
Office of Utilities Regulation

Consumer Affairs Unit

Quarterly Performance Report

2023 October - December

Publication Date: 2024 March 28



OFFICE OF UTILITIES REGULATION

36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10

Consumer Affairs Unit Quarterly Performance Report

Document Number: 2024/GEN/010/QPR.001

Publication Date: 2024 March 28

Table of Contents

The Role and Objectives of the OUR	4
The Consumer and Public Affairs Department	4
The Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU)	4
The Intent and Purpose of the Quarterly Performance Report.....	5
Methods of Calculation.....	5
Executive Summary	7
Table 1: Service Providers Contact Summary 2023 vs 2022.....	8
Chapter 1: Utilities’ Responsiveness	10
(i) Acknowledgements	10
Table 2: Acknowledgement within Standard (5 business days)	10
(ii) Response to Case Letters.....	10
Table 3: Response to case letters within standard (30 business days)	10
Chapter 2: Main Customer Concerns.....	12
(i) Billing.....	12
(ii) Interruption of Service.....	12
(iii) Poor Service Quality	13
(iv) Irregular Supply	13
(v) Disconnection.....	13
Chapter 3: Guaranteed Standards Performance	14
(i) What are the Guaranteed Standards?.....	14
(ii) How are customers compensated?.....	14
(iii) Quarterly report of breaches.....	14
(iv) Utilities’ Performance on Guaranteed Standards	15
Table 4: Private/Small Water and Sewerage Service Providers’ QoS Reporting Requirements and Submissions	18
Table 5: GS Breaches and Compensation for Private/Small Water and/or Sewerage Service Providers	18
Chapter 4: Customer Contact Centre/Call Centre Performance Reports	20
Table 6: NWC’s Call Centre Performance.....	20
Table 7: JPS Call Centre Performance.....	21
Chapter 5: Notification of Planned Outages Report	23

Chapter 6: Customer Contact Distribution.....	24
Chapter 6: Appeals Performance	26
(i) Closure of Appeals	26
(ii) Outstanding Appeals	26
Appeals Process Resolution Rate	26
Chapter 7: Consumer Affairs Highlights	28
(i) Credits/Compensation	28
(ii) OUR Conducting Monitoring and Assessment of Main Utility Service Providers' Complaints 28	
Table 8: Main Service Providers Complaints Compliance Report Submission for the period 2023 July 1 – 2023 December 31.....	29
Appendix I: List of Tables: 2023 October - December.....	30
Table 9: Contact Activity Summary (All Utilities).....	30
Table 10: Distribution of Contacts by Categories.....	30
Table 11: Annual Distribution of Contacts by Categories	31
Table 12: Distribution of Closed Appeals by Utilities.....	32
Table 13: Distribution of Appeals (Outstanding).....	32
Table 14: CAU's Performance on Service Standards (New Appeals	33
Appendix II: List of Figures	33
Appendix III: Definition Of Terms Used In Documenting Customer Contacts	34
Appendix IV: Statement on Confidentiality of Telecommunications Service Provider Information 35	
Appendix V: Appeals Process	36
Appendix VI: CAU Internal Performance Standards.....	36
Special Appeals	37
Appendix VII: Process Timelines for NWC Appeals	37
Appendix VIII: List of Acronyms	40

The Role and Objectives of the OUR

The Office of Utilities Regulation Act of 1995 established the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) as a body corporate. Under the Act, the OUR is charged with regulating the provision of utility services in the electricity, telecommunications and water and sewerage sectors. The objectives are to:

- Ensure that consumers of utility services enjoy an acceptable quality of service at a reasonable cost.
- Establish and maintain transparent, consistent and objective rules for the regulation of utility service providers.
- Promote the long-term efficient provision of utility services for national development consistent with Government policy.
- Provide an avenue of appeal for consumers who have grievances with the utility service providers.
- Work with other related agencies to promote a sustainable environment, and act independently and impartially.

The Consumer and Public Affairs Department

The OUR discharges its mandate to protect utility consumers through the Consumer and Public Affairs (CPA) Department. The Consumer Affairs Unit, the Public Affairs Unit (PAU) and the OUR Information Centre (OURIC) comprise the CPA Department. This Department is the section of the OUR that directly interfaces with utility consumers and one of its main responsibilities is to investigate appeals of decisions made by utility service providers brought by aggrieved consumers.

The Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU)

Among other things, the CAU receives, records and processes utility consumer complaints and appeals, monitors trends in consumer complaints and provides the Office with advice on measures to improve consumer welfare.

The CAU uses, as a primary input to its policy development and advice to the Office, the results of analyses of the complaints received from customers about the services provided by the utility companies. Feedback from consumers at town meetings, public fora and the media are also key sources for opinions and activities of utility services.

A consumer survey which seeks consumer feedback on a range of consumer issues is conducted every 18 - 24 months. Additionally, a public education programme is pursued, which includes organising consultations with stakeholders on pertinent regulatory matters.

The PAU manages the public education programme, media relations and the website while the Information Centre (OURIC), *inter alia*, provides information in keeping with the requirements of the Access to Information Act. Through the CPA department, the OUR also funds the Consumer Advisory Committee on Utilities (CACU) activities, which was established to operate as an independent advocacy group providing critical feedback and support for consumer issues.

The Intent and Purpose of the Quarterly Performance Report

The Quarterly Performance Report (QPR) is prepared by the Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) and provides the public with information and analysis about the contacts received from utility providers. The information includes the number of customer contacts received over the review period; JPS and NWC's performance against the Guaranteed Standards; utilities' responsiveness to our appeals process; and the Unit's performance against the Appeals Process timelines.

The QPR is intended to be a fair, reasonable, and transparent report of the above-mentioned activities. The statistics for each reporting period are gathered from our Customer Information Database and reflect the contacts received from utility consumers island wide. These contacts are received via various channels, namely: letters, telephone, walk-ins, e-mails, fax and social media.

Methods of Calculation

The methods of calculation used include summation, quarterly and year-on-year comparisons. The resort latterly to normalize the number of contacts by expressing this as per customer base reflects our allowance for fair comparisons. Consequently, the report cites the number of contacts per 100,000 of the service provider's customer base. Even so, it is recognized that the telecommunications sector with its heterogeneous customer bases, presents a peculiarity for comparison with the water and electricity utilities that have more homogenous customer bases. The information should be interpreted as a sample or statistical representation of the intake to the Unit.

Requests for additional details or any comments regarding this document should be directed to:

Collette Goode, Consumer Affairs Specialist – Policy
Email: collette.goode@our.org.jm

OR

Yvonne Nicholson – Director, Consumer & Public Affairs
Email: yvonneg.nicholson@our.org.jm

Executive Summary

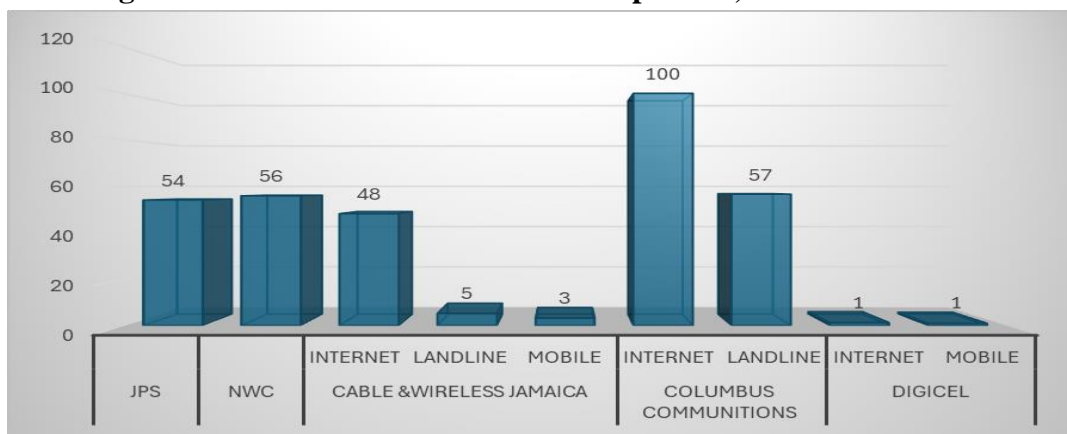
In the 2023 October to December quarter, the OUR's Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) received 903 contacts which is a 7% increase over the preceding period. The data show that the most significant increases were in the categories of: *Irregular Supply* (56%), *Guaranteed Standards* (31%), and *Poor Service Quality* (20%). *Disconnection* was the sole main category with a decrease in the number of contacts of 24%.

