



Home Office

Fire and rescue authorities: operational statistics bulletin for England 2015 to 2016

Statistical Bulletin 12/16

Produced by the Fire Statistics team

FireStatistics@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

020 7035 5022

27 October 2016

Key findings

Total Workforce and Leavers

- Approximately 42,300 **full time equivalent (FTE) Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) staff** were employed in England in 2016¹. This figure is four per cent lower than in 2015 and 17 per cent lower than five years before. ([Section 1.1](#))
- Total **firefighter strength**² was about 34,400 FTE. This figure is four per cent lower than the previous year and 16 per cent lower than five years ago. ([Figure 1a](#))
- During the financial year 2015/16, roughly 4,300 **staff left FRSs**³. This is ten per cent of staff. In 2014/15 nine per cent of staff left FRSs. ([Section 1.2](#))

Workforce Diversity

- Firefighters in England were **predominantly male** (95 per cent), **white** (96 per cent) and **aged 36 or older** (73 per cent) in 2016¹. ([Section 2](#))
- 5.0 per cent (approximately 1,800) of **firefighters were women** in England in 2016. This compares with 4.7 per cent in the previous year and 4.1 per cent five years previously. ([Figure 2a](#))
- Of the 38,800 male staff employed by FRSs, 90 per cent were firefighters in 2016. In contrast, only 28 per cent of the 6,600 female FRS employees were firefighters. ([Figure 2b](#))
- Of those who stated an ethnicity, 3.8 per cent (approximately 1,270) of firefighters were from an **ethnic minority group** in England in 2016. This percentage is unchanged from last year, but was 3.5 per cent five years previously. ([Section 2.2](#))
- The number of firefighters in the **three youngest age bands** (16-24, 25-35, 36-45) all decreased every year between 2011 and 2016. The average age of firefighters has also increased each year over this time. ([Section 2.3](#))

Firefighter Safety and Fire Prevention

- Firefighters sustained approximately 2,600 **injuries** during 2015/16, one per cent lower than in the previous year and 26 per cent lower than five years beforehand. ([Figure 3](#))
- FRSs spent 730,000 hours on **Home Fire Risk Checks**⁴ in 2015/16, virtually the same amount as the previous year but 26 per cent lower than five years beforehand. ([Figure 4](#))
- FRSs carried out 63,000 **Fire Safety Audits**⁴ in 2015/16, seven per cent more than in 2015 but 25 per cent lower than five years beforehand. ([Section 4](#))

¹ Staffing totals (including diversity statistics) are as at 31st March 2016

² Defined as full time equivalent for wholetime, and 24 hour units of cover for retained duty system

³ Including those who left to other FRSs or were employed non-uniformed by the same FRS

⁴ For a full description please see the [Operational Statistics Definitions document](#)

Introduction

This Fire Operational Statistics publication focuses on trends in workforce, workforce diversity, firefighter safety and fire prevention by fire and rescue services, in England, for the financial year 2015/16 (April to March).

Historically, we have collected information on six diversity characteristics from FRSs – age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion and sexual orientation. However, in previous years only gender statistics and summary ethnicity statistics have been published. In this release and its associated tables and infographics we have expanded the scope of the diversity statistics published.

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:

Workforce: [1101](#), [1102](#), [1103](#), [1104](#), [1105](#), [1106](#), [1107](#), [1110](#), [1111](#), [1112](#).

Fire Prevention: [1201](#), [1202](#), [1203](#).

Firefighter Safety: [0508](#), [0509](#), [1402](#).

Improving Operational Statistics:

If you have any comments on any of the statistics or the presentation in this release, especially on the new Experimental Statistics on diversity, please contact us on

Email: FireStatistics@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 7035 5022

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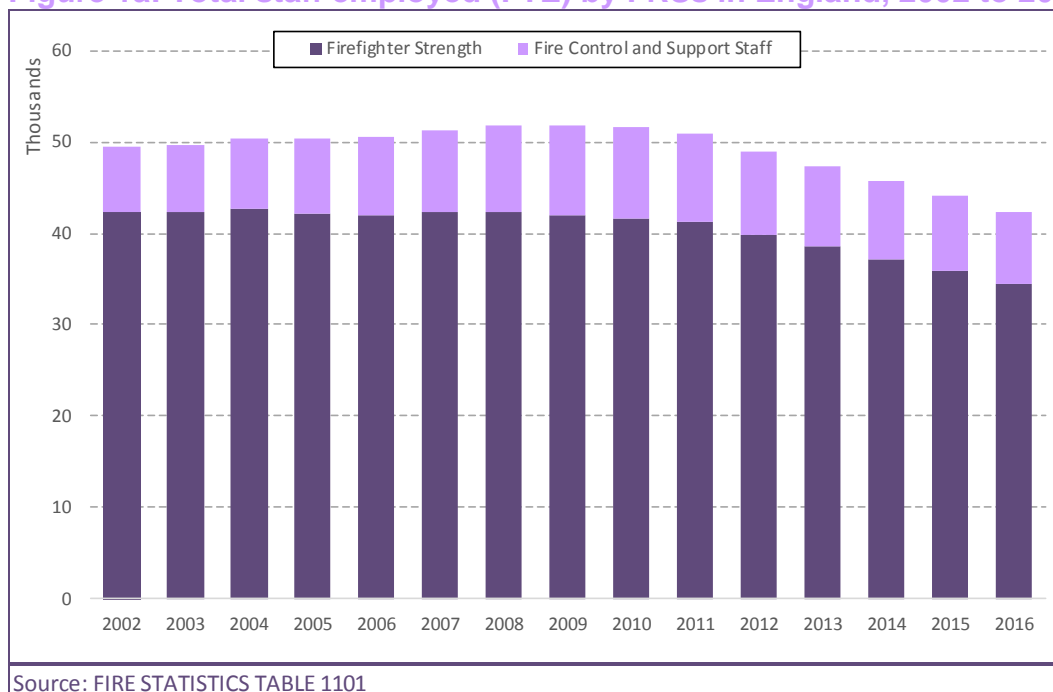
1 Total Workforce and Leavers

