

ROMAN ROAD

BIKE life

2019

Tower Hamlets





Making tracks

Our vision for cycling in Tower Hamlets



Home to the fastest growing population in the country, which is projected to increase to 400,000 by 2041, Tower Hamlets is a dynamic, diverse and rapidly changing inner-London borough.

The demand generated by this growth and the position of the borough along key arterial strategic road routes poses a particular challenge. In March 2019 Tower Hamlets declared a climate emergency, recognising the borough's contribution to climate change and air pollution. Transport accounts for nearly 40% of CO₂ emissions and 50% of NO_x emissions in the borough. As a result of poor air quality, children in Tower Hamlets typically have 10% less lung capacity than the national average.

To address these issues the Council published a 25 year Transport Strategy in 2019, which aims to increase the proportion of trips walked or cycled, whilst reducing car trips and parking provision. Whilst the borough already has a cycle network in place, with 7 miles of protected cycle lanes on its road network, there is further work to do. The Council is therefore working closely with Transport for London (TfL) on developing five new high

quality flagship cycle routes which will provide a denser cycling network and remove barriers to cycling in our community.

To reduce the impact of through traffic on our residents and make our street environment more pleasant for walking and cycling, Tower Hamlets is delivering its ambitious Liveable Streets programme. Phase 1 in the Bow, Bethnal Green and Wapping areas is due for implementation from 2020-21. It will include road closures, safer provision for pedestrians and cyclists and improved cycling access which prioritises cycles over motor traffic.

To improve air quality for our children we have a programme of 50 School Streets to be implemented by 2022, which will see part-time restrictions on through traffic outside schools, and encourage parents and children to walk and cycle to school instead of taking the car.

Tower Hamlets is delighted to be the first London borough to participate in Bike Life. This, our inaugural Bike Life report, will help provide a comprehensive picture of cycling amongst our residents and strengthen the case for delivering our ambitious targets for cycling.

Our vision is for Tower Hamlets to be the most cycle-friendly borough in London.

Mayor John Biggs
Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets



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Introducing Bike Life

Bike Life is the biggest assessment of cycling in urban areas in the UK and Ireland. It is delivered by Sustrans in collaboration with 17 cities and urban areas. Each city* reports on progress towards making cycling an attractive and everyday means of travel.

Bike Life reports every two years. In 2015 and 2017 seven cities published reports. Glasgow, Perth and Stirling followed and published their first reports in 2018.

Fourteen areas are participating in Bike Life in 2019. This includes our first London borough, Tower Hamlets, and our first city outside of the UK, Dublin Metropolitan Area.

This is the first report from Tower Hamlets, produced in partnership with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The information in this report comes from local cycling data, modelling and an independent survey conducted by DRG** of 1,100 residents aged 16 or above, with an additional boost of 42 residents who cycle in Tower Hamlets. It is representative of all Tower Hamlets residents, not just those who cycle.

More details on all Bike Life reports can be found at www.sustrans.org.uk/bikelife.

Our thanks to the people of Tower Hamlets who took part in the survey and shared their stories with us.



*City is used as a shorthand for Bike Life cities, city regions and boroughs
**Survey conducted May-July 2019.

Report summary

Tower Hamlets

Population*

307,964



Survey area

Everyone benefits when Tower Hamlets residents cycle

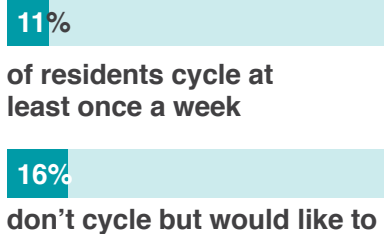
Every day, Tower Hamlets residents cycling instead of driving takes up to

2,600 cars off the road

Based on cycling by Tower Hamlets residents that live in a household with a car. Does not include leisure cycling trips or people that cycle into or through the borough.

- Every year, cycling:
- +** prevents **23** serious long-term health conditions
 - saves **1,500 tonnes** of greenhouse gas emissions
 - £** creates **£5.1 million** in economic benefit for individuals and the borough

There is significant appetite in Tower Hamlets for cycling.

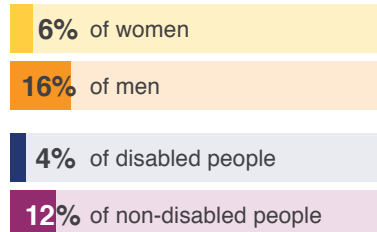


Safety concerns stop cycling being a genuine travel choice for many residents

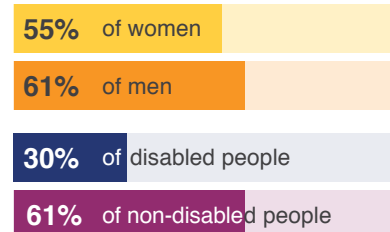
Many residents are less likely to cycle regularly, for example women and disabled people.

However, all groups want cycling safety to be improved.

Proportion of residents who cycle at least once a week



Proportion of residents who think cycle safety needs improving



To help residents cycle more we need better cycling infrastructure

49% think that more cycle tracks along roads physically separated from traffic and pedestrians would be useful to help them cycle more

45% support building more of these tracks, even when this means less room for other road traffic (**31% oppose**)

7 miles of cycle tracks along roads physically separated from traffic and pedestrians currently exist in Tower Hamlets

*NOMIS mid-year 2017 population estimate. This is the most recent available for all Bike Life areas.

People from socio-economic groups D and E are most likely to suffer the impacts of higher traffic levels,** yet are least likely to own a car

Proportion of residents from socio-economic groups AB or DE who have a car or van in their household

69% of people from groups AB

36% of people from groups DE

Not having a car can increase the risk of social exclusion, debt and transport poverty.†

91% of residents from socio-economic groups D and E never cycle, but

13% would like to start

This is equal to **8,600 adults**

Cycling as a mode of transport is ideally suited to urban life.

