









Noise Complaint Statistics for Northern Ireland

2019 - 2020

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.





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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to inform central government, district councils, the general public and any other interested parties as to the number and nature of noise complaints received each year by district councils across Northern Ireland. The Regulatory and Natural Resources Policy Division of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has compiled this report from data supplied by district councils, the organisations that are legally empowered to deal with the vast majority of noise complaints.

This report analyses noise complaints received by all 11 councils between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020. During this period 11,356 noise complaints were received in Northern Ireland. This is a 9.6% decrease in the total number of complaints received compared to the previous year.

There has been a 6.5% increase in the number of notices served this year (570 served this year and 535 served in 2018/19). There were four prosecutions for the 2019/20 year, compared to five prosecutions in 2018/19 and two in 2017/18.

The information in this report is an important indicator of the increasing public awareness of noise issues and the effectiveness of current noise controls. The statistics provided by district councils enable the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to target policy development, such as through the application of the powers in the Noise Act 1996 following the introduction of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 in April 2012.

This report also allows councils to compare their noise statistics to those of neighbouring districts, to examine trends and to consider initiatives implemented by other district councils that have proved effective in increasing noise awareness or reducing noise.

Noise

Noise is commonly defined as 'sound which is undesired by the recipient'. Noise can be any sound that is intrusive, disturbing or annoying. It can be one of the most pervasive pollutants and is capable of causing annoyance, stress, sleep disturbance and other serious conditions. The likelihood of individuals complaining to their council about noise depends on the degree of disturbance and the individual's awareness of the noise control service provided by the council.

A report published by the World Health Organisation (WHO)-Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Union 2018 ¹ describes the public health burden from environmental noise. Exposure to noise can lead to auditory effects on health for example through direct injury to the auditory system, noise leads to auditory effects such as hearing loss and tinnitus. It can further lead to nonauditory effects on health as noise is also a nonspecific stressor that has been shown to have an adverse effect on human health, especially following long-term exposure. These effects are the result of psychological and physiological distress.

Given the potential adverse impacts on health, it is important that instances of noise pollution are taken seriously and fully addressed. The most common complaints relating to excessive noise suffered in Northern Ireland include lack of sleep, inability to relax and interruption to conversations or television programmes.

¹ Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region (2018), xviii + 160 pages ISBN 978 92 890 5356 3



What can be done?

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Articles 63 and 65 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (CNEA) give district councils the power to deal with noise from premises, including land, which they consider is prejudicial to health or amounts to a statutory nuisance. These powers apply to not only existing noise, but also where noise is expected to occur or reoccur. There is no fixed level of noise that constitutes a statutory nuisance. Individual circumstances differ and each case is judged on its merits. In deciding whether or not a noise is sufficient to amount to a statutory nuisance, the authorised officer of the district council has to consider the reaction of the average, reasonable person to the nuisance, taking account not only of its volume, but factors such as when and how often the noise occurs and the duration of the occurrence.

Where a council is satisfied that a nuisance exists, articles 63 and 65 require the district council to serve an Abatement Notice. The notice may require the noise to be stopped altogether or limited to certain times of the day. A notice must be served on the person responsible for the noise or if this person cannot be located, the owner or occupier of the premises. A person on whom an abatement notice is served has the right to appeal it within 21 days of being served.

The CNEA also introduced new powers for district councils to designate all or part of their district as an alarm notification area. In such areas the occupier or owner of any premises (residential or non-residential, occupied or vacant) that are fitted with an audible intruder alarm must nominate a key-holder for those premises and provide the district council with contact details. The key-holder is contacted by the council to silence an alarm that is sounding. Failure to nominate a key-holder is an offence and an individual found guilty is liable on summary conviction to a fine of £1000. Under this legislation, an authorised officer of a district council can enter premises (including land), without force, in order to silence an audible intruder alarm that:

- 1. has been sounding continuously for more than twenty minutes or intermittently for more than 1 hour;
- 2. is likely to give persons living or working in the vicinity reasonable cause for annoyance; and
- 3. if the premises are in an alarm notification area, reasonable steps have been taken to get the nominated key-holder to silence the alarm².

Once on the premises, an authorised officer can take whatever steps are necessary to silence the alarm³. This might include, for example, disabling the externally mounted alarm, but would not include picking a lock to enter. However, if requested by a district council, a lay magistrate can issue a warrant authorising the use of force by an authorised officer to enter premises where certain conditions are satisfied. Before issuing a warrant a lay magistrate must be satisfied that the conditions outlined above have been met, <u>and</u> that a district council cannot gain entry without the use of force⁴.

² Article 56 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

³ Article 58 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

⁴ Article 57 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Noise Act 1996

The Noise Act 1996 allows council officers to issue warning and fixed penalty notices and, in certain circumstances, to seize noise making equipment from premises emitting noise during night hours (from 11pm to 7am). These powers apply to premises including dwellings, those with an exhibition or entertainment licence, premises with a licence to sell intoxicating liquor (including an occasional licence) or where meals or refreshments are supplied for consumption on or off the premises, or premises occupied by a registered club.

Key findings

Complaints

- 11,356 noise complaints received in Northern Ireland in 2019/20.
- 9.6% decrease in the total number of complaints received compared to the previous year.

Figure 1 shows the number of complaints in each council area per 1,000 people, based on mid 2019 population estimates. Noise complaints occur more often in urban areas where there are large numbers of people who may be bothered by the noise. As expected the greatest number of complaints occur in Belfast (18.1 complaints per 1,000 people) and the fewest complaints per 1,000 of population occur in Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (2.3 per 1,000 persons).

