Section 9

Consumer protection

Introduction

This section reports on the types of complaints that consumers are making to Ofcom and their communications providers, as well as monitoring those who say they have had cause to complain but may not have made an actual complaint.

Key trends

- Broadband customers are the most likely to claim they had a reason to complain (14%), followed by mobile (9%) then landline (7%) customers. Not all of these consumers proceeded to make a complaint. In total, 9% of broadband customers said they had made a complaint (this equates 73% of those with cause to complain) and compares to 6% among mobile customers and 5% among landline customers.

- Telecoms issues dominate complaints to Ofcom, with levels broadly in line with 2012. The level of telecoms complaints is similar to 2012, at between 6000 and 7000 per month, although some categories have fallen. This compares to about 1000 complaints about broadcasting standards and around 40 per month relating to postal services.

- Complaints to Ofcom about abandoned and silent calls peaked in April 2013 and have declined since then. In October 2013 there were 2,857 complaints, this followed a peak of 3,900 in April 2013. Ofcom’s market research has found that experience of nuisance calls fell between February, when eight in ten (82%) people reported receiving a nuisance call on their landline in the previous four weeks, and July, when seven in ten (68%) people reported a nuisance call on their landline. It has remained broadly constant since then.

- The issues causing unexpectedly high bills (UHBs) in the mobile contract market remain broadly unchanged from last year. Making calls to numbers not included in the call allowance, and lost/stolen mobiles remain the main cause of UHBs in the mobile contract market, each at 3% of mobile contract customers. Exceeding voice allowance (1%) and using data without an allowance (1%) are the next most common causes.

- The average amount of bill shock in the mobile contract market shows signs of decline. In 2013 the mean average amount of bill shock in the mobile contact market was £40, compared with £46 in 2012. However, many UHBs in the mobile contract market were for less than this average, which is influenced by a small proportion of bills at the higher end of the scale (i.e. £100+ more than expected).

- Complaints about fixed-line and mobile mis-selling have decreased over the past twelve months. From a peak of 1200 complaints in April 2005, the downward trend in fixed-line mis-selling complaints has continued over the past year, with overall fixed-line mis-selling complaints averaging 442 per month for 2013. Mobile mis-selling has also decreased over the past 12 months, from a peak of 270 complaints a month in October 2008 to around 190 a month in 2013. Furthermore, since their high of around 60 complaints per month in 2008 monthly cashback complaints have significantly reduced to single digits over the past two years.

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76 Source: Ofcom face to face omnibus, February/ March 2012, based on the responses of 263 mobile contract customers and March/ April 2013, based on the responses of 239 mobile contract customers

77 This refers to the amount by which the bill was higher than expected, and not the total amount of the bill.
• Complaints received about MAC codes\(^78\) have declined significantly since its peak in 2007, to 100 per month on average in 2013. From a peak of 843 complaints in March 2007 there has been a general downward trend, which has stabilised at between 60 and 130 complaints per month since April 2011. Between October 2012 and October 2013 the average monthly number of complaints about this issue was around 100.

• Broadcasting complaints to Ofcom continue to focus on content standards. In October 2013 there were 1,642 broadcasting complaints, of which 1,581 were about television and 61 were about radio. These levels were broadly in line with those seen in 2012.

• A minority (15%) of those eligible were referred to alternative dispute resolution (ADR)\(^79\) by their provider, with higher satisfaction with outcomes noted among those who used the ADR scheme. Overall, 29% of eligible complainants were satisfied with the final outcome of their complaint; this compared to just under half (47%) of those who used the ADR scheme.

These key trends are explored in more detail below under the following sub-headings:

• Reasons to complain to provider
• Consumer complaints to Ofcom
• Experience of particular issues in the communications markets
• Alternative dispute resolution (ADR)

### 9.1 Reasons to complain to provider

#### 9.1.1 Broadband customers are the most likely to say they have had reason to complain to their provider

The analysis below shows the proportion of customers using each service who said they had reason to complain about the provider of their broadband, landline and/or mobile in the 12 months prior to interview\(^80\). However, not all consumers will make a complaint, and further details on the proportions making a complaint are set out below.

Figure 169 illustrates that across the services, broadband customers are the most likely to say they had reason to complain to their provider (14%), followed by mobile (9%) and landline customers (7%).

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\(^78\) Migration authorisation code (MAC) is a unique code that a customer must give to his or her new broadband service provider, to allow the service to be transferred smoothly from the existing service provider.

\(^79\) Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) schemes act as an independent middleman between the service provider and the customer. If the ADR scheme agrees with your complaint, it can order the service provider to fix the problem and could potentially make a financial award. It is a requirement that all service providers are members of an ADR scheme.

\(^80\) Fieldwork was conducted between August and September 2013, therefore complaints date back to August 2012.
Figure 169  Reason to complain about service or supplier in the past 12 months: 2009 to 2013

Source: Ofcom research, telephone omnibus survey, fieldwork carried out by Saville Rossiter-Base in August and September 2013
Base: All UK households using each type of provider (In 2013 – 2652 broadband, 3007 landline, 2670 mobile phone)
Q9. Have you personally had a reason to complain about any of these services or suppliers in the last 12 months, whether or not you went on to make a complaint? (prompted responses, multi coded)
Note: due to methodology changes in 2013, prior data are not directly comparable

9.1.2 Broadband customers are most likely to cite internet speeds as a reason to complain

Among broadband customers with reason to complain (Figure 170), the two reasons that were stated most frequently by participants were the speed of internet connection (34%) and disruption of service (29%). Just under a quarter (23%) said they felt they had cause to complain about the quality of the service, and 5% said they felt the service differed to that advertised/promised. In total 23% gave various other reasons, each of these mentioned by less than 5% of consumers. In the fixed broadband market these included charging and billing issues, dissatisfactory customer service and inappropriate content.
Figure 170  Main reason to complain about broadband service or supplier

![Bar chart showing reasons for complaining about broadband service or supplier](chart.png)

Source: Ofcom research, telephone omnibus survey, fieldwork carried out by Saville Rossiter-Base in August and September 2013.
Base: All UK households with reason to complain about each service in the last 12 months (359 Fixed broadband)
Note: ‘any other reason’ includes reasons given by less than 5% of those with reason to complain.

