



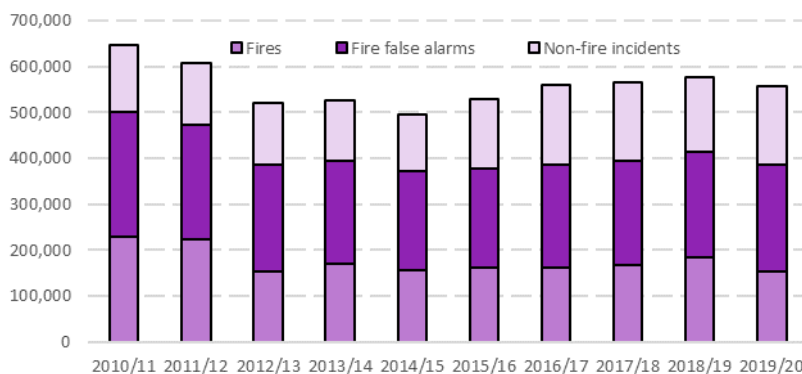
Fire and rescue incident statistics, England, year ending March 2020

This release contains statistics about incidents attended by fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England for 2019/20 (or the year ending March 2020). The statistics are sourced from the Home Office’s online Incident Recording System (IRS) and include statistics on all incidents, fire-related fatalities and casualties from fires, with long term comparisons.

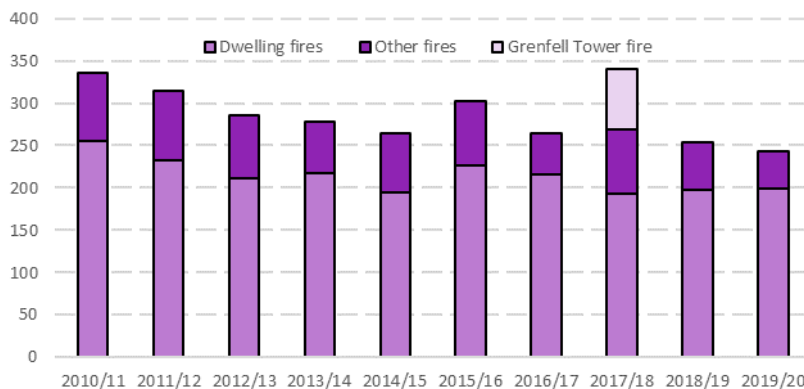
Key results



FRSs attended **557,299 incidents** in 2019/20. This was a three per cent decrease compared with the previous year (576,391). Of these incidents, there were **153,957 fires**. This was a 16 per cent decrease compared with the previous year (182,915) with falls in all types of fires but particularly driven by a 23 per cent fall in secondary fires now that the hot, dry 2018 summer is in the comparator year.



There were **243 fire-related fatalities** in 2019/20 (the lowest number of fire-related fatalities in the annual series) compared with 253 in the previous year.



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[Home Office statistics release calendar](#)

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1 Incident summary

Incidents that FRSs attend are categorised into three main types - [fires attended](#), [non-fire incidents](#) and [fire false alarms](#).

Key results

In 2019/20:

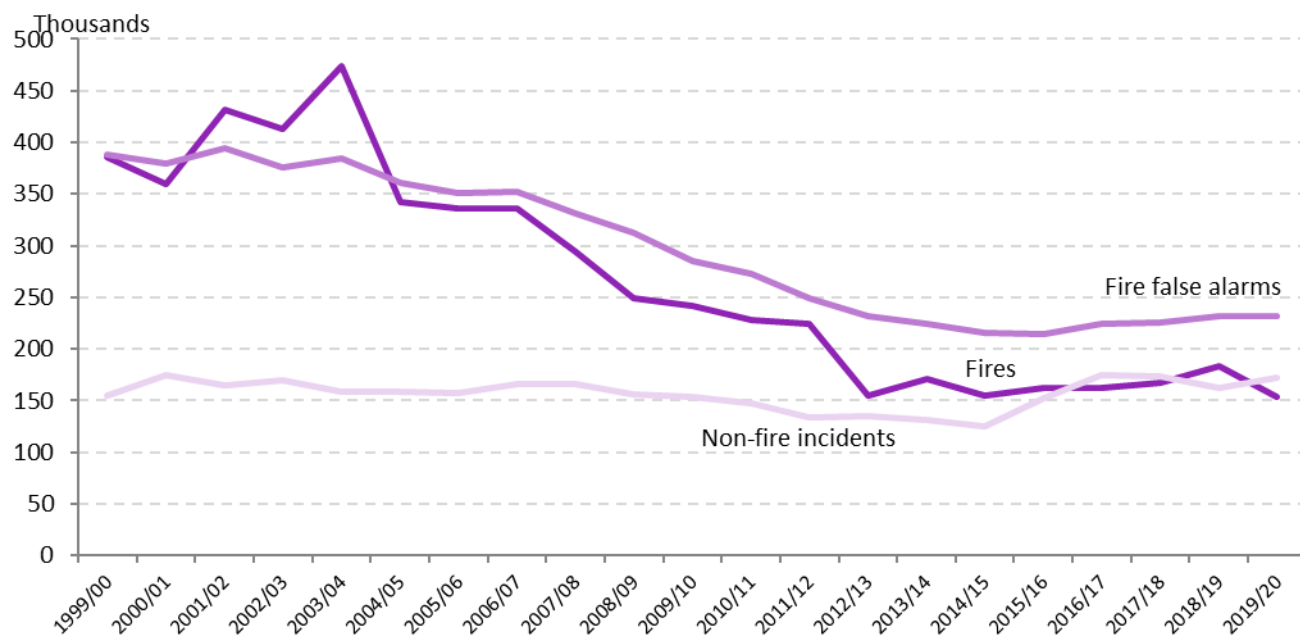
- **557,299 incidents were attended** by FRSs. This was a three per cent decrease compared with the previous year (576,391), a 12 per cent increase compared with five years ago (496,135) but an 18 per cent decrease compared with ten years ago (680,634). The decrease this year compared with last year was driven by a decrease in the number of fires attended, particularly secondary fires. ([Source: FIRE0102](#))
- Of all incidents attended by FRSs, **fires accounted for 28 per cent, fire false alarms 42 per cent and non-fire incidents 31 per cent.**¹ This compares with fires accounting for 35 per cent, fire false alarms 42 per cent and non-fire incidents 23 per cent ten years ago. ([Source: FIRE0102](#))

