

# **Utility Consumer Complaints**

## **2006 Annual Report**



## Table of Contents

### Page

1. Title Page
2. Table of Contents
3. Table of Contents
4. Complaint Percentages by Company
5. Type and Number of Complaints by District 2006
6. Year 2006 Consumer Complaints by Utility
7. 2006 Complaints by PSC District
8. Calls to PSC Toll-free complaints number and level of monthly utility consumer complaints 2004 -2005 -2006
9. Number of Calls (comparing 2005 and 2006)
10. Number of Complaints (comparing 2005 and 2006)
11. PSC Complaints from 2002 – 2006 by service type
12. Year 2006 PSC Consumer Complaints by Complaint Category

### Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers

13. Qwest Corporation 2006 Complaints
14. CenturyTel of Montana 2006 Complaints
15. Other Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers (ILECs) 2006 Complaints

### Competitive Local Exchange Carriers

16. McLeodUSA 2006 Complaints
17. Bresnan 2006 Complaints
18. Other Competitive Local Exchange Carriers (CLECs) 2006 Complaints

### Interexchange Carriers

19. AT&T 2006 Complaints
20. Qwest Long Distance Corporation 2006 Complaints
21. MCI 2006 Complaints
22. Sprint 2006 Complaints
23. Buzz Telecom 2006 Complaints
24. Other Interexchange Carriers (IXCs) 2006 Complaints

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25. Operator Services Providers & Inmate Calling Providers 2006 Complaints
  26. Non-Telco, Telco-Billed 2006 Complaints
  27. NorthWestern Energy 2006 Complaints
  28. Montana-Dakota Utilities 2006 Complaints
  29. Energy West 2006 Complaints
  30. Water Utilities 2006 Complaints

**Table of Contents (Cont.)****Page**

<b>31. PSC Complaints from 1994—2006 by service type</b>
<b>32. Analysis of Annual Data</b>
<b>33. Analysis of Annual Data</b>
<b>34. Analysis of Annual Data</b>
<b>35. Telecommunications Complaints from 1994—2006</b>
<b>36. Incoming 800 Calls 1997—2006</b>
<b>37. Energy Complaints 1994—2006</b>

### Complaint Percentages by Company

Qwest – 17.87%                      .06% (percentage of complaints compared to total MT access lines)  
 CenturyTel - 6.71%  
 Other ILECs - .59%  
 McLeodUSA - .69%  
 Bresnan— .30%  
 Other CLECs - 1.28%  
 Water Utilities - .69%  
 MDU - 16.88%                      .21% (percentage of complaints compared to total MT customers)  
 Energy West - 1.09%              .04% (percentage of complaints compared to total MT customers)  
 NorthWestern - 33.17%        .09% (percentage of complaints compared to total MT customers)  
 ICP - .10%  
 AT&T - 3.36%  
 Qwest LD - .49%  
 MCI—2.67%  
 Sprint— .49%  
 Buzz Telecom—5.53%  
 Other IXC's - 4.74%%  
 OSP - 1.38%  
 Globalyp.net— .69%  
 Other Non-Telco - 1.28%

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Total - 100%

#### Complaints by Service Type

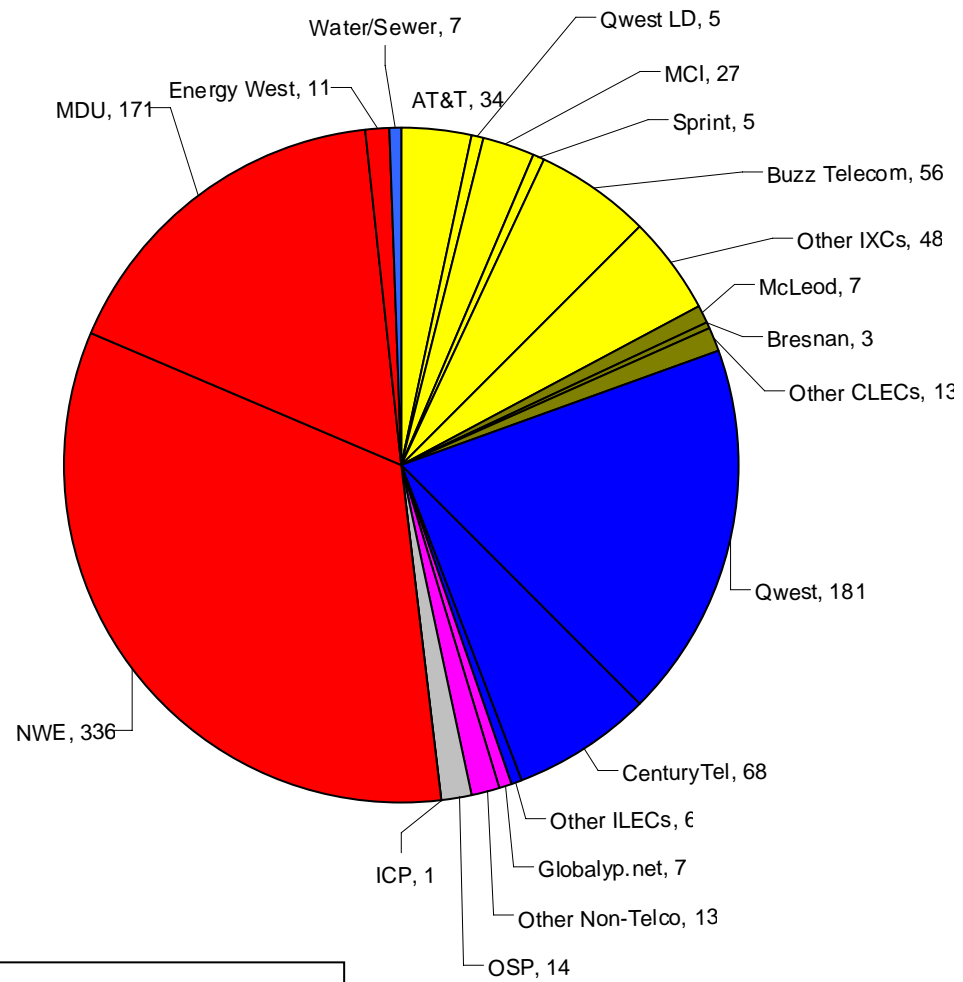
#### Percentage of Total

Energy—518	51.14%
Telecommunications—488	48.17
Water/Sewer—7	.69
<hr style="width: 40%; margin-left: 0;"/>	
Total—1,013	100.00%

**Type and Number of Complaints By District 2006**

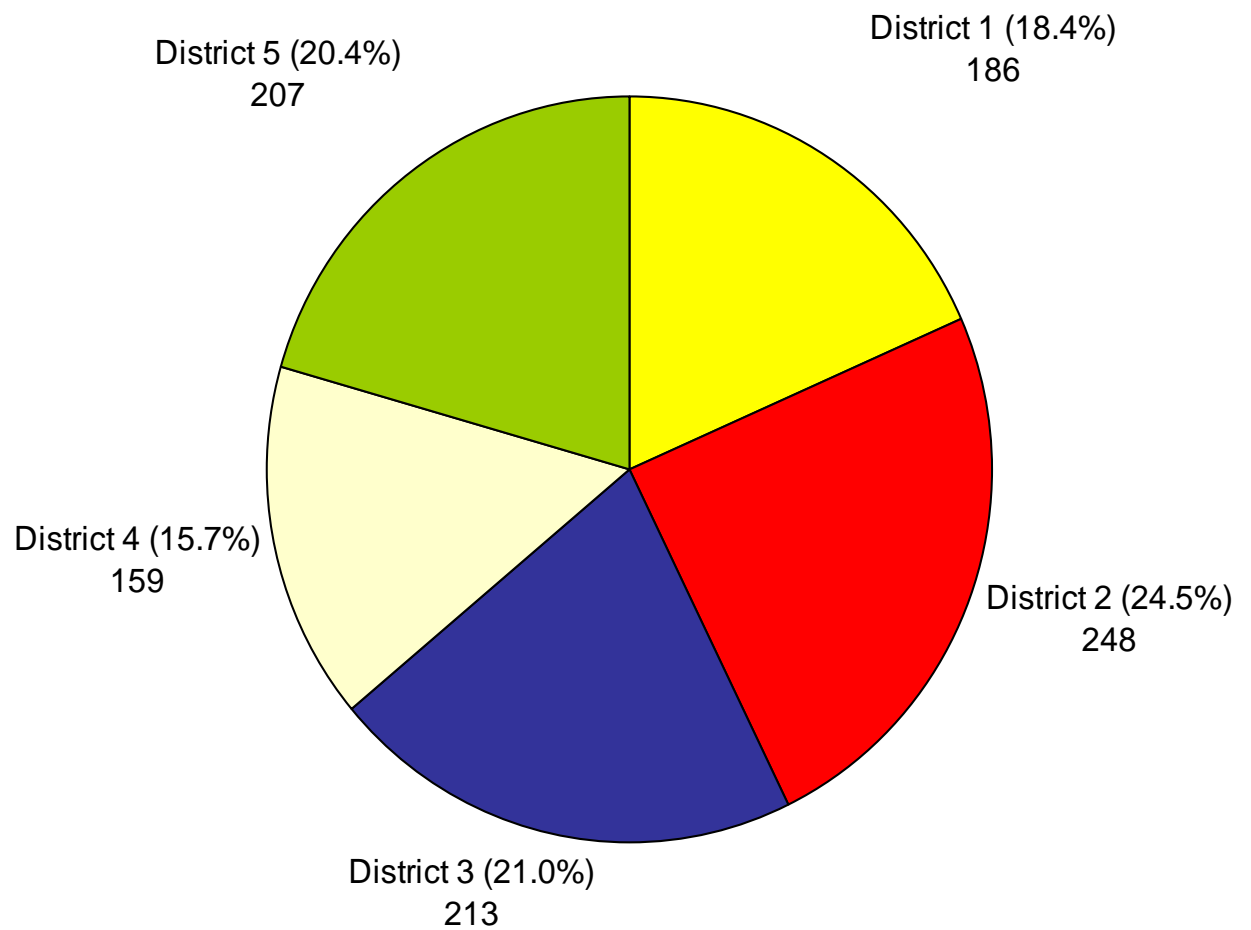
	<b><u>Dist. 1</u></b>	<b><u>Dist. 2</u></b>	<b><u>Dist. 3</u></b>	<b><u>Dist. 4</u></b>	<b><u>Dist. 5</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
<b>1. Billing/Rates</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>2. Business Office</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>3. Cram</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>4. Payment Arrangements</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>5. Access to Business Office</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>6. Repair</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>7. Slam</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>8. Delay in Connection</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>9. Termination</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>10. Meter Questions</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>11. Pay-Per-Call</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>12. Deposits</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13. Cost of Construction</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>14. Directory Listings</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>15. Quality of Service</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>
<hr/>						
<b>Total</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>1,013</b>

**Year 2006 Consumer Complaints By Utility - Total #**  
**Informal Complaints - 1,013**

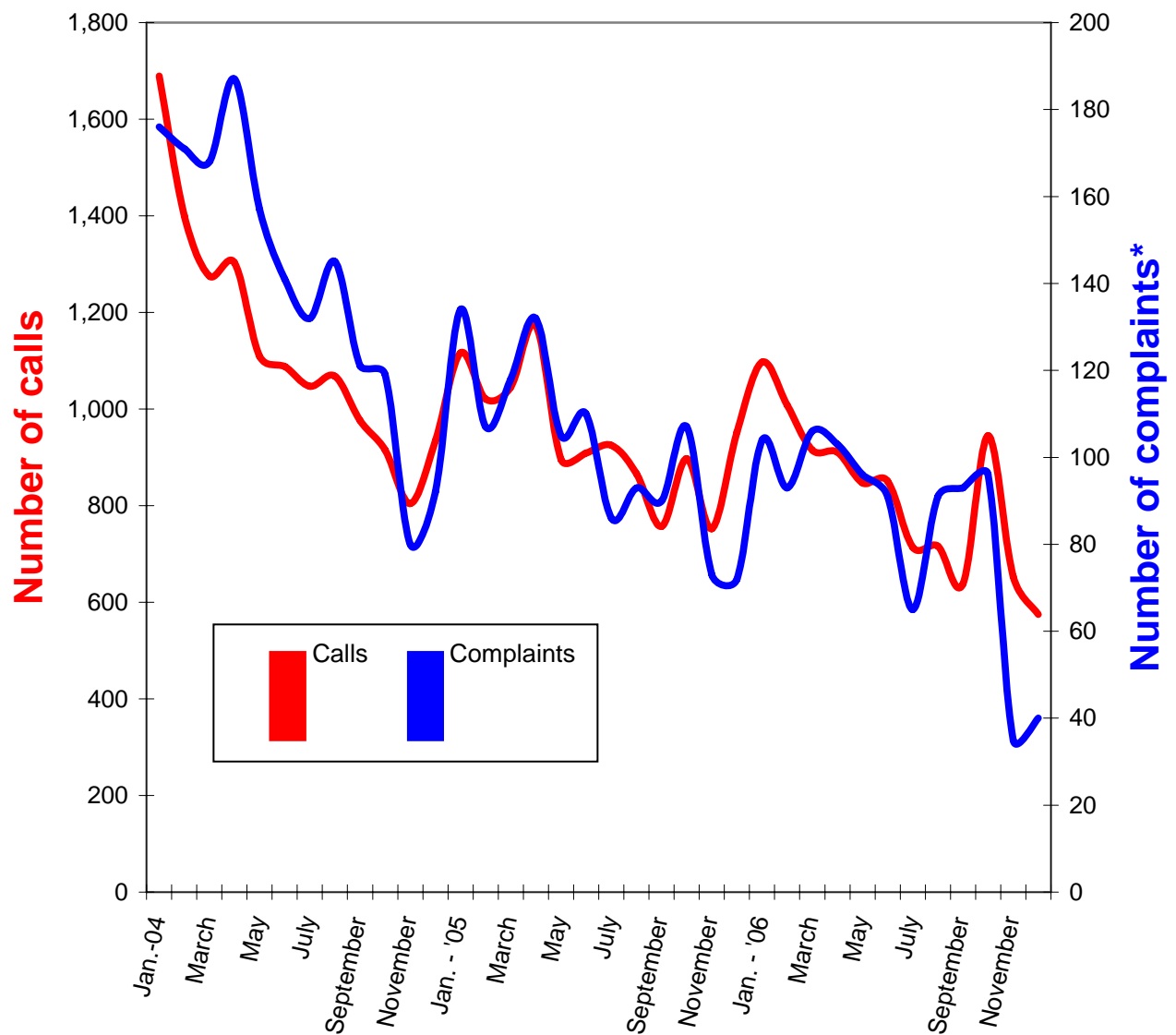


ICP - Inmate Calling Providers  
 OSP - Operator Service Providers

## 2006 Complaints by PSC District



## Calls to PSC toll-free complaints number and level of monthly utility consumer complaints 2004-2005-2006



\*A consumer call or letter is not logged as a complaint unless PSC staff must contact the utility in order to resolve it.



