



Residential landline and fixed broadband services

Overview

This section explores the service quality experienced by consumers using landline and fixed broadband services in 2017,²⁴ including:

- **Overall satisfaction** - how satisfied consumers were with their service, and whether they would recommend their provider to a friend.
- **Getting a new service** - how long it took for new landline and fixed broadband orders to be delivered.
- **Landline and broadband faults** – how providers can make a difference to the time taken to fix faults.
- **Missed appointments** – the extent to which providers and customers have missed appointments for installations and repairs.
- **Customer service** – consumers’ experience of contacting providers.
- **Reasons to complain and complaints volumes** – whether consumers had a reason to complain and how many consumers complained to Ofcom.
- **Satisfaction with complaints handling** - how effectively providers dealt with and resolved complaints.
- **Complaints taken to an alternative dispute resolution scheme** – whether complaints against providers were upheld by an alternative dispute resolution scheme.

²⁴ The fieldwork for the Customer Satisfaction Survey was conducted from 3rd January to 15th February 2018.

While the focus of this section is on services marketed to residential customers, this information will be relevant to the many small businesses that also use these or equivalent services.

Overall satisfaction

Customer satisfaction with fixed broadband services has fallen since 2016

Since 2016, there has been a decline in broadband customers' overall satisfaction with their fixed broadband service, down to 80% from 87% in 2016. Where customers said they were dissatisfied,²⁵ the top two reasons were poor or unreliable broadband connectivity (48%) and slow speeds (47%).

Speed and reliability are key factors for broadband customers

There has been a decline in customer satisfaction with the reliability²⁶ and speed of broadband services compared to 2016.^{27,28} However, a significantly higher proportion of superfast and ultrafast broadband customers (82% and 86%, respectively) were satisfied with the speed of their service compared to standard broadband customers (71%).²⁹

Figure 1: Satisfaction with fixed broadband provider

	Average broadband	BT	EE	Plusnet	Sky	TalkTalk	Virgin Media
Satisfaction with overall service	80% ▼	79%	79%	86%	83%	72%* ▼	83% ▼
Satisfaction with reliability of service	80% ▼	81%	82%	82%	81% ▼	73%*	82% ▼
Satisfaction with speed of service	77% ▼	77%	76%	70%	76% ▼	71%	82%* ▼

Source: *Ofcom Customer Satisfaction Tracker survey 2018*

Base: All adults aged 16+ who are the decision maker and express an opinion on their fixed broadband internet service. Base sizes are variable. See data tables for more information.

Providers used by fewer than 100 respondents are not shown individually but are included in the total; unless otherwise stated. 'Don't know' responses have been excluded from the base. Red or green shading and * indicates significantly lower/higher than the sector average at the 95% confidence level. Arrows represent a significant increase or decrease compared to 2016

²⁵ 11% of customers said they were not satisfied with their broadband service overall.

²⁶ Down to 80% from 86% in 2016.

²⁷ Down to 77% from 83% in 2016.

²⁸ Data tables can be found [here](#) and a slide pack of key results can be found [here](#).

²⁹ In this research, we defined broadband speeds as follows: standard - a download speed of up to 30Mbit/s; superfast - a download speed of between 30Mbit/s and 100Mbit/s; and ultrafast - a download speed of 100Mbit/s or higher. Since conducting this research, Ofcom's definition of ultrafast has changed to a download speed of 300Mbit/s or higher.

Fast broadband has become essential for day-to-day activities such as business, entertainment and socialising, and the amount of data residential broadband customers used per line last year grew by 44%.³⁰ Average download speeds have also been rising sharply in recent years. The main reason for this has been the growth in take-up of superfast broadband packages.

However, although superfast broadband is now available to 93% of premises,³¹ around two in five still use standard broadband.³² This is reflected in the slow speeds that some households receive. Most homes on standard broadband packages could receive faster speeds if they upgraded to faster broadband packages.

Ofcom will shortly be publishing the UK Home Broadband Performance report 2018, with data on the performance of UK fixed-line home broadband services.

Virgin Media ranked higher than average for satisfaction with broadband speed

Although satisfaction with service, reliability and speed have declined overall, there were however differences by provider. Virgin Media ranked higher than average for satisfaction with speed of service, while TalkTalk ranked lower than average for overall satisfaction, as well as for satisfaction with reliability of service.

Virgin Media’s customers were more likely to recommend their provider

We asked broadband customers how likely they would be to recommend their broadband provider to a friend.³³

Virgin Media customers were more likely than average³⁴ to say they would recommend their provider to a friend, while TalkTalk customers were less likely to say they would do so.

Recommend to a friend: Broadband providers	
More likely to recommend	Virgin Media
Broadband average	BT · EE · Plusnet · Sky
Less likely to recommend	TalkTalk

³⁰ See Ofcom, 2017, [Connected Nations Report](#), p.15

³¹ Ofcom, [Connected Nations Update: Spring 2018](#)

³² See Ofcom, 2017, [Connected Nations Report](#).

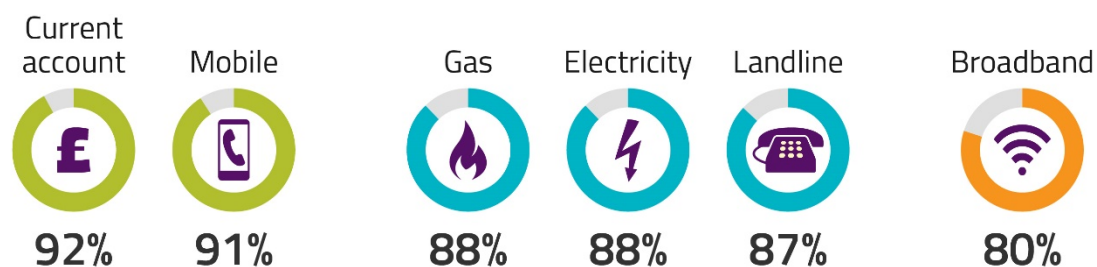
³³ Net Promoter Score™ (NPS™), see [Annex 2](#) for further details on how this metric is calculated. Full results can be found in the data tables [here](#) and slide pack [here](#).

³⁴ Based on the global NPS™ standards, any score above 0 is considered “good”, 50 and above is considered excellent, [see Annex 2](#) for further details. The average ‘recommend to a friend’ score in the broadband market was good (6). Virgin Media’s score was 15, while TalkTalk’s was -13.

Overall satisfaction in the broadband market was below satisfaction in other sectors

The level of overall satisfaction among broadband customers was below that among mobile and landline customers, as well as among current account, gas and electricity customers.

Figure 2: Customers' overall satisfaction with communications providers compared to current account and energy providers



Source: [Ofcom Customer Satisfaction Tracker survey 2018](#)

L1/M2/IN2/PT1/B1/BM3/BM9/BM10: In terms of your (SERVICE) how satisfied are you with the overall service provided by (PROVIDER)? Would you say you are...

Base: All adults aged 16+ who are the decision maker and express an opinion on their landline service(2252), their mobile phone service (2861), their fixed broadband service (2263), their pay TV service (1487), their services taken with the same supplier (2182), their main current account provider (2867), their gas provider (2212), their electricity provider (2536). 'Don't know' responses have been excluded from the base

Customer satisfaction in the landline market remained high³⁵

Nearly nine in ten landline customers reported that they were satisfied with their overall service, which was in line with 2016. The level of customer satisfaction with the reliability of service was also high and comparable with that for 2016.

Where customers were dissatisfied,³⁶ the top two reasons were poor or unreliable service (37%), and the expense of the service (27%).

Overall satisfaction among TalkTalk's customers was below average.³⁷

³⁵ Data tables can be found [here](#) and a slide pack of key results can be found [here](#).

³⁶ 4% of customers said they were not satisfied with their overall landline service.

³⁷ Satisfaction with overall service is not registered as significant for Plusnet due to lower base size of Plusnet respondents.

Figure 3: Satisfaction with landline provider³⁸

	Average landline	BT	EE	Plusnet	Sky	TalkTalk	Virgin Media
Satisfaction with overall service	87%	88%	90%	81%	90%	82% *	84%
Satisfaction with reliability of service	90%	91%	92%	87%	90%	87%	91%

Source: *Ofcom Customer Satisfaction Tracker survey 2018*

Base: All adults aged 16+ who are the decision maker and express an opinion on their landline service (2252). Base sizes are variable. See data tables for more information. Providers used by fewer than 100 respondents are not shown individually but are included in the total; unless otherwise stated. 'Don't know' responses have been excluded from the base.

Red or green shading and * indicates significantly lower/higher than the sector average at the 95% confidence level.

