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This publication is accompanied by the following documents:

- Tables and Charts Workbook
- Guidance Notes on Statistics
- Statistical News 2018-19
1. Main Points

All incidents

- **92,432** incidents attended, of which:
  - **57.1%** were false alarms
  - **28.9%** were fires
  - **14.0%** were non-fire incidents

Fires

- **26,726** fires attended, up 2.1% on last year
  - **5,137** dwelling fires, down 3.5%
    - **4,628** of these were accidental, down 2.8%
    - **61.6%** of accidental dwelling fires started with a cooking appliance
    - **73.3%** of dwelling fires were confined to the original item
  - **21.9%** increase in grassland fires which are known to be weather related

Non-fire Incidents

- **12,936** non-fire incidents attended, down 1.8%, of which:
  - **3,267** were for effecting entry or exit to a property, up 4.6%
  - **2,296** were road traffic collisions, down 9.2%
  - **1,152** were flooding related (including burst pipes), down 11.5%

False alarms

- **51,988** fire false alarms, up 0.2%, of which:
  - **50,517** were due to detecting apparatus
  - **9,193** were due to good intentions
  - **2,278** were malicious
Fatal Fire Casualties

- 45 fatal fire casualties, 1 more than last year
  - 36 of these occurred in accidental dwelling fires

- 57% higher fatal casualty rate for men than women in the last ten years
- Over 3 times higher rate of fatal casualties for the over 80s than the all Scotland average
- 60% higher rate of fatal casualties in the most rural areas than in the most urban

Non-fatal Fire Casualties

- 1,191 non-fatal fire casualties, up 6.6%
- 362 casualties per 1,000 fires when alcohol or drugs is a suspected factor in the fire and 140 without, a 2.6 times higher rate of occurrence
- 338 casualties per million population in the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland compared to 69 in the least deprived, a 4.9 times higher rate of occurrence

Non-fire Casualties

- 383 fatal casualties (down from 413), of which:
  - 132 were in incidents classed as ‘Effecting Entry or Exit’, up from 128
  - 83 were in road traffic collision attendances, up from 81
  - 33 were suicides, up from 27
  - 21 resulted from medical response incidents, down from 59

- 3,442 non-fatal casualties, down 8.9%
2. All Incidents

In 2018-19 the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) attended 92,432 incidents. This is a slight increase (0.6%) on 2017-18 (91,896).

False alarms make up the largest share of incidents and have increased slightly (0.4%) on 2017-18 to 52,770 (up from 52,551 last year), the highest number in ten years. The increases are mainly due to detecting apparatus.

The number of fire incidents increased by 2.1% from 26,172 last year to 26,726 in 2018-19, driven by an increase in outdoor fires which are known to be linked to weather patterns.

Non-fire incidents attended in 2018-19 were 1.8% lower than last year dropping from 13,173 (the highest figure recorded) to 12,936 (the second highest figure recorded).

In the last ten years the breakdown of incidents attended has shifted, with the proportion of non-fire incidents rising from 11.1% in 2009-10 to 14.0% in 2018-19. Fires have decreased from 37.3% of incidents attended in 2009-10 to 28.9%, while false alarms have increased as a share of activity from 50.2% to 56.2%.

Figure 1: Total number of incidents attended with percentage share by type
3. All Casualties

**Fatal Casualties Attended**
There were 432 fatal casualties in incidents attended by SFRS, a 6.3% decrease on 2017-18. The largest proportional change was the reduction in fatal casualties at medical incidents, reducing from 59 last year to 21. There was also a notable reduction in the number of fatal casualties at ‘Assist Other Agencies’ incidents (51 in 2018-19, down from 71 last year). The number of fatal fire casualties increased by 1 to 45.

![Figure 2: Fatal Casualties Attended](image)

**Non-fatal Casualties Attended**
There were 4,633 non-fatal casualties attended by SFRS crews. 1,191 of these (25.7%) were in fires. The majority of casualties attended (3,442) were in non-fire incidents. 1,786 of the non-fire incident casualties were in Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs). Overall there was a 5.4% reduction in non-fatal casualties attended, despite a 6.6% increase in non-fatal fire casualties. The main factor in this reduction was a 13.3% reduction in RTC casualties.

