

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme –Consumer Attitudes Tracker

Area of research interest: [Behaviour and perception](#)

Study duration: 2016-11-01

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Background

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) is a partnership scheme between local authorities and the FSA which aims to provide consumers with information on the hygiene standards of places they choose to eat out at or purchase food from.

The FSA previously commissioned a biannual public attitudes tracker survey to monitor key areas of concern for consumers in relation to food. In 2010, a number of questions were added regarding awareness and use of the FHRS. In 2014, the FSA decided to explore the FHRS and consumers in more detail, and commissioned a bespoke consumer attitudes tracker survey to specifically monitor consumer awareness, attitudes towards and use of the scheme.

This is the fifth wave of the tracker.

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Research Approach

This piece of work consisted of face to face interviews with a representative sample of 2,100 respondents (aged 16 and over). Respondents were selected using a random location sampling method across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The questions primarily focus on the following key areas;

- Awareness of the scheme; the proportion of respondents who report being aware of the FHRS
- Recognition of the scheme; the proportion of respondents who recognize the FHRS sticker, or who had seen a food business displaying one in the past year
- Use of the scheme; the proportion of respondents who report using the scheme to base their decision on where to eat out or purchase food
- Views on the scheme; an example being the proportion of respondents who believe food businesses should be legally required to display their rating

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Results

Awareness

- Half of respondents in England were aware of the FHRS (50%). The figure was slightly higher in Wales (69%) and Northern Ireland (57%).

- The most common source of information (82% or 88% when including prompted responses) was still a sticker or certificate displayed at food business premises, which was also the most common source in all previous waves.
- An area of interest introduced in this wave was around the three component scores that determine the overall rating. Of those who had seen FHRS online, 49% were aware of the three component scores. Of those aware, 64% used them to help make decisions about where to eat or buy food.
- Food standards issues such as those concerning allergens, labelling and composition were considered by 73% of respondents as issues that should be taken into account during an inspection. This was also a new question introduced in this wave.

Recognition

- Consumer recognition of FHRS stickers continues to be slightly higher in Northern Ireland (85%) and significantly so in Wales (90%) than in England (78%).
- There was a significant increase in levels of recognition in England from the previous wave (78% up from 75%).
- Of those aware of any hygiene rating scheme, most respondents report having seen a sticker on display in the last 12 months - 80% of respondents in England, 87% in Wales and 92% in Northern Ireland.

Use

- A total of 38% of respondents in England, 39% in Wales and 48% in Northern Ireland said that they would definitely base their decision to eat out somewhere on the FHRS rating the business received and 29%, 27% and 33% in England, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively said they would 'maybe' do this.
- In terms of actually checking the rating, 44% of respondents in England, 39% in Wales and 62% in Northern Ireland report either often or sometimes doing so, and most commonly do so by checking the food business window or door (62%).
- The proportion reporting 'often' or 'sometimes' using FHRS ratings to make a decision has increased significantly in Northern Ireland (63% up from 44%). This increase occurred over the period in which Northern Ireland introduced the statutory display scheme (October 2016).
- As in previous waves, a rating of 3 was identified most frequently as the lowest acceptable that consumers would consider in Wales (54%) and in Northern Ireland (50%). In England, the most commonly given lowest acceptable rating has increased from 3 to a 4 (38%).

Views on mandatory display

The proportion of respondents who report that business should have to display their ratings continues to be high in England (83%), Wales (88%). As in previous waves, the figure continues to be slightly higher in Northern Ireland (98%)

Research report

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

[View Consumer awareness of FHRS as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (429.57 KB)

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

[View Food Hygiene Rating Scheme \(FHRS\) Biannual Public Attitudes Tracker Wave 5, November 2016 as PDF\(Open in a new window\) \(555.78 KB\)](#)