



**Research into fires in the  
home  
[www.esfrs.org/hero](http://www.esfrs.org/hero)**

# Be Your Own Hero

We would love to be with you all the time to help keep you safe – but there are times you may need to Be Your Own Hero.

Fires in the home are a big problem. The good news is that many can be prevented.

East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service carried out research between November 2017 and January 2018. 329 people took part in the poll online and at events in Hastings, Eastbourne and Brighton. This report explains what we have found out and aims to help you understand what you can do to keep you and your loved ones safe in your homes.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Mark Andrews, said: “Our crews attend many incidents where residents are incredibly lucky that the result did not end in any fatalities, and quite often this is down to the hard work and professionalism demonstrated by our crews for ensuring everyone gets out safely.”

“However, incidents such as kitchen fires, caused by distraction, and electrical fires in the home are commonplace. These incidents demonstrate the need for working smoke alarms in your property, as well as testing them regularly. Fire can happen at any time and if it happens to you, a working smoke alarm will give you time to get yourself and your family to safety. Take the time to practise an escape plan, everyone should know what to do in an emergency.”

## Six Simple Steps

- 1 – Protect your home with working smoke alarms – install smoke alarms on every level and test them every week
- 2 – Take extra care in the kitchen – over 50% of accidental fires in the home start in the kitchen
- 3 - Checking your electrics – Check and maintain your electrical appliances
- 4 – Smoke safe (if you must smoke at all) – put them out, right out
- 5 - Make sure you sleep safe – a bedtime safety routine can reduce the risk of fire whilst you are asleep
- 6 – Plan a safe escape – make sure you know how to get out of your home in an emergency



**East Sussex**  
Fire & Rescue Service

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## Real fires – real people

Paper from flower wrapping was too close to hob caught alight. I was distracted but take more care in the kitchen now.

We had a fire in a dishwasher - once appliance was put outside I found a small plastic lid which had got under the dishwasher and ended up near the element which melted and caused the fire

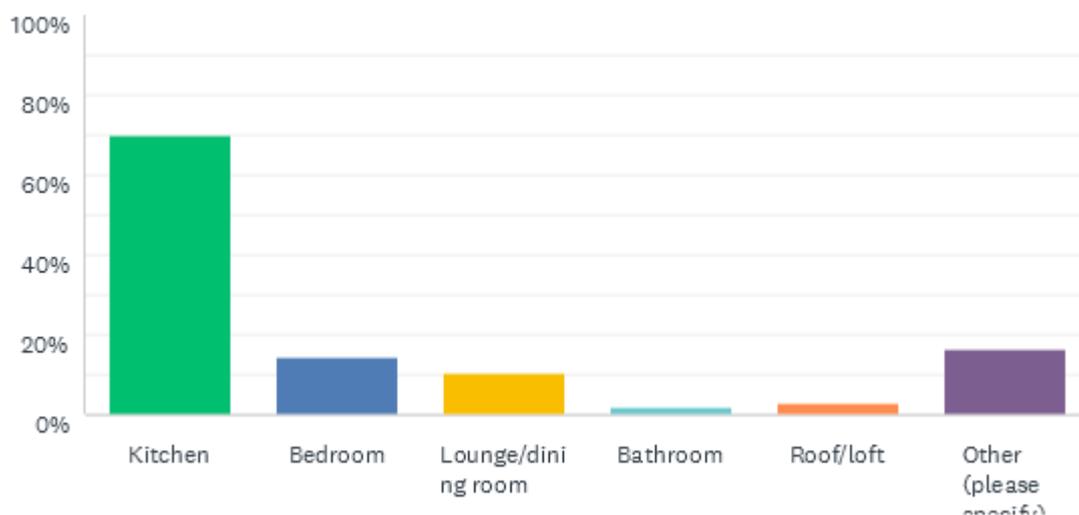
We had a fire in a workshop - the automated fire suppression system dealt with the flames within minutes.

I was using the oven then fell asleep - there was a tea towel on top. I don't cook when tired now.

My grandchild poked a Christmas present into an electric fire and a chip pan caught alight and set alight some hops that I had decorating the kitchen. I have always been fire conscience but these two accidents still happened.

