: 4 per cent from Black African groups; 2 per cent from Black Caribbean groups; and 1 per cent from Other Black groups. Tower Hamlets has a smaller proportion of Black residents relative to the London average (7 vs. 13 per cent).

Indian and **Chinese** residents each represent 3 per cent of the borough's population and **Pakistani** residents make up 1 per cent of the population. A further 2 per cent belong to '**Other Asian**' groups. This population is extremely diverse and examples of groups captured under this heading include: Vietnamese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Sri Lankan, Thai and Malaysian.⁸

Compared with London, Tower Hamlets has a smaller proportion of Indian, Pakistani and Other Asian residents, but a higher proportion of Chinese residents. While Chinese residents comprise a relatively small proportion of the overall population in Tower Hamlets (3.2 per cent) – this is in fact the third highest percentage in England, after Cambridge and the City of London (both 3.6 per cent).

Residents from **mixed** or multiple ethnic groups represent 4 per cent of the borough's population, close to the London average (5 per cent) and higher than the national average (2 per cent).

The 2011 Census is the first Census to include '**Arab**' as an ethnic group. In Tower Hamlets, Arab residents numbered 2,573 – this represents 1 per cent of the borough's population – the same as the London-wide percentage.

6 Census data on Somali residents

The size of the borough's Somali population has been the subject of much debate in recent years and a review of different estimates in 2010 suggested that the size of the Somali population in Tower Hamlets was likely to be somewhere between 2-3 per cent of the population⁹. Unfortunately, Somali was not listed as a separate ethnic group on the Census **which means it remains difficult to obtain a firm estimate of the number of residents who are 'ethnically' Somali.**

When responding to the ethnicity question, it is likely that most Somali residents ticked either the *Black African* box or the *Black Other* box. Analysis of the Census 'other write in' responses shows that a total of 2,349 residents specifically identified themselves as either *Somali* (1,802) or *Somalilander* (547) when responding to the ethnicity question – most were captured as part of the *Black Other* write in group. However, because it is not known how many other Somali residents ticked the *Black African* category, these figures only capture part of the Somali population and are of limited use.

⁸ Based on analysis of 2011 Census table QS211 which provides analysis of the write in responses provided by residents who ticked Other Asian.

⁹ LBTH, The Somali population in Tower Hamlets (25.10.10, Strategy & Performance team).

Analysis of Census data on country of birth, which provides intelligence on the number of Somali-born residents, provides a higher figure for the population (Table 2) – though, again, these data are partial as they only count first generation residents.

The data show that, in 2011, 2,925 Tower Hamlets residents were born in Somalia representing 1.2 per cent of the population. The size of the Somali-born population has more than doubled in size since 2001. As these figures do not include UK-born children of Somali residents (ie second generation residents) they will underestimate of the size of the entire Somali population.

	2001	2011	Change	
	Census	Census	Number	% Change
Residents born in Somalia	1,353	2,925	+1,572	116
As % of population	0.7	1.2		

Source: Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census (QS203); 2001 Census (UV008).

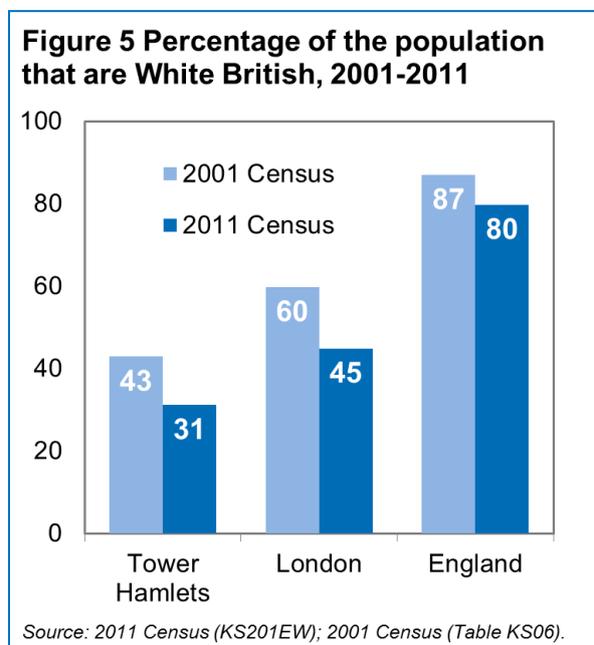
7 Ethnic composition of the borough - Change over time

This section examines change in the ethnic profile of the borough since the last Census in 2001. While there were some changes to the Census ethnic classification between 2001 and 2011 ONS has advised that the questions are 'broadly comparable'. Appendix A provides further detail.

