

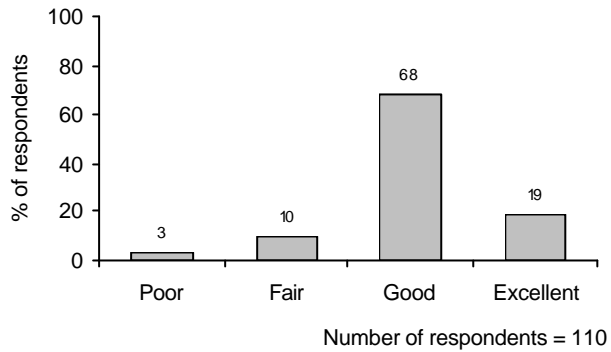


The EQUAL Schemes for Indicator Organisms and Surface Water

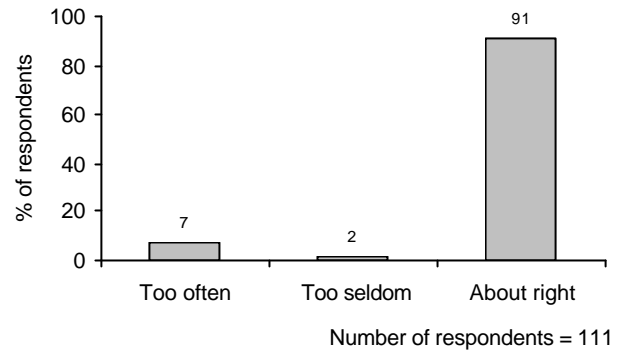
Participant Questionnaire Report July 2005

