

Noise

Complaint Statistics
for Northern Ireland

2007-2008



Department of the
Environment

www.doeni.gov.uk



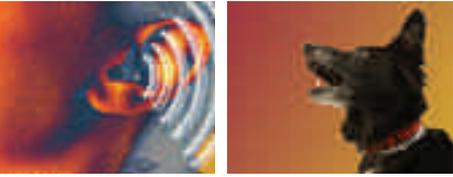
introduction

The purpose of this report is to inform central government, district councils, the general public and any other interested parties as to the extent of noise complaints received by district councils in Northern Ireland. This report has been compiled from a survey of district councils in Northern Ireland by the Planning and Environmental Policy Group, Department of the Environment. The data collected shows that noise complaints have shown a slight decrease from the previous years figures.

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.

In Northern Ireland, district councils are the organisations empowered to deal with the vast majority of noise pollution and this report provides an analysis of noise complaints received by all 26 councils during the period from 01 April 2007 to 31 March 2008.

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



awareness of noise

The extent to which people complain to councils about noise not only depends on the degree of disturbance, but also on awareness of council noise services and the level and type of service provided by individual councils. Surveys carried out in Northern Ireland and in other parts of the UK indicate that many people are unaware of who to contact if they have a problem with excessive noise disturbance and very few will actually complain directly to their local council.

Between 2005 and 2006 the Department conducted a number of short promotional campaigns to raise awareness of noise issues within the community. Leading with the message "Too Loud? – You're Allowed to Complain", television, press and poster adverts used a combination of striking imagery and annoying sounds to deliver a socially responsible message to a wide audience.

The main aim of the campaigns was to inform those people affected by noise that help was available from their local council. Noise makers were 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 such as dogs.

Noise Action Week 2007 was from 22 to 26 May during which some Councils ran special initiatives to highlight the noise nuisance problems in their areas. Lisburn City Council ran a competition alongside an article in the local press asking "What five factors are considered when deciding if a noise nuisance exists?". Moyle District Council produced posters and leaflets for display in council offices, libraries, community centres and local business premises. These were aimed at raising awareness of the problems of noise and in particular noisy neighbours, and gave information to the public on what to do if they were being disturbed by noise.

Complaints about barking dogs accounted for 44% of all complaints received by Craigavon Borough Council. Members of the public were offered the option of borrowing a static correction bark control collar with the overall aim of reducing complaints about barking dogs.



In early 2008 a National Noise Survey, conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Environmental Protection UK (formerly NSCA) reported that a quarter of the population are affected by noise from neighbours, either inside their homes or outside. One in ten are affected by noise from pubs, clubs, entertainment venues and commercial premises.

The Environmental Noise Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 requires competent authorities to assess levels of environmental noise from major transport sources and in large urban areas. This process was completed by the end of 2007 and detailed noise modelling was used to generate maps of environmental noise for N.I.

In May 2006 the Department established a permanent noise monitoring station in Belfast. Noise levels measured at this site were used to validate the noise maps. Data from this site will be used to inform the second round of noise mapping which is to be completed by 2012.

These maps can be found at <http://www.noiseni.co.uk>. Action plans are currently being developed to manage noise exposure where it is deemed to be high and also to protect relatively quiet urban areas where they are identified.



noise complaints

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
- Noise in the street

These sources of noise have been further divided into sub-categories that represent the individual areas of most concern to complainants. Details of these sub-categories can be found in Table 1.

Noise complaint returns were provided by all of Northern Ireland's twenty-six district councils, which means this report provides a comprehensive picture of the noise environment for the entire region. In total 11,705 complaints were made to councils about noise in 2007/08 which is a 2% decrease on the previous year.

A summary of all the data returned by the councils is contained in Tables 1 and 2. The information shows that major population centres generally have a higher number of noise complaints than rural areas. So, 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 the 2001 census data. Councils receiving the highest level of noise complaints were Belfast, Coleraine, Ards and Carrickfergus. The smallest numbers of complaints were received by Castlereagh, Fermanagh, Magherafelt, Moyle and Derry.



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 is required to serve a legal notice requiring the abatement of that noise nuisance.

In total, council officers issued 219 noise abatement notices during 2007/08 under the Pollution Control and Local Government Order. Details of all noise notices served by district councils are contained in Table 2. The data shows that the majority of these notices were 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. In Northern Ireland only Belfast City Council has adopted the Noise Act and during 2007/08 council officers issued 251 notices under this legislation (see Table 2).

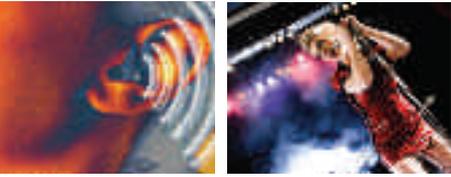


Figure 2 illustrates the numbers of all noise notices served by district councils in Northern Ireland. For comparison, these are expressed per 100 complaints received by the council. Overall, relatively few noise notices are issued by district councils compared to the level of complaints received. Councils reporting the highest level of enforcement activity in 2007/08 were Coleraine, Belfast, Newry and Mourne, and Fermanagh.

In dealing with complaints, council staff endeavour to seek co-operation and agreement to obtain a solution. Hence an informal approach is generally adopted initially to deal with noise complaints. Where this fails, and evidence of a noise nuisance exists then more formal action is instigated. This includes the issue of verbal warnings and written warnings which will often be sufficient to ensure the desired outcome. If required, a formal notice is issued, however it is often difficult for councils to obtain sufficient evidence to justify the issue of a noise abatement notice.

