Session 1E: Tues 5th March, 9:30 – 10:00

IELTS One Skill Retake: Learnings from a new delivery mode

Reza Tasviri
IDP Education Ltd, Australia

Chair
Reza Tasviri
IDP Education Ltd, Australia

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IELTS

IELTS One Skills Retake: Learnings from a new delivery mode

Reza Tasviri, IDP

Emma Bruce, British Council

Tony Clark, Cambridge English

APAIE, Perth, 05 March 2024

With thanks to:

- Hye-won Lee, Cambridge English
- Jan Langeslag, British Council

IELTS One Skill Retake

- We have been listening to stakeholder and test taker **feedback**

- IELTS One Skill Retake allows test takers to **retake one section** of their IELTS test

- IELTS One Skill Retake test must be **within 60 days** of the original test

- Available **once per full IELTS test**

- A **valid** and **secure** solution you can trust. Result can be verified online.

Test Takers have asked… we have listened!

"It does not seem practical or logical that applicants need to re-do all components of the test if they fail in one area and consistently pass others."

"Not only is it expensive and frustrating, it adds unnecessary time and focus on re-doing areas that have already been passed."

IELTS One Skill Retake test format options

The tests are the same length and format

➤ Same **format and timing** as that section of the full IELTS test

➤ Same **marking and scoring procedures** as the full IELTS test

➤ Same **underlying validity evidence and checks** in place:

- ✓ Material produced to rigorous test construction guidelines
- ✓ Pre-testing and calibration
- ✓ Reliability measures
- ✓ Test statistics
- ✓ Research activities

IELTS Security protocols apply to One Skill Retake

➢ IELTS One Skill Retake is **not available for IELTS Online**

➢ IELTS One Skill retake is **only available** via official **IELTS test centres**

➢ IELTS One Skill Retake is delivered via the **same platform** we use in our test centres to deliver four skills test

➢ Test takers sitting a One Skill Retake test undergo the **same multilayered security processes** as test takers undertaking the full four skills test experience

This test taker took **IELTS** a number of times in a 5 month period, Overall score is consistent throughout & level is clearly 5.5. Subscores varied between 4.5 & 6

Overall bandscore is more reliable than subscores

Given name	L	R	W	S	Overall
RAMZI	5.5	5	6	5.5	5.5
RAMZI	5.5	5.5	5	5.5	5.5
RAMZI	6	5.5	5.5	4.5	5.5

This test taker took **IELTS** a number of times in a 2 month period,

Given name	L	R	W	S	Overall
LEE	7.5	8	5.5	7	7
LEE	8	7.5	7	6.5	7.5
LEE	7.5	8	7.5	7	7.5

Retesting can produce variations in subscores

Today's focus

- Overview of OSR
- Theoretical consideration for the validity of OSR
- Overview of existing research
- Preliminary research into One Skill Retake
- Key takeaways

Theoretical considerations

Context

- Bias for best approach
- Key test score users set component-level requirements
- Test taker ability defined by their lowest score in a single skill
- Some test takers retaking the test multiple times in quick succession

One Skill Retake

Test fairness

- Avoidance of the effects of any *construct-irrelevant factors* on the entire testing process (Walters, 2022)

  - E.g., in Weir's (2005) socio-cognitive framework: physical/physiological, psychological, and experiential characteristics of the test taker

  - E.g., in Kunnan's (2008) Test Fairness Framework: 1) validity, 2) absence of bias, **3) access**, 4) administration, and **5) social consequences**

- One Skill Retake: promoting positive effects of retesting by reducing construct-irrelevant variance (e.g., due to anxiety, unfamiliarity with the test and/or testing situation) (Lievens et al., 2005)

How long does it take to learn a language?

- Language learning is a very complex construct; is non-linear, i.e. dynamic, non-uniform and not predictable (Larsen-Freeman 1997)

- Many different contributing dimensions (learner-related and external): motivation, proficiency level, aptitude, learning strategies, learning context, age

- No one-size-fits-all answer; unique to the individual

- No unanimous agreement as to number of hours needed to increase language proficiency

Turning to the literature to answer this question

Second language acquisition (SLA)

"After some 40 years of disciplinary history, we know little about the longitudinal pace and pattern of development in second language and literacy"

Ortega and Byrnes, 2009

Repeat test taking / test retest

"When assessments are conducted digitally, it becomes very much easier to keep track of individual and group test performance over time"

Green & Van Moere, 2020

Test preparation

Separating effects of test practice from changes in L2 ability (construct of interest) is challenging.

Relevant IELTS Research Reports

Investigating the relationship between intensive English language study and band score gain on IELTS

Researchers: Catherine Elder, Kieran O'Loughlin

Date Published: 14th April 2003

Topics: Impact and Washback - Improvement in test scores

Download Report

Investigation of relationships between learner background, linguistic progression and score gain on IELTS

Researchers: Okim Kang, Hyunkee Ahn, Kate Yaw, Soh-Yon Chung

Date Published: 1st March 2021

Topics: IELTS Test - Speaking; Impact and Washback - Improvement in test scores; Impact and Washback - Performance data of candidates and IELTS

Download Report

- 3-month period; n=112; Australia & NZ
- 75% score gains; 25% no change; 5% decrease
- Average overall score gain: 0.598
- Biggest score gain in Listening (0.781); smallest in Reading (0.402)
- Score gains decrease as proficiency increases

- 3-month period; n=52; Korea
- 60% notable score gains (half or full band)
- Average overall score gain: 0.3
- Biggest score gain in Writing; smallest in Speaking
- Potential predictors of score gain: hours of study and proficiency level

Approaches to scoring / retakes

Recent developments

Recent rise in test takers repeatedly taking standardised language tests (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL, PTE) originally intended to be one-shot tests

Testing organisations tend to have short mandatory waiting times for repeating tests

'This repeated, serial assessment approach is at odds with the concept of a single-instance test score interpretation. In theory, candidates should wait until real proficiency gains have been made; in practice, and particularly when facilitated by computerised tests with large item banks and frequent test administration dates, candidates re-test every other week when they have the means to do so'.

