



ACCESS Annual Assembly 2024: Event Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary

ACCESS aims to increase the visibility, impact and use of the social sciences to address environmental problems, helping to drive transformative change towards just and sustainable societies. One of the ways that we champion environmental social science is by building a collaborative knowledge ecosystem, providing opportunities for diverse individuals and organisations to build trusting relationships, learn from each other and work together to inform policy and practice.

The Annual Assembly is a key event in the ACCESS calendar. It has three primary aims: to encourage new thinking about the contribution of the social sciences to tackle environmental problems; to increase connections and network building across boundaries (e.g. career stage, discipline, sector); and to embed the ACCESS Guiding Principles, in terms of ensuring the event integrates Knowledge Co-Production, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Environmental Sustainability.

This report evaluates the 2024 ACCESS Annual Assembly, which was attended by 87 people. It draws on data collected from Assembly attendees using surveys distributed both beforehand and afterwards. Findings indicate that the event was predominantly successful in addressing its aims, but with clear room for improvement in some key areas.

Attendees enjoyed the event, remarking on its positive atmosphere. They complemented the design of the programme which included a mix of topics and session types (e.g. short keynotes, panel discussions, break outs, posters, outdoor activities). It is clear that these two elements – creating a positive atmosphere and structuring diverse opportunities for learning and connection – are crucial to the success of the event, as illustrated by these quotes from attendees:

“It's been brilliant. I've really valued meeting such a variety of people from different disciplines and with different experiences and perspectives. It's been incredibly valuable.”

“Varied and interactive format was excellent - fantastic to get outside for the walk alongs and look at posters and videos during the showcase, as well as time to chat and make new connections.”

Areas for improvement include increasing the diversity of participants in terms of career stage, ethnicity, and geography; enhancing the online experience of the event, for example by providing opportunities for virtual interaction; and refining the evaluation methodology, for example how we capture connections and network building. These findings will inform planning of future Annual Assemblies as well as other ACCESS events (e.g. Leadership College Retreats and Summer Schools).

Introduction

ACCESS aims to increase the visibility, impact and use of the social sciences to address environmental problems, helping to drive transformative change towards just and sustainable societies. One of the ways that we champion environmental social science is by building a collaborative knowledge ecosystem, providing opportunities for individuals from different disciplines, projects, organisations, and sectors to build trusting relationships and work together to inform policy and practice. By improving connections between environmental social scientists and other experts across a fragmented research and practice landscape, we also aim to encourage new thinking about the contributions social scientists can make to drive transformative change towards just and sustainable societies (Devine-Wright et al., 2022; Gatersleben et al., 2024).

This report evaluates the 2024 ACCESS Annual Assembly, which took place at the University of Exeter. The programme for the event was carefully designed to have a mix of session types, long breaks for connection and network building, and a diverse range of attendees (see Appendix A). An illustration of the diversity of sessions and topics at the event was captured by our visual minute taker, Temujen Gunawardena (Figure 1). The Assembly is a relatively small-scale event, with less than 100 people attending and an emphasis on face-to-face interaction, even if virtual attendance is enabled for reasons of inclusivity and sustainability. It is an invite-only event, rather than open or public-facing, with participants drawn from across our professional networks including academia, funding bodies and government organisations.



Figure 1. Visual Minutes from ACCESS Annual Assembly 2024.

Evaluation and reflexivity – using different types of evidence to reflect on what worked well and not so well - is integral to the ACCESS approach across all facets of our work programme, aiming to inform planning for future events, and share this knowledge across our networks. Evaluations of the 2022 and 2023 Assemblies indicated that these events provide space for new perspectives, critical reflection, and the development of new collaborative relationships, arising from event programmes and organisation

that support interactions across boundaries of career stage, discipline and sector. Feedback indicates that attendees especially value opportunities for face-to-face engagement, interactive sessions, informal networking, and diverse session speakers/facilitators (Devine-Wright, Golding, & Lefort, 2023; Golding, 2023).

As with all ACCESS activities, we work to embed our Guiding Principles of Environmental Sustainability, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, and Knowledge Co-production (Barr et al., 2023) into Assembly planning, delivery and evaluation. Critical to this is sensitivity to potential synergies as well as trade-offs and tensions between these principles, which are typically viewed separately in academic projects or initiatives.

To inform evaluation of the Assembly, we collected data from attendees before the event and afterwards. We report findings across three core areas. First, to assess diversity and inclusivity at the event, we analyse the characteristics of people attending, as well as their experiences of the event. Second, to assess how well we stimulated new thinking, we investigate their perceptions of the programme and experience of the event. Finally, to assess how well the event helped to build connections across a fragmented research and practice landscape, we assess network building using ideas from social capital and social network theory. A social network can be understood as the structures and relationships that facilitate the generation and movement of value between network members. For ACCESS, value includes: the exchange of information, knowledge and know-how; developing new understandings and perspectives; connections and access to organisations, power, funding and resources; alongside other forms of value. The degree of value exchange can be explored by asking about the type of connections between people (informed by theories of social capital) and the degree of connectedness between network members, identify central or peripheral actors, and examine how value is distributed in a network. Both aspects are captured in this report.

Methodology

We utilised three sources of data to evaluate the Assembly, collected using four surveys delivered either before or after the event. These surveys, and their respondents, are described in turn below.

Equal opportunities monitoring survey

To assess the diversity of attendees at the Assembly, we invited participants to complete an optional Equal Opportunities Monitoring (EOM) survey during the pre-event registration process. The EOM survey was hosted on Qualtrics and was not linked to registrants' names or other identifiable information; all responses given were anonymous. Questions asked about both professional and personal characteristics (e.g., sector of work, career stage, age, gender, ethnicity etc.; see Appendix B). 37 people completed the EOM survey, of 102 registrations received (response rate = 36%). Twenty-eight responses came from people who intended to attend some or all the sessions in-person, with 9 responses from people who intended to only join online.

Post-event feedback survey

To enable us to evaluate perceptions of the organization and running of the event, we conducted a post-event evaluation survey to assess:

1. Attendees' views about what elements of the event were successful and where ACCESS could make improvements for future Assemblies
2. Attendees' views about the event in relation to the Guiding Principles and suggestions for future actions.

This survey was also anonymous, and hosted online using Qualtrics. We asked seven open-ended questions about what attendees felt worked well at the Assembly and where they felt there was room for improvement at future Assemblies – both in general terms and in relation to the Guiding Principles (see Appendix C).

Social network evaluation surveys

To investigate how well the Assembly enabled participants to connect with others, two Social Network Evaluation (SNE) surveys were distributed – one pre-Assembly, and one post-Assembly (see Appendix D). The pre-and post-Assembly SNE surveys were hosted on Qualtrics, with participants invited to complete the pre-Assembly SNE survey in advance of the event, and the post-Assembly SNE survey at the end of the Annual Assembly. A QR code was also distributed for both surveys at the beginning and the end of the Assembly.

The SNE surveys were structured in three sections. The first two sections built on literature on Social Capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 2000). These covered perceptions of network characteristics (Shared Understanding, Trust, and Reciprocity) and connections with other Annual Assembly Attendees (Bonding, Bridging and Linking Social Capital). We also asked about previous attendance at Annual Assemblies, perceptions of environmental social science skills (informed by our Theory of Change), and feedback on the survey itself. Unlike the other evaluation surveys that we used, the SNE surveys required respondents to name themselves and to identify which other named individuals that they had connected with. They were, therefore, not anonymous. The third and final section of the SNE surveys drew on the ACCESS Theory of Change, and measured agreement with three impact statements relevant to the Assembly concerning people's ability to champion environmental social science, to work in interdisciplinary contexts and to collaborate across sectors. Responses to these three statements used a 5-point Likert type scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', along with an 'I don't know' option.

The SNE surveys built on the Social Capital Evaluation surveys conducted at previous Annual Assemblies (Devine-Wright, Golding, & Lefort, 2023; Lefort, 2023; Romankevich et al., 2023), and enabled us to compare 2024 results with those from previous years. For comparability, we kept the descriptions of these characteristics similar to the social capital evaluation surveys conducted at previous Annual Assemblies in 2022 and 2023 (Devine-Wright, Golding, & Lefort, 2023; Lefort, 2023; Romankevich et al., 2023), but we did make three changes to how the survey questions were presented:

1. The descriptions of the network characteristics were more focused on individual perceptions of the characteristics. For example, in previous surveys, ‘Shared Understanding’ was stated as ‘Agreement on the purpose of the partnership’. For 2024 this was changed to: ‘*I feel that my understanding of the purpose of ACCESS network matches that of other network members*’, with the answer responses changed accordingly.
2. In previous surveys, the answer responses were on a scale of 1-10, with 1 labelled as *lowest* and 10 labelled as *highest*. This was changed to a 5-point scale for 2024, with 1 labelled as *strongly disagree* and 5 labelled as *strongly agree*. We also added an option of indicating *I don’t know*. This is consistent with the updated SNE surveys used across other ACCESS activities, including the Policy & Practice Working Group and the Leadership College.
3. In previous surveys, reciprocity was defined as ‘*The ability to give and receive value from the partnership*’. For the 2024 surveys, the question on reciprocity was divided into two questions, to separately explore the ability to give, and the ability to receive, value from the ACCESS network.

47 people completed the pre-event survey (response rate of 54%), and 24 people the post-event survey (response rate of 28%; see Table 1). Of those who completed the pre-Assembly SNE survey, 13 had attended Annual Assemblies in both 2022 and 2023, 10 had attended one previous Assembly, and 24 had not attended a previous Assembly. Out of the 87 people who attended the Annual Assembly 2024, there were 49 unique responses across both surveys (56% of all attendees). For both the pre- and post-Assembly SNE surveys, there was a large drop-off in the completion of the survey from the beginning to the end.

Table 1: Summary of completion rates for Social Network Evaluation (SNE) survey, including completion rates for Social Network Analysis (SNA) section of this survey.

	Total responses – all (n) *	Response rate – all (%) **	Total responses – completed (n)	Response rate – completed (%) **	Total responses - Pre- & Post-SNA section (n)	Response rate - Pre- & Post-SNA section (%)
Pre- Assembly SNE	47	54%	23	26%	13	15%
Post-Assembly SNE	24	28%	22	25%	13	15%

* Includes fully and partially completed responses

** As percentage of all Assembly Attendees (which was 87 people)

The percentage of those completing the Social Network Analysis (SNA) section of the survey was lower than the total responses in the previous two Annual Assemblies despite the design of the SNA elements being very similar¹. This could be due to insufficient time being provided during the Annual Assembly for survey completion, survey design or ‘survey fatigue’. Of the post-Assembly SNE survey respondents, 20 attended in person, 2 joined online and 1 joined both in person and online, and for 1 it was not possible to identify them.

¹ In 2023, both Social Capital Evaluation surveys were completed by 34 participants (compared to a total response of n = 38 in 2022).

Limitations of social network evaluation

Low response rates

The SNE surveys in 2024 had a low response rate, relative to the number of Assembly attendees. This means that interpretation of quantitative analyses, whether to assess change between pre- and post-event perceptions, or comparing data with previous years, should be interpreted with caution.

Varied responses to survey questions

Although the SNE surveys drew on similarly phrased questions to social capital evaluation surveys conducted in previous years, how connections were defined seems to have been interpreted differently by different respondents in 2024². Some respondents selected all the Assembly attendees as connections, whilst others selected only those with whom they had a specific connection. Given the number of potential connections that some respondents had, selecting a few connections from a list could represent expediency – i.e. perhaps choosing just the more significant connections. This could indicate the need for specificity in future surveys for how connections are defined (although it should be noted that how respondents define and identify potential connections does come with some subjectivity and can vary both within and between respondents). Two reflections about the survey itself were offered from respondents completing the pre-Assembly SNE survey. Some mentioned that it was hard to score other attendees (connections) if they did not know them, if they were unsure about whether to consider someone as a personal or organisational connection, or were unsure about how to define the strength of connection (e.g. a brief chat or worked together).