Further statistics on Total Workforce and Leavers can be found in tables FIRE1101, FIRE1102, FIRE1110, FIRE1111 and FIRE1112 on the Fire Statistics Data Tables page here- <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables#workforce-and-workforce-diversity>

1.1 Total Workforce

- Approximately 42,300 FTE **Fire Rescue Service (FRS) staff** were employed in England in 2016. This figure is four per cent lower than in 2015 and 17 per cent lower than five years before.
- The total number of FTE FRS staff slowly increased between 2002 and 2008, from 49,400 to a peak of 51,800. This was an average increase of 0.8 per cent per year. Since 2008 there have been larger decreases with 42,300 employed in 2016. This was an average decrease of 2.5 per cent per year.

Figure 1a: Total staff employed (FTE) by FRSs in England, 2002 to 2016



- Total **firefighter strength**⁵ was about 34,400 FTE. This figure is four per cent lower than the previous year and 16 per cent lower than five years ago.
- The total number of **support and fire control staff** was about 8,000 FTE. This figure is three per cent lower than the previous year and 18 per cent lower than five years beforehand.
- The numbers of FTE wholetime firefighters, retained duty system firefighters, fire control staff and support staff were all lower compared with one year previously. The greatest decrease was in the number of wholetime firefighters, which had decreased by five per cent.
- The numbers of FTE wholetime firefighters, retained duty system firefighters, fire control staff and support staff were all lower compared with five years

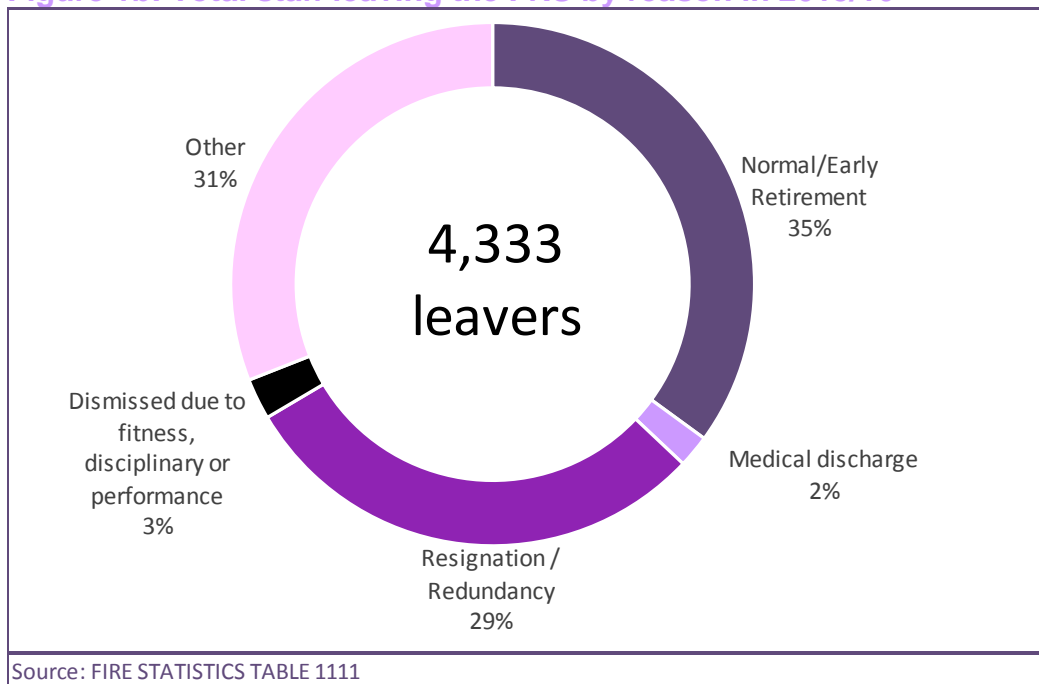
⁵ Defined as full time equivalent for wholetime, and 24 hour units of cover for retained duty system

previously. The greatest decrease over the past five years was in the number of fire control staff, which had decreased by 29 per cent. This is partly caused by fire control mergers over those five years.

