

# Technical Analysis Paper



## Revised ONS Mid-2021 Population Estimates

### Introduction

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published the **revised mid-2021 population estimates** on 23 November 2023. **These represent the new population base for the mid-year estimates (MYE) series based on the results of the 2021 Census.**

### Resident population definition

The ONS mid-year estimates represent the **usual resident population** of each local authority area on **30 June** that include all those people who usually live there, regardless of nationality. Arriving international migrants are included in the usually resident population if they remain for at least a year. Emigrants are excluded if they remain outside the UK for at least a year. This is consistent with the United Nations definition of a long-term migrant. Armed forces stationed outside of the UK are excluded. Students are taken to be usually resident at their term-time address.

### The 'official' population

Mid-year estimates are the *official* estimates of population, allowing comparative analysis with other local authority areas in the country.

### Uses

ONS mid-year estimates are used when making statistical returns to central government, in the calculation of performance indicators and for calculating comparative rates where a usual resident population denominator is required.

**Caution should be exercised when using the new 2021 Census-based estimates due to the discontinuity with the previous series** – see p.2 for further information.

### Key Findings

- Camden's usual resident population at **mid-2021** is estimated to be **211,000**.

#### Sex and Age

- 52.7% female and 47.3% male
- Life stage age groups:
 

'Pre-school' age 0-3.....	3.9%
'Primary' age 4-10.....	6.6%
'Secondary' age 11-15.....	4.9%
'Young adults' age 16-24.....	15.1%
'Younger working age' 25-44.....	35.0%
'Older working age' 45-65.....	23.4%
'Younger pensioner age' 66-74.....	5.8%
'Older pensioner age' 75+.....	5.4%

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**Mid-2021 population estimate (revised) for LB Camden**

*Source: Office for National Statistics,  
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Please note that ONS convention over accuracy dictates that **published data must always be rounded to the nearest 100 persons**. You can use single year of age and unit data in calculations, but for presentation purposes it is preferred that age groups are used and **all estimates must** be rounded.

### Further information

- For Camden: [population@camden.gov.uk](mailto:population@camden.gov.uk).
- General: [ONS website](https://ons.gov.uk)

## Discontinuity in the mid-year estimates series

It is usual for the population to be rebased in line with the latest census results and there will always be some discontinuity between the previous series and the newly established one based on the latest census. In Camden, we have long been aware that the mid-year estimates have a tendency to over-estimate the borough's population due to problems with the accurate estimation of migration, particularly, international migration<sup>1</sup>.

**Due to the nature of Camden's central London location**, with high domestic and international migration - and with a large student presence – the discontinuity can be large, but the scale of the 2021 discontinuity is massive and indicates that there is something else going on. The ONS old series<sup>2</sup> estimated the population of Camden to be 280,400 at mid-2021, which is **69.4 thousand higher** (+32.9%) than the revised 2021 Census-based mid-year estimate (210,400) just published.

**The reasons for the scale of this disparity are being evaluated**, but there two key aspects:

1. ONS migration estimates grossly over-inflating the 2011-based estimates series.
2. Factors that have contributed to the 2021 Census estimate to be lower than expected

**It is the latter in particular that requires further scrutiny**, because the census is meant to provide the basis for a 'gold standard' population base, from which to build estimates over the coming decade.

There are a number of contributory factors, including:

- That **the 2021 Census took place during the COVID-19 pandemic**, at a point when the capital was coming out of lockdown. Many people were trapped by COVID-19 restrictions, which meant that they were not counted as part of the resident population. This included many students, EU and other workers, people made unemployed

or on furlough and those who were riding out the pandemic with relatives or friends, or at second residences outside of London.

- **Brexit** will have played a part, with some EU nationals relocating back to Europe.
- **Housing stock capacity**: the impact of short-term lettings (AirBnB, etc.), company flats, investment accommodation and vacancy that take capacity away from the housing stock.

**ONS are aware that the census took place at difficult time** and that places such as Camden may have lost population temporarily. However, **the census data will not be adjusted** – ONS are confident that the census adequately reflects the population in Camden at the time (21 March 2021).

ONS will continue to monitor population movements and **any population adjustments that need to be made will be to the mid-year estimates**. In order to do this ONS has been reviewing its migration methods, including the use of administrative data to better estimate people moving in and out of local authority areas. Camden and other local authorities have engaged with ONS to try to ensure that they identify those who may be COVID-19 returnees, with ONS encouraging local authorities to provide any data that may be used to provide evidence.

