

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

COVID-19 Mini-Expo

Evaluation Report by Volunteer Scotland

28th June 2021



Scottish
Government
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Economic
and Social
Research Council

Table of Contents

Partner Feedback	3
Evaluation Summary	4
1. Introduction	6
2. Quality of sessions.....	7
3. What works and what could be improved?.....	10
4. Impact of the Expo	12
5. Breakout discussion.....	14
6. Takeaway learnings	14
7. Waterfall question	15
8. Conclusion and recommendations	15

Thank you

Volunteer Scotland would like to thank all our partners, speakers and delegates who contributed to this event and who provided the feedback for this evaluation report. The collaboration and insights will provide a valuable contribution in helping to inform 'The Road to Recovery' and in the enhancement of future Expo events.

Partner Feedback

"I thought the event was really useful today and very slickly managed so well done to you and your team!"

"A very brief email to say well done. I know how much preparation has gone into the event, and all that preparation reaped dividends. The event was superb, it ran so smoothly. My breakout group were very talkative and engaged with the questions so well. I did like the 'waterfall'; a first for me."

"I thought the event went very well. The discussion was great (ref breakout group)."

"Thought it was very good. I liked the fast pace of it – sort of makes the point that extent is not necessarily the best governor of quality or depth!"

"It was a great event with lots of interesting content and discussion, so thank you for allowing me to be a part of it."

"Just wanted to extend my thanks for putting together such a great event. I have really enjoyed working on the slides with you all, and if my breakout group was anything to go by, I think the participants found the session really valuable."

"Thanks, VS, for a really enjoyable and well-managed session yesterday. Big for all the collaboration on the evidence session."

"Just to say I enjoyed the event yesterday and "well done" all round – lots of good preparation and teamwork on display, well briefed speakers, etc."

Megan Wade (ESRC): *"The initial findings were fascinating on blended models and partnerships, resilience and demographics - there is certainly plenty of scope for future research commissioning, and fantastic to see such positive interest and information sharing in the chat channel."*

I really enjoyed the breakout session. It's always great to hear from mix of academic and frontline perspectives, particularly on issues of digital access which are of personal interest from my voluntary experience.

I will look forward to joining future ones where possible and will keep an eye out for resources to share with ESRC colleagues."

Evaluation Summary

Forty-two percent of delegates responded to the evaluation survey (56 out of 134).

All the sessions were ranked as either 'very good' or 'good' by the majority of the participants as can be seen in the following table. The evidence presentations and breakout session had the joint highest ranking, followed by the shared reflections discussion and the 'waterfall' question.

Rating of the Expo sessions as either 'good' or 'very good'		
Expo sessions	Total no. of respondents	% of respondents rating sessions 'good/ v. good'
The evidence presentation by Matthew Linning (Volunteer Scotland), Kate Kilpatrick (Scottish Government) and Laura Crawford (Northumbria University)	56	93%
Shared Reflections discussion by Paul Wilson (Volunteer Edinburgh), Sam Buckley (Edinburgh Coronavirus Support) and Jen Reston (Aberlour)	56	91%
Breakout Session to identify key priorities for recovery	56	93%
Waterfall Question	54	87%
UK Panel Session with Lindsay Armstrong (Volunteer Now), Felicitie Walls (WCVA) and Jo Stuart (NCVO)	56	82%

Delegates rated the impact of the Expo positively, as can be seen in the following table.

- The highest impact was 'Discussion from bringing people together to address 'The road to recovery' theme. This also correlates with the feedback on what do you value the most. The most common theme mentioned in the feedback was the usefulness of the breakout sessions: "*The breakout session was really helpful in discussing the key points raised, and it was really informative to hear from different sized and resourced organisations - this reflects the diversity of the sector!*".
- New insights and learnings also had a high impact rating.
- While the proportion of respondents rating 'Increasing your ability to influence your organisation' as high was lower than other sessions, 60% of respondents also rated this as 'medium impact', and only 7% rated this as 'low impact'.

