



Data Briefing – Weekend 1

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Introduction

This briefing provides an overview of provisional data from the first weekend of the Citizens’ Assembly of Scotland (CA). Informed consent to take part in the research was gathered from assembly members and of the 117 people attending the first weekend, 116 chose to participate in the research.

It draws on data from two sources: 1) 114 questionnaires completed by assembly members at the end of the weekend and 2) 16 pages (7000 words) of observational fieldnotes taken by two members of the research team. The data selected for inclusion address the following research questions:

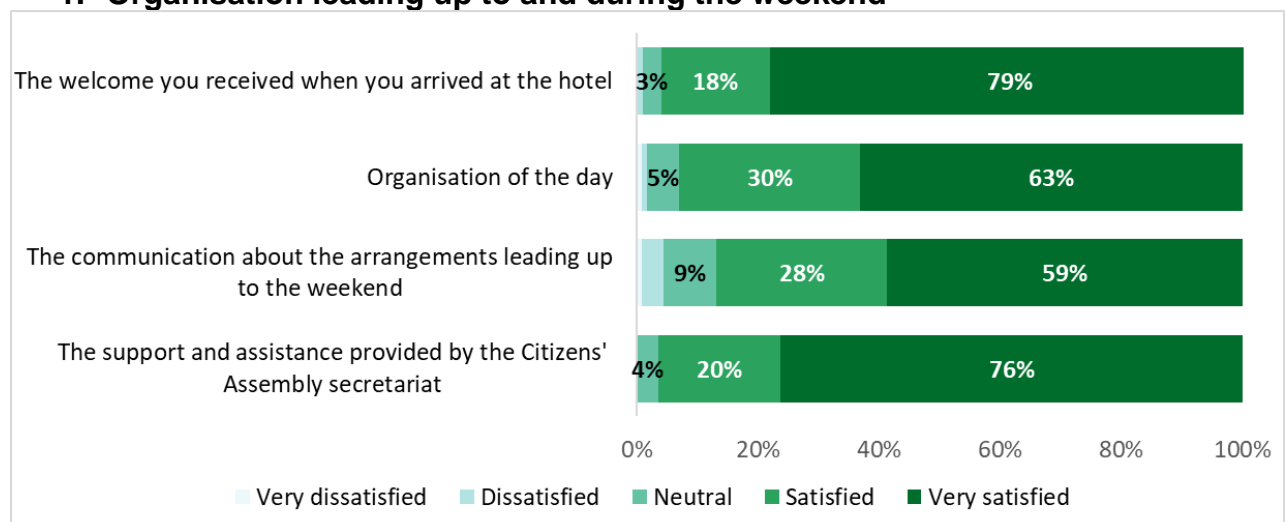
- How do participants experience the Citizens’ Assembly process?
- How do participants learn and form views through the Citizen Assembly process?

The briefing takes each of the research questions in turn.

How do participants experience the Citizens’ Assembly process?

This section focuses on assembly members’ evaluations of the organisation of the weekend, their experience of the CA process and attitudes towards the CA in general.

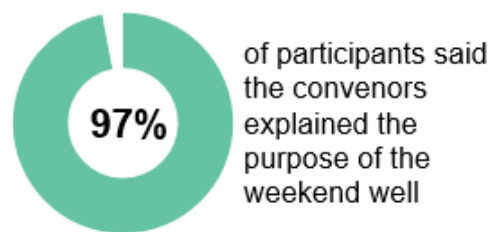
1. Organisation leading up to and during the weekend



