

### **Incidence of Wireless Network Problems Dramatically Higher in Urban Areas Driven by Young, High-Usage Customers**

[Verizon Wireless Ranks Highest in Wireless Network Quality Performance in Five Regions; U.S. Cellular Ranks Highest in North Central Region](#)

**COSTA MESA, Calif.: 25 Aug. 2016** — Wireless customers living in urban areas experience the highest number of overall network problems and have lower tolerance of those problems, according to the J.D. Power 2016 U.S. Wireless Network Quality Performance Study<sup>SM</sup>—Volume 2, released today. The finding underscores the importance of continued investment by carriers in urban areas as the use of 4G LTE compatible smartphones grows and customers expect faster data speeds.

Now in its 14th 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/app connection errors; slow downloads/apps; and email connection errors. Network performance issues are measured as problems per 100 (PP100) connections, with a lower score reflecting fewer problems and higher overall performance.

According to the study, customers living in urban areas experience the highest number of overall network problems, at 15 PP100 vs. 12 PP100 among those living in rural areas and 10 PP100 among those living in suburban areas. The high level of problems in urban locales exists across all network problem areas. For example, customers living in urban areas experience more calling problems than those living in rural or suburban areas (19 PP100 vs. 13 PP100, respectively); messaging problems (8 PP100 vs. 5 PP100); and data problems (20 PP100 vs. 15 PP100).

Also contributing to the high incidence level is that urban areas have a much higher proportion of younger wireless subscribers. The overall number of network quality problems is 17 PP100 among customers 18-34 years old vs. 10 PP100 among those 35 years and older. Younger customers experience higher rates of problems because they are heavy users of their devices. For example, customers 18-34 received, on average, 39 text messages during the previous 48 hours vs. 14 text messages among those 35 years and older. Similarly, customers 18-34 connected to an app on their phone 15 times, on average, during the previous 48 hours vs. seven times among those 35 and older.

“Enhancing network performance to ensure customers consistently experience a high-quality connection—especially those living in urban areas—can substantially improve loyalty for wireless carriers,” said **Kirk Parsons, senior director and technology, media & telecom practice leader at J.D. Power**. “This can be accomplished by improving bandwidth efficiency, data connection speeds and reliability. To retain customers, carriers need to proactively expand and upgrade networks to align with the latest generation of services and devices, particularly those that rely on data speed and consistent connections, such as broadband devices.”

This holds true knowing that urban customers are especially likely to defect when they experience a high number of network problems. More than one-third (37%) of customers in urban areas who experience

overall network problems at a higher incidence than 12 PP100 say they “definitely will” switch carriers in the next 12 months, compared with 17% among suburban customers and 21% among rural customers.

Following are some other key findings of the 2016 Vol. 2 Study:

- **Overall Wireless Network Quality Remains Steady:** Overall wireless network quality problem incidence is 12 PP100, which is on par with the incidence measured six months ago in the 2016 Vol. 1 Study.
- **Data Quality Varies by Device:** On average, wireless customers experience the highest number of data quality problems when using a mobile broadband device (30 PP100), followed by a tablet (19 PP100) and phone (11 PP100).
- **Incidence of 4G-Enabled Devices Increasing:** More than eight in 10 (81%) smartphone owners indicate using a 4G-enabled device, compared with 59% just two years ago.
- **Customers Becoming Less Tolerant:** Nearly one-fourth (24%) of customers who experienced overall network problems at an incidence of more than 12 PP100 say they “definitely will” switch carriers vs. 21% last volume.

### Study Rankings

Metropolitan service areas with the fewest network quality problems (8 PP100 each) are Charlotte, N.C.; Cincinnati, Ohio; St. Louis, Mo.; and Hartford, Conn. San Jose, Calif., has the highest number of reported network quality problems at 23 PP100.

**Verizon Wireless** ranks highest in five of the six regions, with typically lower PP100 scores than the regional averages in call quality, messaging quality and data quality. **U.S. Cellular**, absent from the study since 2014, ranks highest in the North Central region and excels in most network problem areas, especially call quality and data quality.

