

# Review of condom customer complaints 2023

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## Introduction

As part of the prequalification program, every year UNFPA requests details of customer complaints from prequalified suppliers.

This presentation will give an overview of customer complaints for male and female condoms during 2023.

For this period 26 companies submitted data, covering 22 male condoms and 4 female condom types.

Condom complaint data from 2020 and 2021/22 are also included in the results for comparison.

## Review process

The complaints as recorded by the company are forwarded to UNFPA, using a standard template. The record will include a brief summary of the root cause, any corrective/preventive actions taken and the results of such actions.

These are reviewed by UNFPA consultants, and either accepted, accepted with verification to be done at the next inspection or more details are requested from the company

## Potential problems

Complaints are as reported by the customer, and possibly interpreted by the manufacturer. The same complaint can therefore be reported in several different ways, making analysis difficult.

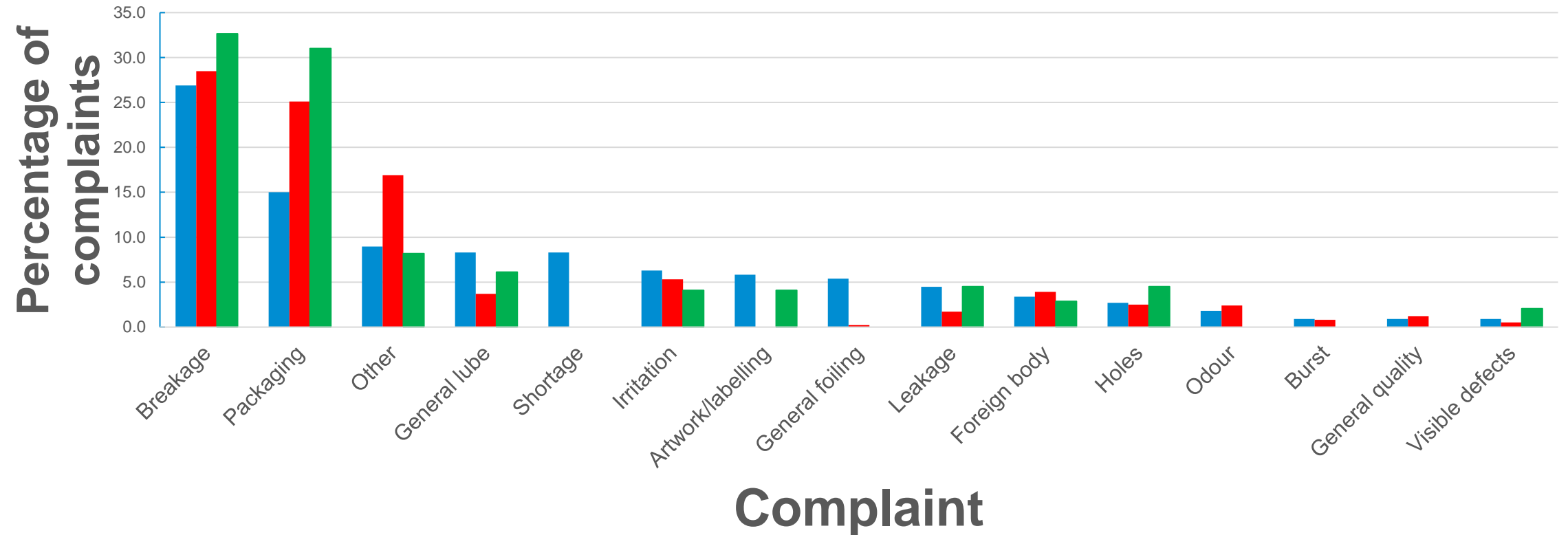
Some complaints are not specific - for example “customer dissatisfaction”, “dots wrong size” etc.

Where a category cannot be assigned the complaint is categorised as “other”.

## Complaints by category 2023

COMPLAINT	NUMBER	%		COMPLAINT	NUMBER	%
Breakage	120	26.8		Leakage	20	4.5
Packaging	67	15.0		Foreign bodies	15	3.4
Other	40	8.9		Holes	12	2.7
Shortage	38	8.5		Odour	8	1.8
Lubricant	37	8.3		Low burst	4	0.9
Irritation	28	6.3		Visible defects	4	0.9
Artwork/labelling	26	5.8		General quality	4	0.9
Foiling	24	5.4				

## % of complaints in each category 2023 (blue), 2021/22 (red) and 2020(green)



## Comparison with previous years

The comparison can not be exact, as not all the companies reported for each year. In addition, the assigning of categories was not exactly the same for each period.

Nevertheless, some conclusions can be drawn.

Breakage and packaging form the majority of the complaints for all the years.

Note that for 2020 and 2021/22 “shortage” was included in “packaging”.

Packaging plus shortage for 2023 totalled 23.3%.

If we ignore the “other” category we can see that, in general, there is a similar picture across this survey period.

