**London Funders Insight Meeting:**

**Why 2022 is an important year for democratic engagement**

**Data Insights**

What’s the current picture?

On 5 May 2022 the London local elections are due to take place with all London borough councilor seats up for election and Mayoral elections in Hackney, Lewisham, Newham, Tower Hamlets and (for the first time) Croydon.

Currently the government are attempting to put through the [Elections Bill](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3020), which was introduced in June 2021 and had its third reading just last week (17 January 22). MPs voted by 325 to 234 in favour at the third reading on the bill, which includes proposals for **mandatory voter ID**, and gives ministers power over the independent Electoral Commission[[1]](#footnote-2). If enacted, it would require voters to show voter ID in polling stations for UK parliamentary elections, local elections in England and police and crime commissioner elections in England and Wales.

Critics say that ‘personation’, the crime of pretending to be someone else when you vote, is rare and introducing voter ID is a disproportionate response. As of August 2020, one conviction and one caution had been secured for personation offences at elections held in 2019.

Following press coverage that a bill was due in 2021, Cat Smith, Labour’s shadow minister for democracy, said: “Voting is safe and secure in the UK, meaning this policy is just an unnecessary barrier to democratic participation”.

The campaign organisation, [Liberty](https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/) warned of the effect voter ID could have on marginalised groups. Sam Grant, head of policy and campaigns, said: ‘‘If you’re young, if you’re a person of colour, if you’re disabled, trans or you don’t have a fixed address, you’re much less likely to have valid photo ID and could therefore be shut off from voting.”[[2]](#footnote-3)

Carnegie UK[[3]](#footnote-4) has just published [**GDWe: A spotlight on democratic wellbeing**](https://bit.ly/3ryvwIi)**,** research and polling which shows that democratic wellbeing in England is under severe threat.

This research was conducted by YouGov polling between 12 - 13 December 2021, which coincided with a heightened focus on levels of trust in government. The results are stark:

* 2 in 5 people in England (41%) now say that democracy is not working. People see the biggest current threat to our democracy as a loss of trust (32%) followed by corruption (16%).
* 76% of the public in England don’t trust MPs, while 73% don’t trust the UK Government.

How is and will London be impacted by the change?

A 2019 YouGov poll showed that **54%** of Londoners think you should have to show ID, **30%** thought you shouldn’t have to and **16%** were unsure.[[4]](#footnote-5)

The London Borough of Bromley took part in a pilot scheme[[5]](#footnote-6) run by the cabinet office during the May 2018 elections. To vote at a polling station in London Borough Bromley on 3 May 2018 an elector needed to take either:

* **One** form of photographic ID (such as a Passport Driving License or Freedom Pass) or
* **Two** forms of non-photographic ID, one of which must have shown their registered address (such as their poll card, debit/credit card, bank statement or birth certificate)

In Bromley 569 originally came to the polling station without suitable ID. Of those 569, 415 people returned with the correct ID and cast their vote, that means **27%** of those people didn’t manage to vote at the election.

The Greater London Authority have carried out their on research on voter registration and democratic participation:

Research from the Electoral Commission[[6]](#footnote-7) and the Cabinet Office[[7]](#footnote-8) shows that London has the lowest voter registration rates across the UK regions and nations. Leading academics have stressed that, in its current form, Elections Bill measures could further reduce voter registration and turnout rates.[[8]](#footnote-9)

ONS data shows that approximately 700,000 EU Londoners (excluding British, Cyprus, Malta and Irish nationals) were eligible to vote in Mayoral and Assembly elections as of 1 December 2018 – 11.6% of the London electorate. According to data on the applications to the EU Settlement Scheme[[9]](#footnote-10), **around 1 in 5 London residents is European**, but EU Londoners are the most under registered community by nationality **with only 69% registered to vote**. Plans to remove the voting rights of most EU Londoners who have arrived from 1 January 2021 and of those who might lose their immigration status in the future, including Londoners who currently have pre-settled status, will also separate EU Londoners into two categories, by immigration status and by voting rights.

The other most under-registered groups identified by the GLA’s Survey of Londoners[[10]](#footnote-11)are:

* **Young people** - one in three (72%) of eligible 16- to 24-year-olds are not registered to vote compared to 97% of those aged 65+ who are registered;
* **Black Londoners** - 83% of Londoners from a Black ethnic background are registered
* **Social and private renters** - 85% of social renters and 86% of private renters are registered to vote compared with 93% of homeowner- occupiers.

The GLA City Intelligence team has estimated that:

* **If Londoners had to present a passport in order to vote, then over half a million (around 550,000) Londoners would not have this documentation** (Data source: Detailed EU/EFTA Passport held - Ward Tool, 2018)
* **If Londoners had to present a full driving licence in order to vote, then over two and a half million (over 2,600,000) Londoners would not have this documentation.** Females are less likely to have a driving licence (42%) compared with males (32%) (Data source: National Travel Survey: 2019)
* **Thirteen per cent (13%) of 60 - 64 years old Londoners do not have an Oyster photocard.** (Data source: TfL - active cards in 2020/21)
* **Only around one in five (18%) of disabled Londoners would be able to present a Freedom Pass as ID, if required.** (Data source: Taxicard and Freedom Pass usage statistics 2020 - 21, London Councils)

What our are members doing to fund democratic work?

