

London's Poverty Profile 2022: COVID-19 and poverty in London


Trust for London
Tackling poverty and inequality

 | ECONOMICS

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Contents

Foreword	4
Background	5
Headline Findings	6
Living Standards	8
Work	22
Health	38
References	54
About	56

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Foreword

London's Poverty Profile shines a light on the nature of poverty and inequality in London. This has never felt more pertinent.

As the dust begins to settle after two years of COVID, this report looks at what the pandemic has meant for living standards. Comparisons to pre-pandemic levels – when many were already struggling – are sobering.

As well as the highest COVID-19 mortality rate in the country, wellbeing and mental health has deteriorated in London, and waiting times for healthcare have shot up.

And things are not getting any easier. The current cost of living crisis is putting strain on families across London and, as so often, this is most deeply felt by our most vulnerable and deprived communities.

This report looks at the cost of living crisis in the early months of 2022 and how this has impacted living standards. This is analysis that we will continue to develop in the coming months by the launch of a new Cost of Living Index for London.

The situation is difficult, but our city is a resilient one, and the community spirit and energy of those fighting for change is what gives many of us hope.

We will need to work together and harness this, using every tool available to us to tackle these problems and ensure that nobody has to live a life of poverty. We hope that this report can be a resource toward that change.

Manny Hothi, Chief Executive, Trust for London



Background

London's Poverty Profile (LPP) provides evidence and insight on poverty and inequality in London. It shines a light on the nature of poverty in London, in an attempt to prompt action from local and national government, the third sector, faith groups, practitioners, experts, businesses, the public and anyone who cares about making London a fairer city to live in.

London's Poverty Profile is structured into five themes:

- 1. People:** An overview of the demography and rich diversity of London and Londoners. This theme provides a frame through which poverty and inequality of outcomes can be explored across the LPP
- 2. Living Standards:** Focuses most heavily on poverty, demonstrating how hard it is for Londoners to turn their earnings, benefits and assets into wellbeing. It also looks at wider indicators of living standards including health and life expectancy
- 3. Housing:** Shows the importance of housing in understanding poverty and inequality, and the significant challenges of affordability and quality faced by Londoners, including for Londoners who are homeless
- 4. Work, Worklessness and Benefits:** Highlights the nature of work in London and inequality in work outcomes, from overall employment and unemployment rates to the types of contracts people are on and their earnings and benefits
- 5. Shared Opportunities:** Looks at the wide range of other factors where we can see poverty, inequality and opportunity overlapping. For example, in quality and access to public services, air quality and pollution, community cohesion and a range of issues around violence and crime

Across each of these areas, the LPP shines a light on real challenges facing Londoners on low incomes, both compared to others within London, and compared to other parts of the UK.

The last two years have seen the scale and complexity of these challenges worsen. As the LPP 2021 report showed, the individuals, families and communities hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic in London had already struggled the most prior to the outbreak. This year's LPP summary report explores the implications of the ongoing pandemic and the more recent cost of living crisis for poverty and inequality in London. The following sections demonstrate the unequal distribution of impacts on Londoners' living standards, work opportunities and health.

Headline Findings

Living Standards

The increase in in- and out-of-work benefits claimants has been around **two times higher among the 20% most income-deprived communities compared to the least deprived**



More than 2 in 3 Londoners report increases in their cost of living during the first months of 2022, mostly as a result of rising food prices and gas and electricity bills



Work

In the second quarter of 2021, London's GDP almost recovered to pre-pandemic 2019 levels, **after falling nearly 20% in 2020**



When the furlough scheme ended in September 2021, the proportion of eligible employees furloughed **was > 50% higher in London (6%) than rest of England (3.7%)**



Health

By January 2022, London was the English region with the **highest age-adjusted regional COVID-19 mortality rate**



By April 2021 mortality rates were 27% higher in the most deprived communities than in the least deprived ones, even after controlling for a range of neighbourhood characteristics





1 in 4 of those experiencing a rise in the cost of living report using their savings to cover the increased spending, and 15% are going further into debt

According to the Legatum Institute, London's poverty rate increased from 28.8% in the 2019/20 financial year to 29.3% in Q2 2020, and is then projected to fall to 28.1% by Q2 2022



The employment gap between current and pre-pandemic levels in London is linked to an increase in the unemployment rate whereas in England it is due to a big increase in economic inactivity rates



The rise in unemployment has impacted women, the young, and people living in the most deprived communities more intensely



Just over 60% of London adults have received a 3rd vaccination dose, 10% below the UK average



And there is a 30% difference between the proportion of adults who have received a 3rd vaccination in the most deprived communities and in the least deprived

By the end of 2021, the number of NHS patients waiting for treatment in London was over 25% higher than pre-pandemic; and waiting times were on average 40% longer



Living Standards

Poverty was a serious issue in London prior to the pandemic, and many struggled with the costs of housing, heating and food. During the pandemic, more Londoners, both in and out of work, have needed benefits to make ends meet. The fall in incomes and recent increases in the cost of living are expected to worsen living standards for many. In this context, the mental well-being of Londoners has been significantly eroded.



Before the start of the pandemic:

With housing costs taken into consideration, London was the region with the highest poverty rate in the UK (27%).

Rates were even higher in Inner London (30%)

15% (more than 530,000) of London households were in fuel poverty, disproportionately impacting disabled people, those on lower incomes, and single parents

More than 1 in 5 Londoners had low or very low food security, meaning that at times their food intake was reduced or their eating patterns were disrupted due to lack of resources

Since the start of the pandemic:

The increase in in- and out-of-work benefits claimants has been around **two times higher among the 20% most income-deprived communities** compared to the least deprived

More than 2 in 3 Londoners reported increases in their cost of living during the first months of 2022, mostly as a result of rising food prices and gas and electricity bills

1 in 4 of those experiencing a rise in the cost of living report using their savings to cover the increased spending, and **15% are going further into debt**

Estimates show that by April 2022 more than 38% of Londoners (3.6 million) will live below the Minimum Income Standard (MIS), up from 35% before the pandemic

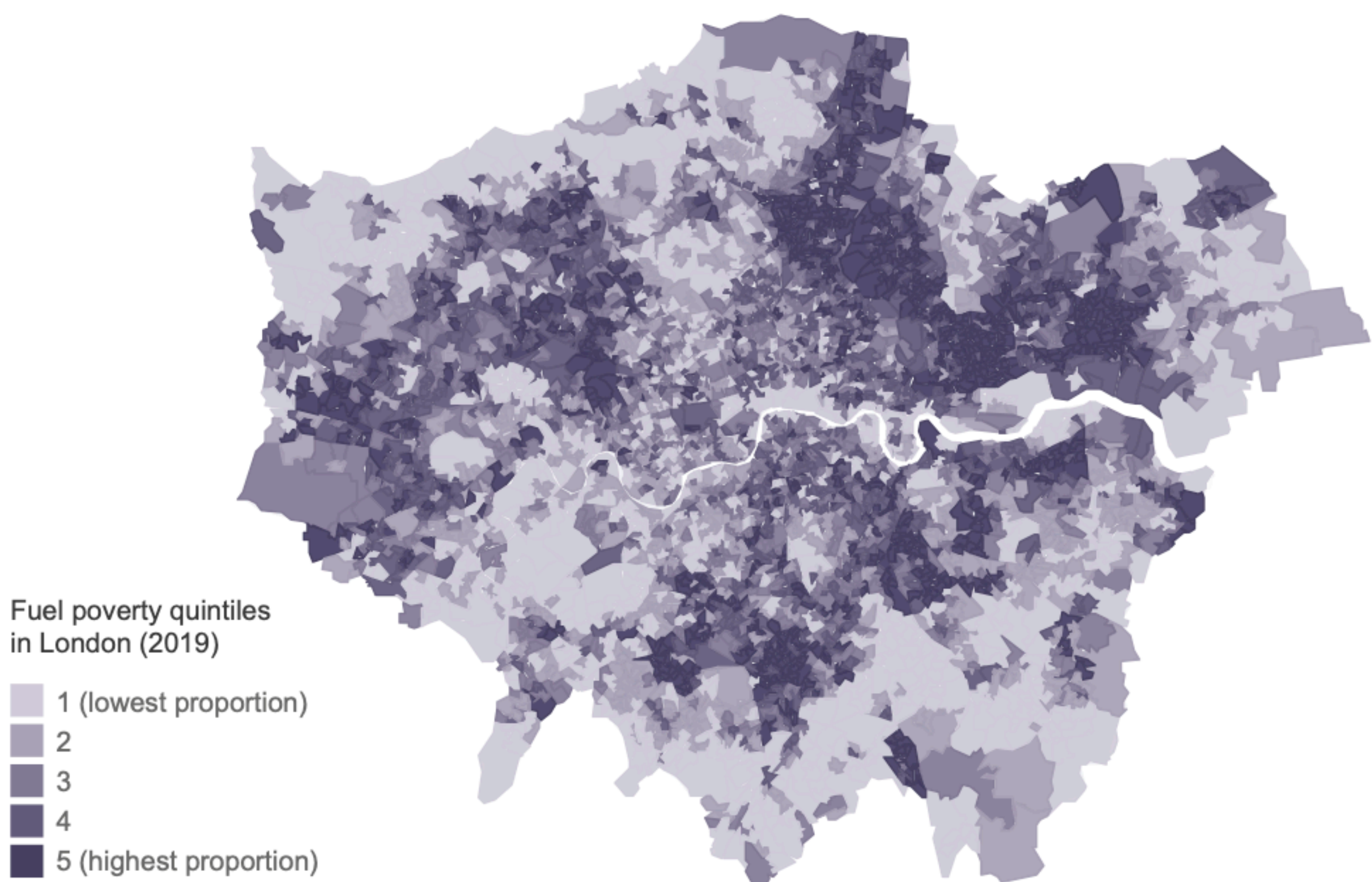
Poverty was a serious issue in London prior to the pandemic, and many struggled with the costs of housing, heating and food

Despite higher incomes, more expensive housing means that the 2019/20 (pre-pandemic) poverty rate in London almost doubles when housing costs are taken into account (from 16% to 27%), making London the region with the highest poverty rate in the UK. Poverty rates are even higher in Inner London (30%), where they are 5 percentage points above many parts of the North of England. For some groups, the rate was even higher; for example, the poverty rate amongst non-White households in London was 39%, and for single parents it was 53%.¹ Poverty rates varied significantly across London's boroughs.

The high poverty rates in London meant that many were already struggling to afford basic living costs before the pandemic, such as fuel poverty:²

- 15% of London households (more than 530,000) were experiencing fuel poverty in 2019
- 1 in 5 neighbourhoods had fuel poverty rates of 19% or above, with some reaching as high as 37%
- The neighbourhoods with the highest proportion of residents in fuel poverty are concentrated in East London, with some pockets in the North West and South

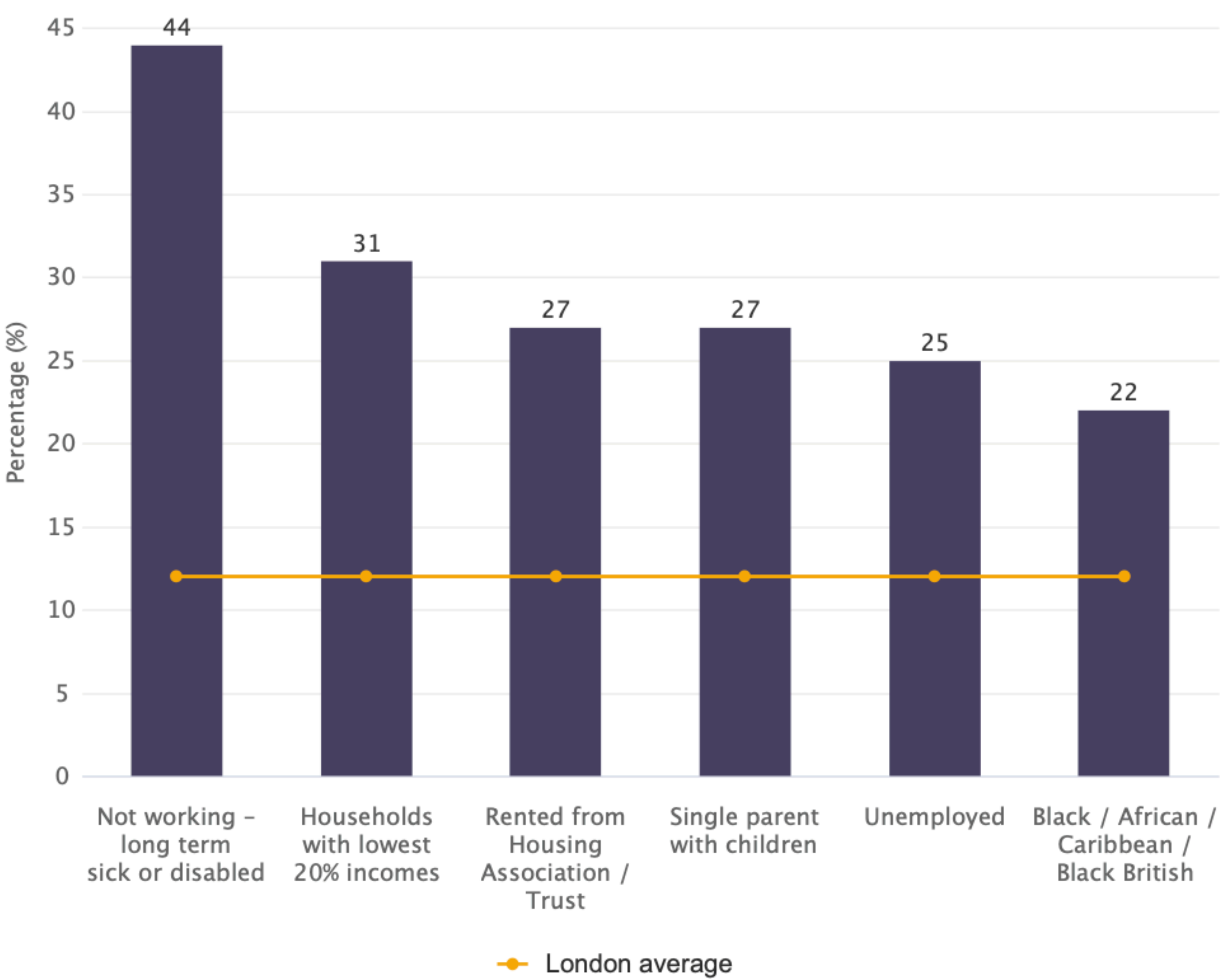
Figure 1: Fuel poverty across London



Source: Sub-regional fuel poverty data (2019), Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

In 2019, more than 12% of Londoners were unable to keep their houses warm in winter. As Figure 2 shows, this proportion was more than three times higher for Londoners out of work due to long-term sickness or disability, and more than twice for those with income in the lowest 20%, those renting from a Housing Association or Trust, single parents with children, and the unemployed.

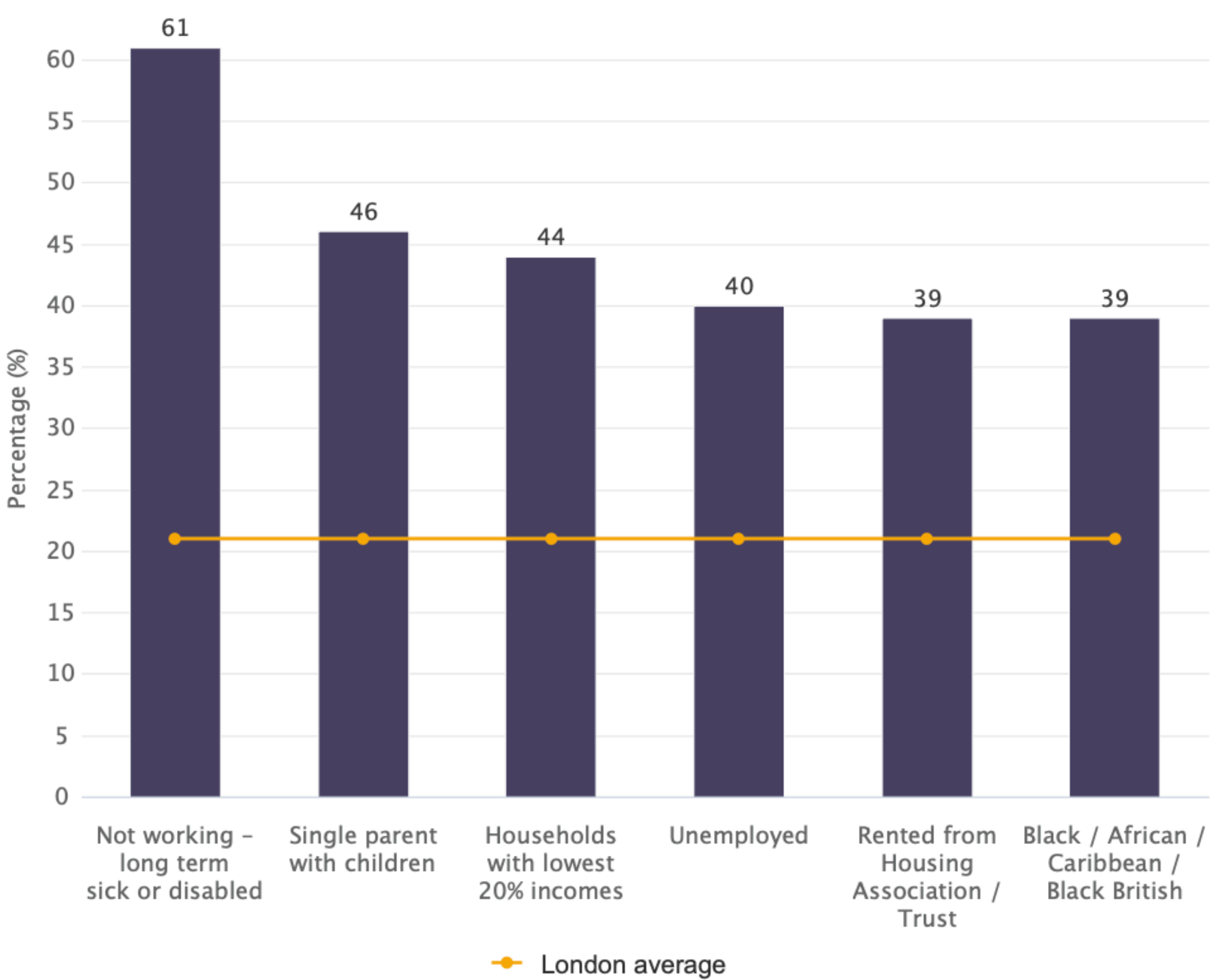
Figure 2: Percentage of adults in London unable to keep their house warm in winter for different socio-demographic groups
2018/19



Source: Survey of Londoners (2018/19), Greater London Authority

Many Londoners were also struggling to afford adequate food before the pandemic. More than 1 in 5 Londoners had low or very low food security, meaning that at times their food intake was reduced or their eating patterns were disrupted because of a lack of resources.³ This rate was more than three times higher for Londoners out of work due to a disability or a long-term health condition (3 out of 5 of whom experienced low or very low food insecurity in 2019), and around two times higher for single parents with children, those living in households in the lowest income quintile, unemployed or of Black, African, Caribbean or Black British ethnicity.

Figure 3: Percentage of adults in London living in low or very low food security for different socio-demographic groups 2018/19



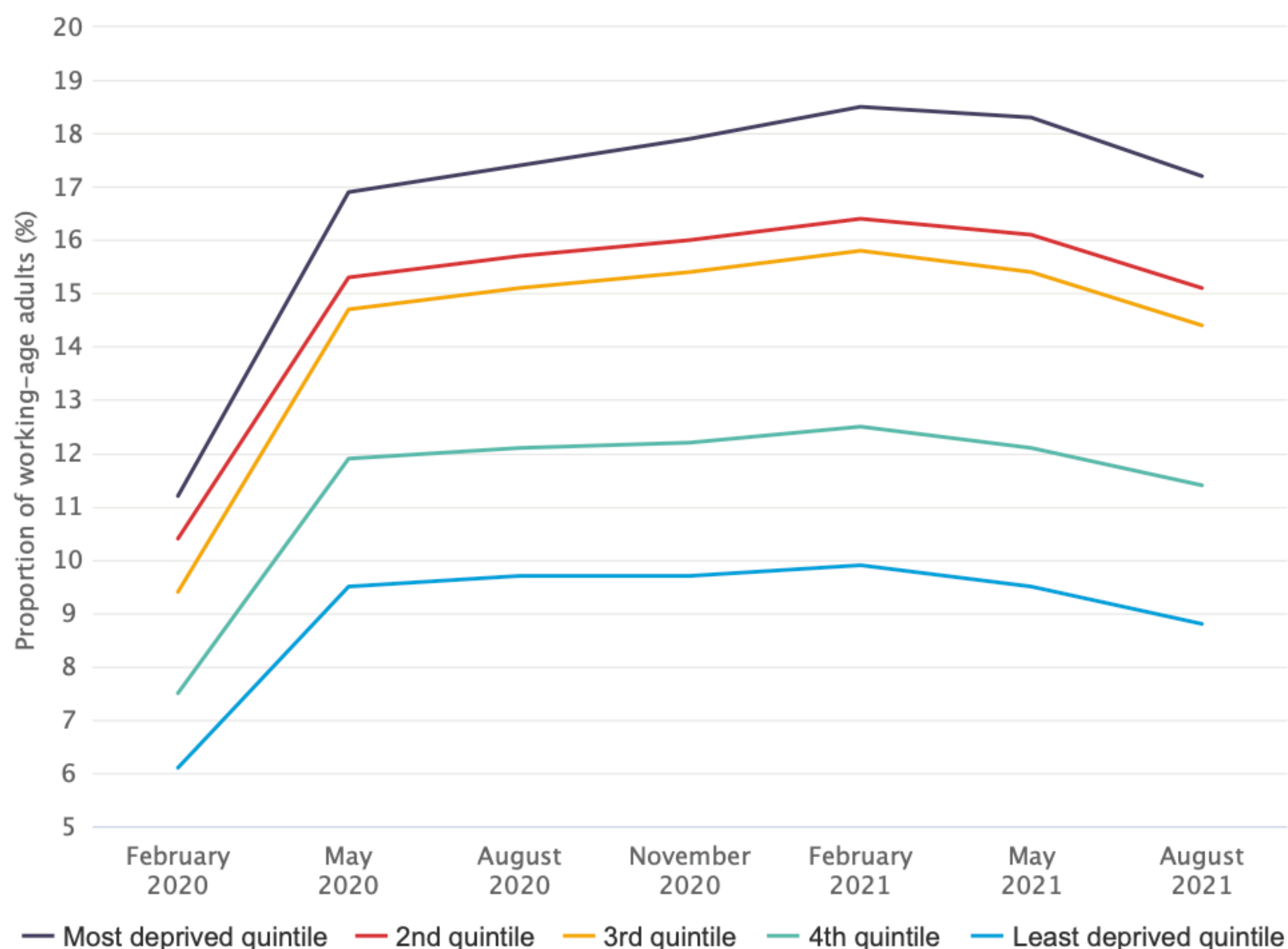
Source: Survey of Londoners (2018/19), Greater London Authority

More Londoners, in and out of work, are now relying on benefits to make ends meet - and the benefits cap is starting to bite

Although comprehensive data on the evolution of Londoners' incomes during the pandemic is not yet available, we know this period saw a substantial increase in the number of Londoners relying on benefits to make ends meet. This includes an increase in the recipients of both out-of-work benefits, as people lost their employment, and in-work benefits, as people saw their hours and pay reduced during the pandemic. In both cases, this increase has been significantly higher in neighbourhoods that were more income-deprived before the pandemic.

