

SRA

Transparency

Rules:

Year One Evaluation

October 2020

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In May 2020, the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) commissioned IRN Research to conduct a Year One Evaluation of the SRA's Transparency Rules as part of a 'direction of travel' assessment. The aim was to consider if the Rules are helping people access accurate and relevant information about a solicitor or firm when they are considering using legal services, and to understand how firms are adapting to the transparency requirements.

The methodology involved: online surveys of consumers using legal services since January 2019 with separate surveys for private individuals (referred to as individual consumers in this report) and SME users (referred to as SME consumers in the report); an online survey of SRA regulated law firms; telephone interviews with a sample of individual consumers, SME consumers, and law firms; boost samples of disabled and non-Internet users of legal services; interviews with selected stakeholders. Fourteen external stakeholders including consumer support organisations, professional associations and regulators of the legal sector were important participants in the research in order that the SRA could bring together wider perspectives, insights and greater understanding of the impact of the reforms.

The Executive Summary focuses on those results which provide early evidence on the specific impacts of the Transparency Rules, the benefits and challenges that have been identified, as well as some broader findings on the use of legal services and user behaviour.

Overview

Since the implementation of the Transparency Rules there has been a noticeable increase in consumers using price information on law firms' websites. Price and services information is the website content looked at most often by consumers when choosing a legal advisor, though both consumers and law firms agree that experience and reputation are the most important factors when consumers are looking for a legal advisor.

This research found that:

- Most consumers were happy with the information they found and thought it easy or very easy to find a solicitor. This includes both those who had used a legal adviser before and first-time users (FTUs) of legal services. Among consumers who used a solicitor after visiting their provider's website, proportionately more non-first-time users found it easy to find and choose a solicitor (76%), compared with FTUs (70%): however, the differences are comparatively small given the inexperience of FTU consumers. Consumers want information on pricing and services and when they have it, they find it useful to help inform their choice of legal services provider.

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- Lowest price is not the major determining factor for consumers using legal services but rather a combination of level of service, quality, recommendation, location and other factors as well as price.
- Some consumers do still lack awareness and understanding as to the extent of regulation and what it means in terms of avenues for redress and consumer rights. However, 92% of law firms with a website operating in practice areas subject to the regulatory requirements of the Transparency Rules display the SRA clickable logo.
- Rather than experiencing information asymmetry¹ between legal services providers and consumers regarding the information and pricing of services, most consumers are happy with the information they had and consider pricing (if not on the website, then in subsequent interactions) to be relatively transparent.
- Law firms are starting to realise the benefits for their firms and their clients although there is scope to reinforce the benefits of transparency with law firms. Despite expressing some resistance to the requirement of publishing prices, 68% of the law firms surveyed who operate in practice areas subject to the pricing requirements of the Transparency Rules now publish pricing information online.

Impact of the Transparency Rules

- 83% of individual consumers and 85% of SME consumers said they had the information they needed to make a good choice, and the majority (77% of individual consumers and 68% of SME consumers) found it easy or very easy to find and choose a legal advisor.
- For both SME consumers and individual consumers, those who looked at their provider's website had a much better understanding of the legal process after they had completed their legal matter, compared with consumers who did not look at the website. Consumers using the website were more likely (a statistically significant difference) to have greater trust in the legal profession. They were also significantly more likely to have a better understanding of how to complain, their protections, legal advisors' services, how services are charged and how a legal advisor can help. They were also significantly more likely to feel they will find it easier to engage with legal advisors in the future.
- Most consumers choosing an advisor do look at the price information displayed on a law firm's website (67% of individual consumers and 62% of SME consumers who used a solicitor and looked on websites before choosing looked at prices).
- Consumers found it fairly easy to make judgments about the quality of the legal service provider with 76% of SME consumers and 68% of individual consumers finding it easy or very easy to compare. 87% of individual consumers and 86% of SME consumers were confident that the information given enabled them to be confident in their choice of provider.

¹ Information asymmetry is defined as when one party to a transaction, for instance the solicitor, has greater and/or different information and knowledge than the consumer of legal services. Information asymmetry can be problematic in some markets if the power imbalance it creates leads to transactions going awry; so it is an issue to research and redress where possible.

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- 80% of individual consumers and SME consumers agree experience/reputation is more important than price. These findings are consistent with recent research studies from the LSCP², SRA³, and IRN Research⁴ which have all found that although price is important as a choice criteria, it is not the most important factor: reputation and experience of the advisor is top of the list. It is not price *or* experience that drives choice, rather it is price *with* experience, suggesting potential clients make an assessment of value for money, i.e. price compared with quality and service as well as other factors including personal recommendation, quality, service and location.
- Evidence from the consumer interviews shows that many consumers make the final choice on their legal advisor not from website information but from a telephone call or an appointment with an advisor. This is where detailed price information is given along with details of who will do the work, timescales, complaints procedure, and any regulatory information.
- 65% of law firms think the Transparency Rules are clear, with 65% of law firms having used the SRA's guidance and templates. Of the law firms using the SRA guidance and templates, a clear majority (69%) consider the guidance and templates as useful or very useful.
- A majority of law firms (59%) say they use the SRA Solicitors Register, and usage is higher for those firms who work in the areas of law that the price and service information elements of the Rules apply to. Over 90% of solicitors or law firms use the Register to check if a third-party solicitor is regulated and then to check on a third-party solicitor's practice area, this can provide useful extra consumer protection.
- Implementation of the Rules has not created significant extra cost for law firms.
- There is no clear evidence suggesting law firms operating in practice areas covered by the price and service information elements of the Rules have increased or decreased their prices compared with law firms offering services not covered by the Rules.
- Stakeholders and law firms are cautious about the potential of digital comparison tools (DCTs) to help consumers. Consumers, however, value customer reviews and testimonials alongside data such as success rates and typical case scenarios and are more likely to use reviews placed on a firm's website than on comparison sites.
- 41% of individual consumers and 55% of SME consumers are aware of legal services price comparison sites, while 51% of individual consumers and 57% of SME consumers are aware of websites with consumer reviews and/or ratings. However, 13% of individual consumers and 22% of SME consumers have actually used legal price comparison sites and 21% and 26% respectively have used legal review sites.
- 37% of individual consumers were aware of Legal Choices⁵, and 11% had used it. Equally, over half of the small business we surveyed (52%) were aware and 21% had used Legal Choices. A three year development programme for the joint legal regulators consumer facing [Legal Choices](https://www.legalchoices.org.uk/) website, which provides consumers with information to help them navigate the legal landscape, was put in place in response to the recommendations of the 2016 CMA review.

² Legal Services Consumer Panel [Tracker Survey 2020](#), [Tracker Survey 2019](#)

³ Solicitors Regulation Authority (2018), [Price Transparency in the Legal Services Market](#)

⁴ IRN Research (2020), UK Legal Services Consumer Research Report

⁵ <https://www.legalchoices.org.uk/>

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- Consumer interview responses show that hardly anyone from the research sample had posted a review of their legal advisor on a review site but these interviews also suggest that a significant group (over 50%) might post if there were more suitable websites and greater awareness of those sites.
- In terms of the impact of the Transparency Rules on SME consumers, it may not be noticeable yet as the majority of SMEs (83%) use the same advisor as before and 61% use the same legal advisor for a range of legal advice across various issues. 16% of SMEs have their own internal legal resource and 12% use legal advice from a trade or membership body. Given that 56% of SME consumers say they do not look for different advisors, this may mean that they have less requirement than individual consumers to compare pricing and service information on law firm websites.

SME consumers don't actively check whether their legal advisor is regulated, but assume that they are – and there is some lack of clarity on who the regulator is and what they regulate in some instances. More so than individual consumers, SMEs when interviewed talk about balancing factors such as lack of time to shop around and the opportunity cost of bringing another law firm up to speed on their own situation with the need to ensure timely, quality advice that is also value for money.

Benefits of the Transparency Rules

- Website prices clearly are of use to consumers: 91% of individual consumers who used a solicitor and looked at price information on a website said the price information was useful (40%) or very useful (51%). Similarly, 93% of SME consumers who used a solicitor and looked at price information on a website agreed that price information was useful (37%) or very useful (56%).
- Almost a third of law firms (29%) agree that they would recommend that the publication of price and service information is good for business; and that they have seen specific benefits to their firm in the two years since implementation.
- Collectively, 24% of law firms were able to identify at least one specific beneficial change for their own law firm, although no single beneficial change was recognised by a high percentage of firms. The beneficial changes most recognised by firms subject to the new Transparency Rules were clients having more realistic expectations (13%) and improved visibility for the firm (12%). Small and medium law firms, particularly those with 5-10 fee earners, were more likely to report benefits than other sized firms.
- Firms are strongly committed to publishing their complaints policy and procedure (how clients can complain to the firm) with 81% of firms who have a website showing this information online and 90% of firms providing it to clients on request.
- 90% of law firms with a website display the SRA clickable logo. Consumers who click on the regulator's logo when evaluating providers (11% of individual consumers and 17% of SME consumers) had a good, if approximate, idea of what it means. 90% of individual consumers and 87% of SME consumers who clicked on it found it useful or very useful.
- It is encouraging that awareness of the Solicitors Register amongst consumers of legal services is also relatively high, given how new it is: just over half of SMEs and almost 40% of consumers who

used a solicitor in the last 18 months are aware of it. Almost all that have used the Register have found the information useful.

Challenges of the Transparency Rules

- With regards to prices, the key issue for the profession is that they say that the Rules do not reflect the complexity, variability and nuances of legal work and displaying prices online has been the most difficult part of the Rules for firms to implement.
- While 22% of law firms were able to identify at least one specific beneficial change for consumers, it is worth noting that this still means there is still considerable progress that has to be made over the coming year or so as the new Transparency Rules become firmly embedded.
- Law firms tend to rate the importance of their websites for consumers' decision-making much lower than consumers do. This might be because, when asked about it in interviews, most firms don't measure the benefits of their websites, e.g., conversion rates or linking consumer usage of the website to inbound enquiries.
- In terms of meeting the requirements of the rules, information presentation seems to be the main problem for providing information on both websites and offline. Key issues are not knowing how much information to provide (over a third of firms with a website report this), not knowing how information should be formatted (just over a quarter of firms with a website) and not knowing where on the website information should be placed (just under 1 in 5 of firms with a website). Almost half of firms with a website identified one problem showing information on their website.
- A significant minority of consumers agree that information provided by law firms, whether online or offline, can still be confusing (30% of consumers, 45% of SME consumers) and contains too much jargon (30% of consumers, 49% of SME consumers agree or strongly agree). Consumers are faced with a variety of price information on websites, including starting prices, minimum prices, a range of prices, quote calculators, fixed prices, and hourly rates.
- Consumers who look at a solicitor's website are more price-focused when selecting a legal provider compared with consumers who did not look at a website. 66% of individual consumers and 68% of SME consumers who looked at a solicitor's website agreed price was the most important selection factor, compared with 50% of individual consumers and 51% of SME consumers who did not look at the website. These differences are statistically significant. This greater focus on price by website users is an issue raised by law firms as one of the problems of publishing prices online.
- Majority of stakeholders say that consumers don't generally conduct detailed or systematic evaluation of prices and quality indicators and that choosing a legal provider is still heavily based around personal recommendation and 'potluck' to an extent.
- Less than 20% of consumers find out about the complaints policy and procedure or look at the regulator's logo when comparing legal advisors suggesting this information may not be high priority at the outset of choosing a legal advisor.
- There is scope to strengthen, or raise, awareness with consumers about what the clickable logo means. Similarly law firms don't typically provide further information about the logo in context, as to what it means for clients more fully in terms of redress and regulation.

2 INTRODUCTION

Context

The report of the investigation into the legal services market by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)⁶ published in December 2016 concluded that competition in legal services for individual consumers and SMEs was not working well. The study found that a lack of transparency was weakening competition between providers and meant that some consumers, in particular vulnerable consumers, did not obtain the legal advice they needed. The CMA's report therefore called on regulators to set a new minimum standard for the information that is published by firms. It recommended a series of measures, including more price transparency, and improved information on quality, service, and regulation to help those who need legal support to choose the best option.

In response to the CMA's recommendations, the SRA introduced the first of its landmark reforms in December 2018⁷. These reforms were developed over a four-year period and were informed by four major public consultations, involving more than 35,000 members of the public, the profession and wider stakeholders. Included are the Transparency Rules which require law firms to publish:

- price and service information for specific areas of law (set out below);
- details on the teams/individuals who will provide services in these specified areas; and
- details of their complaints procedure, including how and when issues can be referred to the SRA or the Legal Ombudsman⁸.

The Better Information, More Choice reforms are part of the SRA's wider new Standards and Regulations⁹ introduced in November 2019. From the same date, regulated firms must display the SRA clickable logo on their websites. Law firm and solicitor details are also on the SRA's Solicitors Register.

The SRA is committed to regular evaluation and monitoring of the reforms and their impact on the legal services market and its consumers, to avoid unintended consequences that might add to cost with no clear benefit to consumers. Evaluation of the reforms will continue over the next five years.

⁶ Competition and Markets Authority. Legal Services Market Study, 2016. <https://www.gov.uk/cma-cases/legal-services-market-study>

⁷ Solicitors Regulation Authority. Looking to the future - better information, more choice. 2018 <https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/consultation-listing/ltf-better-information-consultation/>

⁸ Firms have always had to provide complaints and pricing information to clients when they have been instructed; but the Rules require this information to be published on their website, if they have one, or given to potential clients by another method if they do not have a website.

⁹ Solicitors Regulation Authority. Standards and Regulations. 2019. <https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/standards-regulations>.

Research overview

The aim of the research reported here is to aid understanding of whether the Transparency Rules are having the desired impact on the legal services market and are improving access to justice for consumers.

This research is intended as the first in a series of benchmarking exercises that will help to assess the impact of the Transparency Rules over the short, medium and long-term. It provides an early 'direction of travel' assessment eighteen months to two years after the launch of the Rules.

All SRA-regulated firms must publish the price and description of the services they offer for the public and small businesses in the following areas of law:

- residential conveyancing
- probate (uncontested)
- motoring offences (summary offences)
- employment tribunals (unfair / wrongful dismissal)
- licensing applications (business premises)
- debt recovery (up to £100,000)
- immigration (excluding asylum).

From 25 November 2019, regulated firms were required to display the SRA clickable logo on their websites. Law firm and solicitor details are also on the SRA's Solicitors Registers launched in October 2019.

Summary of methodology

This research started in May 2020. The detailed research methodology is described in the Appendix. The research included:

- Online surveys of individual consumers and business owner/managers of small and medium sized enterprises (SME) consumers using legal services in the 18-month period from January 2019 to June 2020, and follow-up telephone interviews with a sample of individual consumers and SME consumers.
- Online survey of SRA-regulated law firms, and follow-up telephone interviews with a sample of law firms.
- Additional surveys of disabled groups and individual consumers not using the Internet.
- Telephone interviews with a sample of stakeholders
- An initial literature review stage.

The research fieldwork was conducted between May 2020 and August 2020 and included the following phases:

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Date	Methodology	Responses
May 2020	Literature Review	-
July 2020	Telephone interviews with stakeholders	19
July 2020	Online survey of individual consumers of legal services	2,029
July 2020	Online survey of SME consumers of legal services	1,500
July 2020	Online survey of SRA regulated law firms	524
August 2020	Telephone interviews with individual consumers of legal services	120
August 2020	Telephone interviews with SME consumers of legal services	32
August 2020	Telephone interviews with SRA regulated law firms	25
August 2020	Telephone interviews with individual consumers of legal services not using the Internet	34
August 2020	Online survey of individual consumers of legal services with a disability	15

Where the findings of both individual consumers and SME consumers are grouped together in the results they are referred to as ‘consumers’ of legal services. However, separate surveys and results for the two groups mean that there are instances when the two groups are analysed separately. In these instances, the terms ‘individual consumers’ and ‘SME consumers’ are used. Similarly the research will refer to legal advisor, solicitor and/or law firm as this relates to the wording of the questions asked.

Stakeholder insights, based on 19 stakeholder interviews representing both users of legal services and legal services providers, are mentioned in this report where relevant. All stakeholders perceive that, so far, they have not seen evidence for any significant positive or negative impact of the Transparency Rules on consumers or vulnerable groups although some commented on a potential increase in consumers shopping around.

Previous research

The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA)^{10,11,12} published a series of research reports (based on combined consumer samples of over 5,000) in 2018 in advance of the new reforms being launched and these included surveys of both consumers and law firms. Large-scale research surveys on the

¹⁰ Solicitors Regulation Authority. *Price Transparency in the Legal Services Market, 2018*

¹¹ Solicitors Regulation Authority. *Price Transparency in the Legal Services Market – a Study of Small Business and Legal Issues, 2018*

¹² Solicitors Regulation Authority. *Better Information in the Legal Services Market, 2018*

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consumer use of legal services have been published in 2020 by the Legal Services Board (LSB)¹³, based on a sample of almost 29,000 individuals, and the Legal Services Consumer Panel (LSCP)¹⁴, using a sample of 3,623. IRN Research has been running an annual national consumer survey on the use of legal services. The latest report¹⁵, published in April 2020, was based on a sample of 1,200 adults.

The SRA's *Better Information in the Legal Services Market* report from 2018 notes that 85% of people want information on price, protections and quality of service before choosing a legal services provider. The two most important factors in choosing a provider are reputation followed by price. The latest LSCP Tracker Survey also highlights these two factors as the two that are most important. The research also found that: people would be more confident when buying services from a website with a 'regulated by the SRA' clickable logo; as knowing there are some consumer protections is another important factor when buying legal services, and people do not necessarily simply want the cheapest option.

Unlike research with individual consumers, research on the use of legal services by businesses has been more limited. The LSB¹⁶ published the results of a survey of the legal needs of 10,579 businesses at the start of 2018 and the SRA's research focused on price transparency and the possible impact on SME use of legal services in October 2018 (over 4,000 SMEs participated). Both of these surveys suggest that greater price transparency could increase SME use of legal advice and expand the market.

This research focuses on the impact of the Transparency Rules on key participants in the legal market, i.e. stakeholder organisations, law firms, individual consumers, and SME consumers, and concentrates on the period after the Rules were introduced. Therefore, it adds to the existing research and sets the framework for similar future surveys to assess the impact on a regular basis. The research through the interviews has also explored with these user groups their experiences and impact of Covid-19 on the legal sector, summarised in Section 10 Conclusions.

SMEs are important consumers of legal services and often not surveyed separately by regulators. By including SME consumers in the research, the SRA will gain detailed understanding of this sector enabling a holistic and more nuanced understanding of the impact of the Transparency Rules. SMEs are a large and diverse part of the UK economy and exploring their use of legal services on a regular basis is important to understand their use of these services, any issues relating to this use, and to support the economic well-being of the SME sector.

¹³ Legal Services Board. *Legal Needs of Individuals in England and Wales*, 2020

¹⁴ Legal Services Consumer Panel. *How consumers are choosing legal services Tracker Survey 2020*, August 2020

¹⁵ IRN Research. *UK Legal Services Consumer Research Report*, 2020

¹⁶ Legal Services Board. *The Legal Needs of Small Businesses 2013-17*, 2018

3 PRICING

Key findings

- Price transparency has been the most challenging part of the Transparency Rules for regulated law firms. The complexity of legal matters and the challenge of giving general price information when matters can be so specific and specialist are the reasons given. However, consumers find the prices on websites, along with quality information, useful and they assess the value for money of providers.
- Most consumers choosing an advisor look at price information displayed on a law firm's website (67% of individual consumers and 62% of SME consumers). Plus, almost a quarter of those not looking at prices on a website said it was because they couldn't find these.
- However, the actual prices displayed on websites are not the most important factor when making a decision (83% of individual consumers agree that experience and reputation are more important than price). Consumers choose on a range of factors, including personal recommendation, experience, quality, service and location.
- Consumers are faced with a variety of types of pricing and limited specific examples of cases (case scenario pricing) that can be linked to specific pricing options published. In interviews, SMEs particularly said they would find more case studies useful when making decisions.
- Most law firm websites are now displaying, on average, at least two types of pricing information: a) price range and fixed price for areas such as conveyancing and debt recovery; and b) price range and hourly rate for areas such as probate and employment.
- Detailed pricing information is typically provided in a face-to-face, phone, email first contact in a way that is specifically relevant to the client and/or matter on which advice is sought.
- Most individual consumers (51%) and SMEs consumers (61%) can find prices from the homepage of law firm websites.
- Older and more experienced individual consumers focus less on price and on the opinion of other consumers (i.e. customer reviews) and more on the services on offer and measures of the quality of work undertaken – e.g. who does work (including their experience and qualification) and regulation.
- Some minority/vulnerable groups (e.g. some Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and disabled clients) require more reassurance in terms of how the legal process works (e.g. timescales and key stages) and their protections (e.g. rights, insurance, complaints). These groups focus less on price.
- A large majority of those that completed the legal process said that the final price they paid was similar to the prices published on the law firms' website.

Law firm perceptions of publishing prices on websites

Whilst improving information on the website is important for consumers, law firms tend to perceive the website as of secondary importance in terms of business generation. And some law firms have doubts that showing prices out of context aids choice. For example, when interviewed, some law firms

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expressed concern that publishing prices may include making choice more confusing for consumers. There were also concerns from some law firms that they would be forced to compete on price. However, no law firm respondents nor stakeholders had any evidence for these concerns and there was no evidence of this from the consumer surveys. Law firms are on board with the concept of transparency and endeavour to be up front regarding pricing with clients and commit to this in their dealings with clients. In interviews, solicitors note that specific price details are usually given direct to a client via an email conversation or in a client care letter. Price information published on a firm's website is a starting point for practitioners.

I mean generally from time to time we've had positive feedback from clients to say we are transparent with our pricing and I guess it does create a very open and transparent relationship with our clients in that they can view the fees before they instruct us.

Medium law firm, marketing manager, interview

I do think there's a benefit, although there are detractors. And we see it as a positive thing. People come in informed and I think it breeds trust. They think because we've put it up there we're not going to rip them off. High street firm, interview

Transparency is about being open with your clients, put your clients' interests first
Sole practitioner, commercial, interview

The duty ought to be on solicitors to advise clients about cost from the outset in a professional manner when a problem arises, rather than putting information on a website in a non-specific method. Specialist firm interview

I encourage a phone call first then we talk about fixed fee Each element is separately costed. Where I can tell the shape of the transaction I break it out and give the quote or band for each bit. I can't give an estimate easily in advance for every aspect.
Sole practitioner, conveyancing – interview

We will continue to keep transparency up to date as we are obliged to do. We will continue to be transparent in our real individual client sense, working to budget, spending levels and agreements. That's the kind of transparency that really matters. It's not a bit of cheese to catch a mouse, you need to get the client to understand so they are happy, they don't complain and they pay. We want to do things properly and then our complaints record will be good. Law firm interview, marketing manager

Stakeholders suggest that law firms having to act with *greater clarity of intentions* will lead to the positive impact of greater competition in the sector and that those law firms who are transparent will gain consumer confidence and therefore more business, and this is borne out by some firms in interviews.

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It's just basic good practice. Doing that would lead to better services for clients. If you are more transparent, you have to act with integrity, your services improve as you are more open to scrutiny. Stakeholder - consumer organisation, interview

It gets the lawyers to think a little bit more about being clear, and that transparency is important and that people are cost driven, it gets them to think more about a sales perspective. We'd like to move to online quotes, get them to think a bit more transactionally. Quoting isn't a magic process for each individual client, we want to do more fixed fee, online quote systems, modernisation process. Marketing manager, high street law firm interview

Stakeholders mentioned other benefits that may arise from publishing price information, although they didn't have explicit evidence for them. These were:

- faster payment of fees
- ensuring your clients come back to you next time around, more repeat business
- conversion rate of queries to cases increasing
- could make it easier to get clients on board
- might get more clients as it's clearer upfront
- less complaints
- giving consumers more choice.

Prices on law firm websites: implementation

Most law firms have a website, so publishing price information on their websites potentially impacts the majority of the profession. Of the 508 law firms responding to the question “*Does your firm have a website?*” in the 2020 survey, 87% said they did (88% for law firms operating in practice areas covered by the price and service information element of the Rules) with law firms with more fee earners more likely to have a website (68% of those with one fee earner have a website, rising to 86% for those with 2 to 4 fee earners and to 100% for those with 11 or more fee earners).

Not unexpectedly, a practice area breakdown shows that a higher percentage of law firms covered by the price and service information element of the Transparency Rules display price information compared with those not covered. Showing price information is highest for residential conveyancing, immigration (excluding asylum) and probate. There remain some gaps in showing prices, especially in practice areas like licensing business premises, motoring law and offences and employment.

Research by the LSB in 2016¹⁷, showed only 17% of law firms made their prices available on their website, and an SRA survey¹⁸ in January 2018 found that only 18% of the 1,146 law firms surveyed said that they advertised any price information, whether online or offline¹⁹. This latest survey shows that

¹⁷ OMB Research (2016), [Prices of Individual Consumer Legal Services Research Report](#), commissioned by the LSB.

