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Customer Complaints Handling Research

Prepared For:

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A. Introduction

A1. Background & the Need for Research

Ofgem, as the regulator of Britain's gas and electricity markets, has the principal objective to protect the interests of consumers, wherever appropriate by promoting effective competition. Ofgem also has a statutory duty to have regard to the interests of customers who are disabled, chronically sick, of pensionable age, on low incomes or living in rural areas.

The nature of consumer representation in the energy sector changed in October 2008 to introduce a three tier system comprising;

- Consumer Direct providing a single point of contact for consumers covering all markets for information and advice;
- the extension of redress schemes (Energy Ombudsman), approved by the Authority (Ofgem), to cover all energy complaints; and
- a new consumer advocacy body (the new National Consumer Council, known as Consumer Focus) dealing with individual complaints relating to disconnection or involving a vulnerable customer.

In these new arrangements there is a greater emphasis on consumers being able to resolve their complaints at the first port of call with their gas or electricity company. The success of the arrangements depends largely on how successful energy companies are at handling complaints.

To support this change in emphasis, Ofgem was required to make regulations prescribing standards for the handling, by its regulated companies, of consumer complaints made to them. The Complaints Handling Standards Regulations were published on 1st July and came into force on 1st October 2008. They apply to complaints from domestic consumers and micro businesses to gas and electricity supply companies and also to network companies (gas transporters and electricity distributors).

The standards are designed to provide effective protection for customers and comprise a number of key requirements to which suppliers and network companies must adhere when a customer makes a complaint. If suppliers are found to be in breach of these obligations, Ofgem has the power to impose a financial penalty of up to 10 per cent of the company's turnover.

The Consumers, Estate Agents and Redress Act 2007 (CEAR) requires Ofgem to collect information with respect to the levels of compliance with the standards. Consumer Focus is required, under CEAR, to publish statistical information relating to the level of compliance with the standards.

Ofgem initially conducted research in 2009 to assess suppliers' compliance with the new standards and measure customers overall satisfaction with the way in which complaints were handled – the results of which were treated as a benchmark against which future changes and improvements could be monitored. A second wave of research was subsequently required to measure the impact of changes made by suppliers' following Ofgem's recommendations in 2009

A2. Research Objectives

The overall objective that the research aimed to address was:

'To assess energy suppliers' adherence to Ofgem's complaints handling standards by measuring customers' recollections of the process and satisfaction with the handling of their complaint'

Within this overall objective there were a number of overarching aims that the research sought to achieve:

- To gauge customers satisfaction with the six main energy suppliers complaints handling process;
- To identify whether the experiences of customers indicate that gas and electricity suppliers are dealing with their complaints in accordance with the complaints handling standards set out by Ofgem in October 2008;
- To identify areas of good practice in the application of the complaints handling standards;
- And identify areas of weakness in supplier's complaints handling processes in order to identify areas where improvements need to be made;
- To assess the extent to which suppliers' handling of customer complaints and customer satisfaction has changed following Ofgem's recommendations from the 2009 survey

A3. Methodology

A total of 3,008 telephone interviews were conducted with customers who made a complaint to their energy supplier during **December 2009**. The research focused on customers of the six main suppliers in the GB energy market as follows:

- Centrica (British Gas)
- EDF Energy
- E.on UK
- RWE npower
- Scottish & Southern Electric (SSE)
- Scottish Power

Across these six suppliers, two core groups were identified to participate in the research:

- Domestic customers
- Micro businesses, defined as:
    - Having fewer than 10 employees and an annual turnover and annual account balance sheet total not exceeding 2 million Euros.

- An annual consumption of electricity of not more than 55,000kWh or an annual consumption of gas of not more than 200,000kWh.

The methodology and timing of the research were identical to that used in the previous year (2009) to ensure that the results of both waves (2009 and 2010) of research are comparable.

In all cases, the interview was conducted with the person who made the complaint, either personally or on behalf of someone else to focus on their first hand, personal experience of the complaints handling process. As such, the nature and status of all complaints referred to in this report relates to the customers' own definition and recollection of their complaint and not the suppliers definition. Where customer and supplier definitions differ, they are clearly highlighted.

Customers who could not recall making the complaint, or who were unfamiliar with the details of the complaint and/or the process were excluded from the research.

Interviews lasted for approximately 15 minutes and were conducted by experienced Consumer and Business to Business interviewers from Harris Interactive using CAPI technology (Computer Aided Personal Interviewing) and used a questionnaire designed by Harris Interactive in full consultation with Ofgem. All interviews took place between 1st and 26th February, 2010.

Throughout the interview customers referred to their energy supplier by individual name. However, for analysis purposes, all results are presented at a combined, parent-company, level. For example, SSE includes customers of Scottish & Southern Electric, Southern Electric, Scottish Hydro, Atlantic and Swalec.

Customer sample was provided to Harris Interactive independently by each of the six energy suppliers and equal numbers of interviews were completed for each supplier.

Weighting

Domestic customer data was weighted, based on market share figures for the GB domestic energy market, to ensure the results of the study were reflective of the market as a whole. Micro Business data has not been weighted but is presented at the overall level, i.e. based on all completed Micro Business interviews – Micro Businesses make up only a small proportion of the UK energy market.

Significant differences between customer groups (Domestic and Micro Business), between suppliers and between the 2009 and 2010 results have been tested at the 95% confidence level and are highlighted where appropriate.

Questionnaires

A copy of the questionnaire is appended to this report for reference.

B. Executive Summary

Methodology

In this, the second wave of research with customer who had made a complaint to one of the six main energy suppliers in GB, 3,008 fifteen minute telephone interviews were conducted with customers who had made a complaint during December 2009. All customers were classified as either Domestic or Micro Business and contact details were provided independently by each of the six energy suppliers.

The questionnaire, interviewing method and timing of the research used were unchanged from the 2009 survey to enable comparison of results. As previously, Domestic customer data was weighted, based on market share figures, to represent the GB domestic energy market.

Complaints Handling Process

Across the GB energy market as a whole there have been only slight changes in supplier performance with the process of handling of customer complaints since 2009. Whilst satisfaction among Domestic and Micro Business customers remains at a relatively low level, there have been marginal increases in customer satisfaction with most individual elements of the process and a significant fall in the number of Domestic customers who were 'not at all' satisfied overall. As in 2009, satisfaction levels were consistent for complaints registered/handled by telephone and also those which were in written form - letter, email or fax.

Across all complaints, satisfaction was higher for the initial stages of the complaints handling process (receiving and initially handling the complaint) and lower for the latter stages (taking action, informing customers of next steps and calling back as/when promised). Suppliers' performance was again highest in terms of the professionalism and attitude of their staff as well as the ease of registering the complaint with much lower satisfaction with their ability to take ownership of a complaint and, often proactively, find a resolution including calling the customer back and making them aware of the next steps.

Among all suppliers, SSE performed the strongest for Telephone complaints followed E.on and Scottish Power. npower performed consistently below other suppliers for most attributes with EDF Energy also performing below the average for taking ownership of the complaint and having knowledge of the next steps. In terms of Written complaints, Scottish Power performed the most strongly and consistently, especially for making customers aware of the next steps and providing a timeframe to work to.

As previously, no significant differences in satisfaction existed by topic of complaint and no single type of complaint elicited significantly higher or lower levels of satisfaction than others. The most common complaint topic among Domestic and Micro Business customers remained Billing with a notable fall in the proportion of Price related complaints and a slight increase in the proportion of Meter related complaints.

Overall satisfaction with the complaints handling process was relatively low amongst all customers who complained by telephone and at no point in the process did more than one in five customers claim to be 'very' satisfied. However, all points in the process have experienced slight, albeit not significant, increases in satisfaction with the highest average score for any single attribute, as perceived by all Domestic customers, increasing to 3.1 out of 5.0 for the Professionalism of the Call Handler.

The Ease of Registering a complaint remains the attribute with the highest level of satisfaction among Domestic customers who registered their complaint in writing (letter, email, fax or website) – a quarter claimed to be 'very' satisfied. However, as previously, satisfaction with the other elements of the process was relatively low. Unlike telephone complaints, levels of satisfaction throughout the written process remain relatively unchanged from the 2009 research.

Across the research as a whole, Micro Business customers tended to rate the complaints handling process as less satisfactory than Domestic, whether their complaint was made by telephone or in writing. For telephone complaints, as for Domestic, there have been marginal improvements in satisfaction for all elements of the process whilst for Written complaints satisfaction with being informed of the next steps has increased significantly from 2009. Micro Business customers still consider their complaints to be more serious (significantly more so 'very' serious) than Domestic and were more likely to pursue a resolution to their complaint – either in the form of contacting the supplier directly or taking action with other organisations such as the Ombudsman.

Whilst it remains important that energy suppliers provide a complaints handling service that is customer friendly i.e. it is prompt, professional, offers understanding and keeps customers informed at all stages, it is also fundamental that a resolution is found that is satisfactory to each customer. Customers who considered that their complaint had been resolved by their supplier were significantly more likely to view all stages of the process in a more favourable light than customers who considered their complaint to still be unresolved.

Overall Satisfaction

Whilst a large proportion of customers remain dissatisfied with their overall experience of the complaints handling process, there has been a significant fall in the proportion of Domestic customers who claimed to be 'very' dissatisfied – to two-fifths. However, among Micro Business customers, half of customers remain 'very' dissatisfied. Among both Domestic and Micro Business customers, only a quarter were satisfied with the complaints handling process overall and levels of overall satisfaction were similar regardless of whether the complaint was made by telephone or in writing.

By supplier, satisfaction was highest among SSE, Scottish Power and E.on customers with a significant increase in overall satisfaction for SSE. All other suppliers experienced slight improvements apart from E.on for whom satisfaction levels are unchanged from 2009. However, in all cases only one in ten customers were 'very' satisfied.

Among Domestic and Micro Business customers, the key drivers of satisfaction remained the assistance/helpful attitude of staff, the complaint being dealt with or resolved promptly and finding a resolution to the problem at all. Conversely, the drivers of dissatisfaction were not having the complaint dealt with or resolved, the process taking too long, unhelpful staff and a lack of, or poor, communication.

Customers were again more positive about the resolution that they had received than with the process overall and, as in 2009, slightly over half of Domestic and three-fifths of Micro Business customers whose complaint had been resolved claimed to be satisfied with the resolution.

E.on and EDF Energy customers were the least satisfied (almost half 'very/quite' satisfied) whilst the four remaining suppliers experienced similar proportions of customers who were satisfied – at least three-fifths of customers for each supplier were 'quite/very' satisfied.

Contact with suppliers

Across all complaints, only a fifth of Domestic customers had contact with their supplier on a single occasion and only one in ten Micro Business customers had a single contact with their supplier. Among both customer types, customers on average contacted their supplier three times more often than their supplier contacted them – a slight reduction from four times in 2009.

Telephone was by far and away the most widely used method of making a complaint and was used in over four-fifths of cases. Written complaints such as letter or email accounted for a relatively small proportion of all complaints to GB energy suppliers and face to face contact accounted for an insignificant number of complaints – the channel being used in less than half a percent of cases. The only significant difference by supplier saw Scottish Power being more likely than others to receive email complaints and npower more likely to receive written.

Where additional contact was required to resolve a complaint, relatively low proportions of customers claimed to have been offered a copy of their suppliers' complaints handling procedure, provided with information for subsequent contact and promised a timeframe in which the complaint would be resolved. As before, npower were the most likely of all suppliers to follow these standards and SSE were the least likely to do so. The vast majority of Domestic customers (86%) who had additional contact with their supplier had some record of their complaint retained for subsequent contact – an increase on the previous years' results.

There has been a fall in the proportion of customers, both Domestic and Micro Business, who felt the need to escalate their complaint to a senior member of staff or manager since the previous research – a third among Domestic and half among Micro Businesses. Among those who did escalate their concern, almost half felt that it had a positive impact on the resolution to their complaint.

The energy suppliers were not felt by their customers to be taking action to deal with unresolved complaints or offer further steps to seek a resolution – most likely due to the discrepancy between supplier and customer definition of a resolved complaint. In cases where a customer complaint was not deemed by the customer to have been resolved, less than one in ten suppliers were felt to have taken any further action and four-fifths of Domestic customers and two-thirds of Micro Business felt that no further action had been taken at all – an increase from the previous research.

Complaints Resolution

Unchanged from the previous research, there remains a significant discrepancy between the proportion of complaints that each of the suppliers consider to be resolved and the proportion considered to be resolved in the eyes of the customer. Two-fifths of all complaints made that were considered by the suppliers to be resolved, were not resolved in the eyes of the customer. This figure was consistent between Domestic and Micro Business customers, between the different suppliers within the Domestic market and unchanged from 2009.

The proportion of complaints made to GB energy suppliers that remained unresolved in the eyes of the customer, around two-fifths overall, showed some differences between suppliers and between Domestic and Micro Business customers. SSE and Scottish Power have seen falls in the proportion of unresolved complaints since 2009 (significantly so for Scottish Power) and are notably lower than the other suppliers – around one in three compared to two-fifths. Micro Business customers were more likely than Domestic to consider their complaint unresolved – almost half were unresolved.

Exploring the resolution further, little more than one in ten Domestic customer complaints (14%) were considered by the customer to have been resolved on the first and only contact and only one in twenty Micro Business complaints (8%) – results that show no change from 2009. For both customer groups requiring more than one contact with their supplier, around half were 'very' dissatisfied with the fact that they required additional contact.

C. Main Report

C1. Respondent Profile

The six main energy suppliers in GB provided contacts for all customers who had made a complaint to their gas or electricity supplier in December 2009.

From these records, a total of 3,008 interviews were completed, comprised of 2,734 interviews with Domestic customers and 274 interviews with Micro Business customers. By supplier, these interviews were divided as follows;

Table 1 – Proportion of interviews by customer type and supplier

	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.on UK	RWE nPower	SSE	Scottish Power	Total
Domestic	467	446	440	448	490	443	**2,734**
Micro Business	35	56	62	54	8	59	**274**
Total	**502**	**502**	**502**	**502**	**498**	**502**	**3,008**

C.1.1 Domestic Customer Profile

Just over half (54%) of all Domestic customers interviewed were female and slightly under half (46%) were male with the most common age bands being ages 36 – 45 (24% of Domestic customers) and 46 – 55 (21% of Domestic customers). One in five customers (20%) was aged between 25 – 35 while only one in 20 was aged between 18 and 24 (4%). Among the remaining complainants, 16% were aged between 56 – 65 and one in ten (12%) were 66 or older.

This picture was mostly consistent across all suppliers, however, those making a complaint to SSE were more likely to be female than other suppliers (61%). Centrica and npower customers who registered a complaint were more likely than others to be aged 25 – 35 (24% and 22% respectively) while the only other significant difference was that customers of the remaining suppliers were more likely to be aged 66 or older than those of Centrica and npower (14% for EDF Energy, e.on and Scottish Power and 18% for customers of SSE).

The profile of all Domestic customers is shown in table 2 below;

Table 2 – Domestic Customers by gender, age, working status & marital status

% of Domestic Customers	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.on UK	RWE nPower	SSE	Scottish Power	Total
Base:	467	446	440	448	490	443	**2,734**
Gender							
Male	*47*	*46*	*51*	*48*	*39*	*46*	***46***
Female	*53*	*54*	*49*	*52*	*61**	*54*	***54***
Age							
18 – 24	*5*	*5*	*6*	*4*	*3*	*2*	***4***
25 – 35	*24**	*18*	*18*	*22**	*17*	*16*	***20***
36 – 45	*25*	*27*	*24*	*24*	*21*	*24*	***24***
46 – 55	*22*	*18*	*20*	*22*	*22*	*23*	***21***
56 – 65	*13*	*16*	*15*	*16*	*17*	*20*	***16***
66+	*9*	*14**	*14**	*8*	*18**	*14**	***12***
Working Status							
Working – full time	*43*	*47*	*45*	*47*	*31**	*43*	***42***
Working – part time	*13*	*15*	*16*	*15*	*17*	*19*	***15***
Unemployed – seeking work	*9**	*6*	*8**	*8**	*4*	*4*	***7***
Unemployed – not seeking	*16**	*11*	*8*	*11*	*14*	*7*	***12***
Retired	*16*	*19*	*20*	*15*	*28**	*24**	***20***
Marital Status							
Married/Living with Partner	*50*	*53*	*55*	*58*	*58*	*69*	***56***
Single	*29**	*27**	*22*	*24**	*18*	*14*	***23***
Separated / Divorced / Widowed	*18*	*17*	*19*	*14*	*21**	*15*	***18***

** Significant difference*

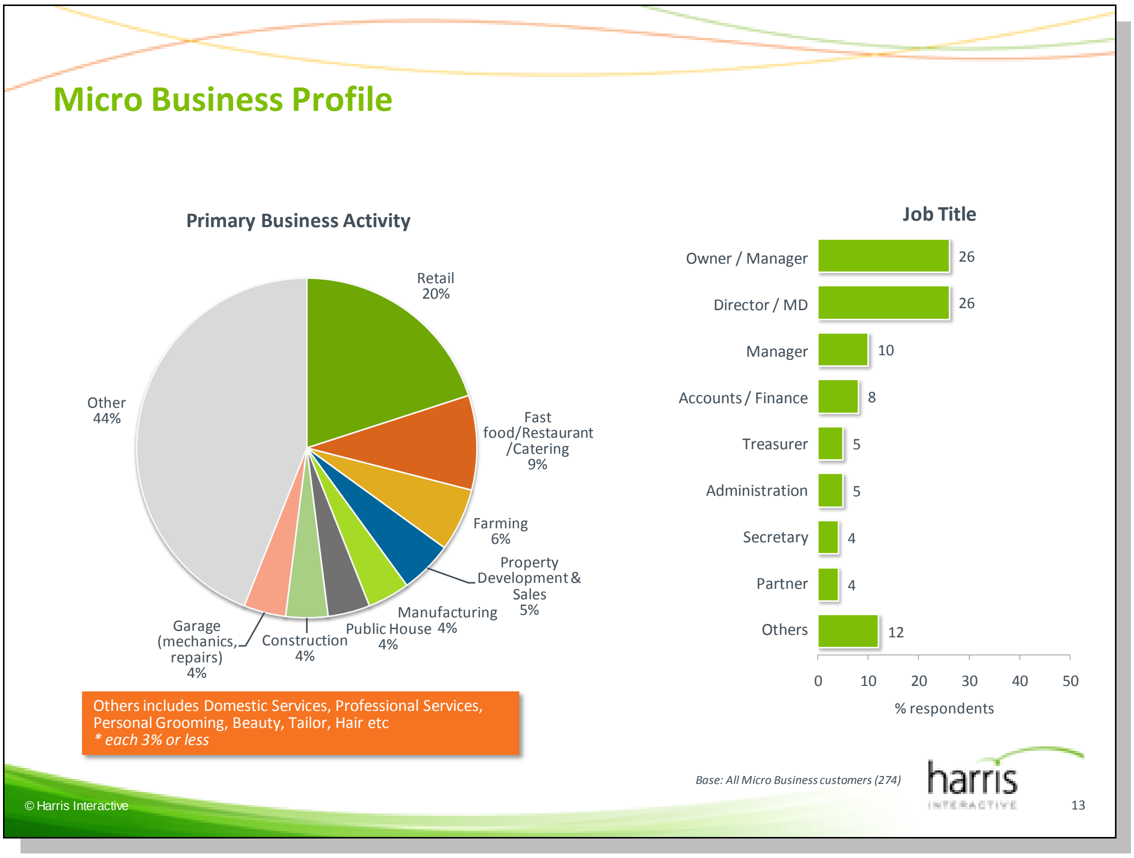
C.1.2 Micro Business Customer Profile

Within the Micro Business interviews a range of business types were surveyed. The most common business type was Retail, accounting for one in five (20%) of all Micro Business interviews, followed by one in ten for Fast food/Restaurant/Catering (9%) and one in 20 for Farming (6%). The largest proportion of Micro Business customers were classified as 'Other' (44%) – a category containing business types which individually accounted for 3% or less of the total. This included such areas as Domestic Services, Professional Services, Personal Grooming, Beauty, Tailor and Hair.

