

# Newham



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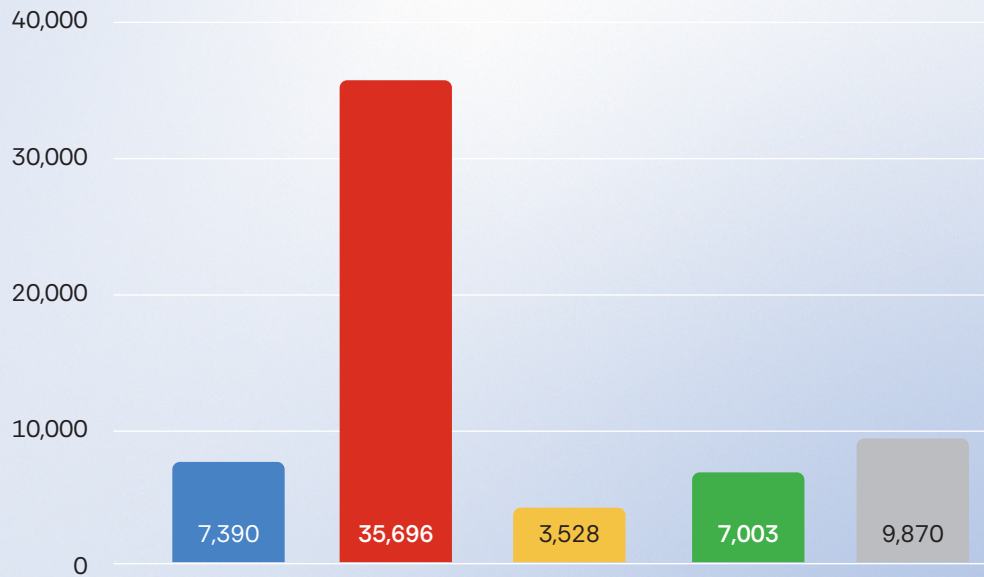
# Since 2022

## Labour Defence

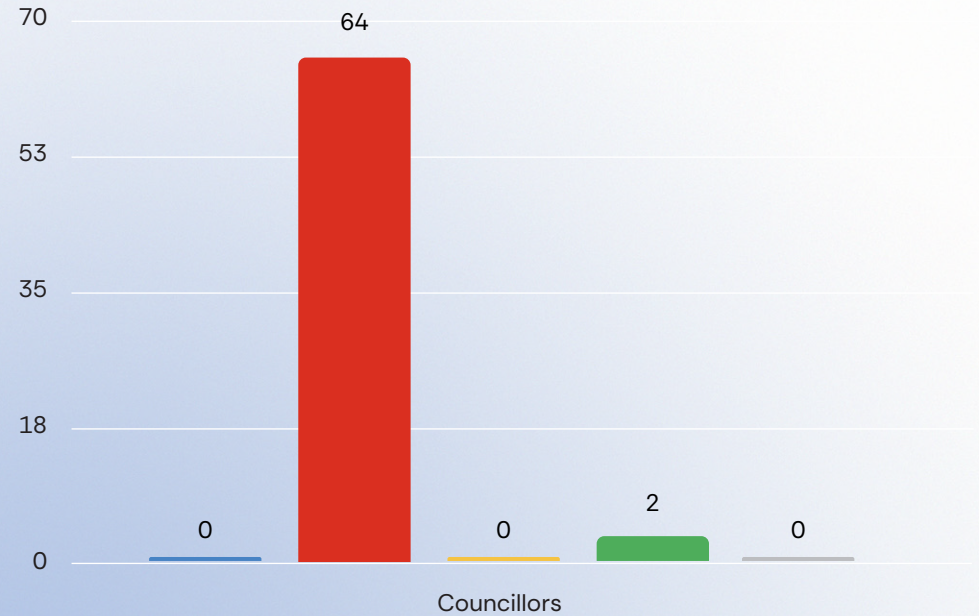
If a big Labour fortress tumbles this time, the loudest noise might come from Newham. No other party has ever got close to winning a council majority. The Newham mayoralty, introduced in 2002, has been Labour's by landslides every time. In 2022, the party's candidate won without second preference votes needing to be counted as she was the first choice of more than half of Newham's voters.

The fact that two of the 66 councillors elected were not from Labour was a break with recent precedent – in 2018, 2014 and 2010, Labour won every single Newham seat.

Newham mayoral election result 2022



Newham Council result May 2022 | Total seats: 54



Conservative Labour Liberal Democrat Green Others

It was the Greens who made that little dent in Labour’s edifice and they will hope to make a bigger one this time. But they won’t be the biggest force of change. The first Mayor of Newham, Sir Robin Wales, was firmly opposed to what he called “community politics”. He kept a wary eye on Tower Hamlets to his immediate west, where local parties, fuelled by local Muslim Londoners’ support, were showing they could beat Labour.

