

Legal Services Consumer Panel Tracker Survey 2026:

How consumers are choosing legal services



July 2026

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Executive summary

Consumer engagement remains stronger than historic levels, but progress has stalled

- Just over four in ten (42%) consumers shopped around before choosing a legal service provider in 2026. This is a similar level to 2025 (44%), but substantially higher than levels seen before 2022 (22%-30%).
- Around eight in ten (81%) felt they had a choice of provider, remaining well above historic levels despite a decline from 2025 (84%).
- However, engagement with the market remains uneven. Older consumers, those in Wales, and those from lower social grades were significantly less likely to shop around, as were those with cases involving criminal charges (23%), probate (31%) and power of attorney services (32%).
- Consumers using no win, no fee arrangements (73%) or free services (70%) were also less likely to feel they had a choice of provider (compared to 81% overall).
- These findings suggest that some groups continue to face barriers to engaging effectively with the legal services market.

Consumers find some information more accessible, but gaps remain around key protections

- When shopping around, consumers reported improvements in finding information about costs (74% found it easy) and service quality (73% found it easy).
- However, information about professional indemnity insurance and rights to complain to an ombudsman remained among the hardest information to access, with little improvement over time. Only 56% of consumers found information on these areas easy to locate.
- Price remained the most commonly compared factor when choosing between providers, yet only around one in seven consumers compared access to an ombudsman. This suggests that many consumers choose a service provider without considering important protections available if things go wrong.

Confidence and value for money remain high, but some consumers report poorer experiences

- Consumers continued to report high levels of confidence in their chosen provider (95%) and positive perceptions of value for money (73%).

- However, these headline figures mask differences between groups. Consumers who felt they had limited choice were substantially less likely to believe their service represented good value for money (37% vs. 73%), while confidence was lower among tenants with housing issues (91%) and consumers from Asian backgrounds (91%).

The findings suggest that while the market is working well for many consumers, some groups continue to experience poorer outcomes and reduced confidence. Understanding and addressing these disparities remains important for regulators seeking to improve consumer experiences across the legal services sector.

Two-fifths of consumers are shopping around

Base: 3802

42% in 2026

-2 vs 44% in 2025
+3 vs. 41% in 2024
+6 vs. 39% in 2023
+1 vs. 40% in 2022



Most likely to shop around when using legal services for:

Base: 3802

55% Housing problems as a tenant (+1% vs. 54% in 2025)
52% Employment disputes (+10% in 2025)



Least likely to shop around when using legal services for:

23% Criminal charges (+1% vs. 22% in 2025)
31% Probate (-13% vs. 43% in 2025)



Most consumers felt they had a choice, and that the price was easy to understand.

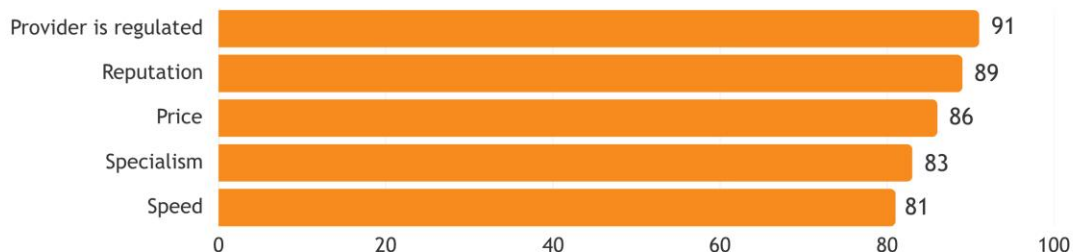
Base: 3802

81% agreed that they had a choice of provider (-3% vs. 84% in 2025)
78% agreed that the information on price was easy to understand (+1% vs. 77% in 2025)
63% first found out the price by speaking to the lawyer



Top 5 factors considered in choice

Base: 3802

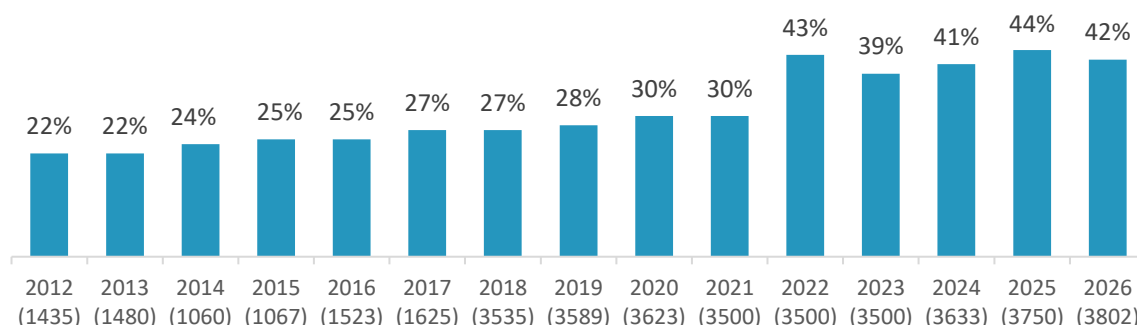


How consumers are choosing legal services

Who shops around?

