

Tracker Survey 2018

Briefing note: how consumers are choosing legal services.

Key findings:

- The overall proportion of consumers who shop around for legal services remains small at 27%.
- Reputation (78%) continues to be the most important factor when choosing a legal service provider, followed by price (72%) and specialism (70%).
- Price is the most important factor for consumers choosing conveyancing (82%).
- 73% of consumers who shop around say they have a wide range of choice when choosing a provider, showing an upward trend since 2016 (68%).
- 63% of consumers find the price of the service after talking to their provider.
- Consumers' experience of value for money has increased to 64% from 61% in 2017.
- The use of fixed fees has increased to its highest level at 52%, showing a consistent upward trend since 2012 (38%). However, there has been a considerable reduction in the use of fixed fees in immigration matters (from 67% in 2017 to 52% in 2018).
- 79% of consumers who shop around find it easy to understand information on price. However, different types of consumers report difference in experiences.

Note on methodology:

For the last eight years the Panel has commissioned YouGov to conduct an annual survey in two parts: a nationally representative sample (1,828 adults); and a sample of people who have used legal services in the last two years (3,535 adults). The two samples were weighted to be representative of each wider population. Differences in the results between sub-groups and over time have been tested to the 95% confidence level – we are 95% confident that these findings are not due to chance. Fieldwork took place during 07 March and 10 April 2018.

Consumer behaviour

The proportion of consumers who shop around before choosing a provider has remained stagnant for the past two years (27%). And it is only slightly higher than it was in 2012 (22%).

There are a number of trends that emerge in the profile of consumers who shop around for a provider:

- Younger consumers are more likely than older consumers to say they shop around (25-34: 38%, 35-44: 34% v 45-54: 27%, 55+: 23%)
- Those consumers from an ethnic minority are more likely than White British consumers to shop around (BAME¹: 35%, White British: 26%).

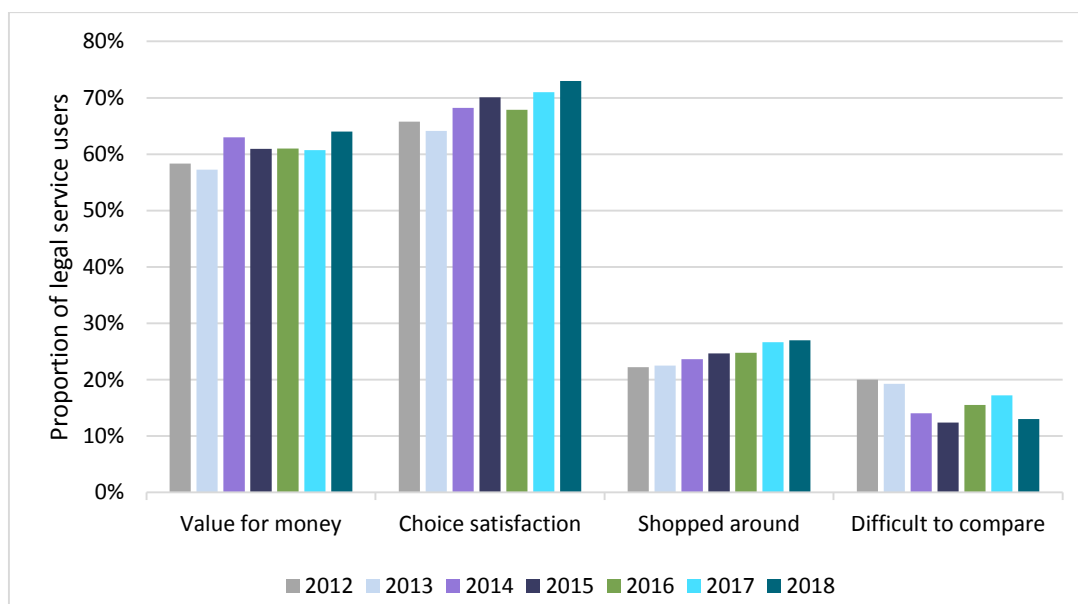
Looking at service areas, those who use conveyancing services are much more likely to shop around for the provider (40%), as are those using legal services for family matters (30%). In contrast, those using probate, accident or injury claims or power of attorney are less likely to shop around (16% for both types of services).

When shopping around, 61% compare three providers or less and 16% compare four providers. Only 7% of consumers compare five or more.

The greatest proportion of consumers who shop around don't spend more than a day searching for providers (43%) in contrast to those who spend less than a week (26%) or a week (9%). Consumers' perception of choice remains broadly the same as last year. 73% of consumers report having a choice compared to 71% in 2017 (see *Figure 1*).