'Internal' only sample

Finally, the pre-Assembly SNE survey indicates how the network is already functioning but only uses a sample of people who are in the ACCESS network, i.e., those who came to (or intended to come to) the Annual Assembly. The Assembly SNE surveys do not point to how the network is (or is not) functioning more widely. These comments will be considered alongside feedback from other recent social network/social capital surveys across other ACCESS activities, which can give a more holistic overview of how ACCESS activities might be contributing to network formation and strengthening.

Findings (1): Diversity and inclusion amongst attendees

The Assembly was attended by 87 individuals. Of those, 78 people attended on day 1 (64 in person, 14 online) and 73 attended on day 2 (62 in person, 11 online). Most people attended both days ($n = 64$).

Professional characteristics

This section draws on data from the EOM survey ($n = 37$). Of those who completed the survey, most worked in academia ($n = 21$) or the government/public sector ($n = 13$; Figure 2). Across all sectors, respondents were mostly in mid- to high-level roles (Figures 3-5). In terms of geographic spread for job location, more than two-thirds of respondents ($n = 26$; 70.3%) reported their role as being based in South West England (Figure 6). Based on self-described disciplinary backgrounds, 22 respondents

² Note: This may have been the case in previous Social Capital Evaluation surveys, but we were able to identify it in 2024 by explicitly asking for feedback about the survey itself.

were classified as being aligned to social science disciplines, 4 were classified as aligned with STEM disciplines, 3 were classified as interdisciplinary, and 6 were classified as other³ (2 respondents left this question blank).

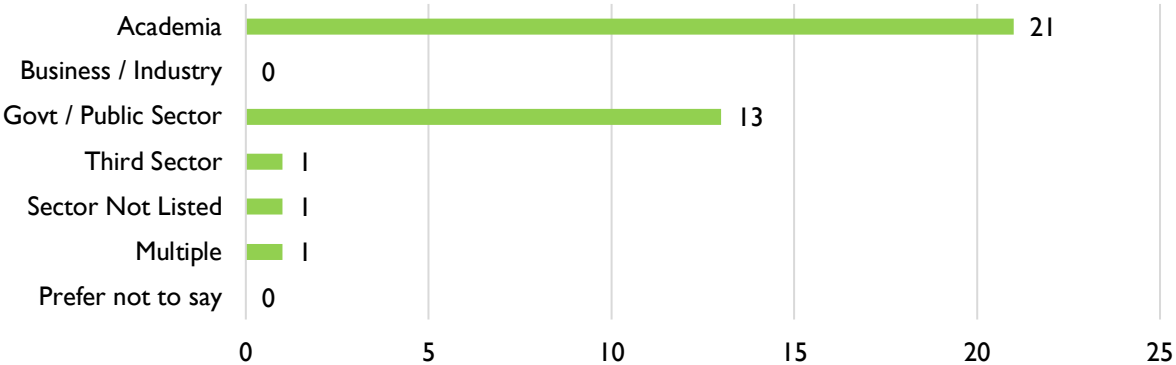


Figure 2. Number of respondents working in each sector (n = 37)

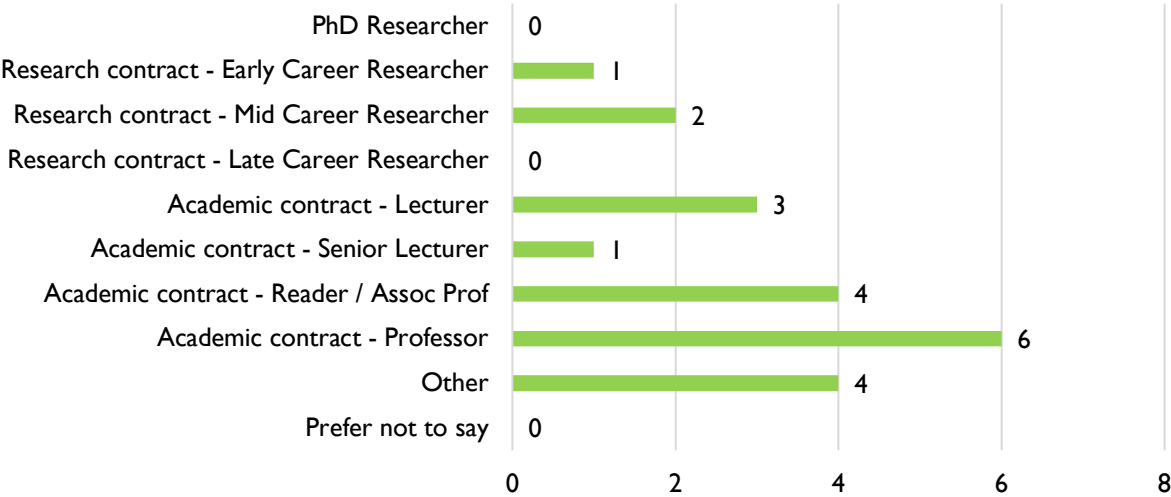


Figure 3. Number of respondents at each career stage, academia (n = 21)

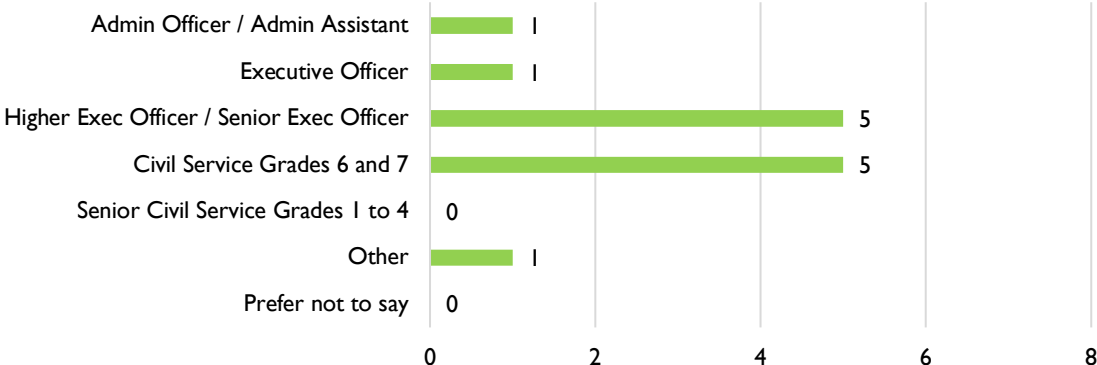


Figure 4. Number of respondents at each career stage, government/public sector (n = 13)

³ Coded based on open-text responses. Respondents were classified as ‘interdisciplinary’ if they reported disciplinary backgrounds that crossed STEM and social science boundaries.

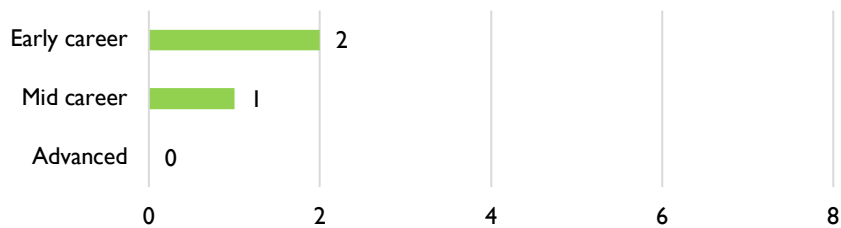


Figure 5. Number of respondents at each career stage, business/third/other sector⁴ (n = 3)

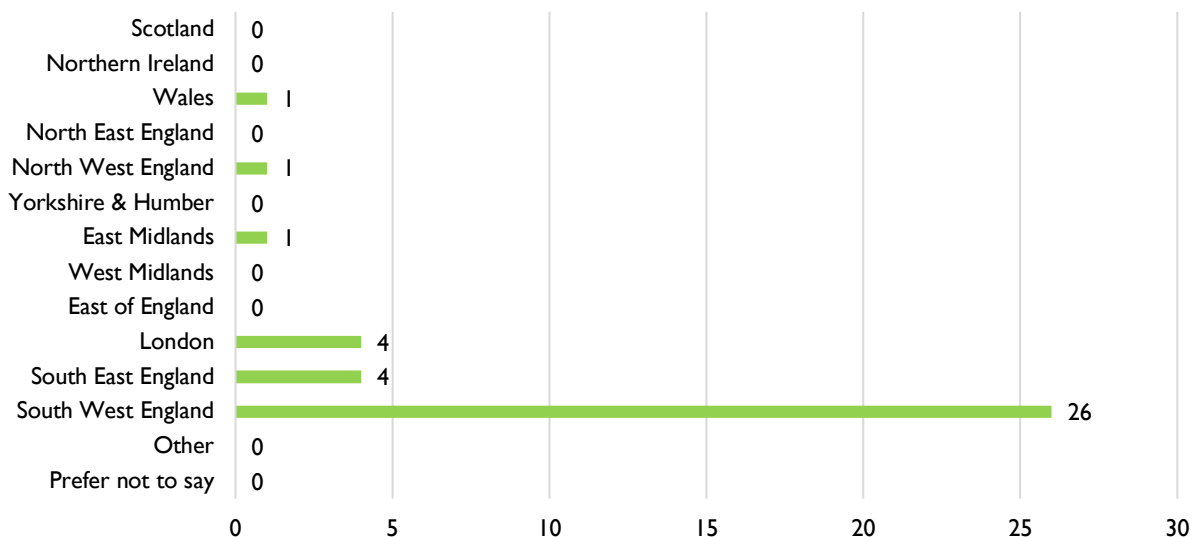


Figure 6. Location of respondents' job roles in each UK region

Personal characteristics

This section analyses the demographic questions in the EOM survey (see Figures 7-16⁵). Respondents' ages ranged from 25-29 (n = 2) to 65+ (n = 2), with the most common age ranges being 40-44 and 50-54 (respectively, n = 9 and 8). Most respondents identified as women (n = 24), as cis gender (n = 36) and as White (n = 33). Most identified as heterosexual (n = 32) and most reported having no religion (n = 30). About two-thirds reported having no disability or long-term health condition (n = 24), and most (n = 32) did not consider themselves to be neurodiverse. Around 57% reported having some form of caring responsibilities (n = 21). Finally, most respondents reported having at least one parent or guardian who was educated to at least degree level by the time the respondent was aged 18 (n = 25).

⁴ Coded based on open-text responses.

⁵ n = 37 for Figures 7-15; n = 36 for Figure 16

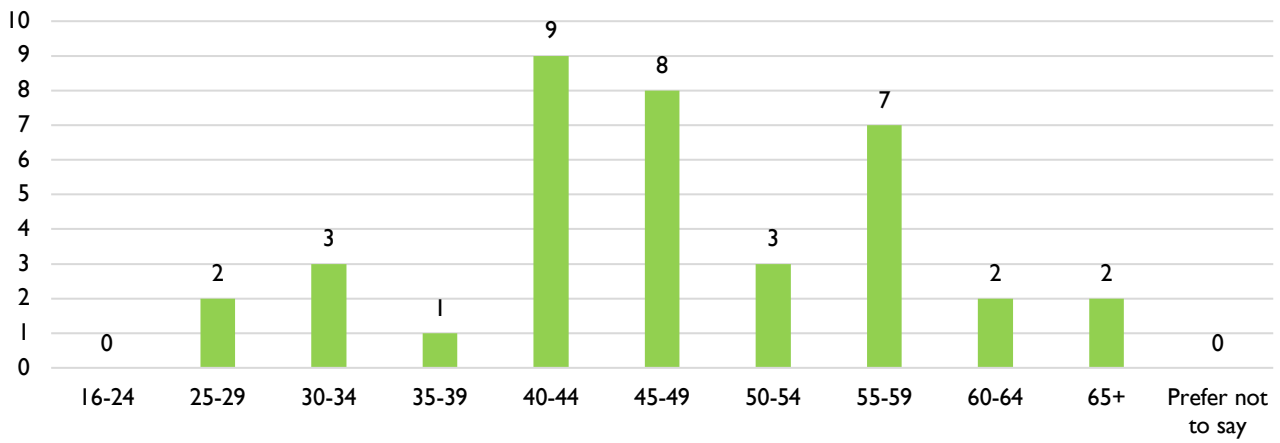


Figure 7. Responses to 'What is your age?'

