

Food & You 2 trends: Chapter 4: Eating out and takeaways

Introduction

[The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme](#) (FHRS) helps people make informed choices about where to eat out or shop for food by giving clear information about the businesses' hygiene standards. Ratings are typically given to places where food is supplied, sold or consumed, including restaurants, pubs, cafés, takeaways, food vans and stalls.

The FSA runs the scheme in partnership with local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. A food safety officer from the local authority inspects a business to check that it follows food hygiene law so that the food is safe to eat. Businesses are given a rating from 0 to 5. A rating of 5 indicates that hygiene standards are very good and a rating of 0 indicates that urgent improvement is required.

Food businesses are provided with a sticker which shows their FHRS rating. In England businesses are encouraged to display their FHRS rating, however in Wales and Northern Ireland food businesses are legally required to display their FHRS rating ([footnote 1](#)). FHRS ratings are also available on the FSA website.

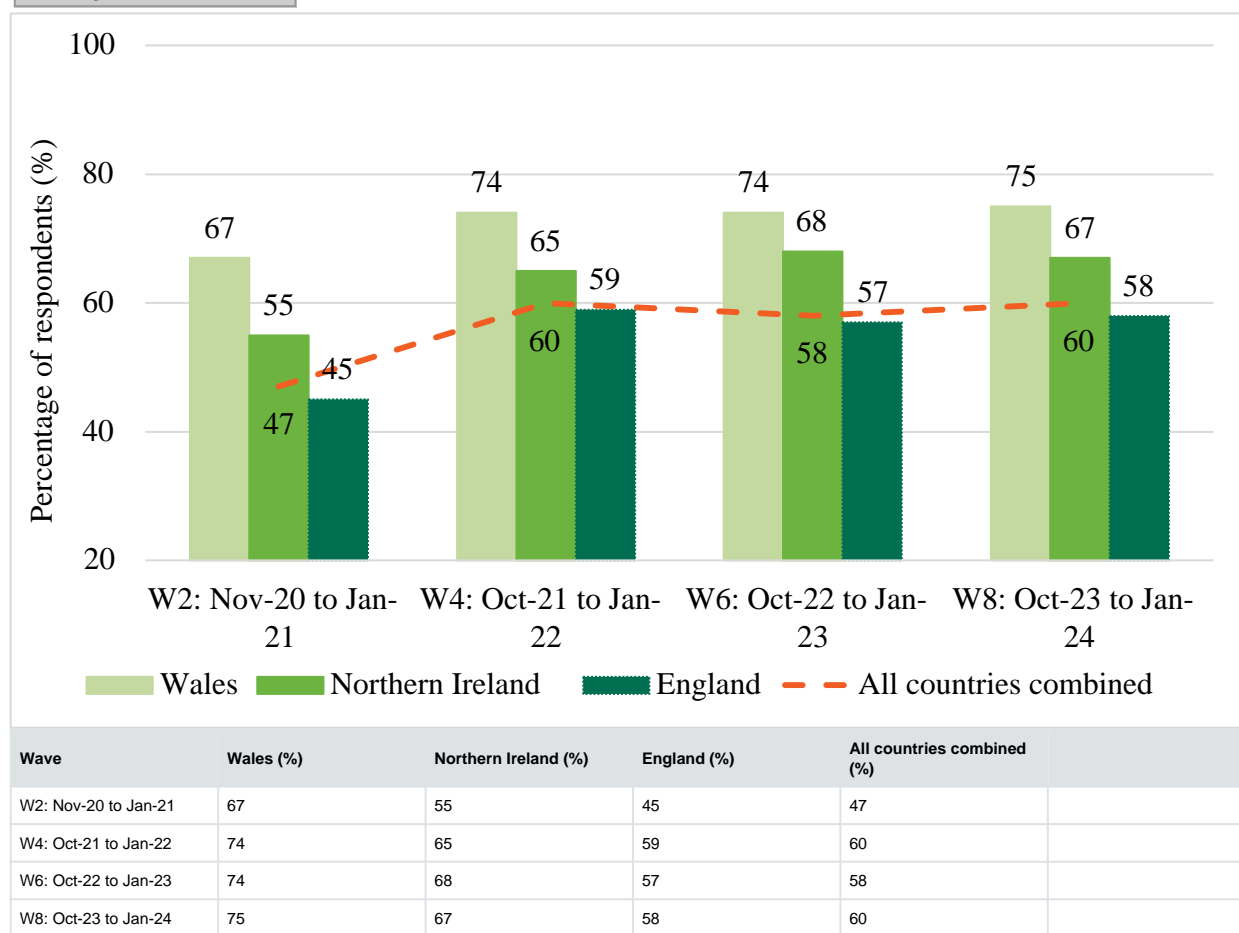
This chapter provides an overview of respondents' eating out and takeaway ordering habits, the factors that are considered when deciding where to eat out or order a takeaway from, and recognition and use of the FHRS between Wave 2 (November 2020 to January 2021) and Wave 8 (October 2023 to January 2024). These topics were only included in the survey on an annual basis (Waves 2, 4, 6, 8).

