



Scotland's Climate Assembly: Research

Data Briefing – Weekend 4

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Introduction

This note provides a summary of results from research on Weekend 4 of Scotland's Climate Assembly on 23rd and 24th January 2021, and makes some comparisons with results from previous Weekends. It does not present an in-depth analysis of all the data but instead focuses on key findings with most relevance for informing learning and continuous improvement of the remaining three Assembly Weekends.

Post-assembly survey

Assembly members were invited to participate in the research and 63, out of 81 current members who have consented¹, completed a post-Assembly online survey. A few respondents did not answer every question. Respondents were fairly evenly spread across the three thematic streams into which members were divided, as shown in Table 1 below. The profile of respondents compared to the Assembly as a whole is included in Appendix A.

Table 1. Proportion of respondents by stream

Stream	number of respondents	percentage of all respondents
Diet, land use & lifestyle	21	33%
Home & communities	23	37%
Travel & work	19	30%
Total	63	100%

Illustrative quotes from open text responses have been included. Names and reference to gender have been removed from quotes to protect the anonymity of respondents and facilitators.

Observation fieldnotes

All plenary sessions and some breakout group discussions were observed live by three members of the research team who made observational notes.

¹ Two members who had initially consented have now left the Assembly.

Members' satisfaction and experience of participating online

All but a small number of respondents were satisfied with the support and assistance provided by the organisers, communications about the arrangements, organisation of the weekend, and with using the online platform. These results are broadly similar to the previous Weekends.

Eight respondents agreed that connection difficulties reduced their ability to participate. The other factors of distractions in home environment, length of sessions, the device they were using, and difficulties with the online platform were reported as an issue by a few respondents.

Comments from respondents who reported difficulties included:

I find it hard to maintain concentration when using zoom so by mid way through the Sunday pm session, I found it hard to participate fully

I have recently noticed that during the lunch zoom my internet connection with the jam board² seems not to be pairing well , which has resulted in my inability to contribute with my video & audio on

I found the obsession with the arc template³ and then laboriously having to decide where to place "post it notes" under in the subsequent template form immensely frustrating - and counter productive to my learning. As someone who lives with autism this format is chaotic and illogical to me, excluding my ability to participate in this part of the assembly.

Some issues with a couple of facilitators on bad internet connections - hopefully it's something temporary.

Observations across the Weekends show that there has been active support from the organising team in relation to technical difficulties experienced by members. Nonetheless, some members continue to experience connection difficulties which impact on their ability to fully participate in the weekend. Technical difficulties experienced by facilitators impact on the time and quality of small group discussions and in at least one instance, this seems to be an ongoing and unresolved difficulty for the facilitator.

Engagement, small group dynamics and facilitation

As with the previous Weekends, almost all reported feeling included and respected by their breakout room facilitator, and either tended to agree or strongly agreed that the facilitator made sure opposing arguments were considered.

² Jamboard is a tool used by facilitators to organise breakout room discussions. Assembly Members post ideas onto the board using 'post-it's'. The group can then organise ideas into themes.

³ The template referred to here is also referred to the rainbow diagram. It maps different levels of action that can be taken: individual, households/communities/neighbourhoods, organisations/business/public service; public policy/incentives/regulation/taxes; and society/norms/values/beliefs.

Five respondents thought their facilitator had sometimes tried to influence the group with their own ideas - these respondents were spread across three different breakout groups. One respondent made a comment on this (see below). Observations in breakout rooms suggest that most facilitators adhere to the principle of impartiality though there have been a couple of instances where new concepts, not provided through the speaker presentations, were introduced to the group by the facilitator.

Comments from respondents on facilitation were mixed, for example:

[facilitator] was amazing this weekend. S/he made a lot of effort to include the quieter members of our breakout room. [facilitator] had great energy and gave us lots of praise and encouragement during the two days.

This weekend [facilitator] was a first class 'translator' and scribe. S/he demonstrated what the key attribute of a good facilitator (sic) should be ...namely the ability to hear a person's view, translate it and articulate it back to the group for acceptance or amendment.