Cities that are designed for cycling can help many residents access everyday services and reduce social and economic isolation.

Socio-economic group is a classification based on occupation maintained by the Market Research Society. Groups A and B are professional and managerial. Groups D and E are semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations and people not in employment.

Tower Hamlets residents believe improving their streets for cycling and walking would make their area a better place to live, work or visit

47% think more cycling would make their area a better place to live and work (**18% disagree**)

39% think fewer motor vehicles on our streets would be useful to help them cycle more

76% think space should be increased for people socialising, cycling and walking on their local high street

42% think streets outside local schools should be closed to cars during drop off and pick up times (**37% disagree**)

62% think speed limits should be reduced on local roads



Residents would like to see more government spending on public transport, walking and cycling

71% Public transport

63% Walking

48% Cycling

27% Driving

Farhana Chowdhury



There are community groups offering free cycling lessons where you can borrow a bike and have a go. The instructor teaches you about road positioning and signalling, to be as safe as possible. My class of learner cyclists meets every week and it's brilliant.



**Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2013. The built environment and health: an evidence review. †Sustrans, 2012. Locked Out Report



Realising benefits

Why everyone gains when more people cycle

Tower Hamlets residents cycle twice around the world every day

47% agree that more cycling would make Tower Hamlets a better place to live and work (18% disagree)

5 million trips

made by cycle by Tower Hamlets residents in the past year, which adds up to

13.9 million miles

= 38,000 miles a day

Annual trips by purpose*

Leisure: 850,000

17%

Work: 2,400,000

48%

Shopping, personal business and social trips: 930,000

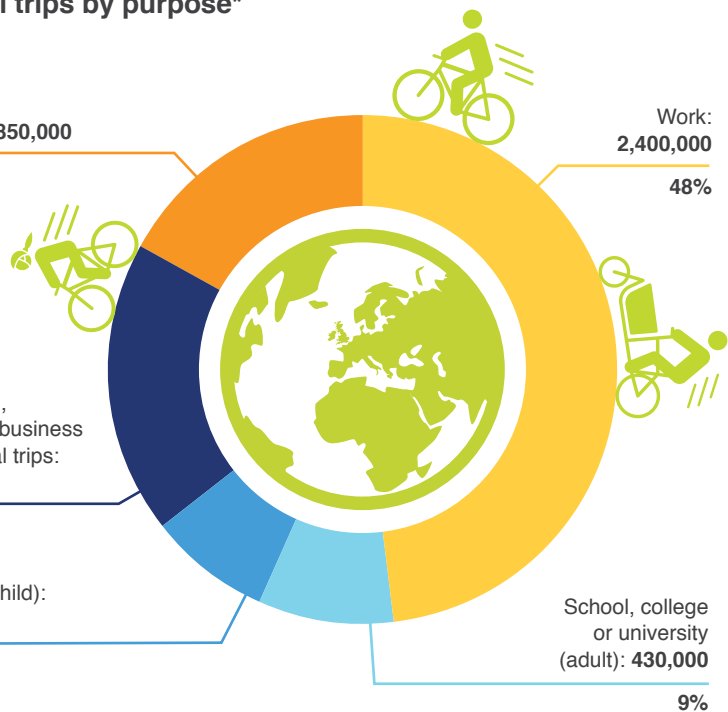
19%

School (child): 390,000

8%

School, college or university (adult): 430,000

9%



Cycling keeps Tower Hamlets moving

Studies show cycling frees up road space in comparison to driving.** This helps to keep Tower Hamlets moving for all road users.

2,600 return cycle trips

are made daily in Tower Hamlets by residents that could have used a car

If these cars were all in a traffic jam it would tail back

8 miles

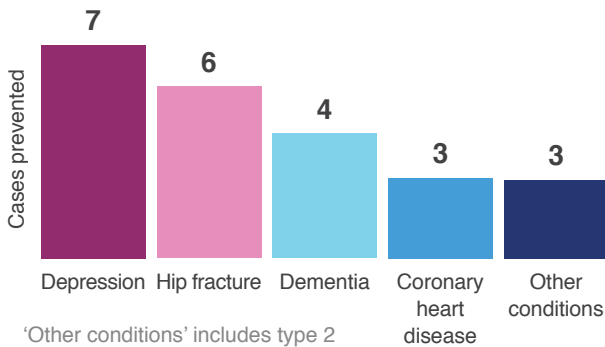
equivalent to the distance from Barking to Whitechapel.



*Leisure trips include adults and children. Education trips are shown separately for adults and children. All other trips are just adults.
 **Litman, 2017. Evaluating Transportation Land Use Impacts. Based upon Eric Bruun and Vuchic, 1995. The Time-Area Concept.

Cycling unlocks health benefits for everyone

Cycling in Tower Hamlets prevents 23 serious long-term health conditions each year



'Other conditions' includes type 2 diabetes, stroke, breast cancer, colorectal cancer.

Saving the NHS in Tower Hamlets

£160,000 per year

equivalent to the cost of **5,400 GP appointments**

Based on Sport England MOVES tool which shows the return on investment for health of sport and physical activity.

In Tower Hamlets the physical activity benefits of cycling

prevent 4 early deaths annually†

which is valued at

£13.4 million

More people cycling improves air quality:

3,100kg

of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and

417kg of particulates

(PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) saved annually.

In Tower Hamlets **85 early adult deaths** occur each year where long-term exposure to air pollution (PM_{2.5}) is deemed to be a contributory factor.

