



## **Examiner Survey 2021**

### **Strategic Report**

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**May 2021**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary of Key Findings

#### Overview and Engagement

- 73% of Boat Safety Scheme Examiners took part in this survey (96/132), down a fraction on the 2018 survey (77%).
- Half of all Examiners (46%) are very experienced, with over 16 years of BSS work behind them.
- The overall pattern of results shows that there has not been much progress since the 2018 survey. This should not come as a surprise as the amount of targeted action that followed the previous survey was minimal.
- Three quarters of the 24 questions in the 2021 survey which have trend data from 3 years ago, have seen a decline in performance over time. Of the questions which did improve, BSS only has direct control over one of them (the provision of on-going training). The other five questions are opinion/perception based in relation to the Examiners' role and their work.
- Examiners remain very proud to be part of the BSS (89% positive) and 82% also believe that part of their role is to spot risks before they become an issue.

#### Examiner Business Models

- About 1 in 3 Examiners claim that their revenue from BSS examinations is a significant source of income for them.
- 58% believe it is easy to find work in their area (a slight improvement on 2018). About half though would welcome the chance to take on more work if it was available.
- 63% are keen on the idea of a more frequent examination cycle (ie. more often than the current once per 4 years). This is especially true for those with less than 10 years of current experience.
- About two thirds (65%) of all Examiners believe that people in their region compete on price.
- 57% would welcome a move towards having a fixed price for examinations (especially true amongst those who are less active / carry out fewer examinations). The majority feel that a fair price in their region would be somewhere in the £151-£200 range.

#### The ECP and Working Processes

- Only 56% think that new processes and procedures are fit for purpose when introduced by the BSS (down from 64% back in 2018). More importantly, just 1 in 3 Examiners (31%) feel that the BSS acts quickly to change things when needed. This feeling is apparent across Examiners in all sub-groups and across the country.
- 82% have a good sense of clarity with the ECP, albeit with some grey areas existing in the documentation. This issue of ECP transparency was however the #1 most mentioned factor in the open-ended question about "what 1 change would you make to improve things significantly for Examiners?".



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- Support for introducing an App to replace the paper ECP is about 50-50. The newer Examiners and those with a longer expected tenure (therefore presumed to be younger) are more keen here.
  - There is a similar almost 50-50 split in terms of satisfaction with the way in which Salesforce / the BSS database works.

#### Support from the BSS Office

- All three key questions here show a decline when compared to 2018.
- Satisfaction with admin support, technical support and customer support have all fallen (now at 73%, 62% and 56% respectively).
- More importantly, 64% are now critical of the response time from the Office when queries are raised. This has worsened from just 46% being negative about this in 2018.
- The BSS Examiner Champion Scheme is not well-established or well-known amongst Examiners. Just 12% are already actively involved in the Scheme (although a further 16% are interested in joining).

#### Standards and Consistency

- There is still a significant minority of Examiners (38%) who believe there is a big problem with varying levels of performance amongst the Examiners. There are many examples of this from the open-ended comments. About half of all Examiners agree that Boat Owners are only interested in the Certificate (and not the safety aspect) and again one half have experienced pressure to “pass” a boat.
- 58% of Examiners agree that the BSS works hard to address issues of malpractice (meaning of course that, the inverse, 42% don’t believe this happens enough).
- Examiners are happy with the amount of on-going training they receive and two thirds would pay for their annual training (with an upper price limit of about £300). A mix of online and face-to-face training is the preference.
- Indeed 75% of Examiners would welcome more opportunities to have meetings with their colleagues (up +5 points since 2018).
- As it stands, only 1 in 3 Examiners feel that there is a good sense of community amongst the Examiner group. This has fallen by -8 points since the previous survey – and the negativity about this issue is apparent across all parts of the country.



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## **Some Recommendations For Strategic Action**

- We have not taken a prescriptive approach with our recommendations this time. Instead, we believe that asking ‘beautiful questions’ will help to inspire the BSS to consider the issues and make its own decisions about which parts of the survey results merit becoming part of the action plan going forward.

### The ECP

- How can the ECP be sharpened and the grey areas be removed?
- Which parts are long overdue an update?
- How can the process be a living and breathing one?
- What role could the Examiners play in helping to achieve this enhanced clarity?
- Is an App viable and practical?
- What is the decision-making process behind this?
- Again, how could the Examiners be involved in designing the key functionality of any App?

### Support from the BSS Office

- How can speed of response from the Office be improved?
- What is preventing a 7 day/week support function?
- Is it a simple people/resource issue?
- How can this be overcome?
- What are the benefits for the BSS from building a better support structure for Examiners?

### Standards and Examiner Performance

- How can the BSS cost and deliver on-going Examiner training programmes?
- Can these sessions be dovetailed with events to create more of an Examiner ‘community’ where ideas and best practices are openly shared?
- How likely is it that additional training will fix all issues of poor Examiner performance?
- Are there also cultural and business model issues which drive down Examiner performance?
- How much of an appetite does the BSS have to seriously address issues of malpractice?
- How can poor performance by Examiners be best policed?

