

2011 Census Snapshot: Main Language

February 2013

Introduction

The 2011 Census was the first census to ask respondents to indicate what they considered to be their main language and the response is therefore a subjective choice made by the respondent. The Quick Statistics table 'QS204EW – Main Language (detailed)', released as part of the second phase of census releases on 30th January 2013, provides data on 92 languages and language groups. This snapshot presents a regional comparison and London Borough analysis of the **main language** dataset.

Throughout this report the term 'non-English speaker' is used to identify a resident whose main language is not English, rather than being an indication of English language ability.

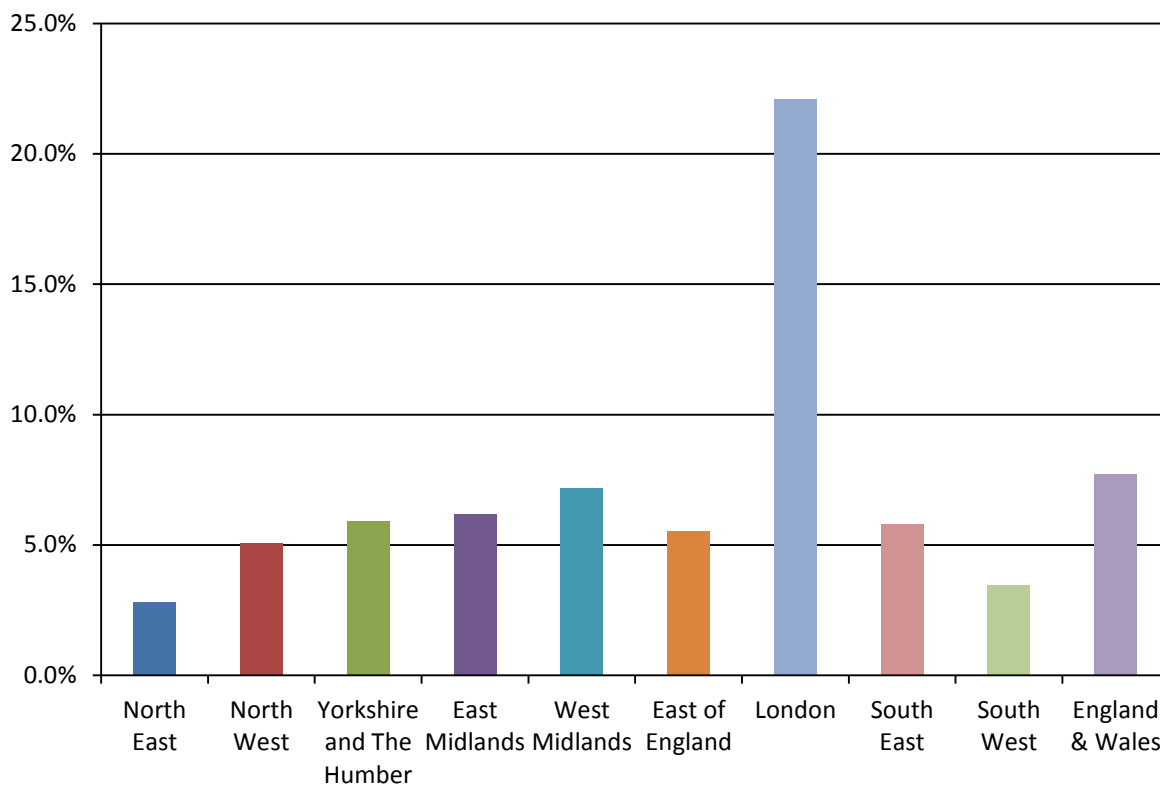
Key findings

- **22.1 per cent of Londoners list a language other than English as their main language, a total of 1.73 million people**
- **41.6 per cent of non-English speakers in England & Wales live in London**
- **Polish is the main language of 147,800 of the capital's residents**
- **Bengali is the most spoken Asian language in London while Somali is the most spoken African language**
- **In Newham 41.4 per cent of residents report a language other than English as their main language**
- **In Havering just 4.6 per cent list a language other than English**
- **9 of the top 10 most linguistically diverse local authorities in England & Wales are in London**

Regional Comparison

London is something of a national hub for non-English speakers. Nationally, 7.7 per cent of the population, age 3 and over, are non-English speakers and when London is excluded this falls to 5.6 per cent. In Greater London 22.1 per cent of residents report a main language other than English, a population of 1.73 million.