[facilitator] had a tendency to go over time therefore our breaks were much shorter than had been allocated therefore we only got a few minutes rather than 10 and on Saturday our lunch break was reduced.

[facilitator] seemed to have a poor understanding of some of the tasks s/he was leading us through, and sometimes was eager to add their own suggestions to our discussions, only to get half way through them before holding themselves back and resuming their role as a facilitator (rather than a contributing assembly member).

I felt that some of my comments weren't being considered (s/he wasn't even typing when I spoke) and was pretty disappointed that s/he constantly disregarded some of my comments in place of more active speakers' feedback. It made me think that i wasn't communicating well, but I have not experienced this in previous groups so that shouldn't be the case. I understand that I may not be as experienced or relevant in the field we are discussing as compared to a few others in the group, but this weekend had really dampened my mood to participate further.

I thought our facilitator for this weekend was excellent and it made me realise how important that role is in achieving enjoyable and useful discussions. It was good to have a facilitator that actually wrote what we said and gave us access to jamboard so we could use our own words unlike previous facilitators

I found this weekend's facilitator wasn't as efficient as previous facilitators. S/he struggled a little with the zoom layout and I found s/he took a long time to explain anything. I found her/him to be quite dull and uninspiring which in turn resulted in a very flat 2 days. It's the first weekend I didn't enjoy it if I'm honest.

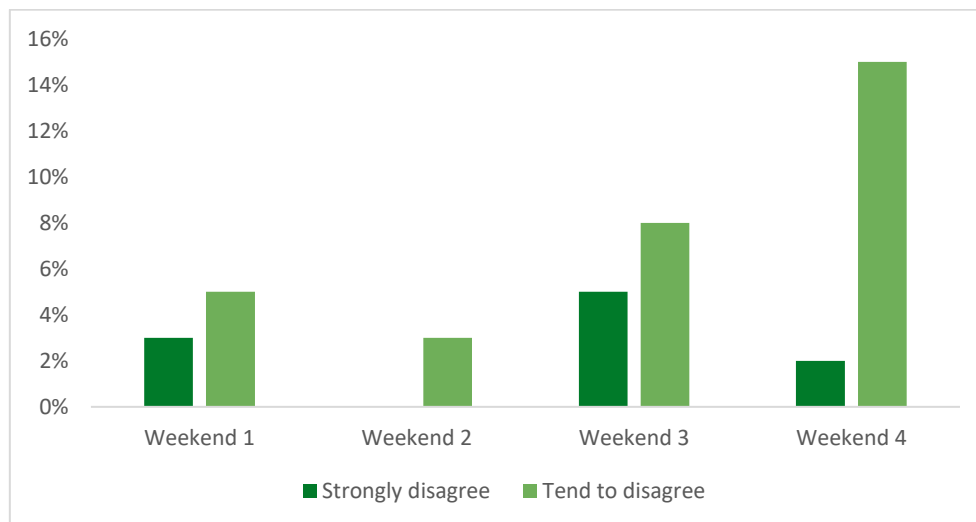
The facilitator was very friendly and encouraged good debate amongst the group. S/he sometimes made suggestions for us to consider but not in an influential way.

Facilitator was also seemingly struggling to understand some of the feedback that other members were speaking about and a lot of time spent trying to "paraphrase" what had been said. The last section of the discussion wasn't very well structured, was abrupt and out of control. We couldn't get the ranking sorted as it was disorganised.

Across the Weekends, the observation notes indicate that facilitators have, on the whole, played an active role in supporting members during both plenaries and breakout rooms. During plenary sessions, facilitators have taken action to aid inclusion and participation, for example by posting definitions of acronyms used by speakers in the 'chat' and congratulating members from their group when they presented during the plenary session. In the breakout rooms, there is variation across facilitators in their ability to manage the group discussion, alongside responding to technical difficulties experienced by members and complete Jamboard or Google Doc templates. In some instances, members have either requested wording to be changed to better capture their contribution or have amended the document themselves. This highlights a challenge for facilitators in taking accurate notes alongside responding appropriately to group dynamics.

