

Telecommunications Users and Consumers Advisory Committee (“TUCAC”)

Minutes of the 21st Meeting held at 3:00 p.m.

on 9 December 2020 (Wednesday) in Conference Room,

Office of the Communications Authority (“OFCA”),

29/F Wu Chung House, Wan Chai

Present:

Mr. Sanda CHEUK (Chairman)	Deputy Director-General
Mr. Francis HO	Representative of Consumer Council
Dr. Anthony NG	Representative of Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce
Mr. Ricky CHONG	Representative of Communications Association of Hong Kong
Mr. Keith LI	Representative of Hong Kong Wireless Technology Industry Association
Mr. C M CHUNG	Representative of the disabled
Mr. Y C SIU	Representative of the disabled
Mr. Johnny YUEN	Representative of the aged community services
Mr. K K LAU, MH, JP	Member appointed on an ad personam basis
Dr. K W TANG	Member appointed on an ad personam basis
Ms. P Y CHAN	Representative as a member of the public
Ms. W K CHENG	Representative as a member of the public
Mr. H C HUNG	Representative as a member of the public
Mr. Y M KUNG	Representative as a member of the public
Ms. Eva LAU	Representative as a member of the public
Dr. K W LAU	Representative as a member of the public
Mr. Richard TSANG	Representative as a member of the public
Ms. Avon YUE	Representative as a member of the public
Mr. Henry LIN	Representative of Education Bureau
Ms. Jamay WONG (Secretary)	OFCA

In attendance:

Ms. Stacy LAM	OFCA
Mr. Gap CHEUK	OFCA
Ms. Andrea LAU	OFCA
Ms. Annie LO	OFCA
Miss Edith YAU	OFCA

Absent with apologies:

Mr. Eric YEUNG	Representative of Small and Medium Enterprises
----------------	--

Mr. W T CHAN
Ms. Katy LAU

Representative as a member of the public
Representative as a member of the public

I. Welcome Message

1. The Chairman said that this meeting was the first meeting of the new term. He introduced and welcomed the newly joined members and thanked all members for attending the meeting. He hoped to continue gauging comments and views through meeting with the members so that OFCA could carry on its regulatory arrangements and educational work regarding telecommunications services in a more appropriate and effective way. In addition, the Chairman said that two new members had been assessed and appointed through the Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth to the current term TUCAC. The Chairman would like to take this opportunity to thank two experienced serving members, namely Ms. Eva LAU and Mr. Richard TSANG, for their assistance in facilitating a smooth completion of the whole selection and assessment process. Pending completion of the relevant procedure, the two young members would take part in the work of this Committee later on.

II. Minutes of the 20th Meeting of the Telecommunications Users and Consumers Advisory Committee (“TUCAC”)

2. The Secretary had not received any proposed amendment to the draft minutes of the 20th meeting from the members prior to the meeting and no amendment was proposed by the members at the meeting. The Chairman announced that the minutes of the 20th meeting were confirmed.

III. Emergency Alert System

3. Ms. Stacy LAM briefed members on the details of the Emergency Alert System (“EAS”), including the background and purposes of setting up the EAS, a comparison between the EAS and short message services (“SMS”), levels of EAS messages, a list of mobile devices that supported reception of EAS messages and samples of EAS messages demonstrated on handsets. Related information was set out in TUCAC

4. The Chairman said that in the past, emergency messages from government departments were disseminated to the public by sending SMS messages via mobile networks. Owing to technological constraints, SMS messages were confined to a length limit, and it often took several hours for an emergency message disseminated via SMS to reach all mobile users in Hong Kong. Since SMS was not an effective means to disseminate emergency messages, the Government had decided to set up the EAS, which made use of the cell broadcast service technology of mobile networks to disseminate messages to all compatible mobile devices connected to 3G, 4G or 5G mobile network services within seconds. Members of the public who were using newer models of handsets or had already updated the software of their older models would be able to receive EAS messages. When a system message was received, the mobile devices would generate a specific audio alarm signal together with vibration in accordance with the relevant technical standards. A text message would also pop up on the screen at the same time. With these features, members of the public could identify the message being disseminated from the EAS. As for the question about under what circumstances would the EAS be used to disseminate messages to members of the public, such decision should be left to the government department concerned.

