



Consumer Affairs Branch

SECOND QUARTER REPORT-2023

September 5, 2023



**California Public
Utilities Commission**

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About This Report

This quarterly report highlights consumer issues related to telecommunications, electric, natural gas, and water utilities regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).

Unless otherwise noted, the data presented in this report are based on inquiries and complaints received by the Consumer Affairs Branch (CAB) from April through June 2023.

This Report details Q2-2023 highlights:

- [CAB Returned More Than \\$568,212 to Consumers in the Q2-2023](#)
- [CAB Received 6,551 Consumer Contacts](#)
- [CAB Assisted About 3,018 Consumers Resolve Complaints](#)

CAB Analysts

1. Muhammad Ahmad
2. Love Asiedu-Akrofi
3. Ravinder Mangat
4. Linette Young

Editors

Terrie Prosper – Director, News and Outreach Office

Clover Sellden – Program Manager, Consumer Affairs Branch, News and Outreach Office

About The Consumer Affairs Branch

The Consumer Affairs Branch (CAB) resides within the News and Outreach Office at the CPUC. CAB is responsible for supporting the diverse needs of consumers. CAB provides the following services:

- Resolves consumer questions or complaints about their regulated telecommunications, natural gas, electric, and water utility services.
- Resolves appeals for California LifeLine, a discounted phone program.
- Administers Limited English Proficiency (LEP) programs that assist consumers with telecommunications and energy issues.
- Analyzes contact data to assist CPUC decision-makers, supports enforcement against fraud and abuse and informs the public.

Consumer Refunds – CAB Returned \$568,212 To Consumers

In the Q2-2023, consumers were reimbursed **\$568,212** from the utilities by reaching out to CAB and utilizing the Informal Complaint (IC) process. An IC is a written consumer contact expressing dissatisfaction with or

a dispute with an action or practice that is regulated through tariffs, rules, orders, or any other form of authority that originates from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).¹

Many of the refunds were the result of incorrect billing and were disbursed by the utility following CAB’s involvement. The average refund in Q2 by industry: Telecommunications **\$342**, Energy **\$1,008**, Water **\$918**.

Table 1: Consumer Refunds by Industry² and Quarter

Industry	2022		2023	
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Energy	\$425,366	\$431,915	\$575,080	\$400,065
Telecommunications	\$137,585	\$99,029	\$94,673	\$146,110
Water	\$4,344	\$19,435	\$18,408	\$22,037
Total	\$567,295	\$550,379	\$688,161	\$568,212

SECOND QUARTER REFUND HIGHLIGHTS

- AT&T bill issue.** The customer received a reminder mailing from AT&T dated 2/17/23 advising her that her current plan would expire on 3/25/23 after which time my rates would increase. However, on 2/10/23 her billing showed an increase from the previous month. The bill increased from \$75.56 to \$227.25. This reflects an increase of \$151.69 well before the rate increase in their mailing was set to take place on 3/25/23. The customer wanted AT&T to honor the information they sent her and not assess additional fees. The plan was canceled on 3/10/2023.

AT&T investigated and determined that the customer’s local service term agreement ended on 01/26/2023, and her local service was changed to the guidebook pricing beginning with the 02/10/2023 statement. However, the system showed that the customer’s promotional discount was valid until 03/2023. On the 02/10/2023 statement under the Plans and Services section, AT&T notified her that her 12-month promotional discount would expire in 03/2023. AT&T records showed that the customer ported her service to another provider on 03/09/2023. To resolve the matter, AT&T honored the term agreement pricing and issued a courtesy credit of \$171.66.

- SCE bill issue.** The customer said she was being overbilled on her Level Pay Plan. She paid the full balance of \$644.87 in November 2022, but that balance was added back to her account in December 2022. Additionally, the consumer experienced considerable issues with SCE’s customer service. She states that she contacted SCE monthly for four straight months. During months one through three, she was told this is being investigated. During the fourth month, on 1/10/23, she contacted SCE again and after waiting on hold for over four hours, she was told that the level pay plan is fraught

¹ In comparison to an IC, the CPUC has a Formal Complaint (FC) process. A FC is a written legal document that claims a utility regulated by the CPUC has violated state laws or the CPUC’s orders or rules. A FC describes these violations, the injury suffered, because of them, and the resolution requested from the CPUC and is overseen by an Administrative Law Judge. CAB focuses on ICs and presents results of Q1 in this report.

² This table only accounts for refunds through the IC process. Cases where a phone contact was transferred to a utility for expedited resolution are not reflected here.

with issues but that she owed the money anyway. After an hour on the call with the SCE representative, and getting nowhere with my position, she felt she had no choice but to agree to a repayment plan.

SCE responded to the customer apologizing for any frustrations she may have experienced while attempting to resolve this matter with SCE. SCE researched and verified the settlement amount in question of \$644.87 was paid on 10/19/21. This amount was reversed and will be reflected on the next billing statement. The correct amount of \$138.51 would have been the customer’s settlement amount for 2022. As a courtesy, SCE waived the \$138.51.

- **Liberty Utilities water meter and billing issue.** The customer contacted CAB and stated that frequently he receives high water bills. The customer previously contacted Liberty and was told that there was an issue with the meter. The problem with the meter was intermittent. The consumer was out of town for a month, no one was in the house. The customer turned off the main water valve before he left, and still got a bill for \$196.80.

Liberty reread the customer’s meter. Field staff saw a possible leak; the meter was moving at .8GPM and concluded the meter was overestimated. To correct the matter, Liberty canceled the customer’s bill dated 02/15/23 for \$196.80 and rebilled for the correct usage on 03/23/23 for \$88.75.

CAB RECEIVED 6,551 CONSUMER CONTACTS

CAB’s team of representatives are responsible for assisting consumers with answering questions and resolving disputes with their utility providers. These contacts are received via phone calls, letters, or the Internet. In Q2-2023, CAB received **6,551 contacts**³ (see **Figure 1** below). **Table 2** below shows that Energy accounted for **approximately 53 percent (rounded up)** of the total industry contacts during Q2. **36 percent** of the contacts were related to Telecommunications, and the remaining **11 percent** of the contacts were distributed among Water, Transportation, and Non-Regulated utilities.

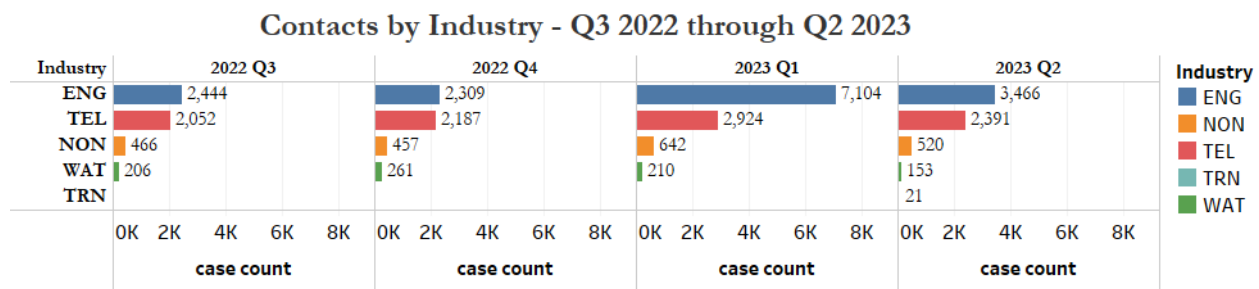


Figure 1: Consumer Contacts by Industry and Quarter

³ For the purposes of this report “Total Contacts” is calculated as all contacts received during the time period. Contacts where either the industry is not identified and/or the contacts is identified as “Misdirected”. Misdirected means that the consumer contacted the CPUC by mistake.

