REPORT NO. 30

The Complaints Floor

UK telecoms complaints have hit an all time low. This report explains what that number still tells you, and what it has quietly stopped telling you.

6

broadband complaints per 100,000 customers.
The lowest figure Ofcom has ever published.

DATA SOURCE

Ofcom Q1 2026 (January to March), published 23 July 2026

Written by Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith · Reviewed by Adrian James

What is in this report

One argument, four league tables, and one question asked on every page.

Want the plain explanations? Sections **03**, **13** and **24**. Want to know what it means for you? Section **23** answers the **'so what'** for every part of the market.

New to this data?

Start at section 03, which shows what happens to your complaint after you make it. Section 13 maps the whole process end to end, and section 24 defines every term used here. A fuller glossary is maintained at broadbandswitch.uk/glossary.html

Why a record low is also a warning

A note from the author on what this report sets out to do, who it is for, and the one question it tries to answer on every page.

Every quarter Ofcom publishes a number that almost nobody reads properly. It counts the complaints the regulator itself received about the UK's largest broadband, landline, mobile and pay TV providers, then scales those complaints per 100,000 customers so that a giant and a challenger can be set side by side. It is the closest thing this industry has to an independent, like for like scoreboard of what service actually feels like when something goes wrong.

This quarter that scoreboard printed a record. Fixed broadband complaints fell to 6 per 100,000 customers, the lowest figure in the fifteen and a half years Ofcom has published this series. Landline, pay monthly mobile and pay TV all sit at or equal to their own lowest published levels. On the face of it, that is an industry success story, and it deserves to be reported as one.

But a record low is also a measurement problem, and that is the argument of this report. When the whole market compresses into a band of a few whole numbers, and the regulator's own comparability rules then declare most of those numbers statistically indistinguishable from one another, the league table stops being a ranking and starts being a ‘simple’ list. In three of the four services Ofcom covers, the table now resolves to a single outlier and a crowd. That matters for anyone who uses this data to choose a provider, to benchmark a competitor, to price risk, or to regulate.

We have written this for the whole market, and not only for broadband. The same measurement problem applies to any regulated service that counts complaints instead of listening for dissatisfaction. Whether you sit in Ofcom, a government department, an infrastructure fund, an altnet build team or a consumer charity, the question we have tried to answer on every page is the same one: **so what?**

Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith
Founder and Chief Executive, Upleashed Limited
Strategic Lead, SearchSwitchSave Group

Nine things this quarter's data actually says

A genuine record

Fixed broadband complaints fell to **6 per 100,000 customers**, the lowest in the published series. The previous low was 7, set in Q4 2025. At the 2011 peak the same figure was 40, a level Ofcom itself uses as the comparison point.

All four services at or near their floor

Landline (3), pay monthly mobile (2) and pay TV (3) all equalled their lowest published levels. Every headline service is now at, or level with, its all time low.

TalkTalk is the sole broadband outlier

TalkTalk recorded **10 per 100,000**, unchanged for a third consecutive quarter, and is the only broadband provider Ofcom does not declare statistically comparable to any other.

Plusnet is the best and the worst

Plusnet had the **fewest broadband complaints (4)** and the **most landline complaints (7)**, in the same quarter, under the same brand.

Sky Mobile stands alone

Sky Mobile recorded **4 per 100,000**, the most of any pay monthly mobile provider, and the only mobile brand outside Ofcom's single comparability chain.

The table is losing resolution

The gap between the best and worst broadband provider is **6 points**, equal narrowest on record. An unbroken chain of Ofcom comparability links every broadband provider from Plusnet to Vodafone.

giffgaff enters the table

giffgaff appears in the pay monthly mobile league for the first time, entering at **1 per 100,000**, joint fewest complaints.

A record low beside a record fine

The record complaints low covers January to March 2026. On 8 July 2026 Ofcom issued its largest ever fine for direct consumer harm, £28 million, to Virgin Media, over conduct between January 2022 and September 2024.

Trustpilot tells a different story

Across **501,802 verified reviews**, the crowd ranks these providers almost in reverse. Plusnet is best on both Ofcom measures and sixth of seven on Trustpilot. Section 20 shows why that is a warning about the measure, not about Plusnet.

PART ONE

The numbers

What Ofcom published on 23 July 2026, how the figure is built, and what fifteen years of data looks like when you plot it all at once.

IN THIS PART

- What happens to your complaint after you make it
- Fifteen years of decline, and where it stops
- Who came top, who came bottom, and by how much
- Seven providers, seven trajectories, one convergence
- The moment a ranking quietly became a list

What happens to your complaint after you make it

Follow one phone call. Yours. Five things happen to it between you picking up the phone and a figure appearing in the news, and every one of them throws something away. That is not a criticism of Ofcom, it is how any national statistic works. But it is why the number is smaller than the problem.

1 You ring Ofcom

You have already got nowhere with your provider. You call, write or fill in the web form to tell Ofcom about it.

→

2 Your call becomes a number

Your one call is logged as up to two complaints, one for each problem you raise. Nothing else you said counts.

→

3 It is filed by service

Not by how angry you were. A broadband fault goes in the broadband pile, even if your whole bundle is affected.

→

4 It is divided by everyone else

Your complaint is divided by every customer your provider has, then multiplied up. That is what per 100,000 means.

→

5 It is rounded, then published

The result is rounded to a whole number. If your provider is small, it never appears at all. That is the figure in the news.

Source: Ofcom, Telecoms and pay-TV complaints: background and methodology, Q1 2026.

If you list five things, only two count

Raise two problems about one service and Ofcom logs two complaints. Raise five and it generally logs the two most serious. Ofcom says people raising more than two are 1% or less of complainants, so this rarely bites, but it means the count is of problems, not of how bad your quarter was.

Your bundle gets taken apart

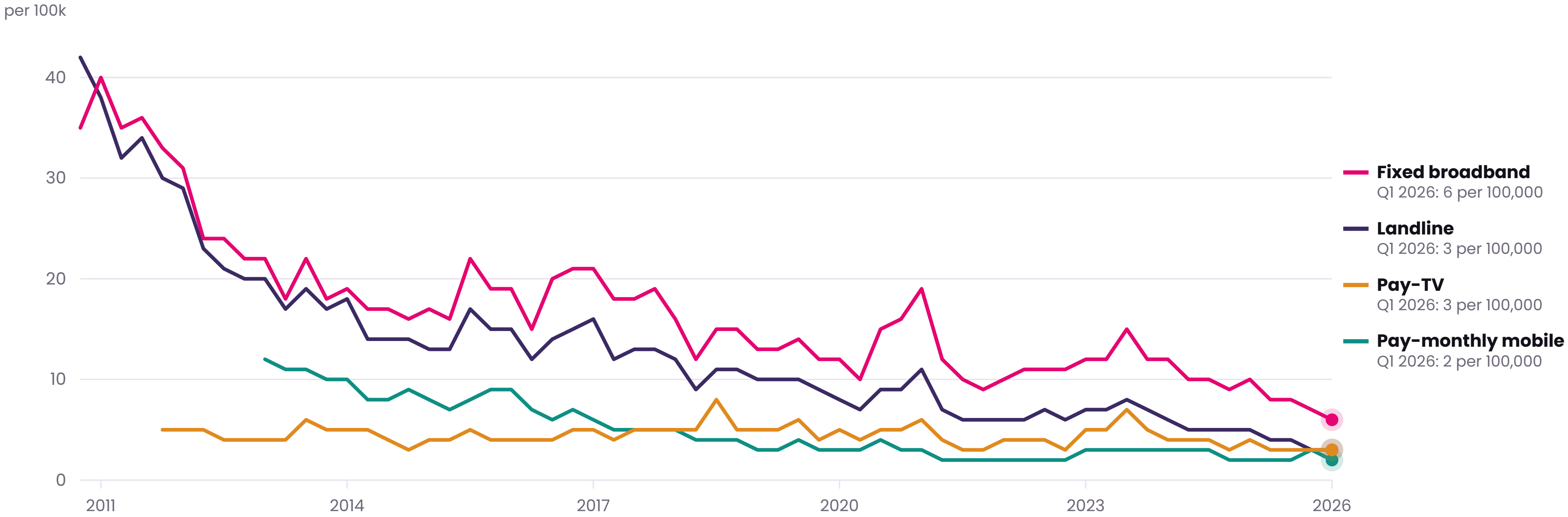
Complain that your broadband is slow and it lands in the broadband column only, even though you pay one bill for three services. Complain you were mis sold the whole bundle and it lands in three columns at once. The same frustration can count once or three times.

The step that decides everything

Step 5. Rounding to a whole number decides how finely two providers can be told apart, and the 1.5% market share rule decides whether your provider is in the table at all. Those two rules together produce the compression problem in section 07.

Fifteen years of decline, in one picture

Ofcom publishes this series inside an interactive dashboard, one service at a time. Plotted together across the full run, the direction is unambiguous, and so is the point at which the lines run out of room.



35 → 6

Fixed broadband complaints per 100,000, Q4 2010 compared with Q1 2026. A fall of 29 points across the full published series.

42 → 3

Landline complaints per 100,000 over the same period. Landline is now the second lowest of the four headline services.