The proportion of consumers who shopped around before choosing a legal services provider has remained fairly stable in the last year (see *Figure 1* - 42% in 2026, 44% in 2025), after a small increase in 2025.

Figure 1. Did you shop around for the provider you chose?* (Base size in brackets, by year. Showing those who shopped around.)



*Question wording was changed from 2023 onwards, so data from previous years is not directly comparable.

Shopping around is **higher** among:

- Those in London (57%);
- Those from racialised communities (56% vs. 38% of those from white communities);
- Legal aid users (50%);
- Those using a Chartered Legal Executive (53%) or insurance company (52%).

Shopping around is **lower** among:

- Those in Wales (34%), vs England (43%);
- Those aged 55+ (30%);
- Those in social grades C2DE (37% vs. 45% of ABC1).

Unsurprisingly, shopping around is higher for more complex legal needs, such as family law services (51%) and housing problems as a tenant (55%), and lower for criminal charges (23%) and power of attorney services (32%) and probate (31%).

Seven in ten consumers (69%) took a week or less to choose a provider. Those who took longer to choose include:

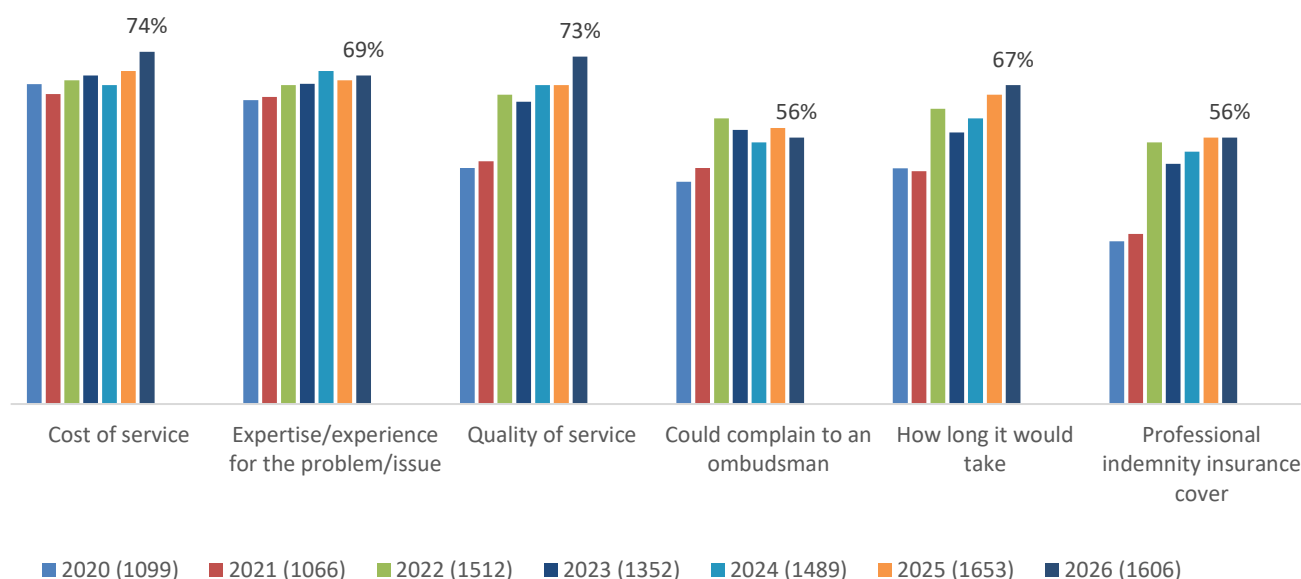
- Those from racialised communities (14% took a month or more vs, 9% of those from white backgrounds);
- Those with cases related to immigration (20%) or housing problems (16%).

Ease of finding information when shopping around

This year, consumers have found it easier to find information on costs, following an increase seen in 2025 (74% vs. 70% in 2025). They are also more able to find information on the quality of service (73% vs. 67% in 2025).

Those aged 18 to 24 were more likely than other age groups to report difficulties finding information around costs (16% vs. 11% overall), insurance (15% vs. 10% overall), how long it would take (20% vs. 13%), and whether they could complain to an ombudsman (15% vs. 8%).

