

Data Management and Analysis Group

Council tax analysis



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Council tax analysis

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Summary of main findings

Chargeable dwellings

- The Valuations Office Agency recorded almost 22.3 million chargeable dwellings in England in March 2007, of which 3.3 million are in London;
- The biggest proportion of dwellings in England are in the lower value bands A to C, which combined make up two thirds of all dwellings (14.7 million) compared with two thirds (or 2.2 million) of London dwellings which are in the middle value bands C to E.

Average council Tax (band D)

- Average band D council tax in England has risen by 133 per cent (from £568) since its introduction in April 1993 to £1,321 in 2007-08;
- London has the lowest average council tax set for 2007-08 of all the regions in England;
- In 2007-08, Kingston upon Thames is the only London borough in the ten most expensive council tax areas in England. However, there are five boroughs in the ten least expensive council tax authorities: Tower Hamlets, Kensington & Chelsea, City of London, Westminster and Wandsworth.

Council tax collection rates

- £18.9 billion of council tax was raised in 2006-07 in England, of which £2.8 billion, or 15 per cent, was collected in London;
- Both the amount of council tax and the rate of collection increased in England and London in 2006-07 compared with the previous financial year. The increase was £957 million in England and £147 million in London;
- However, uncollected council tax is significant, totalling £613 million in England and £146 million in London in 2006-07.

Council Tax Benefit (CTB)

- 4.2 million people in England (27 per cent of households) and 730,000 in London (23 per cent) are CTB recipients;
- Four London boroughs appear in the top 20 list of CTB claimants in England: Newham, Hackney, Southwark and Lambeth;
- Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Newham have the highest percentage of households claiming CTB in London.

1. Introduction

This DMAG briefing will provide an overview of council tax in England, focusing on London boroughs. In particular, it examines domestic council tax collections, rates, increases and take up of Council Tax Benefit.

Council tax was introduced in 1993 and is a local tax based on the value of a domestic property. It is raised by councils to help pay for local services like policing and refuse collection. It applies to all domestic properties, both owned and rented.

When the council tax system was introduced, all properties were valued and put into a valuation band. The valuation bands for homes in England are based on their value on 1st April 1991, not their current value (see Table 1.1). The biggest proportion of dwellings in England are in bands A to C, which combined make up two thirds of all dwellings (14.7 million). The majority of London dwellings (two-thirds or 2.2 million) are in bands C to E, which are higher in value than the rest of England, reflecting the higher house prices in London.

Table 1.1 Council tax valuation bands in England with the proportion of dwellings in England and London

Valuation band	Ranges of values in £ in England (based on property prices in 1991)	Percentage of dwellings in England	Percentage of dwellings in London
A	up to 40,000	25	3
B	40,001 - 52,000	19	14
C	52,001 - 68,000	22	27
D	68,001 - 88,000	15	25
E	88,001 - 120,000	9	15
F	120,001 - 160,000	5	8
G	160,001 - 320,000	4	6
H	320,001 and over	1	2
Total dwellings		22,291,286	3,250,862

Source: Valuation Office Agency as at 26 March 2007

For additional information on council tax, please see the following websites:

- Communities & Local Government www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/ctax/ctax078.htm;
- Valuation Office Agency http://www.voa.gov.uk/Council_tax/index.htm;
- London Councils <http://www.londonCouncils.gov.uk/doc.asp?doc=19572&cat=2437>;
- Direct Gov <http://www.direct.gov.uk/CouncilTax/>;
- Work and Pensions Council Tax Benefit http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/hb_ctb/HousingBenefit.pdf.

2. Chargeable dwellings

The Valuations Office Agency recorded almost 22.3 million chargeable dwellings in England in March 2007. The South East has the most dwellings in England, with 3.6 million dwellings, or 16 per cent. London has just 315,000 fewer dwellings (3.3 million). The North East has the least number of dwellings recorded, with just 1.2 million (see Table 2.1).

