London Voices:

the journey to full participation

Research Report
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Delivery partner: Young Europeans Network

Research team: Dr. Omar Hammoud-Gallego, Katharina Lawall, Isabelle McRae, Dr. Raluca Moise, Stephanie Wanga

Project manager: Dr. Alexandra Bulat

With support and contributions from: Dr. Elisabeth Pop

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Executive Summary

Everyone has a unique journey to civic and democratic participation. Whether we speak about volunteering, voting, voicing a view in a consultation or contacting a local representative, our lived experiences make up our journeys. London Voices maps out Londoners' journeys to civic and democratic participation, with a focus on under-represented and marginalised Londoners - Black, minority ethnic and migrant Londoners; Deaf and disabled Londoners; young and private renting Londoners.

The Trust for London, on behalf of the Citizenship and Integration Initiative, and the UK Democracy Fund, a Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust initiative,[1] have come together to support comprehensive research into the mechanisms that can facilitate equal, inclusive, representative civic and democratic participation as part of the London Voices project. The Greater London Authority (GLA) has supported this research and its wider aims. The report has been drafted independently of the GLA and the Mayor of London and as a result makes recommendations for both.

This report argues that civic and democratic participation in London and the United Kingdom more broadly need to be addressed urgently. Voter turnout is one of the most important indicators of democratic participation. London had a voter turnout of 67.5% in the 2019 General Election,[2] compared with a UK - wide turnout of 67.3%,[3] both rates below averages in most Western European countries. In the 2018 London local elections, the voter turnout was 39%,[4] compared to 42% in the postponed 2021 Mayoral and Assembly elections.[5]

This report presents findings from extensive data collection using inclusive, participatory quantitative and qualitative methods. An original survey with civil society organisations of various sizes from across London was conducted between early July and mid-August 2021. 109 organisations took part in the survey and self-reported a total of 4087 full-time employees and 5611 volunteers. In-depth follow-up interviews were conducted with 21 organisations. Seven focus groups and eight community interviews were co-designed and led by five different young and migrant Londoner, and disabled people-led organisations to provide further community voices and lived experience perspectives. This provided a rich and robust evidence base for insights into current best practices and challenges that civil society organisations and their beneficiaries face in terms of their civic and democratic engagement. These lived experiences informed the recommendations on how and who should support equal, accessible, representative civic and democratic participation in London.

The survey results show 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. There is a clear gap in how comfortable civil society feels organising community events, compared to events related to elections. This missed potential needs to be addressed. 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 are 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 equality implications.

This research illustrates the full journey to participation in London through the lived experiences of under-represented groups. Following the analysis of the stakeholder survey, complemented by the qualitative interview findings, this report focuses on presenting challenges and opportunities in civic and democratic participation through the voices of different communities. The case studies section of the report shows the perspectives of faith and non-faith Londoners, Black and minority ethnic Londoners, migrant and refugee communities, and young Londoners. Some case studies detail specific challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the impact on community building and grassroots organising. This section's aim is also to show examples of innovative civic and democratic engagement, for instance through the case studies on London Voter Registration Week (LVRW) or grassroots-led campaigns like She Votes.

Finally, the report presents a series of detailed and practical recommendations for local authorities, the Greater London Assembly, the Mayor of London, Central Government, funders, civil society and political parties. These were co-designed with under-represented Londoners and an Advisory Board. If implemented, some immediately, others in the medium and long term, they could significantly improve Londoners' belonging, their trust in democratic systems and institutions, the feeling of being heard and the ability to use their voice and power to decide their future and the future of their city and the country.

(1) The UK Democracy Fund funded the work reported in this publication. The material presented here represents the views of the authors, not necessarily those of JRRT or other UK Democracy Fund contributors.
(2) https://electionresults.parliament.uk/election/2019-12-12/results/Location/Region/London
(3) https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/general-election-2019-turnout/
(4) https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/borough-council-election-results-2018
(5) https://www.londonelects.org.uk/im-voter/election-results/results-2021

Introduction

People are more likely to feel they belong in a city they have helped shape and support, so if we have learned anything from recent major events – from Brexit, to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement – it is that the emerging social contract needs to have civic and democratic participation at its heart.

However, to participate fully in shaping their future, citizens and residents need access to relevant knowledge and opportunities; they need to trust the system and feel heard. Central and local government, civil society organisations and funders play a critical role in enabling individuals to actively participate in their communities and their localities, in decisions that affect them, their families and their future.

This is particularly true for London, one of the most diverse cities in the world, which has one of the **lowest voter registration rates**[6] across the UK regions and nations. Voter registration rates are a key indicator of social integration, identity and belonging. With many of the most under-registered and under-represented Londoners disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, focus on access to full participation must become a prime concern.

Percentage of respondents REGISTERED TO VOTE by borough

Registered
70 to 75
75 to 80
80 to 85
85 to 90
90 to 95
95 to 100

Source: Survey of Londoners 2018/19. Weighted percentages

The Trust for London, on behalf of the Citizenship and Integration Initiative, and the UK Democracy Fund, a Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust initiative[7] have come together to support comprehensive research into the mechanisms that can facilitate equal, inclusive, representative civic and democratic participation as part of the London Voices project. The research has the support of the Greater London Authority (GLA).

This report focuses on **civic and democratic participation** in London. It does so by researching and explaining the contributions and challenges faced by non-partisan civil society organisations across London. This report highlights the impact of these organisations on London's civic and democratic life despite structural, institutional and financial barriers. It shows how they often fill the gaps left by local and national authorities, and what recommendations these civil society organisations have for a more inclusive, equitable and representative society.

In this report, **civic participation** is defined as the ways in which Londoners want and are able to engage in their local community. For example, it includes running or trying to set up a local service (through formal or informal volunteering), organising a community, sport or culture event, setting up or signing a petition, writing to and booking a meeting with an elected representative (such as a local councillor or MP).

Democratic participation is defined as the degree to which Londoners want and are able to engage in the democratic system in London and the UK more broadly. For example, it includes campaigning for a political issue and/or a political party, running as a party political or independent candidate for public office, being able and willing to register to vote, and voting in elections.

The report follows a rigorous methodology by using a mixed methods research approach, which blends both quantitative and qualitative methods. The former, a stakeholders' survey, provides evidence about the current work and characteristics of civil society organisations across the whole of London. The latter, in the form of interviews and peer-led focus groups, focuses on community voice and lived experience, presenting different initiatives undertaken by civil society organisations across the city.
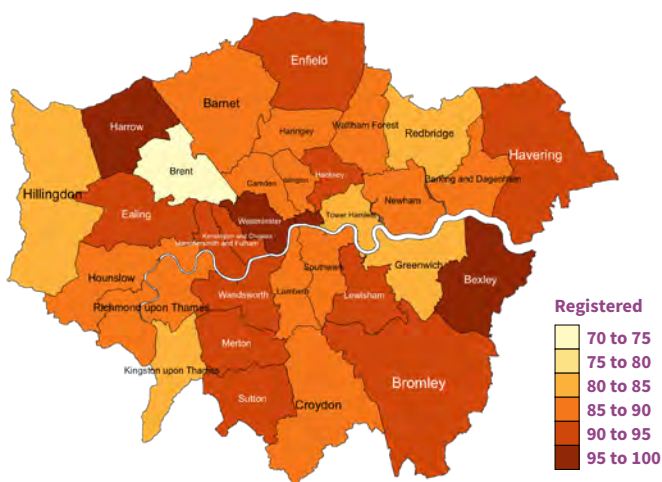
Believed to be the first study of its kind to survey more than 100 civil society organisations of various sizes from across London, the report complements research conducted by the GLA in 2019 with the **Survey of Londoners**[8] and the GLA's Building Strong Communities recovery mission, including the **London Civic Strength Index**[9] and the **Festival of Ideas**.[10]

Percentage of respondents in London registered to vote by AGE GROUP per borough
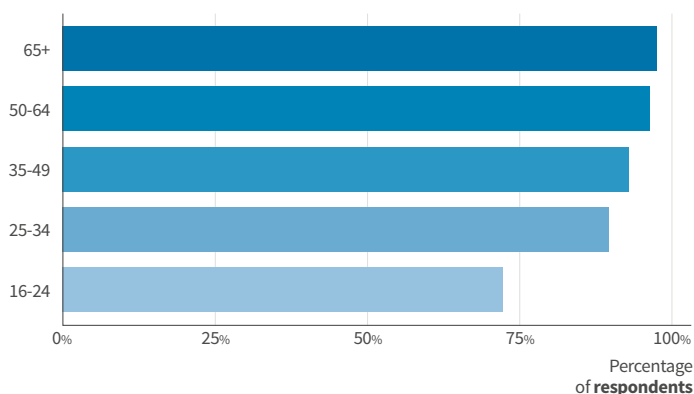
Source: Survey of Londoners 2018/19

Percentage of respondents in London registered to vote by ETHNIC GROUP per borough
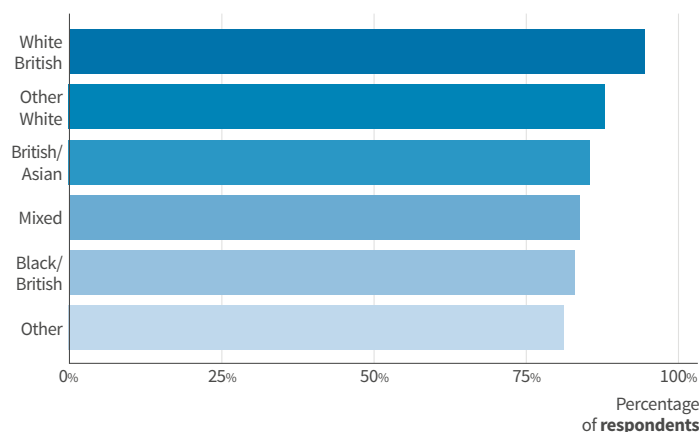
Source: Survey of Londoners 2018/19

The objective of this report was to look at how organisations support the civic and democratic participation of various under-represented communities in London, identifying the priorities and needs in this area, and how civil society and key stakeholders would like to collaborate and coordinate on civic and democratic reform and advocacy. The research also looked at the impact of recent events and current and upcoming legislation. Hence, this report concludes with a series of recommendations for local and national authorities, as well as for civil society, funders and political parties. These detailed and targeted recommendations were co-produced with impacted audiences (minority ethnic Londoners, Black Londoners, young Londoners, faith and non-faith Londoners, and private renters) and an Advisory Board with representation from all main under-represented communities in London.

The research offers a holistic view of the journey to full participation, and in particular stresses the continuum between civic and democratic participation and the importance of including it in the emerging post-pandemic social contact to foster belonging and trust, key indicators of social integration. Yet this research had financial, time and capacity limitations. Further funding and partnership work with civil society, local authorities, statutory bodies and academia should be undertaken to fill the remaining gaps in data and analysis. Further work should continue to be led by community voices and lived experiences; map emerging barriers and best practices in civic and democratic participation; and inspire innovation and collaboration across London, the UK and internationally.

More information and interactive material on this report can be accessed at *www.londonvoices.co.uk* and at *https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/issues/people/london-voices-the-journey-to-full-participation/*

(8) *https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/survey-of-londoners-headline-findings*
(9) *https://www.youngfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Civic-Strength-Index-Final-Report-1.pdf*
(10) *https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/civil-society/london-festival-ideas-your-vision-strong-communities*

Literature review

Successful civic and democratic participation taking place across London

Prior to the pandemic, participatory initiatives were taking place on multiple fronts across London. At the borough level, this included work focusing on civic participation and community welfare (livelihoods, livability and social cohesion). At the grassroots level, there have been ongoing efforts to address the barriers to participation faced by Black and minority ethnic communities, migrant groups, people on low income and young Londoners. Civil society has been bridging the divide between grassroots and governance level initiatives amidst calls for greater collaboration.

A **Local borough & metropolitan councils have been focusing on:**

- Needs assessments conducted through community listening, evidence hearings, surveys and mapping by local councils helped identify existing services and outline recommendations. Some initiatives have created new programmes to protect low income renters and others to implement community resilience projects by strengthening support networks.[11]

- Environmental planning was also highlighted as an entry for democratic participation, identifying interconnections between environmental, social and economic issues in London.[12] In line with this, Newham Council implemented an effective Climate Change assembly.[13]

- *Talk London,* the online community forum of City Hall, has made connecting with local authorities and policy-planning more accessible. Meanwhile, the Local Government Association's *Be a Councillor* Programme has supported communities with civic education and contributed to more diverse leadership.

B **Civic participation is experienced unevenly for different communities:**

- Barriers to an inclusive civic and democratic participation have been identified particularly for **1) Black and minority ethnic Londoners, 2) migrant Londoners** and **3) young Londoners**.[14] This finding has been confirmed by our organisational survey, presented in the next section of the report.

The main causes of low civic and democratic participation are:

- A low sense of belonging[15] is a barrier to all groups, but especially to migrants (via insufficient language services; lack of buy-in and social isolation; policing and surveillance of migrant communities; low socio-economic status);

- For Black and ethnic minorities, such issues are exacerbated by discrimination, institutional racism and policing, and potentially lower socio-economic status, leading to disenfranchisement from political processes;[16]

- Young people often perceive the political system to be alienating, and also face a lack of information about their rights and civic processes;[17]

- A lack of representative elected officials presents an obstacle for the democratic engagement of especially ethnic minorities and young people. This has further implications for policy making;[18]

- Unstable housing conditions make participation difficult, with high mobility resulting in disconnection from local & larger political processes (i.e., private renters, the homeless, and low income);[19]

- Disabled people may also be presented with barriers to involvement through lack of accessibility. Carers may not be informed about their role in encouraging voter registration.[20]

(11) Hackney Council carried out a significant residential engagement project (based on surveys/interviews with 4500 residents and a deliberative panel) which informed the council's 2018-2028 Strategy. See "Hackney: A Place for Everyone: A Residents' View of Hackney in 2015-16"
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1a2Aadi_GxgZfcTLD-s2kTj9w6LBoeEXi/view
Also see London Councils (2020), Hounslow Social Integration projects
https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/leadership-devolution-and-democracy/social-integration/hounslow
(12) Institute for Public Policy Research Environmental Justice Commission & Citizens UK (2021). "London: a Just Transition City".
https://citizensuk.contentfiles.net/media/documents/london-a-just-transition-city-february-21.pdf
(13) Newham Council (2020). Newham Democracy and Civic Participation Commission Final Report.
https://www.newhamdemocracycommission.org/wp-content/uploads/Democracy-Commission-Report.pdf
(14) Mitchell, J. (2018). Who's missing and why? Underrepresentation in voter registration, candidacy, informedness and turnout. Democracy Club.
https://democracyclub.org.uk/reports/whos_missing/#people-with-disabilities
(15) The Migration Observatory (2020). Migrants' social relationships & civic participation in the UK.
https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migrants-social-relationships-identity-and-civic-participation-in-the-uk/
(16) Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021). Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: The Report.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf. Also see the
Mapping for Change project on Romany and Irish Travelers living in London: https://mappingforchange.org.uk/projects/mapping-the-pathway-to-equality/
(17) Brady, B., Chaskin, R. J. & McGregor, C. (2020). Promoting civic and political engagement among marginalized urban youth in three cities: Strategies and challenges. Children and Youth Services Review, Vol 116.
(18) Sobolewska, M. & Begum, N. (2020). Ethnic Minority Representation in UK Local Government. University of Manchester.
https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=49921
(19) Mitchell, J. (2018). Who's missing and why? Underrepresentation in voter registration, candidacy, informedness and turnout. Democracy Club.
https://democracyclub.org.uk/reports/whos_missing/#people-with-disabilities
(20) Ibid.

- Practices to overcome these barriers have highlighted **intersectional and local measures** that require popular buy-in and support from community leadership:

  - Community associations and informal community centers/spaces;[21]

  - Mutual aid groups & digital networks (especially during the pandemic);[22]

  - Local projects addressing systemic & institutional racism via trainings and forums;[23]

  - Democratic participation projects (mayoral, local council levels), including youth councils and forums.[24]

C **The participation sector and the demand for a democracy network:**

- In 2018, the UK civic space was declared to be 'narrow' from a democratic point of view.[25] While the democracy/participation sector involves a **large number** of organisations and groups, there is **limited coordination and capacity** due to: 1) lack of funding, 2) need for better connections within and across the sector, 3) growing pressures and restrictions on advocacy work.

- In 2019, the Lobbying Act was met with calls for revision because of its new measures and requirements which, as major charities have pointed out, restricted them from representing marginal social groups.[26]

- In 2020, the Charity Commission Chair Baroness Stowell warned that charities' advocacy activity could be seen as "culture wars". The Chair's public intervention was met with strong reactions from the sector's leaders.[27]

- In this context, organisations and the sector at large can benefit from **better public engagement,** and the **creation of an up-to-date map** of who is working in the field; this kind of collaboration will both make the sector more efficient and support creativity by engaging with different levels (grassroots, local authority, international hubs).[28]

- To support representation and advocacy work, donors can and should invest in the creation of both **effective physical and digital network hubs** in the democracy sector, and emphasise **collaborative work** through shared grants and funding for group initiatives.

(21) Centre of Migration Research Foundation (2016). Londoner-Pole-Citizen (LPC) Project. Final report. *http://obmf.pl/projekty/Projekt_POL2016/final%20report.pdf*
Also, Banulescu-Bogdan, N. (2020). Beyond Work: Reducing Social Isolation for Refugee Women and Other Marginalised Newcomers. Migration Policy Institute.
https://www.immigrationresearch.org/system/files/TCM-Social-Isolation_FINALWEB.pdf

(22) New Local (2020). Communities Vs. Coronavirus, the rise of mutual aid *https://www.newlocal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Communities-vs-Coronavirus_New-Local.pdf*
Also see The Turkish Cypriot Community Association has very active in providing mutual aid, voting participation, and supporting vaccinations.
https://www.enfieldindependent.co.uk/news/19213023.haringey-charity-spearheading-covid-vaccine-take-up-among-bame-communities/

(23) Centre for City Criminology, University of London (2020). The Disproportionality Project: Addressing issues relating to the disproportionately high representation of Islington's and Haringey's BAME young people in the Criminal Justice System.
http://repository.essex.ac.uk/28826/1/2020-06%20-%20Disproportionality%20Report%20-%20FINAL.pdf

(24) See Operation Black Vote. More at *https://www.obv.org.uk/*

(25) CIVICUS (2018) People Power under Attack. Available online at *https://www.civicus.org/documents/PeoplePowerUnderAttack.Report.27November.pdf*

(26) The Guardian (2019) UK charities call for end to 'gagging law' in run-up to elections.
https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/nov/20/charities-call-for-end-gagging-law-lobbying-act-run-up-elections.
Also, read "The Chilling Reality. How the Lobbying Act is affecting charity & voluntary sector campaigning in the UK", by Sheila Mckechnie Foundation,
https://smk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/SMK_The_Chilling_Reality_Lobbying_Act_Research.pdf

(27) Civil Society News (2020) Charity Commission chair warns charities not to engage in 'culture wars'.
https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/charity-commission-chair-warns-charities-not-to-engage-in-culture-wars.html

(28) See Democracy R&D at *https://democracyrd.org/about/* for more info. Also, see Buček, J., & Smith, B. (2000). New Approaches to Local Democracy: Direct Democracy, Participation and the 'Third Sector.' Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy, 18(1), 3–16. *https://doi.org/10.1068/c9950*

The impact of major events like Brexit, the pandemic and the BLM movement on civic and democratic participation

Brexit, the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, among other major events, have affected different groups of Londoners in distinct ways. Blows were dealt to civic and democratic participation at all levels - ranging from the marginalisation of the House of Commons during the pandemic to the ways in which the sense of belonging among everyday EU citizens and ethnic minorities has been undermined. Below, we break down some of the key ways this has taken place.

A Impact on civic and democratic participation

- In many ways, the government's approach to the House of Commons during COVID-19 has led to the marginalisation of MPs. This is especially via the **erosion of parliamentary control** when it comes to emergency legislation, regulations, and money, and denying MPs' equal participation rights, and wholesale and unnecessary use of proxy votes.[29] Parliamentary control can validly be limited in times of emergency, but some MPs have felt that the government has been taking advantage of this. Further, these measures should be taken only in extenuating circumstances, and justifying continuing these concessions a year on is difficult, as there is a real risk of this sidestepping of parliamentary control to become the norm.

- **Local elections in England due in May 2020 were postponed** due to COVID-19. In order to ensure elections go ahead in 2021, various provisions were made such as for postal and proxy votes (including emergency proxies) throughout the United Kingdom for the various electoral processes taking place. Fewer signatures were needed for candidates' nomination papers. However, the combination of polls also led to **a highly complex election,** especially in England.[30]

- Brexit has had wide-ranging effects, exacerbated by the pandemic (which variously necessitated or threatened delays to an already strained process). The Democratic Audit noted **MPs faced backlash by pro-Brexit media** whenever they expressed any doubts about the consequences of Brexit, curtailing open debate.[31]

B Impact on interventions aimed to increase civil and democratic participation

- While plans were already underway to ensure more students registered to vote,[32] **the disproportionate effect of the pandemic on students required a revised approach to secure their civic and democratic participation.** This rendered the need for participation in decision-making more urgent, with Student Union officers in various universities actively campaigning for the wellbeing of the students, speeding up action from their universities, and in some cases, from the government. Speaking up online also proved, for some, more accessible and less daunting, but also left others out, especially when they were not able to access university resources due to travel restrictions, for example.

- Following the BLM protests, there was an attempt at **accelerated civic engagement with targeted actions for under-represented groups.** The UK government tasked the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities to look into race relations in the United Kingdom,[33] producing the now infamous "Race Report", which a United Nations Working Group categorically rejected and condemned.[34] This would certainly need to be revisited, and the paucity of literature on disaggregated ethnic minorities addressed (for example literature reflecting the distinctions between the civic and political participation of Black British and Commonwealth citizens).

- **The levelling up agenda has been made four times harder in some places outside the Greater South East,** according to Centre for Cities research,[35] though the pandemic grossly left no part of the UK unaffected, including the **poorest parts of the South East.**

C Potential effect of government-led policy in this area

- Long-term impact with **high risk for under-represented groups:** the introduction of photo voter ID.

- Medium-term impact with **high risk for ethnic minorities:** the ban of postal vote harvesting.

- Long-term impact with **benefits for disabled voters:** current civil society campaigns are focused on making the process of democratic participation **more inclusive and deliberative.**

(29) UK Public General Acts (2020) Coronavirus Act 2020. *https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2020/7/contents/enacted/data.htm* Also, see Fox. R., Russell, M., Cormacain, R., Tomlison, J. (2021) The Marginalisation of the House of Commons under Covid Has Been Shocking; a Year on, Parliament's Role Must Urgently Be Restored, April 21, 2021. *https://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/publications/briefings/the-marginalisation-of-the-house-of-commons-under-covid-has-been-shocking-a*

(30) Torrance, N. and Johnston, N. "Coronavirus: Elections", November 5, 2021, *https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8856/*

(31) Dunleavy, P., Park, A. and Taylor, R. (eds) (2018) The UK's changing democracy: The 2018 Democratic Audit. London: LSE Press. DOI: *https://doi.org/10.31389/book1*

(32) Office for Students (2018) Regulatory Advice 11: Guidance for Providers about Facilitating Electoral Registration. *https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-advice-11-guidance-for-providers-about-facilitating-electoral-registration/*

(33) Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021). Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: The Report. March. *https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/foreword-introduction-and-full-recommendations*

(34) BBC News (2021), Race Report: UN Experts Say Conclusions Could 'Fuel Racism. April 19, 2021, *https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-56800763*

(35) Centre for Cities (2021) Levelling up. *https://www.centreforcities.org/levelling-up/.*

- Long term impact with **benefits for British citizens permanent residents abroad** who are getting votes for life.

- Long term impact with **high risk for London's poorest:** the neglect of London in the levelling up agenda is questionable, particularly considering that the highest child poverty rate and the two most deprived local authorities in England are in London, with conditions only being exacerbated by the pandemic.

- Long term impact with **high risk for electors:** the scrapping of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act bears the **risk of disenfranchising electors, especially those living overseas,** largely due to the lack of lead-in time, lowering voter registration and postal voting levels.

- **High risk to the independence of the Electoral Commission** and its ability to safeguard our democracy in view of the Government's plan to manage its oversight and curtail its powers.

- **The removal of current voting rights in local elections for EU citizens who arrive in England and Northern Ireland after 31 December 2020** and are not from an EU country with which Britain has bilateral treaties (Spain, Portugal, Luxembourg and Poland).[36]

Lessons from other cities and regional authorities in UK and worldwide

The literature on civic and democratic participation at local and regional levels in the UK and worldwide has so far identified a series of best practices described here below. These best practices can be described as **mechanisms** and **tools** to promote civic and democratic participation. Moreover, this literature suggests that such best practices can contribute to healing existing political divisions.

A At grassroots level, civil society organisations embed civic and democratic participation methods in social and cultural events. This new mode of engagement forms politically literate audiences and brings forward social issues

- Youth groups organise **social activities** to promote cohesion in diverse and disadvantaged communities.[37]

- Civil society institutions conduct **research projects** to identify new ways of engaging young citizens for democratic participation, such as volunteering around social justice as a route to the ballot box.[38]

- Community organisations run **social events** involving performances, short films, music videos and documentaries.[39]

- **Community organised theatre** (Slung Low's People's Leeds Theatre and Brighton People's Theatre, which have a long tradition in community civic engagement).[40]

- Organisations of local residents run **festivals.**[41]

B Local authorities in the UK support civic and democratic participation by:

- **Promoting public discussions** on young people's right to vote (e.g., in Scotland, public discussions around the Scottish independence referendum[42] have highlighted the need to develop youth-centric policies in order to rebuild public trust in politicians and the political system).[43]

- **Introducing participatory and deliberative processes** to address poverty, emergency responses and inclusive community management. For example, during COVID-19, the West Midlands Combined Authority opened a citizens' panel,[44] Kingston conducted a public survey,[45] Bristol implemented a citizen assembly,[46] and Fife has set up a participatory budgeting initiative.[47] The think tank *Involve* has thoroughly explored both the overall effect of COVID-19 on democracy across the UK and analysed local case studies.[48]

(36) This will not impact the existing full voting rights of Irish citizens or of citizens from Malta or Cyprus, by virtue of these countries being part of the Commonwealth. EU citizens in Scotland and Wales already have voting rights confirmed in local and devolved elections, together with all other residents, irrespective of their nationality. EU citizens who have arrived before 31 December 2020 and have pre or settled status will keep their voting rights as long as they have a legal immigration status in the UK under the EU Settlement Scheme.

(37) RECLAIM, (2021) RECLAIM | Working-Class Young Leaders | United Kingdom. RECLAIM Project. *https://www.reclaim.org.uk; see also #iwill, "About Us," #iwill (blog), https://www.iwill.org.uk/about-us*

(38) Fox, St. (2019) Social Action IS a Route to the Ballot Box - but only for a minority of young people. May 30. *https://wiserd.ac.uk/news/social-action-route-ballot-box-only-minority-young-people*

(39) Pink Dot SG (2021) About Pink Dot SG. Pink Dot SG (blog), *https://pinkdot.sg/about-pink-dot-sg/*

(40) Bartley, S. (2021) UK People's Theatres: performing civic functions in a time of austerity, Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance, 26:1, 171-186

(41) GoDown Arts Centre in Nairobi, Kenya, with a project to explore the anxieties of belonging and identity in a postcolonial city via a festival "Nai ni Who?" (Who is Nairobi?) in Joy Mboya and Garnette Oluoch-Olunya, "Nai Ni Who?: Exploring Urban Identity, Place, and Social (Re)Construction in Nairobi," Critical Interventions 11, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 58–72.