During Q2-2023, Billing issues accounted for **37 percent** of the contacts across all industries. The second and third most common category of issues were Not Regulated – No Jurisdiction, at **19 percent** and Service also at **19 percent** (see **Table 2** below).

CAB began receiving Transportation consumer contacts in June 2023. CAB will continue to report on the Transportation contacts it receives in future quarterly reports. CAB’s role is to accept all consumer contacts related to Transportation, perform triage to determine which contacts can be resolved by CAB and which contacts need to be referred to Transportation Enforcement.

Table 2: Consumer Contacts by Category and Industry – Q2 2023

Category	2023 Q2						Total	% of Total (All contacts)
	Energy	Non Jurisdictional	Telecommunications	Transportation	Water			
Billing	1725	15	585	n/a	86	2411	37%	
Lifeline	n/a	n/a	687	n/a	n/a	687	10%	
Not Regulated - No Jurisdiction	297	477	444	1	25	1244	19%	
Policy and Practices	300	10	106	n/a	10	426	7%	
Public Purpose Programs	425	6	1	n/a	0	432	7%	
Rates	56	2	1	n/a	3	62	1%	
Service	663	10	567	n/a	29	1269	19%	
Transportation	n/a	n/a	n/a	20	n/a	20	0%	
Total	3466	520	2391	21	153	6551	100%	
% of Total (All industries)	53%	8%	36%	0%	2%			

CAB ASSISTED 3,018 CONSUMERS RESOLVE INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

CAB’s Informal Complaints (ICs) are written complaints⁴ about issues under the CPUC’s jurisdiction, and CAB has the authority to act as an intermediary between the consumer and the regulated utility to resolve the consumer’s issues. The IC process allows consumers an easily accessible way to resolve disputes with their utility. In the Q2-2023, CAB resolved **3,018** ICs, see **Figure 2** below. Of the ICs closed in Q2, **72 percent** were for Energy ICs, **26 percent** were for Telecommunications ICs, and the remaining **2 percent** were attributed to Water ICs.

⁴ Written complaints means that CAB received the consumer’s complaint from a written source such as letter, email, web, and faxed.

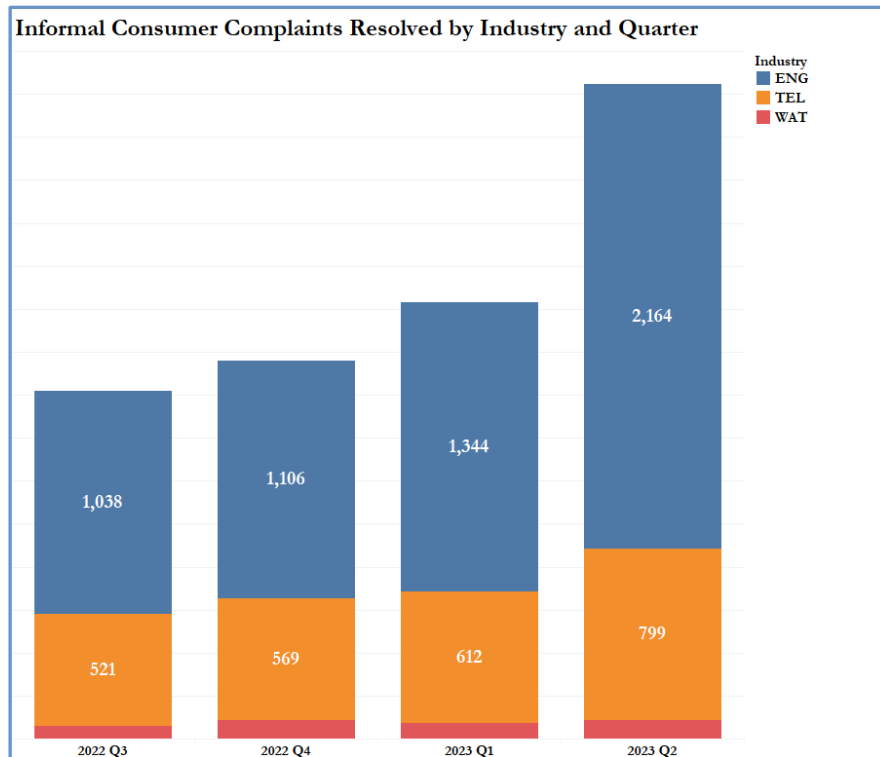


Figure 2: Informal Consumer Complaints Resolved by Industry and Quarter

When Informal Complaints are closed, they are assigned a case disposition. The disposition summarizes the results of the case. Cases are resolved *In Consumer Favor*, when it is determined that the utility made an error, or failed to comply with commission orders, tariffs, and decisions. Cases are resolved *In Favor of Utility* when, after review of the facts of the case, CAB finds that the utility did not make an error and was in compliance with commission orders etc. The disposition, *Discretion Utility*, usually occurs when it is determined that while the utility was not out of compliance, the utility, for example, issues a courtesy bill adjustment. When the disposition, *Compromise*, is identified, the disposition indicates that both parties in the dispute had valid arguments, and both the utility and the consumer came to an amicable agreement.

Table 3 below shows the distribution of the above-described dispositions for the Energy, Telecommunications, and Water utilities. The table shows during Q2, Energy ICs were decided in favor of the utility **63 percent** of the time while Telecommunications ICs were decided in favor of consumers **64 percent** of the time. Water utility related ICs were resolved in favor of the utilities **57 percent** of the time.

Table 3: Informal Consumer Informal Complaints Resolved by Industry and Disposition

Informal Complaint Disposition Statistics by Industry									
Industry	Disposition	2022 Q3		2022 Q4		2023 Q1		2023 Q2	
ENG	In Favor of Utility	542	53%	608	56%	801	60%	1,352	63%
	In Consumer Favor	450	44%	463	42%	474	36%	725	34%
	Discretion Utility	18	2%	5	0%	43	3%	32	1%
	Compromise	19	2%	18	2%	14	1%	42	2%
	Total	1,029	100%	1,094	100%	1,332	100%	2,151	100%
TEL	In Favor of Utility	162	32%	176	32%	174	29%	232	30%
	In Consumer Favor	299	59%	341	61%	390	65%	502	64%
	Discretion Utility	33	7%	28	5%	28	5%	32	4%
	Compromise	12	2%	12	2%	8	1%	18	2%
	Total	506	100%	557	100%	600	100%	784	100%
WAT	In Favor of Utility	31	53%	43	52%	38	53%	47	57%
	In Consumer Favor	25	43%	38	46%	33	46%	32	39%
	Discretion Utility	2	3%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%
	Compromise	0	0%	14	1%	1	1%	3	4%
	Total	58	100%	95	100%	72	100%	83	100%
Total IC's Closed		1,593		1,746		2,004		3,018	

Table 4 below takes a deeper dive into the data showing the case disposition statistics by both Industry and Category. Telecommunications IC resolution stands out as consumers prevailed against their carriers in all complaint categories. Energy ICs show the consumers successfully challenging the utilities in the categories of Public Purpose Programs (CARE reinstatement) and Policy and Practices which includes mostly Abusive Marketing and Safety complaints for Energy utilities. Water ICs showed no categories where consumers consistently prevailed over their water company.

