



**Research into fires in the
home
www.esfrs.org/hero**

Be Your Own Hero

East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service is lifting the lid on fire safety by asking about what really happens behind closed doors in people's homes. We have re-run our Be Your Own Hero survey which aims to find out a little more about what happens just before a fire, and about “near misses” where a fire was only narrowly avoided.

We are using this information to help raise public awareness of fire safety and help reduce the number of fires in people's homes which in turn can save lives. All contributions are being used anonymously.

Trends

It's the second time the service has run the survey and the trends are largely the same:

- Cooking remains top of the list for causes of fires but electrical fires have dropped
- Burnt food is often a major culprit of near misses, when people become distracted by their busy lives
- People forget that they are cooking and become distracted by children in particular
- 88% of people had working smoke alarms on every level of their home and tested them regularly.

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 – you can also register them for recall information.

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.

Read more about our advice: <https://www.esfrs.org/your-safety/safer-homes/>



East Sussex
Fire & Rescue Service

Real fires – real people

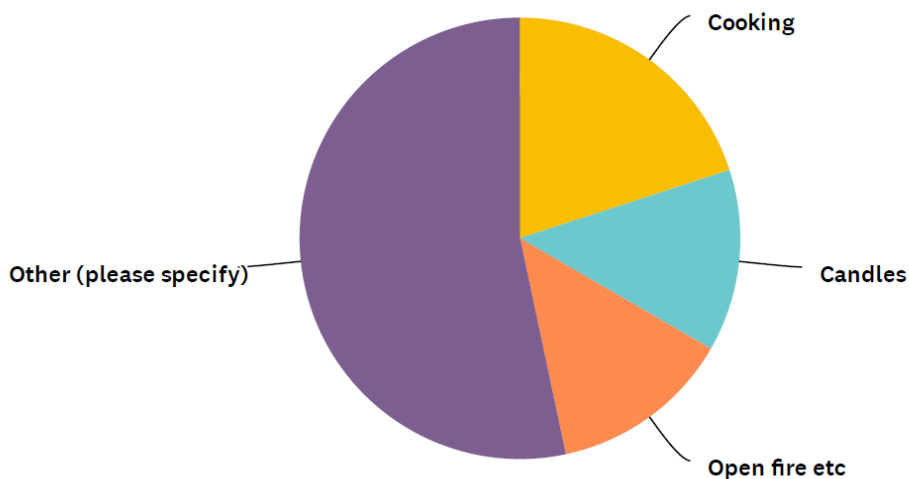
15% of people who took the survey confirmed that they had had a fire in their home. This is a reduction from 29% from the previous survey.

In another change from the previous survey, the most common place for a fire was the lounge/dining room at 27%, followed by the kitchen at 20%.

Other locations included the bedroom, chimneys and outside in the garden.

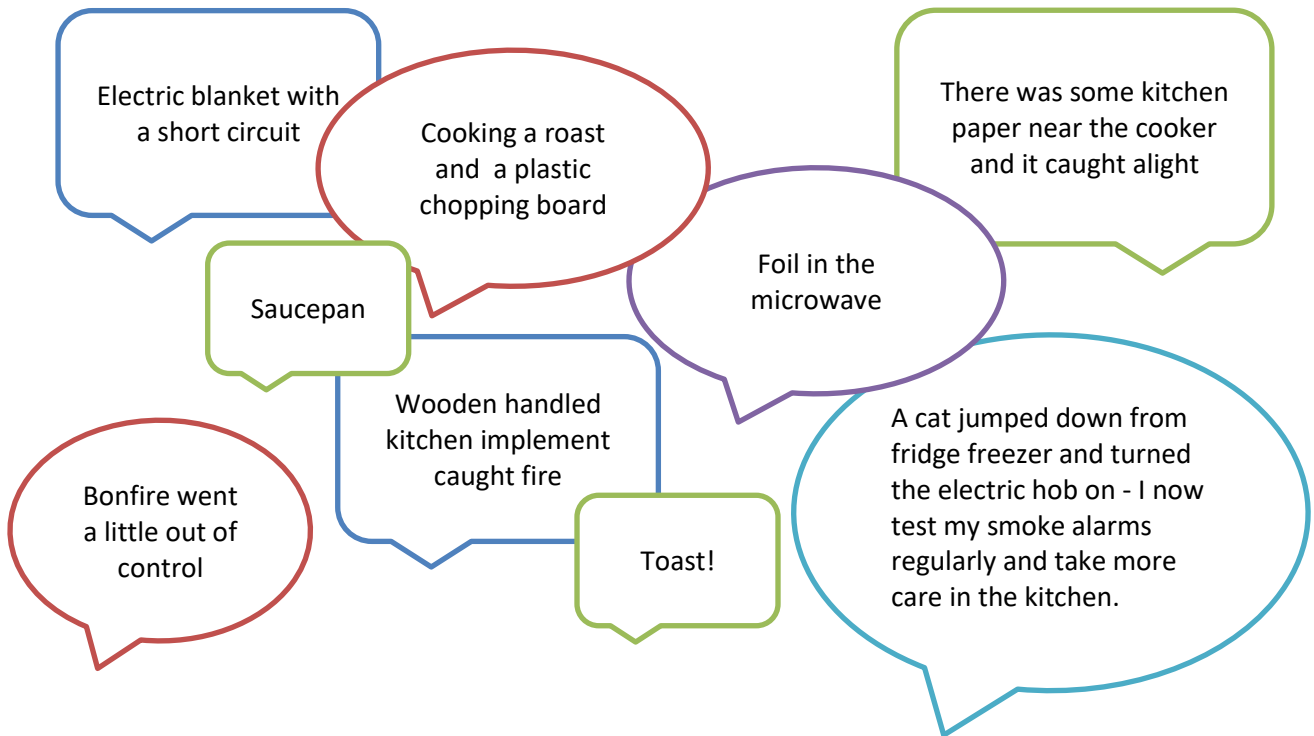
When looking at the causes of fires, cooking accounted for 20% which was also the top single cause last time.