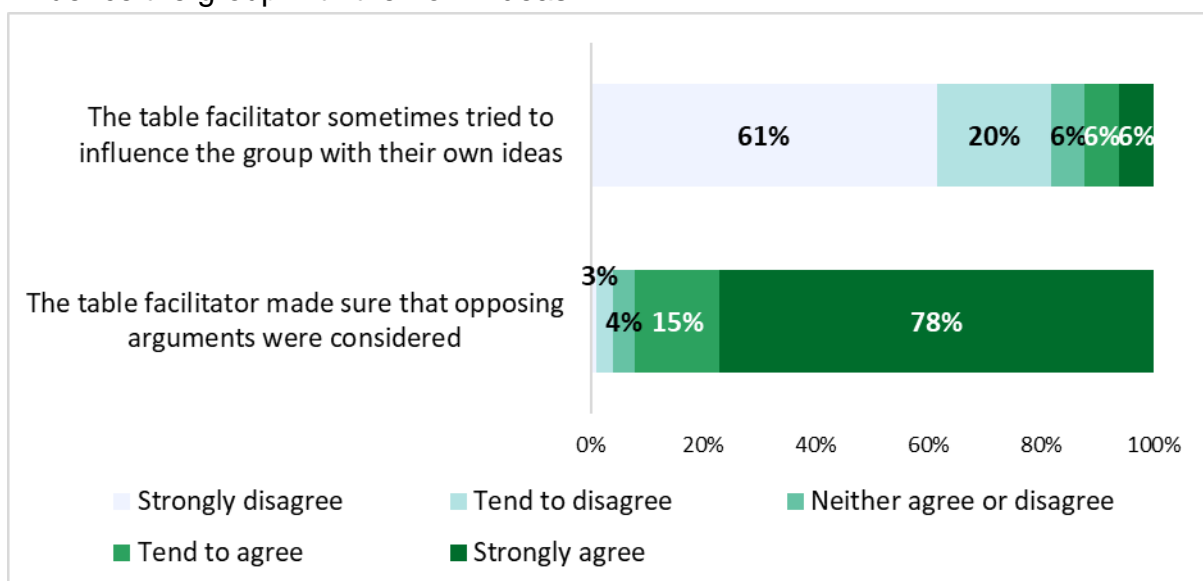
Free text comments made by assembly members in relation to arrangements leading up to and during the weekend centred around **general organisation** and **communication**. The following comments illustrate positive views: *“Everything has been fantastic. Very organised, everyone so friendly. All staff have been very professional”* and *“Up to and during the weekend, communication has been consistent and open”*. On the other hand, the following illustrates a view on where there was room for improvement with respect to the first day schedule: *“First day seemed pretty chaotic, far too many forms being passed around + wasted time. Could've been organised much better.”* In addition, the following quote illustrates a concern in relation to guidance about the media in advance and at the start of the CA: *“It wasn't clear what the photographer was doing on Day 2. He was photographing all the tables when people had already not given consent. It would also have been beneficial to explain what cameras were videoing + what area (including STV).”* Appendix A provides a selection of free text responses.

2. Members’ experiences of the convenors and facilitators, and their opportunities to participate

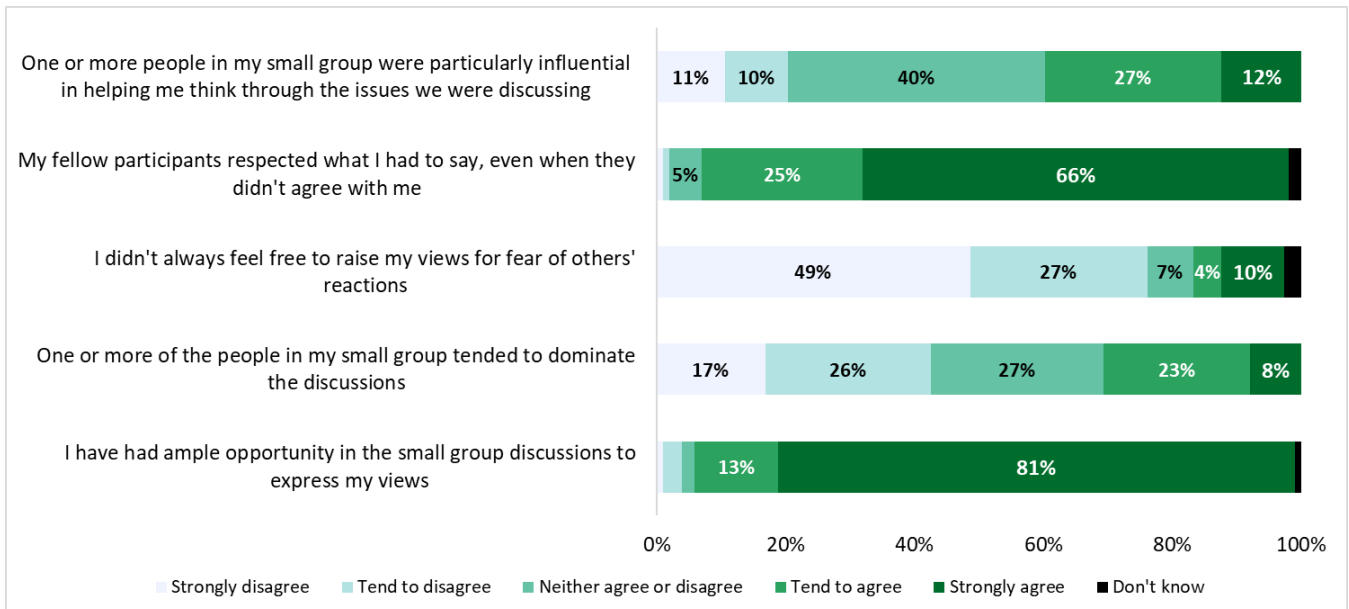
The responses from the survey indicated that, overall, assembly members had positive experiences of the convenors and facilitators. Almost all participants agreed or strongly agreed that convenors had explained the purpose of the weekend well.