16% (ten respondents) disagreed that they had ample opportunity in the small group discussions to express their views, an increase on previous Weekends as shown in Figure 1. These respondents were in four different breakout groups.

Figure 1. Ample opportunity to express views in small group discussions

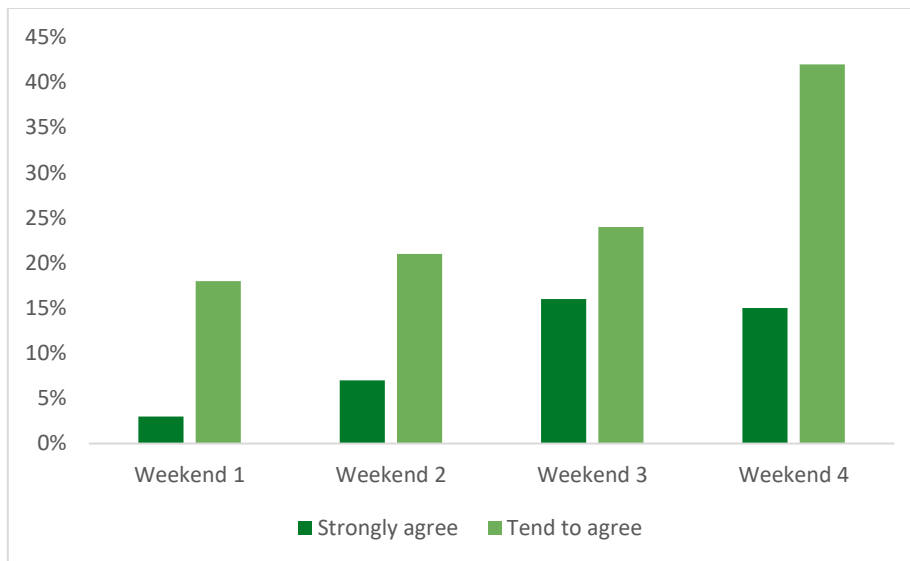


More than half of respondents agreed that one or more people in their small group tended to dominate the discussions, which is also an increase on previous Weekends as shown in Figure 2. These respondents were spread across thirteen of the fifteen breakout groups, and were a mix of gender and age groups.

The observation data shows that, particularly in Weekends 3 and 4, there were instances where members' participation in the discussion was uneven. Knowledgeable members or those with prior experience of the issue tended to dominate the discussion. Some members contributed only once during the course of

a breakout room session. There have been mixed attempts by facilitators to respond to these communication patterns within the breakout rooms.

Figure 2. One or more people in small group tend to dominate discussions



One respondent commented:

Dominant participant in the team and facilitator relied a lot on them to get input. Quite a bit of time spent with just the two of them discussing. Fair enough because [name deleted] is an expert in the field we are discussing, but because the rest of us aren't, the discussions then become circled around information coming from [name deleted] and their viewpoints.

Almost all respondents agreed that their fellow participants respected what they had to say even when they didn't agree with them. However, 12% (seven respondents) reported they didn't always feel free to raise their views and ideas for fear of others' reactions, which is a similar proportion to previous Weekends.

5% (three respondents) agreed that they already formed their opinion and the discussion had little effect on them, a similar proportion to Weekends 2 and 3.

Views about the Assembly

Almost all respondents reported the purpose of Weekend 4 was well explained, however 8% (five respondents) said that they were unsure about what they were expected to do over the following Assembly Weekends.