Between February 2020 and August 2021, the increase in out-of-work benefit recipients among the 20% most income-deprived communities has been two times higher than among the least deprived ones. As a result, by August 2021 the proportion of adults claiming out-of-work benefits in London's most deprived communities (just below 18%) was twice as high as the proportion in the least income-deprived ones (9%).⁴

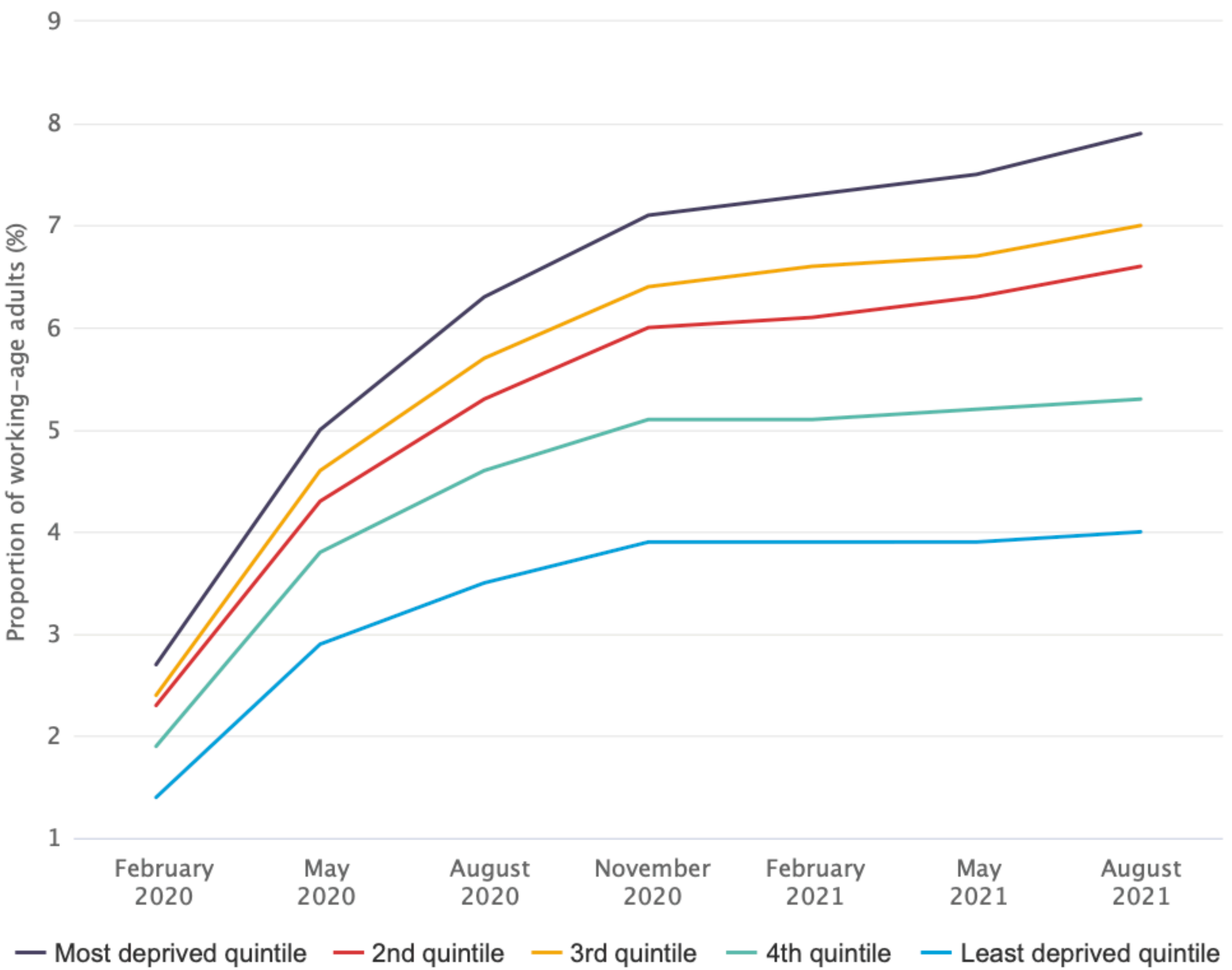
Figure 4: Working-aged Londoners on out-of-work benefits by deprivation quintile
February 2020 - August 2021



Source: Combination benefit data, DWP via StatXplore. Mid-year population estimates 2020, ONS. English Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019.

A similar picture emerges when looking at the claimants of in-work benefits, whose increase was two times higher among the most income-deprived communities as in the least deprived ones. In the former, the proportion of working age adults receiving in-work benefits rose steadily from 2.7% in February 2020 to 7.9% in August 2021, whereas in the latter it increased from around 1.4% to 4% over the same period.⁵

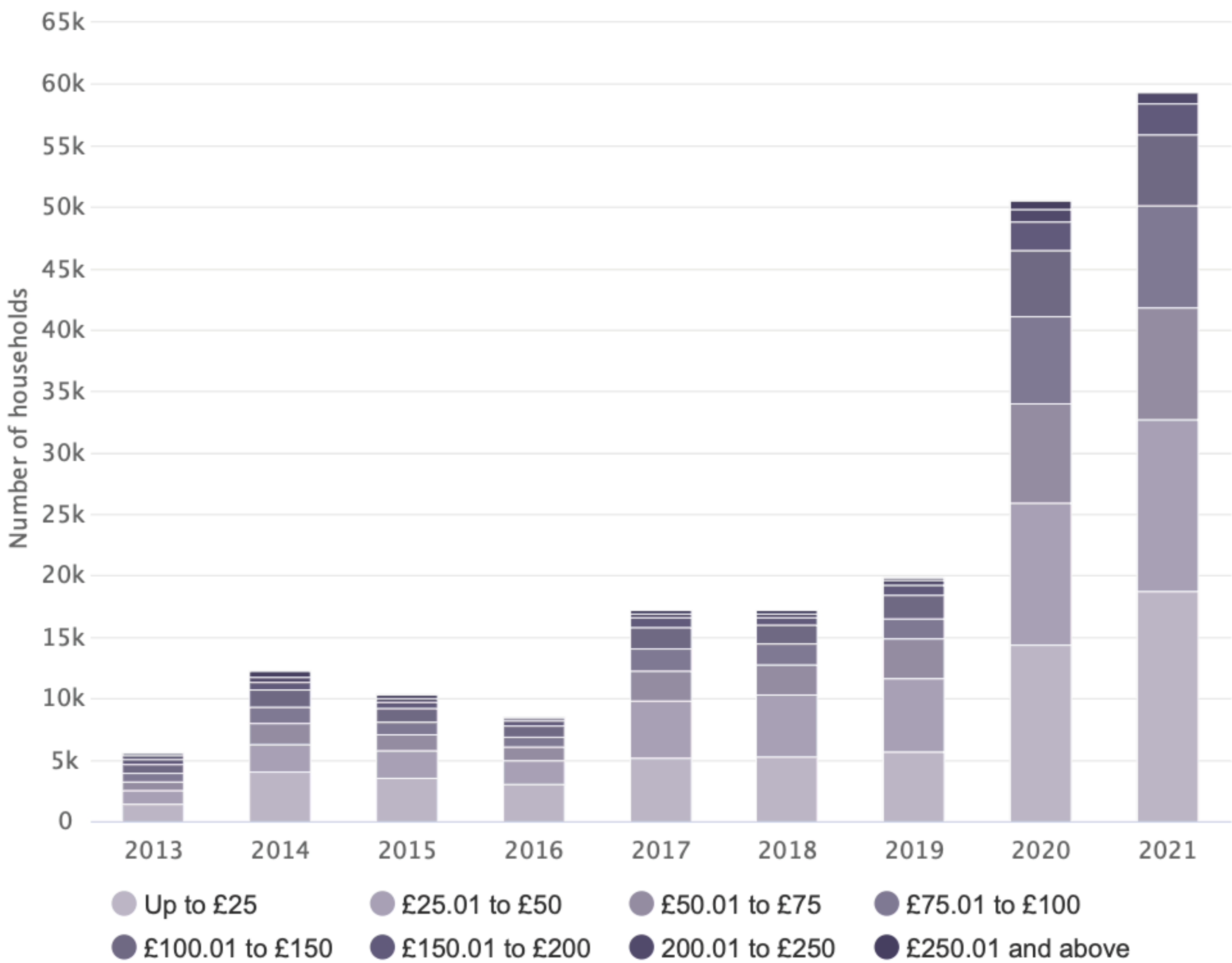
Figure 5: Working-aged Londoners on in-work benefits by deprivation quintile
February 2020 - August 2021



Source: Combination benefit data, DWP via StatXplore. Mid-year population estimates 2020, ONS. English Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019.

As the number of people receiving in- and out-of-work benefits has risen so sharply, so has the number of Londoners affected by the benefit cap. In fact, this number has almost tripled from just below 20,000 in August 2021 to just below 60,000 in August 2021.⁶

Figure 6: London households affected by benefit cap
August 2013 - August 2021

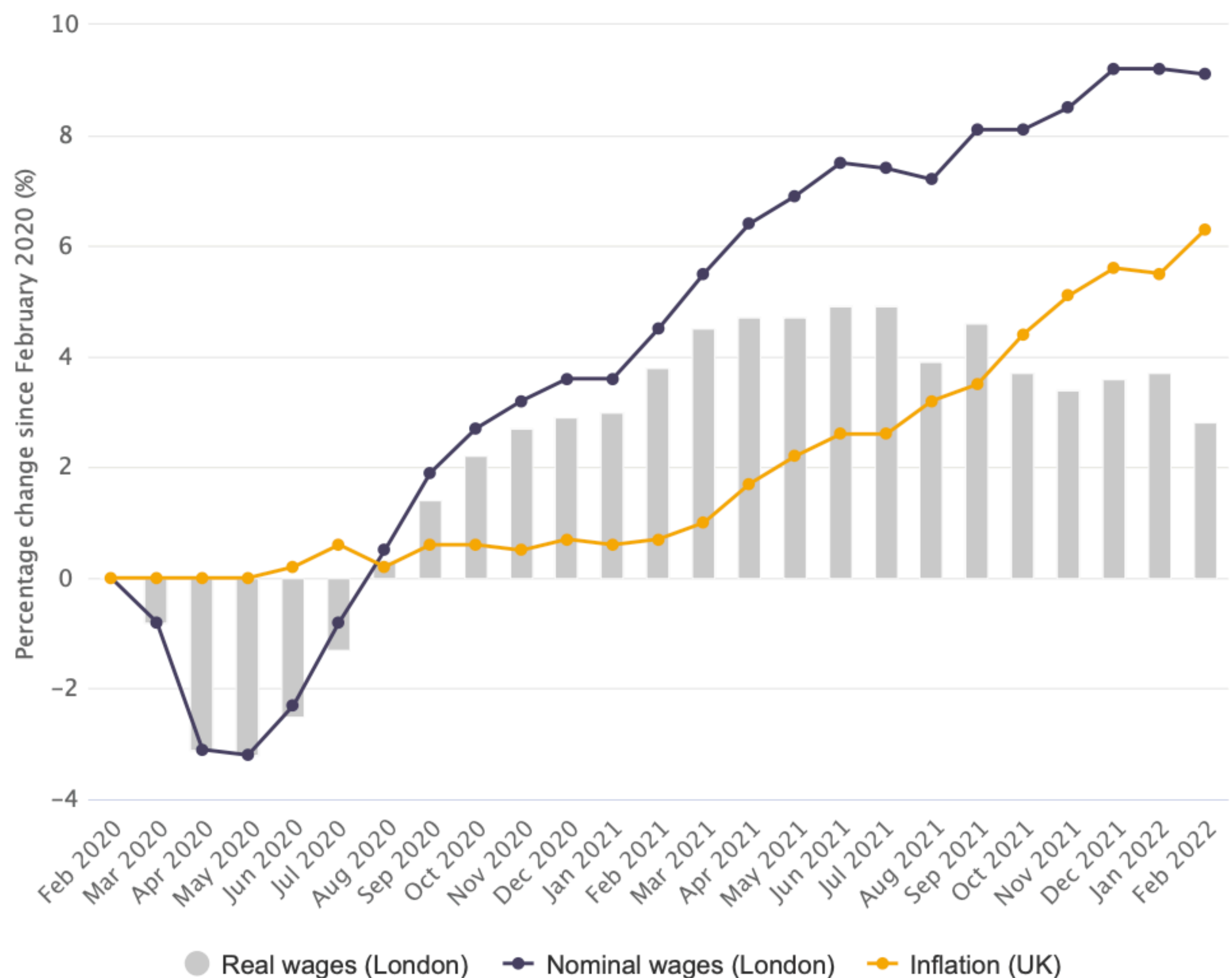


Source: Benefit Cap – Point in Time Caseload via StatXplore, DWP

Recent inflationary pressures are reducing Londoners' real incomes, in a trend set to continue throughout 2022

After an initial dip, nominal wages in London rose steadily until the summer of 2021, at a quicker pace than prices, so that by June 2021 real wages had increased almost 5% from February 2020. Since then, inflation has outpaced the increase in nominal wages and real wages have declined quite significantly, with the increase since February 2020 being 2 percentage points lower in February 2022 than in June 2021.⁷ The Bank of England's forecasts for the United Kingdom as a whole predict real wages will continue to fall throughout 2022, as prices continue to rise faster than nominal wages, whose growth is expected to halt.⁸

Figure 7: Change in wages and inflation during the pandemic
February 2020 - February 2022



Source: Consumer price inflation tables and Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, ONS

Just comparing official inflation measures to median wages, however, underestimates the hit to the living standards of those on the lowest incomes. Modelling by the Institute for Global Change estimates that in the fiscal year 2022/2023 those in the lowest income deciles will endure an inflation rate above 7%, compared to less than 5% for the richest three income deciles. This disparity arises due to large increases in energy prices, with households in the lowest income deciles spending a higher proportion of their income on energy. As a result of the higher rate of inflation, lower increases in nominal incomes, and more dependency on benefits (which are set to experience a below-inflation yearly rise) the poorest 10% of households are projected to suffer a 4% drop in their real incomes, the highest of any income group in the country.⁹

As their real incomes fall, Londoners are struggling with the cost of living and their finances are deteriorating

A range of sources are pointing to the impacts of the falls seen in real incomes. For example, following the definition of poverty developed by the Social Metrics Commission,¹⁰ The Legatum Institute estimates that poverty rates in London have remained the highest in the country during the pandemic, but without significant variation. The poverty rate increased from 28.8% in the 2019/20 financial year to 29.3% in Q2 2020, and is then projected to fall to 28.1% by Q2 2022.¹¹

The report highlights that these changes are driven by a combination of this seemingly flat tendency is the result of:

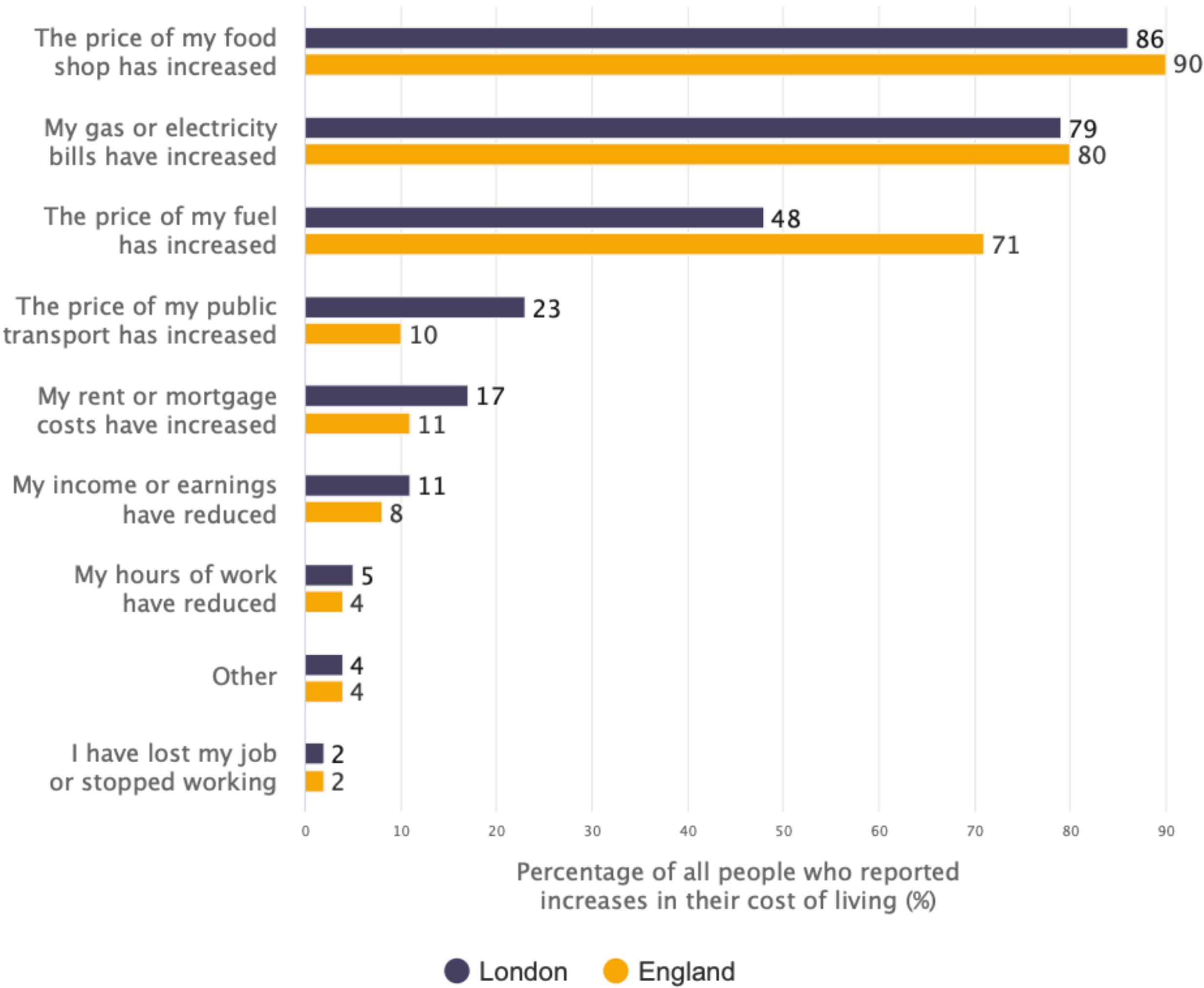
- the negative impact of the labour market, which by Q2 2020 pushed 230,000 more Londoners into poverty, down to 70,000 by Q2 2022, and
- the protection offered by the Government, through temporary and then permanent changes to the benefit system, which lifted 130,000 Londoners from poverty in both periods

Nevertheless, the report warns of the negative impact that rising prices may have on people's living standards, since even if their income is not affected in nominal terms, they may see their purchasing power significantly reduced.

According to modelling from the New Economics Foundation by the second quarter of 2022, 38% of residents in the capital (some 3,600,000 Londoners) will live below the Minimum Income Standard.¹² Not only is this rate 4 percentage points higher than the UK average, but those living below the MIS in London are further away from it than those in other regions, falling short by more than £10,000 on average. This highlights the depth of the cost of living crisis in the capital.

Now, polling from the ONS has shown that more than 2 in 3 Londoners (67%) reported increases in their cost of living in the first months of 2022.¹³ 86% of those experiencing increases to their cost of living report the rising price of food as a reason, and for 8 out of 10 one of the causes was higher gas and electricity bills, even before the 54% increase to the energy cap in April. The rises in food prices and energy bills are common to the rest of the country, yet there are some specific dimensions to the cost of living crisis in London. Londoners experiencing increases to their cost of living are less affected by the rising cost of fuel, but suffer more from increases in the cost of public transport, as they are more dependent on it for their mobility. Additionally, those struggling with the cost of living in London are more likely to report rising housing costs as a reason than those who live in England as a whole. This is in line with the significant impact of housing costs on poverty rates in the capital before the pandemic.