1.2 Workforce Leavers

- During the financial year 2015/16, roughly 4,300 staff left FRSs⁶. This is ten per cent of staff. In 2014/15 nine per cent of staff left FRSs.
- The most common reason staff left FRSs in 2015/16 was because of “normal retirement”⁷, which accounted for around a third of those leaving. The vast majority of staff leaving for this reason were wholetime firefighters.
- The second most common reason staff left FRSs in 2015/16⁸ was to take employment outside FRSs, which accounted for around a quarter of those leaving. The majority of staff leaving for this reason were retained duty firefighters.

Figure 1b: Total staff leaving the FRS by reason in 2015/16



- In 2015/16 approximately 1,500 FRS staff retired through a “normal”⁶ or “early” retirement. This was 32 people per thousand members of FRS staff. In the previous year this rate was 26 people. Five years beforehand it was 13 people.
- In 2015/16 approximately 90 FRS staff retired though “ill health”. This was 1.8 people per thousand members of FRS staff. In the previous year this rate was 1.8 people. Five years beforehand it was 0.8 people.

⁶ including those who left to other FRSs or were employed non-uniformed by the same FRS

⁷ Where a person leaves the FRS to take up retirement after having served their eligible length of service to receive a full pension.

⁸ Not including “Other”

2 Workforce Diversity

Further statistics on Workforce Diversity can be found in tables FIRE1103, FIRE1104, FIRE1105, FIRE1106 and FIRE1107 on the Fire Statistics Data Tables page here- <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables#workforce-and-workforce-diversity>

In this release and its associated tables and infographics we have expanded the scope of the diversity statistics published-

- Ethnicity workforce statistics are published in greater detail than previously (See section 2.2 and Table FIRE1104) back to 2011.
- Age figures (in age bands) are published for the first time (See section 2.3 and Table FIRE1105).
- Experimental Statistics on religion (See section 2.4 and Table FIRE1106) and sexual orientation (See section 2.5 and Table FIRE1107) are published for the first time.

These statistics are published back to 2011 but we are investigating if data for previous years are available and of sufficient quality to publish.

The figures in this section are taken from 31st March 2016.

2.1 Gender

Gender statistics are published at FRS level in table FIRE1103.

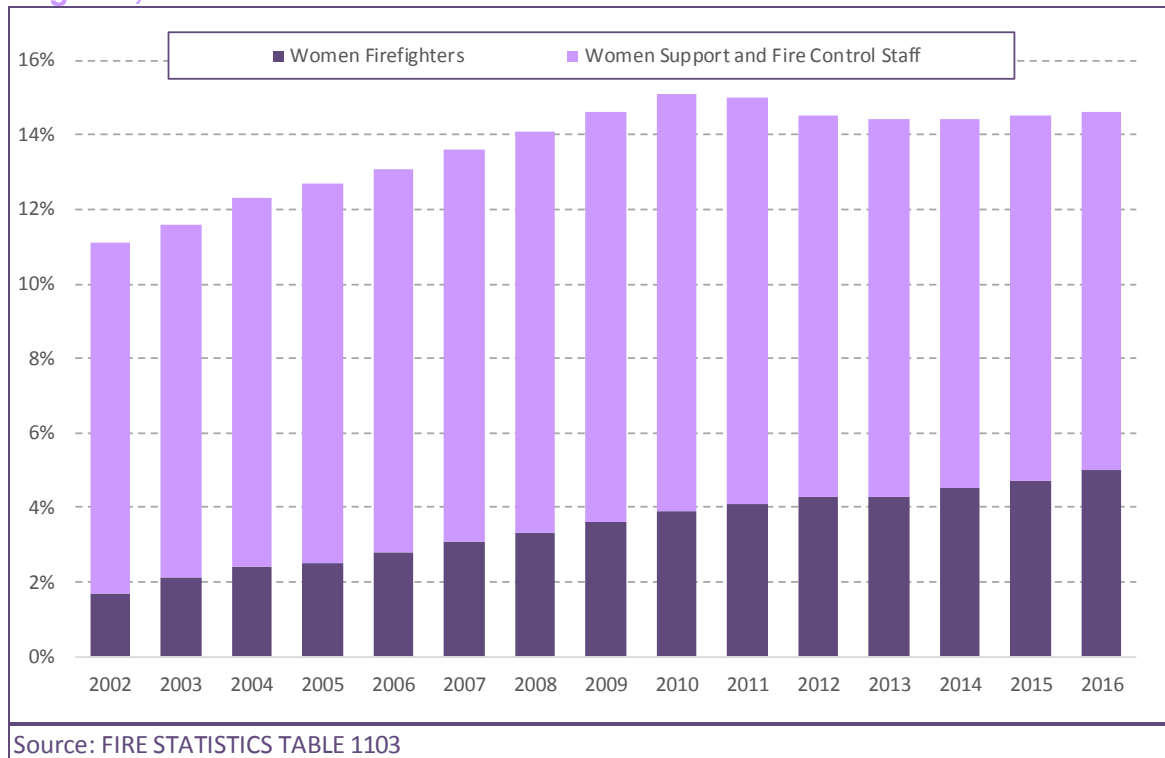
- 5.0 per cent (approximately 1,800) of **firefighters** were women in England in 2016⁹. This compares with 4.7 per cent in the previous year and 4.1 per cent five years previously.
- The number and proportion of women firefighters has slowly increased since 2002 (the first year for which data are available). In 2002 1.7 per cent of firefighters were women. By 2016 this percentage reached 5.0 per cent.
- The main cause of the increase in the **proportion** of women firefighters has been the reduction in the number of men firefighters, rather than an increase in the **number** of women firefighters.
- The percentage of police officers that are women¹⁰ (28.6 per cent) is over five times the percentage of firefighters that are women (5.0 per cent).
- 54.5 per cent (approximately 4,800) of **support and fire control staff** were women. This compares with 55.7 per cent in the previous year and 58.4 per cent five years ago.
- Overall, 14.6 per cent (approximately 6,600) of **all FRS staff** were women in 2016. This is virtually unchanged from 14.5 per cent in the previous year, slightly lower than the 15.0 per cent recorded five years beforehand.
- Between 2002 and 2010 the proportion of women FRS staff gradually increased, which was followed by reductions over the next three years.

