



# Participant Questionnaire 2018

April 2018

## Introduction:

In order to gain feedback and discover additional ways we can improve the scheme, a survey was sent to all participants in the scheme. As there are participants worldwide an online survey was the most effective way of performing it. We chose to use survey monkey to host our survey.

All participants in the scheme were sent an email with a link to the survey on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2018 with the survey closing on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2018. In this time we received 25 responses, the same number as in 2016.

This report looks at the feedback supplied by our participants and provides a summary of their responses.

## Summary of Responses

*The scheme's responses to the participant queries are highlighted in yellow and appear in italics.*

From the participants that responded to our survey there were a similar number of participants receiving serum and blood samples, with slightly more receiving serums. Only one participant indicated they received urine samples. Due to an error in setting up the survey only one answer could be selected from the list. This could explain why there are so few that received urine samples. 80% of the participants find it important that we have achieved ISO 17043:2010 with only one participant who did not find it important.

Overall participants are happy with the scheme with 92% of them either being very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the overall scheme. The remaining 8% of participants are neither satisfied nor unsatisfied. 3 comments were left on this question. Two of the comments were positive; one saying that we are always helpful in our communications and the other liked the grouped dispatch of samples, quick returns and the website. The third comment did not like the grouped dispatch of samples as it has caused lab errors for them in the past.

*We are unclear on why batching the samples for dispatch to participants could be a source of laboratory error. The specimens have been shown to be stable for the duration of the EQA cycle.*

Questions 4 – 7 focus on communications with the scheme and the schemes responses. Overall participants are happy with the way we deal with communications. While only 8 participants indicated that they had contacted us in the last year, 100% of participants said that we were more helpful than expected or as helpful as expected. All comments for this question were positive and can be seen in the data below. Participants were also happy with the speed at which we respond to all queries and questions, 100% of responses showed that our responses were as fast as expected or quicker. The main way in which participants contacted the scheme is through e-mail with 93% of participants contacting us this way. The remaining 7% chose to contact us by telephone.

*We are pleased to see that the respondents were happy with the response they received to their enquiries, that our responses were timely and that the respondents were positive about our communications with them.*

Questions 8 – 11 focus on the quality of samples and the dispatch times. The majority of participants were happy with the quality of the EQA specimens. 100% of participants received the samples on time and 96% received them in good condition. 1 participant did not receive the samples in good condition as they found the whole blood samples had begun to clot. The 87.5% of participants did not have any concerns about the stability of the samples. 12.5% (3) of participants said they had concerns with the stability. Two of these labs left comments, one mentioned zinc as the element of concern, but did not state the matrix, and the other serum copper and zinc. The third laboratory did not leave a comment

to say what they were concerned about. One participant indicated that the ranges used in the EQA samples were not suitable while the remaining participants were happy with the ranges used. One participant left a comment requesting a low serum copper sample occasionally being included.

*We are pleased that both UK and overseas based respondents received the samples in good time. We are aware that in some circumstances the blood samples can clot, however in our experience if steps are taken to minimise pipetting errors, this does not affect the result obtained. In any event we are happy to replace samples that participants are unhappy with at no cost. We were surprised that participants experience stability problems for serum Cu and Zn, we have not observed any issues. The levels in the EQA samples are designed to be useful in clinical and also occupational health laboratories. However we are limited in the lower levels we can supply by the availability of low concentration endogenous samples and the applicability of the technical methods available to reduce the concentration levels.*

Two comments were left suggesting additional elements that they would like to see included in the scheme. The additional elements requested for the urine samples are: antimony; aluminium; chromium and nickel. Both urine chromium and nickel are already on the scheme. The additional serum elements requested are nickel and titanium.

*The scheme is considering providing a panel of materials containing more esoteric metals for 2019-20.*

Questions 13 – 15 look at the different aspects of the reports. All participants find the reports clear and easy to read but 17% of them would like additional information on the reports. The additional information requested by laboratories is:

- An estimation of LOQ and linearity based on results
- A graphical representation of bias vs concentration for 6 or 12 months' worth of results
- The method details of participating labs (pre-treatment method and ICP-Ms model)
- A, B, and C scoring.

96% of participants are happy with the time taken to distribute the reports, with only one lab unhappy mentioning that it is not the fastest program.

*We are pleased that our reports are clear and easy to understand. In response to the specific comments: we are unclear how the data could be used to provide LOQ or linearity data that would be useful for a specific laboratory, this data should be generated by the participating laboratory as part of their method validation process; a graph of bias vs conc would be a useful addition and we will investigate doing this; we are looking into the method categories and hope to improve this in 2019-20; as the scheme has more overseas participants than UK based the use of A,B,C scoring*

