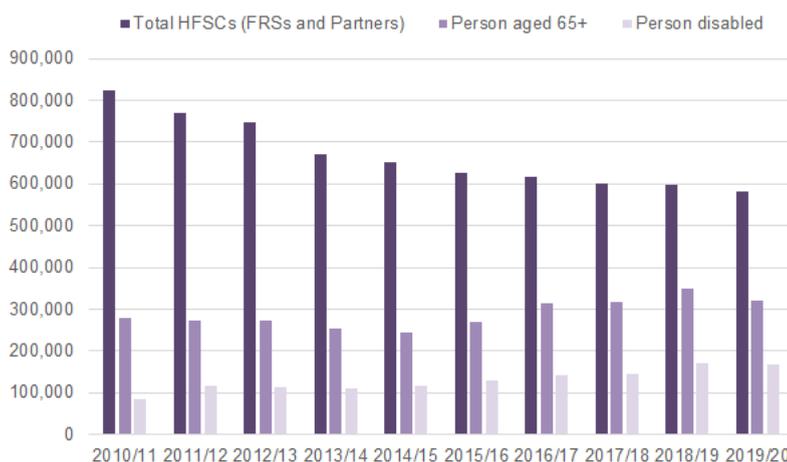




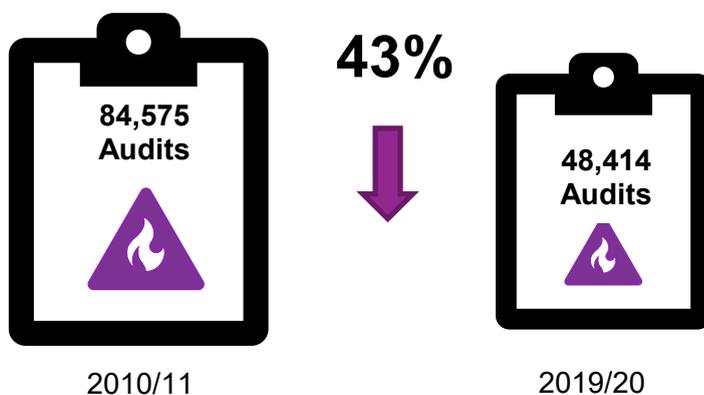
Fire prevention & protection statistics, England, April 2019 to March 2020

This release contains statistics from administrative sources about prevention and protection activities carried out by fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England.

The number of Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs) has been declining since 2010/11. In contrast, the number of targeted HFSCs (people aged 65 and over, disabled people) had both been increasing, although this year has shown a small decrease. In 2019/20, FRSs and their partners completed over 580,000 HFSCs. This was three per cent fewer than in 2018/19 and four per cent fewer than in 2014/15.



The total number of fire safety audits has been declining since 2010/11 (by 43%). It declined 27 per cent over the past five years, however was virtually unchanged since last year.



Contents

- 1 Fire prevention**..... 2
 - Home Fire Safety Checks and Safe and Well Visits3
 - Smoke alarm ownership4
- 2 Fire protection** 6
 - Number of fire safety audits6
 - Outcome of fire safety audits 7
 - Short audits 9
 - Staff employed for fire safety activity 10
 - Building regulation consultations and other fire safety activities 10
- 3 Further information**.....13

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1 Fire prevention

Fire and rescue services (FRSs) undertake prevention activities which provide information and advice and aim to encourage fire safety behaviours, educate people on the steps to be taken to prevent the occurrence of a fire and increase the survivability when involved in a fire. This section focuses on Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs, also known as Home Fire Risk Checks) and smoke alarm ownership.

Key results

- In 2019/20, **FRSs and their partners completed 581,917 HFSCs**. This was three per cent fewer than the previous year (597,656 in 2018/19) and four per cent fewer than five years previously (609,261 in 2014/15). (Source: [FIRE1201](#))
- In 2019/20, **FRSs and their partners completed 321,437 HFSCs targeted at people aged 65 and over**. This was eight per cent fewer than the previous year (349,792 in 2018/19) but 32 per cent greater than five years previously (243,136 in 2014/15). (Source: [FIRE1201](#))
- In 2019/20, **FRSs and their partners completed 168,485 HFSCs targeted at disabled people**. This was two per cent fewer than the previous year (172,087 in 2018/19) but 46 per cent greater than five years previously (115,347 in 2014/15). (Source: [FIRE1201](#))
- The latest available data show that in 2018/19, **91 per cent of households owned a working smoke alarm**, a one percentage point increase since 2017/18, a three percentage points increase since 2013/14 (88 per cent in 2013/14) and an increase of 15 percentage points since 2001 (the earliest date for which these data are available). (Source: [FIRE0701](#))