⁹ Staffing totals (including diversity statistics) are as at 31st March 2016

¹⁰ The source for this is Police workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2016 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2016>

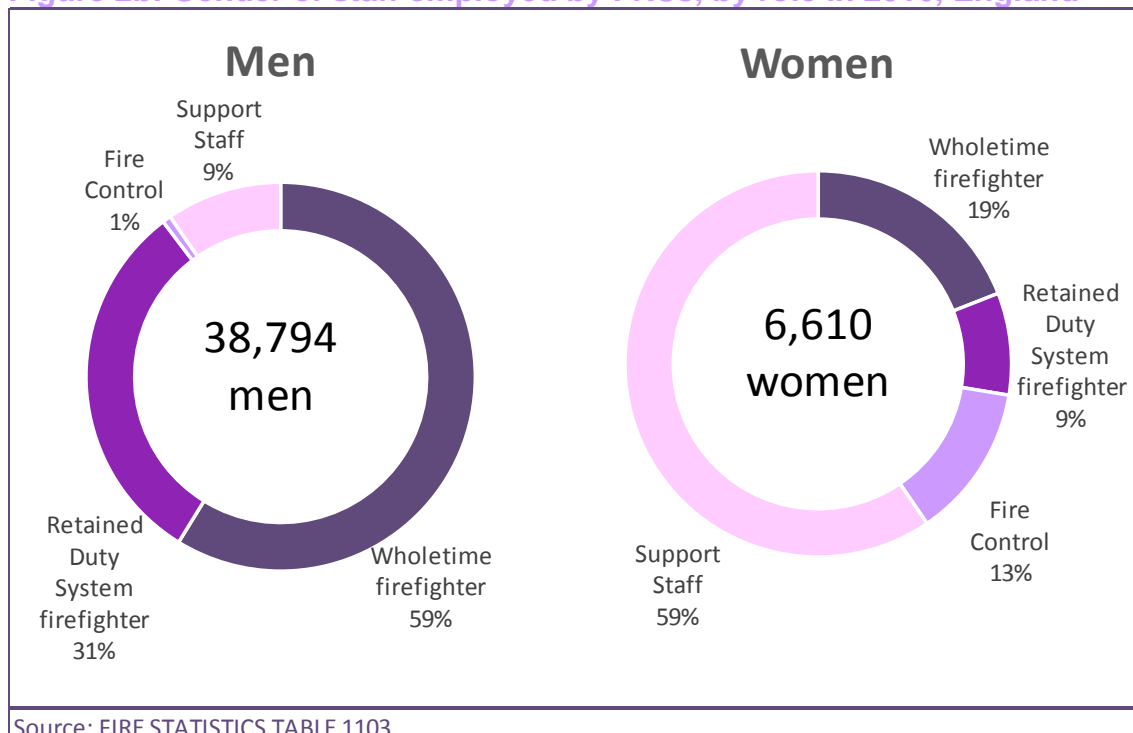
Despite increases in more recent years, the figure in 2016 (14.6 per cent) is yet to reach the peak of 15.1 per cent from 2010.

Figure 2a: Proportion of all staff employed by FRSs that are women in England, 2002 to 2016



- Of the 38,800 men employed by FRSs, 90 per cent were firefighters in 2016. In contrast, only 28 per cent of the 6,600 women FRS employees were firefighters. The most common roles for women were support and fire control staff, with the latter being around three quarters women.

