

2011 Census quality assurance: London borough's response rates

This briefing presents the person response rates, household response rates and household return rates for the London boroughs and compares these with the response rates for the 2001 Census where available.

Key Findings

- Nationally London boroughs are among the authorities with the lowest response rates. This is due to the propensity of 'hard to count' populations such as young adults and minority groups in the capital.
- Havering had the highest person response rate in London in 2011 (95.3 per cent).
- Kensington & Chelsea had the lowest person response rate nationally (81.7 per cent).
- Outer London boroughs had better response rates than Inner London boroughs.
- Many London boroughs have significantly improved their person response rate compared with 2001. Of particular note are City (up 18 per cent), Kensington & Chelsea (up 17 per cent) and Tower Hamlets (up 15 per cent).
- Two London boroughs had a lower person response rate in 2011 than in 2001 (Havering and Bexley).
- The variation between London boroughs has reduced when compared to the 2001 Census. The gap between the highest and lowest person response rates has closed from 32 per cent in 2001 to 14 per cent in 2011.
- Bexley had the highest household response rate in London (96.2 per cent).
- Kensington & Chelsea has the lowest household response rate nationally (82.3 per cent).
- Boroughs with high person response rates tend also to have high household response rates although there are some exceptions: Ealing 19th highest person response rate and 11th highest household rate in London; Enfield 11th highest person rate and 19th highest household rate.
- 27 London local authorities had a household response rate of over 90 per cent, of which six were over 95 per cent.

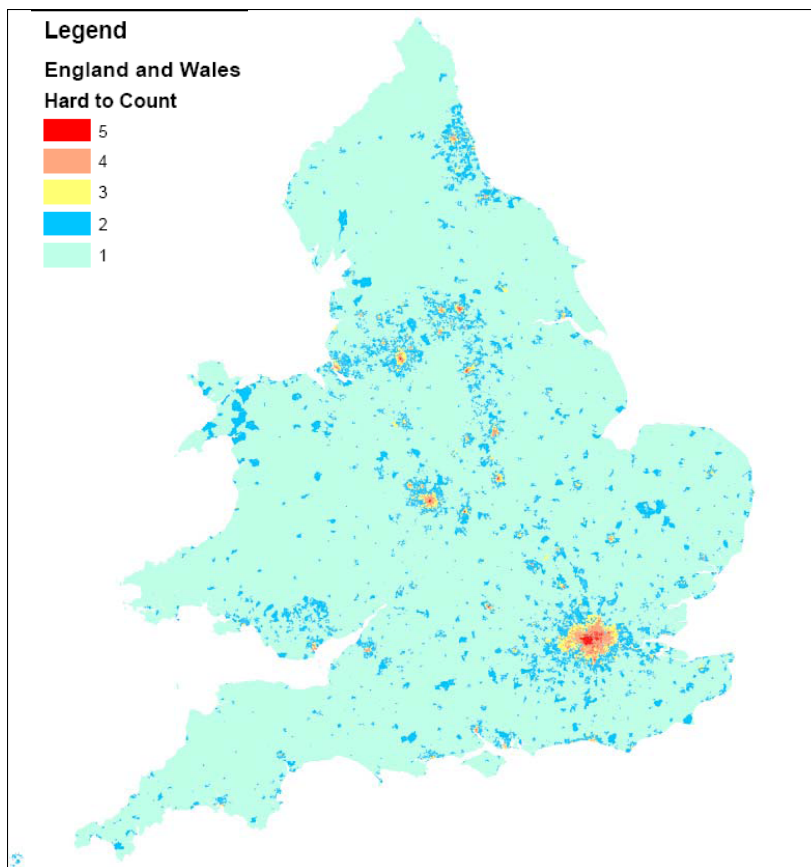
Introduction

On 16 July 2012 ONS released the first results from the 2011 Census for England and Wales. The release included a 'Quality Assurance Pack' which set out some of the details of the population estimation process and supporting information. Included within this dataset were response rates for the 2011 Census.

