CITY INTELLIGENCE

The London Civic Strength Tool – Round 3: methodology

August 2025

Introduction

The London Civic Strength Tool (CST) was developed by the Young Foundation and launched in 2021 to provide a credible knowledge tool that community organisations, funders, and policymakers could use to identify strengths of communities across London.

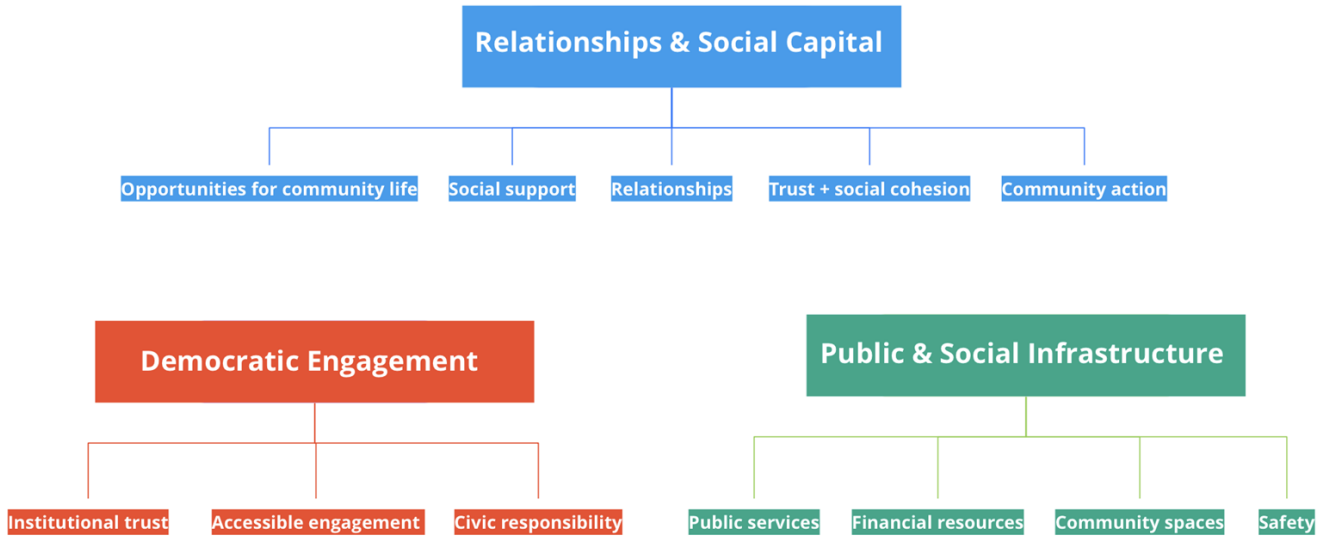
The data feeding into the tool has been updated twice since then, the first update led by WPI Economics in 2023 and the second update led by GLA City Intelligence in 2025.

This report summarises the technical details of how the third iteration of the tool has been created and the data sources used.

Framework

The conceptual framework for civic strength has remained unchanged with three overarching domains: Relationships and Social Capital; Democratic Engagement; and Public and Social Infrastructure (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Civic Strength Framework



There are 12 key sub-domains that sit under the three domains.

As introduced in version two, the tool was split into separate borough and ward level tools. The data sources were also reviewed, updated and changed as necessary, and some new data was introduced into the tool. This process was replicated for version three and new data was also included in the tool through data produced from the Civic Data Innovation Challenge (CDIC), Round 2[1]. The CDIC tasked innovators across London to find new ways of measuring community strength that could be incorporated into future iterations of the CST.

Data sources

The third iteration of the CST includes 40 data measures for the borough level tool and 11 data measures for the ward level tool. Table 1 contains details of those 40 borough level data measures and whether they also feature in the ward level tool.

