Home Office

Fire Statistics Monitor: April 2015 to March 2016

Statistical Bulletin 09/16
Produced by the Fire Statistics team
FireStatistics@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
020 7035 5022
17 August 2016

Key findings

- There were **303 fire-related fatalities** in England during 2015/16. This was 39 more than in 2014/15 and the highest figure since 2011/12. Fire-related fatalities have been on a broadly long-term downward trend, with the 2015/16 figure being 83 fewer than a decade ago.
- Fire and rescue services (FRSs) attended around **528,700**[1] **incidents** in England during 2015/16, 7% higher than the previous year. This increase was predominantly driven by a large increase in non-fire incidents.
- Fire and rescue services (FRSs) attended around **162,000 fires** in England during 2015/16. This is 5% more than the 155,000 attended in 2014/15 but 52% fewer than in 2005/06.
- **Primary fires** (more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property) have also been on a long-term downward trend but increased slightly, for the first time in 14 years, by 3% from around 71,100 in 2014/15 to 73,400 in 2015/16. The increase in primary fires was largely driven by an 11% increase in deliberate primary fires.
- Although the number of **accidental dwelling fires** was virtually unchanged in 2015/16 compared to 2014/15, there were 24 more fire-related fatalities in accidental dwelling fires in 2015/16 (191) than the previous year (167).
- FRSs attended roughly **214,100 fire false alarms** in England during 2015/16. This was a small decrease of 1% compared with 2014/15, continuing the long-term decreasing trend of false alarms. However, the number of malicious false alarms increased for the first time in 14 years (up by 2% on 2014/15) to around 6,900 in 2015/16.
- There was a **22% increase in the number of non-fire (also known as Special Service) incidents** attended by FRSs from 125,200 in 2014/15 to 152,500 in 2015/16. As a result, 29% of incidents attended by FRSs in 2015/16 were non-fire, the highest proportion since non-fire incidents were first recorded in 1999/00.
- The increase in non-fire incidents was driven to a large extent by increases in **co-responder medical incidents** (where the FRS has a formal agreement in place with the ambulance service to respond to medical incidents), which increased by 83% from 14,200 in 2014/15 to 25,900 in 2015/16.

[1] Most of the figures in the text are quoted to the nearest 100. The exact figures can be found in the accompanying data tables

Introduction

This Fire Statistics Monitor publication focuses on trends in fires, fire-related fatalities and fire casualties, false alarms and non-fire incidents attended by fire and rescue services, in England, for the financial year 2015/16 (April to March).

Each time a fire and rescue service (FRS) attends an incident in England, details of that incident are uploaded to the Home Office's Incident Recording System (IRS) by the FRS. The IRS is used as the source for all the statistics in this publication. More information on the IRS can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/incident-recording-system-for-fire-and-rescue-authorities

It should be noted that because records of incidents are added and edited constantly throughout the year, revisions to the details of incidents occur regularly. As such, the figures for 2015/16 in this publication and supporting tables are deemed provisional and some figures for 2014/15 have been revised since the last publication.

This publication is accompanied by reference data tables. All fire statistics tables can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables

The following tables have been updated as part of this publication:

FIRE: 0101, 0102, 0103, 0104, 0201, 0202, 0301, 0302, 0303, 0401, 0402, 0501, 0502, 0901, 0902, 1401.

Definitions for terms used throughout this publication can be found in the accompanying Fire Statistics Definitions document on this page:

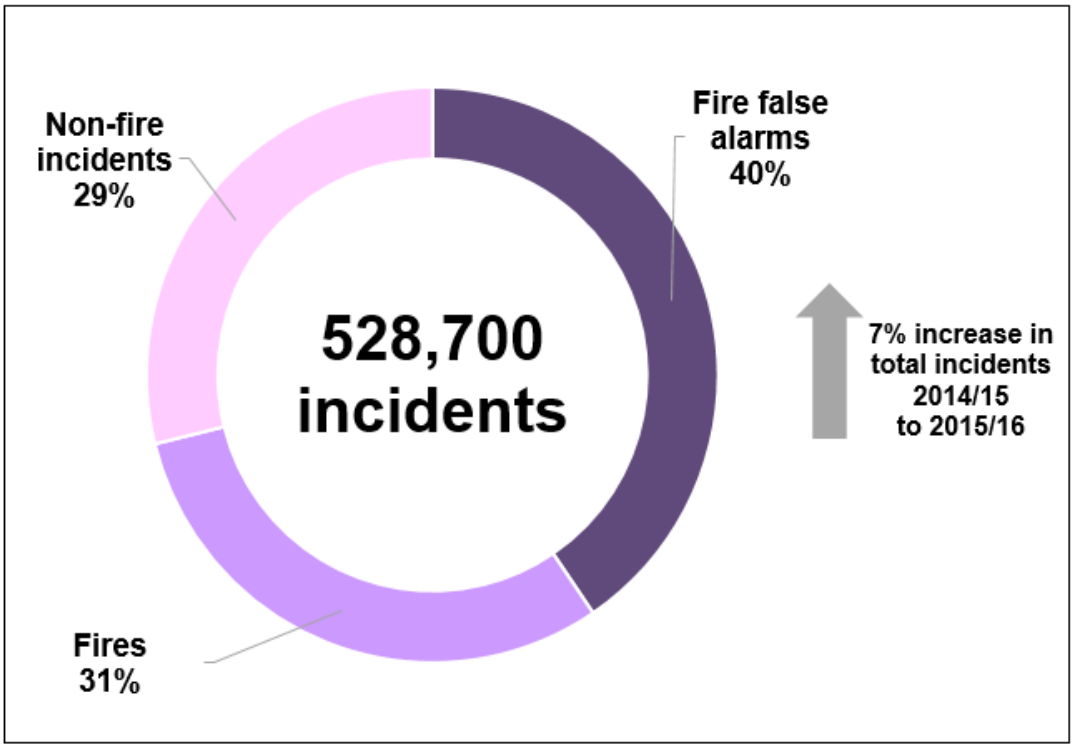
www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fire-statistics-monitor-april-2015-to-march-2016

Contents

1 All Incidents Attended

- Fire and rescue services (FRSs) attended around 528,700[2] incidents in England during 2015/16, 7% higher than the previous year. This increase was predominantly driven by a large increase in non-fire incidents. Total incidents have been on a long-term downward trend, meaning that despite the latest increase, the number of incidents in 2015/16 is still 37% lower than a decade ago.
- Fires accounted for around a third (31%) of all incidents attended. FRSs attended around 162,000 fires in England during 2015/16. This is 5% more than in 2014/15 but still 52% fewer than in 2005/06.
- Fire false alarms, at roughly 214,100 incidents, constituted 40% of all incidents attended by fire and rescue services in England during 2015/16. This is a reduction of 1% compared with 2014/15.
- In common with previous years, the most frequent type of incident attended has been a fire false alarm. Over the last 10 years, false alarms have accounted for between 44% and 40% of incidents attended, with a low of 40% in the latest year (2015/16).
- FRSs attended 22% more non-fire (also known as Special Service) incidents (152,500) in England during 2015/16 than the previous year (125,200). In 2015/16, these incidents represented 29% of incidents attended, the highest such proportion seen since recording began 15 years ago.

Figure 1: Broad classification of incidents attended by fire and rescue services in England, 2015/16; Source table FIRE0102



[2] Most of the figures in the text are quoted to the nearest 100. The exact figures can be found in the accompanying data tables

2 Fire Incidents

2.1. Overall trends in fire incidents

- Fire and rescue services attended around 162,000 fires in England during 2015/16, 5% more than the 155,000 in 2014/15.
- The number of fires attended has been on a long-term downward trend, meaning that despite the increase in 2015/16, total fires are still 52% lower than a decade ago.
- 45% (73,600) of the fires attended were thought to be deliberate and 55% (88,500) were accidental, a similar split to the previous few years.
- Both deliberate and accidental fires increased in 2015/16. Deliberate fires increased by 7% and accidental fires increased by 2% in 2015/16 compared to a year earlier.

2.2. Primary fires

- Primary fires are more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property[3]. In 2015/16 there were around 73,400 primary fires, accounting for 45% of all fires.
- The number of primary fires increased by 3% from 71,100 in 2014/15. As Figure 2 shows, primary fires have been on a long-term downward trend for many years, with the increase in 2015/16 being the first increase in primary fires in 14 years.
- The overall increase in primary fires was predominantly driven by an increase in deliberate fires. Deliberate primary fires increased by 11%, from 17,300 to 19,300 in 2015/16. In contrast, accidental primary fires increased by less than 1%, from 53,700 to 54,000.
- Dwelling fires are the most common type of primary fire, accounting for 43% of primary fires in 2015/16 and almost a fifth of all fires.
- Despite the overall increase in primary fires, the number of dwelling fires only increased very slightly between 2014/15 and 2015/16, by just 4 fires (1 additional accidental and 3 additional deliberate dwelling fires) to 31,333, following steady decreases since 2003/04.
- In contrast, there were increases in primary fires in other locations: other building (non-dwelling) fires increased by 3% to 16,000, road vehicle fires increased by 7% to 20,900, and primary outdoor fires increased by 10% to 5,200.