5. Ms. Avon YUE noticed from the video clip shown at the meeting that there was a difference in the volume of the audio alarm signal generated by different handset operating systems when an EAS message was received. Ms. Avon YUE would also like to know whether the volume of the audio alarm signal given out in a message would be different for the “Emergency Alert” and “Extreme Emergency Alert” levels.

6. Ms. Stacy LAM said that the message shown in the video clip was classified as “Emergency Alert” level, whereas the volume of its audio alarm signal would be dependent on the volume setting of the handsets by the time of reception. As for messages issued at “Extreme Emergency Alert” level, the volume of the audio alarm signal would be the highest level of the handsets by default.

7. The Chairman added that depending on the design of the handsets, users could mute or lower the volume of the audio alarm signal or turn off the vibration alert of messages issued at “Emergency Alert” level. Messages issued at “Extreme Emergency Alert” level were the highest level of alert and would only be sent in the most severe situation requiring immediate responses or actions by all of the affected citizens in Hong Kong to clear and present danger that could cause the loss of human lives, serious personal injuries and massive damage to property. To ensure that users could receive messages issued at “Extreme Emergency Alert” level, according to relevant standards, all compatible handsets had to be preset as being able to receive messages at this level. Users were not allowed to decline reception of these messages. Neither could they adjust the volume of the audio alarm signal nor turn off the vibration alert for messages at this level.

8. Dr. K W TANG pointed out that currently, some shopping malls also provided similar messaging service, allowing visitors to receive information about the malls. To avoid confusion and falling prey to the deceptive acts of scammers, Dr. K W TANG suggested that the Government should educate members of the public how to identify EAS messages. Dr. K W TANG also noted that devices currently supporting reception of EAS messages were mainly smart phones. He believed that members of the public and manufacturers would also like to know if other devices (e.g. smart watches) would support reception of EAS messages as well.

9. Ms. Stacy LAM pointed out that in order to help members of the public identify messages disseminated by the Government via the EAS, OFCA had required that the EAS should be designed in accordance with the specified technical standards and specifications in such a way that messages disseminated from the EAS could not be transmitted or duplicated. The audio alarm signal and vibration alert of the messages should be generated with a specific pattern/rhythm for easy identification by members of the public. As for the devices supporting reception of EAS messages, in addition to smart phones, certain smart watches also supported reception of EAS messages. Depending on market demand, manufacturers could develop other devices that

supported reception of EAS messages. OFCA would update the “List of Mobile Devices that Support Reception of EAS Messages” (the “List of Mobile Devices”) on its website, providing a list of brands and models of the devices in a timely manner for public reference.

10. The Chairman added that OFCA had only stipulated a set of specific technical standards and specifications for handsets but no requirement was set out for other types of devices; therefore, whether or not there would be other products or devices that supported reception of EAS messages in future would be dependent on market development and the commercial decision of manufacturers. In addition, EAS messages would be disseminated via a specific platform and network of telecommunications operators, and the operators were fully aware that the platforms were only for use by the Government. He believed that the arrangement could help prevent fake messages. The EAS was currently designed to disseminate the same message to all users in Hong Kong simultaneously. When a user was in doubt about the reception of an EAS message, he could check with his relatives and friends to see if they had received the same message in order to help him ascertain the authenticity of the message. Alternatively, upon dissemination of EAS messages, the government bureaux or departments that issued the messages would also publish the relevant information on their official website or social media platforms. If members of the public had any doubt about the EAS message received on their mobile devices, they could visit the relevant official website or social media platforms, contact the government bureau or department concerned for verification of the message received or for further information.

11. Mr. K LAU hoped that there would be different types of products or devices that supported reception of EAS messages. He was also concerned about the impact of the status of users’ handsets on reception of system messages. He worried whether users would be able to receive EAS messages if their handsets were turned off or on silent mode. Mr. K LAU also suggested that OFCA should carry out publicity and educational work to clearly inform members of the public that the EAS would never collect users’ information, such as personal data, bank account information and

passwords during its operation and course of dissemination in order to enhance public awareness upon receipt of the messages.