Awareness and recognition of the FHRS

Across all countries, the percentage of respondents who reported that they had heard of the FHRS and had knowledge about it (i.e., Yes, I've heard of it and know a lot / bit about it) increased from 47% in Wave 2 (November 2020 to January 2021) to 60% in Wave 4 (October 2021 to January 2022). Since then, the percentage of respondents reporting awareness and knowledge about the scheme has remained broadly stable (58-60%).

Across all waves, respondents in Wales (67-75%) had a higher level of awareness and knowledge of the FHRS than those in Northern Ireland (55-68%). The lowest level of awareness and knowledge of the FHRS was in England (45-59%) (Figure 13) ([footnote 2](#)), ([footnote 3](#)).

Figure 13. The percentage of respondents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland who had heard of the FHRS and had at least a bit of knowledge about it.

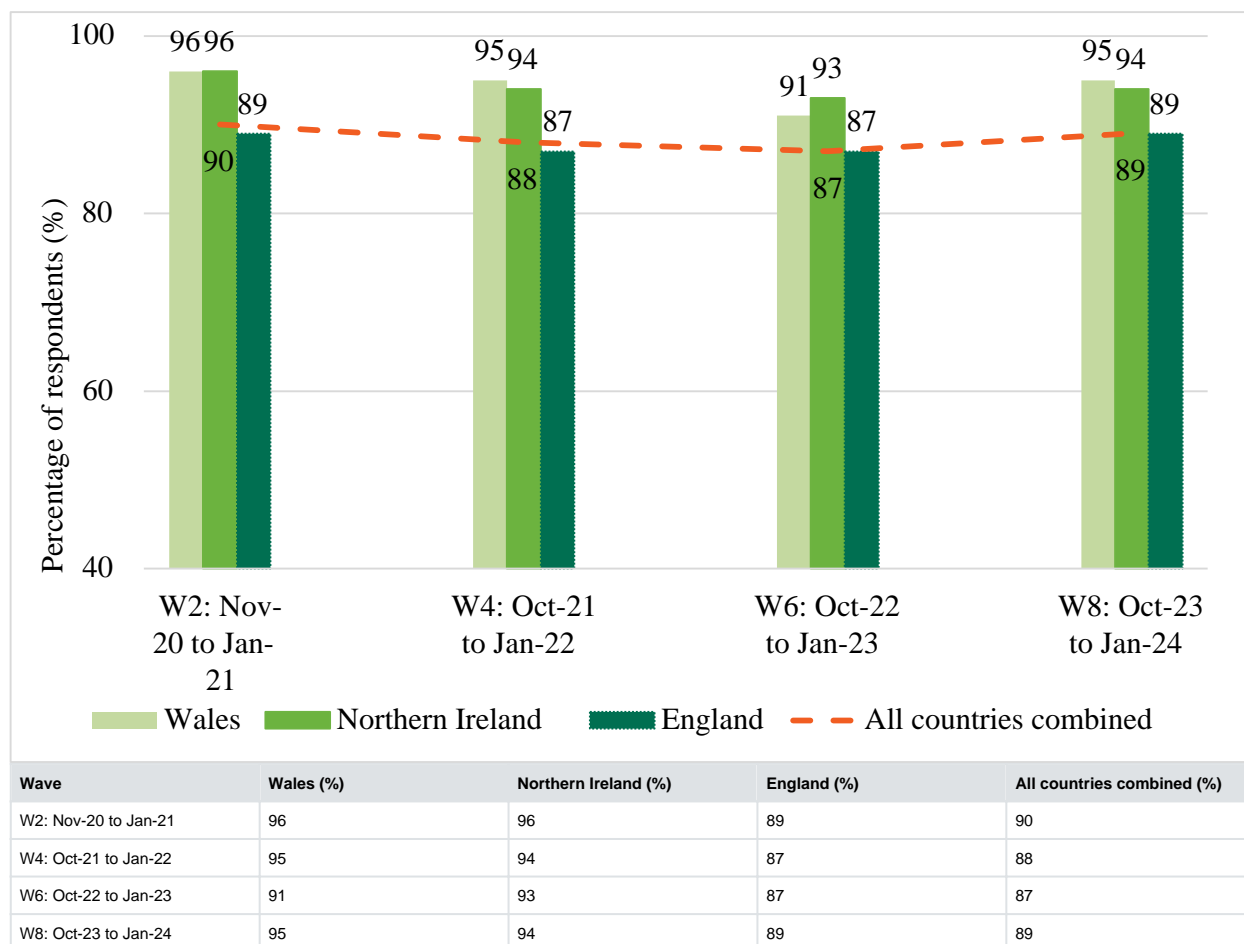
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Food and You 2: Wave 2-8

