Annual Market Review for Phone-paid Services 2025/26

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Overview

Phone-paid or premium rate services (PRS) are any services that are paid for via a consumer's phone bill or pre-pay mobile credit. These include services such as subscribing to music and video streaming platforms, charitable donations, voting on TV talent shows, entering competitions, directory enquiries, and app store purchases including in-app content such as add-ons for games.

Ofcom assumed responsibility for the day-to-day regulation of phone-paid services in February 2025, taking over from the Phone-paid Services Authority (PSA). This annual market review continues the series of annual market reviews previously published by PSA, and last year's report which was produced for Ofcom by Analysys Mason.

This year's report has been produced by Ofcom. We are committed to ensuring that our regulatory decisions are informed by high-quality evidence, and reports such as this help us understand market trends, consumer behaviour, and emerging issues in the PRS sector.

Ofcom is continuing to review how it reports on the PRS sector and we welcome feedback on this publication. Please send any comments to MID@ofcom.org.uk.

What we have found – in brief

Market data

- **Revenue from phone-paid services fell by £21.0m in real terms (3.4%) in 2025/26, to £604.5m.** Revenues retained by the phone-paid services industry after amounts such as charitable donations were passed on in full to charities, fell by £13.3m (2.3%) year-on-year in real terms, to £576.3m. Of this amount, £514.0m was distributed to industry intermediaries and merchants, a real terms fall of £5.1m (1.0%) compared to 2024/25.
- **Donations passed on in full by the phone-paid services industry to charities fell by £7.7m (21.5%) to £28.2m, a driver of this shift being growing use of online payment methods.** Although the audiences being reached by the UK's four largest live televised charity events all fell year-on-year, the total amount raised on the night across these events increased from the previous year, driven by BBC's *Children in Need*. This indicates that more donations were made through alternative payment methods such as online platforms.
- **Revenues from operator billing and voice 087 increased in 2025/26, but all other service channels experienced real-term revenue falls.** Operator billing revenues grew by £7.8m (2.1%) year-on-year in real-terms, to £385.1m, while revenue from voice 087 calls increased by £2.2m to £7.8m (the increase in 087 calls was driven by some additional services using these numbers falling within the definition of a "controlled PRS" following new legislation which came into effect in February 2025). Revenues from premium SMS services, the second-largest source of revenues after operator billing, accounted for £151.9m of total revenue in 2025/26, down 11.4% (£19.6m) in real-terms.
- **Operator billing's share of total phone-paid service revenue continued to grow in 2025/26,** increasing by three percentage points year-on-year, to 64%. Premium SMS accounted for 25% of total revenue in 2025/26, down two percentage points year-on-year and seven percentage points compared to 2020/21.

The customer experience

- **Two in five people taking part in our research said they had paid for services via their mobile or landline bill in the last 12 months.** Entertainment services (which includes subscription and one-off purchases of TV, video and film content, music, and books) was the category most likely to have been purchased by phone-paid service users (31%). This was followed by lotteries/betting/gambling (24%), charity donations (23%), games, digital payments, and TV / radio engagement (all 22%). Phone-paid purchases were most commonly made via operator billing or premium rate texts.
- **Phone users aged 25-44 were most likely to be using phone-paid services.** People aged 25-44 were most likely to use phone-paid services (44%), with those aged 16-34 being more likely to use operator billing. Those with self-reported impacting or limiting conditions (43%) and of social grade AB (43%) or C2 (43%) were also more likely than average to use phone-paid services. Usage was lowest among those aged 55 or above (37%).
- **A third of users had experienced an issue with a phone-paid service.** Receiving spam texts or communications from the purchased service was the most reported problem (11% of users). The majority of those who experienced an issue had tried to resolve it (69%), with most who tried to resolve it having done so successfully (77%). This was despite less than a third saying they knew how to complain about any issues experienced, or who to complain to.
- **Around half of those who received a refund felt this process was clear and straightforward.** Among those who attempted to resolve an issue with a phone-paid service, 44% received a refund. However, of those who did receive one, only around half agreed that it was clear whether they could get their money back, who they should contact, or that the process itself was straightforward.
- **In general, most users were positive or neutral about their overall experience of using phone-paid services.** Around half of phone-paid service users were satisfied with their overall use of services and a further third neutral. Most phone-paid service users felt the cost (73%) and payment terms (77%) of their most recent purchase of phone-paid services was clear, with few saying this information was unclear (8% and 5% respectively).
- **Younger phone-paid service users were most likely to be satisfied, confident and likely to use phone-paid services again in future.** Satisfaction with phone-paid services was higher among those aged 16-24 (60%) and 25-34 (59%), and lower among those aged 55 or above (41%) when compared to the average (50%). A similar trend was also evident for confidence and likelihood to use phone-paid services in future. Concern about scams when using phone-paid services was higher among those aged 55+ (70%) and with limiting or impacting conditions (68%) compared to the average (64%). Younger users were generally more positive about using phone-paid services (more likely than the average to see them as clear, safe, convenient and representing good value).

Complaints made to Ofcom

- **There were 159 complaints to Ofcom about phone-paid services in 2025/26, significantly fewer than the 800 made to Ofcom and PSA in 2024/25**. While complaint volumes were on a downward trend before Ofcom took over the regulation of phone-paid services in February 2025, the steep decrease in 2025/26 is likely to partly reflect the introduction of a new process to report complaints after Ofcom took over phone-paid service regulation.

- **Premium SMS has been the most complained about service channel since 2023/24, accounting for nearly half of all complaints made to Ofcom in 2025/26**. In 2025/26, Ofcom received 75 complaints about premium SMS services, representing 47% of all phone-paid services complaints. Operator billing was the second-most complained about channel, accounting for 45 complaints to Ofcom, or 28% of the total.
- **Information, news and education services continued to be the most complained about service category in 2025/26, accounting for 29% of all complaints received by Ofcom.** The next largest service category by share of complaints were app store-related complaints, which made up 17% of complaints. The proportion of complaints that were app store-related was lower than in 2024/25 (25%), but higher than in 2023/24 (10%).
- **Being charged for a premium rate product or service that was not requested was the most common reason given by complaints made to Ofcom in 2025/26, being the main reason behind 58% of complaints.** This was also the most common reason given by complainants to PSA and Ofcom in 2023/24 and 2024/25. The next most common reason given in 2025/26 was the product or service not stopping when requested, accounting for 8% of complaints, followed by perceived misleading pricing and product, and product or service not received (both 3% respectively).

Phone-paid service revenues

Where our data comes from

Ofcom collected network operator revenue (and outpayments to value chain participants) for H2 2024/25 and 2025/26. Data for H1 2024/25 and previous years was previously collected by the Phone-paid Services Authority (PSA).

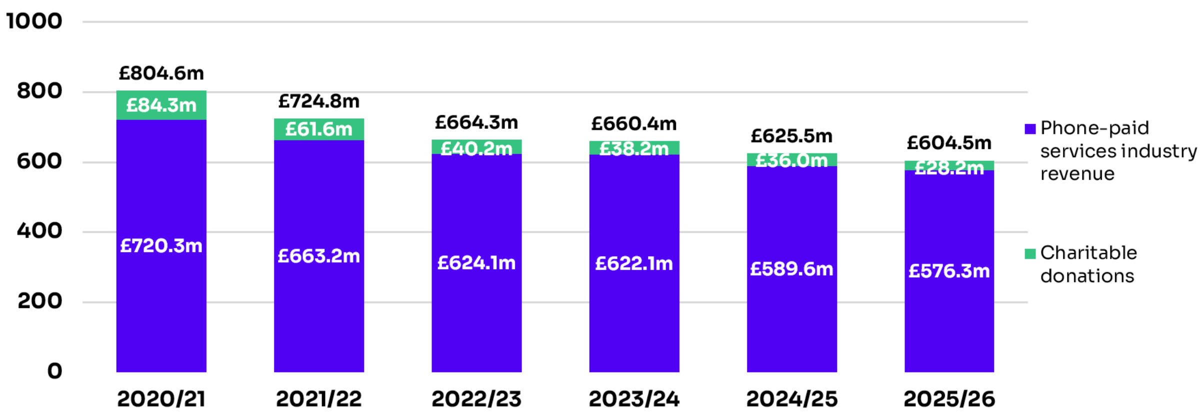
The 2025/26 revenue information used in this section was provided voluntarily by 35 fixed and mobile telecoms providers and has been supplemented by Ofcom estimates for companies that did not submit any data.

