Tower Hamlets Annual Resident Survey 2023

October 2023

Introduction

- Tower Hamlets Council have run an Annual Residents' Survey since the 1990s, other than during the pandemic.

- Due to the restrictions imposed by lockdowns, this 2023 edition is the first Annual Residents' Survey since 2019 with a comparable, face-to-face, methodology.

- A telephone survey took place in 2021, but the different methodology means the surveys are not comparable.

- Fieldwork took place in May 2023.

About the survey

- All surveys, even the Census, are **estimates**. They are also snapshots at that time, and things change.

- Surveys are estimates of the results that we would get if we asked the same questions to every Tower Hamlets resident. The concept of **statistical reliability** is based on how confident we are that the sample of individuals we interviewed is representative of the general population.

- Statistical significance and interpretation of survey data. All figures presented are survey **estimates**, not precise measures, and as such, they have a degree of sampling variability attached to them. The concept of 'statistical significance' is used here to highlight those differences that are likely to reflect real differences (or changes over time), as opposed to those which may be simply reflecting the sampling variability attached to estimates.

Methodology 1

- The 2023 Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey was conducted by an external contractor called MEL Research. Analysis within this document is a combination of their work and our own.

- MEL Research interviewed a stratified random sample of residents of Tower Hamlets. This was the first large scale quantitative survey of Tower Hamlets residents since 2019.

- Stratified sampling: This is used to select a sample that is representative of different groups of people. These 'groups' have shared characteristics. If the groups are of different sizes, the number of respondents selected from each group will be proportional to the number of items in that group.

- The sample was drawn to be representative of the local population across the Borough. Surveys were conducted at over 100 locations.

- MEL interviewed 1,117 Tower Hamlets residents – our "sample". With a sample of this size, at a 95% level of confidence, and on a 50% agreement score, the confidence intervals attached to the % ratings is ±3.0%. This means that there is a 95% chance that the "true" value will (if we had interviewed all residents) fall within 47% and 53%. The confidence intervals depend as well on the result itself: the closer to 50% the wider the confidence interval; the further away from 50% (i.e., closer to 0% or 100%) the narrower the confidence interval.

Methodology 2

- In each ward, Census Output Areas (COAs) were ranked by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). COAs were then selected at random as sampling points. The number of sampling points selected was proportional to the interviewing target for each ward. All addresses for each COA sampling point were made available to interviewers, with a target of 10 interviews set per sampling point.

- For this survey, ward-level quotas were set by age and gender to ensure that the sample reflected the characteristics of the borough's population. Quotas were set using Census 2021 data.

- Quotas were set by gender, age, work status and ethnicity at the ward and local authority level to ensure a representative spread by demographic profile.

- The survey included a screening question to ensure only residents who have lived in the Borough for at least 6 months were interviewed.

- The contractor had interviewers who spoke languages other than English in order to reach members of the diverse communities in Tower Hamlets.

- Figures throughout may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Methodology 3

- In total 1,117 interviews were completed. While the application of quotas at ward level ensured a diverse mix of residents were interviewed, the final dataset was weighted. This weighting eliminated the effect of differential response rates by geography and between demographic groups so that the resulting data is fully representative of the borough. The final data was weighted by ward, age and gender, using 2021 Census population data.

- The sample size of 1,117 means that this dataset has a maximum confidence level of +/-2.9 at the borough level (at a 95% level of confidence). This means that we can say with 95% confidence that the responses reported will be no more than 2.9 percentage-points different than if all residents of the borough were interviewed.

- Sub-group analysis i.e., comparing responses from particular resident groups or from specific locations within the borough will have higher confidence intervals.

- Maximum confidence levels for ethnic group have also been calculated. Those who identify to be of white ethnicity have a sample size of 493 (+/- 4.4), those who identify to be of Asian ethnicity have a sample size of 472 (+/- 4.5) and those who identify to be of Black ethnicity have a sample size of 86 (+/-10.6). This means that we can say with 95% confidence that the responses reported will be no more than the reported percentage-points (+/-) different than if all residents of that ethnicity were interviewed.

