SELF-CATERING SURVEY
IN WALES

2006

ANNUAL REPORT

TERMS OF CONTRACT

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Prepared for: Visit Wales Croeso Cymru

Contact : Robert Lewis

Prepared by: **Beaufort Research**

Contact : Claire Peate/ Osian Bowyer

2 Museum Place
Cardiff
CF10 3BG

Tel: 029 2037 8565
Fax: 029 2037 0600
E-mail: claire@beaufortresearch.co.uk
Website: www.beaufortresearch.co.uk

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CONTENTS PAGE

1. INTRODUCTION

Background

This report presents the main findings of the Visit Wales (VW) survey of tourism trends in holiday parks and self-catering independent operators during the 2006 season. The survey has been conducted in some form since 1987 in combination with monitoring visitor attractions and was until 2001 termed the *Wales Tourist Board Demand Monitor*. In 2001 the Survey ceased to monitor the attractions and has therefore since been known as the *Survey of Self-Catering Accommodation Occupancy*. Since 1987 Visit Wales have appointed Beaufort Research to conduct the survey on their behalf and this appointment now covers the period 2005-2007 (inclusive). Its purpose is to provide a measure of business levels during the peak and shoulder season, and the information is used:

- to assist Visit Wales in its efforts to develop and promote tourism;
- to provide survey participants with benchmark data about their performance over time, in absolute terms and by reference to a sample of their peers.

Research Approach

The survey has been conducted by Beaufort Research in accordance with the specification provided by the Visit Wales Research and Corporate Planning Department.

A detailed statement of the survey method appears in the Annex. In essence the survey involves a series of parallel monthly data collection exercises amongst samples of establishments, selected to be as representative as possible of the sectors in question. Participation in the survey is essentially voluntary and, although assiduous efforts are made to maintain response rates at a consistently high level, the number of returns received each month varies.

The sample is refreshed each year, using past participants as a core in order to maintain consistency over time. The success of any survey of this nature depends on the support and goodwill of the industry. Despite the best endeavours of Visit Wales and the contractor to ensure that samples remain representative of the industry at large, differential rates of response do occur and, in practice, there is probably a skew towards more progressive and efficient operators. Although the extent of any bias cannot easily be measured, readers need to be aware that it is likely to exist.

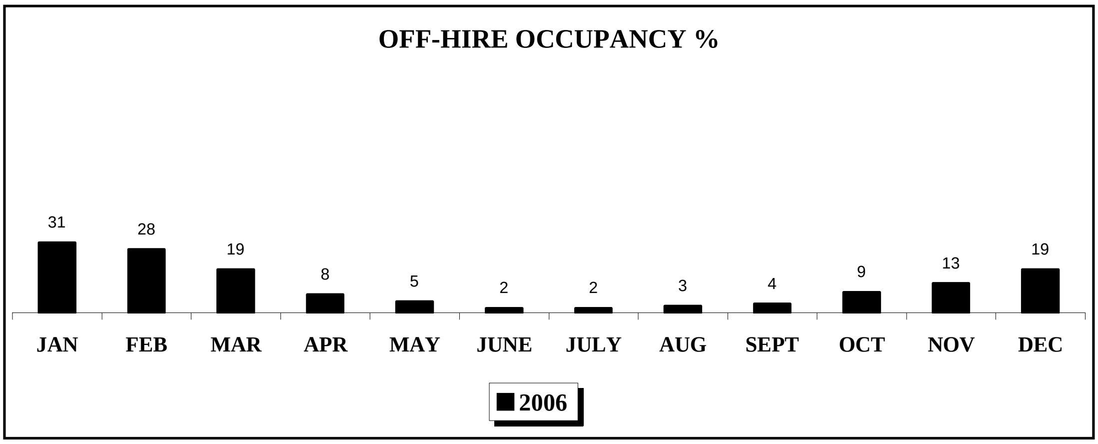
In 2001, in addition to ceasing to cover parallel trends amongst Welsh visitor attractions, the survey was extended to cover the whole year for the Self-Catering sectors and to April to October for the Parks Sectors. For this reason, graphs throughout the report include both an average for comparisons with previous years, consisting of May to October, and a year average, which is the total average occupancy for the whole period covered for that sector.

Changes to Analysis in 2006

In 2005 the decision was made to report levels of occupancy for self catering independent operators *only when a facility was available for hire*. Prior to this, levels of occupancy did not officially take availability into account and periods where facilities were unavailable to the paying public were variously classified by the individual operators. For example, closure of the facilities for maintenance could be classed as ‘unoccupied’ while reserving the facilities for friends and family could be classed as ‘occupied’. For this reason the inclusion of a question on the form about availability to the paying public now enables a more accurate collection of accommodation demand data.

This change was implemented from January 2006 onwards.

This alteration to the reporting methodology should be borne in mind when comparing 2006 results with those from previous years and direct comparisons should be treated with some caution.



Looking at the off-hire occupancy levels (above) there is a clear trend of availability in the core spring and summer months with non-availability peaking in January and February.

The Reporting Cycle

The purpose of the survey is to measure monthly levels of demand, although it is measured according to a four or five week cycle. Thus Bank Holidays and monthly reporting periods are not static from year to year, and on occasion, it is possible for Bank Holidays to “move” from one reporting period to another over seasons. This movement of Bank Holidays can lead either to artificial year on year differences being recorded or to real movements being masked. Movements of public holidays should be borne in mind when interpreting the data at a monthly level. In 2006, Easter fell in the April reporting period, the May Bank Holiday and the Spring Bank Holiday fell in the May reporting period, and the August Bank holiday fell in the August reporting period.

The Report

This report brings together all of the 2006 survey findings, accompanied by a technical explanation.

2. *SELF CATERING AGENCIES*

In 2006 there were several barriers that prevented Beaufort Research obtaining reliable samples of self-catering agencies (letting agencies offering self catering cottages and apartments in Wales). For this reason, it is not possible at this time to report on findings from the self-catering agencies here.

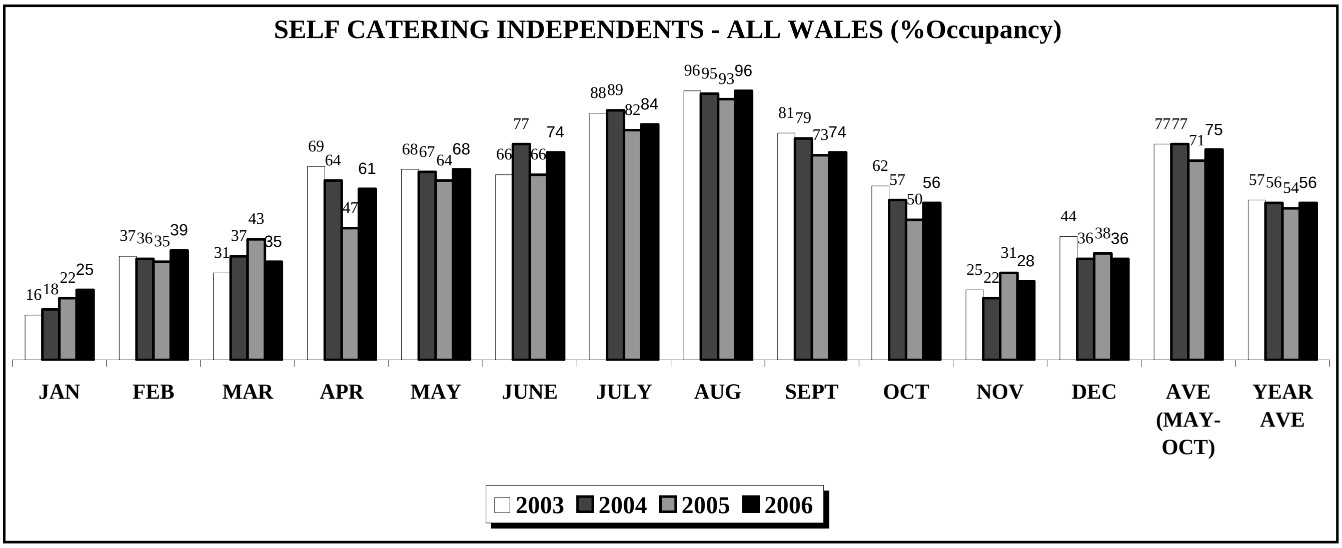
It is hoped that various activities undertaken by Beaufort Research and Visit Wales during 2006 and 2007 will enable reliable agency data to be reported for 2007.