9.1.3 Landline customers are most likely to cite disruption of service as a reason to complain

Among landline customers with reason to complain (Figure 171), the two reasons that were most likely to be mentioned were disruption of service (31%) and poor quality of service (26%). Just over in one in ten (11%) said they had cause to complain about overcharging, while 8% complained that the service was not as promised/advertised and 6% complained either that their bill was incorrect, or that charges were not made clear, or there were unexpected charges.

Various other reasons were each mentioned by less than 5% of consumers. In the fixed line market these included: inappropriate content, nuisance calls and unsolicited calls, phone line not working, staff attitude/problem with staff, bill not received, ‘moved home and it took a long time to connect up our household’, ‘missed an installation appointment’, ‘issue with installation’, ‘advertised tariffs not available to me’ and ‘terms of contract were unfair’.

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81 It is worth noting the relatively low level of landline customers citing nuisance calls as a cause to complain, compared to the incidence of nuisance calls. Respondents may not have considered this an issue specific to their landline service, as opposed to this not being a problem at all.
9.1.4 Mobile customers are most likely to cite poor coverage as a reason to complain

Among mobile customers with reason to complain (Figure 172); poor coverage (23%) is the most likely reason to be given, with similar proportions of customers citing poor quality of service (15%), disruption of service (14%), incorrect bill (13%) and unclear or unexpected charges (13%), speed of internet connection (8%) and service not as promised / advertised (6%).

Various other reasons were each mentioned by less than 5% of consumers. In the mobile market these included: ‘issues with my handset’, ‘handset keeps breaking’, ‘mobile phone not working’, ‘terms of contract were unfair’, overcharged, ‘issues with hacking/fraud/cloning/ security’, ‘theft of mobile’, ‘cancellation/ change of contract’, ‘advertised tariffs not available to me’, ‘bill not received’, and inappropriate content.
Figure 172  Main reason to complain about mobile service or supplier

Source: Ofcom research, telephone omnibus survey, fieldwork carried out by Saville Rossiter-Base in August and September 2013.
Base: All UK households with reason to complain about each service in the last 12 months (219 Mobile phone)
Note: ‘any other reason’ includes reasons given by less than 5% of those with reason to complain.

9.1.5 Landline customers with a reason to complain were the most likely to proceed with a complaint.

Consumers with a complaint may choose to contact their provider, Ofcom or other advisory bodies such as Citizens Advice. Most customers with reason to complain said they did make a complaint. The proportion of customers going on to make a complaint was highest among those with landline services (73%), followed by mobile (68%) and broadband (64%).

If we calculate the proportion of all customers for each of the three services who claimed they had a reason to complain and then went on to make complaint in the past 12 months, the proportion of all broadband customers making a complaint was 9% (this equates to 73% of broadband customers with a cause to complain). For mobile and landline, the proportions making a complaint was 6% and 5% respectively.
**Figure 173** Whether consumers with reason to complain made a complaint in the past 12 months

- **64%** for Broadband
- **73%** for Landline
- **68%** for Mobile

Source: Ofcom research, telephone omnibus survey, fieldwork carried out by Saville Rossiter-Base in August and September 2013.

Base: All UK households with reason to complain about each service in the last 12 months (359 Broadband, 209 Landline, 219 Mobile phone)

Q11/Q14/Q17. And did you go ahead and make a complaint about your broadband/landline/mobile phone service or supplier? (prompted responses, single coded)

Note: due to methodology changes in 2013 prior data are not directly comparable

It is worth noting that there is no correlation between the likelihood to complain and the type of issue a consumer has with their provider in each of the broadband, landline and mobile markets.

The Communications Consumer Panel conducted research in 2013 that highlighted the need for communications providers to support better those consumers who experience problems with their communications service.

The Panel wanted to understand why some people in the UK who had cause to contact their suppliers about an issue did not do so, as well as to explore the experiences of those who had contacted their supplier to try and resolve an issue. The key findings from the qualitative research *Going Round in Circles?* and a review of quantitative data are set out below. The full report and the Panel’s recommendations can be found on the Panel’s website.

**Key findings:**

- For a variety of reasons, some people who don’t contact their provider are suffering in silence and ‘getting by’ on a sub-standard service.
- For some who did contact their provider, their initial frustration was exacerbated by a negative contact experience.
- The loss of time and money by consumers trying to get a problem addressed and the emotional perseverance required are rarely acknowledged by communications providers.
- Some older consumers and some consumers with a disability seemed to be at a particular disadvantage in their dealings with providers.

Escalation of problems frequently appears to be ineffective, and communications providers seem to be poor at telling customers about alternative dispute resolution (ADR). Comments from consumers also highlighted the difficulties they faced:

“Every single phone call that you placed you were speaking to maybe three or four different people and you were having to explain the problem each and every time.” Male 35 – 64 years, Northern Ireland

“They use terms I don’t understand [...] you know, they’ll say ‘have you sorted the router’ or something and I’ll say ‘what router?’ You know, that sort of thing.” Female 65 years+, Wales

9.1.6 Almost four in ten have experienced a problem with the postal system, with mis-delivered post being the most common issue

In total, 36% of the survey participants claimed to have experienced at least one problem with the postal service in the past 12 months (Figure 174). By far the biggest issue cited by those who had experienced a problem was mis-delivered post (60% of those with a problem) followed by delayed mail (45%), lost mail (35%) and damaged mail (29%).