They are now doing it in Newham too: Labour has successfully defended in five of the eight by-elections held since 2022, but local Independents have made gains at its expense in the other three. The Newham Independents, as they are now formally known, are making a big push to win the mayoralty and many more council seats.

Labour has come down from 64 councillors elected in May 2022 to 56 today. As well as the three by-election losses, there has been a defection to the Greens (bringing their tally of councillors up to three) two defections to the Newham Independents and one to standalone Independent status.

Rokhsana Fiaz, Newham’s Mayor since 2018, will not be standing again. Forhad Hussein is Labour’s candidate this time. Newham Independents leader Mehmood Mirza is his party’s challenger. Can Labour’s defences hold?

### By-elections since May 2022

13 JULY 2023	BOLEYN	NEWHAM IND GAIN FROM LAB
13 JULY 2023	WALL END	LAB HOLD
23 NOVEMBER 2023	PLAISTOW NORTH	NEWHAM IND GAIN FROM LAB
04 JULY 2024	FOREST GATE NORTH	LAB HOLD
04 JULY 2024	MARYLAND	LAB HOLD
18 JULY 2024	MARYLAND	LAB HOLD
18 JULY 2024	LITTLE ILFORD	LAB HOLD
18 SEPTEMBER 2025	PLAISTOW SOUTH	NEWHAM IND GAIN FROM LAB

# Local landscape

Newham’s decades of de-industrialisation have been likened to those that devastated Liverpool. The comparison demonstrates the scale of the recovery required in a borough that has also experienced enormous demographic change and churn. Constructing a new economy and social structures from that vista of decline has been no small task.

The borough where the East End and the inner edge of outer London meet and merge had around 308,000 inhabitants in 2011, according to the Census of that year. Ten years later, the figure had topped 350,000. The latest estimate puts it at nearly 375,000. Newham also has the second-lowest median age of all London boroughs. Over 42 per cent of residents categorise themselves as Asian, followed by around 31 per cent who identify as white and around 18 per cent as black. Its biggest religious group are Christians, with Muslims close behind, both accounting for a bit more than a third.

Opposition to Labour this century has, until lately, been sporadic, small and inconsistent. The leader of the Christian Peoples Alliance won a seat in 2002 and was joined on the opposition benches four years later by two CPA colleagues and three representatives of the Respect party. That was that until the Greens’ brace of victories last time.

But this appearance of rock solidity has concealed a seething political undergrowth. Labour’s constituency

Newham Council elections since 2002						
Year	Con	Lab	LD	UKIP/Ref	Green	Other
2002	-	59	-	-	-	1
2006	-	54	-	-	-	6
2010	-	60	-	-	-	-
2014	-	60	-	-	-	-
2018	-	60	-	-	-	-
2022	-	64	-	-	2	-

parties have been suspended for years amid talk of feuds and entryism. In 2021, a referendum was held to determine whether the mayoral model of local government should continue or be replaced. This honoured a Fiaz election pledge. Voters decided to retain the system.

The Newham Independents Party struck its first by-election blow in July 2023 when Mirza scored a surprise,

enormous triumph in Boleyn ward, formerly home to West Ham United’s stadium. Significantly, that was before the start of the Israel-Gaza war. Already, the party was tapping in to disillusion with Labour over issues such as crime, housing, the cost of living and measures to reduce or further regulate private motor vehicle use. Cars and vans are important to many working-class east London Muslims for family and work-related reasons. Bicycles and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, less so.

# Local landscape

Any Labour hopes that announcing Fiaz's departure would dampen support for its new rival were quickly dashed when the Newham Independents candidate crushed Labour's in the Plaistow South by-election of 18 September last year. Labour's vote share dropped by a queasy 34 percentage points.

The Green mayoral candidate is Areeq Chowdhury, the councillor who switched from Labour in July 2024. He was unhappy with its stance on Gaza and more. Reform UK has added to the drama: in March, ex-Mayor Wales was announced as the party's Director of London Government and a fellow defector from Newham Labour, former councillor Clive Furness, as its 2026 mayoral candidate.

What will it take to blow Labour's big house down? The party has deep roots and has not alienated every voter group. Hussein is pitching to supporters it has lost by promising to roll back some of Fiaz's greener transport measures. Mirza's base looks substantial and his party is contesting every council seat, but his appeal might not stretch beyond it. The Greens, too, have a candidate for every council seat, which gives voters fed up with Labour an alternative option for expressing their displeasure. Paradoxically, this might work in Labour's favour. Newham could be a nail-biter.



