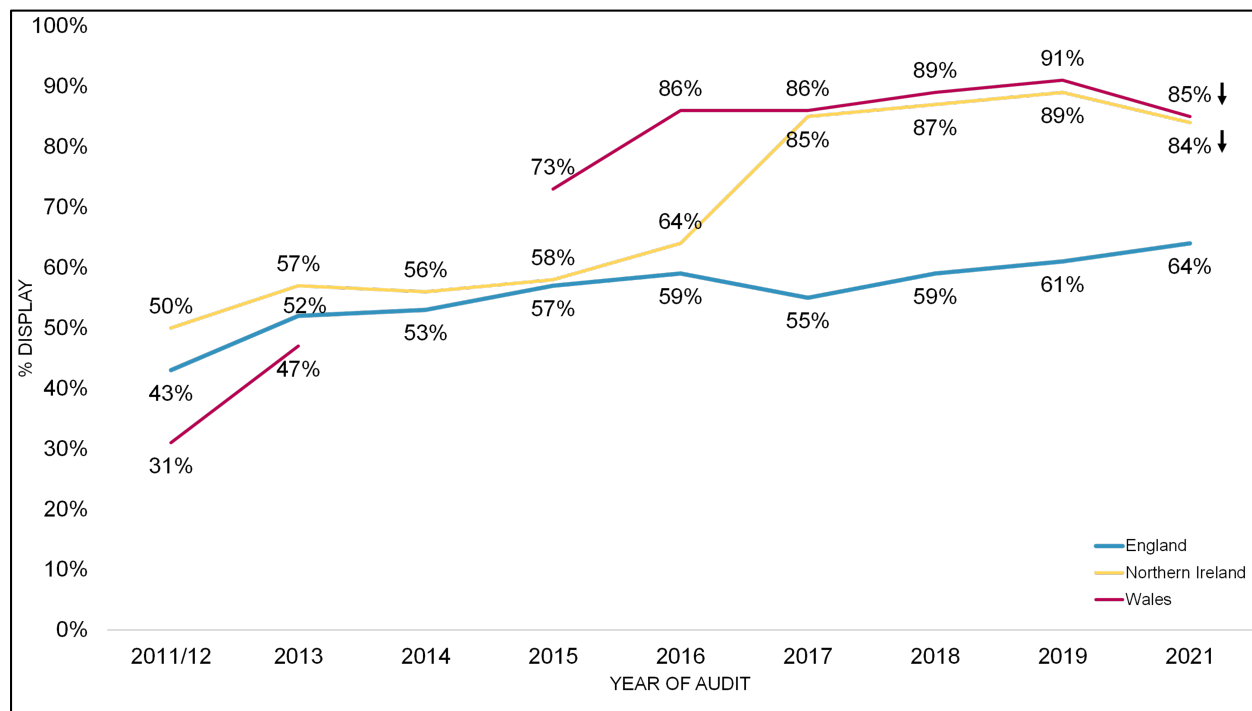


# Audit of display of food hygiene rating stickers results

This chapter covers the findings of the audits of the display of food hygiene rating stickers in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. It looks at areas such as: the rates of display of stickers, where the sticker is displayed, the mode of display which businesses use, and whether the food hygiene rating features on the food business' website. The chapter will also explore the type of sticker and whether the food hygiene rating is displayed on takeaway leaflets in Wales.

## Rates of display

Figure 3.1 summarises the proportion of establishments in England, Northern Ireland and Wales that are displaying food hygiene ratings. [\(footnote 1\)](#)



**Did you see an FHS sticker at this outlet? – Yes. Base: All audited food businesses 2021/2019/2018/2017/2016/2015/2014/ 2013/2012 (England 502/479/500/500/412/429/490/462/452; NI 515/480/500/500/450/445/431/429/418; Wales 505/498/ 500/500/417/430/NA/455/447) – For Wales, only the statutory style sticker is counted. ? Denotes a significant decrease from 2019.**

In England, 64% of businesses are displaying a rating (either inside or in a location visible from outside the premises). This proportion is not significantly higher than in 2019, when it was 61%. However, a steady upward trend is seen from 2017, when 55% of businesses displayed a rating.

In Northern Ireland the proportion of establishments displaying ratings has significantly declined compared to 2019. Over four in five businesses (84%) are displaying a rating either inside or in a location visible from outside the premises, a decline of 5 percentage points from the previous round of audits (89% in 2019). However, the overall picture in Northern Ireland remains

consistent, with the 2021 figure in line with the percentage displaying the sticker in 2017, the first audit after displaying the rating became mandatory in Northern Ireland the previous year.