Figure 2b: Gender of staff employed by FRSs, by role in 2016, England

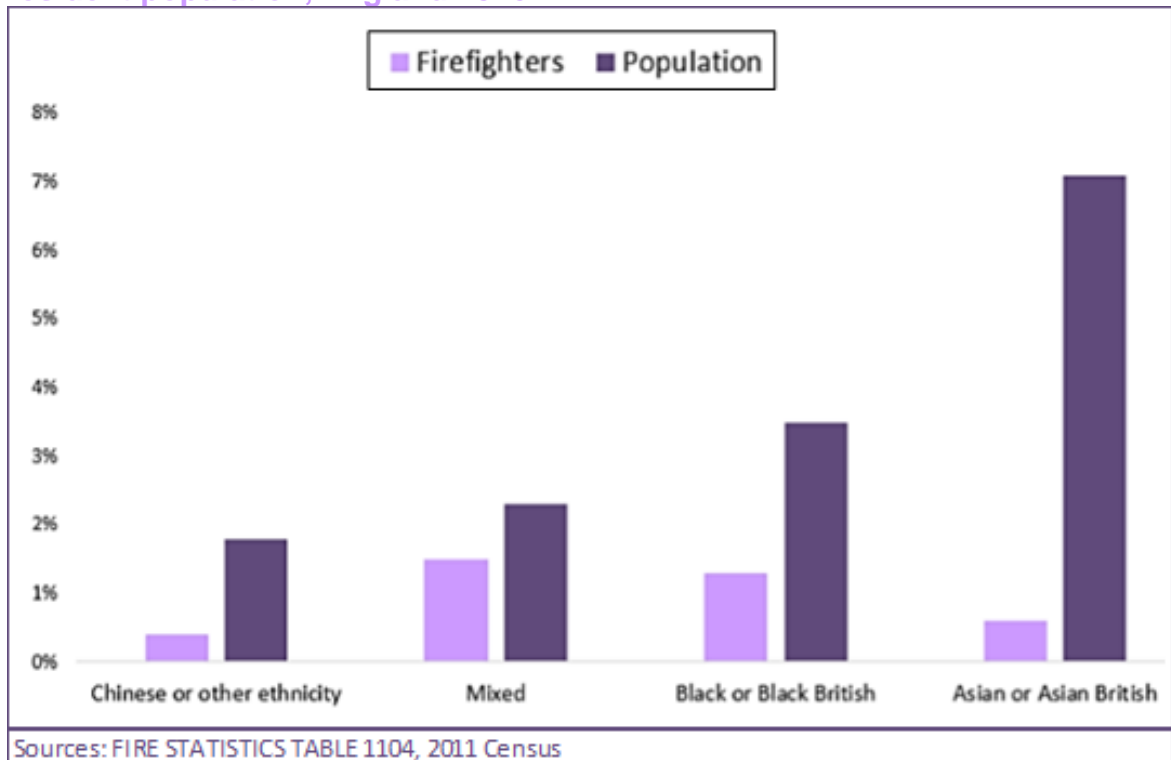


2.2 Ethnicity

For the first time this year we are publishing more detailed statistics on ethnicity, with statistics available for five ethnic groups¹¹. All FRSs collect this information, although 8.9 per cent of staff were recorded as “not stated” for ethnicity in 2016. This proportion has varied between 7.2 per cent and 11.3 per cent for the past six years. Ethnicity statistics are published at FRS level in table 1104.

- Of those who stated an ethnicity, 3.8 per cent (approximately 1,270) of **firefighters** were from an ethnic minority group in England in 2016¹². This proportion is unchanged from the previous year and compares with 3.5 per cent from five years beforehand.
- The actual number of firefighters who stated they were from an ethnic minority group has decreased over the past five years. However, the equivalent percentage has increased over this time because a greater proportion of white firefighters has left FRSs.
- To varying extents, all four ethnic minority groups¹¹ were underrepresented as firefighters in 2016 compared with the population of England. The largest difference was for “Asian or Asian British” which comprised 0.6 per cent of firefighters (approximately 370) compared with 7.1 per cent of England’s population.

Figure 2c: Percentage of firefighters in ethnic minorities, compared to the resident population, England 2016



¹¹ The 2001 Census groups of “White”, “Mixed”, “Asian or Asian British”, “Black or Black British” and “Chinese or Other Ethnicity”.

¹² Staffing totals (including diversity statistics) are as at 31st March 2016

- The percentage of police officers from an ethnic minority group¹³ (5.9 per cent) is more than one and a half times the percentage of firefighters that are from an ethnic minority group (3.8 per cent). These compare with 14.6 per cent of the English population in the 2011 Census¹⁴.
- 6.6 per cent of **support and fire control staff** were from an ethnic minority group. This is virtually unchanged from 6.5 per cent in the previous year, and compares with 6.0 per cent from five years earlier.
- Overall 4.4 per cent of **all FRS staff** were from an ethnic minority group. This is virtually unchanged from 4.3 per cent in the previous year but compares with 4.1 per cent from five years beforehand.
- The number and proportion of **all FRS staff** from an ethnic minority group has slowly increased since 2003 (the first year for which data are available). In 2003, 2.2 per cent of staff were from an ethnic minority, increasing to 4.4 per cent in 2016.