Rating of the impact of the Expo as 'high'		
Impact Question	Total no. of respondents	% of respondents rating impact 'high'
New insights / learnings	56	66%
Increasing your ability to influence your organisation	55	33%
Discussion from bringing people together to address the road to recovery theme	56	82%

A longer event with more time for each session was the main feedback on how to improve this type of 'Expo' event.

The evaluation findings confirm that the format of combining presentations with witness statements and round table discussion is both appreciated and impactful. The evaluation of this Mini-Expo along with those of the June and February 2020 Expos, show that the format of the events works online as well as offline, with the peer-to-peer sharing and discussion being particularly appreciated.

1. Introduction

Expo overview – This Mini-Expo is the third ‘Volunteering for All’ Expo”. The Expo theme for this event was “The Road to Recovery”. Its focus and content were shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic with a specific focus on looking forward to the future beyond Covid-19. This Mini-Expo adopts the same format as the online Mini-Expo in June 2020 during the first lockdown.

The event was held online (by Zoom - as dictated by the COVID-19 restrictions at the time) on 10th June 2021. Due to the popularity of the event, the first 100 places were booked within hours of going online and capacity was extended to include those on the waiting list.

“The Road to Recovery” event was structured around the following sessions:

- **Evidence presentation** by Matthew Linning (Volunteer Scotland), Kate Kilpatrick (Scottish Government) and Laura Crawford (Northumbria University).
- **Shared reflections discussion** by Paul Wilson (Volunteer Edinburgh), Sam Buckley (Edinburgh Coronavirus Support) and Jen Reston (Aberlour).
- **Breakout session** to identify key priorities for recovery.
- **Waterfall question**
- **UK panel session** with Lindsay Armstrong (Volunteer Now), Felicitie Walls (WCVA) and Jo Stuart (NCVO)

A link to the outputs of the event can be found [here](#), which contains the presentations and recordings of the sessions, and the analysis of the breakout discussion and waterfall question – all of which can be downloaded.

Response rate – an online evaluation survey was issued to all 134 delegates after the event resulting in 56 completed surveys, giving a response rate of 42%. This is good considering that the COVID-19 pandemic is contributing to ‘survey burn-out’. COVID-19 has necessitated an increase in use of surveys to gain feedback as lockdown restricts movement and gatherings and necessitates ‘home working’.

Scope of the evaluation – the evidence is structured into seven sections:

2. Quality of the sessions
3. What works and what could be improved
4. Impact of the Expo
5. Breakout discussion
6. Takeaway learnings
7. Waterfall question
8. Conclusion and recommendations

2. Quality of sessions

Table 2.1 shows that all the sessions were ranked as either 'very good' or 'good' by the majority of the participants, with the Evidence Presentation and Breakout Session having the joint highest ranking, followed by the Shared Reflections discussion, the Waterfall Question and the UK Panel Session. Figures 2.1 - 2.5 give the full results for each of the Mini-Expo sessions.