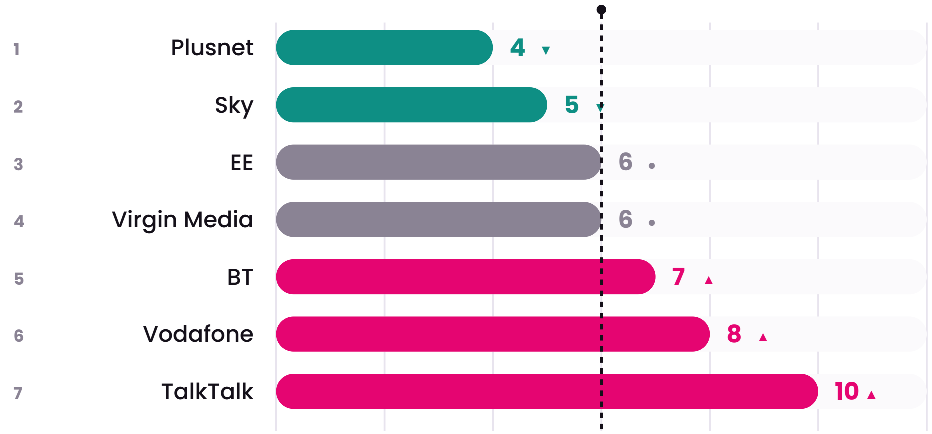
4 of 4

Services sitting at, or level with, their lowest published figure in Q1 2026. Only broadband set an outright new record.

Complaints to Ofcom per 100,000 subscribers, by service, Q4 2010 to Q1 2026. Pay TV data begins Q4 2011 and pay monthly mobile Q1 2013. Ofcom advises that pay TV figures before Q2 2018, and pay monthly mobile figures before Q4 2019, are not comparable with later quarters following methodology changes. Source: Ofcom (2026).

TalkTalk alone at the top

Complaints per 100,000 customers. Higher is worse. ▲ above the industry average, ▼ below it.



Broadband complaints per 100,000 customers, January to March 2026. Pink bars sit above the industry average, teal below. Source: Ofcom (2026).

TalkTalk recorded 10 complaints per 100,000, unchanged for a third consecutive quarter and the only figure Ofcom does not declare comparable to any other provider.

Plusnet returned the fewest at 4. Every other provider landed between 5 and 8, inside a band narrow enough that Ofcom's own rules treat neighbouring pairs as equivalent. Vodafone posted the largest single improvement, from 11 to 8, its lowest figure in the published series.

NOW Broadband has no published broadband figure for a second quarter running. Its last was 4, in Q3 2025. Ofcom's stated rule is that a provider is generally removed once its market share falls below 1.5% for four consecutive quarters; the notice does not confirm the reason here, so we report the gap rather than explain it.

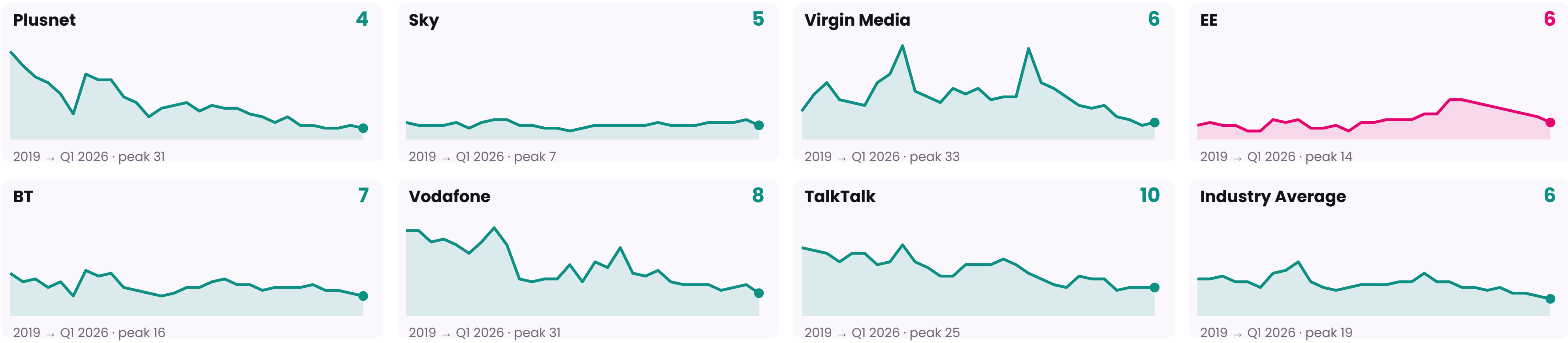
Year on year and quarter on quarter

PROVIDER	Q1 25	Q4 25	Q1 26	MOVE
TalkTalk	13	10	10	Flat
Vodafone	11	11	8	Better
BT	11	8	7	Better
EE	11	8	6	Better
Virgin Media	12	5	6	Worse
Sky	6	7	5	Better
Plusnet	5	5	4	Better

Complaints per 100,000. Move compares Q1 2026 with Q4 2025. Differences of less than 1 are within Ofcom's comparability tolerance.

Seven trajectories since 2019

A single quarter tells you very little. Plotted individually on a common scale, the differences between these providers are differences of direction, not of level. Teal means the provider is lower now than in 2019, pink means higher.



What the shapes show

Every provider on this page sits lower than its own 2019 starting point. The convergence at the right hand edge is the compression problem made visual: seven separate lines arriving at almost the same place.

The exception

TalkTalk is the one line that has not returned to the pack. It has printed 10 for three consecutive quarters while the industry average fell from 8 to 6, so the gap between TalkTalk and the market widened even as its own figure held still.

Complaints per 100,000 by provider, Q1 2019 to Q1 2026, plotted on a shared vertical scale. Source: Ofcom (2026).

A record low is worth celebrating. But this number has quietly stopped doing its job.

When the whole market fits inside six points, and Ofcom's own rules say you cannot tell most providers apart, the league table is no longer a ranking.

It is just a list.

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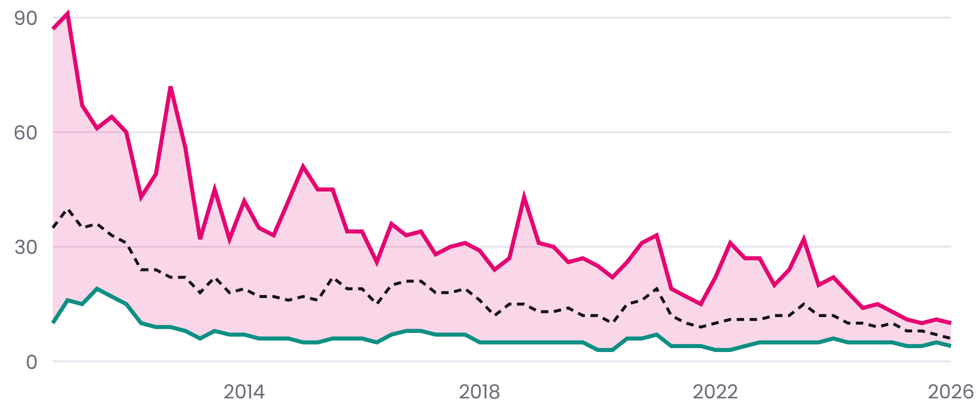
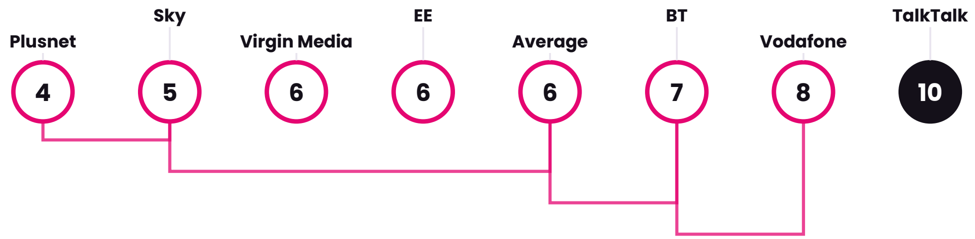
The table is running out of room to rank



Shaded band = gap between best and worst broadband provider. Dashed = industry average.

Best and worst broadband provider per quarter, with the industry average. Q1 2026 spread of 6 points equals the narrowest on record. Source: Ofcom (2026).



Each bracket = a pair Ofcom declares statistically comparable. Dark node = outside every group.

In Q4 2010 the gap between the best and worst broadband provider was 77 points. In Q1 2026 it is 6.

Two Ofcom conventions now collide. The first is that figures are published as whole numbers. The second is that where the actual difference between two providers is less than one complaint per 100,000, Ofcom states their performance should be considered comparable.

Apply the regulator's own published comparability groups for Q1 2026 and the result is striking. An unbroken chain links Plusnet to Sky, Sky to Virgin Media and EE, those to the industry average, the average to BT, and BT to Vodafone. Every provider from best to second worst is connected. Only TalkTalk stands outside it.