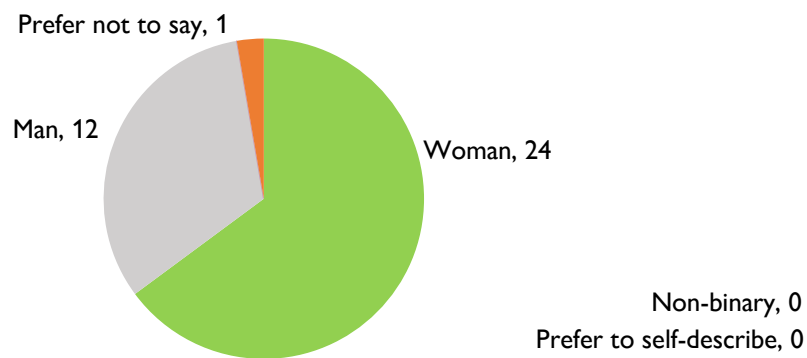


Figure 8. Responses to 'How do you describe your gender?'

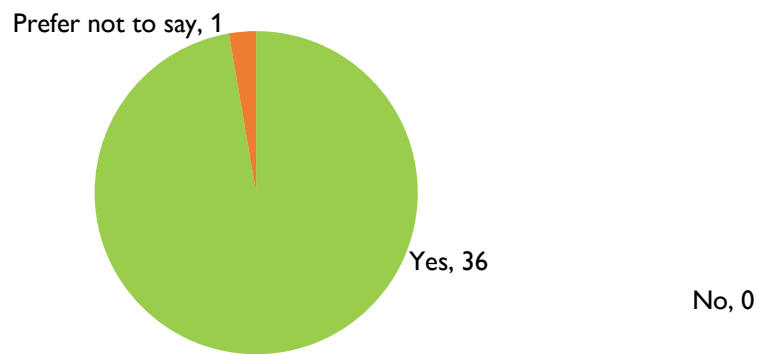


Figure 9. Responses to 'Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were originally assigned at birth?'

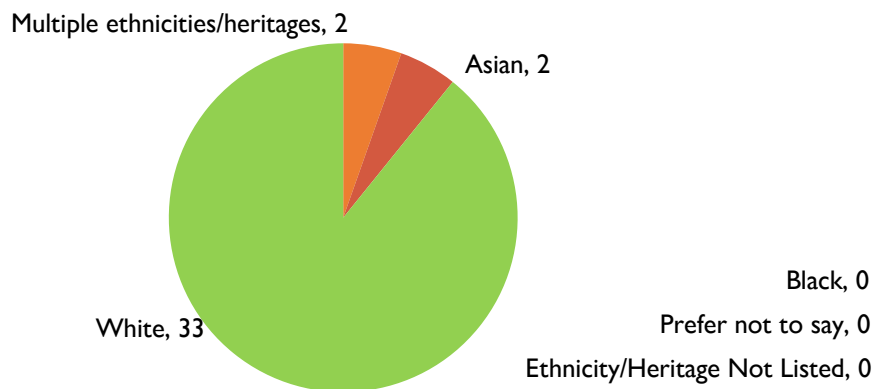


Figure 10. Responses to 'How do you describe your ethnicity?'

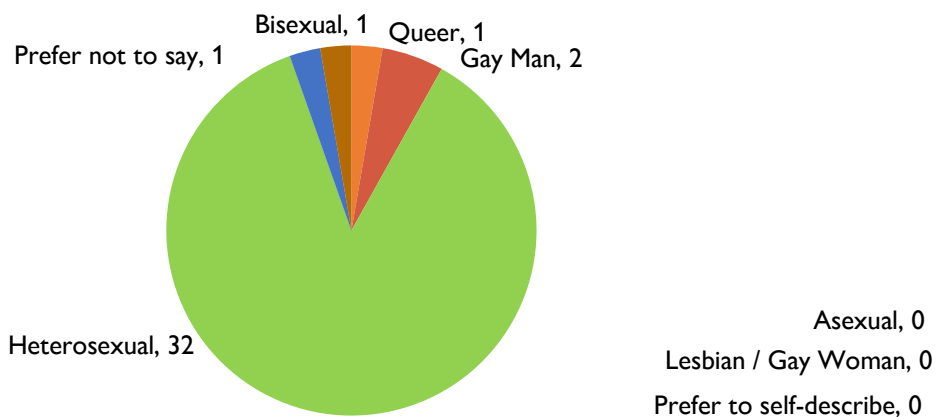


Figure 11. Responses to 'How would you describe your sexual orientation?'

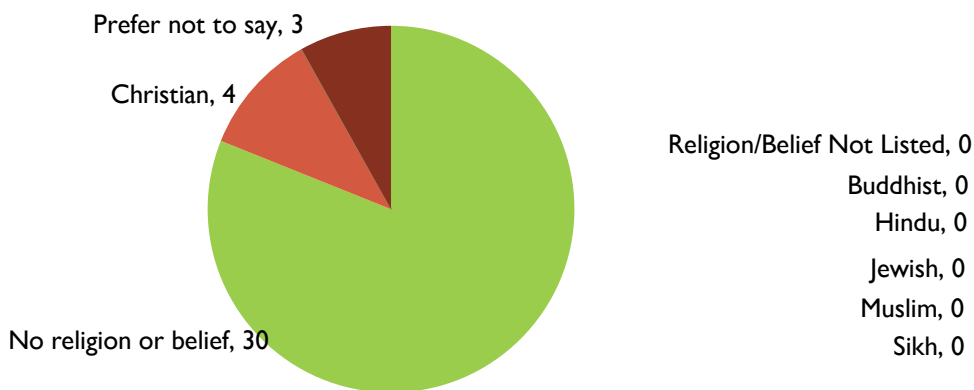


Figure 12. Responses to 'What is your religion or belief?'

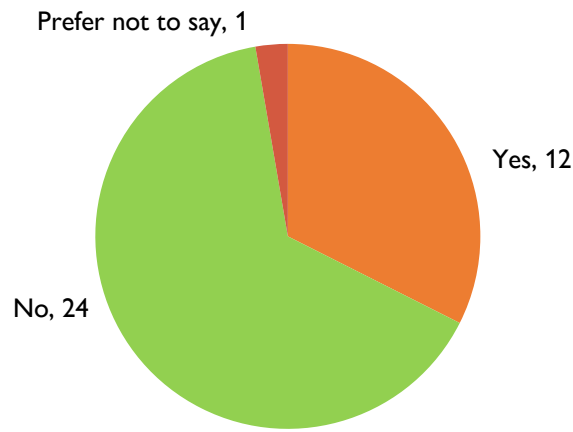


Figure 13. Responses to 'Do you consider yourself to have a disability and/or long-term health condition?'

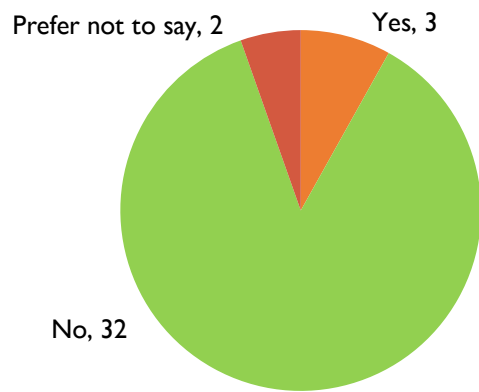


Figure 14. Responses to 'Do you consider yourself to be neurodiverse?'

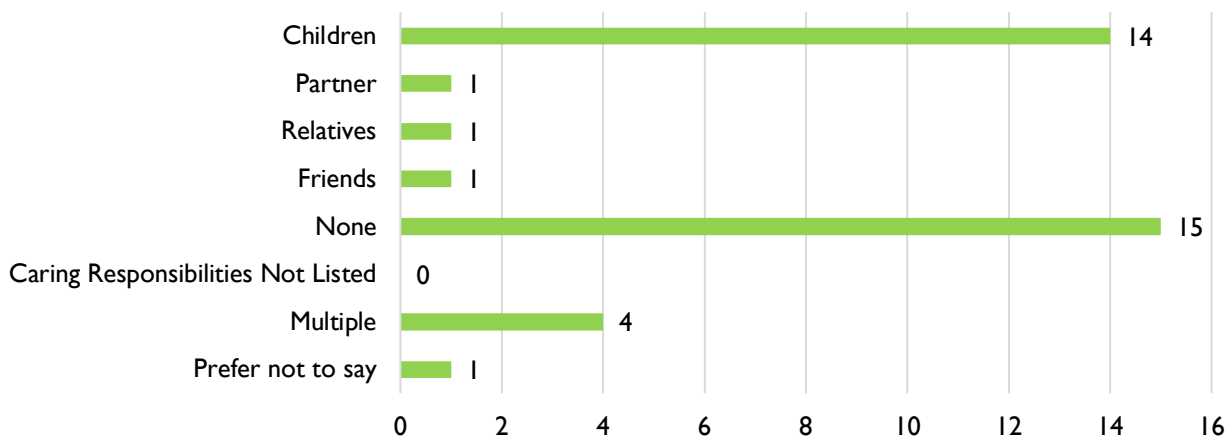


Figure 15. Responses to 'Do you have caring responsibilities?'

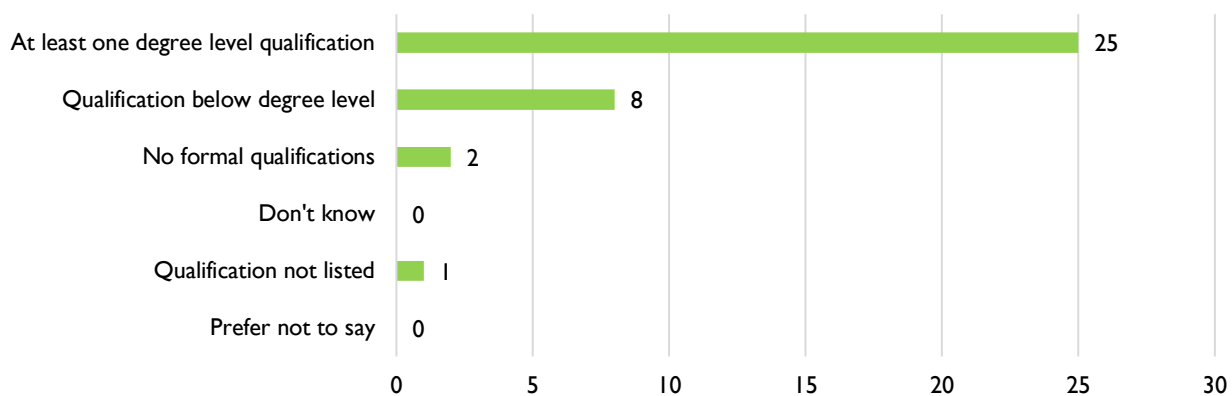


Figure 16. Responses to ‘What is the highest level of qualification achieved by either of your parent(s) or guardian(s) by the time you were 18?’