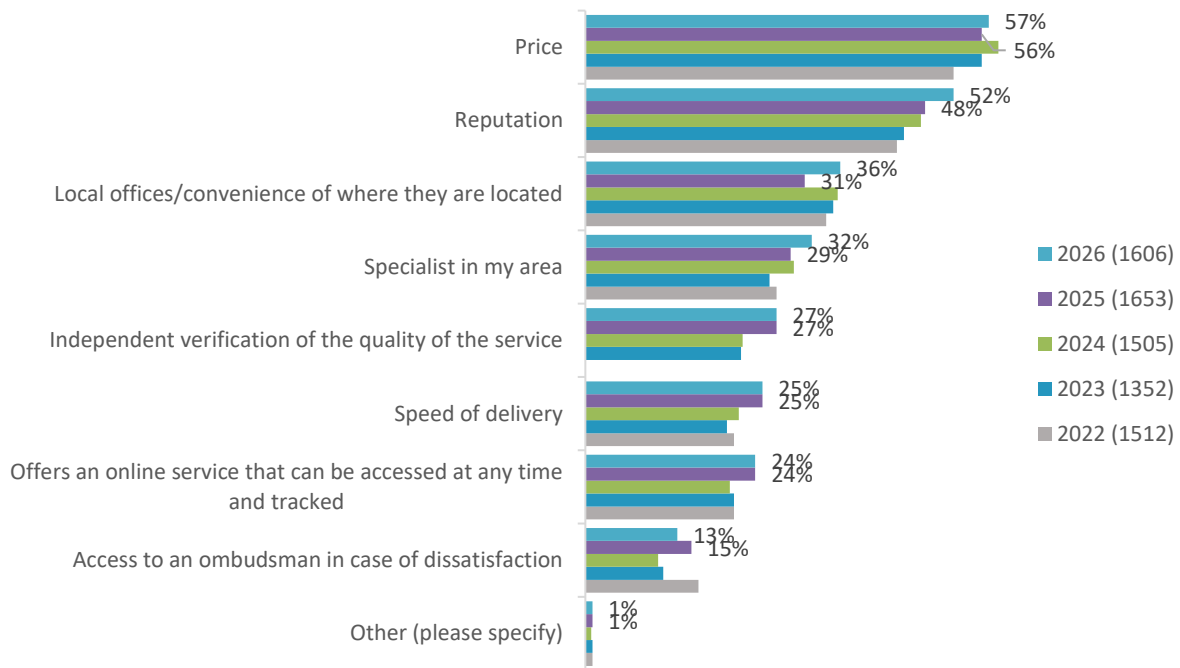
Figure 2. When shopping around for a legal services provider, how easy or difficult was it to find the information you wanted on each of the following? (Respondents who shopped around. Base size in brackets, by year. Showing those who found it easy).



What did consumers compare before choosing their service?

The price (57%) of the service was the main aspect that people compared when shopping around, with reputation (52%) and the location of an office (36%) also important factors; all of these were in line with scores seen in recent years (see *Figure 3*).

Figure 3. Which of the following did you compare before choosing your service? (1606)



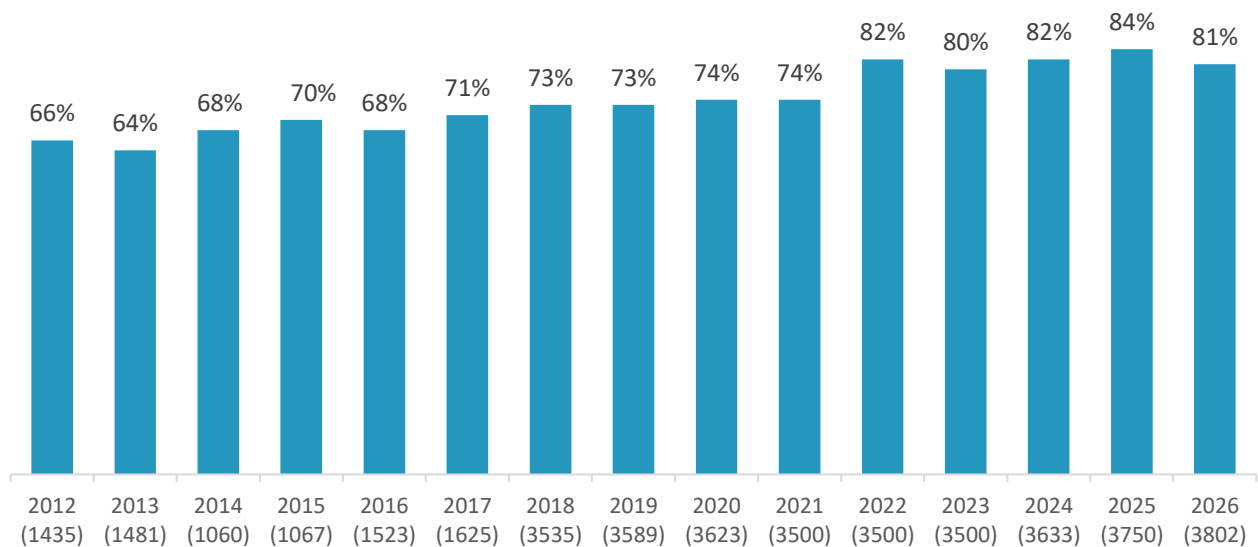
Key subgroup differences include:

- Those in London were more likely to compare most aspects of service, including speed (36% vs. 25% overall), independent verification (34% vs. 27%), and online service (29% vs. 24%) ;
- Those from white backgrounds were more focused on price (59% vs. 52%) and local offices (38% vs. 30%), whereas those from racialised communities were more concerned with speed (41% vs. 18%), reputation (55% vs. 50%) and access to an ombudsman (19% vs. 10%);
- Pricing is more likely to be compared for conveyancing (62%) and will writing (67%) vs. 57% overall.
- Speed is a priority in accident and injury claims (37% vs. 25% overall), whereas an online service becomes more important for employment disputes (39% vs. 24% overall).

How much choice do people think they have?

Over eight in ten consumers (81%) felt that they had a choice. This is a decline on 2025 (84%), returning to levels seen in previous years. This remains well ahead of levels seen between 2012 and 2021 (see *Figure 4*). Unsurprisingly, those that shopped around were more likely to feel that they had a choice (88%), in line with previous years. Those who were satisfied with the outcome of their legal matter were also more likely to feel that they had a choice (85%) than the overall sample, suggesting a correlation between satisfaction with the outcome and service.

Figure 4. How much choice did you feel you had? (Base size in brackets, by year. Showing those who felt they had a choice.)



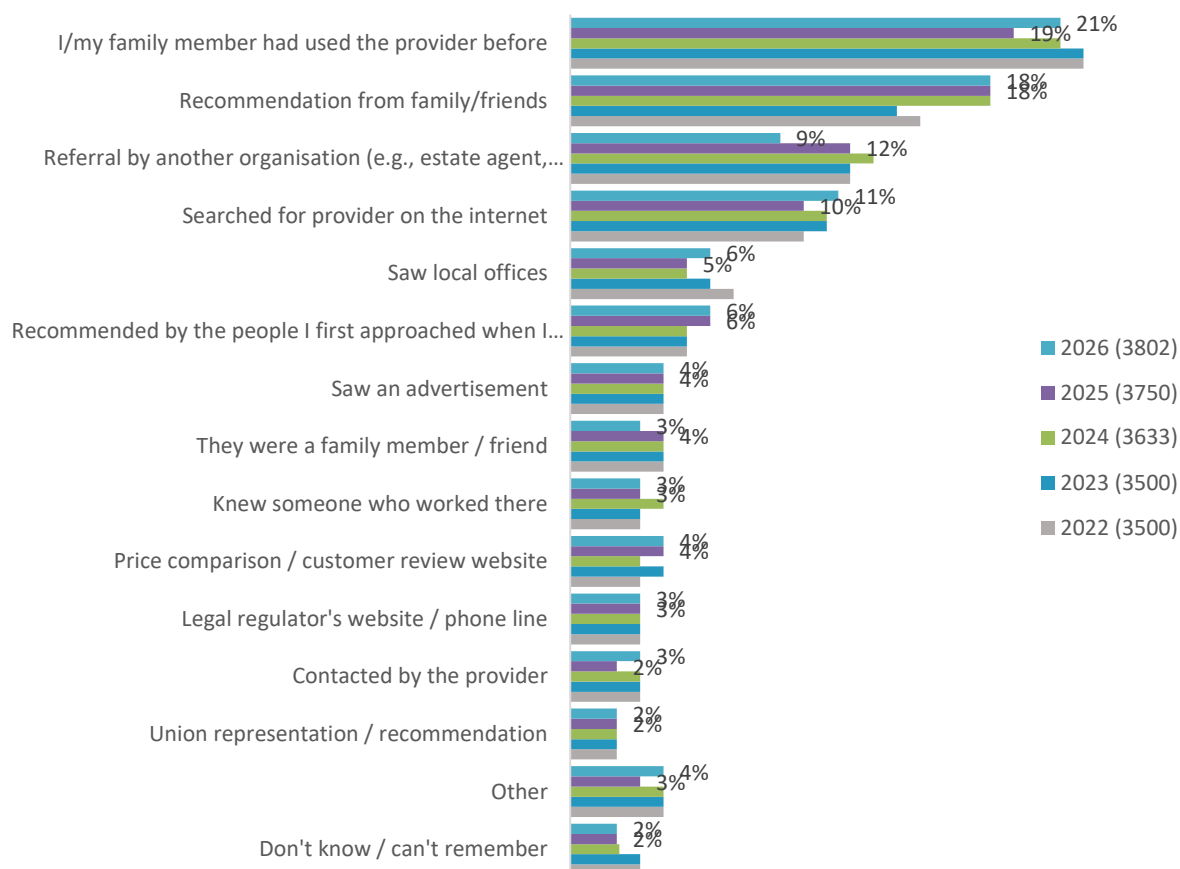
Certain subgroups were more likely to feel that they had a choice:

- Those paying for it themselves (84%) vs. those using a no win, no fee arrangement (73%) or free service (70%);
- Those in social grades ABC1 (83% vs. 78% of C2DEs);
- Those from racialised communities (86% vs. 80% of those from White backgrounds);
- Those in London (88%);
- Those using will writing services (90%).