Notices

- 6.5% increase in the total number of notices served by district councils.
- A total of 570 notices were served in 2019/20. 535 were served in 2018/19.

Of the 570 notices, 543 were served in Belfast. Of these 543, 501 were warning notices served on dwellings. In Belfast of the 38 served under CNEA, 34 were in respect of music/TV/parties, so again related to private dwellings.

Table 2 illustrates the numbers of all notices served by district councils in Northern Ireland under the CNEA and the Noise Act 1996 per 100 complaints received. Councils serving the greatest number of notices per 100 complaints in 2019/20 were Belfast (8.7), Ards and North Down (2.2) and Mid Ulster (1.1).

Of the 11,356 complaints received, 4 resulted in fixed penalty notices being served. This may indicate that council officers are very effective at resolving complaints informally without serving a notice, or that once the issue is drawn to the attention of the noisemaker, they rectify the problem quickly.



Analysis by noise source

Analysis of the data reveals that domestic noise accounted for 80.8% of all complaints this year, followed by complaints relating to commercial and leisure (8.3%), noise in the street (3.4%) and construction noise (3.3%). Figure 3 contains a breakdown of the figures but the tables below give a snapshot comparison of some of this year's statistics compared to last year's.

Domestic			
	2018/19	2019/20	
Music, television and parties	45%	44%	
Animal noise	37%	35%	
Other neighbourhood noise	15%	16%	

Noise in the Street			
	2018/19	2019/20	
Other	33%	37%	
Road Works	14%	12%	
Antisocial behaviour	19%	22%	
Street performance/ public address	24%	19%	

Commercial and Leisure			
	2018/19	2019/20	
Entertainment	45%	40%	
premises			
Security alarms	21%	17%	
Other Shops and	8%	12%	
Offices			
Other	14%	19%	
Sport and leisure	10%	10%	

Transport			
	2018/19	2019/20	
Road vehicles	35%	35%	
Delivery vehicles	14%	12%	
Vehicle horn/revving engine/exhausts	28%	30%	

Industrial			
	2018/19	2019/20	
Industry, manufacturing and workshops	52%	39%	
Agriculture	21%	31%	
Wind Turbine (Individual)	20%	28%	
Wind Farm	6%	2%	

The CNEA enables district councils to designate all or part of their district as an alarm notification area and enter premises with or without force to silence an alarm. No councils have designated alarm notification areas since this legislation came into operation. In 2019/20 Belfast City Council used the powers to silence alarms on one occasion: with force pursuant to a Magistrate's warrant.

Analysis since 2003/04

The total number of noise complaints in Northern Ireland in 2019/20 are 35% greater than the total number of noise complaints in Northern Ireland in 2003/04. Noise complaints rose each year between 2003/04 and 2006/07 when they reached 11,923 complaints. Since 2006/07 the highest number of complaints received was for the 2018/19 year when they reached 12,563. The lowest number since 2006/07 was in 2015/16 when a dip to 10,754 occurred (figure 2).

Full details of the annual changes by sector are illustrated in Figure 4. This demonstrates that the proportion of noise complaints attributable to each category varies little year on year. Domestic noise complaints far outweigh all the other sources and, in general, since 2003/04 the commercial and leisure sector is the second largest category. Figures 5 to 10 show the changes in numbers of noise complaints across the various categories over the past 17 years.

Domestic			
	2018/19	2019/20	% Change
Number of	10,263	9,178	10.6%
complaints			decrease

Levels of domestic noise complaints increased notably between 2003/04 and 2006/07. In 2003/04 6,879 complaints were received. This rose to 10,393 in 2011/12 when complaints relating to domestic noise reached their peak.

Commercial and Leisure				
2018/19 2019/20 % Change				
Number of	1,027	944	8.1%	
complaints			decrease	

Complaint numbers peaked in 2012/13 when 1,124 were received.

Industrial			
	2018/19	2019/20	% Change
Number of complaints	309	275	11.0% decrease

Industrial noise complaints are now 47% greater than they were in 2003/04 when 187 were received.

Noise in the Street				
2018/19 2019/20 % Change				
Number of	409	383	6.4%	
complaints			decrease	

Complaints relating to noise in the street have decreased for the fourth successive year but remain 98% greater in 2019/20 than in 2003/2004.

Construction				
2018/19 2019/20 % Change				
Number of	366	379	3.6%	
complaints			increase	

Construction noise complaints rose almost 86% between 2003/04 and 2007/08 and subsequently fell until 2010/2011, possibly due to the decline in construction and property development following the economic downturn. 2019/20 saw an 93.4% increase in construction/demolition noise complaints in comparison to 2010/2011 (Figure 9).

Transport										
	2018/19	2019/20	% Change							
Number of	189	197	4.2%							
complaints			increase							

Transport noise complaints make up only 1.7% of complaints this year and figures 3 and 8 provide a breakdown of the number of complaints by type of transport. Road vehicles are the predominant source of noise complaints in this category this year (35%). The number of complaints in relation to road noise has varied notably since 2003/04.

