

Professor Stephen Littlechild

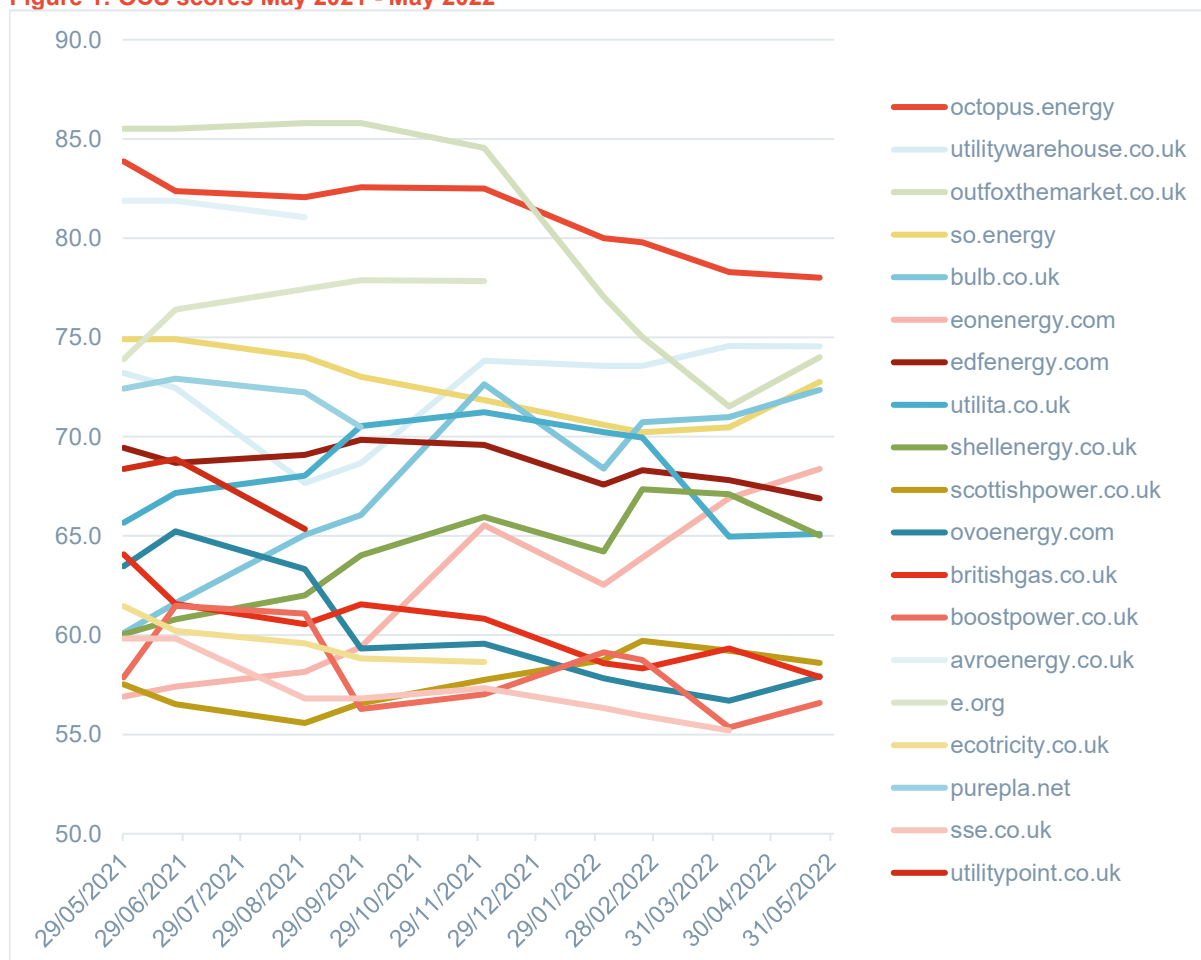
Professor Stephen Littlechild, former Director General of Electricity Supply and part of the Energy Policy Research Group at the University of Cambridge, writes about his proposed Overall Customer Satisfaction (OCS) League, a new way to evaluate suppliers' customer service. He also considers how suppliers' ratings have changed over the past few months.

Thursday (26 May) saw the publication of the latest consumer service data by Ofgem (based on data for Q122). Ofgem reported a 6% increase in number of complaints per 100,000 customers compared to the previous quarter, albeit a 4% reduction compared to a year earlier. For Large and Medium suppliers the increases compared to the previous quarter were 5% and 33%, respectively, while for Small suppliers there was a reduction of 23%.

In terms of the OCS rating, which weights proportion of complaints and speed of resolving them, the main improvements were registered by Outfox the Market and So Energy, with gains also by E.ON UK, E, Bulb, Ovo Energy (including Boost), while Ecotricity, Shell Energy and British Gas deteriorated somewhat.

Publication of the complaints information is somewhat haphazard. Figures on the Octopus Energy website are different from those on the Ofgem site (not always to Octopus's advantage). Only about half of the suppliers had published their complaints figures by the time that Ofgem did. If anyone can find the complaints data on

Figure 1: OCS scores May 2021 - May 2022



Source: Professor Stephen Littlechild

the websites of EDF Energy, So Energy and Outfox the Market, they are better sleuths than I am.

The other rather minor changes since the last report were in Trustpilot ratings, where Ecotricity, So Energy and Utility Warehouse show slight gains while E and Shell Energy show slight falls.

Figure 1 shows what this means for the OCS league, not just over the last couple of months but over the last year, with changes in all four components. There are now three main divisions in the league.

Octopus Energy remains top of the first division, declining slightly but at 78% still way ahead of others. Utility Warehouse maintains its position in second and Outfox the Market, So Energy and Bulb all improved noticeably. In the 73% - 75% range, they are clear of the next division.

E.ON UK continues its dramatic upward movement, to the top of the second division at 68%, no doubt facilitated by the switch of former npower customers to the more highly rated E.ON Next platform. EDF Energy falls slightly, Shell Energy a little more noticeably, Utilita Energy maintains its performance at 65%.

There is then somewhat of a gulf to the third division suppliers, scoring in the range 57% to 59%. Scottish Power and British Gas fall slightly, Ovo Energy and Boost improve.

A handful of suppliers left the league during this last year. Avro Energy, Pure Planet and Utility Point left the market, though not with especially bad ratings and Avro in particular was scoring highly. E and Ecotricity are sadly no longer rated by Which? magazine (along with Good Energy and Cooperative Energy). It seems time to remove SSE, now integrated into Ovo, as a separate supplier.

In general, energy suppliers seem to have maintained overall customer satisfaction in a difficult year. Perhaps the range of satisfaction has narrowed somewhat, mainly by the modification of previously exceptional performance rather than by a fall in the median or lower levels of satisfaction. Yet some suppliers have been able consistently to provide a little more customer satisfaction than others.

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