

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Audit of Display and Business Survey: 2023

IFF Research

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FSA Research and Evidence

Executive summary

Introduction

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) is designed to help consumers make more considered choices about where they eat out or shop for food by providing 'at-a-glance' information about the hygiene standards of food businesses found at the time of their last inspection by a local authority's food safety officer.

Under the scheme, 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'. In Wales and Northern Ireland, businesses have been legally required to display their food hygiene rating sticker in a prominent place like the front door, entrance or window of the business since 2013 and 2016 respectively. Businesses in England do not have to display their rating stickers at their premises but are encouraged to do so. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has developed digital icons and guidance so that businesses can display their rating online, although this is not a legal requirement. Across England, Northern Ireland and Wales, food hygiene ratings are also available to search on the FSA [FHRS website](#).

The FSA has conducted research into the *Display of Food Hygiene Ratings in England, Northern Ireland and Wales* since 2011 (with a pause in 2020 due to COVID-19). The objectives of this wave were to:

- Provide a representative estimate of the display of food hygiene rating stickers at physical premises
- Provide a representative estimate of the display of food hygiene ratings online
- Explore business awareness and attitudes towards the scheme
- Explore the reasons and drivers for display and, in England, non-display

Mainstage fieldwork in October and December 2023 comprised 1,479 covert audits of food businesses in England, Northern Ireland and Wales (485, 497 and 497 respectively) and 1,500 telephone interviews of food businesses in England, Northern Ireland and Wales (500 per nation). In total, 443 food businesses that participated in the telephone survey were also audited.

Display of food hygiene ratings: audit results

In England, just over two-thirds (69%) of businesses were displaying a food hygiene rating sticker, either inside or in a location visible from outside their premises. Although not significantly higher than in 2022 (67%), this represents a continuation of the steady upward trend in rates of display by businesses in England since 2017, when 55% of businesses displayed a sticker. Around two-thirds (64%) of businesses had a sticker displayed outside, and one-in-twenty (5%) displayed a sticker inside their premises, but not outside.

In Northern Ireland and Wales, where it is mandatory for businesses to display their food hygiene rating sticker, the vast majority had their rating sticker on display either inside or in a location visible from outside the premises.

In Northern Ireland, the proportion of businesses displaying a sticker either inside or in a location visible from outside the premises significantly increased from 87% in 2022 to 91% in 2023. Close to nine-in-ten (88%) businesses had a sticker displayed outside and 4% displayed a sticker inside their premises but not outside.

In Wales, 92% of businesses displayed an FHRS sticker either inside or in a location visible from outside the premises, consistent with the findings in 2022 (91%). Close to nine in ten (88%) of businesses had a sticker displayed outside and 3% displayed a sticker inside their premises but not outside.

There was some variation in display rates by outlet type across the three countries, with takeaways and sandwich shops considerably more likely to display a rating sticker in Wales (100%). Retail businesses were less likely than average to have a sticker on display in England (61%), while accommodation businesses and pubs, bars, and nightclubs were less likely to display a sticker (80%) in Northern Ireland.

Online display

Auditors conducted a more thorough online audit than in previous years, with the aim of better understanding the presence of businesses on four food delivery aggregator platforms (Just Eat, Deliveroo, Uber Eats, and

Foodhub), the use of platforms and the rate of display of FHRS ratings across three online platforms (Facebook business pages, Instagram profiles, and businesses' own websites with online ordering capabilities).

This year's telephone survey also covered the topics of online platform use (aggregator platforms, social media platforms and businesses' own websites with online ordering capabilities) and the display of FHRS ratings online in greater detail than in previous years, in addition to continued monitoring of attitudes towards mandatory online display.

In summary, findings from the audit and survey indicate that there is widespread use of online platforms amongst businesses, but a relatively low level of display of their FHRS ratings online. As is to be expected there were differences between self-reported online display and the online audited results.

Audit of online display

Across all three countries, most businesses were observed to use at least one of the three online platforms of interest (77% in England, 77% in Northern Ireland and 76% in Wales).¹ The most widely used was Facebook, with around seven in ten businesses in England (67%), Northern Ireland (69%) and Wales (67%) found to be using this social media platform. Around a third of businesses had an Instagram profile (England 36%; Northern Ireland 35%; Wales 30%) and around a quarter had a website with online ordering capabilities (England 27%; Northern Ireland 24%; Wales 24%).

Despite widespread use of Facebook, Instagram and websites with online food ordering capabilities, only a small minority of businesses were found to be displaying a food hygiene rating on any of these platforms during the audit: 10% in England, 5% in Northern Ireland and 8% in Wales.

A third (34%) of all audited businesses in England, a fifth (20%) of businesses in Wales, and around one-in-six (16%) businesses in Northern Ireland were found in the audit to be present on at least one food delivery aggregator platform (Just Eat, Deliveroo, Uber Eats, or Foodhub). Across all three countries, Just Eat was the most commonly used online food

¹ This includes the use of Facebook business pages and Instagram profiles, and websites with online ordering capabilities. This does not include aggregator platforms. The online audit of Facebook and Instagram recorded an outlet's presence on either of these sites only. It did not record whether an outlet's Facebook business page or Instagram profile had an online ordering facility, or whether the outlet invites orders through messaging services on these platforms.

delivery aggregator (used by 27% of all audited businesses in England; 13% in Northern Ireland; and 14% in Wales), followed by Uber Eats and then Deliveroo.²

Survey of online display

Around two-fifths of businesses in England (43%) and Wales (37%) and three in ten (30%) businesses in Northern Ireland self-reported taking food orders through a third-party website or app (such as Just Eat, Uber Eats or Deliveroo), through an ordering function on their own website, or through their social media accounts (such as Instagram or Facebook). Websites with an ordering function were the most widely used platform to take customer orders across all three countries (England 28%; Northern Ireland 20%; Wales 26%). This is in line with the proportion of businesses found to have a website with an online ordering function in the online audit (England 27%; Northern Ireland 24%; Wales 24%). Slightly fewer reported taking orders through third-party websites or apps (England 27%; Northern Ireland 18%; Wales 17%). The reported use of social media platforms to take food orders was low (England 8%; Northern Ireland 8%; Wales 9%).

There was a slight drop in the reported use of social media accounts to sell food to customers in England and Northern Ireland, with only 8% of businesses offering this option to customers compared to 12% in both countries in 2022. Meanwhile, the number of businesses reporting using a third-party website or app to sell food to customers increased in Northern Ireland from 11% in 2022 to 18% in 2023.

A minority of all businesses reported displaying their food hygiene rating on any online platform³, in England (29%), Northern Ireland (25%) and Wales (29%). Among those that allow customers to order food online, this figure increased to two-fifths in Northern Ireland (41%) and around a third in England and Wales (36% each). Among those that reported displaying their rating online, by far the most common platform where this was done was a business website with ordering capabilities (England 69%; Northern Ireland 57%; Wales 65%).

² It should be noted that the rate of display on aggregator platforms was not audited and is not reported. This is because customers can find the FHRS rating of any business listed on an aggregator platform, typically by opening separate information pages (i.e. behind a 'click-through').

³ This refers to display of an FHRS rating on any online platform, for example on the business's website, social media accounts or on a third-party website. This cannot be directly compared to the online audit findings, which focused on specific platforms.

Across England, Northern Ireland, and Wales, the majority of businesses felt that the display of food hygiene ratings should become mandatory for at least some online platforms (England: 94%; Northern Ireland: 96%; Wales: 93%). When asked more generally for their thoughts on the introduction of mandatory display for online ordering platforms, most businesses gave positive comments. Some noted that as a customer, using a digital platform should be no different from ordering from a physical premises, especially due to the growing importance of online reviews and an online presence.

Similarly, attitudes were largely positive towards the idea of online food delivery aggregators displaying food hygiene ratings in a location where customers can see the rating without having to actively seek it out (e.g. behind a 'click-through'). Around two-thirds of businesses felt this would be a good thing (69% in England, 68% in Northern Ireland and 67% in Wales).

Awareness of the scheme and satisfaction with ratings

As found in previous years, almost all food businesses surveyed reported having heard of the FHRS - England (92%), Northern Ireland (95%) and Wales (97%). Historically, awareness of the scheme in Northern Ireland and Wales has been higher than in England. After an anomalous 2022 where awareness was the same across all three countries, this trend persists, likely reflecting the statutory schemes in Northern Ireland and Wales compared to the voluntary scheme in England.

Within each country, self-reported awareness of the FHRS was at a similarly high level across the different sizes of food businesses. However, there were notable differences by sector and FHRS rating in Northern Ireland and Wales. For example, in both Northern Ireland and Wales, retail outlets were more likely than average to be aware (Northern Ireland 98% and Wales 99%, compared to 94% overall).

Amongst those aware of their food hygiene rating, most businesses in England (92%), Northern Ireland (91%) and Wales (86%) reported being satisfied with their rating. In England and Wales, satisfaction with food hygiene ratings had not changed significantly since 2022. However, in Northern Ireland satisfaction had fallen (from 95% in 2022, to 91% 2023).

Across all three countries, businesses with the highest ratings were more likely to be satisfied. Amongst the minority of businesses that were dissatisfied with their food hygiene rating, around half (56%) said that this was because the rating was lower than they expected. Some attributed their lower-than-desired rating to their perception that food safety officers

were being unfair in their assessments, or the officers putting too much emphasis on what the business considered to be aspects not directly related to food hygiene (i.e. structure and confidence in management).

Between half and three-fifths of businesses in England (61%), Northern Ireland (56%) and Wales (51%) reported they would only be satisfied with a rating of five. However, 4 was the most common rating that businesses felt would be 'good enough' to display their sticker (England 47%, Northern Ireland 45%; Wales 41%). Across all three countries, businesses with higher ratings consistently had a higher minimum rating that they would be satisfied with or would consider 'good enough' to display.

Reported display of ratings and reasons for non-display

Across all three countries, most businesses reported displaying their FHRS sticker somewhere that was clearly visible to customers. However, as might be expected due to mandatory display, this was significantly higher for businesses in Northern Ireland (97%) and Wales (98%) compared to England (82%). In England, there was a significant reduction in this figure when compared to the previous (87% in 2022). As might be expected, self-reported rates of display were higher than rates of display observed during the audit (see Chapter 3).

In Wales and Northern Ireland, accommodation businesses and pubs, bars, and nightclubs were less likely to report displaying stickers at every entrance (Northern Ireland 82%; Wales 77%). In Northern Ireland, takeaways and sandwich shops were more likely to report having FHRS stickers displayed at every entrance (98%). Meanwhile, in Wales, retail businesses were more likely (98%).

Businesses in England that said they did not display their FHRS sticker in a location where customers could see it from outside, or did not display it at all, were asked why they did not, as well as what might encourage them to start doing so. The top four unprompted reasons given for not displaying FHRS stickers were: there was nowhere suitable to show it outdoors (22%); having never received a sticker (12%); having lost the sticker (10%); or claiming it was not compulsory to display the sticker (10%).

Attitudes towards mandatory physical display

Most businesses in Northern Ireland (96%) and Wales (97%) that were aware of their FHRS rating reported being aware of the legal requirement to have their food hygiene rating sticker on display at their premises, this is in line with previous years. In Northern Ireland, micro-sized businesses were less likely than average to be aware of mandatory display (93%).

Around nine-in-ten food businesses in Northern Ireland (89%) and Wales (90%) felt that the legal requirement to display their food hygiene rating sticker was a good thing, and most believed it was 'very good' thing (Northern Ireland: 71%; Wales: 72%). There was also evidence that attitudes towards mandatory display varying by sector in both countries, with restaurants and catering businesses more likely to think it was a good thing (91% in Northern Ireland; 92% in Wales). As would perhaps be expected, businesses that had the highest FHRS rating of 5 were more likely than average to consider mandatory display a good thing (92% in Northern Ireland and 94% in Wales).

Positive attitudes towards mandatory display in Northern Ireland and Wales typically centred around the themes of transparency, maintaining and improving business standards and consumer empowerment. In Northern Ireland, the top reason was the importance of being transparent about food hygiene (32%), while in Wales the top reason was informing customer choice on where it's safe to eat or purchase food (29%).

Amongst the minority of businesses in Northern Ireland and Wales that were neutral or had negative perceptions of mandatory display (11% in Northern Ireland and 9% in Wales), this was typically attributed to reservations around the efficacy and fairness of the FHRS.

More than four in five businesses in England (82%) agreed that the introduction of a scheme where they are required by law to display their food hygiene rating sticker at their premises was a good idea, with most (63%) considering it to be a 'very good' concept. As elsewhere, those with the highest FHRS rating of 5 were more likely to consider mandatory display to be a good thing (86%).

As found in Northern Ireland and Wales, positive attitudes towards mandatory display in England typically centred around the themes of transparency, maintaining and improving business standards and consumer empowerment.

Amongst the 17% of food businesses in England that were neutral or had negative perceptions towards the concept of mandatory display, the most common reason for this was because the business already displayed their food hygiene rating sticker and so the introduction of a legal requirement would make no difference to the business (39%). Those with an FHRS rating of 0-3 were more likely to be neutral or have a negative perception of the concept of mandatory display than those with a rating of 5 (28% compared to 11%)⁴. Other reasons mentioned included the view that it would be

⁴ Outlets rated 0, 1, 2 and 3 have been grouped in this instance to ensure a sufficient base size for analysis when compared to those with an FHRS rating of 5.

unfair to some businesses (16%), it would place additional burdens on businesses (15%), perceived flaws in the way businesses are rated (11%) or believing that customers do not understand the rating (11%).

Awareness and ease of use of safeguards

More than four-fifths of businesses in Northern Ireland (83%) and Wales (82%) and around two-thirds of businesses in England (68%) recalled receiving their inspection letter. In England, the proportion who recalled receiving a letter was lower in 2023 (68%) than it was in 2022 (78%) and is now the lowest it has been since 2015.

Of businesses that received a letter and had an FHRs rating of less than 5, most (88% across all three countries) could recall the letter informing them of what improvements were necessary to achieve the highest food hygiene rating of 5 at their premises.

Businesses were then asked if they knew they could appeal, had a 'right to reply', or request a re-rating inspection if they were unhappy with their FHRs rating. In line with 2022, overall self-reported awareness was high with more than three-quarters aware of each option in England (78% for appeal, 77% for 'right to reply' and 79% for re-rating) and closer to nine-in-ten were aware in Northern Ireland (87% for appeal, 88% for 'right to reply' and 87% for re-rating) and Wales (92% for appeal, 88% for 'right to reply' and 92% for re-rating).

In England and Wales, there was evidence of awareness of safeguards varying by business size. In England, small businesses were more likely than average to be aware that they could request all three safeguards. In Wales, small businesses were more likely than average to be aware that they could request a re-rating, whilst micro businesses were less likely to be aware.

Despite high levels of awareness, very few businesses said that they had appealed the rating they received at their last inspection (England 0.3%; Northern Ireland 2%; and Wales 3%), which corroborates with the earlier finding that most businesses were content with their rating. Among the small minority of businesses that had appealed, most said they had been awarded a higher rating or were still awaiting the outcome of their appeal.

Similarly, despite high levels of awareness, few businesses reported that they had exercised their right to reply. One in twelve reported exercising this right in Northern Ireland and Wales (8% respectively), whilst (6%) did so in England.

Only one-in-twenty businesses in Wales (5%) and Northern Ireland (4%) and one-in-fifty businesses in England (2%) reported applying for a re-rating. Amongst the small minority of businesses that had applied for a re-rating, most said they had been awarded a higher rating or were still awaiting a re-rating inspection to be arranged.

Businesses who were not satisfied with their food hygiene rating and who did not use any of the safeguards were asked why not. The main reasons given by those not applying for an appeal were they had other priorities (19%), the rating was not low enough to appeal (17%), and not thinking that a higher rating was realistically achievable (14%),

The main reasons given by businesses that did not pursue a right-to-reply were, that they accepted the rating (27%), they did not want to make the changes required (16%), and not wanting to spend the time doing it (14%). The main reasons why businesses did not apply for a re-rating were, that the fees were too high (26%), or the business had not yet made all the changes suggested (20%).

Perceived impacts of the scheme

Most businesses reported being motivated to maintain or improve their food hygiene rating and considered that the display of their sticker has a range of positive impacts on customer perceptions of their business.

Nearly all food businesses agreed that they work hard to maintain or improve their food hygiene rating (England 100%; Northern Ireland 98%; Wales 99%) and more than nine-in-ten agreed that displaying a food hygiene rating proved to consumers that their business takes food hygiene seriously (England 98%; Northern Ireland 95%; Wales 93%). Furthermore, most businesses agreed they were proud of their food hygiene rating (England 96%; Northern Ireland 92%; Wales 88%); that having a good rating is attractive to customers (England 96%; Northern Ireland 91%; Wales 90%); and that displaying their rating improves their reputation (England 95%; Northern Ireland 91%; Wales 88%).

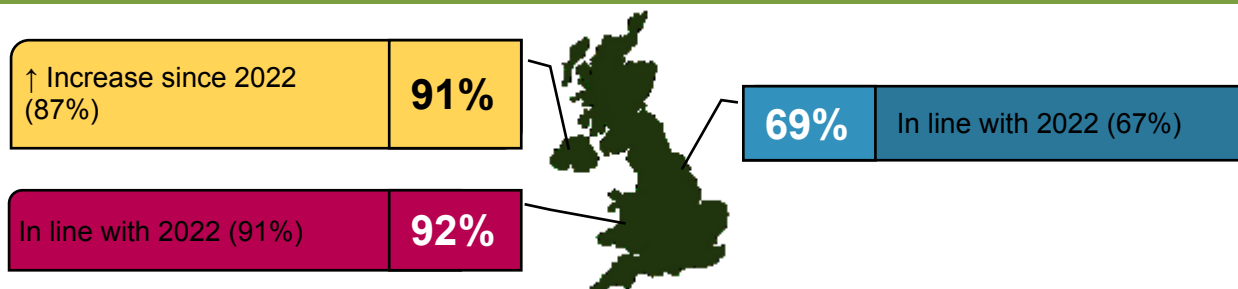
Most food businesses that had received a food hygiene rating of 4 or less reported making changes to try to improve their rating (England: 84%; Northern Ireland: 77%; Wales: 85%).⁵ These proportions have not changed significantly since 2022. The top action taken in England was undertaking repairs or improvement works (32%). In Northern Ireland and Wales, the top action was improving documentation or record keeping (35% and 42% respectively).

⁵ The variations in this proportion between countries were not statistically significant.

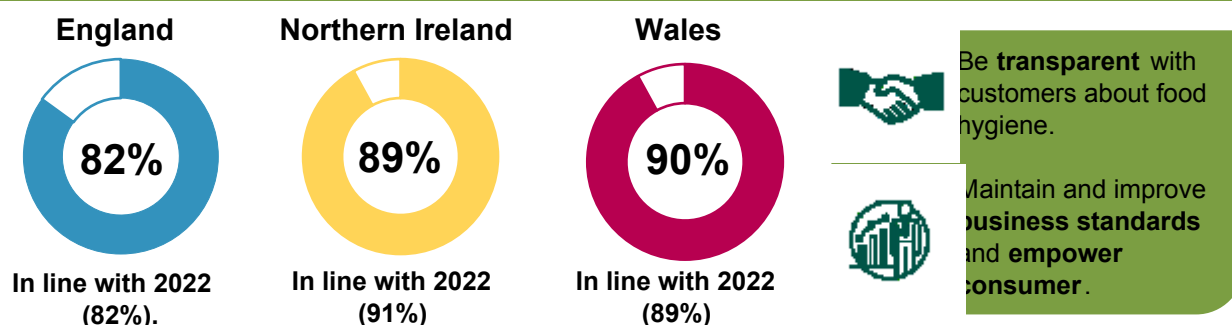
Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) Survey and Audit: 2023



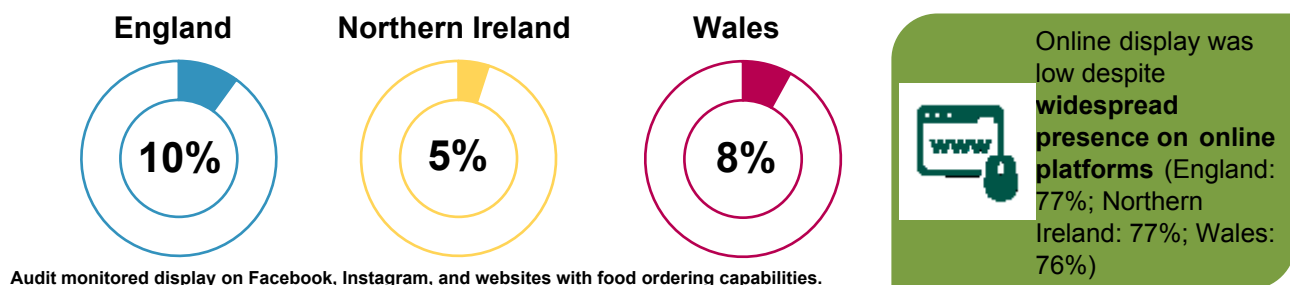
Sticker display rates at premises



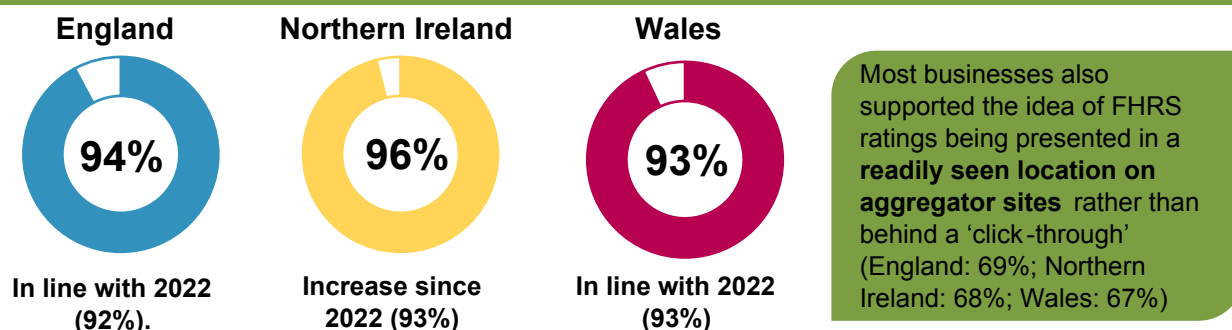
Support for mandatory display of stickers at premises



Online sticker display - Audit



Support for mandatory online display



Attitudes towards the scheme

Practically all businesses said:

- They **work hard** to maintain/improve their rating (England: 100%; Northern Ireland: 98%; Wales 99%)
- That displaying their rating shows customers that they **take food hygiene seriously** (England: 98%; Northern Ireland: 95%; Wales 93%)

Agreement was high for the perceived impact food hygiene ratings have on:

- **Attractiveness** to customers (England: 96%; Northern Ireland: 91%; Wales 90%)
- Business **reputation** (England: 95%; Northern Ireland: 91%; Wales 88%)



Figure 2.1. Example of FHRS sticker in England and Northern Ireland (left) and Wales (right)

1. Introduction

Background to the FHRS

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) was formally launched in 2010. The scheme is designed to help consumers make more considered choices about where they purchase food by providing clear information about the hygiene standards of food businesses found at their last inspection by a local authority's food safety officer.