![Figure 3: Non-fatal Casualties Attended](image)
4. Fires

There was a 2.1% increase in the number of fires attended in 2018-19, rising from 26,172 last year to 26,726. This was mainly due to an increase in grassland fires, the occurrence of which varies considerably each year as a result of weather patterns amongst other things. Secondary grassland fires rose by 1,112 (21.9%) to 6,180 while the more severe ‘primary grassland and crop’ fires increased by 61 (59.8%) to 163. Refuse fires also increased by 5.6% to 7,293. Other categories of fire decreased this year including a 3.5% reduction in the number of dwelling fires.

As can be seen from figure 4 the long-term reduction on the number of fires in Scotland has levelled in recent years. Figures 5 and 6 show that for dwelling fires, ‘other building’ fires and chimney fires the trends have continued, while the headline trend is dominated by refuse fires and grassland fires.

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1Dwellings are properties that people ordinarily live in such as houses and apartments, please see the guidance notes document for a full definition.
Fires which result in harm to people, require five or more fire appliances, or which take place in buildings, vehicles and some outdoor locations, are called primary fires.

The total number primary fires is down 2.2% on last year at 10,450 (from 10,689), and down 20.7% on ten years ago.

The total number secondary fires is up 6.2% on last year at 15,635 (from 14,723), and down 39.0% on ten years ago.

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**Figure 5: Primary fire trends**

**Figure 6: Secondary fire trends**
### 4.1. Motive

In 2018-19, 56.0% of fires in Scotland were recorded as deliberately set. The proportion of deliberately set fires varies considerably by category as shown in figure 7. For dwelling fires 9.9% were deliberate, while at the other end 79.7% of secondary fires were deliberate.

6,115 of the 7,293 refuse fires in 2018-19 were deliberate (83.8%). Similarly, 4,578 of the 6,180 grassland fires (74.1%) were deliberate, an increase of 16.3% on last year, while accidental grassland fires increased 41.5%. These outdoor fires are known to be associated with weather conditions.

The number of accidental dwelling fires has decreased by 2.8% from the 2017-18 total of 4,762 to 4,628, the lowest in this series and 13.8% lower than the 2009-10 total. Deliberate dwelling fires also decreased from 559 in 2017-18 to 509 in 2018-19, again the lowest in this series and 57.3% lower than the total for 2009-10.

![Figure 7: Fires by motive, 2018-19](image)

*Fires classed as 'Deliberate' should not be interpreted as necessarily resulting from arson or criminal intent*
5. Casualties in fires

**Fatal Casualties**

There were 45 fatal fire casualties in 2018-19, one more than last year. While there has been a long-term decrease in the number fatal fire casualties, this trend has levelled off in recent years as can be seen in figure 8.

The number of fire fatalities in accidental fires was 40 this year, of which 5 occurred in fires classified as deliberate (up from 2 last year).

Of the 45 fatalities, 36 occurred in accidental dwelling fires and 4 in deliberate dwelling fires.

![Fatal Casualties in Fires](image)

*Figure 8: Long-term trend in fatal fire casualties. Note that the series changed from calendar year to financial year after 1993.*
Non-fatal Casualties
There were 1,191 non-fatal fire casualties in 2018-19, up 6.6% from 1,117 last year. As the long-term trend (Figure 9) shows, the number of non-fatal casualties in Scotland reduced considerably in the early 2000s. This trend has levelled off in recent years.

The number of casualties in deliberate fires decreased by 8 to 189. Most fire casualties occur in dwelling fires, with 1,010 in 2018-19 (84.8% of the total). 880 of these were accidental, up 10.3% on last year (from 798); this accounts for most of the annual change.

