

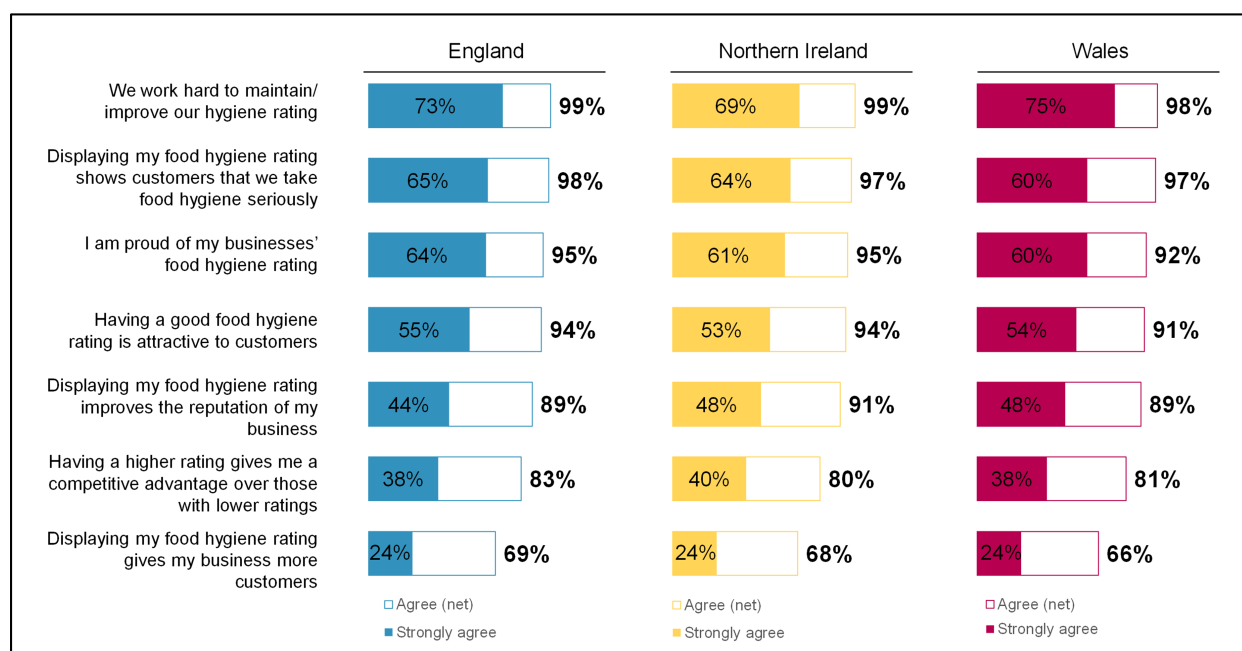
Impacts of the scheme

This chapter covers how food businesses displaying a food hygiene rating feel about the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). Specifically, it looks at changes made by businesses with a food hygiene rating of less than five in order to improve their rating at the next inspection and what kind of impact they feel the scheme has on their business and potential customers. 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 are incentivised to maintain or improve their food hygiene rating and consider that the display of their rating has a range of positive impacts on customer perceptions of the business.

Figure 8.1 Perceptions of FHRS



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 403, Northern Ireland 483, Wales 464).

As presented in Figure 8.1, across England, Northern Ireland, and Wales, nearly all food businesses (97-99%) agreed that they worked hard to maintain or improve their food hygiene rating and that displaying a food hygiene rating proved to consumers that the business takes food hygiene seriously.

Furthermore, more than nine in ten stated that they were proud of their food hygiene rating. Perhaps unsurprisingly, across all countries, those with a rating of five were more likely to be proud (England: 99% vs 95% on average; Northern Ireland: 99% vs 95% on average; Wales: 99% vs 92% on average). There were differences by outlet type within both England and Northern Ireland. In England, restaurants and cafés were more likely to be proud of their rating (98% vs 95%), while in Northern Ireland retail food businesses were more likely (99% vs 95%).