Under the scheme, 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).

In Northern Ireland (since 2016) and Wales (since 2013), businesses are legally required to display their ratings in a prominent place, like the front door, entrance or window of the business where it can be easily read by customers. They are also required to provide information on their rating verbally if requested in person or over the phone. Businesses in England are not legally required 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](#), and the FSA provides guidance and a free toolkit to help businesses get the most from their ratings.

In Wales, the scheme differs slightly in that it also applies to businesses that sell food to other businesses, including food manufacturers and wholesalers. Furthermore, establishments that supply takeaway food 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, as well as reminding consumers that they have a legal right to ask the food business for their food hygiene rating when they order.

Research objectives

The FSA has conducted research into the *Display of Food Hygiene Ratings in England, Northern Ireland and Wales* since 2011. The objectives of this wave were to:

- Provide a representative estimate of the display of food hygiene rating stickers at physical premises
- Provide a representative estimate of the display of food hygiene ratings online
- Explore business awareness and attitudes towards the scheme
- Explore the reasons and drivers for display and, in England, non-display

Methodology

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

1. A covert audit of 1,479 food businesses in England, Northern Ireland and Wales (485, 497 and 497 respectively), conducted by Mystery Shoppers.⁶
2. A telephone survey of 1,500 food businesses in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, conducted by IFF Research (500 per nation).

⁶ This encompassed both an audit of the businesses' physical premises and their website, Instagram or Facebook Business Page, where they had one.

Sampling

For both the audit and telephone survey of food businesses, a sample was drawn from the FSA's [FHRS database](#).⁷ The sample included food businesses that sell or serve food to the public and had received a food hygiene rating following an inspection by a food safety officer.⁸

Food businesses were excluded from the sample if they were a new business and 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.⁹

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

- Accommodation (e.g., hotels) and pubs, bars, and nightclubs
- Restaurants, cafes, and other catering businesses (e.g., event caterers and home caterers)
- Retail (e.g., supermarkets, butchers, and bakeries)
- Takeaways and sandwich shops

The sample was stratified by country, outlet type, and food hygiene rating to reflect the profile of the underlying population of food businesses. Businesses in Northern Ireland and Wales, takeaways and sandwich shops and those with a food hygiene rating of 3 or less were oversampled to ensure that robust results could be produced for each sub-group.

More information on sampling for the 2023 wave of the FHRS Audit and Survey can be found in the accompanying Technical Report.

Audit of food businesses

Following a short period of pilot fieldwork, mainstage audit fieldwork took place between 6 November and 18 December 2023. In total, 1,479 audits were completed. The final profile of the audits achieved by country, outlet type and food hygiene rating are detailed in [Tables 2.1 to 2.3](#).

⁷ The FSA holds Food Hygiene Ratings and a summary of the standards found at the last time of inspection on behalf of local authorities in England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. This data can be found at: [https:// ratings.food.gov.uk](https://ratings.food.gov.uk).

⁸ Kitchens without physical premises were not included in the audit. Food businesses not accessible to the public (e.g. staff canteens) were also not included.

⁹ 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.

Table 2.1. Profile of audited food businesses: Country

Country	Completed audits
England	485
Northern Ireland	497
Wales	497

Table 2.2. Profile of audited food businesses: Outlet type

Outlet type	Completed audits
Accommodation and pubs, bars and nightclubs	260
Restaurants, cafes and catering	570
Retail	408
Takeaways and sandwich shop	241

Table 2.3. Profile of audited food businesses: Food Hygiene Rating

Food Hygiene Rating	Completed audits
0-2	59
3	114
4	244
5	1062

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 survey methodology, including pilot fieldwork and weighting, can be found in the accompanying Technical Report.

Telephone survey

Following a short period of pilot fieldwork, mainstage quantitative fieldwork took place between 24 October and 15 December 2023. In total, 1,500 interviews were completed. The final profile of the interviews achieved by country, outlet type, food hygiene rating and size is presented in [Tables 2.4 to 2.7](#).¹⁰

In total, 443 food businesses that participated in the telephone survey were also audited. Detail on the profile of these businesses is available in the Technical Report

¹⁰ Business sizes are referenced throughout the report. Micro businesses are defined as 1-9 staff at site, small businesses 10- 49, medium businesses 50- 249 and large businesses 250+.

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 with food businesses: Outlet type

Outlet type	Completed interviews
Accommodation and pubs, bars and nightclubs	324
Restaurants, cafes and catering	591
Retail	430
Takeaways and sandwich shop	155

Table 2.6. Profile of mainstage interviews with food businesses: Food Hygiene Rating

Food Hygiene Rating	Completed interviews
0-2	51
3	88
4	252
5	1109

Table 2.7. Profile of mainstage interviews with food businesses: Number of employees

Number of employees	Completed interviews
1 to 9 (micro)	675
10 to 49 (small)	673
50 to 249 (medium)	129
250 or more (large)	18
Unknown	5

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 pilot fieldwork and weighting, can be found in the accompanying Technical Report.

Reporting notes

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

In charts, unless stated otherwise in the notes underneath, upward arrows are used to denote a significantly higher figure – compared to the average or 2022 – while downward arrows are used to show a significantly lower figure. 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.

2. Audit of display of stickers

This chapter covers the findings from the physical audits of food businesses in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. It looks at the rates of display of stickers, and where stickers are displayed.

Rates of display

More than nine in ten outlets in Northern Ireland (91%) and Wales (92%), and just over two thirds of outlets in England (69%) were found to be displaying an FHRS sticker. As illustrated in [Figure 3.1](#), in all three countries a higher proportion of food businesses were displaying a food hygiene rating sticker (either inside or in a location visible from outside the premises) than ever previously recorded. The rate of display in England remained considerably lower than in Northern Ireland¹¹ and Wales¹², likely a direct result of the lack of legal obligation to display a rating sticker at business premises in England.

In England, 69% of businesses displayed an FHRS sticker (either inside or in a location visible from outside the premises). Although not significantly higher than in 2022, this represents a continuation of the steady upwards trend in rates of display by businesses in England since 2017, when 55% of businesses displayed a sticker. Retail businesses were less likely than average to have a sticker on display (61%).

¹¹ Businesses in Northern Ireland are legally required to display their ratings at or near each customer entrance like the front door, entrance or window of the business. Stickers in Northern Ireland must be displayed in a location where they can be readily seen and easily read by customers before they enter the establishment when it is open for business.

¹² In Wales the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Regulations 2013 state that a sticker showing an establishment's valid rating must be displayed at or near each entrance to the establishment that is available for use by customers in a conspicuous place where it is capable of being easily read by customers before they enter the establishment when it is open for business.

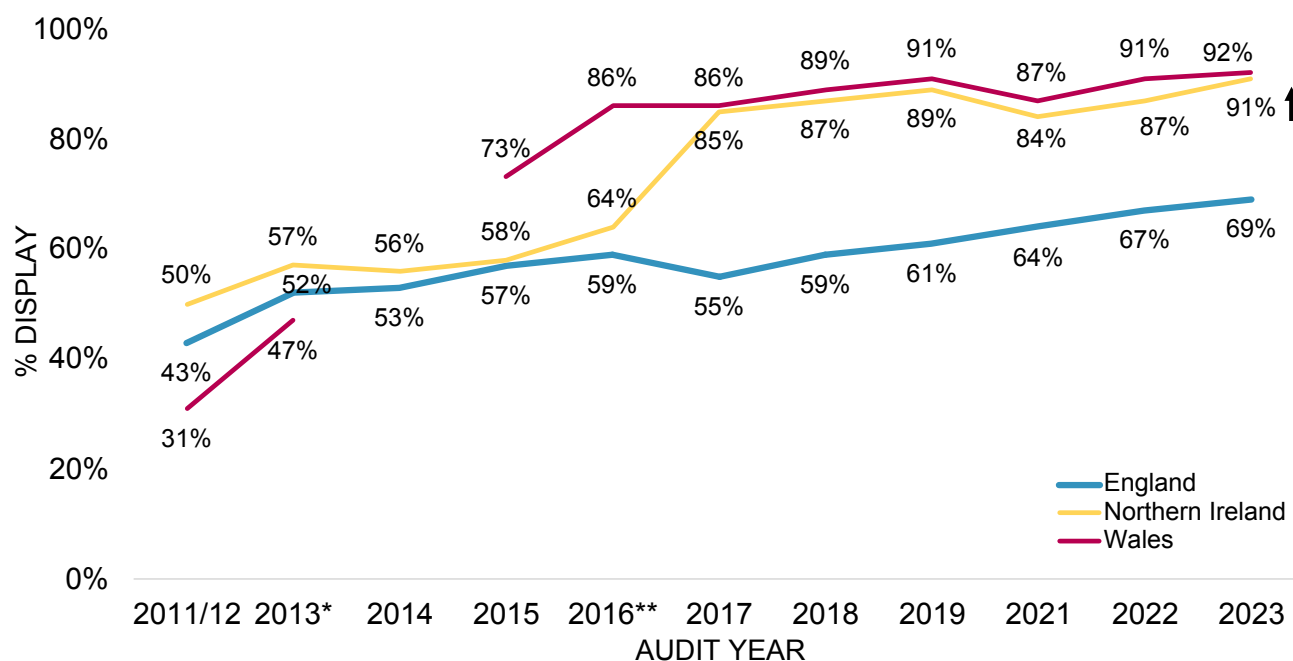


Figure 3.1. Proportion of audited businesses in England, Northern Ireland and Wales that are displaying food hygiene ratings either inside or in a location visible from outside the premises (2011-2022).^[13]

Note: Base: Did you see an FHRS sticker at this outlet? All audited businesses 2023 (England: 485; NI: 497; Wales: 497). Previous years base sizes range from 412 to 502 in England; 418 to 527 in NI; and 417 to 505 in Wales. Figures for Wales for 2013-2019 are based on display of the statutory sticker only. Wales was not included in the 2014 audit. ↑ / ↓ denotes a significant difference compared to 2022.

In Northern Ireland, the proportion of businesses displaying a sticker either inside or in a location visible from outside the premises increased from 87% in 2022 to 91% in 2023. The rate of display has increased over the past two years (after a slight decrease in 2021) to surpass the previous high of 89% in 2019. When comparing across different outlet types, accommodation businesses and pubs, bars, and nightclubs were less likely to display a sticker (80%).

In Wales, 92% of businesses displayed an FHRS sticker, consistent with the findings in 2022 (91%).¹³ Takeaway and sandwich shops were considerably more likely to display a rating, with all the businesses of this type found to be displaying a rating in the physical audit (100%).

¹³ In order to maintain comparability with reported rates in 2021 and 2022, the rate of display recorded includes one outlet identified as displaying a sticker without a dragon logo. Although the rate of display of non-compliant stickers is very low (<1%), no comparisons have been made to rates of display observed before 2021 as these are based only on the display of the statutory sticker with the dragon logo.

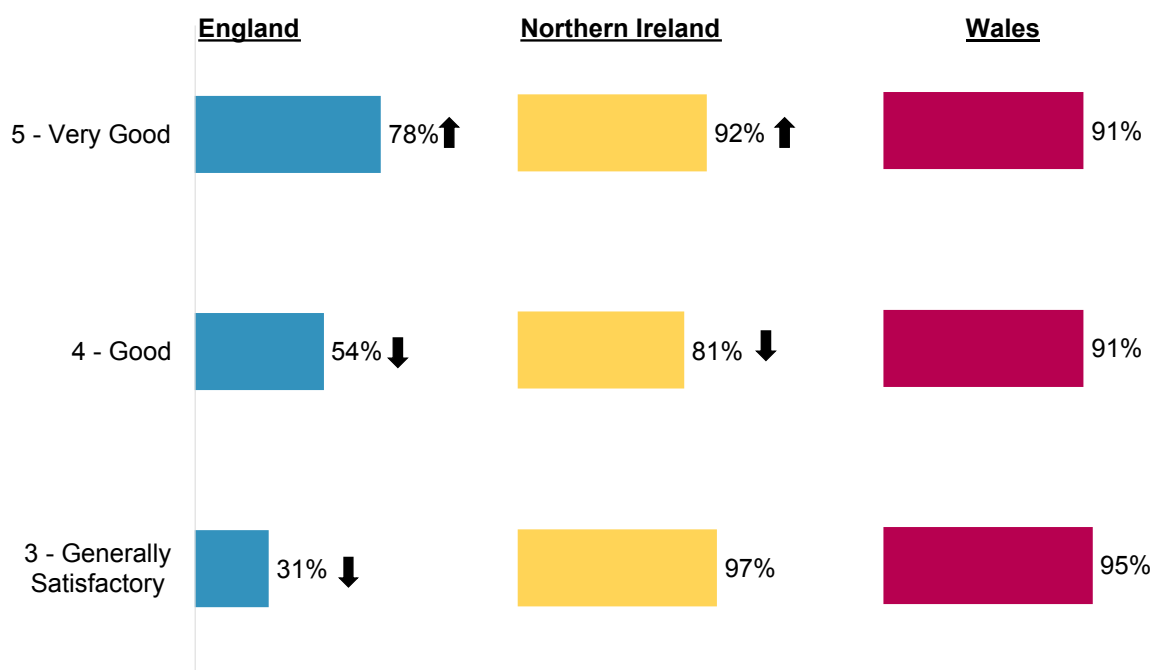


Figure 3.2. Display of FHRs sticker inside or in a location visible from outside, by food hygiene rating (3-5)

Note: Did you see an FHRs sticker at this outlet? – Yes. Base: All audited food businesses, food hygiene rating 5/4/3 (England 352/69/42; NI 377/76/32; Wales 333/99/40) ↑ / ↓ Denotes a significant difference to the average.

In England and Northern Ireland, food businesses with a rating of 5 were more likely than average to display their FHRs sticker (78% in England and 92% in Northern Ireland). There was no significant variation in the rate of display of an FHRs sticker by rating in Wales.

As presented in [Figure 3.2](#), the proportion of businesses displaying a sticker inside or in a location visible from outside in England decreased as ratings became lower, dropping to 54% of those with a rating of 4, and dropping further to just under a third (31%) among those with a rating of 3. Those with a rating of 4 in Northern Ireland were slightly less likely to display a sticker, though the rate was still relatively high at just over eight in ten (81%). In general, there was less difference in display rates between different food hygiene ratings in both Wales and Northern Ireland, likely due to the statutory requirement to display.

As the base sizes of audited business with a rating of 2 or below are small (22 in England, 12 in Northern Ireland and 25 in Wales), findings on the display of FHRs stickers inside or in a location visible from outside amongst this audience should be interpreted with caution.

Amongst audited food businesses with a food hygiene rating of 2 or below, it was much more common for businesses in Northern Ireland and Wales to have an FHRs sticker on display than their counterparts in England. As with the findings at the overall level, the statutory display schemes in

Northern Ireland and Wales are likely to be driving a larger proportion of lower rated premises to display a rating when compared to England. This suggests that the statutory display schemes in Wales and Northern Ireland may help to provide customers with a greater level of transparency when visiting lower rated premises compared to those in England.

- In England, 6 out of 22 businesses with a rating of 2 or below had a sticker on display.
- In Northern Ireland, 10 out of 12 businesses with a rating of 2 or below had a sticker on display.
- In Wales, 22 out of 25 businesses with a rating of 2 or below had a sticker on display.

Looking at the rates of display by region, in England, food businesses in London were less likely than average to display their FHRS sticker (51% compared to the national average of 69%). As shown in [Figure 3.3](#), in the North West the rate of display increased since last year, with 76% of outlets displaying a sticker compared to 60% in 2022, bringing the region back in line with the national average.

In Northern Ireland, unlike in previous years, there were no significant differences in the rates of display across the five regions. While the display rate increased across the nation as a whole, there were no significant increases or decreases within specific regions compared to 2022.

In Wales, businesses in the South West were less likely to display a sticker (87% compared to the national average of 92%). Meanwhile, those in the South East were more likely than average to display a sticker (95%), also marking a significant increase compared to 2022.

Whether rating sticker was clearly visible

The physical audits also captured whether rating stickers were visible from outside business premises and whether they were clearly visible to customers (either inside or outside).¹⁴ As in previous years, the vast majority of FHRS stickers observed were clearly visible.

In England, 64% of businesses had a sticker displayed so that it was visible from the outside. As presented in [Table 3.1](#), this figure has steadily increased over the last few years, though this does not represent a significant change. One in twenty businesses in England (5%) displayed a

¹⁴ 'Clearly visible' is defined as not obscured by any other stickers or posters and not blocked from view by any furniture or objects.

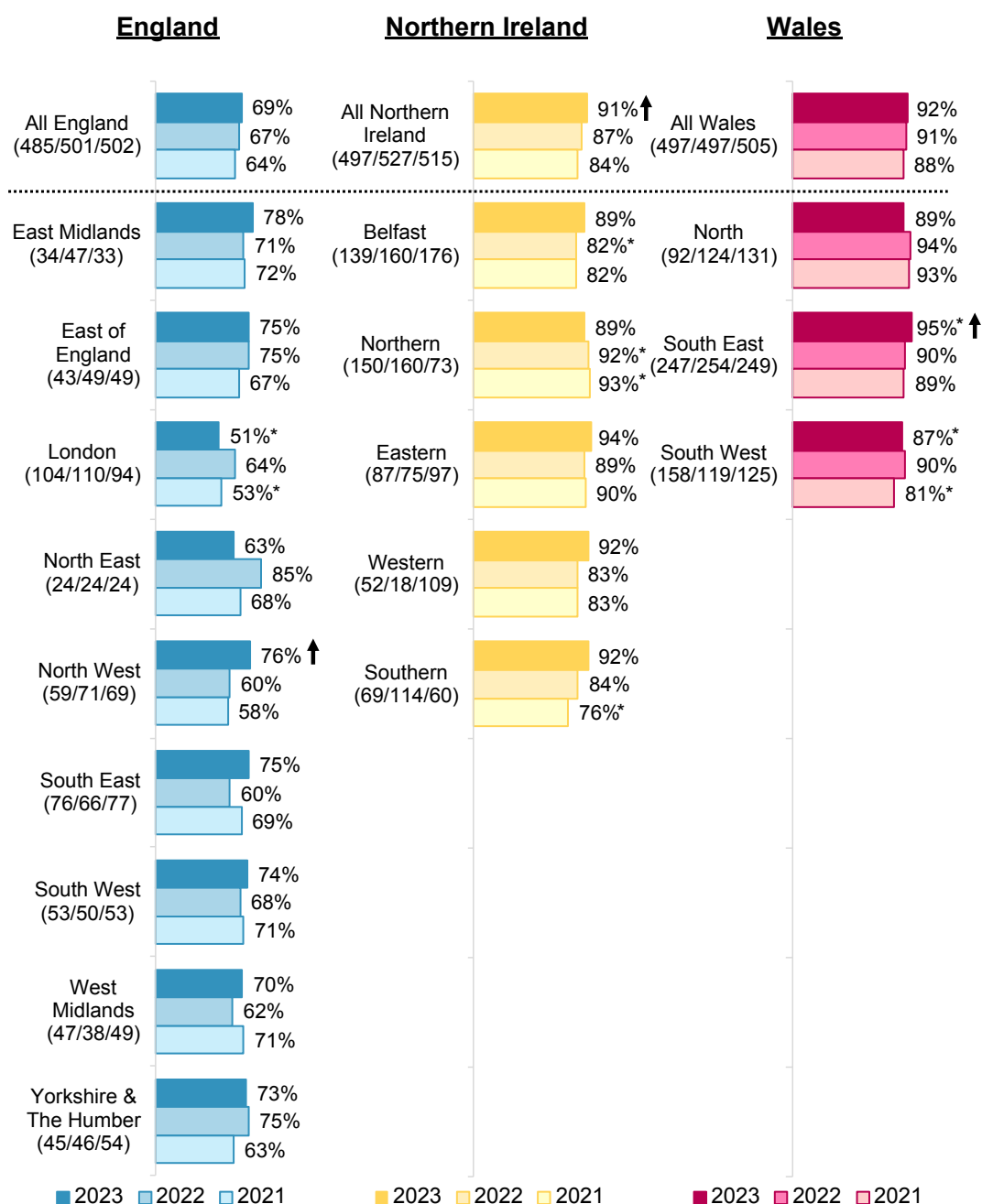


Figure 3.3. Rates of display of FHRs sticker by region, between 2021 and 2023

Note: Did you see an FHRs sticker at this outlet? All audited businesses 2023/2022/2021 (England 485/501/502, NI 497/527/515, Wales 497/497/505. Bases per region shown on chart axis in brackets). ↑ Denotes a significant increase between 2022 and 2023. * Indicates a significant difference to the national average.

sticker inside their premises but not outside. Irrespective of the location of display, two thirds (67%) of businesses displayed a sticker in a location deemed 'clearly visible' by auditors.

Table 3.1. Display rates in England

Type of display	2023 (n=485)	2022 (n=501)	2021 (n=502)
Displayed outside	64%	63%	59%
Displayed inside only	5%	4%	5%
Not displayed	31%	33%	36%
Summary: Displayed inside or visible outside	69%	67%	64%
Deemed 'clearly visible'	67%	66%	63%

Note: Did you see an FHRS sticker at this outlet? – Yes. Base: All audited food businesses 2023/2022/2021 (England 485/501/502)

Table 3.2. Display rates in Northern Ireland

Type of display	2023 (n=497)	2022 (n=527)	2021 (n=515)
Displayed outside	88%	85%*	77%
Displayed inside only	3%	2%**	8%
Not displayed	9%**	13%	16%
Summary: Displayed inside or visible outside	91%*	87%	84%
Deemed 'clearly visible'	89%	86%	83%

Note: Did you see an FHRS sticker at this outlet? – Yes. Base: All audited food businesses 2023/2022/2021 (NI 497/527/515) –* Denotes a significant increase since 2022. ** Denotes a significant decrease since 2022.

In Northern Ireland 88% of businesses had a sticker visible from outside.¹⁵ This was broadly consistent with the findings in 2022, maintaining the level after an increase between 2021 and 2022. 91% of businesses had a sticker visible from inside or outside, a significant increase from 87% in 2022. Close to nine in ten businesses (89%) displayed a sticker in a location deemed 'clearly visible' by auditors (either inside or outside). This can be seen in [Table 3.2](#).