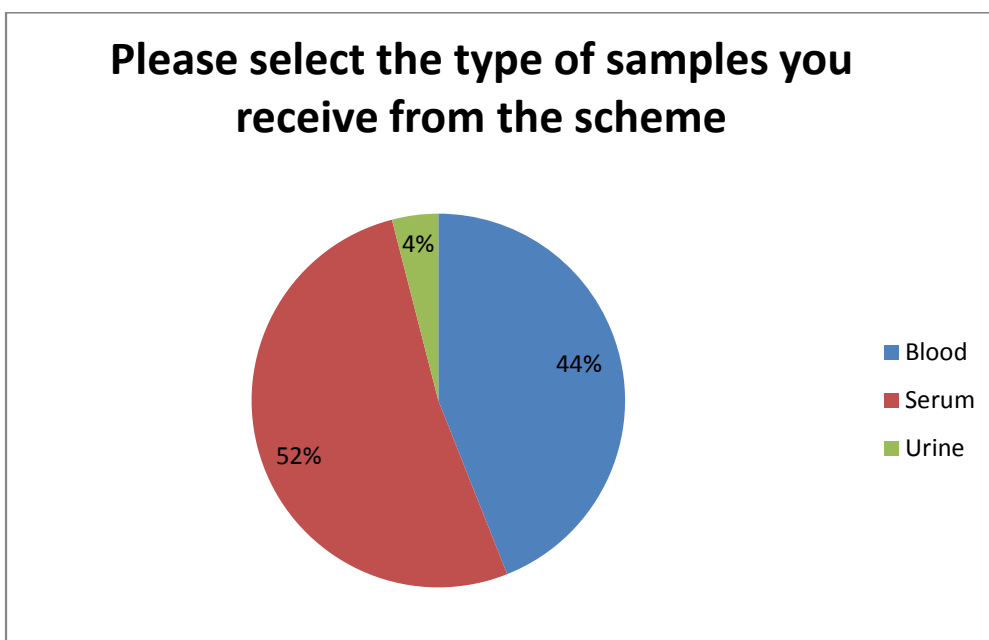
*would not be appropriate, z-scores are internationally accepted as a means to assess participant performance.*

57% of the participants have accessed the website and 43% have been looking at documents on the website. This is an increase in the number of participants that are viewing the documents on the website from the previous survey done in 2016.

Questions 17 and 18 focus on the interest participants have on the production of internal quality control materials. 43% of participants are interested in us producing IQC material. The main materials of interest are serum zinc, copper, aluminium, selenium and blood lead, cobalt and chromium. One participant also asked for water and dialysate IQC for aluminium. Although 43% showed interest in the QC, 38% said they would consider changing to us as a provider for their IQC material.

Overall the participant's responses show they are happy with the scheme and any changes or comments they have on the scheme have been reported in the above questions. No responses were submitted for the final question asking for additional comments that participants may have.

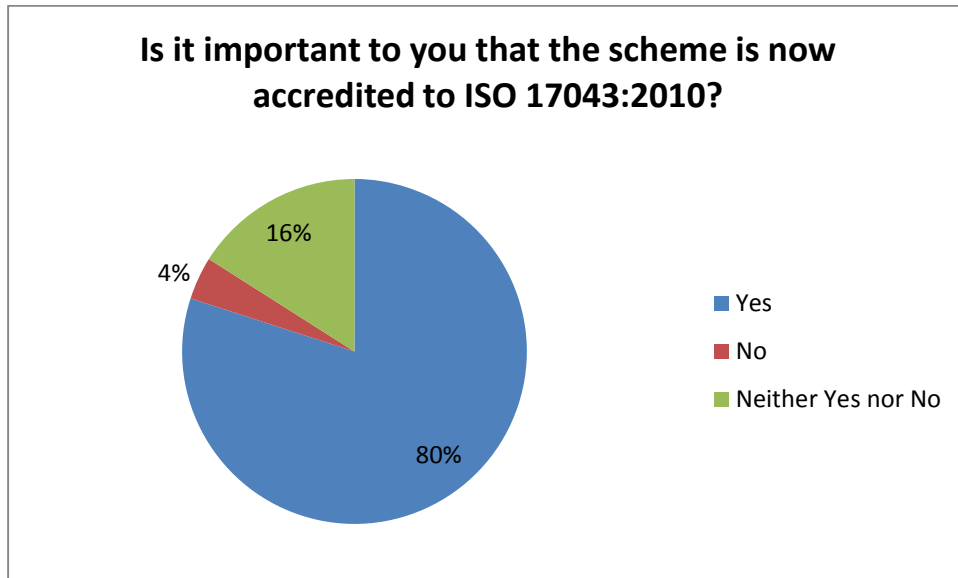
Question 1: Please select the type of samples you received from the scheme.



Answer Choices	Responses	
Blood	44.00%	11
Serum	52.00%	13
Urine	4.00%	1
Comments		1
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>25</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>0</b>

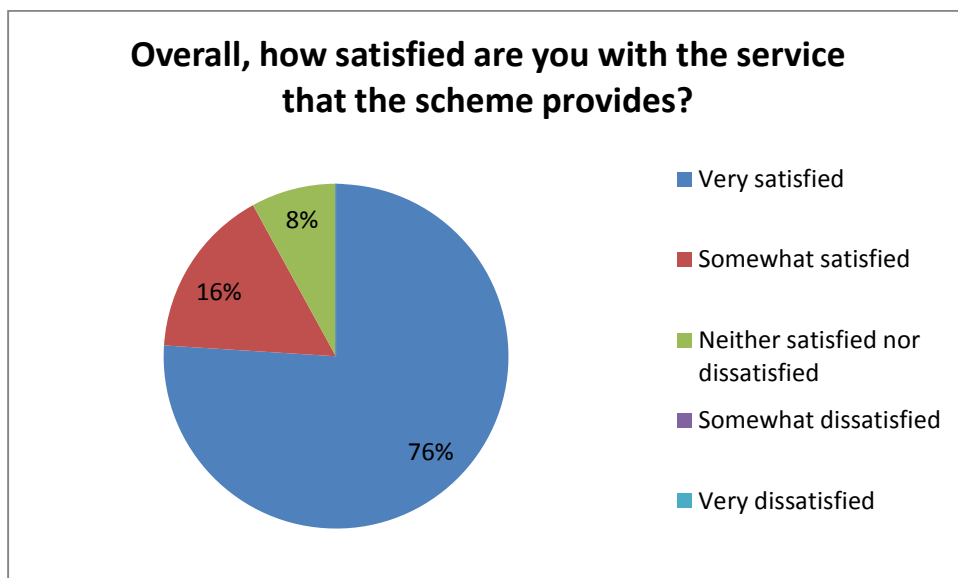
Comments
All of the above, the survey will only let me select one.