In summary, evidence from the EOM survey suggests the Assembly achieved a reasonable level of professional diversity, for example involving a substantial proportion of attendees from government organisations, as well as academics. However, gaps included small numbers of participants from private and third sectors, a lack of early career researchers (i.e. PhD and postdoctoral), as well as a lack of geographical diversity from across the UK.

In terms of personal characteristics, evidence indicates that the Assembly achieved a reasonable mix of people according to age, gender, disability or health condition, and sexuality. While the majority of attendees identified as female, we judge this to be representative of environmental social science more generally. However, there was a notable lack of diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion and class. The lack of ‘prefer not to say’ responses to personal or professional characteristic questions suggests that attendees felt safe providing specific information about themselves, and trusted us with that data. Finally, it is not easy to assess how representative the Assembly attendees are in relation to environmental social science more generally, given a lack of data across the (environmental) social sciences more generally in relation to EDI⁶.

Findings (2): Event experiences and Guiding Principles

This section analyses data from 20 individuals who completed the post-event Feedback Survey (see Methodology and Appendix B) and is illustrated with images from the Annual Assembly 2024 (Figures 17-20). The first author analysed responses to seven open-ended questions in the Feedback Survey using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and four, pre-determined themes focused on the experience of the event. The codes themselves were inductively generated from the data and form the

⁶ During 2023, the ACCESS EDI Lead and Fellow, Kate Burningham and Sarah Golding, worked with George Murrell on an internal exercise to identify baseline data about demographic diversity across different social science disciplines. We drew on public reports from different professional social science bodies in the UK, identified via the Academy of Social Sciences. (<https://acss.org.uk/social-science-societies/>). This exercise indicated differences in levels of reporting between professional bodies (likely due to differing levels of resourcing within organisations) – but also indicated varying levels of diversity on different characteristics between different social science disciplines. Breaking these data down into an understanding of who works in the environmental social sciences is not possible.

basis of the text summaries presented below. As with all the survey data, it should be noted that the small number of responses across these open-ended questions (not every respondent answered every question) means the summaries presented below may not be representative across all Assembly attendees.

What worked well in general: what people valued about the Assembly

Several people commented on practical aspects of the event, such as **catering, venues, event communication and organisation**. Comments were positive, suggesting that the general planning and organisation for the event worked well:

“The catering was amazing! Kudos to the team for organising a lovely dinner.”

“Plus the evening social at Indigo was awesome :)”

“Very smoothly organised, and really good information in advance.”

The Assembly **programme was well-received**, with many positive comments received about all aspects of the programme. People felt that the sessions were high quality, thought-provoking and represented a good range of topics. They also felt that the general atmosphere at the Assembly was relaxed and friendly.

“The walking tour with Saffron was really thought provoking and I appreciated the decision to incorporate moving into the conference.”

“Lovely atmosphere in the room, great facilitation from chairs.”

“The presentation by the Renew project team was a bit of a light bulb moment. Gave me a lot of things to think about.”

“Hearing stories from Gary Fuller - I enjoyed his presentation a lot. Also enjoyed listening to the panel discussions.”

People especially seemed to value the **variety in session formats** across the programme – which included a mix of keynotes, panel discussions, poster sessions, ‘walk-and-talk’ activities, and unstructured breaks:

“Really enjoyed the variety of topics and methods of delivery, especially Wednesday which had the poster sessions where we walked around and engaged with the researchers, and the afternoon outside activities.”

“Nice balance of activities and events, with good balance of formal and informal.”



Figure 17. Assembly attendees participating in ‘walk-and-talk’ session led by Helen Roberts.

Indeed, having this **mix of less formal sessions** (such as breaks, walk-and-talks, and social dinner) in the programme may have helped people to may new connections:

“I liked the blend of indoor keynote discussions and some (relatively unstructured) interactions through the flex fund showcase and the walks. That helped to meet with people in a warm and holistic way (instead of utilitarian networking).”

“Varied and interactive format was excellent - fantastic to get outside for the walk alongs and look at posters and videos during the showcase, as well as time to chat and make new connections”

“I valued the opportunity to just talk to people with different perspectives, and not have an immediate requirement to produce anything from those interactions!”

In terms of how well the event enabled attendees to connect up with other people, having the opportunity to **meet in-person or online** – whether new or existing relationships – seems to be an especially valuable aspect of the ACCESS Annual Assembly experience. People were enthusiastic about having time to meet in-person, exchange ideas, and connect with people from across the wider network. People **valued the diversity of views, sectors, and backgrounds** amongst the delegates and speakers:

“The opportunity for us to get together in person. It has been a great opportunity for time and space to meet and connect and exchange ideas”

“Connecting in the online chat with an old colleague and friend.”

“I love the opportunity to get together in-person and talk to people from different backgrounds and perspectives. I have had so many thought provoking and joyful conversations.”

“Catching up with a few Leadership College and KE [knowledge exchange] fellows was also great!”

“Diversity of participant expertise and experience - opportunity to listen to and meet so many interesting people! Favourite moment - lots of them but throughout loved watching Tem's [visual minute-taker] illustrations emerge.”

The opportunity for **informal and relaxed interaction** is a vital part of the Assemblies – and something people are keen to keep if future Assemblies become larger events:

“Larger assemblies - still include plenty of breakouts in smaller groups, interactive sessions and informal networking opportunities - including getting outside!”

“For future Assemblies, it might be useful to have parallel sessions to ensure that the atmosphere of the sessions remain intimate and friendly (with main keynotes happening in a lecture theatre or similar venue), but with break-outs, and sufficient semi-structured engagement time.”



Figure 18. Poster session presenters being introduced to Assembly attendees

What could have worked better: suggestions for improvement

Most comments from people who completed the feedback survey were positive. This suggests the overall (in-person) experience at the Annual Assembly 2024 was of a well-organized, enjoyable and thought-provoking event. This is similar to feedback from previous years (Devine-Wright, Golding, &

Lefort, 2023; Golding, 2023), indicating the general format and delivery of these Assemblies is well received by attendees.

However, there were several comments from people who attended the event online, indicating that the **virtual experience was sub-optimal**. Most of these comments related to issues with the quality of audio and visuals:

“Please make sure that the audio and video quality online is better next time.”

“When joining online it would be great to be able to see the speakers rather than just hear them and view the slides.”

“Virtual attendance didn't really work.”

A couple of comments also suggested that people might value some **additional question and answer time** with speakers and panelists:

“I did feel though that there wasn't quite as much time for questions and discussions as I would've liked. I wonder if there are ways to build flexibility into the programme that could allow more space for discussion, or perhaps that can't be done practically.”

One person shared their observation that people sometimes appeared to be alone, but that they were not clear whether this was because they were feeling excluded or were choosing to engage in quiet time. This highlights the importance of creating safe and inclusive spaces from both a KCP and EDI perspective – it is important to break down power dynamics, so that people feel comfortable making new connections, while also recognising that some people may choose to disengage from conversations at times:

“There were still people who I didn't know how to approach, who appeared to be outside the conversational fray. I wondered if there was a way to make it explicit when people welcome “hello” approaches, and when they are comfortable and happy to be left alone?”

Guiding Principles: positive experiences

Efforts to ensure the **Environmental Sustainability (ES)** of the event were positively perceived. People especially mentioned the meat-free catering, as well as how delegates were encouraged to consider lower-carbon forms of travel. The format of the event – across two half-days – was mentioned as supporting this:

“I was impressed with the various ways environmental impact was considered.”

“The food was great and I really appreciated that it was all vegetarian/vegan.”

“I think the timing of the assembly days enables public transport travel.”

In terms of **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**, accessibility and inclusivity aspects were generally well received. For example, people appreciated that the event was free, that diverse dietary needs were well catered for, and that people with health needs were free to choose travel options that were most appropriate for them. People valued efforts to adapt the walk and talk sessions, so that people could choose between different types of indoor and outdoor sessions. People also commented positively on perceived diversity amongst speakers and delegates in terms of aspects such as gender, career stage, sector, and discipline.

“The organisers always work so hard to accommodate differing needs. I particularly appreciated having a range of outdoor options to suit different needs.”

“I did not have specific accessibility needs, but was grateful to the team for providing the quiet space.”

“I am grateful that there is always space to sit and not have to stand too much. There is no pressure to walk long distances and I was able to drive to the event with no guilt!”

“From my perspective the diversity of speakers seemed good in terms of gender, career stage, expertise, maybe less so in terms of ethnicity though it was great to hear from Jaya [one of the panellists on Day 2] on decolonisation and inclusion, and to see some visible diversity among Fellows and Flex Fund awardees.”



Figure 19. Assembly attendees talking informally during a refreshments break

People felt that opportunities for **Knowledge Co-production (KCP)** were supported by the diversity of people (both speakers and delegates) at the event. The relaxed atmosphere and the varied nature of sessions were perceived to support these interactions:

“It was great to have a range of policy and practice organisations represented in the speaker line up and also in the delegate list. Fantastic to see funders there too!”

“This year the focus on co production and knowledge exchange themes were very strong. In terms of sector representation, we had a good mix of representation and dialogue.”

“The poster session worked well and enabled a number of informal research discussions with people on topics that were very different from my own.”

“I felt this was a welcoming and inclusive environment where stories and experiences were happily shared. It was good to be amongst a diverse audience with different views i.e. not all from academia”

The ACCESS Guiding Principles were developed as an integrated approach towards considering issues of ES, EDI & KCP (Barr et al., 2023). We took this approach because there are **synergies** between these areas, something this comment from an attendee illustrates - positive actions for the environment can also support inclusivity actions and feelings of belongingness at events:

“It’s good for the environment that there was no meat in the meals and also helpful for vegetarians and vegans as we don’t have to worry about there being enough food for us.”

Guiding Principles: suggestions for improvement

Comments from people about the Guiding Principles concerning the Annual Assembly 2024 were mostly positive. There were, however, a few areas where people suggested further efforts could be made to improve the overall experience of the event.

There were very few comments for improvement regarding **Environmental Sustainability**. One person was keen to know what would happen to leftover food, and another questioned whether the location (Exeter, South West England) might increase travel impact for some attendees. One person wondered whether ACCESS could seek to be more ambitious and have a net positive impact on the environment:

“Clear guidance around travel (facilitated by the event timings) and excellent modelling of good practice in catering etc. The next stage, I guess, would be to consider how to go beyond reducing our impact to making the Assembly contribute to regenerative action...”

In terms of **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**, while most people commented that the Assembly appeared to have a good mix of people across different personal and professional characteristics (e.g., career stage, sector, gender, age), several people raised concerns about the lack of visible difference in terms of **ethnic diversity**, amongst speakers and delegates.

“The gender and career stage diversity is fantastic. The relative weakness of ethnicity/heritage diversity was pointed out. It’s not clear how to tackle this without falling into the tokenism trap but it’s something worth experimenting to tackle?”

“There were issues raised about racial diversity. Although it’s difficult for ACCESS to have influence over attendees perhaps there is more that could be done around speakers. Not tokenistically but to ensure a wider engage of voices and experiences are shared in the assembly.”

“Still visibly dominated by white people, two non-white delegates explicitly mentioned this.”



Figure 20. Group photograph of many attendees at Annual Assembly 2024

There were also **accessibility issues** raised, in relation to the sub-optimal quality of audio, especially for those online, which could also impact people with hearing difficulties:

“I was online...I did have a few problems hearing the presentations.”

“I struggled with the audio at times.”

