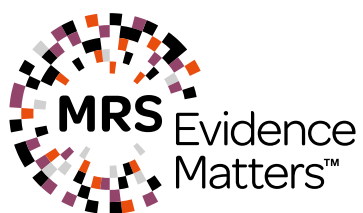




**MRS**  
**Annual**  
**Review**  
*2022/23*



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# Introduction

## Jane Frost, CEO, MRS

*The period covered by this annual review runs from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.*



**2022 was the first calendar year not to be impacted directly by lockdowns and other Covid restrictions, but even though we had some distance from the pandemic the reverberations were still being felt heavily. It was uncertain which parts of the economy would be left standing in the aftermath.**

I'm extremely proud therefore to announce that not only were the central structures of MRS proven to be of sound foundation, but we have also been able to grow and flourish. A lot of that is due to a recognition of the value of the core activities of MRS: maintaining standards, defending the sector, lobbying government and helping companies and individuals build their capacity and capability. Individual membership and Accredited Company Partners have both exceeded pre-pandemic levels; in 2022-23 we welcomed 63 new Accredited Company Partners including 13 International Affiliates.

MRS worked hard lobbying government and contributing to the development of legislation that has direct impact on our sector, consolidating many of the privileged freedoms within which our sector operates. For example, within the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill, government accepted many of our recommendations on

definitions, as well as including market, social and opinion research within the definition of 'scientific research'.

This period was beset by a new crisis in the form of climbing inflation and the cost of living. I am just as proud of our support of the sector now as I was during the worst months of the pandemic.

We also saw record audiences as we returned to our big ticket live events like the MRS Awards and MRS Annual Conference. These are great illustrations of the resilience and innovation that are defining characteristics of the research sector. It has been heartening to see a new spirit of confidence emerging in a sector that, in the past, has sometimes been shy about the contribution that it makes to society and the economy.

Our financial standing at the end of the period has delivered a surplus, which will be used to invest in upgrading core infrastructure so that we can deliver better, more efficient services for you, our members. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programme and the Net Zero initiative both have Pledges which are growing in strength. Networks such as MRSPride and the new MRSUnlimited (for researchers who are neurodiverse or who live with a physical disability) and

the MRS Social Inclusion Group are important parts of delivering safe and welcoming spaces for all who work in the sector. Just as important has been the sterling work of the MRS Representation in Research Group whose work has underpinned the case for greater transparency in representative sampling techniques.

These networks and groups have created useful and supportive resources on our website - if you need help on any of the issues you face in these areas you should go and **have a look** [↗](#).

AI, analytics and digital power is transforming the world, but this sector had a head start on all that many years ago when we first started blending our curious minds with large datasets and machine learning.

Going forward, MRS will be producing guidance and training to help ensure that our sector remains well placed to sell its unique powers to decision makers. We have everything to play for in the year to come, and I'm looking forward to helping you meet the challenge head on.

**Jane Frost CBE,  
CEO of MRS**

# A review of MRS finances

## A return to business as usual?

**Debrah Harding, Managing Director, looks at the financial position of MRS at the year ending 31 March, 2022.**



**A**fter the last few years of business disruption 2022/23 was a year of returning to business as usual with the resumption of in-person MRS events including annual conference, the Oppies, the MRS Awards dinner and some of the one-day commercial events. Throughout the period we saw a real appetite among members, Accredited Company Partners and customers for opportunities to network, share and connect after the Covid period of remote living and working.

The research sector as a whole was fairly buoyant albeit against a very challenging UK economic environment with double digit inflation, talent shortages and cost-of-living pressures.

During 2022/23 MRS launched a new Business Sentiment Monitor which gathers a snapshot of business owners' views on their business, the industry and the UK economy, complementing the data gathered by the MRS Annual Survey and the MRS League Tables.

In the last Quarter of 2022, only **11%** (7 companies) thought the UK economy would improve over the next 12 months, while **83%** (53 companies) believed the economy would decline. For the first wave of 2023, the provisional results reported an improved

With income **growth** of over 21%, MRS products and services have performed at their best level since before the 2008 financial crash

picture with **35%** of participants believing the economy will improve over the coming 12 months (albeit the improvement would be 'slight', just one informant opting for a 'significant' improvement). A balancing **37%** reported the economy will decline; with **27%** believing the economy will stay the same.

MRS continually appraises published evidence, supplemented by surveys such as the Business Sentiment Monitor, to estimate the size and reach of the UK research, insight and analytics industry. For the 2022/23 period MRS estimates that the UK research insight and analytics industry is worth in excess of **£8.936bn** an **+11.0%** uplift on the previous estimate of **£8.05bn**. With the impact of inflation this means that growth has been **c.2%**.

MRS is also back to growth, with income for 2022/23 at **£4.028mn**. With income growth of over **21%**, MRS products and services have performed at their best level since before the 2008

financial crash. Whilst some of this was driven by the return to in-person events and inflation, there were improvements across the MRS portfolio of products and services with membership, Accredited Company Partnership, qualifications, Impact magazine, [Research-live.com](https://www.research-live.com), [Researchjobfinder.com](https://www.researchjobfinder.com), [the Research Buyer's Guide \(RBG\)](https://www.researchbuyer.com), training, awards, annual conference and commercial events all performing well, whilst other areas of the business continued to be resilient.

Overall MRS made an operating surplus of **£175k** for the financial period. As a result of some balance sheet adjustments, primarily for the property, MRS' statutory position is a surplus of **£657k**.

MRS continues to have very healthy reserves of **£6.151mn**, largely as a result of MRS' strong property portfolio which has increased its value, benefiting from the attractiveness of the Clerkenwell area of London as a business location, particularly

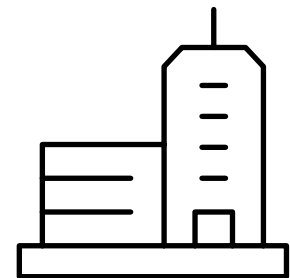
since the opening of the Elizabeth underground line. MRS also continues to have a healthy bank balance, partly because of the mortgage secured prior to the pandemic, but also due to continued prudent cash and business management.

MRS has set a cautious budget for 2023/24 due to the modest levels of business confidence in the sector and the continued economic uncertainty including the potential for stagflation and recession in the UK economy.

During 2023/24 MRS is seeking new tenants to occupy the ground and lower ground floors of the offices in Northburgh Street. With hybrid working, less office space is required to accommodate the MRS staff and now only two of the four MRS floors are occupied by the Society. Leveraging the vacant floors of the property will enable MRS to mitigate some of its overheads and strengthen and diversify the Society's income streams. This extra income will also help to fund capital expenditure in new MRS benefits including some new OnDemand

training courses, plus continued investment in MRS' digital and physical infrastructure to ensure that MRS can continue to serve well its members, Accredited Company Partners and customers.

Leveraging the vacant floors of the **MRS property** will enable MRS to mitigate some of its overheads and strengthen and diversify the Society's income streams.



# Standards and policy

## An overview of activities

### The new MRS Code of Conduct launched on 15 May 2023.

The Code is crucial in helping to protect and regulate first-rate research, insight and data practice. MRS is committed to keeping the Code under regular review to ensure it is fit for purpose. Revisions have been made to the 2019 Code to reflect evolving ethical best practice. The changes focus on the scope of the Code, clarification on Member and Accredited Company Partner obligations regarding co-operating with MRS in investigations, participant wellbeing and reporting obligations in the context of inclusive data.

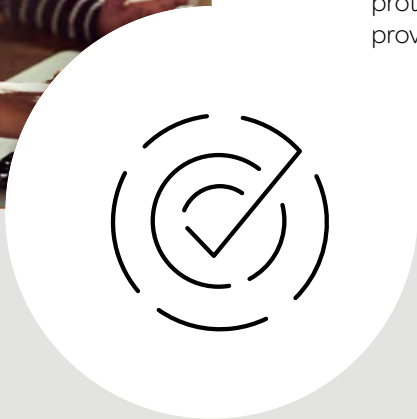
Members sought **specific advice** on data protection issues, incentives, data collection projects involving children, and observation techniques.

The MRS Code of Conduct is the basis of the self-regulation framework for the research sector.