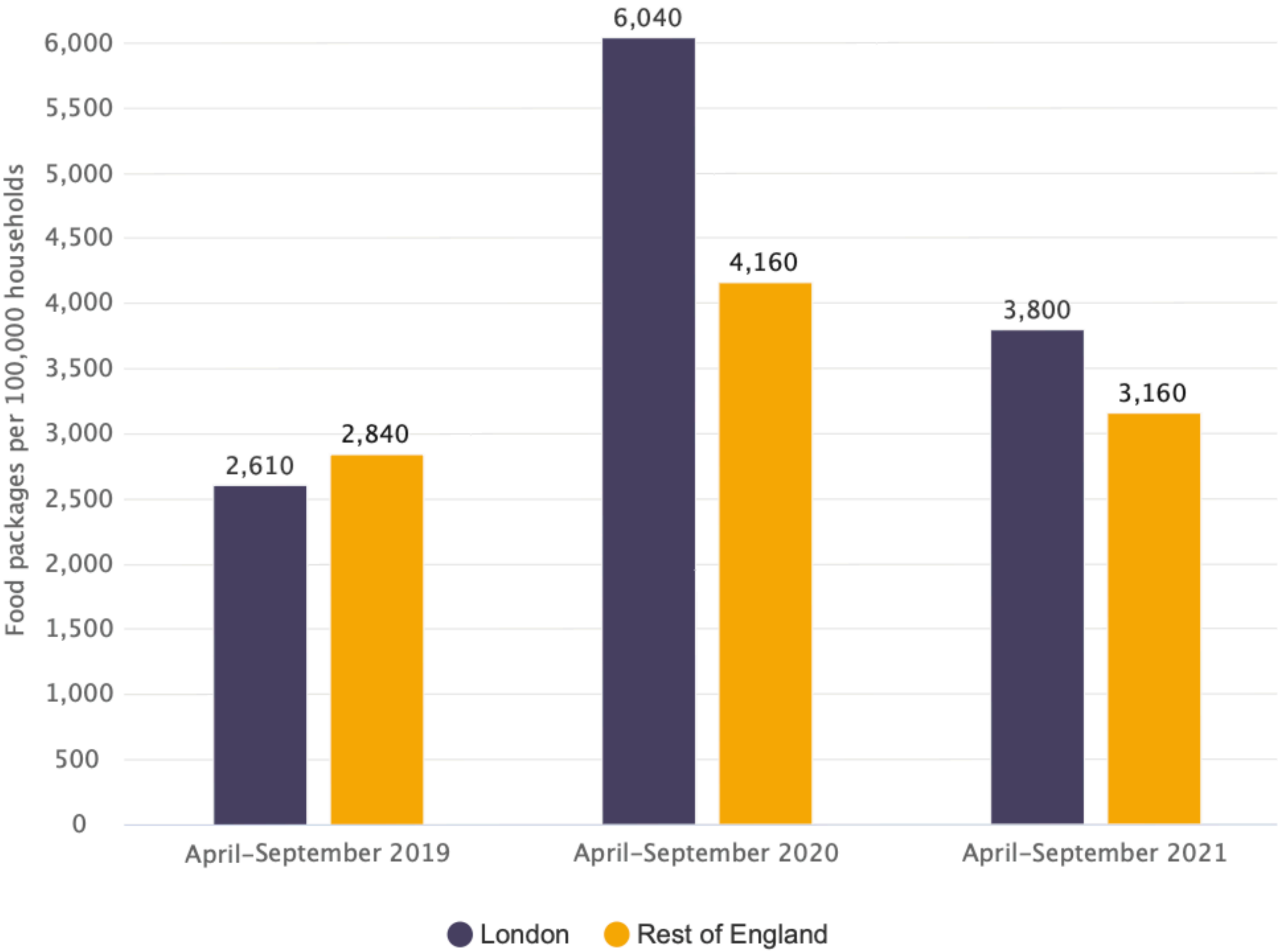
Figure 8: Self-reported reasons for increases in cost of living
January - February 2022



Source: Opinions and lifestyle survey (January - February 2022), ONS

More than 1 in 5 Londoners were already experiencing food insecurity before the pandemic. This means that the rise in the price of food, (up more than 5% between June 2021 and February 2022) across the UK, is of particular concern.¹⁴ During the pandemic the number of Londoners relying on foodbanks to put food on the table has increased significantly, and more intensely than in the rest of England. Between April and September 2020 Trussell Trust food banks in London distributed 210,000 food packages to people in the capital, more than twice as many as during the same period in 2019. The situation improved in 2021, but remained worse than before the pandemic. The number of food packages per 100,000 households is now higher in London than in the rest of England.¹⁵

Figure 9: Food packages distributed by food banks
2019 - 2021



Source: Trussell Trust and Office for National Statistics Household Population Projections

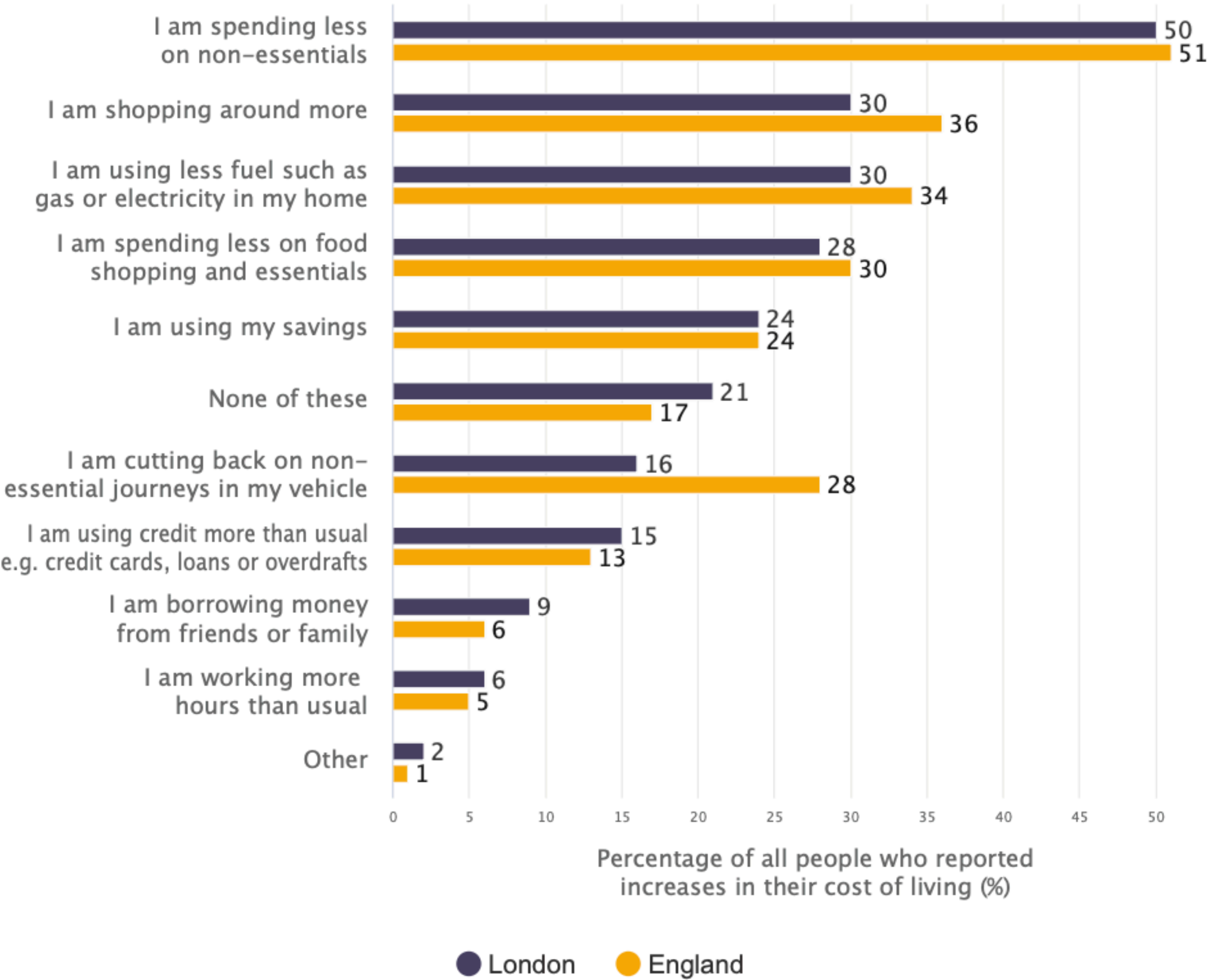
Data from the UK CPI shows that the prices of electricity, gas and other fuels have increased much faster than nominal wages, being up 23% in February 2022 compared with a year earlier.¹⁶ The Resolution Foundation¹⁷ and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation¹⁸ forecast that these increases, together with the additional rise in April, will have a disproportionate impact on those on lower incomes. It is thus likely that the proportion of Londoners in fuel poverty and struggling to keep their houses warm will increase over the coming months.

Regarding housing costs, data from the Homelet Rental Index indicates that in February 2022 the average rent (£1,757) was almost 12% higher than a year before (£1,572), the highest increase in England and significantly above increases in nominal wages over the same period.¹⁹ To put these figures into context, between October 2020 and September 2021 the average rent for a one-bedroom house or flat in London already represented 45% of the median pre-tax pay across the capital, and as much as 70% in Westminster,²⁰ where rents are up 24% in the last year. However, there are many independent foodbanks, both in London and in the rest of the country, whose work is not captured by this data.

With the highest poverty rates of the country pre-pandemic, and those living below the Minimum Income Standard falling shorter than other regions, this generalised increase in the cost of living is putting households' finances in an even more perilous situation. In the first months of 2022, almost 1 in 4 (24%) households in London reported being unable to afford an unexpected but necessary expense of £850. In fact, 1 in 4 (24%) of Londoners struggling with the cost of living reported resorting to savings in response to rising prices.²¹

In a context where the richest 10% of Londoners hold almost half (44%) of London's wealth and the poorest 10% own none of it, the cost-of-living crisis is pushing Londoners in the most precarious financial situations further into debt.²² An estimated 15% of those reporting increases in their cost of living are taking on more credit than usual, and 9% are borrowing money from friends and family. These figures are concerning when considering that increased indebtedness can deepen poverty (by reducing people's disposable income). This tends to make it more difficult to recover financially, as it creates a debt-trap where servicing existing debts makes households more likely to take on further debt to cover their living costs.²³

Figure 10: Self-reported responses to increases in cost of living
January - February 2022

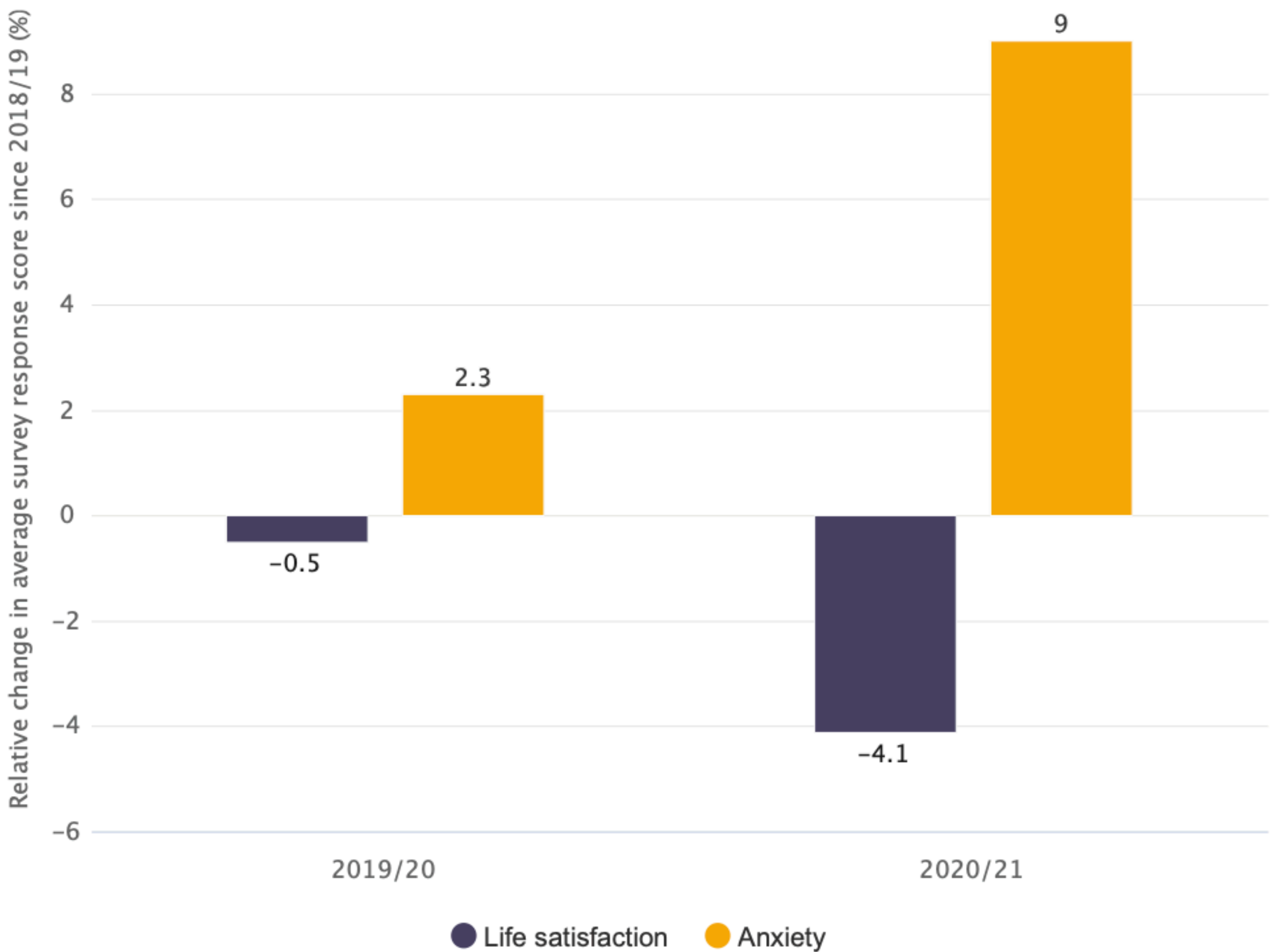


Source: Opinions and lifestyle survey (January - February 2022), ONS

The wellbeing of Londoners has significantly deteriorated during the pandemic

Given the range of health, social and economic consequences of the pandemic, it is no surprise that Londoners' wellbeing has been negatively impacted by the pandemic. Self-reported levels of life satisfaction in 2020/21 fell by 4% in comparison to 2018/19, and self-reported levels of anxiety increased by more than 9%, in both cases to levels not seen since 2011/12. Whilst these impacts are seen across the whole of the UK, London already had lower levels of happiness, life satisfaction and worthwhileness and higher levels of anxiety than the rest of the country.²⁴

Figure 11: Change in self-reported well-being during the pandemic
2019/20 - 2020/21



Source: ONS wellbeing estimates by local authority, 2021

Work

Overall levels of economic activity in London increased as COVID-19 restrictions were eased, following a drop in the pandemic. Despite Government support however, unemployment rose and remains above pre-pandemic levels. The burden of the rise in unemployment has been disproportionately shouldered by those least able.



In the second quarter of 2021, London's GDP recovered to almost pre-pandemic 2019 levels, **after falling nearly 20% in 2020**

By November 2021, workplace mobility in Inner London **was still one third below its pre-pandemic level**

When the furlough scheme ended in September 2021, the proportion of eligible employees furloughed **was almost 50% higher in London (6%) than the rest of England (3.7%)**

By the end of the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) **50% of the eligible population were using the scheme (around 310,000 Londoners)**

By January 2021, the 20% most deprived constituencies in London had an average furlough rate of 19% against 15% in the least deprived constituencies

In the first year of the pandemic, unemployment in London rose more steeply than in England overall and at the end of 2021 was greater than pre-pandemic levels

The gap in employment in London is due to a decrease of working-age people in employment looking for work.

In England, it is due to less working-age people in employment, not searching for work and therefore economically inactive

Between January 2020 and January 2022, the increase in unemployment benefit claimants was **> 3 x higher in the most deprived communities than in the least**

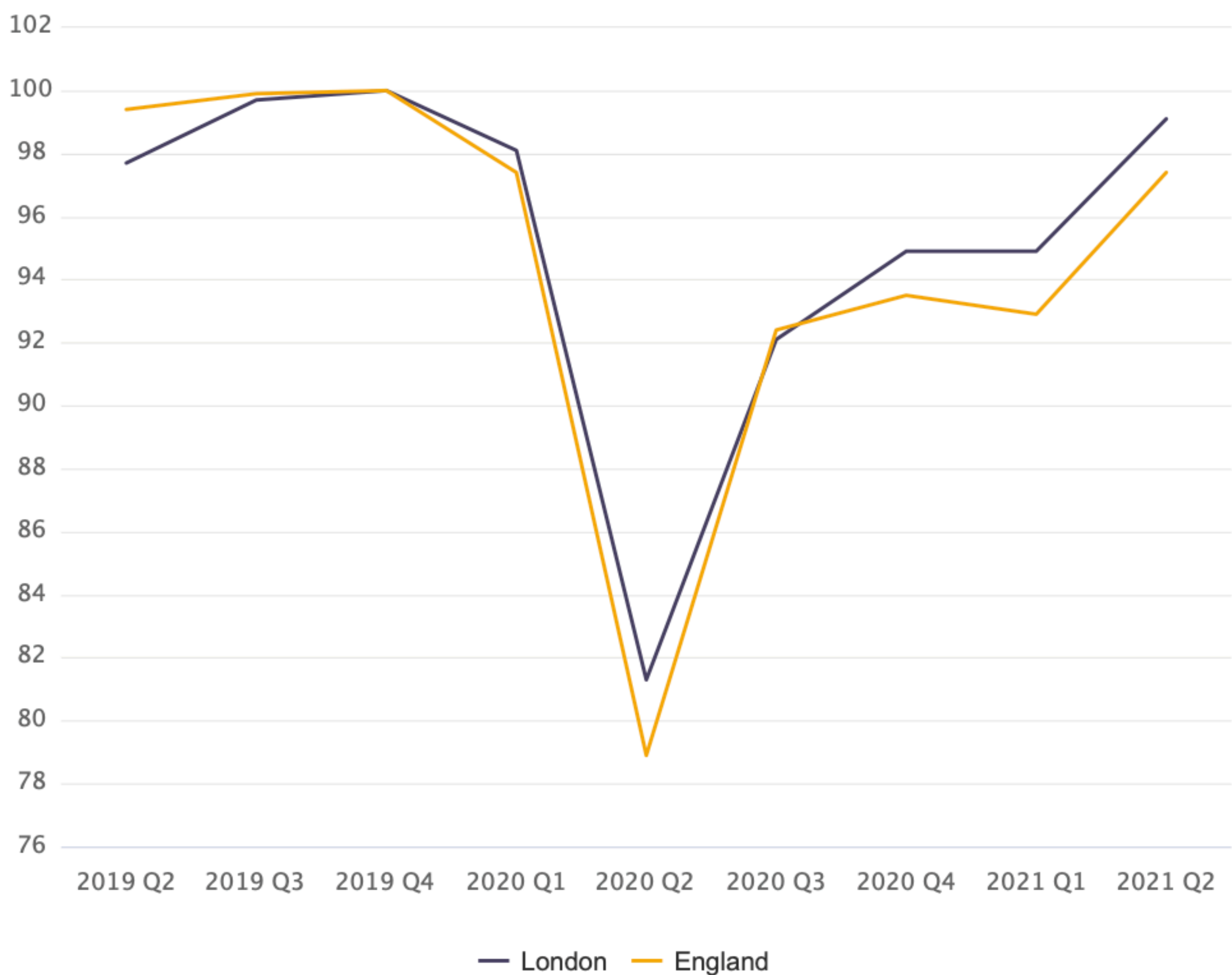
Women's unemployment almost doubled in the first year of the pandemic, staying 50% above pre-pandemic levels at the end of 2021; meanwhile, men's unemployment fully recovered

Those aged 16 to 24 saw the largest absolute rise in unemployment

Overall levels of economic activity have increased as mobility restrictions have been eased

As a result of the pandemic and the restrictions put in place to stop the spread of the virus, there was a significant reduction in economic activity in the initial stages of the pandemic. By the second quarter of 2020 (April to June) GDP in London was almost 20% smaller than in the last quarter of 2019. This reduction in economic activity in the capital has been less intense than in England as a whole, and London has also seen a quicker recovery, so that by the second quarter of 2021 GDP had almost reached pre-pandemic levels.²⁵