Between Wave 2 and Wave 8 the percentage of respondents who reported that they had seen the food hygiene rating sticker before remained broadly stable (87-90%), with a slightly lower percentage in Wave 4 (88%) and Wave 6 (87%) than in Wave 2 (90%). Recognition was consistently higher across Northern Ireland (93-96%) and Wales (91-96%), than in England (87-89%) (Figure 14) ([footnote 4](#)).

Figure 14. Recognition of the food hygiene rating sticker in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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Food and You 2: Wave 2, 4, 6, 8

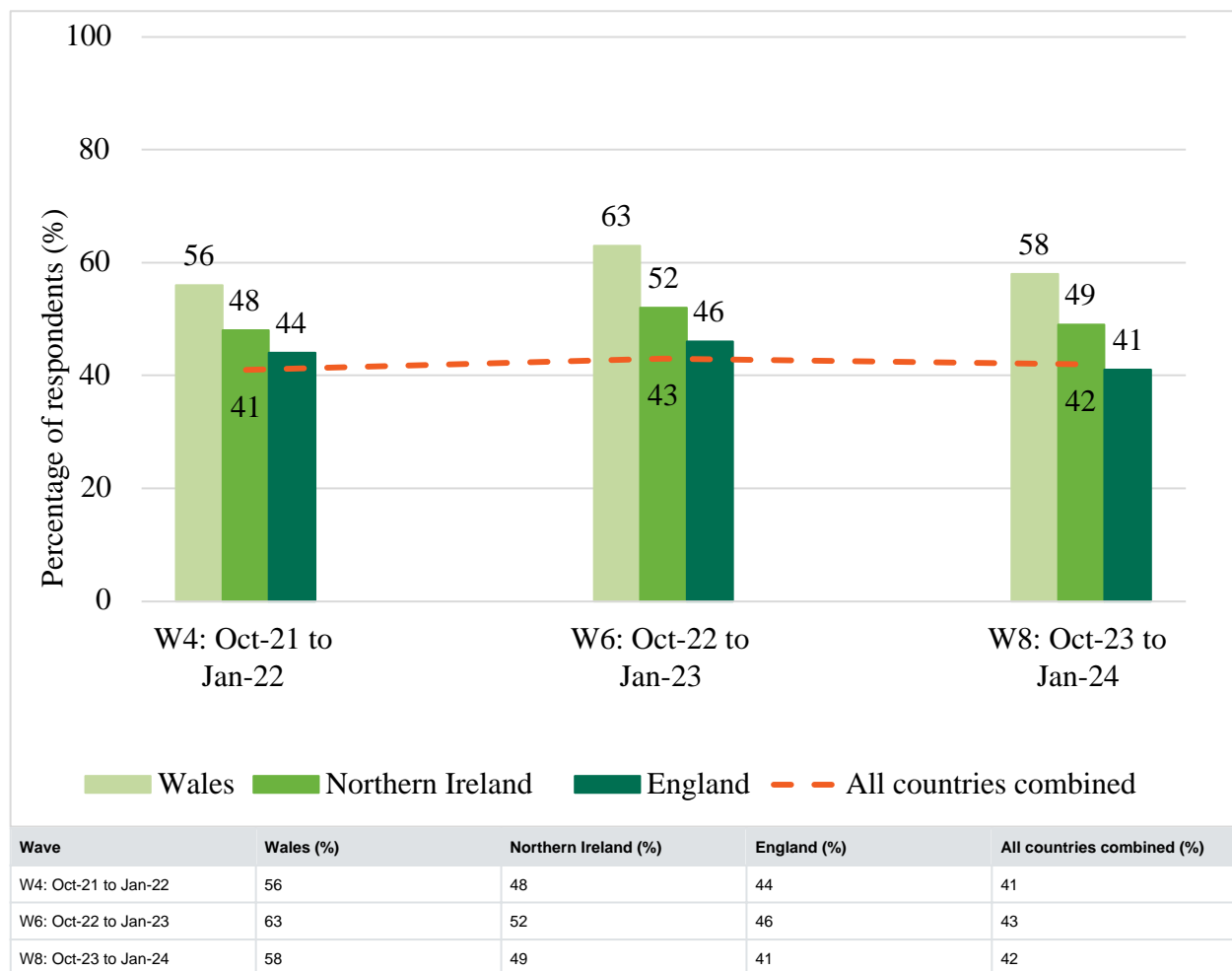
FHRS usage

There were no notable differences in the percentage of respondents who reported that they had checked the food hygiene rating of a business in the last 12 months between Wave 4 and Wave 8, with around 4 in 10 respondents reporting that they had done this across all waves. The percentage of participants who reported checking the hygiene rating of a food business was consistently highest in Wales (56-63%) and lowest in England (41-46%) (Figure 15) ([footnote 5](#)).

