

# Energy star rating: Methodology



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# Introduction: What is the star rating?

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First published in 2016, the star rating provides consumers with accessible information about energy supplier performance and enables consumers to make more informed switching decisions. It was developed with two broad purposes in mind.

The first was to support energy consumers to include customer service performance in their decision-making when switching suppliers.

The second was as a tool for raising the profile of the service performance of individual energy suppliers and generating insight to drive better performance throughout the sector. This is in line with Citizens Advice's obligations under The Gas and Electricity (Consumer Complaints Handling Standards) Regulations 2008.<sup>1</sup> The star rating is published quarterly on our website<sup>2</sup>, and we often issue press releases alongside updates. We also publish a record of historic performance data.<sup>3</sup>

In October 2023, Ofgem decided to introduce new Supplier Licence Conditions requiring suppliers to display their star rating score in a prominent position on their website.<sup>4</sup> In response to this new requirement and to help suppliers in carrying out this new obligation, Citizens Advice has produced this document which provides an overview of the star rating methodology and process. This reflects the changes made during the most recent review of the methodology, conducted in July 2023.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [The Gas and Electricity \(Consumer Complaints Handling Standards\) Regulations 2008](#). Prior to 2016, Citizens Advice met this obligation via the publication of a complaints league table.

<sup>2</sup> The star rating can be found at this [webpage](#).

<sup>3</sup> Historic Complaints and star rating data can be found at this [webpage](#).

<sup>4</sup> Ofgem [Consumer standards decision | Ofgem](#), p.46

<sup>5</sup> Star rating [Decision Document on Revised Methodology for the Citizens Advice star rating July 2023](#)

# Data

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The star rating combines data about 3 areas: data about complaints to third parties, data about customer service and data about customer guarantees

## Notes and Definitions

- All information relates to domestic accounts only.
- 'Customer accounts' refers to separate accounts for gas and electricity (such that a dual fuel customer counts as 2 customer accounts).
- Suppliers should include all customer accounts from white label brands in their reporting, unless they have requested - and been given agreement - to report these separately.
- Our definition of "working" days is the same as the Consumer Complaints Handling Standards: "working day" means any day other than a Saturday, a Sunday, Christmas Day, Good Friday or a day which is a bank holiday within the meaning of the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971
- Citizens Advice may share information provided with Ofgem, unless we receive a specific request not to, to avoid any duplication of information requests. Such a request will not limit data sharing required under Section 27 of the Consumers, Estate Agents and Redress Act 2007.<sup>6</sup>

## Data about complaints to third parties

Suppliers who have had >25,000 customer accounts in each month of the reporting quarter (based on direct complaint returns), and were also set up on the consumer service referral pathway before the first day in the reporting quarter, will be included in the Citizens Advice complaints scorecard for that quarter. Suppliers with between 10,000 and 25,000 meter points can be included in the complaints scorecard on a voluntary basis. Please get in touch with us if this is something that you would like to do.

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<sup>6</sup> [Consumers, Estate Agents and Redress Act 2007](#)

We base the complaints scorecard on information from 7 data sets (2 from the Citizens Advice consumer service, 4 from third-party organisations on numbers of cases, and one from suppliers on number of customers accounts). Each type of case is given a weighting (multiplication factor), which is then used to calculate each supplier's total complaints ratio. These weightings are intended to reflect the seriousness and actual or potential detriment of each type of complaint e.g. an advice-only complaint to the Citizens Advice consumer service is likely to involve significantly less detriment than a complaint to the Extra Help Unit which is then referred to a supplier. The complaints ratio is then used to score their complaints performance in the star rating. You can find out more about the process for the complaints scorecard below.