3. SELF CATERING INDEPENDENT OPERATORS

This section summarises the information obtained from a sample of verified independent self-catering operators offering self-catering cottages and apartments in Wales. The sample was designed to be broadly representative of the range of furnished accommodation let through such independent operators. Occupancy is measured at the individual property level by expressing the number of weeks let each month as a proportion of the weeks and units available for rent.

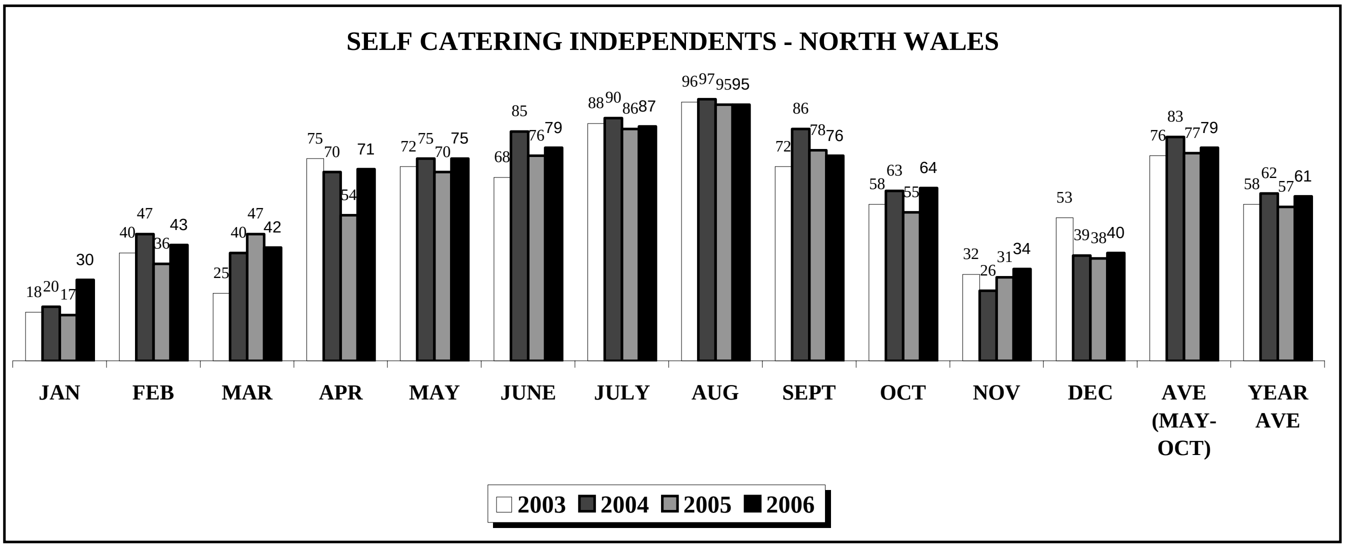
Key Findings

The 2006 yearly average occupancy rate is slightly above that of 2005 although, as previously mentioned, this year occupancy has been calculated only when a facility is available for hire. Interestingly occupancy levels for 2006 were actually lower in November and December, compared to 2005, even when unavailability (of 13% in November and 20% in December) was taken into account in this year's figures.



Regional Trends

In 2006 the average yearly occupancy is highest for North Wales (61%) and lowest for South Wales (53%). Mid Wales exhibits the greatest range in occupancy levels, from 16% occupancy in January reaching 96% in the core month of August. By comparison North Wales displays a narrower range of occupancy; the lowest level being 30% in January rising to 95% in August.