Table 1 – Measures included in the Civic Strength Tool

Domain	Sub-domain	Measure	Unit	Time period	Data source	Ward level measure?
Relationships and Social Capital	Opportunities for Community Life	Footfall in high streets and town centres	Daytime visitor counts to all high streets from all their associated 'home LSOAs', as a proportion of the 'home LSOAs' population	2023/24	Anonymised and aggregated data by BT, via the High Streets Data Service (HSDS)	No
	Opportunities for Community Life	Number of community sport and physical activity offerings	Number	2024	London Sport	Yes
	Social Support	Number of registered charity volunteers	Number	2022/23	MyCake and SuperHighways analysis of Charity Commission for England and Wales	No

[1] Civic Data Innovation Challenge | London City Hall

Domain	Sub-domain	Measure	Unit	Time period	Data source	Ward level measure?
	Social Support	Percentage of adults (16+) reporting that people in neighbourhood pull together to improve the neighbourhood	Per cent	2023/24	Community Life Survey (CLS) 2023/24	No
	Social Support	Percentage of adults (16+) reporting that if they needed help there are people who would be there for them	Per cent	2023/24	Community Life Survey (CLS) 2023/24	No
	Social Support	Number of registered charities	Number	2022/23	MyCake and SuperHighways analysis of Charity Commission for England and Wales	No
	Social Support	Number of community interest companies (CICs)	Number	2025	Companies House	Yes
	Relationships	Internal migration	Number of migrants (total of in- and out-flows)	2023	ONS Estimates of the population for England and Wales	No
	Relationships	Personal wellbeing	Average score between 0 and 10	2022/23	ONS Personal well-being in the UK	No
	Relationships	Percentage of adults (16+) reporting that they felt lonely often or always	Per cent	2023/24	Community Life Survey (CLS) 2023/24	No
	Relationships	International migration	Number of migrants (total of in- and out-flows)	2023	ONS Estimates of the population for England and Wales	No

Domain	Sub-domain	Measure	Unit	Time period	Data source	Ward level measure?
	Trust and Social Cohesion	Percentage of adults (16+) reporting that they belong very or fairly strongly to London	Per cent	2021/22	Survey of Londoners (SoL) 21-22	No
	Trust and Social Cohesion	Index of Local Area Belonging	Index score	2021/22	Neighbourly Lab analysis of Survey of Londoners (SoL) 21-22	No
	Trust and Social Cohesion	Gentrification – change in occupational classes	Percentage point change	2021	ONS 2011 and 2021 Census	Yes
	Trust and Social Cohesion	Income inequality	Ratio	2019/20	ONS Income estimates for small areas, England and Wales	No
	Community Action	Percentage of adults (16+) reporting taking part in formal volunteering at least once in the last year	Per cent	2023/24	Community Life Survey (CLS) 2023/24	No
	Community Action	Number of food banks	Number	2023/24	Trussell Trust	No
	Community Action	Number of food bank parcels delivered	Number	2023/24	Trussell Trust	No
Democratic Engagement	Institutional Trust	Proportion of electoral registrations	Per cent	2023	ONS Electoral statistics for the UK / ONS estimates of the population for England and Wales	No
	Institutional Trust	Ballots cast in borough council elections 2022	Number	2022	Greater London Authority (GLA)	Yes
	Accessible Democratic Engagement	Percentage of adults (16+) agreeing that they personally can	Per cent	2023/24	Community Life Survey (CLS) 2023/24	No

Domain	Sub-domain	Measure	Unit	Time period	Data source	Ward level measure?
		influence decisions affecting their local area				
	Accessible Democratic Engagement	Percentage of adults (16+) treated unfairly in the last 12 months because of one or several protected characteristics or because of their social class	Per cent	2021/22	Survey of Londoners (SoL) 21-22	No
	Accessible Democratic Engagement	Percentage of adults (16+) digitally excluded	Per cent	2021/22	Survey of Londoners (SoL) 21-22	No
	Civic Responsibility	Percentage of adults (16+) who have engaged in some form of civic participation at least once in the last 12 months	Per cent	2023/24	Community Life Survey (CLS) 2023/24	No
	Civic Responsibility	Percentage of adults (16+) who have engaged in civic consultation at least once in the last 12 months	Per cent	2023/24	Community Life Survey (CLS) 2023/24	No
Public and Social Infrastructure	Public Services	Number and proximity of libraries	Borough: number Ward: metres	2023	GLA Cultural Infrastructure Map (CIM)	Yes
	Public Services	Not in education, employment or training (NEET)/not known proportion for age 16-17	Per cent	2022/23	Department for Education (DfE)	No
	Public Services	Percentage of pupils meeting the Key Stage 2 (KS2) expected standard in reading, writing	Per cent	2023/24	Department for Education (DfE)	No