FRSs have been conducting fire prevention work for a number of years and in a number of different areas. This work became a statutory duty for FRSs in 2004 with the introduction of the [Fire and Rescue Services Act](#). Typical prevention activities include: Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs), Safe and Well visits, arson prevention, promotional work with young people and other vulnerable groups as well as other campaigns and initiatives. However, because of difficulties in defining some of this work (due to prevention activity taking on a wide range of forms and recording being inconsistent) and in order to minimise burdens on FRSs we have, from 2018/19, only collected information on HFSCs and Safe and Well visits (SWVs) – we no longer collect information on campaigns and initiatives. The information collected in previous years on campaigns and initiatives can be found in the [Table FIRE1203](#).

Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs) and Safe and Well visits (SWVs¹)

HFSCs are often targeted towards the more vulnerable members of the community, including older people and those with disabilities, and aim to offer bespoke fire safety advice based on their household and lifestyle which can mitigate the risk of fire. These visits can result in the installation of smoke alarms and safety recommendations such as moving/removing furniture which may be hazardous. Many FRSs now conduct HFSCs as part of a wider Safe and Well Visit (SWV), which can cover additional factors such as falls risk assessment, smoking cessation, cold homes and fuel poverty and a range of other health and community issues depending on local arrangements.

The Home Office has been collecting data on the number of HFSCs that FRSs carry out since 2010/11. At a national level, the number of HFSCs that FRSs complete has been declining since 2010/11 (see figure 1.1). In contrast, the number of HFSCs completed on the two targeted groups the Home Office monitor (people aged 65 and over, disabled people) both increased over the same time but have shown small decreases this year. FRSs may also choose to target other specific groups.

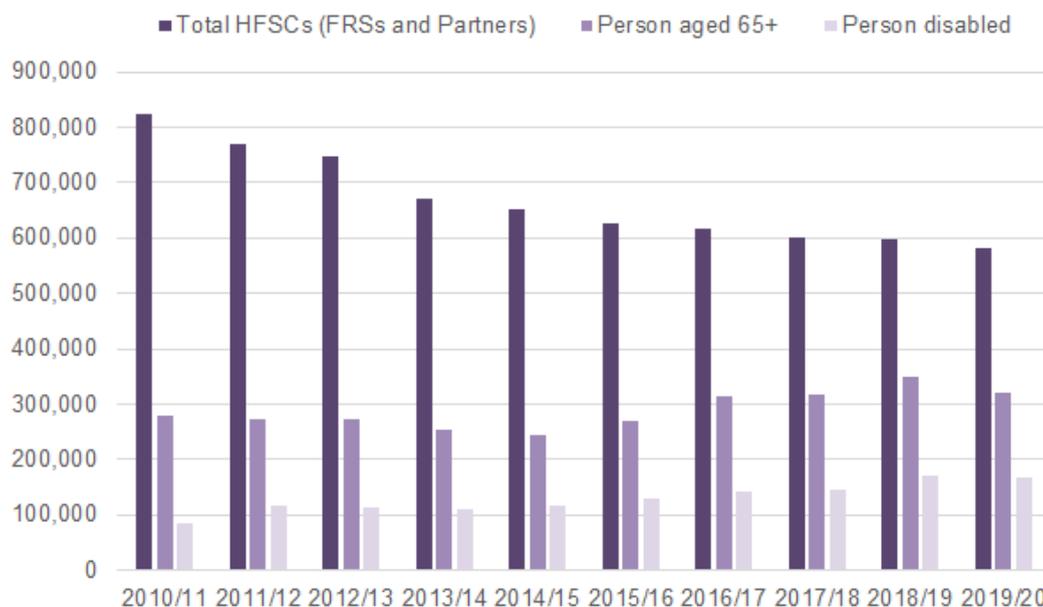
Due to the covid-19 pandemic, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) published a [position statement](#) on strategic intentions to FRSs which may have reduced prevention activity during March 2020. In 2019/20 FRSs and their partners completed 581,917 HFSCs.