SELF CATERING INDEPENDENTS - NORTH WALES
18 20 17 30
40 47 36 43
25 40 47 42
75 70 54 71
72 75 70 75
68 85 76 79
88 90 86 87
96 97 95 95
72 86 78 76
58 63 55 64
32 26 31 34
53 39 38 40
76 83 77 79
58 62 57 61
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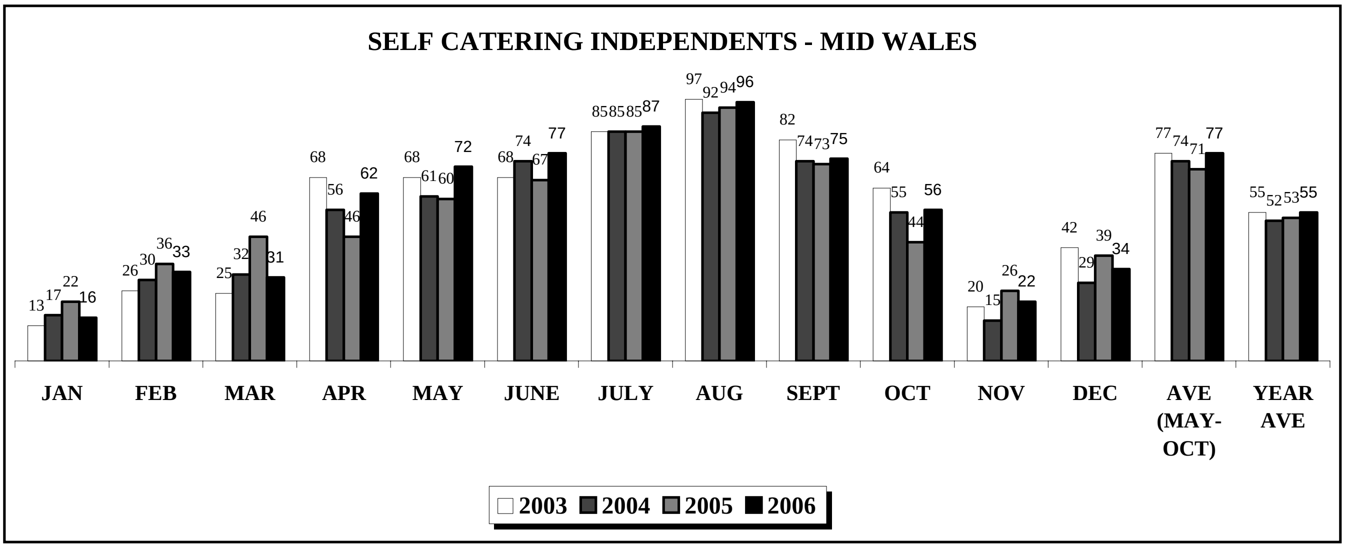
SELF CATERING INDEPENDENTS - MID WALES
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26 30 36 33
25 32 46 31
68 56 46 62
68 61 60 72
68 74 67 77
85 85 85 87
97 92 94 96
82 74 73 75
64 55 44 56
20 15 26 22
42 29 39 34
77 74 71 77
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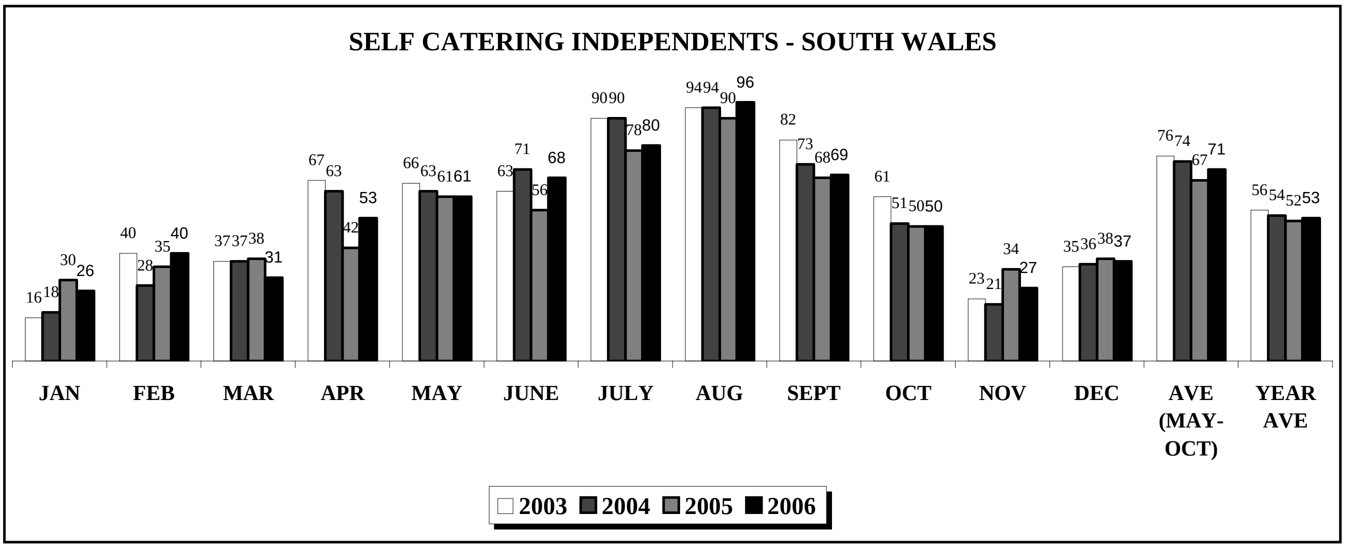
SELF CATERING INDEPENDENTS - SOUTH WALES
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40 28 35 40
37 37 38 31
67 63 42 53
66 63 61 61
63 71 56 68
90 90 78 80
94 94 90 96
82 73 68 69
61 51 50 50
23 21 34 27
35 36 38 37
76 74 67 71
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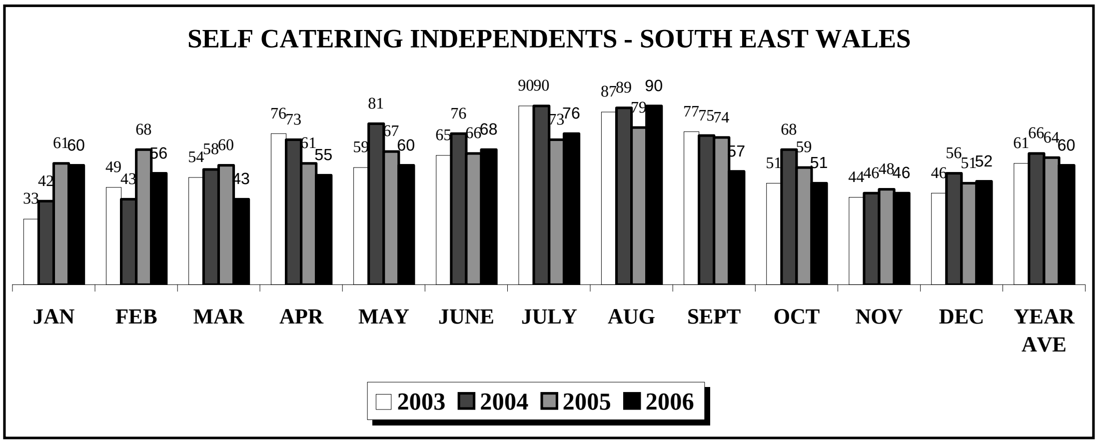
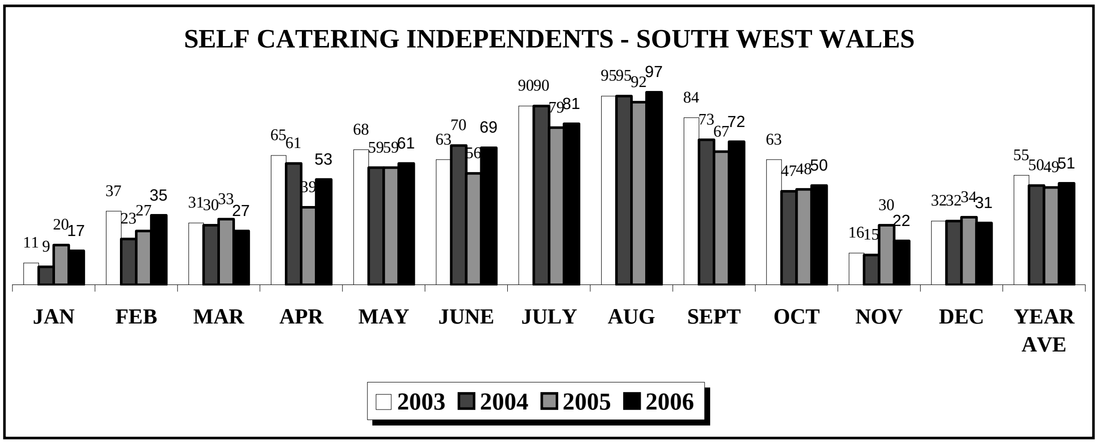

SELF CATERING INDEPENDENTS - SOUTH EAST WALES
JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUNE JULY AUG SEPT OCT NOV DEC YEAR AVE
2003 2004 2005 2006


SELF CATERING INDEPENDENTS - SOUTH WEST WALES
JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUNE JULY AUG SEPT OCT NOV DEC YEAR AVE
2003 2004 2005 2006

Coastal/Inland %

Increasingly coastal locations are outperforming inland locations in terms of occupancy levels for self catering accommodation. In 2006 the May to October average for occupancy in a coastal location was 80%; a full twelve percentage points above occupancy for inland self catering facilities. This gap is an increase from 8% in 2005 and 4% in 2004.

