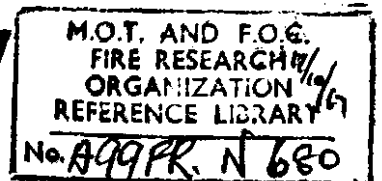


LIBRARY REFERENCE ONLY



## Fire Research Note

No. 680

FIRE: THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A SAMPLE  
OF FIRE-CONSCIOUS ADULTS

by

E. D. CHAMBERS

September, 1966.

FIRE  
RESEARCH  
STATION

F.R. Note No.680.  
September, 1966.  
Research Programme  
Objective 1/9.

FIRE: THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A SAMPLE  
OF FIRE-CONSCIOUS ADULTS

by

E. D. Chambers

SUMMARY

Persons working at an establishment concerned with fire research were asked for particulars of fires they remembered in their houses.

Crown copyright

This report has not been published and should be considered as confidential advance information. No reference should be made to it in any publication without the written consent of the Director of Fire Research.

MINISTRY OF TECHNOLOGY AND FIRE OFFICES' COMMITTEE  
JOINT FIRE RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

116316

FIRE: THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A SAMPLE  
OF FIRE-CONSCIOUS ADULTS

by

E. D. Chambers

INTRODUCTION

In a previous report<sup>1</sup>, a sample of children was asked for particulars of fires that they remembered having happened in their houses. Of this sample, 31 per cent remembered a fire and 14 per cent a fire to which the fire brigade had been called.

A questionnaire on similar lines (reproduced in Appendix I) was given to all the persons employed at the Fire Research Station. Since adults would have a good idea both of date of occurrence and financial loss, this information was also requested.

Because of their work, it was felt that the fire experience of the persons questioned would be particularly low, and would indicate something like an attainable minimum.

PERSONS QUESTIONED

A copy of the questionnaire was sent via the internal post to every person employed at the Fire Research Station. After following up about a dozen slow responders, and allowing for absentees, almost 100 per cent response was achieved. This represented 148 persons, of whom 94 were male and 54 female.

As a sample, they would seem to differ from the average of the working population by being:-

1. Better educated.
2. More 'fire-conscious'.

About half have some scientific qualification, and the work carried out naturally keeps at least some aspects of fire well to the fore.

There is a rather small proportion of young (15-21) staff, but this is unlikely to affect the results greatly.

RESULTS

Persons recalling fires

Fire experience	Persons	Fires
No fire	125	-
One fire	21	21
Two fires	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>
	<u>148</u>	<u>25</u>

Resources did not permit attempts to be made to correlate fire experience with such personal factors as length of employment, education, age and household size. No information was collected on these matters.

Fires recalled.

Particulars	Years ago	Loss (£) (1966 prices)
/ Blowlamp ignited roof	0	3800*
Lightning	4	300*
Clothes drying-burned out	9	110*
Electric blanket	2	50*
Fuse box wiring	5	14*
Fat in pan-burned out	6	12*
Overturned bed lamp	6	12*
Electric blanket	2	8*
Electric fire ignited firescreen	10	7*
Coal on carpet	6	6*
Coal on carpet	16	6*
Clothes airing	3	3
Christmas tree decorations	10	3
Children playing ignited clothes drying	45	2
Fat in pan	14	2
Polish on stove	6	2
Chimney	5	1
Fat in pan in oven	0	1
Clothes airing	11	1
Overturned bed lamp	3	1
/ Chimney	2	0
Chimney	10	0
Coal on lino	0	0
Cooking oil in pan	2	0
Water spilt on defective flex	20	0

/ Fire brigade attended

\* Insurance claim made

One out-of-doors fire involving burning rubbish has not been included in the analysis.

Fire brigade attendance

Out of the 25 fires reported, the fire brigade was called to only two.

In one, a blowlamp ignited the roof structure, and direct damage of about £3300 was done. This naturally resulted in an insurance claim. To this must be added £500 for consequential loss, in the form of the cost of alternative accommodation.

The other fire was a straightforward chimney fire, with negligible damage and no insurance claim.

As a matter of interest, one person recalling a minor fire was a fireman at the period of its occurrence.

## Insurance claims

The eleven most serious fires, with estimated financial losses of about £6 and over, resulted in insurance claims. The losses tabulated do not represent the amounts claimed, since for comparative purposes they have been adjusted to 1966 prices.

Fourteen smaller fires (about £3 and under) did not result in insurance claims.

Presumably the dividing line is largely explained by the clause commonly included in insurance policies by which a householder has to bear the first £5 (more recently £15) of each claim.

## Comparison of fire incidences

Table 1 compares the numbers of fires reported by two groups of people with some roughly equivalent national figures. The numbers involved are too small for the apparent differences to have any statistical significance, even if approximations had not been made in arriving at the figures.

Table 1

Estimated annual incidence of "fire brigade" fires in dwellings occupied by two groups

(All fires recalled and reported divided by 10 to give estimate of annual incidence)

	<u>Number of dwellings</u>	<u>Fires in dwellings (exc. chimney fires)</u>	<u>Chimney fires confined to chimney</u>
Denbigh Road School Pupils <sup>1</sup>	77	0.5 (0.0017)	0.6 (0.0042)
Fire Research Station Staff	148	0.1 (0.0007)	0.1 (0.0007)

Comparative annual incidence of "fire brigade" fires in England and Wales

England and Wales, 1961	14646000	25508 (0.0017)	60964 (0.0042)
-------------------------	----------	----------------	----------------

N.B. Figures in brackets are estimated annual incidences per dwelling.