The number of incidents attended by FRSs in England peaked in 2003/04, at over one million incidents. For around a decade, there was a general decline in all three categories of incidents attended and between 2012/13 and 2015/16 there were around half a million a year. Since 2015/16 this number rose to around 576,000 incidents in 2018/19 then fell to around 557,000 in 2019/20 ([Figure 1.1](#)).

In contrast to the earlier decreases (caused by a reduction in fire and fire false alarm incidents), the increase in total incidents between 2014/15 and 2019/20 was driven by increases non-fire incidents and, to a lesser extent, fire false alarms. The increase in non-fire incidents was mainly due to the changes in the number of medical incidents and collaboration incidents attended, which are discussed in Section 4. This year's decrease in total incidents compared with 2018/19 was driven by a decrease in the number of fires attended due to the hot, dry summer of 2018 being in the comparator year.

¹ Figures do not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Figure 1.1: Total incidents attended by type of incident, England; 1999/00 to 2019/20



Source: [FIRE0102](#)

2 Fires attended

Fire incidents are broadly categorised as primary, secondary or chimney fires depending on the location, severity and risk levels of the fire, and on the scale of response needed from FRSs to contain them.

Primary fires are those that meet at least one of the following criteria – occurred in a (non-derelect) building, vehicle or outdoor structure or involved a fatality, casualty or rescue or were attended by five or more pumping appliances.

Secondary fires are generally small outdoor fires, not involving people or property.

Chimney fires are in (non-industrial) buildings where the flame was contained within the chimney structure.

Key results

In 2019/20:

- **FRSs attended 153,957 fires.** This was a 16 per cent decrease compared with the previous year (182,915), a one per cent decrease compared with five years ago (155,040) and a 36 per cent decrease compared with ten years ago (241,462). The decrease from the previous year was across all fire types but was particularly driven by a 23 per cent decrease in secondary fires (from 106,303 to 82,150) now that the hot, dry summer of 2018 is in the comparator year. Secondary fires display seasonality, with more occurring during the hotter and drier months. ([Source: FIRE0102](#))
- There were **68,677 primary fires** (45% of the 153,957 fires attended). This was a six per cent decrease compared with the previous year (73,278), a three per cent decrease compared with five years ago (71,116) and a 32 per cent decrease compared with ten years ago (101,159). Compared with last year, there were decreases of four per cent in dwelling fires, five per cent in other buildings fires and six per cent in road vehicle fires. Similar to secondary fires, other outdoor fires² decreased by 20 per cent, now that the hot, dry summer of 2018 is in the comparator year, but these are a relatively small category of primary fires. ([Source: FIRE0102](#))
- FRSs attended **775 fires in purpose-built high-rise (10+ storeys) flats**, a six per cent decrease compared with the previous year (821). This was three per cent of the 28,447 primary dwelling fires attended in 2019/20. ([Source: FIRE0205](#))

The long-term picture shows that the total number of fires attended by FRSs decreased for around a decade – falling by around two thirds from a peak of around 474,000 in 2003/04 to around 154,000 in 2012/13. The total number of fires has fluctuated since 2012/13.

[Figure 2.1](#) shows the long-term trend in fire incidents from 1999/00 to 2019/20, for primary (split into dwelling and other primary) and secondary plus chimney fires. The series high for secondary plus chimney fires occurred in 2003/04, which experienced an unusually hot and dry summer. This reflects the fact that the total number of fires attended in a single year can