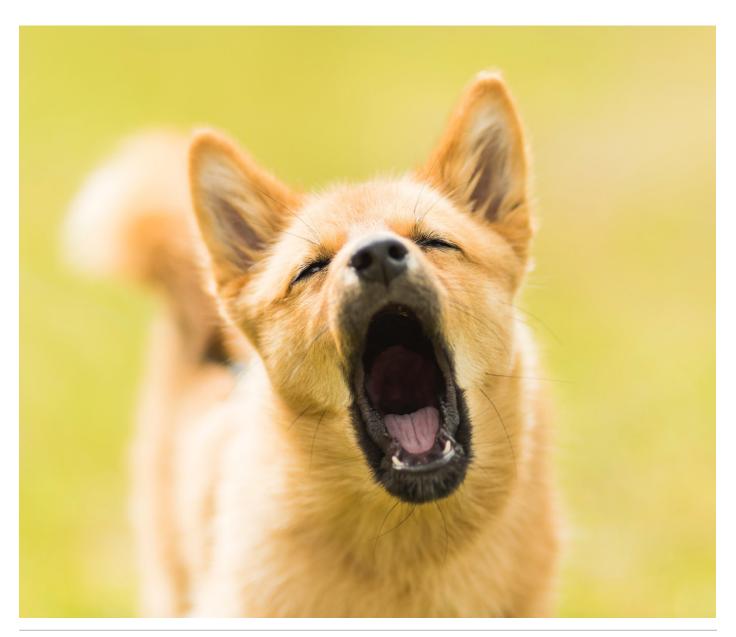
Council initiatives to increase awareness and aid enforcement

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council have information available on their "noise control" section of the council website which includes an information leaflet designed to raise noise awareness.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council have been running an initiative called Nightsafe for several years, this is a Council led partnership with Ulster University, PSNI, NIHE and local community to address Anti-Social Behaviour, in particular noise pollution, personal safety and health and well-being of student population in the Coleraine area. A number of joint patrols with PSNI officers occur during the student academic year.

Conclusion

Neighbourhood noise problems can arise from many quarters. The lack of consideration for the rights of others is a contributory factor in many of these problems. The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs considers that increasing education on noise prevention is one way of tackling the problem and is keen for the councils to continue their efforts to raise noise issues on local agendas.