### The New Examiner Business Model

- What are the necessary (legislative) steps in moving from a 4-year BSSC cycle to a more frequent one?
- Is a fixed price model or a minimum charge model better? For Examiners? For the BSS?
- What are the negative implications of a fixed price model? For Examiners? For the BSS?
- How can the BSS best make these key decisions AND how soon can the BSS make these key decisions?



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## BACKGROUND, MANAGEMENT INFORMATION AND DATA REPORTS

### Research Design and Response Rates

Back in 2018, the Boat Safety Scheme (“BSS”) asked Morale Solutions to help design a survey to understand more about Examiners’ opinions. In 2021, following a change in the BSS Senior Leadership Team, there was a requirement to understand how things had changed for Examiners during the interim 3-year period (and explore some new areas with Examiners).

In addition to a briefing from the BSS Office Team, Morale Solutions had one-to-one conversations with 12 Examiners to get their input into what the ideal questionnaire should cover. All of this information was evaluated and cross-referenced. We produced a draft questionnaire and, following a series of iterations, a final survey was agreed. The topic coverage was as follows;

- Your Role As An Examiner
- Training
- Working With The BSS
- The ECP and Changes to the Process
- Supporting Examiners
- Workload
- Standards And Consistency
- Working With Customers
- The Best Things About The BSS (open comments)
- Making Positive Changes (open comments)
- The Survey

The survey comprised 43 questions (36 closed questions plus 7 open-ended). Back in 2018, the survey was just 38 questions (31+7). Two thirds of the closed questions in 2021 also appeared in the 2018 survey – meaning that we generated a high level of trend data – vital for assessing the progress over the 3 years. This approach to creating the questionnaire was extremely successful and even more successful than in 2018. 88% of all those that completed the questionnaire agreed that “the survey covered issues that are important to me” ; up +5% points from the 83% score last time.

The survey was securely hosted online using a generic URL (non-personalised links). The survey design was optimised for use with PCs/tablet devices (75% of all completions), smartphones (17%) and tablets (8%). The internal survey marketing process involved a series of messages (drafted by Morale Solutions) scripted to deal with common objections / barriers to completion.



The survey launched via an email invite sent on Monday March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021. The fieldwork ran for three weeks, ending on Friday April 9<sup>th</sup>. The response rate was excellent. 96 of the 132 BSS Examiners completed the survey – a return of 73% (2018 was at 77%).

By level of Experience (how long the Examiners had been qualified), only 3 respondents had fewer than 5 years' experience, demonstrating a lack of new recruits to the role since the previous survey. In terms of our survey analysis, we combined this small group with the 6-10 years bracket. Importantly, 46% of all survey respondents have over 16 years' experience as a qualified Examiner (up from 39% at the time of the last survey).

Experience (How long have you been qualified?)	2021 replies	2021 share of returns (%)	2018 share of returns (%)	Difference 2021 vs 2018	2021 analysis notes
Less Than 3 years	0	0%	1%	-1%	these groups were combined for analysis purposes
3-5 years	3	3%	16%	-13%	
6-10 years	24	25%	24%	1%	
11-15 years	24	25%	18%	7%	
16-20 years	19	20%	18%	2%	
More than 20 years	25	26%	21%	5%	
not answered	1	1%	1%	0%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>		

About 1 in 7 (16%) of all Examiners can see themselves stopping being part of the BSS within the next 1-2 years or so. In contrast, 43% can picture being part of the BSS for the next 6-10 years or beyond. About 1 in 3 (31%) are planning to have between 3-5 more years with the BSS (was only 21% in this category in 2018).

Loyalty (How long do you see yourself remaining with the BSS?)	2021 replies	2021 share of returns (%)	2018 share of returns (%)	Difference 2021 vs 2018	2021 analysis notes
Stop within the next year or so	2	2%	9%	-7%	these groups were combined for analysis purposes
1-2 years	13	14%	9%	5%	
3-5 years	30	31%	21%	10%	
6-10 years	16	17%	18%	-1%	
10 years or more	25	26%	31%	-5%	
Not sure	10	10%	12%	-2%	
not answered	0	0%	0%	0%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>		



In terms of Geography, just a handful of Examiners do most of their work in Scotland or Wales (3 of the 96). We have again combined the NE and NW regions into a single “North” reporting unit. Proportionally, there were more Examiners working in the West Midlands this time around than there were in 2018 (18% vs 12%).