The following shows the distribution of contacts per service provider¹:

- Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (JPS) – 373 (41%)
- National Water Commission (NWC) – 298 (33%)
- Columbus Communications (Flow) – 93 (10%)
- Cable & Wireless Jamaica Ltd. (Flow) – 76 (8%)
- Digicel – 35 (4%)
- Private Water & Sewerage Service Providers, Private Telecommunications Service Providers and Other (Not OUR regulated service, e.g. cable service) –28 (4%).

While JPS at 373 accounted for the most contacts, Figure 1 shows that Columbus Communications (Flow) accounted for the highest numbers – at 100 and 57 per 100,000 – in proportion to its internet and landline customer bases respectively.

Figure 1: Distribution of OUR contacts per 100,000 of customer base



¹ Details on contact distribution per service provider can be seen in Table 9 on page 30.

A total of 3,076 contacts were received in 2023, representing a 35% decrease over the preceding year. As is shown in Table 1, JPS (-48%), Other/Not OUR Regulated, e.g. cable service (-44%), and Columbus Communications (Flow) (-42%) accounted for the highest percentage decreases in the total utility-related contacts received in 2023 over 2022.

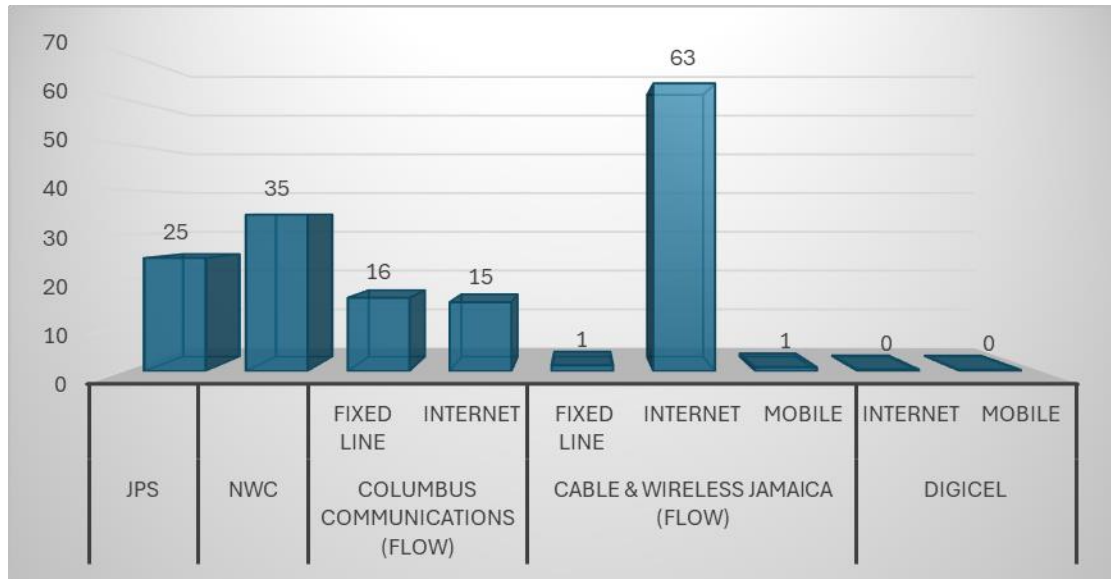
Table 1: Service Providers Contact Summary 2023 vs 2022

Service Providers	Review Periods				Total (Jan - Dec 2023)	Total 2022	% Change
	Jan - Mar	Apr - Jun	Jul - Sept	Oct - Dec			
JPS	303	246	347	373	1,269	2,440	-48%
NWC	221	230	268	298	1,017	1,216	-16%
C&WJ (FLOW)	46	36	55	76	213	195	9%
Columbus Communications (Flow)	72	92	104	93	361	623	-42%
Digicel	18	23	37	35	113	128	-12%
Private/Small Telecommunications Service Providers	2	1	3	2	8	1	700%
Private/Small Water & Sewerage Service Providers	5	10	8	8	31	8	288%
Other/ Not OUR Related	10	14	22	18	64	114	-44%
Total	677	652	844	903	3,076	4,725	-35%

During the review period, billing matters, at 45%, remained the main reason utility consumers contacted the CAU, representing a one-percentage point decrease compared to the preceding period. NWC and JPS, with 184 (20%) and 172 (19%) contacts respectively, accounted for the highest number of billing-related matters.

As shown in Figure 2, Columbus Communications (Flow) at 63 per 100,000 of its internet customer base accounted for the highest number of billing-related contacts. NWC and JPS followed with 35 and 25 per 100,000 of their customer bases.

Figure 2: Distribution of OUR billing contacts per 100,000 of customer base



Service interruption issues, at 17% of total contacts, remained the second highest reason for customer contact to the CAU for the review period and throughout 2023.

Chapter 1: Utilities' Responsiveness

(i) Acknowledgements

During the 2023 October-December quarter, there were thirteen (13) new appeals for investigation of which one (1) pertained to JPS while the other twelve (12) were NWC matters. Requests for information (case letters) were sent for all new appeals accepted.

Based on the established Service Level Agreements (SLAs), JPS and NWC agreed to acknowledge the OUR's case letters within five (5) business days. As shown in Table 2, JPS attained a perfect score of 100% for submitting their acknowledgements within the agreed timeline. For the NWC, ten out of twelve (83%) acknowledgements were received with nine (75%) being received within the agreed timeline.

Table 2: Acknowledgement within Standard (5 business days)

<i>Quarters (2023)</i>	JPS	NWC
<i>January - March</i>	83%	89%
<i>April - June</i>	100%	80%
<i>July - September</i>	100%	100%
<i>October - December</i>	100%	75%

(ii) Response to Case Letters

Service providers are required to respond to case letters within thirty (30) business days. JPS submitting its sole (100%) response that was due within the agreed timeline. As is shown in Table 3, of the NWC's ten responses that were due, four (40%) were received within the agreed timeline and six (6) outside of the timeline.

Table 3: Response to case letters within standard (30 business days)

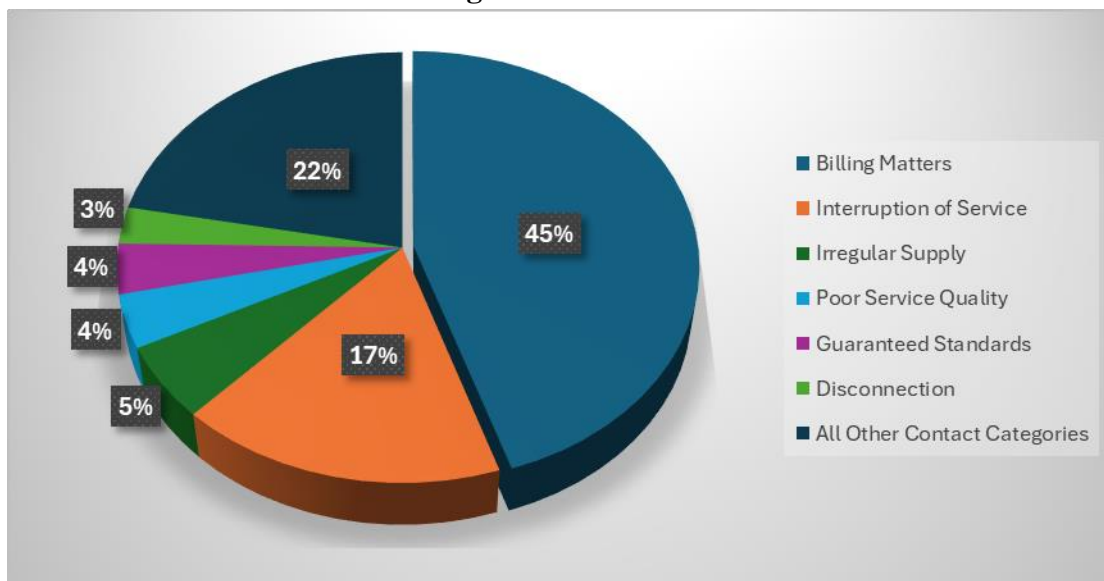
<i>Quarters (2022)</i>	JPS	NWC
<i>January – March</i>	100%	57%
<i>April - June</i>	50%	50%
<i>July - September</i>	100%	100%
<i>October - December</i>	100%	40%

For 2023, both JPS and NWC's performance declined in their average response rate compared to 2022. Except for the April to June period, JPS maintained a perfect score for submitting responses to our case letters, resulting in a 12.5 percentage point decline in performance over 2022 when a perfect score was attained for all quarters. The NWC's average compliance rating for 2023 was 61.8%, representing a 13.3 percentage point decrease over 2022.