Trend data show that the borough’s population has grown strongly since 2001 and that it is becoming more ethnically diverse (Table 3), in line with regional and national trends¹⁰.

The Tower Hamlets population has increased by 30 per cent between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses – the largest increase in England. Similarly, most ethnic group populations have also shown strong growth with the notable exception of the White British group which has fallen in both absolute and relative terms.

The number of White British residents in the borough has fallen by -4,920 since 2001 and the proportion of the population that is White British has declined from 43 to 31 per cent. National and regional trends show a similar picture of increasing diversity – in England the proportion of the population who were White British fell from 87 to 80 per cent between 2001 and 2011. In London, the percentage fell more strongly from 60 per cent to 45 per cent (Figure 5).



¹⁰ [Ethnicity and National Identity in England & Wales 2011](#), ONS, December 2012

Table 3 Population by ethnic group, 2001 and 2011 compared, Tower Hamlets

	2001 Census		2011 Census		Change between 2001-2011**	
	Number	% total	Number	% total	Number	% change
All residents	196,106	100	254,096	100	57,990	30
White ethnic groups	100,799	51	114,819	45	14,020	14
- White British	84,151	43	79,231	31	-4,920	-6
- Irish	3,823	2	3,863	2	40	1
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller (*)	n/a	n/a	175	0	n/a	
- Other White	12,825	7	31,550	12	18,725	146
Mixed ethnic groups	4,873	2	10,360	4	5,487	113
- White & Black Caribbean	1,568	1	2,837	1	1,269	81
- White & Black African	789	0	1,509	1	720	91
- White & Asian	1,348	1	2,961	1	1,613	120
- Other Mixed	1,168	1	3,053	1	1,885	161
Asian/Asian British	75,380	38	104,501	41	29,121	39
- Indian	3,001	2	6,787	3	3,786	126
- Pakistani	1,486	1	2,442	1	956	64
- Bangladeshi	65,553	33	81,377	32	15,824	24
- Chinese	3,573	2	8,109	3	4,536	127
- Other Asian	1,767	1	5,786	2	4,019	227
Black ethnic groups	12,742	6	18,629	7	5,887	46
- African	6,596	3	9,495	4	2,899	44
- Caribbean	5,225	3	5,341	2	116	2
- Other Black group	921	0	3,793	1	2,872	312
Other ethnic groups						
- Arab (*)	n/a	n/a	2,573	1	n/a	
- Any other ethnic group	2,312	1	3,214	1	902	39
All BME Groups	95,307	49	139,277	55	43,970	46

Source: ONS, 2011 Census (Table KS201EW); 2001 Census (Table KS06).

Notes:

* New ethnicity categories introduced in 2011 Census for the first time.

** There were a number of changes to the ethnic classification between 2001 and 2011 which affect these comparisons. To improve comparability, 2001 data for the Asian/Asian British groups total has been reworked to include the same ethnic categories as in 2011. See Appendix A for further detail on the impact of these changes on comparability.

The borough's White Irish population has shown no growth over the period and has declined slightly as a proportion of the population from 1.9 to 1.5 per cent of the population, reflecting regional and national trends.

In contrast, the 'Other White' group has shown significant growth over the period – both nationally and locally. In Tower Hamlets, the Other White group has more than doubled in size between 2001 and 2011 from 12,825 to 31,550 - a rise of 18,725 in number and a percentage rise of 146 per cent. People from Other White groups now make up 12 per cent of the borough's population – up from 7 per cent since 2001. The picture was similar across London where the proportion of White Other groups increased from 8 to 13 per cent between 2001-2011.

A number of other ethnic groups in the borough, though smaller in population size, have also seen quite fast growth (relative to the overall growth rate for the borough of 30 per cent). The following ethnic groups have more than doubled in size:

- Mixed ethnic groups (+113 per cent);
- Indian (+126 per cent);
- Chinese (+127 per cent);
- Other Asian (+227 per cent)
- Black Other (+312 per cent).