What Ofcom actually says is comparable, Q1 2026

Fixed broadband

Plusnet and Sky · Sky, Virgin Media, EE and the average · the average and BT · BT and Vodafone. **One chain, one outlier.**

Pay monthly mobile

EE, giffgaff, Vodafone, Three, Tesco Mobile and the average · the average, O2 and iD Mobile. **One chain, one outlier: Sky Mobile.**

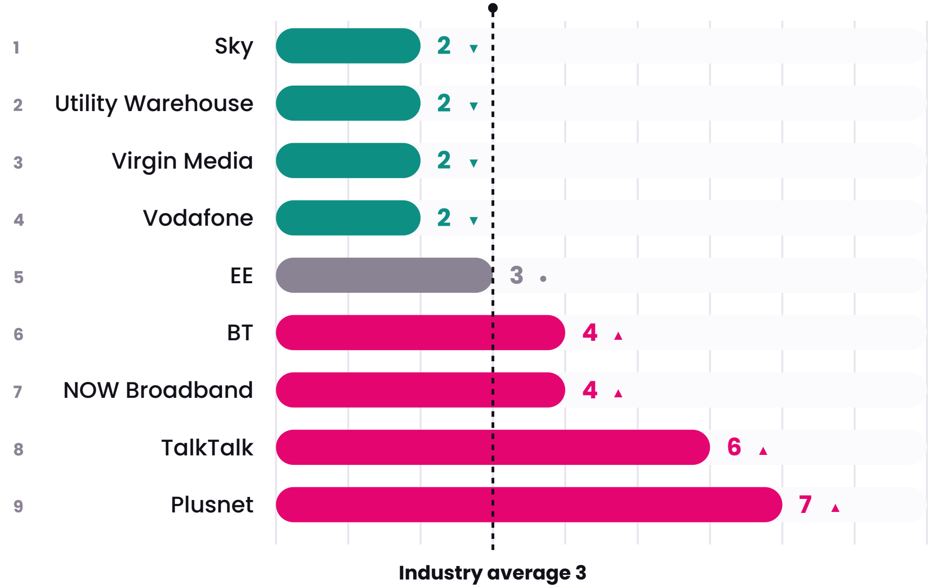
Pay TV

TalkTalk and Sky · Sky, the average and Virgin Media · Virgin Media and EE. **One chain, no outlier at all.**

Landline

Three separate clusters. **Landline is the one table that still discriminates.**

The one table that still separates the field



Landline complaints per 100,000 customers, January to March 2026. Source: Ofcom (2026).

Plusnet recorded the most landline complaints at 7, up from 5, and TalkTalk was second on 6. Ofcom names both as the most complained about landline providers this quarter.

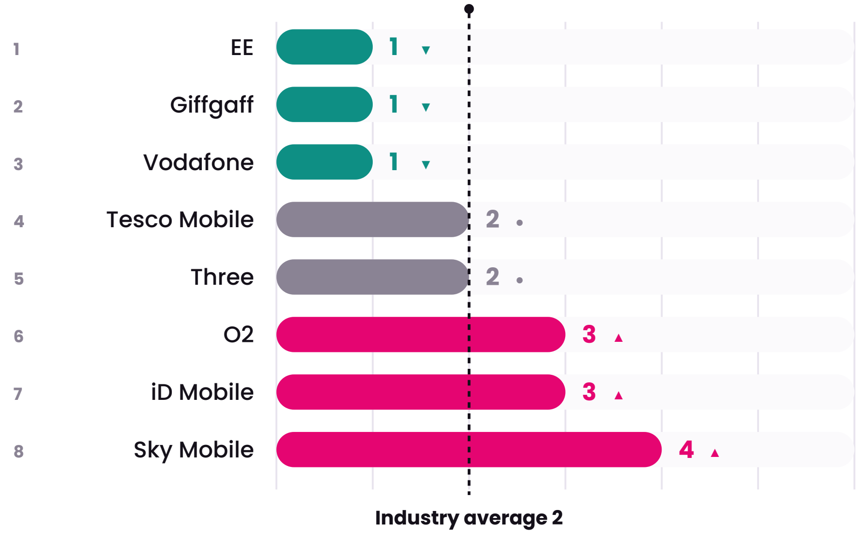
The Plusnet result is the most interesting number in the whole release. In the same quarter, under the same brand, Plusnet produced the fewest broadband complaints in the market and the most landline complaints in the market. ISPreview reports that 41% of Plusnet's landline complaints were driven by faults, service and provisioning.

Vodafone recorded 2, its lowest landline figure in the published series. EE improved sharply from 6 to 3. Ofcom names EE, Sky, Utility Warehouse, Virgin Media and Vodafone among the least complained about.

Why landline still matters, and will matter more

The UK public switched telephone network closes on 31 January 2027. Every remaining analogue line must migrate to a digital voice service before then. Landline provisioning complaints are therefore a live operational indicator during the single largest consumer migration this industry has attempted, and this is the table to watch through 2026.

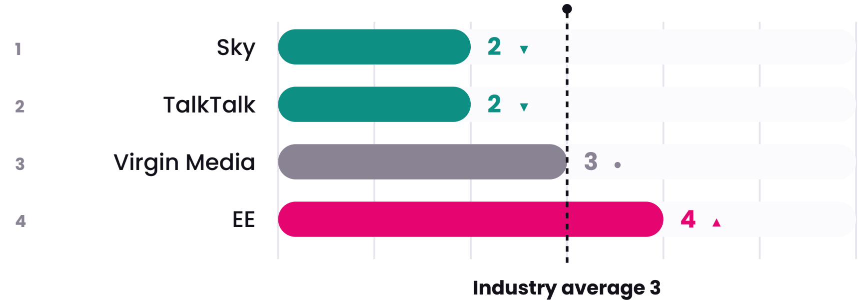
Sky Mobile stands alone



Sky Mobile recorded 4 per 100,000, the most of any pay monthly mobile provider and the only brand outside Ofcom's comparability chain. Ofcom states these complaints were primarily driven by customers' experiences changing provider.

O2 fell from 7 to 3 as the Q4 2025 spike unwound. That spike followed mid contract price rise announcements, and its reversal is the single largest reason the overall total fell. giffgaff enters the table for the first time at 1, joint fewest.

Pay TV: nobody stands out



EE recorded the most pay TV complaints at 4, improving from 5, with Virgin Media on 3. Ofcom states EE's complaints were mainly about how complaints were handled, and Virgin Media's mainly about billing, pricing and charges. Sky and TalkTalk, both on 2, generated the fewest.

Pay TV is the clearest illustration of the compression problem. Ofcom's comparability groups link all four providers in a single unbroken chain, so no provider here is statistically distinguishable from the field as a whole.

Complaints per 100,000 customers, January to March 2026. Mobile figures cover pay monthly services only. Source: Ofcom (2026).

The same masts, the best and the worst result

Four of the eight brands in Ofcom's pay monthly mobile table run on a single physical network, and between them they occupy every position in the table from joint best to outright worst.

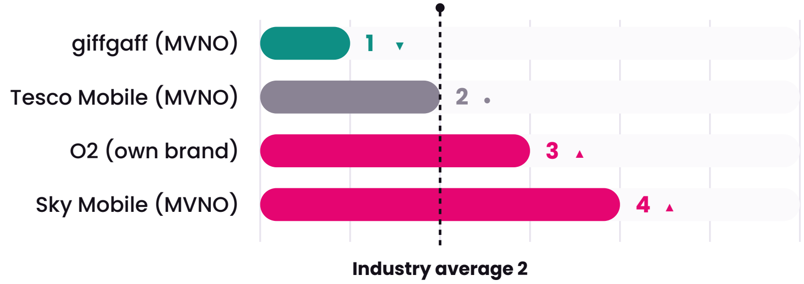
giffgaff, Tesco Mobile and Sky Mobile are all mobile virtual network operators running on the Virgin Media O2 network, alongside O2's own retail brand. In Q1 2026 they recorded 1, 2, 4 and 3 complaints per 100,000 respectively.

That is the entire range of the table, from the joint fewest complaints to the most, generated over identical masts, identical spectrum and identical coverage. Whatever separates giffgaff from Sky Mobile, it is not the network.

Why this is the strongest validation of the metric

It demonstrates that Ofcom's complaints measure is capturing retail conduct rather than network quality: billing, contracts, switching journeys and how a provider behaves when a customer wants to leave. For anyone using this data to assess an operator, that is precisely the thing worth measuring, and precisely the thing a coverage map cannot show you.

Brands running on the Virgin Media O2 network, Q1 2026



Complaints per 100,000, January to March 2026. Host network attribution from published industry sources, not from Ofcom. Ofcom does not group providers by host network.

A note on how we treat this

Ofcom publishes these four brands as separate providers and makes no statement about which network each runs on. The host network attribution here comes from published industry reporting and the operators' own descriptions. We flag it as a secondary source because it is not part of the Ofcom data set.

The full recent record

Two years of data, every provider in these tables. Darker cells mean more complaints. Read across for a provider's trajectory, and down a column for the shape of the market in that quarter.

Fixed broadband

	24Q1	24Q2	24Q3	24Q4	25Q1	25Q2	25Q3	25Q4	26Q1
Plusnet	8	6	8	5	5	4	4	5	4
Sky	6	5	5	5	6	6	6	7	5
Virgin Media	18	15	12	11	12	8	7	5	6
EE	14	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	6
BT	9	10	10	10	11	9	9	8	7
Vodafone	16	12	11	11	11	9	10	11	8
TalkTalk	11	10	14	13	13	9	10	10	10
Industry Average	12	10	10	9	10	8	8	7	6

Darker = more complaints per 100,000. Grey cell = no figure published that quarter.

Landline

	24Q1	24Q2	24Q3	24Q4	25Q1	25Q2	25Q3	25Q4	26Q1
Vodafone	5	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	2
Sky	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Virgin Media	11	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	2
Utility Warehouse	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	2
EE	11	15	8	8	8	8	6	6	3
NOW Broadband	12	10	8	10	4	4	5	6	4
BT	5	7	6	7	7	4	5	5	4
TalkTalk	8	5	8	7	8	6	6	5	6
Plusnet	5	5	6	4	3	3	5	5	7

Darker = more complaints per 100,000. Grey cell = no figure published that quarter.