2.3 Age

From this year statistics on age of the FRS workforce have been published by FRS, in age bands. All FRSs collect age information, with virtually no staff (0.2 per cent) recorded as “not stated”. Age statistics are published at FRS level in table FIRE1105.

- The number of **firefighters** in the three youngest age bands (16-24, 25-35, 36-45) all decreased every year between 2011 and 2016¹⁵. Between 2011 and 2016 these decreases were 40 per cent, 23 per cent and 25 per cent respectively.
- 38 per cent of firefighters were aged 46 or over in England in 2016. This is virtually unchanged from 37 per cent in the previous year but greater than the 29 per cent five years before.
- The (calculated¹⁶) average age of firefighters was 41 in 2016, which is the same as in the previous year but higher than an average of 40 five years ago.
- 54 per cent of **support and fire control staff** were aged 46 or over. This is unchanged from the previous year and compares with 52 per cent five years earlier.
- 41 per cent of **all FRS staff** were aged 46 or over. This is virtually unchanged from 40 per cent in the previous year but more than the 34 per cent five years beforehand.

¹³ The source for this is Police workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2016 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2016>

¹⁴ The source for this is the 2011 Census

(<http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/ethnicityandnationalidentityinenglandandwales/2012-12-11>)

¹⁵ Staffing totals (including diversity statistics) are as at 31st March 2016

¹⁶ FRSs supply data in age bands so this calculation assumes staff are at the midpoint of the age bands.

Box 1: Experimental Statistics and Data Quality

The **religion and sexual orientation** statistics have some quality limitations and other issues which users should be aware of. These include-

- Some FRSs not collecting these data.
- The data contain a relatively high proportion of “not stated” entries; the proportion varies significantly across different FRSs.
- As a result, 49 per cent of data for religion and 54 per cent for sexual orientation are either not collected or not stated. Therefore, the figures we do have may not be fully representative of FRSs as a whole.
- For data protection reasons we have combined or suppressed any categories with very small figures. For this reason statistics are published at an England level only. FRS level figures would require heavy suppression, greatly limiting the usefulness of many of the statistics.

The statistics serve a public good in understanding the diversity of the FRS workforce, but given the current quality limitations, they are published as “Experimental Statistics”. **Experimental Statistics** are statistics which are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.

We welcome feedback on all our statistics, but are particularly interested in **feedback on these two experimental series**. Over time we aim to improve the quality of these outputs, working alongside FRSs. If you have any comments please contact us at firestatistics@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk.

Although we also collect statistics on **disability** they are not sufficiently complete or comparable to publish at present. We are looking to improve our understanding of these statistics and the scope for improving the quality. Also these statistics would need to be heavily suppressed as described above.

2.4 Religion (Experimental Statistics)

According to the new Experimental Statistics-

- Of those whose data on religion were available, 59 per cent of **firefighters** were Christian in England in 2016¹⁷. This proportion has been very similar and the largest group in every year since 2011. This is the same percentage as for England’s population in the 2011 Census¹⁸.
- 35 per cent of firefighters stated they had “no religion”. This proportion has been very similar and the second largest group in every year since 2011. This compares with 25 per cent for England’s population in the 2011 Census¹².
- 60 per cent of **all FRS staff**, of those whose data on religion were available, were Christian. This proportion has been very similar and the largest group in

¹⁷ Staffing totals (including diversity statistics) are as at 31st March 2016

¹⁸ The source for this is the 2011 Census

(<http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/religioninenglandandwales2011/2012-12-11>)

every year since 2011. All roles showed similar percentages for religions over this time.

- Eight FRSs do not have information on religion in the datasets they supplied to the Home Office in 2016, meaning that no data were available for around ten per cent of staff, although this is less than the 27 per cent in 2011. A further 39 per cent of all FRS staff chose to not state their religion in 2016 (broadly the same percentage as previous years).

2.5 Sexual Orientation (Experimental Statistics)

According to the new Experimental Statistics-

- Three per cent of **firefighters** for whom data on sexual orientation were available were bisexual, gay or lesbian in England in 2016¹⁶. This proportion has been very similar in every year since 2011.
- Three per cent of **all FRS staff** for whom data on sexual orientation were available were bisexual, gay or lesbian. This proportion has been very similar in every year since 2011. All roles showed a similar percentage.
- Nine FRSs do not have information on sexual orientation in the datasets they supplied to the Home Office in 2016, meaning 15 per cent of staff appeared to not have their sexual orientation collected by their FRS; this compares with 27 per cent in 2011. A further 39 per cent of staff chose to not state their sexual orientation in 2016 (broadly the same percentage as previous years).