¹⁸ Solicitors Regulation Authority (2019), [Price Transparency in the Legal Services Market](#).

¹⁹ The SRA web sweep survey in 2018 covered a much larger sample of law firms than the current research.

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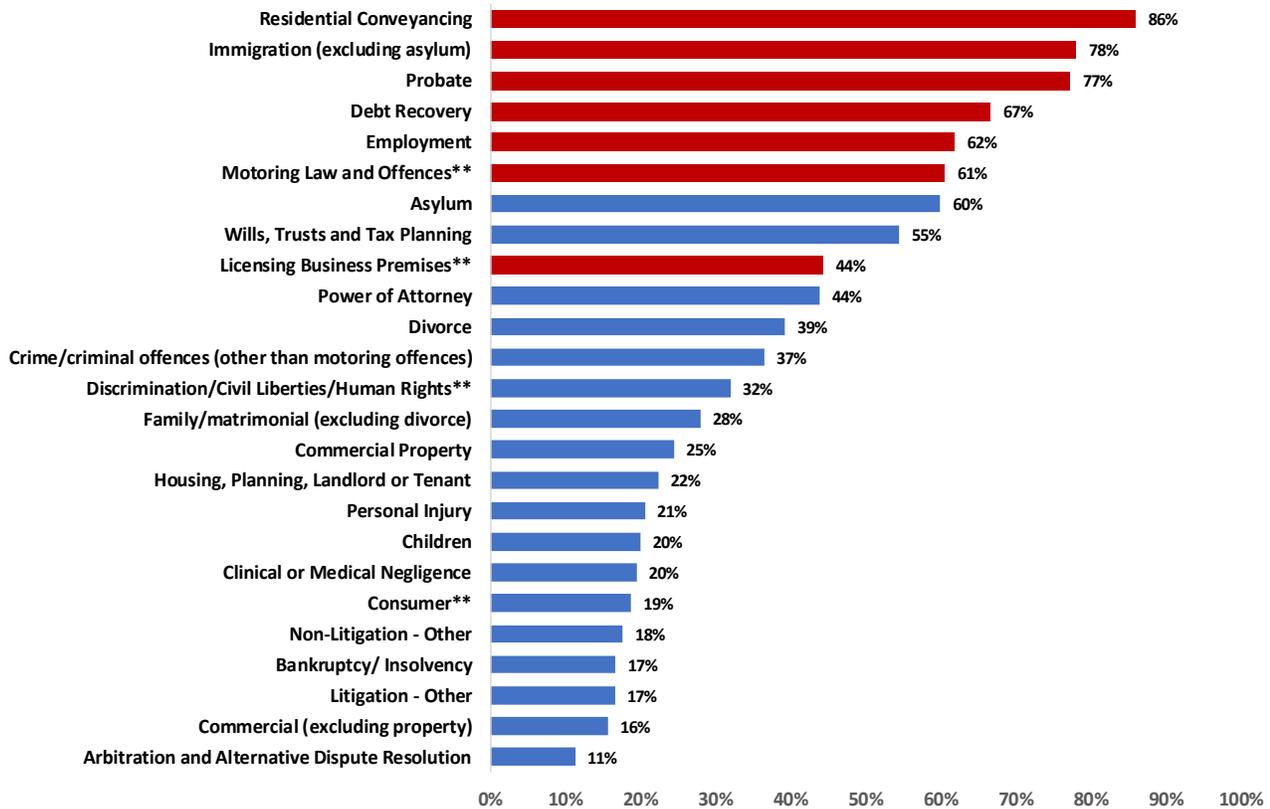


this has now increased to 68% for those areas of law covered by the price and service information element of the Transparency Rules and to 28% for those areas not covered²⁰.

²⁰ The SRA's future web sweeps will cover a much larger sample of law firms.

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Figure 1 The percentage of law firms showing prices on their website* by practice area



* % stating they show prices plus % saying they show all TR-related information (including prices)

** small sample base

Mean average percentage of firms showing prices:

Firms not operating in practice areas that are subject to the price/service element of the Transparency Rules: 28%.

Firms operating in practice areas that are subject to the price/service element of the Transparency Rules: 68%

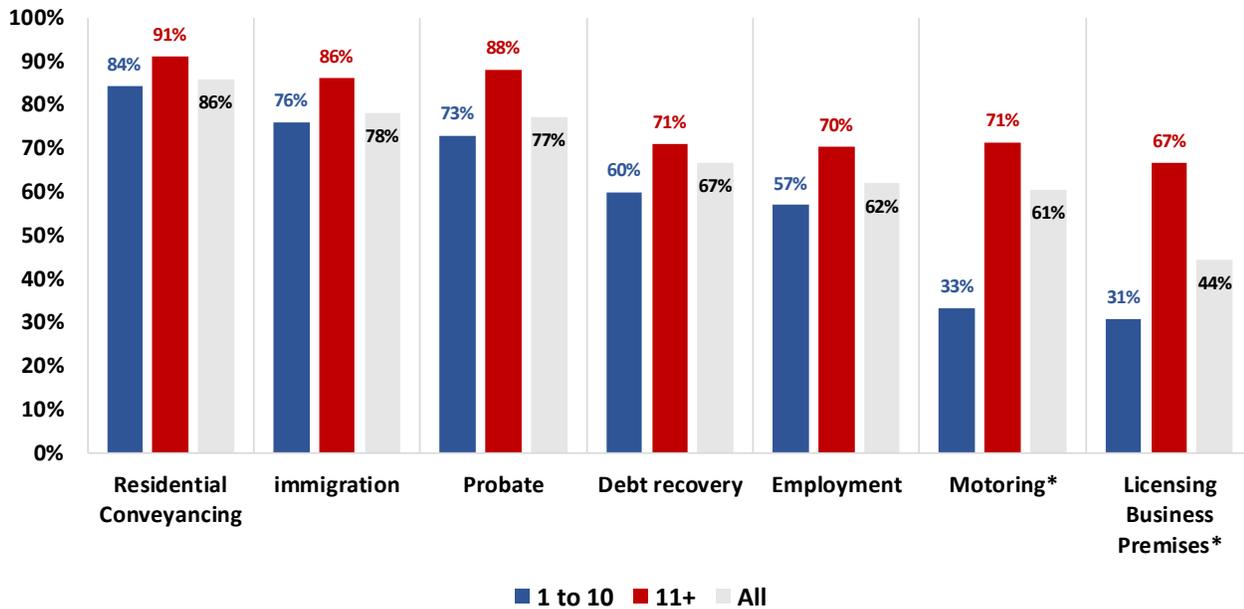
Mean averages are used because the data is not weighted by the number of firms operating in each

Practice areas covered by TR Practice areas not covered by TR

Source: Firm Survey/IRN Research

From this it can be seen that since the introduction of the Transparency Rules, a majority of law firms are now displaying general price information online. Displaying information in the practice areas covered by the Transparency Rules is more likely for the larger law firms (11+ fee earners) rather than the smaller ones (1-10 fee earners) with websites.

Figure 2 The percentage of law firms showing prices on their website by practice area and firm size



* small sample base

Source: Firm Survey/IRN Research

Pricing in context with other factors

Showing prices online by itself is not enough. The information shown needs to be accessible and assessable and that means pricing information should be *prominent* (within three clicks of the homepage), *navigable*, *timely* (available at search stage rather than at point of engagement) and *accurate* (providing an understanding of the total price as well as what services are included)²¹.

Our survey showed that 51% of individual consumers and 60% of SME consumers using a solicitor who looked at price information on the website found that information from a link on the homepage. However, 28% of individual consumers and 34% of SME consumers had to search for it on a website, and 27% of individual consumers (21% of SME consumers) who didn't look at price information on the website said this was because they couldn't find it. This indicates that some law firms could do more to make this information more prominent and available, and indeed in the qualitative research several law firms admitted that they had not sought to promote this type of information overtly for competitive reasons.

²¹ CMA, [Legal Services market study final report](#) December 2016, para 3.68.

Benefits to law firms

Almost a third of law firms (29%) agree that they would recommend that the publication of price and service information is good for business; and that they have seen specific benefits to their firm. This shows that progress has been made in terms of law firms appreciating the value of the reforms. In addition, around 20% of law firms could identify at least one beneficial change for their business as a result of the Transparency Rules. While no specific change was identified by more than 10% of firms interviewed, collectively 21% of firms identified at least one beneficial change. This contrasts with 65% who did not identify any beneficial change and 14% who could not say either way. The fact that 21% can appreciate benefits over a comparatively short time is a positive development.

It is law firms who implemented the changes offline who are more likely to have noticed beneficial effects²² for their firms compared with those who implemented changes on their websites. Possibly this is because, the firm website is not seen to be the prime generator of business for law firms. For firms who have made transparency-inspired changes to their website, the main beneficial changes were commercial in nature (e.g. increased visibility) followed by improved client behaviour – e.g. clients have more realistic expectations, fewer queries about price and increased repeat business. Small and medium firms were more likely to report benefits than other sized firms, particularly those with 5-10 fee earners.

I'm not sure anyone's going to say it's a benefit to the firm, but it's not about them. It's about the consumer. Stakeholder interview

From the law firm survey, firms said:

- *Benefit of the Transparency Rules created innovative awareness and we have adapted well to it*
- *We can refer to our published prices when winning new business which can be convenient*
- *We have employed a quoting tool which has been useful for internal MI reasons*
- *Greater awareness amongst staff of our pricing*
- *We refer clients to the Transparency Rules and our website and state that confirmation of estimated or fixed costs will be provided in writing once instructed. We tend to adhere to the prices quoted because we know that clients will look at other sites and realise we are competitive.*

²² To note the sample sizes are small for those without a website and those who reported benefits.

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Figure 3 Transparency Rules benefits to law firms

	No of fee earners				Total
	1	2 to 4	5 to 10	11+	
Base: firms covered by TR	77	114	69	86	349
Our clients have more realistic expectations	14%	15%	17%	5%	13%
Improved visibility for our firm	10%	11%	22%	9%	12%
We receive fewer queries about price	10%	10%	12%	7%	9%
Increased repeat business	12%	7%	13%	5%	9%
We are more competitive in the market	8%	6%	17%	2%	8%
We have been more innovative with our pricing models	5%	7%	14%	6%	8%
We have been more innovative with our services	6%	7%	12%	5%	7%
Increased conversion of enquiries	3%	9%	10%	6%	7%
We receive fewer complaints about price	5%	6%	10%	5%	6%
Increased web traffic	3%	3%	13%	5%	5%
We receive fewer complaints about other issues	5%	5%	7%	2%	5%
Clients are paying their fees more promptly	0%	6%	9%	2%	4%
None of these	58%	62%	59%	66%	62%
Don't know	17%	14%	9%	16%	14%
Any improvement	25%	24%	32%	17%	24%
Publication of price and service information is good for business: agree	30%	29%	33%	26%	29%

Red entries show an above average response (at least 3 percentage points higher compared with firms as a whole)

Source: Firm Survey/IRN Research

A few law firms also explained that they were committed to transparency before the Rules came into effect. For example, some respondents to the survey said:

We have always worked on a fixed fee basis for stages of work, i.e. to the first hearing to the next one and so on. This always works and clients know where they stand

I had been publishing fixed fees and scenario-based prediction of costs since starting my firm in 2011.

We already had our prices on our website. Nothing has changed for us.

Many also indicated that because price was not the main driver of client demand, publishing prices will not drive new business, while others emphasised that their website was not the main source of instructions so, again, publishing prices via the website will not lead to benefits.

We do not sell on price, we sell on service. Law should not be a commodity.

Our client profile isn't remotely interested in sourcing this information from our website. It is dealt with either via the tender/bid process or in discussion when scoping the work/transaction. This really doesn't work for our client base at all.

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(Large law firm operating in the debt recovery immigration, employment, licensing business premises and motoring practice areas. It only publishes prices on its website for immigration and licensing business premises).

How pricing informs consumer choice

The consumer online surveys show that pricing information is the second most important content looked at on websites. 67% of individual consumers who used a solicitor and looked on websites before choosing their solicitor looked at prices and 62% of SMEs consumers who used a solicitor and looked on websites did likewise.

There is little difference in the tendency of consumers to look at prices on law firm websites before selecting a provider, based on whether the legal issue did or did not fall under the price and service information element of the Transparency Rules. Figure 4 below shows that while SMEs whose last legal issue fell under the price and service information element of the Transparency Rules were more likely to look at prices compared with SMEs whose legal issue was not covered by this Transparency Rule, for individual consumers the reverse is true.

Figure 4 Price information looked at on provider’s website by practice area

	SME consumers		Individual Consumers	
	Base*	%	Base*	%
All Practice areas covered by the service/price elements of the TR	62	68%	364	64%
All Practice areas not covered by the service/price elements of the TR	525	61%	613	69%
All areas	587	62%	977	67%
Specific practice areas covered by the service/price elements of the TR				
Conveyancing			189	66%
Employment			103	65%
Immigration			20**	75%
Probate			49	57%

* used a solicitor

** small sub sample

Source: SRA Consumer Survey/SME Survey/IRN Research

Of the 33% individual consumers who did not look at prices on a website, the largest group – 44% - said that they already knew what the prices were but almost a quarter (24%) did not look at prices because they couldn’t find these on the website.

Consumer usage of pricing information

Website prices clearly are of use to consumers: 91% of individual consumers who used a solicitor and looked at price information on a website said the price information was useful (40%) or very useful (51%). Similarly, 93% of SME consumers who used a solicitor and looked at price information on a

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website agreed that price information was useful (37%) or very useful (56%). Moreover, of individual consumers that did not look at prices on the website only 11% said they did not because this information was not important, similar to the 12% for the equivalent SME consumers. They were more likely not to look at this information because they couldn't find it or because they already knew this.

Consumers, however, feel the published website prices are a good guide to the prices they will pay. While the qualitative interviews highlighted concerns amongst some individual consumers (34 out of 118 interviewees) that the prices published on a website did not include other fees and disbursements that had to be paid, e.g. search fees, court fees etc, and these fees only became apparent in discussions with the legal advisor at a later date, the online surveys indicate that most individual consumers and SME consumers could make a good estimate of the costs they face from the online website prices. As such, published prices are a significant benefit to consumers comparing providers. Moreover, there was little difference in the ability to estimate costs whether prices came via the website or were received in an offline format (email, phone call). This may suggest that some of the omissions in published prices, as identified in a web sweep exercise of 500 randomly selected law firms by the SRA in June 2019²³, have been corrected or that the omissions do not seriously impede clients in estimating their legal costs (although it should be noted that direct comparisons between the two surveys are difficult as they used different samples and had different objectives).

For most consumers that have completed the legal process and who compared advisors based on price, the final price they paid was similar to the prices published on the law firm's website. Moreover, most consumers pay a price which is roughly what they expected and there are relatively small variations between those that found prices via the website and those that received prices offline (some of this latter group will also have looked at prices on websites). This suggests again that website prices are helpful for estimating costs.

²³ Solicitors Regulation Authority (2019), *SRA Price Transparency Rules – Web sweep report*.

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Figure 5 *How price information helped consumers estimate costs*

	individual Consumers using a solicitor		SME consumers using a solicitor	
	Looked at price on website	Received prices offline	Looked at price on website	Received prices offline
How price information helped consumers estimate costs				
Base: all	654	318	363	598
Allow you to estimate the cost	49%	55%	55%	47%
Make you aware of the actual cost	37%	41%	38%	40%
Either of these	76%	81%	79%	76%
Final price was about what was expected				
Base*	508	697	323	393
%	67%	71%	60%	65%
Final price charged was similar to the prices published on your legal advisor’s website?				
Base**	259		149	
%	83%		86%	

* clients whose legal work has finished

** clients whose legal work has finished and who also compared providers based on price

Source: SRA Consumer Survey/SME Survey/IRN Research

In interviews, SME consumers report that pricing information received is, on the whole, useful and advisors tend to stick to it within 5-10% typically. If the final price changes, most SME consumers accept this, provided they are told why the price has increased.

Consumers were asked whether based on their experience of using a legal services provider they now have a better understanding of how legal services are charged: 57% of individual consumers who used a solicitor and who looked at prices on the website agreed (compared with only 41% of those receiving that did not look at the website) and 62% of SME consumers using a solicitor who looked at prices online agreed (52% of those receiving prices offline). Therefore, it seems that online price information reduces some information asymmetry. This is not the view, however, the view of most law firms: only 11% of law firms operating in practice areas falling under the pricing elements of the Transparency Rules feel they have seen improved consumer understanding of law firms’ prices and only 14% feel it is easier for consumers to compare providers. Small to mid-sized law firms (2-10 fee earners) are the most likely to say that consumers understand prices more and can more easily compare providers.

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The ability of online prices to reflect the actual prices paid and to offer a good guide to final costs suggest that the worries of some laws are unfounded. The online survey and interviews with law firms indicate that some firms support the view that the complexity and variability of legal work means the prices shown are unlikely to reflect the true price charged because of the nature of legal work.

Due to the variables in each matter it is impossible to be price specific. Pricing requires detailed information. Law firm

You just don't know the value of the claim when you start the case, there are so many variables. ...you can't say what the costs are going to be, you just don't know. Law firm

79% of law firms covered by the price and service elements of the Transparency Rules felt that legal matters can be complex and variable making publishing price information challenging, while 62% felt published prices cannot consider clients' different needs and budgets. Just over half of law firms (52%) feel publishing prices can confuse clients.

Some law firms are also concerned that the Transparency Rules could distort making comparisons between providers because of different Rules governing regulated and unregulated providers.

In some areas we are competing with unregulated providers who do not have to provide pricing information or whose pricing information is not the real price paid. Law firm survey

Price focus of consumers – online vs offline

One of the main fears of law firms in publishing information online is that it will skew consumer choice. Many law firms argue publishing prices online could make consumer choice too price-focused, with less focus on services and service quality: i.e. a race to the bottom. Another issue raised was that the Transparency Rules are not encouraging fair competition because of a perceived potential for other law firms to 'low ball' or offer artificially low prices to attract clients who will then not receive a good enough service or be invoiced subsequently at an inflated rate. Several admit this is not necessarily a new practice in the market however they thought that the Transparency Rules may exacerbate this. 34% of law firms felt publishing information could give their competitors an advantage and 29% said they had noticed that other law firms publish artificially low prices. Having said that, the research indicates that having to publish prices has not led to a pricing increase or decrease for consumers

Just because we charge a particular amount per hour, does not mean that we would charge more for the case, than someone who has a lower hourly rate. Almost all of our fees are in the region of 50% lower than the other solicitors representing our opponent. The reason being that we have extensive experience in dealing with cases and can work efficiently and therefore our fees are lower, despite sometimes our hourly rates being higher. Therefore when someone is

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looking at a website and our hourly rates are higher than someone else's, they may well go to the other firm but ultimately end up paying significantly higher in fees as it may take a less experienced person many more hours to do the same work! Law firm survey

- Stakeholders also expressed this concern that choice may be becoming too price focused:

This is leading to clients going for cheaper prices but poorer quality representatives, it drives commoditisation of legal services and reduces clients to consumers with a consequent drop in standards in the wider profession. Law firm interview

- There is a concern that it could stop a client seeking legal advice:

It may on occasions prevent a client seeking legal advice through fear of incurring those estimated costs shown on the website. Law firm survey

It is true that consumers who look at a solicitor's website are more price-focused when selecting a legal provider compared with consumers who did not look at a website. For example, individual consumers looking at a website were more likely, compared with consumers who did look at the website, to think that price was the most important factor when selecting a law firm (68% vs 51%). The same pattern exists for SME consumers (see Figure 7 below). However, there are a number of reasons for suggesting this fear is more apparent than real.

Decision making criteria for consumers including price

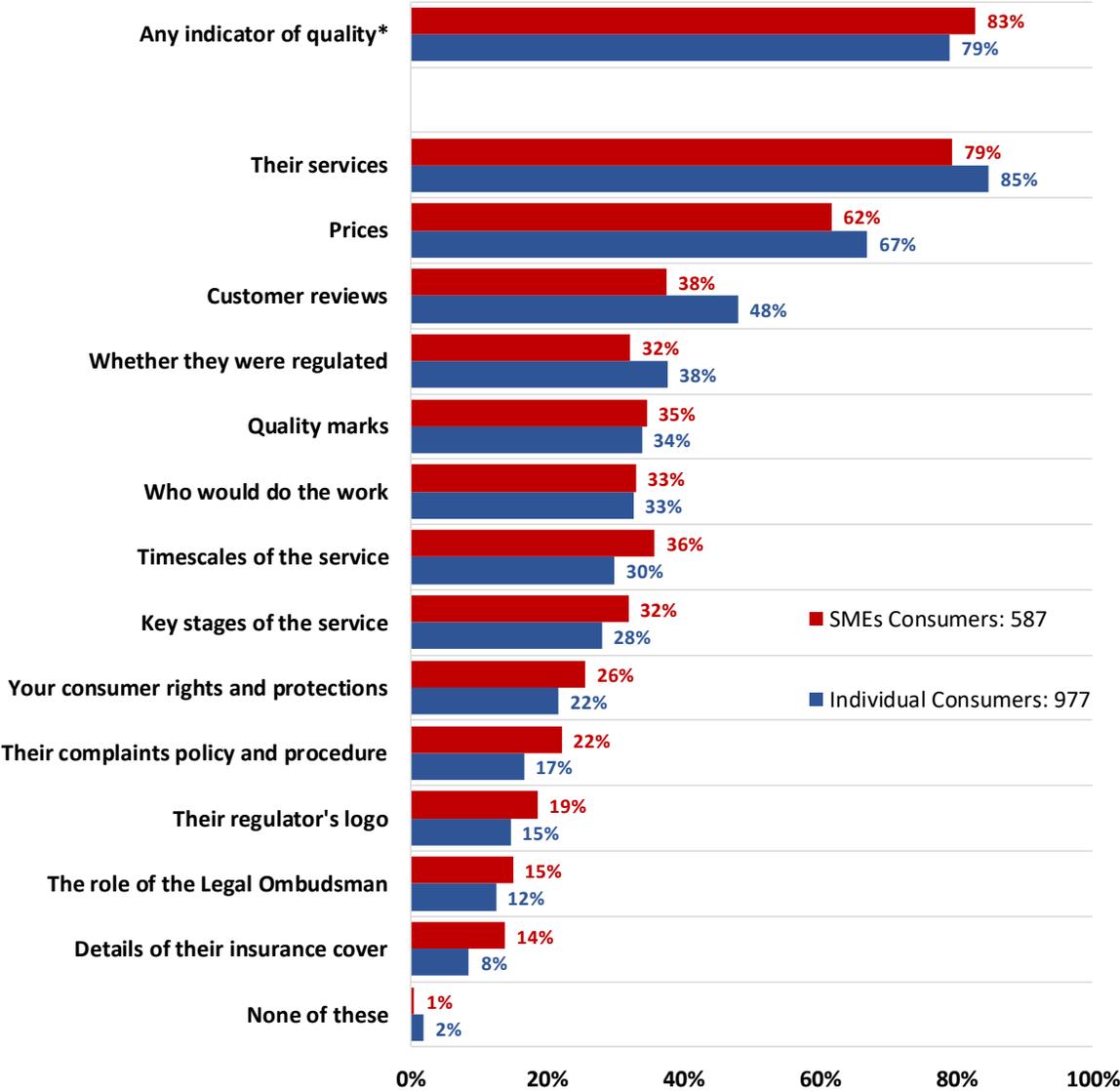
While law firms may fear provider selection could become too price focused, this is not currently supported by the research evidence. For consumers, price, service and service quality (e.g. firm experience and reputation) combined influence provider choice. Figure 6 below shows the importance of quality when selecting a law firm relative to price.

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Figure 6 Price relative to other website content looked at by consumers before selecting a law firm

Base: consumers/SMEs who looked on the website and who used a solicitor. Numbers on legend below



* Customer reviews, whether they are regulated, quality marks, who would do the work, Your consumer rights and protections, their complaints policy and procedure, their regulator's logo, the role of the Legal Ombudsman, details of their insurance cover

Source: SRA Consumer Survey/SME Survey/IRN Research

The importance of service quality factors like firm experience and reputation are seen explicitly in Figure 7 below. When consumers were asked if they agreed with the statements *'experience and reputation were more important than price when choosing a legal advisor'* and *'the price was most important'*, when they make a provider choice, a higher percentage of consumers (individual consumers and SMEs consumers) support the view that experience/reputation was more important than price than support the view that price was the most important. These findings are consistent with recent research studies from the LSCP²⁴, SRA²⁵, and IRN Research²⁶ which have all found that although price is important as a choice criteria, it is not the most important factor: reputation and experience of the advisor is top of the list. Therefore, when making a provider choice, consumers put more emphasis on service and service quality than on price but price remains important, suggesting when making a choice consumers consider price and experience, in other words, value for money, i.e. price compared with quality and service.