Organisation	Data Type	Multiplication Factor	Notes
Citizens Advice consumer service	Advice Only	10	Energy Cases where the consumer may have not contacted the supplier previously. Advice is given to the consumer on what they can do to resolve their issue. Cases with a Distribution and Advice/Information categories are removed from these data. This figure is collected quarterly and any duplicates within the quarter are removed from the data.
	Company Referral	25	Cases where the consumer has contacted the supplier, and the issue has not been resolved however the consumer is still on supply, hasn't been identified as vulnerable and also does not fit the criteria for the Energy Ombudsman. Cases with a Distribution or Information code are removed from this data. This figure is collected monthly, and duplicates within each month are removed from the data. Suppliers will have full sight of these cases as the information is sent to them via email or communicated during the mid-call transfer. Reports on Company Referrals are available as part of the reporting suite.
Advice Direct Scotland	Advice Only	10	Energy Cases where the consumer may have not contacted the supplier previously. Advice is

			<p>given to the consumer on what they can do to resolve their issue.</p> <p>Cases with a Distribution and Advice/Information categories are removed from these data.</p> <p>This figure is collected quarterly and any duplicates within the quarter are removed from the data.</p>
	Company Referral	25	<p>Cases where the consumer has contacted the supplier, and the issue has not been resolved however the consumer is still on supply, hasn't been identified as vulnerable and also does not fit the criteria for the Energy Ombudsman.</p> <p>Cases with a Distribution or Information code are removed from this data.</p> <p>This figure is collected monthly, and duplicates within each month are removed from the data.</p> <p>Suppliers should have full sight of these cases as the information is sent to them via email or communicated during the mid-call transfer.</p>
Extra Help Unit	Complaints	25	<p>Complaints where the consumer has been disconnected, received a threat of disconnection, or is considered to be vulnerable based on either personal circumstances or their difficulty managing the issue themselves.</p> <p>Only complaint call types are included - enquiries and 'ask the advisor' cases are excluded.</p> <p>Cases with a Distribution or Information code are removed from this data.</p> <p>Cases with a Suspected Meter Interference sub-code are also removed.</p> <p>This figure is collected monthly.</p> <p>Suppliers will have full sight of all these complaints, as complaint letters are emailed or in urgent situations a call is made from the EHU caseworker.</p>
Energy Ombudsman	Closed Cases	30	<p>All domestic Energy Ombudsman cases completed within the reporting quarter, with the exclusion of cases where the signposting has been recorded as deadlock.</p> <p>There is no longer a disputes process for this metric within the context of the scorecard.</p> <p>Suppliers can raise any queries with the Ombudsman</p>

			<p>during the investigation period. Citizens Advice will receive the data after all the relevant cases are complete, and at a point where the Ombudsman will no longer be accepting challenges on these cases. Citizens Advice will no longer receive record level data and cannot provide reconciliation of volumes. Any queries on the data should be directed to the Ombudsman.</p> <p>The onus to ensure that signposting evidence is accurately recorded is on the supplier.</p> <p>This figure is collected quarterly.</p>
Suppliers	Market Share	N/A	Provided by suppliers monthly as part of their direct complaint returns

Once all of the metrics have been weighted, the weighted totals are added together. The average monthly weighted totals for the quarter are then divided by the average monthly customer account numbers for the quarter, and multiplied by 10,000 to achieve a ratio of complaints per 10,000 customers. If a supplier does not submit monthly account numbers, Citizens Advice reserves the right to not issue a complaints ratio for that supplier.

For more information regarding the complaints scorecard or to raise any questions, please contact [energyretail@citizensadvice.org.uk](mailto:energyretail@citizensadvice.org.uk)

## Data about customer service

As part of the star rating process, we use our powers under Section 24 of the Consumers, Estate Agents and Redress Act 2007 to issue a Request for Information (RFI) to suppliers. This RFI includes requests for the following information:

### Total contacts

- The number of inbound, customer contacts requiring a response received across all channels (excluding dedicated sales channels).

- Number of inbound, telephone contacts received (excluding dedicated sales channels).
- Number of emails received.
- Number of social media (Facebook and Twitter) contacts received.
- Number of webchat contacts received (where applicable).
- Number of other inbound customer contacts received.

If contacts from other customer inbound channels have been counted, please list the channels through which you received these contacts.

For written forms of communication (email, social media, webchat) please only measure the first contact within a chain of communication.

## Telephone

- The average wait time to answer publicly available inbound, domestic customer initiated, telephone services (excluding dedicated inbound sales lines and sales options in the Interactive Voice Recording (IVR)). Please exclude any time in which the consumer is routed through an IVR.

This should be calculated as the mean average waiting time. Please provide your answer in seconds.

For monitoring purposes we also ask suppliers to confirm if they have an IVR, and if they have a dedicated sales line.

## Email

- The number of emails received during the reporting period which were answered substantively within 2 working days of receipt.
  - Please report only first emails within a communication thread.
  - The day on which a consumer contacts their supplier should be classified as day 0, with the following day classified as day 1.
  - In line with the Consumer Complaints Handling Standards (Sections 4b and 4c), emails received before 17:00 should be classified as



having been received that working day, whereas emails received after 17:00 should be classified as having been received the following working day.

- Please exclude emails which were answered using an auto-respond feature.
- Please exclude emails which only acknowledge receipt of the consumers email and do not address their query directly.
- The number of emails which were answered substantively via an automated response within 2 working days of receipt. This excludes automated emails which do not address the question (ie only confirm receipt of the email). This data is excluded from the email score, and is only collected for completeness.
- The number of emails received during the reporting period which were not answered substantively within 2 working days of receipt.
  - The working day on which a consumer contacts their supplier should be classified as day 0, with the following day classified as day 1.
  - In line with the Consumer Complaints Handling Standards (Sections 4b and 4c), emails received before 17:00 should be classified as having been received that working day, whereas emails received after 17:00 should be classified as having been received the following working day.

## **Social Media**

Please only respond if the number of social media contacts received is greater than or equal to 5% of total contacts received across all channels.

- Average time taken to substantively answer a direct social media message during the reporting period.
  - Please exclude time outside of your publicly available opening hours in your calculation.
  - Please exclude auto-responded queries from your calculation, and only measure social media messages which were connected to an advisor.

This should be calculated as the mean average response time. Please provide your answer in minutes and seconds.

Citizens Advice requests that suppliers submit this information using the reporting proforma provided. Please also refer to the proforma for further guidance on reporting these metrics. You can also check our [decision document](#) for more information.

## **Data about customer guarantees**

We base our ratings on suppliers' membership of the Energy Switch Guarantee<sup>7</sup> and the Vulnerability Commitment.<sup>8</sup> Suppliers score 3 points for membership of the Energy Switch Guarantee or the Vulnerability Commitment. If a supplier is a member of both, their score is capped at 5 points. Trial members of the Energy Switch Guarantee score 2 points.

## **What if a supplier does not submit data?**

If a supplier chooses not to submit data to either the complaints scorecard or the star rating RFI, Citizens Advice reserves the right to include them in the star rating with scores of zero on all metrics for which sufficient data has not been submitted.

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<sup>7</sup> [Energy Switch Guarantee](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Vulnerability Commitment - Energy UK](#)

# Score Thresholds and Weightings

## How the scores are calculated

We give energy suppliers a score out of 5 for each category. 5 is excellent and 1 is poor. Then we give them an overall star rating out of 5.

**Table 1: Star rating scoring**

Category	5	4	3	2	1
Number of complaints per 10,000 customers	5 or less	5 to 15	15 to 30	30 to 55	More than 55
Average call centre wait time (seconds)	Less than 30s	30s - 90s	90s - 180s	180s - 300s	More than 300s
Emails responded to within 2 working days	More than 95%	95 - 80%	80 - 60%	60 - 40%	Less than 40%
Average social media response time	Less than 30 mins	30 - 60 mins	1 - 2 hours	2 - 4 hours	More than 4 hours
Customer guarantees	Suppliers score 3 points each for membership of the Energy Switch Guarantee and membership of the Vulnerability Commitment (up to a maximum of 5 points). Trial members of the Energy Switch Guarantee score 2 points.				