Section 1 Samples

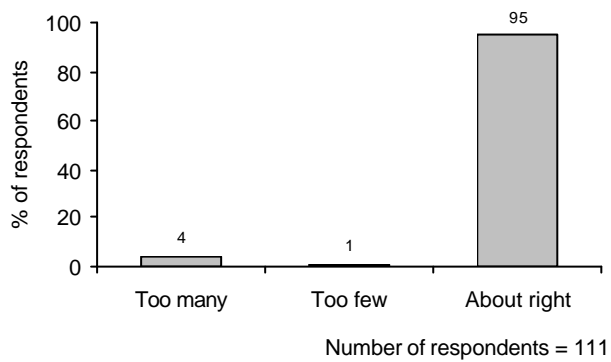
1.1 Sample Delivery Times



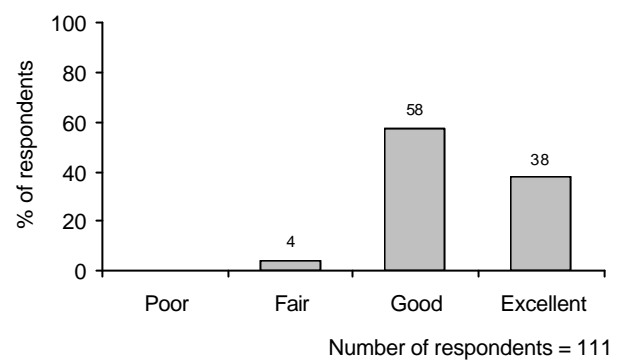
1.2 Frequency of distributions



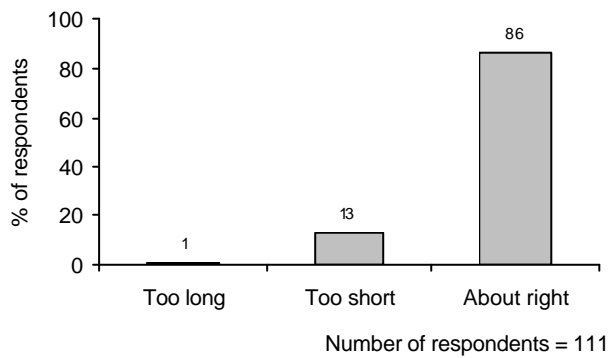
1.3 Number of samples per distribution



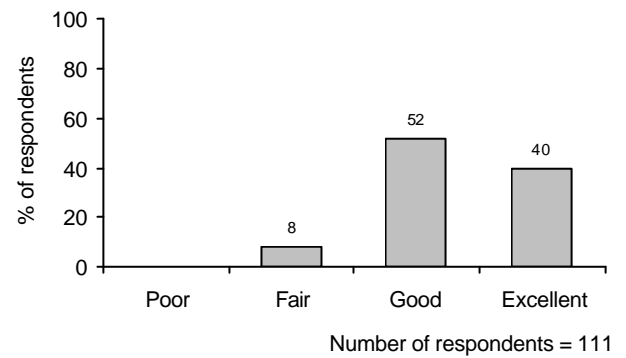
1.4 Clarity of instruction sheet



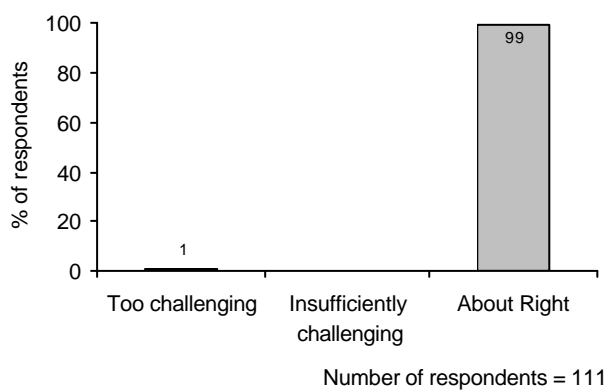
1.5 Time allowed for examination



1.6 Relevance to routine examination



1.7 Level of difficulty



Comments 1

- 1.1 Three overseas respondents expressed concerns that their results may be affected by transit times at ambient temperatures.

One laboratory suggested that we avoid distributing in August, when staff have holidays and distribute in December or January instead.

One laboratory suggested we consider changing the day on which they receive their samples.

- 1.2 Two respondents would prefer to register for fewer distributions, one suggesting four rather than six.

Two laboratories expressed their dislike of having to examine samples from several HPA Schemes in the same timescale. One suggested liaison between Schemes to avoid this.

- 1.5 One respondent suggested allowing an extra week for examination.

One respondent felt that the deadline day should be a Friday.

- 1.6 One laboratory that routinely analyses sewage samples would find it useful if the number of distributions in the Surface Water Scheme were increased, so that they would no longer need to participate in both Schemes.

- 1.7 One laboratory thought that not all parameters should be included in every distribution.

One reported that they rarely examine for enterococci or *Clostridium perfringens* routinely.

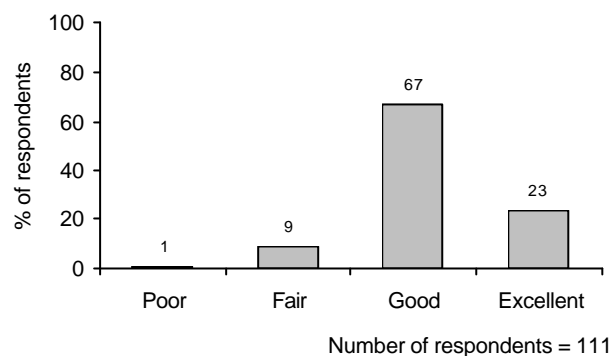
One respondent said that it would be useful to include *Staphylococcus aureus* as an investigative parameter.

General

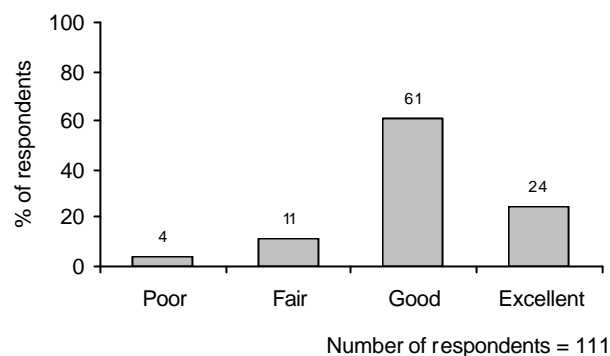
Our favourite comment in this section was 'Well done! A good meaningful Scheme'.