In Wales, as presented in [Table 3.3](#), the proportion of businesses that had a sticker visible from outside remained consistent with 2022 (88%).¹⁶ The number of food businesses only displaying a sticker inside (4%) or not displaying a sticker (8%), also remained broadly consistent with findings in 2022. As in Northern Ireland, 89% displayed a sticker in a location deemed 'clearly visible' by auditors (either inside or outside).

¹⁵ Businesses in Northern Ireland are legally required to display their ratings at or near each customer entrance like the front door, entrance or window of the business. Stickers in Northern Ireland must be displayed in a location where they can be readily seen and easily read by customers before they enter the establishment when it is open for business.

¹⁶ In Wales the Food Hygiene Rating (Wales) Regulations 2013 state that a sticker showing an establishment's valid rating must be displayed at or near each entrance to the establishment that is available for use by customers in a conspicuous place where it is capable of being easily read by customers before they enter the establishment when it is open for business.

Table 3.3. Display rates in Wales

Type of display	2023 (n=497)	2022 (n=505)	2021 (n=498)
Displayed outside	88%	88%	84%
Displayed inside only	4%	3%	4%
Not displayed	8%	9%	12%
Summary: Displayed inside or visible outside	92%	91%	88%
Deemed 'clearly visible'	89%	89%	87%

Note: Did you see an FHRS sticker at this outlet? – Yes. Base: All audited food businesses 2023/2022/2021 (Wales 497/505/498)

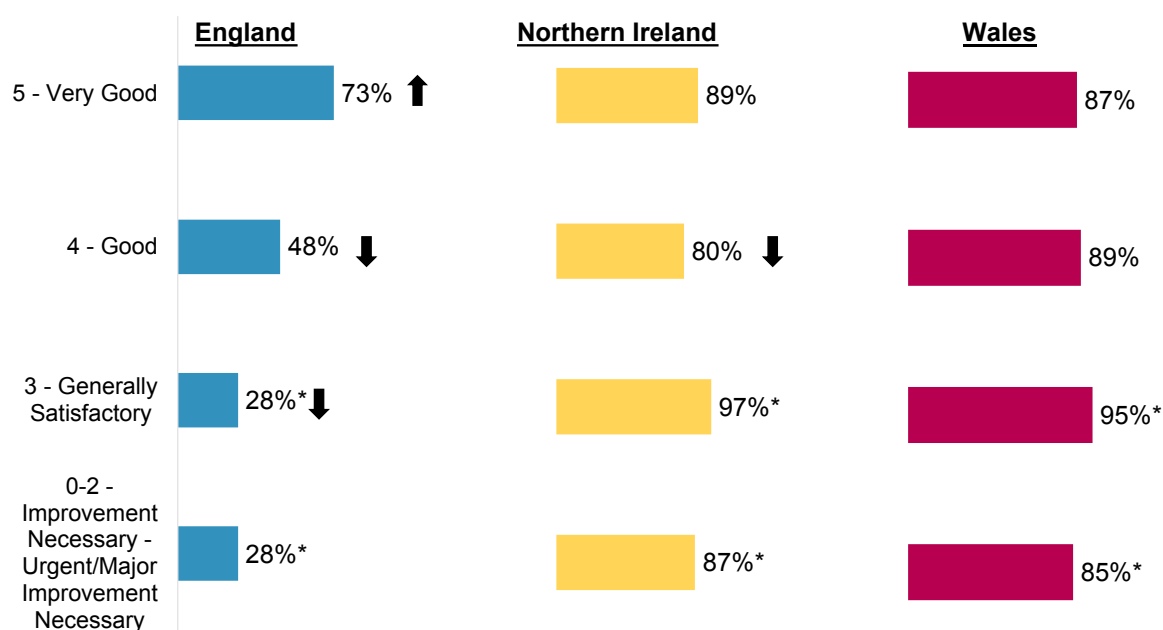


Figure 3.4. Outside display split by FHRS rating

Note: Did you see an FHRS sticker at this outlet? (Outside display). Base: All audited food businesses, food hygiene rating 5/4 (England 352/69; NI 377/76; Wales 333/99). ↑ ↓ Denotes a significant difference compared to the average. * Figures for businesses with a rating of 3 or 0-2 are displayed but should be treated with caution because the base sizes are low: food hygiene rating 3/0-2 (England 42/22; NI 32/12; Wales 40/25).

As illustrated by [Figure 3.4](#), those with a rating of 5 in England were more likely to display their sticker in a location visible from outside the premises (73%), than businesses with a rating of 4 or 3 (48% and 28% respectively). There was considerably less variation among outlets with different ratings in Northern Ireland and Wales, with outlets rated 4 slightly less likely to display a rating outside than average (80%).

Consistent with last year's findings, in all three countries, takeaways and sandwich shops were more likely to have a sticker displayed in a 'clearly visible' location outside the premises (England 72%, Northern Ireland 93% and Wales 96%), while accommodation businesses and pubs, bars and nightclubs in Northern Ireland and Wales were less likely (Northern Ireland 76%, Wales 78%) along with retail businesses in England (54%).

Table 3.4. Inside only display split by FHRS rating

FHRS rating	England	Northern Ireland	Wales
5 – Very good	17	10	14
4 – Good	4	1	1
3 – Generally satisfactory	1	0	0
0-2	0	0	0
Total	22	11	15

Note: Was the food hygiene rating sticker visible from the outside of the premises? – No. Base: Audited food businesses that had an FHRS sticker on display inside their premises but not outside (England: 22; NI: 11; Wales: 15)

As presented in [Table 3.4](#), amongst the minority of businesses all three countries that displayed a sticker inside their premises but not outside, most of these businesses had a rating of 5.

Number of food hygiene rating stickers on display

In addition to recording the rating stickers displayed by businesses, auditors recorded the number of stickers that they saw on the premises. Auditors were asked to check in several different areas around the outlet, and record the rating displayed on each sticker they found.¹⁷ As with previous years, a minority of businesses in each country displayed more than one sticker. Businesses that had multiple stickers displayed were typically establishments with multiple entrances.

In England and Wales, amongst businesses displaying a food hygiene rating sticker, there was no significant change in the proportion that had more than one rating sticker on display compared with findings from 2022 (in England 15% compared to 12% in 2022; in Wales 13% compared to 16% in 2022). The figure increased significantly in Northern Ireland in 2023, with 18% of businesses displaying more than one sticker, compared to 12% in 2022. Retail businesses in Wales and Northern Ireland were significantly less likely than average to display multiple rating stickers (11% compared to 18% average in Northern Ireland and 5% compared to 13% average in Wales).

Where multiple stickers were displayed, ratings generally matched; of the 185 businesses that had more than one sticker, there were seven cases in which there were discrepancies in the ratings displayed. This was either due to a business displaying two different numeric ratings (for example a

¹⁷ This included but was not limited to: On the walls in the main service area, at the counter or till, at the entrances to any non-public areas e.g. the kitchen.

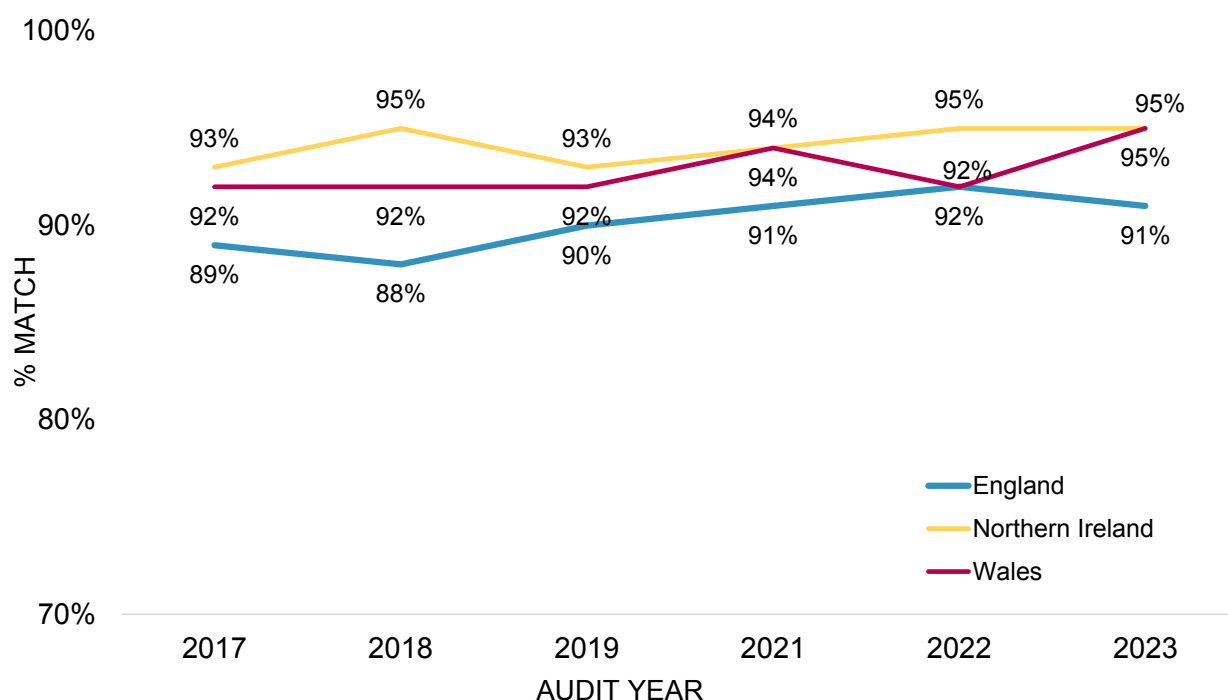


Figure 3.5. Whether displayed FHRs sticker matched FHRs database

Note: Does the food hygiene rating at location match what is in the FHRs database? – Yes Base: All businesses displaying FHRs (England: 332; NI:452; Wales: 456). Previous years base sizes range from 276 to 323 in England; 429 to 458 in NI; and 435 to 467 in Wales.

sticker with a rating of 5 and a sticker with a rating of 4) or two businesses in Northern Ireland displaying both a numeric rating and an 'Awaiting inspection' sticker.

To check the accuracy of FHRs stickers being displayed, the ratings observed by auditors within businesses were compared to those found on the FHRs database. As shown in [Figure 3.5](#), most of the food businesses in each country that displayed a sticker displayed a rating which matched the FHRs database (England 91%; Northern Ireland 95%; Wales 95%).¹⁸ The proportion of food businesses whose displayed food hygiene rating matched the rating recorded in the database was in line with that recorded in previous years and has remained broadly consistent since 2017.

In the small number of cases where the rating displayed did not match the database rating, businesses tended to be displaying a higher rating (England 27 out of 29; Northern Ireland 17 out of 20; Wales 12 out of 20).

¹⁸ There may be temporary differences between the rating displayed at a business (or their website) and online rating for which there are valid reasons, such as: the business has appealed its latest rating and is awaiting the result; or the local authority is in the process of uploading the new rating to the FSA's ratings website. Even if a business achieves the top rating there can be a short delay while the local authority updates the ratings website.

As previously mentioned, there were also seven outlets displaying multiple different ratings, of which five were displaying a rating higher than the rating in the FHRS database.

For all three nations, nearly all businesses with a rating of 5 on the FHRS database were observed to be displaying the correct rating (England 99%; Northern Ireland 99%; Wales 97%). By comparison, 67% of businesses in England, 80% of businesses in Northern Ireland and 86% of businesses in Wales with a rating of 4 on the FHRS database were observed to be displaying the correct rating.

3. Online display

This chapter presents observed and self-reported rates of display of food hygiene ratings online, drawing findings from both the audit and telephone survey. The chapter covers display on both aggregator platforms (e.g. platforms that connects users with various restaurants and food establishments such as Just Eat, Deliveroo, Uber Eats) and non-aggregator platforms (including businesses' own websites and their social media). The chapter concludes with survey findings around attitudes towards mandatory online display.

Audit of online ordering and display of ratings on businesses own websites and social media

In this wave, auditors conducted a more thorough online audit than in previous years, with the aim of better understanding the online presence of food business operators and the rate of display of FHRS ratings across three online platforms: Facebook business pages, Instagram profiles, and the businesses' own websites with online ordering capabilities.

Across all three countries most businesses were observed to use at least one of the three online platforms of interest (77% in England, 77% in Northern Ireland and 76% in Wales). As presented in [Figure 4.1](#), the most widely used was Facebook, with around seven in ten businesses in England (67%), Northern Ireland (69%) and Wales (67%) found to have a presence on this social media platform. Around a third of businesses had an Instagram profile (England 36%; Northern Ireland 35%; Wales 30%) and around a quarter had a website with online ordering capabilities (England 27%; Northern Ireland 24%; Wales 24%).

The use of online platforms varied by outlet type. In all three countries, accommodation businesses and pubs, bars and nightclubs (England 81%; Northern Ireland 80%; Wales 76%) and restaurants and catering businesses (England 73%; Northern Ireland 77%; Wales 79%) were more

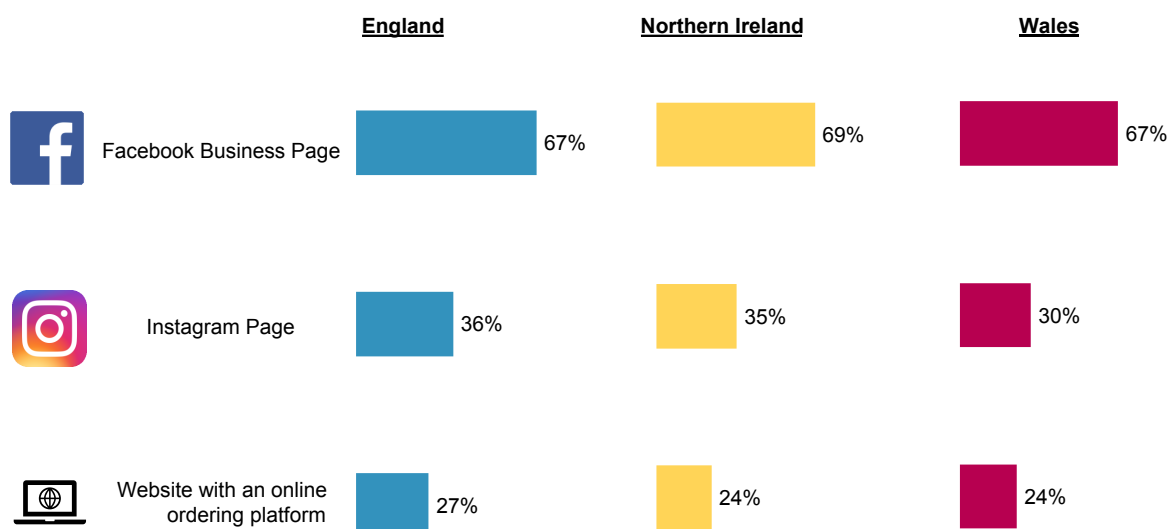


Figure 4.1. Use of online platforms

Note: Does the outlet have their own website with an online ordering function, a Facebook business page or an Instagram page) Base: All - England (485), Northern Ireland (497), Wales (497)

likely to have a Facebook business page. By contrast, takeaways and sandwich shops in England (48%) and Wales (43%) were more likely to have a website with an online ordering function.

Businesses which used online food delivery aggregators (e.g. Just Eat, Deliveroo, Uber Eats) were more likely to have a website with an online ordering function than those not using aggregator services (England: 44% vs 18%; Northern Ireland: 51% vs 19%; Wales 61% vs 15%).

Despite the widespread use of Facebook, Instagram and websites with online ordering capabilities, only a small minority of businesses were found to be displaying an FHRS rating on these platforms during the audit: 10% in England, 5% in Northern Ireland and 8% in Wales (see [Figure 4.2](#)). It should be noted that the rate of display on aggregator platforms was not audited. This is because customers can find the FHRS rating of any business listed on an aggregator platform, typically by opening separate information pages (i.e. behind a 'click-through').

In England, 10% of those with a Facebook business page were found to display a rating on this platform (equating to 7% of all businesses in England), 6% with an Instagram profile displayed their rating on this platform (equating to 2% of all businesses) and 12% with a website with an online ordering platform were found to be displaying a rating on this platform (equating to 3% of all businesses).

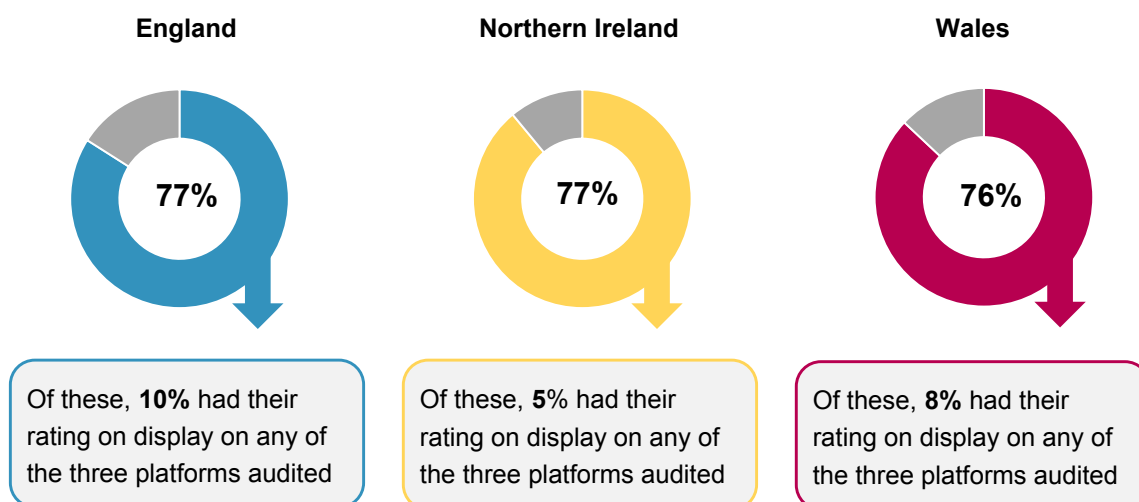


Figure 4.2. Use of any of the three audited online platforms and display of FHRs ratings on any of these platforms

Note: Does the Outlet display a rating online? (On their own website, Facebook Business page or Instagram page)
Base: All - England (485), Northern Ireland (497), Wales (497)

In Northern Ireland, 5% of those with a Facebook business page were found to display their rating on this platform (equating to 3% of all businesses in Northern Ireland), 2% with an Instagram profile displayed their rating on this platform (equating to 1% of all businesses) and 5% with a website with an online ordering platform were found to be displaying a rating on this platform (equating to 1% of all businesses in Northern Ireland).

In Wales, 9% of those with a Facebook business page were found to display their rating on this platform (equating to 6% of all businesses in Wales), 4% with an Instagram profile displayed their rating on this platform (equating to 1% of all businesses) and 10% with a website with an online ordering platform were found to be displaying a rating on this platform (equating to 2% of all businesses in Wales).

Use of online food delivery aggregator platforms

As part of the online audit, checks were also conducted on the presence of businesses on four major online food delivery aggregators: Just Eat, Deliveroo, Uber Eats, and Foodhub. As shown in [Figure 4.3](#), a third (34%) of businesses in England, a fifth (20%) of businesses in Wales and around one in six (16%) businesses in Northern Ireland were present on at least one aggregator. It should be noted that the rate of display on aggregator

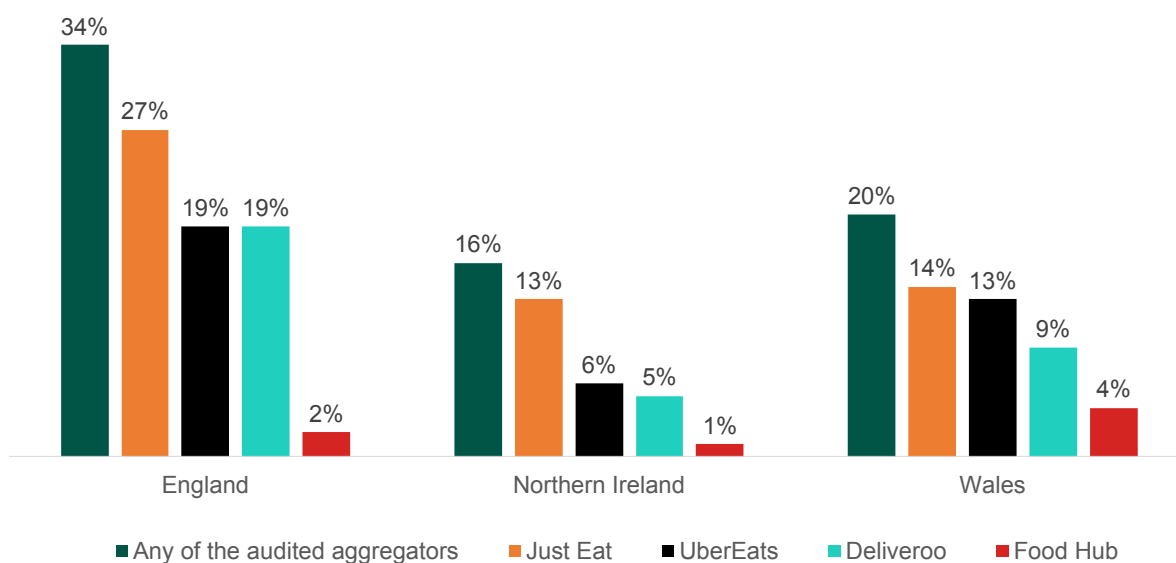


Figure 4.3. Use of online food delivery aggregators

Note: Does the outlet use online food delivery aggregators such as Just Eat, Deliveroo, Uber Eats, Foodhub? Base: All - England (485), Northern Ireland (497), Wales (497)

platforms was not audited. This is because customers can find the FHRs rating of any business listed on an aggregator platform, typically by opening separate information pages (i.e. behind a 'click-through').

Across all three countries, Just Eat was the most commonly used online food delivery aggregator (used by 27% of all audited businesses in England; 13% in Northern Ireland; and 14% in Wales), followed by Uber Eats (England 19%; Northern Ireland 6%; Wales 13%) and Deliveroo (England 19%; Northern Ireland 5%; Wales 9%). Fewer than one in twenty businesses were found to use Foodhub (England 2%; Northern Ireland 1%; Wales 4%).

As may be expected, takeaways and sandwich shops were more likely than other outlet types to use an online food delivery aggregator in all three countries (63% in England, 32% in Northern Ireland, and 48% in Wales). There was no significant variation in the use of online aggregators by rating in any of the three countries.

Reported use of online platforms from the survey

In the telephone survey all businesses were asked whether customers are able to order food from their business through a third-party website or app (such as Just Eat, Uber Eats or Deliveroo), through an ordering function on their own website, or through their social media accounts (such as Instagram, Twitter or Facebook).

