

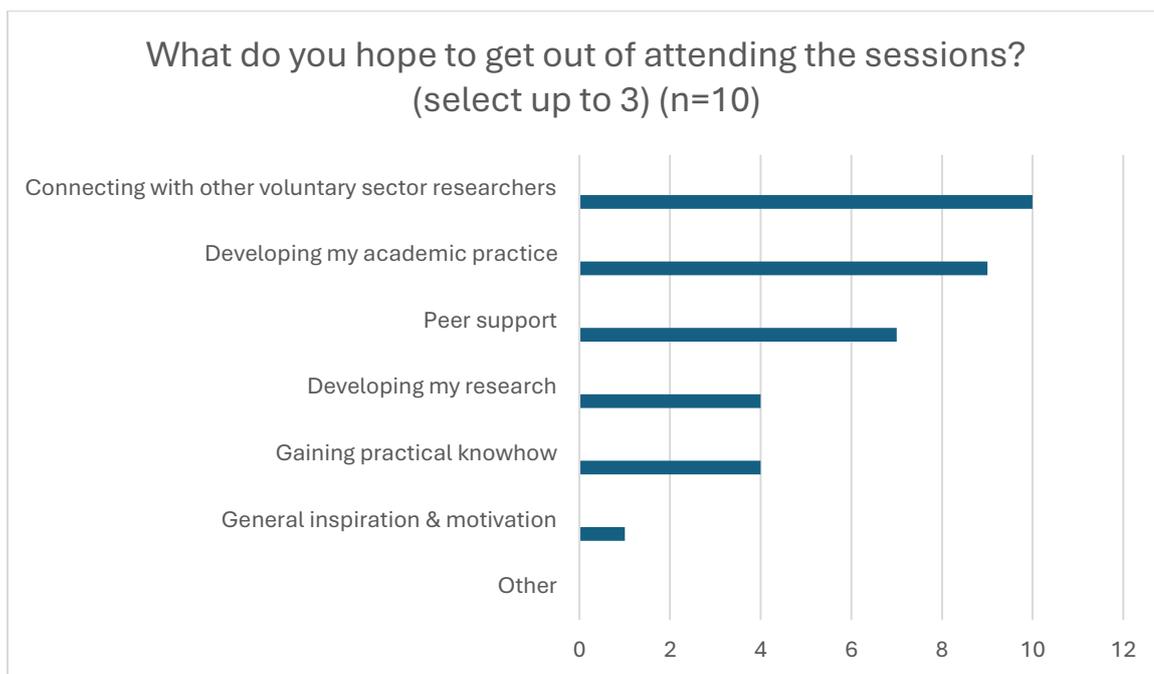
New Researchers Online Sessions feedback 2025

An anonymous online survey was conducted by VSSN during the last quarter of 2025, to gather feedback from new researchers about the online sessions, in order to ensure the sessions better met the needs of new researchers going forwards. 10 responses were received.

Headlines

Finding	Recommendation
People are broadly satisfied with the sessions	Continue broadly as we are, but incorporating the following changes...
People value both connecting, being part of a community, and hearing about others' work, and the opportunity to develop their academic practice.	Ensure more networking and informal connecting time, as well as input from/access to speakers.
The timings and session lengths are about right	Continue to schedule for an hour in the middle of the day (to avoid school runs and accommodate different time zones). We will continue to vary the day, mindful that there is unlikely to be a universally 'best' day. We should avoid Fridays to avoid a clash with Friday prayers.
There seems to be demand for more frequent sessions	We are introducing an informal get-together between regular sessions. This will enable people to connect more frequently (every 6-8 weeks), and allow more time for conversations/sharing/community building, without reducing discussion/speaker topics.
Vary content	We will continue to vary content by working through the range of topics suggested. We will try to ensure we vary topic 'type' (eg: some theoretical, some more practical)
Suggested topics	To be added to the existing working list.
Amongst the topics suggested were requests for conference information (well in advance), feedback, plans for next year; opportunities to present work as posters in other (more affordable) conferences; and recent research news.	<p>We could introduce a standing item for research news and conference/presentation opportunities.</p> <p>We will continue to flag conference information well in advance, including plans for next year as they crystallise.</p> <p>We can ask the conference committee to consider sharing feedback from last year's conference with the network.</p> <p>We will continue to share feedback on the NR day in the online session following the conference.</p>
Comms	We will endeavour to provide clearer titles for the different sessions.
Some demand for a mixture of online and in-person sessions	Regular in-person new researcher meetings aren't practical – they'd require resources we don't have, more organising, a bigger time commitment from attendees, and may exclude those who can't easily travel. However, we can look into and will advertise other in-person opportunities. We can also encourage people to meet up informally with others in their area.