The 2016 U.S. Wireless Network Quality Performance Study—Volume 2 is based on responses from 43,300 wireless customers. 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 also measures the network performance of tablets and mobile broadband devices. The study was fielded January through June 2016.

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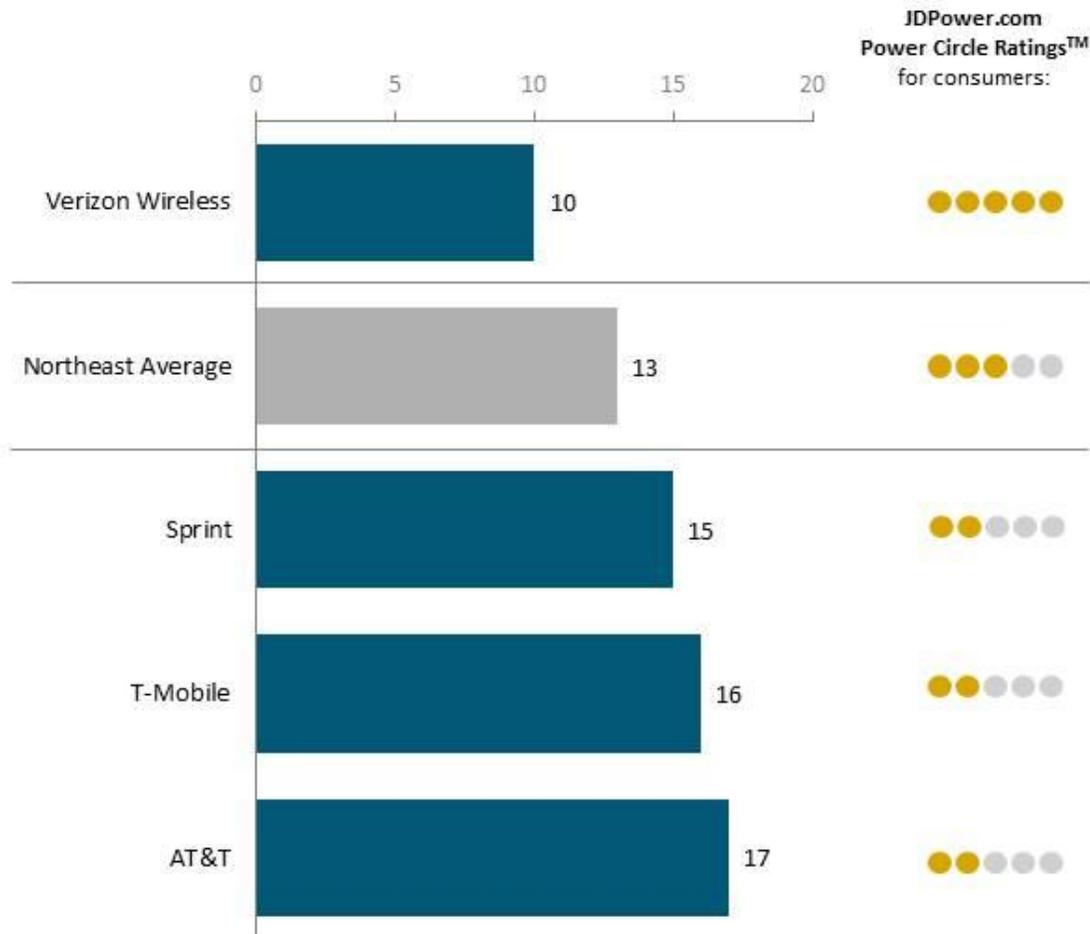
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Note: Seven charts follow.