The MRS Code of Conduct works in conjunction with the relevant legal framework, the UK's Data Protection Act, UK GDPR and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations, to ensure research is carried out in a professional and ethical manner. During this period, the MRS Market Research Standards Board (MRSB) continued to proactively review the self-regulatory framework to ensure it remained fit for purpose and also that data protection advice and guidance provided to members was robust.

The demand for Codeline services decreased slightly this year, as the number of Covid-related queries reduced significantly from **282** in 2021/22 to **135** in 2022/23. In contrast, the number of data protection related queries increased this year, from **199** in 2021/22 to **254** for 2022/23.

Overall, the number of written queries increased from **617** in 2021/22 to **633** during 2022/23. Members of the Codeline team also provided telephone advice where requested, although in line with the approach taken in previous years, the volume of telephone queries is not recorded in the statistics. Members sought specific advice on data protection issues, incentives, data collection projects involving children, and observation techniques. The increased variety in the topics covered in the Codeline queries in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22 reflects in part the return of face-to-face data collection from April 2021, and the resumption of in-home data collection across the UK in September 2021.

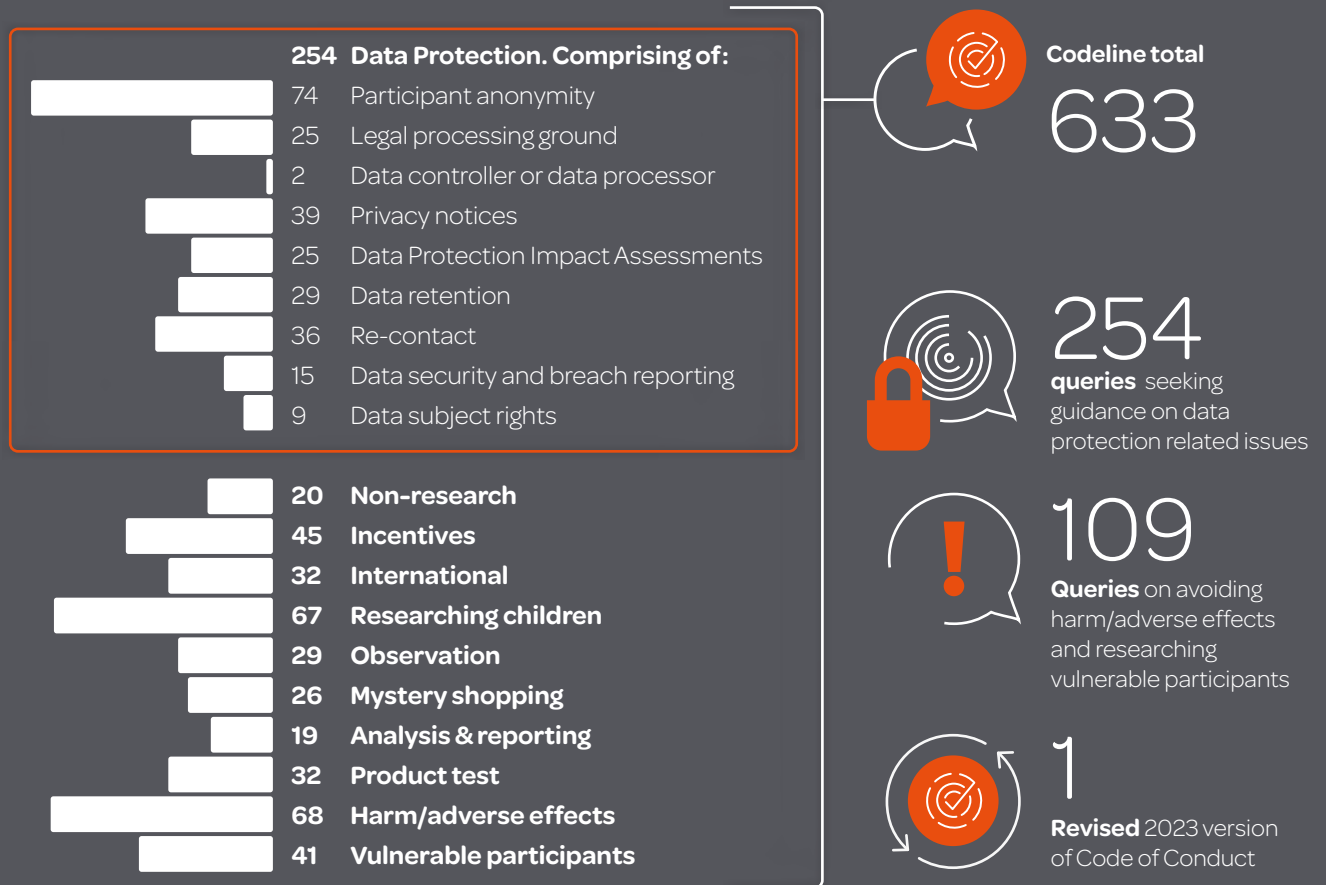




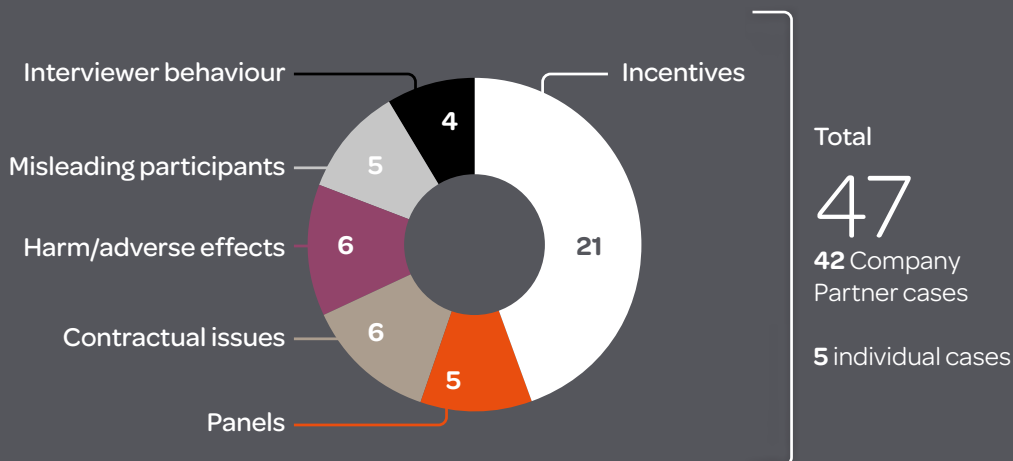
# Standards and policy

## The sector in numbers

### Codeline queries:



### Complaints resolved by the standards department\*



### Disciplinary cases



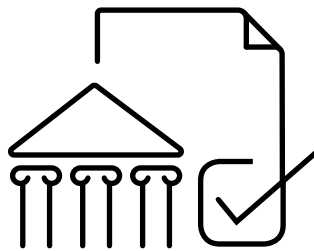
\*email enquiries only

## A new frontier for data protection and digital information?

Throughout the 2022/23 period MRS worked closely with the UK Government inputting directly into the drafting of the new Data Protection & Digital Information (No.2) Bill (DPDI Bill) which the UK Government aims to bring into legislation at some point in 2024.

The DPDI Bill will sit alongside the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR and aims to supplement the UK's approach to data protection. DSIT, the new Government department responsible for the Bill (which was formerly the responsibility of DCMS), sought input from business on the new Bill, creating a Business Advisory Group, providing associations including MRS with the opportunity to input directly into the drafting process.

It is important to note that whilst the proposed changes will affect some data protection practices, for the research sector as a whole the benefits are likely to largely be about clarity. Other changes such as the removal of specific requirements for Data Protection Officers and the need to undertake Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) will only benefit those businesses that process no EU citizen personal data and undertake low levels of personal data processing.



Practices such as 'plugging' bring the research sector into disrepute, and undermine the willingness of the population to participate in research more generally.

We did however welcome the opportunity to contribute and appreciate the clarity which the new Bill brings, particularly the recognition that market, social and opinion research activities can be included within the definition of 'scientific research'. The legal certainty of this is a significant benefit to the UK's research sector. It is a direct result of representations by MRS, and includes the adoption of the MRS' proposed wording of the clauses, together with the

acknowledgement that publicly funded or privately funded commercial or non-commercial activities can be scientific research.

