

OUR ENERGY FUTURES PANEL: EVALUATION

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"Think its a great initiative - there should be more of these across the country to help people understand more and engage people who may not otherwise get the chance to interact with each other." (Stakeholder)

"Oh, I felt like I learned a lot. And it's ...put the discussion about climate change more to the fore of my conversations with friends and family. I did think about it before, but I feel like I'm a bit more informed now. And it's also made me want to research more myself and have a better understanding." (Panel member)

Independent
evaluation report
by A B Consulting

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1 Introduction

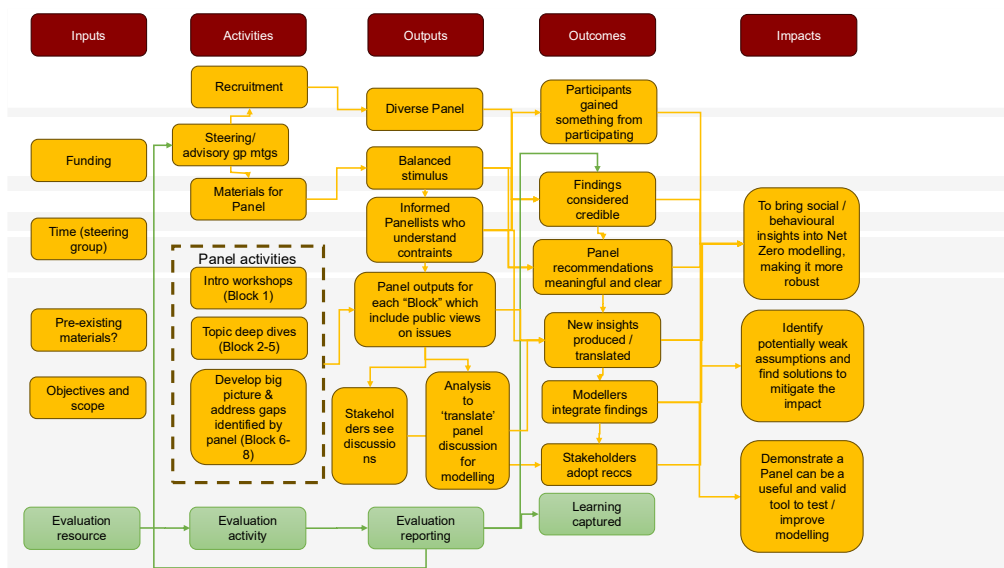
The Our Energy Futures Panel is an ambitious programme of deliberative research, delivered in partnership between the Energy Demand Research Centre (workstream led by Lancaster University) and Involve. In total, the Panel of public panel members took part in 8 Blocks of deliberation, with each Block consisting of two or three evenings of online information provision and discussion and one full-day face-to-face (F2F) event. The Panel members were initially recruited by Sortition Foundation to be broadly reflective of the UK population, but are geographically concentrated around Greater Manchester to facilitate in-person meetings. Some top-up recruitment was conducted after the first year to replace drop-outs. The springboard for deliberation is the Positive Low Energy Futures (PLEF) model, and the outputs from each Block of deliberation inform new panel-inspired model runs.

The independent evaluation worked alongside the Panel, to provide constructive feedback as the Panel developed while also capturing key learning for future projects. The evaluation was designed to be light touch, so rather than following every Block in depth, it captured high level feedback from panel members through a survey in every wave, and more in-depth feedback after Blocks – Block 2, 6 and 8.¹

This evaluation report is based on the following sources:

- Panel member feedback (surveys after each Block, interviews conducted during the Block 2, 6 and 8 F2F sessions and telephone interviews after Block 8). Many of the surveys used Likert scales (5 or 6 point) and the graphs show the average score for each session based on all responses.
- Stakeholder feedback (an online survey of the Reference Group, speakers and PLEF modelling team after Block 2 and 6) and group discussions with facilitators and modellers after Block 8.
- Team reflections (an online workshop, conducted after the Block 6 F2F session and group discussion after Block 8)
- Evaluator Observations of the F2F workshops (Block 2, 6 and 8) and online speaker presentations and panels (all Blocks)

Underpinning the evaluation is a Theory of Change which is shown below.



The evaluation framework (see Appendix 1) includes questions about design, delivery and impact.

¹ These Blocks were chosen because Block 2 was the first of four 'in-depth' Blocks and so learning will influence delivery of Blocks 3-5 which will follow a similar format. Block 6 was the block which aims to bring all the work together for the first time, and Block 8 closed out the Panel's work.

2 Overall reflections

The Panel took participants and the delivery team on a long and successful journey. The team knew the ambition to use a qualitative / deliberative methodology to shape quantitative modelling was going to be challenging, and over the course of the sessions they iterated the approach to get the most out of the sessions. Panel members and stakeholders were satisfied overall with the sessions. Panel members enjoyed the opportunity to learn about the topics from the experts and from each other. Overall they believed that the quality of the facilitation has been good, enabling most people to have their say and feel engaged. Stakeholders were also positive about the process, and feel that overall it achieved its objectives and did support the modellers to develop a new and improved PLEF scenario.

Given how long the Panel lasted, attrition was broadly in line with what was expected (in total 10 people left the Panel). The planned top-up recruitment before Block 5 helped to balance the panel, bringing in more younger people and people with less concern about climate. However, panel members not concerned about the environment were more likely to drop out than those who were very concerned although this trend appeared to slow in the final Blocks.

In the sections below each element of the evaluation framework is considered in more detail. In order to keep the document short and focussed, the report mainly highlights areas for learning although it does also seek to document what went particularly well and where important changes were made. Overall the panel went well and received mostly positive feedback from both the panel members and stakeholders.

3 The panel journey

The panel have now completed eight Blocks, each with a different question and focus.

- Block 1 – introduction to Positive Low Energy Futures (PLEF)
- Block 2 – What could a healthier and more sustainable national diet look like, what may prevent or support us reaching that, and how we can ensure that changes work for everyone?
- Block 3 – How could we buy things in ways that use less energy, whilst supporting everyone to live a good quality of life?
- Block 4 – How could we reduce energy demand from heating the nation's homes in ways that are fair, save people money, and improve comfort and health?
- Block 5 – How could we reduce energy demand from moving around, while ensuring that everyone is able to meet their needs for travel?
- Block 6 – What does a reasonable and fair balance between the three elements [energy demand reduction, clean electricity generation and carbon dioxide removals] of our energy future look like for a net zero UK?
- Block 7 – Topics selected by the Panel:
 - Flying is highly valued, but very difficult to decarbonise. Should we manage demand for flying, by how much, how, and for who?
 - What does a positive low energy future look like for different kinds of places in the UK?
- Block 8 – As a nation we need to use less energy, to meet our climate targets, increase energy security, and save households money. How can we do this in ways that work for everyone?

The discussions in most blocks were directed to address specific aspects which were most pertinent to the modellers; for example, the actions that would have most impact, or the ones with less existing information about public perspectives. This focus was sometimes a cause of frustration for some participants, who did not always understand the reason why a particular topic was being discussed. The topics are set out in the table below.

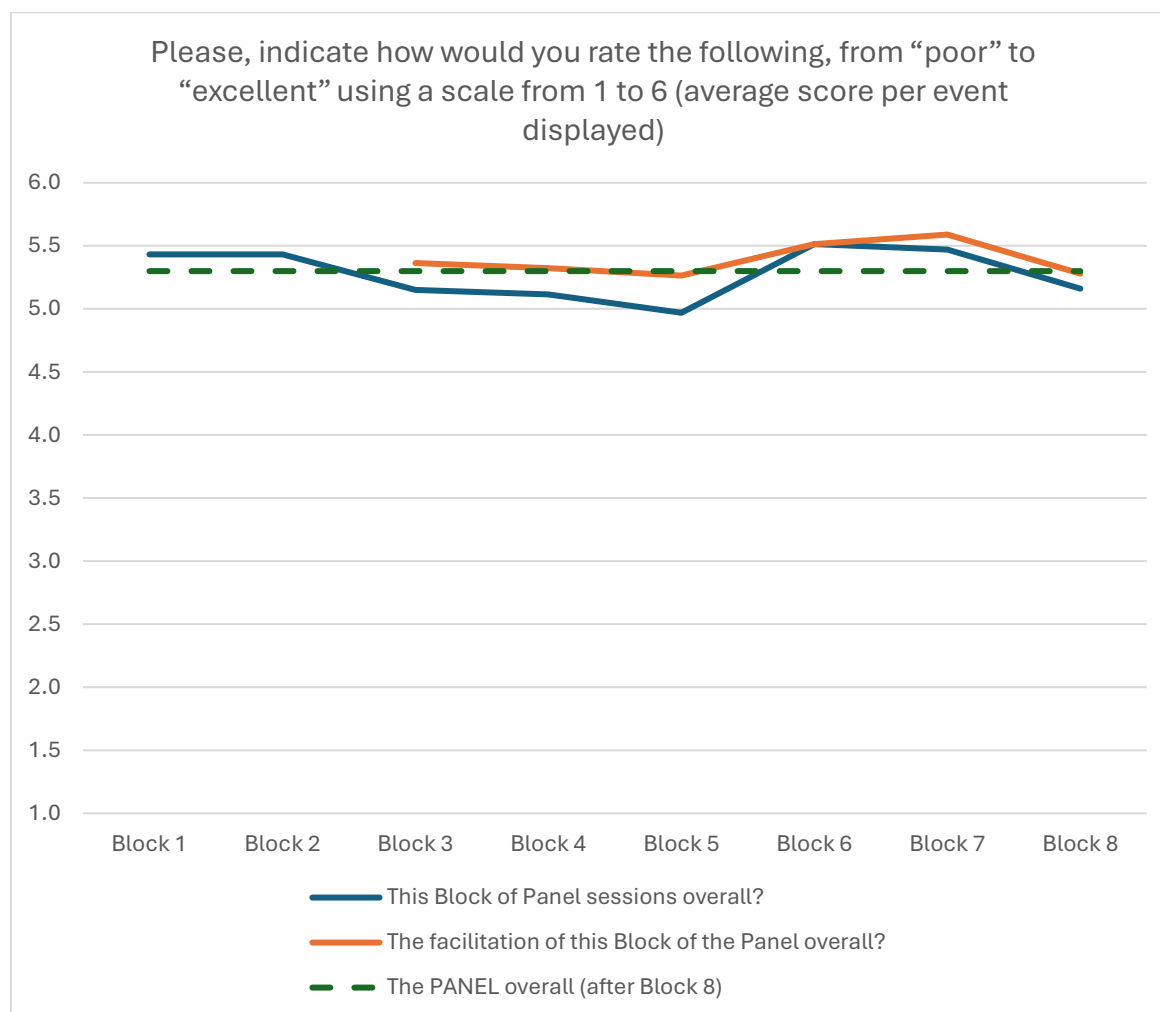
Figure 1: Topics in each block

Block 2:	Reducing meat consumption
Block 3:	Car clubs, journey sharing, conscious clothing consumption, longer-life and repairable electronics, library of things
Block 4:	Use of heat pumps, retrofitting insulation, and flexible energy tariffs
Block 5:	Reducing car size and reducing car-kilometres travelled, by switching journeys to public transport, travelling less far, and travelling less often
Block 6:	The appropriate balance between the three main 'pillars' of net zero – reducing energy demand, increasing clean power generation, and carbon dioxide removals
Block 7:	Aviation and developing place-based visions for low energy futures
Block 8:	Reviewing and voting on the final citizens' panel scenario, and developing principles for reducing energy demand fairly and effectively

As shown in the graph below (Figure 2: Overall sentiment), there has been some variation in the Panel's feedback about the sessions overall and overall they remained high throughout.