Figure 174 Problems experienced with Royal Mail’s postal services in the past 12 months

Source: Ofcom post tracking survey
Base: All adults 16+ (4844), Those with a problem in the last 12 months (973)
QG1A-1E: In the last 12 months, have you experienced problems with Royal Mail’s service in terms of...
Figure 175 shows that those over 75 years old were the least likely age group to have reported having a problem (18%); while those aged 45-54 were the most likely (42%).

**Figure 175  Problems experienced with Royal Mail’s postal services in the past 12 months, by age and gender**

Source: Ofcom post tracking survey  
Base: All adults 16+ (4844)

About one in ten (9%) adults reported that they had had a cause to complain, and 6% claimed to have made a complaint.

Cause to complain was highest among 25-34 year olds (12%) while the claimed level of making a complaint was highest among 35-44 year olds (8%). Over-75s had the lowest level of reason to complain (4%) and of actually making a complaint (2%).
9.2 Consumer complaints to Ofcom

Consumers with cause to complain will not always follow the same route. As noted above, some may not complain at all, others may contact their provider or seek advice or support from regulatory bodies such as Ofcom or the Telephone Preference Service (TPS).

Ofcom’s Consumer Contact Team (CCT) offers a point of contact for consumers enquiring or making complaints about issues in the telecoms, broadcasting and postal markets. The following section provides details on the types of contacts received by the CCT, and in some cases from other bodies such as the TPS. Although Ofcom handles only a small share of the total number of complaints relating to communications services, these data give insight into the extent of certain issues faced by consumers in 2013.

The data is presented alongside consumer research into particular issues such as nuisance calls and unexpectedly high bills, and provides greater insight into the experience of particular issues among the general population.

9.2.1 Telecoms continues to dominate complaints received by Ofcom

The number of telecoms complaints between September 2012 and October 2013 generally fluctuated between 6000 and 7000. The exceptions to this were in December 2012, when they fell to just under 5000, and April 2013, when they rose over 8000 (Figure 177). Silent calls, mis-selling and the way that communications providers (CPs) handle complaints continue to drive complaints in this sector (see Figure 178).
Complaints to Ofcom about abandoned and silent calls rose significantly in early 2013 to reach a peak of 3,900 in April. This was higher than the peak in July 2012. Since then complaints have declined and in October 2013 there were 2,857 complaints, which is just above the level recorded for October 2012.
Under the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003 (PECR) Ofcom is required to maintain the register of persons who do not want to receive live telesales calls. Telephone Preference Service Ltd provides the register, the Telephone Preference Service (TPS), on Ofcom's behalf. Since August 2012 Ofcom has published the number of complaints about live telesales calls made to the TPS. As shown in Figure 179 below, these complaints peaked at 10,373 in February 2013 (this was above the peak seen in July 2012). The TPS has suggested that this rise can be attributed to an increase in marketing calls by companies dealing with payment protection insurance (PPI), accident claims, energy services, insulation grants and lifestyle surveys. Complaints have fallen since then and in October 6,447 complaints were made to the TPS.

Source: Ofcom, CCT data

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83 Under PECR, the Information Commissioner's Office has primary responsibility for enforcement action when unsolicited live telesales calls are made to a person registered with the TPS.
The incidence of nuisance calls fell between February and July 2013 and has remained broadly stable since then

Ofcom carries out market research to track changes in nuisance calls over time. Following a pilot in February 2013, we revised our Consumer Concerns tracker methodology, to capture more timely and accurate information regarding consumers’ experience of nuisance calls. Since July 2013 we have tracked this every other month and asked about personal experience “in the last four weeks” (the previous research was quarterly, and asked about personal experience “in the last six months”). As a result, previous tracking data are not comparable and the new approach is considered to be more robust.

Figure 180 shows data from our study in February 2013 (which was carried out alongside the nuisance calls panel research and is outlined below) and continuous tracking since July 201384. Since February 2013, reported experience of all nuisance calls on landlines in the previous four weeks has fallen from eight in ten (82%) in February to seven in ten (70%) in November.

In November 2013, half (53%) of UK adults with a fixed line phone received a live telesales call in the previous four weeks and four in ten (40%) received a silent call. We estimate a third (35%) received an automated marketing message and just over one in ten (14%) received an abandoned call.

84 Note: data on automated marketing calls are not comparable between the February survey and the new tracking study
Focus on nuisance calls

To obtain better information about the number of nuisance calls received, the types of industries making nuisance calls and the availability of caller information, Ofcom commissioned a nationally representative sample of UK adults with home landline phones to undertake a diary study to record all unwanted calls personally received on their home landline phone across a four-week period (14 January to 10 February 2013).

Panellists were provided with a paper diary and were instructed to complete a diary page every time they considered that they received an unwanted call on their landline phone. This allowed collection of information about these types of calls in ‘real time’, and provided greater insight than a traditional (retrospective) survey - such as information on industries making these types of calls, availability of the caller’s telephone number and company details.

Figure 181 shows that among those who received any nuisance calls, an average of about eight calls (8.4) in the four-week period were received, or two per week. A quarter (26%) received more than ten nuisance calls over the four-week period, and less than one in ten (8%) received more than 20 calls over the period, or more than five a week.

Among all those who reported receiving them, silent calls and live telesales calls were received most frequently, with an average of four silent (4.2) and four live telesales calls (4.2) received over the four-week period. All those who received automated marketing calls

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85 Nuisance calls can also be called unwanted calls.
86 The term ‘unwanted calls’ was used in the recruitment letter, instruction sheet and paper diary provided to participants, as it was considered to be a clearer, more consumer-friendly term than ‘nuisance calls’. In this report ‘unwanted calls’ are referred to as ‘nuisance calls’.
87 http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/other/telecoms-research/nuisance-calls-research/
88 Some calls recorded as nuisance calls may have been the result of participants giving the company prior consent to contact them (e.g. ticking a consent box on a marketing form or company website)
received an average of three (2.7) and those receiving abandoned calls received an average of two (1.9) calls in the period.