Section 2 Interim and Distribution Reports

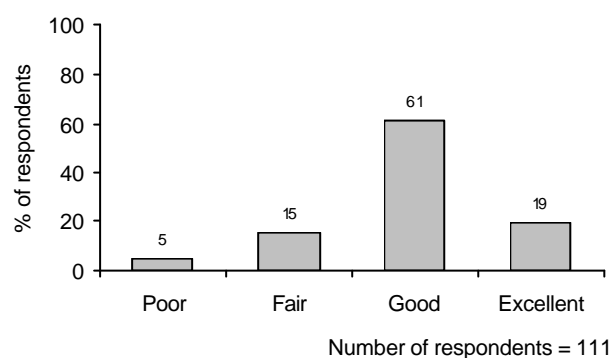
2.1 Clarity of presentation



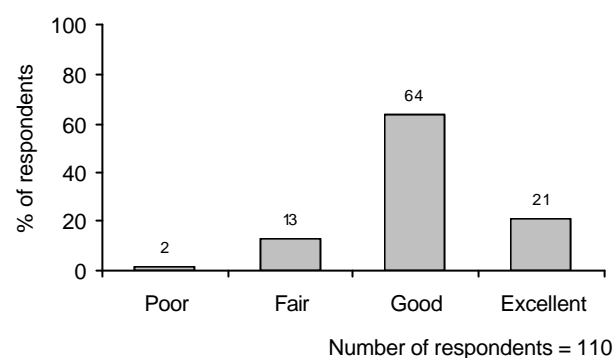
2.2 Level of information provided



2.3 Educational Value



2.4 Turnaround time



Comments 2

2.1 One laboratory was never sure whether the data in the Interim Report was based only on the Distributing Laboratory's results or those of all participants.

2.2 One respondent felt that the Distribution Report was too bulky and queried whether it could be condensed. Another would prefer less but clearer information.

One respondent said that more information on how the 'Intended Result' is achieved would be useful e.g. methodology, number of samples analysed etc. Another respondent felt that inclusion of the Intended Results and Ranges in the graphs of results would be useful.

2.3 One laboratory commented that there are no median results available for individual *E.coli*/coliform methods.

One stated that the 'Isolation Methods Survey had been very useful.

One overseas participant considered transport to be a major contribution to the uncertainty of the results and suggested participants' results be ordered by date of receipt to see whether transport influences results.

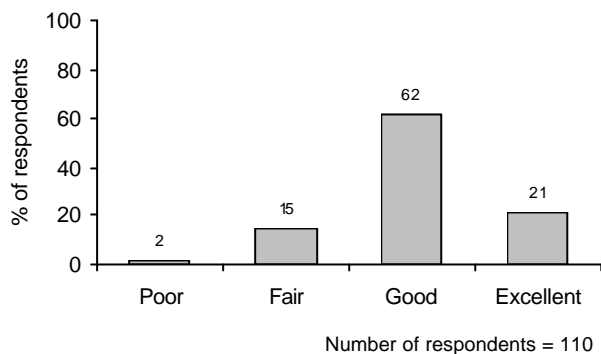
2.4 Four laboratories commented that a more timely Distribution Report would be appreciated in order to address problems more quickly.

General

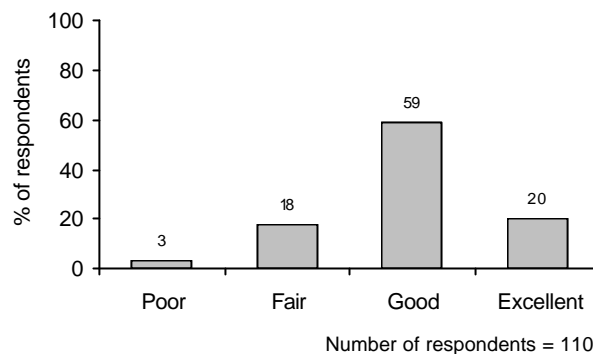
One company said that they were very happy with the Scheme and found it very useful both for training and for monitoring their performance.