Landline providers all received a recommend a friend score in line with the average

For landline, the extent to which customers said they would be likely to recommend their provider did not vary by provider, when compared to the average.³⁹

Recommend to a friend: Landline providers	
More likely to recommend	-
Landline average	BT · EE · Plusnet · Sky TalkTalk · Virgin Media
Less likely to recommend	-

Getting a new service

Most landline and broadband orders were delivered on the date agreed

A consumer's first experience of a provider's service quality is when they place their first order. It is important that all new orders are provided quickly, on the date agreed, and that any delays are managed effectively.

The majority (94%) of landline and broadband orders were delivered by the date agreed with the customer, including any rearrangements agreed in advance⁴⁰ in 2017.⁴¹ Some providers were

³⁸ Comparison with satisfaction measures for 2016 is not possible for EE and Plusnet, as the sample size for these providers was not large enough in previous research.

³⁹ Based on the global NPS™ standards, any score above 0 is considered "good", 50 and above is considered excellent. The average 'recommend to a friend' score in the landline market was good (11). See [Annex 2](#) for further details.

⁴⁰ For providers who could record date changes, around 2% of total orders were rearranged by the provider.

⁴¹ Ofcom analysis of data from BT, EE, Virgin Media, Sky and TalkTalk and measured from the last service commitment date provided to the customer and includes home moves and regrades. It has not been possible to publish provider-specific figures here. See [Annex 1](#) for further details.

unable to report on their success at completing a new order on the date first promised to the customer because they overwrite the original date if any changes are made. We expect to be able to report on this when we start receiving new data in 2019, under new information gathering powers.

Where a customer was moving home but staying with the same provider, nine in ten (90%) orders were delivered by the date agreed.⁴² This lower success rate may in part reflect dates for home moves changing at short notice.⁴³

On average, it took 13 days for a landline or broadband order to be delivered

Across the main providers, it took an average of 13 calendar days to deliver a landline or broadband order in 2017;⁴⁴ this was a slight improvement compared to 2016.⁴⁵ On average orders in rural areas took an additional 1 day to be completed.⁴⁶

There are several reasons why orders can take 13 days or longer to be delivered. Ofcom rules require that switches between providers within the Openreach or KCOM networks take a minimum of ten working days,⁴⁷ and orders can take longer to complete if a customer wants the service to be delivered at a later date (e.g. when the customer is moving into a new home).

The time taken to deliver an order can depend on the type of order and network

In addition, the time taken to deliver a service can depend on the type of order placed by the customer. On the Openreach network, a product change for an existing customer (such as moving to a package with a faster broadband speed), took 14 days on average, compared to 16 days for providing a new customer with a service, and 17 days for a home move. A product change on the Openreach network takes almost as long as other types of order because upgrading to superfast broadband on the Openreach network often requires a physical change in the equipment used to deliver the new service. As customers move onto Fibre-to-the-Premises networks, the average time taken to deliver a product upgrade on the Openreach is likely to decline.

⁴² Ofcom analysis of data from BT, EE, Virgin Media, Sky and TalkTalk and measured from the last service commitment date provided to the customer.

⁴³ For next year's report, we intend to review with providers the main drivers for this lower success rate.

⁴⁴ Ofcom analysis of data from BT, EE, Virgin Media, Sky and TalkTalk and measured from the order date to the last service commitment date provided to the customer and includes home moves and regrades.

⁴⁵ In 2016, it took 14.5 days to deliver a new landline or broadband order.

⁴⁶ Ofcom analysis of data from BT, EE, Virgin Media, Sky and TalkTalk and measured from the order date to the last service commitment date provided to the customer and includes home moves and regrades. Urban and rural postcodes identified using the Locale classification – see [Annex 1](#) for further details.

⁴⁷ This is so that a consumer can stop the switch if they have not agreed to it or have changed their mind.

Figure 4: Time to provide a landline or broadband service on the Openreach network⁴⁸

	Percentage of all providers' orders	Average time to provide (calendar days) ⁴⁹
New Customer Service – where a new service is ordered, by a new customer, either a new line or a new customer who is switching from another provider ⁵⁰	67%	16
Home Move – where the customer is moving home and wishes to take over an active line at their new premises while remaining with their current provider ⁵¹	8%	17
Product Change – where a customer wishes to stay with their provider but change their current service, for example by upgrading to a faster broadband speed	25%	14

Source: Ofcom analysis of BT, Sky, EE, TalkTalk, Plusnet, and Post Office data

On the Virgin Media network, a self-install by the customer typically took 6 days and an engineer-install of a new line took 19 days.⁵² A product change on Virgin Media's network took 2 days, (however, this figure is not directly comparable to the figure for Openreach product changes).⁵³ Some customers upgrading may need to wait for a new router from their provider to arrive; but where this is not the case, Virgin Media can activate the regrade on the same day.

⁴⁸ Providers included in this analysis are BT, EE, Sky, Virgin Media and TalkTalk. More information on how Ofcom derived this and other information from provider data can be found at [Annex 1](#). For 2017, Ofcom reduced the number of "order types" by including restarts and transfers in the "new line" category.

⁴⁹ Rounded up to the nearest full day.

⁵⁰ As set out at [Annex 1](#), this order type combines the "new line", "restart" and "transfer" categories used in 2016.

⁵¹ This does not include home moves where a new customer has switched from another provider.

⁵² Or to repair a line that already existed.

⁵³ Virgin Media's data includes regrades provided proactively by Virgin Media, that were not initiated by the customer.

Figure 5: Time to provide a landline or broadband service on the Virgin Media network⁵⁴

	Percentage of all providers' orders	Average time to provide (calendar days) ⁵⁵
'Quickstart' self-install – where the home has an existing Virgin Media line and the customer can complete the installation themselves	18%	6
Engineer install - where an engineer is required to install a new Virgin Media line into the home or repair an existing Virgin Media connection	32%	19
Product change – where a customer wishes to stay with their provider but change their current service, for example by upgrading to a faster broadband speed	50%	2

Source: Ofcom analysis of Virgin Media data. The ten-day -working minimum switching rules does not apply to Virgin Media orders. Note: Virgin's product change data includes regrades not requested by the customer and is not directly comparable to Openreach providers' data.

As set out in the tables above, the time taken to deliver an order can depend on the network used.

The vast majority of orders were delivered within four weeks

There were limited differences in the time taken to complete landline and broadband orders by provider on the Openreach network. Although EE completed fewer orders compared to the other providers at two weeks, overall there was little difference in the average number of days it took all providers to deliver a new order. In addition, each provider completed the vast majority of orders within four weeks.

Figure 6: Percentage of landline and broadband services provided within four weeks of the order date, and average number of days taken to provide (providers on Openreach network)⁵⁶

	One week	Two weeks	Three weeks	Four weeks	Average Days ⁵⁷
BT	15%	53%	84%	93%	16
EE	11%	38%	89%	96%	16
Sky	17%	55%	88%	95%	15
TalkTalk	11%	54%	90%	96%	15

Source: Ofcom analysis of provider data

⁵⁴ We have not reported separately on the time taken to complete Virgin Media home moves in 2016 or 2017 but will explore this for future publications.

⁵⁵ Rounded up to the nearest full day.

⁵⁶ Ofcom analysis of provider data. The time taken to provide a new service is calculated by taking the difference between the order date and service activation date. More detail on our methodology is available in [Annex 1](#). Plusnet and the Post Office were unable to provide data in line with our requirements and have been excluded from this analysis.

⁵⁷ Rounded up to the nearest full day.

Virgin Media, to whom the ten-working day switching rule does not apply, completed almost seven in ten orders in one week and more than eight in ten orders in two weeks. The main driver of Virgin Media’s high completion of orders in one and two weeks is the relative ease with which it can deliver product upgrades.

Figure 7: Percentage of landline and broadband services provided within four weeks of the order date (Virgin Media)⁵⁸

	One week	Two weeks	Three weeks	Four weeks	Average days ⁵⁹
Virgin Media	68%	84%	90%	94%	8

Source: Ofcom analysis of provider data. Note: This data includes regrades not requested by the customer and is not directly comparable to other providers’ data.

In 2017, KCOM⁶⁰ completed a much lower proportion of its orders in one, two, three and four weeks than it did in 2016. For example, in 2016 it completed four-fifths of orders in two weeks, whereas in 2017 it completed only three-fifths of orders in two weeks. KCOM reported that this was in part due to limitations in its IT systems, as well as its Fibre-to-the-Premise (FTTP) rollout programme.⁶¹

Figure 8: Percentage of landline and broadband services in Hull and East Yorkshire provided within four weeks of the order date (KCOM)⁶²

	One week	Two weeks	Three weeks	Four weeks	Average days ⁶³
KCOM	6%	60%	74%	79%	20

Source: Ofcom analysis of provider data

But a small minority of orders took more than four weeks to be delivered

Very long installation times may cause frustration and inconvenience for consumers, even if their expectations have been managed by their provider. In 2017, fewer than six per cent of orders (around 400,000 orders in total) took more than four weeks to be delivered, and around one per cent took more than eight weeks.⁶⁴

Sometimes long installation times are due to factors outside providers’ control; for example, where permission to conduct street works is required, or ‘wayleaves’ need to be agreed to install or run

⁵⁸ Ofcom analysis of provider data.