Chapter 2: Main Customer Concerns

The main reasons for utility customers contacting the CAU during the quarter related to Billing, Interruption of Service, Irregular Supply, Poor Service Quality, Guaranteed Standards and Disconnection (Figure 3). Further details on all contacts distributed per category are provided in Table 10.

Figure 3: Main Concerns



(i) Billing

Billing matters remained the main reason for customer contact, accounting for 45% of total contacts. These matters included high consumption, disputed charges, adjustments to customers' accounts, and estimated billing.

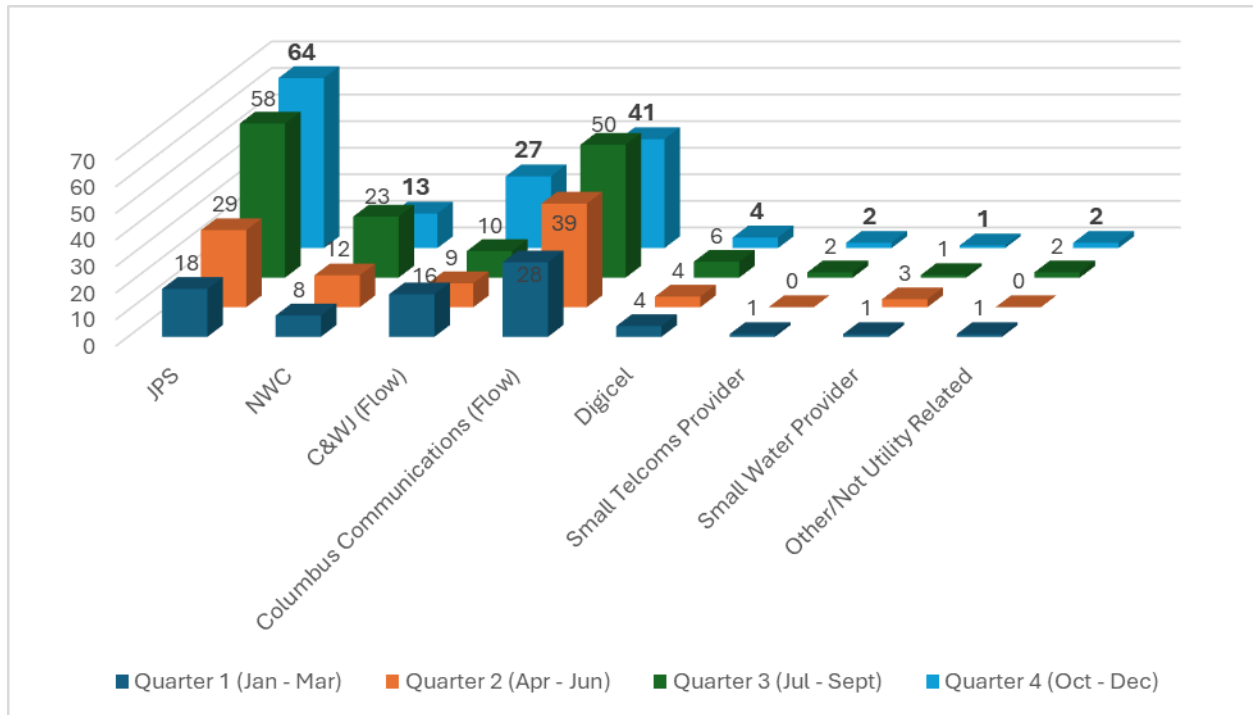
NWC and JPS continued to account for the most billing contacts with 184 (20%) and 172 (19%), respectively. Columbus Communications (Flow) and C&WJ (Flow) accounted for 16 (2%) and 15 (2%) respectively while Digicel, Small Water/Sewerage Service Providers and OUR/Other (Not utility Related) accounted for the remaining 19 (2%).

(ii) Interruption of Service

Service interruption contacts decreased by one percentage points, to 17%, when compared to the preceding quarter. As seen in Figure 4, JPS with 64 (7%), Columbus Communications (Flow)

with 41 (5%), and C&WJ (Flow) with 27 (3%) accounted for the highest number of related contacts. NWC, Digicel, Small Telecommunications Providers, Small Water and Sewerage Service Providers and Other/Not Utility Related accounted for the remaining 22 (2%) of contacts.

Figure 4: Quarterly Service Interruption Contacts



(iii) Poor Service Quality

Poor service quality contacts increased by one percentage point to 4% over the preceding quarter. JPS and Columbus Communications (Flow) and C&WJ (Flow) each accounted for 1% while NWC, Digicel and Small Water and Sewerage Service Providers shared the remaining 1%.

(iv) Irregular Supply

Like the preceding period, irregular supply accounted for 4% of total contacts with JPS accounting for 34 (2%) and the NWC 16 (2%).

(v) Disconnection

Disconnection contacts decreased by one percentage point, to 4%, over the preceding quarter. NWC and JPS accounted for 14 (2%) and seven (1%) of these contacts respectively. Columbus Communications (Flow) and C&WJ (Flow) accounted for the remaining four (1%).

Chapter 3: Guaranteed Standards Performance

(i) What are the Guaranteed Standards?

The Guaranteed Standards (GS) are performance measures that guide the provision of utility services delivered by JPS, NWC, and small water and sewerage service providers. If the companies fail to honour the agreement, the affected customer is entitled to compensation, which is applied as a credit to their utility account.

(ii) How are customers compensated?

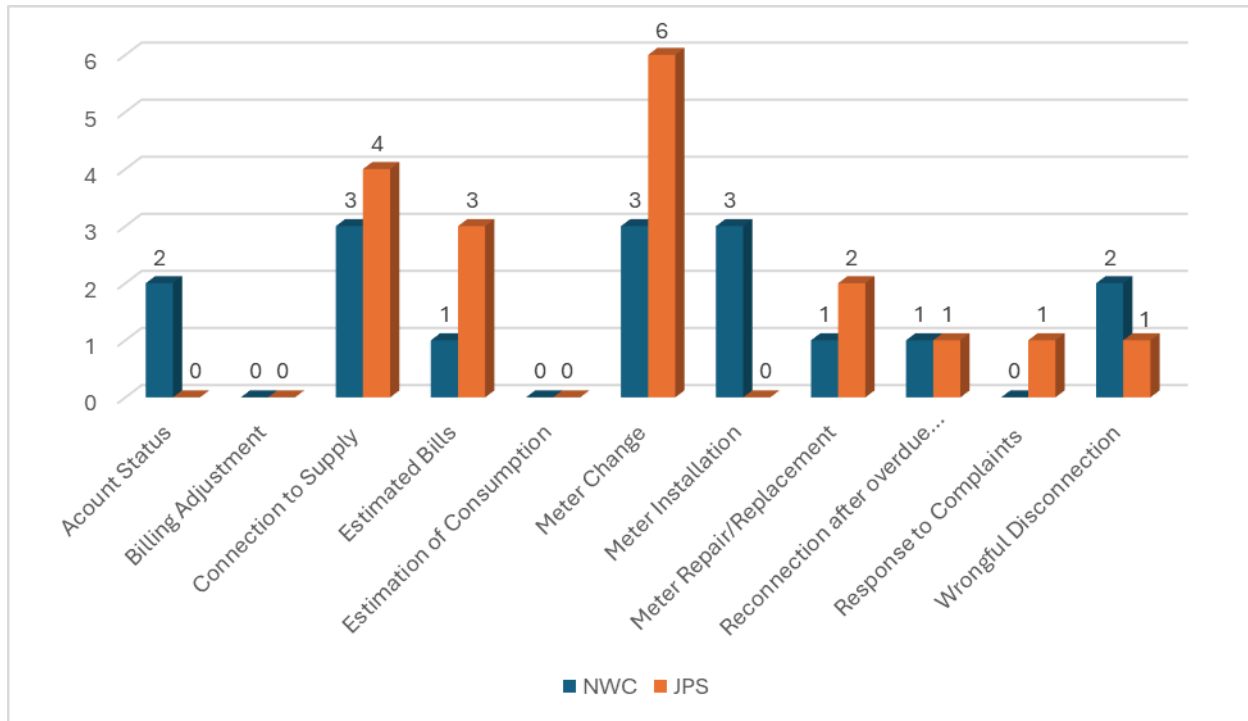
NWC: Compensation for a breach of a standard is four (4) times the applicable service charge OR six (6) times the service charge for those in the special compensation category. Where applicable, customers must submit their claims within 120 days of the breach. Breaches of individual standards will attract compensation of up to six (6) periods of non-compliance.