Law firms fears, however, are not totally without foundation. In Figure 7, comparing the relative importance of price vs. experience/reputation between website and non-website users shows the differences in price sensitivity are greater than the differences in experience/reputation sensitivity. However, it remains the case that website users are more service/experienced focused than they are price focused and it seems they are more sensitive to both price and experience/reputation, compared with non-website users.

²⁴ Legal Services Consumer Panel [Tracker Survey 2019](#), [Tracker Survey 2020](#).

²⁵ Solicitors Regulation Authority (2018), [Price Transparency in the Legal Services Market](#)

²⁶ IRN Research (2020), UK Legal Services Consumer Research Report.

Figure 7 *The importance of price and experience when selecting a legal advisor*

	Base	% agreeing	
		The price was most important	Experience and reputation were more important than price
SME consumers who used a solicitor			
Did not look on website	217	51%	80%
Did Look on website	587	68%	84%
Total	804	63%	83%
Individual consumers who used a solicitor			
Did not look on website	477	51%	79%
Did Look on website	977	66%	85%
Total	1454	61%	83%

Source: SRA Consumer Survey/SME Survey/IRN Research

The individual consumer’s choice of legal advisor may also be more complex than the quality, service, price triangle implies. In 2016, research commissioned by the CMA²⁷ found that when choosing a provider, the most commonly used information is about the provider’s location (49%), followed by feedback/recommendations from family or friends (42%). Direct factors relating to price and quality were less commonly used: specifically, by 34% of individual consumers (price) and by 38% (reputation). Subsequent research may indicate that geographic proximity to legal services becomes less important as a consequence of Covid-19 reducing the scope for face to face contact and the increased provision of remote services.

Consumer journey to obtain pricing information

Law firm fears over publishing price information online may also be unfounded because the website may only be only the first stage in a process that consumers go through to collect information on prices (and services and service quality). Qualitative interviews with consumers suggest that detailed price information is typically not collected when looking at a website but rather are provided at the next stage, when clients talk to a legal advisor. At this stage more specific information relevant to the individual case is then made available by the solicitor either by face-to-face contact, phone or email. This first contact also gives details of who will do the work. This chimes with the LSCP Tracker Survey

²⁷ IFF Research (2016), [Market study into the supply of legal services in England and Wales – consumer findings](#), commissioned by the CMA, p19.

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2020 when 64% found out about detailed prices when talking to a solicitor and only 6% found these detailed prices advertised on a website²⁸.

Moreover, the 2020 LSCP Tracker found that the most popular way of looking for service and price information was a telephone conversation (31%), then visiting the advisor's office (30%), followed by the advisor's website (27%) and sending an email (24%). This reinforces the point that it is direct contact with a law firm where detailed price information is given and not via the website, although prices on websites were found to be useful. In our research, most SMEs obtain pricing and services information by phone (31%), website (29%), email (27%) or visiting offices (27%). Individual consumers in our research said in qualitative research that prices were detailed very well in the first consultation, or in a letter/information pack sent after instruction. Detailed breakdowns are commonly provided, including separate fee breakdown for solicitors and legal executives' time which are felt to be useful.

As consumers commented:

I was choosing from scratch so price was important, as well as competency, and it was about what I could afford to pay. Prices on the website were useful but I only got the real price, with extras like search fees, when I spoke to a person. Consumer – conveyancing

I think a couple had prices on their sites but the others didn't as far as I remember. I rang the three I slimmed it down to and they all explained what the fees would be. I went with the one that seemed to understand my position and listened. Consumer - family law

It was a specialist employment dispute so I didn't think I would see prices on websites and there weren't any – some vague prices on one website but very general. In the first meeting though they gave me a great breakdown of costs including hourly rates for the solicitor, and the work that might be done by the junior partner and a trainee. And a schedule of hours for each. Consumer - employment

I had used solicitors before and I knew the ones that would help locally. I checked them out first on the Internet and rang two firms to check they did really understand the local commercial property market and they were both sounding well informed so I ended up with the one nearest. SME – business lease, interview

We priced out lump sum figures and took time over this. Then we agreed what was in that and what was on an hourly rate. It was a detailed discussion. We knew what was in the lump sums, additional costs. How long the process would take. It was quite involved in discussing the cost and extent of the service. That made it all clear. Details were given in writing and we were informed weekly of costs run up. I expect the same detail as we give clients in our construction business. SME - interview

²⁸ LSCP Tracker Survey 2020, How consumers are choosing legal services August 2020, p 8 Figure 3.

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Price wasn't a key factor as my client recommended them. They matched our requirements in terms of experience and knowledge and [solicitors] who could do what was needed in the construction sector. SME - interview

Law firms make similar points:

We consider every client and matter is different and we prefer to talk to the client, discuss their needs and then give an estimate accordingly. For instance for residential conveyancing you cannot rely on price of property alone to give an accurate estimate, there are so many other factors to consider as an indication of the difficulty – you can give a rough indication but reserve the right to make adjustments when you have more information. Law firm interview

Clients don't tend to use that information [on the website]. I'm not sure that they find it useful. The problem is, because of the type of transaction, (apart from conveyancing, fixed fee etc) in probate you can't give a fixed fee as every case is so different. We give bands and talk about the type of probates that we do and don't do, it makes it very difficult. High street practice, interview

With conveyancing if people just use our calculator on our website they will find us very expensive. We are expensive as we have decent staff, we do the work on time and we survive on our reputation, we have good repeat business. If you just have a price comparison approach, then because these things are done in different ways, the client can miss out on things in the long run if they choose the cheapest. High street practice, interview

Pricing information and vulnerable groups

Many individual consumers from vulnerable groups seem to put more emphasis on prices when selecting a provider compared with consumers as a whole, although this is by no means universal.

When selecting a legal provider price is more important to BAME consumers than for non-BAME: 75% of BAME consumers compared with 59% of White British agree with the statement, '*The price was most important*' when choosing their legal provider'. BAME consumers are more likely than White British consumers to feel the price information on their provider's website allowed them to estimate the actual cost of legal work (44% vs. 37%).

First time users (FTUs) of legal services also pay more attention to price information than those who have used legal services before (72% vs. 64%) on a website before selecting a provider. Confirmation that FTUs are more price focused and less quality focused than non-FTU is shown by the fact that FTUs are more likely, compared with non-FTUs, to feel the price was most important when selecting a legal provider (73% vs. 63%) and less likely to feel experience and reputation were more important than price (81% vs. 87%).

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Disabled consumers also put more emphasis on price compared with consumers who are not disabled (71% vs. 61%).

In contrast, to the two vulnerable groups above, when it comes to provider choice low income consumers (those with annual income of less than £20,000) are less likely to consider prices when making a provider choice compared with their higher income counterparts (i.e. those with income of £20,000 and above) – 58% of the former group looked at prices compared to 68% of the latter. This reflects a more general position, with consumers from the lowest income group tending to look at most website content compared with their more affluent counterparts.

Taking a wider perspective, younger consumers (i.e. those aged 18-40) also put more emphasis on prices compared with their older counterparts (40+) – 70% vs. 64%.

This analysis indicates that older and more experienced individual consumers and those from majority groups focus relatively less on price compared with their younger and less experienced (i.e. first-time user) counterparts.

The analysis indicates that publishing prices is something which will aid vulnerable groups but that they also need a wider range of information made available to them online when choosing a provider.

This issue will be further discussed in the service section.

In terms of making provision for vulnerable groups, stakeholders felt that law firms could do this better in some areas. Law firms when interviewed agreed that they could do more:

- non-English language provision on websites especially when providing immigration and asylum law services;
- home visits for disabled clients or those caring for people with a disability; and
- provide more offline information relevant to these groups.

Stakeholders working with vulnerable groups expressed a need for law firms to offer more fixed fee pricing as well as to offer the ability for consumers to pay using flexible, instalment models as in other sectors. Previous research conducted by the SRA found that although firms often provide this option to pay in instalments it isn't always openly advertised meaning some clients may still struggle to pay due to lack of awareness of this option.

Transparency Rules and cost of legal services

There is no clear pattern suggesting law firms operating in practice areas covered by the price and service information element of the Transparency Rules have increased their prices or reduced their prices by more compared with law firms offering services not covered by this element of the Transparency Rules.

Moreover, for the practice areas covered by the Transparency Rules there is no clear relationship between the tendency to have increased prices and the cost or overhead of implementation. There is more of a relationship between resource/time costs and price increase, but it is not especially strong.

While law firms implementing the Rules on their websites have generally found this more costly compared with law firms doing it not via their website, even for these law firms the monetary costs have not been high and it has not affected the prices they charge.

Therefore, in terms of the level of prices charged, the Transparency Rules have had neither a negative impact (price rises) nor a positive impact (increase competition reducing prices) for consumers at present.

Pricing information display and presentation

The law firm survey shows that law firms sometimes find it difficult to display price information effectively. Law firms who have implemented the changes on their websites but have not seen benefits from these are more likely to say they encountered challenges. Just over one-quarter of the law firms in our survey found it problematic how to set out their prices and where such prices should be placed: 28% of law firms covered by the Transparency Rules said it was difficult to know how to set out the information and 26% felt it was difficult to keep it up to date and accurate. The challenges raised by publishing prices are widely felt and relatively evenly spread across law firms based on their size. While many law firms felt the SRA Rules, guidelines and templates were clear and helpful, there is a call from some respondents for the SRA to be more prescriptive in its requirements with regarding to displaying prices, with the SRA possibly publishing best practice examples²⁹, for example from the survey:

Would be very helpful if they would publish the wording they require, all ready to be put on the individual websites and then we can adjust the prices to suit each practice

Provide a better template - much easier for consumers to then compare and then no risk that law firms are getting it wrong either. Give better guidance - specifically say for example, do costs need their own page, should that page link be at the top or the bottom, can it be included within a page. Every website has it somewhere different.

SRA could provide specimen templates or more detailed guidance on what precisely is required

Provide a few case examples, of how a good web site may look with Price Transparency details and links

²⁹ Some templates/examples provided on SRA website: <https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/guidance/transparency-in-price-and-service/#templates>.

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While many law firms want a more prescriptive approach from the SRA another, smaller, group of firms are calling for the SRA to be less prescriptive, allowing law firms more freedom on how to display information and if such information should be displayed.

Consumer have to compare multiple pricing models

Given the above, it is no surprise that consumers are faced with a variety of options of how price information is displayed on law firm websites. This clearly must impact on their ability to compare prices across firms, although the above evidence suggests these problems are not serious at the moment.

The pricing information most likely to be seen by clients were estimates of prices, an enquiry form, minimum starting prices, a range of prices, a quote calculator, fixed prices, and hourly rates. These individual options have each been seen by between 20% and 26% of individual consumers and up to 33% of SME consumers.

More than 20% of SMEs have also seen all the above options, plus a maximum price option.

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Figure 8 Price information found and displayed on websites

Prices published	Information found by clients	
	Consumers	SMEs
Estimates of prices that could be charged	26%	21%
An enquiry form	26%	33%
Minimum starting prices	24%	28%
Range of prices from lowest to highest	23%	31%
A quote/price calculator	23%	27%
A fixed price	21%	21%
An hourly rate	20%	24%
No win, no fee	14%	14%
Examples of prices charged for cases	13%	12%
An annual or monthly retainer fee	na	10%
The maximum price**	11%	22%
Legal Aid options	7%	8%
It was a free service	3%	4%
Other	1%	0%
Don't know/can't remember	6%	1%

Prices published	The main pricing models published by law firms						
	Res. Conveyancing	Probate	Motoring	Employment	Immigration	Debt Recovery	Licensing Business Premises
Range of prices from lowest to highest	57%	80%	56%	80%	60%	70%	67%
An hourly rate	13%	46%	50%	58%	36%	41%	58%
A fixed price	41%	23%	33%	31%	59%	36%	8%
Scenario based pricing	15%	20%	22%	18%	9%	20%	25%
A quote/price calculator	19%	3%	0%	2%	1%	2%	0%

Source: SRA Consumer/SME Surveys/Firm Survey/IRN Research

When looking at pricing information online, SME consumers reported that this is mostly as an enquiry form (33%), a range of prices from lowest to highest (31%) or a minimum starting price (28%). Quote calculators were available to 27% of respondents. Only 12% said there were examples of prices charged for typical cases. 60% of respondents were able to find pricing information from a link on the homepage.

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For individual consumers that asked their legal advisor for price information offline, the options were a little clearer with over a third (36%) given a fixed price option and, for 32%, the legal advisor gave an estimate of prices. Almost a quarter (23%) were quoted an hourly rate.

Two models emerging

Any potential confusion facing consumers over how to compare prices between providers using different pricing models is being eased somewhat by the fact that law firms seem to be settling around two approaches to showing pricing:

- price range and fixed price: used most commonly in residential conveyancing and immigration
- price range and hourly rate: used most commonly in probate, employment, licensing business premises and motoring.

Debt recovery work has a more equal use of the price range, hourly rate and fixed price models.

In the practice areas not covered by the price and service information element of the Transparency Rules the same pattern is in evidence, with these areas all most commonly showing price ranges and fixed prices, with the exception of family law where it is a fixed price and hourly rate.

Non-internet users and decision making

Telephone interviews with 34 individuals who did not have Internet access, or did not use the Internet to search for professional services, highlighted that half of these (17 out of 34) decided to choose the first legal advisor they came across. Almost all were given a recommendation by another individual or were referred to the legal advisor by a professional advisor, e.g. estate agent, mortgage advisor, housing association, or local advice agency.

The majority asked for price information at the first contact with the advisor or their law firm, and most were given some price information. All of these were satisfied with the price offered. As with those searching online, all but two paid a final fee that was the same as the original price quoted.

The other non-Internet users compared local advisors either by telephoning or visiting the law firm offices. Typically, two advisors were compared by an individual and most asked for prices at the initial contact but six law firms said that they could not give prices until after a more detailed consultation.

In total, nine out of 34 individuals (26%) were unable to obtain any price information from potential legal advisors until they agreed to a consultation with the advisor.

4 SERVICES

Key findings

- Information on the services offered by a law firm is the content consulted by the largest percentage of consumers: over 80% of individual consumers and almost 80% of SME consumers look at this information.
- Other website content related to services, especially who would do the work, timescales for the work, and key stages of the work are only looked at by a minority.
- When consumers did look at the website content on services, the overwhelming majority found this 'useful' or 'very useful'. 96% of consumers were positive about the usefulness of information on a law firm's services, and 52% of individual consumers along with 60% of SME consumers found the information 'very useful'.
- Many consumers that do not look at services information on a website do not do so because they say that they already know this information: 54% of individual consumers and 43% of SME consumers. However, almost a quarter of individual consumers (24%) and 30% of SME consumers do not look at services information because they do not have time.
- 29% of individual consumers do not look at information on the timescale of services, who would do the work, or quality marks because they do not consider this content to be important. Some consumers did not look at information because they could not find it: around 1 in 5 consumers could not find any information on the timescale of services.
- The online surveys, and qualitative interviews, suggest that detailed information on services, timescales, and who would do the work are usually received in the direct contact with a legal advisor in the first consultation rather than from a website. The most common ways to find this information were from a telephone conversation (31%) followed by visiting the advisor's office (30% of individual consumers and 27% of SME consumers), visiting the advisor's website (27% of individual consumers and 26% of SME consumers). And 27% of SME consumers got this information from sending an email.
- A large majority of those choosing a legal advisor found it 'easy' or 'very easy' to assess the quality of service that they might receive. 77% of all consumers found it 'easy' or 'very easy' to compare the services offered while 23% of SME consumers and 15% of individual consumers found this 'fairly difficult' or 'very difficult'.
- Comparing quality of service was a little more difficult for some, with 25% of individual consumers and 22% of SME consumers finding this 'fairly difficult' or 'very difficult'.

Services on law firm websites

Most law firms operating in practice areas subject to the price and service elements of the Transparency Rules now show information on the services they offer. This includes the services included in the price, information on the legal/service process (timescales and key stages) and quality indicators (the qualification/expertise of the staff that will deliver the service). Process information is less likely to be shown compared with general service information and staff qualifications/experience.

Showing staff qualifications/expertise is considered by law firms as integral to their position as a competent provider of legal services, so such information has always been widely shown. Therefore, it is a type of service information that has been less impacted by the Rules: the percentage of firms showing qualification/expertise information does not differ significantly between practice areas subject to the Transparency Rules and those that are not.

In contrast, showing information on services included in the price, timescales and key stages is much more likely for practice areas which are subject to the price and service elements of the Transparency Rules, compared with those that are not, as would be expected. Given that the Transparency Rules are comparatively new, it is encouraging that such a high percentage of firms now show information on the services included in the price (67% on average) and a sizeable percentage are also now displaying timescale information (49% on average) and key stage information (50% on average). Of course, this still leaves a significant gap that needs to be filled.

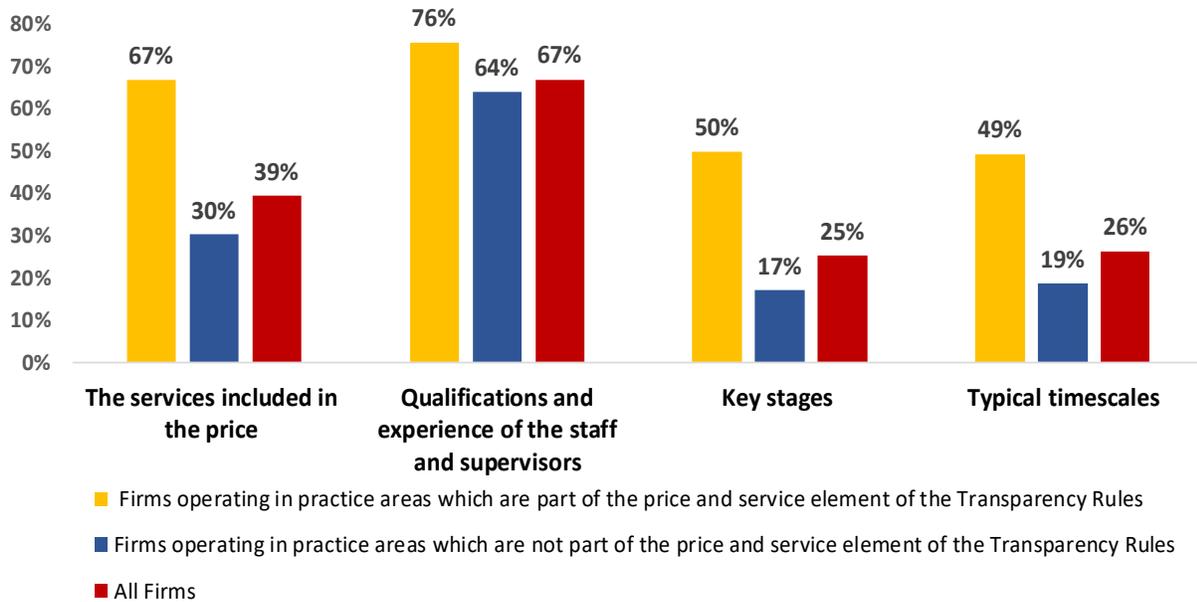
Firms operating in the Licensing Business Premises and Motoring practice areas (NB: small sample sizes) are behind those in other practice areas who have to show price and service information. Law firms selling their services mainly to business clients said they find it harder to display information on their website, because the legal demands of business clients are more bespoke and/or sometimes sold on a contract basis.

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Figure 9 Information shown by practice areas

Information shown by practice areas						
	Base	The services included in the price	Qualifications and experience of the staff and supervisors	Key stages	Typical timescales	Any Service information
Debt Recovery	105	62%	79%	54%	48%	91%
Employment	173	62%	76%	50%	49%	84%
Immigration (excluding asylum)	105	79%	71%	56%	48%	90%
Licensing Business Premises	27	48%	67%	30%	33%	74%
Motoring Law and Offences	33	58%	79%	39%	45%	85%
Probate	189	76%	77%	58%	58%	89%
Residential Conveyancing	178	82%	81%	61%	64%	92%
Firms operating in practice areas which are part of the price and service element of the Transparency Rules (mean average)	338	67%	76%	50%	49%	86%

Information by Practice Areas (Mean Averages)



Source: IRN Research/Firm Survey

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A majority of firms now show some service quality information for the whole firm on their websites. Customer reviews also tend to be described as quality information, with both customers and firms seeing customer reviews as indicators of the quality of a firm's service delivery.

Firms operating in practice areas which are part of the price and service element of the Transparency Rules are more likely to show firm-wide service quality and customer review information on their websites compared with firms not operating in these areas, indicating that the Rules are having an impact beyond the specific practice areas that are part of the rules: many firms operating in areas covered by this part of the Transparency Rules also operate in areas that fall outside the remit of the Rules.

Figure 10 Firm-wide service information shown on law firm websites

	Base*	Information about the quality of your services	Customer reviews**	Any service information
Practice areas which are part of the price and service element of the TR				
Licensing Business Premises	28	82%	43%	85%
Debt Recovery	107	73%	51%	80%
Probate	193	68%	51%	79%
Residential Conveyancing	179	65%	53%	76%
Motoring Law and Offences	32	63%	53%	73%
Employment	177	60%	47%	72%
Immigration (excluding asylum)	107	64%	43%	70%
All	340	65%	49%	75%
Practice areas which are not part of the price and service element of the Transparency Rules				
All Firms	79	57%	38%	68%
All Firms	419	63%	47%	74%

* firms answering the question who have a website

** which are an input into perceptions of service quality

Source: IRN Research/Firm Survey

Consumers and service information on websites

A large majority of consumers look at the services available when they visit a law firm website: 85% of individual consumers and 79% of SME consumers looked at this information and this is the website content looked at more than any other.

Only a third of consumers look at who might do the work and even less consider the key stages of the work (28% of individual consumers and 32% of SME consumers).

Results from the qualitative interviews show that some of this information, especially who would do the work and timescales for the work, are explained when a consumer has the first consultation with a legal advisor rather than from content on a website.

Figure 11 *Content looked at before choosing a legal advisor*

	Individual Consumers	SME consumers
Base: all using a solicitor	977	587
Their services	85%	79%
Timescales of the service	30%	36%
Key stages of the service	28%	32%
Who would do the work	33%	33%
Quality marks	34%	35%
Customer reviews	48%	38%

Source: SRA Firm Survey/IRN Research

Low income consumers are cautious and possibly less engaged when selecting a legal provider compared with higher income counterparts (i.e. those with income of £20,000 and above), in the sense that they are less likely to look at most service content on a website before making a legal advisor choice compared with consumers with higher incomes. They are significantly less likely, compared with adults with higher income, to consider:

- Quality marks (24% vs. 35%)
- The complaints policy and procedure (8% vs. 18%)
- The regulator’s logo (8% vs. 16%)

Disabled consumers are more likely than able-bodied consumers to look at information on the website:

- Quality marks (44% vs. 33%)
- Who would do the work (40% vs. 32%)
- Key stages of the service (35% vs. 27%)
- Their regulator’s logo (20% vs. 14%)

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- Customer reviews (53% vs. 47%)

Variation in service information looked at by practice area

Figure 12 shows the services information looked at by consumers who used a solicitor on the website of the solicitor chosen to carry out their last legal work. Data for individual consumers is shown for four of the practice areas covered by the Transparency Rules. Individual consumer responses for motoring offences are excluded as the sample is too small.

In general, there are only minor variations in the type of service information looked at by individual consumers across the main practice areas subject to the provisions of the Transparency Rules and the same is true comparing these practice areas with those not subject to the provision of the new Rules. The main exceptions are:

- Employment, where over 90% look at services - higher than 85% for the survey as a whole.
- Conveyancing and probate where a smaller percentage of individual consumers look at who would do the work, and quality marks than respondents overall.

Compared with individual consumers, SMEs are less likely to consider what services are included in the price but more likely to consider timescales and key stages.

Figure 12 Content looked at on their chosen provider’s website by selected practice area

	Individual Consumers					SME Consumers
	Conveyancing	Employment	Immigration	Probate	All Practice areas*	All Practice areas*
Base: used a solicitor	189	103	20	49	977	587
Their services	83%	91%	85%	82%	85%	79%
Quality marks	29%	37%	30%	24%	34%	35%
Who would do the work	24%	34%	35%	27%	33%	33%
Timescales of the service	32%	24%	25%	35%	30%	36%
Key stages of the service	26%	26%	25%	31%	28%	32%

* including those that are not subject to the elements of the service and pricing elements of the Transparency Rules

Source: SRA Consumer Survey/IRN Research

Similarly, when consumers look at other provider websites to compare legal advisors, only services information and price details are looked at by a majority: 71% individual consumers compare services and 62% of SME consumers compare services.