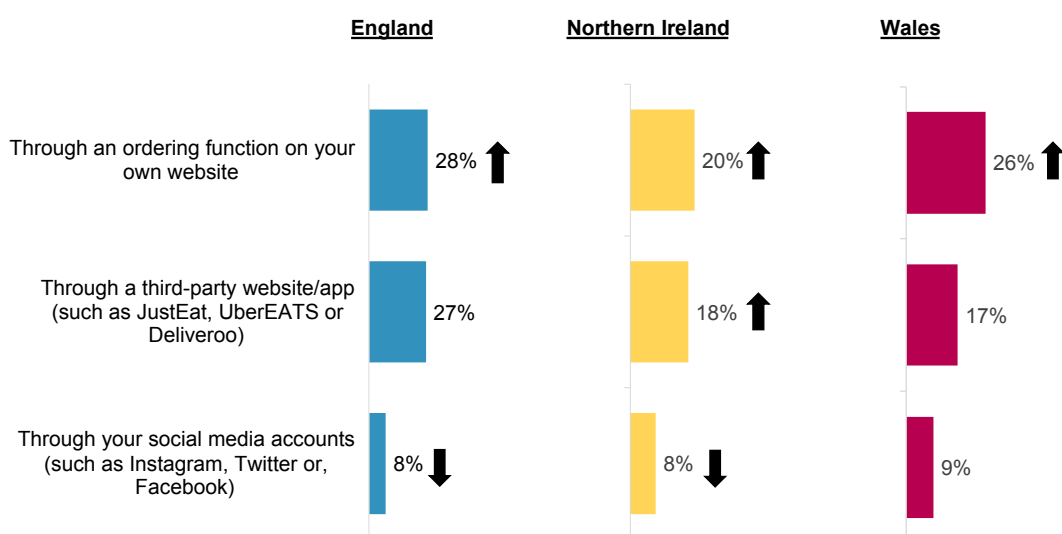


Figure 4.4. Reported ways in which customers can order food

Note: A4. Can customers order food from your business in any of the following ways.... 'Yes' Base: All FBOs (England 500; NI 500; Wales 500). ↑ / ↓ Denotes a significant difference compared to the average.

Around two-fifths of businesses in England (43%) and Wales (37%) and three in ten (30%) in Northern Ireland reported taking food orders on any of these platforms. Websites with an ordering function were the most widely used platform across all three countries (England 28%; Northern Ireland 20%; Wales 26%). This is in line with the proportion of businesses found to have a website with an online ordering function in the online audit (England 27%; Northern Ireland 24%; Wales 24%). The next most common was third-party websites or apps (England 27%; Northern Ireland 18%; Wales 17%). Fewer than one in ten businesses in England (8%), Northern Ireland (8%) and Wales (9%) reported taking orders through social media.¹⁹

Across all three countries, the proportion of businesses reporting using an ordering function on their own website increased compared to 2022 (28% in England compared to 19% in 2022, 20% in Northern Ireland compared to 15% in 2022 and 26% in Wales compared to 17% in 2022). There was also a slight drop in the reported use of social media accounts to sell food to customers in England and Northern Ireland, with only 8% of businesses offering this option to customers compared to 12% in both countries in

¹⁹ The online audit of Facebook and Instagram recorded an outlet's presence on either of these sites only. It did not record whether an outlet's Facebook business page or Instagram profile had an online ordering facility, or whether the outlet invites orders through messaging services on these platforms, so no comparison can be drawn to the findings of the telephone survey.

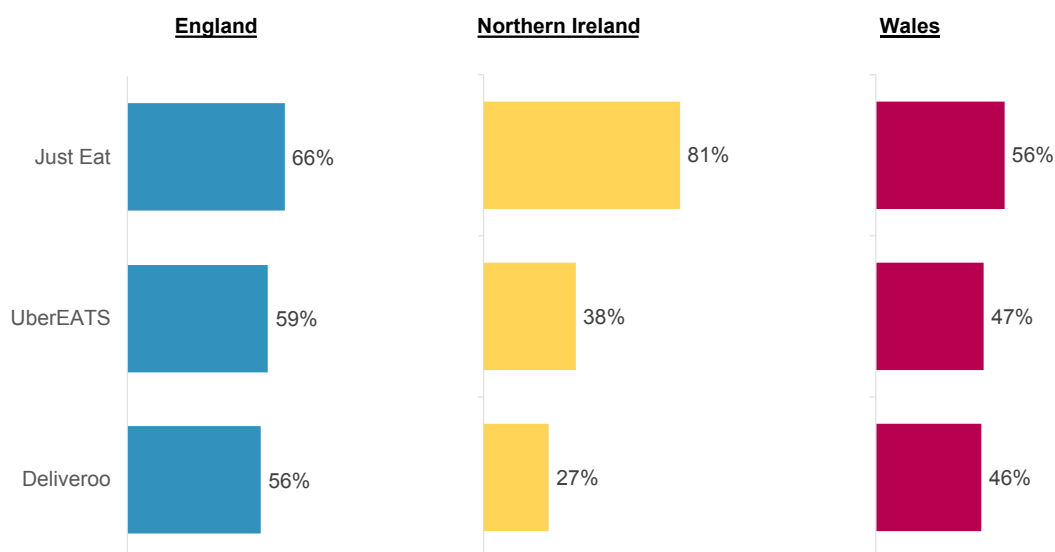


Figure 4.5. Reported use of delivery service website/apps

Note: What delivery service websites/apps can customers use to order food from your business? Base: FBOs who use an aggregator (England 125; NI 77; Wales 82).

2022. The number of businesses reporting using a third-party website or app to sell food to customers increased in Northern Ireland from 11% to 18% in 2023.

Food businesses who reported using an aggregator were asked which delivery service websites and apps customers can order their food from. In line with the audit findings, the most widely used aggregator across all three countries was Just Eat (England 66%; Northern Ireland 81%; Wales 56%), followed by Uber Eats (England 59%; Northern Ireland 38%; Wales 47%) and Deliveroo (England 56%; Northern Ireland 27%; Wales 46%).

Food businesses who reported using social media were asked to specify which social media platforms customers can use to order food. Most used was Facebook (76% in England, 91% in Northern Ireland, and 89% in Wales), while Instagram was used by around two fifths in England (37%) and Northern Ireland (40%) and by a quarter (25%) in Wales.²⁰

²⁰ Base sizes of businesses that reported selling food to customers through social media were relatively low (England: 40, Northern Ireland: 38, Wales:47) so findings on which platforms were used should be treated with caution.

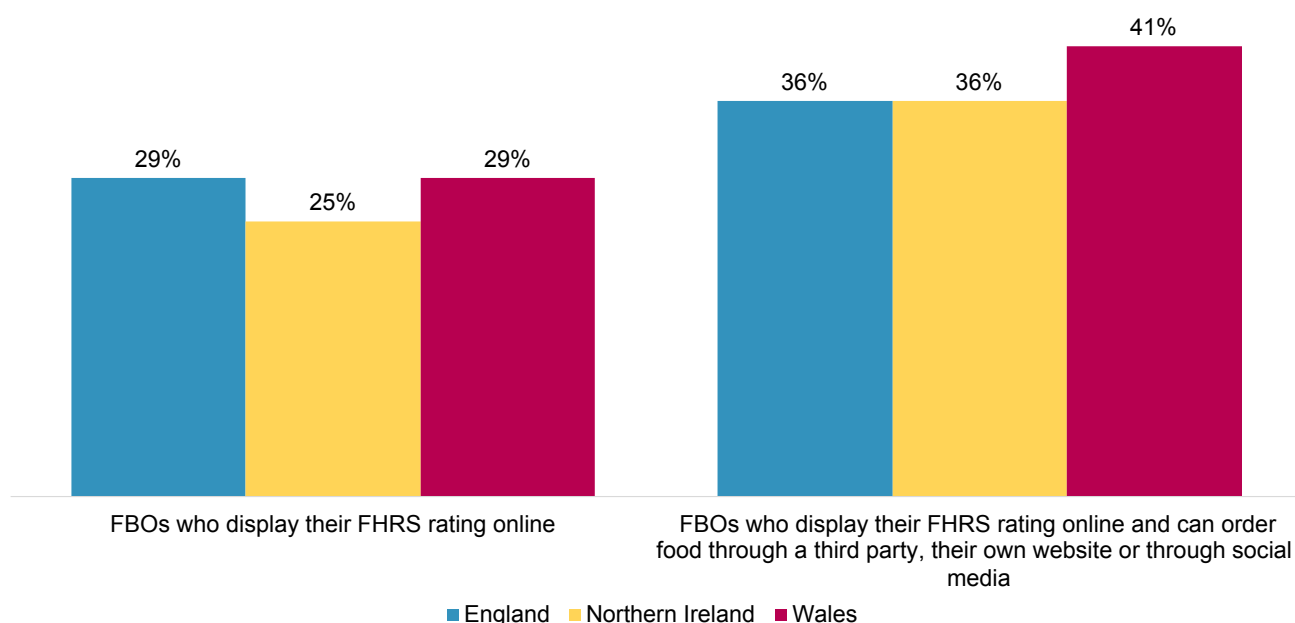


Figure 4.6. Proportion of food businesses reporting display of food hygiene ratings online

Note: B18A. Do you display your Food Hygiene Rating online? Base: Businesses aware of FHRS rating (England: 457; NI: 486; Wales: 481) and FBOs who display their FHRS rating online and can order food through a third party, their own website or through social media (England: 200; NI: 134; Wales: 177).

Reported rate of display on online platforms from the survey

As presented in [Figure 4.6](#) Proportion of food businesses reporting display of food hygiene ratings online, a minority of all businesses reported displaying their food hygiene rating online in England (29%), Northern Ireland (25%) and Wales (29%). This refers to the display of a rating on any online platform, which likely explains the difference between the self-reported rates of online display and the rates recorded in the online audit, which only considered three specific online platforms.

Among those that allow customers to order food online via a third-party application or website, through their own website or via social media this figure increased to two-fifths in Northern Ireland (41%) and around a third in England and Wales (36% each).

In England and Wales, those with a rating of 5 were more likely than those with a rating of less than 5 to report displaying their rating online (31% compared to 20% among those with a rating of less than 5 in England, and 32% compared to 20% among those with a rating of less than 5 in Wales).

The display of ratings online also varied by outlet type. In Northern Ireland and Wales, takeaways and sandwich shops were more likely to report displaying a rating online (Northern Ireland 40%; Wales 42%). In all three

Table 4.1. Reported display on online platforms with ordering facilities split by country

Online platform	England	Northern Ireland	Wales
Ordering function on their own website	59% (26 out of 44)	54% (14 out of 26)	54% (26 out of 48)
Third-party delivery website or app	80% (36 out of 45)	67% (18 out of 27)	64% (21 out of 33)
Social media	56% (9 out of 16)	80% (12 out of 15)	73% (16 out of 22)

Note: B18b. Does your business currently display its Food Hygiene Rating on any of the following online platforms?. NB: Treat with caution. Low base size.

countries, retail businesses were less likely than average to report displaying their rating online (England 21%; Northern Ireland 17%; Wales 15%).

Amongst those that reported displaying their rating online, by far the most common platform used was business websites (England 69%; Northern Ireland 57%; Wales 65%). This is in line with the proportion that reported displaying a rating on their business website in 2022 in England and Northern Ireland, and represents a significant increase in Wales, up from 50% last year. Where businesses sold food via ordering functions on their own website, delivery service websites or apps or social media, more than half reported displaying an FHRS rating on these platforms. However, the base sizes of these questions are low so should be treated with caution (see [Table 4.1](#)).

Amongst those that reported not displaying their rating online on any website or platform, roughly half in England (53%) and two fifths (40%) in Northern Ireland and Wales said they would consider doing so in the future. This represents a significant decrease across all three nations compared to last year's findings (England 61%; Northern Ireland 53%; Wales 56%). There was little variation by outlet type and FHRS rating in the likelihood to consider online display across all three counties.

Attitudes towards display on delivery aggregator platforms

In the telephone survey, businesses were asked how they would feel about online food delivery aggregators displaying food hygiene ratings in a location where customers can see the rating without having to actively seek it out (e.g. behind a 'click-through'). This is the first year that this question was included in the survey, so comparison to previous years is not possible.

As shown in [Figure 4.7](#), attitudes towards this suggested change were positive, with 69% in England, 68% in Northern Ireland and 67% in Wales suggesting that this would be a good thing. A small proportion were

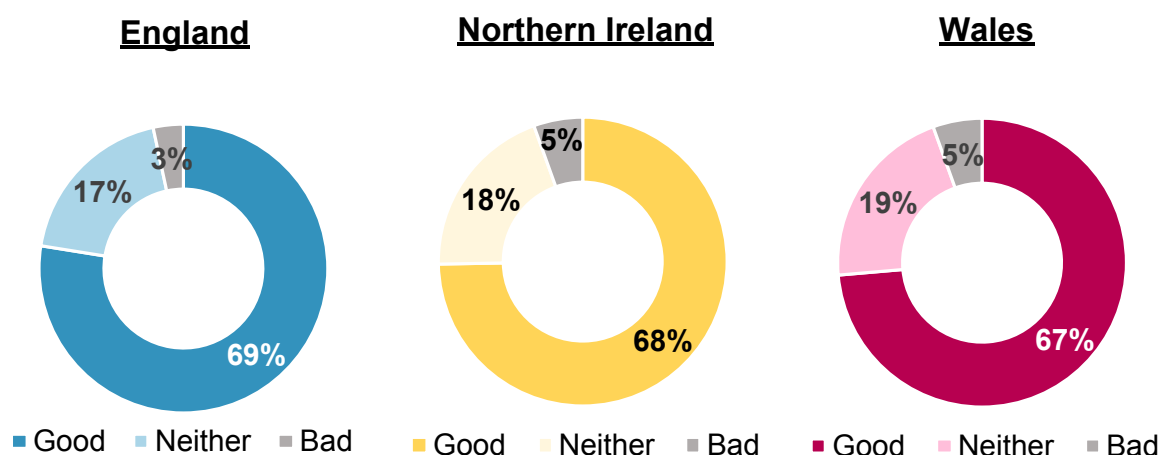


Figure 4.7. Opinions on FHR rating being displayed in a readily seen location on delivery aggregators

Note: B20a. How would you feel about a third-party ordering service displaying your food hygiene rating in a readily seen location on the site rather than behind a 'click-through'? Base: FBOs who know their FHR rating (England 457, Northern Ireland 486, Wales 481)

ambivalent towards this change, saying it would be neither a good thing nor a bad thing (17% in England, 18% in Northern Ireland and 19% in Wales) and a small number said it would be a bad thing (3% in England, and 5% in Northern Ireland and Wales respectively)

Looking specifically at those that reported that customers can order food from their business via a third-party website or app, a majority agreed that this change would be a good thing (78% in England, 87% in Northern Ireland and 83% in Wales).

Similarly, across all three countries, businesses that reported taking food orders online – via third-party applications or websites, social media platforms or through their own websites – were more likely than average to support the concept of food hygiene ratings being displayed in a readily seen location on aggregator platforms (England 77%; Northern Ireland 80%; Wales 78%).

In both England and Wales, businesses with a rating of 5 were more likely than average to say that this would be a good thing (72% and 71% respectively). In England, nearly nine in ten takeaway and sandwich shops (88%) said it would be a good thing, significantly higher than the average across other outlet types. Similarly, in Northern Ireland, takeaway and sandwich shops were significantly more likely to say that displaying the rating in a readily seen location on these sites would be a good thing (82%).

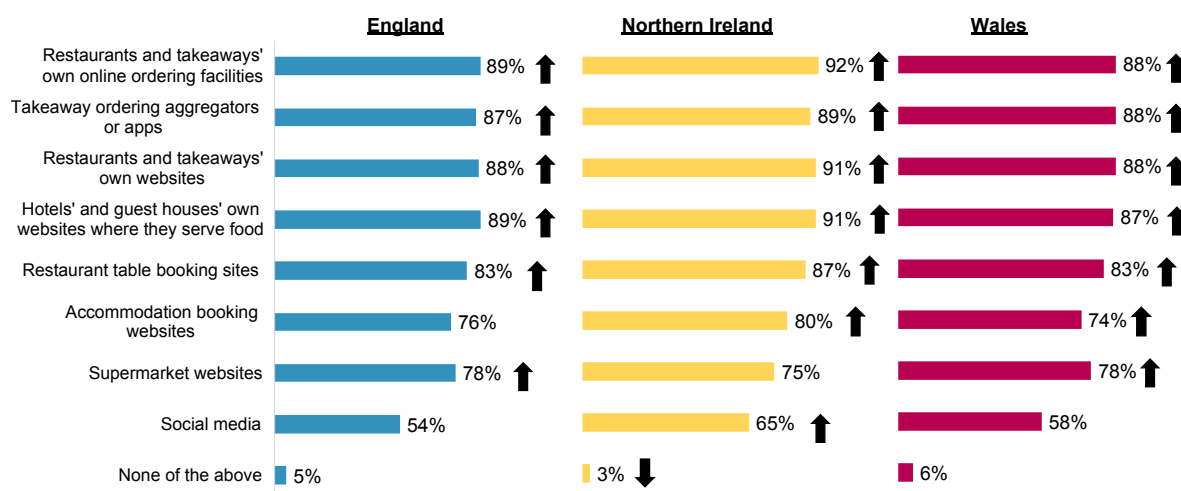


Figure 4.8. Online facilities that should be required by law to display Food Hygiene ratings

Note: C13. Which, if any, of the following online facilities do you think should be required by law to display Food Hygiene Ratings? Base: FBOs that have FHRS (England: 467; Northern Ireland: 489; Wales: 487). ↑ / ↓ denotes a significant difference compared to 2022.

Attitudes towards mandatory display online

Across England, Northern Ireland and Wales, the majority of businesses felt that the display of food hygiene ratings should become mandatory for at least some online platforms (England: 94%; Northern Ireland: 96%; Wales: 93%). In Northern Ireland, this represents a significant increase on last year's finding where 93% felt it should be mandatory for at least some outlets.

As presented in [Figure 4.8](#), compared to 2022 there has been a significant increase in support for mandatory display across almost all the online platforms that businesses were prompted with. The three platforms where businesses most commonly supported mandatory online display were:

- Restaurants and takeaways' own online ordering facilities (England 89%; Northern Ireland 92%; Wales 88%, up from 82%, 84% and 83% in 2022)
- Takeaway ordering aggregators or apps (England: 87%; Northern Ireland: 89%; Wales: 88%, up from 82%, 83% and 81% in 2022)
- Websites of restaurants and takeaways (England: 88%; Northern Ireland: 91%; Wales: 88%, up from 83%, 83% and 79% in 2022).

While support for mandatory display on social media platforms was lower than the other platforms mentioned, still more than half of businesses in England (54%), and Wales (58%) were supportive of it, and the support for it in Northern Ireland significantly increased (65% up from 59% in 2022).

When asked more generally for their thoughts on a scheme being introduced where you would be required by law to display your food hygiene rating on all online ordering platforms, a majority of businesses gave positive comments. Many noted that mandatory online display would benefit customers by providing them with information to inform purchasing decisions, while others said that it would be beneficial to their business as it would promote their high standards. Some noted that as a customer, using a digital platform should be no different to ordering from a physical premises, especially due to the growing importance of online reviews and an online presence.

"That would be great. Digital ordering is the same as ordering face to face. Any information available to customers in person should be available on online ordering systems."

Takeaways and sandwich shops, Northern Ireland, FHRS rating of 5

"I'd be fine with that; it would give confidence to the customer when going onto a company's website if it had been reviewed independently and their food hygiene standards had been checked."

Retail, England, FHRS rating of 5

"[Online ordering platforms] are the business' online front door, so the rating should be on online sites."

Restaurants and catering, Wales, FHRS rating of 5

The minority of businesses that were not supportive of mandatory online display often had concerns about the cost and complexity of implementing this change to their websites, social media platforms and other online platforms. Others took issue with mandatory online display because of reservations about the efficacy and fairness of the FHRS.

"It's another job for us to do, and additional burden, and we don't like things that are mandatory."

Restaurants and catering, England, FHRS rating of 5

"If I could refer you to the way the local council puts into practice how they carry out inspections; they arrive with no warning which I don't see as being fully fair. If it was fairer, then I'd be happy to display."

Restaurants and catering, Northern Ireland, FHRS rating of 4

Summary of online display findings

In summary, findings from the audit and survey indicate that there is widespread use of online platforms amongst food business operators but a relatively low level of display of FHRS ratings online. During the audit, most businesses were observed to have a Facebook business page, Instagram profile or a website with online ordering capabilities (67% in England, 69% in Northern Ireland and 67% in Wales). Of these, only 10% in England, 5% in Northern Ireland and 8% in Wales were found to be displaying ratings on any of these platforms.

The audit revealed that businesses were more likely to have a social media presence than to have their own website with ordering capabilities. However, findings from the survey indicated that a business' own website is the principal platform through which customer food orders are made (England: 28%; Northern Ireland: 20%; Wales: 26%), closely followed by food delivery aggregators (England 27%; Northern Ireland 18%; Wales 17%). This suggests that while widely used, social media platforms might generally only be used for promotional activity.

Attitudes to mandatory online display remain overwhelmingly positive, with nearly all businesses that participated in the telephone survey agreeing that the display of food hygiene ratings should become mandatory for at least some online platforms (England: 94%; Northern Ireland: 96%; Wales: 93%). Furthermore, most businesses that participated in the telephone survey supported the idea of FHRS ratings being presented at the point of ordering in a readily seen location on aggregator sites rather than behind a 'click-through' (England: 69%; Northern Ireland: 68%; Wales: 67%).

4. Awareness of the scheme and satisfaction with ratings

Business awareness of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) is important to drive and maintain compliance with food hygiene standards. This chapter begins by covering awareness of the scheme. It then moves on to explore food business' attitudes towards their food hygiene rating.

