



Institute for  
Interlaboratory Studies

**Results of Proficiency Test  
Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl  
Substances (PFAS) in Textile  
March 2024**

**Organized by:** Institute for Interlaboratory Studies  
Spijkenisse, the Netherlands

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**CONTENTS**

1	INTRODUCTION .....	3
2	SET UP .....	3
2.1	QUALITY SYSTEM.....	3
2.2	PROTOCOL.....	4
2.3	CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT .....	4
2.4	SAMPLES .....	4
2.5	ANALYZES .....	5
3	RESULTS .....	6
3.1	STATISTICS .....	6
3.2	GRAPHICS .....	7
3.3	Z-SCORES .....	7
4	EVALUATION .....	8
4.1	EVALUATION PER SAMPLE AND PER COMPONENT .....	8
4.2	PERFORMANCE EVALUATION FOR THE GROUP OF LABORATORIES.....	9
4.3	COMPARISON OF THE PROFICIENCY TEST OF MARCH 2024 WITH PREVIOUS PTS.....	10
4.4	EVALUATION OF THE ANALYTICAL DETAILS.....	10
5	DISCUSSION.....	11
6	CONCLUSION .....	12

## Appendices:

1.	Data, statistical and graphical results .....	13
2.	Other reported test results .....	17
3.	Analytical Details.....	19
4.	Number of participants per country.....	20
5.	Abbreviations and literature .....	21

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) is an important representative of the substance group of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS). The hazard profile of PFOA is well-known: PFOA is a persistent, bio accumulative and toxic substance, which may cause severe and irreversible adverse effects on the environment and human health. PFOA was the first PFAS to be identified as substance of very high concern (SVHC) under REACH by unanimous agreement between EU Member States in 2014. Besides PFOA also other fluorinated substances have properties of concern. Perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) is listed as persistent organic pollutant (POP) in Annex B of the Stockholm Convention, implemented now by Regulation (EU) 2019/1021. In July 2020 regulation EU 2020/784 was implemented for PFOA and its related compounds.

In addition to mandatory environmental standards and requirements for textiles, some Eco-labelling schemes are imposing environmental requirements for textile products on a voluntary basis, e.g. Bluesign® system substances list (Switzerland) and OEKO-TEX® Standard 100 (Switzerland).

Since 2017 the Institute for Interlaboratory Studies (iis) organizes a proficiency scheme for the determination of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in Textile every year. During the annual proficiency testing program of 2024 it was decided to continue the proficiency test for the determination of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in Textile.

In this interlaboratory study 47 laboratories in 16 countries registered for participation, see appendix 4 for the number of participants per country. In this report the results of the Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in Textile proficiency test are presented and discussed.

## 2 SET UP

The Institute for Interlaboratory Studies (iis) in Spijkenisse, the Netherlands, was the organizer of this proficiency test (PT). Sample analyzes for fit-for-use and homogeneity testing were subcontracted to a laboratory that has performed the tests in accordance with for ISO/IEC17043 relevant requirements of ISO/IEC17025.

It was decided to send two different textile samples of 3 grams each labelled #24520 and #24521 respectively.

The participants were requested to report rounded and unrounded test results. The unrounded test results were preferably used for statistical evaluation.

### 2.1 QUALITY SYSTEM

The Institute for Interlaboratory Studies in Spijkenisse, the Netherlands, has implemented a quality system based on ISO/IEC17043:2010. This ensures strict adherence to protocols for sample preparation and statistical evaluation and 100% confidentiality of participant's data. Feedback from the participants on the reported data is encouraged and customer's satisfaction is measured on regular basis by sending out questionnaires.

## 2.2 PROTOCOL

The protocol followed in the organization of this proficiency test was the one as described for proficiency testing in the report 'iis Interlaboratory Studies: Protocol for the Organisation, Statistics and Evaluation' of June 2018 (iis-protocol, version 3.5). This protocol is electronically available through the iis website [www.iisnl.com](http://www.iisnl.com), from the FAQ page.

## 2.3 CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

All data presented in this report must be regarded as confidential and for use by the participating companies only. Disclosure of the information in this report is only allowed by means of the entire report. Use of the contents of this report for third parties is only allowed by written permission of the Institute for Interlaboratory Studies. Disclosure of the identity of one or more of the participating companies will be done only after receipt of a written agreement of the companies involved.