Figure 12: Quarterly GDP based on GVA (Gross Value Added)
2019 Q2 - 2021 Q2

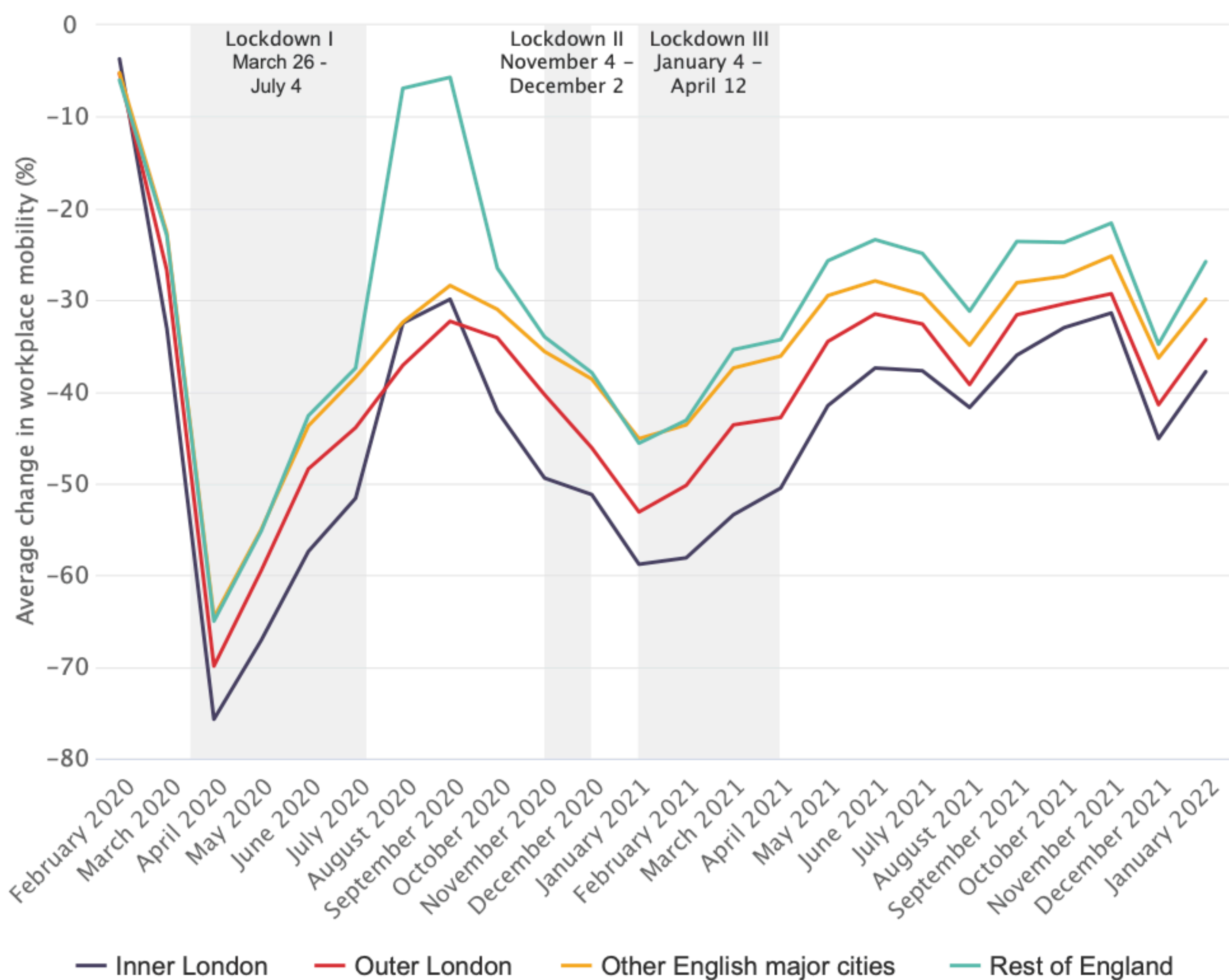


Source: Quarterly country and regional GDP, ONS

Mobility data produced by Google offers a more up-to-date picture of changes in economic activity, assessing changes in the number of people visiting different categories of places compared to the pre-pandemic baseline period (January 3rd to February 6th). Focusing on workplaces and retail reveals that Inner London has seen the largest reduction in mobility at almost all points of the pandemic compared to Outer London, other major English cities and the rest of England.

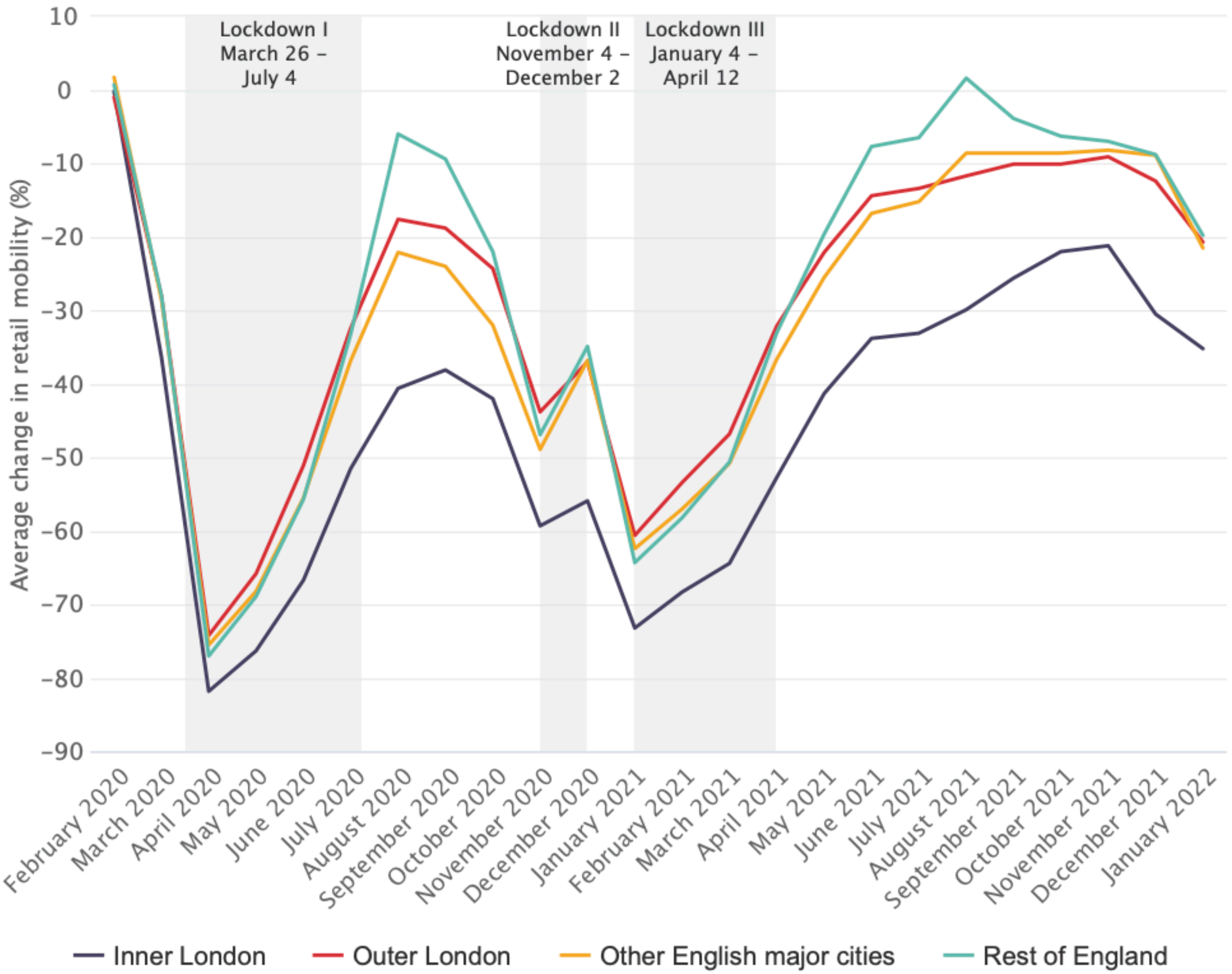
Workplace and retail mobility has been increasing since the summer of 2021, which suggests that the positive trend in terms of GDP growth is likely to have continued for the rest of the 2021 quarters. Nevertheless, by November 2021, before the tightening of restrictions during the Christmas period, workplace mobility in Inner London was still one third below its pre-pandemic level, and one fifth below in the case of retail mobility.²⁶

Figure 13: Average change in workplace mobility compared to pre-pandemic baseline February 2020 - January 2022



Source: Google mobility data

Figure 14: Average change in retail mobility compared to pre-pandemic baseline
 February 2020 - January 2022



Source: Google mobility data

While restrictions were in place, Government support protected many jobs

Where industries had their activities restricted, or where working from home was not an option, the Government's furlough scheme was used to retain employees through the pandemic. At the peak of the scheme, in July 2020, more than 1 in 5 eligible employees – well over one million Londoners – were furloughed. By the end of January 2021, 712,200 jobs in London were furloughed; 17% of all eligible positions. London has seen a particularly high rate of furlough take-up, with furlough rates consistently above those seen in the rest of England. When the furlough scheme ended in September 2021, the proportion of eligible employees that were furloughed was more than 50% higher in London (6%) than in the rest of England (3.7%).²⁷

Figure 15: Furlough take up rate over time by region
July 2020 - September 2021

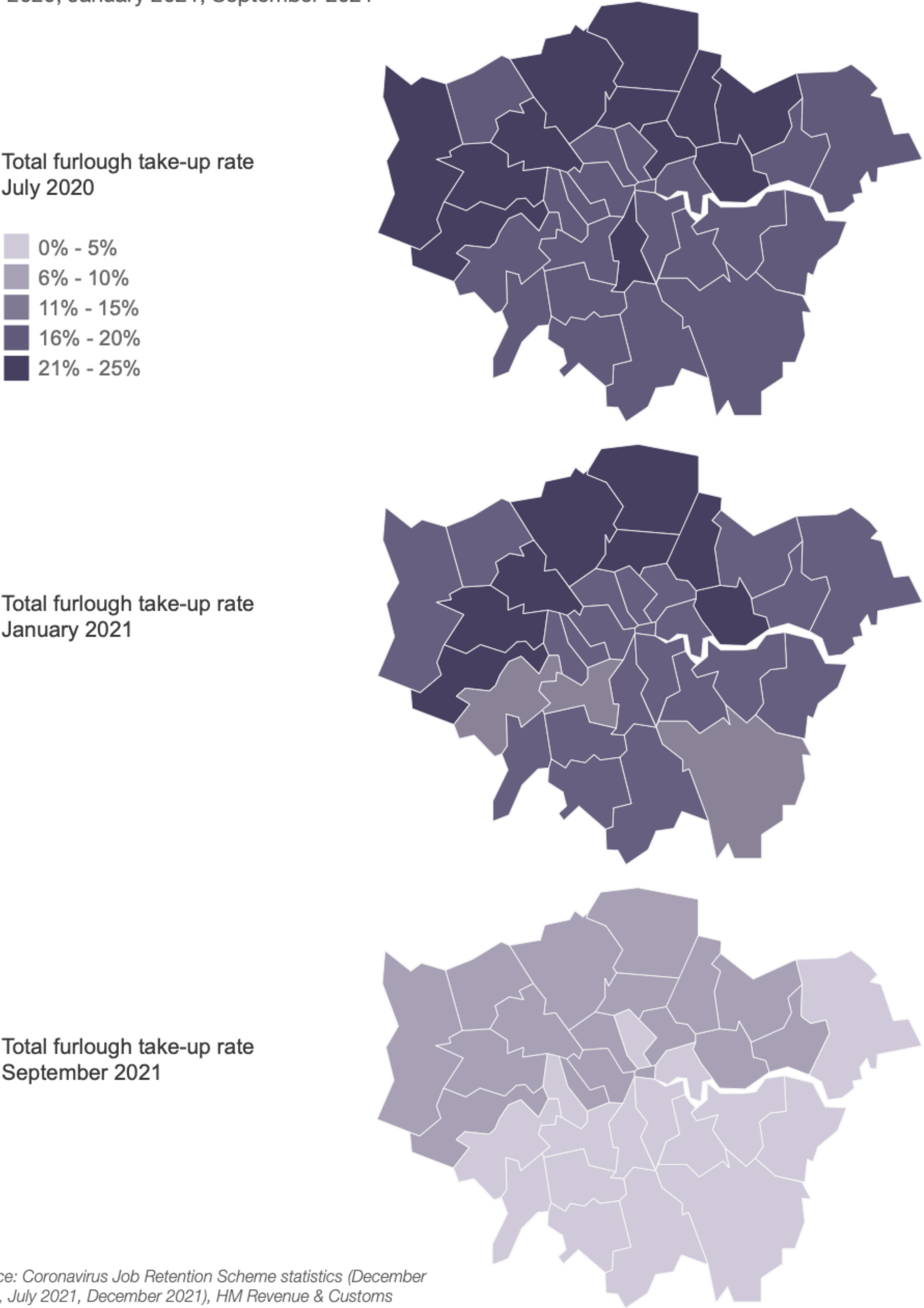


Source: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics (December 2021), HM Revenue & Customs

Overall, in January 2021, 25 of London's boroughs had furlough rates that were above the average in the rest of England (15.5%), albeit with significant differences between them. For instance, the furlough rate in Newham (22%) was 50% higher than in Wandsworth (14%), a difference that by the end of the scheme (September 2021) had doubled (the rates being 8% and 4%, respectively).²⁸

Self-employed Londoners have also been protected by the Government's Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS). At its peak, when SEISS was introduced, there were 499,000 Londoners (77% of the eligible population) enrolled in the scheme. In the fifth tranche of the scheme (July 29 - September 30, 2021), the proportion of self-employed reduced to half (50%) of the eligible population, and 310,000 Londoners were benefitting from the scheme.²⁹

Figure 16: Furlough take-up rates of London boroughs
July 2020, January 2021, September 2021



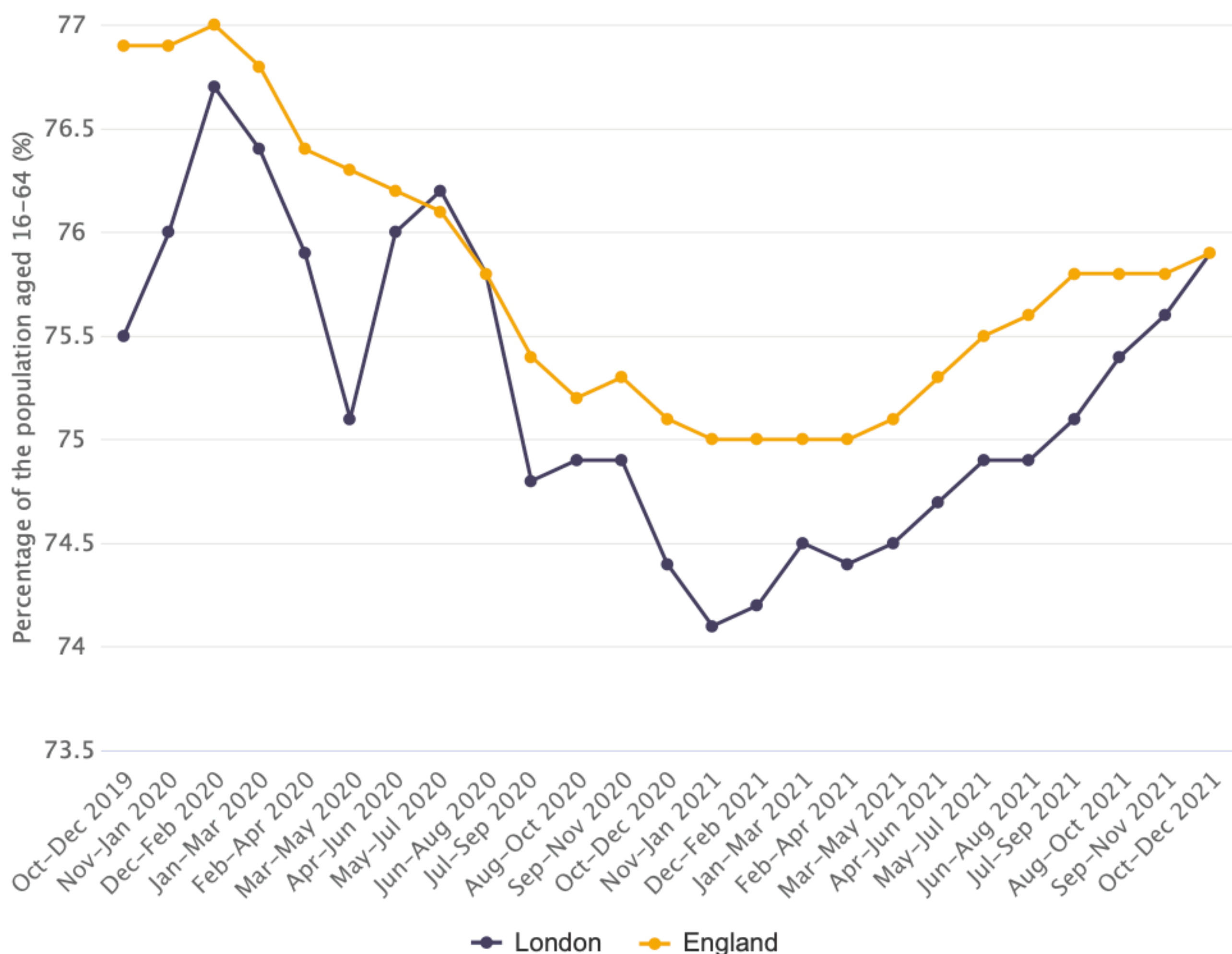
Source: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics (December 2020, July 2021, December 2021), HM Revenue & Customs

But not all jobs were protected and, despite its recent recovery, employment is still below pre-pandemic levels

Whilst the Government's schemes protected many jobs, the scale of the economic impact of the pandemic has still led to significant fall in employment in the capital. The employment rate in London fell from 76.7% to 74.1% in the first year of the pandemic (between December 2019 - February 2020 in November 2020 - January 2021), and it has increased since, reaching 75.9% in the last quarter of 2021 - just 0.8 percentage points below pre-pandemic levels.³⁰ London saw a larger fall in employment than England as a whole, but it has also experienced a more intense recovery. This has meant that whereas before the pandemic London had a lower employment rate than England, by the end of 2021 the gap had been closed and their employment rates were the same.

18% fall in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector.

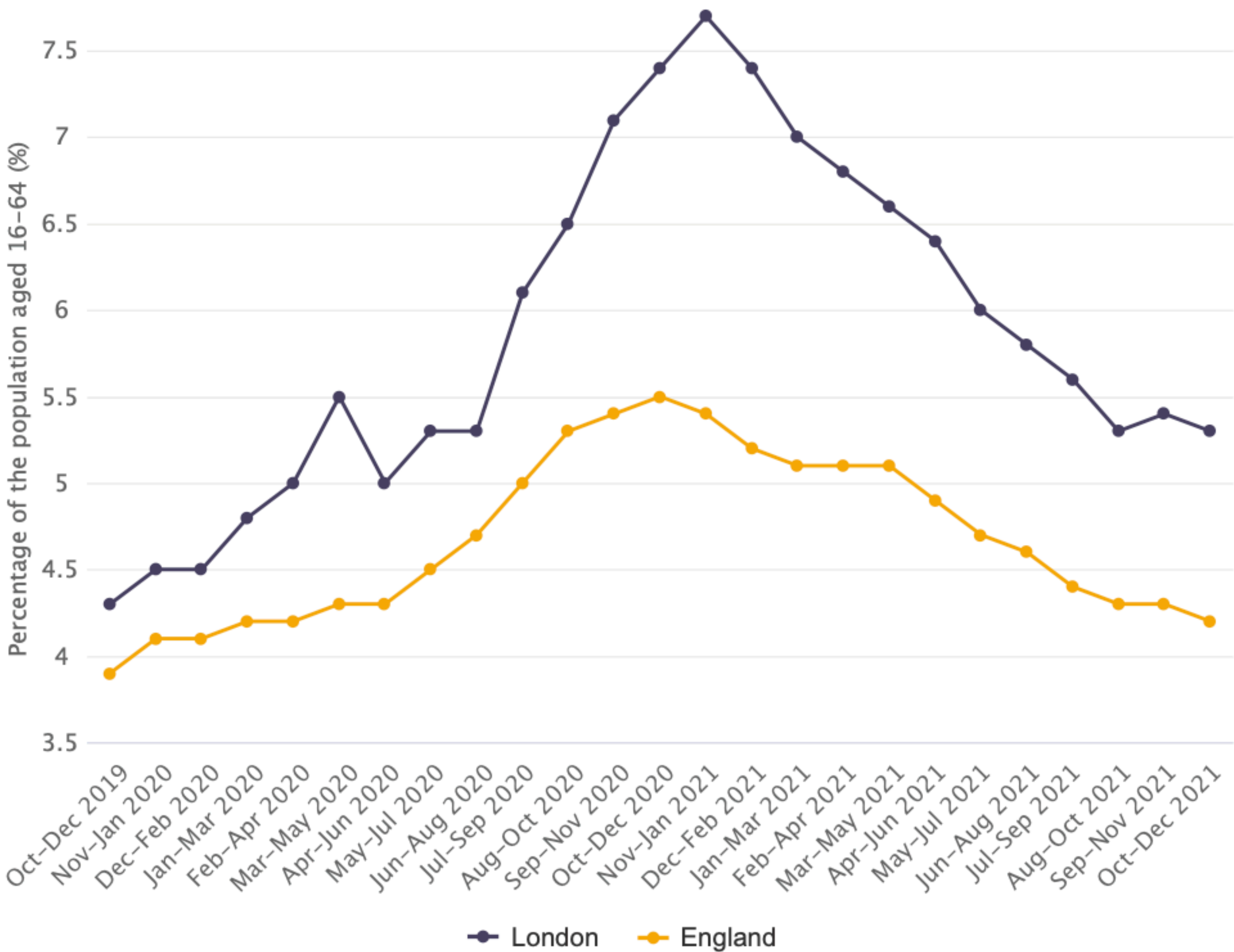
Figure 17: Changes in the employment rate during the pandemic in England and London
October - December 2019 to October - December 2021



Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS

The gap in employment rate in relation to pre-pandemic levels also shows the different impacts of the pandemic on the labour force in England, where it has been associated with a large increase in economic inactivity rates, and London, which has seen a rise in the unemployment rate. During the first year of the pandemic, London saw a larger increase in the unemployment rate than England as a whole. Although the recovery has been more intense in the capital, by the end of 2021 London's unemployment rate was still 1 percentage point above its pre-crisis level, whereas in England it was only 0.3 percentage points higher. Economic inactivity, in turn, has decreased in London by more than 1 percentage point between December 2019-February 2020 and October 2021-December 2021, whereas in England it has increased by almost 1 percentage point.³¹

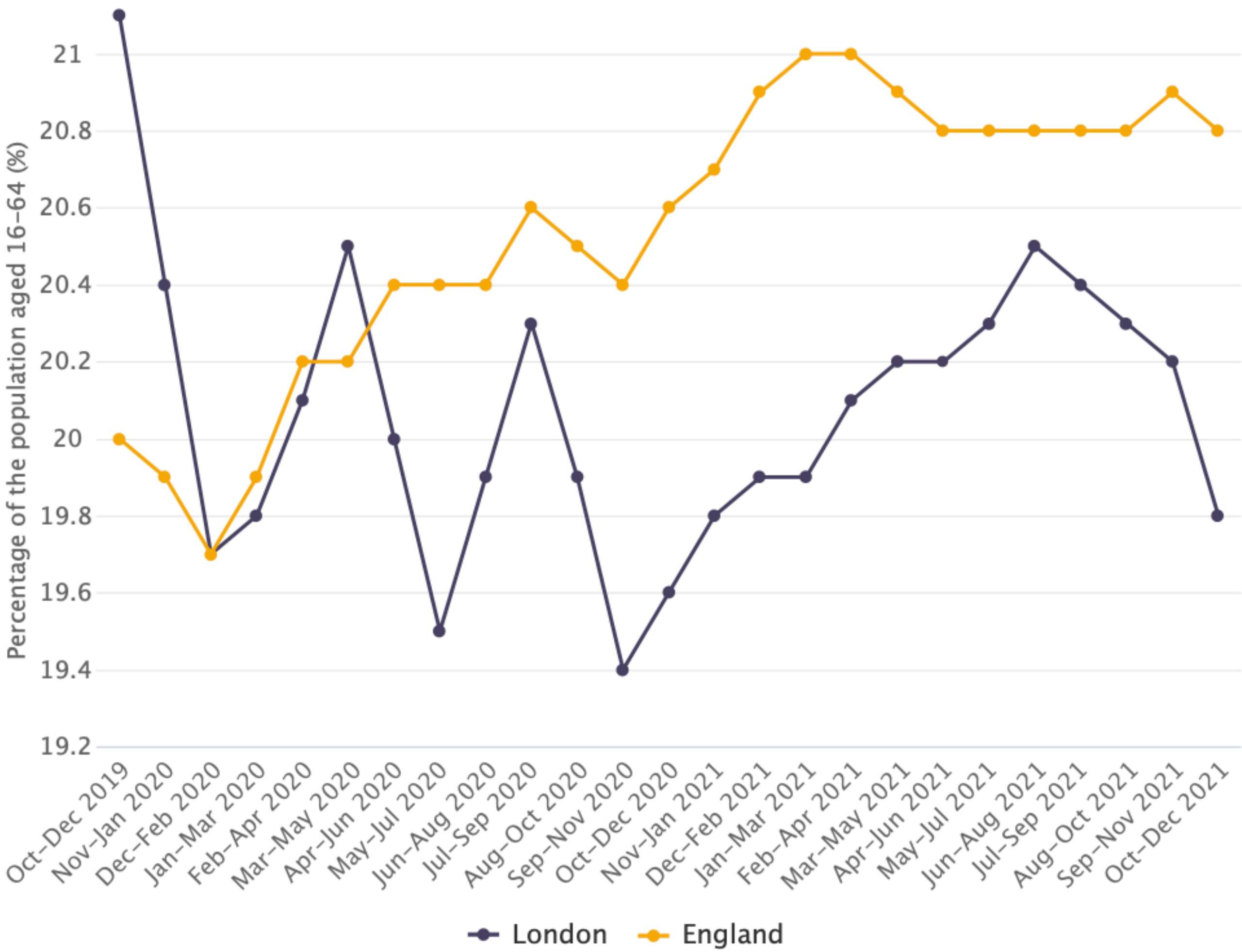
Figure 18: Changes in the unemployment rate during the pandemic in England and London
October - December 2019 to October - December 2021



Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS

Figure 19: Changes in the economic inactivity rate during the pandemic in England and London

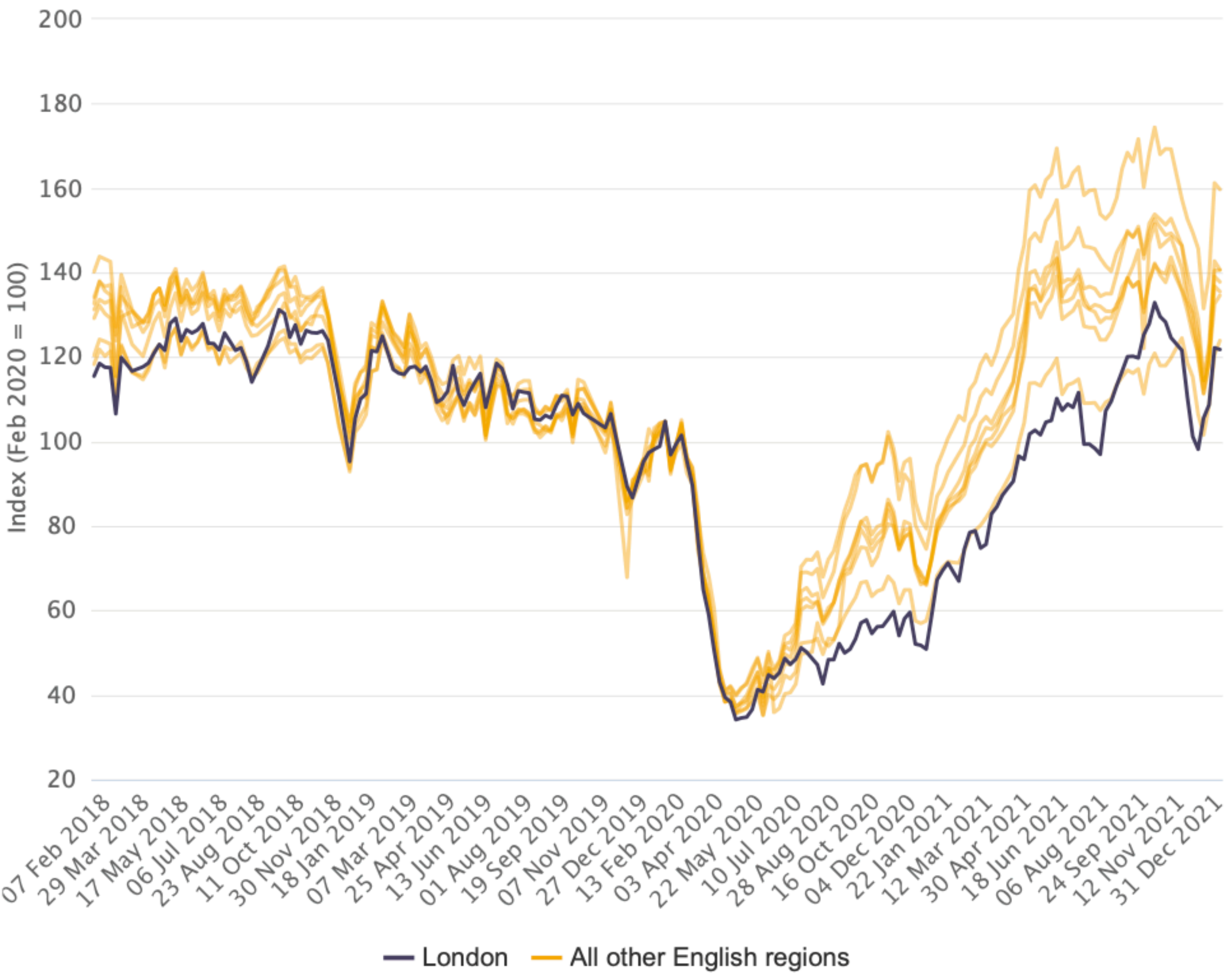
October - December 2019 to October - December 2021



Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS

Despite a smaller recovery of employment, other English regions have seen the number of vacancies increase to higher levels than at any other point since 2018, indicating a tighter labour market as a result of the increase in economic inactivity rates. In London, on the other hand, vacancies have recovered to the pre-pandemic levels without reaching similar highs, while the unemployment rate remains above its pre-pandemic level.³²

Figure 20: Index of the number of vacancies
February 2018 - January 2022



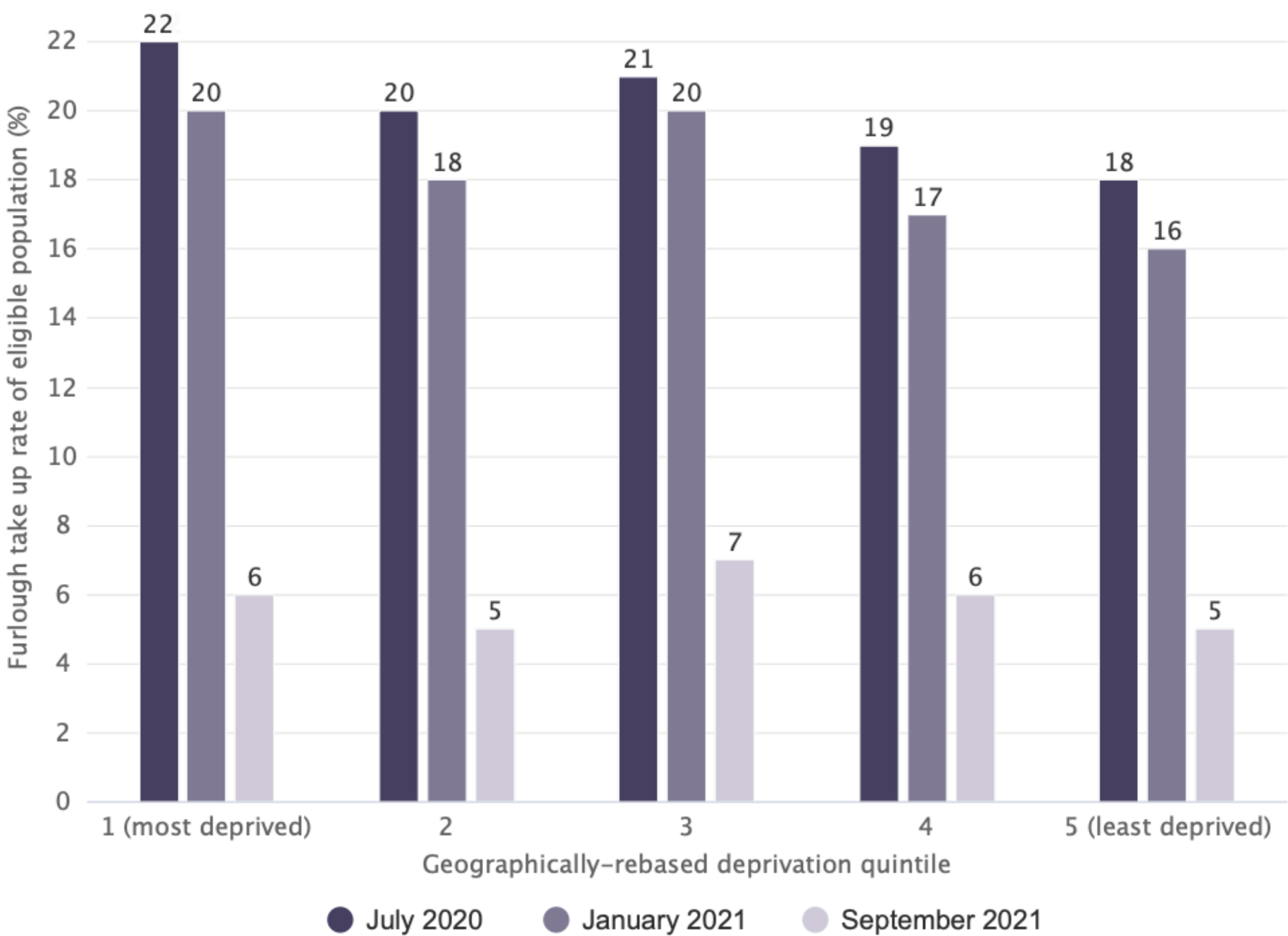
Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS

The impact of the pandemic on employment has been felt very unevenly, often falling disproportionately on those least able to shoulder the burden

Different occupations and sectors were able to adapt to social distancing measures in different ways, with many roles in relatively poorly paid sectors presenting more barriers to work from home. For instance, while 70% of people in professional occupations nationally say that they were able to work from home in April 2020, the figure for those in caring, leisure and other service occupations was 15%³³. This has meant that the impact of the pandemic on employment has been uneven, often disproportionately affecting the most deprived communities.

For example, more deprived areas had higher furlough rates than less deprived areas. The 20% most deprived constituencies in London had an average furlough rate of 20% in January 2021, compared to 16% average for the least deprived constituencies.³⁴ The relationship between deprivation and furlough take up, however, was less strong at the end of the scheme.

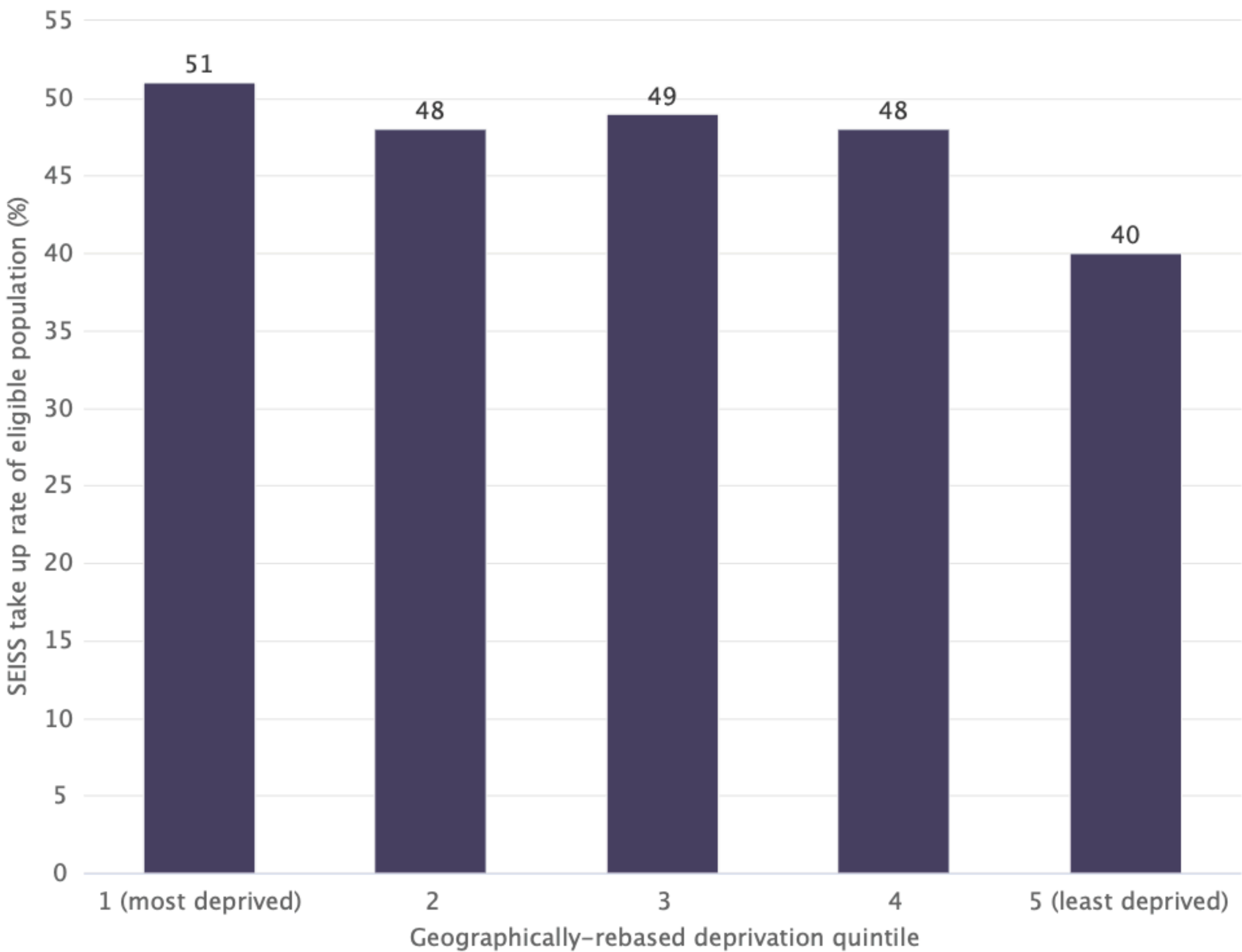
Figure 21: Average furlough take-up rate by constituency deprivation quintile in London
July 2020, January 2021, September 2021



Source: Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics (December 2021), HM Revenue & Customs and Constituency data: Indices of deprivation (2019), House of Commons Library

A similar picture can also be seen for the self-employed, where claims for SEISS were higher in more deprived areas. By the end of the scheme, 51% of eligible self-employed people in the most deprived areas were still benefiting from the scheme, whereas in the less deprived areas this proportion was 40%.³⁵

Figure 22: Average SEISS take-up rate by constituency deprivation quintile London 2020/21

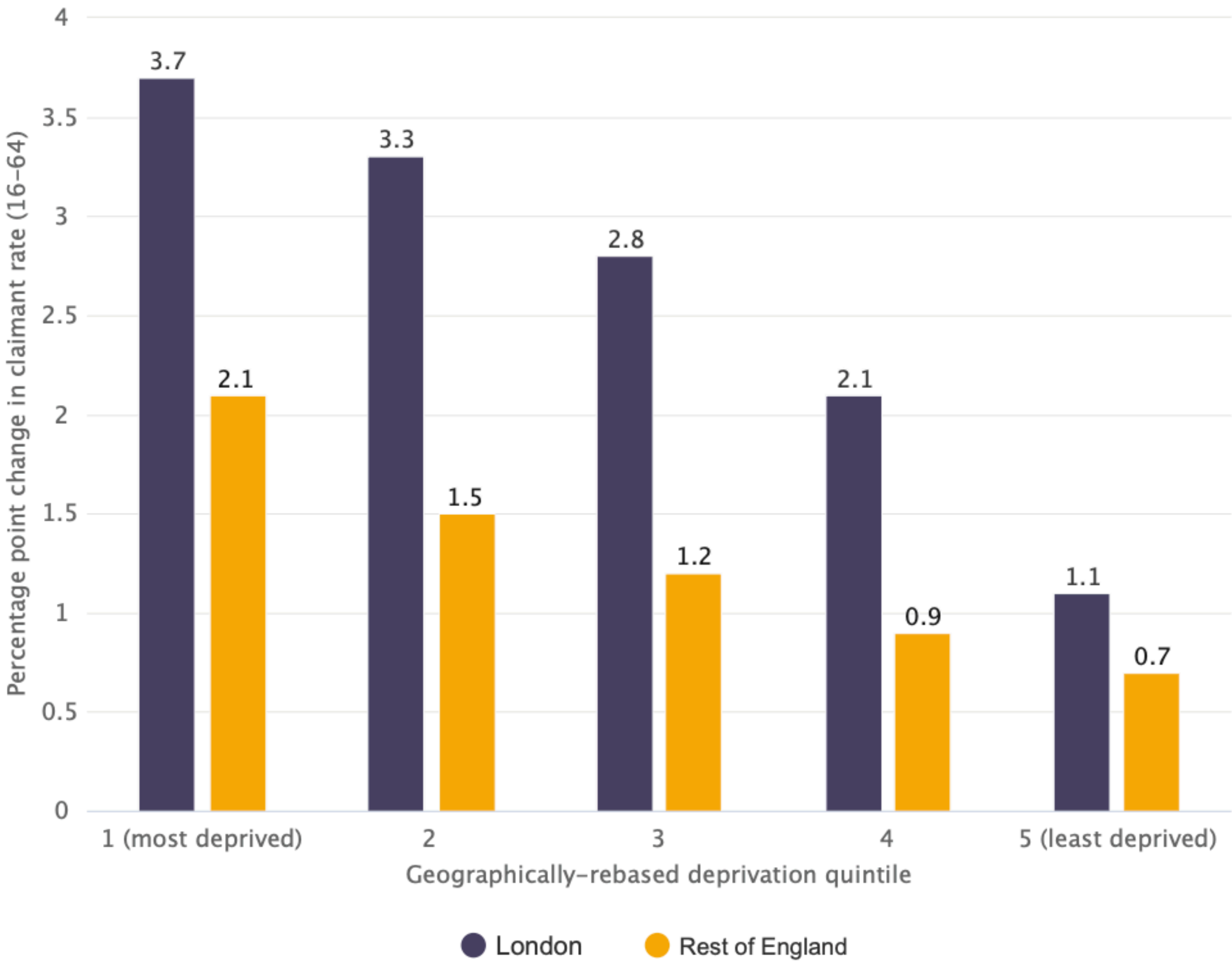


Source: Self-Employment Income Support Scheme statistics (December 2021), HM Revenue & Customs and Constituency data: Indices of deprivation (2019), House of Commons Library

Unemployment increased more in the most deprived areas. Between January 2020 and January 2022, the increase in unemployment benefit claimants, measured as a proportion of the working age population, was more than three times higher in the most deprived communities (3.7%) than in the least deprived ones (1.1%). Overall, this means that 27% of the total increase in unemployment benefit claims seen in the capital have been in the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods.³⁶