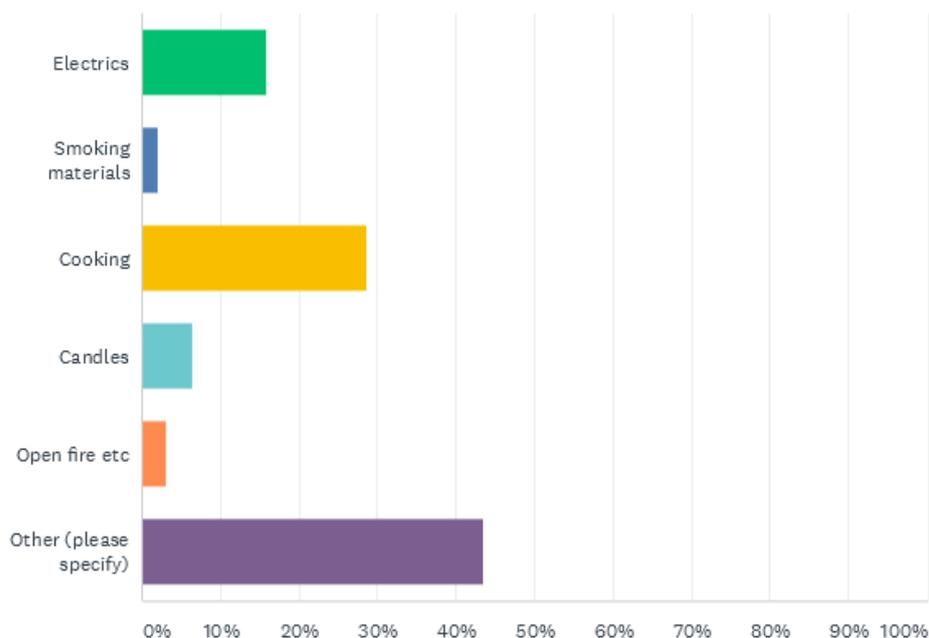
A paraffin heater was knocked over and set washing alight when I was distracted. I test my smoke alarms regularly now.

29% of people who took the survey confirmed that they had had a fire in their home.



The kitchen was the most common place for a fire to occur with 70% of fires occurring in that room. It was followed by bedrooms at 15% and Lounge/dining room at 10%. Other locations outside the home included garages and workshops.

Cooking was the most common cause of fires (27%) with electrics following behind (16%).



Respondents also reported a number of scenarios including:

- Placing items on cooker without realising the cooker was switched on
- Items too close to hobs
- Cooker accidentally being switched on by pets or people

# Near misses and close calls

We have had several close calls - tea towel near gas stove, another with hot fat in open pan and another in oven. I take more care in the kitchen now.

We've had near misses with my daughter leaving hair straighteners on and going out - several times.

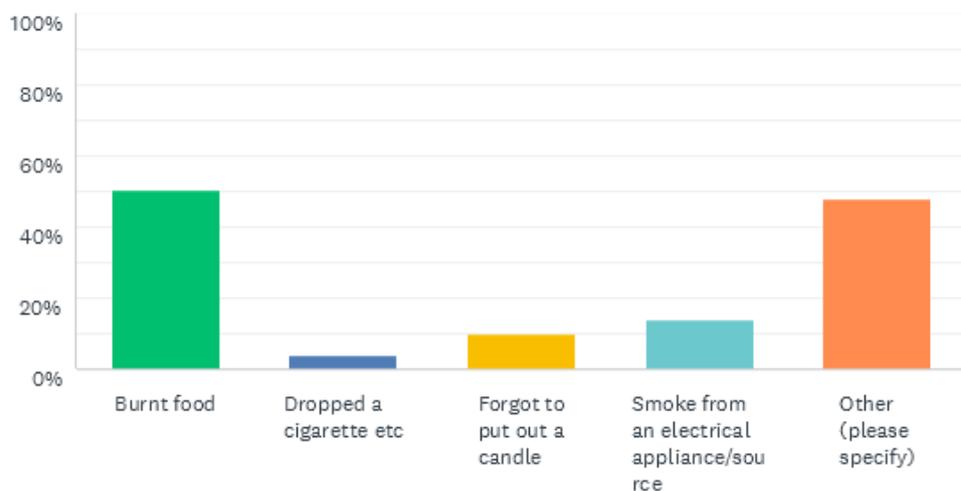
An aerosol can of polish was left on the top of a wood burner which was then lit. I had to act fast and remove can outside to the garden. The can was already hot.

I was cooking and burnt food. The saucepan never actually caught fire as I saw it in time.

A cat jumped down from fridge freezer and turned the electric hob on - I now test my smoke alarms regularly and take more care in the kitchen.