(42) Eichhorn, J. (2015) Should the Voting Age Be Lowered to 16 for UK Elections?. Political Insight 6, no. 2 (September 1, 2015): 22–23.

(43) Mycock, A. and Tonge, J. (2014) Ed Miliband Should Recognise That 16 and 17 Year Olds Can Be Part of Our Democracy Even If They Do Not Have the Vote. Democratic Audit (blog), May 2, 2014, https://www.democraticaudit.com/2014/05/02/ed-miliband-should-recognise-that-16-and-17-year-olds-can-be-part-of-our-democracy-even-if-they-do-not-have-the-vote/.

(44) West Midlands Citizen Panel: *https://www.wmca.org.uk/news/mental-health-support-jobs-and-training-among-key-recovery-priorities-for-west-midlands-citizens-panel/.*

(45) Kingston Council Coronavirus Survey: *https://kingstonletstalk.co.uk/kingston-coronavirus-survey*

(46) Bristol's project "Your City Our Future: *https://bristol.citizenspace.com/bristol-city-council/your-city-our-future/*

(47) Fife Council's budgeting: *https://audioboom.com/posts/7669777-let-s-talk-about-our-fife-with-coryn-barclay*

(48) See Involve's blogs for more detailed information
https://www.involve.org.uk/our-work/our-projects/research/what-role-should-public-play-covid-19-recovery and https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/blog/opinion/long-short-it-local-authorities-responding-covid-19-deliberation

- **Addressing intersectional issues:** in March 2021, Bristol Council called for more local initiatives to "help communities still suffering from systemic poverty many years after the trafficking of African people", in order to address the "long shadows" cast by slavery and address inequality and exclusion within Bristol.[49] It is important to note that London, too, has been trying to address this issue of commemoration, and has actively tried to diversify commemoration in the public realm.[50]

- **Fostering flexible, informal, and technologically-friendly community powered networks** and new initiatives which can be embedded in future best practices.[51]

- **Adopting progressive policies:** as an example, Scotland recently extended voting rights to all people with right to remain, including people with refugee status and those serving short term prison sentences.[52]

C **Local authorities from around the world support civic and democratic engagement by:**

- Promoting an open government model: for instance, the Taiwanese promoted an **open government model** to prevent the "landslide effect of distrust"[53] by 1) relying on existing and well-trusted systems and actors within the community such as pharmacists, 2) roping local nightclubs into the COVID fight and 3) digital innovation was also crucial for civic and democratic participation.

- Ensuring methods of transparent handling of public resources, such as OECD countries' **mechanisms to ensure parliamentary control** over public spending.[54]

- Adopting **digital platforms to promote civic participation,** such as developed by the Madrid City Council in Spain.[55]

D **Inclusive devolution as a solution for deep divisions and an opportunity for social cohesive action, economic prosperity and transparent governance:**

- Devolution, by giving more power to local and regional authorities, can support more accountable and transparent governance. But current devolution processes have not gone far enough, power is still highly concentrated in Whitehall and Westminster whose "un-strategic thinking" has hampered engagement processes.

- London has the highest rates of poverty and inequality in the country.[56] London and the South East accounted for 47% of jobs increase in the UK in the past decade; however, two thirds of these increases have been in management-level and professional white-collar positions, leaving lower-paid labour and service sector workers in insecure and deeply unequal conditions.

- Recommendations suggested include reforming central-local relationships, including via a new constitutional convention. If these relations are reformed, there may be opportunity for more cohesive action amongst various local authorities. IPPR's recommendations include: an inclusive devolution process for all England, devolution of fiscal powers; develop a locally-led regional tier of government; devolve powers to small cities, regions and on-urban areas; permanently reform central-local relationships with a new constitution.[57]

E **Opportunities to develop potential inter-regional collaborations include:**

- **Developing collaborative** practices with similar local councils (Bristol is a most appropriate choice, given the aforementioned practices).

- Seeking increased **support from the UK Government** to develop the Democracy Network and to support collaboration across sectors and regions.[58]

- Establishing a **supraregional collaborative network** (an initiative like that of SANE - The Solidarity Action Network[59] - a platform for civil society actors and advocates with an up-to-date Solidarity Playbook, could be an effective way to share best practices at the regional and supraregional level).

(49) Morris, St. (2021) Bristol Council Calls for Parliamentary Inquiry on Slavery Reparations. The Guardian, March 2,
https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/mar/02/bristol-council-calls-for-parliamentary-inquiry-on-slavery-reparations

(50) Mayor of London (2020) The Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm," London City Hall (blog), September 10.
https://www.london.gov.uk//what-we-do/arts-and-culture/commission-diversity-public-realm

(51) New Local (2020): Shifting the Balance. Overview and case studies of local strategies used around the UK to respond to the Coronavirus.
https://www.newlocal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Shifting-the-Balance.pdf

(52) See the campaign work of the Scottish Refugee Council *https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/working-for-change/policy-campaigns/right-to-vote/* and the Howard League Scotland, a campaigner for criminal justice reform *http://howardleague.scot/tags/prisoner-voting*

(53) Tang, A. (2020) A Thousand-Year-Old Dark Room Can Be Illuminated By a Single Lantern," involve.org.uk, November 20.
https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/blog/opinion/thousand-year-old-dark-room-can-be-illuminated-single-lantern

(54) OECD (2020) Legislative Budget Oversight of Emergency Responses: Experiences during the Coronavirus (COVID 19) Pandemic" (OECD, September 25).
https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/legislative-budget-oversight-of-emergency-responses-experiences-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-ba4f2ab5/#section-d1e787

(55) For an overview on Decide Madrid see: *https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/case-studies/decide-madrid*

(56) Raiks, L. (2020). The Devolution Parliament Devolving Power to England's Regions, Towns and Cities - Summary. Institute for Public Policy Research.
https://www.ippr.org/files/2020-02/the-devolution-parliament-feb-20-summary.pdf

(57) Kenny, M., Rycroft, P. & Sheldon, J. (2020). "Union at the Crossroads: Can the British state handle the challenges of devolution?". The Constitution Society.
https://consoc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Union-at-the-Crossroads-FINAL.pdf

(58) UK Government (2018). Civil Society Strategy: Building A Future That Works For Everyone. Report.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732765/Civil_Society_Strategy_-_building_a_future_that_works_for_everyone.pdf

(59) Read more about the platform here: *https://solidarityaction.network/about/*

New and innovative models on civic and democratic participation in London, the UK and around the world

Recently, innovative models of civic and democratic participation have been adopted in London, the UK and worldwide to promote citizens' engagement, especially the engagement of young people, as well as that of different faith communities and Deaf and disabled people. Below are examples of such innovative models and how they can be adapted to foster citizens' engagement in London and beyond.

A Media and political literacy education for civic and democratic engagement in London's schools and colleges:

- Academic studies show that experiencing civic education at school and civic education exams increase political knowledge, especially among students least likely to encounter this information outside school.[60] Other studies also show how school education focused on civic education leads to long-term increases in voter turnout and registration.[61]

- The GLA has taken strategic measures to ensure inclusive media and political literacy in schools. These include the first Political Literacy resources produced by a regional authority in collaboration with ShoutOut UK, part of the GLA's London Voter Registration Week, to help young people understand their democratic rights, the political system, critically interact with traditional and social media, act on their global citizenship and activism.[62] Furthermore, in 2020, the Mayor of London initiated a diversity review of the curriculum in London. Conducted in partnership with The Black Curriculum, the review aimed to help identify relevant themes for the London Curriculum's three history resources.[63]

- To enable more Londoners to give their time and resources to help the social integration of refugees, the GLA is actively promoting community sponsorship, which brings together the goodwill and expertise of businesses, faith and local communities to welcome refugees.[64]

- The Citizenship Foundation suggests that when developing ideas of national identity amongst pupils, it is imperative that the curriculum does not impose a single view of what it means to be 'English' and/or 'British' and that pupils are given opportunities to recognise the complexity of the term 'Britishness'. The Foundation argues that such a comprehension would allow pupils 'whatever their primary cultures and values to become knowledgeable and competent citizens'.[65]

- The Mayor of London, the Greater London Assembly and ACT[66] have developed a dedicated London citizenship education pack for teachers.[67]

- Recommendations to promote media literacy and civic and democratic engagement include government-funded media literacy campaigns, as well as support for public libraries. Additionally, interactive education formats (like blogging) are deemed effective in increasing political knowledge and participation long-term.[68]

B The role of technology in civic and democratic education and participation:

- Academic research has so far found tentatively positive evidence on how the internet and social media affect citizens' electoral turnout and other forms of political participation. For instance, research by Campante et al. (2018) shows both how the internet has facilitated the emergence of online grassroots movements, but also how the effect of internet on turnout may change over time as new political actors emerge that can mobilise disenchanted or demobilised voters.[69]

- However, other research has also highlighted the negative effects of the internet and social media on turnout and political participation. This situation is mostly due to the crowding out of attention, as citizens may turn their attention to entertainment or other activities other than political participation.[70]

- Other research also suggests that digital politics and online participation may replicate, or worse exacerbate, existing inequalities in political participation.[71]

(60) Campbell, D., & Niemi, R. (2016). Testing Civics: State-Level Civic Education Requirements and Political Knowledge. American Political Science Review, 110(3), 495-511.

(61) Gill, B., Whitesell, E., Corcoran, S., Tilley, C., Finucane, M., & Potamites, L. (2020). Can Charter Schools Boost Civic Participation? The Impact of Democracy Prep Public Schools on Voting Behavior. American Political Science Review, 114(4), 1386-1392.

(62) Greater London Authority. Media and Political Literacy Resources (online). https://registertovote.london/political-literacy-resources/

(63) Mayor of London (2020) Mayor calls for a more diverse National Curriculum. 2 October. https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayor-calls-for-a-more-diverse-national-curriculum

(64) Mayor of London. Community Sponsorship of Refugees. https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/migrants-and-refugees/community-sponsorship-refugees

(65) Citizenship Foundation (2003) Education for Citizenship, Diversity and Race Equality: A Practical Guide (London, The Citizenship Foundation), p. 22.

(66) Association for Citizenship Teaching. About ACT. https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/about-act

(67) Polizzi, G. (2019) We need to promote children's and adult's media literacy. Of course, but how…? 23 October. LSE Blog. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/medialse/2019/10/23/we-need-to-promote-childrens-and-adults-media-literacy-of-course-but-how

(68) Claassen, R. L. & Monson, J. Q. (2015) Does Civic Education Matter?: The Power of Long-Term Observation and the Experimental Method, Journal of Political Science Education, 11:4, 404-421.

(69) For a good overview article see: Koc-Michalska K, Lilleker DG, Vedel T. Civic political engagement and social change in the new digital age. New Media & Society. 2016;18(9):1807-1816; Filipe Campante, Ruben Durante, Francesco Sobbrio, Politics 2.0: The Multifaceted Effect of Broadband Internet on Political Participation, Journal of the European Economic Association, Volume 16, Issue 4, August 2018, Pages 1094–1136; Boulianne, Shelley, 2020. Twenty Years of Digital Media Effects on Civic and Political Participation. Communication research, 47(7), pp.947–966; Margetts, Helen. 2013. "The Internet and Democracy." pp. 421–37 in The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies, edited by Dutton, W. H. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.; Valentino Larcinese & Luke Miner, 2017. "The Political Impact of the Internet on US Presidential Elections", STICERD - Economic Organisation and Public Policy Discussion Papers Series 63, Suntory and Toyota International Centres for Economics and Related Disciplines, LSE.

(70) Falck, O., Gold, R., Heblich S. (2014). "E-Lections: Voting Behavior and the Internet." American Economic Review, 7, 2238–2265.

(71) Robinson, L. et al. (2015). Digital inequalities and why they matter. Information, Communication & Society, 18(5), 569–582.

- Examples of digital divides in the UK: young people who engage in online political participation are usually more likely to be of high socio-economic status, and high in early family socialisation in politics;[72] gaps in who uses cultural offers online/museums online are even bigger than offline;[73] the already more engaged are also more likely to comment on news stories online;[74] a quarter of the UK adult population are internet non-users, or 'limited users' because they have unreliable broadband connections, share devices or lack digital skills.[75]

- Political participation, even in an online format or through apps, increases efficacy and feelings of belonging to the local community. A mixed-methods case study on mySociety, a UK online platform making it easier for citizens to contact their local councillor, shows that users are already more engaged but that online participation further increased efficacy and feelings of belonging to the local community, and also translated to offline participation.[76]

- Digital access needs to encompass digital and media literacy training for all Londoners, not just school children, as well as an expert assessment of how digital technology may replicate or exacerbate existing inequalities between Londoners, and what actions need to be taken to remedy these.[77]

C Influencers' impact on citizens' civic and democratic participation:

- There is a body of evidence from the United States, and some examples from the UK, about the role of influencers (be they community and faith leaders, bloggers, social media, movie, music or sport celebrities). Replicable examples are voter registration initiatives at music festivals and concerts[78] and the initiative of some social media platforms[79] to promote voter registration thus fostering trust in democracy and empowering civil and democratic participation, especially around issues of social justice and representation.[80]

- The academic literature points out that community leaders have different and diverse roles and they are also expected to play them differently. As an example, community leaders can be involved in approaches to planning at the local council level, being linked with elected representatives in forms of authority and decision-making.[81]

D Tools and resources necessary to ensure the full participation of Deaf and disabled Londoners

- Inclusivity must be embedded in the design of a participation process from the start - this requires adequate planning, funding, staff and resources.[82]

- Deaf and disabled people should be actively recruited to be involved in the planning of a participatory process or event from the outset.

- Best practice examples include Camden's citizens' assembly on health and care organised by Kaleidoscope Health and Care. The event included hearing loops, British Sign Language interpreters and captioning, childcare facilities, accessible facilities, as well as space to listen and respond to feedback.[83]

E Opportunities for deliberative democracy in London

- Deliberative democracy tools, such as citizens' assemblies, mini-publics or citizen forums can be an effective way of involving citizens in local decision-making and increasing trust in political institutions.[84]

- Deliberative democracy has been shown to increase out-group empathy and acceptance, as well as generate interest in future political participation.[85]

- A best practice example in London comes from Newham, which used a citizens' assembly to formulate its policy on the climate emergency. The Newham Democracy and Civic Participation Report recommends more permanent citizen assemblies to meet twice a year to support the formulation of policy in Newham.[86] A similar model could be adopted London-wide, as well as by other London boroughs individually.

- Collaboration with researchers and third sector organisations to plan, pilot and evaluate citizens' assemblies in London is key to making these new tools a success.

(72) Leyva, R. Exploring UK Millennials' Social Media Consumption Patterns and Participation in Elections, Activism, and "Slacktivism." Social Science Computer Review. 2017; 35(4), 462-479.

(73) Mihelj, S., Leguina, A. & Downey, J., 2019. Culture is digital: Cultural participation, diversity and the digital divide. New media & Society, 21(7), pp.1465–1485.

(74) Kalogeropoulos A., Negredo S., Picone I., Nielsen R.K., 2017. Who Shares and Comments on News?: A Cross-National Comparative Analysis of Online and Social Media Participation. Social Media and Society.

(75) Based on nationally representative surveys conducted as part of the Talk Together Project: https://together.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Our-Chance-to-Reconnect-1.pdf

(76) Cantijoch M, Galandini S, Gibson R. (2016). "It's not about me, it's about my community': A mixed-method study of civic websites and community efficacy. New Media & Society. 18(9), 1896-1915.

(77) Another report by the Data & Society research organisation focuses on young people and their relation to technology: https://datasociety.net/library/the-unseen-teen/

(78) Organising voter registration drives at mass social and community events is an established method in the US and has contributed to historic democratic participation levels especially among young people, at the 2018 US midterm elections, and Black Americans, at 2020 US Presidential election, following decades of voter suppression. See Ariana Grande's 'Sweetener' tour driving record voter registration rates (https://www.cnbc.com/2019/07/01/ariana-grandes-sweetener-tour-drives-record-voter-registration-at-concerts.html), brands like Coca Cola allowing their employees to take election day off to be able to vote and Ben & Jerry's running big social action campaigns, as well as the historic organising and mobilising strategy overseen by Stacey Abrams in the state of Georgia (https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/05/us/politics/stacey-abrams-georgia.html)

(79) Forbes (2020). Election Update: How Snapchat Has Helped Register Over 1 Million Young People To Vote". October 2020. https://www.forbes.com/sites/afdhelaziz/2020/10/07/election-update-how-snapchat-has-registered-over-1-million-young-people-to-vote/

(80) See HOPE not Hate's work with faith, BAME and migrant community leaders, (https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/democracy-london-18/eu-citizens-marginalised-voters-run-local-elections/) inspired by Souls to the Polls and other civil rights campaigns in the US (https://theconversation.com/the-black-church-has-been-getting-souls-to-the-polls-for-more-than-60-years-145996) and the impact and lessons learned from London Voter Registration Week 2019 and 2020 (https://registertovote.london/evaluation-report/).

(81) Gaventa, J. (2004) Representation, community leadership and participation: citizen involvement in neighbourhood renewal and local governance. Office of Deputy Prime minister. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08cd8ed915d3cfd001664/JGNRU.pdf

(82) Obijaku, Ch. (2021) How do we build more inclusive deliberative and participatory processes? Involve. 26 February. https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/blog/project-updates/how-do-we-build-more-inclusive-deliberative-and-participatory

(83) Full presentation here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbdUymRb3BY&t=6s; see also https://www.kscopehealth.org.uk/blog/how-to-run-accessible-digital-events/

(84) Farrell, D., Curato, N., Dryzek, J. S., Geißel, B., Grönlund, K., Marien, S., Niemeyer, S., Pilet, J-B., Renwick, A., Rose, J., Setälä, M., & Suiter, J. (2019). Deliberative Mini-Publics: Core Design Features. The Centre for Deliberative Democracy & Global Governance, University of Canberra; https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/reports/2020/IIDP-citizens-assembly.pdf

(85) Grönlund, K., Herne, K. & Setälä, M., (2017). Empathy in a Citizen Deliberation Experiment. Scandinavian political studies, 40(4), 457–480; Christensen, H. S., Himmelroos, S. & Grönlund, K., (2017). Does Deliberation Breed an Appetite for Discursive Participation? Assessing the Impact of First-Hand Experience. Political studies, 65(1), 64–83.

(86) Newham London (2020) Newham Democracy and Civic participation commission. Final Report. https://www.newhamdemocracycommission.org/wp-content/uploads/Democracy-Commission-Report.pdf

(F) How increased civic and democratic participation can support London's social and economic recovery, as well as Britain's soft power:

● Resident-led community initiatives can contribute to employment and enterprise development, combat loneliness, increase wellbeing and contribute to future involvement in the community.[87]

● The London Recovery Programme includes two relevant missions: Building Strong Communities and A New Deal for Young People. To build strong community networks and empower young people, it is necessary to improve democratic participation opportunities at the community level, as well as London-wide.[88]

● The Talk Together report also suggests increased citizens' influence in decision-making, as well as opportunities to engage in respectful, meaningful deliberation and discussion - this is essential for rebuilding trust and bridging divides between different parts of the community.[89]

● Academics Foa and Mounk[90] claim: 'that the experience of democracy leads to the strengthening of civil society networks and participation, and that these in turn reinforce democratic performance and legitimacy, again, leading to a positive feedback loop.'[91]

The report has so far identified that London's civil society has been bridging the divide between grassroots, local and central government level initiatives. However, it has also shown that more needs to be done to enhance civic and democratic participation in an increasingly polarised society. Therefore, the research project surveyed London's civil society organisations and tried to capture under-represented voices, in order to get a better sense of how local and central governments can support them and what actions need to be taken moving forward.

(87) See the Big Local 2020 report: *http://www.ourbiggerstory.com/OBS%20Big%20Local%20as%20Change%20Agent%20Feb%2020.pdf*

(88) Mayor of London (2020) London Recovery Programme. London Councils. *https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/recovery_programme_overview.pdf*

(89) Talk Together May 2021 final report, available online: *https://together.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Executive-Summary.TalkTogether-1.pdf*

(90) Foa, R. S. and Mounk, Y. (2019) Democratic Deconsolidation in Developed Democracies, 1995-2018. *Harvard Center for European Studies*, p.5.

(91) See also: Paxton, P., 2002. "Social Capital and Democracy: An Interdependent Relationship," *American Sociological Review*, 67(2), 254–277; Bernhard, M. and Karakoç, E., 2007. "Civil Society and the Legacies of Dictatorship, *World Politics,* 59 (4),: 539–567; Welzel, C., Inglehart, R. and Deutsch, F., 2005. "Social Capital, Voluntary Associations and Collective Action: Which Aspects of Social Capital Have the Greatest 'Civic' Payoff?" *Journal of Civil Society,* 1(2), pp. 121–146.

Mapping the journey to participation:

key findings from stakeholder survey and organisational interviews

London Voices Survey: Sample

The London Voices survey was conducted between early July and mid-August 2021. The three objectives of the survey were to understand how civil society organisations across London contribute to civic and democratic participation, what challenges they face in terms of civic and democratic participation and what funders, local and national governments can do to support their work. Believed to be one of the first of its kind, the survey asked organisations what an inclusive, accessible, representative vision for civic and democratic engagement might look like.

> *It's recognising that, especially when it comes to supporting vulnerable groups, that some of this really needs to happen on a local level… And that's been quite a good starting point to bring services together, have these conversations, what do we see locally for the population as a need, and who's best placed to support around this. And it enables also the smaller players to be part of the conversation, so on our local level we might see faith leaders involved. We might see schools involved. And then you have your children's centers, health services, social services, and various voluntary sector bodies involved as well in capturing what are the needs in the area and how can we support around that.*
>
> Laura – EU citizen working in the voluntary sector in East London

Who are these organisations?

The survey was answered by **109 organisations,** comprising a total of **4087 full-time employees** (or equivalent). In terms of the number of employees, the two biggest surveyed organisations had 430 and 110 full time employees respectively. However, most surveyed organisations relied on few employees with a median of four. 18 of the surveyed organisations relied completely on volunteers and had no employees. On the other hand, the median number of volunteers per organisation was 15. Between them, these organisations mobilised **5611 volunteers** across London in the last 12 months.

What do these organisations do?

The organisations focused on a multitude of activities and policy areas.

The top three most common areas of work were:

HEALTH, WELL-BEING and MENTAL HEALTH ADVICE	EQUALITIES / CIVIL RIGHTS (e.g. gender, race, disability)	ADVICE and SUPPORT SERVICES

AREAS OF WORK of surveyed organisations

Area of work	% (N)
Health and well being e.g. medical health, sickness, disability, mental health	50% (54)
Equalities, civil rights (e.g. gender, race, disability)	50% (54)
Advice and support services	50% (54)
Social justice advocacy campaigning	43% (47)
Community development and mutua aid	39% (43)
Cohesion, Civic Participation	36% (39)
Economic well being (including economic development employment and relief of poverty)	35% (38)
Youth work	27% (29)
Training	27% (29)
Education and lifelong learning	26% (28)
Culture and leisure, including arts, music, sport, and recreation	22% (24)
Accommodation, housing	18% (20)
Capacity building and other support for third sector organisations	17% (18)
Supporting victims of crime or their families	14% (15)
Environment, sustainability	10% (11)
Heritage	8% (9)
Supporting offenders, ex-offenders or their families	7% (8)
Religious, inter-faith based activity	4% (4)
International development (e.g. overseas aid famine relief)	2% (2)
Animal welfare	1% (1)

*Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations   % of **Respondents** – (Number of Respondents in parentheses)*

Who are the beneficiaries of these organisations?

Surveyed organisations offered their services to a wide variety of beneficiaries. Around 44% focused on supporting Black and minority ethnic Londoners. More than 40% reached out to the general public, without a specific target group. Around a third focused specifically on Londoners with financial needs; women; migrants, asylum seekers and refugees; disabled Londoners; young or older Londoners. This wide variety of beneficiaries underlines how important civil society engagement is for already under-represented and marginalised communities, many disproportionately impacted by existing inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic.

> *In London there's so many different people and people associate with so many different people, that you get to understand very quickly what other people's lived experiences are. And so you just start moving in different spaces and start expecting different things of yourself.*
>
> Interviewee, Faith Forums for London

BENEFICIARIES of surveyed organisations

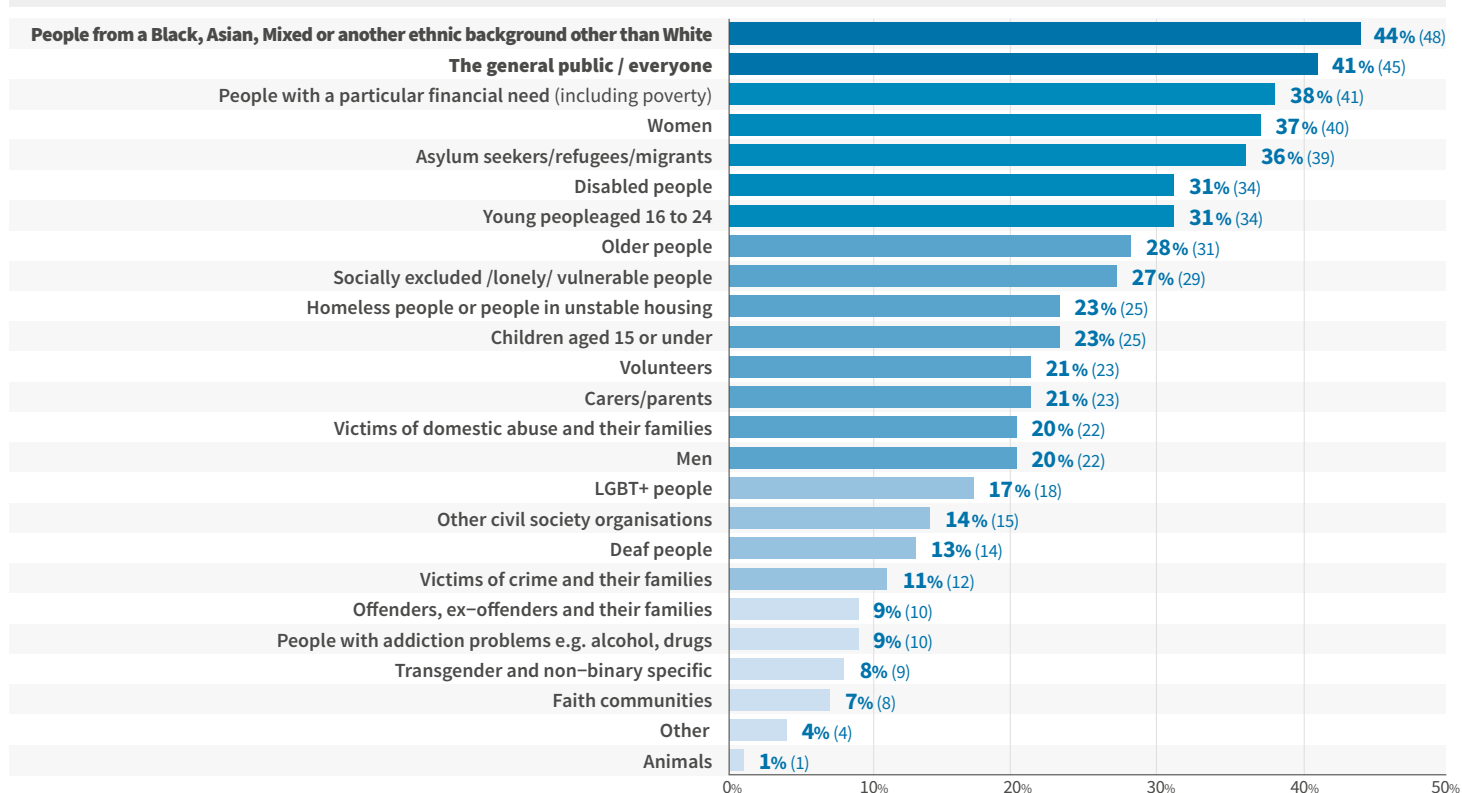| Beneficiary	% (N)
People from a Black, Asian, Mixed or another ethnic background other than White	44% (48)
The general public / everyone	41% (45)
People with a particular financial need (including poverty)	38% (41)
Women	37% (40)
Asylum seekers/refugees/migrants	36% (39)
Disabled people	31% (34)
Young peopleaged 16 to 24	31% (34)
Older people	28% (31)
Socially excluded /lonely/ vulnerable people	27% (29)
Homeless people or people in unstable housing	23% (25)
Children aged 15 or under	23% (25)
Volunteers	21% (23)
Carers/parents	21% (23)
Victims of domestic abuse and their families	20% (22)
Men	20% (22)
LGBT+ people	17% (18)
Other civil society organisations	14% (15)
Deaf people	13% (14)
Victims of crime and their families	11% (12)
Offenders, ex–offenders and their families	9% (10)
People with addiction problems e.g. alcohol, drugs	9% (10)
Transgender and non–binary specific	8% (9)
Faith communities	7% (8)
Other	4% (4)
Animals	1% (1)

*Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations   % of **Respondents** – (Number of Respondents in parentheses)*

Respondents report supporting **381,437 beneficiaries across London.** The report also includes challenges that the surveyed respondents think their beneficiaries are currently facing: poverty, COVID-related health, social or economic issues, as well as social isolation (around 60%). These were followed by racism and discrimination, digital exclusion and pre-existing health, social and economic issues (around 50%). Critically, around 45% mention lack of affordable housing and institutional support as some of the biggest challenges their beneficiaries face.

