

Merton – The Place

The Borough of Merton was formed in 1965 by the merger of Mitcham, Wimbledon, Merton and Morden. It is an outer London borough situated to the south west of central London, neighbouring the boroughs of Croydon, Kingston, Lambeth, Sutton and Wandsworth. Comprising of 20 wards, it covers an area of approximately 14.7 square miles and has a population of just over 208,000 residents living in 84,000 properties.

12% of the population is aged 65 or over while 13.5% of the working-age population are recorded as having a disability. Population density is higher in the wards of the east of the borough compared to the wards in the west. Merton's population is projected to increase to 212,400 by 2020. The age profile is also predicted to shift with a notable growth in the proportion of the population that are under the age of 16 and those over 50 years old. The number of households is projected to rise to 99,000 by 2021, an average annual household growth of 2.2%. This is the fourth highest projected household growth in England, with much of the increase expected to be in single person households.

Served by 11,365 active businesses, the borough's main commercial centres are Mitcham, Morden and Wimbledon, of which Wimbledon is the largest. Other smaller centres include Raynes Park, Colliers Wood, South Wimbledon, Wimbledon Park and Pollards Hill, each with well-developed characters of their own. The borough is predominantly suburban in character, with high levels of commuter flows in and out of central London.

Merton has more than 100 parks and green spaces, including Wimbledon and Mitcham commons, with 99.6% of the borough within less than 400m distance from a publicly accessible open space. 18% of the borough is open space, compared to a London average of 10%.

Merton has good connections with the London transport network, with 15 mainline stations and 28 bus routes. Wimbledon is a central transport hub in the South London area and 18 minutes from Waterloo by train, while the suburban station at Mitcham Eastfields puts the east of the borough 25 minutes from Victoria. As well as the regular suburban rail services that run into central London, both the District and Northern underground lines run through the borough. The Tramlink provides connections between Wimbledon and Croydon via Mitcham and Morden, while over ground stations and bus routes provide easy access to neighbouring boroughs.

Merton has a rich mix of ethnicity, culture, and languages. Greater London Authority (GLA) data puts Merton's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population at 74,998, meaning BAME groups make up around 36% of the population. Merton is one of the most religiously diverse boroughs in London, and Morden is home to the largest mosque in Western Europe.

Merton ranks as 'very low' in terms of overall social deprivation compared to other London boroughs and nationally in the UK. It is the seventh least deprived of the 33 London boroughs and ranks 212 out of 354 (where 1 is the most deprived) for the rest of England. This overall lack of deprivation does, however, hide inequalities and extremes in the borough between deprived wards in the east of the borough that are some of the top 15% most income-deprived in the country, and the more affluent wards in the west that are amongst the top 5% most affluent. Three wards are more deprived than the average for London: Cricket Green, Figge's Marsh and Pollards Hill.

The health of people in Merton is generally better than the London and England average. Life Expectancy at birth in Merton is 80.5 years for males and 84.2 years for females, higher

than the London average and rates of death considered preventable are low. In East Merton life expectancy in men is 78.9 years compared to 81.9 years in West Merton. Women's life expectancy is 83.3 years in the East compared to 85.1 years in West Merton. There is a gap of 6.2 years in life expectancy for men between the most deprived and least deprived areas in Merton. The gap is 3.9 years for women. Linked to deprivation, those in the east of the borough have a much higher chance of serious illness and early deaths from illnesses such as cancer and heart disease.

Merton residents who are in active full-time employment are distributed all over the borough, however, unemployed residents are concentrated towards the east of Merton, and self-employed residents are concentrated toward the west. The employment rate for the borough as at 2015 is 78.8%, above the London average of 72.9%. Although unemployment in the borough is below the national average, it rises significantly in some of the eastern wards. The median gross annual pay for residents in Merton as at 2016 is £33,989, slightly above the London average of £33,776

The borough currently has just under 29,000 pupils across 48 local authority maintained primary, secondary and special schools and pupil referral units. As at August 2017 43 of these schools were judged by Ofsted as being either 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. In 2016 65% of students in Merton achieved 5 or more A*- C at GCSE including English and Maths, the sixteenth highest in the country and above the London average of 61%.

Merton's social housing stock is amongst the lowest in London at 14%, compared to a London average of 22%. 58% of social housing and 63% of private rented homes are flats, compared with only 24% in the owner-occupied sector. The median average house price in Merton in 2016 was £440,000, the seventeenth highest in London and an increase of 7% on the figure for 2015. The ratio of house prices to earnings in Merton is 13.5, which is the sixteenth highest in London and above the London average of 12.8.