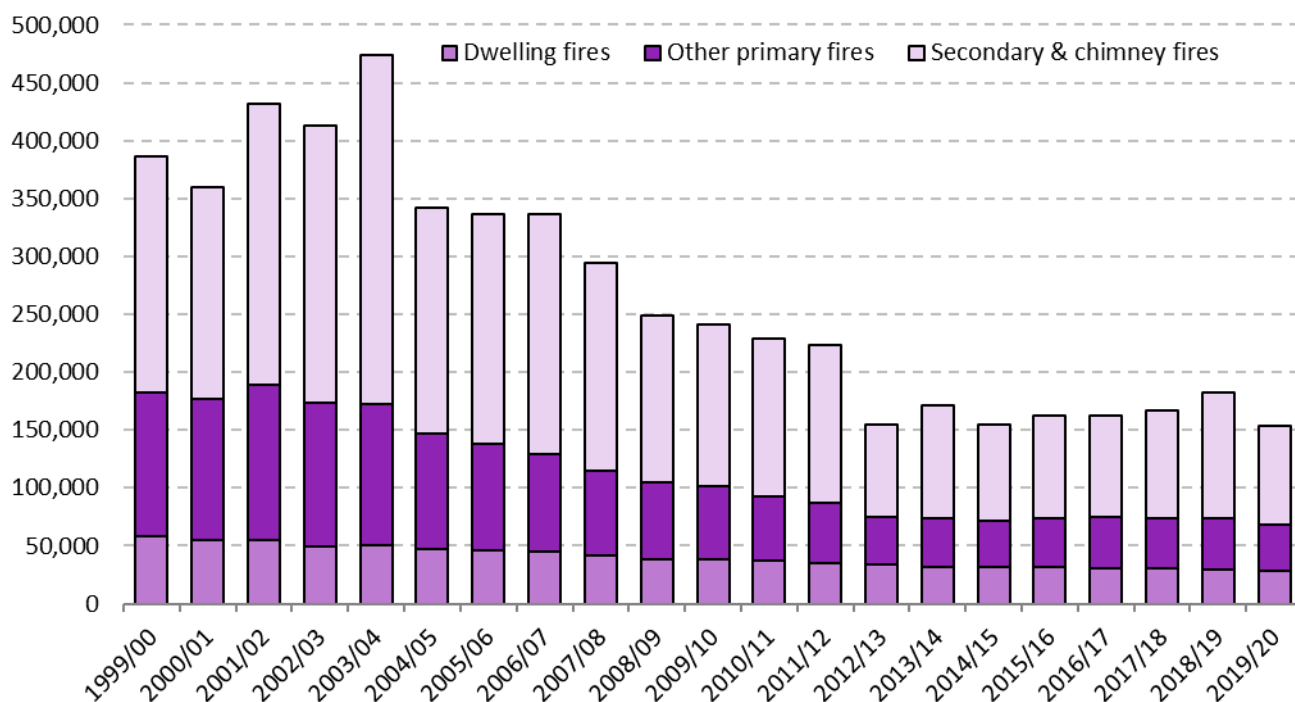
² Fires in either primary outdoor locations (that is, aircraft, boats, trains and outdoor structures such as post or telephone boxes, bridges, tunnels etc.), or fires in non-primary outdoor locations that have casualties or five or more pumping appliances attending.

often be affected by external factors, particularly the weather. Weather is more likely to affect outdoor primary and secondary fires which make up a large share of all fires (over half in almost every year since these figures became available in 1999/00).

Over the past decade, road vehicle, other building and other outdoor fires have shown the greatest decreases within primary fires (37%, 35% and 33% respectively), while primary dwelling fires have decreased by 26 per cent. Secondary fires have decreased by 38 per cent since 2009/10. Chimney fires have shown the greatest proportional decrease (down 57 per cent since 2009/10) but, at just 3,130 fires in 2019/20, these are a very small category of fire.

Of the 28,447 primary dwelling fires attended by FRSs, around three-quarters (74%) were in houses, bungalows, converted flats and other properties, whilst around a quarter (26%) were in purpose-built flats. When looking at fires in purpose-built flats in more detail, 17 per cent of all dwelling fires were in purpose-built low-rise (1-3 storeys) flats/maisonettes; seven per cent were in purpose-built medium-rise (4-9 storeys) flats and three per cent were in purpose-built high-rise (10+ storeys) flats.

Figure 2.1: Total fires attended by type of fire³, England; 1999/00 to 2019/20



Source: [FIRE0102](#)

³ The 'other primary fires' besides primary dwelling fires are other buildings, road vehicles and other outdoor fires.

3 Fire false alarms

Fire false alarms are where an FRS attends a location believing there to be a fire incident but, on arrival, discovers that no such incident exists or existed. They are broadly categorised by motive into 'due to apparatus', 'good intent' and 'malicious'.

Due to apparatus calls are where a fire alarm or fire-fighting equipment operate (including accidental initiation by persons) in error.

Good intent calls are made in good faith in the belief that the FRS really would be attending a fire.

Malicious false alarms are made with the intention of getting the FRS to attend a non-existent incident.

Key results

In 2019/20:

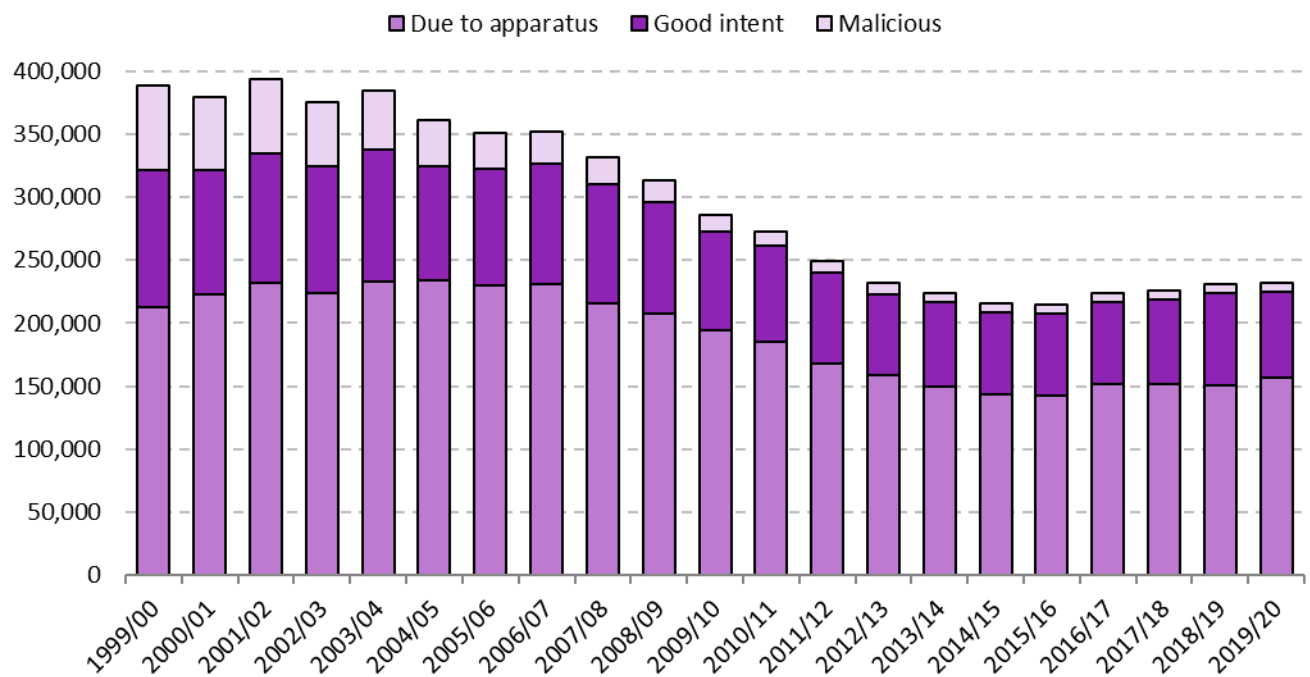
- **FRSs attended 231,431 fire false alarms.** This was unchanged compared with the previous year (231,225), a seven per cent increase compared with five years ago (215,856) and a 19 per cent decrease compared with ten years ago (285,368).

The number of fire false alarms attended by fire and rescue services in England was on a general downward trajectory, from a peak of around 393,900 in 2001/02 to a low of around 214,400 in 2015/16 ([Figure 3.1](#)). The number then climbed to around 231,400 in 2019/20. The proportion of incidents that were fire false alarms has been relatively stable over the past decade, varying between 40 and 44 per cent.

Fire false alarms are broadly categorised by motive into 'due to apparatus', 'good intent' and 'malicious'. In 2019/20 there were:

- 157,149 fire false alarms due to apparatus, a four per cent increase from the previous year (151,037), a nine per cent increase from five years previously (143,710) but a 19 per cent decrease from ten years previously (194,002);
- 67,738 fire false alarms due to good intent in 2019/20, a decrease of seven per cent from the previous year (73,025), an increase of four per cent from five years previously (65,335) and a decrease of 14 per cent from ten year previously (78,961); and
- 6,544 malicious fire false alarms in 2019/20, decreases of nine per cent from the previous year (7,163), four per cent from five years previously (6,811) and 47 per cent from ten year previously (12,405). ([Source: FIRE0104](#))

Figure 3.1: Total fire false alarms attended by type of false alarm, England; 1999/00 to 2019/20



Source: [FIRE0102](#)

4 Non-fire incidents attended

FRSs attend many types of incident that are not fires or fire false alarms, these are known as **non-fire incidents** or special service incidents. Examples include flooding incidents, responding to road traffic collisions, animal assistance and collaboration incidents such as effecting entry/exit and assisting other agencies (a complete list can be found in fire data table [FIRE0902](#)).

Key results

In 2019/20:

- FRSs attended **171,911 non-fire incidents**. This was a six per cent increase compared with the previous year (162,251), a 37 per cent increase compared with five years ago (125,239) and a 12 per cent increase compared with ten years ago (153,804). This year's total demonstrates a mixed picture with a decrease in medical incidents but an increase for assisting other agencies and effecting entry/exit, with smaller decreases or increases in other non-fire incident types. (Source: [FIRE0901](#), [FIRE0902](#))
- FRSs attended **18,304 medical incidents**. This was an eight per cent decrease compared with the previous year (19,906). The removal of support for the emergency medical responding trials by the Fire Brigades Union in September 2017 ([described further below](#)) is likely to be driving this decrease. (Source: [FIRE0901](#), [FIRE0902](#))
- When excluding medical incidents, FRSs attended **153,607 other non-fire incidents**, an eight per cent increase compared with the previous year (142,345). This increase was a mixed picture with flooding incidents increasing by 16 per cent and most of the other non-fire incident types increasing. (Source: [FIRE0901](#), [FIRE0902](#))

There was a general decline in the number of non-fire incidents attended between 2007/08 and 2014/15 ([Figure 4.1](#)), followed by a large increase of almost two-fifths to 2016/17 after which it has been relatively stable. There were 171,911 non-fire incidents attended in England in 2019/20.