Question 2: Is it important to you that the scheme is now accredited to ISO 17043:2010?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	80.00%	20
No	4.00%	1
Neither Yes nor No	16.00%	4
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>25</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>0</b>

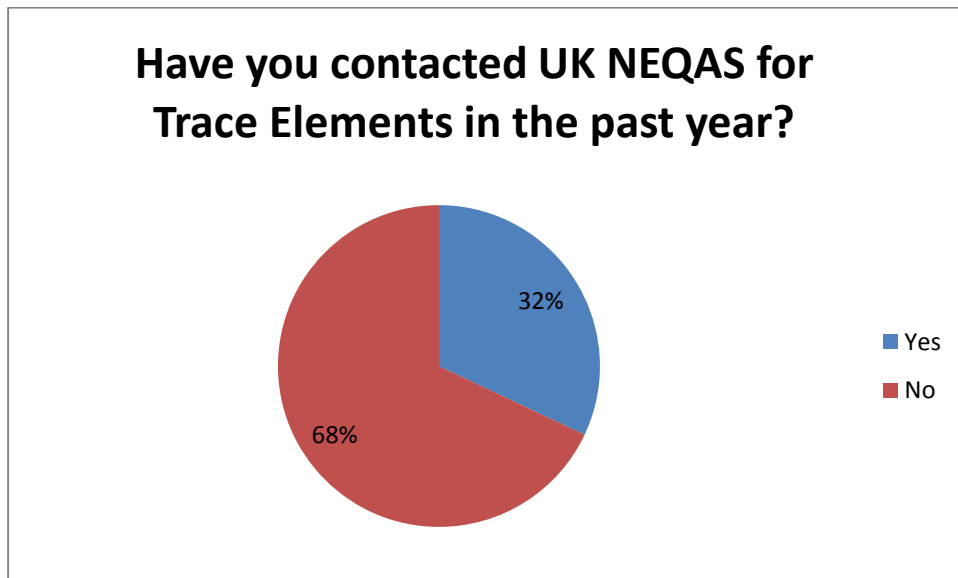
Question 3: Overall, how satisfied are you with the service that the scheme provides?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Very satisfied	76.00%	19
Somewhat satisfied	16.00%	4
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	8.00%	2
Somewhat dissatisfied	0.00%	0
Very dissatisfied	0.00%	0
Comments (please specify)		3
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>25</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>0</b>

Comments
Because 6 months' samples are dispatched together we have occasionally run into lab errors due to analysing the wrong set of samples or running stored previous samples instead of current ones.
Always very helpful if I phone/email
6 months of samples received at once (no waiting), ease of use of website and quick returns

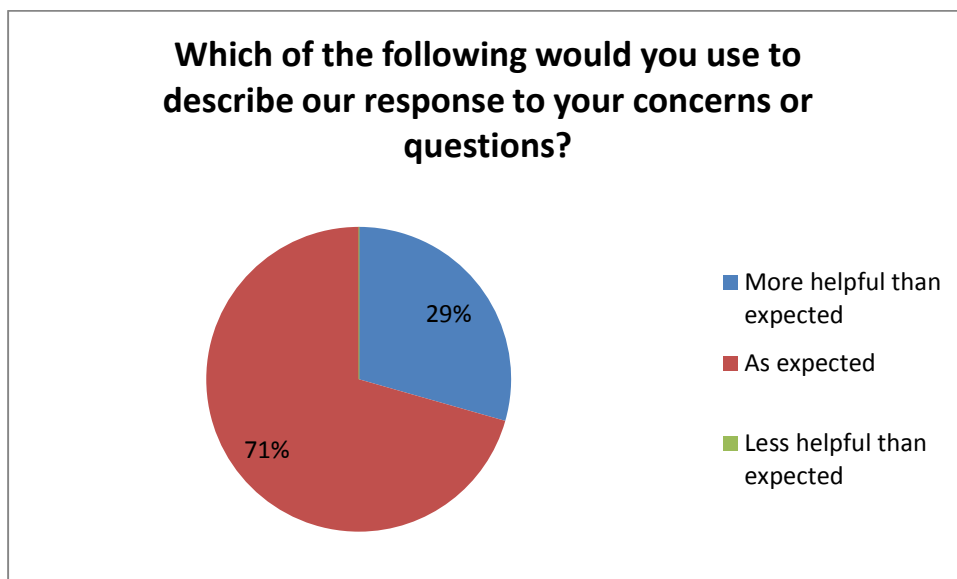
Question 4: Have you contacted UK NEQAS for Trace Elements in the past year?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	32.00%	8
No	68.00%	17
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>25</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>0</b>



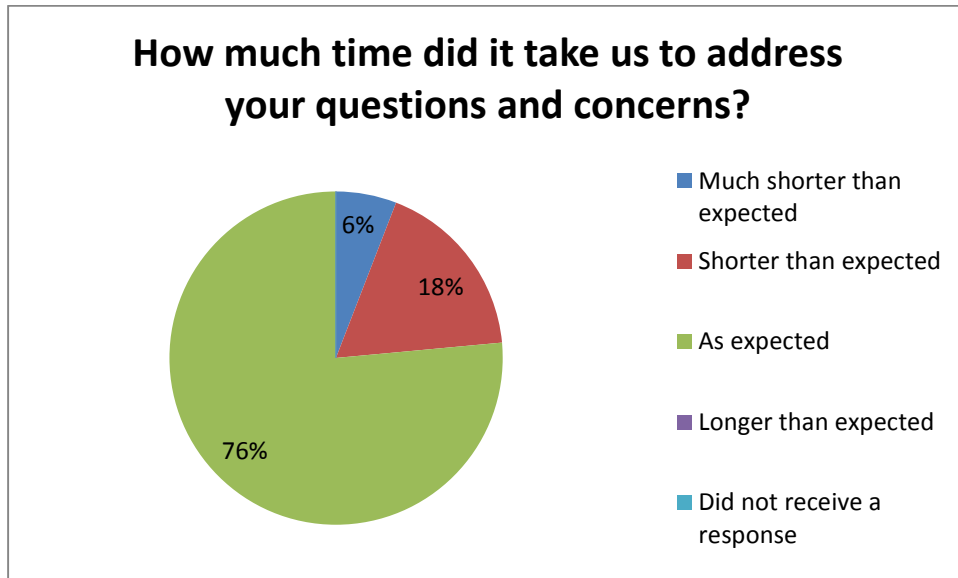
Question 5: Which of the following would you use to describe our response to your concerns or questions?