In Wales, around four in five food businesses (85%) had their statutory FHRS sticker with the dragon logo on display in 2021, a significant decrease from 2019 (91%). However, the overall picture in Wales remains consistent, with the 2021 figure in line with the percentage displaying the sticker in 2017 (86%). Furthermore, almost nine in ten (88%) businesses in Wales had some sort of FHRS sticker on display in 2021, either with the statutory sticker, voluntary scheme sticker, as a certificate or another alternative format.

The reduction in the proportion of Northern Irish and Welsh businesses displaying an FHRS sticker in a location visible from outside their premises should be considered in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, Local Authorities were required to defer the routine inspection of many food businesses and focus resource on the most high-risk establishments. Consequently, there was less opportunity for inspectors to observe non-compliant behaviour and prompt businesses to correct this. There was also considerable upheaval in the food industry during the pandemic, with many businesses temporarily closing and changing management and/or ownership.

In Northern Ireland and Wales, takeaways and sandwich shops are more likely to have their rating on display (90% and 92% respectively) than accommodation businesses and pubs, bars and nightclubs (68% and 82% respectively). However, no such pattern is observed in England. In Northern Ireland, it is particularly accommodation businesses and pubs, bars and nightclubs which have seen a decline in display rates compared to two years ago (68% vs. 87% in 2019) – see Tables 3.1 to 3.3.

**Table 3.1 Display by food business type (England)**

Business Type	2021	2019	2018
Restaurants, cafe, canteen and catering	63%	69%	63%
Takeaway and sandwich shop	71%	62%	51%
Retail	59%	51%	57%
Accommodation and pub, car or nightclub	68%	57%	59%

**Table 3.1 Did you see an FHRS sticker at this outlet? – Yes. Base: All audited food businesses. Business type base 2021/2019/2018: (England Restaurant... 180/183/189 Takeaway 82/76/77, Hotel... 91/92/102 Retail 149/128/132). \*\* Denotes a significant decrease since 2019**

**Table 3.2 Display by food business type (Northern Ireland)**

Business Type	2021	2019	2018
Restaurants, cafe, canteen and catering	90%	92%	85%
Takeaway and sandwich shop	90%	94%	95%
Retail	83%	85%	90%
Accommodation and pub, car or nightclub	68%**	87%	81%

**Did you see an FHRS sticker at this outlet? – Yes. Base: All audited food businesses. Business type base 2021/2019/2018: (NI Restaurant... 196/182/191 Takeaway 88/77/78,**

Hotel... 82/84/91 Retail 149/137/140). \*\* Denotes a significant decrease since 2019

**Table 3.3 Display by food business type (Wales)**

Business Type	2021	2019	2018
Restaurants, cafe, canteen and catering	88%	93%	93%
Takeaway and sandwich shop	92%	94%	95%
Retail	80%	87%	88%
Accommodation and pub, car or nightclub	82%	90%	81%

**Did you see an FHRs sticker at this outlet? – Yes. Base: All audited food businesses. Business type base 2021/2019/2018 (Wales Restaurant.182/182/181, Takeaway 65/67/73, Hotel.117/123/123 Retail 141/126/123). NB: for Wales, only the statutory style sticker is counted.**

## Display by rating

In England, food businesses with a rating of 5 are the most likely to be displaying their food hygiene rating (76%), continuing an upward trend that has been seen since 2017. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the proportion of businesses displaying their rating decreases as the rating becomes lower: around half (51%) with a rating of 4 are showing their food hygiene rating, as are a quarter (25%) of those with a rating of 3.

As presented in Figure 3.2, due to a statutory requirement to display ratings, there was less difference in display rates between different food hygiene ratings in Northern Ireland and Wales. In Northern Ireland, 86% with a rating of 5 had a sticker on display, 78% with a rating of 4 had a sticker on display and 88% with a rating of 3 had a sticker on display. In Wales, 89% with a rating of 5 had a sticker on display, 88% with a rating of 4 had a sticker on display and 88% with a rating of 3 had a sticker on display.

