

# 2021 Census: First release results

What the new data tell us about the Brent population

1 July 2022



BUILDING A  
BETTER BRENT

A decorative horizontal line consisting of four colored segments: green, blue, purple, and orange.

# Headlines (1)

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published the first release of 2021 census data on the 28 June 2022. This report explores what the figures reveal about the Brent population. Key findings:

- **Census population:** On census day (21 March 2021), the ‘usually resident’ population of Brent was 339,800, making Brent the 5<sup>th</sup> largest London borough. The census figure represents an upward correction (+4%) in Brent’s ‘official’ population estimate and will inform future estimates and projections.
- **Change:** The borough’s population has grown by 28,600 since the last census in 2011, a rise of 9%. This compares with an increase of 8% across London and 6% across England & Wales. The census figure represents a new historical high in the size of the borough’s population.
- **Density:** Brent has a population density of 7,859 people per square kilometre – the 14th highest population density in England & Wales, and the highest in Outer London.
- **Age profile:** In common with other London boroughs, Brent has a younger age profile compared with England & Wales, characterised by more adults aged 20-44 and fewer older residents. Around 12% of Brent residents were aged over 65 compared with 19% nationally.
- **Ageing population:** However, in line with wider trends, the population is ageing: the number of residents aged 50 and over has increased by 27% since 2011. In contrast, the number of children under five has fallen by 11% over the last ten years. This is consistent with falling birth rates in recent years, a pattern also seen across London and nationally. The number aged 25-29 also saw a sharp fall between 2011-21 (down 16%). It is possible this could, in part, reflect the pandemic timing of the census, with some younger adults being temporarily away at the time.

# Headlines (2)

- **Sex:** Women comprise just over half (51%) of the population but make up a higher proportion of the elderly population: 59% of those aged 80 and over are female. The sex ratio in Brent is similar to that across London and England & Wales (both 51% female).
- **Households:** The census counted around 118,600 occupied households in Brent (i.e. households containing at least one usual resident). This was up 8,300 since 2011 – a rise of 8%, compared with 5% across London and 6% across England & Wales.
- **Person response rate:** The response rate in Brent was 93%, up from 88% in 2011\*. Brent's rate was lower than the rate across London (95%) and England & Wales (97%). To ensure the census provides a picture of the whole population, data are adjusted upwards to account for non-response. The 2021 census was a 'digital first' census and most Brent households completed the census online (96%).
- **Pandemic impacts:** The census took place during the pandemic, when a range of lockdown restrictions were still in place. It is likely that some residents were temporarily away at this time (e.g. students, furloughed workers, migrant workers). Research by the Greater London Authority suggests that many have since returned to the capital. Census results need to be viewed in this context – as a snapshot of the borough population – as at March 2021.
- **Future data:** The first release provides headline data only – the vast majority of census statistics will be released later, from Autumn 2022 into 2023. These will provide information about the characteristics of Brent's residents and about local areas within the borough (e.g. wards).

# Brent Summary

## census 2021

First release

**339,800**  
Brent population



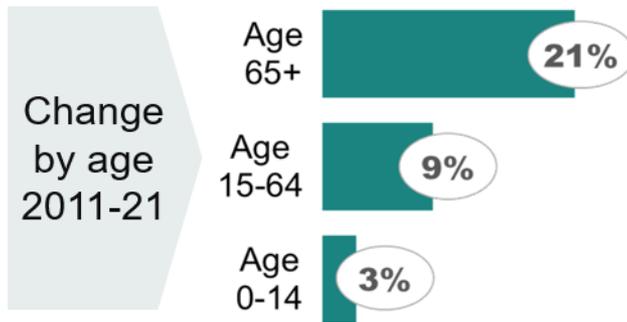
**▲9%**  
Increase  
2011-21



Population  
density  
**7,859**  
people  
per km<sup>2</sup>



14th highest  
in England &  
Wales



**20,000**  
Children  
aged 0-4



**40,700**  
Children  
aged 5-14

**10,600**  
Residents aged 80+



**118,600**  
Number of households



**▲8%**  
Increase  
2011-21

**49%** Male    **51%** Female



Response rate  
**93%**

**▲ up 5**  
points since  
2011 Census



**96%** of  
households  
responded  
online



# Introduction

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## About this report

The census is a survey that happens every 10 years that aims to provide a detailed picture of the population. The latest census took place on Sunday 21 March 2021. This briefing summarises the ‘first release’ of census results, published by the Office for National Statistics on 28 June 2022. The analysis explores what the early statistics reveal about the Brent population and how it has changed since 2011. Topics covered include:

- Population size and density
- How the census population compares with previous population estimates
- Population change between 2011-2021
- Long-term population trends 1801-2021
- The changing age profile of the population
- Population by sex and age
- Number of households
- Census response rates
- Plans for future census releases and further information

## About the data

- First release data were published rounded to the nearest 100 so figures do not always sum exactly to totals.
- Change figures have been calculated with rounded estimates for 2021 and unrounded estimates from 2011.
- All percentages in the narrative have all been rounded to the nearest percentage point.
- London rankings are out of 33 areas; national rankings are out of 331 areas in England & Wales.
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# Population size

## Population size

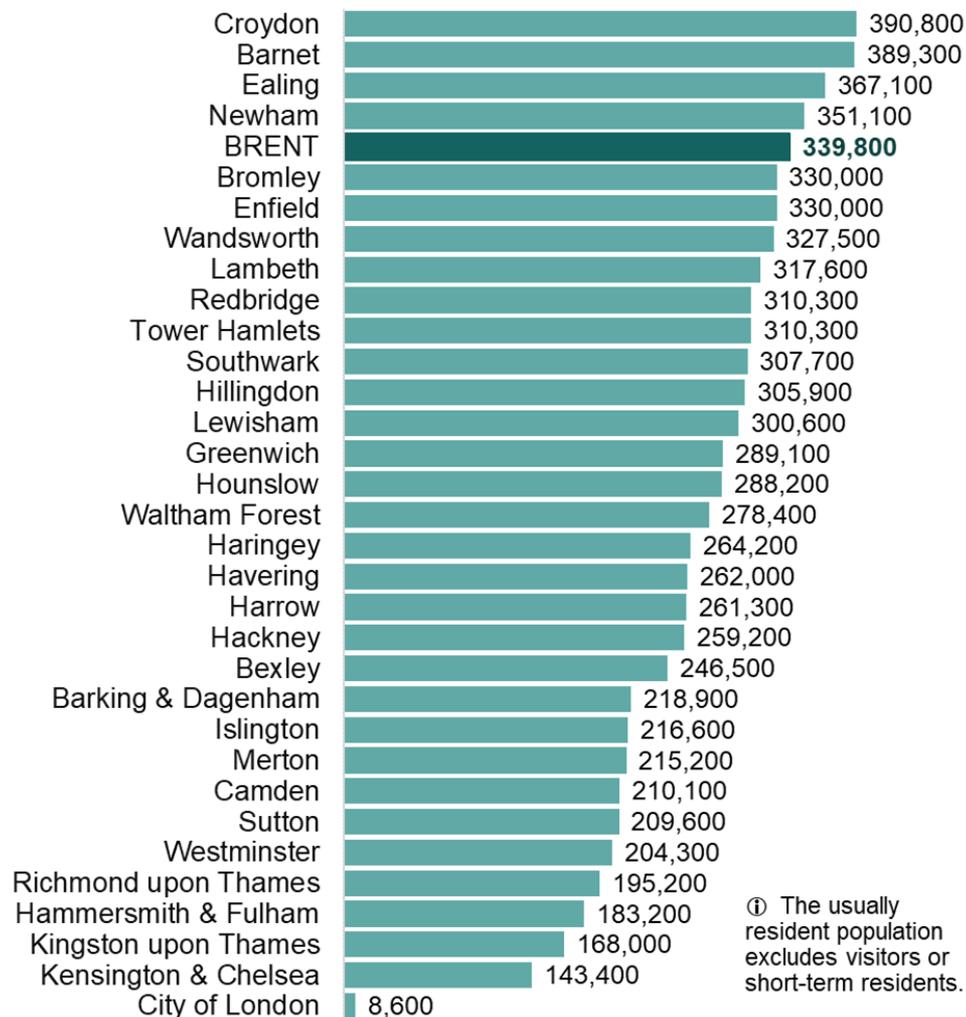
On census day (21 March 2021), the population of Brent was estimated to be 339,800. This makes Brent the 5<sup>th</sup> largest London borough in terms of population size. Nationally, Brent is ranked 29<sup>th</sup> largest out of 331 areas in England & Wales.