Geography (In which part of the country do you do most work?)	2021 replies	2021 share of returns (%)	2018 share of returns (%)	Difference 2021 vs 2018	2021 analysis notes
Scotland	2	2%	4%	-2%	data not reported for this combined group
Wales	1	1%	1%	0%	
North East	3	3%	4%	-1%	these groups were combined for analysis purposes
North West	13	14%	14%	0%	
East Midlands	15	16%	18%	-2%	treat data with caution as n<10
West Midlands	17	18%	12%	5%	
East (Anglian incl. Norfolk Broads)	13	14%	15%	-2%	
South East	21	22%	21%	1%	
South West	7	7%	9%	-2%	
Other	2	2%	0%	2%	
not answered	2	2%	1%	1%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>		





## KEY OVERALL FINDINGS

### Examiner Engagement

- The first section of questions in the survey asked respondents for their opinions on a couple of issues which describe the 'ideal' (preferred) mind-set of Examiners. The issues covered here were;
  - Pride about working with the Boat Safety Scheme
  - Believing that helping the BSS to plan for the future and see risks was also part of the role ("horizon gazing")
- There are still very high levels of pride about working with the BSS (89% agree or agree strongly), although this is down slightly from 95% in 2018.
- 82% now agree that helping the BSS to see risks before they turn into problems was part of their role. This is up +3% points on the previous survey.
- When we look at the most positive response ONLY ("agree strongly"), the results are 37% and 32% respectively.
- The overall (aggregated) scores remain remarkably consistent across all demographic groups (geography, loyalty etc).
- There is a sweet spot in the sense that those with 11-15 years' experience and those who conduct the most examinations (2 or more per week on average) are the most likely to feel this sense of pride and see their role as being to help the BSS plan for the future.

### My Role As An Examiner – Income and Pricing

- Only 1 in 3 Examiners (34%) agreed that their role for the BSS is a significant source of income for them. This is down from 41% in 2018. Whilst part of this shift is undoubtedly due to the downturn in the amount of available work as a result of Covid-19, it's unlikely to be the whole story. For some people, the Examiner role is and will always be a hobby for 'pin money'. For others, their pricing strategies will determine the level of work they can attract and the income they receive.
- This perception that the BSS is a significant source of income is more visible amongst those that complete more examinations (understandably). For those that do 2 or more exams per week on average, some 68% see the BSS as providing a significant source of revenue (double the overall average).
- Interestingly, those that say the BSS is NOT a significant source of income are more likely to welcome the idea of establishing a fixed price for an examination (65% agree vs, just 41% of those who already see the BSS as a significant source of revenue).
- Amongst these two groups, there is little or no variation in people's perceptions of what would be a fair price for an examination in their area. The majority feel that somewhere in the range £151-£200 sounds about right.
- There are, however, some key differences between the different parts of the country.
  - £151-£200 was clearly the most frequent 'fair' price for those in the North, East Mids, East and South West.
  - For those in the West Midlands, there were also high proportions in the £200-£250 price range
  - In the South East, the £200-£250 was the clear winner for 'fair' price, with 60% choosing this option.



## Training

- 83% of Examiners believe they get enough on-going training from the BSS (up slightly from 79% last time). Scores are sound across all demographic groups, with the exception of those Examiners in the combined North region. Just 53% of those are satisfied with their on-going training.
- In terms of training delivery, 60% of all Examiners would prefer a mix of online and face-to-face training. This was the #1 choice across all demographic groups.
- When asked what they would consider reasonable to pay annually for their required training, one third (32%) of all Examiners answered “nothing”. Proportions were even higher amongst those who do 27-52 Exams per year (average to low users), those who can only see themselves staying as part of the BSS for another 2 years and those who are based on the North region – see bullet point above. All of these groups were (coincidentally) at 47% who would prefer to pay nothing for their annual training.
- So, two thirds of all Examiners would pay for their training. 61% of that 67% fell into the price range of up to £300. Just 6% would pay more than £300.
- 40% would pay up to £150, whilst 21% would pay between £151-£300.
- This general pattern was evident across the huge majority of demographic groups.
- An open-ended question in the Training section of the survey asked Examiners about what other aspects of being an Examiner they would like to know more about. 38 out of 96 respondents wrote an answer to this question (40% uptake). There is no one stand-out issue which was raised here – but there were a variety of interesting ideas. Some are shown below and a full list of all comments to this question is provided separately to the BSS.

*A classroom led environment is likely to yield better training and shared experiences.*

*I think refresher training “toolbox” talks would benefit all examiners to ensure a level of continuity amongst examiners.*

*... being totally independent each believes they are working correctly - this belief can only be confirmed by independent oversight or workshops/ discussion. In short, you don't know what you don't know.*

*As many examiners have a business solely for examining it would be useful to offer business advice and have a more shared knowledge experience and open lines of communications with other examiners*

*I think periodic refreshers would be good as I tend get stuck in a knowledge rut with the same type of boats all the time.*

*As we are seeing new battery technologies being applied to boats,  
I feel that better understanding of these systems would be beneficial.*

*How to deal with the more difficult sea going GRP or wood boats that want to be brought onto inland waterways such as the Thames. These often have limited access to fuel tanks and filling hoses and unusual gas installations.*