⁵⁹ Rounded up to the nearest full day.

⁶⁰ KCOM is the universal service provider in Hull.

⁶¹ Due to the time taken to deliver FTTP, where a customer ordered an FTTP service and did not already have broadband, KCOM would provide a standard ADSL service in the interim, to ensure that customers had access to a broadband service.

⁶² Ofcom analysis of provider data.

⁶³ Rounded up to the nearest full day.

⁶⁴ Ofcom analysis of provider data for BT, EE, Sky, TalkTalk and Virgin Media.

equipment on private land. Next year, we intend to look more closely at the reasons why services took longer than four weeks to be delivered.

Four per cent of orders on Openreach's network were reported as not working⁶⁵

Around four per cent⁶⁶ of new orders for landline and/or broadband services on the Openreach network were reported by the customer as not working on the date of delivery. Such orders require an engineer visit or a new customer router to be sent out to resolve the issue. This is likely to be a source of frustration for consumers, and is an area that we will consider further for next year's report.

Landline and broadband faults

Having access to a reliable service is essential for landline and broadband customers to be able to get the most from their service. Where service faults occur, it is vital that these are diagnosed and resolved quickly.

Faults can occur in the home

Sometimes customers lose their service or experience poor service quality, (such as a slow or patchy connection), because of a problem originating in their own home. Common in-home issues include incorrect set-up of the home network, faulty wiring in the home, use of old or faulty equipment, wifi interference and user error.⁶⁷

For these types of problem, effective customer service may be able to help resolve the problem quickly, and we discuss customer service and complaints handling further below. Providers may also be able to reduce the frequency of some of these problems by supplying customers with effective information when they provide a new service, for example on the correct set-up and location of the wifi router.

Ofcom's mobile and broadband checker app offers tips on how consumers can improve their internet connection.⁶⁸ We have also published a new consumer guide with practical tips on how to improve broadband speeds along with a new video guide.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Data from Virgin Media and KCOM did not allow us to accurately identify and reflect the services delivered not working that would allow for meaningful comparisons.

⁶⁶ Ofcom analysis of data provided by Openreach, of services reported as not working within 8 days of services being delivered using the Reseller Identification Codes identified by each provider for their residential services – [see Annex 1](#).

⁶⁷ Based on information supplied to Ofcom by providers.

⁶⁸ Ofcom, [Mobile and broadband checker app](#).

⁶⁹ Ofcom, [Practical tips for improving your broadband speed](#), which includes new video guide.

Providers can make a difference to the time taken to fix faults

When problems originate outside of the home, on the customer's line or wider network, an engineer will usually be needed to address the fault.

The time taken to restore service will depend on how long it takes to diagnose the nature of the fault, the speed at which an engineer is dispatched by the provider or their supplier, if one is required, and the nature of the problem.

We have not been able to publish any provider data on the frequency or time taken to repair faults, which we believe would be useful information for consumers,⁷⁰ however, providers will start recording new, comparable faults data in 2019.⁷¹

BT and Post Office (broadband) pay for quicker repairs than other providers using Openreach

All the largest broadband and landline providers in the UK, apart from Virgin Media and KCOM, rely on Openreach engineers to investigate and fix faults with their customers' connections. We estimate that these faults occur approximately every 8 to 9 years for lines carrying standard broadband services, once every 12 years for landline-only services, and once every 7 years for line carrying superfast broadband services.⁷²

When a provider notifies Openreach of a fault on Openreach's network, Openreach must repair it within an agreed time, depending on which service maintenance level (SML) has been purchased, or pay the provider compensation.⁷³ The service levels range from resolution within two working days (level 1) to within six hours (level 4). Retail providers have a choice of which service level to take; one working day is the basic service level for fibre-to-the-cabinet (FTTC) products. In 2017, there was no change in the Openreach repair level that

Openreach repair level used for most residential customers (2017)

<i>One working day repair (level 2)</i>	<i>Two working days repair (level 1)</i>
BT	EE
Post Office (broadband)	Plusnet
	Post Office (landline)
	Sky
	TalkTalk

One working day is the basic service level for fibre-to-the-cabinet products

⁷⁰ This follows a pilot exercise where we found that the data we could obtain from providers on total loss of service would not be sufficiently comparable to include in this report.

⁷¹ The new data collection coincides with the implementation of the voluntary automatic compensation scheme - under which a landline or broadband customers would be entitled to compensation if their service has stopped working and is not fully fixed after two working days.

⁷² Ofcom, 2018, *Quality of Service for WLR, MPF and GEA Statement*, para 4.15.

⁷³ Except for circumstances beyond the reasonable control of Openreach, such as when civil engineering works are required to repair a fault, or where the customer requests a repair appointment beyond the specified timetable (for example because they cannot be available at the time offered).

providers used for most of their residential customers. BT and Post Office (broadband) continued to pay for quicker repairs than other providers using Openreach.

Openreach’s performance for fixing faults within the agreed time improved slightly in 2017.

Figure 9: Comparison of level 1 and 2 faults fixed within agreed timescales, 2016 and 2017

	2016	2017
Level 1 faults fixed within two working days	83%	84%
Level 2 faults fixed within one working day	78%	79%

Source: Openreach⁷⁴

Ofcom has recently raised the quality of service standards applied to Openreach.⁷⁵ Amongst other things, we have introduced a new standard to ensure that the vast majority of repairs are completed within a reasonable timeframe. By 2020/21, Openreach should complete 88% of landline and broadband fault repairs within one to two working days of being notified, compared with 80% in 2017. It will also need to complete 97% of repairs no later than five working days after the date promised. In addition, these standards will now also cover broadband delivered over Openreach’s fibre-to-the street cabinet (FTTC) that are used to provide superfast broadband services.

Missed appointments

When engineers miss an agreed appointment slot, customers may suffer from delays in having their service installed or repaired, as well as from the time they spend waiting in and having to reschedule the appointment.

Different providers use different definitions for missed appointments, making it difficult to draw comparisons across providers.⁷⁶ For this reason, we are not currently able to report on the volume of appointments missed by these engineers by provider. We expect to be able to report on this when we start receiving new data in 2019, under new information gathering powers.

⁷⁴ Openreach, *Regulated KPIs*.

⁷⁵ Ofcom, 2018, *Quality of Service for WLR, MPF and GEA Statement*.

⁷⁶ See [Annex 1](#) for further details.

Openreach has continued to reduce the proportion of appointments that are missed

In 2017, Openreach reduced the proportion of repairs and installation appointments that it missed⁷⁷ compared to 2016.⁷⁸ There is now little difference in the missed appointments rates for these two types of appointment.

Figure 10: Proportion of appointments missed by Openreach, by appointment type, 2017

	2016	2017
Installation	3.6%	1.9%
Repairs ⁷⁹	2.8%	1.8%

Source: Ofcom analysis of provider data

The proportion of appointments missed by Virgin Media remained low

In 2017, Virgin Media missed 0.3% of all engineer appointments.⁸⁰ Figure 11 shows that, as with Openreach, the proportion of appointments missed fell for installations. However, the proportion of appointments that were missed for repairs increased slightly in 2017.

Figure 11: Proportion of appointments missed by Virgin Media, by appointment type

	2016	2017
Installation	0.6%	0.4%
Repairs	0.2%	0.3%

Source: Ofcom analysis of provider data

Customers also miss appointments, causing delays to repairs and installations

There are also instances when appointments are missed by the customer, such as when the customer is not ready when the engineer turns up at the appointment time. For 2017, the proportion of Openreach appointments missed by the customer was 4.5%.⁸¹ For Virgin Media, this proportion was 2.7%. Customers therefore missed a higher proportion of appointments than Openreach and Virgin Media engineers.

⁷⁷ Openreach defines an appointment as missed if the engineer does not arrive during the originally agreed slot or arrives before the agreed slot without the prior agreement of the customer.

⁷⁸ This is based on data from the following providers: BT, EE, Plusnet, TalkTalk, Sky, and Post Office. [See Annex 1](#) for further details.

⁷⁹ These figures exclude Post Office, as they were not able to provide data on the proportion of missed appointments for which the fault was not the customer.

⁸⁰ For the purposes of this report, Virgin Media only class an appointment as missed if it does not take place on the scheduled day.

⁸¹ This excludes appointments booked with other-third party engineers or the provider's own workforce.

