

Background Quality Report for the Recruit Trainee Survey 2016/17

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Recruit Trainee Survey (RTS) is a tri-service survey administered to gauge Phase 1 recruits' and Phase 2 trainees' attitude, background, perceptions and experience of training. It also investigates their views on the facilities, food, support, fairness of treatment, general perceptions of the course and hopes for the future. The aim of the survey is to:

- Elicit attitudes towards the quality and benefits of training provided.
- Identify any incidences of bad or unfair treatment, i.e. discrimination, harassment and bullying.

The Recruit Trainee Survey (RTS) was established following an appraisal of initial training (Phase 1 and Phase 2) by the Defence Operational Capability (DOC) in 2002.

Performance is reported by Service only and not for individual units; it is further sub-divided into Phase 1 and Phase 2. By analysing all responses over this period we provide an overview of the data, focusing on key findings, and in so doing complement and build on the monthly unit-specific reports.

The survey was trialled by the Army between November 2003 and May 2004. It has been used operationally by the Army since May 2004. The survey was introduced operationally by the Royal Navy (RN) and Royal Air Force (RAF) in November 2004. The survey was subject to the MOD ethical scrutiny process.

All recruits and trainees who have completed at least two weeks training on Phase 1 or Phase 2 courses are invited to participate in the survey. All respondents complete an anonymous and confidential on line questionnaire and are reassured that their responses cannot be attributed to them individually.

The questionnaire includes all the key questions raised by the Defence Operational Capability Audit and was developed by a Tri-Service group. On commission, Ipsos MORI made minor adjustments to the format and design of the questionnaire. Questions have been added, modified or removed during the course of the survey as part of a continuous improvement and review process. As such, there may be more trend data for questions which have not changed throughout the lifetime of the survey. For the purposes of this report, trend data is shown for the past 5 years, that is since 2011.

Regular workshops have been conducted to gain feedback from recruits/trainees, survey administrators and the end users of the reports to support the process of continuous improvement. In addition, on occasions the questionnaire is tested on recruits from different schools in order to examine and evaluate the content, length and language and ensure all respondents can understand the questionnaire.

1.2 Summary Production Process

There are eight stages in the RTS process. Each of these stages is briefly described below.

Stage 1: Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was designed by a Tri-Service group with technical expertise on questionnaire design provided by Ipsos MORI. A questionnaire review is conducted once a year to ensure the survey content remains relevant for all users – feedback is requested from attendees of the User Group meeting and the questionnaire is agreed by stakeholders at the Steering Group meeting.

Stage 2: Survey distribution and communications

All trainees and recruits who have completed at least two weeks training were invited to participate in an on-line anonymous survey between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017. All Phase 1 and 2 training establishments are included in the survey.

Instructions are provided by Ipsos MORI to the training schools to explain how the survey should be administered. This includes a paragraph that should be read out to trainees explaining the purpose of the survey and how the findings will be used. The survey is hosted on-line and schools are given single use passwords; these passwords do not identify any individual. It is requested that the survey is conducted under controlled examination conditions, with an independent computer work station set up to enable each trainee to access the survey. Trainees should not leave the session early or discuss answers with each other.

Stage 3: Data input

Online survey responses are held securely on Ipsos MORI secure data collection platforms. These responses are made available on the online portal on a monthly basis and can be downloaded at any time in the process by the colleges and other Service users

Stage 4: Data cleaning at data collection stage

There are several stages of automated validation built into the data collection process, namely only relevant questions are shown to respondents according to answers given at previous questions and only surveys completed to the end are included in the final data set).

Stage 5: Production of tables of results

Tables of results are produced by Ipsos Mori and level T-tests are carried out (at the 95% confidence interval) on the following comparisons:

- Year on year comparisons (within Services only)
- Comparisons between Services (current year results only)

Stage 6: Analysis of key findings

The tables of results for each section are analysed and summaries of the key points and figures are collated into the Main Report.

Verbatim answers to open-ended questions are collected but are not included in the report.

Stage 7: Data Checking

There are several stages of validation built into the data checking phase of the tables, main report and the online reporting platform. In terms of the data tables, these are designed by the Project Executive before being programmed into our software analysis package. Data tables are built on previous data tables to ensure the continuation of any data edit rules and to ensure that only new changes need to be programmed. All data tables are checked by the Executive team against the raw topline data and also against the data portal. For the main report, the data is input by one Executive team and then checked by a separate team.

Stage 8: Publication

The RTS is an Official Statistic and is produced and published in line with the Official Statistics Code of Practice. The publication date is pre-announced on the UK Statistics Authority official statistics release calendar. 24hr pre-release access is given to those listed on the published RTS pre-release access list. RTS is published on The Ministry of Defence external webpage (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence/about/statistics>).

2. Relevance

2.1 The principal users of the RTS publication are Defence People - Training, Education, Skills, Recruiting and Resettlement and Phase 1 and 2 training establishments and their respective Headquarters

The statistical information is used to inform and measure training and development personnel strategy and policy so it is important that stakeholder requirements are represented.

RTS captures information on the following topic areas:

- Preparing for training
- Facilities and food

- Support
- Complaints procedure
- Fairness, equality and diversity
- Setbacks during training
- General
- Hopes for the future

The information can also be used to answer parliamentary questions and Freedom of Information requests.

The survey is anonymous.

3. Accuracy & Reliability

3.1 The RTS collects data from all eligible recruits and trainees who have completed at least two weeks training.

Survey estimates and error margins are published for each of the three services.