We do, however, continue to have significant concerns regarding the proposed changes to the Privacy & Electronic Communications Regulations (as part of the new Bill), specifically the potential to introduce a new exemption for direct marketing provisions when used for the purposes of democratic engagement.

In the past, MRS has had cause to raise concerns with several political parties about their poor practices, particularly 'plugging' (political lobbying under the guise of research). Whilst we continue to contact political parties from all sides about these bad practices they continue to occur.

Practices such as plugging bring the research sector into disrepute, and by increasing cynicism and decreasing trust, undermine the willingness of the population to participate in research more generally. As a result, MRS continues to make representations to the UK Government about this proposal, and the direct risk this poses to the UK's research sector as well as eroding belief in political process.



In the year ahead, MRS will continue to work with DSIT, as the Bill makes its way through the Parliamentary process, encouraging further changes to the Bill, including the proposed changes to the Privacy & Electronic Communications Regulations.

Whilst these proposed legislative changes to data protection have been taking place, the UK's data protection regulator, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has continued to press ahead developing new guidance interpreting the existing legislation. Two areas of particular interest to MRS, were new chapters for the updated ICO anonymisation guidance and the new research provisions guidance. MRS has been engaged in crucial discussions with the ICO about these essential guidance documents including co-creating with the ICO some case studies to supplement the ICO guidance. It is hoped these case studies will be issued sometime in 2023/24.

The EU has been equally busy. Throughout the year MRS, on behalf of EFAMRO, has been working on developing a positioning paper detailing why market and social research can be considered scientific research within the EU GDPR, to mirror the recognition that MRS has secured within UK legislation. To aid these deliberations MRS met with the Irish Data Protection Commissioner, one of the members of the European Data Protection Board (EDPB), which is responsible for the EU data protection guidance, to gain a more detailed understanding of the EDPB's current thinking.

With the rise of artificial intelligence and machine learning as serious business tools, together with the emergence of generative AI, the MRS' public affairs focus for the year ahead will not only be data protection but also the drivers of the digital economy – technology and its use, ethics and regulation.



# Standards and policy

## In five themes

The MRS Standards and Policy Team has a wide remit, from ensuring new data legislation is fair and workable, to publishing guidelines for conducting research that is ethical and representative.

### Theme 1

#### AI and research

Whilst the year ahead promises significant developments in AI, its use and the legislation that underpins it, 2022/23 was the year that the foundations were laid by Government for the regulatory approaches being set out in 2023/24.

In July 2022 DCMS set out its stall, in a pre-White Paper, establishing a set of guiding principles that apply across sectors with existing regulators, such as the ICO and Ofcom, being responsible for AI.

The “early proposals” for the cross-sectoral principles for AI regulation included:

- ▲ Ensuring that AI is used safely
- ▲ Ensuring that AI is technically secure and functions as designed
- ▲ Making sure that AI is appropriately transparent and explainable
- ▲ Embedding considerations of fairness into AI
- ▲ Defining legal persons’ responsibility for AI governance
- ▲ Clarifying routes to redress or contestability.

MRS responded to this consultation on the pre-white paper emphasising the need to consult and engage secondary regulators such as those represented by MRS and other Code - holding professional and trade associations, as these bodies fill the gaps between the statutory regulators. The MRS response also emphasised the importance of having clear definitions for AI and determining the supply chain liabilities when AI systems are being used and deployed.

At the end of March 2023, the Government issued its AI White Paper, [AI Regulation: A Pro-Innovation Approach](#), setting out the UK Government’s ambition to make the UK “the best place to build, test and use AI technology”. The white paper that is in the words of the UK Government, based on “common-sense” and is “outcomes orientated”, builds on the pre-white paper identifying the essential characteristics of the UK’s regulatory regime, which are:

- ▲ Pro-innovation: enabling rather than stifling responsible innovation
- ▲ Proportionate: avoiding unnecessary or disproportionate burdens for businesses and regulators

- ▲ Trustworthy: addressing real risks and fostering public trust in AI in order to promote and encourage its uptake
- ▲ Adaptable: enabling us to adapt quickly and effectively to keep pace with emergent opportunities and risks as AI technologies evolve
- ▲ Clear: making it easy for actors in the AI life cycle, including businesses using AI, to know what the rules are, who they apply to, who enforces them, and how to comply with them
- ▲ Collaborative: encouraging government, regulators, and industry to work together to facilitate AI innovation, build trust and ensure that the voice of the public is heard and considered.

In June 2023, MRS responded to the UK Government’s AI White Paper with a detailed comprehensive response building on the MRS recommendations from the pre-white paper.

One of the key concerns with the UK’s approach is how this will work with more stringent regimes, such as that being proposed by the EU. Fragmented and divergent

legislative requirements remain one of the greatest barriers to innovation. For UK businesses to leverage fully the opportunities of AI will require an understanding of all the regulatory requirements. MRS has recommended that as part of the UK Government's pro-innovation approach it provides information about alignments and differences with non-UK rules and provides routes and pathways to enable UK business to navigate these requirements to maximise the opportunities for UK businesses, particularly SMEs.

The EU approach differs considerably with that of the UK. The EU is focusing on "excellence and trust, aiming to boost research and industrial capacity while

ensuring safety and fundamental rights". The EU approach is to develop a comprehensive range of legislation tailored to specific digital environments. The EU plans to place new requirements to some 'high-risk' AI, for example AI which affects socio-economic process, government use of AI and consumer products regulated by AI systems.

In the year ahead MRS, via EFAMRO, will be making representations to the EU about the new AI legislation, whilst continuing to work with the UK Government on its approach.

For UK businesses to leverage fully the opportunities of AI will require an understanding of all the regulatory requirements.

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## Theme 2

### The future of the census

Whilst throughout 2022/23 outputs from the 2021 Census were issued, including valuable new inclusion data on topics such as gender identity and ethnicity, the decision regarding the fate of the census as we know it continues to hang in the balance.

Population statistics derived from the census are vital to the understanding of the UK population and the data from the census is used to support decisions and policies right across the UK economy and society, at national and local levels and across different communities, including, for example, identifying the amount of houses, schools and other infrastructure that is needed in the UK. For the research sector, census data is crucial particularly for sampling purposes. Alternative options to the census being considered include using existing and enhanced admin-based sources of data and supplementing these with some large-scale survey data to fill in the data gaps not provided by admin-data sources.

From an MRS perspective and based upon discussions with the MRS census & GeoDems Group (CGG), it is crucial that any alternative to the census



Over **85%** of participants reported that the census is important to their organisation.

produces sufficiently robust and reliable data which is comparable to that provided by the census. Areas of particular concern are that any proposed alternatives to the census:

- ▲ Produce UK estimates
- ▲ Maintain the depth and breadth of data available; in particular there was minimal support for trading off more frequent/timely estimates against small area geographies and/or number of variables.
- ▲ Collect the information required to produce approximated social grade
- ▲ Produce reliable and robust inclusion data
- ▲ Continue to produce estimates for households.

During the 2022/23 period **MRS undertook some research** [↗](#) to gather views on the benefits of the census. Key findings included:

- ▲ Over 85% of participants reported that the census is important to their organisation.
- ▲ UK data are very desirable; over 74% of participants said they were users of census data from all parts of the UK.
- ▲ Uses of the census range from survey weighting to sampling, demographic insight, statistical analysis, small area analysis, regression analysis, geography-based marketing, social media targeting and microdata.
- ▲ Age, sex and approximate social grade, the latter of which is funded, developed and quality-assured in conjunction with MRS, were the variables cited as being used the most.
- ▲ Data on ethnic group, occupation status, NS-SeC and household tenure were also widely used, as were household composition, marital status, health and disability, religion and education.

- ▲ Ward and output area geographies were of critical importance to the participants.
- ▲ More frequent data was widely welcomed, but not at the expense of the quality, breadth and depth of the existing census data set.
- ▲ A majority of participants indicated that a move away from an all-household questionnaire to an approach that provides more frequent and timely data at national and regional level but less detail at lower geographies would be a negative outcome.