Where notices are not complied with, councils may instigate legal proceedings for non-compliance. During 2007/08 there were a total of nine prosecutions taken in Northern Ireland by district councils for noise offences: Dungannon (1); Larne (2); Limavady (1); Newry and Mourne (4); North Down (1).



sources of noise

Analysis of the data reveals that most complaints made to district councils are in the Domestic Sector. This category accounts for 82% of all complaints as illustrated by Figure 3.

Further analysis of this category is shown in Figure 4, which illustrates that the domestic noise source most complained about is music, television and parties (44%). This is followed closely by noise from domestic animals, which is largely attributable to barking dogs (41%).

Figure 4 also shows the breakdown of complaints in the other main categories, with the exception of the Construction Sector which has no further sub-divisions. In relation to the Commercial and Leisure Sector, the public appears to be most annoyed by entertainment noise, which accounts for 40% of all the noise complaints about commercial and leisure premises. These complaints relate primarily to noise from amplified music and noisy patrons. Also of prominence in this category are commercial security alarms with a 3% increase from the previous year and other shops and offices which showed a 4% increase.

In the Transport Sector, noise from road vehicles is the most dominant source of complaint with 46% of all transport related complaints which is a 2% decrease on last year. This is followed by complaints about noise from delivery vehicles which showed a 9% decrease from 2006/07. Noise from vehicle alarms accounted for 14% of complaints which is an increase of 5% on the previous year.



trend analysis

This is only the fifth year for which complete results are available but already an interesting picture of the noise environment in Northern Ireland is developing. In comparison to 2006/07, there were 218 fewer or just under 2% less noise complaints during 2007/08. Most of this decrease occurred in the Domestic Sector. This is the first year a decrease has been recorded however overall noise complaints have increased by 39% since 2003/2004.

domestic

The decrease in domestic complaints relates to all sources in that category, apart from DIY which has shown a slight increase in complaints over the previous year. This is illustrated in Figure 6.

With 4295 noise complaints, music, television and parties is the most complained about domestic noise source. A slowdown in complaints about barking dogs may be due to the Department's publication of guidance on this problem which offers advice to dog owners on how to improve their pets behaviour and reduce constant barking. Nevertheless complaints about animal noise have increased by 60% since 2003/04.

transport

Figure 7 shows that complaints relating to transport have generally increased over the last five years. 2007/08 figures show a 10% increase on previous year. Despite this upward trend, complaints about delivery vehicles are actually down 23% on last year.

Councils have received more complaints about aircraft than the previous year, with ten for civil aircraft and four for military aircraft reported during 2007/08.



industry

Complaints about noise from industry is only slightly up on the previous year but has exhibited a steady increase of just over 25% since 2003/04. This is illustrated by Figure 8.

commercial & leisure

Noise from entertainment premises continues to dominate the commercial and leisure category as shown in Figure 9. This accounted for 294 complaints to councils in 2007/08. This represents only a slight increase on the previous year, but it remains a consistent source of annoyance.

Commercial security alarms accounted for 158 complaints in the same category, which is an increase of 9% on 2006/07.

construction

Also increasing steadily each year are complaints about construction related noise. Councils report that these have increased dramatically (86% in the previous years).

noise in the street

The major sources of noise complaint within the Noise in the Street Sector (Figure 10) have been reported within the category entitled 'other'. Feedback from councils indicates that this generally relates to boisterous and antisocial behaviour in the street. There has been a significant increase in complaints about such activity over the latest year. Overall complaints about noise in the street have increased by 76% on 2006/07 levels with complaints in the "others" category more than doubling from 196 in 2006/07 to 415 in 2007/08.