Table 4: Informal Consumer Disposition Statistics by Industry and Category⁵

Informal Complaint Disposition Statistics by Industry and Category						
Industry	Category	Disposition	Total Closed Q3 2022 - Q2 2023	% of Dispositions Q3 2022 - Q2 2023	Total Closed Q2 2023	% of Dispositions Q2 2023
ENERGY	Billing	IN FAVOR OF UTILITY	2,779	61%	983	66%
		IN CONSUMER FAVOR	1649	36%	466	31%
		DISCRETION UTILITY	74	2%	18	1%
		COMPROMISE	56	1%	25	2%
		Total	4,558	100%	1,492	100%
	Policy and Practices	IN FAVOR OF UTILITY	203	46%	86	59%
		IN CONSUMER FAVOR	222	50%	53	36%
		DISCRETION UTILITY	8	2%	2	1%
		COMPROMISE	11	2%	5	3%
		Total	444	100%	146	100%
	Public Purpose Programs	IN FAVOR OF UTILITY	79	35%	23	32%
		IN CONSUMER FAVOR	139	62%	47	64%
		DISCRETION UTILITY	3	1%	0	0%
		COMPROMISE	5	2%	3	4%
		Total	226	100%	73	100%
	Service	IN FAVOR OF UTILITY	894	55%	258	59%
		IN CONSUMER FAVOR	681	42%	157	36%
DISCRETION UTILITY		35	2%	12	3%	
COMPROMISE		29	2%	9	2%	
	Total	1,639	100%	436	100%	
	Total Energy	6867	68%	2,151	71%	
TELCO	Billing	IN FAVOR OF UTILITY	427	34%	109	35%
		IN CONSUMER FAVOR	707	57%	179	58%
		DISCRETION UTILITY	83	7%	12	4%
		COMPROMISE	31	2%	11	4%
		Total	1,248	100%	311	100%
	Policy and Practices	IN FAVOR OF UTILITY	86	36%	21	45%
		IN CONSUMER FAVOR	137	57%	23	49%
		DISCRETION UTILITY	10	4%	3	6%
		COMPROMISE	6	3%	0	0%
		Total	239	100%	47	100%
	Service	IN FAVOR OF UTILITY	354	25%	102	24%
		IN CONSUMER FAVOR	966	69%	300	70%
		DISCRETION UTILITY	57	4%	17	4%
COMPROMISE		26	2%	7	1%	
	Total	1,403	100%	426	99%	
	Total Telecommunications	2,890	29%	784	26%	
WATER	Billing	IN FAVOR OF UTILITY	130	53%	29	54%
		IN CONSUMER FAVOR	104	43%	21	39%
		DISCRETION UTILITY	3	1%	1	2%
		COMPROMISE	6	2%	3	6%
		Total	243	100%	54	100%
	Policy and Practices	IN FAVOR OF UTILITY	30	73%	9	69%
		IN CONSUMER FAVOR	8	20%	4	31%
		DISCRETION UTILITY	1	2%	0	0%
		COMPROMISE	2	5%	0	0%
		Total	41	100%	13	100%
	Service	IN FAVOR OF UTILITY	35	49%	9	56%
		IN CONSUMER FAVOR	35	49%	7	44%
		DISCRETION UTILITY	2	3%	0	0%
	Total	72	100%	16	100%	
	Total Water	356	4%	83	100%	

⁵ The percentages in this table are shown as whole numbers, and because of that there is rounding error where in parts of the table the percentages don't add up to exactly 100%

ENERGY UTILITIES RECAP WITH Q2-2023 HIGHLIGHTS

This report reviews consumer contacts CAB received in Q2-2023 for all energy utilities and more specifically, the Top-10 utilities. In this case, being a member of the Top-10 means that CAB received the most contacts for these companies compared to all other energy companies regulated by the CPUC.

Energy Consumer Contacts Q2-2023

CAB received a total of **3,466** contacts related to energy utility companies in Q2-2023. The Top-10 energy utilities accounted for **96 percent** of total energy contacts. Most of the contacts were from Southern California Edison (SCE) customers and Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) customers, accounting for **41 percent** and **35 percent** of contacts respectively. Most of the contacts were related to high bills, customer service issues, net energy metering (NEM), delayed orders and payment arrangements disconnections for nonpayment. SCE’s spike in NEM complaints during the second quarter can be attributed to the April 15,2023 sunset of NEM 2.0, and consumer complaints about the newly launched Net Billing Tariff (NBT).

Table 5 below shows the breakout of Top-10 Energy Utilities by count and percent of the total.

Table 5: Top-10 Energy Utility Contact Statistics

Contacts	Q2 2023	% of Total
Total Energy Contacts	3,466	100%
Total Top-10 Utility Energy Contacts	3,319	96%
Top-10 Utility Name		
Southern California Edison Company	1,432	41%
Pacific Gas & Electric Company	1,204	35%
San Diego Gas & Electric Company	238	7%
Southern California Gas Company	216	6%
Spark Energy Gas LLC	55	2%
SFE Energy Inc.	44	1%
Vista Energy Marketing L.P.	42	1%
United Energy Trading LLC dba Collective Energy	38	1%
Bolt Energy Services LLC	27	1%
Southwest Gas Corporation	23	1%

Figure 3 below shows the relative impact that each of the Top-10 energy utilities had on CAB’s energy workload by volume of contacts. The chart was created by using the variables - utility name, case type, and case count. Each of the Top-10 utilities is represented by a unique color, which is replicated throughout this report, and the size of the bubbles are relative to the case counts for each utility and case type. In Q2-2023, CAB’s energy consumer contacts were dominated by SCE, PG&E and San Diego Gas & Electric consumers respectively. Most of CAB’s staff resources were allocated to these three companies. The

various case types represent different contact resolution processes, with Phone Contacts being the least time intensive, and ICs and Complaints⁶ being the most intensive.

