

MEDIA RELEASE

OUR’s Mystery Shopping Findings Show Improvement in Utilities Customer Service

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2021 July 30): The findings of the 2020 Mystery Shopping survey conducted by the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) reveal a general improvement in the performance of the utilities service providers, with an overall performance score across all service providers of 74% compared to 66% in 2019.

However, most of the utility providers continued to underperform in the service provided to their customers in store.

The findings were revealed by Market Research Services Limited (MRSL) at a webinar hosted by the OUR on Thursday, 2021 July 29. MRSL was contracted by the OUR to conduct the Mystery Shopping survey.

The recording of the global broadcast can be viewed on the [OUR’s YouTube channel](#).

Mystery shoppers examined the quality of service provided to them in store, via telephone calls to call centres and online chats with utility providers’ representatives. The **combined** figures indicate that NWC was the best performing utility provider with 80%, followed by JPS with 76%, FLOW with 70% and Digicel with 68%, as indicated in Table 1 below.

**TABLE 1: The Utilities Performance in Total Customer Experience
(In Store, Call Centre & Online Chats)**

	OVERALL PERFORMANCE 2020
FLOW	70%
DIGICEL	68%
JPS	76%
NWC	80%
AVERAGE SCORE	74%

Utility providers received the lowest scores for in store performance, with NWC having the highest score in this area, at 71%, followed by JPS, 66%; FLOW, 59% and Digicel, 57%.

OUR's Mystery Shopping Findings Show Improvement .../2

Compared to 2019, only NWC showed any significant improvement in this area, moving up by 9 percentage points from 62% in 2019 to 71% in 2020. Both JPS and FLOW saw marginal reductions in their in store performance in 2020 compared to 2019, while Digicel recorded a 3 percentage point increase (see Table 2 below).

TABLE 2: The Utilities Performance in Total Customer Experience (In Store)

	TOTAL SCORE 2020	TOTAL SCORE 2019	VARIANCE
FLOW	59%	60%	-1%age point
DIGICEL	57%	54%	3%age points
JPS	66%	68%	-2%age points
NWC	71%	62%	9% age points
AVERAGE	63%	61%	2%age points

The best area of performance for the utility companies was the utilization of the online chat platform. NWC received a very high score of 98% in this area, followed by Digicel, 91%; FLOW, 85% and JPS, 77%.

When assessed for their COVID-19 measures, it was found that utilities, for the most part, have put in place measures, resulting in an overall score of 72%. All utility providers received low scores for sanitation of customer service areas.

JPS achieved the highest score for its COVID-19 measures with 80%, NWC received 74%, while Digicel and FLOW received 68% and 66%, respectively. The COVID-19 measures considered included whether there were any visible social distance markers in store, whether masks were required upon entry, and if sanitization was being done while in-store as well as at points of entry.

BACKGROUND

OUR's Mystery Shopping exercise was conducted between 2020 September and 2021 January. It involved the selection of a range of different persons across all demographic groups who visited, made calls to and participated in online chats with the various stores, call centres and chat rooms of the different utility companies. Each Mystery Shopper was given a specific scenario to "shop" including:

- Enquiring about obtaining a new meter
- Bill query and payment plans
- Enquiring about Digicel Internet and number portability
- Enquiring about FLOW Internet and number portability

Shoppers remained anonymous throughout the process. Visits and calls were made during both the typical peak and off peak periods and totaled 143 contacts with utility customer service contact points.

The OUR has shared the findings with the utility providers and will be guided by the results as it continues to work with the service providers to improve their customer service offerings.