Members were also asked about their experiences of the table facilitators. Only 4% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the facilitator ensured opposing arguments were considered. However, 12% agreed or strongly agreed that the facilitator tried to influence the group with their own ideas.



Almost all participants (94%) agreed or strongly agreed they had ample opportunity to have their voice heard and 66% agreed that other members respected what they had to say. At the same time, 31% agreed that some members tended to dominate the discussion and 14% agreed or strongly agreed that they didn't always feel able to express their opinion for fear of others' reactions.

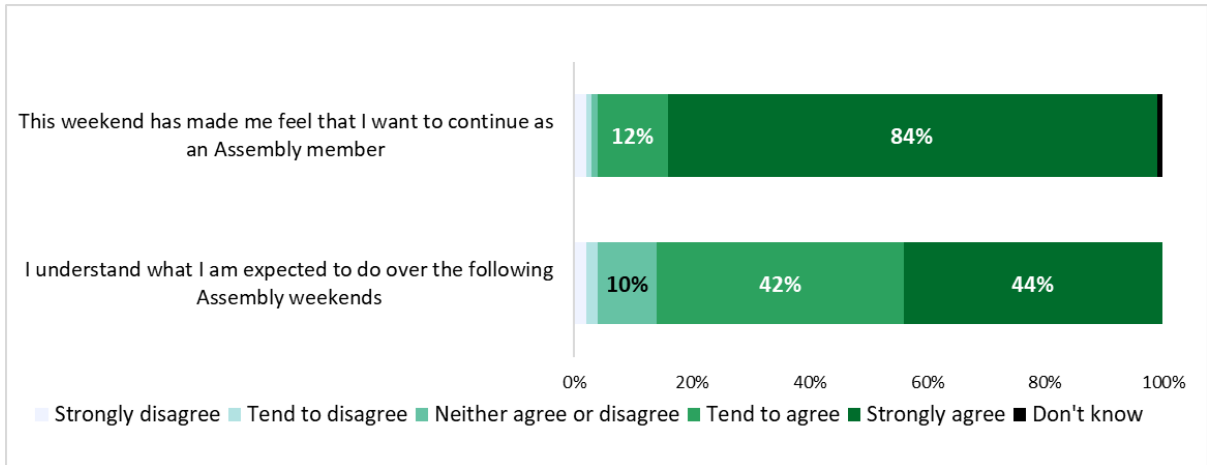


In the facilitation team, a facilitator expressed concern about some assembly members providing 'false information' to each other and how to address this during table discussions. Facilitators also requested knowing the content of presentations in advance to be aware about the topics that may come up. They also made suggestions to improve responsiveness to the flagging-up system (yellow/red cards) by having a team member tasked with monitoring assembly feedback. The observational notes detailed at least one case where a table facilitator raised a card that was not noticed by the lead facilitator or conveners.

In the facilitator briefing, one convenor expressed a desire to have a mechanism to take the 'temperature of the room' as the conversations unfold. The observation notes included a moment where there was an ad hoc attempt by one of the convenors to get feedback from assembly members in a way that was not systematic or quantifiable.