Figure 23: Change in unemployment benefit claim rate, by neighbourhood deprivation quintiles

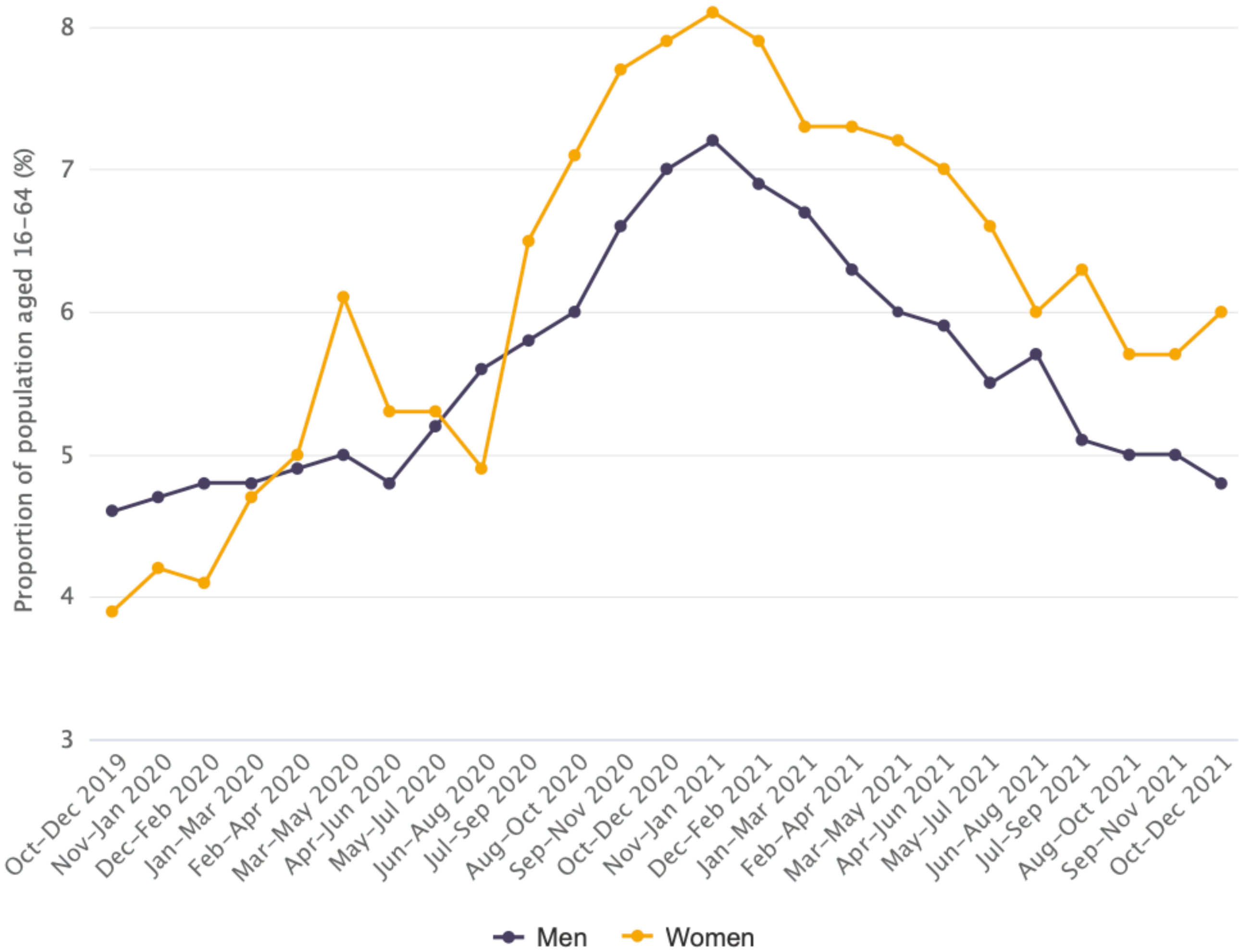
January 2020 - January 2022



Source: Claimant count ONS via NOMIS; English Indices of Multiple Deprivation (MHCLG)

Because different demographic groups are overrepresented in some sectors and occupations, their unemployment rates have also evolved differently. For instance, whereas the unemployment rate for women almost doubled between December 2019 - February 2020 (4.1%) and November 2020 - January 2021 (8.1%), for men it increased by 50% (from 4.8% to 7.2%). Additionally, by the end of 2021 men's unemployment rate had fallen back to pre-pandemic levels, while for women it remained almost 50% higher (at 6%).³⁷

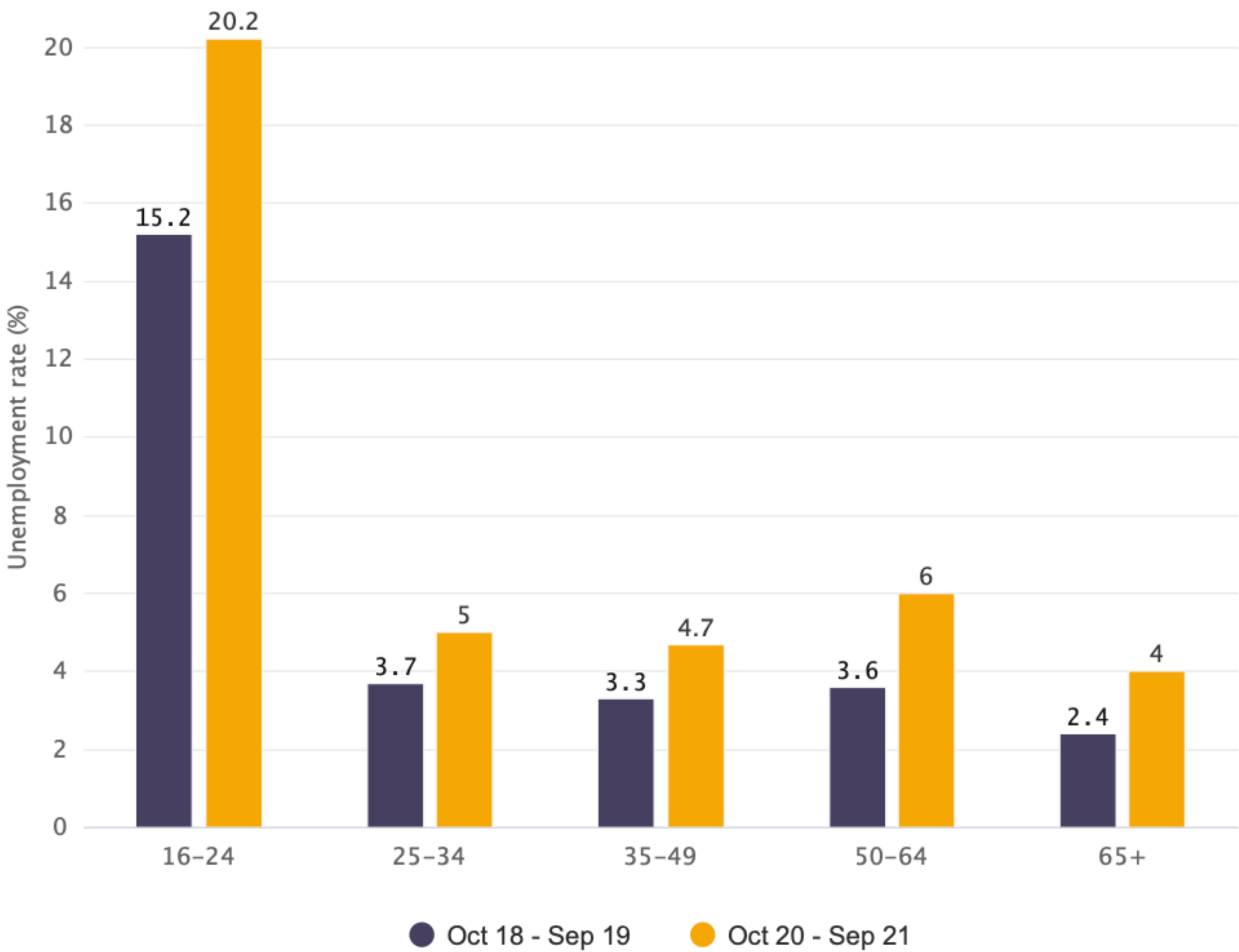
Figure 24: Unemployment rate for men and women during the pandemic
October - December 2019 to October - December 2021



Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS

Looking at different age groups, the largest increase in the unemployment rate was among those aged 16 to 24, for whom the unemployment rate rose from 15.3% in October 2018 - September 2019 to 20.2% in the same period two years later. In relative terms, however, the highest increase was for those aged 50 to 64, which is now the age group with the second highest unemployment rate.³⁸

Figure 25: Unemployment rate by age before and during the pandemic
October 2018 - September 2019, October 2020 - September 2021



Source: Labour Force Survey, ONS

Health

The most apparent impact of COVID-19 is on health. At the time of writing, more than 135,000 people across England have tragically lost their lives and in London alone, the death toll surpassed 20,000.³⁹ The pandemic has also had wider impacts on the NHS, with a substantial increase in the number of patients on waiting lists as well as longer waiting periods.



The overall direct health impacts of COVID-19 have not been evenly spread. Morbidity and mortality have been higher amongst older people, individuals living in deprived areas, and those from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. The increase in remote GP appointments is also expected to deepen health inequalities in groups with lower incomes or poor English skills as they struggle to access primary care.

By January 2022, there had been **28 COVID-19 positive tests for every 100 residents in London**

London has the highest age-adjusted regional COVID-19 mortality rate at 171.4 in 100,000 compared to 128.7 in England as a whole

COVID-19 mortality has hit some populations harder than others: **by April 2021 mortality rates were 27% higher in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods than in the least deprived ones** (even after controlling for a range of neighbourhood characteristics)

Mortality rates are also higher in neighbourhoods with **higher proportions of Black and elderly residents**

Just over 60% of London adults have received a 3rd vaccination, **10 percentage points below the UK average with significant variation within the capital**

There is a 30% difference between the proportion of adults who have received a 3rd vaccination in the 10% most deprived communities and in the 10% least deprived ones

By the end of 2021, the number of NHS patients waiting for treatment in London was over 25% higher than before the pandemic; **and waiting times were on average 40% longer**

In April 2021, 58% of all GP appointments in London took place remotely (either via telephone or online).

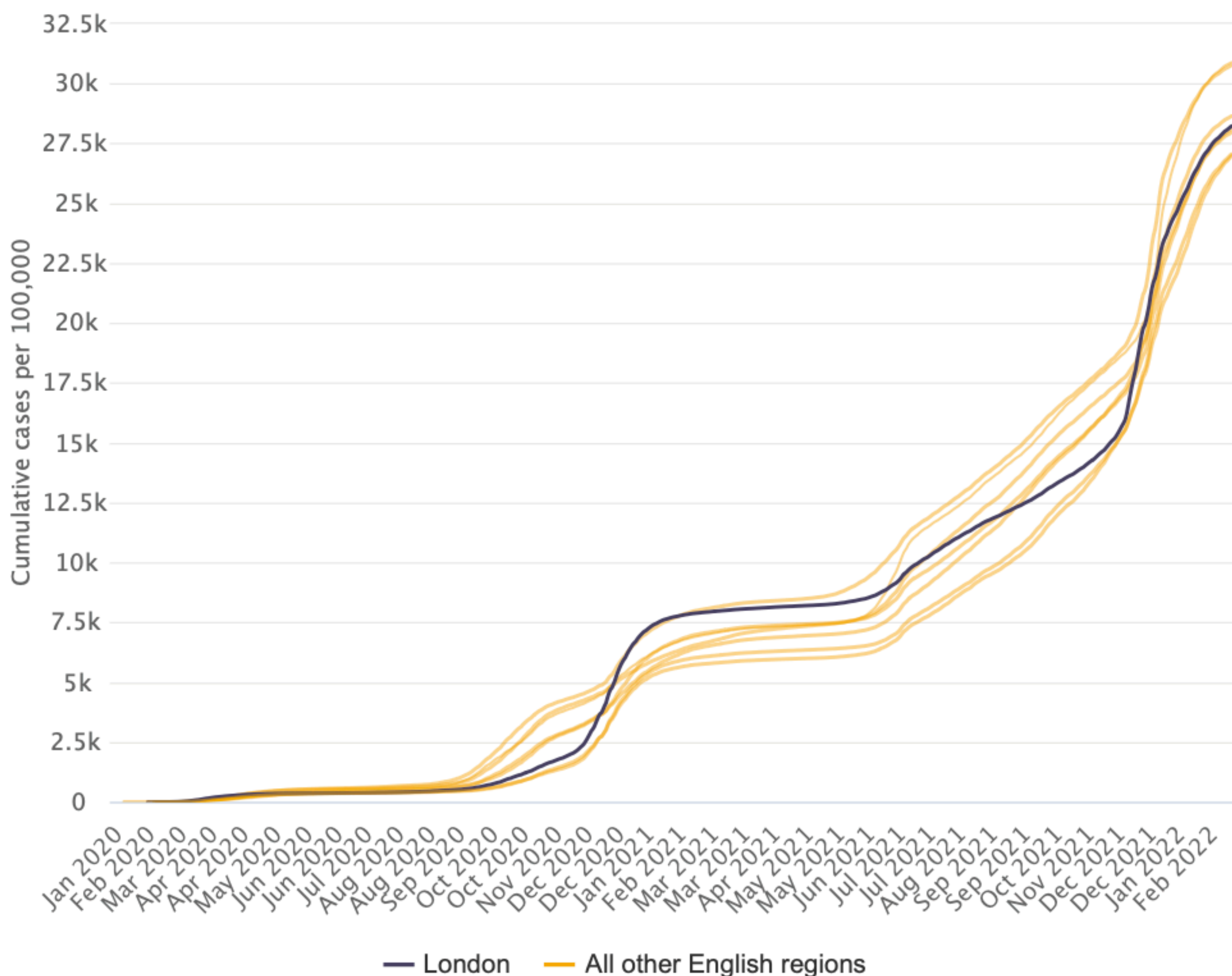
At the end of 2021, the proportion remained high at 43%

The course of COVID-19 infections in London

London was one of the first areas of the UK to experience widespread transmission of the virus. By the start of the first national lockdown on March 23rd 2020, 47 per 100,000 London residents tested positive for COVID-19,⁴⁰ compared with an average of 13 per 100,000 across the rest of England. By 27th February 2021, this proportion had risen to 7,768 per 100,000, compared with an average of 6,186 per 100,000 across the rest of England.

By the summer of 2021, cumulative infection rates in London (standing at 11,280 at the end of August), were similar to those of the rest of England and remained so until the end of January 2022. According to more recent data, London cumulative infection rates stand at 28,233 per 100,000 population.⁴¹

Figure 26: Cumulative infections per 100,000 population
January 2020 - February 2022

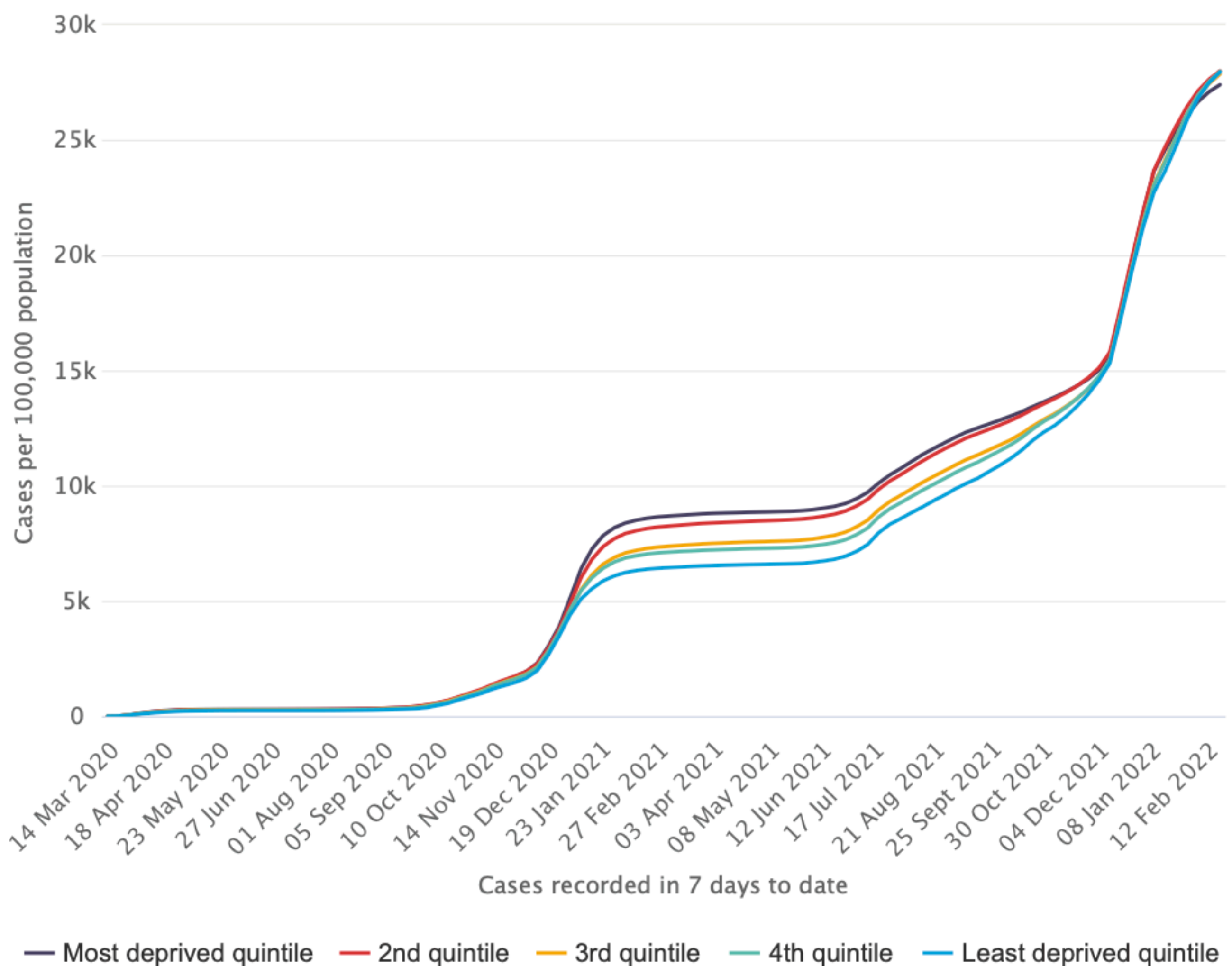


Source: Number of people with a positive COVID-19 virus test (either lab-reported or lateral flow device), as reported by <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

COVID-19 infections have not been evenly spread across London's population. In December 2020, infections started to increase faster among London's most deprived communities, remaining one third higher than in the least deprived communities until July 2021. Since then, cumulative infection rates have been increasing faster among the least deprived, and by December 2021 they had caught up with, and later surpassed, infection rates among the most deprived communities.⁴²

Figure 27: Cumulative COVID-19 infection rates in London by neighbourhood deprivation quintile

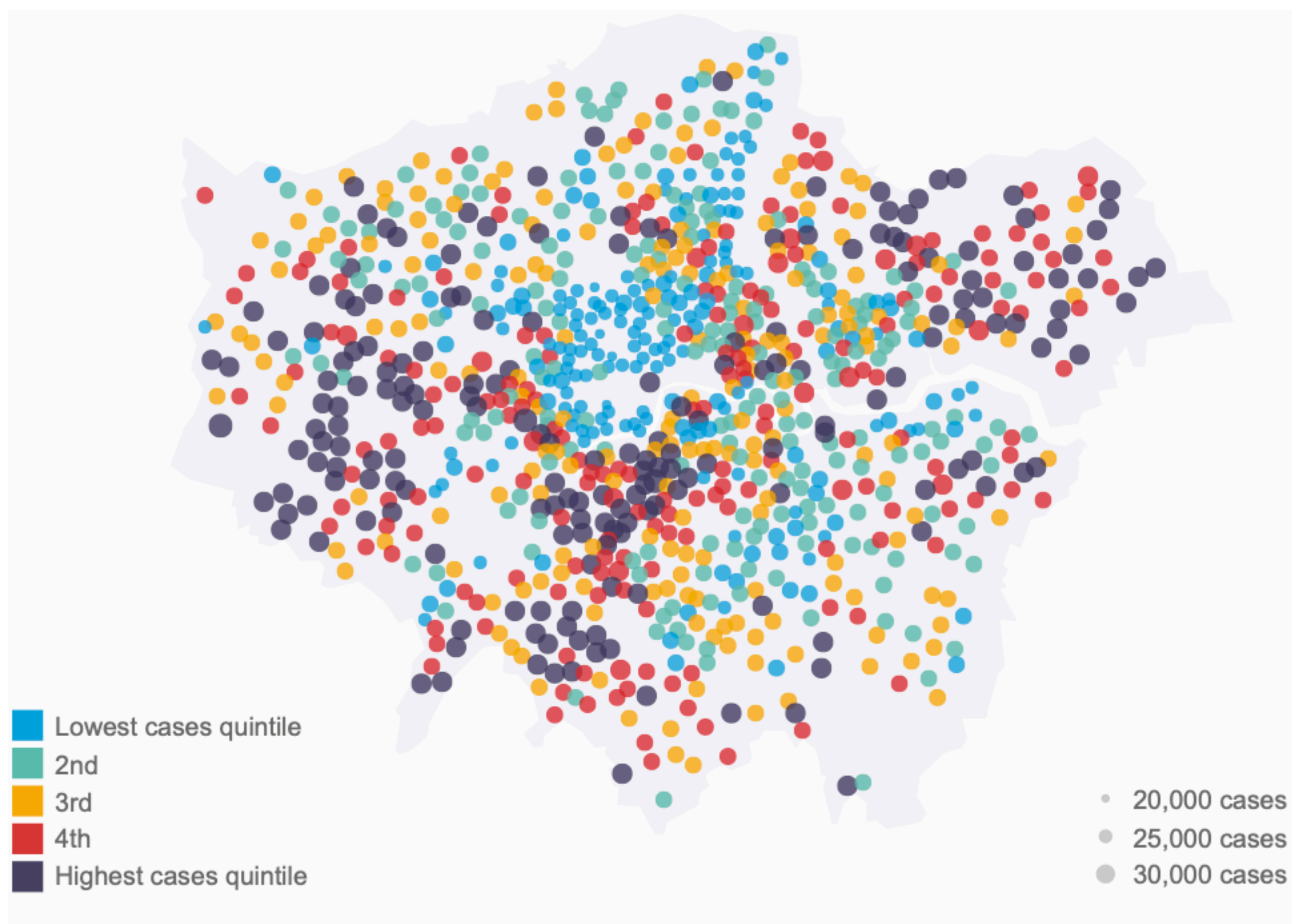
March 2020 - February 2022



Source: Coronavirus cases, Public Health England (PHE); population estimates for middle layer super output areas (MSOAs), ONS; Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