## Customer complaints 2023 - Major categories

Breakage accounted for 26.9% (28.5% in 2021/22 and 32.7 in 2020)) of the complaints

Packaging complaints were 15% (25.1% in 2021/22, 31% in 2020) of the total

“Other” accounted for 9% (16.9% in 2021/22, 8.2% in 2020), but this covered a wide range of issues and cannot easily be broken down.

*Note that the total number of complaints is a very small proportion of the condoms sold - typically less than 1 for every million condoms sold.*



## Customer complaints 2023 – Minor categories (1)

General lubricant 8.3% (3.7% 2021/22, 6.1% 2020)

Shortage 8.3% (in with packaging 2021/22 & 2020)

Irritation 6.3% (5.3% in 2021/22, 4.1% in 2020)

Artwork/labelling 5.8% (Not counted 2021/22, 4.1% in 2020)

General foiling 5.4% (0.2% in 2021/22, not counted in 2020)

Leakage 4.5% (1.7% 2021/22, 4.5% 2020)

## Customer complaints 2023 – Minor categories (1)

Foreign body 3.4% (3.9% 2021/22, 2.9% 2020 )

Holes 2.7% (2.5% 2021/22, 4.5% 2020)

Odour 1.8% (2.4% 2021/22, not counted 2020)

Burst 0.9% (0.8% 2021/22, not counted 2020)

General quality 0.9% (1.2% 2021/22, not counted 2020)

Visible defects 0.9% (0.5% 2021/22, 2.0% 2020)

## Breakage

Breakage - usually in use - is the most common cause for complaint presumably because it is obvious and of concern to the customer.

Condoms, when properly used, do not often break in use and it is possible that many of these complaints refer to inexperienced users. However, it is an obvious cause for concern and the reaction of the company is important.

## Breakage – recommended actions

The company should raise a CAPA showing that it is looking for any common factors that may be involved in the breakage. Are the affected condoms from the same batch? Of the same type? Made from the same latex batch? Sold into the same market? Made at the same site? etc.

The consultants will be looking to see the results of this type of follow up - if not further information will be requested.

## Packaging

Packaging is the second largest category of complaint but covers a wider range. Packaging complaints can vary from outer boxes deformed in transit to other types of damage.

Where possible packaging complaints of leaking foils, empty foils or open foils are separated out and reported separately.

Open foils are considered a serious complaint, as they expose the condom to possible degradation by external factors.

## “Other” complaint category

The “other” category is more difficult to analyse in detail. It can cover vague complaints such as “I did not like the condom”. “It did not fit”, “condom looks funny”.

If the complaint contains sufficient information, then the company’s response can be assessed. If not more information will often be requested.

## Irritation

Although the level of complaints of irritation is low compared to breakage and packaging, these complaints should be taken seriously.

If the complaint relates to more than one incident, the consultants will look for evidence to show that the company has looked for any trends - for example using the same sort of procedure as for breakage.

In addition, analysis to show the presence of significant concentrations of known irritants and allergens may be requested.

## Complaints of holes and low bursts

It is reassuring to see that complaints of holes and low strength/low burst properties are low, although of course these are more likely to be detected by a test laboratory rather than the user.

It shows that prequalified manufacturers seem to be controlling these stages in the production process adequately well.



## Some examples from 2023

Complaints to company 'A' included some 36% of breakage and 13% of lubricant related complaints.

As these are the amongst the majority categories overall, they are in line with the trend.

However, in this case they are relatively high and give the company information on where they should be focusing their quality improvement program.

They also can guide UNFPA inspectors at prequalification inspections.

## Another example from 2023

Complaints to company 'B' included a total of over 50% incidences of breakage.

This is a very significant issue, and this company should be making strenuous efforts to identify and rectify the cause.

In too many of these cases the consultants have to demand further information, as the responses from companies are frequently inadequate. Claiming that no evidence exists to show the root cause of the failure, without evidence of any investigation is not considered sufficient.

## More examples from 2023

Complaints to company 'C' concerning shortages – not enough condoms in the box or delivery - were over 41% of the total for that company.

Company 'D' reported over 34% of packaging-related complaints

Again, this type of information is valuable in identifying where a company should be applying corrective and preventive action and making changes to their operating procedures where necessary

## A helpful hint

It is always useful to remember these simple rules for helping to control quality.

- 1. No process without data collection***
- 2. No data collection without analysis***
- 3. No analysis without decision***
- 4. No decision without action (which may include a decision that no action is necessary)***

## A few words in conclusion

In all these reviews it was noted that several manufacturers returned only one or two, or even no complaints.

There could be two reasons for this: either their product is essentially perfect, or the customer has little faith in the ability of the company to respond to a complaint.

Lack of complaints should prompt a company to carry out some customer liaison to find out why.

A complaint is an opportunity to interact with the customer and a responsible company will take advantage of the fact.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION