

Talk London - Budget Consultation 2021-22

Young black woman stands looking into the camera on millenium bridge in London as people pass her by.

Key information

Publication type: General

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1. Executive summary

Since March this year, the GLA's Opinion Research team have conducted a large amount of qualitative and quantitative research, specifically focussing on understanding Londoners' immediate and longer-term priorities for the capital and for recovery from the pandemic.

The 2021-22 draft Budget Consultation was posted on the Talk London site alongside a [blog post summarising the opinion research findings](#) conducted by the GLA this year on Londoners' priorities. Talk London members were able to read the draft Budget, and comment on the proposed spending decisions made, within a single discussion thread. Once this thread was closed, the 219 comments gathered were sorted into themes and presented within this report under the mission title they best apply to.

The most commented upon topic was the environment: overall, Londoners are aware that we are facing a climate emergency and that some aspects of city life must change. A majority support the emphasis the budget places on

the environment and developing the green economy; however, this general understanding of what needs to be done to benefit the planet is often in conflict with individual needs and wants – primarily, car use. Road use and congestion was the most contended issue, specifically, cycle lanes. Those opposed argue cycle lanes cause congestion and are not adequately used to justify their expense and inconvenience, whilst proponents argue the environmental and health benefits of cycling. As with last year’s budget consultation, air pollution continues to be perceived as a major issue that needs to be tackled.

Londoners are aware of the adverse impact COVID-19 has had on the city’s economy, and support monitoring public expenditure and moves to overcome unemployment. However, how this is done is debated: some support a return to London’s economy ‘how it was’, including investment in the construction industry (especially whilst we are still in the process of recovery), whereas others believe we should be using this opportunity to move towards a green economy. The investment in high streets is well received, as there is an understanding that COVID has placed a renewed emphasis on the importance of the local area. It is crucial, however, that investment is targeted towards those high streets most in need – including outer boroughs.

Similarly, there is widespread awareness that disparity and poverty within the city has increased since COVID: tackling this needs to be a key focus in London’s recovery. Whilst the missions, *A New Deal for Young People*, and *Building Strong Communities* were positively received, there are unanswered questions as to how these missions will be practically implemented: How will the GLA ensure the most vulnerable do not slip through the gaps? And how can the GLA ensure London’s health and social care infrastructure is sufficiently robust to deliver on these promises? At a time when public spending is under scrutiny, evidence demonstrating the success of these missions will be valuable and necessary.

Health and digital access were the least commented upon areas in the budget (although other, much more discussed areas – e.g. active travel and lessening the burden of poverty – are understood to improve health). Interestingly, the provision of housing – a major issue last year – garnered only 21 comments this time.

2. Community engagement report

[The discussion on the London Budget 2021-22](#) was live on Talk London from 5 until 22 January 2021.

Response Metrics:

Emails read: 25,859

Talk London page views: 23,292

Budget Consultation page – unique views = 2,642

Response rate: 219 comments from 137 members aged between 17 and 80

Breakdown of the audience, key demographics:

Please note that the percentages have been rounded and therefore may not add up to 100%.

Ethnicity

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME): 26%

White: 72%

Blank: 1%

Age group

16-24: 6%

25-34: 11%

35-44: 11%

45-54: 16%

55-64: 21%

65+: 28%

Blank or out of range: 7%

Gender

Man: 65%

Woman: 32%

Other: 1%

Blank: 1%

Borough

Barking and Dagenham, 1%

Barnet, 7%

Bexley, 2%

Brent, 1%

Bromley, 2%

Camden, 1%

City of London, 1%

Croydon, 1%

Ealing, 4%

Enfield, 4%

Greenwich, 5%

Hackney, 1%

Hammersmith and Fulham, 3%

Haringey, 4%

Harrow, 2%

Havering, 1%

Hillingdon, 2%

Hounslow, 4%

Islington, 5%

Kensington and Chelsea, 1%

Kingston upon Thames, 1%

Lambeth, 5%

Lewisham, 4%

Merton, 3%

Newham, 4%

Outside of London, 3%

Redbridge, 2%

Richmond upon Thames, 3%
Southwark, 4%
Tower Hamlets, 4%
Waltham Forest, 3%
Wandsworth, 2%
Westminster, 6%
Blank, 1%

Tenure

Being bought on mortgage, 27.7%
Other, 10.2%
Owned outright, 32.8%
Rented from housing association, 7.3%
Rented from local authority, 4.4%
Rented from private landlord, 16.1%
Blank, 1.5%

Employment

Not working - disabled, 1%
Not working - looking after house/children, 3%
Not working - retired, 23%
Other, 11%
Student - with some part time work, 7%
Student - without any part time work, 1%
Unemployed, 2%
Working - Full time (30+ hours), 36%
Working - Part time (9-29 hours), 15%
Blank, 1%

2.1 Benchmarking

[For the Budget Consultation 2020-2021](#), we received a total of 640 comments on the six different discussion threads, from 337 unique Talk London members. We also received 4 responses via email.