**Figure 181 Number of calls received over four weeks among all who received each call type**

A significantly higher level of nuisance calls was claimed by older participants (typically aged 55+) than by younger ones. In addition, among those who reported receiving nuisance calls, a higher average number of calls were reported among those aged 55+ and those not working (an average of 11 calls and ten calls respectively over the four weeks) compared to younger and working adults (each with an average of seven calls in the four weeks). This is likely to be due at least in part to older and non-working participants being more likely to be at home to receive nuisance calls. Those in socio-economic group AB reported a higher incidence of silent calls than those in socio-economic group C2.

**Availability of caller information**

Panel participants were asked to record the type of product or service being promoted, the name of the company that was calling and the telephone number of the company calling, where possible, for each nuisance call received. Awareness of the product or service being promoted in the call, and the name of the company calling, were determined both from information provided by the caller, and the participant’s recall, or ability to hear the caller properly. The caller’s phone number was usually determined either by the number display on the telephone or by the participant dialling 1471 after the call.

The type of product or service was identified in about two in five nuisance calls. It was mentioned in two-thirds or more of automated marketing calls (68%) and live telesales calls (72%), as well as in over half of abandoned calls (57%).

Company name was identified in one in five nuisance calls. Participants receiving live telesales calls were the most likely to record the name of the company calling (41%); in contrast, participants receiving automated marketing calls were unlikely to be able to obtain this information (6%).

A telephone number was recorded for a third (34%) of all nuisance calls; automated marketing (44%), live telesales (41%) and abandoned calls (39%) were more likely than silent (25%) or other calls (25%) to disclose a telephone number.

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89 This is the participant’s understanding of the product or service being promoted, and may not reflect the actual reason for the call.
Figure 182 Availability of caller information, by call type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of product or service</th>
<th>All nuisance calls</th>
<th>Silent</th>
<th>Abandoned</th>
<th>Automated marketing</th>
<th>Live telesales</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company name</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company phone number</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GfK nuisance calls panel research, Jan-Feb 2013
Base: All nuisance calls received by UK panel participants with landline (n=6302, 2116, 241, 882, 2377, 522)
NB: 2% of nuisance calls were not categorised by participants; telephone numbers provided were not checked for accuracy

Product or service being promoted where identified

Figure 183 shows the proportions of nuisance calls that were promoting different products and services, for all calls where participants were able to provide a description of the product or service being promoted. As discussed above, participants were able to provide a description of the product/service being promoted in about two-fifths (43%) of nuisance calls.

Overall, calls about PPI claims made up 22% of all nuisance calls where the product or service was identifiable, followed by energy (10%), market research (10%) and insurance (8%). PPI claims calls constituted half of all automated marketing calls, four in ten abandoned calls and just over one in ten live telesales calls, where the product or service was able to be identified.

Figure 183 Top five products or services being promoted, by call type, where identified

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of product or service</th>
<th>All nuisance calls</th>
<th>Silent</th>
<th>Abandoned</th>
<th>Automated marketing</th>
<th>Live telesales</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PPI claim</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy company</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market research</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension rebate/refund</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: This was the participant’s understanding of the product or service being promoted and may not reflect the actual reason for the call. Table displays the top five products and services only
Source: GfK nuisance calls panel study
Base: All nuisance calls received on UK landlines in which product/service was able to be identified (n=2605, 45**, 142, 588, 1644, 187)
** Base size below 50, too low for analysis
Consumers’ experience of nuisance calls on a mobile phone is lower than their experience of these types of calls on a landline phone. Overall, about four in ten mobile phone owners had received a nuisance call or text message on their mobile in the previous four weeks. In November 2013 one in four (24%) UK adults with a mobile phone reported receiving a telesales text message over a four-week period, two in ten (22%) received a live telesales call and one in ten (10%) reported a silent call on their mobile phone.

Figure 184  Nuisance calls received on mobile phone in “the last four weeks”

Source: Kantar Media face-to-face omnibus
Base: All with a mobile phone (July 2013, 895); (Sept 2013, 923); (Nov 2013, 838)
NB: base size to low to calculate abandoned calls and automated marketing messages

Places consumers would go for information about nuisance calls

Consumers’ own phone providers are the most popular place to go to get advice about how to stop nuisance calls

Landline and mobile consumers were asked where they would go to get advice about how to stop nuisance calls on their landline or mobile phone (Figure 185, below). For all consumers, both when asked ‘top of mind’ and when prompted, the most popular way to get advice about how to stop nuisance calls was to call their phone provider, with a third (34%) of consumers spontaneously stating this, rising to half (52%) when prompted with a list.

At an overall level, the second most popular place to get advice about how to stop nuisance calls is on the internet, using an internet search engine (e.g. Google). However, the popularity of this declines with age. At both a spontaneous and a prompted level, those under 44 are most likely to say they would use a search engine to get advice about how to stop nuisance calls, with about one in five spontaneously stating this, rising to about half once prompted. This compares to 9% of those aged 65-74 and 5% of those aged 75+ claiming they would use this method (once prompted with a list). Those in socio-economic group DE (29%) are less likely than average to use an internet search engine to find this information. For over-65s (aged 65-74: 20%; aged 75+: 35%) and those without internet access (27%) asking friends and family is the second most popular way of getting advice.

A third (32%) of consumers did not know ‘top of mind’ where to go to get advice to stop nuisance calls. This fell to one in ten (11%) once prompted with a list. Lack of knowing where to go for advice, even when prompted with a list, is highest for those aged 65-74 (18%), those aged over 75 (16%), those in socio-economic group DE (18%) and those without internet access (23%).
Figure 185  How consumers would get advice about how to stop nuisance calls on their landline or mobile phone

Base: All who have a mobile phone or landline (Nov 2013, 960)
Source: Consumer Concerns Tracker, Kantar Media omnibus
Q: Where would you go to get advice about how to stop nuisance calls on your landline or your mobile phone?

