



EXPERIENCE OF COMPLETING THE CONTINUING SURVEY OF ROAD GOODS TRANSPORT (CSRGT)



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IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Client/Project owner	Department for Transport
Project	Experience of Completing the Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport (CSRGT)
Type of document	Final Report
Date	12/03/2015
File name	DfT Road Freight Survey – SYSTRA Final Report_20150312
Reference number	103023
Number of pages	35

APPROVAL

Version	Name		Position	Date	Modifications
1	Author	Evelyn Robertson	Project Manager	23/01/2015	
	Approved by	Paul Le Masurier	Project Director	28/01/2015	
2	Author	Evelyn Robertson	Project Manager	12/03/2015	
	Approved by	Paul Le Masurier	Project Director	12/03/2015	



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APPENDICES

- A** Discussion Guide
- B** Letter



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 The Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport (CSRGT) is an assessment of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) relating to the domestic activity of UK-registered vehicles. A representative of the company the vehicle is registered to is required to record information about the specified vehicle's activity for the period of one week. From the data received, the DfT calculates a wide range of information about UK vehicles, including estimates of the total distance travelled, the total tonnage lifted and the types of goods carried by HGVs.
- 1.1.2 The DfT commissioned SYSTRA to assess the CSRGT survey in order to ease the burden on the respondent and increase confidence in the accuracy of the data entered by the respondent.
- 1.1.3 Previous respondents of the survey were contacted by the DfT to identify a sample willing to provide feedback on their survey experience. Interview appointments were made by SYSTRA at a time and place most suitable for the respondent. A total of 14 interviews took place across a range of company size and type. The interviews mainly took place in the respondents' office environment but occasionally the respondents preferred a more relaxed environment, such as a coffee shop.
- 1.1.4 During the interview, respondents were initially asked questions regarding their company and their role within it, in order to understand the circumstances of the representatives completing the CSRGT survey form. Respondents were then asked to provide feedback on their overall experience of completing it, before going through it question by question.
- 1.1.5 Respondents' initial impressions of the survey were fairly neutral, seeing it as a task they were resigned to do, rather than overtly negative. Motivations for completing the survey most commonly included wishing to please the DfT and to remain legally compliant. The time taken to complete the survey ranged from 20 minutes to over 3 hours, depending on the type of company and whether the information required was stored centrally.
- 1.1.6 The interviews also uncovered specific complications that some participants experienced when answering some of the questions. Participants often omitted to select units when providing numeric estimates, and methods for estimating distances varied widely. The 'Journeys Made' section of the survey proved most time-consuming for respondents to complete due to the need to access multiple information sources and conduct manual calculations.
- 1.1.7 There was low awareness amongst respondents to the possibility of completing the survey using Excel. When respondents were shown the Excel version, reactions were mixed - with some feeling they would complete it in this format going forward whilst others were not as keen. In general, participants liked the idea of being able to complete the survey entirely online and felt that, if this option was available, they would complete the survey in this manner, however this would not be suitable for every respondent.
- 1.1.8 From these findings we have been able to suggest some recommendations and small survey amendments that the DfT may wish to consider going forward. These include: acknowledging receipt of the survey for respondents' peace of mind; condensing the



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guidance notes; beginning to communicate with respondents through email; raising awareness of the Excel version; and developing an online version of the survey.



2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Study Background and Objectives

2.1.1 The Department for Transport (DfT) commissioned SYSTRA to assess the 'fitness-for-purpose' of the existing Continuing Survey of Road Goods Transport (CSRGT) survey. The DfT required a review of the questionnaire content and respondent 'experience' in order to identify ways the data quality could be improved and respondent burden potentially reduced; and explore the potential for respondents to move away from a paper based system to an online one.

2.1.2 Primarily, data from the CSRGT survey is used to inform the DfT of the domestic activity of GB-registered fleet operators and is used by both Government and industry to inform decisions and policies on the road freight industry. The data is also supplied to the European Commission as a requirement under EU legislation.

2.1.3 Currently, once the completed CSRGT survey paper-form is received by the DfT the information on it is transposed manually to be stored electronically. The existing approach of, primarily, pen-and-paper leads to time-consuming manual data-entry and introduces potential errors due to: unclear handwriting; incomplete vehicle movement entries; and numeric data where units have been omitted. An electronic approach may reduce or eradicate such errors, and respondents do have the option of completing the survey in an Excel format, though very few do so currently.

2.1.4 Thus this project had two main objectives:

- to understand the experience of completing the CSRGT survey (and, if necessary, identify ways of improving it); and
- to check levels of accuracy of data entered by respondents (and, if necessary, identify ways of improving it).

2.1.5 The findings of the research will help shape future design of the survey.

2.2 Research Methodology

2.2.1 A qualitative research approach was adopted to understand the experience of respondents to the CSRGT survey. The interviewer (a project team member and qualified researcher) and the respondent discussed each question in turn in order to identify how the respondent had interpreted it and the thought-process and rationale behind their answer. Thus we were able to cognitively assess the response to each section, and question, of the survey. It is important to note that this style of qualitative research is by its nature in-depth but not statistically representative due to the small sample.

2.2.2 Wherever possible a copy of the respondent's completed form was used as extra stimuli for the discussion. Where the respondent did not have a copy available, a blank copy of the form was used and the respondent was asked to consider an example vehicle, and week's trip details, when answering the questions. In-depth interviews with fourteen CSRGT respondents took place between October 2014 and January 2015.



- 2.2.3 The interviews were semi-structured – meaning respondents were encouraged to elaborate on answers and change the ordering of survey questions to reflect their own priorities for feeding back comments. The discussion guide was developed in consultation with the DfT, and can be found in Appendix A.
- 2.2.4 An initial tranche of four interviews were conducted in order to report initial findings to the DfT, and to enable the research team and DfT consider any changes/additions to the discussion guide. The discussion guide was found to be suitable in eliciting the required information, with updates made to reflect questioning on the Excel version of the CSRGT survey.
- 2.2.5 In the second tranche of in-depth interviews, respondents were questioned in more depth about their awareness and/or potential use of the Excel version of the survey. This included asking those respondents who had never completed the Excel spreadsheet to complete the first few questions of each main section electronically to understand their initial experience of doing so.
- 2.2.6 Prior to providing SYSTRA with contact details of recent respondents to the surveys, the DfT sent the individual/company a letter informing them of the purpose of the research and giving them the option of opting-out in advance. The copy of the letter can be found in Appendix B. Upon receiving the contact details of willing respondents, SYSTRA followed up the letter with a call in order to arrange the interview.
- 2.2.7 In total, the DfT provided SYSTRA with 27 respondent contact details. Of these:
- 14 in-depth interviews took place;
 - 7 were uncontactable in the timeframe;
 - 4 did not wish to take part, after all; and
 - 2 were not able to be interviewed within the timeframe.
- 2.2.8 In order to understand whether different company factors influence the respondents' experiences of completing the CSRGT, classifications regarding the company type, identified post-sample, were based on the following: haulage or non-haulage (by which we mean for hire or reward, or on own account); size of haulage operations; and whether the division of the company the respondent worked in is international or national. The size of operations has been classed as the following: small – fleet size of 1-19 vehicles; medium – fleet size of 20-199 vehicles; and large – fleet size over 200 vehicles.
- 2.2.9 On the basis of these stratifications, SYSTRA conducted in-depth interviews with the following company types:
- 10 with haulage companies and 4 at non-haulage companies;
 - 5 with small fleets, 3 with medium sized fleets and 6 with large fleets; and
 - 10 operating nationally and 4 operating internationally.
- 2.2.10 The respondent is sent a slightly different version of the CSRGT survey depending on whether the vehicle being surveyed is articulated or rigid. Whilst the majority of the survey is identical on both versions, there are small differences in Section 1, therefore it was important to ensure both versions were discussed. Of the 14 interviews, the



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Articulated CSRG T survey form was discussed with 8 respondents and the Rigid CSRG T survey form was discussed with 6 respondents.

- 2.2.11 We consulted with DfT analysts responsible for commissioning the research in order to understand more about how the survey data is interpreted and used. This ensured an understanding of the analysts' interpretation of data in comparison with respondents' assumptions; and that any suggested changes would not affect analytical requirements of the data. In addition, a DfT representative accompanied an interviewer for an interview in order to gain first-hand insight into the respondents' experience and assumptions when filling in the form.



3. SURVEY RESPONDENTS' VIEWS OF CSRG T OVERALL

3.1 Initial Impressions

3.1.1 Initial impressions of the survey were on the whole fairly neutral, with participants suggesting that it is a minor nuisance but that they also presume it is valuable information (to someone). The general sentiment is that the survey is a bit mundane to fill in, a little time-consuming and/or a slight inconvenience, rather than anything overtly negative. The overall attitude was one of being resigned to complete the task.

“It’s not something you look forward to - it’s mundane, it’s not difficult.” (Haulage, Large, International)

“It’s not difficult, it’s not rocket science - they’re just asking you about the vehicle and what it’s done that week.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

“You think ‘oh gawd, not again!’ ... It then becomes a niggle in the head – that you’ve gotta get it out the way.” (Haulage, Small, Domestic)

3.1.2 As expected, those working in larger fleet divisions received more requests to complete a survey form than those working in smaller companies, or non-haulage companies with only a few vehicles. Those working within international fleet divisions received and completed the International Road Haulage Survey (IRHS) in addition to the CSRG T survey. The time taken to complete the IRHS or the CSRG T had a clear impact on respondents’ preference for one or the other.

3.2 Motivation for Completing the Survey

3.2.1 Respondents cited varying motivating factors for completing the CSRG T survey. For many respondents seeing that the information was required by the DfT was sufficient. These respondents were keen to be seen in a positive light by the DfT and saw timely and accurate responses of the CSRG T survey as a method of doing so.

“The main thing is, that as a Transport Operator, you don’t want to be seen in a bad light by the Department for Transport, so if you’re filling them in efficiently and on time you hope that you’ll be seen in a better light.” (Haulage, Large, International)

“Well to be honest it’s important because it’s the Department for Transport and you don’t ignore the Department for Transport, so it was a priority for me.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

“We try to portray at all times that if we’re asked to do something [by the DfT] we do it and we do it to the best of our ability.” (Haulage, Large, International)

3.2.2 Other respondents referred to the legal requirements of providing the information as their reason for completing the survey.



“It’s required by law, so there’s your motivation.” (Non-haulage, Small, Domestic)

“It’s a legal requirement... we’re trying to keep legally compliant as a company.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

“Because it’s a legal requirement.” (Haulage, Medium, International)

3.2.3 Interestingly, although perhaps unsurprisingly, there were a few respondents who had initially tried to avoid completing the survey, before they were made aware of the potential of being fined. In addition, there were suggestions that data had previously been falsified in order to avoid completion of the survey.

“Honest answer? The very first time I got one I thought you could get away with not doing it but I got told no, they do chase you for it, so just get on and get it done.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

“I’ll give you a story: in the old days when we had quite a few spare vehicles (times have changed) ‘Oh, it’s that vehicle’s survey next week, let’s keep it off the road’. But now we’re cut down to the bone.” (Non-haulage, Small, Domestic)

3.2.4 In a minority of cases respondents cited the use of the data and the importance of accurate submission as their motivating factor, however this was often in combination with another reason and the respondents were not necessarily correct in their belief of what the data is used for. A few respondents felt that completing the survey was an important part of maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship with the DfT.

“I can see why they do it [the CSRG T survey], so that we give information on the drop and where the vehicle’s been, stuff like that.” (Non-haulage, Small, Domestic)

“It has to be a partnership, a partnership between the authorities and the operators. If you get that breakdown in partnership then things are going to fall apart.” (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

3.2.5 There was little understanding for what the survey data is used for. The consensus among respondents was that their company does not use road freight statistics which is a likely reason for their lack of awareness.

“A lot of these statistics are actually quite important. What they’re used for I’m not sure exactly!” (Non-haulage, Small, Domestic)

“Not really no [I don’t know what the data is used for]. Obviously they need to know the information... I don’t know whether it’s something to do with road usage.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

“No, I’ve no idea. It’s just to see where the vehicles are going and make sure they vehicle is capable of carrying what it is carrying maybe.” (Haulage, Small, Domestic)



“It’s always nicer to know why you’re doing it. I mean, to be honest, I just thought they’re checking up to make sure we’re doing things properly and not sending people out for too many hours and I think that’s a good thing. But it would be good to know why you’re doing something, absolutely.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

“I suppose to look at trends and other analysis. To find out what’s happening out there.” (Non-haulage, Small, Domestic)

3.2.6 Most respondents were interested in knowing more about how their contribution through the survey submission impacted on decisions made by the DfT. Whilst respondents recognised that a personalised response to submissions was not feasible, when the results are published, they are interested in knowing specifically how data from the CSRG T survey was used to inform certain policies. Respondents also felt that having this type of feedback would result in them feeling more motivated to complete the survey.

“You don’t really get any feedback from the surveys. You send them off and you don’t actually hear anything back.” (Haulage, Large, International)

“I put a lot of effort into making sure the information is accurate, so it would be nice to get some sort of notice for the fact that you [are completing them]. Otherwise it feels like you’re just filling them in and spending a long time doing it then sending it into a black hole as nothing ever comes back.” (Haulage, Large, International)

“I would certainly be interest in knowing more. It certainly helps, when you are spending that time with someone, actually justifying it... it helps to make it understandable to why they’re doing it.” (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

“It would be nice at some point to get feedback from the DfT. Yes you get the stats, yes you get the surveys that get published and that sort of thing, but I suppose direct feedback on what’s been happening, how this information has helped in a particular area or something like that, rather than just being left open.” (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

“There’s a lot of information that you have to put in and you don’t always feel that you’re getting a lot back out.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

3.3 Method of Completion

3.3.1 The majority of consulted CSRG T respondents complete the survey individually, in an office based environment and aim to complete it in one sitting. However, most respondents at non-haulage companies were unable to complete the survey without assistance from other members of the company. This is because the information is not stored centrally as is generally the case at haulage companies. In the situation where more than one person was involved in completing the survey, the main respondent filled in Sections 1-4 unaided, but did not have all the access required to complete the ‘Journeys Made’ section. This was either given to the vehicle driver to complete, or completed in association with the vehicle driver’s manager.



3.3.2 Interestingly, only one respondent completed the Excel version of the survey. Awareness that this method of completion was a possibility was extremely low among all other respondents.

“No, I haven’t looked at it or considered it [the Excel version], I didn’t even realise there was one.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

“I just really wasn’t made aware of it, I guess.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

“Oh, can you [fill it out like this]? I’ll be honest – I’ve never read the letter.” (Haulage, Medium, International)

3.3.3 Respondents that completed the hard copy of the survey returned it in the post, except one individual who preferred to scan the completed form and email it to the email address given in the accompanying letter. They chose this method simply so they would receive confirmation of receipt of the survey, as they would otherwise be concerned that it may get lost in the post.

3.3.4 The one organisation that completed the Excel spreadsheet (i.e. electronically) is an especially large haulier and had requested the survey reach them in this manner. This large company may have mechanisms that facilitate easy electronic receipt, completion and submission – as well as audit trail requirements – that, perhaps, some smaller companies that we have consulted do not.

3.3.5 All respondents, regardless of company type or size, are required to refer to multiple sources of information in order to complete the form. All respondents stated that it would not be possible to send ‘raw data’ to the DfT for in-house analysts to extract the relevant information and that ultimately a survey format was necessary. Respondents felt that it would ultimately be more complicated having to send over data in its original format, in addition to problems that may raise with data protection.

“I don’t know how we’d stand HR-wise sending the drivers’ timesheets to you because it has a lot of personal and pay information on there... so I think the form, as it is, is better for us.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

“Because I get the information from different areas I’d be sending you screenshots from my Tracker, screenshots from my tachoanalysis, screenshots of the timesheets and it would be more complicated. It’s better to do it this way for me.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

“Not really because when you’ve got so many routing systems they all publish the information in different format, so I’d never really be able to copy and paste a whole block of information over. I’d still end up having to sit and write it out anyway.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

3.3.6 Information sources used to complete the CSRG T survey include:

- Run Records (measuring trips);



- Pink Sheets (regarding orders);
- Drivers' timesheets;
- Drivers' reports/day sheets/worksheets;
- Tachograph software;
- GTS systems (measuring supply and demand);
- GPS systems, including Isotrak;
- Tracker software, including DynoFleet, Sterling and FleetBoard;
- Fleet management software, including Tranman
- Google Maps, AA Route Planner or company equivalent;
- Fuel systems, including Jigsaw M2M;
- Fuel cards;
- Vehicle folders;
- Vehicle inspection sheets;
- Smartphone applications, including TruckCom;
- Odometer readings;
- Order forms;
- Company Diary or Log books; and
- Vehicle service forms.

3.3.7 Typically about three different sources of information were used to complete the survey, sometimes this was stored electronically and at other times was a mixture of computer based information and hard copy data sources.

3.4 Receipt of Survey

3.4.1 The majority of respondents spoken to who complete the survey have operational roles in the company, managing the fleet, or a division of, and managing day-to-day operations including deliveries and collections. Sometimes, especially in non-haulage companies, the survey is completed in conjunction with the vehicle's driver.

3.4.2 All but the one respondent, who completes the Excel version, received the CSRGT survey by post. Some respondents had received the survey before the specified survey week and others received it after the survey week. Often the within-company route that the survey took to reach the correct respondent was a complex one, however in especially large companies this was a necessity.

3.4.3 The survey was often addressed to the incorrect individual within the company, for example, the Health and Safety Manger, or it was addressed to a more generic address, such as Head Office. This was despite one individual being consistently responsible for the completion of the CSRGT surveys. However, none of these respondents had got in contact with the DfT to request the change.

3.4.4 The survey being addressed to the wrong individual was a source of frustration for individuals solely responsible for completing the survey, especially as this often resulted in delays of up to a few weeks for the survey to reach them.

3.4.5 However, in some cases, where depots were divided regionally or multiple fleets managed by different individuals, the best way for the survey to reach the correct person was for it to be addressed to a more senior individual at Head Office, who could then decide who



was the most appropriate person for the selected vehicle, and then pass it onto the relevant individual.

3.4.6 Respondents often had strong preferences on the date that the survey reached them with regards to the survey week. Some respondents ideally need to receive the survey in advance of the week, in order to ensure that all the information was recorded and that the survey could be completed as accurately as possible. Very occasionally respondents preferred to fill the survey out day-by-day, in which case they would also require the survey in advance.

“It’s easier sometimes... you can ask him [the driver] to make additional notes for the specific vehicle for that period.” (Haulage, Medium, International)

“You can then forewarn the driver and then say your vehicle is in for a survey this week, so can you make sure that you make a note of additional [information], everything that you need to, they do it anyway, but just to reiterate... so I can then compile this even better.” (Haulage, Medium, International)

“If it comes to be quick enough I can still access the routing information, if it comes two weeks after the survey week I have to go and do it by paper and then estimate it myself.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

“The only way it would be easier for me, would be if the survey was sent out before the survey week because then it would have time to get to me and I could record it daily as they’re going out.... It would make things easier for me.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

“I wouldn’t have to sit there and retrace every bit of information... I could do each entry daily.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

3.4.7 For some respondents, it was a necessity to receive the survey in advance of the survey week but they also needed to wait until a few weeks after in order to collate all the relevant information.

“Probably two [weeks after the survey week] by the time you get all the fuel bills in, the mileage, all the different bits and pieces that we expect the driver to fill in. It’s easier two weeks after the event and sometimes runs to three.” (Haulage, Medium, International)

“It’s easier for me to wait a little bit longer – give me a bigger window to complete it and you’ll get the information more accurately.” (Haulage, Medium, International)

3.4.8 However, other respondents interviewed would prefer to receive the survey shortly after the stated survey week. Their reason being that they cannot complete the form until all the journeys have been made, and processed centrally. Many of these respondents expressed concern that they were more likely to forget to complete the survey if they received it in advance as it would be filed away.



“I’d like to fill it in and get it out the way, but I won’t get that data until the end of this week, so then I’ve got to remember to fill it in next week.” (Haulage, Large, International)

“One of the problems is, let’s take this as an example [referring to CSRG form recently sent], this is dated 7th of October and I’ve received it on the 10th of October... they then ask you to complete the survey for the 20th to the 26th... they send it to you in advance, but you don’t really get a reminder, so if you put it in your drawer and don’t open your drawer for a month then, you know [it gets forgotten].” (Haulage, Large, International)

“The information’s all stored, it’s all there... so it wouldn’t matter if it was six months ago, or twelve months ago, I’d still have the information to hand.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

3.5 Experience of Completion

3.5.1 The time taken to complete the CSRG survey, including time spent collecting data for it, varied greatly, ranging from about 20 minutes to over 3 hours. The variation in time often reflected the size and nature of the company’s haulage operations. Medium and large hauliers often found the data required much easier and quicker to access, collating information from two or three online or paper sources. In contrast, non-haulage companies often had to spend considerably longer locating the relevant sources of information and, in one instance, had to travel round the country to do so as the information required was not kept centrally.

3.5.2 Consistent comments, regardless of company type, centred around the accompanying guidance notes. Whilst all respondents found the notes useful for certain sections of the form (detailed in the following chapter), the majority of respondents interviewed also felt the notes were too long, unwieldy and would not consider reading them through before attempting completion of the survey. Most respondents simply referred to specific notes highlighted in the form to clarify terminology or to find the correct code, particularly in the Journeys Made section.

“There’s a lot of them [notes] for the type of form you’re filling out.” (Haulage, Large, International)

“Everything is there [information in the notes], it’s just time consuming [to find], that’s all.” (Non-haulage, Small, Domestic)

“I tend to use the notes mainly for the bit with the more than four drops, and less than four drops.” (Non-haulage, Small, Domestic)

3.5.3 Many respondents felt the notes should be more concise and easier to read, such as using more bullet points. Some respondents also felt that receiving paper notes each time was a waste of paper and suggested that they would prefer to receive them through email, or be directed to them online.



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- 3.5.4 Interestingly many respondents were unaware of the 'Examples of recording journeys for the CSRGT' section of the notes, however once these were pointed out and run through with the respondents, the majority of respondents interviewed felt that they were very useful and would refer to them in the future.

"I've never seen this. They might put Guidance Notes in [the envelope containing hard copies of the questionnaire and some explanatory notes] but not these [the Five Example sets of Movements]." (Haulage, Small, Domestic)



4. SURVEY RESPONDENTS' VIEWS SECTION BY SECTION

4.1 Section 1: Vehicle Details

- 4.1.1 The information requested within Section 1 was found by most respondents to be clear and simple to complete. Whilst this information is stored in different places in each company, most respondents interviewed only needed to refer to one data source to complete this section. Many respondents felt they did not even need to refer to other sources to complete this section as they knew the information themselves.

"Nine times out of ten, from the registration, I can fill that part out [Section 1], without having to go anywhere else." (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

Trailer type options (articulated vehicles only)

- 4.1.2 Whilst the format (tick-boxes) for Question 1 was found to be very clear by respondents, some raised queries over types they were unsure over and made suggestions for what they felt may be missing. Some respondents also felt that they would like the opportunity to state the trailer type when selecting 'Other'.

"I suppose one thing that's missing, specialist things like low load trailers or heavy trailers." (Haulage, Medium, International)

"Really it's just 'Containers' missing." [Respondent therefore ticked 'Other'.] (Haulage, Small, Domestic)

- 4.1.3 One respondent raised a query over how to define 'Temperature controlled', where the trailer was a refrigerator but the contents did not require cooling. In this instance he therefore classified it as 'Box/non specialised' but was unsure as to whether this was correct. A query was also raised as to what a powder tanker trailer should be classed as; the respondent felt it could either be 'Solid bulk tanker' or 'Tipper', but that neither were fully accurate. One respondent queried the correct way to fill out the form if the trailer type changed on the same journey. He, not infrequently, had vehicles complete the outward leg of a journey with one trailer type, and another trailer type for the return journey.