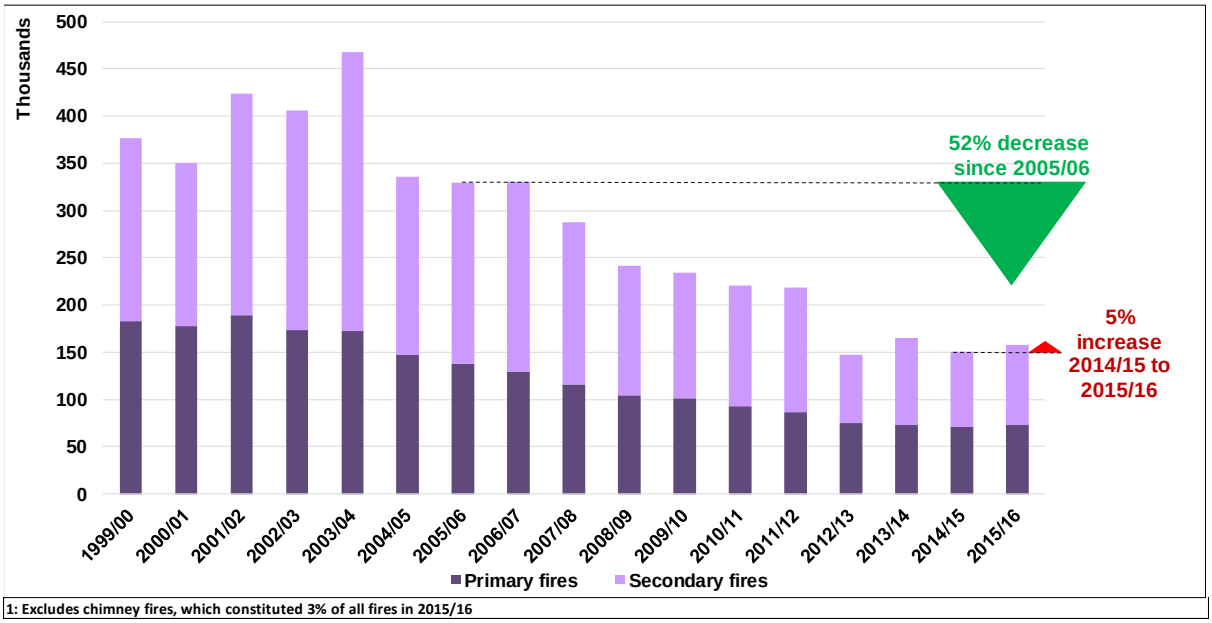
2.3 Secondary fires

- Secondary fires can broadly be thought of as smaller outdoor fires, not involving people or property. In 2015/16 there were around 84,500 secondary fires, accounting for 52% of all fires. Secondary fires increased by 7% in 2015/16, from 78,700 the year before.

[3] For more detailed technical definitions of different types of fire, see the Fire Statistics Definitions document on this page - www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fire-statistics-monitor-april-2015-to-march-2016

- The two largest components of secondary fires were: refuse (rubbish) fires, which accounted for around 60% (48,800) of secondary fires in 2015/16 and grassland fires, accounting for just over a quarter (22,100) of secondary fires. There were increases of 5% and 14%, respectively, in these types of fires in 2015/16, which accounted for the vast majority of the increase in secondary fires.
- As Figure 2 shows, secondary fires show some fluctuation year-on-year, although the overall long-term trend is downward. As secondary fires are outdoors, these year-on-year changes can be associated with the weather: e.g. the unusually wet summer in 2012 was a likely factor in the big decrease in 2012/13. England-level weather data shows that 2015/16 had slightly more rainfall overall than 2014/15 (which we'd normally associate with a reduction in secondary fires) and broadly similar temperature[4]. This suggests that at a national level the weather wasn't a large factor in the increase in secondary fires.