Domain	Sub-domain	Measure	Unit	Time period	Data source	Ward level measure?
		and maths (gap in disadvantage status)				
	Public Services	Students achieving GCSE A* to C English and Maths (%)	Per cent	2023/24	Department for Education (DfE)	No
	Financial Resources	Percent of newly born enterprises surviving 1 year	Per cent	2022	ONS Business demography, UK	No
	Financial Resources	Registered charity expenditure	£ millions	2022/23	MyCake and SuperHighways analysis of Charity Commission for England and Wales	No
	Financial Resources	Local authority (LA) core spending power	£ millions, 2024/25 prices	2024/25	House of Commons Library – Local authority data: finances	No
	Financial Resources	Jobs density	Numbers of jobs per resident aged 16-64	2022	ONS (via Nomis)	No
	Community Spaces	Public transport access levels (PTALs)	PTAL group	2023	Transport for London (TfL)	Yes
	Community Spaces	Passive green space	Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) value	2024	Geographic Data Service – Access to Healthy Assets & Hazards (AHAH) v4	Yes
	Community Spaces	Number and proximity of community centres	Borough: number Ward: metres	2023	GLA Cultural Infrastructure Map (CIM)	Yes
	Community Spaces	Number and proximity of cultural spaces	Borough: number Ward: metres	2023	GLA Cultural Infrastructure Map (CIM)	Yes
	Community Spaces	Healthy Streets score	Score out of 10	2024	Healthy Streets Scorecard	No

Domain	Sub-domain	Measure	Unit	Time period	Data source	Ward level measure?
	Community Spaces	Number of faith centres	Number	2025	Ordnance Survey National Geographic Database (OS NGD)	Yes
	Safety	Recorded crime	Number	2024	Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) recorded crime	Yes

Data was also collected for City of London and included in the calculations, where available. However, as not all sources consistently collected data for City of London, it was excluded from the final tool (as in previous iterations).

The ward definitions for this third iteration of the CST are from 2022, thus the data has been revised substantially from the previous iteration, which used an earlier definition[2].

Population data

Some of the measures were converted into proportions of the total population. Table 2 shows which measures had this applied.

Table 2 – Measures converted into 'per population' measures

Measure
Number of community sport and physical activity offerings
Number of registered charity volunteers
Number of registered charities
Number of community interest companies (CICs)
Internal migration
International migration
Number of food banks
Number of food bank parcels delivered
Ballots cast in borough council elections 2022
Number and proximity of libraries (number only)
Registered charity expenditure
Local authority (LA) core spending power
Number and proximity of community centres (number only)
Number and proximity of cultural spaces (number only)
Number of faith centres
Recorded crime

[2] Ward to Local Authority District (December 2022) Lookup in the UK | Open Geography Portal

For ease of use, one source was used for most measures, namely the GLA's housing-led population projections and the 2022-based 10-year migration Central Fertility Identified Capacity variant, in particular[3]. The 2023 total borough and ward populations were used for the majority of measures, except for two measures.

The 'Ballots cast in borough council elections 2022' measure used the same source but a different year and population definition: the 2022 borough and ward age 18+ population (since this matched the age range of eligible voters at the time of the election).

The 'Recorded crime' measure used a different population. It used the 'at-risk' population for boroughs and wards, which is the sum of the mid-year population estimates data and census workplace population estimates. The Demography team at the GLA collated this population data for use in the CST. The latest data was from 2022.

Methodologies of the complex measures

Some of the measures in Table 1 are more complex than others. This section explains in detail how some of these more complex measures were created for use in the London CST.

1 Footfall in high streets and town centres

As this measure sat in the 'opportunities for community life' sub-domain, we wanted to use this data to capture a high street's local draw, that is, how many of its nearby residents visit it? To achieve this, we used the catchment data from BT, which provides visitor counts to all of London's high streets from individual Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs). We also included town centres in this method, so any references to high streets below also refer to town centres. The data covered the 12-month period of October 2023 to September 2024.