3. Overall satisfaction and impact of the first weekend

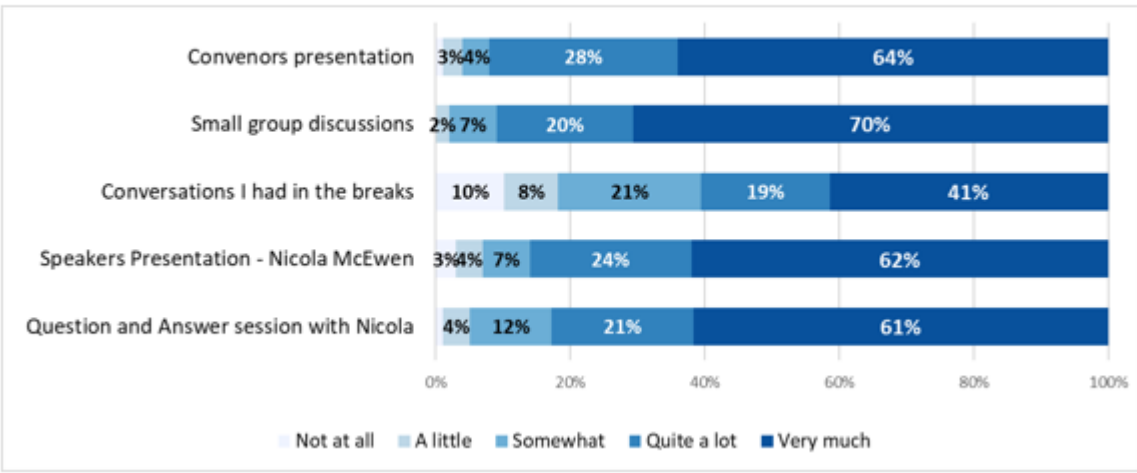
Almost all participants (96%) agreed or strongly agreed that the first weekend had made them feel that they want to continue as an Assembly member. In addition, 44% strongly agreed and a further 42% agreed that they knew what was expected of them.



How do participants learn and form views through the Citizens' Assembly?

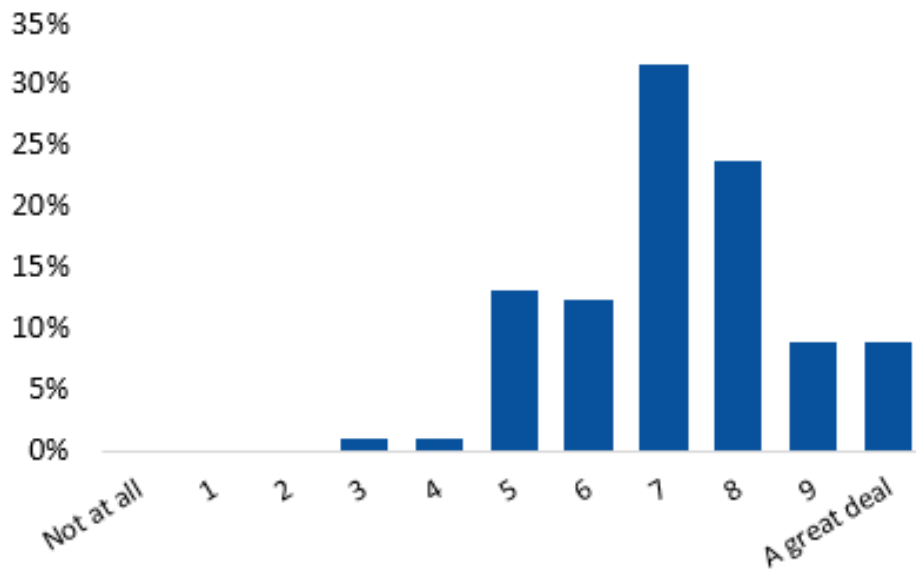
The research also aims to understand assembly members' understanding of the topics discussed during the CA. Comparing the different elements of the weekend in relation to self-reported learning, members found the convenors' presentation (92% 'very much' or 'quite a lot') and the small group discussions (90% 'very much' or 'quite a lot') helpful. 86% reported the speaker presentation as helpful ('very much' or 'quite a lot'). Relatively fewer – but still a majority- found their informal conversations in the breaks helpful for supporting their learning (60% 'very much' or 'quite a lot').

Q To what extent did you find the following activities helpful for your learning this weekend?