CAB Work Distribution by Case Type and Utility Q2-2023

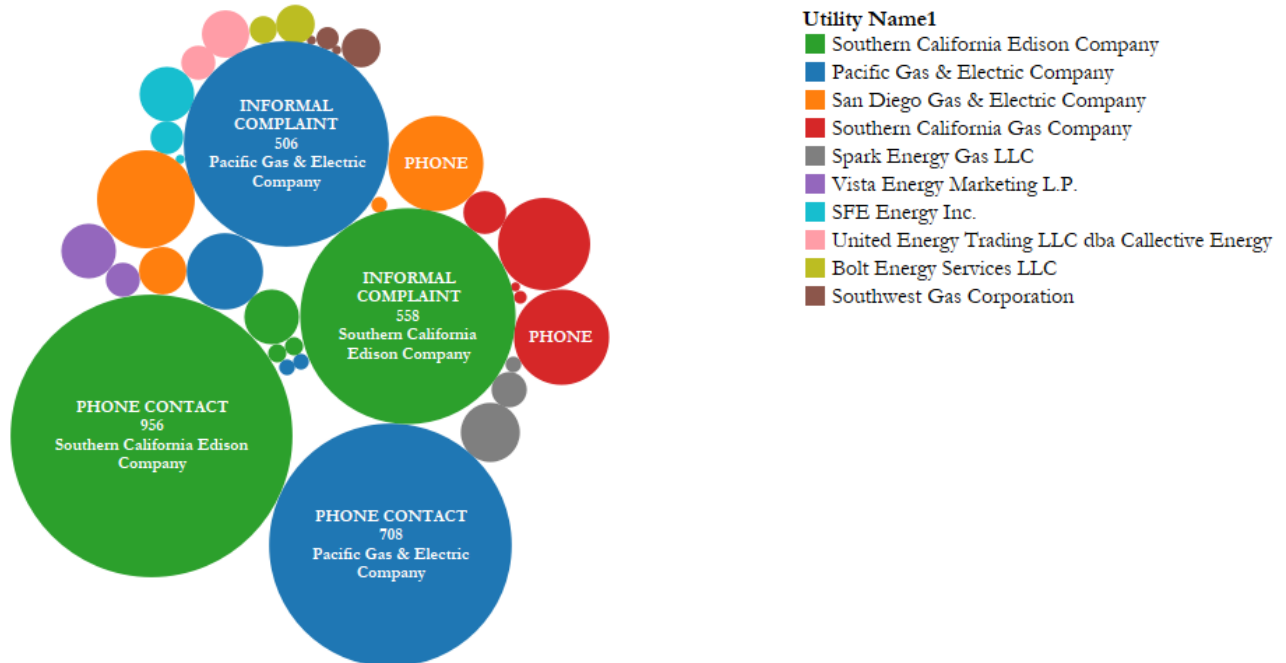


Figure 3: CAB Work Distribution by Case Type and Utility – Q2-2023

Table 6 below shows the ranking of the Top-10 Energy Utilities for Q2-2023, by the number of informal complaints submitted and the average utility response interval. When CAB sends an IC to a utility, the expectation is that the utility will respond to CAB within **20 calendar days** to resolve the IC. SCE had the largest average utility response interval, well over the **20-day** standard. SCE’s long utility response interval of **59 calendar days** may be due to the complex nature of billing complaints. SCE also continues to work on reducing complaint backlogs stemming from problems associated with transitioning to a new billing platform back in 2021. In contrast, PG&E, a similarly sized company responded to **536** ICs with an average response interval of only **14 calendar days**.

⁶ A consumer contact expressing dissatisfaction with or protesting an action or practice of the CPUC, or a regulated or non-regulated utility. The dispute may not be within the purview of the Consumer Affairs Branch to investigate, and the issue is best handled by another CPUC branch. The allegation is NOT sent to the utility for investigation and response, but handled as a referral to the appropriate utility, CPUC division, or closed outright with the appropriate letter of explanation.

Table 6: Top-10 Energy Utilities by Case Responses - Average Utility Response Intervals Q2-2023

Utility Name	Q2-2023 Count Utility Responses Rec'd	Q2-2023 Average Response Interval (Calendar Days)
Southern California Edison Company	578	59
Pacific Gas & Electric Company	536	14
Southern California Gas Company	172	30
San Diego Gas & Electric Company	108	22
United Energy Trading LLC dba Collective Energy	32	17
Tiger Natural Gas Inc.	20	20
West Coast Gas Company	20	61
Symmetry Energy Solutions, LLC	19	4
Spark Energy Gas LLC	17	26
Tiger Natural Gas, Inc.	15	56

Top-10 Subcategories for Top-10 Energy Companies for Q2-2023

Typically, when CAB reports case data by subcategory, we count cases and group them by “primary subcategory”. The primary subcategory is the first subcategory attributed to the complaint, and it represents the overarching reason the consumer contacted CAB. However, the CIMS database allows multiple subcategories to a case (attributes), which allows for a better description of the case and subsequent in-depth analysis.

In **Figure 4**, subcategory frequency represents the count of the number of times an individual subcategory was selected in the Q2-2023. High Bill was applied to **29 percent** of all contacts, followed by NJ Customer Service⁷ and Net Energy Metering (NEM) being applied to **21 percent** and **11 percent** respectively. Many of the NEM complaints were filed by customers who are upset about not being able to enroll in NEM 2.0 after April 15, 2023.⁸

⁷ NJ Customer Service subcategory applies to customer service-related issues such as being transferred from one person to another multiple times within one phone call, not being able to reach the correct department or someone who could deal with the issue, and rude utility representatives.

⁸ Since April 15, 2023, customers applying for interconnection have taken service on the new net billing tariff (NBT) pursuant to [D.22-12-056](#).

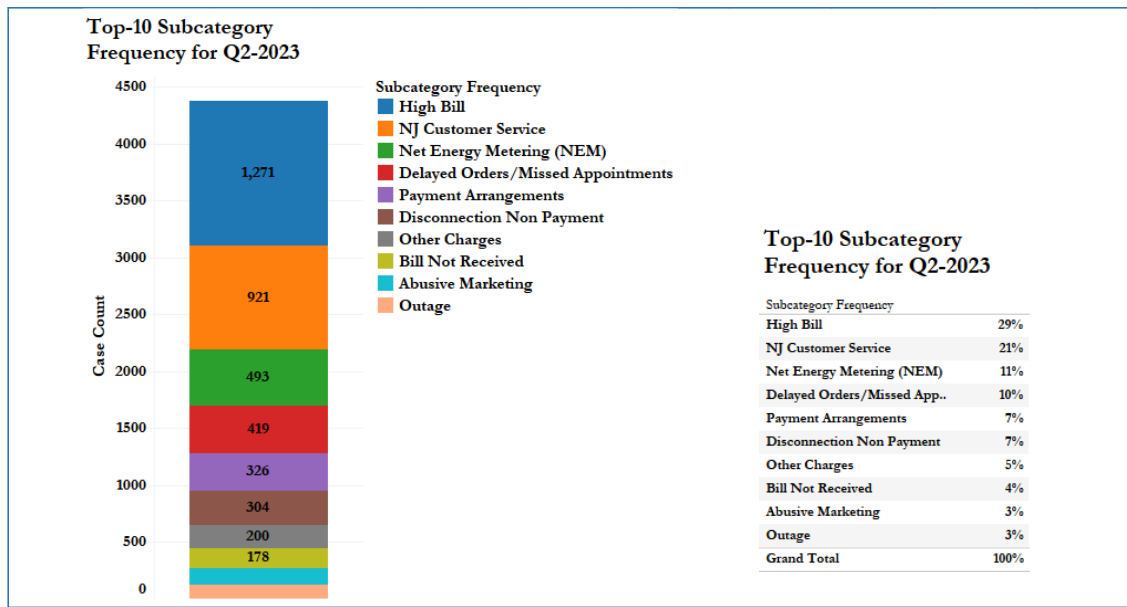


Figure 4: Top-10 Subcategory Frequencies for Energy Utilities Consumer Contacts

Figure 5 below shows the subcategory frequency distribution for the Top-10 energy utilities in the second quarter of 2023. A review of subcategory frequencies data reveals that SCE accounted for the largest number of subcategory choices for 8 out of the Top-10 subcategories including High Bill, NJ Customer Service, Net Energy Metering, Payment Arrangements, Disconnection Non-Payment, Other Charges, Bill Not Received and Outage.

PG&E dominates the Delayed Order/Missed Appointments subcategory, representing Net Energy Metering customers, among others, who are experiencing delays in obtaining Permission to Operate and account for 46 percent of the Delayed Order complaints.

Also noteworthy on this list are Spark Energy and SFE Energy, who accounted for 24 percent and 23 percent respectively of Abusive Marketing as a subcategory choice.