Regarding **Knowledge Co-Production**, despite positive comments about who was ‘in the room’ and the relative approachability across traditional power structures, several comments were also provided suggesting ACCESS could think further about **who is ‘not in the room’**. For example, people referred to a range of different groups that were perceived to be absent or under-represented, such as politicians, environmental groups, industry, practitioners, community groups, and academics from a wider range of universities. Several respondents perceived a lack of diversity in Assembly participants using the Leadership College as benchmark for comparison. The lack of overt disagreement in event discussions was identified by one respondent as potentially indicating a lack of diversity at the event and **scope for more dissenting voices**. It might also suggest the need for the event organisers to be mindful of ensuring all attendees feel comfortable expressing their perspectives:

“The Leadership College Fellows had a session on Day 1, which provided non-academic perspectives (also in an outdoor setting) but in general, it felt like the Assembly was heavily focused on academic

or governmental perspectives. This was particularly apparent during the session on trust and public engagement - I found the panellists' comments on participation, deliberation & co-production to be very insightful, but the irony was that it felt like a closed space - researchers speaking to other researchers, with no practitioners or community representatives invited into the discussion."

"Whilst the ACCESS Leadership College does seem to have found a good balance between academia/government/third sector, both in terms of the makeup of the group and everyone's contributions being invited & valued, my impression from the 2 Assemblies so far is that ACCESS as a whole has not. It would be great for my feeling on this to be disproved!"

"Thoroughly enjoyed the science policy interface and knowledge exchange discussions, but going forward it might also be useful for us to reflect in our work the power we hold as environmental social science researchers when it comes to engaging with groups/communities more vulnerable than us. Some representation from their end will be very instructive for us, and we collectively appear to be receptive to that."

"I didn't get the sense there was much disagreement among participants on the whole. There was an interesting challenge to a perspective on the second day...around the values and identity of 'disrupters', which was welcome and interesting. More of that might have been good. Otherwise there was a lot agreement. Which is probably a good thing but it does leave you wondering."

A few comments pointed towards **tensions** between the three aspects of the Guiding Principles that attendees might have perceived or experienced. These echo some of the discussions that have also been happening across other areas within ACCESS (Barr, 2024; Golding, Barr, et al., 2024). In particular, these comments focus on the challenges of weighing the ES costs of travel impact against the potential EDI and KCP benefits of in-person events:

"I know travel has an environmental impact, but it was so great to meet in person. There's a balance to be struck here."

"So difficult to justify us all meeting in person with the travel but when we do, the energy and genuine connections made outweigh the environmental cost. Plus how do we measure the emotional support it provides for us all to speak to each other in person. It's great. We feel a team, part of something ... a lovely network!"

Findings (3): Social Network Evaluation

As described in the Methodology section (see also Table 1), 47 people completed the pre-event Social Network survey (response rate of 54%) and 24 people completed the post-event Social Network survey (response rate of 28%). Using these survey datasets, in this section we describe findings about how well the Assembly afforded participants opportunities to connect with others, drawing on two dimensions identified in the literature on social capital: three characteristics of social networks (shared understanding, trust, reciprocity) and three types of social capital (bonding, bridging and linking).

Perceptions of ACCESS as a social network

Assembly attendees were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with these statements relating to network characteristics:

- **Shared understanding:** *I feel that my understanding of the purpose of ACCESS network matches that of other network members*
- **Trust:** *I believe that other ACCESS network members will act in the best interests of the network*
- **Reciprocity:** *At present, I have the ability to **give value to** the ACCESS network*
- **Reciprocity:** *At present, I have the ability to **receive value from** the ACCESS network*

Overall, the responses show an increase in the strength of agreement from pre- to post-Assembly for all network characteristics, which indicates a positive impact on the perception of the ACCESS network by Assembly attendees (see Tables 2 and 3). Whilst the strong agreement of the ability to receive value from the ACCESS network is positive, it also indicates the potential to encourage different ways and formats to give value to the ACCESS network. Attention is needed to increase the degree of shared understanding and trust for those ACCESS network members who are new to ACCESS or less heavily involved in ACCESS activities.

Table 2. Perceptions of network characteristics pre-Assembly 2024 (n = 41)

Network Characteristics	Responses (n)					
	I don't know	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Shared understanding	10 (24%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	19 (46%)	9 (22%)
Trust	8 (20%)	0	1 (2%)	3 (7%)	12 (29%)	17 (41%)
Reciprocity: give value to the ACCESS Network	3 (7%)	0	0	7 (17%)	20 (49%)	11(27%)
Reciprocity: receive value from the ACCESS Network	3 (7%)	0	1 (2%)	4 (10%)	15 (37%)	18 (44%)

Table 3. Perceptions of network characteristics post-Assembly 2024 (n = 24)

Network Characteristics	Responses (n)					
	I don't know	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Shared understanding*	1 (4%)	0	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	9 (39%)	11 (48%)
Trust	1 (4%)	0	0	0	9 (38%)	14 (58%)
Reciprocity: give value to the ACCESS network	0	0	2 (8%)	2 (8%)	14 (58%)	6 (25%)
Reciprocity: receive value from the ACCESS network	1 (4%)	0	1 (4%)	0	7 (29%)	15 (63%)

* n = 23

The characteristic for which most respondents selected 'strongly agree' - for both pre- and post-Assembly SNE surveys - is **reciprocity (receive value)**; i.e., the ability for network members to **receive value** from the ACCESS network. This differs from the social capital evaluations at Assemblies in 2022 and 2023, where trust was rated more highly than reciprocity. This could be

because the reciprocity statement has been divided into ‘give value to’ and ‘receive value from’ the ACCESS network, whereas in previous years this statement was worded in a combined way - ‘give and receive value’.

For pre-Assembly perceptions (see Table 2), those who strongly agreed with the **shared understanding** and **trust** statements were mostly comprised of respondents who are more centrally involved in ACCESS. This indicates a potential opportunity to increase understanding of these characteristics for people who are towards the periphery of the network. Pre-Assembly, the number of responses for ‘I don’t know’ were highest for the characteristics of **shared understanding** and **trust**. For both these characteristics, the majority of ‘I don’t know’ respondents were first time attendees of an Annual Assembly – and for some, their first time being involved with the larger ACCESS network. All the instances of ‘I don’t know’ were reduced post-Assembly across all network characteristics (Table 3). This suggests that the Assembly provided an opportunity for attendees to get to know the wider ACCESS network and understand how it worked, and their role – or potential role – within it.

Analysis indicates an overall increase in strength of agreement for each characteristic, together with a reduction in ‘I don’t know’ for these 18 people who completed both the pre- and post-Assembly SNE surveys, 16 of whom attended the event in person (see Figure 21).

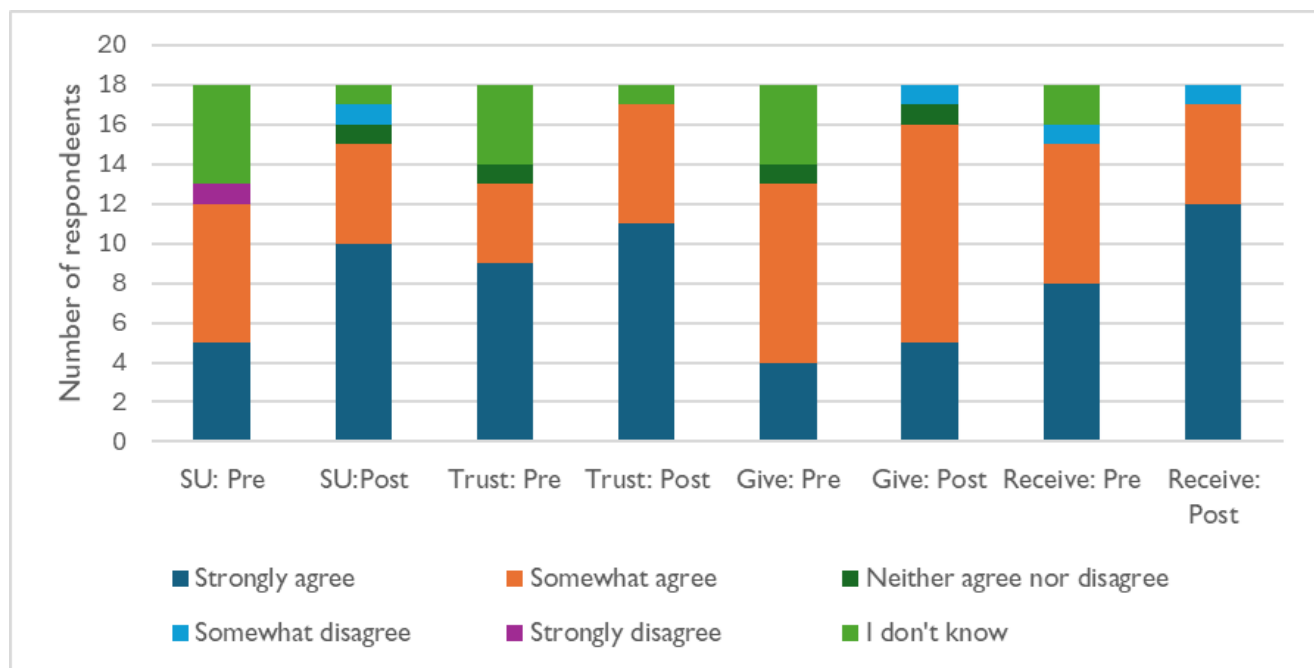


Figure 21. Perceptions of network characteristics pre- and post-Assembly (n = 18). Note: SU = Shared understanding; Give = Reciprocity (give value); Receive = Reciprocity (receive value).

Perceptions of connections made at the Assembly

Social network analysis (SNA) aims to evaluate how well ACCESS meets its objectives of connecting individuals working across diverse disciplines, career stages, organisations and sectors. These connections were categorised as:

- **Bonding:** Within the same social group or with others who are primarily like you (e.g. within an organisation, or the same sector or discipline). There is an existing perceived similarity that allows connections to occur naturally.
- **Bridging:** Between social groups, with others who you may not naturally connect with (e.g. across different sectors, or disciplines). There is an existing perceived gap that has been bridged by specific actions such as attending a conference or participation in the ACCESS network.
- **Linking across power or authority:** Linking is a ‘vertical’ extension of bridging, which denotes interacting across explicit, formal or institutionalised power or authority gradients in society (e.g. between funders and recipients of funding, or decision makers and decision influencers). You might provide or receive access to power in a linking connection.

For each named Assembly attendee, respondents could choose one, two or all three types of connections, with the majority choosing just one type of connection per person. The number of Assembly attendees completing SNE surveys was lower in 2024 than in previous years (see Table 4), with 23 respondents completing pre-Assembly SNE surveys, and 22 completing post-Assembly SNE surveys. Of the total respondents, only 13 people completed both pre- and post-Assembly SNE surveys, and the responses of this subset are shown in Table 4. Given that the sample represents 14.9% of all attendees at the 2024 Assembly, quantitative results should be interpreted with caution.

There was an increase in all three types of social capital arising from the Assembly, indicating its positive impact on connections made. Results can be examined alongside social network evaluations from previous Assemblies (Devine-Wright, Golding, & Lefort, 2023; Lefort, 2023). In contrast to 2023, the number of bridging connections in 2024 showed the greatest increase from pre- to post-Assembly, which could be due to the large proportion (69%) of these respondents attending an Assembly for the first time.⁷

Table 4. Number of perceived bonding, bridging and linking connections pre- and post-Assembly 2024 (and compared to previous Annual Assemblies)

Connections	2024 (n = 13)			2023 (n = 34)			2022 (n = 38)		
	Pre	Post	Change	Pre	Post	Change	Pre	Post	Change
Total	208	326	+57%	1432	1616	+13%	823	1,130	+37%
Bonding	75	122	+63%	498	623	+25%	352	452	+28%
Bridging	111	183	+65%	626	644	+3%	344	508	+48%
Linking	73	115	+58%	308	349	+13%	127	170	+34%

Note. Data from 2022 and 2023 are from previous Assembly reports (Devine-Wright, Golding, & Lefort, 2023; Lefort, 2023).

