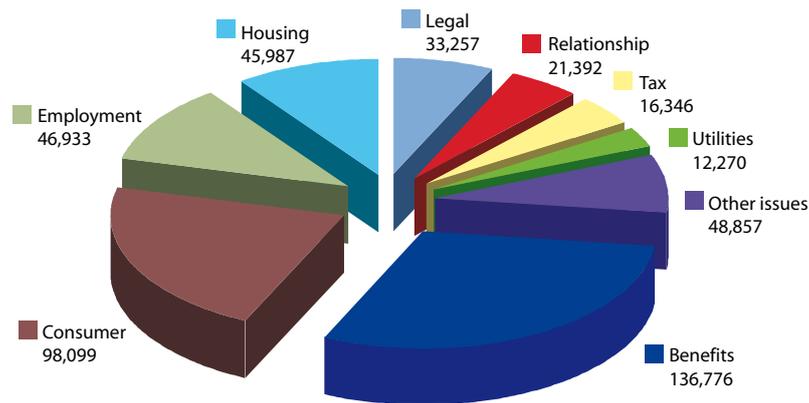


Citizens Advice Bureaux in Scotland: Client Issues 2007/08

Enquiries relating to debt account for 20% of all issues brought to bureaux in 2007/08

Each year Scottish Citizens Advice Bureaux collect statistics on the enquiries brought by clients to our offices across the country. This information helps us to spot patterns and trends in advice seeking and to gauge the scale of specific problems. This briefing presents an overview of the problems seen by Scottish citizens advice bureaux from April 2007 to March 2008. The figures do not represent a head count as clients may raise a number of issues during any one advice session, and any one issue may take a number of advice sessions to resolve.



The main areas of enquiry for our clients

In 2007/08, Citizens Advice Bureaux in Scotland dealt with a total of **459,917 new** issues through a total of **493,251** advice sessions with clients. Advisers also handled **424,308 repeat** issues within these sessions. **There was an increase of 25,147 new and repeat issues this year.**

- **Social security benefits** remain the largest area of enquiry brought into bureaux at **29.7% (136,776)** of all issues raised. There has been increase of 1.8% or 2,363 benefits cases since 2007/08.
- **Consumer issues** remain the second largest area of enquiry for clients, with **98,099** enquiries. Proportionately the number of enquiries is just over **20%** of all issues raised in Scottish bureaux last year. This figure includes **59,214** enquiries relating to consumer debt.
- This year enquiries relating to **legal issues** have seen the largest increase in case numbers, up 6.1% or 1,919 cases since 2006/07. Legal issues now account for **6.3% or 33,257** of all enquiries.

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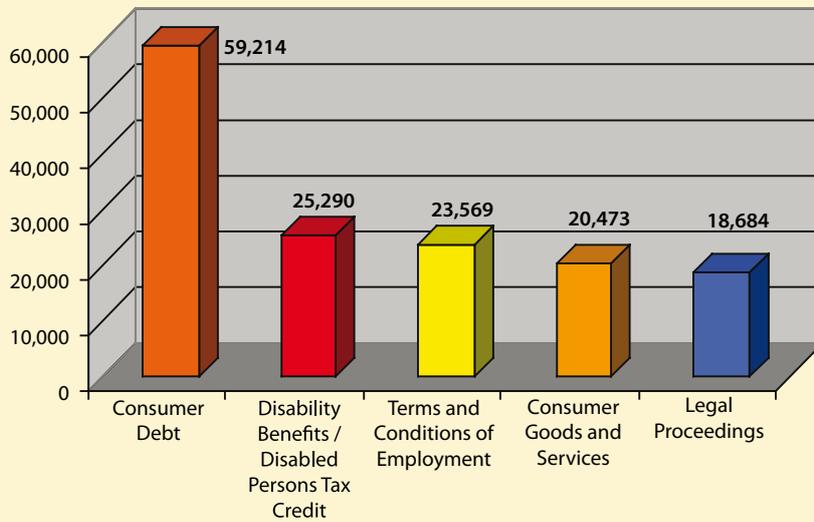
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The Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux – Citizens Advice Scotland (Scottish charity number SC016637)