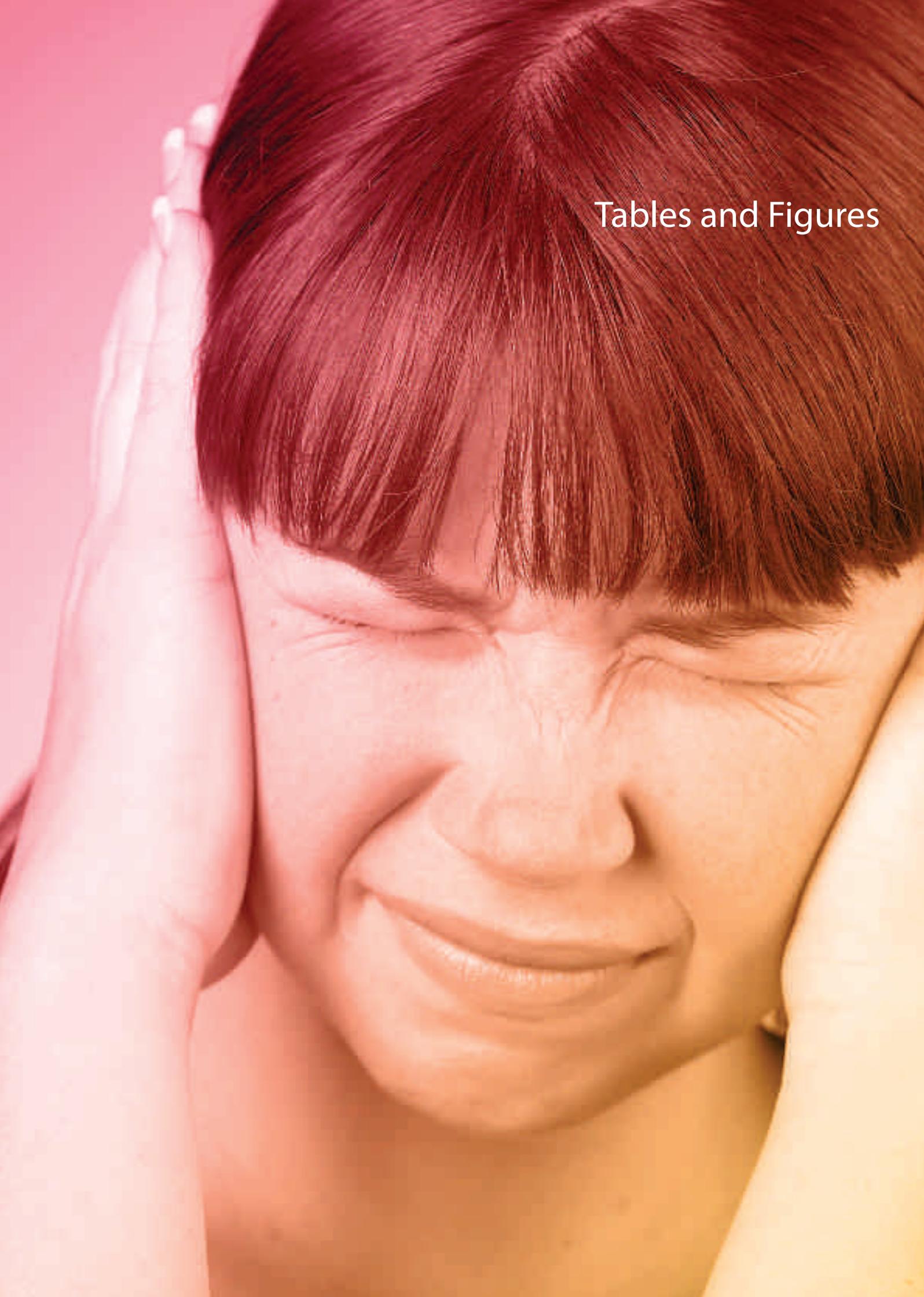


The percentage change in complaint numbers per district council is illustrated in Figure 11. The most significant increases in noise complaints over the last year have been experienced by Strabane District Council with an increase of 31% and Limavady Borough Council with an 11% increase. The most significant reductions in noise complaints were reported by Derry City Council, Moyle District Council and Larne Borough Council with 27%, 26% and 24% fewer complaints respectively during 2007/08 than in the previous year.

In respect of action against noise there has been a significant increase in enforcement activity from councils with 114 more warning and abatement notices being served on noise offenders during 2007/08 compared to the year before. As illustrated in Table 2 this amounted to 470 notices. Also illustrated are the numbers of prosecutions enacted by councils against noise offenders. In total nine cases were taken to court during 2007/08, which is an increase of one over the previous year.

Although the total number of noise complaints reported for 2007/08 is lower than for 2006/07, it is still higher than the number of complaints in the first three reporting years.

Although the total number of complaints in 2007/08 has fallen it is still clear that noise is a problem that affects the quality of life of many people. Many neighbour noise problems are due to a lack of consideration for others. The Department considers that better education is the main way of tackling the problem. It is committed to increasing its efforts to highlight the seriousness of the issue and to better inform the public of how to gain help with noise problems.

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair covering her eyes with her hands, suggesting distress or pain. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent pink and orange gradient. The text "Tables and Figures" is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the image.

Tables and Figures



table one
Total Noise Complaints Received by District Council

COUNCIL	Categor												
	Industrial		Commercial & Leisure							Domestic			
	Industry Manufacturing Workshops	Agricultural	Entertainment Premises	Sports & Leisure	Petrol Stations Car Wash	Hot Food Bars Restaurants	Other Shops & Offices	Security Alarms	Other	DIY	Music Televisions Parties	Animal Noise	House Alarms
Antrim	7	3	8	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	56	111	1
Ards	2	19	13	22	0	1	1	2	1	5	72	193	4
Armagh	6	1	6	2	1	0	2	0	0	1	57	158	0
Ballymena	6	2	3	7	0	0	0	3	1	3	52	117	3
Ballymoney	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	12	93	0
Banbridge	3	6	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	37	90	1
Belfast	3	0	177	2	1	2	45	132	0	69	2945	1032	121
Carrickfergus	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	3	10	5	57	86	3
Castlereagh	7	2	3	9	0	1	1	3	3	4	28	53	1
Coleraine	12	2	11	1	0	6	2	1	3	0	151	237	8
Cookstown	14	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	30	46	0
Craigavon	10	2	0	3	0	2	0	2	4	4	90	170	0
Derry	12	1	5	0	0	0	2	1	3	2	115	119	6
Down	3	4	17	5	4	0	4	3	5	0	57	115	0
Dungannon	23	2	5	1	0	2	1	0	2	1	59	77	0
Fermanagh	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	1	28	99	0
Larne	9	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	16	56	0
Limavady	2	0	1	2	2	0	0	1	0	2	29	58	0
Lisburn	9	0	9	19	1	1	2	0	8	2	136	214	4
Magherafelt	4	2	2	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	18	60	1
Moyle	1	3	2	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	24	0
Newry&Mourne	14	0	9	4	0	1	0	1	0	5	47	149	3
Newtownabbey	12	0	2	11	0	0	0	2	11	7	61	171	2
North Down	2	0	2	0	0	0	4	1	1	4	83	202	4
Omagh	22	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	5	31	63	0
Strabane	4	0	3	1	0	1	3	1	2	1	26	118	0
TOTAL	188	53	294	96	9	21	72	158	78	123	4295	3911	162