Micro Business respondents mostly held senior positions such as 'Owners / Managers' or 'Directors / MD' and each accounted for a quarter of complaints made (26% for each). This is a familiar finding in research with Micro Businesses as a result of their having smaller numbers of employees.

Respondents with less senior job titles accounted for 10% or less of all complaints made and the profile of all Micro Business respondents is shown in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1 – Micro Business Customer Profile



C.1.3 Complaints History & Confidence

Customers were classified by whether or not they had a made a complaint to an organisation other than the energy supplier to whom their existing complaint related in the last 12 months and by their degree of confidence in making such complaints. As in the 2010 research, Micro Business customers were more likely than Domestic to have made a second complaint in the last 12 months – 39% claimed to have done so as opposed to 30% of Domestic customers. However, as previously, Domestic customers appeared to be more confident in making complaints with (64%) claiming to be confident when making complaints, compared to (54%) of Micro Business customers who were confident.

Among the different suppliers, Scottish Power Domestic customers were the most confident, with seven in ten (70%) stating that they were confident compared to an average among all suppliers of two-thirds (64%). npower and Centrica customers were the least confident with 29% and 28% respectively saying they were not confident when compared to the overall average (25% claiming not to be confident).

C.1.4 Complaint Topic

The nature of complaint was established with each individual customer and then classified into one of seven pre-determined categories – Billing, Sales, Transfers, Meters, Prices, Debt and Other.

Among all Domestic customers surveyed the most common topics of complaint were Billing (34%), Meters (21%) and Prices (17%). Compared to the 2009 research when they accounted for 31% of complaints, the proportion of Price related complaints has experienced a significant decline. Billing complaints predominantly focused on accuracy (22% of all complaints related to the accuracy of the bill) with smaller proportions of all customers making a complaint about other aspects of billing – Estimates (9%), Frequency (5%), and Refunds (3%). Most complaints related to Meters were made in regards to Meter Readings (12%) and the Accuracy of the Meter (10%) – only 2% complained about the position of the Meter. Within Prices, one in ten customers (11%) complained about the amount of increase, Direct Debits accounted for a slightly lower proportion (7%) of complaints and less than one in twenty (2%) made a complaint about the notification of increases that had been received.

As seen in 2009, one in ten customers' complaints related to Transfers to/from a supplier and Sales (10% and 9% respectively) and one in twenty (6%) related to Debt. Two-fiths (39%) of Domestic customers complained about something else such as Customer Service, Meter faults/setting, Wrong bill, No service/cut off or Gas card/prepayment card problems.

Among the six energy suppliers, the proportion of complaints related to Billing was fairly consistent – npower (38%), E.on and EDF Energy (37% each) have a significantly higher proportion of complaints than other suppliers. Across the other complaints topics, E.on was significantly below the others for Debt related complaints, Scottish Power had significantly more Sales and Transfer related complaints (12% for both) than others but was significantly lower for Prices. SSE was significantly above the others for Sales (19%) and Transfers (16%) but significantly lower for Meter related complaints (16%).

Table 3 below details the topic of complaint by supplier among Domestic customers;

Table 3 – Domestic Customer topic of complaint

% of Domestic Customers	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.on UK	RWE nPower	SSE	Scottish Power	Total
Base:	467	446	440	448	490	443	**2,734**
Billing	30	37*	37	38*	36	30	**34**
Meters	18	23	20	26	23	16*	**21**
Prices	17	21	20	17	14*	17	**17**
Transfer	9	11*	7	6	12*	16*	**10**
Sales	6	6	9	5	12*	19*	**9**
Debt	8	5	3*	7	6	4	**6**
Other	43*	37	36	40	35	38	**39**

** Significant difference*

Similar to in the 2009 research, the rank order of topic of complaint between Domestic and Micro Business customers was consistent, as was the detail within each overall category. Micro Business customers continued to be significantly more likely than Domestic to have made a complaint about Billing – two-fifths of Micro Business complaints (43%) related to Billing. They were also more likely to register complaints related to Meters (22%), Transfer (15%) and to Other issues (45%). Within the 'Other' category complaints related to a range of topics including General Customer Service and Contract problems i.e. didn't want/sign-up for the account, incorrect details.

C.1.5 Seriousness of complaint

Half of Domestic customers (48%) considered their complaint to have been 'very' serious and a further quarter (23%) considered it to have been 'quite' serious – these figures are unchanged from 2009. Only one in ten customers felt that their complaint was not serious (4% 'not very' and 6% 'not that' serious).

Among Domestic customers, both npower and Centrica customers' complaints were felt to be the most serious – 56% and 50% respectively stating that their complaint was 'very' serious. Less than two-fifths (39%) of Scottish Power customers considered their complaint to be 'very' serious.

As found in 2009, Micro Business complainants were significantly more likely than Domestic to consider their complaint to have been 'very' serious – over half (55%) stated that it was 'very' serious and a fifth (22%) felt that it was 'quite' serious. However, whilst still viewed as more serious than Domestic complaints, there has been a fall (of 7%) from 2009 in the proportion of Micro Business customers who considered their complaint to be 'very' serious. One in ten Micro Business customers felt that their complaint was not serious (4% 'not very' and 7% 'not that' serious).

C2. Contact with Suppliers

C.2.1 Frequency of Contact

Across all complaints made to their energy supplier in December 2009, one in five (22%) Domestic customers had contact with their supplier about their complaint on just a single occasion. All other customers required further contact.

Almost half (46%) of all Domestic customers had contact with their supplier between two and five times and a further tenth (12%) had contact with their supplier between six and nine times. One in ten customers (12%) needed 10 or more contacts in regards to their complaint.

Among the suppliers, npower customers were significantly more likely than others to have had contact with their supplier on more than one occasion (87% compared to an average of 78%). E.on customers needed fewer contacts with their supplier than others (30% had contact only once) followed by SSE (25%) and then EDF Energy and Scottish Power (23% and 22% respectively).

Among Micro Business customers, as in 2009, only one in ten (11%) had a single contact with their supplier regarding their complaint (9% in 2009). One in three (37%) had contact between two and five times and 14% had contact between six and nine times. The remaining third (32%) of Micro Business customers required 10 or more contacts, including 1 in 6 (17%) claiming to have had contact with their supplier on 20 or more occasions.

Among both Domestic and Micro Business respondents, customers on average contacted their supplier three times more often than their supplier contacted them. This is a slight improvement from 2009 when customers contacted their supplier four times more often.

The average number of times that a customer had contact with their supplier is shown in table 4 as follows;

Table 4 – Amount of contact with supplier

All Domestic Customers	**3.7**
British Gas	*3.9*
EDF Energy	*3.8*
E.on UK	*3.2**
RWE npower	*4.5**
Scottish & Southern Electric	*3.3**
Scottish Power	*3.7*
Micro Business Customers	**5.6**

** Significant difference*

C.2.2 Main Method of Contact

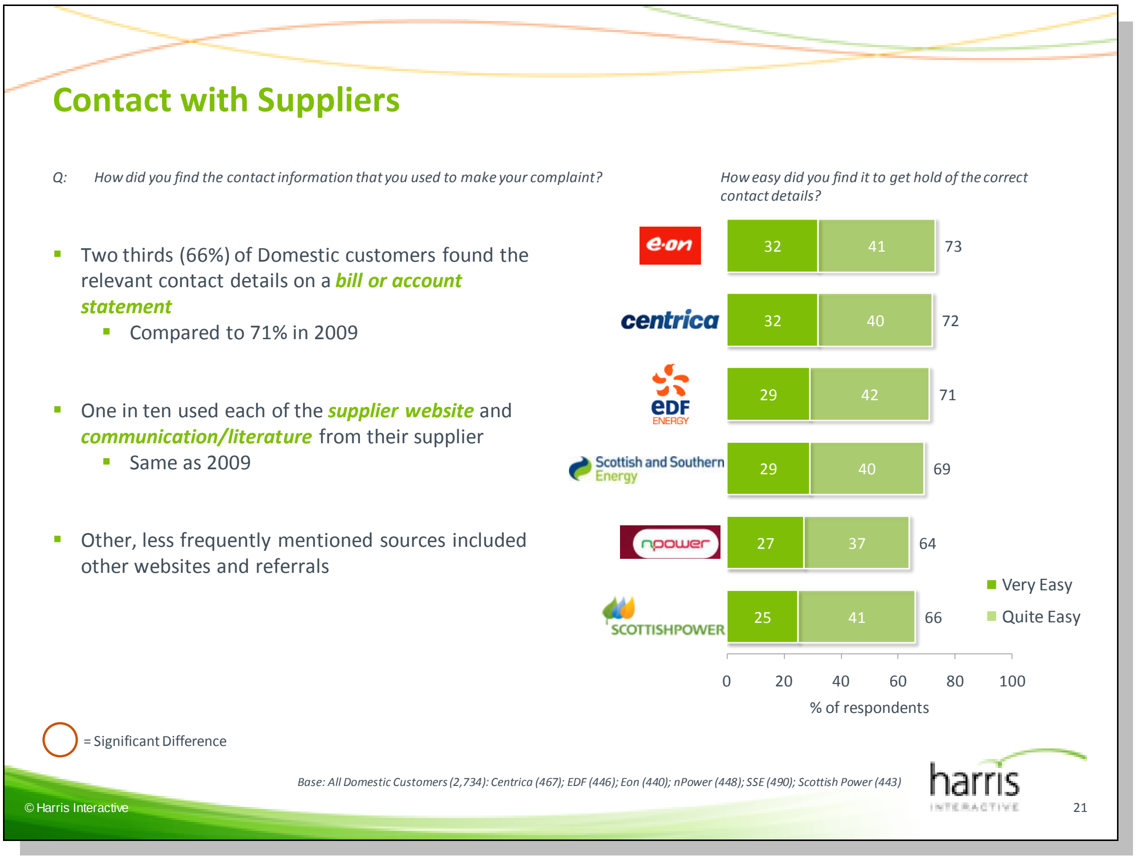
Most Domestic and Micro Business customers used the telephone as their main contact method (88% for Domestic and 81% for Micro Business customers). One in ten Micro Business customers used an Email as their main contact (10%) and half as many (5%) used a Letter. Domestic customers were less likely to use each of a letter or email – 4% for each method of contact.

Relatively equal proportions of Domestic customers of each supplier used telephone as their main contact method. The only notable difference among suppliers was that that Scottish Power customers were significantly more likely than others to contact via Email (11%).

The main source of contact information when registering a complaint was a Bill or Account Statement, used by two thirds (66%) of all Domestic customers – a slight decline from 71% in 2009. This compares to a higher figure for Micro Business customers where three-quarters (75%) used a Bill/Account Statement, one in ten (13%) used Other Communication from the supplier and 8% used the Supplier Website.

Approximately, three-quarters of E.on (73%), Centrica (72%) and EDF Energy (71%) customers found locating contact information to be easy (‘quite’ or ‘very’) compared to two-thirds of SSE (69%), npower (64%) and Scottish Power (66%) customers. This is illustrated in chart 2 below. Similarly, a third of Micro Business respondents found the information ‘very’ or ‘quite’ easy to find – 32% and 35% respectively.

Chart 2 – Contact with Suppliers – Sources & Ease of Finding Contact Information



C3. Complaints Resolution

C.3.1 Resolution

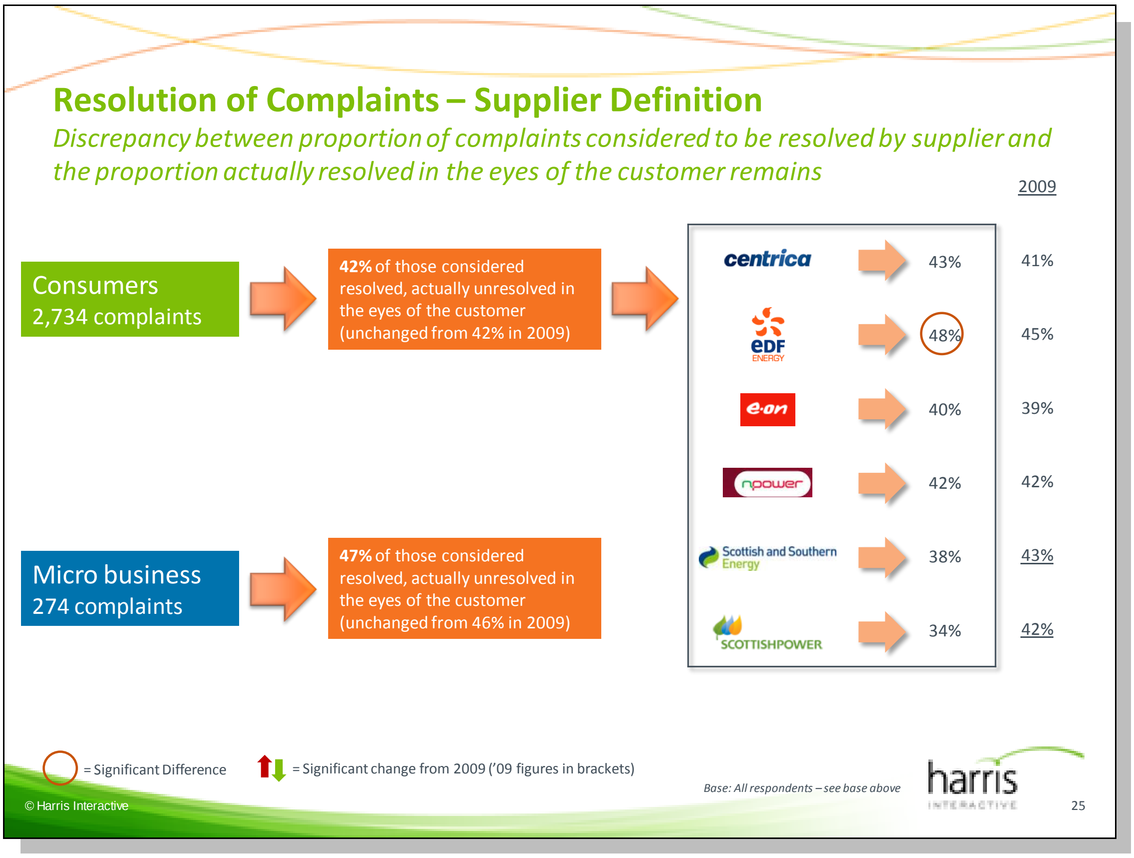
In looking at the process of resolving customer complaints, there remains a significant discrepancy between the proportion of complaints that each of the six major suppliers considers to be resolved and the proportion considered to be resolved in the eyes of the customer.

For both Domestic and Micro Business customer complaints, less than half of all complaints classified as resolved by the supplier were actually considered by the individual customer to have been resolved – 42% for Domestic and 47% for Micro Business customers. These figures are unchanged from the 2009 research. Exploring this further, only one in 20 customers (similar proportions for both Domestic and Micro Business respondents) who felt that their complaint had been resolved, claimed that they had received any communication to confirm that it was in fact resolved. The most common communications were a letter, telephone call or a refund.

Although the overall picture is unchanged in terms of resolution, among the suppliers Scottish Power and SSE have seen falls in the discrepancy as a third of Scottish Power (34%) and almost two-fifths (38%) of SSE customers agreed with the supplier that their complaint had been resolved – compared to 42% for both in 2009.

There were no other notable changes among the other suppliers and the figures for all suppliers and Domestic and Micro Business customers, are shown in chart 3 below;

Chart 3 – Resolution of Complaints – Supplier vs. Customer definition



To avoid uncertainty between supplier and customer definitions of resolved complaints, the research focused solely on the customers' opinion of whether or not their complaint was resolved.

Unchanged from the 2009 research, just under three-fifths (57%) of Domestic customer complaints were resolved by the supplier and only 1% were referred to and resolved by the Ombudsman. Similarly, just over two-fifths of Domestic customer complaints were not resolved – 35% were not resolved and in 7% of cases the customer was unsure of the current status of their complaint.

Looking in more detail, only one in seven (14%) Domestic customer complaints were considered by the customer to have been resolved on the first and only contact. The remaining two-fifths (44%) were felt to have been resolved following additional contact between customer and supplier. Both of these figures are unchanged from 2009.

Across all suppliers, the proportion of resolved complaints was consistent. E.on (18%) and SSE (17%) were more likely than others to resolve them on the first contact and npower (7%) was the least likely supplier to resolve the complaint upon initial contact. Scottish Power (35% – a significant improvement from 2009) and SSE (38% - an improvement but not significantly so from 2009) were less likely than the other suppliers to have complaints that were perceived to be unresolved in the eyes of the customer.