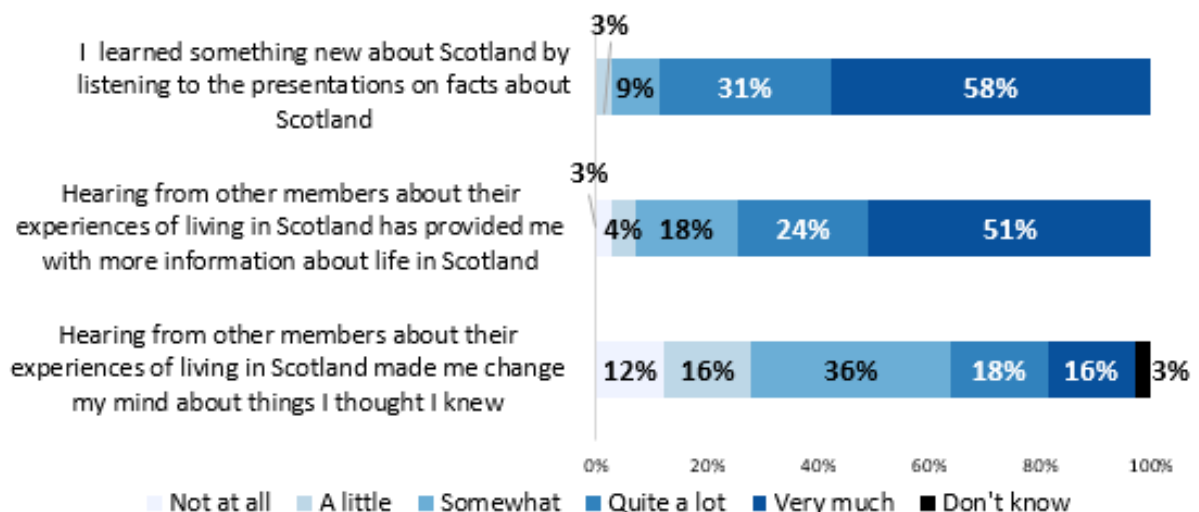


There was quite a spread of view from members about how much they felt they know about Scotland.

Q How much do you feel you know about life in Scotland?



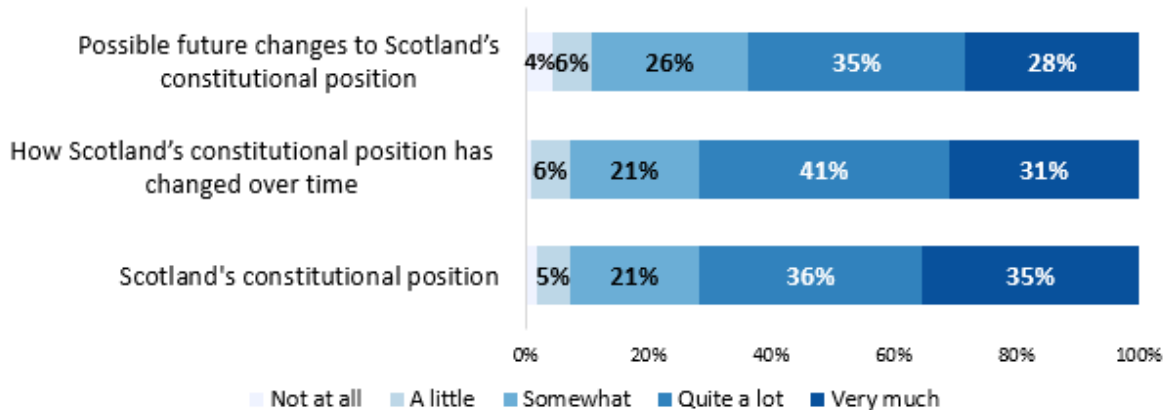
The survey responses revealed that most members agreed they had learned something from the presentations on facts about Scotland (89% 'very much' or 'quite a lot') or from hearing from other members (75% 'very much' or 'quite a lot'). Fewer members reported changing their mind about things they thought they knew: 33% ('very much' or 'quite a lot') reported that hearing from others had helped to change their mind.



Finally, members were asked the extent to which input from Professor Nicola McEwen had increased their knowledge of topics relating to Scotland's constitution.