Table 2.1 Rating of the Expo sessions as either 'good' or 'very good'		
Expo sessions	Total no. of respondents	% of respondents rating sessions 'good/ v. good'
The evidence presentation by Matthew Linning (Volunteer Scotland), Kate Kilpatrick (Scottish Government) and Laura Crawford (Northumbria University)	56	93%
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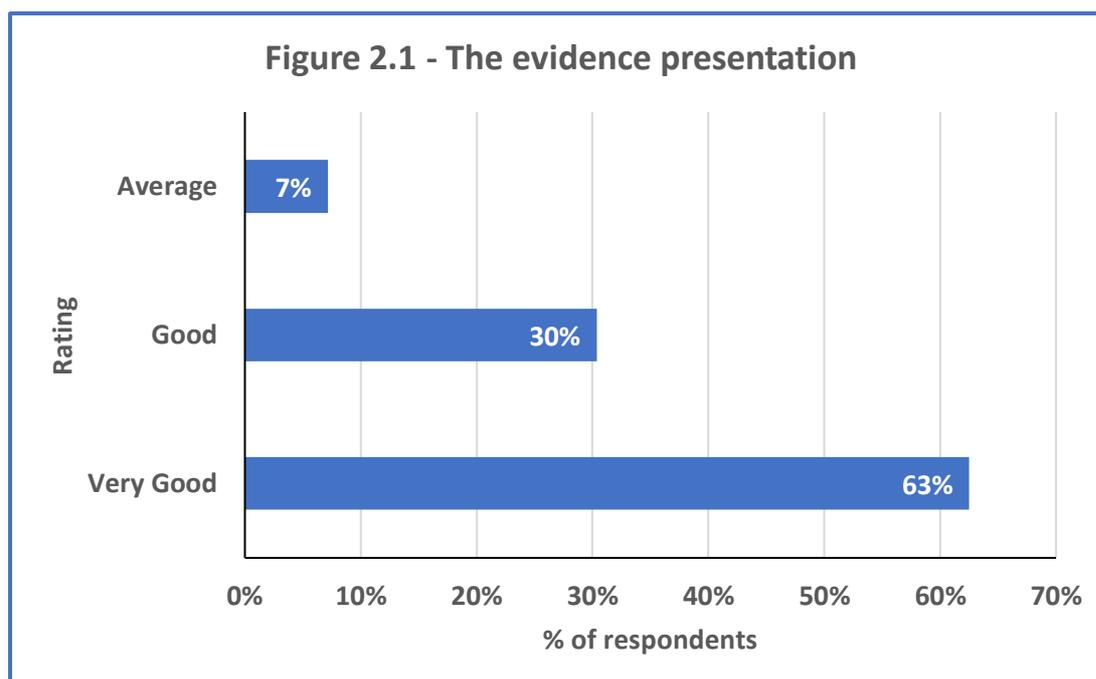


