

# Customer Performance Report 2020





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# 01 Executive summary

The Gas Networks Ireland (GNI) Performance Report has been published annually since 2008. There are now two specific reports;

- **A Systems Performance Report; and**
- **A Customer Performance Report.**

The Customer Performance Report provides an overview of how the natural gas transmission and distribution systems have operated during 2020 in relation to customer-oriented activities. Customer processes are measured, and insights gained are shared with stakeholders.

**Gas Networks Ireland has a Customer Charter<sup>1</sup> which provides assurance to customers of the company's dedication to 10 performance commitments, whereby in certain circumstances, compensation will be provided for failing to meet these standards. The programme of customer satisfaction monitoring continued to score very favourably across all processes in 2020.**

This Customer Performance Report analyzes the key areas where Gas Networks Ireland provides services to customers over a five-year period from 2016 to 2020. The performance of these services is benchmarked against key performance indicators (KPIs) as per the Customer Charter. Gas Network Ireland aims to provide customer services to a high standard in a prompt, efficient, and safe manner. The levels of service provided to customers is continuously monitored. We strive to achieve excellence in all aspects of customer interactions.

Ensuring the safety of customers and the general public is of prime importance to Gas Networks Ireland. In 2020, 99.96% of reported escapes were attended to within the hour. The number of gas escapes reported in 2020 decreased by 5.6% compared to 2019.

The volume of calls received by Gas Networks Ireland was 248,262 in 2020, a decrease of 18% on 2019. When all channels of communication are included, the customer contact volume with Gas Networks Ireland was 448,785 contacts in 2020, representing an overall decrease of 16%. The total number of complaints created in 2020 was 1,188 compared to 1,492 in 2019, showing an overall decrease of 20%. These decreases were primarily driven by the Covid-19 pandemic. The largest number of complaints received fell into the meter related category, which is consistent with previous years. Gas Networks Ireland continues to monitor all customer complaints to seek improvements to the services offered.

*"Gas Networks Ireland continues to monitor all customer complaints to seek improvements to the services offered."*

Following a consultation in 2016, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU), formerly the Commission for Energy Regulation, issued a decision in 2017 on Gas Networks Ireland's Customer Performance Indicators, deciding to incentivise Gas Networks Ireland in key areas of its customer service such as the customer contact centre response, complaints metrics, and the results from customer surveys. During the PC4 price control period, which commenced in October 2017 and will continue for five years until September 2022, the CRU has introduced financial incentives for Gas Networks Ireland with respect to these key customer performance indicators. Gas Networks Ireland will look to establish new performance metrics with CRU as part of customer incentives under the PC5 process.

1 <https://www.gasnetworks.ie/corporate/freedom-of-information/foi-publication-scheme/about-us/customer-charter/>  
 2 Customer Charter: <https://www.gasnetworks.ie/corporate/freedom-of-information/foi-publication-scheme/about-us/customer-charter/>

## 01 Executive summary

Operationally Gas Networks Ireland has generally performed within the KPI levels set out in the CRU approved Customer Charter<sup>2</sup>, providing a consistent level of service to its entire customer base throughout 2020. There have however, been exceptions in meeting KPI's as follows: Appointment Granting for metering work came in at 99% against a KPI of 100% caused by capacity or Local Authority restrictions. Appointment Keeping for metering came in at 99% against a KPI of 100% and Appointment Keeping for Service came in at 98.3% against a KPI of 100% both due to a number of reasons such as in-day delay in making the appointment, human error, called to an emergency response, materials issue or other operational reasons. Reinstatement came in at 94.6% for temporary works and 87.5% for permanent works against a KPI of 100% for both metrics.

The 2019 publication of the Climate Action Plan, which included a political commitment to ban the installation of gas boilers in new builds from 2025 and an installation target of 400,000 heat pumps in homes and businesses, continues to impact on Gas Networks Ireland's operations. Changing building regulations and the growing popularity of heat pumps has a knock-on-effect on our performance in relation to appointment granting, quotations, new connections and reinstatement. Our performance under each of these areas is reported in detail in section 4.0.

In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic has had and continues to have a significant impact on operations. In response to the pandemic, Gas Networks Ireland staff moved to home working on March 13th and remained at home for the rest of 2020. In the initial 2-3 months of the pandemic (March-June), we restricted our supplier facing field work (e.g. meter reading, meter locks, unlocks, fits, exchanges) to only the most essential activities in order to prevent spread of Covid-19 across customers, staff and public. In this period, Gas Network Ireland's activities were focused on maintaining and restoring gas supply for vulnerable customers and essential workers and services.

There were also specific activities undertaken in response to the impact of the pandemic on operations. The Retail Gas Market Incident Management Group (chaired by Gas Networks Ireland) facilitated a coordinated CRU, supplier and GNI response to assisting retail gas customers affected by Covid-19, in particular increasing PAYG Emergency Credit to €100 to mitigate the challenge in an event where a customer is required to self-isolate for health and safety purposes and introducing a new 'escalations' process to ensure that essential siteworks jobs were progressed for vulnerable / front-line customers. GNI also agreed to suspend network usage charges for a period of 90 days for certain businesses who closed due to Covid-19. The scheme opened for applications on 1st May 2020 and was available to non-domestic Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). At the end of July, 2,263 businesses (8.4% of Non Daily Metered Industrial and Commercial customers) had availed of the scheme.

Learning from the initial lockdown and society's gradual reopening in terms of the resilience of our fieldwork capability and in response to feedback from suppliers, GNI's 5-Level Plan published in Autumn 2020 delivered a much higher level of service to customers and suppliers than in the first lockdown, even when nationwide level 5 restrictions were introduced on October 22nd.

GNI's Level 5 Plan for Living with Covid-19 is presented below:

Coronavirus COVID-19		GNI 5-Level Plan for Living with COVID-19							
Gas Networks Ireland		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5			
Meter Reading	outdoor meter	Siteworks activities unrestricted			✓				
	indoor meter				✗				
Meter Fits, Unlocks & Exchanges	indoor access <b>not</b> required				✓		✗		
	indoor access <b>is</b> required <sup>1</sup>				✗		*subject to max 6 indoor jobs per fitter per day		
Credit Locks & Disconnections <small>See Slide 5 for more detail on CRU Lock Moratorium and other types of locks / disconnections</small>	indoor access <b>not</b> required				✓		✗		
	indoor access <b>is</b> required				✗		*max 6 indoor jobs / fitter / day Xmas Moratorium 10 Dec – 12 Jan		
Non-Credit Related Locks / Disconnections	safety lock / customer requested / 'no contract'				✗		*subject to max 6 indoor jobs / fitter / day		
Revenue Protection	RP Inspections & Disconnections				✗		✗		
Market Messages					Submit market messages as normal				Include note <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Note that while **meter fits** for outdoor meters **do not** require a GNI fitter to enter a property, **unlocks and exchanges** at outdoor meters **do** require the GNI fitter to enter the property to carry out safety checks and to restart appliances.

<sup>2</sup> See slide 4 re inclusion of 'note' in market message describing the 'essential' criteria relevant to the request. Approval of request dependent on criteria and capacity.

The new plan proved successful from a supplier perspective, with few operational issues experienced. GNI was able to accommodate supplier siteworks requests to a far greater degree than in the first wave. This was primarily due to the fact that siteworks requests were submitted and processed via market systems rather than the manual system used in the first wave.

*"In response to the pandemic, Gas Networks Ireland staff moved to home working on March 13th and remained at home for the rest of 2020."*

Moving into quarter four, CRU directed a moratorium on disconnection of domestic customers for reasons of non-payment of account to apply from 24 October – 1 December to align with Level 5 restrictions. GNI continued to facilitate safety locks, customer requested locks, and locks at sites without a supply contract in place during this period. The standard arrangements for locks and disconnections remained in place as normal in 2020, namely a moratorium on disconnecting vulnerable customers from November to March and a shorter and more general moratorium over the Christmas period applicable to all customers from 10th December onwards.

## 01 Executive summary

Lastly, from an operations perspective, 2020 was shaped by the December 2018 Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) decision to take measures to tackle perceived consumer confusion and overcharging of callers using Non-Geographic Numbers (NGNs) e.g. 1800, 1850, 1890, 0818, 076. Since December 2019, calls to NGNs cost no more than calls to landline numbers for customers but the next step is that phone numbers in the 1850, 1890, and 076 ranges will be withdrawn from use in Ireland on 1st January 2022 (with the exception of the emergency lines which will remain until 2023 at least). GNI has 18 NGN lines in operation that are required to be changed to an 1800 or 1818 number as per the ComReg initiative. In most cases GNI will simply replace the 1850 prefix with 1800 or 0818 e.g. Gas Networks Ireland's Dial before you Dig line will change from 1850 427 747 to 1800 427 747. However, Gas Networks Ireland's Customer Care Line and Carbon Monoxide Line phone numbers are changing completely (as the 1800 equivalents were already taken by other organisations). Gas Networks Ireland's Customer Care line has changed from 1850 200 694 to 1800 464 464 and the Carbon Monoxide line from 1850 79 79 79 to 1800 89 89 89. All of Gas Networks Ireland's new 1800 and 0818 numbers are now live and can be used in place of the 1850 numbers (however both the 1850 and 1800/ 0818 numbers will operate in parallel for the remainder of 2021). GNI's website and media campaigns have been updated accordingly. Throughout 2021 the new numbers will continue to be promoted on company and 3rd party websites, fleet, assets and collateral including brochures, leaflets and other material. All Shippers are also making the appropriate changes to their collateral and customer communications. The changes will have a significant benefit for customers overall with 1800 numbers now free for the customer to call from landline and mobile. Meanwhile, 0818 numbers have a fixed cost per minute for the caller<sup>3</sup>.



The table below gives a summary of the 2020 Customer Performance Report.

<b>Metric</b>	<b>2020 Target /KPI's</b>	<b>2020 Performance</b>	<b>2019 Performance</b>
<b>Appointment keeping: Contact 1 working day prior</b>	100%	99.00%	98.9%
<b>Appointment Keeping for metering and services</b>	100%	99.00%	98.90%
<b>Gas supply restoration Restore as quickly as possible (less than 24hrs)</b>	100%	100.00%	100%
<b>Emergency response (arrive within one hour of report)</b>	97%	99.96%	99.90%
<b>Total number of complaints</b>	N/A	1,188	1,497
<b>Percentage resolved within 10 working days</b>	85%	98%	N/A
<b>Percentage resolved within 30 working days</b>	85%	96.4%	N/A
<b>Call response (Call answered within 20 seconds)</b>	80%	93.89%	93.40%
<b>Calls abandoned after 10 seconds</b>	N/A	0.87%	N/A
<b>Customer Charter Payments</b>	N/A	995	1025
<b>Quotation turnaround: Respond within 7 working days</b>	100%	100%	100%
<b>Appointment Granting Schedule: appointment within 5 days</b>	100%	99.73%	99.97%
<b>Payment Guarantee Aim to process payment following claim within 10 working days</b>	100%	100%	100%

# 02 Introduction

The Customer Performance Report is produced to comply with the licence conditions pertaining to “overall standards and performance” of the four licences currently held by Gas Networks Ireland, granted by the CRU:

- **Distribution System Owner Licence;**
- **Distribution System Operator (DSO) Licence;**
- **Transmission System Owner Licence; and**
- **Transmission System Operator (TSO) Licence.**

Gas Networks Ireland is responsible for developing, maintaining and operating the gas transmission and distribution systems.

The performance standards have been developed by Gas Networks Ireland and approved by the CRU, who may amend performance criteria from time to time.

The annual performance reports are produced under licence condition 17 of the TSO licence and condition 19 of the DSO licence. Reporting provides an opportunity for Gas Networks Ireland and the CRU to review the company performance over a twelve-month period. The annual performance reports are published on the Gas Networks Ireland website, [www.gasnetworks.ie](http://www.gasnetworks.ie).

Gas Networks Ireland has a Customer Charter where we outline ten commitments to the customer in terms of the services provided. Section 4 of this report illustrates Gas Networks Ireland's performance in these ten areas over a five-year period.

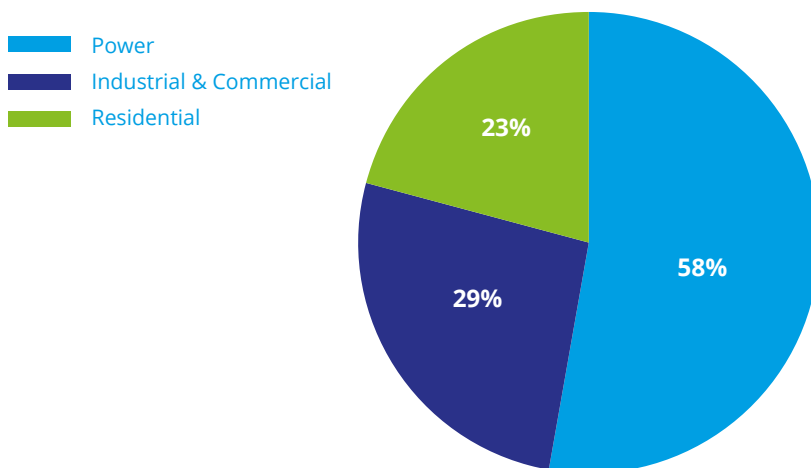
## 2.1 Company and network overview

Natural Gas Customers	711,479
Business Customers	27,329
Population Centres	181
Counties	22
Total Network Length	14,617 Km
Transmission Network	2,477 Km
Distribution Network	12,140 Km

Gas Networks Ireland is responsible for developing, maintaining and operating the gas transmission and distribution systems. Gas Networks Ireland ensures that over 710,000 natural gas customers, including 27,329 business customers, in 181 population centres across 22 counties throughout Ireland receive a safe, efficient and secure supply of natural gas, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

## 02 Introduction

Figure 2.1: ROI gas market demand 2020



Natural gas continues to play a vital role in Ireland’s energy mix and for our country’s social and economic progress. In terms of demand, natural gas accounts for 30% of Ireland’s primary energy mix. The gas demand market is categorised into Power, Industrial and Commercial (I & C) and Residential sectors accounting for circa<sup>4</sup> 58%, 29% and 13% of the demand respectively.

Natural gas is transported through a total network of 14,617km of pipeline, both transmission and distribution. The pipeline network connects the Republic of Ireland (RoI) to Scotland, Northern Ireland (NI) and the Isle of Man (IoM). The natural gas delivered to end users is not owned by Gas Networks Ireland. Rather, Gas Networks Ireland transports gas on behalf of shippers and suppliers who purchase the gas from the wholesale market and use the transportation services of Gas Networks Ireland to deliver gas to businesses and homes throughout Ireland.

The Gas Networks Ireland system includes infrastructure in RoI regulated by the CRU; in NI regulated by the Utility Regulator; and in South West Scotland regulated by Ofgem. The natural gas network is differentiated as transmission and distribution and this is determined by the prevailing pressure in the pipes:

- High pressure transmission network which operates above 16 barg (the total length of transmission pipeline is 2,477km<sup>5</sup>); and
- Distribution network which operates below 16 barg (the total length of distribution pipeline is 12,140km).

A map of the transmission system is provided in Figure 2.2.

The transmission pipes link Ireland’s major urban areas and also connect Ireland to the UK at Moffat in Scotland. Electricity generating power stations and some large industrial customers are also directly connected to the transmission network. Mostly residential and small to medium commercial customers are connected to natural gas on the distribution network.