Category of Source												
Other Neighbour Noise	Construction	Transport						Noise in the Street				
	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
19	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
34	24	0	0	2	0	5	1	2	1	0	0	4
4	4	5	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
40	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
6	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
637	299	24	16	3	0	18	23	4	0	1	8	341
16	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	9
17	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
29	19	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	15
6	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
32	4	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
20	10	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
25	8	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22	6	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
10	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
58	27	3	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	4
5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
44	19	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
45	22	4	2	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	5
9	12	2	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	5	1
10	7	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	4
11	4	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3
1127	492	82	22	10	4	37	26	8	2	5	15	415

TOTAL
213
408
251
241
119
154
5903
199
150
504
112
335
304
257
208
145
118
107
501
101
41
302
361
337
153
181
11705

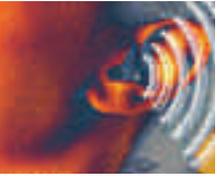
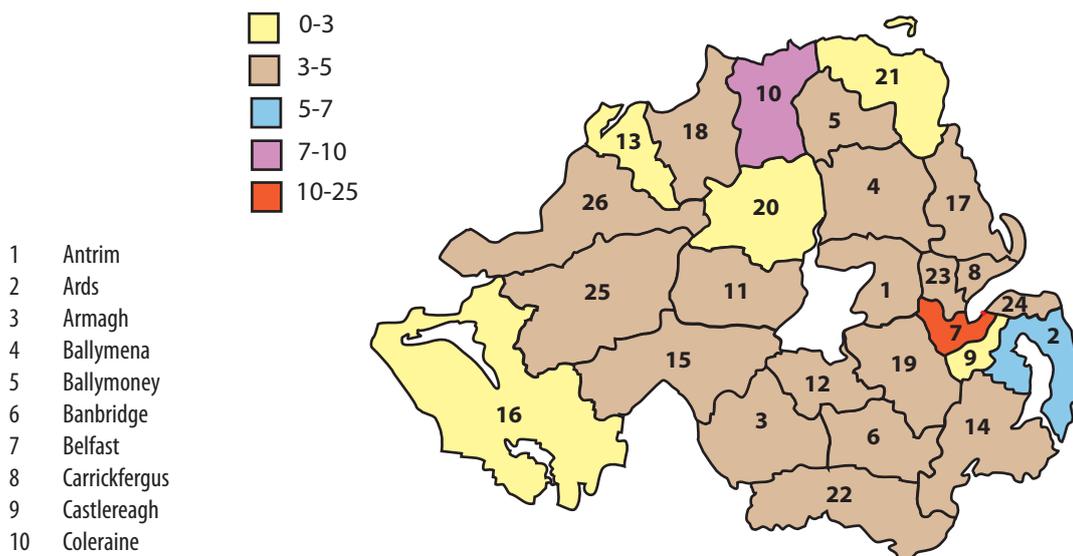


table two
Total Notices Served by District Council

COUNCIL	Pollution Control & Local Government (NI) Order													Noise Act		Total Notices	Noise Act & PC & LG (NI) Order		
	Industrial		Commercial & Leisure							Domestic				Construction				Warning Notices	Fixed Penalty Notices
	Industry Manufacturing Workshops	Agricultural	Entertainment Premises	Sports & Leisure	Petrol Stations Car Wash	Hot Food Bars Restaurants	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	1	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	1	0
Ards	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	3	0
Armagh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	1	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	2	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	2	0
Belfast	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	0	2	0	9	0	1	245	6	271	0
Carrickfergus	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	4	0
Castlereagh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Coleraine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	144	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	144	0
Cookstown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Craigavon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	0	1	0	n/a	n/a	9	0
Derry	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	2	0
Down	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	5	0
Dungannon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	1
Fermanagh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	4	0
Larne	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	2	2
Limavady	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	1	1
Lisburn	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	1	0
Magherafelt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	2	0
Moyle	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Newry&Mourne	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	5	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	12	4
Newtownabbey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	n/a	n/a	1	0
North Down	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	4	1
Omagh	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	1	0
Strabane	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
TOTAL	4	1	4	1	1	1	1	7	1	0	166	20	9	1	2	245	6	470	9