A consumer’s own phone provider is the most popular place to go to find out how to complain about nuisance calls

Landline and mobile phone customers were asked where they would go to find out how to complain about nuisance calls on their landline or mobile phone (Figure 186, below). For all consumers, both when asked ‘top of mind’ and with a prompted list, the most popular place to go to find out how to complain about nuisance calls was to call their phone provider, with a third (35%) of consumer spontaneously stating this, rising to half (51%) when prompted with a list.

At an overall level, the second most popular place to go to find out how to complain about nuisance calls is the internet, using a search engine (e.g. Google). Using an internet search engine is less popular among those aged over 65 (7% of those aged 65-74 and 3% of those aged 75+ claimed this, once prompted with a list). For these older consumers, asking friends or family is the second most popular response, with 19% of those aged 65-74 and 35% of those aged 75+ claiming that this is how they would find out how to complain about these types of calls. Those in socio-economic group DE (28%) are less likely than average to use a search engine to find this information.

A third (33%) of consumers did not know ‘top of mind’ where to go to find out how to complain about nuisance calls. This fell to one in ten (12%) once prompted with a list. Lack of knowing where to go to complaint, even when prompted with a list, is highest for those aged 65-74 (20%), those aged over 75 (17%), those in socio-economic group DE (18%) and those without internet access (23%).
Figure 186  How consumers would find out how to complain about nuisance calls on their landline or mobile phone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Spontaneous</th>
<th>Prompted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call phone provider</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the internet- using a search engine (eg google)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask friends/family</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact a consumer organisation (eg Which?)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact regulator (eg Ofcom, ICO)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the internet- specific website</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking at my paper bill</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking at bill/account info on the internet</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact the police</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wouldn’t look for the information/ not interested</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All who have a mobile phone or landline (Nov 2013, 960)
Source: Consumer Concerns Tracker, Kantar Media omnibus

Q: Where would you go to find out how to complain about nuisance calls on your landline or your mobile phone?

Unexpectedly high bills (UHBs)

In 2013 we conducted, for the second time, two pieces of research to understand the issue of unexpectedly high bills in the mobile contract market. We ran a face-to-face survey to measure and track the incidence of different types of bill shock in this market, and then an online study to better understand the underlying causes, and the amount (£s) of bill shock being experienced by consumers due to each of these. A summary of these findings is set out below and the full report and data are available on the website.90

The types of issues causing UHBs in the mobile contract market remain broadly unchanged since last year

Making calls to numbers not included in the call allowance, and lost/stolen mobiles remain the main causes of unexpectedly high bills (UHB) in the mobile contract market, each at 3% of mobile contract customers.

Calls to 0845 numbers continued to dominate the stated underlying cause of bill shock due to making calls to numbers not included in the allowance (64% of participants said this was related to calls to 0845 numbers). Around half as many related their ‘bill shock’ to making calls to 0800 numbers (36%) and 0870 numbers (31%).

Making more calls than usual (79%) remained the main stated reason for exceeding the call allowance. The vast majority (90%) were unaware that they were making calls exceeding their allowance, not significantly different to the level reported in 2012 (87%).

The proportion who said their UHB was caused by exceeding their data allowance remains unchanged at 0.5%. There was greater stated awareness than in 2012, among these consumers, that they were using data over their allowance. A quarter (24%) of those experiencing this type of UHB said they were aware they had reached their data allowance, which compares to 14% in 2012.

There has been no change in the proportion stating their UHB was due to using data without an allowance, at 1% of mobile contract customers. But a rising proportion of these consumers (50% up from 37%), said they knew they were using the mobile network to access data i.e. not using a Wi-Fi connection.

The average amount of bill shock in the mobile contract market shows signs of decline\(^{92}\)

In 2013 the mean average amount of bill shock\(^{93}\) in the mobile contact market was £40, compared with £46 in 2012.

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\(^{91}\) Data are not available for ‘sending messages’ as this was a new quota group added to the 2013 research

\(^{92}\) Source: Ofcom face-to-face omnibus, February/ March 2012, based on the responses of 263 mobile contract customers, and March/ April 2013, based on the responses of 239 mobile contract customers

\(^{93}\) This refers to the amount by which the bill was higher than expected, and not the total amount of the bill.
However, many unexpectedly high bills in the mobile contract market were for less than this average, which is influenced by a small proportion of bills at the higher end of the scale i.e. £100+ more than expected. In the mobile contract market just over half (52%) of consumers who experienced a UHB said this was for ‘up to £30’ while one in ten (9%) said their bill was ‘£100+’ more than expected.

**There has been no significant change in the average amount of ‘bill shock’ for most individual causes, the only rise being for lost / stolen mobiles**

Data reported in some of the sub-groups shown below, and marked with an asterix, are based on small samples of fewer than 100, and as such should be treated as indicative only. The only apparent rise in the mean average shown for ‘total use abroad’ is not statistically significant, and in fact the difference in the median average between 2012 and 2013 is smaller, at £5.

**Figure 188 Incidence and value of unexpectedly high bills, by type: 2012-2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calls to numbers not in allowance</th>
<th>Exceeding voice allowance</th>
<th>Using data without an allowance*</th>
<th>Exceeding data allowance*</th>
<th>Sending messages not included in allowance*</th>
<th>Total use abroad</th>
<th>Lost/stolen mobile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean additional £’s due to bill shock - 2012</td>
<td>£19</td>
<td>£43</td>
<td>£15</td>
<td>£30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>£60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>£13</td>
<td>£30</td>
<td>£10</td>
<td>£15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>£30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean additional £’s due to bill shock - 2013</td>
<td>£17</td>
<td>£45</td>
<td>£21</td>
<td>£22</td>
<td>£16</td>
<td>£74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>£12</td>
<td>£25</td>
<td>£15</td>
<td>£15</td>
<td>£15</td>
<td>£35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ofcom bill shock online research, conducted by Other Lines of Enquiry in July/August 2013
Base: All mobile contract customers experiencing each type of bill shock, calls to numbers not in allowance (154, 2012 - 80*), exceeding voice allowance (132, 2012 - 90*), using data not included in allowance (81*, 2012 - 59*), exceeding data allowance (86*, 2012 - 107), sending messages not included in allowance (56*, 2012 - 92), total use abroad (120, 2012 - 138), lost/stolen mobile (166, 2012 - 103).
*Low base size, treat as indicative only
Note: The amount of ‘bill shock’ refers to the amount by which the bill is higher than expected, as opposed to the total value of the bill.