How do people choose their provider?

When asked how consumers choose their provider, influence from family members and friends (they or a family member have used the provider before (21%) or family or friends recommended the provider (18%)) remained the most common factors, consistent since 2024 (see *Figure 5*).

Figure 5. Which one of the following best describes how you chose your provider? (Base size in brackets, by year.)



Are consumers confident in the choice they made?

Almost all consumers were confident in the choice they made (95%), in line with high levels seen in 2025 (also 95%). Only 3% said that they were not very or not at all confident that the provider they chose would deliver a good service, consistent with previous years.

Whilst confidence was high across the board, it was **lower** among:

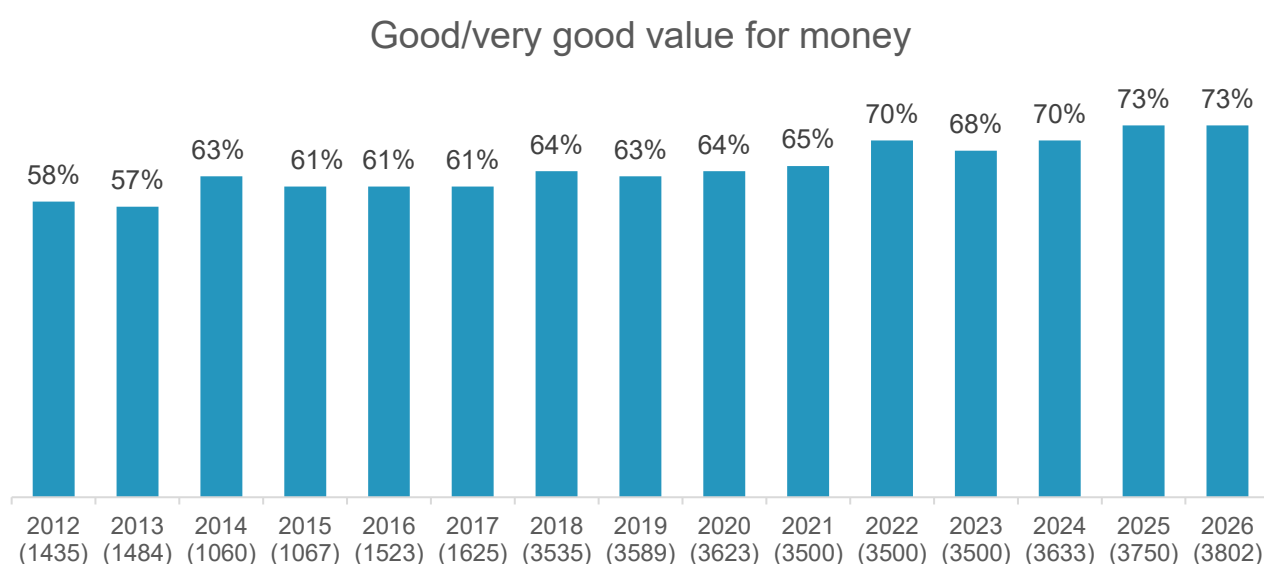
- Those who felt that they had limited choice in their provider (86% vs. 98% of those who felt they had a choice).

- Those from Asian backgrounds (91%);
- Tenants with housing issues (91%).

Do service providers deliver value for money?

73% of consumers felt that the overall service and advice was good or very good value for money. This is consistent with last year, remaining at the highest level seen since the survey began in 2012 (see Figure 6).

Fig 6. Do you think the overall service and advice provided was...? (Base size in brackets, by year, showing the proportion that believed the service and advice was good value for money).



The following groups were more likely to state that the service was good value for money:

- Consumers in London (81%) ;
- Social grades ABC1 (74% vs. 69% C2DE) ;
- Consumers aged under 25 to 34 (84%);
- Those writing a will (78%) or seeking help with employment disputes (80%).

Value for money perceptions were lower among:

- Those from Asian backgrounds (63%);
- Those dealing with probate (64%), or using solicitors (71%)

- Those who felt their choice was limited (39%) or wanted to shop around but didn't know how (52%).

