

Survey Critique 1b: 2025 DORA Quick Check

The DevOps Research and Assessment (DORA) Quick Check (Google LLC, *DORA Quick Check* 2025) is used by software development teams to quickly evaluate their software delivery performance and compare results with industry benchmarks. The instrument converts categorical responses into a normalized performance score, which can be used to guide improvement efforts, capability investments, and DevOps maturity initiatives.

The appeal of the tool lies in its speed and simplicity. However, a methodological weakness exists in the structural design of some of its closed-ended response scales in which the response categories used to measure core metrics are not mutually exclusive. This violates a basic principle of survey design and introduces unnecessary cognitive burden and measurement error. Ultimately, this can reduce the reliability of the benchmarking outcomes produced by the tool.

The issue is most visible in the survey question that measures delivery velocity (see Appendix A, Question 1). The item asks respondents to estimate their lead time for changes, defined as the time required for code to move from commit to successful deployment in production. Respondents must select one answer from several categorical ranges: One to six months, One week to one month, and One day to one week. In survey design, closed-ended questions should provide response categories that are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. When categories overlap, respondents are forced to interpret the intended meaning of the categories rather than simply report their actual experience.

In the DORA lead time question, the boundaries of the response ranges overlap with adjacent options. For example, if a team's average lead time is exactly one week, it logically fits both categories: One day to one week and One week to one month. This ambiguity creates a situation where respondents must decide how to interpret the scale rather than simply selecting the correct category.

This structural overlap interferes with the cognitive process respondents use when answering survey questions. Research on survey response behavior suggests that individuals generally move through several stages when answering a question: understanding the question, recalling relevant information, forming a judgment, and then selecting the response option that best represents that judgment.

A developer taking the survey may know their team's lead time is about one week. The problem arises when they must fit that estimate into overlapping response options. Because the categories are unclear, respondents cannot confidently pick a single correct answer. Some will treat one week as the lower category (one day to one week), others as the higher (one week to one month). This extra interpretation adds cognitive burden and ambiguity. When categories are ambiguous, two developers on the same team with the same one-week lead time can reasonably choose different responses.

In this case, the variation in responses reflects measurement error, not real differences in performance. Teams may appear better or worse than they truly are simply because respondents interpreted the scale boundaries differently.

A straightforward solution would be to redesign the response categories so that the ranges are clearly defined and non-overlapping. For example, the options could be rewritten: Less than 1 day, 1 day to less than 1 week, 1 week to less than 1 month, and 1 month to 6 months. These ranges establish clear cutoff points and ensure that each possible value fits into one distinct category.

In addition to revising the scale, the survey designers could conduct cognitive testing before deploying the revised instrument. Observing how respondents interpret the new response options would help confirm that the categories are clear and align with how participants naturally think about delivery timelines. Implementing these adjustments would allow the DORA Quick Check to maintain its speed and usability while improving the reliability and accuracy of its benchmarking data.

References

Google LLC. (2025). *DORA Quick Check*. DORA.dev. <https://dora.dev/quickcheck/>

Appendix A: DORA Quick Check

Take the DORA Quick Check

Measure your team's software delivery performance in less than a minute! Compare it to the rest of the industry by responding to four multiple-choice questions. Compare your team's performance to others, and discover which capabilities you should focus on improving. We don't store your answers or personal information.



QUESTION 1 OF 4

Lead time



For the primary application or service you work on, what is your **lead time for changes** (that is, how long does it take to go from code committed to code successfully running in production)?

- ☐ More than six months
- ☐ One to six months
- ☐ One week to one month
- ☐ One day to one week
- ☐ Less than one day
- ☐ Less than one hour

QUESTION 2 OF 4

Deploy frequency



For the primary application or service you work on, **how often does your organization deploy code** to production or release it to end users?

- ☐ Less than once per six months
- ☐ Between once per month and once every six months
- ☐ Between once per week and once per month
- ☐ Between once per day and once per week
- ☐ Between once per hour and once per day
- ☐ On demand (multiple deploys per day)

QUESTION 3 OF 4

Change fail percentage



For the primary application or service you work on, **what percentage of changes to production or released to users result in degraded service** (for example, lead to service impairment or service outage) and subsequently require remediation (for example, require a hotfix, rollback, fix forward or patch)?



QUESTION 4 OF 4

Failed deployment recovery time



For the primary application or service you work on, **how long does it generally take to restore service** after a change to production or release to users results in degraded service (for example, lead to service impairment or service outage) and subsequently requires remediation (for example, require a hotfix, rollback, fix forward, or patch)?

- ☐ More than six months
- ☐ One to six months
- ☐ One week to one month
- ☐ One day to one week
- ☐ Less than one day
- ☐ Less than one hour

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