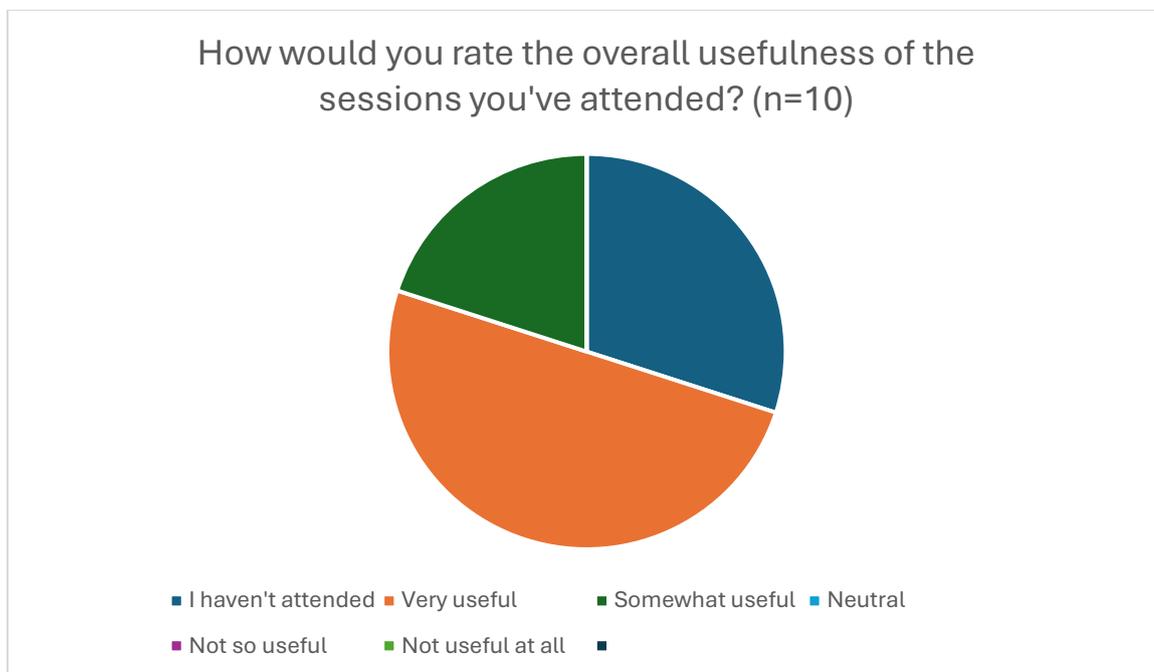
In detail



In attending the sessions, respondents hoped to:

- connect with others (networking, finding peers with shared interests, etc);
- develop their academic practice (learning about theory, methodology, research design, etc);
- engage in peer support (hearing from more experienced researchers, sharing challenges, asking questions, etc).

Those who had attended previously rated sessions as somewhat or very useful:



What have you liked most about the sessions? (n=5)