Coastal Locations

	Jan	*Feb*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*
2006	25	38	31	63	73	81	90
2005	16	32	41	49	66	70	86
2004	14	36	33	65	68	79	91
2003	11	35	25	70	68	73	88

	Aug	*Sep*	*Oct*	*Nov*	*Dec*	*Average (May-Oct)*	*Year Ave*
2006	97	79	60	26	33	80	58
2005	93	78	52	32	37	74	54
2004	96	83	56	18	31	79	56
2003	96	73	60	24	45	76	57

Inland Locations

	Jan	*Feb*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*
2006	24	42	40	59	61	61	75
2005	30	40	47	45	60	59	77
2004	24	35	41	62	67	74	85
2003	22	38	38	69	68	63	88

	Aug	*Sep*	*Oct*	*Nov*	*Dec*	*Average (May-Oct)*	*Year Ave*
2006	95	64	51	31	42	68	54
2005	92	63	47	28	40	66	52
2004	92	72	58	28	43	75	57
2003	96	83	63	28	43	77	58

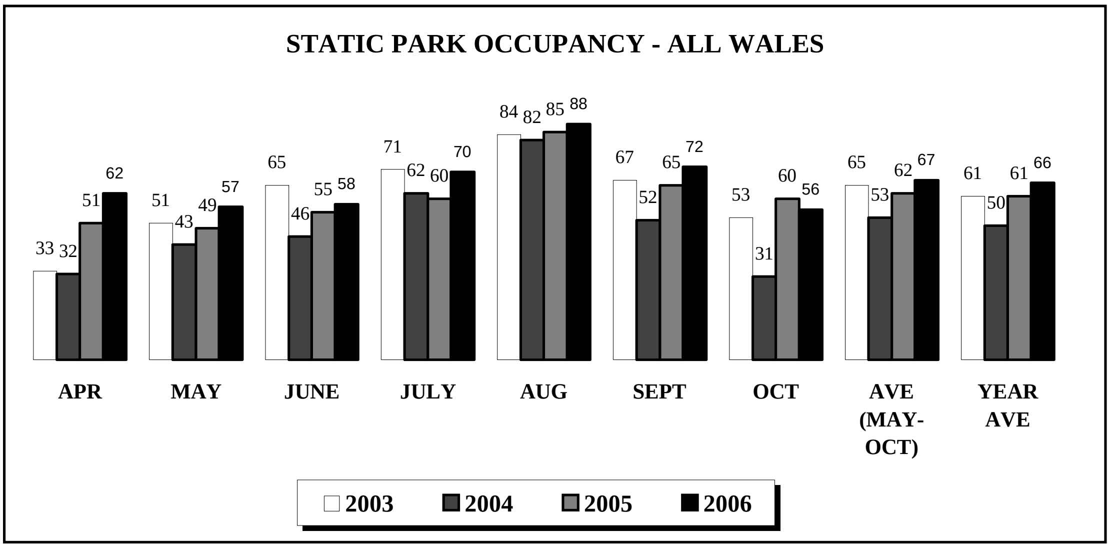
4. STATIC PARKS

In this section we report on the information obtained from operators offering static caravans (and/or chalets) for let. Occupancy is measured by relating the number of units let during the reporting period to the total number available for let during that time.

Key Findings

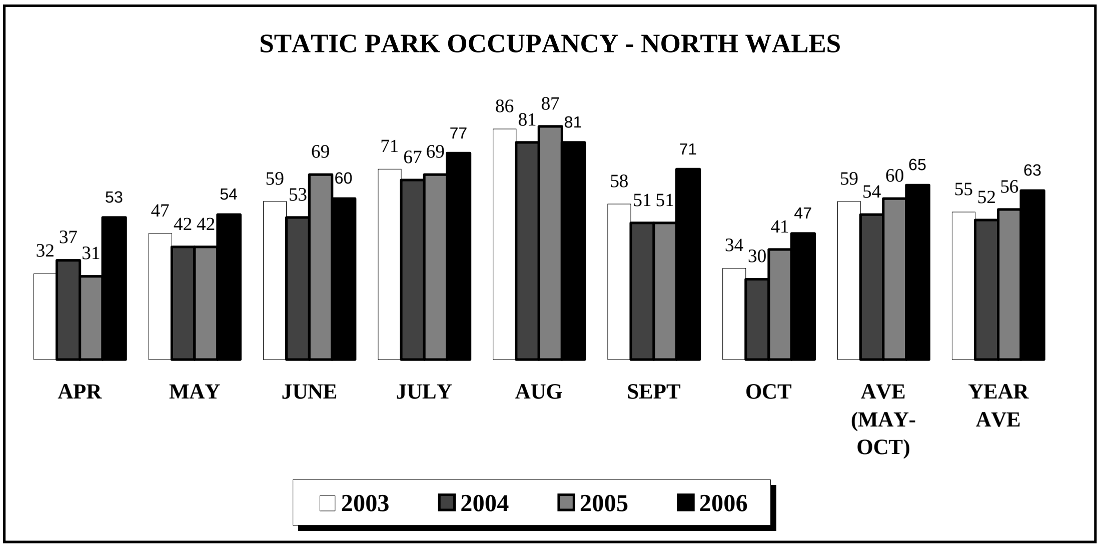
Occupancy levels in 2006 for static parks is continuing the trend of a steady increase since 2004 with average occupancy across April to October now at two thirds (66%).

The most marked increase since last year occurs in the start of the season with occupancy rising by 11% during April, and 8% during May.



Regional Trends

Occupancy levels in North and South Wales have increased since 2005 with levels in Mid Wales remaining on a par with last year at 63%.
The largest increases were seen in South Wales where the yearly average rose from 62% in 2005 to 71% in 2006. This increase in occupancy is most marked in the earlier months of the season; April to June.