Answer Choices	Responses	
More helpful than expected	29.41%	5
As expected	70.59%	12
Less helpful than expected	0.00%	0
Comments (please specify)		5
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>17</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>8</b>

Comments
n/a
Requested a new set of EQA samples they arrived quickly.
Although I've not contacted the scheme in the past year, the response I have had to any queries has always been helpful.
Had an e-mail address corrected
Reply was always within 1-2 days after I queried something.

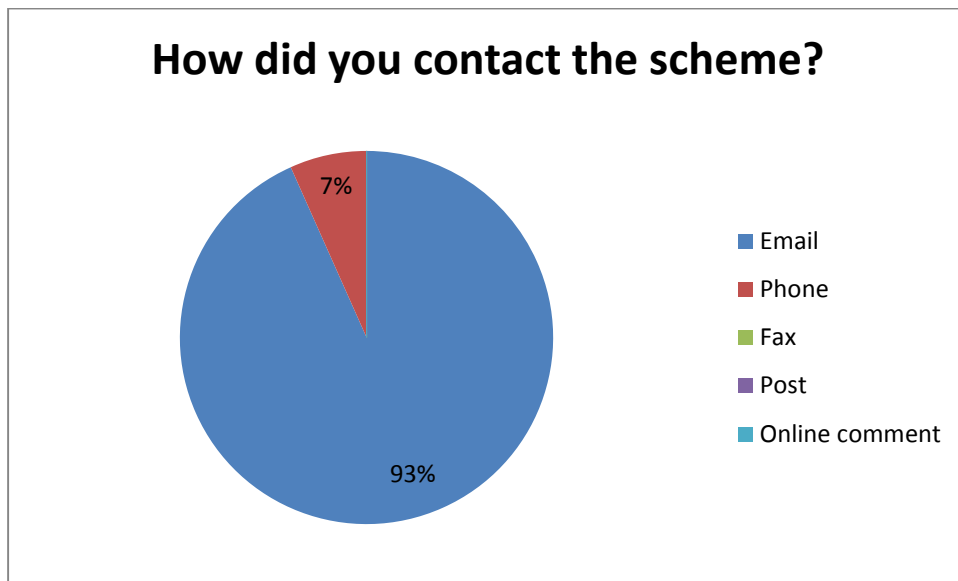
Question 6: How much time did it take us to address your questions and concerns?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Much shorter than expected	5.88%	1
Shorter than expected	17.65%	3
As expected	76.47%	13
Longer than expected	0.00%	0
Did not receive a response	0.00%	0
Please provide details if you were unsatisfied with our response		2
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>17</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>8</b>

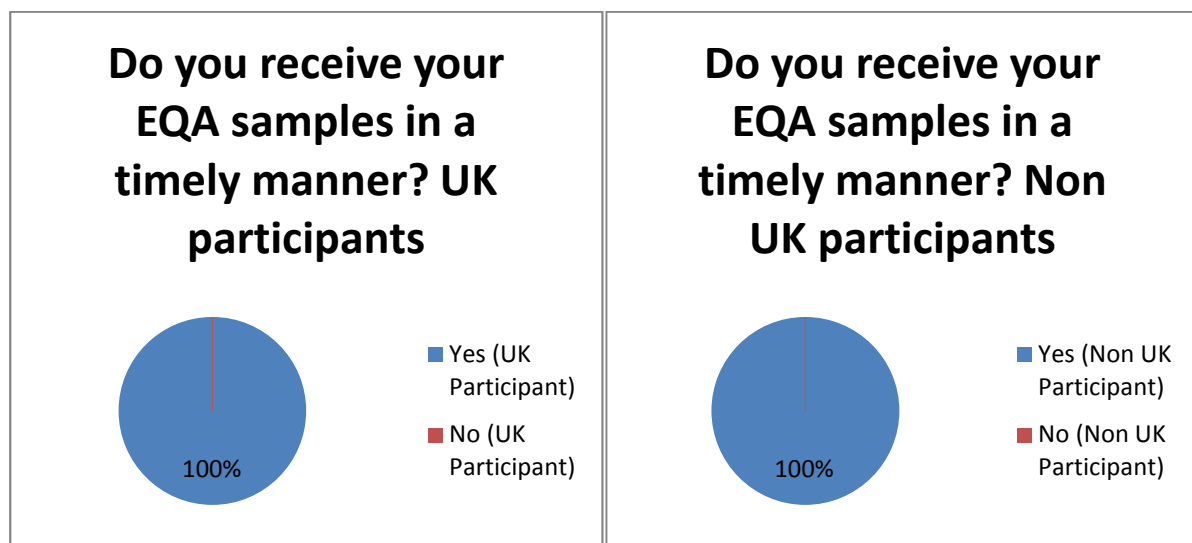
Comments
N/A
As mentioned above, we have had no contacts, so the question is N.A.

Question 7: How did you contact the scheme?