JPS: Residential customers: equivalent to the reconnection fee. Commercial customers: four (4) times the customer charge. Breaches of individual standards will attract compensation of up to eight (8) periods of non-compliance.

(iii) Quarterly report of breaches

The OUR received thirty-four (34) contacts from JPS and NWC customers in relation to alleged breaches of the GS, representing four percent (4%) of the total contacts received. JPS and NWC accounted for eighteen (18) and sixteen (16) contacts respectively.

As is seen in Figure 5, *Meter Change* and *Connection to Supply* accounted for the highest number of contacts in relation to alleged breaches of the GS for JPS. For the NWC, *Connection to Supply*, *Meter Change* and *Meter Installation* accounted for the highest number of contacts in relation to alleged breaches of the GS.

Figure 5: Guaranteed Standards Contacts

The GS reports submitted by the JPS and NWC did not reflect the alleged incidents of breaches reported to the OUR.

(iv) Utilities' Performance on Guaranteed Standards

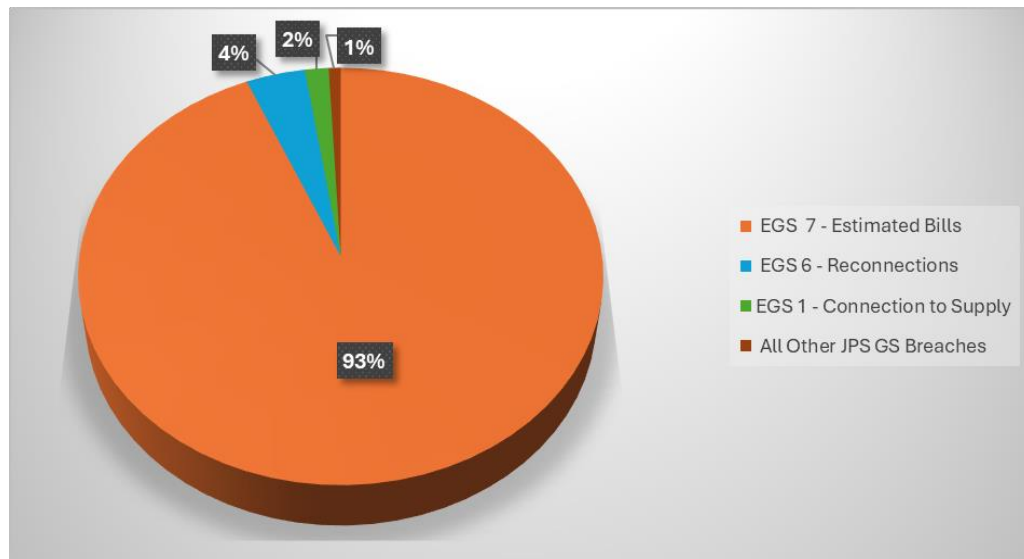
JPS

JPS's compliance report on its GS performance for the review period indicated that 20,528 breaches were committed, representing an 11% increase when compared with the preceding period. These breaches attracted compensatory payments of approximately \$47.9 million, all of which were applied automatically to the affected customers' accounts.

Guaranteed Standards related to *Estimated Bills* (which restricts JPS from sending more than two consecutive estimates without a penalty), *Reconnection* (which requires that JPS restores supply within 24 hours of payment of overdue amounts) and *Connection to Supply* (which prescribes the time within which JPS is to make a

simple connection) continued to account for the highest incidents of breaches (see Figure 6). These standards accounted for 99% of breaches and compensatory payments.

Figure 6: JPS Reported GS Breaches



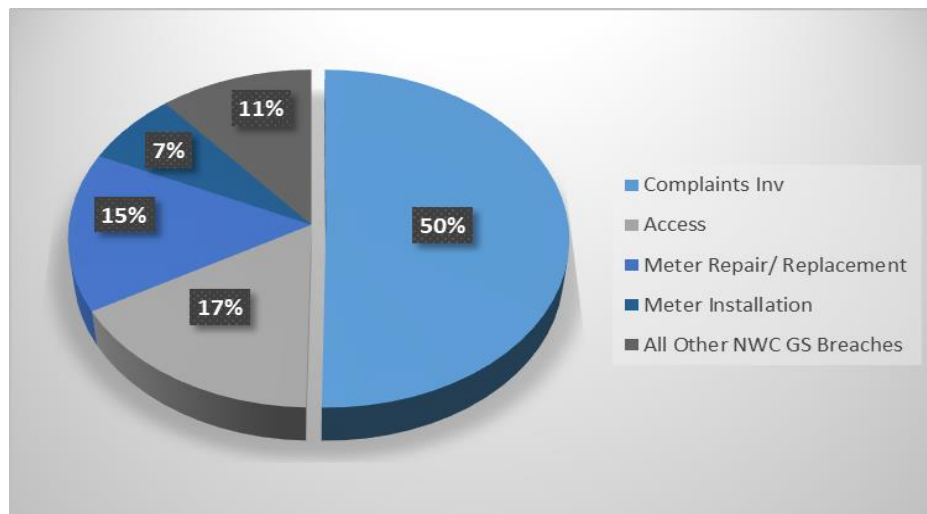
Throughout 2023, JPS's GS reports indicate that a total of 89,187 breaches were committed which represents a 30% increase in breaches over 2022. Compensation associated with these breaches amounted to approximately \$199.4 million, which was paid out automatically to the affected customers' accounts.

NWC

The NWC's Guaranteed Standards compliance report for the review period indicates that 2,279 breaches were committed during the review period, representing a 6% increase when compared with the preceding period. These breaches had a potential payout of approximately \$10.6 million while actual payments amounted to approximately \$3.8 million, or 36% of total potential payments, and were made by way of automatic credits to the affected accounts. The remaining 63% of potential payments not made include those breaches for which the required claim forms were not submitted by the affected customers for validation.

As shown in Figure 7, the standards with the highest incidents of breaches for the NWC were: Complaint Investigations (which require the NWC to complete investigations and respond or provide an update within 30 working days of receipt of a complaint), Access/New Service Connection (which requires NWC to connect a new supply within 10 working days), Meter Repair/Replacement (which stipulates that defective meters are to be verified, repaired/replaced within 20 working days); and Meter Installation (which stipulated that meters are to be installed on customer's request within 30 working days). These four (4) standards represented 93% of total breaches and 88% of potential payments.

Figure 7: NWC Reported GS Breaches



The NWC GS reports indicate that throughout 2023, 8,229 breaches were committed, representing a 3% decrease in the number of breaches committed in 2022. Potential compensation for these breaches was approximately \$36.9 million, of which approximately \$10.5 million (28%) was paid. The remaining 72% of GS compensation not paid included those for which the required claim forms were not submitted by the affected customers.

Private/Small Water and/or Sewerage Service Providers' Guaranteed Standards Report

In keeping with the provisions of their Licenses and OUR Determination Notices, licensed Private/Small Water and/or Sewerage Service Providers (PWSSP) are required to submit quarterly reports on their Quality of Service (QoS) standards performance, which include the Guaranteed and relevant Overall Standards.

As is shown in Table 4, the PWSSP were somewhat compliant as six (6) of eight (8), representing 75%, submitted their QoS reports for the 2023 October - December period. However, only one (13%) report was submitted within the stipulated timeline. We commend RESL for consistently submitting the QoS reports within the stipulated timeline.

Table 4: Private/Small Water and Sewerage Service Providers' QoS Reporting Requirements and Submissions

Licensees to Submit Quarterly QoS Reports	2023 July - September	
	Due Date	Submission Date
Can-Cara Development Ltd. (CDL)	2024.02.15	2024.03.01
Dynamic Environmental Services Ltd. (DEML)		2024.03.14
Dairy Spring Ltd. (DSL)		2024.03.05
Landmark Developers Limited		Not Received
Runaway Bay Water Company Ltd (RBWC)		Not Received
Rosehall Development Ltd. (RDL)		2024.02.15
Richmond Environmental Services Ltd. (RESL)		2024.02.12
Tryall Golf and Beach Club (TGBC)		2024.02.19

Analysis of the quarterly GS reports received from the PWSSP indicates that seven (7) breaches were committed during the review period. For these breaches, potential compensation amounted to approximately \$33,197.12, with no actual payments being made. Details of the GS breaches and compensation for the review period for these service providers are provided in Table 5.