94% of respondents were confident that the legal service provider they used would keep their money safe, a similar proportion to that reported in 2025 (92%), 2024 (91%), 2023 (90%) and 2022 (91%). This figure was lower for those aged 18 to 24 (90%), and those from Asian backgrounds (87%). It was also lower for those using services for housing problems as a tenant (88%) and family law services (88%).

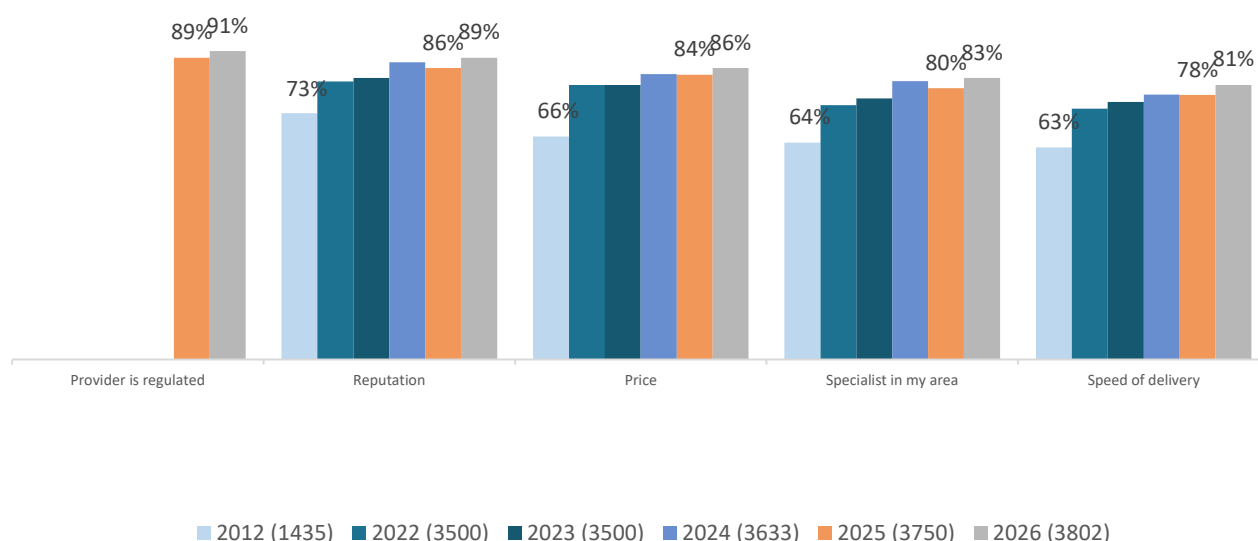
Consumers' decision making

For both providers and regulators, understanding what influences consumers' decision making is key to assessing whether the market is responding to consumers' needs and empowering consumers with the information they need to make informed decisions.

Since 2025, consumers have been asked about how important a provider being regulated was in their decision-making. This has emerged as the most important factor, selected by nine in ten (91% in 2026 vs. 89% in 2025).

Reputation, price, specialism and speed remain key factors, as seen in previous years.

Figure 7. How important were the following factors when choosing your provider? (Base size in brackets, by year. Showing those who thought each was important.)



There are some variations between groups in importance of different aspects in provider choice:

- Provider regulation was more important to those aged over 55 (94%), and those using will writing (94%) or conveyancing (93%);

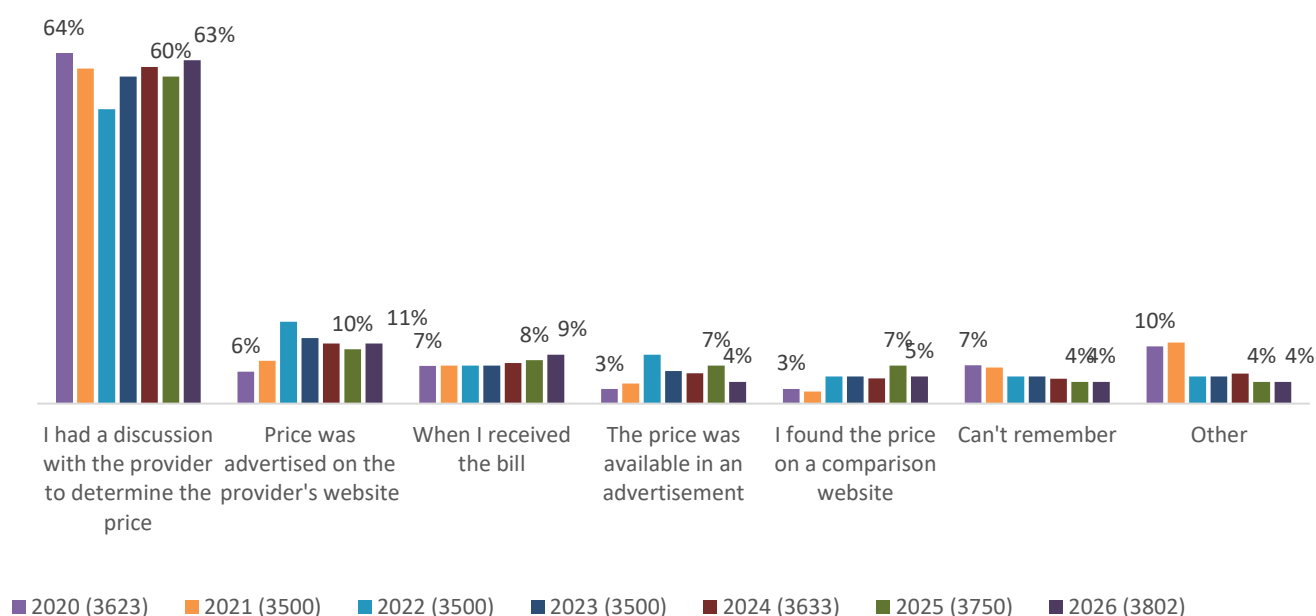
- Reputation was more important to social grades ABC1 (90% vs. 86% C2DE);
- Speed was more important to ABC1s (83% vs. 77% of C2DEs), those from racialised communities (88% vs. 79% from white communities) and matters involving conveyancing (87%).
- Price was more important in certain types of services, including will writing (90%) and conveyancing (89%).