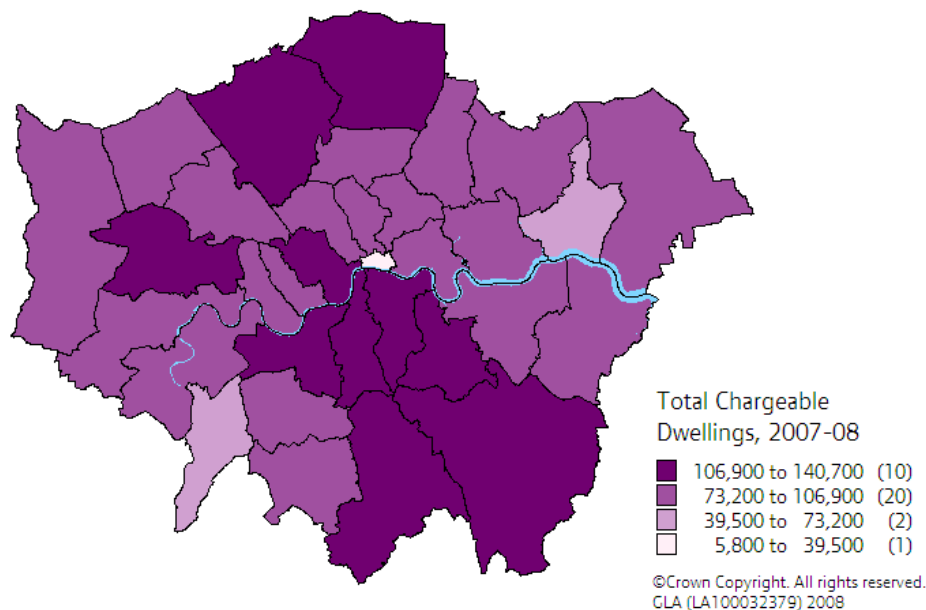
Table 2.1 Dwellings on valuation list by band, by region

	% Band A - C	% Other bands	Total
South East (SE)	51	49	3,566,016
London (L)	44	56	3,250,862
North West (NW)	79	21	3,087,379
East of England (EE)	62	38	2,443,046
West Midlands (WM)	76	24	2,316,833
South West (SW)	65	35	2,301,550
Yorkshire and the Humber (YH)	81	19	2,260,550
East Midlands (EM)	78	22	1,905,801
North East (NE)	86	14	1,159,249
England	66	34	22,291,286

Source: Valuation Office Agency as at 26 March 2007

Map 2.1 shows the number of dwellings on the council tax valuation list by London borough. The City of London has by far the smallest number of dwellings (5,800), followed by Kingston upon Thames (63,500) and Barking and Dagenham (70,000). The largest three boroughs by dwelling numbers are Croydon (141,200), Barnet (134,900) and Bromley (132,900), which combined represent almost 13 per cent of the London total.

Map 2.1 Chargeable dwellings on valuation list, by London borough



Source: Communities and Local Government from the Valuation Office Agency

<http://www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/stats/data/ctbdwell2007.xls>

3. Average council tax (band D)

Note: Band D residences with two adults have been used as an average council tax level in this update as they are widely regarded as a benchmark when comparing council tax in different areas or over time. The figures used for a band D property, used as a main residence and not subject to any discount or exemption.

According to figures from the Department of Communities and Local Government, the average council tax set by local authorities in England for 2007-08 for a band D dwelling (occupied by two or more adults, including parish precepts) will be £1,321 compared with £1,268 in 2006-07. This equates to an increase of four per cent on the previous financial year. However, average council tax in England has risen by 133 per cent (from £568) since its introduction in April 1993, or an average of nine per cent per year.

The average council tax set by local authorities by region for 2007-08 ranges from £1,258 in London to £1,380 in the North East. This represents just £122 difference between the least and most expensive average council tax for band D dwellings in England. It is worth noting that London has the lowest percentage growth in council tax for 2007-08 of all the English regions, at three per cent.

The average council tax bill differs widely among England's local authorities. Table 3.1 shows that council tax for band D is highest in Sedgefield in the North East (£1,566) and lowest in Wandsworth, (£681) and Westminster (£682). Kingston upon Thames is the only London borough in the ten most expensive council tax areas in England, whereas there are five boroughs in the ten least expensive council tax authorities.