12. Ms. Stacy LAM said that OFCA would keep in view the mobile devices available in the market that supported reception of EAS messages and update the list of mobile devices in a timely manner. Ms. Stacy LAM also explained that with the employment of cell broadcast service technology, the EAS had a message re-dissemination mechanism. Even if a user of mobile device failed to receive an EAS message at the first instance because he was inside an elevator, his mobile device was turned off or out of battery, etc, the user would still receive the EAS message concerned if his device was connected to a mobile network when the EAS re-disseminated the message. For EAS messages issued at “Extreme Emergency Alert” level, mobile devices would generate an audio alarm signal at the maximum volume of a handset, regardless of the volume settings of the devices. As for EAS messages at “Emergency Alert” level, users were advised not to mute their mobile devices if they did not want to miss the EAS messages at that level.

13. The Chairman thanked Mr. K LAU for his opinions on OFCA’s publicity and educational work. He said that OFCA had issued a press release on the EAS and set up a thematic web page on OFCA’s website which included an introduction to EAS messages, list of mobile devices and frequently asked questions. OFCA would make reference to members’ comments for improving the contents of the thematic web page.

[Post-meeting note: OFCA had updated the contents of the thematic web page, which included an addition of information on “how to distinguish between official and fake EAS messages” to the Frequently Asked Questions section.]

14. Mr. Richard TSANG agreed to the installation of the EAS. He noticed that reception of EAS messages had been activated on his mobile phone but reception of EAS test messages had been disabled by default. He enquired if the default factory setting concerned would affect users’ reception of any EAS messages. Regarding

OFCA's publicity and educational work, Mr. Richard TSANG understood that OFCA had posted relevant information on its website. However, as the EAS was a brand new system, members of the public might not be aware of it, and thus not proactively visiting OFCA's website for information. Mr. Richard TSANG suggested that OFCA should consider directing its publicity and educational efforts at specific groups (such as elderly people) and proactively providing them with information on the EAS (say by producing and putting up posters at elderly centres). This could alert people that the EAS messages they received were time-critical public announcements and messages disseminated by the Government to the public during emergency situations.

15. The Chairman thanked Mr. Richard TSANG for his opinions and explained that reception of EAS test messages on mobile devices was disabled by default to avoid causing nuisances to the public. The default factory setting would not affect users' reception of emergency messages disseminated from the EAS to the public. On the other hand, OFCA was considering stepping up its publicity and educational efforts, such as production of an API for promoting the EAS, so as to raise public awareness on the system. OFCA would also consider conducting public education through other channels.

16. Mr. Henry LIN enquired (1) whether an user would be able to receive EAS messages via WiFi if he was in a place with poor mobile network coverage but using the WiFi service at the said location; and (2) whether OFCA would consider conducting a drill on dissemination of EAS messages and organising extensive publicity and education programmes prior to the drill so that members of the public could acquire first-hand experience on receiving EAS messages.

17. Ms. Stacy LAM responded that owing to the fact that the EAS used mobile networks as its connection interface, mobile device users in areas with no mobile network coverage would not be able to receive EAS messages, regardless of whether their devices were connected to a WiFi network or using WiFi services. However, as she had previously mentioned, the EAS had a message re-dissemination mechanism. Users would be able to receive EAS messages if they were located within the coverage

of mobile networks by the time the messages were re-disseminated from the EAS.

18. The Chairman further explained that a drill on dissemination of EAS messages, as proposed by Mr. Henry LIN, would entail rather complicated arrangements and thus careful consideration was required. That said, OFCA and the operators concerned had conducted a series of tests during installation of the EAS. He believed that the system would operate smoothly. OFCA would also accumulate experience from the actual implementation and consider if it was necessary to make any improvements to the EAS.

19. Mr. C M CHUNG would like to know whether users could receive EAS messages once their devices were connected to any of the local mobile phone networks, and whether users could still receive EAS messages while roaming overseas.

20. Ms. Stacy LAM said that users' devices should be connected to a local mobile network for receiving EAS messages, which would be disseminated via local mobile networks through application of the cell broadcast service technology. As such, users' mobile devices would need to be connected to one of the local mobile networks in order to allow reception of EAS messages. As for users roaming overseas, no EAS messages would be received as the roaming services being used were connected to the overseas mobile networks instead of a local mobile network in Hong Kong. On the other hand, visitors to Hong Kong using mobile devices that supported cell broadcast service technology would be able to receive EAS messages after their devices were connected to a local mobile network.