FRS partners – includes organisations such as: Home Improvement Services, Education, Social Services, Voluntary Sector, Housing, Primary Care Trusts.

- FRSs and their partners completed 321,437 HFSCs targeted at people aged 65 and over.
- FRSs and their partners completed 168,485 HFSCs targeted at disabled people.
- The vast majority (98%) of HFSCs are completed by FRSs directly with the remaining two per cent (9,607) completed by partners in 2019/20 compared with three per cent in the previous year.
- For the second time, because of changes to how the data are collected last year, we can say how many HFSCs were targeted at the two groups without double-counting. Sixty-two per cent of HFSCs were targeted at the two groups in 2019/20, compared with 66 per cent in 2018/19.
- Of the 581,917 HFSCs undertaken in 2019/20, 344,815 (59%) were part of a SWV, this compares with 58 per cent in the previous year.

¹ For more detailed information on Safe and Well visits see the [NFCC website](#)

Figure 1.1: Total numbers of HFSCs and targeted HFSCs completed by FRSs, England, 2010/11 to 2019/20



Staff carrying out HFSCs and S&W visits

Data on the number and role of staff carrying out HFSCs and S&W visits were first collected in 2018/19, however this is the first year the data are of sufficient quality for publication. Out of the 45 FRSs, 40 were able to quantify the number of staff carrying out these visits.

In 2019/20 for HFSCs, for these 40 FRSs, there was an average of 2.3 staff carrying out these visits with 87 per cent of staff being firefighters. For S&Ws, there was an average of 2.0 staff carrying out these visits with 80 per cent being firefighters. ([Table FIRE1201a](#))

Smoke alarm ownership

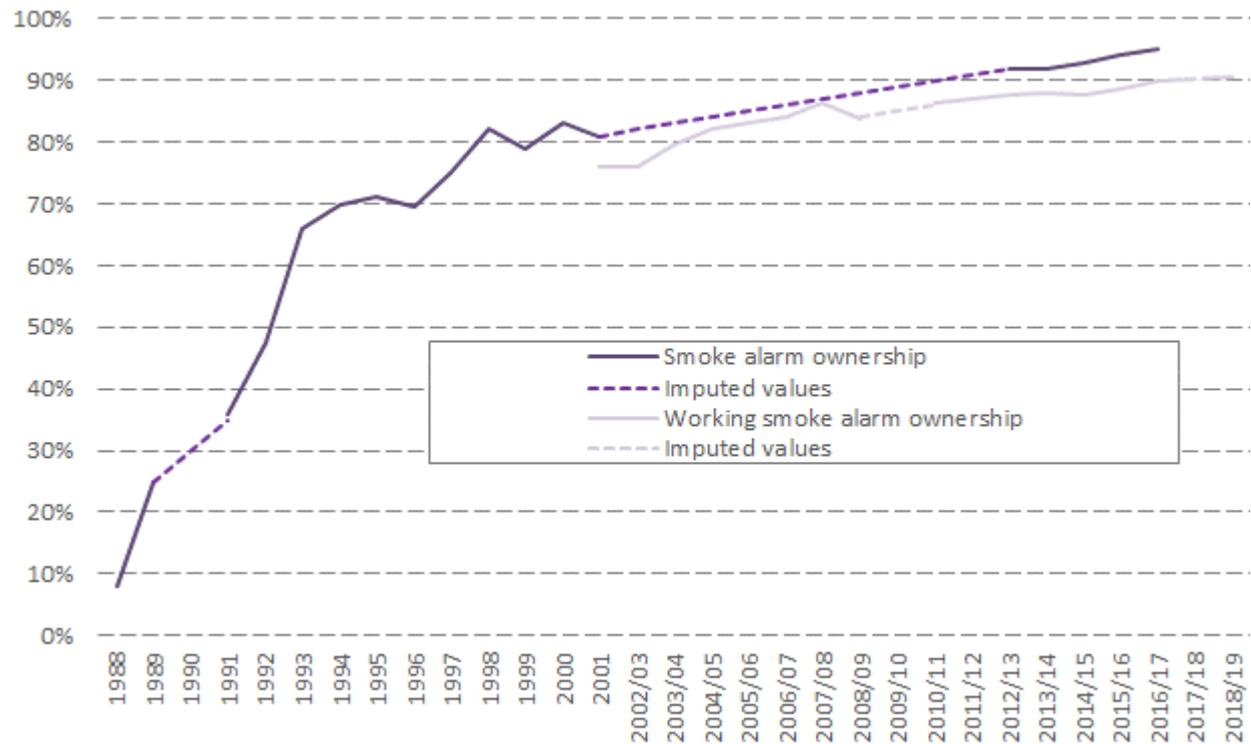
Data on the proportion of households with a smoke alarm have been collected since the 1980s from a variety of sources and data on ownership of a working smoke alarm have been collected from 2001. Since 2008/09 the [English Housing Survey \(EHS\)](#) has been the primary source of information on smoke alarm ownership. The exact questions asked change each year but have previously included ownership of a smoke alarm, ownership of a working smoke alarm, smoke alarm testing habits and carbon monoxide alarm ownership.