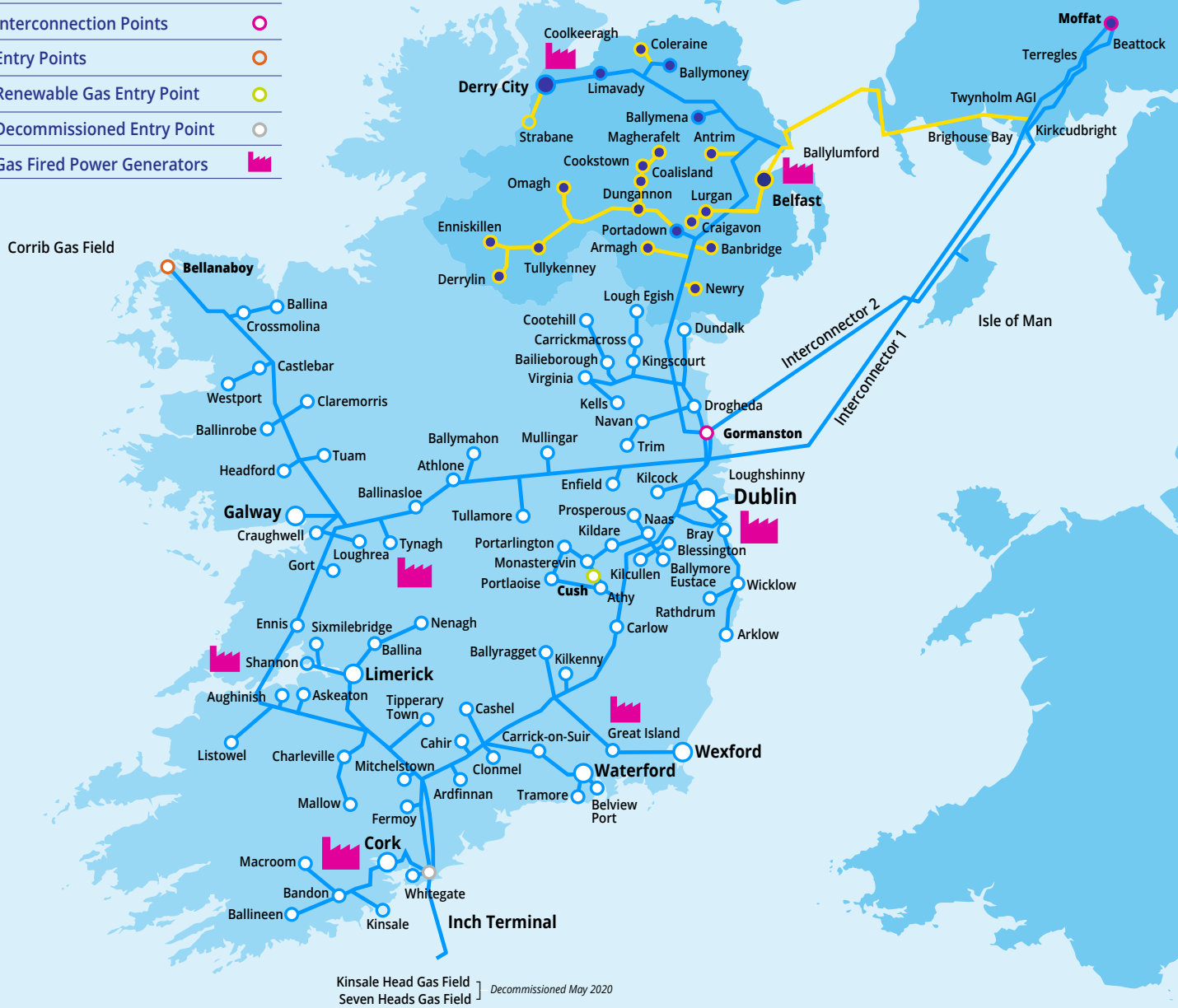
<sup>4</sup> Percentages of gas market share calculated based on Gas Networks Ireland gas year 2019/20 data.

<sup>5</sup> Total length of transmission pipeline is the entire network including pipeline in RoI, NI and on-shore Scotland.

Figure 2.2: Overview of Gas Networks Ireland Transmission System

## Pipeline map

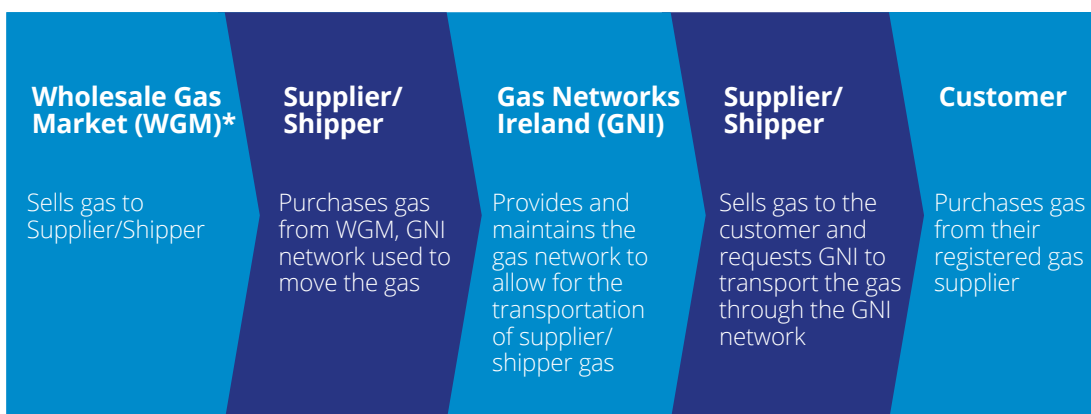
Existing Pipelines	
Pipelines Owned by Others	
Interconnection Points	
Entry Points	
Renewable Gas Entry Point	
Decommissioned Entry Point	
Gas Fired Power Generators	



## 02 Introduction

Suppliers are retail market players that sell gas and provide services to end users i.e. customers. Shippers include suppliers and some large end users such as power stations. These power stations consume large amounts of gas allowing them to purchase gas directly from the wholesale market and use the Gas Networks Ireland natural gas transmission system to transport the gas directly to their sites to facilitate the generation of electricity.

**Figure 2.3: Structure of Irish gas market**



\*The Wholesale Gas Market (WGM) is where the gas is purchased by energy traders and shippers.

Gas Networks Ireland is responsible for connecting all customers to the network, regardless of their supplier. The company manages a 24-hour gas emergency service which handled 14,928 callouts in 2020.

At the end of 2020, the Corrib gas field, which came into operation at the end of 2015, is the only indigenous supply of natural gas with the Kinsale field having ceased production in April 2020 in preparation for decommissioning. Indigenous supply met 36% of Ireland's demand (34% Corrib, 2% Kinsale) with 64% of supplies coming via the Interconnectors to the UK. Ireland's interconnection with the United Kingdom (UK) provides a gateway to the European gas markets, ensuring security of energy supply to the Irish economy.

## 2.2 Customer service overview

Engaging with and listening to customers, meeting their needs, and delivering value for money are key priorities for Gas Networks Ireland. The customer experience provided by Gas Networks Ireland is delivered by the entire organisation, including outsourced business providers, who together offer a range of services, from answering queries over the phone to connecting customers to the gas network, and responding to gas emergency incidents.

Through the Insights into Action Programme<sup>6</sup> Gas Networks Ireland actively surveys customers to evaluate the experience of their interactions with the organisation. Customer feedback includes responses from both domestic and commercial customers. Customer issues and complaints are analysed, statistics on calls and queries are interpreted to see if there are opportunities to introduce customer improvement initiatives. In addition, feedback is also gathered from employees and business partners that engage with customers on a daily basis, as well as from key stakeholders whom customers interact with to evaluate how the overall customer experience can be improved. The users of the *Dial Before You Dig*<sup>7</sup> service are also surveyed.

**Engaging with and listening to customers, meeting their needs, and delivering value for money are key priorities for Gas Networks Ireland.**

A sample of customers are surveyed weekly following their interaction with Gas Networks Ireland. The sample surveyed covers customers who have recently had a job completed by Gas Networks Ireland including emergencies, domestic connections, meter replacement programme, site works or have had a reason to contact Gas Networks Ireland's contact centre regarding a query or a complaint. The majority of surveys moved from calls/email to SMS text in 2018, simplifying surveys and making it easier for customers to respond. Customers were incentivised to respond by offering a €2 donation to Gas Networks Ireland's charity partners Age Action. Each survey is tailored to the journey customers take and to the customer segment to which they belong. Core metrics include: Net Promoter Score (NPS) (Likelihood to recommend GNI as an organisation to deal with); Customer Satisfaction Scores (CSAT) (Success/Satisfaction with GNI's overall performance); and Net EASY Score (NES) (Ease of dealing with GNI). In addition, performance across key customer touch points and gaining insight in staff living our brand values are collected.

Customers provide feedback of their customer experience; and this is then linked back to the specific journey to allow for root cause analysis and enable continuous process improvement. All surveys incorporate a service recovery loop where the Gas Networks Ireland Customer Care team contacts the customer within 24 hours if requested, regarding any issues arising that may be unresolved.

Reporting is undertaken through an online survey portal to provide transparency and survey feedback for all staff and business partners. A structured bi-monthly session is attended by all process owners to gain employee engagement and commitment to change. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, GNI moved these sessions from face-to-face to virtual meetings during 2020.

6 <https://www.gasnetworks.ie/home/customer-care/our-customers/>

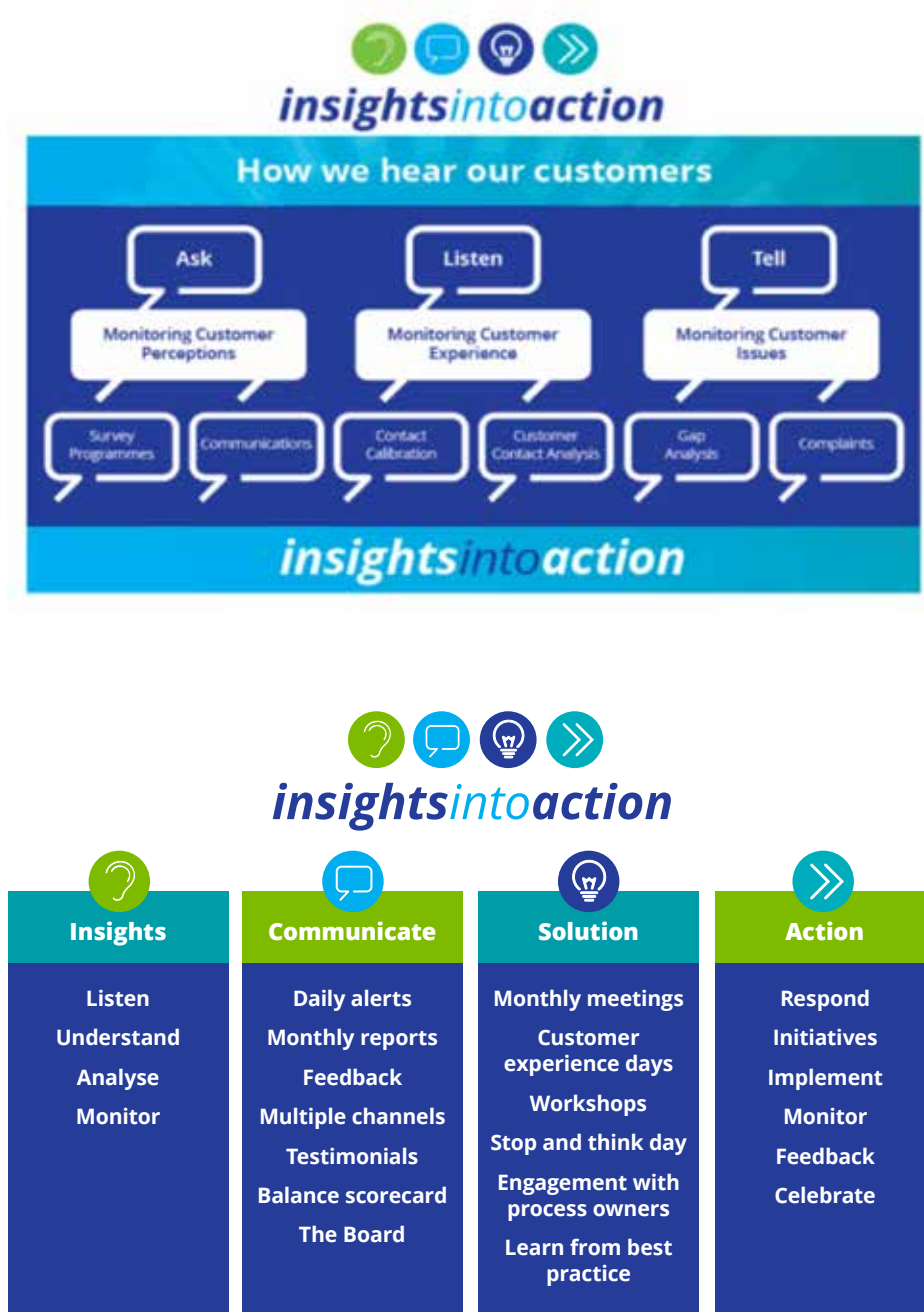
7 <https://www.gasnetworks.ie/home/safety/dial-before-you-dig>

## 02 Introduction

### 2.2 Customer service overview *(continued)*

The Customer Service “Insights into Action Strategy” illustrated in Figure 2.4 shows how Gas Networks Ireland listens, communicates and works on solutions to action improvements that benefit customers.

Figure 2.4: Insights into action illustration





Customer service improvement initiatives are captured on a formal register and are tracked to completion. There were 30 initiatives implemented in 2020, some examples of which are:

- A Dial Before You Dig (DBYD) customer experience survey was implemented in Q4 2020. Recent users of our DBYD online, phone and email channels were asked about their overall experience and suggestions to make the service better. In tandem with this, several improvements were made to the online service. New features, including a new scale option (1:500), new email templates, improved error messaging and further information around critical activity types, have all improved the user experience and reduced unnecessary admin.
- A survey of our contact centre staff was also implemented in Q4 2020, asking the customer service representatives (CSRs) about their experience working with Gas Networks Ireland and ways that we could improve the customer experience. Following this survey, an online hub was set up on Microsoft Teams enabling CSRs to ask questions to team leaders or their colleagues on the best way to resolve a customer issue. This has helped assist with first contact resolution (FCR), resolving customer issues quicker and more efficiently.
- A review of our Meter Replacement Programme communications and appointment process was completed in Q2 2020. Reminder texts are now sent weekly to customers advising them to book a suitable appointment for their meter replacement. The meter replacement webpage was also updated to include clearer instructions and detail of how the appointment booking process works, and when customers can expect to be contacted.
- Work to understand and develop relationships with all suppliers/shippers. Each year GNI surveys all shippers, and work is underway to address the issues raised and enhance these key relationships. This initiative brings focus to customer issues, thus benefitting domestic customers by highlighting trends in our performance.

GNI places great emphasis on regular face to face meetings with suppliers and shippers to enhance relationships and gain closer insights into specific issues facing shippers. Although face to face meetings were not possible throughout most of 2020 due to Covid-19, GNI increased shipper and supplier communication and virtual meetings. This fostered excellent collaboration for the benefit not only of GNI and the shippers / suppliers but for gas customers.

GNI also increased the number of virtual workshops with suppliers throughout 2020 including workshops focused on operational matters such as revenue protection and metering process development.

GNI understands and values the critical role our customers and stakeholders play in our business. We have a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan that takes a holistic, pragmatic approach to stakeholder engagement based on the internationally recognised Stakeholder Engagement Standard (AA1000SES). Steady year-on-year increases in GNI Stakeholder initiatives reflect the growing importance of stakeholder engagement within GNI.

## 02 Introduction

### 2.2 Customer service overview *(continued)*

#### Customer centricity

As part of our Customer Strategy, we developed a strategy in 2019 to drive a customer centric culture across GNI. We surveyed staff across GNI and our business partners to create a road map of where we want to be. We also devised the customer centric metric to measure how customer centric we are as an organization, measure progress of the strategy as we rolled it out across GNI and to track our customers experience cross the various customer journeys.

This metric is a composite score comprising three other measures from our Net Promoter Score, Net Easy and Satisfied metrics<sup>8</sup>. The customer centricity objective is to constantly understand how customer centric we are as an organization and ultimately enhance the service we deliver. We performed strongly in 2020 scoring +76( the range of scoring goes from -100 to +100. The higher the score the more customer centric your culture is.