Table 3.1 Ten most and least expensive council tax charges by local authorities, 2007-08

Rank	Local Authority	Region	Council tax	Rank	Local Authority	Region	Council tax
1	Sedgefield	NE	£1,566	346	Southend-on-Sea UA	EE	£1,174
2	Newark & Sherwood	EM	£1,540	346	Wakefield	YH	£1,172
3	Easington	NE	£1,539	347	Trafford	NW	£1,152
4	Rutland UA	EM	£1,534	348	Dudley	WM	£1,145
5	South Bedfordshire	EE	£1,527	349	Tower Hamlets	L	£1,140
6	Kingston upon Thames	L	£1,523	350	Kensington & Chelsea	L	£1,043
7	Weymouth & Portland	SW	£1,501	351	Isles of Scilly	SW	£1,028
8	Hartlepool UA	NE	£1,497	352	City of London	L	£900
9	Mansfield	EM	£1,497	353	Westminster	L	£682
10	Broxtowe	EM	£1,491	354	Wandsworth	L	£681

Source: Communities and Local Government, band D area council tax for local authorities

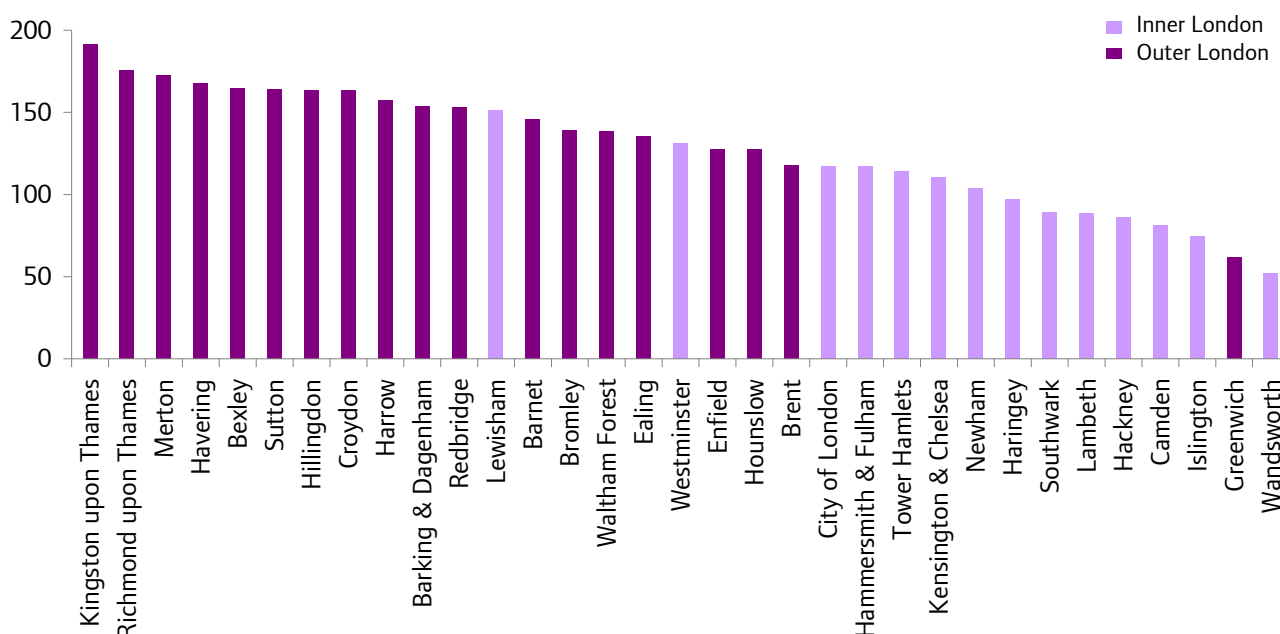
Percentage change in council tax since between 1993-94 and 2007-08

The biggest percentage increase since 1993 has been in Wellingborough in the East Midlands. Despite its ranking of 324 out of 354 in England in terms of amount set for 2007-08, council tax has increased by 400 per cent from £245 in 1993-94 to £1,227 in 2007-08. The biggest increase in London is in Kingston upon Thames, where council tax has risen by 191 per cent, from £523 to £1,523.

The smallest increase in council tax since 1993-94 in England has been in Wandsworth, from £449 to £681 (52 per cent). The borough has seen consistently small rises or even decreases since 1993. Once again, five out of ten areas with the smallest increase in council tax were in London; Wandsworth, Greenwich, Islington, Camden and Hackney. Figure 3.1 shows the percentage change between 1993-94 and 2007-08 in the boroughs. For full details, see Appendix Table A1.

