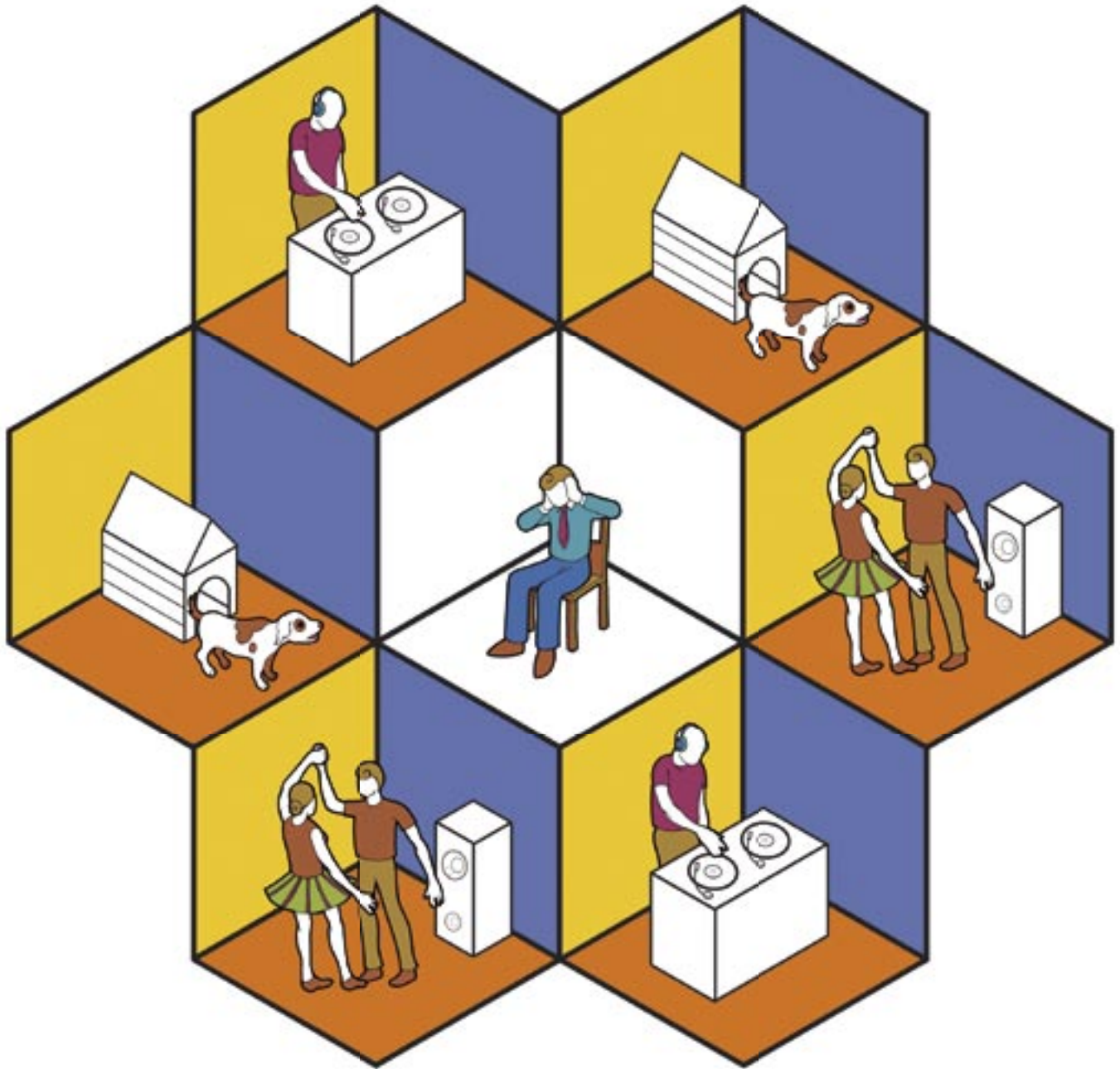


Noise Complaint Statistics for Northern Ireland

2004 - 2005



Introduction

This is the second report into noise complaint statistics for Northern Ireland. The purpose of the report is to inform central government, district councils, the general public and any other interested parties as to the extent of public complaints about noise, which are referred to district councils in Northern Ireland. The main finding is that noise complaints have increased dramatically over the last year.

The commonly accepted definition of noise is 'sound which is undesired by the recipient'. In other words, noise can be any sound which is intrusive, disturbing or annoying.

Noise is one of the environmental pollutants most often complained about yet is least often reported publicly. District councils are the organisations empowered to deal with the vast majority of noise pollution in Northern Ireland. This report provides an analysis of noise complaints received by all 26 district councils during the period of 01 April 2004 to 31 March 2005.

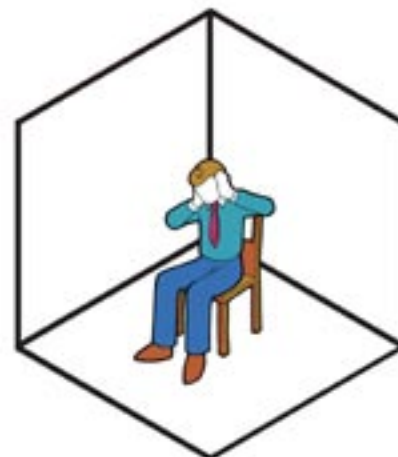
Councils receive a wide variety of complaints about noise and for ease of reporting these have been categorised into the following main noise sources:

- Industrial;
- Commercial and leisure;
- Domestic;
- Construction, demolition or road works;
- Transport;
- Equipment in the street.

These sources of noise have been further divided into sub-categories that represent the individual areas of most concern to those people who make complaints to their local council. Details of these sub-categories can be found in Table 1.