Their overall rating of the Blocks had been gradually dropping over the course of the Panel, but reached a new high in Block 6 and 7 before dropping slightly for the final Block. This is potentially driven by the topics covered in each of the Blocks; participants preferred the sessions that were more closely aligned to the topics that interested them. For example, whereas in Block 5 some people described feeling constrained and unable to ask the questions they wanted or discuss broader issues related to cars, in Block 6 and 7 they enjoyed the wider remit to talk about what they felt was important. Panel members in Block 8 were also asked to reflect across the Panel as a whole to give it one final rating. The average rating was 5.3 out of 6 which corresponds to very good or excellent.

Figure 2: Overall sentiment



Overall most people also regarded facilitation to be very good or excellent*. In the interviews with participants and the facilitator group, people reflected that the breakout groups often felt rushed and very task focussed, which meant the facilitators were not able to create as much space to hear from different views as they would have liked. As a result, on some tables some voices dominated at times. While participants were allocated to different tables for each Block, partly to balance participants who are more and less vocal, nonetheless some people felt that they did not always have the time and space to contribute fully, although they did not disagree with the direction of the discussion. The facilitation team reflected that some of them had limited facilitation experience before the Panel, and so their confidence and skills grew over the process of the Panel.

* The question on Block facilitation changed after Block 2 (several questions were merged into one overall question)

4 Design

It is important to reflect on the design of the Panel and how this impacted on delivery and impact. Due to the light touch evaluation approach, there are not detailed insights for every Block of the panel, but it was possible to observe the team learning and adapting over time.

4.1 Clear, well-defined (and balanced) question / scope / framing

Across the Panel sessions there was a tension between whether participants were being asked what they thought was desirable, achievable or about the changes they would personally be willing to make. In the later sessions this was typically more clear, especially in polling questions used to quantify the

views of the panel. Each framing was challenging – when asked what was desirable, some participants struggled to set aside their views on whether something was achievable. When thinking about what was achievable they made different assumptions based on their views about current politicians, government, society and economy. When thinking about personal changes, people came up with reasons why other people may struggle to make a change, but also tended to focus on the importance of educating other people, rather than committing to making personal changes. There were exceptions, and, as outlined below (0), some participants have made significant changes at home in response to what they learned as being part of the Panel.

4.1.1 Overarching question

The intention was for this innovative piece of work to take insights from deliberations with the public and to identify a way that they can be used to inform modelling being undertaken by the Positive Low Energy Futures Team. To our knowledge, this has not been attempted before. The overall question is *"As a nation we need to use less energy, to meet our climate targets, increase energy security, and save households money. How can we do this in ways that work for everyone?"*.

Throughout the Blocks there was a tension between what the panel members want to talk about and what the modellers needed to know. Specifically, the panel members were keen to talk about and generate solutions, and frequently came back to discussions about the need for more education as the key to the changes required. However, the team were focussed on understanding views on technology already available, being realistic about the timeframes available for change. For example, one suggestion from the panel was that they should discuss hydrogen as a replacement for gas in home heating, but given the current state of technology and policy, the team thought this would not be practical in time to make a meaningful contribution to the 2050 target. In the final interviews, participants felt they had more good ideas that they wanted to share.

Looking back over the course of the Panel, some participants reflected that they would have preferred to learn more about the trade-offs between energy demand reduction, green energy production and carbon capture in the first Block, so that they understood earlier on what the implications would be of choosing to make fewer changes to energy demand. After discussing how carbon capture would work in practice, typically they decided it would be better to go further with demand reduction.

4.1.2 Design of the sessions

All Blocks followed an established format of two shorter sessions online (Monday and Wednesday evening) followed by a full day on the Saturday. The sector-specific blocks also had a follow-up online session for members to review and provide feedback on the qualitative and modelled scenarios developed based on their discussions. Not including this additional session in Blocks 6-8 (scenario choices in Blocks 6 and 7 were reviewed in Block 8) released additional funds to increase the incentives to reduce attrition over the final few Blocks.

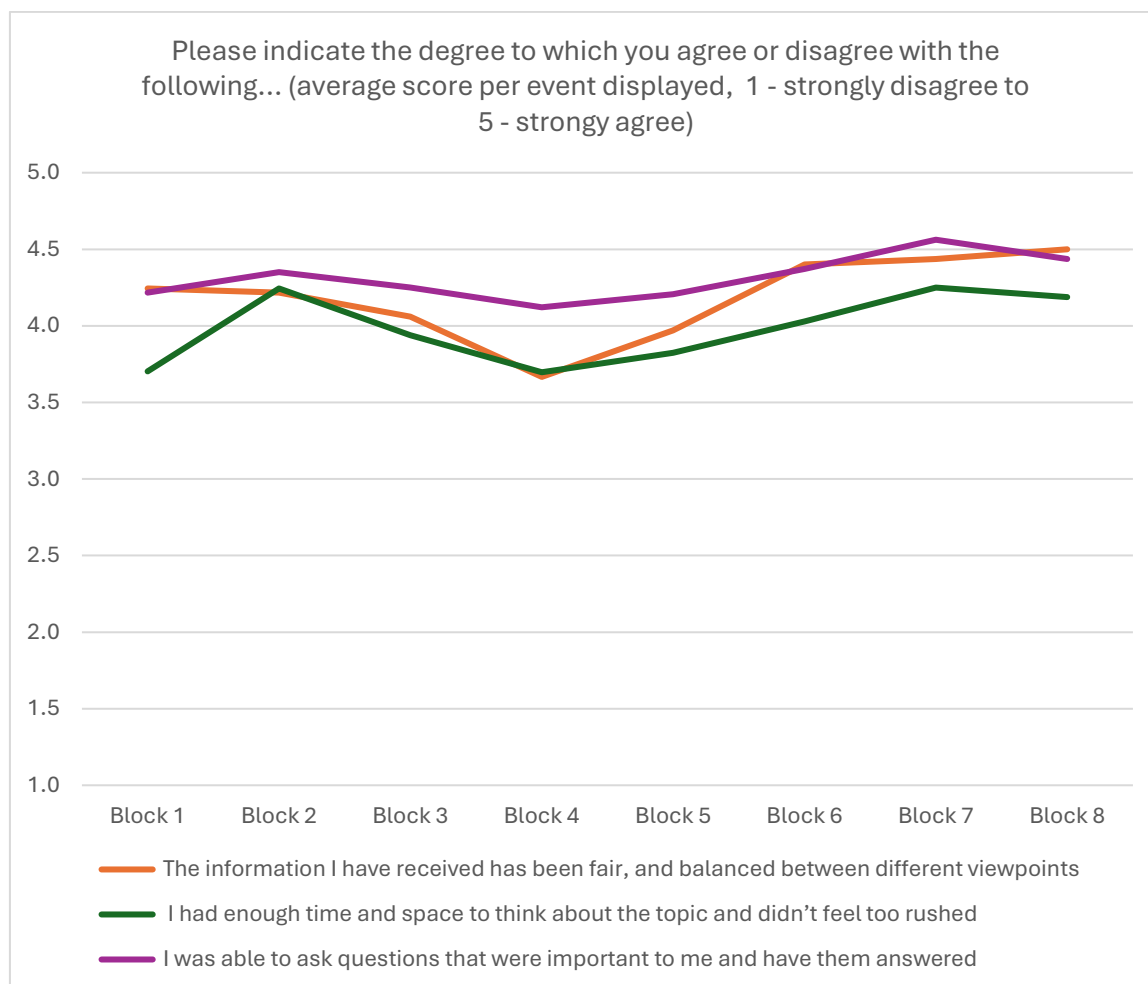
A few members of the Panel continued to feed back that the pace of the sessions, especially online, was too much and that people struggled to take on board everything that they were told. The team had a difficult challenge to manage the divergent needs of different Panel members – some were very well informed and wanted details to help them understand the topic. Others were much less familiar with reading charts and engaging with data and found this information somewhat overwhelming. The approach to managing this was to communicate to participants that the information was there but that the team did not expect everyone to follow everything and that their contribution would still be valuable. However, this did leave some participants feeling they were less able to contribute at times.

As shown in the chart below, the later Blocks performed best, reflecting both the participants getting more familiar with the topics and also the team becoming better at communicating key information, learning from different approaches that they trialled as outlined below (Figure 3: Information provision). In the later sessions, modellers were available to answer questions throughout the face to face session which meant people could follow up on any questions they had. The modelling team

reflected that they found it extremely challenging to pitch their feedback at the right level, and the support of the Panel design team was appreciated to help them strike the right balance.

Some participants observed that they found it much easier to absorb information shared face to face, and that the online sessions were more difficult. This was particularly the case for people who had more difficulty following some of the content.

Figure 3: Information provision



Throughout the Panel the team have been trialling different approaches to gathering the information needed to inform the model in a format that works for both participants and the modellers. In Block 2 the design included a number of relatively complex activities which were not delivered consistently across the tables. In contrast, the Block 6 activities appeared to be mostly much more straightforward and the decision to use laptops on the tables to enable participants to interact with the model worked well overall. Facilitators and the participants preferred the more free-flowing sessions where they were able to discuss topics in a less structured way.

The team worked to strike a balance between qualitative and quasi-quantitative feedback to inform the modelling. Naturally modellers found it easier to use quantitative data but with a panel of this size any survey data can, at best, be considered indicative, and ideally the emphasis should be on the diversity of views captured rather than relying on a survey to identify a 'majority' view. The later sessions focussed mainly on group discussions but also had some individual tasks to get a sense of the weight of different opinions. The emerging write-ups struck a balance between using this data to indicate the strength of feeling without leading with these numbers, although there is a risk that by quoting percentages they could be taken out of context by policy-makers.

The modellers were clear that at some point in the process the qualitative feedback had to be turned into numbers in order for it to shape the model, and as such they preferred the quantitative data because that meant participants were making the decisions, rather than the modellers who did not feel qualified to do so. Taking a step back, it is possible that this was the 'least worst' way to approach it, but as the panel members are not necessarily representative of anything, the question remains what value this had. Therefore, within the chosen methodology the team took the best approach possible, but it would be interesting to explore if alternative approaches, such as deliberative polling, may have been better suited to the purpose, or inviting the panel design team to do the translation from discussion to a numerical output.

