
Chapter 2

Reasons for not having a working smoke alarm

This chapter examines the characteristics of households that do not have a working smoke alarm. It is based on data from the 2010-11 EHS¹ and explores the various reasons for not having a working smoke alarm by household characteristics, dwelling type and tenure. It also explores whether these characteristics have changed since 2008-09.

No working smoke alarm

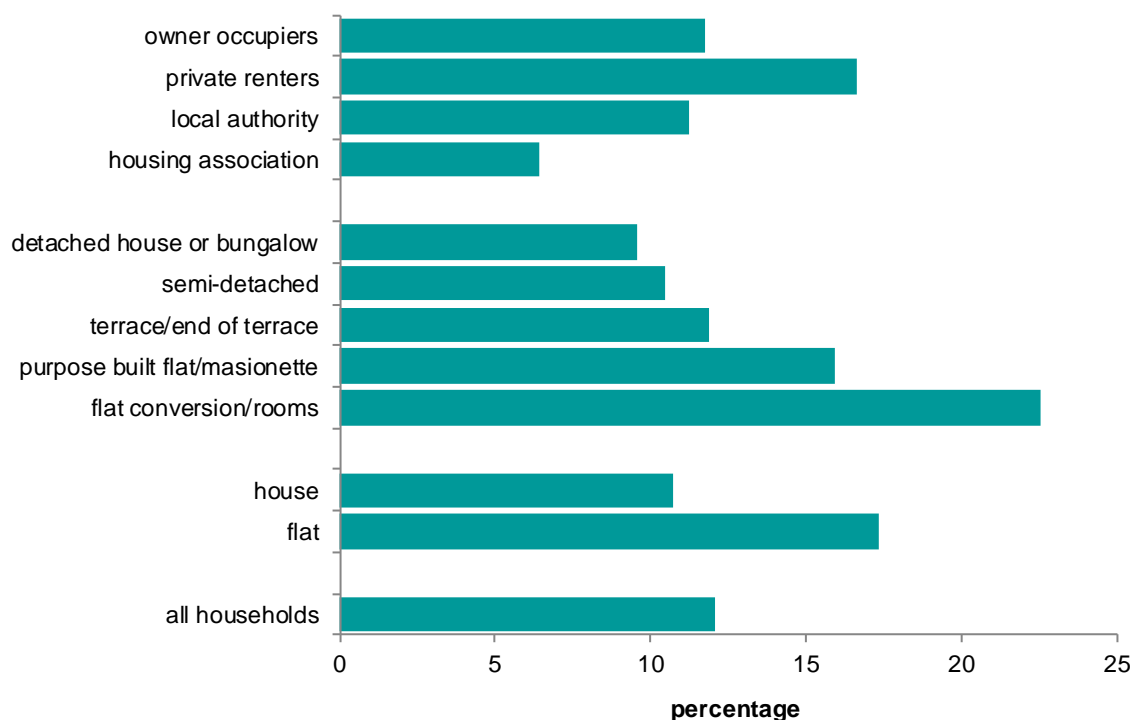
- 2.1 In 2010-11, 12% of households did not have a working smoke alarm either because their installed smoke alarm(s) was not working (3%) or because they did not have a smoke alarm installed (9%), Annex Table 2.1. This compares with 11% of households who did not have a working smoke alarm in 2012-13.
- 2.2 Some 2% of households had a smoke alarm installed, but did not know if it was working. These households have been excluded from the following analysis, which examines the profile of those households who stated that they had no working smoke alarms in their home.

Tenure and dwelling type

- 2.3 Households that lived in private rented accommodation were more likely to be without a working smoking alarm (17%) than owner occupiers (12%) and social renters (11% of local authority and 6% of housing association households), Figure 2.1 and Annex Table 2.2.
- 2.4 Households that lived in flats, particularly converted flats, were more likely not to have a working smoke alarm (17% and 22% respectively) than those households living in houses (11%). This is also likely to be linked to tenure – the private rented sector has a higher proportion of converted flats than the social and owner occupied sectors.

¹ Because questions on fire and fire safety rotate in and out of the EHS, this report presents findings from several different survey years (see introduction for further details). This chapter reports 2010-11 findings as this was the last time the relevant fire and fire safety questions were included in the interview questionnaire.