Based upon Public Health England, 2014. Estimating Local Mortality Burdens associated with Particulate Air Pollution. Adults = 25 years+.

Cycling helps reduce the impact of our climate crisis

1,500 tonnes

of greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxides) saved annually, equivalent to the carbon footprint of

1,800 people taking flights

from Heathrow to New York



Transport now accounts for 27% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions, of which the main sources are petrol and diesel cars.

Overall the UK's emissions between 1990 and 2017 fell by 42%; however transport emissions barely changed (a 2% drop).

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, UK greenhouse gas emissions 2017

Cycling benefits residents and the local economy in Tower Hamlets



93p

net benefit for individuals and society from each mile cycled instead of driven

These figures are based upon monetising the costs and benefits of driving and cycling. This includes travel time, vehicle operating costs, medical costs and work absenteeism, congestion, infrastructure, local air quality, noise, greenhouse gases and taxation.

In total, this adds up to:

£4.8 million

per year from people with a car choosing to cycle for transport, or

£5.1 million

annually from all trips cycled



†Based on WHO/Europe Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT), which enables an economic assessment of the health benefits of cycling by estimating the value of reduced mortality resulting from specified amounts of cycling.



Cycling participation

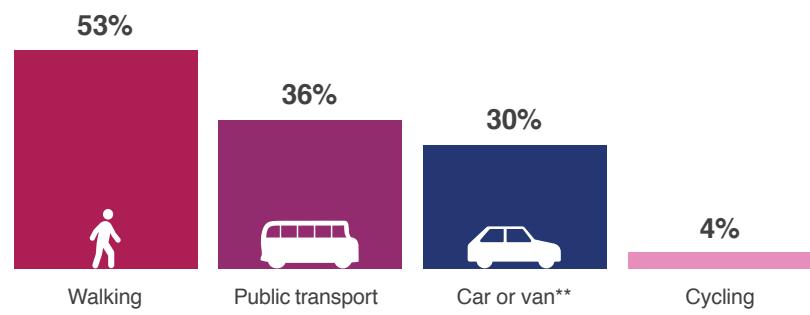
Who is cycling and how often?

Most people living in Tower Hamlets do not currently cycle

Whilst many people cycle in Tower Hamlets, participation is much lower than for other modes of travel.

When cities are designed to make cycling more attractive than other forms of transport, participation can be high. For example **29%** of residents cycle five or more days a week in Greater Cambridge.*

Residents who travel by the following modes five or more days a week in Tower Hamlets



97% of Tower Hamlets residents walk at least once a week

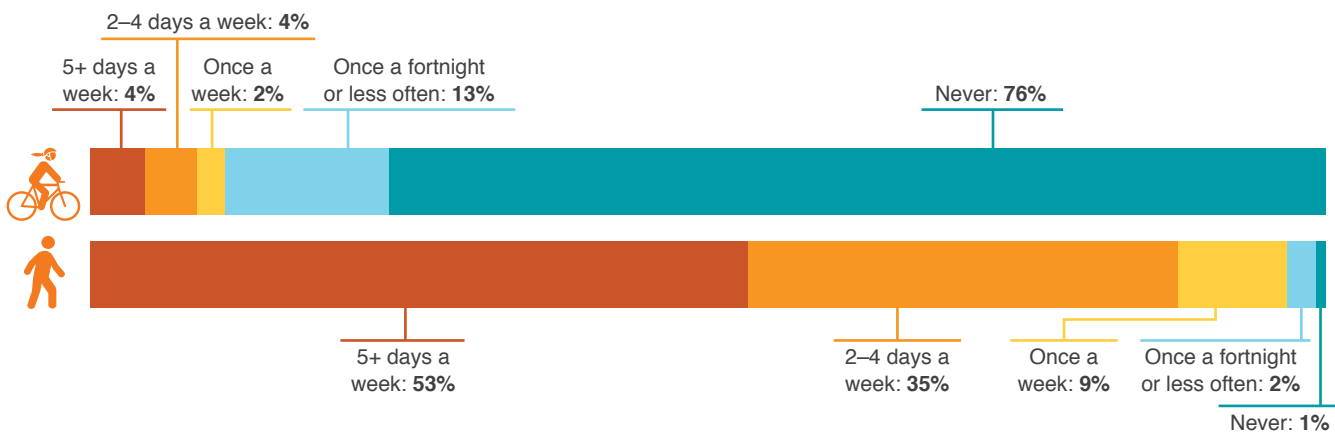
11% of residents cycle at least once a week

While it's clear that improvements need to be made to the walking environment, there is at least a network of protected space – pavements.

In comparison, it is only possible to cycle to most everyday destinations if you are happy to share road space with motor vehicles.



How often are residents cycling and walking?



*Bike Life Greater Cambridge 2019.
 **Travelling as driver or passenger.

How inclusive is cycling?

In Tower Hamlets cycling participation of different demographic groups is not equal.

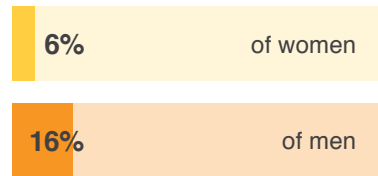
Barriers to cycling can be more pronounced for different demographic groups, however cities with high cycling rates show this is not always the case.

55% of all cycling trips in the Netherlands are made by women. Furthermore, people over 65 make 24% of their trips by cycle, higher than the percentage reported for any other age group over the age of 26.

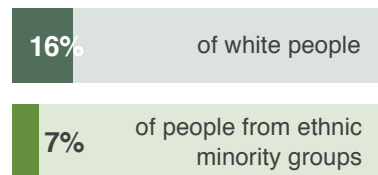
Pucher and Buehler, 2008. Making Cycling Irresistible Transport Reviews, Vol. 28.