The Department regards the information derived from this report as an important indicator of the effectiveness of current controls on noise. The reporting of these statistics will enable Departmental officials to more appropriately target policy development and research needs in respect of environmental noise. It will also provide an opportunity for district councils to compare their noise statistics with those of neighbouring authorities.

This report extends the work already conducted by organisations such as the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection into researching noise complaint statistics throughout the United Kingdom.



Awareness of Noise

The extent to which people complain to their councils about noise will not only depend on the degree of disturbance, but also awareness of council noise services and the level and type of service provided by individual authorities. In January 2005, the Department's Environment and Heritage Service engaged in a comprehensive campaign to raise awareness of noise issues within the community.

Leading with the message "Too Loud? – You're Allowed to Complain", the province wide television and newspaper adverts used striking imagery and annoying sounds to deliver a socially responsible message to a wide audience. This campaign was conducted during the early part of 2005 and focused primarily on informing those people affected by noise that redress was available in the form of help from their local council.

Noise makers were also reminded that "Too Loud is Not Allowed" and encouraged to adopt a more responsible attitude to potentially noisy activities such as playing music and keeping pets.

Independently conducted research confirmed the success of this campaign, which led to distinct changes in attitude to the issue of noise with 80% of people surveyed saying that the campaign made them think about the seriousness of the issue. There was also a 29% increase in the likelihood of complaining and a 50% increase in the amount of people saying they would contact their council if they had a problem with noisy neighbours. Indeed councils reported an average increase in noise complaints of 44% during the period of the campaign compared to the same one month period last year.

The Department also continued to support the National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection (NSCA) in organising an annual event to give everyone involved in managing noise an opportunity to raise awareness of the problems excessive noise can cause and the actions we can all take to mitigate noise. Known as "Noise Action Day", this was held on 27 May 2004 and involved 10 district councils in Northern Ireland participating in awareness raising activity. Council activities included a poster competition by Ards Borough Council and the promotion of ant-bark collars for dogs by Belfast City Council.



Provincewide campaign to highlight noise awareness issues.

Noise Complaints

This report details noise complaint statistic data from all of Northern Ireland's 26 district councils and thus provides an extensive data set on noise pollution for the entire region. In total, 10,047 complaints regarding noise were made to councils in 2004/05.

A summary of all the data returned by the councils is contained in Tables 1 and 2. In order to make a direct comparison between council areas the complaints should be considered in terms of the relevant population density. Figure 1 illustrates the numbers of noise complaints received by individual councils per 1,000 people in each district area, based on 2001 census data. Councils receiving the highest level of noise complaints can be clearly identified as Belfast and Coleraine. Those areas reporting the lowest levels of noise complaint were Dungannon and South Tyrone, Fermanagh and Moyle.



What can be Done About Noise?

Article 38 of The Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 gives district councils power to deal with noise from premises, including land, which they consider amounts to a statutory nuisance. These powers apply not only to the control of existing noise, but also where a noise is expected to occur or recur. Where a council is satisfied that a nuisance exists it must serve a legal notice requiring the abatement of that noise nuisance.

Details of all noise notices served by district councils under The Pollution Control and Local Government Order are contained in Table 2. It can be seen that the majority of these notices are issued in relation to noise emanating from domestic premises.

Councils also have discretion to adopt The Noise Act 1996, which provides additional powers to deal with noise at night from domestic premises. These powers include provision to issue warning notices, fixed penalty notices and in certain circumstances to seize noise making equipment. To date in Northern Ireland, only Belfast City Council has adopted The Noise Act, and the numbers of these notices has also been reported in Table 2.

Figure 2 illustrates the numbers of all noise notices served by district councils in Northern Ireland. For purposes of comparison these are expressed per 100 complaints received by the council. Overall it can be seen that relatively few noise notices are issued by district councils, indeed for 2004/05 there were 12 councils who did not issue any noise abatement notices.

In dealing with complaints, council staff will endeavour to seek cooperation and agreement to obtain a solution. Hence an informal approach is generally adopted initially to resolve noise complaints. Where this fails and evidence of a nuisance exists then more formal action can be instigated.

This includes the issue of verbal warnings and written warnings which will often be sufficient to ensure the desired outcome. A frequent difficulty for councils is obtaining sufficient evidence to justify the issue of a noise notice.

Where notices are not complied with, councils may instigate legal proceedings for non-compliance. During 2004/05 there were a total of 17 prosecutions taken in Northern Ireland by district councils for noise offences: Banbridge (1); Belfast (7); Craigavon (1); Fermanagh (1); Magherafelt (1); Newry and Mourne (6).

Sources of Noise

Analysis of the data reveals that most complaints made to district councils relate to domestic noise sources. This category or sector accounts for 83% of all complaints as illustrated by Figure 3.

Further analysis of this sector is shown in Figure 4, which illustrates that the domestic noise source most complained about is music, television and parties. This is followed closely by animal noise, which is primarily attributable to barking dogs.

Figure 4 also illustrates the situation in respect to the other main categories, with the exception of construction and demolition noise which has no further sub-divisions.

In relation to the commercial sector, the public appears to be most annoyed by entertainment noise sources, which account for 41% of complaints. Also of prominence in this sector are commercial security alarms.

Noise from road traffic is the most dominant complaint in the transport sector with 45%. This is followed by complaints about noise from delivery vehicles and railways.

Trend Analysis

This is only the second year for which complete results are available. In comparison to 2003/04, there were an additional 1,650 or 20% more noise complaints during 2004/05. Full details of this annual change are illustrated in Figure 5.

Sectors showing the most significant increase when compared to 2003/04 were Transport (+35%), Construction (+32%) and Domestic (+22%). Upon closer inspection it can be seen that the increases in domestic complaints relate to all sources in that category as shown in Figure 6. The most substantive increase relates to animal noise.