[For the Budget Consultation 2019-2020](#), we set up a challenge where Londoners could test their knowledge on the budget it takes to keep London running. Over 1,300 members took part and 50 joined in the discussion.

2.2 Methodology of engagement

The campaign was promoted to our members in three waves:

- **Week 1:** Email to everyone to let them know the consultation was open
- **Week 2:** Tailored reminder to our BAME members and those under 35, to diversify the response rate

- **Week 3:** Email to everyone to let them know the consultation was closing soon

A yellow banner was visible to all logged in members and encouraged them to take part in the consultation.

All new members who signed up to Talk London during that time were redirected to Budget Consultation after verifying their new account.

We steered the conversation from the Talk London moderator account, by asking additional questions, replying to general themes and encouraging members to continue the conversation.

Examples below:

To let everyone on the thread know that the consultation was closing:

To address some misinformation, with a few lines supplied by the relevant policy team:

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3. Promotion report

3.1 Promotional objectives

- To encourage Londoners to participate in the discussion on the Mayor's Budget Consultation for 2021-22 and share their thoughts on the proposed spending plans for London.
- To target and ensure a diverse audience of participants
- Optimising promotional techniques throughout as the demographics of Talk London members who had taken part was closely monitored.

3.2 Target audiences

- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) community
- Young Londoners, 16 – 24 years old

Currently these groups are underrepresented within current Talk London membership and therefore we need to target them to ensure that the Londoners who take part are diverse and as representative of the population as possible.

3.3 Promotional activities

Due to the Government announcements and the new lockdown restrictions, the Mayor's channels and City Hall's priority had to be on ensuring the Governments messages were being communicated and therefore were only

used for important content and health messages. Our outreach consisted of:

- Talk London twitter & Twitter partners
- City Hall partners & networks
- Newsletters
- Seeding
- Workshops

3.3.1 Young Londoners

A key priority for the promotional outreach for this consultation was in targeting young Londoners. The consultation was promoted through their teams and networks and a series of workshops held where their young Londoners discussed the consultation and the Mayor's Budget, before they shared their views. This included:

- VRU – Youth Action Group
- London Youth Assembly
- Young Londoners Fund
- Education and Youth team
- Health and Communities team
- Apprentice team

4. Research/analysis report

Overall, the budget consultation garnered 219 comments on a single discussion thread. Comments here been sorted into themes and presented under the mission statement they best apply to.

4.1 A Green New Deal

Overall, Londoners are aware that we are facing a climate emergency and that some aspects of city life must change.

A majority support the emphasis the budget places on the environment and developing the green economy (although a minority believe that the Mayor should focus on 'getting the economy back to normal' before focussing on making this green). The development of more public green spaces is popular, as is ensuring new housing has access to green space. As last year, air pollution (19 comments) continues to be perceived a major issue that needs to be tackled.

Everything possible must be done to both reduce London's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and to prepare for the effect of climate change. Air pollution is a serious issue that must be tackled more quickly. Detecting and fining those with highly polluting vehicles and driving styles would be welcome.

Male, 66, Richmond

I dream of London leading the way in the climate emergency. Ban all cars apart from taxis from central London. Ban all plastics. Promote local shopping, the idea of a 15 minute city and cherish and seek more common land for Londoners to share.

Female, 58, Lewisham

However, this general understanding of what needs to be done to benefit the planet is often in conflict with individual needs and wants – primarily, car use.

By far the most commented upon subject was road use and congestion. Cyclists and cycle lanes are particularly contentious, with support and opposition being equal: 59 comments mentioned cyclists and/or cycle lanes, 24 of which were negative and 24 positive. The main arguments against (in rough order of mention) were:

- Cycle lanes narrow the road, causing congestion and worsening air quality. In addition, emergency vehicles cannot get through. Commuting and deliveries are delayed, causing London's economy and businesses to suffer
- Cycle lanes are not adequately used to justify their expense and inconvenience
- Not everybody is able to cycle (for example, the elderly and disabled). Those who need to use cars should not have to use a compromised road network. Similarly, many acknowledge that car use will not 'go away' in the future (although it might be electrified) – it needs to be built into road planning
- Less people will be using public transport now due to COVID. Roads need to reflect this and be made suitable for higher vehicle use
- Cyclists do not pay road tax or have insurance. Motorists instead subsidise cycle lanes via the congestion charge, whilst their own experience is worsened

What a complete waste of money. The new cycle lanes and LTN's have caused real issues in local communities, including increased congestion and pollution. They have been to the detriment of the majority of residents and were introduced without proper consultation and without much thought.