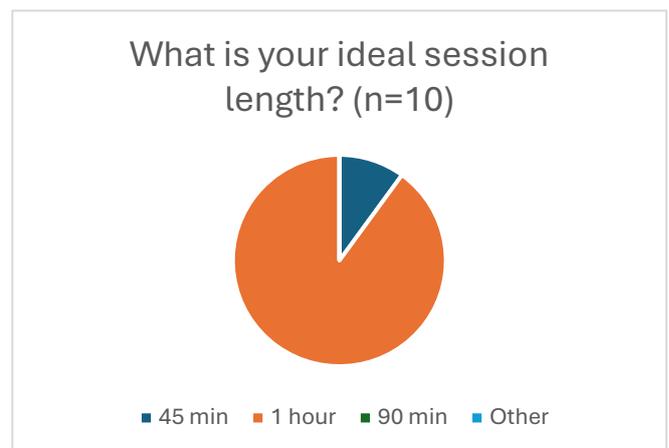
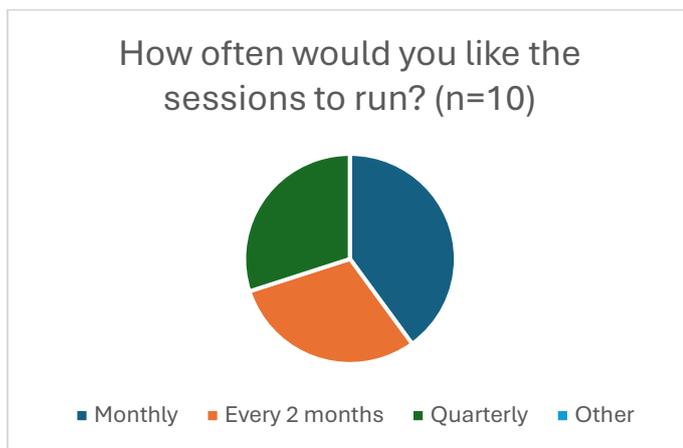
- “Feeling of community”

- “The opportunity to connect with other researchers”
- “Hearing what other people are doing [...] helps me to make sense of what I am doing”
- “Meeting other researchers and hearing about others’ work”
- “The sense of community and connection, particularly given that much of my research work is not directly about the third sector any more”

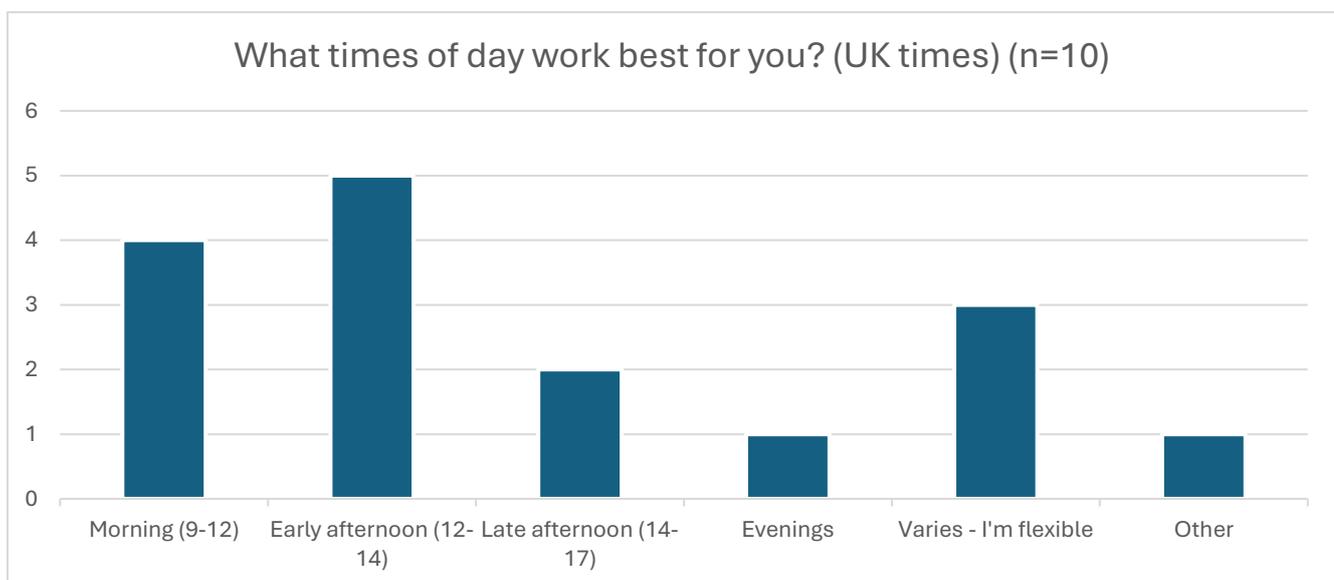
Respondents valued meeting and connecting with others, hearing about others’ work, and the sense of community.

Frequency, length, times of day

At the time of the survey, the sessions were run quarterly and typically last an hour. Responses suggested a demand for more frequent sessions, but that the length is about right.

