



UK Democracy Fund resources

How to count voter registrations

The UK Democracy Fund has set an ambitious target to register and turnout one million new voters by the next General Election.

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The UK Democracy Fund is a pooled Fund set up by the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust. It is independent and non-partisan, and works to build a healthy democracy – one in which everyone can participate and where political power is shared fairly

What is this document for & how to use it

This document was made for the UK Democracy Fund's grantees and applicants who are registering voters as part of their projects. We know that there is a much wider group of organisations who are doing voter registration as part of their work, so we are making it available as a resource to anyone who would like to track their progress on increasing voter registration. The advice in here was compiled from the experience of those on the ground and will continue to be updated as we learn more. If you have any suggestions on how it can be improved we would love to hear from you. Email us at democracyfund@jrrt.org.uk.

It is used as a guide to best practice in how to imbed data collection to track your contribution to our goal of registering a million new voters. Some of the data collection methods outlined in this document may not be relevant to your work. We recommend that you read this before applying for a UK Democracy Fund grant to help you to plan your application. If successful, return to this document to ensure that you have set up the necessary systems and processes to collect data for the entirety of your project. If you have any questions or need help in implementing any of these recommendations please contact your grant manager.

UK Democracy Fund Goals

Our Million More campaign aims to register a million more voters by the next General Election. We are focusing on engaging groups who research has shown are least likely to be registered to vote, including:

1. Young people, especially those with characteristics that make them less likely to vote.
2. Those ethnicities and nationalities least likely to vote particularly:
 - a. people of African heritage;
 - b. people of Caribbean heritage;
 - c. people of South Asian heritage;
 - d. Commonwealth citizens;
 - e. EU citizens who experience racism or are from racialised minorities.
3. Those who move house frequently, private renters and the vulnerably housed.
4. Those with lower incomes, particularly those without educational qualifications.



Why is counting registrations and turnout important?

During the application process for a grant from the UK Democracy Fund, you will be asked to indicate how many registrations your campaign will aim to achieve, your thinking behind that estimate, and how you will count them. Counting registrations will help the Fund to analyse the success of our grants and to demonstrate our grantees' contribution towards our target of one million new voters. It will help you know if the activities you've undertaken have worked, support you in improving your practices, and provide insight into what works for the wider sector. Counting turnout enables campaigns to follow newly registered voters through to the ballot box.

Key principles:

- Wherever possible we encourage grantees to capture verified data (we explain more about this below).
- However, it is important to design your campaign for maximum impact rather than simply based on what will deliver the most verified data.
- Be realistic and do not over claim – and we will take the same approach when reporting to our funders.
- Sometimes campaigns take a number of different approaches, for example undertaking direct registration activity while also sharing resources for other organisations or volunteers to do their own campaigns. We would like to see evidence captured from both these activities. Reporting can differentiate the kinds of data captured (verified or not, activity delivered by your organisation directly, or where you have supported another organisation to deliver a campaign).
- Be open to learning, sharing your learning with other organisations, and contributing to better campaigns across the sector in the future.
- The eligibility of who can vote and in which election(s) is extremely complicated in the UK – it is important that you have an understanding of the impact of this on affected demographics you will work with so we can factor this into the results collected and contribute to the awareness inside the communities you work with. [Check out the Electoral Commission website for more information on voter eligibility.](#)



Types of data

For our purposes, there are two types of registration data: verified and unverified.

Verified data is countable and provable. It is quantitative and gives accurate numbers for the number of registrations that a campaign has directly resulted in.

Unverified data might include estimations and evidence of wider contributions.

How to count – verified data

1. Digital counting

This approach uses unique click-throughs to the Government's voter registration [dashboard](#) from digital campaigns.

How to count using this method: Grantees will collect proof of click-through rates and reach from their website and/or adverts (this could include scanning a [QR code](#) that goes directly to the voter registration page from a flyer or poster) with digital analytics tools (for example [Google analytics](#), [social media analytics](#)). For adverts we would like to see their frequency as well.

A click-through rate is the proportion of people who saw an ad who clicked on it – which includes people who may have clicked multiple times. Unique click-throughs can provide a more specific figure as it is the number of unique individuals who clicked.

Not everyone who clicks-through to the Government website will definitely register – this isn't something you need to worry about when counting. We will take completion rates from the Government's dashboard and apply it to your figures to estimate completed registrations. Grantees will provide a log of monthly click-through rates, reach, and frequency (where available), and we will use the average completion rate from the dashboard for that time. If for any reason the dashboard becomes unavailable, we will use an appropriate estimate of completion rates. It is very important that campaigns keep track of the timing of each advert so the Fund can use the most accurate completion rate possible.

At the end of the General Election, the Electoral Commission provides an estimate of the number of duplicate applications. You don't need to do anything with this number. As long as you provide the total number of unique click-throughs, the UK Democracy Fund will use the Electoral Commission figure to work out an estimate of the number of new registrations you helped with. Together this serves as a proxy for registrations based on the available information.



Pros: It is cheap and easy to use. The dashboard provides public access to application completion rates in 5-minute intervals that can be used to create aggregate patterns over time periods. For digital campaigns it is the best kind of data you can capture without agreements with government bodies to access their data, which most grantees won't have capacity for.

