

Media Release

UTILITY PROVIDERS SCORE LOW ON CUSTOMER SERVICE DELIVERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2023 December 4): The 2023 Office of Utilities Regulation's (OUR) commissioned Mystery Shopping Research has found that utility providers scored an average of 54% across all service channels (retail outlets, website chats, social media platforms, mobile app, and call centers) in the delivery of customer service.

The annual Mystery Shopping survey which forms a part of the OUR's mandate, is designed to monitor the customer service levels delivered to consumers by the various service providers and was conducted by Market Research Services Ltd. (MRSL). The scores represent an average (mean) of in-store score, the call center and online chats (chat bot and mobile app) with a comparative view of scores obtained during peak and off-peak periods.

"It is clear from these findings that some providers have made much effort to address the weak areas coming out of the last study and this is very evident in the change in some of the scores obtained this year. This type of response must be encouraged across all service providers. With only 54% overall score, service providers still have a huge gap to fill to get to the target best practice of 80%", noted OUR's Director of Consumer and Public Affairs, Yvonne Nicholson.

The top performer was FLOW at 65% with the main area of focus for improvement being its Call Centre service channel, especially its handling of queries regarding the refund process and bill payment using the mobile app. With regards to the In-store service channel, Flow underperformed in the provision of services for persons with special needs and in escalating complaints to a manager/supervisor when additional assistance was needed. FLOW generally performed better than other providers across all social media channels.

Digicel came in at 59%, performing best in the digital space through its mobile app, however consistently failed in the courtesies displayed to customers when addressing their queries including opening and closing pleasantries. The study informed that Digicel's Branch service delivery could improve with additional attention to services for persons with special needs and access to the manager/supervisor when the need arises.

Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (JPS) scored 55% and was found to deliver excellently in the general/core service areas during interactions via the Call Centre service channel. However, JPS representatives were weak in responding to customers' needs in the more targeted areas. The findings showed that JPS performed much better in the Branch or face-to-face service channel and delivered the best results across all providers in this area.

National Water Commission (NWC) scored 43%, delivering best above all service providers in the Call Centre service channel. This was achieved by a notable improvement in the service delivered by its representatives across all the scenarios evaluated and was especially outstanding in queries related to the water schedule. The NWC recorded a stable performance in its Branch or face-to-face service channel as well. There is an important need however for the NWC to pay close attention to its service

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delivery in the digital space. This is especially critical as customers are being encouraged to rely more on digital platforms for interacting with NWC.

The next Mystery Shopping Research will be conducted during 2024.

About the OUR's Mystery Shopping

The Mystery Shopping Research involved the selection of a range of persons across all demographic groups who visited, made calls to, and participated in online chats with the various stores, call centers and chat rooms of the different utility companies respectively. There were nearly three hundred interactions and each researcher ('Mystery Shopper') was given a specific service scenario to 'shop' relevant to each provider, including Bill Payment, Refund Processes, Bill Estimates, Service Application, Upgrade in Deposit, Water schedules, etc. Shoppers remained anonymous throughout the process and comprised both males and females and persons across the age spectrum.

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