



Report

Round 126

July 2024



Regular Inter-laboratory  
Counting Exchange

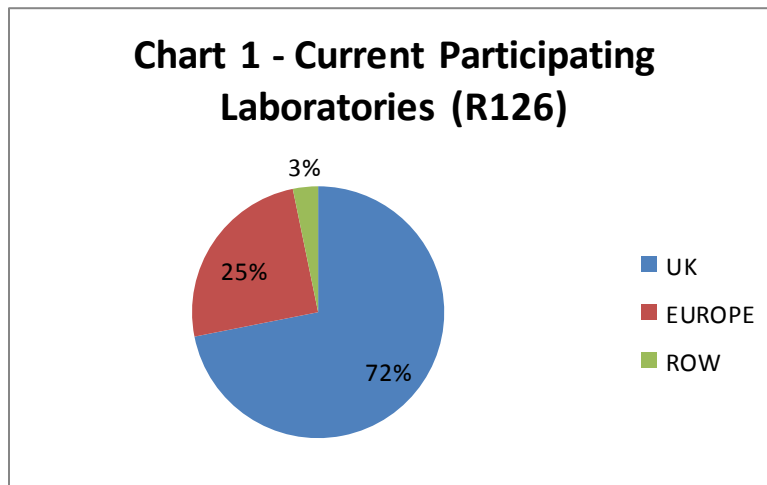
## Regular Inter-laboratory Counting Exchange (RICE) Scheme

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.

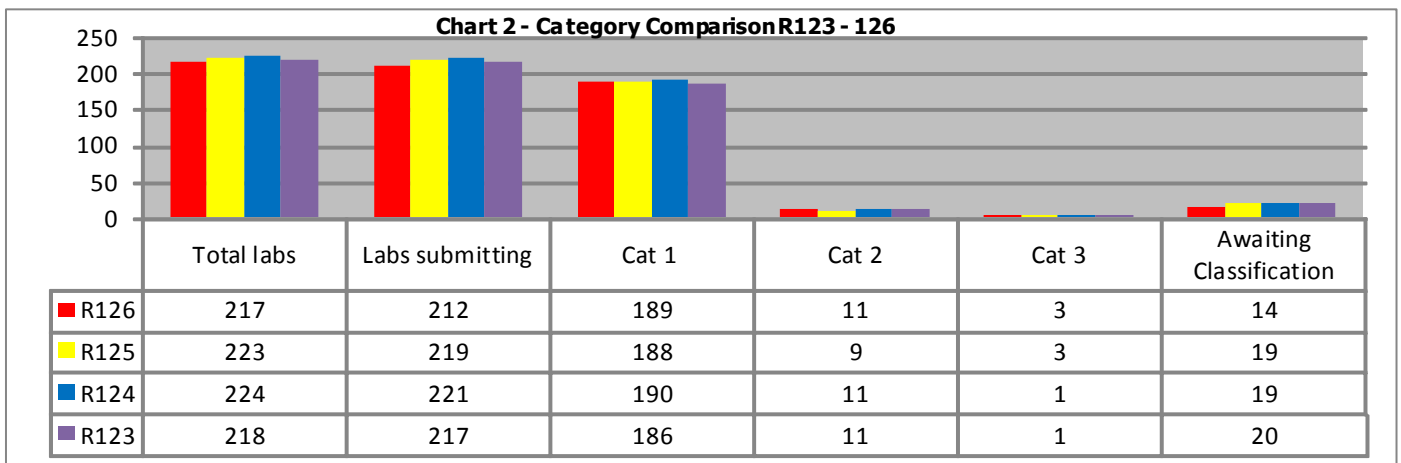
Chart 1 shows the current number of laboratories participating in the RICE scheme for R126.

UK 156 (72%), Europe 54 (25%) and Rest Of World 7 (3%)



The number of counters are as follows: UK 1219, Europe 101 & ROW 21.

