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Food Standards Scotland
For safe food and healthy eating

Our Food 2024

An annual review of food standards across the UK

HC 936
SG/2025/101

Our Food 2024: An annual review of food standards across the UK

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

The Food Standards Agency fsa.communications@food.gov.uk
X @foodgov
Facebook facebook.com/FoodStandardsAgency

Scotland

Food Standards Scotland enquiries@fss.scot
X @FSScot
Facebook facebook.com/FoodStandardsScotland

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Foreword

Welcome to Our Food 2024.

This year marks 25 years since the Food Standards Agency (FSA) was established and a decade since the creation of Food Standards Scotland (FSS). These milestones are a chance to reflect on why both organisations were set up and the key roles we continue to play today.

Professor Susan Jebb
Chair, The Food Standards Agency

Safe food is a primary determinant of human health. Our job is to protect public health and uphold consumer interests in relation to food, working to ensure the food system provides safe and healthy food.

However, this report is not about the FSA or FSS. Rather it is about the wider food system we are part of — looking at how well it is working, where the pressures are, and thinking about what risks may lie ahead. It forms part of our commitment to be transparent about the state of food standards in the UK.

Over the past 25 years, events such as the BSE crisis and the horsemeat incident have shown the importance of strong, independent regulation. The food system, including the businesses that operate within it, continues to face risks and pressures, and our role is to verify that it keeps delivering for consumers safely while also helping food businesses to flourish.

We are greatly encouraged by the wider policy recognition of governments across the UK of the importance of food in addressing some of the societal challenges of our age, notably obesity, diet-related disease and climate change. We are pleased to be playing our part in the food and obesity strategies and policies across the four nations that will seek to improve health by reducing harms from unhealthy and/or unsafe food.

This report can help inform these next steps. By being honest about the current state of the system, we can help secure the improvements needed to protect public health and maintain people's trust in the food they eat.

Heather Kelman
Chair, Food Standards Scotland

Setting the report in context

This year's report marks two significant anniversaries for our organisations.

In 2025, the FSA celebrates 25 years and FSS 10 years of protecting public health and providing assurance that the food we eat is safe, trustworthy and authentic.

Both organisations work to support their respective food sectors and uphold the reputation of high-quality food produced across the UK. FSS also has a specific focus on promoting healthier diets to help improve overall population health.

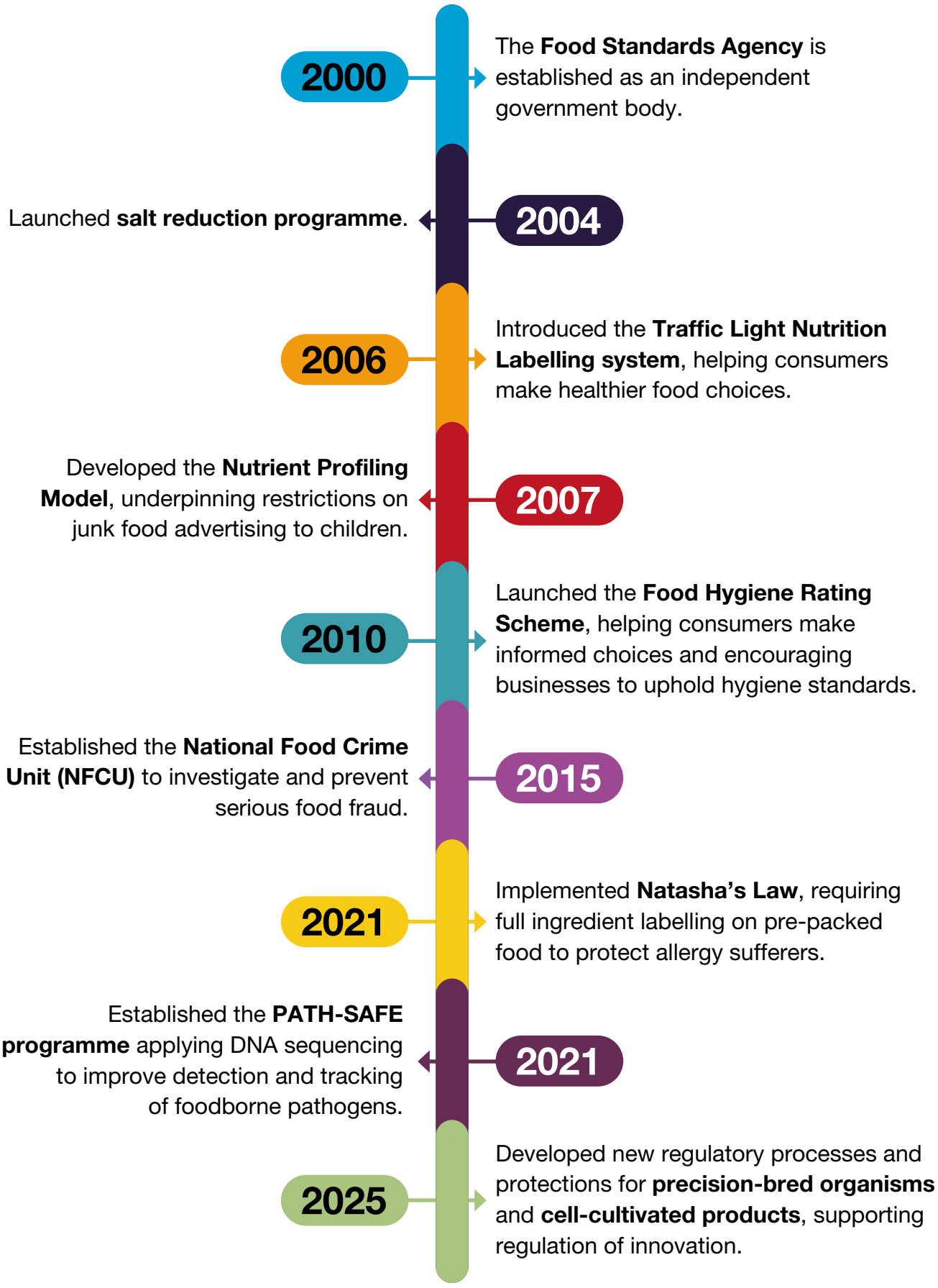
The milestones come at a time of continued evolution in the food system. Over the years, both organisations have adapted to major challenges — including EU Exit, the COVID-19 pandemic, and shifting consumer habits — while maintaining a strong commitment to science and evidence-based regulation. Each organisation has played a pivotal role in supporting consumers and businesses in navigating complex and changing food environments.

Looking ahead, both organisations remain focused on supporting and exploring new technologies within the sector, without compromising the fundamental need for food to be safe. We will continue to innovate, collaborate with stakeholders and evolve as trusted and effective collaborators.

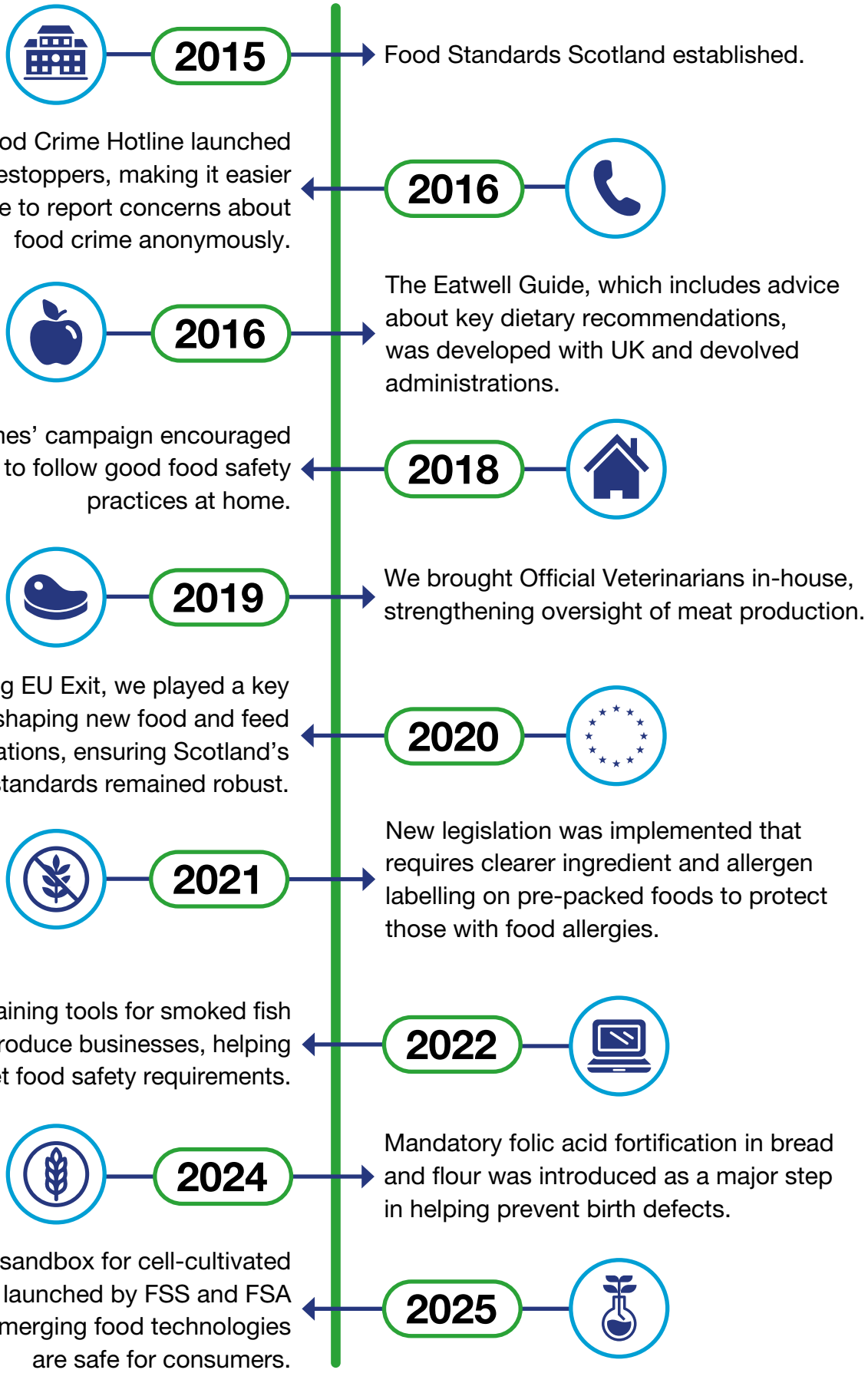
These anniversaries provide an opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made and reaffirm our commitment to collaboration with government, regulatory bodies, and industry, to drive positive change.

We have highlighted key initiatives from the last 10 and 25 years that demonstrate our efforts to maintain public trust and uphold high food standards — building a safe and sustainable food system for the future.

Our journey: Celebrating 25 years of the FSA



FSS: Marking 10 years as the public sector food body for Scotland



Executive summary

This marks the fourth annual review jointly produced by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Food Standards Scotland (FSS). As before, we use a range of data (our own as well as data from local authorities, port health authorities and other government departments) to review the state of food standards across the UK, with a particular focus on food safety. While we cannot cover every aspect of food standards, we clarify at the start of each chapter which specific areas we focus on.

Key findings

The nation's plate

While food prices rose more slowly than overall inflation in 2024, consumers continued to report concerns over affordability.

21% of households in Scotland were classified as food insecure in January 2024. In England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, the proportion of those classified as food insecure in July 2024 decreased from 25% to 21% between April 2023 and July 2024. When broken down, decreases were also seen at nation level. Our survey data showed food prices to be the top prompted concern for consumers.

Recent survey data for Scotland shows that children aged 11-15 in Scotland are still not meeting dietary health goals. They are consuming too many energy-dense foods high in salt, saturated fat, and free sugars, and too few fruits, vegetables, and oily fish. These issues were more pronounced in deprived communities in Scotland. Recent health survey data for England showed that most children and adults in England do not eat the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables per day. Consumption rates in the most deprived areas of England are lower than in the least deprived.

Going global

Food and feed imports to the UK grew by 9.5% in 2024, reaching the highest volume in a decade. There were notable increases in imports from Germany, the United States, and Argentina.

Fifteen new commodities were added to the list of high-risk foods of non-animal origin, requiring additional checks at the border in Great Britain. Two others are now subject to increased controls due to higher safety risks. One commodity was removed and a further four are now subject to reduced checks based on evidence that risks have reduced.

Further developments in trading relationships included the UK signing a new memorandum of understanding with Nigeria — the first bespoke agreement with an African country following the EU Exit — and officially acceding to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

Keeping it clean

Local authority food standards resources are under pressure, with a long-term decline in occupied food hygiene and food standards posts. In Scotland, 20% of all total allocated food safety roles were unavailable or vacant at the end of 2024 and although staffing levels in England, Wales and Northern Ireland showed some improvement between 2022/23 and 2023/24, post-pandemic backlogs persist.

Nine out of ten UK food businesses covered by the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and Food Hygiene Information Scheme continue to hold satisfactory or better ratings, but there is a backlog in England, Wales and Northern Ireland of 95,000 overdue inspections, including 871 high-risk businesses. In Scotland, 17.2% (12,533 out of 72,950) of registered businesses were unrated in December 2024.

Compliance with hygiene standards remains high in UK meat and dairy establishments, with all meat establishments in Northern Ireland and the majority in England, Wales, and Scotland achieving good or satisfactory ratings in 2024.

Immediate pressures on Official Veterinarian (OV) resourcing in England and Wales eased somewhat during 2024 but the process of recruitment for this key public health function remains a challenge.

Safety and authenticity

The number of food and feed safety incidents in 2024 remained stable. Pathogenic microorganisms were the most common hazard, with meat and meat products, and dietetic foods, food supplements and fortified foods also frequently affected. Allergen-related incidents decreased slightly between 2023 and 2024.

Local authority food sampling rates in the UK overall fell by 4.5% between 2022/23 and 2023/24, with decreases in England and Northern Ireland and increases in Wales and Scotland. Sampling levels remain substantially lower than a decade ago.

The FSA and FSS remain vigilant to threats posed by criminal activity in the food chain. In 2024, our food crime units recorded 29 live investigations and 108 disruptions. Multi-agency collaboration remains critical to addressing food crime.

The nation's plate

Consumer behaviours and their drivers

At a glance

In this chapter, we explore:

- the impact of inflation on food affordability
- how cost of living pressures affected consumers' behaviours, choices and attitudes towards food

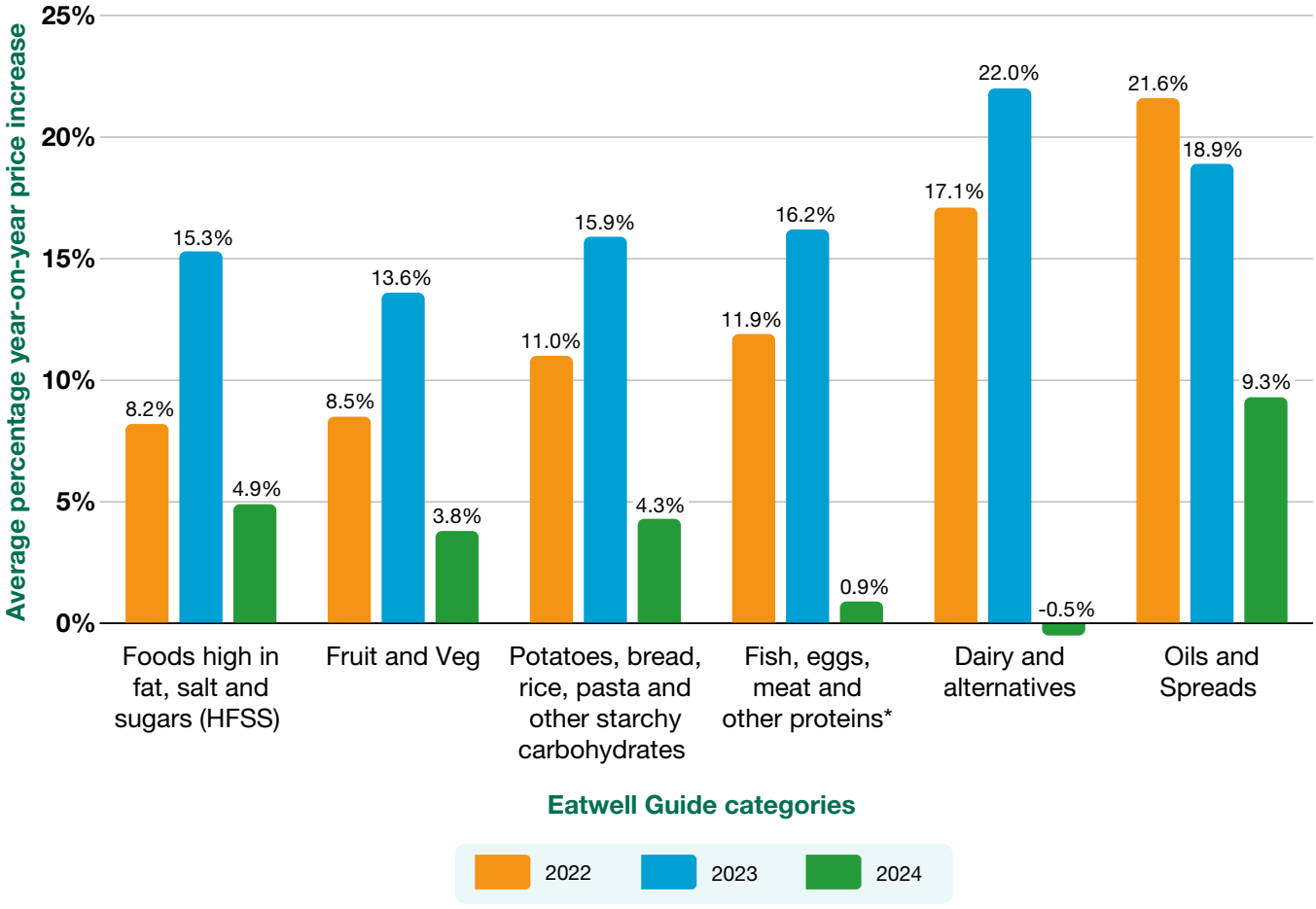
Introduction

As our previous reports show, recent increases in living costs have left a lasting impression on UK households. Even as inflation has slowed more recently, food purchasing habits are likely to have been affected by it.

Food prices and their impact on the consumer

In Our Food 2023,[1] we reviewed how food inflation — measured by the Consumer Prices Index including owner-occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) — hit a 45-year high, peaking at 19.8% in March 2023 before falling to 8% by the end of the year.[2] More recently, Office for National Statistics (ONS) data found that in the 12 months up to December 2024, overall consumer prices rose by 3.5%. Food and non-alcoholic beverages increased at a slower rate of 2.0%.[3] In Figure 1, we see how price inflation affected food goods in the Eatwell Guide (the government guide which shows the proportions of foods required to achieve a healthy balanced diet) between 2022 and 2024.

Figure 1: Comparison of average percentage year-on-year increase in price of Eatwell Guide categories in 2022, 2023 and 2024



*Beans and pulses are excluded due to unavailability of data.

Source: ONS — Consumer Price Inflation Tables (2022-24)

Concerns about affordability

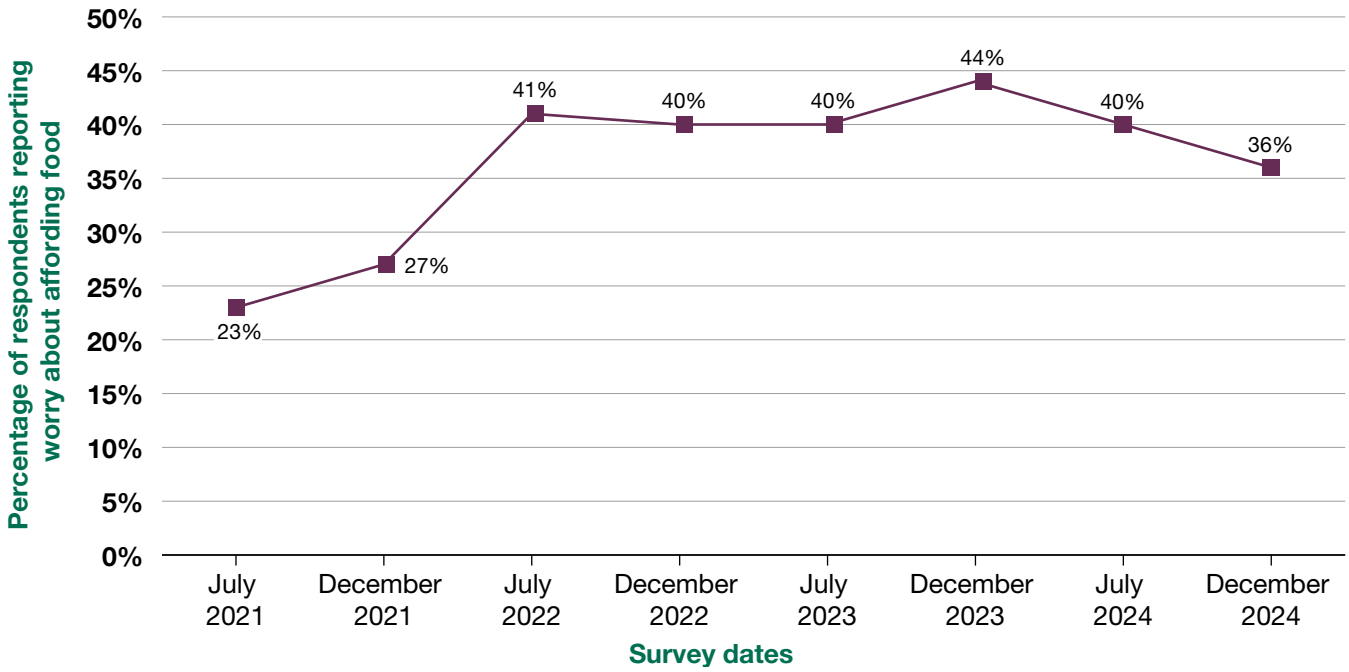
The FSA's Food and You 2 survey found that by July 2024, 75% of respondents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland reported making changes to their eating habits for financial reasons in the previous 12 months. The top three most common changes were eating out less (43%), eating at home more (42%), and buying items on special offer more often (39%).

FSS's Food in Scotland Consumer Tracker[4] found that at the end of 2024, 36% of respondents in Scotland reported worries about affording food in the past 12 months, compared with 44% at the same point in 2023.

Over one in six (17%) consumers reported being unable to afford essential shopping, such as bread and milk. Both figures are lower than in the previous year.

In keeping with other findings, the tracker also suggests that certain groups in Scotland — including women, younger people (aged between 16 and 34), those from a lower socio-economic background, people with children, and the most deprived according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation[5] — were more likely to report worrying about food affordability.

Figure 2: Reported concern about affording food in Scotland



Source: FSS Food in Scotland Consumer Tracker, Waves 12-19 (W12-19), based on research conducted from July 2021 to December 2024

Use of food banks

According to the FSA's Food and You 2 survey, between April and July 2024, 4% of respondents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland reported using a food bank or other emergency food provider in the past 12 months — the same proportion as in 2023. In addition, 5% reported that they had used a social supermarket[6] in the past 12 months. Due to differences between FSA and FSS surveys, figures for Scotland are not available.

Food safety and cost of living pressures

Another way of looking at the impact of cost of living pressures is through consumer self-reporting about steps taken to reduce the cost of food purchasing, storage and preparation. In some cases, these may include food safety behaviours that could have an impact on their health. We are not aware of any evidence that shows how these changes in food handling and storage have affected foodborne illness cases in the UK.

Between December 2023 and December 2024, there was an increase in the percentage of respondents reporting the following food-related behaviours to reduce energy bills and save money (Figure 3):

- lowering the cooking temperature for food
- reducing the length of time food is cooked for
- changing the settings so that food in a fridge and/or freezer is kept at a warmer temperature
- eating food cold because they could not afford to cook it.

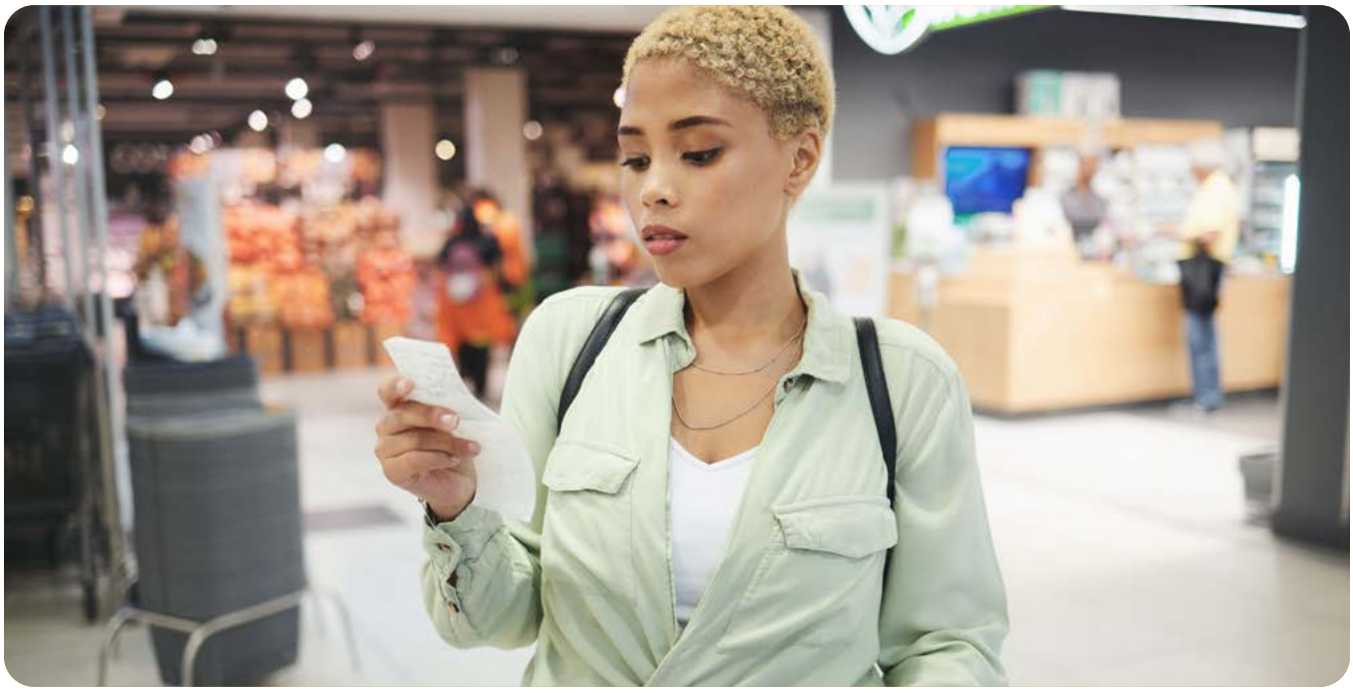
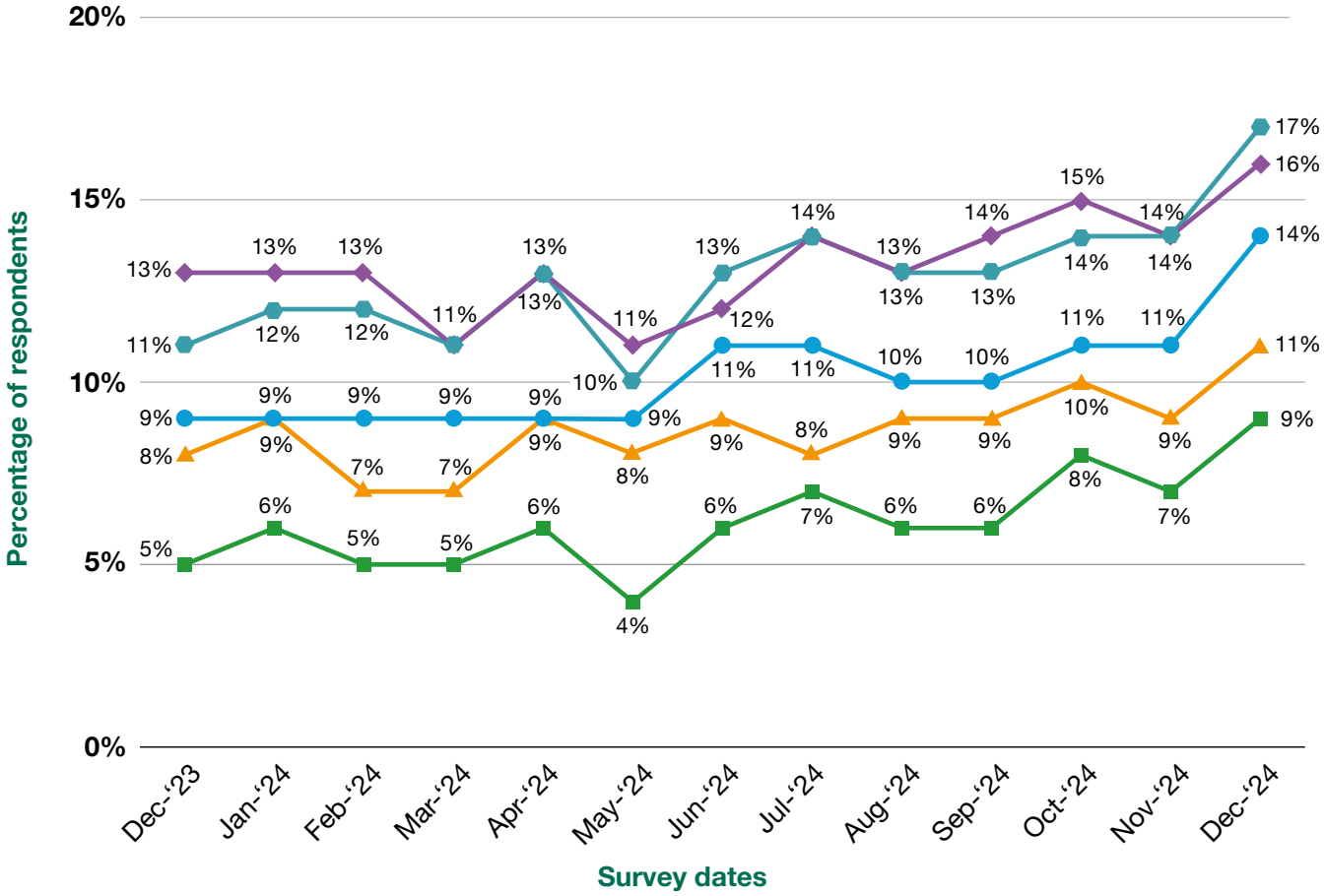


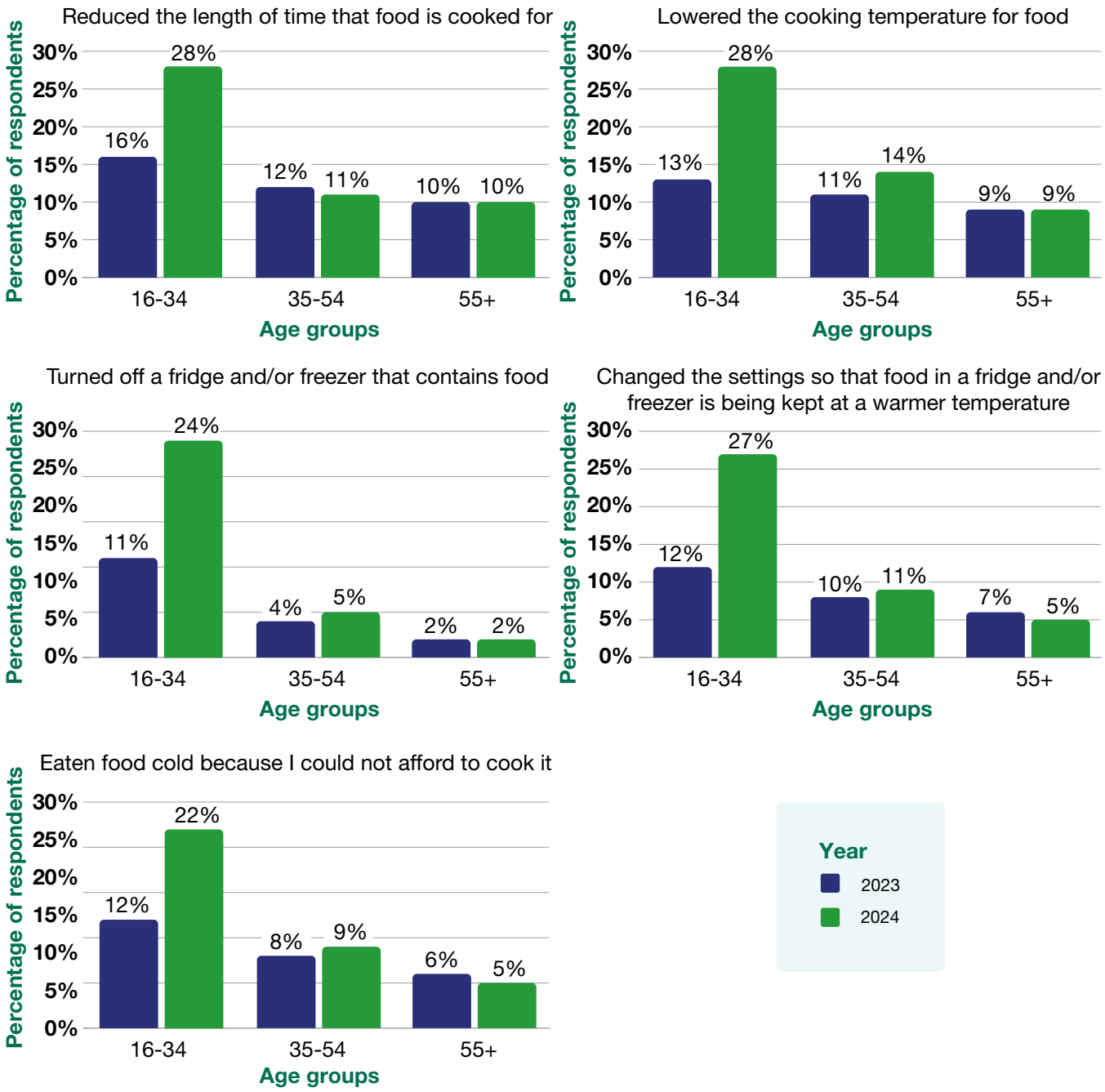
Figure 3: Percentage of respondents who reported food-related behaviours in the past month to reduce energy bills and save money in 2024 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland



Source: FSA Consumer Insights Tracker, based on research conducted from December 2023 to December 2024

The percentage of respondents reporting each behaviour in December 2024 (Figure 3) showed an increase compared with December 2023.[7] Among the younger respondents (aged 16-34), there were year-on-year increases in the proportion reporting that they had lowered the cooking temperature for food and changed fridge/freezer settings (Figure 4) to save money. In addition, more than a quarter of younger respondents said they had adjusted cooking times and temperatures to save money. Among those aged 35 to 54, and 55 and above, little to no change in these behaviours was reported over the same period. Currently there is no evidence available to explain the reasons for these changes in younger age groups.