The latest available data show that in 2018/19, 91 per cent of households owned a working smoke alarm, a one percentage point increase from 2017/18, a three percentage points increase since 2013/14 when it was 88 per cent and an increase of 15 percentage points since 2001 (the earliest date for which these data are available).

In 2016/17, 95 per cent of households reported owning a smoke alarm: the highest level ever recorded. The five-percentage points difference between households owning a smoke alarm and households having a working smoke alarm is the same as reported in 2014/15,

the last time both questions were asked. However, only 26 per cent of the people who own an alarm say they take the time to test it at least monthly.

Figure 1.2: Percentage of households owning a smoke alarm or working smoke alarm, England & Wales or England, 1988 to 2018/19



2 Fire protection

Fire protection refers to FRSs' statutory role in ensuring public safety in the wider built environment and involves auditing and, where necessary, enforcing regulatory compliance, primarily but not exclusively in respect of the provisions of the [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005 \(FSO\)](#). This section of the release specifically focuses on fire safety audits, short audits and building regulation consultations.

Key results

- **In 2019/20 FRSs carried out 48,414 Fire Safety Audits.** This was two per cent fewer than the previous year (49,327 in 2018/19) but 18 per cent fewer than five years previously (58,827 in 2014/15). (Source: [FIRE1202](#))
- 31,978 (66%) of audits in 2019/20 were deemed satisfactory. This percentage was one percentage point fewer than the previous year 33,265 (67%) in 2018/19. (Source: [FIRE1202](#))
- The 48,414 audits were carried out in **three per cent of premises known to FRSs.** This percentage was unchanged from the previous year (3% in 2018/19) but a one percentage point reduction from five years ago in 2014/15 (4%). (Source: [FIRE1202](#))
- **The most common type of premises to be audited was “shops”.** There were 7,880 shops audited in 2019/20, 16 per cent of all fire safety audits. In 2019/20, the second most common type of premises audited was “care homes”, 13 per cent of all Fire Safety Audits. (Source: [FIRE1204](#))
- There were 2,295 formal notices issued in 2019/20 (compared with 2,390 in 2018/19) comprising 1,347 enforcement notices, 788 prohibition notices, 108 alteration notices and 52 prosecutions. (Source: [FIRE1202](#))