Revenue from phone-paid services fell by 3.4% in real terms in 2025/26

UK phone-paid services generated £604.5m in revenue 2025/26, down by £21.0m (3.4%) in real terms year on year. Donations passed on in full by the phone-paid services industry to charities fell by £7.7m (21.5%) to £28.2m, while revenues retained by the phone-paid services industry fell by £13.3m (2.3%) year-on-year in real terms, to £576.3m.

Total phone-paid service revenues fell by 24.9% in real terms in the five years to 2025/26, with the percentage fall in charitable donations over this period (66.5%) being significantly greater than the 20.0% decline in the total revenues retained by the phone-paid services industry over the same period. The data collected by Ofcom from providers shows that outpayments, relating to the retained phone-paid service revenue distributed to industry intermediaries and merchants, totalled £514.0m in 2025/26, a real terms fall of £5.1m (1.0%) compared to 2024/25.

Figure 1: UK phone-paid service revenues: 2020/21 to 2025/26



Source: Ofcom analysis of provider data
Notes: The information we received from providers in relation to PRS calls may not be consistent across providers, as some providers may have reported information covering only PRS calls charged at more than 5.833 pence (exclusive of VAT), while others may have included PRS calls charged at exactly 5.833 pence (exclusive of VAT). This may affect the comparability of the reported figures; Includes restatements of historic data; includes estimates where Ofcom did not receive data from providers; figures are CPI-adjusted (2025/26 prices) and exclude VAT.

Falling PRS charity donations related to falling telethon viewing and growing use of other donation platforms

The year-on-year decline in charitable donations made via phone-paid payment channels, occurring despite *Stand Up to Cancer's* live Channel 4 telethon falling within the 2025/26 reporting period – its biennial frequency meaning that it had not been held in 2024/25[1] – is partly due to the decreasing reach of live charity broadcasts (i.e. the total number of people viewing them), which is a key driver of the donations made using phone-paid services.

Ofcom analysis of Barb[2] data has found that, for all four of the major UK charity telethons (Channel 4's *Stand Up To Cancer*, BBC's *Children in Need* and *Comic Relief/Sport Relief*, and ITV and STV's *Soccer Aid for UNICEF)*, the total audience reached across all related programming on the day of the main charity telethon broadcast fell in 2025/26 compared to the previous telethon aired, with reach falling by between 9% (for *Children in Need*) and 21% (for *Comic Relief/Sport Relief*) year-on-year.

Related charity programming such as *The Great Celebrity Bake Off for SU2C* has also seen declining audiences across live and on-demand viewing over the last two years, with reach down 21% in the most recent series broadcast in March and April 2026 from the prior series aired in 2024/25.[3]

The total amount raised on the night across all donation methods by the four major UK televised charity telethons increased by 19% year-on-year when including *Stand Up To Cancer*; however, as this telethon was not broadcast in 2024/25, this is not a like-for-like comparison. Excluding *Stand Up To Cancer*, the increase in the total amount raised on the night was 3% year-on-year, indicating that more charitable donations are likely being made through other payment methods, such as online using a credit/debit card.

The increase in total amount raised was driven by BBC's *Children in Need*, which raised over £45.5 million on the night in 2025/26 compared to £39.2 million in 2024/25, while ITV and STV's *Soccer Aid for UNICEF* raised the same amount as in 2024/25 and BBC's *Comic Relief* raised approximately £30m on the night, down from £34 million a year prior.

Figure 2: Total audience for related programming of charity telethons on day of main broadcast event: 2020/21 to 2025/26

Charity telethon	Reach 2020/21 (000s)	Reach 2024/25 (000s)	Reach 2025/26 (000s)	Change year-on-year	Change since 2020/21
Children in Need (BBC)	13,740	9,675	8,785	-9%	-36%
Comic Relief (BBC)	14,953	9,845	7,799	-21%	-48%
The Great Celebrity Bake Off for SU2C (Channel 4)	n/a*	11,331*	8,996*	-21%	n/a*

[1] Some *Stand Up To Cancer*-related programming was broadcast on Channel 4 during the 2024/25 period, including episodes of Series 7 and 8 of *The Great Celebrity Bake Off for SU2C.*

[2] Barb Audiences Ltd (Barb) is the UK television and audiovisual industry's official audience measurement service, using a hybrid approach that combines nationally representative people-based panel data with census-level online viewing data to provide a comprehensive view of viewing across broadcast, on-demand and streaming services.

[3] Data is series reach within March to April of the broadcast year and includes all TV, video-on-demand and all other device viewing.

Charity telethon	Reach 2020/21 (000s)	Reach 2024/25 (000s)	Reach 2025/26 (000s)	Change year-on-year	Change since 2020/21
Soccer Aid for UNICEF (ITV, STV)	8,405	7,825	6,965	-11%	-17%
Stand Up To Cancer (Channel 4)	5,334^	4,651^	3,701	-20%	-31%

*Source: Barb, live or viewed on same day as live, TV sets only, individuals aged 4+, UK. Total audience for all related programming on day of main broadcast event. Excludes all video-on-demand or non-TV device viewing. Notes: *Data not available for 2020/21. The Great Celebrity Bake Off for SU2C data for 2024/25 includes reach across all TV, video-on-demand and all other devices for all programs of Series 8, which was aired across March/April 2025, and Series 9 which was aired across March/April 2026. Please note that therefore some of the programming fell outside of the 2024/25 and 2025/26 reporting period; ^Stand Up To Cancer telethons are broadcast biennially and the reach data in the table relates to the telethons broadcast closest to the 2020/21 and 2024/25 financial year periods (October 2021 and November 2023 respectively). Stand Up To Cancer reach data does not include reach for related programming broadcast at different times of year, such as The Great Celebrity Bake Off for SU2C, which is shown separately above.*

Falling total PRS revenues in 2025/26 were partly offset by operator billing and voice 087 calls

The decline in premium rate voice and SMS revenues in 2025/26 was partly offset by operator billing, where revenues grew by £7.8m (2.1%) year-on-year to £385.1m. Operator billing revenues are generated from consumer spending on apps and games across both mobile and physical console platforms, including in-app and in-game purchases, as well as subscriptions to music and video streaming services.

As in 2024/25, the prices of some music and video streaming services increased during 2025/26. Apple TV+, Disney+, and Spotify raised their subscription prices in August 2025, September 2025, and November 2025 respectively. Microsoft's Xbox Game Pass subscription, which provides access to a library of games, increased in price in October 2025, with Xbox Game Pass Ultimate increasing from £14.99 per month to £22.99 per month. Although the price of Xbox Game Pass subscriptions have subsequently fallen (with Xbox Game Pass Ultimate falling to £16.99 per month), this took effect in April 2026 (after the 2025/26 reporting period).