Figure 3.1 Change in council tax in London boroughs, 1993-94 to 2007-08

Percentage change



Source: Communities and Local Government <http://www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/ctax/data/ctaxtimes.xls>

4. Council tax collection rates

In 2006-07, £18.9 billion of council tax was raised in England, of which £1.9 million was collected in Outer London and £894 million in Inner London. Figure 4.1 shows that collection rates in England have been reasonably consistent, increasing by just 1.4 percentage points between 1997-98 and 2006-07. Rates in Inner London increased by 6.1 per cent compared with 1.7 per cent in Outer London between these years. Since 1997-98, England has had a higher collection rate than both Inner and Outer London.

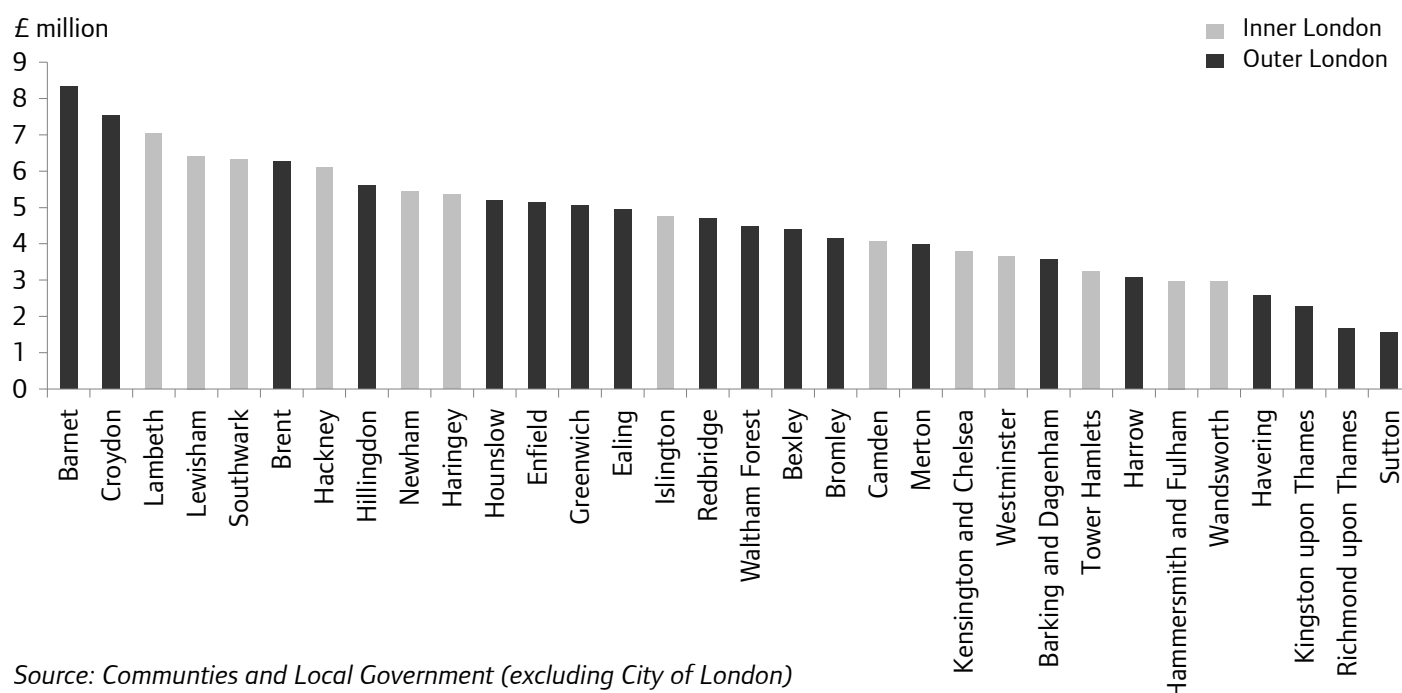
Table 4.1 Council tax collection rates in England, Inner and Outer London boroughs

	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
England	95.5	95.6	95.6	95.8	96.1	96.4	96.5	96.6	96.8	96.9
Outer London	93.8	93.8	93.7	94.3	94.9	95.0	95.0	95.1	95.4	95.5
Inner London	88.0	88.5	88.7	89.6	91.1	91.9	92.0	92.9	93.9	94.1