## 2.4 SAMPLES

For the preparation of the first sample a batch of gray cotton pieces was selected which was made positive on PFOA by a third-party. After homogenization 55 small plastic bags were filled with approximately 3 grams each and labelled #24520.

The batch for sample #24520 was used in a previous proficiency test on Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in Textile (as sample #17536 in iis17A05). Therefore, homogeneity of the subsamples was assumed.

For the preparation of the second sample a batch of green viscose was selected which was made positive on PFOS by a third-party. This batch was cut into small pieces. After homogenization 55 small plastic bags were filled with approximately 3 grams each and labelled #24521.

The homogeneity of the subsamples was checked by determination of total PFOS using an in house method on 7 stratified randomly selected subsamples.

	Total PFOS in mg/kg
sample #24521-1	23.98
sample #24521-2	23.55
sample #24521-3	23.59
sample #24521-4	25.38
sample #24521-5	22.91
sample #24521-6	24.02
sample #24521-7	26.09

Table 1: homogeneity test results of subsamples #24521

From the above test results the repeatability was calculated and compared with 0.3 times the estimated reproducibility calculated with the Horwitz equation in agreement with the procedure of ISO13528, Annex B2 in the next table.

	Total PFOS in mg/kg
r (observed)	3.13
reference method	Horwitz (3 comp)
0.3 x R (reference method)	3.49

Table 2: evaluation of the repeatability of subsamples #24521

The calculated repeatability is in agreement with 0.3 times the estimated reproducibility calculated with the Horwitz equation. Therefore, homogeneity of the subsamples was assumed.

To each of the participating laboratories two textile samples labelled #24520 and #24521 respectively were sent on February 14, 2024.

## 2.5 ANALYZES

The participants were requested to determine on both samples #24520 and #24521:

Perfluorooctanoic acid (Total PFOA)  
 Perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (Total PFOS)  
 Perfluorononanoic acid (Total PFNA)  
 Perfluorodecanoic acid (Total PFDA)  
 Perfluorobutanesulfonic acid (Total PFBS)  
 Perfluorooctadecanoic acid (Total PFODA)  
 Perfluorododecanoic acid (Total PFDoA)  
 Other Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances

To ensure homogeneity it was requested not to use less than 0.5 gram per determination. It was also requested to report if the laboratory was accredited for the determined components and to report some analytical details.

It was explicitly requested to treat the samples as if they were routine samples and to report the test results using the indicated units on the report form and not to round the test results, but report as much significant figures as possible. It was also requested not to report 'less than' test results, which are above the detection limit, because such test results cannot be used for meaningful statistical evaluations.

To get comparable test results a detailed report form and a letter of instructions are prepared. On the report form the reporting units are given as well as the reference test methods (when applicable) that will be used during the evaluation. The detailed report form and the letter of instructions are both made available on the data entry portal [www.kpmd.co.uk/sgs-iis-cts/](http://www.kpmd.co.uk/sgs-iis-cts/).

The participating laboratories are also requested to confirm the sample receipt on this data entry portal. The letter of instructions can also be downloaded from the iis website [www.iisnl.com](http://www.iisnl.com).

### 3 RESULTS

During five weeks after sample dispatch, the test results of the individual laboratories were gathered via the data entry portal [www.kpmd.co.uk/sgs-iis-cts/](http://www.kpmd.co.uk/sgs-iis-cts/). The reported test results are tabulated per determination in appendices 1 and 2 of this report. The laboratories are presented by their code numbers.

Directly after the deadline, a reminder was sent to those laboratories that had not reported test results at that moment. Shortly after the deadline, the available test results were screened for suspect data. A test result was called suspect in case the Huber Elimination Rule (a robust outlier test) found it to be an outlier. The laboratories that produced these suspect data were asked to check the reported test results (no reanalyzes). Additional or corrected test results are used for data analysis and the original test results are placed under 'Remarks' in the result tables in appendices 1 and 2. Test results that came in after the deadline were not taken into account in this screening for suspect data and thus these participants were not requested for checks.

#### 3.1 STATISTICS

The protocol followed in the organization of this proficiency test was the one as described for proficiency testing in the report 'iis Interlaboratory Studies: Protocol for the Organisation, Statistics and Evaluation' of June 2018 (iis-protocol, version 3.5).