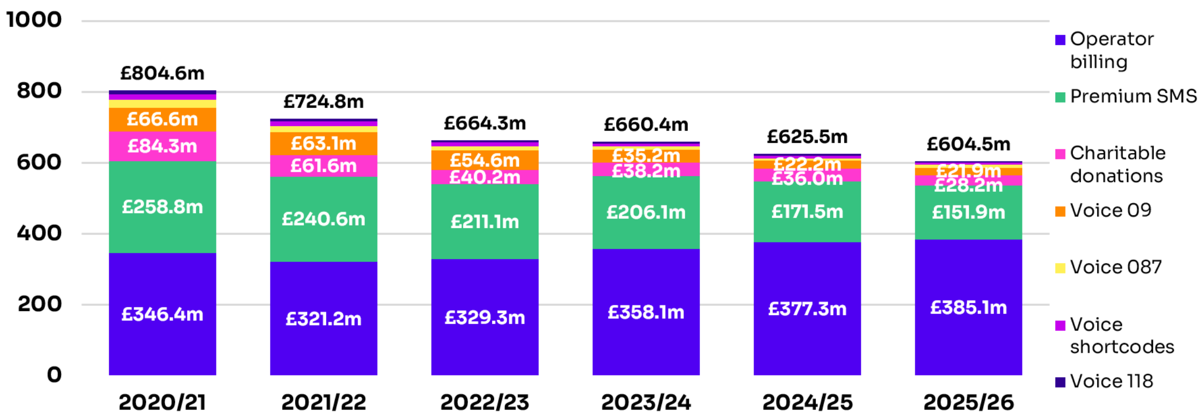
Other than operator billing, the only service channel to experience a real terms revenue increase in 2025/26 was voice 087 calls, with revenues growing by £2.2m to £7.8m during the year.[4] This increase appears to reflect the fact that certain premium rate services using PRS numbers, charged at exactly 5.833 pence (exclusive of VAT), now fall within the definition of a "controlled PRS" under The Regulation of Premium Rate Service Order 2024, whereas previously only services charged above that threshold were classed as such. All other service channels experienced real term decreases in revenue in 2025/26, the largest fall being for Premium SMS services, which accounted for £151.9m of total end-user revenue in 2025/26, down 11.4% (£19.6m) during the year.

[4] The information we received from providers in relation to PRS calls may not be consistent across providers, as some providers may have reported information covering only PRS calls charged at more than 5.833 pence (exclusive of VAT), while others may have included PRS calls charged at exactly 5.833 pence (exclusive of VAT). This may affect the comparability of the reported figures.

Premium SMS revenues may be affected by competition entry revenues shifting to online competitions, where alternative online payment mechanisms such as PayPal, Apple Pay, and Google Pay are offered. In addition, the declining reach of linear television programming more generally may have partly weakened demand for competition entry through Premium SMS.

Across all premium rate voice calls (including calls to 09 and 087 numbers, voice shortcodes, and 118 directory enquiries services) revenues fell by £1.4m (3.6%) in real terms year on year. This decrease is likely linked to the more general shift away from traditional voice calls and SMS messaging, as consumers increasingly use online communications services such as WhatsApp and Messenger, and access information through free online channels. Another factor contributing to the decline in premium rate voice call revenues may be the withdrawal of some Information, Connection and Signposting Services (ICSS). In 2023, these services (which typically operate on 09 numbers) became subject to new consumer protection requirements which may have resulted in some providers leaving the market.

Figure 3: Revenues from UK phone-paid services, by service channel: 2020/21 to 2025/26



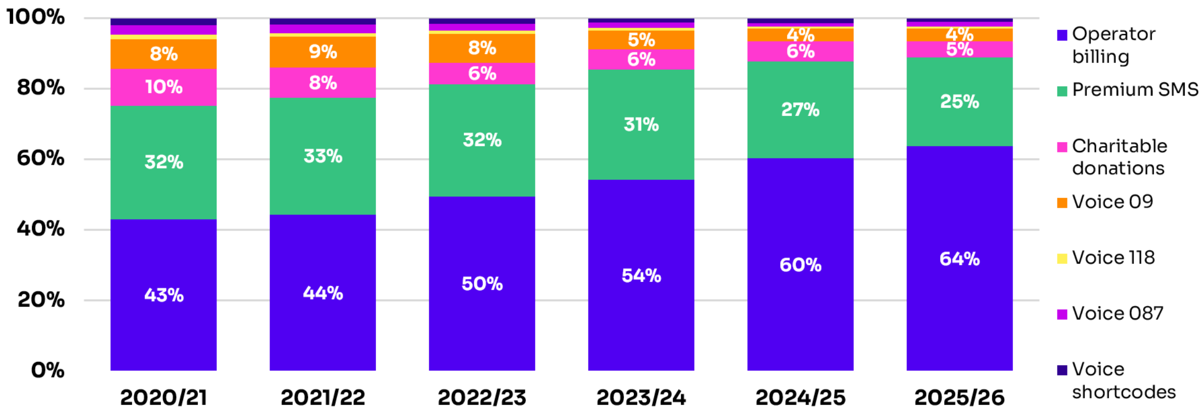
Source: Ofcom analysis of provider data
Notes: The information we received from providers in relation to PRS calls may not be consistent across providers, as some providers may have reported information covering only PRS calls charged at more than 5.833 pence (exclusive of VAT), while others may have included PRS calls charged at exactly 5.833 pence (exclusive of VAT). This may affect the comparability of the reported figures; includes restatements of historic data; includes estimates where Ofcom did not receive data from providers; figures are CPI-adjusted (2025/26 prices) and exclude VAT.

Operator billing's share of total revenue continues to grow, reaching 64% in 2025/26

Operator billing accounted for just under two-thirds (64%) of total UK phone-paid services revenues in 2025/26, up three percentage points (pp) year-on-year and 21pp compared to 2020/21. This growth is likely driven by several factors outlined above, including a broader shift in consumer behaviour away from traditional voice, SMS and phone-paid information services towards online platforms and alternative payment methods. Consumer use of operator billing as a payment method is also likely to be increasing.

Conversely, the largest annual declines in overall PRS revenue share were for premium SMS, which accounted for 25% of total PRS revenue in 2025/26 (down 2pp year-on-year and 7pp since 2020-21) and charitable donations, where the 5% share of the total was 1pp lower than in 2024/25 and 6pp lower than five years ago. Premium voice calls' share of PRS total revenues was 6% in 2025/26, unchanged year on year and an 8pp fall compared to 2020/21.

Figure 4: Share of end-user revenue on UK phone-paid services, by service channel: 2020/21 to 2025/26



Source: Ofcom analysis of provider data
Notes: The information we received from providers in relation to PRS calls may not be consistent across providers, as some providers may have reported information covering only PRS calls charged at more than 5.833 pence (exclusive of VAT), while others may have included PRS calls charged at exactly 5.833 pence (exclusive of VAT). This may affect the comparability of the reported figures; includes restatements of historic data; includes estimates where Ofcom did not receive data from providers.

The customer experience of using phone-paid services

Where our data comes from

Ofcom commissioned YouGov UK to conduct an online survey of 8,000 members of its panel. The survey was targeted and weighted to an online nationally representative sample and ran in March-April 2026.[5]

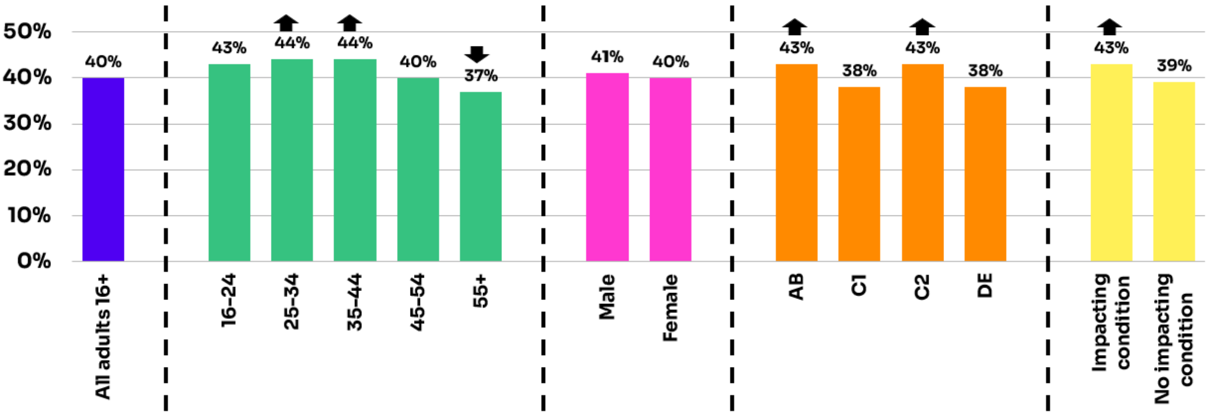
The results of the Ofcom consumer research set out below are not directly comparable to those in previous phone-paid services annual market reviews due to changes in the methodology and questionnaire.