Interestingly, although older consumers are less likely to shop around, they are more likely than younger consumers to feel they have a lot of choice when choosing a provider (55+: 78%, 35-44: 66%, 25-34: 68%). This may be a result of the type of service used, which is a major factor in how much choice consumers feel they have. Consumers say they have more choice in will writing (85%) and conveyancing (80%) than in accident or injury claims (37%) or advice and appeals about benefits or tax credits (40%).

Figure 1: How consumers experience the legal services market.



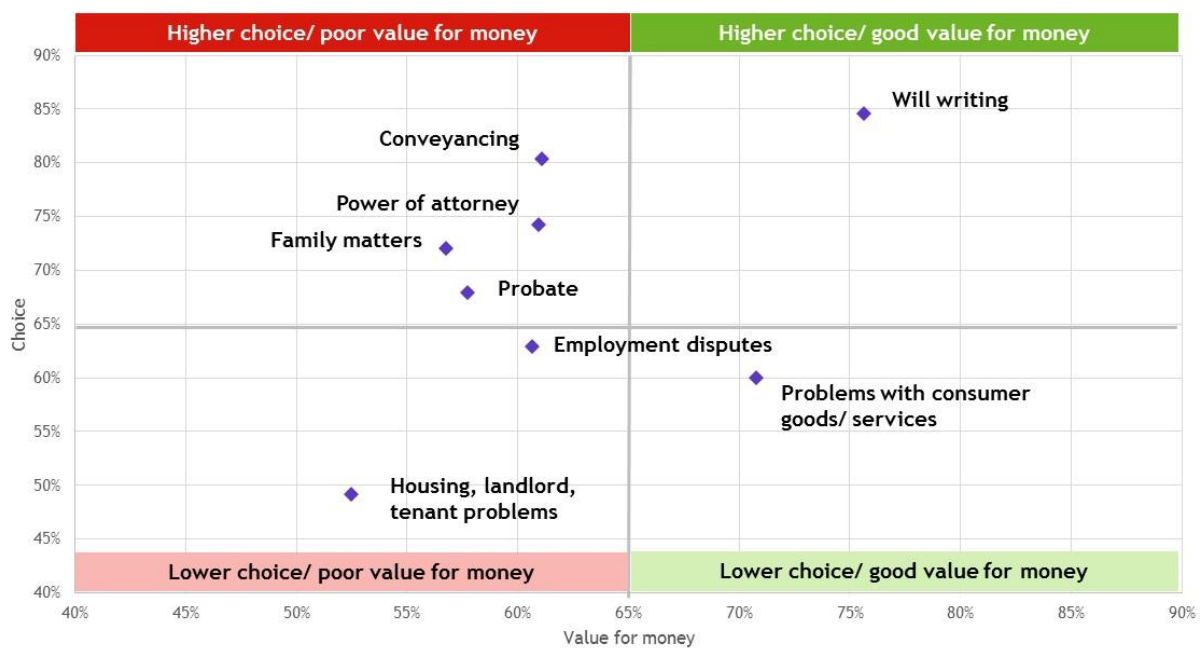
Base: All legal service users (2012=1435, 2013=1484, 2014=1060, 2015=1067, 2016=1523, 2017=1625, 2018=3535)

¹ Black Asian and Minority Ethnic.

Positively, consumers' experience of value for money in 2018 is on the rise, increasing to 64% from 61% in 2017. The highest score for value for money is in will writing (76%), and the lowest are in family matters (57%) and housing, landlord or tenant problems (52%).

Figure 2 shows a comparison of how much choice consumers feel they have against the value for money they feel they receive across a number of different legal service areas. Will writing stands out as the service area that consumers rate highest in terms of the choice of providers and the resultant value for money they receive. In contrast, while choice is relatively high between conveyancers and power of attorney providers, the value for money they receive is rated lower. Consumers accessing housing, landlord and tenant problems rate this service area as having lower choice and worse value for money.

Figure 2: Choice and value for money by legal service type



Drivers of consumer decision-making

Understanding what drives consumer decision-making is important for both providers and regulators. Indicators such as key choice factors can be used to assess whether the market is responding to consumers' needs or empowering them with relevant and readily available information to support informed decision-making.