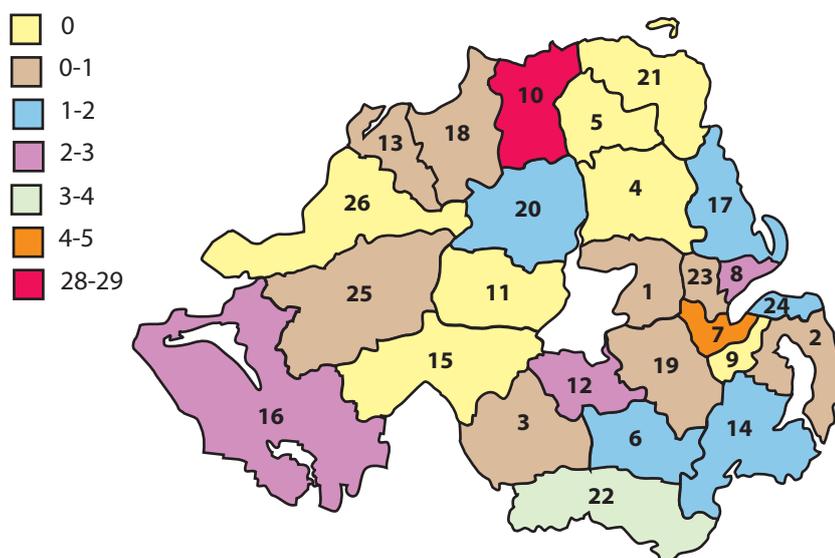


figure 1
Noise Complaints Per 1000 Population



- 1 Antrim
- 2 Ards
- 3 Armagh
- 4 Ballymena
- 5 Ballymoney
- 6 Banbridge
- 7 Belfast
- 8 Carrickfergus
- 9 Castlereagh
- 10 Coleraine
- 11 Cookstown
- 12 Craigavon
- 13 Derry
- 14 Down
- 15 Dungannon
- 16 Fermanagh
- 17 Larne
- 18 Limavady
- 19 Lisburn
- 20 Magherafelt
- 21 Moyle