London in Context

In anticipation of 2011 Census the ONS produced its Hard to Count (HtC) index. The HtC index evaluated how likely households within a specified area were to participate in the census. The aim of the index was to develop a tool for use in determining where best to allocate census follow-up resources. There are a number of factors which determine whether a household is likely to participate in the census including household tenure and location and householder age, ethnicity and family status (ONS, 2009). By identifying the areas where these characteristics are prevalent (for example, there is a particular concentration of these characteristics across London) the ONS was able to map HtC areas. In addition to being a useful tool for census planning the HtC index can also be used to anticipate where one might expect the published response rates to be lowest.

Figure 1: The distribution of HtC categories from the HtC2009 across England and Wales



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The HtC distribution shown in Figure 1 is based on 2009 data. The index used in 2011 Census operations has not yet been released by the ONS. That index contains more up-to-date information than this version but the effect of this on the overall picture is likely to be minimal. Figure 1 clearly shows that urban areas (e.g. Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and London) are considered hardest to count. The Greater London area in particular shows a high density of HtC areas leading one to reasonably expect that London boroughs would feature towards the bottom in a national ranking of local authority response rates. Below is a summary London boroughs in the national context.

For person response rates:

- Havering was London's best performing borough (ranked 163 out of 348 nationally)
- 28 of London's 33 boroughs featured in the bottom 25 per cent of local authorities in England & Wales
- 19 London boroughs were in the lowest 10 per cent nationally
- The bottom 11 places in the national rankings are taken by London Boroughs

For household response rates:

- Bexley was London's best performing borough in 143rd position nationally
- 25 of London's 33 boroughs featured in the bottom 25 per cent of local authorities in England & Wales
- 18 London boroughs were in the lowest 10 per cent nationally
- 8 of the bottom 10 places in the national ranking are taken by London boroughs

These figures belie the fact that the response rates in London for 2011 are a significant improvement on the rates from the 2001 Census. In fact, overall the picture in London is very positive.

Person Response Rate: London 2001-2011

The Person Response Rate is a measure of how successful the initial census operation was in capturing the population of a specified area. It is calculated by dividing the number of residents recorded on the census questionnaire by the estimate of the usually resident population. The higher the number the more accurate the initial census count was and the less imputation was required.

Almost all boroughs saw an increased response in the 2011 Census compared with 2001. Those authorities with the lowest rates in 2001 saw the largest increases, meaning the gap between the worst performing and best performing boroughs decreased by 19 percentage points. Only Havering (-1.3 per cent) and Bexley (-1.2 per cent) have lower response rates in 2011 than they did in 2001. These were the two boroughs with the highest rates in 2001 and, in spite of these decreases, their overall rates remain high and Havering retains its position at the top of the London league table with a response rate of 95.3 per cent.

The lowest response rate in London in 2001 was for the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea where a rate of 64.4 per cent was achieved. In 2011 Kensington & Chelsea remained the borough with the lowest rate although its response had improved by over 17 points to 81.7 per cent. The largest improvement in response was in the City of London which saw rates move from 73.9 per cent in 2001 to 92.7 per cent in 2011. This increase meant its relative position within London changed from 3rd lowest in 2001 to 10th highest in 2011.

The boroughs with the greatest increase in response rates 2001-2011, in percentage points are:

- City of London 18.76
- Kensington & Chelsea 17.24
- Tower Hamlets 15.15
- Hackney 14.32
- Islington 13.51

