

Systemic Issues

The number of potential systemic issues decreased this year, from 120 in 2017-18 to 76 during 2018-19. Billing remains the most common type of systemic issue registered, accounting for 36 per cent of systemic issues.

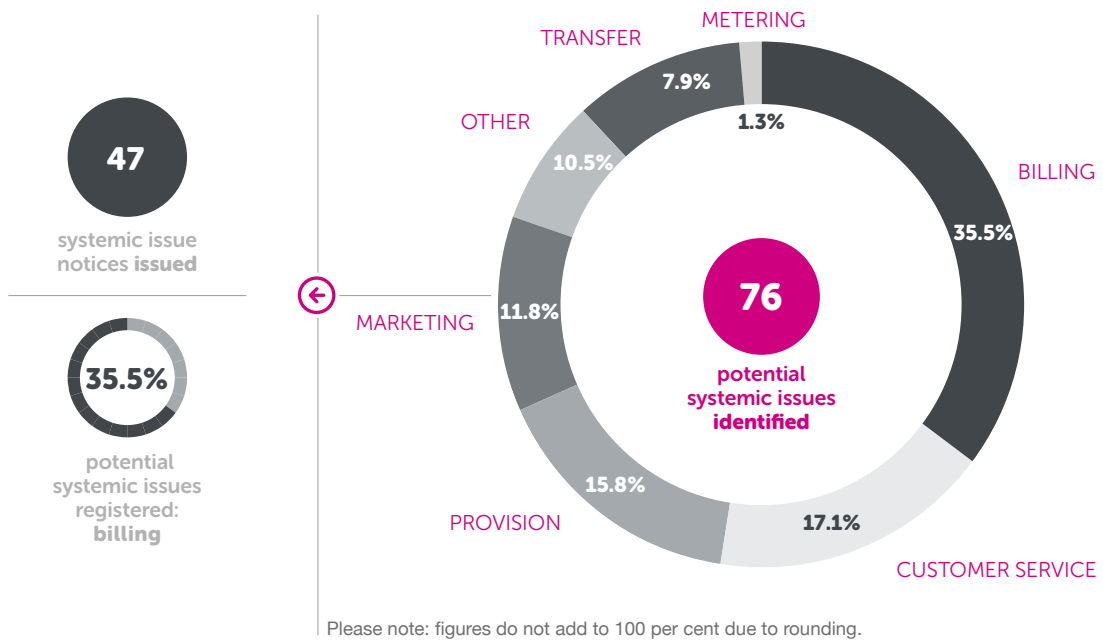


Table 1: Systemic issues

ISSUE	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Billing	43	34	35	41	27
Customer Service	17	14	13	35	13
Provision	1	2	2	17	12
Marketing	6	2	2	12	9
Transfer	5	1	1	11	6
Metering	0	0	2	3	1
Credit	0	1	1	0	0
Supply	0	1	1	0	0
Water	0	1	0	0	0
Other	2	3	5	1	8*
Total	74	59	62	120	76

*includes disconnection, hardship and network assets in 2018-19

Systemic issues case studies

Failure to cancel a contract under cooling off provisions

A customer advised they contacted their new retailer within 10 business days of agreeing to transfer their account and the retailer failed to action the cancellation request under the cooling off provisions. When we investigated, the retailer advised they had recently implemented new procedures and their team were to run daily reports for cancellation requests to check that they had been recorded and actioned. This had not occurred on this occasion. The retailer provided training on the correct process to all its customer service representatives.

No power bills for six months

A customer contacted us after they had not received electricity bills for six months. When we investigated, the retailer advised that the cause of the delay was because of an error in the tariffs in their billing system caused by a consultant. The meter data in the retailer's system has to reflect the same tariff as the Market Settlement and Transfer Solutions (MSATS). As the tariffs did not match, the bill had not been processed.



Case Study

WHAT IS A SYSTEMIC ISSUE?

A systemic issue is a problem that a person has with an energy or water supplier which affects, or may affect, more than one customer.

The issue may arise from a supplier's policy, processes or their application. It may be caused by a range of factors in isolation or together. For example, a system change, an alteration in performance levels, a procedural change, a lack of policy or procedure, or the conduct of a supplier's employees or contractors.

There is often not one specific cause of a systemic issue. It may be a combination of factors – human error, failure to have robust audit or verification processes, lack of adherence to procedures or policies, inadequate billing or IT systems, poor training, or unclear regulatory guidelines can all contribute to unsatisfactory performance that may be systemic in nature.

Identifying and measuring systemic issues

Potential systemic issues are identified through a number of means:

- Our team monitor customer complaints for potential systemic issues and flag it in our case management system.
- A senior advisor reviews these flagged cases and takes any necessary action. The advisor monitors trends in complaints and reports to management regularly.
- Current and emerging systemic issues are reviewed during regional management group meetings.

We remain abreast of current and emerging systemic issues through advice from the Advisory Council, our collaborative relationships with energy and water suppliers, government agencies, and Ombudsman peers in other jurisdictions.

Resolving systemic issues

In 2018-19, 47 systemic issue notices were issued to scheme participants. When systemic issues are identified, we immediately advise the scheme participant concerned and work with them to resolve the issue by providing detailed information about the concern, including advice about how we would like to see the issue resolved and steps to avoid it reoccurring.

We also advise the appropriate regulatory agency of any systemic issues that could, for example, constitute a breach of legislation, code or licence conditions.

Depending on the concern, our identification of systemic issues may lead a scheme participant to:

- redesign products and services
- change organisational practices and procedures
- retrain staff on product and service delivery
- reassess consumer information (e.g. labelling)
- reassess the performance of after-sales service
- receive an early warning about potential product and service defects.