## Pandemic impacts

The census took place at a time when a range of pandemic lockdown restrictions were still in place. It is likely that some residents were temporarily away at this time (e.g. students, furloughed and migrant workers). While some will still have been captured on the census at their usual/term-time address, others will not have been. Research by the Greater London Authority indicates that many such residents have since returned to the capital\*. **For this reason, census results need to be viewed in this context – as a pandemic snapshot of the borough population – as at March 2021.**

## Population (usual residents)

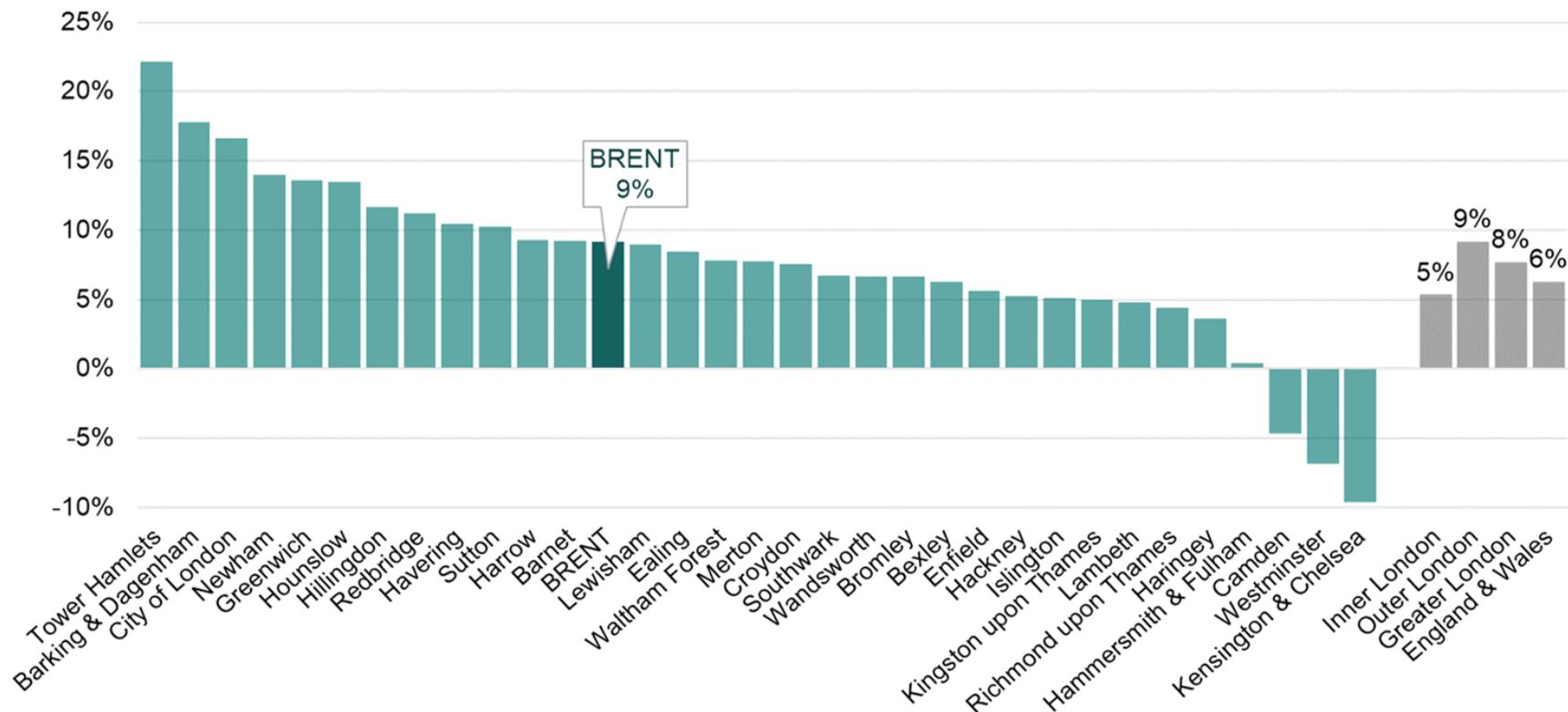
London boroughs, 2021 Census



# Population change 2011-2021

The Brent population has grown by 28,600 since the last census in 2011, a rise of 9%. This compares with an increase of 8% across London and 6% across England & Wales. Within London, Tower Hamlets saw the fastest growth (+22%) while the boroughs of Camden, Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea all saw declines in their population. Overall, growth was stronger across Outer London\* than Inner London (9% vs. 5%). These patterns are likely to reflect a range of different factors, including levels of housing development across boroughs as well as pandemic and Brexit-related impacts on the 2021 census estimate.