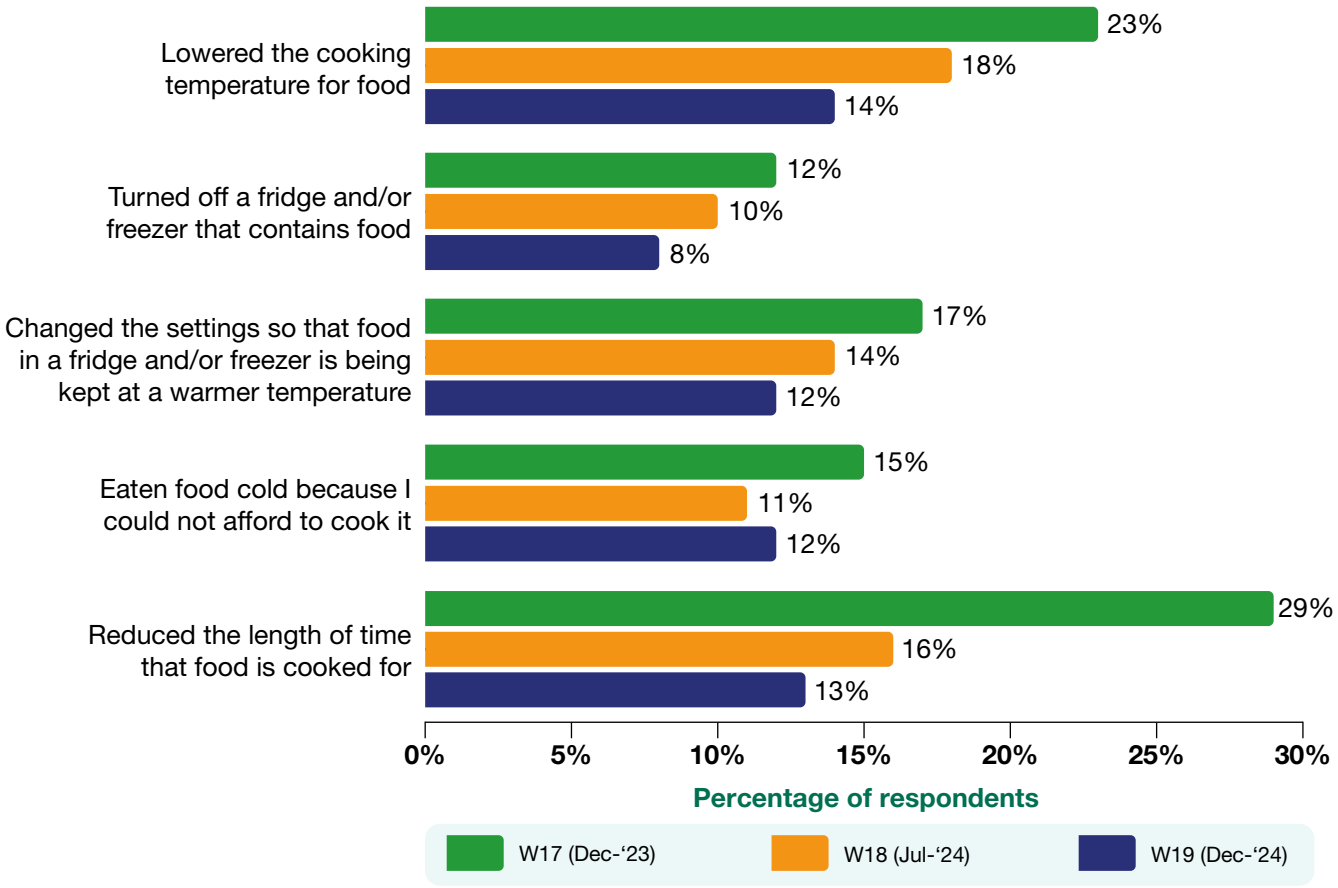
Figure 4: Comparison of respondents from different age groups who reported food-related behaviours in the past month between December 2023 and December 2024 (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)



Source: FSA Consumer Insights Tracker, based on research conducted from December 2023 to December 2024

In Scotland, the number of respondents reporting certain food-related behaviours to reduce energy bills and save money over the past month declined. Nonetheless, in December 2024 one in seven (14%) reported lowering the cooking temperature for food, and one in eight (13%) reported reducing the length of time food was cooked for (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Percentage of respondents who reported food-related behaviours in the past month to reduce energy bills and save money in Scotland between December 2023 and December 2024



Source: FSS Food in Scotland Consumer Tracker, Waves 17-19 (W17-19), based on research conducted from December 2023 to December 2024

Household food insecurity and affordability

Cost of living pressures may also have had an impact on household food insecurity levels in the UK during 2024.

How household food insecurity is defined

The FSA's Food and You 2 survey uses the 10-item U.S. Adult Food Security Survey module introduced by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to define ranges of household food security. These ranges lie along a continuum extending from high to very low food security and are characterised as follows:

Household food security

- **High food security:** no reported indications of food access problems or limitations.
- **Marginal food security:** one or two reported indications — typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake.
- **Low food security:** reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake.
- **Very low food security:** reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

In this report those who report low food security or very low food security are described as being food insecure.

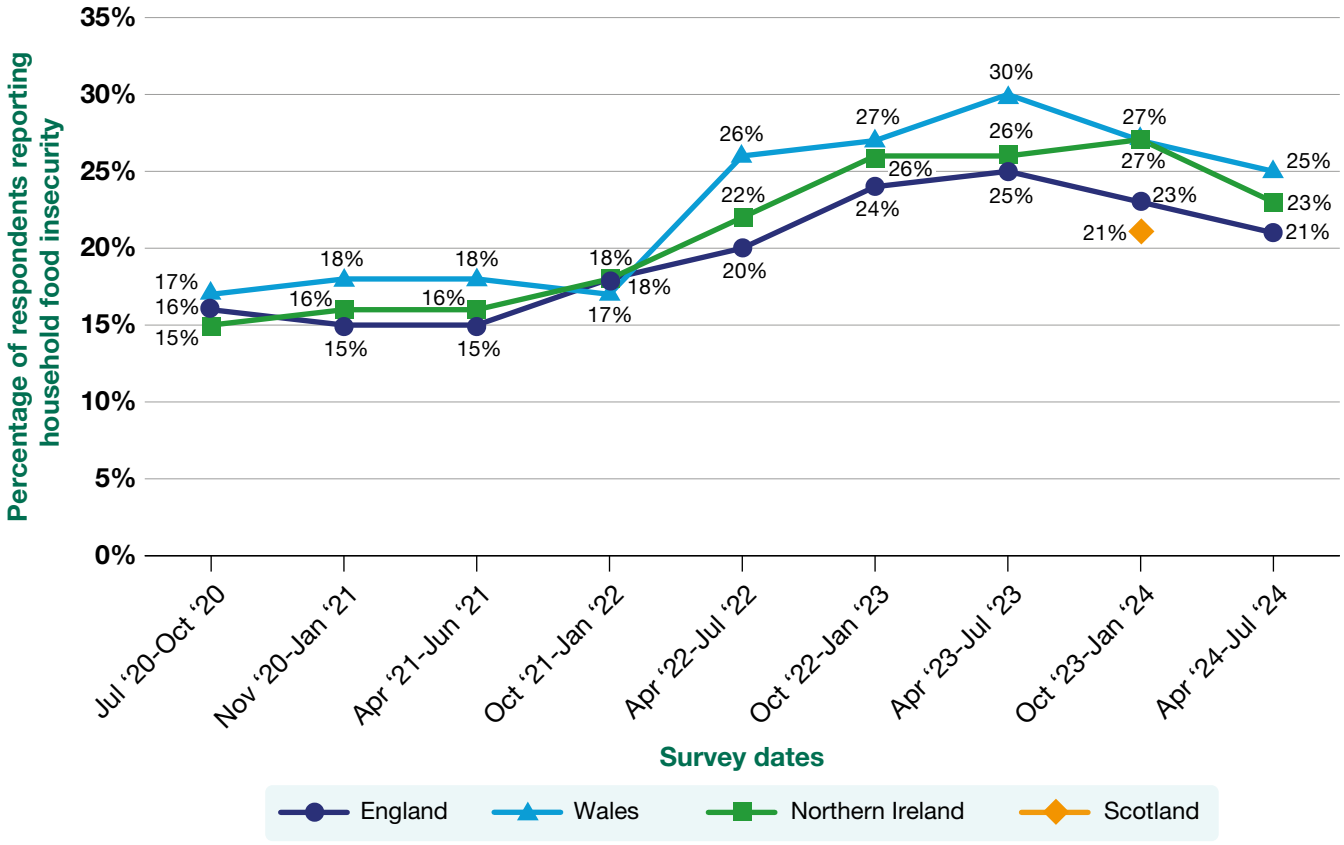
Food insecurity across the UK

The Food and You 2 survey conducted between April 2024 and July 2024 found that across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 21% of respondents were classified as food insecure (10% reported low food security, and 11% very low).

The proportion of those classified as living with low or very low food security showed a statistically significant decrease (from 25% to 21%) between April-July 2023 and April-July 2024. When broken down by nation, there were statistically significant decreases in England (from 25% to 21%), Wales (30% to 25%) and Northern Ireland (26% to 23%).

For the first time, Scotland was also included in the Food and You 2 survey, with 21%[8] of respondents classified as food insecure during October 2023 to January 2024.

Figure 6: Levels of reported household food insecurity in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (July 2020 to 2024) and Scotland (October 2023 to January 2024)



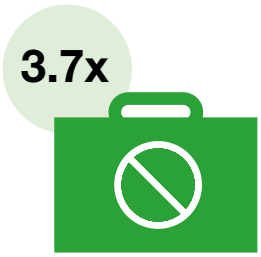
Source: FSA Food and You 2 Wave 1-9, based on research conducted from July 2020 to July 2024
FSS Food and You 2 Survey: Scotland (Wave 8) conducted from October 2023 and January 2024

Who is most at risk of food insecurity?

Respondents from certain groups reported more indications of household food insecurity than others (Figure 7). Employment status was found to be the biggest factor, with respondents in long-term unemployment and/or who have never worked found to be 3.7 times more likely to be classed as having low or very low food security than respondents in managerial, administrative and professional occupations (59% compared with 16%).

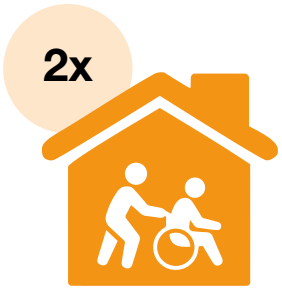
Respondents aged between 16 and 24 years were 3.3 times more likely to be classed as having low or very low levels of food security than respondents aged between 65 and 74 (30% compared with 9%). Larger households of five or more people were 2.1 times more likely to be classed as having low or very low levels of food security than households with two members (31% compared with 15%). Across all demographic groups shown in Figure 7, these differences have remained consistent with those observed in surveys conducted over the past year.

Figure 7: Relative risk of experiencing household food insecurity in England, Wales and Northern Ireland



Long-term unemployed are **3.7 times** more likely to be food insecure than those in managerial, administrative and professional occupations.

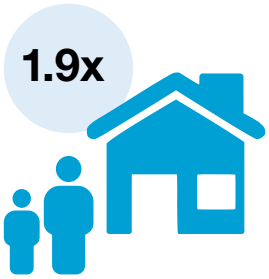
Young people aged 16-24 are **3.3 times** more likely to be food insecure than 65-74 year olds.



People with a long-term health condition are **2 times** more likely to be food insecure than those without a long-term health condition.

Larger households of five or more are **2.1 times** more likely to be food insecure than households of two.

People with an intolerance are **1.4 times** more likely to be food insecure than people with no intolerences or other food hypersensitivities.



Households with children under 16 are **1.9 times** more likely to be food insecure than those with no children under 16.

Asian/Asian British respondents are **1.3 times** more likely to be food insecure than white respondents.

Source: FSA Food and You 2 Wave 9, based on research conducted between April 2024 and July 2024

Understanding consumers' main concerns about food

Unsurprisingly, food prices remained the top prompted food-related concern for consumers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, according to the Food and You 2 Survey. Other areas of concern included food waste, food quality, and the amount of sugar in food, all of which are relatively unchanged from 2023 (Figure 8).

Figure 8: The top five prompted* concerns for consumers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Rank	Top concerns July 2023 (percentage of respondents)	Top concerns January 2024 (percentage of respondents)	Top concerns July 2024 (percentage of respondents)
1	Food prices (72%)	Food prices (69%)	Food prices (69%)
2	Food Waste (58%)	The quality of food (65%)	Food waste (59%)
3	The amount of food packaging (56%) The amount of sugar in food (56%) The quality of food (56%)	Food waste (63%)	The amount of sugar in food (57%) The quality of food (57%)
4	Animal welfare (49%) Being able to eat healthily (49%) Food hygiene when ordering takeaways (49%)	The amount of sugar in food (58%)	The amount of food packaging (55%)
5	Food hygiene when eating out (48%)	The amount of food packaging (55%)	Animal welfare (52%) Being able to eat healthily (52%)

* In this survey, 'prompted' means that respondents were asked to indicate if they had concerns about several food-related issues, from a list of options.

Source: FSA Food and You 2 Survey England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Wave 7 (based on research conducted from April to July 2023), Wave 8 (October 2023 to January 2024) and Wave 9 (April to July 2024)

Concerns about ultra-processed food

In Scotland, the FSS Food in Scotland Consumer Tracker showed that ultra-processed or over-processing of food were the second most commonly reported (81%) prompted concern for consumers after food prices (Figure 9).

Additionally, the tracker found 74% of respondents reported that they were actively trying to reduce the amount of ultra processed foods they eat, and 63% said they were concerned about how much of these products they were eating.

Figure 9: The top five prompted* concerns for consumers in Scotland

Rank	Top concerns in Scotland and percentage of respondents December 2024
1	Food prices (90%)
2	Ultra processed or over processing of food (81%)
3	Food poverty and food inequality (80%)
4	The 'healthiness' of people's diets in general (75%)
5	The safety of food imported from outside the UK (74%)

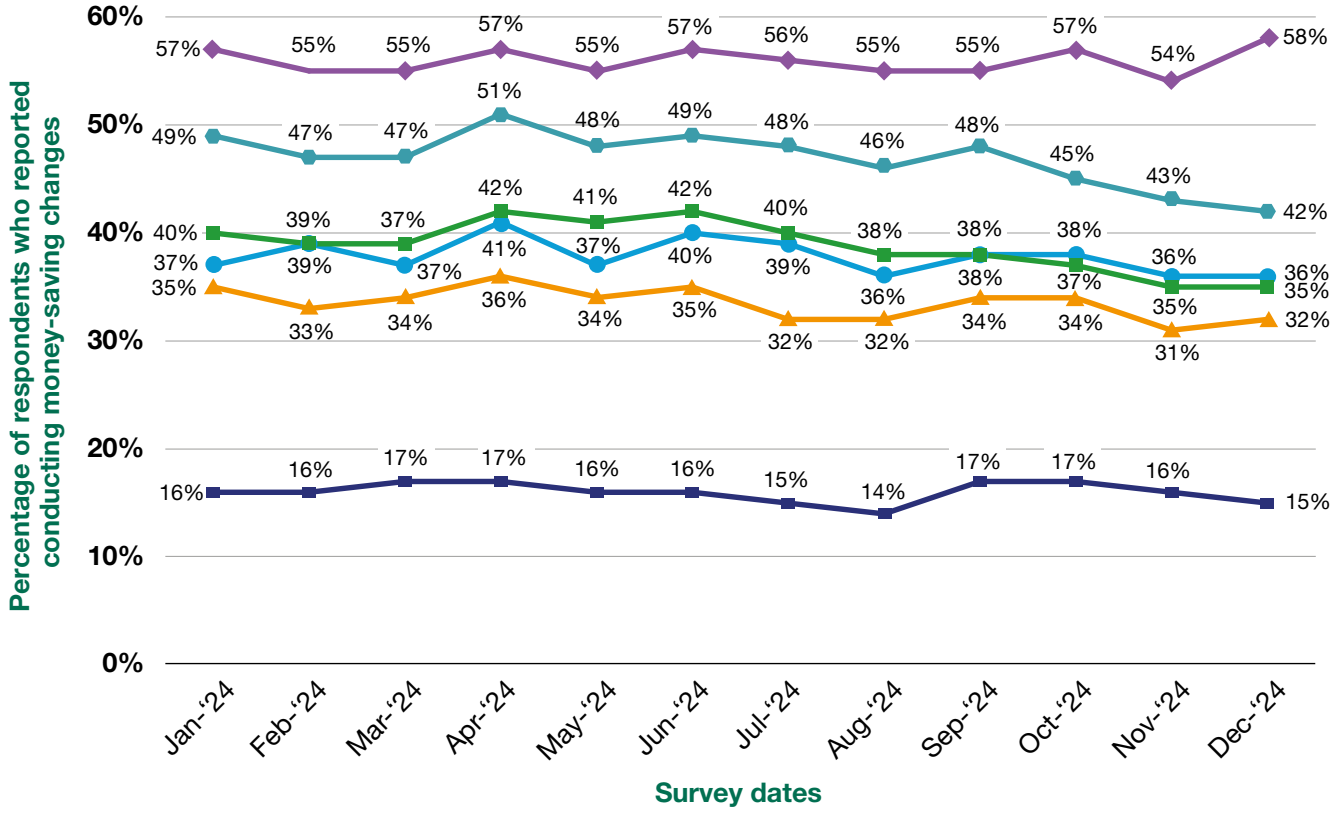
* In this survey, 'prompted' means that respondents were asked to indicate if they had concerns about several food-related issues, from a list of options.

Source: FSS — Food in Scotland Consumer Tracker, Wave 19, based on research conducted in December 2024

Household cooking and eating practices

Many respondents said that they had adapted their approach to buying and preparing food due to the higher cost of food. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 58% of respondents reported using cheaper cooking methods, while 42% reported choosing cheaper alternatives to branded products by the end of 2024 (Figure 10).

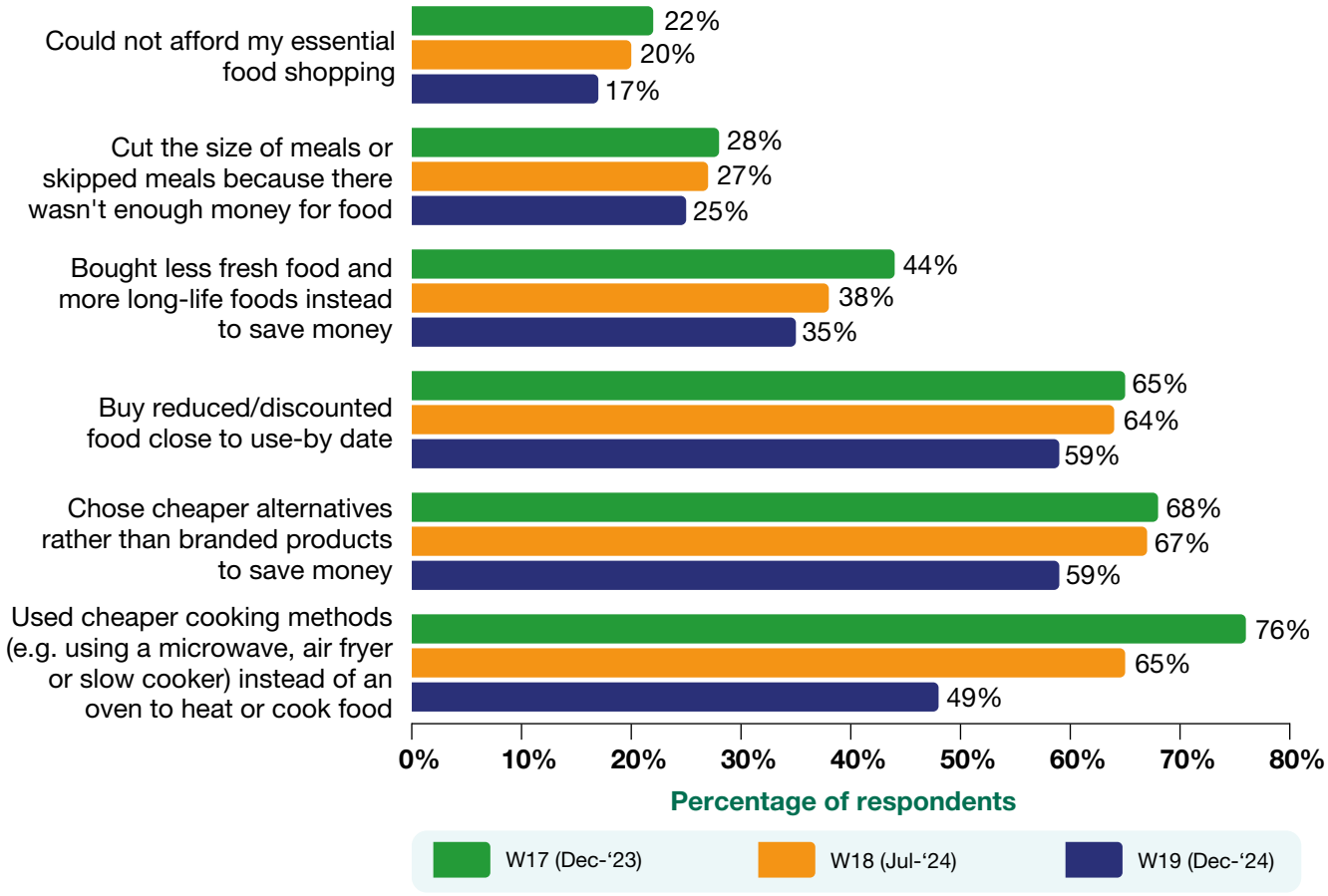
Figure 10: Percentage of respondents who reported conducting money-saving changes in the past month in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2024)



Source: FSA Consumer Insights Tracker, based on research conducted from January 2024 to December 2024

In Scotland, there was a fall in the percentage of respondents who reported using cheaper cooking methods, choosing cheaper alternatives to branded products, and buying discounted food in the second half of 2024 (Figure 11). However, the proportion reporting other practices, such as buying less fresh food, cutting the size of meals, or skipping meals altogether showed some change compared with previous surveys.

Figure 11: Percentage of respondents who reported conducting money-saving practices in Scotland (2023-2024)



Source: FSS Food in Scotland Consumer Tracker, Waves 17-19, based on research conducted from December 2023 to December 2024

Diet and health

A final question relates to how these cost-of-living pressures might affect the nation's diet and health over the long term. Even before the recent surge in food prices, many people in the UK did not meet national dietary health guidelines. Consumers report that financial pressures are making it more difficult to eat healthily, according to our surveys. In Scotland, for example, around a quarter (26%) of people reported difficulty affording a healthy, balanced diet at the end of 2024. The FSA's Consumer Insights Tracker found that in December 2024, 9% of respondents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland said they could not afford to eat a healthy balanced diet in the past month.

The FSA's Food and You 2 survey, conducted between April 2024 and July 2024, found that 52% of respondents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland were concerned about being able to eat healthily. When respondents were asked to select up to three things they consider to be most important when choosing which food to buy, the most common answer was price/value for money (58%), followed by quality (39%) and freshness (30%). In addition, 23% said healthiness was one of the most important aspects.

We do not have data linking diet inequalities to health outcomes for individuals; however, we know that poor diet contributes to a range of chronic health conditions, widening health inequalities across our society.[9]

Dietary health in Scotland

The Dietary Intake in Scotland's Children (DISH) report demonstrates that poor diets remain a substantial challenge for many children, particularly those aged 11 to 15 years old. Diets were found to be too energy-dense and high in salt, saturated fat, and free sugars, and too low in fibre, fruits, vegetables, and oily fish. The report also highlighted certain micro-nutrient deficiencies[10] in children aged 11 to 15.

The survey also highlighted clear socio-economic differences, with higher intakes of fibre, fruit and vegetables among children living in the least deprived areas compared with the most deprived.

Source: Dietary Intake in Scotland's Children (DISH) research report (2024)

Health Survey for England

The Health Survey for England 2022, published in 2024, reported that only 19% of children aged between 5 and 15 ate the recommended five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day. In 2003 this figure was 11%, increasing to 21% in 2006. Since 2007, the prevalence among children has remained between 16% and 23% with no clear trend.

It also showed that the mean consumption of fruit and vegetables in adults was 3.9 portions a day. 29% ate five or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day, and 7% ate none. Reported consumption levels were higher among women than men (an average (mean) of 4.0 and 3.7 portions a day, respectively). Women were also more likely to eat five or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day than men (30% and 28%, respectively). Fruit and vegetable consumption varied by age, with adults aged 16 to 24 least likely to eat five or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day (25%) and those aged 65 to 74 most likely to do so (34%). The average (mean) consumption per day was 3.5 portions among those aged 16-24 compared with 4.2 portions among those aged 65 to 74.

Adults in the most deprived areas were less likely to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables. The proportion of those who did was 23% in the most deprived areas compared with 34% in the least deprived areas. The average (mean) portions of fruit and vegetables consumed in the most deprived area was 3.3 portions a day, compared with 4.4 portions a day in the least deprived area.[11]

In summary

- **Cost of living pressures still influenced consumers' purchasing and consumption habits** even though food prices rose more slowly than the overall rate of inflation.
- **Reported household food insecurity continued to be an issue.** Around one in five (21%) households across England, Wales and Northern Ireland were classified as food insecure in July 2024. A similar rate was observed in Scotland, where one in five (21%) households were classified as food insecure between October 2023 and January 2024. The proportion of respondents who reported using food banks in England, Wales and Northern Ireland remained the same as in 2023 (4%).
- **Food prices again ranked as the top consumer concern across all four nations.** Consumers also expressed worries about food waste, food quality, and the amount of sugar in foods — while FSS research revealed concerns about ultra-processed foods, with 73% reporting that they were actively trying to reduce the amount they eat.
- **The latest survey data suggests that people are still not meeting certain dietary health goals.** The most recent survey for Scotland showed that children aged 11-15 are eating foods that are too energy-dense and high in salt, saturated fat, and free sugars, and too low in fibre, fruits, vegetables, and oily fish. Diets were poorest among children from the most deprived communities in Scotland, highlighting the potential impact on health inequalities. In England, survey data suggested that the majority of children and adults in England still do not eat the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables per day. Those living in the most deprived areas in England typically consume less than those living in the least deprived areas.