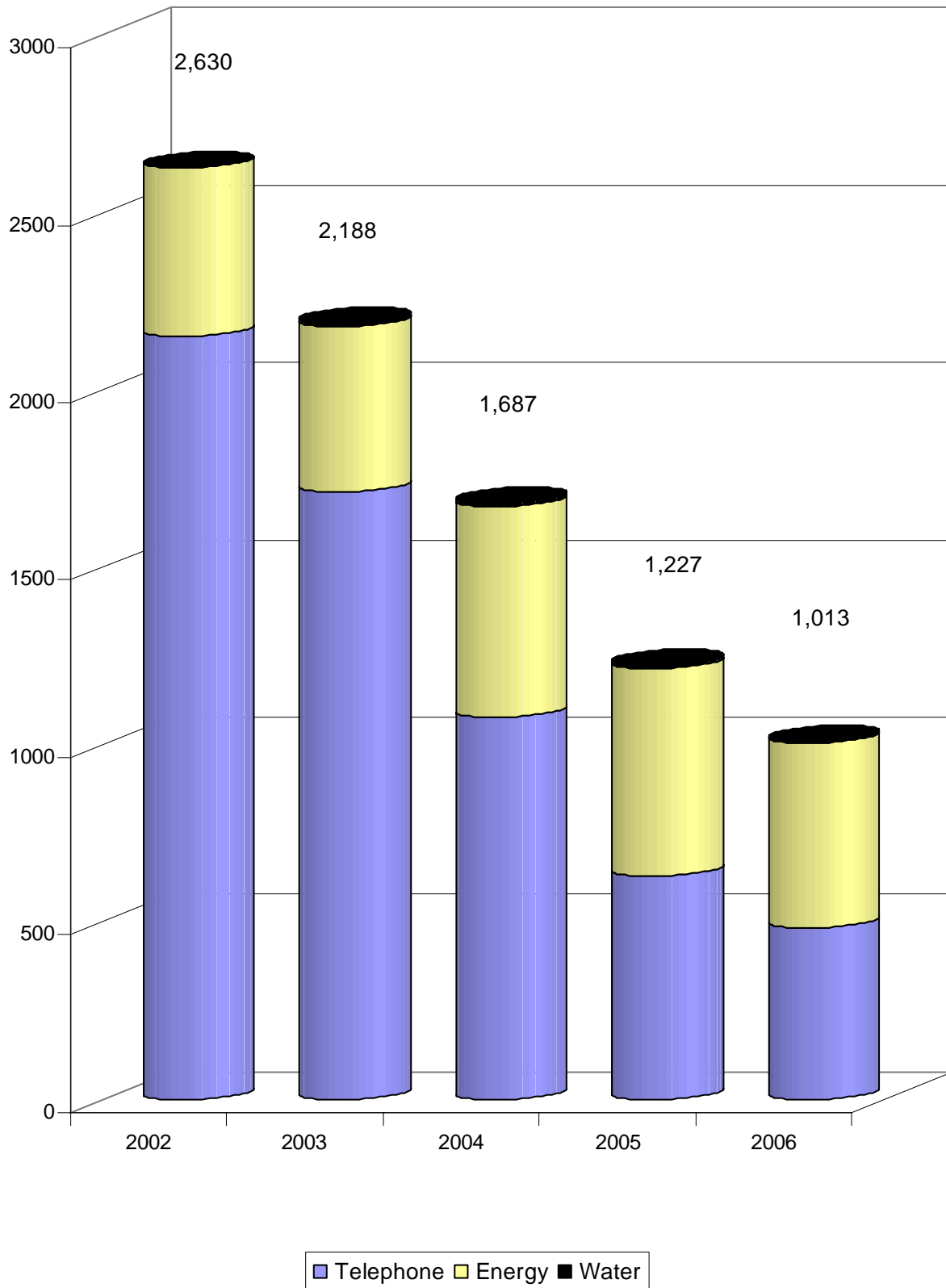
Number of Calls  
(comparing 2005 and 2006)

	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>%of Change</u>
January	1,116	1,097	(1.70%)
February	1,021	1,008	(1.27%)
March	1,045	915	(12.44%)
April	1,174	911	(22.40%)
May	896	847	(5.47%)
June	909	851	(6.38%)
July	925	714	(22.81%)
August	866	716	(17.32%)
September	757	638	(15.72%)
October	897	945	5.35%
November	752	653	(13.16%)
December	952	575	(39.60%)
	-----	-----	
Total	11,310	9,870	(12.73%)

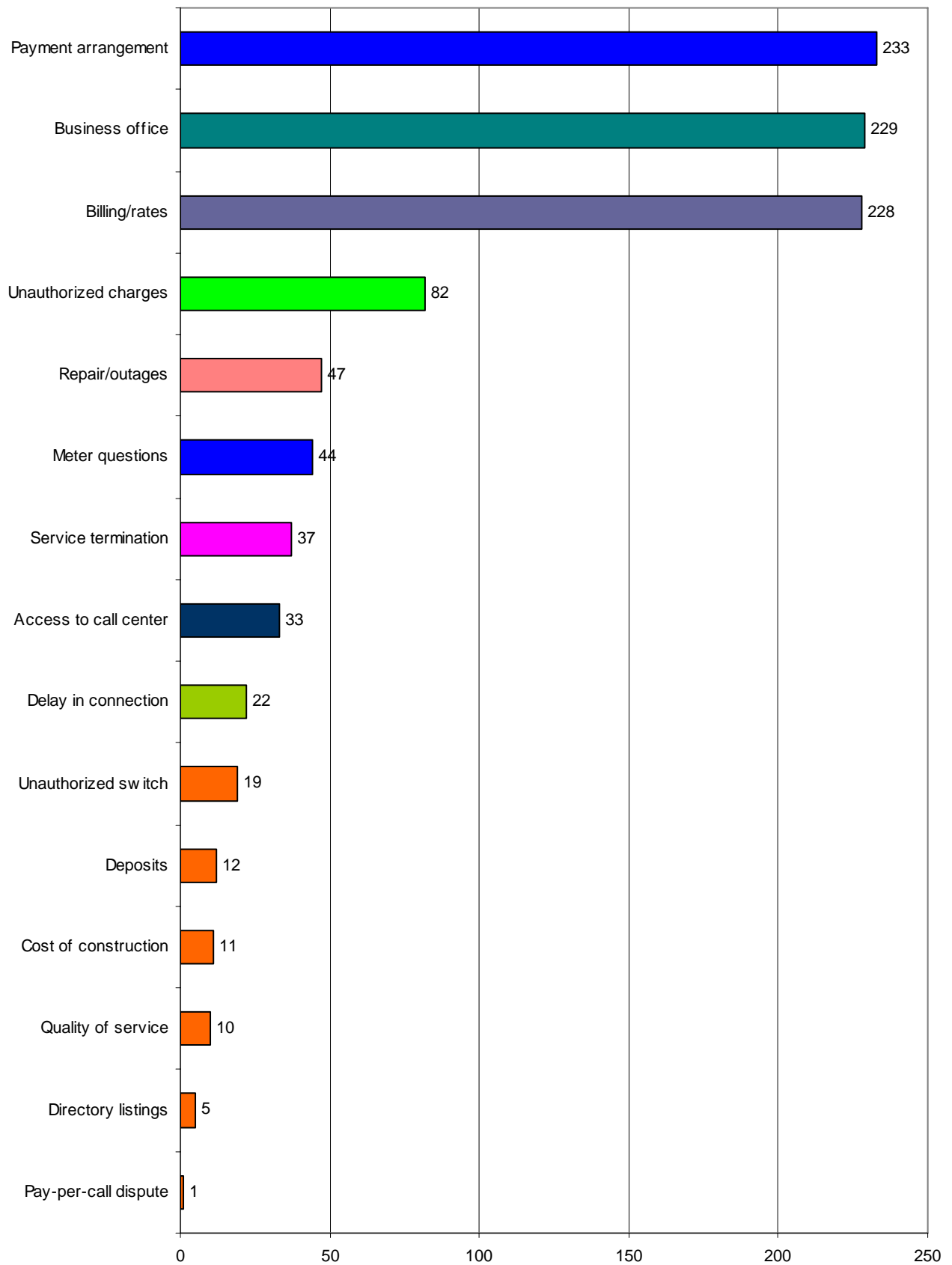
**Number of Complaints**  
**(comparing 2005 and 2006)**

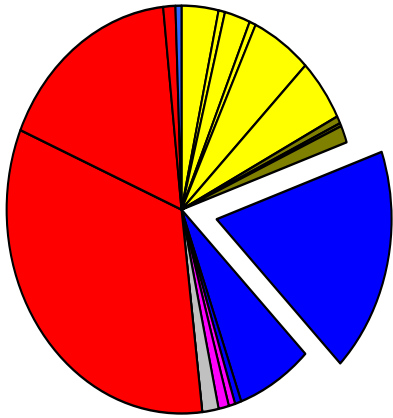
	<b><u>2005</u></b>	<b><u>2006</u></b>	<b><u>%age of Change</u></b>
January	134	104	(22.4%)
February	107	93	(13.1%)
March	118	106	(10.2%)
April	132	103	(22.0%)
May	105	96	(8.6%)
June	110	91	(17.3%)
July	86	65	(24.4%)
August	93	91	(2.2%)
September	90	93	3.3%
October	107	96	(10.3%)
November	73	35	(52.1%)
December	72	40	(44.4%)
	-----	-----	
Total	1,227	1,013	(17.4%)

