

Value of FHRs Business Research: Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is responsible for food safety across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. As part of its work on the [Achieving Business Compliance \(ABC\) programme](#), the FSA wanted to understand in more detail how Local Authorities (LAs), businesses and consumers feel about the current [Food Hygiene Rating Scheme \(FHRS\)](#). In addition, the FSA wanted to capture consumer views on potential changes to the regulatory approach. To this purpose, the FSA commissioned Ipsos UK to conduct qualitative research to explore the views of businesses about the FHRS.

The overarching research objective for the business strand was to assess the perceived value of the FHRS for businesses.

The key research questions were:

- What do businesses value about the FHRS process?
- How do views of the FHRS scheme vary according to business type?
- How do businesses view the frequency of FHRS assessment?
- Do businesses use the FHRS scheme to assess other businesses that they are working with (relevant in Wales only)?
- How do business view the mandatory display of FHRS ratings?
- Do businesses view the current FHRS as fair?
- What improvements would businesses suggest to the FHRS?

This report sets out the main findings from the business strand of the research.

Alongside the evidence from the LA and consumer research, the findings will help inform the work of the ABC programme in the future.

1.2 Methodology

To answer these research questions, in-depth interviews were conducted with different businesses to explore their views. In total, 56 depth interviews were conducted with businesses across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. There were a broad range of businesses by different key characteristics, including business type, business size and current FHRS rating. The table below provides a breakdown of these businesses, by nation, size and type.

Table 1: Business sample breakdown

Business size	Number of interviews conducted
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Small (less than 10 employees)	18
Small (between 10 and 24 employees)	18
Small (between 25 to 49 employees)	4
Medium (50 to 249 employees)	6
Large (250+ employees)	10

Nation	Number of interviews conducted
England	20
Wales	14
Northern Ireland	12
Large business operating across nations	10

Business type	Number of interviews conducted
Retail and accommodation (for example, hotels, shops and convenience stores)	25
Food and beverage services (for example, restaurants, pubs, cafes and takeaways)	26
Manufacturing and wholesale (in scope of the FHRS scheme)	5

Total: 56

Businesses were recruited in the following ways:

- the business had given permission to be recontacted for further research following a previous survey that they took part in for the FSA
- the business was on a commercially available list of businesses provided by DBS data solutions
- through the business' involvement with the FSA's ABC programme
- as a result of the business expressing interest in participating in this research.

The design and structure of the depth interviews was informed by the key research objectives. Depth interviews were recorded with the participant's permission to allow for a full analysis of views.