

# Night-time work in London

December 2023

## Introduction

London is global city with an extensive 24-hour economy. Most parts of London's £520 billion economy are active around the clock. A quarter of London's workforce (1.3 million people) regularly work between 6pm and 6am. However, the breadth of activity in the capital after dark is hidden from many and remains poorly understood and often overlooked.

The Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, and the Night Czar Amy Lamé, have committed to improving how London is planned at night. To that end, they have endorsed the improvement of data collection, analysis and research about London's people, places and economy at night. In 2018, the GLA published the London At Night Evidence Base for a 24 Hour City. It revealed important new insights including the breadth and scale of London's night-time workforce.

In his London Plan, the Mayor has called on all boroughs to create evidence-led night-time strategies. A third of London boroughs are now doing so, and the London Borough of Wandsworth recently became the first to publish their night-time strategy.

This short publication provides a glimpse into the next London At Night Evidence Base update, which will be published in the coming months. It reveals the latest headline findings about London's night-time workforce. These headline findings can be summarised as follows:

- People of all ages, backgrounds and skill levels work at night, but young people and those in low skilled occupations tend to do so more than other groups;
- Night work plays a big part in the economies of outer London boroughs;
- There have been notable changes in the scale and prevalence of night working across different industries; and
- Inequalities in pay and conditions are often worse for night workers compared to daytime-only workers.

## Definitions

1. **Night workers** are those who work at any time between 6pm and 6am. Their work hours can be divided into two periods:
  - **Evenings** (6pm-12pm).
  - **Late nights** (12pm-6am).
  - Those who never work nights are **daytime-only** workers.

- We refer to **night workers** as those who “usually” work evenings and/or late nights, even if they also “usually” work during the day. This is because many people work both day and night as part of their usual shift patterns.
  - We use **late night workers** for those who work late nights even if they also “usually” work evenings and/or days.
2. People work at night in many activities, but some industries and occupations are more likely to involve night work than others — we call these **night-time industries** and **night-time occupations**. In 2018, The London Night-Time Commission’s Data and Research Group designed a Night-Time classification which we use in this report (see Figure 1). It includes a wide range of industries and occupations that have a higher-than-average proportion of night-workers.<sup>1</sup> We refer to people working in these industries as **workers in night-time industries**.<sup>2</sup>

## Key findings

1. **The number of workers in night-time industries earning below the London Living Wage (LLW) fell from 378,000 in 2015 to 257,000 in 2022.** However, workers in night-time industries (other than 24-hour health and personal services) remain more likely on average to be paid below the LLW than those in other industries. In 2022, some 20% of workers in night-time industries were paid below the LLW, compared to 11% of those in day-time industries. Some 39% of workers in the night-time cultural and leisure sector (including workers in hospitality, private security firms and creative, arts and entertainment sectors) were still paid below the LLW in 2022, although the trend has improved from 56% in 2015. (See Figure 2)
2. **The number of night workers in the UK has been falling and this trend is mirrored in London.** In the UK there were 8.4 million night-workers in 2023, down from 9.5 million in 2016.
3. **London now has 1.32 million night workers, down from 1.60 million in 2017.** Night workers now make up 25% of London’s workforce, down from 31% in 2015. This fall in the share has occurred due to both a 278,000-person fall in the night-time labour force and a 297,000-person rise in the day-time labour force. (See Figure 3)
4. **London had 16% of the UK’s night workers in 2022.** Greater Manchester and the West Midlands were the next largest cities for night working, having 4.1% and 3.7% respectively of the UK total.<sup>3</sup> However, London’s 25% rate of night-working in 2023 was just below the rest-of-UK average of 26%.
5. **Night work can have negative impacts on health and sleep.** The Liminal Space interviewed 801 people working nights in London, asking them about the impact of their work on their sleep and general health. Out of more than 250 respondents, around one fifth (22%) said their quality of sleep was poor or very poor when working shifts. Half the respondents said their sleep quality varied between good and poor. In addition, almost three-fifths of respondents said they slept less than six hours when working shifts. Only 14% said they slept at least seven hours.

<sup>1</sup> It is based on UK Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) sectors and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) jobs.

<sup>2</sup> Note that some workers in night-time industries might not be night workers, and vice versa.

<sup>3</sup> See Office for National Statistics, [Night-time Economy in the UK](#) (2022).