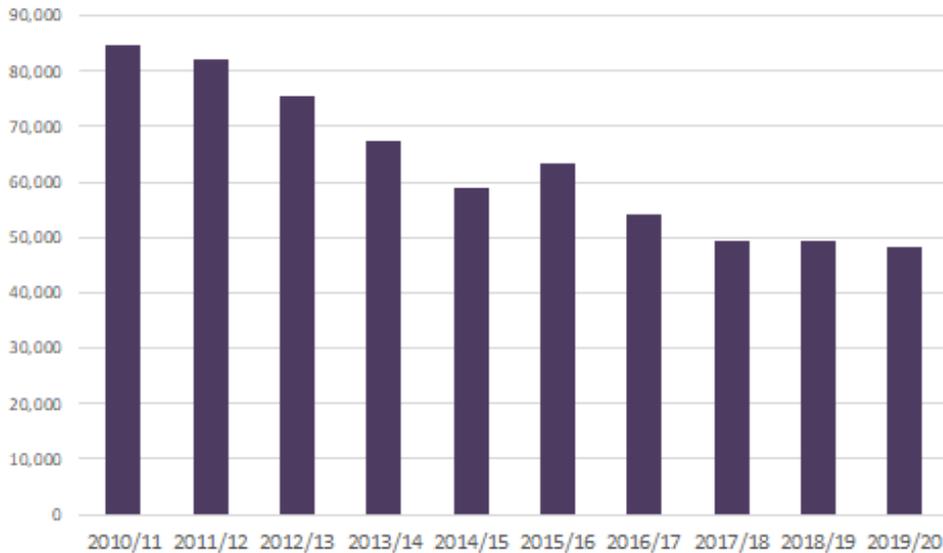
Number of Fire Safety Audits

A fire safety audit is a planned visit by an FRS to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the level of compliance with the requirements of the FSO in a particular premises. The FSO requires a 'responsible person' for a workplace or premises to which the public have access to carry out and regularly review a fire risk assessment to ensure that the general fire precautions are adequate and appropriate, to reduce the risk from fire to employees and other relevant persons to as low as reasonably practicable. The FSO applies to the majority of non-domestic premises and the communal areas in residential buildings.

It is a matter for FRSs to determine how many audits they carry out per year but they must have a locally determined risk-based inspection programme and management strategy in place for enforcing the FSO.

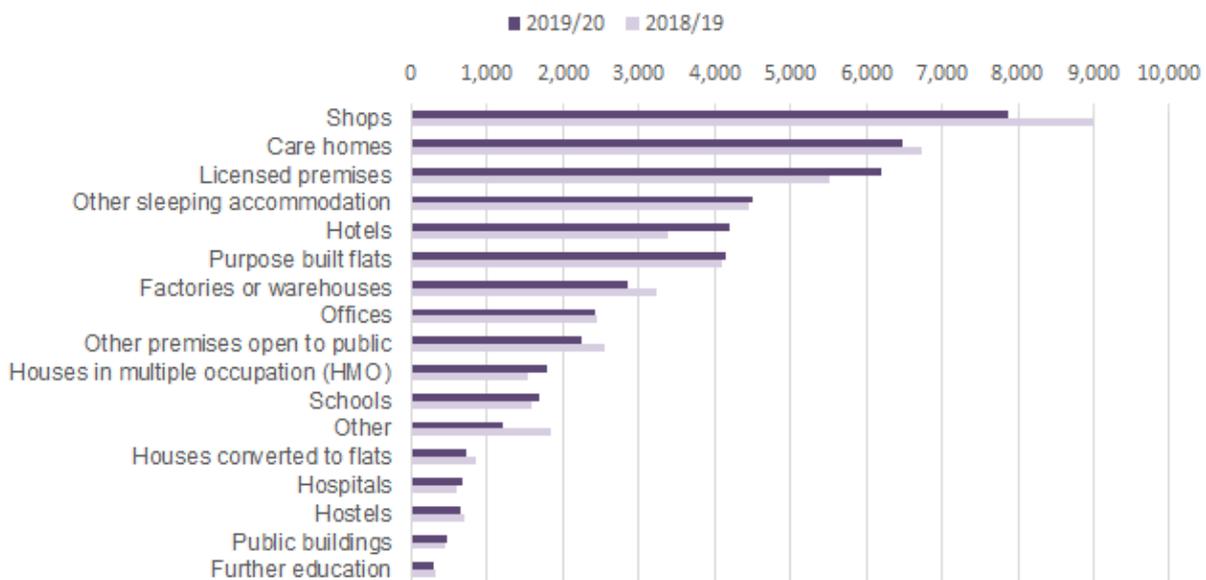
In 2019/20 FRSs carried out 48,414 Fire Safety Audits. Since 2010/11 there has been a general decline in the number of fire safety audits that FRSs complete with 43 per cent fewer completed in 2019/20 compared with 2010/11.

Figure 2.1: Number of Fire Safety Audits, England, 2010/11 to 2019/20



It is expected that the number of audits on different premises types in individual FRSs will vary from year to year depending on the local need, targeting strategies and the complexity of the specific buildings being audited. However, at the national level, certain patterns have remained relatively stable. For example, the highest proportion of fire safety audits were on shop premises for all years on record between 2011/12 and 2019/20.