PSC complaints from 2002 through 2006 by service type



### Year 2006 PSC Consumer Complaints by Complaint Category

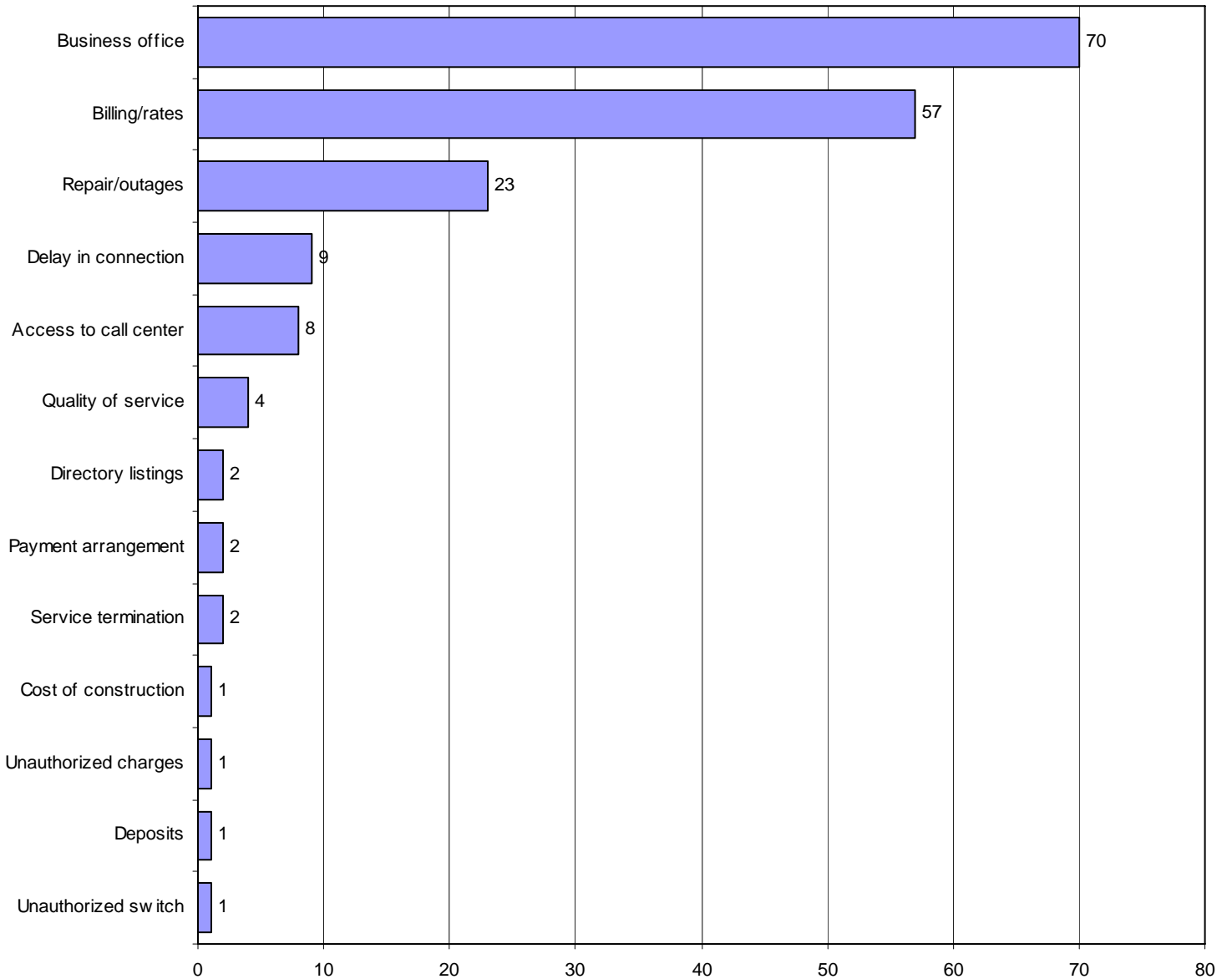


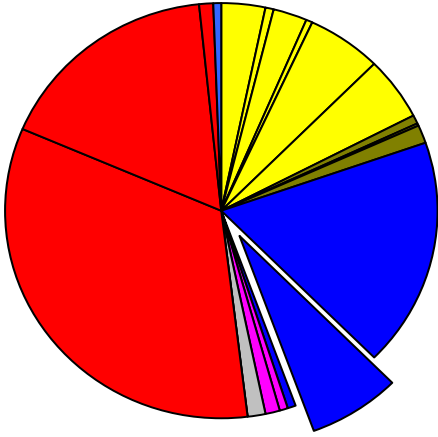


# Qwest Corporation

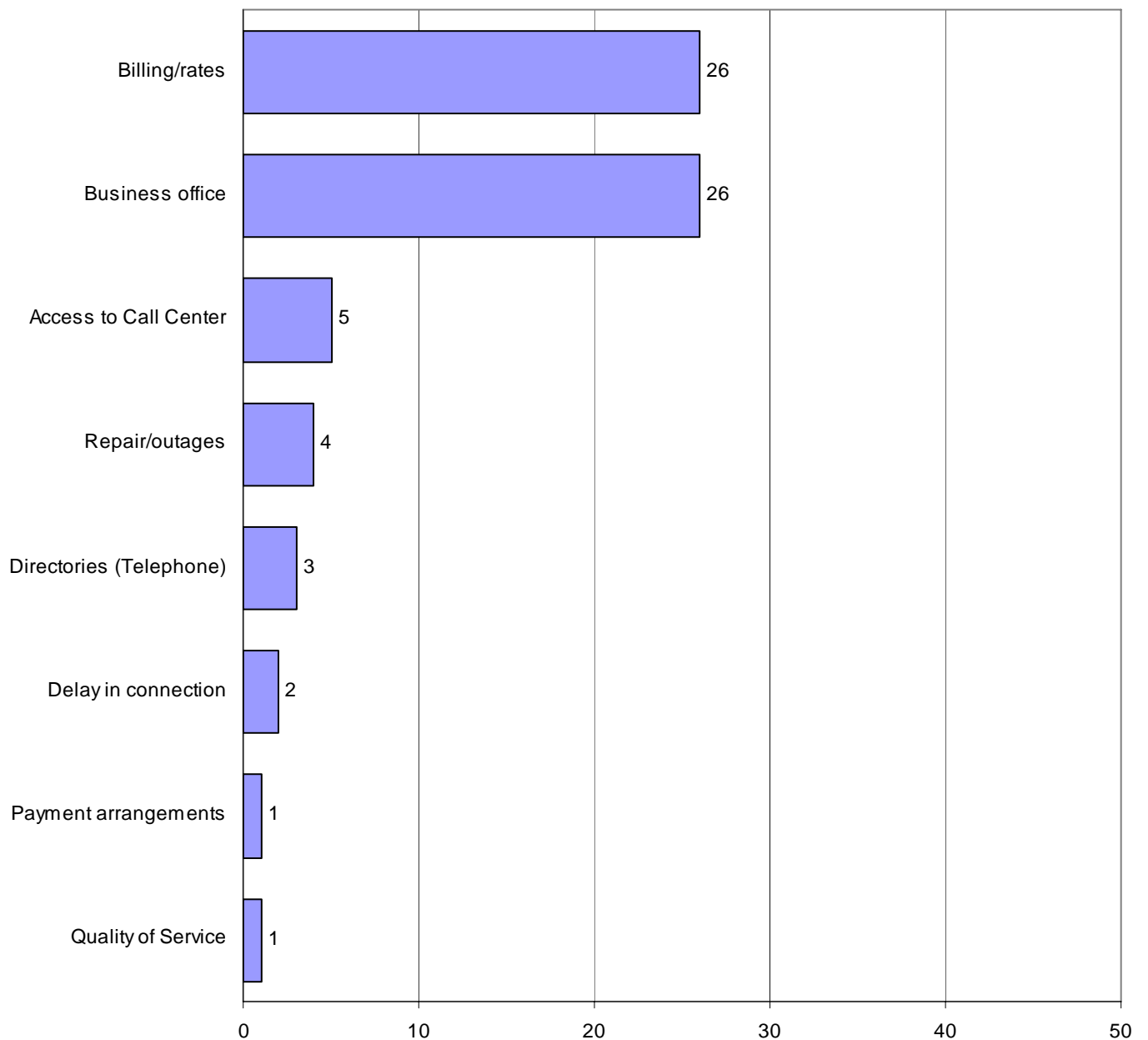
## 2006 Complaints

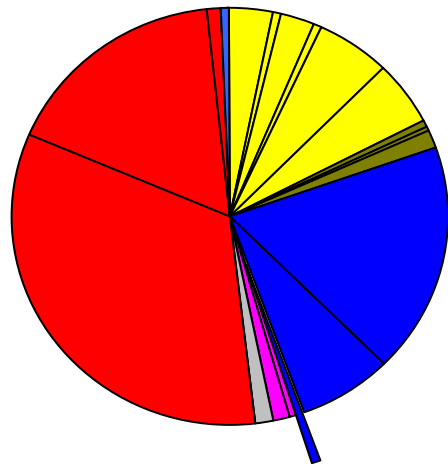
### 181 Total



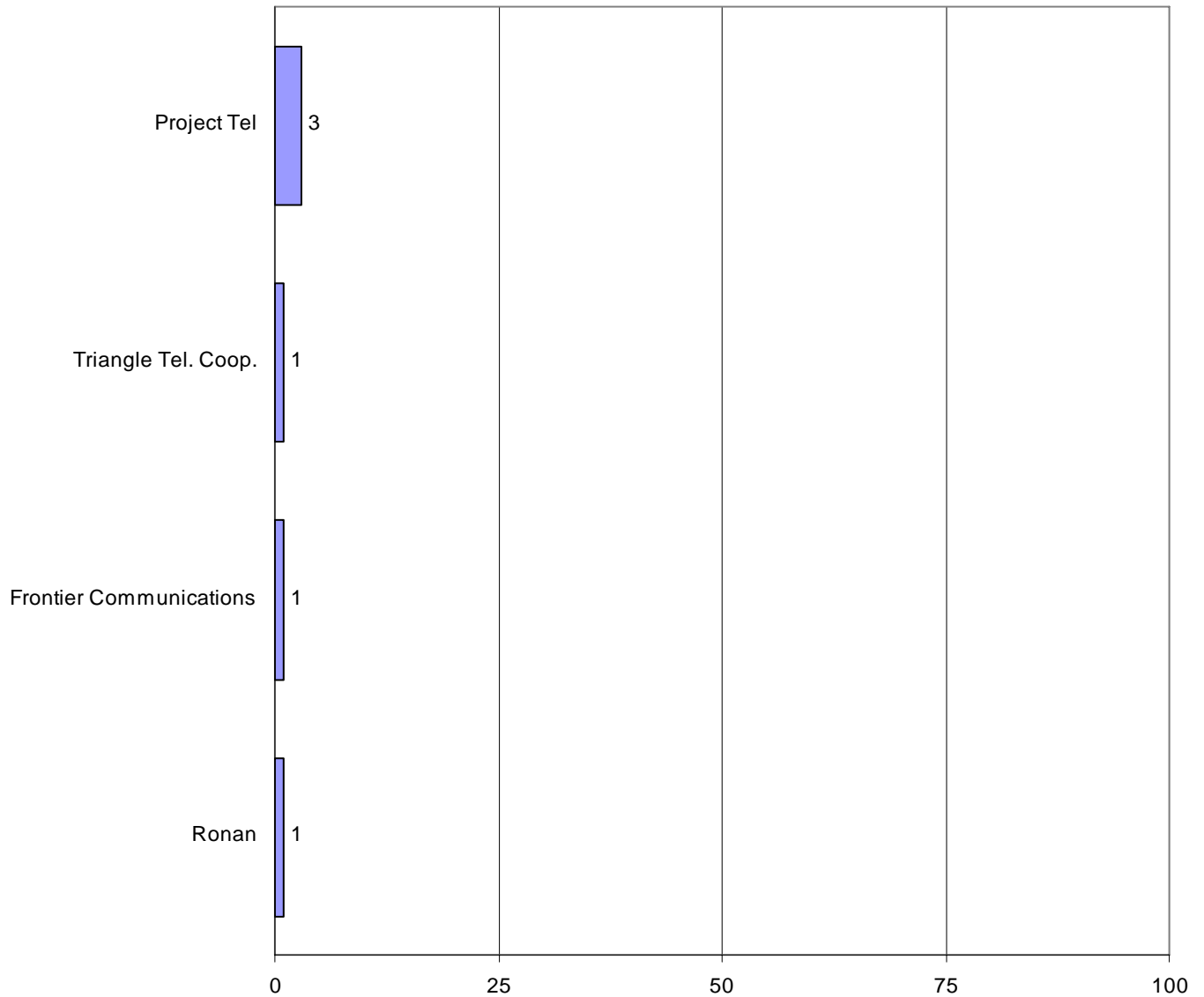


# CenturyTel of Montana 2006 Complaints 68 Total

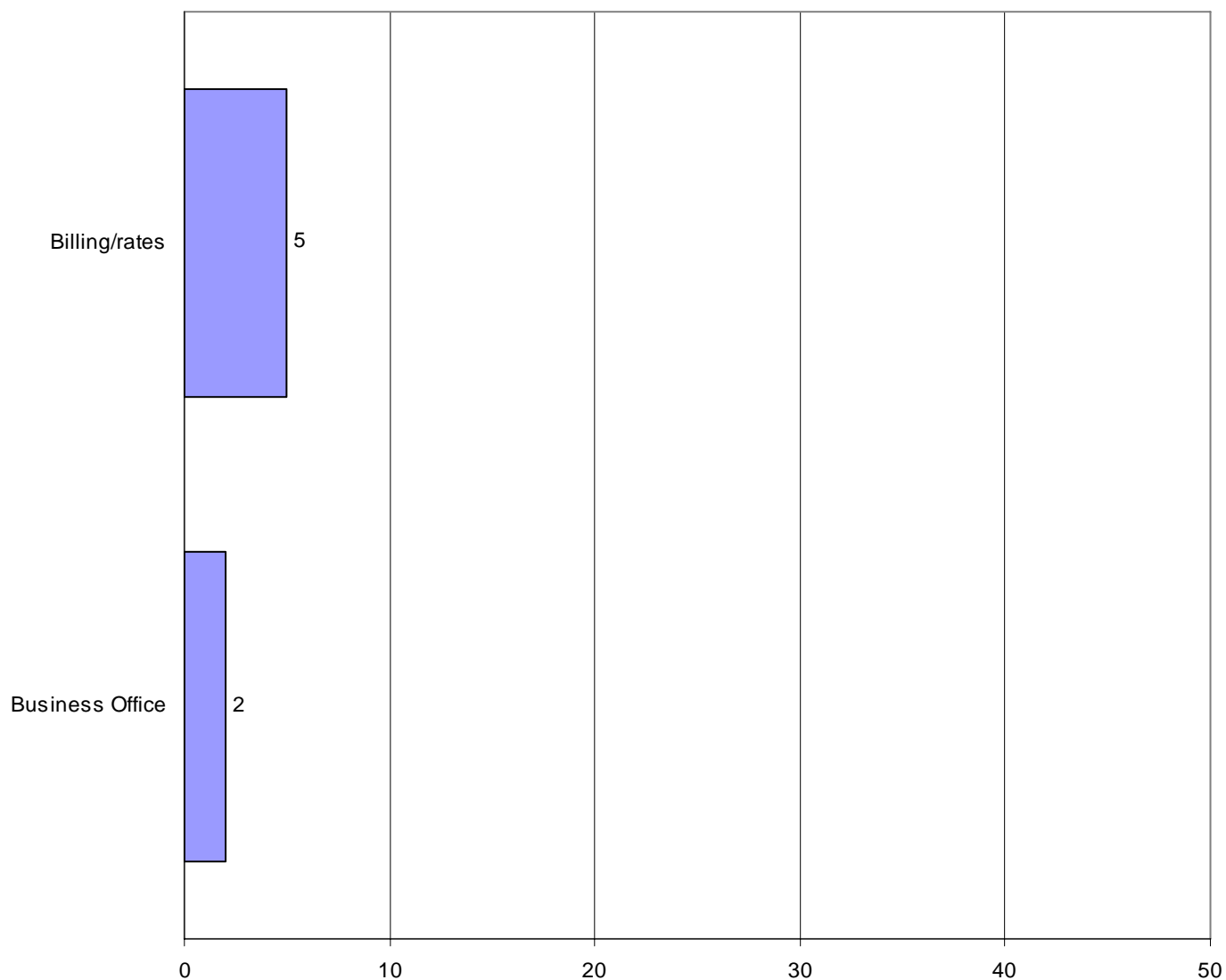
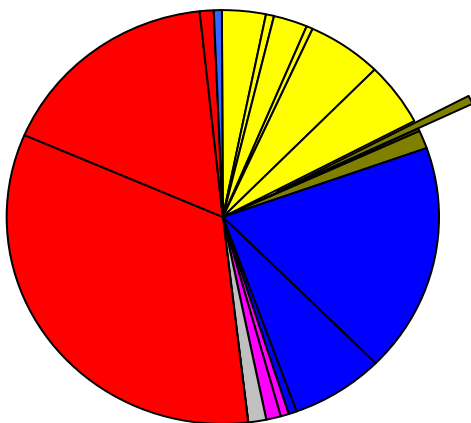




**Other 15**  
**Incumbent**  
**Local**  
**Exchange Carriers**  
**(ILECs)**  
**2006 Complaints**  
**6 Total**

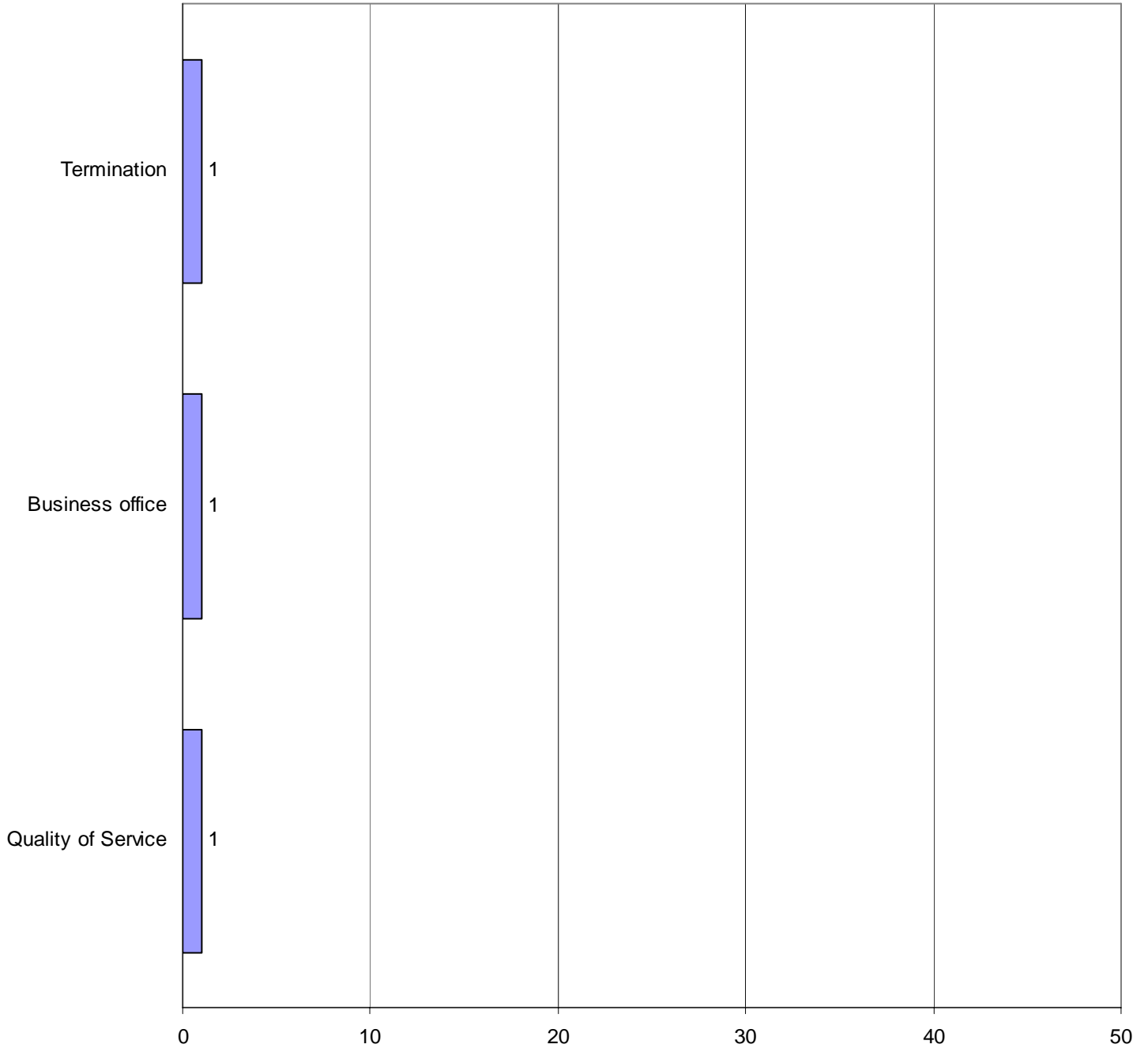
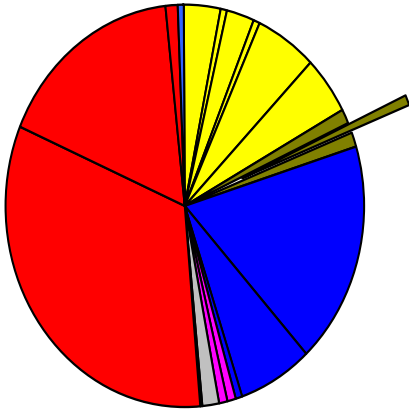