Proportion of Tower Hamlets residents in different demographic groups who cycle at least once a week

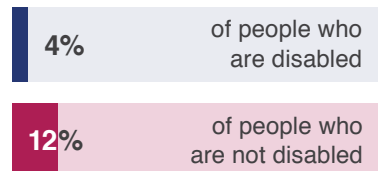
Gender



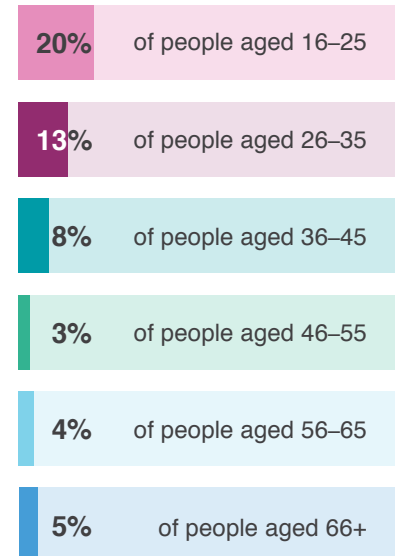
Ethnicity



Disability



Age



Nadine Homewood



I live in Tower Hamlets and really enjoy cycling and the feeling of freedom it brings. I ride regularly with the All Ability Cycling Club and there's all types of cycles for disabled kids.

I've won two silvers and one bronze in the Special Olympics, riding against other boroughs. I most often ride a recumbent bike.

Cycling helps build up my strength and I enjoy riding with my colleagues. When you see people riding, you feel like they are confident. Victoria Park is my favourite place to ride, because you've got the pond, where you can watch or feed the ducks, and see different pets like dogs and sometimes horses.

More bike lanes would encourage more people to ride by giving them more confidence to try it out. To people thinking of cycling I would say you will enjoy it. You can stop, relax, and when you feel like riding again you can just go.





Social inequality and mobility

Cycling's potential to help people

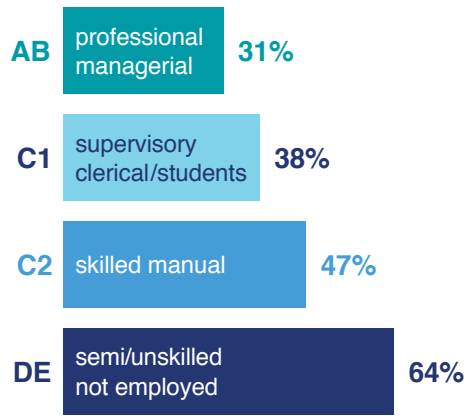
Mobility is about accessing basic, everyday needs that help people live well

Mobility enables people to access employment, education, fresh food, green space, and healthcare. Mobility also enables people to see family, participate in their community and to have a voice in society.

And yet, mobility for many people in the UK is neither equal nor inclusive.

People who do not have a car can find it challenging to reach everyday services in areas where travel alternatives are lacking

Proportion of residents from each socio-economic group* who do not have a car or van in their household



27% of the population of Tower Hamlets are from the socio-economic groups D and E. That's around **82,000** people in total.

Groups D and E are semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, homemakers and people not in employment.

Many disadvantaged neighbourhoods have fewer local amenities and poorer public transport provision.** This combination means that everyday services may be harder to reach. Cycling could help accessibility.

Many residents from socio-economic groups D and E would like to start cycling

13%
of residents from groups D and E in Tower Hamlets would like to start cycling. This is equal to **8,600** adults

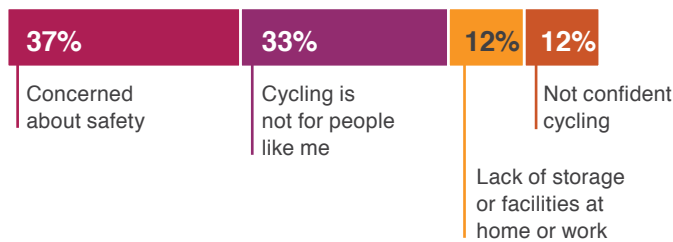
6%
of residents from groups D and E in Tower Hamlets currently cycle at least once a week

In comparison, **13%** of residents from groups A and B cycle at least once a week.

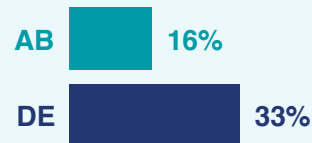
*Socio-economic group is a classification based on occupation maintained by the Market Research Society.
 **Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2013. The built environment and health: an evidence review.

However, many barriers prevent people from these groups cycling

Reasons why Tower Hamlets residents from socio-economic groups D and E do not cycle or why they cycle less often



Proportion of residents from socio-economic groups who think cycling is not for people like them



Being a 'cyclist' can be associated with a certain type of person and characteristics.

Cycling has potential to reduce social and economic exclusion

Cycling could help many residents access employment, healthcare and everyday services, but only if we make cycling attractive, safe and easy for everyone.

At a relaxed pace you can cycle over 4 miles in 25 minutes. So, cycling can be ideally suited to urban life, especially as an option for people who do not own a car and live further away from public transport.

25-minute cycling distance from Mile End station

Cycling would enable **810,000** people to travel from their home to Mile End Station in less than 25 minutes, including **260,000** people from areas that are among the 20% most deprived in England.



Shaheb Muhammad



Ten years ago mine was the only bicycle locked outside the mosque during prayer. Now I service bicycles here, worshippers have begun cycling and approach me for advice, which is a blessing. Santander Cycles have increased worshippers that cycle. I first felt the benefits during commutes to university; I saved on public transport and it helped with self-esteem and forgetting about problems for a while.