Female, 45, Lambeth

Within the next ten to twenty years the number of petrol and diesel vehicles on London's roads will decrease. Therefore, it is time to stop punishing and vilifying car drivers. Transport policy must include all forms of transport - cars are not going to go away.

Male, 42, Waltham Forest

There is a pandemic, but why is everything being proposed around cyclists, runners and walkers? I am for safe-guarding nature and having more green spaces, but making the motorist pay for all things is not fair or justified.

Female, 67, Redbridge

Those who were pro-cycling and supportive of the development of cycle lanes (24 comments) primarily mentioned the environmental benefits of cycling (several also argued that cycling is much more environmentally friendly than electric cars, as well as non-electric). Also mentioned were the health benefits of cycling and the efficiency of cycling (one cyclist takes up much less space than a car with a single passenger).

Electric cars are not environmental. They have thousands of miles worth of embedded carbon when built and still create the same toxic rubber from tyres and brakes. eBikes and eScooters are the

future and we need to enhance those schemes along with providing safe routes for them.

Male, 51, Greenwich

Roads were built for everyone, both cyclists and motor vehicles. Motor vehicles pollute our air and cause a climate emergency while cyclists don't.

Male, 64, Hammersmith and Fulham

Some comments elaborated, arguing that providing cycle lanes alone was not enough: the Mayor needs to encourage a modal shift amongst Londoners, by ensuring that London's infrastructure is set-up to accommodate active travel:

Do not allow planning permission for business premises with parking spaces, other than for Blue Badge holders, and ensure that businesses and new blocks of flats all provide secure bicycle storage. Ensure that GP surgeries have cycle racks outside them to promote the health of their patients. Repurpose car parking spaces to become bike hangars.

Female, 64, Harrow

Perceptions of electric vehicles (15 comments) are largely positive. There is general agreement that electric vehicles are preferable to cars – however, there are currently not enough charging points for these to be considered a viable alternative. A small minority argue that electric vehicles should not actually be positioned as an alternative to cars – that they are still worse for the environment than active travel/public transport, and, instead, the focus should be on discouraging private vehicle use completely.

Electric cars are not a magic bullet - they still congest our streets, still pollute by emitting brake dust, still harmful to the environment due to the manufacturing of them and still encourage inactivity.

Male, 61, Tower Hamlets

29 comments mentioned public transport. It is generally felt that London's public transport offer needs to be better (e.g. improving delayed services), especially if the Mayor is looking to decrease private vehicle use. A small majority support investment in public transport, due to its environmental benefits and positive impact on congestion. However, others argue that public transport needs to be made safe (in terms of COVID), before we can focus on lessening car use.

Commenters are highly critical of TfL as an organisation, arguing it is badly managed. A minority argue that the Silvertown Tunnel should be scrapped, and funding instead diverted to TfL.

TfL (tube and bus) is a shambles, and poses a far greater risk to those using it than personal transport. London needs to prioritise the ability of residents to move about without having to be crammed in a small space with other members of the public for an hour.

Male, 33, Barnet

Focusing on Covid-related initiatives is thinking in the very short term only. Instead London needs to think much longer term. What matters most to every person in this city is their quality of life. London can contribute to it by investing in more cycle ways, better public transport, and by closing roads.

Male, 32, Newham

TfL will need a great deal of support to meet the needs of Londoners once the vaccine begins to have an impact and lockdown is eased. Probably the best way to release about £2bn is to cancel the Silvertown tunnel. Not only will this help greatly financially, but it will help to limit the flow of traffic into London, which is essential in meeting carbon reduction and pollution targets.

Male, 72, Hounslow

4.2 A Robust Safety Net and Helping Londoners into Good Work

42 comments mentioned the economy; however, many of these do not go further than stating that COVID has had an adverse impact on London's economy, and therefore public expenditure should be closely monitored. Some argue that now is not the time to increase council tax, especially when this is seen as being spent in inefficient ways:

Many London councils, i.e. Hounslow Council, have erected themselves a new town hall office block, during years of austerity... Why are council tax-payers having to pay for this corrupt / deceitful & fraudulent policy? When in the fifth richest nation in the world we see homelessness our streets, plus many relying on food banks.