Awareness of the scheme

More than nine in ten food businesses in England (92%), Northern Ireland (95%) and Wales (97%) reported having heard of the FHRS, as per [Figure 5.1](#). Historically, awareness of the scheme in Northern Ireland and Wales has been higher than in England, likely reflecting the different legal requirements around the FHRS in the different countries (with display being mandatory in Northern Ireland (since 2016) and Wales (since 2013))

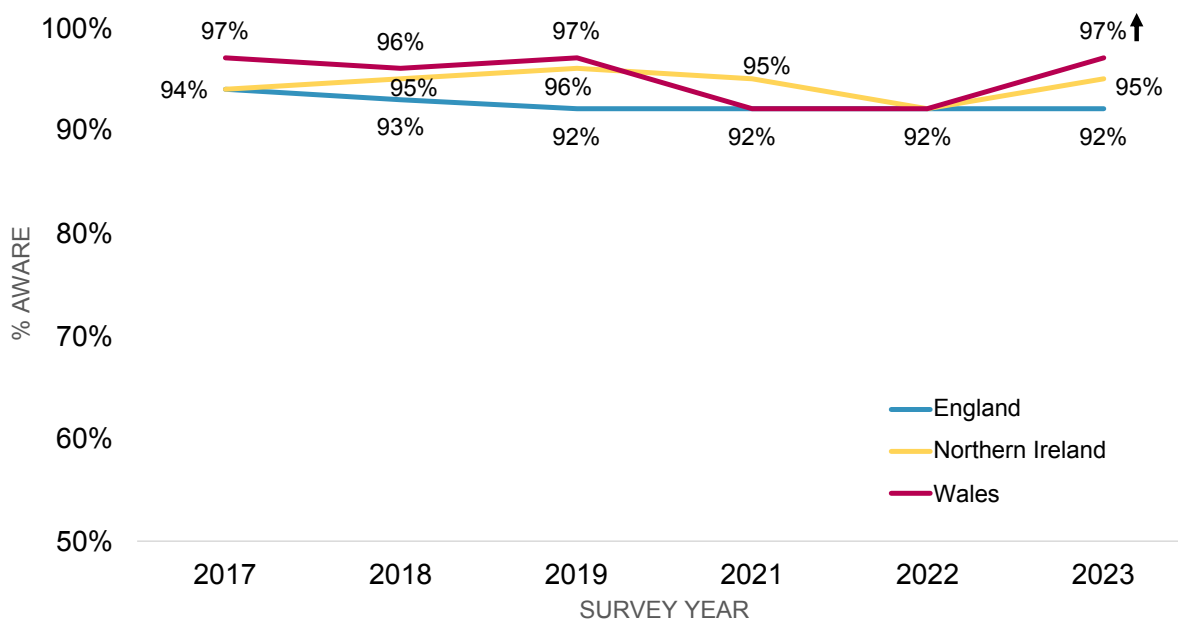


Figure 5.1. Awareness of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS)

B1. Note: Have you heard of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme? Base: All FBOs 2023 (England 500, Northern Ireland 500; Wales 500) Previous years base sizes range from 464 to 500 in England; 469 to 500 in NI; and 478 to 501 in Wales. ↑ / ↓ denotes a significant difference compared to 2022.

but voluntary in England).²¹ After an anomalous 2022 (where awareness levels were equal across all three countries) and 2021 (where awareness levels were the same in England and Wales), this trend returned in 2023. Compared to 2022, there was a slight increase in awareness in Northern Ireland, but not to a statistically significant extent (from 92% to 95%). There was a statistically significant increase in Wales (from 92% to 97%).

Within each country, self-reported awareness of the FHRS was at a similarly high level across the different sizes of food businesses. However, there were notable differences by sector and FHRS rating in Northern Ireland and Wales. Accommodation businesses and pubs, bars and nightclubs in Northern Ireland were less likely than average to be aware of the scheme (91%). In both Northern Ireland and Wales, retail outlets were more likely than average to be aware (Northern Ireland 98% and Wales 99%). In Wales there was also variation between business with different FHRS ratings – those with a rating of 5 were more likely than average to be aware (98%), whereas those with a rating of 4 were less likely than average (93%).

²¹ It should be noted that the results for food businesses in Northern Ireland and Wales may be affected by a self-report bias due to the statutory requirement to display FHRS stickers in these countries.

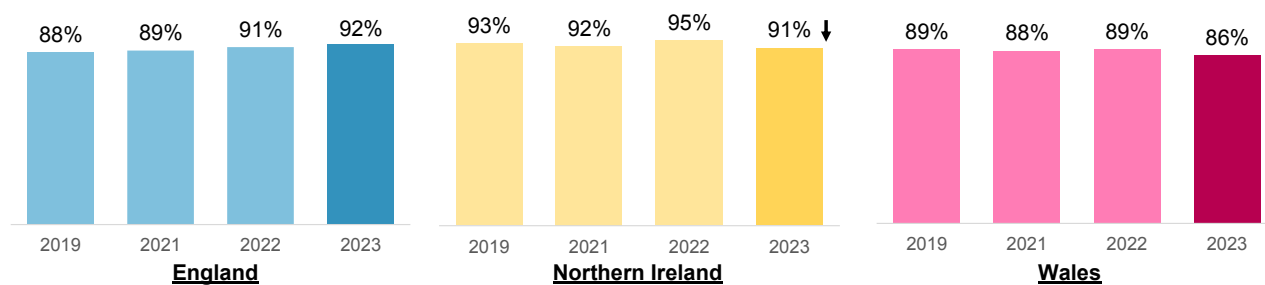


Figure 5.2. Satisfaction with food hygiene rating

Note: B6. Are you satisfied with the rating you received? – Yes; Base: Where knows food hygiene rating 2023/2022 (England 457/452; NI 486/482; Wales 481/471). This question refers to the numerical rating a business received, not necessarily the signage. ↑ / ↓ denotes a significant difference compared to 2022.

After further prompting – for example, referencing the green and black rating stickers – slightly more businesses in Northern Ireland and Wales could recall being given a food hygiene rating by their local authority than had recognised the name of the FHRS (Northern Ireland 100% vs 95% and Wales 99% vs 97%). This suggests that some businesses are aware of the scheme but are unfamiliar with its official title.

Satisfaction with food hygiene ratings

As presented in [Figure 5.2](#), amongst those aware of their food hygiene rating, most businesses in England (92%), Northern Ireland (91%) and Wales (86%) reported being satisfied with their rating. In England satisfaction with food hygiene ratings has not changed significantly since 2022, but has continued the steady upward trend observed since 2019. In Northern Ireland satisfaction fell significantly (from 95% in 2022 to 91% 2023). There was also a slight decrease in satisfaction in Wales, but not to a statistically significant extent.

Unsurprisingly, across all three countries, businesses with the highest ratings were more likely to be satisfied. Virtually all businesses with a rating of 5 were satisfied with their rating (England 100%, Northern Ireland 99% and Wales 100%). On the other hand significantly fewer businesses with a rating of 4 were satisfied (England 74%, Northern Ireland 65% and Wales 69%).

Amongst the minority of businesses that were dissatisfied with their food hygiene rating, around half said that this was because the rating was lower than they expected. Some perceived their lower than desired rating to food safety officers being unfair in their assessments or putting too much emphasis on what the business considered to be non-food hygiene aspects (i.e., structure and confidence in management), while others were dissatisfied simply because their rating had fallen since their last assessment.

"The inspector did not take into consideration the age of the building and ongoing renovations that [were being] carried out."

Retail, Northern Ireland, FHRS rating of 3

"We had the five star rating for eight years and the environmental health inspector came in, took her two hours to inspect and gave us a three, it doesn't make sense."

Restaurant/café/canteen, Northern Ireland, FHRS rating of 3

"[There was] different parameters used on this inspection. The business has not changed. previous inspections had not picked up the issues that were noted this time."

Accommodation and pub/bar/nightclub, Wales, FHRS rating of 3

"I understand why they gave me the rating: the out building is old , and [I am] not prepared to sort things out as it would cost thousands, so happy with the [rating of] four."

Takeaways/Sandwich Shops, England, FHRS rating of 4

Minimum satisfactory rating

Businesses were asked what was the lowest food hygiene rating which they would be satisfied with. As shown in [Figure 5.3](#), around six in ten businesses in England (61%) and Northern Ireland (56%) reported they would only be satisfied with a rating of five, while just over half (51%) of businesses in Wales mentioned they would only be satisfied with a rating of five. Around a third of businesses considered a rating of 4 to be the minimum (England 34%, Northern Ireland 36%; Wales 38%). Across all three countries, very few would be satisfied with a rating of 3 or less (England 5%, Northern Ireland 8%; Wales 10%).

Across all three countries, businesses with higher ratings had a higher minimum rating that they would be satisfied with. For example, 74% of businesses in England with a rating of 5 considered 5 to be the lowest rating they would be satisfied with (compared to 61% on average), while 57% of businesses with a rating of 4 considered 4 to be the lowest rating they would be satisfied with (compared to 34% on average). Businesses of different sizes also varied in their responses. In England and Wales, micro businesses were less likely than average to say that 5 would be the lowest rating they would be satisfied with (England 54%; Wales 43%). In Northern Ireland, small businesses were less likely than average to say that 5 would be the lowest rating they would be satisfied with (51%), whilst medium-sized businesses are more likely (70%).

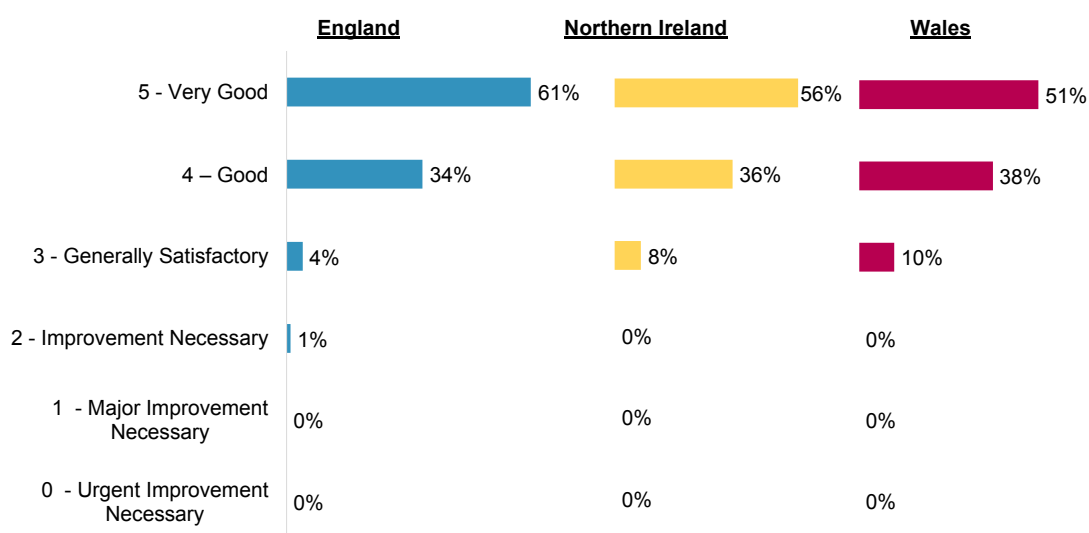


Figure 5.3. Lowest food hygiene rating businesses would be satisfied with

Note: B7a. What is the lowest Food Hygiene Rating you would be satisfied with? Base: Where knows food hygiene rating 2023 (England 457; NI 486; Wales 481).

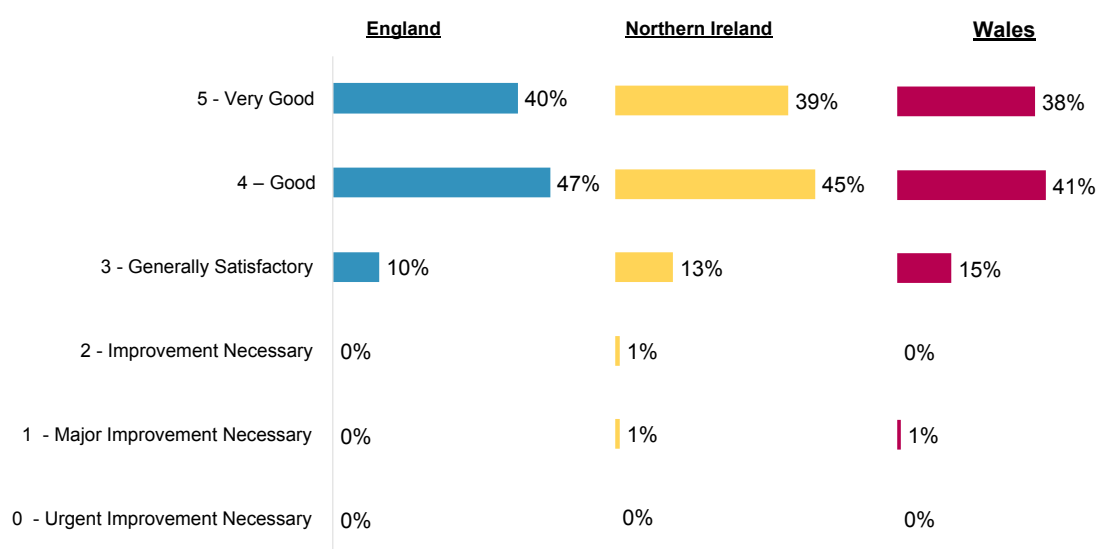


Figure 5.4. Lowest food hygiene rating businesses would consider 'good enough' to display split by rating

Note: B17. And thinking more generally now about the Food Hygiene Rating, what is the lowest Food Hygiene Rating that you would consider 'good enough' to display at your business? Base: Where have FHRS certificate/sticker rating (England 467; NI 489; Wales 487).

Businesses were also asked what was the lowest rating they would consider 'good enough' to display. As illustrated in [Figure 5.4](#) across England, Northern Ireland and Wales most businesses said that only a rating of 4 or 5 would be appropriate (England: 87%; Northern Ireland: 84%; Wales: 79%), with a rating of 4 being the most common baseline (England: 47%; Northern Ireland: 45%; Wales: 41%). Again, across all three countries businesses with higher ratings had a higher minimum rating they would consider to be 'good enough' to display.

5. Reported display of stickers and reasons for non-display

This chapter covers food businesses' self-reported display of Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) stickers according to survey findings, including whether stickers are located somewhere clearly visible from outside the premises and (in Northern Ireland and Wales) whether stickers are displayed at all entrances. The chapter also addresses the reasons some businesses do not display stickers and possible actions that could motivate businesses to start displaying their sticker in England, where display is not mandatory.

Stated display of ratings

Across all three countries, most businesses reported displaying their FHRS sticker somewhere that was clearly visible to customers, as per [Figure 6.1](#). However, this was significantly higher for businesses in Northern Ireland (97%) and Wales (98%) compared to England (82%), where it is not a legal requirement to display an FHRS sticker.²² In England there was a significant reduction in this figure compared to last year (82% vs 87% in 2022), while it remained consistent in Northern Ireland and Wales.

In England and Northern Ireland, those with an FHRS rating of 5 were more likely than average to state they display their rating somewhere visible (England 90%; Northern Ireland 98%). In Wales, there were no significant differences between businesses with different FHRS ratings. Across all three countries there were no significant differences between business sectors or sizes.

As might be expected, self-reported rates of display were higher than rates of display observed during audits (see Chapter 4). In total, 443 food businesses that participated in the telephone survey were also audited. Of these, the majority (83%) self-reported display and this was confirmed when audited. Of the remainder, 14% self-reported display but were found to not be displaying when audited; 2% were unsure of their rating or whether they displayed it in a visible location but were found to be displaying when audited; and 1% self-reported non-display of their rating. These figures are consistent with last year's findings.

²² It should be noted that the results for food businesses in Northern Ireland and Wales may be affected by a self-report bias due to the statutory requirement to display FHRS stickers in these countries.

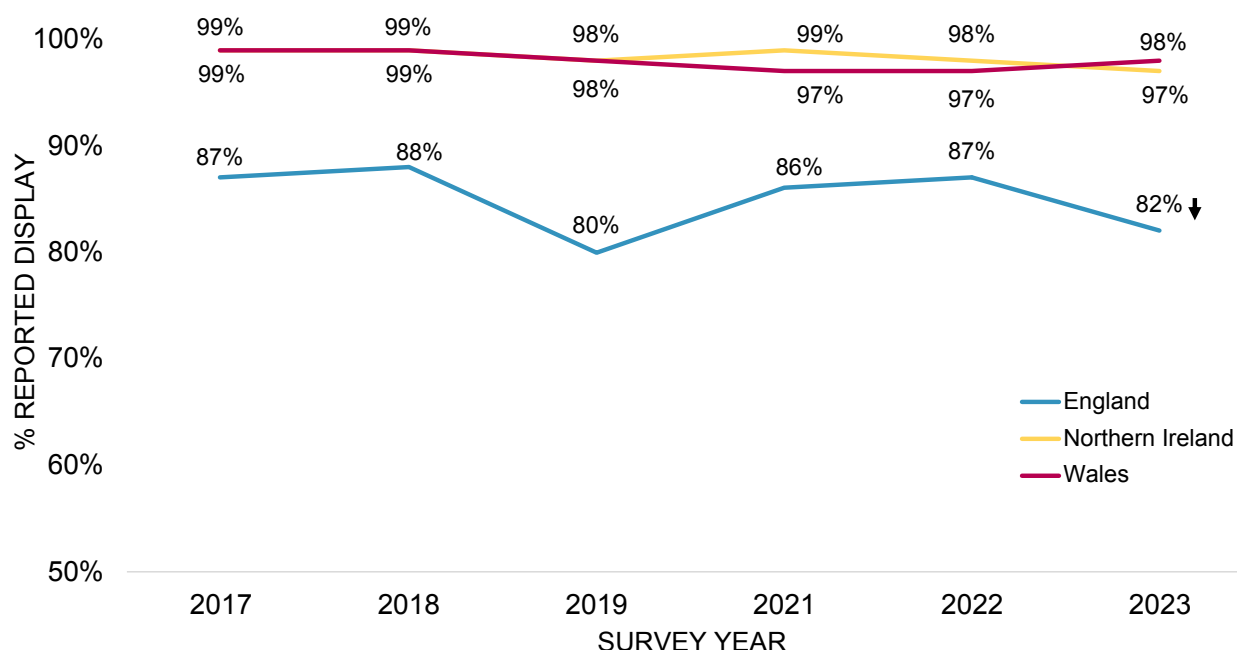


Figure 6.1. Proportion of food businesses reporting display of an FHRS sticker in a clearly visible location

Note: B10. Is your Food Hygiene Rating sticker on display on your premises? – Yes – Somewhere it is clearly visible; Base: Businesses who have FHRS in 2023 (England 467, Northern Ireland 489; Wales 487) Previous years base sizes range from 438 to 475 in England; 476 to 495 in NI; and 478 to 500 in Wales. ↑ / ↓ denotes a significant difference compared to 2022.

Stated location of display

Businesses that stated that they displayed their FHRS sticker were also asked whether their sticker could be clearly seen by customers from outside their premises. As shown in [Figure 6.2](#), amongst those that reported displaying a sticker, 97% of businesses in Wales, 94% of businesses in Northern Ireland and 89% of businesses in England reported that the sticker could be seen before entering the premises, which is broadly consistent with rates reported in 2022.

As nearly all businesses in Wales that reported displaying an FHRS sticker said that the sticker was visible from outside their premises, there was no significant variation between subgroups within this country. However, there were some small differences in England and Northern Ireland by business type:

- In England, restaurants and catering businesses were less likely than average to report clearly displaying stickers outside (84%).
- In Northern Ireland, accommodation businesses and pubs, bars and nightclubs were less likely than average to report clearly displaying stickers outside (88%). Businesses in this sector that reported not displaying stickers most commonly attributed this to there being nowhere suitable to display in location visible outside.

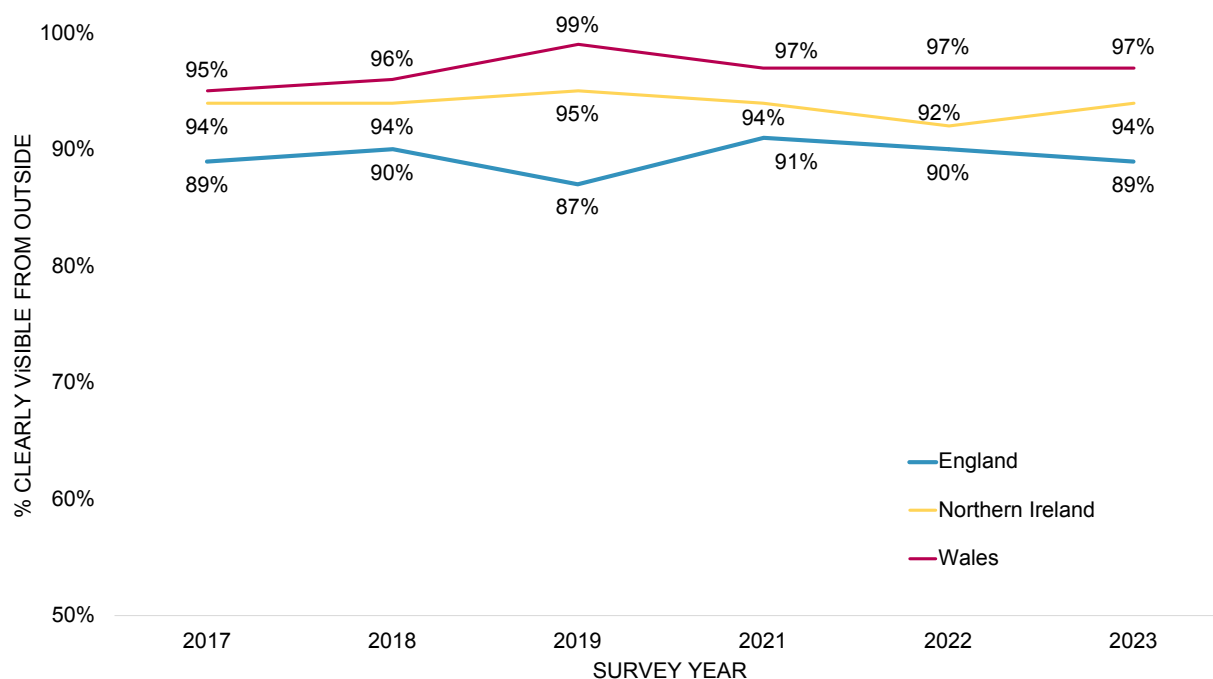


Figure 6.2. Proportion of food businesses reporting display of an FHRs sticker clearly visible from outside the premises

Note: B11. Can customers clearly see your Food Hygiene Rating sticker from the outside of your premises? – Yes;
Base: Businesses that display an FHRs sticker in 2023 (England 392, Northern Ireland 478; Wales 477) Previous years base sizes range from 392 to 415 in England; 473 to 490 in NI; and 465 to 495 in Wales.

Businesses in Northern Ireland and Wales who stated that they displayed their sticker on their premises in a clearly visible location were also asked whether they had stickers at all entrances to their premises, providing they had a customer entrance. As shown in [Figure 6.3](#), most of these businesses reported having an FHRs sticker at every entrance (89% in Northern Ireland and 88% in Wales). Fewer businesses said they had a sticker displayed at some of their entrances but not all (9% in Northern Ireland and 11% in Wales) while very few reported not having a sticker displayed at any entrance (1% in Northern Ireland and 1% in Wales).

In Northern Ireland, takeaways and sandwich shops were more likely to report having FHRs stickers displayed at every entrance (98%). Meanwhile in Wales, retail businesses were more likely (98%). In both countries, accommodation businesses and pubs, bars and nightclubs were less likely to report displaying stickers at every entrance (Northern Ireland 82%; Wales 77%).

