

Homes in a heatwave

Key findings from a Planning and Regeneration Committee survey

August 2026

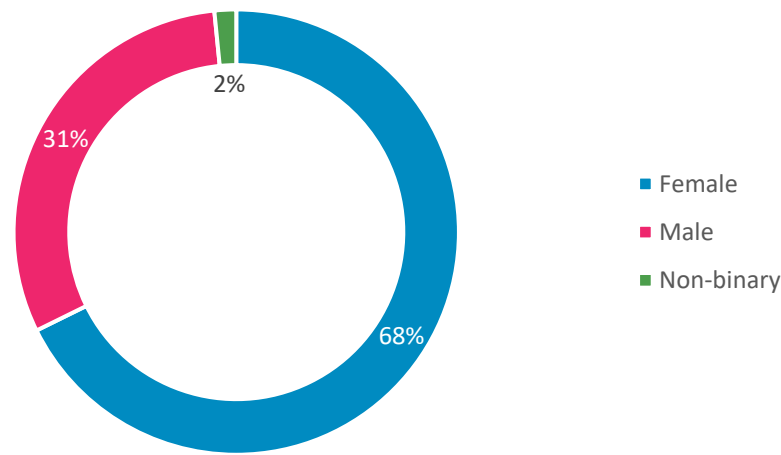
Methodology and data limitations

- May and June 2026 saw a series of heatwaves in London. London was covered by an Amber Heat Health Alert (HHA) from 22 May to 28 May, from 18 June to 24 June and from 26 June to 28 June. From 24 June to 26 June, London was under a Red HHA, only the second time a Red HHA has been issued.¹
- The primary purpose of the survey was to explore Londoner's experiences of the heatwaves and what they did to stay cool. This was done via qualitative questions.
- Responses to the survey were received between 2 June and 6 July 2026. All responses were gathered via an online survey platform. The survey was designed by Research Unit staff in consultation with the Planning and Regeneration Committee project team.
- The survey initially asked respondents about the May 2026 heatwave. The June 2026 heatwave took place while the survey was open. As a result, survey wording was updated to refer to both the May and June 2026 heatwaves. Otherwise question wording remained the same.
- The survey was promoted by the Committee and project team by sharing it with stakeholders, and online via social media.
- In total, there were 134 completed responses to the survey. Respondents to the survey were self-selected and cannot be considered to be representative of the London population. The results should therefore be treated with caution. The findings can provide the Committee with an impression of the experience of some Londoners.
- Demographic data was collected to understand which groups of Londoners the survey reached. The next page provides an overview of the age, gender and ethnicity of respondents, as well as the proportion of respondents with a long-term health condition or disability.

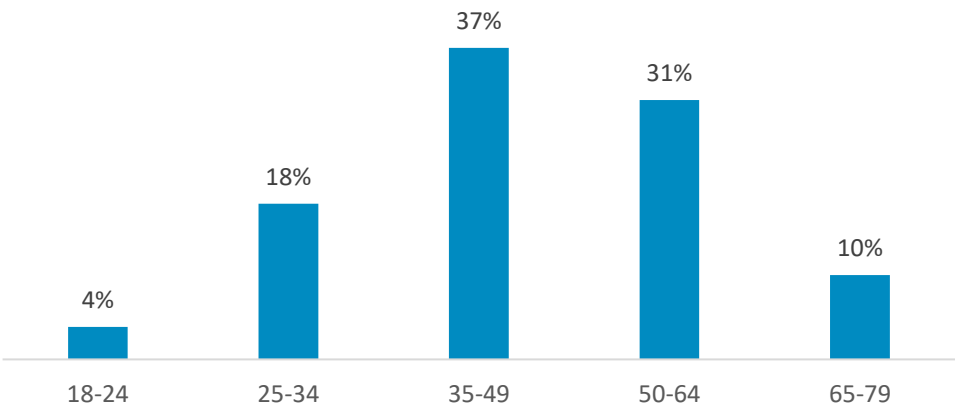
¹UKHSA, [UKHSA updates heat health alerts across England](#), updated 13 July 2026