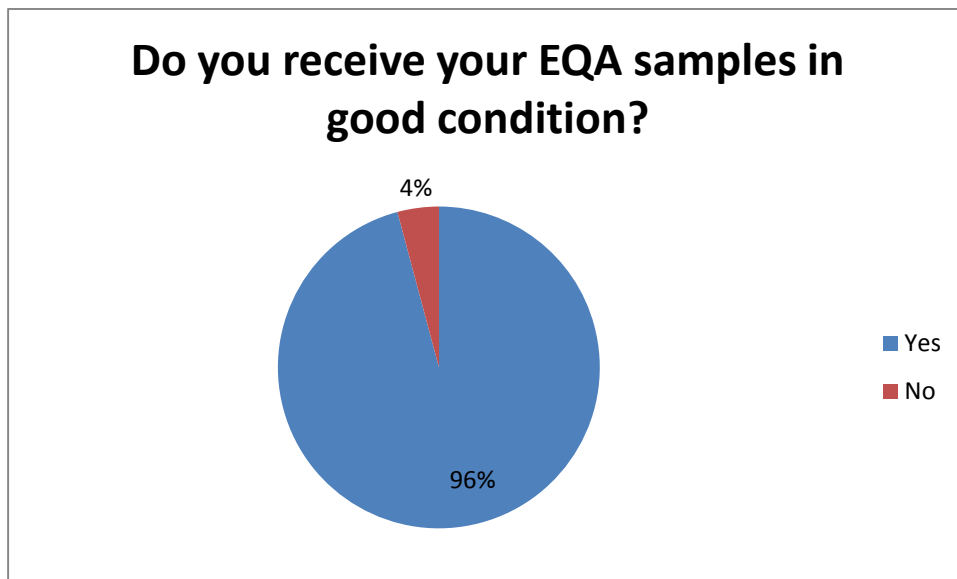
Answer Choices	Responses	
Email	93.33%	14
Phone	6.67%	1
Fax	0.00%	0
Post	0.00%	0
Online comment	0.00%	0
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>15</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>10</b>

Question 8: Do you receive your EQA samples in a timely manner?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes (UK Participant)	45.83%	11
No (UK Participant)	0.00%	0
Yes (Non UK Participant)	54.17%	13
No (Non UK Participant)	0.00%	0
If no, please provide further details and state your participant number		0
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>1</b>

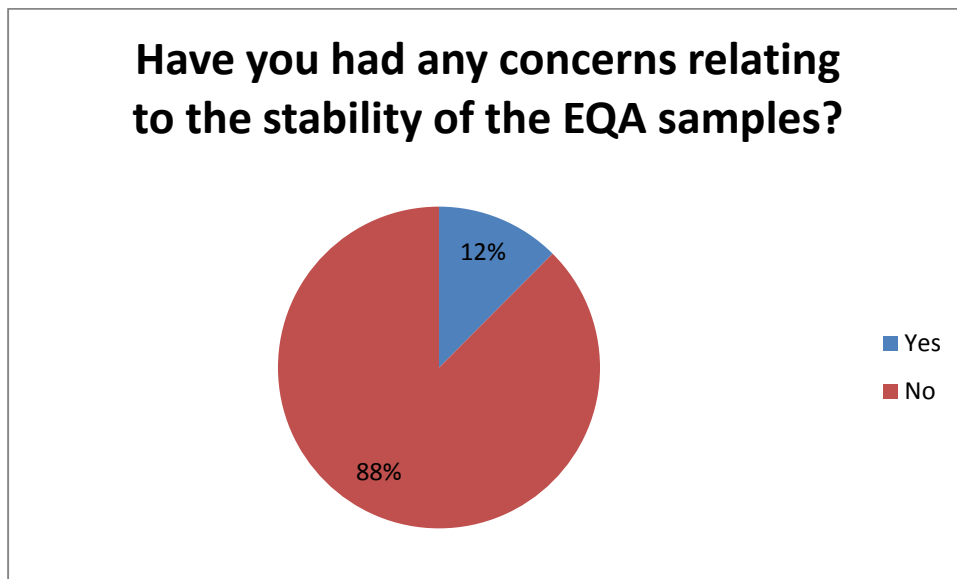
**Question 9: Do you receive your EQA samples in good condition?**



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	95.83%	23
No	4.17%	1
If no, please specify		1
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>1</b>

Comments
Whole-bloods may have/develop clots.

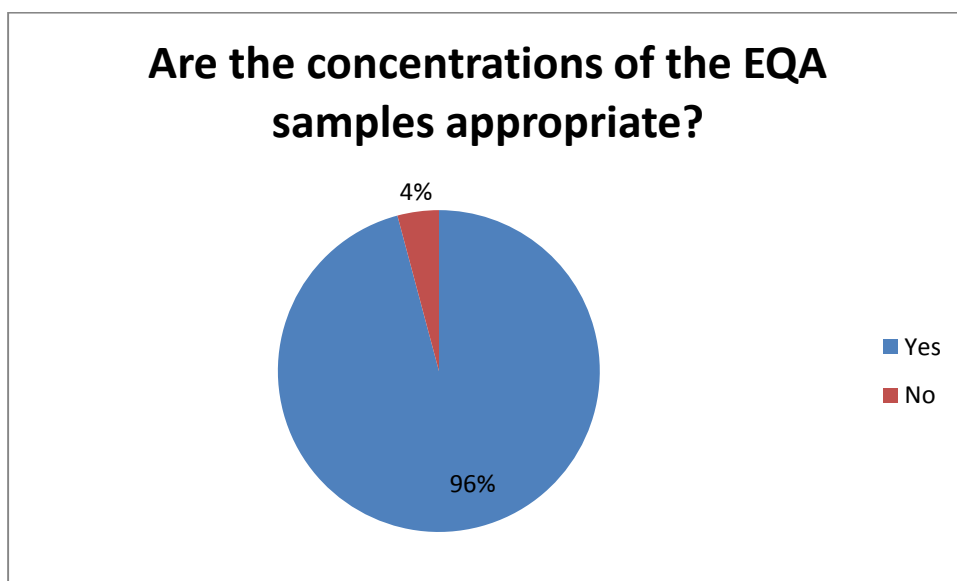
Question 10: Have you had any concerns relating to the stability of the EQA samples?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	12.50%	3
No	87.50%	21
If yes, please specify the test item matrix and analyte(s), include sample number(s) if possible.		2
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>1</b>

Comments
Zinc, we have observed low recovery
We have always had some issues with serum copper and zinc, but not a problem as we also use RIQAS, which have lyophilised samples.