For the statistical evaluation the *unrounded* (when available) figures were used instead of the rounded test results. Test results reported as '<... ' or '>... ' were not used in the statistical evaluation.

First, the normality of the distribution of the various data sets per determination was checked by means of the Lilliefors-test, a variant of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and by the calculation of skewness and kurtosis. Evaluation of the three normality indicators in combination with the visual evaluation of the graphic Kernel density plot, lead to judgement of the normality being either 'unknown', 'OK', 'suspect' or 'not OK'. After removal of outliers, this check was repeated. If a data set does not have a normal distribution, the (results of the) statistical evaluation should be used with due care.

The assigned value is determined by consensus based on the test results of the group of participants after rejection of the statistical outliers and/or suspect data.

According to ISO13528 all (original received or corrected) results per determination were submitted to outlier tests. In the iis procedure for proficiency tests, outliers are detected prior to calculation of the mean, standard deviation and reproducibility. For small data sets, Dixon (up to 20 test results) or Grubbs (up to 40 test results) outlier tests can be used. For larger data sets (above 20 test results) Rosner's outlier test can be used. Outliers are marked by D(0.01) for the Dixon's test, by G(0.01) or DG(0.01) for the Grubbs' test and by R(0.01) for the Rosner's test. Stragglers are marked by D(0.05) for the Dixon's test, by G(0.05) or DG(0.05) for the Grubbs' test and by R(0.05) for the Rosner's test. Both outliers and stragglers were not included in the calculations of averages and standard deviations.

For each assigned value the uncertainty was determined in accordance with ISO13528. Subsequently the calculated uncertainty was evaluated against the respective requirement based on the target reproducibility in accordance with ISO13528. In this PT the criterion of ISO13528, paragraph 9.2.1, was met for all evaluated tests. Therefore, the uncertainty of all assigned values may be negligible and need not be included in the PT report.

Finally, the reproducibilities were calculated from the standard deviations by multiplying them with a factor of 2.8.

### 3.2 GRAPHICS

In order to visualize the data against the reproducibilities from literature, Gauss plots were made, using the sorted data for one determination (see appendix 1). On the Y-axis the reported test results are plotted. The corresponding laboratory numbers are on the X-axis. The straight horizontal line presents the consensus value (a trimmed mean). The four striped lines, parallel to the consensus value line, are the +3s, +2s, -2s and -3s target reproducibility limits of the selected reference test method. Outliers and other data, which were excluded from the calculations, are represented as a cross. Accepted data are represented as a triangle.

Furthermore, Kernel Density Graphs were made. This is a method for producing a smooth density approximation to a set of data that avoids some problems associated with histograms. Also, a normal Gauss curve (dotted line) was projected over the Kernel Density Graph (smooth line) for reference. The Gauss curve is calculated from the consensus value and the corresponding standard deviation.

### 3.3 Z-SCORES

To evaluate the performance of the participating laboratories the z-scores were calculated. As it was decided to evaluate the performance of the participants in this proficiency test (PT) against the literature requirements (derived from e.g. ISO or ASTM test methods), the z-scores were calculated using a target standard deviation. This results in an evaluation independent of the variation in this interlaboratory study.

The target standard deviation was calculated from the literature reproducibility by division with 2.8. In case no literature reproducibility was available, other target values were used, like Horwitz or an estimated reproducibility based on former iis proficiency tests.

When a laboratory did use a test method with a reproducibility that is significantly different from the reproducibility of the reference test method used in this report, it is strongly advised to recalculate the z-score, while using the reproducibility of the actual test method used, this in order to evaluate whether the reported test result is fit-for-use.

The z-scores were calculated according to:

$$Z_{(\text{target})} = (\text{test result} - \text{average of PT}) / \text{target standard deviation}$$

The  $Z_{(\text{target})}$  scores are listed in the test result tables in appendix 1.

Absolute values for  $z < 2$  are very common and absolute values for  $z > 3$  are very rare. Therefore, the usual interpretation of z-scores is as follows:

	$ z  < 1$	good
1 <	$ z  < 2$	satisfactory
2 <	$ z  < 3$	questionable
3 <	$ z $	unsatisfactory

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