Tackling these structural and institutional barriers is pivotal to increase the civic and democratic engagement of these groups.

BIGGEST CHALLENGES of beneficiaries of surveyed organisations

| Challenge	% (N)
Poverty	66% (72)
Covid–related health, social or economic issues	63% (69)
Social isolation	57% (62)
Racism and discrimination	54% (58)
Digital exclusion	52% (57)
Pre–existing health, social and economic issues	50% (54)
Lack of affordable housing	47% (51)
Lack of institutional support (e.g. local authorities, GLA, Mayor of London, Government)	46% (50)
Lack of social infrastructure including community hubs	35% (38)
Lack of opportunities to meet people beyond their own communities	30% (33)
Lack of trust in the democratic system	28% (30)
Lack of cultural and sport events	11% (12)
Don't know	3% (3)
Lack of quality green space	1% (1)
Environmental damage	1% (1)

*Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations   % of **Respondents** – (Number of Respondents in parentheses)*

Civil society organisations are a best practice example for building lived experience into organisational structure

Of the organisations surveyed, the median number of employees is four and of volunteers is 15 respectively. The graphs below summarise how most of the civil society organisations who took part in the research function with less than 10 full-time staff and only slightly more volunteers. These results show how important voluntary work is for the functioning of these often very small organisations who usually deliver essential advice and support for communities across London.

Number of FULL TIME EMPLOYEES of surveyed organisations
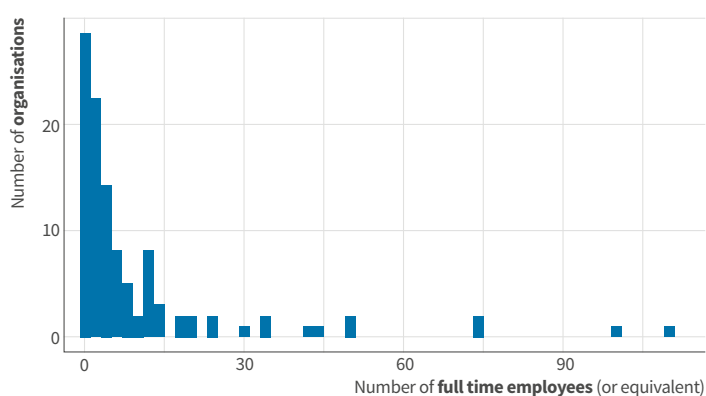
Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations
Two surveyed organisations with more than 400 employees are excluded from this plot.

Number of FULL TIME VOLUNTEERS of surveyed organisations
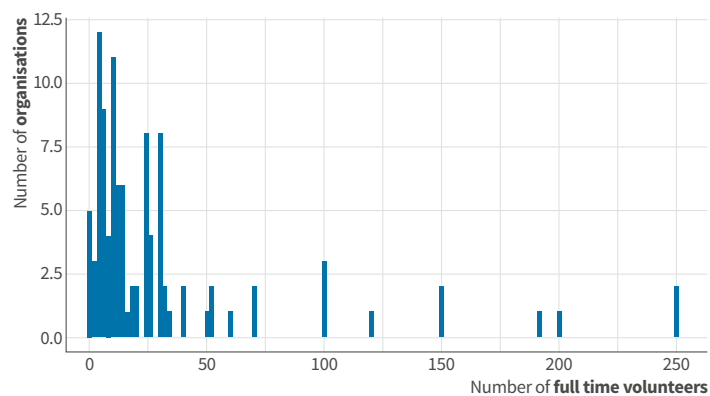
Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations
Three surveyed organisations with more than 400 volunteers are excluded from this plot.

According to the data, in almost 50% of organisations the overwhelming - if not totality - of volunteers and staff have lived experience, that is, they are or were previously beneficiaries of the type of work that these organisations currently conduct. Civil society organisations thus provide a best practice example of how lived experience is represented at all echelons of an institution and thus actively shapes the initiatives of these organisations.

This wealth of first-hand experience puts civil society organisations in a unique position to design and provide services, events, social action and participation opportunities that will meaningfully engage and benefit under-represented Londoners. This finding also shows how civil society organisations often step in to solve issues that they might feel are not addressed by local and national authorities.

> *We kind of see ourselves as a bit of a bridge between the community and between people needing support and services, and one of our aims is to actually support people towards a kind of greater independence, but also to help them consider a way of giving back. We've had clients come through our services and programmes who've went on to volunteer to become a peer support for others.*
>
> Laura – EU citizen working in the voluntary sector in East London.

Number of volunteers and staff WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE
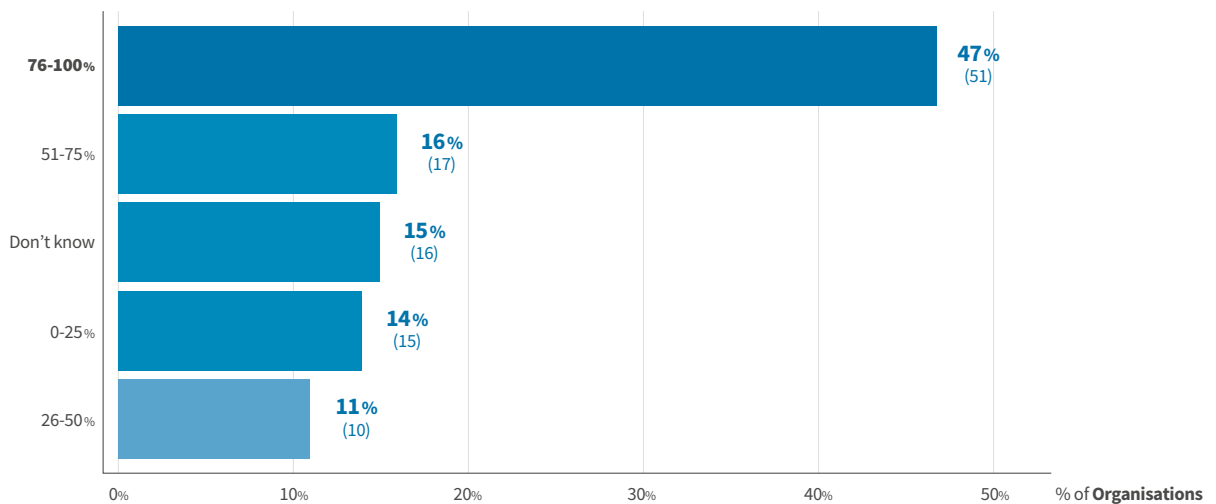
76-100%	47% (51)
51-75%	16% (17)
Don't know	15% (16)
0-25%	14% (15)
26-50%	11% (10)

% of **Organisations**

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations – Lived experience meaning that they belong to one of the beneficiary groups of the organisation's work

Civil society organisations make a huge contribution to civic participation

Over 60% of civil society organisations surveyed had organised a civic participation event or initiative for their beneficiaries in the last 12 months, including mentoring or training opportunities, raising awareness about campaigns, or organised a local community event. Some civil society organisations also directly participate in local policy making and thereby give their beneficiaries and under-represented communities a voice in these processes. Over half of organisations have signed a petition, participated in a local government consultation, or contacted their local MP.

> *We work with the police and also the Home Office. And the police, we have regular surgeries to look at if they want to make police report the community, they can come talk to police, they have a safer neighborhood team, we work closely with them. And also, for the Home Office, we make sure that we do a monthly surgery, where people can come and ask their questions [to the] immigration officer… Without traps, I have to advertise. Because people are scared about that… And I have to say that so far we have managed to help people to achieve whatever they want.*
>
> Jaime Law – Chinese Information & Advice Centre

What **TYPES OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION** do organisations engage in?

Organised mentoring or training for beneficiaries/volunteers/members (online or offline)
Shared information about a campaign with members/beneficiaries/volunteers
Organised a local community/ sport/ culture event (online or offline)
Signed a petition
Participated in a local government consultation (council, borough, London Mayor, GLA)
Contacted your local MP
Gave comment to a media outlet (e.g. newspaper, radio, TV)
Participated in a UK government consultation
Contacted your local councillor
Shared an external petition with members/beneficiaries/volunteers
Had a meeting your local council or councillor
Started a campaign
Supported a local mutual aid group
Sent information about the elections on May 6th 2021 (e.g. posted on social media, sent out an email)
Published a report with policy recommendations
Had a meeting with your local MP
Organised an event about the elections on May 6th 2021 (an online or offline event)
Set up a petition
Day of action including protests for greater protection of renters during the pandemic
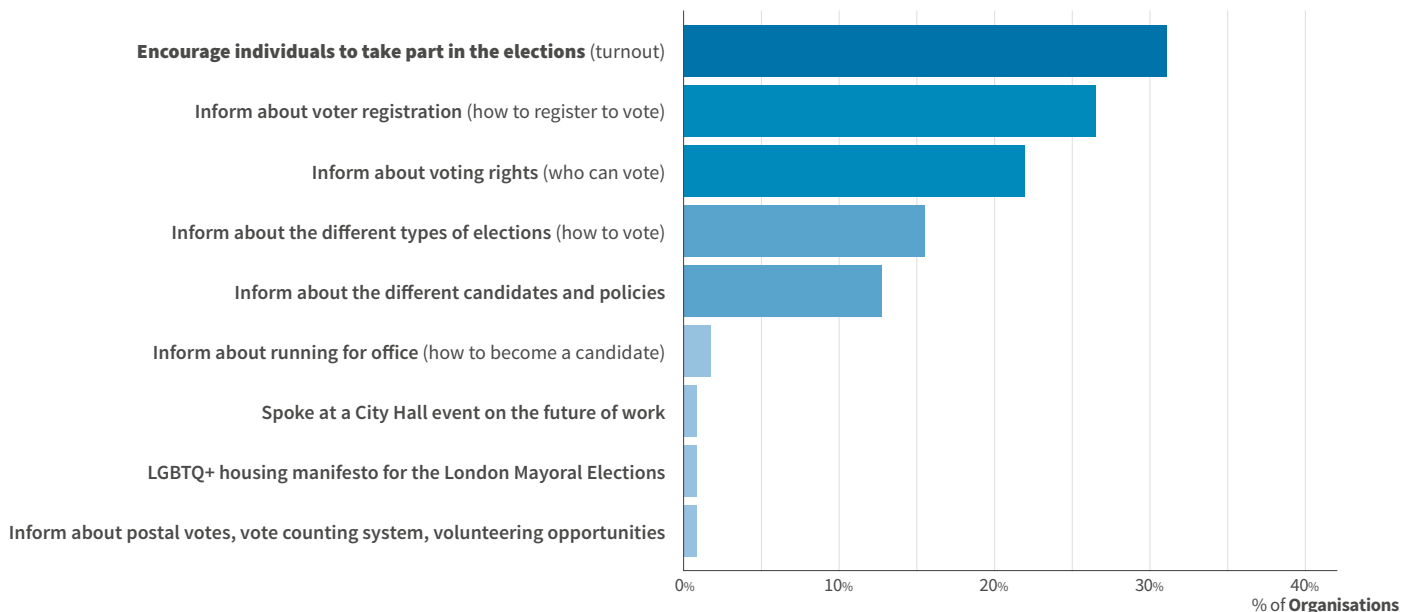Don't know

% of **Organisations**

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

Civil society organisations also directly engage in voter registration and many different types of awareness raising activities. Over a quarter of surveyed organisations organised an event or activity that directly aimed at encouraging Londoners to take part in the local elections in May 2021. Overall, the organisations surveyed estimate that through their voter registration and awareness raising activities on the May 2021 elections, they reached more than half of London's population.

At the same time, it is also evident from these figures that there is still a gap between the amount of civic participation initiatives organisations provide (more than half of organisations organised these), and specific activities on voter registration rights and the process, as well as voter awareness. It is important to explore why these gaps in take up exist, and how institutions can support civil society organisations in organising non-party political participation initiatives especially around voter registration.

What **TYPES OF VOTER REGISTRATION** or **INFORMATION ACTIVITIES** do organisations engage in?

Encourage individuals to take part in the elections (turnout)
Inform about voter registration (how to register to vote)
Inform about voting rights (who can vote)
Inform about the different types of elections (how to vote)
Inform about the different candidates and policies
Inform about running for office (how to become a candidate)
Spoke at a City Hall event on the future of work
LGBTQ+ housing manifesto for the London Mayoral Elections
Inform about postal votes, vote counting system, volunteering opportunities

% of **Organisations**

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations – Lived experience meaning that they belong to one of the beneficiary groups of the organisation's work

# Funders and political institutions need to support civil society in their ability to campaign

Most organisations say that they campaign more frequently than they used to. This highlights how important campaigning has become as a tool for civil society organisations to make their and their beneficiaries' voices heard. Positive community feedback, positive media coverage and a general awareness of what civil society achieves were mentioned as the top three things that help civil society campaign on issues important to them.

On the flipside, negative views and comments from politicians, conditions on funding that prevent non-party political campaigning and negative media coverage were mentioned as the top three hurdles to civil society campaigns. This shows that funders and political institutions can play an important role in enabling civil society organisations and their beneficiaries to fulfil their civic and democratic potential and rights - even within the boundaries of recent changes to charity and electoral law - by addressing current gaps in democratic and civic participation.
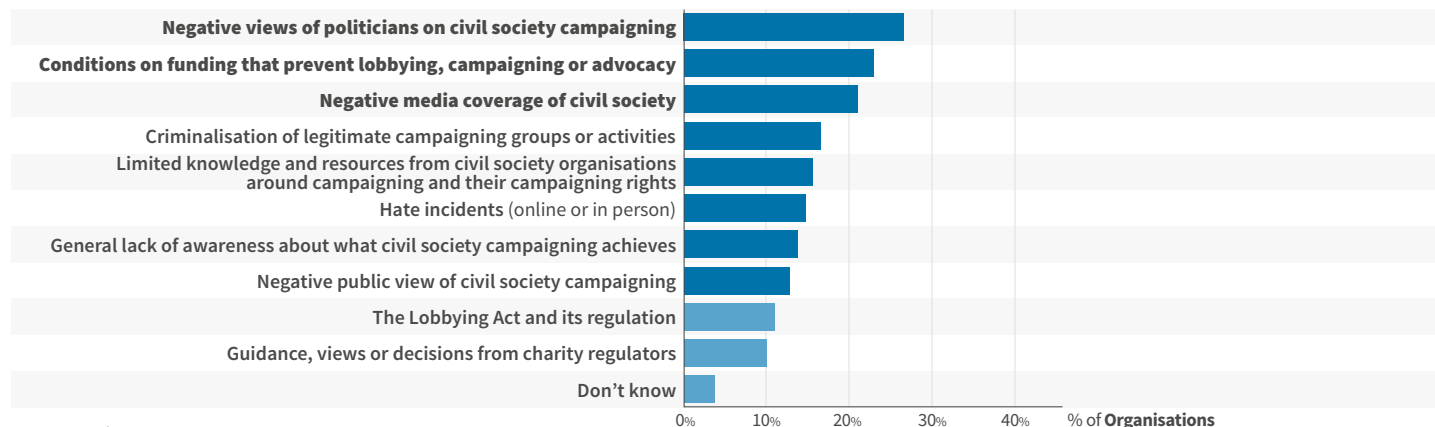
Most organisations say THEIR CAMPAIGNING HAS INCREASED

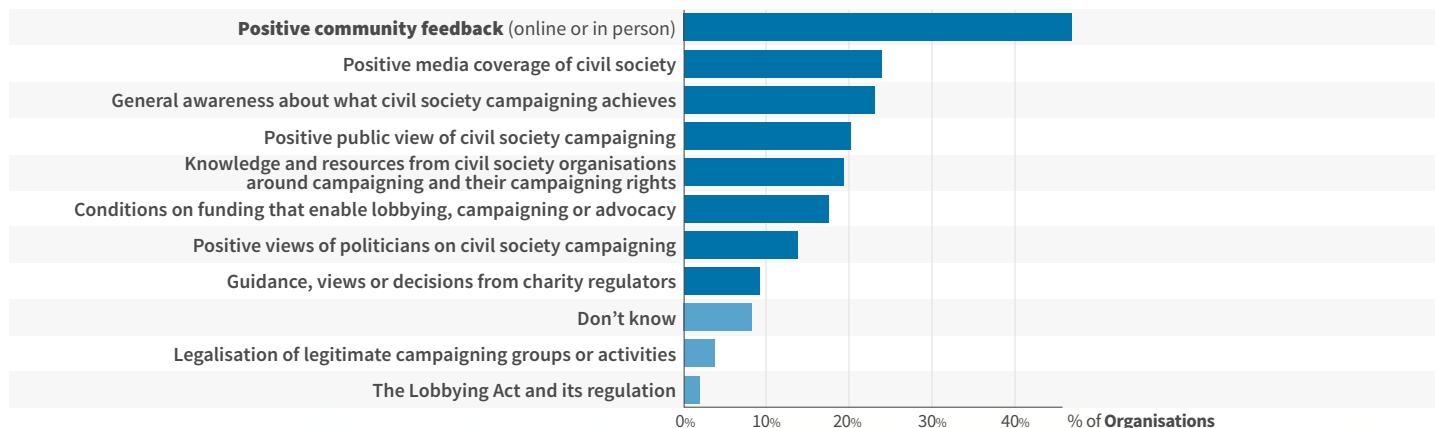Q: How has the amount of campaigning organisations do changed over the last three years?
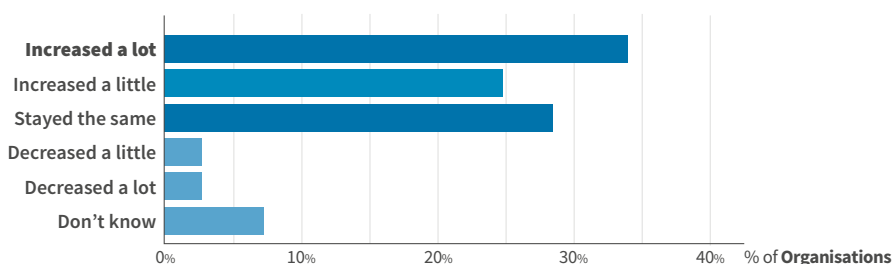
Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

What makes it more DIFFICULT for civil society organisations to campaign?

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

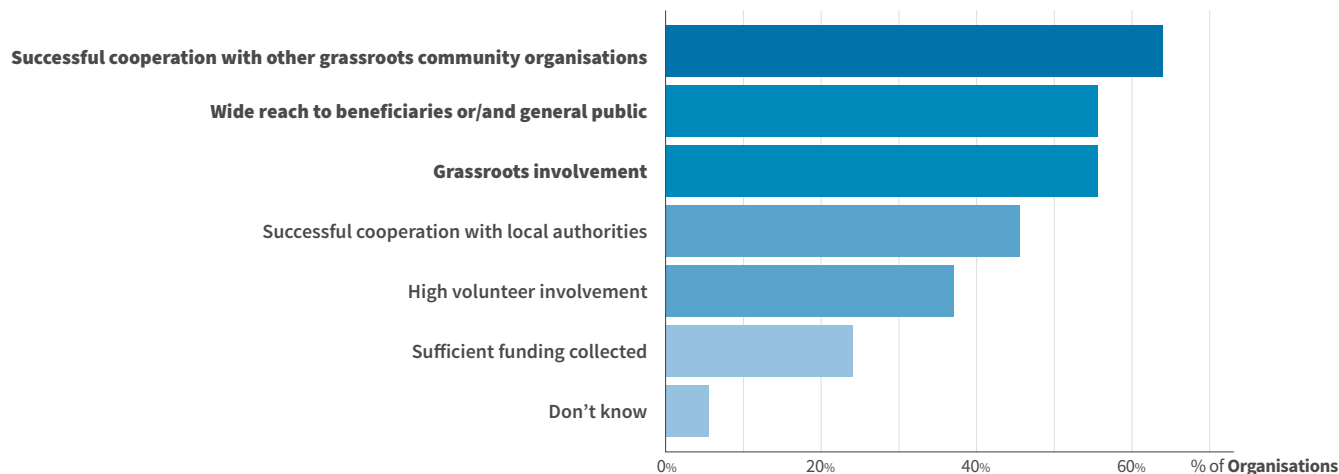## What makes it EASIER for civil society organisations to campaign?

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

Local authorities and political institutions need to support civil society in organising civic participation initiatives

Cooperating with other grassroots organisations, having a wide reach to beneficiaries and the public, and grassroots involvement make it easier for civil society organisations to organise successful civic participation initiatives. Strengthening and creating platforms where civil society organisations can exchange and build cooperations is therefore key for improving civic and democratic participation. This need is also evidenced by the high support among civil society organisations for a London Democracy Network that would bring together civil society, funders, policy-makers and researchers (see page 48).

What **HELPS** civil society organisations to organise a successful civic participation initiative?

- Successful cooperation with other grassroots community organisations
- Wide reach to beneficiaries or/and general public
- Grassroots involvement
- Successful cooperation with local authorities
- High volunteer involvement
- Sufficient funding collected
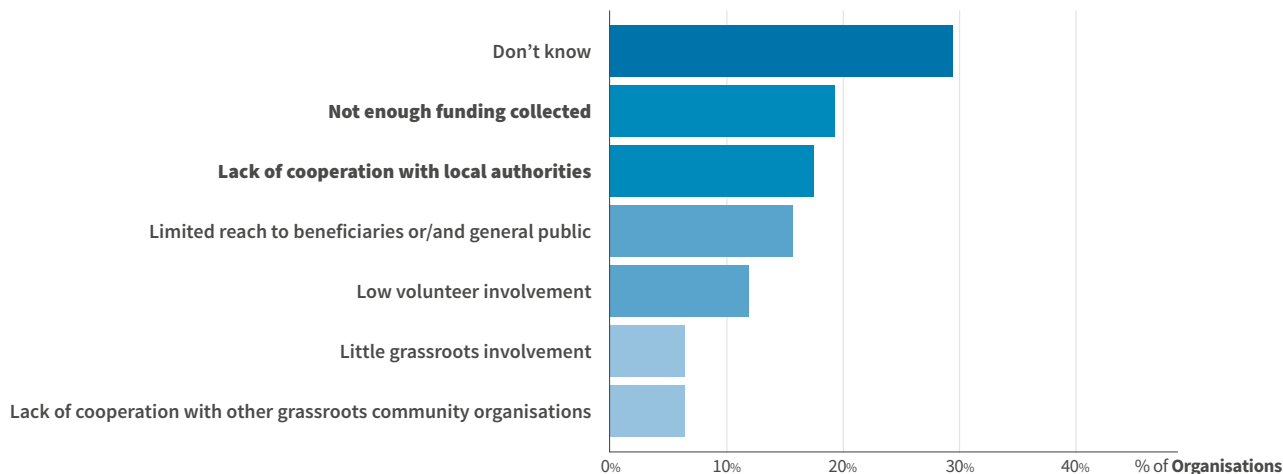- Don't know

% of **Organisations**

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

Lack of funding, lack of cooperation with local councils and limited reach to beneficiaries are the most common inhibiting factors for civil society-led civic participation initiatives. Most civil society organisations are not sure what makes it more difficult for them to organise civic participation initiatives. This highlights the need for further in-depth research on this issue, and bespoke support for individual civil society organisations who want to have the capacity to focus beyond service provision, influence local and regional decisions, engage their beneficiaries in deliberative processes and collaborate with others on shared aims.

What **PREVENTS** civil society organisations from organising a successful civic participation initiative?

- Don't know
- Not enough funding collected
- Lack of cooperation with local authorities
- Limited reach to beneficiaries or/and general public
- Low volunteer involvement
- Little grassroots involvement
- Lack of cooperation with other grassroots community organisations

% of **Organisations**

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

Highlight - HEAR Network: Strengthening cross-organisational and cross-sectoral exchange during COVID-19

The aim of the HEAR Equality and Human Rights Network (HEAR Network) is to connect and support equalities specialists from all equality characteristics across London to get their voices heard, and to influence policy and the environment within which people work for equality and human rights. As part of this work, and to facilitate connections, HEAR sends out frequent email bulletins to over 1000 network members.

Since the pandemic *'people are more and more inclined to send things for me to include and rely on our newsletters for getting things around, and letting people know about things, not only members from voluntary and community organisations, but also statutory partners….So those kinds of communications to keep people linked to each other seem to be more important.'* (Interview with HEAR Network Coordinator)

Some of the things being shared through HEAR's pan-London bulletins are event announcements, campaigns, vacancies and job opportunities, training opportunities, consultations, calls for solidarity, new research outputs and calls for research, borough initiatives and community resources. HEAR also manages separate mailing lists for all London boroughs, and for a range of equality specialisms and topics, for example for organisations working with women, or on tackling hate crime.