Characteristics of survey respondents

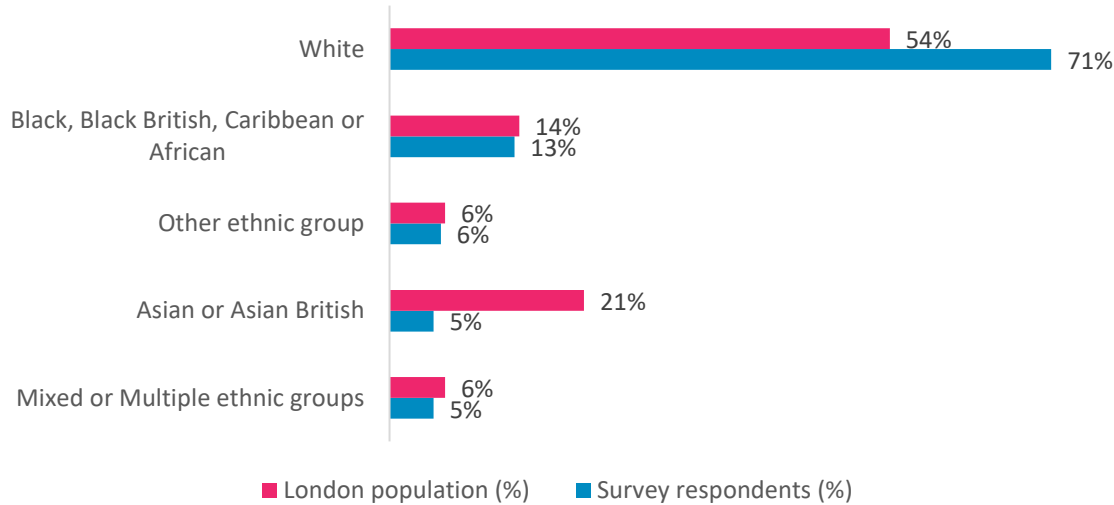
Gender of survey respondents



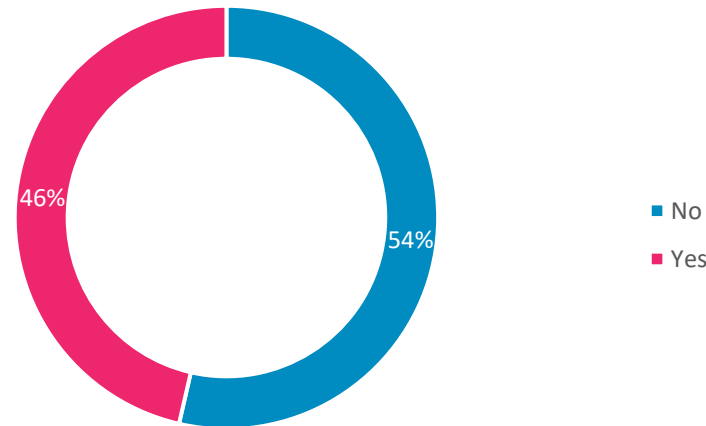
Age group of survey respondents



Ethnicity of survey respondents



Survey respondents with a disability or long-term health condition

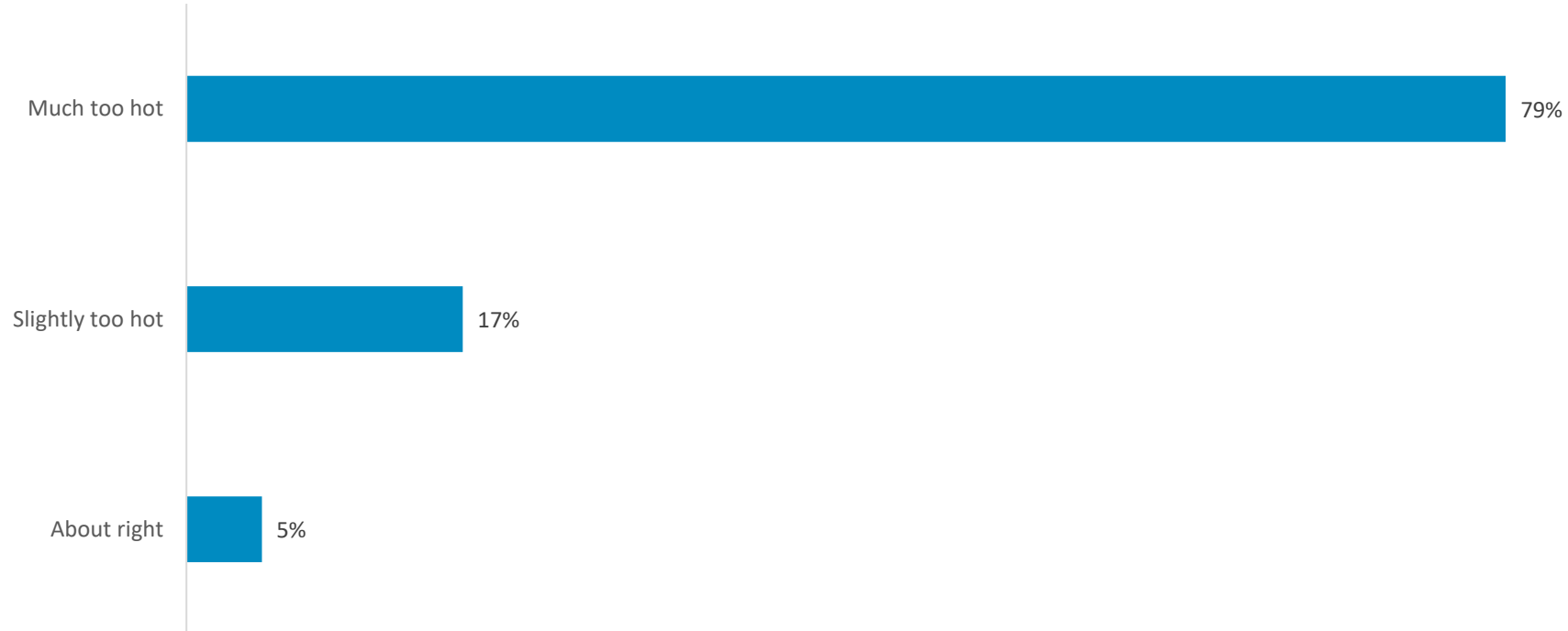


Where questions were skipped or respondents answered 'prefer not to say', these are not included in percentage calculations.

Temperature inside homes in London during the heatwave

The vast majority of respondents to the survey indicated that they found the temperature of their homes during the heatwaves to be much too hot (79 per cent).

Temperature inside homes in London during the May and June 2026 heatwaves (% of respondents)



Temperature inside homes in London during the heatwave

When asked about their experience of being at home during the heatwaves, respondents most commonly described their homes as being excessively hot, with many reporting that indoor temperatures remained high throughout the day and night. Many respondents noted that their homes were hotter than the outdoor temperature and retained heat for prolonged periods.

Several respondents, particularly those living in flats, reported indoor temperatures exceeding 30°C and, in some cases, reaching 40°C or higher.

“ [My home was] Stifling and uninhabitable. The flat hit 45 degrees indoors already. We could not stay there. ”

“ My flat feels like an oven during [the] heatwave. ”

“ The flat got to around 36°C and didn't cool substantially overnight. No airflow. ”

“ The same external temperature inside as we had outside. My flat held that heat all night. ”