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Figure 13 *The information compared if looked at other provider websites*

	Consumers	SMEs
Base: all using a solicitor	553	337
Their services	73%	72%
Timescales of the service	30%	40%
Key stages of the service	26%	36%
Who would do the work	28%	28%
Quality marks	20%	28%
Customer reviews	41%	30%

Source: SRA Consumer & SME Surveys/IRN Research

Usefulness of website information for consumers

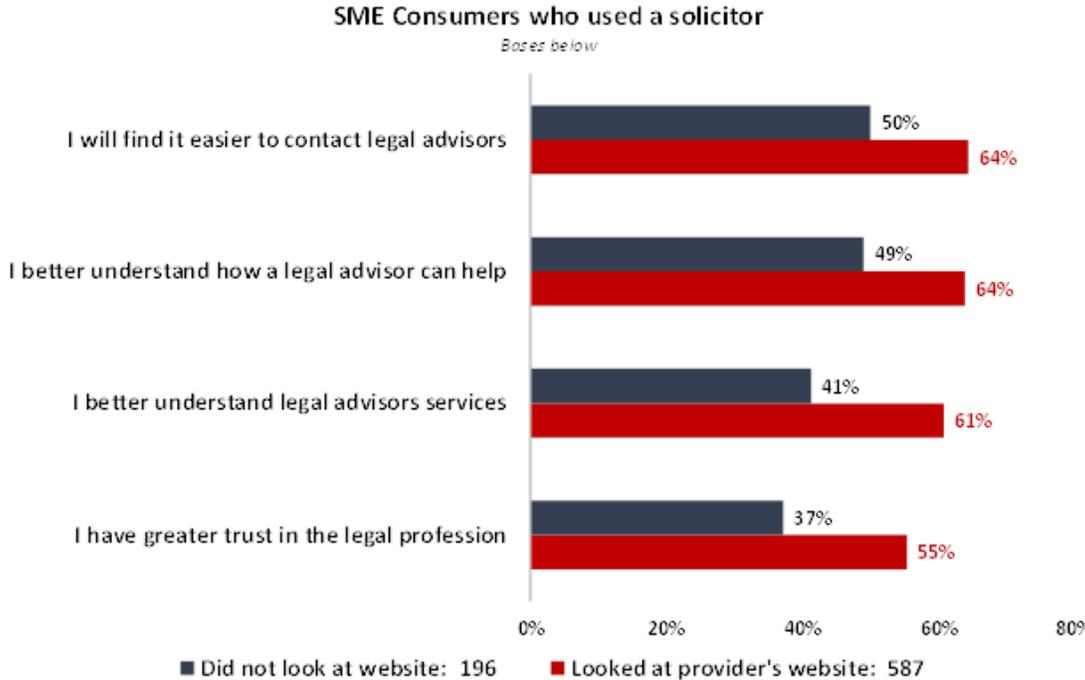
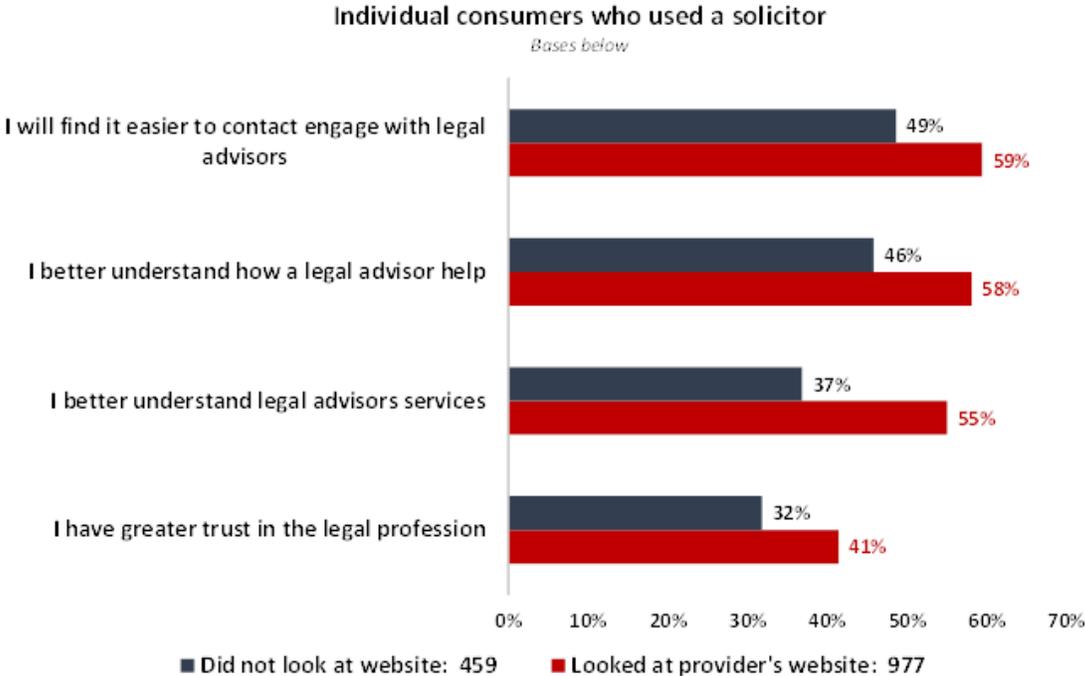
When consumers did look at the services website content, the overwhelming majority found this ‘useful’ or ‘very useful’.

96% of consumers (individual consumers and SME consumers) found the information on the services included in price useful or very useful, while 92% of consumers (individual consumers and SME consumers) found information timescales useful or very useful and 91% (again both types of consumer) found information on who would do the work useful or very useful. Individual consumers (93%) found the information on key stages slightly more useful/very useful compared with SME consumers (88%).

Service and service quality information is the information most reviewed online and therefore these seem to play a key role in helping drive understanding of the legal process and drive increased trust. Consumers who looked on their provider’s website were significantly more likely compared with those that did not to increase their understanding of and trust in the legal profession and these differences are statistically significant for both individual consumers and SME consumers, especially the latter.

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Figure 14 Consumer agreement with statements, based on their experience of using a legal provider



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Source: SRA Consumer & SME Surveys/IRN Research

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The impact of using the website seems especially strong for BAME consumers. Compared with White British consumers, BAME consumers, based on their experience of using a solicitor, are more likely to agree with the statements:

- I have greater trust in the legal profession (47% vs. 37%)
- I better understand how to complain about a legal advisor (52% vs. 37%)
- I better understand my protections using a legal advisor (48% vs. 40%)
- I better understand how a legal advisor can help (60% vs. 53%)

BAME consumers (54%) are also more likely than White British consumers (42%) to feel confident about using a legal advisor in the future. This contradicts the expectations of stakeholders who felt that BAME consumers have a less positive experience of using legal services.

However, lower-incomed individuals (household income of less than £20,000) are statistically significantly less likely than their higher incomed counterparts to agree *that I better understand legal advisors services* (43% vs. 57%).

Disabled consumers who used a solicitor and also looked at their provider's website are more likely than their able bodied counterparts to feel confident using legal providers in the future (57% vs. 48%).

Website effect in context

The most common ways to find information about services were from a visit to a provider's office or a telephone conversation. Looking at the advisor's website was used by only around one-quarter of consumers to find service and price information, similar to an email. In other words, it is often direct contact with a law firm or legal advisor where detailed service and price information is given.

Figure 15 How consumers found out about the services and prices offered by their legal advisor

	Individual Consumers	SME Consumers
Base: used a solicitor	1454	804
I visited their office	32%	34%
I telephoned	32%	33%
Their website	26%	25%
I sent an email	24%	27%
I had used them before, so already knew	13%	21%
A legal advisor visited / met me	6%	16%
I used a website with consumer reviews of legal advisors	5%	9%
I used a legal price comparison website	5%	10%
It was a free advice service	4%	2%
I sent a text	3%	7%
Other	11%	2%
Don't know	1%	1%

Source: SRA Consumer & SME Surveys/IRN Research

Consumer information outside of firm websites

Some consumers, in interviews, said that they found the information on law firms’ websites to be clear and helpful, whereas others found that the information received from talking to a firm was clearer and more helpful. For example:

I thought that there was simplicity in the wording on the website so I went with them and when we met with them they explained exactly what they would do, and what they won’t do so it was never a problem.

Services information on websites was a much of a muchness and it looked like they had copied and pasted each other’s. But when I spoke to [law firm name deleted] on the phone it was clear if they could do what I needed by their confident demeanour. If someone was halting in their conversation or hesitated when I asked something then I crossed them off.

‘Meet the team’ page on the website was useful because it wasn’t that brief. It went into what they could do, experience of other cases, and things like that.

One law firm looked like another and it was only when I talked to them one by one that it became clearer what their services would be and how things would work.

Service information – reasons for not checking

Most consumers who don't look at the services included in the price information on a website say this is because they already know this information (54% of individual consumers and 43% of SMEs) or don't have time (24% of individual consumers and 30% of SME consumers).

29% of individual consumers who do not look at information such as the timescale of services, who would do the work, or quality marks say this is because they do not consider this content to be important. Some individual consumers did not look at information because they could not find it: around 1 in 5 consumers could not find any information on the timescale of services.

Figure 16 Why consumers did not look at service content on websites

	Base:*	Not important	Couldn't find it	Lack of time	Already knew	Don't know
Services information included in price						
Individual consumers	828	9%	8%	24%	54%	5%
SME consumers	466	8%	15%	30%	43%	5%
Timescale of services						
Individual consumers	292	29%	19%	11%	33%	8%
SME consumers	210	16%	20%	22%	39%	3%
Key stages of service						
Individual consumers	274	24%	16%	15%	35%	10%
SME consumers	187	16%	17%	23%	40%	4%
Who would do the work						
Individual consumers	319	29%	14%	11%	39%	7%
SME consumers	194	19%	16%	20%	41%	4%
Quality marks						
Individual consumers	311	29%	9%	14%	29%	19%
SME consumers	203	19%	12%	23%	39%	6%
Customer reviews						
Individual consumers	470	24%	12%	19%	32%	13%
SME consumers	220	14%	14%	26%	41%	5%

* used a solicitor and looked at on provider's website

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Source: SRA Consumer & SME Surveys/IRN Research

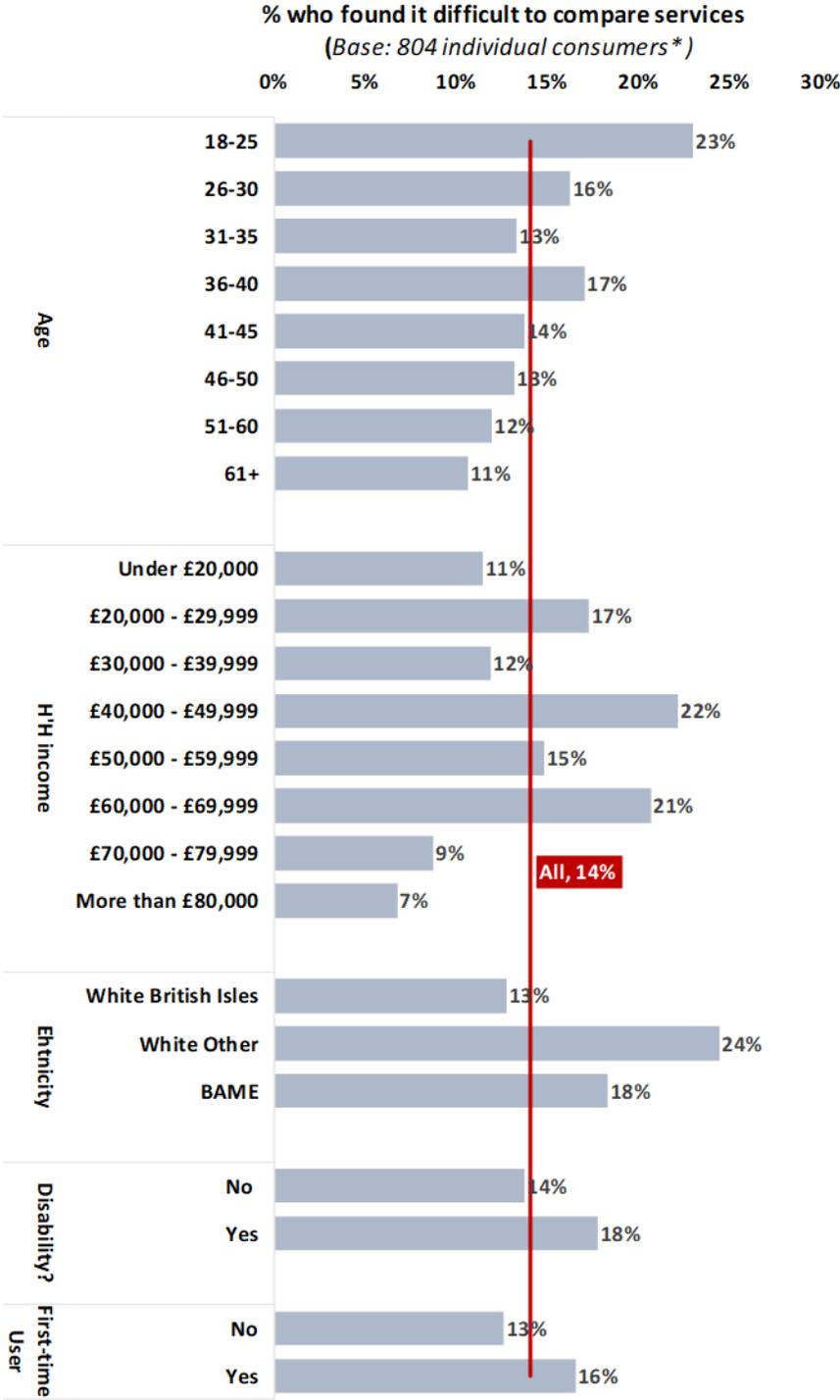
Service information and ease of comparison

Only 14% of individual consumers found it difficult to compare law firms based on the services information published on their websites. In contrast, 77% of individual consumers found it easy (50%) or very easy (27%) to compare. However, these strongly positive results mask some areas where more significant problems remain. For example,

- Young adults – 23% of 18 to 25 year olds found it difficult
- 24% of 'other white' (i.e. non-British) adults (but a small sample -61) and 18% of BAME adults found it difficult.
- 18% of disabled users found it difficult.

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Figure 17 Ease or difficulty of comparing advisors



*those comparing advisors and using a solicitor

Source: SRA Consumer Survey/IRN Research

Service information and demographic

Based on the website service information looked at before selecting a legal provider (including the website content that has a bearing on service quality perceptions), there are important variations between consumers in terms of the type of service information studied. Based on the website content looked at we can see that:

- Older (i.e. 40+) and more experienced individual consumers focus relatively less on price (see pricing section) and relatively less on the opinion of other individuals (i.e. customer reviews) compared with their younger and less experienced (i.e. first-time user) counterparts, and instead focus relatively more on the services on offer and measures of the quality of work undertaken – e.g. who does work (including their experience and qualification) and regulation. For older and more experience individual consumers their own experience rather than the experience of others is of greater importance when judging the quality of service they will get from a provider and the quality of the service on offer is of greater importance compared with price.
- Compared with majority groups (e.g. White British, able-bodied individuals), minority/vulnerable groups (e.g. BAME and disabled individuals) are more likely:
 - to look at timescales and key stages when selecting a legal provider
 - to look at explanation of their protections and means of redress (e.g. they are relatively more likely to look at their rights and protections, the law firm’s insurance cover, the law firm’s complaints procedure, the role of the Legal Ombudsman).

The variations are most pronounced between BAME and White British consumers. This is shown by the fact that when selecting their legal provider, BAME consumers were more likely compared with White British consumers to look for information on the website that provides information on:

- How the legal process works : e.g. timescales of the service, key stages of the service.
- How they could seek redress if things go wrong and/or assurance that things won’t go wrong e.g., Your consumer rights and protections, their complaints policy and procedure, the role of the Legal Ombudsman, regulator's logo, whether they were regulated, quality marks and customer reviews.

FTUs, possibly because of their inexperience, tend to be less likely compared with their more experienced counterparts to look at any service information on a provider’s website.

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Figure 18 Differences when looking at information on their provider’s website

	Website content more likely to be looked at by first group compared with second group before choosing a legal provider				
	AGE	DISABILITY	ETHNICITY	EXPERIENCE	INCOME
<i>First Group</i>	18-40	Disabled	BAME	First Time Users	Up to £20k
<i>Second Group</i>	40+	Non-Disabled	White British	Non-FTUs	Over £20k
Website Service Content					
Their services					√
Timescales of the service	√	√	√		
Key stages of the service	√	√	√		√
Who would do the work		√	√		
Your consumer rights and protections	√	√	√		
Their complaints policy and procedure	√	√	√		
The role of the Legal Ombudsman	√	√	√		
Their regulator's logo	√	√	√		
Quality marks	√	√	√		
Whether they were regulated		√	√		
Customer reviews	√	√	√		
Details of their insurance cover	√		√		

Red tick marks shows a statistically significant difference

See the Appendix for the data used to generate the above Figure

Source: Individual Consumer Online Survey/IRN Research

Provision of information and expansion

The previous section highlighted that fact that just over one-quarter of firms would recommend publishing price and services information is good for business and that just over one-quarter of firms which have implemented any of the Transparency Rules feel that the costs are outweighed by the benefits, both encouraging findings at the present.

There is also some evidence that some firms are planning to expand the Transparency Rules into practice areas not covered by the Rules, which effectively means publishing service and service quality information in new practice areas. Currently, 12% of firms operating in practice areas subject to the price/service element of the new rules are planning to expand the Rules into areas not subject to the rules, which is encouraging for such a new set of Rules. Firms currently working in Asylum, Immigration, discrimination are the most likely to expand the Transparency Rules not having a significant impact on law firm service provision.

Moreover, publishing mainly information on websites has not caused a contraction of service provision in the practice areas subject to the new rules. While law firms operating in practice areas covered by the Rules were twice as likely as those operating in other practice areas to have stopped working in a

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practice area in the last 18 months, only around one-in-ten of the firms covered by the Rules have stopped working in any practice area and only 4% have stopped working in practice areas covered by the Rules. There could be many reasons for a firm to stop practising in particular areas of law, unrelated to the Rules.

Of the 53 firms saying they had stopped working in a particular practice area, comments were received from 46 explaining why they had stopped working in a particular area. Reasons given for withdrawal were:

- Commercial: 18 – e.g. low work volumes/low profitability/lack of demand
- Lack of fee earner: 17 – e.g. fee earner left the firm/retired
- Strategic: 6 – e.g. to focus on core practice areas, realign the business
- Transparency Rules – 4.

5 COMPLAINTS

Key findings

- All firms are required to publish complaints information and a high proportion of those with a website (81%) do so.
- Firms also provide this information offline in client care letters and emails, with 90% of firms reporting that they provide complaints information to clients on request.
- Few firms identified any problems or challenges in providing this type of information.
- Publishing complaints information is perceived by some firms to be central to their positioning as a trusted, reputable organisation although only a few have evidence for the benefits of publishing this information (e.g. reduction in complaints).
- Stakeholders agree but several feel that having this information on the law firm website at the outset when consumers are reviewing or comparing legal services providers isn't at the relevant part of the customer journey.
- Consumer feedback reiterates that complaints policy and procedure is useful information but not a priority for them at the time of engaging a legal advisor.
- Almost three-quarters of consumers would complain if they were dissatisfied.

Implementation of complaints information by law firms

Firms are strongly supportive of the principle of publishing their complaints policy and procedure (how clients can complain to the firm) with 81% of firms who have a website showing this information online.

77% of firms with a website also set out how and when a complaint can be made to the Legal Ombudsman and/or SRA, this is 85% for firms who do not have a website. In interviews, firms reiterated that they provide this information in client care letters as well and they make clients aware of their complaints procedure in other, offline, ways. The survey supported this, indicating that 90% of firms provide complaints information to clients on request.

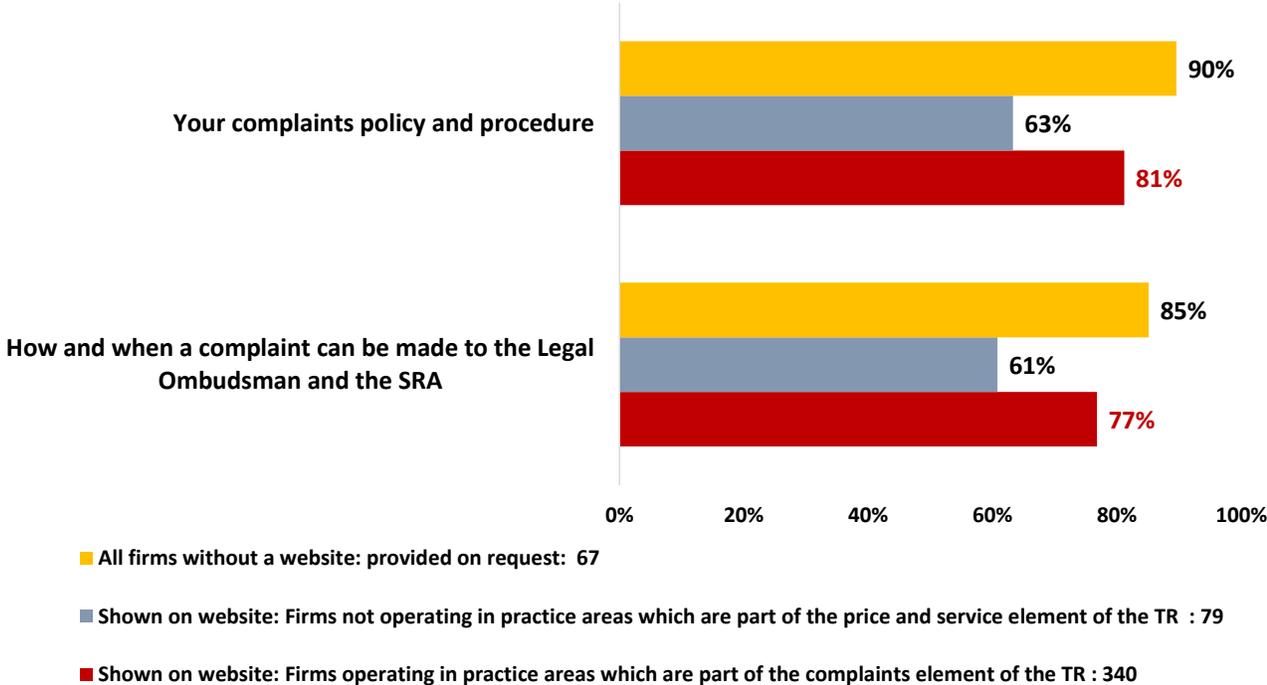
We are required to give pricing and complaints information so we do. A letter from us sets out the transaction. High street firm interview

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Figure 19 Information shown on websites and provided to clients

Practice Area	Base: firms with a website	Your complaints policy and procedure	How and when a complaint can be made to the Legal Ombudsman and the SRA
Debt Recovery	107	83%	82%
Employment	177	84%	77%
Immigration (excluding asylum)	107	78%	73%
Licensing Business Premises	28	86%	86%
Motoring Law and Offences	32	81%	84%
Probate	193	82%	82%
Residential Conveyancing	179	83%	83%
Firms operating in practice areas subject to the TR	340	81%	77%
Firms not operating in practice areas subject to the TR	79	63%	61%
All firms	419	78%	74%



Source: Law Firm Survey/IRN Research

Few firms identified problems providing this type of information and many felt that the availability of a complaints procedure is central to their presentation as a quality, reputable firm. For some, this has been an inherent part of the way they do business, for others the publication of this information is in

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response to the Rules. Firms did not identify any significant barriers in complying with this aspect of the Transparency Rules.

Firms are less keen to publish details of the complaints they have received and the outcomes, because they are worried about the lack of context and that this leaves them vulnerable to inaccurate, aggrieved or fraudulent reviews (see Section 7 on Digital Comparison Tools).

Hardly any law firms cite a reduction in complaints as a benefit of the transparency changes (3%), nor have many seen a reduction in complaints on price (5%) so far.

More publication of complaints I'm for it. It would have to be in context, explaining bigger firms get more. Break them down into quality of service, and cost, look at the size of the firm and divide it by the number of complaints and give you a score out of 10 relative to your size....The public need to know and that may help them choose - it's a real measure.

High Street Firm, interview

Usage of complaints information by consumers

Only around one-third of individual consumers and just over four-in-ten SME consumers looked at compliant-related information on their provider's website before they many a provider choice. For both individual consumers and SME consumers the most looked at information was the consumer's rights and protections.

Figure 20 Complaints information looked at on provider's website

	Consumers	SMEs
Base: all using a solicitor	977	587
Your consumer rights and protections	22%	26%
Their complaints policy and procedure	17%	22%
The role of the Legal Ombudsman	13%	15%
Any complaint related	32%	44%

Source: SRA Consumer & SME Surveys/IRN Research

When individual consumers who looked at their providers compliant policy and procedure on their website were asked whether complaints policy and procedure is useful information, 94% agreed this was useful or very useful, with a 92% of SME consumers who looked at the policy and procedures online agreeing.