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The Five Biggest Issues

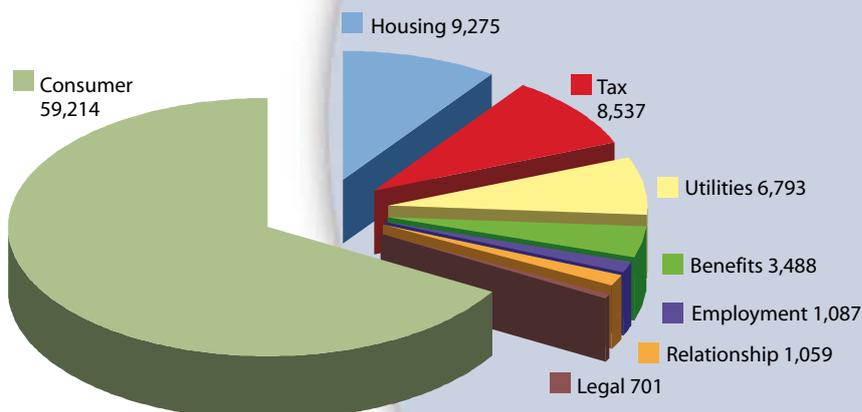
The CAB service's broad categories of enquiry are divided into a 'second tier' of issues. The top five issues brought to Scottish bureaux last year come from four different categories; consumer, benefits, employment and legal. The data on issues allows a breakdown of these categories. The top five issues account for **147,230** or **32%**, of all the enquiries in 2007/08



- The number of **consumer debt** cases continues to be the single biggest issue for CAB clients at **12.9%** of all enquiries.
- Issues raised regarding legal proceedings, including earnings and bank arrestments and sequestration, have risen **7.3%** this year to **4.1%** of all enquiries and are in the top five main issues for the fourth year running.
- Disability benefits and disabled persons tax credit account for **5.5%** of all enquiries and remain the second highest raised issue. Bureaux have seen a rise in benefit and tax credit related disability enquiries for the first time in three years.
- Terms and conditions of employment were the cause of **23,569** or **5.1%** of all enquiries and account for half of all employment queries for the second year running.

Debt Profile Scotland 2007/08

- Overall, enquiries relating to **debt** account for **20%** of all enquiries brought to bureaux in 2007/08. Debt issues related to tax, housing and utility debt have all risen.
- The most significant rise in debt case numbers is for **housing debt**; enquiries have increased by **3.9%** in 2007/08.
- **Consumer debt** issues account for **66%**, or **two thirds**, of all debt enquiries and is still the biggest single issue seen by Scottish bureaux. The consumer debt category includes mail ordering, hire purchase, credit sales, loans, rental arrears and insurance premium arrears.



Large print and electronic versions of this briefing are available on request

|| A client on benefits with a weekly income of £46.85 and his partner with no income, were asked by a Scottish utility company to repay a debt of £85 over two months. The bureau calculated the clients could afford to repay no more than £3 a week towards the debt however this was refused by the utility company. The utility company would not consider any payment period longer than two months or the client's financial circumstances. The only alternative was a prepayment meter which the clients agreed to have installed. The meter will make a deduction of £5 per week towards the debt.

|| A client called into a bureau for assistance with a credit card which she stated she had not used for approximately 2 years. The adviser noted that of the £283.71 minimum payment the client was making each month, £74.54 of this went towards Payment protection insurance (PPI) and £198.88 contributed towards interest accruing. This means that only £10.29 of the client's payments was going towards reducing her £9,500 debt. The bureau advised her to cancel the PPI, make a reduced payment offer to the creditors and asked that interest was suspended.