The HEAR Network measures its impact by the extent that it *'enables people to link across sectors - voluntary and community sector, statutory sector, academia, think tanks, all those kinds of sectors - and to the extent that we're creating opportunities for that to happen.'*

As well as facilitating connection through its communications, HEAR also works hard to ensure that the priorities of its members are heard by decision makers, and to facilitate a combined voice to increase influence. As an organisation which does considerable work with the GLA and a variety of statutory bodies, the HEAR Network advocates that, *'All of these structures need to be making sure that it isn't always just "the usual suspects" that are at the table, the larger organisations that have got more resources, in terms of time, or the way that their projects are funded to attend, that they make sure that smaller organisations or organisations that have really got something to say are able to attend.'*
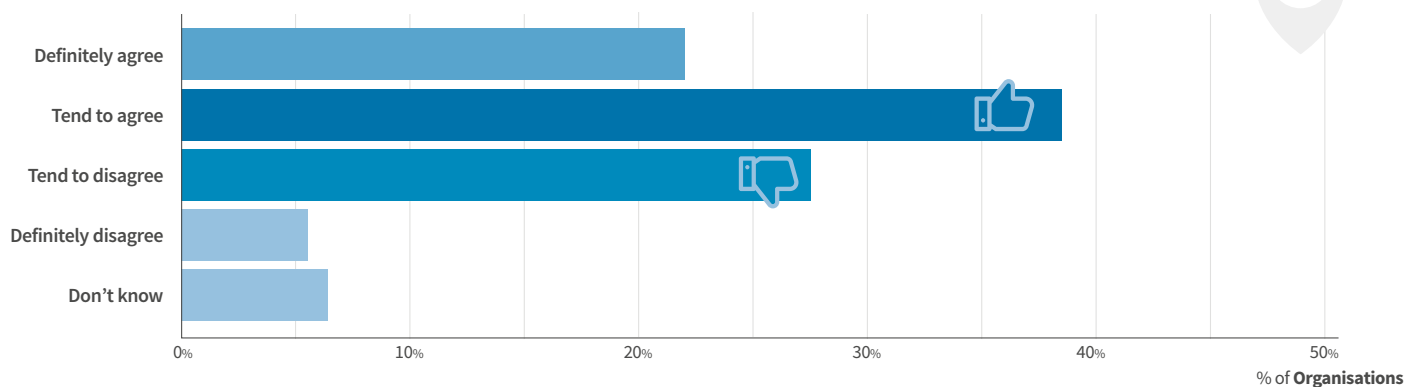
Civil society feels they can affect decisions in their local area more so than in London or the UK as a whole

Encouragingly, a majority of organisations said that they feel they are able to influence decisions affecting their local area or borough (60.5% of organisations tended to or definitely agreed with this sentiment). Over half of organisations also sai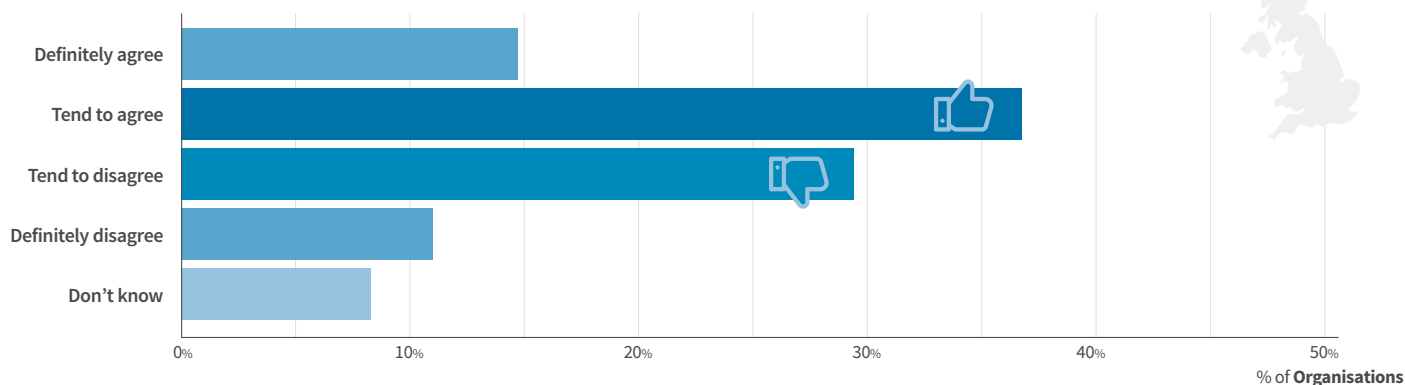d they felt able to influence decisions affecting London or the UK as a whole. However, this also shows that there is a gap in the perceived agency and power civil society organisations have between the local borough level and the London/UK-wide level, or between London's local government and central Government.

Most organisations feel they CAN INFLUENCE DECISIONS…

… affecting LOCAL AREA or BOROUGH

Response	% of Organisations
Definitely agree	~22%
Tend to agree	~38%
Tend to disagree	~27%
Definitely disagree	~5%
Don't know	~6%

… affecting LONDON or UK

Response	% of Organisations
Definitely agree	~15%
Tend to agree	~37%
Tend to disagree	~29%
Definitely disagree	~11%
Don't know	~8%

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

According to civil society organisations, lack of knowledge and lack of trust are key reasons why under-represented Londoners do not vote

Surveyed organisations were also asked about their beneficiaries' participation in elections, and why they believe their beneficiaries are unlikely to take part in them. Around 45% mentioned lack of knowledge and trust as the main reasons, followed by a lack of interest. These results underline how some of the most under-registered and under-represented Londoners do not have access to advice and resources around their civic and democratic rights, but also have low expectations about what political representatives and institutions can do for them.

" *There is a lot of disillusionment… we're talking about a community which is similar to some other communities in that they're coming from countries where they've experienced colonialism, where they experienced repression, dictatorships. Where free speech isn't allowed or not certainly encouraged, where people are fearful to express themselves, they don't trust authority. And it takes generations to actually change that mindset.* "

Misak Ohanian – Centre for Armenian Information & Advice

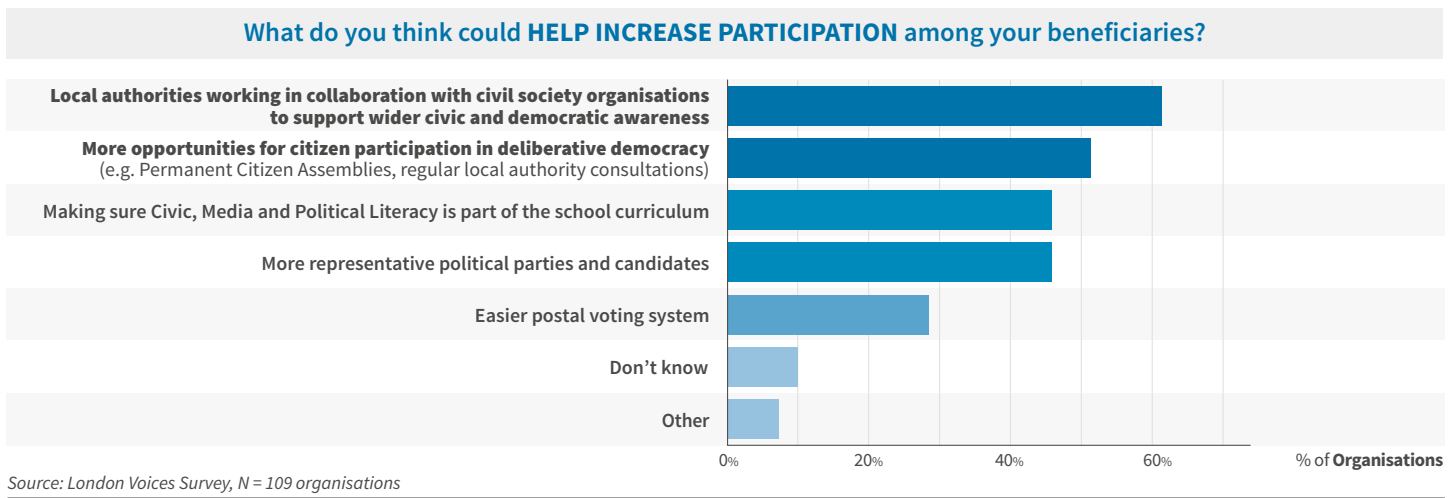**WHY do you think that many of your beneficiaries HAVE NOT VOTED in elections?**
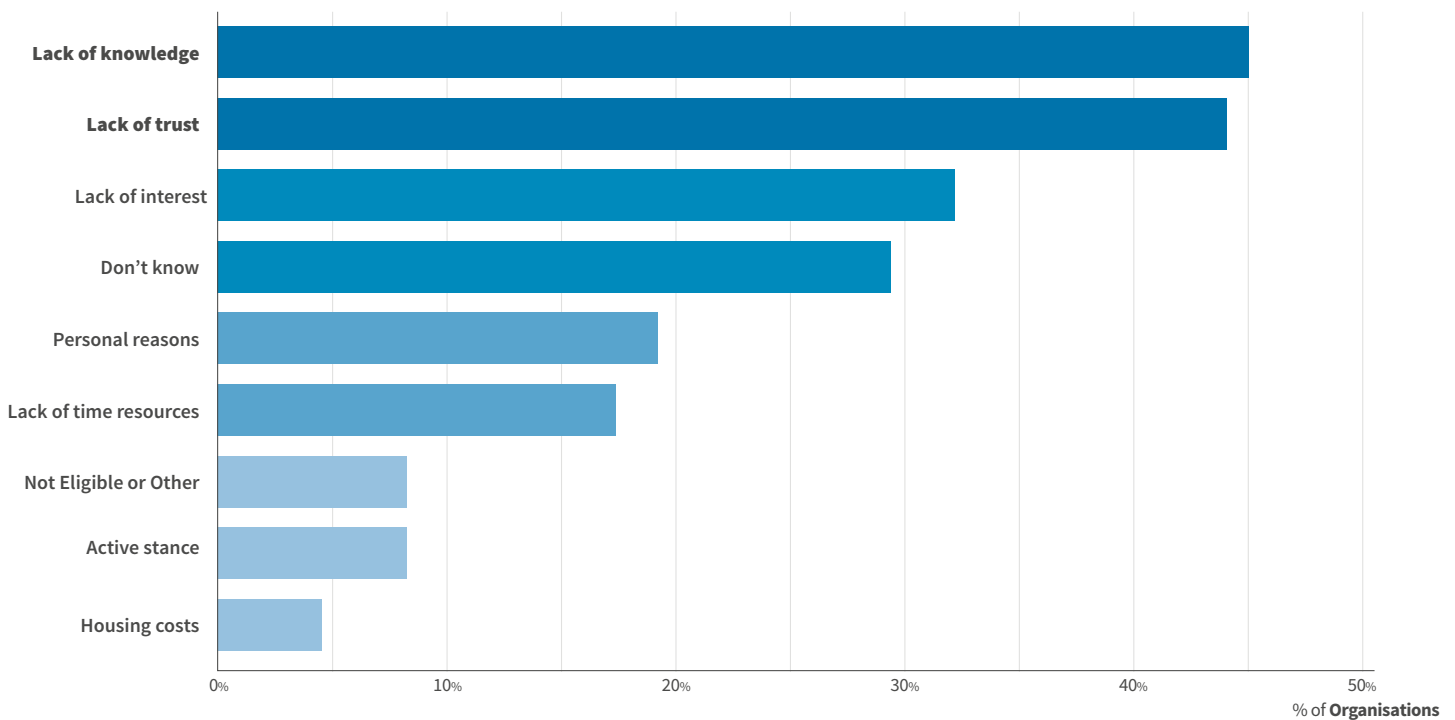
Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

Civil society supports residence-based voting rights and more deliberative democracy

Various solutions are advocated by the surveyed organisations as possible means to increase the participation of Londoners in elections, including collaborations between local authorities and civic society organisations to support wider civic and democratic awareness (61%), more deliberative democratic initiatives (51%), including civic, media and po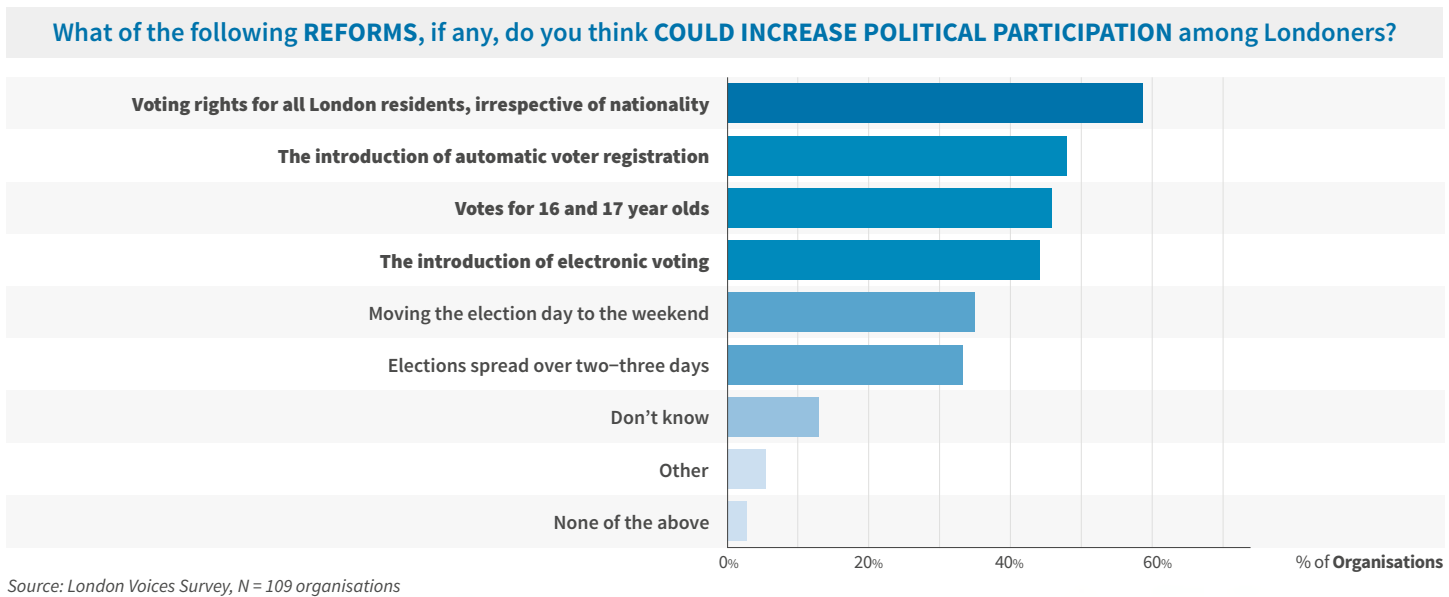litical literacy in school curricula (46%), as well as having more representative political parties and candidates (46%). These actionable proposals highlight how well connected civil society organisations are to their local communities and how institutions need to involve them in activity and reforms aimed at addressing barriers and increasing the currently low civic and democratic engagement among marginalised communities.

> *We want communities to be actively engaged in political processes, especially at the local level, and public appointments and to step up and get better representation.*
>
> Jeremy Crook – Black Training and Enterprise Group

What do you think could HELP INCREASE PARTICIPATION among your beneficiaries?

Category	%
Local authorities working in collaboration with civil society organisations to support wider civic and democratic awareness	
More opportunities for citizen participation in deliberative democracy (e.g. Permanent Citizen Assemblies, regular local authority consultations)	
Making sure Civic, Media and Political Literacy is part of the school curriculum	
More representative political parties and candidates	
Easier postal voting system	
Don't know	
Other	

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

Specifically in regard to elections, introducing progressive democratic reforms such as residence-based voting rights for all Londoners (59%), automatic voter registration (48%), voting rights for 16 and 17 years old (46%), as well as introducing electronic voting (44%) are thought to be the most effective policies to increase democratic participation throughout London.

What of the following REFORMS, if any, do you think COULD INCREASE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION among Londoners?

Category	%
Voting rights for all London residents, irrespective of nationality	
The introduction of automatic voter registration	
Votes for 16 and 17 year olds	
The introduction of electronic voting	
Moving the election day to the weekend	
Elections spread over two–three days	
Don't know	
Other	
None of the above	

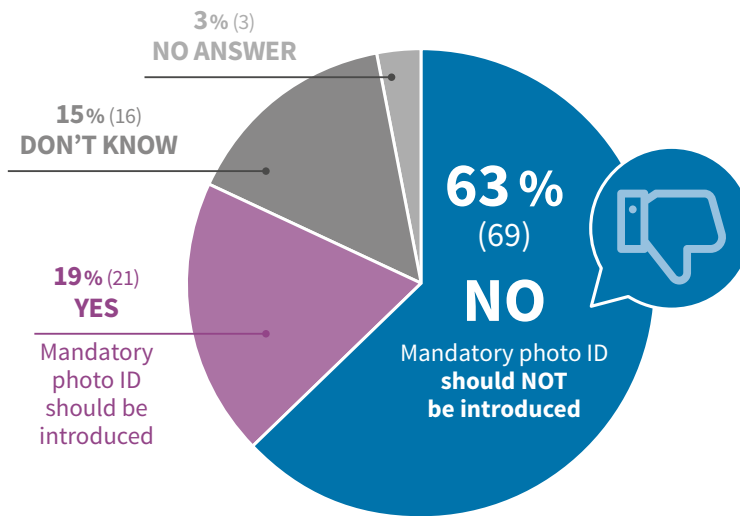*Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations*

Civil society is against introducing mandatory photo IDs for in-person voting

63% of respondents disagree with the introduction of photo voter ID requirements, with a further 15% undecided and 3% not answering the question. Organisations' negative view of photo voter ID requirements increases to 74% when only organisations that support and advise Black Londoners and minority ethnic Londoners are taken into account. These results and further feedback in the follow-up survey open question show the deep concerns that under-registered and under-represented communities in London have towards the introduction of certain forms of photo voter ID and how it could further exacerbate existing democratic inequalities.

Should **MANDATORY PHOTO IDS** for in–person voting be introduced or not?

3% (3)
NO ANSWER

15% (16)
DON'T KNOW

19% (21)
YES
Mandatory photo ID should be introduced

63%
(69)
NO
Mandatory photo ID **should NOT be introduced**

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations   % of Respondents – (Number of Respondents in parentheses)

Should **MANDATORY PHOTO IDS** for in–person voting be introduced or not?

Only organisations supporting **BLACK LONDONERS** and **OTHER MINORITIES**
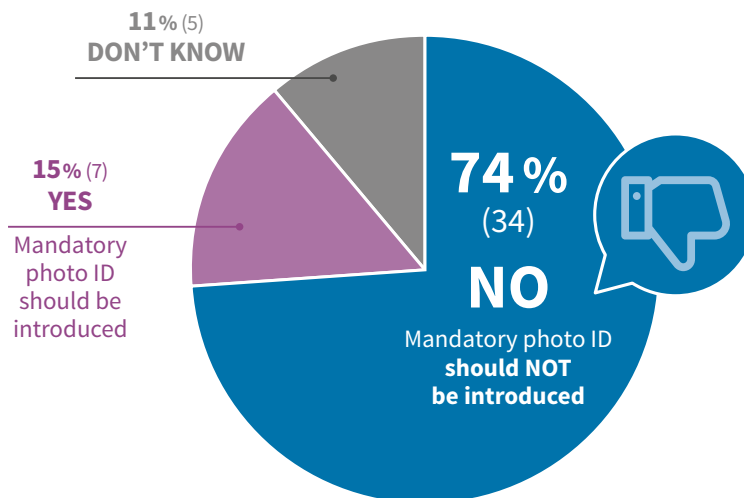
11% (5)
DON'T KNOW

15% (7)
YES
Mandatory photo ID should be introduced

74%
(34)
NO
Mandatory photo ID **should NOT be introduced**

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations   % of Respondents – (Number of Respondents in parentheses)

In their own words:
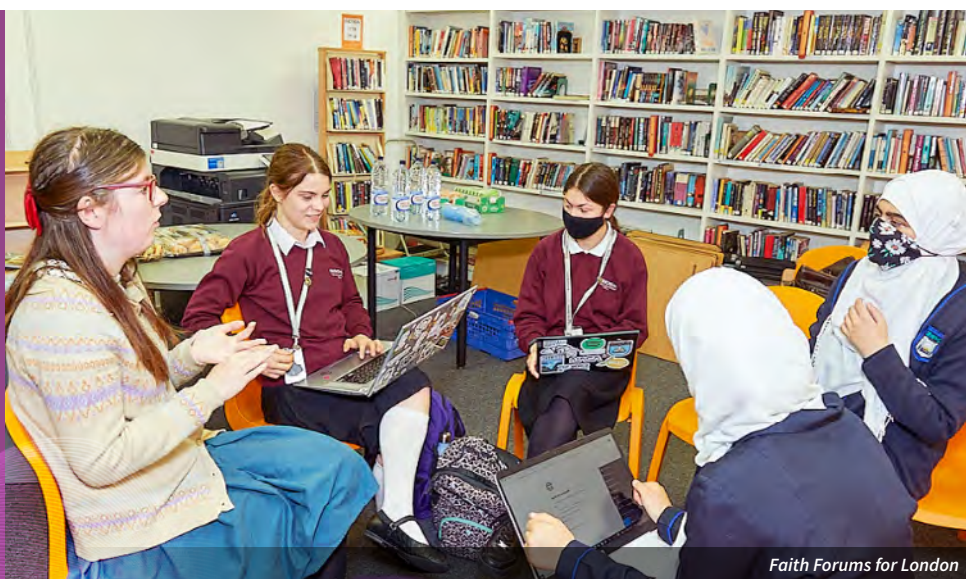
London Voices case studies

The voices of under-represented Londoners

Case study 1

Voices of Faith and Non-faith young Londoners on barriers to participation and the need for reform

Faith Forums for London

As part of this project, Faith Forums for London conducted multiple focus groups and interviews with Londoners of all faiths and none. Focusing on civic engagement, political literacy, and barriers to participation, their discussions revealed insight into how diverse young Londoners perceive policy and the roles of their communities.

For young people, there is a strong perception that the government is not engaging younger generations effectively. One interviewee explains, *'A lot of young people feel like either they're so disillusioned with politics in England, because of either party politics nonsense, or they don't feel like they're going to impact anything.'* Election cycles, divisive party politics and protest movements which do not result in policy changes have contributed to a sense disenfranchisement: *'I think we're all very aware now of like very deep rooted injustices in the system are….there's only so much that our democratic participation on a kind of local level can actually do to rectify problems.'*

Behind these assessments, participants spoke about the lack of access to political literacy in school: *'Politics is something you chose to do after you left school and it was a specialist subject… we were never taught about, like how the government works, like what your local councillors do, about voting, about why it's important to vote.'* Unsurprisingly, this leads young people to feel that there is a large distance between their lived experiences and local politics, particularly when they do not see people in power who represent their identities or values.

Highlighting the role of technology in participation, another interviewee discussed how *'politics is so unbelievably accessible… but then we're not seeing that quite in terms of democratic turnout. So it's in a weird transition stage where public awareness is so great now that [people] almost feel like they've done something, like talking about it is enough rather than voting a certain way.'* While social media activism has exploded, it has not been mirrored by political literacy training.

Another interviewee added, *'Something really important to include for a generation that probably is receiving more political information from a wider variety of sources is that we teach them to be critical… like, Who's written this? What's their perspective? What's their agenda? Who is it funded by, with what resources? I think that that would be something to include as well in political education.'*

Voting age was also discussed: *'Political decisions really influence young people quite strongly, especially now, with climate change. I mean, who's going to suffer from that if the politics don't do anything? I've always been very politically engaged… I remember when the 2017 election happened, I was just too young to vote. And I felt really frustrated, because I still live with the consequences of that election every day.'* Participants debunked the argument of young people not being politically informed, which is frequently given as a reason against extending their democratic rights. *'I think they should [be able to vote at 16], because the sooner they understand the democratic process, and the sooner they understand their responsibility within that, the more they can go about making changes because they're responsible for those changes.'*

While there is recognition of increased engagement from the Mayor of London and the GLA, one interviewee stated how *'for young people, it's increasingly becoming apparent that it's a little bit of a sticking plaster… there's only so much a month long campaign encouraging talks about mental health can do when you're faced with severe lack of opportunity.'* Another interviewee added, *'there's often a misconception of what young people actually want… over-simplifying the issues in order to make them more appealing to young people without actually targeting the issue itself… [There needs to be] more diversity in projects, or maybe trusting young people a bit more, to give them more to tackle these issues and give them more insights rather than less.'*

Faith Forums for London

Speaking with representatives from faith communities, Faith Forums for London brought together reflections on the role of faith leadership in civic and democratic participation. A Christian Anglican interviewee discussed how, *'in London, we are blessed to have a highly diverse population from all over the world. And that is a blessing in many ways. One of the downsides of it is that levels of civic and democratic participation in the incoming communities tend to be fairly low. Understandably, if you're just establishing yourself in a new country, a new city you are prioritising your employment and your family and so you can understand why that happens.'*

Another interviewee from the Hindu community reflected on her personal background: *'Growing up, because our parents were new to this country - my parents are from Kenya, and my grandparents are from India. They didn't ever want you to push buttons, they didn't ever want you to stand out and be taken notice of in the wrong way, you just had to live your life in a very, very particular way. So you were treated equal to all your peers. So every Asian girl grew up the same as I did, but not equal in society.'* The sentiment was echoed by a Sikh interviewee, *'At home, I think that there's also a social background behind this, that we're encouraging our children not to go into politics, but to go into medicine, or to run big businesses, or become accountants… a lot of parents would not want their child to go into politics. Not something that they feel comfortable with. I think, if a child wants to do it's purely because he's decided to take that route himself.'*

While faith communities may have negative perspectives on democratic participation (often marked by generational differences), it is a two-way street. Lack of representation in local and national politics can make political engagement with faith communities seem superficial, as noted by the Sikh interviewee: *'Once they've done their politics run and got their votes, they hardly ever come back to the community to talk to them properly about anything, or listen to their concerns. And they don't make as much an effort when they have the meetings, or attend, for example, going to hassle the MP, so I don't see much engagement locally.'*

But interviewees did emphasise the power of congregations and faith leaders: *'I can only speak for the Jewish community and my specific brand of Judaism. I think if you're religious, or the more religiously engaged you are, the more likely it is that it will impact your civic democratic engagement, which you've seen with vaccines and stuff. Like if a rabbi or a faith leader says, 'No vaccines', and everyone's like, 'Oh, no!'. And If he says, 'get the vaccine!', everyone says yes to vaccines, everyone will get the vaccine. It's an extremely powerful position to be in.'*

During the pandemic, another interviewee was impressed by the renewed role faith communities play in bringing Londoners together: *'a number of the faith groups and congregations stepped up to the mark, took an active interest in and supported their neighbours that actually I suppose it led me to have more sympathy for organised religion than I have had because I saw how effective it was at a time of need.'* The pandemic especially showed the power faith communities have in supporting civic participation and community health, and how they can play a role in advocating for their communities in civic and democratic forums.

Imkaan
For Black and minoritised women and girls

★ ★ ★

Imkaan is the only UK-based umbrella women's organisation dedicated to tackling violence against Black and minoritised women and girls. They describe themselves as a Black feminist organisation and have over two decades of experience working on domestic violence, forced marriage and other women's issues, at the local, national and international level.

One of the key challenges this organisation has to contend with is the scarce funding for Black women-led organisations: *'Funding is a structural issue. We believe that across the UK, generally speaking, Black and minoritised organisations, whether they are [organisations against] violence against women and girls… or [organisations that] provide other services to Black and minoritised communities, [they] are underfunded. And they tend to fare less well when they submit proposals for funding',* the interviewee from Imkaan said.

Considering the urgency of addressing matters around women's security, and considering security concerns are especially aggravated for Black and minoritised communities, both the funding sector's and the government's reluctance to prioritise systemic change and efforts in this direction was, to the interviewee, confounding, especially in the face of the upcoming introduction of photo voter ID: *'I think that there are things that do need to be addressed within the system. So for example, women's safety, which is all over the news, that needs to be addressed, we need priority given to women's safety.'*

Further, Imkaan's interviewee discussed how the Elections Bill in conjunction with other bills under consideration, such as the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill work toward increasing police powers, which in turn often disproportionately target Black and minoritised communities: *'if you think about the trajectory of these ID cards…you have to get to the Policing and Crime Bill that's coming in, right. And that is not addressing issues like women's safety, which is a very big one, which has always been a very big one… Agendas like 'Prevent', which specifically target Black and minoritised communities with increased policing, and also increased police violence against these communities. So, photo ID is one of these…initiatives that come in, but the purpose of this initiative is actually much bigger. It is about increased policing powers and controls. And we don't need that in the current climate, because we know of the abuses of police very clearly. And what we want is a fundamental address to the social problems that we have in this country. And photo ID is not… it.'*

Lack of trust also undermines such government initiatives, especially in view of institutional racism and misogyny, such as the case of Sarah Everard: *'What kind of faith and confidence should women have in, in police, where this is the conduct that we see? And, say, you add to that, if that's the general experience of women, you add to that the experiences of Black and minoritised women…who see, for years and years… young Black men, being arrested, being harassed, being criminalised by the police.'* The interviewee called for a radical reexamination by the Home Office of the Policing and Crime Bill, and for meaningful consultations with Black and minoritised communities on that and other exclusionary aspects of the current systems: the hostile immigration policy, housing, support for women with no recourse to public funds, and the inclusion of intersectional oppression in the analysis of structural inequalities and social policymaking.