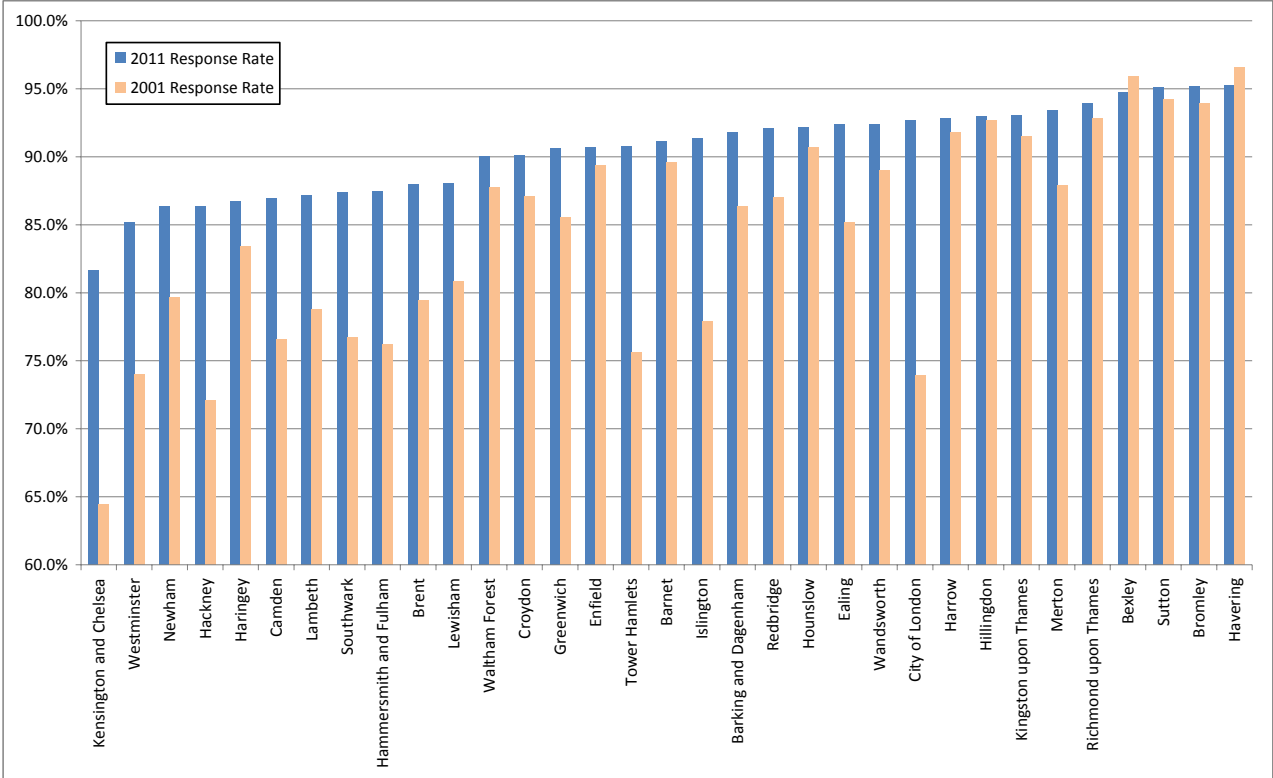
The 2011 person response rates show significantly less variation than the rates in 2001. In 2001 nine London boroughs had rates of 90 per cent and above, 12 boroughs had rates between 80 and 89 per cent, 11 boroughs had rates between 70 and 79 per cent and one borough had a rate less than 70 per cent response rate. In 2011 there was much more consistency with 22 boroughs achieving a rate of 90 per cent or higher and the remaining 11 all falling within the 80 to 89 per cent category. The range of values has decreased from 64 – 97 per cent in 2001 to 82 – 95 per cent in 2011.

This consolidation, and the associated large increases many boroughs have seen in their response rates, means that the London borough rankings are very different in 2011 compared to 2001. Some of the largest movers are outlined below:

- The City of London is 24 places higher in 2011
- Tower Hamlets improved its relative position by 11 places
- Islington moved up the rankings nine places
- Newham and Haringey fall down the rankings nine places
- Waltham Forest and Enfield are both eight places lower in 2011

Consequently 12 authorities moved up the rankings, 16 moved down and 5 retained their position including Kensington & Chelsea in 33rd and Havering in first place.

Figure 2: Comparison of 2001 and 2011 census response rates



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Table 1: Person Response Rates for London boroughs 2001 & 2011