# J.D. Power 2016 U.S. Wireless Network Quality Performance Study<sup>SM</sup> — Volume 2

## Northeast Region

Problems per 100 (PP100) Mobile Connections



**Power Circle Ratings Legend**

- Among the best
- Better than most
- About average
- The rest

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

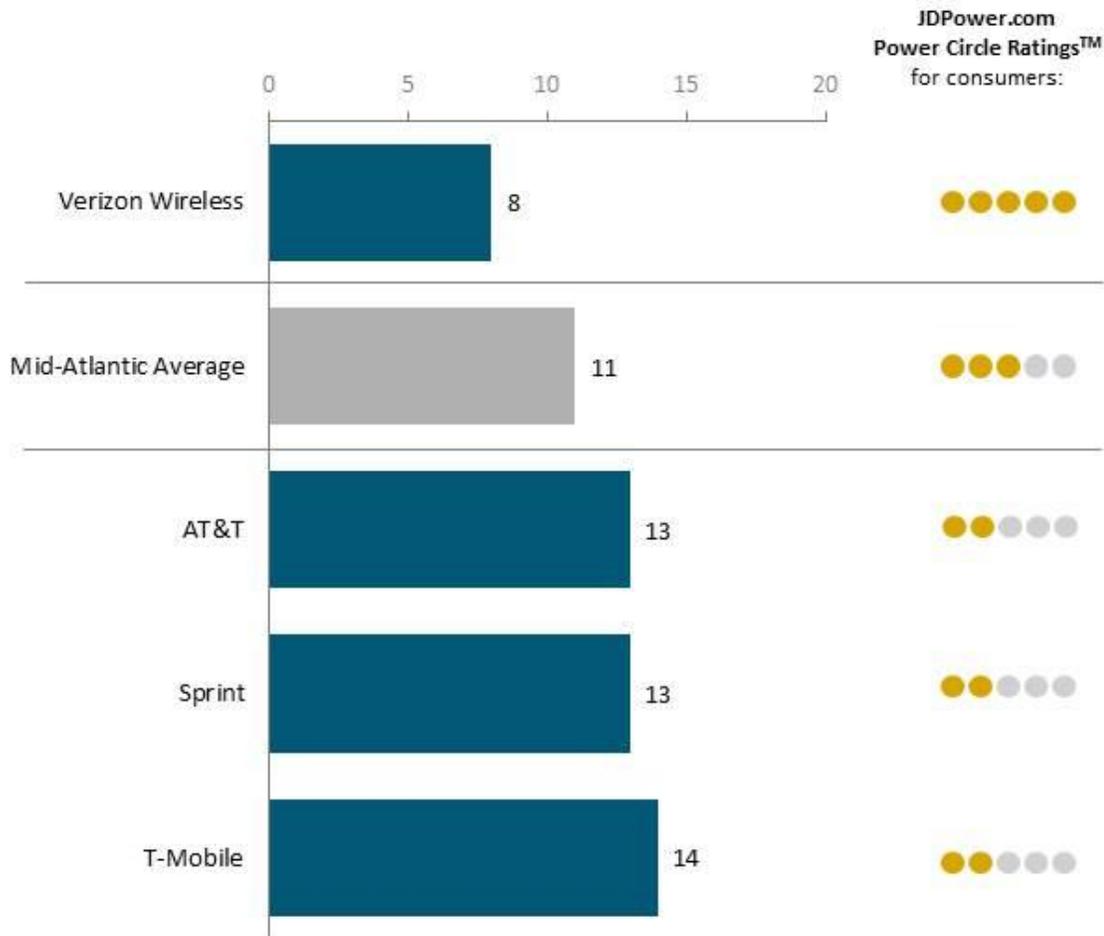
Source: J.D. Power 2016 U.S. Wireless Network Quality Performance Study<sup>SM</sup>—Volume 2

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## Mid-Atlantic Region

*Problems per 100 (PP100) Mobile Connections*



**Power Circle Ratings Legend**

- Among the best
- Better than most
- About average
- The rest

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

*Source: J.D. Power 2016 U.S. Wireless Network Quality Performance Study<sup>SM</sup>—Volume 2*