However, agreement was notably lower with regards to the impact the scheme has on levels of custom. There was widespread agreement that good food hygiene ratings were attractive to customers (England: 94%; Northern Ireland: 94%; Wales: 81%), and around two-thirds agreed that displaying a food hygiene rating resulted in more customers (England: 69%; Northern Ireland: 68%; Wales: 66%). In both England and Northern Ireland, takeaways and sandwich shops were more likely to agree that trade was enhanced by display of their rating (England: 83% vs 69% average; Northern Ireland: 93% vs 68%). There were no significant differences by outlet type in Wales for this statement.

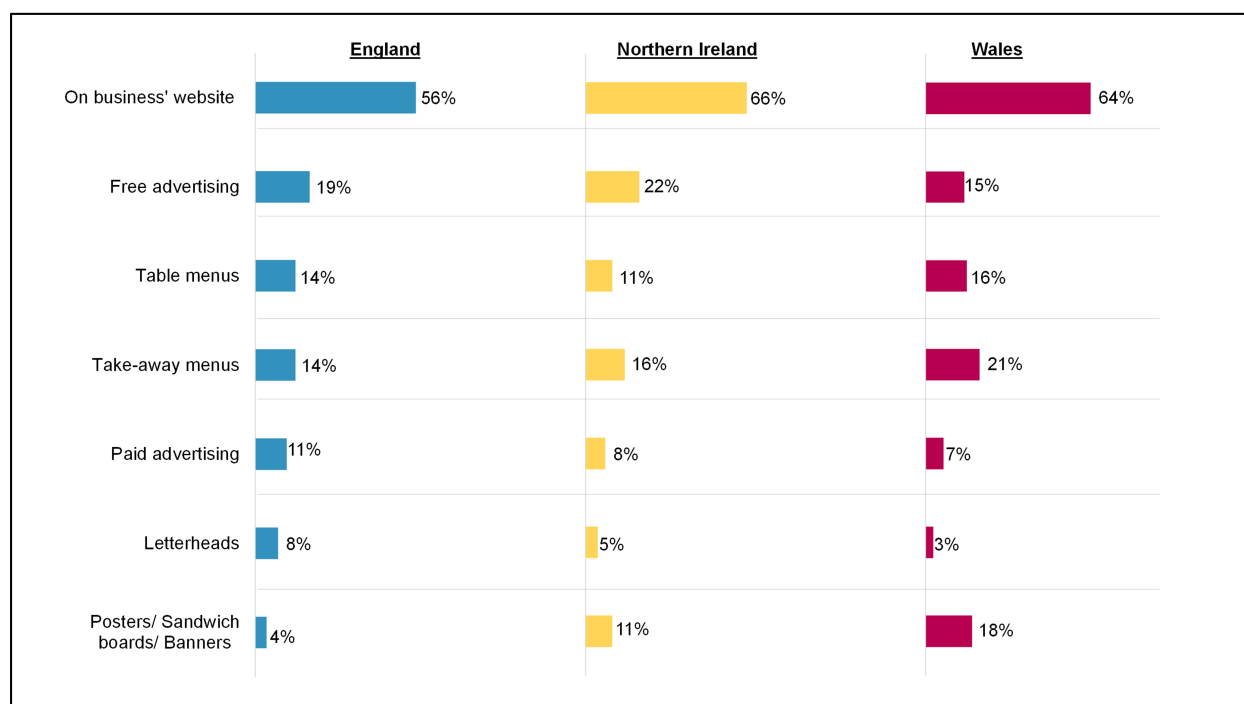
Use of food hygiene ratings for promotion

Across each nation, less than a quarter of food businesses said they used their food hygiene rating to promote their business (England: 21%; Northern Ireland: 23%; Wales: 24%). For example, through display in advertising, their website or on menus.