## Time since occurrence

Possibly more fires would have been reported if the questionnaire had included some phrase such as "however small, in any house in which you have been living". There is a tendency for more recent fires to be recalled rather than those that happened several years ago. This apparent increase, illustrated in Figure 1, is at about 12 per cent per annum, although such factors as changes in fire hazards and household size would influence this.

## CONCLUSIONS

In a sample of fire-conscious adults, 16 per cent had some experience of a fire in their home, and 2 per cent of a fire to which the fire brigade had been called. Insurance claims had been made by 7 per cent, being for all the fires where the damage exceeded about £5.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The paper is Crown Copyright, published by permission of the Controller, H.M. Stationery Office. It is contributed by permission of the Director of the Fire Research Station of the Ministry of Technology and Fire Offices' Committee.

Thanks are due to the staff of the Fire Research Station for their co-operation in this exercise.

## REFERENCE

- (1) CHAMBERS, E.D. Fire: the personal experience of a sample of children. Ministry of Technology and Fire Offices' Committee Joint Fire Research Organization Fire Research Note 630. Boreham Wood, Herts, August 1966.

APPENDIX I

1.

2. Mr. Chambers

It would be appreciated if you would complete this questionnaire, cross your name off the top and return it.

Have you ever had a fire of any sort in your house?

If your answer is No, please ignore the rest of this form.

If your answer is Yes, please continue:-

About how long ago did this happen?

What caught fire?

Did anybody call the fire brigade?

What was the value of the damage (roughly)?

Did you claim on an insurance policy?

Any other comments.

Thank you for your co-operation

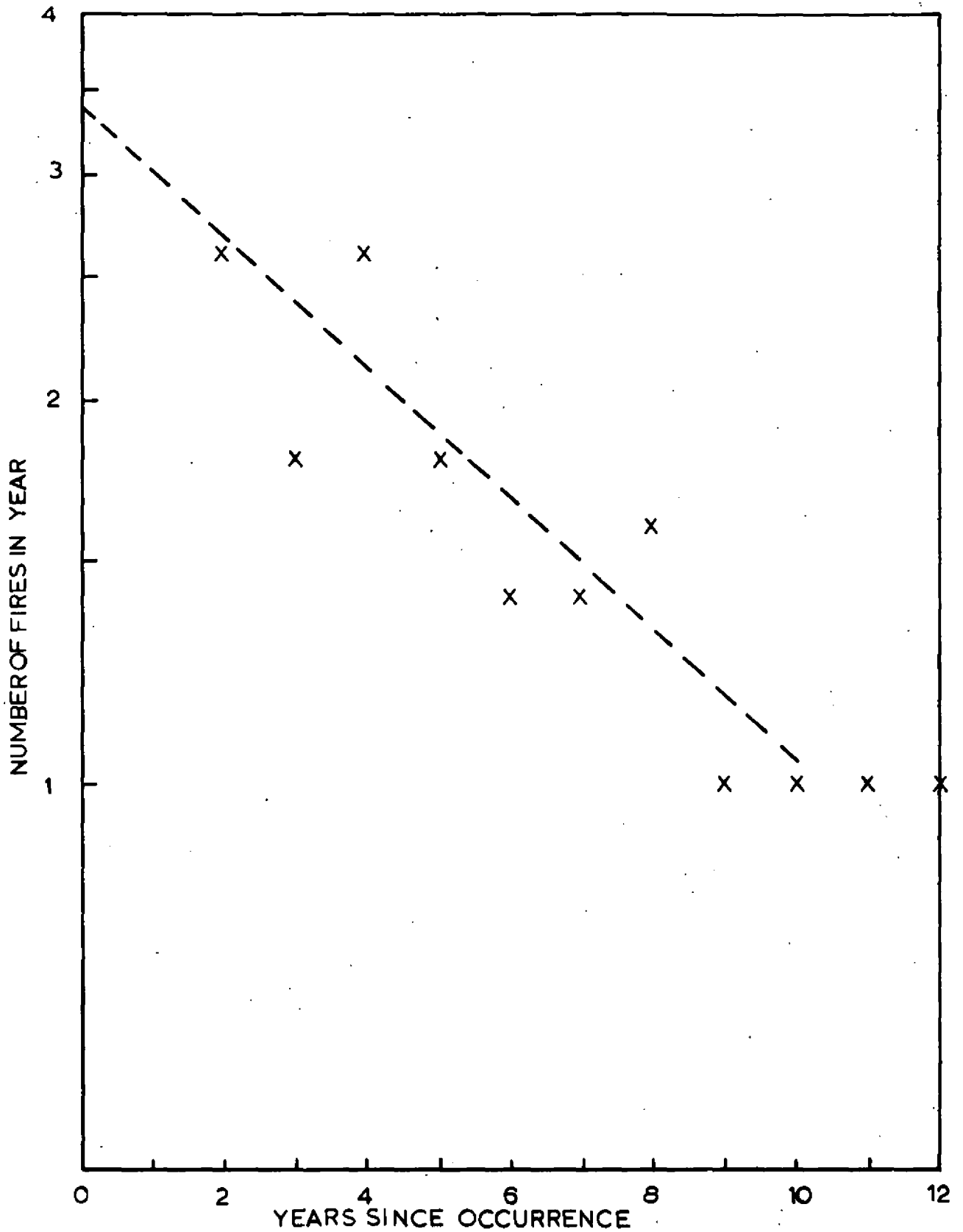


FIG.1 FIRES OCCURRING IN A YEAR AND RECALLED BY 148 PERSONS AGAINST TIME SINCE OCCURRENCE  
 — 5-YEAR MOVING AVERAGES