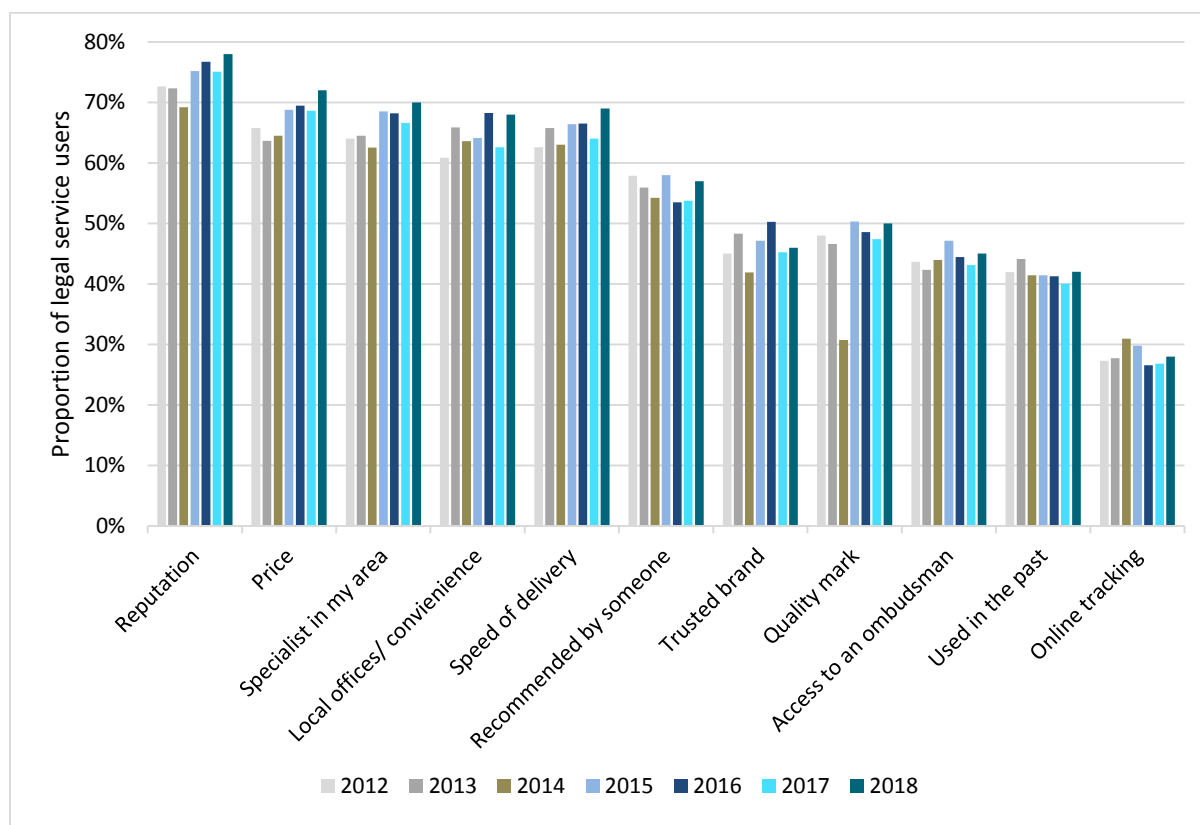
Overall, our research finds that reputation is still the key choice factor when deciding which provider to choose, with 78% rating reputation an important factor in choice ahead of price (72%), see Figure 3. Speed of delivery and local offices have increased in importance when compared to last year (2018: 69%, 2017: 64%, and 2018: 68%, 2017: 63%).

Personal recommendation by someone has increased slightly in importance over the past two years (2016: 53%, 2017: 54%, 2018: 57%). However, price is the most important factor for consumers choosing conveyancing (82%) and the lowest for probate provider (64%).

In areas such as probate or will writing, having used a provider in the past is seen as more important when shopping around. 54% of probate and 49% of will writing consumers rate this as important, compared with 39% of conveyancing consumers or 35% of those accessing advice on family matters.

Convenience of local offices is also the most important factor to consumers in Wales (74%) than in England (67%). This is also a key factor for consumers seeking advice on family matters (81%), probate (78%) and will writing (78%). This is significantly important when compared with other service areas such as conveyancing (67%), employment disputes (67%), problems with consumer services/goods (51%) or accident or injury claims (28%).

Figure 3: Consumers choice factors.