Customer service

Phone remains the most popular way for customers to contact their provider

In most instances, customers continue to contact their provider by telephone. In addition, with the exception of EE and Post Office, the main providers can be contacted via webchat and social media for queries relating to fixed landline and broadband services. Contact via social media is mostly limited to Facebook and Twitter, although some providers respond to queries on other social media platforms.

Sky and TalkTalk can also be contacted via message services that do not require the customer to stay connected to the advisor or to respond in real time.⁸² For example, with Sky this involves a customer messaging an advisor via SMS or Facebook Messenger.

Some providers also have apps to support landline and broadband customers

BT, Sky, TalkTalk and Virgin Media each have apps that can be used by landline and broadband customers. The capability of these apps varies across providers, but generally customers can carry out activities such as checking and paying their bill and checking their data usage. In some cases, customers can test their broadband speed, run broadband diagnostics, and report and track faults.

EE's, Post Office's and TalkTalk's customers waited less than one minute on average to speak to their provider on the phone

The average call waiting times were generally higher for landline and broadband customers than for mobile customers.^{83, 84}

There were however variations by provider. Landline and broadband customers calling EE, Post Office or TalkTalk had less than a minute on average to wait to speak to their provider on the phone. Plusnet, however, was the slowest provider to answer the phone, with an average call waiting time of just less than eight minutes.

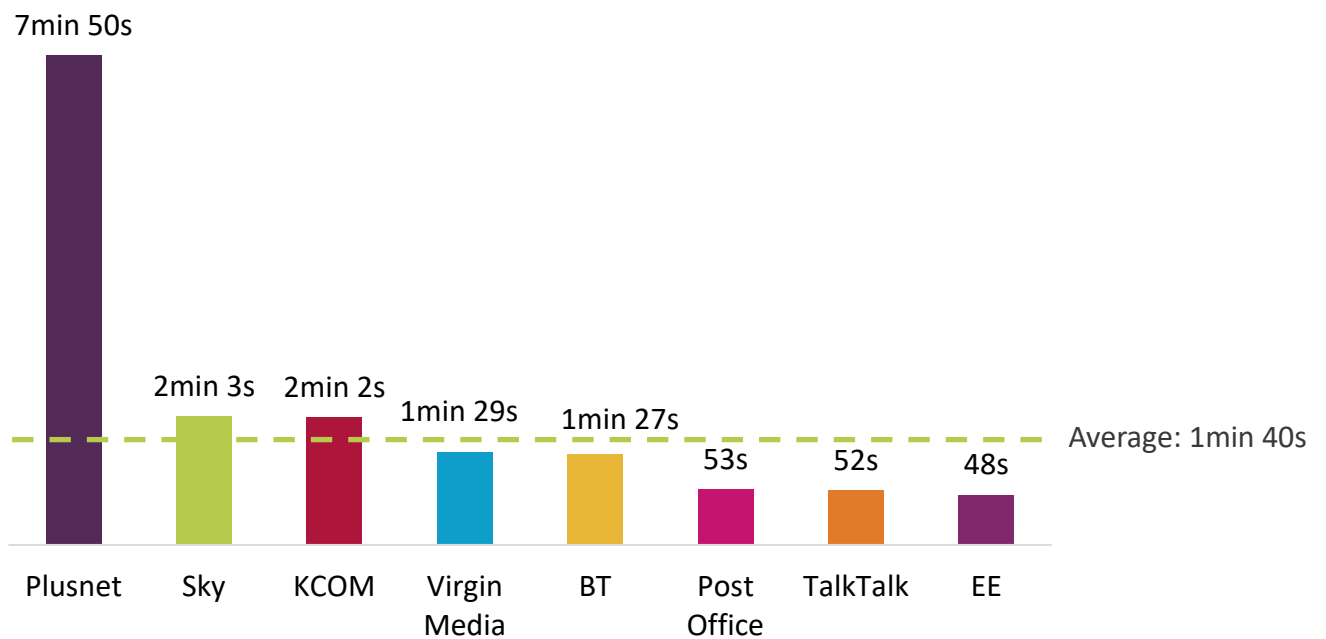
BT was the only provider that offered customers waiting in the call queue the option of receiving a call-back.

⁸² This is also referred to as asynchronous messaging.

⁸³ The average call wait time for mobile customers was just under one minute compared to 1min 40s for landline and broadband customers.

⁸⁴ The data we requested here differed in 2017, and therefore may not be comparable with 2016.

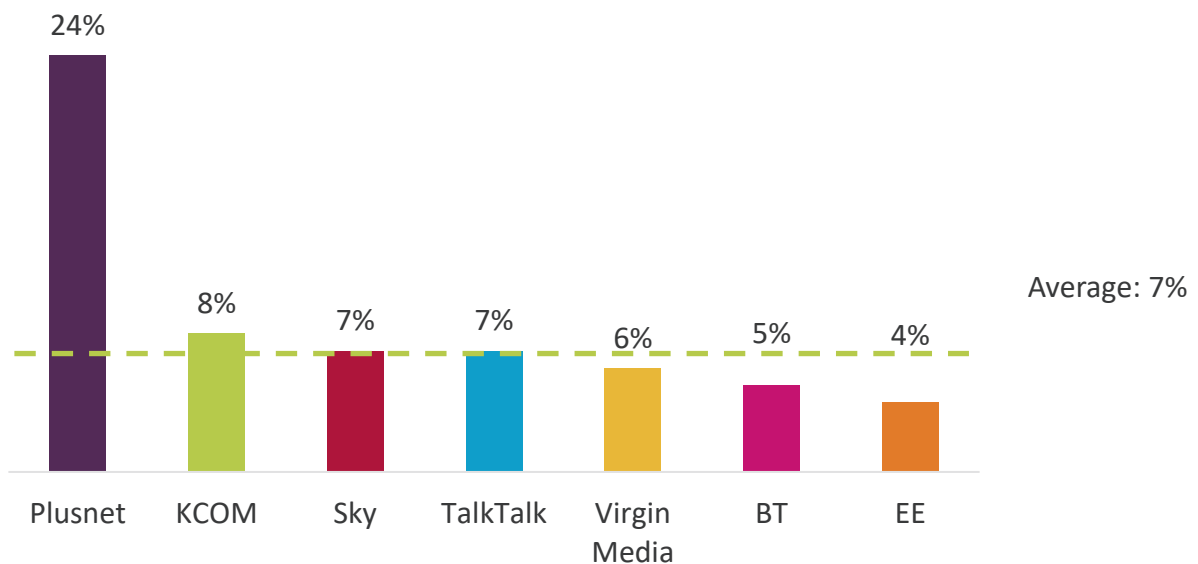
Figure 12: Average call waiting times, landline and broadband providers



Source: provider data, 2017. Note: the BT data includes call-backs.

Plusnet also had the highest proportion of phone calls that ended while the customer was in the queue waiting to speak to an advisor.

Figure 13: Calls ended while the customer was queuing to speak to an advisor, landline and broadband providers




Source: provider data, 2017. Post Office has been excluded from this data set, as they were unable to include instances where the call was ended without the customer hanging up (e.g. due to technical problems), meaning that their data was not comparable with the other providers'.

Reasons to complain and complaints volumes

The proportion of broadband consumers with a reason to complain has increased since 2016

Around one in seven broadband consumers reported that they had a reason to complain⁸⁵ about their provider in the last 12 months,⁸⁶ an increase since 2016.⁸⁷ TalkTalk consumers were more likely than average to have had a reason to complain in the past year.

Figure 14: Proportion of broadband customers who had a reason to complain in the past 12 months, (whether or not they went on to make a complaint), by provider

	Average Broadband	BT	EE	Plusnet	Sky	TalkTalk	Virgin Media
Proportion of consumers with a reason to complain	15% 	14%	14%	13%	14%	18%*	16%

Source: [Ofcom Quality of customer service research](#), face-to-face omnibus survey, fieldwork carried out by Kantar Media, January 2018.

Base: All UK households 16+; average broadband (5171), BT (5391), EE (214), Plusnet (175), Sky (1189), TalkTalk (659) and Virgin Media (1242)

Q. 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?

Red or green shading and * indicates significantly lower/higher than the sector average at the 95% confidence level. Arrows represent a significant increase or decrease compared to 2016.⁸⁸

The most common reason to complain was the broadband service not performing as it should

Of those with a reason to complain, the main cause was a service issue, such as slow broadband speeds, complete or intermittent loss of service or service not as advertised.⁸⁹ The next most common causes were a billing or pricing issue, and a problem with a repair to the service.

⁸⁵ This is regardless of whether or not they went on to make a complaint.