Going global

Food and feed imports

At a glance

In this chapter, we look at:

- where we sourced our food and feed from in 2024 and how import volumes have changed over time
- the latest changes to controls for imported food and feed entering Great Britain
- the potential impact of new free trade agreements on food safety in the UK

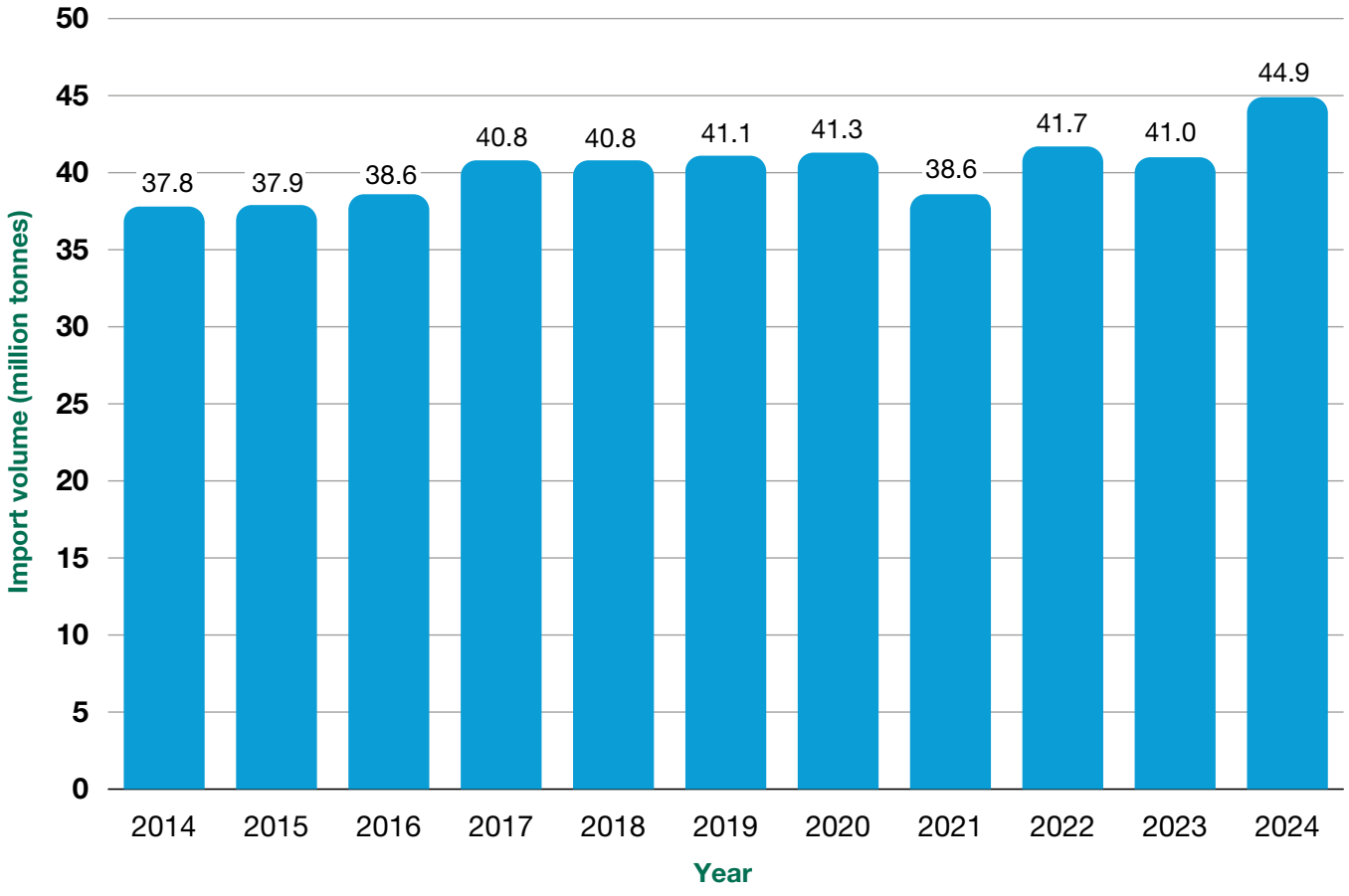
Introduction

The UK imports roughly two-fifths of its food, yet global supply chains are under growing pressure. Disruptions from geopolitical conflict, shifts in our trading relationships, and extreme weather can threaten the continuity of supply from overseas and could pose challenges in upholding food safety standards.

The landscape of food and feed imports

In 2024, there was a 9.5% rise in the volume of imports of food and feed to the UK compared with the previous year. This equates to almost 4 million more tonnes of food and feed entering the UK that year — resulting in the highest annual volume of imports in the last decade — underlining the important role that food and feed imports play in our food supply (Figures 12 and 13).

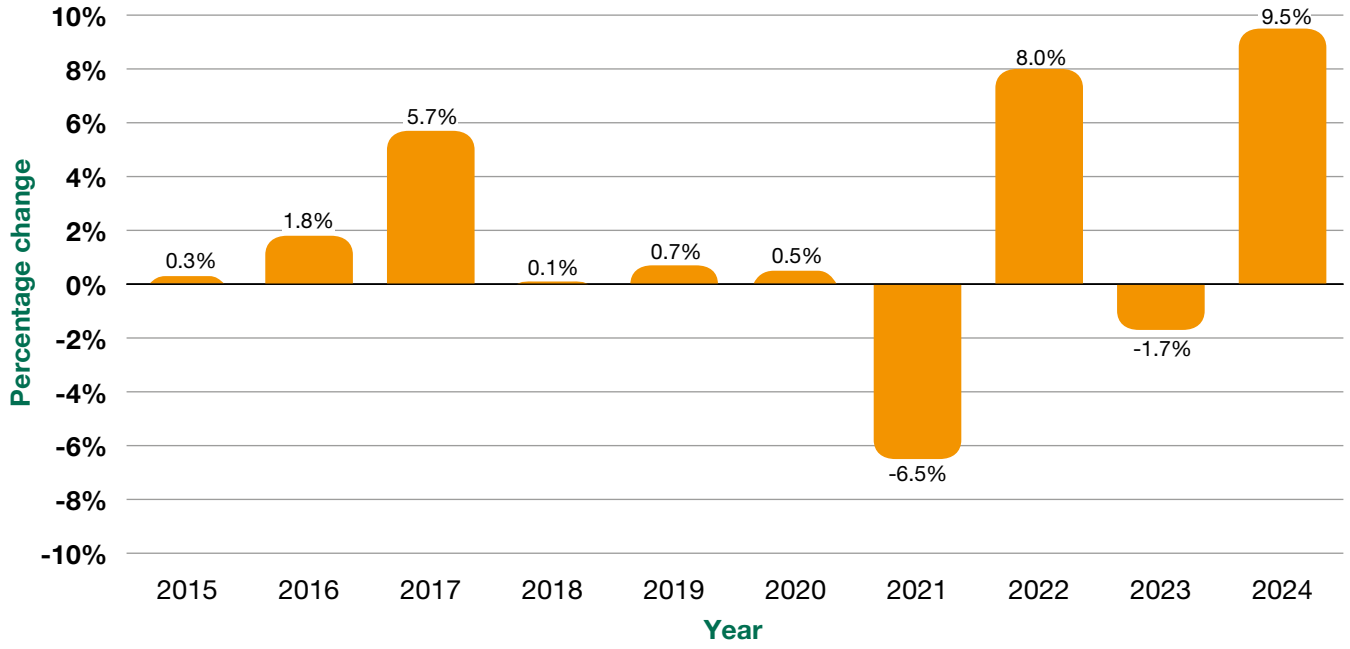
Figure 12: Total UK imported food and feed volumes over time (2014-2024)



Note: Due to changes in data extraction, import volumes presented in Figure 12 differ slightly when compared to previous Our Food reports.

Source: HMRC UK Trade data

Figure 13: Yearly percentage change in total UK food and feed import volumes (2015-2024)



Note: Due to changes in data extraction, percentage changes presented in Figure 13 differ slightly when compared to previous Our Food reports.

Source: HMRC UK Trade data

Where do we source our food from?

While the top 10 countries the UK imported food and feed from remained the same in 2024 compared with the previous year, there were fluctuations in their rankings (Figure 14). This reflects changes in the volumes of products imported from certain countries as follows:

- **Germany moved up three positions to fourth in our rankings.** This was mainly due to a substantial increase in the total amount of cereals and grains imported from Germany in 2024 (to 1,261,379 tonnes in total), more than doubling quantities imported in 2023 (568,079 tonnes in total).
- **Imports from the United States and Argentina increased by more than a quarter**. The United States moved from ninth to seventh in 2024. Despite a 17% drop in imported feed (to 655,056 tonnes in total), the UK saw a 50% increase in beverages (to 816,072 tonnes in total) and increased volumes of cereals and grains (to 213,186 tonnes in total), vegetables (to 182,280 tonnes in total) and sugar and syrups (to 116,435 tonnes in total) imported from the United States, which more than doubled when compared with 2023. The growth in imports from Argentina was primarily due to an increase of 32% in the volumes of imported animal feed (to 1,882,436 tonnes in total) in comparison with 2023.

Figure 14: Top 10 countries by UK food and feed import volumes for 2024

Country	Volume of imports 2024 (million tonnes)	Year-on-year volume change	2024 ranking*	Difference in ranking from 2023
Netherlands**	5.2	-1%	1 (1)	No change
Ireland	3.7	9%	2 (2)	No change
France	3.5	12%	3 (3)	No change
Germany	3.2	41%	4 (7)	+3
Belgium	2.8	-1%	5 (4)	-1
Poland	2.5	9%	6 (5)	-1
United States	2.3	26%	7 (9)	+2
Spain	2.2	-1%	8 (6)	-2
Argentina	2.2	27%	9 (10)	+1
Italy	1.9	0%	10 (8)	-2

* 2023's ranking is in brackets.
** Imports from the Netherlands reflect the effect of Rotterdam as a global hub for transporting goods.
Source: HMRC UK Trade data

EU and non-EU import volumes by commodity type

Import volume data can be broken down across three main commodity types (Figure 15):

- **Products of animal origin (POAO),** which include meat, eggs, fish and dairy
- **Food not of animal origin (FNAO),** which includes beverages, cereals, fruit and vegetables
- **Animal feed,** which includes oilcake and pet food

The latest data shows that volumes of FNAO imports rose by 11.0% compared with 2023 and made up the largest share (71%) of our food and feed imports by weight in 2024. Both POAO and feed imports also increased by 3.3% and 8.8% respectively in volume compared with 2023. Goods brought in from EU countries continue to account for just over 60% of the UK's total food and feed imports, accounting for most of the POAO (79%) and nearly two-thirds of the FNAO (64%) we buy from other countries. Non-EU countries meanwhile provide over half (56%) of animal feed imports.

Figure 15: Total volume of imports split by main categories of POAO, FNAO and animal feed

Import category	Total in 2024 (million tonnes)	Volume change 2023 vs 2024	EU proportion 2024 (2023*)
POAO	6.8	3.3%	79% (79%)
FNAO	31.8	11.0%	64% (64%)
Feed	6.3	8.8%	44% (47%)
Total	44.9	9.5%	63% (64%)

* Due to changes in data extraction, 2023 proportions differ slightly when compared to the Our Food 2023 report.
Source: HMRC UK Trade data

Monitoring imported food at the border

As our trading landscape evolves, ensuring that imported food meets our safety and authenticity standards remains critical. Effective border controls allow for potential threats to be detected quickly so that action can be taken at an early stage. This is an important step for public health protection. Checks vary depending on the type of product and the level of risk it may pose to public, animal, and plant health.

New arrangements for food safety controls

During 2024, the UK Government started to phase in its new Border Target Operating Model (BTOM), which applies a new risk-based approach to checks on imported goods. Under the new model, EU food and feed entering Great Britain are now subject to border controls. Risk categories for certain imports from non-EU countries were also subject to changes. The full model is still being implemented. The FSA and FSS regularly analyse risks posed by food and feed and recommend border control risk categories based on risk management. Our input into the risk model ensured that consumer protection was a key consideration.

Due to the phased implementation, the differences in the controls applied, and the availability and type of data gathered, it is not possible to include data on 2024 border checks in this report.

Changes to designation of high-risk food not of animal origin (HRFNAO)

The FSA and FSS are jointly responsible for identifying any imported FNAO that may pose a high risk to public health and should therefore be subjected to additional border checks upon entering Great Britain.

Our latest review of the list of imported HRFNAO was completed in 2024 following a detailed risk analysis considering commodity, country of origin and hazard of concern. The recommended changes to the levels of control, such as reduced or increased frequency of documentary, identity, and physical checks including sampling, came into force in December 2024.

The FSA and FSS recommended that ministers add **15 new commodities** to the HRFNAO list and increase controls for another two due to the risk they may pose. These include changes related to a potential increased presence of pesticide residues in certain spices and herbs from India and Israel, aflatoxins in hazelnut and groundnut products from Georgia, Argentina and Madagascar, and the risk of *Salmonella* in sesame seeds from Turkey and India, among others.

We also recommended that one commodity should be removed from the list as border data and other notifications indicated a reduced level of risk. Additionally, four commodities should be subjected to reduced checks due to improvements in the level of compliance after being subjected to the highest level of enhanced controls. A full list of the changes is shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Changes to designation of high-risk foods

Imported HRFNAO commodities that have been risk-assessed as no longer being a risk to public health and are no longer subject to controls at the border.

Commodity	Country	Hazard
Groundnuts	Brazil	Pesticide residues

Imported HRFNAO commodities that remain under control but have been risk-assessed as posing a declining risk to public health.

Commodity	Country	Hazard
Guar Gum	India	Pentachlorophenol and dioxins
Nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*)	India	Aflatoxins
Peppers of the genus *Capsicum* (sweet or other than sweet)	India	Aflatoxins
Sesame seeds *(Sesamum)*	India	Pesticide residues

Imported FNAO that have been identified through our surveillance and intelligence systems as presenting a risk to public health and have been brought under control at the border.

Commodity	Country	Hazard
Cumin seeds, neither crushed nor ground	India	Pesticide residues
Cumin seeds, crushed or ground	India	Pesticide residues
Fenugreek leaves	India	Pesticide residues
Yardlong beans (*Vigna unguiculata* subsp. *sesquipedalis*)	India	Pesticide residues
Basil (holy, sweet)	Israel	Pesticide residues
Mint	Israel	Pesticide residues
Groundnuts paste	Madagascar	Aflatoxins
Mukunuwenna *(Alternanthera sessilis)*[12]	Sri Lanka	Pesticide residues
Grapefruits	Turkey	Pesticide residues
Sesame seeds *(Sesamum)*	Turkey	*Salmonella*
Tahini and halva from *Sesamum* seeds	Turkey	*Salmonella*
Mixtures of nuts or dried fruits containing hazelnuts	Georgia	Aflatoxins
Hazelnut paste	Georgia	Aflatoxins
Hazelnut oil	Georgia	Aflatoxins
Groundnuts paste	Argentina	Aflatoxins

Imported HRFNAO that have had controls increased (e.g. more frequent tests or lab testing where none was carried out before) at the border due to increased non-compliance or risk to public health.

Commodity	Country	Hazard
Tea, whether or not flavoured	China	Pesticide residues
Sesame seeds *(Sesamum)*	India	*Salmonella*

Source: The Official Controls (Import of High-Risk Food and Feed of Non-Animal Origin) (Amendment of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1793) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2024

The Official Controls (Import of High-Risk Food and Feed of Non-Animal Origin) Amendment (Scotland) (No. 2) Regulations 2024

The Official Controls (Import of High-Risk Food and Feed of Non-Animal Origin) (Amendment of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1793) (No. 2) (Wales) Regulations 2024

New trade agreements and food safety

Two trade related agreements were concluded in 2024 and neither have required changes or reductions in UK food and feed regulatory and legislative standards.

In February 2024, under the former Conservative administration, the UK signed an Enhanced Trade and Investment Partnership (ETIP) with Nigeria, the UK's first bespoke agreement with an African country following EU Exit. This memorandum of understanding aims to strengthen bilateral trade and investment relations between Nigeria and the UK by prioritising certain sectors and policy areas, including agriculture, food safety and food security, and economic co-operation. The agreement does not alter or reduce any existing food and feed import controls.

In addition, the UK's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) entered into force in December 2024. CPTPP is an Asia-Pacific trade bloc including Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. The UK is the first new member since the bloc was established in 2018 and the first European country to join.

In summary

- **Import volumes grew during 2024**, with almost 4 million more tonnes of food and feed (+9.5%) imported into the UK compared with 2023. This amounts to the highest volume of food and feed imported to the UK over the last decade and included notable increases in volumes imported from Germany (+41%), the United States (+26%), and Argentina (+27%).
- **New arrangements for border safety controls are being established.** Due to changes in border controls under the new BTOM, and its ongoing implementation, it is not possible to provide comparative data on changes in safety compliance of food imports this year. Once the new model is fully operational and consistent data from the revised system becomes available, we will include analysis of food safety compliance at the border.
- **Several additions to our list of designated high-risk foods have been made.** As certain imported products were assessed to have higher food safety risks, 15 new commodities were added to our list of HRFNAOs. These goods will now be subject to additional checks at the border in Great Britain.
- **There were further developments in our trading relationships.** The UK signed a new memorandum of understanding with Nigeria — the first bespoke agreement with an African country following the EU Exit — and also officially became a member of the CPTPP.

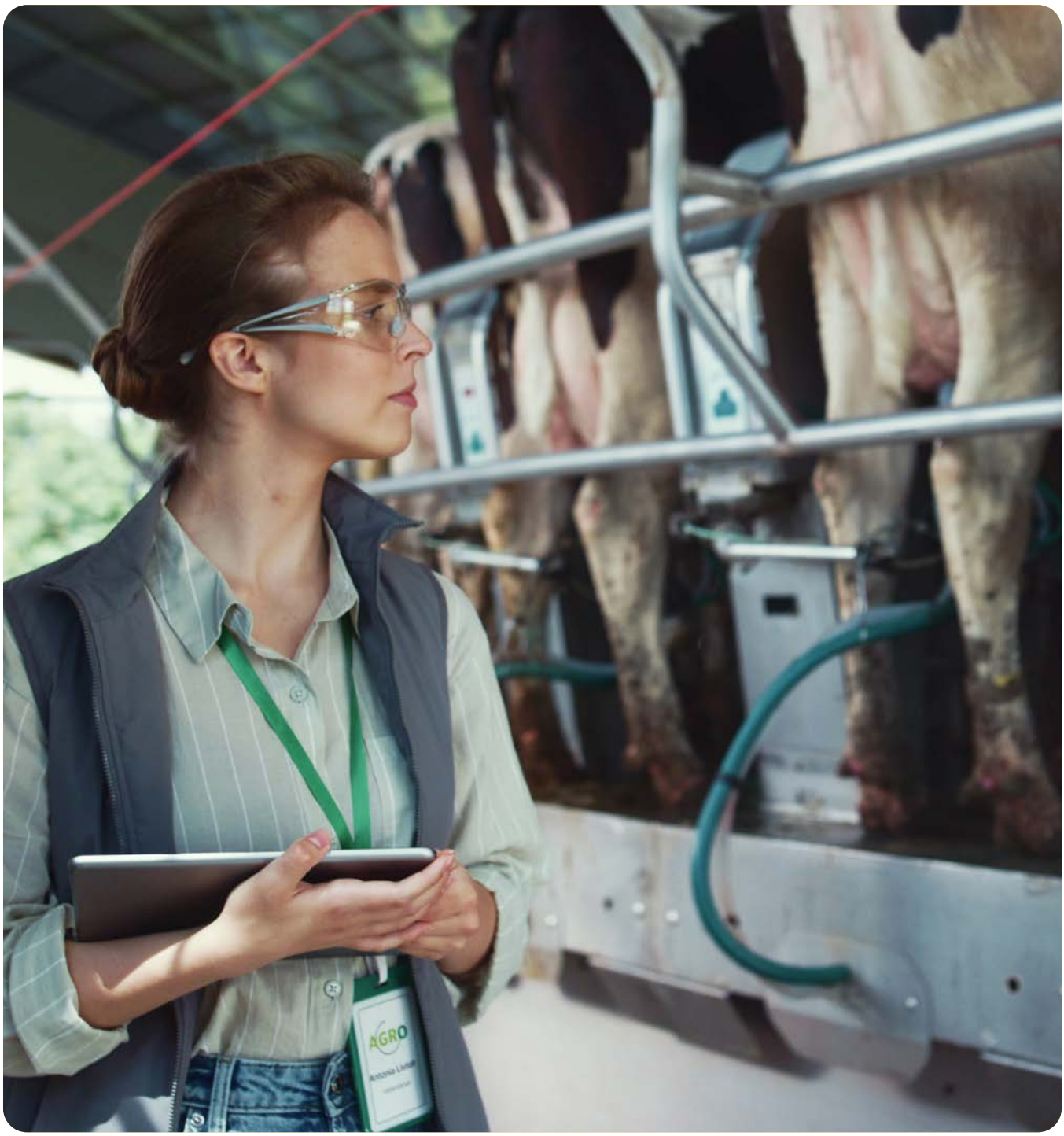
Keeping it clean

Hygiene standards in food and feed establishments

At a glance:

In this chapter we look at:

- the levels of compliance of food hygiene across food and animal feed establishments
- the progress made by local authorities in addressing the backlog in hygiene inspections since the COVID-19 pandemic
- the staffing capacity available to uphold food hygiene and food standards



Introduction

Public trust in food depends on the fundamental assurance that what we consume — whether purchased in a shop, served in a restaurant, or prepared elsewhere — is produced, manufactured, stored, and prepared safely and hygienically at every stage.

How are food safety standards upheld?

Ensuring the safety of our food is a shared responsibility. Food businesses are legally required to maintain safety standards, while local authorities across the UK carry out inspections, provide guidance and take enforcement action where needed.[13] The FSA and FSS oversee this system while also regulating certain sectors directly (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Responsibilities for maintaining food hygiene controls across the UK

Type of food establishment	Which authority is responsible for hygiene controls?	Which professionals are involved in the inspection process?
Food businesses: these include restaurants, cafés, pubs, supermarkets and other places where food is manufactured[14] supplied, sold or consumed, such as hospitals, schools and care homes.	UK-wide: local authorities	Food safety officers/food law officers (in Scotland), including environmental health officers (EHOs)
Meat establishments: these include abattoirs, cutting plants, game-handling establishments and meat markets.	England and Wales: FSA and local authorities Scotland: FSS Northern Ireland: FSA, delivered through Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	Official Veterinarians (OVs), meat hygiene inspectors (MHIs) and food safety officers/food law officers including EHOs
Dairy establishments: these include farms and production plants manufacturing dairy products.	England and Wales: FSA/local authorities Scotland: local authorities Northern Ireland: FSA, delivered through DAERA	Dairy hygiene inspectors, OVs, EHOs/Food law officers (in Scotland)
Animal feed establishments: these include wholesale suppliers and manufacturers of animal feed products.	England and Wales: local authorities Scotland: FSS Northern Ireland: DAERA	Feed officers

Hygiene in food establishments

For the public, food hygiene standards in cafes, restaurants, supermarkets and other food businesses are made visible in two national ratings schemes:

- **the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS)**, which operates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and rates businesses food hygiene standards on a scale of 0 to 5,
- **the Food Hygiene Information Scheme (FHIS)** which operates in Scotland and gives a 'Pass' or 'Improvement Required' following an inspection for food hygiene.

Although the two schemes are different and cover different types of businesses, they both publish the results of the most recent local authority inspections to help consumers make informed choices.[15]

In Wales and Northern Ireland, food businesses are legally required to display their food hygiene rating sticker in a prominent place. FSA and FSS also make all ratings available online as open data, bringing greater transparency to our food system.[16][17]

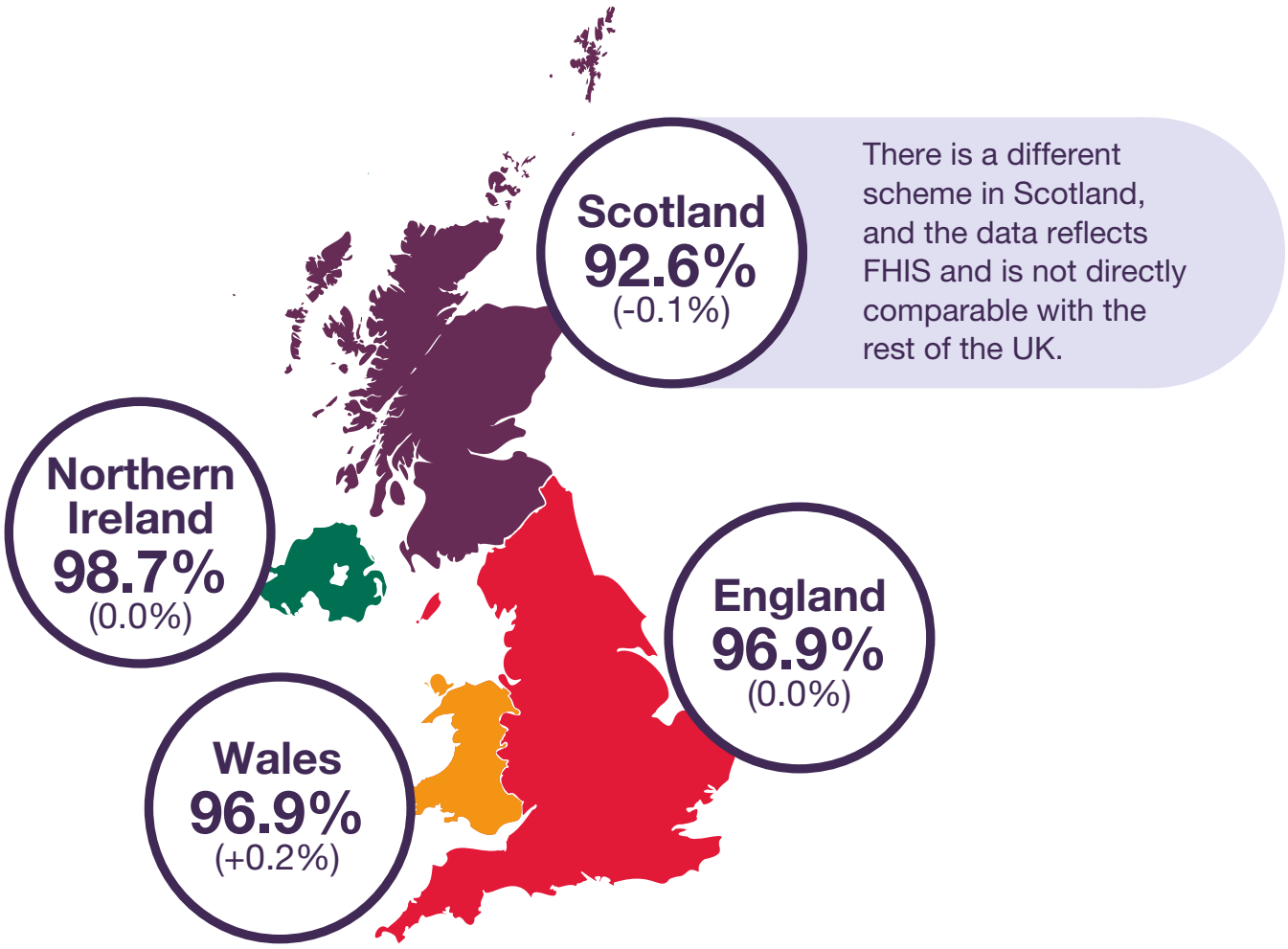
Latest hygiene compliance data

The latest data shows that the overall hygiene compliance in food establishments within the schemes remained stable between December 2023 and December 2024 (Figure 18). More than nine out of ten (96.9%) businesses in England, Wales and Northern Ireland have a rating of 3 'Generally Satisfactory' or better for FHRS. In Scotland, more than nine out of ten (92.6%) met the required food hygiene standards and achieved a 'Pass' for FHIS (Figure 18).

In addition, 76.6% (365,133) of food businesses in England, Wales and Northern Ireland achieved a top rating of 5, while 3.1% (14,633) scored 2 'Improvement Necessary' or below, meaning that they require substantial improvement and will be given guidance to improve or could be subject to enforcement action (Figure 19).

This data shows all establishments within the respective schemes that have been inspected and have received an outcome. Some of these inspections may have happened two years ago or longer, depending on the risk of the establishment and as we discuss later in the chapter, there is a backlog of establishments with overdue inspections.

Figure 18: Percentage of UK food businesses with a rating of '3 — Generally satisfactory' or better (FHRS) or 'Pass' (FHIS) as of December 2024



Note: Figures in brackets show percentage point difference compared to 2023. All figures are rounded to 1 decimal place, which may lead to apparent discrepancies in calculated changes when compared to last year.

Source: FSA — FHRS data and FSS — FHIS data

Figure 19: Percentage distribution of latest FHRS ratings as of December 2024

FHRS Rating	0	1	2	3	4	5
England	0.21% (+0.02%)	1.43% (+0.01%)	1.50% (+0.00%)	5.98% (-0.13%)	14.19% (-0.46%)	76.69% (+0.56%)
Wales	0.12% (-0.03%)	1.55% (-0.15%)	1.38% (+0.00%)	6.49% (-0.24%)	17.29% (-0.28%)	73.17% (+0.71%)
Northern Ireland	0.01% (+0.00%)	0.39% (-0.07%)	0.85% (+0.10%)	3.84% (+0.26%)	12.61% (+0.13%)	82.29% (-0.43%)

Note: Numbers in brackets correspond to percentage point change from 2023.

Source: FSA — FHRS data

Food law compliance in Scotland

The **Scottish Food Law Rating System (FLRS)** was introduced in 2019 when the Scottish Food Law Code of Practice was updated and combines the rating systems for food hygiene and food standards into one regime. In the legacy regime, known as Annex 5, there was duplication caused by the existence of two separate rating systems. FLRS enables local authorities to better target resources on high-risk and non-compliant food business establishments.

Not all businesses have been inspected under the new FLRS regime and will retain their Annex 5 ratings until their next scheduled inspection. For those businesses that have been through the FLRS regime, 98.4% were assessed as compliant as of December 2024 (Figure 20), which is stable compared with the previous year.

Figure 20: Percentage of inspected food businesses in Scotland compliant with FLRS in 2023 and 2024

Year	2024	2023
Percentage of compliant food businesses	98.4%	98.7%

Note: Compliance in FLRS is defined as any food business rated A-C following an inspection. The percentage for 2023 has changed to include data that had not been received at the time of last year's publication.

Source: FSS — Scottish National Database data

Hygiene in approved meat establishments

All the UK's 963 **approved meat establishments**,[18] including slaughterhouses, game handling establishments, cutting plants and wholesale meat markets, are audited at a frequency that depends on the risk they pose to food safety, to check that they meet hygiene, animal health, and animal welfare standards. These audits helped the FSA and FSS oversee the safe processing of 1.2 billion poultry animals, 12.9 million sheep, 10.5 million pigs, and 2.9 million cows in 2024.[19][20]

The data can only provide a snapshot of compliance levels from the end of each calendar year. This is based on the latest available audits for businesses, some of which could be from nearly two years ago for lower-risk establishments. Due to differences in the frequency and nature of FSA and FSS audits, direct comparisons cannot be made between Scotland and the other three nations.[21]

Nevertheless, compliance data from December 2024 of establishments that had been audited show that all rated establishments in Northern Ireland (51) and the majority of those in England (735 of 741), Wales (40 of 41) and Scotland (81 of 82) had good or generally satisfactory hygiene standards according to their most recent audit (Figure 21).[22]

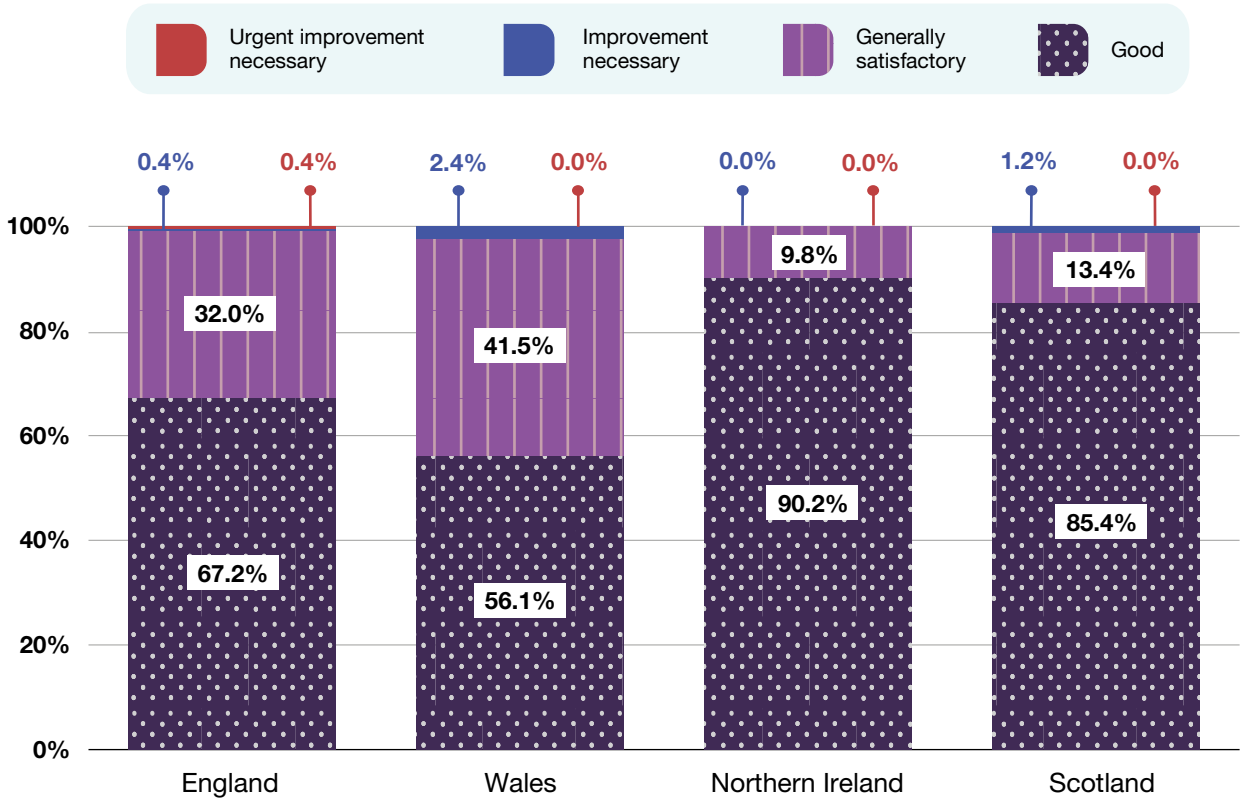
In Wales, the reported increase in business compliance levels was due to two previously non-compliant establishments meeting the required standards in 2024 — equating to a 4.2 percentage point rise across the 41 approved meat establishments audited. A full distribution of ratings across the UK is shown in Figure 22.