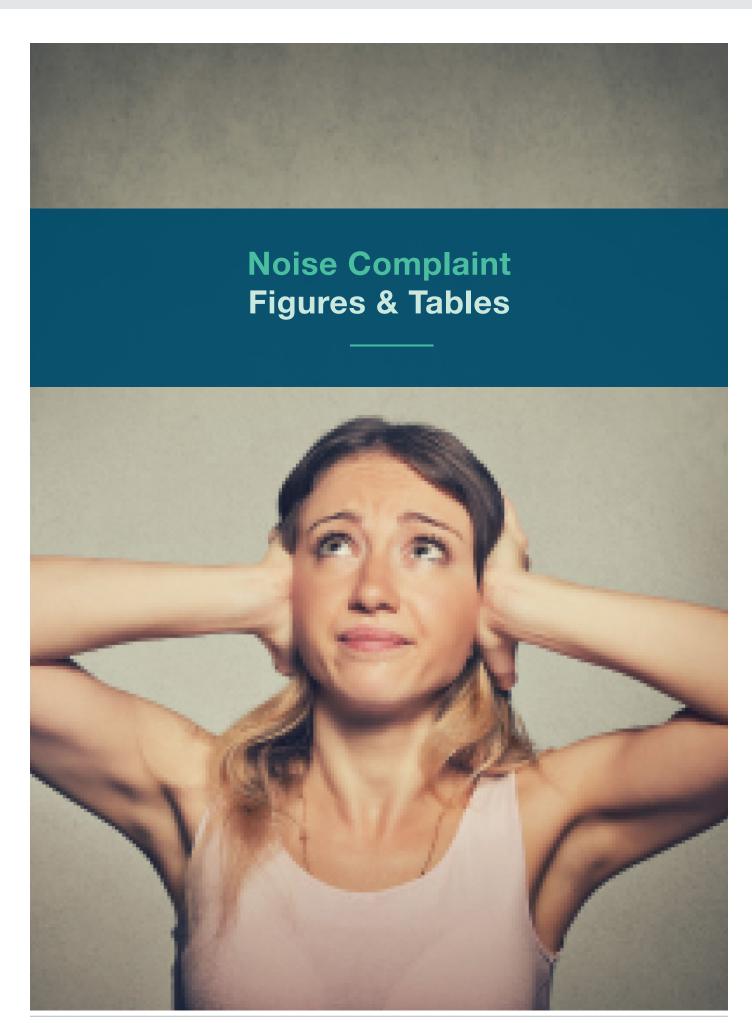


Table 1

Total noise complaints received by district council 2019 - 20

	Cate	egor	y of	Sour	ce											
		ndu	stria			Con	nmer	cial 8	& Leis	sure			Do	omest	ic	
COUNCIL	Industry Manufacturing & Workshops	Agricultural	Wind Turbine (Individual)	Wind Farm	Entertainment Premises	Sports & Leisure	Petrol Stations/Car Wash	Hot Food Bars/Restaurants	Other Shops & Offices	Security Alarms	Other	YIO	Music/Televisions/Parties	Animal Noise	House Alarms	Other Neighbour Noise
Antrim & Newtownabbey	12	9	1	0	5	6	0	0	3	8	58	11	86	349	11	108
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	12	21	43	0	4	6	3	0	0	6	3	4	144	406	2	96
Belfast	1	0	0	0	306	46	1	5	102	128	46	92	3291	631	182	922
Causeway Coast & Glens	8	4	20	3	11	14	1	2	1	3	7	6	80	291	16	47
Derry & Strabane	10	7	1	0	13	4	0	3	0	2	6	10	90	234	5	42
Fermanagh & Omagh	4	5	3	2	4	1	0	0	1	0	3	4	43	130	0	37
Lisburn & Castlereagh	5	2	0	0	5	5	0	1	0	1	15	2	92	260	7	52
Mid & East Antrim	5	5	3	1	5	1	0	0	2	4	12	7	85	228	1	58
Mid Ulster	36	13	0	0	8	8	0	1	0	1	8	7	45	194	2	16
Newry, Mourne & Down	10	8	5	0	9	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	39	267	2	32
Ards & North Down	5	10	1	0	5	2	1	3	5	8	19	11	70	254	10	67
TOTAL	108	84	77	6	375	93	6	16	114	163	177	154	4,065	3,244	238	1,477
				275							944					9,178

Table 1

Total noise complaints received by district council 2019 - 20 continued

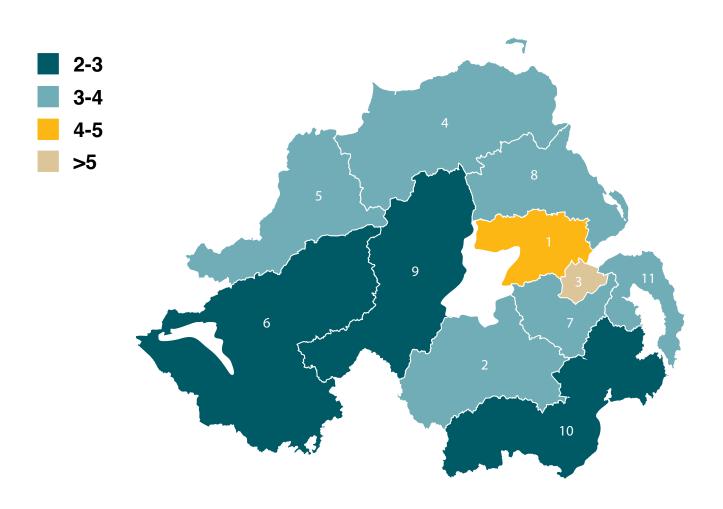
	Category of Source												•				
	Construction			Trai	nspo	ort				N	oise	in	the S	Stre	et		
COUNCIL	Construction Sites/Demolition Works Road Works	Road Vehicles	Railways	Civil Aircraft	Military Aircraft	Delivery Vehicles	Vehicle Alarms	Vehicle horns/revving engines/noisy exhausts	Loudspeakers	Road Works	Ice Cream Van Chimes	Street Traders	Street Performance/Public Address	Children Playing	Antisocial Behaviour	Other	Total
Antrim & Newtownabbey	11	7	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	691
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	22	7	0	0	0	4	1	13	1	0	0	1	0	2	30	24	855
Belfast	199	30	21	1	1	9	2	7	8	42	0	0	59	0	30	68	6,230
Causeway Coast & Glens	17	0	2	0	1	2	0	9	1	0	1	0	5	0	1	13	566
Derry & Strabane	16	2	0	0	0	2	1	5	7	0	2	0	5	1	6	0	474
Fermanagh & Omagh	12	5	0	0	0	1	0	9	0	0	0	0	1	2	4	4	275
Lisburn & Castlereagh	42	7	0	0	0	2	0	3	3	2	0	0	1	1	2	4	514
Mid & East Antrim	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	3	436
Mid Ulster	16	6	0	0	0	1	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	375
Newry, Mourne & Down	14	4	0	1	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	19	428
Ards & North Down	22	1	0	0	0	2	0	4	3	1	0	0	1	0	1	6	512
TOTAL	379	69	23	2		24	18	59	24	47	5	1	72	8	83	143	11,356
	379							197								383	

Table 2

Notices served per 100 complaints received 2019 - 20

COUNCIL	Number notices served (CNEA & NA)	Number of notices per 100 complaints
Antrim & Newtownabbey	0	0.00
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	8	0.94
Belfast	543	8.72
Causeway Coast & Glens	1	0.18
Derry & Strabane	1	0.21
Fermanagh & Omagh	1	0.36
Lisburn & Castlereagh	0	0.00
Mid & East Antrim	0	0.00
Mid Ulster	4	1.07
Newry, Mourne & Down	1	0.23
Ards & North Down	11	2.15
TOTAL	570	5.02

Noise complaints per 1,000 head of population 2019 - 20



- **1** Antrim & Newtownabbey
- **2** Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon
- 3 Belfast
- 4 Causeway Coast & Glens
- 5 Derry & Strabane

- 6 Fermanagh & Omagh
- 7 Lisburn & Castlereagh
- 8 Mid & East Antrim
- 9 Mid Ulster
- 10 Newry, Mourne & Down
- 11 Ards & North Down