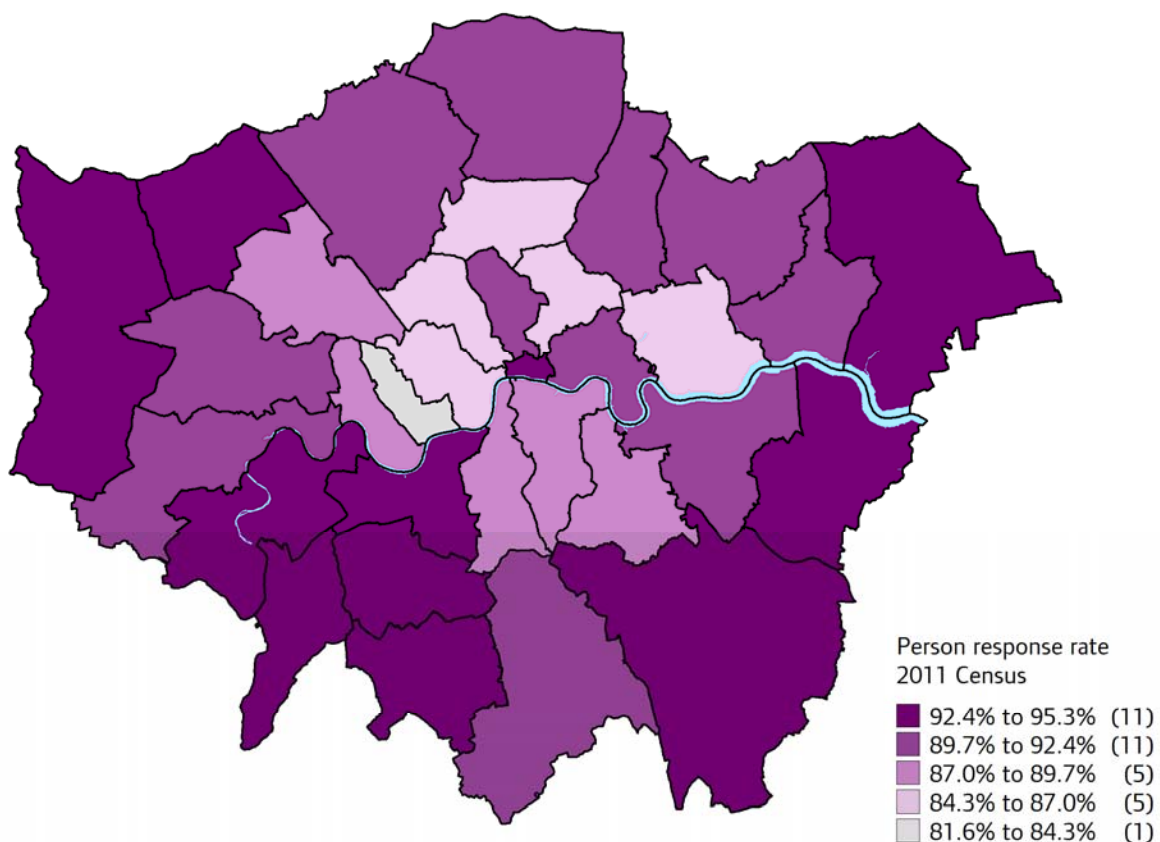
	2011 Person Response Rate	2011 Rank	2001 Person Response Rate	2001 Rank	Difference 2001-2011
Havering	95.3%	1	96.6%	1	-1.3%
Bromley	95.2%	2	93.9%	4	1.2%
Sutton	95.1%	3	94.2%	3	0.9%
Bexley	94.7%	4	95.9%	2	-1.2%
Richmond upon Thames	93.9%	5	92.9%	5	1.1%
Merton	93.4%	6	87.9%	13	5.5%
Kingston upon Thames	93.1%	7	91.5%	8	1.6%
Hillingdon	93.0%	8	92.7%	6	0.3%
Harrow	92.8%	9	91.8%	7	1.0%
City of London	92.7%	10	73.9%	31	18.8%
Wandsworth	92.4%	11	89.0%	12	3.4%
Ealing	92.4%	12	85.2%	19	7.2%
Hounslow	92.2%	13	90.7%	9	1.5%
Redbridge	92.1%	14	87.0%	16	5.1%
Barking and Dagenham	91.8%	15	86.3%	17	5.5%
Islington	91.4%	16	77.9%	25	13.5%
Barnet	91.1%	17	89.6%	10	1.5%
Tower Hamlets	90.7%	18	75.6%	29	15.2%
Enfield	90.7%	19	89.4%	11	1.3%
Greenwich	90.7%	20	85.6%	18	5.1%
Croydon	90.1%	21	87.1%	15	3.0%
Waltham Forest	90.0%	22	87.8%	14	2.2%
Lewisham	88.1%	23	80.8%	21	7.2%
Brent	88.0%	24	79.4%	23	8.6%
Hammersmith and Fulham	87.4%	25	76.2%	28	11.3%
Southwark	87.4%	26	76.8%	26	10.6%
Lambeth	87.1%	27	78.8%	24	8.4%
Camden	86.9%	28	76.6%	27	10.3%
Haringey	86.8%	29	83.4%	20	3.3%
Hackney	86.4%	30	72.1%	32	14.3%
Newham	86.4%	31	79.7%	22	6.7%
Westminster	85.2%	32	74.0%	30	11.1%
Kensington and Chelsea	81.7%	33	64.4%	33	17.2%

