



GROUP REPORT
Round 130

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



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

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

Chart 1 shows the current number of laboratories participating in the RICE scheme for R130.
UK 147 (68%), Europe 59 (28%) and ROW 10 (4%)

Chart 1 – Current Participating Laboratories (R130)

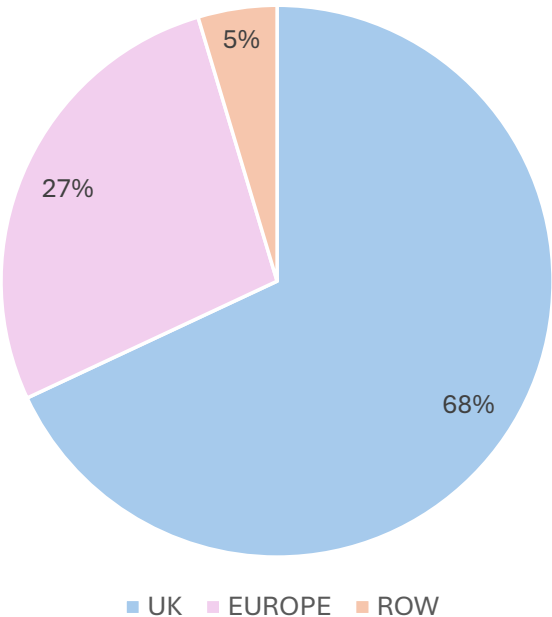
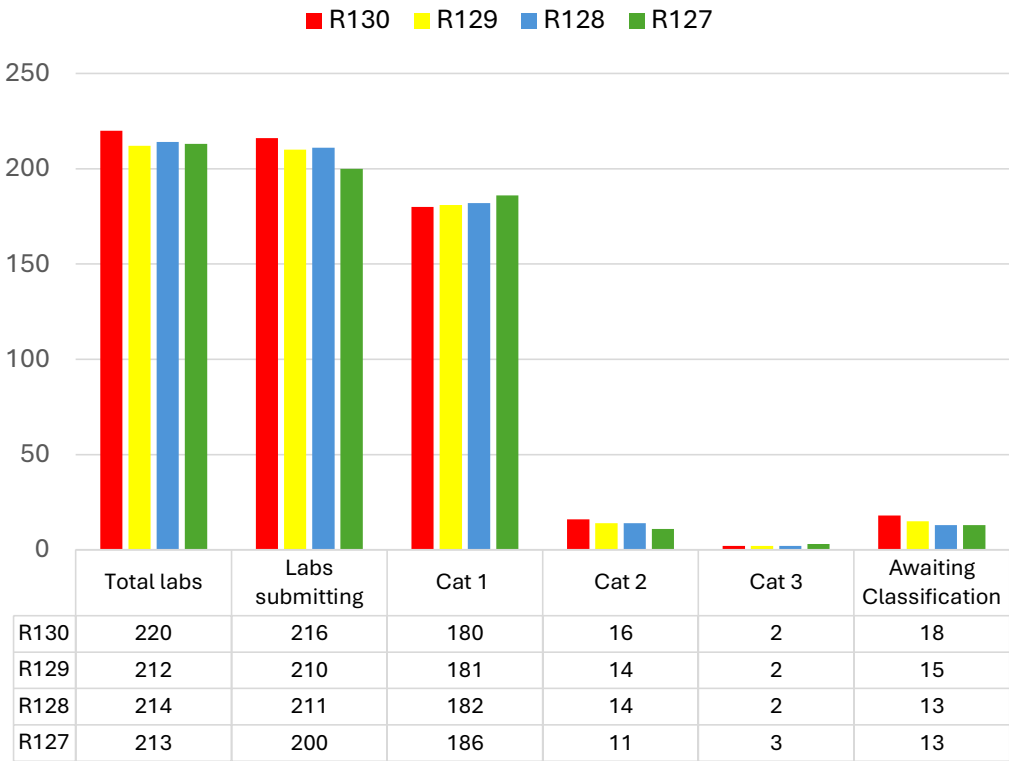


Chart 2 shows the comparison of categories from participating laboratories in R127-130.

Chart 2 – Category Comparison R127-130





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

- UK 139 (94%) are category 1, 4 (3%) are category 2 and 4 (3%) are awaiting classification.
- Europe - 37 (62%) are category 1, 10 (17%) are category 2, 2 (3%) are category 3 and 11 (18%) are awaiting classification.
- ROW - 4 (45%) are category 1, 2 (22%) are category 2 and 3 (33%) are awaiting classification.