**McLeodUSA**  
**2006 Complaints**  
**7 Total**

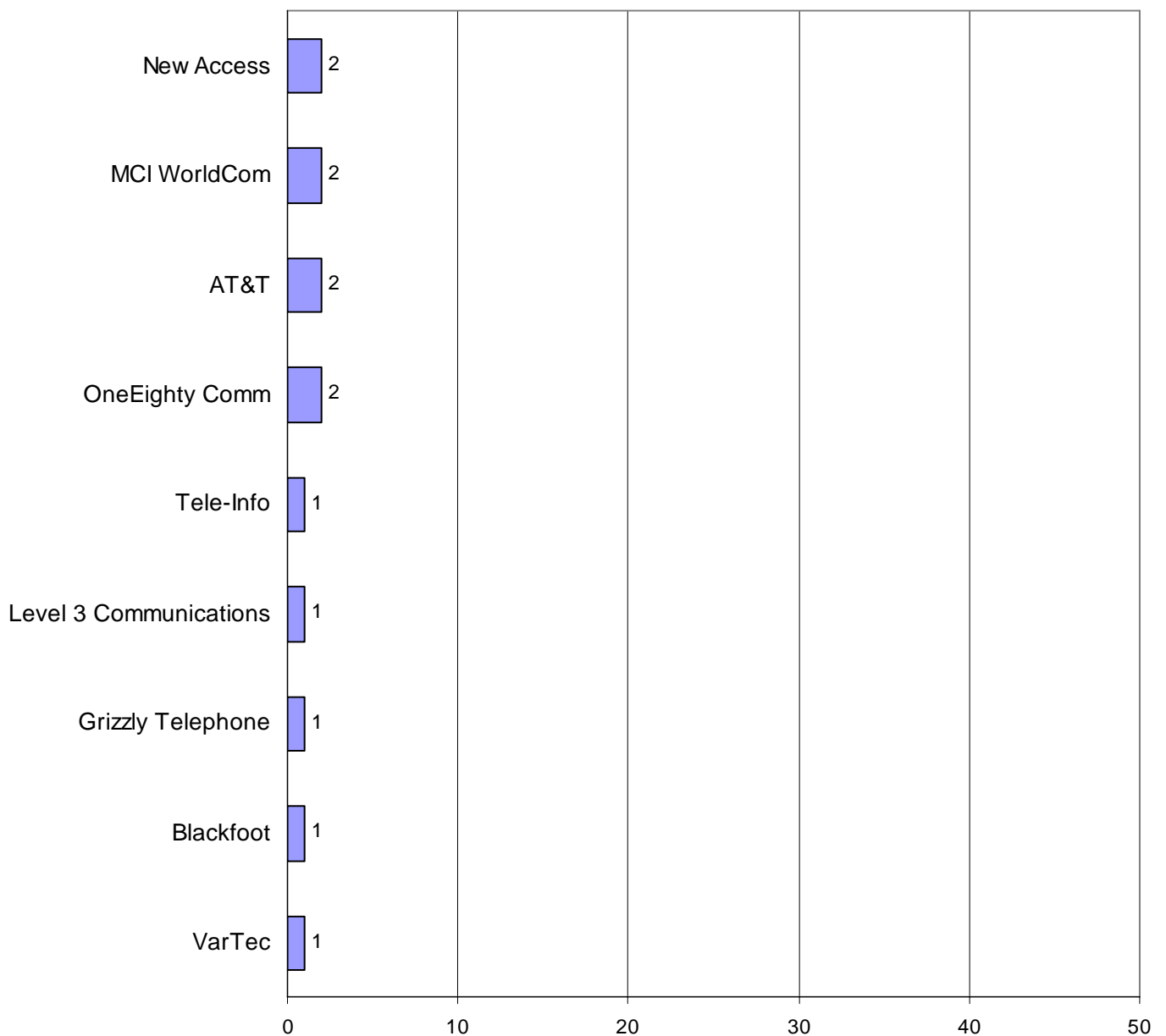
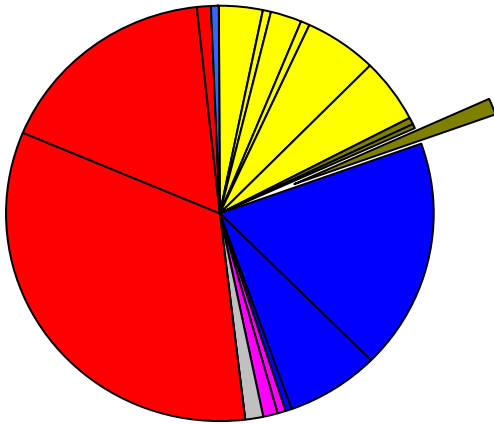


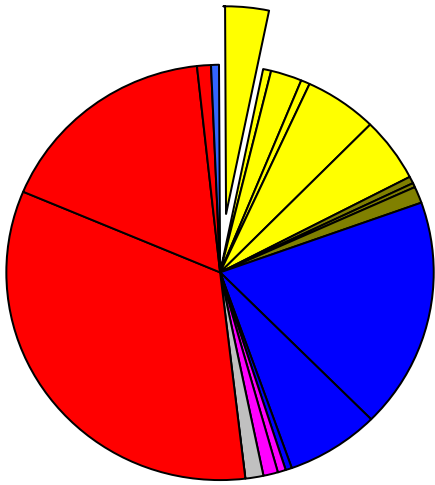


# Bresnan 2006 Complaints 3 Total



**Other Competitive  
Local Exchange  
Carriers (CLECs)  
2006 Complaints  
13 Total**

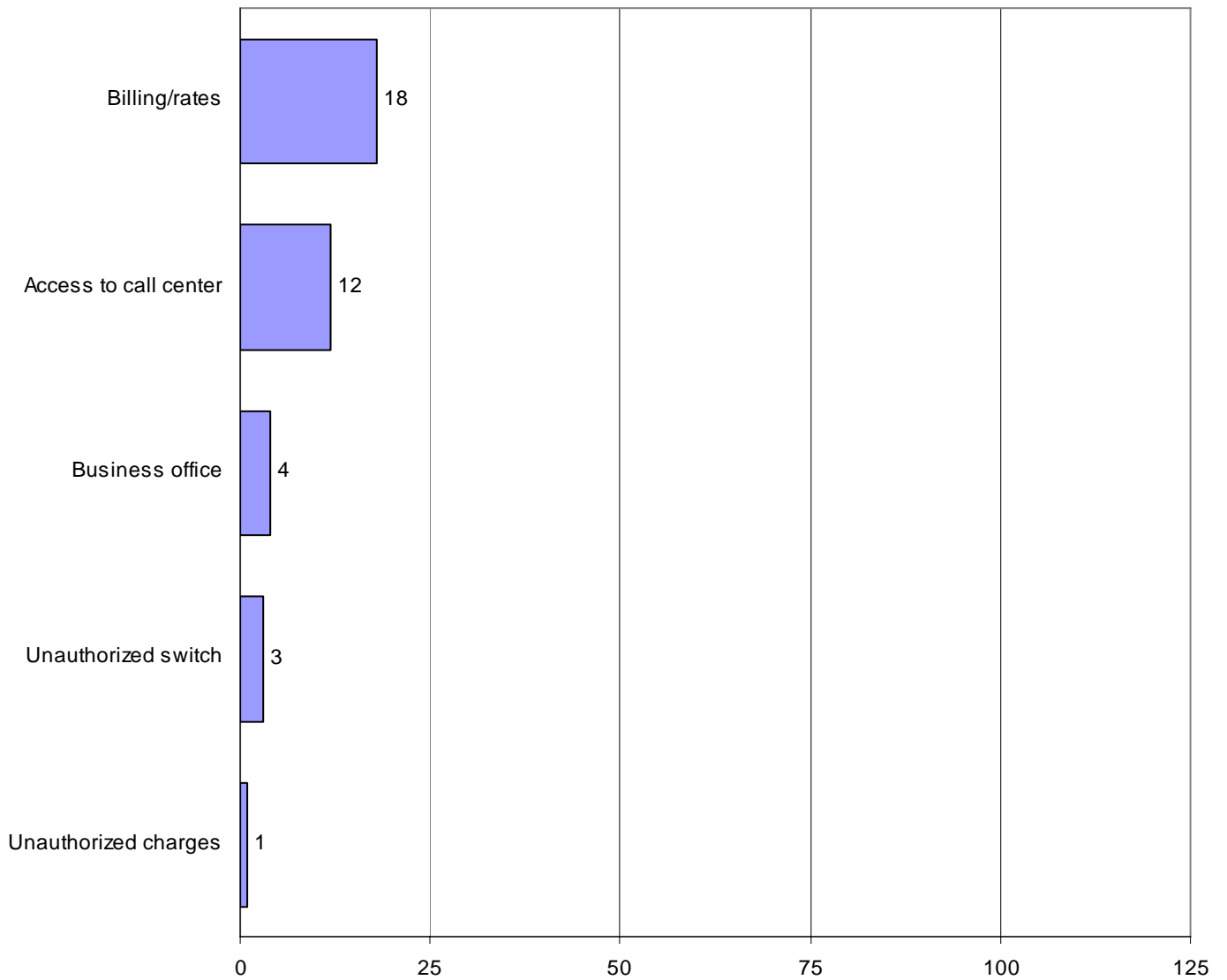




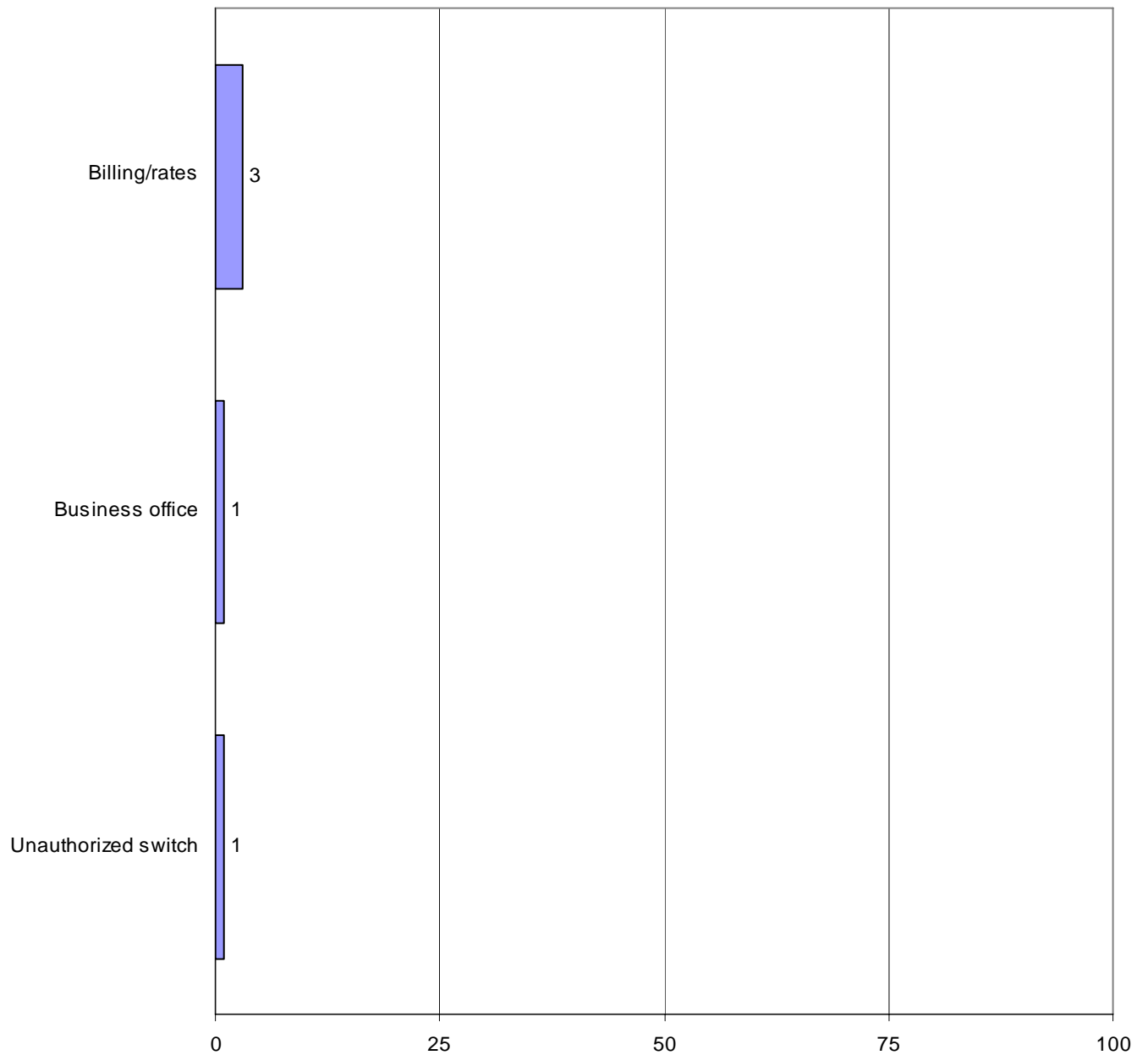
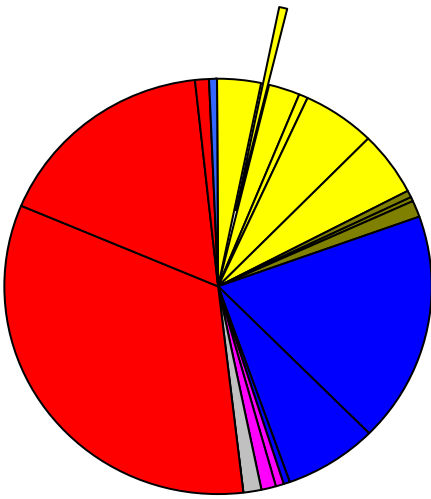
# AT&T