Figure 15. The percentage of respondents who had checked the hygiene rating of a food business.

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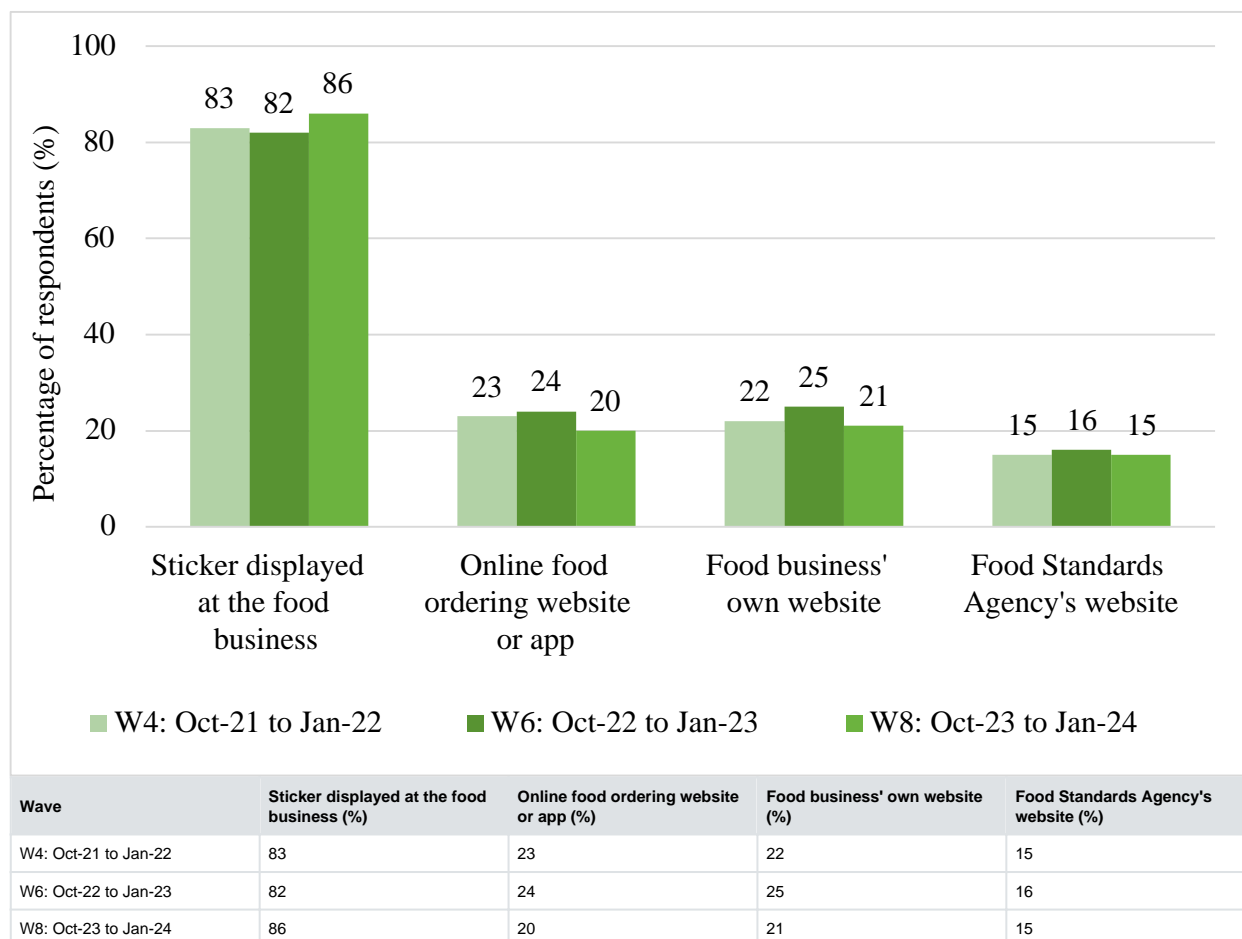
Food and You 2: Wave 4, 6, 8

Respondents who had checked the food hygiene of a food business in the previous 12 months were asked how they had checked the rating. There was a slight increase in the percentage of respondents who reported that they had checked the rating using a sticker displayed at the food business between Wave 4 and Wave 6 (from 82% to 86%**). There was also a slight decrease in the percentage who reported checking a rating using an online food ordering website or app between Wave 4 and Wave 6 (from 24% to 20%**). Consistently, across all waves participants were most likely to check the sticker displayed at the food business; with over 8 in 10 using this method (Figure 16) ([footnote 6](#)).