 NEWHAM

# Electoral prospects

The history of massive Labour dominance in Newham elections, and the prospect of a wave election washing away the previous landmarks, means that there is little point in trying to distinguish between most Newham wards on grounds of marginality. Previous elections give some clues about Green potential, but can tell us little about the prospects for a new challenger party.

A broad view is that a high Independents tide could see them win the mayoralty and a council majority. A lower one would see the Greens winning the backing of the newer Newham communities in the Stratford and Royal Docks wards, with Labour holding wards in Canning Town and some of Forest Gate, the Newham Independents taking most of the seats in the North East and battling it out with Labour in East Ham and Plaistow.

# Stratford

5 seats

The Stratford Olympic Park ward is essentially a new community. Its resident population rose from 59 people in 2011 to 11,830 in 2021. The development is mixed: 24 per cent are social renters but over half rent privately, an unusual pattern outside central London. Seventy per cent have degree-level education, again a very high proportion. Stratford ward has an older community, but it too has seen massive development, the High Street flanked with new and old tower blocks.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Stratford	Lab	Lab	Lab	10.5	54.5	14.2	20.8	-
Stratford Olympic Park	Green	Green	x	4.2	33.7	9.4	51.6	1.0

The Greens broke Labour’s monopoly (since 2010) of Newham Council seats by successfully appealing to the new Olympic Park residents. Completely new London neighbourhoods form their own political identities and the Greens have a certain appeal in several of them. Both of the Stratford wards have more Green target voters than do most in Newham.

# Forest Gate

10 seats

These wards in the north of the borough have been, alongside Stratford, part of the Stratford & Bow constituency for parliamentary purposes since the 2024 boundary changes. They were all strongly Labour in 2022, but the party needs to worry about at least a couple of them.

The Muslim proportion of the population is very high in Green Street West (52 per cent) and Forest Gate South (41 per cent). In the other two wards it is 25–28 per cent, which is high by most standards but usual for Newham.

The area is not one of the borough’s “council estate” neighbourhoods, as most of the housing is in terraces built for the more prosperous workers of West Ham’s late-Victorian industries and is now either owner-occupied or rented out on the private market.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Forest Gate North	Lab	Lab	x	10.9	60.8	9.3	19.0	-
Forest Gate South	Lab	Lab	Lab	11.7	58.6	11.0	18.6	-
Green Street West	Lab	Lab	Lab	15.1	70.7	-	14.1	-
Maryland	Lab	Lab	x	9.6	59.3	10.2	16.0	4.9

The supply of cheap traditional housing was one of the factors that drew postwar immigrant communities to the northern ward of what, since 1965, has been Newham. It isn’t much gentrified, and the 2021 Census found it to have low proportions of graduates and professionals, although that may change as Maryland and Forest Gate have been plugged into the Elizabeth line.

In the 2006 elections Respect won Green Street West and came close in Forest Gate South. Labour held the other two wards, Maryland and Forest Gate North, in by-elections held on the same day as the general election, but things have changed since then.

# Plaistow-West Ham

12 seats

This block of wards is the heart of West Ham, lying either side of Plaistow station on the District line and served at its edges by the West Ham and Abbey Road stations on other lines. It is divided by the elevated Greenway, which follows the course of Joseph Bazalgette’s Northern Outfall Sewer, one of London’s great Victorian public works, and lies between the redevelopment areas of Stratford and the Royal Docks. Its population totals were stable between 2011 and 2021 despite the wider borough’s massive increase.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Plaistow North	Lab	Lab	Lab	15.9	67.8	-	16.3	-
Plaistow South	Lab	Lab	Lab	15.7	57.0	12.1	15.2	-
Plaistow West & Canning Town East	Lab	Lab	Lab	12.2	58.3	10.7	12.3	6.5
West Ham	Lab	Lab	Lab	11.7	61.8	9.9	16.8	-

West Ham is a Labour stronghold of formidable longevity. Labour had uninterrupted control of West Ham County Borough from 1919 onwards and then throughout the history of the borough of Newham that took over in 1965. This block of wards is the central stronghold in the fortress.

It is therefore ominous for Labour that two of its by-election losses to the Newham Independents have been in Plaistow North (November 2023) and then Plaistow South (September 2025).

Plaistow North had the most promising demographics for the new party, being 42 per cent Muslim, but the electoral challenge obviously runs deeper. These are mixed communities, both ethnically and socially, but mostly working-class (fewer residents have degrees than average, for instance).