#### Customer Service highlights from 2020 include:

- In 2020 Gas Networks Ireland handled 448,785 customer contacts.
- In 2020, workshops were carried out on key domestic and commercial processes, resulting in an increase in customer experience metrics for 2020 vs 2019.
- 210 number of staff were recognised in our Above and Beyond recognition programme. This programme recognises our staff who have been highlighted by our customers as delivering excellent customer service
- A 20% reduction in customer complaints received in 2020 vs 2019
- 15,972 Euro was given to Age Action as part of our survey donation programme.
- 30 customer improvement initiatives were implemented.
- Gas Networks Ireland achieved excellent levels of performance in respect of its published Customer Charter service standards and commitments. Our programme of customer experience monitoring continues to score favourably across all processes.
- Further surveys carried out on Dial Before You Dig process and Contact Centre Agents with an increase seen across key metrics.
- Commenced process for changes of 1850 numbers to 1800 numbers as directed by ComReg.

The customer commitments and KPIs are shown in Table 2.1. These will be explored in greater detail in section 4 (Retail Market).

**Table 2.1: Customer commitments**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>2019 Performance</b>	<b>2020 Performance</b>
Call response Call answered within 20 seconds	80%	93.4%	93.89%
Quotation turnaround: Respond within 7 working days	100%	100%	100%
Appointment Granting Schedule: appointment within 5 days	100%	99.97%	99.73%
Appointment keeping: Contact 1 working day prior	100%	98.9%	99%
Reinstatement commitments within 24hrs of completion	100%	100%	100%
Gas supply restoration Restore as quickly as possible (less than 24hrs)	100%	99.97%	100%
Emergency response: Arrive within 1 hour of report	97%	99.9%	99.96%
Complaints handling: Resolve within 10 working days	85%	100%	98%
Payment Guarantee Aim to process payment following claim within 10 working days	100%	100%	100%



# 03 Gas industry

## 3.1 Market overview

The CRU has responsibility for regulating the natural gas market in Ireland. Gas Networks Ireland connects all customers to the network regardless of which natural gas supply company the customer chooses. Additionally, Gas Networks Ireland transports gas on behalf of the suppliers who sell the gas to the end users. The role of Gas Networks Ireland is also to facilitate meter readings for end-users. In July 2007 the Irish retail gas market was opened to competition allowing all gas customers to switch their gas supplier. The domestic gas market was subsequently fully deregulated in July 2015 allowing suppliers to set their own tariffs. The intrinsic benefits to consumers are increased choice, greater efficiency, lower prices and higher standards of service.

There are a number of large end-users of gas such as power stations who engage Gas Networks Ireland to transport the gas on their behalf. Collectively the suppliers and these large end users who use the transportation service are known as “shippers”.

## 3.2 Shipper queries

Gas Networks Ireland provides transportation services to shippers operating in the wholesale and retail markets. The shippers/suppliers and large end users (circa 311 industrial customers), are supported by the Shipper Services Department. In addition to this, Shipper Services also supports the development of new entrants to both the retail and wholesale markets. It does so by facilitating and mentoring their entry into the gas market through information provision, system setup, training and implementation of the necessary legal and contractual arrangements. Gas Networks Ireland supports initiatives from various industry bodies and ensures compliance with EU legislation as well as playing a driving role in the development of market arrangements to meet with industry best practice. Gas Networks Ireland coordinates industry meetings at both retail and wholesale levels in Ireland; at the Gas Market Arrangements Retail Group (GMARG) and Code Modification Forum respectively. These groups process changes agreed to reduce issues that shippers may have. Gas Networks Ireland continues to work proactively with shippers on initiatives to identify possible issues in advance of problems occurring.



*“Gas Networks Ireland continued its engagement with shippers to maintain the levels of service achieved in previous years.”*



Gas Networks Ireland continued its engagement with shippers to maintain the levels of service achieved in previous years. All issues received by the Shipper Services Key Account Management function are logged on the Shipper Services Issues system and issue resolution is managed to successful conclusion. This includes stakeholder management of internal (such as GNI Asset Operations, Grid Control, and Sitework teams ) and external (such as Wholesale shipper and gas supply companies) departments. Every issue is assigned a unique issue number and an email confirmation is sent where requested, regarding the status of an issue within three business days. Gas Networks Ireland provides each shipper with an issue update every 20 business days thereafter, as long as the issue remains open on the Gas Networks Ireland system.

## 03 Gas industry

### 3.3 Breakdown of issues by type

There were 2,763 issues directed to the Shipper Services Key Account Management department in 2020. A definition of the main categories of issue experienced by shippers is provided in Table 3.1. The breakdown in the main categories of issues as a percentage of the total recorded in 2020 is illustrated in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.1:** Explanation of the main categories of Shipper issues

Issue Category	Explanation
Siteworks query	Queries relating to the status of various siteworks jobs such as it meters, meter unlocks, etc.
Information request	General Shipper queries on a broad range of issues such as customer historical consumption, market messages, capacity register, etc.
Supply Point Capacity (SPC)/Annual Quantity (AQ) Queries	Questions relating to customers SPC/AQ values or the annual SPC/AQ process
IT Issues	Gas Transport Management System (GTMS) access requests, problems with GTMS access, issues relating to the marketing messaging system (Gasmapi), issues related to PRISMA the European Gas Capacity Booking system
Connection Issues	Any issue relating to a new gas connections or disconnections e.g. disconnection quotations
Financial Security	Questions relating to the financial security policy, the shippers transactions with GNI in relation to financial security deposits, letter of credit, etc.
Metering/Billing	Any query that relating to billing for individual customers – in general these are driven by meter-related issues such as a not tied possible high consumption issue, Pay As You Go (PAYG) end user queries, etc.
Other	Any issue not captured by the above categories

**Table 3.2:** Main category of shipper issues recorded by %

Shipper Issue Category	2019 Issue No.	%	2020 Issue No.	%
Metering/Billing	817	32%	1019	37%
Information request	708	28%	751	27%
Siteworks Queries	565	22%	263	10%
IT Issues	245	10%	273	10%
Other	133	5%	25	1%
SPC/AQ Queries	48	2%	187	7%
Financial Security	31	1%	108	4%
Connection Issues	17	1%	137	5%

The average length of time that a shipper issue was open in 2020 was five business days, which is the same as the 2019 average. The average number of business days taken to resolve Shipper Services issues per category is shown in Table 3.3 below.

**Table 3.3:** Average number of business days to resolve shipper issues by category

Shipper Issue Category	2019 Days to resolve*	2020 Days to resolve*
Metering/Billing	6	8
Information request	4	1
Siteworks Queries	5	5
IT Issues	4	5
Other	3	1
SPC/AQ Queries	5	11
Financial Security	1	3
Connection Issues	7	8

\* The vast majority (85%) of shipper issues are resolved within one day and are not therefore reflected in the above table. Table 3.3 provides averages only for those issues that are not resolved within 1 day. Because of their nature resolution times can vary significantly.

# 04 Retail market

Gas Networks Ireland provides access to the gas pipeline system for shippers. At the end of 2020 there were 32 shippers active in the Irish gas market, supplying and selling gas to customers in all segments of the market from power generation to residential. Of the total 32 shippers there are ten who engage in the retail supply market. Gas Networks Ireland connects all natural gas customers to the network no matter which supplier they choose.

Gas Networks Ireland is also responsible for works on service pipes and meters to customers' premises and operates a full 24-hour emergency response service 365 days a year. A range of supporting customer services is managed by Gas Networks Ireland to deliver these activities to its customers, their customers and the general public.



## 4.1 Customer service

Gas Networks Ireland is committed to putting customers first. This commitment is reflected in day-to-day operations and in both the Gas Networks Ireland Codes of Practice<sup>9</sup> and the Gas Networks Ireland Customer Charter<sup>10</sup>.

The Codes of Practice include the Vulnerable Customer Guide<sup>11</sup>. This outlines Gas Networks Ireland's commitment to providing the best customer service possible for all customers; specifically the provisions made for those who require special services. Customers are encouraged to register, if necessary, on the Special Services Register with their gas supplier to automatically avail of these provisions.

In addition to this, Gas Networks Ireland also works with our charity partners Age Action to promote the services that we provide for our vulnerable customers and to support Age Action's cause. We have been supporting Age Action since 2016 donating over €200,000 worth of carbon monoxide alarms, which were installed in the homes of elderly people. We were one of the first to support Age Action's Covid-19 response and hardship fund, providing vital financial support (€8,000) for vulnerable people. Vulnerable older people were able to apply for a €250 grant to help with immediate costs including food, bills etc. In 2020 we raised €15,972 through our customer survey programme. These donations went towards the Care and Repair programme, which supports older people who find it difficult to complete household tasks. 24 employees also volunteered on Age Action's new technology tutoring programme, 'Getting Started Keep in Touch', supporting self-isolating citizens to keep in touch with friends and family by showing them how to make video calls through their smartphones as well as how to use the internet.

*"...Gas Networks Ireland also works with our charity partners Age Action to promote the services that we provide for our vulnerable customers and to support Age Action's cause."*

The Customer Complaint Handling Guide<sup>12</sup> provides guidance to customers on how their complaint will be handled. It details the steps Gas Networks Ireland will take to handle all customer complaints. The Disconnection Code of Practice<sup>13</sup> outlines Gas Networks Ireland's obligations towards customers when disconnecting their occupied property; following a request from their gas supplier. The Customer Charter provides assurance to customers of Gas Networks Ireland's commitment to these standards and in certain circumstances, compensation will be provided for failure to meet these standards. Details of these standards are outlined in Table 4.1 Customer Commitments.

9 Code of Practice <https://www.gasnetworks.ie/corporate/freedom-of-information/foi-publication-scheme/about-us/code-of-conduct/>

10 Customer Charter: <https://www.gasnetworks.ie/corporate/freedom-of-information/foi-publication-scheme/about-us/customer-charter/>

11 Vulnerable Customer Guide <https://www.gasnetworks.ie/home/customer-care/vulnerable-customers/>

12 Customer Complaint Handling Guide <https://www.gasnetworks.ie/home/customer-care/how-to-make-a-complaint/>

13 Disconnection Code of Practice <https://www.gasnetworks.ie/business/business-gas-meter/disconnection-code-of-practice/27-GNI-Disconnection-Code-of-Practice-English-2018.pdf>

# 04 Retail market

## 4.1 Customer service *(continued)*

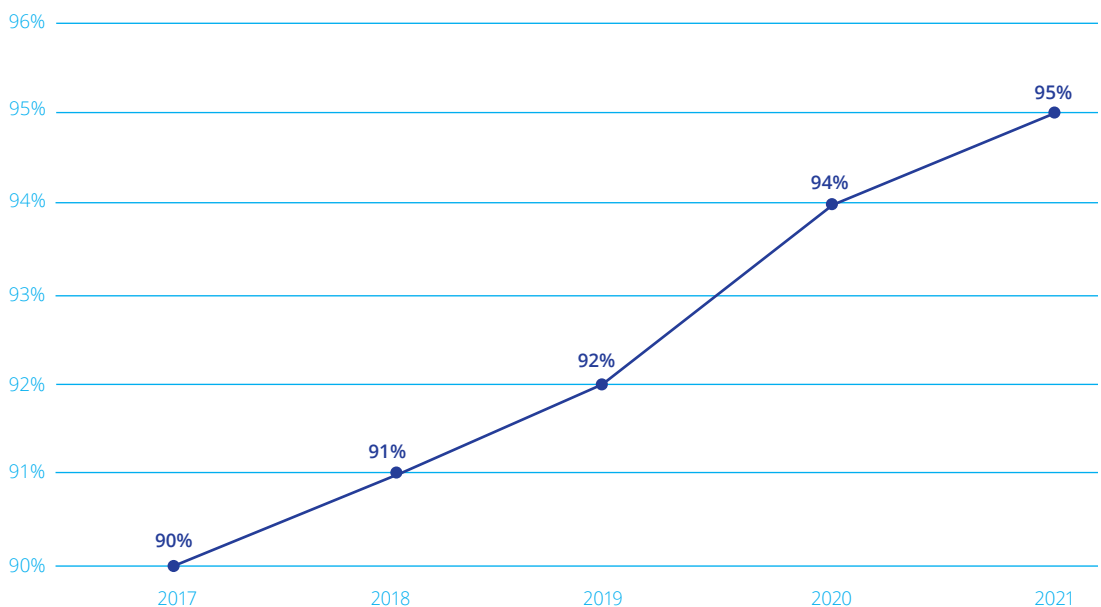
**Figure 4.1: Ten customer performance commitments**



The customer guides have been translated into six different languages with input from disability groups to ensure that they are accessible to all customers. The guides are available to download on the Gas Networks Ireland website, or by contacting Gas Networks Ireland’s Contact Centre. They may be requested in braille if required.

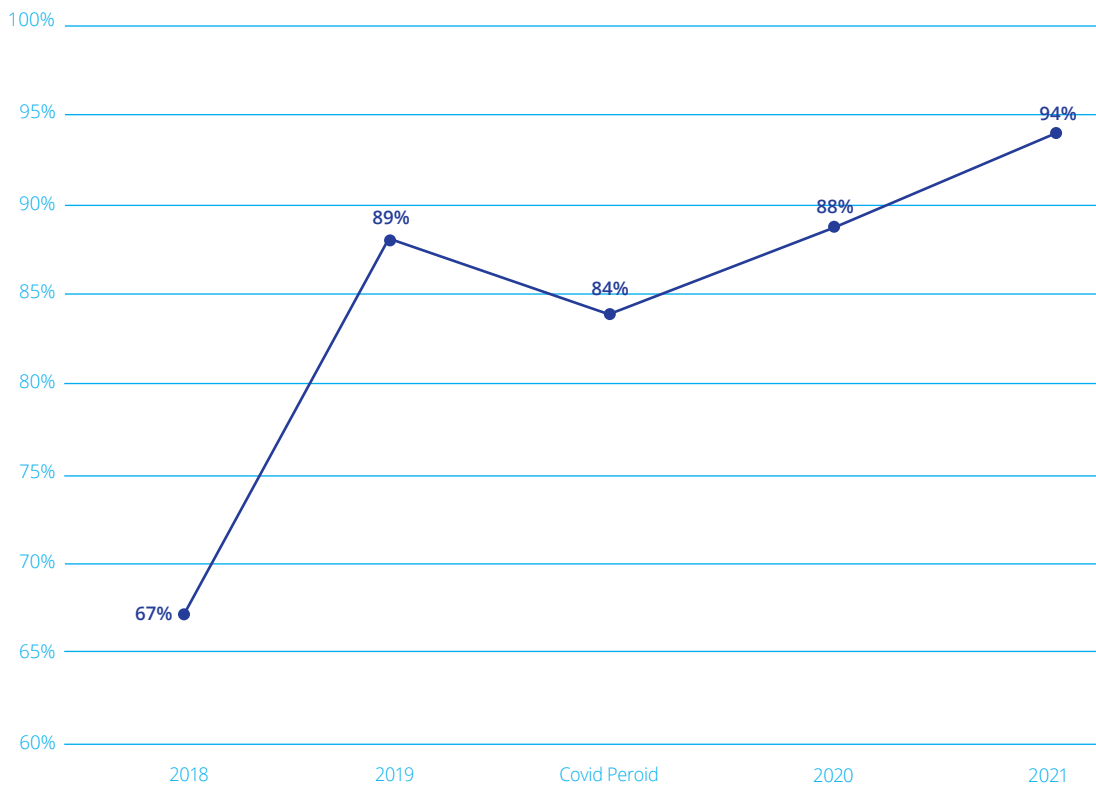
End User Customer Satisfaction ratings have steadily increased over the last number of years (please see graph 1 below) from a baseline of 90% in 2017 to 95% in 2021.

