

# 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.

The biggest proportion of the population (9.5%) is aged between 35-39. The proportion of the population that is working-age (16-64) is 66.5%, while 12.4% of the population is aged 65 or over, higher than the London average of 11.7%. 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 222,717 by 20205 and 232,473 by 2030. 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%, with much of the increase expected to be in single person households.

Merton has a rich mix of ethnicity, culture, and languages. GLA data at 2018 puts Merton's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population as 76,800, meaning BAME groups make up just under 38% 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.

Served by 12,070 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 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 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 ranks as 'very low' in terms of overall social deprivation compared to other London boroughs and nationally in the UK. It is the sixth least deprived of the 33 London boroughs and ranks 114th out of 326 authorities (where 1 is the most deprived) in 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 80.8 years for males and 84.2 years for females, higher than the London average, and rates of death considered preventable are low. However, within the borough there are significant inequalities in health outcomes, aligned with deprivation. 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. 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. In the 2011 Census 52% of residents reported their health as 'very good' whilst 3.9% reported themselves as being in either 'very bad' or 'bad' health.

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%. Unemployment in the borough is 4.6%, below the London average of 6.1%. The youth unemployment (claimant) rate for those aged 18-24 is 3.9, below the London average of 5.2. Although unemployment in the borough is below the national average, it rises significantly in some of the eastern wards.

As at 2016, the out of work benefits rate for Merton is 5.7. This is below the London average of 7.7. The latest figure for the Proportion of 16-18 year olds who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) is 4.3%, which is above the London average of 3.4%. The median gross annual pay for residents in Merton as at 2017 is £35,628, slightly above the London average of £34,725.

The borough currently has just under 29,000 pupils across its local authority maintained primary, secondary and special schools and pupil referral units. 50 out of the 53 schools (including maintained, academies and special schools) in the borough that have been rated as Ofsted are judged as being 'Good' or 'Outstanding' as at December 2018. In 2018 68.2% of students in Merton achieved 9-4 pass (incl. English and Maths), above the London average of 67.7%. 46.6% of primary school pupils and 34.8% of secondary school pupils in Merton have a first language known or believed to be other than English, while the percentage of children known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals is 13.9% at primary school and 15.1% at secondary school.

59.3% of households in the borough are owner occupied, either owned outright or with a mortgage. 36.5% are privately rented through a private landlord or letting agency. 14.1% of households are social rented, with 3.7% rented from the council. The median average house price in Merton in 2018 is £470,000, the nineteenth highest in London. The average house price in London is £540,937. The ratio of house prices to earnings in Merton is 12.9, which is the twentieth highest in London and below the London average of 14.5.

For further information on Merton as a borough, and the Merton population, please see <https://data.merton.gov.uk/>