6. **The industries with the highest number of night workers in London in 2023 were Professional services, Health and Transport & storage.** These three sectors accounted for more than 40%, or 560,000, of London's night workers. (See Table 1 and Figures 4, 5 and 6)
7. **Night workers made up the biggest share of the workforce in the Transport and storage (55%) and the Arts & recreation (55%) sectors.** Hospitality also had a large share of night-workers (48%), however it lost nearly half its night-time workforce since 2017 when 151,000 worked at night.
8. **Among London's night workers, the number working any *late* nights has fallen from 615,000 in 2015 to 507,000 in 2023.** The industry with the highest number of late night workers in 2023 was Transport & storage with 106,000. It was also the industry with the highest share of late night-workers (39%). Health (77,000 workers, 13%) and Hospitality (37,000 workers, 23%) are also notable large employers of late-night workers. (See Figure 7)
9. **Of London's 1.32 million night workers, 544,000 live in Inner London, 581,000 live in Outer London and 222,000 live outside London.** However, more work in Inner London (791,000) than in Outer London (528,000). Around 28,000 Londoners work at night outside the city (See Figure 8).
10. **Commuting flows data suggests that night workers live and work in the same zones,** with 503,000 living and working in Inner London and 389,000 living and working in Outer London. Some 164,000 travel to Inner London from Outer London, and 41,000 travel to Outer from Inner.
11. **Using BT footfall data, we find Westminster has the highest share of night workers in London (6.8%) but large concentrations are also found in outer London boroughs such as Hillingdon (4.8%), Bromley (4.3%) and Barnet (4.3%).** Considering individual boroughs we find that in Outer London, working at night is more likely than in Inner London. Redbridge (35%), Havering (34%) and Harrow (34%) have the highest shares of night workers to daytime workers. (See Figure 9).
12. **Night work encompasses a very wide range of job types and at all skill levels.** Almost half of all night workers aged 26-60 were in high skill (level 4) occupations. Low-skilled workers (level 1) make up a small share of the London's overall workforce (around 10%) and these workers are disproportionately likely to work late nights, with over 15% doing so, compared to 12% at level 2, 10% at level 3 and 7% at level 4.
13. **The occupations with the highest shares of night work in 2023** were Protective services in the Associate professional category (which includes junior ranks in the police, fire and prison services) with 63%; the Leisure and travel services category in Caring and Leisure (which includes rail and air travel assistants) with 62%; and Process, plant and machine operatives (with 62%).
14. **Younger workers are more likely to work evenings and nights in London.** 34% of workers aged 16-20 were night workers in 2023, while the share was 38% for those aged 21-25.

15. **Of London's 1.32 million night workers in 2023, 796,000 were men (60%) and 525,000 were women (40%).** These ratios were roughly in line with workforce shares, though with a slightly higher share of night workers among male workers.
16. **Night workers are more likely to have been born overseas than day workers.** There was a slightly lower share of night workers among those born in the UK relative to those born outside the country. While 24% of UK-born workers work evenings and nights, the share was 28% for those born in the EU and 26% for those born in the rest of the world.
17. **One in three night-workers (421,000 people) in London in 2023 were from the Black and minority ethnic population.** The share of night workers among BAME workers in London has typically been higher than that for white workers over the years since 2015, averaging 33% and 27% respectively from 2015-2022. However, in 2023 the likelihood of BAME workers doing nights fell steeply, from 32% in 2022 to 24%. Further data is required to understand the reasons for the drop. (See Figure 10)
18. **If you are disabled, you are also more likely to work at night.** The share of night workers among those with an **Equality Act disability** is 29%, which is higher than the 25% share among workers without a disability.
19. **If you are self-employed, you are much more likely to work at night.** 37% of London's self-employed workers work at night.

## Data

The data used in this briefing note is available on the London Datastore, see <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-at-night--research-and-analysis>. The analysis draws on the following datasets:

- The ONS Labour Force Survey. Used to analyse socio-economic characteristics and travel patterns of night workers.
- The ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. Used to analyse low pay in London by night-time industry.
- BT Footfall data, accessed from the High Streets Data Service. Used to analyse the location of workers by time of day.

*This work contains statistical data from ONS which is Crown Copyright. The use of the ONS statistical data in this work does not imply the endorsement of the ONS in relation to the interpretation or analysis of the statistical data. This work uses research datasets which may not exactly reproduce National Statistics aggregates.*

