UK Democracy Fund
Counting Voter Registrations Methodology

April 2025

In 2020, the Fund set an ambitious target to register one million voters from low-voting demographics by the 2024 General Election.

This document describes the choices and approaches that the Fund has taken to provide a conservative, best estimate for the final number of voter registrations reported by grantees. The Fund sought to account for registration completion rates, potential duplicate registrations, and, wherever possible sought to include uncertainty intervals. This methodology has been scrutinised by The Policy Institute at King's College as part of an external evaluation commissioned by the Fund.

With these factors taken into account, the Fund's estimate is of **750,000** voter registrations. This is lower than the one million target, but a commendable achievement given the ambition of the target and the broader trends of low turnout and engagement with the 2024 General Election.

The table below shows the split between higher-quality verified data and lower-quality estimated data. The Fund also calculated the figures as a range to take account of completion rates. The Fund does not at this time have verified rates from Government departments but has calculated the rate from data provided by Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG). The Fund shows how the data would vary if the calculated completion rates were an (illustrative) 5% lower or higher. The source of the available data, how calculated, and applied are laid out further in the document, based on the data available at the time of writing.

The table on the next page summarises the registrations achieved, rounded, with all respective rates applied (as described below).

Median total estimate = 750,000		
	Lower range	**Higher range**
Verified data		
Digital	290,000	370,000
Non-digital verified data	9,000	9,000
	300,000	**380,000**
	42%	48%
Unverified data		
Self-reported	7,000	7,000
Estimated	400,000	400,000
	410,000	**410,000**
	58%	52%
Total	**710,000**	**790,000**

Counting registrations: data collection

The approach has been developed taking account of the constraints of the current fragmented and dated electoral data landscape (see *The UK Electoral Data Democratic Deficit: A vision for digital modernisation* Toby. S. James and Paul Bernal, 2022). Electoral data for registration and turnout is expensive to track and labour intensive to collect, and detailed breakdowns are simply not possible to collect without a formal data agreement with individual local authorities.

The Fund encouraged grantees to use verified data but recognises that it is important to design campaigns for maximum impact not simply what will deliver most verified data. Grantees used a variety of methods to engage voters, and tracking impact is easier for some campaigns than others. When reporting, the Fund will be clear on the level of confidence the Fund has in different numbers. The Fund created a guide on to how to collect data and how the Fund would be calculating final registration numbers. Please note that the approach has been updated since publishing the guide, based on grantee feedback and available data as outlined below, and therefore the guide that is linked is now out of date.

Verified data

Digital click-throughs to the Government voter registration site
Grantees record the number of clicks on links or scans of QR codes that go directly to the Government voter registration site (RTV site). Grantees gather this data from digital analytics tools (eg, Google analytics, social media performance data, trackable QR code scans). This total number of clicks was in the range **290,000–370,000**.

The Fund corrects the data to account for two key factors. The first is the proportion of visitors to the RTV site who actually complete the application, which is 60.6%; the Fund has accurate data on this for people who accepted cookies, and extrapolate that to cover people who did not accept cookies as well, as the Fund has no basis to think that would be higher or lower.

The second factor is the proportion of completed applications that lead to a new registration – some do not because of incomplete or incorrect information, ineligibility, or because they are duplicate registrations. The Fund has figures for each year for all applications; we assume these apply equally to our grantees, although there are reasons to think that they will result in fewer duplicates. The reduction for 2021-3 was in the range 35.5–40%, but in 2024 the rejection rate was considerably and unexpectedly higher at 55%; the Fund is investigating this further. (NB, the rates are outlined in the electoral data spreadsheets, which can be downloaded from the 'supporting evidence' section at the bottom of each linked page.)

Non-digital verified data
Grantees physically witness an application being made online or on paper. This is often done through stalls at events, street canvassing, or at schools or other institutions. Staff or volunteers tally the number at each event and report this as non-digital verified data. This is adjusted with rejection rates.

Unverified data

Where verified data was not available, or grantees were unable to collect it, they used other methods. The Fund has marked this data as "unverified" to demonstrate that it is a classifier, as by its very nature it was not able to be verified by a third party or other alternative verification methods. All unverified data of any kind was included in the final count, and any data that is not verified is marked as unverified.

In some cases, the campaigns have adjusted the estimates downwards to reduce the risk of overestimating registration numbers. In one case, no numbers were reported and the Fund made no attempt to estimate.

Voter self-reported data
Grantees follow up with those they engaged with to ask if they voted. This will be less accurate data as surveys will have low response rates and have been shown to overcount (people feeling pressure to say they registered).

Estimated data
Where it is not possible for grantees to collect the exact data, or where data collection is overly labour intensive, a reasonable basis for the estimates needs to be supplied. The data is considered by the Fund as lower quality but often useful in combination with qualitative learning. The assumptions and approaches on which estimates have been made were scrutinised by the Policy Institute and deemed reasonable for the data available. The exact figures and methodologies for campaigns using estimated data are not included in this document to protect grantee confidentiality.

Counting registrations: data analysis for accuracy

Available data for 2024 General Election
The Cabinet Office holds the detailed data on the use of all government websites and passes only a limited set of that data to relevant Government departments. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) manages the RTV site. The Fund has been working in collaboration with the Electoral Commission and MHCLG to attempt to obtain completion rates. This has been a difficult process and one that has reinforced our concerns about the electoral data landscape. The sections below set out how the Fund will count within the constraints of the data limitations.

Completion rates

The completion rate is the number of visitors to the RTV site who successfully submit an application to register.