Pay monthly mobile

	24Q1	24Q2	24Q3	24Q4	25Q1	25Q2	25Q3	25Q4	26Q1
EE	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Giffgaff	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	·	1
Vodafone	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1
Three	4	3	3	3	2	3	2	1	2
Tesco Mobile	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
O2	7	7	5	4	3	2	2	7	3
iD Mobile	4	3	2	3	2	2	1	3	3
Sky Mobile	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	5	4

Darker = more complaints per 100,000. Grey cell = no figure published that quarter.

Pay TV

	24Q1	24Q2	24Q3	24Q4	25Q1	25Q2	25Q3	25Q4	26Q1
TalkTalk	3	2	2	2	3	1	2	2	2
Sky	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	2
Virgin Media	11	9	9	7	8	5	5	3	3
EE	2	9	8	6	7	6	6	5	4

Darker = more complaints per 100,000. Grey cell = no figure published that quarter.

Q4 2025 is visible as a dark column in mobile, driven by mid contract price rise announcements. It has almost entirely cleared by Q1 2026. Source: Ofcom (2026).

PART TWO

The interpretation

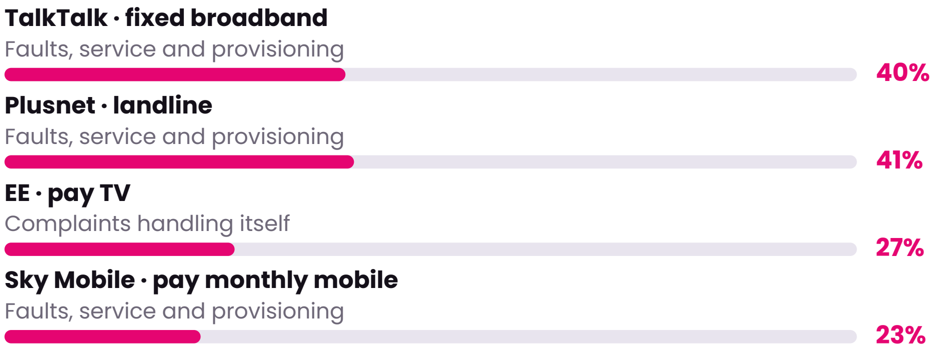
What the numbers mean for each part of the market, what the data cannot see, and the arguments that could yet prove this record low wrong.

IN THIS PART

- What people are actually angry about
- What happens when you complain, and what does not
- The providers this table cannot see
- A record low and a record fine, fifteen days apart
- Where the rest of the industry disagrees with us
- How the UK compares with the US and Europe
- The five things that could prove us wrong

Broadband Switch.uk

The remaining complaints are an operations problem



Share of each provider's complaints attributed to the leading category in Q1 2026, as reported by ISPreview from the Ofcom release. Categories are Ofcom's own. Source: Jackson (2026).

Faults, service and provisioning is the largest complaint driver in three of the four services. Much of the rest is generated in the contact centre.

Across three of the four services, the single biggest driver is the same: faults, service quality and getting connected in the first place.

That is worth pausing on. These are not complaints about price, or product design, or advertising. They are complaints generated by field operations and by the contact centre: an install that slips, a fault that recurs, an appointment missed, a case never closed.

The exception proves the point. For EE's pay TV service the leading category is complaints handling itself, at 27%. More than a quarter of the complaints that reached Ofcom were not about the original problem but about how the provider responded to it.

The lesson for any provider reading this

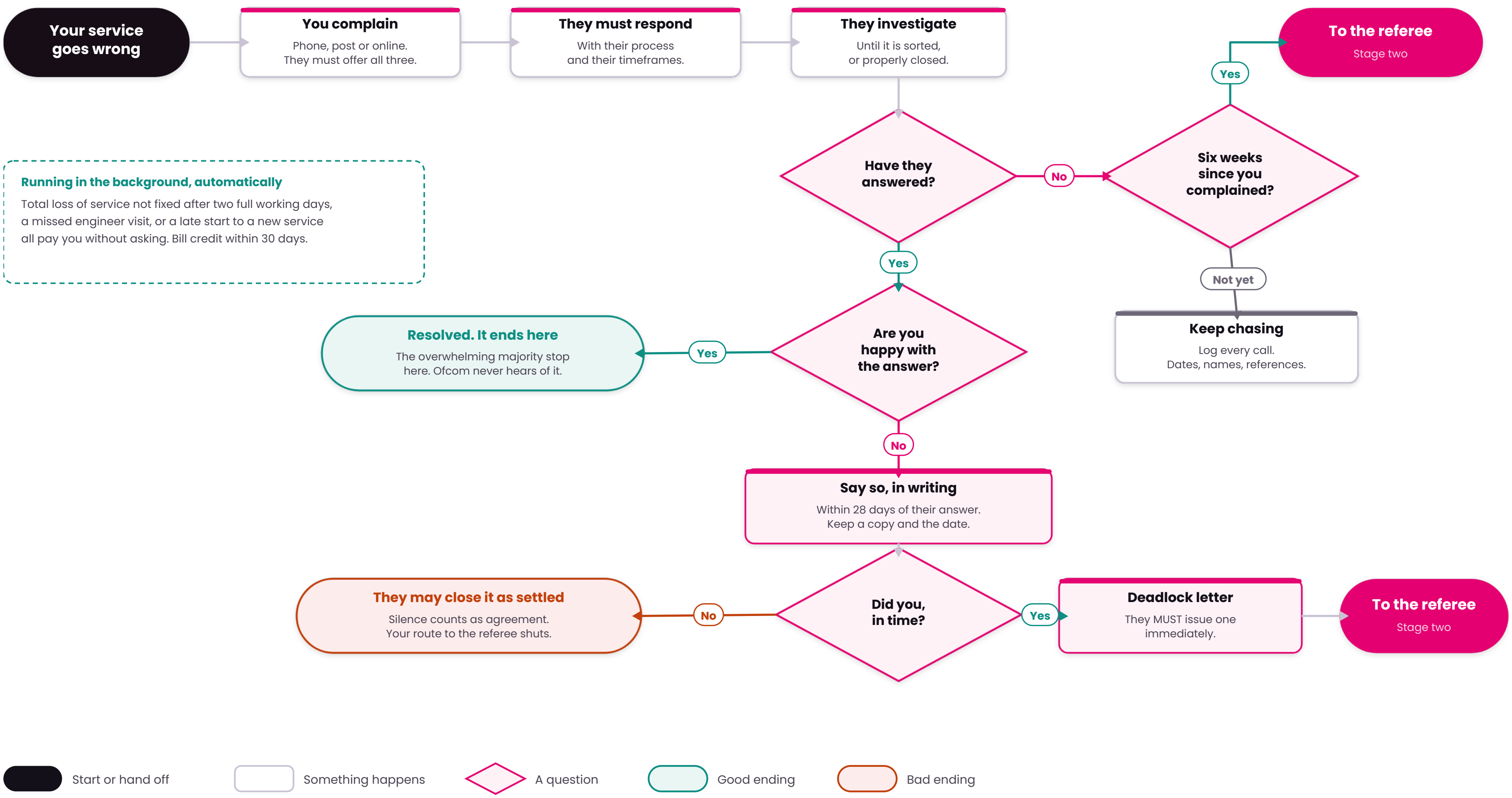
Handle complaints quickly and thoroughly. Ofcom's own note that poor handling shows up more prominently means the fastest way to improve your published score is not to break less often, it is to close properly what you have already broken.

Why this changes where the effort should go

A market at 6 complaints per 100,000 has largely solved its product problems. What is left is execution, distributed across engineers, subcontractors, order journeys and escalation paths that are frequently outsourced. Ofcom notes separately that providers with poor complaints handling may feature more prominently than those with good handling, which means part of every provider's score measures how it behaves after the failure, not the failure itself.

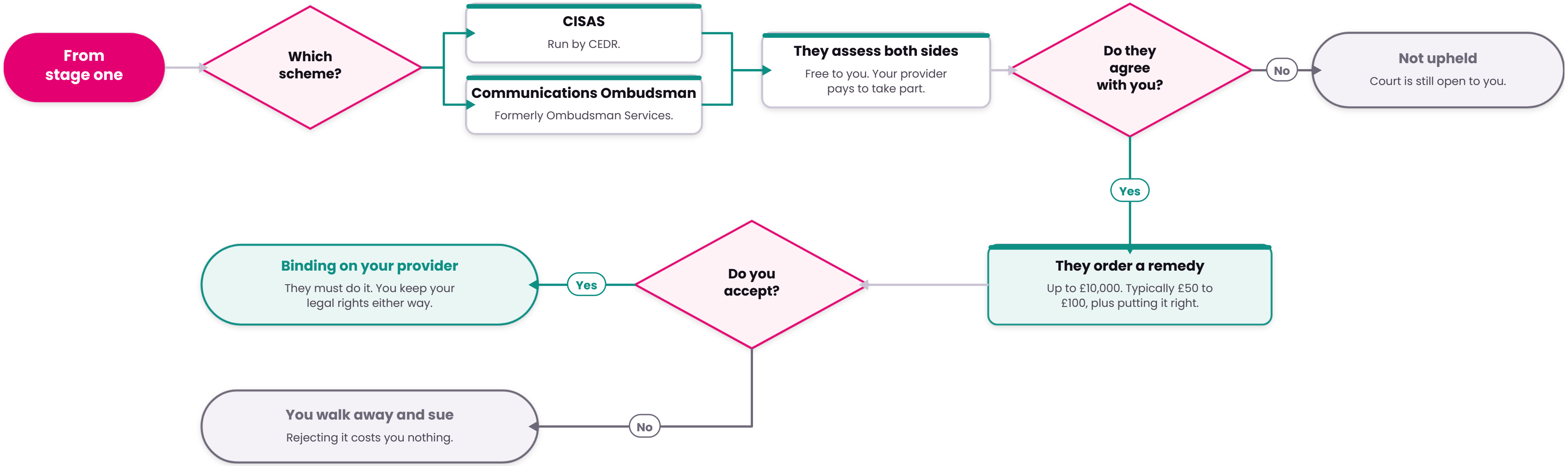
Stage one: with your provider

A persistent misunderstanding sits behind this data: people assume complaining to Ofcom will get their problem fixed. It will not. Every box below is something your provider must do by law under General Condition C4. Follow the arrows from your own situation.