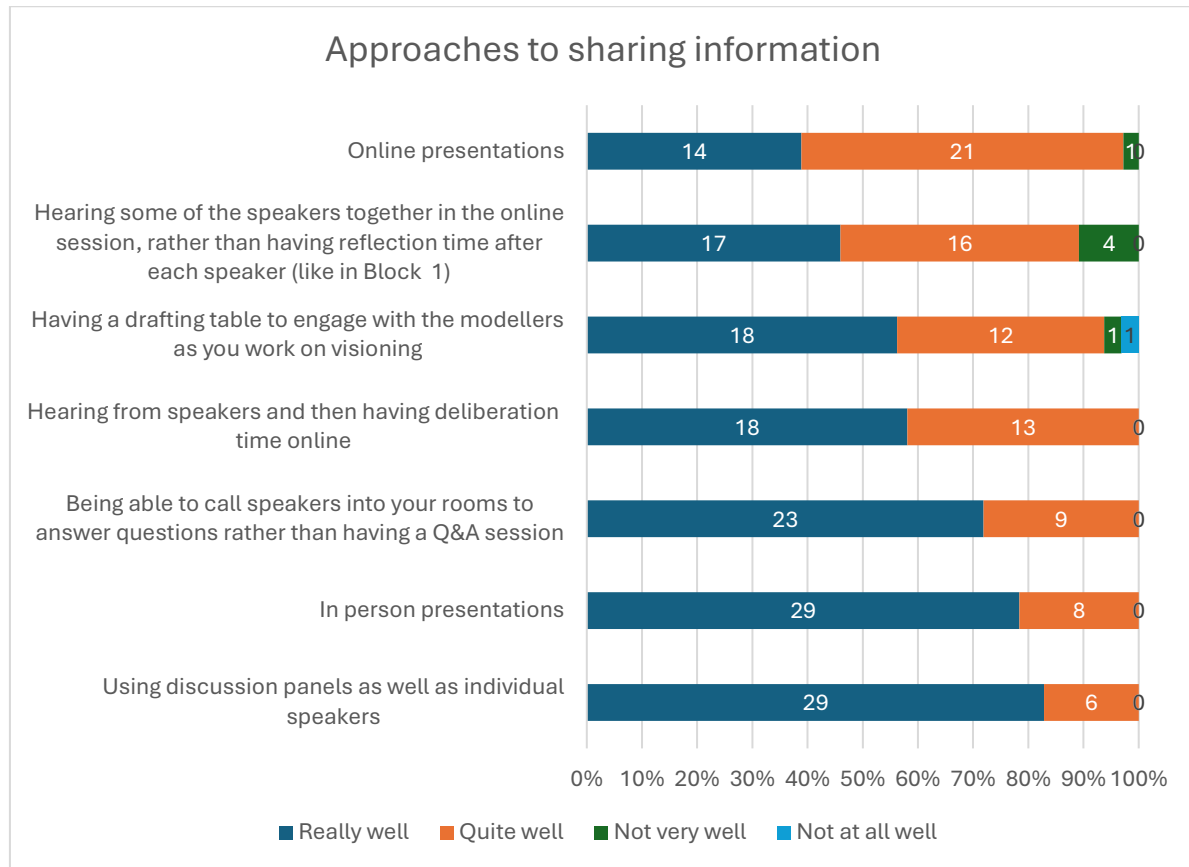
4.1.3 Different tools and techniques

Across the different Blocks, the team have used a range of different approaches. Each time they have asked Panel members for their views and this has informed later waves where possible.

The team have looked at how best to share information on new topics (see Figure 4). Nearly all the participants felt that all the approaches worked at least 'quite well'. In person sessions were particularly successful according to participants, and the modellers also agreed that face to face was their preferred format as it was easier to 'read the room'. In the interviews they explained that speakers are more engaging in person and it is easier to think of and ask relevant follow up questions in the room. It is interesting that while having a couple of speakers back to back before going into breakout sessions to discuss (which was tried in Block 2) was one of the less successful approaches, having a discussion panel for Q&A (Block 6) was well received *"I could have listened to them more! I could have sat there all afternoon."* (Panel member). The evaluator noted when observing the Block 6 face to face session that Panel members were very engaged with the speaker sessions and some were making extensive notes.

In Blocks 7 and 8, participants could approach a 'drafting table' of specialists at any point during the face-to-face session to get feedback and ask questions. Some tables made more use of this resource than others. Typically each table sent one or two people across but the feedback from the drafting table was not necessarily shared back with the whole table afterwards, or was shared back in an abbreviated form. While participants who approached the table appeared to value the opportunity to discuss ideas in more detail it did not appear to significantly impact on the outputs.

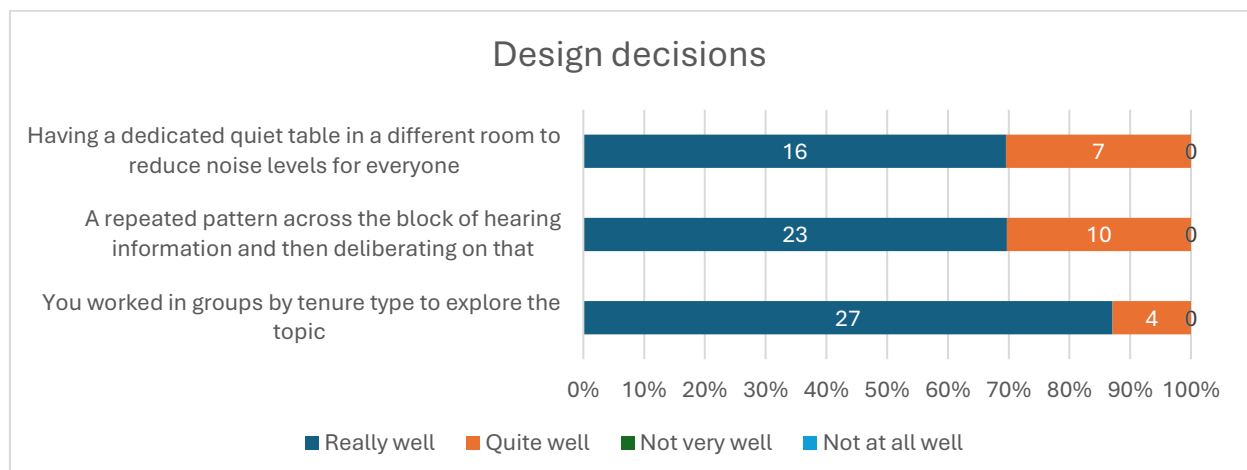
Figure 4: Approaches to sharing information



* Note that the values on the bars represent N due to the small number of participants involved. Because the total number of participants varies for the different questions the bar sizes represent the percentage of participants who gave each response.

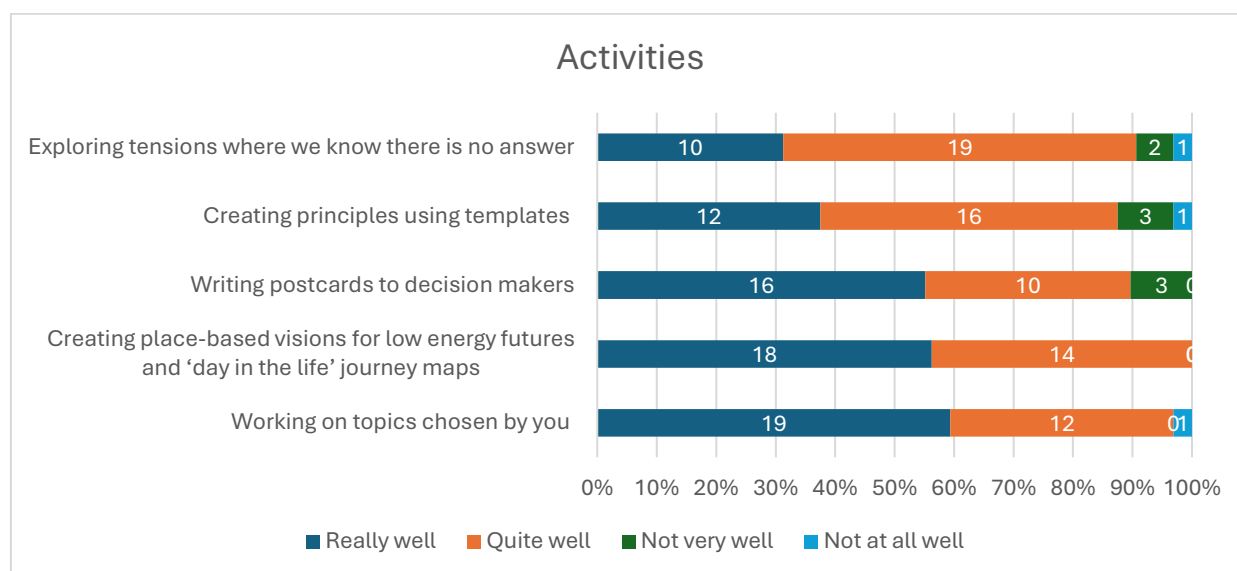
The team also explored different design ideas (Figure 5) including arranging participants by tenure in a Block about housing, alternating between information and deliberation rather than having all the deliberation on the last day, and having a dedicated quiet table in a separate room for people who struggled to hear in the main room. The latter appeared to have less support, but mainly because 9 people declined to answer as they did not access the quiet table. Observations suggested that the quiet room worked well for people, although being outside the main room meant it was not obvious when the group struggled with one of the tasks. The group were also less likely to go to the drafting table for help. Almost everyone thought that splitting the groups by tenure type worked well.

Figure 5: Design decisions



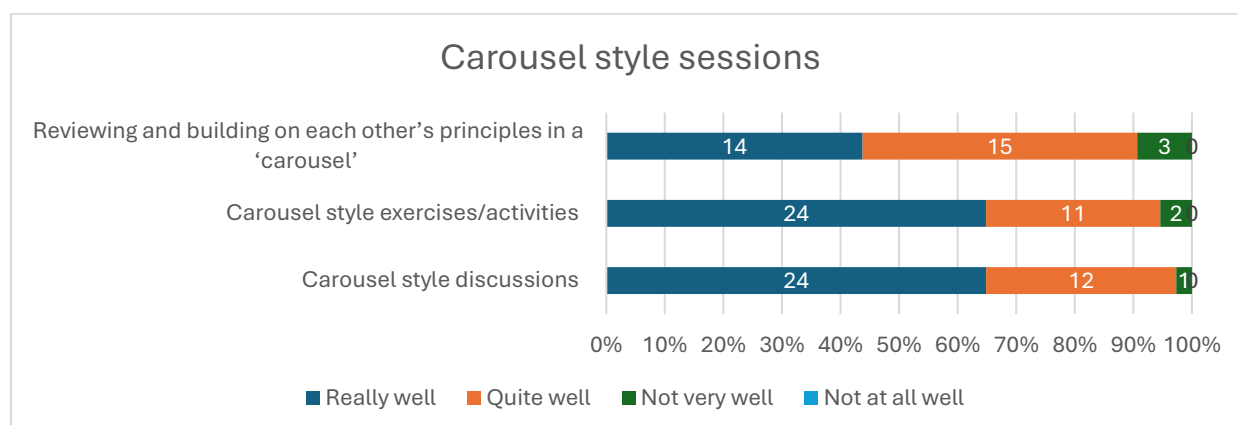
Across the Blocks, many different activities were used (see Figure 6). Again, Panel members mostly thought these worked well. They particularly appreciated the tasks where they had more control – most people thought it worked really well working on topics picked by the panel (in block 7). They also enjoyed the more creative tasks where they had more leeway including both creating place-based visions which was a group task, and writing postcards to decision-makers which was a personal task. Creating principles and exploring tensions were not as well received although most people still thought they worked at least ‘quite well’.

