



[Isla McKetta](#) | [July 11, 2022](#)

More Consumers are “Always On” Your Network, Here’s What They Need From You

We know the COVID-19 pandemic changed mobile user behavior, but new research commissioned by Ookla® shows just how much more consumers came to rely on their mobile connections. Ookla conducted a survey of five thousand mobile phone users from a diversity of demographic groups across Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States to learn more about how they use their devices and how they view their mobile operators. [Computer Weekly recently shared a look at what this looked like in the U.K.](#) For this article, we’ve paired this information with [Speedtest®](#) data on consumer sentiment in all three countries to get a full picture of what consumers expect from their mobile operators today.

Key takeaways:

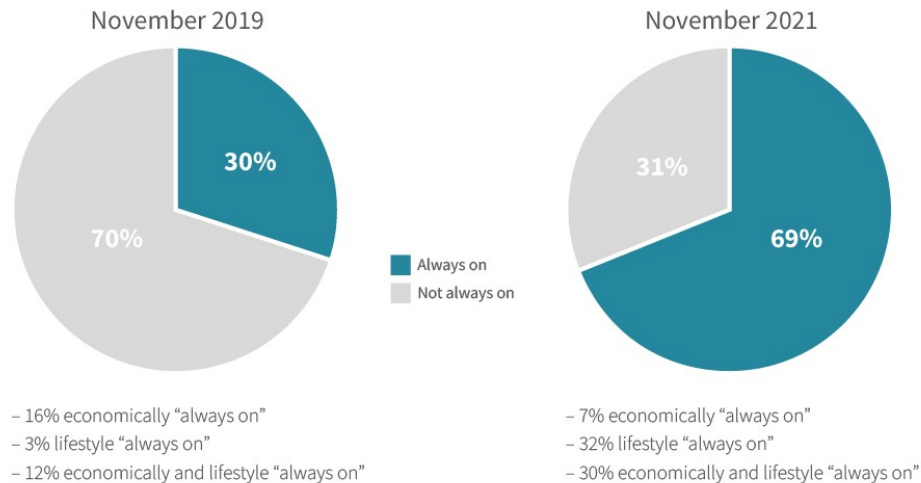
- The percentage of consumers who describe themselves as always online grew from 30% to 69%.
- Fewer than two-thirds of respondents are satisfied with customer service with “always on” customers at least twice as likely to report issues with customer service.
- “Always on” consumers have different support needs, prioritizing a more well-rounded customer service experience.
- Nearly half (47.4%) of customers who have had customer service issues in the past 18 months are likely to want to switch to another operator.

Increasing numbers of mobile customers are “always on”

The number of mobile customers who described themselves as always online grew from 30% in November 2019 to 69% in November 2021. Whereas consumers used to put down their phones for a variety of reasons, “always on” users are online for a variety of economic reasons (accessing customers and generating business, traffic information and remote working, social media, and information sharing) and lifestyle reasons (parenting and caregiving, health and fitness, and gaming). It’s no surprise then,

that these valuable customers need reliable networks to keep up with the demands of their mobile internet use.

More Users Are “Always On”



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Between 2019 and 2021 we saw a drop in users who were only “always on” for only economic reasons from 16% to 7%. Meanwhile, users who were “always on” for lifestyle reasons grew from 3% to 32%. The largest increases were in users who were “always on” for economic and lifestyle reasons.

Fewer than two-thirds of respondents satisfied with customer service

The 2020 American Customer Satisfaction Index found the telecom industry lags significantly in customer satisfaction. While customer service could be a key component of improving customer satisfaction, our survey revealed that fewer than two-thirds of respondents were satisfied with the customer service they received. Wait time had the lowest proportion of satisfied respondents (51%) while clarity of communication and multiple options for contact had the highest (62%). In addition, an operator-by-operator analysis showed that between 10% and 25% of customers of each operator had to submit a formal complaint. This obviously leaves significant room for improvement.

Net Satisfaction with Operator Customer Service

		Overall	U.S.	U.K.	Switzerland
Communication 59%	The clarity of communication you received	62%	67%	62%	56%
	That you feel valued and appreciated as a customer	60%	66%	61%	54%
	The empathy that staff demonstrated when you reported your issue	56%	60%	54%	54%
Ease of access to support 57%	The multiple options available for how you can interact with them (e.g. by phone, email, text, online chat, etc.)	62%	66%	64%	57%
	The ease with which you were able to find where to report your issue (i.e. what number to call, where to find information on their website, etc.)	57%	62%	54%	56%
	The waiting time when trying to reach a customer service operative	51%	56%	51%	46%
Expertise & resolution 60%	The level of expertise the staff demonstrated	61%	67%	61%	55%
	How quickly the issue was resolved	59%	64%	57%	55%



“Always on” users have different support needs

With more customers categorizing themselves online all the time, it’s increasingly important that their network be available whenever they need it. It is also vital that they get the kind of customer support they need when they encounter a problem.