Figure 2.2: Total number of fire safety audits by FRSs, by type of building, England, 2018/19 and 2019/20 (ordered by 2019/20 figures)

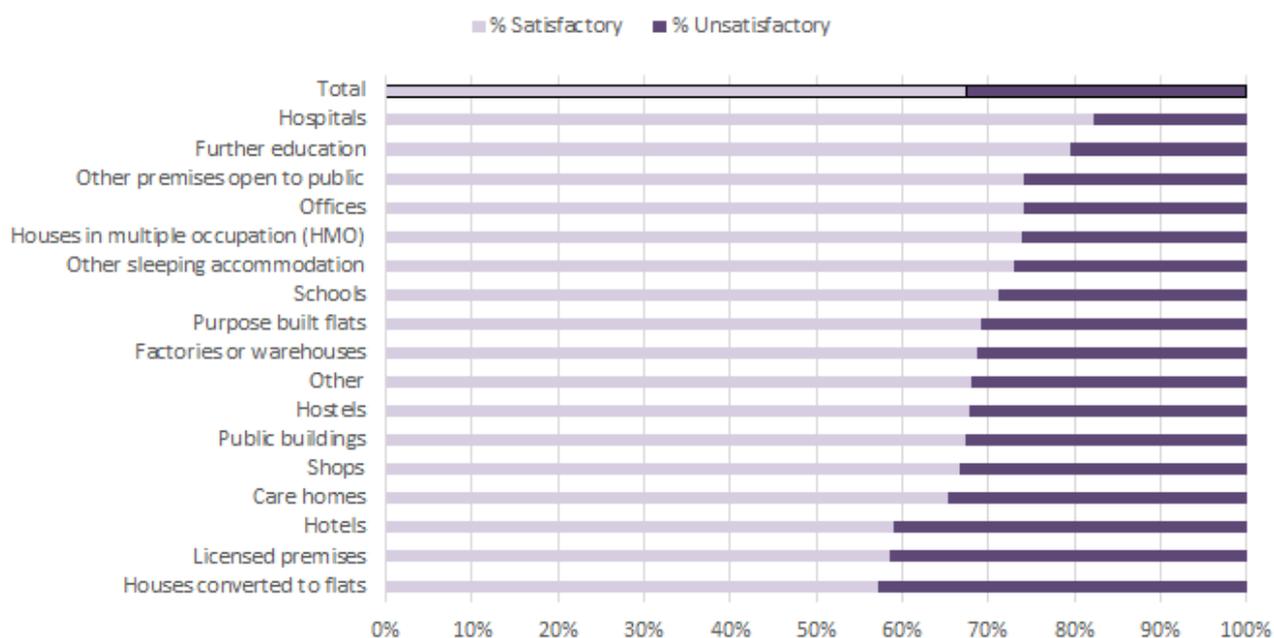


There were 3,494 audits of purpose-built blocks of flats of four storeys or more in England in 2019/20, similar to levels seen in 2018/19 (3,612 audits) and slightly more in 2016/17 (3,095 audits) but lower than the 6,545 audits in 2017/18 which is likely to have been because there was an increase in focus in these audits after the Grenfell Tower Fire. Care homes were the second most common audit in every year except 2016/17.

Outcome of Fire Safety Audits

When a fire safety audit is completed the result is categorised as either satisfactory, when no further action is taken, or unsatisfactory, when the responsible person is non-compliant with the FSO.

Figure 2.3: Proportion of fire safety audits deemed satisfactory or unsatisfactory by type of building, England, 2019/20 (ordered by per cent satisfactory)



In 2019/20, 31,978 (66%) of the fire safety audits were deemed satisfactory. The proportion of audits that were satisfactory was 56 per cent in 2010/11 and increased gradually until the middle of the decade. Since then the proportion has been relatively stable between 66 and 69 per cent. As Figure 2.3, shows the premises type with the greatest proportion of satisfactory audits was “hospitals” (82%) while houses converted to flats (53%), licensed premises (59%) and hotels (61%) were the premises with the lowest proportion.

Formal notifications are issued in the most serious of cases where less formal action has failed to resolve issues of non-compliance. These are categorised within the FSO as:

There were 2,295 formal notices issued in 2019/20 compared with 2,390 in 2018/19 and 2,002 in 2016/17, when the data were first collected. When looking at informal notices 13,184 were issued in 2019/20 compared with 14,514 in 2018/19 and 14,139 in 2016/17. For more information on formal notices see Figure 2.4.