21. The Chairman said that the purpose of the EAS was to enable government departments to disseminate important real-time messages to users of mobile phones connected to local mobile networks during emergency situations that might extensively endanger lives and properties so as to remind members of the public to take contingency measures immediately. As such, the EAS might not be applicable to people outside Hong Kong. The Chairman emphasised that while making use of

the EAS, government departments would continue to use the existing channels such as official websites, social media platforms, press releases and SMS to disseminate relevant messages. In case the government departments concerned found it necessary to disseminate important messages to members of the public overseas, the use of SMS might be considered for those using roaming services overseas to receive important information via SMS.

22. Dr. Anthony NG considered the EAS a policy beneficial to all people. Currently, the target group of the EAS were all members of the public being located within the coverage of local mobile networks and using mobile phones that supported the cell broadcast service technology. Dr. Anthony NG suggested that the Communications Authority (“CA”) consider upgrading the EAS at the next stage to allow EAS messages to be disseminated on a district basis since some emergency situations might only happen in certain districts and affect the people locally. There was no need to inform people in other districts to take immediate actions concerning the emergency situation.

23. The Chairman thanked Dr. Anthony NG for his suggestion and said that OFCA had considered this idea in designing the system. However, in view of the actual circumstances, the EAS could only disseminate territory-wide messages for the time being. OFCA would study the need and feasibility of disseminating EAS messages on a district basis in future.

24. Dr. K W LAU asked whether the Government had established an internal mechanism to manage the dissemination of message, in order to avoid causing public panic by sending out a false alarm.

25. The Chairman pointed out that as SMS was giving out for alert of major incidents in the past practice, the Government had adopted a stringent system to manage the dissemination of EAS messages. Any government departments intending

to disseminate an EAS message for an emergency situation, irrespective of what alert level, must seek approval from the Heads of the relevant bureaux or the Chief Secretary for Administration to make the decision, and the department concerned should also take appropriate measures and arrangements before disseminating the message to the public.

IV. Full Digital TV Broadcast

26. Ms. Andrea LAU briefed members on the full digital TV broadcast, including the implementation timetable, the merits of implementation and the relevant measures, the use of the spectrum vacated after switching off analogue television services (“ASO”), the public consultation on the assignment of the spectrum and an overview on digital TV broadcast in Hong Kong. Related information was set out in TUCAC Paper No. 4/2020.

27. The Chairman said that Hong Kong had entered an era of full digital TV broadcast after the ASO on 1 December 2020, which marked a milestone in the development of the telecommunications industry. OFCA had all along been working closely with the relevant free TV broadcasters to remind households who still used analogue TVs that they would only need to add a digital TV receiver in order to keep accessing local free TV programmes. In fact, having received enquiries from the public after 1 December 2020, OFCA found that some members of the public were not aware of the ASO and had not yet purchased digital TV receivers. If assistance was needed, members of the public could apply for the Community Care Fund Digital Television Assistance Programme, which aimed to subsidise analogue TV households with financial needs to obtain digital TV receivers (including installation of the equipment and performing TV programme channel rescan) before 15 July 2021. In addition, OFCA would provide technical advice to households to help them improve the reception of digital TV according to various circumstances and needs.

28. Ms. Annie LO added that the contractor of the Community Care Fund Digital Television Assistance Programme would offer 3-year free maintenance service upon successful installation day. Households who had participated in this programme could approach the contractor for follow-up if they encountered a technical or usage problem (e.g. need to rescan the programme channels) after obtaining digital TV receivers.

29. Mr. C M CHUNG was concerned about the arrangement for the spectrum vacated after the ASO. He wished to know whether OFCA would allocate the spectrum to telecommunications operators in order to resolve the problem of no network coverage for 5G services in certain areas in the New Territories.

30. The Chairman replied that vacating the spectrum from analogue TV would allow valuable spectrum resources to be utilised more effectively. The Government had studied the issue of deploying the vacated spectrum for the provision of 5G high value-added mobile telecommunications services. Taking into account the compatibility of the neighbouring television broadcasting services and the local mobile services operating in the same band, the 600 MHz band vacated after the ASO would only be used for the provision of indoor public mobile services. However, given the excellent propagation characteristics and higher penetration power of spectrum, the 600/700 MHz bands could provide better coverage for both indoor and outdoor 5G services. He believed that the vacated 600/700 MHz bands could significantly improve the coverage of 5G services in rural and remote areas. The Chairman also explained that OFCA had adopted an open and transparent auction mechanism for spectrum allocation since 2000. All incumbent telecommunications operators or new investors could participate in the spectrum auctions. Successful bidders would be assigned with their respective spectrum and could start building radio base stations for the provision of mobile services. Pending completion of the post-production work which included finalising the channel migration with various broadcasters to vacate the 600/700 MHz bands, OFCA expected to put out the spectrum for auction in the latter half of 2021 and complete the assignment of the spectrum by the end of the year.