Among Micro Business customers, half (48%) of complaints overall were resolved by the supplier and almost one in ten (8%) were resolved at the initial point of contact. The remaining half (51%) of Micro

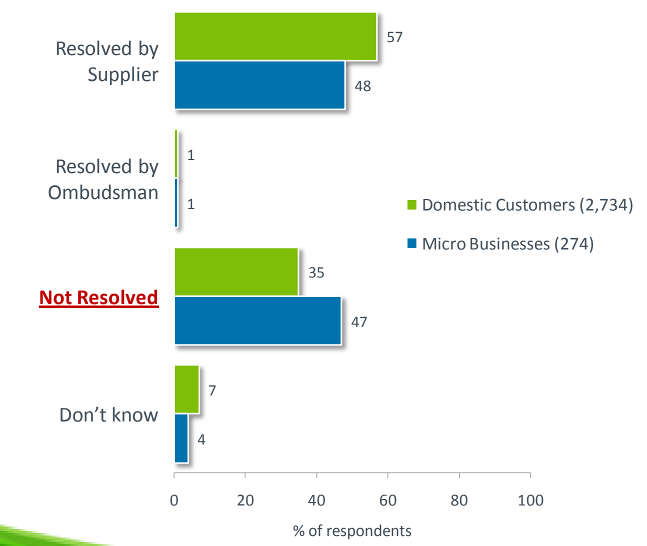
Business complaints were unresolved – 47% unresolved and 4% where the customer was unsure of the status.

The proportion of resolved and unresolved complaints, as well as the proportion resolved on first contact, can be seen in chart 4 below;

Chart 4 – Resolution of Complaints on First Contact

Resolution of Complaints – Customer Definition

Q: Has your complaint been resolved by [SUPPLIER], by the Ombudsman or is it still ongoing?



Proportion of complaints resolved, resolved by Ombudsman and unresolved almost unchanged from 2009

Domestic Customers (2,734)

14% resolved on first contact

44% resolved on subsequent contact

Micro Business Customers (274)

8% resolved on first contact

41% resolved on subsequent contact

Base: All respondents – see brackets

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Resolution of Complaints – Domestic Customers

% of respondents	centrica	EDF Energy	e.on	npower	Scottish and Southern Energy	ScottishPower
Base:	*467*	*446*	*440*	*448*	*490*	*443*
Resolved on first contact	14	13	18	7	17	14
Resolved on subsequent contact	43	38	40	47	45	51
Not resolved	43	49	42	46	38	35↓

2009

Not resolved	42	46	39	44	43	42

↑↓ = Significant change from 2009 ('09 figures in brackets)

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C.3.2 Resolution by Complaint Topic

Looking at the different complaint topics and the proportion of each resolved on the first contact, suppliers were significantly more likely to resolve Domestic customers' complaints about Prices and Sales than all other topics – 18% for each resolved on first contact.

A further look among the suppliers highlights that E.on was the most likely supplier to resolve Price complaints first time (27%) – significantly more likely than others. Centrica and SSE were more likely than others to resolve Sales complaints on the first contact (29% and 19% respectively) with Centrica also more likely than other suppliers to resolve Transfer complaints (19%). E.on were more likely than others to resolve Debt complaints (29%) and SSE were more likely to resolve Meters complaints (16%). npower is least likely supplier to resolve Billing complaints first time.

Among Micro Business customers, Transfers were the most likely complaint to be resolved on the first contact (10%), followed by Billing and Prices (8% for each) and Debt (7%). Sales complaints were the least likely to be resolved on the first contact (none resolved on first contact) and only 2% of Meter complaints were resolved on the first contact.

The proportion of complaints that were resolved on the initial contact with the supplier can be seen in the following table;

Table 5 – Complaints resolution on first contact by nature of complaint

% resolved on first contact	Micro Business	Domestic Customers	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.on UK	RWE nPower	SSE	Scottish Power
Billing	**8**	**14**	14	13	16	8*	17	16
Sales	**0**	**18***	29*	6	15	11	19*	14
Transfers	**10**	**11**	19*	6	10	0	7	9
Meters	**2**	**9**	8	4	11	3	16*	12
Prices	**8**	**18***	19	14	27*	13	10	19
Debt	**7**	**8**	3	6	29	4	13	8

** Significant difference*

- Base too low for analysis

C.3.3 Satisfaction with the Need for Additional Contact

Similar to the 2009 research, slightly over two-fifths (44%) of Domestic and nearly half (47%) of Micro Business customers required contact with their supplier on more than one occasion before their complaint was resolved.

For both customer groups the proportion of customers reporting that they were 'very dissatisfied' declined from slightly over half in 2009 (53% for Domestic and 54% for Micro Business customers) to just under half in 2010 (48% for each customer group). The results were fairly consistent among the individual suppliers in terms of the proportion of customers claiming to be ‘very dissatisfied’ with having to make additional contact. Half of Scottish Power customers were ‘very dissatisfied’ (50%) whilst E.on had the lowest proportion of dissatisfied customers (44%).

C.3.4 Additional Contact – Information Provided

Domestic customers who required additional contact to resolve their complaint were given an explanation as to why this was in two-fifths of cases (39% given an explanation). The proportion was slightly higher among Micro Businesses customers with almost half (46%) given an explanation. As was the case in 2009, there were no significant differences between the two customer types or among suppliers and the remaining customers were not given an explanation.

Although a requirement of the complaints handling standards, only one in five customers recalled being offered a copy of their suppliers’ Complaints Handling Procedure, either as a free copy or by being directed to the suppliers’ website. This was however, an improvement from 2009 when only one in ten customers reported being offered a copy of the procedure. Among the suppliers, only npower stood out as being more likely than others to offer this –12% of npower customers claimed to have been offered a copy of the complaints handling procedure compared to a market average of 6%.

Table 6 – Supplier Actions – Unresolved complaints

% offered	Micro Business	Domestic Customers	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.on UK	RWE nPower	SSE	Scottish Power
Base:	***107***	***1,118***	*182*	*158*	*162*	*197*	*209*	*210*
Directed to complaints procedure on website	**11**	**9**	9	5	10	14	4	10
Offered copy of complaints procedure	**9**	**6**	3	3	8	12*	5	6
Neither of these	**80**	**83**	85	87	78	74	90	77
Don’t know	**2**	**5**	4	6	7	7	2	9

** Significant difference*

With regards to re-contacting their supplier, slightly under half (45%) of Domestic customers were not provided with any information with which to re-contact their supplier. By supplier this figure was highest among Centrica and EDF Energy customers, with half reporting that they were not provided with any information. It was, however, significantly lower for both npower and Scottish Power customers, of whom approximately a third (30% and 35% respectively) were not provided with details.

The most common information to be provided was a reference number (32%) followed by a telephone number and/or a named contact (both 29%). npower continued to stand out from other suppliers as being significantly more likely to provide customers with a telephone number (43%) and/or a reference number (49%). Scottish Power (45%) was also significantly more likely than most other suppliers to provide customers with a reference number.

Micro Business customers were more likely than Domestic to be provided with information for further contact – less than a third (30%) of Micro Business customers were provided with no information compared to almost half of Domestic. Micro Business customers were significantly more likely than Domestic customers to be provided with additional information on every means of contact apart from contact hours.

Table 7 below outlines the information provided to customers;

Table 7 – Further contact information provided

% offered	Micro Business	Domestic Customers	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.on UK	RWE nPower	SSE	Scottish Power
Base:	***107***	***1,118***	*182*	*158*	*162*	*197*	*209*	*210*
Telephone number	**44***	**29**	23	25	29	43*	26	34
Reference number	**47***	**32**	27	24	29	49*	24	45*
Named contact	**59***	**29**	21	28	30	31	33	36
Contact hours	**20**	**15**	13	13	15	20	13	19
Email address	**25***	**10**	10	13	11	11	7	10
None of these	**28**	**45***	50	50	49	30*	49	35*

** Significant difference*

The vast majority (86%) of Domestic customers who had additional contact with their supplier to resolve their complaint had some record of their complaint retained for subsequent contact. Three-quarters (78%) had their contact details recorded and two-thirds (65%) had a record of the complaint. Similar to the 2009 study, half (55%) claimed that the supplier held a full and correct record of the complaint. Across the suppliers there were consistent results in terms of retaining details about the customer making a complaint although, SSE was slightly less likely, albeit not significantly, to have customer details.

The figures for Micro Business customers were consistent with those of Domestic customers. Four out of five customers (80%) had their correct contact details held by the supplier and three-quarters (76%) had a record of their complaint. Nearly two-thirds of all customers (64%) stated that a full and complete record of the complaint was held by the supplier and all of these proportions showed an improvement from 2009. The largest improvement was for holding a record of the complaint which increased by 12%.

C.3.5 Additional Contact – Resolution

As was the case in 2009, Micro Business customers were more likely than Domestic to state that they received confirmation from their supplier that their complaint had been resolved – three-fifths (61%) of Micro Business customers claimed to have received confirmation compared to slightly less than half (47%) of Domestic customers.

Micro Business customers were more likely to receive a confirmation email or telephone call than Domestic customers (29% compared to 20% for telephone and 13% compared to 5% for email responses). However Domestic customers were slightly more likely to receive confirmation in the form of a letter than Micro Business customers (27 vs. 23%).

Among Domestic customers, as in 2009 npower customers were more likely than others to receive confirmation (66% receiving confirmation compared to 47% overall) and also were more likely to receive a confirmation letter than others (48% compared to 27% overall).

Just under two-thirds of all customers who required additional contact with their supplier to resolve their complaint (64% Domestic and 58% Micro Business) were given no timescale in which the supplier would resolve the issue. This is a slight improvement from 2009 where the proportions where 66% and 70% respectively.

Between the suppliers, there was some slight difference in terms of providing a timescale to customers – EDF Energy was the most likely to not provide a timescale (71%) whilst npower was the least likely to not provide one (56%).

For both Domestic and Micro Business customers, in almost two-thirds of cases the supplier met the timings that had been promised – 65% and 69% respectively. Among Domestic customers, Centrica were slightly more likely than others to stick to the timescales promised.

C.3.6 Additional Contact – Referral to a Manager

A third (33%) of Domestic customers stated that they had to refer their complaint to a manager or senior member of staff whilst seeking a resolution. Encouragingly, this was a lower proportion than the two-fifths (41%) achieved in 2009. The proportion of referrals to a manager among Micro Business customers also declined from 2009 – from 57% in 2009 to 47% in 2010.

npower customers were significantly more likely than others to escalate their complaint to a senior member of staff (50%) and E.on customers were the least likely to seek a referral with only a quarter (28%) referring their complaint to a senior member of staff.

C.3.7 Referral of complaints to Energy Ombudsman/Unresolved by Supplier

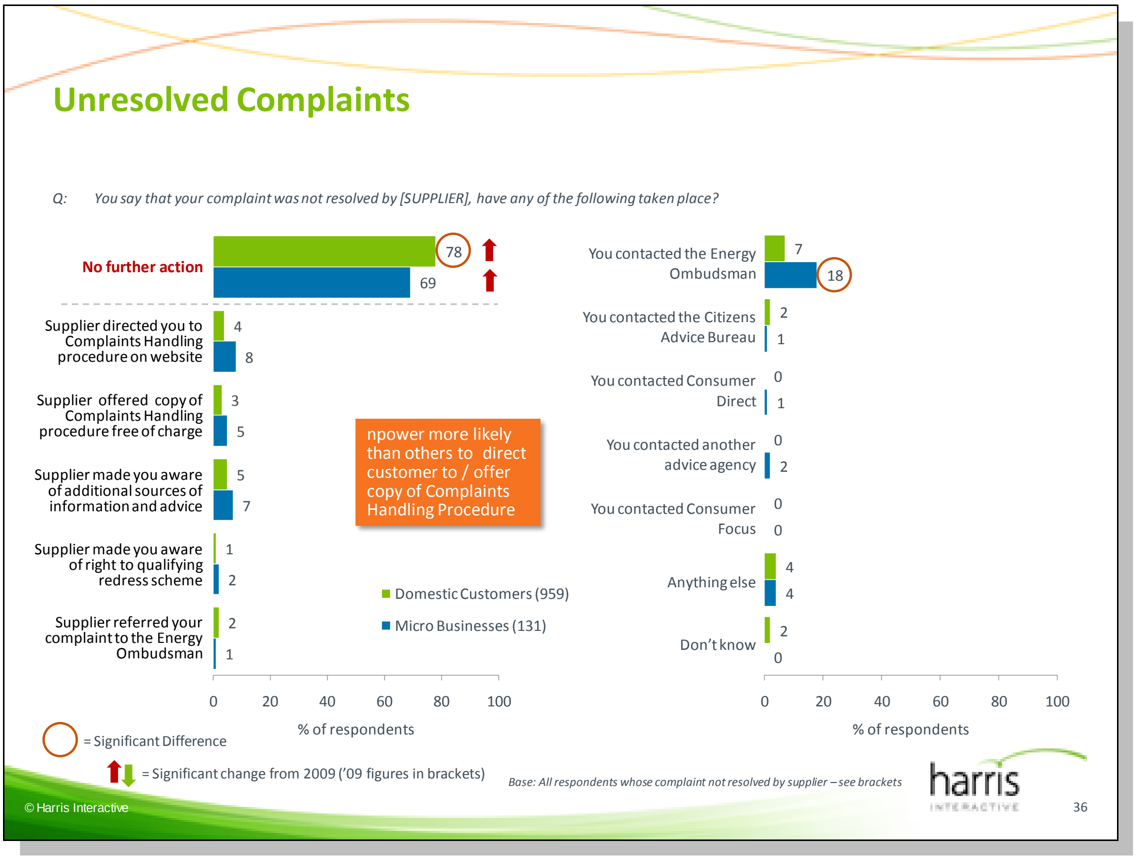
One in three (35%) Domestic and nearly half (47%) of Micro Business customers' complaints were not resolved by their supplier.

Three-quarters (78%) of Domestic customers' unresolved complaints received no further action while over two-thirds (69%) of Micro Business complaints saw no further action taking place.

As previously, Micro Business customers were more likely than Domestic to pursue a resolution in terms of taking action to follow up their complaint. One in five (18%) Micro Business customers contacted the Energy Ombudsman themselves and one in twenty (6%) pursued another course of action compared to one in twenty for each (7% and 6% respectively) for Domestic customers.

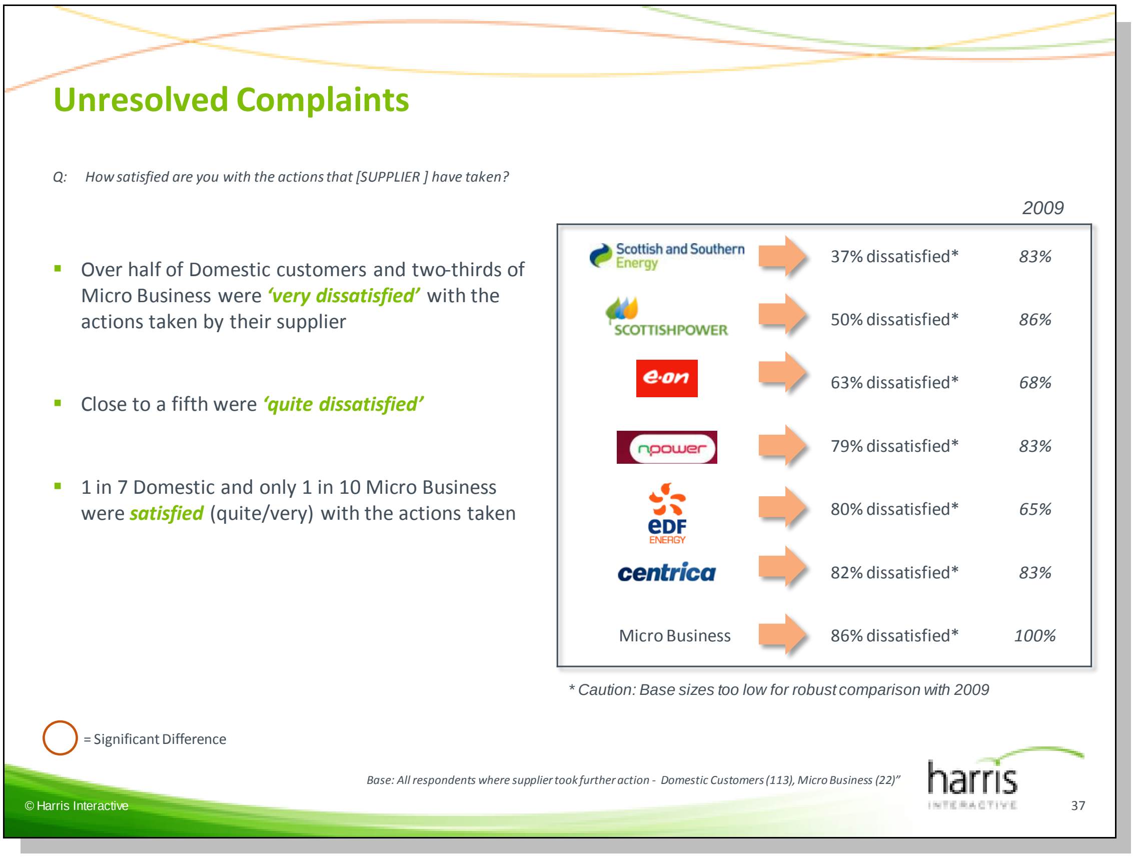
The actions taken by the supplier and/or the customer themselves are highlighted in chart 5 below;

Chart 5 – Unresolved Complaints – Action Taken



Where the supplier did take action, nearly three-quarters of all Domestic customers who complained reported that they were dissatisfied (quite/very) with the actions that were taken. One in seven of these customers reported being satisfied with the actions taken – the proportions who were dissatisfied by each supplier can be seen in the chart below;

Chart 6 – Unresolved Complaints – Satisfaction with Supplier Actions



All customers whose complaint had not been resolved (959 Domestic customers and 131 Micro Business customers) were asked the question, "What is happening with your complaint now?"

Domestic customers gave the following responses;

- 2% Given up
- 26% Nothing
- 4% Don't know
- 3% Just been left/they don't care
- 1% Nothing can be done
- 17% Ongoing/need to contact/trying to do something
- 5% Changed supplier
- 5% Going to change supplier
- 6% Supplier demanding payment/increased their tariffs & costs/still charging too much
- 7% Must pay the bill/more bills
- 3% Result but not as expected/hoped for
- 5% Waiting for next bill
- 5% Waiting for discount/credit/compensation
- 3% Waiting for meter reading/engineer

Micro Business customers gave the following responses;

- 2% Given up

- 19% Nothing
- 2% Don't know
- 7% Just been left/they don't care
- 2% Nothing can be done

- 11% Ongoing/need to contact/trying to do something

- 3% Changed supplier
- 5% Going to change supplier

- 11% Supplier demanding payment/increased their tariffs & costs/still charging too much
- 4% Must pay the bill/more bills

- 4% Result but not as expected/hoped for

- 5% Waiting for next bill
- 8% Waiting for discount/credit/compensation
- 7% Waiting for meter reading/engineer

- 10% Taking it to the Ombudsman/court

C4. Complaints Handling Process

In assessing the overall process of handling complaints, customers were asked to rate their satisfaction with their suppliers' performance on a series of attributes relating to their main form of contact.