Subcategory Frequency for Top-10 Energy Utilities - % of Total

Utility Name	High Bill	NJ Customer Service	Net Energy Metering (NEM)	Delayed Orders/ Missed Ap..	Payment Arrangements	Disconnecti on Non Pay ment	Other Charges	Bill Not Received	Abusive Marketing	Outage
Southern California Edison Com..	43%	51%	55%	38%	49%	48%	46%	67%	1%	49%
Pacific Gas & Electric Company	33%	30%	37%	46%	43%	47%	32%	25%	7%	47%
San Diego Gas & Electric Com..	8%	6%	7%	5%	2%	1%	7%	6%		5%
Southern California Gas Company	9%	6%	0%	5%	4%	1%	4%	2%		
Spark Energy Gas LLC	2%	2%		2%	0%	0%	5%			24%
United Energy Trading LLC..	1%	2%	0%	2%			1%			15%
SFE Energy Inc.	1%	1%		2%			2%			23%
Vista Energy Marketing L.P.	1%	1%		1%	0%		1%	1%		20%
Bolt Energy Services LLC	1%	2%		1%			2%			9%
Southwest Gas Corporation	1%	1%			2%	3%	2%			1%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 5: Subcategory Frequency for Top-10 Energy Utilities - % of Total

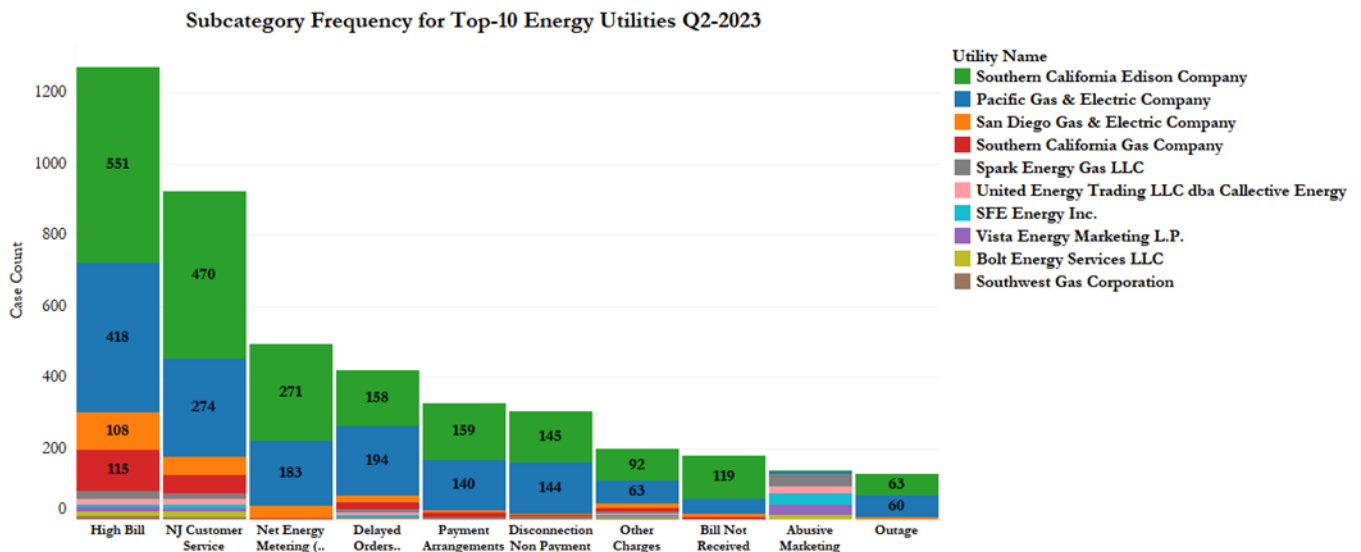


Figure 6: Top-10 Subcategory Frequencies for Top-10 Energy Utilities Consumer Contacts

Environmental Social Justice (ESJ) Consumer Contacts Q2-2023

The mission of the CPUC is to regulate essential utility services to protect consumers and safeguard the environment, assuring safe and reliable access to all Californians. CAB is committed to furthering the CPUC’s commitment to advance Environmental Social Justice (ESJ) principles by integrating ESJ considerations in our work.

The CPUC identifies ESJ communities as:

- Predominantly communities of color or low-income
- Underrepresented in the policy setting or decision-making process
- Subject to a disproportionate impact from one or more environmental hazards; and
- Likely to experience disparate implementation of environmental regulations and socio-economic investments in their communities

ESJ communities may also include:

- Disadvantaged Communities
- All Tribal Lands
- Low-income households (defined as household incomes below 80 percent of the area median income); and
- Low-income census tracts (defined as census tracts where aggregated household incomes are less than 80 percent of area or state median income)
- For the purposes of this report, CAB identifies ESJ communities using census tracts that score in the top 25 percent of CalEnviroScreen 4.0 and rolled them up to United States Postal Service (USPS) zip codes.

CalEnviroScreen is a mapping tool that helps identify California communities that are most affected by many sources of pollution, and where people are often especially vulnerable to pollution’s effects. The tool uses environmental, health, and socioeconomic information to produce scores for every census tract in the state. The scores are mapped so that the different communities can be compared. An area with a high CalEnviroScreen score is one that experiences a much higher pollution burden than areas with comparatively low scores. CalEnviroScreen ranks communities based on data that are available from state and federal government source. CalEnviroScreen 4.0 is the latest version and was last updated in October 2021.

CPUC defines Disadvantaged Communities pursuant to CalEnviroScreen 4.0 as census tracts that score in the top 25 percent of CalEnviroScreen 4.0, those that score within the highest 5 percent of CalEnviroScreen 4.0’s Pollution Burden but do not receive an overall CalEnviroScreen score, census tracts identified as Disadvantaged Communities in CalEnviroScreen 3.0, and areas under the control of federally recognized Tribes.

Figure 7 isolates these ESJ communities as defined above. This figure shows that a majority of the ESJ energy contacts reside in the central part of California. The color spectrum from blue (lowest) to red (highest) reflects the contact counts in the shaded areas. The map shows that a high number of contacts originated from disadvantaged communities in the East Bay, Central Valley and Southern California depicted on the map by shades of red.

**Total ESJ Energy Contacts
(75th to 100th Percentile)
Q2 2023**

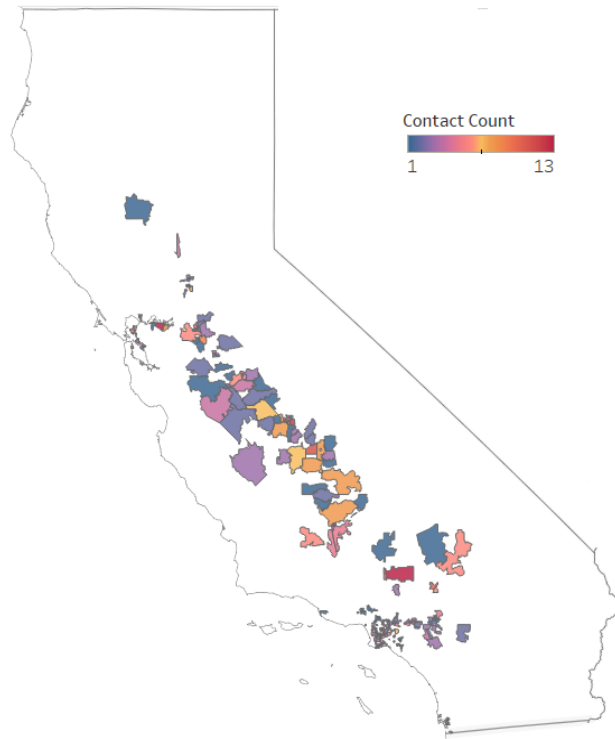


Figure 7: ESJ Energy Contacts In Top 25 Percentile of California Zip Codes

In the second quarter of 2023, CAB received **33,161** energy contacts from consumers. **712** of those are energy complaints that originated from residents in ESJ communities and represent **17 percent** of total contacts received as shown in **Table 7**.

Table 7: Percent of All Contacts received In Top 25 Percentile of California Zip Codes

Contacts	Q3 2022	Q4 2022	Q1 2023	Q2 2023	Total
Total Contacts	6,833	6,782	12,994	6,552	33,161
Total ESJ Energy Contacts (75th-100th percentile)	1,162	1,282	2,335	712	5,491
ESJ % of Total Contacts	17%	19%	18%	18%	17%

When we compare the number of ESJ energy contacts to the total number of energy contacts received in the same period in **Table 8**, **38 percent** of them represent residents of ESJ communities. CAB received a total of **3,466** energy contacts and **712** of them are contacts from ESJ communities.