Case study 4

Focus on under-represented communities in Southwark: Southwark Travellers Action Group and Southwark Law Centre

STAG Development Worker, Kathleen Ryan, with members of their Women's and Youth Groups

Southwark Travellers Action Group (STAG) is a community organisation for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers based in Southwark, supporting these groups in overcoming barriers to accessing services via one-to-one and group support. They run projects aimed at addressing issues around employment, education, housing and health. They also work to celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture and history.

Southwark Law Centre, on the other hand, provides specialist casework and representation in areas such as immigration, housing, employment, discrimination and welfare rights for some of the most disadvantaged members of the community, including people who are destitute and homeless. Interviews with representatives from both these organisations underscored the multi-layered nature of belonging - a running theme in nearly all interviews conducted for this research - and their repercussions for civic and democratic participation.

The STAG representative interviewed noted, *'it seems that although quite a lot of headway… has… gone forward with Black Lives Matter and other things with racial equality, I think it still seems as though it's still okay to be discriminatory against Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. It is… it's almost acceptable.'* This belief that inadequate attention has been paid to the discrimination and the lack of social integration of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, even while some progress might have been made for other marginalised groups compounded the sense of marginalisation When local planning directly affected them, such as with the New Southwark Plan, which threatened the loss of Travellers' sites, *'the language that was used, the consultation process was all…. all Zoom meetings, I think it was really difficult for [Travellers] to get involved and for us to say…this is really important to you. And what they actually meant, because it's pages and pages of documents all in a very complex planning language. And it didn't really say to people actually, if you don't get involved in this, you're going to lose the Traveller site in Southwark.'* This sense of exclusion is inbuilt in the very language, access options and processes available to these communities.

These sentiments were echoed in the discussion with Southwark Law Centre, but for another group: those of the Windrush generation. Further underscored was the need to bring services directly to the people, in places they regularly go to, and in ways they will understand and readily engage with: *'We've talked to… members of the older Black community around…Windrush, and…we're going to hold the event in a local Baptist church because that's where people go; so it's by taking things to people. And again, building…trust…Windrush is a good example…Only 19% of the people who might be eligible for compensation have claimed the compensation. And that's because of a lack of trust in the Home Office, you know, people still thinking,… however long we've been in the UK, people still feeling insecure, which is awful. So…we need to build that trust. And I think that needs to be done…face-to-face really.'* The crucial question for the interviewee from Southwark Law Centre was whether there was the will on the part of the Government to build this trust and sense of inclusion, and if there is that will, efforts need to be made to make this intent very clear.

London Youth during a sports activity

Case study 5

The Voices of Black & Young Londoners

★ ★ ★

The participants in the focus group organised by London Youth showed a high level of civic and democratic awareness and action through volunteering in the local community and participating in local citizen forums organised by local authorities. They explained that this active engagement was rooted in the political education they received in school and a strong sense of belonging to their local community.

At the same time, participants stressed their disengagement with national government politics; they all expressed feelings of mistrust towards media and politicians. References to the toxic political rhetoric around major events such as Brexit and the 'Race Report' came up in the focus group as examples of why young Black Londoners feel disengaged from national politics. The lack of representation is a key issue here: *'I don't see diversity within politics. However, there might be other things that factor into that, I think there's a bigger population, and there's a Black population or BAME population in the whole of the UK, or England, not just in London.'* Race, gender, nationality, ethnicity and social class were all highlighted as social denominators by which the access in political life is informally regulated.

Some participants expressed an awareness that new residents might not experience the same sense of belonging and connection with the civic life in London. Regarding other types of possible barriers that young Black Londoners might experience to civic and democratic engagement, specifically discussing the role of local authorities and the access to the citizen forums organised by local authorities, participants stressed the fact that the publicity of these meetings has to target disengaged Black and young residents: *'we only heard about it because The Nest[92] asked us to go, otherwise how would you know?'* The group also highlighted the importance for meetings to be communicated through the right channels and formats so that residents who have not previously participated or engaged in civic actions can do so.

Some participants in the focus group highlighted their lack of political knowledge and education. Others stressed that, even though they did politics in secondary school, this was optional. Hence, all our participants agreed on the need of embedding political education from early on, at primary level: *'Oh, you do teach politics and still in school, because you teach in PSHE. And it's like an eight level option. But if it's not embedded from like, primary school, no one's going to be interested if they haven't integrated previously.'* Besides the inclusion of political topics in the main curricula from primary level, focus group participants stressed the need for critical thinking skills through learning contexts appropriate for young people, such as debates, but also the role of political leaders as role models. The young Londoners underlined how politicians relate to young people, the importance of political communication, appropriate channels to reach different types of publics and adapted content.

All participants stressed both the positive role of technology, through its capacity of reaching mass audiences, generating awareness around civic and democratic issues and amplifying marginalised voices, but also risks of social media such as misinformation, media bias and the performative nature of the individual usage which does not reflect the real level of civic and democratic engagement.

(92) The Nest is a service delivered by Groundwork on behalf of Southwark Council

Case study 6

Here to stay, here to vote: the voices of migrant and refugee Londoners

the3million Young Europeans Network #OurHomeOurVote campaign, 2021

Many Londoners of migrant and refugee background do not have democratic rights in the UK. In England, only British, Commonwealth and Irish citizens can vote in general elections. In local elections, EU citizens can also vote. However, the Elections Bill will only preserve the right to vote and stand in local elections for EU citizens who arrived in the UK before 1 January 2021 and have pre-settled or settled status. Unlike the more inclusive, residence-based franchise in Scotland and Wales Scotland and Wales, Londoners with refugee status also cannot vote in local elections.

Even for migrants who can vote in London elections, the journey to wider civic and political participation has many barriers. For instance, the Electoral Commission shows that EU citizens have much lower voter registration rates than Commonwealth citizens, who have, in turn, significantly lower registration than British citizens.

How can we encourage Londoners of migrant and refugee background on their journey to participation? The first step is to provide culturally competent information about what democratic rights exist and how one can use them. In our focus group with EU migrant Londoners, access to information was the key theme. Participants described how they felt uninformed about civic and democratic participation when they moved to the UK - and in many cases, for several years after. It was common that they found out about their democratic rights through another form of participation, such as volunteering or studying a topic related to politics:

'I was never very involved in local elections up until this year, these past elections are the only ones that I've voted for. Yeah, I was aware of them. But I never thought that I could. In the beginning, I never thought that I could vote as a new citizen, or I didn't think it necessarily mattered for some reason. I guess while I was at university, it wasn't necessarily something that a lot of my friends did. And yeah, once I moved to London, and I started volunteering more with different groups and engaging more in civil society, that's when I actually found out that I can vote and that actually counts for something.'
M., Bulgarian focus group participant

M. is one of the young migrant Londoners volunteering for the Young Europeans Network, a national-level group campaigning on migrants' rights issues. Access to and expanding democratic rights are central to the Network's advocacy efforts. The #OurHomeOurVote[93] campaign asks for a UK-wide residence-based voting rights model, where all residents, regardless of nationality, can vote in local elections.

But until a residence-based voting rights system, which this report recommends, is achieved, it is important to communicate the message to migrant and refugee Londoners that participation does not start and end with voting. The migrant and refugee Londoners consulted for this research, through peer research by the3million Young Europeans Network and London Youth, highlighted the importance of seeing migrant representation in politics and local government, as well as finding out about opportunities beyond elections, such as how to volunteer for social justice causes, how to participate in consultations and meet local representatives. A Brazilian-Italian participant recalls one of the first steps in her journey to participation:

'When I was doing my A-levels […] the Mayor of London invited us for tours of City Hall […] I was studying politics and the Greater London Authority wanted to encourage students to become involved; that also helped my journey because when I was that young, I was very excited to go to City Hall for a tour of the building and to hear the debates taking place inside.'

While some have received the information and support needed to engage, others are still not reached by local authorities. Migrant Londoners all pointed out how they meet EU citizens who think they cannot vote anymore due to Brexit. There is a consensus that local authorities, political parties and civil society need to focus more on actively informing and engaging migrant and refugee Londoners, as well as being more transparent about democratic processes. A Romanian participant summarises this well:

'What exactly do you do? Who are you? How can we contact you? If I have a suggestion? Who do I reach out to? What happens after I made that suggestion? There's simple things like that […] the government is like such a big machine, but the local authorities can be a lot more accessible to us, because they are in our neighborhoods basically.'

(93) https://www.ourhomeourvote.co.uk/

Case study 7

The Voices of Deaf and disabled Londoners

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The voice of Deaf and disabled Londoners

The social model of disability was created by disabled people and states that people are disabled by structural or organisational barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. Barriers can be physical, like buildings and trains not having accessible toilets, or they can be social and cultural, like people's attitudes to difference or assuming disabled people cannot do certain things. The social model helps us recognise barriers that make life harder for disabled people and take appropriate action. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers disabled people more independence, choice and control[94] - all of these, in one way or another, add to one's sense of belonging to a particular place.

It is this very sentiment that came up in the focus group with Deaf and disabled Londoners' organisations. Civic and democratic participation very directly hinges on Deaf and disabled Londoners' sense of belonging - one more readily participates in places in which they feel welcome and valued, if the methods of engagement are accessible, if they trust the process and can impact the outcome.

'the biggest challenge for some of our service users is getting out of bed in the morning… voting is probably not a priority'

The journey to participation is just that - a journey. In the heat of discussion about photo voter ID and how it would affect Deaf and disabled Londoners, one of the participants exclaimed, *'Why is this even a question?'* Faced with so many barriers in daily life, a rise in cost of living, a decade of cuts to public services and the aftermath of the pandemic, participation in civic and democratic life might not seem a priority. Questions around voting and social action may not seem intimately tied to questions of social infrastructure design and public services delivery, but they are. Civic and democratic systems should be designed with and for Deaf and disabled Londoners.

'I don't have any specific recommendations because I think unfortunately it's such a massive task that one recommendation

won't fix it because the big issue is inclusion in society and attainment and unfortunately in order to make disabled people want to participate in democracy, you're gonna need to improve in education, you need to improve in employment, improve in quality of Adult Social Care.'

Amongst the biggest barriers to full participation, focus group participants and Deaf and Disabled People's organisations (DDPOs) identified: funding; digital exclusion; pandemic-related pressure on capacity and services; government failure to reform social care and support independent living; increased discrimnation; lack of resources and capacity to engage with other civil society organisations; lack of accessibility and reasonable adjustments, and barriers to legal recourse. Research from Inclusion London shows that DDPOs play a crucial role in our communities,[95] including civic and democratic participation, with their expertise of lived experience and ability to offer much needed support. Their holistic approach is invaluable - DDPOs meet the needs of the whole person resulting in greater positive impact and more cost effective interventions, not least because of their local knowledge, authentic voice and role as a community asset. The work they do could serve as a tried-and-tested model for wider government-led practice.

In the focus group, considerable discussion took place around the introduction of photo voter ID. Some of the key concerns expressed were about the credibility of the data used by the Government to bring forward these requirements, underscoring a lack of trust in processes and in central and local authorities which came throughout this research. There were also concerns about this just creating one more barrier to civic and democratic participation when Deaf and disabled Londoners already do not get the necessary advice and legal support from the relevant authorities.

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(94) For more info check Scope's work, available at *https://www.scope.org.uk/about-us/social-model-of-disability/*
(95) "Understanding the needs of DDPOs in England", Inclusion London, July 2021. Available at *https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/news/understanding-the-needs-of-ddpos-in-england/*

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'[T]his will cause a massive issue for quite a few disabled people who already struggle with accessibility in our legal aid practice. One of the requirements we assist with is obtaining documents for them. And that is incredibly difficult. I don't trust local authorities to be very efficient, nor helpful to provide reasonable adjustments in helping disabled people to get that photo ID or to get an exception, as such. So ideally, no. But if so, then there needs to be assurances that full and proper assistance will be given for reasonable adjustments in this case in order to prevent further reduction in democratic engagement.'

'... a year or two ago, I had to renew my passport. So I did about literally 100 selfies in different light in different settings, I spent hours and uploaded it onto the government website and every single one was rejected for various reasons and... in the end I had to go and spend 15 pounds to go to one of those photo shops which they take the photo and they give you an ID which and then it took me five minutes but again not everyone has 15 pounds. I can't believe that local authorities and whatever it could be set up to do that. And even if they were, it goes back to the issue that some of us have raised. Why would you trust?... A lot of people, that's the reality, I'm not going to go in there and kind of give their photo and ID to a local authority.'

Further to this, some participants pointed out that if there is indeed money to spend around elections there may be better ways to spend it for accessible information and support for Deaf and disabled candidates:

'[I]f millions are going to be spent... it could be much better spent on providing, for example, British Sign Language interpreters around election times, or making sure all polling stations are accessible. I think I've often had correspondence from people who still complain about inaccessibility at polling stations. I think another issue is people with learning difficulties lack information, in Easy Read or video form. So...however 10s of millions of pounds are going to be proposed to be spent on an ID, these things would be much better at promoting increased access for disabled people. And they used to be that government funding for Deaf and disabled people who were interested in standing for local government or national government. And I think that got scrapped. Not sure the latest, maybe there was talk about it being reintroduced. But again, for example, if you use a wheelchair, or you need to do canvassing door-to-door, there could be extra expenses. Maybe you need a support worker or a BSL interpreter to go with us. So these are much better ways to improve democracy for Deaf and disabled people.'

That said, there was some support for the measure in the focus group. One of the participants firmly believed that if photo voter ID was what was necessary to curb electoral fraud, so be it. It was not as big an ask as one may initially believe, according to this participant, considering the prevalence of the use of ID in other aspects of our daily life and when voting does not occur so often as to make this be unduly extraneous.

Finally, as participants in the focus group and Inclusion London put it in their most recent report, DDPOs need support to:

- Provide effective infrastructure support so DDPOs can lead the change in their local communities and deliver day-to-day support that is crucial to Deaf and disabled people being able to access rights, entitlements, opportunities, choice and control;

- Engage with decision makers as respected and valued partners, who together can develop solutions to the most urgent domestic challenges of the 21st century including: inequality and exclusion and social care/independent living support, building on the best of DDPOs movement's track record of innovative policy and practice;

- Learn from, and build alliances with other social justice movements and develop new ways of working to create a sector that is genuinely intersectional, intergenerational and centers the most marginalised groups of Deaf and disabled people;

- Empower, upskill and equip DDPOs and communities, bringing young Deaf and disabled people into the movement, developing the next generation of Deaf and disabled leaders and supporting current leaders;

- Create change in their wider communities and in local, regional and national decision and policy making structures; gather robust evidence about the added value and impact of the sector as user-led organisations so they can strengthen their capacity to shift the power balance and re-set relationships with those with power.

Successful civic and democratic participation taking place across London

Case study 1

#NoVoteNoVoice
Lessons from London Voter Registration Week

London Voter Registration Week

London has one of the lowest voter registration rates across the UK regions and nations with one in three young Londoners not registered to vote. Due to structural barriers and cost of living, besides Londoners aged 16 to 24, Black, Asian, minority ethnic and migrant Londoners (including Commonwealth and European Londoners), disabled and private renting Londoners are the most under-registered and under-represented. Voter registration has direct socio-economic implications, from credit score to representation on juries and fairer verdicts. We also know, from the Survey of Londoners, that voter registration rates are also linked to higher levels of belonging and trust.

This is why the GLA, with the support of the Citizenship and Integration Initiative,[96] has set up London Voter Registration Week (LVRW). The GLA coordinates and collaborates with the London Voter Registration Strategic Partnership made up of representatives from the Electoral Commission (the regulator), borough electoral services, education and faith institutions, equalities and youth organisations. It has the cross party support of the London Assembly and of all the 33 London borough councils.

Since 2019, activity takes place in the second half of September each year to build capacity around the annual canvass and raise awareness around the start of the academic year. The GLA and the delivery partner co-design and co-deliver awareness resources (digital, video and print, including in community languages), education resources (media and political literacy) and activity (mainly online due to the pandemic) with under-registered and under-represented Londoners. For LVRW 2020, the GLA together with ShoutOut UK launched activity with the support of a London-wide, broad coalition of support made of over 100 civil society organisations, and the week itself saw the organic support of

a further 100 civil society organisations and influencers which ensured that resources reached 1.2 million individuals.

Through this large coalition and civic and democratic resources unique in the UK, LVRW 2020 has managed to contribute to increase in voter registration rates:

- 27,120 people registered to vote in London - a 14% increase from the week before, while across the UK there was a decrease of 5%.
- 5,920 young people registered to vote in London - a 23% increase from the week before, while across the UK there was a decrease of 6%.

The evaluation into the impact of LVRW 2020 has showed that the co-production and co-delivery framework and mechanisms have made some under-registered and under-represented communities, especially Central and Eastern European and Latin American Londoners, feel "seen and heard for the first time"; have confirmed the need to ensure equal, accessible, representative civic and democratic participation is embedded in post- Covid -19 recovery; while the unapologetic anti-racist approach and the equality, diversity and including principles underpinning the project have increased trust in the democratic system and institutions at a key time when we see an increase in apathy and a rise in conspiracy theories.

All the resources are available on the London Voter Registration Week hub.[97] The hope is that the GLA can continue to build on lessons learned, share best practice with other strategic partners across the UK and internationally, and that the LVRW model can be employed in other metropolitical areas with the support of other Metro Mayors.

(96) https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/issues/people/citizenship-integration-initiative/
(97) https://registertovote.london/

She Votes:
Information, social integration and leadership for Polish women in London

Co-Director Marzena Zukowska and volunteers distributing leaflets in front of Polish shops

Polish Migrants Organise for Change (POMOC) is a relatively new organisation in the democracy sector and was set up to "use art and grassroots activism to spur political awareness and social change". Led by Polish women, most of its activity is for Polish women, although the organisation collaborates on a range of projects, such as outreach for Polish, Romanian and Roma communities, or political leadership for Eastern European women.

POMOC's activity for the 2021 London elections illustrates its focus on the whole journey to political participation - from information to shaping migrant leaders in politics and in the third sector. Its voter registration campaign, She Votes (or Ona Głosuje, in Polish), included a wide range of activities, from a bilingual digital information campaign (in English and Polish), to co-leading on an Open Source Guide for EU nationals voting in 2021 elections and in-person targeted activities (leafleting, shop visits, events) in areas with high Polish migrant populations, such as Ealing and Walthamstow Forest. It even encouraged the use of fashion to promote voter registration (#ModaNaWybory), where Polish women would choose a favourite outfit and take a photo posting their ballot or at the polling station.

Example of bilingual digital material from the "She Votes" campaign

POMOC collaborated with the London Voices project to conduct two evaluation focus groups for the She Votes campaign, asking, amongst others, what is needed to facilitate the journey to participation for London's Polish community. These were a mix of verbal answers and Zoom chat participation. The theme of trust is central to the focus group conversations. Polish participants observed a lack of trust in politicians, which is often directly linked to mistrust in the political system in Poland, but also wider mistrust from ethnic minority communities in London.

"It seems to me that if you look at the UK and London specifically, when it comes to trust in politicians and when you go to the polls, if there are, for example, ethnic minorities who have been oppressed in some way by these politicians for years, these people won't go to the polls because they won't feel safe just to vote and, as it were, to enter into this world which has been really hurting them for a long time, and it seems to me that this is also where the lack of trust comes from because of the accumulation of very bad experiences in politics." (participant, POMOC focus group)

This is related to the fact that politicians and organisations are seen to engage very little with migrant communities, especially beyond election time. As another participant put it: "It seems to me that this is why trust is falling; there is something wrong with the civic society, which concentrates so much on elections and not on any other attitudes beyond elections."

Designing and disseminating culturally competent materials for Polish citizens, and migrant voters more broadly, as well as engaging beyond the short campaign period with migrant communities, were two key recommendations emerging from these focus groups which are reflected in the relevant section of this report. As one focus group participant notes:
"Certainly more actions aimed at Poles outside the social media, e.g. at Polish shops. I have the impression that in social media, however, everyone operates in their own bubble and it may not be easy to reach the less convinced."

For POMOC, participation means much more than registering and mobilising Polish women to vote in UK local elections. The journey to civic and democratic participation is one based on solidarity. POMOC is collaborating with the Young Europeans Network in calling for residence-based voting rights for all Londoners, despite Poland and the UK already having secured a bilateral agreement, and thus Polish voters' democratic rights are protected in the whole of the UK. Most of all, the journey to participation means shaping the migrant leaders of tomorrow. POMOC's programme titled 'Rise Up', in collaboration with ShoutOut UK, aims to provide Eastern European women with the skills and experience they need to become future local councillors, council leaders, migrant sector leaders and MPs.

The impact of major events and upcoming legislation

Creativity, resilience and community engagement during COVID-19

Singh Guru Singh Sabha Croydon supporting the NHS

Central YMCA is a civic engagement charity organisation founded in 1844 and the initiator of the YMCA movement; it works independently as a leading UK health, education and wellbeing charity. Its centres are based in four regions across the UK; the Central London centre, founded in 1911, is considered the organisational flagship for education, health and wellbeing. The charity's education and employment programmes run in 10 local communities and support 16-19 year-olds to develop new skills and gain the qualifications and work experience to move into further training or employment. The charity also offers services for older adults. For this report, Arvinda Gohil, CEO Central YMCA, shared insights.

Singh Guru Singh Sabha Croydon is a civic engagement charity, providing services such as regular prayers, education of Punjabi Gurmukhi, the Sikh religion, music and seva. The primary use is as a Sikh place of worship (Croydon Gurdwara) and the charity's aim is to provide a community space for community activities for all including the elderly. For this report, Surinder Sahota, board member, shared insights.

Both organisations were confronted with similar challenges during COVID-19. Faced with the possibility of closing down their centres, Central YMCA and Singh Guru Singh Sabha Croydon have shown great creativity in adapting their activities to reach both young and old Londoners. Offering the same services in a COVID-19 context presented the greatest challenge: *'How do we continue to really create an offer that works for people in the current environment and the future environment, taking account of the full demographics?'* Funding and revenue streams have massively been impacted by COVID-19, so both organisations had to rethink their social model of relevant service provision.

One example was a full transition to online; Central YMCA had to move its Women's Diabetes Prevention Programme online

as an adaptation during lockdowns: *'What it demonstrated is, we can do that, although it's not my totally favourite option, because I think the kind of work that involves requires more than just screen time and self-reflection.'* The difficult times have represented an opportunity to reach more communities by putting in place the right mechanisms for direct, constant feedback: *'the people on the frontline, the operation staff obviously talked to the people we work with constantly'* and an increased social media conversation and reach: *'we're increasingly talking to people on social media, as well as a way of reaching out.'*

Singh Guru Singh Sabha Croydon has also transitioned their Punjabi school programme to digital spaces. By doing testers while schools were closed and keeping children engaged with small incentives, the charity has continued its social programme during much of the pandemic. At the same time, the charity became a centre piece of community help and support during COVID-19: *'First of all, we identified anybody local to us… So, what we did was we identified elders or our community people around our houses. And we asked everybody on Facebook, on the web pages, please identify people that are on their own around you. To support them with shopping, support them with giving, supplying food, help them with anything they need. If there is a concern about something, flagging [it], so we can address it as a group.'* The community and civic engagement has been extremely high and the charity succeeded in supporting the local hospital in Croydon through a matching up scheme: *'We said, if the place of worship donates £10,000, can the community match it up? So, what we managed to get is, we donated £10,000. And the community donated £10,100.'* By educating around religious tolerance, building on the role of elders as community leaders and fostering community spirit, the organisation helped the Singh community and others during COVID-19 and proved their work is essential to the local communities' welfare and social integration.

The potential impact of photo voter IDs

The Elections Bill proposes the introduction of photo voter ID. One of the key arguments from the Government is that photo voter ID will prevent voter fraud. However, a research briefing from the House of Commons Library shows that the number of allegations of voting offences has averaged around 100 over the six years between 2014 and 2019, while there have been only 3 convictions in the UK since 2016.[98]

63% (69 civil society organisations) surveyed for the London Voices research project disagreed with the introduction of photo voter ID requirements. The survey, as well as some follow-up interviews, illustrated the lack of awareness of this issue for some organisations - and 15% (16 organisations) did not know and 3% (3 organisations) did not answer the question. When we consider only those organisations whose beneficiaries include Black Londoners and other ethnic minorities, around 74% disagreed with the introduction of voter ID requirements.

As a follow up in the survey, organisations were asked to describe the impact they think photo voter ID would have. The key concerns expressed in the comments were that photo voter ID would reduce participation thus widening the democratic deficit, and impose unfair barriers on already marginalised communities, such as disabled Londoners and Black, Asian and minority ethnic Londoners.

Southwark Travellers Action (STAG). Beneficiaries: Gypsies, Travellers and Roma Londoners:
'The women who we work with, not all of them, but some of them don't have either passports or driving licences. So that would be an extra barrier for them. Also just the expense of getting those things.'

...

Should **MANDATORY PHOTO IDS** for in-person voting be introduced or not?
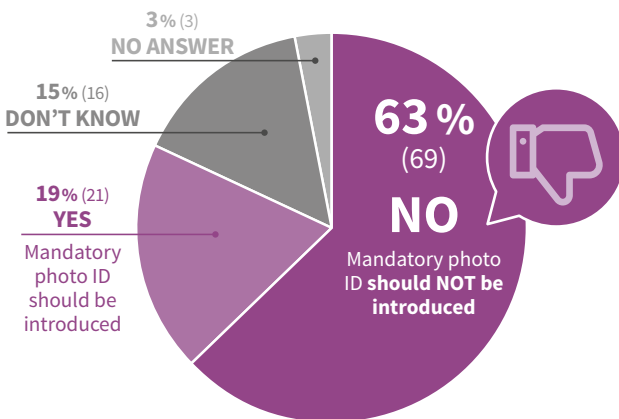
3% (3)
NO ANSWER

15% (16)
DON'T KNOW

19% (21)
YES
Mandatory photo ID should be introduced

63%
(69)
NO
Mandatory photo ID **should NOT be introduced**

Source: London Voices Survey. N = 109 organisations.
% of Respondents (Number of Respondents in parentheses)

(98) https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9304/CBP-9304.pdf

…

Haringey Welcome. Beneficiaries: Migrant and refugee Londoners:
'Loads of people don't have a passport, have never travelled outside of the country… And I think, you know, that it's clearly the poor and the disadvantaged, who are least likely to be able to prove their identity in that way.'

Central YMCA. Beneficiaries: Young Londoners:
'We do have an informal economy in London. Anybody who doesn't want to accept that is just not facing reality. So, the people in that economy will be very reluctant. And quite a lot of people in that economy tend to be from BAME communities, or from poorer communities. And therefore, you're actually saying to quite a large part of the demographic that they are going to be excluded from the democratic process'.

Jacky Peacock, Advice for Renters. Beneficiaries: Private renters
'Fewer people will vote - some won't have photo ID, some (particularly refugees) have lived in authoritarian countries and are fearful while for others it's just one more small deterrent.'

Voice4Change England. Beneficiaries: Black Londoners
'In a vibrant civil society, it is incumbent on the government to endeavour to increase political participation by expanding voters' rights. The US case rightly highlights that the introduction of voter ID legislation reduced voter participation, and it is suggested that this was disproportionately high among racial and ethnic minority groups. … The government should instead look to address the fact that millions of people are left off the electoral register, to review anachronistic campaign laws and to empower the Electoral Commission with investigatory

powers comparable to those of the Information Commissioner's Office to tackle the new battleground of digital campaigning.'

