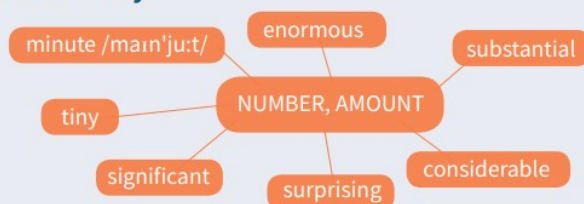


46

Number and frequency

A Commenting on how much or how many

These adjectives collocate strongly with both *number* and *amount*. Try to use them instead of *small* or *large* where appropriate.



B Talking about numbers

collocation	example	comments
odd/even numbers	51 is an odd number – 50 is an even number	odd numbers = 1, 3, 5, etc. even numbers = 2, 4, 6, etc.
a decline/drop in the number of	There's been a recent decline in the number of boys joining the army.	<i>Drop</i> is more informal than <i>decline</i> .
an increase/rise in the number of	The increase in the number of homeless people is worrying.	<i>Rise</i> is slightly more informal than <i>increase</i> .
come to a total of	If we add up all the figures, it comes to a total of 794.	A calculation comes to a total of x; the person calculating arrives at a total of x.
birth rate rises/falls	Over the last few years the birth	A rate can also drop or decline as well as
birth rate rises/falls	Over the last few years the birth rate has been falling .	A rate can also drop or decline as well as fall.
a unit of currency/measurement	The standard unit of currency in most EU countries is the euro.	We also talk about a unit of electricity , unit of length .

C Frequency

Widespread [existing or happening in many places or among many people] collocates strongly with a lot of words relating to either attitude (**widespread interest**, **widespread support**) or problems (**widespread damage**, **widespread poverty**):

There has been **widespread support** for the government's new policy on education.
The heavy winds at the weekend have caused **widespread damage**.

Rare [infrequent and special] collocates with things in the natural world (**rare disease**, **rare bird**, **rare species**) and also with collectable items of special interest (**rare coins**).

If someone repeatedly does something that annoys you, you can use the expression **keeps asking**, **keeps interrupting**, **keeps hitting**, etc. This is common in informal spoken English:
Please don't **keep interrupting** me when I'm trying to work.

The children **keep asking** me when we're going to buy a new computer.

Constant and **continual** also convey the idea of something happening repeatedly:

I couldn't get on with my work today because of **constant interruptions** – the phone kept ringing every five minutes.

It was a mistake to go on holiday with them. Their **continual complaining** drove us mad.

D Describing graphs and charts

Profits **rose sharply/steeply** in July, but **fell sharply/steeply** in September.

There was a **dramatic rise/fall** in the number of students applying to university this year.

Numbers of mature students have **increased steadily/gradually** since the 1960s.

The number of crimes committed in the city has **remained constant/stable** since 2011.

Exercises

46.1 Use adjectives from A opposite instead of the underlined words to complete the collocations.

- 1 I only put a very small amount of chilli in the soup but it was still too hot for some people.
- 2 There was an extremely large amount of information to read, 5,000 pages, which was far too much for one person to absorb.
- 3 We can't ignore the fact that a small but important number of people disagree with the plan.
- 4 There was an unexpected number of people at the meeting who had never voted in their lives.
- 5 The government's new budget will mean that a rather large number of people will have to pay more in taxes. (Give two answers.)

46.2 Choose the correct collocation.

- 1 17, 29 and 395 are all *strange / odd / unequal* numbers.
- 2 Many European countries use the euro as their standard unit of *money / value / currency*.
- 3 26, 8 and 192 are all *equal / level / even* numbers.
- 4 The bill *comes / arrives / gets* to a total of 287 dollars.
- 5 The unemployment rate is *falling / decreasing / lowering*.

46.3 Use words from the box to complete the news reports. You may use the words more than once.

decline rare keep widespread drop fall rise

Following (1) criticism of the government's environmental policy and a recent report showing a (2) in the numbers of seabirds along the nation's coastline, a scheme has been announced which, it is

hoped, will result in a (3) in the population of birds, especially of those (4) species which are seriously threatened with extinction.

Unfortunately, last year's storms did (5) damage to homes in the north, and the damage is still visible in many places. One local resident complained, 'We (6) asking the authorities when we will be compensated. They

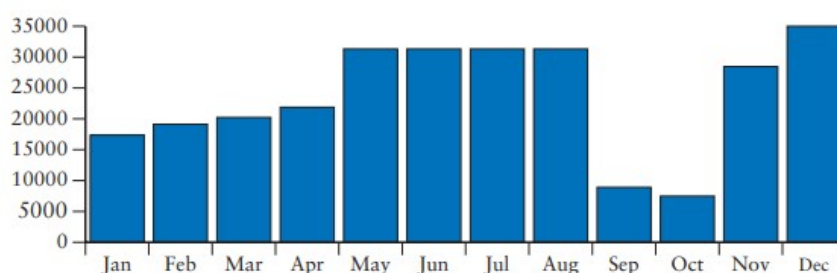
(7) promising to sort it out but then nothing happens.' There has been a steady (8) in the number of severe storms in the area, with an average of two per year recorded in the 1980s and more than five per year now.

Although only a relatively small number of people die from (9) diseases each year, a plan to build a research centre into such diseases has received (10) support from all political parties. 'I'm glad to say that we

have seen a steady (11) in the incidence of these diseases,' a medical expert said. 'But we must be careful. The numbers could (12) again if we do not continue to support research.'

46.4 Write sentences describing the sales figures in the chart. Use all the collocations from D.

Sales of mobile phones



English Collocations in Use Intermediate