The transport sector has also witnessed an overall increase in complaints with only those relating to military aircraft declining (Figure 7).



In general, the industrial and commercial sectors also exhibited greater numbers of complaints. Most notably these related to noise from entertainment premises and industrial sites, though public complaints about leisure activity and commercial security alarms did decline (Figures 8 and 9).

Complaints about noise in the street also showed a slight downward trend (Figure 10), though complaints in the 'other' category remain at a relatively high level. It is thought that these were mainly attributable to boisterous and anti-social behaviour in public places. There was, however, an increase in complaints about street performers and public address systems.

In respect to action against noise there has been a marked increase in enforcement activity by councils. During 2004/05 there were 340 notices issued, an increase of 10% on the previous year. Prosecutions also increased from 7 during 2003/04 to 17 during 2004/05 (Table 2).

Figure 11 illustrates the percentage change in complaint numbers per district council. It can be seen that significant percentage increases were reported by Lisburn, Cookstown and Armagh councils.

The general upward trend in complaints about noise may in part be attributable to the increased efforts of Government to highlight the seriousness of noise issues through the 'Too Loud' awareness campaign and initiatives such as 'Noise Action Week', or we may indeed be living in an ever increasingly noisy environment. Whatever the case, we all do make noise and everyone in society has a duty to act responsibly when engaging in potentially noisy activity and should be tolerant to the rights of our neighbours.

Further Information

Further information on noise matters in general, or the content of this report may be obtained from Environment and Heritage Service at the following address:

Air and Environmental Quality Unit
 Environment and Heritage Service
 Commonwealth House
 35 Castle Street
 Belfast
 BT1 1GU
 Tel: 028 905 46425
 Fax: 028 905 46424