Gross vehicle weight and carrying capacity (Question 2)

- 4.1.4 Most respondents interviewed knew the gross vehicle weight and carrying capacity figures without referring to data sources and did not refer to Note 2 of the guidance notes, as advised in the survey. Often the figures were the same for all vehicles in the respondent's fleet. Interestingly, one respondent verbally gave the answer to Question 2 in tonnes, despite the unit requirement being kilograms, suggesting a level of inaccuracy.

"You do it day-in and day-out, you just know these answers [Q2]." (Haulage, Medium, International)



Axle configuration (articulated and rigid vehicles)

4.1.5 Respondents commenting on both articulated and rigid vehicle surveys felt that having the axle configuration set out in diagram form was useful and the best method of asking the question. However, there were comments that the image seemed outdated and had potential configurations missing. It was not clear to any respondents that when selecting ‘Other’ they were expected to complete the number of trailer axles in the ‘Journeys Made’ section.

“It looks like a truck, you can see where the wheels are, so as long as you know how many wheels are on your truck, you’re ok.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

“The image is the right way to do it, it just needs updating and taking out of the nursery school.” (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

4.1.6 Some respondents commented on the increase in different types of axle configuration that are not reflected on the form. One potentially missing combination raised by a respondent for an articulated vehicle is a three axle track unit with a single axle tractor (i.e. 3/1), although the respondent did say that would be a rare occurrence, mainly used by parcel delivery companies. A respondent’s view on different rigid vehicle combinations is summarised in the quote below.

“It’s clear what they’re looking for but some of the configurations have changed greatly since they’ve got them on there... there’s a lot more now configuration-wise... very often now you’ve got two axels front, three axels rear and additional axels on that, so instead of four axels we’ve actually got some vehicles with five axels on.” (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

Remaining questions in Section 1

4.1.7 All other questions in Section 1 were found to be worded clearly, with respondents reiterating that this section is fast and simple to complete.

“All straightforward as long as you know what your vehicles have got.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

“It’s all in your head to be honest... I don’t even read the question because I know what’s coming, if you know what I mean. They’re pretty much the same information in the same box in the same place at the same time, so you just go down it [the form].” (Haulage, Medium, International)

4.1.8 One respondent had difficulty answering whether the vehicle was fitted with a vehicle tracking system (GPS). The respondent did not tick this option, because the vehicles are not fitted with a GPS, however, the vehicle drivers are given phones installed with a fleet management system (TruckCom) that acts as the vehicle’s GPS.



4.2 Section 2: Vehicle Activity

4.2.1 Section 2 of the survey was also considered relatively fast and simple to complete. However, there are large discrepancies in how respondents calculate their answers to some of the questions and record their answers and therefore some potential for data inaccuracy.

Units

4.2.2 Section 2 includes three questions that require a unit to be selected from two options. Most respondents stated that it was simple to delete the appropriate unit and that it was preferable to have the option (e.g. miles or km), however often this had been omitted on their completed surveys. This can greatly decrease the quality of the data as it leaves figures ambiguous¹.

4.2.3 When this was pointed out, respondents suggested the only way of increasing data accuracy would be to remove the choice of units. Whilst distance in miles was more commonly spoken about, there was a general consensus that the data was more commonly recorded in kilometres.

"If you're talking trucks you might as well get rid of miles because all the tachographs are in kilometres anyway." (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

Vehicle not in use options

4.2.4 Respondents felt that the options given were comprehensive and clear. The only suggestion given for an extra option was 'Sold', which could then tie in with Section 4 of the survey. Interestingly, one respondent suggested that this part of the survey was used in order for respondents to avoid completing the rest of the survey.

"I know there are operators out there who say, 'yeh, it was off the road, no work', so that they can just send it back, especially if you have to fill anything in." (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

Estimating mileage

4.2.5 Nearly every respondent uses a different method to estimate the mileage the vehicle undertakes each year. Different methods include:

- Referring back to the total mileage figure when the vehicle was a year old;
- Using figures taken from fleet management systems;
- Calculating from the daily mileage readings from the survey week;
- Citing an industry used figure;
- Dividing total vehicle mileage by vehicle's age in years; and
- Multiplying the survey week's mileage by 50.

¹ We understand that there is a reasonably high proportion of distance units not stated, so this is a continuing problem.



“I looked up what the reading was when it was a year old [to estimate mileage from the central tachograph system].” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

“When you buy a truck, most truck manufacturers will say to you, what’s your average mileage a year – 75,000. That seems to be the norm that they would expect you to do... that’s the only reason why [that figure is entered].” (Haulage, Medium, International)

“Say the vehicle is three year’s old, divide the mileage by three and that will be the average.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

- 4.2.6 Respondents from international fleet divisions failed to recognise that the question only referred to mileage in the UK, and instead provided an estimate of total mileage.

Litres of fuel

- 4.2.7 Respondents felt providing fuel estimates to be more accurate, as this was often recorded on an internal system, logged on drivers’ timesheets, or recorded on fuel cards. However, small companies were more likely not to keep a fuel record and therefore estimated fuel use from mileage.

“We’ve got a fuel monitoring programme that runs off of our diesel pumps, so that’s quite an easy one. Just look it up on the system.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

“We have a fuel programme that records the number of litres on a vehicle.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

- 4.2.8 Most respondents interviewed interpreted the question as asking how much fuel had been put into the vehicle over the course of the survey week, however some respondents expressed uncertainty at the wording of the question, meaning that one respondent left it blank.

“Now this is a question that I don’t [understand fully]. ‘With regard to your own supplies’ – now I’m assuming from that a diesel tank in your own yard or not... so are they saying it’s with regards to the amount of fuel purchased on the road? What I would say is ‘How much fuel has been purchased for this vehicle?’ x, y, z and ‘How much has been from your own supplies’, or from you own yard, or warehouse or whatever.” (Haulage, Medium, International)

- 4.2.9 Very few respondents felt they would have been able to provide accurate information about CO₂ emissions of the vehicle, however suggestions were made as to other factors that may influence the vehicle’s emissions. Whilst some companies do keep internal records of CO₂ emissions, respondents were quick to emphasise that it would be time consuming to access that information (usually from the Environment Department or working it out from fuel drawings) and that their calculations may not be consistent with the DfT’s.



- 4.2.10 Some respondents suggested that in order to build a more accurate picture of CO₂ emissions the survey could incorporate extra questions including on engine class (e.g. Euro 5), automatic gears, diesel exhaust fluid (e.g. AdBlue) or Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) equipped vehicles and idling cut-off mechanisms.

“Knowing which units have the AdBlue and how new they are and all the rest of it.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

4.3 Section 3: Business Details and Section 4: Change of Possession

- 4.3.1 Respondents suggested that it would be useful for the DfT to request email contact details in the same location as name and telephone number. Many respondents would prefer to receive the survey and accompanying notes via email and recommended requesting an email contact address in this location. Most respondents would prefer the DfT to get in touch through email if any clarifications were required on the survey.

- 4.3.2 Most respondents interviewed were happy with the wording ‘Does your firm nationally have a total employment of less than 10 people’. However, some respondents felt that the wording was confusing and could potentially be read as a double negative.

“The easiest option would be to include in there ‘Does your company employ more than 50 people?’ Yes or no.” (Haulage, Medium, International)

- 4.3.3 Respondents were very comfortable with the language ‘on own account’ and ‘for hire/reward’, however this meant they did not feel it was necessary to refer to note 3. As such, companies operating ‘for hire/reward’ did not write ‘haulage’ as the nature of their business, as requested by the notes. Instead, respondent’s wrote their main transport goods. As a result of this, respondents often requested more space to describe the nature of their business.