In March 2023 MRS wrote to the UK National Statistician, Professor Sir Ian Diamond, setting out our concerns. The decision regarding the census is due to being made during 2023/24. In the meantime, MRS and ONS are working together to harness the detailed views of the research sector including hosting a number of webinars and roundtables to ensure that the research sector's views are understood fully and are being appropriately considered when the decision is finally made.

Theme 3

**Data Quality**

In March 2023, MRS announced it was coordinating efforts with the Canadian Research Insights Council (CRIC), ESOMAR, the Insights Association, The Research Society (TRS), SampleCon, and The Association of Market Research Austria (VMÖ) to address ongoing and emerging risks to data quality in the market and social research, consumer insights and analytics industry via the creation of the **Global Data Quality**  initiative.

With the goal of increasing information and building trust, each organisation is leading a workstream that delivers resources to improve the conversation and outcomes around:

- ▲ The language of quality: how we refer to the different aspects of fraud, duplicates, and survey cleaning in ways that inform with accuracy and transparency
- ▲ Fraud detection: tracking the prevalence of fraudulent survey completions by humans or bots and outlining best fraud detection and mitigation practices

- ▲ Identification and mitigation of bias from sample frame and representativeness
- ▲ Data quality in research surveys, and the resulting impact on overall quality of the data
- ▲ Improvement in the research participant experience

MRS is focusing on the use of fraud and bot technology, and throughout the 2023/24 period the MRS project team will be focusing on eight areas of activity:

- ▲ Creating a glossary of the terms and definitions used to describe bot and fraud technologies
- ▲ Identifying approaches being used by the research sector to combat bot and fraud technology across modes and methodologies and providing guidance on the costs, resource and time implications of each approach
- ▲ Identifying approaches used by other sectors to address bot and fraud technology and determining which if any might be appropriately used by the research sector

- ▲ Identifying potential legal and GDPR challenges arising from the techniques used to address bot and fraud technologies and providing guidance on how to address these issues
- ▲ Compiling a list of sources of fraudulent responses and working with the platforms to have the sources removed
- ▲ Considering the possible creation of new solutions
- ▲ Investigating how technology is disrupting qualitative research and providing guidance to mitigate the risks of fraudulent participants
- ▲ Documenting and categorising third party quality and security software solutions

The aim being that new MRS guidance will be produced in 2023/24, harnessing the outputs from the above workstreams, to assist MRS members and Accredited Company Partners to protect data integrity. This will be supplemented by the outputs being delivered by the other partner associations and organisations that form the Global Data Quality initiative.

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The Representation in Research group produced **new research** assessing the commercial benefits of using more representative samples.

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Theme 4  
**Inclusion and Representation in Research**

In March 2021, the **MRS Representation in Research** [group](#) was established to determine how to improve representation of often underrepresented groups within UK research projects. Throughout the previous financial period, MRS issued a series of best practice guidance documents to help practitioners to understand their responsibilities including how to collect ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and physical disabilities and/or mental health data ethically and legally.

During 2022/23 this guidance was supplemented with strengthened provisions within the update to the MRS Code of Conduct, setting out the transparent reporting requirements when reporting on representative samples such as Nationally Representative or City Representative samples. This was supplemented with new guidance:

**Is your Research Really Representative? The Nat Rep Journey – The Essentials questions for Planning, Designing and Undertaking Inclusive Research** [group](#)

The Representation in Research group also produced some **new research** [group](#) assessing the commercial benefits of using more representative samples when undertaking research projects in the UK; demonstrating the untapped views that can be missed by not using more inclusive characteristics when researching the UK population.

In the year ahead new EDI training for recruiters will be issued to enhance the AQR/MRS Recruiter Accreditation Scheme (RAS) for accredited recruiters and recruitment organisations. This supplements the existing EDI training which is available as part of MRS' training offering.

MRS is also working with the Social Research Association (SRA) aiming to access some funding to enable MRS and SRA to supplement its resource base to strengthen the sector's inclusion activities.

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Theme 5  
**Procurement**

For the last 10 years MRS has been working with the UK Government and public sector to improve research procurement practices. This includes monthly meetings with Crown Commercial Service (CCS), the biggest public procurement organisation in the UK which is responsible for the Research & Insight Marketplace Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), the main research procurement vehicle for the public sector.

In September 2022, as part of the on-going engagement with CCS, MRS together with the SRA arranged a supplier roundtable to discuss issues such as the impact of inflation and the cost of living on government research tenders and the ongoing challenges with the standardised evaluation of social value within UK Government research procurement. The recommendations from this roundtable were used by CCS to improve and refine their approaches including new advice for government commissioners on **how to manage inflation and the cost of living** [group](#).

MRS also produced new guidance, **Social Value Policy in UK Government Research Procurement** [group](#) to assist practitioners with demonstrating social value and to understand the UK Government's requirements.

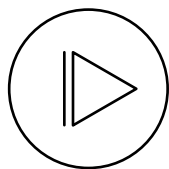


# Councils, boards and committees

As well as MRS Main Board (p.31), there are several groups, councils and committees that provide MRS with strategic direction and operational support.

<p>ACP Council</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>	<p>Census and GeoDems Group</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>	<p>Data Analytics Council</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>
<p>Delphi Group</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>	<p>Disciplinary Authority</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>	<p>Diversity, Inclusion &amp; Equality Council</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>
<p>Fellows Advisory Board (FAB)</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>	<p>Fair Data Accreditation Board</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>	<p>Market Research Quality Standards Advisory Board</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>
<p>Market Research Standards Board</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>	<p>Professional Development Advisory Board</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>	<p>Representation in Research Steering Committee</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>
<p>Senior Client Council</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>	<p>Sustainability Council</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>	<p>Recruiter Accreditation Steering Group</p> <p><a href="#">View current membership</a></p>

# Membership Initiatives



## Professional Webinars

Professional Webinars are a key membership benefit. Throughout the year MRS' interactive events attracted over **2,000** participants from all around the world. Topics included Sustainability, AI and Qual at Scale and Financial Vulnerability on the Rise. Members can access all the recordings on-demand within the [webinar library](#).

## The MRS & AQR University Roadshow

also made return visits to long time supporters, including Oxford Brookes, University of Plymouth, Imperial College London and the University of Leeds.



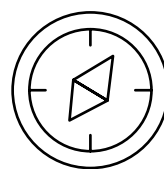
Powered by MRS

## &More

&more's flagship event, the &more Virtual Conference continued to grow, with over 130 attendees attending the 2022 event. &more members met face-to-face to compete in the ' &more Challenge – in collaboration with The FA' event, which saw teams tackle a specially created brief from The FA, based on the UEFA Women's Euro 2022 tournament.

There was more friendly competition at the &more Summer Party held at Bounce, with drinks, nibbles, networking and a chance to be crowned ping-pong champions. Online activities included the 'Power of Linguistics in Research' webinar and the creation of an &more Slack channel, to enable members to stay connected outside &more events.

&more continued to support and promote the activities of the Young Person's Sustainability Collective and &more members continued to represent the sector via the MRS & AQR University Roadshow and MRS Schools initiatives.



## MRS & AQR University Roadshow

The MRS & AQR University Roadshow continued its successful programme of visits, with over 1,000 students attending virtual sessions for universities across the UK. Virtual sessions were held for new and existing supporters of the programme, as well as universities and colleges whose courses are accredited towards MRS Qualifications, including the University of East London and the London College of Fashion.

The MRS & AQR University Roadshow also made return visits to long time supporters, including Oxford Brookes, University of Plymouth, Imperial College London and the University of Leeds.

Both MRS and &more members continued as volunteer speakers for the Roadshows, as well as speaking at a pilot MRS Schools Outreach event at the Apprentices Fair at Esher Sixth Form College.



### Sustainability in research

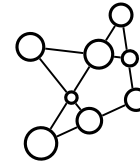
The MRS Net Zero Pledge was launched in June 2021 and by the end of the financial year in 2023, 80 research organisations had signed up committing to being Net Zero by 2026. June 2022 marked the anniversary of the pledge launch and was celebrated by our Sustainability in Research month which featured two sustainability webinars – ‘How to talk to consumers about sustainability’ and ‘Bridging the gap between what consumers want and buy’ - attracting over 160 bookings each.