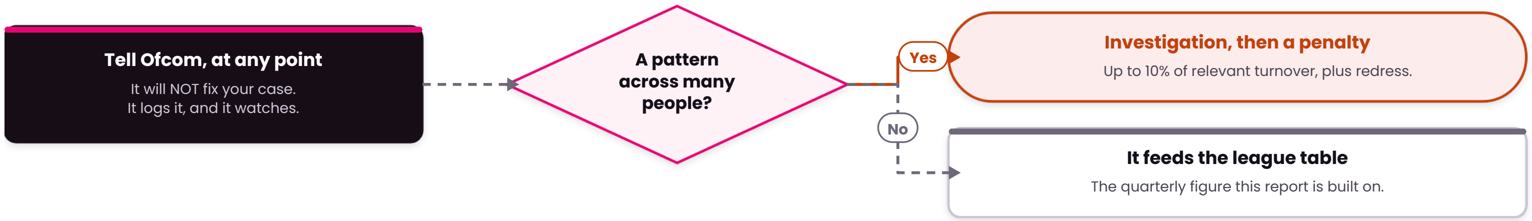


Stage two: over their head

A free, independent referee settles your case. Ofcom does not, and the dashed track below shows why it still matters that you tell them: your complaint is the raw material of the league table in this report.



A SEPARATE TRACK, RUNNING IN PARALLEL



Award ceiling and typical award as published by the Communications Ombudsman. Ofcom penalty ceiling under section 97 of the Communications Act 2003.

Two clocks, and what you are owed

These two deadlines start on different days. Confusing them is the most common and most expensive mistake in the whole process, and it is the one thing on these three pages worth memorising.

CLOCK ONE

Six weeks

Starts the day you FIRST complain

When it runs out, you can go to the free referee.

Shortcut: if they send you a deadlock letter, you can go straight away.

CLOCK TWO

28 days

Starts the day THEY give you their answer

If you have said nothing by then, they can close it as settled.

This is the one people miss. Object in writing and keep the date.

£10.34

A day, once it drags. For every day you are still cut off, after the first two full working days.

£32.31

Each missed visit. The engineer does not turn up, or cancels with under 24 hours notice.

£6.46

A day, late starts. A brand new service does not go live on the day you were promised.

Rates set by Ofcom, effective 1 April 2026, paid as a bill credit within 30 days without you asking. The scheme is voluntary: Ofcom reports signed up providers cover 97% of landline and 91% of broadband customers, so check yours is in it. These three failures only, not slow speeds.

Provisioning, the work of getting a connection live, sits inside the biggest complaint category across the fixed services.

Who is not in this table, and why it is starting to matter

1.5%

The market share a provider must hold, stably, to appear in the league table at all. Ofcom generally removes a provider once its share has been below the threshold for four consecutive quarters.

Ofcom states that the providers included account for at least 95% of the fixed broadband market, 91% of landline, 98% of pay monthly mobile and 99% of pay TV. That is a defensible design choice: complaints per 100,000 is unstable at small subscriber counts, and Ofcom says so explicitly.

The altnet gap

The practical consequence is that no alternative network retail brand appears in the only independent, like for like service quality scoreboard that UK consumers are pointed at. A household choosing between a national brand and a well run local full fibre provider can compare price and speed on equal terms, but not service.

As retail share continues to fragment across the full fibre market, the share of UK connections invisible to this measure grows. That is a structural disadvantage for good altnets, who have no route to prove quality on the same page as the incumbents, and a genuine gap for policymakers assessing whether infrastructure competition is improving service or only price.

No alternative network retail brand meets the 1.5% threshold, so none appears in the Ofcom league table.

NOW Broadband shows the mechanism

NOW Broadband has no published fixed broadband figure for either Q4 2025 or Q1 2026. Its last published figure was 4 in Q3 2025, among the strongest results in that quarter's table. It continues to appear in the landline table, where it recorded 4 this quarter.

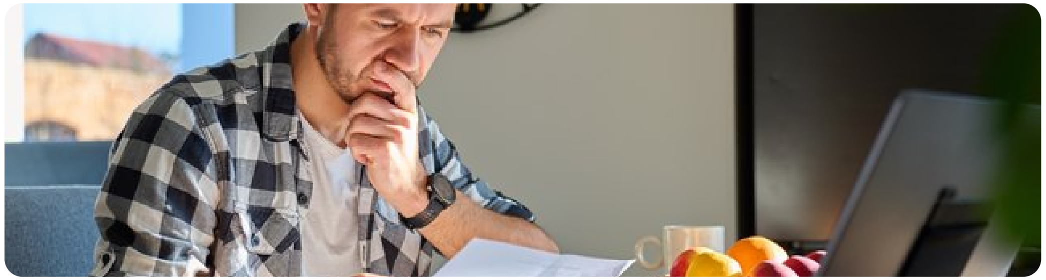
We are reporting the gap, not explaining it. Ofcom's published rule is that a provider is generally removed once its market share has been below 1.5% for four consecutive quarters, and Ofcom has not stated a reason for this specific case. What is observable is the effect: a brand can disappear from the scoreboard while still selling broadband, and its absence looks identical to never having been measured at all.

A record low, and a record fine, in the same month

On 23 July 2026 Ofcom published the lowest complaints figures in the history of the series. Fifteen days earlier, the same regulator issued its largest ever fine for direct harm to consumers.

On 8 July 2026 Ofcom fined Virgin Media £28 million after finding that its cancellation process and agent behaviours caused customers on millions of calls unreasonable effort, hassle or undue difficulty when trying to cancel. The conduct ran from January 2022 to September 2024. The penalty included a 30% reduction because Virgin Media admitted the failings and settled. Ofcom also directed it to check every affected customer who complained received redress.

Hold the two facts together and the lesson is uncomfortable but useful. Through much of the period Ofcom was investigating, Virgin Media's broadband complaints to Ofcom were falling, and by Q4 2025 it was among the least complained about providers in the table. The complaints series did not surface the harm. A three year investigation did.



A low complaints figure is evidence about complaints made to Ofcom. It is not evidence of regulatory compliance.

£28m

Ofcom's largest ever fine for direct consumer harm under its consumer protection rules, issued to Virgin Media on 8 July 2026.

What this means for how you read the table

- A low complaints figure is evidence about complaints made to Ofcom. It is not evidence of regulatory compliance.
- Harm that is systemic, procedural and spread thinly across millions of interactions may never produce a complaints spike, because each customer experiences friction rather than failure.
- Enforcement runs on a far longer clock than this data set. Ofcom opened the investigation in July 2023 and concluded it three years later, by which time the complaints table had moved on entirely.
- For investors and lenders, complaints trend and enforcement exposure are two separate risks and should be modelled separately.

How the rest of the market read these figures

We are not the only people who covered this release, and the range of interpretation is wider than the headlines suggest. Every position below is summarised in our own words from published sources, with attribution.

Ofcom

Cristina Luna-Esteban, Director of Consumers and Retail Markets

Welcomed the record low but warned against complacency, saying Ofcom expects providers to keep improving, and encouraged dissatisfied customers to switch. Pointed to end of contract alerts, simpler contract summaries and easier switching as the reforms behind the improvement.

Reported by Advanced Television, 23 July 2026

ISPA

Internet Services Providers' Association

Attributed the fall to more than £40 billion of investment in gigabit capable infrastructure, gigabit availability above 90% of premises, rising speeds, falling real terms prices and One Touch Switch. Said members are committed to resolving remaining complaints quickly.

Reported by Advanced Television, 23 July 2026

ISPreview

Mark Jackson

Reported the record low alongside the caution that the data covers only complaints Ofcom itself receives, not those made to an ISP or an ADR scheme. Noted Ofcom received 38,441 telecoms complaints directly from consumers in 2024.

Reported by ISPreview, 23 July 2026

thinkbroadband

Editorial analysis

Set out competing explanations for the fall. The optimistic reading is better full fibre reliability and altnets picking up customers where incumbents underperform. The sceptical reading is that providers have simply become better at handling billing and fault failures, so underlying fault levels may be unchanged while fewer people escalate to the regulator. Also expects a possible blip within six months as delayed PSTN migrations finally happen.

Reported by thinkbroadband, 23 July 2026

TalkTalk

Company statement

Said it is transforming its customer service to find and fix the root causes of complaints, is disappointed by these results, and expects continuing investment to show for customers in future quarters.

Reported by ISPreview, 23 July 2026

The question none of them asked

How aware are customers of their right to escalate at all? Every provider must print the ADR scheme on its bills and must issue a deadlock letter the moment it will go no further. Yet the six week route to a free, independent decision remains one of the least known consumer rights in the UK. A complaints figure this low may say as much about awareness as it does about service, and nothing in the data can separate the two.

Several price comparison sites also commented on this release. As a comparison site ourselves we do not cite competitors as sources.

Five things that could change this picture

A report that only argued its own case would not be worth much. These are the strongest challenges to the conclusions above, including one that could undo the headline entirely.

The deflection hypothesis

This is the most serious challenge to the record low, and it deserves to be stated plainly. thinkbroadband argues that providers may simply have become better at containing complaints before they escalate, meaning underlying fault levels could be unchanged while fewer people take what it calls the nuclear option of going to the regulator.

Why it matters: Nothing in the Ofcom data can settle this either way. A falling complaints line is consistent with genuinely better service and with more effective complaint containment. Distinguishing the two requires a second measure.

The missing denominator: ADR volumes

Ofcom's own methodology states that its figures exclude complaints made directly to providers and to Alternative Dispute Resolution schemes. CISAS and the Communications Ombudsman separately publish quarterly case data for members above a 1.5% market share.

Why it matters: Pairing the two series is the obvious test of the deflection hypothesis. If Ofcom complaints fall while ADR caseloads hold or rise, containment is the likelier explanation. We have not run that comparison here because it needs its own dataset and its own methodology note, and we will not assert a conclusion we have not evidenced.

The Digital Voice blip

The PSTN closes on 31 January 2027. thinkbroadband expects complaints to rise within six months as households that delayed migrating to Digital Voice are finally moved.

Why it matters: The most predictable risk to the record low, landing in the table where Plusnet and TalkTalk are already worst. Watch Q2 and Q3 2026 landline.

A policy change mid flight

DSIT is being wound down under machinery of government changes set out on 22 July 2026, the day before this data was published. Most functions move to the new Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade, with digital identity policy going to DCMS and AI strategy to the Cabinet Office.

Why it matters: Reporting at the time indicated BDUK's work continues uninterrupted, and gov.uk had not yet confirmed its new home. But the department that owned national digital infrastructure policy when this quarter's complaints were made is being dissolved, which matters for anyone citing DSIT in current documents.

The companion metric Ofcom already publishes

Ofcom's Comparing customer service research covers satisfaction, reliability and complaints handling by provider, using survey evidence rather than complaint counts.

Why it matters: As the complaints league loses its power to separate providers, that research becomes the more useful consumer facing comparison. The two should be read together, and arguably published together.

Three regulators, three different questions

Before any cross border number is quoted, it is worth knowing what each regulator actually collects. The three systems below are not three versions of the same measure. They are three different measures wearing the same word.

United Kingdom

Ofcom

Complaints made directly to the regulator, normalised per 100,000 subscribers, published quarterly by named provider for providers above a 1.5% market share.

- 6 per 100,000 broadband, Q1 2026
- 38,441 telecoms complaints to Ofcom in 2024
- 29.2m UK fixed broadband lines, Q4 2024
- Ofcom does not resolve cases; two ADR schemes do

The only genuine named-provider league table of the three.

United States

FCC

Informal complaints logged on a public dashboard and served on the carrier, which must respond within 30 days. Organised by issue category, not by provider rate.

- A live dashboard, continuously updated
- Organised by issue, not by provider
- Informal complaints fell from a 2018 peak
- The FCC serves and forwards; it does not rule

No per-subscriber ranking of named ISPs exists.

Europe

BEREC and national regulators

Coordinated but fragmented. Every member state publishes on its own definitions. ADR is mandated in all 27 states by the European Electronic Communications Code.

- France, ARCEP: 57,000+ signalements 2024, up 8%
- Germany, BNetzA: 154,624 number misuse cases 2024
- Italy, AGCOM: compulsory ConciliaWeb conciliation
- No EU wide league table equivalent to Ofcom's

Comparable ambition, incomparable outputs.

Sources: Ofcom (2026); FCC Consumer Complaints Data Center and FCC Annual Robocall Report (2025); ARCEP, Bilan annuel de J'alerte l'Arcep, 3 April 2025; Bundesnetzagentur press releases, January 2025; AGCOM Delibera 203/18/CONS. US connection count: FCC Internet Access Services, June 2024. UK line count: Ofcom Telecommunications Market Data Update, 10 April 2025.

Can these numbers be compared? Mostly, no

This is the part most coverage skips. We are not going to publish a table ranking the UK against the US and Europe, because the underlying definitions do not support one.

The honest headline

The UK operates the most transparent telecoms complaints regime of the three. It is the only one that publishes a normalised, named provider, quarterly league table. That is a real achievement and Ofcom deserves credit for it.

It also makes this report's central finding worse, not better. If the most transparent instrument in the world has compressed to the point where its own rules say you cannot separate six of seven providers, the problem is not the UK. The problem is the method.

Different things are being counted

Ofcom counts complaints made to the regulator. The FCC counts informal complaints it forwards to carriers. ARCEP counts signalements, which are alerts rather than disputes. AGCOM counts conciliation cases already heading for binding resolution. These are four different points in the same funnel.

Only two of them normalise

Ofcom and ARCEP both publish rates per 100,000. The FCC, the Bundesnetzagentur and AGCOM publish raw totals. A raw total cannot be set against a rate, and totals scale with population.

The one comparison that looks possible is a trap

ARCEP's 2024 fixed market signalement rates ran at roughly 75 to 100 per 100,000 users for Orange, SFR and Bouygues, and about 150 for Free. Ofcom's equivalent figure is 6. That is not evidence that French broadband is fifteen times worse. It is evidence that a low friction alerting platform collects far more reports than a regulator complaints line. The gap is definitional.

So what

The UK does not lead the world on service. The UK leads the world on **publishing** service. That distinction is the whole point of this report, and it makes the compression problem more serious rather than less: the best instrument in the world has lost the ability to separate the field.

Complaints measure failure. They do not measure quality

Complaint counts Failure — Ofcom, per 100,000

Counts only those who complained, and only to the regulator. Falls when service improves and also falls when people give up complaining. A lagging, negative-only signal.

Satisfaction indices Quality — ACSI, UKCSI, Ofcom research

Survey based, representative, scored 0 to 100. Captures the silent majority who never complain, positive and negative alike. Published far less often than complaints.

Crowd review scores Sentiment — Trustpilot and similar

Continuous and public, captures praise and anger together. But self selected, and heavily shaped by whether a provider invites reviews at all.

A complaint count can only ever tell you how often something went wrong badly enough that somebody escalated it. It is silent on the experience of the overwhelming majority who never complain, whether they are delighted or quietly resigned. Moving an industry from acceptable to outstanding needs a measure that can see both.

Four numbers that show the gap

73 The ACSI score for US internet service providers in 2026, up from 72, on a 0 to 100 scale. Fibre 76, non fibre 71. Against a US national average of 76.7, ISPs remain a below average industry.

American Customer Satisfaction Index, 19 May 2026, from 26,963 surveys

64 → 73 The same ACSI score in 2022 compared with 2026. US ISPs have improved substantially on satisfaction over four years, which is the trend the UK complaints series cannot show you.

American Customer Satisfaction Index, 19 May 2026

76.0 The UKCSI score for Telecommunications and Media in January 2026, up 2.7 points year on year but still 2.2 points below the UK all sector average of 78.2.

Institute of Customer Service, January 2026

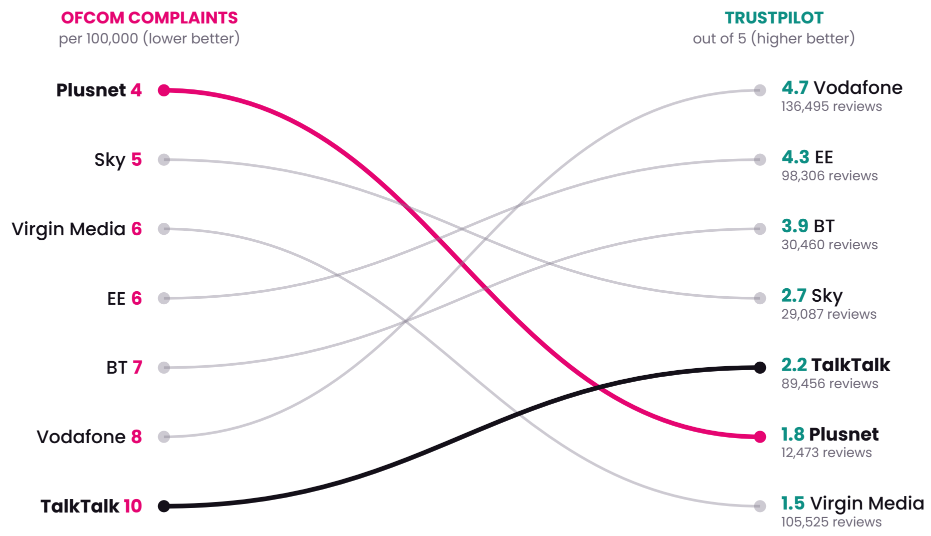
23% Share of UK broadband customers who had a reason to complain, even as overall broadband satisfaction reached 84%. Most of that dissatisfaction never reaches Ofcom.