Total number of Complaints 2004 - 2020

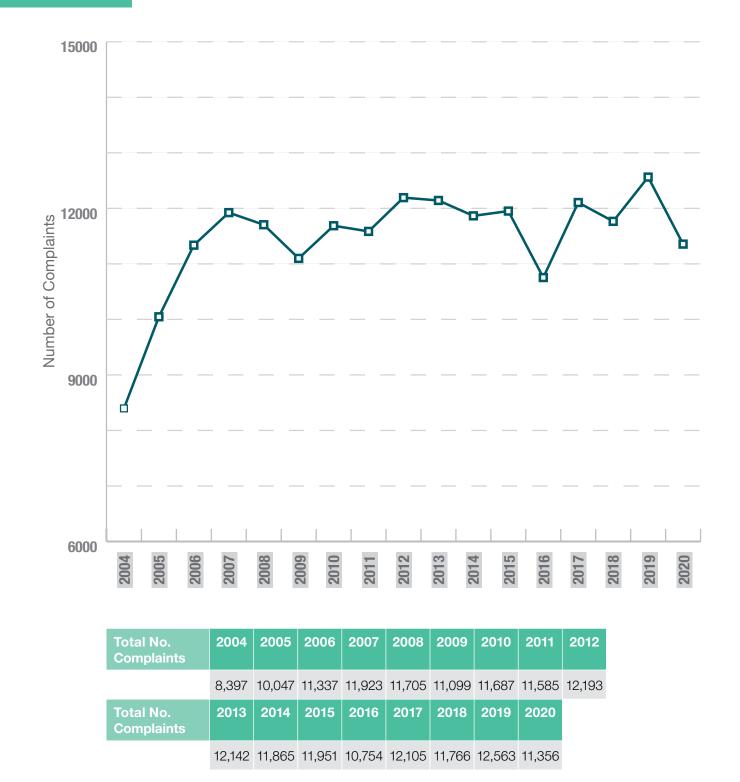
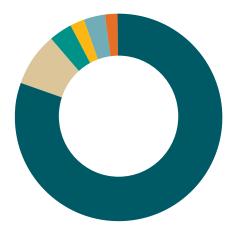


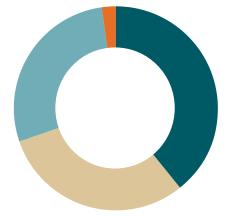
Figure 3

Noise complaints by category 2019 - 20



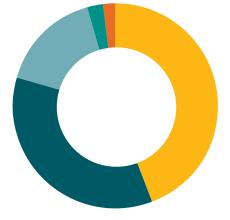
Total Noise Complaints

Domestic	80.82%
Commercial & Leisure	8.31%
Noise in Street	3.37%
Industrial	2.42%
Construction	3.34%
Transport	1.73%



Industrial Complaints

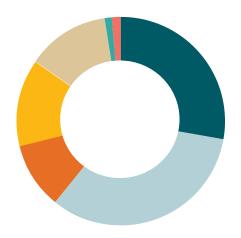
•	Industry Manufacturing & Workshops	39.27%
	Agricultural	30.55%
	Wind Turbine (Individual)	28.00%
	Wind Farm	2.18%



Domestic Complaints

Music, Televisions & Parties	44.29%
Animal Noise	35.35%
Other Neighbour Noise	16.09%
House Alarms	2.59%
DIY	1.68%

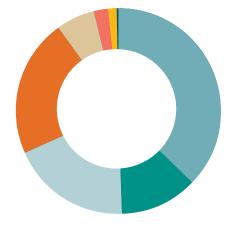
Transport Complaints



Road Vehicles	35.03%
Vehicle horns/revving engines/noisy exhaust	29.95%
Vehicle Alarms	9.14%
Delivery Vehicles	12.18%
Railways	11.68%
Military Aircraft	1.02%
Civil Aircraft	1.02%

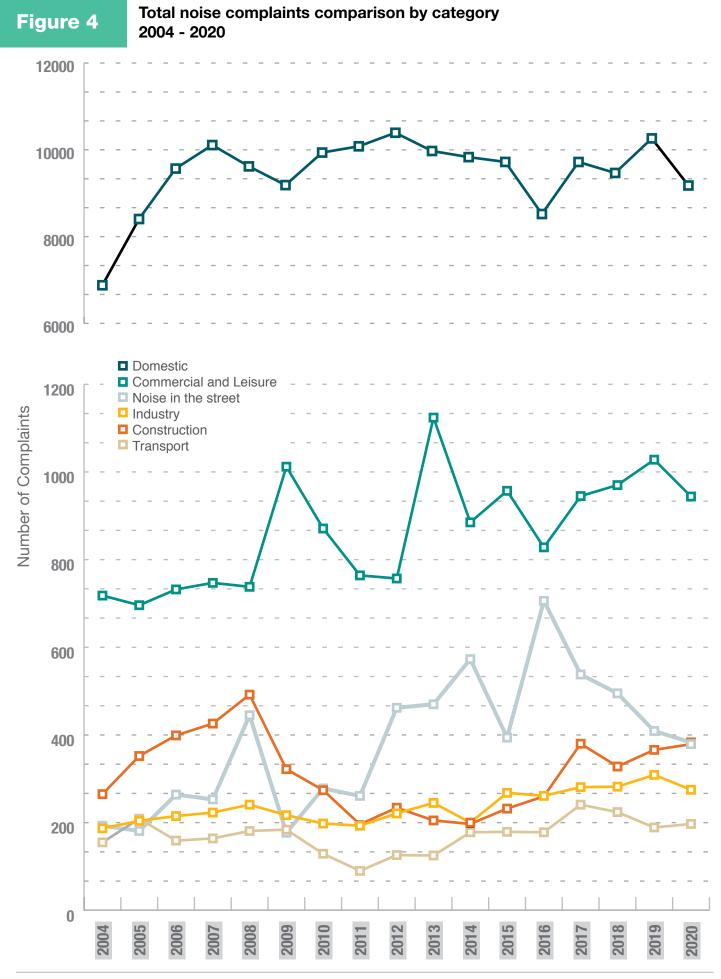
Commercial and Leisure Complaints

Entertainment Premises	39.72%
Security Alarms	17.27%
Other	18.75%
Sports & Leisure	9.85%
Other Shops & Offices	12.08%
Hot Food Bars Restaurants	1.69%
Petrol Stations/Car Wash	0.64%