Complaints information on a firm's website is more likely to be looked at by a specific sub-group of consumers: older ethnic minorities who focus more strongly on redress if something goes wrong –

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although they are potentially also the group least likely to actually complain according to some stakeholders.

Whilst stakeholders recognise that complaints procedures need to be part of new client on-boarding some felt it doesn't necessarily need to be up-front on law firm website, arguing that it's not part of the customer journey at that point:

It's in the wrong place for the consumer shopping around/journey
Stakeholder interview

Stakeholders generally consider that this element of the reforms has had a low impact so far (and did not specify reasons for this other than the customer journey point above) although they support the need for the requirement for consumers, and stress that for it to be valuable complaints information needs to be in context, e.g., size of the firm, case load and number of clients (more on this in Section 8 on Digital Comparison Tools).

Law firms' complaints handling, the insurance and protection built in is very adequate for consumers, it does offer remedies. The Rules are really strict and that goes to the heart of how consumers see law firms. Stakeholder interview

You can pull stats as to complaints with the LO [Legal Ombudsman] but that doesn't tell you how many clients you have in total. If you have 10,000 clients or 500,000 - needs to be in context. People want it to be simple but by its very nature it isn't. Once you give the complexity the attention it deserves it becomes ...[too difficult]. Top 100 firm, interview

Consumer knowledge of protections

When choosing a legal advisor, it seems that not all individuals are clear about the protections they might have.

The largest percentage (44% of individual consumers and 41% of SME consumers) note that they have to meet certain standards of work. 44% of individual consumers and 38% of SME consumers know that they can complain to the Legal Ombudsman.

38% of individual consumers and almost half of SME consumers (48%) believe that they will have insurance in case something goes wrong, and 34% and 29% respectively (individual consumers and SME consumers) state that they could report the advisor to their legal regulator.

Over a quarter of individual consumers (27%) and 32% of SME consumers think that their regulator might be able to compensate them if their money is lost.

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Propensity to complain

73% of individual consumers and 75% of SME consumers would be willing to complain if they were dissatisfied with their legal advisor. Viewing complaint-related information online seems to have a positive impact on the willingness of consumers to complain: 83% of individual consumers and 80% of SME consumers who saw any compliant information on their provider’s website would complain.

Figure 21 *If you were dissatisfied with your legal advisor, would you complain?*

	Base:*	% who would complain
Consumers		
Looked at on provider's website		
<i>Your consumer rights and protections</i>	212	85%
<i>Their complaints policy and procedure</i>	162	88%
<i>The role of the Legal Ombudsman</i>	122	84%
<i>Any complaint info</i>	310	83%
Did not look at on provider's website	667	74%
Total	977	77%
SMEs		
Looked at on provider's website		
<i>Your consumer rights and protections</i>	150	79%
<i>Their complaints policy and procedure</i>	130	82%
<i>The role of the Legal Ombudsman</i>	88	82%
<i>Any compliant info</i>	258	80%
Did not look at on provider's website	329	72%
Total	587	75%

Source: SRA Consumer & SME Surveys/IRN Research

If complaining, 61% of individual consumers who would complain and 58% of SME consumers who would complain, would make their complaint to their legal services advisor and 41% of individual consumers and 39% of SME consumer would complain to someone else in their organisation. Most individual consumers who would complain (63%) and 50% of SMEs who would complain would complain to the Legal Ombudsman, with fewer (45% of individual consumers, 36% of SME consumers) would complain to the regulator. The process should be that complaints should firstly be taken to the firm before the Legal Ombudsman can investigate. The SRA focuses on misconduct concerns so is not part of the complaints process.

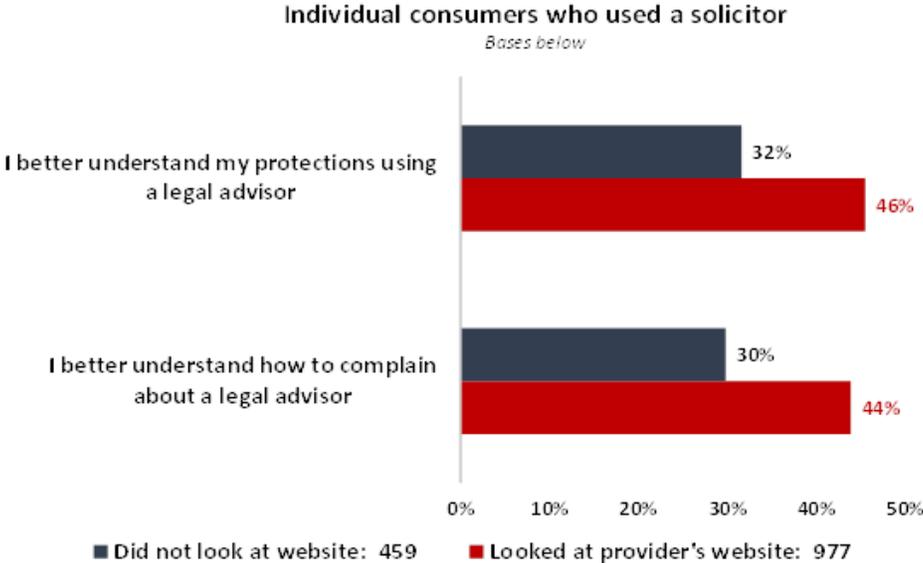
Amongst the minority who would not complain, the main reasons given are that it would take too long (43% of consumers, 46% of SMEs) or because it might cost too much (28% of consumers, 33% of SMEs).

Disabled consumers are more likely to complain if things go wrong, compared with able-bodied consumers (80% vs. 74%)

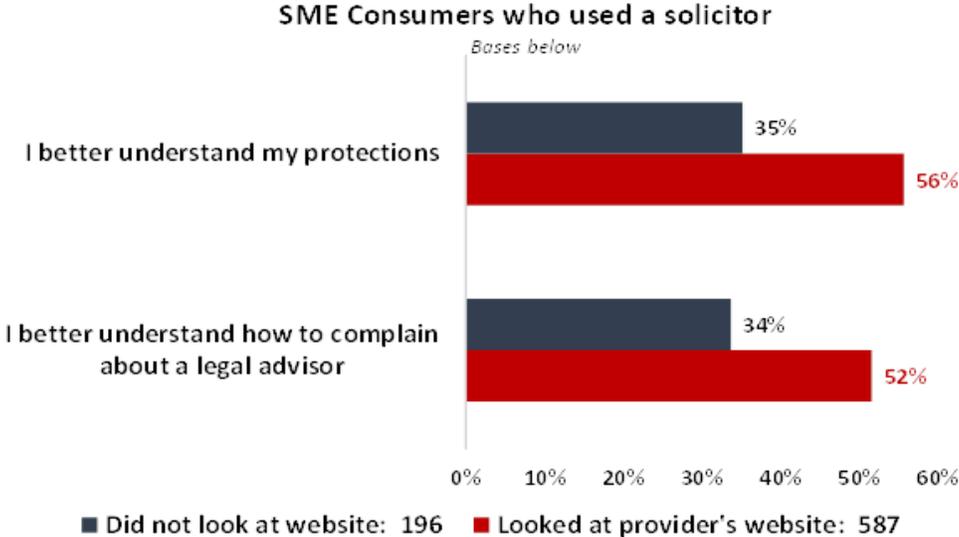
Understanding of complaints procedure

The recent use of a legal advisor’s website has helped consumers to have a clearer understanding of how to complain about a legal advisor. Individual consumers and SME consumers looking on their provider’s website had a better understanding of their protections and a better understanding of how to complain compared with consumers not using a website.

Figure 22 Agreement with complaint statements, based on their experience of using a legal provider



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All consumer responses	Base:	Agree	Disagree	Neither
I better understand how to complain about a legal advisor				
<i>Individual consumers</i>	1,436	40%	11%	49%
<i>SME consumers</i>	783	43%	12%	45%
I better understand my protections when using a legal advisor				
<i>Individual consumers</i>	1,436	41%	10%	48%
<i>SME consumers</i>	783	47%	8%	45%

Source: SRA Consumer & SME Surveys/IRN Research

6 DISPLAY OF SRA CLICKABLE LOGO

Key findings

- 92% of law firms who have websites and said they are displaying the SRA logo
- Not many consumers are looking at, or clicking on, the regulator's logo. It is used more by law firms.
- There is scope to strengthen, or raise, awareness with consumers about what the clickable logo means.
- So far, the logo is more meaningful for SME consumers than individual consumers, and has encouraging brand attributes when consumers are prompted to say what it means.

Implementation of SRA clickable logo by law firms

The SRA clickable logo is by far the most common type of information required by the Rules to be displayed on a law firm website, followed by information regarding complaints. Over 90% of firms operating in the practice areas subject to the Transparency Rules show the logo on their websites.

I feel that the SRA clickable logo is a kite mark and gives a good impression that we are a regulated firm. Law firm interview

I do display the SRA logo, I had it up when they first said rather than waiting for the deadline. I thought it was a benefit not a hindrance. When the logo came in I pointed it out to clients but they said we know you're a solicitor and you wouldn't lie about that, you have morals. I asked them if they thought it was a good thing? Clients say they expect solicitors to be regulated, they don't actually check it and they aren't aware of the logo. The logo is a good idea and helps me when I'm checking other solicitors. Sole Practitioner interview

Consumer engagement with SRA clickable logo

From the survey, 15% of individual consumers using a solicitor in a law firm looked at the regulator's logo before selecting a provider, compared with 19% of SME consumers. 36% of individual consumers using a solicitor in a law firm who looked at the SRA logo then clicked on it, compared with 44% of SME consumers who looked at the logo.

Only 8% of those in low income households (less than £20,000 annual income) but a larger percentage of disabled consumers (20%) than the survey a whole saw the logo.

Around a third of individual consumers (37%) who did not look at the logo, said they did not because they felt that it was not important. Among SME consumers, the equivalent percentage was 24%. Among SME consumers who did not look at the logo, 41% did not because they already knew what this was about, compared with 29% of individual consumers.

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Some consumers said that the logo gave them confidence in the firms and some gained confidence from other aspects of their website. For example, in interviews, consumers said:

I saw lots of logos and images about bodies they were part of and their accreditations at the bottom of the homepage I think which all looked convincing but I didn't look at them. I suppose it made me feel confident that they were reputable and abided by certain standards but I didn't check. The logo you mention could have been one of these.

No I didn't see it but I wasn't looking to be truthful. The website looked really professional and they had more than one office and that was enough to make me think that they were an established firm and reliable.

I saw the logo and it helped to re-assure me that they were covered if I had a problem and that was enough so I didn't feel the need to click on it and find out more.

Awareness of what the SRA clickable logo means

Stakeholders felt that there is still low consumer awareness of the SRA logo and what it means in terms of remedies, redress and insurance. Several respondents said that firms should be required to do more in terms of pointing out what being regulated actually means.

Consumers live in a world where logos are everywhere and don't mean much to anyone. Yes I know the logo is a quality indicator/stamp but I don't think consumers see it as such. I don't think they are taking it as the SRA intend. Stakeholder interview

The digital badge is possibly a 'not yet' thing, it needs to become more established. Stakeholder interview

Law firms agree that typically they are not providing clients with the supporting information as to what the logo actually means and most say that they don't receive client enquiries about what the logo means in terms of redress and regulation.

I don't know how well the logo is working or not but none of my clients knew about it. Sole practitioner interview

SRA isn't a strong brand with members of the public. Law firm interview

I am a solicitor, I run a legal practice so I follow the Rules and I say that I'm regulated by the SRA. Not much cachet in titles and logos. I'm jaundiced against these types of things. Little kitemark thing looks good for a few years. it's not worth the candle. Sole practitioner interview

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We use the SRA logo but I don't think it's particularly effective - clients never ask about it. Everyone knows we are 'solicitors' and what it means. Law firm interview

They have not made the most of that logo. I'd be surprised - 90% of the public have no idea. It's all very well making us transparent when 99.9% of us are already, yet surely the transparency should be so the public understands it, not us. We have these lovely SRA logos that the public don't seem to know about. There is a need for simple advertising, about the protection that you get when the firm is regulated. Sole Practitioner, interview

Engagement of SMEs with SRA clickable logo

Over eight-in-ten SMEs who looked at the logo (84%), felt that it was indicative that they would receive a good service, compared with 59% of individual consumers. Respondents who looked at the logo felt that this logo means you can complain if things go wrong (88% of SME consumers and 52% of individual consumers) and that complaints would be dealt with fairly and quickly (78% of SME consumers and 38% of individual consumers).

Out of the respondents who clicked on the logo³⁰, 78% of individual consumers (73% of SME consumers) noted that solicitors have to meet high standards and 64% of SME consumers (61% of individual consumers) became aware of the compensation fund.

49% of individual consumers who looked at the logo (55% of SME consumers) felt increased trust in the legal profession based on their experience of using a legal provider.

I don't go out of my way to find it [regulator's logo] but if I do see it I would be happy that it's there. It means trusted and more professional. A local business of that type I would like. Something I can trust, its reliable which is good for me.

SME interview

You see it [regulator's logo] and if we were looking to move the business to another firm we would check that out and check with the Register that the logo is legit and correct. I wouldn't take it as read that the logo means regulated I would absolutely check it.

SME interview

As the word cloud below shows, where the size of the word is relative to the number of mentions, many SMEs said that the clickable logo is about the regulation of solicitors, governing body/oversight, legal or law. It is strongly associated with quality, standards and trust.

³⁰ Small sample - 51 respondents for individual consumers and 44 SME consumers.

Figure 23 Word cloud of terms associated with the SRA clickable logo*



* outside of terms solicitors, regulation, authority (free text SME survey responses)

Source: SRA SME Survey/IRN Research

7 SRA SOLICITORS REGISTER

Key findings

- The Solicitors Register was only launched in October 2019 but, in a relatively short space of time, it is being used by a majority of law firms. Almost six out of ten law firms responding to the survey are using it, and a quarter are not. 63% of firms covered by the price/service element of the Transparency Rules in the survey are using the Register compared with only 50% of other firms.
- Over 90% of solicitors or law firms use the Register to check if a third-party solicitor is regulated.
- It is encouraging that awareness of the Register amongst individual consumer users and SME users of legal services is also relatively high: just over half of SMEs and almost 40% of consumers who used a solicitor are aware of it. Low income consumers have the lowest awareness of the SRA's Solicitors Register at just 4%.
- Whilst awareness is relatively high, usage is low with only 19% of SME consumers who used a solicitor using it and 10% of individual consumers.
- Consumers mostly use the Register to find out if a solicitor is regulated by the SRA (51%), find out about the services offered by a law firm (47% of individual consumers and 52% of SME consumers) and check if someone is a solicitor (44% of individual consumers and 49% of SME consumers).
- 79% of individual consumers who used a solicitor and 82% of SME consumers – find it fairly easy or easy to use, while 87% of individual consumers and 88% of SME consumers find the information useful or very useful.

Awareness and usage of the Solicitors Register

Awareness of the Register is relatively high among consumers who used a solicitor, at 54% for SMEs consumers, and 38% for individual consumers responding to the online surveys. 36% of SMEs and 25% of consumers using a solicitor who are aware of the Register have used it (this represents 10% of the total consumer sample and 19% of the total SME sample).

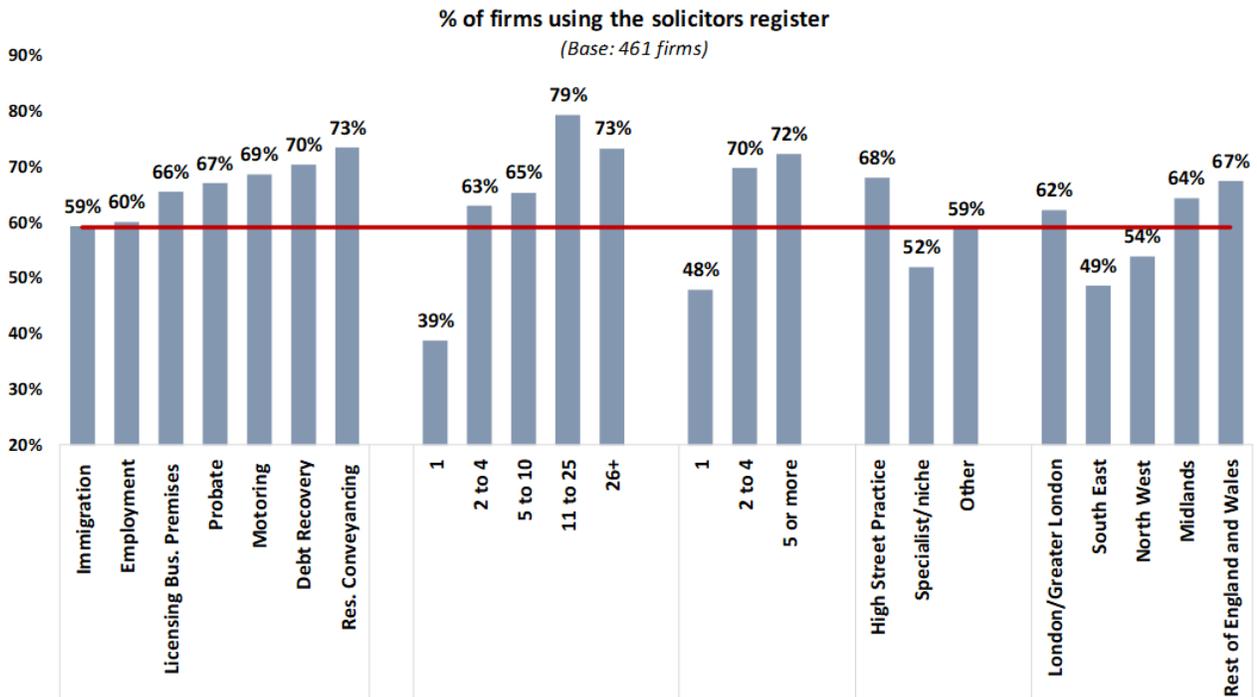
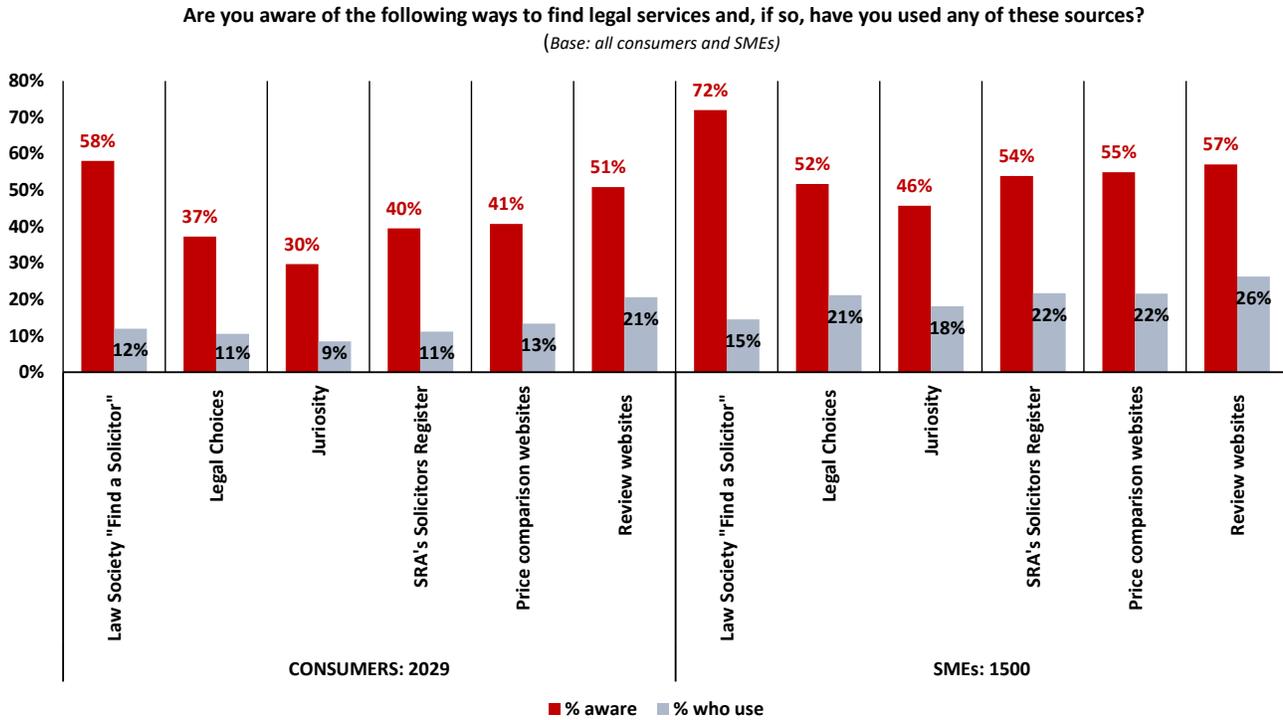
59% of all law firms said they use the SRA Solicitors Register and 25% said they did not (16% could not say if they had or had not used it).

Use of the Register is more likely among firms operating in practice areas covered by the price and service element of the Transparency Rules, firms which have made rule-inspired changes to their website and High Street practices.

Use of the Register varies by practice area, for example: residential conveyancing (73%) followed by debt recovery (70%), motoring (69%), probate (67%), licensing business premises (66%), employment (60%) and immigration (59%). On average, 63% of firms covered by the price and service element of the Transparency Rules answering the survey are using the Register compared with only 50% of other firms.

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Figure 24 Awareness of sources to find a legal advisor among consumers and law firms using the SRA register



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Source: SRA Consumer Survey/Firm Survey/IRN Research

51% of consumers (individuals and SMEs) use the Register to find out if a solicitor is regulated by the SRA. The main use for SMEs (52%) is to find out about the services offered by a law firm, and 47% of consumers also use it for this reason.

A higher percentage of SMEs than consumers use it to check whether someone is a solicitor (49% vs. 44%), but proportionately more consumers use the Register to find out where a solicitor works (43% vs. 34%).

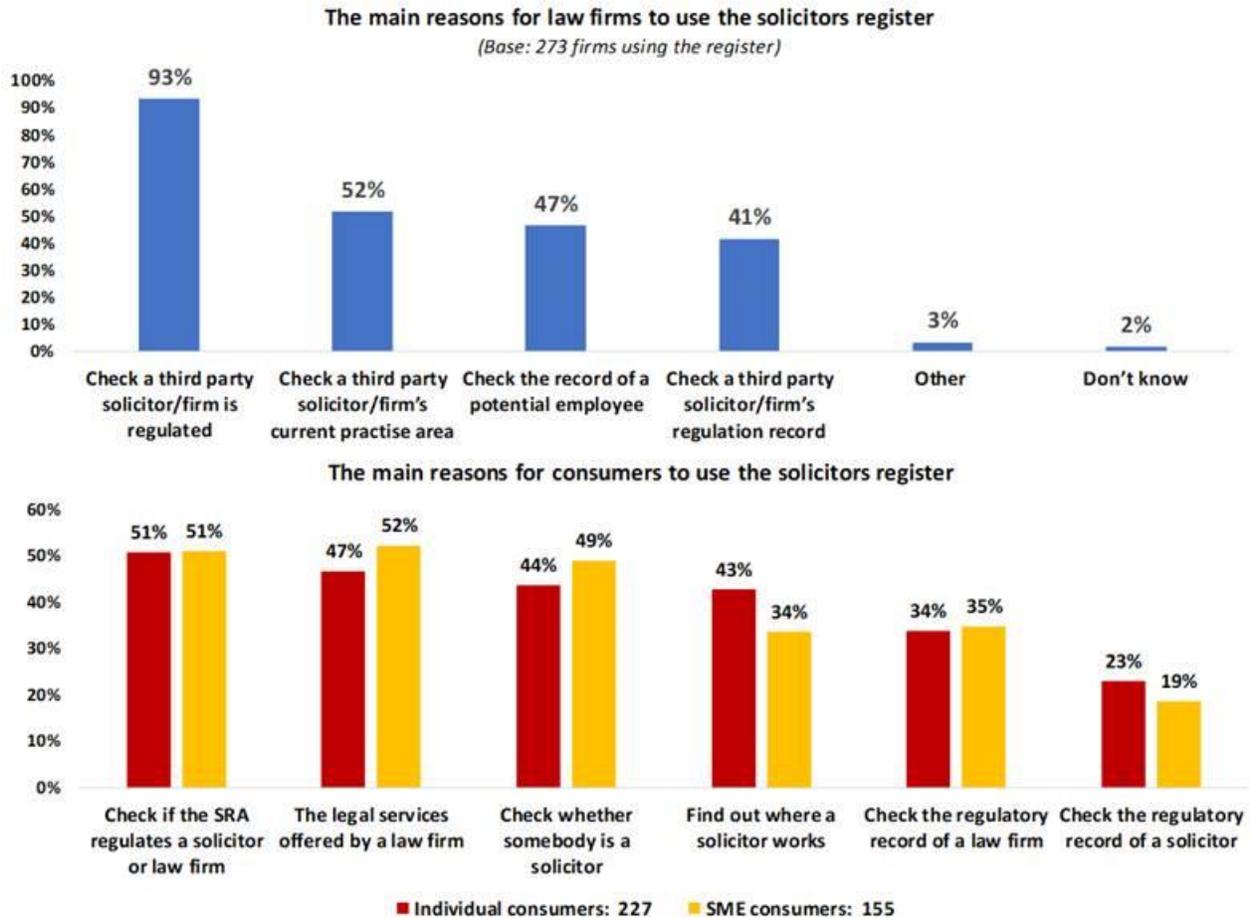
Checking the regulatory record of a law firm or solicitor is important to just over one-third, and on average, consumers check 2.4 items on the Register.

By far the main use of the Register among law firms is to check if a third-party solicitor is regulated – used by 93% of law firm survey respondents and the only other main use mentioned is to check on a third-party solicitor’s practice area (52%).

37% of individual consumers were aware of Legal Choices, and 11% had used it. Equally, over half of the small business we surveyed (52%) were aware and 21% had used Legal Choices. A three year development programme for the joint legal regulators consumer facing [Legal Choices](#) website, which provides consumers with information to help them navigate the legal landscape, was put in place in response to the recommendations of the 2016 CMA review.

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Figure 25 Reasons for using the Solicitors Register – consumers and law firms



Source: SRA Firm Survey/IRN Research

79% of individual consumers and 82% of SMEs who used a solicitor and who also used the Register found it 'fairly easy' or 'very easy' to use. Only 3% of consumers and 2% of SMEs said that it was difficult to use.

87% of consumers using found the information on the Register 'useful' or 'very useful' and 88% of SMEs had the same response.

Among law firms, in terms of improving the Register, IRN received 65 comments from law firms of which 39 stated or implied no changes were required by not offering an opinion (e.g. 'N/A'), succinctly saying no improvements were needed (e.g. 'none') or making a statement indicating no changes were wanted (e.g. 'keep it as it is ! no need to give any other information to the general public- one never knows how they will use any extra information in a retaliation scenario', 'perfect for now', 'Seems fine for us'). Another group of comments were off topic or vague in their meaning, leaving 20 comments suggesting improvements. There were only three common threads among these comments:

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- More accuracy – 6
- Information and functionality more like Find a Solicitor database from the Law Society – 7
- Changes to disciplinary information – 2.

8 DIGITAL COMPARISON TOOLS (DCTS)

Key findings

- 41% of individual consumers and 55% of SME consumers are aware of legal services price comparison sites, while 51% of individual consumers and 57% of SME consumers are aware of websites with consumer reviews and/or ratings. However, 13% of individual consumers and 22% of SME consumers have actually used legal price comparison sites and 21% and 26% respectively have used legal review sites.
- This shows a significant increase in usage compared with previous research findings.
- For both online comparison websites and online reviews, firms identified more challenges than benefits, this being especially so for online comparison websites.
- Law firms have reservations about engaging with them, primarily because of the risks of negative or inaccurate reviews, the difficulty of portraying quality accurately, how to describe and commoditise complex legal services and also how to establish objectivity.
- Law firm usage of these sites is also very low with 2% of law firms saying they provide price and service information to any price comparison website, with another 2% saying they do not at present but are planning to.
- 47% of individual consumers and 33% of SME consumers do look at customer reviews and feedback on law firm websites when making a decision on legal services but awareness of comparison sites, and usage, is low.
- Some stakeholders are cautious about the potential of DCTs to help consumers.
- SME consumers in interviews were also sceptical about the value of comparison sites and their reservations were around four main areas: a comparison site would not reflect the specific complexity of their matter, the site would not cover the personnel involved which is felt to be important, difficulty of indicating quality and risks of featuring false reviews.
- Consumers are largely satisfied that they know the service quality to expect before choosing an advisor – for 76% and 68% respectively of SME consumers and individual consumers - it was 'easy' or 'very easy' so perhaps this explains the low usage of comparison sites.

Consumer awareness and usage of legal comparison sites

There were 45% that said they would look at DCTs in the legal services sector when comparing legal advisors but 28% said no.

Awareness is higher for websites with consumer reviews and ratings of legal services at 51% of individual consumers and 57% of SME consumers, with 21% of individual consumers and 26% of SME consumers saying that they have used a site with consumer reviews and ratings of legal services.

41% of individual consumers surveyed are aware of legal price comparison sites but only 13% have used them. Similarly, 55% of SME consumers were aware of these sites whereas 26% have used them.

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These measures of usage seem high given that only 2% of law firms responding to the online survey said they gave prices to price comparison sites. The percentages are also higher than those recorded in previous surveys: the LSB's Legal Needs survey found that only 3% had used a cost comparison site and the LSCP's Tracker Survey had 2% using a price comparison site. IRN Research consumer survey results found that 6% used review sites in 2019 and 2% used price comparison sites³¹. One reason for the disparity between apparent consumer use of legal price comparison sites and the percentage of law firms putting prices on these sites could be because our research sample included consumers who had used a range of legal services, not just regulated firms. It may also be that some price comparison sites use the publicly available data from law firm websites – the data has not been supplied directly by the law firm. There has also been a growth in price comparison sites for conveyancing services in recent years which may be starting to impact on awareness and use. Plus, the surveys have been done at different times and with different samples that might be impacting on results.

91% of individual consumers (109) and almost all SMEs who were interviewed (31) said they have not used a legal comparison site or a review site in choosing a legal advisor.

I think it's horses for courses, and every legal case is different, unless it's a bog standard conveyancing or a will and then what would you say that would be useful...the conveyancing went well and we bought the house! Just because someone had a good experience with one advisor and one issue it doesn't mean they would get it right next time so I would be dubious about using a review site.

Consumer interview

If there were sites like these when I was looking I think they would have really helped. So yes I would use. It was my first time and I didn't really know what to expect but comments written in words that ordinary people could understand would be good. I didn't know what I was comparing really so definitely would have been helpful.

Consumer interview

It wasn't relevant but then again if there was something that focused on disabled people with feedback from us then it could be really useful. We need more consumer powers so it could help.

Consumer interview

I haven't used no - price I don't think is that relevant because it depends on how much they can do and the exact problem. Reviews maybe but would they tell you what is really important - like how compassionate the person is, empathetic, and things like that?

Consumer interview

³¹ Legal Services Board. [Legal Needs of Individuals in England and Wales](#), 2020

³¹ Legal Services Consumer Panel. [How Consumers Choose Legal Services Tracker Survey](#), 2020

³¹ IRN Research. [UK Legal Services Consumer Research Report](#), 2020

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I think these could be another thing to look at as long as you didn't base everything on these. Are they not just going to show the really good ones and really bad ones? So I am a bit sceptical.
Consumer interview

Perceived challenges with DCT usage

Consumers had reservations about the potential for false or misleading reviews and lack of sophistication of comparison sites, similar to law firms' concerns. Some SME consumers said they would use a site as part of a more detailed evaluation as another useful input but that data would be used alongside other factors e.g. personal recommendation rather than as a starting point.

Ability to do the work is more important than price comparison. Personnel is more important than price. Comparisons wouldn't help. SME consumer interview

Never done it and can't imagine ever doing it. I would rather go for a recommendation. SME consumer interview

No. I am aware of them but doesn't feel right to use one for something as important as legal. I use them for phone providers or power but not for legal. SME consumer interview

No no, I just don't believe a lot of the reviews and for something like this it would just be too much hit and miss. It wouldn't be enough quality assessment for me. Also it's a business issue which makes it harder - someone could say their conveyancing lawyer was great because they finished it quickly but this doesn't work with commercial questions. SME consumer interview

No I haven't [used]. Heard of them like go compare, gas and electric. But are you comparing the similar things? Am I comparing the same things with legal services? Making a will for example may be straightforward but not employment law matters. I like not having to explain my business to the firm. I may look at comparisons in the future if it's a simple matter, but if it's more complicated I value the continuity. It takes time to bring people up to speed. Even for a better deal on price, due to complex issues in the past of the business, I would say that I wouldn't change. SME consumer interview

For online comparison sites, the four main challenges or drawbacks from the perspective of the profession is that they are not completely accurate, they can be misleading in terms of prices/information, they focus too much on price and more generally they are not considered appropriate for the legal sector. Law firms are concerned that such sites may encourage consumers to make comparisons based on incorrect or inappropriate criteria.

When firms were asked if there were any other benefits or challenges of using comparison sites and online reviews, replies can be grouped around three broad areas:

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- **Data presented may be inaccurate/misleading/designed to deliberately harm a firm** and there is a lack of accountability:

People post stuff which is blatantly untrue and there is no real recourse
Law firm survey

It is essentially a free for all and, given privilege and confidentiality it is not necessarily easy to reply to negative comments, which often centre on outcomes rather than what we as a firm have done for a client
Law firm survey

- **Inappropriate for the legal sector as not commoditised/standardised work**

Legal services are not like insurance products and not plain vanilla, its wholly inappropriate to use comparison sites and should be left for each firm to decided how to use online reviews
Law firm survey

You cannot democratise this information. It's so open to abuse. It's not eBay. It's not fair to be judged in this way. Law firm interview

if you can compare apples and apples that's ok. Can't compare apples with double decker buses.
Law firm interview

It just wouldn't work for us and we would not be interested. Legal 500 and Chambers are established reference sources that are used by clients and these are very good. We certainly wouldn't ask our clients to place a review on a public site - we would of course ask clients in some depth at the end of the process for feedback but that would remain internal and we would address any issues raised. The barriers for us is that we wouldn't see a site like this offering us any value and the drawback outweigh any benefits. Bad reviews are hard to put behind you even if they are addressed and responded to. So no.
Law firm interview

- **Price** should not be the main focus of comparison:

Comparison web sites drive down the price and reduce the service levels to clients

We are not selling insurance or cake, we are selling an experience, a journey, an outcome. Like everything else the work will go to people with the most money and the service will be worse.
Law firm interview

I would definitely be keen although internally it would be a job to convince people. So difficult to price with individual circumstances. Someone may not disclose everything up front to get an

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accurate quote. Wills maybe and conveyancing much easier to give an accurate quote. If we see our competitors doing it, we would look at it. Law firm interview, marketing manager

Online customer reviews – usage

- Individual consumers interviewed in the qualitative stage are split almost equally between those who would use a legal comparison site and those who wouldn't.
- Although DCT awareness and usage is low across all consumer types, customer reviews and feedback are considered to be very important when evaluating providers and consumers do look at customer reviews on law firm websites.
- Reviews placed on a firm's website are more likely to be used by consumers rather than information on comparison sites. But only a minority of law firms say clients can are able to add reviews and/or ratings of them on their own websites (22% at present and 7% planning) or third-party sites (29% at present and 4% planning).
- For online reviews, the four main challenges are that reviews can be based on outcomes of the case not on a firm's service/advice, they are not completely accurate, the firm is unable to respond fully because of legal professional privilege and there is a risk of loss of confidentiality. Again, perceptions of firms are that reviews are not based on the right criteria and firms may be unable to respond to this.
- The largest law firms are least likely to include customer reviews on their own website or a third party's website, possibly as they conduct a higher volume of B2B transactions.
- In interviews, majority of consumers said they looked at customer reviews on law firm websites; almost half looked at comparison sites and specific mentions were TrustNet, Trustpilot, SAM Conveyancing and Google Reviews.

Online customer reviews – posting

- There was a 50:50 split between those consumers who say they would post reviews on a comparison site and those who wouldn't. Reasons from the latter group include 'not relevant to legal services, don't trust comparison sites, posting reviews is not what I do'. Therefore some of their reasons are because of their general behaviour as a consumer rather than being specific to the legal sector.
- Individual consumer interviews (although a smaller group than surveyed) suggest that a significant proportion (over 50% if those who would post and those who might post are included) could be encouraged to post reviews if more sites were available.
- When surveyed, 114 individual consumers responded to a question on whether they would use DCTs specifically covering the legal services sector and, despite the limited use so far, 42% said they would consider posting a review on such a site compared with 28% who said no. The other 20% were unsure.
- Slightly more SME consumers than individual consumers said they would post reviews of legal services, especially if they were at either end of the quality spectrum e.g., very poor or excellent but most were reluctant along the lines of 'it's not what I do', sensitivity of the issue, confidentiality

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and/or lack of time. Several agreed in theory that they would post a review if their legal advisor asked them directly, due to the nature of their personal relationship. This is not suggesting that firms are cherry-picking clients to write positive reviews.

I don't do that personally or professionally. There may be comebacks. If someone asked me who I use I'm happy to say. I don't want to tie my [organisation] name to a recommendation. I have done private conversations with potential clients - I don't want it out in the big wide world. SME interview

Mainly the services I had were ok. Everything was fine. When you give a review it has to be either really bad or really good. If it's average I don't care. It's fine. It's done. SME interview

Professional services and social media don't work together. SME consumer interview

Yes I would, like TripAdvisor, I like to give people a warning or an idea about what they are in for. It may reassure someone else.

SME consumer interview

I haven't used no - price I don't think is that relevant because it depends on how much they can do and the exact problem. Reviews maybe but would they tell you what is really important - like how compassionate the person is, empathetic, and things like that?

Consumer interview

I think these could be another thing to look at as long as you didn't base everything on these. Are they not just going to show the really good ones and really bad ones? So I am a bit sceptical. Consumer interview

Now that I have had some experience I would probably look around a bit more next time and a review site would make life easier and more simplistic for me. So I would use. It would at least let me know that they were legit and I would go for someone who explained things simply...this would come out in the review. Consumer interview

Online customer reviews – benefits

In the survey, a handful of firms highlighted benefits for customer reviews, which largely boils down to validation: consumers can validate an opinion of a firm by seeing other consumer reviews and firms can validate their internal perceptions of what their clients think of them, *e.g. 'It sort of shows how you are doing with the public', 'Online reviews are useful guide to customer feedback', 'Provides a quick 'at a glance' as to the quality of the firm someone is looking at using'*.

For both comparison websites and online reviews, the main benefits are they make it easier for consumers to research options, although less than one-third of firms mention this benefit for either site.

Online review sites are considered as better for increasing enquiries and the volume of work, possibly because such reviews feed into perceptions of quality, an influence on demand.

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Figure 26 The benefits and challenges of comparison websites and online reviews

Benefits and challenges of digital comparison tools		
	Comparison websites	Online Reviews
BENEFITS		
Base: all firms expressing an opinion	377	381
Easier for consumers to research options	23%	31%
Increases number of enquiries	11%	27%
Increases volume of work	11%	22%
Helps our firm to innovate	10%	15%
We can check that our prices are competitive	13%	8%
Saves time for our firm	6%	6%
None of these	71%	56%
Any benefit	29%	44%
CHALLENGES		
Base: all firms expressing an opinion	400	372
Reviews can be based on outcomes of the case not our service/advice	43%	58%
Not completely accurate	49%	47%
Unable to respond fully because of legal professional privilege	36%	44%
Risk of loss of confidentiality	32%	38%
Not appropriate for the legal sector	45%	33%
Difficult for us/consumers to verify the prices/information	39%	32%
Some prices/information is misleading	47%	30%
Focused mainly on price	47%	26%
Creates confusion for consumers	35%	26%
Consumers don't trust these	25%	23%
None of these	20%	20%
Any challenge	80%	80%

Source: SRA Firm Survey/IRN Research

From the law firm interviews, a number of requirements emerged from respondents who set out what would be needed for these sites to be effective:

- Need for arbitration/moderation – objectivity
- Must be independent
- Not open to larger firms buying reviews at the top of the listings
- May be possible in more commoditised areas of law e.g., conveyancing, wills

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- Need to deal with fake or rogue reviews
- Ensure consistent client understanding of quality of service
- Ensure confidentiality of service provision
- Maybe a standard set of questions to all clients so that comparison across various quality marks can be judged properly
- Comparison elements – price, quality, size of firm – but how you get across quality of service is a challenge
- Information including reviews and complaints need to be in context.

9 QUALITY INDICATORS

Key findings

- Over a third of consumers look at quality marks when looking at a legal advisor's website (34% of individual consumers and 35% of SME consumers), and over 90% of these find this information 'useful' or 'very useful'.
- However, 29% of individual consumers and 19% of SME consumers do not look at this information because they do not think that it is important.
- Results from the online surveys show that consumers and law firms are generally in agreement when it comes to key quality indicators: both put two indicators at the top of the list and these are experience and customer feedback. Recommendations are also important for consumers.

Consumer usage of quality indicators

34% of individual consumers and 35% of SME consumers look at quality marks when looking at an individual website, and over 90% of these find this information 'useful' or 'very useful' (41% of individual consumers and 42% of SME consumers find it useful, 53% and 50% respectively find it very useful).

However, this leaves a majority that did not look at quality marks and of some concern is that 29% of individual consumers did not look at this information because they felt that it was not important. The main reason given from both individual consumers and SME consumers was that they already knew about this information (29% of individual consumers and 39% of SME consumers).

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Figure 27 *Quality indicators on websites*

	Individual consumers	SME consumers
Those looking at quality marks on an individual legal advisor website	34%	35%
Those looking at quality marks on websites when comparing legal advisors	20%	28%
Those finding quality marks on website “useful” of “very useful”	94%	92%
Reasons for not looking at quality marks:		
I already knew	29%	39%
I didn’t think it was important	29%	19%
Lack of time	14%	23%
Couldn’t find	7%	12%

Source: SRA Consumer & SME Surveys/IRN Research

- Only 25% of households with less than £20,000 income per year looked at quality marks on a website, and 38% of households with income below £20,000 not looking decided not to look at these indicators because they didn’t think these were important, compared to 29% in the overall survey.
- BAME consumers and disabled consumers are more likely to look at quality mark information on a website: 41% of BAME consumers and 44% of disabled consumers compared to 34% of all consumers.

Customer reviews and experience of legal advisor

In the online survey, individual consumers were asked about information they would need to help them with understanding the potential quality of the service from their legal advisor.

1,052 individual consumers provided responses and the most popular keywords in order of the number of mentions were:

- Customer reviews
- Experience
- Recommendations
- Reputation
- Services

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The top two mentions are the same as those given by law firms when they were asked for quality indicators, although they are in reverse order for law firms.

The telephone interviews asked interviewees to explain what quality indicators they would look for. The feedback offered more varied and nuanced responses but the top themes were similar to the online survey: customer reviews were still mentioned most often followed by recommendations and experience.

However, for a majority of interviewees it was the direct contact with a law firm/legal advisor that led them to select a legal advisor based on their quality indicators and not the website information.

Top themes in order were:

- Customer reviews
- Recommendations
- Prices
- Experience/established
- Whether regulated/regulator logo
- Professional
- First contact/first impressions
- Simple explanations/jargon free
- Trust/confidence

There were so many good reviews and testimonials on the site and the good thing was that they were quite detailed rather than just saying "they were good" or "very professional". They offered more. I know they are picking testimonials that say great things but there were enough to convince me that they were a good firm. Customer interview

Lots of things when I spoke to them like experience and feeling confident and comfortable with what they said. There was also a level of professionalism that came across on the website and in the call when they gave me more details. He was able to speak to me sympathetically. Consumer interview

Quality of service to me means established, with a good reputation which I got from asking around. Also when you speak to them they are not patronising and their personality. Consumer interview

Quality indicators and law firms

For law firms, quality is projected by:

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- Establishing firm credibility in the eyes of the client/building trust (e.g. proving the expertise and experience of fee earners/partners, showing the firm's accreditations, showing the firm is regulated).
- Proving the firm will treat its clients well and satisfy their needs (e.g. by showing positive customer feedback, testimonials and reviews and making quality assurance statements).

Quality, as such, for firms is closely bound to marketing and brand building.

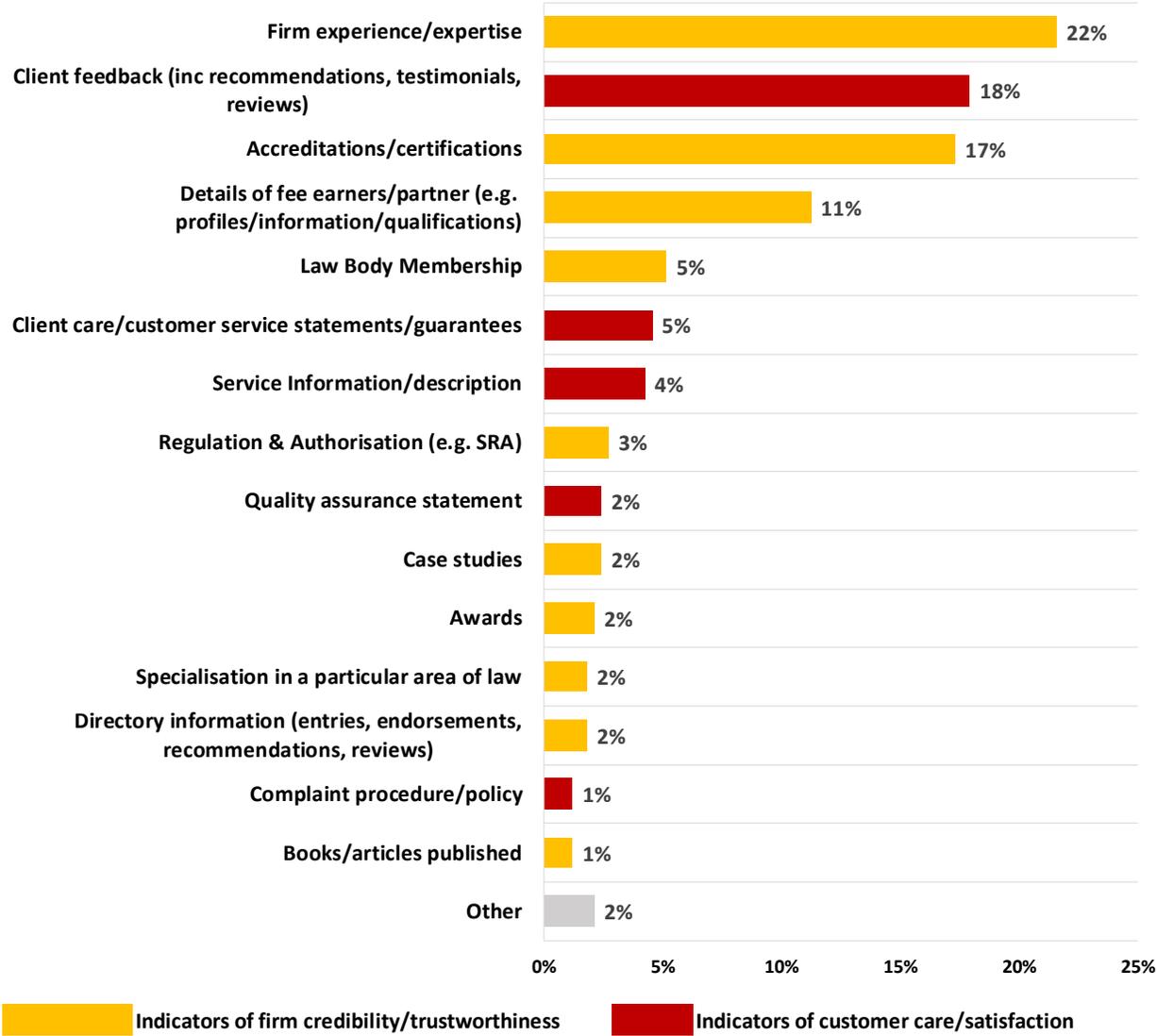
A very similar picture emerges from firms without websites. These comments also focused on:

- credibility – i.e. experience/expertise, regulation, success rate, qualifications, case studies
- customer care/treatment – i.e. client testimonials, client care, turnaround time, quality statements.

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Figure 28 The most important descriptors of quality of firms with websites

Base: 329 words and phrases used to describe quality



Source: SRA Firm Survey/IRN Research

Consumers satisfied they know service quality to expect

Comparing quality of service created difficulties for some with 25% of individual consumers and 22% of SME consumers finding this ‘fairly difficult’ or ‘very difficult’. For the majority – 76% and 68% respectively of SME consumers and individual consumers - it was ‘easy’ or ‘very easy’.

Helping consumers to judge quality

Stakeholders, especially regulators, and law firms are thoughtful about the relationship between price and quality indicators and can support the SRA in understanding this relationship more fully. In terms of quality indicators specifically, respondents did not have any easy answers. Several suggestions were made about how to help consumers to judge quality. These were:

- **Accessibility for vulnerable groups** – indicate firms who make provision for vulnerable groups e.g., home visits, British Sign Language, use of interpreters for non-English speakers, accessible offices and websites including making information available in offline formats and in other languages. Suggestions did not specifically mention the SRA’s website or Register as a potential location for this information.
- **Decision tree** – where consumers could input their matter/situation and it would guide them to a choice of the legal services providers.
- **Information around trust, approachability and empathy** in dealing with clients as this can be a priority for people depending on their issue.
- **Accessibility** to legal advice more generally in terms of reducing gatekeepers at law firms, offering initial free consultations or using a Virtual Assistant on the website to start a live chat and offer a no-obligation/no-cost appointment for example.