MRS also introduced full biodegradable membership cards and planted a tree for every paid for booking made across conferences, training and events during the MRS Sustainability month. Meanwhile MRS bolstered the green resources in the Sustainability hub on the MRS website including reference sources, webinars and a session from the Sustainability Summit held in November 2022.



### MRS Pride

68 people attended the IDAHOBIT party in May (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia) in London. MRSpride’s first annual conference, SHOW UP 2022 Insights Summit, attracted 101 delegates both virtually and in-person.



### Regional Networks

In 2022-2023 MRS ran a number of regional events. In June, MRS North hosted the annual Awards Showcase in Manchester which attracted 67 bookings. This was run as a hybrid event, kindly hosted at InSites Consulting with drinks afterwards for those attending in person. MRS planned the annual programme MRS Roadshow of events but due to the ongoing train strikes, only two events were able to run. This was held in Birmingham in July with 23 attendees. The London MRS Roadshow event took place in June with 50 bookings.





### Data analytics

ADA (Advanced Data Analytics) Network is a specialist group for advanced practitioners to meet, identify, develop and disseminate research industry best practice in the area of advanced analytics and has existed for many years. In June 2022 the ADA network panel held a webinar titled 'An Advanced Look at Audience Measurement' which attracted 96 bookings.

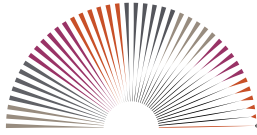
During 2022/23 the new MRS Data Analytics Council was launched which encompasses the ADA network. The council's aim is to encourage and support those in the research profession to understand, and collaborate more with analytics and data science, and showcase the research sector as an exciting, innovative and challenging space for advanced data and analytical skills.

### Inclusion

Signatories to the MRS Inclusion Pledge climbed steadily during the year to over 100. The MRS Senior Client Council decided that they would make inclusion a priority and one of their actions was to require their research suppliers to have signed up to the Pledge, which boosted take up. **The third report on the state of inclusion in the sector was issued** [↗](#).

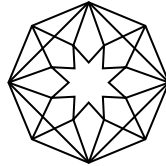
The 2022 MRS Excellence lunch saw the first Changemaker Award being presented to Sabrina Trinquetel. Inclusion requirements were made specific as part of the judging criteria for the MRS Awards. The exceptionally long candidate list for the MRS Main Board elections has resulted in its composition becoming even more diverse.





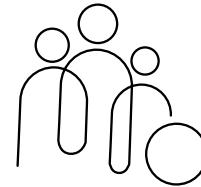
### Flex Forum

The MRS FLEX Forum is a collection of research and professional development practitioners set up before the pandemic to explore flexible working. The forum provides guidance to the sector to help create a fairer, more productive workplace in today's society. The Flex Forum hosted a webinar in 2022 titled 'Flexible working as a tool in the talent shortage crisis' attracting 78 delegates. Recordings of previous MRS FLEX Forum events can be found [here](#). During 2022/23 the Flex Forum members dedicated most of their energies to the MRS People and Talent initiative.



### Awards

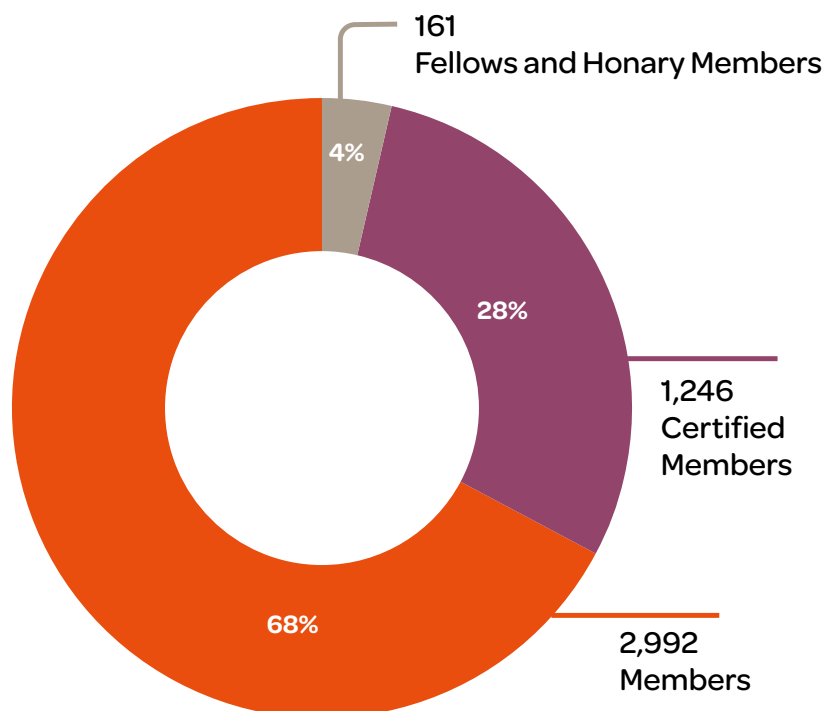
For the first time since the pandemic all the awards in this period were held as face-to-face events. The Excellence Awards lunch was held at Devonshire Terrace, in June with **88** guests in attendance. The Operations Awards (Oppies) took place at The Curtain, in September with **220** guests in attendance. The main MRS Awards were held in December at Old Billingsgate and hosted by Suzi Ruffell. **880** guests attended and entry numbers increased **11%** on the previous year.



### MRS Social Inclusion Group

September 2021 saw the launch of MRS Social Inclusion Group, a new network for people across the research and communications communities who want to improve the opportunities and amplify the voices of those disadvantaged on the basis of their social background. A five-day virtual launch festival attracted over **100** registrants per day with topics including The cost of living crisis, Researching working class audiences and Working class the world of work.

### MRS members As of 31 March 2023 Total 4399



# Professional Development Qualifications and Training



## Qualifications

### MRS Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice

In this financial year a total of **213** candidates participated in assessment for the Advanced Certificate qualification.

**145** candidates were awarded the qualification – a **68%** pass rate.

### MRS Certificate in Market & Social Research

**468** candidates achieved the introductory level MRS Certificate via the online multiple-choice exam.

**309** enrolled onto the 'Foundation Course in Market Research'.



## Mentoring

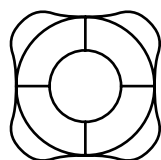
The MRS Mentoring Scheme continues to help participants think through strategic decision-making as well as manage day-to-day work challenges more effectively. **340** individual members have now benefitted from the scheme as mentees and **200** members have been trained as mentors.



## Apprenticeship

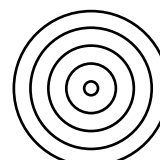
**30** apprentices were enrolled on the Market Research Executive Apprenticeship, with the first two apprentices successfully completing their apprenticeship in March 2023. Over **50** apprentices are enrolled on the standard.

MRS continues to fully support the apprenticeship as a stepping stone into the research profession, to promote social mobility and to continue to build a diverse and inclusive sector.



## MRS/AQR Recruiter Accreditation Scheme (RAS)

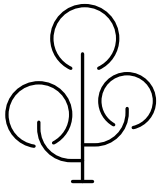
RAS raises the profile and status of individual recruiters, recognising their knowledge, skills and competence. **320** recruiters held active RAS Accredited Status at the end of March 2023, and there were **58** RAS Accredited Companies (**28** External, **30** in-house).



## CPD

The MRS CPD programme continues to attract registrations, providing members with a framework to demonstrate their achievements, gain recognition for their professionalism and take control in planning their careers. The programme has enabled **100** membership upgrades to Certified Membership.





### Training


28 days of bespoke in company training were delivered to blue chip clients, academia, central government, government agencies and research businesses across the UK, plus in countries such as Germany, Belgium, and Africa.

Only **3** courses were delivered face to face at client sites in 2022 with the preference being for online delivery due to the flexibility in company offers, MRS also saw more clients splitting a full day into two half days so that delegates have more flexibility and balance between training and day-to-day work activities.

