



# Ofcom Complaints Handling Tracker 2020: Annual Technical Report

## General survey description

Since 2009, Ofcom has conducted research to quantify levels of satisfaction with customer service for the main communications providers in the UK; and since 2016, we have used one of the strands of this research to monitor customer satisfaction with complaints handling specifically. As with the previous waves of the Complaints Handling Tracker (“CHT”), this research includes UK communications providers with a market share of 4% or more (Q4 2019).

## Survey objectives

The core aim of this study is understand the level of satisfaction with customer service complaint handling on a range of criteria across the main providers of fixed line, fixed broadband, mobile and pay TV services among those who have contacted their provider with a complaint within the last six months.

To report customer service satisfaction and consumer perceptions of provider performance by types of complaint i.e. billing and customer service; repairs and installation; and service issues for each of the main providers in each sector.

To gather an overall customer satisfaction measure for all providers per sector.

## Sampling approach and sample achieved

Interviewing was conducted using an online panel approach, providing a cost-effective and efficient means to reach the low incidence audience consult for this study. Targets were set by provider within

sector in order to ensure that a minimum number of interviews per cell was achieved for the purposes of analysis.

We invited a sample demographically representative of the UK adult population to take part in the research from which respondents were screened as having made a complaint to a relevant provider within the six months prior to fieldwork. In the absence of robust profiling data for this low incidence audience, we considered this approach to be the best method to ensure that the resulting sample was as representative of the sample target as possible.

The providers included in the research and samples achieved are listed below.

| Provider     | Sample Sizes by Sector 2020 |                 |        |        |
|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------|--------|
|              | Landline                    | Fixed Broadband | Mobile | Pay TV |
| BT           | 599                         | 642             |        | 361    |
| EE           | 238                         | 293             | 753    |        |
| giffgaff     |                             |                 | 248    |        |
| O2           |                             |                 | 681    |        |
| Plusnet      | 89                          | 241             |        |        |
| Sky          | 629                         | 707             |        | 746    |
| TalkTalk     | 373                         | 567             |        | 366    |
| Tesco Mobile |                             |                 | 348    |        |
| Three        |                             |                 | 533    |        |
| Virgin       | 483                         | 752             | 255    | 561    |
| Vodafone     |                             |                 | 568    |        |

## Fieldwork

The survey was conducted via an online panel from 16<sup>th</sup> November – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, and comprised a total of 6,052 interviews. Therefore, the “previous six-months” time period referred to in the research corresponds broadly to complaints made to providers in the second half of 2020.

## Data reporting

Data is reported on a total sector level (i.e. the combined results of the providers included in the research for each sector) as well as split by provider within each sector.

Complaints were grouped into three categories for reporting: *Billing and customer service* complaints, *Repairs and installation* complaints and *Service issues* complaints. Any complaints not falling into these categories were grouped as *Something else* and were not reported on independently due to low base sizes and their containing a disparate set of reasons for complaint (although they are included in the overall results).

## Weighting

The data is presented at both a total sector level and at a provider level. Only total sector level data is weighted, provider level data is unweighted.

Total sector level data has been weighted using market share and incidence of complaints for each provider calculated from fieldwork data, in order to report total sector figures that best represent the make-up of complaints within each sector.

For example, first we take the number of respondents who qualified due to having made a complaint to *Landline Provider X* in the six months prior to fieldwork as a proportion of all respondents saying they use *Landline Provider X* for their landline service. This provides us with an incidence of complaints for that individual provider for that service.

We then multiply this by *Landline Provider X's* market share within the sector (among providers included in the research for that sector) to generate an incidence of complaint for *Landline Provider X*.

Finally, we take this incidence of complaint for *Landline Provider X* as a proportion of the sum of all incidences of complaint for all providers included in the research for that sector to generate the share of complaints for *Landline Provider X*, i.e. the contribution of *Landline Provider X* to the total complaints universe of the providers included in the research for the sector.

There were several reasons why we chose this approach:

- Weighting to market share alone, would not account for the differences in incidence of complaints by provider and, as such, could overweight the effects of some providers that have a larger market share
- This approach was repeatable for subsequent waves and was able to account for changes over time
- The provider level data is unweighted and is therefore as representative as possible of customers of the provider who made a complaint in the 6 months prior to fieldwork and who are online.

This approach has been taken consistently since the first wave in 2016, enabling comparability of data year to year.

## Guide to Statistical Reliability

The variation between the sample results and the “true” values (the findings that would have been obtained if everyone had been interviewed) can be predicted from the sample sizes on which the results are based, and on the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95%, that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the “true” values will fall within a specified range. However, as the sample is weighted, we need to use the effective sample size<sup>1</sup> (ESS) rather than actual sample size to judge the accuracy of results. As the provider level

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<sup>1</sup> Effective Sample Size shown as Effective Base in the data tables produced

data is unweighted, the actual and effective sample sizes for results based on individual providers are identical. However, for results from any sample comprising more than one provider, e.g. the total sector results, the effective base is used. The following table compares ESS and actual samples for each of the four sectors.

|                              | <b>ACTUAL</b> | <b>ESS</b> |
|------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| <b>Total landline</b>        | 2,411         | 2,251      |
| <b>Total fixed broadband</b> | 3,202         | 2,980      |
| <b>Total mobile</b>          | 3,386         | 3,249      |
| <b>Total pay TV</b>          | 2,034         | 1,734      |