Source: Communities and Local Government <http://www.local.odpm.gov.uk/finance/stats/ctax.htm>

Both the amount of council tax and the rate of collection increased in England in 2006-07 compared with the previous financial year. In 2006-07, £957 million more than the previous financial year was collected in England and £147 million more council tax was collected in London. However, uncollected council tax totalled £613 million in England and £146 million in London in 2006-07. Uncollected council tax in Outer London reached £90 million in 2006-07 and the Outer London borough with the most uncollected tax was Barnet (£8 million) and the least was Sutton (£1.5 million), as shown in Figure 4.1. Inner London reported £56 million in uncollected tax in 2006-07. The Inner London borough with the most uncollected tax was Lambeth (£7 million) and the least was Wandsworth (£3 million) (discounting the City of London at £82,000).

Figure 4.1 Uncollected council tax by London borough, 2006-07



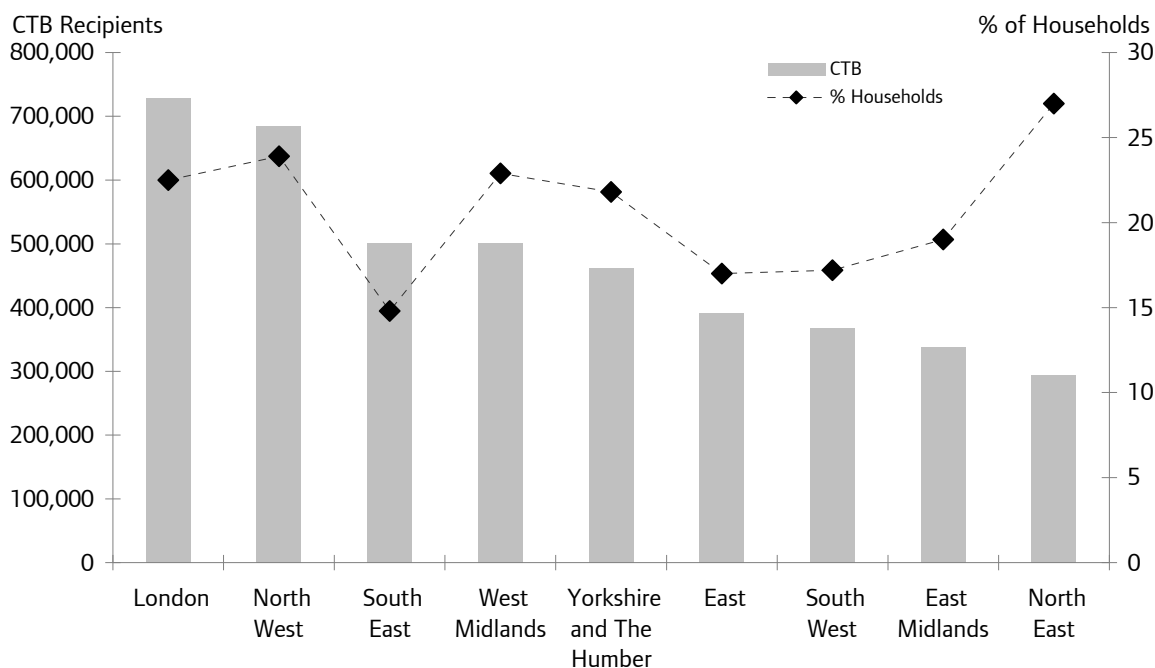
Source: Communities and Local Government (excluding City of London)

5. Council Tax Benefit

Council Tax Benefit (CTB) is an income-related benefit administered by local authorities and is designed to help people on low-incomes to pay their council tax. There are two types of CTB; *Main Council Tax Benefit*, and *Second Adult Rebate*. This briefing will just look at the total CTB. Please see the [Department for Work and Pensions website](#) and the DMAG Briefing 2007-19 [Benefit Claimants in London 2006](#) for more detailed information.

Data from the Department for Work and Pensions shows that 4.3 million people in England are recipients of CTB which equates to over a quarter of all households. Figure 5.1 shows that in London, there are 729,000 CTB recipients, or 23 per cent of households. London has the highest number of CTB recipients of all the regions in England, whilst the North East has the least with 297,000 which equates to 27 per cent of households. Conversely, the North East has the highest percentage of CTB households in England.