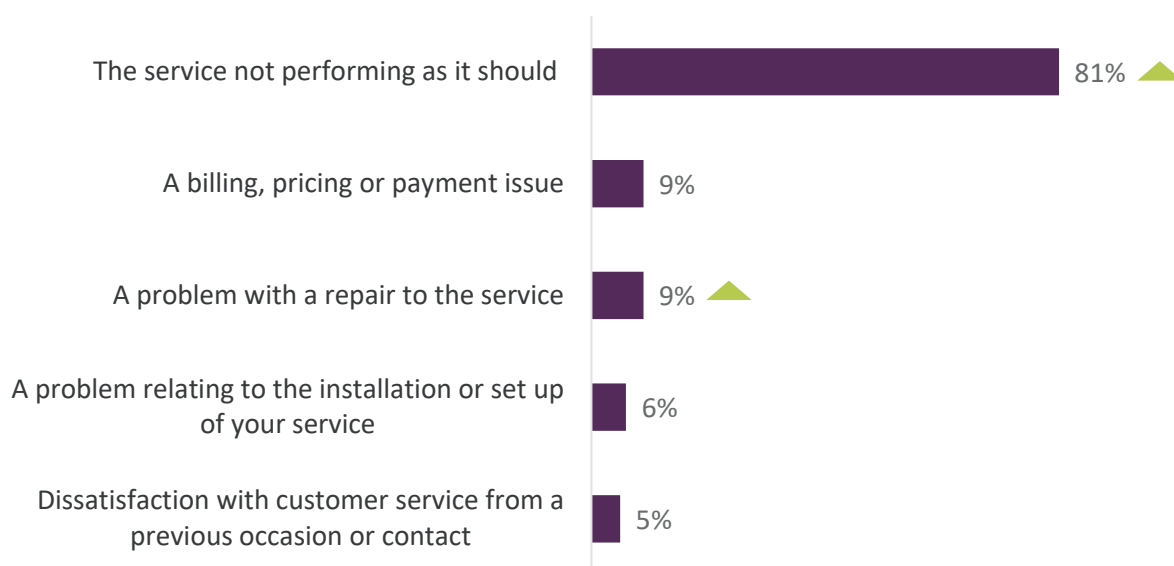
⁸⁶ Fieldwork was conducted in January 2018, therefore reasons to complain date back to January 2017.

⁸⁷ The proportion of broadband customers with a reason to complain has increased from 13% to 15%.

⁸⁸ Ofcom, 2018, [Reasons to complain study](#); Ofcom, 2016, [Reasons to Complain data tables](#).

⁸⁹ This has increased to 81%, up from 73% in 2016.

Figure 15: Reasons to complain about broadband provider



Source: [Ofcom Quality of customer service research](#), face-to-face omnibus survey, fieldwork carried out by Kantar Media, January 2018.

Base: All UK households 16+ who had a reason to complain about broadband (764)

Q. What was the issue/s you had reason to complain about in connection with your fixed broadband internet?

Arrows represent a significant increase or decrease compared to 2016

The proportion of landline consumers with a reason to complain has fallen since 2016

Only four percent of landline consumers had a reason to complain in 2017, which represents a fall since 2016 (5%). Sky consumers were less likely than average to have had a reason to complain.⁹⁰

Figure 16: Proportion of landline customers who had a reason to complain in the past 12 months⁹¹

	Average landline	BT	EE	Plusnet	Post Office	Sky	TalkTalk	Virgin Media
Proportion of consumers with a reason to complain	4% ▼	4%	3%	4%	7%	2%* ▼	5%	4%

Source: [Ofcom Quality of customer service research](#), face-to-face omnibus survey, fieldwork carried out by Kantar Media, January 2018.

Base: All UK households 16+; average landline (5227), BT (2042), EE (181), Plusnet (132), Post Office (85), Sky (964), TalkTalk (607) and Virgin Media (1021)

Q. 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?

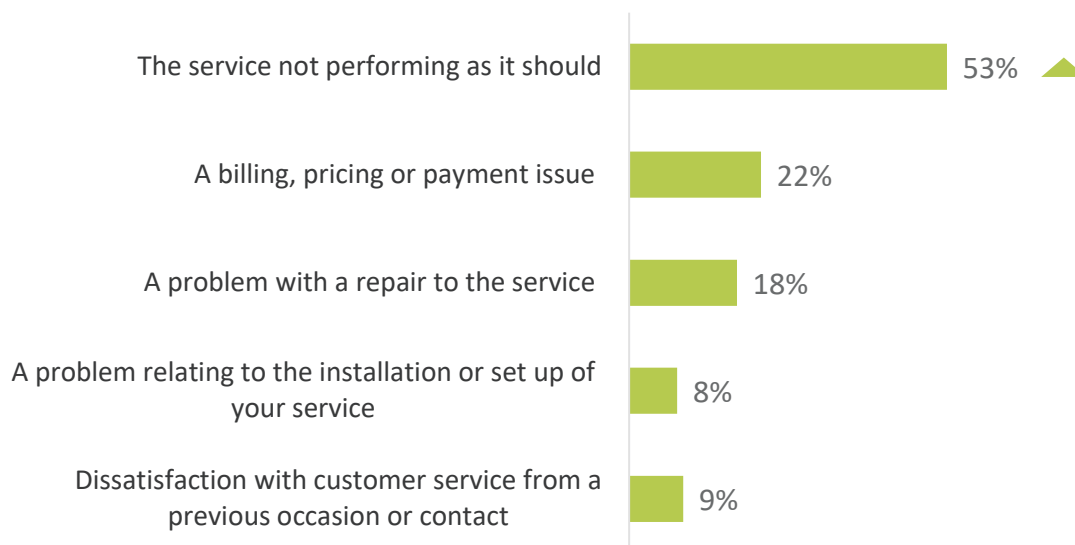
⁹⁰ All other apparent differences are not statistically significant.

⁹¹ Whether or not they went on to make a complaint.

Red or green shading and * indicates significantly lower/higher than the sector average at the 95% confidence level. Arrows represent a significant increase or decrease compared to 2016

Of the small proportion of landline customers with a reason to complain, the main cause was a service issue, such as poor line quality or voicemails delivered late.⁹² The next most common cause to complain was a billing pricing or payment issue, followed by a problem with a repair to the service.

Figure 17: Reasons to complain about landline provider



Source: [Ofcom Quality of customer service research](#), face-to-face omnibus survey, fieldwork carried out by Kantar Media, January 2018.

Base: All UK households 16+ who had a reason to complain about landline (210)

Q. What was the issue\|s you had reason to complain about in connection with your home landline?

Arrows represent a significant increase or decrease compared to 2016

Sky generated the lowest number of broadband complaints to Ofcom per 100,000 subscribers

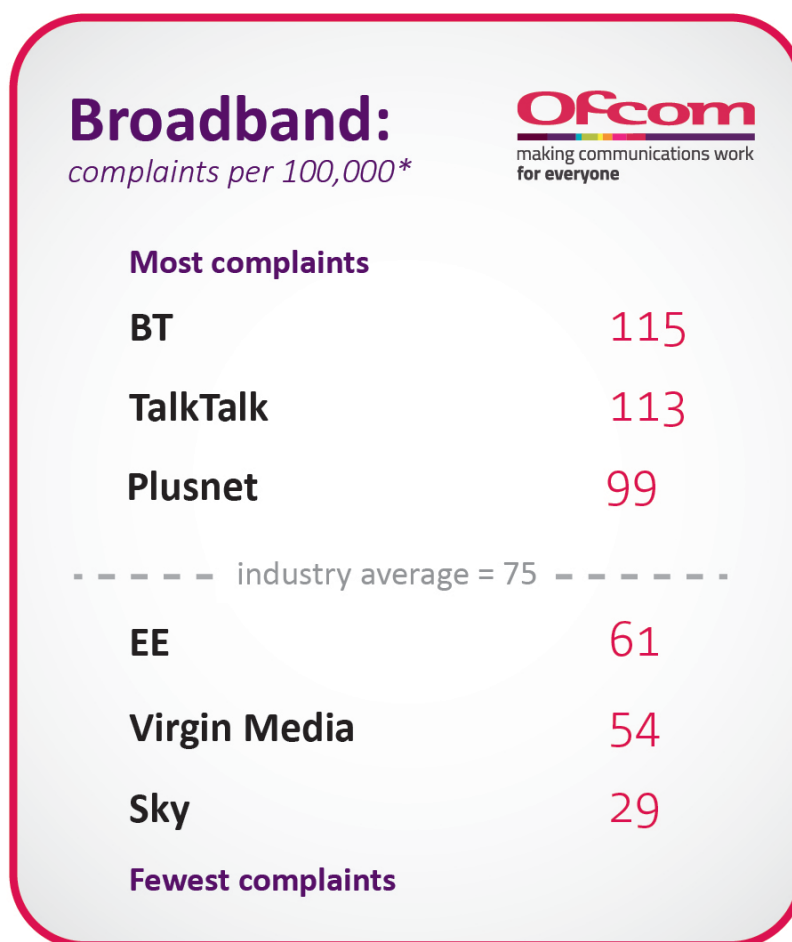
Some customers contact Ofcom to complain about their broadband provider. Ofcom reports on the total number of complaints generated by the main broadband providers each quarter.⁹³

For 2017, Sky generated the lowest number of complaints to Ofcom per 100,000 subscribers whereas BT generated the highest number of complaints.