Chart 3 – UK Classifications

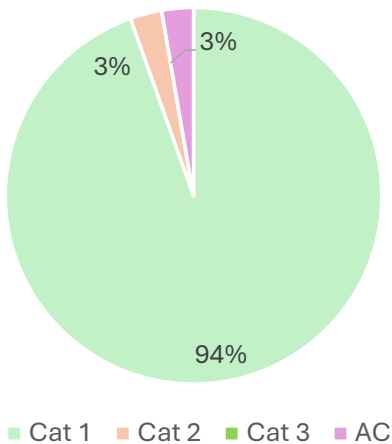


Chart 3 – Europe Classifications

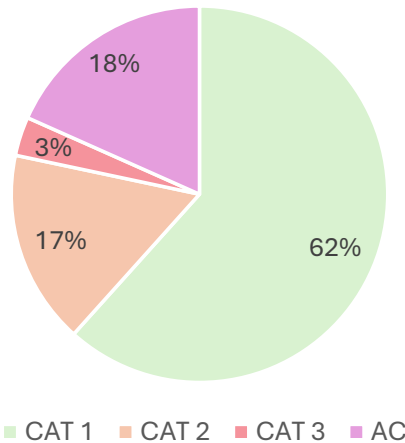
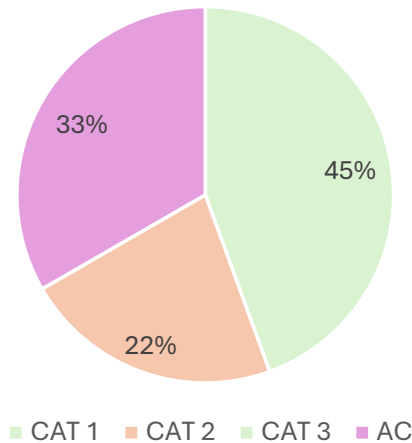


Chart 3 – ROW Classifications





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Slide Queries

Following R130, 43 slide investigations were undertaken. 10 of these were following participant queries and the remainder were highlighted by the PT (Proficiency Testing) team. 11 slides were withdrawn in total - 10 reference slides and 1 candidate slide.

Round	No. Of Queries	Withdrawn Reference Slides	Withdrawn Candidate Slides
127	25	7	2
128	25	7	1
129	58	17	4
130	43	10	1

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

Number of Counters for R130

UK – 1206
Europe – 105
ROW – 26

Slide Damage/ Withdrawal

Following R130, 13 slides were withdrawn due to damage and 4 received minor damage and were able to be repaired.

Round	Total Damaged	Minor Damage	Withdrawn
127	10	2	8
128	3	3	0
129	3	1	2
130	17	4	13

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

RICE Batches

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

Failure to return the slides may result in a lost slide fee and / or a delay in sending slides for future rounds.





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Software Update

The PT Team have recently amended all documents and software to HSE red, Further updates are planned, an email will be sent to all participants once they are live.

R130 Certificates

If you're not able to view your RICE R130 Certificate on the Online Data Entry System, it may be that we've not received payment for either a damaged slide, additional counters or for your subscription. If payment hasn't been received by Friday 19th December, no further slides will be despatched.

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

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

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

Classification Reports

Classification Reports for UK & Republic of Ireland (R127-130) are now available on the website.

RICE QC

Update (if necessary)

R131

The next round of RICE will be despatched week commencing 5th January 2026 . Participants will receive an email to advise them if they're first or second in their group. Lab 1 deadline for results submission is Friday 6th February 2026 , Lab 2 deadline is Friday 13th March 2026.

Please note - slides will not be despatched if payment is outstanding.

Rogue Slides Update

Rogue slides have been introduced into the scheme from R117. These slides are designed to test participants' ability to apply the sample rejection criteria correctly (i.e. quality of slide, dust obscuration etc.). There has been a mixed response - some laboratories have counted the slides and submitted a result; others have highlighted non-rogue slides as possible rogue slides. HSE have checked all slides that were incorrectly reported as rogues and all were deemed suitable for the scheme. HSE also recognise that participants may be concerned that if they count/ don't submit a count then a score may be applied. The counting/ rejection criteria in HSG248; The Analysts Guide (section A1.38, A1.39 & A1.40) should be followed. A free copy of the guide is available to download on the HSE website: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg248.htm>. When analysing slides, counters should follow the requirements of HSG248, in particular paragraph A1.38 (low magnification scan of slide) which, according to UKAS, is often overlooked by laboratories. This will also help analysts to determine whether a slide is a rogue or not. Two different rogue slides have been photographed, as an example- these have previously been sent to all participants by email. If you would like a copy, please email the PT Team with your HSE PT Lab number

Feedback

The annual survey is now live – please log on to the PT Online System to complete. Constructive comments/ suggestions are welcome at any time of the year, please email them to the PT team on the email address below.

AOB

There will be limited PT support over the festive period (from 22nd December 2025 to 5th January 2026). Please send all queries by email and we will respond as soon as we can. The PT Team would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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