

Embargoed until 00:01, 16 November 2016

LEGAL SERVICES FAILING TO PROVIDE FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups are experiencing consistently different levels of service from legal services, research from the Legal Services Consumer Panel shows.

An in-depth focus on the experiences of BME groups when choosing and using legal services has highlighted disparities in trust and confidence, knowledge, and satisfaction. Data from the Panel's annual Tracker Survey, when combined with drawing on wider research, shows how cultural variations are having a measurable impact on the way in which people interact with legal services.

Key findings:

- BME users are less satisfied with both the service they receive and the outcome of their matter than White British users.
- BME groups shopped around more and were less likely to use the same lawyer as before, but were less satisfied with the choice on offer and found it more difficult to compare.
- BME groups were less likely to use fixed fees, and more likely to receive a free service; similarly 9% BME used legal aid compared to 2% of White British.
- Levels of trust remain lower among BME users than White British.

Based on these findings, the Panel has also drafted a series of recommendations for Approved Regulators and for representative bodies to take forward in order to address some of the challenges identified. These can be found in the briefing.

Elisabeth Davies, Chair of the Legal Services Consumer Panel, said:

"We have seen this gap in satisfaction and experience persist over the last six years, but this report really highlights the extent to which BME groups are getting a raw deal when choosing and using legal services. Starting with addressing the fundamental lack of trust in the profession, it is clear that there is work to be done by regulators and representatives to ensure everyone is able to access quality, satisfactory and affordable legal services, no matter their ethnicity.

There are lessons to be learned too – BME groups are more active in shopping around and place a higher premium on specialism, and White British groups are far more likely to have prepared a will. These behavioural differences can and should be used to better understand the risks posed to different groups of consumers and what can be done to address these."

-ends-

For more information, contact Lola Bello, Consumer Panel Manager, on 020 7271 0077

Notes to editors

1. The Legal Services Consumer Panel was established under the Legal Services Act 2007 to provide independent advice to the Legal Services Board about the interests of consumers of legal services in England and Wales. We investigate issues that affect consumers and use this information to influence decisions about the regulation of legal services.
2. For the last six years the Panel has commissioned YouGov to conduct an annual survey in two parts: a nationally representative sample (1,864 adults); and a sample of people who have used legal services in the last two years (1,523 adults). Booster samples were obtained for Wales and BME groups. All the figures below have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). The results have been tested to the 95% confidence level - we are 95% confident that these findings are not due to chance. Fieldwork took place during 12 February - 4 March 2016.
3. The briefing notes released today can be found [here](#).