3 Firefighter Safety

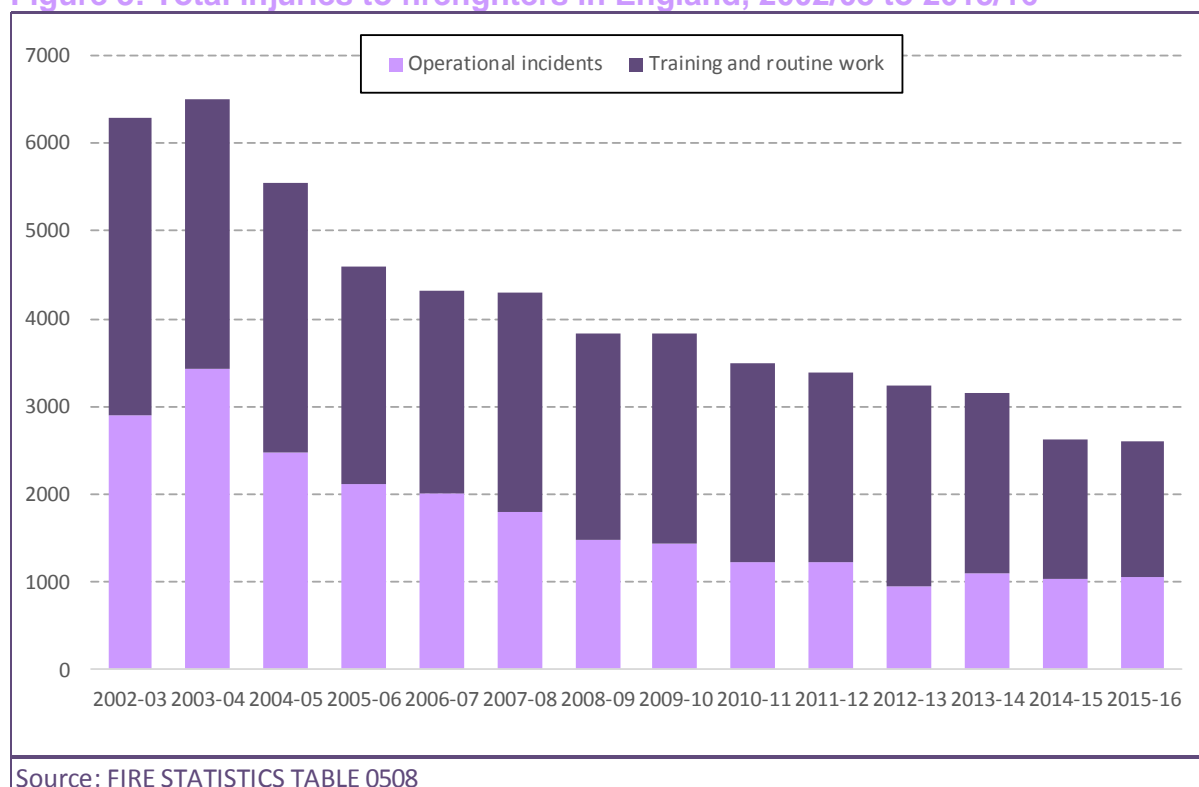
Further statistics on Firefighter Safety can be found in tables FIRE0508, FIRE0509 and FIRE1402 on the Fire Statistics Data Tables page here-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables>

- Firefighters sustained approximately 2,600 **injuries** during 2015/16, one per cent lower than in the previous year and 26 per cent lower than five years earlier.
- The number of injuries to firefighters has been on a downward trend for over a decade. Whilst injuries in both operational incidents and training and routine work have decreased the number of injuries in operational incidents is less than a third of the peak in 2003/04, while the number of injuries in training and routine work is about half of the equivalent figure from 2003/04.
- Of those 2,600 injuries, approximately 1,050 were in **operational incidents**, one per cent greater than in the previous year but 15 per cent lower than five years beforehand. The number of operational incidents increased for only the second time in eight years (and by seven per cent) which may account for this increase¹⁹.

¹⁹ The source for this is the [Fire Statistics Monitor 2015-16](#).

Figure 3: Total injuries to firefighters in England, 2002/03 to 2015/16



- Of those 2,600 injuries, 49 were classed as major injuries²⁰, compared with 81 in the previous year and 74 five years beforehand.
- There was one firefighter fatality recorded in 2015/16; the first fatality since 2013/14. Over the last decade there have been 16 firefighter fatalities in total.
- There were approximately 2,760 **accidents involving FRS vehicles** in 2015/16, two per cent lower than the previous year and 26 per cent lower than five years beforehand.

4 Fire Prevention

Further statistics on Fire Prevention can be found in tables FIRE1201, FIRE1202 and FIRE1203 on the Fire Statistics Data Tables page here- <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables#fire-prevention>

FRSs have a duty to undertake community fire safety campaigns and initiatives. Typical activities include: Home Fire Risk Checks, arson prevention, promotional work with young people and other vulnerable groups. Home Fire Risk Checks are carried out on a targeted basis with various members of the community, including older people, disabled and youth groups, and can result in the installation of smoke alarms and fire prevention equipment.

