



noise
ACTION WEEK

How Loud is Noise?

This table shows the relative decibel levels of some common noises. These are not absolute levels, but give an indication of the relative ranking of everyday sounds. Noise is measured in decibels (dBA), which is logarithmic. This system is used because it behaves in a similar way to human hearing.



Noise Facts and Figures

- The word noise derives from the Latin word 'nausea' meaning sickness.
- Vomiting is the world's most unpopular sound according to a survey carried out by Trevor Cox of Salford Acoustics. *Salford Acoustics Research Centre www.sound101.org 2007*
- In 2007 around 1 million people moved home to escape noise from neighbours. *Ipsos Mori 2007*
- Research by the World Health Organisation suggests that 3% of deaths caused by coronary heart disease are due to chronic noise exposure, including daytime traffic. *WHO Working Group on the Noise Environmental Burden on Disease 2007*
- Soldiers learning to play the bagpipes were told they must wear ear plugs and limit practice sessions to 24 minutes a day outdoors or 15 minutes indoors. This followed a study by the Army Medical Directorate showing that the sound could reach 111 decibels outside, slightly louder than a pneumatic drill, and 116 inside, as loud as a chainsaw. *The Scotsman 2006*
- 10% (as many as 6 million people) are bothered by noise from pubs, clubs and entertainment venues. *Ipsos Mori 2007*
- Complaints from domestic premises about noise account for three quarters of all noise complaints. They have increased almost five times between 1984/5 and 2004/5 and almost 20% between 2000/1 and 2004/5, according to the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health statistics. *Defra 2006*
- Around half the population say that noise affects their quality of life. *Ipsos Mori 2007*
- In a recent survey 22% of people cited noise as the most common cause of problems between neighbours, followed by anti-social behaviour (14%) and harassment (10%). *Neighbours from Hell 2006*
- One in seven people are woken by neighbours, whilst one in ten are kept awake, and women are more likely to be woken than men. *Ipsos Mori 2007*
- Children in London schools are regularly exposed to noise that exceeds World Health Organisation Guidelines, and this can adversely affect their performance at school. *South Bank University 05/02*
- One in five people in Britain think they make less noise than neighbours, whilst one in eight people think they make more noise than their neighbours. *Ipsos Mori 2007*
- In October and November 2004 682 incidents of animals treated by vets for distress or injuries caused by fireworks were reported and firework related complaints received by the RSPCA in November 2004 were at the highest for any November between 1999 and 2004. *RSPCA 2007*
- During the World Cup 2006, the audience roar following a goal in a football stadium reached 110dBA, which is comparable to the noise levels of a nightclub. The blaring of horns reached levels as high as 130dBA. *Deafness Research UK 2006*
- The total number of complaints about noise rose by 11% between 2005/6 and 2006/7, from 158,199 in 2005-06 to 172,415 in the past 12 months. *The Times, survey of 100 local authorities 2007*
- A survey carried out by 118 118 found that Sunderland football fans are the noisiest, with chants reaching almost 129.2 decibels – almost as loud as a jet. Meanwhile, Manchester United fans only reached 117.5 decibels. *118 118 Survey 2007*