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The social survey into the reaction to aircraft noise around London,
Gatwick, Airport.
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The assessment and subsequent control of the nuisance arising from aircraft noise in the vicinity of airports depends for its validity upon a reliable predictive index of community response. The Authorities responsible for community and airport development in this country rely heavily upon the Noise and Number Index and its use is widespread. The NNI method has come under heavy criticism when used at certain airports as the case can be made that, as it was derived from a social survey around London, Heathrow, Airport, the subjective scale of annoyance rating would not be applicable for other airports.

The Counties of Surrey, East and West Sussex were very aware of this problem especially as it reflected upon their policy for the control of development around London, Gatwick, Airport. Accordingly, they commissioned a Social Survey around Gatwick Airport with the aim of comparing the reactions of the Gatwick population to the reactions of the Heathrow population. In short, it was required to erect a scale of subjective response which would more accurately reflect the local reaction than would a subjective response scale derived from the Heathrow conditions.

This paper sets out the conduct of the survey and discusses the results obtained. Its relevance to other airport situations is examined and the actions taken by the planning authorities around Gatwick as a result are shown.

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