Figure 2: Primary and secondary fires attended by fire and rescue services in England since 1999/00; Source table FIRE0102



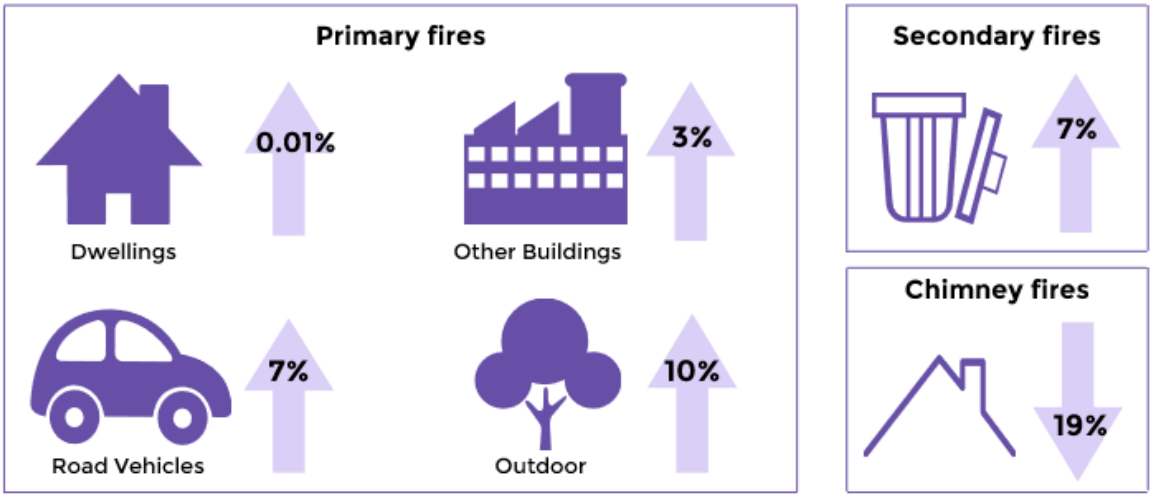
1: Excludes chimney fires, which constituted 3% of all fires in 2015/16

2.4 Chimney fires

- Chimney fires are fires in domestic-style buildings where the flame was contained within the chimney structure, did not involve casualties and fewer than five appliances attended. They accounted for around 3% of fires in 2015/16, a similar proportion to previous years.
- Chimney fires decreased by 19%, from 5,200 in 2014/15 to 3,900 in 2015/16, a similar sized decrease to the last 2 years.

[4] Met Office data available here - www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries

Figure 3: Summary of changes in different types of fire between 2014/15 and 2015/16; Source table FIRE0102



3 Fire Fatalities and Casualties

3.1 Fire-related Fatalities

- There were 303 fire-related fatalities in England during 2015/16. This was 39 (15%) more than in 2014/15 and the highest figure since 2011/12. Though subject to fluctuation due to the relatively small numbers, fire-related fatalities have been on a broadly long-term downward trend, with the 2015/16 figure being 83 (22%) fewer than a decade ago.
- Although the overall increase in *fires* was largely driven by an increase in deliberate fires (Section 2.1), the increase in *fatalities* was mainly due to fatalities from accidental fires.
- Of the 303 fire-related fatalities, the majority (246) of the fatalities were from accidental fires, up 35 from 2014/15, whilst 57 fire-related fatalities were from fires that were thought to be deliberate (4 more than 2014/15).
- The increase in accidental fire deaths was predominantly driven by two underlying contributions:
    - Fire-related fatalities in accidental dwelling fires, which accounted for almost two-thirds of all fire-related fatalities, increased by 24 from 167 in 2014/15 to 191 in 2015/16.
    - A number of fatal fires involving aircraft, including at the Shoreham Air Show in August 2015. There were 19 fire-related fatalities involving aircraft in 2015/16, compared to 14 in total across the 6 previous years that data have been collected online via the IRS. The Shoreham disaster was a particularly unusual event in that it led to a large number of deaths (11). Excluding Shoreham no more than 6 fatalities have been recorded from any single fire incident since IRS recording began in 2009.

- Looking at the longer-term trend in fire fatalities, despite the increase in 2015/16, the number of fatalities is 22% less than a decade ago, 46% less than two decades ago and 61% less than three decades ago.
- Within the overall long-term downward trend, there have been previous year-on-year fluctuations in fatalities. It's too early to say whether the increase in 2015/16 is a one-off fluctuation or a change in the longer-term trend.
- Fatalities accounted for around 4% of total fire-related casualties in 2015/16. This proportion has fluctuated between 3% and 4% since the early 1990s.

Figure 4: Fire-related fatalities in England since 1999/00; Source table FIRE0502

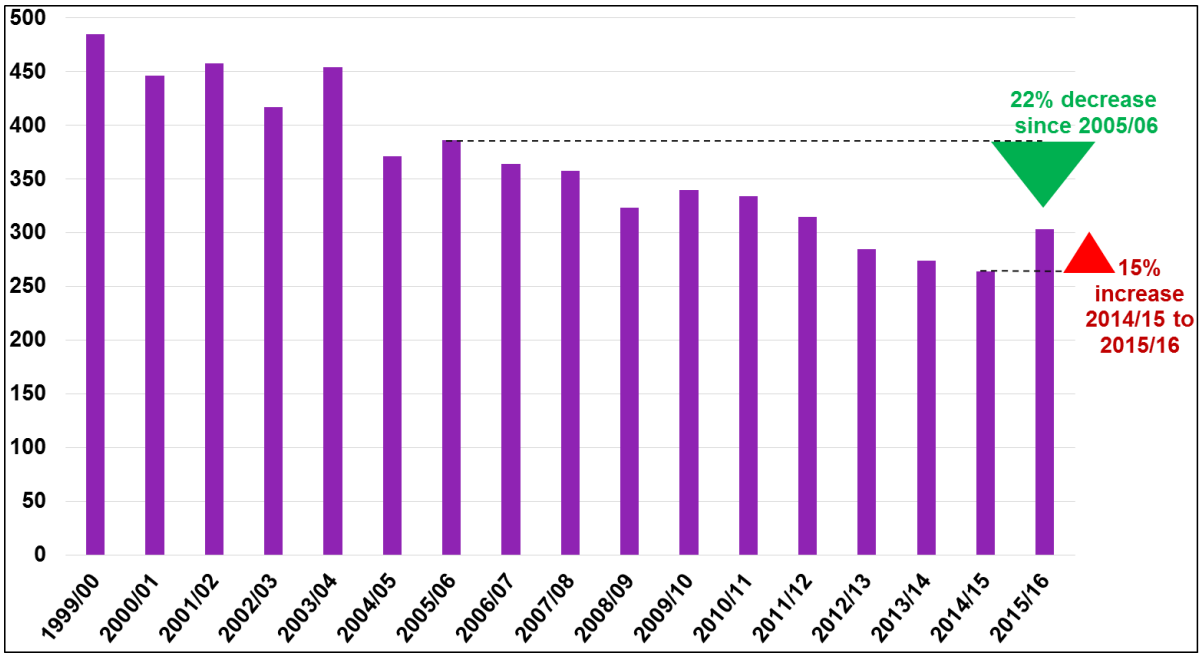
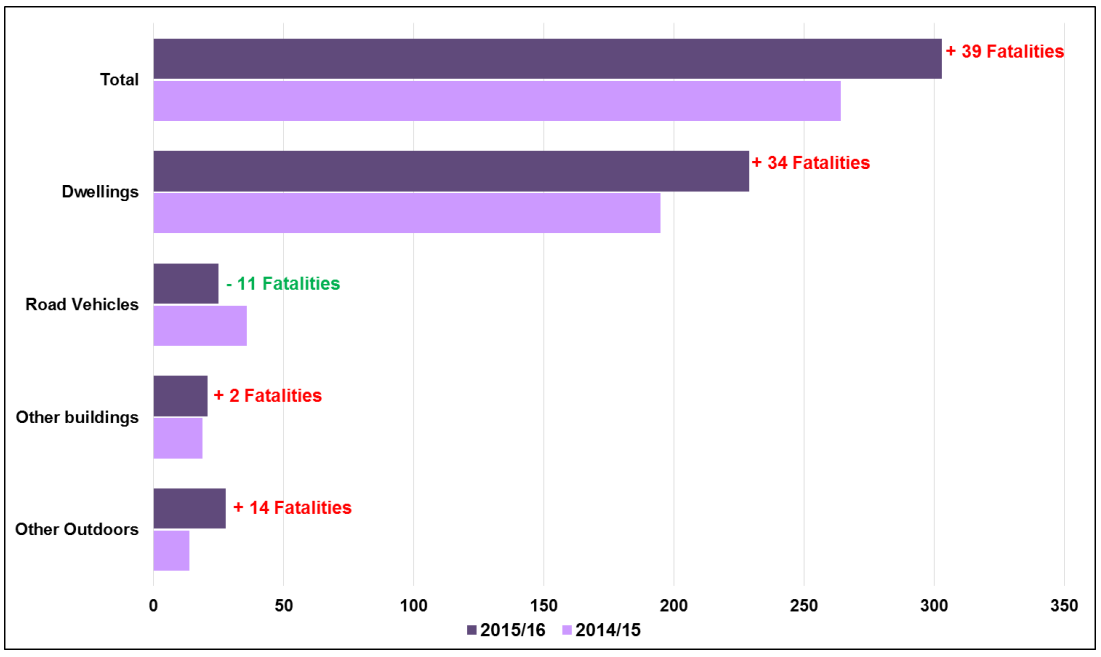


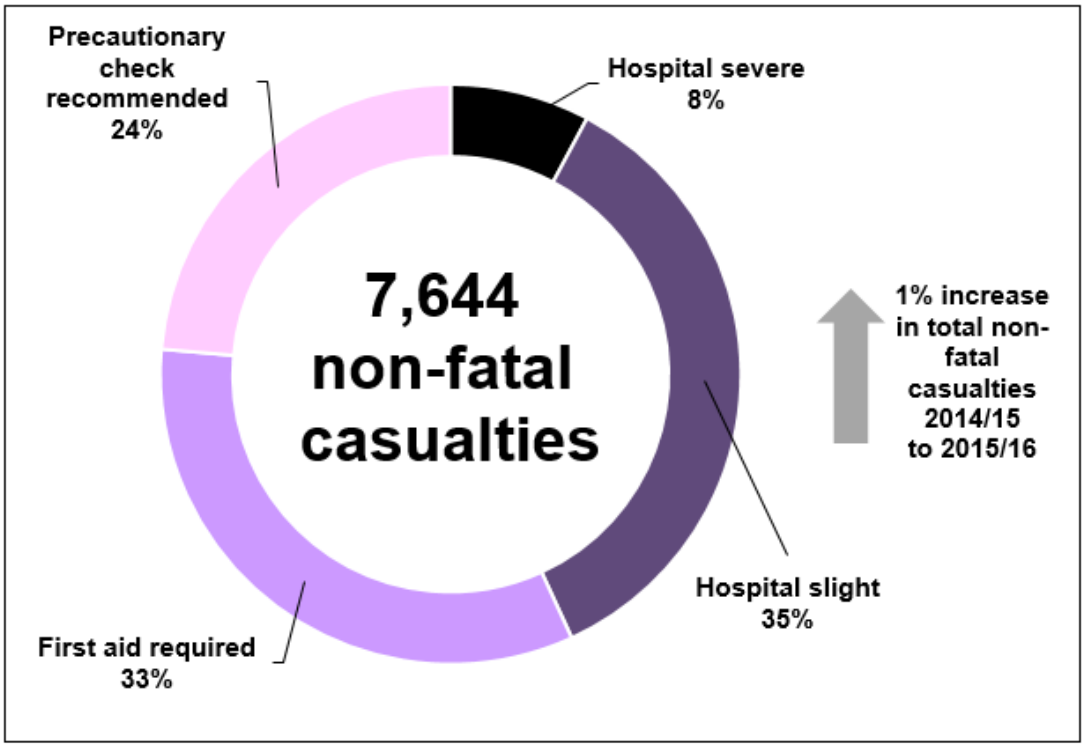
Figure 5: Fire-related fatalities in England by location, 2014/15 and 2015/16; Source table FIRE0502



3.2 Non-Fatal Fire Casualties

- There were 7,644 non-fatal fire casualties in England during 2015/16, a 1% increase on 2014/15.
- Of these, 43% (3,299) resulted in hospital treatment in 2015/16, which was also a 1% increase on 2014/15.
- The remaining casualties required first aid at the scene (33%) or were recommended to have precautionary checks (24%).

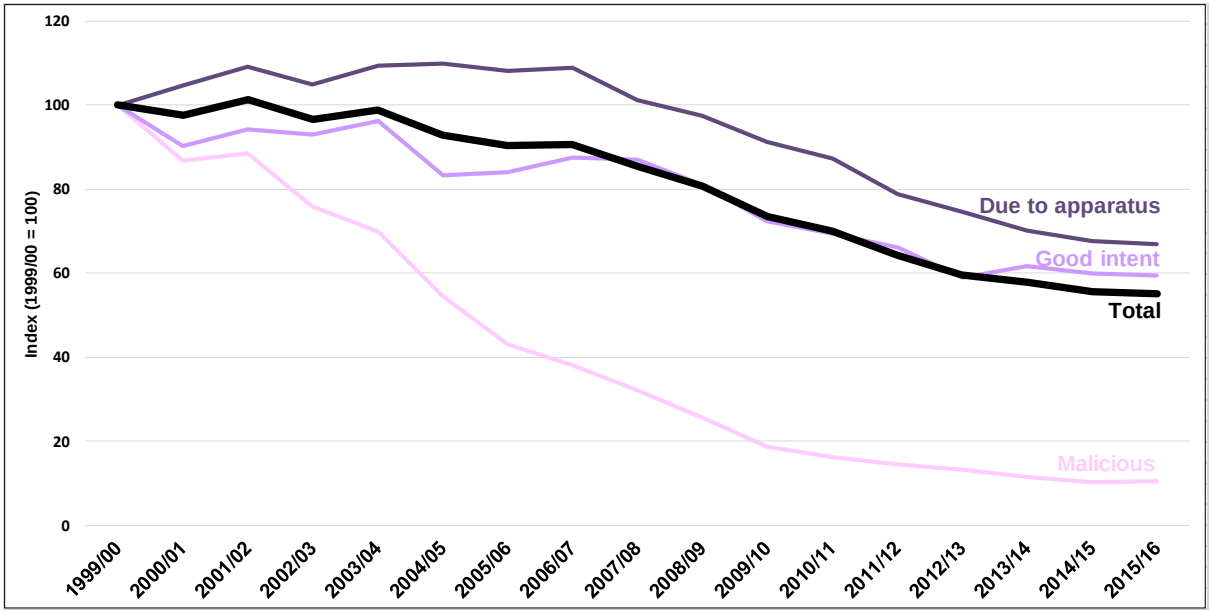
Figure 6: Non-fatal casualties in England by severity of injury, 2015/16; Source table FIRE0502



4 Fire False Alarms

- FRSs attended around 214,100 fire false alarms in England during 2015/16. This was a 1% decrease compared to 2014/15, continuing the long-term downward trend in false alarms shown in Figure 7.
- Fire false alarms have been the most common type of incident attended by FRSs every year since 2004/05. In 2015/16, they constituted 40% of incidents attended in England.
- During 2015/16, around two-thirds (66%) of fire false alarms were due to apparatus, where a fire alarm operates erroneously. Fire false alarms due to apparatus decreased by 1% from 2014/15 to roughly 142,300 in 2015/16.
- The remaining fire false alarms were predominantly due to good intent (30% of false alarms) - calls made in good faith in the belief that there is an incident the FRS should attend - which decreased by 1% from 2014/15 to around 64,900 in 2015/16.
- Malicious fire false alarms, whilst comprising a very small proportion (3%) of false alarms, increased slightly by 2% to around 6,900 in 2015/16, the first increase for 14 years. Malicious fire false alarms had previously been on a steady decline for many years, meaning that even with the increase in 2015/16, the number of malicious fire false alarms was still 90% lower than 1999/00, when recording began.