Figure 16. Most common methods used to check food hygiene ratings

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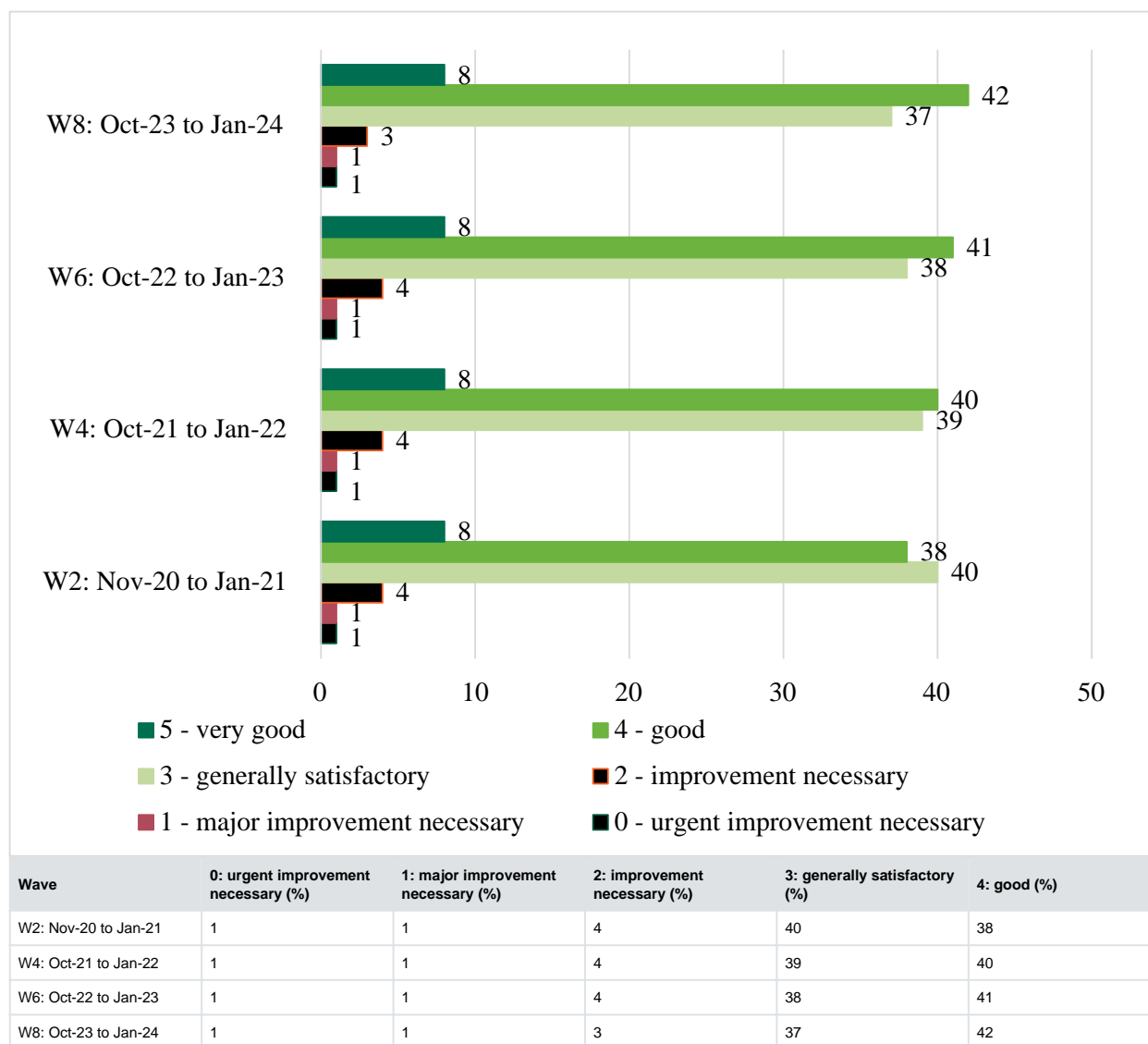
Food and You 2: Wave 4, 6, 8 ([footnote 7](#))

Respondents were asked which food hygiene rating they would consider the lowest acceptable level. Across all waves, about 4 in 10 respondents considered a rating of 4 – good as the lowest acceptable level and about 4 in 10 respondents considered 3 – generally satisfactory as the lowest acceptable level. There has been a slight increase in the percentage of respondents who stated that a rating of 4 would be the lowest acceptable level between Wave 2 and Wave 8 (from 38% to 42%)*. Similarly, the percentage who reported that a rating of 3 would be their lowest acceptable rating decreased slightly over the same period (from 40% to 37%)*. Other acceptable ratings have remained stable since monitoring began (Figure 17) ([footnote 8](#)).