[London Voices: the journey to full participation](https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/publications/london-voices-the-journey-to-full-participation/), a report commissioned by members [Trust for London](https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/publications/london-voices-the-journey-to-full-participation/), on behalf of the Citizenship and Integration Initiative, and the UK Democracy Fund, a Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust initiative find that civil society organisations make a huge contribution to civic participation in London – over 60% of civil society organisations who took part have organised training, mentoring or community events that enable the civic participation of Londoners. However, only around a third have organised initiatives around voter registration or other democratic awareness activities.

Funders, civic, democratic and political institutions need to support civil society to campaign and organise non-party political, impartial civic and political participation initiatives.

Some key changes that civil society would like to see in this respect are:

* local authorities embracing civil society as full and equal partners in the co-design and delivery of civic and democratic participation initiatives;
* the strengthening and creation of platforms that connect different civil society organisations;
* ensuring funding is available for non-party political, impartial campaigning and political participation activities.

There was also strong support for democratic reforms among the civil society organisations who took part in the London Voices research: over half of all civil society organisations surveyed said they were in favour of residence-based voting rights, and more opportunities for deliberative democracy, such as permanent Citizens’ Assemblies**. Over 60% of civil society organisations were also opposed to the introduction of mandatory photo voter ID**, citing deep concerns about the effect on the electoral turnout of their beneficiaries.

From London Funders [annual member audit](https://londonfunders.org.uk/latest/news/findings-our-member-audit) we can see that only **3%** of our members fund ‘Volunteering and Social Action’ and within the **2%** that fund research only **50%** is marked as ‘policy & campaigning’.

Looking on GrantNav, searching ‘London’ and grants from grant-making bodies and local authorities, we can see there are strong group of funders funding of democracy-related work in London[[11]](#footnote-12) between 2019 – 2021 **nearly 600 grants** were made, to **over 300 recipients** totalling over **£44 million.**  However, this has to be taken with a caveat that not all of these will be directly to what some might describe as ‘democracy related’ and may fall more strongly around other grant themes which are interlinked, such work around migrants rights and advice. It is still felt that democratic work is chronically under funded. The good news is that out of the top ten funders, eight were London Funders members and have strong record in funding work around democracy: A B Charitable Trust, Trust for London, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, National Lottery Community Fund, Comic Relief, The Childhood Trust, City Bridge Trust and The Tudor Trust. Do get in touch with London Funders if you would like to be connected in some way!

Further reading and recommendations

Five things we have learnt about England’s voter ID trials in the 2019 local elections, London School of Economics – <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/five-things-we-have-learnt-about-englands-voter-id-trials-in-the-2019-local-elections/>

Electoral Reform Society - <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/campaigns/upgrading-our-democracy/voter-id/>

Liberty’s view on voter ID - <https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/issue/libertys-view-on-voter-id-plans-opportunistic-divisive-and-undemocratic/>

London Voices: the journey to full participation, Trust for London <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/publications/london-voices-the-journey-to-full-participation/>

The Future of Political Campaigning, ICO - <https://ico.org.uk/media/2259365/the-future-of-political-campaigning.pdf>

What does voter ID mean for voters?, The Big Issue - <https://www.bigissue.com/news/politics/voter-id-what-does-the-new-plan-mean-for-voters/>

A spotlight on democratic engagement, Carnegie Trust - <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/gdwe-a-spotlight-on-democratic-wellbeing/>

1. <https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/elections-bill-mps-approve-plans-to-make-voter-id-mandatory-and-abolish-transferrable-votes-for-mayors-1407490> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9187/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/gdwe-a-spotlight-on-democratic-wellbeing/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/survey-results/daily/2019/10/16/98653/1> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/info/200033/elections_and_voting/1177/voter_id_pilot> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Voter registration rates in London are 76%, compared with 91% in the North East and 83% the England average. Electoral Commission, September 2019. <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/ourviews-and-research/our-research/accuracy-and-completeness-electoral-registers/2019-report-2018-electoralregisters-great-britain/completeness-great-britain> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. “Atlas of Democratic Variation”, Cabinet Office, January 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/atlasof-democratic-variation> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Toby James, Stuart Wilks-Heeg, Alistair Clark, “The UK Electoral Integrity Bill”, University of East Anglia, May 2021. <https://tobysjamesdotcom.files.wordpress.com/2021/05/02e03-ukelectoralintegritybill1.00.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Around two million EUSS applications have been made in London. For the latest data check <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/eu-settlement-scheme-statistics> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. “Survey of Londoners”, GLA, June 2019. <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/survey-of-londoners-headline-findings> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. https://insights.threesixtygiving.org/?url=https://grantnav.threesixtygiving.org/search.json?query=democracy%2C+democratic%2C+voting+rights%2C+voter%2C+voting%2C+voting+rights&default\_field=%2A&sort=\_score+desc&recipientRegionName=London&fundingOrganizationTSGType=Grantmaking+Organisation&fundingOrganizationTSGType=Lottery+Distributor&fundingOrganizationTSGType=Local+Government&currency=GBP&awardDate=2019&awardDate=2020&awardDate=2021 searching democracy, democratic, voting rights, voter, voting, voting rights [↑](#footnote-ref-12)