STATIC PARK OCCUPANCY - NORTH WALES
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47 42 42 54
59 53 69 60
71 67 69 77
86 81 87 81
58 51 51 71
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59 54 60 65
55 52 56 63
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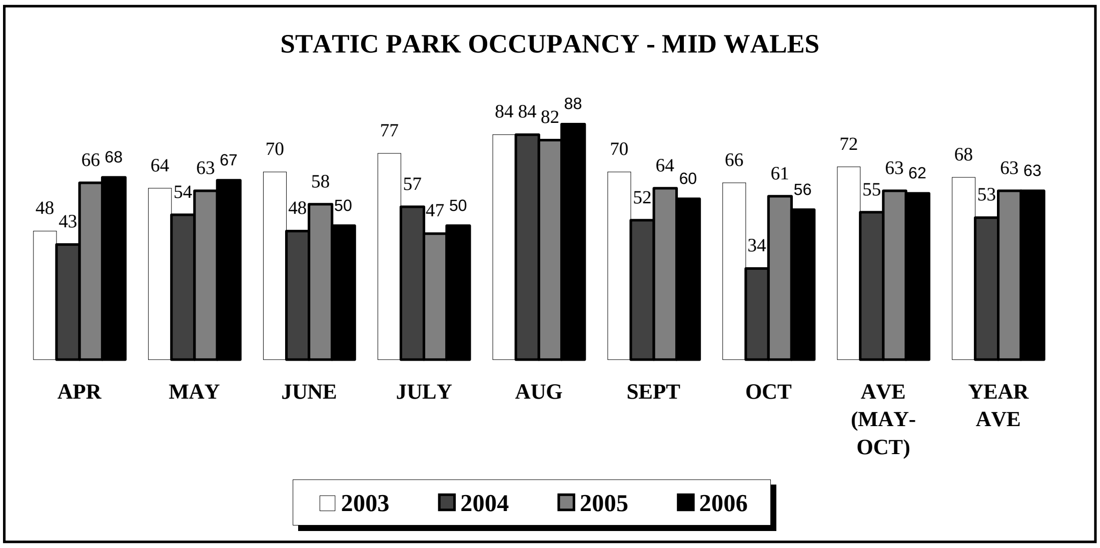
STATIC PARK OCCUPANCY - MID WALES
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64 54 63 67
70 48 58 50
77 57 47 50
84 84 82 88
70 52 64 60
66 34 61 56
72 55 63 62
68 53 63 63
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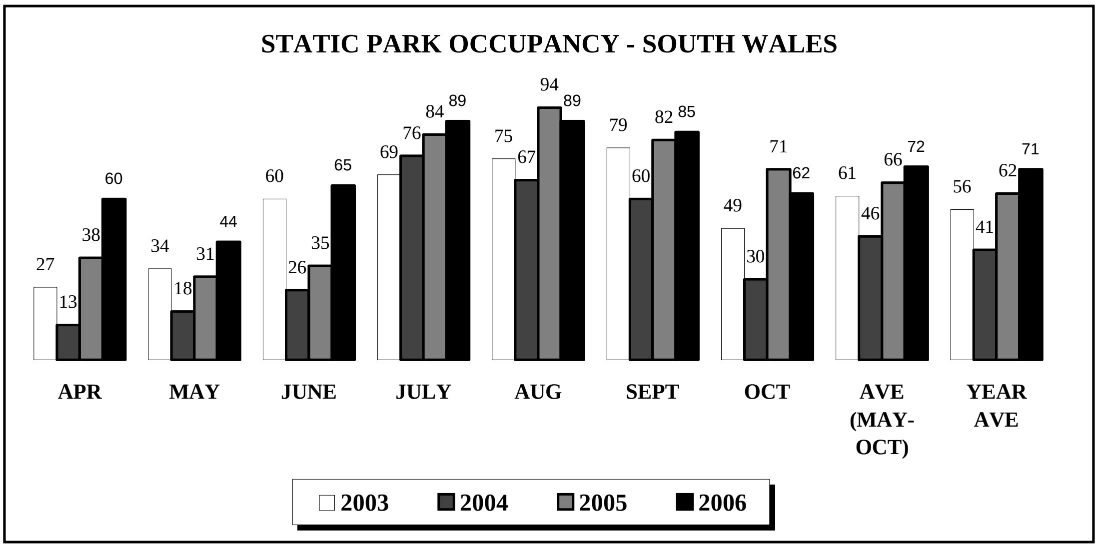
STATIC PARK OCCUPANCY - SOUTH WALES
27 13 38 60
34 18 31 44
60 26 35 65
69 76 84 89
75 67 94 89
79 60 82 85
49 30 71 62
61 46 66 72
56 41 62 71
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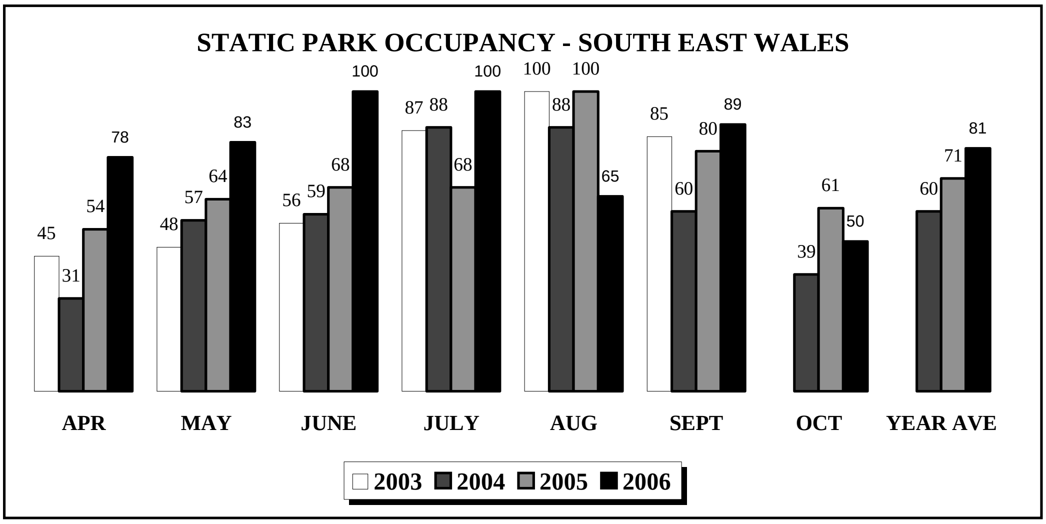
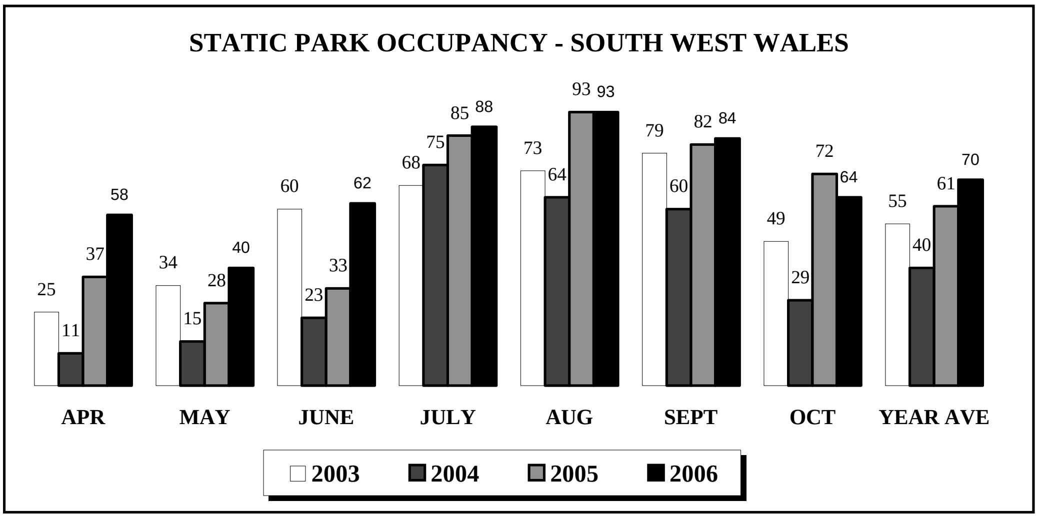
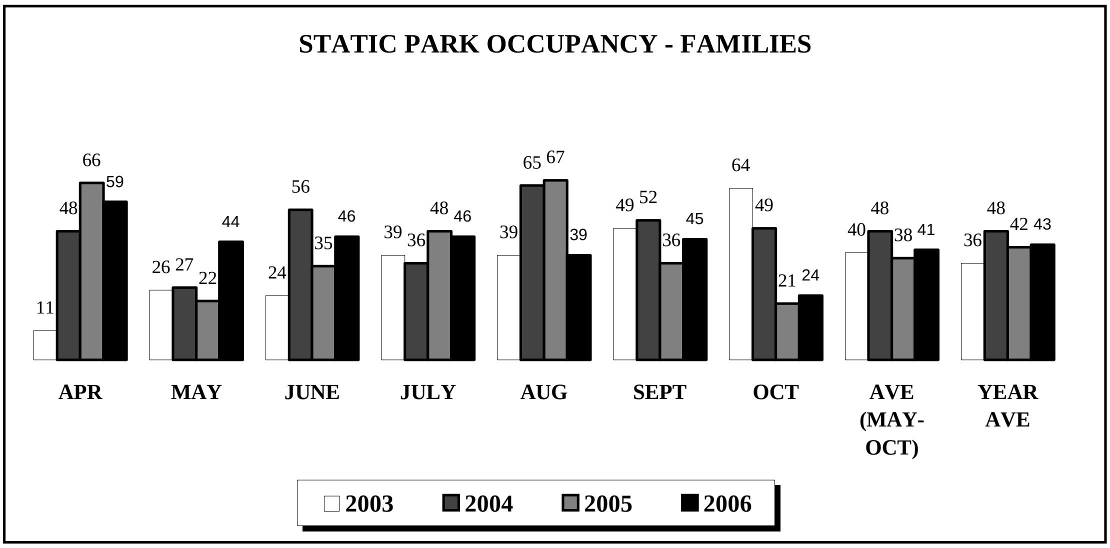


NB: No October returns for SE Wales in 2003, hence a year average has not been calculated.