- 4.3.4 Most respondents interviewed had never had to complete Section 4: Change of possession, however when asked to read through the section they felt it was clear. One respondent had experience of a vehicle being sold midway through a survey week; in this situation he filled in the form up to the day it was sold and then completed Section 4. One respondent suggested that, whilst he had not ever completed this section of the form, if he did have to, it may cause problems, as vehicles were sold at auction and therefore he would not know the details of the new owner.

4.4 Journeys made

Initial impressions

- 4.4.1 Respondents were asked for any initial comments they had on either of the ‘Journeys Made’ sections before going through column by column. This section of the survey required the greatest amount of the respondents’ time, in comparison with the other sections. This was because multiple information sources were required, in addition to manual calculations often needing to be made.



4.4.2 Most respondents interviewed felt it was not initially clear which section of the form to fill in, primarily due to how the survey is currently set out. Some respondents initially did not realise the ‘five or more stops’ section existed, despite needing to fill this in.

“I believe I cocked it up the first time I’ve done one because I ran out of space once I put that many drops in the top section” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

“Probably, no, it’s not clear initially. You get to know the form is probably the best way of putting it... The split in the different type of journey could be clearer.” (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

4.4.3 Suggestions on how to clarify that respondents needed to read both sections before assessing which part of the form to fill in included separating the sections out onto different pages and dividing ‘four or fewer stops’ so that no more than that could be entered into the grid.

“Maybe block up the grid so that there is only enough room to write the four stops for each day. Section it out in terms of days.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

“Although I hate adding paper, probably split them onto two separate pages.” (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

4.4.4 Despite many respondents suggesting that they were confident in completing the correct section of the form, multiple examples were seen where the incorrect section had been completed. One respondent deliberately completed the incorrect section as they felt completing ‘five or more stops’ did not give a clear enough indication of the vehicle’s movement.

4.4.5 Some respondents were unclear on the definition of ‘stop’, querying whether this involved the destination if this was at the depot and whether it included both deliveries and collections for both the inward and outward part of the journey.

“If you count the return to depot as the fifth stop we could probably pretty much cover most of it on that bottom section. But if you were calling it five stops out on the road and then back, then we might use the top section a little bit more.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

4.4.6 A minority of respondents also queried the correct interpretation of ‘loaded’ and ‘empty’. This tended to occur at non-haulage companies where, for instance, some equipment was always kept in the vehicle and/or considered part of the vehicle itself and therefore whether the vehicle is ever ‘empty’.

Journeys

4.4.7 Some respondents were happy with the wording ‘Origin’ and ‘Destination’, however many made other suggestions. These included:



- Start point and end point;
- Start of vehicle’s journey and end of vehicle’s journey;
- Start and finish;
- Start and end; and
- Collection and delivery.

4.4.8 Most respondents suggested an alternative because they felt it would be clearer, however one respondent found the information requested confusing as the responses to both columns could be the same.

“the only confusion around it is, with our business, we could turn around and say that our origin and destination are actually going to be the same place” (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

4.4.9 Most respondents said they would be happy to provide postcodes instead of town names and this would mean little, if any extra work. There was also the understanding that postcodes would be more accurate as place names could be ambiguous.

“Place names suit, but the only problem would be if you had more than one in the country.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

“If you’ve got the information together in front of you, nine times out of ten you’re going to have the postcode there.” (Haulage, Medium, International)

4.4.10 However, some respondents had a strong preference for not providing postcodes, arguing this would create extra work and, in some cases, not be possible, for instance where stops were roadside locations. Some of these respondents would prefer extra space to make the place name location less ambiguous.

“Postcodes wouldn’t help us because our sites [which goods are transported between] have the same postcode!” (Non-haulage, Small, Domestic)

“One thing I would say is that there’s not really enough space to put the place name in sometimes, so I did struggle a little bit.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

4.4.11 Respondents were unlikely to refer to notes 4 and 5 to assist in completion of these columns. As such, where goods on the journey were being transferred from one mode of transport to another the ‘intermodal’ terms were not used.

Type of goods

4.4.12 Most respondents do not refer to note 6 in order to complete the type of goods being carried. As such there are occurrences where this is not correctly completed.



“All I actually do is write down caged groceries because it’s such a mix of stuff we do. So basically everything that a convenience store would stock... it’s just a total mixture.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

4.4.13 Not all respondents manage vehicles that carry dangerous goods, however those that do suggested aligning the codes in the notes with the Health and Safety Executive classifications to save unnecessary complication.

Distance travelled

4.4.14 The distance the vehicle travelled, both loaded and empty, was an area of particular difficulty when completing this section of the survey. Whilst some traditional haulage companies record this information, most respondents had to make manual calculations. Often respondents needed to use multiple sources of information to complete these columns, for instance using both drivers’ worksheets and Google Maps or an in-house system.

“Some of them are paper, some of them are electronic, so this is where pulling the data together to fill it out is the biggest thing and involved background work to get it together.” (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

“We’re always going to have loaded and empty journeys and our system doesn’t make that distinction... it is a case of doing the legwork.” (Haulage, Large, International)

4.4.15 Some respondents also had difficulty defining ‘empty’, particularly if operating not as a haulage company, as they may, near permanently, carry the same equipment in the vehicle.

“We’re never fully loaded and we’re never fully empty.” (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

“It’s never actually empty, it’s always for something on it. In terms of actually taking stock out it’s only loaded until it gets to its last drop. So I just class it as not empty at all because there’s always something of the back of it.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

“We leave that [equipment] as being almost part of the vehicle, because they always carry that, regardless. If they’re carrying material, or something that has been put onto the vehicle that is part of their role during the day, or they’ve had to take new materials out, or if it is waste they’re taking away, that’s where it would come in to say it is loaded or empty.” (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

4.4.16 Whilst respondents responded positively to having the option of miles and kilometres, many had failed to select their choice of units. When this was highlighted to them, the suggested solution was to remove the choice of units.

“Take the option away and make it whatever you want, I think that would be the safe option.” (Haulage, Medium, International)



Weight of goods

4.4.17 Most respondents completing ‘four or fewer stops’ found this column simple to complete, with information being recorded on order forms, customer invoices or internal computer systems.

“90% of our goods are packaged. The weights will be accurate because we weigh them... there’ll be a dispatch goods note printed with the weight on... they’ll weigh it because we get paid by the weight!” (Non-haulage, Small, Domestic)

“Should be pretty accurate as we go on what the customer has put on the order.” (Haulage, Medium, International)

4.4.18 Respondents completing ‘five or more stops’ were more likely to find making the distinction between weights of goods delivered and collected more challenging. This was particularly the case if the goods were not measured by weight (e.g. liquids) or where goods were simultaneously dropped off and collected. These columns were most likely to require manual calculations.

“Sometimes it can be difficult to work out total weight of goods delivered or collected, so the figures I give are usually an estimate. All we actually collect are empty roll cages and waste cardboard and plastic.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

Number of stops (five or more stops)

4.4.19 The only difficulty in completing these columns occurs when delivery and collection happen at the same ‘stop’ and therefore are not isolated incidents.

MOA

4.4.20 Respondents were not familiar with the term ‘mode of appearance’, nor its acronym, prior to completing the CSRG T survey. Note 9 was consistently referred to in order to complete this column. Most respondents found the terminology clear once they had read the note, although felt it did not necessarily reflect what was actually being asked.

“Once you’ve read the notes, yes, it becomes clear; for someone looking at it fresh, probably not, no.” (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

“The options were perfectly clear – everything is palletised.” (Non-haulage, Small, Domestic)

“The MOA, how it’s carried, I had to look up the form to see what that meant, but it was easy to find.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

4.4.21 Alternative suggestions for renaming were ‘description of goods’ and ‘type of goods’. In addition, one respondent suggested there should be an option for ‘loose cargo’, where goods have not been packaged.



'90% of available space' column

- 4.4.22 Most respondents suggested that the wording for this question was clear, however many had omitted to complete the column. One respondent found the wording confusing and suggested an alternative.