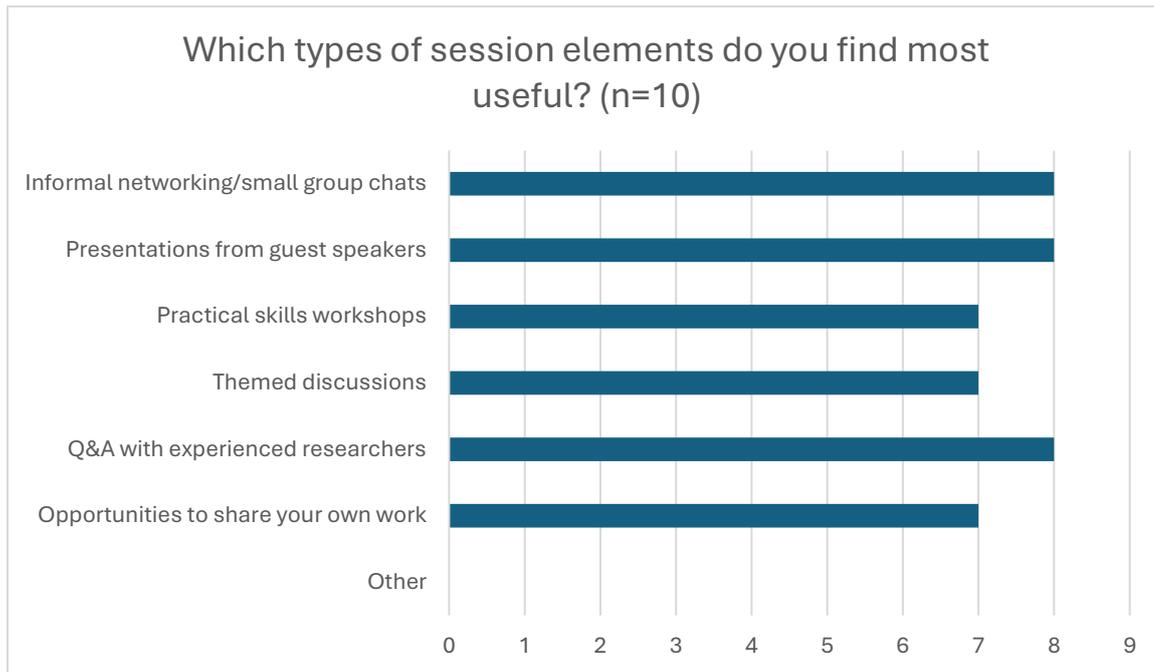


The most popular times were the first part of the day (before 14:00). However, we were asked to avoid school run times, and one response highlighted unpredictable schedules making it difficult for some to commit to a specific time. Typically, we aim for the middle of the day to avoid school runs, accommodate those in different time zones, etc. This seems to work well for most people. We also vary the day.



Activities within sessions

All options scored similarly, so there was no clear steer from responses to this question as to where our focus should lie.



Specific comments (n=3) highlighted the importance of varying session content, informal chat times, and trainings on practical topics.

Do you have suggestions for how we should structure or use the sessions?

- Avoid school run times
- Provide clear titles for sessions
- Vary content
- “I really like the way you facilitate the sessions. The opportunity to chat in a breakout room at the beginning is lovely.”

Lots of ideas for future topics were suggested (n=7):

- Help with research projects
- Funding
- Ethics
- Methodology, research methods
- Coproduction
- VCSE employees & volunteers talking about their challenges and successes
- Occasional theory
- Impact & external engagement
- Writing theoretical & conceptual papers
- Writing journal articles (and how differs from thesis writing)
- Where to publish research
- Journal content
- How to review journal articles
- Career pathways
- Conference information (well in advance), feedback, plans for next year

- Opportunities to present work as posters in other (more affordable) conferences
- Recent research news

The final two questions asked what should be changed and, more broadly, what else would help respondents get the most out of the New Researchers Network (n=3). Again, the value of the relational aspect of the group was emphasised.

What would you change about the sessions, if anything? (n=3)

- “Less guest speakers, more conversation”
- “More time chatting to others about what they are doing”
- “Nothing!”
- “I think they are useful as they are”

What else would help you get the most out of the New Researchers Network?

- “Getting to know other people – use of breakout room could help with this”
- “Mix of online and in-person”
- “Nothing to add”