Van Moere and Hanlon (2020)

Approaches to scoring / retakes

TTs not happy with their score can apply to retake whole test as soon as they feel ready (up to 13 days for paper version) or can do a One Skill Retake.

- **IELTS**

Most restrictive conditions: TTs must wait a minimum of one month to repeat whole test.

- **Trinity**

TTs cannot take TOEFL iBT more than once in a 3-day period (shorter than 6 to 10-day timeframe in which results are delivered). MyBest™ scores.

- **ETS (TOEFL iBT)**

Second chance resit option (Take2) for Spoken or Written paper within 14 days of original test (TTs must have achieved minimum scores)

- **LanguageCert SELT**

Preliminary research into One Skill Retakes

Research aims

- Identify characteristics of test-takers who choose to take IELTS One Skill Retake in terms of demographics and patterns of full IELTS and One Skill Retake tests

- Examine what contributes (or does not contribute) to variability in One Skill Retake scores

- Understand the perception of test takers and receiving organisations to One Skill Retake

Test taker questionnaire

Online questionnaire and interviews

Questionnaire

- August 2023 and onwards
- Closed and open-ended questions
- Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis

Interviews

- Intended to expand on questions in questionnaire

Important to note: *the survey was sent to respondents <u>after</u> they had received their One Skill Retake result. This introduces some bias in the results as the respondents may be reacting to their score outcome rather than their experiences with different aspects of the One Skill Retake in a more holistic way.*

Demographics

- Sample used here:
- Tests sat in 18 different countries
- 31.6% female, 37% male, 31.4% prefer not to say
- 60.4% were 26+ years old, no minors

Time period between full test and retake

How much time did you have between taking the full (4 skills) IELTS and One Skill Retake?
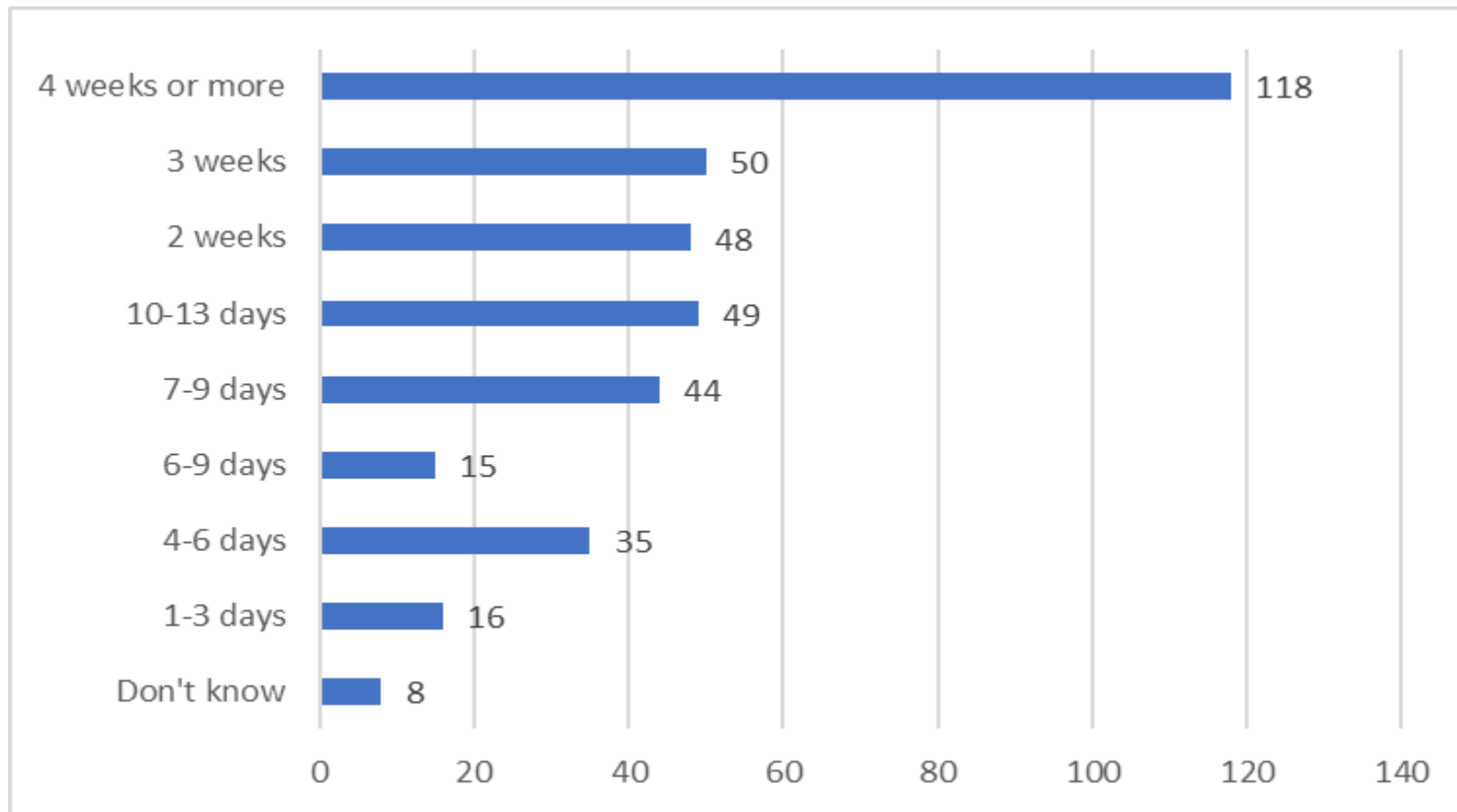
Time period between the two tests

Academic (n = 10,106)		General Training (n = 4,192)	
Component	Average Days to OSR ▼	Component	Average Days to OSR ▼
S	29.20	W	31.63
W	27.83	S	29.33
R	25.56	L	26.17
L	24.88	R	26.05
Total	**27.00**	**Total**	**28.26**

Reason for time period

What was your main reason for this time between taking full (4 skills) IELTS and One Skill Retake?	
Allow time for me to prepare	82
Availability of test dates	69
Other	13

Other:

- Own schedule
- Urgency of immigration application
- Thought maximum was 30 days
- Waiting for Enquiry on Results of original test

Test taker perceptions and feedback
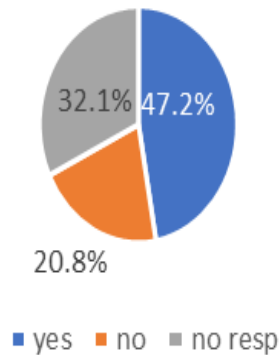
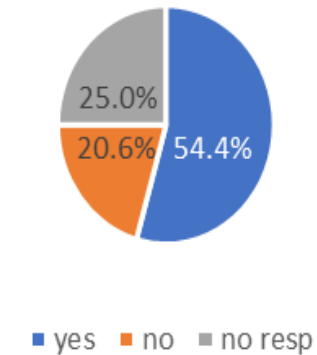# Did you achieve your desired score on Academic OSR?

AC Listening (n=48)
- 68.8% yes
- 16.7% no
- 14.6% no resp

AC Reading (n=92)
- 41.3% yes
- 18.5% no
- 40.2% no resp

AC Writing (n=106)
- 47.2% yes
- 20.8% no
- 32.1% no resp
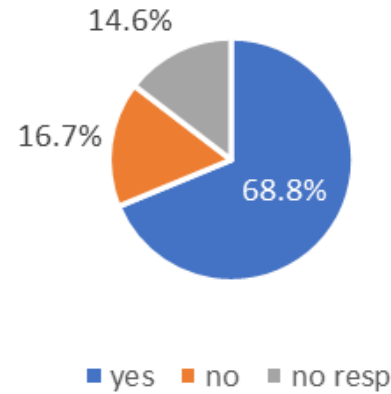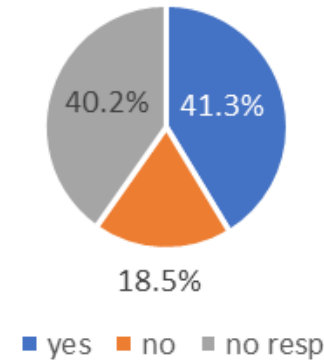
AC Speaking (n=68)
- 54.4% yes
- 20.6% no
- 25.0% no resp

Did you achieve your desired score on GT OSR?

GT Listening (n=10)

0.0%

20.0%

80.0%

- yes - no - no resp

GT Reading (n=27)

11.1%

29.6%

59.3%

- yes - no - no resp

GT Writing (n=25)

32.0%

36.0%

32.0%

- yes - no - no resp

GT Speaking (n=7)

14.3%

0.0%

85.7%

- yes - no - no resp
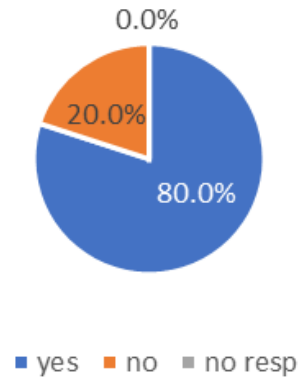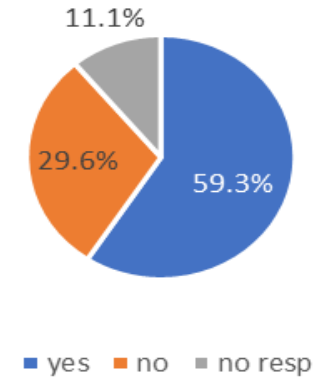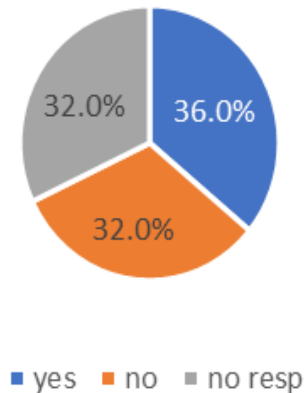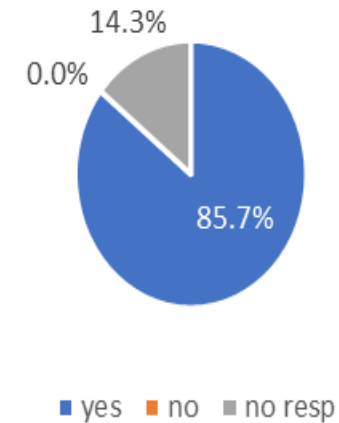
Why did you not receive your desired score initially?

Top responses	freq.
Lack of practice / preparation	48
Time management	29
Lack of test familiarity	26
Stress / confidence	17
Unfair examiner	13
Fatigue / lack of focus	12
Familiarity w computer-based format	10
Distraction by environment	9

What was your main reason for taking One Skill Retake?

- Approx 97% for higher score / didn't achieve expected score:
  - 9% specifically mentioned immigration / visa purpose
  - 3% specifically mentioned work / study

*For master degree I required to have **at least 6.5 in each module**, but unfortunately **in the first attempt I got 5.5 in reading**. However, in others I scored above 6.5. So that was the main for choosing IELTS OSR for reading.*

*Had to get **all 8s for immigration purposes** and **don't want to spend $450 on the whole test** again*

- Approx 2% reported a reason for not achieving desired score:

*The main reason to attempt the test again was **a small disturbance during the test. I was unable to perform well** in the test, so it made me to take the test again.*
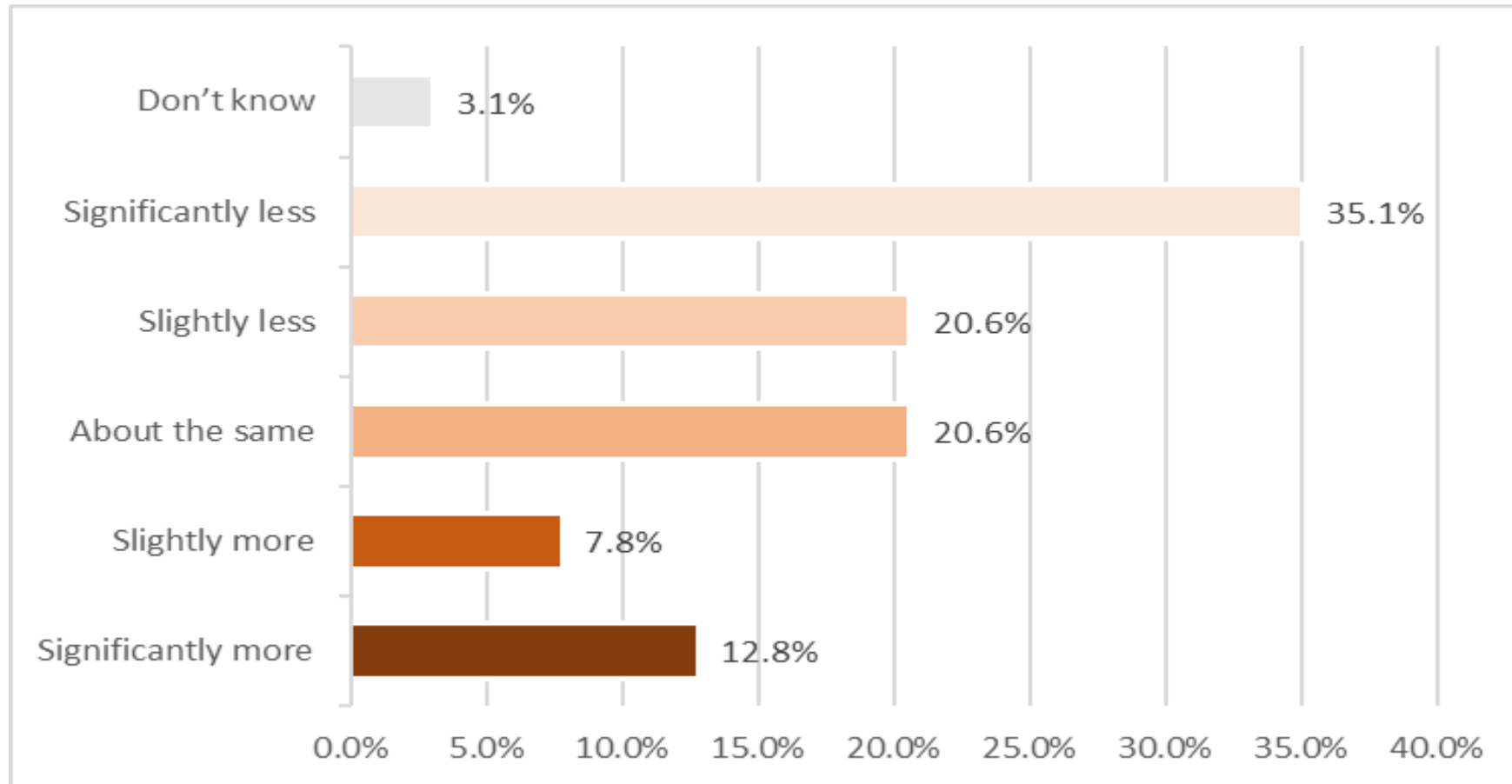
***I forgot to enter the answers into the computer directly**, choosing to write them on the given page, and discovered that **the last two minutes were insufficient to fill the answers**.*