Making calls to numbers not included in the call allowance resulted in a mean average bill shock of £17 (£12 median), broadly comparable with that noted for the new quota group included in the study this year: ‘sending messages not included in allowance’ (£16 - £15 median). Using data without an allowance and exceeding data allowance resulted in levels of £21 and £22 respectively (median average of £15 for each).

The mean average amount of bill shock caused by exceeding voice allowance stands at £45. This type of bill shock is reported by a relatively small number of consumers (2% of those experiencing this type of bill shock) with bills at the top end of the scale i.e. £200+ more than expected, which pushes up the mean average. The median average amount for these consumers is £25. These averages are not significantly different to those reported in 2012.

As the chart above shows, use of mobiles abroad results in a mean average level of bill shock of £74. However, this average is increased by a relatively small proportion of outliers. Four per cent of those experiencing this type of bill shock said they had received bills of £200+ more than they had expected. Most (71%) of those experiencing UHBs due to mobile use abroad said their bills were up to £50 more than expected, and the median average is £35.
The only area where there has been a significant rise in the mean average amount of bill shock is lost or stolen mobiles. The mean average has risen from £34 to £65, although, as with other factors, this average is inflated by a relatively small proportion of outliers experiencing bill shock at the top end of the scale. In total, 5% of those experiencing this type of bill shock had received a bill of £200+ more than expected. However, when taking account of any reimbursement the net amount of bill shock was much lower at £27.\textsuperscript{94}

Consumers who have experienced bill shock are more likely to use simple measures to protect themselves against UHBs, such as locking the handset (63%)

The most common preventative measure being used by consumers who have experienced bill shock is to lock the handset (63%). Fewer said they had set a password (49%) despite a further 36% being aware of how to do this. A similar proportion (51%) said they checked their usage levels, with a further quarter (25%) aware that this is possible. In April 2013 the \textit{Adults media use and attitudes report}\textsuperscript{95} reported similar levels of consumers locking their handsets, with just over three in five (61%) of those who personally used a mobile claiming to lock their phone; this increases to 75% among those with a smartphone.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure189.png}
\caption{Awareness and use of preventative measures, among those experiencing a UHB}
\end{figure}

Source: Ofcom bill shock online research, conducted by Other Lines of Enquiry in July/August 2013
Base: All mobile contract customers experiencing any type of bill shock in the 12 months prior to interview (1,102)

**Telecoms and broadcast consumer complaints to Ofcom**

Complaints about fixed-line and mobile mis-selling have decreased over the past 12 months

The term ‘mis-selling’ covers a range of sales and marketing activities that can work against the interests of consumers and competition, and can undermine confidence in the industry as a whole. These include:

- the provision of false and/or misleading information (for example, about potential savings, or promising offers or gifts that do not actually exist);

\textsuperscript{94} Reimbursement may be in the form of operator removing some or all of these unexpected charges, or insurer contributions, for example.
\textsuperscript{95} \url{http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/adult-media-lit-13/2013_Adult_ML_Tracker.pdf}
• applying unacceptable pressure to change provider, such as refusing to leave until the
customer signs, or using threatening or otherwise intimidating behaviour; and

• 'slamming', an extreme form of mis-selling, where customers are simply switched from
one company to another without their knowledge or consent. Forms of slamming can
include, for example, passing off (i.e. where representatives claim to represent a different
company to the one they are actually working for), and customers being told they are
merely signing for information and then being switched to another provider.

Complaints about fixed-line mis-selling have decreased significantly since a peak of around
1,200 in April 2005. The downward trend in fixed-line mis-selling complaints has continued
over the past year, with overall fixed-line mis-selling complaints averaging 442 per month for
2013 compared with an average of around 542 a month between October 2011 and October
2012 (Figure 190).

The proportion of complaints about mis-selling/slamming which relate to the mobile market is
smaller. This also decreased during Q4 2012, from 284 in October 2012 to 170 in December
2012. There has been some fluctuation since, from a peak of 239 in April 2013 to a low of
140 in June 2013.

**Figure 190  Monthly complaints received by CCT regarding mis-selling**

![Graph showing monthly complaints received by CCT regarding mis-selling from October 2012 to October 2013.](source: Ofcom, CCT data)

Mobile mis-selling complaints have fluctuated over the long term, while complaints
about cash-back schemes have remained low and relatively stable.

Figure 191, below, shows the volume of mis-selling complaints received by Ofcom in relation
to the mobile market from October 2008 to October 2013. From their peak in October 2008
(277 complaints per month), complaints about mobile mis-selling and slamming reached a
low of 100 in February 2010. From that point onwards, complaints about mis-selling and
slamming rose steadily, reaching another high in August 2012 (268). From October 2012 to October 2013, although levels have fluctuated, we have seen a broad downward trend, with an average number of approximately 190 complaints per month.

Compared to mobile mis-selling complaints, complaints about cashback schemes are much fewer and relatively stable, with an average of eight complaints per month between October 2012 and October 2013.

**Figure 191  Monthly complaints about mobile mis-selling / slamming and cashbacks**

![Chart showing monthly complaints about mobile mis-selling and cashbacks from October 2008 to October 2013](chart.png)

Source: Ofcom, CCT data

**Complaints about additional charges have remained stable year on year, and largely relate to early termination charges**

Additional charges that consumers may face from their communications supplier, over and above those which they already pay for the service, can be due to a number of factors, including not paying by direct debit, late payment of bills, having a service restored following a restricted or suspended service after a late payment, and early termination charges.