e-mail ep@doeni.gov.uk

www.ehsni.gov.uk



Figure 1
Noise Complaints per 1000 Population

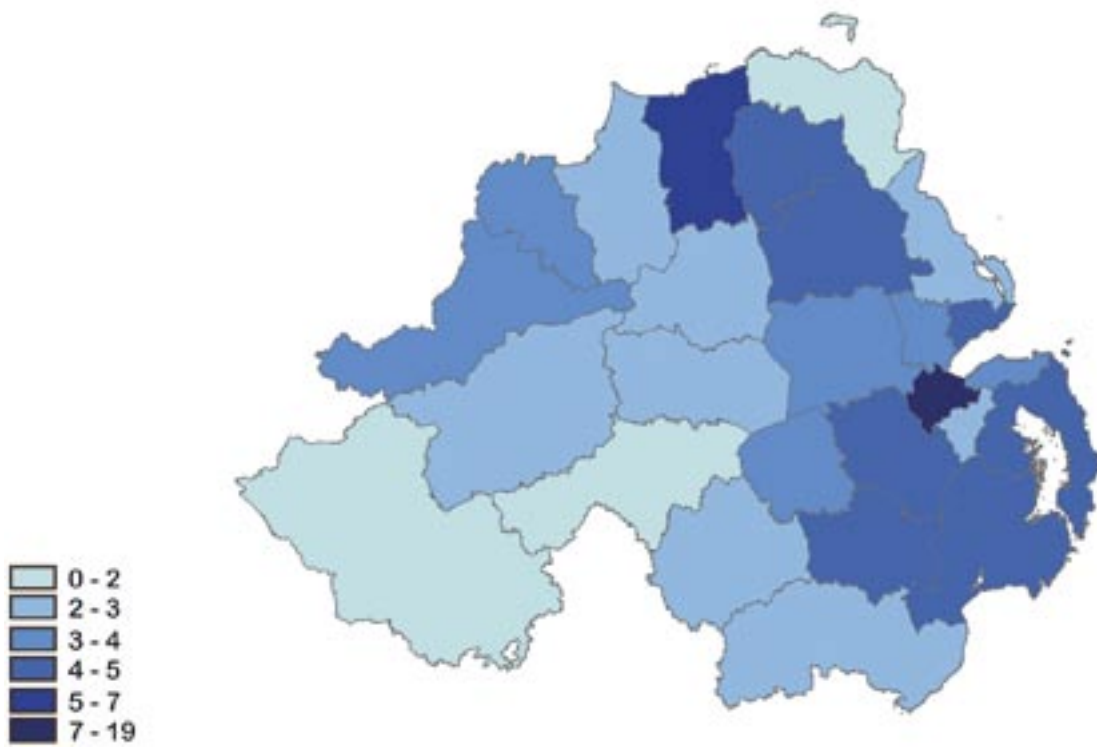


Figure 2
Notices Served per 100 Complaints Received

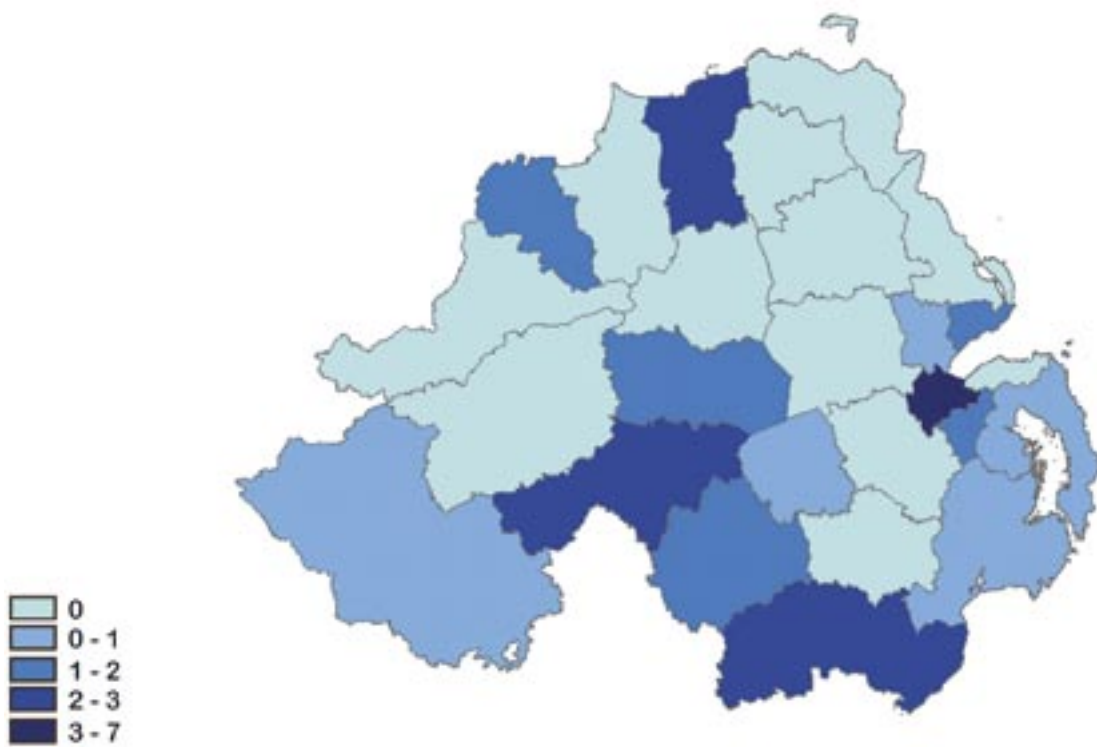


Table 1
Total Noise Complaints Received By District Council

COUNCIL	Category of Source																				TOTAL						
	Industrial		Commercial & Leisure							Domestic			Construction	Transport					Noise in the Street								
	Industry Manufacturing Workshops	Agricultural	Entertainment Premises	Sports & Leisure	Petrol Stations Car Wash	Restaurants Hot Food Bars	Other Shops & Offices	Security Alarms	Other	DIY	Music Televisions Parties	Animal Noise	House Alarms	Other Neighbour Noise	Construction Sites Demolition Works Road Works	Road Vehicles	Railways	Civil Aircraft	Military Aircraft	Delivery Vehicles		Vehicle Alarms	Loudspeakers	Ice Cream Van Chimes	Street Traders	Street Performance Public Address	Other
Antrim	2	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	3	1	38	96	1	15	3	4	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	174
Ards	4	3	3	19	0	1	1	2	6	5	69	178	6	25	20	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	351
Armagh	6	4	3	3	2	1	0	0	0	1	31	89	0	3	3	6	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	156
Ballymena	3	3	2	13	1	4	1	1	3	1	49	132	1	36	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	263
Ballymoney	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	16	88	2	5	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	125
Banbridge	3	1	1	2	0	0	0	2	1	1	36	101	0	13	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	170
Belfast	18	0	211	8	2	21	16	95	17	47	2498	671	185	858	197	38	27	11	5	14	18	11	1	1	8	85	5063
Carrickfergus	3	0	7	1	0	0	2	3	8	0	30	95	1	13	9	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3	178
Castlereagh	4	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	8	4	47	89	7	21	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	8	197
Coleraine	4	3	15	1	0	6	0	0	7	2	44	213	0	24	17	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	8	349
Cookstown	9	0	0	6	0	1	1	0	4	1	0	35	0	23	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	84
Craigavon	16	2	1	5	1	0	1	1	5	1	109	142	0	15	4	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	312
Derry	8	0	9	0	1	0	6	2	5	7	112	156	2	17	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	338
Down	10	2	12	3	0	1	1	3	4	3	56	134	2	44	9	9	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	1	298
Dungannon	7	1	3	3	1	0	0	0	3	2	18	48	0	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	92
Fermanagh	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	24	71	0	10	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	120
Larne	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	39	33	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	85
Limavady	6	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	45	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	88
Lisburn	15	2	7	8	0	0	3	2	8	2	97	266	1	40	5	2	2	0	1	6	3	0	0	0	1	0	471
Magherafelt	11	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	16	48	0	1	4	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	91
Moyle	0	3	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	8	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	33
Newry & Mourne	1	7	3	1	0	0	3	0	0	2	17	109	3	30	13	4	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	196
Newtonabbey	12	0	3	2	0	0	0	7	10	8	50	157	2	24	18	4	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	306
North Down	1	0	2	0	2	0	1	2	8	5	62	135	1	27	5	0	0	2	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	257
Omagh	11	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	2	4	15	49	0	9	2	4	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	4	107
Strabane	8	1	4	2	3	0	1	1	0	0	23	90	0	3	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	143
TOTAL	170	34	293	81	13	36	47	122	104	101	3532	3285	214	1273	352	94	34	14	8	36	23	16	5	4	13	143	10047

Table 2
Total Notices Served By District Council

COUNCIL	Pollution Control & Local Government (NI) Order														NOISE ACT		TOTAL NOTICES	PROSECUTIONS	
	Industrial		Commercial & Leisure							Domestic			Construction	Warning Notices	Fixed Penalty Notices				
	Industry Manufacturing Workshops	Agricultural	Entertainment Premises	Sports & Leisure	Petrol Stations Car Wash	Restaurants Hot Food Bars	Other Shops & Offices	Security Alarms	Other	DIY	Music Televisions Parties	Animal Noise	House Alarms			Other Neighbour Noise			Construction Sites Demolition Works Road Works
Antrim	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Ards	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	1	0
Armagh	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	n/a	n/a	2	0
Ballymena	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Ballymoney	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Banbridge	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	1
Belfast	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	6	2	16	0	3	259	16	309	7
Carrickfergus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	3	0
Castlereagh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	n/a	n/a	3	0
Coleraine	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	3	0
Cookstown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	1	0
Craigavon	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	3	1
Derry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	n/a	n/a	4	0
Down	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	1	0
Dungannon	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	2	0
Fermanagh	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	1	1
Larne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Limavady	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Lisburn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Magherafelt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	1
Moyle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Newry & Mourne	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	5	6
Newtonabbey	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	2	0
North Down	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Omagh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Strabane	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
TOTAL	7	0	5	2	0	0	0	5	0	0	14	10	19	0	3	259	16	340	17

