

Media Release

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OUR's Mystery Shopping Shows Utility Consumers Still Troubled by Customer Service Issues

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2025 January 13): Utility customers are still troubled by customer service issues such as long wait times (both in-store and online), poor communication, and poor physical facilities. These are among the findings from the Office of Utilities Regulation's (OUR's) latest annual Mystery Shopping research, conducted in the latter part of 2024.

The Mystery Shopping study across the four major utility providers—Cable & Wireless Jamaica Limited and Columbus Communications Jamaica Limited trading together under the brand "FLOW", Digicel Jamaica Limited (Digicel), Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (JPS), and the National Water Commission (NWC)—highlights these significant, recurring service challenges that negatively impact customer experience.

The common issues observed also include inadequate customer service engagement, inconsistencies in communication, and poor physical and digital infrastructure. While some agents demonstrated professionalism and knowledge, customer experience was undermined by inefficiencies, lack of accessibility, unclear processes, and poor responsiveness.

The annual Mystery Shopping research enables the OUR to assess the quality of customer service offered by the regulated utility providers across the various channels. The findings help to inform the OUR's engagement with service providers over the next period and the focus of its regulatory interventions

The 2024 findings revealed an average score of 66%, up from the 54% performance level of 2023 across in-store, call centres, websites, social media, and the mobile app. The best-performing providers were FLOW and JPS, at 70%, as shown in the table below.

**THE UTILITIES' PERFORMANCE IN TOTAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
(In Store, Call Centre, Website Chats, Social Media & Mobile App)**

| | TOTAL SCORE | | | PEAK TIME | | | OFF-PEAK TIME | | |
|----------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------|------------|-----------|
| | 2023 | 2024 | Change | 2023 | 2024 | Change | 2023 | 2024 | Change |
| FLOW | 65% | 70% | +5 | 58% | 78% | +20 | 71% | 62% | -9 |
| DIGICEL | 59% | 64% | +5 | 56% | 62% | +6 | 61% | 67% | +6 |
| JPS | 55% | 70% | +15 | 53% | 67% | +14 | 58% | 72% | +14 |
| NWC | 43% | 58% | +15 | 43% | 60% | +17 | 42% | 55% | +13 |
| AVERAGE | 54% | 66% | +12 | 53% | 66% | +13 | 59% | 64% | +5 |

THE ABOVE SCORES REPRESENT AN AVERAGE (MEAN) OF THE INSTORE SCORE, THE CALL CENTRE & ONLINE CHATS (CHAT BOT AND MOBILE APP) WITH A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF SCORES OBTAINED DURING PEAK AND OFF -PEAK PERIODS.

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Digicel (82%) and FLOW (89%) had the strongest call centre experiences, while in-store customer experience among all the providers hovered between 62% and 78%, with Digicel scoring the lowest, moving from 56% in 2023 to 46% in 2024.

The overall customer experience for the online/digital interface, including social media, mobile app use, and website chats, recorded a disappointing average score of 58%. In particular, the average score for customer experience on social media remained low even though moving from 32% to 48% across all service providers. The performance is disappointing given the providers' push to have utility customers conduct business, such as bill payment, service requests, etc., in their digital space.

These findings indicate systemic gaps in customer service protocols, operational efficiency, and infrastructure readiness across the service providers. They also suggest that utility providers could benefit from adopting standardised practices where feasible, enhancing physical and digital infrastructure, and focusing on customer-centric engagement to transform customer experiences. A coordinated effort is necessary to raise the bar for utility service delivery and ensure consistent, high-quality interactions for all customers across all service providers.

The data collection for this Mystery Shopping exercise started in 2024 August and ended in 2024 October.

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