Two in five people say they have paid for services via their mobile or landline bill in the last 12 months

Among those who took part in our research, 40% of participants who had access to a mobile or landline phone said they had paid for a service via their mobile bill, mobile credit or landline phone bill in the last 12 months.[6]

Use of phone-paid services was significantly higher than the average for 25–44-year-olds (44%), those of AB (43%) and C2 (43%) social grades, and those with an impacting or limiting condition (43%). Usage was significantly lower than the average among those aged 55+ (37%) and of social grade E (32%). There were no significant differences in the use of PRS services by gender.

Figure 5: Use of a phone-paid service in the last 12 months (Among those with a mobile or landline phone)



[5] 8,234 panellists responded to the survey. Eighteen were screened out due to not having access to a mobile or landline phone leaving a total sample of 8,216 adults aged 16 or above.
[6] Use of phone-paid services was established by combining the results of two questions in the survey. It represents all those who said they had purchased any category of service via a phone-paid service in the last 12 months at Q3, or who said they had used any method of phone-paid service at Q4.

Source: Ofcom Market Research, 2026.
Note: The figures shown are the proportion of respondents who selected any answer at either Q3 or Q4; arrows indicate a significant difference compared to all adults average at a confidence interval of 95%.
Q3. Based on your understanding of phone-paid services, which, if any, of the following categories of services have you used and paid for via your mobile phone bill or landline phone bill over the last 12 months? Q4. Which, if any, of the following payment types for phone-paid services have you used over the last 12 months? Please select all that apply. Unweighted base: Nat rep aged 16+ who own a mobile or landline phone (8,216). 16-24 (1,092), 25-34 (1,144), 35-44 (1,444), 45-54 (1,270), 55+ (3,266), Male (3,905), Female (4,311), AB (2,404), C1 (2,485), C2 (1,436), DE (1,891), Impacting or limiting condition (2,881), No impacting or limiting condition (4,558).

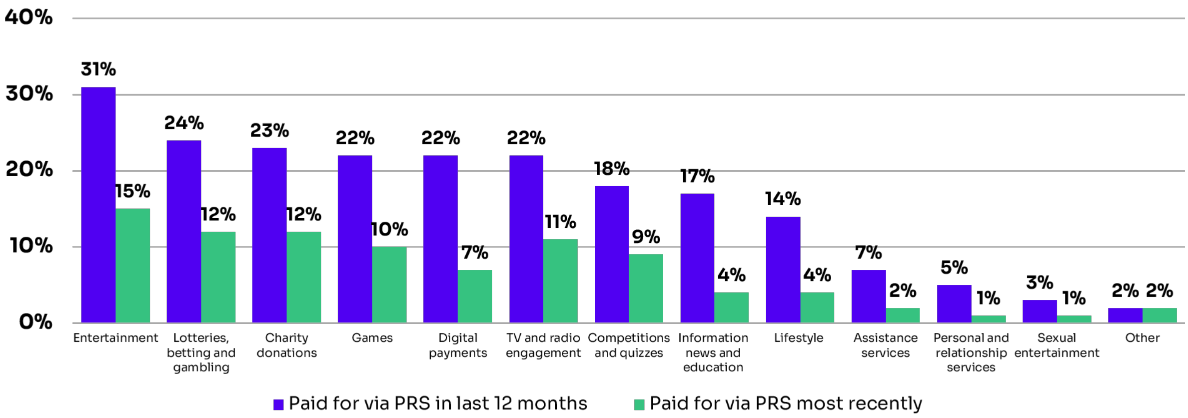
Entertainment services are the most likely to be paid for with phone-paid services

The service category most likely to have been purchased in the last 12 months by phone-paid service users in our research was entertainment (31%), which includes subscription and one-off purchases of TV, video and film content, music, and books. The proportion of PRS users who paid for entertainment services via their mobile bill, mobile credit or landline phone was significantly higher among those aged 16-24 (46%) and 25-34 (45%) and lower among those aged 55+ (18%).

The next most common categories of service purchased by users were lotteries / betting / gambling (24%), charity donations (23%), games - including subscription and one-off purchases of games, add-ons and in-game currency, digital payments – including virtual gift vouchers and gift cards, and TV and radio engagement – such as entering broadcaster competitions and voting for TV shows (all 22%).

Within the most purchased categories, some audience differences were observed. Games services were more likely to be purchased by PRS users aged 16-24 (37%), 25-34 (29%) and 35-44 (27%); lotteries / betting / gambling services among those who were male (29%), of C2 social grade (28%) and aged 55 or above (31%); charity donations among those who were aged 55 or above (31%), female (26%) and of AB social grade (30%); and digital payments among those aged 16-24 (28%).

Figure 6: Categories paid for via phone-paid services, among those who have used in the last 12 months[7,8]



[7] 'Lotteries / gambling and betting services', 'personal and relationship services' and 'sexual entertainment' were only asked of participants aged 18 or above. The percentage shown therefore only relates to those aged 18 or older.
[8] Axis labels have been shortened for brevity. The full text shown to respondents can be [found in the questionnaire].

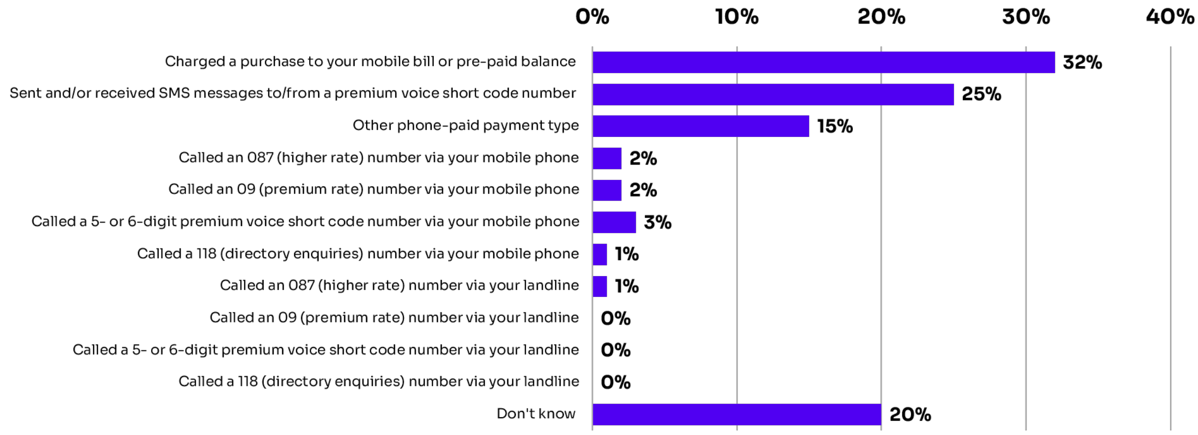
Source: Ofcom Market Research, 2026.
Q3. Based on your understanding of phone-paid services, which, if any, of the following categories of services have you used and paid for via your mobile phone bill or landline phone bill over the last 12 months? Q8. Which category of service did you pay for most recently?
Unweighted base: All who have purchased phone-paid services in the last year (3,289).

Charging a purchase to a mobile bill or pre-paid balance was the payment method most likely to have been used most recently

Almost a third (32%) of phone-paid service users in our research said their most recent purchase was made by charging a purchase to their mobile bill or pre-paid balance. This purchase method was significantly more likely to be used by 16-24-year-olds (51%) and 25-34-year-olds (40%).

A further 1-in-4 (25%) had sent or received a text to / from a premium voice short code number, with higher usage among those aged 45-54-year-olds (31%) and females (28%). Calls to premium rate phone numbers[9] were the least likely method used most recently (9%). Usage was higher, though still low relative to other methods, among those of social grade AB (12%).

Figure 7: Phone-paid service payment method most recently used, among those who have used in the last 12 months and remember their most recent purchase



Source: Ofcom Market Research, 2026.
Q9. How did you access the service for this most recent purchase? Unweighted base: All UK Adults who have used paid phone services in the last year and remember the most recent example (2,951).