## Figures and Tables

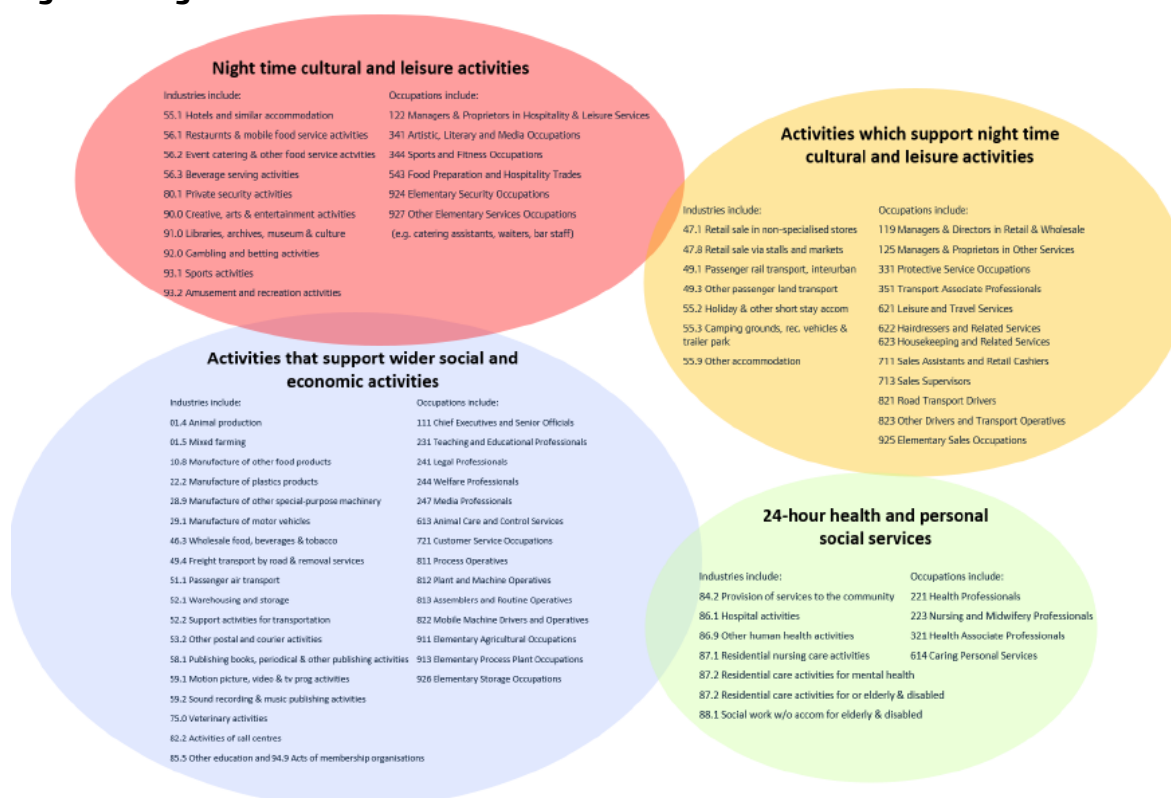
**Table 1: Night workers by industry (top 10) in London, 2023**

Industry	Night workers	Share of night workers in industry
Professional services	231,000	25%
Health	181,000	32%
Transport & storage	147,000	55%
Retail	94,000	29%
Public admin & defence	94,000	21%
Education	94,000	19%
Information & communication	92,000	20%
Hospitality	77,000	48%
Finance & insurance	76,000	14%
Arts & recreation	68,000	55%

Source: Labour Force Survey, UK Data Service.

Note: Based on place of work.