### Reconciliation

In order to make sense of the 2021 Census results, ONS has re-worked the mid-year estimate series from 2012-2020 and published these alongside the revised mid-2021 estimates and mid-2022 estimates on 23 November 2023. The main part of the process was to re-evaluate the annual estimates of migration across the decade, but a large component is 'unattributable population change'.

There are consequences of such a change. In order that time-series make sense, e.g. KPIs with a population denominator will need to be recalculated in light of the renewed population information and the data re-presented. The reconciled estimates consistent with the 2021 Census based results are available [here](#).

<sup>1</sup> Following the 2011 Census it was found the 2001-based rolled forward mid-year estimates had overestimated Camden's population by +18,900 (+8.6%) over the decade.

<sup>2</sup> 2011-based rolled forward mid-year estimates series.

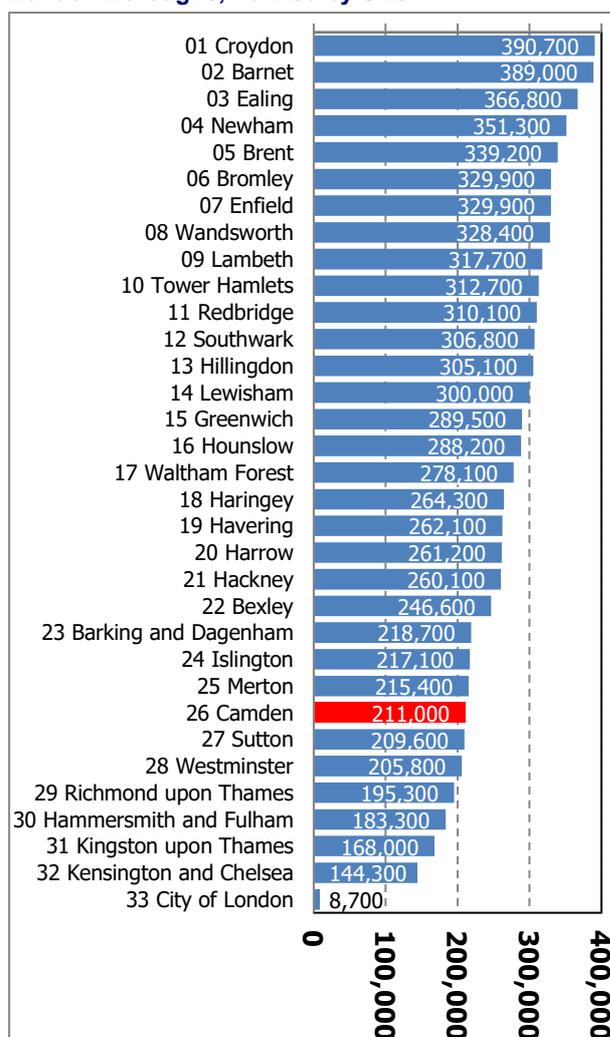
## Results for Camden

### Total population

ONS revised mid-2021 estimate of Camden's usual resident population is 211,000. This is a decrease in population over the 2011-21 decade of -9,100 persons (-4.1%). Camden is one of 3 central London boroughs to have lost population, along with Westminster (-6.3%) and Kensington & Chelsea (-8.8%).

Camden's population (211,000) is one of the smaller-sized London boroughs, currently ranking 26<sup>th</sup> largest of London's 33 areas. Of its neighbours, Camden is smaller by population than Brent (339,200), Barnet (389,000), Haringey (264,300) and Islington (217,100), but larger than Westminster (205,800) or the City of London (8,700).

**Figure 1: Revised Mid-2021 Population Estimates London Boroughs, Ranked by Size**



Source: ONS, © Crown Copyright, 2023.

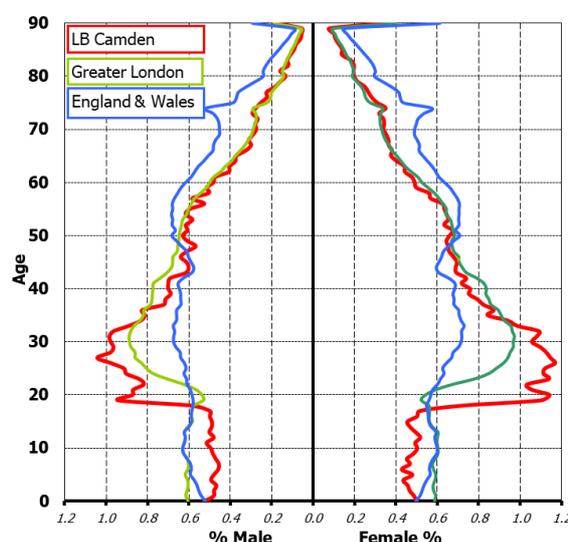
### Age and Sex

In Camden, at mid-2021, there are more female usual residents than males (52.7% females and 47.3% males).