Grantees who ran digital campaigns report to the Fund the number of click-throughs or QR code scans that go directly to the RTV site. To assess how many of these resulted in someone submitting a completed application to register, the completion rate needs to be applied based on the proportion of site visitors who completed an application. Completion rates are only applied to digital numbers.

As of 30 April 2025, no official source has been able to provide a completion rate. The Fund will update the data using the completion rate provided by the Cabinet Office, if the Fund receives it. In the interim, the Fund calculated the completion rate using data that has been obtained – see below.

Calculating completion rates		Source
Time period	22 May 2024 – 17 June 2024	MHCLG
Number of visitors accepting cookies	1,894,785	MHCLG
MHCLG approximate estimated rate users accept cookies on 'Government type sites'	40%	MHCLG
Multiplier to 100%	2.5	Calculation
Estimated visitors	4,736,963	Calculation
Applications submitted	2,870,020	Register to Vote Performance Dashboard
Completion rate	**60.6%**	Calculation

The Fund has no way of knowing whether completion rates varied across different demographics or by journey to the site (eg, user searches or click-throughs from social media).

The Cabinet Office have not yet provided a cookie acceptance rate for the RTV. In conversation, a civil servant who manages websites told the Fund that their general assumption is that the cookie acceptance rate on 'Government type' websites is 40%. If the Fund receives more accurate information on this, the completion rate will be revised.

The Fund has used a range of 5% higher and lower to illustrate the potential impact. This was based on discussion between Fund staff.

	Accepted cookies	Extrapolated visitors	Impact on completion rate	Impact on digital registrations
Lower range	35%	5,413,671	53%	41,33, fewer registrations
Higher range	45%	4,210,633	68%	41,514 more registrations

The completion rate provided/calculated is based on website data provided by MHCLG. They only have access to data in the pre-election period between the day the 2024 General Election was called on 22 May 2024 to the registration deadline on 18 June 2024. Completion rates can vary at different points of the electoral cycle; the Electoral Commission stated in their 2019 General Election report that "public interest in major electoral events is increasingly driving electoral registration applications just before elections", but data for different time periods is not available. Former Fund staff noted that the rates varied when they were able to access this on the previous Voter Registration Dashboard that did include completion rates. Additionally, lower rates make logical sense given lower public interest in local elections versus general elections. However, the Fund has no data to inform even an estimation and therefore would be too arbitrary to apply an alternative rate confidently. The Fund has therefore applied the provided/calculated rates to all campaigns.

Rejection rates

Once an application is made, it is sent to Election Registration Officers (EROs) in Local Authorities to carry out checks against current Government data and reject applications due to incomplete or incorrect information, ineligibility, and/or duplicate registrations. This data is reported back to the Electoral Commission who then analyse and publish it in their post-election reports. Data on the reason for the rejection is only available for duplication, as EROs are not required to report data on the reasons for rejection. This data is also not broken down by demographic.

Rejection rates may vary at different points of the election cycle, but the data available is limited. Electoral Commission data on rejection rates are set out in the table below. The rates for 2021-2023 are similar (35.5-40%) and were recorded for local elections in those years. The 2024 General Election rejection rate is considerably higher at 55%, although this was consistent with rejections during the 2019 General Election where "Only around half of all applications led to an addition to the register". Duplicate applications account for most of this and the Fund has made recommendations to the Government to investigate why these rates are so high. It is worth noting that because all the campaigns were targeting low-propensity voters, the likelihood of duplications could be lower, but data broken down by demographic is not available, so the Fund does not adjust for this.

The Fund has identified the year in which most registration activity occurred for each of the 39 campaigns funded, and has applied the respective rates for campaigns that were delivered in that calendar year. The rates applied are set out in the table below.

	Rejection rate	Number of campaigns applied
2021	40.0%	13
2022	37.0%	6
2023	35.5%	5
2024	55.0%	15
Click links for source, rates are outlined in the electoral data spreadsheets which can be downloaded from the 'supporting evidence' section at the bottom of each site		

Duplication rate

As the rejection rates include duplicates, the Fund does not need to adjust for these.

Eligibility

Campaigns more likely to reach migrant communities may have a higher probability of reaching ineligible voters and therefore a higher likelihood of rejections, although there is no available data to confirm this. The Fund attempted to calculate an estimated eligibility rate for the targeted demographics to apply to these campaigns. However, the data that is available on the number of citizens born overseas is of poor quality and does not provide an accurate picture of eligibility. Therefore, the Fund has decided not to apply an additional eligibility rate to these campaigns. Across the different demographic groups there are likely to be different variations in the number and reasons why applications are rejected, but in the absence of any data from EROs, the Fund does not have a basis for estimates and will use the average rejection rate across all campaigns.

Reporting 16- and 17-year-old registrations

Seven of the campaigns were targeted at registering young people aged 16 and 17. The Fund has included all the "attainers" registered because while some may not have turned 18 in time to vote in the General Election, they are now registered for future elections and more likely to vote having taken the initial step of registering. The Electoral Commission 2023 report: Electoral registers in the UK showed attainer registration to be considerably lower than any other demographic group, down from 25% in 2018 to only 16% in 2022.

Counting turnout

The Fund is still yet to find an effective way to track turnout given the limitations of electoral data available. While some grantees made attempts to measure turnout, it was exclusively based on self-reported data through surveys or requests for reporting back, responses to the grantees' surveys or requests had a very a low response rate. Therefore, the Fund will not publish numbers on grantees' contribution to turnout.

However, the Fund will look separately at what can be learned from grantees' experience of Get-out-the-Vote campaigns and work with bodies like the Electoral Commission on improving the data environment.

If Automatic Voter Registration is implemented the Fund may wish to consider rebalancing work on registration and turnout, and this experience may help to inform future decisions.

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