Figure 1: Percentage of population with a main language other than English, Regions



Source: 2011 Census, ONS

Nationally, 41.6 per cent of non-English speakers live in the capital. This figure includes many languages which are not found in any other region. Polish is the second language in England & Wales (546,200 people) and the diversity of language in London is well demonstrated by a comparison of the relative size of the Polish-speaking communities across the regions. In the South West region Polish accounts for 24.0 per cent of non-English speakers. The lowest percentage regionally is in London where 8.6 per cent of the non-English speaking population report speaking Polish. However, this is more related to the variety and size of other language groups within London than an indication that the Polish population in the capital is small. Polish is in fact the number one non-English language spoken in London (147,800 people or 27.1 per cent of the national total).

Main Language in London

Table 1 shows the twenty most spoken non-English languages in London. As already noted Polish is the most common language with 8.6 per cent of London’s non-English speakers reporting it as their main language. Bengal is the most common Asian language (6.6 per cent of non-English speakers) while Somali is the most spoken African language (3.2 per cent, 12th most spoken overall).

Table 1: Most spoken (non-English) main languages in London

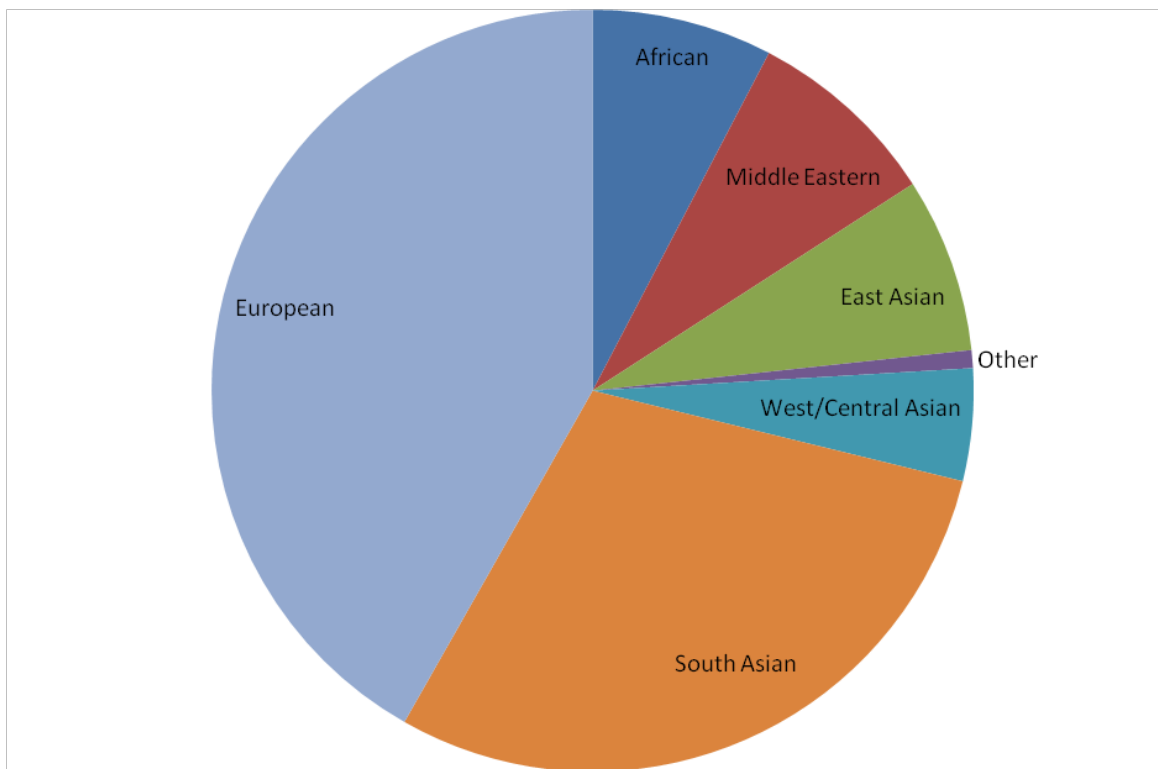
	Location	Speakers	% of non-English speakers
Polish	European	147,816	8.6%
Bengal	South Asian	114,267	6.6%
Gujarati	South Asian	101,676	5.9%
French	European	84,191	4.9%
Urdu	South Asian	78,667	4.6%
Portuguese	European	71,525	4.1%
Turkish	Middle-East	71,242	4.1%
Spanish	European	71,192	4.1%
Arabic	Middle-Eastern	70,602	4.1%
Tamil	South Asian	70,565	4.1%
Panjabi	South Asian	68,525	4.0%
Somali	African	54,852	3.2%
Italian	European	49,484	2.9%
Romanian	European	39,653	2.3%
Persian/Farsi	Middle-Eastern	39,645	2.3%
Lithuanian	European	35,341	2.0%
German	European	34,712	2.0%
Greek	European	31,306	1.8%
Russian	European	26,924	1.6%
Tagalog/Filipino	East Asian	26,603	1.5%