**Figure 1: Night-time classification**



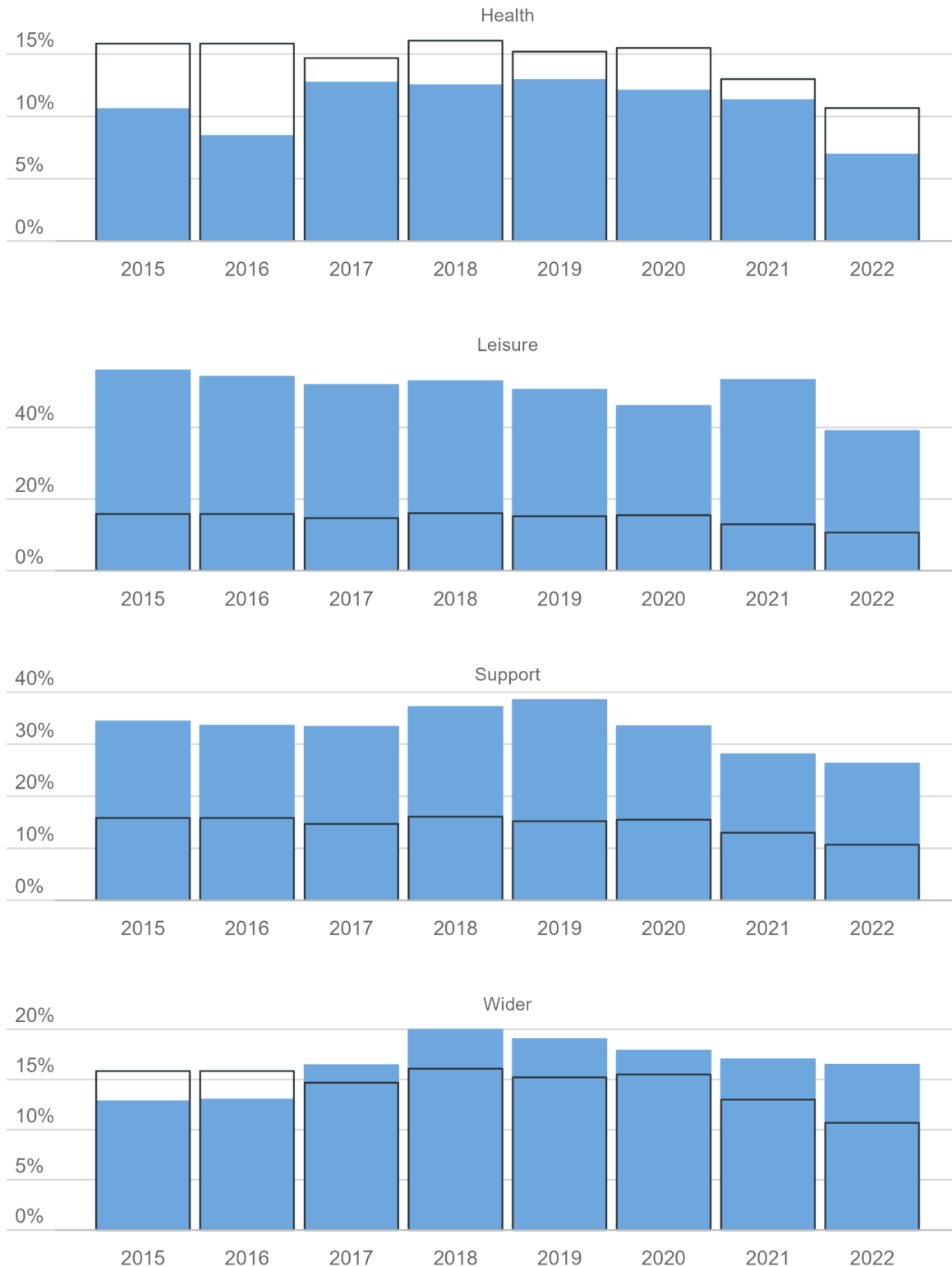
Source: London at night: An evidence base for a 24-hour city (2018).

Notes: Night-time Commission's Data and Research Group and GLA classification.

**Figure 2: Workers earning below London Living Wage**

The blue shaded area shows the share of workers in the night-time industries categories that earn below the London Living Wage, 2015-2022

The grey box shows the Share of workers earning below the London Living Wage in Day Time industries.

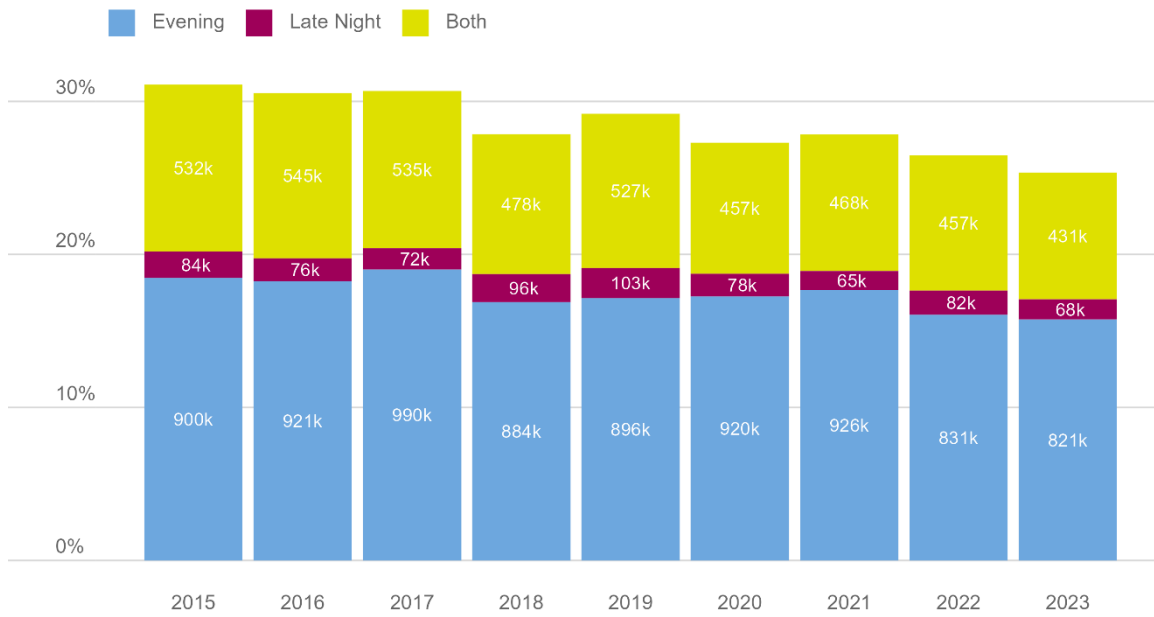


Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

Notes: Based on place of work. Pay data refers to April of each year. London Living Wage refers to the rate set in Autumn of that year.