⁹² This has increased from 40% in 2016 to 53% in 2017.

⁹³ Further information about how we compile our complaints data can be found in our most recent quarterly report publication: Ofcom, [Telecoms and pay-TV complaints data](#).

Figure 18: Broadband complaints to Ofcom per 100,000 subscribers in 2017⁹⁴



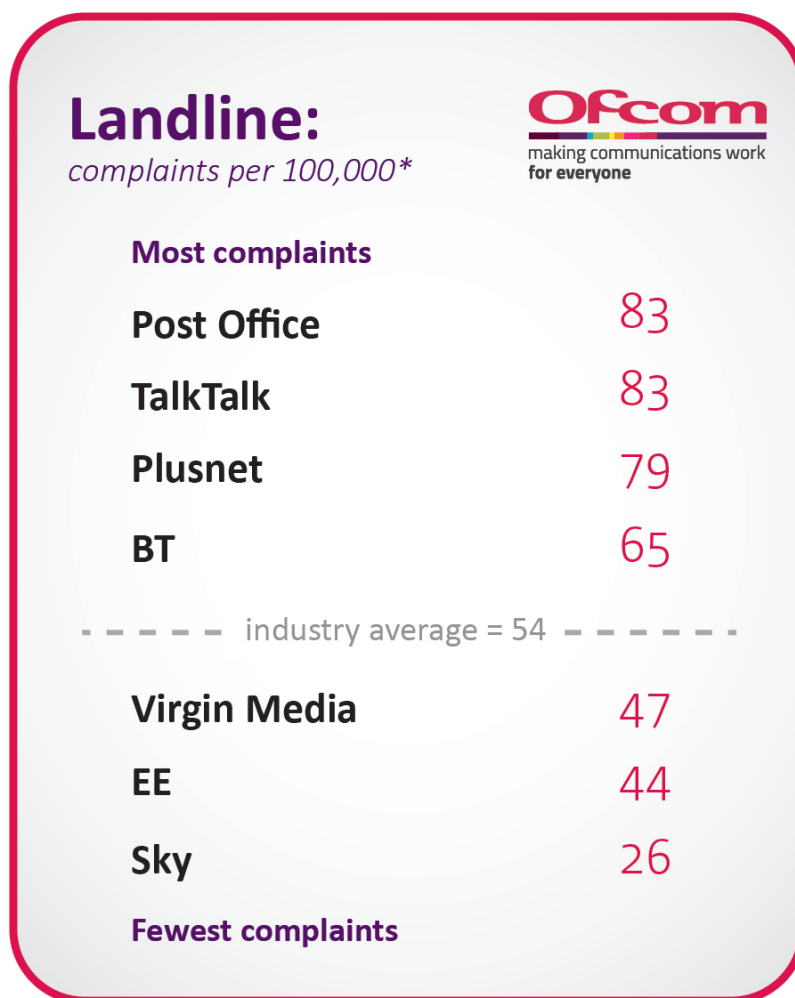
*All figures rounded to nearest whole number. Industry average is limited to those providers included in the report. Source: Ofcom, CCT data

Sky also generated the lowest number of landline complaints to Ofcom per 100,000 subscribers

For landline services, Sky generated the lowest number of complaints to Ofcom per 100,000 subscribers, whereas Post Office and TalkTalk generated the highest number of complaints in 2017.

⁹⁴ We have normalised complaints figures using the average of the quarterly subscriber figures across the year. This is a change from the methodology used to calculate the 2016 complaints data and therefore we cannot make any comparisons between 2016 and 2017 data.

Figure 19: Landline complaints to Ofcom per 100,000 subscribers in 2017⁹⁵



*All figures rounded to nearest whole number. Actual measurable difference may in some cases be less than one. Industry average is limited to those providers included in the report. Source: Ofcom, CCT data

Complaints handling⁹⁶

Satisfaction with complaints handling in the broadband markets has decreased since 2016

Complaints handling is a crucial part of customer service. Unless providers respond effectively to dissatisfied customers, issues can become drawn-out and any harm can increase. Ofcom requires providers to have in place transparent, accessible and effective complaints handling procedures.⁹⁷

When asked, half of broadband customers who complained to their provider said they were satisfied with how their complaint was handled, a fall compared to 2016.⁹⁸ This decline has mainly been

⁹⁵ We have normalised complaints figures using the average of the quarterly subscriber figures across the year. This is a change from the methodology used to calculate the 2016 complaints data and therefore we cannot make any comparisons between 2016 and 2017 data.

⁹⁶ In the Quality of customer service – complaints research ‘average’ refers to the average of the providers included in the survey (see table).

⁹⁷ Ofcom, [The Ofcom Approved Code of Practice for Complaints Handling](#).

⁹⁸ 56% of broadband customers said they were satisfied with complaints handling in 2016.

driven by a decrease in satisfaction with providers' handling of service issue complaints,⁹⁹ such as slow broadband speeds, complete or intermittent loss of service or service not as advertised.

EE and Sky had high satisfaction with broadband complaints handling

Both Sky and EE ranked higher than average for overall satisfaction with complaints handling, while TalkTalk ranked lower than average.

Figure 20: Broadband – overall satisfaction with complaint handling

	Average Broadband	BT	EE	Plusnet	Sky	TalkTalk	Virgin Media
Overall satisfaction with complaint handling	50% ▼	50% ▼	59%*	48%	57%*	40%* ▼	46% ▼

Source: [Ofcom Quality of customer service – complaints research](#), online survey, fieldwork carried out by BDRC, December 2017/January 2018

Q. Overall, how satisfied are you with the service you received from [provider] customer services with regard to the complaint that you had?

Base: All who complained about the broadband service in past 6 months (3396), BT (717), EE (291), Plusnet (266), Sky (720), TalkTalk (598), Virgin Media (804).

Red or green shading and * indicates significantly lower/higher than the sector average at the 95% confidence level. Arrows indicate an increase or decrease compared to 2016. No 2016 data for Plusnet.¹⁰⁰

These findings were also reflected in customer satisfaction with providers' customer service during the complaints handling process, with Sky and EE ranking higher than average across a number of factors, while TalkTalk ranked lower than average across each factor.

⁹⁹ Satisfaction with service issue complaints was 45% compared to 52% in 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Plusnet was added to the 2017/18 survey as it reached the 4% market share inclusion criteria.

Figure 21: Broadband – satisfaction with specific aspects of customer service measured

Satisfaction with specific aspects of customer service:	Average Broadband	BT	EE	Plusnet	Sky	TalkTalk	Virgin Media
Ease of finding provider contact details	63%	62%	64% ▲	69%	65%	57%*	65%
Ease of getting through to the right person (PHONE)	50%	50% ▲	66%* ▲	44%	55%*	39%*	50%
Time taken to handle issue	46% ▼	45% ▼	55%*	44%	52%*	37%* ▼	44% ▼
Getting issue resolved to your satisfaction	49% ▼	49% ▼	58%*	48%	57%*	40%* ▼	47% ▼
Courtesy and politeness of advisors	65%	65%	70% ▲	69%	71%*	55%* ▼	62% ▼
Advisor doing what they said they would do	55% ▼	54%	62%*	60%	62%* ▼	45%* ▼	54% ▼
Logging of query details to avoid having to repeat yourself	49% ▼	51% ▼	56%*	55%	58%* ▼	39%* ▼	43%* ▼
Offering compensation or goodwill payment	36% ▼	38% ▼	46%*	26%*	42%* ▼	30%* ▼	33% ▼
Willingness to help resolve your issue	58% ▼	58%	64%	62%	65%*	47%* ▼	55% ▼

Source: *Ofcom Quality of customer service – complaints research*, online survey, fieldwork carried out by BDRC, December 2017/January 2018

Q. And how satisfied were you with the following aspects of [provider]'s customer service?

Base: All who complained about the broadband service in past 6 months (3396), BT (717), EE (291), Plusnet (266), Sky (720), TalkTalk (598), Virgin Media (804).

Red or green shading and * indicates significantly lower/higher than the sector average at the 95% confidence level. Arrows indicate an increase or decrease compared to 2016. No 2016 data for Plusnet.