Ease, impulse and availability were the main reasons cited for using a phone-paid service recently

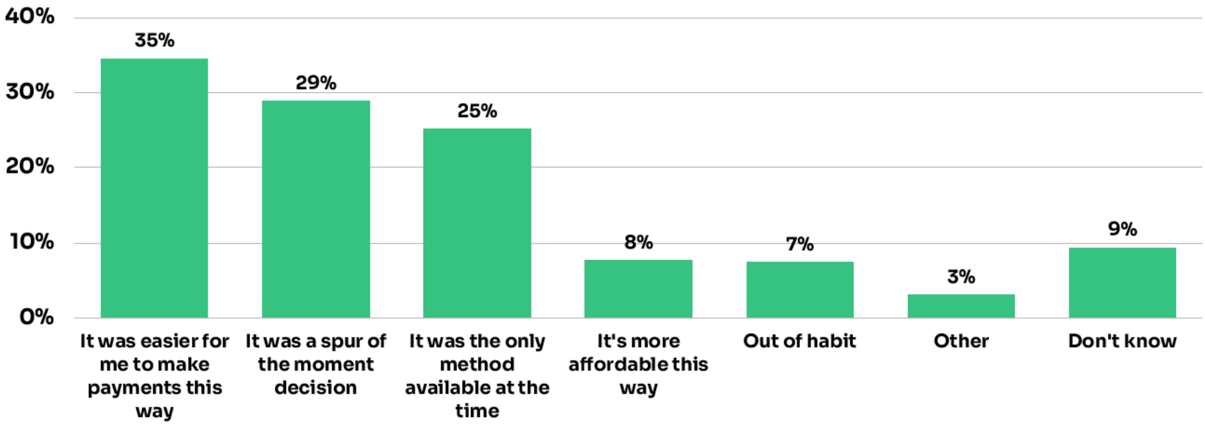
When asked the reason for their most recent phone paid service purchase, ease ('it was easier for me to make payments this way'), impulse ('it was a spur of the moment decision') and availability ('it was the only method available at the time') were the top reasons cited, although this varied depending on the purchase method.

Those who had most recently sent or received texts to / from a premium voice short code were more likely than the average user to cite impulse or availability, while those who had most recently charged a purchase to a mobile bill were more likely than the average user to cite ease, affordability ('it is more affordable to make payments this way') and habit ('out of habit').

[9] 'Premium rate numbers refer to calls made to an 087, 09, 118 or 5-digit short code number made from a mobile or landline phone. The usage referenced is a net score of those who called any premium rate number.

Those who had most recently called a premium rate number were more likely than the average user to cite availability, affordability, and habit.

Figure 8: Reason for most recent use of phone-paid services, among those who have used in the last 12 months and remember their most recent purchase



Source: Ofcom Market Research, 2026.
Q10. Still thinking about the most recent phone-paid service you used, what were your reasons for using a phone paid method rather than another way of paying? (Please select all that apply).
Unweighted base: All UK Adults who have used paid phone services in the last year and remember the most recent example (2,951).

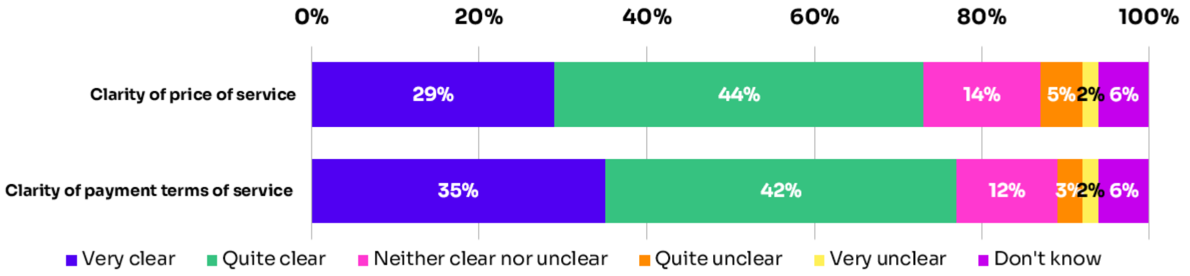
Most considered the price and payment term of their most recent phone-paid purchase to be clear

Over three-quarters (77%) of phone-paid service users said that the payment terms of the service they purchased most recently was clear[10] to them (5% stated it was unclear), and this was consistent across those whose most recent service was a one-off charge and those who had purchased a subscription or a service with ongoing charges. A similar proportion (73%) said the actual price of the service they purchased most recently was clear to them, with 8% stating that price was quite or very unclear.

Self-reported clarity of pricing terms and actual price was higher among those who most recently sent or received a text to / from a premium voice short code number, or who had charged a purchase to their mobile bill or pre-paid balance, compared to other payment methods.

[10] This is a net score of those who selected that the responses 'quite clear' or 'very clear' on a Likert scale response for these questions. This was a 5-point scale with an additional 'don't know' option.

Figure 9: Clarity of price and payment terms for most recently used phone-paid service, among those who have used in the last 12 months and remember their most recent purchase



Source: Ofcom Market Research, 2026.

Q11. How clear or unclear was the price of the phone-paid service, before you used it? Q13. And how clear or unclear was it that the service was paid for in this way (i.e. was it clear that it was a one-off charge, or that it required a subscription)?

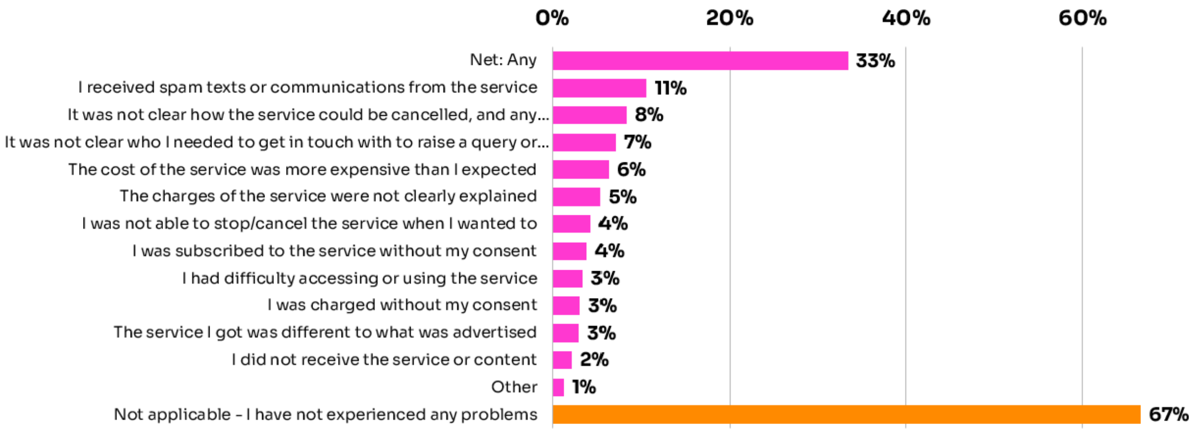
Unweighted base: All UK Adults who have used paid phone services in the past year and remember the most recent example (2,951).

A third of users had experienced a problem with a phone-paid service in the last 12 months

Among participants who had used a phone-paid service in the last 12 months, a third (33%) reported having experienced an issue with the service. Receiving spam texts or communications was the most commonly reported problem (11%), followed by unclear cancellation processes / terms (8%), and difficulty finding out how to get in touch with to raise a query or complaint (7%).

Among those who had experienced a problem, less than a third (29%) said they knew how to complain or who to complain to.

Figure 10: Proportion of phone-paid service users who experienced any problem in the last 12 months



Source: Ofcom Market Research, 2026.