The successful bidders would be able to start constructing their networks in 2022 for the provision of 5G services with better coverage.

31. Dr. K W TANG said that as far as he knew, the coverage of 5G services provided by mobile service operators was not satisfactory at present. While the operators should devote more resources to improve the situation, it was not possible for them to make the investment due to a lack of fund. This issue of network coverage had also affected manufacturers' desire to develop and launch 5G products, which in turn had affected the development of 5G services. As a result, both telecommunications operators and manufacturers looked forward to the arrangement of vacating spectrum for improving the coverage of 5G services, and hence boosting the development of 5G services and products.

32. The Chairman thanked Dr. K W TANG for his sharing. He said that OFCA had kept liaising with the industry and was aware of the operators' intentions during the consultation on assignment of the spectrum in the 600/700 MHz bands for the provision of public mobile services. OFCA hoped that the related work could be completed successfully on schedule. The Chairman added that OFCA had all along adopted a technology neutral approach to regulate telecommunications services, so operators might consider deploying some of the spectrum currently supporting 2G/3G/4G services for 5G services in order to better utilise the spectrum resources and meet the market demand.

V. Any Other Business

Report on Consumer Complaints

33. The Secretary reported that the CA had received 320 and 354 cases of consumer complaints in the 2nd Quarter and 3rd Quarter of 2020 respectively. Among these

complaints, 319 cases (99.7%) in the 2nd Quarter of 2020 and all cases (100%) in the 3rd Quarter of 2020 were outside the CA's jurisdiction. These complaints primarily involved dissatisfaction with customer services, disputes over contracts/service termination, dissatisfaction with the quality of mobile communications/fixed network/Internet services and disputes over billing. One case in the 2nd Quarter of 2020 was related to possible breach of Telecommunications Ordinance ("TO") or licence conditions involving alleged billing errors on Internet service providers. No substantiated case was confirmed to be in breach of the TO/licence conditions in the 2nd Quarter and 3rd Quarter of 2020. The latest consumer complaint statistics are in Annex 1.

Date of Next Meeting

34. The Secretary said that the next meeting would be held in the first half of 2021. Members would be notified of the exact time of the meeting later.

35. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Report on Consumer Complaints on Telecom Services

The Telecommunications Users and
Consumers Advisory Committee
The 21st Meeting
9 December 2020



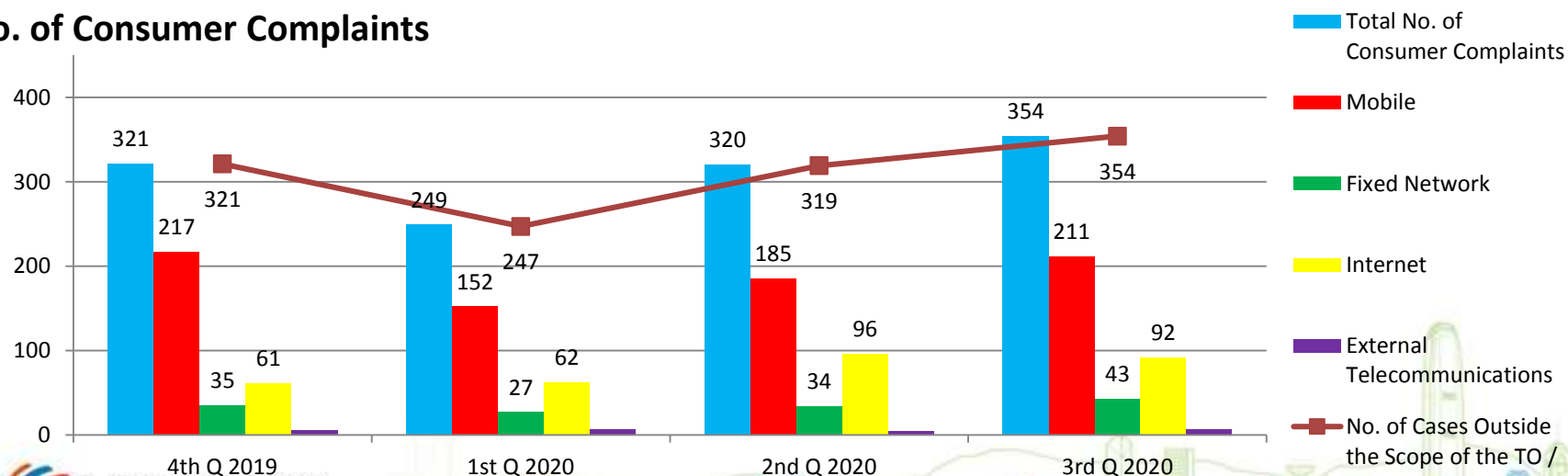
Overview (2nd Quarter and 3rd Quarter of 2020)