**Figure 3: Night workers by usual work hours**

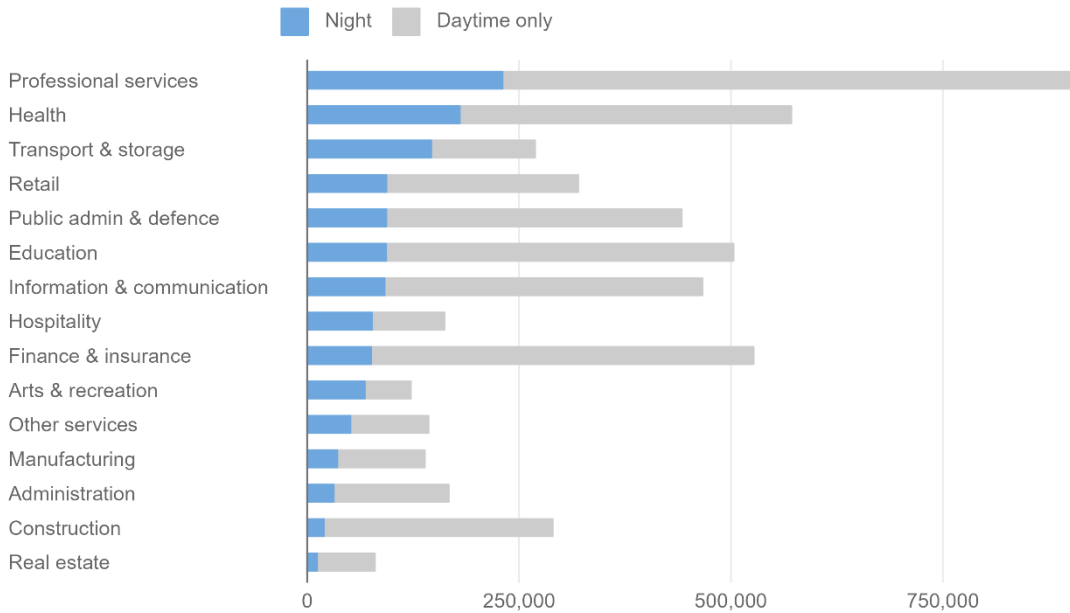
Share of all workers in London. Worker counts by category in text labels



Source: Labour Force Survey, UK Data Service.

Notes: Based on place of work.

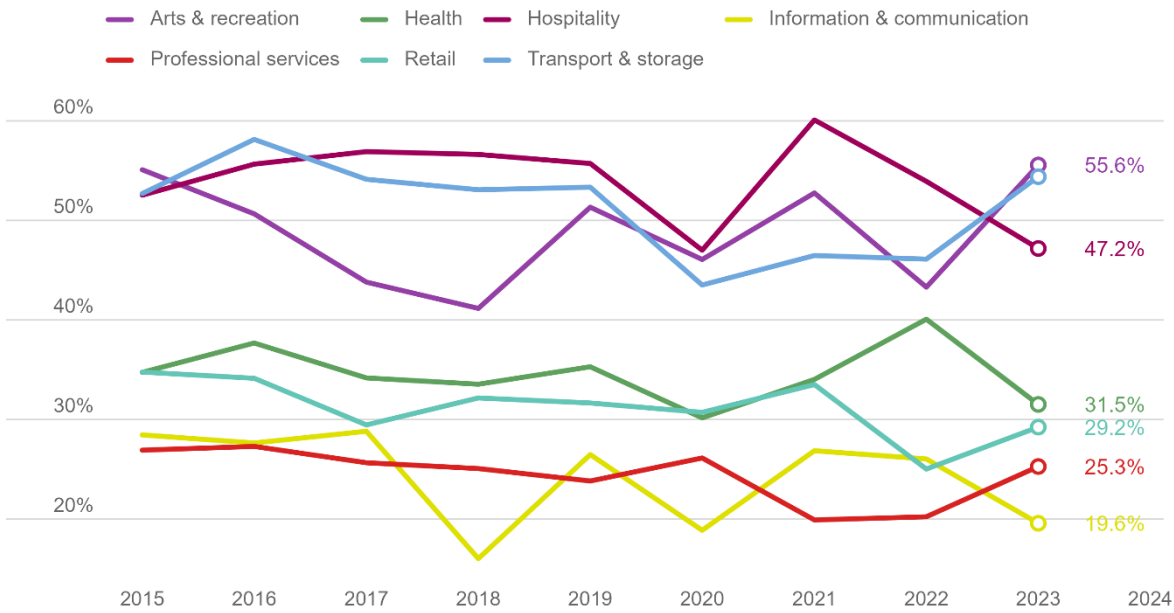
**Figure 4: The number of night workers by industry, in London, 2023**



Source: Labour Force Survey, UK Data Service.