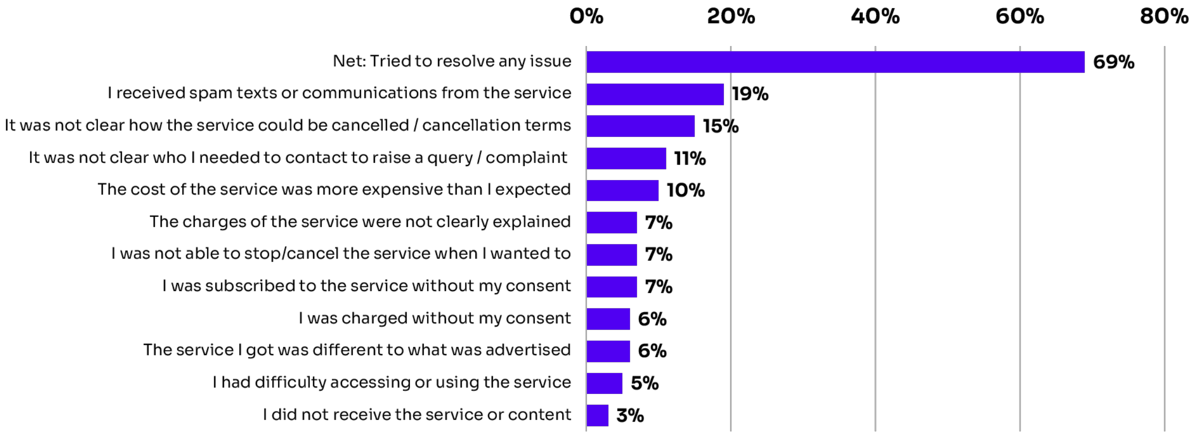
Q15. Thinking about ALL the phone-paid services you have used in the last 12 months, which, if any, of the following problems have you experienced?

Unweighted base: All UK Adults who have purchased any category of paid phone services in the past 12Ms (3,076).[11]

Over two thirds of those who experienced an issue tried to resolve it, with the majority being able to

Sixty-nine percent of PRS users in our research who had experienced an issue in the last 12 months had tried to resolve it, and 77% of those who attempted to resolve an issue reported that they were able to successfully. Issue resolution tended to be either on the same day (24%) or within one day and a month (41%) of raising the issue. In order to resolve their issue, 35% went to the service provider, 24% to their mobile or landline provider, and 24% to their bank or card provider.

Figure 11: Proportion of phone-paid service users who tried to resolve issues, among those who had experienced an issue



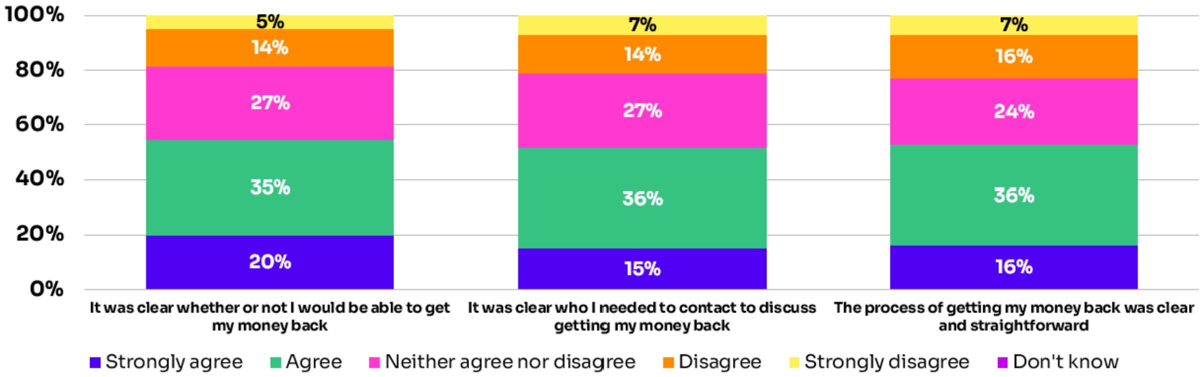
Source: Ofcom Market Research, 2026.
Q19. Which, if any, of the problem(s) you experienced from using a phone-paid service did you try to resolve?
Unweighted base: All who had experienced an issue in the last 12 months (1,027).

For those whose issue involved a refund, only half found the process to be clear and straightforward

Around four-in-ten (44%) of those who tried to resolve a PRS-related issue said that this involved getting their money back.[12] Not all who received a refund found this process to be clear or straightforward; only around half of those who had received a refund said that it had been clear whether or not they could get their money back (54%), that the process of getting a refund was straightforward (52%), and who they needed to contact about getting their money back (51%)[13].

[11] Note: As Q15 refers to issues with services, the definition of 'PRS User' for this question is only based to those who had selected a category of service purchased at Q3. This differs to other survey questions where 'PRS User' includes those who selected answers at either Q3 or Q4.
[12] This is a net score combining those who had received a refund already (36%) and those expecting to receive a refund, but hadn't yet (8%)
[13] Please note that this data is based on those who had already received their refund and excludes those still waiting for their refund.

Figure 12: Experience of getting money back, among those who had received a refund



Source: Ofcom Market Research, 2026.
Q24. Based on this experience, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (Please select one option for each statement).
Unweighted base: Phone-paid users who experienced a problem in the last 12 months and who had received a refund (295).

Most users of phone-paid services rate their general experience as positive or neutral

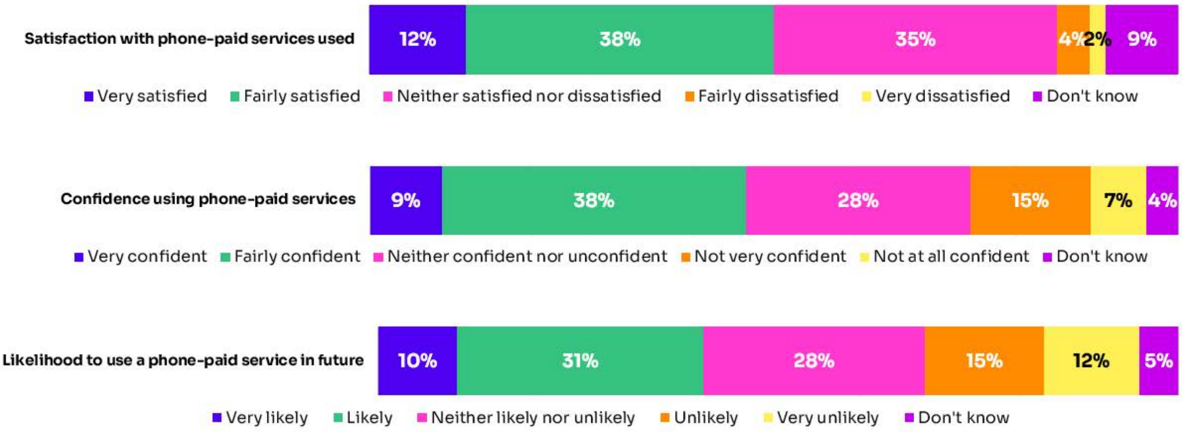
Half (50%) of those who had used phone-paid services in the last 12 months were satisfied[14] with their use of phone-paid services in general, with a further 35% neutral. Seven percent were dissatisfied. Satisfaction was higher among those aged 16-24 (60%) and 25-34 (59%), and lower among those aged 55 or above (41%).

A similar proportion (47%) reported they were confident using phone-paid services, with 28% neutral. Around 1-in-5 (22%) were not confident using such services. Confidence was higher among males (51%) and those aged 16-24 (59%) and 25-34 (60%), with lower confidence being evident among those with impacting or limiting conditions (43%), females (42%) and those aged 55+ (35%).

Just over two in five (41%) said they were likely to use a phone-paid service again in future, with 28% neutral and 26% unlikely to use. As with other metrics, likelihood was higher among those aged 16-24 (53%), 25-34 (51%) and without impacting or limiting conditions (44%), and lower among those aged 55 or above (31%) and of social grade E (32%).

[14] Metrics reported in this section are all net scores of the top two answers on a 5-point Likert scale response, with an additional 'don't know' option.

Figure 13: Experience of using phone-paid services, among those who have used in the last 12 months



Source: Ofcom Market Research, 2026.
Q6. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the phone paid services you have used in the last 12 months? Q7. And in general, how confident or unconfident do you feel using phone-paid services? Q26. And based on your experience of using phone-paid services so far, how likely or unlikely are you to use phone-paid services in future?
Unweighted base: All who have purchased phone-paid services in the last year (3,289).