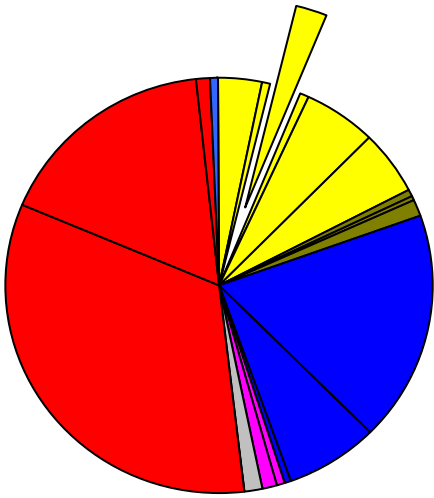
## 2006 Complaints

### 38 Total



# Qwest Long Distance Corporation 2006 Complaints 5 Total

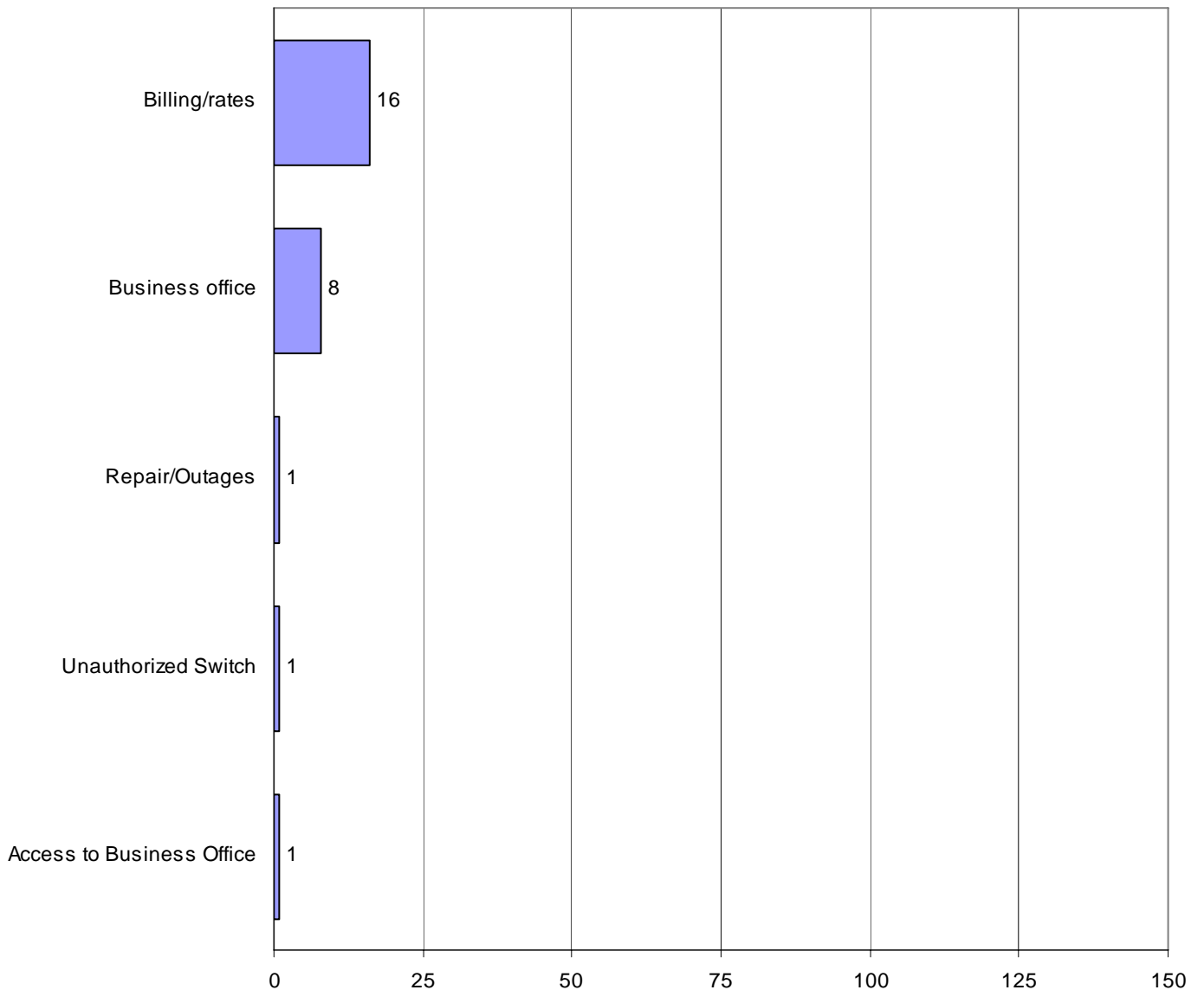


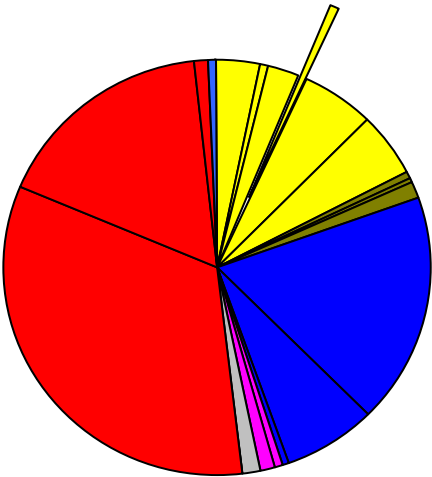


# MCI

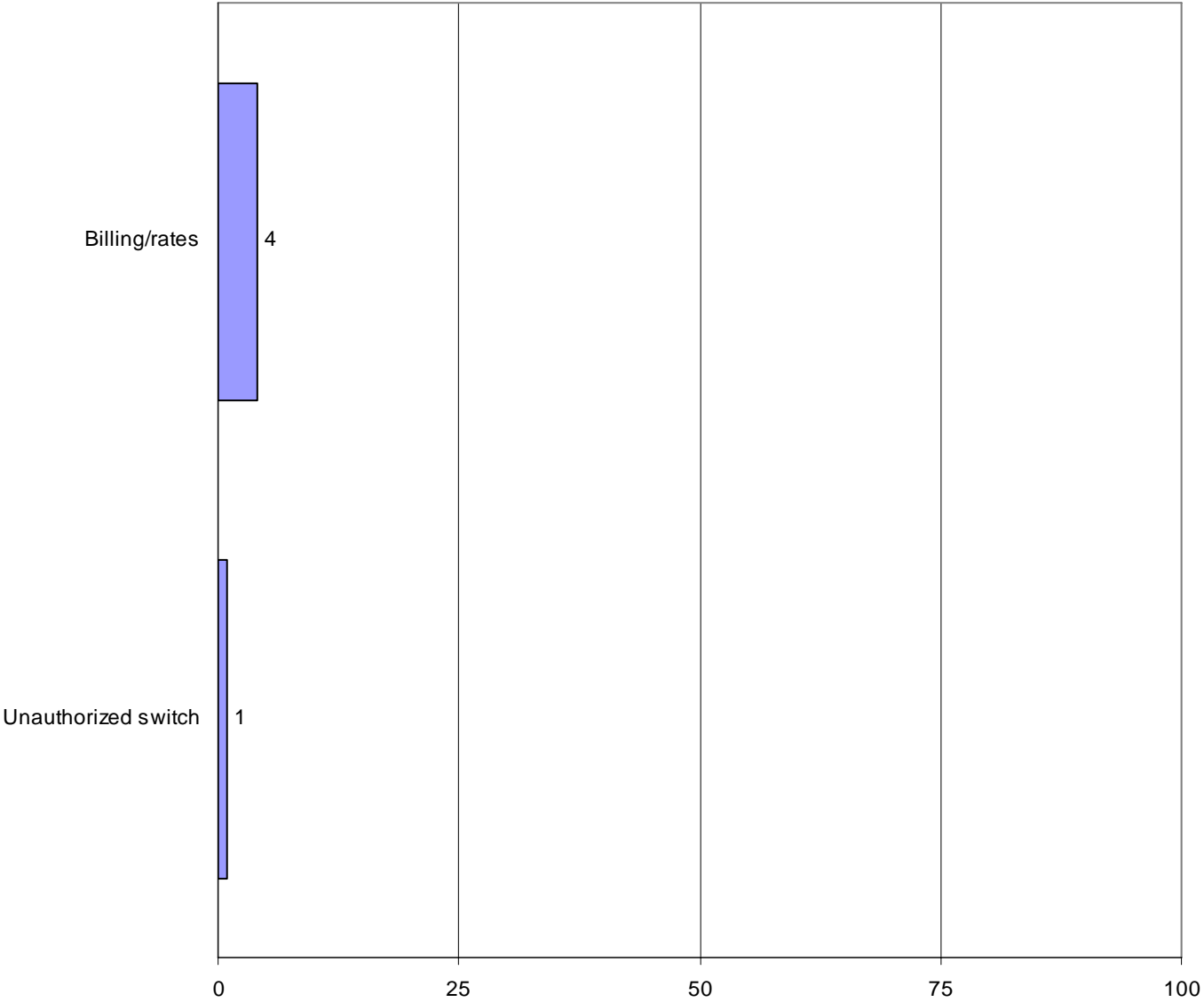
## 2006 Complaints

### 27 Total

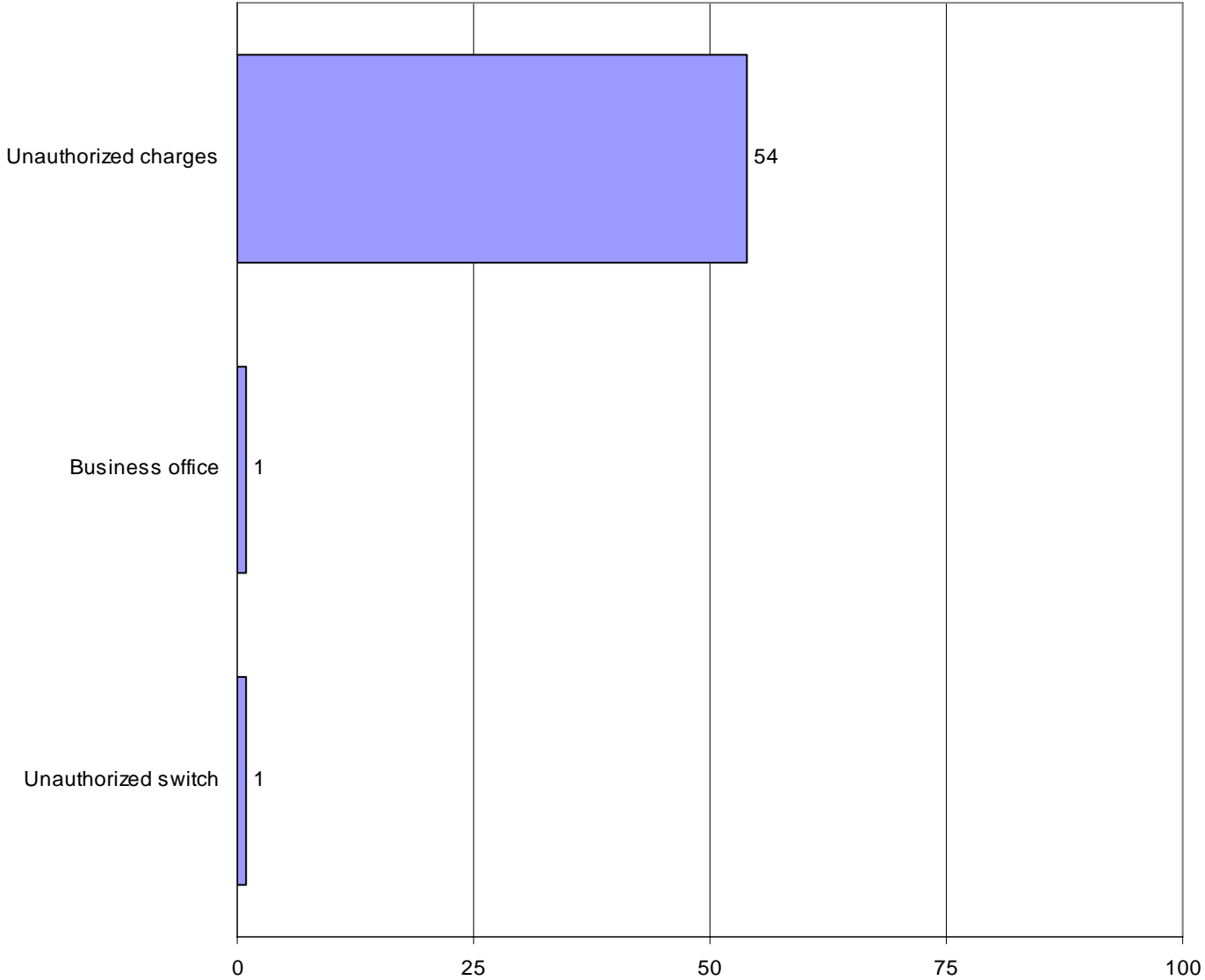
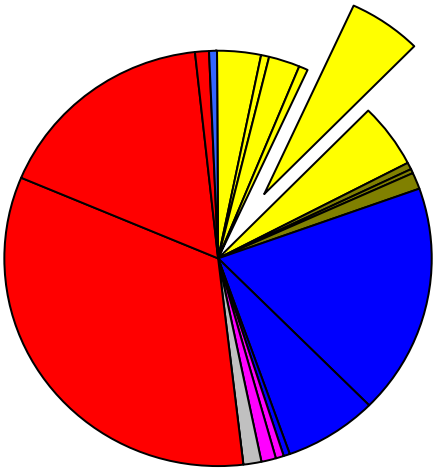