Consumers potentially suffer financial harm if such charges are unclear, or they do not take the charges into account when choosing their communications provider, and as a result do not make the best choice. In addition, competitive pressures may not act to reduce these charges, which can then be set significantly above cost, and consumers who are not aware of them cannot take measures to avoid them.

Some consumers are potentially more at risk from incurring additional charges, for instance, those who do not have a bank account and so cannot pay by direct debit.

Figure 192 illustrates the trend in the volume of complaints that Ofcom has received about additional charges, across all communications services. Complaints about additional charges have remained stable year on year, from 166 in October 2012 to 163 in October
2013, with a low point of 114 in December 2012 and a peak of 184 in January 2013. The majority of these complaints relate to early termination charges (ETC).

**Figure 192 Complaints about additional charges**

![Complaints about additional charges chart]

Source: Ofcom, CCT data

**Complaints about MAC codes have declined significantly since its peak in 2007, with 100 per month on average in 2013**

When consumers wish to change their broadband supplier they have to request a migration authorisation code (MAC) from their current ISP. A MAC is a unique code that a customer must give to his or her new broadband service provider, to allow the service to be transferred smoothly from the existing service provider. Ofcom used to receive large volumes of complaints from consumers who had experienced difficulties in obtaining a MAC from an ISP.

Ofcom introduced broadband migration rules requiring suppliers to provide a MAC on request in February 2007. The volume of complaints about broadband migration in general has decreased significantly since then. The chart below illustrates the trend in the volumes of complaints specifically relating to MAC (Figure 193).

The sharpest monthly decrease was from 843 in March 2007 to 530 in April 2007. Complaints fluctuated over the following year, before dropping again from 570 in March 2008 to 446 in April 2008. The general downward trend has since continued, more gradually and with some variation, stabilising at between 60 and 130 complaints per month from April 2011. Between October 2012 and October 2013 there were about 90 monthly complaints about this issue.
Broadcasting complaints to Ofcom continue to focus on content standards

Broadcasting complaints are few in comparison to the level of complaints received by Ofcom relating to telecoms, but have been generally at a similar level to spectrum complaints at points during the past year.

Over the course of 2013 the Content Standards, Licensing and Enforcement team received approximately 1,000 complaints each month about the content of programmes. Complaints about radio programming remained at a low level throughout 2013. In October 2013 there were 1,642 broadcasting complaints, of which 1,581 were about television and 61 were about radio (Figure 194).
The level of broadcasting complaints increased in October 2012 due to complaints about *The X Factor Results Show* (ITV1). There were also small rises in January 2013, largely due to complaints about *Celebrity Big Brother* (Channel 5), in March 2013, largely due to complaints about *Comic Relief: Funny for Money* (BBC 1), in May 2013, largely due to complaints about the broadcast news coverage of the Woolwich incident on 22 May 2013 (various channels), and in October 2013, largely due to complaints about *The X Factor Results Show* (ITV). Figure 195 shows the individual TV programmes that received the most complaints between September 2012 and October 2013.
### Figure 195  Top programmes complained about: September 2012 - October 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month of broadcast</th>
<th>Top programmes complained about (over 100 complaints in a month)</th>
<th>number of complaints in a month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug-12*</td>
<td>Islam: The Untold Story</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-12</td>
<td>Sky News</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-12</td>
<td>The X Factor Results Show</td>
<td>1,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-12</td>
<td>This Morning</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-12</td>
<td>Big Fat Quiz of the Year</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-13</td>
<td>Celebrity Big Brother</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-13</td>
<td>Celebrity Big Brother</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar-13</td>
<td>Comic Relief: Funny for Money</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-13</td>
<td>Britain's Got Talent Results</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-13</td>
<td>ITV News and Weather</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-13</td>
<td>Big Brother</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul-13</td>
<td>Big Brother</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul-13</td>
<td>Emmerdale</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug-13</td>
<td>Big Brother</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-13</td>
<td>Downton Abbey</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-13</td>
<td>The X Factor Results Show</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-13</td>
<td>The X Factor Results Show</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ofcom, Standards data

*Ofcom received a total of 287 complaints about Islam: The Untold Story broadcast by Channel 4 on 28 August 2012. Of those complaints, 102 were received in September 2012.

Figure 196 below lists the television programmes most complained about between September 2012 and October 2013. The X Factor Results Show received the highest number of complaints (11%).

As there were no radio programmes which received more than three individual complaints during the timeframe specified, they have not been shown in the chart below.

The relatively high level of ‘other’ issues (each mentioned by less than 1% of consumers) in both television and telecoms highlights the wide variety of issues that consumers complain about within the communications market.
### Figure 196  Most-mentioned complaints to Ofcom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Television</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The X Factor Results Show</em></td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Big Brother</em></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>This Morning</em></td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Celebrity Big Brother</em></td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Comic Relief: Funny for Money</em></td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The X Factor</em></td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Coronation Street</em></td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Emmerdale</em></td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ITV News and Weather</em></td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sky News</em></td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telecoms</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silent calls</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints handling</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mis-selling (fixed-line)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mis-selling (mobile)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional charges - ETC breakdown (consumer)</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mis-selling (bundled services)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charged for cancelled service</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mis-selling (other)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (1% or less)</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ofcom, CCT and standards data September 2012 to October 2013

### 9.3 Alternative dispute resolution (ADR)

Ofcom receives a proportion of complaints and enquiries about the communications market and postal sector, but many consumers contact their communications provider (CP) direct. As the communications regulator, Ofcom has a duty to set regulation for CPs’ complaints handling procedures, to ensure that consumers do not experience harm or detriment. As part of its ongoing monitoring, Ofcom publishes an annual report measuring and comparing the

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96 ETC (early termination charges)

97 Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) schemes act as an independent middleman between the service provider and the customer. If the ADR scheme agrees with your complaint, it can order the service provider to fix the problem and could potentially make a financial award. It is a requirement that all service providers are members of an ADR scheme.
quality of customer service that consumers receive from the main providers in each of the communications markets. For various reasons, not all complaints will be resolved by communications providers (CPs). Where this is the case, the CP should issue the complainant with a ‘deadlock letter’ so that the complaint can be referred to an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) scheme. A dispute which is older than eight weeks and unresolved can also be referred to ADR. CPs must be signed up to one of the two Ofcom-accredited schemes: Ombudsman Services or CISAS.