The above quotes are from respondents' answers to the question, "What was your experience of being in your home during the recent May heatwave?" which allowed free text entry. Number of respondents = 128.

How some Londoners tried to stay cool

When asked how they tried to stay cool during the heatwave, respondents described using a wide range of measures, including fans, portable air conditioning units, blackout blinds, reflective window coverings, cold showers, ice packs, cold drinks and opening windows overnight. Several reported carefully managing curtains and windows throughout the day in line with public advice.

Responses also highlighted the lengths to which some residents went to reduce indoor temperatures, including using foil coverings, wet towels, makeshift shading and spending time outside the home where possible.

“ [To stay cool I] Used a fan, had regular cold showers, ate an inordinate number of ice lollies, slept without covers, started work earlier and finished earlier, tried to stay out of the house as much as possible. ”

“ I keep the bath full of water and dip in and out of it. I have a variety of ice packs in the freezer which we use at night. Frozen water bottles which we will roll on us during the day. ”

“ I put foil-covered bubble wrap on the outside of my windows to try slow the increase of temperature. I get up at 4am to try to get air moving through by opening all windows and doors throughout the building. ”

“ I had previously shaded the windows of my home using cardboard covered in reflective material... My ceiling fan was the most effective measure. ”

The above quotes are from respondents' answers to the question, “How did you try to stay cool at home during the heatwave and how effective was this?”, which allowed free text entry. Number of respondents = 130.