Figure 3
Total Noise Complaints

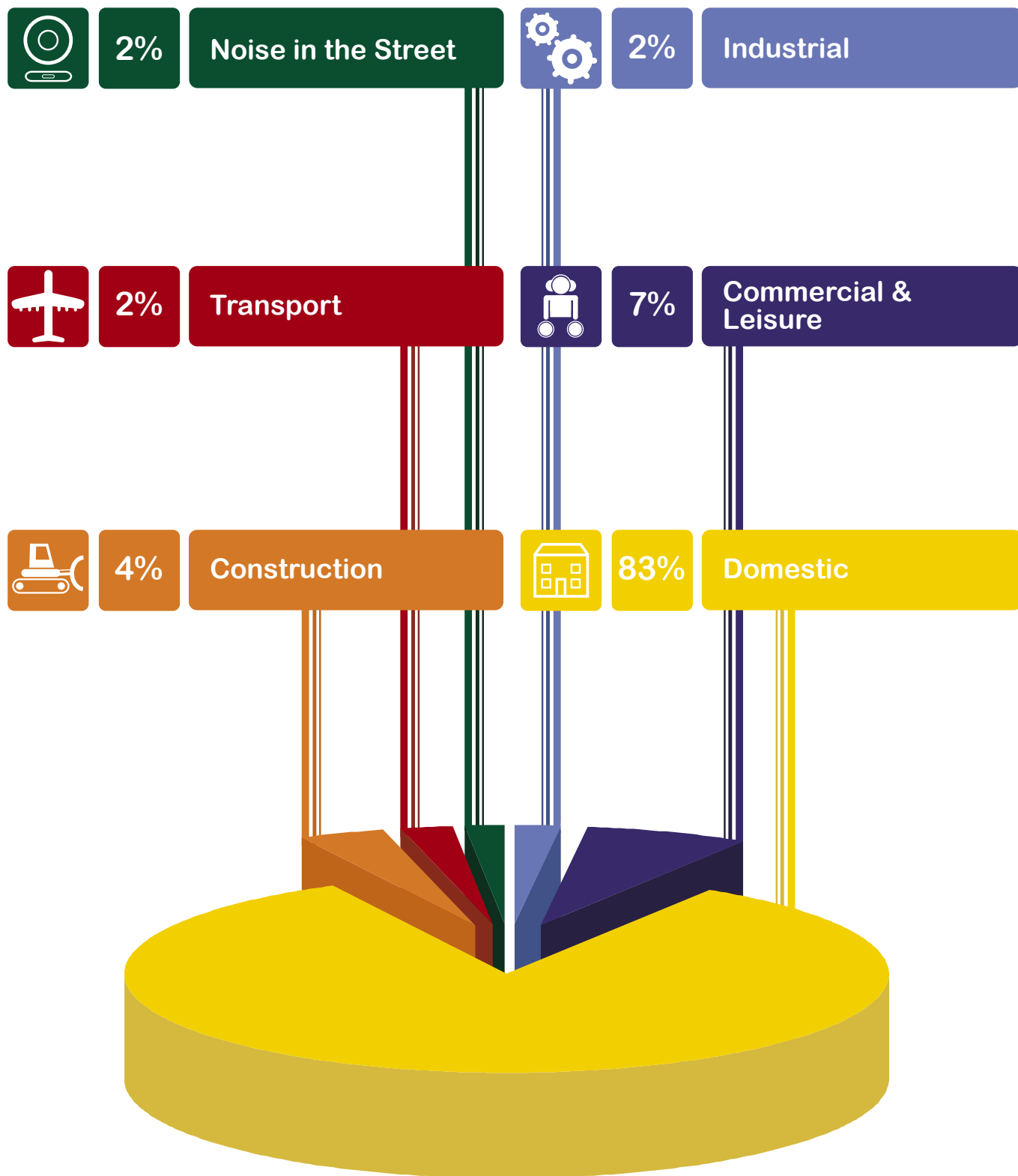
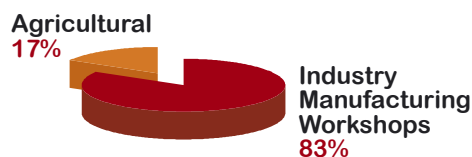
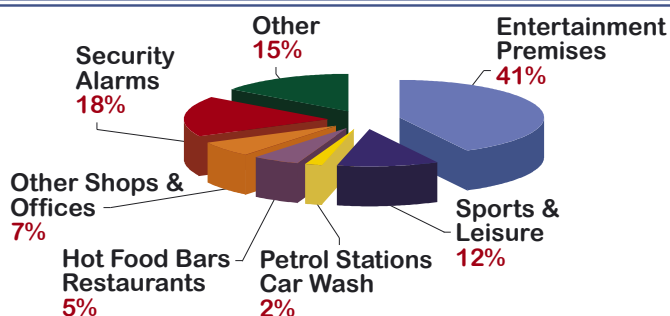