Ofcom, Comparing customer service, 22 May 2025

Ofcom already publishes the companion

Ofcom's Comparing customer service research measures satisfaction, reliability and complaints handling by named provider, using survey evidence rather than complaint counts. It runs every two years. The complaints league runs every quarter. As the league loses its power to separate providers, the case for publishing the two together, on the same cadence, gets stronger.

We tested the obvious alternative. It failed



Lines cross because the two measures rank the field differently.
Rank correlation about -0.3, not significant at n=7.

Trustpilot scores and review counts captured manually on 26 July 2026 from each provider's main UK consumer profile, because Trustpilot blocks automated collection. Scores update continuously. Total reviews across the seven profiles: 501,802. Ofcom satisfaction: Comparing customer service, published 22 May 2025, covering 2024.

Verdict

Our conclusion is the opposite of what we expected when we started this test. Trustpilot is a valuable listening tool and a genuine record of how angry or delighted individual customers feel. It is not a service quality ranking, it is not stable enough to publish as one, and it should not be set alongside Ofcom's figures as though the two carry equal evidential weight. The right companion to a complaint count is proper satisfaction research, which Ofcom already commissions and publishes.

The two regulator measures agree with each other

Ofcom publishes two independent things: how many people complained, and how satisfied customers say they are. On complaints, Plusnet is best in the market at 4 per 100,000. On satisfaction, Ofcom names Plusnet as the highest, at 91%. On both, TalkTalk is worst: 10 per 100,000 and 77%. Two different instruments, built on different evidence, pointing the same way.

Trustpilot disagrees with both

On a verified capture of 501,802 reviews across the seven main provider profiles, Plusnet sits sixth of seven at 1.8 out of 5, and TalkTalk fifth at 2.2. Ranking the seven on each measure gives a rank correlation of about -0.38. With only seven providers that is not statistically significant, and we do not claim it is. But it is the opposite of the corroboration the two Ofcom measures show.

Trustpilot itself explains why

Trustpilot labels the Plusnet profile with a warning that the company has no history of asking for reviews, and that reviews may therefore not be representative. Providers that invite every customer collect a broad, mostly contented sample. Providers that invite nobody collect only the self selected minority motivated enough to arrive unprompted, who skew heavily negative. Vodafone holds 136,495 reviews against a customer base far smaller than BT's or Sky's.

The same brand can score three points apart

EE's main profile stood at 4.3 while its broadband specific profile sat at 1.2, a gap of 3.1 points for one company on one platform. TalkTalk's main profile and a secondary profile differed by 1.0. A brand's score depends on which of its profiles you happen to land on, which is not a property you want in a ranking.

"

Nobody ever rang Ofcom because their broadband worked. That is the whole problem with judging an industry on complaints alone.

If you are stuck in a complaint right now, the number that matters is not six per hundred thousand. It is six weeks, because that is when you can go over your provider's head and get an independent decision.

Know that date. Diarise it.

Adrian James

Sales Director and Broadband Editor, BroadbandSwitch.uk

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One call we will be marked on

Reports 26 and 27 published probabilities in advance and committed to scoring them in public. This one should do the same, so here is a single claim with resolution criteria set before the outcome is known.

OUR CALL

UK landline complaints will rise above 3 per 100,000 in at least one of Q2 or Q3 2026.

65% our confidence, published before the outcome is known

Reports 26 and 27 carried published probabilities with resolution dates. This one had none until now, which was a gap rather than a decision.

Why we think so

The PSTN closes on 31 January 2027 and the remaining analogue lines are the hardest ones. thinkbroadband expects a complaints rise within six months as delayed Digital Voice migrations finally happen. Landline is already the one table with genuine separation, and Plusnet at 7 and TalkTalk at 6 have room to move.

Why we might be wrong

Providers have had years to prepare and the migration has been deliberately slowed to protect vulnerable users. A quarter at 3 is already close to the floor, and the whole argument of this report is that the measure struggles to register small movements.

How it resolves

Scored against Ofcom's published landline industry average for Q2 2026 and Q3 2026, on the quarterly releases expected in late 2026 and early 2027. We will publish the result either way, in the corrections log, whether it flatters us or not.

The missed opportunity

Read this data as it is usually reported and you would think a complaint is a serious event, worth recording only once it is grave enough to involve a regulator. That framing is the problem.

Where this report ends up

Do both and you stop managing complaints and start putting the customer at the heart of the experience. That is what would lift this industry, and it is the opportunity this quarter's record low quietly conceals.

Dr Alex J. Martin-Smith
Founder and Chief Executive, Upleashed Limited

What gets counted

Ofcom's figure counts the small minority of people who complained, escalated, and got as far as the regulator. At 6 per 100,000 that is roughly one customer in sixteen thousand. Everyone else is invisible to it.

What gets missed

The sigh at the third transfer. The customer who gives up halfway through the webchat. The one who quietly switches at the end of the contract and never says why. Every one of those is an expression of dissatisfaction, and not one of them reaches this table.

What it would take

Capturing every expression of dissatisfaction, not just the ones loud enough to reach a regulator, and pairing it with a genuine intention to act on what comes back. The measurement is the easy part. The intention is the hard part.

So what: part one

Ofcom, DBIST, BDUK and the devolved administrations

The instrument is approaching the limit of its own resolution. Ofcom publishes to whole numbers and treats gaps of less than 1 as comparable. With a broadband industry average of 6 and a total spread of 6 points, those two rules now interact: six of seven broadband providers sit inside a 4 point band, and the comparability chain runs unbroken from best to second worst. This lands mid reorganisation: DSIT is being wound down under changes set out on 22 July 2026, with most functions moving to the new DBIST.

'So what': the complaints series is still an excellent longitudinal measure of whether the market is improving. It is becoming a weak cross sectional measure of which provider is better. If the table is to keep doing consumer facing work, it needs either finer reporting (one decimal place is already used when a figure falls below 0.5) or a companion metric. Ofcom's own *Comparing customer service* research is the obvious pairing.

Infrastructure providers, altnets, INCA and techUK

The table only includes providers with a stable market share of 1.5% or more in the relevant market. Ofcom states these providers account for at least 95% of the fixed broadband market. Every altnet, and every retail brand below the threshold, is therefore absent by design. NOW Broadband illustrates the mechanism: it has no published fixed broadband figure for Q4 2025 or Q1 2026, its last being 4 in Q3 2025, although it remains in the landline table.

'So what': as retail share fragments, a growing slice of UK connections sits outside the only independent service quality scoreboard consumers are pointed at. That is a competitive disadvantage for good altnets, who cannot prove quality on the same page as the incumbents, and a gap for policymakers tracking whether infrastructure competition is improving service or only price.

Retail service providers and MSPs

Faults, service and provisioning is the single largest driver in three of the four services. It accounted for 40% of TalkTalk's broadband complaints, 41% of Plusnet's landline complaints and 23% of Sky Mobile's mobile complaints. For EE's pay TV service, 27% of complaints were about complaints handling itself.

'So what': the remaining complaint volume is an operational execution problem, not a product problem. It is generated in the field and in the contact centre: installs that slip, faults that recur, escalations handled badly. Plusnet's split result, best on broadband and worst on landline in the same quarter, shows how sharply one process can diverge from another inside one brand.

So what: part two

Investors, lenders and rating agencies

Complaint rates are a cheap, public, quarterly proxy for churn pressure and regulatory exposure. But Q1 2026 shows the limits of using them alone. Virgin Media's broadband complaints to Ofcom sat at or below the industry average through 2025 and into Q1 2026, while the conduct that produced Ofcom's largest ever fine for direct consumer harm ran from January 2022 to September 2024.

'So what': a clean complaints line is not evidence of a clean compliance position. Enforcement risk in this sector is driven by breaches of the General Conditions and by direct evidence of consumer harm, which can be investigated over years and land long after the complaints series has moved on. Model the two exposures separately.

Consumers, Which?, Citizens Advice and the Communications Consumer Panel

The good news is real: even the worst figure in the broadband table, 10 per 100,000, is roughly one customer in ten thousand raising a complaint with Ofcom in a quarter. The harder news is that the table is now a weaker tie breaker than it was. Ofcom itself declares most broadband providers comparable to at least one neighbour.

'So what': use the table to spot the outlier, not to split the field. In Q1 2026 the defensible statements are that TalkTalk is the most complained about broadband provider and Sky Mobile the most complained about mobile provider. Ranking Sky above Virgin Media, or BT above EE, is not supported by Ofcom's own comparability rules. For everything else, pair the table with price, speed, contract terms and the compensation record.

Housing developers, landlords and the civil engineering supply chain

Provisioning sits inside the largest complaint category across the fixed services. That covers the handover between a build programme, an ISP order journey and an engineer appointment, which is precisely where new build and multi dwelling connections fail.

'So what': the complaints data does not break out new build or MDU premises, so the sector cannot see its own contribution. Developers and landlords negotiating wayleaves and connectivity commitments should ask retail partners for provisioning fail rates directly, because the public scoreboard will not surface them.

Every term in this report, defined

ACSI to General Conditions · Full glossary: broadbandswitch.uk/glossary.html

ACSI **American Customer Satisfaction Index**

A US satisfaction index running since 1994, scored 0 to 100. Its 2026 internet service provider score was 73. ISPs sit near the bottom of the industries it measures.