Figure 5.1 Council Tax Benefit recipients by Government Office Region, 2006



Source: Department for Work and Pensions, November 2006

The local authority in England with the highest number of CTB recipients is Birmingham (125,200) followed by Liverpool (70,400) and Leeds (65,200). Four London boroughs appear in the top 20 list; Newham in 11th place (34,900), Hackney in 15th place (34,500), Southwark in 17th place (33,400) and Lambeth in 18th place (32,700).

Local authorities with the lowest number of CTB recipients, are Rutland in East Midlands (1,600) and Teesdale in the North East (2,000). *City of London and Isles of Scilly figures have been excluded as the data are subject to a high degree of sampling error and should only be used as a guide.* The London borough with the lowest number of CTB recipients are Kingston upon Thames (8,000) and Richmond upon Thames (9,300).

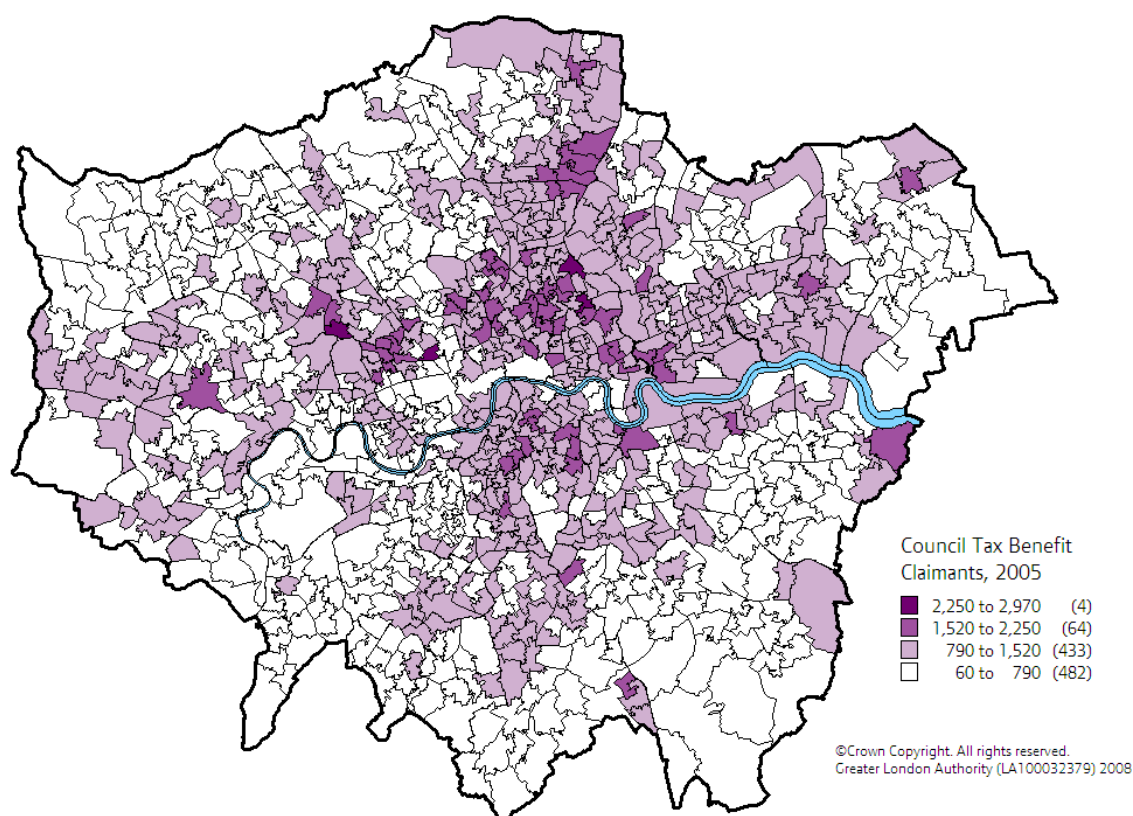
Percentage of households claiming Council Tax Benefit, 2006

When UK local authorities are ranked by CTB recipients as a percentage of all households, Hackney and Tower Hamlets have the joint third highest percentage in England, both with 38.3 per cent. Sefton in the North West has the highest percentage in England (40 per cent) followed by Liverpool with 38.5 per cent. Four additional London boroughs appear in the top 20 list; Newham (34.9 per cent), Islington (33.9 per cent), Barking and Dagenham (32.7 per cent) and Haringey (31.9 per cent).