Cycling makes it easy to move around whereas navigating through traffic, train delays and road works or finding car parking has been stressful and costly. Tower Hamlets has everything I need as a cyclist and Muslim. There's the cycle-friendly highway from one side of the borough to the other, which is so easy and smooth! For short rides with the family there's Victoria Park. Next to the East London Mosque is the Bengali sweet shop where I fuel up with calories to ride home!



[†]Adapted from TravelTime platform, travel time maps (isochrone shapes): qgis.traveltimeplatform.com. Uses a baseline cycling speed of 10mph and takes into account type of cycle tracks and junctions but does not include gradient.



Barriers

What is stopping Tower Hamlets residents cycling more?

67%

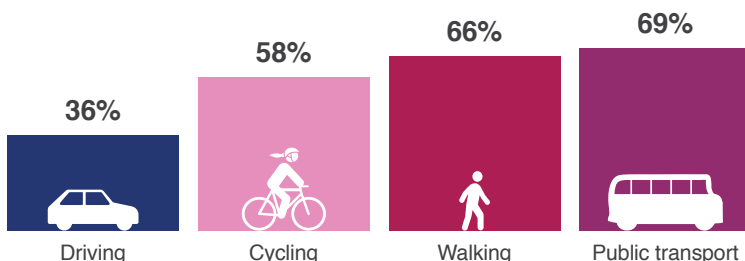
think Tower Hamlets is a good place to cycle. But many barriers to cycling exist.

Reasons why some residents do not cycle or why they cycle less often



Safety is the single largest barrier to more people cycling

For which modes do residents think safety needs to be improved?



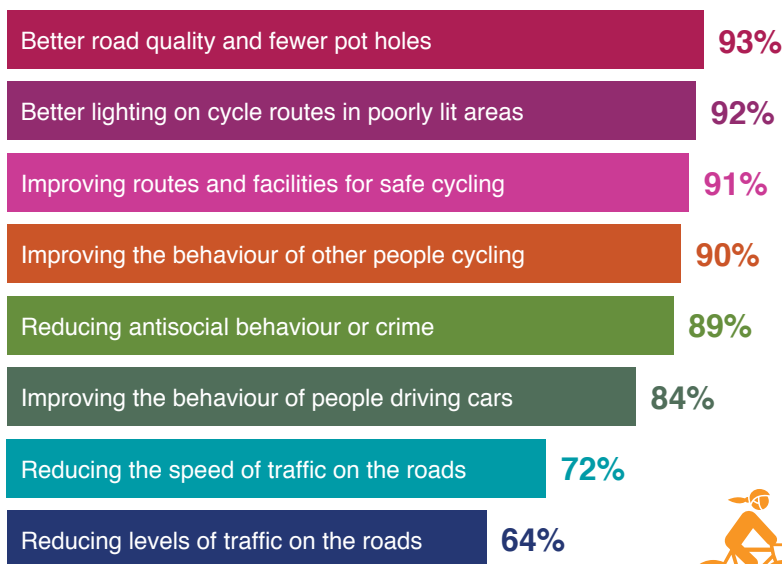
52%

of residents think cycling safety in Tower Hamlets is good

31%

think children's cycling safety in Tower Hamlets is good

Which issues do residents think are important for improving cycle safety in Tower Hamlets?



10%

of streets in Tower Hamlets are without 20mph speed limits*

63%

of households are further than 125 metres from routes that are considered good practice**

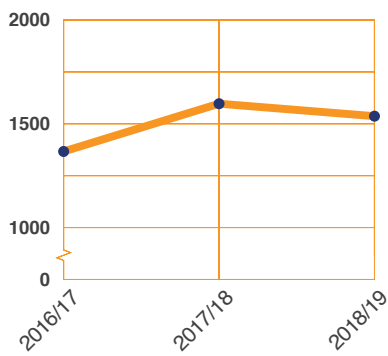


*These roads are managed by TfL as part of the strategic road network. All borough roads are 20mph.

**These are defined as routes that are traffic-free and away from roads, cycle tracks along roads physically protected from traffic and pedestrians, and routes along quieter streets where there is less traffic.

Secure cycle storage is important at home and when out and about

Reported cycle thefts



There were **1,536** reported cycle thefts in Tower Hamlets in 2018/19.

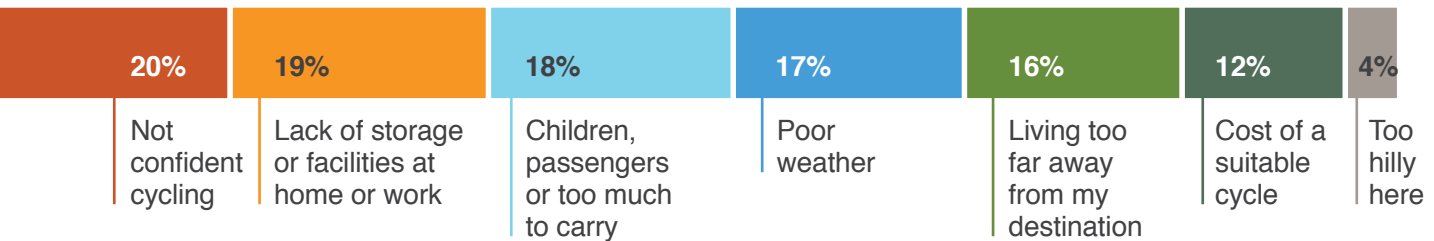
For every **47** people who own an adult cycle in Tower Hamlets, there was 1 reported cycle theft in the past year.

