

Australian consumers generally satisfied with their telecommunications services

The latest report from ACMA's ongoing *Telecommunications Today* research program has found that the majority of Australians (81 per cent) are generally satisfied with their telecommunications services. The research covers all voice services (fixed-line, mobile and voice over internet protocol) and internet services (dial-up and broadband in all its forms, such as ADSL, cable, satellite and wireless).

Satisfaction levels among consumers living in metropolitan areas (capital cities) and those in non-metropolitan areas are similar; however, the 13 per cent of respondents who are 'quite dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' are more likely to be professionals, male or aged between 35 and 44 years of age, or to have a household income greater than \$100,000.

While overall satisfaction levels are generally consistent across the survey's key consumer groups—householders, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the farming sector—consumers in the farming sector have reported the highest levels of dissatisfaction with mobile and internet services.

VOICE SERVICES

The highest levels of satisfaction are with the traditional fixed-line telephone; however, there is some variation between metropolitan and

non-metropolitan users of national (STD) and international services. Earlier reports in this series highlighted that this service is still used by most consumer groups.

Among SMEs, 77 per cent of respondents think improvements can be made to the delivery of fixed-voice services, which they view as vital to business. The farming sector is generally satisfied with fixed-line services, with this finding consistent across all states, farm types and farm sizes.

Complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) about fixed-line services increased by 46 per cent from 2002–03 to 2006–07, with the main areas of concern including billing, contracts, faults and privacy. The largest rise was in customer service complaints, which increased from 15 to 25 per cent.

Mobile phone services—which the majority of consumers use to complement, rather than to replace, fixed-line services—are generally viewed positively.

Most household consumers (83 per cent) believe mobile phones are a critical service for the future and more than half are generally content with their service provider. Reasons for dissatisfaction with mobile services include coverage, cost, the usability of handsets, customer service, and point-of-sale help and advice.

More than half of the SME respondents believe improvements can be made to mobile phone services, while 35 per cent of farm consumers are dissatisfied. The most common reason cited for this is poor call quality (89 per cent), including drop-outs and noise.

The TIO reported that complaints about mobile phone services now comprise 35 per cent of all complaints, with billing and customer service the main areas of concern.

While awareness of VoIP services is high, only 15 per cent of respondents currently use the technology. This emerging service presents unique challenges—while users of fixed-line services are mainly dissatisfied with customer service, dissatisfaction among VoIP users stems from issues such as service speed and voice quality.

INTERNET SERVICES

Internet take-up for household, SME and farm respondents is now more than 70 per cent, with broadband the most common connector.

The generally high level of satisfaction with internet services is demonstrated by the reluctance of most respondents to switch to a different internet service provider (ISP). More than 80 per cent of household consumers claim their ISP met or exceeded their expectations in

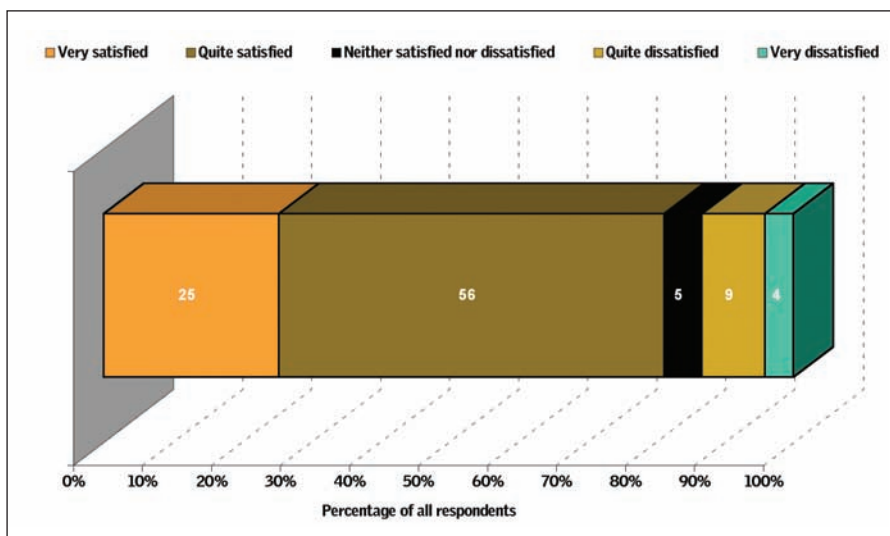


FIGURE 1: HOUSEHOLD CONSUMER SATISFACTION WITH TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

2006–07, and respondents are generally satisfied with broadband speeds and value for money. However, those in non-metropolitan areas are less satisfied—they would like faster and more consistent internet access, and believe that service is inferior to that provided in metropolitan areas.