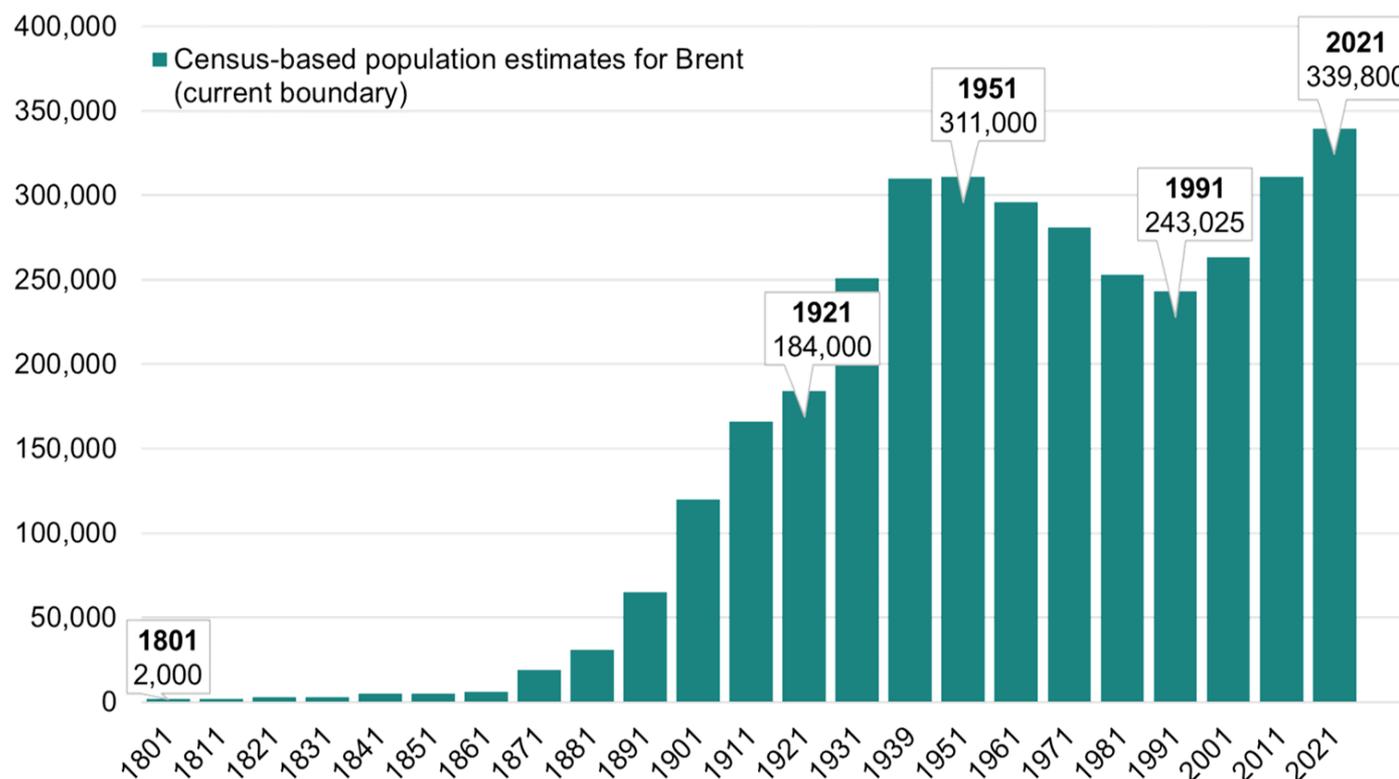
## Change in population (% change) 2011-21, London boroughs



# Long-term historical trends

To put the new census figure in context, the chart below shows how the Brent population has changed over the last 200 years, since census records began in 1801. Like most London boroughs, the population of Brent saw a major decline in the post-war period, which ended in the early nineties, after which it began growing again. The latest census figure for 2021 represents a new high in the size of the borough's population.

## Population change in Brent – the long term picture 1801-2021



### Notes

Figures for the years 1801-1971 are from research carried out by the Greater London Council in 1978. This analysis reworked historical census data by area to estimate counts for London boroughs. Later figures are published census counts for Brent.

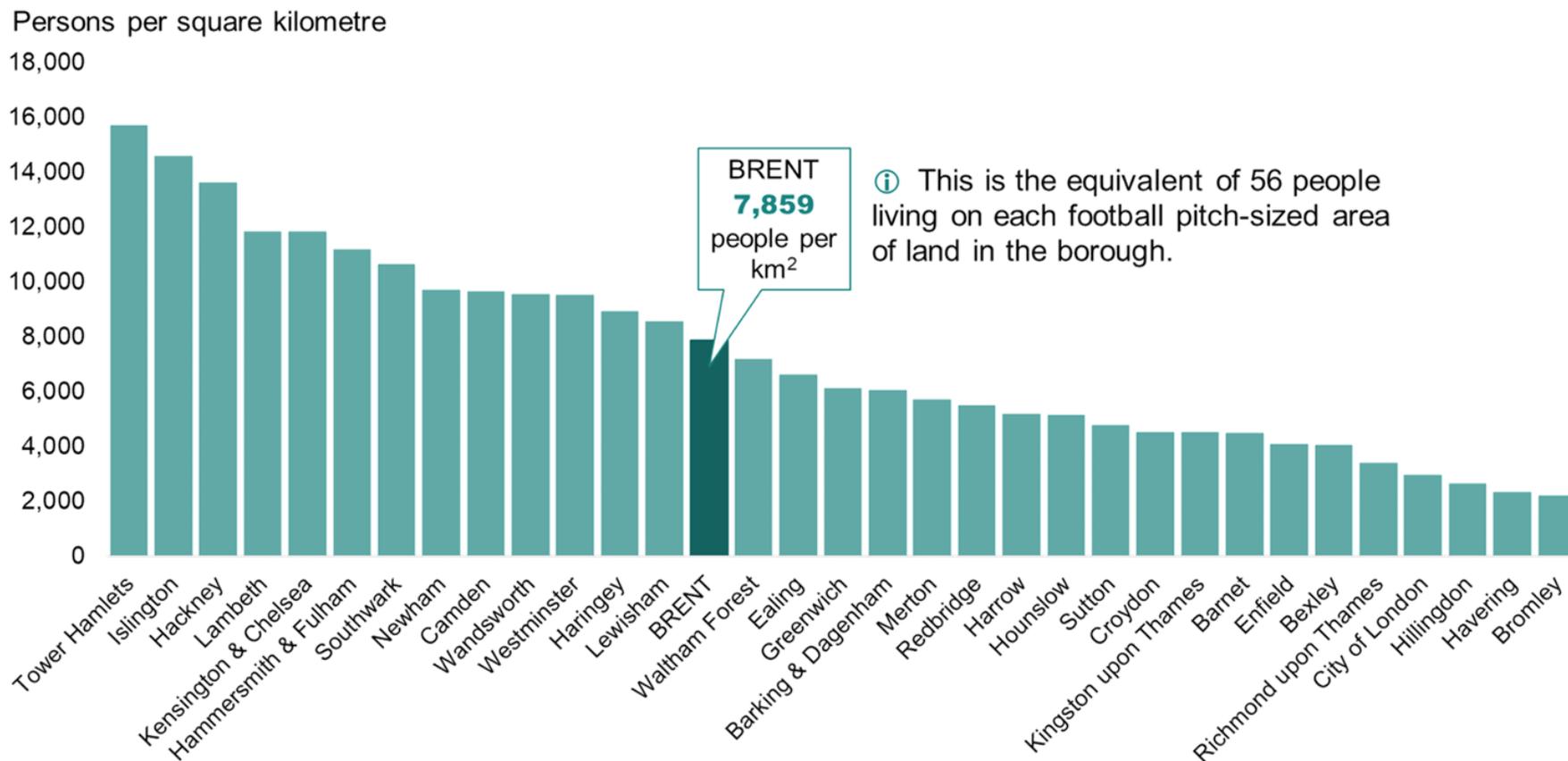
Figures for 1801-1981 relate to persons present population definition, while later data relate to the current usual resident definition.