Figure 6: Activities



The carousel style activities (Figure 7), where groups rotated around different topics and added to what the previous group had discussed (used in Block 1 and 8) worked quite well for most people but a handful disagreed. The reason reviewing the principles in carousel did not work as well appears to be because some people felt there was not enough time to do the job well in the final Block *“I felt rushed in the carousel, for the amount of things we were supposed to consider I don't think there was enough time and we were not refined” (Panel member)*.

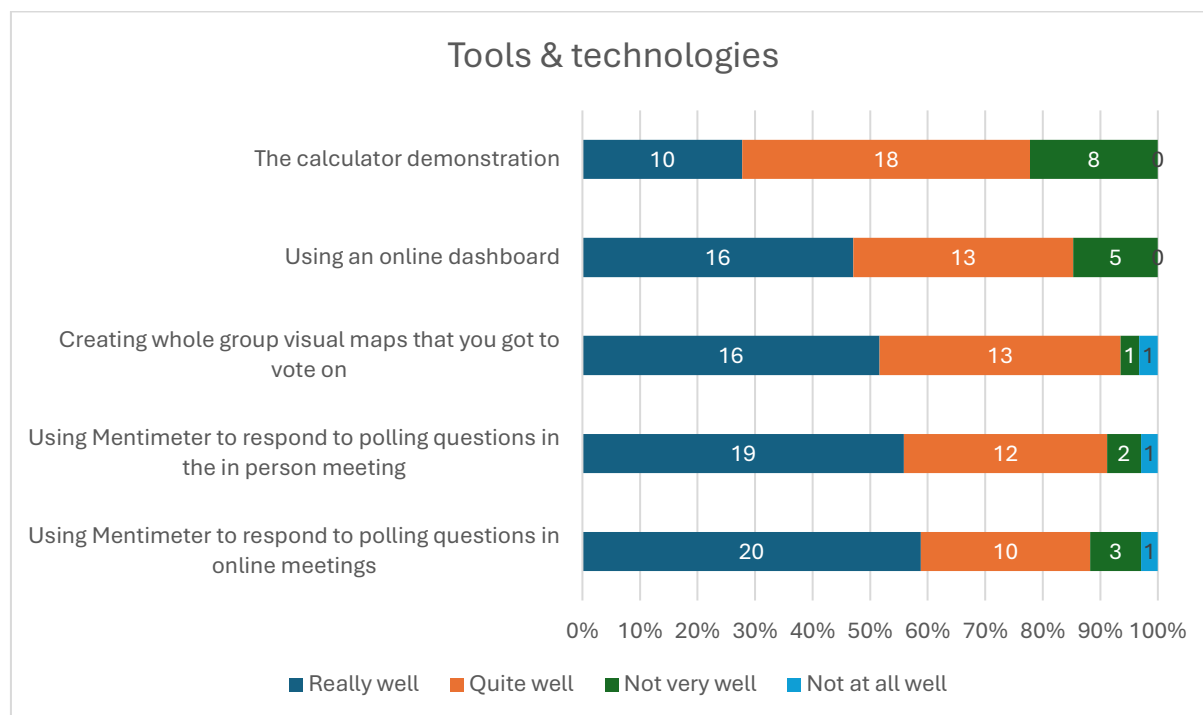
Figure 7: Carousel Activities



Finally, the team have also used different tools and technologies in the sessions (see Figure 8). Although again responses were mainly positive, the number saying ‘really well’ were notably lower for some of these questions. Also, the tools were more polarising with the most popular approach (using Mentimeter in the online meetings) also receiving one ‘not at all well’ and three panel members said ‘not very well’.

The calculator demonstration (Block 2) did not go particularly well because the text was small and hard to see and people struggled to follow. In contrast, the online dashboard used in Block 6 was better, although some still found it difficult to use. *“I’m glazing over – it’s too much. I’m not a graph person” (Panel member)*. The team were conscious that not all tools would work for all participants, and worked hard to make it clear that people could engage in different ways.

Figure 8: Tools and technologies



In Block 6 when people did tasks with an online dashboard on laptops on tables, the decision to put people in groups to ensure someone in each group had the digital skills required to operate the website appeared to work well, and all the groups appeared to be given sufficient time to do the tasks they were set. However, on reflection in the final interviews, a few people who were watching but not controlling the laptops commented that they did not really understand what was happening in those sessions. The discussions that happened while delivering the tasks varied in depth, but generally demonstrated that people were learning by using the online tool *“Until I started doing this I had no idea about any of this” (Panel Member)*. It also stimulated them to ask new questions. On balance the research team thought that giving panel members the opportunity to engage with the model in this way was valuable. *“I was really nervous about how it would go with Members engaging with the dashboard and was really surprised at how well it worked... I feel like it helped [them] to understand the balance between clean electricity, carbon dioxide removals, energy demand reduction, and how they interact.” (Stakeholder)*

Overall, some people preferred the online sessions as they were shorter and more convenient, but more said they appreciated the opportunity to meet face to face. One person mentioned that in the online sessions the focus on question generation can feel unnatural, and they preferred the opportunity to discuss topics so that questions emerge naturally and can be answered as they arise.

The team have also reflected on the different approaches used. Specifically, an ongoing challenge is how to get the right balance of different activities. Suggestions included:

- Having more flexible slots where participants can lead the discussion and have the flexibility to express what matters most to them and explore any tensions between group members.
“Balancing time for more open discussion with trying to get to outputs. Some tension between

needing to find quantifiable outputs that can be modelled with deliberative processes in limited time."

- Allowing more time for discussion between panel members and specialists, so that more questions could be asked and answered. *"It would have been helpful as an expert speaker to get more involved when the table discussions were happening - it felt like I could've answered more questions, and only had a short time to answer questions so felt like I wasn't as helpful as I could have been."*
- Finding ways to report findings by demographic group *"I would also like to see more distinctions between different groups (eg age / socioeconomic status / political worldview etc) being drawn out - with the caveat that the sample sizes would then be very small. But it is obvious from my involvement in the Panel that views differ a fair bit - as you'd expect - and it is a shame to smush all of this into one 'Panel view'."*

Each of these suggested changes would require trade-offs and some would not necessarily align with best practice (for example, reporting on demographic differences is discouraged on such a small sample size but also generally within qualitative research where tables have a mix of demographics). As noted elsewhere, at times the attempts to develop feedback for modellers led to complex sessions that were difficult to deliver. In Block 6 this was less of an issue, although the task requiring the group to work through the balance of different elements was challenging and led to some panel members appearing to go off-topic.

4.2 Appropriate stakeholders involved

4.2.1 Reference group

The Reference Group includes external advisors. Over time attendance has varied and sometimes the turnout can be low because it is difficult to find times that everyone can commit to. One member explained that it was difficult committing to a project running over such a long timeframe.

A key challenge for this piece of work was identifying a sufficiently diverse Reference Group given the range of topics being addressed. The Reference Group provides advice to the project team, including commenting on high level plans for the agenda within each block and suggesting speakers drawing on their expertise and contacts.

Block 2 (food) was particularly challenging as the Reference Group did not have a deep understanding of the sector. In contrast, for some of the other Blocks the Reference Group had more to contribute. Various members of the PLEF team also continued to act as hands-on advisors during the development and delivery of Blocks which related to their specific expertise.

4.2.2 Speakers

Recruiting speakers for deliberative panels was challenging. Overall the team secured a range of speakers from different backgrounds, who were mostly been able to engage the panel members and provide input at an appropriate level.

In Block 6 participants were satisfied that they heard from a range of relevant speakers who were able to address their questions *"Very informative. The Experts seemed more open than previous ones" (Panel member)*. In the interviews some participants reflected that they particularly enjoyed hearing from a farmer in the food block and that they would appreciate the opportunity to hear from other viewpoints across the different blocks. One commented that the session on heat pumps felt like *"pressure from a double-glazing salesman" (Panel member)* at times. The delivery team reflected that this may be a result of the session framing which focussed on *how* to achieve heat pump roll-out for the majority of homes, rather than *whether* to attempt it.

When observing the information provision, the evaluator was comfortable that the information provided was generally well-balanced and feedback about some slides which might have been overly complex was taken on board. Nonetheless, participants continued to feedback all the way through that

they struggled to understand some of the presenter's content. Despite these difficulties, the questions from panel members in Q&A sessions continue to be relatively sophisticated, demonstrating a more in-depth understanding of the topics than might be expected from the general public. This is likely driven by a few factors: firstly, there were some people in the group who had a particularly advanced interest in the topic who contributed questions; secondly, over time, these participants were passing their knowledge to their fellow Panellists; and, thirdly, Panellists repeatedly said that participating was encouraging them to want to learn more so it was possible that they were learning both within and between the Blocks.

"Most of the speakers broke everything down into layman's terms which was really helpful. You're dealing with quite complex issues at times." (Panel member)

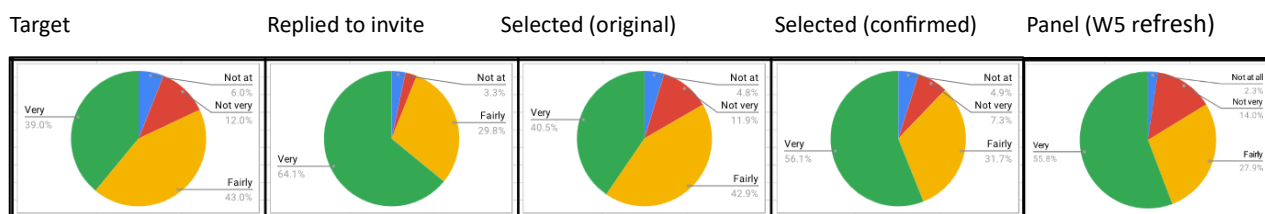
In the final interviews, some Panellists who struggled more with the content reflected that they were frustrated that they were unable to spend more time between sessions getting up to speed, but that they had busy lives and not enough time to dedicate to the task. They also reflected that having the sessions every 3 months meant that between sessions they would forget some of what they had learned, and that they would have preferred a more compressed timeline to help them retain the information between sessions.

4.3 Consideration of inclusion & representation in design / recruitment

Originally the recruitment, using Sortition, appeared to achieve a good mix of demographics. Sortition sent out 9300 invites to a bespoke area (within a twenty mile radius of central Manchester) and in total 181 people signed up which is a response rate of 1.95%. From this group, 42 were selected, to allow for attrition, with the hope that 40 would attend.