Details of formal and informal notifications

Enforcement notices (Article 30) - These are served if the enforcing authority is of the opinion that the responsible person has failed to comply with any provision of the FSO or of any regulations made under it.

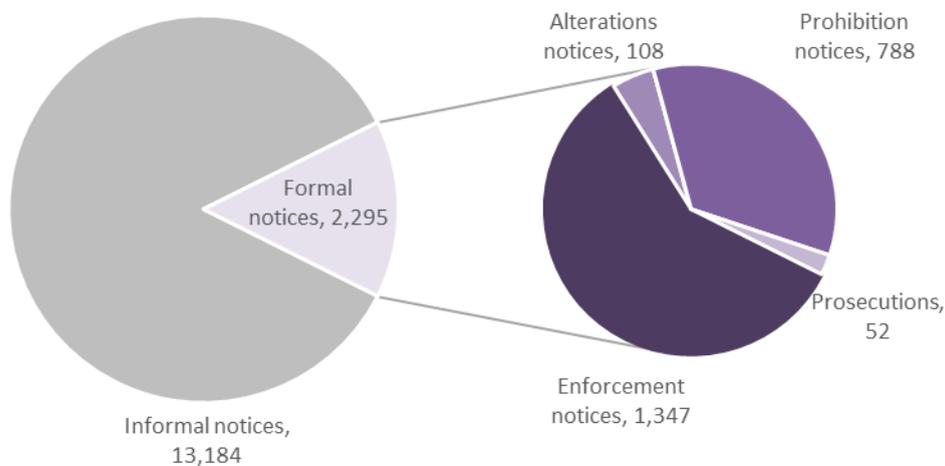
Prohibition notices (Article 31) - These are served on the responsible person or any other person, if the enforcing authority is of the opinion that use of premises involves or will involve a risk to relevant persons so serious that use of the premises ought to be prohibited or restricted.

Alteration notices (Article 29) - These are served on the responsible person if the enforcing authority is of the opinion that the premises constitutes a serious risk to relevant persons (whether due to the features of the premises, their use, any hazard present, or any other circumstances); or may constitute such a risk if a change is made to them or the use to which they are put.

Prosecutions (Article 32) - These are convictions for failure to comply with an alteration, enforcement or prohibition notice, or any other matter for which it is an offence under Article 32.

Informal notification – These can be issued instead of a formal notice when an outcome is unsatisfactory and the risk to relevant persons is not significant and the responsible person is willing to comply.

Figure 2.4: Fire safety notices resulting from unsatisfactory fire safety audits (informal and formal) issued in England, 2019/20



Short Audits

Since 2016 FRSs have had the option of using the short audit form, designed by the sector to support the principles of better regulation and allow FRSs to focus their enforcement resources more effectively on higher risk premises.

A Short Audit may record an ‘unsatisfactory’ outcome where non-compliances are found that require attention but are not judged to reach the formal enforcement threshold. These may be dealt with by means of an informal Fire Safety Matters letter which may or may not require a follow-up inspection. Failure to comply with a Fire Safety Matters letter may be escalated to formal enforcement.

In recognition of the important protection work being carried out by FRSs at this time in relation to COVID-19, the Home Office have accepted certain non-attendance activity as a recorded return.

Where a remote desktop appraisal of the fire safety measures has been carried out and recorded in accordance with [CFOA Short Audit guidance](#), and there are no outstanding fire safety issues, this activity has been recorded in FRS returns, allowing FRSs to record the vital and important work being carried out during this challenging time.

In 2016/17, for the first time, the Home Office collected data from FRSs on the number of these short audits that they complete. The data were collected on a voluntary basis and were only indicative of the national picture as only 11 out of the 45 FRSs provided data or completed short audits. In 2017/18, the Home Office made this collection mandatory and now in 2019/20, there are 27 FRSs that carry out short audits with 18 reporting carrying out

none and the remaining two not indicating if they carried out short audits. Collecting data on the number of short audits enables greater understanding of the protection work that FRSs undertake.