There is a public cycle parking space for every **9** residents who cycle in Tower Hamlets.

35% of residents think the security of public cycle parking is good.

Security can also be a risk at home, especially in flats where storage inside the property can be harder.

Please note survey respondents could pick multiple options



Ewan Main



I cycle my daily commute of five miles from Leyton to Mile End Road where I am a lecturer at Queen Mary, University of London. The sheer volume of traffic can understandably put a lot of people off taking that first step of considering making a journey by bike. It's no wonder it can be difficult convincing novices to choose to cycle. Victoria Park is amazing, but as soon as you get onto the major roads, it's no fun.

With so much heavy traffic, including all the construction trucks, there definitely need to be more segregated cycle ways to reduce the conflict between HGVs, cars and the more vulnerable road users on bikes.

Quality signage is also a critical factor in making travelling by bike easy. There are loads of occasions in London where I've started off fine, and then the cycle route signs disappear so I've ended up having to take a main road which inevitably is well signed for motor traffic.

I'm convinced that creative and ambitious thinking about how road space could be used so that people who cycle don't feel threatened, would encourage a greater number of people to choose the bike as the best way to get around.

Solutions

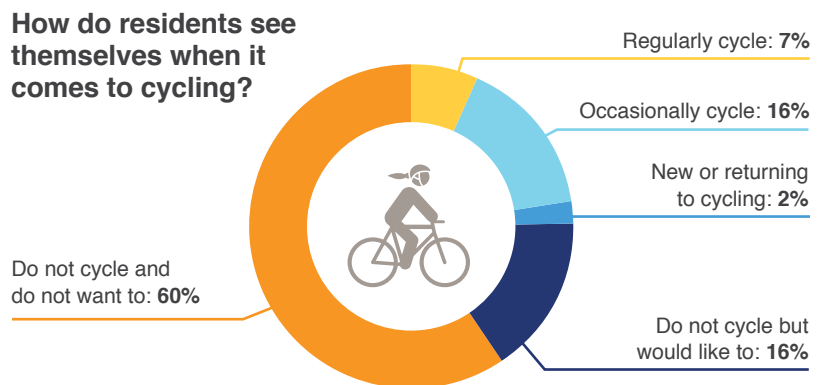
What would help Tower Hamlets residents to cycle more?

Many Tower Hamlets residents want to cycle

36%

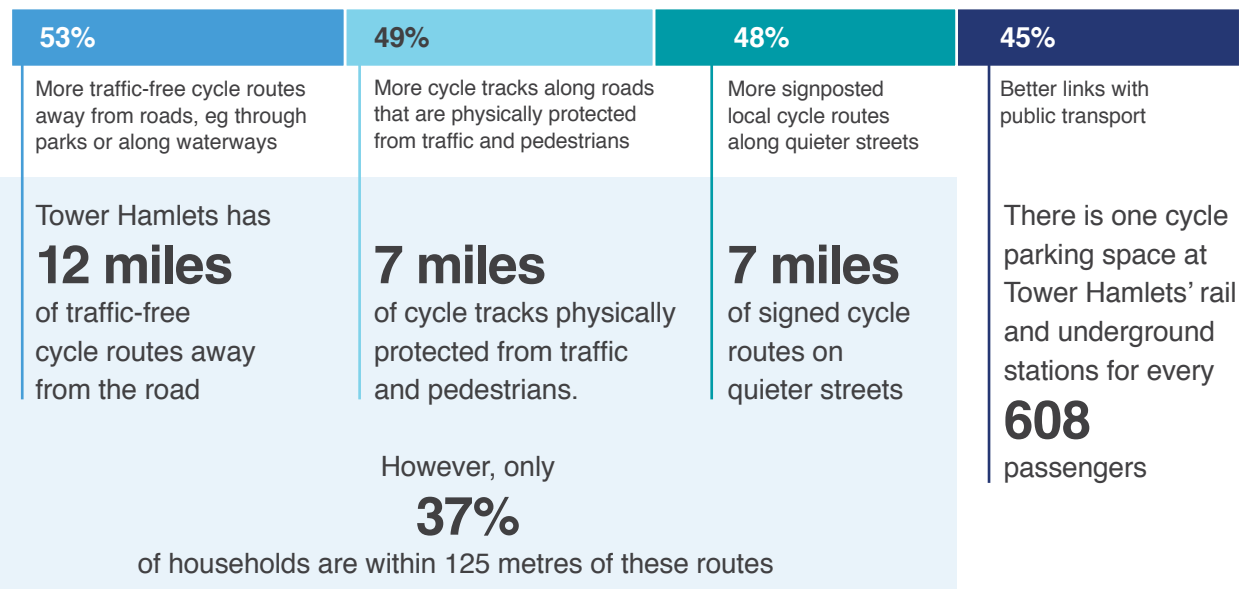
of residents feel that they should cycle more

How do residents see themselves when it comes to cycling?



Residents want improved cycling infrastructure

What proportion of residents would find infrastructure improvements useful to cycle more?



45%

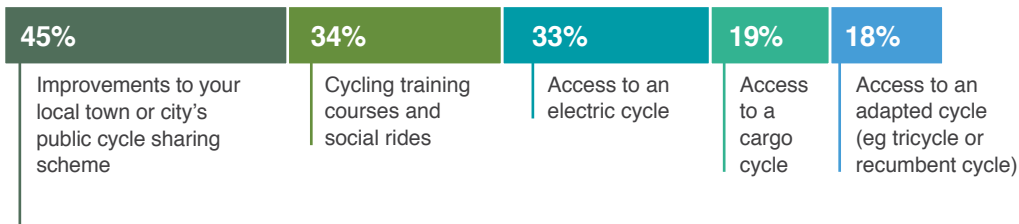
of residents support building more protected on-road cycle tracks, even when this would mean less room for other road traffic (**31% oppose**)

A and B roads have higher levels of traffic so these are where physical separation is most useful for cycling. In total, **45 miles** miles of these roads exist in Tower Hamlets.