Around half of broadband complaints were completely resolved

Consumers reported that around half of their broadband complaints were completely resolved by their provider; this proportion was higher for EE and Sky and lower for TalkTalk. Just over a third of all complaints were completely resolved on the first contact with provider; this was higher for Sky and lower for TalkTalk.

Figure 22: Broadband – proportion of complaints completely resolved and resolved on first contact

	Average Broadband	BT	EE	Plusnet	Sky	TalkTalk	Virgin Media
Proportion of complaints completely resolved	49% ▼	51% ▼	57%*	47%	53%*	37%* ▼	49% ▼
Proportion of complaints resolved on first contact	35%	36%	40%	34%	41%*	25%*	33%

Source: *Ofcom Quality of customer service – complaints research*, online survey, fieldwork carried out by BDRC, December 2017/January 2018

Q. In your opinion, was [provider] able to successfully resolve your complaint? Q. You said that your complaint was completely resolved, was it completely resolved on your first contact with PROVIDER?

Base: All who complained about the broadband service in past 6 months (3396), BT (717), EE (291), Plusnet (266), Sky (720), TalkTalk (598), Virgin Media (804).

Red or green shading and * indicates significantly lower/higher than the sector average at the 95% confidence level. Arrows indicate an increase or decrease compared to 2016. No 2016 data for Plusnet. No 2016 data for proportion of complaints resolved on first contact.¹⁰¹

Satisfaction with the handling of landline complaints has also fallen

Just over half (53%) of landline customers who complained to their provider said they were satisfied with how their complaint was handled, a decline compared to 2016.¹⁰² Again this has mostly been driven by a decrease in satisfaction with handling of service issue complaints, such as poor line quality or voicemails delivered late.¹⁰³

Sky had high satisfaction for landline complaints handling

In 2017, Sky ranked higher than average overall for customer satisfaction with landline complaints handling, while TalkTalk ranked lower.

Figure 23: Landline – overall satisfaction with complaints handling

	Average Landline	BT	Sky	TalkTalk	Virgin Media
Overall satisfaction with complaint handling	53% ▼	53% ▼	58%* ▼	44%* ▼	53%

Source: [Ofcom Quality of customer service – complaints research](#), online survey, fieldwork carried out by BDRC, December 2017/January 2018

Q. Overall, how satisfied are you with the service you received from [provider] customer services with regard to the complaint that you had?

Base: All who complained about the landline service in past 6 months (2002), BT (579), Sky (500), TalkTalk (420), Virgin Media (503).

Red or green shading and * indicates significantly lower/higher than the sector average at the 95% confidence level. Arrows indicate an increase or decrease compared to 2016.

These findings were also reflected in customer satisfaction with different aspects of providers' customer service during the complaints handling process; Sky ranked higher than average across five factors, while TalkTalk ranked lower than average across eight factors.

¹⁰¹ This question was new to the 2017/18 research.

¹⁰² Down from 62% in 2016.

¹⁰³ 52% in 2017 vs. 66% in 2016.

Figure 24: Landline – satisfaction with specific aspects of customer service measured

Satisfaction with specific aspects of customer service:	Average Landline	BT	Sky	TalkTalk	Virgin Media
Ease of finding provider contact details	62%	62%	64%	52%*	65%
Ease of getting through to the right person (PHONE)	49%	50%	53% ▼	42%	46%
Time taken to handle issue	51% ▼	50% ▼	58%*	43%* ▼	50% ▼
Getting issue resolved to your satisfaction	54% ▼	56% ▼	58%	45%* ▼	52%
Courtesy and politeness of advisors	64%	65%	67%	54%* ▼	64%
Advisor doing what they said they would do	58% ▼	57%	66%*	46%* ▼	58%
Logging of query details to avoid having to repeat yourself	54% ▼	54% ▼	62%*	43%* ▼	51% ▼
Offering compensation or goodwill payment	47% ▼	46% ▼	55%*	40%* ▼	43% ▼
Willingness to help resolve your issue	59% ▼	58% ▼	65%*	47%* ▼	60%

Source: *Ofcom Quality of customer service – complaints research*, online survey, fieldwork carried out by BDRC, December 2017/January 2018

Q. And how satisfied were you with the following aspects of [provider]'s customer service?

Base: All who complained about the landline service in past 6 months (2002), BT (579), Sky (500), TalkTalk (420), Virgin Media (503).

Red or green shading and * indicates significantly lower/higher than the sector average at the 95% confidence level. Arrows indicate an increase or decrease compared to 2016.

Almost three in five landline complaints were completely resolved

Customers reported that almost three in five of all landline complaints were completely resolved by their provider in 2017; however, the proportion was lower for TalkTalk.

Customers also reported that just less than half of all landline complaints were completely resolved on the first contact with provider; again the proportion for TalkTalk was lower compared to the average.

Figure 25: Landline – proportion of complaints completely resolved and resolved on first contact

	Average Landline	BT	Sky	TalkTalk	Virgin Media
Proportion of complaints completely resolved	57% ▼	60% ▼	57%	47%* ▼	56%
Proportion of complaints resolved on first contact	45%	48%	46%	34%*	43%

Source: [Ofcom Quality of customer service – complaints research](#), online survey, fieldwork carried out by BDRC, December 2017/January 2018

Q. In your opinion, was [provider] able to successfully resolve your complaint? Q. You said that your complaint was completely resolved, was it completely resolved on your first contact with PROVIDER?

Base: All who complained about the landline service in past 6 months (2002), BT (579), Sky (500), TalkTalk (420), Virgin Media (503).

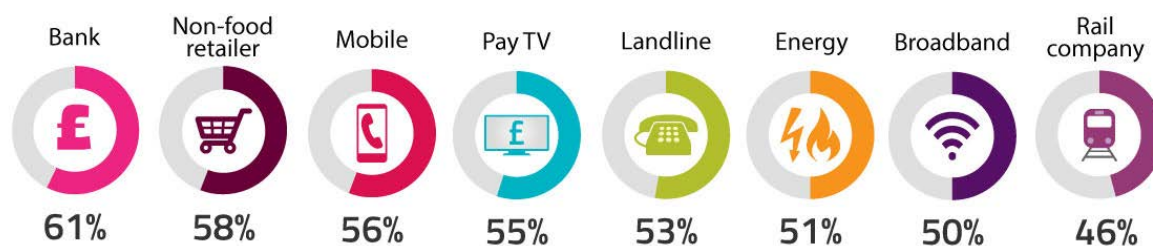
Red or green shading and * indicates significantly lower/higher than the sector average at the 95% confidence level. Arrows indicate an increase or decrease compared to 2016. No 2016 data for proportion of complaints resolved on first contact.

Satisfaction with complaint handling in other sectors

The level of overall satisfaction with broadband complaint handling was in line with the energy and rail sectors, but lower than the bank and non-food retail sectors.

The level of overall satisfaction with landline complaint handling was in line with the energy, rail and non-food retail sectors, but lower than the bank sector.

Figure 26: Overall satisfaction with complaint handling in communications, energy, bank, non-food retail and rail sectors



Source for landline, mobile, broadband and pay TV: [Ofcom Quality of customer service – complaints research](#), online survey, fieldwork carried out by BDRC, December 2017/January 2018

Q. Overall, how satisfied are you with the service you received from [provider] customer services with regard to the complaint that you had?

Base: All who complained about each service in past 6 months: Landline (2002), Mobile (2856), Broadband (3396), Pay TV (1824). Source for energy, bank, rail company and non-food retailer: Ofcom complaint handling benchmarking survey - online survey, fieldwork carried out by Populus, 6 – 7 December

Q. Overall, how satisfied are you with the service you received from [provider's] customer services with regard to the complaint that you had?

Base: All who complained about each service in the past 6 months: energy (223), bank (210), non-food retailer (395) and rail company (172).

Complaints taken to an alternative dispute resolution scheme

Service quality was the most common type of broadband complaint taken to an alternative dispute resolution scheme

If a customer believes their provider has not dealt with a complaint properly, they can escalate it to the appropriate alternative dispute resolution (ADR) scheme. There are two schemes that handle broadband and landline complaints,¹⁰⁴ both of which have recently published data summarising the complaints they received between October and December 2017, broken down by provider. This information can be found on their respective websites.¹⁰⁵

For broadband services, service quality (for example, loss of service, disconnections and broadband speeds) and billing were the most common types of complaint made to the ADR schemes.