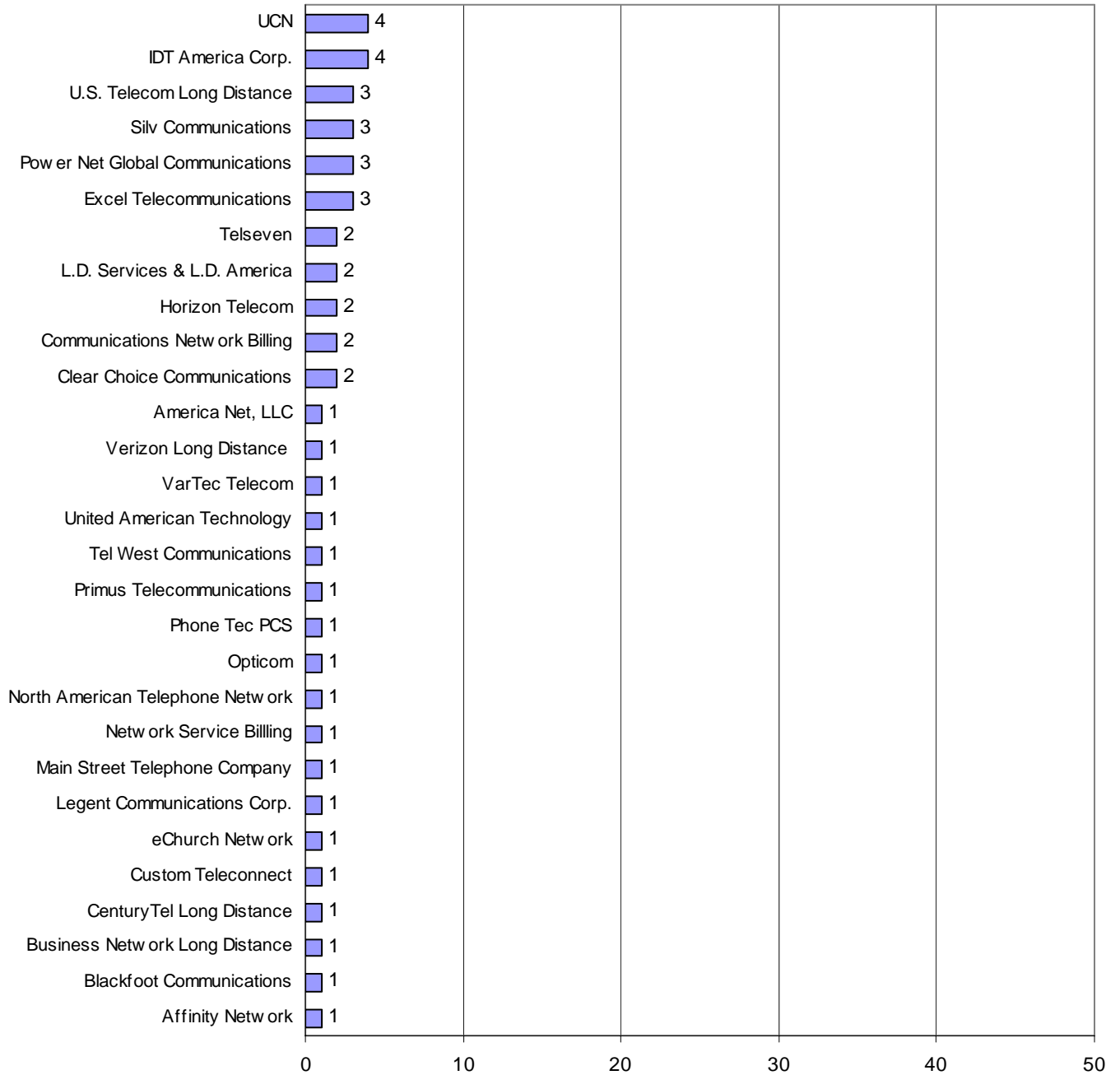
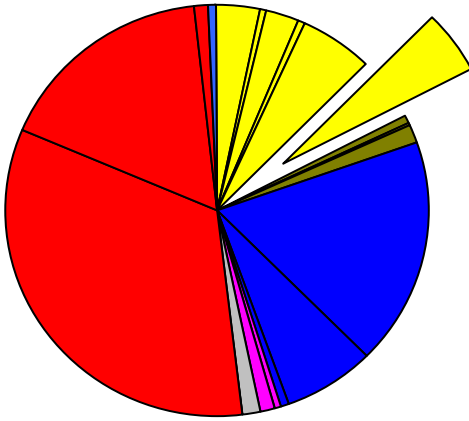
**Sprint**  
**2006 Complaints**  
**5 Total**



**Buzz Telecom**  
**2006 Complaints**  
**56 Total**

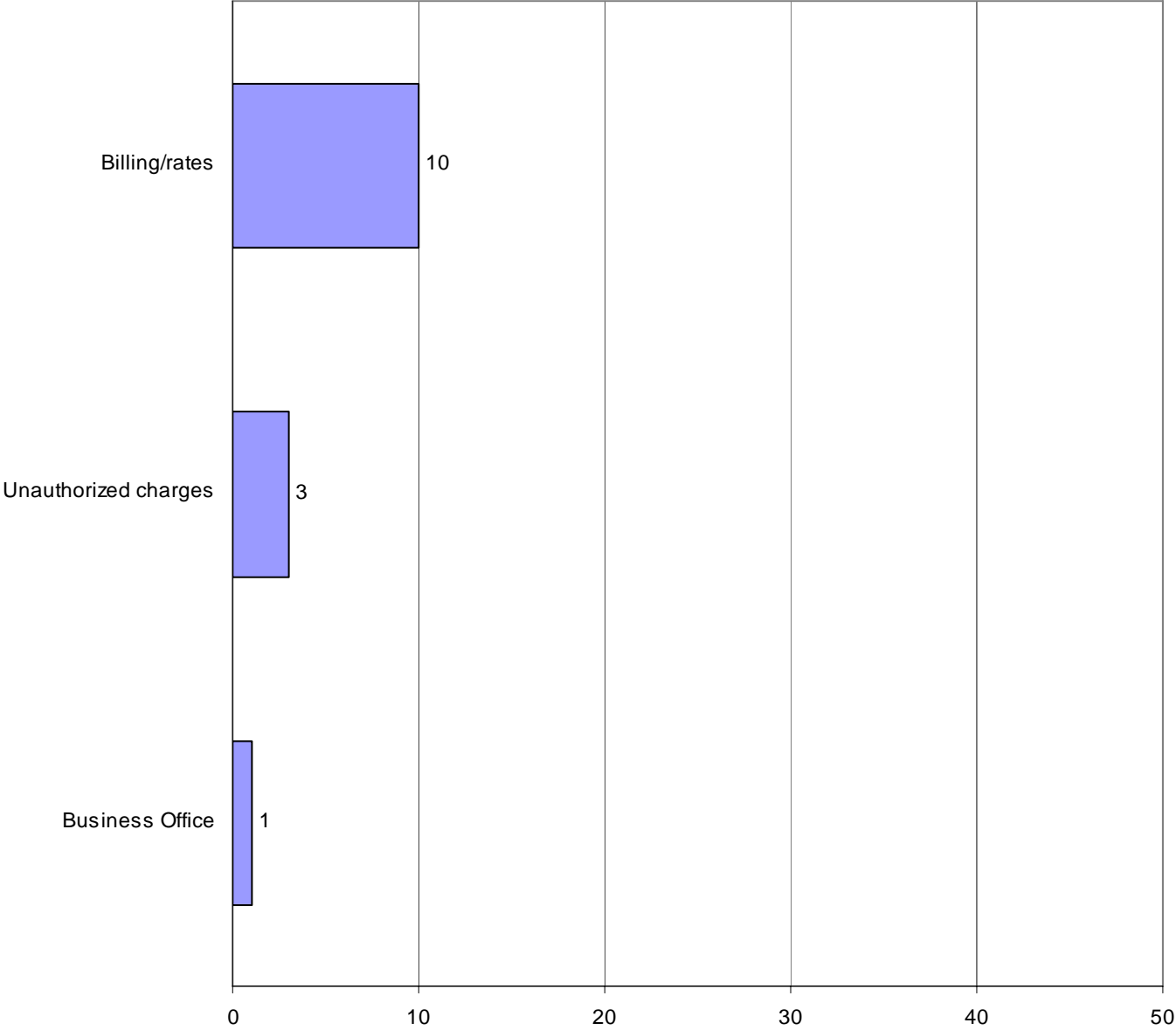
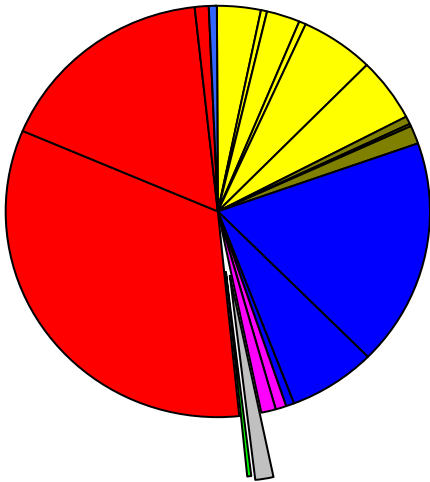


# Other Interexchange Carriers (IXCs) 2006 Complaints 48 Total

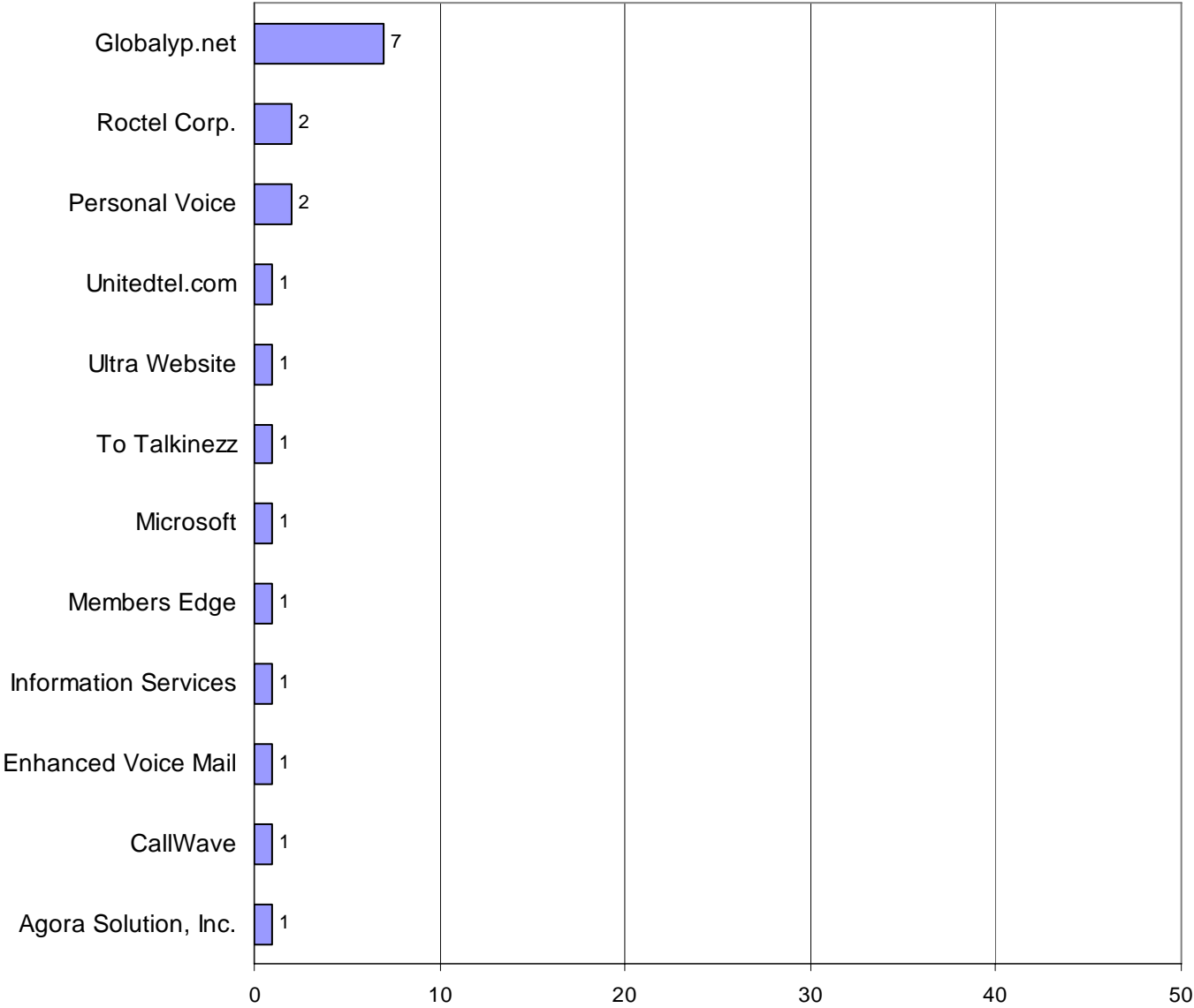
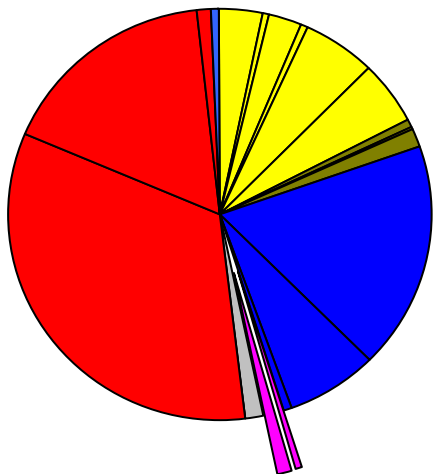