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Distribution of Response Rates

Broadly speaking Outer London had higher response rates than Inner London. The highest response rates were focused in three areas: along the outer eastern extent of Greater London, and in clusters in the south-west and north-west. The only exception to this was the City of London which also sits within the highest group. The boroughs with the lowest response rates are located in the northern half of Inner London.

There may be a number of reasons for lower response rates. Boroughs with a propensity for second home ownership may find that their population is under-enumerated and this was certainly a concern following the 2001 Census. Another reason for lower response rates is the age profile of a population. Young adults and particularly students tend to have lower response rates. The Inner London boroughs have an age structure skewed towards younger people and as a result will suffer more from the under-enumeration of this group. A third reason for low response could be the presence of ethnic minority groups in an area. Cultural and language barriers can lead to the under-counting of communities and so areas, such as Inner London, with large minority populations may be under-represented in the initial census count. Future releases of 2011 Census data will provide information on second homes, short-term migrants and population characteristics which will shed more light on the pattern of low response. However, given the improvements across London in response rates it seems that ONS may have deployed field staff to overcome the hard to count issue where possible.



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Household Response Rates 2011

Household response rates are the number of households recorded on census forms as a percentage of the overall household estimate. As with person response rates a higher percentage indicates a greater proportion of households were captured by the census questionnaire. There are no data available for 2001 Census household response rates and so comparisons between the two datasets are not possible.

The local authority with the highest household response in London was Bexley where 96.2 per cent of households were captured through the census questionnaire. The lowest was Kensington & Chelsea where 82.3 per cent of households were counted. As with the person response rate the range of household response rates was relatively narrow, just 14 per cent. Twenty-seven authorities had a response of 90 per cent or over and the top six had a rate over 95 per cent.

The London-wide rankings for household response were broadly similar to the person response rankings. Five of the top six boroughs in both lists are the same, as are three of the lowest four. That said there are some anomalies:

- Merton is 7th in the household ranks but 13th in the person ranks
- Ealing is 19th in the person ranks but 11th in the household ranks
- Enfield is 11th in person ranks and 20th in the household ranks