Notes: Based on place of work. Excludes industries with less than 50 thousand workers.

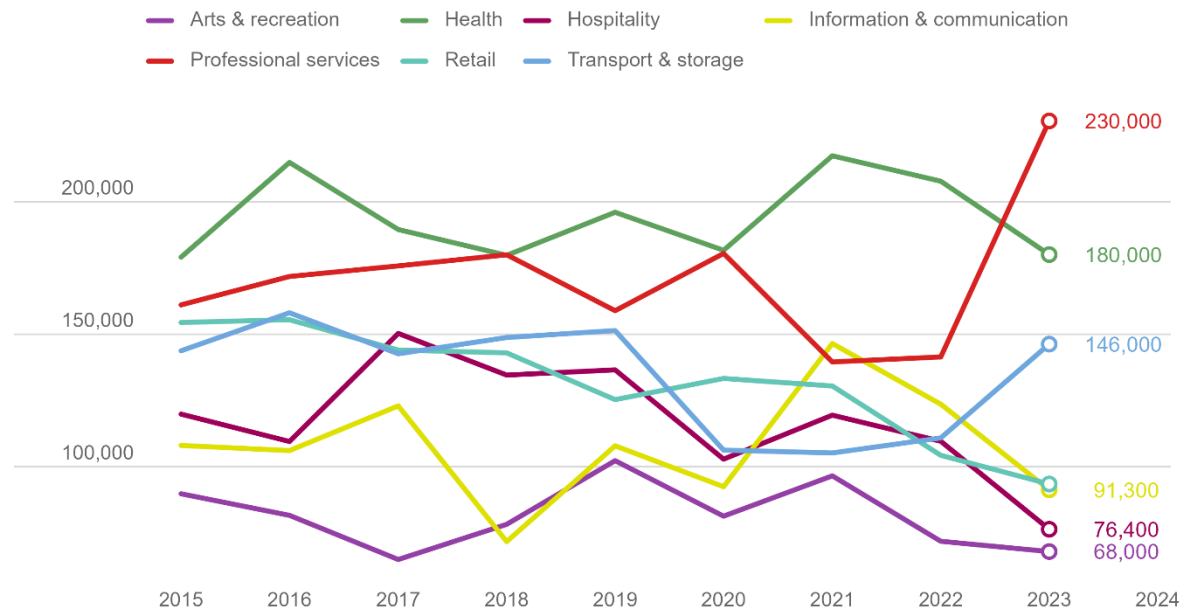
**Figure 5: Night worker share by industry.** Share of night workers within selected sectors in London



Source: Labour Force Survey, UK Data Service.

Notes: Based on place of work.