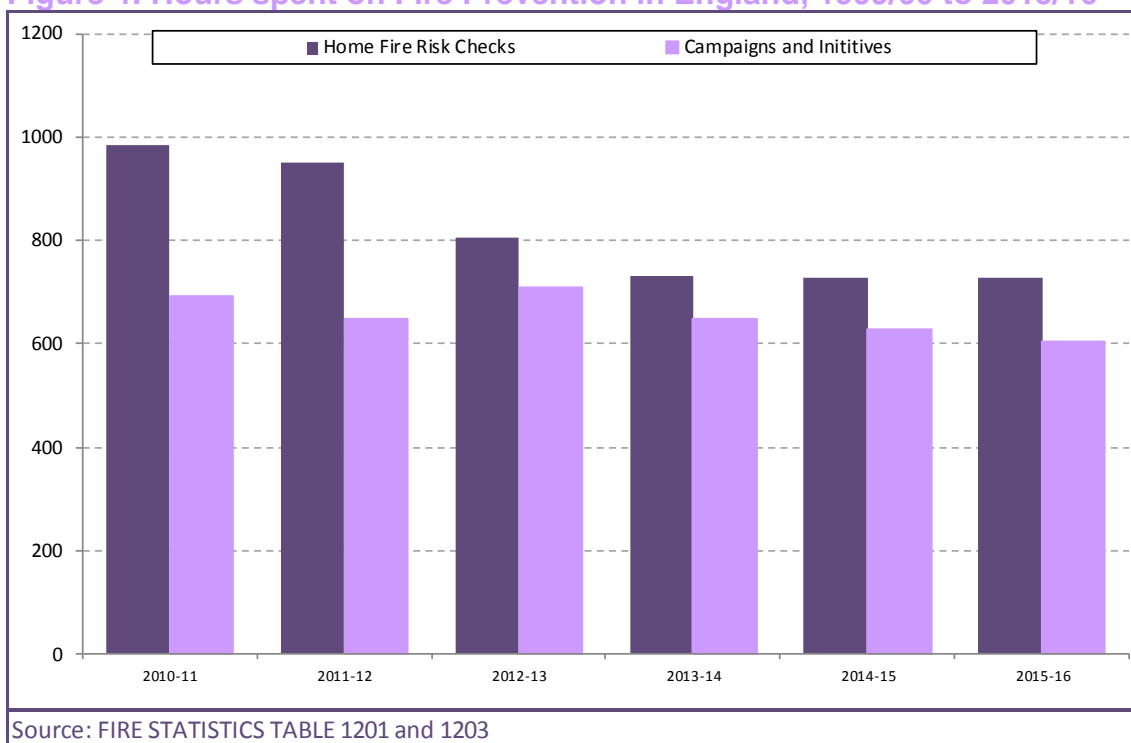
Fire and Rescue Authorities deliver their enforcement duties under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 ([the FSO](#)) through locally determined, risk-based programmes of audit/inspection visits to non-domestic premises. These Fire Safety

²⁰ For a full definition please see the [Operational Statistics Definitions document](#)

Audits form part of each Fire and Rescue Authority’s Integrated Risk Management Plan ([IRMP](#)).

- FRSs spent 730,000 hours on **Home Fire Risk Checks**²¹ in 2015/16, virtually the same amount as the previous year but 26 per cent lower than five years earlier.
- FRSs completed 581,000 Home Fire Risk Checks in 2015/16, five per cent less than the previous year and 25 per cent lower than five years ago.
- FRSs carried out 63,000 **Fire Safety Audits**¹⁵ in 2015/16, seven per cent more than the previous year but 25 per cent lower than five years before.
- 69 per cent of Fire Safety Audits carried out in 2015/16 were satisfactory²². This compares to 67 per cent in the previous year and 56 per cent five years earlier.
- FRSs spent 605,000 hours on **Campaigns and Initiatives**¹⁵ in 2015/16, four per cent lower than the previous year but 13 per cent lower than five years ago.

Figure 4: Hours spent on Fire Prevention in England, 1999/00 to 2015/16



²¹ For a full description please see the [Operational Statistics Definitions document](#)

²² An audit is “satisfactory” if the premises broadly comply with the Order and no further action is necessary.

5 Further Information

Guidance for using these statistics and other fire statistics publications can be found on or via the fire statistics collection page-

www.gov.uk/government/collections/fire-statistics

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

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Experimental Statistics:

Experimental statistics are statistics which are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.

The new Experimental Statistics on religion and sexual orientation serve a public good in understanding the diversity of the FRS workforce. They complement the existing statistics on gender, the improved statistics on ethnicity and new statistics on age.

We aim to work with FRSs to improve our understanding of these series and explore the scope for encouraging fuller datasets with fewer missing fields. We expect this process could take several years if, for instance, FRSs introduce new data collection systems. We will continue to monitor the feedback and interest in these new figures.

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 Paul Gaught

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 made in this release, and future changes, is 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](#).

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

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