

Census survey methodology



The three Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK publishes the findings from its annual UK survey of consultant physicians, providing key workforce data and an insight into their working lives. This is a collaboration between the three UK royal colleges of physicians: the Royal College of Physicians (RCP), Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (RCPE) and Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Glasgow (RCPSG).

Every year the RCP sends a survey to consultants and SAS physicians that it was able to contact via email between November and January. The design, distribution and analysis of the survey is managed by the RCP Medical Workforce Unit (MWU), which works closely with all three colleges during each stage of the process.

Survey design

- > Review existing questions with three RCP colleges
- > Call for questions across relevant departments
- > Agree longitudinal questions, including on:
 - work status
 - post details
 - work location
 - country of graduation
 - contract and job plan
 - working remotely
 - rota gaps and consultant vacancies
 - research
 - wellbeing
 - job satisfaction
 - supporting SAS doctors
 - retirement/future planning
 - membership benefits and feedback
 - equality, diversity and inclusion
- > Set up questions that will have prefilled answers according to the held data (name, GMC number, RCP code, (where possible) contracted programmed activities, specialty, work location)
- > Invite specialty representatives to submit questions (up to five)
- > Check wording of specialty questions and gain final approval
- > Review GDPR statement
- > Identify any incentives for survey completion
- > The dataset used to distribute the census each year is created using the finalised database from the previous census. The final database for each census is data checked against records the MWU receives from the GMC to ensure accuracy. Any doctors who have retired, moved abroad or who are no longer eligible to complete the census are removed from the distribution dataset. Newly appointed consultants are identified via the RCP Advisory Appointments Committees and data returned from the annual survey of medical certificate of completion of training. SAS doctors are reached via our SAS membership; we also promote the survey to SAS doctors who are not members and invite them to contact us to be included. We also publish the survey as an open participation link (more details below under distribution).



**Royal College
of Physicians**



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of EDINBURGH



ROYAL COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS AND
SURGEONS OF GLASGOW

- Agree timescales of launch among the three royal colleges and develop a communications plan, including branding approach.
- Plan for reporting of the data from the survey, note the following:
 - Data that is identifiable (where there are fewer than five responses in a hospital in a specialty for example) will not be published.
 - Data that is more detailed than that published may be released with approval from the registrar on request to fellows or other relevant stakeholders in line with our GDPR policy.

Distributing the census survey

The census survey is sent out with a specific URL for each individual on the distribution list with specific information already prefilled.

The MWU uses a variety of methods, resources and software to distribute the census to the consultant and SAS physician workforce. The primary distribution method is via the email platform SendGrid, which is facilitated by digital transformation specialists Restore Digital.

SendGrid has a proven track record in meeting secure NHS email standards. The MWU also uses the survey software package Verint to send the census, as well as the RCP's chosen mailing platform DotDigital. All three of these platforms are used to distribute reminder emails to non-responders to the census following the initial invitation.

The census survey is also published as an open participation link used to publicise the census via several networks and committees. The census is promoted widely across the three colleges and has a dedicated email address for any enquiries.

Handling the survey results

As soon as the survey is live, the MWU provides a live results web link for each topic to the relevant teams/officers. This provides a percentage breakdown of questions asked, and free-text responses are supplied once the survey has closed (unless there are exceptional circumstances).

Once the survey closes:

- The MWU 'cleans' and categorises responses as required.
- The MWU undertakes analysis as agreed during the survey planning process – the most common format being pivot tables for each question with subcategories as appropriate.
- Membership responses are supplied to the membership teams of the three colleges.
- For the census – EDI data provided and consented by RCP members is uploaded to the RCP's CRM.
- For the census – specialty-specific questions are treated in the following way:
 - The MWU combines responses with demographic data from the census
 - Sex
 - Age group
 - Nation
 - Region
 - Trust
 - Full-time/less-than-full-time
 - The dataset of specialty cohorts is supplied to the specialty workforce representatives.
 - The representative undertakes their analysis, referencing the census where appropriate.
 - The representative sends their report to the MWU for approval prior to publication
- The results are reviewed by the MWU in consultation with the three colleges.
- Relevant departments and committees are co-opted for help with interpreting results where required.
- Once reviewed, a decision is made on whether any questions require statistical analysis and what tests would be required.
- The sign-off and approval of that data will be the officer lead who commissioned the data.
- The census report requires sign-off from all three college workforce leads.

Operational policy for dealing with data requests

- > The purpose and scope of the request is clarified, including why the requester needs the data, what questions they want to answer, and what level of detail they expect.
- > The feasibility of the request is evaluated, most importantly ensuring that it adheres to GDPR, also considering the sample size, response rate and resource required to undertake the request.
- > Aggregated results can be shared.
- > In order to process any requests for granular data, it is imperative that the GDPR statement for that survey is reviewed. The RCP GDPR officer is consulted if clarification is required.
- > If data is requested for a report, it must be shared prior to publication and reference the census correctly.

For further information, please contact
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