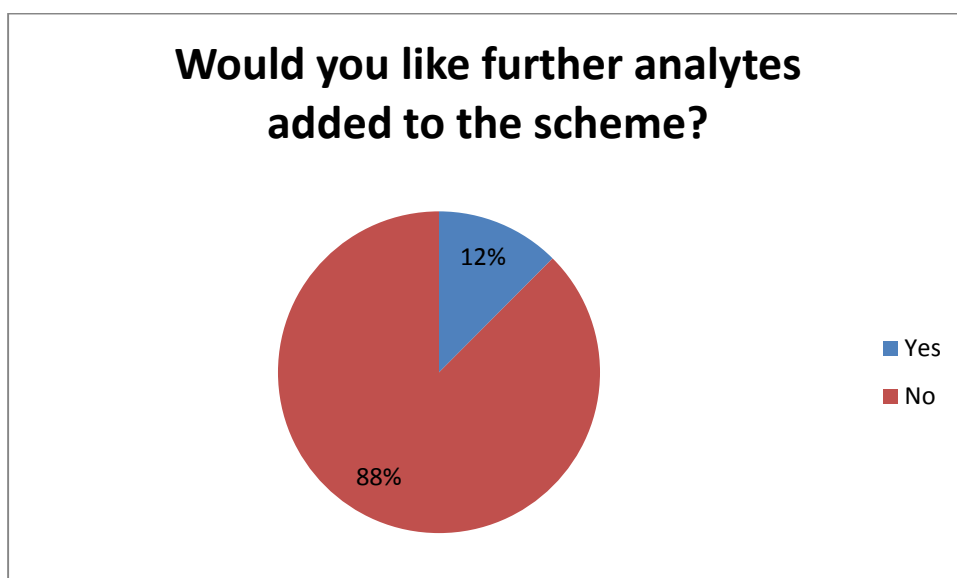
Question 11: Are the concentrations of the EQA samples appropriate?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	95.83%	23
No	4.17%	1
If no, please specify the test item matrix and analyte, include sample number(s) if possible		1
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>1</b>

Comments
an occasional low serum copper (Wilson's) would be useful

Question 12: Would you like further analytes added to the scheme?



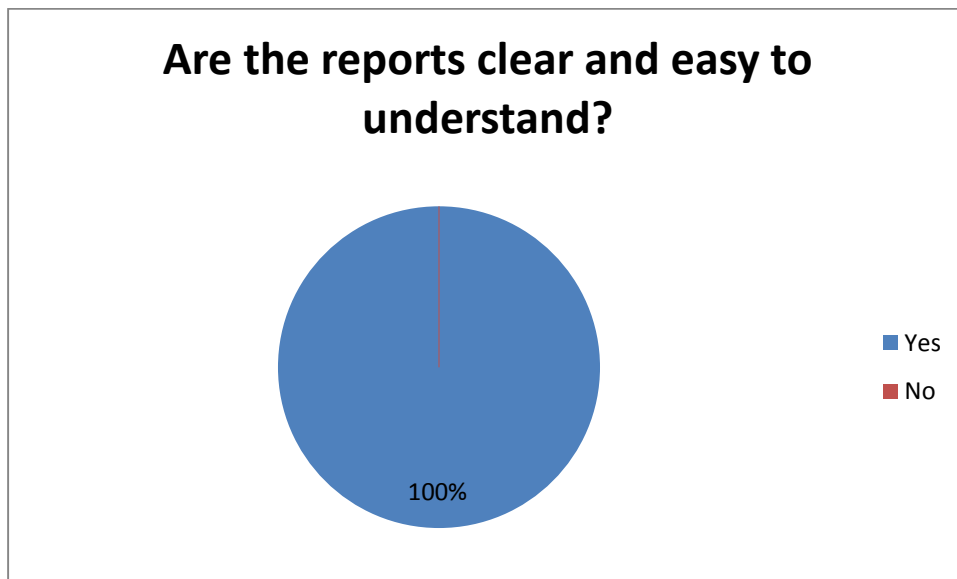
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	12.50%	3
No	87.50%	21
If yes, please specify matrix and analyte		2
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>1</b>

### Comments

Urine Antimony, Chromium, Nickel, etc.