Candles and open fires both account for 13% in second place and there were no reports of fires caused by electrics, which is a reduction from 16% last time.



Other causes included debris in the chimney, a lighter and dry wood and scrub.

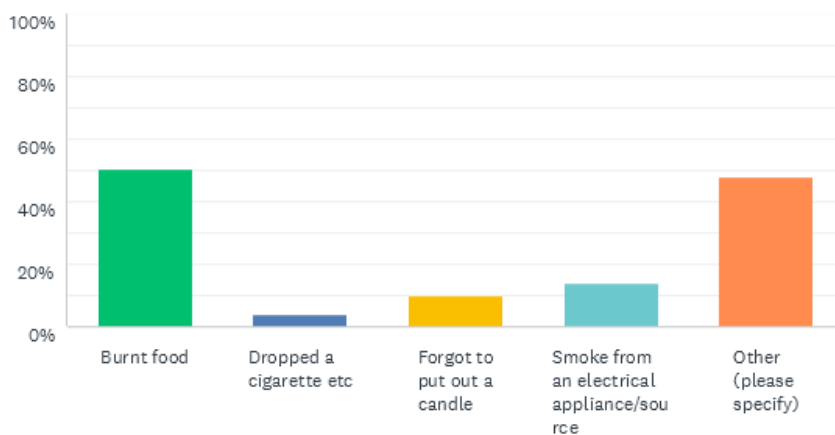
Near misses and close calls



When asked if respondents had had a “near miss”, 32% reported having burnt food, down from 50% in the previous survey. This was followed by smoke from an electrical appliance/source 12% and forgetting to put out a candle 6%. 2% forgot to put out a cigarette. There were several comments about 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, 91% said no, this is an increase from 80% last time. 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?

32% of people reported being distracted when the fire happened. This is a reduction from 50% last time.

We asked what they were distracted by and got a range of answers, the most common of which was being distracted by children.



Other reasons included:

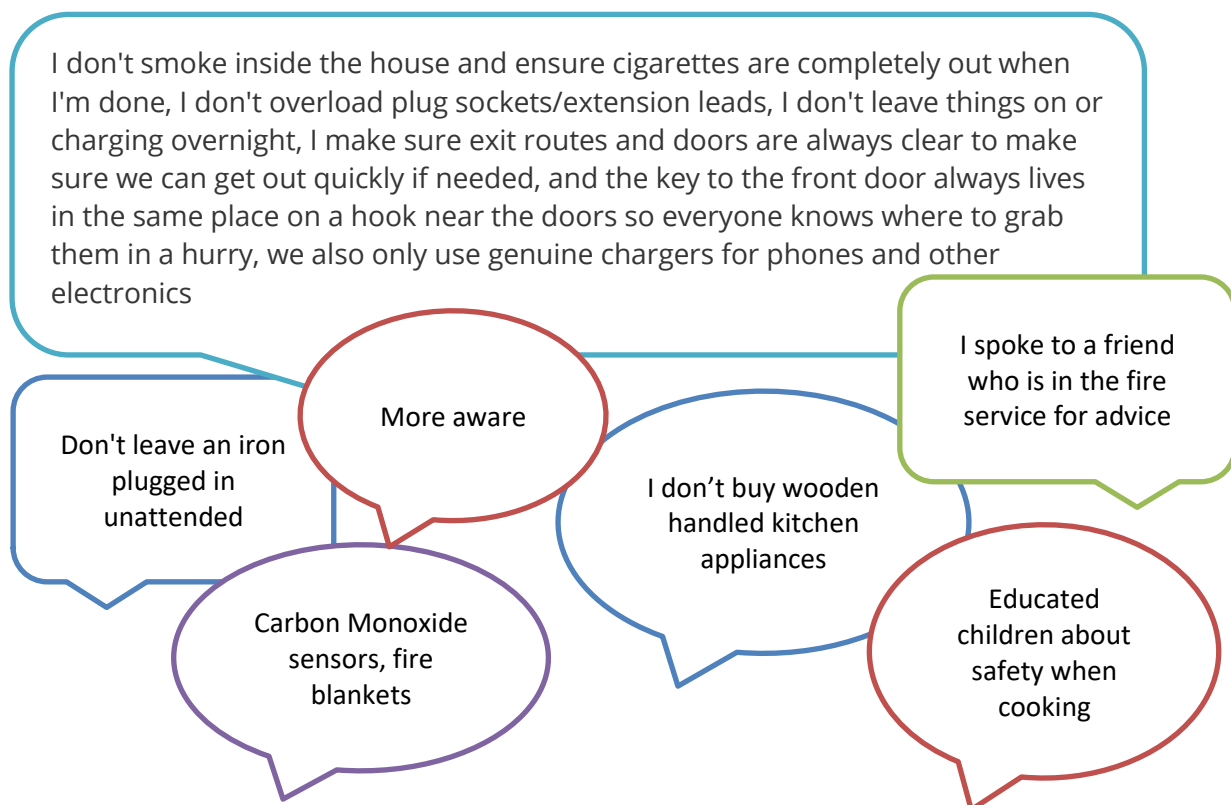
- Busy clearing a bush and got stuck with removing a root ball
- Cooking and stupidly didn't think the paper was too close to the hob
- Other members of my family - eating meals and discussions
- In a uni kitchen, brioche buns under a grill went up in flames, distracted by 6 other people.

Fire safety

35% of respondents reported knowing a lot about fire safety in the home before the incident which is a drop from 45% last time. 29% said they knew a bit against 47% previously. 5% said that they know nothing.

When asked if their behaviour had changed since the fire or near miss, the most common answer was that they have fitted smoke alarms 58% and test them regularly 47% – both of these are an increase on the previous survey.

I use a timer in the kitchen	15.38%	10
I take more care in the kitchen	27.69%	18
I don't cook when tired	10.77%	7
I don't cook after an alcoholic drink	6.15%	4
I have registered my electrical appliances	24.62%	16
I ensure I put candles out	23.08%	15
I don't use candles anymore	15.38%	10
I ensure I put my cigarettes out	3.08%	2
I don't smoke when tired or after an alcoholic drink	3.08%	2
I have given up smoking completely	7.69%	5
I have had my chimney swept	7.69%	5
I have learnt about escape routes	38.46%	25



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:

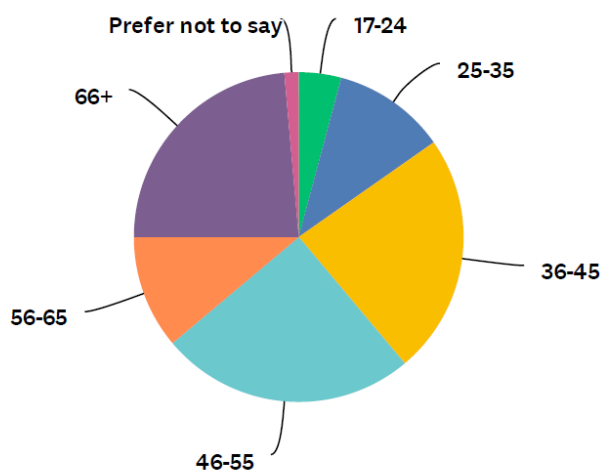
- Online survey ran between 1 July 2022 and 1 February 2023
- Two events took place:
 - Crowborough
 - Brighton.

Summary:

- 74 people took part in the survey
- Cooking remained top of the list for causes of fires
- While burnt food is very common, 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 children/family
- 41 contacts given for further work and engagement.

Demographics:

We had 74 responses from a range of age groups.



For further information please contact communications@esfrs.org