Panellists were relatively diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, a mix of men and women and voting intention in line with the quotas that were set (see Appendix 2). People with professional jobs, and people with a high degree of climate concern were significantly more likely to respond to the invite, and although they were down-weighted in the selection process they remain over-represented overall, especially as some of the people originally selected from the replies decided not to participate. Due to the relatively small number of participants involved, small changes in who participated would significantly impact on the overall spread. The chart below shows how people who are very concerned about climate change were over-represented from the start, although this was balanced out by focussing the top-up recruitment in Wave 5 on people reporting they were not very concerned.

Figure 9: Climate concern among panellists



The original quotas did not capture behavioural data but this was explored in the evaluation after Block 2. On balance, it appeared likely that panel members were more likely to be undertaking sustainable behaviours than the general population before they joined the panel, reflecting the data that they were more likely to be very concerned about climate change.

As anticipated, as the Panel continued, there was some attrition with ten panel members leaving in total, mostly in the first Blocks:

- Two people only attended one meeting in block 1 and did not return.

- Four people were poor at attending during block 1-4 and stopped communicating by the end of Block 4.
- Two long term members had good attendance and left for personal reasons across the process.

Before Block 5 the team undertook a top-up recruitment to replace the people who had left. They decided to use a recruiter rather than returning to the original Sortition responses, so that they could use the top-up to focus on specific demographics including younger people and those less concerned about climate. Two top-up people attended the onboarding and a couple of Block 5 meetings and then stopped responding. This attrition is discussed further in section 5.5 below.

4.4 Blocks of sessions lead to outputs that can be ‘translated’ into model inputs

Overall the team were confident that this happened (see section 6.1). They discussed the challenge of getting the balance right between enabling the panel members to explore a topic and discuss what mattered to them, versus focussing in on activities and tasks which enabled quantification of their views to more easily inform the model. The team felt that the ambition should be to *“narrow the gap”* between what was discussed in the session and what was put into the model, so that how the modellers were using the discussions was *“as transparent as possible”*.

Each Block has used a different approach to inform the modelling, experimenting with different qualitative and quantitative techniques. On balance, the modellers felt that the quantitative techniques worked better in providing them with usable model input, although the delivery team had mixed views, especially as this was a qualitative exercise. The team noted that in this case, as some of the voting exercises were necessarily complex in order to get at the range of information required for modelling input, that electronic voting was preferable to dot-based voting. For example, in some dot-voting exercises, they had observed a few people voting more than once for the same option when they had been asked to vote only once for each preferred option, and others not voting at all on questions where a response was required, or not understanding all the different options available to vote on. This may have distorted the data captured at the margins. The dot-voting was also physically more difficult for those Panel members with limited mobility. The team supported people who needed help with electronic voting.

The team commented that it was easier to work with the panel where the modellers were more familiar with the underlying model. Specifically, Block 4 (buildings) was more challenging as the model used was different to that in the original PLEF project, due to a lack of in-house expertise in the current team with both that category of modelling, and the original model used. The team were very ambitious, and always wanted to do more. For example, they indicated an ambition to help participants visualise the impact of the decisions they were making and while the dashboard in Block 6 started to do this, they would have liked to do more to make it real for participants.

5 Delivery

5.1 Time and space to deliberate / learn

As indicated above, time and space were at a premium throughout the Panel. As shown in Figure 3 above, some sessions were more successful than others, but often people were left feeling they had more to say. Block 6 was particularly wide-ranging in its question, and introduced a number of new ideas and technologies which participants may not have previously known much about (i.e. related to carbon capture). Some participants really enjoyed the opportunity to take a step back and look at the bigger picture, but for others it was perhaps a bit overwhelming. On reflection, some of the Panel members said they wished they had the information provided in Block 6 back at the start, so that they could understand where energy demand reduction fits within the bigger picture. This was provided briefly in Block 1, but they had perhaps not fully absorbed it.

“One of the reasons I don’t feel confident is my circumstances... When not seeing family and we don’t go out loads or see lots of people. So conversation and expressing myself to strangers isn’t part of my normal life ... I think that it feels like a quick-fire format, which is not good for someone like me. And I think there were others that struggle with that as well, as they were not used to engaging in that way. And I have to think carefully about what we might say and the words we’re using in ways you wouldn’t if it’s part of your everyday life. It disadvantaged people” (Panel member)

The decision to provide an opportunity for Q&A in the face to face session of Block 6 was valued. After Block 2 some participants requested this and the feedback has confirmed it was a positive change. People felt that the quality of questions and answers was better in the room and that it was easier to ensure the questions they wanted answering were asked.

Some participants reflected that they did not enjoy the Zoom sessions. They thought that they were harder to facilitate well, that the 20 minute breakout discussions felt too short and that they struggled more to get their views across. Although they were easier to attend, some struggled with the technology. For example, one person mentioned in the final interview that she could not see everyone in her room. While this is technologically possible, she may not have mentioned it to the team as she did not realise, so she may not have had the best experience possible.

“The small groups [on Zoom] maybe was 20 minutes that actually didn’t give you a lot of time to talk and even when you did because it was a bit too formal... I found it quite hard to express what I needed to say and I was trying to choose my words perhaps too carefully instead of just saying what I thought, like I might do if I was with people [in person].” (Panel member)

In the interviews at the F2F events, a few panel members mentioned that is a long week, with two online events immediately followed by a full day F2F event on top of their normal commitments. Some might prefer the sessions to be spread over a longer period of time or compressed into a full weekend face to face, as most thought face to face sessions were more productive. One person suggested the whole Panel could have been run as a one-week residential although this may not have suited others. The temperature in the venue may have contributed to participant fatigue; it was very hot in summer and cold in winter with some people wearing coats in the venue at times.

“I feel the [presentations] that are in person were typically a lot better and also there’s some that were later on felt better, but then there was some early on or just in the online ones that were a bit could go a bit on.” (Panel member)

5.2 Information provided is balanced / presents different viewpoints

Across the waves, the panel members have had different views on whether materials have been balanced. Overall, as seen in Figure 3, the later blocks, which had more open agendas, performed well. The least well performing Block from the participant perspective was Block 4, where some panel members had concerns about the focus on heat pumps to the exclusion of other technologies which could be used in the home such as solar panels or hydrogen. However, even in Block 4, the majority of participants (22/33) were comfortable that the information they received was balanced. By the end of the final block, some participants were still unsure why they had spent time on some topics and not others – for example, the idea of car clubs was very unpopular and they were not clear how much it would contribute to overall emissions.

“It was a good breadth of stuff that was like it was nice to have some that weren’t as considered as much, but then it was some felt a bit odd, whereas like I felt there was like a massive emphasis on the carpooling compared to other stuff.” (Panel member)

As noted above, the fact that the Reference Group is mostly made up of people with expertise in energy systems, rather than each of the composite sectors (for example, the food sector) and the absence of organisations / individuals who are less bought into the need for emissions reductions makes it difficult to assess whether there were voices that were missing. However, overall a stakeholder survey confirmed that none of the people involved have any concerns (6/8 agreed information has been fair and balanced and none disagreed), and the only voice they thought might be missing is that of an organisation such as Citizens Advice to bring a 'people focussed' perspective. With this in mind, none of the stakeholders strongly agreed that "The choice of speakers has exposed the panel to sufficiently diverse viewpoints", although equally none disagreed, perhaps reflecting the team's ambition to always strive to do even more.

In Block 2, there were some practical issues including some panel members struggling to see and hear presentations. The team addressed these concerns in later Blocks, ensuring larger font sizes and better use of microphones. Equally, in Block 6 one of the stakeholders commented that they felt speakers were well briefed *"Very good briefing for the expert speaker, including on how the online session will be run"* and all stakeholders who completed the survey agreed that they were clear on their role, understood where they fit in the process and had opportunities to ask questions about the process. Modellers reflected that they appreciated the support and advice from the delivery team.

In the interviews, panel members were broadly happy with the information provided, and mentioned that they would like the opportunity to hear from speakers like the farmer who took part in Block 2 who could give different types of insight. Similarly, one panel member suggested it would be interesting to have a politician at one of the future panel sessions. This did not happen, as the final Block included fewer speakers to allow time for participants to develop their principles/recommendations based on everything they had learned.

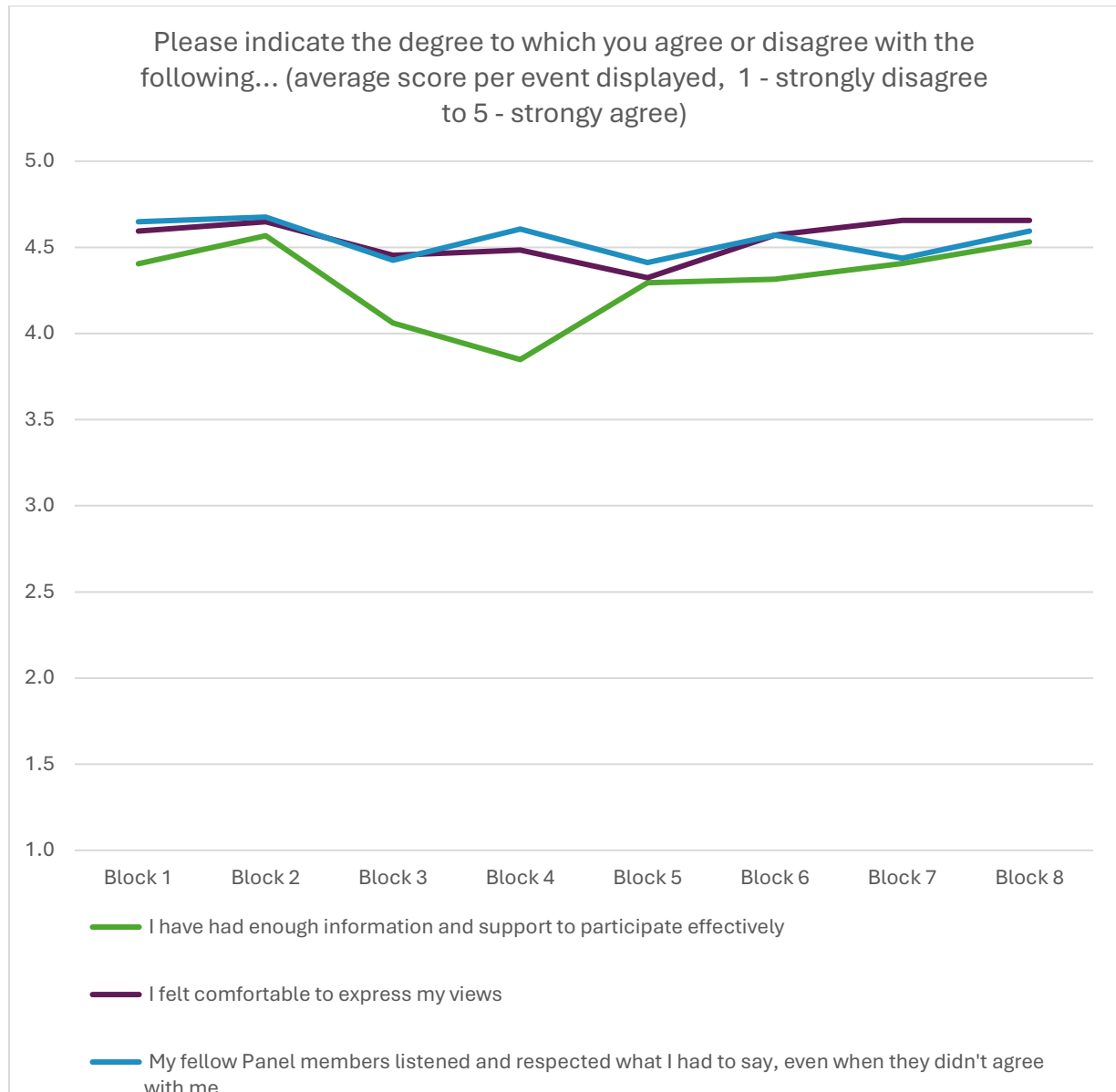
5.3 Panel members all feel that they have a voice / are heard