Figure 21: Percentage of meat establishments rated as good or generally satisfactory

Country	Percentage of meat establishments rated as good or satisfactory for hygiene in 2024	Percentage point change against 2023
England	99.2%	+0.1%*
Wales	97.6%	+4.2%
Northern Ireland	100.0%	No change
Scotland	98.8%	+1.3%

* Following retrospective review, an additional two establishments were found to be non-compliant in England in 2023.
Source: FSA/FSS — Meat establishment inspection data

Figure 22: Breakdown of hygiene compliance ratings for approved meat establishments as of December 2024



Source: FSA/FSS — Meat establishment inspection data.

Hygiene compliance in milk production

Around 16 billion litres of milk were produced in the UK during 2024.[23] Our analysis shows high levels of compliance within primary[24] dairy establishments across England, Wales and Northern Ireland over this period.

As of December 2024, nearly all dairy farms in these three nations met required hygiene standards, with compliance rates of 98.7% in England, 99.3% in Wales, and 99.9% in Northern Ireland, with no substantial change compared with the previous year (Figure 23).

Among the 10,518 dairy establishments that have a rating from being audited (Figure 24), a small proportion (93) had an ‘Improvement Necessary’ or ‘Urgent Improvement Necessary’ rating, with most (72.1%) achieving the highest compliance rating.

Although data from Scotland is not directly comparable[25], out of the 833 dairy holdings in Scotland, 230 were inspected in 2023/24 and 219 of those required no form of enforcement (95.2%). Enforcement in Scotland can range from informal guidance letters and warning letters for hygiene non-compliance to formal action which includes hygiene improvement notices (HINs) which are issued where a hygiene non-compliance breaches regulations and must be rectified within a set period. An establishment could also be referred for prosecution.

Levels of reported enforcement activity in Scotland also fell following a post-COVID-19 focus on higher-risk farms. As audits began covering a wider range of farms again, only 4.8% required enforcement (Figure 25). While guidance letters were issued in most of these cases, no HINs were required.

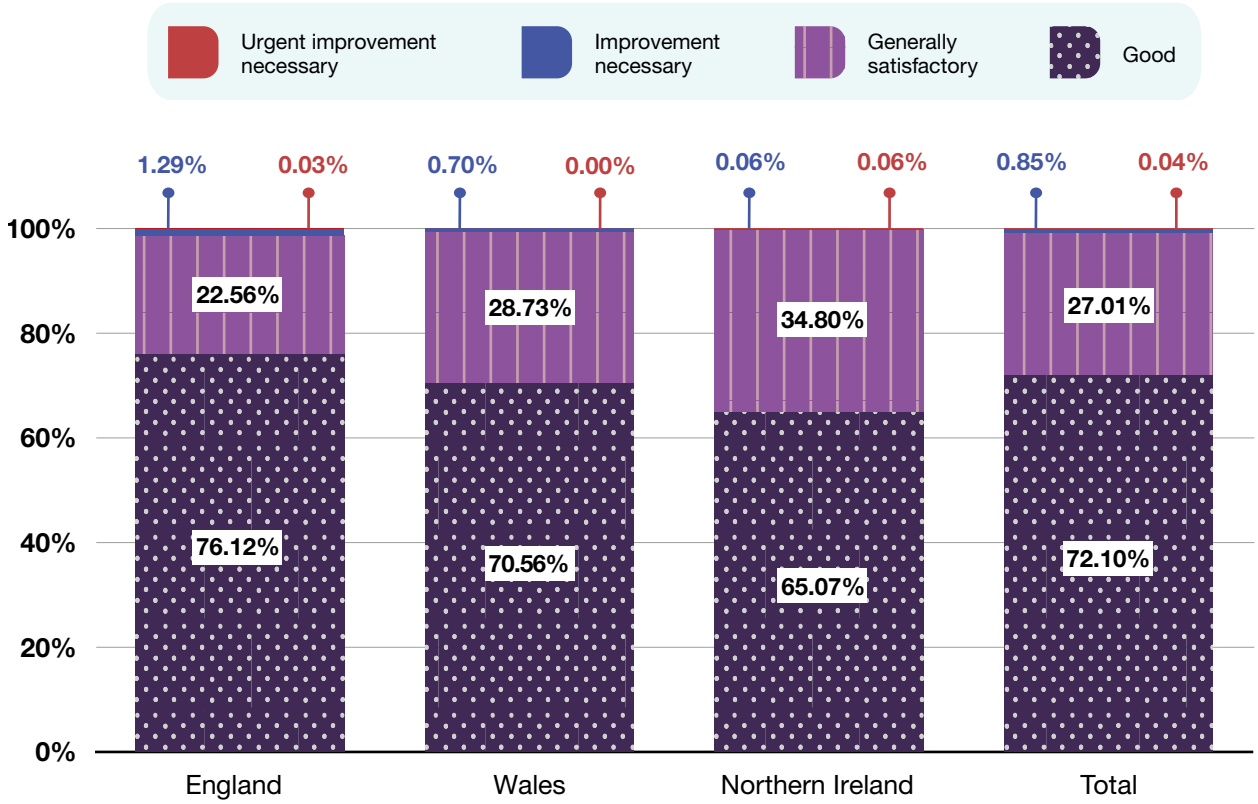
Figure 23: Percentage of dairy establishments which achieved the highest outcomes of either Good or Generally Satisfactory in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Country	Percentage of dairy establishments rated as Good or Generally Satisfactory	Percentage point change from 2023
England	98.7%	+0.3%
Wales	99.3%	+0.4%
Northern Ireland	99.9%	N/A*

* Due to a change in the way the data for Northern Ireland was analysed in 2024, no comparison can be made against previous years.

Source: FSA/DAERA — Dairy farm inspection date

Figure 24: Breakdown of hygiene compliance ratings for dairy establishments from England, Wales and Northern Ireland inspection data



Note: Percentages might not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: FSA/DAERA — Dairy farm inspection data

Figure 25: Dairy inspections and enforcement in Scotland for financial years 2022/23 - 2023/24

Financial year	Inspections	Guidance letters	Warning letters	HINs
2022/23	73	15	9	0
2023/24	230	8	3	0

Source: FSS — Scottish National Database

Hygiene compliance across animal feed establishments

Animal feed businesses must meet legal requirements relating to hygiene, traceability, labelling, composition and undesirable substances which can affect the quality and safety of the wider food chain.

Business compliance with hygiene standards remained broadly unchanged across much of the UK, while compliance levels rose in Wales following a sharp fall reported in Our Food 2023:

- In England, compliance rose slightly by 0.8 percentage points, from 95.2% in 2022/23 to 96.0% to 2023/24.
- In Northern Ireland there was a small increase of 0.2 percentage points, from 97.1% in 2022/23 to 97.3% in 2023/24.
- In Wales there was a rise of 9.6 percentage points, from 79.1% in 2022/23 to 88.7% in 2024.
- In Scotland there was a slight decrease of 0.2 percentage points, from 98.9% in 2023 to 98.7% in 2024.

Overall, the latest data suggests a stable or upwards trend in hygiene compliance across animal feed establishments in the UK.

Figure 26: Percentage of animal feed organisations assessed as compliant with hygiene standards

England	96.0%	96.0% of feed establishments achieved a rating of at least satisfactory compliance in 2023/24 (52,219 of 54,725) — an increase of 0.8 percentage points compared to 2022/23 (51,755 of 54,370).
Wales	88.7%	88.7% of feed establishments achieved a rating of at least satisfactory compliance in 2023/24 (12,020 of 13,558) — an increase of 9.6 percentage points compared to 2022/23 (11,527 of 14,571).
Northern Ireland	97.2%	97.2% of feed establishments achieved a rating of at least satisfactory compliance in 2023/24 (1,068 of 1,099) — an increase of 0.1 percentage points compared to 2022/23 (1,078 of 1,110).
Scotland	98.7%	98.7% of feed establishments achieved a rating of at least satisfactory compliance in 2024 (1,152 of 1,167) — a decrease of 0.2 percentage points compared to 2023 (1,105 of 1,117).

Note: The latest England, Wales and Northern Ireland data shows the inspections carried out during the 2023/24 financial year. The latest data from Scotland is based on the 2024 calendar year.

Source: FSA/FSS/DAERA — Animal feed establishment inspection data

Capacity and capability challenges

Enforcing food hygiene and food standards relies on having enough staff to meet the demand, in addition to them being capable through qualifications and experience to conduct inspections and help businesses maintain good hygiene practices and ensure food meets safety, composition and labelling standards. In last year's report, we highlighted three key concerns:

- the long-term decline in **food safety posts within local authorities**
- the challenges faced by local authorities in **addressing the post-pandemic backlog**
- the ongoing cost of **recruiting and retaining official veterinarians (OVs)** to support meat safety controls.

This section provides an update on each of these issues.

Local authority resourcing

The FSA has tracked local authority resourcing levels in England, Wales and Northern Ireland since 2010/11.[26] From 2013/14 to 2017/18, there were year-on-year decreases in the amount of resource that local authorities allocated[27] for food hygiene and food standards (Figures 27 and 29). Since then, resourcing levels have remained relatively static.

The workforce data for England, Wales and Northern Ireland shows some reported improvements in the number of available local authority resource during the 2023/24 financial year.[28][29] In Scotland, workforce data shows that at the end of 2024 about one-fifth of the workforce were either vacant or unavailable.[30]

Food hygiene resourcing in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Local authorities across the UK are responsible for a wide range of checks and interventions at food establishments to ensure food hygiene standards are maintained and that businesses are compliant with relevant food laws.[31] These are carried out by food safety officers, such as environmental health officers.

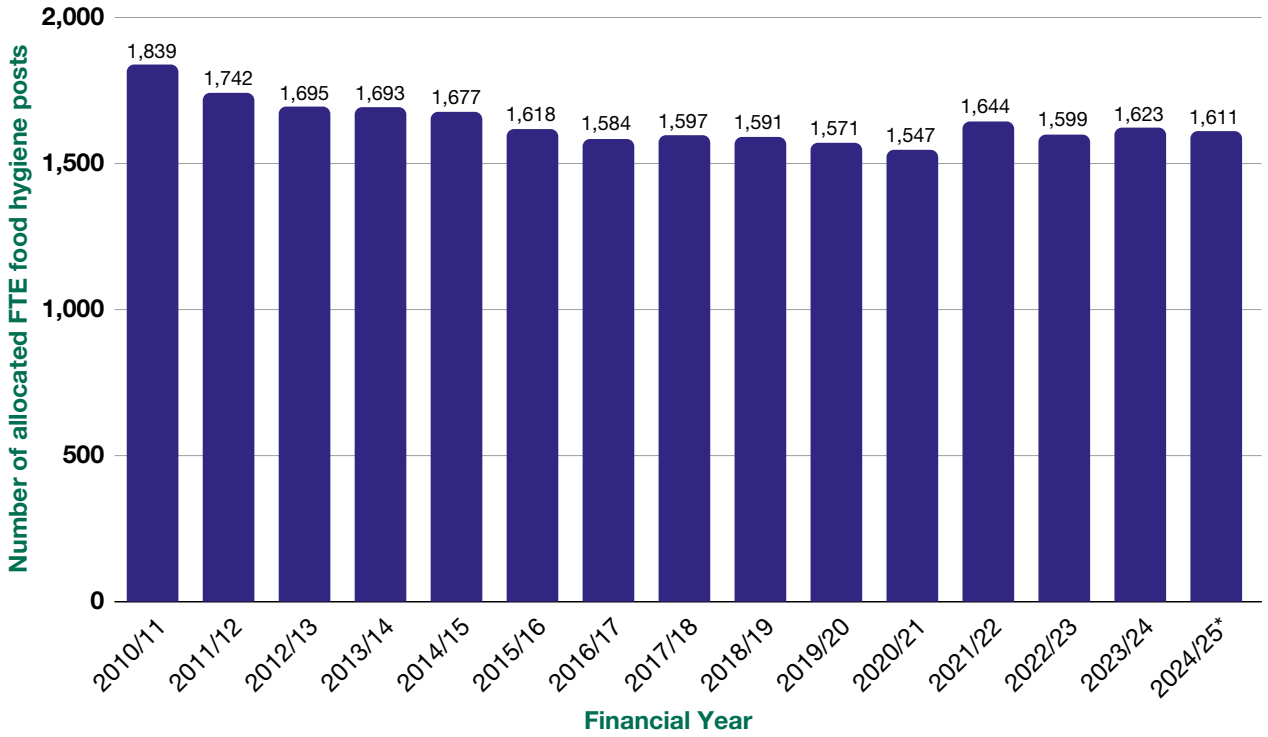
The number of allocated food hygiene full-time equivalents (FTE) posts is shown in Figure 27 and the percentage of those allocated posts that remain unfilled in Figure 28. The number of those that were occupied and available[32] at the end of 2023/24 compared with 2022/23 shows that the local authority resource dedicated to food hygiene:

- **rose by 2.6%** in England (1,226 to 1,258 posts)
- **decreased by 1.4%** in Wales (144 to 142)
- **rose by 18%** in Northern Ireland (50 to 59)

However, total food hygiene resourcing across these three countries (1,459 posts) remained 15.4% lower than 2010/11 (1,725 posts), despite the number of food businesses requiring a food hygiene intervention rising from 574,000 to nearly 588,000 over this period.

In effect, this means there were 403 businesses per food hygiene FTE in 2023/24, compared with 333 in 2010/11 — a 21.1% increase in workload per FTE.

Figure 27: Number of allocated food hygiene full-time equivalents in local authorities across England, Wales and Northern Ireland



Note: An asterisk (*) denotes a half year return.

Source: FSA — LAEMS/Local authority self-reported FTE data (LAEMS up to 31 March 2020)

Figure 28: Percentage of unfilled food hygiene posts (FTE) in local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Year	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	Total
2018/19	8.7%	9.7%	9.7%	8.8%
2019/20	10.1%	6.9%	4.9%	9.6%
2020/21	58.4%	65.5%	25.4%	57.7%
2021/22	12.0%	27.7%	15.3%	13.7%
2022/23	11.0%	12.7%	13.8%	11.1%
2023/24	9.9%	12.9%	7.8%	10.1%
2024/25*	8.9%	12.2%	4.9%	9.2%

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes a half year return. The percentage of unfilled posts across England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2020/21 was due to the reallocation of food safety officers to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: FSA — LAEMS/Local authority self-reported FTE data (LAEMS up to 31 March 2020)

Food standards resourcing in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

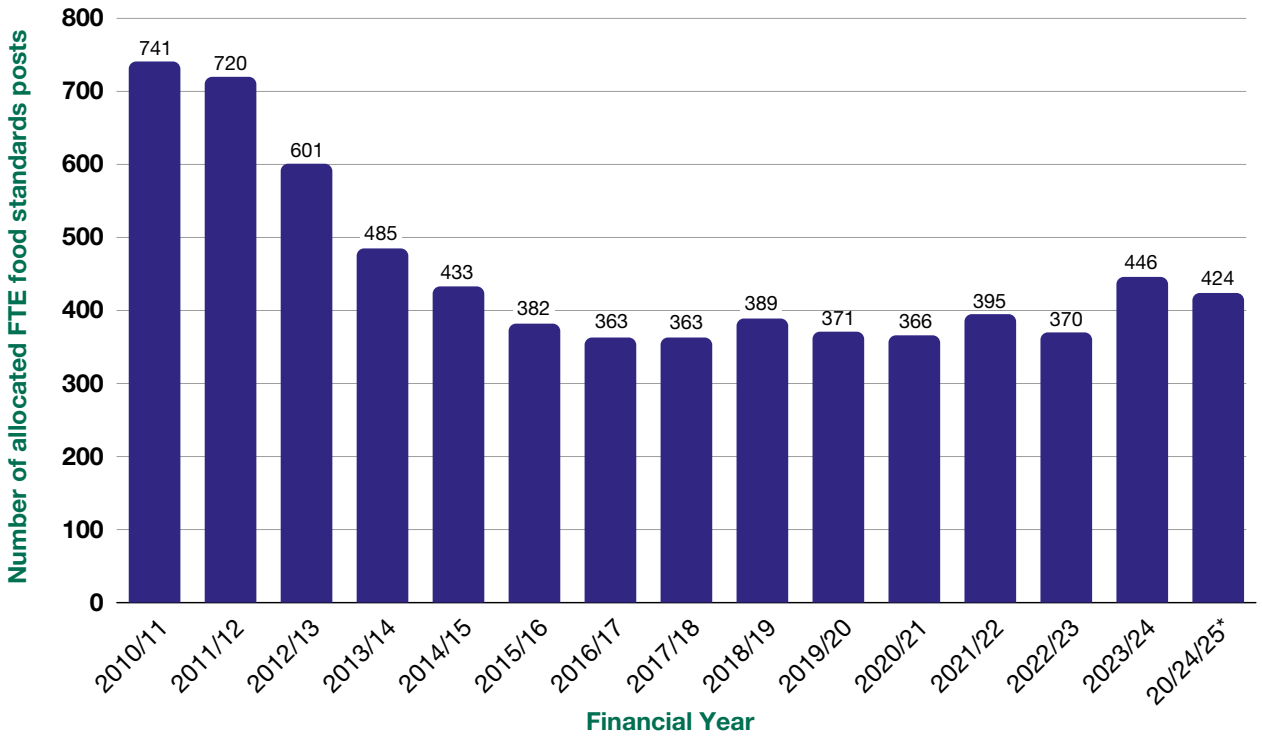
Food standards resourcing ensures that the labelling and composition of food and animal feed are within the law.

The number of allocated food standards FTE posts is shown in Figure 29, and the percentage of those allocated posts that remain unfilled in Figure 30. When compared with 2022/23, the number of posts occupied and available to maintain food standards at the end of 2023/24:

- **rose by 20.6%** in England (from 252 to 304 posts)
- **rose by 20.8%** in Wales (53 to 64)
- **fell by 3.6%** in Northern Ireland (28 to 27)

However, the combined resourcing levels (395 posts) remained lower than in 2010/11, when there were 703 posts. Although we do not have robust data about the number of businesses requiring food standards intervention to show if workload has increased, the workforce change since 2010/11 represents a substantial reduction (43.8%) in available resource.

Figure 29: Number of allocated food standards full-time equivalents in local authorities across England, Wales and Northern Ireland



Note: An asterisk (*) denotes a half year return.

Source: FSA — LAEMS/Local authority self-reported FTE data (LAEMS up to 31 March 2020)

Figure 30: Percentage of unfilled food standards posts (FTE) in local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Year	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	Total
2018/19	9.6%	8.9%	9.1%	9.0%
2019/20	7.3%	6.0%	2.9%	6.5%
2020/21	48.1%	63.5%	25.0%	48.1%
2021/22	9.7%	16.7%	15.2%	10.9%
2022/23	9.7%	8.6%	15.2%	10.0%
2023/24	12.6%	5.9%	6.9%	11.7%
2024/25*	8.4%	11.3%	3.1%	8.5%

Note: An asterisk (*) denotes a half year return. The percentage of unfilled posts across England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2020/21 was due to the reallocation of food safety officers to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: FSA — LAEMS/Local authority self-reported FTE data (LAEMS up to 31 March 2020)

Food hygiene and standards resourcing in Scotland

In Scotland, a Required Resource Calculation (RRC)[33] undertaken in 2021 estimated that 380 FTE posts were needed to deliver all the required food law (food hygiene and food standards) interventions and activities. As of December 2024, 225.4 FTE posts were allocated within Scottish local authorities for delivering food law. Of these, only 179.4 posts were filled, with 46 posts (20.4%) vacant or unavailable to be filled. Compared with the 2021 estimate, this means 52.8% of the required resourcing stipulated by the RRC was not in post.

This lack of resource in Scotland is impacting in equal measure on both hygiene and standards and there is little sign of improvement given the demographics of the current EHOs in Scotland and the lack of a sufficient volume of replacement for those retiring.

Food law officers in Scotland have decreased between 2016 and 2024, from 270.5 FTE to 179. The number of premises have increased over this time too, with 65,095 in 2016 to 72,946 in 2024. This means that there were 240.6 businesses per FTE in 2016, and 407.5 in 2024 — a 69.3% increase in workload per FTE.

Figure 31: Number of allocated food law officer full-time equivalent posts in Scotland 2016 - 2024

Year	Food Law Officers in post (FTE)	Number of food premises
2016	270.5	65,095
2017	N/A	N/A
2018	223	65,105
2019	214	67,864
2020	N/A	N/A
2021	202	73,852
2022	N/A	N/A
2023	N/A	N/A
2024	179	72,946

Note: Different surveys have been used to provide the years where Food Law Officers in post are provided and their methodology to calculate these numbers may have differed.

Source: Food Standards Scotland[34]

A more detailed RRC is currently being undertaken to provide a more accurate and robust estimate of the current resourcing requirements. This new calculation will ensure the current deficit is understood, to support prioritisation and provide a baseline for the **SAFER programme** (see box out).

Modernising regulation and supporting local authorities

The FSA is currently working on a series of initiatives to improve the regulatory system. These initiatives will help local authorities to make best use of the resources they have to support businesses and protect consumers, and to build a sustainable pipeline of new recruits. These include:

- **initial trials with participating large retailers to test if an alternative regulatory model could work**, using business intelligence data alongside some physical checks to assess compliance and proactively manage risks
- **consulting on potential changes to food hygiene checks**, including greater use of remote inspections
- **supporting and recognising new qualification routes** to attract more people into the food safety profession
- from spring 2025, **a new, more risk-based approach to food standards inspections will be introduced** across England and Northern Ireland. This approach will strengthen the use of intelligence to better prioritise resources and enhance consumer protection. In Wales, a pilot for the proposed new model has already taken place, and this has now been consulted on through the Food Law Code of Practice, the responses to the consultation will be considered and advice provided to the Welsh Ministers in autumn 2025 regarding next steps.

In **Scotland**, as this report illustrates, local authorities' (LAs) financial and people resources for food law have been reducing for a considerable period and work undertaken by LAs and FSS in 2024 suggests that only 52.8% of the required number of officials are available. An effective food law enforcement regime is a crucial foundation of both public health and a flourishing food sector and provides a system that will stand up to increasing levels of international export trade scrutiny.

However, evidence gathered by FSS and the Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland (SoCOEHS) clearly demonstrates LA official control delivery falls far short of statutory requirements, presenting a clear and present risk to public health, trade and economy.

This strategic issue has been on the FSS risk register for a number of years and is a risk shared by Ministers and Scottish Government. Given the importance of having an effective food law model Food Standards Scotland has developed the **Scottish Authority Food Enforcement Re-Build programme (SAFER)** which recognises that

the current model is broken and presents substantial public health, economic and trade risks. It is essential that all aspects of the system are reviewed and modernised. SAFER proposes transformation of the system for food law regulation and enforcement in Scotland. It will ensure that the delivery model is efficient, robust and sustainable with less, or without the need for, government subsidy; targeting interventions which optimise public health protection and support a thriving food sector. The programme will be formally launched during 2025.

Managing the post-pandemic backlog

As we described in Our Food 2023, local authorities have been managing high volumes of overdue inspections accumulated during the pandemic — and despite some workforce growth, they faced similar issues in 2024. One of the challenges is that local authorities are reporting that a sizeable proportion of the newly recruited staff are either still in training or require additional support and supervision as they build up their professional experience.

Local authorities also report difficulties in recruiting and retaining competent officers[35], while some food safety officers are being diverted to deal with other demands outside of food safety.

As a result, the impact of increased staffing numbers is expected to take time to translate into any marked reductions in overdue inspections.

FHRS and FHIS inspection volumes

It is important to note FHRS and FHIS ratings are given only to businesses that sell or serve food directly to the public.[36] As such, they do not encompass all types of food inspections. Nevertheless, FHRS ratings provide a useful indicator of overall progress in food hygiene standards among consumer-facing establishments.

In Our Food 2023, we reported that inspection levels had not yet returned to pre-pandemic rates as local authorities continued to deal with the extensive backlog of overdue inspections accumulated during COVID-19. However, there have been further signs of recovery during 2024.[37]

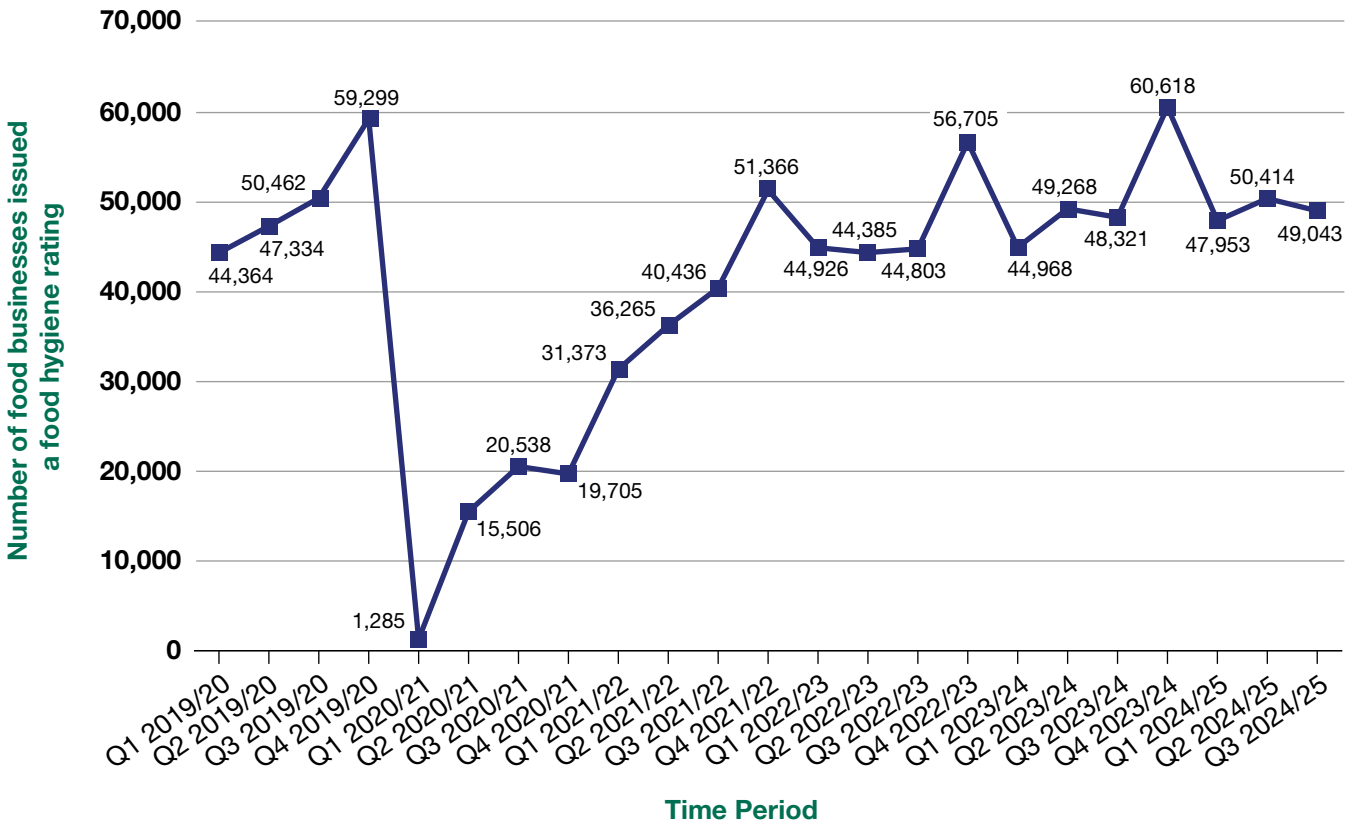
Data for England, Wales and Northern Ireland showed a rise in the number of FHRS ratings issued in the final quarter of the 2023/24 financial year, raising volumes for the first three months of 2024 above pre-pandemic levels for the first time (Figure 32).

Overall, the number of ratings issued in 2023/24 increased from 191,000 to 203,000 — a 6.5% increase compared with 2022/23. For comparison, there were about 159,000 ratings issued in 2021/22 as activity resumed after the pandemic.

In Scotland, the number of FHIS assessments remained below pre-pandemic levels, but increased compared with the previous year. The highest volume of FHIS assessments recorded from the latest data occurred between October and December 2024, with 4,014 FHIS assessments carried out, compared with 3,495 during the equivalent period in 2023 (Figure 33).

Overall, the total number of FHIS ratings increased from 14,259 in 2022/23 to 14,732 in 2023/24 — a rise of 3.3%. However, the number of Scottish businesses awaiting FHIS assessment also increased from 8,810 at the end of 2023 to 9,153 by the end of 2024 (+3.9%).