## Working With the BSS

- Just 56% of Examiners agree that when the BSS introduces new procedures, processes, or documentation they are fit for purpose (-8 points from the 64% last time).
- Similarly, only 31% of all Examiners agree that the BSS acts quickly to make important changes to processes whenever it's needed (-7 points from 2018's 38%).
- The latter issue is a key point for the BSS. Not a single demographic group we've looked at scored over 50% here, meaning that the overall sense of negativity for this issue holds for Examiners of all types.
- Importantly, there is a highly negative response to these 2 'procedures and change' questions from amongst those Examiners who have strong concerns about varying performance levels across the Examiner population. For example, just 14% of people in that group feel that the BSS acts quickly to make important changes to processes.
- When considering the ECP documentation, 25% of all Examiners feel that everything is clear for them. A further 57% feel that it is mostly clear (with a few grey areas). This means that overall, 82% have a pretty good sense of clarity from the ECP.
- However, the remaining 18% don't feel that way (ranging between 14% picking "confusing" and 4% "difficult").
- Perhaps understandably, the greater the Examiner's experience, the more comfortable they are with ECP (eg. 92% of those with more than 20 years' experience see the ECP as clear or mostly clear).
- There was an open-ended question in this section asking people to make any specific suggestions they had for adapting the ECP documentation to make it easier for Examiners. 42 people wrote a considered response (44% of the survey sample). Some example comments are show below (full set under separate cover).

*As new standards are updated and accepted this should automatically be sent to examiners and included in the ECP. Maybe the ECP documentation should be made into an app instead of paper form thus allowing the office to update instantly as required , examiners could purchase tablets at a reduced rate to compliment this.*

*Surely it would a lot easier to make changes and keep everybody singing from the same hymn sheet if it was done digitally*

*... Check sheet copy for the owner? (Help owners understand what we check and can be left with a form e.) Check sheet that flows with an examination rather than lumped into Parts? Example on boarding first thing I look at is Labels marking locations, second is Fire extinguishers, blankets Co Alarms Appliances, ventilation.*

*The ECPs are often out of date online. The public and often examiners simply don't understand them. The check sheets examiners are supposed to use on site are too complex, too cumbersome, impractical and lead the examiner to spend more time faffing with paperwork than actually looking at the boats. It is no surprise there are so many things missed by examiners. Compare it to MOTs, and MOT inspectors do not walk round with 4 double sided sheets (in a*



*gale or pouring rain) of tick boxes, writing down irrelevant information - they are looking up and at the vehicle at all times. Changing back to laminated check sheets and accompanying field notes would make things way less cumbersome and enable examiners to focus.*

*Reformat it to a concise checklist with amplifications as per the original ABSSE checklist that flows with the ongoing examination of boat. The ECP folder can then be used as a more detailed backup for reference aka the original Technical Manual.*

*We have ECPs and processes that have been outdated and/or in 'Draft' process for YEARS!!*

- Examiners were asked about their appetite to move away from the paper-based ECP and towards an online App (which would not need WiFi/4G to operate). 22% were very keen and a further 25% would support this as long as Examiners had some input into the design. This aggregates to 47% of Examiner who are behind the idea.
  - Indeed, a further 21% are also behind the idea in principle but are happy with the current way of doing things.
  - 9% had some reservations about using their smartphone for this kind of work and 23% of Examiners are completely against moving to using paperless technology.
  - Those with less current experience and those with a longer expected 'tenure' (presumably the younger end of the Examiner range) were significantly more likely to be supportive to the move to using an App. This group are also potentially more tech-savvy in their approach to other issues at work and in their lives.
  - There was more negativity amongst the more experienced (older) Examiners.
  - Those Examiners who conduct fewer examinations were supporters of the App idea (eg. 67% of those who do an exam every fortnight or so) are very keen for the App. The heavy users (2 or more Exams per week) are spot on the overall average (48% falling into the very keen / keen with input boxes).
  - It was the group in the middle of this – Examiners who conduct between 53-104 per year that were more set in their ways and showed much less desire to adopt the App idea (only 22% were positive).
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- In terms of Salesforce/the BSS database, there is a very obvious 'Brexit-esque' divide in opinion. 52% : 48% positive to negative.
  - 52% either find it easy to use (17%) or like the system but feel it could be improved (35%).
  - The other 48% feel that the interface is too time consuming (38%) or that it's really difficult to use (10%).
  - Demographically, the heavy users (more than 2 exams per week) are more likely to be positive here (65% vs the average 52%).



## Supporting The Examiners

- 73% of Examiners believe that the administrative support they get from the BSS Office helps them to do a good job. This is down very slightly from 76% in 2018.
- 62% are happy with the technical support they get from the BSS Office (68% in 2018).
- 56% agree that if they have a problem with a customer, they get good support from the BSS Office (was 62%).
- So, all 3 questions about support from the BSS Office have seen (an albeit slight) decline since the 2018 survey.
- The longest serving Examiners are the most critical for all 3 questions.
- Similarly, those with big concerns over the variability of Examiner performance are also negative with regard to the Office support.
- Again, there seems to be a degree of regional polarisation for this issue, with those in the North being more positive (80%+), whilst scores for Examiners based in the East and West Midlands are lower. The same was true in 2018.
- The BSS Examiner Champion Scheme is not particularly well established or well-known. 30% admit to knowing nothing about it and a further 43% are not interested in becoming involved (but do at least know about it).
- 12% of Examiners are part of the Scheme or actively pursuing option to be involved.
- 16% are interested in becoming involved but are unsure how to achieve this (peaking amongst less experienced Examiners and those base in the West Midlands).
- We asked a question about how the Examiners felt about the speed of response from the BSS office when they had a question.
  - 9% are completely happy with the speed of response (was at 20% in 2018)
  - 27% do feel that response times vary but all in all the Office responds quite quickly (down from 34%)
  - 42% feel the response speed is a bit hit and miss (up from 33%)
  - 22% feel that it always takes too long to get a response (up from 13%)
- The trajectory here is clear. In 2018, we were at 54% positive / 46% negative. The ratios in 2021 are more damning 36% : 64%. Examiners are currently much more critical of the speed of response from the office than they were back in 2018.
- We added an open-ended question asking people to expand on their opinions about “speed of response”. 45 people wrote a response to this prompt (47% uptake). One example from each of the options is shown below and the full set of comments is available separately).