The three local authorities with the lowest percentage of CTB per households, all with under nine per cent are all in the South East region; Wokingham (7.3 per cent), Hart (7.6 per cent) and Surrey Heath (8.4 per cent). Within London, Richmond upon Thames (11.9 per cent) and Kingston upon Thames (12.7 per cent) have the lowest percentage, as shown Appendix Table A3.

Map 5.1 shows the distribution of CTB claimants in August 2005 throughout London. The general pattern is for the higher levels of claimants to be concentrated in Inner London, as seen in Islington, Southwark and Westminster. In general, the lower number of claimants are situated in Outer London. However there are boroughs with pockets of higher numbers such as in Enfield, Ealing and Haringey.

Map 5.1 Council Tax Benefit Claimants by Super Output Area, August 2005



Source: *Neighbourhood Statistics, Super Output Area Middle Layer*

Note: derived from a 100% scan of CTB claimants in August 2005. The data were collected from Local Authorities over a four week period and are not National Statistics

Appendix

Table A1 Band D council tax by London borough

Local authority	Council tax set 1993-94 (£)	Council tax set 2007-08 (£)	Rank in England 1993	Rank in England 2007	% change 1993 to 2007
City of London	414	900	260	352	117
Barking & Dagenham	504	1,278	122	295	154
Barnet	549	1,350	161	179	146
Bexley	515	1,362	77	144	164
Brent	597	1,299	259	275	118
Bromley	510	1,218	190	330	139
Camden	718	1,301	305	272	81
Croydon	515	1,358	82	160	163
Ealing	570	1,344	204	189	136
Enfield	587	1,337	234	204	128
Greenwich	783	1,266	312	305	62
Hackney	699	1,302	304	268	86
Hammersmith & Fulham	549	1,193	261	337	117
Haringey	727	1,432	290	41	97
Harrow	554	1,423	107	49	157
Havering	536	1,433	62	38	168
Hillingdon	525	1,384	81	90	164
Hounslow	613	1,395	235	82	127
Islington	698	1,219	310	328	75
Kensington & Chelsea	496	1,043	273	350	110
Kingston upon Thames	523	1,523	10	6	191
Lambeth	630	1,187	303	341	88
Lewisham	516	1,296	139	278	151
Merton	498	1,358	50	159	172
Newham	599	1,220	282	327	104
Redbridge	525	1,331	125	223	153
Richmond upon Thames	541	1,491	37	11	175
Southwark	624	1,181	302	342	89
Sutton	521	1,376	78	107	164
Tower Hamlets	533	1,140	267	349	114
Waltham Forest	590	1,407	191	68	139
Wandsworth	449	681	313	354	52
Westminster	295	682	219	353	131

Source: *Communities and Local Government, Local Government Finance*

Table A2 Council taxes: collection amounts and rates: 2005-06 and 2006-07

	Estimated net collectable debit in respect of 2005-06 council taxes £000s	Total receipts of 2005-06 council taxes £000s	Receipts of 2005-06 council taxes by 31 March 2007 as a % of net collectable debit	Rank of collection rate in England 2005-06	Estimated net collectable debit in respect of 2006-07 council taxes £000s	Total receipts of 2006-07 council taxes £000s	Receipts of 2006-07 council taxes by 31 March 2007 as a % of net collectable debit	Rank of collection rate in England 2006-07
London boroughs								
City of London	4,466	4,324	97	27	4,797	4,715	98	11
Barking and Dagenham	43,532	40,471	93	78	45,829	42,261	92	83
Barnet	148,970	142,029	95	53	154,806	146,467	95	64
Bexley	92,568	88,468	96	47	97,609	93,204	95	51
Brent	87,874	81,497	92	81	92,778	86,501	93	78
Bromley	131,741	127,782	97	23	140,112	135,952	97	26
Camden	90,476	86,138	95	55	95,423	91,358	96	48
Croydon	133,844	125,619	94	69	141,821	134,291	95	62
Ealing	119,698	114,456	96	46	125,610	120,664	96	41
Enfield	108,067	103,115	95	51	112,953	107,806	95	53
Greenwich	73,040	68,073	93	74	76,114	71,057	93	75
Hackney	61,297	53,624	87	85	64,070	57,962	90	85
Hammersmith and Fulham	73,665	70,223	95	54	77,162	74,183	96	39
Haringey	81,963	76,510	93	71	86,249	80,896	94	71
Harrow	95,256	92,454	97	21	100,917	97,853	97	27
Havering	102,280	99,087	97	25	106,424	103,855	98	17
Hillingdon	104,516	99,039	95	60	110,186	104,572	95	60