In England and Wales takeaway businesses and sandwich shops stood out as more likely to use food hygiene ratings in promotional materials (England: 35% vs 21% on average; Wales: 35% vs 24% on average). Meanwhile retail businesses were less likely to in England (10% vs 21% on average), Northern Ireland (15% vs 23% on average) and Wales (17% vs 24% on average). Moreover, Welsh food businesses with a rating of five were more likely than those with a rating of three or less to use their rating in advertisements (27% vs 11%). However – perhaps surprisingly - in England and Northern Ireland the rating had no influence.

Figure 8.2 presents the channels used by food businesses that use their food hygiene rating to advertise. Across all three countries, a food business' personal website was by far the most common channel. In England, over half (56%) of those that used their rating in advertisements did so on their own website, while in Northern Ireland and Wales it was around two-thirds (Northern Ireland: 66%; Wales: 64%). This equates to 11% of all businesses in England, 15% in Northern Ireland and 15% in Wales claiming to advertise their food hygiene rating on their own website – proportions considerably higher than the levels of online display found in the audit of businesses where rates were 3% in England, 4% in Northern Ireland and 7% in Wales.

Figure 8.2 Channels used to advertise food hygiene ratings



B18. Does your business currently use, or has it previously used, your Food Hygiene Rating in any of the following ways? Base: FBOs who use their FHRS to advertise (England: 95, Northern Ireland: 111, Wales: 114).

Only a minority of businesses in England, Northern Ireland and Wales reported using online ordering functions on delivery service websites / apps, social media or their own website ([footnote 1](#)). Amongst these businesses the inclusion of their food hygiene rating on these platforms was relatively low.

- one in eight businesses in England (13%), one in five businesses in Northern Ireland (21%) and one in four businesses in Wales (24%) that sold food through an ordering function on their own website said they displayed their rating on this platform
- between one in ten and one in seven businesses that used third party delivery services said they displayed their rating on this platform (England: 10%; Northern Ireland: 12%; Wales: 14%)
- between one in ten and one in fourteen businesses that sold food through social media said they displayed their rating on this platform (England: 8%; Northern Ireland: 10%; Wales: 7%)

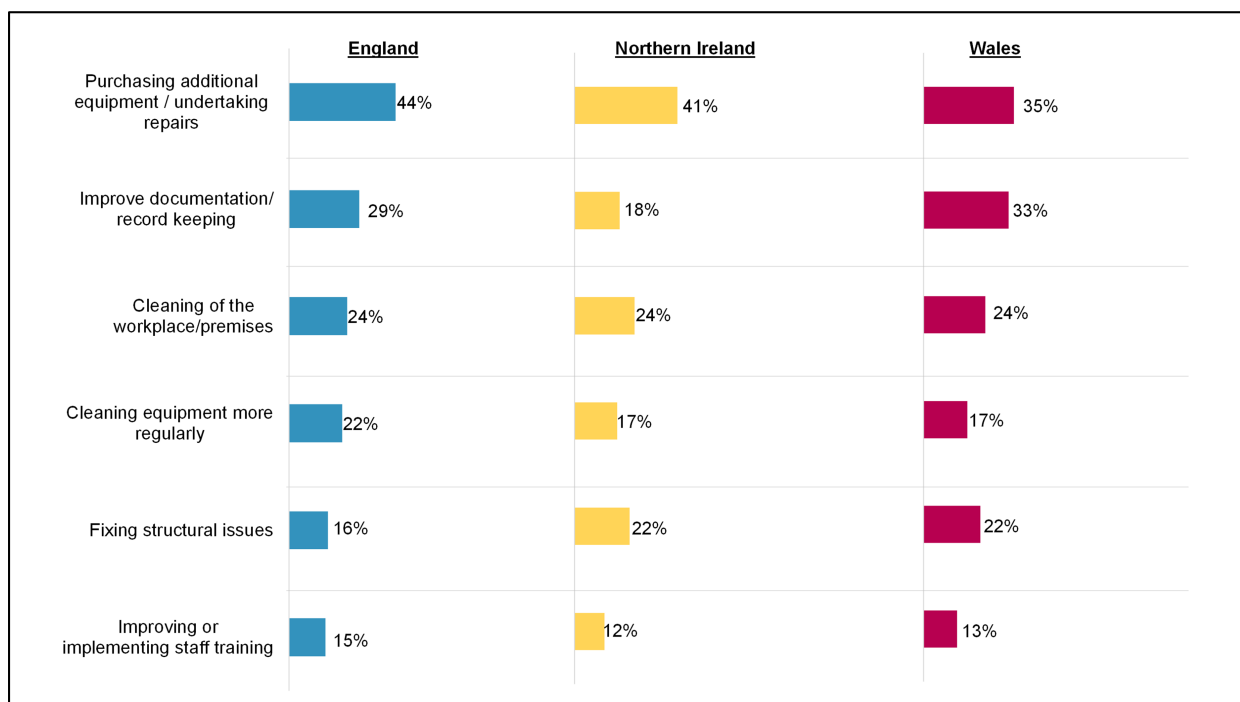
Although only a minority of businesses currently used their food hygiene rating to advertise their business, around two-fifths of those who do not in England (41%), Northern Ireland (41%) and Wales (38%) said they would consider doing so in the future.