Section 3 Performance Assessments Reports

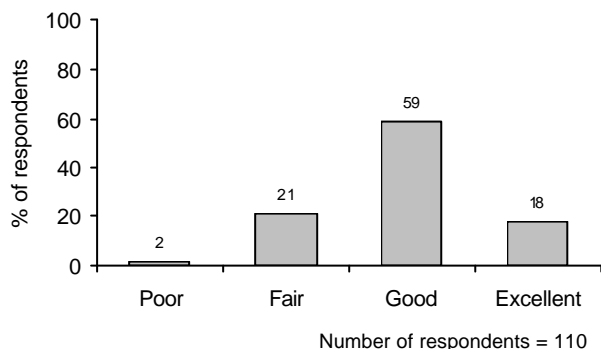
3.1 Clarity of presentation



3.2 Level of information provided



3.3 Turnaround time



Comments 3

3.2 One respondent said that they would like a scoring system and another requested z scores.

One laboratory said that it would be useful if the long-term assessments indicated 'highs' as well as 'lows'.

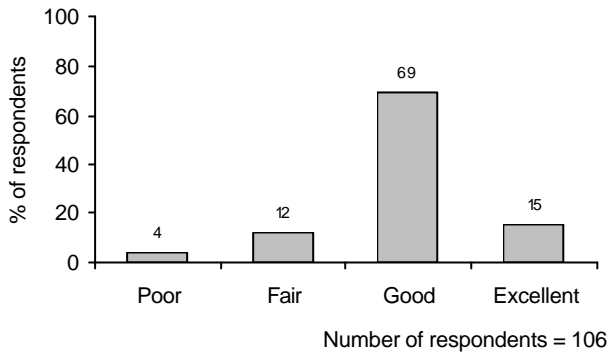
One participant suggested more in depth analysis of low or high counts when the participants' median result is not as expected.

One respondent felt it would be more useful to assess all parameters over the same series of distributions.

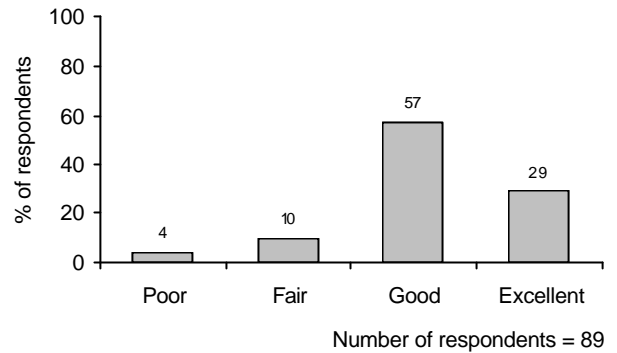
3.3 One laboratory that wanted quicker turn-around times for Distribution Reports made the same comment in relation to Performance Assessments Reports.

Section 4 Advisory Service/Communication

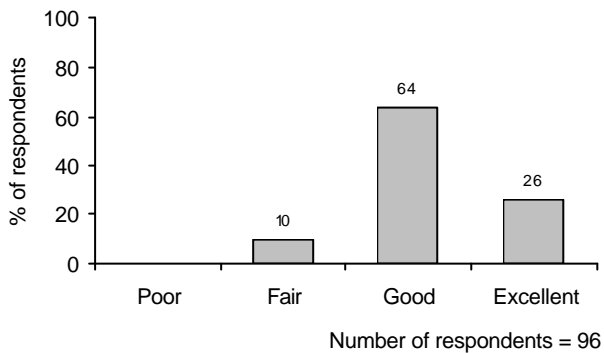
4.1 General level of communication between participants and organisers