- ▲ **1,460** individuals received some form of training from MRS during 2022/23.
- ▲ **118** training courses were conducted through its training programme
- ▲ New courses were introduced on subjects such as Gamification, Managing Bias and D&I Goodbye to Stereotypes

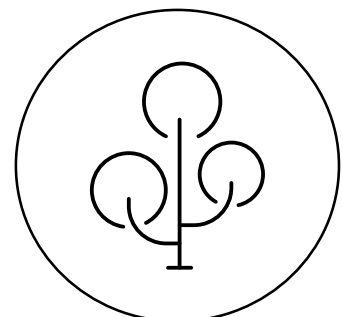


### People & Talent

The **MRS People & Talent programme**  was put in place to help address the many challenges we face across the sector in attracting, supporting and retaining the best possible talent.

A workshop was held in June 2022 to kickstart the programme. The workstreams are: new and returning talent, wellbeing, professional learning and development and agency culture and leadership. Outputs so far from the programme include cost of living and inflationary pressures guidelines, wellbeing definition and a paper: Barriers to Wellbeing.

28 days of **bespoke in company training** were delivered to blue chip clients, academia, central government, government agencies and research businesses across the UK



# Publishing and advertising

## Content partnerships and advertising

With several decades of in-house B2B publishing and editorial expertise, MRS is the leading provider of news and case studies to the research, insight and data analytics community.

MRS has a wide variety of opportunities for advertisers across its various content channels including display advertising and sponsored content. Clients over this period included Britain Thinks, Ipsos, Toluna, Forsta, Foreign Tongues, Made in Surveys, Schlesinger, Foreign Tongues, One Poll and Quantilope.

High points include the annual campaign to **celebrate unsung heroes** of the sector – Research Heroes.



## Research Live

With a dedicated editorial team, the website continues to be the first port of call for research, insight and data news and opinion with over 22,000 unique visitors every month. High points include the publication of the Research Live Industry Report 2022, live coverage of MRS annual conference, and the annual campaign to celebrate unsung heroes of the sector – Research Heroes.

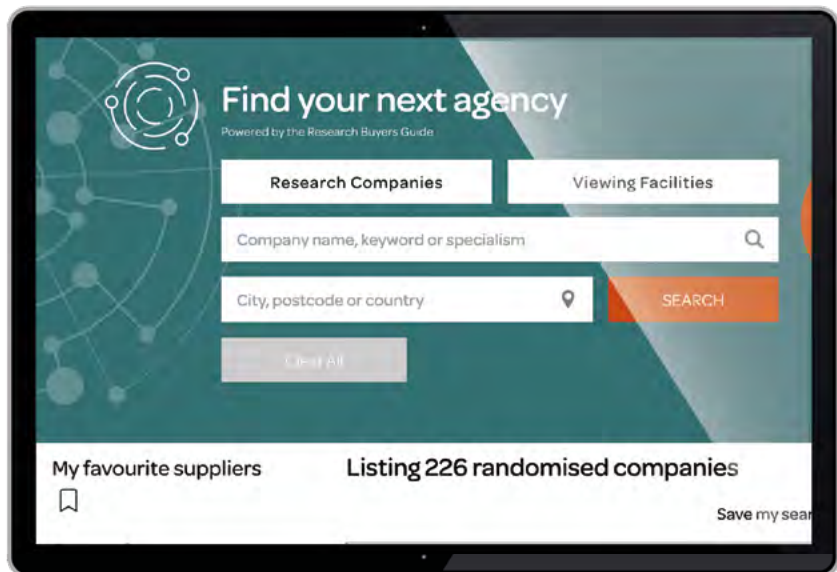
## Impact magazine

The quarterly magazine is the jewel in the crown of MRS publications and since its launch ten years ago has built a reputation for high quality journalism exploring cutting edge trends and issues across the research sector and beyond. Sent to over 5,000 members and VIPs from the broader marketing community, the magazine's combination of special reports, case studies and CEO profiles and columns, makes the arrival of each issue an important event in the research calendar.



### The Research Buyers Guide

This online directory of research suppliers enjoys over **2,800** unique visitors every month, **70%** of traffic is from the UK, **15%** from Asia, **8%** from Europe and **4%** is from the US. Buyers of research can refine their search by specialisms, geography and participant location, and new categories were added to reflect new expertise, for example in AI and online qual.



### IJMR and SAGE

Members have free access to SAGE Publications' Research Methods suite as part of their enhanced membership benefits. Sage Publications also publishes on behalf of MRS the bi-monthly peer-reviewed journal, the IJMR (International Journal of Market Research), which is part of the membership package for MRS Fellows and Certified members. IJMR has seen a significant increase in its Impact Factor which is now at an all-time high, at 2.513.

### MRS Delphi Group

The MRS Delphi Group is the think tank for the research sector and includes experts from brands and agencies. The chair is Colin Strong from Ipsos. Report topics this year included 'The Rise of the Insight Alchemist: how the data explosion has created a new breed of insights professional'.

All reports MRS Delphi Group reports are available [here](#).



After a turbulent period in the recruitment market **the jobs website has rebounded** with increased traffic

### Research Jobfinder

After a turbulent period in the recruitment market the jobs website has rebounded with increased traffic – **2,500** unique visitors every month. The website is particularly valuable to reach out to the widest possible pool of candidates to counter a shortage in talent across the sector.

# Accredited Company Partners

MRS Accredited Company Partnership experienced strong growth in the 2022-23 period, welcoming **63** new Partners. This includes client-side insight teams from companies like Reckitt, Lloyds, Asahi, and Mars, as well as agencies such as The Good Side, AMA Research, and Newton X.

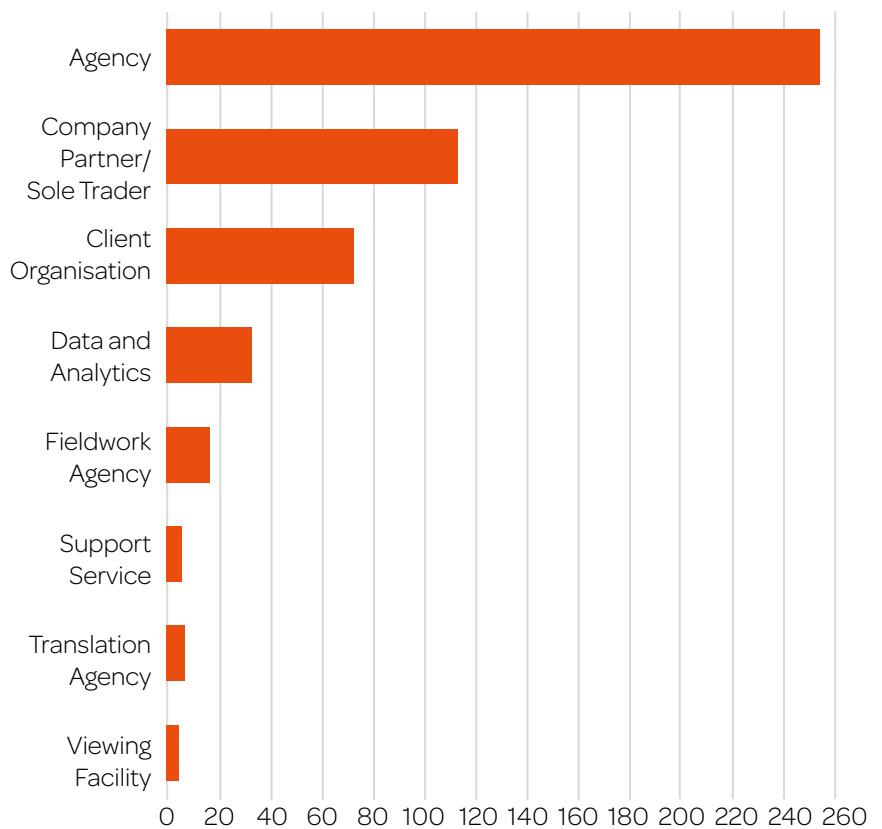
There were **13** new International Affiliates that gained Accreditation this year. They represented the countries; Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, India, and the United States. These organisations attended MRS conferences and Awards as well as supporting important MRS initiatives such as [Global Data Quality](#).

