



GROUP REPORT
Round 129

Regular Inter-laboratory Counting Exchange Scheme (RICE)
July 2025



This report is available to view on our website: <https://www.hsl.gov.uk/proficiency-testing-schemes/rice-group-reports>

This report will be issued to all participating laboratories following the completion of each round of RICE.

Chart 1 shows the current number of laboratories participating in the RICE scheme for R129.
UK 147 (69%), Europe 56 (27%) and ROW 9 (4%)

Chart 1 – Current Participating Laboratories (R129)

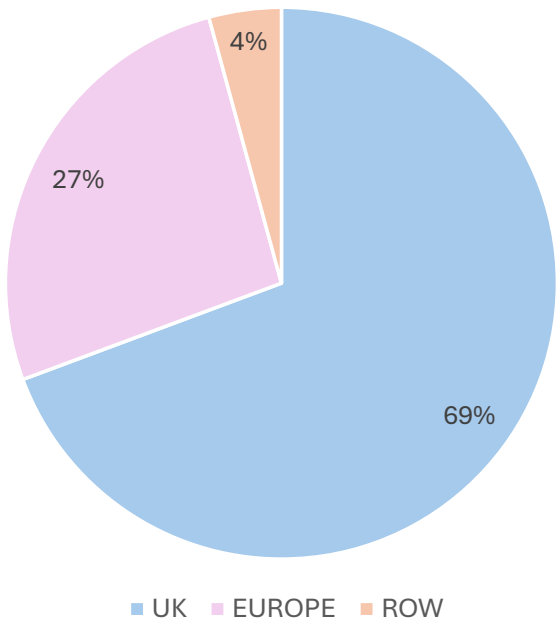
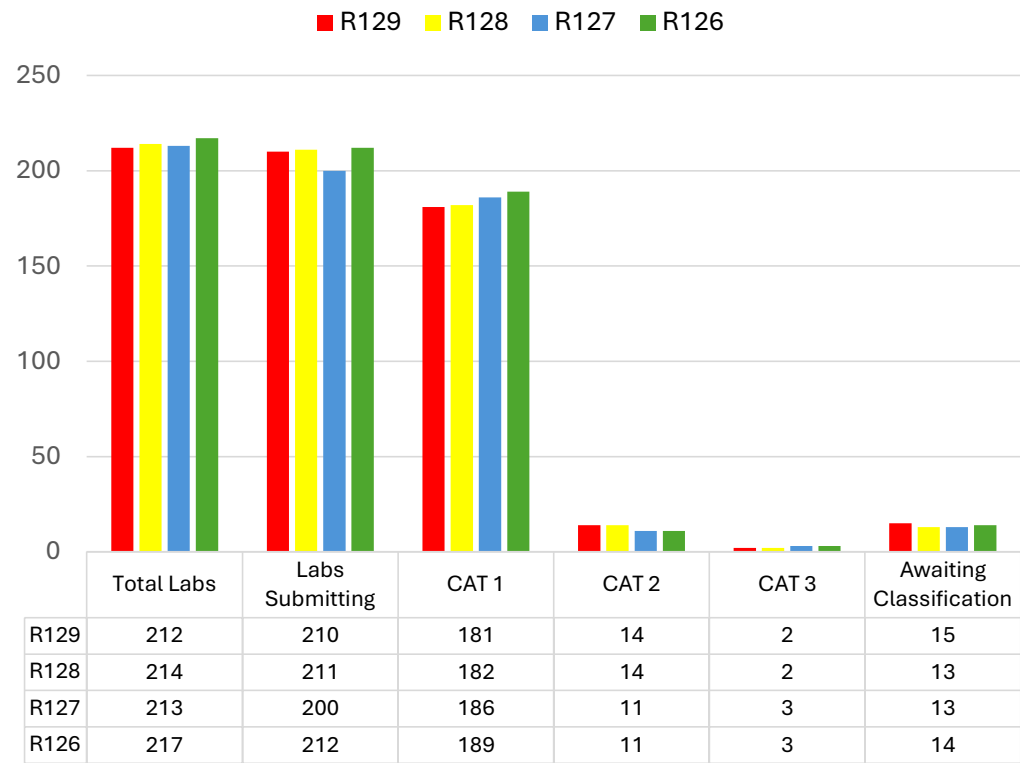


Chart 2 shows the comparison of categories from participating laboratories in R126-129.

Chart 2 – Category Comparison R126-129





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Chart 3 represent the classifications of each group - UK, Europe & ROW.

- UK - 143 (97%) are category 1, 3 (2%) are category 2 and 1 (1%) are awaiting classification.
- Europe - 35 (62%) are category 1, 10 (18%) are category 2, 1 (2%) are category 3 and 10 (18%) are awaiting classification.
- ROW - 3 (33%) are category 1, 1 (11%) are category 2, 1 (11%) are category 3 and 4 (45%) are awaiting classification.