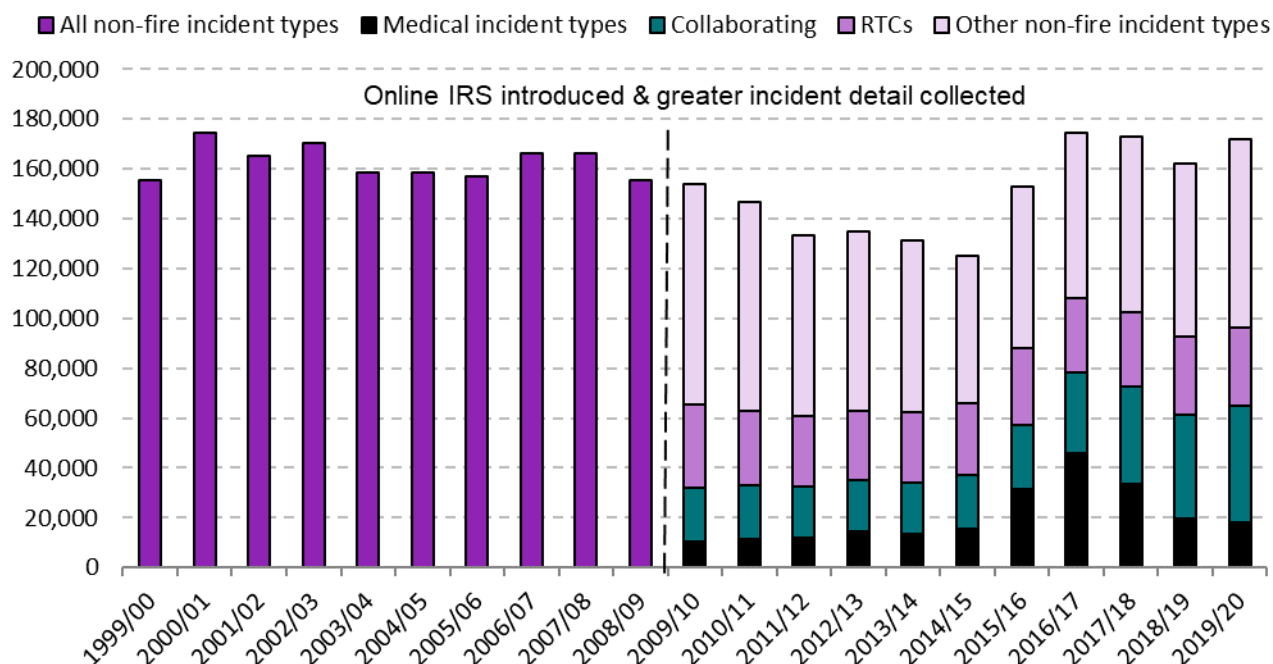
[Table 4.1](#) shows the five largest categories of non-fire incidents attended by FRSs in England in 2019/20. These were, in descending order: road traffic collisions, effecting entry/exit, assisting other agencies, medical incidents, and flooding incidents.

Table 4.1: The five largest categories of non-fire incidents attended by FRSs in England in 2019/20, compared with 2018/19

	Road traffic collisions	Effecting entry/exit	Assisting other agencies	Medical incidents	Flooding incidents
2018/19	31,114	24,880	14,821	19,906	13,367
2019/20	31,080	26,331	18,324	18,304	15,526
Change	-	+6%	+24%	-8%	+16%

Source: [FIRE0901](#), [FIRE0902](#)

Figure 4.1: Total non-fire incidents⁴ attended by FRSs, England; 1999/00 to 2019/20



Source: [FIRE0901](#)

Between 2009/10, when attendance at medical incidents were first recorded, and 2014/15, the number of medical incidents attended steadily rose from around 10,000 to around 16,000 a year. From 2014/15 to 2016/17 a little under two-thirds (61%) of the increase in non-fire incidents was accounted for by a further rise in the number of medical incidents attended. The large increase in the number of medical incidents attended coincided with the introduction, in 2015, of the National Joint Council (NJC) supported trials of emergency medical responding (EMR) where FRSs formed agreements with ambulance trusts to undertake health and care related work, in particular co-responding. The number of such incidents peaked in 2016/17, but on 18 September 2017 the Fire Brigades Union, who represent the employees’ side of the NJC, removed their support for the EMR trials. As a result, some of this work has now stopped and it is likely that this is driving the recent decrease in such incidents.

Between 2015/16 and 2019/20 the number of collaborating incidents attended nearly doubled (from 25,966 to 46,690), as can be seen in [Figure 4.1](#). The increases coincide with the [duty to collaborate legislation](#), whereby each emergency service “must keep under consideration whether entering into a collaboration agreement with one or more other relevant emergency services in England could be in the interests of the efficiency or effectiveness of that service and those other services.” See the [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#), Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 2(1) for more details.

For more detailed information on EMR incidents, see [table FIRE0902](#) and [‘Detailed analysis of non-fire incidents’](#).

⁴ Medical incidents include “First responder” and “Co-responder” incidents; collaborating incidents are “Assisting other agencies”, “Effecting entry/exit” and “Suicide/attempts”; RTCs are road traffic collisions.

5 Fire-related fatalities and casualties

As the Incident Recording System (IRS) is a continually updated database, the statistics published in this release may not match those held locally by FRSs, and revisions may occur in the future (see the revisions section for further detail). This may be particularly relevant for fire-related fatalities, where a coroner's report could lead to revisions in the data some time after the incident. **It should also be noted that the numbers of fire-related fatalities are prone to year-on-year fluctuations due to relatively low numbers.**

Fire-related fatalities are those that would not have otherwise occurred had there not been a fire. For the purpose of publications, a fire-related fatality includes those that were recorded as 'don't know'.

Non-fatal casualties are those resulting from a fire, whether the injury was caused by the fire or not.