Did you receive your required score for OSR?
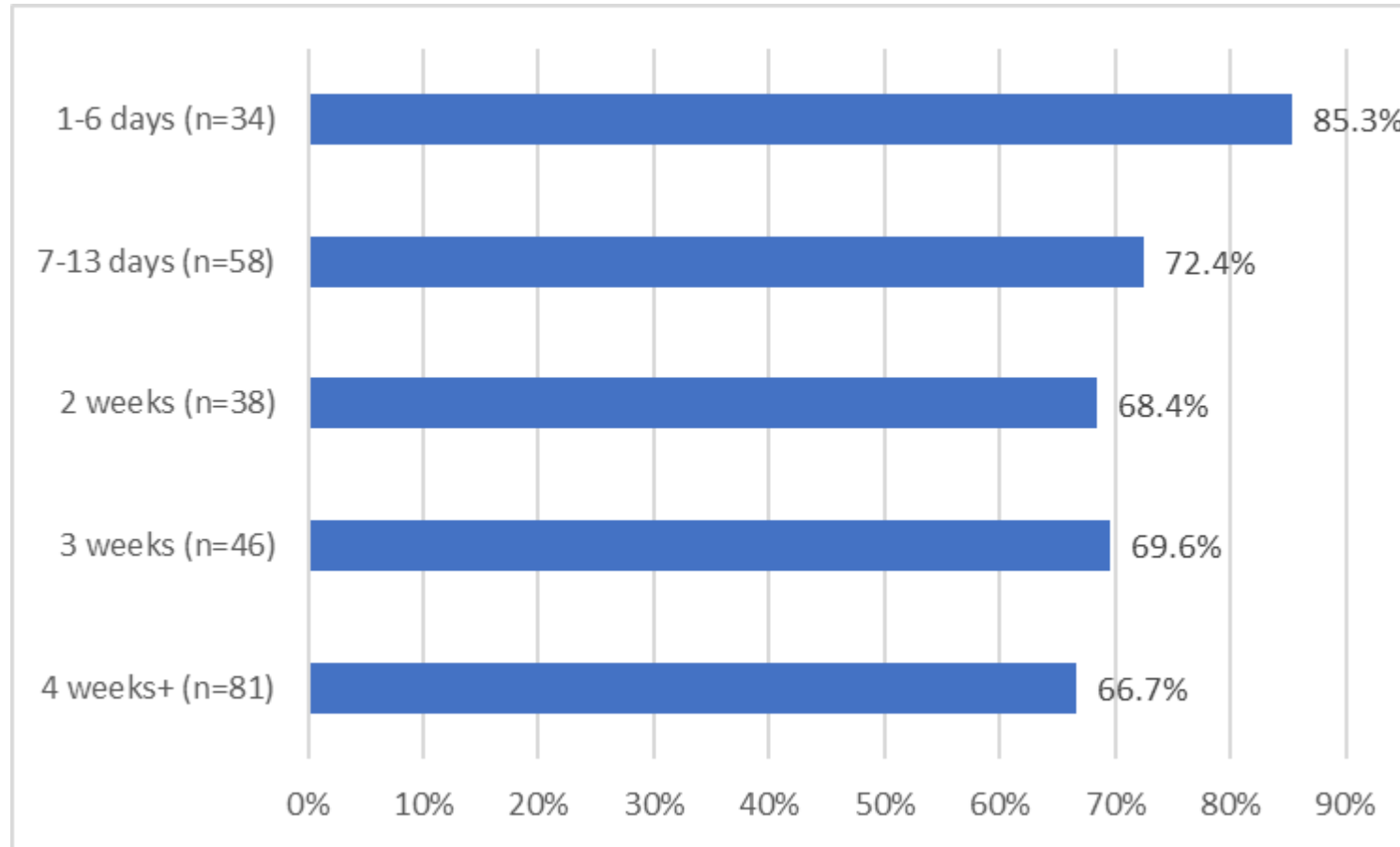
Preparation time

How much time did spend preparing for the One Skill Retake compared to taking the full (4 skills) IELTS?

Positive perceptions

Theme	frequency
Focus on 1 skill only	31
Saves time	20
Relieve stress	17
Saves cost	13

"When you undertake only 1 skill test, you have higher energy and concentration."

"Additional costs are required, but it significantly alleviates mental stress."

"If there wasn't OSR, I wouldn't have decided to retake a full test again because it was exhausting."

the main reason why I have rated OSR one with those high high marks, because when I was giving the OSR test that gives me the edge that I now I had to only focus on one component which which basically you know lags behind a little bit in terms of my result in terms of my complete result.
So yeah, that's that's what my honest opinion is

Positive perceptions

- Saves money
- Saves time
- Easier to focus
- Easier to prepare
- Less stress
- Less tiring

When you undertake only 1 skill test, you have **higher energy and concentration**. When you undertake 4 modules one after another in 4 hours continuously, by the time of writing test there is almost no energy and it is **not easy to keep the same level of concentration.**

It allows me **to focus on my weakness skill** and not necessarily to redo other parts and **much cheaper.**

Recommendations in questionnaire

Theme	freq.
Too expensive	56
Wider acceptance	27
Provide feedback	18
More availability test dates	12
Would like more than 1 retake attempt	8
Retake should be easier than full test	7
Don't mix test takers sitting different skills	5
Do not mention OSR on certificate	5
Believes OSR is more difficult than full test	4
Be able to send results directly to ROs	4

"The price of the OSR is really high, which may discourage people from taking it."