Residents want more support to cycle

What proportion of residents would find more support useful to cycle more?



29% of residents have access to an adult pedal cycle

Transport for London's cycle share scheme began in 2010 and is currently operated by Serco and sponsored by Santander. Cycles are available at docking stations across nearly all of Tower Hamlets, which sits at the eastern end of the scheme's overall range.

In Tower Hamlets alone:

1,297,565
annual trips

119
cycle share stations

1,926
shared cycles

42% of residents think that the public cycle share scheme is good in Tower Hamlets

9% of residents think that it's bad



Felicity Scott



There need to be more segregated cycleways. It needs to be convenient. Employers need to work with boroughs to create their own travel plans so employees know how to get to and from work using alternatives to the car.

At Poplar HARCA housing association we were awarded money from the Mayor of Tower Hamlets' Air Quality Fund. We worked with local start-up Unicorn Electrics and bought e-bikes for staff to use. This is great because all of the estates we manage are within one mile of the central office.

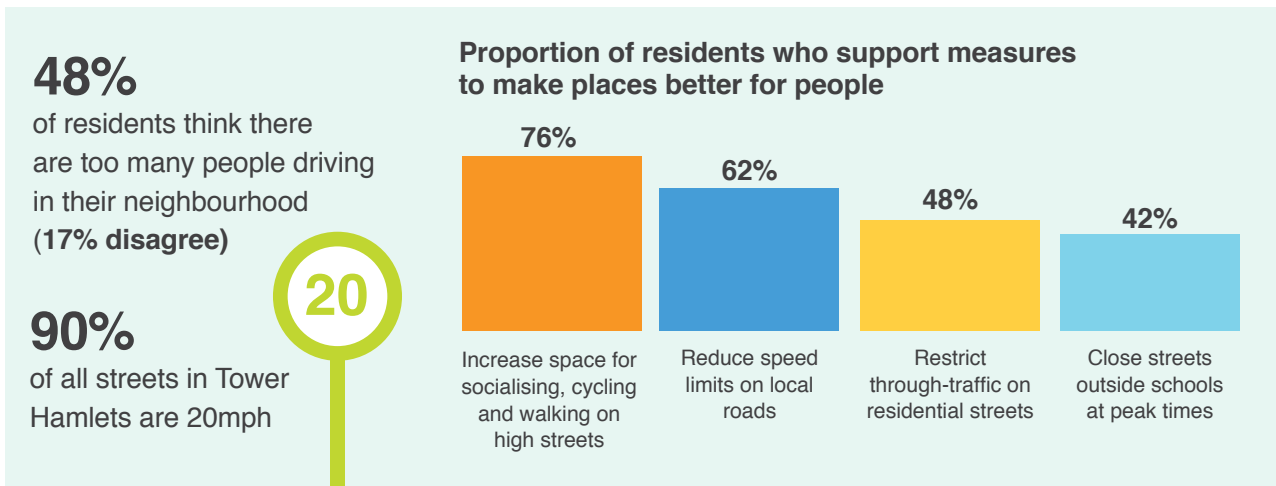
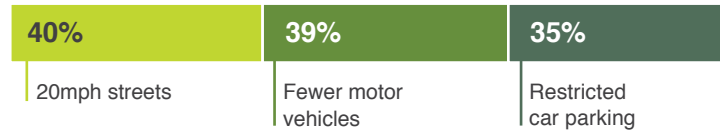
We were also successful in applying for funding to purchase cargo bikes for our soon-to-be-built fashion hub, Poplar Works. We want to explore the role that cargo bikes could play in helping staff, who have to carry heavy equipment from site to site, travel less by car. And also how small and medium sized enterprises at Chrisp Street Market and Poplar Works could reduce the use of polluting vehicles and use low carbon alternatives.



Residents think 20mph streets and fewer motor vehicles would help increase cycling and make their area a better place

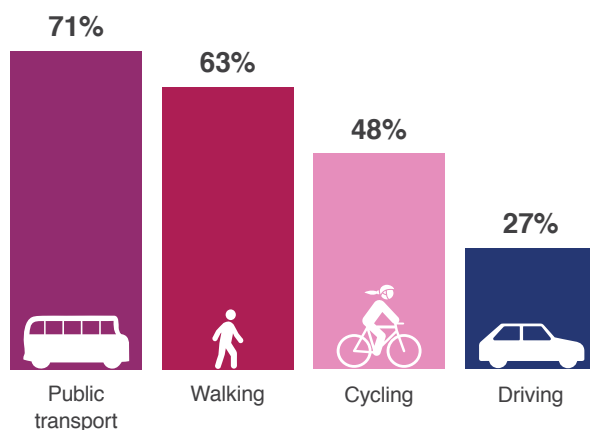
A reported cycle injury occurs once every **48,000 miles** cycled by residents around Tower Hamlets. Whilst injuries are relatively rare, sharing the road with motor vehicles is unattractive for most people.

What proportion of residents would find traffic management measures useful to cycle more?