The Family Market

Occupation of static parks by families in 2006 has shown a slight increase since the previous year, up from 42% to 43%. Interestingly, the proportion of families at static parks during the key summer month of August has dropped considerably since last year, from 67% to 39%.



Static Parks: Overseas Visitors %

Overseas visitors still account for 4% of the occupancy at static parks, a figure that has remained consistent over the past four years.

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Average (May-Oct)	Year Ave
2006	2	6	3	2	1	8	6	4	4
2005	7	1	5	6	7	4	1	4	4
2004	1	1	7	2	9	4	1	4	4
2003	2	2	4	5	10	4	2	5	4

Static Parks: Inland/Coastal %

Both coastal and inland static park locations continue to exhibit year on year increases in occupancy levels since 2004. The increased figure in 2006 is due in part to considerably higher occupancy levels at the start of the static park year compared to 2005; a rise of 11% in April for coastal locations and 22% for inland locations.

Coastal Locations %

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Average (May-Oct)	Year Ave
2006	62	57	58	70	90	73	58	68	67
2005	51	49	55	60	84	68	61	63	61
2004	32	44	46	63	83	53	32	54	50
2003	33	52	66	74	84	67	54	66	61

Inland Locations %

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Average (May-Oct)	Year Ave
2006	58	57	45	80	59	69	26	56	56
2005	36	46	52	58	93	54	48	59	55
2004	30	32	45	53	70	43	28	45	43
2003	28	35	49	65	75	65	28	53	49

Static Parks: Grading %

Occupancy at 4-5 star static park sites continues to outperform occupancy at 1-3 star sites. However, between 2005 and 2006 while occupancy in 4-5 star sites has remained at a constant level of 76%, occupancy at 1-3 star sites has increased by 6 percentage points to 63%.

1-3 Stars %

	April	***May***	***June***	***July***	***Aug***	***Sep***	***Oct***	***Average (May-Oct)***	***Year Ave***
2006	61	52	51	65	88	71	56	64	63
2005	68	50	43	45	81	59	54	55	57
2004	23	46	43	62	90	56	29	54	50
2003	26	53	72	78	86	73	63	71	64

4-5 Stars %

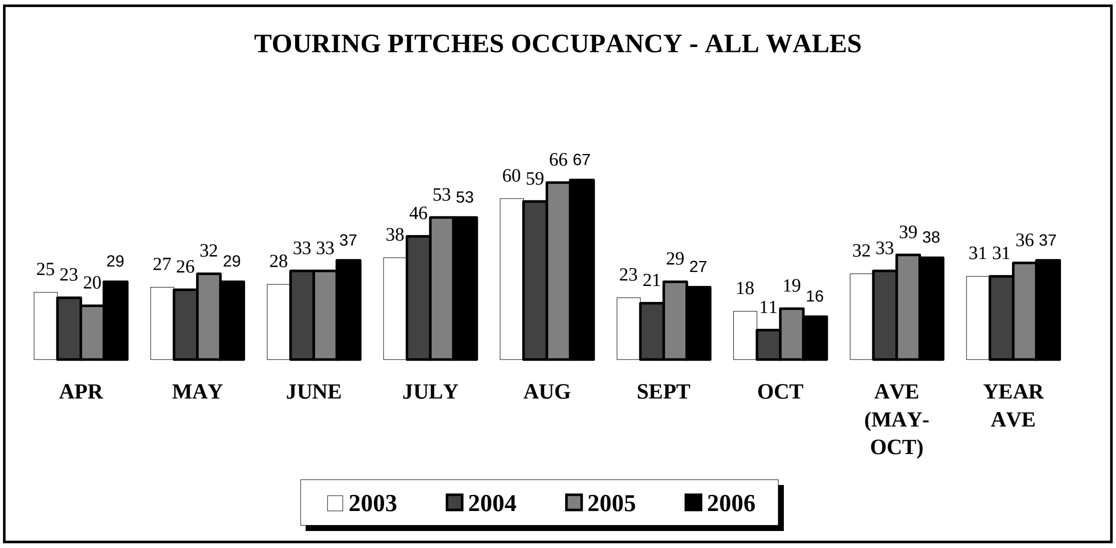
	April	***May***	***June***	***July***	***Aug***	***Sep***	***Oct***	***Average (May-Oct)***	***Year Ave***
2006	63	64	82	86	93	84	60	78	76
2005	52	69	82	85	97	78	66	80	76
2004	57	56	74	78	83	76	54	70	68
2003	53	65	72	77	82	82	66	74	71

5. TOURING PITCHES

This component of the Occupancy Survey deals with parks offering touring caravan pitches. Although this sub-sector is dealt with separately for analysis purposes some of these parks will of course also offer static caravans for hire.