**Figure 4.2: End User Customer Satisfaction Ratings**



In addition to the above, Gas Networks Ireland carried out three surveys of gas shippers and suppliers in 2020. The first two surveys (one mid-year and one at year end) were aimed at operational staff in supplier organisations with a specific focus on how Gas Networks Ireland handles day-to-day queries from suppliers in the retail market. Overall satisfaction has risen in 2021, 94% of Suppliers outlining they are satisfied, up from 88% in 2020 as illustrated in Graph 2 below. This high level of satisfaction is closely related to the high level of ease in evidence, when Suppliers deal with GNI.

**Figure 4.3: Shipper Operational Survey Customer Satisfaction Ratings**

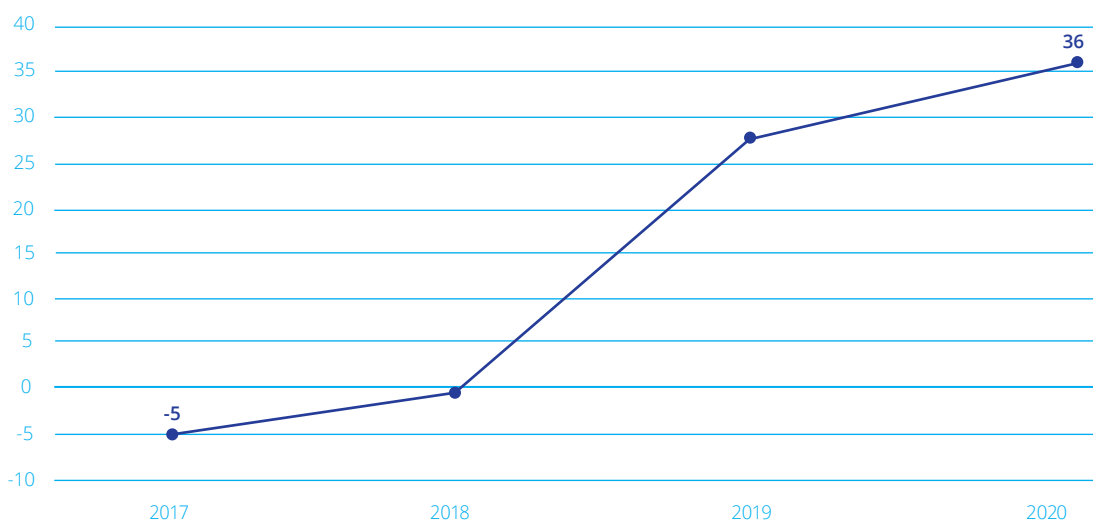


## 04 Retail market

### 4.1 Customer service *(continued)*

The third survey, aimed at management level staff in both shipper and supplier organisations, had a much broader remit across wholesale and retail activities. Graph 3 illustrates the rise in Gas Networks Ireland Net Promoter Score (NPS) (likelihood to recommend) from a negative baseline of -5 in 2017 to +36 in the most recent survey.

**Figure 4.4: Shipper Management Survey Net Promoter Scores**



The purpose of the surveys was to gauge shipper and supplier sentiment towards Gas Networks Ireland and to look at ways in which these relationships could be improved, ultimately feeding down to the end customers. Based on the outcomes of these shipper/supplier surveys a plan was developed across 18 internal GNI teams with initiatives for improvement identified and the initiatives shared with both the Wholesale and Retail industry fora. These focus areas are set out in the table below.

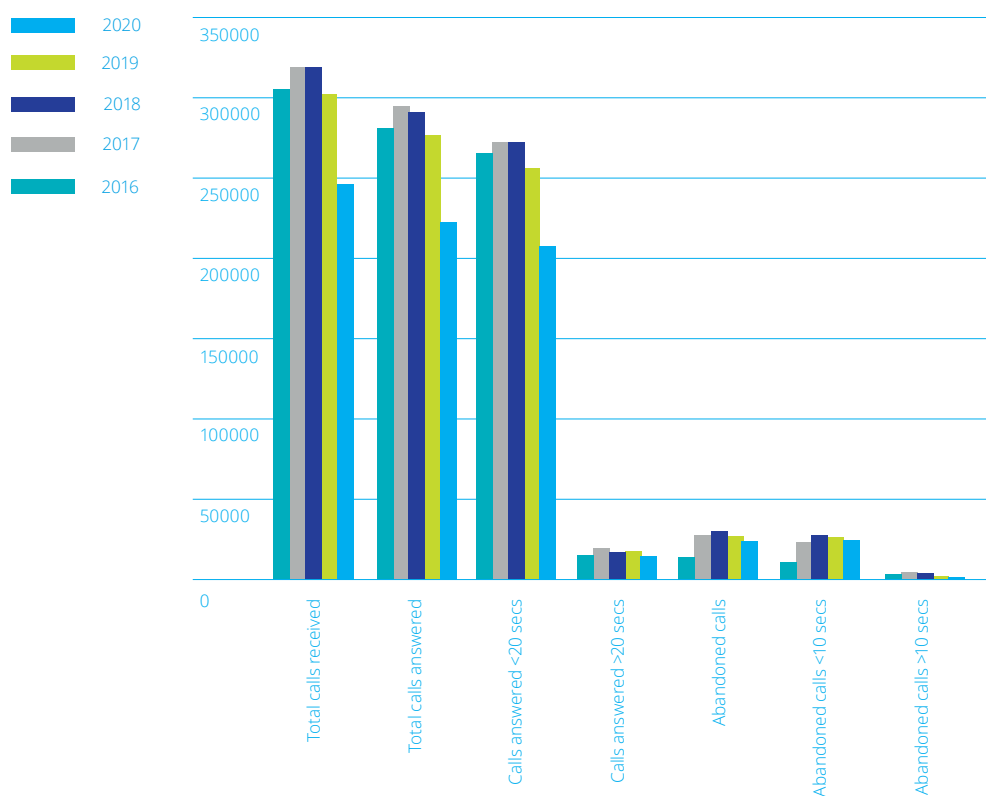
**Table 4.1: GNI Shipper/Supplier Survey Response Focus Areas**

Expand virtual communication	Future network	Increase digitalisation
Stakeholders knowlege building	Progress PPM solution	Gas market roles
Understand & listen to Powergen	Learn from electricity smart metering	Cost reduction drive

## 4.2 Call response

Gas Networks Ireland operates telephone lines<sup>14</sup> for customers to contact the company in relation to a number of key activities including: the 24-hours emergency service; domestic connections; commercial connections; Dial Before You Dig; carbon monoxide information; and the meter replacement programme.

Figure 4.5: Call response



In 2020, Gas Networks Ireland handled 248,262 inbound calls. This total includes calls related to emergencies, domestic and business queries, and meter readings. Out of the calls received, 93.9% (0.5% increase) were answered within 20 seconds and only 0.87% of calls were abandoned by the caller after more than 10 seconds; meaning all call handling targets were achieved. Covid-19 related restrictions were the primary driver in an overall 18% decrease in call handling volumes.

Taking a view of all customer communication channels, we see a similar level of impact due to works restrictions brought on by the pandemic response. In total, Gas Networks Ireland handled 448,785 customer interactions in 2020, down from 537,214 in the previous 12 months.

14 <https://www.gasnetworks.ie/corporate/contact-us/>

## 04 Retail market

### 4.2 Call response *(continued)*

**Table 4.2** Contact Breakdown

Call Type	Volume 2020	% Split 2020	Volume 2019	% Split 2019
Outbound call	29121	6.5%	36652	6.8%
E-mail	48169	10.7%	49186	9.2%
SMS	67883	15.1%	63273	11.8%
Call handled with IVR	66329	14.8%	85398	15.9%
Correspondence	55350	12.3%	85776	16%
Inbound agent handled calls	181933	40.5%	216929	40.39%
<b>Total customer interactions</b>	<b>448,785</b>		<b>537,214</b>	

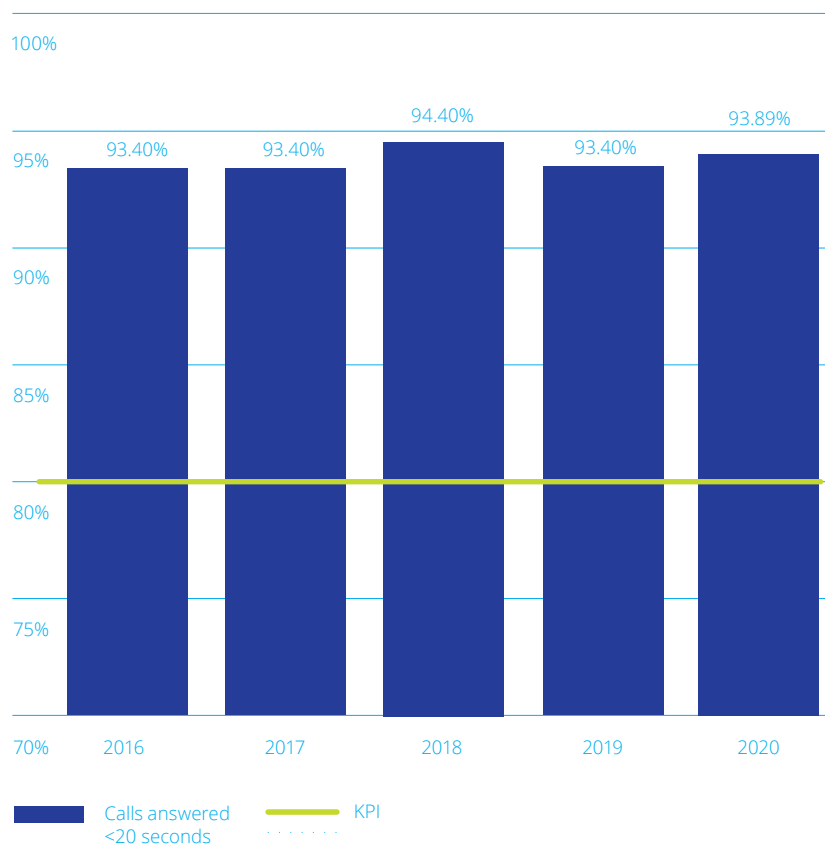
A number of initiatives and improvements were utilised to continue to reduce unnecessary inbound customer contacts and to serve customers through more efficient and cost-effective channels. This was particularly important as changes to work and travel restrictions led to greater customer uncertainty on whether works would be continuing or would have to be suspended, as changes were introduced on restrictions throughout the year. The key customer channels are enhanced Interactive Voice Recording (IVR) information messages for customers, proactive outbound calling, and engagement with gas suppliers on shared customer processes. The main driver of our customer communication improvements has been a focus on delivering the information in the format that our customers want, and more crucially when they need it.

These improvements have been a response to understanding both the importance, and cost effectiveness, of alternative channels with regard to displacing unnecessary contacts and delivering improvements in customer effort and engagement. The main areas of increased contact are SMS and email. Considerable effort continues to be made in enhancing the customer experience by displacing inbound calls with planned outbound calls and the use of text messages to customers at key stages of their interactions with Gas Networks Ireland. In 2020, GNI handled customer interaction volumes on these channels of communication: circa 36K Planned Outbound Call, 48K Email and 66.5K SMS. Postal correspondence continues to be a key part of the customer engagement strategy with 55K customer letters issued from the Contact Centre in 2020.

The consistent focus on driving efficiencies in customer communications has mitigated the anticipated increase in customer inbound calls over the past five years and ensured that calls are answered promptly for customers. Fexco are contracted to provide the Contact Centre service on behalf of Gas Networks Ireland, through to July 2022. Work has commenced on the tender process to deliver a new contract for 2022 to 2027.

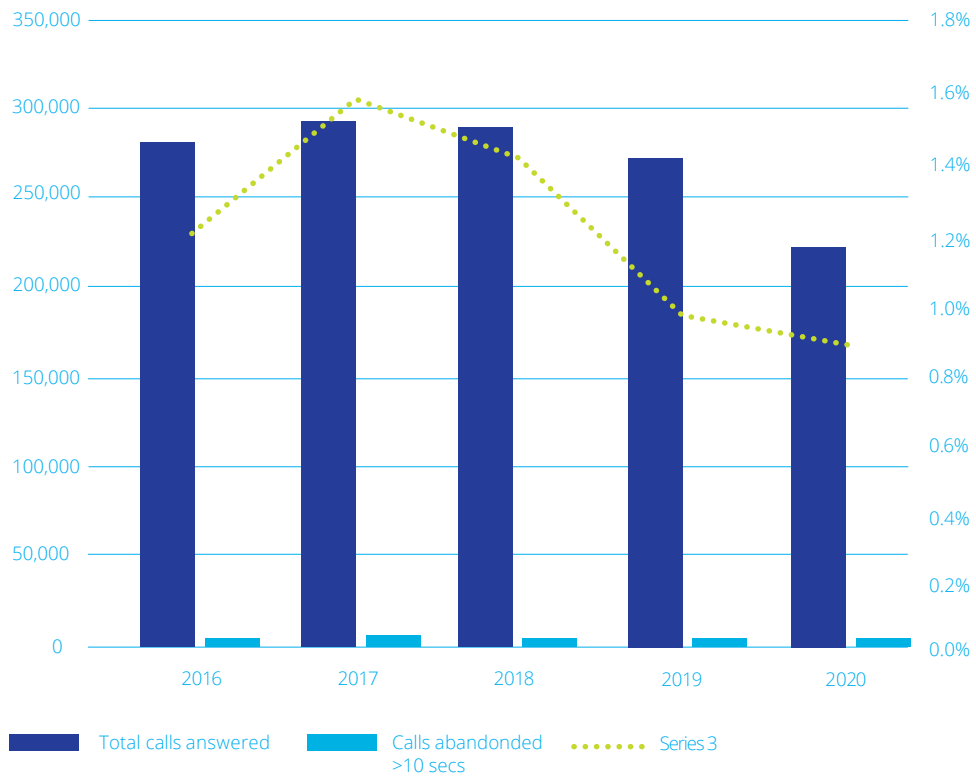
In parallel, Gas Networks Ireland continues to increase our social media presence through creating unique content that engages our customers. In 2020, we increased our media spend through targeted campaigns in order to grow our following and engagement. Digital trends throughout the Covid-19 pandemic tell us that more and more users are turning to online social channels to view content and communicate. We saw an increase of +50.2% in engagement across all our social channels in 2020 (versus 2019). We want to ensure GNI is correctly positioned to support and facilitate preferred contact options and foresee social customer service growing in the next five-year period. We have also used these new insights to inform our digital strategy across GNI's website and our CRM. How we communicate with new and existing gas users, stakeholders and partners can be done digitally and in-line with our corporate social responsibility objectives.