FHRs sticker inside or in a location visible from outside, by food hygiene rating (3-5)" data-embed-button="image" data-entity-embed-display="entity\_reference:media\_thumbnail" data-entity-embed-display-settings="{\"image\_style\":\"max\_650x650\",\"image\_link\":\"\"}" data-entity-type="media" data-entity-uuid="9ff74359-6443-47bd-bfcd-c327ff3e6045" data-langcode="en">

**Did you see an FHRs sticker at this outlet? – Yes. Base: All audited food businesses, food hygiene rating 5/4/3 (England 324/105/52; NI 386/101/25; Wales 294/129/59)**

Focusing on audited food business with a food hygiene rating of less than 3, it was much more common for outlets in Northern Ireland and Wales to have an FHRs rating sticker on display than their counterparts in England.

- In England, 2 out of 19 food businesses with a rating of less than 3 had an FHRs rating sticker on display. ([footnote 2](#))
- In Northern Ireland, 1 out of 3 food businesses with a rating of less than 3 had an FHRs rating sticker on display
- In Wales, 18 out of 23 food businesses with a rating of less than 3 had an FHRs rating sticker on display

## Whether rating was clearly visible

The audits captured whether ratings were visible from outside the premises and whether they were clearly visible to customers i.e. not obscured by furniture or other posters. As in previous years, the vast majority of FHRs stickers found were clearly visible, as shown in Tables 3.4. to 3.6

**Table 3.4 Display rates in England**

Type of display	2021 (n=502)	2019 (n=479)	2018 (n=500)
Visible from outside	59%	55%	52%
Displayed inside	5%	6%	6%
Not displayed	36%	39%	41%
Summary: displayed inside or visible outside	64%	61%	59%
Deemed 'clearly visible'	63%*	59%	55%

**Did you see an FHRs sticker at this outlet? – Yes. Base: All audited food businesses 2021/2019/2018 (England 502/479/500; \* Denotes a significant increase since 2019. \*\* Denotes a significant decrease since 2019**

**Table 3.5 Display rates in Northern Ireland**

Type of display	2021 (n=515)	2019 (n=480)	2018 (n=500)
Visible from outside	77%**	87%	84%
Displayed inside	8%*	3%	3%
Not displayed	16%*	11%	11%
Summary: displayed inside or visible outside	84%**	89%	87%
Deemed 'clearly visible'	83%**	89%	87%

**Did you see an FHRs sticker at this outlet? – Yes. Base: All audited food businesses 2021/2019/2018 (NI 515/480/500) –\* Denotes a significant increase since 2019. \*\* Denotes a significant decrease since 2019**

**Table 3.6 Display rates in Wales**

Type of display	2021	2019	2018
Visible from outside	82%	89%	87%
Displayed inside	4%	2%	3%
Not displayed	15%	9%	11%
Summary: displayed inside or visible outside	85%	91%	89%
Deemed 'clearly visible'	85%	89%	87%

**Did you see an FHRs sticker at this outlet? – Yes. Base: All audited food businesses 2021/2019/2018 (Wales 505/498/500) – For Wales, only the statutory style sticker is counted. \* Denotes a significant increase since 2019. \*\* Denotes a significant decrease**

## since 2019

Similar to the pattern seen for England in Figure 3.1, the number of food businesses with a rating visible from outside (59%) has seen an upward trend over the past few years.

In Northern Ireland, the number of food businesses displaying their rating so that it is visible from outside has declined since 2019 (77% vs. 87% in 2019) ([footnote 3](#)). Conversely, the number of food businesses that are displaying their rating inside has increased to 8%, up from 3% in 2019.

For Wales, just over four in five food businesses (82%) are displaying the statutory sticker so that it is visible from outside, this is 7 percentage points down from 2019 (89%). However, the number of food businesses displaying their rating inside has remained consistent compared to the last audit (4% vs 2% in 2019). The number of food businesses not displaying the statutory sticker with the dragon logo has increased to 15%, up from 9% two years ago.

There is some variation by food business type with regards to food hygiene ratings being outside within each country:

- In England, takeaways and sandwich shops are more likely to have a sticker visible from outside (69%) compared to retail (55%).
- In Northern Ireland, accommodation businesses and pubs, bars and nightclubs are significantly less likely to have their rating visible from outside (57%) compared to all other food business types (77% average).
- In Wales, when accounting for the correct sticker only, takeaways and sandwich shops are more likely to have their rating visible from outside (89%) than accommodation businesses and pubs, bars and nightclubs (77%).

## Mode of display

In England and Northern Ireland, the vast majority of displays are using an FHRs sticker. An alternative format, such as a certificate or an A-board, was used in less than 1% of cases.