For a given high street, we found all the 'home LSOAs' i.e. the ones that intersect with the high street boundary (it was a long or short list of LSOAs depending on the absolute high street size in m^2). Then, using the visitor catchment data, we computed the average number of daytime visitors that each of these 'home LSOAs' contributed to that high street. The output data was a spreadsheet containing daytime visitor counts to all high streets from all their associated 'home LSOAs'. These were then summed to compare overall local visits to one high street versus another.

To create a measure for each borough, we took all of the high streets and town centres in a borough and computed an average of averages measure, after first creating ratios from the high streets data out of the population who lived there (using Census 2021 population data at the LSOA level). The ratios enable us to take into account high streets and town centres of different sizes.

2 Personal wellbeing

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) uses four questions to measure personal wellbeing[4]:

- Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
- Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?

[3] Housing-led population projections - London Datastore
[4] Personal well-being in the UK - Office for National Statistics

- Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

People are asked to respond on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely". The ONS produces estimates of the mean ratings for all four personal well-being questions, as well as their distributions. For the CST, the scale on the anxious question was flipped first to align with the 'direction' of the other measures. The mean average was then taken across all four scores to come up with an overall personal wellbeing score.

3 Gentrification – change in occupational classes

To create a measure of gentrification, we replicated the method devised by CityGeographics using Census data[5]. The method is obtaining data for the proportion of residents in the three occupational classes: Managers, Professionals and Associate Professionals from both the 2011 and 2021 Censuses, then creating a measure of change.

As noted by the original author, this is an imperfect measure of gentrification, based on just occupational class data. To look into these issues more deeply, we would need to add analysis on housing markets, tenure, deprivation, age and migration data.

4 Income inequality

The ONS produces income estimates for middle layer super output areas (MSOAs) across England and Wales[6]. To create a measure of inequality within a borough, we analysed the MSOAs within a borough then took the ratio between the maximum and minimum total annual incomes at this level. A higher ratio indicates higher inequality.

5 Public transport access levels (PTALs)

The PTAL values produced by TfL range from zero to six, where the highest value represents the best connectivity[7]. For historical reasons, the PTAL value of one is split into two categories (1a and 1b) and the PTAL value of six is split into two categories (6a and 6b). All together there are nine possible values of PTAL: 0, 1a, 1b, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6a and 6b. To enable calculations to be carried out, these values were assigned the values of 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 respectively.

6 Passive green space

The index of Access to Healthy Assets and Hazards (AHAH) is a multi-dimensional index developed by the Geographic Data Service (GeoDS) for Great Britain measuring how 'healthy' neighbourhoods are[8]. It used to include an 'active' greenspace indicator, which was based on the distance people have to travel to their nearest greenspace access point conducive to physical activity. This indicator is no longer present in the index and, instead, what feeds into the index is a 'passive' greenspace indicator, which is based on the proportion of greenspace within a 900-metre buffer (~15 mins walk) from where people live.

Distances are measured from postcode centroids before creating LSOA level averages. This measure includes the following categories:

- public park or garden
- playing field

[5] Tracking Gentrification in London and Manchester Using the 2021 Census Occupational Class Data – CityGeographics
[6] Income estimates for small areas, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics
[7] Planning with WebCAT - Transport for London
[8] Access to Healthy Assets & Hazards (AHAH) - Dataset - Geographic Data Service

- golf course
- allotments or community growing space
- cemetery.

Excluded:

- play space, bowling green, tennis court and religious grounds because these areas were not considered to enhance the 'green' environment, often being behind fences etc.

The data presented by GeoDS is the NDVI value indicating Passive Green Space, which is the Normalised Difference Vegetation Index and, in particular, the mean NDVI value for each postcode within an LSOA. The NDVI is a widely used metric derived from remote sensing data to assess and quantify vegetation health and density. To integrate this data into the CST, the mean value was taken across all of the LSOAs, which made up a ward or borough.

7 Recorded crime

In keeping with previous iterations of the CST, the recorded crime measure did not use all crimes as recorded by the MPS. It excluded:

- Possession of Drugs
- Perjury
- Other Forgery
- Perverting Course of Justice
- Bicycle Theft
- Shoplifting
- Aiding Suicide

A count of crimes was then created covering the whole of the 2024 calendar year. Then, to create a per population measure, the methodology as in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) was used, namely, to use as a denominator, the 'at risk' population, which is the sum of the mid-year population estimates data and census workplace population estimates. The Demography team at the GLA collated this population data for use in the CST and it was for 2022.