Source: 2011 Census, ONS

The geographical classification of languages is difficult because some are both national and international languages (French, Spanish, Portuguese) while others have no real geographic base (Arabic). Broadly speaking though ten of the top 20 most spoken languages in London are European, five are South Asian, three are middle-Eastern, one is African language and one East Asian. See Appendix A for details of how languages have been classified.

Figure 2 shows the origin of all of the languages spoken by London's population (discounting English). European languages are spoken by 41.8 per cent of residents whose language is not English, making them the largest group. South Asian languages are spoken by 29.4 per cent of people. The remaining 28.8 per cent are split relatively equally among African (7.7 per cent), Middle Eastern which includes Turkish and Arabic (8.2 per cent), East Asian (7.4 per cent) and West/Central Asian (4.8 per cent). Languages outside these groups such as Caribbean Creole and Sign language account for the remaining 0.8 per cent or 13,100 people.

Figure 2: Languages spoken in London



Source: 2011 Census, ONS
See Appendix A

Variation within London

Table 2 shows how many residents in each London borough speak a main language other than English. Newham, Brent and Tower Hamlets have the highest totals of non-English languages as a percent of all usual residents aged 3 and over. In Newham 41.4 per cent of the population list a main language which is not English. The lowest percentage is in Havering where 4.6 per cent of the population have a non-English main language. The average for London is 22.1 per cent.

Table 2: Main Language is not English

	Number	% of Population	London Rank*
City of London	1,236	17.1%	24
Barking and Dagenham	32,705	18.7%	22
Barnet	79,678	23.4%	14
Bexley	13,447	6.0%	31
Brent	110,480	37.2%	2
Bromley	17,222	5.8%	32
Camden	49,763	23.5%	13
Croydon	50,219	14.5%	28
Ealing	109,375	33.9%	4
Enfield	68,032	22.9%	15
Greenwich	40,756	16.9%	25
Hackney	56,445	24.1%	12
Hammersmith and Fulham	39,685	22.7%	16
Haringey	72,436	29.7%	6
Harrow	65,347	28.5%	8
Havering	10,461	4.6%	33
Hillingdon	49,155	18.8%	21
Hounslow	69,448	28.7%	7
Islington	39,403	19.9%	19
Kensington and Chelsea	42,776	28.0%	9
Kingston upon Thames	25,176	16.4%	27
Lambeth	58,754	20.3%	18
Lewisham	43,221	16.5%	26
Merton	40,133	21.1%	17
Newham	121,012	41.4%	1
Redbridge	65,371	24.6%	11
Richmond upon Thames	18,619	10.4%	29
Southwark	53,933	19.6%	20
Sutton	18,277	10.0%	30
Tower Hamlets	82,880	34.2%	3
Waltham Forest	64,877	26.4%	10
Wandsworth	51,038	17.4%	23
Westminster	65,162	30.8%	5