"...the time given for retest practically not an enough time to raise the level of English skills."

Interviews

Test taker interviews (n=17)

Majority were aware their original test was not optimal before they received their results

- Easier to prepare
- Adapted preparation methods (based on full test experience)
- Helpful to only take one skill

"I would recommend if they know exactly what went wrong in the exam."

Interviews with higher education professionals (n=4)

Overwhelmingly positive

*"The profile of our market means **the cost implications of a complete retest can be prohibitive**. This is a good compromise."*

Professor, Associate Dean of School of Business

*"**students sometimes simply haven't familiarised themselves well enough with the requirements of those sections**.... we therefore welcome the option to sit just the one area where they haven't met our minimum entry criteria."*

Director of Academic Development and Training for International Students

*"We are excited. We see **many students with half a band below the requirement in one skill**."*

Head of Internationalisation

Early trends in score changes

Test Taker Characteristics – Demographics

- **Age**

	Frequency - Academic		Frequency - General	
< 21	1,055	16.0%	22	0.7%
21 - 25	2,470	37.4%	356	10.9%
26 - 35	2,269	34.4%	1,965	60.0%
> 35	805	12.2%	934	28.5%
Total	6,599		3,277	

Test Taker Characteristics – Demographics

- **Gender**

	Frequency - Academic		Frequency - General	
Female	2,400	36.4%	1,056	32.2%
Male	2,499	37.9%	1,548	47.2%
	1,700	25.8%	673	20.5%
Total	6,599		3,277	

OSR test taker overall band scores

	Academic		General Training	
~ 5.0 (≈ B1)	429	4.2%	520	12.4%
5.5 ~ 6.5 (≈ B2)	5,959	59.0%	1,741	41.5%
7.0 ~ 7.5 (≈ C1)	2,816	27.9%	1,308	31.2%
8.0 ~ (≈ C2)	902	8.9%	623	14.9%
Total	10,106		4,192	

Percentage of test takers retaking each skill

(15%)

(35%)

(17%)

(32%)

OSR Component
- Writing
- Reading
- Speaking
- Listening
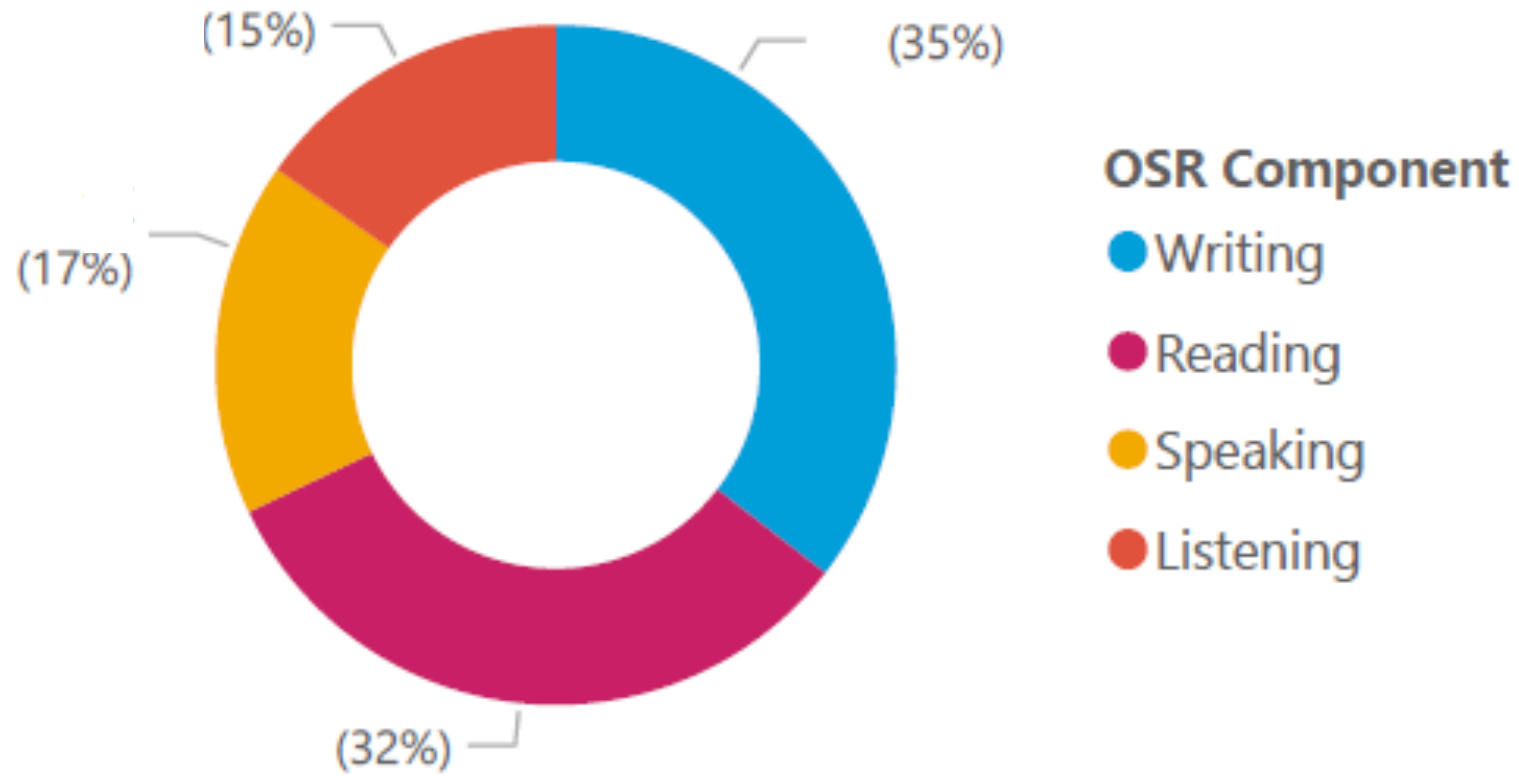
Percentage of test takers retaking each skill