Being able to reach your legal advisor direct and for them to respond by phone, email is important. SME interview

- **Competency/specialisation** – make it clear the level of expertise on offer and degree of specialisation as that often has a link to hourly rate – consumers like profiles of individuals and descriptions of cases they have worked on as it may give them an indication of how their matter may be handled:

Very often consumers will feel that there is a need for specialist knowledge - quality is quite often in their mind linked with experience and specialism so they will look for that. Stakeholder interview

- **Customer service** – consumers value responsiveness, law firms should set out in advance on instruction:

The kinds of things that you will do and how you will do them, commit to for example we will be touch base every two weeks through this process, we won't make decisions without consulting you, put the reassuring parameters up front. SME interview

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There are some proxies along the way - steps in the process e.g., communication, understandable advice, feeling like you are getting value for money is important, an understanding of quality and comparative markets. the nature of the human dimension, interaction, empathy and understanding will make you understand quality. Stakeholder interview

Quality being linked to accessibility, responsiveness, a standard of customer service. Deal with that by reviews. If more law firms were able to engage with sites that published reviews of the types of service that people find beneficial and how complaints were addressed then people can judge. Stakeholder interview

Understanding of regulation by consumers

The fact that a provider is subject to regulation is another potential quality indicator.

A large majority – 78% of individual consumers and 88% of SME consumers – knew that their legal advisor was regulated before they started using them. However, only 40% of the former group knew who the regulator was. In comparison, a majority of SME consumers – 53% – knew who the regulator was.

Respondent's awareness of the broader regulatory landscape is still patchy: over 4 out of 10 consumers say that all legal services are regulated (43% of individual consumers 45% of SME consumers). However, this is an improvement on the 57% of consumers that believed that all legal advice services were regulated in an SRA 2018 survey³². Another 43% of individual consumers and 40% of SME consumer understand that some legal services providers are not regulated.

12% of individual consumers and 16% of SME consumers say that only law firms and solicitors are regulated.

50% of low-income consumers (those with annual household income of less than £20,000) think that all legal services are regulated compared with 43% in the overall survey.

³² Solicitors Regulation Authority. [Better Information in the Legal Services Market, 2018](#)

10 CONCLUSIONS

Although it is only 18 months since the Transparency Rules were launched, and only just under a year since the creation of the Solicitors Register, this research indicates that the majority of consumers (83% of consumers and 85% of SME consumers) say they have the information they need to make a good choice, and that most (68% of SME consumers) find it easy or very easy to find and choose a legal advisor.

Consumers using the online information provided by law firms were more likely (a statistically significant difference) to have greater trust in the legal profession. They were also significantly more likely to have a better understanding of how to complain, their protections, legal advisors' services, how services are charged for, and how a legal advisor can help. They were also significantly more likely to feel they will find it easier to contact/engage with legal advisors in the future, compared with consumers who did not look at law firms' websites.

Previous research from the SRA in 2018 described in the Introduction section of this report, found that consumers want more information on services and prices in particular. Most are now able to find this on law firm websites, with 68% of the law firms surveyed now publishing pricing information online and 92% of law firms with a website displaying the SRA clickable logo. Other information, such as who would do the work, service timescales and complaints procedures, is not seen as important for a majority of consumers when looking at websites. However they do find it helpful when they are at the point of choosing a legal advisor. For some vulnerable groups, especially BAME and disabled consumers, information on the nature of the legal process (e.g. timescales and key stages) and information which offers reassurance with respect to customer treatment, potential redress and service quality (such as complaints information, customer reviews, if the provider is regulated, regulator's logo etc.) is more important when selecting a legal provider. For most users of legal services, it is not price *or* experience that drives choice, rather it is price *with* experience, suggesting consumers make an assessment of value for money, i.e. price compared with quality and service.

Despite some initial reluctance, and perceived challenges involved in making pricing information publicly available, law firms have embraced the Transparency Rules, especially in terms of publishing pricing online and in displaying the SRA clickable logo, and this information is accurate and helpful for consumers. While most law firms are yet to feel the benefits from the rules, it is encouraging that in the relatively short time they have been operational just over one-quarter of law firms can point to positive benefits.

Law firms are not going beyond the minimum requirements of the Transparency Rules at this point but neither are they ceasing to provide legal services that are subject to the higher mandatory transparency requirements. The cost of compliance for law firms is not felt to be significant, with only modest time/cost overheads for firms mainly in keeping the pricing and services information up-to-

date, and the cost of implementing the reforms has not pushed the prices of legal services upwards. Nor are consumers paying more than they expect for legal services.

Website information forms an important part of the decision-making process for most consumers. Detailed information on prices, who would do the work, and timescales is more likely than not to come when consumers make direct contact with a legal advisor, through a telephone call or personal visit, where they still may be making a choice between more than one advisor. It is difficult to measure, even by law firms, the precise parts that law firm websites play in the decision-making process and when and how consumer visits to the websites are conducted relative to instructing a legal advisor.

Law firms do find it difficult to define quality signals and when potential clients look at websites to compare law firms, three factors tend to influence choice: perceptions of quality, services on offer and then price. When choosing a legal advisor, consumers seem to measure quality on two dimensions.

- **How credible and trustworthy is the firm?** (e.g. how expert is the firm and its fee earners? Is it regulated? Hence clients look at factors like whether the firm is regulated, who would do the work (i.e. their profile and experience), success rates in comparable cases, quality marks, and, to an extent, the regulator's logo).
- **How well will the firm treat me and satisfy my needs?** This is being judged by reading client feedback/reviews, customer service metrics, that complaints will be handled well, that the law firm will explain to the client their rights, offers protections, and to an extent, knowing the firm has adequate insurance cover and that there is redress to the Legal Ombudsman.

This is almost identical to the quality indicators used by law firms. When asked via open-ended questions, what quality indicators they use, law firm responses show they try to convince clients on the quality of their services by:

- **Establishing firm credibility in the eyes of the client/building client trust** (e.g. expertise, accreditations/regulation, staff expertise and experience e.g. showing on their websites that they are regulated, outline who would do the work (with qualifications/profile included), showing quality marks, showing their regulator's logo, and showing accreditations etc.)
- **Proving the firm will treat its clients well and satisfy their needs** (e.g. showing client feedback on the website, making quality assurance statements, showing their complaints policy and procedure, and showing they have insurance cover).

One unintended consequence of the rules may be some confusion for a minority of consumers when looking at prices on websites. The research has shown that various types of pricing information are given on websites and as might be expected given the complex nature of legal services and differences in practice areas, there is limited consistency in how firms display pricing information. Although the

evidence from the research is that most consumers find price information easy to understand, there may be confusion in the longer term as there are a range of pricing options and models included on websites. There may still be some work to do for some law firms to make the information on their websites even more accessible. When choosing a legal advisor, 45% of SME consumers and 32% of individual consumers found the information confusing and 49% of SME consumers and 37% of individual consumers said there was too much jargon.

Evidence from the research suggests that the jury is still out on DCTs, in that many law firms, stakeholders and SME consumers have yet to be convinced of their usefulness and value. The consumer surveys show that there is still limited awareness and usage of these but individual consumers might post reviews if they were made more aware of these sites and if their legal advisor was to invite feedback and participation. The SME consumers who were interviewed were largely sceptical as to the benefits of comparison sites given the complexity of their businesses' legal matters, how to effectively measure and compare quality of services as well as evaluate the individual doing the work. As buy-in from the legal sector would be necessary to make these sites workable, there is an opportunity to persuade law firms as to the benefits of participation over the longer term.

Regarding the impact of Covid-19 on the sector, this research indicates an initial dropping off in people seeking legal help, especially in residential and commercial conveyancing, commercial litigation and PI. However some practice areas, such as wills and probate and employment, stakeholders and law firms have seen an increase in activity. Those in the advice sector report a spike of other types of legal problems including family, employment, neighbour disputes, child residency as well as legal issues being exacerbated in the care system. Stakeholders are also concerned about a potential backlog of claims for example in debt recovery, landlord and tenant, which have been on hold (*'suspended animation'*) during the pandemic.

As the restrictions reduced the opportunities for face-to-face contact, the move towards digital services in the legal sector and the need to innovate has been accelerated, as law firms have been able to resolve legal issues for consumers remotely as well as participating in online court hearings and medical examinations via Zoom. Although this research indicates that geographic proximity is an important factor when choosing a law firm, and that consumers and SMEs value face-to-face contact and office meetings with their solicitor, this may change for consumers as it becomes apparent that legal services can be delivered to the same level of quality online. For this reason we may also see a boost to lawtech uptake by firms.

Stakeholders are pleased that the SRA is conducting a detailed evaluation and welcome the SRA's intention to take time to review and evaluate the impact of the Transparency Rules fully rather than accelerating and/or changing direction radically at this stage. Stakeholders and law firms too, appreciate that the market is complex and inter-dependent and there is no 'whole market solution'. The SRA faces two key contradictory forces: firms wanting more prescriptive advice/help from the SRA making it easier for firms to follow the Rules and firms wanting less prescription and more flexibility to

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reflect the nuances of legal work. Not surprisingly, the latter demand comes often from firms that handle more complex legal work, where bespoke pricing is more common.

The surveys and the qualitative research seem to suggest that there is scope to keep the profession informed and support them further with implementation guidance, as well as the need to deliver a consumer education piece about what regulation means. Stakeholders do not want the SRA to give up on the mission of empowering consumers and those more vulnerable members of society.

APPENDIX

Methodology

In May 2020, the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) commissioned IRN Research to conduct a one-year evaluation of the SRA's Better Information reforms. The research included:

- An initial literature review stage.
- Telephone interviews with a sample of stakeholders.
- Online surveys of consumers using legal services in the 18-month period to June 2020.
- Follow-up telephone interviews with a sample of consumers.
- An online survey of SRA-regulated law firms.
- Follow-up telephone interviews with a sample of law firms.
- Additional surveys of disabled groups, and individual consumers not using the Internet.

The Phases of the SRA's Better Information Reforms Research

Date	Methodology
May 2020	Literature Review
July 2020	Telephone interviews with stakeholders
July 2020	Online survey of individual consumers of legal services
July 2020	Online survey of SME consumers of legal services
July 2020	Online survey of SRA regulated law firms
August 2020	Telephone interviews with individual consumers of legal services
August 2020	Telephone interviews with SME consumers of legal services
August 2020	Telephone interviews with SRA regulated law firms
August 2020	Telephone interviews with individual consumers of legal services not using the Internet
August 2020	Online survey of individual consumers of legal services with a disability

Stakeholder Interviews

Overview

As part of the wider evaluation research project assessing the impact of the transparency reforms, 19 stakeholder interviews were completed, both internal and external.

The aims of the research were to:

- gauge general awareness of the transparency reforms - (intend to help people access accurate and relevant information about a solicitor or firm when they need legal services);
- understand stakeholder's perspectives as to whether the reforms have helped consumers and SMEs access legal services (e.g. easier to shop around, more clarity on pricing, clearer who is regulated or not);
- learn about the impact of Covid-19;

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- ask for feedback on how the transparency reforms have impacted on solicitors and law firms, whether there are any issues around the ability of law firms to respond to the changes;
- discuss how best to include vulnerable consumers in the research and for the reforms to help them; and finally
- thoughts on the future direction of the transparency reforms.

Methodology

The SRA drew up the list of organisations designated as stakeholders in the transparency reforms and these organisations were invited to participate in the research interviews via email from the SRA. Follow up emails were sent from Spinnaker/IRN, follow up calls were also made and interviews booked with respondents who were willing to participate. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, Skype and by phone according to respondent's preference and interviews were recorded where the technology allowed, and data protection consent was given (not usually withheld). Respondents who declined to participate did so for reasons of lack of familiarity with the transparency reforms, several saying they felt unable to comment with the necessary level of detail.

The organisations included consumer support bodies, legal sector regulators, support for the profession bodies and internal SRA stakeholders.

Consumer Online Surveys

Individual Consumers and SME consumers

In order to see how consumers choose a legal provider and make decisions based on the information they have, and in particular how they access advice when using solicitors, two online surveys were run covering two main consumer groups:

- Individual consumers
- Small and medium sized enterprise (SME) business consumers

For this report, IRN Research commissioned Made in Surveys Group (MIS) to conduct two surveys among its online panel:

- A sample of 2,029 adults aged 18+ in England and Wales who had used a law firm / solicitor / other professional legal advisor for a legal matter within the past 18 months
- A sample of 1,500 UK adults who are managers/owners in SMEs in England and Wales, whose business has had any legal issues to deal with in the last 18 months. SMEs are defined as businesses with less than 250 employees.

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IRN Research in association with the SRA produced a questionnaire, which is found later in the Appendix.

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The Individual Consumer Sample: 2029 individual consumers

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Gender		Main place of residence	
Male	47%	Own my home outright	38%
Female	53%	Own my home and paying a mortgage	38%
In another way	0%	In private rented accommodation	15%
I'd prefer not to say	0%	In social rented accommodation	6%
		In university / college accommodation	0%
Age		Other	2%
18-25	7%	Prefer not to say	0%
26-30	9%		
31-35	14%	Highest level of education	
36-40	13%	A degree, equivalent or above	55%
41-45	11%	A level or equivalent	19%
46-50	9%	O level or GCSE equivalent	14%
51-60	19%	Trade apprenticeships or equivalent	5%
61+	18%	Another qualification	5%
		None of the above	2%
Annual household income, before tax		I'd prefer not to say	0%
Under £20,000	11%		
£20,000 - £29,999	16%	Region	
£30,000 - £39,999	15%	London	23%
£40,000 - £49,999	14%	South East	14%
£50,000 - £59,999	10%	South West	9%
£60,000 - £69,999	7%	East England	7%
£70,000 - £79,999	8%	East Midlands	8%
More than £80,000	13%	West Midlands	9%
Don't know	1%	Wales	5%
I'd prefer not to say	4%	Yorkshire and Humberside	9%
		North East	4%
Occupation		North West	12%
Upper management, senior executive/professional	11%		
Middle management, executive/professional	23%	Ethnic group	
Small business owner, self employed	8%	English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	81%
Junior Management/professional	13%	Irish	1%
Office/Administrative	12%	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0%
Others non-manual	2%	Any other White background	4%
Skilled manual labour	7%	White and Black Caribbean	1%
Manual Labourer	2%	White and Black African	1%
Student	2%	White and Asian	1%
Full-time parent/carer	3%	Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background	1%
Unemployed	4%	Indian	3%
Casual worker	0%	Pakistani	2%
Retired	14%	Bangladeshi	0%
		Chinese	1%
Before the current COVID-19 crisis, which if any of the following statements would you have agreed with?		Any other Asian background	1%
I always have money left over at the end of the week or month	60%	African	1%
I had not saved any money in the previous year	19%	Caribbean	1%
I had enough savings to cover an unexpected major expense	44%	Any other Black / African / Caribbean background	0%
I always make sure that I have money saved for a rainy day	42%	Arab	0%
		Any other ethnic group	0%
Relationship status		Prefer not to say	0%
Single	19%		
I have a partner	9%	Thinking about your access to legal services, which of the following statements apply to you, if any	
Living with partner	13%	I have a physical, mental, or medical condition that makes it difficult for me to visit a legal services provider in person	8%
Engaged	3%	I have a physical, mental, or medical condition that makes it difficult for me to contact a legal services provider by telephone	4%
Married / In Civil Partnership	52%	I have a physical, mental, or medical condition that makes it difficult for me to use the internet	2%
Divorced	5%	I have a physical, mental, or medical condition that makes it difficult for me to access a legal services provider in another way	3%
Separated	2%	None of these	86%
Widowed	2%	Prefer not to say	1%
Prefer not to say	0%	Don't know	0%

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The SME Consumer Sample: 1,500 managers and owners

Level of management responsibility	
Owner / Proprietor	30%
Partner	10%
Chairperson	2%
Chief Executive	9%
Managing Director	15%
Other board level manager / director	5%
Other senior manager or director below board level	10%
Middle manager	19%
Number of full-time employees in your organisation in the UK	
1 (just me)	6%
2	5%
3 to 5	8%
6 to 9	8%
10 to 19	11%
20 to 34	9%
35 to 49	8%
50 to 99	18%
100 to 249	26%
Company turnover in the last financial year	
First year of trading	2%
Less than £25,000	5%
£25,000 to £49,999	9%
£50,000 to £99,999	8%
£100,000 to £249,999	9%
£250,000 to £499,999	8%
£500,000 to £999,999	10%
£1 million to £1.9 million	10%
£2 million to £2.9 million	7%
£3 million to £4.9 million	7%
£5 million to £9.9 million	6%
£10 million to £19.9 million	6%
£20 million to £34.9 million	4%
£35 million to £50.0 million	4%
Don't know	2%
Prefer not to answer	1%

Industry sectors	
Manufacturing	11%
Construction	9%
Retail	11%
Financial services	12%
Hospitality and leisure	7%
Accountancy	4%
IT & telecoms	13%
Media / marketing / advertising / PR & sales	4%
Medical & health services	4%
Education	6%
Transportation & distribution	3%
Real estate	3%
Other	11%

Online Law Firm Survey

In order to find out how law firms are responding to the SRA's Transparency Rules, an email survey invitation was sent out to 8,045 SRA regulated law firms. Responses were received from 524 firms, representing a response rate of 6.5%. Of these 524 responses, 454 firms completed the whole survey.

Invitation emails to participate were sent out by IRN Research, with respondents directed to an online survey hosted on IRN's SNAP webhost domain. The questionnaire was designed using SNAP Surveys software by IRN in association with the SRA.

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The questionnaire is found later in the Appendix.

Law firm sample: 454 firms completing the whole survey

Type of firm		Fee earners	
Partnership	12%	1 (sole practitioner)	27%
Limited Liability Partnership	20%	2 to 4	33%
Incorporated Company	33%	5 to 10	17%
Sole Practitioner	33%	11 to 25	12%
Other (please specify)	2%	26 to 80	5%
Don't know	0%	81+	5%
		Don't know	0%
Firm description		Number of offices	
Online only	3%	1	74%
High street practice	45%	2	17%
Top 100 City Firm	3%	3 to 5	6%
Alternative Business Structure	6%	6 to 10	2%
Specialist/niche firm	46%	11 to 20	0%
Other (please state)	5%	21 to 50	0%
Don't know	1%	50+	0%
		Don't know	
Partners		Region of main office/headquarters	
1 (sole practitioner)	49%	London/Greater London	34%
2 to 4	36%	South East	16%
5 to 10	7%	South West	8%
11 to 25	3%	East of England	4%
26 to 80	2%	East Midlands	5%
81+	2%	West Midlands	8%
Don't know	1%	Wales	5%
		Yorkshire & Humberside	7%
		North East	2%
		North West	11%

Online survey of individual consumers of legal services with a disability

In association with the Disability Law Service (DLS), IRN Research produced an online questionnaire asking disabled consumers who had used a legal advice a range of questions, including how they choose a legal advisor, did they use a law firm's website, the problems they encountered, and what factors they looked at before making a choice. The DLS promoted the survey and 15 replies were received.

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Telephone Interviews

The individual consumer, SME consumer and the law firm surveys asked respondents if they would be willing to participate in further telephone research. The telephone interviews were designed to probe more deeply issues raised in the online surveys. The following outlines the number of respondents who indicated their willingness to participate in further research and the number of interviews completed.

Survey	Number indicating a willingness to participate	Number of interviews completed
Individual consumers	756	120
SME consumers	284	32
SRA regulated law firms	108	25

The discussion guide for the consumer interviews is shown later in this section.

In addition, 34 telephone interviews were conducted with individual consumers of legal services not using the Internet, to understand more about how people access legal services and find out about law firm prices, services and issues surrounding regulation.

Individual Consumer Questionnaire

A. What is your gender?

Male
Female
Other

B. What is your age?

18-25
26-30
31-35
36-40
41-45
46-50
51-60
61+

C. Which of the following best describes your annual household income, before tax?

Under £10 000
Between £10 000 – £14 999
Between £15 000 – £19 999
Between £20 000 – £24 999
Between £25 000 – £29 999
Between £30 000 – £34 999
Between £35 000 – £39 999
Between £40 000 – £44 999
Between £45 000 – £49 999
Between £50 000 – £54 999
Between £55 000 – £59 999
£60 000 and more

D. What is your occupation?

Upper management, senior exec
Middle management, exec
Small business owner, self employed
Junior Management
Office/Administrative
Others non-manual
Skilled manual labour
Manual Labourer
Student/pupil
Housewife/House husband
Unemployed or casual worker
Retired

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E. Before the current COVID-19 crisis, which if any of the following statements would you have agreed with? Please select all that apply (MULTICODE)

- I always have money left over at the end of the week or month
- I had not saved any money in the previous year
- I had enough savings to cover an unexpected major expense
- I always make sure that I have money saved for a rainy day

F. What is your relationship status?

- Single
- I have a partner
- Living with partner
- Engaged
- Married/In Civil Partnership
- Divorced
- Separated
- Widowed
- Prefer not to say

G. What type of residential accommodation do you live in as your main place of residence?

- Own my home outright
- Own my home and paying a mortgage
- In private rented accommodation
- In social rented accommodation
- In university/college accommodation
- Other (please specify)

H. Education level

- A degree, equivalent or above
- A level or equivalent
- O level or GCSE equivalent
- Trade apprenticeships or equivalent
- Another qualification
- None of the above
- I'd prefer not to say
- Other (please specify)

I. What region do you live in?

- Central London
- Greater London

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South East
South West
East England
East Midlands
West Midlands
Wales
Yorkshire and Humberside
North East
North West

J. What is your ethnic group?

White
English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
Irish
Gypsy or Irish Traveller
Any other White background
White and Black Caribbean
White and Black African
White and Asian
Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background
Indian
Pakistani
Bangladeshi
Chinese
Any other Asian background
African
Caribbean
Any other Black / African / Caribbean background
Arab
Any other ethnic group

K. Thinking about your access to legal services, which of the following statements apply to you, if any? Please select as many as apply.

I have a physical, mental, or medical condition that makes it difficult for me to visit a legal services provider in person
I have a physical, mental, or medical condition that makes it difficult for me to contact a legal services provider by telephone
I have a physical, mental, or medical condition that makes it difficult for me to use the internet
I have a physical, mental, or medical condition that makes it difficult for me to access a legal services provider in another way
None of these
Prefer not to say
Don't know

L. How confident are you using the internet to find information?

Very confident
Fairly confident
Not very confident

Not at all confident

USE/EXPERIENCE OF LEGAL SERVICES

We are now going to ask you some questions about your experience with using a legal advisor in the last 18 months. If you have used a legal advisor for more than one issue in the last 18 months, please think about the MOST RECENT time.