The 1941 Census was cancelled because of the Second World War. The 1939 figure shown is a count from the 1939 National Population Register.

# Population density - 2021

In common with other London Boroughs, Brent is densely populated – with a population density of 7,859 people per square kilometre. Across local authority areas, this is the 14th highest population density in England & Wales (across 331 local authority areas), and the highest in Outer London.

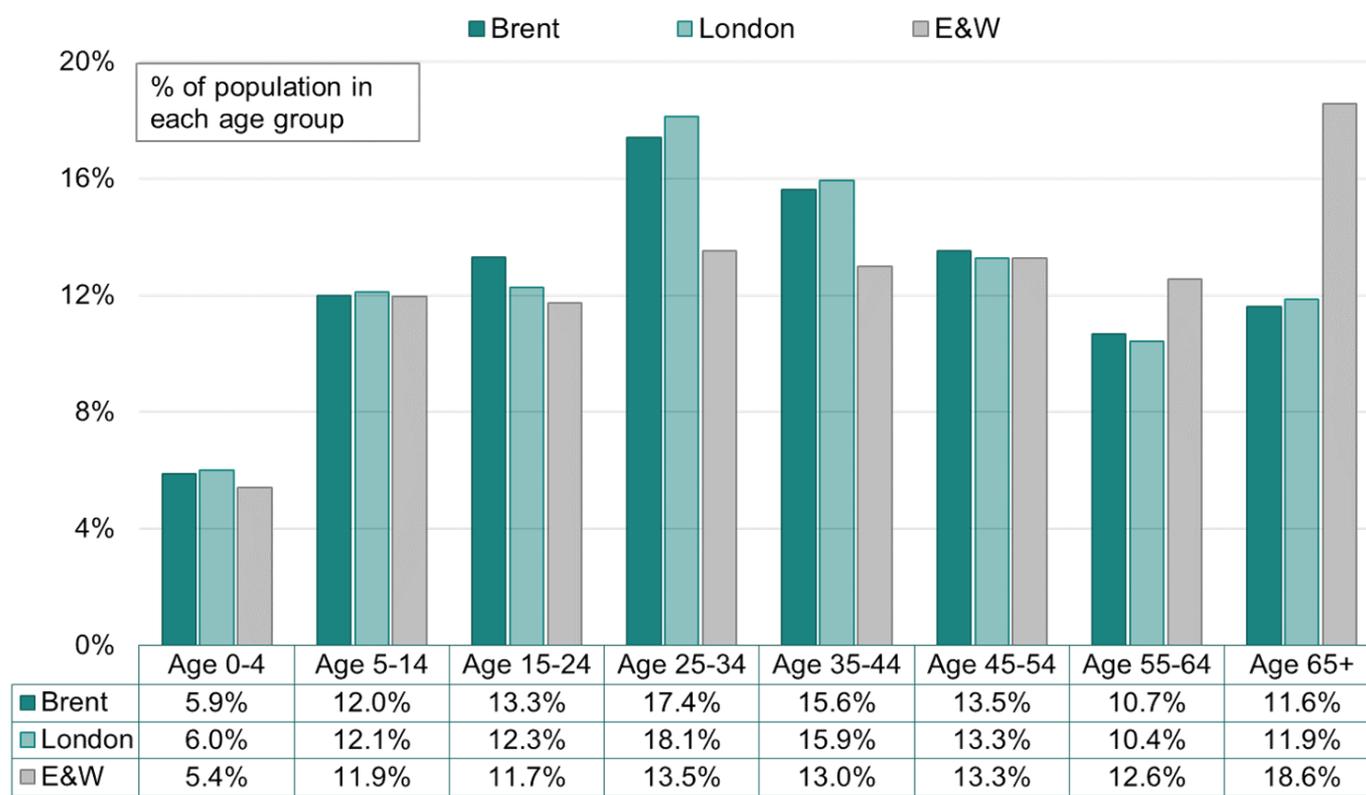
## Population density, London boroughs, 2021 Census



# Population by age - 2021

In common with other London Boroughs, Brent has a younger age profile when compared with England & Wales, characterised by more adults aged 20-44 and fewer older residents. Around 12% of Brent residents were aged 65 and over compared with 19% nationally.