Methodology – sample profile

Age	Count	Percent
18-27	213	23.9%
28-37	274	30.7%
38-47	154	17.3%
48-57	116	13.0%
58-67	75	8.4%
68-77	42	4.7%
78-87	17	1.9%
88-97	1	0.1%

Gender	Count	Percent
Male	568	51%
Female	549	49%
Grand Total	1,117	100%
Sex	Count	%
Male	562	50%
Female	543	49%
Prefer not to say	12	1%

How would you describe your ethnic group?	Count	Percent
Asian: Bangladeshi	350	31.3%
White: British	338	30.3%
White: Any other White background	141	12.6%
Asian: Indian	53	4.7%
Black: African	49	4.4%
Asian: Chinese	30	2.7%
Asian: Any other Asian background	28	2.5%
Black: Caribbean	25	2.2%
Prefer not to say	21	1.9%
Other: Any other background	17	1.5%
White: Irish	9	0.8%
Mixed: Any other Mixed background	8	0.7%
Black: Somali	8	0.7%
Mixed: White and Asian	7	0.6%
Asian: Vietnamese	6	0.5%
White: Gypsy / Roma	4	0.4%
White and Black Caribbean	5	0.4%
White and Black African	5	0.4%
Asian: Pakistani	5	0.4%
Black: any other Black / African / Caribbean background	4	0.4%
Other: Arab	3	0.3%
White: traveller of Irish background	1	0.1%
Total	1,117	100%

What is your religion or belief?	Count	Percent
Muslim	399	35.7%
No religion or belief	312	27.9%
Christian	263	23.5%
Prefer not to say	69	6.2%
Hindu	36	3.2%
Agnostic	17	1.5%
Buddhist	7	0.6%
Jewish	5	0.4%
Prefer to self-describe	3	0.3%
Sikh	2	0.2%
Humanist	2	0.2%
Don't know	2	0.2%

Do you own or rent your current home?	Count	Percent
Rent privately	375	34%
Housing association	267	24%
Rent from council / through Tower Hamlets Homes	201	18%
Owner occupier	183	16%
Shared Ownership (part own, part rent)	32	3%
Other	30	3%
Prefer not to say	29	3%

How the findings are presented

- Where results are presented as a total, e.g. Sum Positive, the number given is all the positive responses added together. The sum positive/sum good etc. is the way that these numbers have been grouped and presented in past editions of the ARS; presenting in this way provides continuity.

  – For example, Q2 To what extent do you think these statements apply to your Borough… My council is doing a good job: A great deal 5%, To some extent 51% will be a Sum good of 56%.

Summary

- Satisfaction with local area up 8 points – 70% to 78% and above national benchmark (76%).

- Residents' perception of the Borough as a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together increased (78% to 87%).

- Despite a challenging period for the public sector overall satisfaction with the council remains about the same compared to 2019 (60% to 63%, not statistically significant).

- Concern about crime remains high, but residents' worries about various types of ASB in their local areas is down.

- Almost all services show statistically significant improvement among users e.g. the positive sentiment of users of parking services is up 19 percentage points compared to 2019.

- Many areas see significant increases in those who say they Don't Know. To the question "My council is efficient and well run" the Sum positive is down 12 %points, Don't Knows are up 9 %points.

Findings

Findings - positives

Findings – benchmarking against LGA

Thinking about your local area/neighbourhood, how satisfied are you with the area as a place to live?	Satisfied	78%	76%
How much do you trust Tower Hamlets Council?	Great deal/Fair amount	65%	59%
Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Tower Hamlets run things?	Satisfaction	63%	60%
My council keeps residents informed about what they are doing	A great deal/To some extent	57%	57%
How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in your local area after dark?	Safe	66%	71%
How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in your local area during the day?	Safe	94%	92%

Tower Hamlets performs **above or at the national average for most key benchmarks**. Whilst the LGA's benchmarking club has been discontinued, it continues to run a quarterly survey of the whole country. The LGA figures are taken from the February 2023 edition.