Noise in the Street Complaints

Other	37.34%
Road Works	12.27%
Street Performance Public Address	18.80%
Antisocial Behaviour	21.67%
Loudspeakers	6.27%
Children Playing	2.09%
Ice Cream Van Chimes	1.31%
Street Traders	0.26%

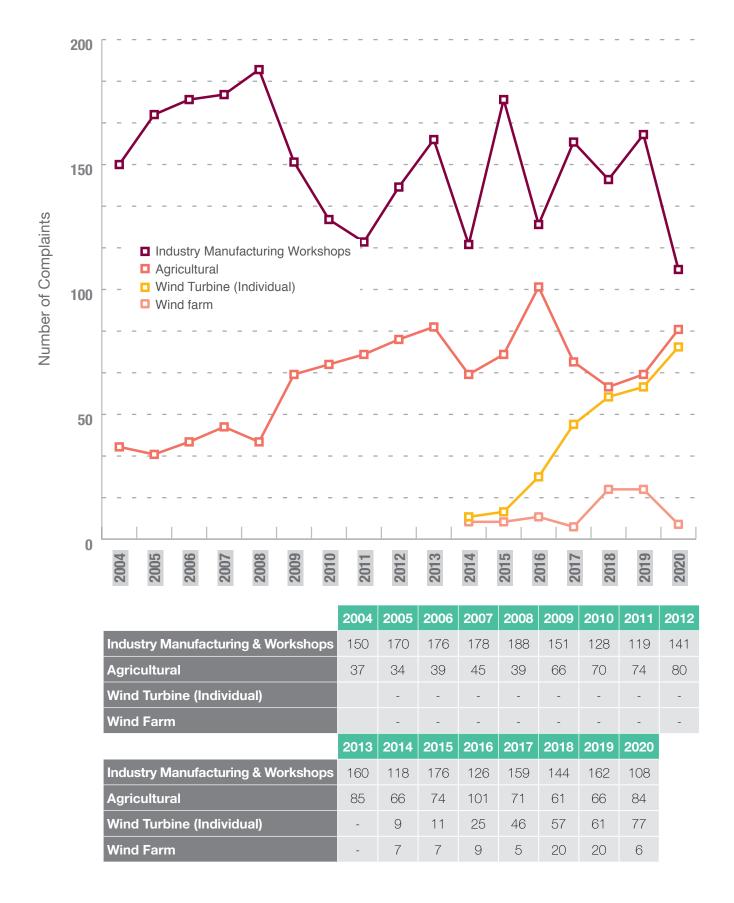


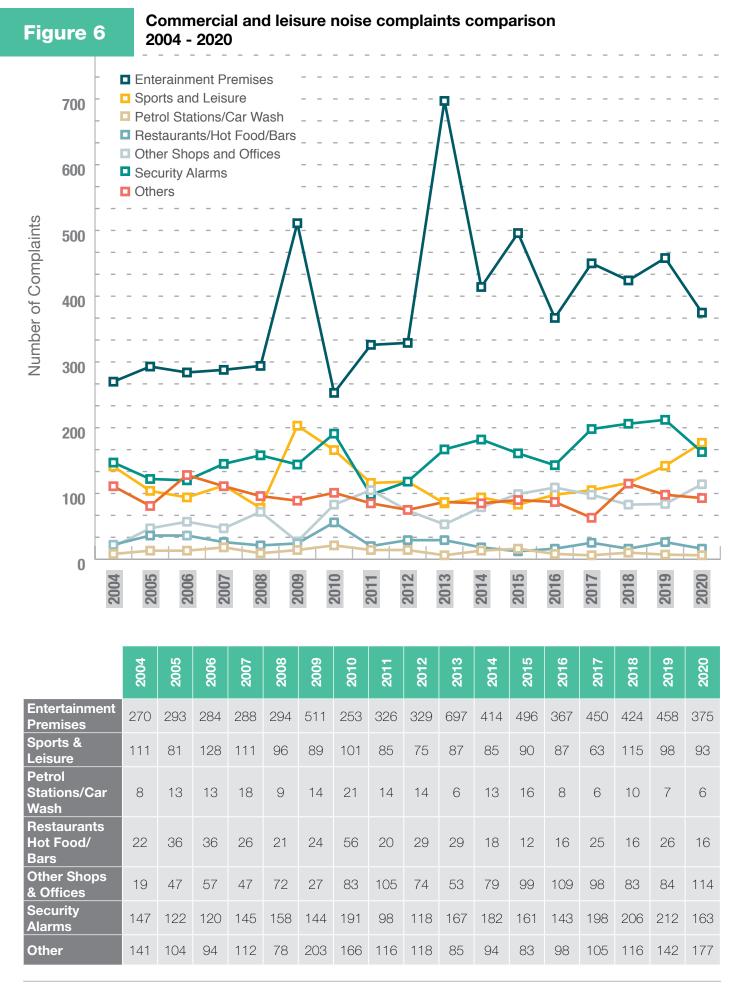
Total noise complaints comparison by category 2004 - 2020 continued