This varied a little between the different topics: for increased knowledge of possible future changes, 63% reported their knowledge and understanding increased ‘very much’ or ‘quite a lot; for how the constitution has changed over time, 72% reported their knowledge increased ‘very much’ or ‘quite a lot’.

Q To what extent did input from Nicola increase your knowledge and understanding of the following topics?



The observational notes, however, suggest that the language could be more accessible and basic concepts could be unpacked better. This is illustrated by the assembly members request to receive a ‘glossary’ of key terminology on constitutional issues. Another observation was that the flow of the presentation was affected by displaying the wrong version of the slides, the screen not being visible from the speaker’s podium, and the bottom of the slides not being visible to members towards the back of the room. Some of the feedback from facilitators indicated that some assembly members noted that the questions asked in the Q/A session were selected by the convenors and put to the speaker in their language, rather than the words of the assembly members.

Appendix A: Selection of responses to open-text questions

Question 2 – Do you have any other comments you would like to make about the arrangements leading up to and during this weekend?

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Organisation positive | Great programme and pre-arrangement. The programme effectively & efficiently managed. |
| | The agenda provided was very helpful and set a clear expectation of exactly what was going to happen and when. |
| | We were well informed before we came this weekend and made very welcome by everyone. |
| | Everything has been fantastic. Very organised, everyone so friendly. All staff have been very professional. |
| | Everything seemed to be really well organised. |
| Organisation negative | First day seemed pretty chaotic, far too many forms being passed around + wasted time. Could've been organised much better. |
| | More information. Paid quicker than 2 weeks, because some people paid a lot to get here. |
| | The meal times were not organised properly. I stood in a queue for 18 mins. Was the same lunch/ evening. |
| | Could the next hotel please be asked to make sure the meals are labelled for coeliacs? (Gluten free foods must be gluten free!!) |
| | Broadly satisfied, some organisation issues particularly in emails being tagged as spam |
| Communication - positive | Happy with the contact made with me. |
| | The information given via email on run up to weekend was great. |
| | Very satisfied with the communication |
| | I felt fully informed throughout. |
| | Plenty of communication which was great. |
| Communication negative | Tried to call the number advised to ask questions but got no answer and I tried for 3 days. Had to call the hotel. |
| | No mention about needing ID for the castle and then in the end didn't need it so stressed for nothing. Emails had a lot of the same information and was a bit overwhelming. Would have liked to have known the layout of the day sooner if possible. |
| | I would have liked to have the programme for the day in advance instead of on the day. |
| | Email address was not accurate (not working) for 3 days, ended up telephoning. An iPad may have helped reduce paper (sustainable) + would have also helped with presentations. |
| | Forms - while emailed - could have been done via a website or something? |

Question 20 - Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Positive Comments | Very enjoyable event, I am looking forward to hearing more expert opinions and small group opinions. |
| | I feel this weekend has been filled with really positive vibes, everyone is so friendly. I am excited for the meetings ahead. The challenges we face and our final outcoming. Along with experiencing all people and walks of lives opinion. |
| | I think this process will be very rewarding & for someone who was not that keen I am very pleasantly surprised. |
| | I've found out things about myself over this weekend that have surprised me |
| Negative Comments | We did not have enough time to discuss ANYTHING!! Too rushed. When asking some important questions. |
| | Having so many people in one room has made hearing each other very difficult |
| | Disappointed at hotel facilities - room was poor to say the least. Castle visit ran very poorly - sat on buses for far too long, not very accommodating for individuals who don't drink wine! |
| | Enjoyed the assembly but not the uncertainty around photography/ filming. Perhaps explaining where is being filmed/ photographed in future weekends would be beneficial. |
| Improvement comments | Given info on subjects to be discussed in advance of being asked to record your views on them. |
| | Use less plastic in future events. |
| | I feel like we need more information on how the country is run and how decisions are made. Also what was pledged to change and what has changed since the last election. |
| | Don't rush this event. Let everyone speak. |
| Hopes and intentions | Really enjoyed being part of the assembly. Has really sparked my interest and passion for inequality in Scotland. I want to do more. |
| | I am very passionate about making changes now that I have attended Citizens Assembly |
| | I would very much like to be in parliament - Scottish or Westminster when the report of the C. Assembly is reported & discussed. |
| | I hope that the Government will act on what happens at this Assembly |