⁷ The social network analysis and network graphs were calculated using NodeXL basic software (NodeXL Version: 1.0.1.530).

The percentage increases for all perceived connections in 2024 are substantially higher than the previous two years. Potential explanations for this finding might be that participants could select bonding, bridging and linking (i.e. one, two or all three) for each named person, or that despite the wording and survey design being similar to surveys conducted in previous years, the interpretation of connections was different.

Perceived value of connecting with others at the Assembly

We invited reflections from attendees on the perceived value of specific connections made at the Assembly, using an open-text question in both SNE surveys, asking: ‘From the ACCESS connections selected, who have you most valued connecting with so far and why?’ (pre-Assembly survey), and ‘From the ACCESS connections selected, who did you most value connecting with at the Annual Assembly, and why?’ (post-Assembly survey).

Twenty responses were received to the **pre-Assembly survey**; 4 respondents just provided the names of those who they valued connecting with, whilst 16 provided more information. We grouped these responses thematically as follows:

- Seven respondents valued a **work-related common interest** and/or collaboration, e.g., “We have mutual interests that we have felt able to explore and progress with specific actions”; “Because [they’re] a contact in an arm’s length agency that has direct involvement in [related work]”.
- Four respondents valued **connecting with peers** through the ACCESS network, such as Leadership College Fellows and the ACCESS Knowledge Exchange and Impact Fellows, e.g., “[Meeting] other ACCESS Leadership College Fellows”.
- Three respondents mentioned valuing **pre-existing connections** within the network, e.g., “With whom I’ve worked on a knowledge exchange project and have a strong collaborative relationship”.
- Two respondents shared comments related to gaining **better understanding** of specific ACCESS work tasks, e.g., “I have valued getting to know members of the Task Force better, to work out where different people’s experience contributes to the project’s aims”.
- In addition, one respondent reflected on the value they have gained from ACCESS: “It’s been brilliant. I’ve really valued meeting such a variety of people from different disciplines and with different experiences and perspectives. It’s been incredibly valuable”.

In the **post-Assembly survey**, 16 respondents completed this question about the perceived value of specific connections. We grouped these connections thematically as follows:

- Three respondents valued the opportunity to **cement on-line connections in-person**, e.g., “In person connection with colleagues from the Met office”.
- Two respondents valued **creating connections** that can be helpful beyond the Assembly, e.g., “Creating connections that I can take back to the day job and do things with”.
- Two respondents valued connecting over a **common research interest**, e.g., “Her air quality work in the early 2000s was informative for my own research and I hadn’t met her before. We had a good and productive discussion”.

- Four respondents valued the opportunity to **hear and learn from different perspectives**, e.g. *“I really enjoyed seeing [LC fellow] who always gives me a unique perspective on topics”*; *“For offering so many points of connection in the paths we have travelled but such different perspectives on where we are now; I learnt loads”*; *“Everyone I interacted with had something valuable to offer, in terms of epistemic approaches to research as well as the disciplines/fields they were engaged”*.
- Three respondents described the opportunity to **reflect on experiences**, e.g., *“Shared interests and learning from their experience employing social scientists in an environmental organisation”*; *“We had great in-depth conversations about our respectively different perspectives and experiences”*.
- Four respondents commented that the event provided an **open and friendly opportunity for relaxed interactions**, or highlighted the importance of face-to-face meetings for connecting with others, e.g.: *“I think further face to face meetings will help even more”*.

The comments provide more depth of insights into the different ways that people value primarily in-person connections within the network, although one online respondent valued connecting with another via the online chat.

What hindered connecting with others?

We explored the factors that people perceived as hindering their ability to make connections within the ACCESS network, both pre- and post-Assembly.

In the **pre-Assembly SNE survey**, seventeen responses were received, which we grouped thematically:

- **Time scarcity:** seven respondents mentioned a lack of time. This was qualified by needing to justify time for participation in ACCESS activities in general relating to work, alongside a reflection of not making the time to consider how ACCESS related to their own work, e.g., *“Not making time to consider ACCESS network and its relevance to my current work”*.
- **New to and/or lack of knowledge about ACCESS:** six respondents had recently joined the ACCESS network, thus had limited opportunity to participate in events or get to know other ACCESS members, e.g., *“I wasn’t aware of who all the participants were”*.
- **Limited participation in ACCESS:** two respondents had only participated in one aspect of ACCESS so far (e.g. Flex Fund), e.g., *“I have only been involved in the Policy and Practice Working Group for a short time”*.
- **Navigating the fit between institutional roles and the ACCESS network:** Five respondents reflected on how their work connected to the ACCESS network. For some this included a time constraint, whilst another reflected that *“collaboration is hindered by the limitations of my University role both in terms of capacity and power”*. Two respondents reflected on the time needed to familiarise themselves with ACCESS, e.g. *“at the beginning I was uncertain what I could help with seeing as I was also figuring out what I was doing in my new role”*.

In the **post-Assembly SNE survey**, we asked: ‘Did anything hinder your ability or capacity to connect or collaborate with other ACCESS network participants at the Annual Assembly?’. Nine responses were received, grouped thematically below:

- **Improve connections for online participants:** as one respondent commented, “*Being online - I did not connect with anyone else apart from [name] during the event - I didn't recognise any of the other online members' names, and unfortunately they didn't have profile pictures! I have a hearing aid and struggled with the sound at times, too*”.
- **Extend opportunity for connections outside formal sessions:** Three respondents would have valued more time to connect with particular groups in ACCESS, or to have more breaks, e.g., “*I would have loved to go around to look at the posters of fellow ACCESS Flex Fund Round 1 recipients. Hopefully, we find an opportunity to virtually chat and share our insights with each other—I only managed to meet a few of them because everyone was simultaneously presenting at the showcase.*”

Attention is therefore needed when planning future Annual Assemblies to improve the connection experience for everyone participating, particularly for those online and those with accessibility needs – some of which were not met at the 2024 event.

Assessing Assembly impact using ACCESS Theory of Change statements

Drawn from the ACCESS Theory of Change, three impact statements were included in the pre- and post-SNE surveys. We asked respondents to what extent they agreed with the following statements:

- **Champion Environmental Social Science:** *I have the skills, tools & confidence to champion Environmental Social Science within my professional role(s)*
- **Enable Interdisciplinary Working:** *I feel equipped and confident to work in interdisciplinary contexts*
- **Collaborate Across Sectors:** *I have the connections to collaborate on the use, creation or promotion of Environmental Social Science with people outside my sector.*

33 respondents completed this question in the pre-Assembly SNE survey, and 22 completed it post-Assembly (Figure 22). Of these, 17 respondents completed these questions both pre- and post-Assembly (Figure 23).

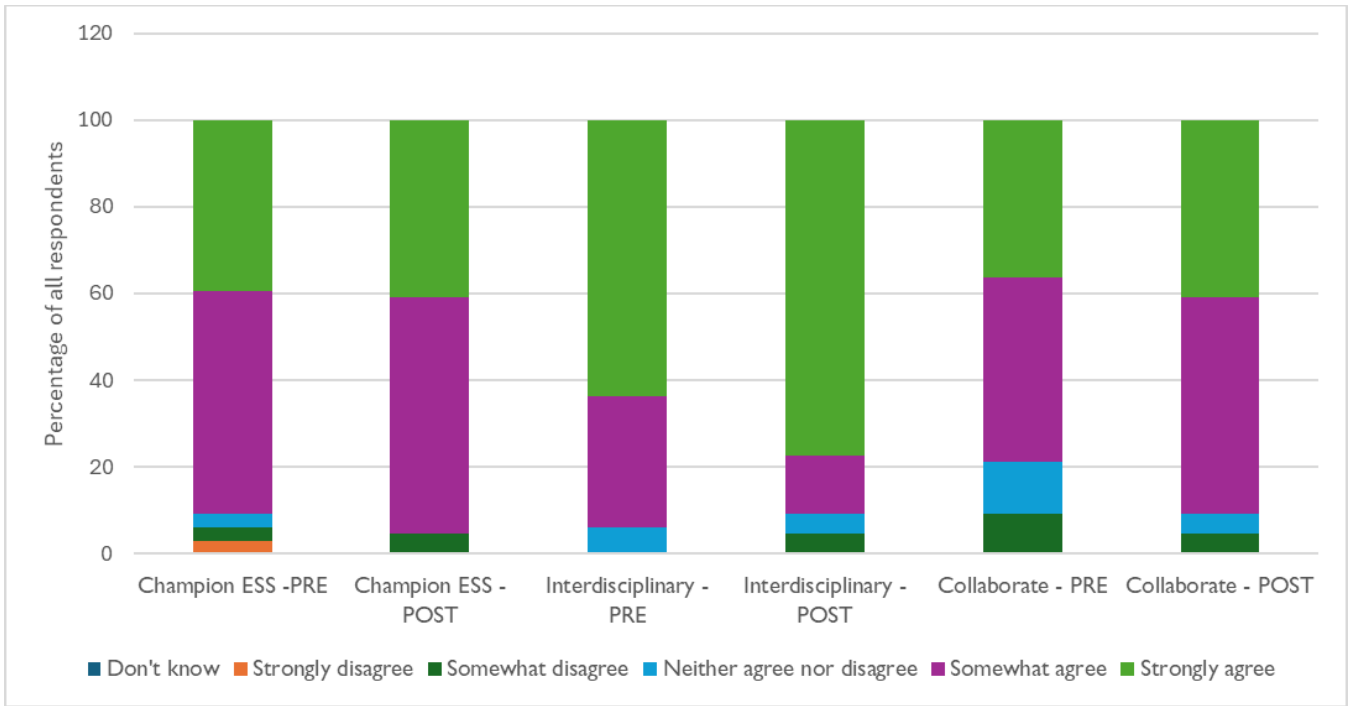


Figure 22. Theory of Change statement responses from all respondents (pre-Assembly $n = 33$, post-Assembly $n = 22$)

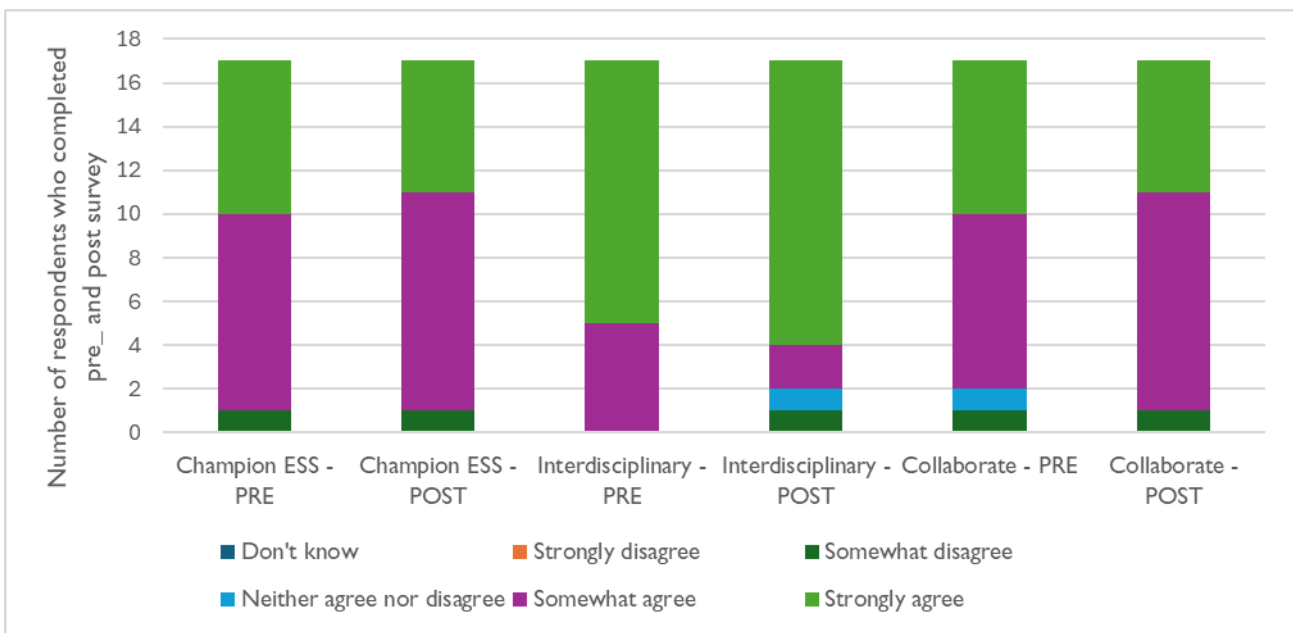


Figure 23: Theory of Change statement responses from respondents who completed both pre- and post-Assembly SNE surveys ($n = 17$)

Overall, levels of agreement were high for all statements, with at least 80% agreeing or strongly agreeing with each. This suggests a high baseline - that people attending the Assembly might already feel they possess these skills to a reasonable extent. There was little evidence of substantial change in responses before and afterwards, although it is difficult to draw firm conclusions from these responses, given the low response rate for those completing both pre-and post-Assembly SNE surveys.