Figure 2.1: Households with no working smoke alarm, by tenure and dwelling type, 2010-11



Base: all households

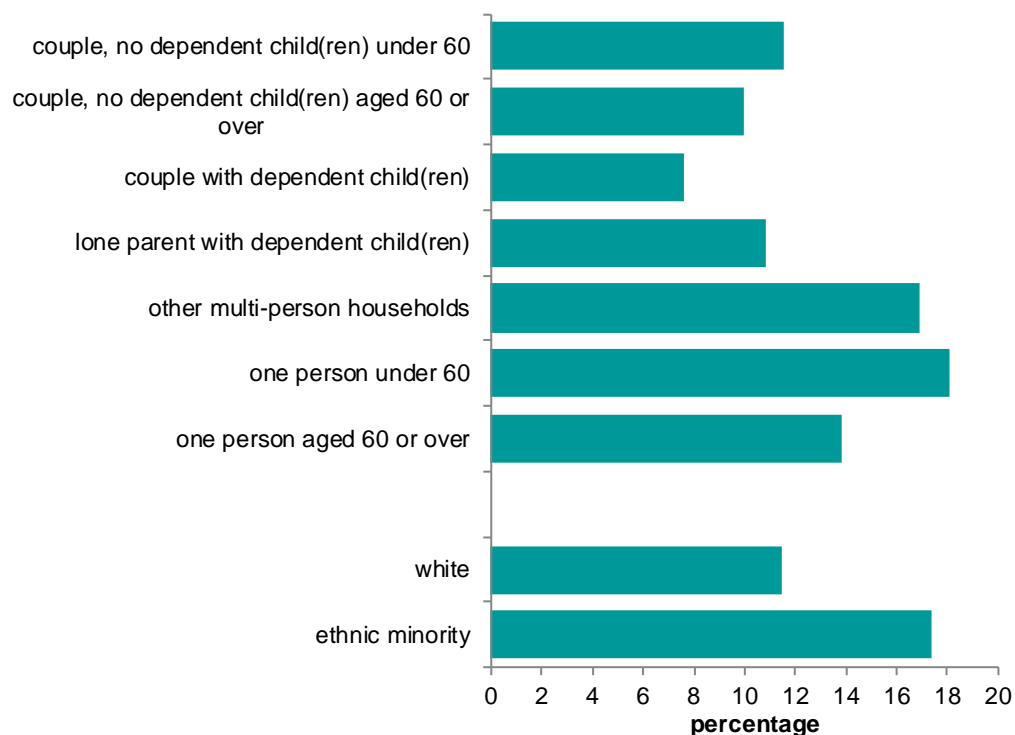
Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.2

Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

Household type

- 2.5 Households with a household reference person (HRP) from an ethnic minority background were more likely to not have a working smoke alarm than households with a white HRP (17% compared with 11%), Figure 2.2 and Annex Table 2.3.
- 2.6 Single person under 60 and multi-person households were also more likely not to have a working smoke alarm (18% and 17% respectively). Couples with dependent children were least likely to be without a working smoke alarm (8%), although lone parents with dependent children were equally likely to not have a working smoke alarm as couples without dependents.

Figure 2.2: Households with no working smoke alarm, by household type and ethnicity, 2010-11



Base: all households

Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.3

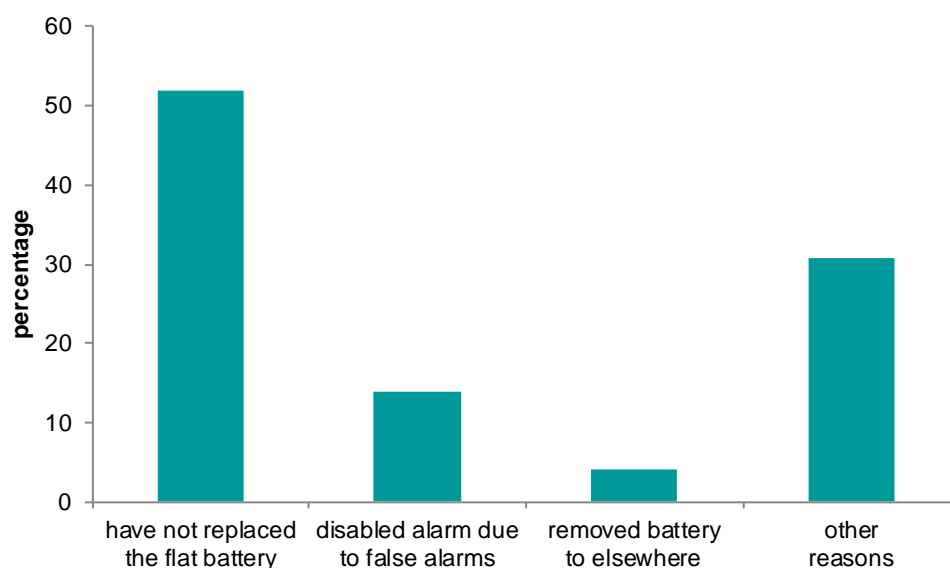
Source: English Housing Survey, full household sample

- 2.8 There was no correlation between the age of the HRP and not having a working smoke alarm.
- 2.9 Households with an unemployed HRP were more likely to be without a working smoke alarm (16%) than households with either a retired HRP (11%) or a HRP in full time employment (12%).
- 2.10 There were also strong connections between income and not having a working smoke alarm; 9% of households in the highest income band did not have a working smoke alarm compared with 15% of households in the lowest income band, Annex Table 2.3.