As shown in Figure 10, panel members mostly agreed that they have been comfortable to express their views and felt respected by other panel members, especially in the final Blocks. This was also apparent in the observations where it appeared there were less issues with some voices dominating than there had been in Block 2, although occasionally it still occurred. During an interview, one participant reflected that they had been learning over the duration of the Panel and while in early Blocks they would enthusiastically always try to answer first, they were now allowing space for others to contribute and then adding in their reflections. In the interviews, Panel members said they felt people were comfortable to disagree with each other and valued this. Concerns from the earlier Blocks that not all views were being listened to and recorded equally did not arise in the Block 6 and Block 8 feedback, perhaps because the activities were not designed to shortlist or generalise in the same way.

Feedback about not feeling heard that was present in Block 2 did not appear in Block 6 or 8. This may be due to the work the team has done to provide additional opportunities for feedback. For example, they offered an optional session about population change (attended by 8 panel members) which was less relevant to developing the PLEF model but which was an issue a small number of participants really wanted to explore. At the end of the optional session they developed a recommendation on population which was voted on by the Panel, who were broadly supportive, and the research team made and published a set of commitments in relation to the recommendation. However, a small minority remained frustrated because they were not sure of the value of informing a model which they believed to be based on flawed assumptions (e.g. about population).

The evaluator observed that side conversations were often an issue, and some of the facilitators did not always maintain control of the whole group. This was particularly apparent when participants who had difficulties contributing were invited to comment (see 5.3.1).

Figure 10: Ability to participate



5.3.1 Facilitation for inclusion

The team worked hard to create an inclusive environment, and this improved over time as they became more familiar with the different needs of the Panel members.

One participant had high support needs: they needed support to see information on flipcharts and post-its, to move easily around the posters set up around the room and to contribute in writing and verbally. The evaluator observed that sometimes side conversations occurred when the table facilitator needed to focus on accessibility needs. On one occasion the lead facilitator stepped in to remind the other members at the table to speak one at a time which was helpful. This participant was supported by a family member who enabled their participation, but their role in the discussions was not always clearly defined. There was also a non-native English speaker who struggled to contribute.

Some of the facilitation team wondered whether more could and should have been done to support these participants, such as providing them with a personal assistant (like a teachers' assistant in a classroom setting) whose role would have been to amplify their voices and fully capture their views in written and voting activities. They suggested this could also have been useful for people who were

struggling to read or understand charts and tables, or to assimilate the information being shared. This is not standard practice in the sector, and would increase project costs, but might be an interesting idea to explore in future projects.

One member was supported by attending with their support dog. The participant was very grateful to the organisers for letting them bring the dog, as otherwise they would not have had the confidence to attend. However, on occasions the dog would cause a distraction for members suggesting a need for additional consideration around how to accommodate support dogs while consistently ensuring a productive and supportive space for all.

“it's just, it's amazing because of all my disabilities, I've had my dog with me at each session and they've just been brilliant... I think I was okay because [my dog] was there and I knew that if I needed to leave the room for whatever reason I could do. But having [my dog] there meant I didn't need to as much.”
(Panel member)

On balance, the individuals involved were happy to have been invited and included. While it may have been possible to do more with more resources the individuals appreciated the opportunity to take part and felt that their voices were heard.

5.4 Adaptability of team in response to feedback

Throughout the Block, the team welcomed feedback and responded to it. For example, suggestions to make changes to the slides to simplify them were accommodated and on the day any observations from the evaluator were quickly addressed. Having both the lead facilitator and project lead on hand to support the tables was valuable for keeping everything on track and trouble-shooting. Some feedback has been harder to address such as the difficulty people have reading charts, but the team tried to make it clear that they do not feel that understanding the details of charts, as opposed to the general trends they show, is necessary for people to fully participate. Similarly, requests from some members for materials in advance were not met which the team decided as not all participants would access them, and this would lead to information inequalities, but participants received workbooks where they can see the slides and write notes. Materials were provided in advance to participants who requested this for access reasons.

5.5 Panel members remain engaged across Panel duration

As noted above, the team expected attrition and did some top-up recruitment before Block 5, as well as offering people the opportunity to exit if they wanted to. This top-up brought the average attendees from c.33 to c.38 but not back up to 40 and by Block 6 the average fell to 34 which was then maintained for the final blocks. There were drop-outs from both original and ‘new’ panel members. The team increased the incentives for the final two Blocks to reduce further attrition.

Before Block 5, the team followed up with departing participants to understand their reasons for leaving, and where they were able to make contact they were largely reassured that often it was a case of changes in circumstances making it difficult to participate, such as moving out of the area. Only one person said they were choosing not to return because they were not confident that their voice was being heard (this person was ‘fairly concerned’ about climate change).

A few of the participants interviewed during the final Block reflected it might have been better if the panel was more condensed rather than requiring a 2 year commitment. Benefits would also have included lower cognitive load getting up to speed each Block if they were closer together, and also ensuring feedback to policymakers was more timely as they noted that over the course of two years, energy policy changed significantly.

As noted above, this is a qualitative sample so each individual decision significantly changes the statistics. With this in mind, people who were less concerned about climate change appear to be over-

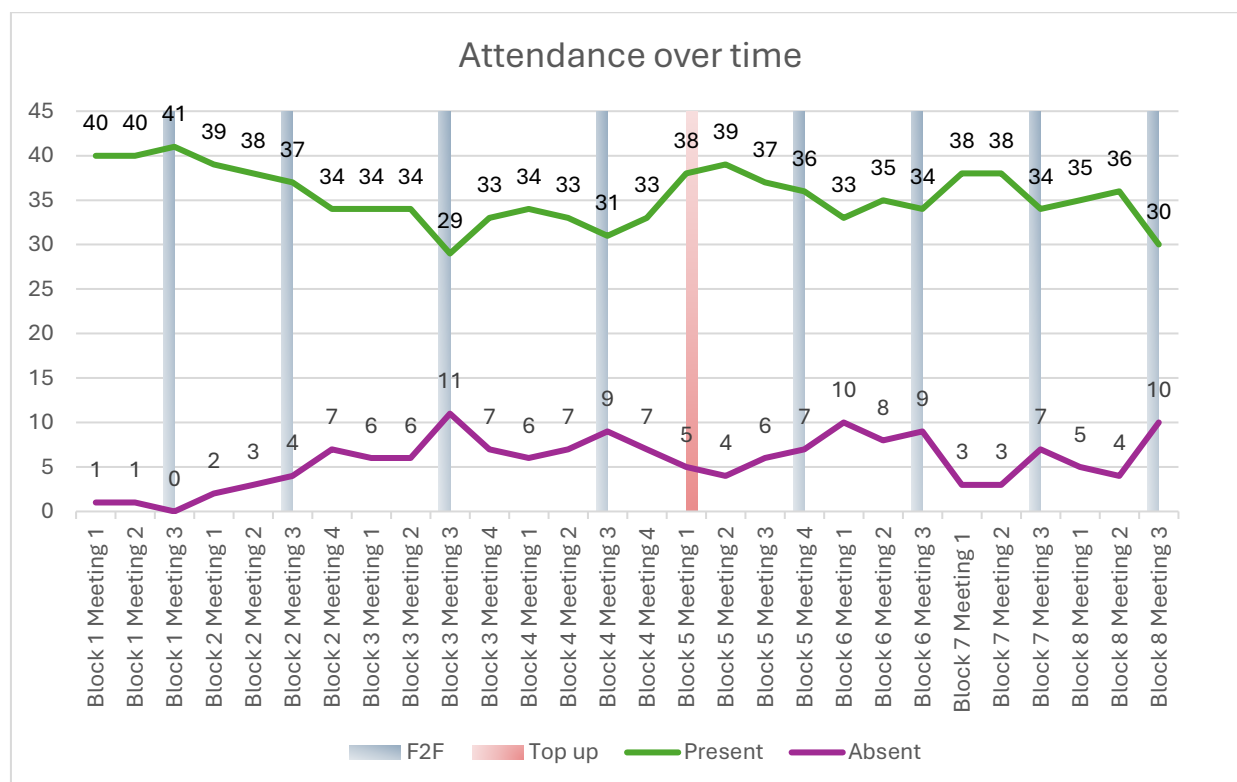
represented amongst the drop-outs. Whereas over half of the original Panellists were 'very concerned' only 3/8 (c.38% but a very small base) of the drop-outs before the final Block were 'very concerned'. Equally, while only 12% of the original Panellists were not at all or not very concerned, 3/8 (c.38%) of drop-outs fell into this category. Two fairly concerned people dropped out: one who said they did not feel their voice was being heard, and the other said they got too busy. Similarly, nearly all the drop-outs (6/8) were in the youngest age group (18-29 years old).

The final session of Block 8 had 30 participants. The ten people who did not attend were more in line with the characteristics of the panel members overall than the earlier drop outs; 6 men, 4 women, spread across the age brackets, 6 very climate concerned and only 1 not very concerned.

Differential attrition is perhaps unsurprising, give that people less concerned about climate may feel that the topic is less interesting, and also are likely to feel like they are expressing a minority view which is not widely shared. For future panels it might be worth considering over-recruiting for these viewpoints from the start, noting that this would have been difficult given that the Sortition responses from people not concerned about climate were limited.

This differential attrition on attitudes would be important for any qualitative research, but is potentially even more important for the panel given that the modellers were using the data (including quantitative survey data) to inform their modelling process. When analysing outputs from the panel it was not clear that they were considering how likely any statistics derived would be to be reflective of the general population, given the elevated levels of climate concern among panel members to start with. As noted below, participants also noted that their attitudes shifted over time, as can happen in any in-depth deliberative process, and they were better informed than the general public and became more supportive of energy demand reduction as the Panel progressed. Some more sceptical voices remained, but they were a small minority which would not have been fully reflected in voting unless it was weighted.

