

# Statistics on the number of incidents involving an attack on firefighters: England, April 2016 to March 2017

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## Introduction

This note summarises the number of incidents attended by fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England involving an attack on firefighters, as collected by the Home Office. The statistics are sourced from the Home Office's online Incident Recording System (IRS), which allows FRSs to complete an incident form for every incident attended, be it a fire, a false alarm or a non-fire (also known as a Special Service) incident. The online IRS was introduced in April 2009 and the information captured here replaces that previously submitted by FRSs on paper Fires of Special Interest (FOSI) forms.

Data are available on all IRS incidents attended where the firefighters experienced an attack<sup>1</sup>, either travelling to/from or at the incident. It should be noted that the IRS does not provide a complete picture of attacks on firefighters as it only covers incidents attended by firefighters through an emergency call. It does not therefore cover attacks occurring on, for example, training or routine activities. In addition, it provides a count of the number of incidents that involved an attack on firefighters not the number of attacks, as more than one firefighter could have been attacked at one incident.

The types of attack recorded are:

- harassment,
- objects thrown at firefighters/appliances,
- verbal abuse,
- physical abuse and
- other acts of aggression.

The question only allows one option to be coded and FRSs record the one that best describes it, so there may be an undercount of some types of attacks.

Figures are also collected on the number firefighters who sustained serious or slight injuries as a result of these attacks.

- 'Serious injuries' are defined as at least an overnight stay in hospital as an in-patient.
- 'Slight injuries' are defined as attending hospital as an outpatient, First Aid given at the scene (by anyone) or a precautionary check was recommended.

The '**Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Bill 2017-19**' is due to reach Committee stage on 15 November 2017. The Home Office has published this note in order to give background during the debate, providing quality assured and publicly available statistics.

Figures on the number of incidents involving an attack on firefighters will be published in the firefighter workforce and pensions statistical bulletin in future years.

[Further information on incidents involving attacks on firefighters can be found in fire data table 0510.](#)

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<sup>1</sup> One FRS, Berkshire, does not complete the attack on firefighters IRS questions. Whilst efforts have been made to gain consistent data some attacks on firefighters have been categorised as "unknown" type and the number of injuries from the attacks (0) may be an underestimate.

Information on attacks on firefighters at incidents attended by Welsh FRSs are not routinely published, but data to 2015/16 were made available in a [Welsh Government Cabinet Statement](#).

Scotland publish information on attacks on firefighters as part of their Fire safety and organisational statistics, available here:

<http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/about-us/fire-and-rescue-statistics.aspx>

### **The total number of incidents involving attacks on firefighters**

In 2016/17 there were 738 incidents involving an attack on firefighters, an increase of 116 on the previous year. The total number has fluctuated since 2010/11, when there were 867 incidents involving an attack on firefighters. The percentage of incidents where attacks have occurred has remained at around 0.1% of all incidents attended.

### **The type of attack and injuries**

The majority of incidents involving an attack involved verbal abuse (55%, 403 incidents in 2016/17) and a further 28 per cent involved objects being thrown at firefighters and /or appliances (206 incidents). The remaining incidents involved physical abuse (6%, 44 incidents), harassment (2%, 18 incidents) and other acts of aggression (9%, 64 incidents). These percentages were very similar to those in previous years.

In 2016/17, there were 56 injuries in total from these 738 incidents. The majority (52) were classified as slight and the remaining 4 as serious (requiring a hospital stay). These figures have fluctuated over the time period.

**Table A: Incidents attended by fire and rescue services where firefighters were attacked and injuries to firefighters: England, 2010/11 to 2016/17**

Year	Attacks on firefighters							Injuries from attacks		
	Total	Harassment	Objects thrown at firefighters/appliances	Physical abuse	Verbal abuse	Other acts of aggression	Unknown	Total	Slight	Serious
2010/11	<b>867</b>	38	250	45	472	62	0	<b>26</b>	24	2
2011/12	<b>835</b>	26	266	37	435	70	1	<b>25</b>	24	1
2012/13	<b>616</b>	22	158	26	353	53	4	<b>53</b>	53	0
2013/14	<b>605</b>	23	155	28	352	46	1	<b>40</b>	36	4
2014/15	<b>578</b>	25	149	25	323	56	0	<b>24</b>	23	1
2015/16	<b>622</b>	21	161	38	327	74	1	<b>28</b>	22	6
2016/17	<b>738</b>	18	206	44	403	64	3	<b>56</b>	52	4