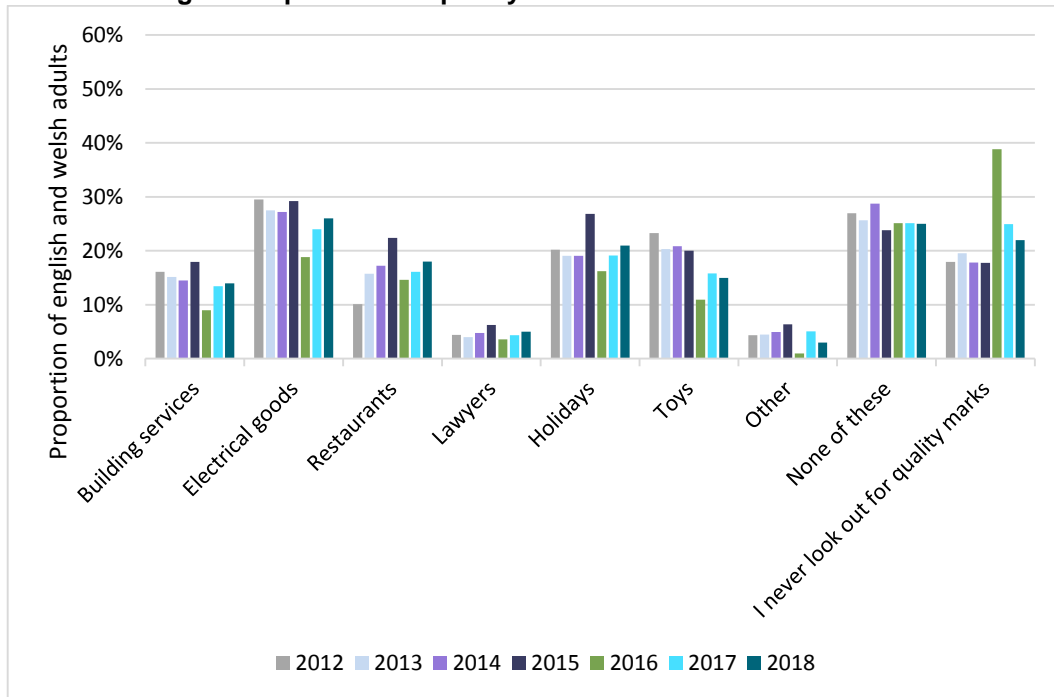
Base: All legal service users (2012=1435, 2013=1484, 2014=1060, 2015=1067, 2016=1523, 2017=1625, 2018=3535)

The general public’s awareness of quality marks remains stable at 71%. In line with previous years, awareness levels of quality marks are lowest for those aged 18-24 (50%) and for those from a lower social grade (C2DE², 61%). Recognition of quality marks continues to be lower among BAME groups, with 62% noting their awareness compared to 76% of White British background.

The use of quality marks to help consumers choose between different providers has been consistently low over the past six years. Only 5% of consumers use a quality mark. Although this figure is very low compared with other sectors, it must be noted that 22% of consumers across all sectors say they never look for quality marks, and another 25% say they do not use quality marks to choose between service providers (see *Figure 4*).

² ABC1 and C2DE are drawn from a system of demographic classification originally developed by the National Readership Survey to classify readers, but now used as a standard for market research. ABC1 is classified as the highest social grade and C2DE classified as the lowest social grade.

Figure 4: How the general public use quality marks in different sectors



Base: All English and Welsh adults (2012=1796, 2013=1762, 2014=1896, 2015=1794, 2016=1864, 2017=1822, 2018=1828)