Figure 2.2 - Shared reflections discussion

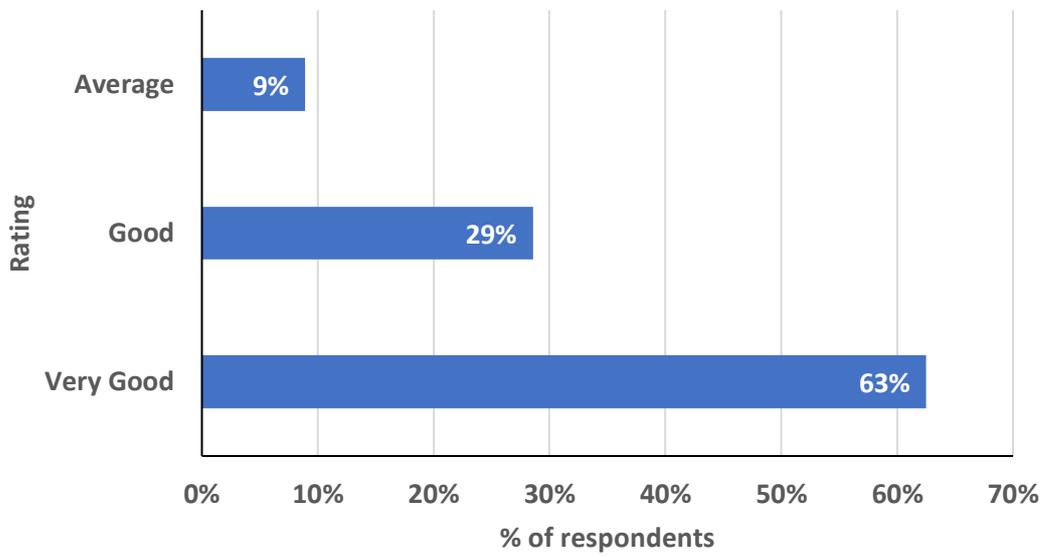


Figure 2.3 - Breakout session to identify key priorities for recovery

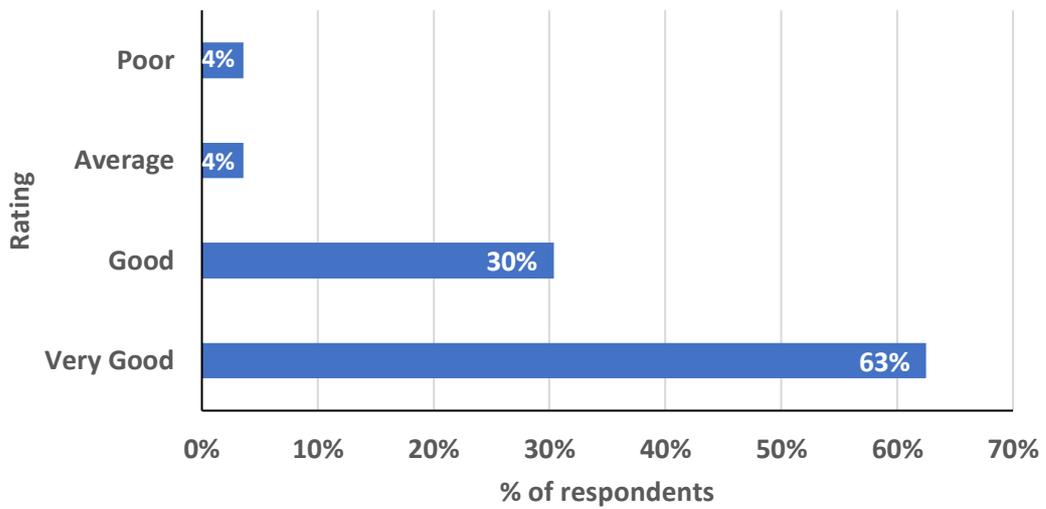


Figure 2.4 - Waterfall Question

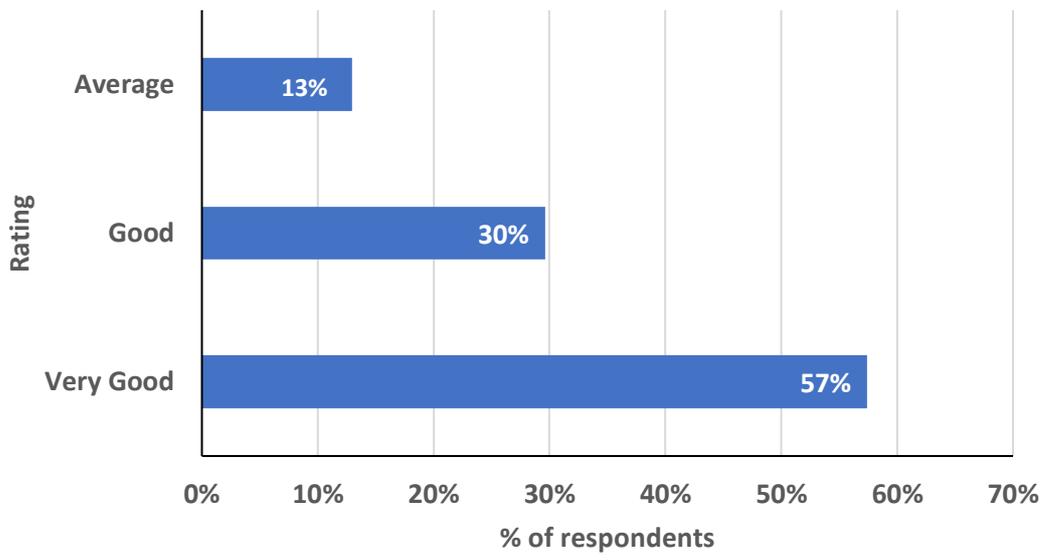
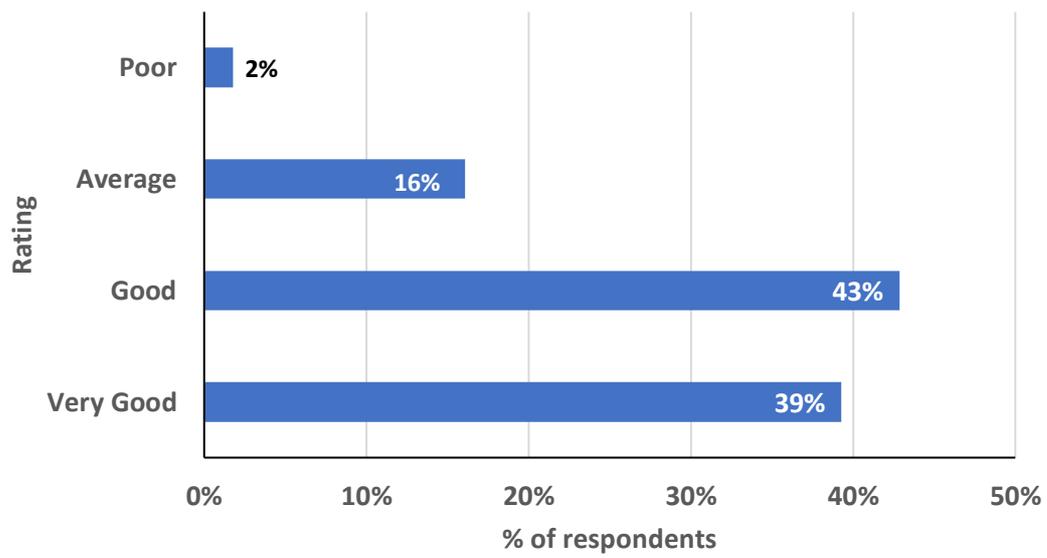


Figure 2.5 - UK Panel Sesssion



3. What works and what could be improved?

Delegates were asked to give specific feedback on 'What aspects of the Expo did you find most useful and why?'.

- Three elements of the Expo stand out from this open question:
 - Breakout sessions – 19 respondents cited these
 - Shared reflections – 9 respondents cited these
 - Evidence session – 8 respondents cited these

An overarching positive theme from the Expo stands out – the opportunity to talk with other organisations and exchange knowledge. As this theme encompasses many different positive statements it is harder to quantify in terms of the number of respondents who cited this. However, the comments below provide a snapshot of respondents' comments.

What works

"Useful to hear other viewpoints"

"It was interesting to hear others point of view about how to take volunteering forward and that we have the same issues across the board."

"The knowledge shared and the breakout discussions"

"Listening to the experiences of the voluntary services in attendance. I am new to the role of volunteer co-ordinator so appreciated hearing their thoughts"

"Listening to the experiences & ideas of other people in the Volunteering sector"

"Lots of passionate and committed people wanting to work together"

"Seeing the bigger picture but also speaking to other organisations in the same situation as yourself"

"Just really hearing how other volunteer sectors are getting on and how they plan to recover."

"Getting together and hearing that others share similar thoughts around pausing, reflecting and supporting existing volunteers"

"Sharing and hearing from other organisations "

"Finding out other organisations had similar experiences"

"A space to discuss how we move forward with colleagues in other organisations. Feeling connected to the sector."

"Discussion and lots of ideas"

Delegates were also asked 'What aspects of the Expo, if any, would you change?' Feedback was focused on two aspects:

- More time in the breakout sessions – 14 delegates mentioned this
- Presentations were too fast, and discussion afterwards would be helpful – 3 delegates said this.

However, 18 respondents would not make any changes.

What could be improved?

"Maybe too many speakers for the time allowed. OR Advertise it as finishing at 12 and finish early, everyone likes to finish early."