Rachel Coates, Advocacy for All. Beneficiaries: Disabled Londoners
'I think less people with disabilities will vote as this will make it more complicated.'

In the follow up interviews, participants raised issues around trust (who will issue the voter ID, who will collect and manage personal data, how will the data be issued in the context of the hostile immigration environment, etc.), the fact that the list of acceptable IDs is not comprehensive and that this is not a priority.

The survey placed attitudes towards the introduction of photo voter ID in the wider context of the need for reforming a 200 years old electoral system. Most relevant to the Elections Bill context, organisations were asked to select the reforms that they thought could increase Londoners' participation in democracy.

Most notably, a majority (59%, 64 organisations) of civil society stakeholders would like to see voting rights for all Londoners, regardless of their nationality. They believe granting voting rights could increase political participation in London and benefit all Londoners. This shows strong support for a modern, inclusive residence-based model for voting rights, as currently operating in Scotland and Wales. In addition, significant numbers of civil society organisations believe that the introduction of automatic voter registration (48%) and voting rights for 16 and 17 years olds (46%), as well as electronic voting (44%) could increase political participation among Londoners.

What of the following REFORMS, if any, do you think COULD INCREASE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION among Londoners?

Reform	% (N)
Voting rights for all London residents, irrespective of nationality	59% (64)
The introduction of automatic voter registration	48% (52)
Votes for 16 and 17 years olds	46% (50)
The introduction of electronic voting	44% (48)
Moving the election day to the weekend	35% (38)
Elections spread over two-three days	33% (36)
Don't know	13% (14)
Other	6% (6)
None of the above	3% (3)
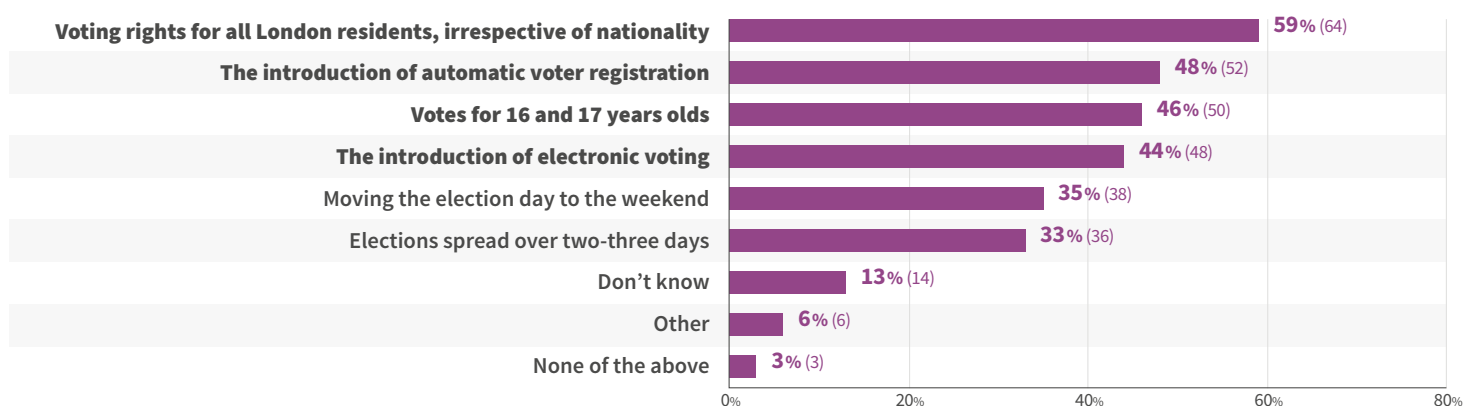
*Source: London Voices Survey. N = 109 organisations. % of **Respondents** – (Number of Respondents in parentheses) – Multiple choice*

The intersection between rights and representation

Advice for Renters and ACORN:
The Fight for Fair Housing

Participants at an Advice for Renters workshop, 2021

In speaking with Advice for Renters and ACORN about their respective work campaigning for private rental reform, the conversation turned from the micro to the macro. While both organisations work across the UK, the calls for legislating the private rental market in London are particularly urgent. 29% of households live in private rentals in London, where the typical rent of a two-bedroom flat is £1430, over twice that of other regions in England.[99] While ONS considers rent at 30% of income affordable, the average couple spends over 41% of their income on rent in London. There is a crisis for vulnerable people living in low-quality, expensive housing. Moreover, this instability contributes to the huge turnover of private renters, and to landlords taking advantage of a system which has limited oversight.

One of the biggest challenges for private renters is not knowing about their rights, particularly regarding Section 21 eviction notices which allow landlords to repossess properties without fault on part of the renters: *'So many renters don't realise that they have any rights, or that there could be any defense to possession. Many, if the landlord simply tells him, "I want you to leave", they will just leave. And that is likely to be particularly the case, if, because of COVID, the impact, they've lost income, and they actually owe rent.'*

While Advice for Renters is able to connect renters with low-interest loans, or file counterclaims against negligent landlords, tenants must make contact with them first. Making sure their work is publicized - at local food banks, on council websites, through student unions, embassies and on social media - is a big part of this outreach work. Meanwhile, ACORN has been organising Community Protection Teams in London Boroughs to provide housing advice and intervene in blocking evictions during the pandemic. Beyond frontline support and advice, both organisations are working on the policy level.

Security of tenure is one of their biggest battles now. Having no security of tenure has consequences not only for people's livelihoods and well-being, but for civic and democratic engagement, like the

An ACORN action day

ability to form relations and know that you need to re-register to vote every time you move address: *'The lack of security of tenure for private renters [means] you can't feel settled in your home, because you never know when you're gonna be thrown out. But even more possibly, is the fact that you don't identify with your local community, because you can't afford to really get to feel tight within that community and part of it, because it's then too stressful when you're forced to move away from there.'*

As Jacky notes, *'the inequalities were just so starkly displayed by the pandemic, that I just thought, "No, that's not enough." We've got to actually address this head on.'* A staff member from ACORN reflected the same sentiment: renters feel disenfranchised, lack information about how to enact change, and are angry at the way the social system privileges certain social groups over others. While grievances at poor housing or lack of housing for the homeless may be directed at local councils, it is clear that there is a larger issue at hand: far too much demand for housing, and far too many loopholes to exploit. *'So you've actually got to solve, you've got to end the housing crisis,'* says Jacky. TTo do this, organisations like Advice for Renters and ACORN are joining together with private renters to campaign for security of tenure and housing reform across the UK and a comprehensive housing strategy for all of London.

(99) Private Rental Market Summary Statistics, ONS, 2021

Case study 2

Granville Community Kitchen:
Food Insecurity in London

★ ★ ★

Granville Community Kitchen

Founded in 2014, Granville Community Kitchen (GCK) is a community food hub located in a historic building, The Granville in South Kilburn. They are focused on empowering marginalised members of the local community through food related activities such as cookery classes, volunteering, and urban farming.

In London, more than 2.3 million Londoners live below the poverty line and 33% of adults have skipped meals to save money so that their children can eat. In 2020, GCK had already been running a weekly community meal programme. 60-70 people from all backgrounds would come, as volunteer Leslie Barson described: *'single people, there were people with mental health problems. There were people with families, there were people who didn't need to come financially, but came because we're lonely, and wanted somewhere to meet their community. Old, young, and everyone in between.'* But when the COVID pandemic began, GCK shifted to distributing surplus food with City Harvest: *'We realised there were a lot of families that were in trouble. And we started delivering, and gradually, our numbers have grown pretty steadily. In the 18-19 months to now, we're feeding over 1100 people a week. So we're feeding about 270 households.'* GCK has also diversified to provide The Good Food Box, organic vegetable boxes for low income families with culturally appropriate contents.

GCK is not a food aid charity, yet they have been on the frontline of food insecurity in London particularly since the pandemic. *'As we see it there's no such thing as food poverty, there's only poverty. So if somebody is in trouble, food-wise, they're also in trouble rent-wise and energy-wise, travel-wise, and possibly employment-wise. So what we're fighting for, in general, is first of all a right to decent food, so that people have a right to food like housing and a decent living and it should be seen as part of that.'*

GCK, along with the Brent Food Aid Network, has been delivering regular meals to 40-60 residents who cannot cook for themselves. Adult Social Services has relied on such small organisations to keep homebound residents fed during COVID-19, but these stop-gap measures do not alter the structural issues which make Londoners food insecure in the first place.

Leslie explained that many South Kilburn residents are *'highly deprived and mostly work in zero hour contract type work. A lot of people are in care work, or a lot of people are in driving. So these are very precarious types of work. And during the pandemic, a lot of the people had to decide, "do I stay home and isolate or do I pay my rent?" It was not a question of, "Oh, you know, let's all stay home."'* On top of unstable work situations, people have precarious immigration statuses: *'Because of the overriding [anti-immigrant] atmosphere in the UK… people feel worried. So they don't want to complain, they don't want to say anything. Because they're not sure they might get kicked out of the country… So you just keep quiet, and you stick very much with your own community and you help yourselves, you help each other.'*

The pandemic has revealed the urgent need to reform the UK food system and GCK has a vision for a sustainable future in London. They are advocating for growing food in urban and peri-urban environments, and integrating food growing into community education. And they are looking to start a farm to provide organic food and be a local site to *'train [young] people up to be agro-ecological farmers in the future'.* On the frontline of London's battle for food security, GCK is calling for national food and agricultural legislation, so that decent food, just as housing and employment, can be a universal right in the UK.

Case study 3

Positive Money

★ ★ ★

Positive Money is a not-for-profit research and campaigning organisation that tries to address the money and banking system, which they argue isn't working for most people. They believe that big banks have too much power and that there is an untenable democratic deficit in the decision-making processes of the Bank of England. Their work, therefore, is largely geared towards the reformation of the money and banking system, enabling a fair, democratic and sustainable economy.

Alongside campaigning, researching and policy work they also do educational work. They try to break down the complexities of the money and banking system in digestible ways: *'One of our goals is… to democratise the economy,'* a representative said during the interview - *'we highlight the role of our most powerful public economic institutions like the Treasury and the Bank of England, conduct research and campaign for the kind of policies that would support people and planet, and let people know how they can engage with them.'*

Even so, what exactly would a democratised economy look like? To the Positive Money representative interviewed, there would be different strands to this: '*One strand involves campaigning to have more diversity and representation at the Bank of England especially within critical policymaking committees, but being careful to say that just because we have more diversity doesn't mean [things necessarily change]. We do a lot of reactive work on that front, highlighting where these problems exist and how the money and banking system can reinforce existing inequalities and structures of oppression, we try to make that accessible to people, and highlight how it could be different.'*

They also push for more diverse banking systems based on democratic ownership structures: *'it doesn't have to be all the big major banks all the time, a more diverse banking sector would include co-operative and community banks, credit unions, and public investment and savings banks. This would ensure everyone can access finance and that investment would flow towards the real economy and to where it is needed most like a fair and green transition. At the local level we can support credit unions, and different styles of saving amongst community groups that do have their own systems. We also want to protect access to cash. So, the fact that most vulnerable groups and those from poorer communities are experiencing lack of access to cash, like ATMs closing, bank branches shutting down, we try and highlight why that's taking place. It's systemic, it's because it is not profitable for banks to keep a branch or ATM open. We campaign for a public payments system to be established which will provide universal, free and fair access to cash. And so we try to highlight how we still need to protect the systems that serve different communities.'*

Positive Money calls attention to these problems in multiple ways. They may, for instance, respond in the media to particular events of interest, mobilise their supporters around a campaign, and have meetings with supporters to talk about these issues or conduct research to highlight the impact of these issues and propose policy solutions. In sum, they approach a single problem from as many fronts as they can. The goal, in the end, if civic and democratic participation is to be seen as a journey, is to take very deliberate care of the crucial social, economic and financial aspects that underpin it.

Case study 4

Chinese Information and Advice Centre:
Frontline Support

★ ★ ★

Casework in action at the Chinese Information and Advice Centre

'People don't just come in with one type of issue, they come in with almost like a package. And you just have to unwrap it piece by piece and try to figure out how we can start from the beginning.'

The Chinese Information and Advice Centre (CIAC) provides essential frontline services and advice to London's Chinese community. Jaime Law spoke about the CIAC's work and the barriers experienced by the Chinese community in London.

CIAC's work covers a range of issues: from providing frontline advice and information on immigration and healthcare (including vaccination clinics), to assistance to offenders and support for victims of domestic abuse. Since COVID-19, CIAC has experienced a huge increase in demand for services, as many people lost their jobs and have fallen into destitution. Jaime gave the example of accessing Universal Credit: *'because everything is based online, you have to verify your identity online, which is not easy to do. And sometimes it is impossible to do it. Because the system only recognises British passports [not foreign passports]. It may sound very straightforward to mainstream beneficiaries, but not the case in ethnic minorities.'* This posed a serious problem during the lockdown, particularly for elderly beneficiaries shielding at home who could not figure out the digital system. Jaime explains, *'it's normal, it's understandable, that not everyone has a utility bill. And it's understandable that not everyone has a driving license. So I'm not sure what the government is after.'* As a result of these delayed processes, beneficiaries may face the further stress of eviction or debts until their applications can be settled.

'The government is working very closely with other ethnic minorities, with religious leaders, working very closely with mosques, with churches, but how about the Chinese? And I haven't mentioned the Southeast Asians, like, Thai, Indonesian, Vietnamese. They are pretty much extremely under-represented.'

CIAC is engaging cross-sectorally, particularly on hate crimes and supporting victims of domestic abuse, building connections with law enforcement, the Home Office, and other organisations in the sector. However, authorities have not given the Chinese community many reasons to trust them: *'when we look at racial attacks, racist behavior, that sort of thing, we know our rights, because there's been so many workshops since the COVID, since the pandemic, we have done enough workshops. We know the definition. Everyone knows our priorities. But the problem is, if the local authority or the local police, the team doesn't recognise this, that this is an issue, this is a racist behaviour, then it contradicts the message that is from the government, and which then confuses the community.'*

Democratic participation is connected to this sense of distrust, but it is also related to existing conceptions of political participation. Jaime explains, *'a big portion of our beneficiaries are actually from Mainland China, with or without status, with or without the right to vote. But the thing is, for them, voting is a new thing. If we compare what happens in China… So, for them, they rather not get involved. Because getting involved in China means getting in trouble. And why, "I'm starting to live in a country, why should I get myself in trouble?"'* While the Centre has supported voter education campaigns, as well as participation in the census, Jaime is clear that there are other challenges at play.

Language, for instance, is a significant issue. Certainly, the Government could provide more support in this, particularly when it comes to crucial information about UK benefits, rights, legal and health services for Chinese communities. With immigration from Hong Kong projected to grow, Jaime underscores that it is critical the Government and local authorities make an effort to integrate newcomers better, as well as provide a comprehensive response to hate crimes.

Case study 5

Hostland to Homeland:
Centre for Armenian Information and Advice

★ ★ ★

Centre for Armenian Information and Advice

Misak Ohanian, the Founder of the Centre for Armenian Information and Advice (CAIA), discussed the idiosyncrasies of supporting the diverse Armenian community in the UK and the challenges of maintaining a user-led organisation, drawing patterns across the third sector and the minority immigrant experience. *'We're a user-led organisation, which means that everybody who is involved in the organisation, be it staff, the volunteers, be it the board members, they all have either benefited from the center or been involved with the organisation one way or another.'* While they serve the diverse Armenian population, they also have strong links with other local voluntary organisations, BAME groups and London councils.

New Londoners face many obstacles to building their lives in the UK; whether that is to do with language, lack of digital skills, or simply not knowing where to find information. As an organisation with a wide remit, not only serving those in London, but also Armenians across the UK and even from abroad, Misak engages constantly with beneficiaries to address their *'incredibly varied questions and demands to basically find out about their statutory rights. Because they have difficulty accessing those or they are unfamiliar with certain ways of doing things in this country. Or just generally helping them live, from how to arrange a funeral to how to make benefit entitlements, or help their kids to apply for school.'*

The pandemic had a huge impact on CAIA, increasing demand for community support, and putting up barriers for an organisation with limited capacity. *'During the COVID period as an organisation, we were absolutely overwhelmed by the requests, by funders and statute agencies. Tell us what was going on, or what the issues were. Obviously, they have the right to know, and it was good that they wanted to know, but that did obstruct us, they did divert a lot of our time and attention and put additional stress and pressure on our well being, I suppose, continuously having to justify ourselves.'*

The overwhelming shift toward digitalisation during the pandemic has meant increased pressure on service and on the organisation's own resources. As Misak explains, *'we get requests for technical support from people across London where I've got to literally send one of my colleagues to make a home visit just to help*

somebody to teach them how to send and receive emails, or how to take a photograph of a very important letter, how to send it to us, or how to do internet banking.' Aware of digital exclusion of the Armenian community well before the pandemic, CAIA has been able to secure funding for digital skills and employability workshops, such as CV writing and how to start a business. They also include information on these topics on their website, magazine and popular monthly e-bulletin.

As Misak notes, most ethnic minority Londoners *'have got links, they've got families, they've got relatives, they still follow what's happening in the country where they came from.'* For them, the UK is a *'hostland, as opposed to a homeland'.* Discussing the emotional and financial impact of the recent Nagorno-Karabakh war for Armenians in the UK, Misak says, *'All of that impacts us because we, as a local organisation, local charity, have to gear our service around the needs and the concerns or stresses of the community. And over the last 30 years, we've had to adapt and adjust our service to make those people feel welcome. Whether it's about helping them find accommodation, or work or education, or introducing them to how to settle in this country, how to help with their quality of life. So everything that happens outside Britain impacts community groups like ours… whether it impacts us physically, i.e., people arriving here, or psychologically, or mentally.'*

Misak also raised the issue of disillusionment with political processes. Not only are there cultural backgrounds which lead the community to be reticent about democratic participation, there is a perception that politicians or officials do not care. To counter this, Misak advocates: *'if you're working in a responsible position, in the local authority, or you're a councillor, you're an MP or Prime Minister, you should be seen as the servant of the people. You shouldn't be there to empower yourself… Because the perception is that actually you're not listening to me, you're not actually helping me, you're just there, pushing papers, pushing numbers, pushing people around, not actually making any impact.'* For minority communities it is critical to establish this trust and work to help make London feel more less like a hostland and more like a home.

London Voices: **the journey to full participation**
In their own words – The intersection between rights and representation

46

New and innovative models on civic and democratic participation

Case study 1

Active Horizons:
Empowering Young Leaders

★ ★ ★

Yeukai Taruvinga Founder of Active Horizons in Bexley

Active Horizons is a community-based organisation supporting young people from migrant and BAME communities in Bexley and the surrounding areas. Yeukai Taruvinga founded Active Horizons back in 2006. As a young refugee, she faced the challenges of being an asylum seeker in the UK, trying to settle and get legal status. Her journey took her through long-term unemployment and homelessness. Through this, she met many other young people in similar situations and decided to set up a self-help group, *'to get everybody in similar circumstances to support one another, but also to challenge the discriminatory policies or laws that were against people in my situation.'* That was the beginning of Active Horizons.

One of Active Horizons key objectives is making a change for young people and empowering them to lead and become civically engaged. Hence, it facilitates youth leadership training in local schools in Bexley, where young people work with other young people to understand their identities, come together, and identify the issues affecting them. It gives young people the tools and techniques to be able to change perceptions and ultimately change policy.

Active Horizons also organises forums for young people to learn about local politics, through meetings with MPs and councillors, and election events with prospective candidates from across political parties or independents. Making local politics accessible allows young people to engage with democracy and humanise a process which can feel very alienating and intimidating. Of their initiatives, Yeukai Tavuringa says, *'these things are really important, in terms of saying to the young people, you have the right to engage your MP. You have the right to, express concerns, or to express successes as well to your MP, because he or she is your representative.'* Breaking down stereotypes about politics encourages young people to *'understand democracy, to understand decision making, influencing, and knowing what's the process to achieve, and also encourage other young people*

to be involved in politics.' Clearly, it has been an effective strategy: *'Active Horizons has built some prospective politicians, some are working in these political parties, doing community organising, we have a couple of them who will try to become councillors. So all that is a testimony of the work we have done, and empower the young people to be part of.'*

As a small organisation, Active Horizons faces some of the issues common to the sector: a shortage of capacity for the growing demand. On the frontline in Bexley, they do innovative work creating platforms where young people can express themselves through spoken word, poetry and creative writing to address racism, discrimination, and mental health. But Yeukai illustrates a common dilemma facing small organisations with limited staff and barriers to funding: *'We don't have the resources, the time, because we are busy focused on delivery. And I think if they make the [grant] process much, much easier and fairer for smaller groups to actually access financial support that would be great.'*

Seeing the impact of Active Horizons' projects over the years, Yeukai advocates for greater recognition by local authorities and cross-community collaboration. For the UK government, the founder also laid out her recommendations: *'I think the UK needs to acknowledge the positive benefits that the refugee and migrant community has in the UK. I'm an immigrant myself. It took years to be recognised as a citizen, I'm talking years, almost 10 years, which took all my youth in that regard. Had I been given the opportunity, then I would have even done more impactful work than I'm doing now.'* Furthermore, *'they need to have the political will to tackle racism that's going on from a senior level, in terms of the government level, starting with their policies, right down to the individual.'* With this, the work of small and essential youth organisations like Active Horizons can expand and thrive to support their beneficiaries, local communities and London's society.

Unlock Democracy:
Scaling up
the Democracy Sector

★ ★ ★

Unlock Democracy

Unlock Democracy is a membership organisation which campaigns for democratic reform in the UK. Shaun Roberts, the organisation's Head of Campaigns & Digital, highlights some of the current challenges for the sector and democracy at large. With over 1500 members and 25,000 supporters, they work with other organisations *'to stand up and fight for a better democracy in the UK.'*

Adapting quickly to the set-backs during COVID-19, Unlock Democracy has been focusing on scaling up their work: *'it's about growth, because ultimately, if we want to have influence and deliver change, and stop bad things happening, we have to be a bigger organisation. And that pretty much runs across the democracy sector really, in that it's comparatively small compared to many other campaigning sectors.'* Their current campaigns focus on climate change, electoral integrity, right to protest and devolution.

Even so, it's a growing area, pushed forward by Brexit and critical bills currently going through Parliament, especially the Elections Bill and the Police and Crime Bill. Shaun reflects, *'at the moment I think it's kind of the tip of the iceberg and people are still kind of just coming to terms with some of the negative changes that are starting to happen to our democracy. It potentially will be very shocking to some when they find that even one person protesting outside their council offices with a placard or outside Parliament could be banned if it's seen as noisy or annoying.'* He went on to discuss how *'a lot of people think why it won't affect my kind of protest or these kinds of protests,*

but truth is it covers everybody. Everyone's going to have to go through this process and it gives extraordinary powers to the police and it gives extraordinary power to people who want to object to protests.'

In asking why most people are not worried about the rollback of democracy in the UK, Shaun believes the media plays a strong role: *'I think there's clearly an issue with the fact that democracy can be very process and system-led, and people tend to care less about process and system - they care about outcomes. What the media is writing these days is stuff that gets clicks. And I think with democracy, you can have a lot of headlines that really don't encourage a lot of clicks… they are not going to break into that public awareness.'* For Unlock Democracy and other organisations in the democracy sector, one of the biggest challenges is figuring out how to get their message out there. For them, it is about sharing the human story and illustrating how political decisions have a real impact on regular people.

Brexit brought into sharp focus how *'large parts of this country feel that those people in power just don't [care about them]. That prompts a question - in a democracy how can a politician ignore the people? The answer is because our democracy isn't isn't working properly. So we need to fix it, whether that's changing the electoral system or introducing citizens' assemblies, or any kind of range of things that can make people's voices heard. To me that's why fixing our political system is so important and I think more and more people are starting to feel the same way.'*

If a London Democracy Network existed **WOULD YOU JOIN IT?**

YES	**61%** (67)
No	**8%** (9)
Don't know	**25%** (27)
No Answer	**6%** (6)

% of **Organisations**
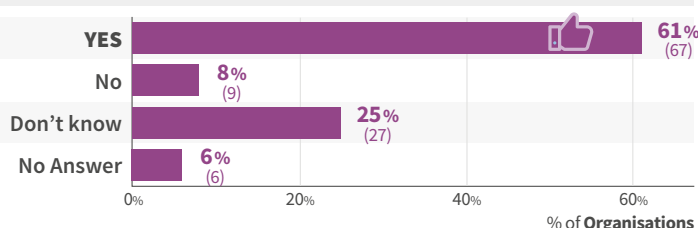
LONDON DEMOCRACY NETWORK

More than 60% of survey respondents said they would join a London Democracy Network, if one existed. Such a network would bring together local authorities, the regulator, funders, civil society and academics

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations – A London Democracy Network would share best practices, funding opportunities, collaborate on activities and advocacy as well as meet regularly.

Case study 3

BTEG and Association of Panel Members:
Fighting for Race Equality

★ ★ ★

BTEG in action

'We want to see better representation, and not over-representation in things like the care system and low paid work. We want better representation, better paid jobs, and better careers.'
Jeremy Crook, BTEG

The Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG) is a national charity based in London. It was set up to tackle race disparities, particularly in education, employment, regeneration, and over the last 10 years, the criminal justice system. They combine practical project delivery with policy influencing and voice and work nationally and regionally.

Founded in 2006, the Association of Panel Members (AoPM) is a professional association of volunteers supporting young offenders, campaigning for criminal justice reform, the introduction of standards in training and support for Panel Members, and improved access to services for young people. Jeremy Crook, the Chief Executive of BTEG, and Sandra Beeton, the Executive Director of AoPM, shared insights on how their organisations envision and work toward an equitable model of racial justice in London and the UK.

Inequality in the criminal justice system must be seen as structural. Both organisations are addressing different aspects of this inequality, with the understanding that the current social system (from mechanisms, legislation, policies, decision-making process) is designed to prevent social mobility. The interviewees expressed frustration at the government and local authorities for having cut off funding for social services provided by organisations and the decreasing funding for racial equality work. Further, they highlighted the reduced impact of research reports which have not translated into action or strong legislation on race. Below we look at two critical initiatives BTEG and AoPM are working on to address racial inequality in London and the UK.

A key part of BTEG's current work is focused on how stigma, criminalisation and policing pose barriers to decent employment for young Black men and women. Beyond their leadership work in London schools, BTEG's employment initiative, working closely with the GLA part of the WIN programme,[100] is focused on getting more employers from key growth sectors to look at their recruitment and to engage and

promote young Black men. In Jeremy's words, *'if we can move the dial for young Black men, we can also apply some of that learning to other under-represented groups in London. They do experience the highest levels of unemployment and underemployment. And as young people, they face some of the biggest negative stereotypes in society.'* Here, '*the policing agenda is really important because it seems to me, we're stopping and searching large volumes of young Black men and boys, which is traumatising them and putting them onto databases, which they don't need to be on. And that just reinforces stereotypes for employers that they are not to be trusted… They are obviously serious issues, but they disproportionately get conflated to be applied to large groups of young men.'*

For AoPM, who work specifically with young offenders, addressing the vicious cycle of criminalisation requires restorative community-based support. Hence, AoPM is developing a Community Justice Academy model that would, 1) train members of the community in crime hotspots to deliver non-criminalising restorative justice via Local Justice Panels targeted at those aged under 25 from BAME backgrounds; 2) offer offenders the opportunity to train as restorative justice facilitators as a part of their mandated community service, to maximise their positive contribution to panels based on lived experience; and 3) deliver training programmes and restorative conferencing where beneficiaries are located (e.g., on council estates) using the recovery college model.