Figure 4
Noise Complaint Categories

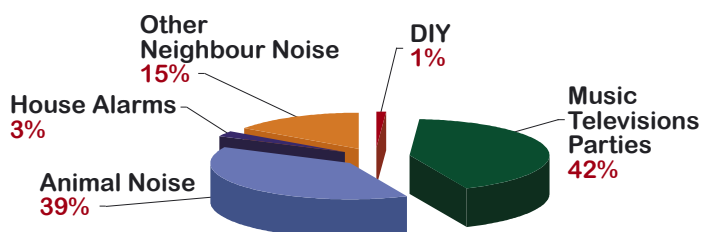
 **Industrial**



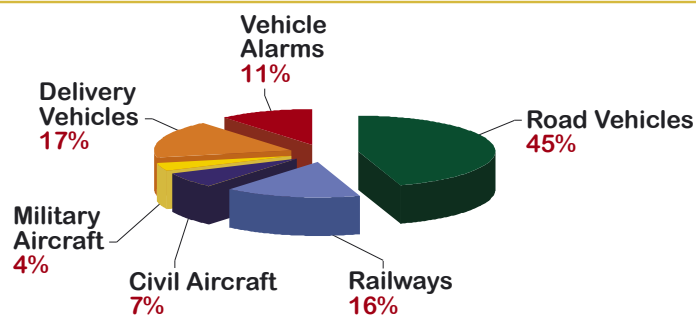
 **Commercial & Leisure**



 **Domestic**



 **Transport**



 **Noise in the Street**

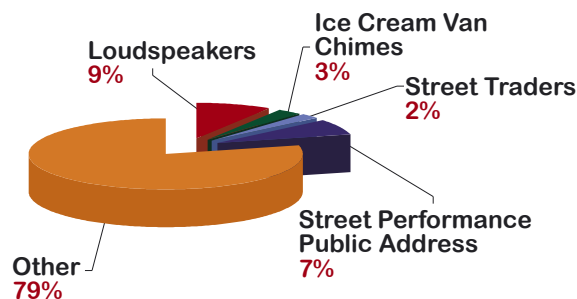


Figure 5
Noise Complaints: 2003/04 - 2004/05 Comparison

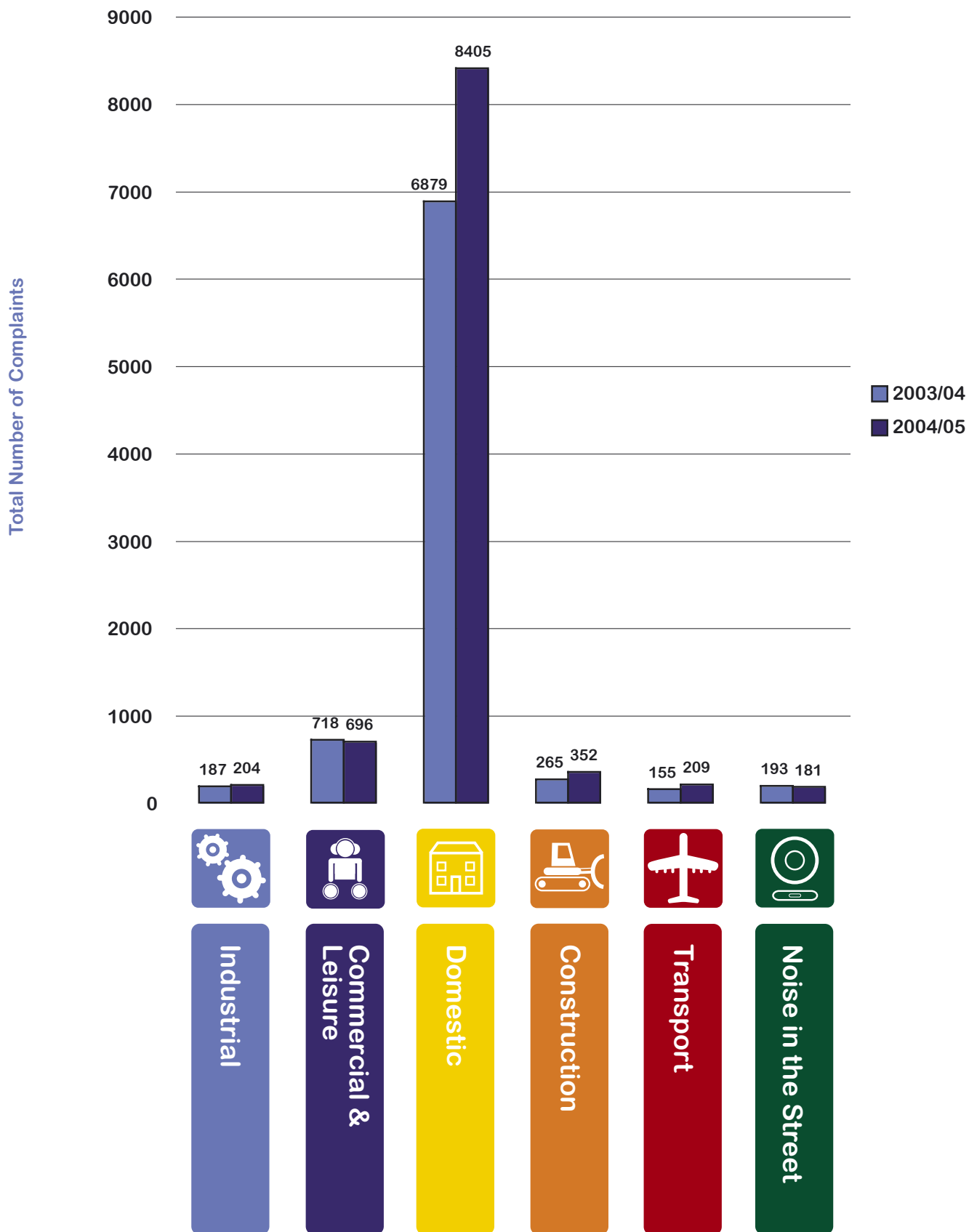


Figure 6
Domestic Complaints Comparisons 2003/04 - 2004/05