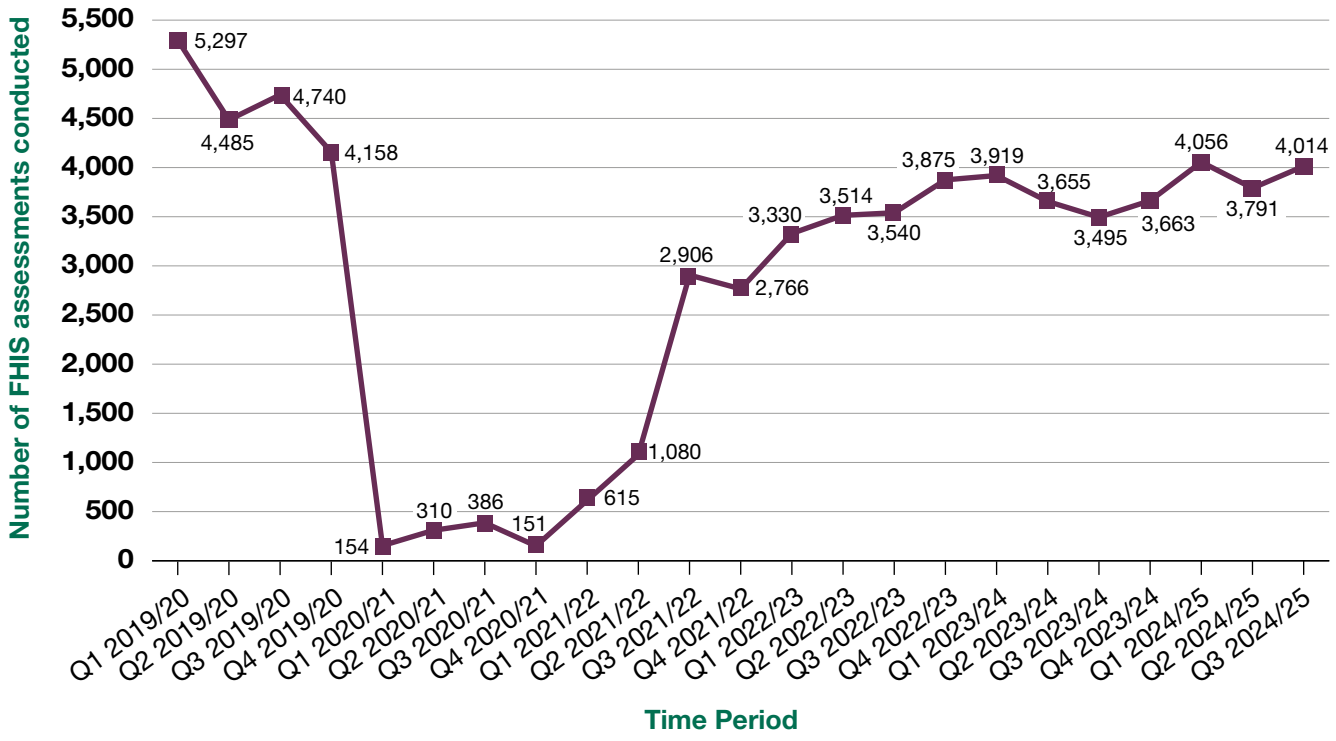
Figure 32: Number of food businesses issued a food hygiene rating by quarter for England, Wales and Northern Ireland from 2019/20 to 2024/25



Note: Q1 — April, May, June; Q2 — July, August, September; Q3 — October, November, December; Q4 — January, February, March.

Source: FSA — FHRS data

Figure 33: Number of FHIS assessments conducted within food businesses by quarter for Scotland from 2019/20 to 2024/2025



Note: Q1 — April, May, June; Q2 — July, August, September; Q3 — October, November, December; Q4 — January, February, March.

Source: FSS-FHIS data

Overdue food hygiene interventions and unrated businesses

Data provided to us by local authorities showed that, between April and September 2024, 51.7% of due food hygiene interventions were delivered in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, compared with 51.9% between October 2023 and March 2024. This left approximately 95,000 **overdue inspections** for this period. However, this mid-year data should be interpreted cautiously, as past trends show a surge in inspections towards year-end. Most overdue interventions were for medium to low-risk businesses. However, although 91% of high-risk inspections were carried out on time, inspections for 871 (9%) high-risk businesses were overdue.

In addition, the number of **unrated businesses**[38] **in England, Wales and Northern Ireland** awaiting an initial food hygiene inspection increased by 3% from 41,101 in March 2024 to 42,353 in September 2024, partly due to the continual cycle of new business openings. This cycle is particularly concerning as businesses without an initial inspection may be operating for extended periods without appropriate advice, support or enforcement, posing a potential risk to public health. Again, this mid-year data should be interpreted cautiously, as past trends show a surge in inspections towards year-end.

Overall, there were 582,000 registered businesses in England, Wales and Northern Ireland requiring a food hygiene intervention as of September 2024 — similar to the previous year.

In Scotland, the number of unrated businesses decreased between December 2023 and December 2024. At the former date, 13,116 out of 73,334 total registered businesses (17.9%) were unrated. In December 2024, 12,533 out of 72,950 (17.2%) of registered businesses were unrated.

Official veterinarian resources

By law[39], **official veterinarians (OVs)** must be present for abattoirs to operate, making them essential for our £10.9 billion domestic meat industry and £2 billion meat export industry.[40]

In last year's report, we highlighted the difficulties that FSA and FSS had experienced in recruiting and retaining enough OVs to meet demand. Although the two agencies use different resourcing models — FSS directly employs OVs, while the FSA in England and Wales uses Service Delivery Partners to provide its staff, and the FSA in Northern Ireland delivers official controls via a Service Level Agreement with the Department of Agriculture the Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) — these challenges have persisted, to varying degrees, in 2024.

The role of OVs

OVs work alongside Official Auxiliaries (also referred to as Meat Hygiene Inspectors (MHIs)), to assure the safety and quality of food produced in UK abattoirs. They monitor live animals before and during slaughter and inspect the carcasses afterwards, playing a critical role in food safety, disease detection and animal welfare.

The use of temporary registered novice OVs in England and Wales

Overseas recruitment has been crucial for maintaining OV staffing levels in England and Wales in recent years, largely supported by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' (RCVS) Temporary Registration scheme.

What is Temporary Registration?

RCVS Temporary Registration allows qualified veterinarians from European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE)-accredited universities with Level 6 IELTS English (since changing from a level 5 in 2024) to temporarily register and work under supervision as Novice Official Veterinarians (TRNOVs) in abattoirs, while completing their English language training.

Between 2021 and mid-2023, the FSA's Service Delivery Partner relied heavily on **TRNOVs** to meet demand. The RCVS asked that the FSA explore alternative recruitment pathways to eliminate the reliance on bulk temporary registration. To address this, the FSA worked with the RCVS, other parts of government, and the veterinary profession to launch an alternative international recruitment pathway in 2024, alongside initiatives to promote OV careers domestically. Workforce retention has also improved due to higher salaries, targeted recruitment, and intensive language training — particularly aimed at helping candidates meet the IELTS Level 7 English requirement, which had previously accounted for 35% of OV attrition. As a result of these interventions, the proportion of candidates leaving due to unmet language qualifications dropped to just 3% between January and August 2024, as pass rates improved (Figure 34).

As a result, the proportion of OV workforce drawn from TRNOVs employed by the Service Delivery Partner fell from 125 in July 2022 to 49 in August 2024, a 61% decrease. This marked a notable step in reducing reliance on temporarily registered staff.

Meanwhile the total OV workforce in England, Wales and Northern Ireland grew by 6% from December 2023 to August 2024, rising from 263 to 280.

Figure 34: Pass rate for International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Level 7 English

Period	IELTS Level 7 Pass Rate
January '23 — June '23	57%
July '23 — December '23	72%
January '24 — June '24	82%
July '24 — September '24	100%

Source: FSA — OV Service Delivery Partner

Vet Track: a new FSA recruitment pathway for OVs

Vet Track is an alternative OV qualification route. It allows veterinarians from EAEVE-accredited universities to work within an OV-led team while studying for IELTS Level 7 English. Once qualified, they become members of the RCVS and can progress to Novice OV status before eventually becoming a full OV.

OV services in Northern Ireland

As outlined earlier, the FSA in Northern Ireland delivers official controls via a Service Level Agreement with DAERA. In response to ongoing challenges in recruiting OVs, DAERA began, for the first time in 2024, to engage external contractors to supplement its veterinary workforce.

DAERA intends to launch a recruitment campaign in 2025, offering enhanced pay and reward packages to attract and retain veterinarians within the Department.

Improving OV recruitment and retention in Scotland

Scotland has faced similar OV resourcing challenges. As of December 2024, FSS was operating with only 79% of the required OV staff in post, although temporary agency staff prevented any service disruption. During the year, FSS successfully recruited six trainee OVs, which is expected to stabilise staffing levels and reduce reliance on agency support, although this will take a minimum of six to eight months. During this time agency staff will be able to continue to support operations, but with an additional cost burden.

To strengthen its long-term resourcing, FSS continues to invest heavily in recruitment and retention strategies, offering pay supplements, professional development and training, and career progression opportunities. FSS also achieved the British Veterinary Association Great Workplace Accreditation Silver Award in 2024/25, the first non-clinical practice to ever do so.

Overall, these measures have started to take effect, with reduced reliance on agency backfill, and continued use of the FSS training programme for OVs and OAs. There has also been greater interest from domestic and overseas vets expressing an interest to work in FSS. This is a greatly improved picture than in recent years and these measures aim to position FSS as an attractive civil service employer and build a stable OV pipeline.

In summary

- **Food hygiene standards have remained stable, but there is a considerable backlog of overdue inspections.** Of those inspected, nine out of ten UK food businesses covered by FHRS and FHIS continue to hold a satisfactory or better food hygiene rating. While the number of inspections carried out in England, Wales and Northern Ireland exceeded pre-pandemic levels for the first time, 95,000 businesses were overdue inspections, including 871 high-risk businesses. The number of unrated businesses awaiting an initial food hygiene inspection also increased.
- **The vast majority of UK meat and dairy establishments are compliant with hygiene standards.** All approved meat establishments in Northern Ireland and the majority in England, Wales, and Scotland had achieved good or satisfactory rating as of December 2024. Compliance in dairy farms in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland remained consistently high in 2024, with 98.7% to 99.9% meeting required hygiene standards. In Scotland, despite a larger number of inspections in 2023/24 (230) than in 2022/23 (73), there were fewer enforcement actions needed with 24 in 2022/23 compared with 11 in 2023/24 as the scope of audits broadened beyond the immediate post-pandemic focus on higher-risk farms.
- **Local authority food standards and hygiene resources remain under pressure.** While staffing levels in some nations rose during 2023/24, there has been a longer-term decline in occupied food hygiene (-15.4%) and food standards (-43.8%) posts in England, Wales and Northern Ireland since 2010/11. In Scotland, 20% of all total allocated food safety roles were unavailable or vacant at the end of 2024. Local authorities are still struggling to address post-pandemic backlogs, with high numbers of unrated businesses awaiting first inspections — which could impact oversight and assurance of food safety.
- **Recruitment of OVs has improved but remains challenging.** The FSA in England and Wales reduced its reliance on TRNOVs as a proportion of the OV workforce from 46% to 18% and introduced a new recruitment and qualification route for overseas candidates. In Scotland, FSS's OV resourcing remained 21% below the required levels in 2024, requiring temporary agency staff to bolster capacity. FSS continues to invest heavily in training, pay and career progression to attract staff and successfully recruited six additional OV staff members during the year. In Northern Ireland, to address persistent challenges in recruiting OVs, DAERA began supplementing its veterinary workforce with external contractors in 2024 and plans to launch a targeted recruitment campaign in 2025, offering improved pay and incentives during 2025. Reducing staff shortages and building a future pipeline of OVs remain key priorities for all organisations to ensure consumers remain protected and to support the meat industry in producing safe food.

Safety and authenticity

Food and feed incidents, surveillance sampling and food crime

At a glance

In this chapter, we look at:

- the volume and nature of food and feed incidents notified to FSA and FSS in 2024
- the latest findings from FSA and FSS food sampling and surveillance programmes
- the activity and focus of our food crime units

Introduction

People should have confidence that the food they buy is safe to eat, is what it says it is, and has met all necessary standards. After food businesses and local authorities, the FSA and FSS act as the third line of defence in food safety. We use a range of evidence to identify and detect emerging issues within our food chain, and take action, both directly and via enforcement partners to protect consumers.

Food and feed incidents

A food and/or feed incident is defined as any event where there are concerns around the safety, quality or integrity of food or animal feed that could require intervention to protect consumers. The FSA and FSS are notified of incidents by different sources, including local authorities, port health authorities, national and international bodies, industry and consumers.

In 2024, 1,903[41] food and feed safety incidents were reported to the FSA and FSS, a decrease of approximately 2% compared with the previous year (Figure 35).

A reduction in the overall number of incidents has been observed since 2020, which may be due to changes in the way incidents are managed and recorded, as described in Our Food 2023.

Understanding food incident data

Changes in the number of notified incidents do not necessarily reflect a change in incident frequency or severity. This is because various factors, including new and amended regulations, changes in consumer behaviour, or improvements in detection and reporting, can affect the number of incidents the FSA and FSS are notified of. Throughout this section, we have sought to explain and contextualise any trends to support our interpretation.

Figure 35: Number of notified food and feed safety incidents in the UK from 2020 to 2024

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Notified incidents	2,261	2,363	2,221	1,935	1,903

Source: FSA and FSS

Food categories most associated with incidents

Analysing the food categories most frequently associated with incidents helps to identify key vulnerabilities, enabling more targeted action where needed. It also strengthens our intelligence and monitoring activities, which guide sampling activity and inform the priorities of our national food crime units.

The same six product categories have consistently been associated with the highest number of incidents since 2020 (Figure 36).

In 2024, the categories with the highest proportion of food incidents were as follows:

- **Meat and meat products** (excluding poultry) accounted for 15% of the incidents notified in 2024. These incidents were mostly linked to microbiological contamination, the presence of veterinary residues[42] and issues related to poor or insufficient food safety controls.[43]
- **Dietetic foods**[44], food supplements and fortified foods had the second highest proportion of notified incidents in 2024, making up 9% of the total. Within this food category, 73 (41%) of the 179 incidents were related to novel foods.[45] These were mostly associated with foods that have not been authorised and included products containing CBD (cannabidiol) and food supplements containing certain mushrooms. Across all food types, the number of incidents involving novel foods increased from 59 in 2020 to 106 in 2024.
- **Prepared dishes and snacks** were associated with 7% of incidents in 2024. They mainly involved the presence of undeclared allergens, microbiological contamination (*Listeria monocytogenes* being the most common hazard detected), and the presence of physical contaminants such as fragments of plastic, glass or metal.
- **Cereals and bakery products** contributed 7% of the total number of notified incidents in 2024. The presence of undeclared allergens, physical contaminants, and pesticide residues were the most common issues among these incidents.
- **Poultry meat and poultry meat products** accounted for 6% of all notified incidents in 2024. Over half (58%) of these incidents involved the detection of *Salmonella*.

Figure 36: Top five food categories involved in notified food and feed safety incidents from 2020 to 2024

Rank (1-5)	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	Meat and Meat Products (other than poultry) **Total: 243** 11% of total incidents	Meat and Meat Products (other than poultry) **Total: 254** 11% of total incidents	Meat and Meat Products (other than poultry) **Total: 284** 13% of total incidents	Meat and Meat Products (other than poultry) **Total: 305** 16% of total incidents	Meat and Meat Products (other than poultry) **Total: 290** 15% of total incidents
2	Cereals and Bakery Products **Total: 157** 7% of total incidents	Poultry Meat and Poultry Meat Products **Total: 238** 10% of total incidents	Dietetic Foods/ Food supplements/ Fortified Foods **Total: 192** 9% of total incidents	Cereals and Bakery Products **Total: 162** 8% of total incidents	Dietetic Foods/ Food supplements/ Fortified Foods **Total: 179** 9% of total incidents
3	Dietetic Foods / Food supplements/ Fortified Foods **Total: 136** 6% of total incidents	Dietetic Foods/ Food supplements/ Fortified Foods **Total: 207** 9% of total incidents	Cereals and Bakery Products **Total: 189** 9% of total incidents	Dietetic Foods/ Food supplements/ Fortified Foods **Total: 137** 7% of total incidents	Prepared Dishes and Snacks **Total: 142** 7% of total incidents
4	Fruits and Vegetables **Total: 129** 6% of total incidents	Cereals and Bakery Products **Total: 139** 6% of total incidents	Poultry Meat and Poultry Meat Products **Total: 151** 7% of total incidents	Prepared Dishes and Snacks **Total: 134** 7% of total incidents	Cereals and Bakery Products **Total: 128** 7% of total incidents
5	Poultry Meat and Poultry Meat Products **Total: 114** 5% of total incidents	Fruits and Vegetables **Total: 118** 5% of total incidents	Prepared Dishes and Snacks **Total: 123** 6% of total incidents	Fruits and Vegetables **Total: 128** 7% of total incidents	Poultry Meat and Poultry Meat Products **Total: 105** 6% of total incidents

- Meat and Meat Products (other than poultry)
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Cereals and Bakery Products
- Poultry Meat and Poultry Meat Products
- Dietetic Foods / Food supplements / Fortified Foods
- Prepared Dishes and Snacks

Source: FSA and FSS

Contamination by harmful microorganisms

Pathogens — microorganisms that are harmful to people — occur naturally in the environment, and the UK's system of food regulation is designed to minimise the risk of food becoming contaminated by them in a way that could cause illness. Symptoms can range from mild (e.g. gastrointestinal discomfort) to life threatening. When a food and/or feed incident involving pathogens does occur, swift action is essential to identify the source and reduce potential harm to consumers.

Pathogenic microorganisms remained the most common hazard in food and feed incidents in 2024, accounting for 23% of all notified cases (Figure 37). These included incidents related to foodborne disease outbreaks or clusters of cases posing sufficient concern to require investigation.

Figure 37: Number of food and feed safety incidents involving contamination by harmful microorganisms in the UK from 2020 to 2024

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Pathogenic Microorganisms	430 (19%)	582 (25%)	646 (29%)	453 (23%)	436 (23%)

Note: The text in brackets is the percentage of total proportion of food and feed incidents for the year. Figures prior to 2024 may differ from previous reports due to adjustments in categorisation of microbiological incidents.

Source: FSA and FSS

Among these incidents, the most commonly identified microorganisms were:

- ***Salmonella***, responsible for 43% of the notified cases, with poultry and meat products being the most frequently affected food categories.
- ***E. coli***, involved in 22% of the incidents, commonly found in shellfish. These also included incidents related to **Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC)**, which was associated with 8% of the incidents involving harmful microorganisms and detected in meat and meat products and dairy, among other food types.
- ***Listeria monocytogenes***, linked to 14% of the incidents and detected across various food types, including milk and milk products (mostly related to cheese), and prepared dishes and snacks.

Food incidents involving allergens

Allergens have the potential to cause severe allergic reactions in hypersensitive individuals. In the UK, it is estimated that around 2.4 million adults have a clinically confirmed food allergy.[46]

Between 2023 and 2024, the number of notified incidents involving allergens in the UK decreased by 11% but stayed within historic range since 2020 (Figure 38). However, allergens were the second highest category of incidents recorded by FSS, with numbers rising from 18 to 30 when compared with 2023.

Figure 38: Number of food incidents involving allergens across the UK from 2020 to 2024

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Allergens	240	272	322	299	267

Source: FSA and FSS

Peanut contamination of mustard products

In September 2024, the FSA and FSS conducted an investigation after a food business reported traces of peanut in mustard powder from a supplier. Urgent allergy advice was published advising those with peanut allergies to avoid consuming foods containing mustard, mustard powder or mustard flour whilst investigations were ongoing.

The investigation traced the contaminated mustard ingredients to four Indian suppliers and three spice companies in the UK, who distributed these ingredients to a range of manufacturing, hospitality and retail businesses, prompting product withdrawals and recalls across the supply chain. From September to November 2024, FSA and FSS published three allergy alerts and 31 follow-up alerts[47], affecting 59 brands and 307 products.

In November 2024, after confirming that all necessary food safety measures were in place and affected products were removed from sale, the FSA and FSS lifted the precautionary advice. Enhanced testing of mustard products is now in place as a safeguard to ensure that any further products that may be affected by cross contamination do not reach the market, enabling consumers to enjoy these foods with confidence.

Food alerts and recall notices

When a food incident is identified, it is investigated to ensure that any harmful food is removed from the market. This typically involves businesses withdrawing or recalling affected or potentially affected products. These actions are led by industry and local authorities, working closely with regulators.

To support this, the FSA and FSS often publish alerts (online) to inform consumers and food businesses about recalls and advise on any actions they need to take.

Allergy alerts

An allergy alert is published when a product is recalled due to undeclared allergens (including labelling not in English) or incorrect labelling of allergens on the product.

In 2024, the number of allergy alerts issued by the FSA and FSS rose by 58% compared with the previous year (Figure 39). Around a third of all allergy alerts in 2024 were due to the major contamination incident of mustard products with peanuts.

This incident led to 34 allergy alerts (each containing lists of multiple products being recalled) and accounted for 79% of all peanut alerts issued in 2024. In all, 43 peanut-related alerts were published in 2024 — 5.7 times higher than the average number of alerts linked to peanut issued over the previous four years (Figure 40). This increase is attributed to the above contamination incident.

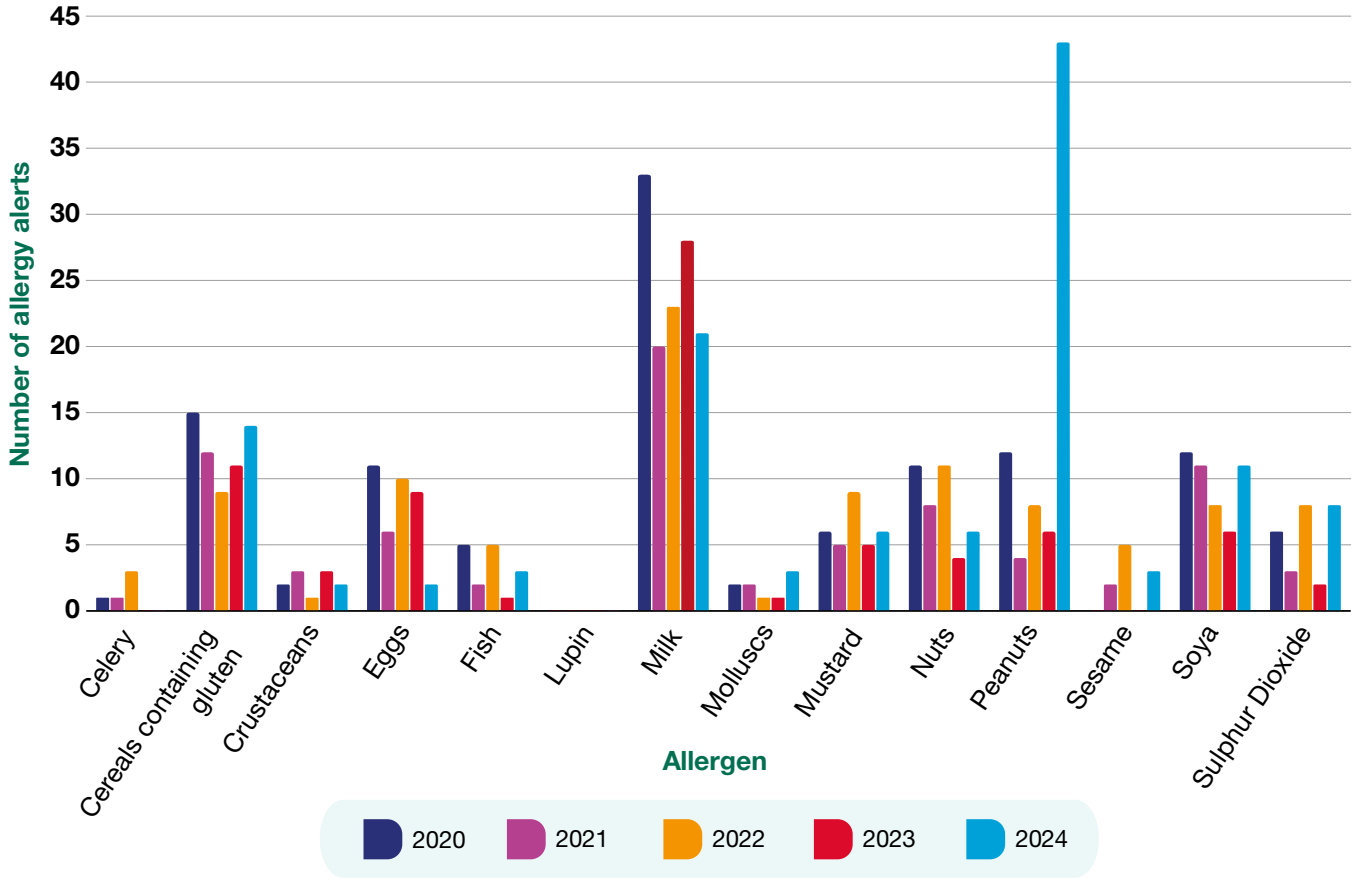
Figure 39: Total number of allergy alerts published by FSA and FSS from 2020 to 2024

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Allergy Alerts	77	83	83	64	101

Source: FSA and FSS

Milk remained one of the most frequently undeclared allergens on food labels, making it the second most common reason for an allergy alert to be issued in 2024 (Figure 40), despite a decrease compared with 2023. The number of allergy alerts involving other allergens remained broadly stable compared with 2023. However, there was a slight increase in alerts involving sulphur dioxide and soya, while alerts related to eggs decreased.

Figure 40: Number of allergy alerts by type of allergen from 2020 to 2024



Source: FSA and FSS

Product recall information notices (PRINs)

A product recall information notice (PRIN) is published when there are concerns about the safety of a product, most often due to contamination, mis-packing or mislabelling of products.

The total number of PRINs issued in 2024 remained in line with historic variation since 2020 (Figure 41) and the reasons for the recalls were similar to those in 2023:

- 40% involved concerns over the presence of foreign bodies, including metal, glass, plastic or rubber.
- 39% were related to the potential for microbiological contamination.
- 21% were linked to concerns over incorrect use-by-dates, poor hygiene controls, or other safety issues.

Figure 41: Total number of PRINs issued in the UK from 2020 to 2024

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
PRINs	66	67	81	65	67

Source: FSA and FSS

Food alert for action (FAFA)

A food alert for action (FAFA) is issued to local authorities and consumers when the distribution of products is less well-defined or when a food business is not taking the required steps to remove products from sale and remedial action from local authorities is required.

The low number of FAFAs issued since 2020 suggests that most food businesses comply with regulatory requirements. However, the number of FAFAs issued increased from one in 2023 to seven in 2024 (Figure 42). These included four initial alerts, and three updates where further affected products and or businesses were identified, addressing the following incidents:

- ***Listeria monocytogenes* contamination** in chilled and ready-to-eat products, including bread products and pasta salads — one alert and one update.
- **Safety concerns in beef, pork, and chicken meat products** from a cutting plant that failed to meet food safety and hygiene requirements — one alert and two updates.
- Discovery of bottles of **counterfeit vodka containing isopropyl alcohol**, prompting local authorities to search for and remove affected products from the market — one alert.
- A recall of all **mustard and spice products** containing mustard supplied and manufactured by a spice company in the UK due to peanut contamination — one alert.

Figure 42: Total number of FAFA issued in the UK from 2020 to 2024

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
FAFA	1	0	0	1	7

Source: FSA and FSS

Food surveillance sampling

FSA and FSS run national surveillance programmes to help identify potential safety, standards and authenticity risks and work with delivery partners to address them. These surveillance programmes are specifically targeted at areas of potential risk and vulnerability, so they carry a greater likelihood of identifying non-compliance than we would expect to see in a randomly selected sample. The results are therefore not representative of overall UK food standards. The two surveys are designed separately, based on intelligence or information which is relevant to the food chain in relevant areas of the UK, and as different commodities are targeted, results from the FSA and FSS surveys cannot be compared.

However, both surveys provide valuable insights that help the national food safety agencies, industry and enforcement authorities respond to possible issues within the food chain.

The latest findings of our targeted surveys are summarised below.

The FSA targeted survey 2024/25

What we tested

In total, 445 samples (30-60 samples covering each of the 13 different products) were collected across England, Wales and Northern Ireland from July 2024 to September 2024 and tested for the presence of allergens and contaminants, authenticity, composition, labelling accuracy, and compliance with food information standards.

The commodities sampled for this programme included foods targeted for surveillance due to known or potential safety and authenticity risks or prior compliance issues. As with the 2023/24 survey, a higher proportion of samples (66%) were collected from small food businesses as previous results indicated higher failure rates for small retailers compared with larger supermarket chains.

What we found

- The **overall compliance rate** for the food products sampled in the 2024/25 survey was 77% (344/445 samples).
- Foods sampled from **supermarkets and other large food businesses** were 86% compliant while samples collected from small food businesses had a lower compliance rate of 73%. These results should not be seen as representative of the food industry as a whole as surveillance is targeted at high-risk areas.
- **Bread products** were tested for the presence of allergens and compliance with labelling requirements, which in 2024/25 included a full label check contrary to the previous surveys where only allergen-related label checks were carried out. Nine of the 35 bread samples tested (26%) were compliant, resulting in the lowest compliance rate among the commodities tested this year. The presence of undeclared allergens was detected in two of the bread samples, which were found to contain milk. 26 samples failed to comply with labelling requirements outlined in regulations and/or industry guidance. These were mostly related to errors in the format or units for nutritional information or errors in the format of durability information (e.g. best before, use by date). Other labelling issues included allergens being declared but not suitably emphasised or correctly described and allergen statements missing or not worded as suggested in industry guidance.

- Samples of **oregano** were analysed for authenticity and presence of contaminants. 20 of the 30 samples tested (67%) were compliant. Half of the ten non-compliant samples contained more than 0.1%[48] of other leaf types, such as olive leaves, sage, thyme or myrtle, and were deemed inauthentic. Mycotoxins and heavy metals were not detected in any of the samples tested, while physical contaminants, such as plastic and insect fragments, were present in eight.

- **Sausages** were tested for meat content, presence of meat species not included on the label and compliance with labelling standards. 27 of the 40 samples tested were compliant (68%). Of the 13 non-compliant samples, nine had less meat than declared and four contained undeclared meat species at levels suggesting poor production practice, as opposed to deliberate substitution.

- **Chicken ready meals** were also tested for composition, presence of any undeclared meat species and compliance with labelling requirements. Of the 30 samples tested, 21 were compliant (70%). All samples were compliant for authenticity, which means that other meat species were not detected. However, seven samples contained less meat than declared and two samples were non-compliant due to labelling issues where declaration of meat content was missing.

- Samples of **minced meat** were tested for composition and compliance with labelling standards. 29 of the 40 samples tested (73%) were compliant. Of the 11 samples deemed non-compliant, nine had labelling issues, including inaccurate product descriptions or inaccurate nutritional information. One of these and two further samples had fat content above the level for the product description (e.g. lean minced meat or minced pure beef).

- **Olive oil** was tested for composition, authenticity and compliance with labelling requirements. The rate of compliance for the 30 samples of olive oil was 80%. Of the six samples deemed non-compliant, three did not meet the compositional requirement related to the freshness of the oil[49], with one of them also failing due to labelling issues. Two samples did not meet the compositional standard for extra virgin olive oil[50], and one was not compliant with labelling requirements for the description of the type of oil.

- Thirty samples of **milk** were tested for fat content and against labelling requirements and had a compliance rate of 80%. Three samples of whole milk and two samples of semi-skimmed milk had fat content less than permitted by regulations[51], while one sample of semi-skimmed milk had fat content greater than permitted.

- Vegan and free from products were tested for the presence of allergens and compliance with labelling requirements and had a compliance rate of 87% and 85%, respectively. One of 30 samples of **vegan products**, which included cakes and desserts, contained undeclared milk and four samples failed due to labelling issues. Allergens were not detected in any of the 60 samples of **free from** products tested. Nine of these samples failed to meet labelling standards.

