

Introduction

Background to the FHRs

Under the FHRs, places where food is supplied, sold or consumed are given a rating ranging from 0 to 5, with 5 indicating 'very good' food hygiene and 0 indicating 'urgent improvement necessary'. The ratings are determined by three elements: hygienic food handling; physical condition of the premises and facilities; and food safety management.

Figure 2.1 provides examples of the FHRs stickers currently in use in England and Northern Ireland (left) and Wales (right).

FHRs sticker" data-embed-button="image" data-entity-embed-display="entity_reference:media_thumbnail" data-entity-embed-display-settings="{\"image_style\":\"\", \"image_link\":\"\"}" data-entity-type="media" data-entity-uuid="4edf73e8-e9d8-43e2-a348-3a46ed509b39" data-langcode="en">

In Northern Ireland and Wales, businesses are legally required to display their ratings in a prominent place, like the front door, entrance or window of the business. They are also required to provide information on their rating verbally if requested in person or over the phone. Businesses in England do not have to display their rating at their premises but are encouraged to do so. Across England, Northern Ireland and Wales, [food hygiene ratings are available to search on the FSA's rating website](#).

In Wales, the scheme differs slightly in that it also applies to businesses who sell to businesses, including food manufacturers and wholesalers. Furthermore, takeaways must include a bilingual statement on menu leaflets and flyers which tells customers how to find details of their food hygiene rating on the FSA website.

Research objectives

The FSA has conducted research into the Display of Food Hygiene Ratings in England, Northern Ireland and Wales since 2011. As with the previous waves of the research, the objectives were threefold:

- Provide a representative estimate of the display of food hygiene ratings by food businesses
- Explore the reasons and drivers for display and non-display
- Explore business awareness and attitudes towards the scheme

Methodology

To meet the objectives outlined in the previous section a two-pronged research approach was adopted, consisting of:

1. A covert audit of 1,522 food businesses in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, conducted by Mystery Shopper . [\(footnote 1\)](#)

2. A telephone survey of 1,500 food businesses in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, conducted by IFF Research.

Sampling

For both the audit and telephone survey of food businesses, a sample was drawn from the FSA's FHRS database. The sample included food businesses that sell or serve food to the public from a physical commercial premises and were in receipt of a food hygiene rating following an inspection by a food safety officer.

Food businesses were excluded from the sample if they had not yet been inspected and issued with a food hygiene rating. Food businesses were also excluded if not publicly accessible, a mobile food business or a food business in a residential property. [\(footnote 2\)](#)

The starting sample for the audit and telephone survey of food businesses included the following outlet types:

- Accommodation (for example, hotels, bed & breakfasts, and guest houses)
- Pubs, bars, and nightclubs
- Restaurants, cafes, and canteens
- Retailers (for example, supermarkets, butchers, and bakeries)
- Takeaways and sandwich shops
- Other catering premises (for example, caterers and community centres)

The sample was stratified by country, outlet type, and food hygiene rating to broadly reflect the underlying population. Northern Irish businesses and those with a food hygiene rating of less than three were oversampled to ensure that robust results could be produced for each group.

Audit of food businesses

Pilot

Pilot audit fieldwork was conducted between 21 October and 27 October, 2021, to ensure the questionnaire designed for the audit of food businesses was appropriate ahead of mainstage fieldwork.

In total, 27 audits of food businesses were conducted during the pilot. The questionnaire performed well. However, one minor adjustment was made: a question was added to collect information about the display of food hygiene ratings on food business's websites.

Mainstage

Mainstage audit fieldwork took place between 3 November and 8 December, 2021. In total, 1,522 audits were completed. The final profile of the audits achieved by country, outlet type and food hygiene rating is detailed in Tables 2.1 to 2.3.

Table 2.1 Profile of audited food businesses: Country

Country	Completed audits
England	502
Northern Ireland	505
Wales	515

Table 2.2 Profile of audited food businesses: Outlet type

Outlet type	Completed audits
Accommodation	74
Pubs, bars and nightclubs	216
Restaurants, cafes and canteens	522
Retail	439
Takeaways and sandwich shop	235
Other catering premises	36

Table 2.3 Profile of audited food businesses: Food hygiene rating

Food hygiene rating	Completed audits
0-1	26
2	21
3	136
4	335
5	1,004

Audit results were weighted so that findings were representative of the underlying population of food businesses in terms of outlet type and food hygiene rating within England, Northern Ireland, and Wales. More information on the audit methodology, including sampling and weighting, can be found in the accompanying Technical Report.

Telephone survey

Cognitive testing

To ensure that effective questions were asked, the survey was cognitively tested with food businesses between 14 September and 27 September, 2021. In total 10 cognitive interviews were completed.

The survey performed well during cognitive interviews. There were, however, some questions where potential issues were identified and/or where improvements were recommended by participants. Small changes were therefore made to the questionnaire ahead of pilot fieldwork.

Pilot

A pilot was conducted between 20 October and 22 October, 2021, to ensure the amended questionnaire following cognitive testing flowed well and to check the interview ran to a suitable length.

In total, 50 pilot interviews were completed. There were some further small refinements made to the questionnaire following piloting to improve the clarity of questions asked and to add pre-coded responses that were not previously included.

Mainstage

Mainstage quantitative fieldwork took place between 15 November and 14 December, 2021. In total, 1,500 interviews were completed. The final profile of the interviews achieved by country, outlet type, food hygiene rating and size in terms of employee numbers at the site surveyed is presented in Tables 2.4 to 2.7.

Table 2.4 Profile of mainstage interviews with food businesses: Country

Country	Completed interviews
England	500
Northern Ireland	500
Wales	500

Table 2.5 Profile of mainstage interviews food businesses: Outlet type

Outlet type	Completed interviews
Accommodation	113
Pubs, bars and nightclubs	179
Restaurants, cafes and canteens	531
Retail	399
Takeaways and sandwich shop	197
Other catering premises	81

Table 2.6 Profile of mainstage interviews with food businesses: Food hygiene rating

Food hygiene rating	Completed interviews
0-1	18
2	25
3	111
4	292
5	1,054

Table 2.7 Profile of mainstage interviews with food businesses: Size

Size	Completed interviews
Micro (1-9 employees)	854
Small (10-49 employees)	561
Medium (50-249 employees)	76
Large (250 or more employees)	5
Unknown	4

Survey results from mainstage fieldwork were weighted so that findings were representative of the underlying population of food businesses in terms of outlet type and food hygiene rating within England, Northern Ireland and Wales. More information on the survey methodology, including sampling and weighting, can be found in the accompanying Technical Report.

Reporting conventions

Throughout the report the terms 'business', 'establishment', 'premises' and 'outlet' are used interchangeably to refer to food business sites.

In charts, arrows are used to denote statistically significant differences (upward arrows are used to denote a significant increase and downward arrows are used to denote a significant decrease). In tables statistically significant differences are denoted by asterisks (a single asterisk is used to denote a significant increase and two asterisks are used to denote a significant decrease).

All differences between sub-groups and previous waves of the research stated in this report are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level unless otherwise stated.

For analysis purposes the six outlet types included in the initial sample frame have been grouped into four categories:

- Accommodation, pubs, bars, and nightclubs
- Restaurants, cafes, and canteens, and other catering
- Retailers
- Takeaways and sandwich shops

1. This encompassed both an audit of the businesses' physical premises and their website, where they had one.
2. The FHRS applies to food manufacturers and wholesalers in Wales. These businesses were excluded from the sample because their premises are typically not publicly accessible, and so it would not be possible to audit them.