Table 8: Percentage of Energy Contacts In Top 25 Percentile of California Zip Codes

Contacts	Q3 2022	Q4 2022	Q1 2023	Q2 2023	Total
Total Energy Contacts	2,621	2,527	7,605	3,466	16,219
Total ESJ Energy Contacts (75th-100th percentile)	1,162	1,282	2,335	712	5,491
ESJ % of Total Energy Contacts	44%	51%	31%	40%	34%

The overall decrease in the number of energy contacts from **7,605** in Q1 to **3,466** in Q2 in **Table 8** above is likely due to the stabilization of natural gas prices on the gas commodities market after seeing unprecedented high wholesale prices during last winter.

Table 9 is a summary of ESJ Billing category contacts, displayed by subcategories. A majority of the contacts received were related to High Bill and Payment Arrangements concerns. Also noteworthy is the reduction in ESJ High Bill contacts from **416** in Q1-2023 to **182** in Q2-2023. Payment Arrangements contacts may be high for ESJ contacts probably because residents in economically depressed areas with low incomes are more likely to seek payment arrangements to cover their utility bills.

Table 9: ESJ Billing Contacts by Subcategory

ESJ Billing Contacts by Subcategory					
Subcategory	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	% of Q2 Total
High Bill	119	124	416	182	49%
Payment Arrangements	14	23	33	45	12%
Other Charges	22	14	41	35	9%
Disputed Customer of Record	12	8	15	27	7%
Bill Not Received	16	27	24	23	6%
Estimated Billing	2	5	6	15	4%
Bill Adjustment	3	14	12	14	4%
Payment Error	9	8	9	9	2%
Energy Diversion	5	0	3	6	2%
Meter Inaccuracy	0	6	5	5	1%
Backbilling	4	2	5	3	1%
Crossed Meter Billing	0	1	1	3	1%
Balance/Level Pay Plan	0	3	2	2	1%
Meter Reading Issue	2	3	4	2	1%
Bill Format	0	0	4	1	0%
Deposits	4	1	1	1	0%
Early Termination Fee - ETF	2	2	3	1	0%
Late Payment Charge - LPC	1	1	0	1	0%
Electric Service Provider Contract Termination	1	0	0	0	0%
Master/Sub Meters	0	1	1	0	0%
Master/Sub Meters (Mobile Homes)	1	0	1	0	0%
Premise Visit Charges	0	1		0	0%
Grand Total	217	244	586	375	100%

TELECOMMUNICATIONS UTILITIES 12-MONTH RECAP WITH Q2-2023 HIGHLIGHTS

CAB received 1,701 contacts related to telecommunication utilities in Q2-2023 not including LifeLine related contacts. The Top-10 telecommunication utilities who received the most contacts accounted for **88 percent** of the total telecommunication contacts in this quarter. AT&T California received the most contacts in Q2, accounting for **32 percent** of the total number of contacts received against telecommunication companies.⁹

Table 9 shows the total number and percentage of contacts the Top-10 telecommunication utilities received in Q2-2023.

Table 10: Top-10 Telecommunication Utility Contact Statistics

Contacts and Top-10 Utilities	Q2 2023	
Total for Telecommunication Contacts	1,701	100%
Top-10 Utilities		
AT&T California	539	32%
Frontier California Inc.	291	17%
Verizon Wireless	137	8%
Comcast Phone of California, LLC	127	7%
Charter Fiberlink CA-CCO, LLC	104	6%
AT&T Mobility Wireless Operations Holdings Inc.	95	5%
T-Mobile West LLC	93	5%
Comcast OTR1, LLC	44	3%
TracFone Wireless, In	41	2%
Cox California Telecom LLC	19	1%
Total for Top-10 Telecommunication Contacts	1,490	88%

When we look at the data for the second quarter, we notice a clear change compared to the previous quarter. The initial increase in consumer contacts that was seen in January slowed down during the second quarter. Interestingly, as we can see, in **Figure 8** the total number of cases from April to June was **15 percent** lower than in the first quarter. This shows that there was a readjustment in the number of questions or issues people had.

It is worth noting that the Service category did not show big changes in the first and second quarters. On the other hand, there was a decrease in contacts related to LifeLine starting from April. Similarly, cases labeled as Not Regulated - No Jurisdiction followed the same pattern, with a small decrease in the second quarter.

The Policy & Practices category remained quite steady, with the number of cases staying about the same in both quarters. Additionally, cases related to Public Purpose Programs appeared here and there, showing that they were consistently present but not very frequently.

⁹ AT&T California is also known as Pacific Bell.

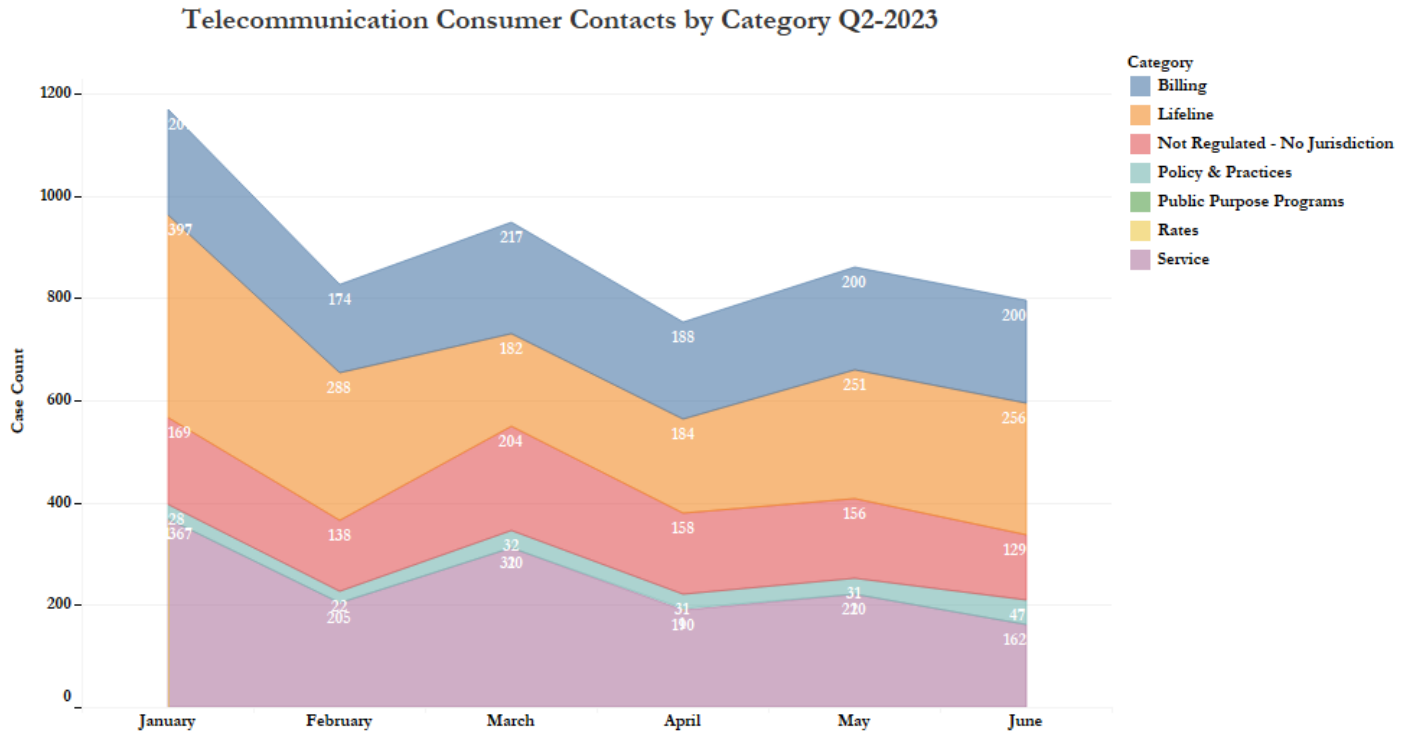


Figure 8: Top-10 Telecommunication Company Consumer Contacts by Category

Figure 9 illustrates the distribution of case counts for various utility companies during the months of April, May, and June. AT&T California consistently holds a significant share of both phone and written cases, representing around one-third of the total case count for each month. Frontier California Inc. follows as the second-largest contributor, with its percentage varying from month to month. Notably, the case count for both Verizon Wireless and Charter Fiberlink CA-CCO, LLC remains relatively steady across the three months. Comcast Phone of California, LLC, TracFone Wireless, Inc., and Cox California Telecom, LLC exhibit some fluctuations in their respective shares. Interestingly, the months of May and June show a peak in case counts for AT&T California, while other companies like Frontier California Inc. and Assurance Wireless USA, L.P. experience a decrease in their case counts during the same period. This data suggests that certain utility companies might experience seasonal variations or changes in customer service demands, potentially influenced by factors such as network issues, customer complaints, or service disruptions.

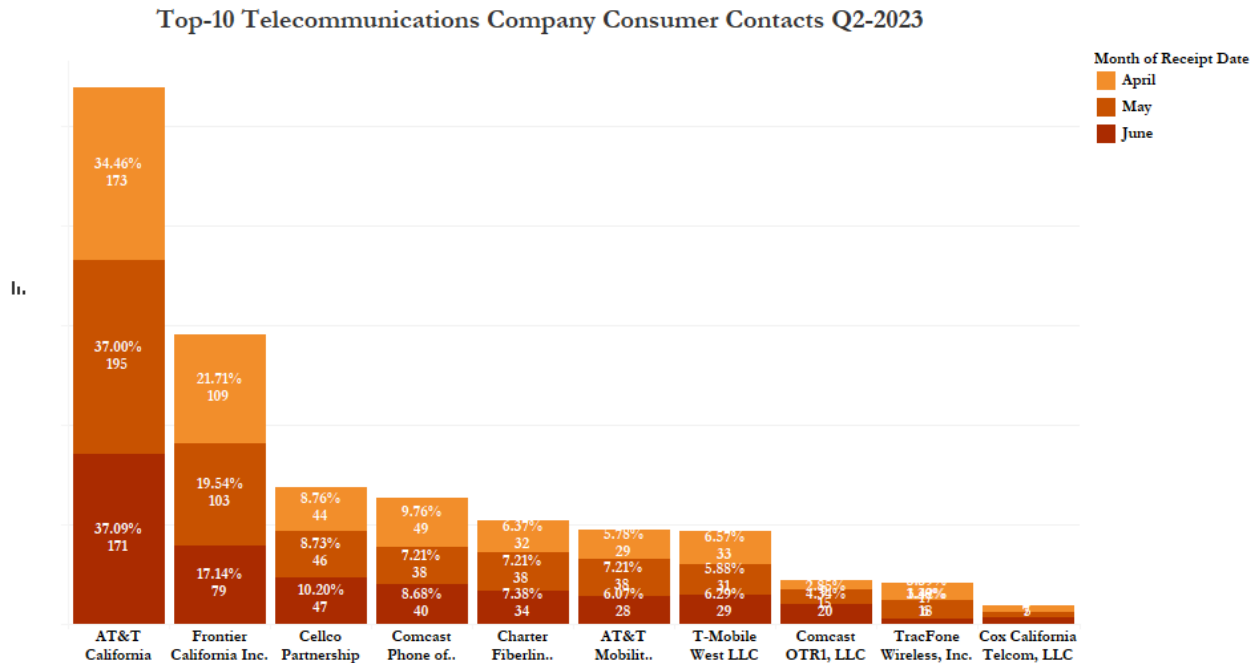


Figure 9: Telecommunication Company Consumer Contacts

Figure 10 represents the subcategory frequencies for the Top-10 telecommunication utilities in the Q2 of 2023. Several patterns and trends can be observed from the data. First, it appears that the subcategories NJ Equipment, NJ Internet Billing, High Bill, NJ Customer Service, Other Charges are prevalent across multiple utility companies, suggesting common issues faced within the telecommunication sector. The subcategory Outage is also significant, indicating instances of service disruptions, with some utilities experiencing higher case counts in this area. Notably, AT&T California seems to have a higher frequency across various subcategories, particularly in NJ Equipment, High Bill, and NJ Customer Service. On the other hand, Frontier California Inc. exhibits high case counts in NJ Customer Service, Delayed Orders/Missed Appointments, and Outage. This data could point towards specific areas of improvement needed by each utility, such as addressing customer service concerns or enhancing service reliability to reduce outage-related cases.

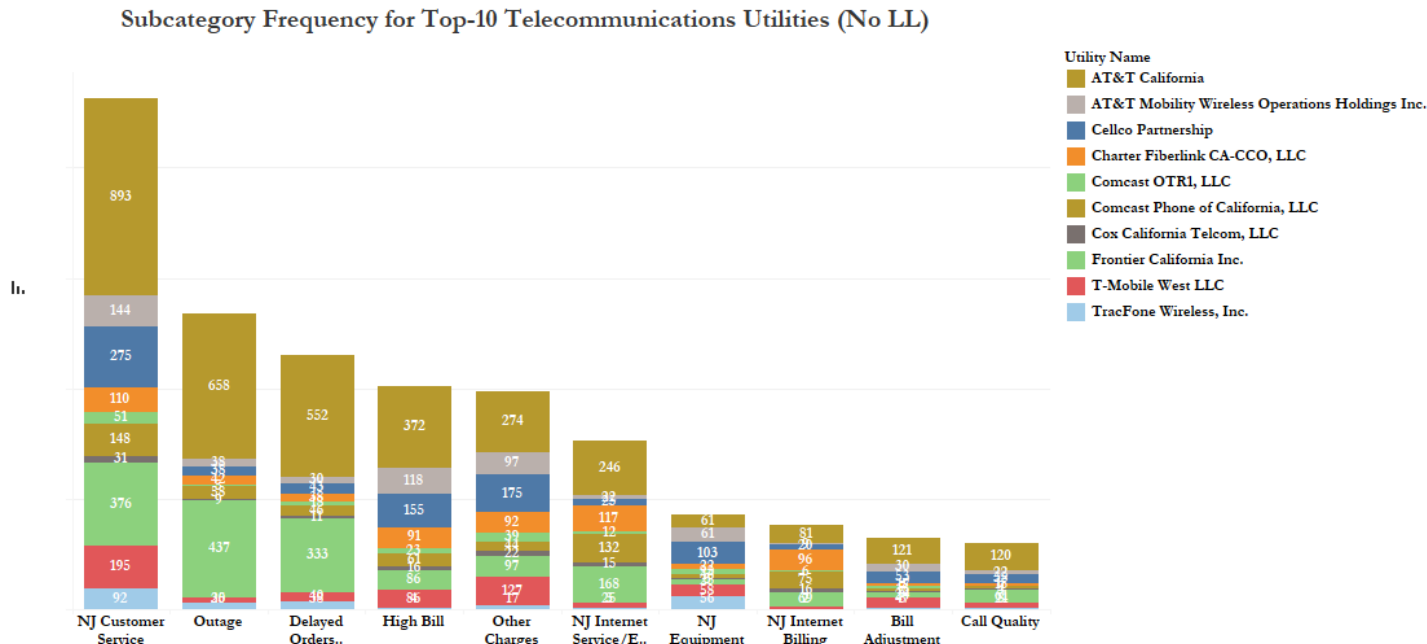


Figure 10: Subcategory Frequency for Top-10 Telecommunication Utilities for Q2-2023

LIFELINE

CAB has five dedicated California LifeLine specialists to assist consumers in answering inquiries and questions related to the LifeLine program. CAB also reviews appeals filed by consumers who were disqualified by the program’s Third-Party Administrator (TPA). Additionally, CAB facilitates LifeLine billing issues to service providers for investigation and resolution as necessary.

As shown in **Table 11**, a notable trend emerged in the LifeLine Assignment Pending cases, where there were three instances of cases received and successfully closed during this quarter. This suggests an effective handling of pending LifeLine assignments, contributing to a smoother consumer experience. In addition, LifeLine Billing cases displayed a consistent pattern of engagement, with **161** cases closed during Q2-2023. In Q2-2023, four complaints were closed, reflecting a focus on resolving issues and maintaining customer satisfaction. LifeLine Inquiry contacts, which are written consumer contacts requesting facts and information regarding LifeLine cases maintained a consistent trajectory as well, with **57** cases closed. Furthermore, LifeLine Landline Appeal cases, which are LifeLine cases related to landline (wireline) carriers showed a decline in closure rates compared to the previous quarter, possibly suggesting a shift in consumer preferences towards wireless options. The data highlights a particularly notable surge in LifeLine Phone Contacts which is when a consumer calls CAB in reference to concerns, questions, and complaints related to LifeLine. There were **309** LifeLine Phone Contact cases successfully closed cases, possibly indicating a rise in consumer contacting CAB due to changes in service preferences or billing concerns. This analysis of LifeLine contacts received and closed during Q2-2023 underscores the importance of effective consumer support and resolution mechanisms to address a diverse range of consumer needs and concerns.

Table 11: LifeLine Contacts Received and Closed

	2022		2023		% Change Q1 to Q2
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	
LifeLine Contacts Received					
Phone Contacts Received	144	190	213	309	45%
Written Contacts Received	218	459	629	388	62%
Total Contacts Received	362	649	842	697	82%
Top LifeLine Case Types Closed					
LifeLine Appeals	138	330	619	225	36%
LifeLine Billing Cases	249	279	322	161	50%

The Top-10 LifeLine subcategories in Q2-2023 are shown in **Figure 11**.

Cases related to LLB Federal Program/Equipment steadily increased from April to June 2023. This subcategory is selected when consumers have attempted to secure a free or discounted phone through their Federal LifeLine Wireless Carrier but either did not receive the equipment or received a defective handset. Another subcategory that rose consistently is LLB Approved for Discount services, a scenario where the consumers claim that they are not receiving the LifeLine discount but have already been confirmed by the LifeLine Administrator to receive the discount from this carrier with their number.

Conversely, instances of LL Documents Not Provided/Does Not Meet Guidelines decreased. This means CAB received a smaller number of complaints about consumers not receiving the correct documents or being rejected because they did not meet the annual income required to be enrolled in the LifeLine program.

For LLB Application Request (when consumer has attempted to request a new LL application from their carrier but has not received the form and CAB has verified that they are not pending in the Certifying Agents database as a new customer or as a customer attempting to get back onto the program) and LL Consumer Did Not Return Form (when application and other forms are either not received, or received after due date), these subcategories had relatively low numbers, with few cases in one month and a slightly higher count in another.

LL Policy/Practices contacts, where a LifeLine consumer expresses dissatisfaction with, or protests a LifeLine-related action or practice of a utility regulated by the CPUC remained relatively stable. LL Form Complexity (consumer finds the application form to be complex), and LL Initials Missing (consumer did not print their initials on the LifeLine application) also saw similar trends.

This data underscores changing consumer needs within the LifeLine program during Q2-2023.

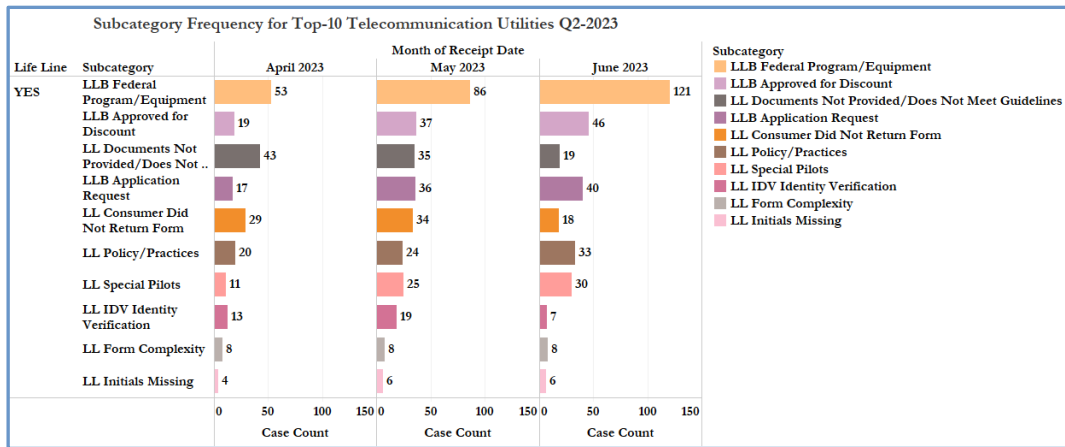


Figure 11: LifeLine Subcategory Frequency Comparison between April, May and June 2023

TEAM AND CHANGES

In addition to the consumer contacts handled by CAB, the Telecommunications Education and Assistance in Multiple-Languages ([TEAM](#)) and Community Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and Electric Services ([CHANGES](#)) programs overseen by CAB assist Limited English Proficient (LEP) consumers with telecommunications and energy issues, respectively.

The most recent TEAM and CHANGES contract was awarded to the non-profit organization Self-Help for the Elderly (SHE) from June 7, 2019, to June 6, 2022, with two one-year options to extend the contract. The CPUC is currently in the second option year and the contract is due to expire on June 6, 2024. TEAM is authorized for an annual budget up to **\$1.6 million**, and CHANGES is authorized up to **\$1.68 million** per year.

TEAM and CHANGES support LEP utility consumers statewide through **24** Community-based Organizations (CBOs) that offer services in their preferred language, and with cultural sensitivity. The CBOs provide consumer outreach, education, and case assistance (needs assistance and dispute resolution).

In Q2-2023, CBOs provided case assistance to **3,060 consumers**, for financial and other needs (e.g., CARE/LifeLine or other financial assistance programs), or with utility disputes. This was an increase of **2 percent** from the previous quarter, as shown in **Table 11**. CBOs also provide education on a range of topics to assist them in managing their utility services. In the first quarter, these education classes had an attendance of **26,156**, which was an increase of **21 percent** compared to the previous quarter.

Finally, the TEAM program helped consumers resolve disputes with their telecommunications provider that resulted in reclaiming almost **\$31,000** on their behalf in the second quarter. Over the last four quarters, CBOs reclaimed almost **\$99,000** from telecommunications providers on behalf of their TEAM clients.

Table 12: CBO Case Support and Education Services Provided and Amount Received

	2022		2023		
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Total
Individual Case Support	2,457	2,196	3,004	3,060	10,717
Education Provided	17,043	13,282	21,557	26,156	78,038
Amount Recovered (TEAM)	\$19,995	\$23,813	\$24,123	\$30,817	\$98,748