Figure 9: Long-term trend in non-fatal fire casualties. Note that the series changed from calendar year to financial year after 1993.
Excluding those encouraged to visit a doctor as a precautionary measure, there were 943 casualties, up from 882 last year (6.9%). 425 casualties attended hospital, up slightly from 419 last year (1.4%), with the remaining 518 casualties having received first aid at the scene (up 11.9% from 463 last year).

The primary cause of injury in fires was being overcome by gas, smoke or toxic fumes at 60.5% with burns accounting for a further 10.6%.

![Figure 10: Treatment of non-fatal casualties](image)

**Gender**

Of the 45 fatal casualties in 2018-19, 29 were male. In the last ten years 59.5% of fatal casualties were male. With an all Scotland average of 8.3 fatal casualties per million population\(^3\) in 2018-19, the rates are markedly different by gender, with 5.4 for women and 10.9 for men (more than double the rate for women). On average the rate of fatal fire casualties is 56.8% higher for men than women.

There is also a gender difference in non-fatal casualty rates though the difference is smaller. In 2018-19 the rates were 243.1 non-fatal casualties per million population for men and 182.5 for women. The Scotland average was 219.0 in 2018-19. There is a 31.5% higher rate for men than women on average. 54.9% of non-fatal casualties (excluding injured firefighters) were male.

\(^3\)Population figures were sourced from National Records of Scotland
Age
There is a strong relationship between age and rates of fatal casualties as shown in figure 11. The rates for those aged below 16 are less than a tenth of the Scotland average, while the rate for those aged 80-89 is more than triple the average figure and for the over 90s it is around six times higher. Fatal casualty categories for persons aged 40 and above have higher than average rates. We used the ten-year average figures to make sure that the comparisons are robust as one year figures can be variable.

For non-fatal casualties the picture is quite different. It is similar in that the over 80s have significantly higher rates of injury, although those aged between 30 and 79 have rates quite close to the average figure. And, despite much lower rates of fatal casualties, those aged 17-29 have a rate of injury over 40% higher than the average.

For more on fire casualties please see section 10 for discussion on the role of deprivation and section 11 for discussion on rurality. Section 12 has Local Authority comparisons and section 13 compares Scottish rates with England and Wales.
Figure 11: Ten-year average rate per million population of fatal casualties by age band. The dotted line represents the average figure of 8.7.

Figure 12: Ten-year average rate per million population of non-fatal casualties by age band. The dotted line represents the average figure of 231.2.
6. Dwelling Fires

With 40 out of 45 fatal casualties in 2018-19 occurring in dwelling fires and 1,010 of the 1,191 non-fatal casualties, factors relating to safety in dwelling fires as well as the cause are of great importance.

Ignition Source
In 2018-19, as with previous years, the majority of accidental dwelling fires (61.6%) stemmed from cooking appliances. A further 7.8% were due to the electrical supply or electrical lighting, 7.3% were smoking related, and 7.1% were from other domestic appliances (excluding cooking and heating appliances). These rates are quite similar to previous years.

Impairment
In 15.0% of accidental dwelling fires this year, impairment by the use of alcohol or drugs was suspected to have been a contributory factor. This is the same proportion as last year. These fires have a much higher casualty rate, with an average of 13.4 fatal casualties per 1,000 accidental dwelling fires compared to 2.5 fatal casualties where impairment is not suspected. For non-fatal casualties, there are 361.6 casualties per 1,000 fires with such impairment compared to 139.9 without. These averages are based on ten years of casualty data as there is no clear trend in recent years and the relatively low number of casualties means that a longer term average is fairer. In 2018-19 there were 6 fatal casualties in accidental dwelling fires where impairment by alcohol or drugs is a suspected factor and 243 non-fatal casualties.

Smoke Alarms
In recent years, fires in dwellings without smoke alarms have been decreasing faster than the number of dwelling fires overall. There were 1,303 dwelling fires where the property had no smoke alarm in 2018-19, a 1.1% reduction on 1,317.

The percentage of dwelling fires where the property did not have any smoke alarms was 25.4% in 2018-19, which is down from 37.7% in 2009-10. Conversely the proportion of incidents where there was a smoke alarm present which raised the alarm has risen from 38.4% in 2009-10 to 53.3% in 2018-19.