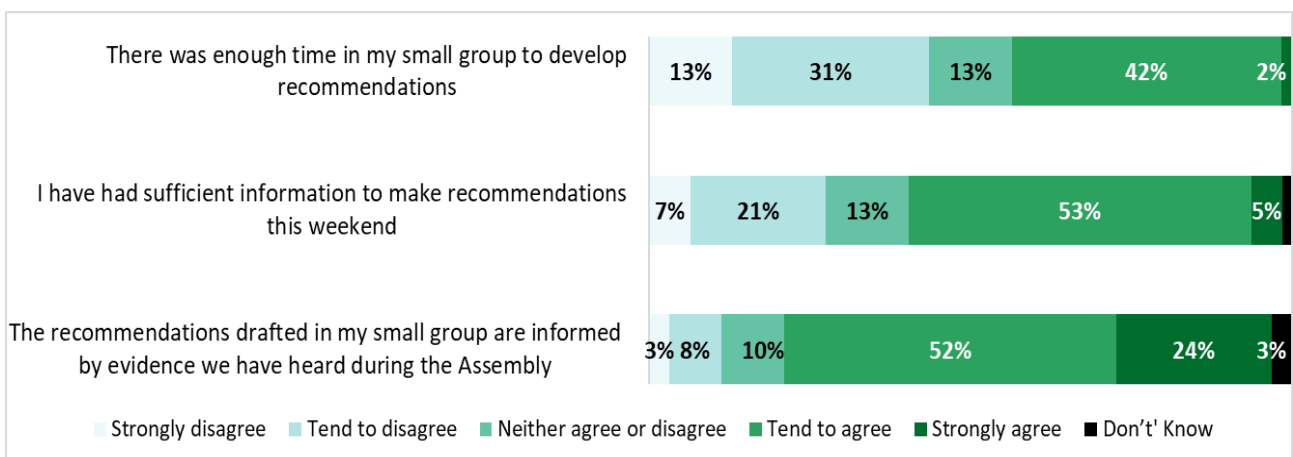
Observations find that there has been a high level of engagement and interest from members throughout the Weekends so far. The majority of members have consistently had their video camera on for the duration of the Weekends, connectivity allowing. In the plenary feedback sessions in Weekends 1 and 2, there was visible diversity in member participation in terms of age, gender and ethnicity.

Most agreed that the Assembly is diverse enough to ensure a broad range of perspectives are considered, however a few (7%) tended to disagree that this was the case. Whilst just under two thirds agreed that that the information they had received had been fair and balanced between different viewpoints, 13% disagreed and 23% neither disagreed or agreed. One respondent commented:

It feels a bit like we are being steered to support a certain action/agenda which raises questions about the integrity of the assembly. The format of the assembly is very disjointed and questions about the format, tools used and schedule seem frowned upon.

Respondents were asked for their views on specific elements of the Weekend programme. Almost all liked the way proposals for change were discussed in their small group. However, 44% thought that there was not enough time in their small group to develop recommendations⁴. Whilst 28% felt they had insufficient information to make recommendations, 76% agreed that the recommendations worked on in their small group were informed by evidence they had heard during the Assembly. Only three respondents thought that their views were not reflected in recommendations that were worked upon in their small group⁵.

Figure 3. Views on developing recommendations



Observations during Weekends 3 and 4 showed that some groups expressed frustration about the level and type of information they had received and there was some instances where members raised concerns about their ability to develop appropriate recommendations. With encouragement from the facilitators, these groups were able to complete the allocated task, but some continued to express doubts about the potential impact of these recommendations. Across the Weekends, time in the breakout rooms for a full discussion with opportunities for peer scrutiny and explanation has seemed, at points, limited, and in tension with the need to complete templates with the outputs of the discussion.

⁴ At the end of Weekend 4, members voted to have an additional (seventh) Assembly weekend.

⁵ In Weekend 4 members largely worked on developing areas for recommendations.

Respondent comments included:

There wasn't enough time allocated to discuss the presentations and in particular to talk about structural changes that will be required to facilitate implementation.

Not enough time to discuss the topic before coming up with the draft recommendations on work. Also not enough time to consider the consolidated recommendations on travel.