Smoke alarm not working

- 2.11 In 2010-11, 3% of households (744,000) had a smoke alarm installed, but which was not working, Annex Table 2.1. Of these households, around half (52%) said that they did not have a working smoke alarm because they had not replaced the flat batteries, 14% had disabled their smoke alarm due to false alarms, and 4% had removed the batteries to be used elsewhere. The remaining third (31%) of households had ‘other reasons’ for not having a working smoke alarm, Figure 2.3. The same pattern was observed in 2008-09, Annex Table 2.5.

Figure 2.3: Reasons for smoke alarm not working, 2010-11



Base: all households with a no working smoke alarm/s

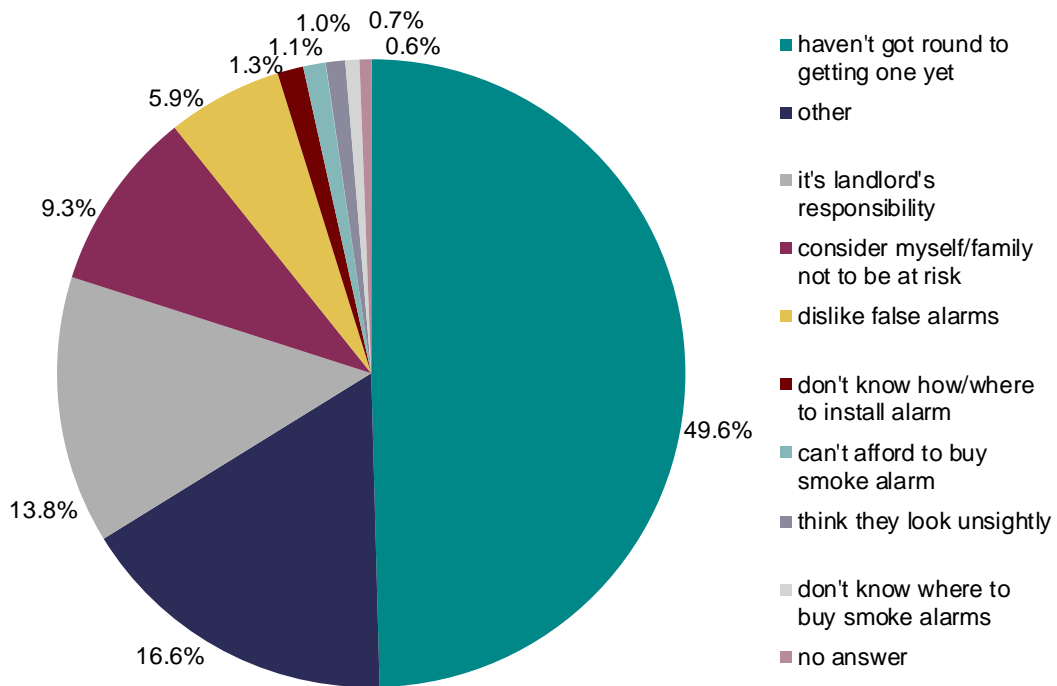
Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.5

Sources: English Housing Survey, full household sample

Smoke alarm not installed

2.12 In 2010-11, 9% of households (1.9 million) did not have a smoke alarm installed, Annex Table 2.1. Of these households, half (50%) stated that they did not have a smoke alarm because they had not got round to obtaining one yet while 14% of households felt it was the responsibility of their landlord to install smoke alarms in their home. Some 9% of these households stated that they did consider themselves or their family to be at risk from a fire while 1% said that they did not have a smoke alarm because they were unsightly. The second largest response category to this question was 'other', (17%) but the details of these other reasons were not recorded as part of the survey, Figure 2.4. The same pattern was observed in 2008-09, Annex Table 2.6.

Figure 2.4: Reasons for smoke alarm not installed, 2010-11



Base: all households with a no smoke alarm installed
Note: underlying data are presented in Annex Table 2.6
Sources: English Housing Survey, full household sample