In the 11.7% of dwelling fires where a smoke alarm was present but did not operate (601 incidents), 52.4% were due to the detector being too far from the fire. This has increased from 40.2% in 2009-10 due to a reduction in the number with failed operation from other causes.

Spread of Fire
In 2018-19, 73.3% of dwelling fires resulted only in smoke or heat damage or were confined to the item first ignited, while 9.5% of dwelling fire incidents involved the fire spreading beyond the initial room. 12.8% of dwelling fires have an area of damage greater than 5 square metres.
7. Non-fire Incidents

There were 12,936 non-fire incidents attended in 2018-19, down 1.8% from the series high value of 13,173 last year but up 12.4% on 2009-10.

Recent years have seen an increase in inter-agency cooperation in Scotland which accounts for the major changes. The two major categories of incidents related to this are ‘Assist Other Agencies’ and ‘Effecting Entry or Exit’ which have both increased (1.3% and 4.6% respectively). Effecting entry or exit frequently involves the breaking open of a locked door to assist the Scottish Ambulance Service or Police Scotland with their work. Incidents of this kind now amount to 25.3% of non-fire incident activity.

The 9.2% reduction in road traffic collisions attended and 11.5% reduction in flooding related incidents (including burst pipes) have resulted in the headline reduction in non-fire incidents.

The number of suicide-related incidents has increased significantly, rising 48.7% on last year to 232. Medical response incidents have decreased by 5.7% to 459.

Figure 13: Long-term trend in non-fire incidents
Figure 14: Trends in non-fire incidents
8. Non-fire Casualties

Fatal
There were 383 fatal casualties in non-fire incidents attended in 2018-19. This is down 7.3% on last year although a significant increase on the years previous to 2015-16.

The number of fatal casualties encountered by SFRS crews has substantially increased in recent years due primarily to increasing inter-agency cooperation, in particular the breaking open of locked doors in ‘Effecting Entry or Exit’, but also through medical responder incidents.

The number of fatal casualties in road traffic collisions attended has been steadily decreasing over many years.

As with suicide incidents attended there has been an increase in fatal suicide casualties recorded, up from 27 to 33 (22.2%).

The number of fatal casualties in incidents classed as ‘Rescue or Evacuation from Water’ has increased from 24 to 36 this year.

Figure 15: Long-term trend in non-fire fatal casualties

Figure 16: Non-fire fatal casualties by incident type
**Non-fatal**
As with the number of fatal casualties, there was a decrease in non-fatal casualties recorded in non-fire incidents attended in 2018-19, reducing 8.9% to 3,442.

The increase in inter-agency cooperation and in particular the breaking down of doors (effecting entry or exit) has resulted in a considerable increase in casualties attended in recent years. An increase in medical responder incidents has a clear impact on casualties recorded.

Non-fatal casualties in road traffic collisions have dropped substantially this year, from 2,061 to 1,786 (down 13.3%).

The large increase in suicides attended has led to a 33.3% increase in non-fatal casualties recorded in attempted suicides.

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**Figure 17: Long-term trend in non-fire non-fatal casualties**

**Figure 18: Non-fire non-fatal casualties by incident**
9. False alarms

There were 52,770 false alarms in 2018-19, very similar to last year though slightly up (0.4%). Of these, 51,988 were fire false alarms. In recent years there have been nearly twice as many fire false alarms as fire incidents attended. The increase in false alarm incidents is driven by an increase in false alarms due to detecting apparatus, which, at 40,517 in 2018-19, accounts for 43.8% of all incidents attended by SFRS this year.

The long-term trend in figure 19 shows that the number of fire false alarms increased over the late 1990s to the mid-2000s. Figure 20 reveals that this was due to increasing numbers of automated signals while the number of false alarms with good intentions remained steady and the numbers of malicious calls decreased. From the mid-2000s to around 2013-14 the number of automated signals was steady each year while there were decreases in other false alarms. In the last five years however, the trends in malicious and good intent false alarms have levelled and the number of automated signals has increased, now at the highest figure since records began and 35.9% higher than the lowest figure in 2002-03.