## Population by age (% total), Brent, London and England & Wales, 2021

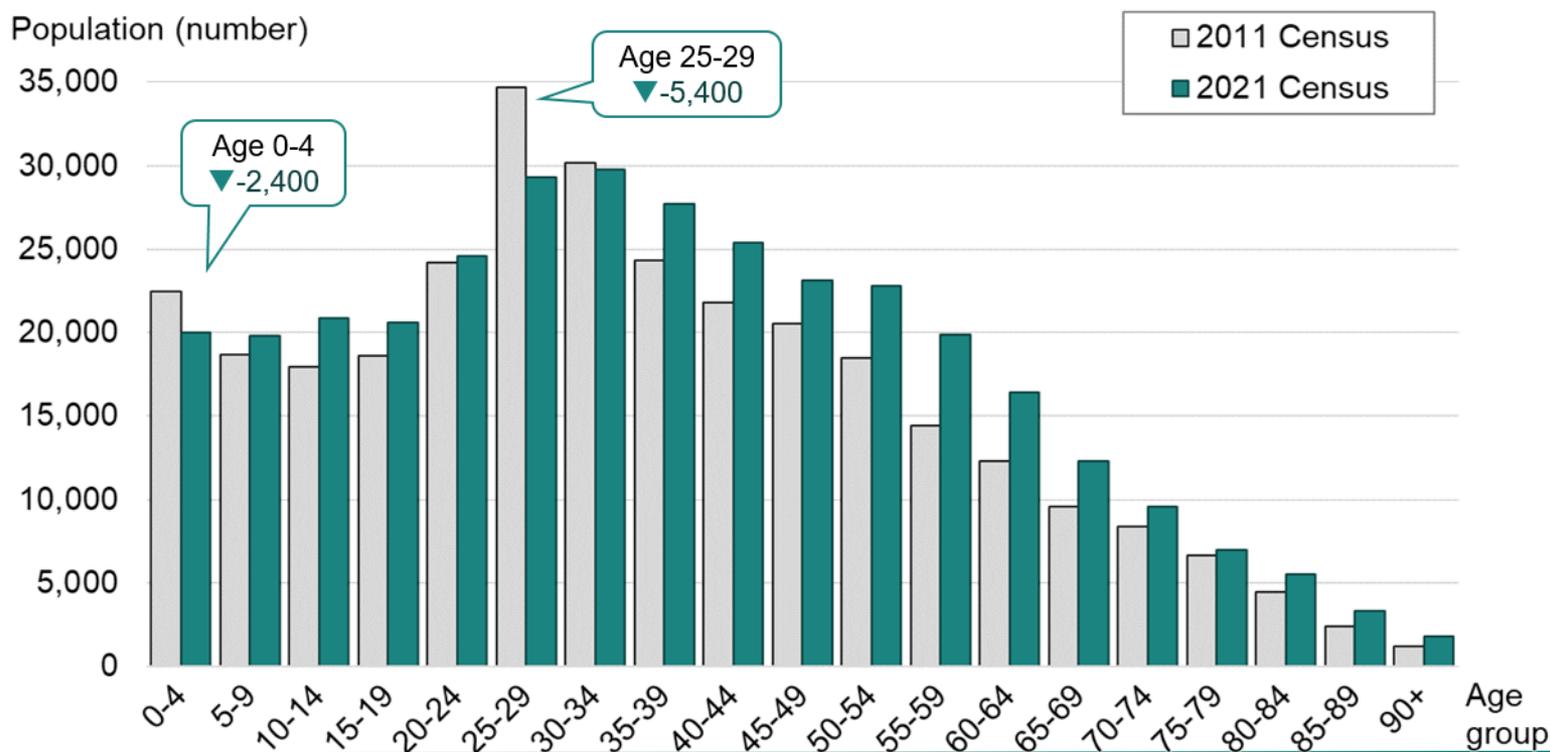


Age profile, Brent, 2021		
Age	Population	% total
0-4	20,000	5.9%
5-9	19,800	5.8%
10-14	20,900	6.2%
15-19	20,600	6.1%
20-24	24,600	7.2%
25-29	29,300	8.6%
30-34	29,800	8.8%
35-39	27,700	8.2%
40-44	25,400	7.5%
45-49	23,100	6.8%
50-54	22,800	6.7%
55-59	19,900	5.9%
60-64	16,400	4.8%
65-69	12,300	3.6%
70-74	9,600	2.8%
75-79	7,000	2.1%
80-84	5,500	1.6%
85-89	3,300	1.0%
90+	1,800	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>339,800</b>	<b>100%</b>

# The changing age profile of the population

- However, in line with wider trends, the population is ageing: 29% of residents are now aged 50 or over, up from 25% in 2011. The number of over 50s has increased by 20,800 since 2011, a rise of 27%. In contrast, the number of children under five has fallen by -2,400, a drop of 11%. This is consistent with a downward trend in birth rates in recent years – similar patterns are evident across London, and nationally.
- The number of young adults aged 25-29 fell by -5,400 (a fall of 16%) between 2011 and 2021. This could reflect the pandemic timing of the census, with some young adults being temporarily away at the time, and/or post-Brexit impacts on the number of migrant workers coming to London.

## Population by age, Brent, 2011-21

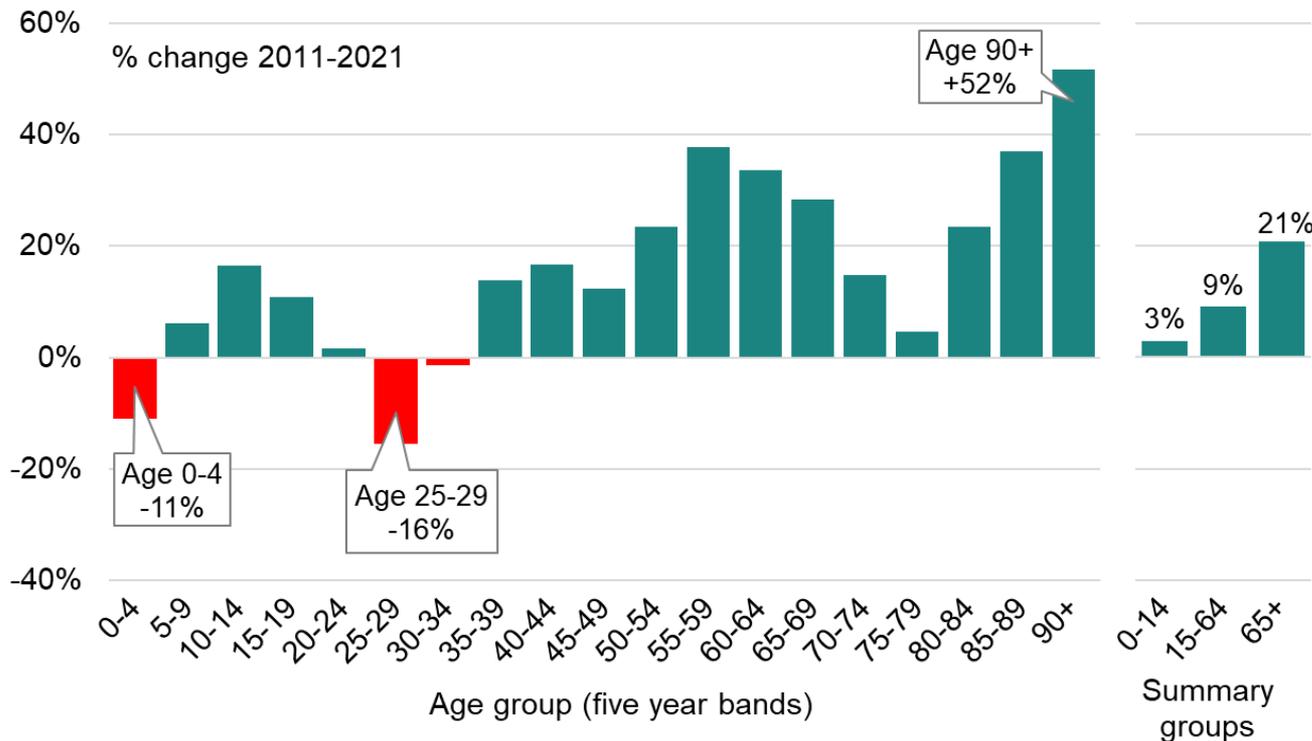


# Population change by age: % change

The chart and table below show the percentage change in the population by age group. While the Brent population grew by 9% between 2011 and 2021, the rate of increase was far higher for older age groups. Those aged 50-69 and those aged 80+ saw rises of well over 20%. The population aged 90 and over now numbers 1,800, up 52% since 2011. While the child population under five declined by 11%, children aged 5-9 and 10-14 both saw rises (6% and 16% respectively). Overall, the child population aged 0-14 grew by 3%.