Table 5: GS Breaches and Compensation for Private/Small Water and/or Sewerage Service Providers

Service Providers	Total Breaches	Potential Compensation (\$)	Actual Payments (\$)
Can-Cara Development Ltd.	1	2,957.12	2,957.12

Dairy Spring Ltd.	0	0	0
RESL	0	0	0
RDL	0	0	0
TGBC	6	30,240.00	0
Total	7	33,197.12	2,957.12

The analysis also showed that CDL's breach related to not reconnecting a supply for which payment was received following disconnection, within the stipulated 24-hour timeline. The compensation for this breach is automatic and was paid by CDL. The remaining six breaches related to TGBC and were associated with GS 6 – *Meter Reading* (which requires TGBC to bill accounts monthly based on meter readings, where there is access to the meters). However, for TGBC, the affected customers are required to submit a claim form for the validation and payment of compensation for this breach, which was not done.

Chapter 4: Customer Contact Centre/Call Centre Performance Reports

In recognition of the important role of Customer Contact Centres (Call Centres) in customer service delivery, the OUR has deemed it necessary to include a report on the performance of the JPS and NWC Call Centres. Here, the focus is placed on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on general customer satisfaction levels for NWC and JPS, which includes their performance on First Call Resolution Rate (FCR).

NWC:

As seen in Table 6, the NWC Call Centre Report for the review period indicate that the *Average Speed of Answer increased by 06 seconds, Average Talk Time increased by 04 seconds, and Average Length of Call (Call Handle Time) increased by 30 seconds* when compared to the preceding period. The *Percentage of Abandoned Calls* also increased to 1.42% while like the preceding quarter, the *Percentage Service Level* and FCR remained at 93% and 89% respectively.

Table 6: NWC's Call Centre Performance

<i>KPIs</i>	<i>KPI Definition</i>	<i>Performance 2023</i>			
		Jan - Mar	April - Jun	Jul - Sept	Oct - Dec
<i>Average Speed of Answer</i>	Average time for answering calls	0:00:19	0:00:39	0:00:11	0:00:17
<i>Average Talk Time</i>	Average time spent talking to customers	0:04:50	0:04:51	0:04:34	0:04:38
<i>Average Length of Call (Call Handle Time)</i>	Combination of Average Talk Time, Average After Call Work and Hold Time	0:06:34	0:07:14	0:06:44	0:07:14
<i>Percentage Service Level</i>	Percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds	91%	88%	93%	93%
<i>Percentage of</i>	Percentage of calls not	1.4%	3.08%	0.76%	1.42%

<i>Abandoned Calls</i>	serviced				
<i>First Call Resolution Rate</i>	Customer's complaint/issue being resolved/solved at the first point of contact with the Call Centre	83%	87%	89%	89%

JPS:

As seen in Table 7, the JPS Call Centre Report for the review period indicates an increase in the time taken for the *Average Speed of Answer* by 12 seconds, *Average Talk Time* by 19 seconds, and *Average Length of Calls (Call Handle Time)* by 20 seconds when compared to the preceding period. The *Percentage of Abandoned Calls* and *Percentage Service Level* also increased by one percentage point, respectively over the preceding period. JPS's FCR performance increased by eight percentage points, to 78% over the preceding period, thereby exceeding the agreed target of 70%.

Table 7: JPS Call Centre Performance

Performance 2023

KPIs	KPI Definition	Jan - Mar	April - Jun	Jul - Sept	Oct - Dec
<i>Average Speed of Answer</i>	Average time for answering calls	0:00:19	0:00:17	0:00:53	0:01:05
<i>Average Talk Time</i>	Average time spent talking to customers	0:05:04	0:04:44	0:04:59	0:05:18
<i>Average Length of Call (Call Handle Time)</i>	Combination of Average Talk Time, Average After Call Work and Hold Time	0:06:03	0:05:29	0:06:03	0:06:23
<i>Percentage Service Level</i>	Percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds	94%	95%	94%	95%
<i>Percentage of</i>	Percentage of calls not	2%	1%	4%	5%

<i>Abandoned Calls</i>	serviced				
<i>First Call Resolution Rate</i>	Customer's complaint/issue being resolved/solved at the first point of contact with the Call Centre	71%	63.9%	71%	79%

Chapter 5: Notification of Planned Outages Report

As part of their agreed Quality of Service Standards, the JPS and NWC are required to submit reports relating to their performance in notifying customers within a specified timeline about planned outages. This standard is a part of the Overall Standards for JPS (EOS 1) and the Performance Targets for the NWC.

JPS:

Under EOS 1, JPS must provide customers 48 hours (2 days) notice of planned outages. For the review period, JPS reported a 53.3% compliance rating for this standard, indicating that the company fell 46.7 percentage points short of attaining the established target of 100%.

NWC:

The NWC performance targets provide for a 98% attainment rate for 12 hours' advance notification of planned service interruptions of a duration of no more than 4 hours. However, where a planned interruption is expected to be for more than four hours, the NWC must give advanced notice of at least 24 hours at a 90% attainment rate.

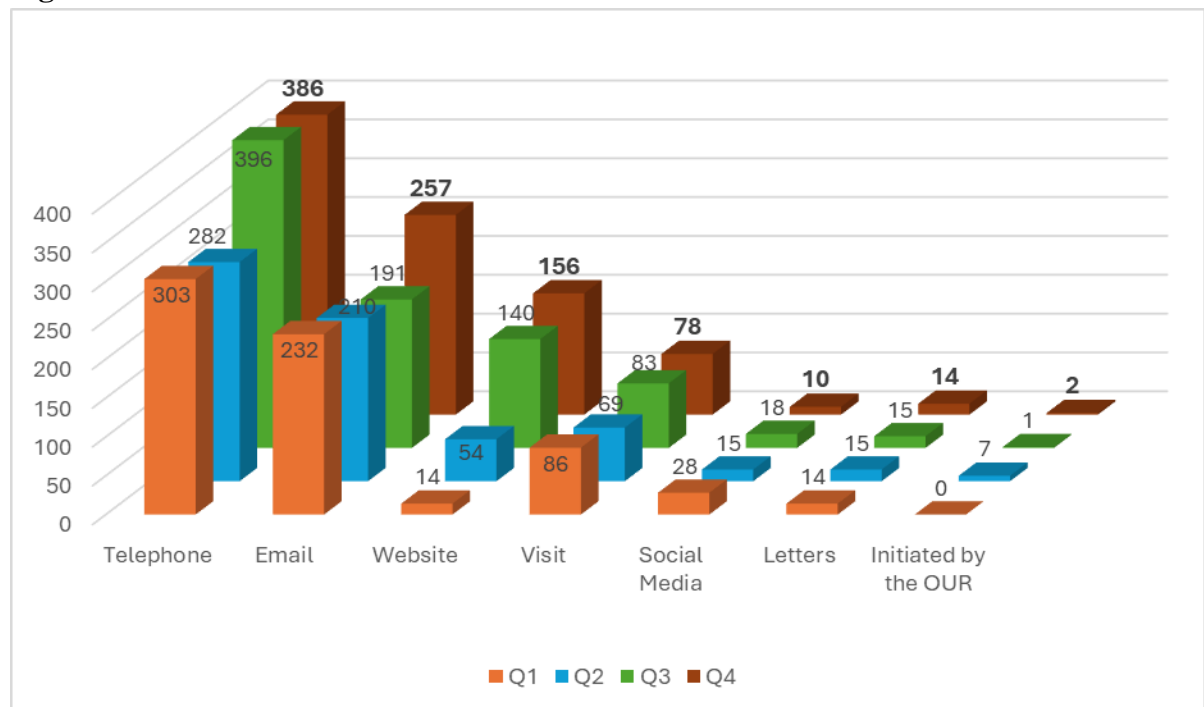
Based on the notifications to the public, for outages lasting no more than 4 hours, the NWC attained a 0% compliance rating as the sole relevant notice issued was not done within the established target.