"It felt a bit overloaded with panellists so would suggest reformatting that aspect of it"

"Although the format worked very well, all aspects were delivered very quickly, it all felt a bit rushed, maybe a little longer?"

"Timings were rushed. This made things concise but may have restricted authentic/meaningful discourse from any of the sections (break out rooms felt like they had more than enough time)"

"More time with so many speakers"

"Less presenters so as each would have more time so not such a rushed feeling"

"I guess too much happened in a short period of time & the end session became rushed."

"Making it slightly longer, the speed was dizzying!"

"The length of the session - although all the sessions were great, it remains challenging to concentrate for extended periods of time on screen so I perhaps wasn't as tuned into the final sessions."

"I've said some of that above - more time, more slides, subtitles, names of speakers showing when they speak"

"Perhaps more break outs and less presentations- there was a lot of information to take in/ consider. Perhaps 3 shorter sessions with 1 topic at each and more time in more break outs?"

"Could have made it slightly longer to give more time to final session"

"A little more time on the discussion panels"

"I understand the time limits, but perhaps 90 minutes was a bit too short for everything that was planned."

4. Impact of the Expo

Delegates were asked how they would rate the impact of the Expo in terms of:

- New insights - what you learned?
- Increasing your ability to Influence your organisation.
- Bringing people together to address the road to recovery theme.

Impact Question	Total no. of respondents	% of respondents rating impact 'high'
New insights / learnings	56	66%
Increasing your ability to influence your organisation	55	33%
Discussion from bringing people together to address the road to recovery theme	56	82%

Bringing people together to address the Expo theme gained the highest impact, with 82% of respondents rating this impact to be 'high', followed by giving new insights/ learnings at 66%.

Impact on 'your ability to influence your organization' received the lowest impact rating but still a third of survey respondents gave it an impact rating of 'high', 60% medium and only 7% gave a low impact rating.

Figures 4.1 - 4.3 present the full impact ratings.

