

MEDIA RELEASE

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

(Kingston, Jamaica; 2022 June 29): The findings of 2022 Mystery Shopping survey commissioned by the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) to assess the quality of service being provided by utility providers, have revealed a significant decline in the performance of the utility service providers. The overall average performance score across all service providers was 49 percent.

The survey was conducted by Market Research Services Limited (MRSL) and it examined the quality of service provided to the mystery shoppers in-store, via telephone calls to call centres and online chats with utility providers’ representatives. As shown in Table 1 below, the combined figures indicate that the best performing utility providers were JPS and Digicel with scores of 56 percent and 55 percent respectively. NWC followed with 45 percent and FLOW with 38 percent.

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

	TOTAL SCORE	PEAK	OFF-PEAK
FLOW	38%	38%	37%
DIGICEL	55%	52%	59%
JPS	56%	57%	54%
NWC	45%	47%	40%
AVERAGE SCORE	49%	49%	48%

As indicated in Table 2, the worst performing service area for the utility providers was the online chat, while they performed best through their call centres.

TABLE 2: Service area Performance

	IN-STORE	CALL CENTRE	ONLINE CHAT
FLOW	64%	46%	8%
DIGICEL	59%	61%	46%
JPS	60%	89%	21%
NWC	63%	57%	17%
AVERAGE	62%	63%	23%

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Commenting on the findings, Acting Director of Consumer and Public Affairs, Elizabeth Bennett Marsh said, "We are disappointed with the latest results. In light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, utility providers have focused on customer contact through digital means and through their call centres and we were optimistic that we would have seen better performances in these areas. The underlying reasons for the lackluster performance will be explored and addressed in more detail with the utility providers at our annual Quality of Service Symposium later this year."

It is to be noted that data gathered from the latest Mystery Shopping survey were not compared to the 2021 results because of changes to the instrument used. The 2022 instrument provides for a more probing evaluation. In the 2022 exercise, the OUR introduced additional scenarios which became necessary due to changes that came with the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant effect it had on customers' experience. The additional scenarios were specific to the different utility companies and applied equally across the different service modalities (in-store, call centre, web chat). These results have established a new enhanced baseline that is not comparable to previous years.

BACKGROUND

OUR's Mystery Shopping exercise was conducted between 2022 February and 2022 March. It involved a range of 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 providers.

No single shopper was allowed to shop at more than one location for the same company during the time of the study. Visits and calls were done during both the typical peak and off-peak period and totaled 143 contacts with utility customer service contact points.

Shoppers remained anonymous throughout the process. Each Mystery Shopper was given a specific scenario to "shop" including enquiring about the internet, bill payment IVR, bill payment App., bill estimate, refund process, service application and water schedule.

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