For notifications exceeding four hours, the NWC attained a performance rating of 74% to provide at least 24 hours advance notice, which fell 16 percentage points short of the established target. Of the 31 related notifications received, 23 complied with the stated target.

Chapter 6: Customer Contact Distribution

The telephone, at 386 (43%), continued to be the most frequently used method for customers contacting the OUR. Emails, website, and visits followed with 257 (28%), 156 (17%), and 78 (9%) respectively. Social media, letters and contacts initiated by the OUR shared the remaining 26 (3%). The details are provided in Figure 8.

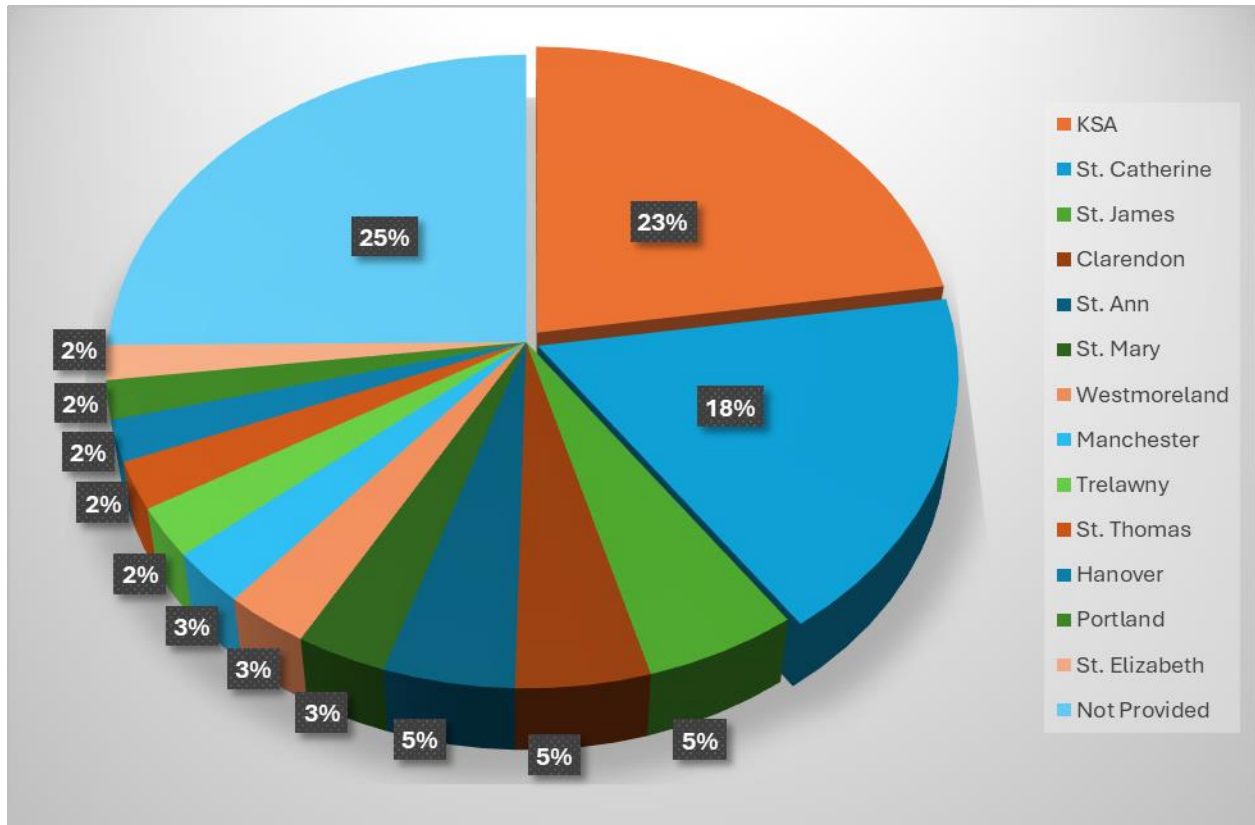
Figure 8: Methods of Contact



Geographical Distribution of Contacts

Kingston and St. Andrew and St. Catherine, at 23% and 18% respectively, continued to account for the most contacts. St. James, Clarendon, and St. Ann followed with 5% each. St. Mary, Westmoreland, Manchester and Trelawny accounted for 3% each while all other parishes each had a share of 2% or less. Twenty-five (25%) of the contacts received provided no information on their location/parish, or the information was not recorded. Details are provided in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Geographic Distribution of Contacts



Chapter 6: Appeals Performance

(i) Closure of Appeals ²

Three (3) appeals were closed during the review period, with all being resolved in favour of the utility service providers. Two (2), representing 67% of the closed appeals were resolved within the established sixty-five (65) working days while the remaining one (1) was closed outside of the timeline.

(ii) Outstanding Appeals³

At the end of the review period, twelve (12) appeals remained outstanding in that they exceeded the established 65 business days for resolution. Of these appeals, nine (9) were awaiting OUR's action, while JPS and NWC are to submit one (1) and two (2) responses each for the remaining three (3) outstanding appeals.

JPS accounts for four (4) of the outstanding appeals, which relate to two (2) cases of equipment damage, one (1) property damage and one (1) billing-related matter. The NWC accounts for the remaining eight (8) outstanding appeals which relate to billing matters.

Appeals Process Resolution Rate

Of the thirteen (13) new appeals that were accepted for investigation, all relevant information was received for five (5) within the established timeline, six (6) were received outside of the timeline, while the timeline for the remaining two responses had not expired. In addition, follow-up actions were taken on four of the responses received for which one response was not due at the end of the review period.

Final decisions were made and communicated to five (50%) customers (by way of Final Letters), for which all relevant information was received. Of the five final decisions made, four (40%) were completed within the established 65 working days while the remaining 1 (10%) was completed outside of the timeline. Further details on the CAU's performance on some key Appeals Process activities are provided in Table 14, Appendix I.

² Breakdown of Appeals Closures can be seen in Table 12 on page 32

³ Breakdown of Outstanding Appeals can be seen in Table 13 on page 32

Thirty-eight (38) new appeals were accepted for investigation in 2023 of which 36 were due for closure for the review period. Sixteen – representing 44% - of the 36 new appeals were resolved within the established 65 working days.

Chapter 7: Consumer Affairs Highlights

(i) Credits/Compensation

Through the OUR's intervention, \$233,844.33 was secured for utility consumers during the review period. Of this amount, JPS and NWC accounted for \$155,852.88 (67%) and \$55,484.16 (24%), respectively. The remaining \$30,228 (9%) was shared among C&WJ (Flow), Columbus Communications Limited (Flow) and DEML.

The total amounts secured for utility consumers for 2023 was \$1,824,150.72, of which the NWC and JPS accounted for 62% and 37% respectively. C&WJ (Flow), Columbus Communications (Flow) and DEML shared the remaining 1% of credits, respectively.

(ii) OUR Conducting Monitoring and Assessment of Main Utility Service Providers' Complaints

Under the OUR Act, the organization is authorized to conduct research as it deems necessary or desirable for the purpose of performing its functions and give directions to any service provider to ensure, among other things, that the needs of utility consumers are protected. In keeping with this mandate, the OUR in its 2021 – 2022 Workplan, commenced a project to conduct an analysis of the complaint contacts received by the major utility service providers. Accordingly, these service providers were requested to submit to the OUR data on the complaints contacts received on a quarterly basis. The type of data provided by the service providers includes the number of complaints per category, complaint location (parish), and customer type (residential/business). The OUR has recognized that the data submitted by the service providers is voluminous and has decided that it is necessary to hire a consultant during 2023 – 2024 to conduct the analysis of the utility service providers' complaints contacts data for the period 2023 July 1 to 2024 June 30.

The OUR is undertaking this project to be better informed about the number of, and type of contacts being handled by the service providers. This is to allow the OUR to identify any complaints trends and inform us about appropriate measures to implement recommended improved consumer protection.

In fulfillment of this project, the service providers are required to submit a summarized report in addition to the detailed data within thirty (30) working days of the end of the reporting period. In addition, the service providers are to provide information on its complaint resolution rate. The service providers' compliance in submitting their quarterly complaints data is shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Main Service Providers Complaints Compliance Report Submission for the period 2023 July 1 – 2023 December 31

Reporting Period	Due Date	Service Providers' Submission Date			
		JPS	NWC	Digicel	Flow
2023 Jul - Sept	2023 Nov 13	2023 Nov 30	2023 Nov 15	2023 Dec 15	Not Received
2023 Oct - Dec	2024 Feb 12	Not Received	2024 Feb 20	2024 Feb 12	Not Received

As seen in Table 8 above, Digicel and NWC have submitted their complaints reports for the reporting periods, albeit not by the due date in all instances. JPS's report for the 2023 October - December is not yet received. However, Flow has not been compliant in submitting its complaints quarterly reports for the two reporting periods. The OUR will continue to liaise with the service providers regarding the outstanding reports.