The weightings and design for the main star rating can be found in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Main star rating weighting**

Category	Weighting	Metric	Weighting (within category)	Data source
Customer service	55%	Average call waiting time	60%	RFI
		Email response time	40% or 20%*	RFI
		Social media response time	20%*	RFI
Complaints	35%**	Existing complaints ratio		Ombudsman: Energy (OS:E), consumer service (CS), Extra Help Unit (EHU)
Customer commitments	10%	Membership of the Energy Switch Guarantee, Vulnerability Commitment		Publicly available

\* Social media response time is included in star rating scores only if social media contacts make up over 5% of a supplier's total contact volume.

If a supplier has under 25,000 meter points (and has opted not to submit complaints data if they have over 10,000 meter points), the following weightings will be applied to their scores. **Please note that if a supplier is scored according to this second method they will not be included in the main star rating table, only in the supplementary table. They will receive an overall score, but no ranking.** This enables consumers to compare suppliers on individual metrics without indicating that overall scores are comparable.

**Table 3: Star rating design for Small Suppliers (No complaints score)**

Category	Weighting	Metric	Weighting	Data source
Customer service	90%	Average call waiting time	60%	RFI
		Email response time	40% or 20%*	RFI
		Social media response time	20%*	RFI
Customer commitments	10%	Membership of the Energy Switch Guarantee, Vulnerability Commitment		Publicly available

\* Social media response time is included in star rating scores only if social media contacts make up over 5% of a supplier's total contact volume.

### Tiebreaker Formula

In the event that two suppliers receive the same overall score, the supplier with the lower ratio of complaints per 10,000 customers will receive the higher overall ranking. The complaints ratio is used as the basis for tiebreaker for a number of reasons:

- There is an established precedent for favouring Citizens Advice and third party data over supplier submitted data in the star rating.
- The complaints ratio makes up the largest single metric in the star rating.
- If a supplier has chosen not to submit RFI data, it is still possible to use the complaints ratio as a tiebreaker.

If two suppliers also have the same complaints ratio, we use a tiebreaker formula to decide on their ranking. This tiebreaker formula uses the same weightings as the main star rating score, but uses the primary data that we receive from suppliers (excluding the complaints ratio and customer guarantees score.) This has the effect of awarding the supplier with the better customer service performance the higher ranking, even if the difference in performance is relatively small.

## Other information included in the star rating

In addition to the scores themselves, we publish a range of other details about suppliers as follows:

Information	Format
Fuel Mix	Fossil-fuel: % Nuclear: % Renewable: % Other: %
Contact	Telephone: Email: Website: Web chat: Y/N Ring backs: Y/N Mobile hotline: Y/N Minicom text: Y/N
Billing	Direct debit: Y/N Cash or cheque: Y/N Prepayment: Y/N

If you are new to the star rating, you will be asked to submit this information with your first RFI response via email. If any details change, it is important that you inform Citizens Advice as soon as possible in order to prevent incorrect information being published. You can do this by emailing the RFI inbox.

## Displaying the star rating on your website

In October 2023, Ofgem introduced a new requirement for *'suppliers to publish the latest licensee's overall customer service performance rating and its scores for each customer service category as measured by the Citizens Advice star rating, as soon as possible after it becomes available, in a prominent location, in a format that is readily accessible and that meets the needs of Domestic Customers, including those Domestic Customers in Vulnerable Situations.'*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> [Consumer standards decision | Ofgem pg 47](#)

If you would like to use Citizens Advice branding assets in meeting this requirement, please contact the team ([energyretail@citizensadvice.org.uk](mailto:energyretail@citizensadvice.org.uk)) in order to arrange this.