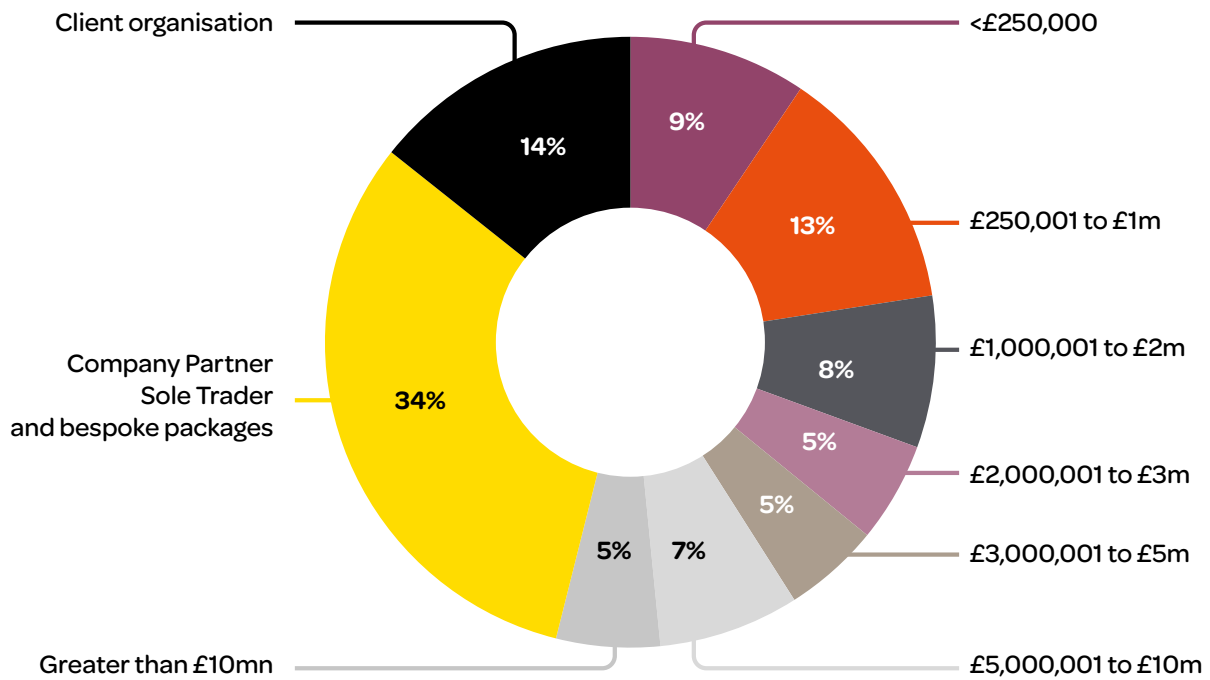
Upskilling continues to be important for client-side teams, with many of them benefiting from enhanced Accredited Company Partnership packages. These have included an increase in the number of vouchers for training and conferences as well as bespoke in-company training sessions.

Professional recognition and the need for accreditation continues to influence an Accredited companies' decision to become a Company Partners. Through Company Partnership

There were 13 new **International Affiliates** that gained Accreditation this year. They represented the countries; Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, India, and the United States.

**Accredited Company Partners by type**





### Accredited Company Partners by turnover

organisation's can also sign MRS' NetZero and Inclusion Pledges further enhancing their credentials within the sector and with clients.

Throughout the year MRS has strengthened the relationship between MRS and the employees of MRS Accredited Company Partners. MRS has done this through targeted initiatives such as in-person and online tailored induction sessions, wellbeing webinars, and monthly standards briefings. MRS Accredited Partner induction sessions provide an opportunity to introduce teams to what the MRS has to offer them as a company and individuals. MRS' series of wellbeing webinars have addressed important aspects of employee welfare

MRS' series of **wellbeing webinars** have addressed important aspects of employee welfare, this year we highlighted the importance of organisational culture for employee wellbeing.

- this year MRS highlighted the importance of organisational culture for employee wellbeing. MRS' standards briefings, delivered exclusively to Accredited Company Partner teams, have ensured that staff are well-versed and up-to-date with best practices and changes to the MRS Code of Conduct.

MRS Fair Data partners find the trust mark valuable to reassure their customers and stakeholders holders of their commitment to the Fair Data principles. MRS supports Fair Data partners by providing detailed and practical advice on the application of key legislation. MRS welcomed MM-Eye to the growing list of Fair Data companies in addition to 10 other organisations who are undergoing the Fair Data process.



# Pledge to make a difference in 2023



## MRS Inclusion Pledge

Manifesto for Opportunity

### A manifesto for opportunity

The research sector is taking steps to ensure that it is representative of the world around us.

- ✓ Publishing annual pay statistics
- ✓ Diversity at board level


Sign up the MRS Inclusion Pledge.

### A manifesto for sustainability

The research sector is taking steps to be part of the solution to the growing climate emergency.

- ✓ Delivering net zero by 2026
- ✓ Publishing carbon emissions

Sign up to the MRS Net Zero pledge



## MRS Net Zero Pledge

Manifesto for Sustainability

[www.mrs.org.uk](http://www.mrs.org.uk)





## Insight Alchemy 2023 - MRS Annual Conference

The MRS Annual Conference returned as an in-person event on 14 March 2023 at the Hilton Bankside in London. The conference was run as a one-day event with two main content streams, plenary and a lunchtime workshop.

The conference was rebranded to celebrate the launch of the MRS Delphi Report: **Rise of the Insight Alchemist** and hosted nine topical debates over the course of the day.

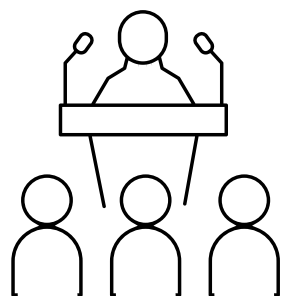
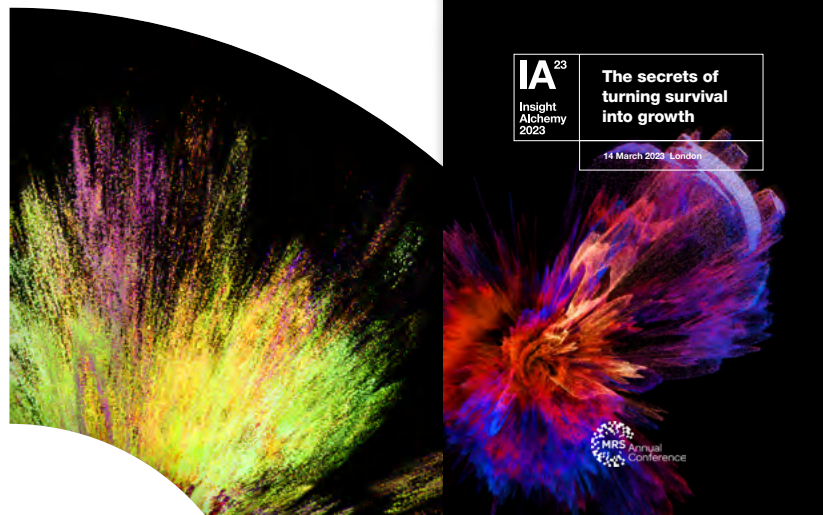
Keynote speakers included David Olusoga, British Historian and author and Claer Barratt, Consumer Editor at the Financial Times.

The conference attracted over **400** participants from across a diverse spread of practitioners: clients, suppliers, specialists, consultants, academics and the wider media.

## MRS one-day conferences

MRS ran 11 one-day events in 22/23 attracting over **1,250** participants. Three of the events returned as face-to-face events - Sports and Gaming, Behavioural Science and Financial Services - welcoming **390** delegates back in-person. Alongside the other annual digital events - Semiotics, CX/UX/MR and Digital Ethnography - two new digital events were held in 22/23. They were Brand Purpose and Research in the Metaverse.

The [annual] conference was rebranded to celebrate the launch of the MRS Delphi Report: **Rise of the Insight Alchemist** and hosted nine topical debates over the course of the day.



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# Communications

## activities and highlights

Highlights of the MRS communications campaign 2022/23 included:

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### Proactive media engagement to support MRS' strategic priorities

including profiling the importance of market and social research to government decision-makers, highlighting challenges facing the sector such as a lack of clarity on GDPR reform and analysing areas of future revenue growth.