I placed shopping on the cooker not realising I had left a gas ring alight - I test my smoke alarms regularly now.

When asked if respondents had had a “near miss”, 50% reported having burnt food. This was followed by smoke from an electrical appliance/source (14%) and forgetting to put out a candle (10%). There were a number of comments about chip pans or frying pans as well as items being left on cookers.



## Reporting fires or near misses

When asked whether they had reported the fire or near miss, 80% of people said no. The majority who did not report it said it was because they dealt with it themselves. We always advise you to call 999 if you have a fire.

## What was happening just before the fire?

50% of people reported being distracted when the fire happened. Many reported simply having forgotten that they were cooking, or were distracted by other people or pets in the home.

## Fire safety

45% of respondents reported knowing a lot about fire safety in the home before the incident and 47% said they knew a bit.

When asked if their behaviour had changed since the fire or near miss, the most common answer was that they have fitted smoke alarms (57%) and test them regularly (42%), followed by taking more care in the kitchen (40%). 25% had learnt about escape routes.

78% of respondents have working smoke alarms on every level of their home test them regularly. 11% have alarms but don't test them regularly and 9% only have one alarm.



**Home Safety Visits**

Our specially trained staff offer these to give advice to people in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove who are most at risk from fires in their homes

Contact us if you or someone you know would like to find out more. Please call us on 0800 177 7069 or go to [www.esfrs.org](http://www.esfrs.org)

# About the research

The aims were:

- To gather research about human behaviour and Accidental Dwelling Fires using the survey
- To promote Home Safety Visits
- To promote home safety messages

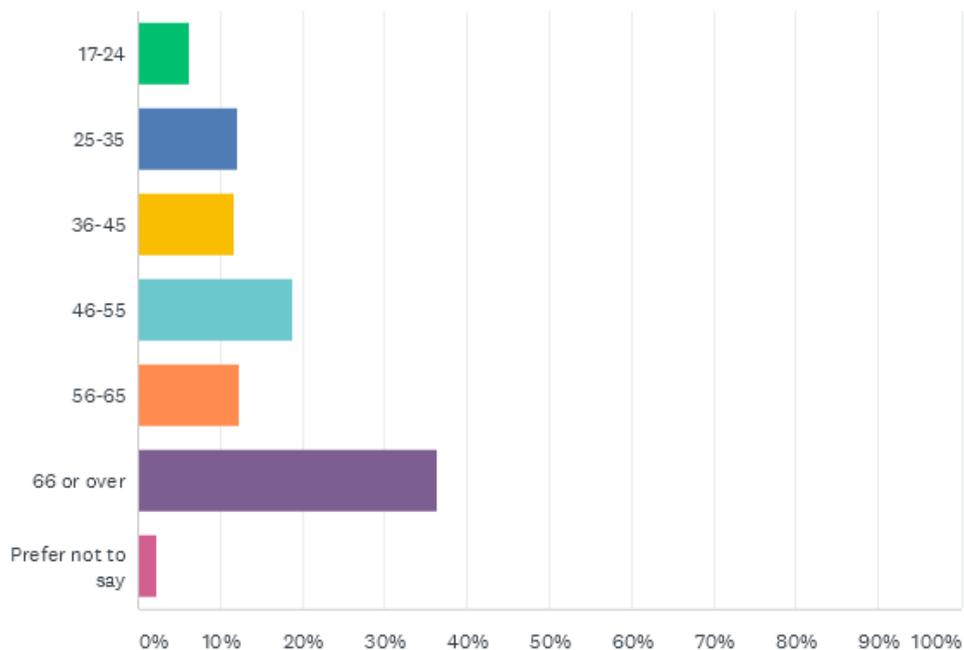
Activities:

- Online survey ran between 1 November 2017 until 2 January 2018.
- Three events took place:
  - Eastbourne – Arndale Centre 3 November 2017 from 9am until 5.30pm
  - Hastings – Priory Meadow 10 November 2017 from 9am until 5.30pm
  - Brighton - Jubilee Library 17 November 2017 from 10am until 4pm

Summary

- 329 people took part in the survey
- Cooking and electrical remain top of the list for causes of fires
- While burnt food is very common, tea towels or other combustible items left on cookers is an issue
- Many people put out the fire themselves
- Many people said they just forgot they were cooking
- Distractions include pets/children/family
- 150 contacts given for further work

Demographics



For further information please contact [communications@esfrs.org](mailto:communications@esfrs.org)