# Key policies

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## Star rating policy for supplier mergers, acquisitions and trade sales and SoLR and SAR processes

### Process for mergers, acquisitions and trade sales

After a merger, acquisition or trade sale we will combine the complaints ratio for the suppliers involved. This combined complaints ratio will be applied for the first full quarter after the transaction was completed. Therefore, if a migration began in February, the combined complaints ratio would apply from the April-June period.

In order to do this, we will take one of two approaches:

- Where the Previous Supplier (PS) is still submitting customer numbers (as part of direct complaints reporting) we would take the sum of New Supplier (NS) and PS customer numbers and create a ratio using third party complaints made against the suppliers combined.
- Where the PS is no longer submitting customer numbers (as part of direct complaints reporting), we would expect the former customers of the PS to be included in the data of the NS.

We will require information from suppliers on which approach they wish to take based on the nature and progress of the transaction.

Where the previous supplier is no longer accepting new customers, the previous supplier will be removed from the rating. Where customers are being migrated onto the supply licence of the new supplier, but the previous supplier brand is accepting new customers, a shared complaints ratio will be used. Other metrics can, however, remain separate in line with our established approach on white label brands as stated in our 2017 decision document.



## **Process for Supplier of Last Resort (SoLRs)**

The handling of complaints during a SoLR will broadly follow the same approach outlined above.

However SoLRs have a grace period of one quarter before the complaints ratio is combined. This means that complaints for the PS are not included for the NS until the second full quarter after the SoLR appointment was announced (i.e. an additional quarter than for mergers, acquisitions and trade sales). Therefore, for a SoLR appointment in February, a combined complaints ratio would be applied for the next Jul-Sep period.

We provide a grace period for a SoLR as these appointments can be made directly by Ofgem and at relatively short notice. In comparison, we view mergers, acquisitions and trade sales as business decisions undertaken by the new supplier that should be well planned with processes in place to deal with the scenarios outlined above.

## **Process for Special Administration Regime (SARs)**

The handling of complaints following an SAR will follow the same approach outlined for SoLRs.

SARs have a grace period of one quarter before the complaints ratio is combined. This means that complaints for the PS are not included for the NS until the second full quarter after the SAR appointment by the Secretary of State was announced, or after the SAR is confirmed in a judicial review. Therefore, for a SAR appointment in February, a combined complaints ratio would be applied for the next Jul-Sep period.

# Timeline and process

All communications regarding the star rating should be directed to the Ratings RFI inbox ([RatingRFI@citizensadvice.org.uk](mailto:RatingRFI@citizensadvice.org.uk)). Please note that this inbox is monitored infrequently. If you have an urgent query, please contact [energyretail@citizensadvice.org.uk](mailto:energyretail@citizensadvice.org.uk).

In general, Citizens Advice aims to have a full version of the star rating published on its website within 10 weeks of the end of the relevant quarter. However, we reserve the right to publish the star rating after this date.

The following timeline is indicative only.

	Week (from start of quarter)									
Step	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
RFI Sent										
RFI Deadline										
Draft Supplier Scorecard Sent for Review										
Review Period										
Press Release Produced										
Final Table Sent to Suppliers										
Star rating Released										

## Review and Complaints Process

Please note that feedback periods are built into the star ratings process. We ask that any issues with individual supplier scores are raised within these periods so as to prevent any unnecessary delays to publication. If you have broader feedback on the star rating, please get in touch with the team at: [RatingRFI@citizensadvice.org.uk](mailto:RatingRFI@citizensadvice.org.uk). We are always happy to hear feedback.

## **Publicising the star rating**

Citizens Advice may decide to issue a press release to media outlets to promote the star rating. If an individual supplier is named in the press release, we will ensure that a draft of the press release is shared with the supplier in a timely manner prior to it being shared with the media. We take our responsibility to share accurate information seriously and will ensure that any comments from suppliers are taken into account.

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