"Do you mean it was full up or not?" (Haulage, Medium, International)

"How full was this vehicle? 10%, 20%, 30% etc. 100% being completely full and 50% being half full. I think that would be an easier option. Or, quarter full, half full, three quarters full." (Haulage, Medium, International)

Number of trailer axles and STGO tick

- 4.4.23 None of the respondents had completed the last two columns of the 'four or fewer stops' form, however when these were pointed out there was a feeling that they were not necessarily in the correct location. One respondent suggested that as they were so rarely used they should be combined with the previous relevant questions.

4.5 Excel Version

- 4.5.1 Initial reactions to the Excel version of the CSRG T survey were mixed. Respondents who were unaware that it could be completed in this format were keen to give it a go, however after briefly trying out the version some respondents then felt they still preferred the paper version of the form.

"I'm already sold [on completing it in this format in the future]." (Haulage, Medium, International)

"Yes [I would consider filling in the Excel version] because it would save me having to walk past the post box." (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

- 4.5.2 When respondents were asked to complete parts of the survey the majority of respondents interviewed struggled to navigate to different parts of the spreadsheet. Respondents rarely realised that accessing different parts of the survey (and away from the guidance notes) was done by tabs. None of the respondents identified that the 'five or more stops' section of Journeys Made required scrolling down the sheet and suggested it would be clearer if the sections were separated by tabs, if this instruction was given clearly. However, it is important to recognise that the respondents were only given a short timeframe in which to test the format.

"It says click here to send it and it's the big box in the middle, your eyesight is drawn to it straightaway and so you just click it." (Haulage, Medium, International)

"As soon as you open the tab all you see is the bit at the top... maybe go to a separate tab." (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)



SYSTRA

"I've got stuck! It would be a case of getting used to it." (Non-haulage, Small, Domestic)

- 4.5.3 In addition to difficulty navigating the form, some respondents also struggled with text sizing and the arrangement of notes within the spreadsheet.

"I'm not saying I'm blind, but if you look at the type of goods information there, that is hardly readable." (Haulage, Medium, International)

"To be honest with you that's [the notes] quite messy, because the lines are going over each other, it crosses quite messily. My advice – colour code it." (Haulage, Medium, International)

- 4.5.4 Use of drop down boxes was found to be particularly confusing by some respondents. This included where respondents attempted to enter the date format as dd/mm/yy multiple times, when the correct action was to select the day of the week from the drop down menu. Clarity of the drop down menus is not aided by text asking the respondent to 'Please tick'.

"Oh, I see, it's the actual day. I would have thought it was better off with the date, but I suppose it depends; if you put the date of the survey in, it could do it that way." (Haulage, Medium, International)

"What I would say is MOA, I would have that as a drop down box." [Respondent did not realise initially that it is.] (Haulage, Medium, International)

- 4.5.5 Suggestions for improvement of the Excel survey format also included ensuring that required answers had been completed before being able to submit the survey response.

"If you can do it in this format then I would make sure you've got on there the opportunity that you haven't complete the boxes... [for example] you haven't completed the vehicle registration mark... so it won't let you proceed to the next section until you've complete the boxes that are compulsory boxes." (Haulage, Medium, International)

- 4.5.6 Most respondents interviewed reacted very positively to the suggestion of the CSRGT form being emailed to them in the future. Some respondents felt it would reach them much quicker and that it would raise their awareness of the Excel format as a method of completion.

"Email's fine. To be honest with you, if you're going to go computerised then you might as well go into email to get the ball rolling. If you put this attachment on it, it might be easier." (Haulage, Medium, International)

"There's always the danger [of the email getting lost or not arriving], but the likelihood of that happening is probably zero to none." (Haulage, Large, Domestic)



“Who’s not using email these days? It’s the world we’re living in.” (Non-haulage, Small, Domestic)

4.5.7 However, some respondents were not as comfortable with using a computer and preferred a paper-based system.

4.6 Online Feasibility

4.6.1 Most respondents reacted positively to the idea of being able to complete the CSRG T as an online survey; but some would still prefer pen-and-paper. Many respondents suggested that an online survey should be the natural progression for completing the form.

“It wouldn’t really be a massive issue to do it online.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

“If we had the option we would do it online.” (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

“I would prefer to [complete it online], it would be a lot simpler for me.”(Haulage, Large, Domestic)

4.6.2 Respondents that had missed out completing sections of their submitted CSRG T highlighted, without prompting, that an online version would prevent simple mistakes like that from happening.

“Being on the internet, I wouldn’t be able to miss that out.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

4.6.3 There were considered to be very few barriers to completing the form online, although respondents did raise concerns that they would want to be addressed before the survey moved in the online direction. These included:

- Losing work if internet connection breaks;
- Some small companies may not have a computer;
- Lack of flexibility in entering data; and
- Would want choice of online or hardcopy, at least to start with.

“Only that obviously, you’re half way through a survey then all of a sudden I’ve got a problem and I’ve got to put that to one side, would it then, if you were still online, would you then break the connection?” (Haulage, Medium, International)

“If you’ve got it on a screen you could be forever flicking between different windows to get the information. Whereas I can have sheet in front of me and a pen and look up at the screen for the info and it’s all done in one.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

4.6.4 Respondents made suggestions about how these concerns could be addressed, in addition to other benefits an online survey could offer. These included having:



- Secure logins;
- Screen prompts for assistance;
- Help buttons for more detailed assistance;
- The ability to save progress regularly; and
- The possibility of the development of a mobile phone application.

“Have the comments [notes] on there but have them hidden so that when you hover over the box you get the explanation telling you what you need to be writing in there.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

“You could get rid of all the typed comments and have them as pop up comments.” (Haulage, Medium, Domestic)

“Maybe have screen prompts as well, rather than having the notes. When you’re filling something in that you’re not so sure on you could have like a help button. It would save on a lot of paper.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

“I think the ability to save a section at a time, so you actually work through step by step, so you don’t have to sit down and complete it in one go... If you had to sit down start and finish it in one hit, that would cause problems, but the ability to dip in and out of it would be beneficial.” (Non-haulage, Large, Domestic)

“How about them having a mobile phone application built? Everybody’s using smartphones these days, they could have an application built where maybe the driver could do it.” (Non-haulage, Small, Domestic)

4.6.5 Security was not considered to be a problem with regards to completing the survey online. Many respondents felt that this would be addressed through a secure login and that they would trust the data protection methods the DfT had in place. In addition, some respondents felt that the data would not be interesting enough to attract unwanted attention.

“You’d want it to be secure, so that when you do log in you are logging in with your own password, so not anybody could just fill your data in.” (Haulage, Large, International)

“Joe Blogs isn’t going to know what to do with this or bother to hack in.” (Haulage, Large, Domestic)

4.6.6 When asked to compare the Excel version of the form and the potential for an online survey version, most respondents felt that the online version would offer more advantages, including the opportunity to be formatted more clearly, provide more assistance through interactivity and that it would improve the quality of data as it could enforce answers to required questions.



5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 General Recommendations

- 5.1.1 The recommendations that follow are based on the research conducted with 14 previous CSRG T respondents. Whilst the CSRG T survey does, in many ways, deliver the information required by the DfT, there are some key issues that could be addressed in order to improve the experience for those completing the survey and to increase confidence in accuracy for those analysing the data.
- 5.1.2 The lack of awareness of the Excel version of the survey would benefit from being addressed. Initially this could be done by further amending the letter that is sent with the CSRG T survey, in order to draw more attention to this option, or it could be addressed using a separate eye-catching note that directs respondents online. A further consideration is to email the Excel documents as attachments and invite respondents to complete the CSRG T by filling-in the Excel document and emailing it back.
- 5.1.3 When the next set of data is published, the DfT could consider sending a separate note to respondents letting them know how parts of their responses have been used to formulate the published data and/or impacted any decisions that have been made on the basis of results from the CSRG T survey. If not possible, a leaflet or infographic could be produced containing figures and statistics of interest to fleet operators. To maximise interest and relevance, it may be necessary to use information from additional sources that complement the results of the CSRG T.
- 5.1.4 Providing information on the results of the survey and raising awareness of the Excel version could be combined in one colour leaflet or infographic. This could both promote the benefits of the Excel version of the survey (such as possibly faster completion and ease of submission), in addition to high level statistics of interest to respondents, highlighting the value of the survey to them and the value the DfT places on their submission.
- 5.1.5 An acknowledgement of receipt would give confidence to respondents that their completed survey has been received and could direct them to a source of more information. Receiving a brief 'thank you' may also help engage with respondents which in turn may encourage many to improve data accuracy in future.
- 5.1.6 Addressing the survey to the correct individual, or department, could help ease completion for respondents that would like to receive the survey in advance of the survey week and increase their confidence in the quality of the DfT's data. In order to begin this process, a question could be incorporated into the survey asking who the best individual is to address the survey to. This will also help address inconsistency and delays in the survey, and reminders reaching the correct individual.
- 5.1.7 The DfT could consider revising the guidance notes, particularly if they can be condensed to appear more digestible for respondents, who currently only refer to them if they feel it is truly necessary. Highlighting the corresponding numbers on the notes and using bullet points rather than prose could help to make them more appealing.



