Trusted Research Environment Survey 2024:

Key Takeaways

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March 2025

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and Social
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"TREs provide approved researchers with a single location to access valuable datasets. The data and analytical tools are all in one place, a bit like a secure reference library."
(HDR UK)

The survey

Aim: Identify key challenges and opportunities for improvement in how researchers experience Trusted Research Environments (TREs).
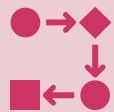
Survey ran 08/07/2024 to 30/09/2024.

Both qualitative and quantitative feedback was gathered within this survey.

~100 responses

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1 – Data access should be transparent

Researchers perceive that the process to access data in TREs is long and drawn out (many believe the process exceeds 12 months).

They often did not understand the whole process, and the expected or actual time to complete each part of the process.

Data custodians and TREs should publish this information.

2 - Training

KEEP DOING IT!

It is critical (e.g. Safe Researcher Training)

Provides useful information to researchers and helps them understand how to use TREs

Researchers believe it helps them understand how to prepare statistical outputs for release: this is an efficiency for TRE staff

Explains why some data are more sensitive than others; and why TREs are necessary

Over 80% of respondents told us they find this training valuable

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3 - Onboarding

Provide orientation training for new TRE users ahead of their first session (for example, UK Data Service SecureLab guide).

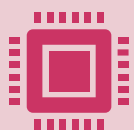Remember, we are asking them to work in a new and unfamiliar environment.

Happily, most researchers found it easy to navigate around and find the data and documentation for their work.

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4 - Software

Software is part of the research process.

There are innovative solutions for providing access to a range of software; and for allowing researchers to develop their own software to use data in TREs.

5 - Compute

Photo by SEO Galaxy on Unsplash

Researchers are increasingly becoming frustrated by amount of compute available.

How can TREs provide access to large-scale or even HPC?

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6 – Imports and Outputs

After access, researchers find these procedures the most unclear and bureaucratic.

We think the procedures for these operations should be reviewed regularly, with researchers.
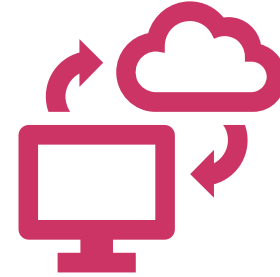
Aim: minimise time and bureaucracy.

7 – Other key lessons

Researchers work collaboratively. TREs should support this.

Invest in tech, invest in people:

Automate the repetitive and mundane.

TREs and researchers need to understand each other.

Invest in specialist support:

8 – Finally…..

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SUPPORT STAFF ARE FAB!

Thanks for listening

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