The increasing prevalence of false alarms due to apparatus in dwellings is the main cause of increased false alarms overall. The total number of apparatus false alarms in dwellings is a new high in this series at 13,601, up 1.4% on last year and up 50.3% on 2009-10. False alarms in ‘Other Buildings’ has changed very little in the last ten years.

Figure 19: Long-term trend in fire false alarms
Figure 20: Trends in cause of fire false alarms

Figure 21: Trends in the location of fire false alarms due to apparatus
10. Deprivation (SIMD⁴)

As can be seen in figure 22 the rate of fire per million population of dwelling fires is strongly associated with deprivation. The rate of dwelling fires is 4.5 times higher in the 20% least deprived areas of Scotland than the 20% most deprived. The most deprived areas have a dwelling fire rate 2.0 times higher than the Scotland average.

There is a similar relationship with secondary fires with the most deprived areas having a rate 3.6 times higher than the least deprived and 1.7 times higher than the all Scotland average.

Figure 22: Rate of dwelling fires per million population by level of deprivation, 2018-19. The Scotland average is 945.

⁴Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016
The rate of non-fatal casualties in fires also has a clear relationship to deprivation, see figure 23. The most deprived communities have a 4.9 times higher casualty rate than the least deprived and 1.9 times the Scotland average.

**Figure 23:** Seven year average rate of non-fatal fire casualties per million population by level of deprivation. The Scotland average is 178. Seven years of data was used to ensure a fair comparison.

Fatal casualty rates are slightly more complex with the middle 60% of Scottish areas having rates quite close to the Scotland average, while the least deprived 20% of areas have a rate less than half the average. The least deprived areas have a fatal casualty rate 1.8 times higher than average and 4.5 times higher than the least deprived areas.

**Figure 24:** Seven year average rate of fatal fire casualties per million population by level of deprivation. The Scotland average is 7.8. Seven years of data was used to ensure a fair comparison.
11. Urban-Rural\textsuperscript{5}

The most urban areas of Scotland have a rate of dwelling fires per million population that is 1.8 times higher than the most rural areas, and a rate of non-fatal casualties that is 1.6 times higher. For fatal casualties the trend is reversed: the rate of fatal casualties per million population in the most rural areas is 1.6 times that of the most urban areas.

The three categories of remote areas in Scotland all have higher rates of fatal casualties per million population than average and all have lower than average rates of non-fatal casualties. The two most rural categories have significantly lower than average rates of dwelling fires per million population.

Accessible small towns have a lower than average rate of dwelling fires (75% of the average), lower rate of non-fatal casualties (65% of the average), and lower rate of fatal casualties than other areas (63% of the average).

\textsuperscript{5}Scottish Government Urban Rural Six Fold Classification
Figure 26: Seven year average rate of non-fatal fire casualties per million population by level of rurality. The Scotland average is 178. Seven years of data was used to ensure a fair comparison.

Figure 27: Seven year average rate of fatal fire casualties per million population by level of rurality. The Scotland average is 7.8. Seven years of data was used to ensure a fair comparison.
12. Local Authority Comparisons

The number of incidents and casualties vary considerably across the 32 Local Authority areas of Scotland. We use rates adjusted for population or the number of dwellings to more fairly compare these areas.

**Accidental Dwelling Fires**

With 36 out of 45 fatal casualties occurring in accidental dwelling fires in 2018-19, this is an important topic to explore at lower geographical levels.

In 2018-19 there was an average of 177.0 fires per 100,000 dwellings in Scotland. West Dunbartonshire had the highest rate at 296.3 fires per 100,000 dwellings, followed by Glasgow City at 251.7 (these two areas had the highest rates last year too). Shetland Islands had a considerably lower rate at 35.5 in 2018-19.