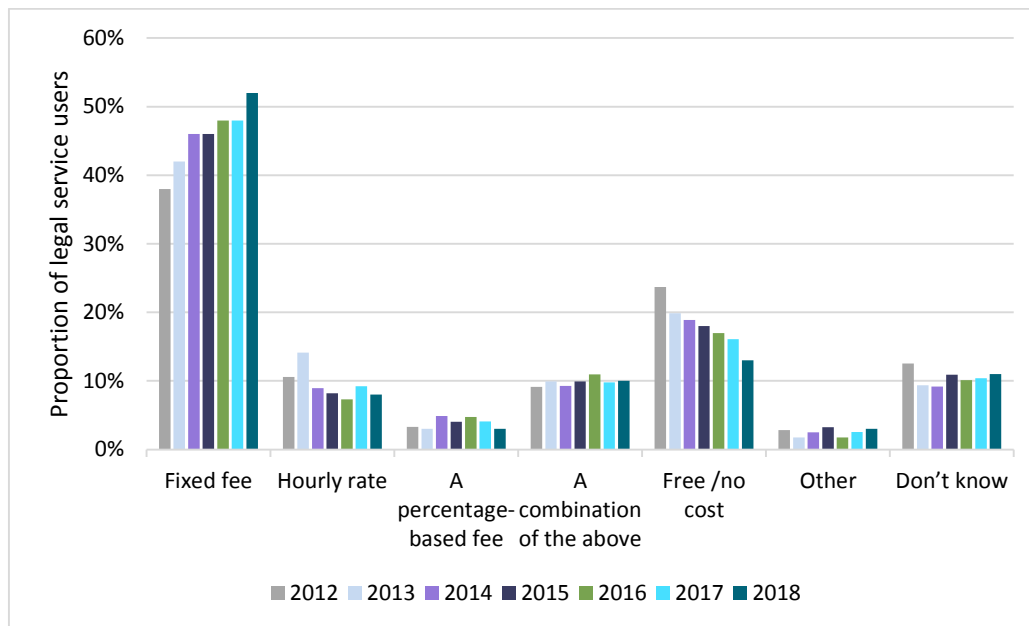
Charging methods

Fixed-fee arrangements give consumers a clear idea of what a service is likely to cost. It enables consumers to compare prices and make an informed decision. They are also an indicator of improved competition in the market, we have therefore tracked their usage over the years.

The overall use of fixed-fee arrangements are at their highest level since tracking began in 2012. They are used in 52% of legal services transactions (see *Figure 5*). There has been a considerable reduction in the use of fixed fees in immigration matters (from 67% in 2017 to 52% in 2018) and less considerable in conveyancing (from 67% in 2017 to 65% in 2018).

The use of fixed-fee arrangements is highest for services related to will writing (68%), conveyancing (65%), and power of attorney (65%).

Figure 5: Breakdown of charging methods

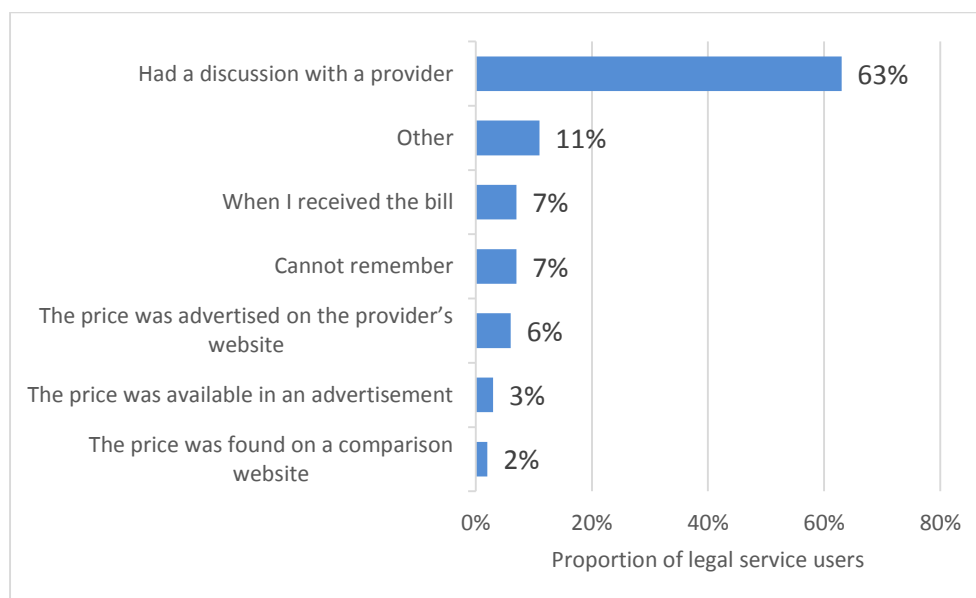


Base: All legal service users (2012=1435, 2013=1484, 2014=1060, 2015=1067, 2016=1523, 2017=1625, 2018=3535)

Price transparency

Transparent information about the cost of a service is critical to making a choice. Legal services consumers have several ways to find out the price of legal services. The Tracker Survey shows that 63% of consumers have a conversation with their provider to determine the price of the service. Only 6% of consumers of legal services find the price on the provider’s website and another 2% find it in an advertisement or on a price comparison website. However, this year’s figures reveal variations by service area, 11% of consumers with neighbour disputes find out about the price through a comparison websites. This is higher than consumers using will writing (1%) or conveyancing (2%). These low levels of initial price transparency, which are unchanged from last year, suggest that consumers remain hindered in making informed choices before talking to a provider (see *Figure 6*).

Figure 6: How consumers find out about the price of the service.



Base: All legal service users, 2018=3535

Ease of understanding price information

The majority (79%) of consumers who shop around find it easy to understand information on price. However, different types of consumers report difference in experiences. Older consumers are more likely than younger ones to say that it was easy to understand the information on price (55+: 82%, 45-54: 73%, 35-44: 76%, 25-34: 74%). In contrast, consumers from a BAME background are less likely to find price information easy to understand: 70% find price information easy to understand compared with 81% of White British consumers.