urine aluminum, serum nickel, serum/urine titanium

### Question 13: Are the reports clear and easy to understand?

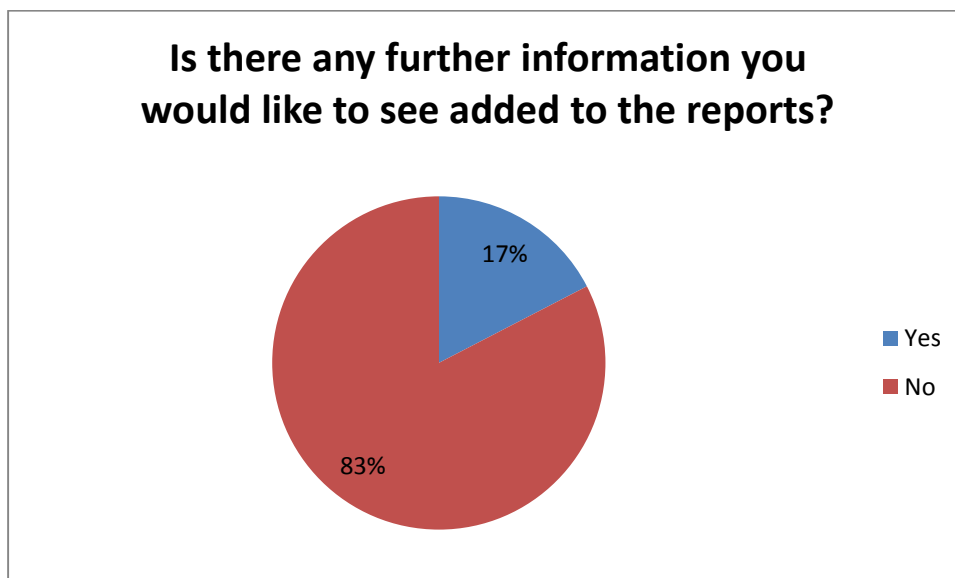


Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	100.00%	23
No	0.00%	0
If no, please provide further details		1
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>23</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>2</b>

### Comments

Very friendly

Question 14: Is there any further information you would like to see added to the reports?

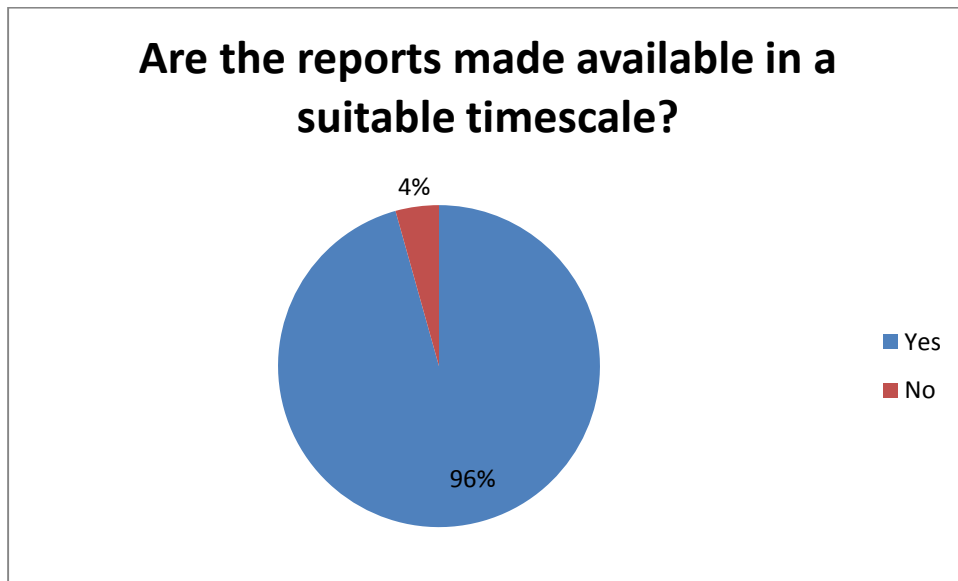


Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	17.39%	4
No	82.61%	19
If yes, please provide further details		4
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>23</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>2</b>

Comments
Estimation of LOQ and linearity based on results
Serum copper - graphical representation of bias vs. concentration for 6 or 12 months'-worth of results
The details of participating laboratories( such as pretreatment method and ICPMS model ) should be provided.
I would prefer to use the A, B and C scores to provide continuity between the UKNEQAS schemes



Question 15: Are the reports made available in a suitable timescale?

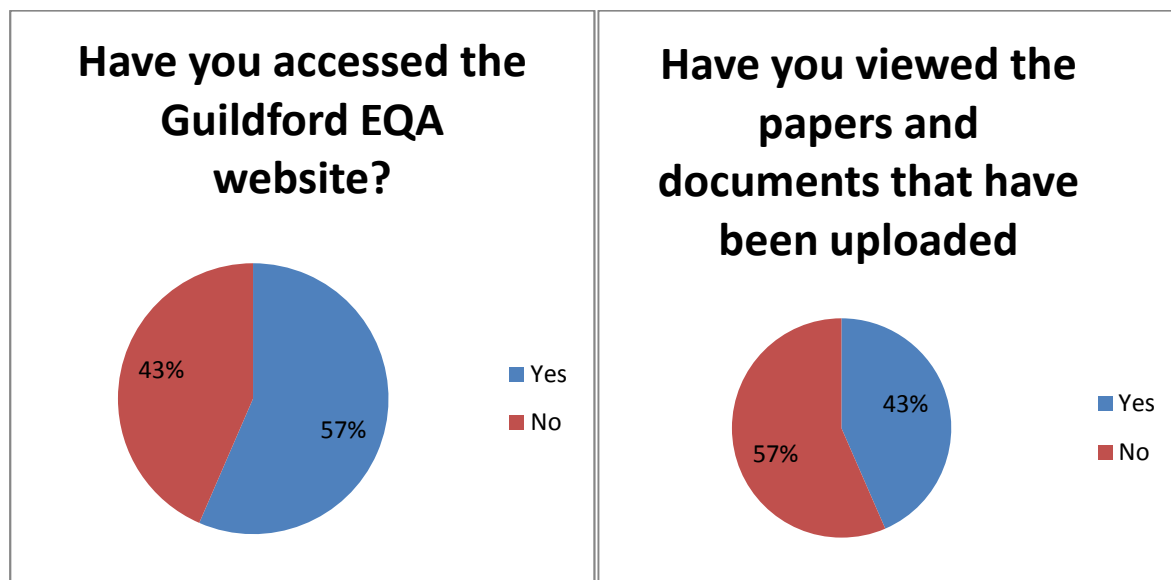


Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	95.65%	22
No	4.35%	1
If no, please provide further details		1
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>23</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>2</b>

Comments
Not the fastest program, but it's not that important.