The numbers of customers using each method of contact, and subsequently rating their satisfaction, were as follows:

Domestic Customers

	Centrica	EDF Energy	E.on UK	RWE nPower	SSE	Scottish Power	Total
Telephone	423	398	393	382	441	349	2,386
Written *	31	30	39	48	21	72	241
Face to face	1	-		1	4	-	6
	455	**428**	**432**	**431**	**466**	**421**	**2,633**

Micro Business Customers

	Total
Telephone	222
Written *	41
Face to face	0
	263**

**Written includes Letter, Email, Fax or Website*
***Note that give a proportion of customers were unsure or could not recall the main method of contact with their supplier, totals in these tables are lower than the total number of respondents in the survey*

C.4.1 Complaints Handling Process – General Themes

As was the case in 2009, across both telephone and written complaints, satisfaction was typically higher for the initial stages of the complaints handling process (receiving and initially handling the complaint) and lower for the latter stages (taking action, informing customers of next steps and calling back as/when promised). This was true when looking overall and at the performance of individual suppliers and, whilst differences did exist between individual suppliers' performance, the overall trend was consistent regardless of supplier or complaint method. Encouragingly, satisfaction with the complaints handling process has increased slightly on most elements for telephone and written complaints – although the improvements are not significant, they do indicate a positive trend.

Analysis of satisfaction by the nature of complaint shows that no significant differences exist by type of complaint with no one topic eliciting significantly higher or lower levels of satisfaction ratings than others.

Satisfaction with the complaints handling process continues to be directly linked to the resolution status of each complaint. As in 2009, all customers, Domestic or Micro Business, who considered their complaint to have been resolved, rated all elements of the process, telephone or written, significantly higher than those whose complaint had not been resolved. The implication continues to be that whilst the resolution and the complaints handling process do not work hand in hand i.e. it is possible to handle a resolution well but still not resolve it to the customers' satisfaction, the overall outcome of the complaint will affect the customers' perception of the process.

C.4.2 Telephone Complaints – Domestic customers

Although satisfaction has increased on most elements of telephone handling, overall satisfaction with the complaints handling process remains relatively low among all customers who. Throughout the complaints handling process overall, at no point did more than one in five (22%) Domestic customers claim to be 'very' satisfied with the services that they received and the highest average score for any single attribute, as perceived by all Domestic customers, was only 3.1 out of 5.0.

Compared to the 2009 research, on all attributes of telephone complaints handling there have been slight, albeit not significant, increases in satisfaction with mean scores out of 5 having increased by 0.1 or 0.2.

Looking at the individual attributes in turn, two-fifths (41%) of Domestic customers were satisfied (very/quite) with their suppliers performance for **the attitude of the call handler towards dealing with your complaint**. Relatively equal proportions were 'very' (22%) and 'quite' (19%) satsified. However, a quarter (25%) of Domestic customers were 'not at all' satisfied with their suppliers performance on this attribute.

As was the case in 2009, the attribute with the highest overall satisfaction was **the professionalism of the call handler** for which slightly over two-fifths (44%) of customers claimed that they were satisfied with their suppliers performance. A fifth (21%) were 'very' satisfied and almost a quarter (23%) were 'quite' satisfied. The proportions claiming to be dissatisfied were a fifth (19%) who were 'not at all' satisfied and less than a fifth (15%) 'not very' satisfied.

Two-fifths (38%) of customers were satisfied (20% 'very' and 18% 'quite') with their suppliers' performance for **their understanding of your complaint or** problem. However, almost half (47%) of customers who complained were dissatisfied with this attribute and three in ten (30%) claimed to be 'not at all satisfied'.

As in 2009, satisfaction with **the call handler taking ownership of your complaint** was almost identical to their understanding of your complaint or problem. A fifth (18%) of customers were 'very' satisfied and 16% were 'quite' satisfied with just under a third (30%) claiming to be 'not at all' satisfied.

The suppliers' knowledge **of possible solutions to resolve your complaint** and **next steps in resolving your complaint** were also almost identical in terms of customer satisfaction. Both showed that three in 10 customers (31% and 29% respectively) were satisfied (16% 'very' and 15% 'quite' for **possible solutions** and 15% 'very' and 14% 'quite' for **next steps**) and half of all customers (50%) were 'not' satisfied.

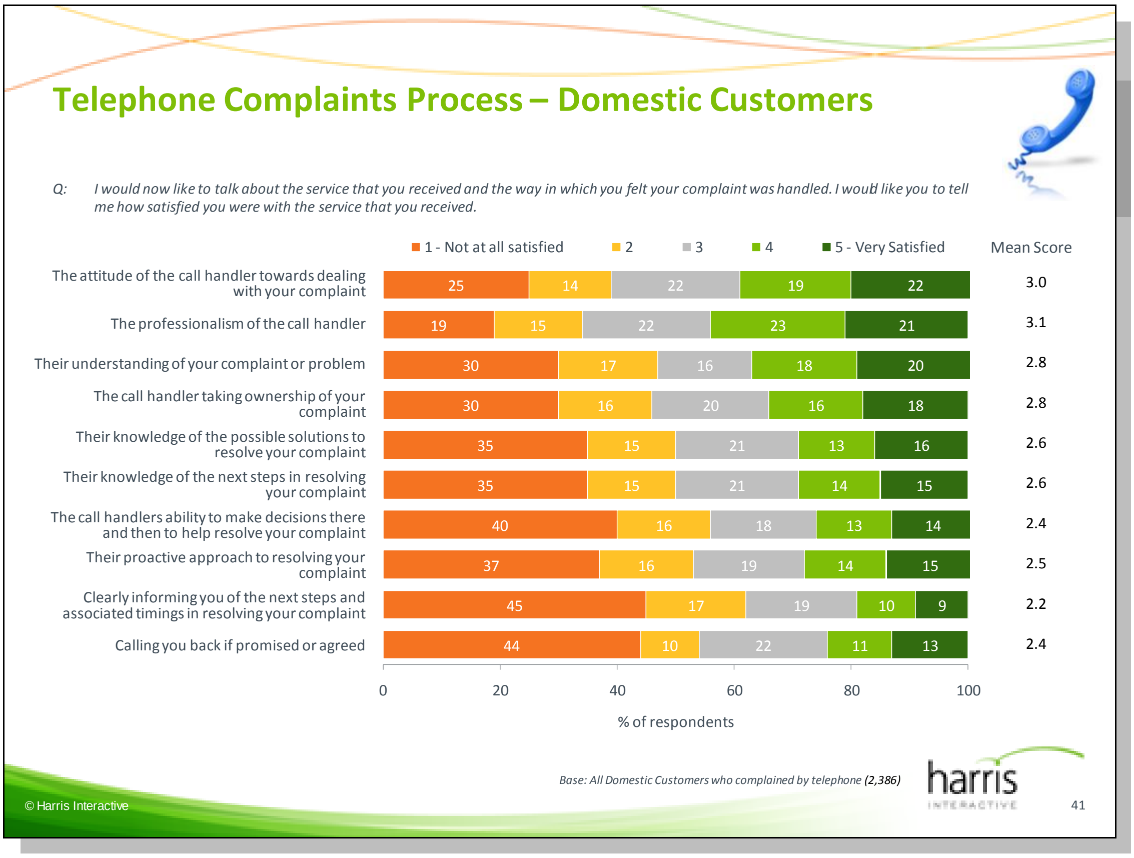
Supplier performance for **the call handlers' ability to make decisions there and then** and **their proactive approach to resolving your complaint** continue to be similar to one another. Just over half (56% for call handlers ability to make decisions and 53% for a proactive approach) of customers were not satisfied. For the call handlers' **ability to make decisions**, over one in ten (14%) were 'very' satisfied and (13%) were 'quite' satisfied and for their **proactive approach**, similar proportions (15% and 14%) were 'very/quite' satisfied respectively.

Relatively unchanged from 2009, the attribute where customers were least satisfied was **clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings** as nearly two-thirds (62%) of customers were not satisfied – 45% 'not at all' satisfied. Less than one in five customers were satisfied – only 9% 'very' and 10% 'quite' satisfied.

Finally, for **calling you back if promised or agreed**, over half (54%) of customers were dissatisfied and approximately a quarter (23%) were satisfied – 13% 'very' and 11% 'quite' satisfied.

The overall pattern of results for Domestic customers can be seen in the following chart;

Chart 7 – Telephone Complaints Handling Process – Domestic Customer Satisfaction



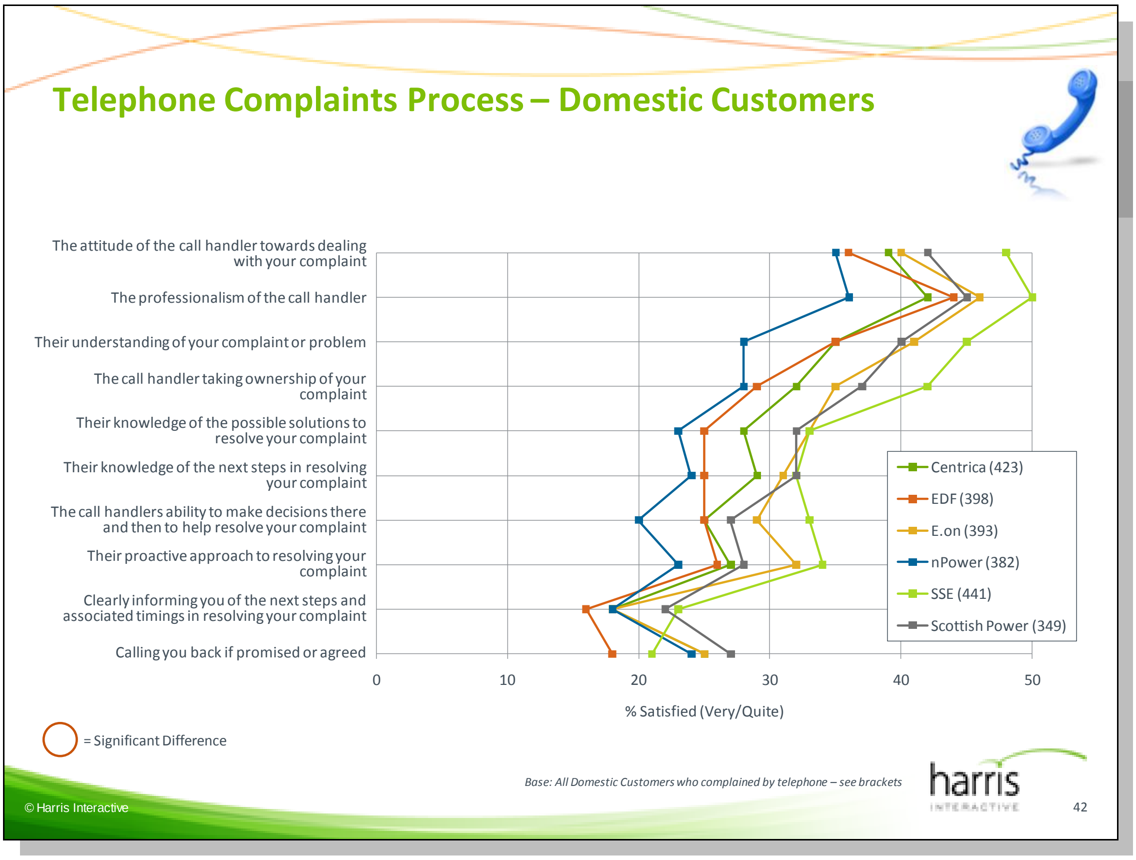
Showing no change from the 2009 research, customers of SSE were the most satisfied among the suppliers, significantly more so than all others on almost all elements of the process. Scottish Power and E.on customers were the next most satisfied after SSE, scoring ahead (significantly or indicatively) of the remaining suppliers on most attributes.

For the second year in a row, npower and EDF Energy had the lowest proportion of customers claiming to be satisfied with the different stages of the complaints handling process across almost all elements. Centrica continued to perform fairly poorly in terms of satisfaction with the service offered with lower satisfaction than SSE, Scottish Power and E.on on most attributes.

Scottish Power continued to perform closest to the overall market average and were on a par with, or slightly ahead, on nearly all measures.

The performance of each supplier on each of the individual attributes is highlighted in the following chart;

Chart 8 – Telephone Complaints Handling Process – Domestic Customer Satisfaction by Supplier

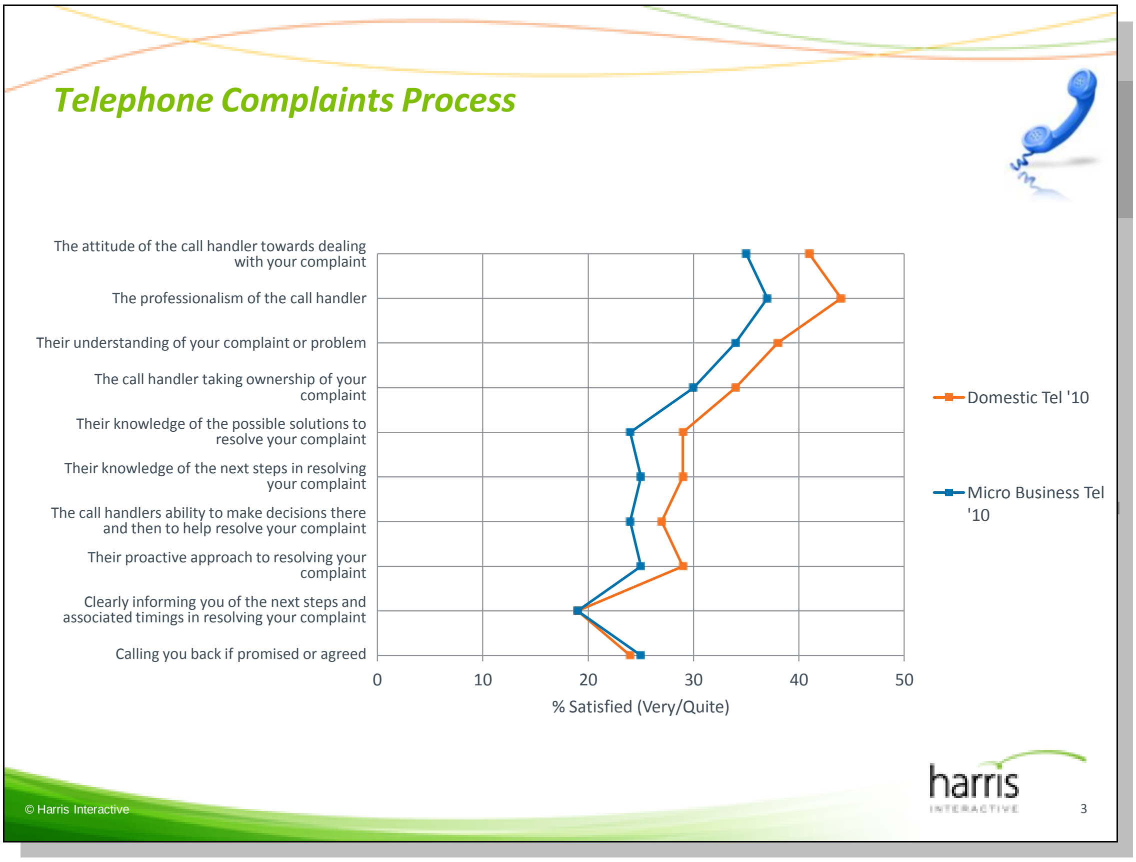


C.4.3 Telephone Complaints – Micro Business customers

Micro Business customers were again less satisfied than Domestic customers across all aspects of the telephone complaints handling process. As in the previous research and consistent with Domestic customers, satisfaction was higher with the initial stages of the process and lower with the latter stages.

The comparison between Domestic and Micro Business customers is illustrated in chart 9 below;

Chart 9 – Telephone Complaints Handling Process – Domestic vs. Micro Business Customer Satisfaction



A third (35%) of Micro Business customers were satisfied with their suppliers' performance for **the attitude of the call handler towards dealing with your complaint**. This figure was fairly evenly split between 'very' and 'quite' satisfied – 18% and 17% respectively. One in three (33%) were 'not at all' satisfied with this element of the process and a further (17%) were 'not very' satisfied.

Satisfaction for **the professionalism of the call handler** was similar to the attitude of the call handler with just over a third (37%) of customers satisfied with this attribute (16% 'very' and 21% 'quite' satisfied). However, a quarter (25%) of Micro Business customers were 'not at all' satisfied and a further fifth (19%) were 'not very' satisfied.

Half of all Micro Business customers who complained by telephone expressed dissatisfaction with the service they received from their supplier for **understanding of your complaint or problem** – 30% were 'not at all' satisfied and 18% were 'quite' dissatisfied. An equal proportion of customers claimed to be 'quite' and 'very' satisfied (17% for each).

Three in ten (30%) Micro Business customers were satisfied with the service received for **the call handler taking ownership of your complaint** – two-fifths (18%) 'very' satisfied and 12% 'quite' satisfied. Two-fifths (41%) were 'not at all' satisfied and 14% were 'quite' dissatisfied.