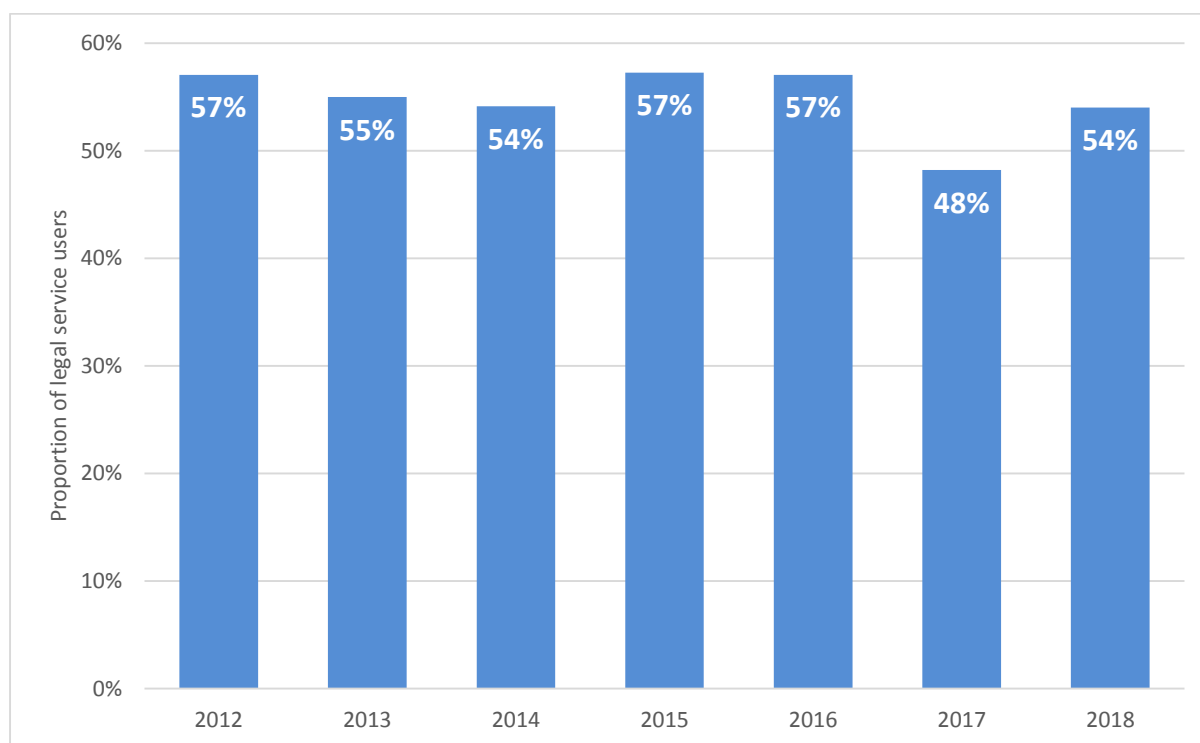
By service area, consumers who use a service for family matters (10%) or accident or injury claims (14%) are most likely to report difficulty in understanding pricing information.

Making comparisons between providers

54% of consumers say it is easy to make comparisons between different providers. This represents a 6% increase from 2017 (48%) (see *Figure 7*). 58% of consumers feel that it was easy to make comparisons on price across providers. There are no significant differences in the services between people of different demographics or those who use different types of legal services.

73% of consumers say they have a wide range of choice when choosing a provider, showing an upward trend since 2016 (68%). Differences can be seen by service type. Consumers believe they have more choice in will writing (85%) and conveyancing (80%) than in accident or injury claims (60%) or advice and appeals about benefits or tax credits (56%).

Figure 7: How easy it is to make comparisons between providers.