Findings - change over time
All these findings are statistically significant

To what extent do you think these statements apply to your Borough?	Measure	2019	2023	2019-2023	Statistically Significant?
To what extent do you agree or disagree that this local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together?	Agree	78%	87%	⇧9% points	✓
How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in your local area after dark?	Safe	58%	66%	⇧8% points	✓
How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in your local area during the day?	Safe	86%	94%	⇧8% points	✓
Thinking about your local area/neighbourhood, how satisfied are you with the area as a place to live?	Satisfied	70%	78%	⇧8% points	✓

- The benchmarked areas set out above show significant improvements in residents' perceptions of the borough.
- Residents in Tower Hamlets believe the borough is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, up 9 percentage points from the 2019 edition of the ARS.
- Residents are more satisfied with their local area as a place to live compared to 2019, up by 8 percentage points.
- Residents feel safer in the Borough than they did in 2019. For both during the day and after dark, feelings of safety have increased, both by 8 percentage points.

Findings - change over time

Thinking about this local area (within 15/20 minutes walking distance), how much of a problem do you think are...?	Measure	2019	2023	Difference	Statistically Significant?
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	Problem	35%	18%	⇩17 %points	✓
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	Problem	48%	29%	⇩19 %points	✓
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	Problem	45%	29%	⇩16 %points	✓
People using or dealing drugs	Problem	67%	49%	⇩18 %points	✓

While crime and anti-social behaviour remain a concern for many, residents are notably less worried about ASB in their local area than they were in 2019

Findings

Areas for improvement

Benchmarking questions - results

The table shows the % of residents giving a positive response to each question and the % of *'Don't Knows'.*

Whilst these indicators suggest a decline, much of this is based upon an increase in 'Don't Know' rather than an increase in dissatisfaction. Of the key benchmark questions, all in the table below saw an increase in Don't Knows, of which six increased by 10 % points or more (highlighted in the table). All the results below show a statistically significant change since 2019.

To what extent do you think these statements apply to your Borough?	Measure	2019	2023	2019-2023 % points	Don't know (2019)	Don't know (2023)
My council involves residents when making decisions	A great deal/To some extent	57%	42%	⇩15%	4%	17%
My council keeps residents informed about what they are doing	A great deal/To some extent	72%	57%	⇩15%	2%	8%
My council is doing a good job	A great deal/To some extent	69%	56%	⇩13%	3%	7%
My council is efficient and well run	A great deal/To some extent	65%	53%	⇩12%	4%	13%
My council listens to concerns of local residents	A great deal/To some extent	61%	48%	⇩13%	4%	16%
My council responds quickly when asked for help	A great deal/To some extent	56%	40%	⇩16%	7%	17%
My council has staff who are friendly and polite	A great deal/To some extent	79%	59%	⇩20%	6%	17%
My council doesn't do enough for people like me	A great deal/To some extent	54%	42%	⇩12%	5%	19%
My council provides good value for money for the council tax I pay	A great deal/To some extent	57%	45%	⇩12%	3%	12%
My council is doing a better job now than one year ago	A great deal/To some extent	59%	38%	⇩21%	5%	20%
My council is making the local area a better place for people to live	A great deal/To some extent	72%	56%	⇩16%	3%	9%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that Tower Hamlets Council is open and transparent about its activities?	Total agree	51%	45%	⇩6%	2%	11%
How much do you trust Tower Hamlets Council?	Great deal/Fair amount	69%	65%	⇩4%	2%	4%

Findings

Services

Findings - services
All residents' views of services

This table presents the views of all residents. A later slide presents the views of service-users only.

What is your opinion of...?	Good	Average	Poor	Don't know
Street lighting	69%	24%	6%	1%
Parks and open spaces	67%	23%	6%	4%
Refuse collection	63%	24%	9%	4%
Recycling services	62%	24%	9%	5%
Pest control	59%	16%	25%	0%
Housing benefit service	55%	32%	10%	3%
Street cleaning	54%	28%	17%	1%
Idea Stores/libraries	54%	18%	2%	26%
Local health services	50%	28%	16%	6%
Repair of roads and pavements	49%	32%	15%	4%
My Council Tax account	48%	25%	8%	19%
Leisure and sports facilities	47%	22%	6%	26%
Policing	36%	36%	20%	8%
Parking services	35%	22%	17%	27%
Council Housing	27%	18%	8%	47%
Social Housing	26%	20%	8%	46%
Youth Services	24%	18%	9%	50%

Findings - services
All residents' views of services

This table presents the views of all residents. A later slide presents the views of service-users only.