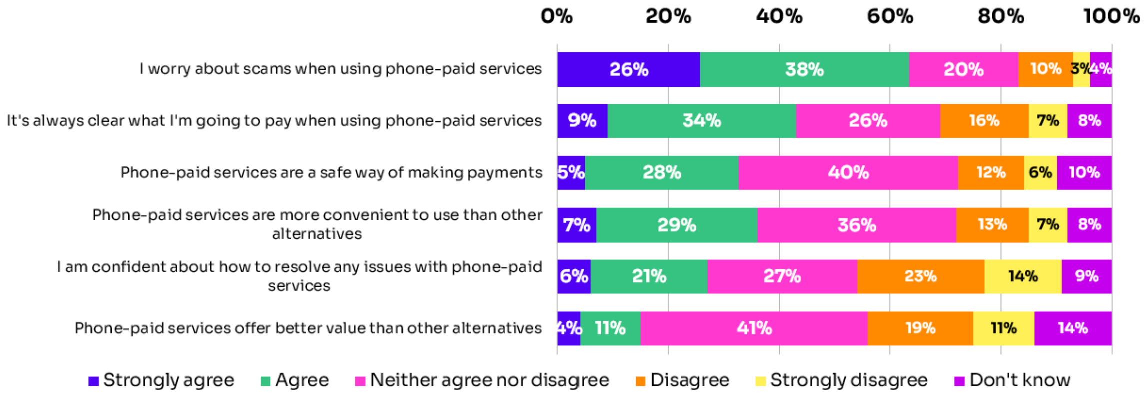
Over half of phone-paid service users are worried about the risk of scams

When shown a range of attitudinal statements about phone-paid services, 64% of users agreed[15] with the statement 'I worry about scams when using phone-paid services'. This was higher for those aged 55 or above (70%) and with impacting or limiting conditions (68%).

Generally, younger users (aged 16-34) were more likely than the average user to agree with a range of positive statements about phone-paid services, including them having clear pricing, and being safe, convenient and better value ways to make payments, with those aged over 55 consistently rating lower. Males also tended to show higher agreement with these attitudinal statements than females.

[15] This data point is a net score of the top two answers on a 5-point Likert scale response, with an additional 'don't know' option.

Figure 14: Agreement with attitude statements around phone-paid services, among those who have used in the last 12 months



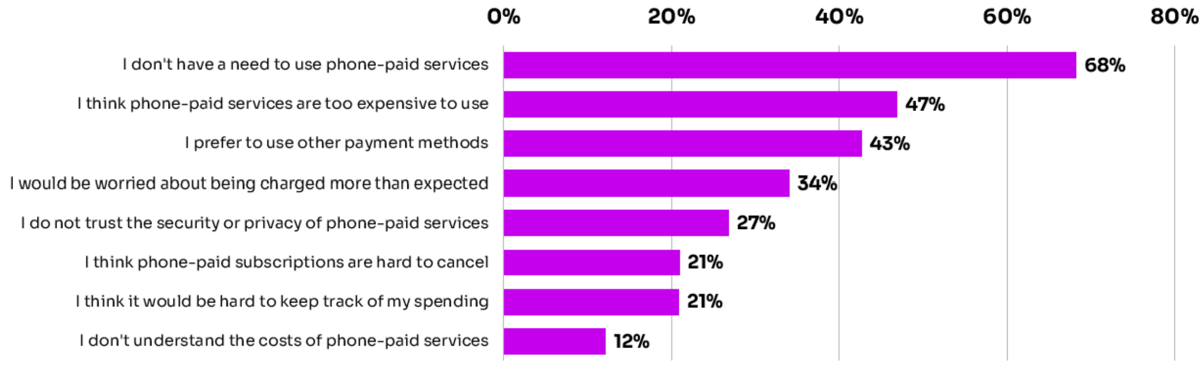
Source: Ofcom Market Research, 2026.
Q25. Thinking of your use of phone paid services generally, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Unweighted base: All who have purchased phone-paid services in the last year (3,289).

The low likelihood for non-users to use phone-paid services in the future is due primarily to lack of need

Over three-quarters (78%) of those who had not used a phone-paid service in the last 12 months said they were aware of such services. Awareness was lower among non-users aged 16-24 (57%).

Eighty-eight percent of non-users said they were unlikely[16] to use phone-paid services in future, with the vast majority of these being 'very unlikely' (72%). This is predominantly due to a perceived lack of need (68%), as well as a perception that phone-paid services are too expensive (47%) and a preference for other payment methods (43%).

Figure 15: Reasons to be unlikely to use phone-paid services in future, among non-users



Source: Ofcom Market Research, 2026.
Q29. Which, if any, of the following are reasons you would be unlikely to consider using phone-paid services?
Unweighted base: All non-users who are quite / very unlikely to use in future (4,451).

[16] This is a net score of those who selected that they were 'unlikely' or 'very unlikely' on a Likert scale response. This was a 5-point scale with an additional 'don't know' option.

Complaints to Ofcom

Where our data comes from

Ofcom receives complaints related to premium rate services through our [PRS complaints form] and by telephone and post. While we do not investigate or resolve individual complaints, the information provided helps us monitor consumer issues and identify trends.

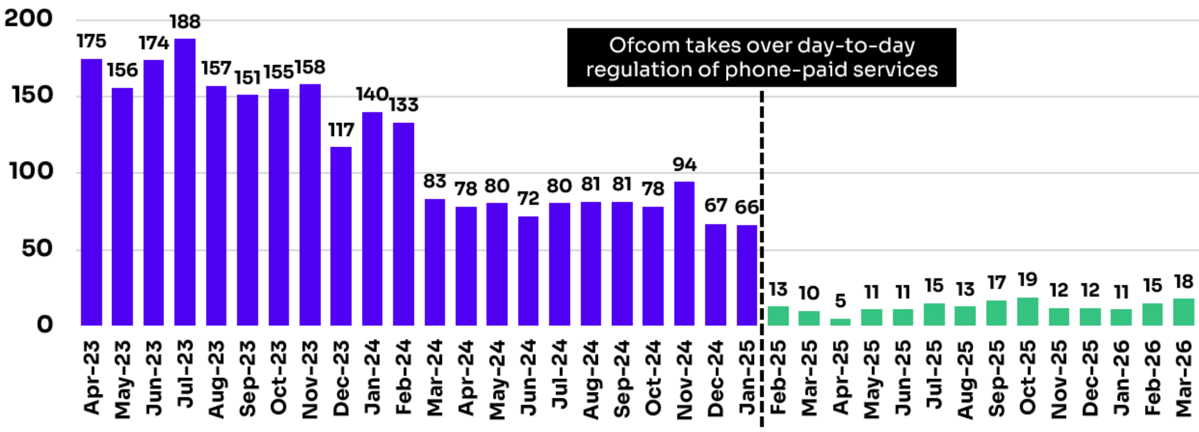
The data in this section covers complaints made to Ofcom for 2025/26 and, for earlier periods, complaints made to PSA. It does not include complaints via other channels, such as to PRS providers or the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Ofcom received 159 complaints related to premium rate services in 2025/26, a decrease of 80% from the previous year

There were 159 complaints to Ofcom about premium rate services in 2025/26, averaging 13 per month. Although complaints about phone-paid service had been falling prior to 2025/26 – declining by 55% from 1,787 in 2023/24 to 800 in 2024/25 – the volume of complaints received by Ofcom in 2025/26 represented a further sharp reduction of 80% from the previous year's total of 800 (an average of 67 per month).[17]

However, the decline in the number of phone-paid service complaints in 2025/26 is likely to be overstated due to difficulties in making like-for-like comparisons. As noted earlier, Ofcom assumed responsibility for the regulation of phone-paid services in February 2025, taking over from the Phone-paid Services Authority (PSA). The reduced complaint volumes in 2025/26 may therefore reflect this transition, notably the introduction of a new process to report complaints to Ofcom. We are looking at ways we can make it easier for consumers to complain to Ofcom about phone-paid services.

Figure 16: Total phone-paid service complaints to Ofcom and PSA: April 2023 to March 2026



[17] Ofcom assumed responsibility for the day-to-day regulation of phone-paid services in February 2025, and therefore the 2024/25 reporting period includes complaints made to Ofcom in February and March 2025.