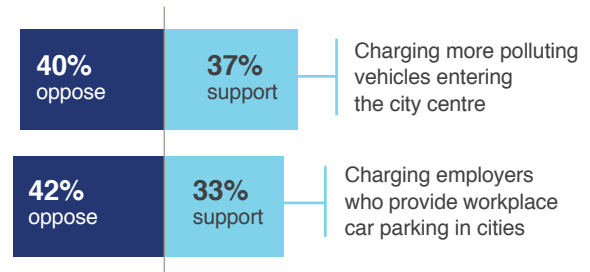
Residents want more investment in public transport, walking and cycling

Proportion of residents who would like to see more government spending on different types of transport



Public support exists for introducing policy measures that could be used to help fund walking, cycling and public transport. However, significant opposition also exists.

Proportion of residents who support and oppose traffic management measures



Investing in provision for cycling is good value for money, and gives greater returns than many alternatives. For example, Transport for London's 'Walking and Cycling Economic Benefits summary pack' tells us that for every £1 spent on walking and cycling, £13 of benefits are returned to the economy.





Improving cycling

How has Tower Hamlets Council been developing cycling?



Councillor Kyrsten Perry, Mayor's cycling and pedestrian champion

Progress has already been made in improving cycle route infrastructure, with the completion of Quietway 13* along Columbia Road and Virginia Road in 2018, and improvements to Cycleway 3 at Cable Street carried out in 2019. Tower Hamlets Council has also worked with Transport for London (TfL) on identifying corridors in the borough with a high potential for increasing cycling, obtained from the Strategic Cycling Analysis tool, with feasibility and design work already underway. One of the key priority routes being developed is the Hackney to Westferry route through the heart of the borough which will provide a high quality link between Cycleways 2 and 3.

Recognising that access to secure cycle storage is one of the key barriers to taking up cycling, the borough has invested substantially in cycle parking, with 510 residential cycle parking spaces and 138 on-street cycle parking spaces delivered in the last 3 years. During the same period we have also delivered Bikeability cycle training to 1,648 adults and 4,564 children. We support more than 60 schools to commit to active, safe and sustainable travel through TfL's Sustainable Travel: Active, Responsible, Safe (STARS) scheme. To further widen access to cycling, the Council has supported TfL in expanding the Santander Cycle Hire public cycle share scheme in the borough.

A 20mph limit on all borough roads was introduced in 2015, making road conditions safer for cyclists and pedestrians. In 2019 the ambitious Liveable Streets programme was launched, which aims to transform 17 neighbourhoods in the borough over the next 4 years by reducing through traffic in residential areas and encouraging more walking and cycling. Already, full public consultation has been completed in Bethnal Green, Wapping and Barkantine.

A 10 year Cycling Strategy was produced by Tower Hamlets in 2016, which set out the borough's commitment to developing cycling which will be updated by a Cycling Plan in 2020. Policies will be overseen by dedicated Walking and Cycling Champion, Councillor Kyrsten Perry, who acts as a figurehead to promote cycling amongst stakeholders and the wider public.

*Quietway 13 will be renamed and renumbered as a Cycleway route



Bike to the future

Tower Hamlets Council's ambition and plans to make it happen



Tower Hamlets has a vision to become the most cycle-friendly borough in London, with cycling becoming the natural choice of transport for most people.

In 2019, Tower Hamlets Council declared a climate emergency, recognising the urgent need to address the borough's contribution to climate change and air pollution. 77% of the borough's population and 80% of its schools are based in areas that exceed the legal limits for air pollution and transport is the main source, responsible for nearly 40% of carbon dioxide and half the nitrogen dioxide emitted in the borough.

The council's Transport Strategy for 2019–2041 commits the borough to play its role in meeting the Mayor of London's targets. In Tower Hamlets, that means 90% of journeys in the borough should be made by public transport, walking and cycling by 2041.

A key priority in the Transport Strategy is to reduce car use. The flagship Liveable Streets programme will transform 17 neighbourhoods by removing unnecessary through traffic, providing exciting opportunities for developing the cycle network and making both walking and cycling more attractive. Key outcomes of the Liveable Streets programme will include:

- Greener, more attractive, safer streets, with new public places and more street planting, in line with TfL's Healthy Streets principle.
- Less congestion and 'rat running' traffic on local roads, which will improve air quality.
- Improved safety of walking and cycling by reducing through traffic.
- Opportunities for increased retail footfall.



Tower Hamlets Council will work closely with TfL to develop five new Cycleways, which are required to serve a demand identified in the London Strategic Cycling Analysis. These will generate improved connections to existing infrastructure like Cycleways 2 and 3, and National Cycle Network Route 1.

The borough has a commitment to deliver the following measures to support cycling:

- Provision of a dedicated new secure cycle hub for the new Crossrail station at Whitechapel.
- Delivery of 100 new on-street bike hangars by 2022, providing 600 cycle parking spaces.
- Continued investment in new secure cycle lockers on estates and other residential areas.
- Roll out of 50 School Streets in the borough.
- Expansion of the Zero Emission Network and introduction of Business Low Emission Neighbourhoods to encourage businesses to adopt cargo bikes and e-bikes for their operations.
- Carry out a wide-ranging parking review which will look at tightening existing policies.
- Use the Council's move to a new flagship Civic Hub at Whitechapel in 2022 as an opportunity to promote sustainable travel amongst staff.
- Continued investment in subsidised Bikeability cycle skills sessions for both schoolchildren and the wider community.
- Further expansion of the All Ability inclusive cycling programme for residents with physical and learning disabilities.



Notes on terminology and methodology:

The attitudinal survey was conducted from May to July 2019 by independent social research organisation DRG.

The survey is representative of all Tower Hamlets residents, not just those who cycle.

Rounding has been used throughout the report.

More information and a detailed methodology are available at www.sustrans.org.uk/bikelife

Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle.

We connect people and places, create liveable neighbourhoods, transform the school run and deliver a happier, healthier commute. Join us on our journey. www.sustrans.org.uk

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