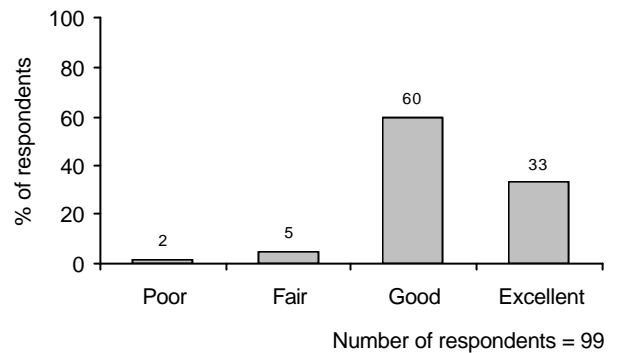
4.2 Response to telephone enquiries/complaints



4.3 Response to letters/faxes/e-mails



4.4 Level of professional support



Comments 4

4.1 Six laboratories made very positive comments about the helpfulness and friendliness of the staff, the thoroughness of responses and the knowledgeable technical advice given.

4.2 One participant said that telephone response can be slow, due to difficulties finding staff that could provide assistance.

4.3 One participant commented that an e-mail had not received a reply.

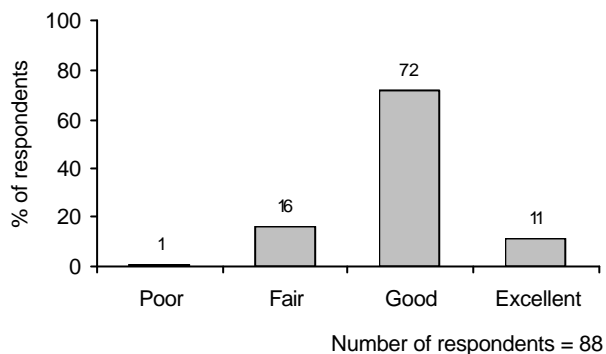
One respondent said that changing their address had been difficult, necessitating a lot of correspondence.

One participant had not received feedback on comments made about the internal quality control (IQC) LENTICULE discs.

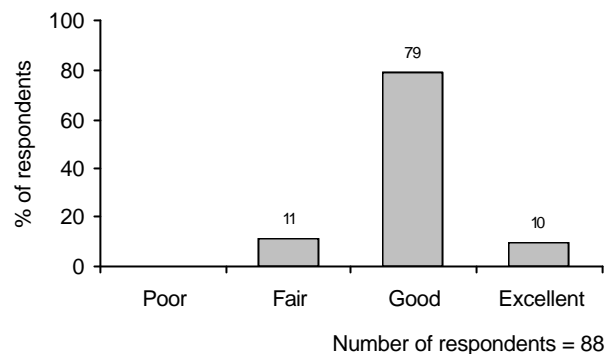
One laboratory said that they appreciated being able to order repeat samples and another commented on the good response when ordering these.

Section 5 Website

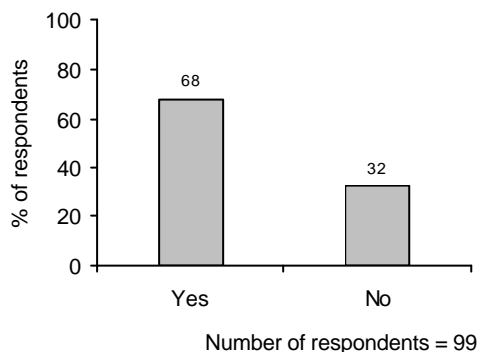
5.1 Ease of navigation



5.2 Usefulness of information provided



5.3 Would you welcome a move to all electronic reporting of results?



Comments 5

5.1/2 Eight laboratories commented that they had never used the web site.

5.3 One laboratory, that had missed deadlines in the past when returning results by post, said that electronic reporting would be better and give more flexibility for analysing the samples.

Please note there is already the facility to report electronically via the web site.

Another participant, who had experienced problems transmitting electronic requests for repeat samples had reservations about submitting results electronically.

Eight laboratories said that they would prefer or need a hard copy of the Scheme Reports although three of them said hard copy and electronic versions in parallel would be acceptable.