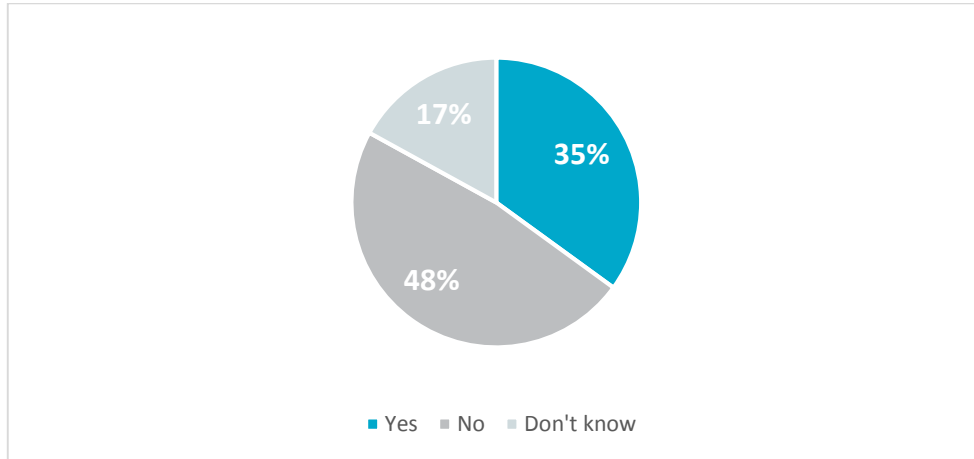
Base: All legal service users who shopped around, 2012=361, 2013=296, 2014=277, 2015: 278, 2016: 388, 2017=457, 2018: 993.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has recommended³ that providers of legal services publish a description of the services they provide on their websites. This should include the types of staff who deliver services, when key stages of the work will be completed,

³ [The Competition and Markets Authority, Legal Services Market Study, 2016.](#)

and any factors that could affect these. The Tracker Survey shows that when shopping around for a provider, 35% of consumers see information on staff, services and timings for delivery, although half (48%) do not see these things and 17% do not know (see *Figure 8*). This is a consistent trend across service types.

Figure 8: Awareness of the CMA recommendation on providers publishing a description of services provided on their websites.



Base: All legal service users who shopped around, 2018=993

Trust trends

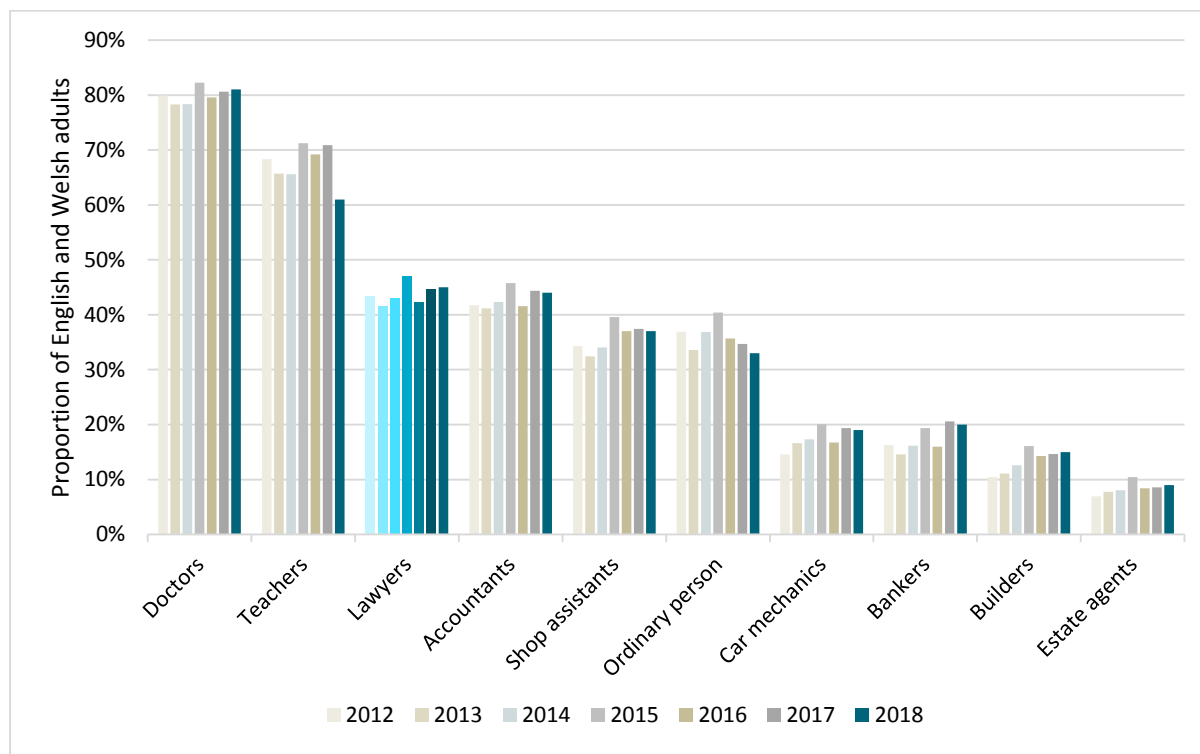
Public trust in lawyers' remains stable at 45% (see *Figure 9*). Consumers who used a legal service provider in the past two years trust lawyers less than those who did not (48% vs 50% - the 2% difference is statistically significant).