Academic (*n* = 10,106)

4K (35%)
2K (17%)
(21%)
3K (28%)
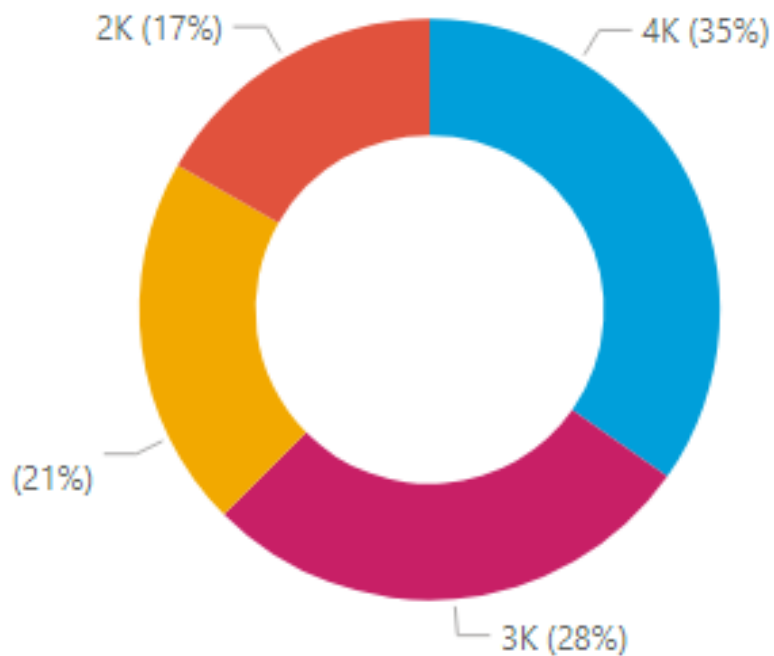
COMPONENT
- W
- R
- S
- L

General Training (*n* = 4,192)

2K (41%)
1K (14%)
(15%)
1K (31%)
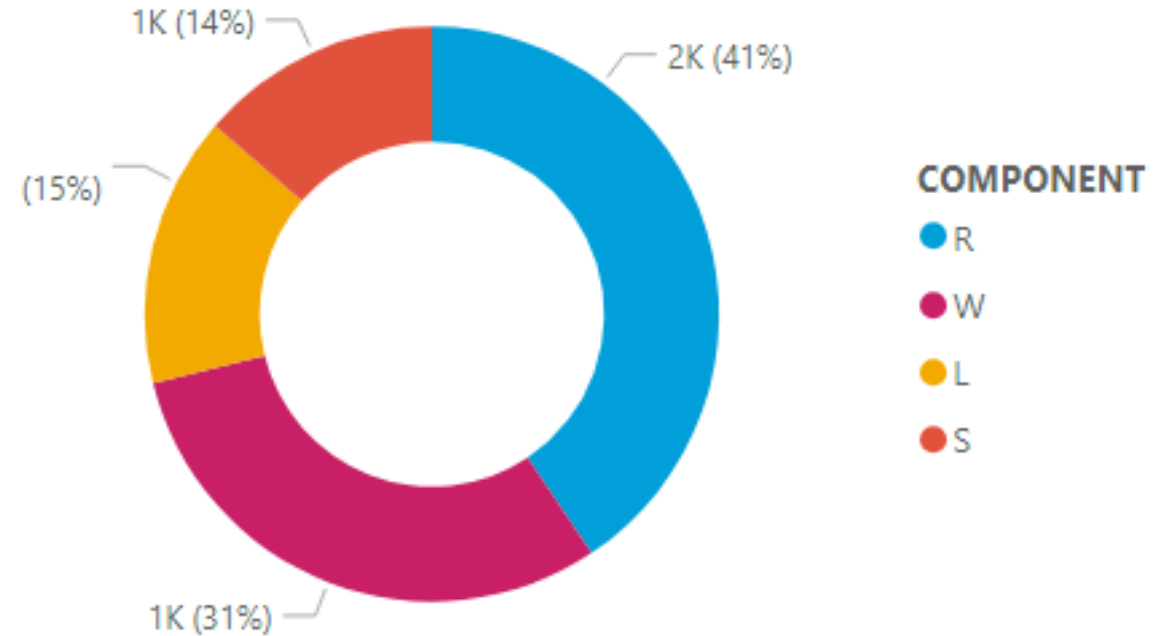
COMPONENT
- R
- W
- L
- S