The reports for the 2024 January – March period will become due on 2024 May 13 and the final report for the 2024 April – June period will become due on 2024 August 13. The OUR is urging the service providers to be guided by the timelines to submit their reports.

Appendices:

Appendix I: List of Tables: 2023 October - December

Table 9: Contact Activity Summary (All Utilities)

	Description	JPS	NWC	C&WJ (FLOW)			Columbus		Digicel			Private Telcoms	Private Water	OUR/Other (Not Utility)	Total
				Internet	Landline	Mobile	Internet	Landline	Internet	Landline	Mobile				
A	Contacts for the Quarter														
(i)	New Appeals	1	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
(ii)	New Complaints	277	169	24	9	18	65	13	5	1	12	1	7	11	612
(iii)	New Enquires	16	15	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	2	39
(iv)	New Opinions	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	6
(v)	New Referrals	79	102	13	3	5	12	1	5	0	6	1	1	5	233
	Total Contacts	373	298	38	12	26	79	14	13	1	21	2	8	18	903
B	Closure/Resolution of Appeals:														
(ii)	Resolved in Favour of Utility	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	Total Closures	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
C	Total Appeals from Previous Periods:														
	Outstanding Appeals with OUR														
(i)	Undergoing Analysis/Determination	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
(ii)	Awaiting Service Provider's Response	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	Total Outstanding Appeals	4	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12

Table 10: Distribution of Contacts by Categories

Complaint Category	Service Providers									Total
	JPS	NWC	Digicel	C&WJ (FLOW)	Columbus Communications (Flow)	Small/Private Telcoms Provider (Cornwall Communications Ltd)	Small/Private Water/Sewerage Providers	OUR/Other (Not Utility Related)		
Billing Matters	172	184	12	15	16	0	5	2	406	
Broken Main	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Customer Service	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	
Defective Street Lights	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Disconnection	7	14	0	1	3	0	0	0	25	
Equipment Damage	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	
Guaranteed Standards	18	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	34	
Guaranteed Standards Query	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	
Health & Safety	10	4	0	0	2	0	0	1	17	
Illegal Connections	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	
Interruption of Service	64	13	4	27	41	2	1	2	154	
Irregular Supply	34	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	
Leak at Meter	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	
Other	21	19	7	9	7	0	1	9	73	
Payment Arrangement	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Phone Credit Depletion	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	7	
Poor Service Quality	10	3	4	10	8	0	1	0	36	
Prepaid Metering Service	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	
Reconnection	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	
Rebate	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	
Refund	6	3	3	1	7	0	0	2	22	
Security Deposit	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Service Connection	3	3	1	0	7	0	0	1	15	
Terms and Condition of Service	0	3	2	3	0	0	0	1	9	
Unable to get through to Provider	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	
Unavailability of Service - No Facility	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Total	373	298	35	76	93	2	8	18	903	

Table 11: Annual Distribution of Contacts by Categories

Complaint Category	Review Periods (2023)				
	Jan - Mar	Apr - Jun	Jul - Sept	Current Quarter (Oct. - Dec.)	Total (Jan - Dec 2023)
Billing Matters	385	319	386	406	1,496
Broken Main	0	0	5	1	6
Customer Service	0	5	1	4	10
Defective Street Lights	2	2	2	1	7
Disconnection	23	9	33	25	90
Equipment Damage	11	10	13	10	44
Guaranteed Standards	29	29	26	34	118
Guaranteed Standards Query	6	5	3	4	18
Health & Safety	6	9	13	17	45
Illegal Connections	4	3	2	3	12
Interruption of Service	77	96	152	154	479
Irregular Supply	8	25	32	50	115
Leak at Meter	3	3	4	7	17
Metering	2	0	1	0	3
Number Portability	1	0	0	0	1
Other	47	58	50	73	228
Payment Arrangement	2	3	2	1	8
Phone Credit Depletion	7	8	12	7	34
Poor Service Quality	24	21	30	36	111
Prepaid Metering Service	3	4	16	9	32
Property Damage	3	1	0	0	4
RAMI Service Connection	0	1	0	0	1
Reconnection	5	4	5	4	18
Rebate	4	3	7	4	18
Refund	10	8	21	22	61
Security Deposit	3	0	2	2	7
Service Connection	8	10	10	15	43
Terms & Conditions of Service	1	10	11	9	31
Unable to get through to Service Provider	3	6	4	4	17
Unavailability of Service	0	0	1	1	2
Total	677	652	844	903	3,076

Table 12: Distribution of Closed Appeals by Utilities

Appeal Category	Service Providers		Total
	JPS	NWC	
Billing Matters	1	1	2
Disconnection	0	1	1
Total	1	2	3

Table 13: Distribution of Appeals (Outstanding)

Appeal Category	Service Providers		Total
	JPS	NWC	
Billing Matters	1	8	9
Equipment Damage	2	0	2
Property Damage	1	0	1
Total	4	8	12

Table 14: CAU's Performance on Service Standards (New Appeals)

Activity	Service Standards	% Compliance	Comment
Acknowledgement of Appeals	Within two business days of receipt of customer's correspondence	92%	Two of the three new appeals were acknowledged within the established timeline.
Case Letters/ Other Utility Contact	Within five business days of acknowledging customer's correspondence	85%	All new Case Letters were dispatched within the stipulated five business days.
Correspondence Copied to Customer	The customer is to be copied on all correspondence submitted to the utilities pertaining to their complaint	100%	
Final Response	Within the established timeline of receipt of all necessary information from relevant parties	40%	Final responses were prepared and dispatched within the established timeline for the two new appeals for which all relevant information was received.

Appendix II: List of Figures

- Figure 1: Distribution of Contacts per 100,000 of Customer Base
- Figure 2: Distribution of Billing Contacts per 100,000 of Customer Base
- Figure 3: Main Customer Concerns
- Figure 4: Quarterly Service Interruption Contacts
- Figure 5: Guaranteed Standards Contacts
- Figure 6: JPS Reported GS Breaches
- Figure 7: NWC Reported GS Breaches
- Figure 8: Methods of Contact
- Figure 9: Geographic Distribution of Contacts

Appendix III: Definition Of Terms Used In Documenting Customer Contacts

Appeal:	Any contact in which the utility company has completed an investigation into a customer's complaint, the customer remains dissatisfied with the outcome and writes to the OUR asking for an independent investigation of the matter.
Complaint:	Any contact from consumers who feel that particular action(s) of a utility service provider might have been in breach of their Terms and Conditions or might have been unfair to them. The OUR provides investigation for complaints as is necessary. Acceptance of complaints does not require submission of a written response from the service provider.
Customer Contact:	Any contact made to the OUR to register an appeal, inquiry, opinion, etc. Contact can be made through the telephone, post, electronic channels (emails, website, and Facebook page) and visits.
Enquiry:	Any contact requiring verification/confirmation of information relating to the OUR, a utility service, policy and/or practice, etc.
Equipment Damage:	Damage caused to customers' equipment as a result of alleged action or inaction of their service provider.
Interruption of Service:	Where no service is provided, usually for an extended period.
Irregular supply:	Where service is not provided regularly and in keeping with the Terms and Conditions of Service/Contract.
Opinion:	Any contact expressing a view about the actions, practice or terms of service, etc. of a utility company or the OUR.
Referral:	Any contact advised by the OUR to consult the relevant utility company because the complainant had not initially utilized or exhausted the complaint procedure within the relevant utility company.
Refund:	Amounts credited to customers' accounts for breaches of the service provider's Terms and Conditions of Service/Contract
Resolution:	Where the OUR communicates its decision on customers' appeals and complaints
Resolution Rate:	The percentage of resolutions that are made within the established timelines.