One respondent cited breakdowns or malfunctions of IT systems as the reason for preferring a paper alternative to work with.

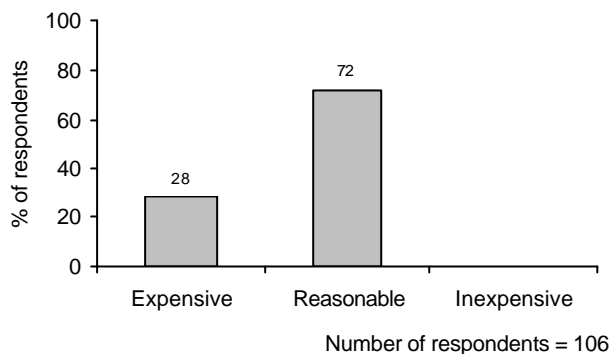
One participant thought all electronic reporting was a good idea, but still had reservations from an internal organisational point of view.

One respondent was in favour of electronic reports, so long as they were secure and presented in such a way that statistical information could be extracted to provide long-term trend analysis.

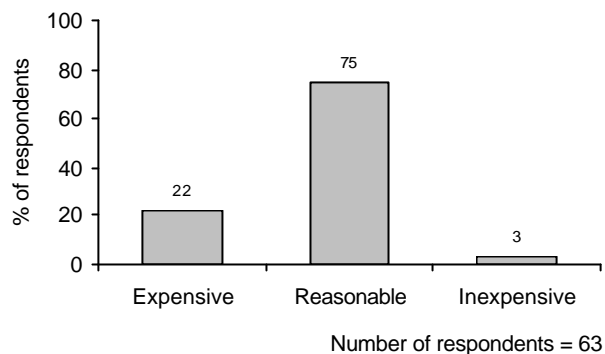
One participant said that an e-mail should be sent to relevant contacts via a pdf file.

Section 6 Cost

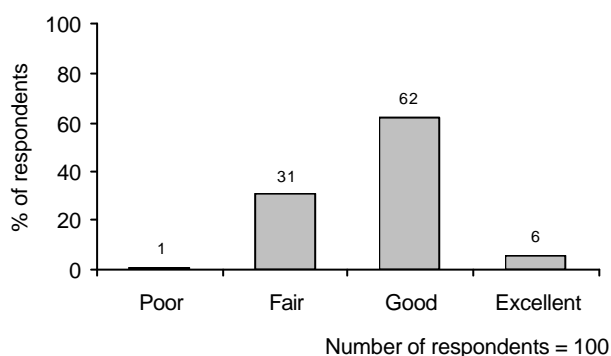
6.1 Registration Fee



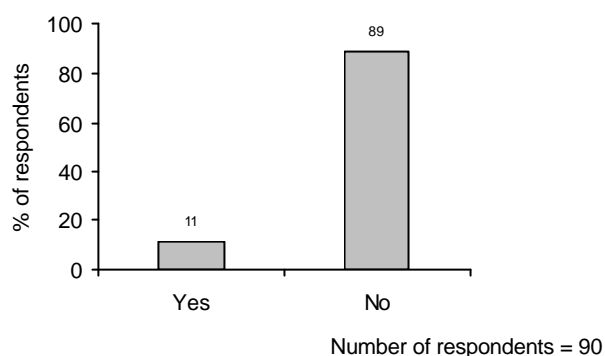
6.2 Despatch cost



6.3 Value for Money



6.4 Would you use Direct Debit if this facility was available?



Comments 6

6.1/2 Two laboratories commented that they were always under pressure to keep laboratory costs as low as possible, but one went on to say that it was appreciated how much work goes into organising and running the Scheme and acknowledged the costs involved. This laboratory stated that the availability of free repeat samples was much appreciated.

6.3/4 Payment of fees by Direct Debit was not very popular.

The need to raise order numbers and the allocation of fees from particular cost codes were raised as possible obstacles by two respondents.

Two respondents expressed an interest in payment via Mastercard/Barclaycard/Visa, one adding that this would save them money.