- Basmati rice and durum wheat pasta were tested for authenticity. The compliance rate for **basmati rice** was 87%, with four out of the 30 samples tested failing the authenticity tests. Of the 30 samples of **durum wheat pasta**, one (3%) contained non-durum wheat and was deemed non-compliant.

- One (3%) out of 30 samples of **orange juice** failed to comply with labelling requirements. All the samples tested were compliant for composition and presence of unauthorised colours.

- **Turmeric** had a compliance rate of 97%. Mycotoxins and heavy metals were not detected in any of the 30 samples tested, but unauthorised colour was present in one.

FSS's compositional and chemical contaminants sampling programme

What we tested

From July 2023 to June 2024, the FSS programme focused on nine food commodities which were selected based on intelligence obtained from previous sampling, horizon scanning and issues identified by local authorities in their routine activities. A total of 649 samples (42-85 samples per commodity) were collected from retailers, manufacturers and catering establishments and tested for authenticity, composition, presence of allergens and contaminants. The programme targeted the following areas:

- Mycotoxins in dried figs
- Heavy metals in spinach
- Fat and connective tissue in prepacked mince beef
- Propionic acid (a preservative) in naan and other flatbreads
- Meat speciation in frozen processed pork products
- Meat speciation in frozen processed beef products
- Lead in wild game birds (to assess carry over from ammunition)
- Milk protein in coffees made from non-dairy alternatives[52] and
- Egg protein in dishes described as egg-free in catering establishments[53]

What we found

- The **overall compliance rate** for the programme was 86% (557/649 samples) with nearly three-quarters (74%) of the 92 non-compliances being due to the presence of allergens.
- **Non-dairy lattes** had the highest non-compliance of the foods sampled, with 58 out of 68 samples (85%) containing milk protein above recommended levels of 0.2mg/portion.[54] Concerningly, two samples had milk protein present at levels greater than 10mg/portion. The presence of milk protein in these drinks indicates that cross-contact can occur during the preparation of these drinks and may pose a serious risk for individuals with a milk allergy. FSS is working on an incident prevention strategy to address allergen issues detected in cafes and other catering establishments.
- Ten (14%) out of 70 samples of **egg-free takeaway meals** had egg protein above the recommended levels of 0.2mg/portion[55] and were deemed non-compliant, with one of these samples containing levels above 10mg/portion. These results are also possibly due to cross-contact during food preparation and may pose a risk to individuals with egg allergy.
- Of the 79 samples of **naan and other flatbreads**, such as pitta and tortillas, 16 (20%) were non-compliant due to high levels of propionic acid, which exceeded legal limits for this preservative.
- All 166 samples of **frozen processed pork and frozen processed beef products**, which included sausages and burgers, were compliant for meat speciation, meaning that only the meat species declared on the labels were present.
- Six (8%) out of 72 samples of **prepacked minced beef** were considered non-compliant due to fat content, either because they exceeded regulatory requirements or contained higher levels than the values provided on labels.
- One out of 79 **dried fig** samples tested for mycotoxins was deemed non-compliant due to presence of excessive levels of Ochratoxin A.
- One of the 73 **spinach** samples tested for heavy metals was found to have levels of cadmium higher than the regulatory requirements.
- Whilst there are no specified regulatory levels established for lead in **wild game birds**, this sampling showed that over three-quarters (76%) of the 42 wild game bird samples had lead levels above the limit set for poultry meat[56], indicating that carry over had occurred via the ammunition used to kill the birds. The FSS assessment of the results concluded that the current guidance on lead-shot game and existing advice to cut down consumption remains applicable.

Figure 43: Headline results of the 2023/24 FSS national food sampling programme

Tested for composition

Products tested	Number of samples tested	Number of non-compliant samples
Prepacked mince beef	72	6
Naan and other flatbreads	79	16

Tested for chemical contaminants

Products tested	Number of samples tested	Number of non-compliant samples
Figs	79	1
Spinach	73	1

Tested for authenticity

Products tested	Number of samples tested	Number of non-compliant samples
Frozen processed pork products	81	0
Frozen processed beef products	85	0

Tested for the presence of undeclared allergens

Products tested	Number of samples tested	Number of non-compliant samples
Non-dairy lattes	68	58
Egg-free takeaway meals	70	10

Note: Results for wild game birds are not included in the tables as there is no regulatory level for lead in wild game and, therefore, samples were not assessed for compliance.

Source: FSS — Food Sampling Surveillance Programme 2023/24

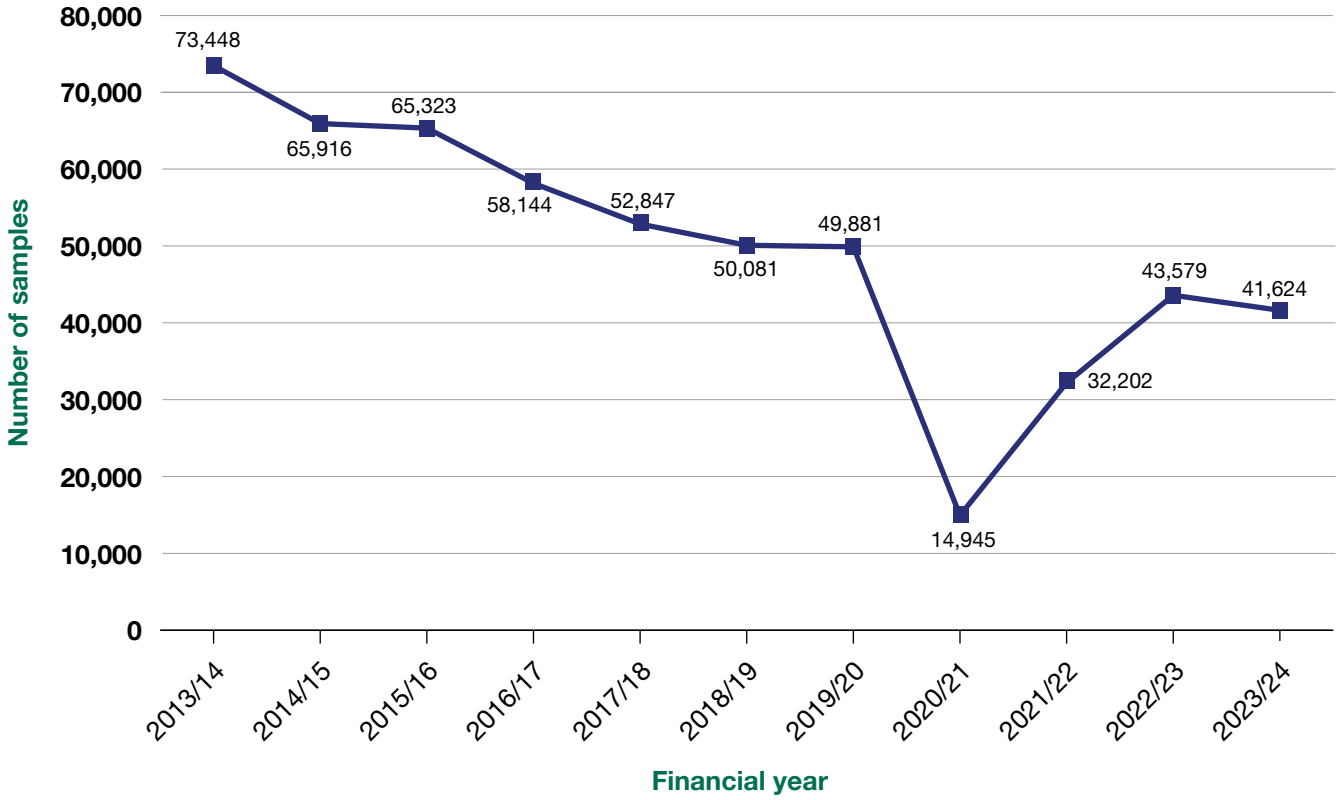
Local authority sampling

Local authority sampling plays a key role in keeping consumers safe. Local authority environmental health and trading standards teams collect food samples which are tested in official laboratories to check safety, standards and authenticity parameters. These include samples taken as part of their routine food safety and standards controls work, as well as those funded via national food safety agencies to target areas of risk.

According to latest available figures, sampling between 2022/23 and 2023/24 fell by 4.5% (from 43,579 in 2022/23 to 41,624, Figure 44). However, trends differed across nations – for example, sampling activity went up in Wales (from 3,137 to 3,550) and Scotland (from 3,435 to 3,713) but fell in England (28,682 to 26,297) and Northern Ireland (8,325 to 8,064) over the period (Figure 45).

As highlighted in the Our Food report 2023, sampling by local authorities in the UK has declined over the past decade. Although there has been a gradual recovery since 2020/21, levels remain 43% lower than ten years ago. However, it should be noted a different pattern is observed in Northern Ireland. Despite the reduction in 2023/24, reported samples have remained broadly stable over the years (with the exception of the drop in 2020/21 due to the pandemic). This may be related to different funding arrangements and the development of annual sampling plans by district councils in collaboration with official control laboratories and other parties with a coordinated approach to sampling across Northern Ireland.

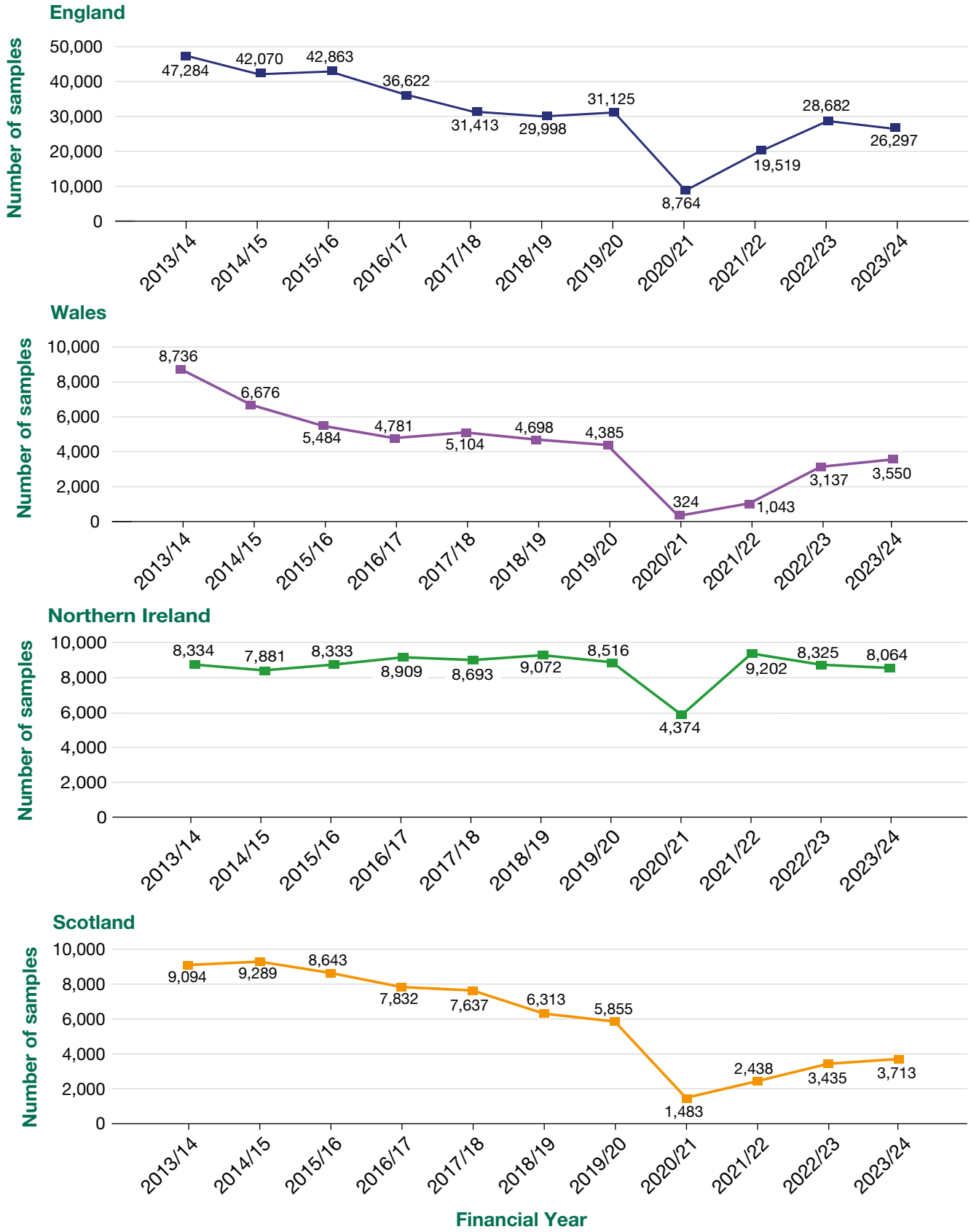
Figure 44: The number of samples reported by local authorities in the UK over time



Source: FSA and FSS

Nevertheless, the long-term decline in sampling remains a concern, since reduced testing could increase the risk of food safety or authenticity issues going undetected. Financial pressures, staffing shortages, and ongoing backlogs in lower-risk inspections may be contributing to this trend.

Figure 45: The number of samples reported by local authorities in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland over time



Source: FSA and FSS

Food crime

We define food crime as serious fraud and related criminality within food supply chains, including supply of drink and animal feed. It may take many different forms[57] and can come at a heavy cost, estimated at between £410 million and £1.96 billion per year in the UK.[58] Crime targeting the food chain could cause serious harm to consumers and damage confidence in the food chain. It may also adversely affect our food security.[59]

Although the majority of food and drink on sale in the UK is safe and authentic, the food industry remains an attractive target for criminals as economic pressures, changing consumer demands and geopolitical events create new opportunities to commit crime.

The role of the UK's food crime units

Operating within FSA and FSS, the UK's two national food crime teams — the NFCU and SFCIU — work with local authorities, food businesses and other agencies to detect, investigate, disrupt and prevent food crime across the UK.

Each unit sets its priorities through a Control Strategy which is informed by a joint strategic assessment[60] to target criminal behaviour and work to reduce known vulnerabilities within the food chain.

What did the food crime units focus on in 2024?

Live investigations

The NFCU and SFCIU conduct investigations to identify and take action against individuals or groups involved in food crime.

While the number of live investigations offers some insight into the impact of enforcement activity, it does not necessarily reflect the overall level of food crime or allow for year-on-year comparisons, as they can be launched for different reasons and vary in complexity and scale.

Additionally, many food crimes go unreported — often without consumers even realising they have been affected. However, investigations do help to highlight the types of food crime currently being encountered and reveal potential vulnerabilities.

During 2024, the UK's food crime units carried out a total of **29 live investigations** (Figure 46), with the majority involving meat and meat products.

Figure 46: The key areas of focus for food crime investigations in 2024

Key areas of focus	Number of live investigations
Meat and meat products (including poultry)	20
Alcohol	3
Other*	3
Dangerous non-foods	1
Fish and seafood	1
Vegetables	1

* Investigations relating to products that do not fall into the key areas of focus presented here.
Source: FSA and FSS

Types of illegal activity being investigated included:

- **misrepresentation** of country of origin, variety or premium status
- **diversion of unsafe products** into the food supply chain
- **illegal processing**
- **suspected fraud** in relation to counterfeit alcohol
- **traceability issues** in the meat supply chain

Disrupting food crime

Disruptions[61] are recorded when an intervention has a direct impact on food crime, for example, when a criminal group has been stopped from operating in the usual way through arrests, asset seizures, or by taking down websites illegally marketing dangerous products as food.[62] These interventions are defined and validated according to national law enforcement standards.

In 2024, the UK's food crime units recorded a total of **108 disruptions** (Figure 47), with nearly a third targeting criminal activity in the meat sector. Examples included:

- A community order was obtained for a defendant who pleaded guilty for involvement in the **supply of unfit meat** and now faces confiscation proceedings amounting to £205,825.
- A multi-agency investigation led to a guilty plea and a £50,831 fine for a number of **regulatory offences**, including falsifying *Salmonella* testing certificates, meaning that birds had been slaughtered for the food chain without proof they were pathogen-free.

- Support for a local authority case resulted in fines totalling £36,642 for three individuals involved in operating **an illegal 'smokies'**[63] business.
- A business owner operating at unapproved premises pleaded guilty and was fined £4,000 for three offences, including **obstructing FSS inspectors** carrying out an inspection.

Figure 47: The key areas of focus for disruptions carried out by the food crime units in 2024

Key areas of focus	Number of Disruptions
Other*	38
Meat and meat products (including poultry)	32
Dangerous non-foods	23
Alcohol	12
Vegetables	2
Fish and seafood	1

* Disruptions relating to products that do not fall into the key areas of focus presented here.
Source: FSA and FSS

Fourteen of the 38 'other' disruptions related to **prevention activities**. These included businesses adopting new food fraud prevention practices following NFCU training and engagement exercises, and the increased use of the Food Fraud Resilience Tool[64] leading to new counter-fraud strategies, improved monitoring procedures, and greater awareness of risks across industry. SFCIU introduced its Food Crime Risk Profiling Tool[65] in 2023.

Counterfeit alcohol was another major focus, accounting for 12 out of the 34 SFCIU disruptions in 2024 — including a key investigation targeting the sale of counterfeit vodka containing isopropanol.

Case study: Tackling illegal meat operations

Following an investigation by a local authority and NFCU, four individuals and a business were convicted for diverting meat unfit for human consumption back into the human food chain. The investigation began when local authority officers found 1.9 tonnes of animal by-products — including whole and cut chickens, lamb's testicles and beef burgers — being processed for human consumption in an illegal cutting plant in London.

The NFCU traced these animal by-products back to legitimate food business operators who confirmed they had originally sent them for safe disposal or manufacture into pet food.[66] Analysis of communications data and other evidence demonstrated a criminal relationship between the individuals accused.

In March 2025, after an 11-week trial, a jury found the four defendants and the business guilty of conspiracy to defraud by placing unfit food on the market.

Case study: Cracking down on isopropanol-laced vodka sales in Scotland

Since August 2024, the SFCIU has led a joint investigation with Scottish local authorities into the sale of counterfeit 35cl vodka bottles in independent licensed convenience stores. These products contained isopropanol (isopropyl, IPA), a toxic alcohol which is dangerous if consumed.

In response, FSS issued a food alert for action (FAFA) notice to all 32 Scottish local authorities. Over two weeks, officers visited more than 1,730 independent licensed convenience stores across Scotland, leading to the recovery of 231 bottles of counterfeit vodka. Consumer warnings and advice were also issued.

This swift, co-ordinated action substantially reduced the risk to the public, likely disrupting the supply of illegal products and deterring further sales. FSS is now liaising with multiple agencies as part of an ongoing investigation.

In summary

- The overall number of **food and feed safety incidents** in 2024 remained broadly stable compared with the previous year. Pathogenic microorganisms continued to be the most common hazard, while meat and meat products, dietetic foods, food supplements and fortified foods, prepared dishes and snacks, and cereals and bakery items were the most frequently affected food categories. Allergen-related incidents reduced slightly from 2023 but remained an area of concern, with a large-scale contamination incident involving peanuts in mustard powder leading to an increase in allergy alerts. While the number of product recall notices since 2020 remained within historic variation, there was an increase in food alerts for action, linked to four complex incidents requiring direct intervention by local authorities.
- **Targeted sampling programmes** suggest some challenges involving allergen management and labelling accuracy.
- **Overall local authority food sampling rates** have fallen, reducing from 43,579 in 2022/23 to 41,624 in 2023/24 — a decrease of 4.5%. Sampling carried out in England and Northern Ireland during this period decreased by 8% and 3% respectively, while rates in Wales increased by 13% and in Scotland by 8%. Sampling levels in England, Wales and Scotland remain considerably lower than a decade ago while in Northern Ireland, levels have remained broadly stable except for a drop in 2020/21.
- In 2024, the UK's **food crime units** conducted 29 live investigations and made 108 disruptions involving a wide range of interventions, from counterfeit alcohol to unsafe meat processing. These activities highlight the importance of multi-agency collaboration and proactive monitoring to address vulnerabilities and disrupt illegal activities.

Conclusions

The data presented in this report suggests that food safety and authenticity standards are being upheld overall. However, several aspects of the food system continue to operate under considerable pressure.

In previous reports we have highlighted major challenges in recruiting Official Veterinarians (OVs). Essential within the UK's valuable meat industry, they protect public health, animal health and animal welfare. The FSA successfully reduced its reliance on temporary registered novice OVs (TRNOVs) from 46% in 2022 to 18% in 2024. FSS has improved recruitment and retention with a variety of measures including pay supplements and professional development strategies. While these measures are expected to stabilise resourcing levels in future years, building a sustainable pipeline of OV recruits remains a critical goal for both organisations.

We also noted substantial resource and workforce shortages within environmental health and trading standards food teams in local authorities, critical to the effective enforcement of food law and food standards throughout the UK. In 2024, the situation in England, Wales and Northern Ireland stabilised or showed slight improvement but in Scotland the deficit has become even more pronounced. We remain concerned that local authorities do not have sufficient capacity to deal with a growing number of food businesses, with a substantial backlog of new businesses awaiting their first inspection and feedback on any unknown risks.

We are particularly concerned to see that sampling activity is well below pre-pandemic levels despite some signs of recovery since 2020/21. Sampling related to food standards has been particularly affected, in part due to resource challenges, and is especially concerning when we know from wider surveillance that there continue to be non-compliances.

Labelling issues are responsible for most non-compliances in the FSA's retail surveillance sampling targeted survey. Failure to identify allergens on labels or to accurately list the ingredients within a product can be life threatening to consumers with food allergies. The public should be able to rely on the information on the label.

While major safety or authenticity issues, other than allergens, are relatively rare, we urge businesses to pay greater attention to the accuracy of labelling, especially for allergens. In doing so, we can look forward to seeing a reduction in non-compliances next year.

Surveillance sampling is deliberately targeted at specific areas of likely non-compliance so it is not possible to draw conclusions about wider compliance. Food businesses conduct greater levels of sampling across a far wider range of food items. We believe there are opportunities to develop a robust and co-ordinated approach to sampling across local authorities, the food industry, and regulators. Greater sharing of results through systems such as the Food Industry Intelligence Network will promote more efficient use of resources across the food system, enable improvements in standards, and build trust between the consumer and industry.

The new Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) commenced its phased implementation in 2024 and controls of sanitary and phytosanitary products entering Great Britain from the EU have been introduced. We welcome the progress made including the documentary checks and physical checks at our borders. However, full rollout is not yet complete, and more work remains to be done before we have complete data from the system to fully assess compliance. Recent announcements about a common understanding on future cooperation between the EU and Great Britain may affect implementation plans; however, throughout the transition and in any future arrangements, our duty remains to ensure the public health and protect the interests of the consumer, which requires access to robust and accurate data. This is particularly important given the future shifts we might expect to see in the food supply chain resulting from the impact of tariffs or trade deals on global trade, alongside the continuing impact of climate change.

We initiated these annual reports in the wake of the UK Exit from the EU when there was public concern about the impact on our food standards. We could not have predicted the extent of change in global food systems caused by geopolitical change in subsequent years. We have seen that events happening thousands of miles away can affect our global supply chains almost immediately. Expecting the unexpected has become the new normal and domestic food security has assumed greater prominence in our national debate.

The high food standards we enjoy overall are an important component in the continuing high level of trust in the UK food system. However, a concerning number of consumers are not confident that they can access affordable, nutritious food for themselves and their families. One in five households across the UK continue to face food insecurity.

Recently published dietary health data for Scotland shows that poor diet among children remains a challenge and inequalities are not diminishing. Tackling the food environment needs to be a priority for all governments. Children in the most deprived areas of Scotland were less likely to meet dietary health goals for fruit and vegetable intake, and fibre, compared with those in the least deprived areas. The Health Survey for England 2022 (published in 2024) showed similar socio-economic differences in fruit and vegetable intake.

The prevalence of obesity in adults and children across the country remains high,[67][68] leading to poor health for individuals and reduced economic productivity. Poor diet also exacerbates health inequalities. While many chronic health issues are treatable, prevention remains better than a cure. What is clear from the data we and others have presented is that far greater action is needed to support and enable everyone to achieve a healthy diet.

The food system is an important contributor to economic growth but that growth must protect and enhance health, not undermine it. We welcome efforts by governments across the UK to reconcile health and wealth as it relates to food. We need to recognise that increasing ill-health and high levels of overweight and obesity will continue to add costs to the NHS and will have an economic impact, too, through increasing sick absence of employees. In England, the Government's planned food strategy and 10 year NHS plan, in Scotland the Government's Good Food Nation Plan and work on children's health, and the food strategies being published in Wales and Northern Ireland, present opportunities to set out a vision and roadmap to promote an environment that favours healthier food choices. As regulators we stand ready to play our part to improve public health outcomes.

Thanks to the concerted efforts by all those in the system we have seen extraordinary resilience and standards have been maintained. But this has come at a cost; the system is stretched as never before, resources are constrained at every level — national government, local authorities and households, with businesses trying to avoid food price rises. This creates vulnerabilities and as the recent report commissioned by the National Preparedness Commission on food system resilience showed, we need to do more to be prepared.

It is more important than ever that as regulators we work with businesses, local authorities and government to identify and respond to risks in the food system as they emerge, and to keep food standards high.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Chapter references and explanatory notes

1. Our Food 2023: The annual review of food standards across the UK.

2. Consumer price inflation, UK - Office for National Statistics - December 2023.

3. ONS Consumer Price Inflation, UK, December 2024: Consumer price inflation, UK - Office for National Statistics.

4. The Food in Scotland Consumer Tracker monitors attitudes, knowledge and reported behaviours relating to food using a non-probability representative sample of Scotland's population. The survey is undertaken biannually in July and December. Wave 19 survey (covering 4th to 18th December 2024) comprised a 15-minute self-completed online survey covering 1009 Scottish adults (16+). Quota controls were used to guide sample selection for this study. This means that we cannot provide statistically precise margins of error or significance testing as the sampling type is non-probability. The margins of error outlined should therefore be treated as indicative, based on an equivalent probability sample. Margins of error calculated at the 95% confidence level (market research industry standard) are as between ±0.61% and ±3.06%. Further details are included in the technical appendix for Wave 19.

5. Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) - the Scottish Government's standard approach to identify areas of multiple deprivation in Scotland. SIMD looks at the extent to which an area is deprived across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing.

6. Social supermarket: A shop that sells 'waste' stock at low prices to people on low incomes who are struggling with food poverty: Social supermarkets | London City Hall.

7. The FSA Consumer Insights Tracker uses t-tests to assess differences over time and between groups, and highlights those where the p value is <0.05. Due to the quota sampling methodology used, the tests cannot be interpreted strictly. However, they do help to highlight where there is the greatest evidence of a shift in behaviour or attitudes. Further information on this approach can be found in the technical report.

8. Fieldwork for Food and You 2 Wave 8 was conducted between 12 October 2023 and 8 January 2024. A total of 1,377 adults (aged 16 years or over) from 954 households across Scotland completed the survey. Further details are provided in the methodology annex for Wave 8.

9. https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0686/POST-PN-0686.pdf

10. On average, overall intake of micro-nutrients was at or above the RNI except for zinc, which was below the RNI overall. However, in females 11 to 15 years old, vitamin A, folate, iron, calcium, magnesium, potassium, iodine and selenium intake were below the RNI. Likewise, in males 11 to 15 years old, vitamin A, iron, calcium, magnesium, potassium and selenium intake were below the RNI. Dietary Intake in Scotland's Children (DISH): An assessment of diets in children and young people aged 2 to 15 years living in Scotland, 2024.

11. Health Survey for England 2022 Part 1 — fruit and vegetable consumption (adult).

12. Mukunuwenna is a leafy green vegetable widely consumed in South and Southeast Asia and is often used in herbal medicine.

13. Responsibilities for maintaining food hygiene controls - in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Food Law Code of Practice, provides statutory guidance for local authorities enforcing food law, and the Feed Law Code of Practice provides statutory guidance for local feed authorities on enforcing animal feed law. In Scotland, the equivalent resources are provided by Food Standards Scotland (FSS). The Food Law Code of Practice (Scotland) and the Interventions Food Law Code of Practice (Scotland) 2019 offers statutory guidance and criteria for local authorities on enforcing food law.

14. Where food is manufactured that is not listed elsewhere in this table.

15. In Scotland, FHIS covers all food outlets that supply food to consumers. In England and Northern Ireland FHRS cover food businesses providing food to the final consumer, such as restaurants, pubs, cafés, takeaways, hospitals, schools, and care homes. In Wales, the scheme also covers business-to-business operations such as manufacturers. For full details, see Guidance on implementation and operation of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme: the Brand Standard and statutory guidance | Food Standards Agency and About the Food Hygiene Information Scheme | Food Standards Scotland.

16. Search for ratings | Food Hygiene Ratings.

17. Food Hygiene Information Scheme | Food Standards Scotland | Food Standards Scotland.

18. Approved meat establishments handle, prepare or produce products of animal origin for which requirements are laid down in assimilated EU Law 853/2004.

19. Latest poultry and poultry meat statistics - GOV.UK.

20. Latest cattle, sheep and pig slaughter statistics - GOV.UK.

21. FSS uses audit cycles where each meat establishment receives a series of interventions (minimum 3) over a 12-month period. These include both announced and unannounced inspections, more information can be found here Chapter 4 Audit v0.3. FSA use a risk based inspection scheme where the frequency of interventions depends on the risk of a meat establishment, more information can be found here Auditing approved meat establishments | Food Standards Agency.

22. Explanation of hygiene compliance for meat establishment rating categories.

23. Latest statistics on milk utilisation by dairies - national statistics - GOV.UK.

24. Primary production refers to the primary production of milk on farms—the keeping of cows (and other animals such as goats, sheep etc.) for the production of milk for human consumption.

25. In Scotland, FSS has no direct enforcement role for dairy hygiene, which is instead the responsibility of 32 Scottish local authorities who hold this data. Scottish dairy farms are also lower risk from not selling raw milk to consumers.

26. Although records began in 2008/09, the dataset was incomplete and in addition certain standards must be met to report data as official statistics, which occurred in 2010/11.

27. Allocated resourcing is the total amount of full-time equivalent posts that exist within the local authorities.

28. Workforce data is sent from local authorities to the FSA every six months: at the middle and end of a financial year. Half-year returns give us good indications of the workforce, however, full conclusions and comparability between years cannot be fully assessed until financial year end.

29. The FSA recognises that FTE data supplied by local authorities will often be educated estimates. The local authority returns from some reporting periods will have undergone more correction following accuracy checks than others. Additionally, not all local authority submissions will have been submitted on time. For data based in 2019/20, 98% of total food hygiene data was submitted. For Oct 2024, we have 99.7% of food hygiene and 98.9% food standards returns.

30. Unavailable resource means that the FTE may be diverted away from food duties and are covering other duties for the local authority for example, dealing with flooding.

31. Compliance assessments are carried out at a range of businesses. These include manufacturers and packers, importers and exporters, distributors and transporters, retailers, restaurants and caterers. In each case, the establishment's level of compliance is assessed against a range of criteria, including how food is handled, stored, and prepared, the cleanliness of facilities and how food safety is managed. The criteria for assessment may vary across the nations and are carried out in line with the relevant Food Law Codes of Practice.

32. Available FTE covers fully qualified staff, regulatory support officers and trainee officer posts for staff working towards a 'suitable qualification' and who can carry out certain tasks. In the past year local authorities have reported an increase in the number of trainees recruited in both responsibilities. It will take time for this additional resource to have an impact on service delivery as these trainees work towards become fully professionalised.