Figure 3: Household response rates by borough

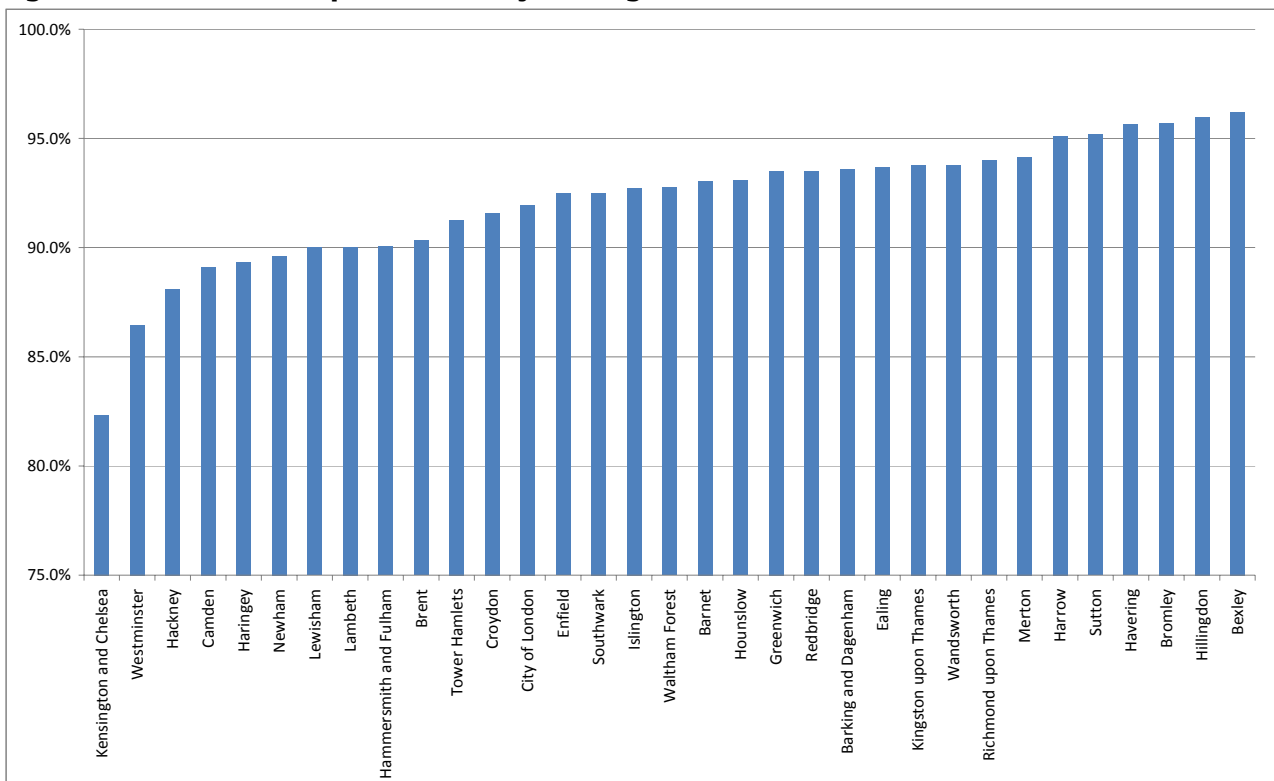


Table 2: Household response rates 2011, descending order

	2011 Household Response Rate	2011 Rank
Bexley	96.2%	1
Hillingdon	96.0%	2
Bromley	95.7%	3
Havering	95.6%	4
Sutton	95.2%	5
Harrow	95.1%	6
Merton	94.2%	7
Richmond upon Thames	94.0%	8
Wandsworth	93.8%	9
Kingston upon Thames	93.8%	10
Ealing	93.7%	11
Barking and Dagenham	93.6%	12
Redbridge	93.5%	13
Greenwich	93.5%	14
Hounslow	93.1%	15
Barnet	93.1%	16
Waltham Forest	92.8%	17
Islington	92.7%	18
Southwark	92.5%	19
Enfield	92.5%	20
City of London	91.9%	21
Croydon	91.6%	22
Tower Hamlets	91.3%	23
Brent	90.3%	24
Hammersmith and Fulham	90.1%	25
Lambeth	90.0%	26
Lewisham	90.0%	27
Newham	89.6%	28
Haringey	89.3%	29
Camden	89.1%	30
Hackney	88.1%	31
Westminster	86.5%	32
Kensington and Chelsea	82.3%	33