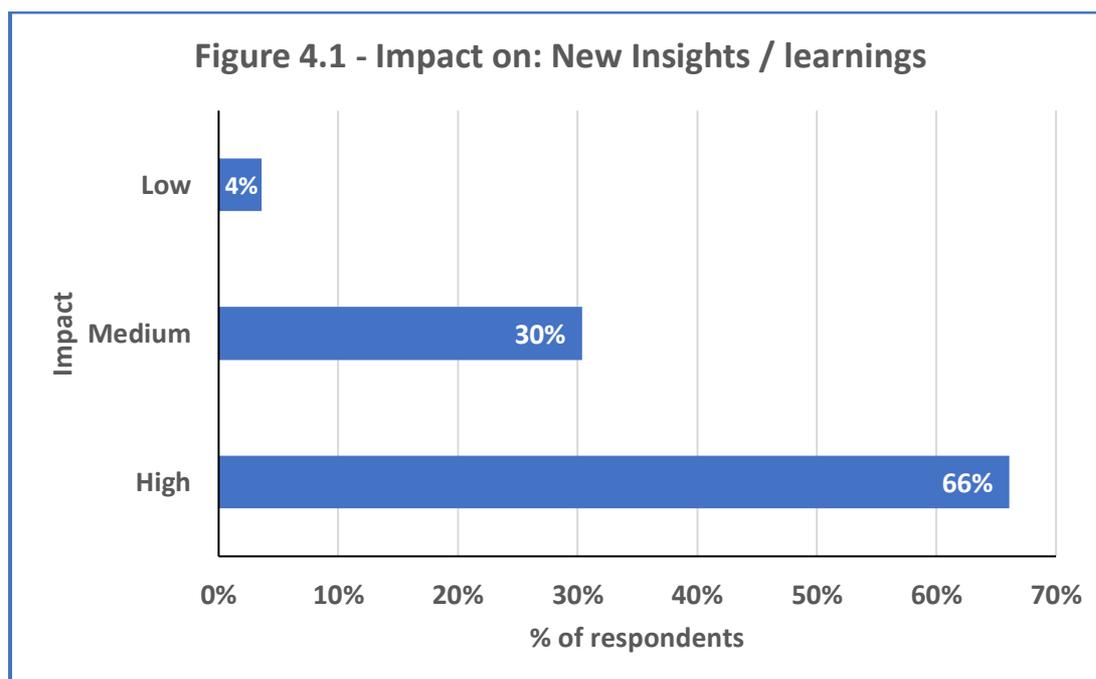


Figure 4.2 - Impact on: Increasing your ability to influence your organisation

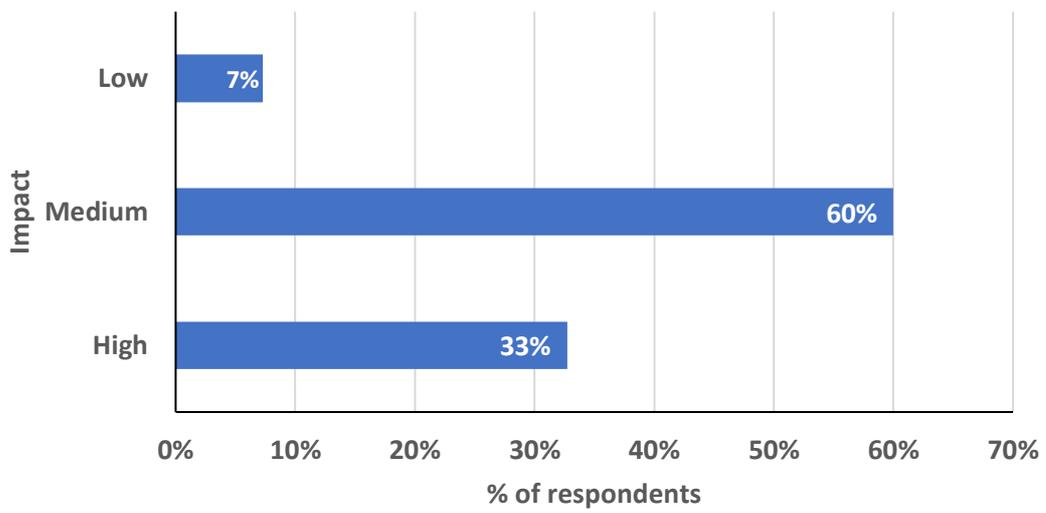
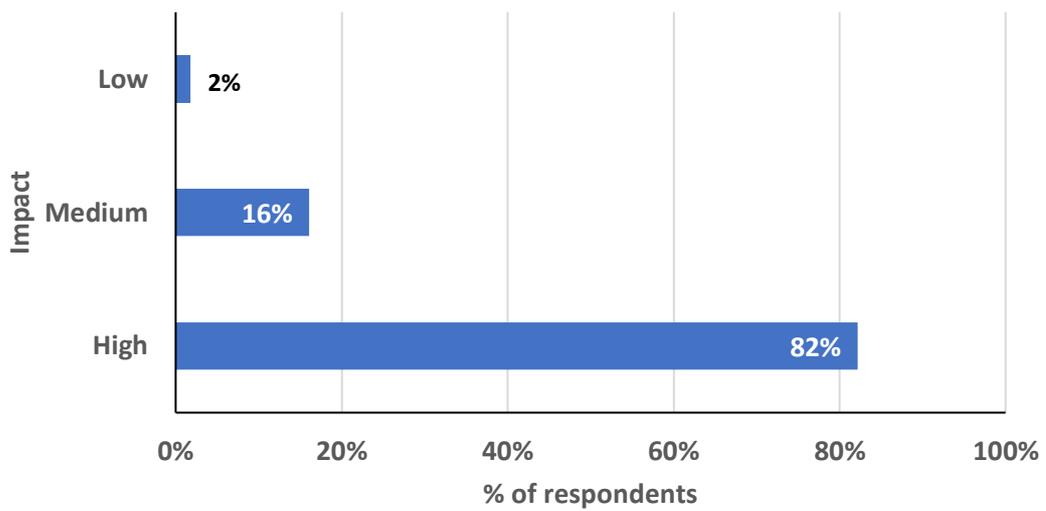