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### Running a programme of media monitoring of five Sunday papers

over the 12-month period. Reviewing them fortnightly, establishing the proportion of articles reliant on research – either directly driven by or quoting research – as well as which publications are most reliant on research, the focus of that research (economic, political or social) and how it varied over the year. Analysing the results and developing a summary document for use in MRS' communications and to be profiled by [Research Live](#).

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We ran a programme of **media monitoring** of five Sunday papers over the 12-month period and establishing the proportion of articles reliant on research.

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### Supporting the drive to attract more talent

to the market research sector by promoting the Market Research Executive Apprenticeship throughout the year, including securing an interview during National Apprenticeship Week (6-12 February) for [Marketing Week](#) with the head of innovation at Ipsos to discuss its benefits.

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### Interviewing research interviewers from across the UK

about the recruitment challenges they are facing. Creating a document summarising the issues and developing a series of tactics to improve the recruitment of research interviewers.

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### Providing guidance for social media best practice

for the MRS Main Board, with a particular focus on LinkedIn and Twitter (now 'X'), including key tactics to employ and common mistakes to avoid.

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### Building profile and expectation for Insight Alchemy 2023

including announcing the headline speakers and profiling them in relevant media outlets such as [The Media Leader](#). Encouraging and securing the attendance of journalists from a wide range of trade, marketing, national and other sector press. Securing the attendance of journalists, including from [Marketing Week](#) and [WARC](#), resulting in a number of pieces of coverage and social media engagement.

Throughout the period **42 pieces** of media coverage were achieved.

**Driving engagement with the MRS Awards 2023.** Developing a script for the host and a book of the night, and building anticipation by announcing the shortlist. Attending and working with the filming crew to create vox pops about the awards for use on social media to drum up excitement for next year's awards; securing coverage post the event.

**Contributing to marketing and ecommerce trade publication Econsultancy's** [new best practice guide on research](#), with MRS used to define research and outline how it should be practised.

**Developing a series of interviews with the Office for National Statistics**, promoting the Census 2021. Providing advice for the interviews with Rebecca Cole, chair of the MRS Representation in Research Group, and Jane Frost, CEO of MRS, and reviewing the videos prior to their publication.

**Leading on the announcements of key MRS updates** including promoting the MRS cost of living guidance and showcasing the latest results from reports on confidence and trust in and the diversity and mental wellbeing of the UK research sector. Selling them to the media and securing coverage with titles including **Marketing Week** [MrWeb](#) [Research Live](#) [and](#)

**Contributing to Research Live's** [Review of 2022](#) and Preview of 2023 series, including about the cost-of-living crisis, skills, significant industry developments and more. Also contributing to **Impact's** [10<sup>th</sup>](#) anniversary feature about the impact of the climate crisis.

#### **#ResearchInside campaign** [Research Inside](#)

MRS' Research Inside campaign highlighted some of the winning case studies from MRS' 2020 awards. There are so many powerful examples demonstrating the impact that research has on design and decision making both in the commercial and public sectors.

MRS wanted to celebrate this impact and share the message widely to demonstrate the range and variety of products, policies and communication where research and the insights it generates has made a real difference.

Our social media campaign across LinkedIn, X and Research Live highlighted a few brilliant and innovative ways where research makes a difference. The campaign ran from November 2022 to January 2023 attracting over 9,200 impressions on LinkedIn.



# Financial

## Statutory accounts

The following summary of key financial information is extracted from the audited accounts for the year 2022/23

A copy of the statutory report and accounts which is submitted to Companies House is available to members on request.

### Summary Income and Expenditure Account (£'000)

Income	2022/23	2021/22
Individual membership subscriptions	738	687
Company Partner Service	642	531
Publications & information services	572	529
Training & qualifications	876	847
Conferences & seminars	459	295
Other services	741	419
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,028</b>	<b>3,308</b>

Expenditure	2022/23	2021/22
Cost of activities	1,069	728
Employment	2,005	1,895
Other administration less sundry income	778	710
Net financing charges & taxation	249	39
Revaluation of property investment	(730)	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,371</b>	<b>3,372</b>

Recognised gains and losses	2022/23	2021/22
Net surplus/(deficit) on trading	138	(64)
Revaluation of property investment net of deferred tax	519	0
Surplus/(deficit) for the financial year	657	(64)
Revaluation of tangible fixed assets net of deferred tax	885	(9)
<b>Contribution to reserves</b>	<b>1,542</b>	<b>(73)</b>

### Summary Balance Sheet (£'000)

	2022/23	2021/22
Tangible assets	7,977	6,062
Net current liabilities	(545)	(629)
Long term liabilities inc. deferred tax	(1,281)	(825)
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>6,151</b>	<b>4,608</b>

Property revaluation reserve	4,976	3,572
Income & expenditure account	1,175	1,036
<b>Reserves</b>	<b>6,151</b>	<b>4,608</b>

## MRS Main Board and Officers 2022/23

### MRS Officers



**Jane Frost** CBE  
Chief Executive Officer,  
MRS



**Saj Arshad** CMRS  
President



**Sinead Jefferies** CMRS  
Chair of Main Board



**John Haworth** MMRS  
Honorary Secretary  
Treasurer



**Crispin Beale** FMRS



**Geoff Gosling** CMRS



**Jennifer Perry** CMRS



**Dr Marie-Claude Gervais**  
CMRS



**Rebecca Cole** CMRS



**Jonathan Hall** CMRS



**Zoe Ruffels** CMRS



**Babita Earle** CMRS



**Nick North** CMRS



**Jake Steadman** CMRS  
(Special Advisor)

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# Company details

## Further information

[mrs.org.uk/about](https://mrs.org.uk/about)

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### The Market Research Society (MRS)

With members in more than 50 countries, MRS is the world's leading authority for research and business intelligence. It's for everyone with professional equity in market, social and opinion research and in market analysis, customer insight and consultancy.

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### Evidence matters

Evidence helps build strategy and reduce risk; it's essential for good commercial and public policy decisions. If you need, use, generate or interpret evidence, MRS can help you. Our members have commissioned and provided evidence that has helped elections, launch global brands and understand profound trends in society. We support, promote and aim to enrich the research and business world.

In consultation with our individual members and Accredited Company Partners, MRS supports best practice by setting and enforcing sector standards. The commitment to uphold the MRS Code of Conduct is supported by the Codeline service and a wide range of specialist guidelines. By setting and enforcing sector standards. The commitment to uphold the MRS Code of Conduct is supported by the Codeline service and a wide range of specialist guidelines.

### MRS Research-Live

[research-live.com](https://research-live.com)

### IJMR

[mrs.org.uk/ijmr](https://mrs.org.uk/ijmr)

### Research Buyer's Guide

[www.mrs.org.uk/researchbuyersguide](https://www.mrs.org.uk/researchbuyersguide)

### Impact Magazine

[www.mrs.org.uk/resources/impactmagazine](https://www.mrs.org.uk/resources/impactmagazine)

### Research Jobfinder

[researchjobfinder.com](https://researchjobfinder.com)

### Fair Data

[mrs.org.uk/fairdata](https://mrs.org.uk/fairdata)

### Recruiter Accreditation Scheme

[ras.mrs.org.uk](https://ras.mrs.org.uk)

### GeoDems Knowledge Base (GKB)

[mrs.org.uk/geodemographics](https://mrs.org.uk/geodemographics)

### The Market Research Society

(Limited by Guarantee)  
Company Number 518685

### Registered office and Business address

The Old Trading House  
15 Northburgh Street  
London EC1V 0JR

### Telephone

+44 (0)20 7490 4911

### Fax

+44 (0)20 7490 0608

### Email:

[info@mrs.org.uk](mailto:info@mrs.org.uk)

### Website:

[mrs.org.uk](https://mrs.org.uk)

### Auditors

Gravita ABG LLP  
30 City Road  
London EC1Y 2AB

### Bankers

Nat West Plc  
City of London Office  
1 Princes Street  
London EC2R 8BP

### Solicitors

Bates Wells  
10 Queen Street Place  
London EC4R 1BE





The Market Research Society (MRS) is the world's leading research association. For all those who need, generate or interpret evidence for making good business and policy decisions.

[Click here to find out more about us](#)

