



Shop around and save on your phone bill

By Jane Last

CONSUMERS can save as much as 90pc on phone calls if they switch from Ireland's biggest phone company Eircom, a new survey has shown.

Eircom's basic rates were compared to those of eleven competitors, and the price survey found that the former State-owned company is more expensive for landline calls and half of calls to mobiles.

EXPENSIVE

And customers who avail of Eircom's best package could still save up to 30pc if they opted to switch to a competitor like TalkTalk.

The Consumers Association of Ireland conducted the survey, looking at costs for landline and mobile calls.

In every single case, Eircom was more expensive when calling local, national or international landline numbers at any time of the day.

A weekend call to the US with Eircom costs 15.23c a minute - whereas a customer with Swift would pay 4c and customers with BT in Ireland would pay 7.99c.

Similarly, a weekday phone call to the UK costs 14.44c a minute with Eircom, 5c with Perlico and only 1.1c with TalkTalk.

National daytime calls cost 8.17c a minute with Eircom but 7.35c with UTV, 3.79c with BT Ireland and are free with Cinergi.

Daytime calls to Europe will set you back 24.20c with Eircom compared with 7c

with Worldlink and 8c with Perlico.

Monthly landline rental was either the same with Eircom or cheaper in most cases with minimum call charges always equal or less.

And Eircom is one of the most expensive when it comes to calling mobile phones from landlines.

Swiftcall operations director Luke Rafferty said his firm have over 60,000 households subscribing to it thanks to cheaper rates on offer since the mid-1990s.

REDUCED

"We have consistently reduced our prices for consumers while Eircom do it every two to three years maybe when someone new comes into the market," he said.

He added that greater competition was hampered by Eircom's ownership of the network of phone cables linking homes to exchanges across the country.

Eircom spokesperson Dearbhail Rossiter said the firm offers customers value for money.

"No other provider offers a wider range of packages or discounts - currently over 500,000 of our customers are on a discount package.

"Eircom has tailored phone packages with each one offering customers the ability to make significant savings," she added.

COMPETITORS

Although competitors offer more favourable rates than Eircom, it appears customers

are wary of making the switch.

Recent surveys commissioned by watchdog ComReg found that consumers and businesses were wary of changing over to competitors after the collapse of Smart Telecom.

Consumers are less likely to switch telecoms operators and more likely to remain with the incumbent provider.

The research also found that Eircom is now seen as a "private monopoly" with people perceiving them to have unfair control over the telecoms system in Ireland.

The survey showed that businesses and consumers who were considering moving from Eircom to an alternative provider are less likely to switch any time soon.

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CHEAP CHAT: Competitors beat the main phone company in almost all areas