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## Southeast Region

*Problems per 100 (PP100) Mobile Connections*



**Power Circle Ratings Legend**

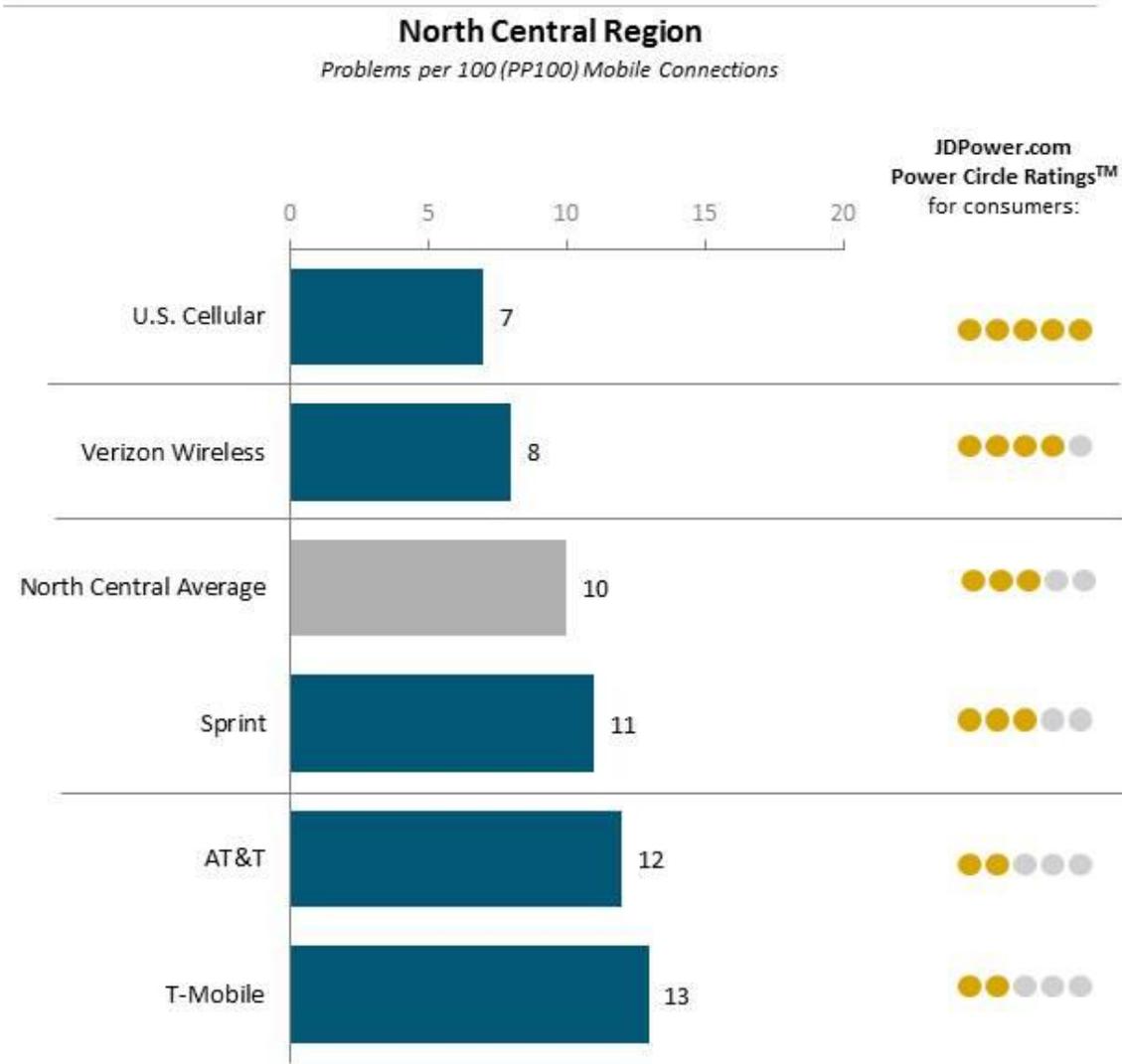
- Among the best
- Better than most
- About average
- The rest

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

*Source: J.D. Power 2016 U.S. Wireless Network Quality Performance Study<sup>SM</sup>—Volume 2*

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**Power Circle Ratings Legend**