Appendix IV: Statement on Confidentiality of Telecommunications Service Provider Information

Information on the customer base of the telecommunication companies was used in some of the calculations contained in the QPR, pursuant to Section 7A of the Telecommunication Act – Amended. The referenced section states, in part:

“...the following information is not required to be regarded and dealt with as secret and confidential namely -

- (a) information that will facilitate customers in their choice of facilities or specified services and the development of the telecommunications industry; and
- (b) information relating to the –
 - (i) quality of service measurements;
 - (ii) prices charged to customers or to other licensees;
 - (iii) network coverage of licensees;
 - (iv) market share of licensees;
 - (v) volume of services of licensees however measured;
 - (vi) subscriber base of licensees; and
 - (vii) capacity and usage of international submarine cables

Appendix V: Appeals Process

The activities of utility companies are guided by “terms and conditions” within their license and/or Act. There are occasions, however, when consumers feel that particular action(s) of a utility company might have been in breach of the utility’s “terms and conditions” or might have been unfair to them. In such circumstances, the OUR is an avenue for recourse in having any such wrong investigated and addressed through our appeals process.

Prior to submitting an appeal to the OUR, consumers are expected and encouraged to first take the complaint, or issues giving rise to the complaint, up to the level of a senior officer at the respective utility company. The hearing of grievances is a consumer’s right and utilities are obliged to review such matters with the aim of having the issue addressed or clarified.

Appendix VI: CAU Internal Performance Standards

Process Timeline for General Appeals

<u>Description</u>	<u>Timelines</u>
Acknowledging correspondence & Assigning Appeal	2 (Two) working days
Case Letter Preparation	5 (Five) working days
Receive JPS’ Response/Update	30 working days ⁴
Review of Provider Response & prepare Follow-Up (F/U) Case letter or issue Directive (where necessary)	10 working days
Receive response to F/U Case Letter	5 (Five) working days
Review Response to F/U Case Letter	5 (Five) working days ⁵
Final Letter Preparation (Draft)	5 (Five) working days
Supervisor’s Review of Final Letter	2 (Two) working days
Dispatch Final Letter	1 working day
Total	65 working days

⁴ Where, based on exceptional circumstances, JPS requires additional time to provide the response to a Case Letter, same is to be communicated to the OUR within five (5) working days of the Case Letter date. The rationale for the additional time must be outlined in the request. The OUR will provide a response to the request within two (2) working days.

⁵ Subsequent to the review of the providers’ response to OUR’s Case Letter, Follow-up Case Letter or Directive issued, the appeal may be escalated to the Supervisor, Manager or Director and would then be treated as a Special Appeal.

Special Appeals

There are appeals that, based on the nature of the issue, may require expertise and/or resources that do not reside in the designated units of the OUR and JPS to effectively resolve same. Accordingly, the classification of “Special Appeals” was revised to provide additional time to both parties to complete their investigation of these matters.

Where necessary, an additional fifteen (15) working days is allotted to JPS to respond to Follow-up Case Letters sent by the OUR. These appeals will thereafter be reclassified as Special Appeals. The OUR has also reduced its consultation time to review Special Appeals from twenty (20) to fifteen (15) working days. Accordingly, the total time allotted to complete the review of a Special Appeal for JPS is at 95 working days

Recommended Service Levels

1. JPS is expected to respond to **OUR’s Case Letters** regarding customer’s appeals within **thirty (30) working days** of receipt. The company is also expected to acknowledge receipt of our Case Letters within five (5) working days of receipt.
2. JPS is expected to respond to the OUR’s follow-up case letter within five (5) working days of receipt for General appeals. However, where necessary, JPS shall notify the OUR within five (5) working days of receipt of the Follow-up Case letter that additional time is required to provide the response. Such Appeals shall then be reclassified as a Special Appeal with the JPS being allotted a total of twenty (20) working days to provide the response, from the date of the Follow-up Case Letter.
3. The OUR’s Final Letter to the customer is to be dispatched within **eighteen (18) working days** of receipt of utilities’ response (where no Follow-up Case Letter was sent). JPS will be provided with a copy of the Final Letter.
4. The OUR is expected to complete investigations of JPS appeals within the following timelines:
 - **Sixty-five (65) working days** for GENERAL APPEALS (which do not require external consultation)
 - **Ninety-five (95) working days** for Equipment Damage Appeals (which do not require external consultation)
5. The utility company is to extend the hold on the customer’s account for thirty **(30) days** subsequent to receiving OUR’s final response to allow the customer to make arrangements for the balances that are outstanding and/or give the customer time to appeal to the Director – Consumer & Public Affairs.

Appendix VII: Process Timelines for NWC Appeals

<u>Description</u>	<u>Timelines</u>
Acknowledging correspondence & Assigning Appeal	2 working days
Case Letter Preparation	5 working days

Receive NWC's Response/Update	30 working days
Review of Provider Response & prepare Follow-Up (F/U) Case letter or issue Directive (where necessary)	10 working days
Receive response to F/U Case Letter	5 working days
Review Response to F/U Case Letter	5 working days ⁶
Final Letter Preparation (Draft)	5 working days
Supervisor's Review of Final Letter	2 working days
Dispatch Final Letter	1 working day
Total	65 working days

Special Appeals

There are appeals that, based on the nature of the issue, may require expertise and/or resources that do not reside in the designated units of the OUR and NWC to effectively resolve same. Accordingly, the classification of "Special Appeals" was revised to provide additional time to both parties to complete their investigation of these matters.

Where necessary, an additional five (5) working days is allotted to the NWC to respond to Follow-up Case Letters sent by the OUR. These appeals will thereafter be reclassified as Special Appeals. The OUR has also reduced its time to review Special Appeal from twenty (20) to fifteen (15) working days; thereby retaining the completion timeline for Special Appeals at 85 working days.

Other Appeals Activities:

Monthly reports detailing the appeals for which the responses are outstanding will be generated and sent to the NWC. Where the responses/updates are not received within ten (10) working days of submission of the report, the matter will be escalated to the Vice President – Investment and Performance Monitoring, NWC, for action. Similarly, the CAU will provide NWC with a monthly update on appeals for which our responses are outstanding.

As a consequence, the following are the proposed Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to which the utility companies will be accountable. It is being recommended that the following be agreed upon by all parties and published:

⁶ Subsequent to the review of the providers' response to OUR's Case Letter, Follow-up Case Letter or Directive issued, the appeal may be escalated to the Supervisor, Manager or Director and would then be treated as a Special Appeal.

Recommended Service Levels

NWC is expected to respond to OUR's Case Letters regarding customer's appeals within **thirty (30) working days** of receipt. The Commission is also expected to acknowledge receipt of our Case Letters within five (5) working days.

NWC is expected to respond to the OUR's follow-up case letter within **FIVE (5) working days of receipt for General appeals**. However, where necessary, the NWC shall notify the OUR within FIVE (5) working days of receipt of the Follow-up Case letter that additional time is required to provide the response. Such Appeals shall then be reclassified as a Special Appeal with the NWC being allotted a total of ten (10) working days to provide the response, from the date of the Follow-up Case Letter.

The OUR's Final Letter to the customer is to be dispatched within **EIGHTEEN (18) working days** of receipt of the NWC's response (where no Follow-up Case Letter was sent). The NWC will be provided with a copy of the Final Letter.

The OUR is expected to complete investigations of NWC appeals within the following timelines:

- **SIXTY-FIVE (65) working days** for GENERAL APPEALS (which do not require external consultation)
- **EIGHTY-FIVE (85) working days** for SPECIAL APPEALS (Appeals which require external consultation)

The Utility company is to extend the hold on the customer's account for thirty **(30) days** subsequent to receiving OUR's final response to allow the customer to make arrangements for the balances that are outstanding and/or give the customer time to appeal to the Director – Consumer & Public Affairs.

Appendix VIII: List of Acronyms

Can Cara	-	Can Cara Development Limited (Water & Sewerage Provider)
CPA	-	Consumer and Public Affairs Department (OUR)
CAU	-	Consumer Affairs Unit (OUR)
DEML	-	Dynamic Environmental Management Limited (Water and Sewerage Provider)
Dekal	-	Dekal Wireless Ltd. (Telecommunications Provider)
Flow Service	-	Columbus Communications Jamaica Ltd. (Flow) - Telecommunication Provider
FLOW	-	Cable & Wireless Jamaica Ltd. (C&WJ) Flow
JPS	-	Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (Electricity Provider)
KSA	-	Kingston & St. Andrew
NWC	-	National Water Commission (Water & Sewerage Provider)
OUR	-	Office of Utilities Regulation
OURIC	-	Office of Utilities Regulation Information Centre
The Office	-	Comprises 6 members and is headed by a Chairman with the Director General serving as an <i>ex officio</i> member