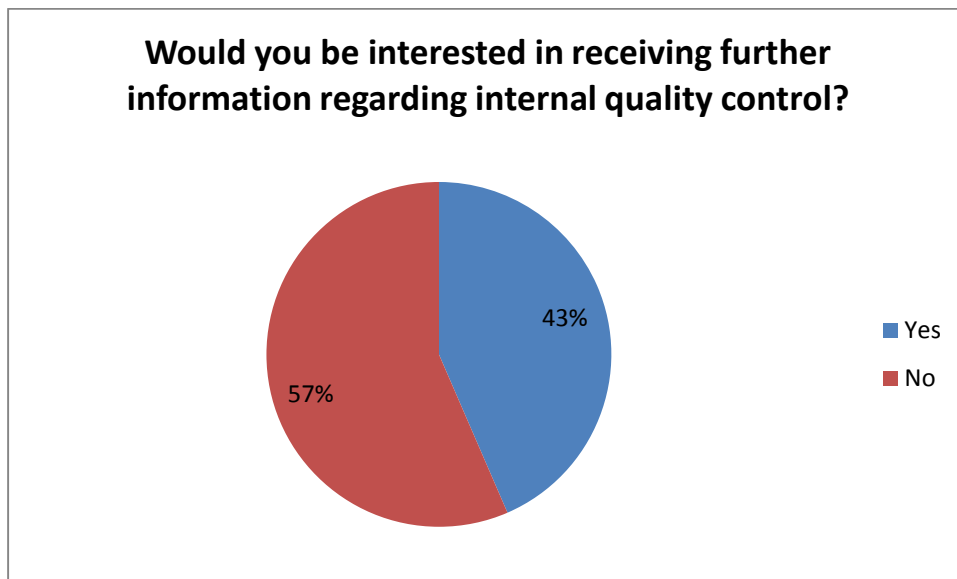
Question 16: Questions regarding the Guildford EQA website;

[www.surreyeqas.org.uk](http://www.surreyeqas.org.uk)



	Yes		No		Total
	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	
Have you accessed the Guildford EQA website?	56.52%	13	43.48%	10	23
Have you viewed the papers and documents that have been uploaded?	43.48%	10	56.52%	13	23
If you have any suggestions on how we can improve our website, please use the box below to provide further details.					0
				<b>Answered</b>	<b>23</b>
				<b>Skipped</b>	<b>2</b>

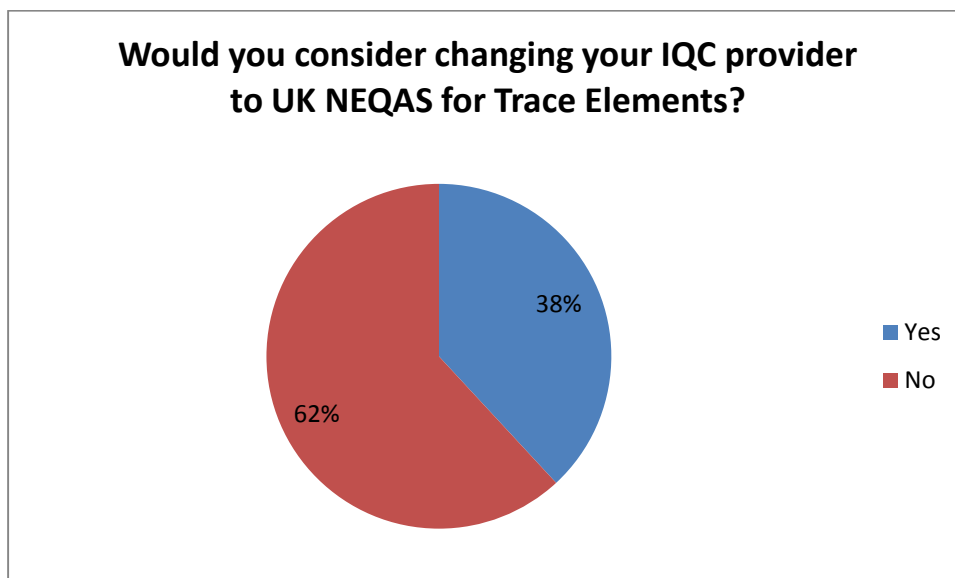
Question 17: Would you be interested in receiving further information regarding internal quality control?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	43.48%	10
No	56.52%	13
If yes, please provide your participant number and details of the elements / matrices you are interested in		4
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>23</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>2</b>

Comments
10490. Method selection/verification for colourimetric serum zinc is on hold at present but if we try again in the future we may be interested in IQC material with suitably low or even low normal concentrations
cu,zn,Al,Se, serum Pb, Cob, Chr blood
We order the samples via DEKS in denmark, but is there anything interesting, we are interested.
10274 aluminium in water & dialysates samples

Question 18: Would you consider changing your IQC provider to UK NEQAS for Trace Elements?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	38.10%	8
No	61.90%	13
Comments		5
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>21</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>4</b>

Comments
Commercial IQC are adequate for serum copper. See above Q17 about possible serum zinc in future
Dependant on ranges and costs
Not at the moment
Either provider is acceptable
see Q17

Question 19: If you have any comments regarding UK NEQAS for Trace Elements not covered by the previous questions, please use the space below. If you would like us to contact you in regard to any part of this questionnaire, please provide your participant number, contact details and any relevant details.

**0 responses**