In Wales, FHRs stickers look different to those in the rest of the UK. The statutory sticker, identified with a logo of a dragon, was displayed inside or in a location visible from outside by around four in five (85%) food businesses, a significant decline compared to 2019 (91%). Three percent are displaying an FHRs sticker without a dragon, in line with 2019 (3%), and just three food businesses are displaying their rating in alternative format. The remaining 12% are not displaying anything at all.

## Number of food hygiene ratings on display

Auditors recorded the number of ratings that were on display. Where more than one rating was observed, auditors recorded the location of display and the date on each record, where possible. As with previous years, a small minority of businesses in each country displayed more than one sticker.

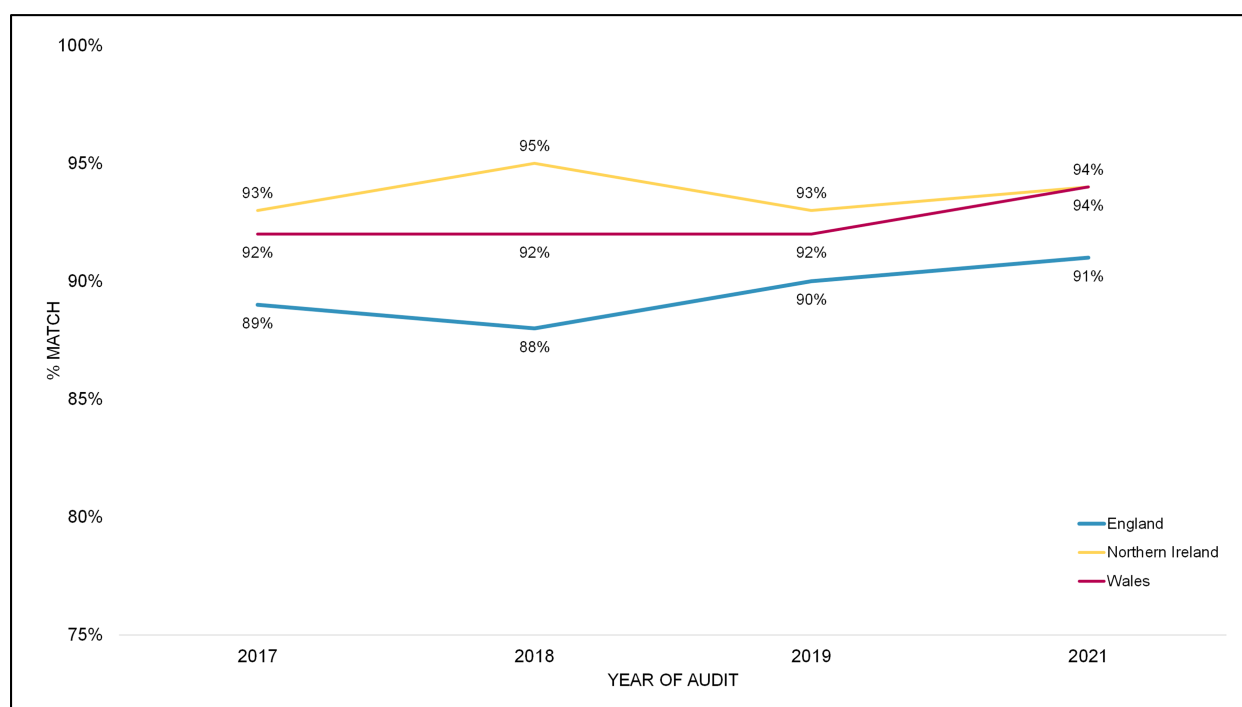
For England, amongst businesses displaying a food hygiene rating, 12% of businesses had more than one food hygiene rating on display, an increase compared to the figure in 2019 (7%). In Northern Ireland, 14% of businesses displayed more than one FHRs sticker, higher than the 9% that was reported in 2019. For Wales, 11% had more than one sticker on display (of any type), a similar figure compared to the previous audit (8%).

Where multiple stickers were displayed, ratings generally matched – there was a difference in the rating displayed between the first and second sticker in just 10 audits out of 145 where more than one sticker was found.

## Comparison of ratings on display to those recorded in FHRs database

Most food businesses in each country who displayed a food hygiene rating sticker, displayed a rating matching that which was published on the FSA’s rating website (England 91%; Northern Ireland 94%; Wales 94%). In the small number of cases where the rating displayed does not match the rating online, more food businesses displayed a higher rating (England 7%; Northern Ireland 4%; Wales 3%) than a lower rating (England 2%, Northern Ireland 2%; Wales 3%).