5.2 Specific Recommendations on Current Paper Survey

Section 1

- 5.2.1 A space to expand on 'Other' for trailer type options (articulated vehicles only) should be considered. If consistent options occur these can then be considered for entry into the list.
- 5.2.2 The axle configuration images would benefit from an update, including incorporation of new relevant configurations. Alternatively the respondent could be given the option to write the accurate configuration in, either by having space under a blank diagram, or in boxes to write the number.

Section 2

- 5.2.3 In order to increase data accuracy the choice of units could be considered for removal. Based on respondent feedback, kilometres is the preferred option, however we are aware this may be a politically sensitive issue.
- 5.2.4 Under reasons the vehicle was not used, the option of 'Sold' could be added, then directing the respondent to Section 4.
- 5.2.5 In order to increase data accuracy from estimated vehicle mileage, guidance could be offered on how estimations could be calculated.

Section 3

- 5.2.6 The most relevant location to obtain the respondent's email address would be to add in the requirement under name and telephone number.
- 5.2.7 The 'number of employees' question could be reworded in order to remove any ambiguity.

Journeys Made

- 5.2.8 The difference spatially between the two different sections would benefit from being addressed, with more direction to the relevant area – perhaps spelling out at the top of the page that different sections apply according to whether 5+ stops were made on each survey day. In addition, defining 'stop' would benefit the respondent as it is currently being interpreted in different ways.
- 5.2.9 The wording of 'Origin' and 'Destination' could be considered to be changed, with the most likely candidate for change being 'Start' and 'End'.
- 5.2.10 The table could include a request for the use of postcodes, if the respondent is able, in order to increase data accuracy.
- 5.2.11 The dangerous goods codes could be aligned with those of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as respondents are already familiar with using these codes.



5.2.12 There needs to be clarification over the terms 'loaded' and 'empty' as this causes confusion, particularly with non-haulage companies.

5.2.13 Mode of Appearance could be considered for renaming as it is not terminology used in the industry.

5.3 Recommendations on Excel Version of Survey

5.3.1 In order to increase ease of use, the formatting of the Excel version of the survey needs updating to aid navigation. The initial page could be one of instructions and help for completion as opposed to highlighting the final step in the survey. In addition, the different 'Journeys Made' sections could be separated – perhaps as different tabs – in order for respondents to identify, and distinguish between, them.

5.3.2 In some areas of the survey, the wording could be changed to reflect what the respondent is being required to do. For example 'please tick' could be altered where the respondent is being asked to select from drop down menus.

5.3.3 In order to encourage respondents to refer to the notes, particularly in places where they are not doing, 'see note x' could be hyperlinked to a location on the spreadsheet where this can be easily read. This can also be applied to the notes surrounding the table in the Journeys Made section, which appears confusing to many respondents.

5.4 Recommendations for an Online Survey

5.4.1 Transferring the survey online offers a long term solution to improved data quality. The main ways to achieve this are:

- Presenting the survey in a much more user-friendly, and intuitive, manner;
- Including logic checks to ensure respondents have completed all the required questions;
- Including logic checks to ensure information like units has not been omitted; and
- Only allowing participants to see the parts of the survey they need to fill in, preventing unnecessary confusion, particularly in choosing the correct Journeys Made section to complete.

5.4.2 Implementing thorough logic checks would greatly improve quality of data. In addition from preventing respondents from omitting any information, checks should be put in place that ensure the postcodes entered are valid and email addresses are in the correct format.

5.4.3 An online survey has the benefit of being very interactive, which can help to ensure respondents understand the requirements of the questions. Shorter notes and reminders can be displayed by hovering over question mark symbols and longer notes can be displayed in pop-out boxes.

5.4.4 Where multiple individuals in a company complete CSRGT forms, logins can be developed by company or depot in order to ensure the correct individual is accessing the survey.



SYSTRA

Moving forward, the IRHS survey could also be accessed and completed through the same portal.

- 5.4.5 An online portal can store copies of previous CSRGT submissions made by the same individual and thus act as a good source of information for respondents who wish to refer to previous surveys. In addition, tools could be incorporated into the portal to provide an easy method of communication between the DfT and respondent, in order to clarify any queries either party may have.
- 5.4.6 Respondents' and analysts' data formatting requirements can be considered separately, meaning that the front-end of the survey can be tailored to ease for the respondent, and the back-end displays the data as required by the data analysts, without the need to compromise.
- 5.4.7 However, despite these potential benefits, there is a risk that some respondents will be disenfranchised from the survey if 'forced' to complete the survey online. Some respondents – especially some at smaller companies - indicated a distinct lack of online knowhow and may use old hardware and software.



6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1.1 The research has demonstrated that the CSRGT survey is broadly 'fit-for-purpose' and in the necessary format to collect the required data. It is not possible for respondents to submit data directly from their records and, therefore, the continued use of the CSRGT survey form is a necessity.

6.1.2 However, there are many identified areas that, once amended, could improve the ease of completion for the respondent, whilst at the same time increasing confidence in data accuracy for the analysts.

6.1.3 In summary these include:

- Condensing the guidance notes for easy and more frequent use;
- Incorporating space for respondents to include 'other' options;
- Defining methods for estimating figures;
- Defining the terms 'stop', 'loaded' and 'empty'; and
- Aligning terminology and codes to those already used in the industry.

6.1.4 In addition, there are changes that could be made to improve the respondents' experience. These include:

- Ensuring the form is addressed to the correct individual/department;
- Starting to communicate with respondents using email, if they wish;
- Acknowledging receipt of completed survey form; and
- Offering feedback and a 'thank you'.

6.1.5 The quality of data from the CSRGT survey can only be as good as the tool that is used to capture it. As such, any re-design that improves the ease of use for respondents can only benefit the quality of the data received. In the short term, there are a number of simple changes which will clarify the requirements to respondents, improving their understanding of the questions and thus the accuracy of their answers. This in turn benefits those analysing the data, saving time ordinarily required to interpret answers and increasing their confidence in the accuracy of the data. Larger, long-term changes to an online survey will ultimately result in a far more durable survey, with improved data accuracy and enhanced user experience for both the respondent and analyst.



CONSULTATION WITH RESPONDENTS OF CSRGT

A INTRODUCTION

Reminders

- SYSTRA is an international consultancy which undertakes research for the transport industry.
- Systra has been contracted by the DfT to undertake a research project to review the effectiveness of the CSRGT survey.
- The aim of the project is to provide the DfT with greater insight into how the questionnaire can be made easier to fill-in; and increase confidence in data analysis.
- The research will be conducted in accordance with the Market Research Code of Conduct and Data Protection Act; and views expressed will be anonymised in all data provided to the DfT.

B ABOUT YOU & YOUR COMPANY

Q1a What is the nature of your company's road haulage operation? (i.e. movement of own goods OR movement of customers' goods.)

Q1b What is your company's size by number of staff/fleet size (approx.)? And is it international/national/local?

Q1c Please describe briefly your role in the company.

Q2 How did the CSRGT survey reach you?

Q3 Do you believe you are the most suitable person in the company to complete the form?
If not: who is the most suitable person?

