



# FACT SHEET » RESEARCH

## An Overview of the U.S. Fire Problem

In 2016, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated 1,342,000 fires. These fires caused 3,390 civilian deaths and 14,650 civilian injuries. In the same year, 69 firefighters were fatally injured and 62,085 firefighters experienced non-fatal injuries while on duty.

The 2016 fire statistics (except those for firefighter fatalities) are projections derived from NFPA's annual fire department survey. The 2,769 departments that responded to the sample survey protect 132 million people, or 41% of the total U.S. population.

### On average, U.S. fire departments responded to:

- ▶ A fire every 24 seconds
- ▶ A structure fire every 66 seconds
- ▶ A home fire every 90 seconds
- ▶ An outside or unclassified fire every 48 seconds
- ▶ A highway vehicle fire every 182 seconds

On average, fire claimed nine lives every day.

### Highway vehicle fires caused 8% of the civilian fire deaths.

In 2016, the 280 deaths caused by car, truck, and related vehicle fires was almost two times the 150 deaths resulting from non-residential structure fires.

Three of every five road vehicle fire deaths resulted from fires caused by collisions or overturns.

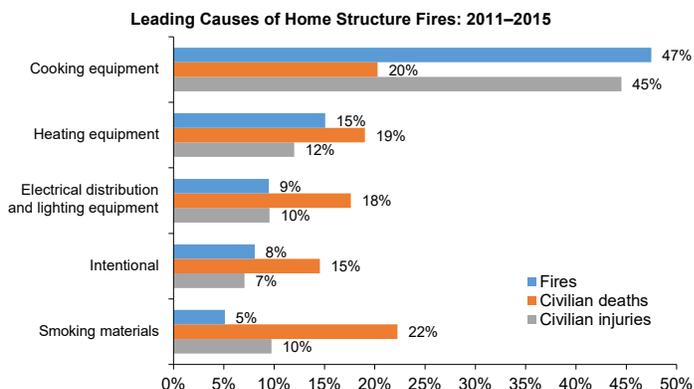
### In most years, roughly half half (49%) of all reported fires were outside or unclassified types of fires.

Brush, grass, or forest fires accounted for 22% of these fires; 13% were outside rubbish fires, 7% were outside fire involving property of value, and 8% were unclassified or other non-structure, non-vehicle fires.

### Home Structure Fires

In 2016, home structure fires caused 81% of the civilian fire deaths and 73% of the civilian fire injuries. (Homes include one- and two-family homes, apartments, townhouses, row houses, and manufactured homes.)

The graph below shows how the leading causes vary depending on whether the interest is in fires, deaths, or injuries.



### Cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries and the second leading cause of home fire deaths.

Unattended cooking is the leading factor contributing to these fires. Frying poses the greatest risk of fire.

*More than half of all cooking fire injuries occurred when people tried to fight the fire themselves.*

### Smoking has been the leading cause of home fire deaths for decades.



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### Heating equipment was involved in one of every five home fire deaths.

Heating equipment ranked second in reported home fires and home fire injuries, and third in home fire deaths. Portable and fixed space heaters, including wood stoves, are involved in more fires than central heat. These fires are also more likely to result in death than central heating fires.

### Intentional fires were the fourth leading cause of home fires.

Intentional fire setting was blamed for 8% of home fires, 15% of home fire deaths, and 7% of home fire injuries. According to FBI statistics, nearly one out of every three people arrested for arson in recent years were under 18.

### Electrical distribution or lighting equipment was the third leading cause of home fires.

This category includes fixed wiring, meters, switches, receptacles, outlets, cords and plugs, and lighting equipment. Electrical distribution or lighting equipment was involved in 9% of home fires, 10% of fire injuries, and 18% of home fire deaths.

Electrical factors can play a role in any fire involving equipment powered by electricity. Electrical failures were factors in 13% of home fires.

### Almost all U.S. homes have at least one smoke alarm, but three of every five home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or none that worked.

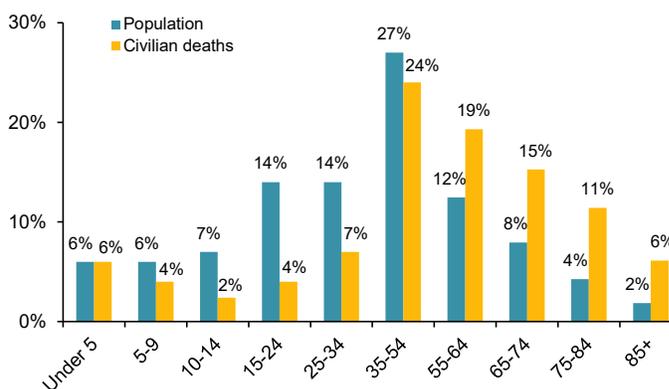
People who are under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or medications, have disabilities, or are very close to where the fire started, may not be able to act on a smoke alarm's warning. Nuisance alarms are the leading reason for disabling smoke alarms.

### Sprinklers decrease the fire death rate per 1,000 reported home fires by about 81%.

NFPA's Fire Sprinkler Initiative®: Bringing Safety Home is a nationwide effort to encourage the use of home fire sprinklers and the adoption of fire sprinkler requirements for new construction.

See [www.firesprinklerinitiative.org](http://www.firesprinklerinitiative.org).

Home Structure Fire Civilian Deaths and Injuries, by Age Group: 2011-2015



### Compared to their share of the population, older adults were more likely to die in home fires than people in other age groups.

#### States with the highest fire death rates tend to have higher percentages of:

- ▶ Adults who did not finish high school
- ▶ African American or Native American residents
- ▶ Smokers
- ▶ Households living in poverty
- ▶ People living in rural areas

Source: NFPA Research: [www.nfpa.org/research](http://www.nfpa.org/research)

Contact information: 617-984-7450 or [research@nfpa.org](mailto:research@nfpa.org)



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