J.D. Power Reports: Tablet and Mobile Broadband Devices Generate Increased Data Quality Issues as Usage Patterns and Customer Expectations Impact Problem Incidence

Verizon Wireless Ranks Highest in Wireless Network Quality Performance in Five Regions; AT&T Ranks Highest in One Region

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif: 28 August 2014 — The incidence of data quality problems has risen for the first time in more than four years as the growing number of tablets and mobile broadband devices generates different usage patterns and network quality expectations from smartphone and feature phone device owners, according to the J.D. Power 2014 U.S. Wireless Network Quality Study™—Volume 2 released today.

Now in its 12th year, the semiannual study is based on 10 problem areas of the customer experience: dropped calls; calls not connected; audio issues; failed/late voicemails; lost calls; text transmission failures; late text message notifications; Web connection errors; slow downloads; and email connection errors. Network performance issues are measured as problems per 100 (PP100) network connections, with a lower score reflecting fewer problems and better network performance. Carrier performance is examined in six geographic regions: Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, North Central, Southwest and West. In addition to evaluating the network quality experienced by customers with wireless phones, the study now also measures the network performance of tablets and mobile broadband devices.

Verizon Wireless ranks highest in five regions; Northeast, Southeast, North Central, Southwest and West, with typically lower PP100 scores in call quality, messaging quality and data quality areas. AT&T ranks highest in the Mid-Atlantic region with lower PP100 scores in data quality issues.

“The ability to provide a high-quality experience with the network is largely dependent on how well carriers understand usage patterns and customer expectations of the network,” said Kirk Parsons, senior director and practice leader of telecommunications at J.D. Power. “While customers may be leveraging the same network across a multitude of devices—including smartphones, tablets and mobile broadband devices—their experience can be different given the variety of locations in which they are used and the different activities performed on each.”

According to Parsons, as usage of such devices as cellular tablets continues to grow, carriers that understand those dynamics will be better positioned to provide a more satisfying experience with the network, leading to higher levels of overall customer satisfaction, higher rates of retention, customer advocacy and return on investment.

KEY FINDINGS

- Overall wireless network quality problem incidence is 12 PP100 network connections. The overall problem rate is unchanged from the 2014 U.S. Wireless Network Quality Performance Study—Volume 1 (2014 Vol.1) and has been consistent since 2012.
Satisfaction with network quality among customers who have a cellular tablet is 33 points higher than among those without a cellular tablet (793 vs. 760 on a 1,000-point scale). Similarly, satisfaction with network quality is 17 points higher among customers with mobile broadband devices than among those without such a device (780 vs. 763, respectively).

On average, wireless customers experience 27 PP100 related to data quality on their mobile broadband device, followed by 20 PP100 for their tablet. This compares with just 16 PP100 for phones.

Both wireless call quality and wireless messaging quality have improved from 2014 Vol.1 (16 PP100 vs. 17 PP100; and 6 PP100 vs. 7 PP100, respectively). During that same time frame, however, problems with data networks have increased to 16 PP100 from 14 PP100 in 2014 Vol. 1.

In 2014 Vol. 2, 14 percent of wireless customers indicate having a tablet with a data plan from their wireless carrier, while 10 percent have a mobile broadband device, such as an aircard or hotspot.

When examining particular types of data problems, email connection errors occur more frequently on tablets than phones (17 PP100 vs. 6 PP100, respectively). In contrast, issues related to slow mobile Web connections are more likely to occur on phones (15 PP100) than mobile broadband devices (13 PP100) and tablets (12 PP100).

Cellular tablet owners are more willing to switch carriers if a competitor can offer faster, more reliable connections for a comparable price. In fact, while they are more satisfied overall, 29 percent of customers with cellular tablets say they “definitely will” or “probably will” switch their carrier within the next year, compared with just 15 percent of those without a cellular tablet.

The 2014 U.S. Wireless Network Quality Study—Volume 2 is based on responses from 26,205 wireless customers. The study was fielded between January and June 2014.

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Note: Six charts follow.
Northeast Region
Problems per 100 Mobile Device Interactions (PP100)

Verizon Wireless 11
T-Mobile 12
Northeast Average 12
AT&T 14
Sprint Nextel 16

Note: Included in the Northeast Region are Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont


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Mid-Atlantic Region
Problems per 100 Mobile Device Interactions (PP100)

- AT&T: 10
- Verizon Wireless: 11
- Mid-Atlantic Average: 12
- T-Mobile: 13
- Sprint Nextel: 15

Note: Included in the Mid-Atlantic Region are Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.


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Southeast Region
Problems per 100 Mobile Device Interactions (PP100)

Verizon Wireless
9

AT&T
12

Southeast Average
12

T-Mobile
14

Sprint Nextel
16

Note: Included in the Southeast Region are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee


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North Central Region
Problems per 100 Mobile Device Interactions (PP100)

Verizon Wireless 8

AT&T 11

North Central Average 11

T-Mobile 14

Sprint Nextel 15

JDPower.com
Power Circle Ratings℠
for consumers:

Note: Included in the North Central Region are Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin


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Southwest Region
Problems per 100 Mobile Device Interactions (PP100)

- Verizon Wireless: 9
- AT&T: 11
- Southwest Average: 12
- T-Mobile: 13
- Sprint Nextel: 15

Note: Included in the Southwest Region are Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas

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West Region
Problems per 100 Mobile Device Interactions (PP100)

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<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Problems per 100 Mobile Device Interactions (PP100)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Verizon Wireless</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>T-Mobile</td>
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<td>West Average</td>
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<td>AT&amp;T</td>
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<td>Sprint Nextel</td>
<td>18</td>
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Note: Included in the West Region are Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington and Wyoming


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