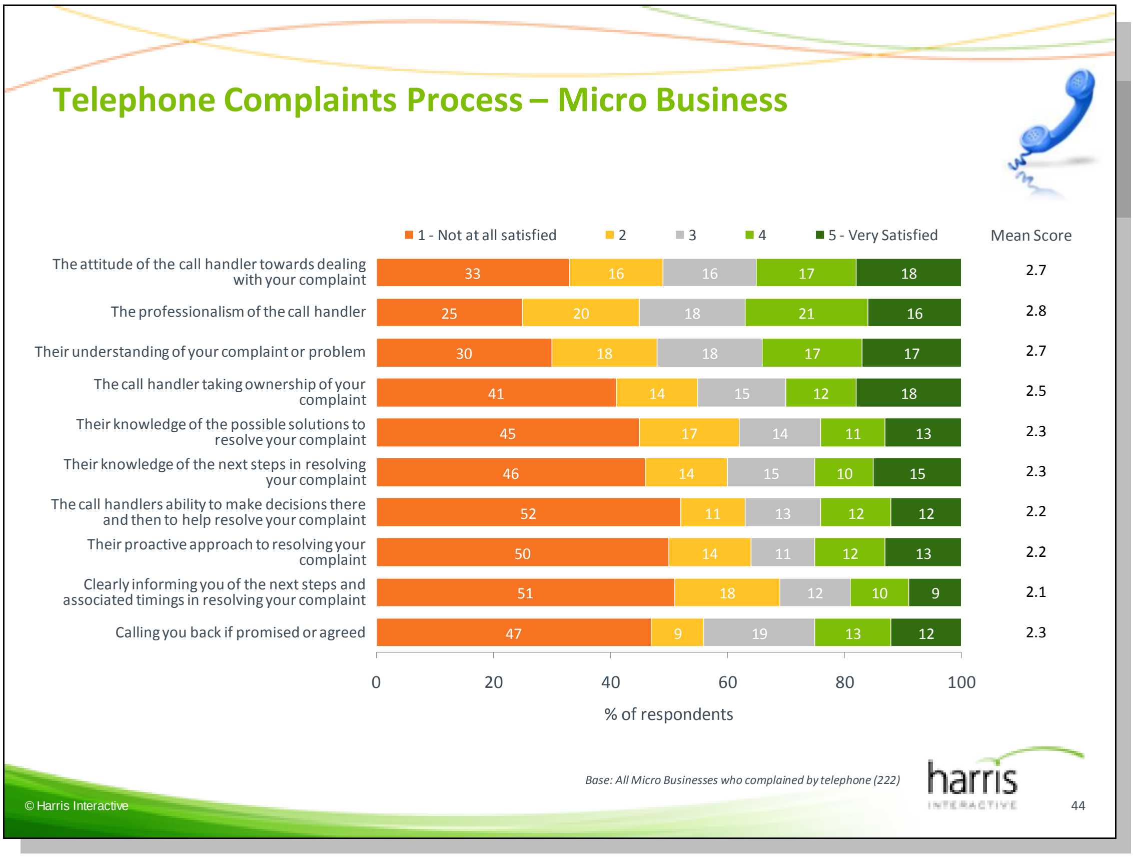
Similar to the 2009 results and as with Domestic customers, levels of satisfaction were very similar for the suppliers' **knowledge of possible solutions to resolve your complaint** and **knowledge of next steps in resolving your complaint.** Just under half of Micro Business customers were 'not at all' satisfied for each of these attributes – 45% and 46% respectively and a quarter of all customers (24% and 25% respectively) were quite/very satisfied.

Both the **call handlers' ability to make decisions there and then** and **their proactive approach to resolving your complaint** performed consistently among Micro Business customers. Half of all customers (52% & 50% respectively) were 'not at all' satisfied and a tenth (11% & 14%) were 'not at all' satisfied. A quarter of customers were satisfied on each of these statements (23% and 25% respectively).

The attribute **clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings** performed the lowest of any among Micro Business customers. Two-thirds expressed dissatisfaction (69%) while one in five (19%) stated that they were satisfied.

For **calling back if promised or agreed**, just over half of Micro Business customers (56%) were not satisfied – 47% 'not at all' and 8% 'not very' satisfied. One in five (25%) claimed to satisfied – 12% very and 13% quite. The overall results for Micro Business customers can be seen in the following chart;

Chart 10 – Telephone Complaints Handling Process – Micro Business Customer Satisfaction



C.4.4 Written Complaints – Domestic customers

As was the case in 2009, although almost half of customers (49%) who registered their complaint in writing (letter, email, fax or website) were satisfied with the initial stage of registering their complaint, the levels of satisfaction with all other elements of the process were much lower.

A quarter of customers (27%) were 'very' satisfied with the **ease of registering the complaint** and a further fifth (22%) were 'quite' satisfied – higher proportions than for all other attributes. A quarter of customers (24%) were 'not at all satisfied' and one in ten (9%) were 'not very' satisfied.

The attribute **being informed of the next steps/what would happen next** and **being made aware of the timeframe in which the complaint would be addressed** performed similarly to one another. A fifth (22% and 23% respectively) were satisfied with each and three-fifths (62% and 59% respectively) were not satisfied. Little over two-fifths of customers (44%) claimed to be 'not at all satisfied' for each attribute.

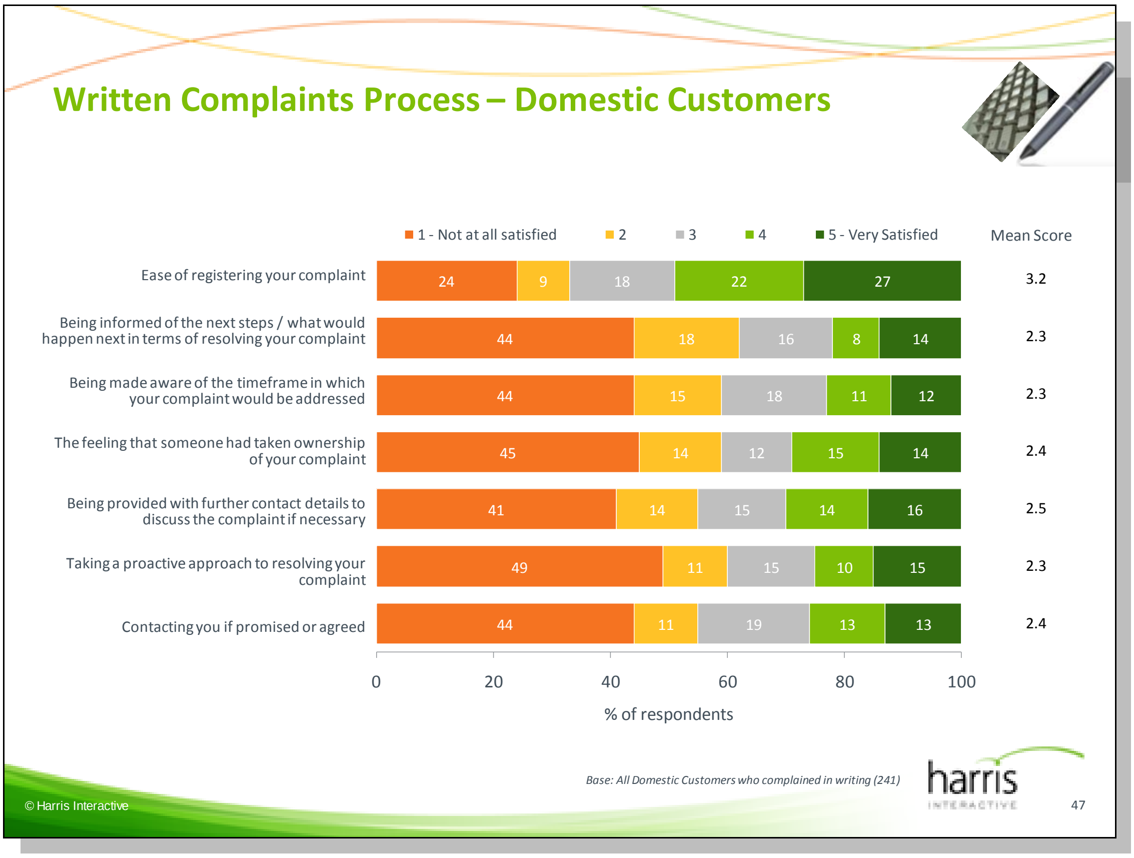
Levels of dissatisfaction for **the feeling that someone had taken ownership of the complaint** and **being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint** were also quite similar for both attributes. Almost a third of customers were satisfied with their suppliers' performance for each (29% and 30% respectively) but over half (59% and 55% respectively) were not satisfied.

Half of Domestic customers who complained in writing (49%) were 'not at all' satisfied with suppliers **taking a proactive approach to resolving the complaint**. However, similar to last year, satisfaction for this attribute was consistent with the others with a quarter (25%) of customers stating that they were satisfied (15% 'very' and 10% 'quite').

Finally, two-fifths (44%) of customers were 'not at all' satisfied with their supplier for **contacting you if promised or agreed** and one in ten (11%) were 'quite' dissatisfied. A quarter were satisfied with this attribute (26%).

The overall pattern of results for Domestic customers who complained in writing can be seen in the following chart;

Chart 11 – Written Complaints Handling Process – Domestic Customer Satisfaction



There were no significant differences between the suppliers in terms of handling written complaints, however, Centrica and Scottish Power had the highest proportion of customers claiming to be satisfied with many of the attributes. Both suppliers had similar results for **keeping customers aware of the timeframe in which the complaint would be addressed** and **contacting customers if promised or agreed**.

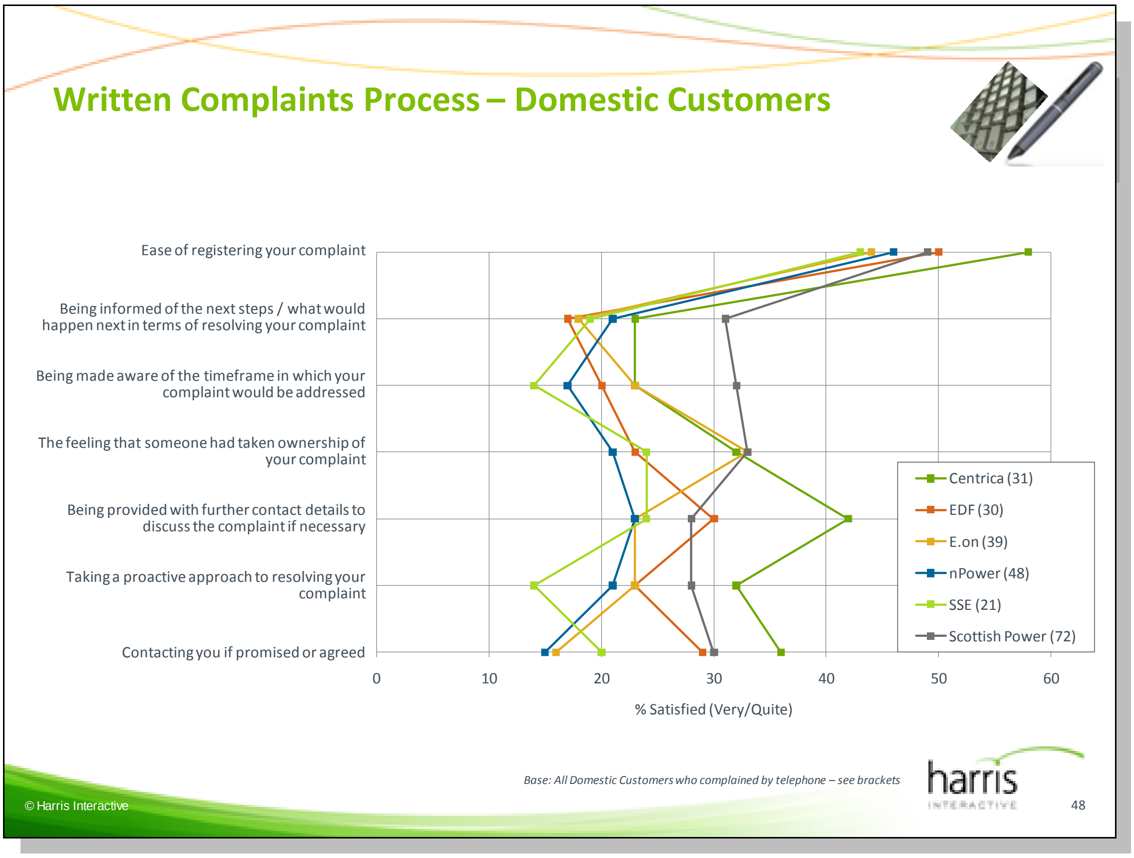
Centrica performed the most strongly in terms of satisfaction for the **ease of registering their complaint**, **being provided with further contact details** and **taking a proactive approach**.

Scottish Power meanwhile had the highest proportion of customers who were satisfied with keeping them **informed of the next steps** as well as **giving the feeling to customers that they had taken ownership of the complaint**.

E.on performed strongly for taking ownership of a complaint but the remaining suppliers performed relatively consistently with each other for each attribute.

The performance of each supplier on each of the individual attributes is highlighted on chart 12;

Chart 12 – Written Complaints Handling Process – Domestic Customer Satisfaction by Supplier

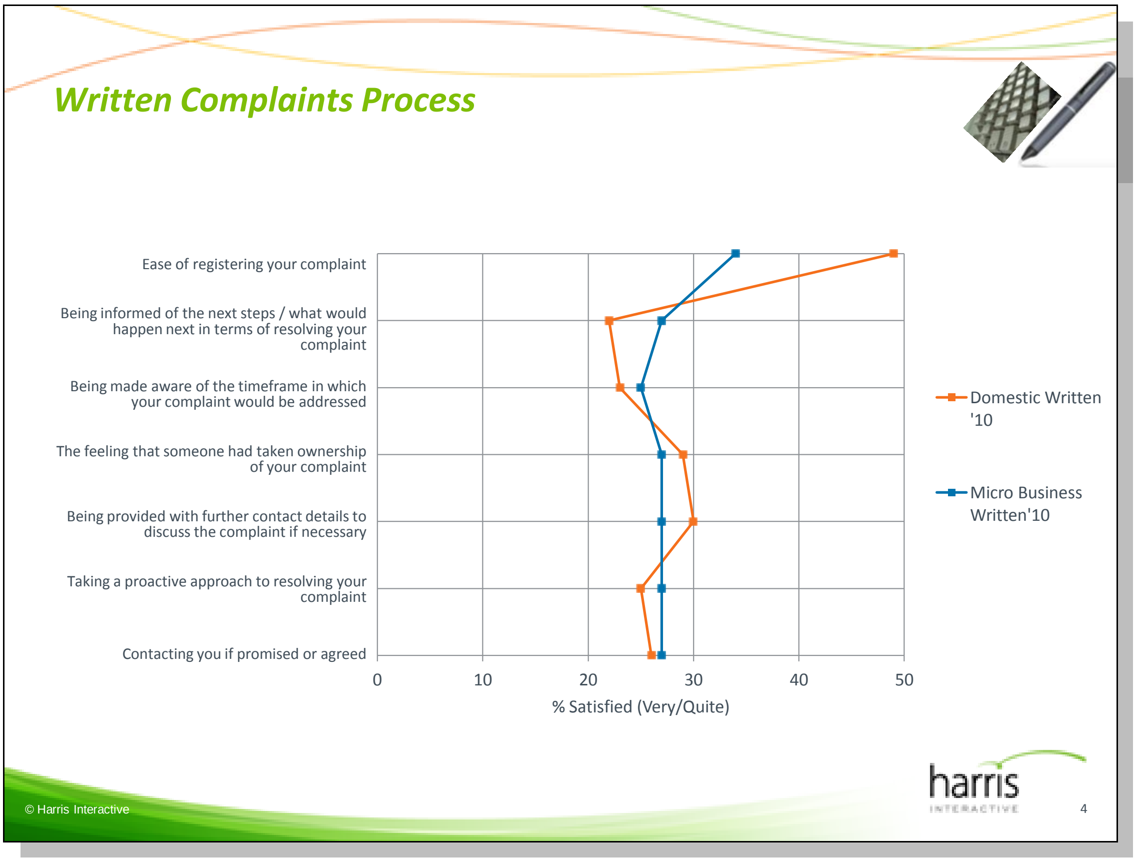


C.4.5 Written Complaints – Micro Business customers

Micro Business customers exhibited similar levels of satisfaction to Domestic customers on nearly all elements of the complaints handling process for written complaints. The only difference being the **ease of registering your complaint** for which Domestic customers had higher but not significantly so, levels of satisfaction than Micro Business customers.

This is seen on chart 13;

Chart 13 – Written Complaints Handling Process – Domestic vs. Micro Business Customer Satisfaction



A third (34%) of Micro Business customers were satisfied with the **ease of registering the complaint** in writing – split between one in ten (10%) claiming to be 'very' satisfied and a quarter (24%) saying they were 'quite' satisfied. Half of all Micro Business customers who complained in writing (49%) were not satisfied – over a third (37%) were 'not at all' satisfied and a tenth (12%) were 'not very' satisfied.

Just under half (46%) of all Micro Business customers who complained in writing were 'not at all' satisfied with their suppliers' performance for **being informed of the next steps/what would happen next** – a decrease of 11% from the 2009 study. Additionally, one in six (15%) were 'not very' satisfied and a quarter of Micro Business respondents reported being satisfied (12% 'very' and 15% 'quite') with this attribute.

Satisfaction with **being made aware of the timeframe in which the complaint would be addressed** was almost identical to the previous attribute with only 5% saying they were 'very' satisfied and one in five (20%) saying they were 'quite' satisfied. Half of customers (49%) were 'not at all' satisfied and over a tenth (15%) were 'not very' satisfied.

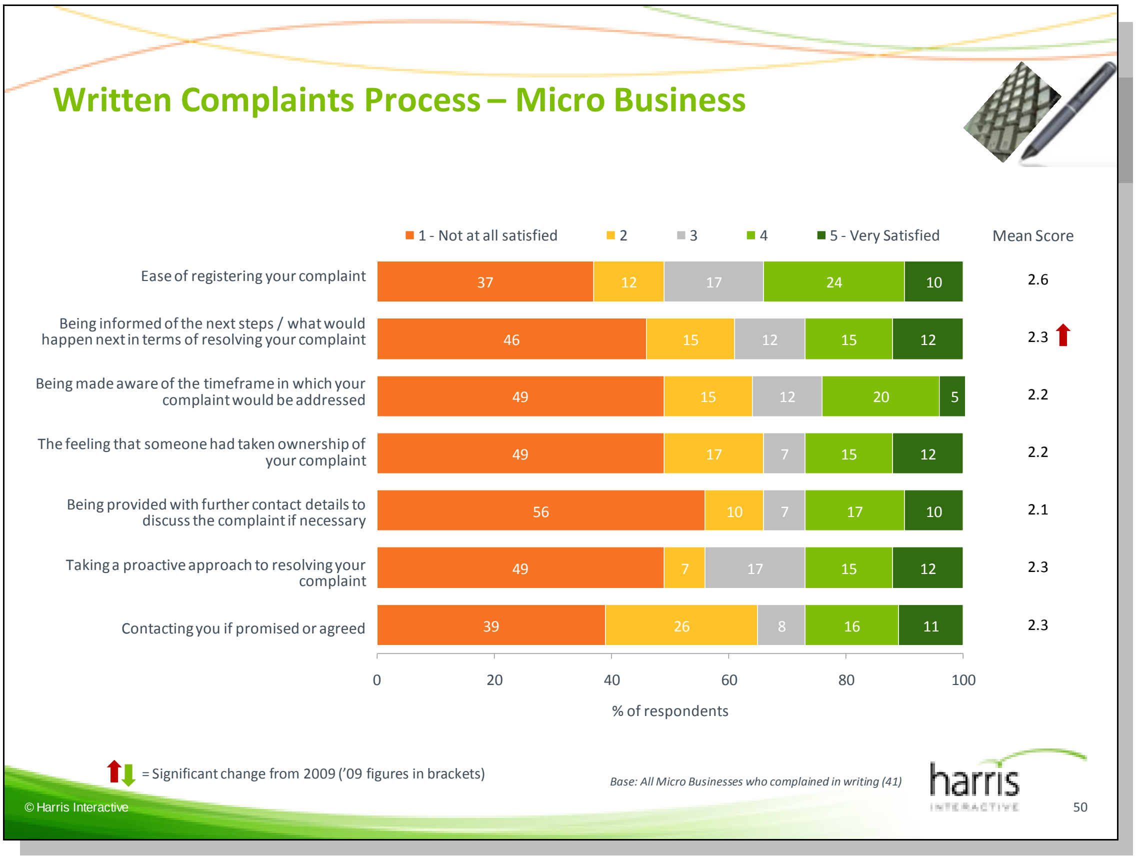
Two thirds of all Micro Business customers reported that they were dissatisfied with the attribute **the feeling that someone had taken ownership of the complaint** – 49% were 'not at all' satisfied and 17% were 'not very' satisfied. A quarter (27%) of customers reported that they were satisfied (12% 'very' and 15% 'quite').