With such stark differences in infection rates by neighbourhood deprivation, it is no surprise that some parts of London have fared very differently. This can be seen at specific points in time, where infections have grown rapidly as the virus transmitted quickly in a specific local area. It can also be seen overall, with infection rates varying significantly across different parts of the capital. By 7th March 2022, Hounslow and Ealing had the highest cumulative infection rates (31,856 and 31,846 in 100,000 respectively), with Westminster and Camden the lowest (22,401 and 22,564 in 100,000 respectively).⁴³

Figure 28: COVID-19 infection rates per 100,000 in London neighbourhoods (MSOAs)
For all weeks between 11th March 2020 and 23rd February 2022



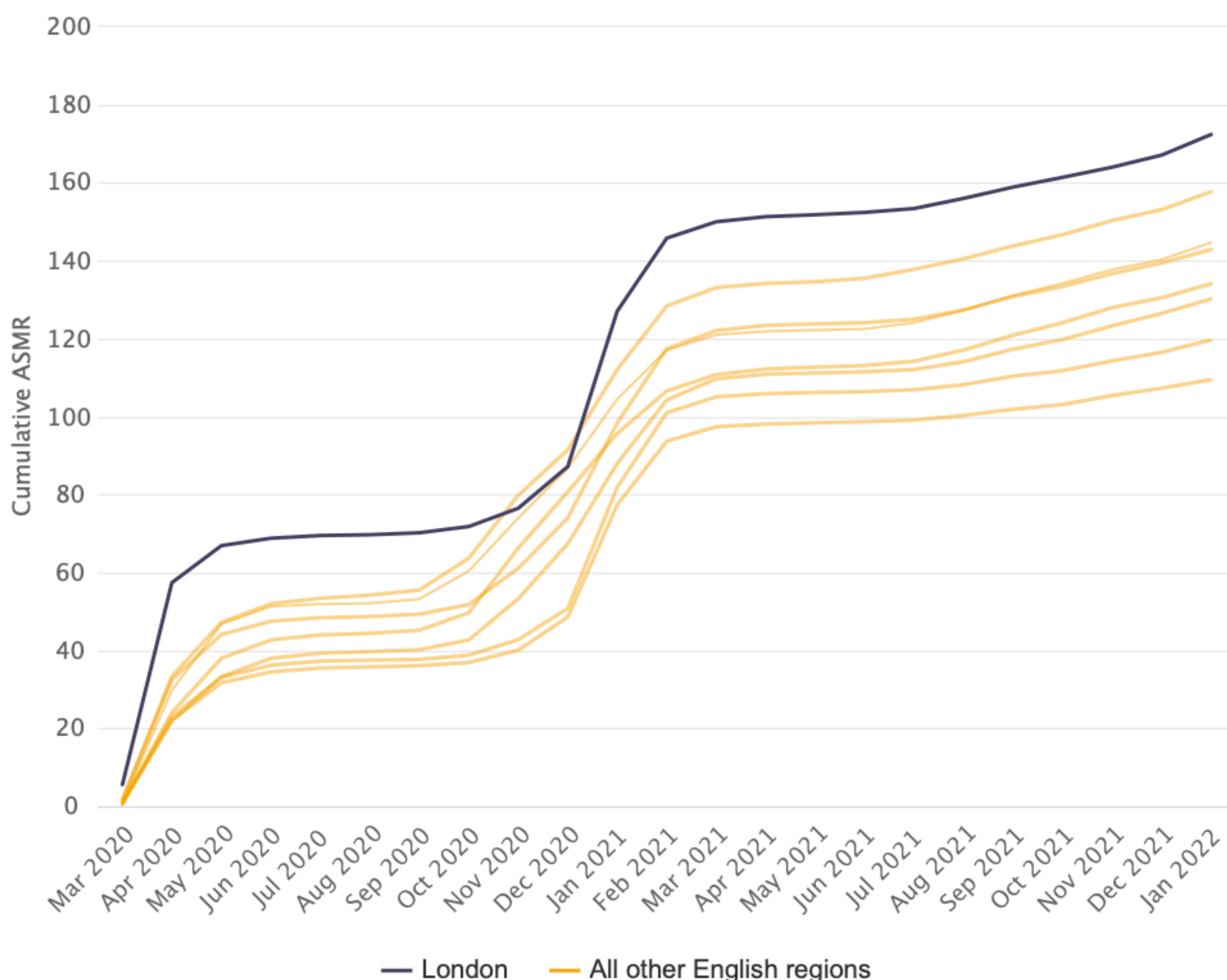
Source: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/cases>, Public Health England; Mid-year population estimates for Middle Super Output Areas, ONS

COVID-19 mortality in London

By January 2022, 20,234 Londoners had tragically lost their lives to COVID-19.⁴⁴ To understand how this compares to other regions across the UK, we look at deaths as a proportion of the population adjusted for the area's age profile. This is important considering that London has a relatively young population, and so would be expected to experience lower mortality rates than other regions with older populations.

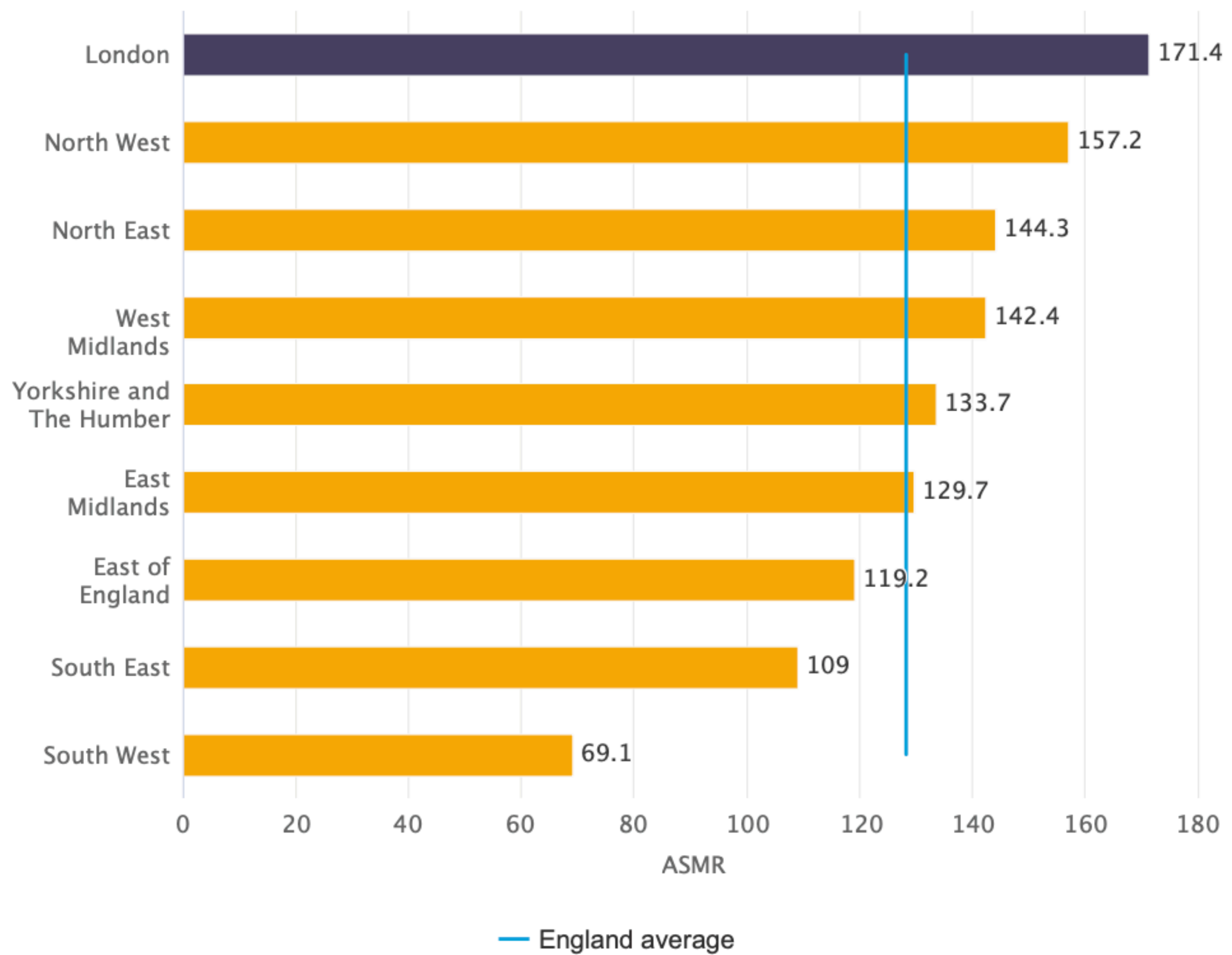
London has consistently had the highest regional standardised mortality rate (SMR) from COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic, except during November and December 2020. By January 2022, the cumulative mortality rate in London was 171.4 per 100,000, compared to just 128.7 for England as a whole. This means London saw the highest mortality rate out of all English regions, being almost 150% higher than in the South West, the region with the lowest mortality rate.⁴⁵

Figure 29: Cumulative age-standardised COVID-19 mortality per 100,000 population
March 2020 - January 2022



Source: Deaths due to COVID-19 by local area and deprivation, ONS

Figure 30: Cumulative age-standardised COVID-19 mortality per 100,000 population (ASMR)
March 2020 - January 2022



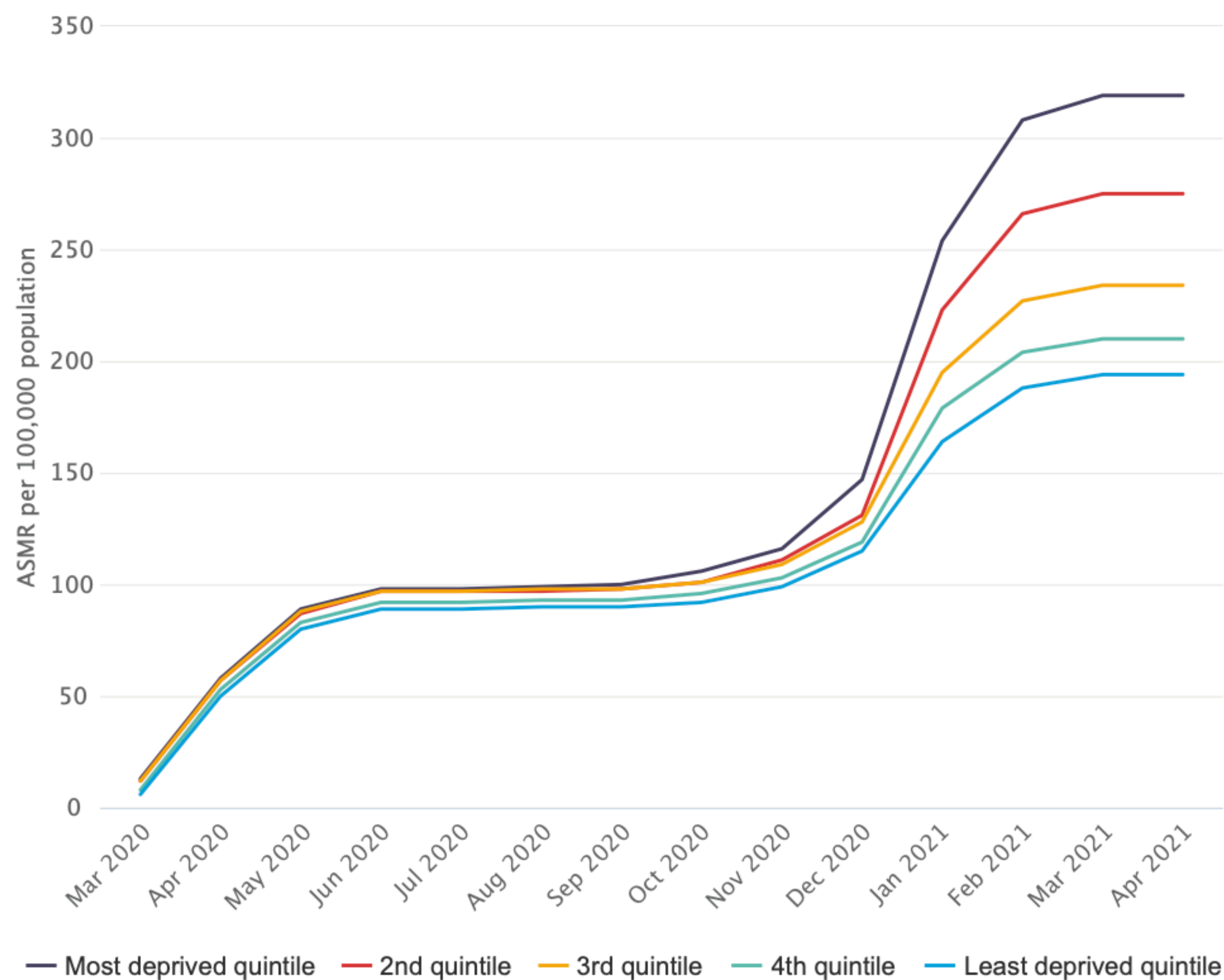
Source: Deaths due to COVID-19 by local area and deprivation, ONS

As with infections, COVID-19 mortality varies significantly between different parts of London and amongst demographic groups. By April 2021 cumulative COVID-19 mortality rates were:

- More than 60% higher in the 20% most deprived London neighbourhoods (319 per 100,000) than in the 20% least deprived (194 per 100,000)
- 3.4 times higher in the worst impacted London borough (Newham - 401.2 per 100,000) than the least impacted borough (Richmond-upon-Thames - 145.0 per 100,000)⁴⁶

Figure 31: Cumulative COVID-19 mortality rates per 100,000 population in London by neighbourhood deprivation quintile

March 2020 to April 2021



Source: Deaths due to COVID-19 by local area and deprivation, ONS; Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019, MHCLG

Figure 32: Cumulative COVID-19 mortality rates across London
Up to April 2021



Source: Deaths due to COVID-19 by local area and deprivation (March to January 2021), ONS; Mid-year population estimates for Middle Super Output Areas, ONS

Table 1 and figure 33 show how factors like age, deprivation and ethnicity interact to influence COVID-19 infections and mortality.

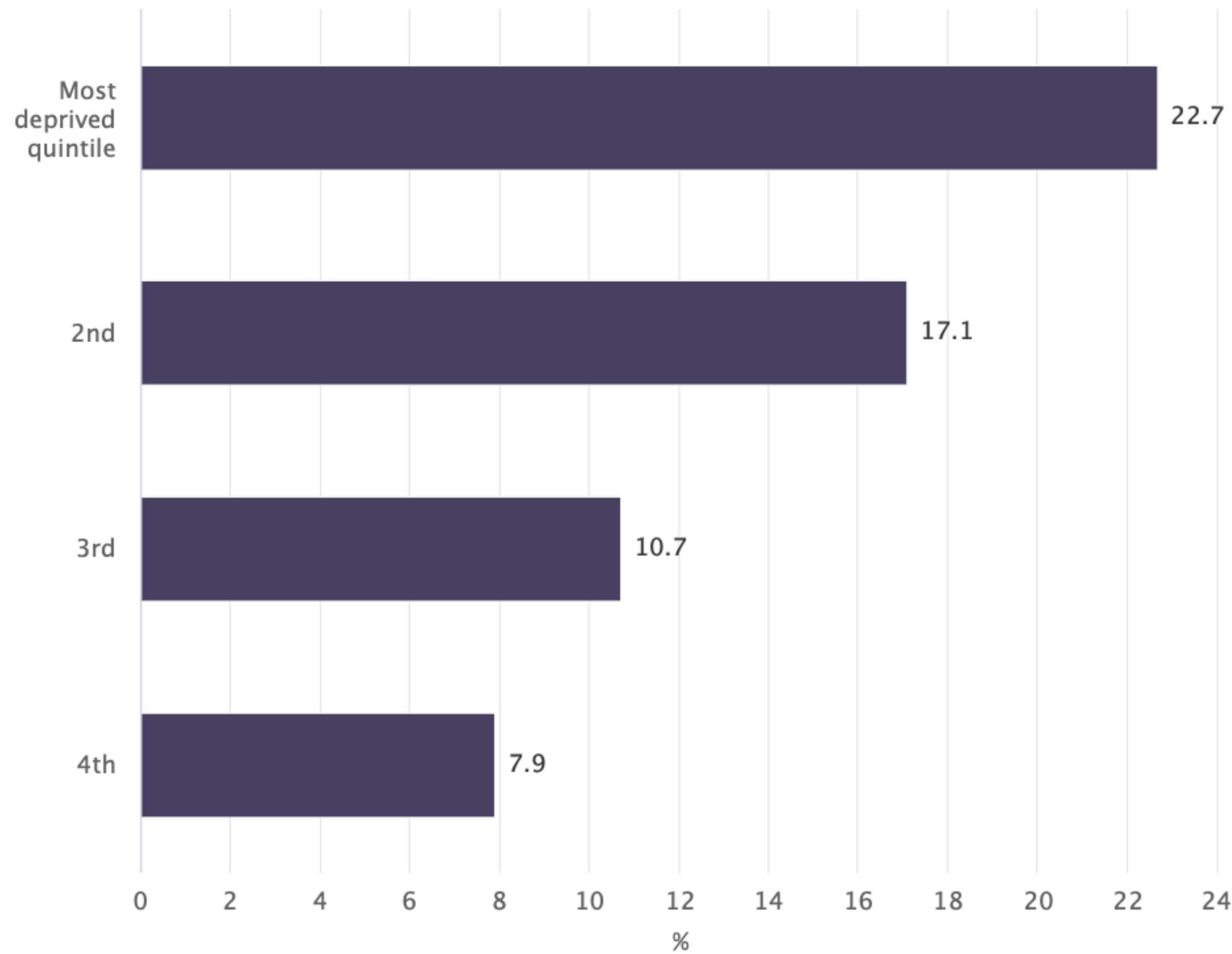
Table 1: Change in COVID-19 infection and mortality rates in London, for different neighbourhood characteristics

Characteristic	This change in the characteristic	Leads to this change in COVID-19 mortality per 100,000 population
Care home residents	Increasing by 100 residents	68 increase
Population in process, plant and machine operative occupations	Increase by 100 persons	14 increase
Population 65 plus	Increasing by 100 persons	13 increase
Black population	Increasing by 100 persons	2 increase
Lab-confirmed cases rate	Increasing by 100 cases	1 increase
Population aged 0-14	Increasing by 100 persons	-2 decrease
Population aged 40-64	Increasing by 100 persons	-2 decrease
Population in elementary occupations	Increasing by 100 persons	-9 decrease
Populations in caring, leisure and other service occupations	Increasing by 100 persons	-12 decrease

Source: Deaths due to COVID-19 by local area and deprivation (March to January 2021), ONS; Regression inputs <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/publications/covid19mortalitylondonlpp/>

COVID-19 mortality is also predicted by levels of deprivation, even after controlling for a range of neighbourhood characteristics. Mortality rates are 27% higher in the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods compared to the least deprived 20% of neighbourhoods.⁴⁷

Figure 33: Percentage difference in cumulative deaths per 100,000 relative to least deprived 20% of neighbourhoods
March 2020 - January 2021

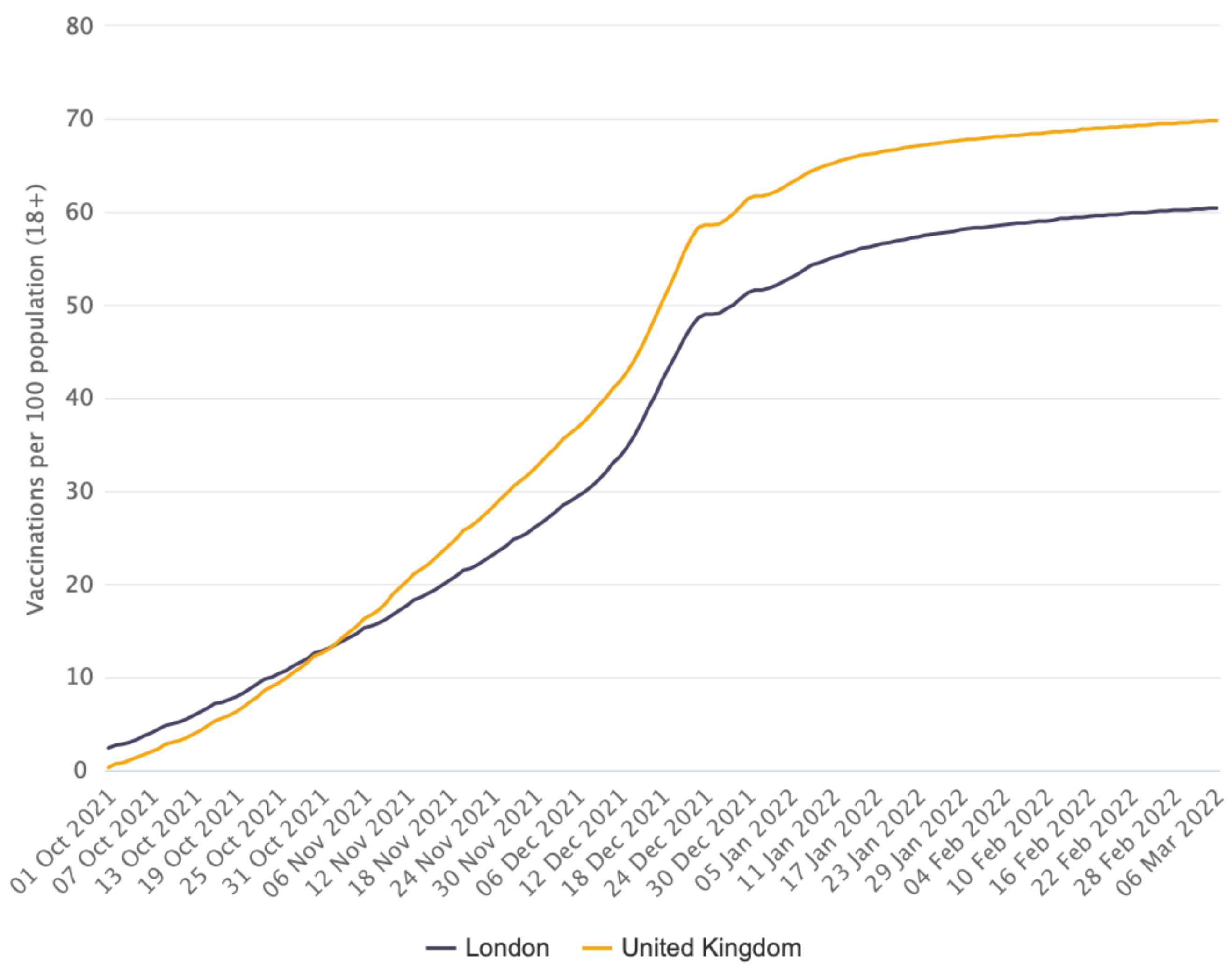


Source: Deaths due to COVID-19 by local area and deprivation, ONS; regression inputs <https://trustforlondon.org.uk/publications/covid19mortalitylondonlpp/>

COVID-19 vaccinations in London

In addition to a consistently higher mortality rate than the rest of English regions, London has also lagged behind the rest of the country in terms of vaccination take-up. By the beginning of March 2022, just over 60% of London's adults had received their 3rd dose of the vaccination, 10 percentage points below the UK average.