The Local Justice Panels model can guide offenders' journey to reintegration into the community by *'working with peer networks, supported by community providers willing to support "difficult" people with mentoring, counselling, welfare and other effective support. When appropriate, service users may themselves go on to become local community organisers, creating virtuous circle[s] in situ, at the places where the problems really are.'* For Sandra, Local Justice Panels would enhance social mobility by converting the lived experiences of those who have 'graduated from the system' into positive community development. By co-production with local social providers, Panels will improve the existing system where community support services are currently accessed only as the last resort when statutory services have failed.

(100) https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/workforce-integration-network-win

Borough-level responses to structural inequalities:
Dadihiye Somali Development Organisation and Haringey Welcome

Dadihiye Somali Development Organisation during an activity with beneficiaries

Dadihiye Somali Development Organisation was established in Somalia in 1989 and was set up in 1993 in the UK to mainly support communities with Somali background. Their beneficiaries come from all over London, particularly Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham, Westminster, Ealing, Brent and Waltham Forest. Haringey Welcome, as the name suggests, is also borough-focused, promoting social integration and a welcoming, inclusive community.

What the two organisations have in common is promoting social integration at a local level to address the structural inequalities experienced by their beneficiaries. The need for this work does not stop at the first generation of migrants and refugees. Dadihiye Somali Development Organisation explains how many beneficiaries are British citizens, but they are not treated equally in employment, housing and other services: *'They cannot voice for their rights, they cannot talk what they want, they even live in overcrowded, horrible accommodation. I have seen a family of four still living in a one bedroom flat, six living in a two bedroom flat.'* The organisation comments on how the beneficiaries are voiceless due to language or cultural barriers and the challenges posed by the *'UK bureaucratic system'.* We cannot see the issues faced by migrants and refugees as separate from the structural inequalities affecting Black and minority ethnic British Londoners just by virtue of their immigration status.

For these two organisations, one of the key causes of the inequalities experienced by their beneficiaries is the UK hostile immigration policy, which, as seen in the Windrush scandal most notably, affects migrants as well as those who consider themselves, and in many cases are, in fact, British citizens. The Hostile Environment shifted the policing onus from the state to the individual - it is the individual who has to prove their immigration status, and thus their entitlement to services, and for health professionals, landlords, employers and councils to become border guards and check this status every time people want to rent a house, get a new job or need to access welfare or healthcare. In this sense, Haringey Welcome described themselves in the interview as campaigning *'to make Haringey a welcoming borough for everybody',* challenging the hostile environment policies with positive action locally.

While Dadihiye Somali Development Organisation works directly with beneficiaries, Haringey Welcome describes itself as a campaign organisation. Nevertheless, outreach and grassroots are central to both their operations. COVID-19 severely impacted their ability to mobilise the grassroots and do much needed work. For instance,

Haringey Welcome has been unable to carry out some of their local-level initiatives, such as school summer fairs. However, COVID-19 opened up opportunities for other types of engagement, such as closer work with local authorities and information campaigns. One of the Haringey Welcome projects in 2021 was set up for migrants and other residents to write about their lives, resulting in a workbook and website. Six films have been made working with academics and other stakeholders to record the experiences of migrants during the pandemic. These local information campaigns have been successful in challenging stereotypes around asylum seekers and refugees:

'It's interesting, when you've got something like Afghanistan, there's a lot of support; a lot of people wanting to help refugees from Afghanistan, I think there's a general kind of a willingness, when people actually understand the situation, to engage. They don't know why people are crossing the channel in boats, more boats, including the fact that some of those are Afghan refugees, and some of them Syrian.'

As more in-person meetings are now possible, a key recommendation for local authorities is to start in-person outreach--whether it is about voter registration, information about services or immigration status--getting the advice and services to communities is crucial. One of the key challenges to address the gaps in civic and democratic participation is limited access to information. As the representative from Haringey Welcome notes: *'There's a huge lack of information. So, what their civic rights are, what they can and can't do, legally, how to get legal advice [...] any information about what they're entitled to, I think it's very hard for people to get.'* In this view, the recommendations section of the report provides detailed and actionable recommendations on reaching out to London's under-represented communities.

Haringey Welcome with the Solidarity Knows No Borders (#SKNB) movement, 2021

Recommendations

to address structural barriers and increase civic and democratic participation among Londoners

The London Voices research offers a holistic view of the journey to full participation, and in particular stresses the continuum link between civic and democratic participation and the importance of including it in the emerging post - pandemic social contact to foster belonging and trust, key indicators of social integration.

Hence, this report presents a series of detailed and practical recommendations for local authorities, Greater London Assembly, the Mayor of London, Central Government, funders, civil society and political parties. These were co-designed with under-represented Londoners (through input in the survey, peer-led focus groups and in-depth interviews) and an Advisory Board. Some can be implemented immediately, especially those around current legislation going through Parliament and the lessons learned from the pandemic, others require political and good will to coordinate and collaborate on the medium and long term to achieve equal, accessible, representative civic and democratic participation in local communities, London and the UK.

Recommendations for
LOCAL AUTHORITIES

To increase civic and democratic participation, local authorities should recognise and appreciate civil society organisations as equal partners and understand that collaborating with civil society will deliver benefits for their residents.

Meaningful engagement on civic and democratic participation:

- **To embrace culture change** that sees civil society organisations as partners with whom to meaningfully co-design, collaborate and coordinate on civic and democratic participation initiatives.

- **To provide more opportunities** for, and collect the data on levels of, participation in deliberative democracy initiatives such as Citizens' Assemblies. This should be in addition to regular and meaningful local authority consultations which will require ample notice and time to contribute in an accessible and representative way.

- **To develop strong housing development strategies** with civil society, strengthen oversight over private developer contracts and ensure affordable housing development, especially social housing.

- **To support volunteering, sport, cultural and community events** that further community relations and social integration, including by embedding voter registration drives and awareness where appropriate.

- **To address lack of accessibility and reasonable adjustments across services and engagement,** including by providing staff with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and unconscious bias training to ensure values are reflected throughout engagement and service delivery.

- **To allow for continued hybrid digital access** to meetings and consultations.

Amplifying and facilitating the work of civil society:

- **To value and amplify the key role civil society organisations play** in our local communities and our city, beyond their role in filling potential gaps in state provision.

- **To strengthen platforms and create resources for civil society organisations** working on the same issue or in the same area to connect and plan joint initiatives.

- **To boost the reach of civil society organisations to potential beneficiaries** through public engagement and strategic communications work that take into account digital inequality.

Informing and communicating about civic and democratic participation:

- **To provide information material** to newly registered civil society organisations about their rights and possible funding opportunities, as well as networking opportunities with other funders.

- **To collect and communicate data** on the representation of elected officials by age, gender, disability and ethnicity.

- **To evaluate and communicate** provision and levels of civic and democratic education.

- **To fund advice** in every borough relating to housing, immigration, employment, family and youth needs.

Recommendations for
THE GREATER LONDON ASSEMBLY (GLA)

As the London regional authority, the GLA already delivers and coordinates impartial civic and democratic participation activity that has the cross-party support of the London Assembly. The GLA is linked to, though distinct from, the Mayor of London and as a result the report proposes recommendations for both.

The GLA should continue to convene and facilitate cooperation between civil society organisations, local authorities, funders and central government. The GLA also plays an important role in advocating for civic and democratic participation reform, and should continue to showcase and embed best practices in its own structures and programmes as well as adequately financing civic initiatives across London.

Facilitating cooperation on civic and democratic participation:

- **To create and coordinate a London Democracy Network** that brings together local authorities, the regulator, funders, civil society and academics. This network should collaborate closely with similar initiatives, such as the Democracy Network.[101]

- **To create platforms and resources** for civil society organisations to connect, share best practices and plan joint initiatives on civic and democratic participation.

- **To increase regular engagement** with civil society organisations, beyond election periods.

- **To engage more regularly** with Deaf and disabled, LBGTQ+, women-led, Black and minority ethnic organisations to produce policy decisions for them and with them.

Funding civic and democratic participation:

- **To increase funding for and co-design resources** with civil society-led and organised campaigns to increase levels of civic and democratic participation. This should include volunteering, sports, social action, voter registration and access to citizenship and Political Literacy.

- **To ring-fence funding** for small civil society organisations led by under-registered and under-represented communities with less stringent application criteria and review how funding reaches these organisations in all funding programmes.

Strengthening the civic and democratic participation of Londoners:

- **To promote a greater number of opportunities** for Londoners and organisations to meaningfully influence their policies and spending decisions through more consultations, assemblies, as well as decision-making and policy forums.

- **To embed learning and best practice** on civic and democratic participation in all its systems and structures, including via coordination and collaboration among its various units and policy leads.

Advocating for civic and democratic participation:

- **To share best practices** and encourage other local and regional authorities outside London, including the devolved nations, to trial and embrace the model and principles of London Voter Registration Week.

- **To coordinate and fund a London-wide response** and public awareness campaign to upcoming changes to civic and democratic rights. This should be focused on addressing the negative impact and equalities implications of the introduction of photo voter IDs and the removal of voting rights for some EU Londoners.

- **To continue playing a convening and thought - leadership role** on issues of civic and democratic participation, including advocacy around votes at 16, residence-based voting rights and automatic voter registration.

(101) *https://www.involve.org.uk/resources/blog/project-updates/democracy-network-what-it-how-itll-work-and-answers-other-faqs*

Recommendations for
MAYOR OF LONDON

Outside the devolved nations, the Mayor of London is one of the most outspoken political figures on the need for cross-party civic and democratic reform and its key role in social integration.

The Mayor of London should continue to facilitate sustainable and inclusive engagement with civil society on civic and democratic participation, with a focus on the most under-registered and under-represented Londoners. The Mayor of London should build on the important role played in advocating for reforms to strengthen civic and democratic participation and in bringing together statutory bodies, local authorities and central government around these key issues.

Meaningful engagement on civic and democratic participation:

- **To encourage the sharing and showcasing of civil society-led best practices** on civic and democratic participation, including non-party political, and impartial campaigning activities.

- **To ensure year-round engagement** on barriers to civic and democratic participation, not just in the run up to elections.

- **To provide funding for programmes and policy** focused on the most under-represented groups, including Deaf and disabled Londoners, and Black,minority ethnic and migrant Londoners

- **To co-design programmes** with and continue to amplify the voices of young Londoners to develop more informed and intersectional campaigns.

Strengthening the civic and democratic participation of Londoners:

- **To provide more opportunities** for participation in deliberative democracy, such as Citizens' Assemblies, as well as regular consultations.

- **To work with central government and London borough councils** to create more opportunities for civic and democratic engagement on the issues that matter to London's civil society organisations and their beneficiaries.

Advocating for civic and democratic participation:

- **To support inclusive, modern democratic reform,** including voting rights for all London residents, irrespective of nationality; automatic voter registration and votes for 16 and 17 year olds.

- **To support a London-wide response** and public awareness campaign to upcoming changes to civic and democratic rights. This should be focused on addressing the negative impact and equalities implications of the introduction of photo voter IDs and the removal of voting rights for some EU Londoners.

- **To continue to act as a bridge** between London's communities and central government.

- **To coordinate and collaborate cross-party** and with Metro and other Mayors on tackling barriers to civic and democratic participation, advocating for and implementing reform.

Addressing challenges to civic and democratic participation:

- **To embed EDI principles in procurement processes,** in both supply chains and workforce diversity.

- **To address institutional racism and sexism** in the Metropolitan Police and oversee the work of the Police Commissioner in reducing discriminatory stop and search and misogynistic practices.

Recommendations for
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Central Government should focus on sharing evidence, resources and data on civic and democratic participation in an accessible way with organisations and key stakeholders. More opportunities should be created for collaboration with civil society, meaningful civic and democratic participation (including through legislation, such as the democratic reforms already adopted by the devolved nations) and a more sustainable funding structure for the civic and democratic sector.

Sharing evidence, resources and data on civic and democratic participation:

- To ensure accessible and transparent access to data on civic and democratic participation, including voter registration, by characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, age, disability, and nationality, crucial in the design and evaluation of activity and in tracking trends and ensuring that data provision is standardised across local authorities and councils.
- To consult with civil society, legal and academic experts and address gaps in the collection of strategic data on civic and democratic participation, especially around the access, representation and participation of under-registered and under-represented communities.
- To strengthen race equality legislation and take significant action on race disparity data.

Fostering meaningful engagement on civic and democratic participation:

- To ensure legislation allows civil society organisations to engage in policy making processes at local, regional and national level without fear of sanctions.
- To create more opportunities for civil society engagement on the issues that matter to these organisations and their beneficiaries, including ensuring they have more influence on decisions impacting them and their communities, including through new devolution deals.
- To co-design with communities, farmers and businesses a national legislation on food security and sustainability
- To collaborate with community organisations to implement culturally sensitive training for law enforcement when responding to hate crimes, foreign offenders and domestic violence cases.

Providing sustainable and inclusive funding for civic and democratic participation:

- To provide sustainable funding for London's civil society, including by making sure London is not overlooked in the "levelling up" agenda given current levels of poverty and structural inequalities.
- To provide financial support for Deaf and disabled candidates (reinstate the EnAble Fund which stopped in March 2020).
- To provide funding for civil society-led and organised campaigns to increase civic and democratic awareness, including through providing funding for - and embedding - Media and Political Literacy in the schools' curricula.

Strengthening civic and democratic participation:

- To encourage equal, accessible, inclusive, representative civic and democratic participation through government policy and programmes.
- To introduce inclusive democratic reform, including residence-based voting rights in local elections, automatic voter registration, voting rights for 16 and 17 year olds, and electronic voting.
- To introduce an England - wide National Voter Registration Day, following the model of "London Voter Registration Week".
- To expand support for resources in community languages, particularly when they involve digital processes. For example, by providing "welcome packs" with key social integration information about rights, obligations and services designated in community languages and targeted especially at new immigrant and asylum seeking Londoners (such as those provided to Hong Kong BNO visa recipients).

Addressing challenges to civic and democratic participation:

- To address the culture of politics and public discourse which makes Deaf and disabled Londoners, Black Londoners, women, LGBTQ+ Londoners, ethnic and faith minority communities disproportionately subjected to abuse, especially on social media. This could be done by regulating the social media companies who financially benefit from the spread of misinformation and disinformation.
- To ensure that regulators, such as the Electoral Commission, retain or, where appropriate, have their mandates, resources and independence renewed.
- To decrease restrictions on legal aid eligibility and expand its remit.
- To rethink the Policing Bill that - in its current form - restricts the right to protest, criminalises Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities for their way of life and could make disparities even greater in stop and search, and result in longer sentences especially for Black and Muslim Londoners.
- To address food insecurity by extending funding for universal free school meals to primary and secondary schools.
- To rethink the introduction of further barriers to democratic participation, in the form of mandatory photo IDs for in-person voting or removing the voting rights of some EU citizens London residents.

Recommendations for FUNDERS

Funders should implement sustainable and inclusive funding practices, by providing more core and unrestricted funding, making it easier for small and new civil society organisations to obtain funding, and by investing in more medium and long-term funding. Funders should also empower and support civil society organisations by providing training, mentorship and networking opportunities. This holistic approach is instrumental in supporting a third sector that is genuinely intersectional, intergenerational and focuses on the most marginalised groups.

Supporting small and new civil society organisations:

- **To provide specific funding** to support capacity especially for small civil society organisations.
- **To ring-fence funding** for small and new civil society organisations which lack the capacity to comply with time-consuming application and reporting requirements

Facilitating access to funding opportunities:

- **To coordinate the creation of a centralised funding availability platform** for London's civil society organisations so that organisations do not miss relevant opportunities and deadlines.
- **To ensure grant information is shared** using the 360Giving data standard, and that geographic information is included.

Implementing sustainable and inclusive funding practices:

- **To provide more opportunities** for unrestricted and core funding.
- **To support racial equality organisations** and councils and provide sustainable investment in their work.
- **To invest in strategic medium** (2 years) **and long term** (3 - 5 years) **funding,** collaborations and projects with civil society, local authorities and researchers around civic and democratic participation, not just around elections - a current practice that reinforces the systemic issues in the sector, especially around capacity and resilience and threatens the survival of many organisations and their ability to coordinate and collaborate on medium and long term advocacy.
- **To consider the value of funding campaigning work** to achieve social change (which CC9 campaigning and political activity guidance for charities allows for) and update their funding principles accordingly to ensure they do not exclude non-party political, impartial campaigning activities.

Empowering civil society:

- **To fund work** to increase the knowledge-base and capacity of civil society organisations to get involved in campaigning, and encourage greater sharing of experience of how best to influence elected officials and other decision-makers. This will help shift the balance away from focus on service delivery and towards collectively tackling the root causes of the issues faced by civil society organisations and Londoners.
- **To facilitate and fund cross-sector buddying or mentorship** on civic and democratic participation.
- **To consider funding and coordinating an annual event** around a potential London Democracy Network.
- **To raise awareness, co-design and co-produce resources** to support civil society organisations to deal with the chilling and gagging effects of charity and electoral law and to better communicate their stories and impact, especially in view of upcoming legislation that could impact on the right to protest and run non-party political, social justice campaigns.

Recommendations for
CIVIL SOCIETY

To strengthen civic and democratic participation, civil society organisations should coordinate and collaborate on activity and advocacy, should strive to create a sector that is intersectional, intergenerational and focused on the most marginalised groups. Civil society should also adopt a holistic approach to civic and democratic participation, embedding democratic engagement and outreach activities into their regular events and services.

Implementing a holistic approach to civic and democratic participation:

- **To incorporate non-party political, democratic engagement and education,** including voter registration and impartial voter turnout activity, in other soft entry points on the journey to full participation, e.g., volunteering, sports, cultural and community events, advice and service provision.

Equitable and intersectional collaboration on civic and democratic participation:

- **To learn from, and build alliances with, other social justice movements** and develop new ways of working to create a sector that is genuinely intersectional, intergenerational and focuses on the most marginalised groups

- **To support equitable power-sharing** in partnerships and consortiums.

- **To coordinate and collaborate** on the design, delivery and evaluation of activity and advocacy related to civic and democratic participation

- **To collaborate with academic and research institutions** to identify beneficiaries' needs and develop actionable, public policy initiatives based on the output of such research.

Sharing evidence, resources and data on civic and democratic participation:

- **To gather robust evidence** about the added value and impact of civil society to strengthen capacity and agency, to shift the power balance and re-set relationships with those with power.

- **To collaborate on a London civil society audit** to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats on civic and democratic participation, part of the wider social integration agenda.

- **To share resources, expertise, data and best practice** on civic and democratic participation activity, especially antiracist and social justice campaigns.

Recommendations for
POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties should support candidates from under-represented groups, invest in engagement with under-registered and under-represented communities and advocate for progressive, modern reforms to civic and democratic participation.

Supporting diverse candidates:

● **To ensure that candidates are more representative** of their local communities in terms of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity and nationality.

● **To diversify the candidate portfolio** and facilitate entry routes to becoming a candidate for under-represented groups.

Engaging with marginalised voters:

● **To engage under-represented and marginalised communities** in awareness raising around civic and democratic rights and outreach activities, including voter registration activity

● **To provide more easily accessible information** about individual candidates and their priorities.

● **To provide culturally competent communications,** including in different community languages, to reach out to eligible Commonwealth and EU voters.

Advocating for civic and democratic participation:

● **To support democratic reform in England** and, by virtue of current devolution arrangements in London, that will encourage social integration, build trust and nurture belonging, especially residence-based voting rights, votes for 16 and 17 year olds and automatic voter registration.

Acknowledgements

Appendix

Further data from the London Voices survey

This section features additional data on questions asked in the London Voices survey.

Where surveyed organisations work

40% of the 109 surveyed organisations work across all the boroughs of London, with the rest focusing on a specific set of neighbourhoods. The top three boroughs represented in the survey were Haringey, Brent, and Newham.

GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS OF WORK of surveyed organisations
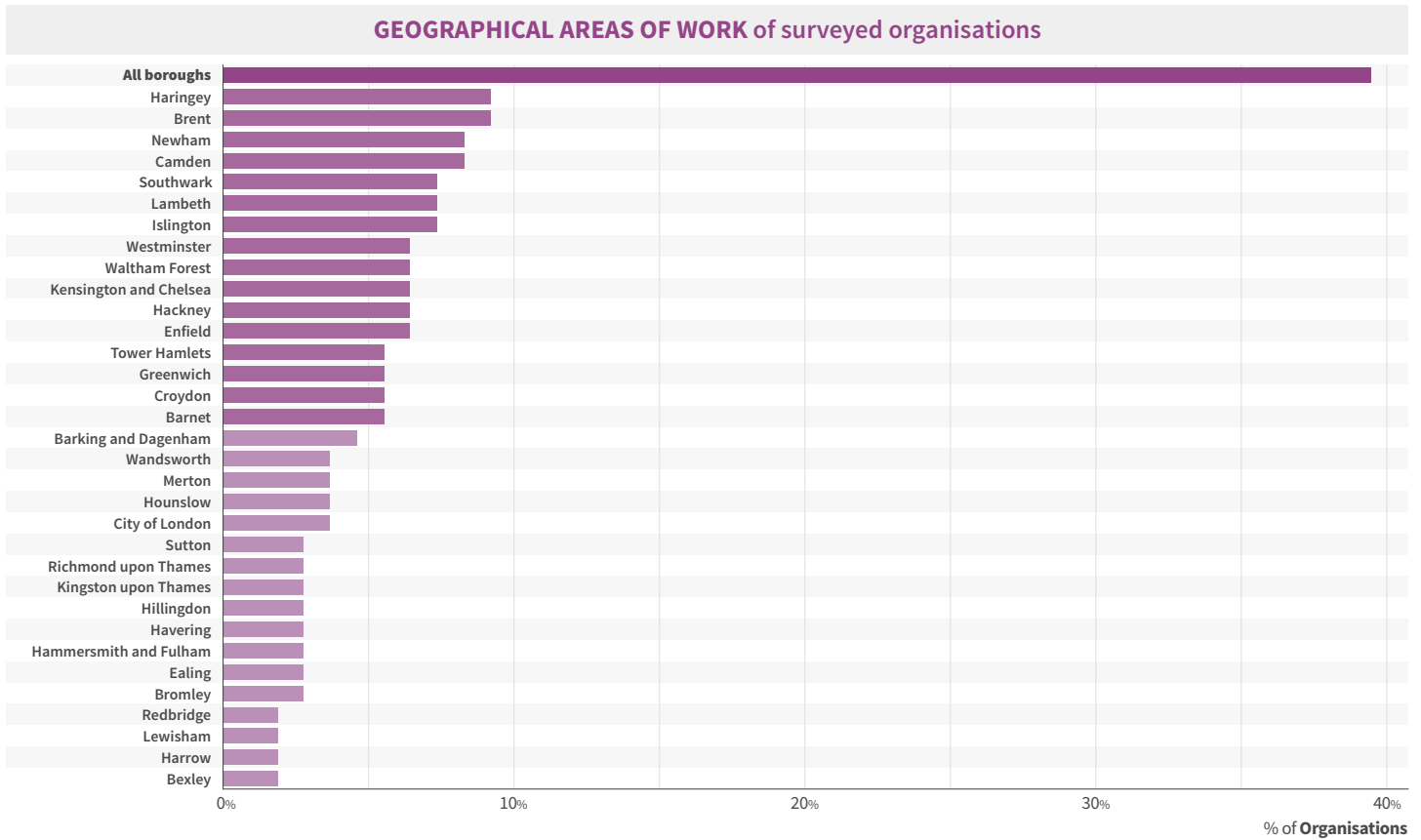
Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

Organisations' income and funding restrictions

Around 30% of the organisations reported an income from £251k to more than £500k. Roughly 16% reported an income between £101k and £250k, while a similar percentage reported an income of up to £10k. However - as shown below - when it comes to the use of their funding, more than 45% of organisations claim that only between 0 and 25% of their income is unrestricted, that is, they can use it as they see fit.
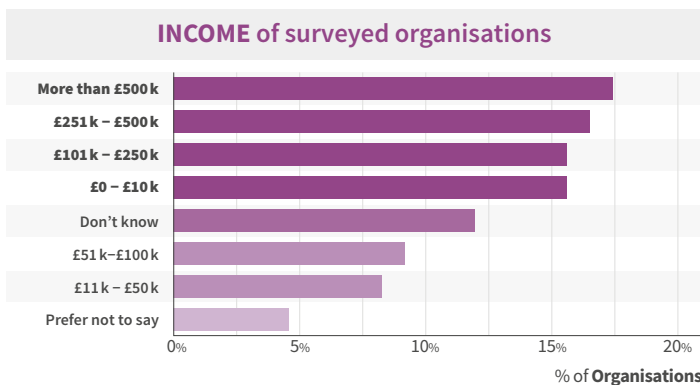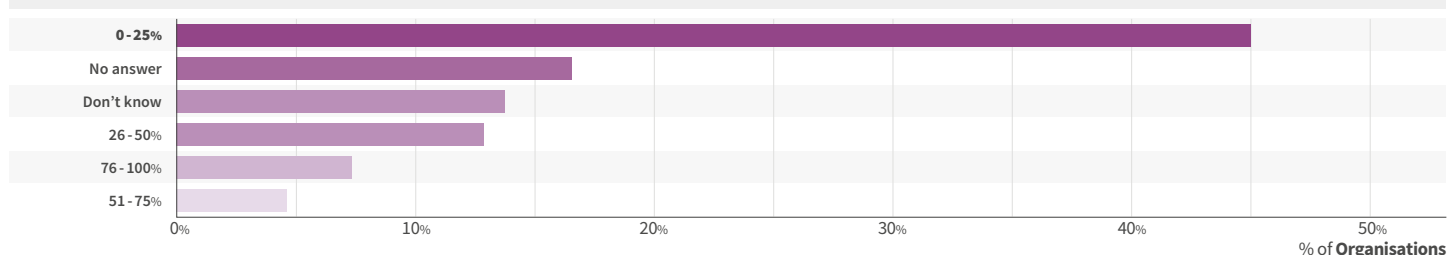
INCOME of surveyed organisations

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

**Proportion of UNRESTRICTED FUNDING of surveyed organisations**
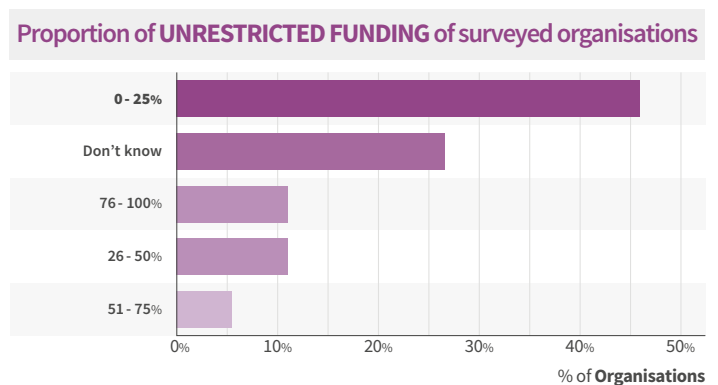
Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

When the allocation of funding is further investigated, the series of plots below show how more than 55% of all organisations surveyed allocate more than half of their funding to the delivery of services.
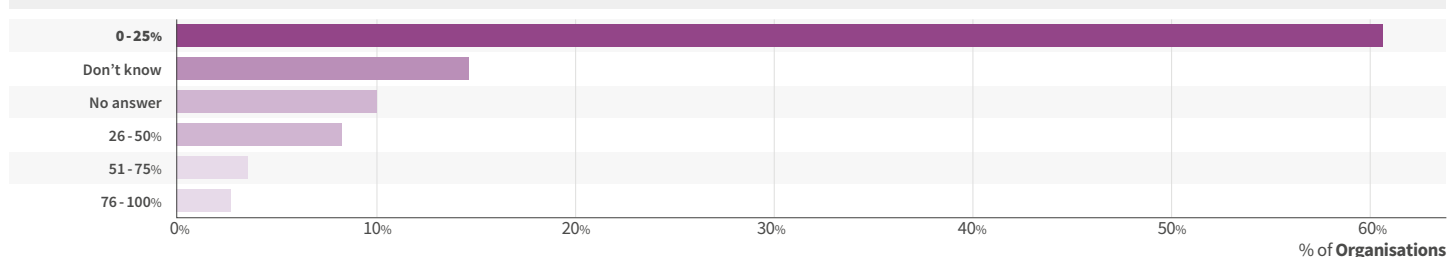
Proportion of funding allocated to CAMPAIGNING AND ADVOCACY

% of **Organisations**

Proportion of funding allocated to SERVICE DELIVERY
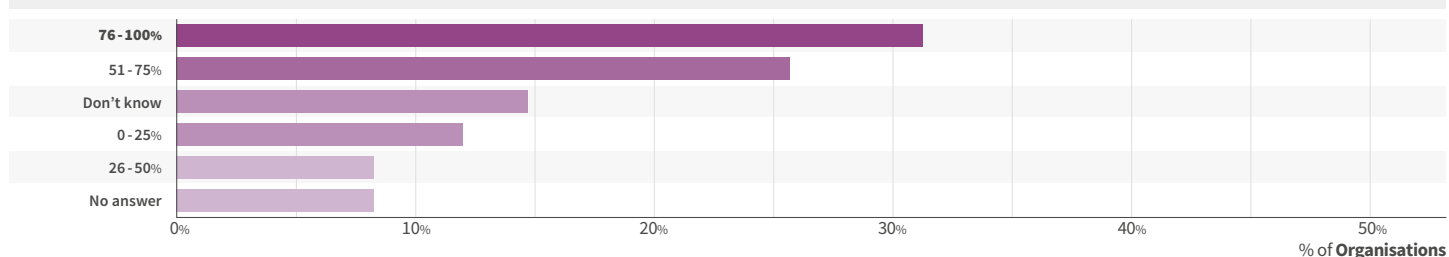
% of **Organisations**

Proportion of funding allocated to HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMIN

% of **Organisations**

Proportion of funding allocated to OTHER ACTIVITIES
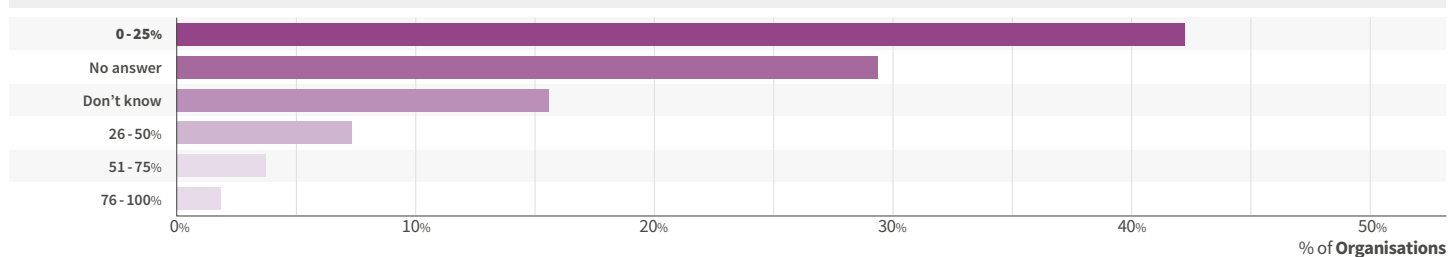
% of **Organisations**

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

How do these organisations communicate with their beneficiaries, staff and volunteers

The plots below show how organisations communicate with their beneficiaries, staff and volunteers. They highlight that online communications have become a vital tool for many civil society organisations to organise their work internally and to communicate their work to the wider public, while certain front line services are still delivered in-person.