What is your opinion of...?	2019	2023	Difference	Statistically Significant?
Street lighting	68%	69%	⇧1%	X
Parks and open spaces	66%	67%	⇧1%	X
Refuse collection	63%	63%	0%	X
Recycling services	53%	62%	⇧9%	✔
Pest control	x	59%	x	x
Housing benefit service	39%	55%	⇧16%	✔
Street cleaning	58%	54%	⇩4%	X
Idea Stores/libraries	62%	54%	⇩8%	✔
Local health services	59%	50%	⇩9%	✔
Repair of roads and pavements	53%	49%	⇩4%	✔
My Council Tax account	64%	48%	⇩16%	✔
Leisure and sports facilities	53%	47%	⇩6%	✔
Policing	41%	36%	⇩5%	✔
Parking services	32%	35%	⇧3%	X
Council Housing	36%	27%	⇩9%	✔
Social Housing	x	26%	x	x
Youth Services	x	24%	x	x

Findings – service users only

Service	Good	Average	Poor	Don't know
Primary education (5 - 11 yrs)	79%	8%	2%	3%
Idea Stores/libraries	78%	17%	2%	3%
Parks and open spaces	73%	21%	4%	1%
Nursery education (under 5's)	73%	18%	1%	8%
Secondary education (11 - 18 yrs)	70%	20%	5%	6%
Children's centres	69%	19%	2%	9%
Leisure and sports facilities	67%	25%	4%	4%
Recycling services	65%	24%	9%	3%
Pest control	59%	16%	25%	0%
Housing benefit service	55%	32%	10%	3%
Parking services	52%	26%	20%	2%
Youth Services	47%	19%	25%	9%
Council Housing*	42%	33%	16%	8%

*For council housing the figures are the views on Council Housing of residents who said they rent from the council / through Tower Hamlets Homes

Findings – service users views over time

Service	Good 2019	Good 2023	Difference	Statistically Significant?
Primary education (5 - 11 yrs)	74%	79%	⇧5%	✓
Idea Stores/libraries	74%	78%	⇧4%	✓
Parks and open spaces	70%	73%	⇧3%	X
Nursery education (under 5's)	65%	73%	⇧8%	✓
Secondary education (11 - 18 yrs)	65%	70%	⇧5%	✓
Children's centres	61%	69%	⇧8%	✓
Leisure and sports facilities	61%	67%	⇧6%	✓
Recycling services	57%	65%	⇧8%	✓
Pest control	x	59%	x	X
Housing benefit service	51%	55%	⇧4%	✓
Parking services	33%	52%	⇧19%	✓
Youth Services	x	47%	x	X
Council Housing*	40%	42%	⇧2%	X

Service users are more positive about all services than in 2019.

*For council housing the figures are the views on Council Housing of residents who said they rent from the council / through Tower Hamlets Homes

Findings

Cost of living

Findings: Personal concerns

The top three issues residents expressed concern about in 2023 are:

- the cost of living (rising prices and interest rates)
- crime and ASB
- street cleanliness.

In fourth place is the level of council tax, which is also likely to be related to the cost of living.

Which three of these are you PERSONALLY most concerned about?	%
Rising prices / interest rates	40.1%
Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour	38.8%
Street Cleanliness	30.3%
Level of council tax	24.2%
Quality of Health Services	23.5%
Quality of housing	18.2%
Homelessness	16.7%
Traffic congestion	12.1%
Level of air pollution	11.3%
Availability of Employment	8.6%
Availability of recreational facilities	7.4%
Services for older people	7.0%
Other	6.7%
Standard of education	5.0%
The environment or climate	5.0%
None of these	4.6%
Quality of public transport	2.7%
Don't know	0.8%