The age structure of Camden is relatively young with a mean age of 37.5 years, the same as Greater London, but both are lower than the national average of 41.2 years<sup>3</sup>.

Figure 2 shows the relative proportions of the usual resident population by sex and age, comparing Camden with Greater London and with England & Wales.

**Figure 2: Revised Mid-2021 Population Estimates Age Structure comparison of Camden with Greater London and England & Wales (%)**



Source: ONS, © Crown Copyright, 2023.

Camden has proportionally fewer children aged under-18 than either London or England & Wales. Camden has a much larger proportion of younger working aged people (more women than men) who are aged 20 to early 30s, than either London or England & Wales. In the over 50s, Camden and London have similar profiles, both having smaller proportions in these ages compared to the more ageing national population.

Camden's resident population, by proportion:

- 41% are aged under 30
- 65% are aged under 45
- 89% are aged under 66<sup>4</sup>

**Young people (under 18):** The proportion of children under the age of 18 in Camden is

<sup>3</sup> England and Wales

<sup>4</sup> 66 is the current state pension age.

17%, compared to 22% in London and 21% in England & Wales (although Camden has a youthful age structure, this is down to the large proportion adults in their 20s and 30s than a large child population).

**Younger working age adults (18-44):** Camden has a larger proportion of people aged 18-44 (48%) when compared to the London (43%) or national (35%) proportions. Some will undoubtedly be university students.

**Older working age adults (45-65<sup>3</sup>):** Camden has relatively few people of the older working age group aged 45-65 accounting 23% of the population, but compares with 25% in London and 27% in England & Wales.

**Older people aged 66+:** Camden has a similar proportion of older people aged 66 and over (11%) when compared to Greater London, but smaller than the national average for England & Wales (18%).

## Dependency

The dependency ratio is calculated as the proportion of the population who are deemed economically inactive (i.e. under 16s and over 66s) expressed as a proportion of the working age population (16-65). The dependency ratio thus calculated for Camden from the mid-2021 estimates is 36, much lower than that of either Greater London (44) or England & Wales (56).

## Potential issues

The ONS mid-year estimates are the *official* measure of population, but they are still only estimates and should be treated as such. Despite the proximity to the 2021 Census, the quality indicators associated with Camden's mid-year estimate show that the estimates should be used with a degree of caution<sup>5</sup>:

Census base 2021.....	5-10%
Cumulative Migration 2021.....	0-2%
Internal Migration 2021.....	5-10%
International Migration 2021.....	0-2%
Students 2021.....	10-20%
Armed Forces 2021.....	0-2%

**The rebasing of the estimates on the 2021 Census has produced a very large discontinuity between 2011-based and the 2021-**

**based mid-year estimates series.** Some of the effects of COVID-19 may have led to sections of the population not being counted in Camden but temporarily elsewhere, e.g. international students and foreign workers, or domestic workers relocating due to the pandemic or through loss of work or furlough.

**ONS are adopting new methods** in their collection of data to measure migration based on much more reliance on administrative data. It is hoped that this may result in the tracking of people if and/or as they return post-pandemic. The mid-2021 estimate is still too close to the pandemic event in time to test whether this is the case or not, but the new methods should start to bleed-in as the series develops.

**The mid-2022 estimate was published on 23 November 2023** alongside these revised estimates for mid-2021. They are the subject of a further Technical Analysis Paper (TAP 2023-04).

## Links

- [Mid-year 2021 Estimates \(revised\) Summary for LB Camden](#) (Excel) includes reconciled estimates 2012-202.

## Further information

- For Camden: [population@camden.gov.uk](mailto:population@camden.gov.uk).
- General: [ONS website](#)

<sup>5</sup> The indicators are not measures of accuracy; they indicate the risk of uncertainty based on characteristics of the local

authority population that are associated with difficulty in estimation" ONS Mid-2021 Population Estimates QMI table – unchanged from original 2021-based publication.