C COMPLETING THE SURVEY

Q1 Where did you fill in the survey?

Prompt: please describe the environment in which the survey was completed.

- Q2 How long did the survey take to complete?
- Q3 Did you complete the survey in one sitting or was it completed intermittently?
*Prompt: were you carrying out other tasks at the same time?
was it completed at the end of each survey day or at the end of the week?
If you completed the survey retrospectively, how long after the survey period was this?*
- Q4 Did you complete the hard copy of the survey sent to you OR the Excel spreadsheet that's accessible online?
Why did you chose that particular format?

D MOTIVATION FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY

- Q1 Why did you complete the survey?
Prompts: told to by manager; to please the DfT; understand usefulness of the data?
- Q2 Do you know why the information is sought or how the DfT uses it?
Are you interested in knowing why?
- Q3 Does your company use road freight statistics data?
If yes: how?
- Q4a Have you completed the survey before this most recent time?
- Q4b Have you completed other similar surveys e.g. the International Road Haulage Survey (IRHS)?
If so: how does completing each form compare?

E EASE OF COMPLETING THE SURVEY

[SHOW QUESTIONNAIRE] Do you clearly remember the details that you logged? Please tell me your overall impression of filling in the survey?

*[IF YES, GET VIEWS ON QUESTIONNAIRE BASED ON MEMORY, OTHERWISE READ AS FOLLOWS:]
I'd like to see how easy, or difficult, it is for you to record the requested information. Please can you identify a vehicle that was in operation last week and try to record all requested details on the form.*

For each section, in turn, I'd like you to tell me how easy it WAS/is to answer the questions, and whether there WERE/are any uncertainties about how to interpret some of it, or difficulties getting information to answer the questions reliably?

[Articulated vehicle survey question numbers](#)

[Rigid vehicle survey question numbers](#)

Q5 **Section 1: Vehicle Details**

[Views:] _____

Prompts (general and at specific questions):

- What data sources are you using? And how easy (long) to get hold of?
- Is this simple to answer? Are there any other options that should be included? (Q1)
- Did you refer to Note 2? Is the information in the note useful? (Q2/ Q2)
- Is the image clear? Could the question be presented in a better way? (Q3/ Q1)

Q6 Section 2: Vehicle Activity

[Views:]

Prompts (general and at specific questions):

- What data sources are you using? And how easy (long) are they to get hold of?
- When do you fill this response in? Is it clear that you need to delete miles/kilometres? (Q10/ Q7)
- Are there other options that should be included? (Q11/ Q8)
- How accurate do you feel the estimation is? Is this information recorded formally anywhere? (Q12/ Q9)
- How accurate do you feel your response is? The question aims at estimating CO₂ emissions for the vehicle – do you record this information in a different way/ is there a different way the question could be asked? (Q13/ Q10)

Q7 Section 3: Business Details

[Views:]

Prompts (general and at specific questions):

- What data sources are you using? And how easy (long) to get hold of?
- Did you refer to note 3 before answering the question? Is the note clear? Is the question easy to answer? Is there enough space to give an accurate response? (Q17/ Q14)

Q8 Journeys Made

[Views:]

Prompts:

- Is it clear which section of the form needs to be filled in for each type of journey?
- If both types of journey are made during the survey period, is it clear that the two trip types should be split between the two sections of the form?

- Did the accompanying notes help?
 - Did you read them before starting to fill out the form?
 - If not, which section prompted you to start reading them?
- Journeys: Are 'Origin' and 'Destination' clear or would e.g. 'Start' and 'End' be preferable?
 - Are the codes and where to put them for intermodal journeys clear?
 - Would providing postcodes for example be easier?
 - How easy is it to determine the furthest stop from the origin when completing the 'five or more stops' section of the form?
- Type of Goods: Are the guidance notes clear e.g. 'mixed consignments'?
 - Is it easy to class the dangerous goods into the codes given?
- Distance Travelled: Is the distinction between 'Loaded' and 'Empty' clear?
 - Do you obtain distance information from your own systems or do you estimate this from other sources such as Google Maps etc?
- Weight of Goods: Is Note 8 useful?
 - How accurate do you believe the estimate to be?
 - How easy is it to estimate weight when the vehicle is carrying 'empties' or only packaging?
 - Is there any other assistance that could be provided to help you estimate the weight?
- MOA: Is the term 'mode of appearance' understandable? Are the options clear? Are there any others that should be included?

- Is this journey information already recorded by the company?
 - If yes: what survey information is already captured by your systems?
 - In what format is it recorded in?
 - Is there a particular piece of software used?
 - Would it be possible to be sent a screen shot of how this information looks?
 - Would it be feasible and easier for you to send the details over in the format you record them in?

What would you do if:

- a trip was made with the vehicle empty?
- you had incomplete information on a trip?
- the vehicles was not in use for every day of the survey week?
- goods were being carried for another company to provide consignment information?

Q9 Overall, how does each section of the survey form compare in terms of ease of completion?

Q10 Have you ever contacted DfT to clarify any aspect of the questions being asked on the road freight survey form?

If yes: Was this by e-mail or telephone?

F ONLINE FEASIBILITY

Interviewer to open relevant Excel version of the CSRGT survey on a laptop and run through it with the respondent. If the respondent has not completed the survey in this format before, time permitting, they will be asked to fill some sections in, in order to assess ease of use.

Q11a If respondent has previously completed Excel version:

- How did you become aware of being able to complete the survey in this version?
- How easy was it to locate through the letter or website?
- How does it compare to filling in the hard copy?
- How useful are the drop down options/automatically generated notes?

- Do you have any suggestions for how to could be improved?

Q11b If the respondent has not previously completed the Excel version:

- Were you aware that you could complete the survey in an Excel document?
- Would you consider completing it in this format in the future?
- How useful are the drop down options/automatically generated notes?
- Do you have any suggestions for how it could be improved?

Q12 Would you prefer to be able to complete the survey online?

If no: What would be the barriers to doing so?

Is there another format that you would prefer to complete the survey in?

If yes: How interactive would you want the survey to be?

Would you foresee any barriers to completing the survey online?

Do you have any suggestions as to how the questions could be filled in online?

How should it compare to the excel version?

G GENERAL

Q13 Would you be happy to be contacted by the DfT by phone or email after completing the survey for any clarification of your responses?

Q14 Before we conclude, do you have any other comments relating to the completion of the survey?

H TO CONCLUDE

To help them with further, on-going, feedback the DfT is looking to create a user-group that they would like to invite you to join. It would simply involve commenting on ideas for improving the survey, and would give you the opportunity to help shape how your company's interaction with the DfT. Is this something you might, in principle, be willing to participate in? If so only your name and contact details will be passed on to DfT, your responses to this exercise will still be anonymous.

Thank you for your time.

Name: _____

Company: _____

Tel: _____

Dear xxx

I lead the Road Freight Statistics Team at the Department for Transport and I'm contacting you, as a prominent operator within your sector, because you may be willing to help with a project I am currently working on.

My team is responsible for the Continuing Survey of Roads Goods Transport GB (CSRGT GB). We want to better understand fleet operators' experience of completing the questionnaire and identify ways the process can be improved.

We have commissioned Systra Ltd, a research organisation, to complete a series of interviews with people who have recently completed the questionnaire. The interview would be expected to last approximately 45 minutes, at a date and time of your convenience and will be conducted at your place of business.

By participating you will have the opportunity to shape the future of the Continuing Survey of Roads Goods Transport GB and improve fleet operators' experience of completing the survey.

A project team member from SYSTRA will call you in the next week or so to see if your organisation is interested in participating in this project; and, if so, who would be the most appropriate person to discuss the experience of completing CSRGT GB. They will receive a financial reward for their time.

If you would like any more details about this project, please let me know.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Julie

SYSTRA provides advice on transport to central, regional and local government, agencies, developers, operators and financiers.

A diverse group of results-oriented people, we are part of a strong team of professionals worldwide. Through client business planning, customer research and strategy development we create solutions that work for real people in the real world.

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