Figure 17. What rating respondents would consider the lowest acceptable food hygiene rating.

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Food and You 2: Wave 2, 4, 6, 8

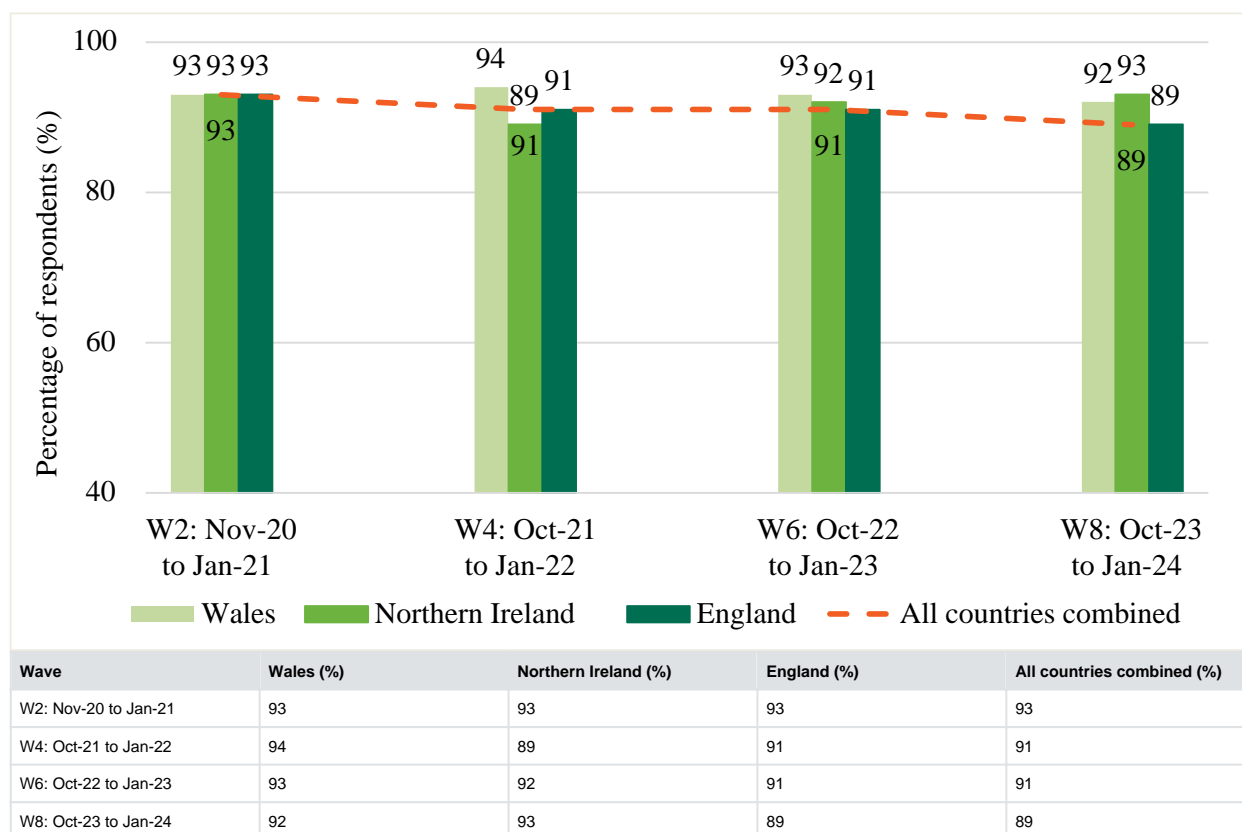
Views on mandatory display

There were no notable differences in views on mandatory display between Wave 2 and Wave 8 with around 9 in 10 respondents reporting that they think food businesses should be required by law to display their food hygiene rating at their premises across all waves (Figure 18) [\(footnote 9\)](#).

Figure 18. The percentage of respondents who think that food businesses should be required by law to display their food hygiene rating at their premises.

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Food and You 2: Wave 2, 4, 6, 8

Similarly, there were no notable differences in views on the online display of ratings between Wave 2 and Wave 8, with around 9 in 10 respondents reporting that they think food businesses providing online food ordering services should display their food hygiene rating where it can clearly be seen by customers before they order food across all waves (Figure 19) [\(footnote 10\)](#).

