What is the picture now?

As we head into 2024, we’re taking looking at of some of the key issues that will likely be high on the agenda and what the data is saying about London, its funders and its communities.

**Upcoming Mayoral Election**

2024 will be the sixth London Mayoral Election since the first was held in 2000. With multiple crisis affecting Londoners – from cost of living and housing and climate – there is a lot to contest at this years election.

Not only that, *how* we elect the Mayor of London has also changed. Following the Electoral Reform Act 2022 the votes will now favour first past the post (FPTP) rather than the supplementary voting (SV) system, as well as introducing the requirement for voter ID (as we covered in our [January 2022 insight meeting](https://londonfunders.org.uk/resources-publications/tools-funders/data-insights-why-2022-important-year-democratic-engagement)). According to the Institute for Government, the FPTP “suits major parties”. Whereas the SV meant that “voters could take a chance on an outside candidate without worrying that their vote would be ‘wasted’ – this was because they could allocate their second vote to the candidate they preferred (or disliked less) of the parties most likely to get through to the second round, in which the ‘top two’ of the first round go head to head.”[[1]](#footnote-2) Sadiq Khan commented that the combination of both the new voter ID requirements and the introduction of the FPTP is “a cynical attempt to make it harder for people to vote”.[[2]](#footnote-3)

According to a poll by Opinium, only 30% of Londoners are aware of the change[[3]](#footnote-4) to the FPTP voting system. The [Electoral Reform Society](https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/) is calling for this to be changed, they state that “the Supplementary Vote ensured they had broad support, but First Past the Post will mean we could see a mayor elected on a small share of the vote” and “in a city with a hugely diverse population of almost nine million, preventing that diversity of opinion from finding a compromise and middle ground via their vote is wholly undemocratic.”

A [report by the Electoral Commission](https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/research-reports-and-data/our-reports-and-data-past-elections-and-referendums/report-may-2023-local-elections-england) looking at the impact of introducing voter ID in the May 2023 elections showed that “it had a disproportionate effect on disabled and unemployed voters, who were more likely not to vote due to not having ID”. They have recommended to the government that they:

1. Increase awareness of the support available to disabled voters
2. Review the list of accepted ID
3. Improve access to the Voter Authority Certificate for voters
4. Provide options for voters who do not or cannot access any form of accepted ID
5. Polling station staff should continue to collect data on the impact of voter ID at future elections
6. The electoral community should work to improve the collection of data at polling stations for future elections

**Climate Crisis**

In mid-January 2024, the London Climate Resilience Review published an [interim report](https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/environment-and-climate-change/climate-change/climate-adaptation/london-climate-resilience-review) into the preparedness for the impacts of climate change. The review gathered evidence from across London’s public services, the financial sector, sports and cultural institutions.

Whilst London is not the centre of the climate crisis, it has been felt already. With flooding in 2021, “displacing residents and disrupting critical services to vulnerable Londoners” and heat waves in 2022, with 386 heat related deaths.

The report states that “climate change will not impact Londoners equally” and that “the climate crisis is a health crisis and will widen inequalities.”

The report covers how drought, heat, rising sea levels, wildfires, subsidence, surface water flooding and wider climate risks impact our communities. These all have wide and lasting impacts, from direct heat related deaths to surgeries being cancelled, from over 30 tube stations being affected by flooding to the large economic costs of repair, from train lines buckling to large-scale events being cancelled due to surface water flooding. The report highlights that “the whole world is unprepared for extreme weather” and that “vulnerability to climate hazards is unequal in London” and that “the people who have contributed the least in terms of carbon emissions usually suffer the most in terms of weather impacts. This is true in London where the poorest Boroughs are hit hardest.”

In terms of action, The London Climate Resilience Review[[4]](#footnote-5) go onto say that “ensuring the most vulnerable benefit from adaptation should be a guiding principle” as Londoners prepare for and recover from climate events. And says the Mayor “does not need to wait for national government” and that if there is “exemplary resilience” in London that it will “help other decision makers to accelerate action”

The report lists 20 recommendations with eight being listed as ‘urgent’ which include a national infrastructure assessment, a climate resilience budget and a strategic plan for heat.

**AI and Technology**

The development in AI, particularly generative AI over the last few years has accelerated. And so has our need to collectively understand, not only what it is and what opportunities there are to using it, but to also ensuring we understand how it works, it’s biases and consequences if used wrongly.

There a numerous ways AI can help grant making, whether that’s being more efficient or taking on complex problems. For London’s funders it could be used from processing large volumes of applications, extracting key information for grant managers, or chatbots to help applicants through the grantmaking process on their websites. It can also be used for much larger scale data analysis, by analysing qualitative and quantitative data sources, AI algorithms could help identify trends, track outcomes, and measure the effectiveness of funded projects in achieving their intended goals.

It also comes with its own concerns. Asking ChatGPT directly ‘what are the negative or unintended consequences of using AI in UK Grant making’, it will list the things we are all concerned about. From biases in the data and decision making (it only knows what it’s been told) to a lack of transparency about how it’s reached these decisions, GDPR risks and loss of human connection and expertise. AI can’t empathise or replace lived experience and knowledge of that funders and civil society hold.

Organisations such as CAST are reaching out non profits across the UK to understand what the baseline is on the understanding, practicalities and implementation of AI into their work, and funders are coming together to see how they can constructively understand, test and learn the benefits for grantmaking.

Further reading

Institute for government - <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/comment/elected-mayors-first-past-the-post>

Electoral Reform - <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/first-past-the-post-in-mayoral-elections-means-less-choice-and-a-weaker-voice/>

Resources for Charities Campaigning during elections, Trust for London - <https://trustforlondon.org.uk/news/resources-for-charities-campaigning-during-elections/>

The London Climate Resilience Review, The Mayor of London - <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/environment-and-climate-change/climate-change/climate-adaptation/london-climate-resilience-review>

The Impacts of Climate Change on London, UKCIP - <https://www.google.com/search?q=london+climate+change&rlz=1C1CHBF_en-GBGB1031GB1031&oq=london+climate+change&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyCQgAEEUYORiABDIHCAEQABiABDIHCAIQABiABDIHCAMQABiABDIHCAQQABiABDINCAUQLhjHARjRAxiABDIHCAYQABiABDIGCAcQRRg80gEINDcxM2owajSoAgCwAgA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

How will grantmakers cope with AI-generated applications?, SmartyGrants (Australia) - <https://www.smartygrants.com.au/articles/how-will-grantmakers-cope-with-ai-generated-applications>

AI is coming for philanthropy, Alliance Magazine - <https://www.alliancemagazine.org/analysis/artificial-intelligence-is-coming-for-philanthropy/>

AI peer group, CAST **-** <https://www.funderscollaborativehub.org.uk/collaborations/ai-for-grantmakers>

Digital resources, CAST - <https://www.wearecast.org.uk/our-work/free-digital-resources/>

1. <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/comment/elected-mayors-first-past-the-post> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/first-past-the-post-in-mayoral-elections-means-less-choice-and-a-weaker-voice/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/dec/09/sadiq-khan-urges-progressives-to-back-him-amid-concern-about-new-voting-system> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/environment-and-climate-change/climate-change/climate-adaptation/london-climate-resilience-review> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)