(What I have learnt is) How big these issues are in relation to tackling them and how I don't feel we have in all cases received enough information to make informed decisions

My biggest anxiety from this weekend was the incredibly short time we were given to make recommendations on Saturday and I feel that we did not cover half of what we wanted to. There was slightly more time for this on Sunday but we still ran out of time.

The time allocated to review the goals/recommendations from the previous week wasn't enough and we had to rush which was frustrating and I don't think it serves its purpose.

I think it's probably an unavoidable consequence of having to carry out the assembly online, but everything feels very rushed. We are being presented with a lot of information and then being asked to comment on it with very little time to digest it - and then running short of time to discuss and get our recommendations down on paper while in groups.

The speakers this weekend were amazing and very interesting, especially the ones relating to architecture. However compared to the previous weekends the group discussions felt muddled, chaotic and with not enough information given on some of the topics. Also, it often feels like we are discussing things that are already being considered or implemented as we speak, so feels a bit pointless at times. Too many vague questions, too broad. Not sure how helpful this weekend was to the overall goal.

60% found the online Members Hub quite or very helpful with regards to their participation in the Assembly. 13% stated they didn't know if it was helpful, which suggests they may not have engaged with this resource yet.

All but nine respondents agreed that the Weekend had made them feel that they wanted to continue as an Assembly member (two disagreed, seven neither agreed nor disagreed).

Experience of evidence sessions

As with previous Weekends, almost all respondents reported understanding the speakers. 51% understood all the speakers and 41% most of the speakers. Most reported learning something new - 35% learnt from all the speakers and 44% from most of the speakers.

Levels of trust were similar to Weekends 2 and 3, with 89% trusting what was said by all or most speakers, and 82% trusting the information that was presented. Most were happy with the choice of speakers, although 8% were not.

Speaker presentations across the Weekends have been delivered by pre-recorded video. Observational data shows that the production value of these videos has been high. There have been issues with audio quality and captioning that have been addressed as the Weekends have progressed. Where slides or graphs have been used, these have, at times, moved too quickly for members to fully digest the content. Prior to drafting recommendations for each of the allocated question across Weekends 3 and 4, members had input from one informant and four advocates⁶. In Weekend 3, there was no explanation of the difference between informant and advocacy presentations, however, this was made clearer to members in Weekend 4.

Actions which have been introduced to aid members learning have included: individual reflection time immediately after each speaker; encouragement for members to take notes during the presentation alongside the provision of note taking templates; and, in advance of Weekend 4, members were sent short summaries of the weekend presentations. According to observational data, at least some members appear to have made use of the note taking templates. In the Weekend 4 post-Assembly survey, 76% reported finding the reflection time after the presentations to be helpful for their learning about climate change. Observations found little mention of speaker summaries by the lead facilitator or breakout room facilitator throughout Weekend 4, and it was unclear the extent to which members used them to support their discussions. However, the member survey results show that most respondents found these summaries to be helpful for their learning, as shown in Table 2 below.

All but a few respondents found the speakers' presentations quite or very helpful. Across Weekends 2-4, there has been no opportunity for a plenary Q&A after the pre-recorded presentations and instead members were able to invite speakers to come to their breakout room to ask a question or request clarification. Observations show that there continues to be unequal access to speakers in the breakout rooms and variation in how groups make use of this opportunity. For example, in some groups, the facilitator asks the question and in other groups, the members directly question the speaker themselves.

Responses to the survey at the end of Weekend 4 showed that 79% found time with speakers in the breakout rooms 'quite helpful' or 'very helpful', compared to 89% in Weekend 3. Facilitators have noted the difficulty in balancing the time in sessions between time with speakers alongside completing the breakout room task.

⁶ Informants are considered to be more 'neutral' speakers, while advocates are encouraged to explicitly take a position.

One respondent commented:

I felt that the availability of experts was too limited in the group discussions. I felt that I was being pushed to make it quick when speaking to them as they were required elsewhere. I have not felt that the facilitators were very well-equipped to focus the discussions or collate our views afterwards.