33. The RRC methodology can be found here FSS/ENF/20/011 - COVID-19 - LA Food Law Intervention Recovery Process | Food Standards Scotland.

34. The figures for 2016, 2018, and 2019 were compiled from questionnaires from the FSS audit branch. The 2021 figures were gathered as part of the COVID-19 restart process, and the 2024 figures were compiled from the Scottish National Database (SND).

35. Local Authority Performance Update | Food Standards Agency.

36. In Wales, the scheme also covers business-to-business operations such as manufacturers that fall under the remit of local authorities.

37. Full inspections data is gathered from local authorities every six months which is reported to the FSA business committee, as well as an annual update provided to the FSA board.

38. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2017/625/article/148.

39. Under assimilated Regulation (EU) 2017/625, abattoirs must have an OV present to function legally, making their recruitment and retention a priority.

40. United Kingdom Food Security Report 2024: Theme 3: Food Supply Chain Resilience - GOV.UK.

41. The number of incidents presented in this report excludes 240 cases notified in 2024 of Bluetongue disease, which has no known direct public health or food safety implications. Bluetongue is a notifiable viral disease that primarily affects ruminants such as sheep, cattle, goats, and deer, and it is transmitted by biting midges of certain *Culicoides* species. FSA records notifiable diseases in food-producing animals to record FSA activities undertaken in response to the confirmation of disease, for example, confirmation whether there are FSA-approved slaughterhouses within the control zones. With Bluetongue cases included, there was a 11% increase (1,935 to 2,143) in the number of notified incidents between 2023 and 2024.

42. This refers to veterinary medicines containing pharmacologically active substances which may leave residues in food products derived from treated animals.

43. This refers to the absence or failure to implement adequate food safety management procedures to ensure compliance with food safety and food standards. Some examples include incidents related to concerns over temperature controls and poor hygiene during processing or transport of meat and meat products.

44. These refer to foods designated for carbohydrate, lipid, protein, vitamin, and other metabolism correction that may be modified in content levels or ratio or have added ingredients. Some examples include infant formula, meal replacement or protein shakes and sports nutrition products.

45. Novel foods are any food that was not used for human consumption to a significant degree within the United Kingdom or the European Union before 15 May 1997. This means that the foods do not have a 'history of consumption'. These include newly developed, innovative foods, traditional foods eaten elsewhere in the world, and foods produced from new processes. Some examples are edible insects, chia seeds and UV-treated foods. The authorisation process is set out on the FSA website.

46. https://science.food.gov.uk/article/126077.

47. FSS mirrored 29 of the 31 follow-ups published by the FSA due to relevance for Scottish consumers.

48. The threshold for foreign material content, including other leaf types, for all classes/grades of dried oregano is 0.1% (Codex Standard for Dried Oregano CXS 342-2021).

49. In three of the olive oil samples, the tests indicated the presence of peroxides, which are unstable compounds formed when the oil reacts with oxygen. Fresh oils have a low peroxide value, but as oil ages or becomes rancid, the peroxide value will increase meaning that the product is not fresh. For more information: assimilated Commission Regulation (EEC) No 2568/91 of 11 July 1991 on the characteristics of olive oil and olive-residue oil and on the relevant methods of analysis.

50. In this case, the olive oil sample did not meet the prescribed fatty acid composition for extra virgin olive oil.

51. The fat content must be no less than 3.5% for whole milk and between 1.5% and 1.8% for semi-skimmed milk (The Drinking Milk (England) Regulations 2008).

52. To assess the potential for allergic consumers to be exposed to milk due to cross-contamination.

53. To assess the potential for allergic consumers to be exposed to egg due to cross-contamination.

54. The reference level of milk protein recommended by the VITAL (Voluntary Incidental Trace Allergen Labelling) Scientific Expert Panel at the time of the analysis was 0.2 mg/portion (VITAL 3.0, 2019). This is the dose that would elicit an allergic reaction in 1% of individuals with milk allergy.

55. The reference level of egg protein recommended by the VITAL (Voluntary Incidental Trace Allergen Labelling) Scientific Expert Panel at the time of the analysis was 0.2 mg/portion (VITAL 3.0, 2019). This is the dose that would elicit an allergic reaction in 1% of individuals with egg allergy.

56. The maximum limit for lead is 0.1mg/kg for poultry meat as defined in Annex I of assimilated Commission Regulation (EC) 1881/2006 and was used for reference only.

57. A full description of the seven different types of food crime, as described by the FSA, can be found on the FSA website.

58. The Cost of Food Crime Phase 2 - Executive Summary | Food Standards Agency.

59. UK Food Security Report 2024: Theme 5 (Food Safety and Consumer Confidence) — 5.25 Food Crime.

60. The latest Food Crime Strategic Assessment produced by NFCU and SFCIU was published in 2024 and outlines threats from food crime to the UK.

61. As with investigations, disruption numbers cannot be used to draw cause-effect relationships on levels of food crime as many offences go unreported. Accurate year-on-year comparisons also cannot be drawn as different factors, such as legal proceedings or increased public awareness, can affect recording patterns.

62. These are substances sold as food that should not be marketed as such due to their harmful nature. An example is DNP (of 2,4-Dinitrophenol), a toxic chemical marketed illegally as a fat burner.

63. A smokie is a food prepared by the illegal process of blowtorching the fleece from the unskinned carcass of a sheep or goat and carries a significant risk to public health due to the nature of the product and production method increasing the risk of harmful microorganisms being present.

64. Food Fraud Resilience Self-Assessment tool developed by NFCU to provide support, guidance and advice to food business on food fraud.

65. The Food Crime Risk Profiling Tool is an online self-assessment tool designed to help food businesses identify their vulnerabilities to food crime and receive tailored guidance to reduce those risks.

66. For safety reasons, meat classified as animal by-product can never be placed back into the human food chain.

67. https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03336/SN03336.pdf

68. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024/united-kingdom-food-security-report-2024-theme-4-food-security-at-household-level#healthy-diet.

Appendix 2: Glossary of terms

Term	Explanation
Aflatoxins	A toxic compound produced by certain moulds found in food, which can cause liver damage and cancer.
Allergens	There are 14 allergens declarable by law, but consumers may be allergic or have intolerance to other foods or ingredients.
BSE Crisis	The BSE Crisis refers to the outbreak of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) — commonly known as mad cow disease — in the UK during the 1980s and 1990s.
Cell-cultivated products	These are foods made by growing animal or plant cells in a controlled environment—without slaughter or traditional farming—to produce items like meat, seafood, or eggs.
Climate change	Climate change is the long-term shift in average weather patterns across the world, primarily driven by human activities like burning fossil fuels, which increase greenhouse gas concentrations and lead to global warming.
CPIH	CPIH stands for Consumer Price Inflation including owner-occupiers' Housing costs and is the UK's leading measure of inflation produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). It is measured by looking at the average change over time in the prices paid by consumers for a basket of consumer goods and services, including owners' and occupiers' housing costs and council tax.
Crimestoppers	Crimestoppers is an independent UK charity that allows people to report crime anonymously.

Term	Explanation
Dietetic foods, food supplements and fortified food	Dietetic foods: specially formulated foods intended to meet specific dietary needs due to a particular physical or physiological condition (e.g. gluten-free or low-protein foods) as recognised under UK and EU food law. Food supplements: products taken to supplement the normal diet, typically containing concentrated sources of nutrients or other substances with a nutritional or physiological effect (e.g. vitamins, minerals, amino acids). Fortified foods: foods that have had nutrients added to them that do not naturally occur in significant amounts, such as adding vitamin D to margarine or iron to breakfast cereals.
Disruptions	A recently implemented measure of food crime interventions which stop or reduce the opportunity for food crime offending and, in doing so, increase UK food security by ensuring food is safe.
Eatwell Guide	The Eatwell Guide is the UK government's official tool for promoting a healthy, balanced diet, showing the proportions of different food groups people should aim to eat over time.
E. coli	*Escherichia coli* is a type of bacteria that can be found in the intestines of animals and humans. Some strains can cause serious illness in humans.
EU Exit	The EU Exit refers to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, formally completed on 31 January 2020, following a public referendum and the enactment of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.
Food Industry Intelligence Network	The Food Industry Intelligence Network is a UK collaboration between industry and government that shares data and intelligence to help detect and prevent food fraud, supporting food authenticity and safety across the supply chain.
Foodborne disease	Foodborne disease refers to illnesses caused by consuming food contaminated with harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites, or chemicals, with common examples including infections from *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, and *E. coli*.

Term	Explanation
Free from	Denoting or relating to food products that do not contain ingredients known to cause a reaction in people with food allergies or intolerances.
Free trade agreements	Trade agreements set out the rules that cover trade between two or more countries. They aim to make trading easier between those countries. They do this by reducing the restrictions on imports and exports between them.
Full-time equivalents (FTE)	A standardised metric for gauging the workload of employees or students, facilitating the comparison of workloads in diverse settings.
Genetically modified	Produced from organisms that have had their genes altered to introduce traits not created through natural selection.
Geopolitical conflict	Geopolitical conflict refers to tensions or confrontations between nations or blocs over power, influence, territory, or ideology.
Good Food Nation Plan	The Good Food Nation Plan is a Scottish Government strategy that sets out long-term goals for creating a healthier, fairer, and more sustainable food system, with coordinated actions across health, environment, and the economy.
Health inequalities	Health inequalities are unfair and avoidable differences in health outcomes between different groups in society.
High-risk businesses	In the UK, high-risk food businesses are those that pose a greater potential threat to public health due to the nature of their food handling, history of non-compliance, or complexity of operations, and are therefore inspected more frequently by local authorities under a risk-based model.
Horizon scanning	Horizon scanning is the process of identifying signals of change, emerging trends, and potential risks or opportunities to inform strategic planning, policy, and regulatory decisions in the UK food system.
Horsemeat incident	The horsemeat incident was a major UK and EU food fraud crisis in 2013, where undeclared horse DNA was found in products labelled as beef, prompting widespread recalls, regulatory reforms, and a renewed focus on food traceability and authenticity.

Term	Explanation
Household food insecurity	A term used to describe households that are without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.
HRFNAO	HRFNAO refers to certain plant-based foods and feeds that pose a higher risk to public health—such as due to contamination with mycotoxins, pesticides, or pathogens—and are subject to enhanced import controls when entering the UK.
Hypersensitive/ Hypersensitivity	Food hypersensitivity refers to an adverse physical reaction to certain foods, including food allergies (immune response), food intolerances (digestive issues), and coeliac disease (autoimmune reaction to gluten), all of which can affect health and quality of life.
Illegal processing	A term used to describe the slaughter, preparation or processing of products of animal origin outside of the relevant regulatory framework.
Listeria	*Listeria monocytogenes (listeria)* is a foodborne bacterium that causes an illness called listeriosis.
Memorandum of understanding	A memorandum of understanding is a formal, non-legally binding agreement between two or more parties that outlines shared intentions, responsibilities, and cooperation on specific objectives or activities, often used in government, education, and international relations.
Microbiological contamination	The unintentional introduction of microbial agents such as bacteria, viruses or parasites.
Micronutrient deficiencies	Micronutrients are vitamins and minerals needed by the body in very small amounts. However, their impact on a body's health are critical, and deficiency in any of them can cause severe and even life-threatening conditions.
National dietary health guidelines	The UK's national dietary health guidelines are primarily represented by the Eatwell Guide, which is the official government tool for promoting a healthy, balanced diet.
National Preparedness Commission	The National Preparedness Commission is a UK-based initiative that brings together leaders from government, business, academia, and civil society to improve the nation's resilience and preparedness for major risks and emergencies.

Term	Explanation
PATH-SAFE	The Pathogen Surveillance in Agriculture, Food and Environment (PATH-SAFE) programme was a £24m Shared Outcomes Fund (SOF) research programme which aimed to develop a national surveillance network, using the latest DNA-sequencing technology and environmental sampling to improve the detection, and tracking of foodborne human pathogens and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) through the whole agri-food system from farm-to-fork.
Propionic acid (a preservative)	Propionic acid is a food preservative (E280) used to inhibit mould and bacterial growth, particularly in baked goods and cheese. While generally recognised as safe at approved levels, excessive consumption may cause gastrointestinal irritation or disrupt gut microbiota in sensitive individuals.
Ochratoxin A	Ochratoxin A is a mycotoxin produced by several species of fungi such as Aspergillus and Penicillium, that can contaminate food crops like cereals, coffee, and dried fruit, especially during poor storage conditions. Long-term exposure has been linked to kidney damage and potential carcinogenic effects.
Official controls	Generally meaning inspections, enforcement, advice and guidance that are required in law or government guidance.
Oilcake	Oilcake is the remaining residue after the oil is removed from an oilseed (e.g. soya bean). It is rich in protein and a valuable animal feed.
Pathogen	Pathogenic microorganisms are tiny organisms that can cause diseases. They include viruses, bacteria, fungi, and protists. These pathogens can infect humans, animals, and plants, and can spread in various ways, such as through air, water, or direct contact. When they enter a host, they can reproduce and release toxins that harm the host and cause illness.

Term	Explanation
Pentachlorophenol and dioxins	Pentachlorophenol is a synthetic chemical once widely used as a pesticide and wood preservative, now restricted due to its toxicity and persistence in the environment. Dioxins are a group of highly toxic environmental pollutants formed as by-products in industrial processes and combustion. Long-term exposure to dioxins—mainly through food—can affect the immune and reproductive systems and is linked to cancer and developmental problems.
Precision-bred organisms	Precision-bred organisms are plants or animals whose genetic makeup has been altered using modern biotechnology techniques like gene editing, in a way that could also occur through traditional breeding methods, without introducing foreign DNA.
Salmonella	Salmonellas are a group of common bacteria that cause food poisoning. They are usually spread by inadequate cooking and through cross-contamination. Salmonella infection (salmonellosis) is a common bacterial disease that affects the intestinal tract. Salmonella bacteria typically live in animal and human intestines and are shed through faeces. Humans become infected most frequently through contaminated water or food.
Sampling	Sampling is the taking of a product to check that it is up to the standard needed. This may include being safe, of the desired standard, or that labelling is correct. It is undertaken to support enforcement, as part of business checks, and for research and surveillance purposes.
Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement	An SPS agreement sets out rules and standards between countries for protecting human, animal, and plant health in relation to traded goods, including food and live animals, by managing biosecurity risks through inspections, certifications, and import controls.
Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)	The Scottish Government's standard approach to identify areas of multiple deprivation in Scotland. SIMD looks at the extent to which an area is deprived across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing.

Term	Explanation
Service Level Agreement	A Service Level Agreement (SLA) is a formal contract between a service provider and a customer that defines the expected level of service, performance metrics, responsibilities, and remedies for non-compliance.
‘Smokies’	A ‘smokie’ is a food prepared by the illegal process of blowtorching the fleece from the unskinned carcass of a sheep of goat.
Socio-economic background	Socio-economic background refers to the social and economic circumstances in which a person is raised, typically including factors like parental occupation, education, income, and housing. It influences life outcomes such as education, employment, and health.
Ultra processed foods	Ultra processed foods are products made using industrial techniques and ingredients not typically found in home kitchens (e.g. emulsifiers, preservatives). Examples include fizzy drinks, packaged snacks, and ready meals.

Appendix 3: Table of figures

Chapter 1: The nation's plate

Chapter 2: Going global

Chapter 3: Keeping it clean

Chapter 3: Keeping it clean

Chapter 4: Safety and authenticity

Chapter 4: Safety and authenticity

Nation-specific data (Annex 5)

Nation-specific data (Annex 5)

Appendix 4: List of acronyms

Acronym	Phrase
BSE	Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
BTOM	Border Target Operating Model
CBD	Cannabidiol
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CPIH	Consumer Price Inflation including owner-occupiers' housing costs
CPTPP	Comprehensive Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DISH	Dietary Intake in Scotland's Children
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
DNP	2,4 Dinitrophenol
EAEVE	European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education
EHO	Environmental Health Officer
ETIP	Enhanced Trade and Investment Partnership
EU	European Union
FAFA	Food Alert for Action
FHIS	Food Hygiene Information Scheme
FHRS	Food Hygiene Rating Scheme
FLRS	Food Law Rating Scheme
FNAO	Food Not of Animal Origin
FSA	Food Standards Agency
FSS	Food Standards Scotland
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
FTE	Full-time equivalent

Acronym	Phrase
GB	Great Britain
HIN	Hygiene Improvement Notice
HMRC	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs
HRFNAO	High-Risk Food Not of Animal Origin
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IPA	Isopropanol (isopropyl alcohol)
LA	Local Authority
LAEMS	Local Authority Enforcement Monitoring System
MHI	Meat Hygiene Inspector
NFCU	National Food Crime Unit
NHS	National Health Service
NI	Northern Ireland
OA	Official Auxiliary
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OV	Official Veterinarian
PATH-SAFE	Pathogen Surveillance in Agriculture, Food and Environment
POAO	Product of Animal Origin
PRIN	Product Recall Information Notice
RCVS	Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
RNI	Reference Nutrient Intake
RRC	Required Resource Calculation
SAFER	Scottish Authority Food Enforcement Re-Build programme
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
SoCOEHS	Society of Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland

Acronym	Phrase
SFCIU	Scottish Food Crime and Incidents Unit
SND	Scottish National Database
STEC	Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli*
TRNOVs	Temporary Registered Novice OVs
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
UV	Ultraviolet (light)
VITAL	Voluntary Incidental Trace Allergen Labelling

Appendix 5: Nation specific data

Figure 48: The top prompted concerns for consumers in England

Rank	Top concerns and percentage of respondents July 2023	Top concerns and percentage of respondents January 2024	Top concerns and percentage of respondents July 2024
1	Food prices (73%)	Food prices (69%)	Food prices (70%)
2	Food Waste (58%)	The quality of food (65%)	Food waste (59%)
3	The quality of food (56%) The amount of food packaging (56%) The amount of sugar in food (56%)	Food waste (64%)	The quality of food (58%)
4	Being able to eat healthily (50%)	The amount of sugar in food (58%)	The amount of sugar in food (57%)
5	Animal welfare (48%) Food hygiene when ordering takeaways (48%) Food hygiene when eating out (48%)	The amount of food packaging (56%)	The amount of food packaging (55%)

Source: FSA Food and You 2 Survey, England, Wave 7 (based on research conducted from April to July 2023), Wave 8 (October 2023 to January 2024) and Wave 9 (April to July 2024)

Figure 49: The top prompted concerns for consumers in Wales

Rank	Top concerns and percentage of respondents July 2023	Top concerns and percentage of respondents January 2024	Top concerns and percentage of respondents July 2024
1	Food prices (73%)	Food prices (68%)	Food prices (68%)
2	Food Waste (61%)	The quality of food (61%)	The amount of food packaging (58%)
3	The quality of food (59%)	Food waste (60%)	The quality of food (57%)
4	The amount of food packaging (57%)	The amount of food packaging (57%)	Food waste (55%)
5	Animal welfare (56%) The amount of sugar in food (56%)	The amount of sugar in food (56%)	Food hygeine when eating out (54%) The amount of sugar in food (54%)

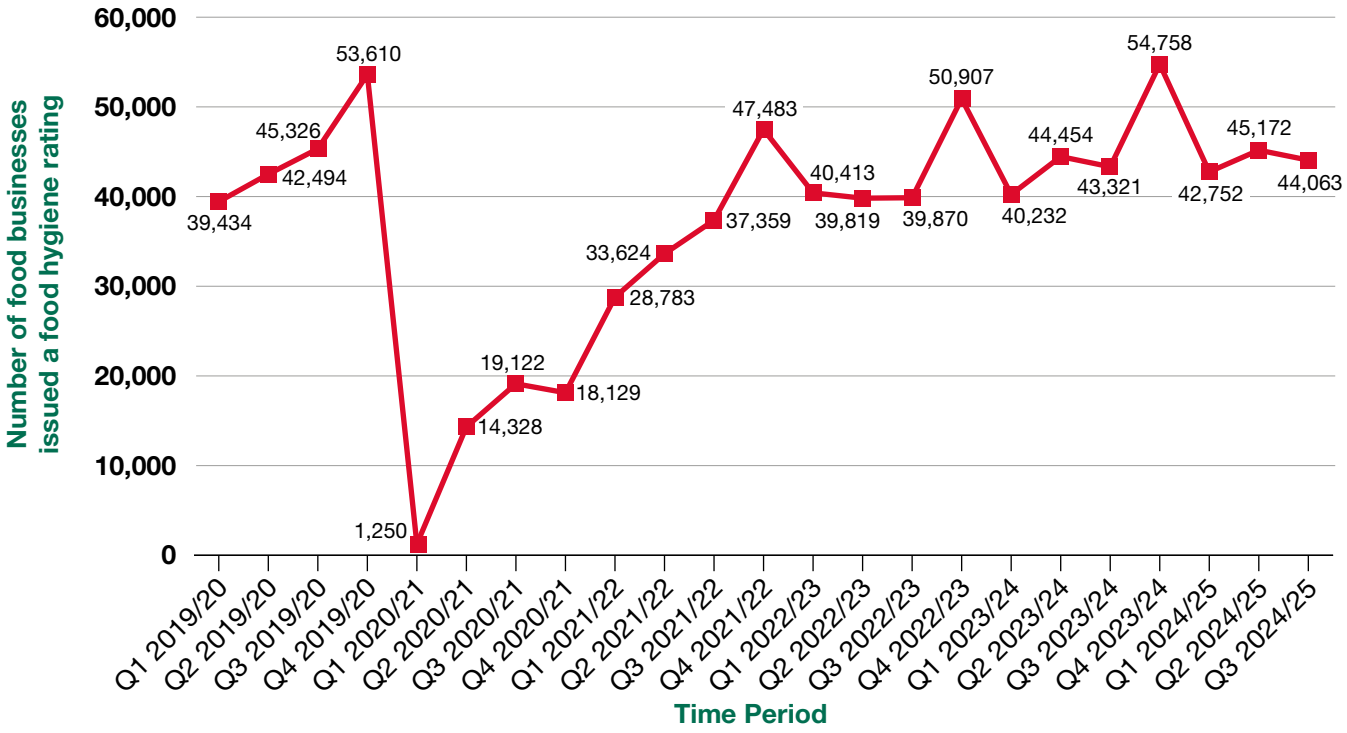
Source: FSA Food and You 2 Survey, Wales, Wave 7 (based on research conducted from April to July 2023), Wave 8 (October 2023 to January 2024) and Wave 9 (April to July 2024)

Figure 50: The top prompted concerns for consumers in Northern Ireland

Rank	Top concerns and percentage of respondents July 2023	Top concerns and percentage of respondents January 2024	Top concerns and percentage of respondents July 2024
1	Food prices (67%)	Food prices (67%)	Food prices (68%)
2	Food Waste (56%)	The quality of food (64%)	The quality of food (56%)
3	The quality of food (52%) The amount of food packaging (52%)	Food waste (55%) The amount of sugar in food (55%)	The amount of sugar in food (54%)
4	The amount of sugar in food (51%)	Food poisoning e.g., salmonella and E.coli (52%)	Food waste (51%) Food hygiene when eating out (51%)
5	The amount of food packaging (50%)	The amount of salt in food (49%)	Food hygiene when ordering takeaways (49%)

Source: FSA Food and You 2 Survey, Northern Ireland, Wave 7 (based on research conducted from April to July 2023), Wave 8 (October 2023 to January 2024) and Wave 9 (April to July 2024)

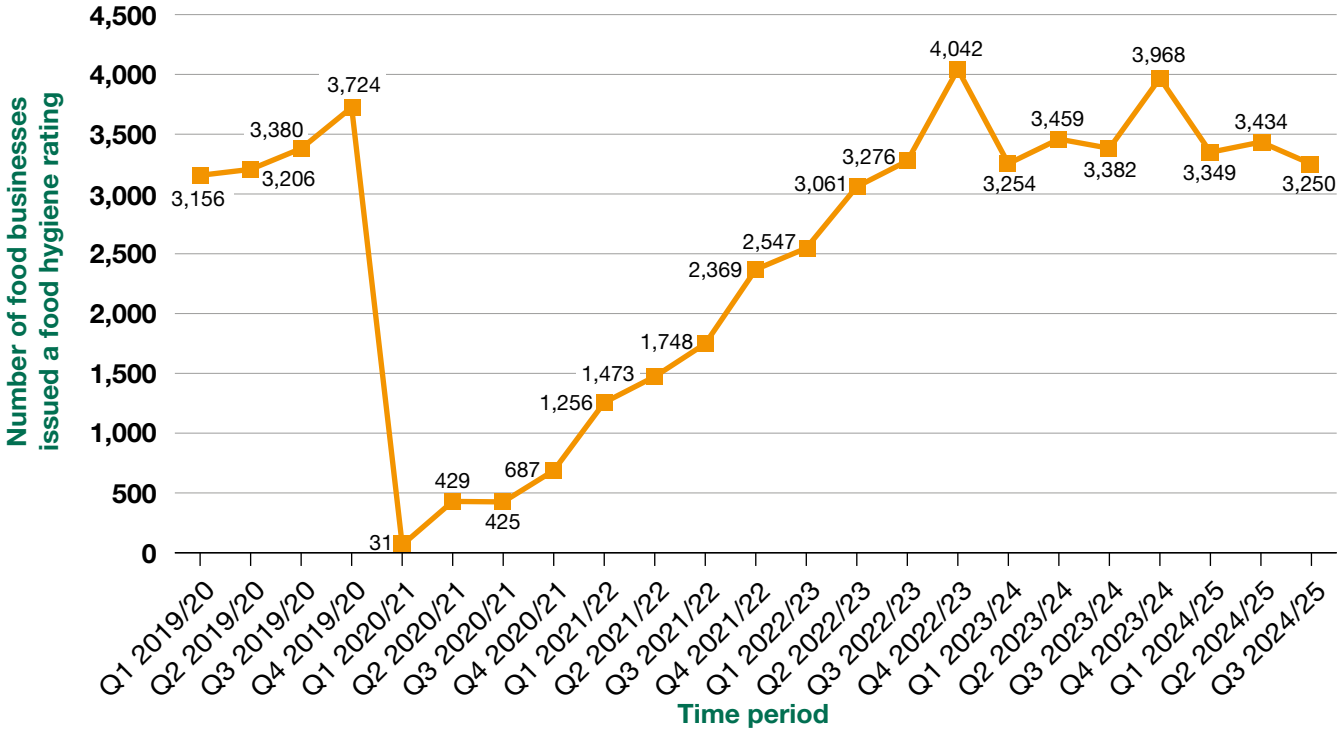
Figure 51: Number of food businesses issued a food hygiene rating by quarter for England from 2019/20 to 2024/25



Notes: Q1 — April, May, June; Q2 — July, August, September; Q3 — October, November, December; Q4 — January, February, March.

Source: FSA — FHRS data

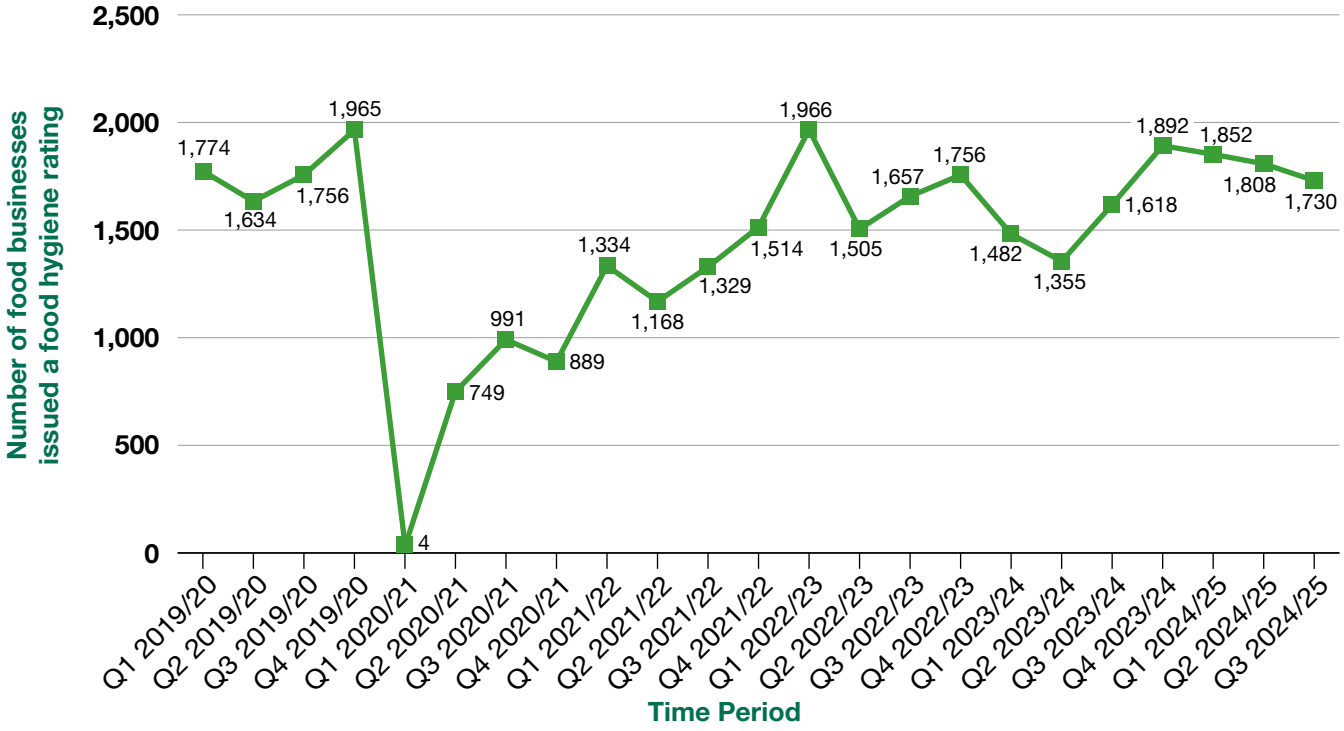
Figure 52: Number of food businesses issued a food hygiene rating by quarter for Wales from 2019/20 to 2024/25



Note: Q1 — April, May, June; Q2 — July, August, September; Q3 — October, November, December; Q4 — January, February, March.