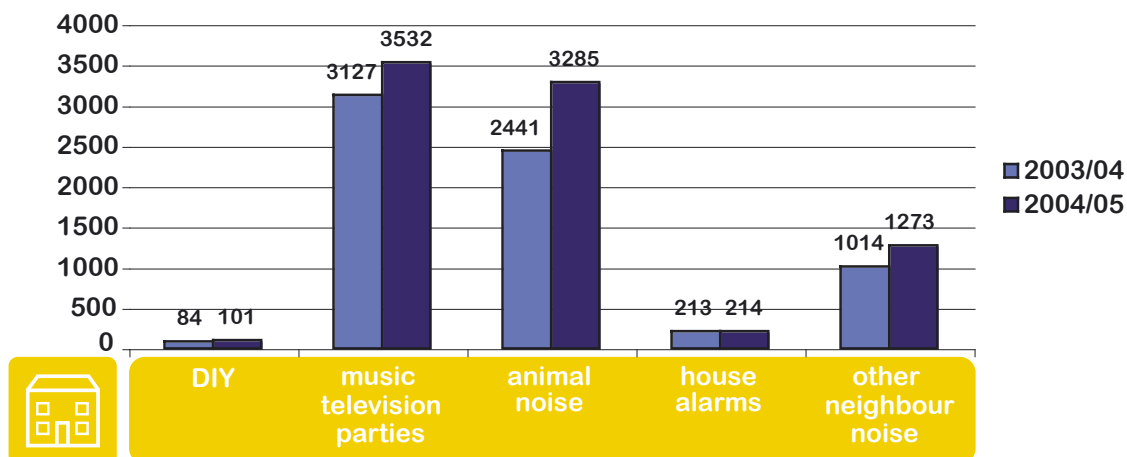


Figure 7
Transport Complaints Comparisons 2003/04 - 2004/05

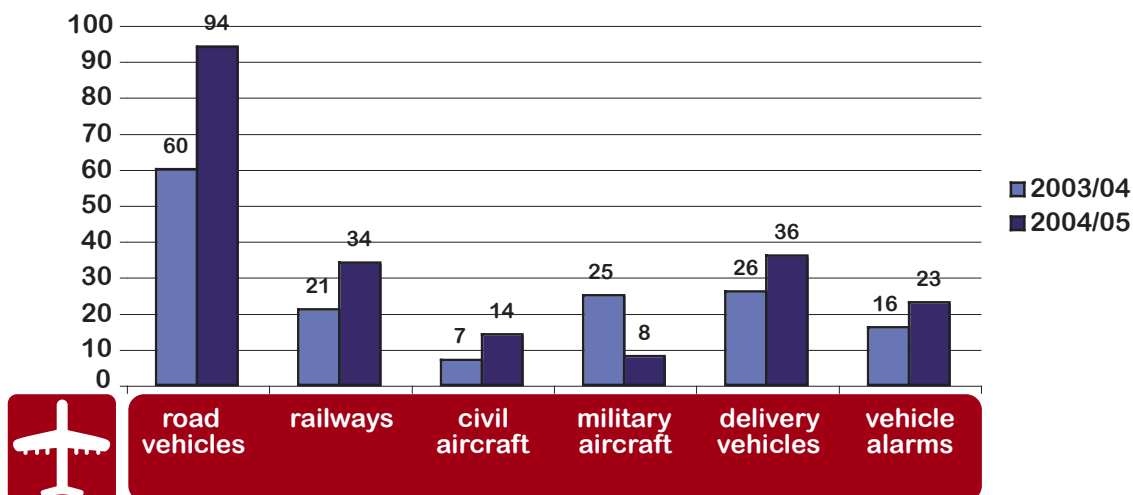


Figure 8
Industrial Complaints Comparisons 2003/04 - 2004/05

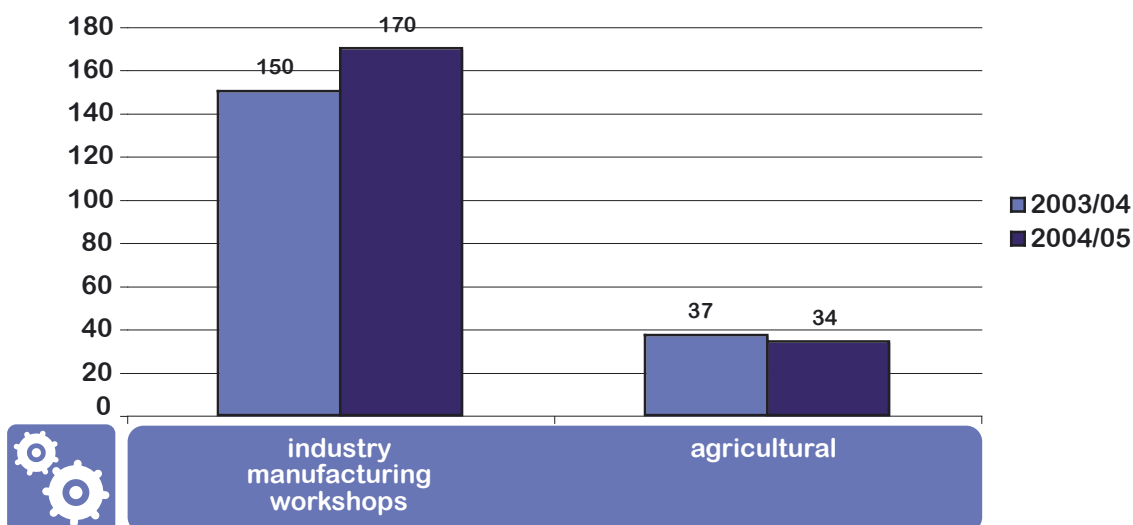


Figure 9
Commercial and Leisure Complaints Comparisons 2003/04 - 2004/05

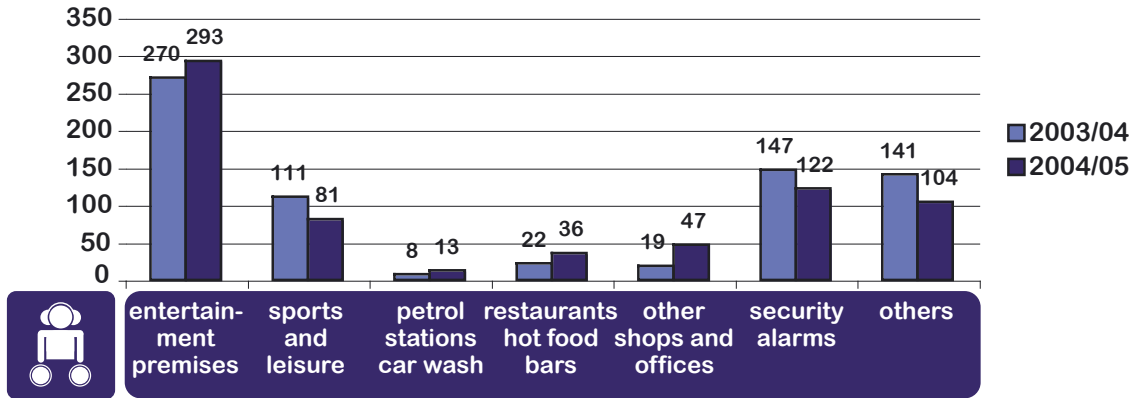


Figure 10