Key results

In 2019/20:

- There were **243 fire-related fatalities** compared with 253 in the previous year (a decrease of 4%). Fire-related fatalities decreased by eight per cent compared with five years ago when there were 264 fire-related fatalities and by 29 per cent compared with ten years ago when there were 340. Fire-related fatalities had been on a downward trend since the 1980s but have plateaued in recent years. However, this year's figure is the lowest number in the annual series. ([Source: FIRE0502](#))
- There were **6,910 non-fatal casualties**⁵, a four per cent decrease compared with the 7,163 in the previous year. There has been a nine per cent decrease compared with the 7,596 non-fatal casualties five years ago and a 22 per cent decrease compared with 8,864 ten years ago. ([Source: FIRE0502](#))

The number of fire-related fatalities in England has been on a general downward trend since 1981/82 (see [Figure 5.1](#)), when comparable figures first became available. Though the numbers have fluctuated due to the relatively small numbers involved, over recent years the number of fatalities has plateaued and reached an annual series low of 243 in 2019/20. There was an exceptionally high figure in 2017/18 due to the Grenfell Tower fire.⁶

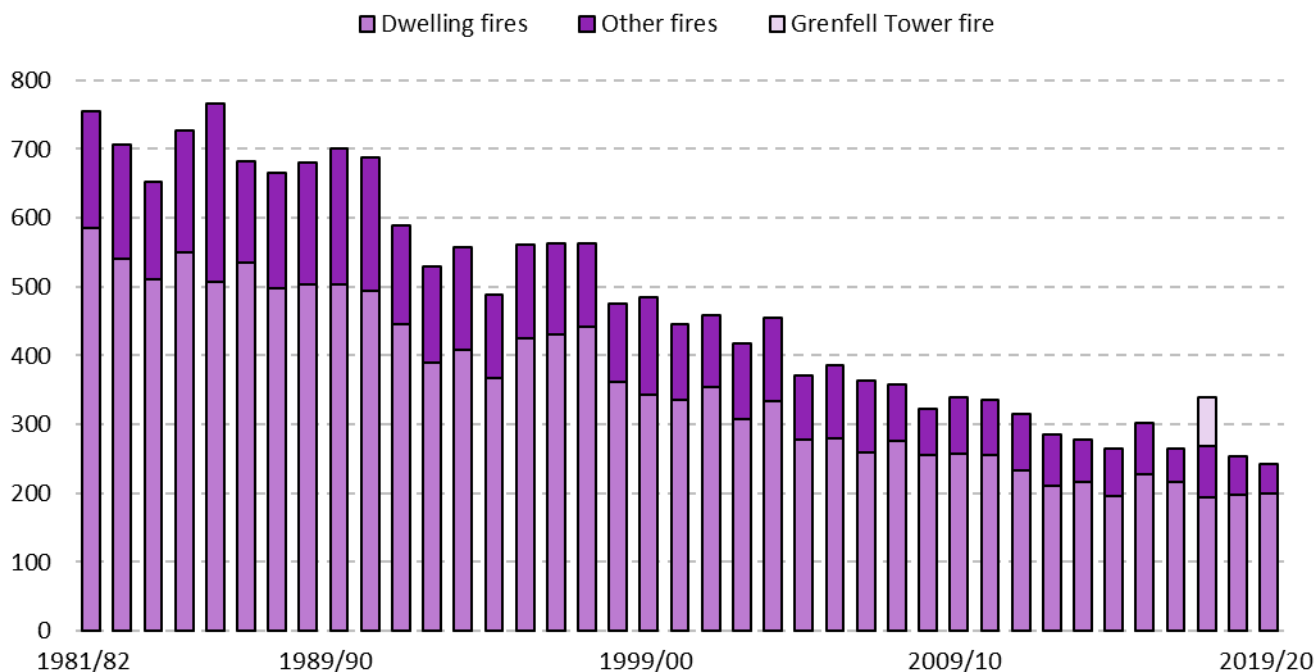
A very small proportion of fires resulted in a fire-related fatality: 232 out of the 68,677 primary fires (0.34%) in 2019/20. This proportion is a slight increase compared with the previous year, when there were 231 fires with a fire-related fatality out of the 73,278 primary

⁵ A further breakdown of the different types of non-fatal casualties is available in the published fire data tables.

⁶ London Fire Brigade's records of the number of fatalities (71) are based on information provided by the Metropolitan Police Service. On 29 January 2018, a further victim, who had initially survived the fire, passed away in hospital. As a result, a figure of 72 fatalities from the Grenfell Tower fire has been widely cited in the media and the Grenfell Tower inquiry honoured her memory at the commemoration hearings. However, at the time of writing the Metropolitan Police had not yet added her to the official list of fatalities from the fire, pending the results of a coroner's report which will determine whether her death was a direct result of the fire or caused by her pre-existing medical condition. She, therefore, remains counted in the list of non-fatal casualties pending a final decision from the coroner and the subsequent updating of any formal records in the police and fire systems regarding this case.

fires (0.32%). There were five fires from the 775 fires in purpose-built high-rise (10+ storeys) flats in 2019/20 which resulted in a fatality, compared with four in the previous year.