- 22 Newry&Mourne
- 23 Newtownabbey
- 24 North Down
- 25 Omagh
- 26 Strabane

figure 2
Notices Served Per 100 Complaints Recieved



- | |
|-------|
| 0 |
| 0-1 |
| 1-2 |
| 2-3 |
| 3-4 |
| 4-5 |
| 28-29 |

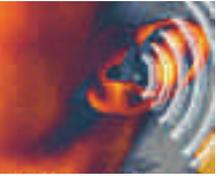


figure 3
Total Noise Complaints

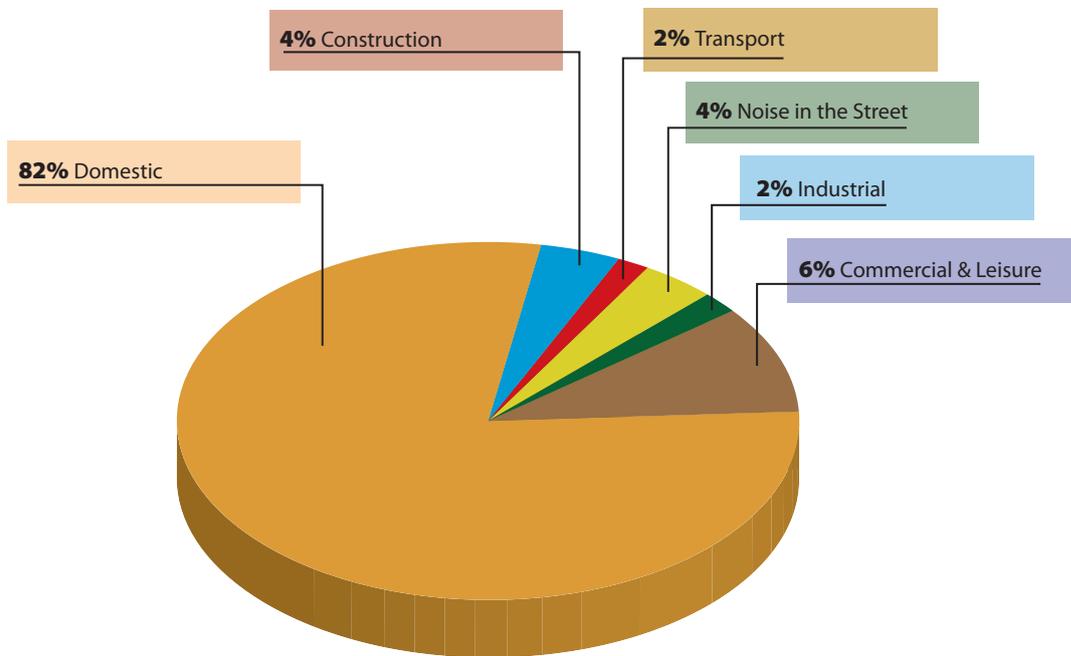
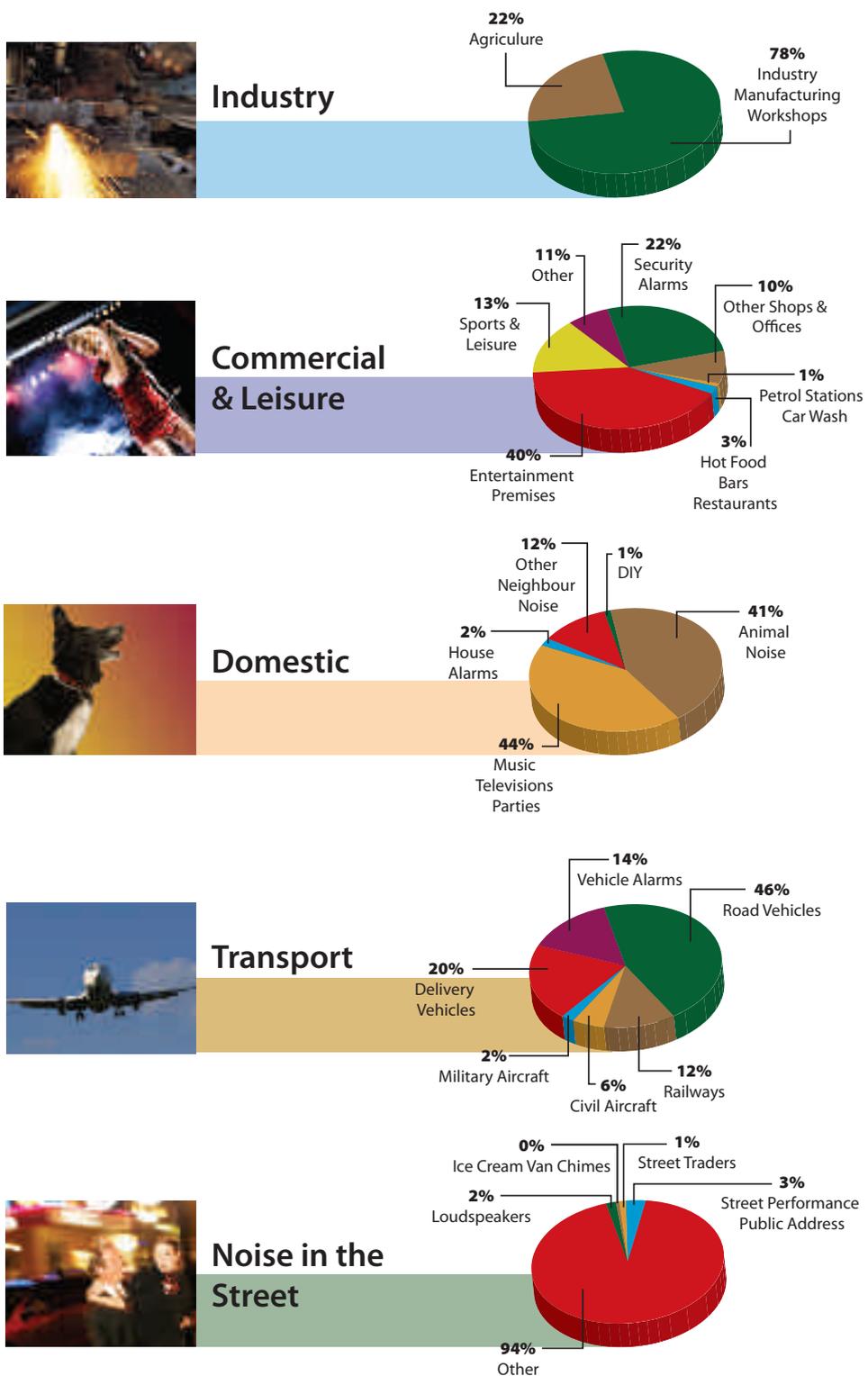