**Figure 6: Night workers by industry.** Number of night workers within selected sectors in London

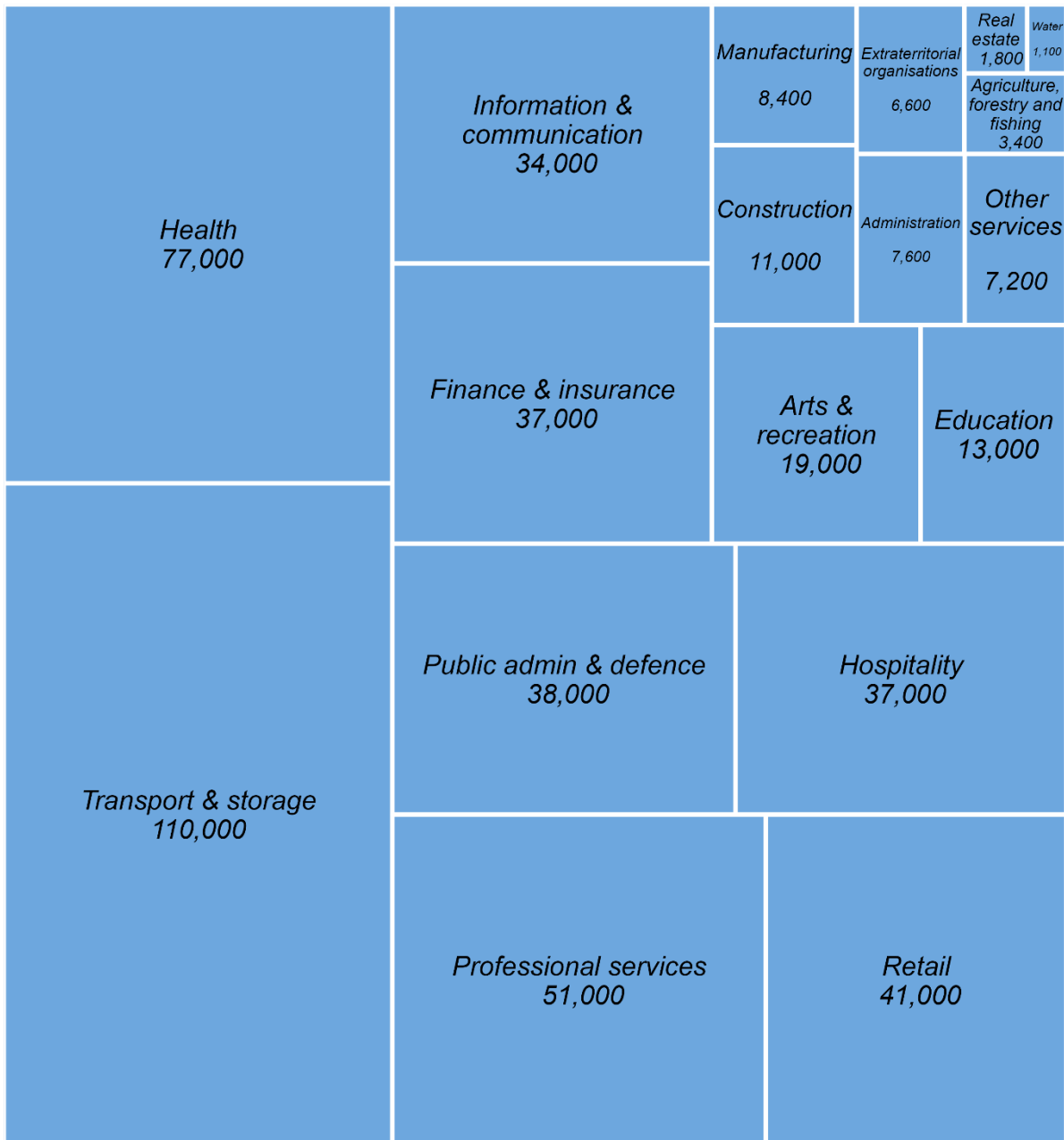


Source: Labour Force Survey, UK Data Service.

Notes: Based on place of work.



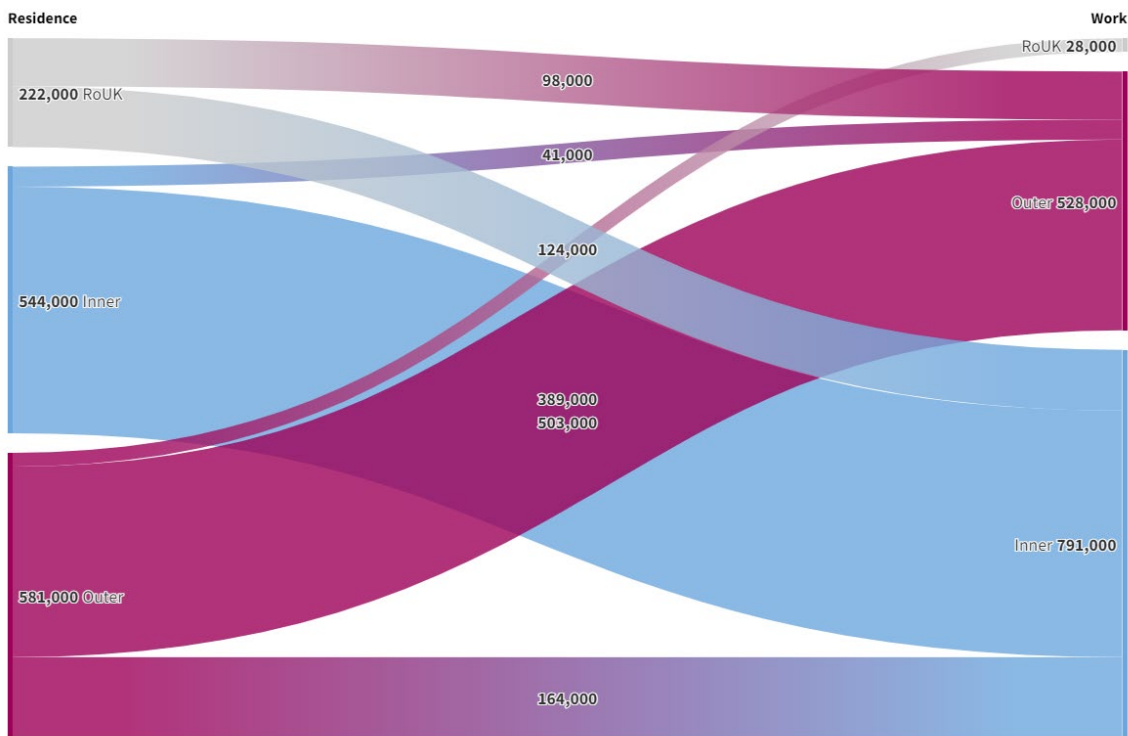
**Figure 7: The number of late-night workers by industry in London, 2023**



Source: Labour Force Survey, UK Data Service.