Price transparency

Having a discussion with the provider remained the most common way that consumers first found out about the price of legal services (63%), an increase on 2025 (60%) (see *Figure 8*).

Those of social grade ABC1 were more likely to have had a discussion with the provider to determine the price (64% vs. 62% of C2DEs), along with those aged 55+ (69%), those with White backgrounds (65%), and those using conveyancing services (70%) and will writing (72%).

Figure 8. How did you FIRST find out what the price of the service would be? (Base size in brackets, by year.)



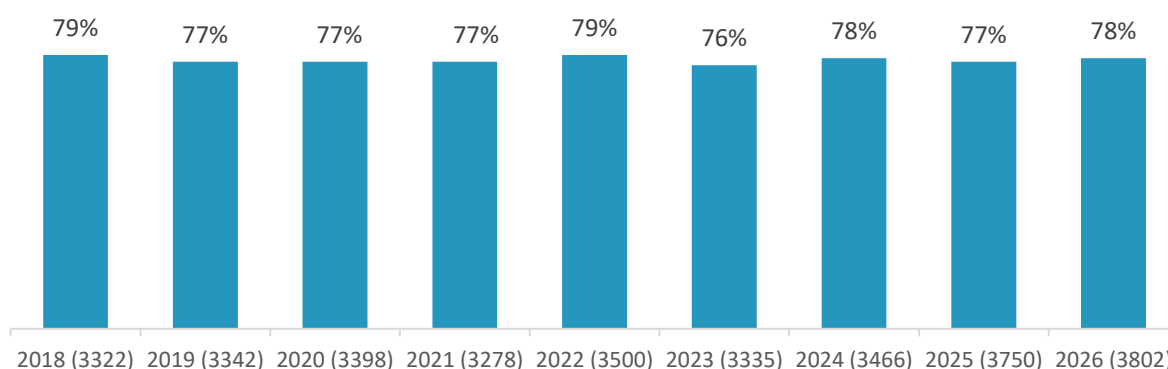
Ease of understanding price information

Three quarters of consumers (78%) found it easy to understand the cost of their legal services. This is generally in line with levels seen since 2018.

Whilst the majority found it easy to understand the cost, across all subgroups, the proportion finding it difficult to understand (5%) was higher among:

- Those using probate services (7%), accident or injury claims (9%).

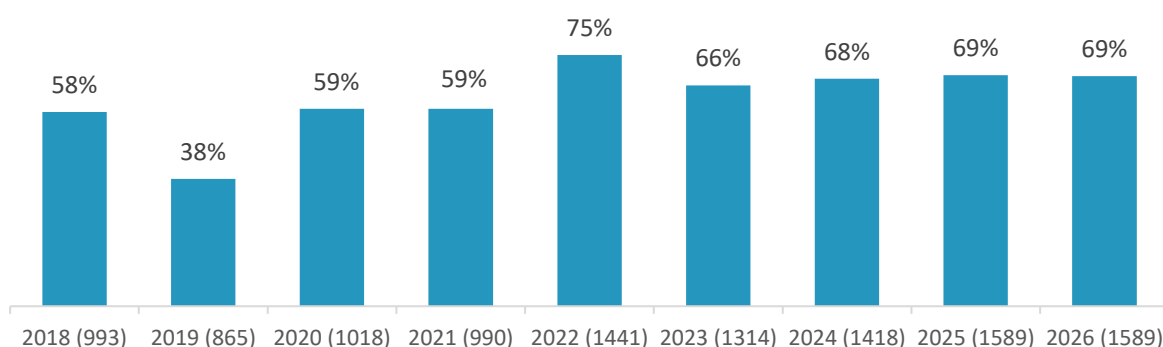
Figure 9. How easy or difficult was it to understand this information about the price of the legal service? (Base size in brackets, showing those who found it easy.)