Cons: The data on the dashboard does not show if registrations are new or duplicate, so it only shows part of the picture of the electoral register. Although the Government are able to see where click-throughs have come from – from a particular campaign or Facebook advertisement – they unfortunately do not share this information publicly.

Options:

- Tracking unique click rates, engagement, and reach on adverts with [Facebook Ads Manager](#) or [Google Ads](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#).
- Creating a [Linktree](#) account and connecting it to your social media accounts can be another useful tool to track clicks, and can give your audiences some choices on if they need more information before they go directly to the government registration website. Just note that the free version only allows time specific analytics for the previous 28 days, so set a reminder to check so you don't lose data.
- Set up [Google analytics](#) for your website and/or [QR code](#) if you are using one.

2. Non-digital

If you are using in-person outreach or where digital click-through rates are not available, campaigns can provide other forms of verified data. Much of this is very strong, for example, organisations working with schools and colleges can get every student aged 16-18 to either fill in a paper application or provide a screenshot of their completed online registration. If you are collecting screenshots from vulnerable people, please speak to your grant manager about safeguarding measures. The Fund will also apply the duplication rate to these figures to get an accurate picture.

If you are working via partners, it is good to inform them and/or give them the tools to keep track of registration numbers and set a time or process to feed that back to you, this could be as simple as requesting they send you an email or text with the number after the event or a set amount of time.

Pros: Cheap and easy to count, just make sure you track as you go.

Cons: For screenshots, this is an extra step that people might forget to do at the time, or they may forget to share the screenshot. Similar concerns regarding duplicity and eligibility are the same as digital counting.



Options:

- Count paper applications and/or screenshots and include the information in a spreadsheet
- Make sure everyone involved, including any volunteers, know what to track and how; you could design a template form to help you count, but use your own insight into whatever format is going to be most likely to be returned to you.
- Use an iPad or other devices to help register people and keep track of how many people have been registered (talk to the grant manager about whether funding for devices can be included in UK Democracy Fund applications)

How to count – unverified data

3. Data based on self-reporting

This uses information reported to you by those you are encouraging to register. For example, your organisation might hand out registration forms or provide the online link to register to people to complete the process later (see links on creating QR codes and trackable links above). This could be at an event, via a partner organisation or through a targeted mailing to young people at schools. Contacting these people after providing the information and asking them whether they have registered will provide an estimated number of registrations.

While unlikely to be as accurate as the verified examples above, it's still useful information and we would encourage grantees to build processes into their campaigns to capture evidence in this way. It will be important to ensure that you collect contact details to enable these follow-ups.

How to count using this method: After circulating your campaign materials (or, for example, running an event or speaking at a school) follow up with the people that you have been in contact with and ask them whether they went on to register. This could be via email, phone or WhatsApp. Another approach would be to enable self-reporting via your social media channels – for example, a 'have you registered' poll on your Facebook page. Keep a tally of responses.

Pros: Fairly simple to do. Even if your initial contact did not result in a person registering, the follow-up request might prompt them to do so – if you email to request self-reported data, including the online link in your email is a good idea! Phoning people to follow-up enables discussion and could give you more detailed information on how you have been successful, what has worked and what hasn't worked. It can also provide an opportunity to move to questions beyond simply registering to vote, and begin to encourage people to actually turn out to vote too.



Cons: It can be time consuming. Self-reporting will be less accurate as you may have low response rates to emails or surveys and are likely to have higher levels of inaccurate reporting from people feeling pressure to say they registered. You may double-count people if they respond both to a direct request as well as to a social media post. You will also need to consider data management and data protection of email addresses and phone numbers, for example. Who will have access to this data and how will it be stored and subsequently destroyed? This should be laid out in your organisation's Privacy Policy if you are unsure of how to do this and ensure that you are following your organisation's procedures.

Options:

- Collect contact details for follow-ups
- Conduct phone calls / send emails
- Create and share a survey

4. Your wider contributions

Some of the work you do might indirectly contribute to more voter registrations. For example, you could make a resource that is circulated to other organisations who do their own voter registration campaign. It may be worth including a trackable link directly to the voter registration page in your resources (template emails, social media posts, web copy, flyers, etc). However, be courteous to your partners if they would rather use their own systems. While you might not be able to say that you 100% brought about this change, or count exactly how many people registered to vote as a result, we still want to hear about it.

How to count using this method: You can try and quantify some of your indirect and wider contributions. One example is counting the number of organisations running mobilising campaigns after interaction with your resources. If those organisations can share the number of registrations they mobilised, even better.

Pros: You can include more of the work that you have done and it recognises the importance of collaboration.

Cons: It can be difficult to untangle what your influence has been versus the impact of other organisations.

Options:

- Keep evidence of organisations that you have engaged with – count them!
- Share resources that you have created with a trackable link included in them



Next steps...

Build relationships with local authorities and academic partners

Data from local authority electoral registers is the best and most accurate data around. Working with local authority data is the only way to know if the targeted demographic has had increased registrations.

However, buying the open register is expensive. There are also conditions on access. Inspecting a hardcopy is labour intensive. Open registers are not entirely complete as people can opt out. You can mitigate some of these issues by building relationships with local authorities. You could also consider using an academic partner.

As this approach to counting registrations is expensive, grantees who wish to use this method will need to show they can put together a carefully designed experiment that is both feasible and likely to add greater intelligence to the field.