Reasons for not displaying in England

Businesses in England that said that they did not display their FHRs sticker in a location where customers could see it from outside or did not display it at all were asked why they did not, as well as what might encourage them to start doing so.

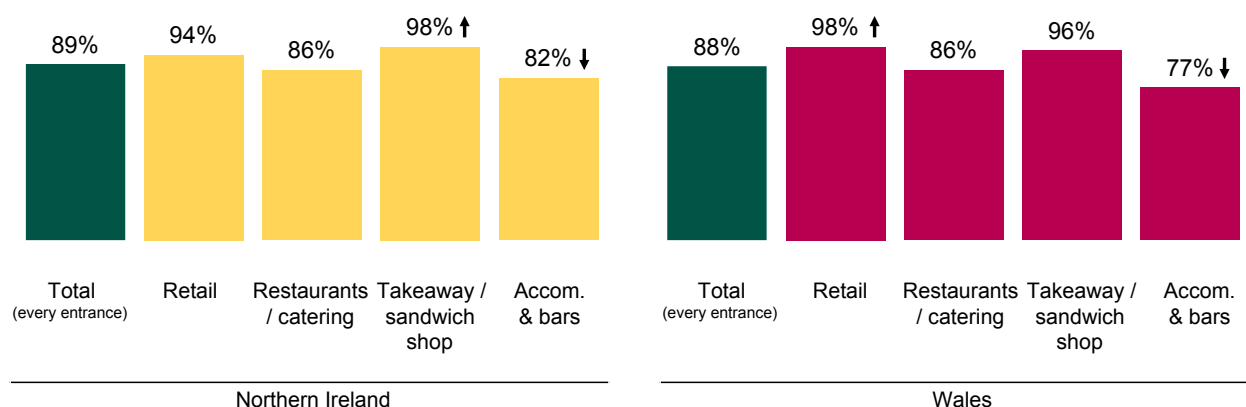


Figure 6.3. Proportion of food businesses in Northern Ireland and Wales reporting display of an FHRS sticker at entrances

Note: B13. Do you have the sticker displayed at your customer entrance? B14. At how many customer entrances do you have the sticker displayed? Base: Businesses with at least one customer entrance and food hygiene rating sticker is clearly on display, by outlet type Total/Retail/Take-away/Catering/ Accommodation and bars 2023 (NI 446/440/142/66/181/51; Wales 459/445/111/43/176/115). ↑ / ↓ denotes a significant difference compared to the total.

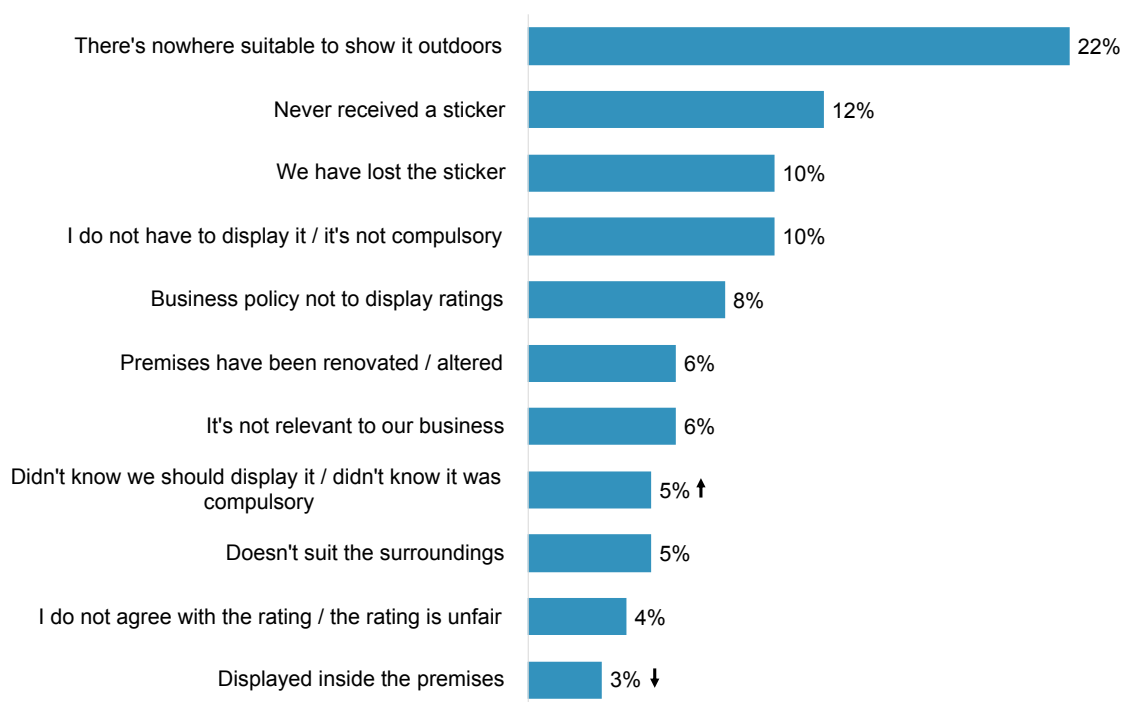


Figure 6.4. Reported reasons for not displaying an FHRS sticker, England (unprompted)

Note: B15. Why is your Food Hygiene Rating not on display where your customers can clearly see it? Base: Businesses whose FHRS sticker is not on public display (England 112). Please note that responses under 3% have not been displayed. ↑ / ↓ denotes a significant difference compared to 2022.

As presented in [Figure 6.4](#), the top four unprompted reasons given by businesses in England for not displaying FHRS stickers were: there being nowhere suitable to show it outdoors (22%); having never received a sticker (12%); having lost the sticker (10%); or claiming it was not compulsory to display the sticker (10%).

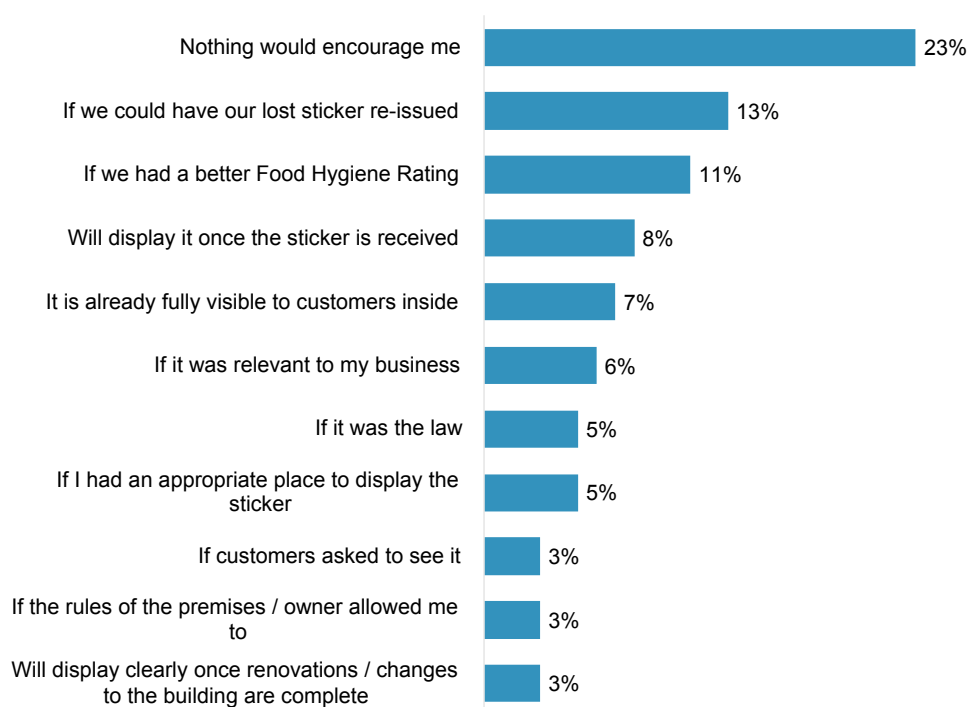


Figure 6.5. Actions that may encourage displaying an FHRS sticker in England

Note: B16. What would encourage you to display your Food Hygiene Rating where customers could clearly see it?
 Base: Businesses whose FHRS stickers are not on public display (England 112). Please note that responses under 3% have not been displayed.

Compared to 2022 responses here have largely remained consistent. There has been a significant decrease in the number that said they displayed the sticker inside the premises (3% in 2023 vs 11% in 2022).²³

As shown in [Figure 6.5](#), around a quarter of businesses in England that said they did not display their FHRS sticker in a publicly visible location claimed that nothing would encourage them to do so (23%). The second most common response was that they needed their lost sticker re-issued (13%), matching the sizable minority of businesses who reported not displaying a sticker for this reason. As in 2022, although having a low food hygiene rating was not frequently mentioned as a reason for non-display, having a better rating was the most common action that would encourage display (11%). Compared to 2022, there were no significant differences in the actions that would encourage display.

6. Mandatory display

In Northern Ireland and Wales, food businesses are legally required to display their food hygiene rating sticker in a prominent place so it is visible at or near each entrance. In England, businesses are not legally required

²³ Base sizes were relatively small here (112 in 2023; 94 in 2022) so changes over time for each response should be interpreted with caution.

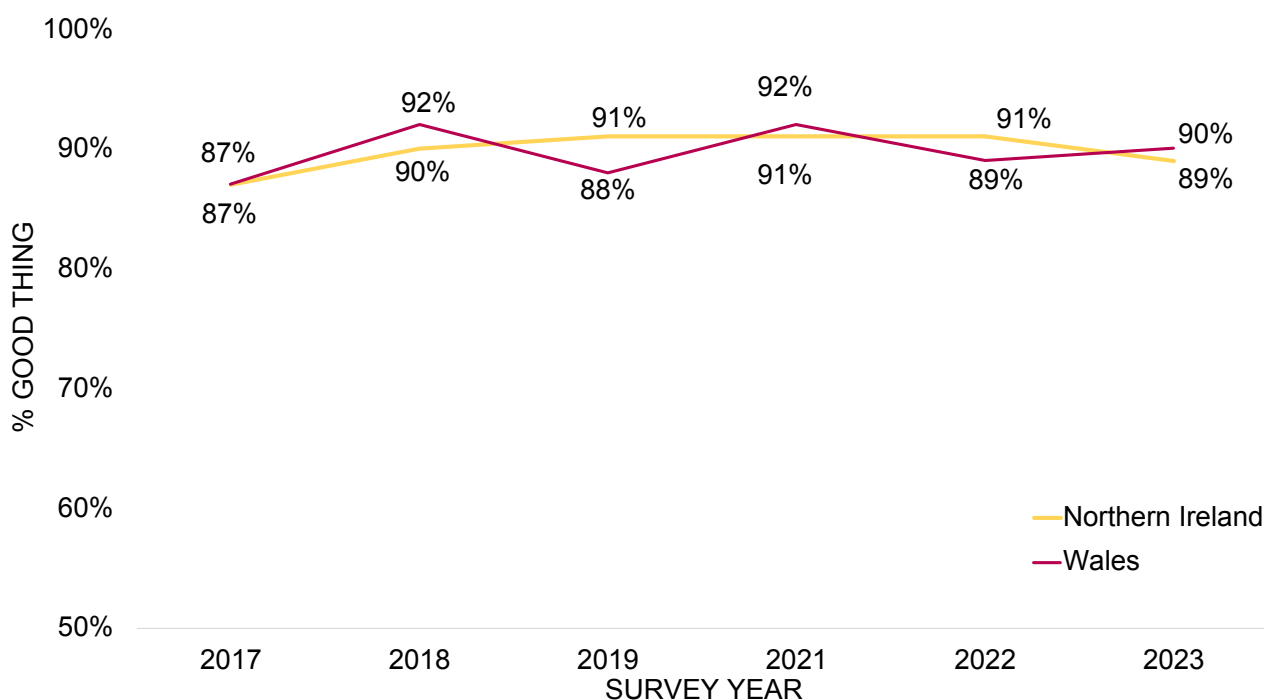


Figure 7.1. Positive attitudes towards mandatory display requirements in Northern Ireland and Wales

Note: C12. How do you feel generally about the legal requirement to display your Food Hygiene Rating at your premises? Base: FBOs in Wales/NI aware of their FHRS rating (Northern Ireland: 489, Wales: 487).

to display their rating but are encouraged to do so. This chapter begins by exploring awareness and attitudes towards the mandatory display of food hygiene ratings in Northern Ireland and Wales. It then covers the views of food businesses in England toward the idea of mandatory display.

Awareness and attitudes in Northern Ireland and Wales

Most food businesses in Northern Ireland (96%) and Wales (97%) that were aware of their FHRS rating reported being aware of the legal requirement to have their food hygiene rating sticker on display, in line with previous years. In Northern Ireland, micro businesses were less likely than average to be aware of mandatory display (93%).

As illustrated in [Figure 7.1](#), around nine in ten food businesses in Northern Ireland (89%) and Wales (90%) felt that the legal requirement to display their food hygiene rating sticker was a good thing, and most believed it was 'very good' (Northern Ireland: 71%; Wales: 72%). The proportion of businesses in Wales that considered mandatory display to be a good thing was broadly in line with previous years. The proportion in Northern Ireland dipped slightly compared to 2022, but not to a significant extent.

In both countries, businesses that had the highest FHRS rating of 5 were more likely than average to consider mandatory display a good thing (92% in Northern Ireland and 94% in Wales), while those with a rating of 4 or below were less likely (76% in Northern Ireland and 82% in Wales). There was also evidence of attitudes towards mandatory display varying by sector in both countries, with restaurants and catering businesses more likely to think it was a good thing (91% in Northern Ireland; 92% in Wales).

Positive attitudes towards mandatory display in Northern Ireland and Wales typically centred around the themes of transparency, continuous improvement and consumer empowerment. As [Figure 7.2](#) shows, the top three reasons for support of mandatory display were the same in both countries, albeit in a different rank order. In Northern Ireland the top reason was the importance of being transparent about food hygiene (32%), while in Wales the top reason was informing customer choice on where it's safe to eat or purchase food (29%).

Compared with 2022, the proportion of businesses that supported mandatory display because it helps inform consumers decisions about where it is safe to eat or purchase food increased significantly in both Northern Ireland (24% vs 17%) and Wales (29% to 20%). Conversely, the proportion saying it shows customers that businesses care and have high standards decreased in both countries (Northern Ireland: 17% vs 27% in 2022; Wales: 17% vs 28% in 2022). The proportion of businesses saying it was important for transparency of hygiene standards with customers decreased in Wales (28% vs 35%).

Amongst the minority of businesses in Northern Ireland and Wales that were neutral or had negative perceptions of mandatory display (11% in Northern Ireland and 9% in Wales), this was typically attributed to reservations around the efficacy and fairness of the FHRS:

- In Northern Ireland, 53 businesses did not think mandatory display was good. This includes 13 who said there were flaws in the way the ratings are determined, 8 who said consumers do not understand the ratings and a further 8 who said that consumers do not pay attention to ratings. The remaining 24 businesses gave varied reasons as to why it was not a good thing, including 5 that said that they didn't know.
- In Wales, 46 businesses did not think mandatory display was good. This includes 17 who said there were flaws in the way the ratings are determined, 15 who said it was unfair to some businesses and 7 who said that consumers do not understand the ratings. The remaining 7 businesses gave varied reasons as to why it was not a good thing.

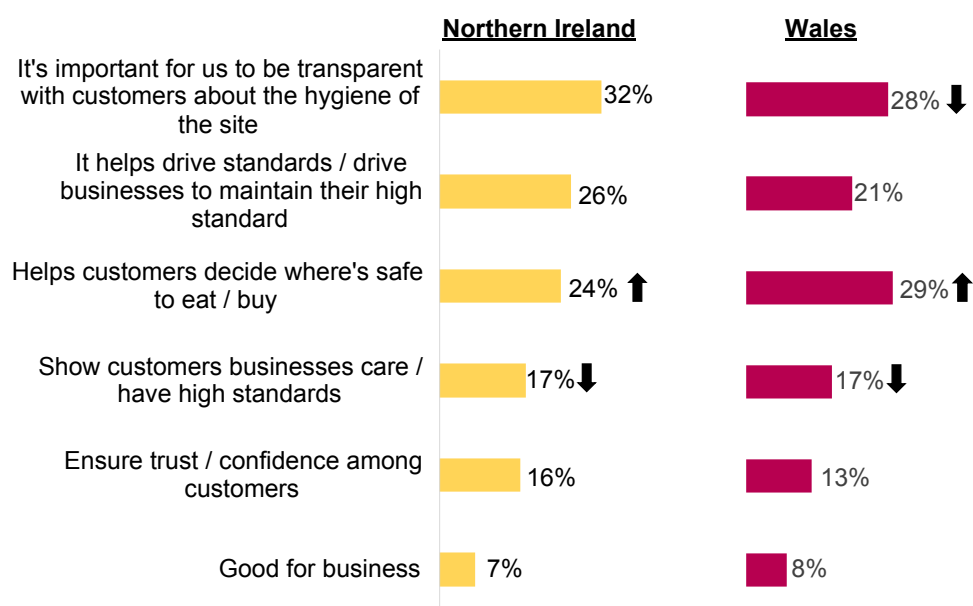


Figure 7.2. Reasons for positive attitudes towards mandatory display in Northern Ireland and Wales (Unprompted)

Note: C12A. Why do you feel good about the legal requirement to display your Food Hygiene Rating at your premises? Base: FBOs that think it is good thing that it is a legal requirement to display FHRS in Wales/NI (Northern Ireland: 432, Wales: 438). Please note that responses under 7% have not been displayed. ↑ / ↓ Denotes a significant change from 2022.

Attitudes in England

As presented in [Figure 7.3](#), more than four in five businesses in England (82%) agreed that the introduction of a scheme where they are required by law to display their food hygiene rating sticker was a good idea, with most (63%) considering it to be a 'very good' concept. The proportion of businesses in support of such a scheme was unchanged compared to 2022. Those with the highest FHRS rating of 5 were more likely to consider mandatory display to be a good thing (86%).

As found in Northern Ireland and Wales, positive attitudes towards introducing mandatory display in England typically centred around the themes of transparency, maintaining/improving business standards and consumer empowerment. The most common reason for support of mandatory display was the view that it would help customers decide where it is safe to eat or purchase food (see [Figure 7.4](#)). Compared to 2022, the number of businesses mentioned this as a reason for support increased significantly from 21% to 30%. The second most common reason for support of mandatory display was the view that it was important for food businesses to be transparent about hygiene standards (18%). While the second most common, significantly fewer businesses attributed support for mandatory display to this reason when compared to 2022 (18% vs 46%).

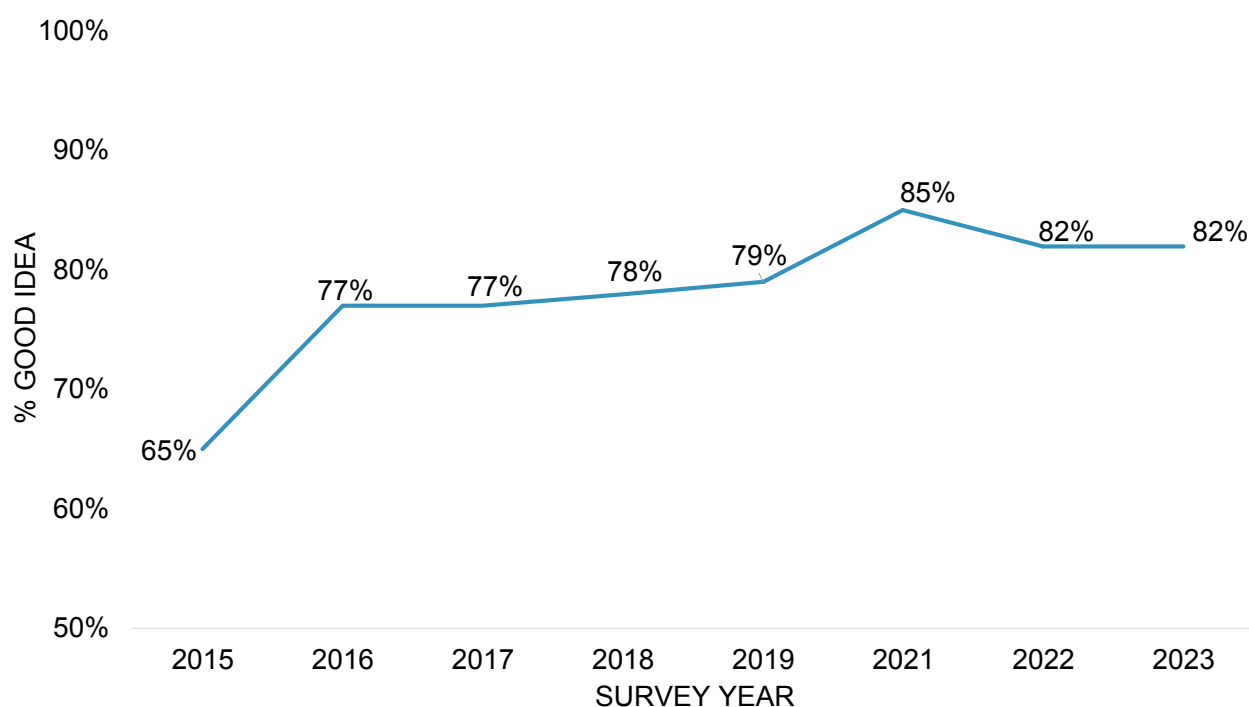


Figure 7.3. Positive attitudes towards mandatory display in England

Note: C9. How would you feel if a scheme was introduced where you were required by law to display your Food Hygiene Rating? Base: FBOs in England (467).

"[Mandatory display] makes customers aware [of] what to expect before they come to premises [and] makes staff aware to ensure they do their job correctly [...] makes them aware of consequences if we get a low rating we won't get customers [so they are] held accountable if rating was to drop."

Restaurant/café/canteen, England, FHRS rating of 5

As shown in [Figure 7.5](#), amongst the 17% of food businesses in England that were neutral or had negative perceptions towards the concept of mandatory display, the most common reason for this was because the business already displayed their food hygiene rating sticker and so the introduction of a legal requirement would make no difference to the business (39%). Those rated 0-3 were more likely to be neutral or have negative perceptions towards the concept of mandatory display than those rated 5 (28% compared to 11%)²⁴. Other reasons mentioned by more than one in ten included the view that it would be unfair to some businesses (16%), it would place additional burdens on businesses (15%), perceived flaws in the way businesses are rated (11%), or believing that customers do not understand the rating (11%).

²⁴ Outlets rated 0, 1, 2 and 3 have been grouped in this instance to ensure a sufficient base size for analysis when compared to those with an FHRS rating of 5.