***[completely happy with the speed of response]***

*I have never had a problem. On the odd occasion I have been unsure about a point to the extent of needing to call the office Rob or Dave have been very responsive*



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***[response times vary but all in all the Office responds quite quickly]***

*My limited contacts with the office have been dealt with satisfactorily.*

*Occasional need for technical assistance has also been connected the same day. No current problems.*

***[response speed is a bit hit and miss]***

*If I can get through to a technical advisor then it is usually very good,*

*if I can't connect directly then often if I get a response, it is too late.*

***[always takes too long to get a response]***

*No-one is ever available when you need to talk. Surely there should be a Technical Advisor available to talk you through any questions available 7 days a week. After all we work 7 days a week to fit in with customers lives and indeed if you cannot get answers from the Office you either have to terminate the examination or make an educated guess.*

## **My Workload**

- In terms of Examinations conducted in the last 12 months, 60% of all Examiners are active at least once per week with their work.
  - 19% have done between 1-26 examinations in the past year (less than one every fortnight or so)
  - 20% have done 27-52 (up to one per week)
  - 28% have done 53-104 (1-2 per week across a year)
  - 26% have done between 105-208 (2-4 per week)
  - 6% have gone beyond 208 examinations in a year (more than 4 per week)
- For all respondents 37% say they are happy with their current level of workload (and have no desire to increase the number of examinations they are conducting). 52% would take more work if it was available. 12% are “very keen” to increase the number of examinations they carry out.
- 60% of those who say that the BSS Examiner income is NOT a significant source of revenue for them would happily conduct more work if it was available to them.
- Geographically, 23% of Examiners who work in the East are very keen to increase the number of examinations they conduct, with a further 62% “happy to take on more work”. This untapped demand for more work from those in the East is mirrored by the fact that people in this region are less likely to agree that it's easy to find work in their part of the country (23% vs the overall average 58%).



- The pattern across the country is that 58% of Examiners feel that it is easy to find enough examination work in their region (was 55% in 2018). The ranked order of satisfaction with this question is shown below;
  - 71% South West (was 92% in 2018)
  - 67% South East (71%)
  - 67% East Midlands (64%)
  - 53% West Midlands (59%)
  - 50% North (24%)
  - 23% East (33%)
- The ranked order is identical as 2018, with the sole exception of the North – where double the proportion are now satisfied with workload availability.
- It therefore makes sense that Examiners in the East - at the bottom of the list above - are the least likely to say they are happy with the amount of examinations they carry out (15% compared to the average 37%).
- When conducting examinations, the boat owner is still just about more likely to be present than not. However, there has been a decline in this figure – again undoubtedly related to Covid and the Boat Owners’ inability to attend due to travel restrictions or social distancing measures.
- 24% say the Boat Owner is always (or always almost present) and a further 28% say that they’re there for about three quarters of examinations (total 52%, but down from 68% in 2018).
- Compared to the average 52% across the UK, the score for those in the East is just 23%, indicating that in this region, the Boat Owners are much less likely to be present at the time of the examination.

## **Standards and Consistency**

- 75% of Examiners say they would welcome the opportunity to have Examiner meetings, get-togethers or networking sessions in their part of the country – an increase of 5 points on 2018, and possibly related to the difficulty in holding these kinds of events across the last year due to Covid. As in 2018, the appetite for this diminishes based on experience (ie. from 88% of those with up to 10 years’ experience, down to 74% amongst those with 16-20 years and just 63% for those with more than 20 years’ experience). However, all of those scores have indeed seen an increase compared to 3 years ago.
- Geographically, there is demand throughout the country for this (peaking at 100% in the South West [n=7], and 81% in the North). The lowest level of demand is amongst those in the South East (but still at 65%).
- In a related question, just 31% agree that there is a good sense of community / teamwork between the Examiners that are active in their part of the country. This has fallen from 39% in 2018. Of course, whilst the implications of Covid can be blamed for some of this trend, it cannot be the only explanation for the decline. No geographical region is above 50% for this question. The issue exists everywhere.
- The conclusion here is the same as in 2018. Overall, there is not really a sense of community but there is some unrealised demand for Examiners to have more of a close-knit feel.