*rank is based on percentage not number

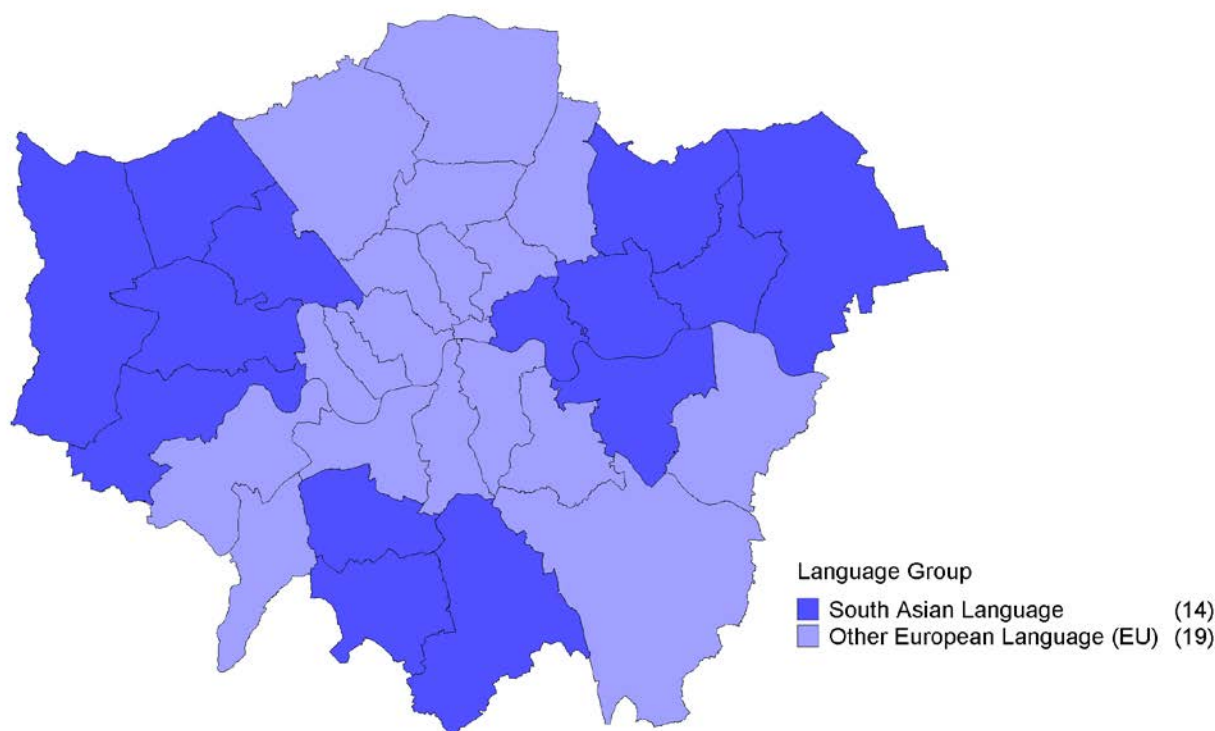
Source: 2011 Census, ONS

In 19 boroughs the totals category 'Other European Language (EU)' represents the highest Non-English language group. This group contains languages spoken in EU countries other than French, Spanish and Portuguese. This category accounts for 24.5% of the speakers of non-English languages.

In 14 boroughs the totals category 'South Asian' is the highest non-English language group. Across all local authorities in London, South Asian languages account for 29.4 per cent of the total of Non-English speakers.

Map 1 shows the distribution of non-English language across London boroughs. Those boroughs with 'Other European Language (EU)' as their second language are located in the north of London and in the south-east and south-west while 'South Asian' languages occur more in the north-west, north-east and south.

Map 1: Distribution of Second Language Groups



Source: 2011 Census, ONS

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Table 3 identifies the second language of each London local authority. In seven local authorities Polish is the most spoken language after English, while for four boroughs the second language is Turkish. Four boroughs have a second language which is unique to them: Greenwich (Nepalese), Lambeth (Portuguese), Southwark (Spanish) and Westminster (Arabic).

Table 3: Second language of London boroughs

	Second Language	% of non-English population
City of London	French	12.5%
Barking and Dagenham	Lithuanian	12.0%
Barnet	Polish	10.0%
Bexley	Panjabi	12.3%
Brent	Gujurati	21.3%
Bromley	Polish	9.3%
Camden	Bengali	13.0%
Croydon	Tamil	10.3%
Ealing	Polish	18.7%
Enfield	Turkish	27.0%
Greenwich	Nepalese	12.4%
Hackney	Turkish	18.7%
Hammersmith and Fulham	French	13.6%
Haringey	Turkish	16.6%
Harrow	Gujurati	31.2%
Havering	Lithuanian	9.4%
Hillingdon	Panjabi	18.0%
Hounslow	Panjabi	16.7%
Islington	Turkish	10.6%
Kensington and Chelsea	French	17.5%
Kingston upon Thames	Tamil	10.4%
Lambeth	Portuguese	16.8%
Lewisham	Polish	9.5%
Merton	Polish	16.5%
Newham	Bengali	17.9%
Redbridge	Urdu	15.4%
Richmond upon Thames	Polish	9.2%
Southwark	Spanish	11.9%
Sutton	Tamil	14.9%
Tower Hamlets	Bengali	52.5%
Waltham Forest	Urdu	12.4%
Wandsworth	Polish	12.1%
Westminster	Arabic	18.4%

Source: 2011 Census, ONS

Linguistic Diversity Index

A Diversity Index is a measure of the variety in an area which takes account of the relative size of different communities. The Linguistic Diversity Index presented here is based on the Simpson Diversity Index Methodology and was undertaken at the Greater London Authority and has previously been used to measure ethnic and religious diversity. This Index assesses the distribution of the 21 most commonly spoken languages in England & Wales (including English/Welsh) and a 22nd group of 'all other languages'.