Figure 7.4. Reasons for positive attitudes towards mandatory display in England (Unprompted)

Note: C10B. Why do you say it would be a good thing? Base: FBOs that think it would be a good thing if it was a legal requirement to display FHRS in England (384). Please note this was an open-ended question. Please note that responses under 7% have not been displayed. ↑ / ↓ Denotes a significant change from 2022.

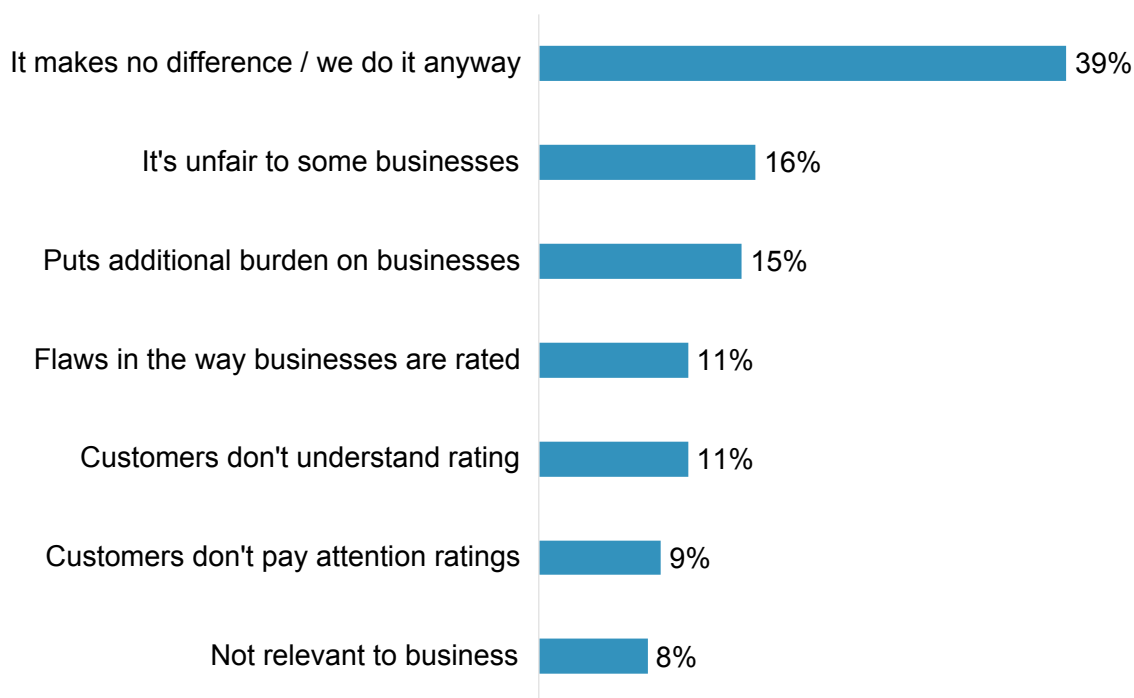


Figure 7.5. Reasons for negative attitudes towards mandatory display in England

Note: C10A. Why do you say it would be a bad thing? Base: FBOs who think it would not be a good thing if it was a legal requirement to display FHRS in England (78). Please note this was an open-ended question. Please note that responses under 9% have not been displayed.

7. Awareness and ease of use of safeguards

Once businesses have been inspected by a local authority, they are sent a letter to notify them of their rating and suggest improvements if their rating is less than the top rating of 5 (very good). If a business is dissatisfied with their rating, they can exercise their right to appeal, right to reply or apply for a re-rating inspection.²⁵

This chapter details businesses' awareness of the inspection report letter and its content, and of the options available if businesses wish to challenge their rating. It also covers the proportion of businesses that report using the safeguards, their experience of doing so and the barriers to take-up.

Recollection of inspection report letter

More than four fifths of businesses in Northern Ireland (83%) and Wales (82%) and around two thirds of businesses in England (68%) recalled receiving an inspection letter. As shown in [Figure 8.1](#), the proportion who recalled receiving an inspection letter in Wales remains unchanged since 2021. In Northern Ireland there was a slight decrease in reported receipt of letters between 2022 and 2023 (from 86% to 83%), but this was not statistically significant. In England the proportion who recalled receiving a letter was significantly lower in England in 2023 (68%) than it was in 2022 (78%) and is now the lowest it has been since 2015.

Of businesses that received a letter and had an FHRS rating of less than 5, most could recall the letter informing them of what improvements were necessary to achieve the highest food hygiene rating of 5 at their premises (England 94%; Northern Ireland 86%; Wales 86%), as shown in [figure 8.2](#) below. Following a dip between 2021 and 2022, the proportion of businesses in England that recalled receiving a letter increased significantly between 2022 to 2023 from 80% to 94%. The proportion recalling being told about necessary improvements had not changed significantly in Northern Ireland or Wales since last year.

²⁵ A 'right to reply' allows businesses to tell customers how their business has improved its hygiene standards or if there were unusual circumstances at the time of inspection. This response is published online, alongside the rating, by the local authority. Businesses can 'appeal' an FHRS rating if they think that the rating does not reflect the hygiene standards at the time of inspection. If a business makes the improvements to hygiene standards that food safety officers raised at their last inspection, businesses can request a 're-rating' visit.

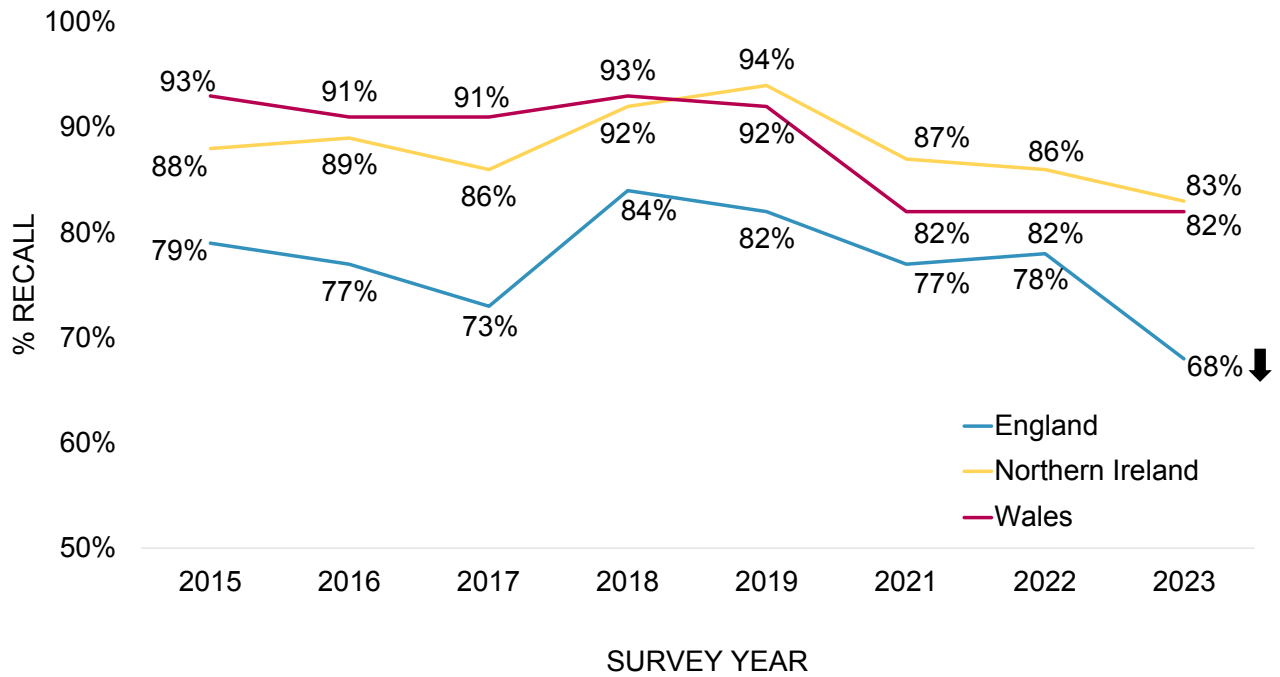


Figure 8.1. Proportion of food businesses that recall receiving an inspection report letter

Note: C1. Do you recall if your business received an inspection report letter from the local authority? Base: FBOs who have a food hygiene rating 2023 (England: 467; Northern Ireland: 489; Wales 487). Previous years base sizes range from to 417 to 473 in England; 440 to 490 in NI; and 468 to 494 in Wales. ↓ Denotes a significant decrease from 2022.

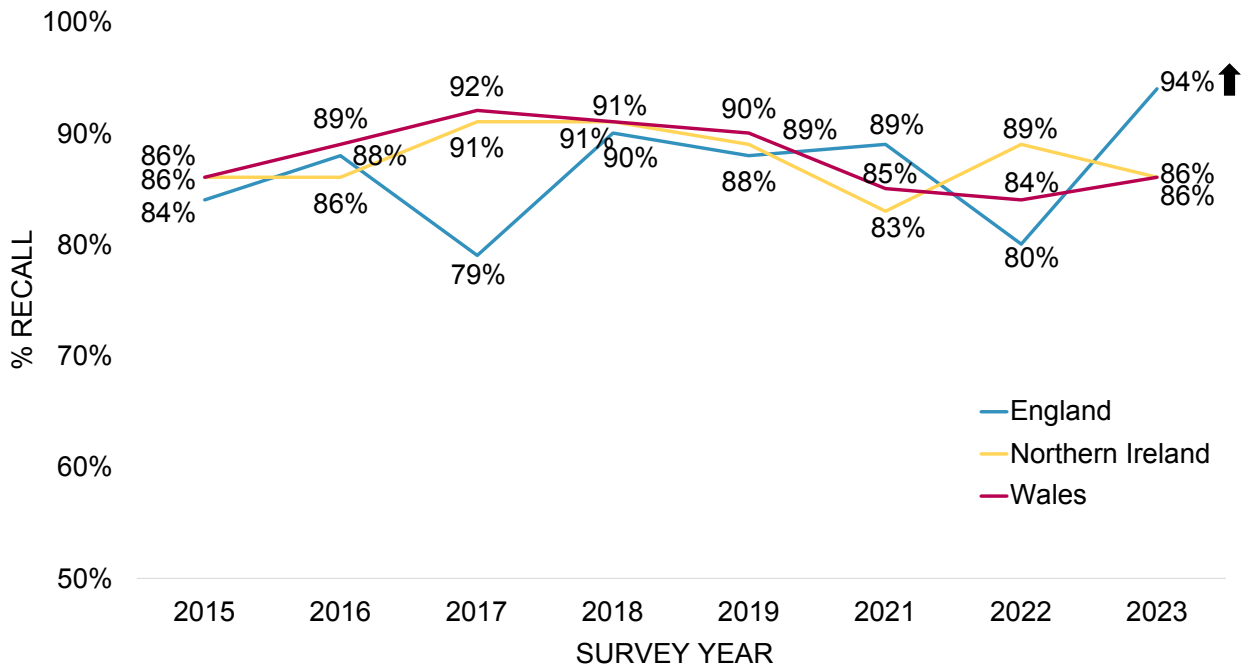


Figure 8.2. Recollection of letter instructing how to achieve a maximum rating

Note: C2. Do you recall if your letter told you what improvements you would need to make to achieve the highest Food Hygiene Rating of 5 at your premises? Base: FBOs who received a letter and have a food hygiene rating of <5, 2023. (England: 73; Northern Ireland: 83; Wales: 123). Previous years base sizes range from to 82 to 187 in England; 77 to 490 in NI; and 127 to 237 in Wales. ↑ Denotes a significant increase from 2022.

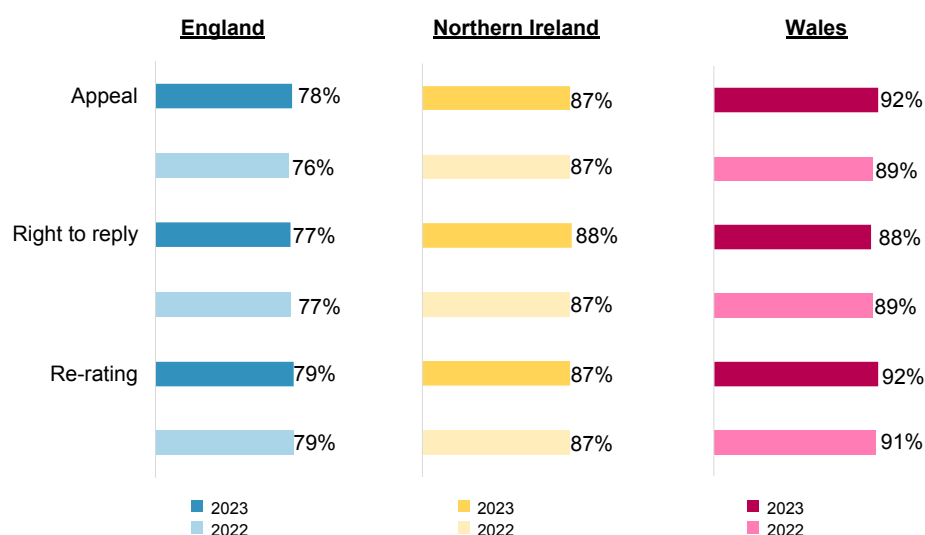


Figure 8.3. Proportion aware that can request an appeal, a 'right to reply' and a re-rating, by country

Note: C3_1-3. Following an inspection, are you aware that if you are unhappy with your rating you can request... An appeal? / A 'right to reply'? / A re-rating? Base: FBOs who have a food hygiene rating in 2023: England (467); Northern Ireland (489); Wales (487). 2022: England (465); Northern Ireland (487); Wales (478).

Awareness of safeguards

Businesses were asked if they knew they could appeal, had a 'right to reply' or request a re-rating inspection if they were unhappy with their FHRs rating. In line with 2022, overall self-reported awareness was high, with at least three quarters aware of each option in England (78% for appeal, 77% for 'right to reply' and 79% for re-rating) and around nine in ten aware in Northern Ireland (87% for appeal, 88% for 'right to reply' and 87% for re-rating) and Wales (92% for appeal, 88% for 'right to reply' and 92% for re-rating) (see [Figure 8.3](#)).

In England and Wales, there was evidence of awareness of safeguards varying by business size. In England, small businesses were more likely than average to be aware that they could request an appeal (83%), a right to reply (83%), or a re-rating (83%). Conversely, micro businesses were less likely than average to be aware that they could request an appeal (73%) or their right to reply (73%). In Wales, small businesses were more likely than average to be aware that they could request a re-rating (95%) whilst micro businesses were less likely to be aware (89%). There were no differences by size in Northern Ireland, but restaurants and catering businesses were more likely to be aware that they could request an appeal (92%).

Use and experience of safeguards

All food businesses that reported being aware of the ability to appeal ratings, exercise a right to reply or apply for a re-rating were asked if they had taken up any of these options following their most recent inspection.

Table 8.1. Proportion of food businesses that report exercising their right to reply

Exercised right to reply	England	Northern Ireland	Wales
2023	6%	8%	8%
2022	9%	10%	10%
2021	7%	7%	7%

Note: C7. Has your establishment exercised its 'right to reply' by sending comments to the local authority about the most recent rating you have been given? Base: FBOs who have a food hygiene rating and aware that can exercise right to reply. 2023/22/21: England (360/345/348); Northern Ireland (431/424/424); Wales (427/423/425).

Appealing ratings

Very few businesses said that they had applied to appeal the rating given at their last inspection (England 0.3%; Northern Ireland 2%; and Wales 3%). This aligns with the finding discussed in Chapter 5 that the majority of businesses were satisfied with their rating, suggesting this might be the reason they did not feel the need to appeal.

Amongst the small minority of that had applied for an appeal, most said they had been awarded a higher rating or were still awaiting the outcome of their appeal:

- In England, one business reported appealing their rating and said they were subsequently awarded a higher rating.
- In Northern Ireland, of the 10 businesses that reported applying for an appeal, 4 said they were awarded a higher rating, 4 said they were awaiting an outcome, 1 said they received the same rating and 1 was unsure on the outcome.
- Similarly, in Wales, of the 12 businesses that reported applying for an appeal, 3 said they were awarded a higher rating, 4 said they were awaiting an outcome, 4 said they received the same rating and 1 was unsure on the outcome.

Exercising right to reply

Similarly, despite high levels of awareness, few businesses reported that they had exercised their right to reply. Again, this could be because the majority of businesses were satisfied with their rating. One in twelve reported exercising their right to reply in Northern Ireland and Wales (8% respectively), whilst (6%) did so in England. This can be seen in [Table 8.1](#). These results show a slight decrease compared to 2022 but this is not a statistically significant difference.

Table 8.2. Proportion of food businesses that report applying for a re-rating

Applied for re-rating	England	Northern Ireland	Wales
2023	2%	4%	5%
2022	4%	2%	6%
2021	5%	4%	5%

Note: C4. Has your establishment applied for a re-rating inspection from the local authority since your last inspection? Base: FBOs who have a food hygiene rating and aware of ability to apply for a re-rating. 2023/22/23: England (367/370/377); Northern Ireland (424/424/427); Wales (449/434/436).

Applying for a re-rating

As presented in [Table 8.2](#), only one in twenty businesses in Wales (5%) and Northern Ireland (4%) and one in fifty businesses in England (2%) reported applying for a re-rating. These low levels could again be explained by the fact that the majority of businesses were satisfied with their rating. There was no statistically significant change in the proportion of businesses reporting applications for re-ratings in any of the three countries compared to 2022.

Amongst the small minority of that had applied for a re-rating, most said they had been awarded a higher rating or were still awaiting a re-rating inspection to be arranged:

- In England, 7 businesses applied for a re-rating and all were subsequently awarded a higher rating.
- In Northern Ireland, of the 18 businesses that reported applying for a re-rating, 7 said they were awarded a higher rating, 7 said they were awaiting a re-rating inspection to be arranged, 1 received the same rating, 1 received a lower rating and 2 were unsure of the outcome.
- Similarly, in Wales, of the 25 businesses that reported applying for a re-rating, 13 said they were awarded a higher rating, 7 said they were awaiting a re-rating inspection to be arranged, 1 said they were refused a re-rating inspection and 4 were unsure of the outcome.

Non-use of safeguards

Those that reported being dissatisfied with their food hygiene rating but did not use the safeguard options available to them were asked why this was the case. Sample sizes by each country were low for non-use of appeals (England n= 23; Northern Ireland n= 34; Wales n= 55), right to reply (England n= 20; Northern Ireland n= 29; Wales n= 41) and re-ratings (England n= 25; Northern Ireland n= 31; Wales n= 52), so the results that follow are presented for all three countries combined.

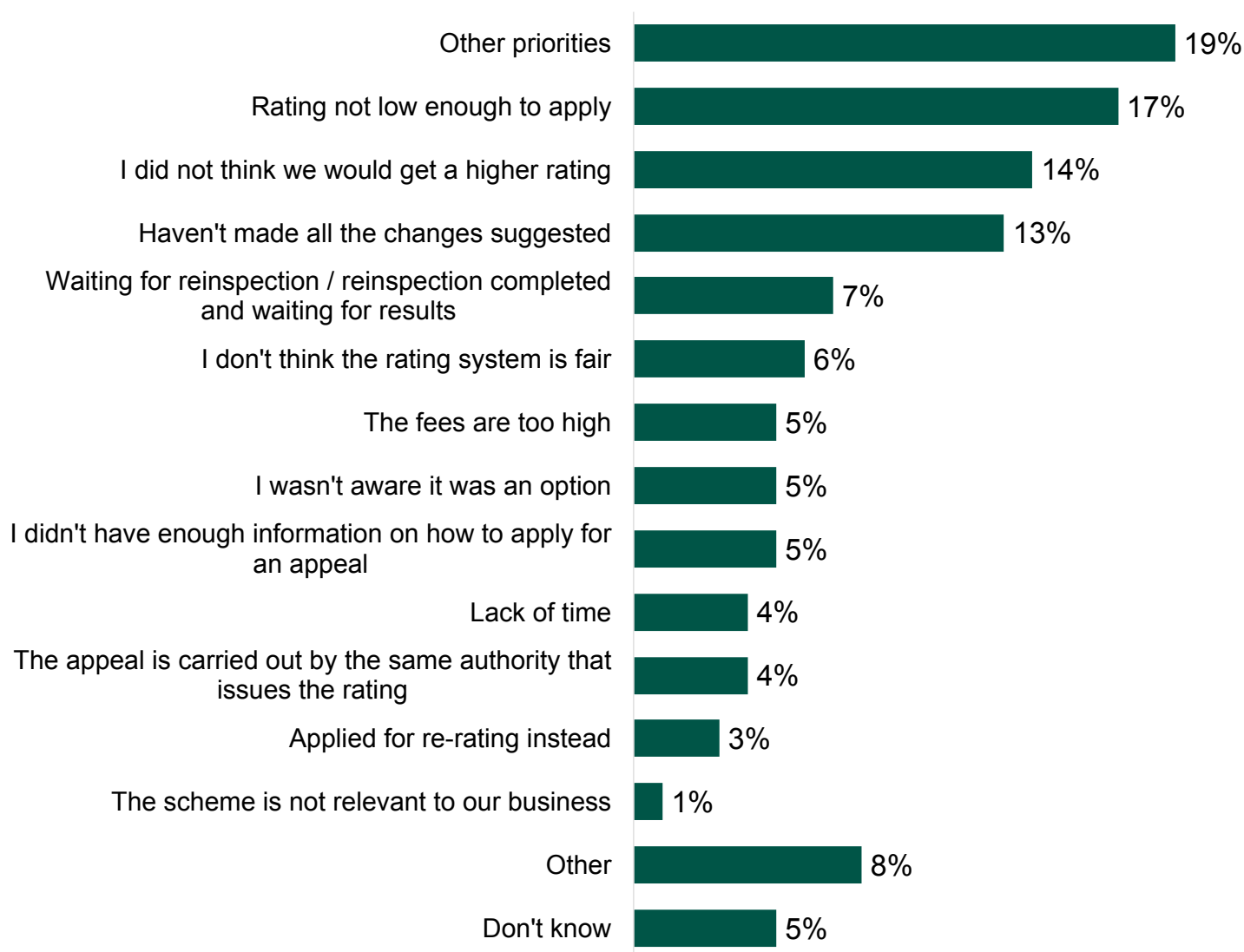


Figure 8.4. Reason for not applying for an appeal (results for all countries combined)

Note: C15. Why did you not apply for an appeal? Base: All FBOs who were not satisfied with the food hygiene rating but did not appeal their rating. (Responses given fewer than 1% are not shown). All countries: 2023 (112).

Appealing ratings

The main reasons given by those not applying for an appeal, each cited by more than one in eight were: other priorities (19%), the rating not being low enough to apply for an appeal (17%), not thinking that a higher rating was achievable (14%) and not having made all the changes suggested (13%). This can be seen in [Figure 8.4](#).