Findings: Personal concerns 2019/2023

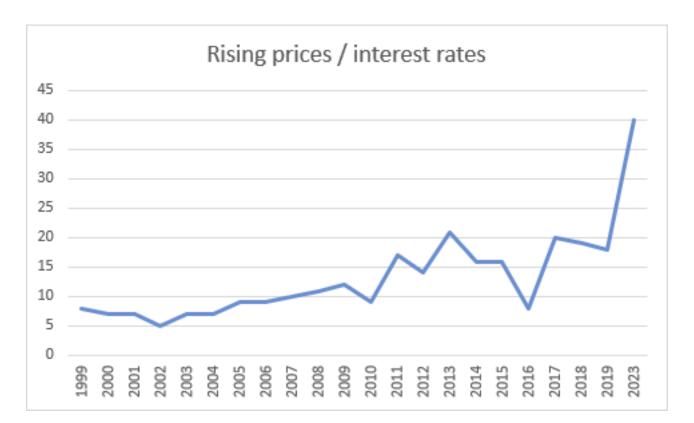| Which three of these are you personally most concerned about?	2019	2023	2019-2023	Statistically Significant?
Rising prices/interest rates	18%	40%	⇧22%	✔
Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour	48%	39%	⇩9%	✔
Litter/ dirt in streets	28%	30%	⇧2%	X
Level of council tax	14%	24%	⇧10%	✔
Quality of Health Service	11%	23%	⇧12%	✔
Number of homeless people	19%	17%	⇩2%	X
Traffic congestion	11%	12%	⇧1%	X
Level of air pollution	16%	11%	⇩5%	✔
Lack of jobs	7%	9%	⇧2%	X
Not enough being done for elderly people	6%	7%	⇧1%	X
Other	6%	7%	⇧1%	X
Standards of education	5%	5%	0%	X
None of these	8%	5%	⇩3%	✔
Poor public transport	3%	3%	0%	X
Don't know	0%	1%	⇧1%	✔

There have been statistically significant changes in several areas, most notably Rising prices/interest rates, Level of council tax, and Quality of Health Service which all saw increases of 10 percentage points or more.

23

Findings: Personal concerns – cost of living

We have data on rising prices/interest rates since at least 1999. In 2023 40% of respondents put it in their top 3 concerns, an increase of 22 percentage points since 2019, double its previous highest level (21% in 2013). This graph shows the percentage who put rising prices/interest rates as a top 3 concern. 2023 is only the second year that crime has not been top. In 2017 availability of affordable housing overtook it.

Note: Not all of the concern areas are directly comparable with previous years as questions have been added or reworded.

Rising prices / interest rates
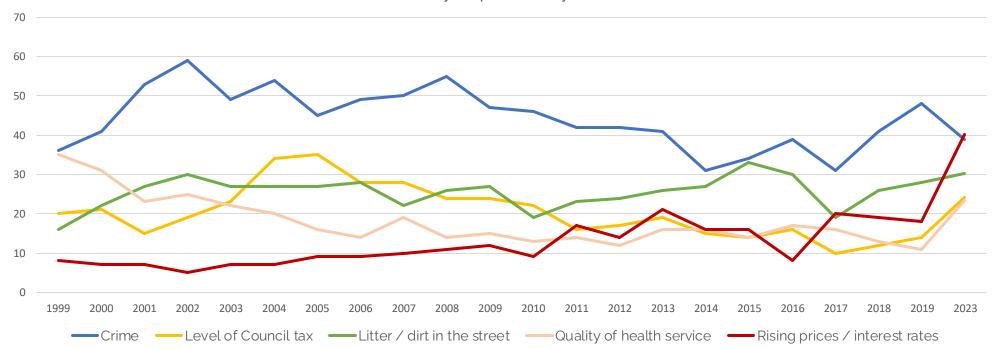
Key context: Personal concerns
In answer to which three of these are you PERSONALLY most concerned about?

The key context to this edition of the Annual Resident Survey is the cost of living. Each edition of the ARS has asked residents for their top personal concerns. The 2023 edition is the first to see the cost of living (framed as rising prices/interest rates) come top. In addition to the many who chose the cost of living, a further quarter selected council tax as among their top three concerns.