Chart 3 – UK Classifications

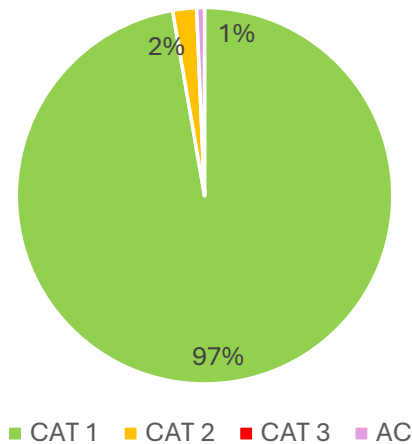


Chart 3 – Europe Classifications

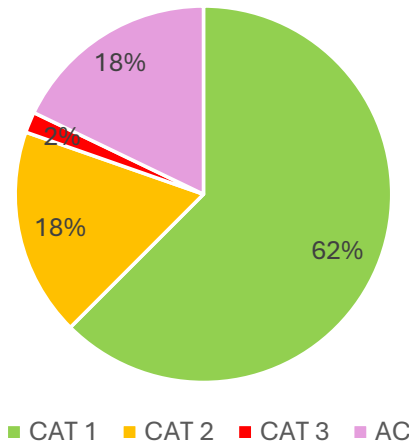
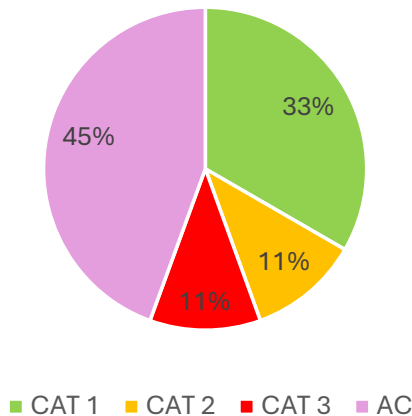


Chart 3 – ROW Classifications





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Slide Queries

Following R129, fifty-eight slide investigations were undertaken. Thirteen of these were following participant queries and the remainder were highlighted by the PT (Proficiency Testing) team. Twenty-one slides were withdrawn in total - seventeen reference slides and four candidate slides.

Round	No. Of Queries	Withdrawn Reference Slides	Withdrawn Candidate Slides
126	43	13	3
127	25	7	2
128	25	7	1
129	58	17	4

The PT team would like to remind participants that they are able to keep their slides until their group deadline date. If results are submitted prior to the deadline, the provisional report can be issued within a few working days, therefore giving time for the laboratory to take another look at the batch, if required. This could help with training or to confirm a potential slide issue. To query a slide, please either note this on your RICE submissions or send an email to the PT team with your HSL PT Lab number and the slide details. All investigations are carried out once the slides have been returned, so this may be at the end of the round.

Number of Counters for R129

UK - 1195
Europe - 95
ROW - 26

Slide Damage/ Withdrawal

Following R128, no slides were withdrawn due to damage but three received minor damage and were able to be repaired.

Round	Total Damaged	Minor Damage	Withdrawn
126	35	1	34
127	10	2	8
128	3	3	0
129	3	1	2

Please may we draw your attention to the Slide Responsibility information (despatched with the slides, available in the Information Book for Participants and in the Useful Links on our website - <https://www.hsl.gov.uk/proficiency-testing-schemes/rice>). Laboratories should open and check their slides within 24 hours of receipt - failure to do so may result in your laboratory being responsible for any damage.

RICE Batches

When your RICE slides are despatched, you receive labels with your paperwork to let you know where you need to send the slides onto following your deadline. This will either be the 2nd laboratory in your group or returned to HSE. If you're unsure where to send the slides, please send an email to the PT Team with your HSE PT Lab number.

RICE slides should be despatched on your results deadline date to ensure they are received by the 2nd laboratory or HSE in a timely manner. Failure to return the slides may result in a lost slide fee and / or a delay in sending slides for future rounds





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R129 Certificates

If you're not able to view your RICE R129 Certificate on the Online Data Entry System, it may be that we've not received payment for either a damaged slide or additional counters. Payment must be received before the certificates, or any further slides can be despatched.

If you have made payment, please contact the PT team with the following information (without this information we may not be able to locate your payment efficiently)

- .. your HSE PT Lab number
- .. your company name
- .. transaction date
- .. transaction reference/ description quoted on the bank transfer

Provision of confirmation paperwork i.e. remittance advice, bank transfer evidence may also be useful.

Classification Reports

Classification Reports for UK & Republic of Ireland (R126-129) are now available in the Useful Links section of the website page: [RICE](#)

RICE QC

RICE QC slides, additional counter fee and damaged slide fees can now be paid for on the PT Online Data Entry System. If you require assistance ordering/ paying for these, please email the PT Team. If you need to replace one of the last four consecutive rounds of RICE due to a poor score, you can purchase a replacement round. Please contact the PT Team for further information.

R130

The next round of RICE will be despatched by week commencing 25th August 2025. Participants will receive an email to advise them if they're first or second in their group. Lab 1 deadline for results submission is 3rd October 2025, Lab 2 deadline is 14th November 2025.

Please note - slides will not be despatched if payment is outstanding. Please ensure scheme invoices/ additional counters are paid before 25th April 2025.

Rogue Slides Update

Rogue slides have been introduced into the scheme from R117. These slides are designed to test participants' ability to apply the sample rejection criteria correctly (i.e. quality of slide, dust obscuration etc.).

There has been a mixed response - some laboratories have counted the slides and submitted a result; others have highlighted non-rogue slides as possible rogue slides. HSE have checked all slides that were incorrectly reported as rogues and all were deemed suitable for the scheme.

HSE also recognise that participants may be concerned that if they count/ don't submit a count then a score may be applied.

The counting/ rejection criteria in HSG248; The Analysts Guide (section A1.38, A1.39 & A1.40) should be followed. A free copy of the guide is available to download on the HSE website:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg248.htm>.

When analysing slides, counters should follow the requirements of HSG248, in particular paragraph A1.38 (low magnification scan of slide) which, according to UKAS, is often overlooked by laboratories. This will also help analysts to determine whether a slide is a rogue or not.

Two different rogue slides have been photographed, as an example- these have previously been sent to all participants by email. If you would like a copy, please email the PT Team with your HSE PT Lab number

Feedback

We carried out the annual questionnaire in December 2024 – the results are on our website page:

[Participant Feedback](#)

If you have any constructive comments/ suggestions, please email them to the PT team on the email address below.

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