Changes made as a result of FHRS

Across all three nations, most food businesses that had received a food hygiene rating of four or less reported making changes in an attempt to improve their rating. In England, nearing nine in ten (87%) businesses had made changes, while around eight in ten businesses in Wales (82%) and Northern Ireland (78%) had. The proportion of food businesses saying that they had taken action to improve their food hygiene was in line with previous years in all countries.

As presented in Figure 8.3, the most commonly reported action taken by food businesses to improve their rating was purchasing new equipment and undertaking repairs. This was cited by more than two-fifths of businesses in England (44%) and Northern Ireland (41%) and around a third of businesses in Wales (35%).

Figure 8.3 Changes made to improve food hygiene ratings



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 five and made changes to improve their rating (England: 109, Northern Ireland: 75, Wales: 124).

As presented in Tables 8.4 to 8.6, compared to 2019, there has been considerable movement in the nature of the changes businesses said they made to improve their food hygiene rating.

Table 8.1 Changes made to improve food hygiene ratings over time (2018-2021), England

Changes	2021 (n=109)	2020 (n=127)	2019 (n=112)
Purchasing additional equipment/undertaking repairs	44%	43%	37%
Improve documentation/record keeping	29%*	11%	10%
Cleaning of the workplace/premises	24%*	13%	10%
Cleaning equipment more regularly	22%	27%	20%

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 five who have made changes to the way they do things in order to improve their rating. See table for bases. * Denotes a significant increase since 2019. ** Denotes a significant decrease since 2019.

Table 8.2 Changes made to improve food hygiene ratings over time (2018-2021), Northern Ireland

Changes	2020 (n=75)	2019 (n=119)	2018 (n=135)
Purchasing additional equipment/undertaking repairs	41%*	27%	43%
Improve documentation/record keeping	18%	17%	7%
Cleaning of the workplace/premises	24%*	9%	10%
Cleaning equipment more regularly	14%	25%	14%

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 five who have made changes to the way they do things in order to improve their rating. See table for bases. * Denotes a significant increase since 2019. ** Denotes a significant decrease since 2019.

Table 8.3 Changes made to improve food hygiene ratings over time (2018-2021), Wales

Changes	2021 (n=124)	2019 (n=134)	2018 (n=122)
Purchasing additional equipment/undertaking repairs	35%*	48%	45%
Improve documentation/record keeping	33%*	14%	12%
Cleaning of the workplace/premises	24%*	3%	20%
Cleaning equipment more regularly	17%	16%	20%

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 five who have made changes to the way they do things in order to improve their rating. See table for bases. * Denotes a significant increase since 2019. ** Denotes a significant decrease since 2019.

1. Third party delivery services England: 19%, Northern Ireland: 13%, Wales: 14%, sell food through social media (England: 14%; Northern Ireland: 15%; Wales: 14%), ordering function on own website (England: 22%; Northern Ireland: 14%; Wales: 20%).