Table A2 continued Council taxes: collection amounts and rates: 2005-06 and 2006-07

	Estimated net collectable debit in respect of 2005-06 council taxes £000s	Total receipts of 2005-06 council taxes £000s	Receipts of 2005-06 council taxes by 31 March 2007 as a % of net collectable debit	Rank of Collection rate in England 2005-06	Estimated net collectable debit in respect of 2006-07 council taxes £000s	Total receipts of 2006-07 council taxes £000s	Receipts of 2006-07 council taxes by 31 March 2007 as a % of net collectable debit	Rank of Collection rate in England 2006-07
London boroughs								
Hounslow	92,551	87,520	95	61	97,926	92,731	95	61
Islington	67,363	62,794	93	73	70,730	65,981	93	76
Kensington and Chelsea	87,811	84,276	96	43	91,238	87,444	96	46
Kingston upon Thames	77,387	74,872	97	30	81,535	79,272	97	23
Lambeth	90,563	84,315	93	76	94,843	87,792	93	81
Lewisham	83,489	78,482	94	67	87,841	81,418	93	80
Merton	81,123	78,880	97	18	85,748	81,760	95	54
Newham	54,894	49,684	91	84	57,475	52,022	91	84
Redbridge	90,605	85,665	95	63	96,661	91,970	95	57
Richmond upon Thames	110,623	108,558	98	7	114,516	112,849	99	6
Southwark	76,769	71,364	93	79	81,942	75,623	92	82
Sutton	80,145	78,539	98	9	85,603	84,048	98	13
Tower Hamlets	56,657	53,531	94	64	60,574	57,329	95	63
Waltham Forest	77,943	72,486	93	77	80,892	76,403	94	67
Wandsworth	66,406	63,076	95	56	70,956	67,986	96	47
Westminster	70,074	66,417	95	58	75,409	71,759	95	56

Source: Communities and Local Government

Table A3 Council Tax Benefit recipients by London borough

Local Authority	CTB recipients (in thousands)	CTB as % of households*	Rank CTB in England	Rank % CTB in England
City of London**	0	10	353	346
Barking and Dagenham	22	33	55	13
Barnet	25	19	45	144
Bexley	15	17	83	200
Brent	28	25	34	58
Bromley	19	15	68	259
Camden	25	27	42	41
Croydon	29	21	32	125
Ealing	26	21	39	126
Enfield	30	26	25	46
Greenwich	26	28	38	32
Hackney	35	38	15	3
Hammersmith and Fulham	19	23	65	77
Haringey	31	32	24	17
Harrow	15	18	87	179
Havering	17	18	73	156
Hillingdon	18	18	70	155
Hounslow	19	22	64	106
Islington	28	34	36	11
Kensington and Chelsea	14	17	94	189
Kingston upon Thames	8	13	175	297
Lambeth	33	26	18	54
Lewisham	29	26	33	57
Merton	12	15	107	248
Newham	35	37	11	6
Redbridge	20	21	61	121
Richmond upon Thames	9	12	143	315
Southwark	33	29	17	29
Sutton	12	15	112	244
Tower Hamlets	32	38	21	4
Waltham Forest	25	27	43	44
Wandsworth	21	18	58	178
Westminster	20	22	60	95

Source: Department for Work and Pensions, HB 3.2

Notes

* A Household is either one person living alone, or a group of people who share common housekeeping or a living room. Percentages are based on Mid 2003 Household data.

** City of London figures are subject to a high degree of sampling error and should only be used as a guide.

The reported rises in caseload, particularly from November 2003, may largely reflect the impact of a large reduction in the number of outstanding claims, due to recent administration rule changes, rather than a true rise in the number of benefit recipients.

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