(Categorised by service types)

	<u>4th Q 2019</u>	<u>1st Q 2020</u>	<u>2nd Q 2020</u>	<u>3rd Q 2020</u>	<u>2nd Q 2020</u>	<u>3rd Q 2020</u>
Total No. of Consumer Complaints	321	249	320	354	319	354
Mobile	217	152	185	211	185	211
Fixed Network	35	27	34	43	34	43
Internet	61	62	96	92	95	92
External Telecommunications	6	7	4	7	4	7

No. of Cases Outside the Scope of the Telecommunications Ordinance ("TO") / Licence Conditions ("LC")

No. of Consumer Complaints



No. of Complaints (2nd Quarter and 3rd Quarter of 2020)

In the 2nd Quarter of 2020, the Communications Authority (“CA”) received 320 cases of consumer complaints, representing an upsurge of 28.5% from the 249 cases received in the 1st Quarter of 2020. In the 3rd Quarter of 2020, the number of CA received consumer complaints increased 10.6% to 354 cases.

No. of cases not involving any breach of the TO or LC : 319 and 354 cases in the 2 Quarters respectively

The cases mainly involved :

	<u>2nd Q 2020</u>	<u>3rd Q 2020</u>
➤ Dissatisfaction with customer service :	92 cases	87 cases
➤ Disputes on contract terms / service termination :	76 cases	66 cases
➤ Dissatisfaction with the quality of mobile/ fixed network/Internet services :	70 cases	97 cases
➤ Disputes on bills :	37 cases	37 cases

No. of cases involving possible breach of the TO or LC : 1 case in the 2nd Quarter of 2020

- Alleged billing information error on the service bill of an Internet service provider:

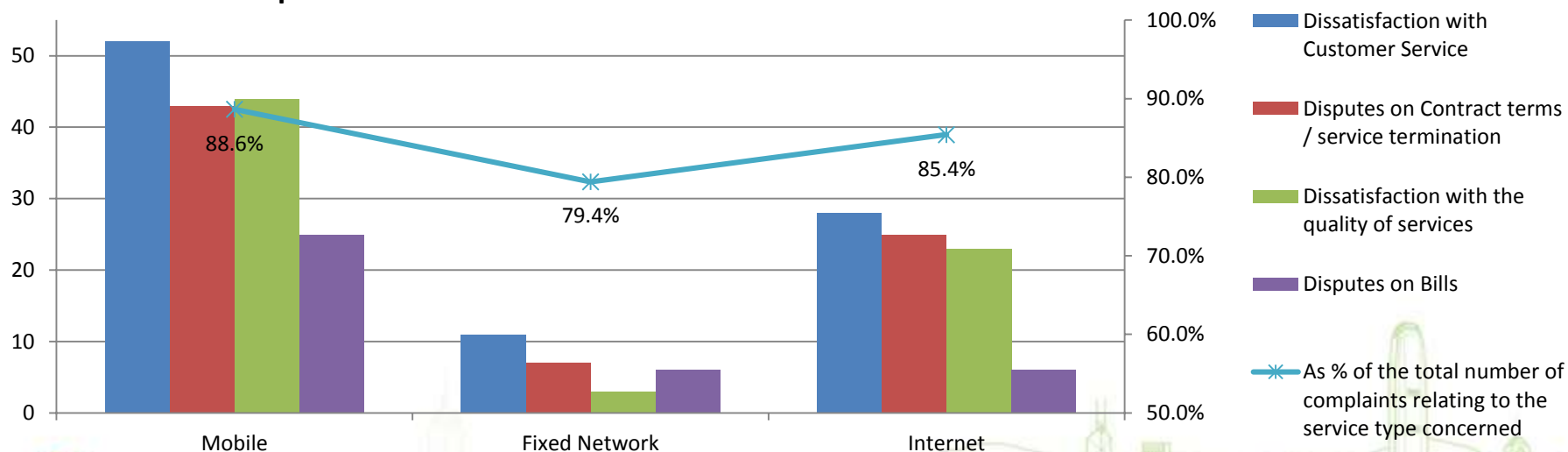
1 case

0 case

No. of Complaints (2nd Quarter of 2020)

<i>(Categorised by major service types)</i>	<u>Dissatisfaction with customer service</u>	<u>Disputes on contract terms / service termination</u>	<u>Dissatisfaction with the quality of services</u>	<u>Disputes on bills</u>	<u>As percentage of the total number of complaints relating to the service type concerned</u>
Mobile	52	43	44	25	88.6%
Fixed Network	11	7	3	6	79.4%
Internet	28	25	23	6	85.4%

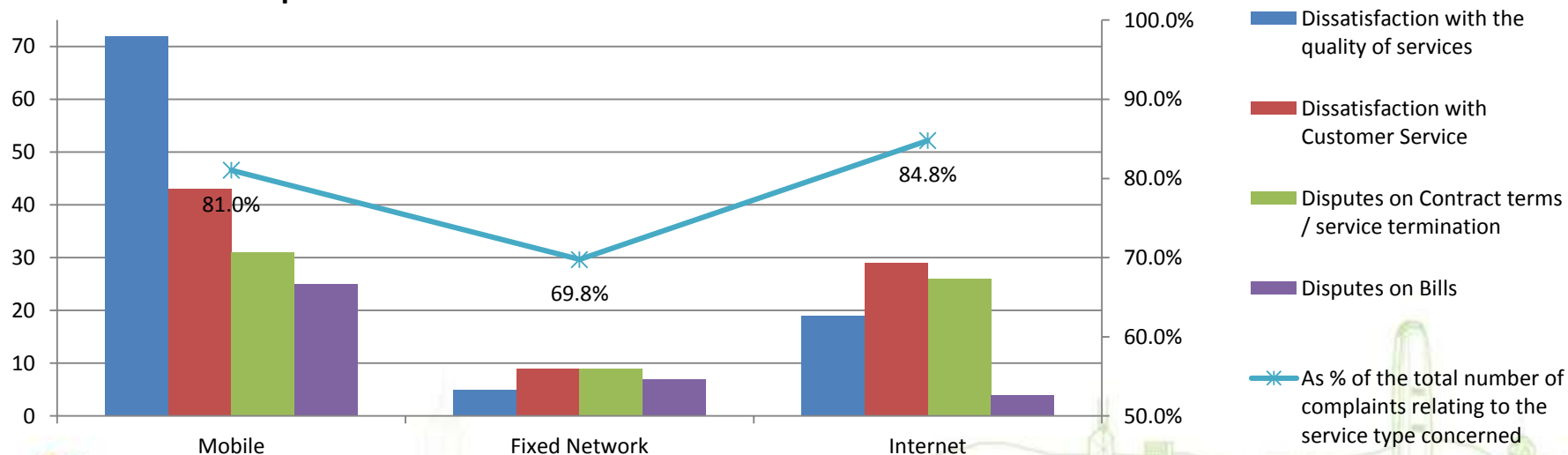
No. of Consumer Complaints



No. of Complaints (3rd Quarter of 2020)

<i>(Categorised by major service types)</i>	<u>Dissatisfaction with the quality of services</u>	<u>Dissatisfaction with customer service</u>	<u>Disputes on contract terms / service termination</u>	<u>Disputes on bills</u>	<u>As percentage of the total number of complaints relating to the service type concerned</u>
Mobile	72	43	31	25	81.0%
Fixed Network	5	9	9	7	69.8%
Internet	19	29	26	4	84.8%

No. of Consumer Complaints



No. of Complaints (2nd Quarter and 3rd Quarter of 2020)

Case Analysis of Breach of the TO / LC

In the 2nd Quarter and 3rd Quarter of 2020, there was no substantiated case of breach of the TO/LC.



Thank You