Male, 73, Hounslow

11 comments mentioned (un)employment. This is acknowledged as an issue and moves to overcome it are commended. However, how this is done is debated: some support a return to London's economy 'how it was', including investment in the construction industry, whereas others believe we should be moving towards a green economy. There is also some argument that economic growth is not the answer: rather, the focus should be on creating a more resilient economy, with attention paid to the health and well-being of its population.

This is not the time to introduce such green measures [such as cycle lanes]. Consequential traffic jams not only increase pollution but if people who need to move themselves and goods around London for work can't do so - businesses suffer. We are in an economic crisis. The key point of London is that it is a city of trade. To protect and create jobs on which we all depend, the Mayor's focus must be to enhance the ability of our capital to trade and do business as best as possible.

Male, 54, Lambeth

My only disagreement with the proposals is we don't need growth in the economy – only local resilience, local food supplies, community gardens, people hired (as in New Zealand) for jobs promoting biodiversity. Again, as in New Zealand, it's time to move away from GDP and the obsession with growth (i.e. loads of stuff we don't really need), for a Health and Wellbeing Index – 'degrowth' as some people call it.

Male, 44, Hackney

4.3 A New Deal for Young People and Building Strong Communities.

22 comments mention London's disparity, poverty and cost of living, with many saying this has gotten worse since the pandemic and needs to be a key focus in London's recovery. There is a real want to address this, and comments are often positive about missions such as *A New Deal for Young People* and *Building Strong Communities*. However, **questions remain around how these missions will be practically implemented, and there is some scepticism: How will the GLA ensure the most vulnerable do not slip through the gaps in terms of access to mentors, housing and skills training?** Many argue this requires hiring more staff into public services, such as health and social work and the emergency services.

To truly keep in mind the young people in London we must consider young people in vulnerable set ups, accessibility to services, and young people with experience in justice, social and health services. It should be compulsory for every young person in care to have free mental health assessments, as these are the young people that often are left in the dark.

Female, 21, Hounslow

I think the proposal "A New Deal for Young People" is a really good idea... However, I think it would be important to allocate this funding in a way that benefits the most vulnerable first. Some young people will need more support than others, and I think the budgeting should reflect this and allocate more funding to the groups that need it the most.

Female, 18, Waltham Forest

Regarding Building Strong Communities, what will a community hub look like and how accessible will it be for the everyday citizen? How possible is it for the majority of people to be given an opportunity to volunteer? I would suggest that building strong communities should be a top priority; particularly through an accessible community hub which is publicised to as many people as possible. This should be a dedicated, safe space for people to access the hub in each borough and a digital space which is accessible to all people - particularly friendly to Londoners with disabilities which may hinder certain digital skills. These community hubs should also be places where people can go for support and each have its own food bank. There should be a significant amount of provision for the homeless, assisting these people to improving their lives through prioritised access to council housing, mentors and care workers to help them feel comfortable in all areas of everyday life.

Male, 17, Enfield

The budgets allocated to the various "missions" have no chance at all to deliver the objectives stated. I cannot see how the Mayor and the GLA will provide "a personal mentor" to "all young people in need by 2024" - in need of what? And for £1million? The match between aspirations and their delivery is inconceivable and is a political disgrace to Londoners' intelligence.

Male, 71, Enfield

Housing remains a major issue. One of the major future concerns facing Londoners is whether or not they'll still be able to pay rent. I recognise that calls to abolish/halt rent payments is far too radical and unrealistic. Instead, however, London authorities, especially the councils, should look at ways of alleviating/forcibly reducing the extortionate rates attached to the vast majority of London properties, which can in no way continue to be justified given the major economic downturn that

awaits.

Male, 22, Barnet

4.4 High Streets for All

21 comments mention city planning, and 9 mention high streets and local areas (there is some overlap between these comments). Generally, the investment in local high streets is well received: **there is an understanding that well-developed high streets can become places for both the local community and economy to flourish, as well as discouraging car use and encouraging an outdoor lifestyle.** COVID is understood to have permanently changed the way we live and work, alongside a more general increased want to shop locally.

The way we live and work in a post-COVID world will be radically different. Government strategy and spending needs to pivot towards supporting local neighbourhood and much less need to travel in and out of central London. Paris have the right idea with '15 minute neighbourhoods', we need to adapt in a similar fashion

No user data available

One issue is the difference in experience between different high streets – some areas are much more pleasant to shop in than others. GLA investment needs to target these most in need areas first, including those in outer London.

I express continual dismay at the ragged, confused filthy aspect that Peckham's main shopping areas portray. It really is not acceptable to have open-fronted food shops spilling their wares onto busy pavement space that is constricted enough already.