# Canning Town

9 seats

Canning Town is another very traditionally Labour area. Keir Hardie was first elected for a parliamentary seat around here in 1892. By Newham standards, the proportion of South Asian Londoners is relatively low and the white and black populations are correspondingly larger.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Canning Town North	Lab	Lab	Lab	8.7	56.7	-	13.2	21.5
Canning Town South	Lab	Lab	Lab	11.3	53.7	-	13.9	21.2
Custom House	Lab	Lab	Lab	14.5	52.5	11.8	14.2	7.0

True to its working-class heritage, Canning Town presents an industrial face to the traveller along the A13 and to arrivals at its ingenious double-deck Jubilee line and Docklands Light Railway station. But the area is changing. Hallsville Quarter, beside the station, will become a new "Town Centre" with 1,100 mixed-tenure housing units.

The three wards taken together have already added 6,000 new residents between 2011 and 2021. Canning Town South saw a sharp increase in the proportion of professional and managerial workers living in the ward.

It is also the area of Newham with the largest proportion of social housing, particularly in Canning Town North. The relatively large vote share for "Others" in 2022 comprised Independents and the Christian People's Alliance. All told, Canning Town looks to be one of the harder areas for Labour's challengers to penetrate.

# Royal Docks

7 seats

The south of the borough around the Royal Docks is home not only to the main offices of Newham Council but also the Mayor of London’s City Hall, London City Airport and the ExCel centre. It is a residential area too and has added population since the Docklands redevelopment started in the 1980s. And it is still growing – Royal Victoria ward added 7,714 residents between 2011 and 2021.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Beckton	Lab	Lab	Lab	15.1	47.8	-	31.8	5.3
Royal Albert	Lab	Lab	x	14.9	58.4	8.2	14.8	3.6
Royal Victoria	Lab	Lab	x	18.8	47.7	12.1	21.4	-

The Royal Albert and Beckton wards have 35 per cent and 37 per cent social housing, and some of the new development has been aimed at working-class communities. Royal Victoria is a bit different, with more classic young professional demographics including a very high private rented proportion, at 55 per cent.

The Greens did respectably in Beckton in 2022 and they rather than the Newham Independents are likely to be the main opposition to Labour here. There is some potential for the populist Right too. These wards are white by Newham standards (45 per cent or so, including 20 per cent white British) and have veered that way on occasion in the past, though surely not by enough to win.

# East Ham (South)

12 seats

East Ham’s Labour history is only slightly weaker than West Ham’s, and in recent decades the area has sometimes returned formidably large Labour percentages in local and parliamentary elections. Part of the reason for its solidity is its large community of South Asian origin, which means that these wards are plurality-Muslim (around 40 per cent).

The first by-election blow to Labour’s hegemony, weakened in 2022, came with Mehmood Mirza’s win in Boleyn in July 2023 – before Gaza and the General Election, as noted above. The Newham Independents will fancy their chances of adding the other two Boleyn seats and breaking through in the other East Ham wards.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Boleyn	Lab	Lab	Lab	16.7	59.7	-	17.8	5.8
East Ham	Lab	Lab	Lab	22.3	63.4	-	14.3	-
East Ham South	Lab	Lab	Lab	14.7	67.9	-	12.8	4.6
Wall End	Lab	Lab	Lab	13.0	50.6	-	8.8	27.6

# East Ham (North) and Manor Park

11 seats

The north east corner of Newham, separated from the rest of East Ham by the District Line, has continued changing since then. All four wards are majority-Muslim and Plashet has the lowest White British proportion in London (four per cent) other than three wards in Ealing’s Southall town centre.

Ward-level results (2022)	Councillors 2022			Vote share percentage 2022				
	1	2	3	Con	Lab	LD	Green	Other
Green Street East	Lab	Lab	Lab	15.2	65.8	-	13.1	5.9
Little Ilford	Lab	Lab	Lab	9.3	53.6	11.2	6.2	19.7
Manor Park	Lab	Lab	Lab	13.4	68.0	7.6	11.0	-
Plashet	Lab	Lab	x	18.5	42.4	-	7.9	31.2

These Newham wards have been solidly Labour for years, although a straw in the wind was Mirza winning over 900 votes running as an Independent in Plashet in 2022. There will no doubt be a challenge from the Newham Independents in all of these wards.

### Historical footnote

A long time ago – in 1994 to be precise – one of the authors, covering the Newham North East by-election, asked a Labour volunteer, an older white lady with a strong working-class London accent, whether there was much racism in the area. Her reply was, “If you were a racist, you wouldn’t live round ‘ere.”



NEWHAM

## What to watch for

For the first time ever, Newham is a key borough to watch. Local issues and Labour's national problems with Muslim and liberal voters have laid the groundwork for a potentially historic result at local Mayoral and councillor level.