Older people in England and Wales are more likely to trust what lawyers say, with 51% of those aged 55+ trusting lawyers to tell the truth compared with 35% of those aged 18-24. However, there is a persistent trend of lower levels of trust and confidence among BAME groups, with 40% trusting lawyers to tell the truth, against 49% of White British. This figure drops further still with consumers from a Black African (31%) background, who have the lowest levels of trust within the BAME groups. BAME groups also have less confidence in their rights being protected (43%) than White British consumers (52%), unchanged from the data reported last year.

Confidence that consumer rights are protected when dealing with lawyers remains broadly the same this year, 49% compared with 46% in 2016. Confidence in consumer rights being protected remains higher for those with better knowledge of what lawyers do compared to those with no knowledge (34% of those with no knowledge compared with 57% of those with a great deal of knowledge).

51% of consumers who represent themselves in court say they have confidence that their rights are protected compared to 49% of those who have representation in court, demonstrating no significant difference in levels of confidence.

Figure 9: Trust trends across different sectors



Base: All English and Welsh adults (2012=1796, 2013=1762, 2014=1896, 2015=1794, 2016=1864, 2017=1822, 2018: 1828)

Types of firms

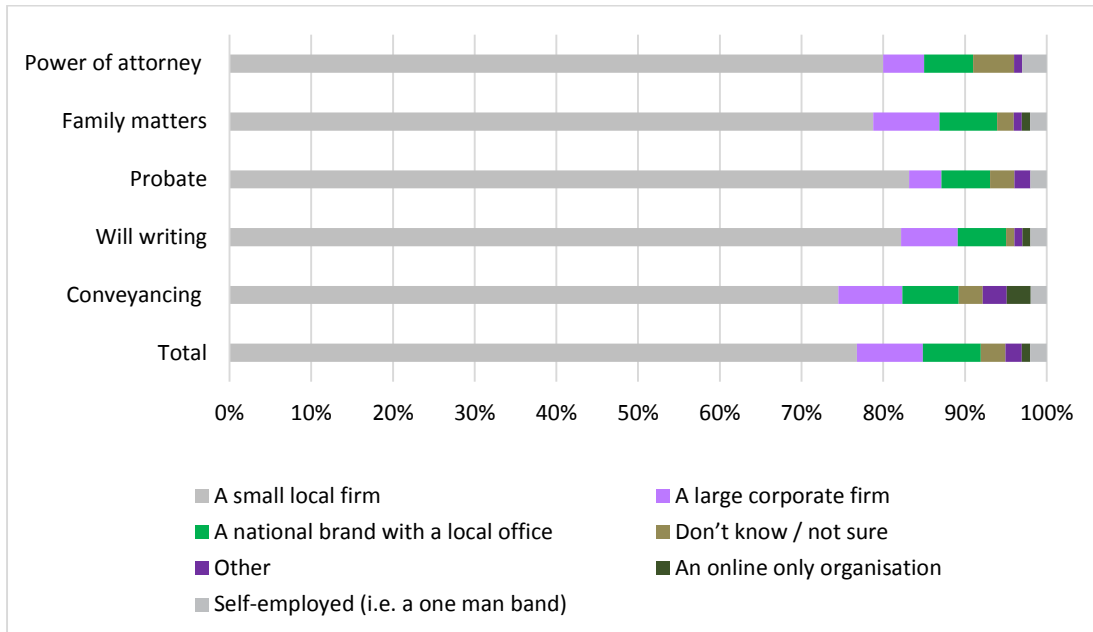
66% of consumers use a solicitor. Amongst this group, local firms remain the preferred option (76%). This is perhaps understandable considering consumers rely on recommendations of friends and family when choosing a provider, as well as face to face advice from lawyers.

91% of consumers say that their provider is regulated⁴ and just 2% say the provider is not regulated, with the remainder (7%) not knowing.

Consumers from a BAME background are more likely than White British consumers to think their provider is not regulated (5% vs 2%) or not know if their provider is regulated (10% vs 6%). By service area, the lowest levels of understanding that a provider is regulated are from consumers accessing housing, landlord or tenant problem services (75%), problems with consumer services or goods (78%), and advice and appeals about benefits or tax credits services (65%).

⁴ By “regulated” we mean providers that are authorised and must comply with requirements set out by a specific regulating body, including requirements concerning complaints handling (e.g. solicitors are regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority).

Figure 10: Type of solicitors firm used by type of legal service accessed



Base: All legal service users who used a solicitor, 2018=2414