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Industry	187	204	215	223	241	217	198	193	221
Commercial & Leisure	718	696	732	747	728	1,012	871	764	757
Domestic	6,879	8,405	9,568	10,110	9,618	9,187	9,937	10,081	10,393
Construction	265	352	399	426	492	322	274	196	234
Transport	155	209	159	164	181	184	129	90	126
Noise in Street	193	181	264	253	445	177	278	261	462
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Industry	2013 245	2014 200	2015 268	2016 261	2017 281	2018 282	309	2020 275	
Industry Commercial & Leisure									
	245 1,124	200 885	268 957	261	281 945	282 970	309 1,027	275 944	
Commercial & Leisure	245 1,124	200 885	268 957	261 828	281 945	282 970	309 1,027	275 944	
Commercial & Leisure Domestic	245 1,124 9,973	200 885 9,832	268 957 9,721	261 828 8,521	281 945 9,720	282 970 9,467	309 1,027 10,263	275 944 9,178	

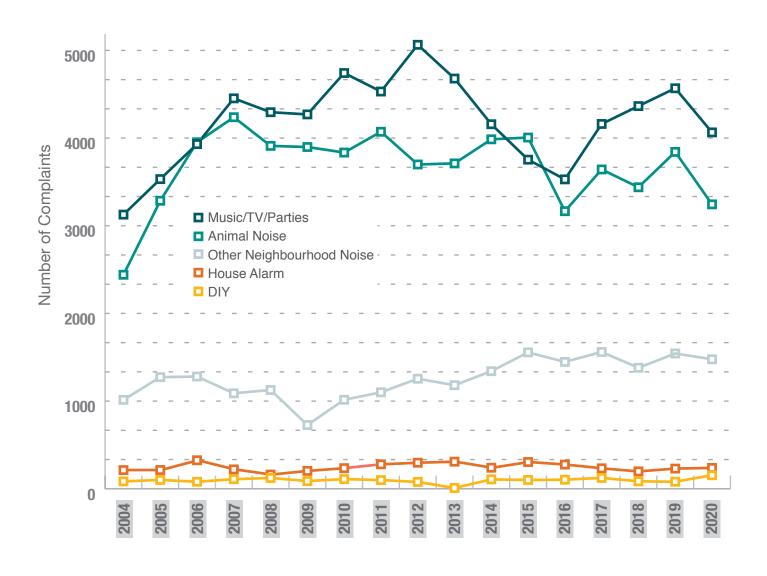
Figure 5

Industrial noise complaints comparison 2004 - 2020





Domestic noise complaints comparison 2004 - 2020



	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
DIY	84	101	80	109	123	88	110	99	78	9	107	100	103	124	85	80	154
Music/TV/ Parties	3,127	3,532	3,931	4,453	4,295	4,270	4,742	4,531	5,064	4,679	4,158	3,754	3,529	4,161	4,365	4,568	4,065
Animal Noise	2,441	3,285	3,952	4,238	3,911	3,898	3,835	4,072	3,699	3,711	3,986	4,006	3,166	3,642	3,439	3,842	3,244
House Alarms	213	214	325	221	162	204	235	279	297	309	240	305	276	233	198	230	238
Other Neighbour Noise	1,014	1,273	1,280	1,089	1,127	727	1,015	1,100	1,255	1,181	1,341	1,556	1,447	1,560	1,380	1,543	1,477