Civic Data Innovation Challenge (CDIC) data sources

Five measures that were incorporated into the third iteration of the CST were as a result of the work done through the Civic Data Innovation Challenge (CDIC), Round 2[9]. These were:

- Number of community sport and physical activity offerings
- Number of registered charity volunteers
- Number of registered charities
- Index of Local Area Belonging
- Registered charity expenditure

[9] Civic Data Innovation Challenge | London City Hall

Geo-distance measures

Some indicators were adapted for version 2 at ward level to represent the distance from the centre of a ward to the destination service, whereas in version 1 they counted the number in the area itself. This adaption was retained in the third iteration of the tool as well. These measures were:

- Number and proximity of libraries
- Number and proximity of community centres
- Number and proximity of cultural spaces

At borough level we continued to count the numbers within the boundary of the place as the spatial areas were large enough for that to be meaningful.

Creating the index scores

We followed the same process as in creating the first and second iterations of the tool. Both indices (borough and ward) followed the same methodology but with fewer inputs for the ward level tool.

1. Measures were combined into one file. Some of the measures were adjusted, as mentioned earlier, to be proportions of the population, where appropriate.

2. Polarity was reversed for measures where a high score was 'worse' in civic strength terms (see Table 3).

Table 3 – Measures that had their values converted into negative values

Measure
Internal migration
Percentage of adults (16+) reporting that they felt lonely often or always
International migration
Gentrification – change in occupational classes
Income inequality
Number of food bank parcels delivered
Percentage of adults (16+) treated unfairly in the last 12 months because of one or several protected characteristics or because of their social class
Percentage of adults (16+) digitally excluded
Not in education, employment or training (NEET)/not known proportion for age 16-17
Percentage of pupils meeting the Key Stage 2 (KS2) expected standard in reading, writing and maths (gap in disadvantage status)
Number and proximity of community centres (proximity only)
Number and proximity of cultural spaces (proximity only)
Recorded crime

3. All were then scaled to standardised z-scores (mean of 0, standard deviation of +/- 1).

4. A weighting matrix was then created to multiply the standardised scores by (see Table 4).

Table 4 – Weighting matrix

Domain	Combined domain weight	Sub-domain	Sub-domain weight	Number of borough measures	Number of ward measures
Relationships and Social Capital	36.1%	Opportunities for Community Life	5.3%	2	1
		Social Support	2.7%	5	1
		Relationships	11.2%	4	0
		Trust and Social Cohesion	9.2%	4	1
		Community Action	7.7%	3	0
Democratic Engagement	31.9%	Institutional Trust	7.8%	2	1
		Accessible Democratic Engagement	9.5%	3	0
		Civic Responsibility	14.6%	2	0
Public and Social Infrastructure	32%	Public Services	6.625%	4	1
		Financial Resources	2.325%	4	0
		Community Spaces	6.425%	6	5
		Safety	16.625%	1	1

Note: the sub-domain weights for Public and Social Infrastructure originally added up to 31.9%. Thus, a decision had to be made about how to allocate the remaining 0.1%. Rather than distribute proportionally to each sub-domain, it was decided just to add 0.025% to each sub-domain weight within Public and Social Infrastructure.

5. The sub-domain-level weights were evenly apportioned across however many measures made up the sub-domain. For example, the weight of 11.2% in Relationships was split evenly between the 4 measures in that sub-domain, so each of them received an absolute weight of 11.2% divided by 4 = 2.8%.

6. We then summed up the weighted z-scores to get domain, sub-domain and index scores.

7. In the end, we rescaled each score again back to the standardised distribution.

8. Two files were created: one for boroughs, one for wards.

Interpreting the index scores

As the scores have been re-standardised with a mean of zero, this means that the values are to be interpreted as that area compared with the average across London.

A value greater than zero indicates that civic strength is higher in that area, compared with the average across London, while a value less than zero indicates that civic strength is lower in that area, compared with the average across London

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For more information please contact City Intelligence

Barry Fong,
Greater London Authority,
City Hall,
Kamal Chunchie Way,
London E16 1ZE

Tel: 020 7983 4000
e-mail: Barry.Fong@london.gov.uk

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