Figure 27: Most common type of complaints made to ADR schemes for the largest broadband providers (Q4, 2017)

	Most Common	Second Most Common
BT	Service Quality (41%)	Billing (21%)
EE	Service Quality (49%)	Billing (19%)
Plusnet	Service Quality (42%)	Billing (19%)
Sky	Service Quality (38%)	Billing (19%)
TalkTalk	Service Quality (42%)	Contract Issues (13%)
Virgin Media	Contract Issues (23%)	Billing (21%), Service Quality (21%)

Source: CISAS and OS data

Over 70 percent of broadband complaints considered by the ADR schemes were found in favour of the consumer or settled

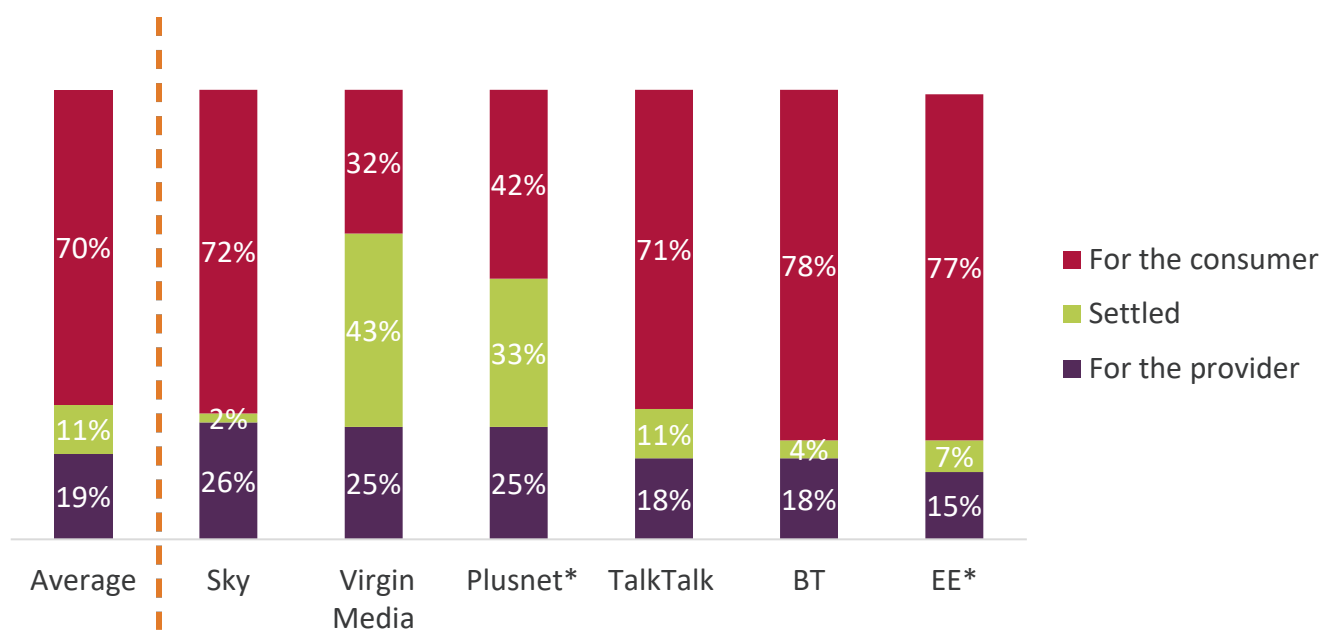
BT and EE had the highest proportion of complaints found in favour of the consumer,¹⁰⁶ whereas Virgin Media had the lowest. Virgin Media and Plusnet settled a much larger proportion of complaints than the other providers.

¹⁰⁴ Ofcom currently approves two ADR schemes in communications: Ombudsman Services: Communications (OS) and Communication and Internet Services Adjudication scheme (CISAS). Our most recent review is: Ofcom, 2017, [Review of Ofcom's approval of Alternative Dispute Resolution Schemes](#).

¹⁰⁵ [OS website](#) and [CISAS website](#).

¹⁰⁶ ADR schemes will investigate a complaint if it is within their terms of reference, and will then allocate the outcome to the following categories: for the provider - these are cases that are found entirely in favour of the communications provider, with nothing going to the consumer; settled - these are cases resolved with the agreement of both the communications provider and the consumer without the need for an investigation; and for the consumer - these are cases where any part of the complaint is found in favour of the customer.

Figure 28: ADR case outcomes for the largest broadband providers (Q4, 2017)



Source: CISAS and OS data. Some figures do not sum to 100% due to rounding. Those marked * have a low base size.

Service quality was the most common type of landline complaint taken to an ADR scheme

For landline services, service quality (for example, loss of service and disconnections) and billing were the most common types of complaints made to the ADR schemes for the main landline providers.¹⁰⁷

Figure 29: Most common type of complaints made to ADR schemes for the largest landline providers (Q4, 2017)

	Most Common	Second Most Common
BT	Service Quality (33%)	Billing (27%)
EE	Service Quality (49%)	Billing (20%)
Plusnet	Service Quality (33%)	Billing (23%)
Post Office	Contract Issues (35%)	Service Quality (28%)
Sky	Service Quality (35%)	Billing (22%)
TalkTalk	Service Quality (35%)	Contract Issues (15%)
Virgin Media	Contract Issues (25%)	Billing (20%)

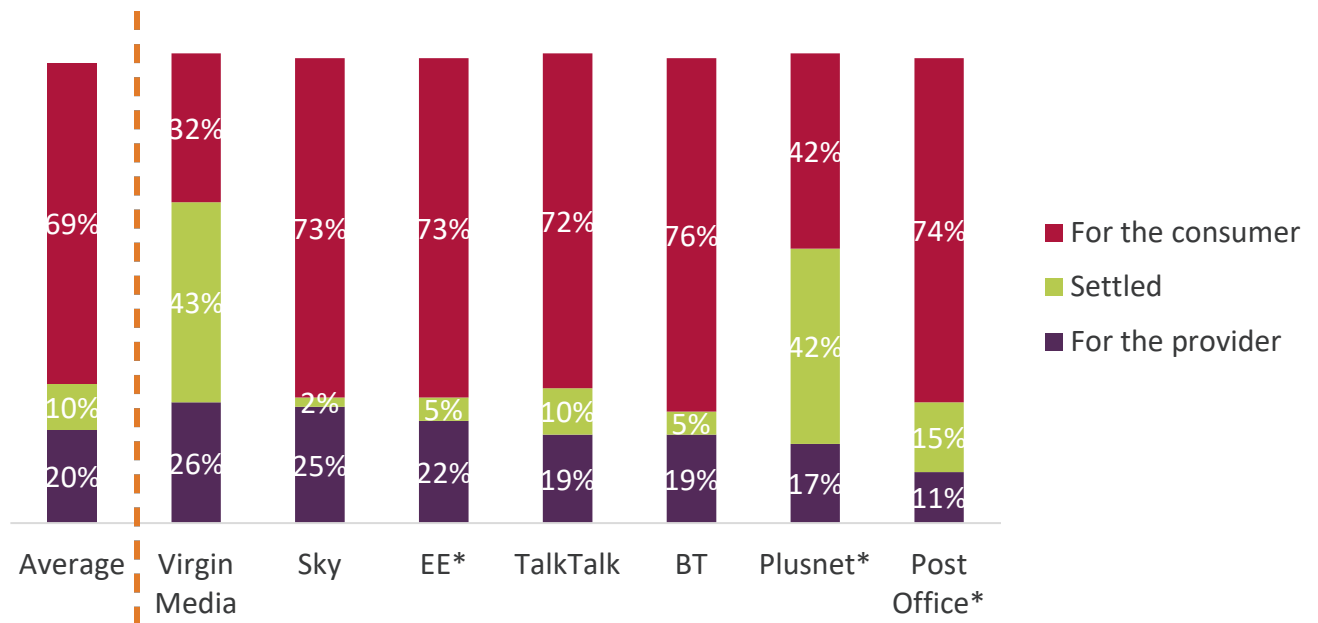
Source: CISAS and OS data

¹⁰⁷ Both schemes log one case per service. That means that each case logged may include a number of different complaints relating to the same service (for example, a consumer may complain about their bill, but also their provider's customer service in relation to their broadband service). Both schemes allocate each case to a single category of complaint according to what they perceive to be the main issue raised by the complainant.

Over three quarters of landline complaints considered by the ADR schemes were found in favour of the consumer or settled

BT had the highest proportion of complaints found in favour of the consumer, whereas Virgin had the lowest. Virgin Media and Plusnet settled a much larger proportion of complaints than the other providers.

Figure 30: ADR case outcomes for the largest landline providers (Q4, 2017)



Source: CISAS and OS data. Chart only includes providers with a market share over 1.5%. Providers with OS: BT, EE, Plusnet (from 21 November 2017, with CISAS before) and Sky (with CISAS from 1 February 2018). Providers with CISAS: TalkTalk (from 1 October 2017, with OS before) and Virgin. Some figures do not sum to 100% due to rounding. Those marked * have a low base size.