The Bangladeshi population has grown in size (+15,824) since 2001 – a percentage increase of 24 per cent. However, because this growth rate is slower than the overall growth rate of 30 per cent in the borough, the proportion of the population who are Bangladeshi has fallen marginally from 33 per cent in 2001 to 32 per cent in 2011.

8 Multi-ethnic households

In Tower Hamlets, 21 per cent of households are 'multi-ethnic households'. These are households that contain residents from more than one ethnic group. Multi-ethnic households can have different ethnicities across the generations as well as those where partners are from different ethnic groups. Examples of such households would include: a couple family who comprise a Black Caribbean mother, a White British father and a child of mixed ethnicity; or a group of flatmates who belong to a variety of different ethnic groups.

	Tower Hamlets (number)	Tower Hamlets	London	England % total
All households	101,257	100	100	100
One person household	35,047	35	32	30
All household members have same ethnicity	44,668	44	47	61
Multi-ethnic households:	21,542	21	22	9
- <i>Different groups within partnerships (and/or also between generations)</i>	8,428	8	9	5
- <i>Different groups across generations only</i>	3,827	4	6	2
- <i>Other combination of multiple ethnic groups</i>	9,287	9	6	2

Source: ONS, 2011 Census, Table QS202EW

The remainder of the borough's households are those where all members belong to the same ethnic group (44 per cent) or single person households (35 per cent).

The proportion of multi-ethnic households in the borough has risen from 14 per cent up to 21 per cent between 2001 and 2011. The picture is similar in London where there has been a rise from 15 to 22 per cent. Nationally, the proportion of multi-ethnic households has also risen (7 to 9 per cent) though the overall proportion of multi-ethnic households in England remains much lower than in London.

9 Measuring ethnic diversity

The concept of ethnic diversity can be measured in different ways – so the answer to the frequently asked question: *How diverse is Tower Hamlets?* - depends entirely on which particular measure is used. Here, we consider two measures of ethnic diversity - both based on 2011 Census data.

Simple measure - % non-white British

The first, and simplest, measure of ethnic diversity is a straightforward percentage that measures the proportion of the population that is not White British, which captures the proportion of the population that are from all minority ethnic groups (White and BME). These data were explored earlier and showed that more than two thirds (69 per cent) of Tower Hamlets residents come from ethnic groups other than White British. On this measure, Tower Hamlets is the fifth most diverse local authority in England (out of 326 local authority areas), after Newham, Brent, Ealing and Harrow (Figure 4).

Enhanced measure – Simpson's Diversity Index (Figure 6)

The second measure considered is the Simpson's Diversity Index. This is a more refined analysis of diversity as it takes account of the mix and size of all 18 ethnic groups in the population. The GLA has calculated this index using 2011 Census data at local authority level¹¹. The index can potentially range from 1 to 18 (least to most diverse). If an area had 18 equally sized ethnic group populations – the maximum diversity possible (theoretically) in an area – the value of the index would be 18. At the other end of the spectrum, a score of 1 would mean an area's entire population came from one ethnic group (no diversity at all). In reality, most areas tend to have a higher concentration of residents from one ethnic group over another – so in practice, all areas score less than 10.