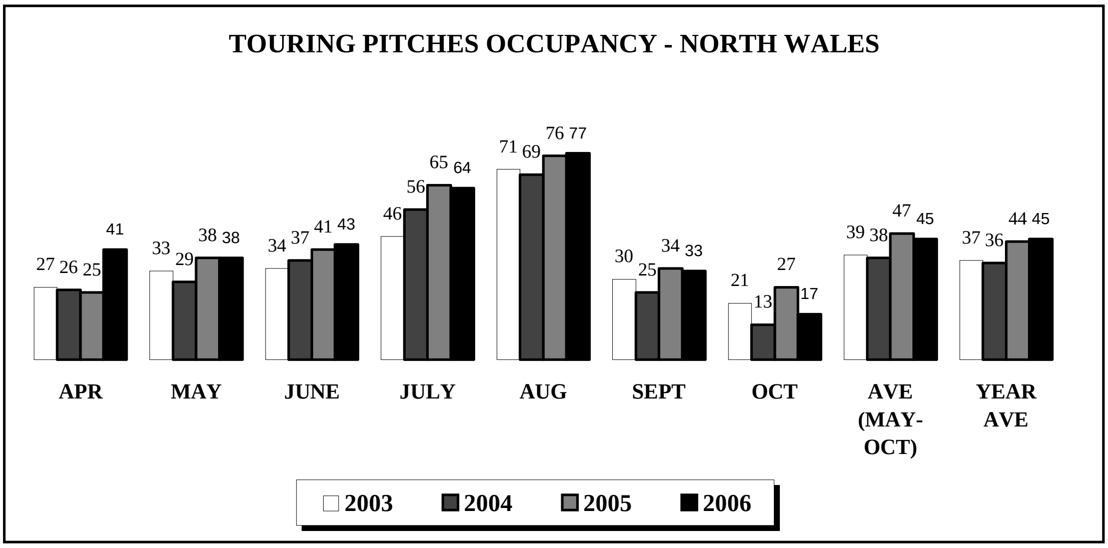
Key Findings

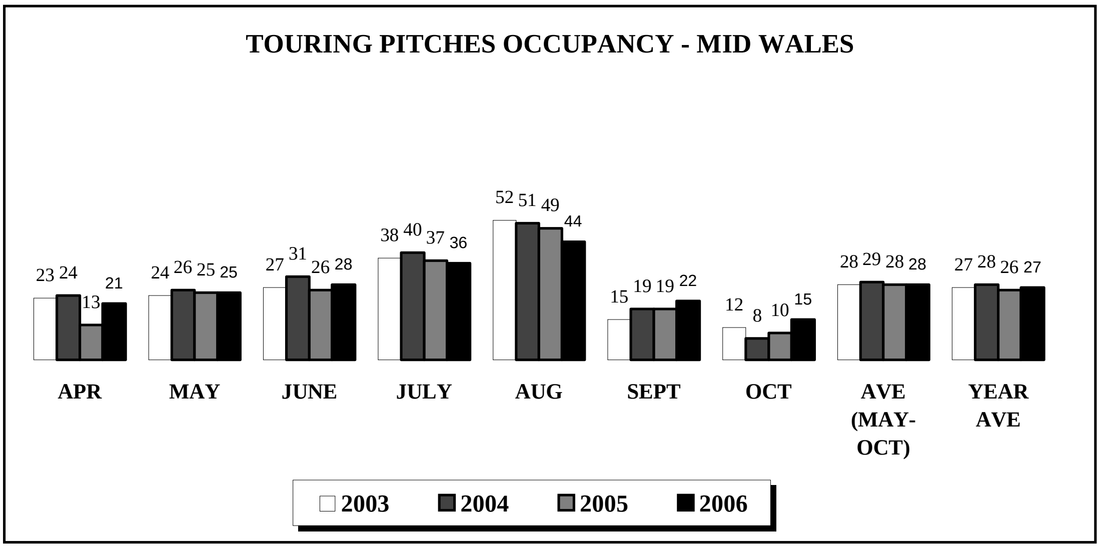
Occupancy levels for touring pitches continues a trend of steady improvement since 2003 with occupancy now at 37% across the touring park year.



Regional Trends

Occupancy levels in South Wales show the greatest increase since the previous year with occupancy now at almost a third (32%) – an increase of 4% since 2005.




TOURING PITCHES OCCUPANCY - MID WALES
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52 51 49 44
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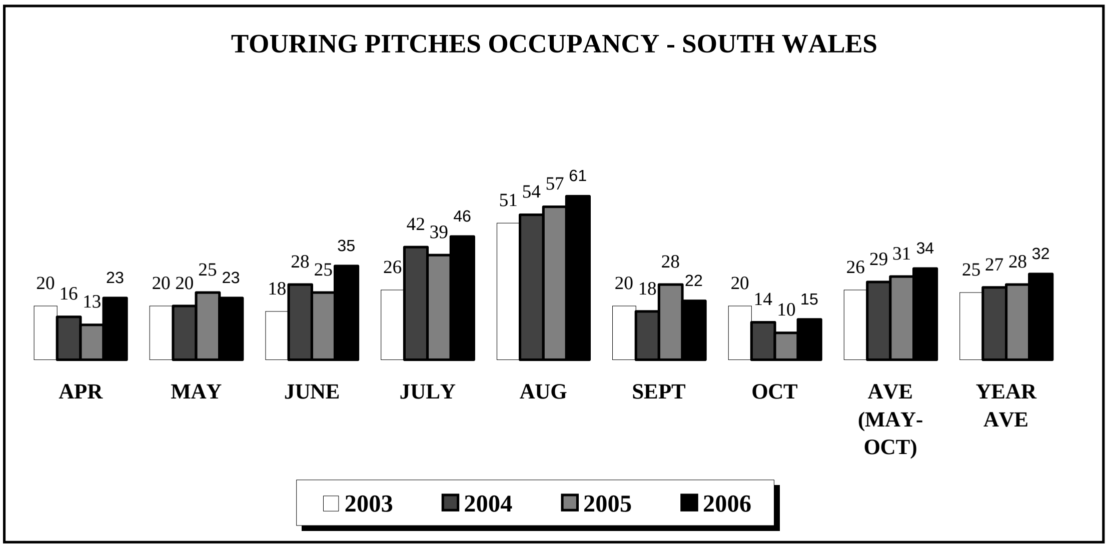
TOURING PITCHES OCCUPANCY - SOUTH WALES
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20 20 25 23
18 28 25 35
26 42 39 46
51 54 57 61
20 18 28 22
20 14 10 15
26 29 31 34
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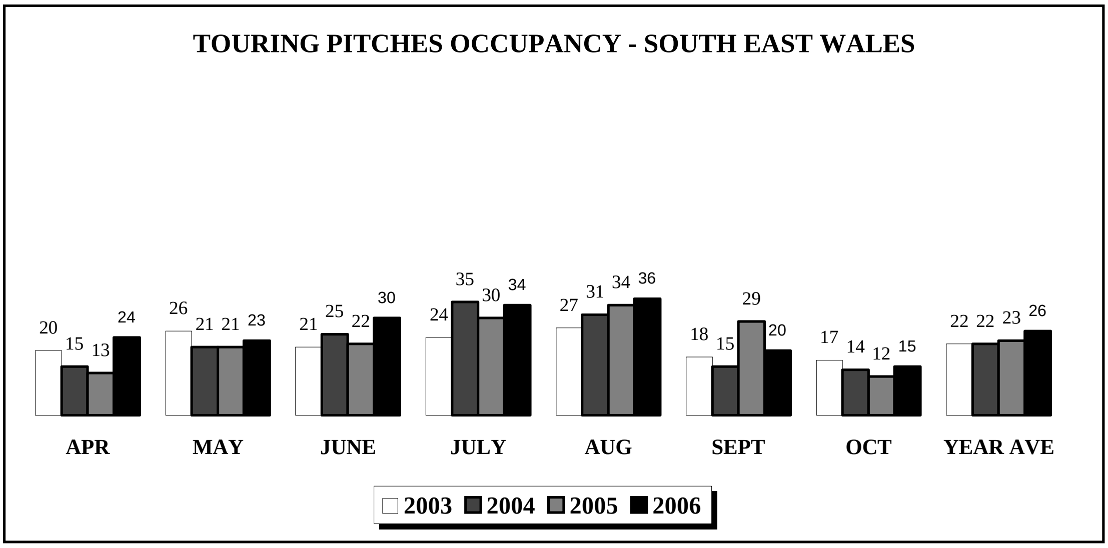

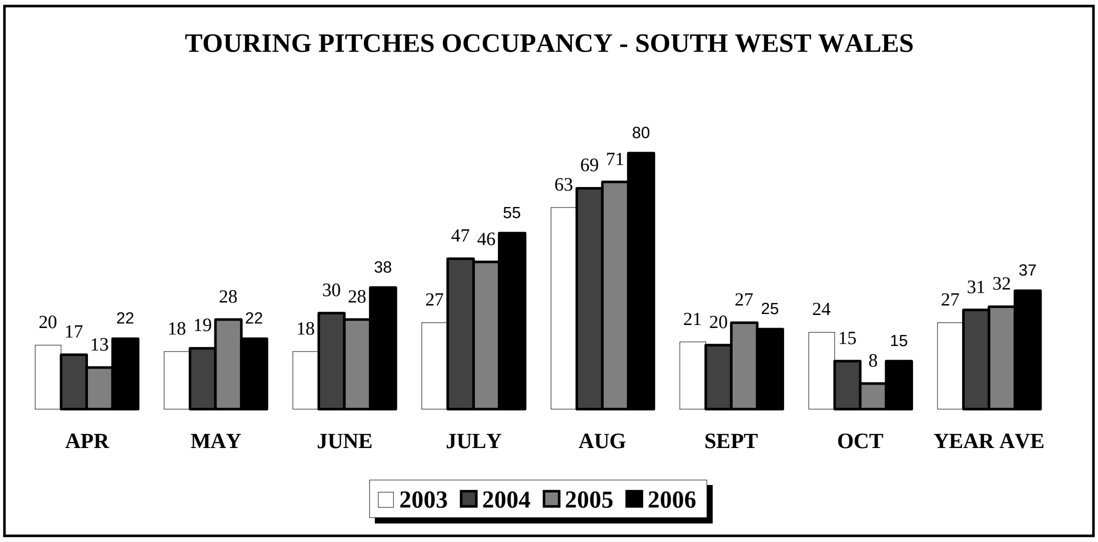

Touring Parks: Overseas Visitors %

The proportion of overseas visitors to touring parks has risen slightly since 2005 to 3% across the touring park year.