More than three-quarters of SMEs are also satisfied with their internet service, although non-metropolitan SMEs are marginally less so, citing slower speeds, drop-outs, poor service, cost or lack of access as areas of dissatisfaction.

Take-up of internet services in the farming sector is helping to negate issues of distance and

isolation. More than half (56 per cent) are satisfied, but the 26 per cent who are dissatisfied mainly cite slow speeds as the cause. Farmers using dial-up internet services (44 per cent) are more dissatisfied than those with access to wireless, ADSL, satellite and cable services.

The TIO recorded a 109 per cent increase in internet-related complaints, with customer service issues accounting for nearly a quarter of these.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The consumer satisfaction report is the fourth in the *Telecommunications Today* series. The objectives of this report were to:

- explore consumer attitudes and the level of satisfaction with voice and internet services
- determine if consumers in different geographical locations have similar levels of satisfaction with their telecommunications services
- determine if consumers from different demographic sectors have similar levels of satisfaction with their telecommunications services.

Information in the report is drawn from five data sources:

- Commissioned work from Woolcott Research based on 12 focus group discussions with residential household consumers recruited from a random sample, as well as quantitative research using 1,600 respondents.
- A telephone survey of approximately 2,000 farmers across the major agronomic regions in Australia (the AgScan survey) conducted from 5 April to 2 May 2007.
- Sensis® Business Index telephone survey of 1,800 SMEs conducted between 24 April and 31 May 2007.
- Roy Morgan Single Source survey of individual consumers aged over 14 years.
- Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman complaint data.

The report can be found on ACMA's website at <www.acma.gov.au> (go to About ACMA: Publications & research > Telecommunications publications > Telecommunications today: research report series).

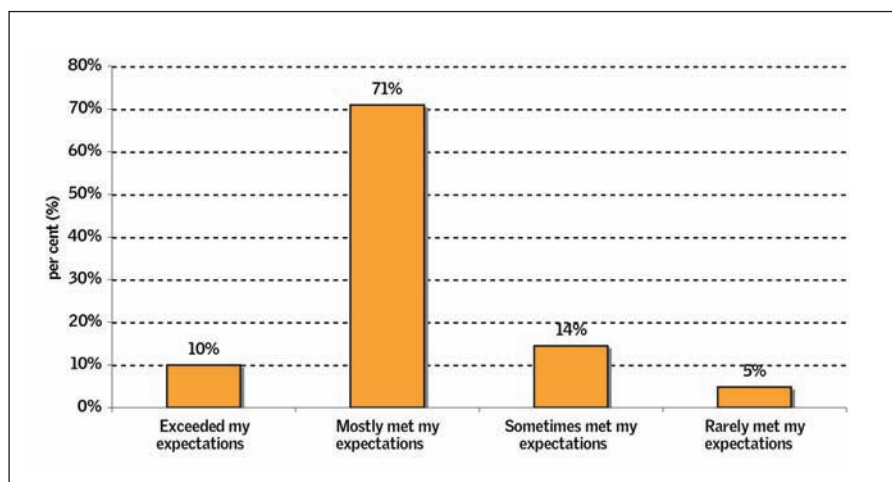


FIGURE 2: HOUSEHOLD CONSUMER SATISFACTION WITH INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

Temporary community broadcasting licences allocated, February 2008

State	Licence area	Licensee	Community served	Frequency	Start	Finish	Allocated
NSW	Coffs Harbour RA3	Coffs Harbour Christian Broadcasters Inc.	Christian	94.1 MHz	1/3/08	28/2/09	12/2/08
NSW	Cobar RA2	Cobar Community Radio Inc.	General	102.9 MHz	22/1/08	21/7/08	14/2/08
WA	Perth RA1	Youth Media Society of Western Australia Inc.	Youth	101.7 MHz	29/2/08	31/5/08	22/2/08
QLD	Tiaro RA1	Tiaro Shire Community Centre Inc.	General	107.1 MHz	1/3/08	28/2/09	26/2/08
QLD	Bundaberg RA2	Bundaberg Burnett Community Broadcasting Association Inc.	General	96.3 MHz	9/3/08	8/3/09	29/2/08