- Among the best
- Better than most
- About average
- The rest

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

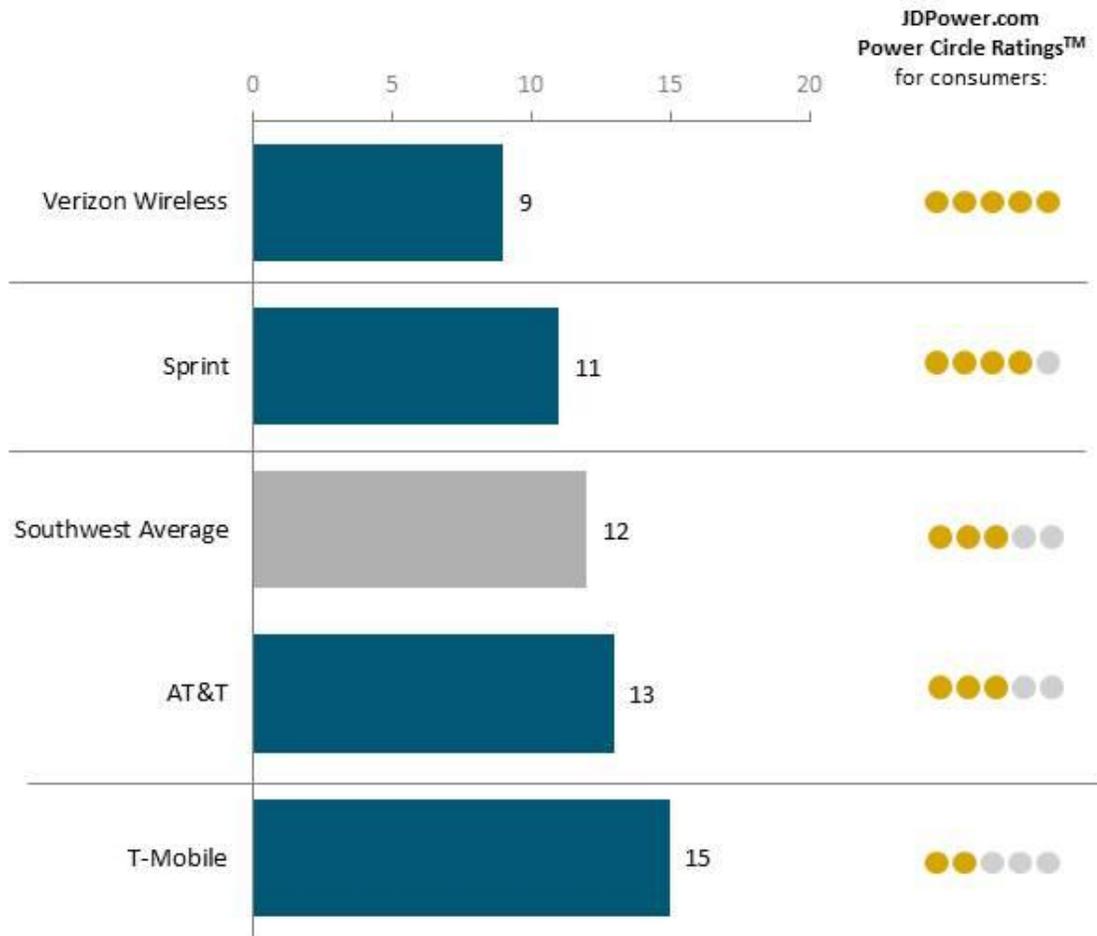
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## Southwest Region

*Problems per 100 (PP100) Mobile Connections*



**Power Circle Ratings Legend**

- Among the best
- Better than most
- About average
- The rest

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

*Source: J.D. Power 2016 U.S. Wireless Network Quality Performance Study<sup>SM</sup>—Volume 2*

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## West Region

Problems per 100 (PP100) Mobile Connections



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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**J.D. Power  
2016**

**U.S. Wireless Network Quality Performance Study<sup>SM</sup> –Volume 2**

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**Award-Eligible Carriers Included in the Study**

<u>Company Name</u>	<u>Business Leader Name</u>	<u>U.S. Company Location</u>
AT&T	Glenn Lurie	Atlanta, Ga.
Sprint	Marcelo Claure	Overland Park, Kan.
T-Mobile	John Legere	Bellevue, Wash.
U.S. Cellular	Kenneth R. Meyers	Chicago, Ill.
Verizon Wireless	John Stratton	New York, N.Y.

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