figure 4
Noise Complaint Categories



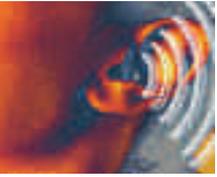


figure 5

Noise Complaints Comparison 2004-2008

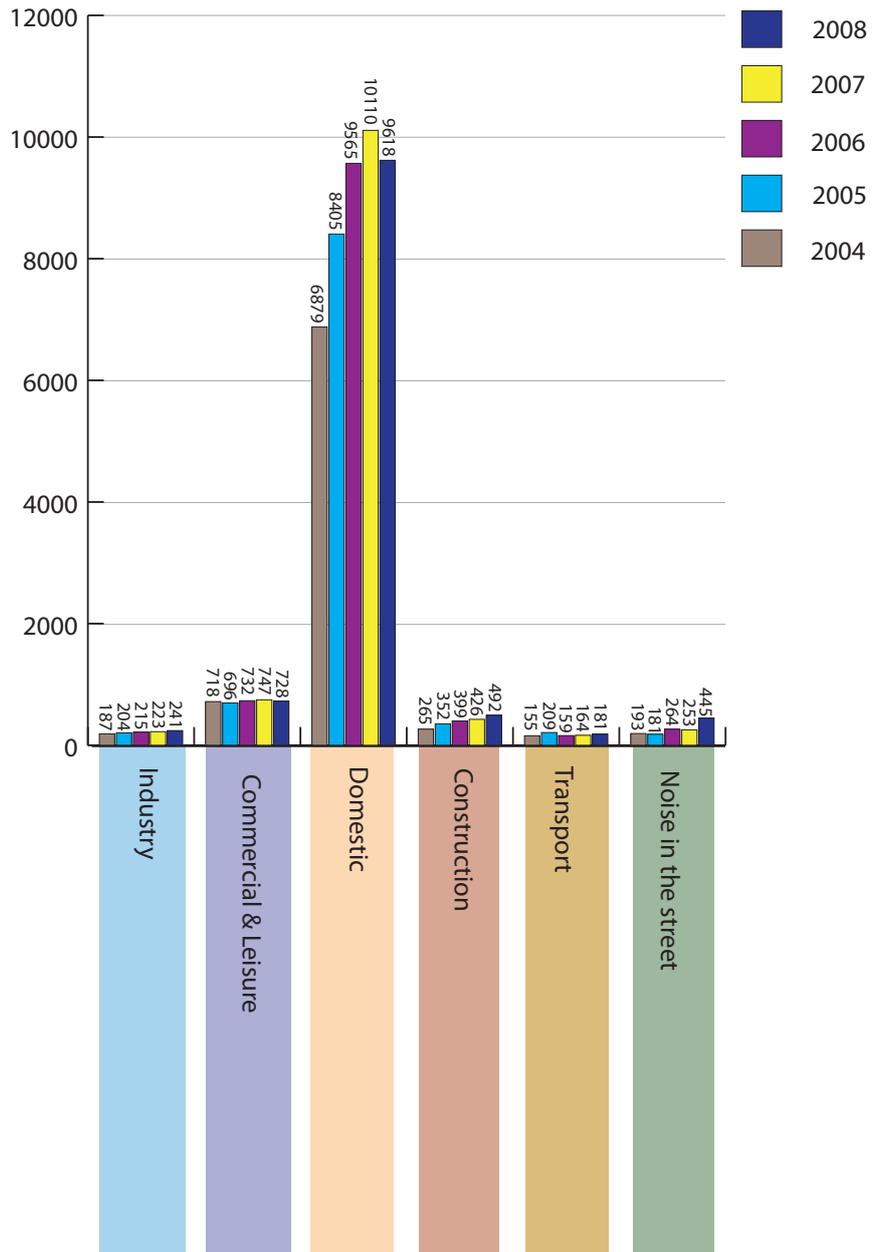




figure 6

Domestic Complaints Comparison 2004-2008

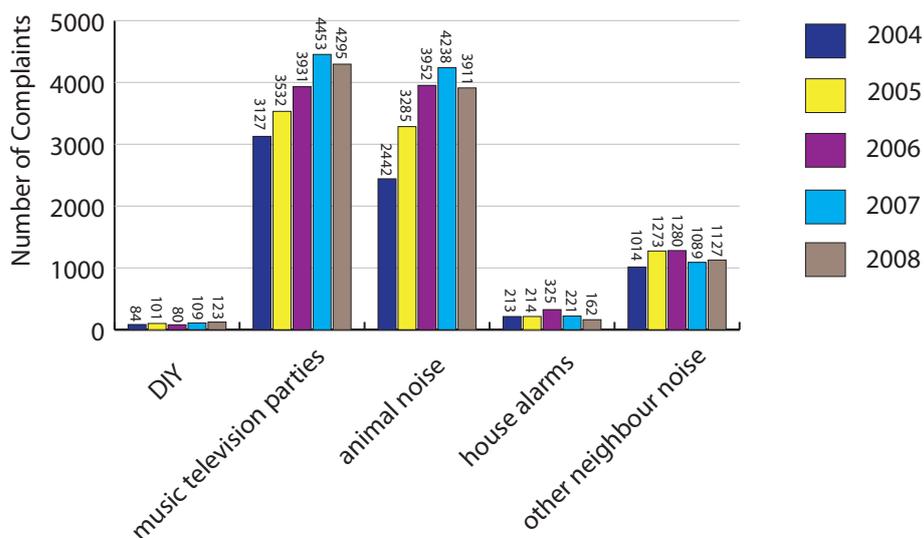
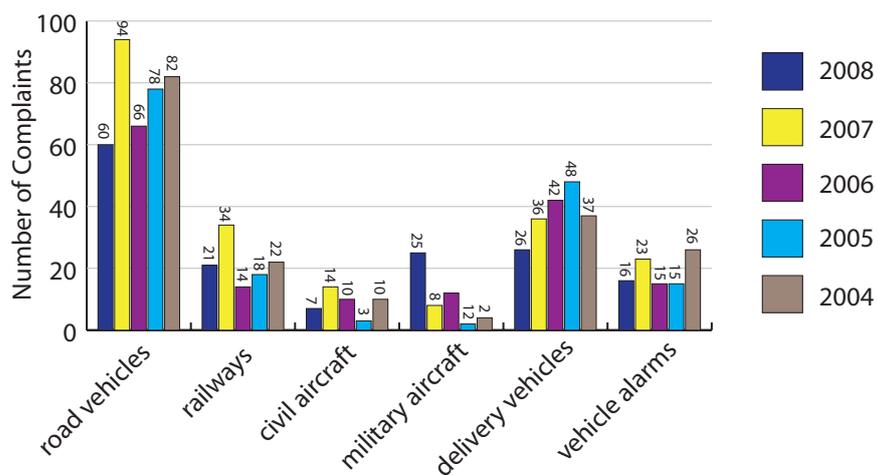