- 65% of all respondents agree that in their part of the country, Examiners compete on price for the work that is available. This appears to be more prevalent in the South East (71%) and East (92%) – all other regions are in the 50%.
- Linked to this, some 76% of all respondents admit to being concerned that an increase in the number of Examiners will have a negative effect on the amount of work they get to do. This anxiety is felt in all regions and especially the East (92%).
- The worry is apparent for both those for whom the examination income is significant and for those where it is not.
- There is slightly more concern amongst those who feel they will stay as part of the BSS Examiner cohort for another 3-10 years (who may therefore want to start to grow their customer base).
- We asked a question about perceptions of Examiner performance
  - 7% believe that Examiners apply the ECP rules consistently (was 4% in 2018)
  - 45% think that there are “occasional lapses in performance levels” (44%)
  - 38% think there is a big problem with varying performance levels (36%)
  - 9% have no evidence of the way in which other Examiners work, so can’t make a judgement (16%)
- So, not much has changed since 2018. There is still a significant minority of Examiners who feel that varying performance is rife and the BSS should take a look at this. Efforts to address this issue since the previous survey have had little to no effect.
- Those in the South East (53%) and West Midlands (52%) are the most likely to perceive the issue as a “big problem”. Again, this is a repeating pattern to 2018 – with almost identical numbers.
- Linked to this, just 58% of all Examiners feel that the BSS works hard to address issues relating to malpractice by Examiners. Results vary wildly across the regions – from a high of 80% in the North, down to 50% in the South East, 46% in the West Midlands and 43% in the South West [n=7].
- A follow-up open-ended question prompted people to provide more details about their views towards Examiner performance levels. 43 people wrote a response here (45% uptake). A selection of comments is shown below and the full list of comments are provided separately.

*I do have evidence of both Good, Bad, Indifferent, amateurish and illegal work by some examiners. It is not for me to state what and where. That is one role of the office. Unfortunately, it is a role they only take up when backed into a corner. That said, there are good and bad examiners and the BSS past recruitment process only reinforces that situation.*

*I think some examiners would like to express their opinions of the performance levels of others without actually having evidence, and then shout about it on social media.*

*A large number of examiners simply issue certificates and take the money without doing a thorough examination. Some even issue certificates without ever visiting the boat! When an examiner complains, the scheme just isn't interested.*





*Come on, we all know this is a massive issue. Examiners have been blagging it for years, taking the money, retiring, and having no come back and leaving the good examiners to give the boaters the bad news. Many examiners are simply incompetent, and the early PIN examiner / surveyors (sub-100) often did not even get trained they just got told they could issue certs. It's not just that examiner performance is poor though, it's that the scheme have known about this for many years and do not take adequate action to resolve it; in fact, they stopped examiners looking at who issued previous certificates to prevent complaints. Fewer complaints will be received giving the perception that standards are improving, but really, it's just being hidden.*

*How many times do you get the comment "it was alright last time"?*

*I often check Salesforce on severe fails and find that they have been passed by another examiner.*

*I am finding that the standards are dropping with previously examined boats. Some of this is due to DIY owner modifications / repairs, but much is due to poorly applied ECP rules on previous examinations. As an examiner, we all know who these rogue examiners are / were - regardless of how you try to hide their identity on Salesforce.*

*I have found several examples of lack of professionalism with examiners. We all miss points from time to time but when a client says to me, "Thanks for that, mate. The last bloke didn't even come on the boat, wrote me out a certificate and charged me 150 quid", I actually feel ashamed for the Scheme. Of the many other examples I have come across one was a gas test. The previous examiner had tested the gas tightness using the nipple in the gas locker. I couldn't get a reading on my manometer so I removed the nipple and found ..... it had never been drilled out!*

*So how was the previous examiner able to get a reading to pass the boat?*

*Most owners and the majority of brokers are only interested in a pass ASAP for as cheap as they can get. I find it quite strange but to them its all about money and a fast turnaround. The best engineers appear to prefer the most vigilant and honest examiner. The cheaper the examination is, the less vigilant and professional the examiner appears to be.*

*"Pay peanuts get monkeys".*

### **Ideas for the Future – Fixed Price Model**

- 57% of all Examiners would welcome the idea of establishing a fixed price for a BSS examination. This average statistic hides a number of huge variations by demographic groups.
- 75% would of those with less than 10 years' experience would welcome this, versus just 33% of those with 16-20 years.
- Linked to this, those who see themselves as only staying with the BSS for another 2 years max, are unlikely to want it (just 47% show support).



- Geographically, those in the East (77%), North (69%) and South East (65%) are keen to have a fixed price system, whereas those in the East Midlands (47%), West Midlands (38%) and South West (33%) are not.
- The analysis in the previous section showed that those in the East and South East had higher levels of belief that Examiners compete on price and this shows that they would rather this wasn't the case.
- Those who complete more examinations per year are less likely to be in favour of the fixed price model (around 50% supportive). Those who do less than or up to 1 exam per week are keen though (averaging around 68% supportive).
- Examiners were asked what they would consider to be a fair price for an Examination in their part of the country
  - Nobody opted for a price less than £100
  - 14% overall thought that £101-£150 was about right
  - 58% believed that £151-£200 would suit
  - 28% have a view that a price between £201-£250 would be best
  - Nobody felt they would charge more than £250
- The £151-£200 price point was the most frequent choice in ALL regions except for the South East. In the South East, 60% of Examiners felt that a fair price would be £201-£250.