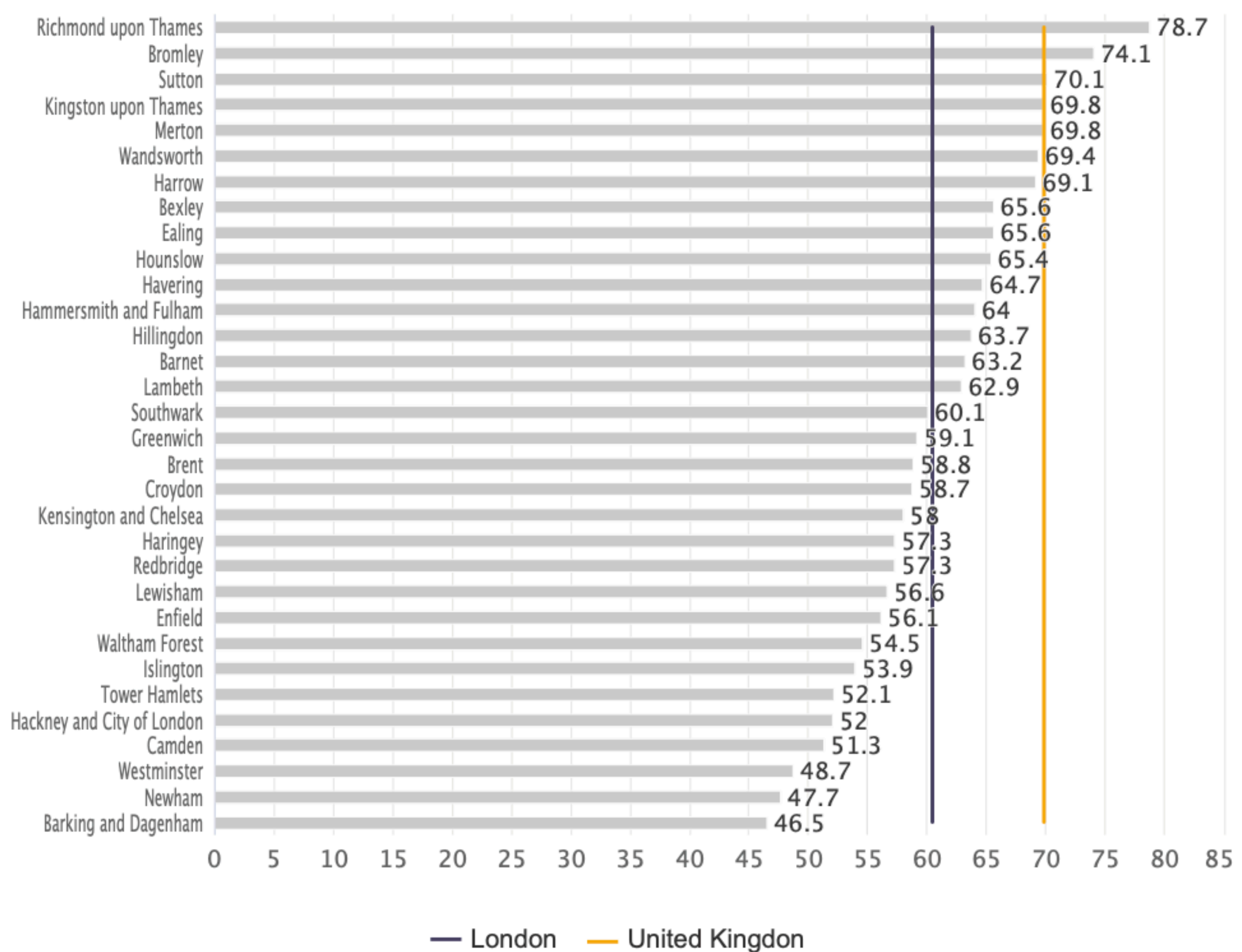
Figure 34: COVID-19 third dose vaccinations per 100 adults (aged 18+)
October 2021 - March 2022



Source: Vaccinations in the UK, as reported by <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

There is significant variation within the capital in terms of vaccination coverage, as some mostly Outer London boroughs have percentages close to or above the UK average of 70%, and some mostly Inner London boroughs lag behind the capital's average, with percentages below 55% or even 50%. The percentage of adults who have received their 3rd vaccination dose is more than 30 points higher in Richmond upon Thames, the borough with the highest percentage, than in Barking and Dagenham, the borough with the lowest.⁴⁸

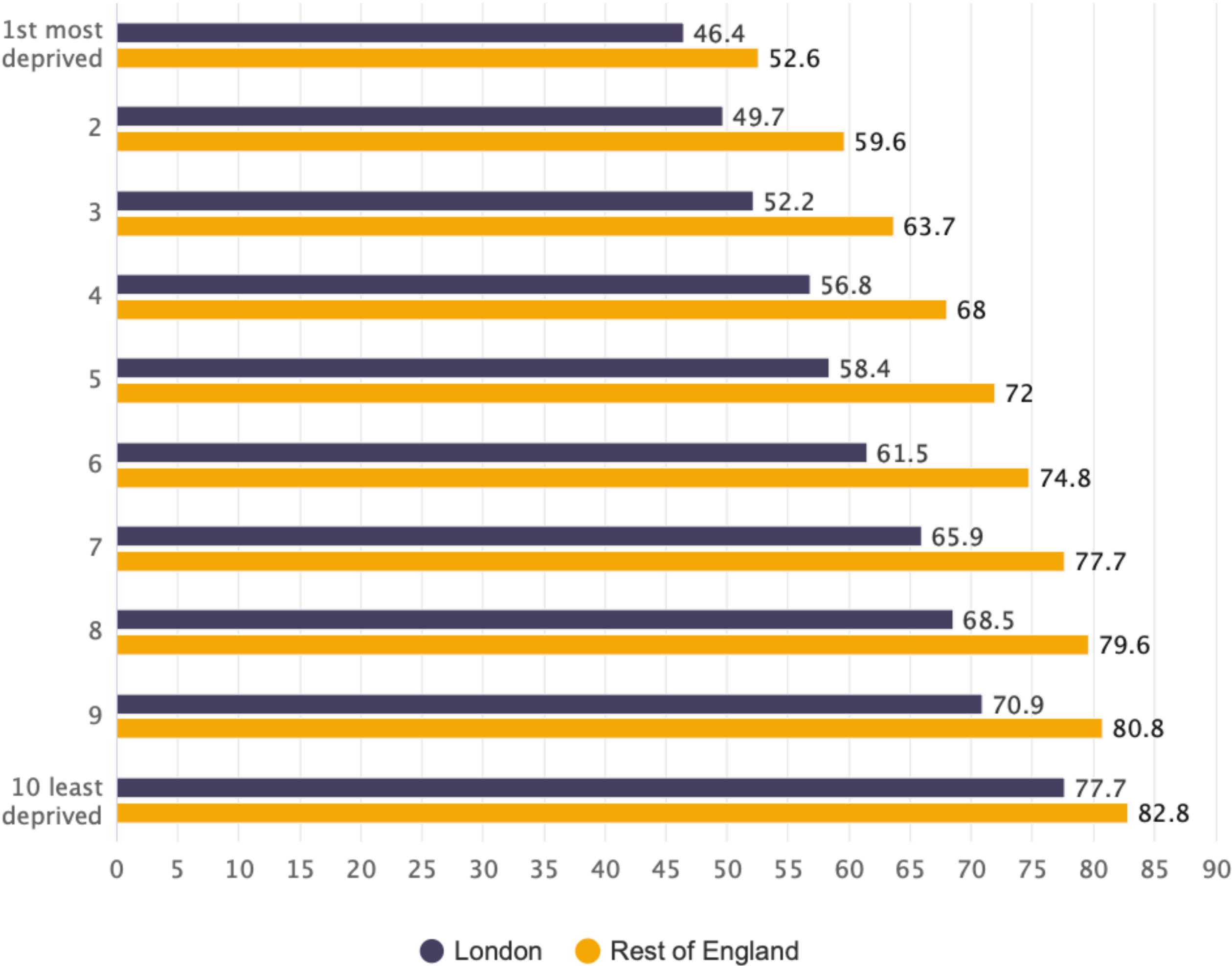
Figure 35: COVID-19 third dose vaccinations per 100 adults (aged 18+) for London boroughs
Up to March 6, 2022



Source: Vaccinations in the UK, as reported by <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>

There are significant inequalities in vaccination take-up based on neighbourhood deprivation. In London, there is a 30 percentage point difference between the proportion of adults who have received their 3rd vaccination dose in the 10% most deprived communities and in the 10% least deprived ones. London shows lower percentages of boosted adults than the rest of England across all deprivation deciles.⁴⁹

Figure 36: COVID-19 third dose vaccinations by deprivation decile (MSOA)
Up to March 7, 2022



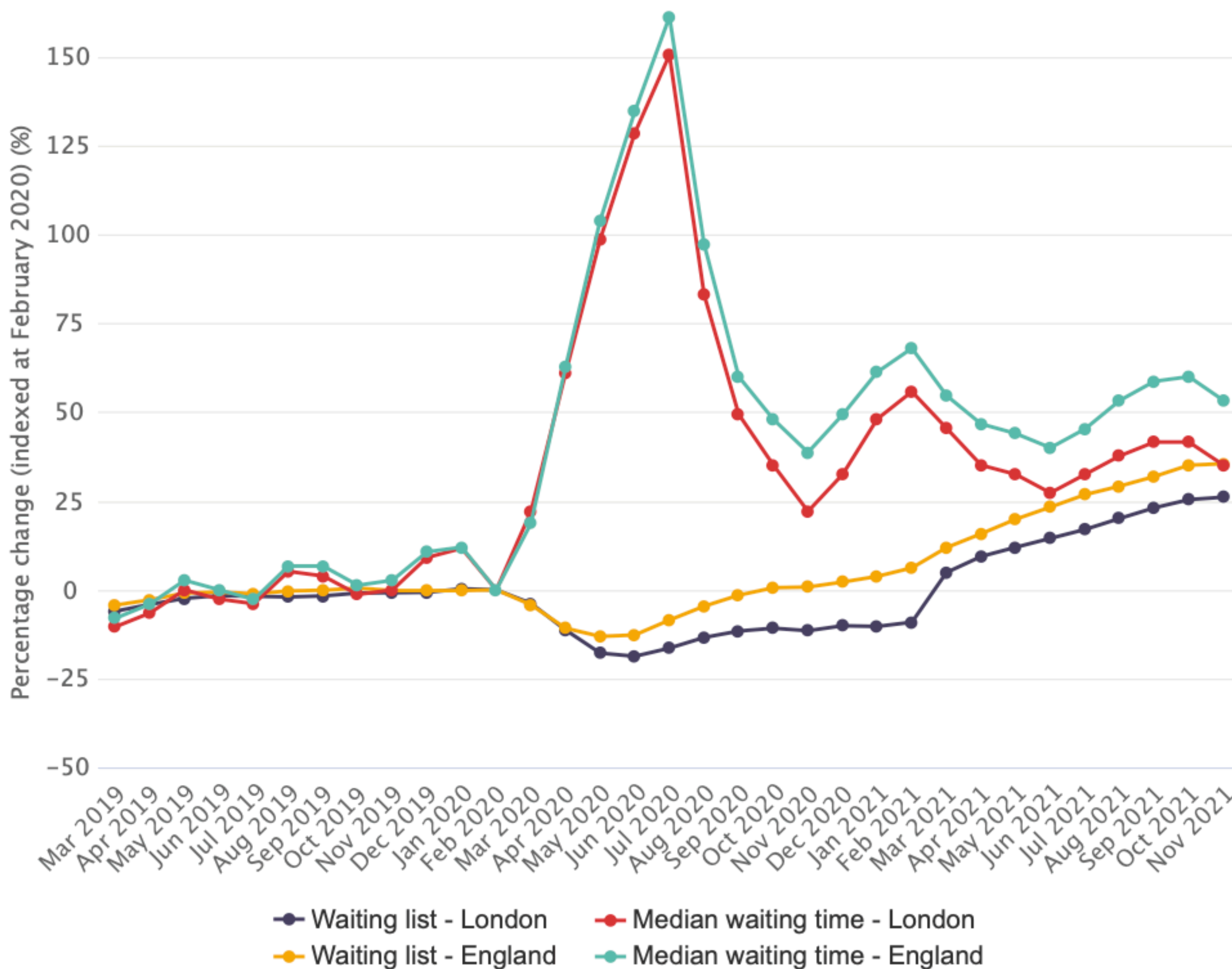
Source: Vaccinations in the UK, as reported by <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>. Indices of deprivation (2019), House of Commons Library.

In addition to the direct impact on infections and mortality, the pandemic has also added strain to an already stretched health system

As resources in the NHS had to be redeployed to respond to the large numbers of COVID-19 patients, the pandemic has also affected the NHS's capacity to continue with routine activities and treatments.

By July 2020, the median waiting time for treatments had increased by 150% compared to February 2020, remaining above 40% by the end of 2021. The total number of patients waiting for treatment had increased by more than 25% between February 2020 and the end of 2021.⁵⁰

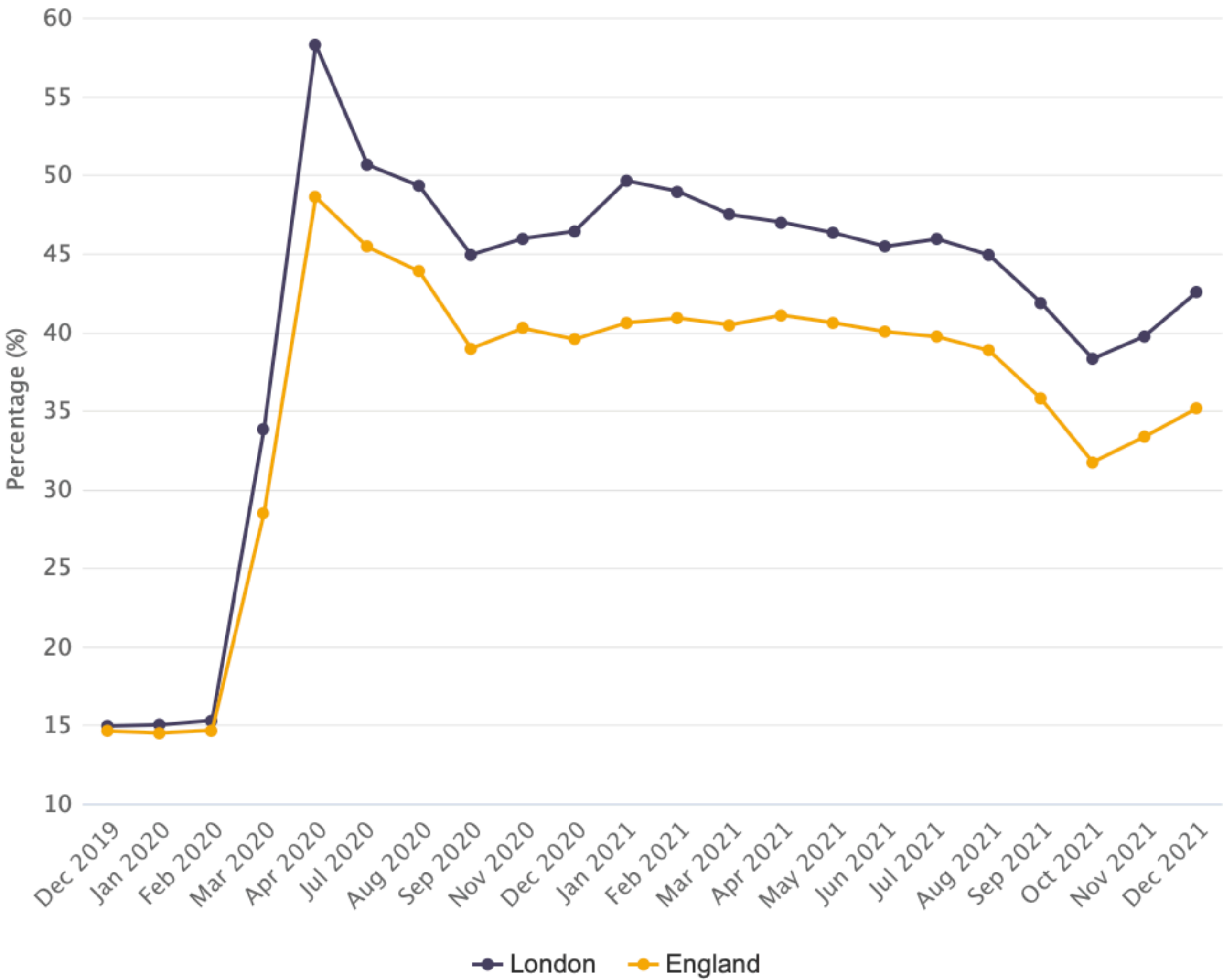
Figure 37: Percentage change in patients waiting for treatment and mean waiting time March 2019 to November 2021



Source: NHS England, Consultant-led Referral to Treatment Waiting Times

The NHS responded to social distancing measures by carrying out some of its activities remotely. The percentage of GP appointments taking place either online or via telephone increased more than three times in England, and almost four times in London, between February and April 2020. Since then, this percentage has decreased, although remaining at much higher levels than before the pandemic, standing above 40% by the end of 2021 in London.⁵¹

Figure 38: Percentage of GP appointments by telephone or online



Source: NHS - Appointments in General Practice

While the move to remote attendance enabled more GP appointments to take place than would have otherwise been the case in the context of the pandemic, healthcare professionals and civil society have raised concerns about its impact on health inequalities.⁵² A major driver behind this is digital poverty, defined as “the ability to interact with the online world fully, when, where and how an individual needs to”. Digital poverty “exacerbates and is exacerbated by other socio-economic, educational, racial, linguistic, gender, and health inequalities”, among which income is particularly important: 47% of offline people in the UK are part of a low income household, with 53% of those offline not being able to afford monthly broadband bills,⁵³ and those with an annual income of £50,000 or more are 40% more likely to have basic digital skills than those earning less than £17,500.⁵⁴

National evidence shows that these wider inequalities map onto an uneven access to remote healthcare. Patients in the most deprived areas are less likely to have used the website of their GP practice, and if they do, generally find this process more difficult than patients in the least deprived areas. The former also found it more difficult to get through to their GP practice via phone,⁵⁵ a process which is much harder for those experiencing literacy or language barriers.⁵⁶

In London, 18% of Londoners lack some basic digital skills.⁵⁷ Research from the London division of Age UK revealed that during the pandemic “finding information on health-related issues (...) was the least, or one of the least, common uses of the internet for most older people”, with less than half of over 65s using the internet for these purposes.⁵⁸ As London is the English region with the highest poverty rate, and the highest proportion of residents who cannot speak English well or at all, the larger rise in the proportion of GP appointments taking place remotely in the capital is likely to have made healthcare less accessible for many Londoners.

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