As shown in Figure 3.3, the number of food businesses whose displayed food hygiene rating matched the rating recorded in the FHRs database was in line with that recorded in previous years and has remained fairly consistent since 2017.



**Does the food hygiene rating at location match what is in the FHRs database? – Yes Base: All businesses displaying FHRs 2021/2019/2018/2017 (England 315/294/294/276; NI 448/429/446/435; Wales 435/467/454/438)**

For all three nations, businesses with a rating of 5 are more likely to be displaying the correct rating compared to those with a rating of 4. Base sizes for businesses rated 3 are low but are shown for context (indicative only). Tables 3.7 to 3.9 show the rating on display split by the rating awarded by the FSA.

**Table 3.7 Comparison of rating on display to rating recorded in FHRs database (England)**

Comparison of ratings	3 (n=13**)	4 (n=53)	5 (n=247)
3	31%	0%	<1%
4	30%	73%	1%

Comparison of ratings	3 (n=13 <sup>**</sup> )	4 (n=53)	5 (n=247)
5	39%	27%	97%
Awaiting inspection	0%	0%	1%

**What rating was on the sticker/certificate? Base: All food businesses displaying FHRs. <sup>\*\*</sup> indicates a low sample size, these figures may not be representative of the population. A highlighted cells notes where the rating on sticker matches rating in FHRs database**

**Table 3.8 Comparison of rating on display to rating recorded in FHRs database (Northern Ireland)**

Comparison of ratings	3 (n=22 <sup>**</sup> )	4 (n=79)	5 (n=333)
3	72%	0%	<1%
4	18%	82%	1%
5	9%	17%	98%
Awaiting inspection	0%	1%	<1%

**What rating was on the sticker/certificate? Base: All food businesses displaying FHRs. <sup>\*\*</sup> indicates a low sample size, these figures may not be representative of the population. A highlighted cells notes where the rating on sticker matches rating in FHRs database**

**Table 3.9 Comparison of rating on display to rating recorded in FHRs database (Wales)**

Comparison of rating	0-2 (n=18 <sup>**</sup> )	3 (n=52)	4 (n=113)	5 (n=260)
1	31%	0%	0%	0%
2	37%	0%	0%	0%
3	7%	92%	0%	0%
4	24%	2%	91%	2%
5	0%	4%	6%	96%
Awaiting Inspection	0%	2%	3%	2%

**What rating was on the sticker/certificate? Base: All food businesses displaying FHRs. <sup>\*\*</sup> indicates a low sample size, these figures may not be representative of the population. A highlighted cells notes where the rating on sticker matches rating in FHRs database**

## Use of the food hygiene rating on a food business' website

For the first time, food businesses that were audited also had a review of their websites, to see whether the food hygiene rating was displayed there. [\(footnote 4\)](#)

In England, 59% of businesses had a website. Of these, just 5% had their rating on display on their website. Ten of the fourteen businesses displaying their rating matched the rating on the FSA database, while two had a rating which was higher than their actual rating whilst the remaining two businesses displayed a number lower than what they had been given. [\(footnote 5\)](#)

In Northern Ireland, half (50%) of businesses had a website. Of these, 8% had their rating on display on their website. All but one of the 21 food businesses displaying a rating were given a rating of 5; the remaining food business had a food hygiene rating of 4. All food businesses were showing a rating which matched what is held for them on the FSA database.

In Wales, three in five (60%) food businesses had their own website. Of these, 11% had their rating on display on their website. Of the 31 businesses displaying a rating on their website, 26 were showing a rating of 5; while the remaining five businesses were showing a rating of 4. Five food businesses were showing ratings higher than what they were awarded, the rest were displaying a rating which matches what was given to them by the FSA.

1. Data on the proportion of Welsh businesses displaying FHRs rating stickers is unavailable for 2014
2. Three audits were conducted in Northern Ireland with businesses with a rating less than 3. This equated to 0.6% of all Northern Ireland audits, in line with the 1% who have a rating of less than 3 in the nation. Due to low base size in the raw data, this finding should be interpreted with caution.
3. This is partly caused by a sampling effect. In 2021, fewer businesses than in 2019 had their own entrance (95% vs. 98%) and therefore fewer could display their sticker in a way which was visible from outside the premises. However, even accounting for this, the drop in the number of businesses displaying their rating in a location visible from outside remains statistically significant.
4. 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 their website. Even if a business achieves the top rating there can be a short delay while the local authority updates their website.
5. A strict definition of a business' website was observed. It did not include a business' social media presence or aggregators, only a business' own website.