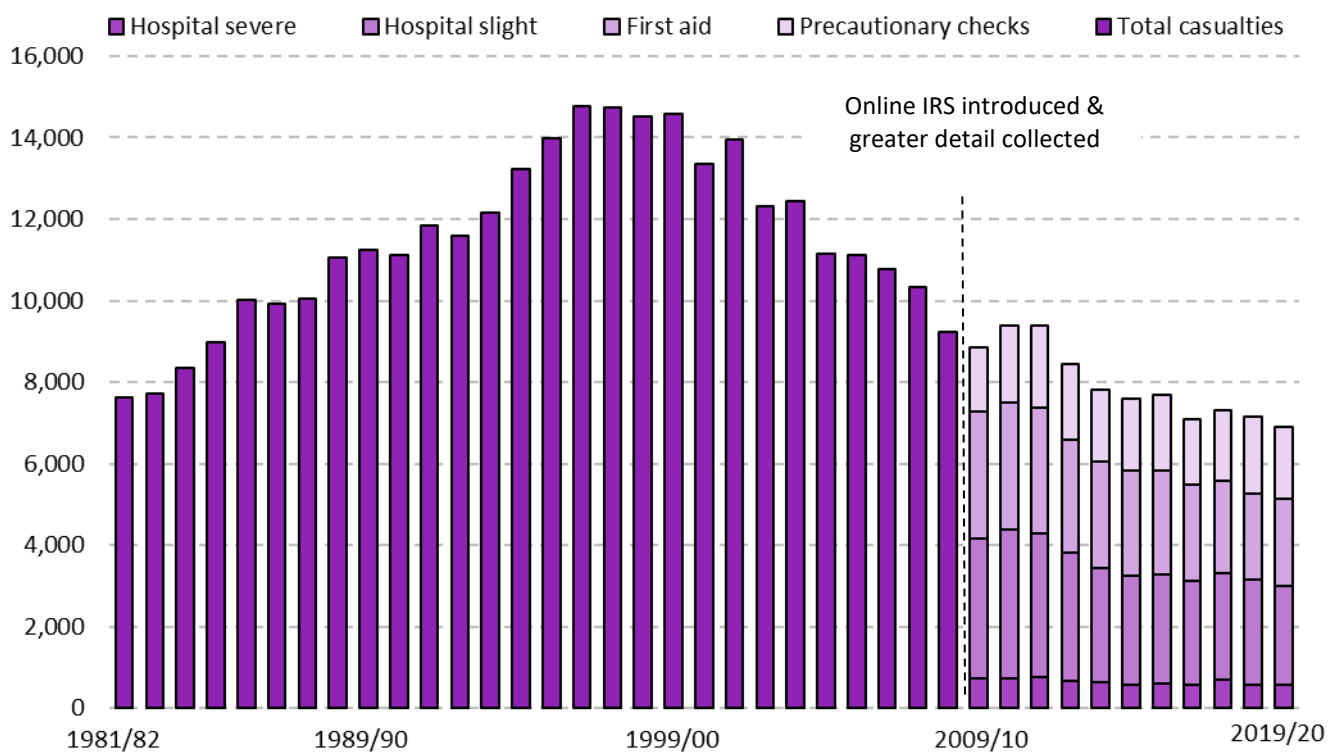
Figure 5.1: Total fire-related fatalities in dwellings or other fires, England; 1981/82 to 2019/20



Source: [FIRE0502](#)

The number of non-fatal casualties in fires in England had been on a downward trend since the mid-1990s, but it appears the downward trend has slowed down in recent years ([Figure 5.2](#)). Since the introduction of the online IRS in 2009/10, detail on injury severity has been collected. All categories of severity have fallen by at least 25 per cent in 2019/20 compared with 2009/10, except 'precautionary checks' which has increased by 12 per cent. Although the absolute numbers have fallen, the proportion of non-fatal casualties requiring hospital treatment has been relatively stable since the online IRS was introduced, ranging between 43 and 47 per cent. Of the non-fatal casualties this year, 2,995 were casualties requiring hospital treatment, a five per cent decrease compared with the 3,144 in the previous year.

Figure 5.2: Total non-fatal casualties in fires by injury severity, England; 1981/82 to 2019/20



Source: [FIRE0502](#)

Notes: These figures are for all non-fatal casualties in fires, whether the fire caused the casualty or not.

6 Summary of changes over time

Table 6.1: Number of incidents, comparing 2019/20 with 2018/19, five years previously in 2014/15 and ten years previously in 2009/10

Incident type	2019/20 compared with		
	2018/19	2014/15	2009/10
557,299 all incidents	576,391 -3% ↓	496,135 +12% ↑	680,634 -18% ↓
153,957 fires	182,915 -16% ↓	155,040 -1% ↓	241,462 -36% ↓
68,677 primary fires	73,278 -6% ↓	71,116 -3% ↓	101,159 -32% ↓
28,447 dwelling fires	29,595 -4% ↓	31,334 -9% ↓	38,376 -26% ↓
25,484 accidental dwelling fires	26,562 -4% ↓	28,321 -10% ↓	33,032 -23% ↓
82,150 secondary fires	106,303 -23% ↓	78,743 +4% ↑	132,941 -38% ↓
231,431 fire false alarms	231,225 =	215,856 +7% ↑	285,368 -19% ↓
171,911 non-fire incidents	162,251 +6% ↑	125,239 +37% ↑	153,804 +12% ↑
18,304 medical incidents	19,906 -8% ↓	15,807 +16% ↑	10,241 +79% ↑

Table 6.2: Number of fire-related fatalities and non-fatal casualties, comparing 2019/20 with 2018/19, five years previously in 2014/15 and ten years previously in 2009/10

