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Consumers complain over cable prices

By **BRIAN FUNG**

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Frustrated with rising prices? Check. Keep getting hit with more fees and charges? Check. You're paying for more channels than you'd ever want to watch? Check.

These are just a handful of the most common complaints consumers have when it comes to charges from their cable companies.

A recent online survey of 3,000 current cable subscribers on the nation's biggest cable providers found that more than half — 53 percent — of Americans would abandon their cable provider if they could. But about 70 percent of those surveyed said their options are limited, according to the study by consulting group cg42.

The list of options may soon narrow even further with several impending mergers, including the proposed deal between Comcast and Time Warner Cable. That may not be good news for consumers. More than 70 percent of those surveyed said that the larger the cable companies become, the worse off consumers will be.

"You have a soup of misery," said cg42 managing partner Steve Beck. Of all the industries the company has studied, he added, "these are the highest levels of [company] vulnerability and [consumer] frustration we've ever seen."

The industry argues that the rise of streaming services like Netflix and satellite television providers has eaten away at cable's marketshare — evidence that competition is working and choices are plentiful. "The top four biggest video subscription services in the U.S. are an online video provider [Netflix], a cable company and two satellite companies," said Brian Dietz, spokesman for the National Cable and Telecommunications Association.

The study found that each of the nation's top five cable companies — Comcast, Time Warner Cable, Cox, Charter and Cablevision — stand to lose about 10 percent of their customers to cordcutting or carrier-switching in the next 12 months. Whether you call it competition or defection, that puts about \$7 billion in revenues at stake across the industry.

"What we know is that frustration drives attrition," said Beck. "It drives switching."