**Figure 4.6: Calls answered < 20 seconds**



## 04 Retail market

**Figure 4.7: Abandoned calls after 10 seconds**



### 4.3 Quotations turnaround

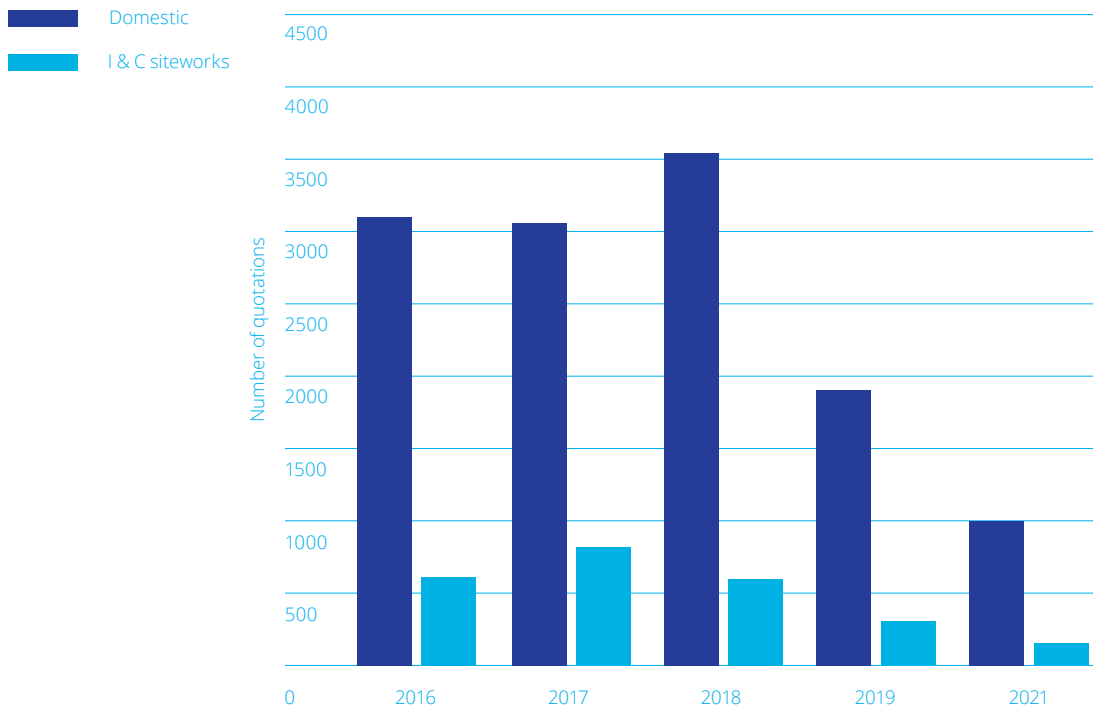
Many of the services provided by Gas Networks Ireland are standard and quotations can be provided quickly over the telephone with minimal information. If the job requirements are more complex, a company representative may need to make a visit to the site in advance of a quotation being issued.

For domestic and small commercial service pipe connections (where no design work is required) or connection alteration/reconfiguration involving no main laying activity, the KPI is that quotations will be available within seven working days from receipt of all necessary data

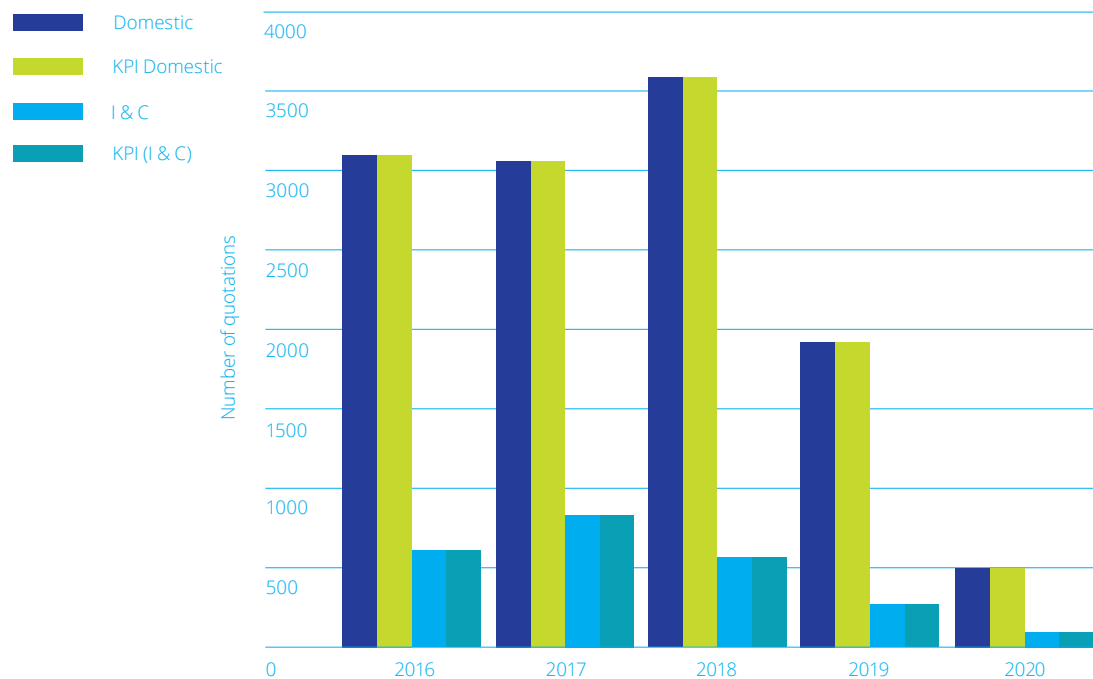
In 2020, a total of 1,156 quotations were issued within the seven-day period, achieving the KPI of 100% performance rate. The KPI of 100% has been achieved consistently over the past five years, see Figure 4.11. In 2020, there was a decrease in domestic quotations of 46.8% and a decrease in I&C quotations of 44.8%. This decrease is largely due to changing market demand and new preferences following the publication of the 2019 Climate Action Plan and the negative affect of the Covid-19 pandemic.



**Figure 4.8: Quotations**



**Figure 4.9: Quotation turnaround in 7 working days against KPI**



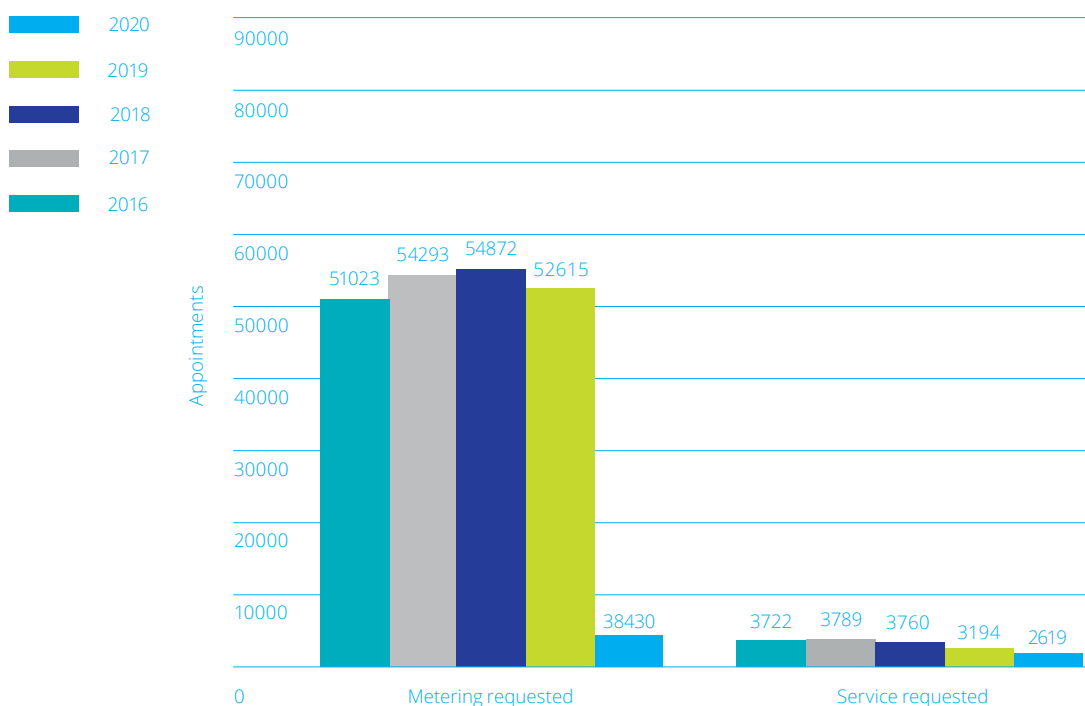
## 04 Retail market

### 4.4 Appointment granting

For quotation site visits and domestic metering service appointments, a choice of morning or evening day appointments will be scheduled within five days of receipt of request. For domestic pipe laying appointments, an appointment will be given, on receipt of payment which takes into account the realistic timeframe to acquire a Road Opening Licence (ROL) if required. If no ROL or additional restrictions are required, Gas Networks Ireland endeavours to offer an appointment within four weeks. Closer to the time a firm date will be agreed with the customer ensuring that sufficient notice is given.

If Gas Networks Ireland fails to grant an appointment commitment within five days (quotation) or four weeks (domestic works), applicable compensation can be claimed, subject to conditions. These conditions include, but are not limited to, restrictions put in place by local authorities including road closures, moratoriums, operation free flow<sup>15</sup> and severe weather restrictions on certain roads. These conditions would prevent charter payments taking place. This request will adhere to the Customer Charter process.

Figure 4.102: Appointment granting



15 Operation free flow covers situations when GNI is instructed by a local authority not to undertake physical works except for emergencies, for example at busy retail times such as Christmas.

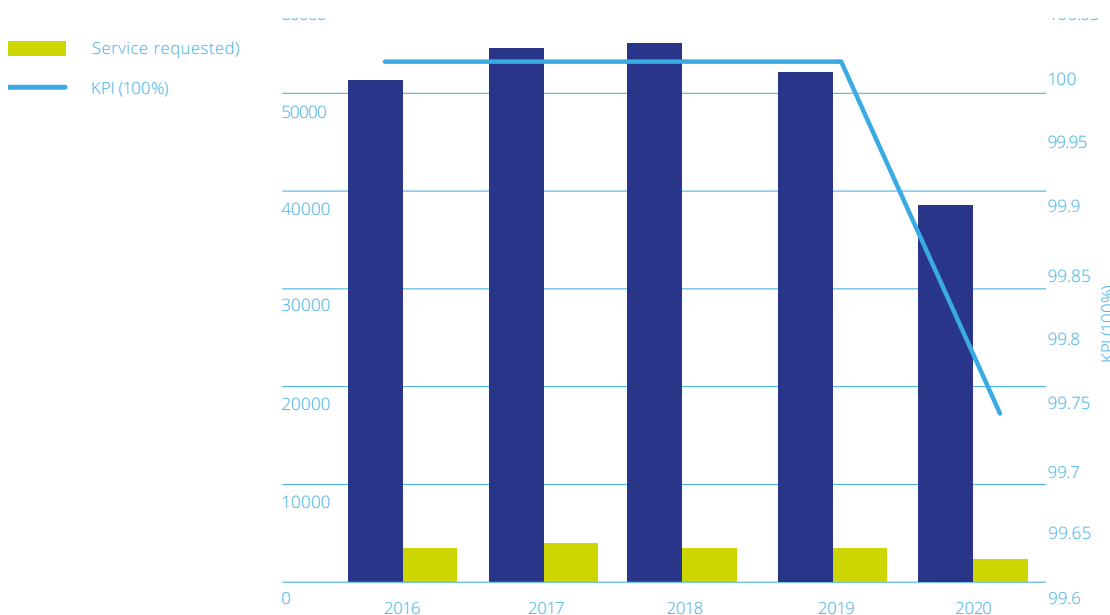
In 2020, Gas Networks Ireland’s compliance around pipe laying was adhered to and customers advised as necessary, while compliance was at 99.73%, just below the KPI of 100%, where 44 requests were not granted. Gas Networks Ireland endeavours to achieve maximum compliance with Customer Charter performance commitments with regard to the granting of appointments.

In 2020, Gas Networks Ireland granted 2,619 service appointments. This represents a decrease of 21.95% on the 2019 figure of 3,194. The performance for service requests was 100% which is in line with 2019 results.

The performance rate of meter appointment requests was 38,430 in 2020, this was down 36.91% on 2019 figures of 52,615. The performance for meter compliance was 99.9% which is in line with 2019 results (see Figure 4.17).

In relation to appointments, it is important to note that there has been continued downward pressure on domestic connections due to new building regulations and the increasing competitiveness of heat pump pricing.

**Figure 4.11: Appointment granting performance against KPI**



## 04 Retail market

### 4.5 Appointment keeping

Gas Networks Ireland endeavours to keep all appointments with customers on the assigned day and within the nominated timeframe (morning, afternoon, or all day). If unable to keep this appointment, contact will be made with the customer a minimum of one working day prior to the scheduled appointment.

Failure to make the appointment or notify the customer of the cancellation on or before the working day prior to the scheduled appointment results in the customer being able to make a request for a compensation claim. This request will adhere to the Customer Charter process.

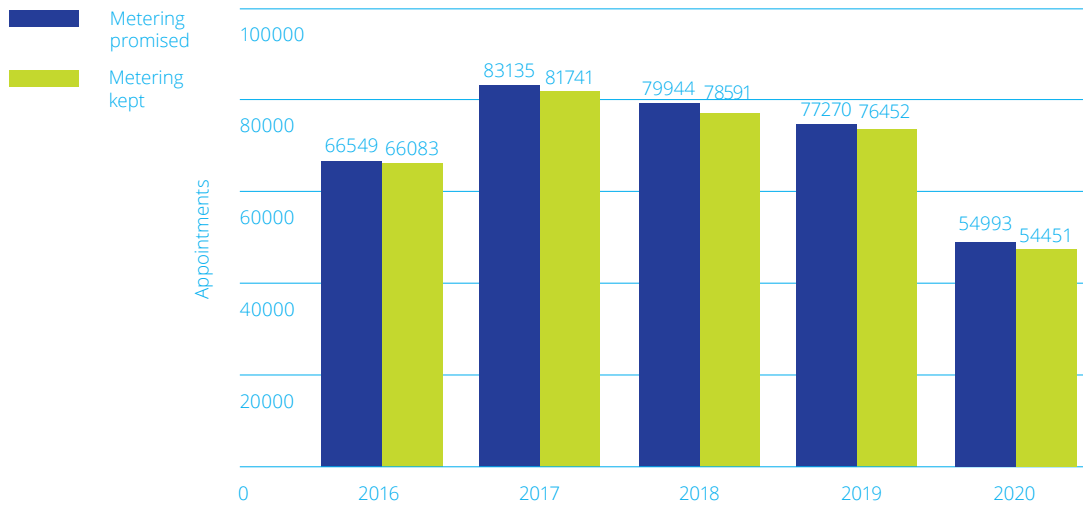
In 2020, there were a total of 57,810 appointments (metering and services) which was a decrease of 40.53% on the 2019 figure. This decrease was driven mainly by Covid-19 pandemic and Government restrictions on lockdown levels.

Total compliance for these appointments was at 99%, compared to 98.9% in 2019. In 2020, there were 2,817 service appointments which represents a decrease of 41% on 2019. The compliance rate for service appointments was 98.3%; which is an increase of 1% on 2019 figures.

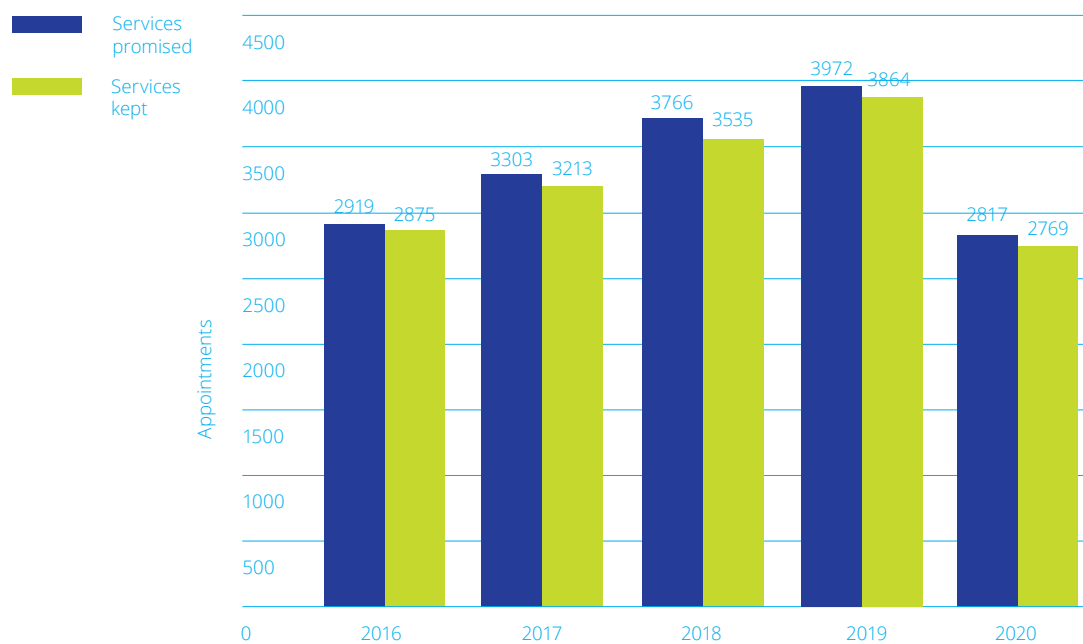
There were 54,993 metering appointments which represents a decrease of 40.50% on 2019. The compliance rate for metering appointments was 99.0%; which is a slight decrease of .01% on 2019 figures.