Mental and physical health impacts

When asked about the effects of the heatwave on their health and wellbeing, respondents frequently reported both physical and mental health impacts. Common physical effects included lethargy, headaches, dehydration, dizziness, nausea and worsening symptoms of existing health conditions such as asthma.

Respondents also described increased stress, anxiety, irritability and low mood. Many linked these effects directly to prolonged heat exposure, poor sleep and the feeling that there was little relief available within their homes.

“ I was crying a lot as I felt so awful.” ”

“ I developed symptoms of heatstroke and had extreme fatigue.” ”

“ Our flat is too hot to sleep in. This is making me feel exhausted, anxious and depressed. My partner and I are trying to have a baby but I'm scared of what it will be like to be pregnant in such an overheated flat.” ”

“ [The high temperature] causes nausea, vomiting, insomnia, high blood pressure, headaches, anxiety, depression, heart palpitations.” ”

“ [The heatwave had a] Massive impact: couldn't sleep, feeling stressed, anxious, tearful, unable to concentrate at work.” ”

The above quotes are from respondents' answers to the question, "In what ways, if any, did the heatwave affect your physical health or mental wellbeing?", which allowed free text entry. Number of respondents = 127. And "What was your experience of being in your home during the recent May heatwave?" which allowed free text entry. Number of respondents = 128.

Sleep disruption and exhaustion

Sleep disruption was one of the most frequently reported impacts of the heatwaves on Londoners. Respondents commonly described difficulty falling asleep, waking repeatedly during the night, and feeling unable to cool their homes sufficiently before bedtime.

Many reported that poor sleep resulted in fatigue, reduced concentration, lower productivity and difficulty carrying out everyday activities. Several respondents stated that prolonged periods of high overnight temperatures left them feeling exhausted for days at a time.

“ The temperature in my bedroom peaked at 34°C and some nights did not fall below 30°C. This made sleeping incredibly difficult. ”

“ Poor sleep then affected my energy levels, concentration and general sense of wellbeing. ”

“ Multiple nights of broken sleep affected my mood, physical wellbeing and productivity. ”

“ I couldn't sleep, exercise or do any housework. I just felt so awful the whole time. ”

The above quotes are from respondents' answers to the questions, “In what ways, if any, did the heatwave affect your physical health or mental wellbeing?”, which allowed free text entry. Number of respondents = 127. And “What was your experience of being in your home during the recent May heatwave?” which allowed free text entry. Number of respondents = 128.

Vulnerable residents

Responses highlighted particular concerns for vulnerable residents, including older people, disabled people, people with long-term health conditions and households with young children. Many respondents expressed concern about the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable family members during periods of extreme heat.

“ At 70 years old I felt vulnerable and was very worried. ”

“ I am 56 years old, disabled with chronic illnesses and immunocompromised... I have nowhere to go and I am unable to do anything during a heatwave except lie on my bed. ”

“ My wife has MS and is always badly affected. ”

“ I found it very stressful worrying about my children overheating. ”

“ We're worried about the safety of our new born twins. ”

The above quotes are from respondents' answers to the questions, “In what ways, if any, did the heatwave affect your physical health or mental wellbeing?”, which allowed free text entry. Number of respondents = 127. And “What was your experience of being in your home during the recent May heatwave?” which allowed free text entry. Number of respondents = 128.

Poor building design

Respondents also frequently linked their experiences to the design and construction of their homes, citing issues such as poor ventilation, large areas of glazing, lack of shading, limited airflow and heat-retaining building materials. Many reported feeling that their homes were not designed to cope with increasingly frequent periods of extreme heat.

“ I live in a new-build flat [...] The flat does not seem designed to stay safe or comfortable during periods of extreme heat. ”

“ Large floor-to-ceiling windows let in so much heat and there's no way to stop it. ”

“ This new build is like a greenhouse but without any way to get the heat back out. ”

“ Homes in the UK are not built to cope with heat. ”

“ My experience was that my home did not protect me from extreme heat and in fact intensified it. ”

“ I live in a new building block of flats which is designed to be energy efficient and it does a great job in the winter [however in] summer my flat is regularly 26C minimum and often at 30C plus [...] There is no facility to let out the heat that gathers in the building. [...] I have had to buy an air con unit to cope. ”