### **Ideas for the Future – More Frequent Certification**

- 63% of all Examiners would welcome the idea of changing the Certification process to something more frequent (instead of the current 4-year cycle). The frequency was deliberately not named in the question.
- A more frequent cycle – with or without a fixed price Examination model – would allow Examiners to increase the size of their business more easily and at the same time potentially improve the safety monitoring processes.
- This average statistic (63%) again hides a number of similar variations by demographic groups.
- 85% would of those with less than 10 years' experience would welcome this, versus just 44% of those with 16-20 years.
- Linked to this, those who see themselves as only staying with the BSS for another 2 years max, are unlikely to want it (just 29% show support).
- Geographically, those in the East (77%), North (81%) and South West (71%) are keen to have a more frequent cycle, whereas those in the East Midlands (57%), West Midlands (56%) and South East (53%) are not. So, whilst there is a majority – just – in all regions of the country, there is a definite divide in enthusiasm.

### **Working With Customers**

- 74% of Examiners agree that they work hard to maintain a business relationship with their customers in the 4-year period between their examinations (up from 69% in 2018).
- It is clear that there is a direct link between people's likelihood to maintain that relationship and the amount of examinations they conduct. For example, whilst 90% of those that do 2 or more exams per week believe they work hard to maintain customer relationships, just 41% of those who do around 1 exam per week claim the same.



- 49% say they have experienced pressure from boat owners to “pass” their boat and this rises to 65% amongst those who have less than 10 years’ experience as an Examiner (75% amongst all Examiners working in the North).

*What I do have a problem with is examiners who don't examine correctly. We all can miss something.*

*I include myself in that. What I still get fed up with is the question. "Why did it pass last time?"*

*So, I would like to understand why some examiners pass things that don't comply?*

- Interestingly, some 70% of those who say the Boat Owners are present at the exam about half the time, feel this pressure.
- 38% admit that they sometimes feel uncomfortable if they have to fail a boat. This is higher (48%) amongst those that see the income as a significant source of revenue.
- 50% of all Examiners also believe that the majority of boat owners see the examination as an inconvenience and are only interested in the Certification (67% in the East Midlands and 63% in the North – see “pressure” question above). 78% of those who do around 1 exam per week think this too.

## **The Survey**

- 88% are happy that the survey covered issues which are important to them, up +5 points on the score from 2018. Scores are very consistent across all the demographic groups ranging from 71% to 100%.
- An open-ended question prompted people to make suggestions for other questions they felt were “missing from the survey”. 28 people wrote a valid comment here (29% uptake). There was, however, no ‘big issue’ that was deemed to have been overlooked. Although a handful of people would have liked to explore the fairness of the cost of the Examination Certificate.
- Whilst people’s satisfaction with the content of the questionnaire has got better, there is slightly lower belief that the results will be presented back openly (74% down from 84%).
- Worse still, just 36% of Examiners believe the survey will lead to positive changes for Examiners. This has fallen from 45% in 2018 and is clear evidence that the lack of follow-through action from the previous survey has affected the level of trust in the project. There is significantly less belief that things will change for the better amongst the longer serving Examiners (19% for those with 20+ years’ experience) and for those in the West Midlands (also 19%).



## The #1 Change You Would Suggest

- There was an open-ended question asking; “if you were in charge of the Boat Safety Scheme, what would be the number 1 change you would make to improve things significantly for Examiners?”.
- 76 people wrote a response here (an uptake of 79% - a touch above the rate from last time, and the highest for any of the open-ended questions in the survey).
- Issues related to the ECP came out as the most mentioned theme (30% of comments were under this heading, up +3 points from last time’s 28% - difference is ‘rounding’). Comments on this topic covered issues about specific elements of the ECP process, the documentation, and ideas for improving the way it works to help Examiners.
- 17% of comments were about pricing and the competitive landscape.
- Third in the list were comments about Meetings and Communication, making up 16% of comments – a huge increase from the 5% that this theme generated in 2018. Potentially the lack of contact and connection during lockdown has made people crave this side of things slightly more.
- Some example comments are below, with the full list made available separately.

All Comment Theme Codes		2021	2021	2020	YOY
rank	main theme	number of comments	% of all comments	% of all comments	change in % points
1	ECP - processes, procedures, technology	23	30%	28%	3%
2	Competitive landscape - number of examiners, costs, fees	13	17%	18%	-1%
3	Meetings and Communication	12	16%	5%	11%
4	BSS Office and Support	9	11%	11%	0%
5	Examiner Standards and Performance	8	11%	18%	-8%
6	Training, database and FAQ	7	9%	15%	-6%
7	other, incl no comment	4	5%	5%	0%
	<b>All Comments</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

*Find a way to reduce the overly wordy and potentially confusing ECP documentation.*

*Make it easier to apply the ECP by reducing grey areas and/or giving better training to reduce the grey areas. Including detailed*