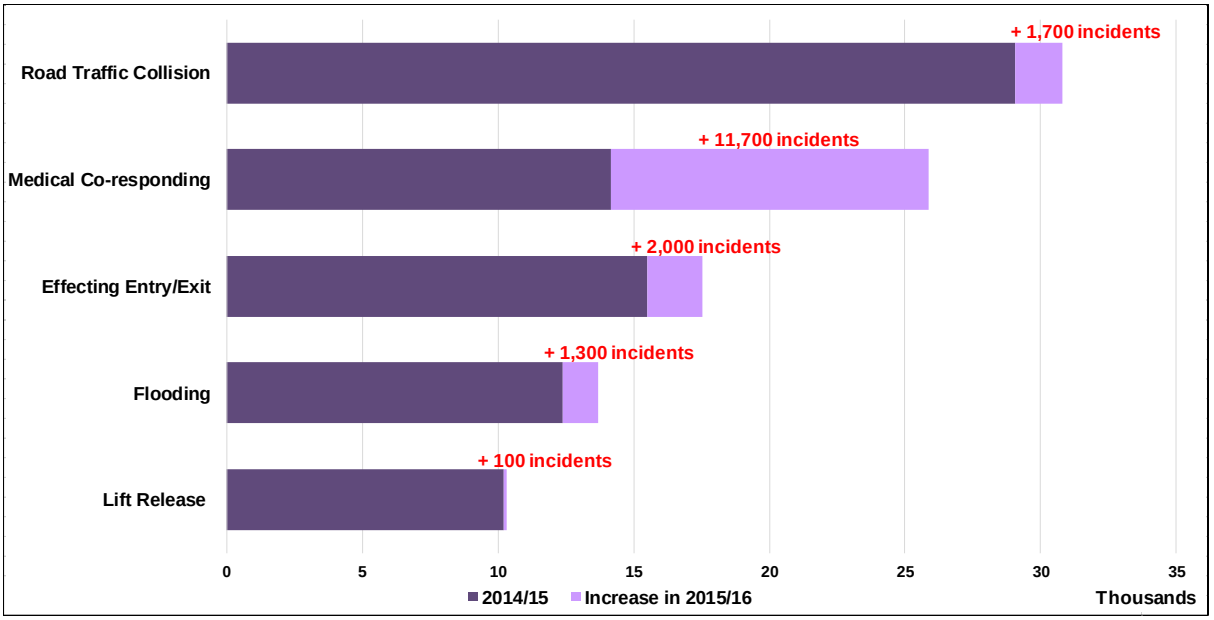
Figure 7: Trend in false alarms in England by type, since 1999/00; indexed to 1999/00; Source table FIRE0102



5 Non-Fire Incidents

- There was a 22% increase in the number of non-fire (also known as “Special Service”) incidents attended by FRSs, from 125,200 in 2014/15 to 152,500 in 2015/16. Non-fire incidents have followed a broadly downward trend since 2007/08. The increase in 2015/16 brings the number of non-fire incidents back to a level similar to 2009/10.
- Non-fire incidents accounted for 29% of total incidents attended by FRSs, the highest *proportion* since recording of non-fire incidents began in 1999/00.
- The most common types of non-fire incident were: attending a road traffic collision (30,800), co-responding to a medical incident (25,900) or effecting entry/exit (17,500), which comprised almost half (49%) of all non-fire incidents attended. These three categories, along with attending flooding incidents (13,700) and lift releases (10,300), accounted for almost two-thirds (64%) of all non-fire incidents attended.
- The increase in non-fire incidents was largely driven by co-responder medical incidents - where the FRS has a formal agreement in place with the ambulance service to respond to medical incidents – which increased by 83% from 14,200 in 2014/15 to 25,900 in 2015/16.
- This increase reflects the greater level of collaboration between FRSs and ambulance services at a local level, for example, FRS personnel providing slips, trips and falls assistance.
- In total, there are 18 other broad categories of non-fire incident, which include animal assistance and dealing with hazardous materials (for a full list, see table FIRE0901).

Figure 8: Change in the 5 most common non-fire incidents attended by fire and rescue services in England, between 2014/15 and 2015/16; Source table FIRE0901



6 Further Information

Guidance for using these statistics and other fire statistics publications can be found on the fire statistics collection page:
www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-statistics

More detailed analyses, such as on the causes of fires can be found in the publication Fire Statistics England

This publication is accompanied by reference data tables. All the fire statistics tables can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables

Media enquiries via Home Office news desk:

Office hours: 020 7035 3535; 7am-8pm Monday-Friday
Out of hours: 07659 174240

Statistical or public enquiries:

The responsible statistician for this publication is James Gallucci
To contact the Fire Statistics team:
Email: FireStatistics@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk;
Telephone: 020 7035 5022

The information published in this release is kept under review, taking into account the needs of users, burdens on suppliers and producers, in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Feedback on the changes detailed below, and proposals for future changes, are welcome.

If you have any comments, suggestions or enquiries, please contact the team via email using FireStatistics@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk or via the user feedback form on the fire statistics collection page.

Statistical Bulletins are prepared by staff in Home Office Statistics under the National Statistics Code of Practice and can be downloaded from GOV.UK:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/about/statistics

ISBN: 978-1-78655-167-2

ISSN: 1759-7005