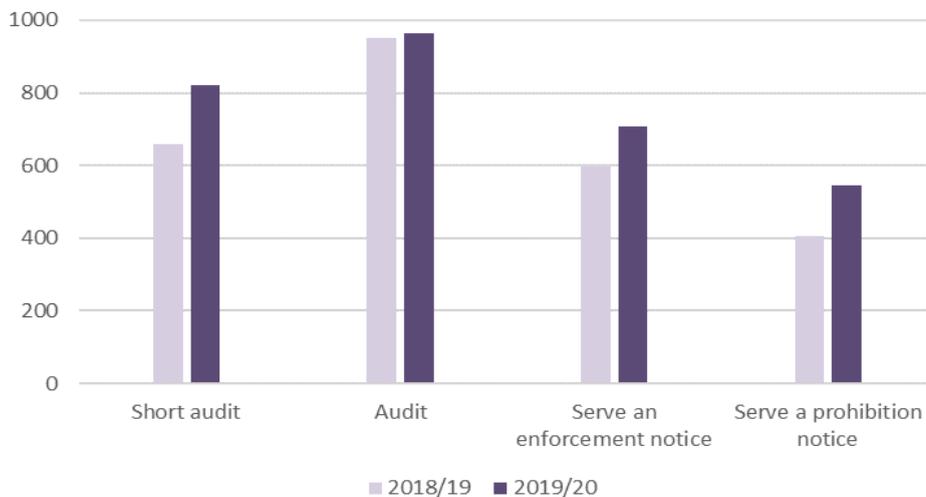
In 2019/20, FRSs completed 7,929 short audits.

Staff employed for fire safety activities

In 2018/19, and again in 2019/20, the Home Office collected information on the number of staff competent to carry out fire safety activities (see Figure 2.5 and FS10 of table [FIRE1204](#)). As FRS staff are likely to be competent to carry out more than one of these activities, the categories are not mutually exclusive. In addition, there were 97 fire engineers² (FTE) employed by FRSs, up from 72 in the previous year.

² Fire engineer figures include those who have a level 5 diploma. Fire safety engineers require a minimum level 6 fire safety engineering qualification, so this figure is higher than the actual number of fire safety engineers.

Figure 2.5: Number of staff employed by FRSs for fire safety activities, as at 31 March 2019 and as at 31 March 2020



Building regulation consultations and other fire safety activity

FRSs also provide data on the number of consultations received under Building Regulations; and any other fire safety activities they undertake to support business understanding of, and compliance with, the FSO. Building regulation consultations are statutory consultations with FRSs by building control bodies under articles 45 and 46 of the FSO. The information can be found in [FS2 of FIRE1204](#).

In 2019/20 FRSs carried out 50,812 building regulation consultations; a one per cent increase compared with 2018/19 (50,157). The highest proportion of building regulation consultations in 2019/20 were in offices (18% or 9,308). This is different to fire safety audits in which shops accounted for the highest proportion.

Other safety activity – This captures all fire safety activity generated by requests from others, i.e. approaches from other agencies or bodies (e.g., Ofsted), the public, and business representatives as well as any FSO related promotional/awareness raising activities generated within the FRA.

FRSs carried out 83,348 other fire safety activities in 2019/20 (an increase of 11 per cent compared with 75,036 in 2018/19).

3 Further information

This release contains administrative statistics about prevention and protection activities carried out by fire and rescue services (FRSs) in England. This publication also draws from other sources such as the English Housing Survey.

Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics and other Home Office statistical releases are available from 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. The sections above state the most relevant tables for each section. The tables can be found here:

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

Guidance for using these statistics and other fire statistics outputs is available on the fire statistics collection page, found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-guidance>.

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 figures in this release refer to activity that occurred in the financial year 2019/20, the year up to and including 31 March 2020. The statistics published may not match those held locally by FRSs and revisions may occur in the future.

Other related publications

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

- [Fire and rescue incident statistics, England](#): provides statistics on trends in fires, casualties, false alarms and non-fire incidents attended by fire and rescue services in England, updated quarterly.
- [Detailed analysis of fires attended by fire and rescue services in England](#): focuses on fires attended by fire and rescue services across England, and 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.

- [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:

Statistics for [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#) are published. [Northern Ireland](#) fire statistics are published by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

We're always looking to improve the accessibility of our documents. If you find any problems, or have any feedback, relating to accessibility please email us at firestatistics@homeoffice.gov.uk

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