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Household Return Rates

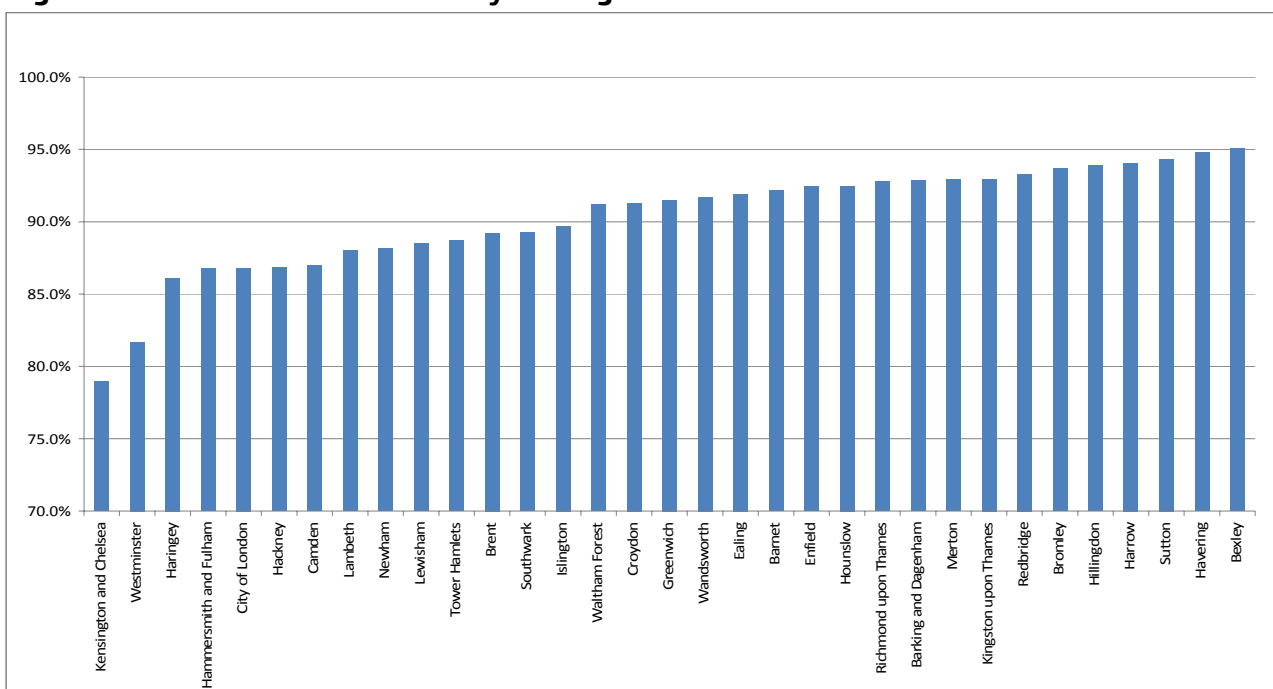
The 2011 Census was the first census where forms were posted out and posted back. In previous censuses enumerators hand delivered and collected questionnaires directly from households. In 2011 the ONS produced a national address register using a number of administrative data sources, including local authority local land and property gazetteers (LLPG). Forms were then posted out to all of the addresses on the register. Addresses were added to the register as they were discovered during census operations.

The household return rate describes the number of household questionnaires returned as a percentage of those posted out. The household return rate differs from the household response rate in that it includes all properties on the address register, not just those with a usually resident occupier. This means that vacant properties, second homes and properties containing only short-term migrants are included.

The factors which influence the household response rates will also impact the household return rates however it is likely the effects will be amplified. This is because the return rate includes more properties of the types less likely to return a questionnaire (second homes, vacant properties). The return is therefore lower than the response rate for all London boroughs, although the amount by which they differ varies. In Enfield the difference is 0.1 per cent while in the City of London it is 5.1 per cent, the average in London is around 1.8 per cent.

A wider differential between household return and household response rates suggests a greater number of vacant properties, second homes or short-term migrants in a local authority area. However, the exact mix of these three contributing elements remains unclear until the relevant data are made available in future census releases.

Figure 4: Household return rates by borough



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Table 3: Household return rates 2011, descending order

	2011 Household Return Rate	Rank	Difference between hh response and return rates
Bexley	95.1%	1	1.2%
Havering	94.8%	2	0.8%
Sutton	94.3%	3	0.9%
Harrow	94.1%	4	1.0%
Hillingdon	93.9%	5	2.1%
Bromley	93.7%	6	2.0%
Redbridge	93.3%	7	0.2%
Kingston upon Thames	93.0%	8	0.8%
Merton	92.9%	9	1.2%
Barking and Dagenham	92.9%	10	0.8%
Richmond upon Thames	92.8%	11	1.2%
Hounslow	92.5%	12	0.6%
Enfield	92.4%	13	0.1%
Barnet	92.2%	14	0.9%
Ealing	91.9%	15	1.7%
Wandsworth	91.7%	16	2.1%
Greenwich	91.5%	17	2.0%
Croydon	91.3%	18	0.3%
Waltham Forest	91.2%	19	1.5%
Islington	89.7%	20	3.0%
Southwark	89.3%	21	3.3%
Brent	89.2%	22	1.1%
Tower Hamlets	88.7%	23	2.6%
Lewisham	88.5%	24	1.5%
Newham	88.1%	25	1.5%
Lambeth	88.0%	26	2.0%
Camden	87.0%	27	2.1%
Hackney	86.8%	28	1.3%
City of London	86.8%	29	5.1%
Hammersmith and Fulham	86.8%	30	3.3%
Haringey	86.1%	31	3.2%
Westminster	81.7%	32	4.8%
Kensington and Chelsea	79.0%	33	3.4%

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