The KPI of 100% is the ultimate service level that Gas Networks Ireland strives to achieve in collaboration with business partners and key stakeholders. Gas Networks Ireland is actively engaged with all relevant Local Authorities. Regular meetings take place to improve the Road Opening Licence (ROL) applications process. Gas Networks Ireland is also engaged with key stakeholders and agencies such as the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS); City & County Managers Association (CCMA) and the Road Management Office (RMO); other utilities; and representative organisations. Ongoing engagement will continue throughout 2020 to provide service excellence to customers and to improve the customer experience.

**Figure 4.12: Appointment keeping (metering)**



**Figure 4.13: Appointment keeping (service)**



## 04 Retail market

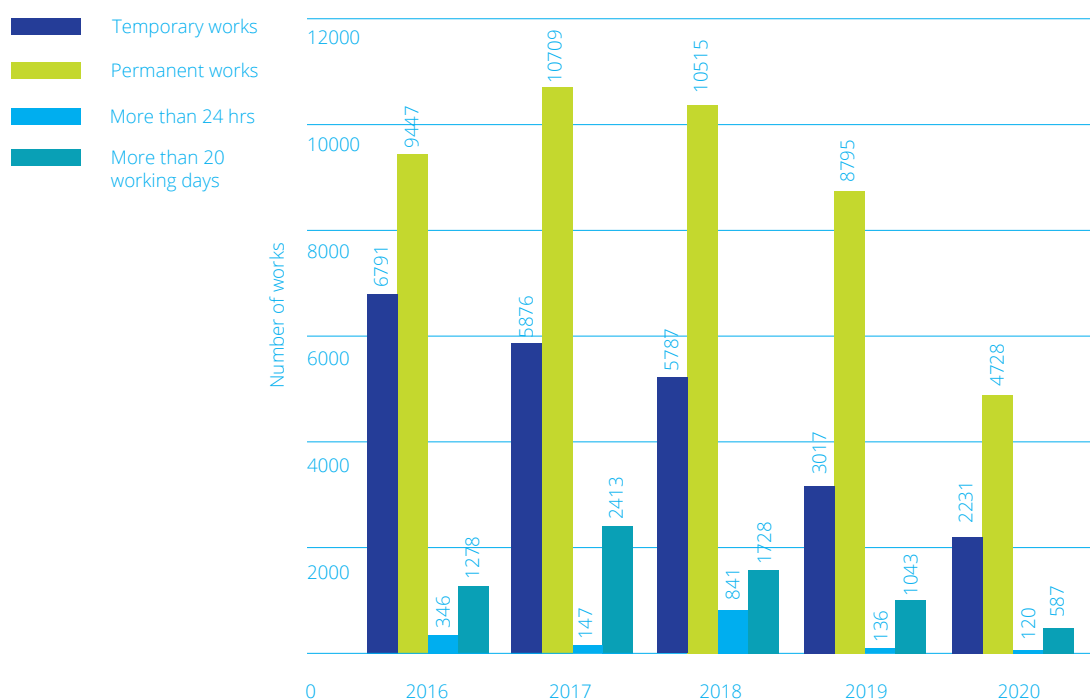
### 4.6 Reinstatement commitments

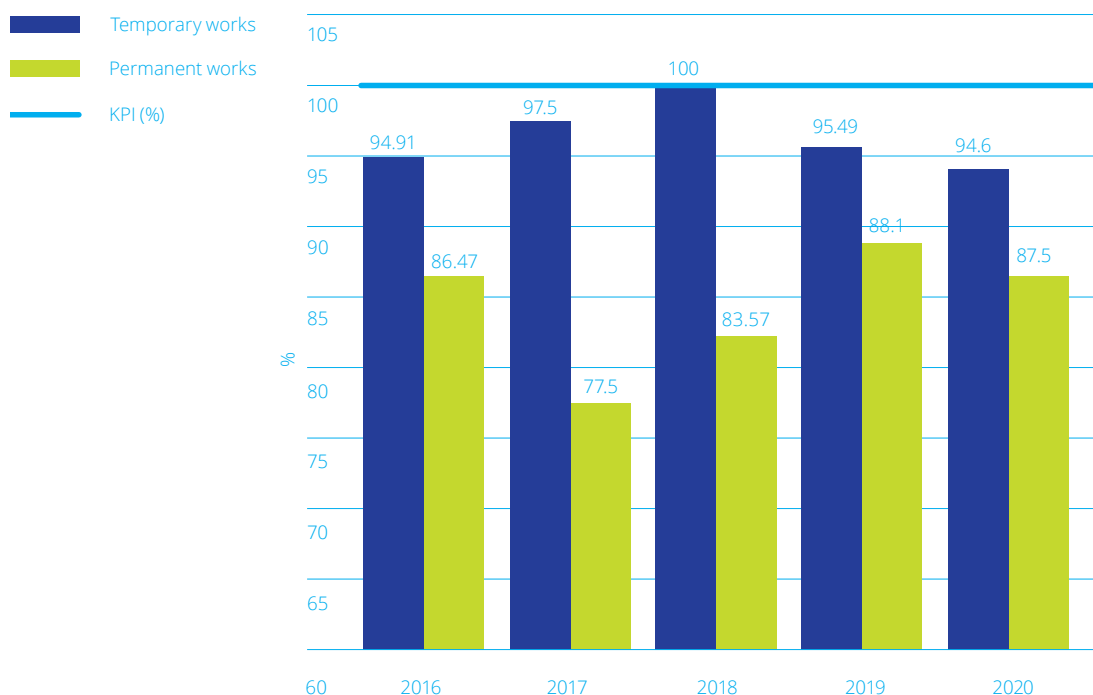
In order to facilitate the laying of the gas connection pipework, Gas Networks Ireland may need to excavate ground on the premises. It is the aim of Gas Networks Ireland to backfill and securely cover all excavations within 24 hours of work completion.

If there is a failure to complete a temporary reinstatement within 24 hours (as per the KPI) of the work completion, compensation will be paid to the customer, if applied for. Commitments apply only to circumstances where clear access to the site and premises has been provided. Reinstatement commitments do not extend to excavations arising from emergency, renewal or unplanned work.

Reinstatement is associated with the level of new connection activity. In 2020, there were 2,231 temporary works completed, all of which were completed within the 24 hours commitment, which shows that performance against the KPI was at 100.00%. Works are all either permanently reinstated first time; temporarily reinstated; or selected openings are backfilled, secured with barriers/steel plates or footpath boards and reinstated within 2 days. The total permanent works carried out in 2020 were 4,728. 587 of these were completed outside the 20 working days commitment. The majority of which were addressing legacy reinstatements, an issue in getting Road Opening Licence extended to complete the reinstatement, or difficulty in accessing the area due to parked vehicles etc. Progress was made in 2020 with 58% of permanent reinstatements completed within two working days of carrying out the original work (D+2 reinstatement). By carrying out permanent reinstatement sooner, GNI provides better customer service by minimising customer impact. Progress will continue into 2021 with a target of achieving D+2 permanent reinstatement on 60% of works. Figure 4.19 shows the reinstatement performance against the KPI.

**Figure 4.14: Reinstatement commitments**



**Figure 4.15: Reinstatement performance vs. KPI**

The KPI of 100% is the ultimate service level that Gas Networks Ireland strives to achieve in collaboration with business partners and key stakeholders.

## 4.7 Gas supply interruption

In some instances when carrying out essential planned maintenance work or connecting new customers, Gas Networks Ireland may need to interrupt the gas supply. If this is necessary, customers will be given at least two days' notice. Failure to do so allows the affected customer(s) to claim for compensation. However, very short supply interruptions<sup>16</sup> and interruptions arising from network faults or third-party actions are exempt from the guarantee. Every effort is made to minimise the inconvenience caused to customers in these instances. For customers listed as vulnerable on the Special Services Register (as registered by their natural gas supplier); Gas Networks Ireland will offer alternative heating and cooking facilities during planned gas supply interruption or network outage.

In 2020, there were 11,497 vulnerable customers registered. See Figure 4.20 – Gas supply restoration and Table 4.8. The Register of Vulnerable Customers is managed by the gas suppliers (shippers). In 2020 there was no system wide emergency that necessitated the download/use of the vulnerable customer list (For example GPRO was not asked to produce a report at short notice in response to any incident.) but it may have been required for local incidents, though these are not recorded.

<sup>16</sup> Very short supply interruptions refer to the "No Gas calls" received from end users. GNI receives approximately 1,100 of these no gas calls per month and the vast majority are completed within 24 hours.

## 04 Retail market

**Table 4.3:** Register of vulnerable customers

Description	Count of GPRN
Dexterity Impaired	24
Elderly	7,018
Hearing Impaired	1,245
Language Difficulty	251
Learning Difficulty	209
Mental Health	263
Mobility Impaired	1,769
Speech Impaired	107
Visually Impaired	611
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>11,497</b>

### 4.8 Response to emergencies

One of Gas Networks Ireland's primary objectives is to respond to all emergencies as soon as possible. On notification of an actual or suspected gas escape report, one of the emergency response personnel will be dispatched immediately. The objective is for the response personnel to arrive on site within one hour of the gas escape report being notified. The KPI for arriving and dealing with such incidents is 97%.

At Gas Networks Ireland safety is a key priority. There are a number of ongoing safety campaigns to advertise the steps to take in case of a gas emergency and to promote the emergency number (1850 20 50 50), for instances where a response is required. The aim is to make the general public aware of what to do if they smell gas on a premises or on the street.

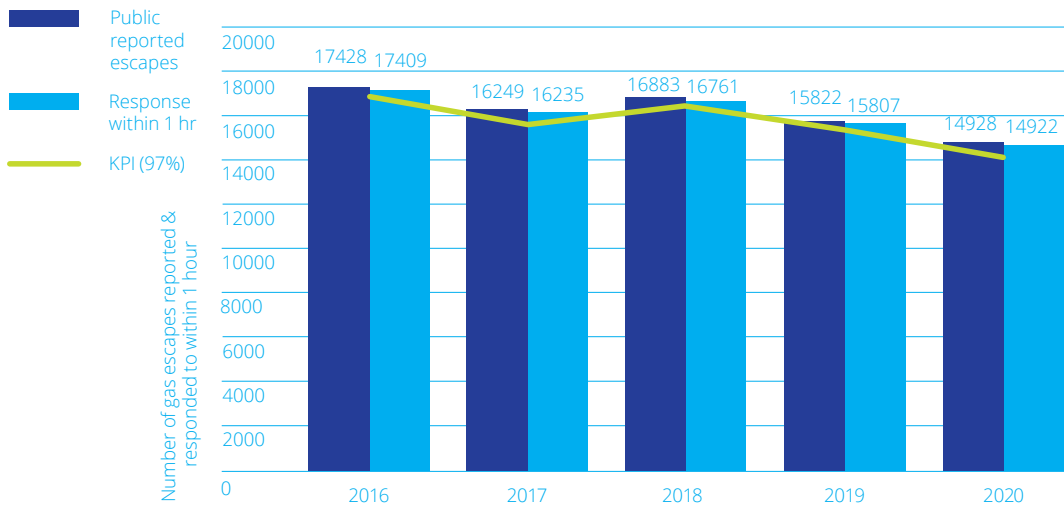
The number of reported emergency gas escapes was 14,928 in 2020, 99.96% of which were attended to within one hour. Annually this has been a consistent achievement (see Figure 4.19). The average response time for 2020 was 29 minutes, an increase from 27 minutes in 2019.

The breakdown of incidents is as follows;

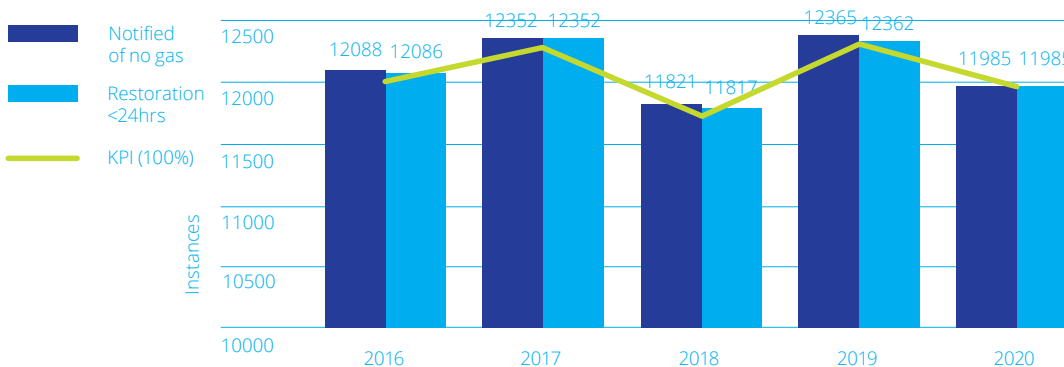
- No Trace - 8,198;
- Internal - 3,758; and
- External - 2,771



**Figure 4.16: Response to emergencies**



**Figure 4.17: Gas supply interruption and restoration**



Gas Networks Ireland has been appointed the National Gas Emergency Manager (NGEM) by the CRU in accordance with Statutory Instrument (SI) 697 of 2007, should a major gas incident occur. The NGEM has responsibility for declaring a natural gas emergency, as well as coordinating planning arrangements and any emergency response in accordance with the Natural Gas Emergency Plan (NGEP). The scope of the NGEP covers emergency arrangements, emergency planning and operational response.

## 04 Retail market

### 4.9 Gas supply restoration

Occasionally faults may occur on the gas network and as a result there may be an interruption to supply. On receiving a report, Gas Networks Ireland will do everything possible to restore the supply as quickly as possible. However, if there is a failure to restore the supply by the end of the following day after notification and it is a network fault, customers may make a claim for compensation per day, for each 24-hour period without gas subject to a maximum amount. Where there are exceptional circumstances such as extreme weather conditions or extensive disruption to gas supplies, the guarantee and the compensation will not be offered. The number of gas supply interruptions has decreased over the past five years, with the number of instances reported declining.

The number of customers who had service restored outside 24-hours has been steadily declining (see Figure 4.20 on previous page). The performance was at 100% in 2020 with restorations taking place within a 24-hour period. It should be noted that there was a decrease of 3% in the number of gas interruptions in 2020.

