Overview of consumer complaints

Total complaints 8,964 (1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019)

Your complaints help us better understand where to focus our activity and resources. Here is a snapshot of the issues you have told us about over the past year.

Year on year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Complaints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16/17 FY</td>
<td>7,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/18 FY</td>
<td>7,452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/19 FY</td>
<td>8,964</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have received over 1,500 more Fair Trading complaints than we did last year.

Complaints by Act

- FT Act 8,302
- Commerce Act 348
- CCCF Act 314

While reading this snapshot, please keep in mind:

- The speech bubbles do not contain real complaints from consumers – they are indicative of the kinds of complaints we received.
- A complaint does not necessarily mean that any law has been breached.
- This snapshot only reflects complaints to the Commission. Some complaints on the same matter might have gone to other complaint bodies.
- Larger industries are likely to generate more complaints because they have many more customers.
- High levels of publicity about an industry could result in more complaints.

We value your complaints

Your complaints are an important source of information for us and we use them to inform what we do.

Your complaints help us to identify what we should investigate. We cannot investigate everything so we focus on harm to New Zealand consumers and markets. Our investigation outcomes include providing information to help businesses comply with the law, warnings and prosecutions.

Complaints also indicate where businesses need more or different information to comply with the law. We regularly provide this information through fact sheets, videos, educational campaigns and by speaking at events.

Helping consumers understand their rights is important to us. Complaints sometimes tell us where consumers need better information. There are consumer-friendly pages on our website and we look for opportunities to get our messages to communities around New Zealand.

We provide expert advice to government policy makers and Parliament about the laws that we enforce. Information about complaints we receive can be useful to policy-makers to understand where changes are needed to address particular business conduct.
We have received the most complaints about these industries.

**Telecommunications retail service providers**
- 727 complaints
  - I was charged a fee that I was not told about
  - My telco bills are often wrong. They got my pricing plan and discounts wrong, and even kept charging me when I switched providers
  - A salesperson signed me up to a contract I did not agree to
  - The plan was advertised as unlimited, but there were constraints on data usage
  - My internet is slower than advertised

**Online ticket reselling**
- 585 complaints
  - The headline price did not match the price we ended up paying
  - We thought we were buying from an official seller, however later found out it was a resale site
  - I spent a lot on my ticket and so I thought I had bought a premium seat. When I got to the venue, I was disappointed
  - My tickets did not work at the gate
  - I felt pressured into quickly buying tickets online due to a countdown timer and a message saying “limited seats”

**Domestic appliance retailers**
- 469 complaints
  - I was told that the Consumer Guarantees Act did not apply when I tried to return a faulty product. Are they trying to get out of their CGA obligations?
  - I bought an item in a sale only to find out later that it was not in stock and I would have to wait a long time to receive it
  - I’ve been told that I would have to pay to have my product repaired or replaced because the manufacturer’s warranty has just expired
  - I purchased a product online, only to be told later that it was not available

**Motor vehicle retail**
- 449 complaints
  - The dealer said the car was in great condition, but I’ve had issues with it ever since I bought it
  - I found faults with the used car I recently bought, and my dealer is refusing to fix them
  - The car did not have the features I was told it would have
  - I ended up paying more for the car than the price tag because the advertised price did not include GST or on road costs

**Construction**
- 365 complaints
  - The building work I paid for was not completed
  - I was charged more than the agreed quote and I do not know why
  - I had a problem with my building works and the builder will not fix the problems under their warranty
  - The building materials I ordered weren’t delivered on time

**Further industries**
- **Airlines** 189
- **Grocery products** 162
- **Supermarkets** 151
- **Motor vehicle rentals** 143
- **Electricity retail** 138

**Product safety**
- **Children's toys** 21
- **Household cots** 8
- **Children's nightwear** 5
Major complaint themes in consumer credit are displayed below. These are grouped by the types of conduct evident in the industry. We thank financial mentors and other organisations for submitting their complaints to us.

### Debt collection
- **124 complaints**
  - The debt collector called me repeatedly and was aggressive towards me
  - The debt collector tried to make me pay a debt that I did not owe
  - I was offered another loan, but I’m struggling to pay off my current debts

### Responsible lending
- **116 complaints**
  - This lender gave me a loan when other lenders would not. The lender did not check whether I could afford to pay it back
  - I applied for a loan because the lender advertised “no credit checks” and there did not seem to be much in the way of fees
  - When I lost my job, the lender would not consider adjusting my repayment amounts

### Disclosure
- **50 complaints**
  - I don’t think the lender gave me any loan documents with terms or told me the total cost of my loan
  - I applied for a loan because the lender advertised “no credit checks” and there did not seem to be much in the way of fees

### Market power
- **114 complaints**
  - The trader is using its monopoly to raise prices
  - The trader is using its market power to force suppliers not to supply me
  - The online platform dropped my business’ search ranking because I did not agree to follow some of their pricing rules

### Restrictive contracts
- **109 complaints**
  - My competitors have prevented retailers from dealing with me so I’m struggling to sell my products
  - My supply has dried up because my competitors have an agreement with suppliers to only supply them

### Price fixing
- **13 complaints**
  - I always see these traders showing the same prices – I wonder if they’ve agreed not to undercut each other?

### Resale price maintenance
- **9 complaints**
  - My supplier has told me that I can’t discount the recommended retail price of their product

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**Consumer Credit**

Consumers and competitors have complained to us about conduct they think is anti-competitive.

**10%** of our consumer credit complaints come from financial mentors*

*Previously known as budget advisors, financial mentors advocate for clients in debt and deliver free budget and financial capability services.

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**Trends in online retail**

Over the past five years, we have seen an **80% increase in complaints** relating to online retail. These complaints now make up around **⅓** of all our Fair Trading complaints.

- I think the trader inflated the “original” price to make the sale price look appealing
- Additional charges were added so I ended up paying more than the advertised price
- The item I received was nothing like I expected
- I felt rushed into buying my item because of countdown timers and “stock running out” messages on screen
- I did not receive the item I ordered and paid for online
Our vision

New Zealanders are better off because markets work well and consumers and businesses are confident market participants.

We enforce laws that:

- Prohibit false and misleading behaviour by businesses and a range of other unfair business practices
  *Fair Trading Act 1986*

- Protect consumers when they borrow money
  *Credit Contracts and Consumer Finance Act 2003*

- Prohibit anti-competitive behaviour and acquisitions that substantially lessen competition
  *Commerce Act 1986*

We also have regulatory responsibilities in these sectors:

- Airports
- Electricity lines
- Telecommunications
- Gas
- Dairy

Contact us if you have concerns about fair trading, consumer credit or anti-competitive practices

Phone: 0800 943 600
Write: Enquiries Team, PO Box 2351, Wellington 6140
Webform: www.comcom.govt.nz/make-a-complaint

On this page we also list other agencies who can help you get a personal remedy

See our media release here

Kei te pirangi koe, ki te korero Māori ki a matou?

您想用中文和我们说话吗？

When you call us, you can choose your preferred language. We want to hear from you in Te Reo Māori, Samoan, Tongan, Korean, Cantonese, Mandarin or Spanish.

Our resources are available in selected languages at www.comcom.govt.nz [search ‘Languages’]