Chart 2 shows the comparison of categories from participating laboratories in R123 - 1256





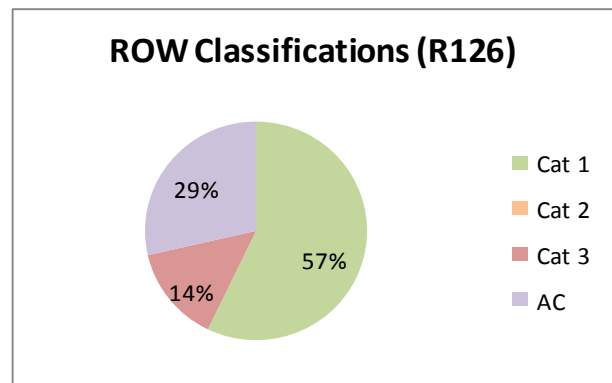
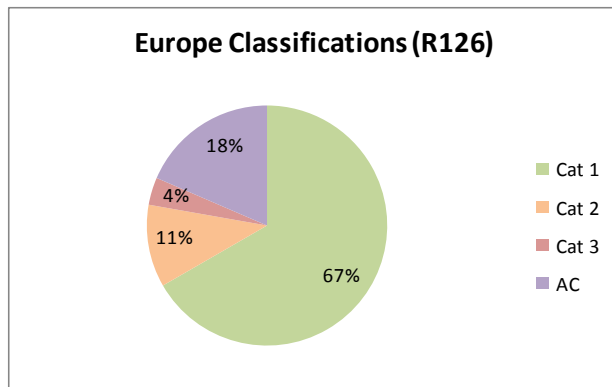
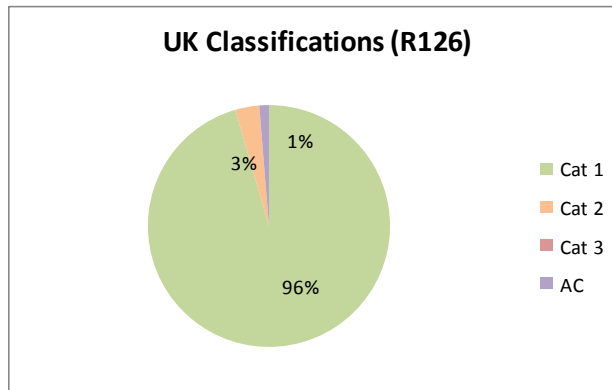
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Chart 3 represent the classifications of each group - UK, Europe & ROW.

UK - 149 (96%) are category 1, 5 (3%) are category 2 and 2 (1%) are awaiting classification.

Europe - 36 (67%) are category 1, 6 (11%) are category 2, 2 (4%) are category 3 and 10 (18%) are awaiting classification.

ROW - 4 (57%) are category 1, 1 (14%) are category 3, and 2 (29%) are awaiting classification.





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### Slide Queries

Following R126, Forty-three slide investigations were undertaken. Three of these were following participant queries on receipt of their provisional report - the remainder were highlighted by the PT (Proficiency Testing) team. Sixteen slides have been withdrawn (13 reference and 3 candidate slide).

Round	No. of Queries	Withdrawn Reference Slides	Withdrawn Candidate Slides
123	57	20	2
124	32	11	1
125	37	17	3
126	43	13	3

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 HSE 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.

### Slide Damage/ Withdrawal

Following R126, ten slides were withdrawn due to damage and twenty-four slides (two full batches) have been withdrawn as lost. One slide received minor damage

Round	Total Damaged	Minor Damage	Withdrawn
123	5	0	5
124	12	5	7
125	17	5	12
126	35	1	34

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 loss slide fee and / or a delay in sending slides for future rounds.



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### R126 Certificates

If you're not able to view your RICE R126 Certificate on the Online Data Entry System, it may be that we've not received your slides back or payment for either a damaged slide or additional counters. R126 certificates and slides for R127 will not be despatched until full payment has been received.

If payment has been made, please contact the PT team with the following information so that we can verify the details. Without this information we may not be able to locate your payment efficiently.

- ◆ your 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 (R123-126) are now available on the website.

### 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.

### Feedback & Further Information on the Addition of Rogue Slides

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 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

The annual feedback questionnaire was carried out in December 2023. The results are now available to view on the PT website page: <https://www.hsl.gov.uk/proficiency-testing-schemes/participant-feedback>

Feedback can be provided at any time, please email any constructive comments/ suggestions to the PT team on the email address below.

**Contacting the PT Team:** We are mainly working from home, so please contact us by email and we will get back to you as soon as we can.

Melanie Clunas  
RICE Scheme Co-ordinator

Email: [proficiency.testing@hse.gov.uk](mailto:proficiency.testing@hse.gov.uk)

Telephone: +44 (0)203 028 3382