figure 7

Transport Complaints Comparison 2004-2008



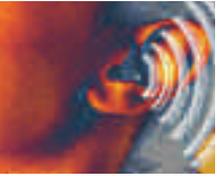


figure 8

Industrial Complaints Comparison 2004-2008

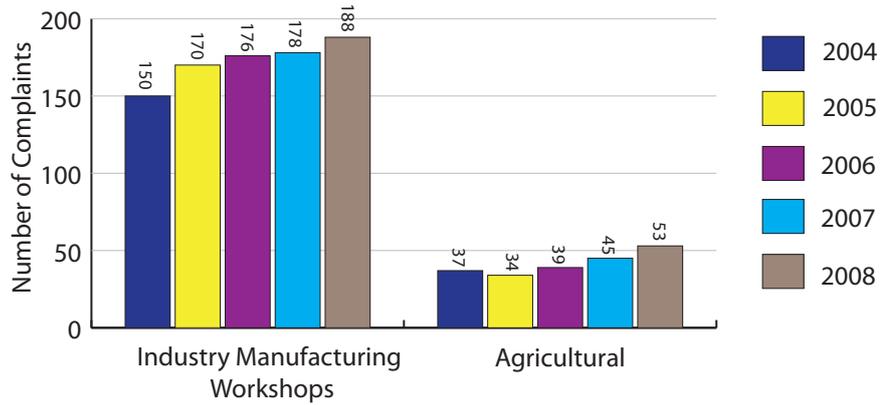


figure 9

Commercial & Leisure Complaints Comparison 2004-2008

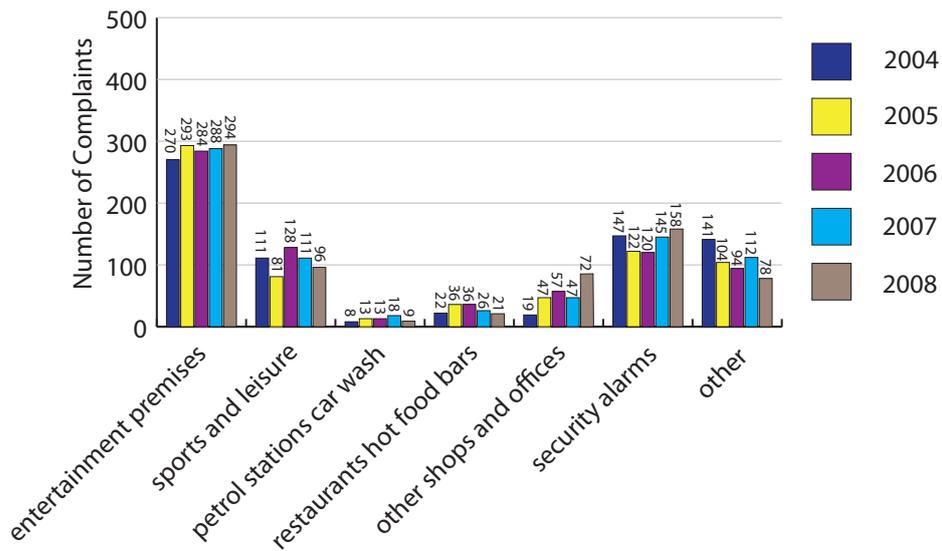




figure 10

Noise in the Street Complaints Comparison 2004-2008

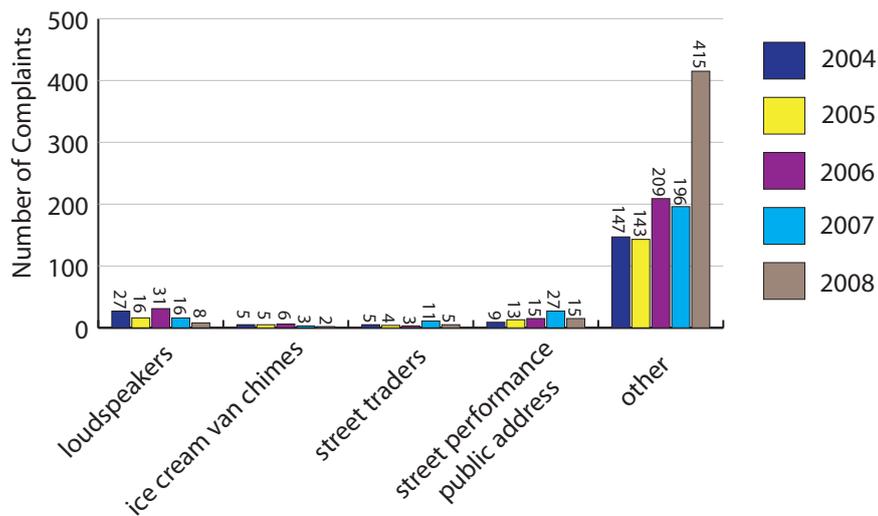
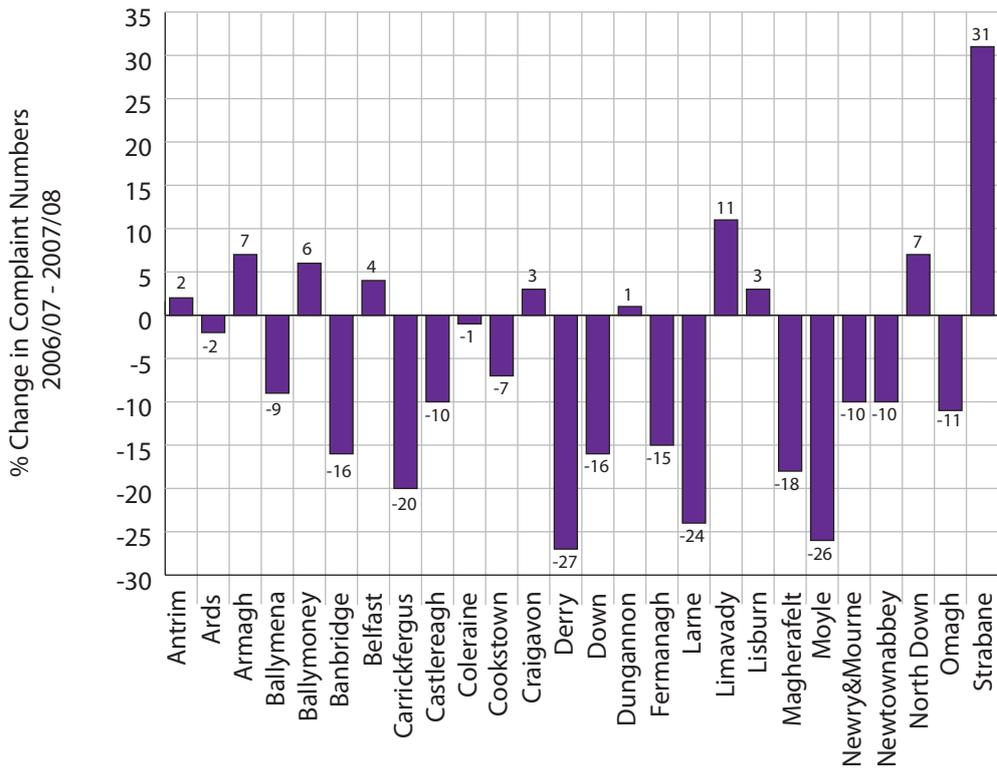




figure 11
 Percentage Change in Complaint Numbers
 2006/07 - 2007/08





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"The Department's aim is to secure a better and safer environment and support effective local government".

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