Over half of Micro Business customers who complained in writing (56%) were 'not at all' satisfied with **being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint**. A tenth (10%) reported being 'not very' satisfied with this attribute whilst a further quarter (27%) were satisfied – 10% 'very' and 17% 'quite' satisfied.

Just over half (56%) of Micro Business customers were not satisfied with their supplier **taking a proactive approach to resolving the complaint**, with the majority claiming to be 'not at all' satisfied (49%)**.** A quarter of customers were satisfied overall (an increase of 13% from 14% in 2009 to 27% in 2010) with 12% 'very' and 15% 'quite' satisfied.

Finally, two-fifths (39%) of Micro Business customers were 'not at all' satisfied with their supplier for **contacting you if promised or agreed** – an increase of 8% from 2009. However, twice as many customers claimed to be 'not very' satisfied as in 2009 (26% compared to 13% in 2009). Just over a quarter of customers stated that they were satisfied – 11% 'very' and 16 'quite'.

Chart 14 – Written Complaints Handling Process – Micro Business Customer Satisfaction



C.4.6 Face to Face Complaints

The proportion of customers who registered their complaint face to face was extremely low – as in 2009. Of the 2,734 Domestic customers surveyed, only 6 registered their complaint face to face – this represents half a percent of all Domestic complaints and is relatively consistent with the results from 2009.

Whilst this base size was too low to analyse statistically, customers who complained face to face typically rated all aspects of the process similarly to those who complained by telephone or in writing. The highest average satisfaction rating for face to face complaints was 3.9 for **calling you back if promised or agreed** and the lowest was 2.1 for **their knowledge of the next steps in resolving your complaint**.

As for telephone and written complaints, satisfaction levels varied throughout the complaints handling process, however again note the lower base size (6).

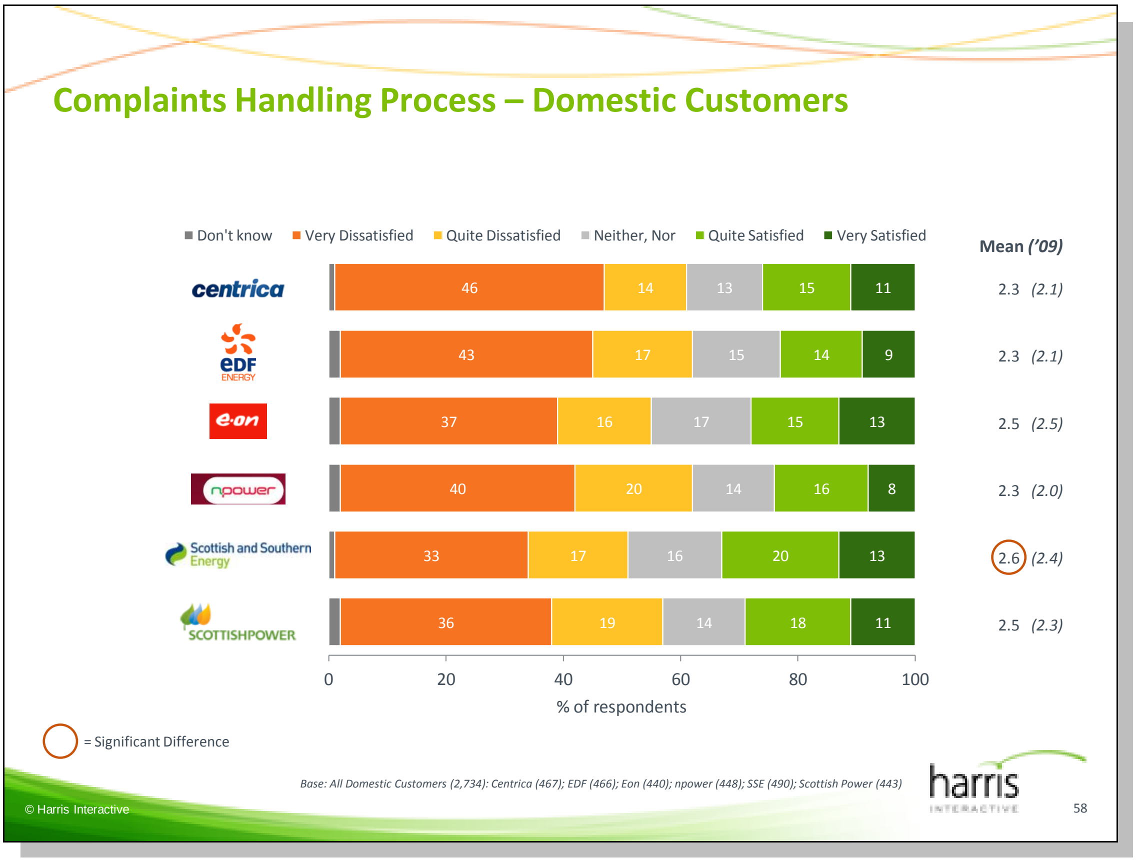
There were no Micro Business customers who registering a complaint face to face.

C5. Overall Satisfaction with Complaints Handling Process

As with most of the individual elements of the complaints handling process, the largest proportion of Domestic and Micro Business customers were dissatisfied with their overall experience of the process. Two-fifths (40%) of Domestic customers and half (52%) of Micro Business were 'very' dissatisfied. However, there has been a significant fall (of 6%) in the proportion of Domestic Customers who stated that they were 'very' dissatisfied from 2009 to 2010. For both Domestic and Micro Business customers, around a quarter claimed to be satisfied overall – 11% 'very' and 16% 'quite' satisfied among Domestic customers and 10% and 14% respectively for Micro Business.

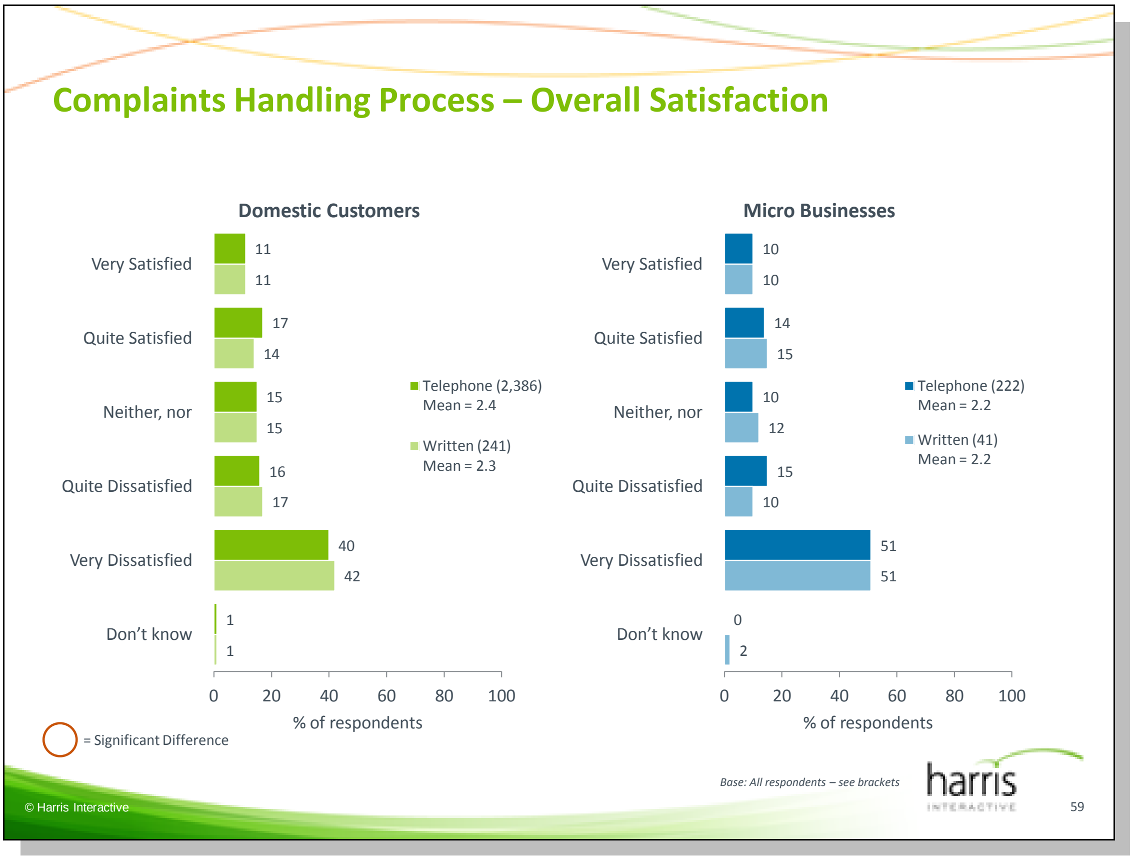
By supplier, overall satisfaction was highest among customers of SSE, E.on and Scottish Power (significantly so for SSE with a mean score of 2.6 out of 5). However, only one in three SSE customers were satisfied (very or quite) and among EDF Energy and npower customers, this figure fell as low as one in four as can be seen on chart 15 below;

Chart 15 – Overall Satisfaction by Supplier



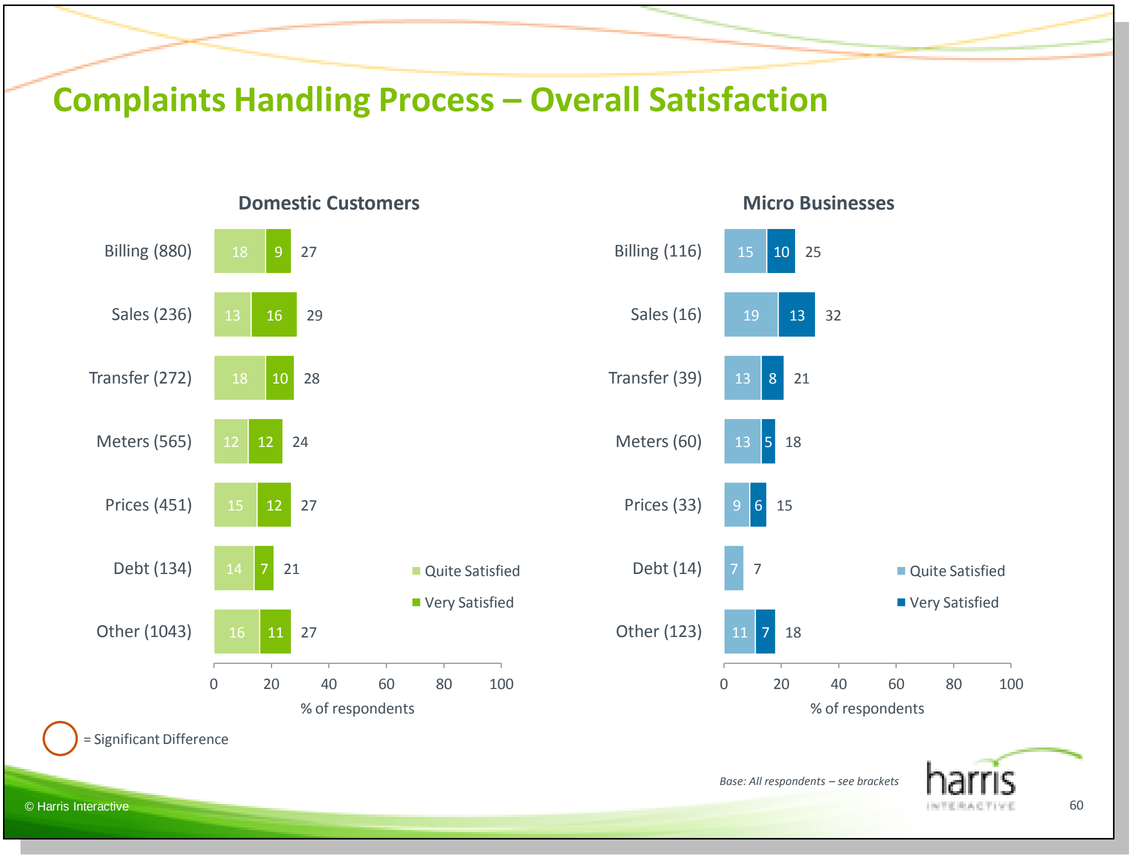
As was the case in 2009, levels of overall satisfaction with the process were similar regardless of whether the complaint was made by telephone or in writing. These similarities for Domestic and Micro Business customers are highlighted in the chart below;

Chart 15 – Overall Satisfaction by Complaint Method



The following chart illustrates the different levels of satisfaction with the complaints handling process overall for each of the different types of complaint made. There were no significant differences by nature of complaint, however satisfaction was highest for Sales related complaints and lowest for Debt related complaints for both Domestic and Micro Business customers.

Chart 16 – Overall Satisfaction by Nature of Complaint



Customers were asked why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the overall process and among both Domestic and Micro Business customers the top 3 drivers of satisfaction remained as they were in 2009. These were having the complaint *dealt with/resolved quickly*, being *satisfied with the (helpful) staff* and *having the problem resolved*. However, the order has changed slightly with the complaint being dealt with or resolved promptly now being slightly more important than assistance/helpful staff.

As in 2009, the drivers of dissatisfaction continued to be *not having the complaint dealt with* or resolved, *unhelpful staff, the process taking too long, and a lack of/ poor communication*.

Tables 8 and 9 show the proportion of customers giving each response when asked why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the overall complaints handling procedure;

Table 8 – Reasons for satisfaction with the complaints handling procedure overall

% of respondents answering	Domestic Customers	Micro Business*
Base:	*298*	*26**
Dealt with / resolved quickly	40	38
Satisfied with assistance / helpful staff	37	35
Problem resolved	13	23
Eventually helped	3	-
No complaints / problems	3	-

Other responses 3% or less

**Caution: Low base*

A selection of verbatim comments given by Domestic and Micro Business customers who were satisfied with the complaints handling process are given below

Domestic Customers

"Dealt with quickly and efficiently, kept in time frame and kept me informed with what was happening."

"Because it was dealt with quickly and dealt with correctly."

"The lady was extremely helpful, returned our calls when she said she would, kept us updated, explained what was happening and why, she gave us timescales, and she was just generally very kind and helpful."

"Because it was done quickly efficiently."

Micro Business Customers

"They made a gesture to refund me a nominal sum of £20 that they were sorry they'd breached their terms and conditions."

"Because I rang up and she listened to what I said, she understood the problem, she showed empathy, and said they had no right to send out this aggressive letter to me, she understood my frustrations and anger, she dealt with it very well."

"Because its not very often you get a large company calling you back to help resolve your complaint and it was dealt with fantastic enthusiasm."

Table 9 – Reasons for dissatisfaction with the complaints handling procedure overall

% of respondents answering	Domestic Customers	Micro Business
Base:	*1537*	*180*
Unresolved / Not dealt with	28	38
Staff unhelpful / bad attitude	18	23
Process took too long	20	24
Lack of / Poor communication	13	12
Customer has to chase / contact	8	4
Generally unhappy / dissatisfied	6	5
Do not listen / not interested	6	4
Information unsatisfactory / wrong	5	6
Do not keep to their promises	5	2
Poor customer service	4	6

A selection of verbatim comments given by customers who were dissatisfied with the complaints handling process are given below

> *"I feel as if I have been ignored. No one has got back to me. I have had no communication from them."*

> *"The call handler's attitude, the way she spoke to me. She made it clear that I was a stupid person, I should have guessed their policy was for customers to be reading meters and they had no responsibility. She immediately said it wasn't their problem."*

> *"Because they haven't done anything about it it's now February this has been going on since April last year. Ten months to me is a long time to resolve."*

> *"Always having to ring them, they didn't contact me, they were not bothered about resolving the issue, and they wouldn't have done it if I had not rang."*

> *"It hasn't been handled or rectified, the attempts they made to resolve it were poor, they had poor communication between themselves."*

There were some significant differences between the suppliers in terms of drivers of overall dissatisfaction. npower customers were significantly more likely than others to report that they were generally unhappy or dissatisfied and also to report that the process took too long however. they were the least likely to report that the staff were unhelpful or had a bad attitude. Scottish Power customers were significantly more likely than others to report their dissatisfaction with having to chase further contact/a resolution and also being supplied with information that was unsatisfactory or wrong. The chart below highlights the differences between suppliers;

Chart 17 – Reasons for Dissatisfaction by Supplier

Drivers of Overall Dissatisfaction – Domestic Customers

%	centrica	EDF Energy	e.on	npower	Scottish and Southern Energy	Scottish Power
Base:	*277*	*268*	*234*	*270*	*245*	*243*
Unresolved / Not dealt with	27	31	28	33	29	24
Staff unhelpful / bad attitude	21	21	21	15	22	19
Process took too long	19	12	15	24	17	18
Lack of / Poor communication	12	12	16	13	16	11
Customer has to chase / contact	6	5	9	8	9	12
Generally unhappy / dissatisfied	5	6	5	10	4	6
Do not listen / not interested	7	5	6	6	4	7
Information unsatisfactory / wrong	6	2	5	5	4	10
Do not keep to their promises	6	6	4	6	2	3
Poor customer service	4	5	1	4	2	6