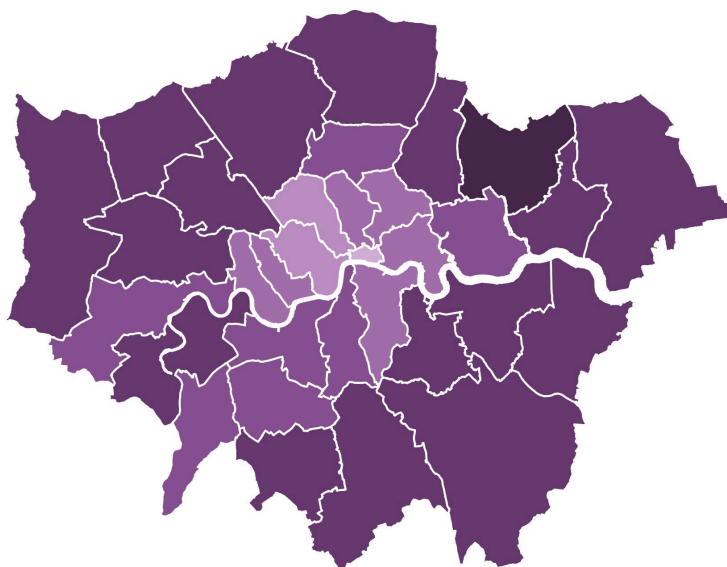
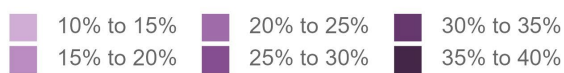
Notes: Based on place of work. Figures may not sum to accurate totals due to rounding.

**Figure 8: Flow of night workers 2023.** Residents or workers in Inner London, Outer London and Rest of UK



Source: Labour Force Survey, Secure Research Service.

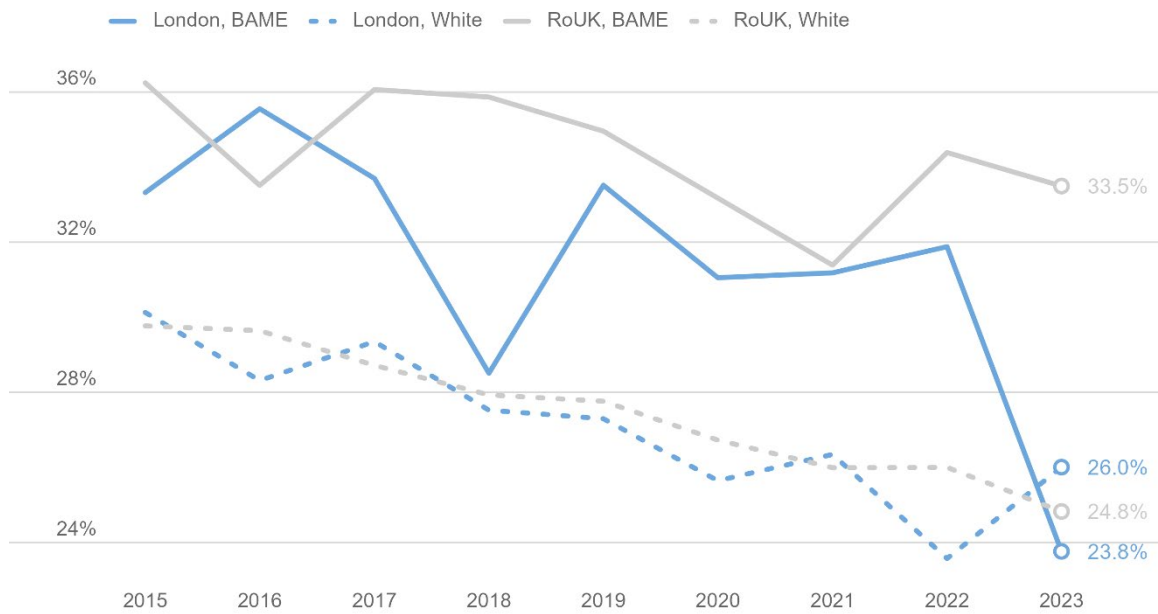
**Figure 9: Share of workers within each borough who work at night, 2022-2023**



Source: BT Footfall data, GLAE analysis.

Notes: Night work defined as working 6pm-6am. Contains Ordnance Survey data.

**Figure 10: Night workers by ethnicity.** Share within ethnicity, London and Rest of UK



Source: Labour Force Survey, UK Data Service.

Notes: Based on place of work.