A score of 22 would indicate that all language groups were represented equally within an area, a score of 1 that a single language was spoken. Due to the fact that, even in the most linguistically rich areas, English is spoken by an overwhelming majority of residents the average value for local authorities in England & Wales is 1.15 and the values range from 1.02 to 2.76. In London the average is 1.66 with a range between 1.10 and 2.76.

The top nine most linguistically diverse local authorities in England & Wales are all London Boroughs and almost three quarters of the top 40 are located in the capital. Only Bromley and Havering fall outside the first 100 most diverse local authorities.

The most diverse borough is Newham followed by Brent, Ealing, Tower Hamlets and Westminster. Interestingly Hillingdon, which is one of only two local authorities nationally to contain speakers of all of the languages listed in the census (the other is Manchester) is 24th in the diversity indices. This is because while Hillingdon has a wide variety of language the number of individuals speaking those languages is not well balanced with just a small number people speaking many of the languages.

Table 4: Linguistic Diversity in London Boroughs

	Score	National Rank
City of London	1.45	28
Barking and Dagenham	1.50	25
Barnet	1.68	16
Bexley	1.13	99
Brent	2.43	2
Bromley	1.13	108
Camden	1.68	15
Croydon	1.36	37
Ealing	2.22	3
Enfield	1.65	18
Greenwich	1.43	29
Hackney	1.71	14
Hammersmith and Fulham	1.66	17
Haringey	1.97	6
Harrow	1.91	8
Havering	1.10	142
Hillingdon	1.51	24
Hounslow	1.93	7
Islington	1.54	22
Kensington and Chelsea	1.89	9
Kingston upon Thames	1.42	32
Lambeth	1.56	21
Lewisham	1.43	31
Merton	1.59	19
Newham	2.76	1
Redbridge	1.74	13
Richmond upon Thames	1.24	51
Southwark	1.53	23
Sutton	1.23	55
Tower Hamlets	2.13	4
Waltham Forest	1.82	12
Wandsworth	1.46	26
Westminster	2.03	5

Source: 2011 Census, ONS

Appendix A: Geographic Classification of Languages

Welsh/Cymraeg	European
Gaelic (Irish)	European
Gaelic (Scottish)	European
Manx Gaelic	European
Gaelic (Not otherwise specified)	European
Cornish	European
Scots	European
Gypsy/Traveller languages	European
French	European
Portuguese	European
Spanish	European
Italian	European
German	European
Polish	European
Slovak	European
Czech	European
Romanian	European
Lithuanian	European
Latvian	European
Hungarian	European
Bulgarian	European
Greek	European
Dutch	European
Swedish	European
Danish	European
Finnish	European
Estonian	European
Slovenian	European
Maltese	European
Any other European Language (EU)	European
Albanian	European
Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian	European
Ukrainian	European
Any other Eastern European Language (non EU)	European
Northern European Language (non EU)	European
Romani language (any)	European
Yiddish	European
Russian	European
Turkish	Middle-Eastern
Arabic	Middle-Eastern
Hebrew	West/Central Asian
Kurdish	West/Central Asian
Persian/Farsi	West/Central Asian
Pashto	West/Central Asian
West/Central Asian Language (all other)	West/Central Asian
Urdu	South Asian

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Hindi	South Asian
Panjabi	South Asian
Pakistani Pahari (with Mirpuri and Potwari)	South Asian
Bengali (with Sylheti and Chatgaya)	South Asian
Gujarati	South Asian
Marathi	South Asian
Telugu	South Asian
Tamil	South Asian
Malayalam	South Asian
Sinhala	South Asian
Nepalese	South Asian
South Asian Language (all other)	South Asian
Mandarin Chinese	East Asian
Cantonese Chinese	East Asian
All other Chinese	East Asian
Japanese	East Asian
Korean	East Asian
Vietnamese	East Asian
Thai	East Asian
Malay	East Asian
Tagalog/Filipino	East Asian
East Asian Language (all other)	East Asian
Oceanic/Australian language (any)	Other
North/South American language (any)	Other
Caribbean Creole (English-based)	Other
Caribbean Creole (all other)	Other
Amharic	African
Tigrinya	African
Somali	African
Krio	African
Akan	African
Yoruba	African
Igbo	African
Swahili/Kiswahili	African
Luganda	African
Lingala	African
Shona	African
Afrikaans	African
Any other Nigerian language	African
West African language (all other)	African
African language (all other)	African
All other languages	Other
British sign language	Other
Sign Language (all other)	Other
Any Sign Communication System	Other