![Figure 28: Accidental dwelling fires per 100,000 dwellings, choropleth and area normalised cartogram 2018-19](image-url)
Deliberate Fires

Fires classed as of ‘Deliberate’ intent also varies considerably across Scotland, with 14.9 deliberate fires recorded per 100,000 population in Na h-Eileanan Siar in 2018-19 and 510.6 in Inverclyde (the highest in Scotland). The all Scotland average is 275.0 deliberate fires per 100,000 population. As can be seen from figure 29 deliberate fire setting is more frequent in the more urban Local Authority areas and in particular west of the Central Lowlands.

Figure 29: Deliberate fires per 100,000 population, choropleth and area normalised cartogram 2018-19

For more local authority graphs and statistics please see the downloadable tables and charts workbook.
14. Great Britain Comparisons

As discussed in previous sections the rates of incidents and casualties across Scotland varies widely, with many factors involved. Headline statistics reflect differences in population, accessibility of locations and the built environment amongst other differences. We can see from figures 30 and 31 that there are similar trends in dwelling fires and fatal casualties in England and Wales as there are in Scotland. Such similarities are also true across other categories of attendance including secondary fires and non-fire incidents.

**Incidents**

In 2018-19, the rate of incidents attended in Scotland per million population was 16,997 compared to 11,686 in Wales and 10,291 in England. There were 65% more fire and rescue incidents attended per million population in Scotland than in England. With fires, the variation was lower with 4,915 fire incidents per million population in Scotland in 2018-19, while in Wales there were 4,114 and in England 3,266. The rate of fire incidents was 50% higher in Scotland than in England this year.

For non-fire incidents in 2018-19, there were 2,379 per million population in Scotland while in England there were 2,767 and in Wales, 2,956. The rate in Scotland is around 20% lower than in Wales.

Fire false alarms made up 40.1% of fire and rescue service attendances in England in 2018-19, while in Wales the share was 39.5% and in Scotland it was 56.2%. Since 2001-02 the rate of fire false alarms has decreased by around 10% in Scotland. In the same timeframe the rate in England has decreased 48% and in Wales it has decreased by 31%. Scotland now has more than twice the rate of fire false alarm attendances compared with either England or Wales at 9,560 per million population in 2018-19. Variations in fire false alarm policies may play a role in explaining some of the differences in Great Britain.
Casualties
The number of fatal casualties incurred in fires varies each year, particularly in Scotland and Wales where the populations are lower. Figure 31 shows that the rate of fatal fire casualties per million population has generally been higher in Scotland than in Wales, with England having the lowest rate. There has been a long-term reduction across Great Britain in rates of fatal fire casualties although the trend appears to have levelled in recent years.

With non-fatal fire casualties the trend has been downward in recent years. In 2018-19 Wales recorded an unusually low number of casualties with 126.2 per million population compared to 127.9 in England and 219.0 in Scotland.

Figure 31: Fatal fire casualties per million population in Great Britain

For more Great Britain graphs and statistics please see the downloadable tables and charts workbook.
## Appendix A

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**Cartogram Local Authority Key**

- Ab-C: Aberdeen City
- Ab-Sh: Aberdeenshire
- Angus: Angus
- Arg+B: Argyll and Bute
- Clacks: Clackmannashire
- D&G: Dumfries and Galloway
- Dundee: Dundee City
- E Ayr: East Ayrshire
- EDun: East Dunbartonshire
- E loth: East Lothian
- E Ren: East Renfrewshire
- Edinb: Edinburgh, City of
- WI: N a h’Eileanan Siar
- Falk: Falkirk
- Fife: Fife
- Glas: Glasgow City
- High: Highland
- Inv-Cl: Inverclyde
- MLoth: Midlothian
- Moray: Moray
- N ayr: North Ayrshire
- NLan: North Lanarkshire
- Ork: Orkney Islands
- P & K: Perth and Kinross
- Ren: Renfrewshire
- Bord: Scottish Borders
- Shet: Shetland Islands
- S ayr: South Ayrshire
- S lan: South Lanarkshire
- Stir: Stirling
- WDun: West Dunbartonshire
- W loth: West Lothian
A Statistics Publication from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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