Summary and Next Steps

Evaluation is crucial to enable identification of ‘what works’ well and not so well. In this report, we evaluated the ACCESS Annual Assembly 2024 to assess whether the event met the aims and aspirations envisaged by the leadership team. This can enable a process of continuous reflection and improvement to future Assemblies and other ACCESS events (e.g. Leadership College Retreats and Summer Schools). While feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, several concerns were raised. Below, we structure key findings using 3 key themes:

The ‘atmosphere’ of the Assembly

The atmosphere at the event was perceived as relaxed and friendly. People especially enjoyed the diversity of topics, sessions and speakers across the programme. This afforded multiple opportunities for informal interactions, which occurred during breaks in the programme and during sessions themselves (e.g. walks and talks outside). The transdisciplinary nature of the event – bringing together people from multiple sectors and backgrounds – was also highly valued by attendees. However, there was some evidence that the online experience of the event could be improved.

Guiding Principles

Perceptions on how the ACCESS Guiding Principles were enacted within the event were also predominantly positive, particularly in relation to **environmental sustainability**. Evaluation indicated that there are opportunities in future Assemblies to **increase diversity and foster inclusion**, as well as further break down potential **barriers to knowledge co-production**. Diversity amongst attendees was good across some characteristics (e.g., gender, age, discipline, sector), but there was **under-representation** amongst attendees on other characteristics (e.g., geography, ethnicity, working class background, sexuality, religion, early career stage). Work in other areas of ACCESS – such as the Flex Fund or Winter School – has indicated that greater diversity can be achieved by making procedural changes that encourage and support people from different backgrounds to apply to open calls (Devine-Wright, Golding, & Spruce, 2023; Golding, Burningham, et al., 2024). This is something that ACCESS is mindful of, and while diversity of attendees has increased since the first Assembly, increasing representation and creating a welcoming and inclusive space for a greater diversity of people remains a ‘work in progress’ for ACCESS to consider in planning future Assemblies and other events.

Connecting people and organisations

The results provide evidence that the structure of the Assembly’s timetable and the general atmosphere of the event worked successfully to **increase the number and strength of connections** between attendees, while also increasing the overall value of the network for attendees. Levels of shared understanding, trust and reciprocity were high. The event may also strengthen attendees’ abilities to champion Environmental Social Science, engage in interdisciplinary working and collaborate across sectors (although data suggests that attendees already felt skilled in these areas). However, the SNE survey highlights the need for future events to focus on **reciprocity** – exploring how attendees, particularly those more peripherally involved in or new to ACCESS, navigate the network for mutual benefit, both giving and receiving value.

Next Steps: Planning future Assemblies

While the Annual Assembly 2024 was undoubtedly a success, there remain aspects that could be improved in future events. First, it is clear that creating a positive atmosphere and planning a diverse programme are key foundations to stimulate fresh thinking and to enable high levels of connection and network building. Second, maintaining **things that worked well should be retained** in future Assemblies. These include:

- Timing and location to encourage use of public transport (i.e. beginning and ending the event at the middle of the day; locating it close to a train station)
- Provision of meat- and fish-free (i.e., vegan/vegetarian) catering
- Lengthy breaks which give people unstructured time to chat, network, or take 'time out'
- Flexibility of space to support differing needs and functions throughout the event (e.g., social spaces that have different types of seating, nearby outdoor space for fresh air and walking, quiet rooms for people to take breaks from social activities or other forms of over-stimulation)
- Mix of session type, which provide diverse contexts for learning, and encourage multiple opportunities to connect (e.g. short keynotes, panels, break outs, posters, outdoor activities)
- Variety of topics/content across different environmental challenges
- Diversity of speakers and attendees, across sector, discipline, gender etc.
- Allocated time for movement sessions - e.g., walk and talk sessions, led-walks between venues
- In-person emphasis, affording opportunities to make new connections, and strengthen existing relationships

This evaluation also highlighted **areas for improvement** when designing future Assemblies and other ACCESS events, including:

- Address imbalances amongst delegates and speakers across personal and professional characteristics such as ethnicity, geography and career stage
- Invite new / under-represented voices from outside academia and government (e.g., community groups, NGOs, companies)
- Provide more opportunities for discussion with speakers (e.g., longer question-and-answer slots)
- Include space for knowledge co-production in the programme (while recognizing this is challenging with larger groups in time-restricted sessions)
- Enhance the online experience, with a focus on providing a better audio-visual experience, and providing opportunities for effective hybrid and virtual interaction
- Refine the evaluation methodology, for example reducing the number of surveys distributed and refining how we capture data on social capital and network building

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Appendix A – Assembly Programme

Wednesday 12 June

12.30 – 1.30	Registration & Lunch Vegan buffet provided by Mulberry Catering	Foyer
1.30 – 1.45	Welcome Housekeeping Patrick Devine-Wright ACCESS Director, University of Exeter	Henderson Lecture Theatre (<i>hybrid</i>)
1.45 – 2.15	Building Capability for Behavioural Research across topics and disciplines Linda Bauld, (University of Edinburgh) and Chief Social Policy Adviser, Scottish Govt & Behaviour Research UK	Henderson Lecture Theatre (<i>hybrid</i>)
2.15 – 3.15	ACCESS Project Showcase Birgitta Gatersleben ACCESS Co-Director (University of Surrey), Flex Fund awardees & Knowledge Exchange Fellows	Henderson Lecture Theatre(<i>hybrid</i>) & Breakout rooms (<i>no online option</i>)
3.15 – 3.45	Networking tea & coffee break	Foyer
3.45 – 4.30	Crossing the social science/policy boundary: lessons from ACCESS Net Zero Task Force. A panel discussion Karen Bickerstaff (University of Exeter), Patrick Devine-Wright (University of Exeter) Simone Abram (Durham University), Peter Bailey (Environment Agency) and Susan Owens (University of Cambridge)	Henderson Lecture Theatre (<i>hybrid</i>)
4.40 – 5.30	Exploring inclusivity, accessibility and the more-than-human in climate and environment experiences Walk & talks with the Leadership College Fellows introduced by Saffron O’Neil (University of Exeter)	Various locations (<i>no online option</i>)
5.30 - 5.45	Wrap up and collect bags Patrick Devine-Wright, Sue Varley	Henderson Lecture Theatre (<i>hybrid</i>)

Additional Instructions: If you would like to walk over to the city centre and Hotel Indigo with others, please meet in the Foyer at 5.45. The walk will take approx. 25 minutes.

Thursday 13 June

8.45 – 9.15 am	Registration & Tea/Coffee	Foyer
9.15 – 9.30	Welcome Housekeeping Birgitta Gatersleben ACCESS Co-Director, University of Surrey	Henderson Lecture Theatre (<i>hybrid</i>)
9.30 – 10.00	RENEW Collaboration in Practice: working across disciplines & beyond academia Angela Cassidy & Eleanor Hadley-Kershaw (University of Exeter)	Henderson Lecture Theatre (<i>hybrid</i>)
10.05 – 11.00	Generating impactful Knowledge Exchange (KE) for transformative change: addressing the dissonance between intentions and systems of KE across sectoral boundaries. A panel discussion Jo Hamilton, Steve Guilbert (University of Exeter), Sarah Golding, George Warren (University of Surrey), Harry Marshall (Forest Research), Katie Dow (Environment Agency), Jaya Gajparia,(London South Bank University & ACCESS Leadership College Fellow), Gary Kass (University of Surrey, Sustainability Science Consultant), Caroline Verfuert (CAST, Research Associate & KE Associate)	Henderson Lecture Theatre (<i>hybrid</i>)
11.00 – 11.30	Networking tea & coffee break	Foyer
11.30 – 12.15 pm	Environmental and Climate Policy implementation: An interactive style workshop exploring the effects of political trust, public engagement and communication on policy implementation Theofanis Exadaktylos (University of Surrey), Alice Moseley (University of Exeter) and Doug Eltham (Devon County Council), Clive Mitchell (NatureScot) Holly Butterworth (Natural Resources Wales), Aisling Lannin (Marine Management Organisation)	Henderson Lecture Theatre (<i>hybrid</i>)
12.30 – 1.00	Championing air pollution research Heather Price (University of Stirling) and Gary Fuller (Imperial College London) Clean Air Programme	Henderson Lecture Theatre (<i>hybrid</i>)
1.00 – 1.15	Reflections and closing remarks Patrick Devine-Wright and Birgitta Gatersleben	Henderson Lecture Theatre (<i>hybrid</i>)
1.15 – 2.00	Lunch Vegan buffet provided by Mulberry Catering	Foyer

Additional Instructions: Please let us know if you need any assistance with your onward travel. If you would like to share a taxi to the train station, please contact one of the ACCESS team at the registration desk

Appendix B - Equal Opportunities Monitoring Survey

Monitoring EDI in the ACCESS Network – Participant Information Sheet V1.1 2023-08-21 ACCESS Annual Assembly 2024

Thank you for registering for the ACCESS Annual Assembly 2024. We would like to gather additional information about attendees and invite you to complete this short, anonymous survey. You can choose to answer all, some, or none of these questions. The survey is voluntary and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

ACCESS is committed to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in climate and environmental social science. We would therefore like to collect some information about your personal and professional demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, career stage) to help us understand more about who attends the Annual Assembly 2024. By collecting this information, it will help us assess where we are as a programme and where we need to do further work to advance EDI.

The primary purpose of this short survey is therefore to aid our general project monitoring and evaluation activities and does not form part of a research project. However, as a secondary purpose, we may also wish to publish high-level, aggregated, anonymized EDI data in future academic articles and project reports, which can be considered research.

To read more about who is responsible for the EDI survey, and how your data may be used, click here to download [link in online form]. Thank you for reading this information and considering taking part in the EDI survey. If you are willing to take part, please continue to the next page to confirm your consent and start the survey.

[Q1] Please indicate whether you intend to attend (or attended) the Annual Assembly 2024 meeting online or in-person

- Online
- In-Person

[Q2] In what sector do you work?