The chart below shows how concern about crime has fallen over time, and that cost of living and quality of local health services have become more salient.

Which three of these are you personally most concerned about?

Legend: Crime — Level of Council tax — Litter / dirt in the street — Quality of health service — Rising prices / interest rates

Findings – key context: Personal concerns
In answer to which three of these are you PERSONALLY most concerned about?

Thinking about your finances, which, if any, of the following are you most concerned about at the moment:	2019	2023	Difference	Statistically Significant?
Paying other bills or costs	19%	30%	⇧11%	✓
Paying the rent / mortgage	15%	29%	⇧14%	✓
Paying council tax	15%	27%	⇧12%	✓
Paying fuel bills	15%	50%	⇧35%	✓
Paying for food / grocery bills	12%	32%	⇧20%	✓
Paying credit card bills	6%	8%	⇧2%	X
Paying loans	4%	4%	0%	X
I am not concerned about any of these issues	55%	32%	⇩23%	✓
Don't know	3%	2%	⇩1%	✓

It is striking that the percentage of people not worried about any of the issues listed fell from 55% to less than one-third (32%).

Findings: Personal concerns – cost of living
LIFT data from May

Risk group	Count of households	% of all low income households
Coping	28,014	85%
Struggling	749	2%
At risk	3,243	10%
In crisis	809	2%
Grand Total	32,815	100%

We have compared the figures against the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) by working with the Poverty Insights Officer in the Growth & Economic Development team.

Combining the data from LIFT with the Annual Resident Survey on personal concerns, personal finances, and the question on concerns about paying bills we gain some insights into residents' financial situations. Combining all these implies that there is not currently widespread destitution in the Borough, but that residents are concerned about the future.

Of those in low-income households, 85% are coping financially according to the most up-to-date figures.

Analysis

Context and insights

Analysis - summary

- Many of our key indicators have gone up. The council is performing well against national benchmarked data and is emerging well from the Covid period.

- Since the last comparable Annual Residents Survey in 2019, residents have faced two major crises with the pandemic and the cost-of-living.

- The survey results show that the current cost-of-living crisis appears to be having an impact on residents' lives and on concerns for the future.

- In 2019 more than half (55%) of residents reported that they were not concerned about any of the issues listed (paying bills, utilities, rent etc.). This figure has fallen to just 32% in 2023.

Analysis - context

- Residents' views of the council may be shaped by their financial circumstances. The 14% of residents who report that they are struggling financially are more likely to have negative views of the council across a range of measures.

- Those struggling financially are 10 % points more likely than those managing well to disagree that "My council is doing a better job now than one year ago"

  - Managing well: 42% disagree council is better than a year ago, financial problems: 52% disagree council is better than a year ago.

- The ARS findings should be viewed in the context of the cost of living crisis and the continued impact on public services of the pandemic.

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Analysis - demographics

- Younger people, aged 18-34. are generally more positive about the council. Residents aged 35-54 are generally more negative, as are carers, those with health problems, and those living in the Borough for 10 years and more.

- When asked about their overall satisfaction with the council, just 9% of those aged 18-34 are dissatisfied, but the figure is 19% for those aged 55+.

- Those with a health problem or disability are almost 10 % points more likely to express dissatisfaction – 14% overall are dissatisfied compared to 23% with a health problem suggesting perceptions of the council are linked to those of public health providers.

Analysis – exploring linkages

- Residents who are more positive about the council are also more positive about the police and vice versa. Though the council and the police are separate, residents' views of one appear to influence their view of the other.

- When asked whether they are satisfied with the council overall, those who believe police / local services are dealing well with crime / antisocial behaviour are more likely to be satisfied (81% compared to 63% overall). Fewer than 6% of those who agree police / local services are dealing well with crime / antisocial behaviour are dissatisfied with how Tower Hamlets run things.

- This continues to indicate that crime is a determining factor when forming a view of the council.

- We see the same with health. Satisfaction with local health services is the lowest since 2004, and views of local health services correlate with views of the council. Residents who are positive about local health services are more likely to say that the council is doing a good job (58% compared to 50% overall).