= Significant Difference

Above/below other suppliers

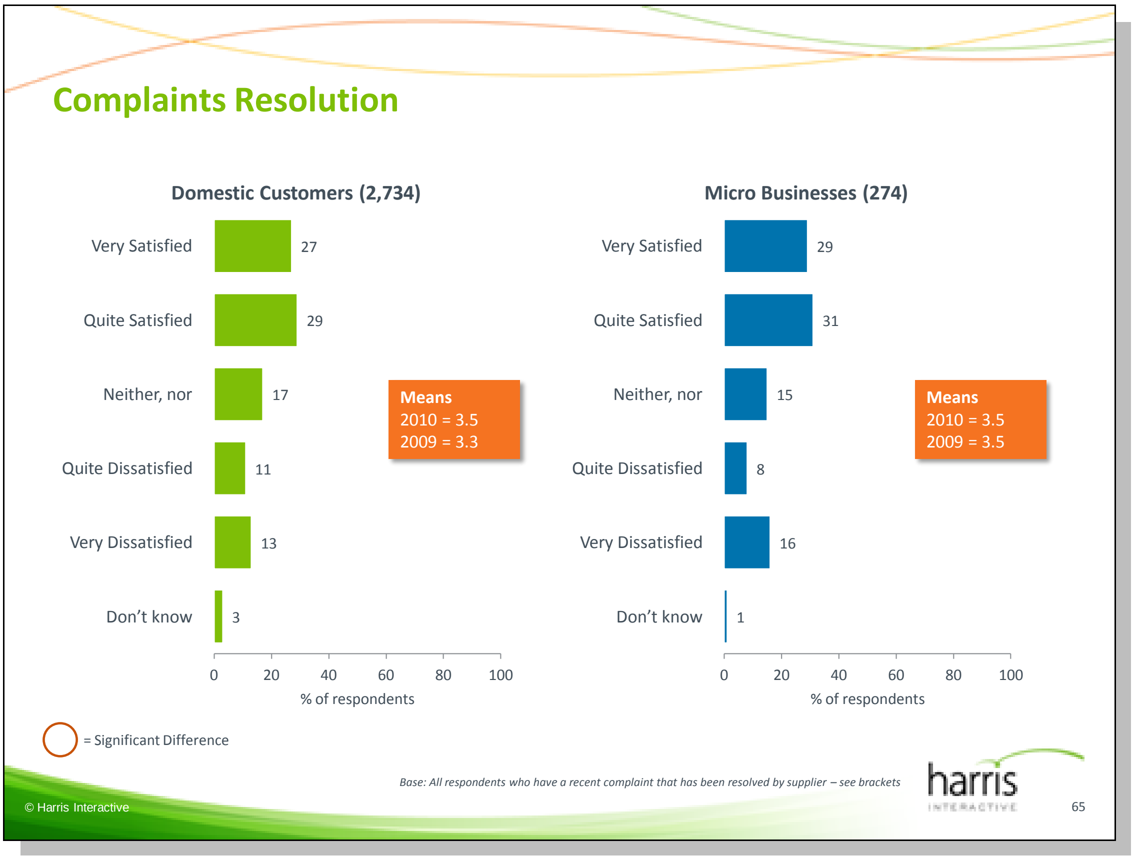
harris INTERACTIVE

63

C6. Resolution

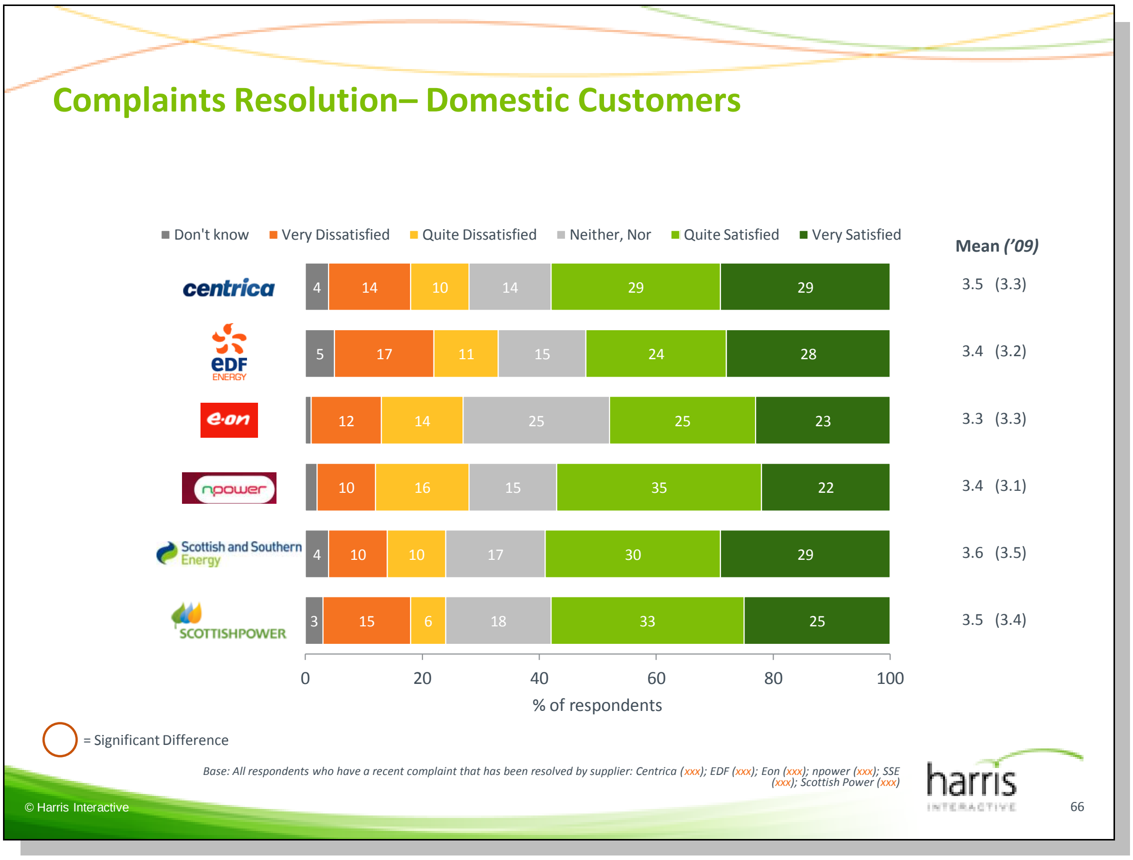
Although satisfaction with the different elements and the process overall continues to be low, customers were more positive about the resolution that they had received than in 2009. Over half of Domestic (56%) and three-fifths (60%) Micro Business customers who considered their complaint to have been resolved stated that they were satisfied with the resolution. In both cases however, around a quarter of customers continue to be dissatisfied as can be seen in the chart below.

Chart 18 – Overall Satisfaction with Complaints Resolution



As can be seen on the following chart, in terms of the resolution to their complaint, E.on customers were the least satisfied (48% 'very/quite' satisfied) and SSE, Scottish Power and Centrica customers were the most satisfied – 59% for SEE and 58% for each of Scottish Power and Centrica.

Chart 19 – Overall Satisfaction with Complaints Resolution by Supplier



Customers whose complaint had been resolved by their supplier were asked whether they had had an expectation of a possible outcome to their complaint when they initially contacted their supplier. A fifth (19%) of Domestic customers stated that although they made a complaint, they did not expect anything to happen as a result and expected no outcome or resolution. Of these respondents, two-thirds (68%) received no resolution or outcome to their complaint – a figure that showed notable differences among the suppliers. Among EDF Energy customers, almost nine in ten (86%) of those who expected nothing, received nothing whereas for npower customers the proportion who expected and received nothing was as low as one in three (38%).

Half (49%) of Domestic customers expected simply to have their problem/complaint rectified when making their complaint. Of these customers, only a third (33%) had their problem rectified by the supplier – generally this did not differ among the suppliers.

Four in ten (41%) expected to receive an apology letter or email after having registered their complaint. Of these customers, two-fifths (61%)actually received such a response- this figure was consistent across all suppliers.

Two-fifths expected to receive an apology letter or email although only one in five (19%) of these customers actually received one. Among the suppliers, Scottish Power and npower were more likely than others to provide customers with such a letter or email – 31% and 26% respectively among those who expected one.

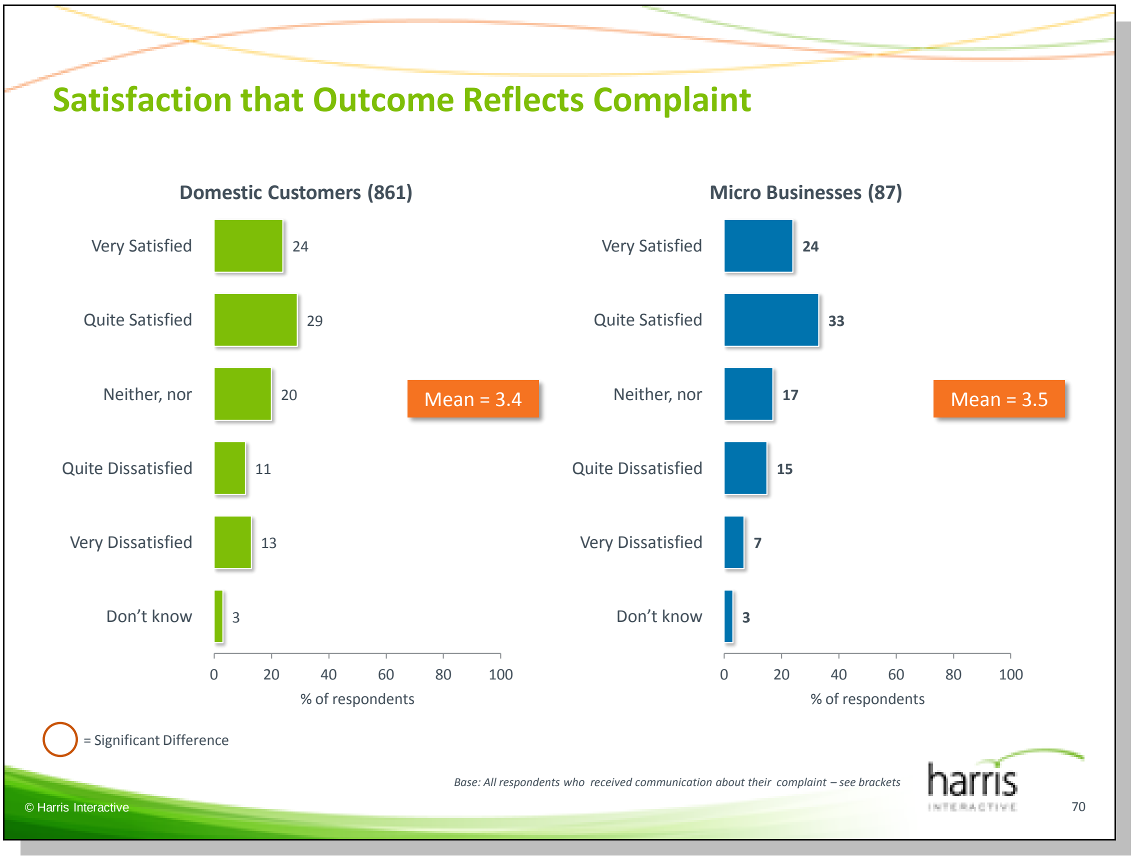
One in four customers expected to receive a compensation or apology payment (26%) or an apology telephone call (23%) after having made a complaint to their supplier. Of those expecting a payment, one in three (35%) actually received compensation and one in four received a telephone apology. nPower and SSE (45% and 42%) were the most likely to offer a compensation or apology payment while SSE (14%) was also more likely than other suppliers to make an apology call.

As seen in the 2009 research, Micro Business customers were more likely than Domestic to expect an 'action' to occur after having registered their complaint. Around one in eight (12%) expected nothing to happen and of these customers, a half (56%) received nothing. Three-fifths (61%) of Micro Business customers expected their problem/complaint to be rectified by the supplier – a figure significantly higher than among Domestic customers (49%). Of those who expected their complaint to be rectified, almost three-quarters (70%) received a resolution – a figure that was also significantly higher than among Domestic customers.

As previously, there were no other significant differences between Micro Business and Domestic customer in terms of expectations and received outcomes. Just over a third (37%) Micro Business customers expected to receive an apology letter or email – one in five (22%) actually received one. A fifth (21%) expected an apology telephone call and one in five (18%) actually received one. A lower proportion of Micro Business customers (15%) expected to receive compensation or an apology payment and of these customers, a quarter (25%) received one.

Finally, Domestic customers were slightly, albeit not significantly, more satisfied than Micro Business that the outcome they received accurately reflected the nature and seriousness of their complaint – the same was true in the 2009 study. For both customer types, around half of customers were satisfied (53% of Domestic 'very/quite' satisfied and 57% of Micro Business 'very/quite' satisfied) and a quarter were not satisfied (24% of Domestic 'very/quite' dissatisfied and 22% of Micro Business 'very/quite' dissatisfied) as is shown on chart 20 below.

Chart 20 – Overall Satisfaction with Complaints Resolution



D. Appendix

D1. Quantitative Questionnaire

Version: 1	Date: 14th Jan '10	Designer: IM			

Ofgem – 2010 Customer Satisfaction with Complaints Research

Respondent Name: ____________________
Job Title: ____________________
Company: ____________________
Address: ____________________
____
____
Postcode: ____________________
Telephone: ____________________
Email: ____________________

Classification Information

D.1.1 **S1. Supplier** (from sample)

Centrica (British Gas)	☐	01	N = 500
EDF Energy	☐	02	N = 500
E.on UK	☐	03	N = 500
RWE npower	☐	04	N = 500
SSE	☐	05	N = 500
ScottishPower	☐	06	N = 500

S2. Customer Type (from sample)

Consumer	☐	01	N = 2700
Micro Business	☐	02	N = 300

S3. Quota (from sample) D.1.2

Centrica Consumer	☐	01	N = 450
Centrica Micro Bus.	☐	02	N = 50
EDF Consumer	☐	03	N = 450
EDF Micro Bus.	☐	04	N = 50
E.on Consumer	☐	05	N = 450
E.on Micro Bus.	☐	06	N = 50
RWE Consumer	☐	07	N = 450
RWE Micro Bus.	☐	08	N = 50
SSE Consumer	☐	09	N = 450
SSE Micro Bus.	☐	10	N = 50
ScottishPower Consumer	☐	11	N = 450
ScottishPower Micro Bus.	☐	12	N = 50

S4. Complaint Status (from sample)

Resolved	☐	01
Unresolved	☐	02

S5. Date of Complaint (from sample)

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

S6. Date of Resolution (from sample)

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

S7. Method of Complaint (from sample)

Telephone	☐	01

Letter	☐	02
Internet	☐	03
Email	☐	04
Fax	☐	05
Customer	☐	06
In Person	☐	07
Ombudsman	☐	08
SMS	☐	09
Textphone	☐	10
Written	☐	11
Verbal	☐	12

Introduction & Screening

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS AND MICROBUSINESSES WITH A NAMED CONTACT

S8. Good morning/afternoon. Could I please speak to [INSERT NAME FROM SAMPLE]?

Good morning/afternoon. My name is ……… and I am calling from Harris Interactive, a market research consultancy based in Stockport. We are currently carrying out a project on behalf of the energy regulator Ofgem into energy suppliers' handling of recent customer complaints.

I believe that you made a complaint to your energy supplier in December, is that correct?

Yes	01	**CONTINUE TO S11 IF MICROBUSINESS AND S12 IF CONSUMER**
Yes – on behalf of someone else	02	
No	03	**SEEK REFERRAL & REPEAT IF NECESSARY OR THANK & CLOSE**

BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESSES WITH NO NAMED CONTACT

S9. Good morning/afternoon. My name is ……… and I am calling from Harris Interactive, a market research consultancy based in Stockport. We are currently carrying out a project on behalf of the energy regulator Ofgem into energy suppliers' handling of recent customer complaints.

I believe that someone from your business made a complaint to your energy supplier in December is that correct?

Yes	01	**SEEK REFERRAL**
No	02	**THANK & CLOSE**
Not a business	03	**CHECK DOMESTIC COMPLAINT AT S10**

INTERVIEWER: IF YES (S9 CODE 1), ASK TO SPEAK TO COMPLAINANT AND REPEAT AS MICROBUSINESS WITH NAMED CONTACT FROM S8

BASE: ALL SAYING NOT A BUSINESS (S9 CODE 3)

S10. Was a complaint made relating to a domestic energy supplier?

Yes	01	SEEK REFERRAL
Yes – on behalf of someone else	02	
No	03	THANK & CLOSE

INTERVIEWER: IF YES (S10 CODE 1 OR 2), ASK TO SPEAK TO COMPLAINANT AND REPEAT AS CONSUMER RESPONDENT FROM S8

BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS

S11. And can I confirm, was your complaint related to the energy supplied to your business or to your home?

Business	01	CONTINUE TO S12
Home	02	RE-CODE AS CONSUMER AND CONTINUE TO S12

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

S12. Ofgem would like to understand a little more about your experience of making a complaint and how satisfied you were with both the process and the way in which your complaint was handled. We would greatly appreciate your help.

Could you please spare between 10 and 15 minutes to answer some questions?

(INTERVIEWER: REASSURE THE RESPONDENT THAT THE INTERVIEW IS CONFIDENTIAL, AND THAT WE ARE NOT SELLING ANYTHING)

Yes	01	CONTINUE
Yes – but not now	02	MAKE APPOINTMENT
No – need to speak to someone else	03	SEEK REFERRAL
Refusal – satisfied with complaint handling	04	THANK & CLOSE
Refusal – opted out of research	05	
Refusal – no reason given	06	
Refusal – no time	07	
Refusal – not interested	08	
Refusal – other reason	09	

Classification & Nature of Complaint

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q1 Thank you. To begin with, can I confirm that you made a complaint to your energy supplier in December 2008?

INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT UNSURE OR UNABLE TO RECALL COMPLAINT, PROMPT WITH SUPPLIER NAME, METHOD AND DATE OF COMPLAINT FROM SAMPLE

Yes	☐ 01	CONTINUE
No	☐ 02	THANK & CLOSE
Don't know	☐ 03	

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q2 And with which supplier did you make a complaint?

British Gas	☐ 01	BRITISH GAS
Scottish Gas	☐ 02	
EDF Energy	☐ 03	EDF
E.on UK	☐ 04	E.ON
nPower	☐ 05	NPOWER
Utility Warehouse	☐ 06	
Telecom Plus	☐ 07	
Gas Plus Supply	☐ 08	
Electricity Plus Supply	☐ 09	
Scottish & Southern Electric (SSE)	☐ 10	SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN
Southern Electric	☐ 11	
Scottish Hydro	☐ 12	
Atlantic	☐ 13	
Swalec	☐ 14	
ScottishPower	☐ 15	SCOTTISH POWER
SP Manweb	☐ 16	
Other (please specify)	☐ 17	

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q3 And was this complaint related to your gas or to your electricity?