Making comparisons between providers

69% of consumers found price comparisons easy this year, remaining fairly stable since 2024. There were no clear subgroup differences in ease or difficulty of making price comparisons.

Figure 10. And how easy or difficult was it to make PRICE comparisons across the legal services providers? (Respondents who compared more than one legal service. Base size in brackets, by year. Showing those who found it easy).



Appendix 1: Note on the methodology

Context

The Legal Services Consumer Panel commissioned M·E·L Research to conduct an annual tracker survey and research among those who have used legal services in the last two years. This year we talked to 3,802 legal services users. Respondents were sourced via an online panel, with quotas set to generate representative results. The survey was live from Monday 23 February to Monday, 13 April 2026.

Specifically, the survey was designed to:

- Gain an understanding of consumers' understanding and experience of using legal services in England and Wales;
- Assess what type of individuals are using legal services, the reason for their use, their satisfaction with the service and their understanding of the profession.

Statistical significance

The findings throughout the report are presented in the form of percentages, and all differences between subgroups highlighted in the text are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level unless otherwise indicated. In some instances, apparent differences between figures may not be considered 'statistically significant' due to sample sizes. Non-significant findings do not necessarily mean that no change has occurred (e.g. year on year), rather they indicate a failure to detect differences due to sampling variation.

Reporting conventions

The 'base' or 'n' number referred to in each chart and table is the number of individuals responding to the question. An asterisk (*) denotes small base sizes (<30) and findings should therefore be considered as indicative only. Due to computer rounding, numbers and percentages displayed visually on graphs in the report may not always add up to 100% and may differ slightly when compared to the text. The figures reported in the text will be correct.

Please note: the findings in the report may not appear in the same order as the survey questions.

Sample

The sample is broadly comparable with 2025 and previous years by location, age and gender. The sample was weighted to the type of legal service used in the past two years.

The 2025 and 2026 surveys include a boost of 500 respondents in Wales (as opposed to 250 in previous years), to enable robust analysis of legal services users within Wales. When conducting analysis among the overall sample, we have down weighted the proportion of respondents in Wales to match previous waves to ensure comparability of data.

M·E·L Research has conducted the survey from 2022 onwards. Prior to this, between 2012 and 2021, the survey was conducted by YouGov. Comparisons between results in different years are made in the report, and whilst there were some methodological changes introduced in 2022 as a result of the change of research services provider, the sample is broadly comparable with previous years, subject to the differences noted in the samples for each year.

Appendix 2: Sample comparison on key demographics

	Year of Survey						
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Difference from last year
	Region						
North East	4%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	0%
North West	12%	12%	12%	12%	12%	13%	1%
Yorkshire and the Humber	9%	9%	9%	10%	9%	9%	0%
East Midlands	8%	8%	9%	9%	8%	8%	0%
West Midlands	9%	10%	9%	9%	9%	10%	1%
East of England	11%	9%	10%	9%	10%	10%	0%
London	12%	16%	14%	14%	14%	14%	0%
South East	18%	15%	15%	15%	15%	16%	1%
South West	11%	9%	10%	10%	10%	10%	0%
Wales	5%	8%	7%	7%	7%	7%	0%
Net: England	95%	93%	93%	93%	93%	93%	0%
Net: South exc. London	30%	24%	25%	25%	25%	25%	0%
Net: Midlands and Wales	23%	25%	25%	25%	17%	17%	0%
Net: North	25%	26%	26%	27%	27%	27%	0%
	Gender						
Male	49%	50%	49%	49%	49%	50%	1%
Female	51%	50%	51%	51%	51%	50%	-1%
	Age						
18-24	2%	6%	10%	10%	9%	9%	0%
25-34	12%	17%	17%	17%	17%	17%	0%
35-44	15%	17%	15%	17%	16%	16%	0%
45-54	15%	17%	17%	15%	17%	17%	0%
55+	56%	43%	42%	41%	41%	41%	0%
	Ethnicity						
White	75%	77%	68%	76%	68%	72%	4%
Racialised communities (total)	19%	19%	29%	24%	32%	24%	-8%
Mixed background	6%	3%	5%	4%	4%	2%	-2%
Indian	4%	4%	6%	5%	6%	3%	-3%
Pakistani	2%	3%	4%	3%	4%	1%	-3%
Chinese	1%	2%	2%	2%	3%	1%	-2%
Black African	2%	3%	6%	6%	11%	12%	1%
Black Caribbean	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	-1%