Figure 4.3 - Impact on: Discussion from bringing people together to address the road to recovery theme



5. Breakout discussion

Facilitated discussion, explored the following key questions.

- Reflections so far – from what you have heard this morning what do you think are the key challenges/issues relevant to recovery?
- Solutions – what are your ideas on how best to support the contribution of volunteering to Scotland's recovery from COVID-19?

Detailed analysis of the breakout discussion is given in a [separate report – Attendee Voices](#). It highlights the shared reflections of participants as well as suggestions for potential solutions. This report contains useful learnings and insights that are important to reflect on.

6. Takeaway learnings

Take away learnings were answered by 51 out of the 56 people who completed the survey. This feedback centred around the following themes:

- Organisations are not alone; many are facing the same challenges – 15 respondents
- The need for support for volunteers and volunteer managers along with recognition of the work they do - 9 respondents
- Organisations need time to heal before planning recovery – 5 respondents.

There were also other takeaway learnings that are captured in the following quotes:

“Collaborating”

“The need to ease volunteers back to volunteering and how to find ways to capture the informal volunteers”

“Always - the evidence!”

“To keep doing what I'm doing”

“General feeling of positivity.”

“Digital access is still very much a barrier and should be a key priority. Lots of interesting ideas for future research and policymaking to feed back to UKRI/ESRC, including barriers to participation including inclusivity for vulnerable volunteers as well as service users, exploring employer supported volunteering and perceived value of VS. Thank you all.”

“The need to continue the shared learning - this is so beneficial!”

“That we as a service, having been operating a blended model for some time due to our locality and Tier placement, are ahead of the game compared to some, but that doesn't mean that we cannot learn from others' and keep our service delivery under review.”

“The importance of networking.”

7. Waterfall question

As part of the Road to Recovery Expo a new element was added, a waterfall question. It asked all attendees to consider and respond simultaneously - "What is the No.1 priority to support the contribution of volunteering to Scotland's recovery?".

Detailed content of the Waterfall question answers is given in the separate report - [Attendee Voices](#). This report highlights the shared reflections of participants as well as suggestions for potential solutions. This report contains useful learnings and insights that are important to reflect on.

8. Conclusion and recommendations

The popularity of the Mini-Expo model does seem to imply that these Expos are meeting a real need in the third sector. The survey results presented in this Evaluation Report show that the vast majority of delegates rated all the sessions as either 'very good' or 'good'. The Expo structure based on evidence presentations, shared reflections, panel session and the opportunity to discuss and network together seems to be a well-received and successful format.

The role of the Expo in bringing people together for networking, sharing experiences, learning and discussion seems particularly impactful. Covid-19 moved the Expos online and, in a year where the third sector has faced unprecedented challenges, having time to reflect and participate in peer-to-peer discussion is fulfilling a vital need. This echoes the evaluation findings from the Expos in February and June 2020. However, a key area for review relates to 'time shortage' linked to the compressed 1 ½ hour programme for the Mini-Expo format. Thirty percent of respondents (17 out of 56) suggested that more time be devoted to the presentations and shared reflection sessions.

Implications for future events: - Running this event online does not seem to reduce the popularity or impact of the Expo, and perhaps even opens up such events to those that could not attend in-person. There is similar impact evidence and comments in 'The Gathering' Expo Feb 2021 Evaluation Report. This indicates that the Expos are a model that can operate both in traditional conference settings and through online platforms like Zoom.