Figure 11: Attendance over time



5.6 Other reflections

5.6.1 Role of table leads & observers

The table leads / facilitation team were deliberately chosen as people with existing knowledge of the field, rather than for their prior facilitation experience. While they were not expected to contribute their knowledge to the discussions, the intention was *“[Having that understanding meant] they had a much better idea of what topics or avenues of thought were dead-ends, irrelevant or wouldn’t contribute meaningfully to outputs, enabling them to keep the discussion focussed on the things that mattered to the outcomes, even if they were not what mattered most to some participants.” (Team member).*

This decision was made in response to previous processes where they felt that experienced facilitators had prioritised listening to what interested participants, but without sufficient regard to the needs of the project. According to the team, this same issue occurred once during the panel, when a stand-in facilitator who was brought in to cover an absence in the core team; again, they facilitated good discussions but the outputs were not helpful to informing the modelling. However, they also reflected that another four substitutes were able to facilitate the sessions effectively.

In the later Blocks, face to face session the team were functioning well. The room was set up and de-rigged quickly and efficiently with everyone clear on their roles. Facilitators appeared much more at ease with the tasks and with bringing in speakers for their input when helpful. Although some speakers sometimes spent longer on tables than was strictly necessary, the participants were clearly enjoying learning from their expertise and occasionally the lead facilitator stepped in to ensure conversations stayed on track.

If doing a project like this again it would be interesting to think about how best to support the facilitation team. Some joined the project with very limited experience of facilitation, especially in a deliberative setting. Training was provided, but on balance the team reflected that more additional advice and support earlier on to facilitate sessions effectively might have been valuable along with more

reflection sessions specifically focussed on facilitation skills throughout the process. That is not to say it was the wrong decision to bring in this facilitation team – they each individually got a lot out of the sessions and will bring that learning into their future work.

The participants appreciated the work that the facilitators were doing to work with the group and keep conversations on track. There was a tension because sometimes the topics put forward for discussion were not the ones that participants wanted to talk about or focus on. People responded to this in different ways, and may not have realised that in addition to the flipcharts the team were also analysing the full transcripts of every discussion.

5.6.2 Venue choice

The venue for the first Block was not ideal and detracted from the focus of the day. In contrast, the venue for all subsequent Blocks was perceived to be much better. This second venue continued to get too hot (or too cold) at times, and some people would have preferred different food options, but overall it worked well and participants were happy with it. Keeping a consistent venue made it easier for people to attend as they knew their way around and how best to get there after Block 2. Nobody suggested moving to another venue despite some discomforts.

6 Impact

Underpinning the ambition for impact was the need for the people involved to be bought in to the Panel approach, and confident in the outputs. An interim stakeholder survey suggested that the team had confidence in the methodology, and a group discussion with the modellers after the final Block confirmed that they were confident using the outputs from the Panel to build new scenarios and thought this had value.

6.1 Outputs successfully inform the modelling, leading to a new/improved scenario

In the stakeholder survey, three people agreed strongly that “This process is having a discernible impact on the PLEF model”, one agreed and none disagreed (three said they did not know, which is not surprising as not all the stakeholders work closely with the modellers). In the reflexive session, the team were positive overall: *“It clearly is meeting the objective. We are developing new scenarios.”*

In the stakeholder survey, everyone who expressed a viewpoint agreed that “The panel outputs are meaningful and clear” although none of the participants strongly agreed. There is no further information to explain this finding. In the debrief to the Reference Group the participants were cautiously supportive, although highlighted some concerns with the assumptions embedded within the UK TIMES model that was being used to inform the discussions, specifically on assumptions made about industry decarbonisation which the panel have not discussed and about the model’s use of capital expenditure only rather than considering ongoing running costs for different scenarios. While the team did not put much emphasis on financial considerations in their reporting, and detailed financial costings were not provided in information to the panel or discussed by them, the broad issue of costs, who would bear them, and at what point (e.g. upfront vs running costs) was frequently raised in information provision and panel discussions. Detailed discussion on the costs of different policy options and their distribution was not possible in a ‘broad brush’ panel such as this one, but would be a suitable subject for future deliberation.

As a result of the panel, the modellers have developed a new ‘Citizens’ Panel’ scenario reflecting the public voice. They feel that the public input gives the model additional credibility and are pleased about the input they received. Some also reflected on the value of spending time with the public, to hear different perspectives and bring to life different outlooks which they might not have otherwise understood. Being present in the sessions was helpful for the Panel but also had value to the modellers themselves.

6.2 Panellists clear how their input has influenced modelling

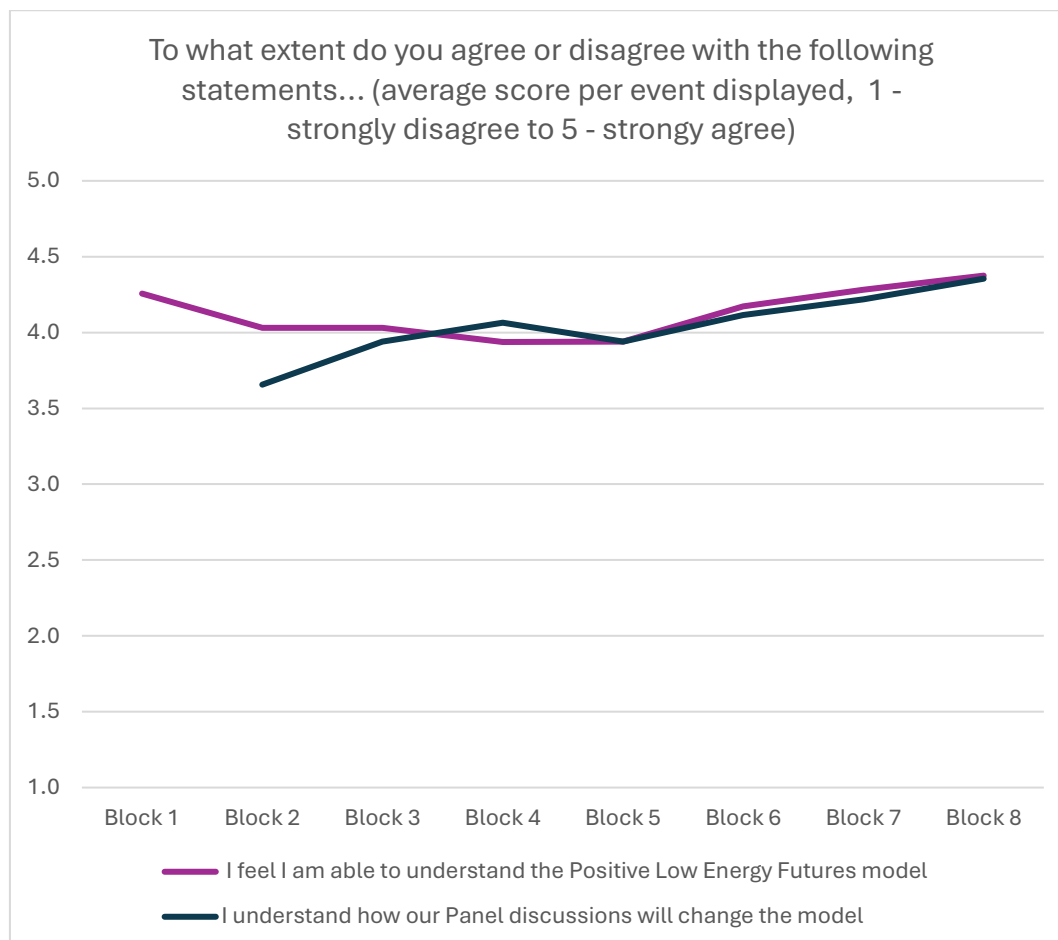
The evaluator had expected that, by the end of the Panel, participants would have a broad understanding of how their input was influencing the modelling. However, despite the team providing feedback in most Blocks, in the final interviews some participants could not really explain the PLEF model or how their feedback was being used, other than to say that the recommendations were being shared with senior policy-makers. Nonetheless, participant confidence in understanding their role and the model increased over time (see Figure 12), after falling during the topic specific Blocks and after the Panel refresh (Block 5).

“Speaking with other people, I know others didn’t really understand what a model is...felt like they were creating laws / rules / taxes – not a mathematical simulation of what could happen” (Panel member)

“Now that I did struggle with a bit. Yeah. I can’t even remember it. Yeah. I did struggle with understand the model.” (Panel member)

When observing the Block 6 and Block 8 face to face sessions it was clear that Panel members were able to contribute to the discussions and to give their considered thoughts relating to the overall question for the Block, despite not being clear how exactly this would inform the model. The sessions where feedback was provided on the impact of Panel discussion were appreciated, but some Panel members found the amount of information provided overwhelming and would have valued a more simplified output.

Figure 12: Overall sentiment



6.3 Modelling is valued more (e.g. by CCC) as a result of the additional input

The team note that as a result of prior engagement with some of the delivery team, the CCC commissioned its own deliberative panel (in partnership with Sciencewise) in 2024 and dedicated a section of its [report on the Seventh carbon budget](#) to views of its citizens panel, suggesting the CCC recognises the importance of engaging the public in this way and considering feedback. Similarly, the results of Block 6 were shared with DESNZ as a contribution to their Independent Review of Greenhouse Gas Removals. Briefings on the panel are being organised with DESNZ and the CCC.

6.4 Routes to impact identified (including harnessing panel members & keep them informed)

There were early indications that the discussions and information provision in Block 2 led some panel members to consider their eating habits and how they might make changes to their diets to increase sustainability. Similarly, after Block 6 participants said that participating was making them more aware of the different actions they could take and a couple of panel members had started ride-sharing to the face to face Panel sessions.