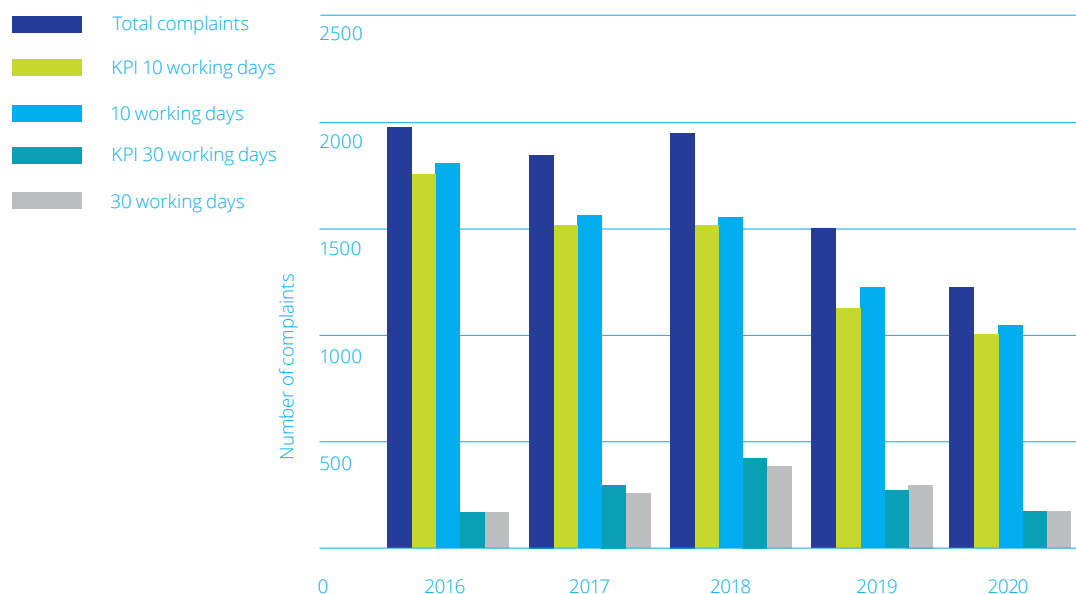
### 4.10 Complaints handling

Complaints may be registered with Gas Networks Ireland. The company endeavours to resolve all complaints within 10 working days of registration of the complaint. However, property damage or meter mix-ups may take up to 30 days from notification to resolution. Complaints are acknowledged within one day from receipt and the complainant will be contacted by Gas Networks Ireland within four working days of registering their complaint to check on the progress of the issue. This check is carried out when the complaint is allocated to an owner who has to contact the customer within the given time frame, if there is no record against the complaint, the complaint advocate will contact the customer. Gas Networks Ireland has exceeded the complaint handling performance measure since 2011.

The number of complaints has fallen by approximately 39.5% since 2016, from 1,979 to 1,188 in 2020, driven primarily by continuous improvement and improved internal feedback processes. The complaints handling process is illustrated in Figure 4.21.

In 2020, Gas Networks Ireland received a total of 1,188 complaints. There were a total of 1,019 10 day complaints of which 994 were completed within the 10 days, 25 were outside criteria. There were a total of 169 30 day complaints of which 163 were completed within the 30 days, 6 were outside criteria.

In 2020, Gas Networks Ireland achieved 98% compliance against the targets set for them by the CRU. Gas Networks Ireland's performance for resolution of all complaints was 98% in 2020 against a CRU approved KPI of 85%.

**Figure 4.18: Complaints handling**

Under the terms of the Natural Gas Distribution Licence, Gas Networks Ireland published a Complaint Handling Procedure<sup>17</sup> as agreed with the CRU. This document outlines how Gas Networks Ireland handles complaints.

## 4.11 Categories of complaints

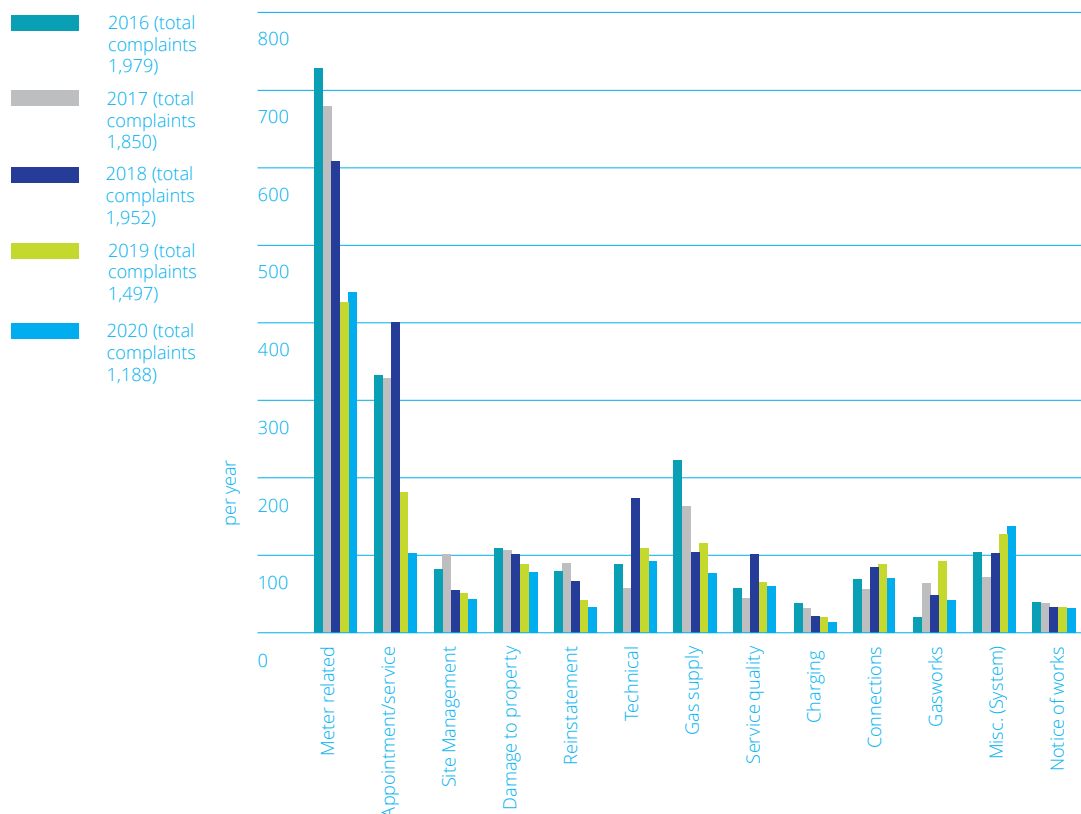
Due to the diversity of work that Gas Networks Ireland engages in, there are many categories of complaint types. These categories are outlined in Figure 4.22 overleaf. The total number of complaints received was 1,188 in 2020. Complaints can vary across all the types of services delivered by Gas Networks Ireland. Complaints are received from both customers who are having services installed and may also come from others affected by the work undertaken by GNI in their locality. The figure for complaints decreased from 1,497 in 2019 to 1,188 in 2020, representing a change of 20%. Between April and June we only received 133 complaints, Gas Networks Ireland would normally expect over 100 complaints each month. This was due to covid related restrictions.

The largest number of complaints received fall into the meter related category, which is consistent with previous years. Gas Networks Ireland continues to monitor all customer complaints to seek improvements to the services offered and address any issues that are within its control. As a result of these reviews, Gas Networks Ireland have appointed a Customer Advocate in the Contact Centre to be a single point of contact for complaints. In addition, individual reports are issued to departments highlighting the volume and type of complaint received. This helps to highlight areas in need of improvement.

17 <https://www.gasnetworks.ie/home/customer-care/how-to-make-a-complaint/GNI-Customer-Complaint-Handling-2017.pdf>

## 04 Retail market

**Figure 4.19: Customer complaints by category**



### 4.12 Payment guarantee

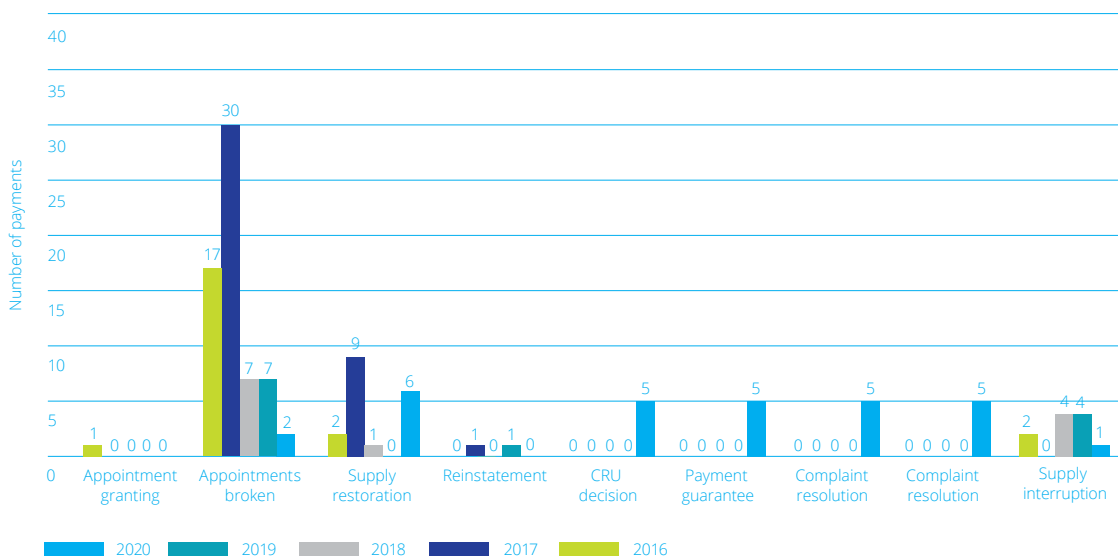
Gas Networks Ireland will issue a cheque for the appropriate sum in respect of a requested or notified refund or any validated Charter compensation claim within 10 working days. If the KPI of 10 working days is not met, then compensation will be made in respect of failure to meet this standard. The performance rate payment guarantee has been 100% since 2012. All claims and refunds in 2020 were paid within the required time frame.

### 4.13 Customer charter payments

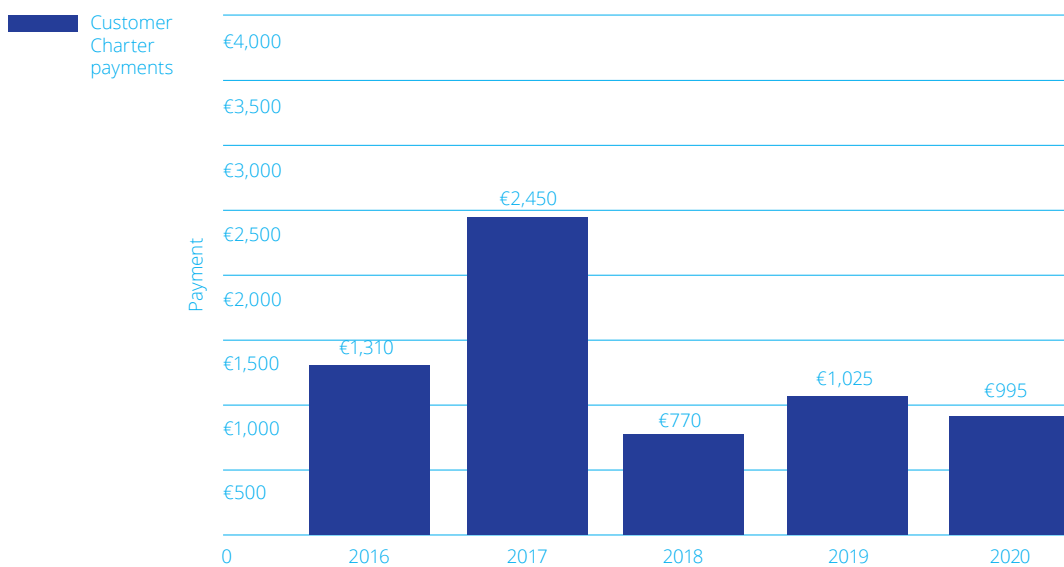
Gas Networks Ireland connects all natural gas customers to the network and is responsible for carrying out related work at the customer’s premises. Every effort is made to provide services in a prompt, efficient, and safe manner and to a high standard. The Customer Charter provides assurances to customers regarding the standards to which these services are provided. In certain circumstances, compensation will be provided for failing to meet these standards where the customer makes a claim. In such instances, the customer is directed to the Customer Charter page on the Gas Networks Ireland website where instructions on making a claim are available. The Customer is normally expected to look for a Charter Payment if Gas Networks Ireland does not fulfill its service correctly, however on some occasions they may be offered a payment as a result of a complaint or just a delay on work being carried out. Other payments are made because Gas Networks Ireland is directed to do so as a complaint resolution by the CRU<sup>18</sup>.

Over recent years there has been a reduction in the amount of Charter Payments made which follows an overall 39% downward trend in complaints between 2016-2020. In 2020 17 compensation payments were made to customers. The total value of these payments was €995. A further four payments to the value of €1,050 were made to customers as directed by the CRU.

**Figure 4.20: Customer charter payments and compensation claims**



**Figure 4.21: Customer charter payments**



# 05 Future development

Gas Networks Ireland continually brings the benefits of natural gas to new customers and new towns across the country, with natural gas now available in 22 counties and 181 population centres throughout Ireland. The Connections Policy, a Gas Networks Ireland document approved by the CRU, facilitates high level objectives that encourage the connection of new customers, offers transparency around charges, treats connections consistently and minimises the impact on tariffs. The more customers that are connected to the gas network, the more throughput on the system, which in turn reduces tariffs for the benefit of all gas customers.

Gas Networks Ireland actively promotes natural gas as a fuel of choice for homes, businesses and industry, encourages greater utilisation of the natural gas network, and looks for opportunities to expand the network where economically viable. Towns connected to the gas network have a significant competitive advantage over towns without a natural gas network. As a low carbon fuel with low energy costs, natural gas is appealing to multi-national organisations. Cities and towns that have natural gas infrastructure are attractive for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and can benefit through direct employment and investment in the local economy.

The natural gas network developed by Gas Networks Ireland has sufficient capacity to meet the gas demands of a modern Ireland competing in the global economy, thus contributing to Ireland's social and economic progress. Where the extension of the network to a town is not economically viable, innovative solutions are being considered. In Sligo town, stakeholders have proposed a virtual gas network to economically bring the benefits of both natural gas and renewable gas to Sligo without the significant costs associated with a transmission network extension. This is currently under consideration.

Across Gas Networks Ireland, there is considerable emphasis on investing in innovation and new business areas. This will improve customer experience and ensure that Gas Network Ireland will continue to underpin the social, environmental, and economic progress of Ireland. The Gas Innovation Fund continues to promote and encourage an environment of innovation in the gas industry. The fund provides support for research and demonstration projects and is driven by a number of key priorities. These are (i) increase throughput through the gas system, (ii) assist in the transition to a low carbon economy, (iii) deliver significant carbon savings and (iv) provide measurable value to all gas customers.

Below we set out further detail on developments in compressed natural gas and renewable gas. These areas are part of the solution in meeting Ireland's emission reduction targets.

## Compressed natural gas

Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) is an established global source of transport fuel, with 28 million gas powered vehicles worldwide and almost 2 million in Europe. CNG is natural gas stored under high pressure and used in transport. Renewable gas can also be utilised by CNG vehicles as bio-CNG. Gas is distributed to refuelling stations via the gas network from where it can be easily compressed and transferred to vehicles and used as fuel. CNG as a transport fuel offers a number of environmental, economic and financial benefits, ranging from cheaper fuel for heavy goods vehicle transport, lower air pollution and reduction in noise pollution. Furthermore, with more gas flowing through the network, the use of CNG may ultimately lead to lower tariffs for all natural gas users.

Gas Networks Ireland is currently establishing an initial network of public access CNG stations along the TEN-T core and comprehensive road network in Ireland. Gas Networks Ireland has received co-funding from the European Commission, under the CEF Transport Fund and the CRU Innovation Fund to install a total of 14 public CNG refuelling stations together with a large-scale renewable gas injection point on the gas network by 2021. This project is known as the Causeway Study. The rollout of these CNG refuelling facilities has already commenced, with two public CNG stations currently operational at Circle K's Dublin Port and Cashel stations. A further two public access stations are due to open in the second half of 2021. Eight public stations are also currently progressing through the design and planning project phases. Gas Networks Ireland has also received grant approval from the European Commission for a project called Green Connect, running from 2019 to 2023, which includes the installation of 21 public CNG stations, four direct renewable gas injection facilities, four mobile CNG refuelling units as well as a vehicle grant scheme for 400 vehicles.

Gas Networks Ireland provides CNG refuelling via three station formats - public forecourts, large private stations and medium private stations - using fast fill technology that is similar in operational terms to diesel. There are currently three medium-sized private CNG stations operational in Ireland. A large private station is also planned for completion in the second half of 2021.