Top Three Rated Components of Customer Satisfaction

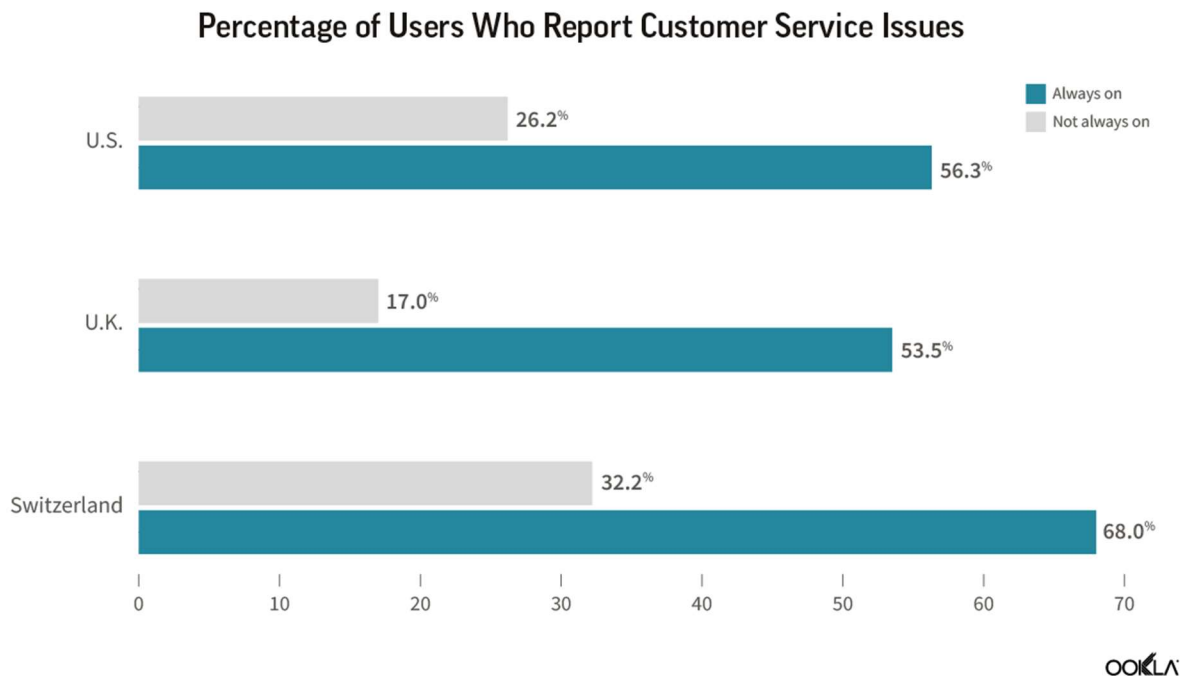
		U.S.		U.K.		Switzerland	
		Not always on	Always on	Not always on	Always on	Not always on	Always on
Expertise & resolution	That the staff are well trained and demonstrate expertise	49.5%	42.2%	48.9%	40.2%	50.2%	44.0%
	That once an issue has been reported it is resolved quickly	44.3%	34.7%	46.2%	39.8%	45.0%	41.5%
Communication	Clear communication	45.2%	43.5%	40.2%	38.4%	41.7%	40.8%
	That you feel valued and appreciated as a customer	34.6%	35.5%	35.1%	34.8%	32.7%	34.6%
	That staff are empathetic when you go to them with an issue	26.0%	29.1%	29.6%	30.0%	25.6%	28.1%
Ease of access to support	That waiting times to report an issue are not too long (e.g. that it doesn't take too long to get through to support on the phone, that when you email with issues that get back to you in a timely manner)	34.8%	39.2%	35.1%	42.1%	40.8%	42.8%
	That it is clear where to go when you need support (i.e. what number to call, where to find information on their website, etc.)	35.2%	39.5%	35.8%	39.7%	39.8%	38.1%
	That there are multiple ways in which you can interact with them (e.g. by phone, email, text, online chat, etc.)	30.3%	36.3%	29.1%	34.8%	24.2%	30.2%



We asked respondents to rank the top three components of customer satisfaction that make for good customer service. While customers who are not “always on” are looking for well trained staff, a quick resolution, and clear communication, “always on” users are looking for a more well-rounded customer service experience. “Always on” users also prioritize short wait times, clear paths to resolution, multiple methods of communication, and that they feel valued as a customer.

This means operators with a robust support network that customers can comprehend and access in the ways that they prefer to communicate will win the customer service race — and consequently, customer retention. Our clients have [seen this already with Spatialbuzz™](#), which allows mobile operators to identify, prioritize, and diagnose customer dissatisfaction areas in real time with quick, actionable resolutions.

“Always on” customers experience more problems with customer service



“Always on” respondents in all three countries were at least twice as likely to report issues with customer service. The difference was especially pronounced in the U.K. where “always on” users were more than three times as likely to report customer service issues than their counterparts. This, plus the growth in the number of “always on” customers, poses a difficulty for mobile operators whose customer support programs have not evolved to meet these changing needs. If operators want to retain these key customers, there is work to be done.

Users who contact customer service are still likely to churn

The fact that customer service is a key factor in customer retention is no surprise, still our survey revealed that nearly *half* (47.4%) of customers who have had customer service issues in the past 18 months are likely to want to switch to another operator. The data tells us that even when issues are resolved, customers are often not satisfied with how they have been dealt with and still consider switching.

Customer Satisfaction and Likelihood to Churn



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Respondents in the U.S. were the most likely to consider switching (24-37%, depending on operator). Customers in the U.K. were open to switching (25%, 29%, 29%, and 32%, depending on operator) and those in Switzerland were slightly less likely to consider switching (25, 27%, and 32%, depending on operator).

As important as adequate customer service is, it's clear that mobile operators need to meet customers' needs before they have to resort to customer service. Providing a high level of network performance is important to this as is checking in with consumer sentiment, especially as consumers' habits shift toward being "always on."

Solving customer issues is not enough to retain your customer base. Those issues need to be resolved with care through clear communication and expertise in a timely manner. To learn more about [Consumer Sentiment™ data](#) or how [Spatialbuzz could help you connect with in-need customers faster and more efficiently](#), contact us.

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Isla was the first content manager at Ookla, working her way up to Sr. Director of Consumer Marketing in her 8+ years with the company.