Source: FSA — FHRS data

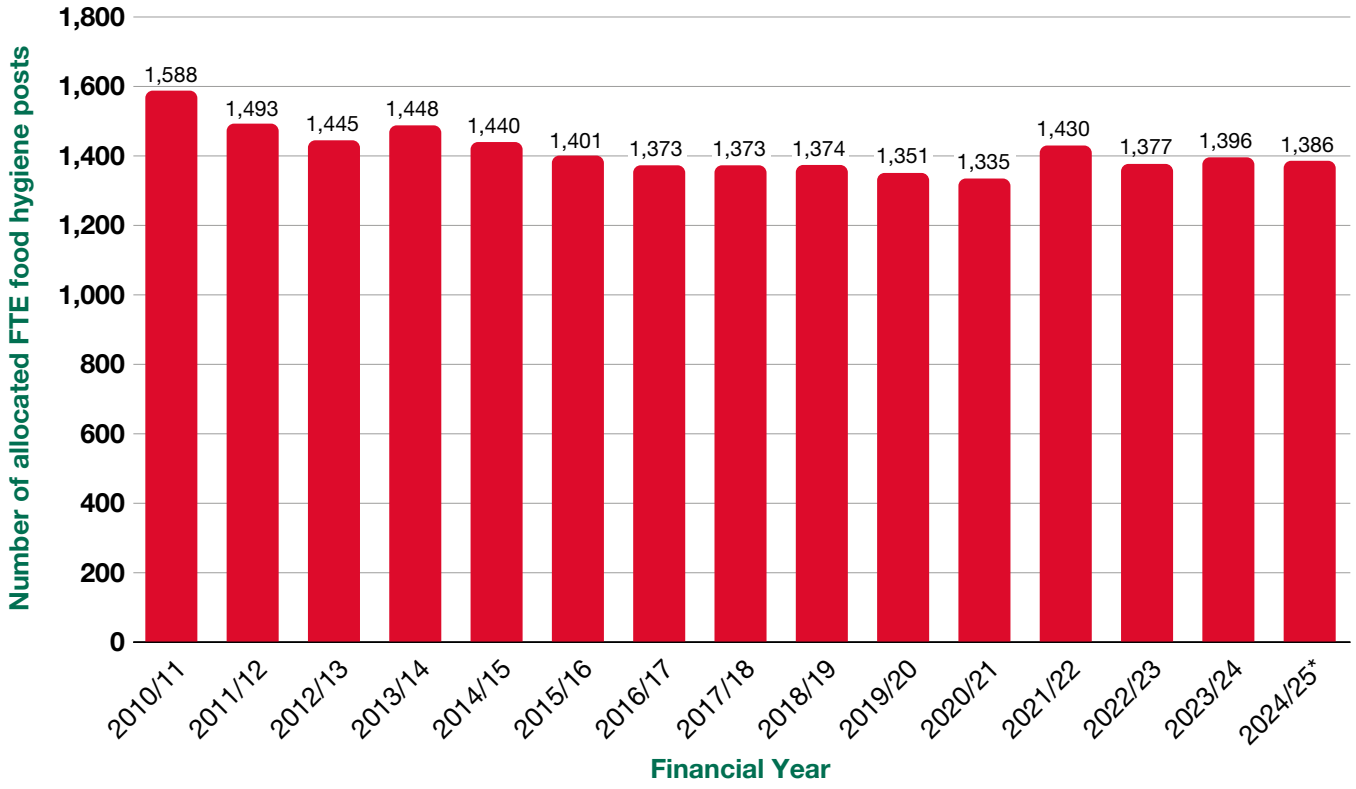
Figure 53: Number of food businesses issued a food hygiene rating by quarter for Northern Ireland from 2019/20 to 2024/25



Note: Q1 — April, May, June; Q2 — July, August, September; Q3 — October, November, December; Q4 — January, February, March.

Source: FSA — FHRS data

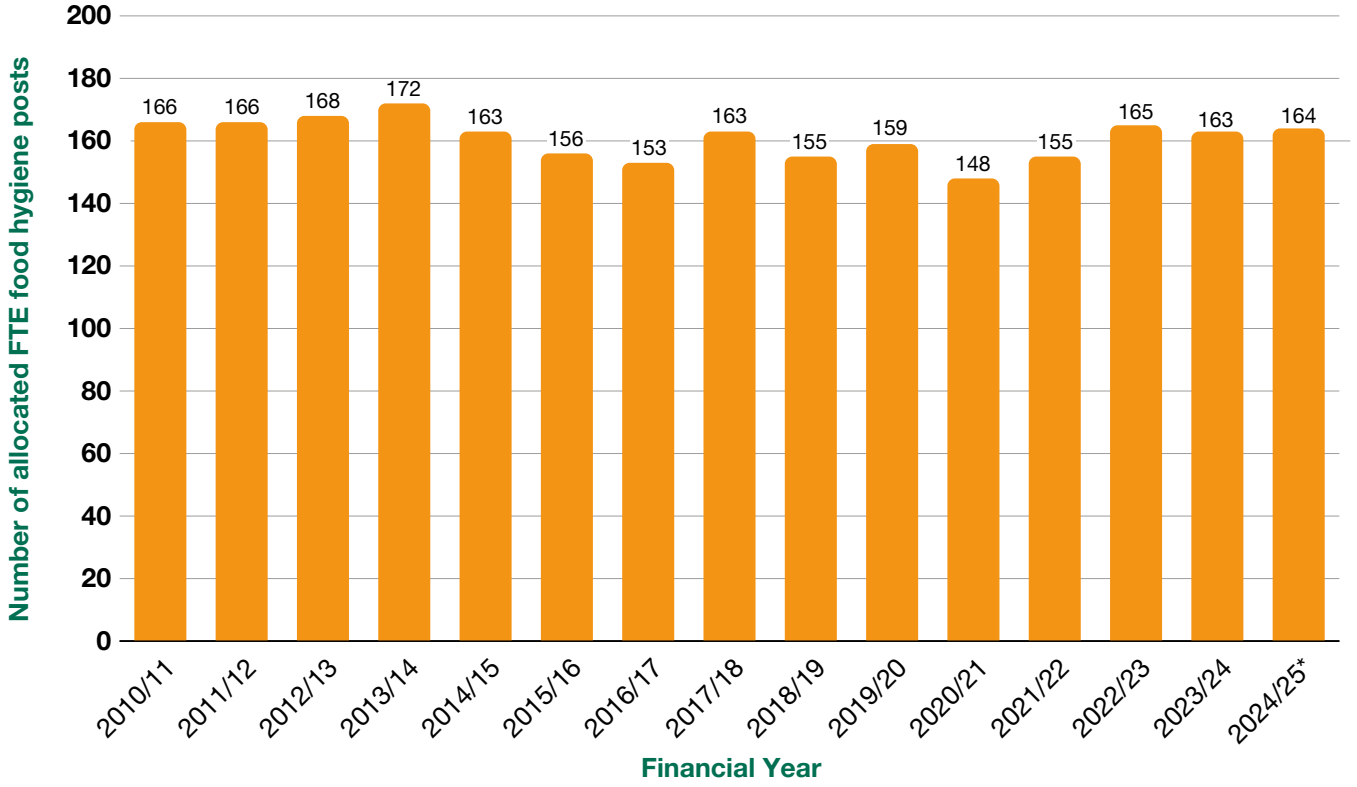
Figure 54: Number of allocated food hygiene full-time equivalent posts in local authorities across England



Note: An asterisk (*) denotes a half year.

FSA — LAEMS/Local authority self-reported FTE data (LAEMS up to 31 March 2020)

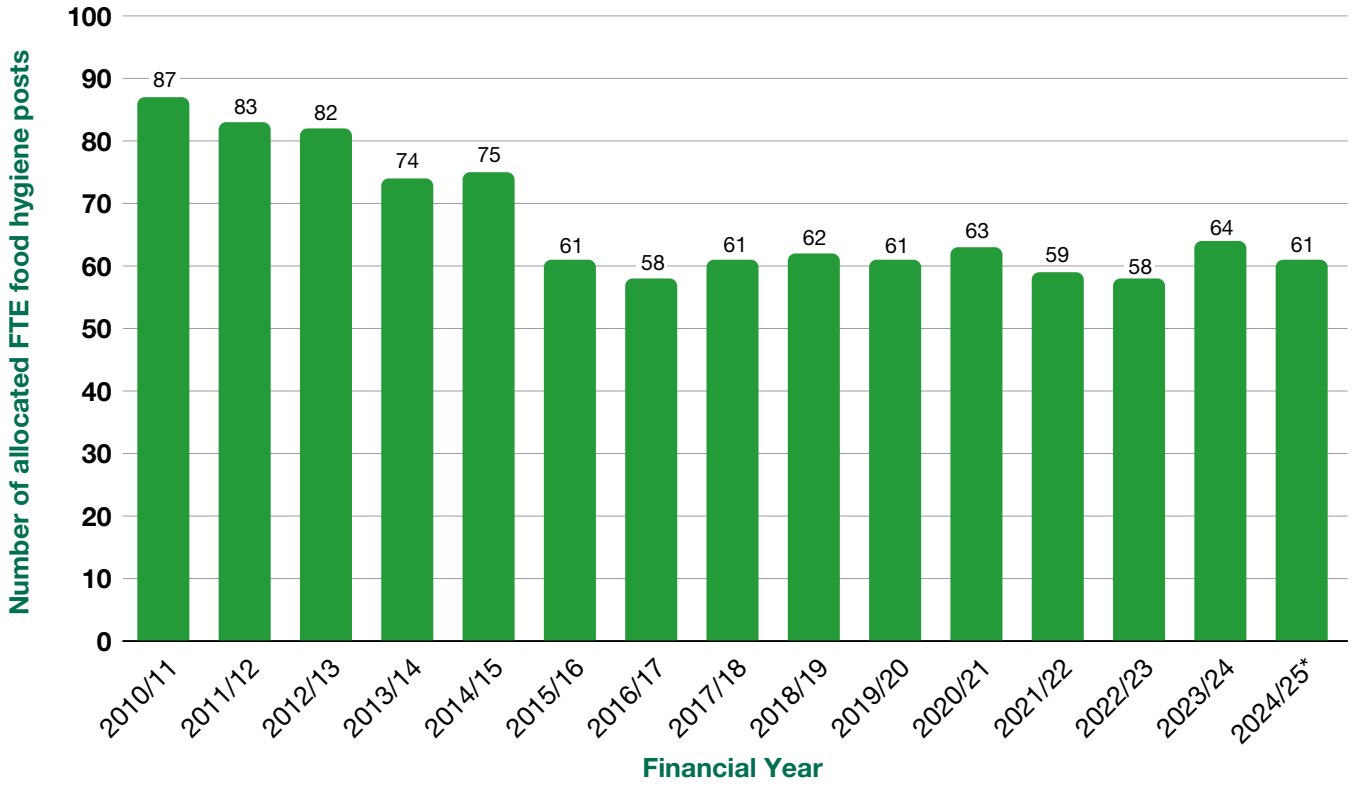
Figure 55: Number of allocated food hygiene full-time equivalent posts in local authorities across Wales



Note: An asterisk (*) denotes a half year.

Source: FSA — LAEMS/Local authority self-reported FTE data (LAEMS up to 31 March 2020)

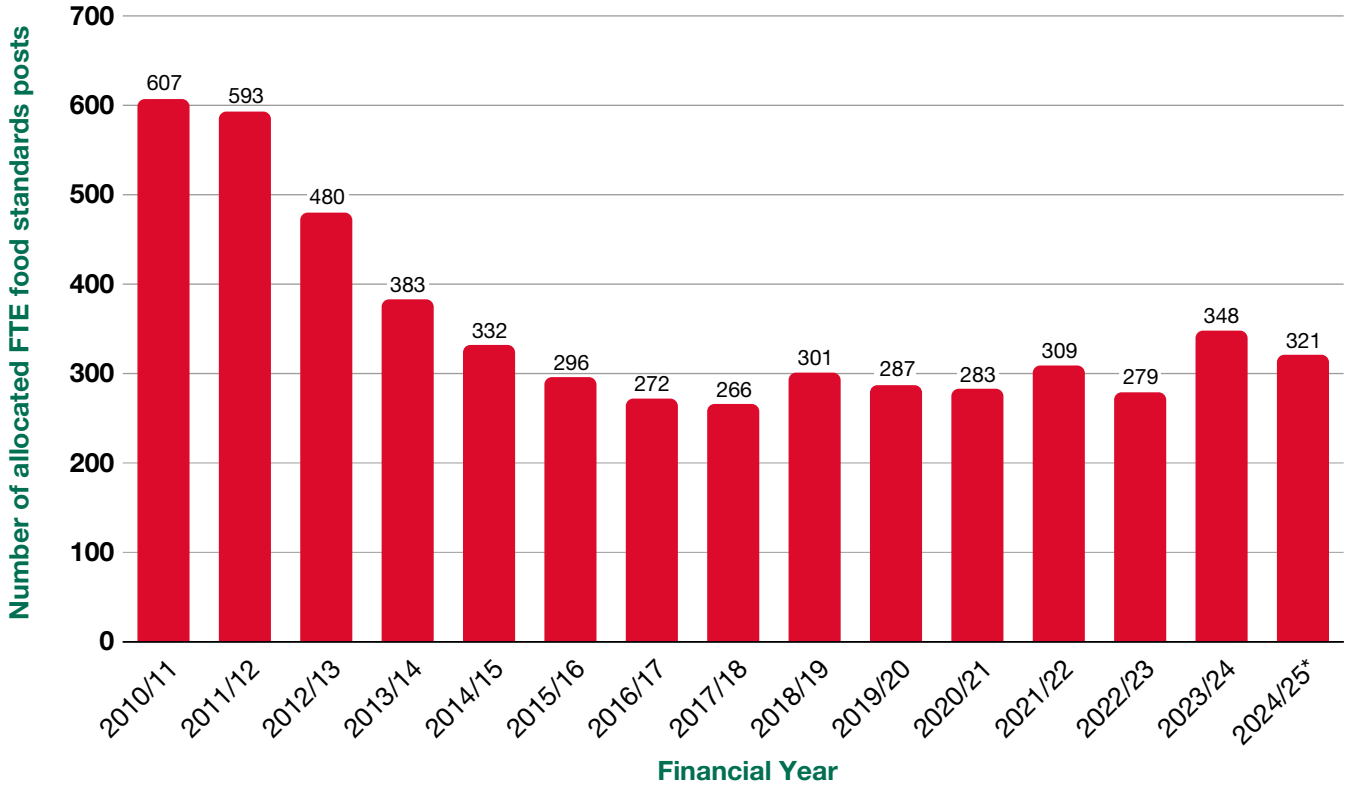
Figure 56: Number of allocated food hygiene full-time equivalent posts in local authorities across Northern Ireland



Note: An asterisk (*) denotes a half year.

Source: FSA — LAEMS/Local authority self-reported FTE data (LAEMS up to 31 March 2020)

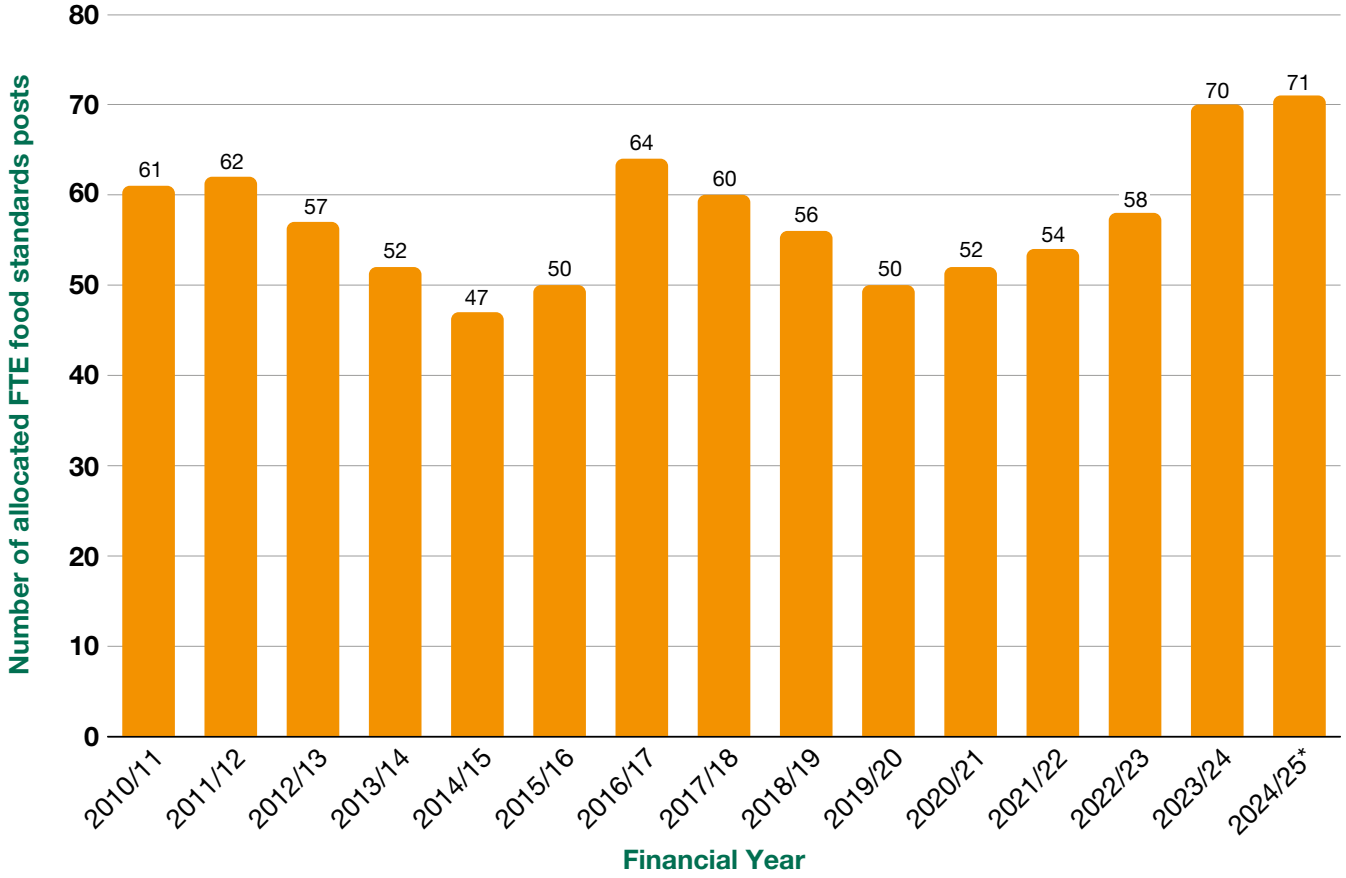
Figure 57: Number of allocated food standards full-time equivalent posts in local authorities across England



Note: An asterisk (*) denotes a half year return.

Source: FSA — LAEMS/Local authority self-reported FTE data (LAEMS up to 31 March 2020)

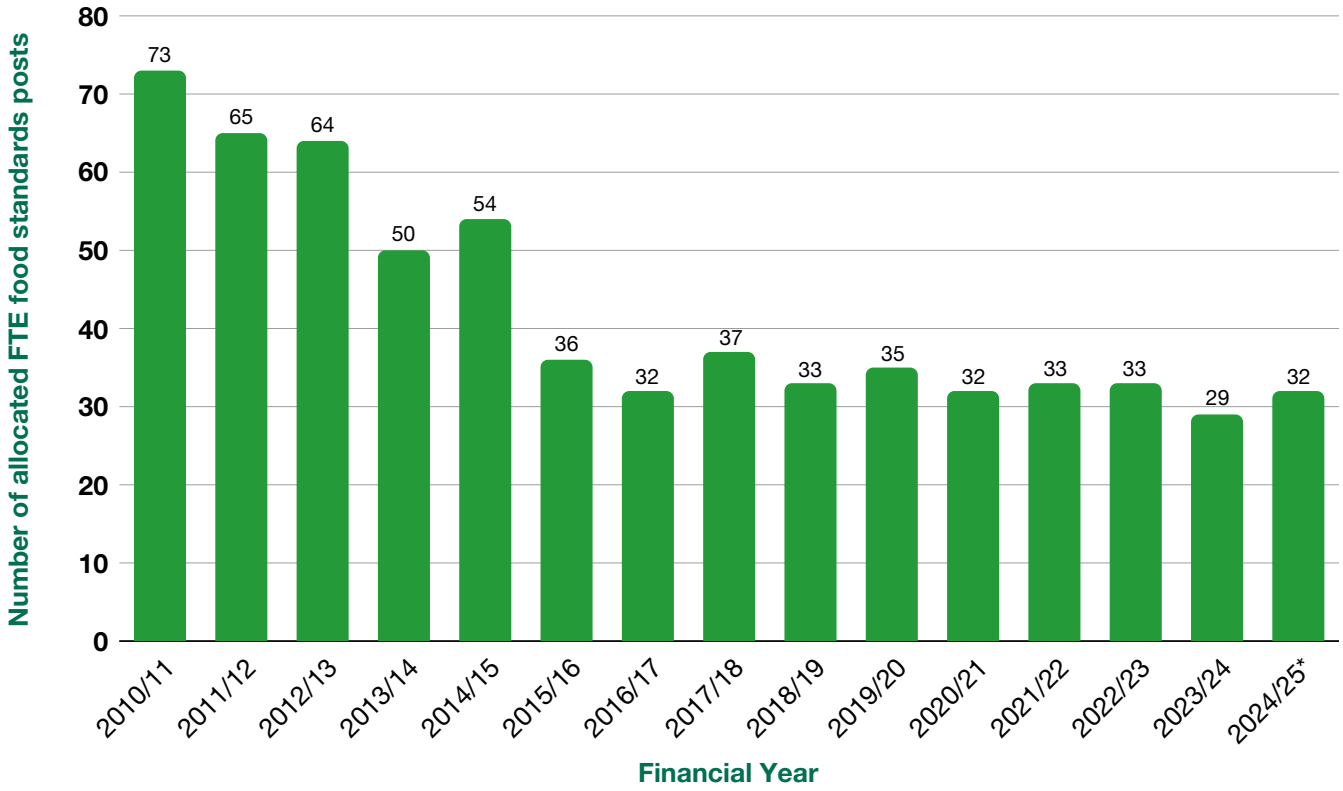
Figure 58: Number of allocated food standards full-time equivalent posts in local authorities across Wales



Note: An asterisk (*) denotes a half year return.

Source: FSA — LAEMS/Local authority self-reported FTE data (LAEMS up to 31 March 2020)

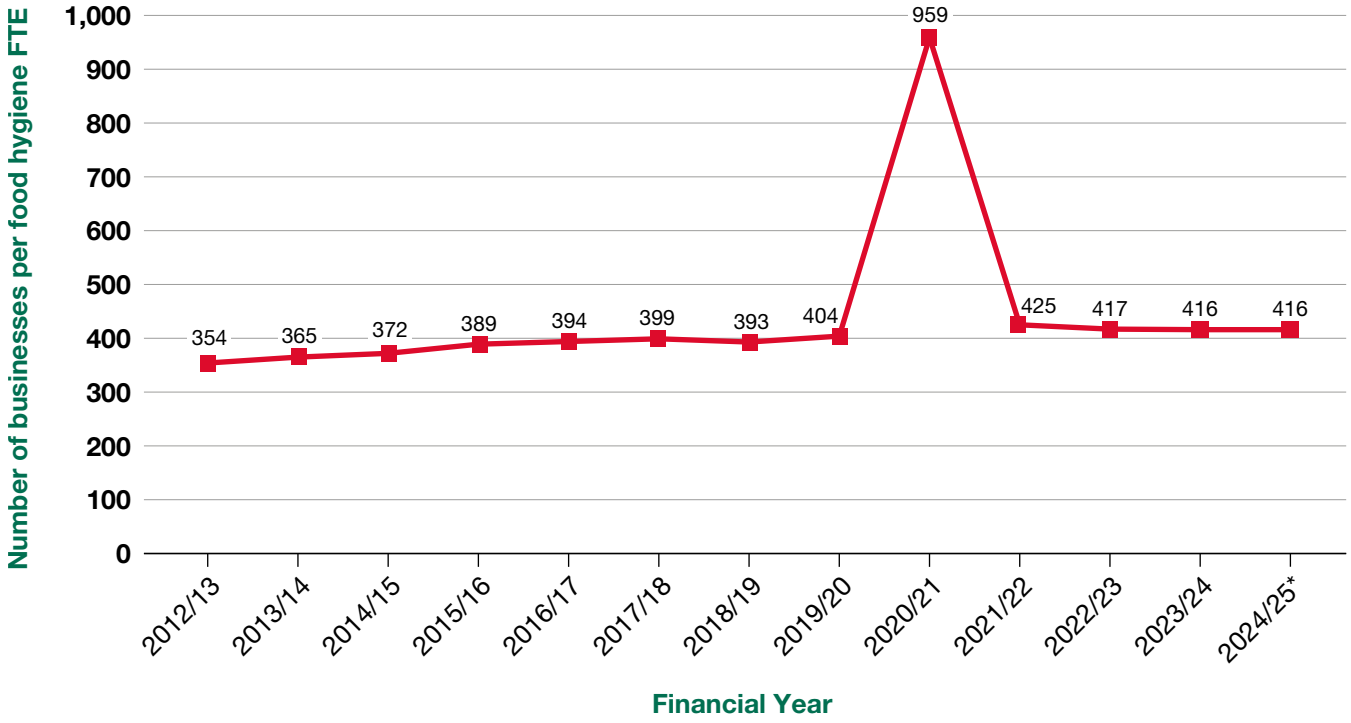
Figure 59: Number of allocated food standards full-time equivalent posts in local authorities across Northern Ireland



Note: An asterisk (*) denotes a half year return.

Source: FSA — LAEMS/Local authority self-reported FTE data (LAEMS up to 31 March 2020)

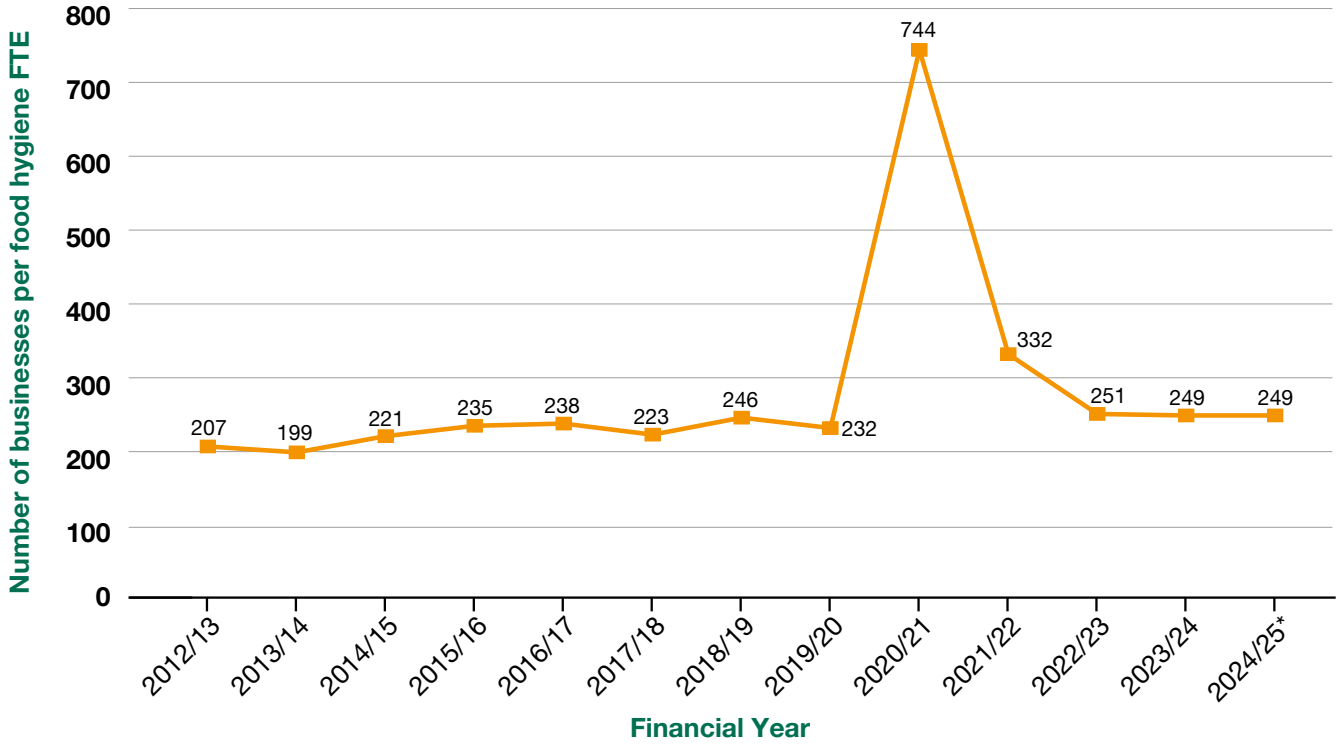
Figure 60: Number of food businesses per food hygiene FTE in England



Note: An asterisk (*) denotes a half year return.

Source: FSA — LAEMS/Local authority self-reported FTE data (LAEMS up to 31 March 2020)

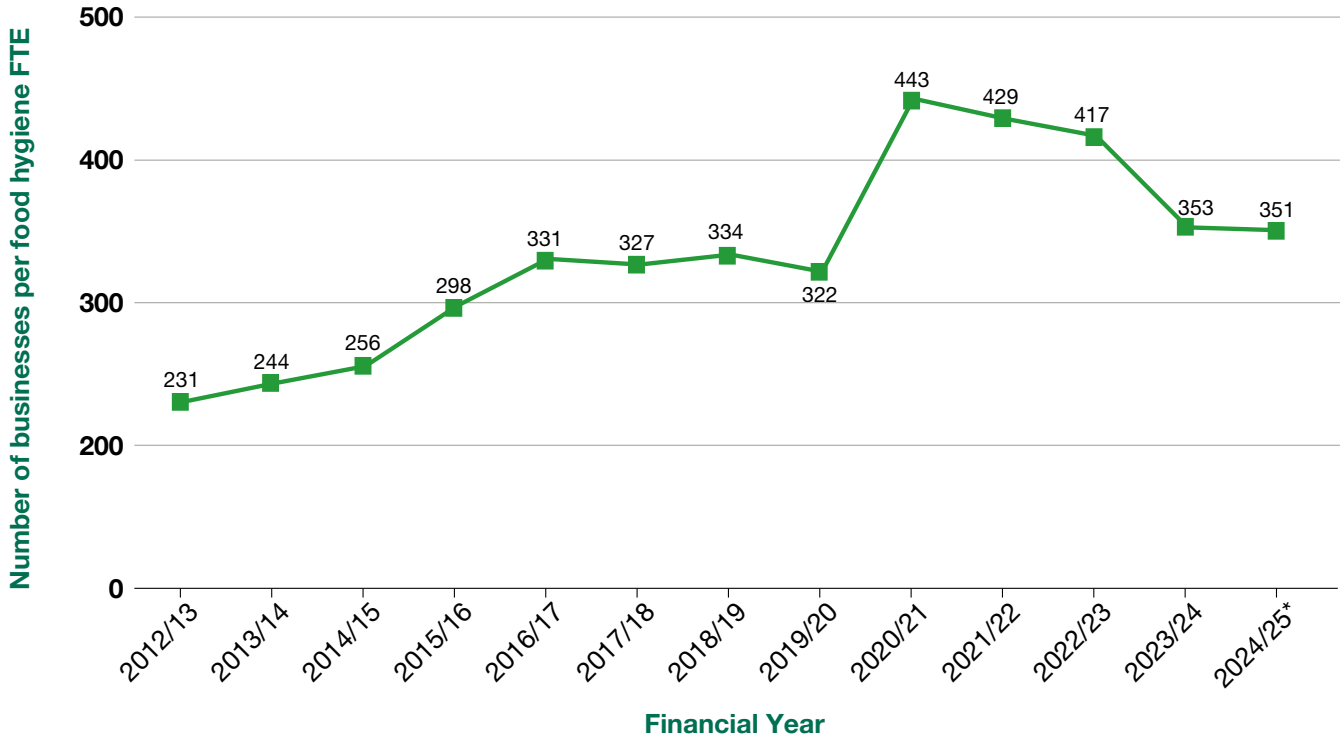
Figure 61: Number of food businesses per food hygiene FTE in Wales



Note: An asterisk (*) denotes a half year return.

Source: FSA — LAEMS/Local authority self-reported FTE data (LAEMS up to 31 March 2020)

Figure 62: Number of food businesses per food hygiene FTE in Northern Ireland



Note: An asterisk (*) denotes a half year return.

Source: FSA — LAEMS/Local authority self-reported FTE data (LAEMS up to 31 March 2020)

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