ADR **Alternative Dispute Resolution**

A free, independent scheme that can rule on a complaint your provider has not resolved. Every UK provider must belong to one: CISAS or the Communications Ombudsman.

ADSL **Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line**

Broadband delivered over a copper line running to the street cabinet and then to the premises. Ofcom counts ADSL inside its fixed broadband complaints category.

Altnet **Alternative network**

An independent network builder competing with Openreach and Virgin Media O2. No altnet meets the 1.5% threshold, so none appears in this table.

ARCEP **Autorite de regulation des communications electroniques**

The French telecoms regulator. Runs J'alerte l'Arcep, a public reporting platform, and normalises reports per 100,000 users as Ofcom does.

BDUK **Building Digital UK**

Administers public broadband funding including Project Gigabit. Formerly part of DSIT; its placement after the July 2026 reshuffle was unconfirmed at the time of writing.

BEREC **Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications**

Coordinates the EU's national telecoms regulators. It does not publish a single pan-EU complaints league table.

BNetzA **Bundesnetzagentur**

The German federal network regulator. Publishes issue-specific complaint counts rather than a per-provider service quality league.

CISAS **Communications and Internet Services Adjudication Scheme**

One of the two Ofcom approved ADR schemes. Run by CEDR. Its decisions bind the provider, not you.

Comparable **Ofcom's statistical tolerance**

Where the actual difference between two providers is less than one complaint per 100,000, Ofcom states their performance should be treated as equivalent.

CSAT **Customer Satisfaction Score**

A transactional measure: how satisfied were you with this specific interaction. Distinct from NPS, which measures relational loyalty.

DBIST **Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade**

Created in the machinery of government changes set out on 22 July 2026, merging DSIT with Business and Trade. Set to hold most national digital infrastructure policy.

Deadlock letter **Written confirmation a complaint is stuck**

A letter from your provider confirming it cannot resolve your complaint. It lets you go to ADR immediately rather than waiting the full six weeks.

DSIT **Department for Science, Innovation and Technology**

Being wound down from 22 July 2026. Created February 2023; functions split between DBIST, DCMS and the Cabinet Office. Still cited in earlier policy documents.

FCC **Federal Communications Commission**

The US communications regulator. Serves informal complaints on carriers, who must respond within 30 days, rather than adjudicating them.

FTTP **Fibre to the Premises**

Full fibre. An optical fibre running all the way into the building, with no copper in the final stretch.

FWA **Fixed Wireless Access**

Home broadband delivered over a mobile network. Ofcom excludes it from fixed broadband, but notes that where a provider sells both, FWA complaints cannot be separated out.

General Conditions **Ofcom's binding rules for providers**

The conditions every UK communications provider must meet. Breaching them is what triggers enforcement, including the £28 million Virgin Media fine of July 2026.

Every term in this report, defined (continued)

INCA to Wayleave · Full glossary: broadbandswitch.uk/glossary.html

INCA **Independent Networks Co-operative Association**

The trade body representing UK alternative network builders.

ISP **Internet Service Provider**

The company that sells you your broadband connection. It may or may not own the network your connection runs over.

MNO **Mobile Network Operator**

An operator that owns physical mobile infrastructure. In the UK these are EE, Virgin Media O2 and VodafoneThree.

MVNO **Mobile Virtual Network Operator**

A mobile brand that rents capacity from an MNO rather than owning masts. Four of the eight brands in Ofcom's pay monthly mobile table are MVNOs.

One Touch Switch **The UK switching process since September 2024**

You contact only the provider you are moving to. It handles the rest, including cancelling your old service.

Per 100,000 **How every figure here is scaled**

Complaints divided by subscribers, times 100,000. Scaling is what lets a provider with ten million customers be compared fairly with one that has half a million.

PSTN **Public Switched Telephone Network**

The UK's analogue telephone network. It closes on 31 January 2027, after which every landline must run over broadband.

TrustScore **Trustpilot's 1 to 5 rating**

Not a simple average. It weights recent reviews more heavily, rewards steady review collection, and seeds new profiles with a baseline, so volume dampens movement.

Wayleave **Legal permission to install on someone's land**

The agreement a network builder needs from a landowner or landlord. A frequent cause of delay in flats and new developments.

Industry average **The benchmark line in every table**

Total complaints for a service divided by the total subscribers of all providers included, per 100,000. It excludes providers below the 1.5% threshold.

MDU **Multi-Dwelling Unit**

A block of flats or similar shared building. A common source of provisioning complaints because access usually requires a wayleave.

MSP **Managed Service Provider**

An IT firm that bundles connectivity with services such as cloud, security and voice, usually for business customers.

NPS **Net Promoter Score**

A loyalty measure created at Bain & Company in 2003, based on how likely a customer is to recommend a provider.

Openreach **The BT Group network division**

Builds and maintains the largest UK fixed access network, which most retail ISPs sell over.

Provisioning **Getting the service working in the first place**

Everything between placing an order and a working connection: appointment, engineer, activation. It sits inside the largest complaint category.

Six week rule **When you can escalate to ADR**

Since 8 April 2026 you can go to ADR after six weeks, not eight. Ofcom cut the wait in its July 2025 ADR statement. Deadlock still lets you go sooner.

UKCSI **UK Customer Satisfaction Index**

Published twice yearly by the Institute of Customer Service, scored 0 to 100. Telecommunications and Media scored 76.0 in January 2026.

The BroadbandSwitch.uk research library

Five reports across fourteen months, each free to read, each with its sources published. Every figure on every cover below is drawn from that report's own published data.

REPORT No. 26

The Last *Dial Tone*

Britain switches off its analogue phone network on 31 January 2027. What actually happens, who is at risk, and one accountable forecast.

72%

the date holds, with a managed residual tail

June 2026 · 47 cited sources

broadbandswitch.uk/reports/the-last-dial-tone/

REPORT No. 27

The Great *Consolidation*

Forecasting the future of the UK ISP and altnet market. Evidence graded, with resolution criteria published in advance.

68%

three national fibre platforms, plus a niche tail

Final edition 13 July 2026 · 75 sources

broadbandswitch.uk/reports/the-great-consolidation/

REPORT No. 28

The Loyalty *Penalty*

What disengaged UK broadband customers really pay, who pays the most, and why the gap is closing faster than the headlines suggest.

£7 to £9

a month, the gap between staying put and switching

July 2026

broadbandswitch.uk/reports/the-loyalty-penalty/

REPORT No. 29

The 82% *Country*

Ofcom's Connected Nations data puts full fibre outside 24.9 million front doors, and finds 14 million premises that have not opened theirs.

82%

of UK homes can now get full fibre, 24.9m of 30.5m

Spring 2026 data · July 2026

broadbandswitch.uk/reports/the-82-percent-country/

REPORT No. 30

YOU ARE HERE

The Complaints *Floor*

UK telecoms complaints have hit an all time low. What that number still tells you, and what it has quietly stopped telling you.

6

broadband complaints per 100,000 customers

This report · July 2026

broadbandswitch.uk/reports/the-complaints-floor/

Also worth your time

Complaints and your rights
The escalation route, including the six week ADR rule in force since 8 April 2026.
broadbandswitch.uk/guides/complaints-and-your-rights/

Automatic compensation rates
What providers must pay for delayed repairs and missed appointments, without you asking.
broadbandswitch.uk/guides/automatic-compensation-rates/

Is TalkTalk being sold?
The most complained about provider in this report, with its consumer arm in a live auction.
broadbandswitch.uk/insights/is-talktalk-being-sold/

Broadband glossary
Every term in this report, and several hundred more.
broadbandswitch.uk/glossary.html

How to read this data honestly

Every limitation below is one Ofcom states itself, in its published background and methodology document for this release. We repeat them because the figures are routinely quoted without them.

It counts complaints made to Ofcom, not all complaints

The series excludes complaints made directly to a provider or to an Alternative Dispute Resolution scheme. It is a consistent sample for comparison, not a total volume.

The figures are rounded to whole numbers

Ofcom rounds to one decimal place only where a figure falls below 0.5. Two providers printed as 6 and 7 may be much closer than the printed gap suggests.

Gaps under 1 are declared comparable

Where the actual measurable difference between providers is less than one complaint per 100,000, Ofcom states their performance should be treated as equivalent. This report follows that rule and names the groups explicitly.

Small providers move more

Ofcom notes that bigger fluctuations are more likely for smaller operators, because the complaint count is measured against a smaller subscriber base.

Complaints handling quality is inside the signal

Ofcom notes that providers with poor complaints handling may feature more prominently, because unresolved cases are more likely to reach the regulator.

It is a lagging indicator

Q1 2026 covers January to March 2026 and was published on 23 July 2026. A provider's service today can be better or worse than its last printed quarter.

Publicity moves the numbers

Ofcom notes that call volumes can spike when enforcement action or a high profile issue is publicised, which is a plausible factor in the Q4 2025 mobile spike that this quarter unwinds.

A Primary source
Published by the organisation that produced the data. Regulator releases, official data sets, methodology documents and satisfaction indices.

B Reported source
Trade press reporting on a primary release, used where we could not obtain the primary document directly. Named journalist or publication, dated.

C Our own working
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What we could not verify

Every URL above was opened during checking. Where we could not confirm a page, the reference carries no link rather than a plausible looking one. Two figures from an earlier draft were removed because we could not stand them up: a UKCSI complaint handling sub score, and the scope of the FCC's informal complaint totals.

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