Transport noise complaints comparison 2004 - 2020

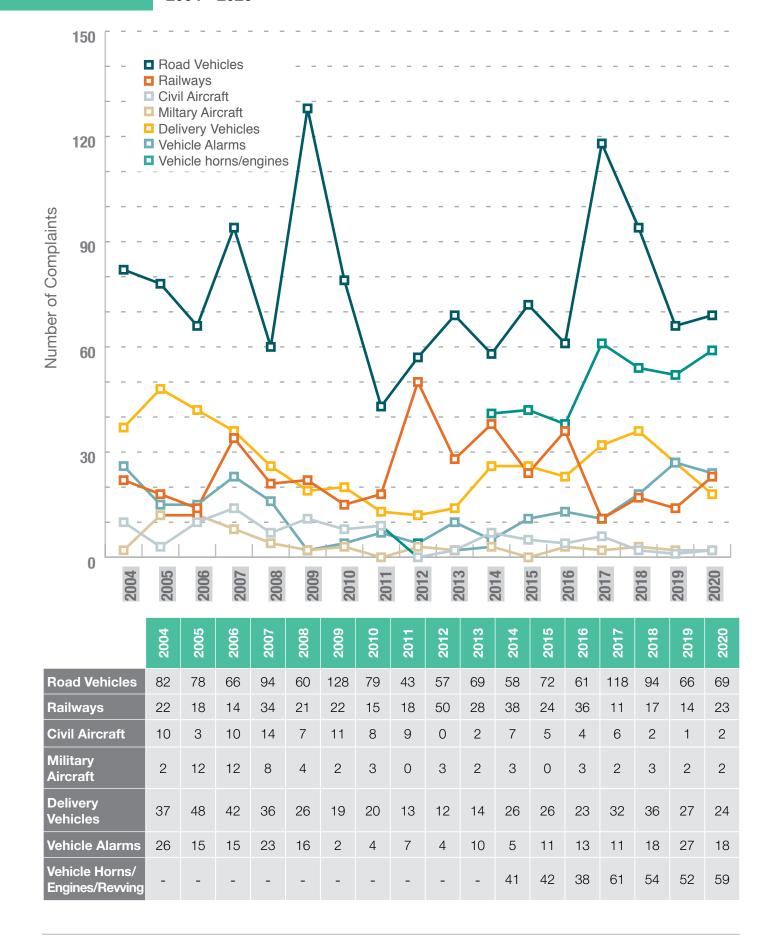
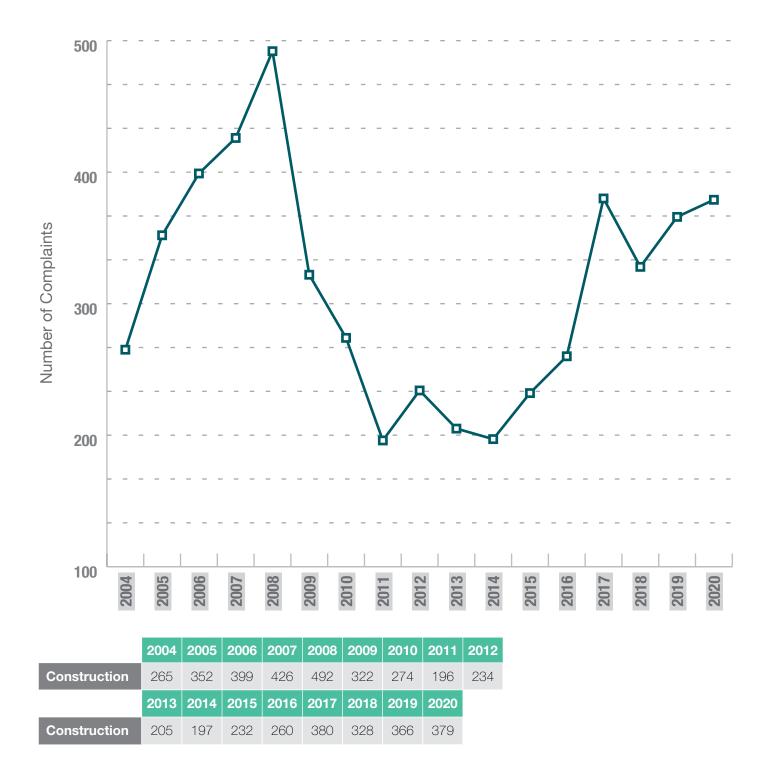
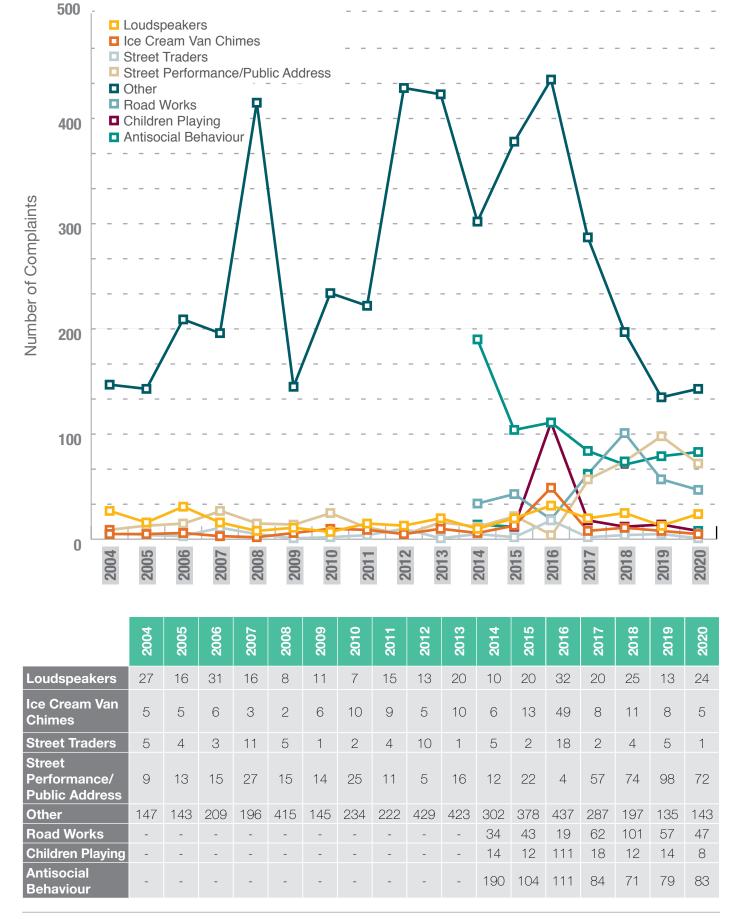


Figure 9

Construction noise complaints comparison 2004 - 2020



Noise in the street complaints comparison 2004 - 2020



Noise Complaint Statistics for Northern Ireland

2019 - 2020

Further information on noise matters in general, or the content of this report can be obtained from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs at the following address:

Air and Environmental Quality Unit

Regulatory and Natural Resources Policy Division
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
2nd Floor Klondyke Building
Cromac Avenue
Gasworks Business Park
Lower Malone
Belfast
BT7 2JA

Tel: 028 9056 9543

E-mail: aeqteam@daera-ni.gov.uk

www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/noise