- Academia
- Business / Industry
- Government / Public (local or national)
- Third Sector
- Sector not listed above (please provide details) _____
- Multiple sectors (please provide details) _____
- Prefer not to say

[Q2a – Display if Q2 = Academia] What is your career stage? (Please select the option which mostly closely matches your job grade, even if this is not your exact title)

- PhD student
- Research only contract - Early Career Researcher
- Research only contract - Mid Career Researcher
- Research only contract - Late Career Researcher
- Academic contract - Lecturer
- Academic contract - Senior Lecturer
- Academic contract - Reader / Associate Professor
- Academic contract - Professor
- Career stage not described above (please provide details) _____
- Prefer not to say

[Q2b – Display if Q2 = Government/Public] What is your career stage? (Please select the option which mostly closely matches your job grade, even if this is not your exact title)

- Administrative Officer / Administrative Assistant
- Executive Officer
- Higher Executive Officer / Senior Executive Officer
- Civil Service Grades 6 and 7
- Senior Civil Service Grades 1 to 4
- Career stage not described above (please provide details) _____
- Prefer not to say

[Q2c – Display if Q2 = Third Sector / Multiple / Not listed / Prefer not to say] How would you describe your career stage?

[Q3] Please describe your disciplinary background (if applicable)

[Q4] Where is your job geographically based (if you currently/mostly work from home, where is your institution primarily located)?

- Scotland
- Northern Ireland
- Wales
- North East England
- North West England
- Yorkshire & The Humber
- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- East of England
- London
- South East England
- South West England
- Region not listed (please provide details) _____
- Prefer not to say

[Q5] How do you describe your gender?

- Non-binary
- Woman
- Man
- If you prefer to self-describe, please provide details _____
- Prefer not to say

[Q6] Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were originally assigned at birth?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

[Q7] What is your age?

- 16-24
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 35-39
- 40-44
- 45-49
- 50-54
- 55-59
- 60-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to say

[Q8] How do you describe your ethnicity?

Ethnic origin is not about nationality, place of birth or citizenship. It is about the ethnic / heritage group to which you perceive you belong. Please tick the appropriate box

- Multiple ethnicities / heritages
- Asian
- Black
- White
- Ethnicity / heritage not listed above
- Prefer not to say

Display This Question: If What is your ethnicity? = Multiple ethnicities / heritages

[Q8a] Multiple ethnicities / heritages

- Please provide details _____
- Prefer not to say

Display This Question: If What is your ethnicity? = Asian

[Q8b] Asian

- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Indian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Pakistani
- UK (British/English/Scottish/Welsh/Northern Irish)
- Asian ethnicity / heritage not listed above (please provide details) _____
- Prefer not to say

Display This Question: If What is your ethnicity? = Black

[Q8c] Black

- African
- Caribbean
- UK (British/English/Scottish/Welsh/Northern Irish)
- Black ethnicity / heritage not listed above (please provide details) _____
- Prefer not to say

Display This Question: If What is your ethnicity? = White

[Q8d] White

- Roma / Traveller
- UK (British/English/Scottish/Welsh/Northern Irish)
- White ethnicity / heritage not listed above (please provide details) _____
- Prefer not to say

Display This Question: If What is your ethnicity? = Not listed

[Q8e] Ethnicity / heritage not listed

- Arab
- Indigenous
- Jewish
- Ethnicity / heritage not listed above (please provide details) _____
- Prefer not to say

[Q9] How would you describe your sexual orientation?

- Asexual
- Bisexual
- Gay man
- Heterosexual
- Lesbian / gay woman
- Queer
- If you prefer to self-describe, please provide details _____
- Prefer not to say

[Q10] What is your religion or belief?

- No religion or belief
- Buddhist
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Religion or belief not listed (please provide details) _____
- Prefer not to say

[Q11] Do you consider yourself to have a disability and/or long-term health condition?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

[Q12] Do you consider yourself to be neurodiverse? (e.g., be autistic, have dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, etc.)?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

[Q13] What caring responsibilities do you have? Select all that apply.

- Children
- Partner
- Relatives
- Friends
- None
- Caring responsibilities not listed above (please provide details) _____
- Prefer not to say

[Q14] What is the highest level of qualifications achieved by either of your parent(s) or guardian(s) by the time you were 18?

- At least one degree level qualification
- Qualification(s) below degree level
- No formal qualifications
- Don't know
- Qualification level not listed above (please provide details) _____
- Prefer not to say
-

Appendix C – Post-Event Evaluation Survey

ACCESS Annual Assembly 2024 - Post-Event Evaluation

Thank you for attending the ACCESS Annual Assembly 2024. We would like to gather feedback about the event from attendees, so we can evaluate what worked well about this year's event, and how we might improve future Assemblies.

This short survey is anonymous and should take 5-10 minutes to complete. You can choose to answer all, some, or none of these questions. All data will be stored and processed securely in line with data protection regulations.

[Q1] Please indicate which sessions and in what format you attended the ACCESS Annual Assembly 2024:

	Wednesday 12th June	Thursday 13th June
Online	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
In-Person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[Q2] In what capacity did you attend?

- Delegate only
- Session Contributor only (e.g., speaker, panellist, workshop facilitator)
- Delegate and Session Contributor
- Other (please provide details) _____
- Prefer not to say

For the following questions, if your comments are specific to the experience of attending in-person or online, please highlight this in your feedback.

[Q3] Please tell us what you thought were successful aspects of the ACCESS Annual Assembly 2024.

[Q4] Please tell us what you most enjoyed or valued about the ACCESS Annual Assembly 2024

ACCESS is underpinned by three Guiding Principles: Equality, diversity and inclusion; Environmental sustainability; Knowledge co-production.

Please share any reflections you have about your experiences in relation to these three Guiding Principles at the ACCESS Annual Assembly 2024. We welcome both positive and constructive feedback - we are keen to hear what we got 'right', as well as where we might be able to improve.

Please consider any area of relevance (this might include travel, accommodation, venue, food, social events, presentations, and pre-planning and preparation)

[Q5] Please share any reflections relating to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

For example, you may wish to reflect on different aspects of EDI, such as how well accessibility needs were met (whether you disclosed any needs or not), your thoughts on (visible and invisible) diversity in the room, or any other aspects of EDI in relation to the event.

Q6] Please share any reflections relating to Environmental Sustainability.

For example, you may wish to reflect on your perceptions of different aspects of the event in terms of resource use and environmental impact

[Q7] Please share any reflections relating to Knowledge Co-production.

For example, you may wish to reflect on to what extent you feel different voices were represented / heard / included throughout the event, or to what extent there were opportunities to build relationships with others who have different perspectives

[Q8] Please share any reflections about any synergies or tensions you perceived / experienced between the three Guiding Principles at the Annual Assembly

[Q9] If you have any suggestions for how we might improve any aspect of future ACCESS Assemblies, please share your comments here.

Additionally, we anticipate future Assemblies will grow in size so that we can include more speakers and participants in each event. If you have specific suggestions for how we might be able to grow the event while still maintaining the 'intimate and friendly' atmosphere of previous Assemblies, we would be pleased to hear these too.

[Q10] If you consent to ACCESS using (some or all of) your anonymised feedback in public-facing material relating to the Assemblies, please confirm below (e.g. we may use your anonymised comments as testimonials on our website, our social media channels, or in our newsletters)

- Yes, you may use my anonymised feedback as testimonials
- No, you may not use my anonymised feedback as testimonials

Thank you for completing this event feedback - it really helps!

Appendix D – Social Network Evaluation Survey

[Combined Pre and Post-Annual Assembly (AA) Social Network Evaluation (SNE) Survey Questions]

To meet its objectives of interdisciplinary working across multiple organisations and sectors, the ACCESS Annual Assembly aims to:

- build new and maintain existing connections between the members of the network;
- develop the capacity of its members; and
- convene opportunities for learning and sharing different perspectives.

A social network can be understood as the structures and relationships that facilitate the generation and movement of value between network participants. For the ACCESS network, value includes the exchange of information and knowledge, new understandings and perspectives, connections and access to organisations, power, funding and resources, and other forms of value.

The aim for this survey – alongside other evaluations – is to produce an evidence base indicating whether changes in the network have taken place arising from each Annual Assembly using a mixed method approach.

Ethics and data:

Your responses are valuable for evaluation purposes, to inform how ACCESS meets its stated objectives. We will keep identifying information confidential but will consolidate anonymised results from this and other surveys to report on project outcomes, which might include academic journal papers. We will respect confidentiality by not identifying names of people, but will identify sectors. If you have any questions or queries about this survey, please contact Dr. Jo Hamilton (ACCESS Knowledge Exchange and Impact Fellow): j.hamilton3@exeter.ac.uk.

Please indicate your consent to participate in this survey by ticking the box below:

Yes, I consent to participate in this survey

To begin, please enter your name: _____

[Pre-AA only] Please enter your organisational affiliation/s:

[Pre-AA only] Did you attend the ACCESS Annual Assembly in 2023? (please tick)

<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (in person)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (online)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (hybrid)

[Pre-AA only] Did you attend the ACCESS Annual Assembly in 2022? (please tick)

<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (in person)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (online)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (hybrid)

Section 1: Network characteristics

For a network to function well, it must foster and maintain characteristics which give its members the ability, opportunity and motivation to contribute to the sharing of value. These characteristics are:

- **Shared Understanding:** members have a mutual comprehension of the purpose and form of the ACCESS network, and are able to meaningfully connect within it.
- **Trust:** the belief that other members will act with the ACCESS network’s best interests at heart, increasing their motivation to do the same.
- **Reciprocity:** the opportunity for members to both give and receive value within the ACCESS network.

Please indicate your view of the following characteristics of the ACCESS network by ticking one box per row:

	I don't know	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Shared understanding: I feel that my understanding of the purpose of ACCESS network matches that of other network members						
Trust: I believe that other ACCESS network members will act in the best interests of the network						
Reciprocity: At present, I have the ability to <i>give value to</i> the ACCESS network						
Reciprocity: At present, I have the ability to <i>receive value from</i> the ACCESS network						

Section 2: Connections with other ACCESS Annual Assembly participants

This part of the survey aims to evaluate how well ACCESS meets its objectives of interdisciplinary working across multiple organisations and sectors, over time and through events such as the Annual Assembly. This is achieved through the network members such as yourself building new and maintaining existing connections. Here we ask about the type of connections you have with other members, categorised as:

- **Bonding:** Within the same social group or with others who are primarily like you (e.g. within an organisation, or the same sector or discipline). There is an existing perceived similarity that allows connections to occur naturally.
- **Bridging:** Between social groups, with others who you may not naturally connect with (e.g. across different sectors, or disciplines). There is an existing perceived gap that has been bridged by specific actions such as attending a conference or participation in the ACCESS network.
- **Linking across power or authority:** Linking is a ‘vertical’ extension of bridging, which denotes interacting across explicit, formal or institutionalised power or authority gradients in society (e.g. between funders and recipients of funding, or decision makers and decision influencers). You might provide or receive access to power in a linking connection.

Please indicate what existing connections you have with the other attendees of the ACCESS Assembly 2024 by selecting the appropriate connection, or connections if you have multiple connections with someone. If you have no connection with someone, leave their row blank.

Name and affiliation	Bonding	Bridging	Linking
[List of attendee names removed to preserve anonymity]			

[Pre-AA only] From the ACCESS connections selected, who have you most valued connecting with so far and why?

[Pre-AA only] Has anything hindered your ability or capacity to connect or collaborate with other ACCESS network?

[Post-AA only] From the ACCESS connections selected, who did you most value connecting with **at the Annual Assembly**, and why? _____

[Post-AA only] Did anything hinder your ability or capacity to connect or collaborate with other ACCESS network participants at the Annual Assembly? _____

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements (please tick one box per row)

	I don't know	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I have the skills, tools & confidence to champion Environmental Social Science within my professional role(s)						
I feel equipped and confident to work in interdisciplinary contexts						
I have the connections to collaborate on the use, creation or promotion of Environmental Social Science with people outside my sector						

If you would like to share any reflections about this survey, please do so in the box: _____

We may like to follow up your responses with a short interview later in the year. If you would be happy to participate in an interview in principle, please enter your name below: _____