Noise in the Street Complaints Comparisons 2003/04 - 2004/05

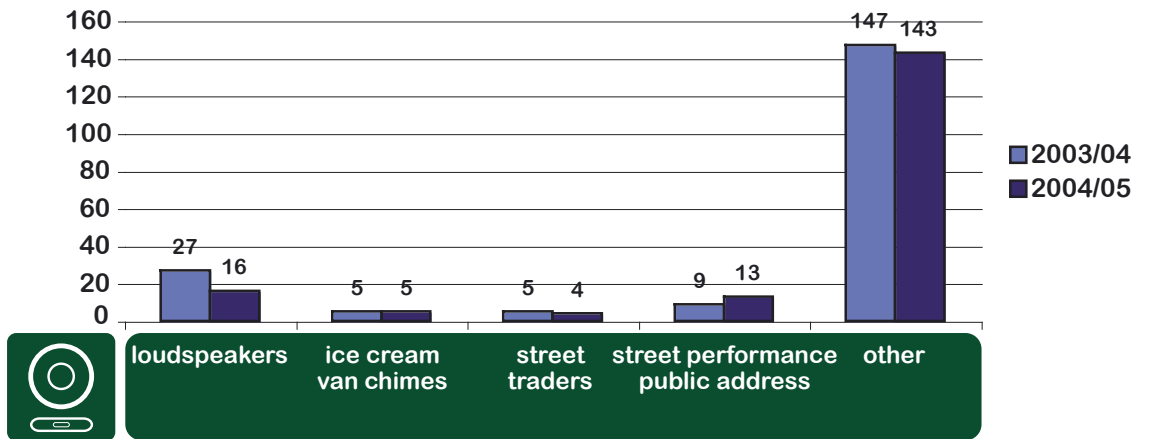
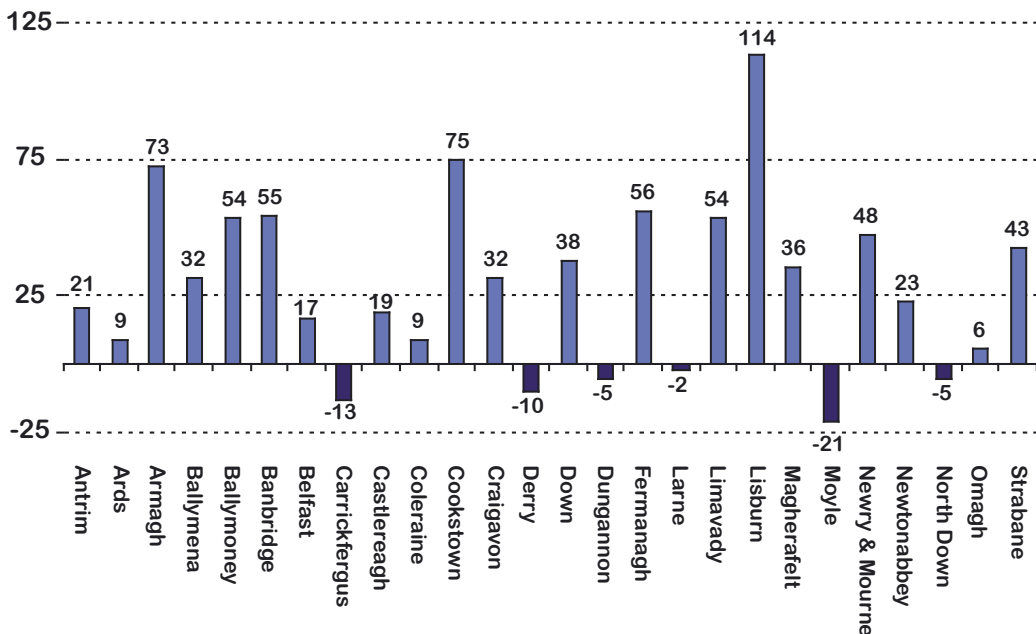


Figure 11
Percentage change in Complaint Numbers 2003/04 - 2004/05





Our aim is to protect and conserve the natural and built environment and to promote its appreciation for the benefit of present and future generations.

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