SINGLE CODE

Gas	☐	01	**CONTINUE**
Electricity	☐	02	
Both	☐	03	
Something else (please specify)	☐	04	
Don't know / can't remember	☐	05	**THANK & CLOSE**

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q4 What was your recent complaint to [INSERT SUPLIER FROM Q2] about?

DO NOT READ OUT BUT CODE ACCORDINGLY

MULTICODE

Billing – accuracy of bill	☐ 01	
Billing – estimated bill	☐ 02	
Billing – frequency	☐ 03	
Billing – refunds	☐ 04	
Sales – behaviour of sales staff	☐ 05	
Sales – mis-information provided	☐ 06	
Sales – agreed to receive information only	☐ 07	
Transfer – problems switching to supplier	☐ 08	
Transfer – problems switching from supplier	☐ 09	
Meters – accuracy of meter	☐ 10	
Meters – position of meter	☐ 11	
Meters – meter readings	☐ 12	**CONTINUE**
Prices – notification of increases	☐ 13	
Prices – amount of increase	☐ 14	
Prices - direct debits	☐ 15	
Debt – debt recovery	☐ 16	
Debt – debt payment schemes	☐ 17	
Debt – disconnection	☐ 18	
Prepayment meters e.g. setting, faults, use	☐ 19	
Customer service – general	☐ 20	
Internet / website problems	☐ 21	
Other **(please specify)**	☐ 22	
Don't know / can't remember	☐ 23	**THANK & CLOSE**

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q5 And, using a scale from 1 to 5 where means that it was not very serious and 5 means that it was very serious, could you tell me how serious you felt your complaint was?

1 – Not very serious	☐ 01
2	☐ 02
3 – Neither serious, nor unserious	☐ 03
4	☐ 04
5 – Very serious	☐ 05
Don’t know / Refused	☐ 06

Contacting the Supplier

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q6 I would like to begin by talking about the contact that you had with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] when making your complaint. How many times have you had contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] regarding your complaint?

Once only	☐	01
Twice	☐	02
Three times	☐	03
Four times	☐	04
More than four (please specify)	☐☐☐	05
Don't know	☐	06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO HAD MORE THAN ONE CONTACT (Q6 CODEs 2 – 5)

Q7 And approximately how many times did [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] contact you and how many times did you have to contact them to resolve your complaint?

Supplier contacted	☐☐☐	01
Respondent contacted	☐☐☐	02
Don't know	☐	03

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO CONTACTED SUPPLIER (Q6 CODE 1 OR Q7 CODE 2)

Q8a In which of the following ways did you contact [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] when making your complaint?

READ OUT

RANDOMISE

MULTICODE

Telephone	☐ 01
Email	☐ 02
Letter	☐ 03
Fax	☐ 04
Website	☐ 05
Face to face	☐ 06
Other (please specify)	☐ 07
Don't know	☐ 08

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS CONTACTED BY SUPPLIER (Q7 CODE 1)

Q8b In which of the following ways did [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] contact you when handling your complaint?

READ OUT

RANDOMISE

MULTICODE

Telephone	☐ 01
Email	☐ 02
Letter	☐ 03
Fax	☐ 04
Website	☐ 05
Face to face	☐ 06
Other (please specify)	☐ 07
Don't know	☐ 08

<u>BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WITH MULTIPLE CONTACT METHODS (Q8a AND Q8b MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE EACH)</u>

Q9 And which of these was your main type of contact?

DO NOT READ OUT BUT PROMPT IF NECESSARY

IF ONLY ONE RESPONSE AT Q8, FILL Q9 WITH THAT CODE

RANDOMISE

Telephone	☐	01
Email	☐	02
Letter	☐	03
Fax	☐	04
Website	☐	05
Face to face	☐	06
Other (please specify)	☐	07
Don't know	☐	08

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q10 How did you find the contact information that you used to make your complaint?

DO NOT READ OUT BUT PROMPT IF NECESSARY

MULTICODE

On a bill or account statement	☐ 01
Supplier website	☐ 02
Other website	☐ 03
Other form of communication from supplier	☐ 04
Referred from other department within supplier e.g. accounts, meter reading	☐ 05
Consumer Focus	☐ 06
Consumer Direct	☐ 07
Copy of suppliers' Complaints Handling procedure	☐ 08
Energy Ombudsman	☐ 09
Citizens Advice Bureau	☐ 10
Age Concern	☐ 11
Friends/Family	☐ 12
Other (please specify)	☐ 13
Don't know	☐ 14

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS REFERRED FROM OTHER DEPARTMENT (Q10 CODE 5)

Q11 You say that you were referred from a different part of [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], how satisfied were you with the way that your referral was handled?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	☐ 01
Quite satisfied	☐ 02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	☐ 03
Quite dissatisfied	☐ 04
Very dissatisfied	☐ 05
Don't know	☐ 06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS DISSATISFIED WITH REFERRAL (Q11 CODES 4 OR 5)

Q12 Why do you say that?

PROBE FULLY

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q13 How easy did you find it to get hold of the correct contact details to make your complaint?

READ OUT

Very easy	☐ 01
Quite easy	☐ 02
Neither easy, nor difficult	☐ 03
Not very easy	☐ 04
Not at all easy	☐ 05
Don’t know	☐ 06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO FOUND IT VERY EASY OR DIFFICULT (Q13 CODES 1, 4 OR 5)

Q14 Why do you say that?

PROBE FULLY

Resolving the Complaint

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q15 Thinking about the complaint that you made to [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], has your complaint been resolved by [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], by the Ombudsman or is it still ongoing?

READ OUT

Resolved by supplier	☐ 01
Resolved by Ombudsman	☐ 02
Not resolved	☐ 03
Don't know	☐ 04

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q16 You told me that you had contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] more than once. Were you given an explanation as to why your complaint was not resolved following your first contact?

Yes	☐ 01
No	☐ 02

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q17a How satisfied were you that you had to have more than one contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] before your complaint could be resolved?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	☐ 01
Quite satisfied	☐ 02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	☐ 03
Quite dissatisfied	☐ 04
Very dissatisfied	☐ 05
Don't know	☐ 06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q17b Whilst resolving your complaint, did [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] … ?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

Direct you to their Complaints Handling procedure on their website	☐	01
Offer to provide you with a copy of their Complaints Handling procedure free of charge	☐	02
Neither of these	☐	03

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q18a And were you given any of the following information to re-contact [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] whilst your complaint was being resolved?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

Telephone number	☐	01
Reference number	☐	02
Named contact	☐	03
Contact hours	☐	04
Email address	☐	05
None of these	☐	06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q18b Is there anything else that you would have expected to receive from [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] whilst your complaint was being resolved?

PROBE FULLY

____

____

____

____

<u>BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)</u>

Q19 And when you had to make further contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], did they have any of the following details about you and your complaint?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

Correct contact details	☐ 01
A record of your complaint	☐ 02
Full details about the complaint	☐ 03
None of these	☐ 04

<u>BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)</u>

Q20 Following your final contact with [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], did you receive any confirmation, either by telephone or in writing, that your complaint had been resolved?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

Yes – telephone	☐ 01
Yes – letter	☐ 02
Yes – email	☐ 03
None of these	☐ 04

<u>BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)</u>

Q21 Were you expecting to receive any of the following forms of confirmation?

MULTICODE

Telephone call	☐ 01
Letter	☐ 02
Email	☐ 03
Nothing expected	☐ 04
Don't know	☐ 05

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q22 Were you given a timescale in which your complaint would be resolved?

DO NOT READ OUT BUT PROMPT IF NECESSARY

No timescale given	☐	01
Within 1 day	☐	02
Within 2 days	☐	03
Between 3 and 7 days (within a week)	☐	04
8 – 14 days (within a fortnight)	☐	05
14 – 28 days (within a month)	☐	06
Longer than 28 days	☐	07
Don't know	☐	08

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT RESOLVED FOLLOWING FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q22a And how satisfied were you with this?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	☐	01
Quite satisfied	☐	02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	☐	03
Quite dissatisfied	☐	04
Very dissatisfied	☐	05
Don't know	☐	06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS GIVEN A TIMESCALE (Q22 CODES 2 – 7)

Q23 And did [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] keep to this timescale?

Yes	☐	01
No	☐	02
Don't know	☐	03

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q24a Whilst making your complaint to [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], at anytime did you have to escalate your concern to a senior member of staff or a manager?

Yes	☐ 01
No	☐ 02
Don't know	☐ 03

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO ESCALATED THEIR CONCERN TO SENIOR MEMBER OF STAFF (Q24a CODE 1)

Q24b Did escalating your concern have a positive impact on the way in which your complaint was handled?

Yes	☐ 01
No	☐ 02
Don't know	☐ 03

Unresolved Complaints

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHERE COMPLAINT NOT RESOLVED BY SUPPLIER (Q15 CODE 2 OR 3)

Q25 You say that your complaint was not resolved by [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], have any of the following taken place?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

[SUPPLIER FROM Q2] directed you to their Complaints Handling procedure on website	☐ 01
[SUPPLIER FROM Q2]offered to provide a copy of their Complaints Handling procedure free of charge	☐ 02
[SUPPLIER FROM Q2]made you aware of your right to a qualifying redress scheme	☐ 03
[SUPPLIER FROM Q2]referred your complaint to the Energy Ombudsman	☐ 04
[SUPPLIER FROM Q2]made you aware of additional sources of information and advice	☐ 05
You contacted another organisation (please specify)	☐ 06
Anything else (please specify)	☐ 12
No further action taken place	☐ 13
Don't know	☐ 14

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WITH FURTHER ACTION FROM SUPPLIER (Q25 CODES 1 – 5)

Q26 How satisfied are you with the actions that [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] have taken?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	☐	01
Quite satisfied	☐	02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	☐	03
Quite dissatisfied	☐	04
Very dissatisfied	☐	05
Don’t know	☐	06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO ARE VERY SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED (Q26 CODES 1, 4 OR 5)

Q27 Why do you say that?

PROBE FULLY

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BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHERE COMPLAINT NOT RESOLVED (Q15 CODE 2 OR 3)

Q28a What is happening with your complaint now?

PROBE FULLY

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BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHERE COMPLAINT NOT RESOLVED AND SUPPLIER THINKS RESOLVED (Q15 CODE 2 OR 3 AND S4 CODE 1)

Q28b We understand that [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] believes your complaint has been resolved. Have you received any communication from [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] to say that your complaint has been resolved?

Yes (**PROBE FULLY ON COMMUNICATION RECEIVED**)	☐	01
No	☐	02
Don’t Know	☐	03

Complaints Process – Telephone contact

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLAINED BY TELEPHONE (Q9 CODE 1)

Q29 I would now like to talk about the service that you received from [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] and the way in which you felt your complaint was handled.

For each statement that I read out, I would like you to tell me how satisfied you were with the service that you received using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means that you were not at all satisfied and 5 means you were very satisfied.

READ OUT

The attitude of the call handler towards dealing with your complaint	☐ 01
The professionalism of the call handler	☐ 02
Their understanding of your complaint or problem	☐ 03
The call handler taking ownership of your complaint	☐ 04
Their knowledge of the possible solutions to resolve your complaint	☐ 05
Their knowledge of the next steps in resolving your complaint	☐ 06
The call handlers ability to make decisions there and then to help resolve your complaint	☐ 07
Their proactive approach to resolving your complaint	☐ 08

ASK ALL WHOSE COMPLAINT REQUIRED FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5)

Clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings in resolving your complaint	☐ 09
Calling you back if promised or agreed	☐ 10

Complaints Process – Written (Letter, Fax, Email, Website)

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLAINED IN WRITING (Q9 CODES 2 – 5)

Q30 Thinking about when you made your complaint to [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2], did you receive confirmation, by letter, email or telephone that your complaint had been received and would be addressed?

MULTICODE

Yes – letter	☐	01
Yes – email	☐	02
Yes – telephone	☐	03
None of these	☐	04
Don't know	☐	05

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLAINED IN WRITING AND REQUIRED FURTHER CONTACT (Q9 CODES 2 – 5 AND Q6 CODES 2 – 5)

Q31 And did you receive an update on the progress or status of your complaint whilst waiting for it to be resolved?

Yes	☐	01
No	☐	02
Don't know	☐	03

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLAINED IN WRITING (Q9 CODES 2 – 5)

Q32 I would now like to talk about the service that you received from [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] and the way in which you felt your complaint was handled.

For each statement that I read out, I would like you to tell me how satisfied you were with the service that you received using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means that you were not at all satisfied and 5 means you were very satisfied.

READ OUT

Ease of registering your complaint	☐ 01
Being informed of the next steps / what would happen next in terms of resolving your complaint	☐ 02
Being made aware of the timeframe in which your complaint would be addressed	☐ 03
The feeling that someone had taken ownership of your complaint	☐ 04
Being provided with further contact details to discuss the complaint if necessary	☐ 05
Taking a proactive approach to resolving your complaint	☐ 06

ASK ALL WHOSE COMPLAINT REQUIRED FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 – 5)

Contacting you if promised or agreed	☐ 07

Complaints Process – Face to Face contact

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLAINED FACE TO FACE (Q9 CODE 6)

Q33 I would now like to talk about the service that you received from [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2] and the way in which you felt your complaint was handled.

For each statement that I read out, I would like you to tell me how satisfied you were with the service that you received using a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means that you were not at all satisfied and 5 means you were very satisfied.

READ OUT

The attitude of the representative towards dealing with your complaint	☐ 01
The professionalism of the representative	☐ 02
Their understanding of your complaint or problem	☐ 03
The representative taking ownership of your complaint	☐ 04
Their knowledge of the possible solutions to resolve your complaint	☐ 05
Their knowledge of the next steps in resolving your complaint	☐ 06
Their ability to make decisions there and then to help resolve your complaint	☐ 07
Their proactive approach to resolving your complaint	☐ 08

ASK ALL WHOSE COMPLAINT REQUIRED FURTHER CONTACT (Q6 CODES 2 - 5)

Clearly informing you of the next steps and associated timings in resolving your complaint	☐ 09
Calling you back if promised or agreed	☐ 10

Overall Satisfaction

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q34 Taking into account everything that we have talked about so far regarding the complaints process, how satisfied were you overall with the way in which your complaint was handled by [INSERT SUPPLIER FROM Q2]?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	☐	01
Quite satisfied	☐	02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	☐	03
Quite dissatisfied	☐	04
Very dissatisfied	☐	05
Don't know	☐	06

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS VERY SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED (Q34 CODES 1, 4 OR 5)

Q35 Why do you say that?

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BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT HAS BEEN RESOLVED (Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q36 And how satisfied were you with the resolution to your complaint?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	☐	01
Quite satisfied	☐	02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	☐	03
Quite dissatisfied	☐	04
Very dissatisfied	☐	05
Don't know	☐	06

Resolution

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT HAS BEEN RESOLVED (Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q37 Finally, thinking about the resolution to your complaint, did you **expect** to receive any of the following having made a complaint?

READ OUT

MULTICODE

Nothing expected	☐ 01
Rectification of problem	☐ 02
Apology letter or email	☐ 03
Apology telephone call	☐ 04
Compensation or apology payment	☐ 05
Anything else (please specify)	☐ 06
Don’t know	☐ 07

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHOSE COMPLAINT HAS BEEN RESOLVED (Q15 CODE 1 OR 2)

Q38 And did you receive anything?

Nothing received	☐ 01
Rectification of problem	☐ 02
Apology letter or email	☐ 03
Apology telephone call	☐ 04
Compensation or apology payment	☐ 05
Anything else (please specify)	☐ 06
Don’t know	☐ 07

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS WHO RECEVIED SOMETHING (Q38 CODES 2 – 5)

Q39 How satisfied were you that what you received adequately reflected the problems that you had encountered?

READ OUT

Very satisfied	☐ 01
Quite satisfied	☐ 02
Neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied	☐ 03
Quite dissatisfied	☐ 04
Very dissatisfied	☐ 05
Don't know	☐ 06

Recent Complaints

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q40 Before we finish, can you tell me if you have made a complaint, excluding the one we have talked about today, to any of the following types of company or organisation in the last 12 months?

READ OUT

Energy supplier	☐ 01
Water company	☐ 02
Telephone provider	☐ 03
Internet service provider	☐ 04
Bank or Building Society	☐ 05
Transport company e.g. trains or buses	☐ 06
Local council	☐ 07
Anyone else (please specify)	☐ 08
Don't know	☐ 09

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS

Q41 And in general terms, how confident do you feel about making a complaint to companies such as these?

READ OUT

Very confident	☐ 01
Quite confident	☐ 02
Neither, nor	☐ 03
Not very confident	☐ 04
Not at all confident	☐ 05
Don't know	☐ 06

Classification

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q42 Gender

INTERVIEWER RECORD – DO NOT READ OUT

Male	☐ 01
Female	☐ 02

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q43 And finally for classification purposes only, could you tell me which of the following age bands you fall into?

READ OUT

18 - 24	☐ 01
25 - 35	☐ 02
36 - 45	☐ 03
46 - 55	☐ 04
56 - 65	☐ 05
66+	☐ 06
Decline to answer	☐ 07

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q44 Which of the following best describes your current working status?

READ OUT

Working - full time (30+hrs)	☐ 01
Working - part time (8 - 29hrs)	☐ 02
Unemployed seeking work	☐ 03
Unemployed not seeking work	☐ 04
Retired	☐ 05
Decline to answer	☐ 06

BASE: ALL CONSUMER RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 1)

Q45 And finally, what is your marital status?

READ OUT

Married/living with partner	☐ 01
Single	☐ 02
Separated/divorced/ Widowed	☐ 03
Decline to answer	☐ 04

BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 2)

Q46 And finally, for classification purposes and so that we can analyse our results by different type of business, could you please tell me your primary business activity?

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BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 2)

Q47 And your job title within the business?

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BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 2)

Q48 What is your companies' approximate annual turnover?

Less than £25,000	
£25,000 to £50,000	☐ 01
£50,001 to £250,000	☐ 02
£250,001 to £500,000	☐ 03
£500,001 to £1 million	☐ 04
£1 million to £2 million	☐ 05
More than £2 million	☐ 06
Decline to answer	☐ 07

BASE: ALL MICROBUSINESS RESPONDENTS (S2 CODE 2)

Q49 And how many full time employees do you have?

Number of employees	☐☐☐
Don't know	☐ 01

Thank you for your help. Can I just remind you that this interview is part of a market research survey being carried out by Harris Interactive. If you want to verify that we are a bona fide agency, I can give you the Freephone number of the Market Research Society to ring.

GIVE NUMBER IF REQUIRED (0500 396 999).