In the rollout of CNG infrastructure, Gas Networks Ireland continues to work with all stakeholders in the transport market, including Government departments, regulatory agencies, vehicle manufacturers and distributors, forecourt operators and, most importantly, end-users.

## 05 Future development

### Renewable natural gas

Renewable gas can make a significant contribution to Ireland's renewable energy and carbon reduction targets. It is produced from different sustainable organic materials, upgraded to biomethane, and then injected into existing gas distribution infrastructure. Renewable gas is widely used in other European countries and Gas Networks Ireland believes it has a major role to play in assisting the country's transition to a low carbon economy.

Renewable gas represents the lowest cost pathway to decarbonising residential heat, at less than one third the cost of electrifying heat<sup>19</sup>. Renewable gas also has a role to play in attracting future FDI to Ireland as it provides an appealing solution to many multinationals that have mandatory targets set for renewable energy<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, renewable gas provides a solution for national waste management and represents a renewable indigenous fuel source.

Ireland's Climate Action Plan has a target of 1.6TWh/annum of renewable gas onto the gas network by 2030 and there is scope for a much higher ambition. Ireland's first renewable gas injection point was constructed at Cush, Co. Kildare in 2018 with the first injection of renewable gas to the gas network taking place in 2019. This was part of the Causeway Study and was funded by the Innovation Fund as part of the PC3 price control. The site became commercially operational in 2020 with a capacity to inject up to 200GWh per annum of renewable gas into the network. First commercial flows commenced on this date with Naturgy as Shipper, and Tesco as the first customer.

Following the approval of a new Connections Policy by the CRU in October 2018 there has been significant interest from developers who plan to progress their projects once a stimulus is in place to kick start the anaerobic digestion (AD) industry. Gas Networks Ireland has also been shortlisted for €8.5 million of co-funding under the government's Climate Action Fund for the GRAZE Gas project. The project has a total value of €30.1m and will provide for the installation of the first transmission connected Central Grid Injection (CGI) facility for renewable gas, to be located near Mitchelstown, Co. Cork. The GRAZE Gas Project will also include two CNG stations and a grant scheme to support circa 74 CNG vehicles. Planning permission to develop the CGI was granted in December 2020 by An Bord Pleanála.

In 2020, Gas Networks Ireland established a renewable gas registry to certify the origin of renewable gas entering the gas network and this will become a guarantee of origin (as described in Article 19 of RED II) once the statutory instrument is finalised. Producers of Renewable Gas will be required to hold a certificate of sustainability issued by an EU Voluntary Scheme to ensure sustainability criteria set out under the re-cast EU renewable Energy Directive (RED II) which comes into legal effect in 2021 are met. This assurance is vital to providing confidence to consumers that the gas delivered is renewable and can be counted against their emission reduction targets. It will give government and regulators certainty that sales of renewable gas are transparent and accounted for.

Gas Networks Ireland will continue to work collaboratively with industry stakeholders, researchers and relevant Government Departments to develop the roadmap for renewable gas.

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19 Poyry report: "Fully decarbonising Europe's energy system by 2050" and KPMG report: "Decarbonising Domestic Heating in Ireland"

20 World Business Council for Sustainable Development



## Smart metering

The National Smart Metering Programme (NSMP) is led by CRU and saw the commencement of electricity smart meter installation in late 2019, with deployment to continue across three distinct phases through to 2024. The programme foresees gas smart metering commencing in 2024.

As part of CRU's review of phase one of the NSMP ([Checkpoint Review Information Paper](#)) during 2020, it requested GNI to carry out a "review of the approach to collection and management of data from gas meters for completion by GNI by December 2021". GNI carried out this review in the first half of 2021, issuing the 'Gas Smart Metering Options Analysis' report to CRU in July 2021, seeking direction from CRU regarding next steps. The following recommendations were included in the report:

### Recommendations

#### **GNI supports roll-out for full meter population over time, prioritising PAYG initially**

Given the positive business case for Scenario 3 and the efficiency benefits to both homes and businesses, GNI recommends the roll-out of smart metering across the full meter population (home and businesses), with the deployment of PAYG meters being prioritised in the deployment timeline.

#### **GNI's recommends independent gas comms and data processing**

GNI recommends an independent gas communications approach rather than an integrated approach leveraging the ESN comms network. The availability of low power communications solutions can reduce the overall costs and complexities associated with an integrated solution, reducing challenges in design, procurement, operations, governance, and regulatory and commercial arrangements. This solution also provides resilience and autonomy for the gas market.

#### **Further investigations required to determine optimal approach to retrofitting of 'smart ready' meters**

GNI recommends that further investigations be carried out before making a decision but are aware of the concerns raised over the complexity, challenges and risks associated with the retrofit option.

#### **GNI recommends an alternative solution to an IHD based on consumer technology**

GNI proposes that smart metering data is provided to the consumer via the consumer's personal device (ie. computer, phone, tablet) rather than via a dedicated In-Home Device (IHD) provided by GNI. As a result, the provision of a Home Area Network (HAN) to support the IHD is unnecessary.

#### **GNI favours a 'thin' metering model**

GNI favours the 'thin' metering model due to lower battery consumption and lower unit costs per meter asset. However, GNI is mindful of the benefits of the inclusion of some 'thick' functionality particularly for PAYG (e.g. keypad on the meter to facilitate top-ups at the meter if comms are unavailable).

# 06 Conclusion

The Customer Charter, which outlines Gas Network Ireland's ten guaranteed performance commitments, is also a means to measure performance of Gas Networks Ireland's customer interactions. Gas Networks Ireland works in partnership with its stakeholders, including the CRU and shippers to ensure the safe, secure and reliable delivery of gas to all users. Our customer service performance is benchmarked against key performance indicators (KPIs) as per the Customer Charter.

Our operating environment is constantly changing, presenting new opportunities and challenges. The business is continually adapting to meet customers' needs and identifying areas for improvement. Customers are empowered to make contact through various means of communication, which include telephone and digital channels. Their feedback is also encouraged through surveys. Regular active participation with shippers takes place through the GMARG and Code Modification Forums. Gas Networks Ireland continuously seeks and monitors customer feedback, analyses results and KPI metrics.

The year of 2020 was overshadowed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the move to working from home, and the introduction of nationwide level-5 lockdowns. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, Gas Networks Ireland was able to continue its customer facing operations and succeeded in achieving excellent levels of performance in respect of our published Customer Charter service standards and commitments. Our programme of customer experience monitoring continues to score favourably across all processes as illustrated in this report. Some of the Customer Service highlights from 2020 include a 20% reduction in complaints received and the implementation of 30 customer improvement initiatives.

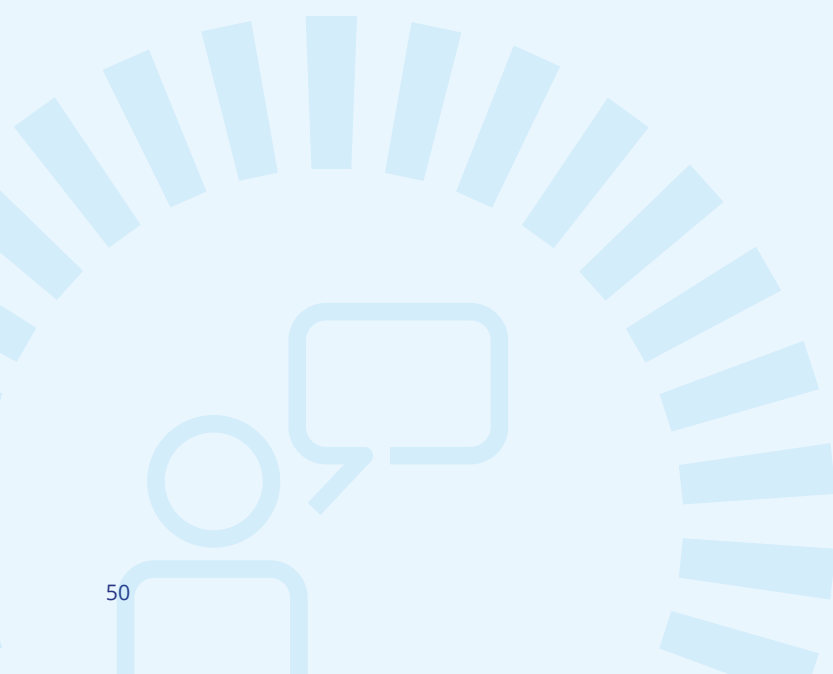
*“Gas Networks Ireland was able to continue its customer facing operations and succeeded in achieving excellent levels of performance.”*



Looking ahead, Gas Networks Ireland's customer strategy will continue to drive a customer centric focus across the business, by proactively monitoring feedback and undertaking monthly trends analysis to identify areas for improvement and maintain a high consistency of service. Working in collaboration with teams across the business and our customer contact centre, we will host monthly meetings, workshops and Customer Experience Days for relevant stakeholders to meet and agree areas for improvement.

As we work towards our vision for Ireland's gas network to be net zero carbon by 2050, customers will remain at the fore of our business. Developments in innovation provide customers with choice and presents new opportunities for customers to make a positive impact on emissions. By transitioning the gas network to combine renewable gas, hydrogen and natural gas in combination with carbon capture and storage, Gas Networks Ireland will deliver net zero gas for home heating, transport, industry and electricity generation. In doing so, we will empower our customers to actively partake in a low carbon economy and contribute to meeting Ireland's renewable and carbon reduction targets.

# 07 Appendices



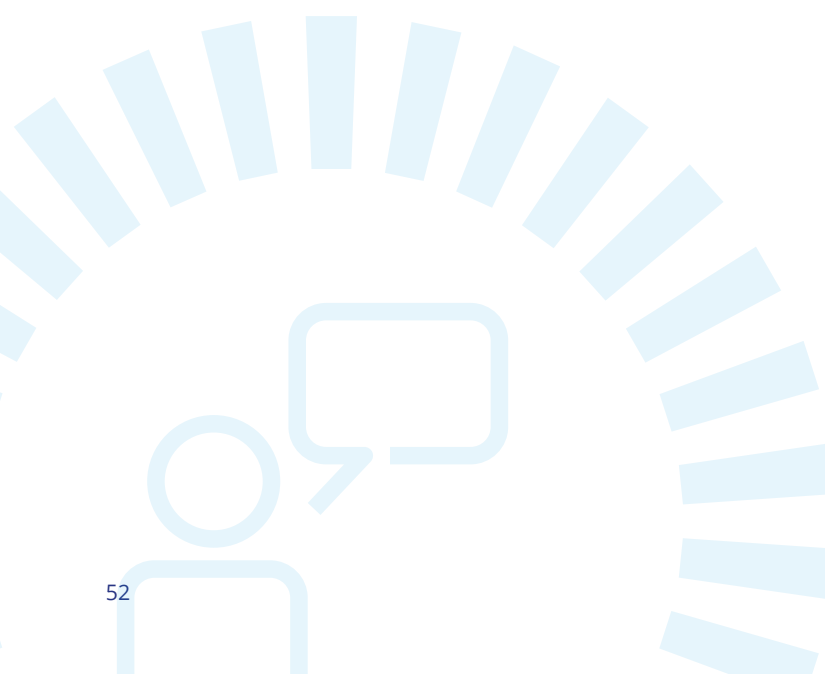
## 7.1 Glossary of terms

CCA	Customer Contact Association
CNG	Compressed Natural Gas
CO	Carbon Monoxide
ComReg	Commission for Communications Regulation
CRU	Commission Regulation of Utilities
CSAT	Customer Satisfaction Scores
DBYD	Dial Before You Dig
DSO	Distribution System Operator
DTTAS	Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
EU	European Union
ESBN	ESB Networks
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GNI	Gas Networks Ireland
GMARG	Gas Market Arrangements Retail Group
GTMS	Gas Transportation Management System
IoM	Isle of Man
IVR	Interactive Voice Recording
I & C	Industrial & Commercial
I/C	Interconnector
Km	Kilometre
KPI	Key Performance indicator
MPD	Market Process Documents
NGEM	National Gas Emergency
NGEP	Natural Gas Emergency Plan
NI	Northern Ireland
No.	Number
NPS	Net Promoter Score
NSMP	National Smart Metering Programme
PAYG	Pay as you Go
PRISMA	Operates the internet platform where capacity rights for natural gas transport can be traded or marketed
RMO	Road Management Office
RoI	Republic of Ireland
ROL	Road Opening Licence
SI	Statutory Instrument
TMP	Traffic Management Plan
TSO	Transmission System Operator
UK	United Kingdom

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### 7.2 Customer centricity scores

Metric	Assessment of metric (survey question & scale)	How score is calculated
Net Promoter Score (NPS)	Following your recent experience how likely are you to recommend Gas Networks Ireland as an organisation to deal with? <i>(On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is 'Not at all likely' and 10 is 'Very likely')</i>	Subtract the % of <b>detractors</b> (scoring 0 to 6) from <b>promoters</b> (scoring 9 to 10)
NetEasy	Overall, how easy was your experience of dealing with Gas Networks Ireland? <i>Out of 10 (On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is 'Extremely difficult' and 7 is 'Extremely easy')</i>	Subtract the % stating it was difficult to some extent 1 to 3, from those stating it was easy 6 to 7
Satisfied	Overall, how satisfied were you with your experience? <i>(On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is 'Very dissatisfied' and 10 is 'Very satisfied')</i>	Overall satisfied defined as those scoring 7 to 10, with Very Satisfied defined as those scoring 9 to 10
Customer Centricity	This metric is not a score in itself, but rather a composite score comprising three other measures.	An average of total promoters (9-10), total easy (6-7) and total very satisfied (9-10), i.e. take the three scores and divide by 3



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### 7.5 Change of customer contact numbers

Old Number	Description	GNI Area
1850 200 694	Customer Care (Dom)	Customer Care
1850 205 050	Gas Control Emergency Line	Emergency Dispatch
1850 211 447	IC Cert	Customer Care
1850 211 512	Fitter Support Line	Emergency Dispatch
1850 211 540	RGI Line	Customer Care
1850 211 573	Regulatory and Corporate services	Regulatory Services
1850 211 615	Scada Test Line	GNI IT
1850 211 792	Scheduling & Dispatch (GNI Fitter Support)	Scheduling and Dispatch
1850 211 816	IT Service Desk	IT
1850 411 511	Business Link Line	Customer Care
1850 427 261	Gas Point Registration Office (GPRO)	Regulatory Services
1850 427 399	Aurora Emergency Line	Aurora
1850 427 732	Automated Meter Reading Service	Customer Care
1850 427 737	Project Line	Customer Care
1850 427 747	Dial before you Dig Line	HSQE
1850 504 060	New Connection Line	Commercial
1850 774 636	Leak Survey	Scheduling and Dispatch
1850 797 979	Carbon Monoxide Line	HSQE



## 7.6 Charter payment breakdown 2020

### Charter payment breakdown 2020

Charter Commitment	Total Payment €	YTD	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Call Response	€0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Quotation Turnaround	€105	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Appointment Granting	€0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Appointment Keeping	€70	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Reinstatement Commitment	€0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gas Supply Interruption	€70	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Emergency Response	€0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gas Supply Restoration	€645	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Complaint Resolution	€70	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Payment Guarantee	€35	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CRU	€1,050	4	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
<b>Total Number</b>		17	3	1	3	0	1	1	3	1	0	1	2	1
<b>Total Payment €</b>	€2,045	€2,045	€445	€490	€385	€0	€35	€105	€105	€70	€0	€175	€200	€35

The main contact details for Gas  
Networks Ireland are:

.....  
**General Enquiries**

**1800 464 464**

.....  
**24hr Emergency Service**

**1800 20 50 50**

.....  
**networksinfo@gasnetworks.ie**

.....  
**@GasNetIRL**

**gasnetworks.ie**