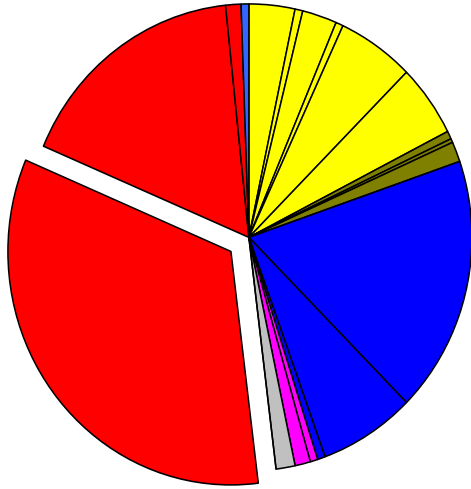


**Operator Services  
Providers & Inmate  
Calling Providers  
2006 Complaints  
14 Total**

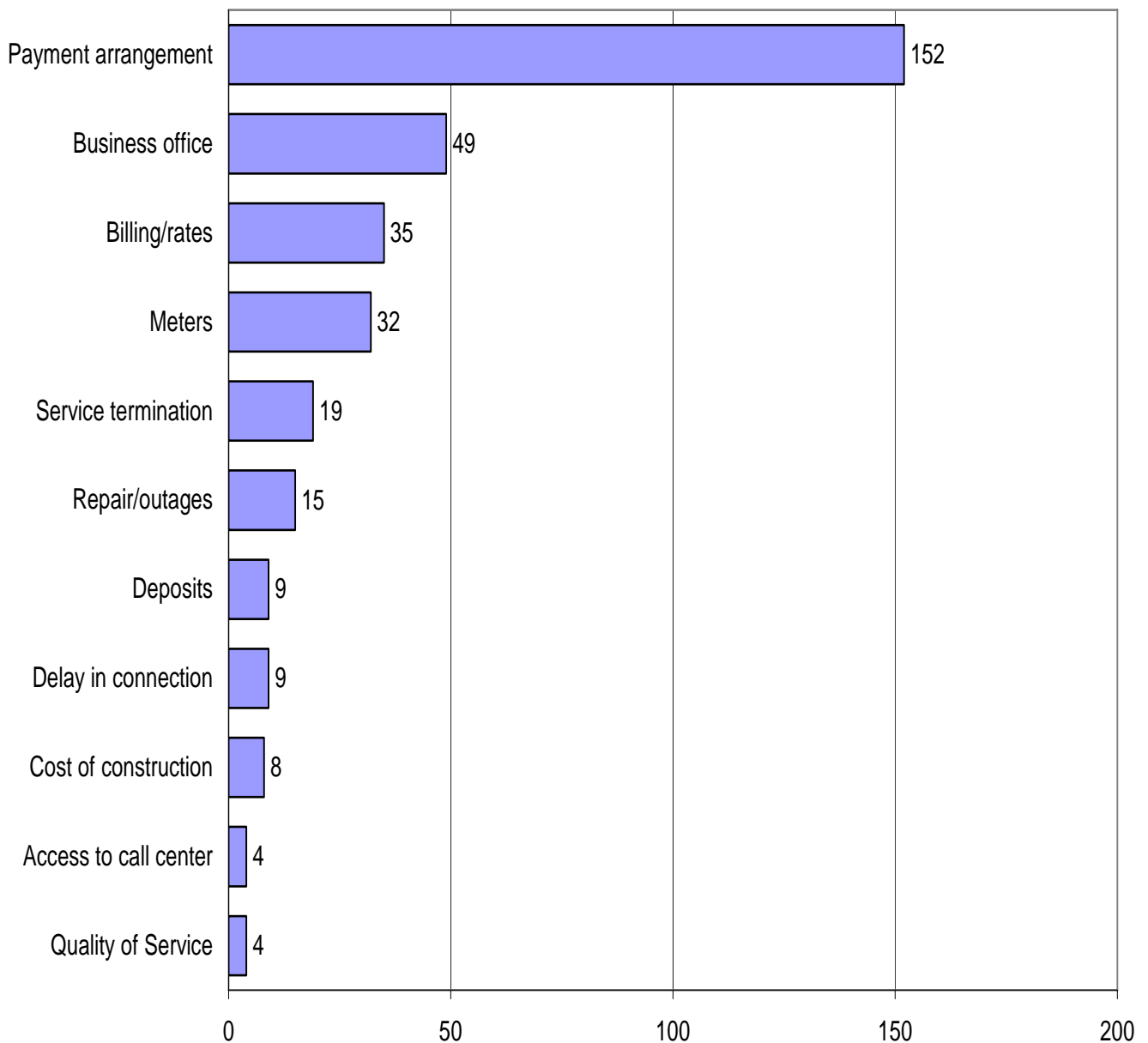


**Non-Telco,  
Telco-Billed  
2006 Complaints  
20 Total**

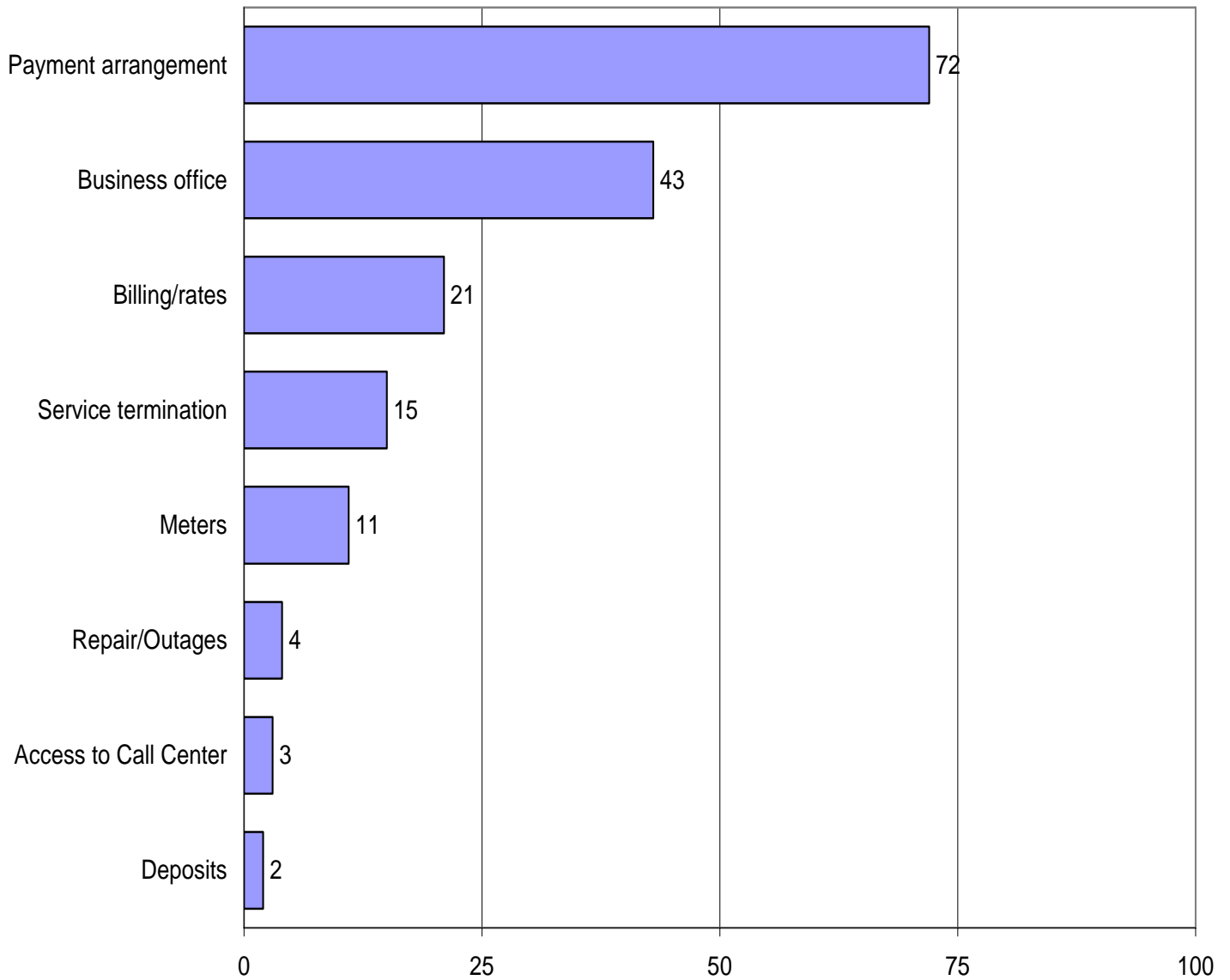
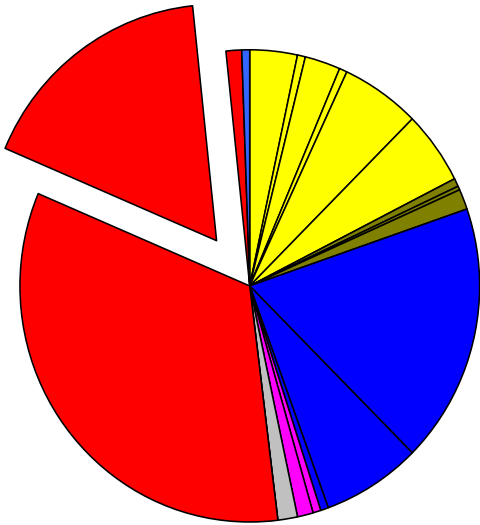


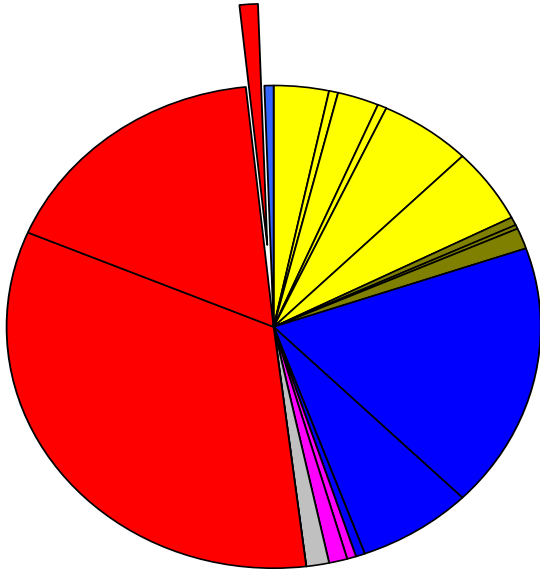


## NorthWestern Energy 2006 Complaints 336 Total

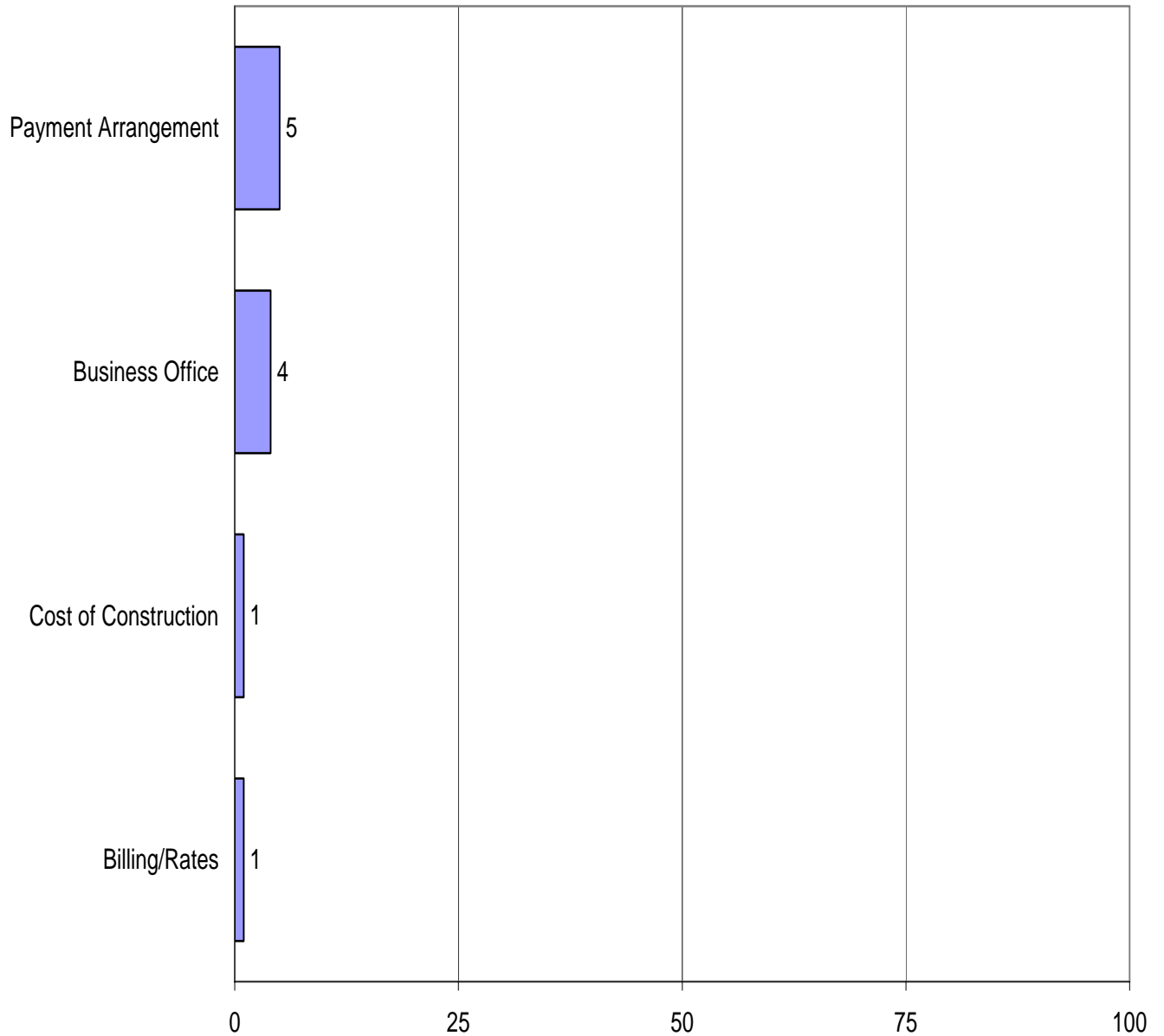


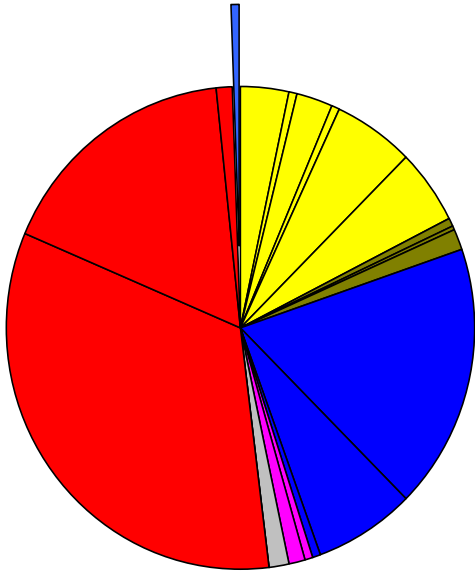
**Montana-Dakota  
Utilities  
2006 Complaints  
171 Total**