## Population change (% change) by age group

Brent, 2011 and 2021



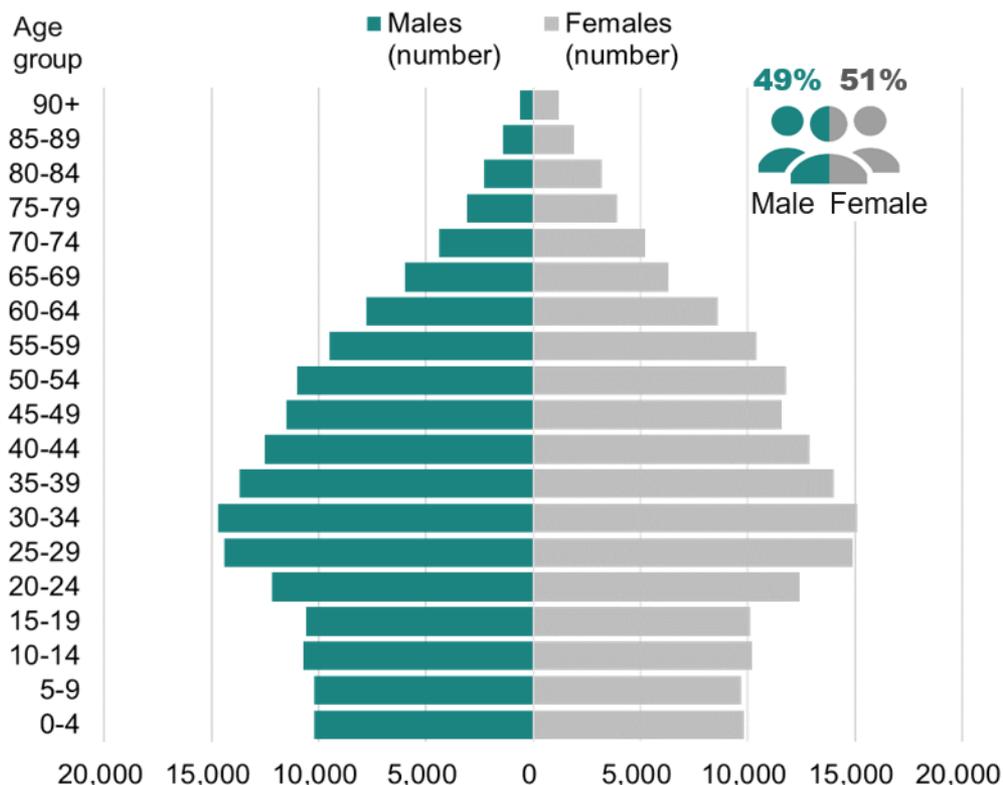
Change by age: 2011-2021			
Age band	Population 2021	Change % change	
		since 2011	since 2011
0-4	20,000	-2,400	-11%
5-9	19,800	1,200	6%
10-14	20,900	3,000	16%
15-19	20,600	2,000	11%
20-24	24,600	400	2%
25-29	29,300	-5,400	-16%
30-34	29,800	-400	-1%
35-39	27,700	3,400	14%
40-44	25,400	3,600	17%
45-49	23,100	2,600	12%
50-54	22,800	4,300	23%
55-59	19,900	5,500	38%
60-64	16,400	4,100	34%
65-69	12,300	2,700	28%
70-74	9,600	1,200	15%
75-79	7,000	300	5%
80-84	5,500	1,000	24%
85-89	3,300	900	37%
90+	1,800	600	52%
<b>Total</b>	<b>339,800</b>	<b>28,600</b>	<b>9%</b>

# Population by sex and age - 2021

The Brent population is 49% male and 51% female. Women comprise just over half (51%) of the population but make up a higher proportion of the elderly population: 59% of those aged aged 80 and over are female and this rises to two thirds for the over 90s (67%). The sex ratio in Brent is similar to that across London and England & Wales (both 51% female).

Note: In addition to the question on sex, the census form also asked a separate question about gender identity. These statistics are expected later in the year, along with a wide range of other equalities data.

## Population by sex and age Brent 2021



Population by sex, 2021			
Age	Population	% Males	% Females
0-4	20,000	51%	49%
5-9	19,800	51%	49%
10-14	20,900	51%	49%
15-19	20,600	51%	49%
20-24	24,600	50%	50%
25-29	29,300	49%	51%
30-34	29,800	49%	51%
35-39	27,700	49%	51%
40-44	25,400	49%	51%
45-49	23,100	50%	50%
50-54	22,800	48%	52%
55-59	19,900	48%	52%
60-64	16,400	48%	52%
65-69	12,300	49%	51%
70-74	9,600	46%	54%
75-79	7,000	44%	56%
80-84	5,500	42%	58%
85-89	3,300	42%	58%
90+	1,800	33%	67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>339,800</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>51%</b>