Test Taker Characteristics – Demographics

- **Overall band scores**

	Frequency - Academic		Frequency - General	
~ 5.0	347	4.0%	437	11.6%
5.5 ~ 6.5	5,138	58.5%	1,566	41.7%
7.0 ~ 7.5	2,493	28.4%	1,186	31.6%
8.0 ~	801	9.1%	568	15.1%
Total	8,779		3,757	

Score change by skill

Score change in each skill by percentage of test takers in 2023 (n=approx. 4,000)

	-1.00	**-0.50**	**0.00**	**0.50**	**1.00**
Listening		0.65%	52.93%	45.11%	1.30%
Reading		2.08%	63.02%	34.21%	0.69%
Speaking		3.76%	68.02%	27.93%	0.29%
Writing	0.70%	3.33%	77.38%	19.15%	0.70%

Overall Band Score – Frequency Distribution
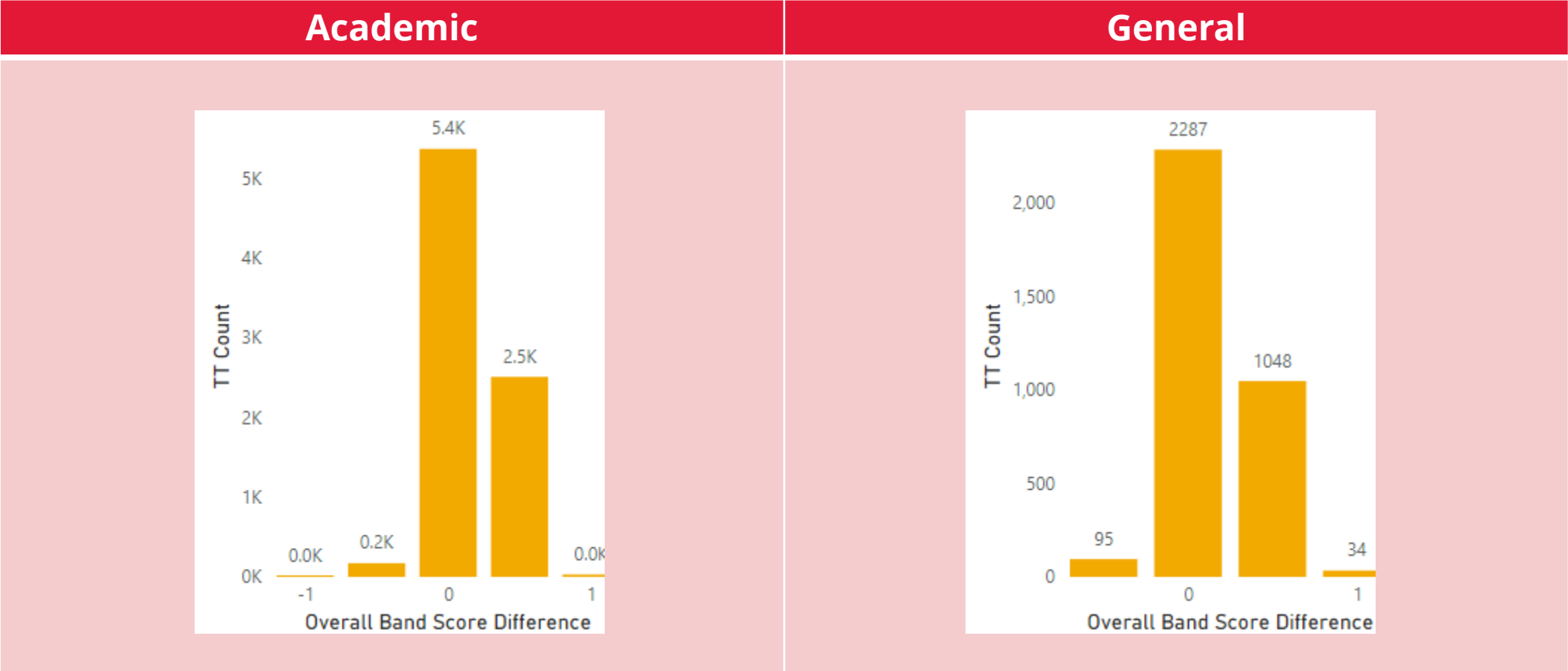
Summary

- Generally positive perceptions from test takers and early positive views from university personnel

- 60 - 70% of test takers improve their score

- 20 - 30% of test takers maintain the same score

- Research currently underway to investigate relationship between what test takers do in the period between full test and One Skill Retake

- Expanded dataset from global rollout will increase understanding of regional patterns

3 key takeaways

➢ IELTS One Skill Retake is **secure** and **valid**, enabling you to offer **more flexibility** without compromising on the quality

➢ Governments, Universities, and assessing authorities **already trust and use it**

➢ You need to **register with IELTS** to receive and verify IELTS One Skill Retake results

Organisations accepting IELTS One Skill Retake results

Receiving and verifying IELTS One Skill Retake Results

You must register to receive and verify One Skill Retake results

Thank you!

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Any questions?

Reza.Tasviri@idp.com

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