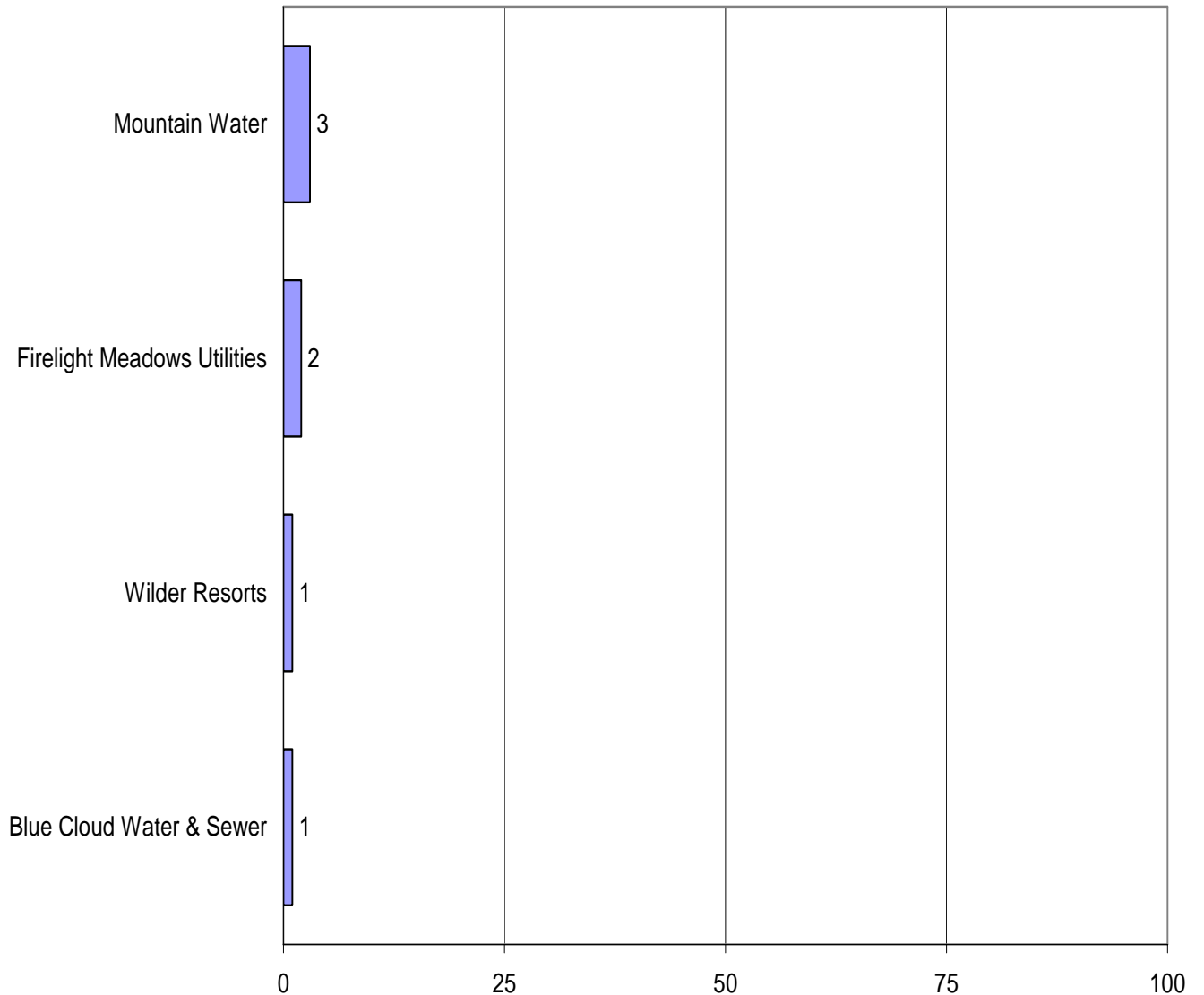


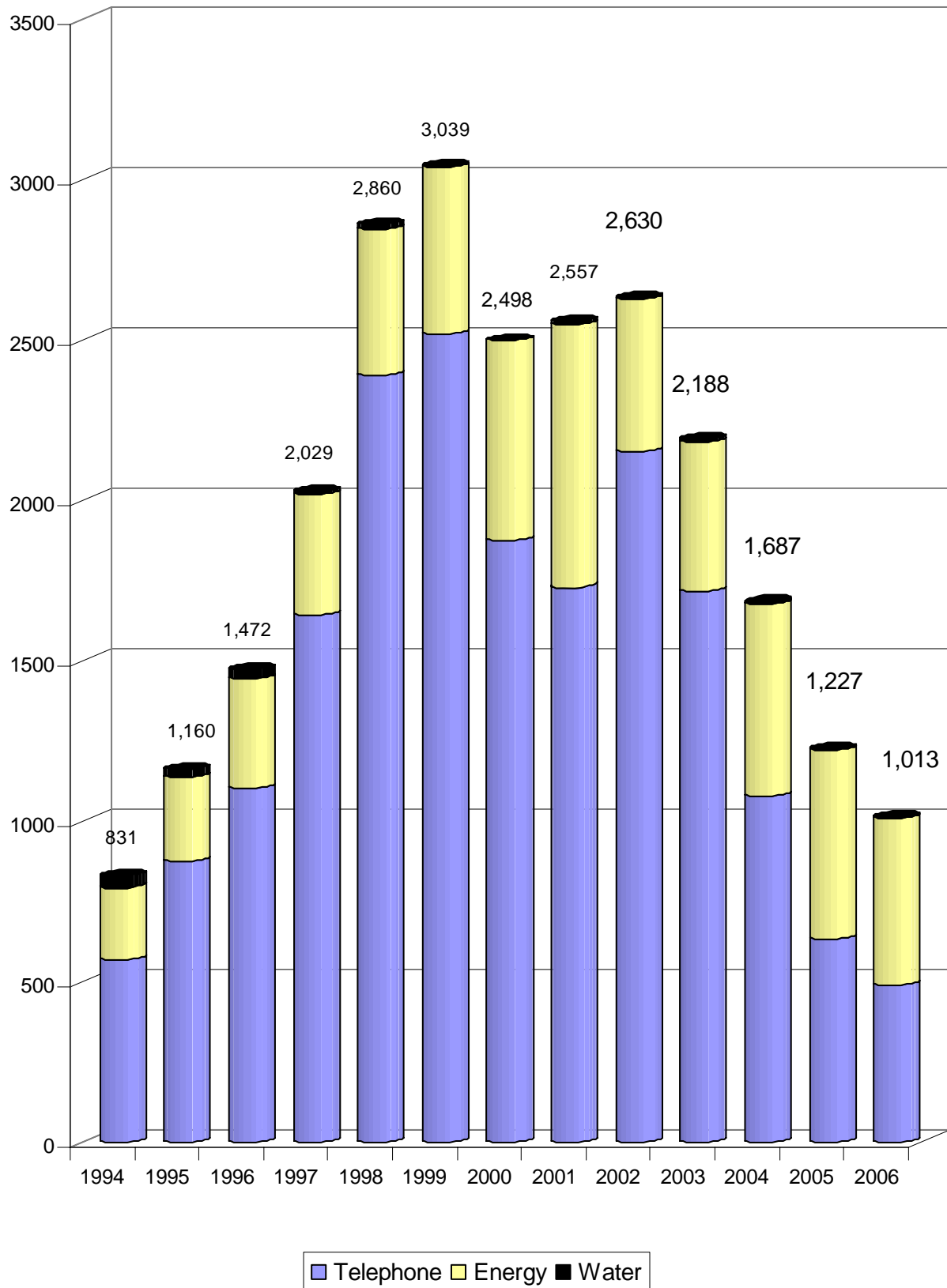
**Energy West  
2006 Complaints  
11 total**





## Water Utilities 2006 Complaints 7 Total



**PSC complaints from 1994 through 2006 by service type**

## **Analysis of Annual Data**

As illustrated on pages 11 and 31, the 2006 complaint statistics have shown a continued drop in complaint numbers which started back in 2003. This drop is attributed to telecommunications and not energy, since energy complaints have not changed accordingly. I've included on page 35 a chart reflecting just the telecommunications complaint levels from 1994-2006. From 2002 through 2006 the telecommunications complaints have dropped over 77%. The Billing/Rates complaint category, over the last few years, the number one complaint category, has experienced a 68% drop from 2002 through 2006. The majority of this category (5 yr. average of 75%) is attributed to telecommunications—specifically, the long distance and local exchange carrier categories. There have been some changes over time that have contributed to this decline. They are:

1. Competition from cell phone and VoIP companies.
2. Prepaid calling cards.
3. Unlimited long distance plans vs. charges by the minute.
4. A decline in residential long distance advertising. In some cases, the long distance companies are marketing to the commercial arena only.



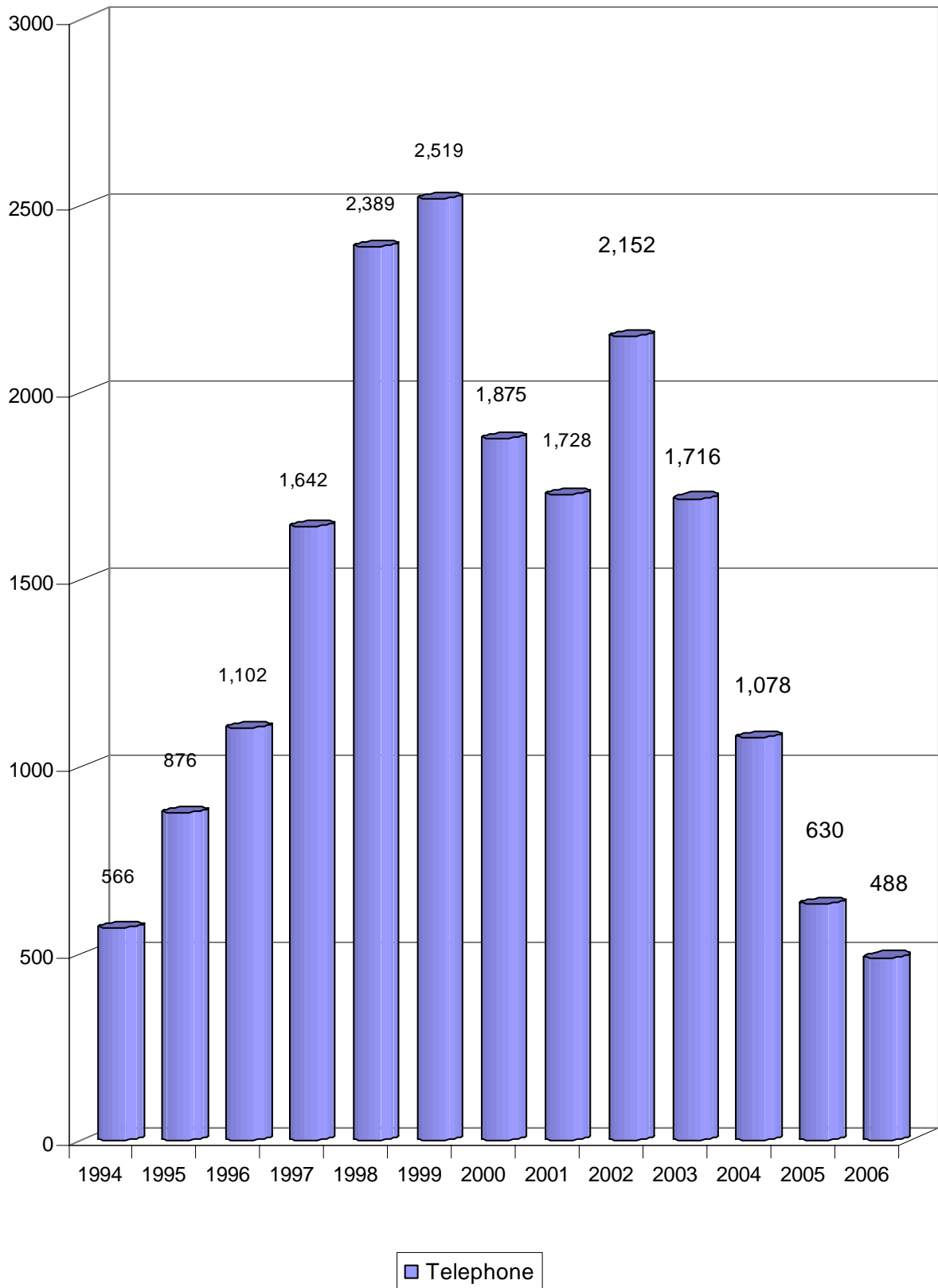
As is indicated on page 35, the telecommunications complaint chart resembles a bell curve. The main telecommunications categories that reflected the most complaints in 1998 and 1999, in frequency order, were business office, billing/rates, unauthorized switching of phone service (slamming) and unauthorized placement of charges on the customer's LEC bill (cramming). The slamming and cramming complaints in Montana peaked in 1998 with significant numbers in 1999 as well. The slamming and cramming complaints after 1999 to present drastically reduced in number with only one notable exception. It was in 2002 when we had 519 cramming complaints, the highest ever, almost half of which related to Directory Service complaints. These involved small charges for directory assistance not authorized. In 2006 the bulk of telecommunications complaints were in the payment arrangement, billing/rates, and business office categories.

The 800 line for consumer complaints was installed at the PSC in June 1996. The number of calls on our 800 complaint line increased from 1997 to 2001, and, since then, the calls have decreased to present, as illustrated on page 36. Pages 8 and 9 reflect the more recent number of call comparisons in monthly detail. Obviously, similar reasons would be attributed to the call volume drop as is attributed to the complaint number reductions; however, there are incoming calls to the complaint staff other than the ones on the 800 line. We receive calls on our local complaint line, calls to our personal

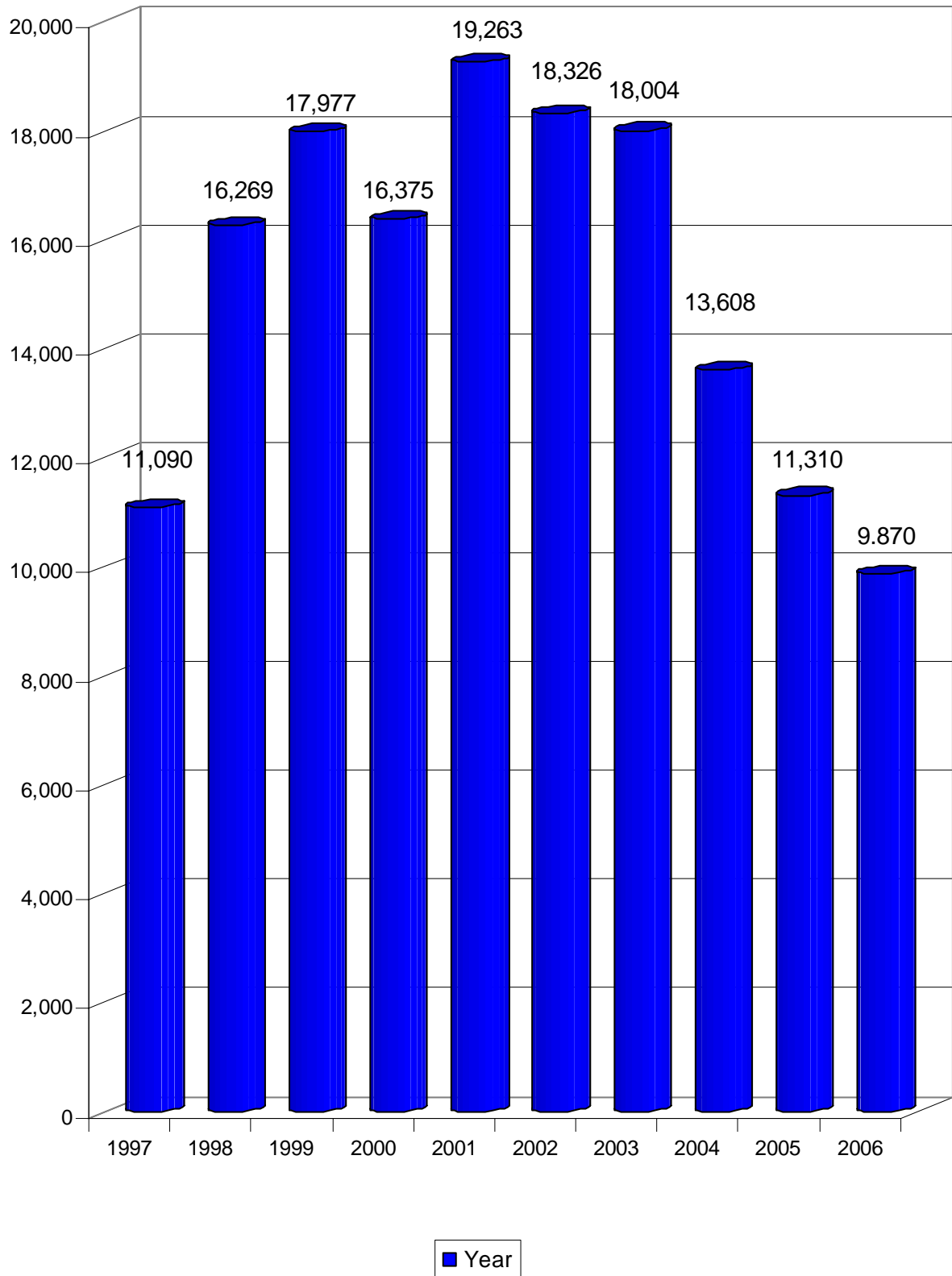
telephone numbers, and calls coming into the Commission's main telephone line and transferred to staff. These type of calls into the Commission are not reflected in the 800 line totals.

There are many more calls to staff that do not result in the filing of a complaint. Those would be in the area of explaining utility bills, answering many utility related questions, and explaining what and to what extent we regulate.

The energy complaints over the years peaked in 2001 with 821 complaints filed. From that point on the energy complaints have hovered around 500-600 per year. The chart of page 37 illustrates the rise and eventual stability of the energy complaint numbers.

**Telecommunications Complaints from 1994 through 2006**

800 Incoming Calls 1997 - 2006



Energy Complaints from 1994 through 2006