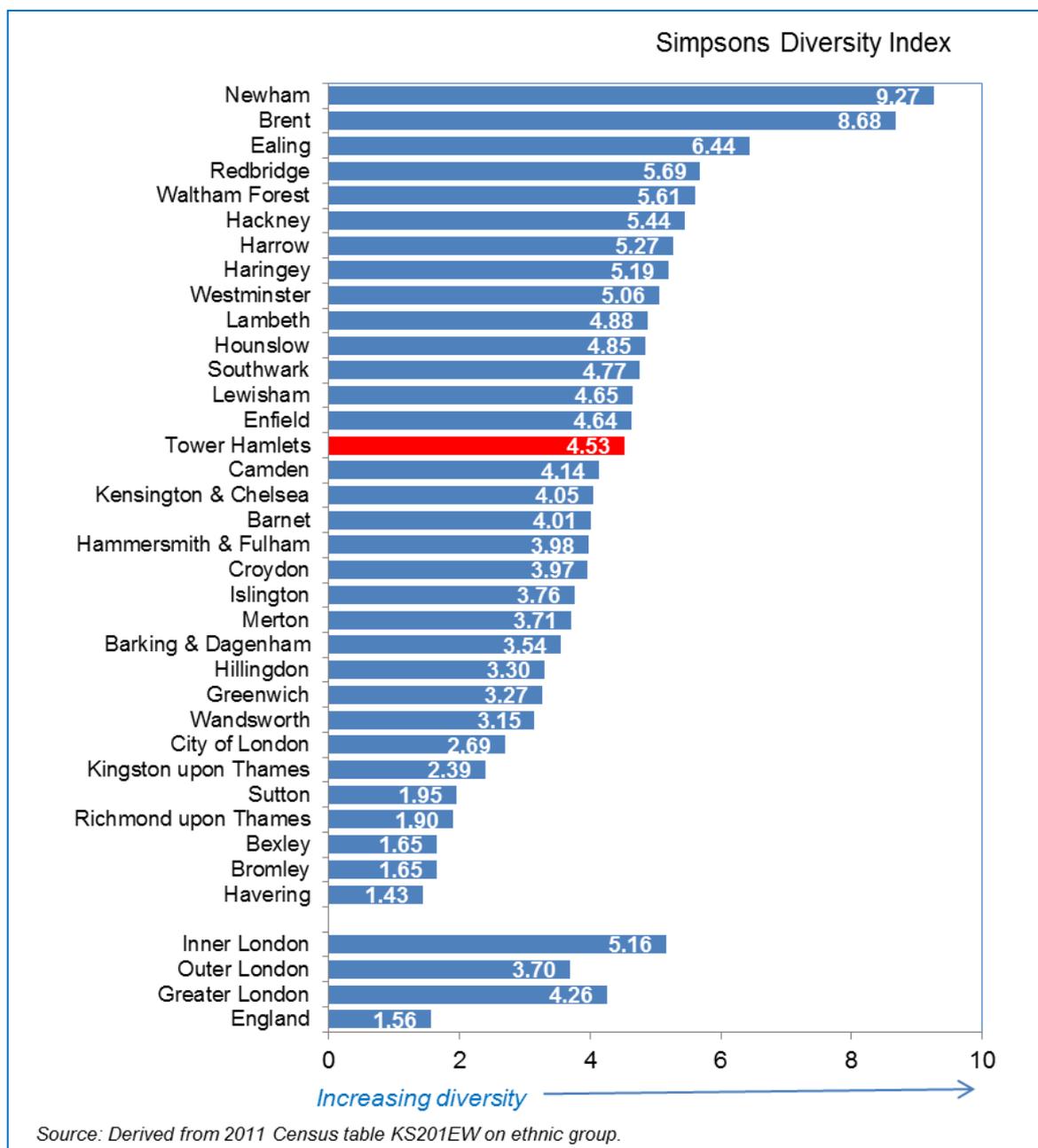
The diversity index for the England population as whole is quite low at 1.56, whereas for London, the score is far higher at 4.26. The most diverse score nationally is 9.27 for Newham, followed by Brent at 8.68 (Figure 6). Tower Hamlets emerges with a score of 4.53 just above the London-wide average. This makes Tower Hamlets:

- the 16th most diverse local authority nationally out of 326 local authority areas in England (ie in the most diverse 5% of local authorities in England);
- the 15th most diverse borough in London (out of 33) – about average for London.

¹¹ Greater London Authority (Intelligence Unit), [2011 Census Snapshot: Ethnic Diversity Indices](#)

London Boroughs dominate the list of most diverse local authorities in England - of the top 20, only 2 are outside London: Slough (ranked 8th) and Luton (ranked 17th).

Figure 6 Simpson’s Diversity Index for London Boroughs (based on 2011 Census)



10 More information

This briefing was produced by the Council’s Corporate Research Unit. This report is a summary of available Census data as at January 2013. More detail about the characteristics of different ethnic group populations is expected in the coming months.

For more information about the Census results, please see the [LBTH intranet](#). For more information about this report, please contact: [Lorna Spence](#), Research Officer, Corporate Research Unit.