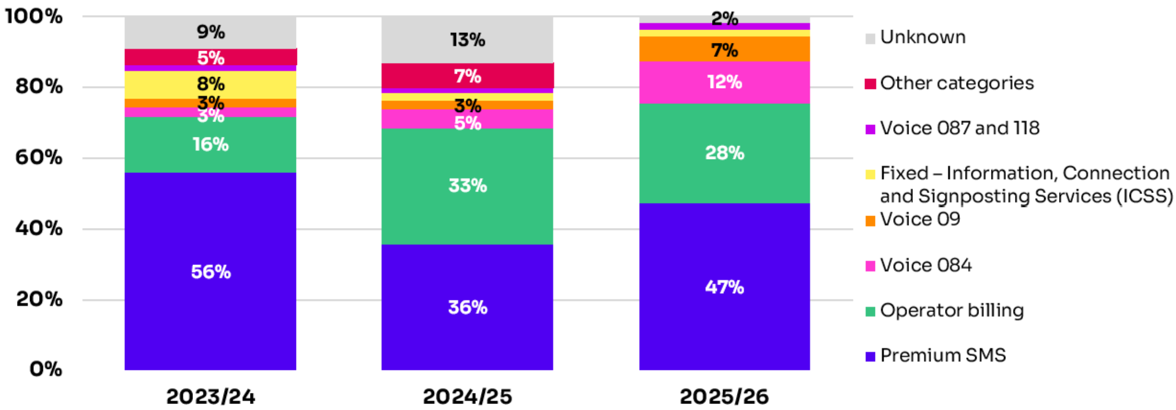
Source: Ofcom / Phone-paid Services Authority.
Notes: Figures may differ slightly from those previously published by PSA due to a recategorisation of the data. Data relates to complaints to PSA up to and including January 2025 and to Ofcom from February 2025 onwards.

Premium SMS complaints accounted for nearly half of all complaints made to Ofcom

In 2025/26, there were 75 complaints related to premium SMS services made to Ofcom, accounting for 47% of all phone-paid services complaints. Since 2023/24, Premium SMS has had the largest share of complaints regarding phone-paid services. Operator billing accounted for next highest number of complaints, with 45 in 2025/26, accounting for 28% of all complaints. Voice 084 complaints accounted for 12% of all complaints (up from 5% in 2024/25 and 3% in 2023/24), with 19 made to Ofcom in 2025/26.

For some complaints between 2023/24 and 2025/26, PSA and Ofcom were unable to determine the relevant service channel from the information available. These complaints have been categorised as 'Unknown'.

Figure 17: Share of phone-paid service complaints to Ofcom and PSA, by service channel: 2023/24 to 2025/26



Source: Ofcom / Phone-paid Services Authority
Notes: Figures may differ slightly from those previously published by PSA due to a recategorisation of the data. The data relates to complaints to PSA up to and including January 2025 and to Ofcom from February 2025 onwards (when it took over the day-to-day regulation of phone-paid services); the 'Other' and 'Unknown' category includes complaints which fell outside the remit of phone-paid service regulation and could not be separately identified from the available information.

Complaints related to information, news and education services were highest in 2025/26

There were 46 complaints related to information, news, and education premium rate services in 2025-26, accounting for 29% of all complaints received by Ofcom, a similar proportion to 2024/25.

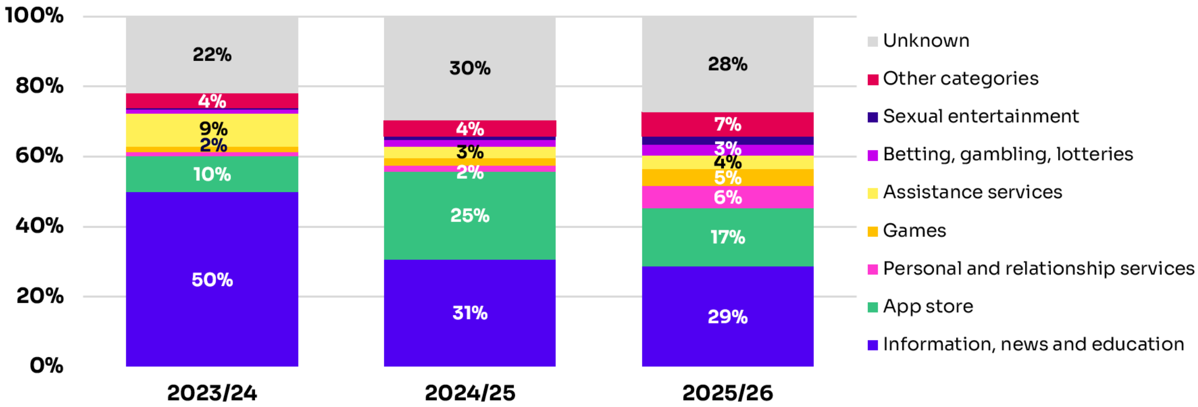
The next largest service category by share of complaints were app store-related complaints, which accounted for 17% of complaints.[18] This category saw the largest year-on-year decrease, with its share falling by 8pp from 2024/25, although it remained higher than in 2023/24. Service categories

[18] App store-related complaints include digital payments and app store payments made for games, in-game content, and entertainment.

that increased in their share of total complaints year-on-year included personal and relationship services (up 5pp) and games (up 3pp).

For 28% of complaints, the service category could not be determined from the information provided by the complainant.

Figure 18: Share of phone-paid service complaints to Ofcom and PSA by service category: 2023/24 to 2025/26



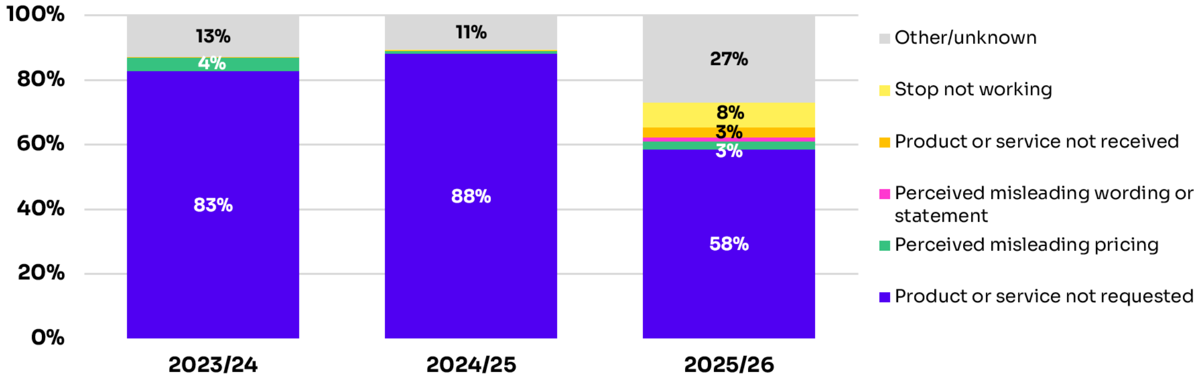
Source: Ofcom / Phone-paid Services Authority
Notes: The data relates to complaints to PSA up to and including January 2025 and to Ofcom from February 2025 onwards (when it took over the day-to-day regulation of phone-paid services); the 'Unknown' category includes complaints which fell outside the remit of phone-paid service regulation and could not be separately identified from the available information; app store-related complaints include digital payments and app store payments made for games, in-game content, and entertainment.

The most common type of phone-paid service complaint in 2025/26 was that the product or service had not been requested

Of the 159 complaints made to Ofcom about premium rate services in 2025/26, 58% involved the complainant describing that they had been charged for a premium rate product or service they had not requested. This was the most common reason behind complaints made to PSA and Ofcom in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

The next most common reason given in 2025/26 was the product or service not stopping when requested, accounting for 8% of complaints, followed by perceived misleading pricing, and product or service not received (both 3% respectively).

Figure 19: Reasons for phone-paid service complaints to Ofcom and PSA: 2023/24 to 2025/26



Source: Ofcom / Phone-paid Services Authority
Notes: Complaint reasons are based on the primary reason recorded for each complaint; complainants may have experienced multiple issues, but only the main reason for the complaint is shown; the data relates to complaints made to PSA up to and including January 2025 and to Ofcom from February 2025 onwards (when it took over the day-to-day regulation of phone-paid services); the 'Other/unknown' category includes complaints which fell outside the remit of phone-paid service regulation and complaints where the main reason behind the complaint could not be separately identified from the available information for 2023/24 and 2024/25.