Figure 19. The percentage of respondents who think that online food ordering services should display their food hygiene rating.

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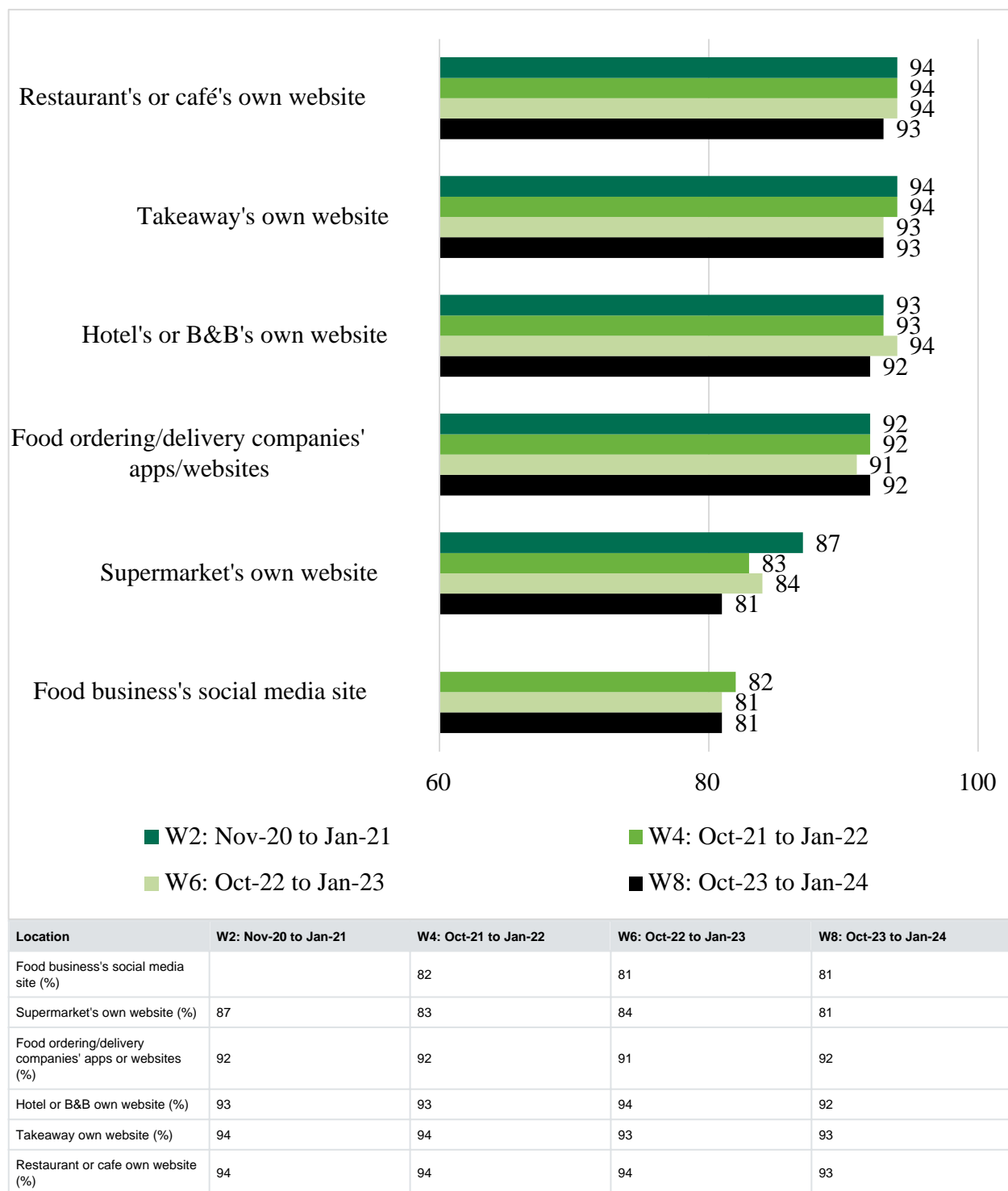
Food and You 2: Wave 2, 4, 6, 8

Respondents were asked where they thought food hygiene ratings should be displayed ([footnote 11](#)). There has been little change across waves, with the majority (over 90%) of respondents reporting that ratings should be displayed on the businesses' own website (including restaurants, cafes, takeaways, hotels/B&Bs and food ordering/delivery apps) across all waves. There has been a slight decrease in the percentage of respondents who reported that ratings should be displayed on a supermarket's own website from 87% in Wave 2 to 81% in Wave 8** (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Locations where respondents think food hygiene ratings should be displayed

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Food and You 2: Wave 2, 4, 6, 8

1. Legislation for the mandatory display of FHRs ratings was introduced in November 2013 in Wales and October 2016 in Northern Ireland.