Fatalities and non-fatal casualties	2019/20 compared with		
	2018/19	2014/15	2009/10
243 fire-related fatalities	253 -4% ↓	264 -8% ↓	340 -29% ↓
199 fire-related fatalities in dwellings	198 =	195 +2% ↑	257 -23% ↓
6,910 non-fatal casualties	7,163 -4% ↓	7,596 -9% ↓	8,864 -22% ↓
2,995 non-fatal casualties requiring hospital treatment	3,144 -5% ↓	3,252 -8% ↓	4,155 -28% ↓
5,133 non-fatal casualties in dwellings	5,239 -2% ↓	5,926 -13% ↓	6,863 -25% ↓

Source: [Fire statistics data tables](#)

7 Further information

This release contains statistics about incidents attended by fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England. The statistics are sourced from the [Home Office's online Incident Recording System \(IRS\)](#). This system allows FRSs to complete an incident form for every incident attended, be it a fire, a false alarm or a non-fire incident (also known as a Special Service incident). The online IRS was introduced in April 2009. Previously, paper forms were submitted by FRSs and an element of sampling was involved in the data compilation process.

Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics and other Home Office statistical releases are available via the [Statistics at Home Office](#) pages on the GOV.UK website.

Data tables linked to this release and all other fire statistics releases can be found on the Home Office's ['Fire statistics data tables'](#) page.

Guidance for using these statistics and other fire statistics outputs, including a Quality Report, is available on the [fire statistics guidance](#) page.

The information published in this release is kept under review, taking into account the needs of users and burdens on suppliers and producers, in line with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). If you have any comments, suggestions or enquiries, please contact the team via email using firestatistics@homeoffice.gov.uk or via the user feedback form on the fire statistics collection page.

Revisions

The IRS is a continually updated database, with FRSs adding incidents daily. The figures in this release refer to records of incidents that occurred up to and including 31 March 2020. This includes incident records that were submitted to the IRS by 14 June 2020, when a snapshot of the database was taken for the purpose of analysis. As a snapshot of the dataset was taken on 14 June 2020, the statistics published may not match those held locally by FRSs and revisions may occur in the future. This is particularly the case for statistics with relatively small numbers, such as fire-related fatalities. For instance, this can occur because coroner's reports may mean the initial view taken by the FRS will need to be revised; this can take many months, even years, to do so.

COVID-19 and the impact on the IRS

The figures presented in this release relate to incidents attended by FRSs during the period April 2019 to the end of March 2020. In response to the coronavirus pandemic, restrictions in England and Wales started from 12 March 2020 and lockdown was applied on 23 March 2020, which imposed strict limits on daily life. The start of the restrictions and the first eight days of lockdown are therefore captured in IRS data for the year ending March 2020.

Home Office statisticians have been monitoring incidents on the IRS since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown to ensure that data quality has not been reduced, and that all incidents are recorded. In addition, FRSs were asked to upload the information more quickly after attending an incident so that the IRS could be used to produce Management

Information to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on FRSs capacity. Analysis of this time period will be included in the next release, covering the year ending June 2020.

Changes to this release and future releases

This release has been published using the new Home Office statistical release template. We welcome comments on the new format of release. Please send any comments to FireStatistics@homeoffice.gov.uk.

Other related publications

[Home Office](#) publish five other statistical releases covering fire and rescue services:

- [Detailed analysis of fires attended by fire and rescue services in England](#): focuses on fires attended by fire and rescue services across England, fire-related fatalities and non-fatal casualties in those fires; including analyses of the causes of fires and smoke alarms ownership and operation.
- [Detailed analysis of non-fire incidents attended by fire and rescue services, England](#): focuses on non-fire incidents attended by fire and rescue services across England, including analysis on overall trends, fatalities and non-fatal casualties in non-fire incidents, and further detailed analysis of different categories of non-fire incidents.
- [Fire and rescue workforce and pensions statistics](#): focuses on total workforce numbers, workforce diversity and information regarding leavers and joiners; covers both pension fund income and expenditure and firefighters' pension schemes membership; and includes information on incidents involving attacks on firefighters.
- [Fire prevention and protection statistics, England](#): focuses on trends in smoke alarm ownership, fire prevention and protection activities by fire and rescue services.
- [Response times to fires attended by fire and rescue services, England](#): covers statistics on trends in average response times to fires attended by fire and rescue services.

The [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government](#) publish one statistical release on fire:

- [English housing survey: fire and fire safety report](#): focuses on the extent to which the existence of fire and fire safety features vary by household and dwelling type.

Fire statistics are published by the other UK nations:

[Scottish fire statistics](#) and [Welsh fire statistics](#) are published based on the IRS. [Fire statistics for Northern Ireland](#) are published by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service using data from a system similar to the Incident Recording System, which means that they are not directly comparable to English, Welsh and Scottish data.



National Statistics

These statistics have been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority to ensure that they continue to meet the standards required to be designated as National Statistics. This statistical bulletin is produced to the highest professional standards and is free from political interference. It has been produced by statisticians working in accordance with the Home Office's Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, which covers Home Office policy on revisions and other matters. The Chief Statistician, as Head of Profession, reports to the National Statistician with respect to all professional statistical matters and oversees all Home Office National Statistics products with respect to the Code, being responsible for their timing, content and methodology. This means that these statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, impartiality, quality and public value, and are fully compliant with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

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