Exercising right to reply

The results displayed in [Figure 8.5](#) show that accepting the rating (27%), making the changes required (16%) and not wanting to spend the time doing it (14%) were the primary reasons why businesses did not pursue a right to reply. Due the small base sizes, the apparent variations in the mix

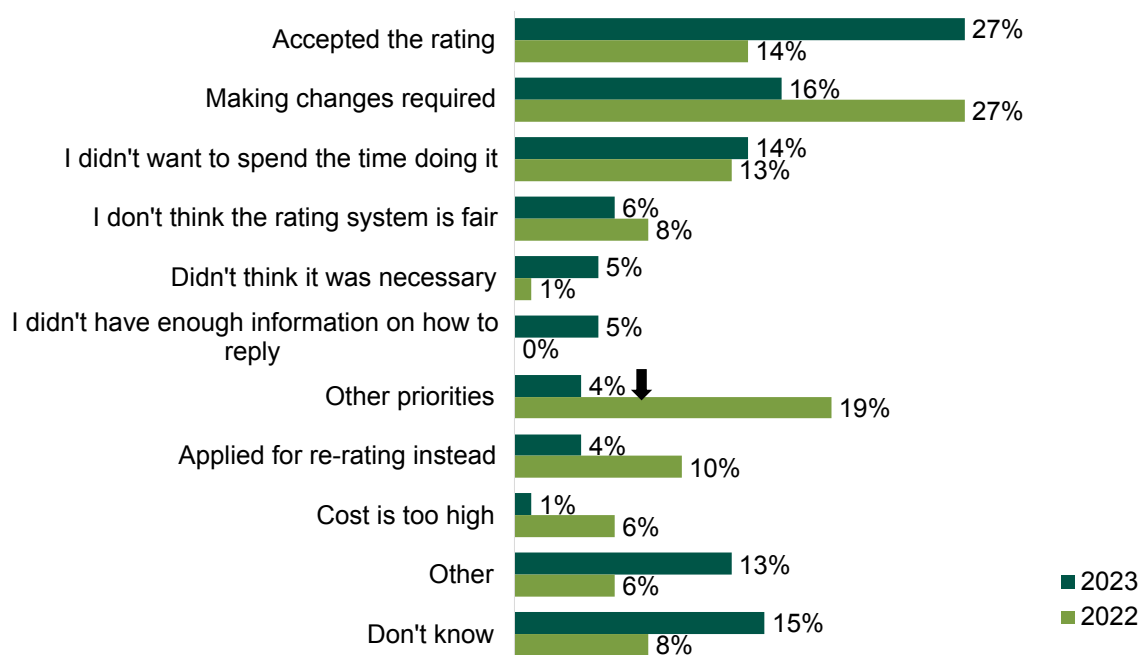


Figure 8.5. Reason for not exercising right to reply (results for all countries combined)

Note: C8. Why did you not exercise your 'right to reply'? Base: All FBOs who were not satisfied with the food hygiene rating but did not exercise their right to reply. (Some responses given by 1% or fewer are not shown). All countries: 2023: 90; 2022: 58. ↓ Denotes a significant decrease from 2022.

of reasons given in 2023 versus 2022, were not statistically significant. The only exception to this was having other priorities, which was cited by fewer in 2023 than in 2022 (4% vs. 19%).

Applying for a re-rating

The results displayed in [Figure 8.6](#) show that the most common reasons why businesses did not apply for a re-rating were: that the fees were too high (26%), or the business had not yet made all of the changes suggested (20%). Supplementary reasons, each cited by more than one in ten were: waiting for reinspection/ reinspection completed and waiting for results (18%), the rating was not low enough to apply for a re-rating (13%) or lack of time (10%).

Whilst the top two reasons were the same in 2023 as in 2022, there were a few significant differences for other reasons. Specifically, there was an increase in the proportion saying they were waiting for a reinspection or had been reinspected and waiting for results (18% vs. 5%), and a decrease in the proportion saying they did not think they would get a higher rating (1% vs. 6%) and that felt the re-rating would be carried out by the same authority that issued the original rating (0% vs. 5%).

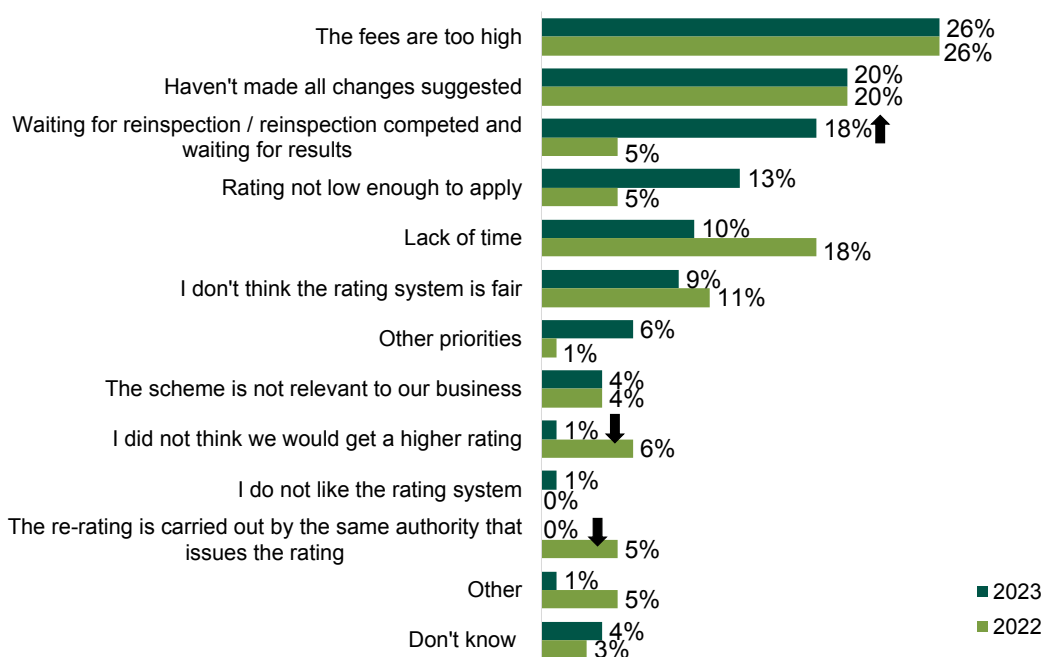


Figure 8.6. Reason for not applying for a re-rating (results for all countries combined)

Note: C5. Why did you not apply for a re-rating? Base: All FBOs not satisfied with the food hygiene rating but did not apply for re-rating. (Responses given by fewer than 1% are not shown). All countries: 2023: 108; 2022: 77. ↑ / ↓ Denotes a significant change from 2022.

8. Impacts of the scheme

This chapter covers how food businesses displaying a food hygiene rating felt about the FHRs. Specifically, it addresses the perceived impact the scheme has on businesses and potential customers and changes made by businesses with a food hygiene rating of less than 5 in order to improve their rating at the next inspection. It also explores actual and potential use of food hygiene ratings in promotion and advertising.

Business and customer perceptions of food hygiene ratings

Overall, most businesses reported being motivated to maintain or improve their food hygiene rating and felt that the display of their rating has a range of positive impacts on customer perceptions of the business.

As presented in [Figure 9.1](#), nearly all food businesses agreed that they worked hard to maintain or improve their food hygiene rating (England 100%; Northern Ireland 98%; Wales 99%) and more than nine in ten agreed that displaying a food hygiene rating proved to consumers that the business takes food hygiene seriously (England 98%; Northern Ireland 95%; Wales 93%)

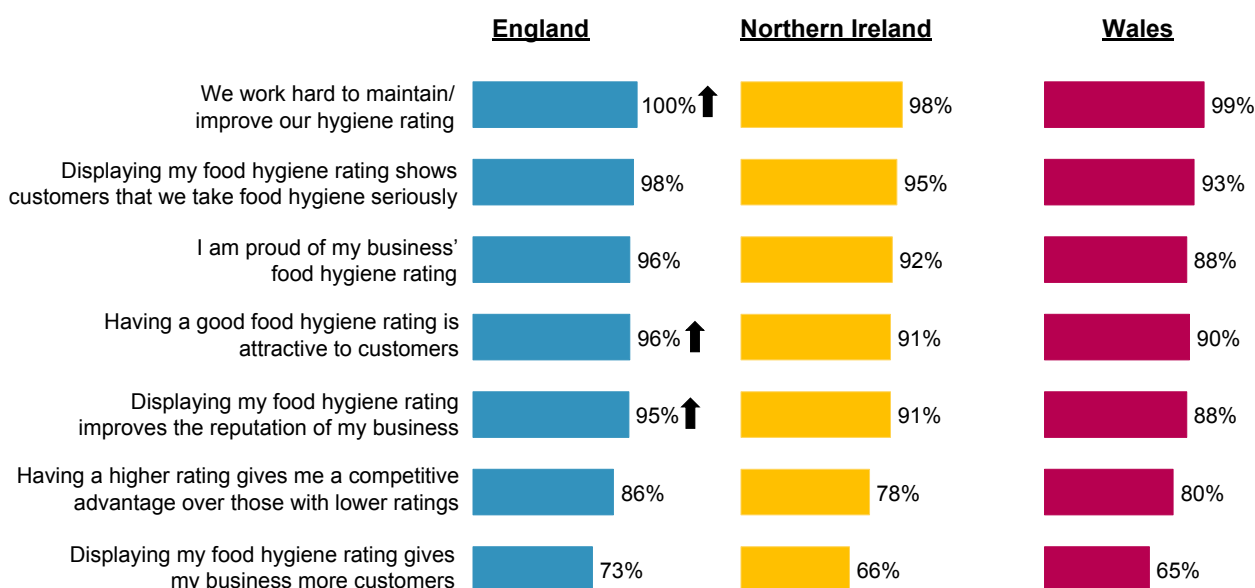


Figure 9.1. Perceptions of the FHRs

Note: B23. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Food Hygiene Rating scheme...? Base: FBOs with FHRs on display: England (387); Northern Ireland (476) Wales (477). Chart shows NET agreement: those who said "strongly agree" or "agree" to each statement. ↑ Denotes a significant increase from 2022.

Furthermore, most businesses agreed they were proud of their food hygiene rating (England 96%; Northern Ireland 92%; Wales 88%); that having a good rating is attractive to customers (England 96%; Northern Ireland 91%; Wales 90%); and that displaying their rating improves the reputation (England 95%; Northern Ireland 91%; Wales 88%). Perhaps unsurprisingly, across all countries, those with a rating of 5 were more likely than the average of those with a rating of 4 or less to be proud of their rating (England 99%; Northern Ireland 97%; Wales 98%).

Somewhat fewer - although still a majority - agreed that the scheme provided positive impacts on custom and trade. Three-quarters or more agreed that having a higher rating gave them a competitive advantage (England 86%; Northern Ireland 78%; Wales 80%) and two thirds or more agreed that displaying their rating brings them more customers (England 73%; Northern Ireland 66%; Wales 65%).

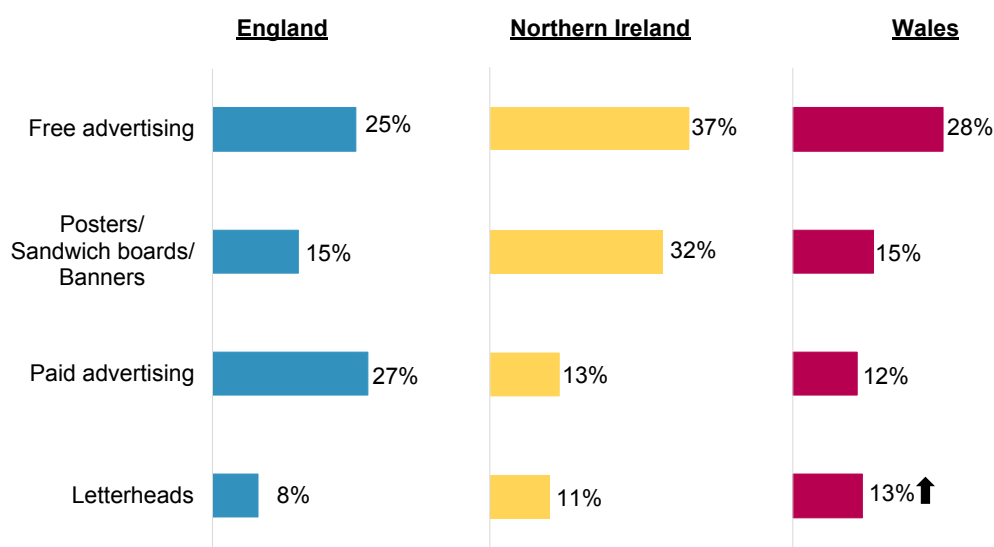


Figure 9.2. Methods used by food businesses to advertise their food hygiene rating

Note: B18. Does your business currently use its Food Hygiene Rating in any of the following forms of advertisement? Base: FBOs who use their FHRs to advertise: *England (47); Northern Ireland (53) Wales (53)*. ↑ Denotes a significant increase from 2022.

Use of food hygiene ratings for promotion

Across each nation, just over one in ten food businesses said they used their food hygiene rating sticker to promote their business, for example through display in advertising on posters, or on menus (England: 11%; Northern Ireland: 11%; Wales: 11%).²⁶

Figure 9.2 presents the channels used by food businesses to advertise their food hygiene rating. There were apparent variations in the mix of methods used by country. In England, the most common method used was paid advertising (27%), followed by free advertising (25%). In Northern Ireland and Wales the most common method was free advertising (37% and 28% respectively), followed by posters and sandwich boards in Northern Ireland (32% and 15% respectively).

Changes made as a result of the FHRS

Across all three nations, most food businesses that had received a food hygiene rating of 4 or less reported making changes to try to improve their rating (England: 84%; Northern Ireland: 77%; Wales: 85%).²⁷ These

²⁶ The *Food Hygiene Rating Wales Regulations 2016* states that all establishments must include information on their publicity materials about where to find the food hygiene rating for that establishment. Establishments may choose whether or not they display the rating itself on publicity materials. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2016/429/made/data.pdf>

²⁷ The variations in this proportion between countries were not statistically significant.

Table 9.1. Most common changes made to improve food hygiene ratings

Changes made	England	Northern Ireland	Wales
Undertaking repairs/ improvement works	32%	27%	27%
Cleaning equipment more regularly	27%	18%	16%
Improve documentation/ record keeping (including updating/ utilising HACCP)	25%	35%	42%*
Cleaning of the workplace/premises (including more thorough/creating rotas)	23%	14%	17%
Fixing structural issues	19%	18%	11%**
Monitoring fridge temperatures	14%	11%	9%
Improving or implementing staff training	9%	12%	10%**
Purchasing additional equipment	8%	14%	11%
Labelling food with the date it was opened	7%	7%	11%
Using different equipment (chopping boards, utensils etc) for different foods to avoid cross-contamination	6%	12%	9%
Recording what is done every day in a diary	4%	10%	6%

Note: B9. What changes have you made at your premises in order to achieve a higher Food Hygiene Rating at your next inspection?
Base: FBOs with a rating of less than 5 and made changes to improve their rating: England (86); Northern Ireland (76); Wales (126).
 Please note that responses under 10% for all countries have not been displayed.* Denotes a significant increase from 2022. ** Denotes a significant decrease from 2022. This table only displays results above 10% for at least one country.

proportions had not changed significantly since 2022 when they were 83%, 85% and 82% respectively. In England, among those with a rating of 4 or less, retailers were less likely than average to have made any changes (72%).

[Table 9.1](#) shows the most common changes made by country. The top action in England was undertaking repairs or improvement works (32%). In Northern Ireland and Wales the top action was improving documentation or record keeping (35% and 42% respectively). The variations in prevalence of specific changes by country were not statistically significant, except for the proportion citing cleaning equipment more regularly being significantly higher in England (27%) than in Wales (16%).

The relative prevalence of different actions taken was broadly similar to 2022 in each country. The only significant changes were in Wales, where more said they had improved documentation or record keeping (42% in 2023 vs. 30% in 2022) and fewer had fixed structural issues (11% vs. 24%) or improved or implemented staff training (10% vs. 19%). In England none said they had undertaken all the recommendations from the report in 2023, compared to 7% in 2022.

9. Limitations

The 2023 wave of the FHRs survey and audit ultimately delivered insight the relevant to the overarching aims and objectives of the research. There were however some challenges faced during fieldwork and analysis:

- As in previous years, challenges were faced with completing surveys with businesses in the takeaway and sandwich shop sector. This was primarily caused by businesses operating in this sector not picking up the phone. With the knowledge that difficulties had been faced with this audience in previous waves, during the design phase we purposefully oversampled takeaways and sandwich shops. Furthermore, during fieldwork we employed a variety of techniques to improve participation, including sourcing alternative contact details, calling at different times of the day and calling during the weekend. However, despite a concerted effort we were unable to achieve the original target of 230 surveys with this audience (80 in England, 80 in Northern Ireland and 70 in Wales). We finished fieldwork with 155 surveys in total (53 in England, 52 in Northern Ireland and 50 in Wales).
- The total number of audits achieved in 2023 was slightly lower than the target of 1,500 (500 in each country). We finished fieldwork with 485 audits in England, 497 in Northern Ireland and 497 in Wales. This shortfall occurred due to auditors encountering a relatively high number of un-auditable establishments. The main reasons for this included establishments being closed within their advertised opening hours, establishments no longer being in business and establishments not being publicly accessible.
- Though we encountered a few challenges, the profile of the achieved sample in both the audit and telephone survey in each country was broadly in line with underlying population in terms of sector and FHRS rating. With the data having been weighted to ensure representativeness, we do not envisage the small shortfalls on targets in either strand having any effect on the degree to which the data reflects the overall population.
- Where possible, comparisons between survey and the audit findings have been made in the main report. However, a degree of caution is needed when looking at these comparisons owing to survey findings relying on self-reported information provided by respondent food businesses and audit findings being derived from direct observations. Both data sources, but particularly survey data, may be subject to biases or inaccuracies. While comparisons provide valuable insights, they should be made with careful consideration of the unique strengths and limitations associated with each data collection method.

10. Conclusions

A key finding from the research was the high level of observed physical display of food hygiene ratings in the countries where physical display is mandatory. More than nine in ten businesses in Northern Ireland (91%) and Wales (92%) were found to have an FHRS sticker on display either inside or in a location visible from outside the premises (comparable figures in 2022 were 87% and 91% respectively).

In England, where physical display is not mandatory, 69% of businesses were found to display an FHRS sticker (either inside or in a location visible from outside the premises). Although not significantly higher than the rate of display observed in 2022, this represents a continuation of the steady upwards trend in rates of display since 2017, when 55% of businesses displayed a sticker.

More than four in five businesses in England (82%) agreed that the introduction of a scheme where they are required by law to display their food hygiene rating sticker at their premises was a good idea, with most (63%) considering it to be a 'very good' concept. The proportion of businesses in England in support of such a scheme was unchanged compared to 2022.

Another key finding from the audit and survey is that there is widespread use of online platforms amongst food business operators but a relatively low level of display of FHRS ratings online.

Across all three countries most businesses were observed in the audit to have a presence on Facebook or Instagram or to have a website with online food ordering capabilities (77% in England, 77% in Northern Ireland and 76% in Wales). However, despite widespread use of these platforms, only a small minority of businesses were found to be displaying a food hygiene rating on any of them: 10% in England, 5% in Northern Ireland and 8% in Wales.

Findings from the survey indicated that a business' own website is the principal platform through which customer food orders are made (England: 28%; Northern Ireland: 20%; Wales: 26%), closely followed by food delivery aggregators (England 27%; Northern Ireland 18%; Wales 17%). Fewer than one in ten businesses in England (8%), Northern Ireland (8%) and Wales (9%) reported taking orders through social media. This might suggest that while widely used, social media platforms are generally used for promotional activity.

In the survey, there was a strong consensus that the display of food hygiene ratings should become mandatory for at least some online platforms (England 94%; Northern Ireland 96%; Wales 93%), particularly the websites of restaurants and takeaways with online ordering

capabilities (England 89%; Northern Ireland 92%; Wales 88%). Many noted that mandatory online display would benefit customers by providing them with information to inform purchasing decisions, while others said that it would be beneficial to their business as it would promote their high standards.

Similarly, attitudes were largely positive towards the idea of online food delivery aggregators displaying food hygiene ratings in a location where customers can see the rating without having to actively seek it out (e.g. behind a 'click-through'), with around two-thirds of businesses feeling this would be a good thing (69% in England, 68% in Northern Ireland and 67% in Wales).

As found in previous years, most food businesses reported being aware of the FHRS (England 92%; Northern Ireland 95%; Wales 97%) and, amongst those aware, most were satisfied with their business' food hygiene rating (England 92%; Northern Ireland 91%; Wales 86%). Satisfaction levels were in line with those recorded in 2022 in both England and Wales but had fallen significantly in Northern Ireland (from 95% in 2022 to 91% 2023).

Awareness that it is a legal requirement to display food hygiene rating stickers in Northern Ireland and Wales was extremely high (96% and 97% respectively). Furthermore, around nine in ten businesses in Northern Ireland (89%) and Wales (90%) felt that this legal requirement was a good thing

More than four fifths of businesses in Northern Ireland (83%) and Wales (82%) and around two thirds of businesses in England (68%) recalled receiving an inspection report letter following their most recent inspection. The proportion of businesses that recalled receiving a letter was in line with 2022 in Northern Ireland and Wales but had fallen significantly in England (from 77% in 2022 to 68% 2023).

Overall awareness that businesses could request a re-rating, appeal and had the 'right to reply' was high across all three countries. In line with 2022, at least three quarters were aware of each option in England and around nine in ten were aware in Northern Ireland and Wales. Few businesses said they had applied to appeal the rating given at their last inspection (England 0.3%; Northern Ireland 2%; and Wales 3%), exercised their right to reply (England 6%; Northern Ireland 8%; and Wales 8%) or applied for a re-rating (England 2%; Northern Ireland 4%; and Wales 5%). This could be because most businesses were content with their FHRS rating and so did not see a need to engage with the safeguards available.

In line with previous years, most businesses reported being motivated to maintain or improve their food hygiene rating (England 100%; Northern Ireland 98%; Wales 99%) and felt that the display of their rating proved to consumers that the business takes food hygiene seriously (England 98%; Northern Ireland 95%; Wales 93%).

Across all three nations, most food businesses that had received a food hygiene rating of 4 or less reported making changes to try to improve their rating (England 84%; Northern Ireland 77%; Wales 85%).

Overall, businesses felt positively about the value of the FHRS. Most businesses agreed they were proud of their food hygiene rating (England 96%; Northern Ireland 92%; Wales 88%); that having a good rating is attractive to customers (England 96%; Northern Ireland 91%; Wales 90%); and that displaying their rating improves their reputation among customers (England 95%; Northern Ireland 91%; Wales 88%).

Acknowledgements

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