2. Question: Have you heard of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme? Responses: Yes, I've heard of it and know quite a lot about it, Yes, I've heard of it and know a bit about it, Yes, I've heard of it but don't know much about it, Yes, I've heard of it but don't know anything about it, No, I've never heard of it. Total base across waves 2, 4, 6, 8 (all countries combined) = 15,244 (range between 3,745 in Wave 4 and 3,915 in Wave 8), all online respondents. Please note: this question was not included in Wave 1. Whilst data is available for waves 3, 5, and 7 it is not directly comparable due to changes in question ordering and methodology in the survey design.
3. Responses to other FHRS questions not included in this report are available in the full dataset and tables. A more detailed FHRS report is published separately.
4. Question: Have you ever seen this sticker before? Responses: Yes, No, Don't know / not sure. Total base across waves 2, 4, 6, 8 (all countries combined) = 19,489 (range between 4,755 in Wave 4 and 4,966 in Wave 8) all online respondents and those answering the Eating Out postal questionnaire.
5. Question: In the last 12 months, have you checked the hygiene rating of a food business? You may have checked a rating at the business premises, online, in leaflets or menus whether or not you decided to purchase food from there. Responses: Yes, I have checked the Food Hygiene Rating of a food business, No, I have not checked the Food Hygiene Rating of a food business, Don't know. Total base across waves 4, 6 and 8 = 14,639 (range between 4,755 in Wave 4 and 4,966 in Wave 8), all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating Out' postal questionnaire. Please note: this question was not included in Waves 1, 3, 5 or 7. In wave 2, different routing was used which means the data is not directly comparable, therefore it has been omitted from this graph.
6. Question: How did you check these ratings? Responses: I looked at an FHRS sticker displayed at the food business (such as in a business' window or on the door), I checked an online food ordering website or app (e.g. Just Eat, Deliveroo, Uber Eats), I checked the food business' own website, I checked on the Food Standards Agency's website, I checked on an app (e.g. Scores on the Doors Food Hygiene Rating), I checked on another website, I checked in a local newspaper, Other, Don't know. Total base across waves 4, 6, 8 = 6746 (range between 2,085 in Wave 4 and 2,378 in Wave 8), all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating Out' postal questionnaire, who have checked the Food Hygiene Rating of a food business in the previous 12 months. Please note there has been minor rewording across the waves. This question was not included in Wave 1, 2, 3, 5 or 7.
7. Only methods with 10% or more responses are shown. Results for other options can be found in the accompanying data tables.
8. Question: From a rating of 0 to 5, what is the lowest rating you would usually consider acceptable, if you were considering buying food from somewhere? Responses: 0 - urgent improvement necessary, 1 - major improvement necessary, 2 - improvement necessary, 3 - generally satisfactory, 4 - good, 5 - very good, Don't know, I do not usually notice the rating when I go into a food business. Total base across waves 2, 4, 6, 8 = 19,489 (range between 4,755 in Wave 4 and 4,966 in Wave 8), all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating Out' postal questionnaire. Please note: this question was not included in Waves 1, 3, 5 or 7.

9. Question: Do you think that food businesses should be required by law to display their Food Hygiene Rating at their premises, or should it be up to the business to decide whether to or not? Responses: They should have to, It should be up to them to decide, Don't know. Total base across waves 2,4,6, 8 = 19,489 (range between 4,755 in Wave 4 and 4,966 in Wave 8), all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating Out' postal questionnaire. Please note: this question was not included in Waves 1, 3, 5 or 7.
10. Question: Do you think businesses providing an online food ordering service should display their Food Hygiene Rating where it can clearly be seen by customers before they order food? Responses: Yes, No, Don't know. Total base across waves 2,4,6,8 = 19,489 (range between 4,755 in Wave 4 and 4,966 in Wave 8), all online respondents and those answering the 'Eating Out' postal questionnaire. Please note: this question was not included in Waves 1, 3, 5 or 7.
11. Question: Do you think the hygiene ratings should be displayed on.... Food ordering and delivery companies' apps and websites that allow you to order food from a range of local restaurants and takeaways? / A food business's social media site / A restaurant's or cafe's own website? / A takeaway's own website? / A hotel's or B&B's own website? / A supermarket's own website? Responses: Yes, No, don't know. Total base across waves 2, 4, 6 and 8 = 19,489 (range between 4,755 in Wave 4 and 4,966 in Wave 8), all online respondents, and those answering the relevant postal questionnaire. Base = 4966, all online respondents and those answering the Eating Out postal questionnaire.