Appendix A – Changes to the Census ethnic classification

ONS has asked an ethnic group question on the Census since 1991, and the classification has changed with each Census. ONS takes on board a wide range of factors in determining the final classification, including how the population changes over time, and the changing needs of data users and interest groups – all of which have to be balanced against what is feasible. Of all the Census questions, the development of the ethnic group question is thought to be one of the most complex. Table A1 shows how the ethnic classification has changed over the last thirty years. The 1991 Census classification comprised 9 categories and, in 2001, this grew to 16 categories – reflecting the addition of several ‘mixed’ ethnic groups and additional White groups. To help respondents navigate the longer list of groups, five summary headings were also added to the question in 2001.

Table A1 ONS ethnic classifications for 1991, 2001 and 2011 Censuses England

1991 Census (9 categories)	2001 Census (16 categories)	2011 Census (18 categories)
<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>What is your ethnic group?</i>	<i>What is your ethnic group?</i>
White	White	White
Black-Caribbean	- British	- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
Black-African	- Irish	- Irish
Black-Other*	- Any other White background*	- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
Indian		- Any other White background*
Pakistani	Mixed	Mixed / multiple ethnic groups
Bangladeshi	- White and Black Caribbean	- White and Black Caribbean
Chinese	- White and Black African	- White and Black African
Any other ethnic group*	- White and Asian	- White and Asian
	- Any other mixed background*	- Any other mixed background*
	Asian or Asian British	Asian / Asian British
	- Indian	- Indian
	- Pakistani	- Pakistani
	- Bangladeshi	- Bangladeshi
	- Any other Asian background*	- Chinese
		- Any other Asian background*
	Black or Black British	Black / African / Caribbean / Black British
	- Caribbean	- African
	- African	- Caribbean
	- Any other Black background*	- Any other Black/African/Caribbean background*
	Chinese or other ethnic group	Other ethnic group
	- Chinese	- Arab
	- Any other*	- Any other ethnic group*

Source: ONS, Census questionnaires for England, 1991,2001 and 2011

*‘Write-in’ boxes are provided for these groups for respondents to provide detail of their ethnic group.

In the 2011 Census, the classification expanded further to 18 categories and there were also been changes to wording and the placement and order of some of the groups. These changes will affect how some respondents will answer and how they classify themselves – and need to be considered when comparing data between 2001 and 2011. Table A2 lists the main changes and discusses the likely impact on comparability.

Despite the changes, ONS has advised that the ethnicity data from 2001 and 2011 are 'broadly comparable'¹².

Table A2 Changes between 2001 and 2011 and potential implications

Changes	Impact on comparability (ONS advice)
<i>British</i> tick-box relabelled to <i>English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British</i> .	Small loss of comparability between new and old White British category. Direct like for like comparisons still possible for all White groups amalgamated.
New <i>Gypsy or Irish Traveller</i> tick-box added under <i>White</i> heading.	May have some small effect on comparability on tick boxes within White category (ie previously this group are likely to have identified as White British/Irish or Other). Direct like for like comparisons still possible for all White groups amalgamated.
<i>Chinese</i> tick-box repositioned from <i>Chinese or other ethnic group</i> section to <i>Asian/Asian British</i> section.	Comparability of Chinese numbers expected to be good - despite the move. However, this change of position is expected to affect direct comparability of a number of other groups: - the combined <i>Asian groups</i> totals - the <i>Asian other</i> category - some mixed categories (ie <i>White and Asian</i> ; any other mixed/multiple ethnic group)
<i>Arab</i> tick-box added under <i>Other ethnic group</i> heading.	Impact of this is not yet clear. ONS research indicates, that in 2001, many British Arabs tended to tick one of the <i>Other' categories</i> , though others ticked boxes such as African.
<i>Black or Black British</i> heading relabelled <i>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British</i> .	No effect on comparability is anticipated from the relabelled section heading.
Order of <i>African</i> and <i>Caribbean</i> tick-boxes reversed to list 'African' first.	No effect on comparability is anticipated from the reversal of labels.
Source: Office for National Statistics, <i>Final recommended questions for the 2011 Census in England and Wales: Ethnic group</i> , October 2009	

¹² Office for National Statistics, 2011-2001 Census in England and Wales, Questionnaire comparability (December 2012)