Knowledge and learning

Assembly members remained split into three streams in Weekend 4: Diet and lifestyle, Homes and communities, and Work and travel. With regards to the extent they learnt something new on their respective topic, 29% reported learning ‘a lot’, 43% ‘quite a bit’ and 24% ‘a little. Around two thirds of respondents rated their knowledge on their stream topic 7 and above on a 10 point scale (0 = none, 10 = a great deal) with most (38%) giving a rating of 7.

Small group discussions were found to be quite or very helpful for learning about climate change by 79% of respondents, a similar result to previous Weekends. The results for other specific activities are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Helpfulness of specific activities in Weekend 4 for learning about climate change

Activity	Quite helpful	Very helpful
Saturday morning review and reflection on the priorities identified at Weekend 3	36%	23%
Saturday morning time to explore the problem in their small group	41%	36%
Saturday morning discussion about Propositions on Fairness	32%	31%
Availability of the transcripts of the speakers’ presentations in advance on the online hub	21%	45%
Receiving the summary of the speakers’ recommendations in advance	31%	48%

Respondents were asked to what extent they thought they had the information required to answer the Assembly question ‘*How should Scotland change to tackle the climate emergency in an effective and fair way?*’ With regards to whether they could answer this question themselves, no members thought they had the information ‘very much’ but 41% thought ‘quite a lot’ and 43% thought ‘somewhat’. These results are slightly higher than for Weekend 3 and similar to Weekend 2. In terms of having the information to answer this question by the Assembly as a whole, the results were mixed with 18% thinking ‘very much’, 48% ‘quite a lot’ and 21% ‘somewhat’. The survey data do not show a clear pattern of improvement over the four Weekends.

One respondent commented that:

A few members in our group were complaining about lack of information to make recommendations. I am happy enough - the level of information needed to properly enact our recommendations is several degrees and PhDs worth, I think we are getting enough to point us in a direction without becoming overwhelmed with information.

Feelings about climate change

78% of respondents reported feeling excited/hopeful about what we can do to tackle climate change, with 44% feeling optimistic that things will work out fine.

A quarter agreed that they felt worried/upset by what they were learning, which is lower than previous Weekends. However, the proportion of respondents feeling overwhelmed by the information that was presented has remained the same, at 21%.

Five respondents reported that their feelings about climate change were having a negative impact on their mental health⁷.

Around four in ten agreed that they pushed emotions away so they would not feel distressed about climate change, and a similar proportion agreed they were not aware of feeling any negative or distressing emotions about climate change.

⁷ Wellbeing resources have been produced for Assembly members and were made available via the Members Portal following Weekend 4.

Appendix A: Profile of Members completing Weekend 4 post-Assembly Survey

Characteristic	Category	Post-Assembly WE4 Survey	Scotland's Climate Assembly
		% of respondents	% of members +
Gender*	Man	41.3%	46.7%
	Woman	55.6%	51.4%
	In another way	3.2%	1.9%
	Unknown		
Age**	16-18	0.0%	4.8%
	19-24	6.3%	9.5%
	25-29	4.8%	5.7%
	30-44	28.6%	23.8%
	45-64	33.3%	32.4%
	65-74	17.5%	23.8%
	75+	6.3%	
	Unknown	3.2%	
Ethnicity**	White Scottish/British	82.5%	
	White Other	7.9%	92.4%
	Black, Asian, Ethnic Minority	6.4%	7.6%
	Unknown	10%	
Which of these statements, if any, comes closest to your own view about climate change? ***	Climate change is an immediate and urgent problem		67.6%
		65.1%	
	Climate change is more of a problem for the future	14.3%	14.3%
	Climate change is not really a problem	1.6%	3.8%
	I'm still not convinced that climate change is happening	0%	6.7%
	None of these	4.8%	N/a
	Don't know	0.0%	7.6%
	Unknown	14.3%	

*Base n=63

** Base n=61

*** From pre-Assembly survey responses. Base n=54

+ Base n=105 (Sortition Foundation recruitment report, selected confirmed %)