

# Text campaign had significant effect on voter registration

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Researchers recorded an eight percentage-point increase in people registering to vote after being sent a series of text messages from their local council, with the increase translating to a three percentage-point

increase in turnout at the ballot box.

The researchers said: "Impersonal methods such as text messages have increased in importance since the onset of the pandemic and have been used widely by different types of organizations, both governmental and non-governmental over the past two years.

"We found that text messages sent by a local authority were effective at registering citizens to vote and that around one third of the effect translated into higher turnout at the polls."

The findings are included in the working paper "When do text messages increase voter registration? Comparative evidence from RCTs with a local authority and an advocacy organization in the UK," co-authored by Professor Peter John (King's College London), Dr. Florian Foos (LSE), Dr. Asli Unan (Humboldt University), and Vanessa Cheng-Matsuno (LSE).

The [local council](#) results stand in contrast to a study run in parallel in which people were sent a series of text messages from an issue advocacy group. These messages did not generate any increase in voter registration or turnout, suggesting that the nature of the organization involved in the campaign may affect perceptions of credibility among residents.

The researchers added: "The advocacy organization's text messages neither increased voter registration, nor turnout."

"The striking differences in results lead us to hypothesize that the type of mobilizing organization might matter for the effectiveness of voter registration campaigns conducted via text messaging."

The research was conducted in April 2021 in England, in the run up to the 2021 local elections, and forms part of a wider project looking at

how organizations can increase [voter registration](#) and turnout in the UK. The report authors have called for more [research](#) to take place to replicate the findings with other [local authorities](#) and groups.

**More information:** When do text messages increase voter registration? Comparative evidence from RCTs with a local authority and an advocacy organisation in the UK. [www.florianfoos.net/register-to...\\_Unan\\_Cheng\\_MPSA.pdf](http://www.florianfoos.net/register-to..._Unan_Cheng_MPSA.pdf)

Provided by King's College London

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