	Apr	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug*	*Sep*	*Oct*	*Average (May–Oct)*	*Year Ave*
2006	2	2	3	5	3	2	1	3	3
2005	1	2	3	3	2	1	0	2	2
2004	1	2	2	3	2	2	0	2	2
2003	0	6	3	8	7	9	0	6	5

Touring Parks: Inland/Coastal %

As with static parks, touring parks in coastal locations continue to enjoy higher occupancy levels than their inland counterparts. In 2006 touring parks achieved 41% occupancy across the year in coastal locations compared to 28% in inland locations. For both locations occupancy increased considerably at the start of the year, with levels increasing since 2005 by 10% for both locations.

Coastal Locations %

	April	***May***	***June***	***July***	***Aug***	***Sep***	***Oct***	***Average (May-Oct)***	***Year Ave***
2006	32	32	40	61	76	29	15	42	41
2005	22	36	39	61	75	32	23	44	41
2004	22	26	33	52	66	22	11	35	33
2003	26	28	30	41	69	24	22	36	34

Inland Locations %

	April	***May***	***June***	***July***	***Aug***	***Sep***	***Oct***	***Average (May-Oct)***	***Year Ave***
2006	24	24	30	36	44	23	16	29	28
2005	14	24	25	35	52	25	11	29	27
2004	24	24	33	38	45	21	11	29	28
2003	21	26	23	30	40	21	13	26	25

Touring Parks: Grading %

Occupancy levels in 1-3 star sites is now on a par with 4-5 star sites at 37%. This is due in part to an increase in occupancy at 1-3 star sites in October, up from 14% in 2005 to 27% in 2006.

1-3 Stars %

	April	***May***	***June***	***July***	***Aug***	***Sep***	***Oct***	***Average (May-Oct)***	***Year Ave***
2006	26	28	37	48	65	26	27	39	37
2005	17	29	28	47	66	30	14	36	33
2004	19	25	34	47	56	22	19	34	32
2003	21	24	25	36	53	23	20	30	29

4-5 Stars %

	April	***May***	***June***	***July***	***Aug***	***Sep***	***Oct***	***Average (May-Oct)***	***Year Ave***
2006	31	29	37	54	68	28	14	38	37
2005	22	32	37	54	69	30	22	41	38
2004	25	27	33	47	63	21	9	33	32
2003	26	27	29	40	63	21	16	33	32

ANNEX 1: SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Visit Wales has undertaken a range of monitoring exercises since the 1970s. Since 1987 the they have commissioned Beaufort Research to conduct a monitoring survey amongst visitor attractions, self-catering agencies and holiday caravan/camping parks. The current methodology is based upon that employed in 2003.

Sampling and recruitment

The survey is based upon a series of separate enquiries among discrete samples chosen to be as representative as possible of the main sectors under review. Although the samples are refreshed each year, the survey specification provides for the contractor to seek to maintain as much continuity as possible over time, in the interests of consistency and the establishment of trends.

The main sectors covered are:

- Camping and caravan parks with static facilities
- Camping and caravan parks with touring facilities
- Self catering agencies
- Self catering independent operators

Samples were chosen and recruited in the following way at the start of the 2006 survey year:

- A sample of 119 caravan/camping parks was selected to form the sample. All parks who formed part of the panel in 2005 and who were willing to participate in 2006 were sent letters and recruitment forms early in March, to complete details regarding their outlet. At this stage it was also established whether each co-operator required their correspondence and survey materials in Welsh or English. This was then logged onto our database and for the remainder of the season they would receive materials in the language of their choice. Replacement parks were selected onto the panel to replace those who no longer wished to participate.

- A sample of 10 letting agencies and 202 verified independent self-catering operators were selected, again mainly those who had formed part of the panel in 2005. Replacements for those who no longer wished to take part were recruited by post, being sent self-completion forms at the end of December 2005 along with an explanatory letter about the survey.

Data collection

Information was obtained by means of monthly self-completion forms. Specimen copies are enclosed hereafter.

As emphasised earlier, participation in the survey is entirely voluntary. The samples analysed for each month differ according to how many usable returns were available at the time of panel closure. Details of the analysed samples each month are shown below:

Sample sizes (2006)

	Jan	***Feb***	***Mar***	***Apr***	***May***	***Jun***	***Jul***	***Aug***	***Sep***	***Oct***	***Nov***	***Dec***
S/C Independents	127	134	126	133	136	137	138	143	139	139	110	108
S/C Agencies												
Static Parks	-	-	-	30	32	35	33	32	32	29	-	-
Touring Pitches	-	-	-	30	36	38	41	36	37	32	-	-

A reminder process is used in order to encourage higher response. A postal and telephone reminder is implemented for parks, a postal reminder for self-catering independents and a telephone reminder for self-catering agencies. In addition, all park sites returning a form are entered into a prize draw each month and all panel members are mailed a summary of their and the monitor's findings each month.

Time Period

In the self-catering sector each period commences on a Saturday and finishes on a Friday. Thus, whilst analysis is described in calendar months terms the periods are not precisely so. The precise periods covered in 2006 were as follows:

January	*7th* January	-	3rd February
February	4th February	-	3rd March
March	4th March	-	31st March
April	*1st* April	-	5th May
May	*6th* May	-	2nd June
June	*3rd* June	-	30th June
July	*1st* July	-	4th August
August	5th August	-	1st September
September	*2nd* September	-	6th October
October	*7th* October	-	3rd November
November	4th November	-	1st December
December	*2nd* December	-	5th January 2006

Monitoring encompasses five-week months in March, June, September and December.

For caravan/camping parks, the period covered is based on a calendar monthly basis thus allowing direct comparability with previous years data which has been re-worked (calculated) to encompass a calendar monthly period.

Analysis

All analysis is undertaken at Beaufort's offices. All forms received are logged, checked and then entered onto a database for analysis. The following paragraphs highlight the main procedures: From 2003 use has been made of an analysis system commissioned by Visit Wales from a software consultancy called Rezolve.

Caravan and Camping Parks: No weighting is applied to the parks analysis. Returns for parks with static facilities and those with touring facilities are separately grouped into each reporting break and the required percentage calculated for each data sub set. It follows, therefore, that each park is analysed once within each of the reported groupings. The regions analysed are defined as follows:

North:	Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham, Gwynedd North (Caernarfonshire)
Mid:	Gwynedd South (Meirionydd), Ceredigion, Powys
South East:	Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Newport, Monmouthshire
South West:	Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Swansea, Neath & Port Talbot.

Self-Catering Independents: Returns for self-catering independents are reported in the form of weighted percentages. The weighting being on the basis of the number of units / properties each operator has available to let within Wales during the holiday season relative to the known universe.

The data is accumulated at total cell level and the weighting is applied. The data is then grouped into its relevant breaks (region / number of units available for let) and the required percentages are calculated for each break.

The regions analysed are defined as follows:

North:	Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham, Gwynedd North (Caernarfonshire)
Mid:	Gwynedd South (Meirionydd), Ceredigion, Powys
South East:	Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff, Newport, Monmouthshire
South West:	Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Swansea, Neath & Port Talbot

ANNEX 2: SPECIMEN COPIES OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Self-catering Operators

Self-catering independent operators

Parks