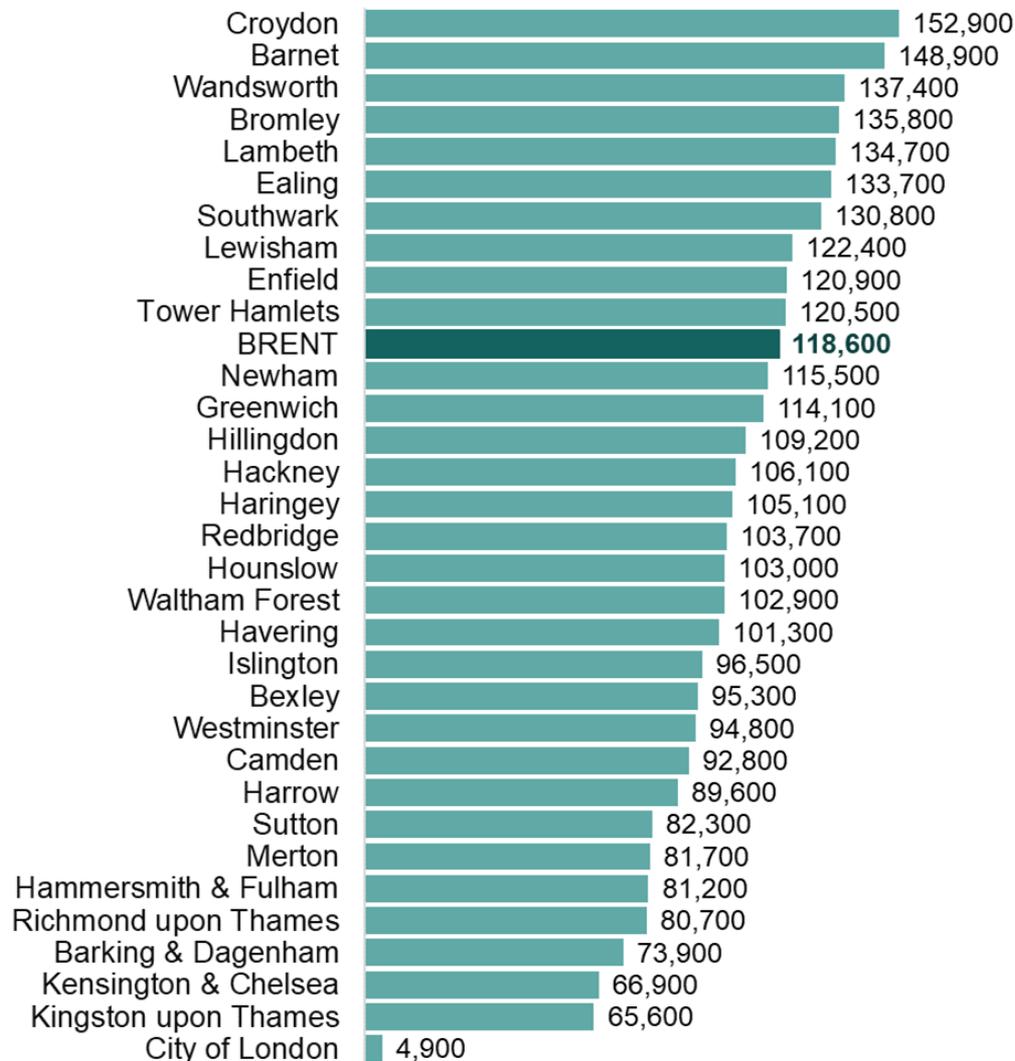
# Households - 2021

- In the census, a **household** is defined as one person living alone or a group of people (not necessarily related), living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room or dining area.
- The census recorded around 118,600 households in Brent, a rise of 8% since 2011 (+8,300). This compares to a rise of 5% across London, and 6% across England & Wales.
- Brent is ranked 11<sup>th</sup> out of 33 areas in London on the number of households.

## ① Communal establishments

Some residents live in communal establishments not households (e.g. care homes or student halls of residences). These residents are included in the census population count. ONS has yet to release data on the breakdown of the population by household or communal establishment.

## Number of households (with at least one usual resident), London Boroughs, 2021 Census

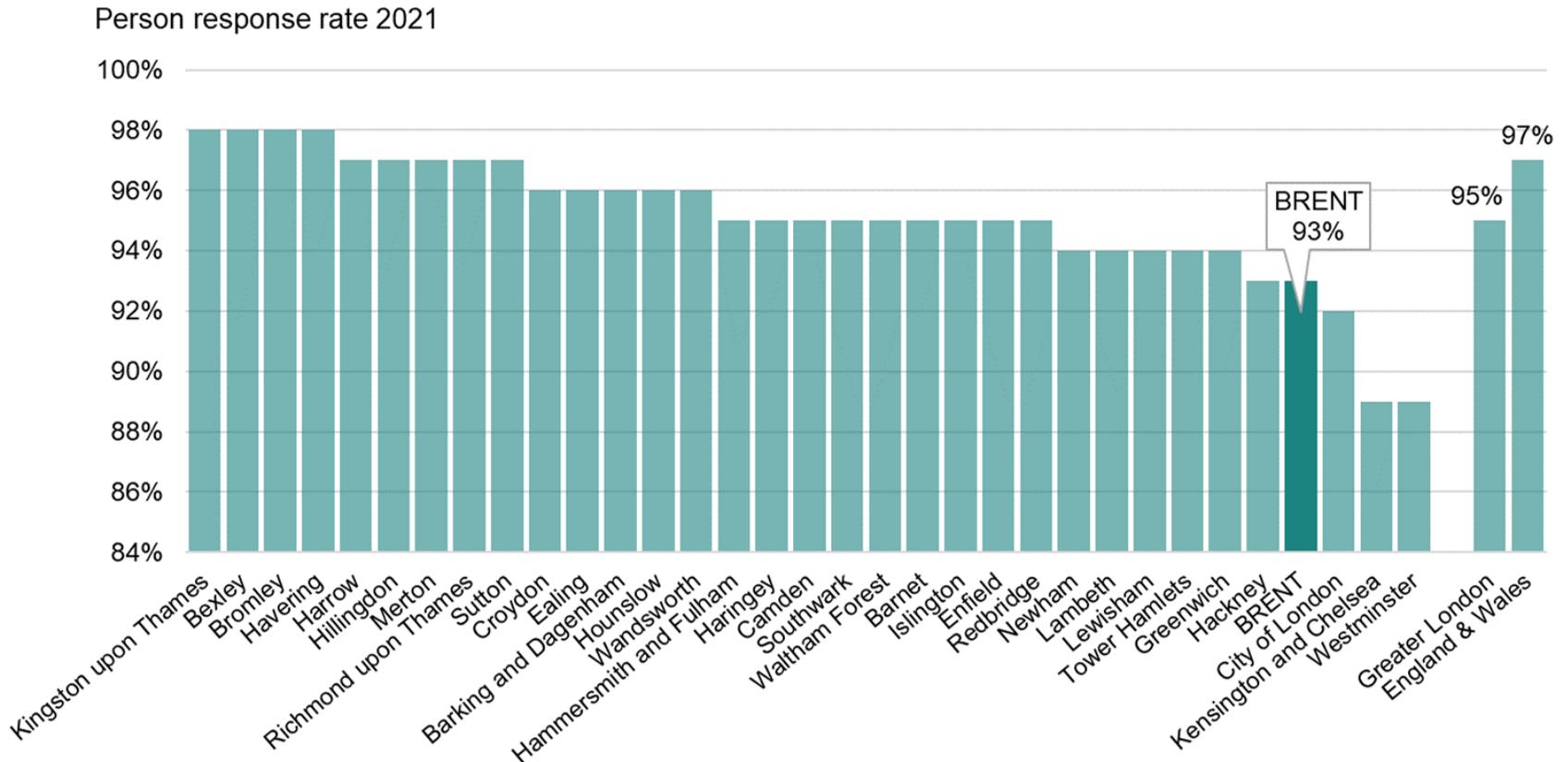


# Response rates – 2021 Census

In 2021, the response rate in Brent was 93%, up from 88% in 2011. This compares to a rate of 95% across London and 97% nationally (England & Wales). To ensure results provide a picture of the whole population, the ONS makes a range of adjustments to the data to account for non-response.

## 2021 Census person response rates (%), London Boroughs

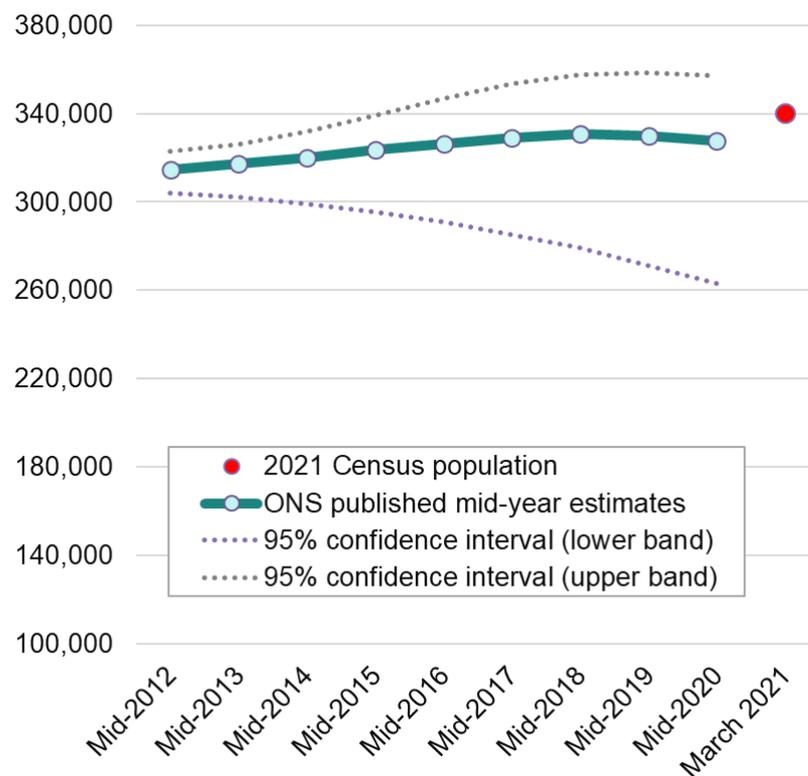
Note: Published figures were rounded to nearest point



