

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme – Consumer Attitudes Tracker (Wave 6)

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

Study duration: 2017-10-01

The survey moved from a biannual basis to an annual basis for Wave Six onwards. The next survey is due to take place in October 2018.

Background

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) is run in partnership between us and local authorities and provides information on the standards of hygiene in businesses providing food directly to consumers, such as restaurants, pubs, cafés, takeaways and hotels, as well as supermarkets and other food shops.

We previously commissioned a biannual public attitudes tracker survey to monitor key areas of concern for consumers in relation to food. In 2010, questions were added regarding awareness and use of the FHRS. In 2014, we took the decision 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 sixth wave of the tracker.

Research Approach

This piece of work consisted of face to face interviews with a representative sample of 2,066 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 - for example, the proportion of respondents who believe food businesses should be legally required to display their rating

Results

Awareness

- The majority of respondents in England (54%) and Northern Ireland (54%) were aware of the FHRS. The figure was higher in Wales (75%). Awareness has not significantly increased in each of the countries since the previous wave

- Across all three countries, the combined percentage of people aware has risen from 52% in the previous wave to 55% in the current Wave
- Awareness of FHRs has increased significantly in England, Wales and Northern Ireland since Wave 1 in November 2010 from 45% to 55% overall
- The most common source of information was the rating being displayed at a food business (84% or 89% when including prompted responses), which has also been the most commonly reported source in all previous waves
- Of those who had seen the food hygiene rating online, 47% reported being aware of the three component scores that determine the overall ratings. Of those aware, 66% 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 77% of respondents as issues that should be taken into account during an inspection

Recognition

- Consumer recognition of FHRs stickers continues to be higher in Northern Ireland (92%) and Wales (91%) than in England (81%). Across all three countries, recognition has increased from 79% in the previous wave to 82% in the current wave, though this increase was not significant
- There was an increase in levels of recognition in England from the previous wave (81% up from 78%), Wales (91% up from 90%) and in Northern Ireland (92% up from 85%), though these were not significant increases
- The majority of respondents (82%) reported having seen a food business displaying its hygiene rating sticker/certificate in the last 12 months, which has increased since the previous wave (80%). Respondents in Northern Ireland (95%) and Wales (91%) were more likely to report having seen a hygiene rating sticker displayed in the last 12 months compared to those in England (81%)

Use

- A total of 43% of respondents in England, 52% in Wales and 57% in Northern Ireland said that they would definitely decide to eat out somewhere based on the FHRs rating the business received and 28%, 19% and 31% in England, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively said that they would 'maybe' do this
- In terms of actually checking the rating, 46% of respondents in England, 53% in Wales and 47% in Northern Ireland report either often or sometimes doing so before deciding to purchase food from an establishment, and most commonly do so by checking the food business door or window (67%)
- Ratings of 3 and 4 were equally reported as the lowest acceptable rating consumers would consider when buying food (38%) in England and across all three countries combined. The lowest acceptable rating in Wales was considered to be a 3 (48%), and in Northern Ireland a rating of 4 (51%) which is a significant increase from 25% in the previous wave

Views on mandatory display

The proportion of respondents who report that businesses should have to display their ratings continues to be high in England (85%) and Wales (96%). In Wales, this figure was significantly higher than the previous wave (88%). As in previous waves, the figure continues to be higher in Northern Ireland (99%).

Research report

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

[View FHRS wave 6 tracker as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (1.21 MB)

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

PDF

[View Food Hygiene Rating Scheme \(FHRS\) Public Attitudes Tracker - Wave 6 Summary as PDF\(Open in a new window\)](#) (838.93 KB)