CHANNELS MOST USED to communicate with beneficiaries, staff and volunteers
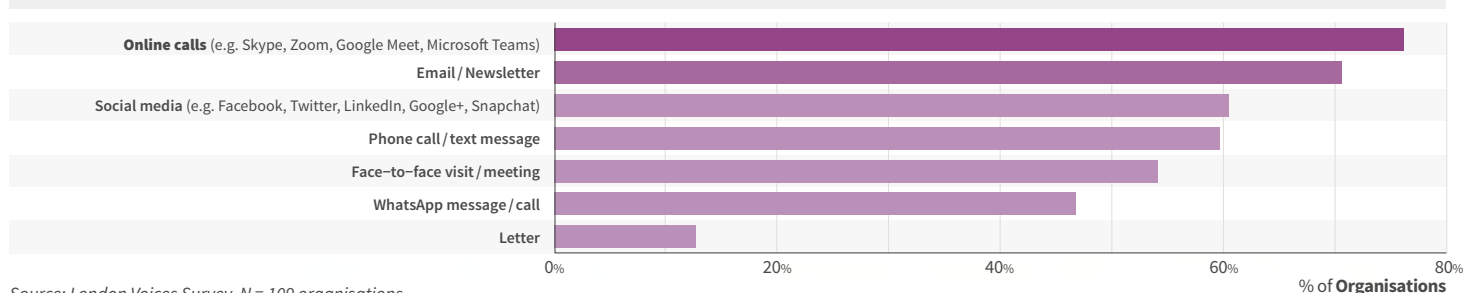
% of **Organisations**

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

What **SOCIAL MEDIA** is used for

Category	
Information about specific events, actions and services run by our organisation	
General updates about the organisation	
Information about other organisations… events and services	
Campaigning (e.g. sharing links to petitions, protests, political news stories)	
Recruiting volunteers	
Fundraising	
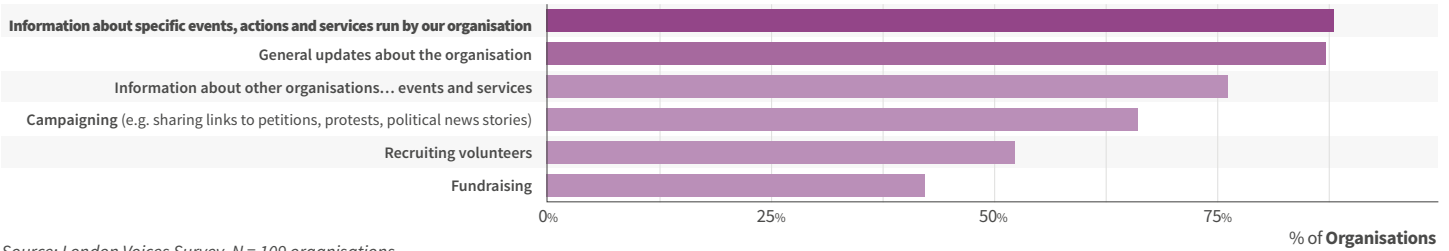
% of **Organisations**

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

Beneficiaries' civic and democratic engagement

The engagement of beneficiaries varies substantially, according to the organisations that support them. As an example, organisations believe that most of their beneficiaries have not voted in the last national or local elections. It is also noteworthy that many organisations don't know what proportion of their beneficiaries have ever voted. Lack of knowledge on the part of civil society organisations about the voter registration status and awareness of their own beneficiaries is a key challenge for their civic and democratic participation activity. More transparent and standardised access to voter registration data at the local level is important in planning and evaluating voter registration and awareness drives by civil society organisations.

Civil society organisations believe that one of their beneficiaries' main reasons for not voting is a lack of knowledge and trust in the democratic and electoral process, as discussed in the survey results section. Thus, continuous non-party political outreach and engagement with under-represented groups is paramount to increase their trust in democracy and participation in electoral processes.

Proportion of beneficiaries / users / members / clients who respondents believe have ever **VOTED IN LOCAL OR NATIONAL ELECTIONS**

Range	
0 - 25%	
26 - 50%	
51 - 75%	
76 - 100%	
Don't know	

% of **Organisations**

Proportion of beneficiaries / users / members / clients who respondents believe have ever **CONTACTED THEIR LOCAL COUNCILLOR OR MP**

Range	
0 - 25%	
26 - 50%	
51 - 75%	
76 - 100%	
Don't know	

% of **Organisations**

Proportion of beneficiaries / users / members / clients who respondents believe have ever **STARTED OR SUPPORTED A CAMPAIGN OR CIVIC CAUSE**
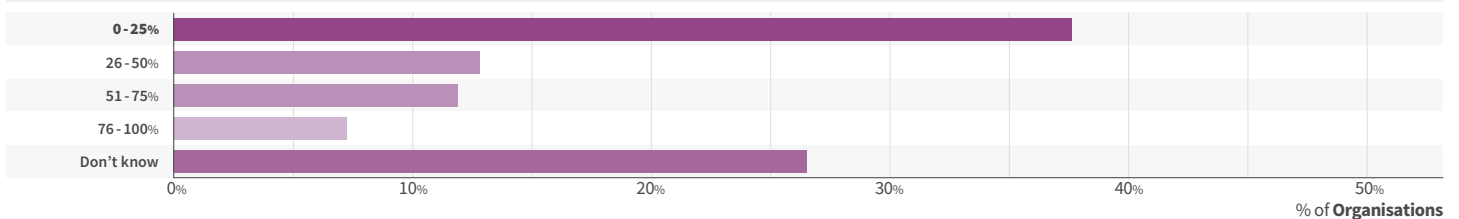
Range	
0 - 25%	
26 - 50%	
51 - 75%	
76 - 100%	
Don't know	

% of **Organisations**

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

Proportion of beneficiaries / users/members / clients who respondents believe have ever
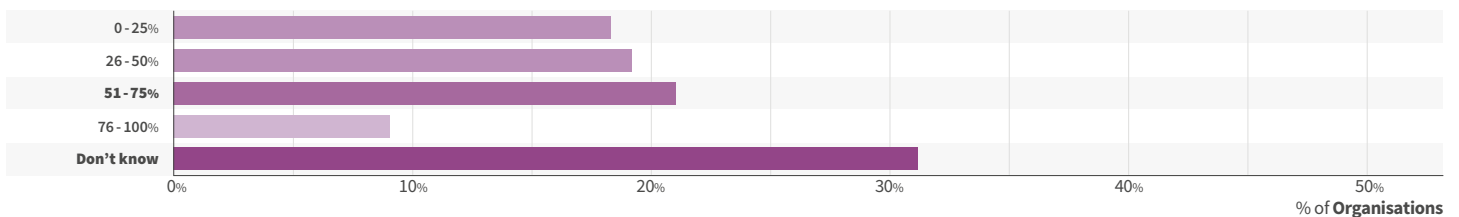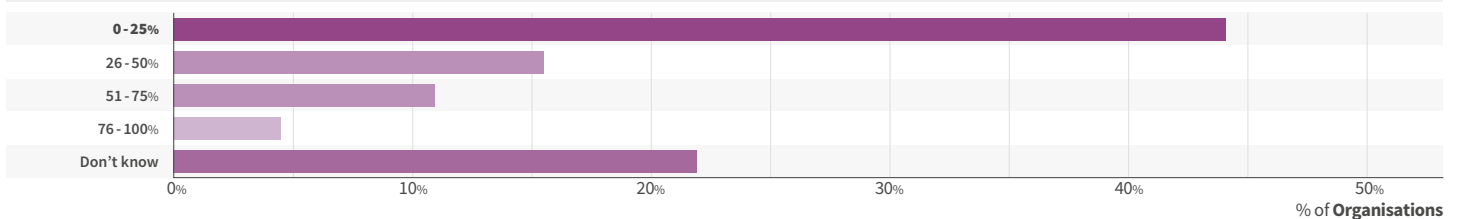### VOLUNTEERED IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY

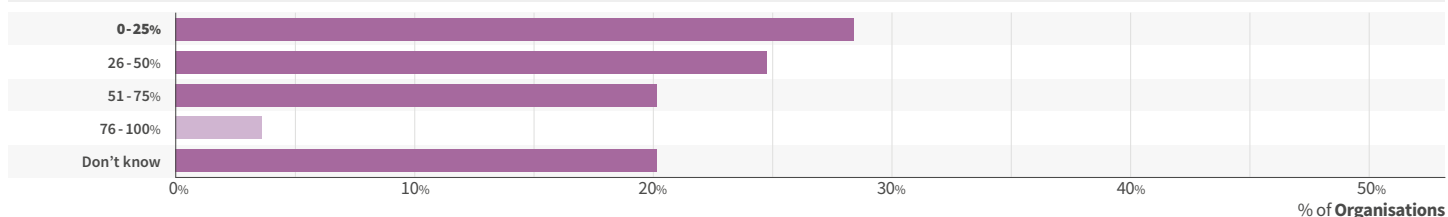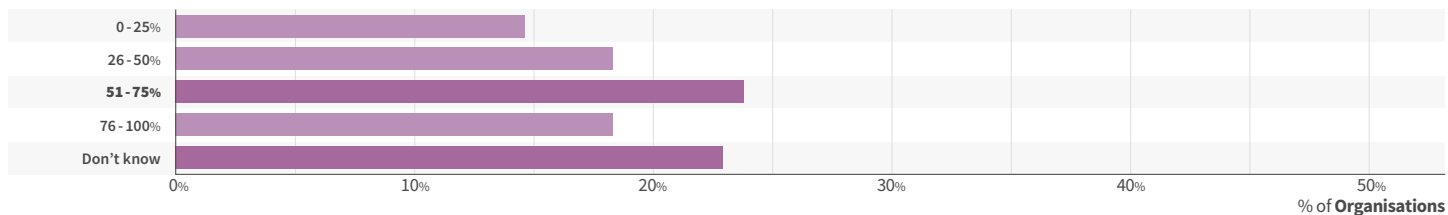| Category	% of Organisations
0-25%	
26-50%	
51-75%	
76-100%	
Don't know	

% of **Organisations**

Proportion of beneficiaries / users/members / clients who respondents believe have ever
ATTENDED A CULTURAL, SPORT OR COMMUNITY EVENT

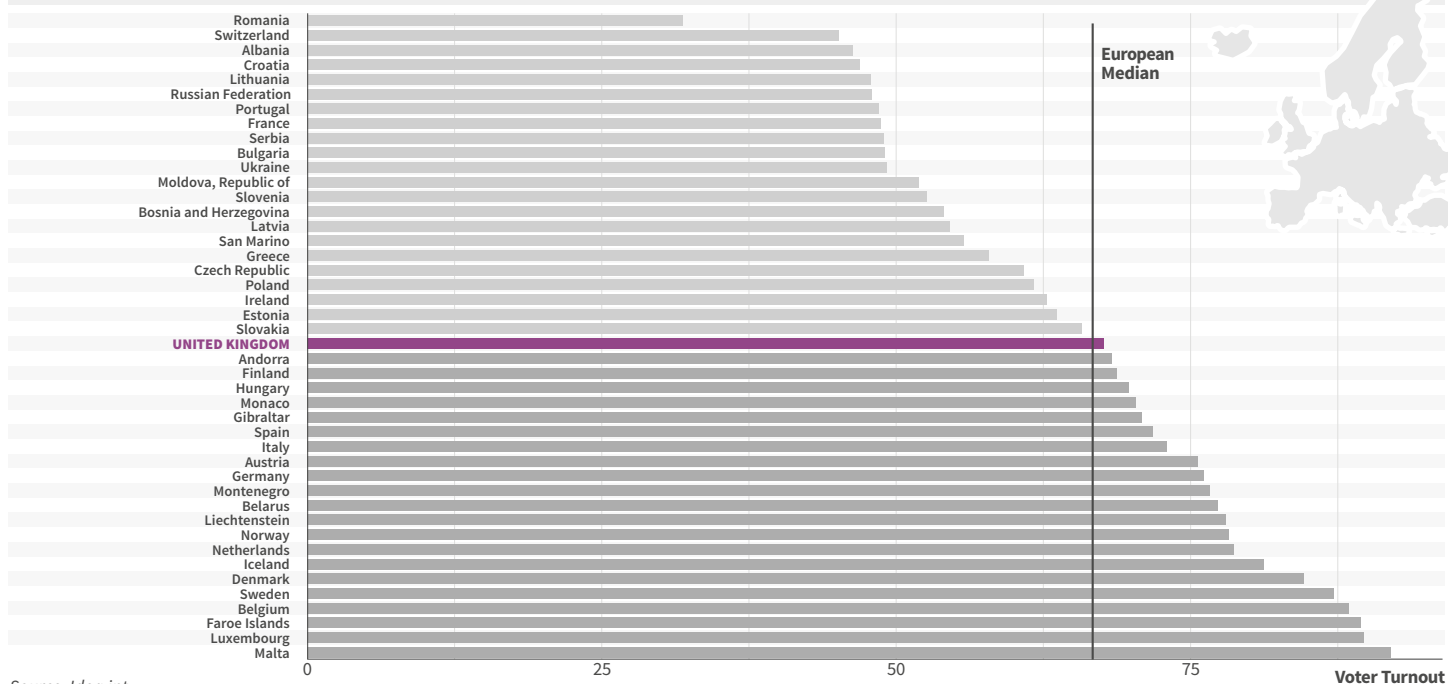| Category	% of Organisations
0-25%	
26-50%	
51-75%	
76-100%	
Don't know	

% of **Organisations**

Source: London Voices Survey, N = 109 organisations

Democratic engagement: voter turnout

Together with voter registration, one of the most important indicators of democratic participation is voter turnout. As the OECD defines it:
'High voter turnout is a measure of citizens' participation in the political process. Voter turnout is defined as the percentage of the registered population that voted during an election. High voter turnout is desirable in a democracy because it increases the chance that the political system reflects the will of a large number of individuals, and that the government enjoys a high degree of legitimacy.'[102]

It is important to note that, according to the OECD, the gap in voter turnout between the wealthiest 20% and the bottom 20% of the population is at 21 percentage points in the United Kingdom.[103] Voter turnout in London ranges from 62.5 to 79.9% in the 2017 parliamentary elections, with a mean turnout of 70.50, similar to the national mean of 69.19. Worryingly, however, the median voter turnout in local elections is much lower at 38.5 across London. In the 2018 London local elections, the voter turnout was 39%, compared to 42% in the postponed 2021 Mayoral and Assembly elections.[104] Measures are needed to solve lower turnout across the whole of London.

VOTER TURNOUT ACROSS EUROPE (Latest Parliamentary Election)

Source: Idea.int
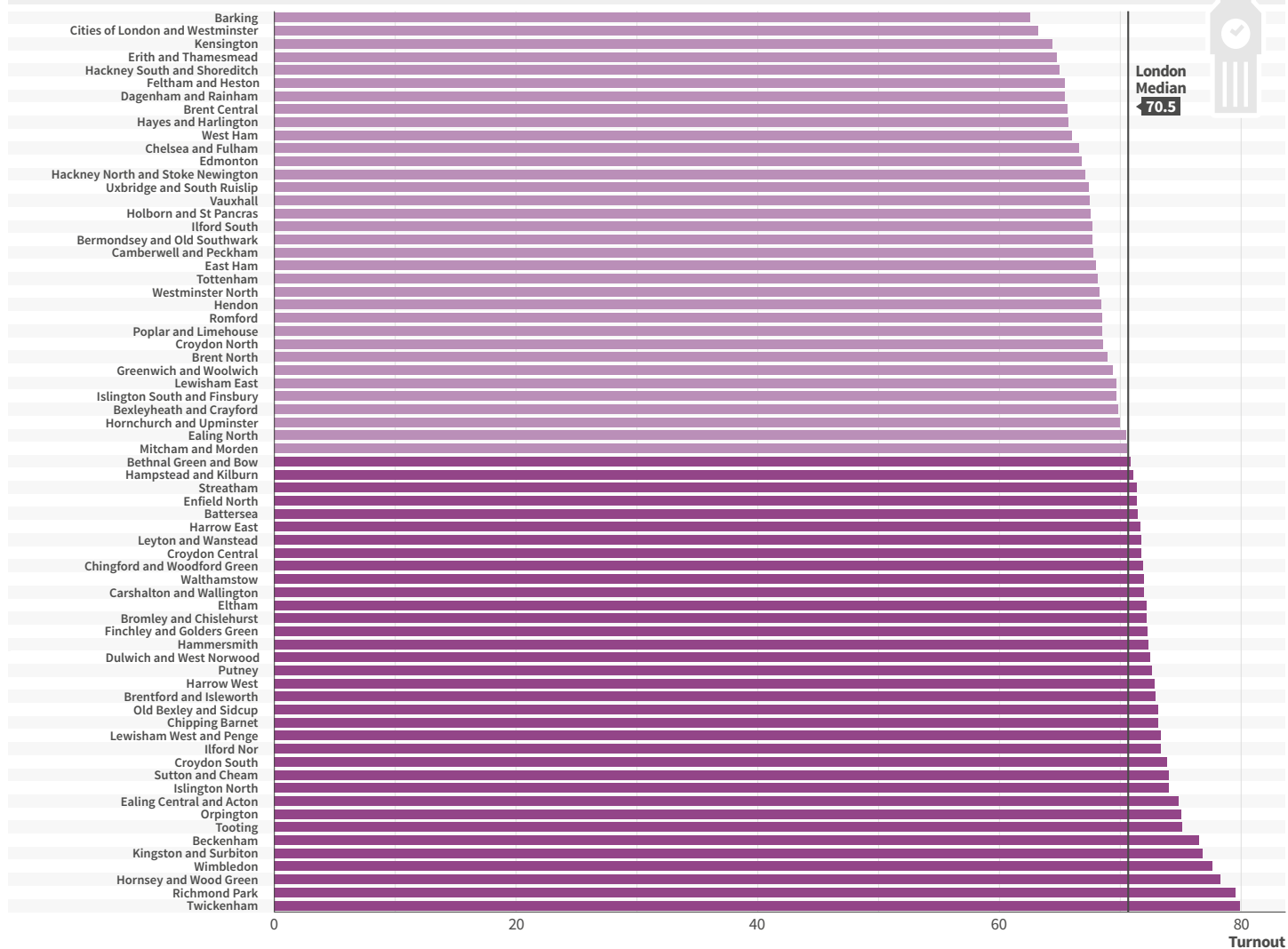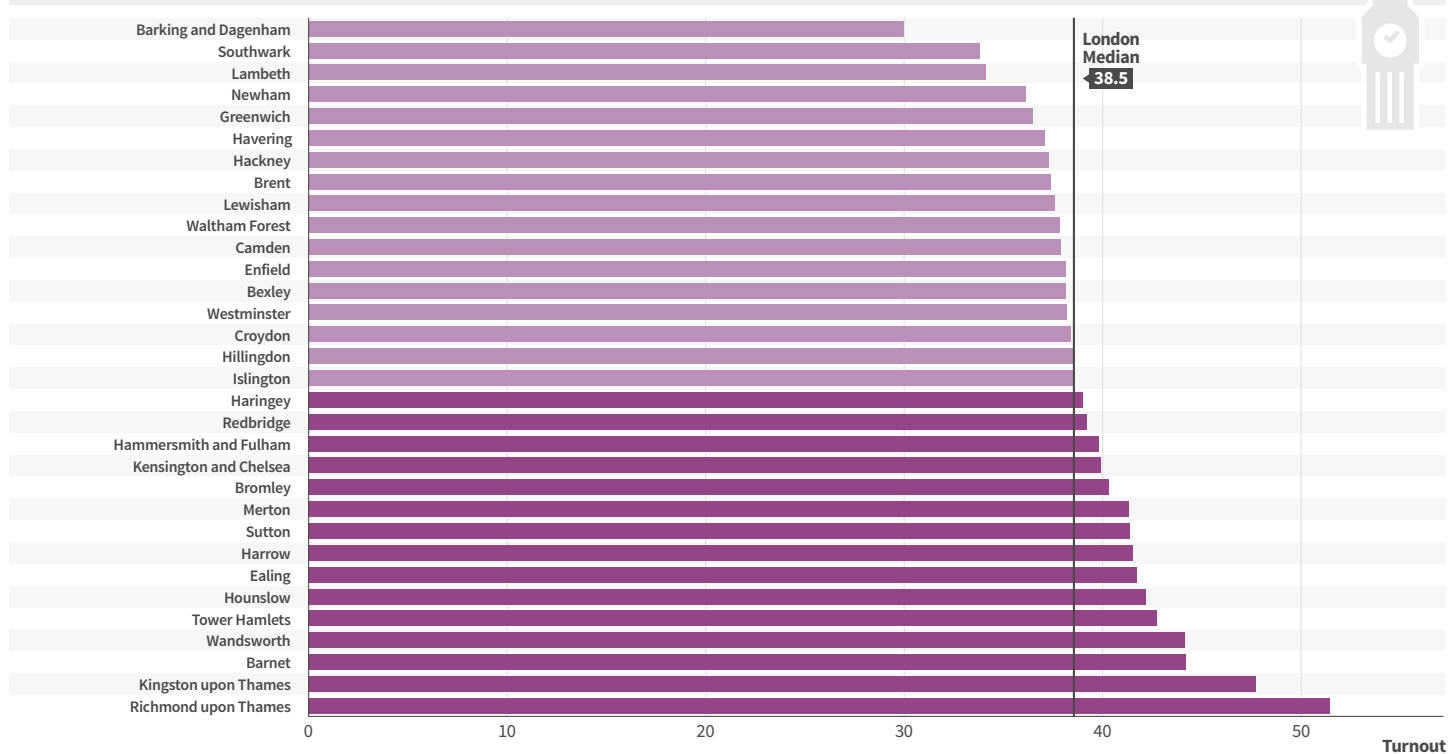
(102) *http*://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/civic-engagement/
(103) Ibid
(104) See *https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/borough-council-election-results-2018 and https://www.londonelects.org.uk/im-voter/election-results/results-2021*

Voter turnout across LONDON during THE 2017 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

London Median 70.5

Barking
Cities of London and Westminster
Kensington
Erith and Thamesmead
Hackney South and Shoreditch
Feltham and Heston
Dagenham and Rainham
Brent Central
Hayes and Harlington
West Ham
Chelsea and Fulham
Edmonton
Hackney North and Stoke Newington
Uxbridge and South Ruislip
Vauxhall
Holborn and St Pancras
Ilford South
Bermondsey and Old Southwark
Camberwell and Peckham
East Ham
Tottenham
Westminster North
Hendon
Romford
Poplar and Limehouse
Croydon North
Brent North
Greenwich and Woolwich
Lewisham East
Islington South and Finsbury
Bexleyheath and Crayford
Hornchurch and Upminster
Ealing North
Mitcham and Morden
Bethnal Green and Bow
Hampstead and Kilburn
Streatham
Enfield North
Battersea
Harrow East
Leyton and Wanstead
Croydon Central
Chingford and Woodford Green
Walthamstow
Carshalton and Wallington
Eltham
Bromley and Chislehurst
Finchley and Golders Green
Hammersmith
Dulwich and West Norwood
Putney
Harrow West
Brentford and Isleworth
Old Bexley and Sidcup
Chipping Barnet
Lewisham West and Penge
Ilford Nor
Croydon South
Sutton and Cheam
Islington North
Ealing Central and Acton
Orpington
Tooting
Beckenham
Kingston and Surbiton
Wimbledon
Hornsey and Wood Green
Richmond Park
Twickenham

Turnout

Voter turnout in 2018 LOCAL ELECTIONS across LONDON

London Median 38.5

Barking and Dagenham
Southwark
Lambeth
Newham
Greenwich
Havering
Hackney
Brent
Lewisham
Waltham Forest
Camden
Enfield
Bexley
Westminster
Croydon
Hillingdon
Islington
Haringey
Redbridge
Hammersmith and Fulham
Kensington and Chelsea
Bromley
Merton
Sutton
Harrow
Ealing
Hounslow
Tower Hamlets
Wandsworth
Barnet
Kingston upon Thames
Richmond upon Thames

Turnout

Source: Electoral Commission