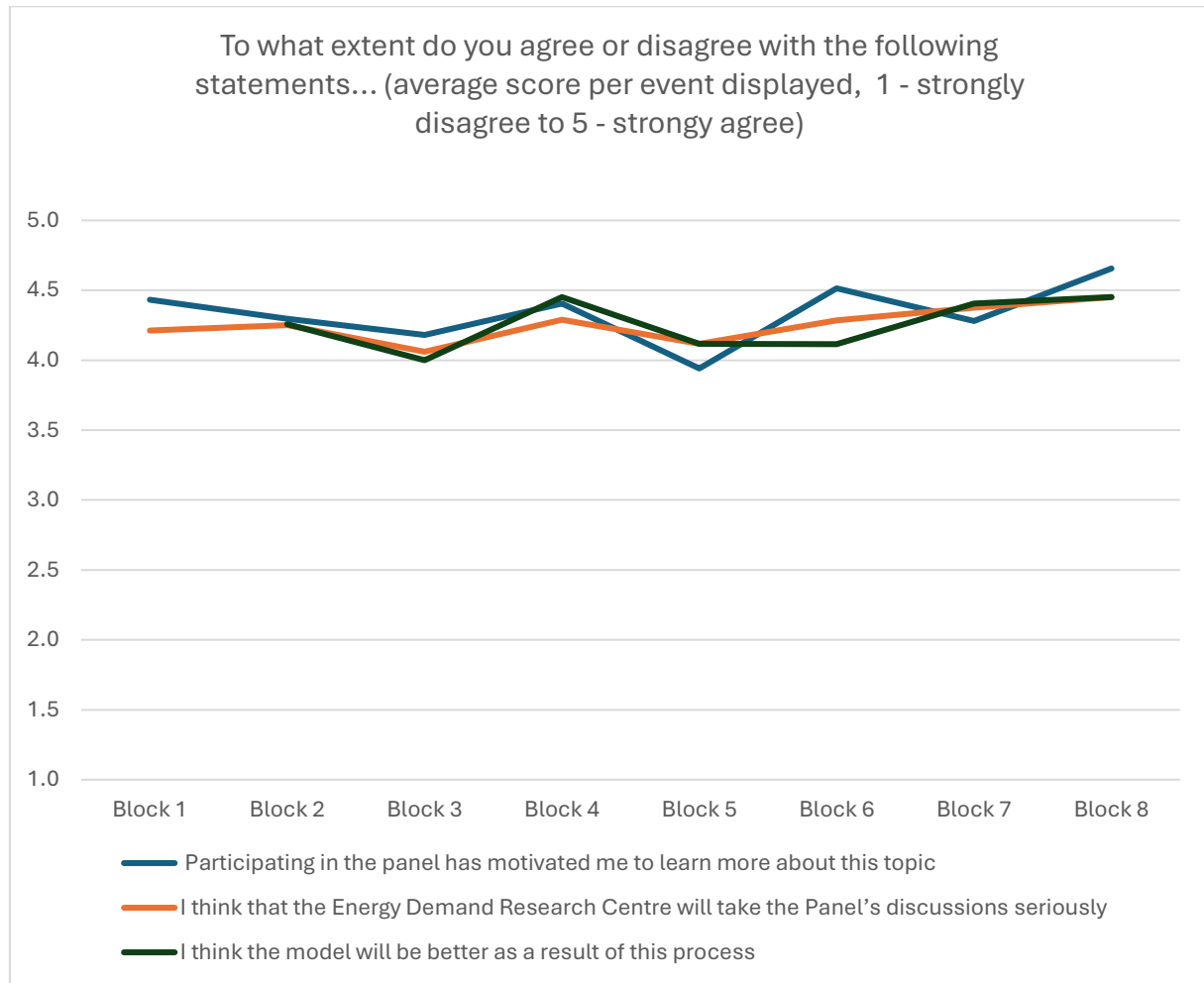
By the end of Block 8, some participants credited the Panel as giving them encouragement to make bigger changes, including buying an electric vehicle and installing a heat pump and solar panels. Some may have done so anyway, but others commented that it was because they had learned about the technology in the sessions that they had made the change and were now encouraging friends and family to do so. Some described taking the information they had learned back to their friends and family. Some also read more about the topic between sessions, inspired by what they were learning.

"I'm interested in climate anyway. I have a more active interest now and can see on a bigger scale how the decisions I make on recycle or reduce [will impact]... I speak to family who are more sceptical - who don't expose themselves but will talk to me." (Panel member)

"I go regularly to Isle of Man – since this panel I've stopped getting the plane – 90% of the time I now travel by ferry. Every little helps." (Panel member)

Participant perceptions of the impact increased over time (see Figure 13), including motivating participants to learn more about the topic, believing the EDRC would take discussions seriously and thinking the model would be better as a result.

Figure 13: Impacts of the Panel



The team have agreement to keep Panel member's details on record and hope to be able to invite them to opportunities to act as ambassadors for the work if additional funding can be identified. They are also committed to continuing to provide feedback to Panel members so they can see what happens as a result of their contributions.

6.5 Panel member privacy protected as agreed

The evaluator is not aware of any issues relating to panel member privacy or consent. The team are using mobile phones to record discussions and the agreed protocol is to upload these immediately to a secure One Drive folder and to remove them from the phone as soon as possible after the meeting. Recordings are then transcribed and anonymised by a professional transcriber operating under a confidentiality agreement. This is in line with Lancaster University guidelines and approval from the Faculty of Science and Technology Ethics Committee. The evaluator did not check with individual facilitators to see if this protocol is being followed. Individuals' contributions on recordings will be identifiable as voices are considered unique, but the recording will only have first names and the discussions are not focussed on sensitive topics.

7 Conclusions

Overall the Panel was a success. Participants enjoyed it and felt listened to and the modellers got insights they were able to use to refine the PLEF model as they hoped. The team worked hard to iterate and improve over the course of the Panel and learned along the way. Based on the feedback received, the evaluator believes the following are the key lessons to take forward:

- A qualitative Panel can inform modelling. Overall the team felt that the work had value and the Panel findings improved the final model being developed. More information is available about this in a separate paper.
- It is possible to run a panel with sustained participation over an extended duration. While Panellists would potentially have preferred sessions closer together to help with recall, overall the participation rates remained relatively high, reflecting the well-organised, supportive atmosphere of the sessions. At the start this was a concern of the team, and due to their hard work and ensuring the sessions remained enjoyable and engaging, attrition was relatively low. The work they did to onboard new members before Block 5 was appreciated and meant that the 'new' people quickly fitted in.
- Developing inclusive practice is important and challenging. For many different reasons, some participants were able to contribute more than others and it is always valuable to stop and reflect what else can be done to help ensure everyone contributes on an equal footing. The team worked hard to ensure that people with different needs were included and able to contribute. Solutions such as having a quiet table outside the main room for people who struggled with the busy environment, and accommodating reasonable adaptations such as having a carer and support dog present were valued.
- Facilitation is challenging. The facilitation team worked hard and received positive feedback from participants overall. However, many of the team were inexperienced and some had no experience of facilitating deliberative engagement before joining the Panel. Over time the design team developed less complex activities and the facilitation team became more confident. However, even in the final Block, there were some issues with participant management and timekeeping that might have been less likely with a more experienced team. This did not undermine the quality of the outputs significantly, but potentially meant that some opportunities to get richer insights may have been missed.

The Panel was established to enable public input into the Positive Low Energy Futures model, and achieved this aim. They also created strong bonds between people from different walks of life, learned and had fun along the way. For some Panel members, taking part has had a significant impact; from personal efforts to reduce their energy demand to finding the confidence to participate. Many have volunteered to stay in touch with the team, reflecting the positive experience that they had, and twenty have signed up to be ambassadors for the Panel.

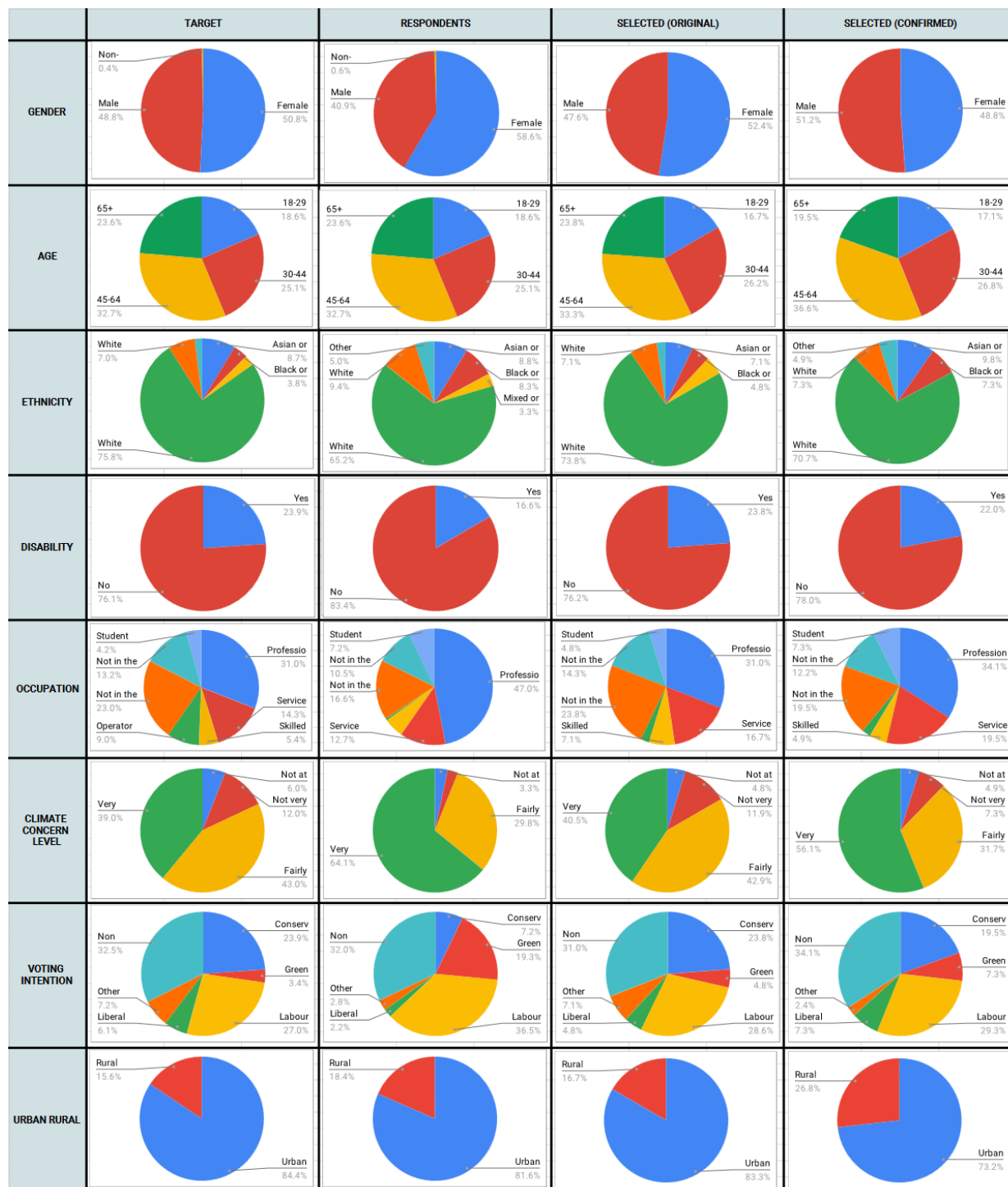
Appendix 1: Evaluation Framework

- Design
 - Clear, well-defined (and balanced) question / scope / framing
 - Appropriate stakeholders involved
 - Consideration of inclusion & representation in design / recruitment
 - Blocks of sessions lead to outputs that can be 'translated' into model inputs
- Delivery
 - Time and space to deliberate / learn
 - Information provided is balanced / presents different viewpoints
 - Panel members all feel that they have a voice / are heard
 - Adaptability of team in response to feedback
 - Panel members remain engaged across Panel duration
- Impact
 - Outputs successfully inform the modelling, leading to a new/improved scenario
 - Panellists clear how their input has influenced modelling
 - Modelling is valued more (e.g. by CCC) as a result of the additional input
 - Routes to impact identified (including harnessing panel members & keeping them informed)
 - Panel member privacy protected as agreed

Appendix 2 – recruitment data

Participants recruited to Block 1

Target = quotas set based on population, Respondents = responses received to mailout, Selected (Original) = participants selected by the Sortition lottery, Selected (Confirmed) = final confirmed panel members.



Participants at Block 5

After Block 4, Involve undertook a top-up recruit. The charts repeats the target demographics and shows who was recruited to Block 5.