Male, 76, Southwark

People are wanting to shop locally now more than ever before, yet most high streets and local areas are still very unattractive places to visit by foot or cycle due to congestion. Now is perfect opportunity to undo the past mistakes and make the positive changes needed to boost the local economy. It's unfair that there's such disparity between the changes made to streets in areas like Hackney when compared with Haringey. It's unfair that inner London boroughs are allocated more money for schemes like LTNs when boroughs next door in "outer London" can't afford to do the same. This needs to change urgently.

Male, 39, Haringey

Comments on city planning more generally focus on cycle lanes (either for or against – see *A Green New Deal* section above), the need to lessen congestion and to increase green space. Tower blocks and 'mega developments' are unpopular – but opposition to these sits alongside requests for more housing (21 comments) and ensuring London builds the infrastructure needed for its increasing population (i.e. schools and hospitals).

Londoners need access to open spaces and health facilities such as affordable gyms, running tracks and maybe tennis courts in park. Especially for children. Many Londoners live in small flats and need simple open safe spaces for fresh air and exercise. More community health care centres with pitches and courts would be good.

Male, 29, Westminster

Happy to see someone trying to make housing (and housing wealth) more accessible to everyone and particularly to younger people. I think the problem here is the current price of land and buildings. How can we do anything about this without taking money from people who already own housing by reducing the real value of what they own? We definitely could make a decision to do everything we can to stop house price inflation for the future though.

Male, 70, Hounslow

4.5 Healthy Food, Healthy Weight and Mental Health and Wellbeing

Health was one of the least commented upon areas within the budget (14 comments), although other, much more discussed areas – e.g. active travel and lessening the burden of poverty – are understood to improve physical and mental health.

Comments centred around ensuring health services are sustainable and will withstand the pandemic and beyond. Only one comment mentioned healthy eating.

Priority should be given to services, primarily health, which will aid the recovery from Covid-19 and its impacts.

Male, 60, Redbridge

Given the strain that the pandemic has put on everyone's mental health, the focus on wellbeing is really important. Too many people are currently suffering with mental health problems in silence and I don't think there are enough services currently provided. I'm glad to see that this issue has been highlighted in the budget and I hope that this will mean more people can access the help they need in the future.

Female, 18, Waltham Forest

Money should be allocated to creating more green spaces: new developments should have mandatory green space, gardens etc. So important for physical and mental health, not to mention the wildlife.

Female, 62, Wandsworth

Santander scheme needs to be developed further south of the River. It is a convenient, effective and healthy means of getting around, which I used to use a lot when I lived further north in London.

Male, 29, Westminster

4.6 Digital Access for All

Only one comment mentioned digital skills (arguing these should be taught within community hubs, in a way that is accessible to Londoners with disabilities), and two comments mentioned broadband (arguing this should be free for everyone/children on free school meals).

4.7 Other comments

11 comments discuss **devolution**/the role of central government. This includes both arguments for the Mayor to be given more power and for the Mayor to devolve power to borough councils.

I believe that the Mayor of London should be able to borrow to invest – or perhaps have access to some form of quantitative easing facility – in the interest of creating a more equitable society.
Male, 67, Hillingdon

The office of the Mayor of London is supposed to support the unitary authority but frankly makes matters worse for many with wide sweeping and draconian measures that are not supported in the 32 boroughs... Clearly the long-term issue is that there is far too much authority consolidated into the one office. Rather, devolve the power into the councils and boroughs and allow them to manage affairs with an eye to the residents in their area.
Male, 33, Barnet

There were 9 comments on **crime and policing, the majority of which argue that more police are needed on the streets, and more money should be invested into the police force** (especially given that COVID has caused poverty to rise – considered to be a pre-cursor to increased crime). A minority of comments argue that the approach is not to fund ‘more of the same’, but instead improve the existing police force, e.g. by ensuring local people are recruited, to improve relations with local communities. Similarly, others argue investing in young people and local communities will help decrease crime.

More police and security cameras would also help reduce crime and make people feel safer in this city.
Male, 32, Newham

Under-used, unused and new high street spaces should be developed or refurbished with some of the budget and then donated to different grassroots organizations with aims of tackling social issues such as knife crime in young people. These buildings could provide subsidized alternative out of school activities, such as cooking lessons and space for entrepreneurial ventures. These will provide young people with a sense of welcoming and belonging to their communities... which will likely reduce the condoning of antisocial behaviour.
Male, 20, Croydon

Putting money towards young people having opportunities and work experience will both benefit them and improve the crime rate in London. Having an opportunity had a big impact on my own life: I saw the positives of working legit and learnt new skills that are not taught in schools.
Male, 19, Barking and Dagenham

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