*App with everything build into it including ECP, certification and latest info*

*Create consistency between the ECP's and the system. Frankly, the problem with systems is "crap in = crap out"*

*And from the time I spend looking at the system there is a lot of poor quality data in it.*



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*Fix the price , the basic certificate cost is now too high , if you spend 2-3 hours on a boat at a workshop rate of £50 ish an hour plus vat it should be circa £250 plus travel plus retest way too much Too many examiners are early retired adding a bit extra to big pensions kick off anybody shown to be charging too little better still employ the examiners you charge the boater and pay the examiner*

*Set fees . 0-20 feet. 20-30 feet. 30-45feet. 45-60feet. 60+ feet each with a sub category*

*1. Gas. 2. Inboard 3.outboard 4. Mains electricity.*

*Better appreciation of BSS Examiners workload at certain times of the year. Better and more timely communication for BSS Examiner re-registration for 1st April 2021. The notification for re-registration was only received tonight (26th March 2021), with a deadline to complete 30th March 2021. This shows how the office are mismanaging processes since the introduction of new support staff members.*

*(Outside of a pandemic), gather all examiners annually or bi-annually to a conference/forum to air views , soundboard, update on what's happening, future changes, presentations on changing technology/components etc.*

*Add the cost of certification to the license cost and start supporting examiners. Currently there is no real support structure. The BSS office claim to support examiners, how can that be if you can never get a telephone call answered?*

*Made to feel we are partners with the main office instead of feeling more like customers to be exploited.*

*A paperless system as well as frequent and formal appraisals of the examiners work would I believe improve things and create a two-way conversation between examiners and the office.*

*Allowance & support for more examiner discretion. It's become a tick box system which works for vehicle MOT's where vehicles are mass produced to a set design and are type approved. Boats are often home made, owner completed or built by so called professionals who self certify the product. There needs to be more information out there about what is expected. A much quicker response from the office is needed with grey areas.*

*As an older examiner I was once told by the then Manager "we're going to get bad press from this, if it's 50/50 for Christ's sake pass it" after a complaint from a customer about me being over zealous.*

*Instil some sort of professionalism via a proper professional body. Membership of this body should not be by a telephone call or form filling but rather by proven knowledge and CPD. Similar to Gas Safe, NICEIC etc.*



### **Best Things About Working With The BSS**

- There was an open-ended question asking; “What are the best 3 things about working with the BSS?”. 71 people wrote a response here (an uptake of 74%, also very slightly up on 2018).
- There were actually 4 very clear factors which rose to the top of the list of best things; relationships with boat owners, the sense of creating a safe boating environment, the pure love of boating/the outdoors and the waterways, and the fact that the role gave people flexibility to work in the way they wanted. About three quarters of all comments fell into these four categories.
- The first three were also the top 3 back in 2018. However, the flexibility theme – which generated 17% of all comments this time around, was only responsible for 5% of comments last time around.
- Example comments are given below, with a full list supplied separately.

Aggregate of All Comment Theme Codes (1-2-3)		2021	2021	2020	YOY
rank	main theme	number of comments	% of all comments	% of all comments	change in % points
1	People - Boat Owners	38	23%	27%	-4%
2	Safety related issues	36	22%	27%	-5%
3	Just love boats, water, the outdoors, travel	28	17%	20%	-3%
4	Flexibility of work, money	28	17%	5%	12%
5	Challenge of the job	16	10%	11%	-1%
6	People - the BSS Office/team/support/Other Examiners	15	9%	5%	4%
7	other comments, no comment, negative	3	2%	5%	-3%
<b>All Comments</b>		<b>164</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

*Meeting fellow boaters in the boating community Helping boaters with potential safety issues.*

*Being a respected professional on the waterways.*

*Spending time talking with other boaters. Helping boaters understand the error of their ways.*

*Getting out and about around the canal and river system whilst being paid....win, win*

*Being out and about meeting boaters and examining boats. Seeing different and varying boats.*

*The appreciation of boaters when faults are found that they have missed.*

*Promotion of safety, being part of a recognised body employed to improve safety.*

*Increasing customer knowledge and understanding about safety*



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*You can be proud that you are keeping boaters, boats, and the waterways safe.*

*You meet interesting people.*

*You have a good source of income*

*Educating the public / boat owners on safety checks and why we do them. Identifying safety issues then returning and witnessing the safety improvements Everyday is a school day, no two boats are identical, can be challenging and satisfying work.*

*1; Travelling to different locations on the waterways to carry out my job.*

*2; Meeting / liaising with boat owners and a feeling that I have helped prevent accidents, loss of property & life.*

*3; I feel a sense of pride being an examiner.*

*Visiting other peoples boats and moorings. Vast variety of craft, which I find interesting.*

*Being technically competent and experienced, I find it an easy job to do part-time, having retired from other full-time occupations.*

*Being my own man. Generally dealing with nice people.*

*Nice working environment by the riverside.*

*Pride , self employed , keeping boats safe*

*1) Doing something of value [I have definitely saved lives!]*

*2) Meeting interesting & entertaining boaters.*

*3) I can do/ not do the job as & I when I desire.*