The data below summarise the results of a study conducted in early 2013 on ADR awareness and use among communications complainants who were eligible for referral to an ADR scheme. The research reflects eligible complainants’ views on their most recent or most-progressed complaint with their provider in the past 12 months.

**Just over a quarter of complainants surveyed were eligible for ADR referral**

Figure 197 shows the proportion of all screened participants in the Ofcom study who had made any complaint to their communications provider in the past 12 months. Forty-two per cent of those interviewed said they had made at least one complaint to a communications provider in this period. A comparable proportion (45%) of all complaints made were about services that came as part of a bundle.

Of the individual services, fixed broadband was the most complained-about service overall, with just under a quarter (23%) making at least one complaint in the past 12 months. This was followed by just under one in five (19%) making a complaint about their mobile phone service.

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100 An eligible complaint is defined as: A complaint that is unresolved for more than 8 weeks, or a complaints that has been unresolved for less 8 weeks but for which the complainant has received written notification of their right to apply to ADR or a deadlock letter. Eligibility refers to eligibility for ADR referral, not necessarily eligible for acceptance to an ADR scheme.

101 This refers to the number of consumers who were asked a number of initial questions to determine their eligibility for taking part in the research.
Q5 Have you made a complaint to any of these service providers in the last year. This could be a current, on-going complaint or one that has already been resolved.

A minority (15%) of eligible complainants were referred to ADR

Figure 198 shows that just over a quarter (27%) of complainants were eligible for ADR referral, but only 4% of all the complainants screened had actually been referred to ADR. This equates to 15% of all eligible complainants being referred to ADR by their CP, while half of those referred to ADR said they had proceeded to use this process.

Q6 Have any of these complaints taken 8 or more weeks to resolve?

QC3.1 Did you receive written notification from your provider informing you about your right to apply to an ADR scheme in any of the following ways?

Q9.2 When your ADR application was accepted did you proceed with this complaint via the ADR scheme with either the Ombudsman service or CISAS?
Among those eligible, three in ten complainants were aware of their right to be referred to ADR

As shown in Figure 199, three in ten eligible complainants were aware of ADR. Awareness of ADR was lowest among fixed broadband complainants (25%) and highest among pay-TV complainants (37%). Awareness of ADR among complainants whose service comes as part of a bundle was in line with other services (31%).

Figure 199  ADR awareness among eligible complainants

![Bar chart showing ADR awareness among eligible complainants.]

Source: ADR online research
Base: All eligible complainants: (1524); mobile (496); landline (270); fixed broadband (552); mobile broadband (87)*; pay TV (149); bundle complainants (646)
*Caution: low base
Q7 Were you aware of this scheme before now?

Eligible complainants rely on their communications providers to inform them about ADR

As noted above, 15% of eligible complainants recalled being referred to ADR by their provider. The majority (14% of all eligible complainants) recalled receiving written notification of their right to apply to ADR (Figure 200). This varied across provider types, with over one in five (21%) pay-TV complainants recalling written notification, compared to one in ten (10%) fixed broadband complainants.
Figure 200  Eligible complainants who recalled receiving written notification of ADR

Source: ADR online research
Base: eligible complainants: (1524); mobile (496); landline (270); fixed broadband (552); mobile broadband (87); pay TV (149); bundle complainants (646)
QC3.1 Did you receive written notification from your provider informing you about your right to apply to an ADR scheme in any of the following ways?
*Caution: low base size

Half of all eligible complainants who were aware of ADR first became aware of the scheme via their CP (Figure 201). Among complainants who went on to become ADR users, the majority (79%) had first heard about ADR through their CP.

Figure 201  How eligible complainants who knew about ADR first became aware of it

Source: ADR online research
Base: eligible complainants aware of ADR (452), ADR users (111)
Q8 Can you recall how you first heard about this scheme?
On average it took over five hours for consumers’ complaints to be dealt with during working / caring hours

Figure 202 shows that 22% of complainants in employment took time off work, and spent on average 5.24 hours to deal with their complaint. Another 8% of complainants took time away from carer commitments, and spent on average 5.64 hours, to deal with their complaint.

Issues with landline services were the most likely to be dealt with during working hours (45%) with pay-TV issues the least likely (27%).

**Figure 202  Complainants who took time away from work or carer commitments to deal with their complaint**

![Complainants taking time away from work or carer commitments to deal with complaint](image)

Source: ADR online research  
Base: eligible complainants: (1524); All eligible complainants employed (985); Complainants taking time from work (333); complainants taking time from carer commitments (124)  
QC5.1 Did you take any time away from work/carer commitments in order to deal with this complaint?  
QC5.2 How much time did you take away from work/carer commitments?  
QC6 When were you dealing with this complaint?

**Overall satisfaction with the outcome of the complaint was better when an ADR scheme was used**

Figure 203 shows levels of satisfaction with the final outcome of the complaint, among all those eligible to be referred to ADR, compared with satisfaction levels of eligible complainants who actually used the scheme.

Overall, 29% of eligible complainants were satisfied (with a score of 5 or above) with the final outcome of their complaint, compared to just under half (47%) of those who used the ADR scheme being satisfied. Furthermore, those who used the service are far less likely to be dissatisfied than those who are eligible but did not use ADR (14% vs. 46%).
Figure 203  Satisfaction with final outcome of complaint procedure

Source: ADR online research
Base: eligible complainants: (1524); ADR Users (111)