As the RTS does not achieve 100% response rates (the overall response rate achieved in RTS 2016/17 was (67%) there is always the risk that those who returned questionnaires have differing views from those who did not. We assume that all non-response is Missing At Random (MAR). This means we have assumed that those people who did not return their questionnaires have (on average) the same perceptions and attitudes as those who did respond.

The figures used in the response rates calculations are obtained by allowing each Service to report the number of recruits and trainees in their respective training schools. This is then used, along with the number of completed surveys, to determine the proportion of eligible recruits and trainees that completed the survey in each Service.

Attitudes and perceptions are liable to change within the calendar year, for example, as a result of events or even due to the time of the year that the responses were collected (a seasonality affect). As the RTS is carried out over the course of the calendar year, results over time might be impacted by the varying times within the years that responses are completed.

3.2 Data revisions: There are no scheduled revisions. Any required corrections will be released in updated RTS reports, along with the reasons for the corrections, on the gov.uk website.

4. Timeliness and Punctuality

4.1 Timeliness

The RTS questionnaire is agreed 2 months prior to the start of the data collection period to allow the survey to be scripted. Once the fieldwork is closed, the data is checked, analysis completed and the report produced and quality assured; due to a number of methodological issues. The first draft of the report for review is typically produced around 8 weeks after the close of fieldwork.

The timing of data collection was driven by the Services, to align the results with other military timescales. The survey is continuously in field to ensure all recruit trainees are given the opportunity to complete the survey.

The release date for this publication was pre-announced on the [MOD's Calendar of Upcoming Releases](#)³ section of GOV.UK."

4.2 Punctuality

All pre-announced publication deadlines have been met.

5. Accessibility and Clarity

5.1 Access to publications

The report is published on the statistics section of GOV.UK as a PDF document (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/recruit-trainee-survey>).

5.2 Clarity

A cover note is provided summarising the methodology of the survey as well as a link to the Background Quality Report, and the contact details of the responsible statistician. An introduction to the bulletin is provided on the front page and a summary of key points and trends are included as well as a link to the Background Quality Report, and the contact details of the responsible statistician. It also provides a link to the more detailed report published on 27 July 17.

Within the report there is further information on the methodology and advice to users of caveats in the data.

6. Coherence and Comparability

6.1 Coherence

This is the only source of information about the specific experiences of recruits and trainees. There are no other tri-Service data sources that collect the same data with which to ensure coherence. However, the questionnaire and other methodological issues are harmonised with the Officer Cadet Survey where possible, so that results can be compared. A key difference between the RTS and the OCS is that the RTS responses for the Royal Marines are included within the Royal Navy figures whilst the OCS includes the figures separately (this is for historic reasons).

6.2 Comparability over time

Given changes in response rates for the individual Services, tri-Service results are not comparable with previous years therefore are not presented.

7. Trade-offs between Output Quality Components

7.1 Timeliness and costs versus Quality

The main trade-off is between timeliness and quality. Except for a small number of questions where it is felt relevant to analyse results by demographic questions, the reporting does not provide any cross-tabulations by each other, nor does the analysis employ any data reduction methods. This is so that the basic statistical information can be made available to policy users and the public as soon as possible in a clear and accessible format.

8. Assessment of User Needs and Perceptions

8.1 Description and Classifications of Users

Occupational Psychologists from the project team work closely with the main users of the survey within Defence to ensure that content reflects policy user requirements.

8.2 RTS Users/Uses

Internal users of the RTS include

- All Phase 1 and 2 training establishments
- ARTD
- FOST
- 22 Trg Gp RAF

The MOD has previously held regular consultation meetings with users of the RTS and Officer Cadet Survey, which provided a forum for user feedback on their needs and perceptions. Proposed changes were set out at the consultation meetings in order to gain feedback from both internal and external users.

The MOD invites users to provide feedback to the statistical output teams on any of their publications or reports using the contact information on the front of the publication.

9. Performance, Cost and Respondent Burden

9.1 Performance and Cost Effectiveness

The estimated cost of running the RTS and OCS surveys and producing reports is approximately £160K. This includes external contractor costs in production and running of the external survey, data cleaning and

analysis and production of the report. Costs are closely monitored and MOD strives to balance quality and timeliness against costs. A census approach has been taken due to the small number of recruits and trainees, who the survey is targeted at.

9.2 Burden

Response to the RTS is voluntary, participant information is provided at the start of the questionnaire to encourage informed consent. Respondents are reassured that their answers are confidential and anonymous. The average time taken to complete the survey is around 20 minutes.

10. Confidentiality, Transparency and Security

10.1 Security

All staff involved in the RTS production process adhere to the MOD and Civil Service data protection regulations. All data is stored, accessed and analysed using restricted systems.

10.2 Confidentiality

The survey is anonymous and only aggregated results are provided to anyone not directly involved in the analysis, results are not presented for groups containing less than 10 respondents.

10.3 Transparency

We adhere to the principles and protocols laid out in the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#)² and comply with pre-release access arrangements. The [Defence Statistics Pre-Release Access lists](#)⁴ are available on GOV.UK. The report is published with details of the methodology alerting readers to any potential issues. Any significant errors identified after publication will result in revisions along with explanations as to the cause of the revisions.

11. References

	Reference	Website Location
1	RTS	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/recruit-trainee-survey
2	Code of Practice for Official Statistics	http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-official-statistics.pdf
3	MOD's Timetable of Future Releases of National and Official Statistics	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-timetable-for-future-releases-of-national-and-official-statistics
4	RTS pre-release access list	https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/defence-statistics-pre-release-access-list
5	Defence Statistics Disclosure and Confidentiality Policy - Identifiable Survey Data	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-statistics-policies

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