# Census vs. population estimates

- The census population for Brent was 12,000 higher than the last ONS mid-year population estimate for 2020 (327,800). The census figure represents an upward correction in Brent's 'official' population estimate (+4%).
- However, interpreting the difference between these two figures is not straightforward. First, the figures relate to slightly different time periods. Second, and more importantly, the 2020 mid-year estimates for London boroughs have large confidence intervals attached to them. In other words, the annual estimates are subject to significant uncertainty. Consequently, it is not unusual for census counts to differ from the annual estimates – especially in London.
- The census results will inform future population estimates and projections, which will be revised to take account of the new data. It is unclear whether the ONS will make adjustments to future population estimates, to account for the temporary impact the pandemic lockdown will have had on London's census baseline.

**ONS annual population estimates vs. 2021 census estimate, Brent**



**Estimates compared for Brent**

2020 mid-year estimate	327,800
2021 Census	339,800
Difference	12,000
% difference	3.7%

# Further information

- **Data:** For access to the data used to create this report:
  - 2021 Census first release datasets for local authorities can be downloaded from the [ONS website](#)
  - 2011 Census data can be found on the [NOMIS website](#)
- **ONS interactive visual:** ONS has produced an interactive web-based guide to how population has changed in different areas – see the story for [Brent](#).
- **London analysis and pandemic impacts:** The Greater London Authority (GLA) has carried out a pan-London analysis of the first release results, available on [GLA datastore](#). The GLA has also carried out analysis on pandemic impacts on recent population trends: Population change in London during the COVID-19 pandemic (February 2022 update), also available on [GLA datastore](#).
- **Future census data:** The first release is only a small part of the census results – the majority of statistics are still to come. More detailed results about the characteristics of the population, and localities, will be released by the ONS from Autumn 2022 into 2023. The timetable for future census releases can be found on the [ONS website](#).
- **Brent Open Data:** For more facts and figures about the borough of Brent please see the [Brent Open Data website](#).
- **Contact:** This report was produced by Brent Council’s Data and Insight team. For more information please email the team at: [open.data@brent.gov.uk](mailto:open.data@brent.gov.uk)

# Appendix 1: Definitions

Term	Definition (2021 Census)
Usual resident	A usual resident is anyone who, on 21 March 2021, is in the UK and has stayed, or intends to stay, in the UK for 12 months or more or has a permanent UK address and is outside the UK and intends to be outside the UK for less than 12 months. The usual resident population definition excludes short-term residents and visitors.
Short-term resident	A census short-term UK resident is anyone born outside the UK who has stayed, or intends to stay, in the UK for a period of three months or more but less than 12 months.
Household	One person living alone or a group of people, not necessarily related, living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room or sitting room or dining area.
Definition of Inner and Outer London	Definitions of Inner and Outer London vary. The definition used in this report refers to the statistical areas defined by the Office for National Statistics, as opposed to the statutory definition. This defines Outer London as: Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Bromley, Croydon, Ealing, Enfield, Greenwich, Harrow, Havering, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Redbridge, Richmond upon Thames, Sutton, and Waltham Forest.

# Appendix 2: Response mode

- The 2021 census was a 'digital first' census. In Brent, the vast majority (96%) of responding households completed their form online, with the remainder returning paper questionnaires. This compares to 89% across England & Wales.
- Online response rates were heavily impacted by ONS fieldwork decisions regarding how initial contact was made with households.** In some areas, where the take-up of the online option was expected to be low, the initial contact was a paper questionnaire. In Brent, less than 0.1% of households received an initial paper questionnaire contact compared with 11% of households in England & Wales. The online approach comprised a letter with a access code for online completion.
- Households were free to request a paper questionnaire, or complete the census online, regardless of the way they were contacted initially. The table shown summarises mode data for London Boroughs.

**2021 Census – mode of response, London Boroughs**

Area (ranked by online response estimate)	Paper first approach: % households	Online first approach: % households	Paper first households: % online response	Online first households: % online response	Overall online response: (estimate*)
Newham	1.04	99.0	69.6	97.0	96.7
City of London	0.00	100.0	0.0	96.7	96.7
Hounslow	0.01	100.0	100.0	96.6	96.6
Tower Hamlets	3.78	96.2	72.4	97.3	96.4
Lambeth	0.03	100.0	87.9	96.3	96.3
Harrow	0.03	100.0	69.6	96.2	96.2
<b>BRENT</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>99.9</b>	<b>85.1</b>	<b>96.1</b>	<b>96.1</b>
Southwark	0.61	99.4	70.4	96.2	96.0
Waltham Forest	0.01	100.0	50.0	96.0	96.0
Islington	0.03	100.0	73.1	96.0	96.0
Barnet	0.41	99.6	62.8	96.1	96.0
Richmond upon Thames	0.01	100.0	90.9	95.9	95.9
Merton	0.01	100.0	75.0	95.9	95.9
Redbridge	1.24	98.8	69.8	96.2	95.9
Westminster	0.64	99.4	63.7	96.0	95.8
Ealing	0.66	99.3	67.0	95.9	95.7
Greenwich	1.59	98.4	64.7	96.2	95.7
Kingston upon Thames	0.93	99.1	59.2	96.0	95.7
Hammersmith & Fulham	0.04	100.0	93.5	95.6	95.6
Lewisham	0.58	99.4	60.6	95.7	95.5
Haringey	0.97	99.0	59.5	95.7	95.3
Camden	0.65	99.4	53.4	95.6	95.3
Enfield	1.15	98.8	62.8	95.7	95.3
Wandsworth	3.41	96.6	60.8	96.5	95.3
Hillingdon	0.61	99.4	56.5	95.5	95.3
Kensington & Chelsea	0.94	99.1	54.2	95.5	95.1
Croydon	1.53	98.5	55.0	95.6	95.0
Sutton	1.14	98.9	48.7	95.4	94.9
Bromley	0.95	99.1	57.5	95.1	94.7
Bexley	0.49	99.5	68.1	94.3	94.2
Havering	0.70	99.3	49.2	94.3	94.0
Hackney	2.37	97.6	59.7	94.6	93.8
Barking & Dagenham	12.84	87.2	71.1	95.6	92.5
London boroughs (Median)	0.65	99.4	63.7	95.9	95.7
England & Wales	11.00	89.0	46.4	94.2	88.9