1. Thinking of your most recent legal issue, when did you start to use your legal advisor? (SINGLE CODE)

Jan-March 2019
April-June 2019
July-Sept 2019
Oct-Dec 2019
Jan-March 2020
April- Jun 2020
Don't know

2. Thinking of your most recent legal issue, which of the following best describes the type of issue? (SINGLE CODE)

Asylum
Bankruptcy/ Insolvency/ Debt
Clinical or Medical Negligence
Conveyancing (buying/selling a property)
Crime/criminal offences (excluding motoring offences)
Discrimination/Civil Liberties/Human Rights
Divorce
Employment
Family (excluding divorce)
Housing, Planning, Landlord or Tenant
Immigration (excluding asylum)
Mental Health
Motoring Law and Offences
Neighbour disputes
Personal Injury
Power of Attorney
Probate
Problems with Consumer Services/Goods
Social Welfare

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Wills, Trusts and Tax Planning
Other (please specify)
Don't know

3. Which was the main legal advisor or organisation used for your most recent legal issue? (SINGLE CODE)

A solicitor in a law firm
An individual solicitor not connected to a specific law firm
A barrister
A claims management company
A licensed conveyancer
A specialist will writer/will writing and probate service
An accountant/financial advisor
A bank/building society
Citizens Advice/other charity
Another legal services advisor – please specify
Don't know

4. How was the service mainly delivered? (single code)

In person
Telephone
Email
Post
Online
Other
Don't know

5. Had you used a legal advisor before this most recent legal issue?

Yes
No
Don't know

6. Thinking about how you chose your legal advisor for your most recent issue

Yes
No
Don't know

Did you use the same legal advisor as one you had used before? Yes/no **(only show if Q5 =1)**

Did you look for different advisors?
Did you compare different advisors?
Don't know

7. How easy was it to find and choose a legal advisor?

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

Very easy
Fairly easy
Neither easy or difficult
Fairly difficult
Very difficult
Don't know

8. Did you look at your legal advisor's website before using them? (SINGLE CODE)

Yes
No
Don't know

ASK IF Q8=1

9. Before choosing your legal advisor, did you look at any of the following content on their website? Please select all that apply

Their services
Timescales of the service
Key stages of the service
Who would do the work
Prices
Your consumer rights and protections
Their complaints policy and procedure
The role of the Legal Ombudsman
Their regulator's logo
Quality marks
Whether they were regulated
Customer reviews
Details of their insurance cover
None of these

ASK IF Q9(LOOKED AT) = (1 to 13), i.e. DID NOT SELECT NONE OF THESE. ONLY LIST OPTIONS LOOKED AT IN Q9

10. How useful was the information you looked at?

Very useful
Useful
Not very useful
Not useful at all
Don't know

Their services
Timescales of the service
Key stages of the service
Who would do the work
Prices
Your consumer rights and protections

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- Their complaints policy and procedure
- The role of the Legal Ombudsman
- Their regulator's logo
- Quality marks
- Whether they were regulated
- Customer reviews
- Details of their insurance cover

ONLY ASK IF ANY OPTION NOT LOOKED AT IN Q9. ONLY SHOW OPTIONS NOT selected IN Q9

11. Why didn't you look at this content?

- I didn't think it was important*
- Couldn't find*
- Lack of time*
- Don't know*

- Their services
- Timescales of the service
- Key stages of the service
- Who would do the work
- Prices
- Your consumer rights and protections
- Their complaints policy and procedure
- The role of the Legal Ombudsman
- Their regulator's logo
- Quality marks
- Whether they were regulated
- Customer reviews
- Details of their insurance cover

ASK if Q6 = YES for 2 or 3

ASK IF Q8=2 (THOSE NOT USING LAW FIRM WEBSITES)

12. How did you find out about the services and prices offered by your legal advisor? (select all that apply)

- I visited their office
- A legal advisor visited/met me
- I telephoned
- I sent a text
- I sent an email
- I used a legal price comparison website
- I used a website with consumer reviews of legal advisors
- I had used them before, so already knew
- It was a free advice service
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know

ASK IF Q8=2 (THOSE NOT USING LAW FIRM WEBSITES)

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13. Did you ask for and/or receive information from your legal advisor on any of the following before you chose them?
Please select all that apply

Asked for
Received
Neither

Their services
Timescales of the service
Key stages of the service
Who would do the work
Prices
Your consumer rights and protections
Their complaints policy and procedure
The role of the Legal Ombudsman
Quality marks
Whether they were regulated
Customer reviews
Details of their insurance cover

ONLY ASK IF Q13 = RECEIVED FOR ANY ITEM. ONLY SHOW OPTIONS FOR ITEMS RECEIVED

14. How useful was the information provided?

Very useful
Useful
Not useful
Not useful at all

Their services
Timescales of the service
Key stages of the service
Who would do the work
Prices
Your consumer rights and protections
Their complaints policy and procedure
The role of the Legal Ombudsman
Quality marks
Whether they were regulated
Customer reviews
Details of their insurance cover

ONLY SHOW OPTIONS NOT ASKED FOR IN Q13 ONLY LIST ITEMS NOT ASKED FOR IN Q13

15. Why didn't you ask for this content?

I didn't think it was important
Lack of time

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Don't know

- Their services
- Timescales of the service
- Key stages of the service
- Who would do the work
- Prices
- Your consumer rights and protections
- Their complaints policy and procedure
- The role of the Legal Ombudsman
- Their regulator's logo
- Quality marks
- Whether they were regulated
- Customer reviews
- Details of their insurance cover

16. Did you look at the websites of other legal advisors? (SINGLE CODE)

Yes
No
Don't know

ASK IF Q16=1

17. When you looked at the websites of other legal advisors, did you compare them based on any of the following content on their websites? Please select all that apply.

- Their services
- Timescales of the service
- Key stages of the service
- Who would do the work
- Prices
- Your consumer rights and protections
- Their complaints policy and procedure
- The role of the Legal Ombudsman
- Their regulator's logo
- Quality marks
- Whether they were regulated
- Customer reviews
- Details of their insurance cover
- None of these

ASK ALL

18. Thinking about when you chose your legal advisor, to what extent do you agree with the following statements. (SINGLE CODE ACROSS OPTIONS)

Strongly agree

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Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

The price was most important
Experience and reputation were more important than price
The information provided by the various law firms I looked at made it easy to choose my preferred legal advisor (*only show if Q6 = 2 or 3*)
I was confident that I made the right choice

The information available was too confusing
The information available had too much jargon

ASK IF Q16=1

19. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your legal advisor's website?

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

It gave me **all** the information I needed to make a well-informed choice
It gave me **some** of the information I needed to make a well-informed choice
It gave me **enough** information to make me feel I had made a good choice

ASK IF Q16 = 2 or 3

20. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the information your legal advisor gave you before you chose them?

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

It gave me **all** the information I needed to make a well-informed choice
It gave me **some** of the information I needed to make a well-informed choice
It gave me **enough** information to make me feel I had made a good choice

ASK all

21. Before you chose your legal advisor, how easy or difficult was it to understand the quality of service you could expect?

Very easy
Easy
Difficult
Very difficult
Don't know

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ASK IF Q21=2 OR 2 (very easy OR easy)

22. What information helped you understand the potential quality of your legal advisor?? (OPEN ENDED)

ASK ALL

23. What other information would have helped you better understand the potential quality of your legal advisor? (open ended)

ASK if Q6 = 2 or 3 (those who looked at/compared different advisors)

24. From the various legal advisors that you looked at, how easy did you find it to compare:

Services offered
Prices
Quality of service

Very easy
Fairly easy
Fairly difficult
Very difficult
Don't know

LOGO

ASK IF Q9 (NOTICED) =9 (NOTICED regulator LOGO) AND Q3 = 1 OR 2 (SOLICITOR)

25. You said your legal advisor was a solicitor and that you looked at their regulator's logo on their website. This would have been the "Regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA)" clickable logo. Did the logo give you confidence that...?

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither
Disagree
Strongly disagree

You would receive a good service
Your solicitor would be appropriately trained and qualified
Your best interests would be put first
Your confidentiality would be respected
You could complain if things went wrong
Any complaint would be dealt with quickly and fairly
The SRA would make sure that the solicitor meets certain standards

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The solicitor had appropriate insurance

ASK IF Q9 (NOTICED) =9 (NOTICED regulator LOGO) AND Q3 = 1 OR 2 (SOLICITOR)

26. Did you click on the “Regulated by the SRA” clickable logo?

Yes

No

Don't know

ASK IF Q26=1

27. Please explain in one sentence what you think the “Regulated by the SRA” clickable logo is for? (OPEN ENDED)

ASK IF Q26=1

28. After clicking on the logo, did you notice any of the following?

That solicitors have to meet high standards

They have insurance in case something goes wrong

The SRA's Compensation Fund

Who I can complain to if something goes wrong

More information was available on the SRA's Solicitors Register

Other (please specify)

None of these

Don't know

ASK IF Q26=1

29. After clicking on the logo, did your trust in the solicitor change?

Increased

Unchanged

Decreased

Don't know

ASK IF Q26=2

30. Here is the “Regulated by the SRA” clickable logo which you can click on to find more information. Please explain in one sentence what you think the logo is for? (open)

PRICE

Q9 (LOOKED AT) =5 (looked at prices on website)

31. You said you looked at price information on your legal advisor's website. How were the prices shown? (select all that apply)

Minimum starting prices

A range of prices from lowest to highest

An enquiry form

A quote calculator

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The maximum price
Estimates of prices that could be charged
A fixed price
An hourly rate
Examples of prices charged for cases
No win no fee
Legal Aid options
It was a free service
Other (please specify)
Don't know/can't remember

ASK IF Q13= RECEIVED 5 (PRICES)

32. You said you received price information from your legal advisor. How were the prices shown? (select all that apply)

Minimum starting prices
A range of prices from lowest to highest
The maximum price
Estimates of prices that could be charged
A fixed price
An hourly rate
Examples of prices charged for cases
No win no fee
Legal Aid options
It was a free service
Other (please specify)
Don't know/can't remember

Q9 (LOOKED AT) =5 (looked at prices on website)

33. How did you find the information on price on your legal advisor's website?

It was on a web page that I found from a link on the home page
It was on a web page but I had to search their website to find it
Other (please specify)
Don't know

Q9 (LOOKED AT) =5 (looked at prices on website) and Q13 RECEIVED 5 (prices)

34. Did the price information...? (Please select all that apply)

Allow you to estimate the cost
Make you aware of the actual cost
Make you aware of any additional costs
Make you think the cost was unaffordable
Reassure you that the cost was affordable
Confuse me, I had to contact the firm to understand the cost

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35. Has the legal advisor finished the work?

- Yes
- No

ASK IF Q35=1

36. How were you charged for legal advice?

- A fixed price
- An hourly rate
- No win, no fee arrangement
- Legal Aid paid for some/all
- It was a free service
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know/Can't remember

ASK IF Q35=1

37. Was the final price paid...?

- Much lower than you expected
- Slightly lower than you expected
- About what you expected
- Slightly higher than you expected
- Much higher than you expected
- Don't know

ASK IF Q35=1 and if Q17=5

38. Was the final price you were charged similar to the prices published on your legal advisor's website?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

PROTECTION

ASK ALL

39. Before choosing your legal advisor, did you know if they were regulated? (single code)

- They were regulated but I didn't know who regulated them
- They were regulated and I knew who regulated them
- They were not regulated
- Didn't know

ASK ALL

40. Before choosing your legal advisor did you know if you would be protected in any of the following ways?.
(MULTICODE)

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

They have to meet set standards of work
They have insurance in case something goes wrong
Their regulator might be able to compensate me if my money is lost
Their regulator might be able to get my documents back
I can complain to the Legal Ombudsman
I can report them to their regulator
Other (please specify)
None of these
Don't know

41. If you were dissatisfied with your legal advisor, would you complain?

Yes
No
Don't know

ASK IF Q41=1

42. Would you...?

Complain to my legal advisor
Complain to someone else in their organisation
Complain to the Legal Ombudsman
Complain to their regulator

43. Why would you not complain?

Because it might cost too much
Because it might take too long
For another reason

44. As far as you are aware, which of the following statements best describes how legal services are currently regulated? (select one)

All legal services providers are regulated
Some legal services providers are not regulated
Only law firms and solicitors are regulated

REGISTER

ASK ALL

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

45. Are you aware of the following ways to find legal services and, if so, have you used any of these sources? (PLEASE CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY)

Aware of

Used

The Law Society "Find a Solicitor" database
Legal Choices website
Juriosity, the official Bar directory
The SRA's Solicitors Register
Legal services price comparison websites
Websites with consumer reviews and/or ratings of legal services

ASK IF Q45(USED)=4 (SRA Solicitors Register)

46. How easy or difficult was it to use the SRA's Solicitors Register?

Very easy
Fairly easy
Neither easy nor difficult
Fairly difficult
Very difficult
Don't know

ASK IF Q45(USED)=4 (SRA Solicitors Register)

47. How useful was the information you found on the SRA's Solicitors Register?

Very useful
Useful
Neither
Not useful
Not useful at all
Don't know

ASK IF Q45(USED)=4 (SRA Solicitors Register)

48. What did you use the SRA's Solicitors Register for? (select all that apply)

Check whether somebody is a solicitor
The legal services offered by a law firm
Find out where a solicitor works
Check if the SRA regulates a solicitor or law firm
Check the regulatory record of a law firm
Check the regulatory record of a solicitor
Other (please specify)

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation



General thoughts

ASK ALL

49. How confident would you be using a legal advisor in the future?

- More confident
- No difference
- Less confident
- Don't know

50. Based on your experience of using a legal advisor, to what extent do you agree with the following statements? (SINGLE CODE ACROSS OPTIONS)

- Agree*
- Disagree*
- Neither agree or disagree*

- I better understand legal advisors' services
- I better understand how services are charged
- I will find it easier to contact and engage with legal advisors
- I have greater trust in the legal profession
- I better understand how to complain about a legal advisor
- I better understand my protections when using a legal advisor
- I better understand how a legal advisor can help with problems

51. Would you like to participate in a follow-up interview with IRN Research? If so, please provide your email address.

- Yes
- No

Open text (if completed, text to say IRN will be in touch with you if you are selected for interview).

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SME Consumer Questionnaire

A. What is your gender?

Male
Female
Other

B. What is your age?

18-25
26-30
31-35
36-40
41-45
46-50
51-60
61+

C. What level of management responsibility do you hold in your current position?

Owner / Proprietor
Partner
Chairperson
Chief Executive
Managing Director
Other board level manager / director
Other senior manager or director below board level
Middle manager

D. Including yourself, approximately how many full-time employees are employed by your organisation in total in the UK?

1 (just me)
2
3 to 5
6 to 9
10 to 19
20 to 34
35 to 49
50 to 99
100 to 249

E. What was the turnover of your company in the last financial year? Please give your best estimate if you are unsure.

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First year of trading
Less than £25,000
£25,000 to £49,999
£50,000 to £99,999
£100,000 to £249,999
£250,000 to £499,999
£500,000 to £999,999
£1 million to £1.9 million
£2 million to £2.9 million
£3 million to £4.9 million
£5 million to £9.9 million
£10 million to £19.9 million
£20 million to £34.9 million
£35 million to £50.0 million
Don't know

F. Which ONE of the following industry sectors does your business mainly operate in?

Manufacturing
Construction
Retail
Financial services
Hospitality and leisure
Accountancy
IT & telecoms
Media / marketing / advertising / PR & sales
Medical & health services
Education
Transportation & distribution
Real estate
Other

G. How often does your business need legal advice? (Note: legal issues could include anything from creating an employment contract, health and safety issue, through to litigation.)

Every day
Every week
Every month
A few times a year
Only occasionally

H. What region is the head office/main office of your company / organisation based in?

Central London
Greater London
South East
South West
East England

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

East Midlands
West Midlands
Wales
Yorkshire and Humberside
North East
North West

I. Over the last 18 months, which issues have you needed help with?

Business contracts
Business formation
Criminal offences
Debt recovery
Employment law (other than representation at tribunals)
General Health and Safety issues
Immigration
Injuries at work and industrial diseases
Insolvency
Intellectual Property issues
Licensing of business premises
Litigation
M & A activity (buying and selling businesses)
Other financial issues
Overseas Trade issues
Partnership issues
Pensions
Property issues
Representation at employment tribunals
Specific issues related to Brexit
Tax
Other

J. What was the LAST legal issue your business had help with?

Business contracts
Business formation
Criminal offences
Debt recovery
Employment law (other than representation at tribunals)
General Health and Safety issues
Immigration
Injuries at work and industrial diseases
Insolvency
Intellectual Property issues
Licensing of business premises
Litigation
M & A activity (buying and selling businesses)
Other financial issues
Overseas Trade issues
Partnership issues

Pensions
Property issues
Representation at employment tribunals
Specific issues related to Brexit
Tax
Other

USE/EXPERIENCE OF LEGAL SERVICES

1. Thinking of your most recent legal issue, when did you start to use your legal advisor? (SINGLE CODE)

Jan-March 2019
April-June 2019
July-Sept 2019
Oct-Dec 2019
Jan-March 2020
April- Jun 2020
Don't know

2. Which legal advisors or organisations did you use for your most recent legal issue?

A solicitor in a law firm
An individual solicitor not connected to a specific law firm
A barrister
A claims management company
A licensed conveyancer
A specialist will writer/will writing and probate service
An accountant/financial advisor
A bank/building society
Citizens Advice/other charity
Another legal services advisor – please specify
Don't know

3. Which was the main one used

A solicitor in a law firm
An individual solicitor not connected to a specific law firm
A barrister
A claims management company
A licensed conveyancer
A specialist will writer/will writing and probate service
An accountant/financial advisor
A bank/building society
Citizens Advice/other charity
Another legal services advisor – please specify
Don't know

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4. How was the service mainly delivered? (single code)

In person
Telephone
Email
Post
Online
Other
Don't know

5. Which of the following statements about your business do you agree with?

The business regularly uses the same advisors for a range of legal advice across various business issues
The business regularly uses different advisors depending on the legal advice needed
The business does not have a specific advisors that we use regularly so we had to find one for the last legal issue

6. Thinking about how you chose your legal advisor for your most recent issue...

Yes
No
Don't know

Did you use the same legal advisor as one you had used before?
Did you look for different advisors?
Did you compare different advisors?

7. How easy was it to find and choose a legal advisor?

Very easy
Fairly easy
Neither easy or difficult
Fairly difficult
Very difficult
Don't know

8. Did you look at your legal advisor's website before using them? (SINGLE CODE)

Yes
No
Don't know

ASK IF Q8=1

9. Before choosing your legal advisor, did you look at any of the following content on their website? Please select all that apply

Their services

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Timescales of the service
Key stages of the service
Who would do the work
Prices
Your consumer rights and protections
Their complaints policy and procedure
The role of the Legal Ombudsman
Their regulator's logo
Quality marks
Whether they were regulated
Customer reviews
Details of their insurance cover
None of these

ASK IF Q9(LOOKED AT) = (1 to 13), i.e. DID NOT SELECT NONE OF THESE. ONLY LIST OPTIONS LOOKED AT IN Q9

10. How useful was the information you looked at?

Very useful
Useful
Not very useful
Not useful at all
Don't know

Their services
Timescales of the service
Key stages of the service
Who would do the work
Prices
Your consumer rights and protections
Their complaints policy and procedure
The role of the Legal Ombudsman
Their regulator's logo
Quality marks
Whether they were regulated
Customer reviews
Details of their insurance cover

ONLY ASK IF ANY OPTION NOT LOOKED AT IN Q9. ONLY SHOW OPTIONS NOT selected IN Q9

11. Why didn't you look at this content?

I didn't think it was important
Couldn't find
Lack of time
Don't know

Their services
Timescales of the service
Key stages of the service

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Who would do the work
Prices
Your consumer rights and protections
Their complaints policy and procedure
The role of the Legal Ombudsman
Their regulator's logo
Quality marks
Whether they were regulated
Customer reviews
Details of their insurance cover

ASK if Q6 = YES for 2 or 3

ASK IF Q8=2 (THOSE NOT USING LAW FIRM WEBSITES)

12. How did you find out about the services and prices offered by your legal advisor? (select all that apply)

I visited their office
A legal advisor visited/met me
I telephoned
I sent a text
I sent an email
I used a legal price comparison website
I used a website with consumer reviews of legal advisors
I had used them before, so already knew
It was a free advice service
Other (please specify)
Don't know

ASK IF Q8=2 (THOSE NOT USING LAW FIRM WEBSITES)

13. Did you ask for and/or receive information from your legal advisor on any of the following before you chose them? Please select all that apply

Asked for
Received
Neither

Their services
Timescales of the service
Key stages of the service
Who would do the work
Prices
Your consumer rights and protections
Their complaints policy and procedure
The role of the Legal Ombudsman
Quality marks

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Whether they were regulated
Customer reviews
Details of their insurance cover

ONLY ASK IF Q13 = RECEIVED FOR ANY ITEM. ONLY SHOW OPTIONS FOR ITEMS RECEIVED

14. How useful was the information provided?

Very useful
Useful
Not useful
Not useful at all

Their services
Timescales of the service
Key stages of the service
Who would do the work
Prices
Your consumer rights and protections
Their complaints policy and procedure
The role of the Legal Ombudsman
Quality marks
Whether they were regulated
Customer reviews
Details of their insurance cover

ONLY SHOW OPTIONS NOT ASKED FOR IN Q13 ONLY LIST ITEMS NOT ASKED FOR IN Q13

15. Why didn't you ask for this content?

I didn't think it was important
Lack of time
Don't know

Their services
Timescales of the service
Key stages of the service
Who would do the work
Prices
Your consumer rights and protections
Their complaints policy and procedure
The role of the Legal Ombudsman
Their regulator's logo
Quality marks
Whether they were regulated
Customer reviews
Details of their insurance cover

16. Did you look at the websites of other legal advisors? (SINGLE CODE)

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Yes
No
Don't know

ASK IF Q16=1

17. When you looked at the websites of other legal advisors, did you compare them based on any of the following content on their websites? Please select all that apply.

Their services
Timescales of the service
Key stages of the service
Who would do the work
Prices
Your consumer rights and protections
Their complaints policy and procedure
The role of the Legal Ombudsman
Their regulator's logo
Quality marks
Whether they were regulated
Customer reviews
Details of their insurance cover
None of these

ASK ALL

18. Thinking about when you chose your legal advisor, to what extent do you agree with the following statements. (SINGLE CODE ACROSS OPTIONS)

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

The price was most important
Experience and reputation were more important than price
The information provided by the various law firms I looked at made it easy to choose my preferred legal advisor (*only show if Q6 = 2 or 3*)
I was confident that I made the right choice

The information available was too confusing
The information available had too much jargon

ASK IF Q16=1

19. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your legal advisor's website?

Strongly agree
Agree

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Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

It gave me **all** the information I needed to make a well-informed choice
It gave me **some** of the information I needed to make a well-informed choice
It gave me **enough** information to make me feel I had made a good choice

ASK IF Q16 = 2 or 3

20. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the information your legal advisor gave you before you chose them?

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

It gave me **all** the information I needed to make a well-informed choice
It gave me **some** of the information I needed to make a well-informed choice
It gave me **enough** information to make me feel I had made a good choice

ASK all

21. Before you chose your legal advisor, how easy or difficult was it to understand the quality of service you could expect?

Very easy
Easy
Difficult
Very difficult
Don't know

ASK IF Q21=2 OR 2 (very easy OR easy)

22. What information helped you understand the potential quality of your legal advisor? (OPEN ENDED)

ASK ALL

23. What other information would have helped you better understand the potential quality of your legal advisor? (open ended)

ASK if Q6 = 2 or 3 (those who looked at/compared different advisors)

24. From the various legal advisors that you looked at, how easy did you find it to compare:

Very easy
Fairly easy
Fairly difficult

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Very difficult
Don't know

Services offered
Prices
Quality of service

LOGO

ASK IF Q9 (NOTICED) =9 (NOTICED regulator LOGO) AND Q3 = 1 OR 2 (SOLICITOR)

25. You said your legal advisor was a solicitor and that you looked at their regulator's logo on their website. This would have been the "Regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA)" clickable logo. Did the logo give you confidence that...?

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither
Disagree
Strongly disagree

You would receive a good service
Your solicitor would be appropriately trained and qualified
Your best interests would be put first
Your confidentiality would be respected
You could complain if things went wrong
Any complaint would be dealt with quickly and fairly
The SRA would make sure that the solicitor meets certain standards
The solicitor had appropriate insurance

ASK IF Q9 (NOTICED) =9 (NOTICED regulator LOGO) AND Q3 = 1 OR 2 (SOLICITOR)

26. Did you click on the "Regulated by the SRA" clickable logo?

Yes
No
Don't know

ASK IF Q26=1

27. Please explain in one sentence what you think the "Regulated by the SRA" clickable logo is for? (OPEN ENDED)

ASK IF Q26=1

28. After clicking on the logo, did you notice any of the following?

That solicitors have to meet high standards
They have insurance in case something goes wrong
The SRA's Compensation Fund
Who I can complain to if something goes wrong
More information was available on the SRA's Solicitors Register

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Other (please specify)
None of these
Don't know

ASK IF Q26=1

29. After clicking on the logo, did your trust in the solicitor change?

Increased
Unchanged
Decreased
Don't know

ASK IF Q26=2

30. Here is the "Regulated by the SRA" clickable logo which you can click on to find more information. Please explain in one sentence what you think the logo is for? (open)

PRICE

Q9 (LOOKED AT) =5 (looked at prices on website)

31. You said you looked at price information on your legal advisor's website. How were the prices shown? (select all that apply)

Minimum starting prices
A range of prices from lowest to highest
An enquiry form
A quote calculator
The maximum price
Estimates of prices that could be charged
A fixed price
An hourly rate
An annual or monthly retainer fee
Examples of prices charged for cases
No win no fee
Legal Aid options
It was a free service
Other
Don't know / can't remember

ASK IF Q13= RECEIVED 5 (PRICES)

32. You said you received price information from your legal advisor. How were the prices shown? (select all that apply)

Minimum starting prices
A range of prices from lowest to highest
An enquiry form
A quote calculator
The maximum price
Estimates of prices that could be charged
A fixed price

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An hourly rate
An annual or monthly retainer fee
Examples of prices charged for cases
No win no fee
Legal Aid options
It was a free service
Other
Don't know / can't remember

Q9 (LOOKED AT) =5 (looked at prices on website)

33. How did you find the information on price on your legal advisor's website?

It was on a web page that I found from a link on the home page
It was on a web page but I had to search their website to find it
Other (please specify)
Don't know

Q9 (LOOKED AT) =5 (looked at prices on website) and Q13 RECEIVED 5 (prices)

34. Did the price information...? (Please select all that apply)

Allow you to estimate the cost
Make you aware of the actual cost
Make you aware of any additional costs
Make you think the cost was unaffordable
Reassure you that the cost was affordable
Confuse me, I had to contact the firm to understand the cost

35. Has the legal advisor finished the work?

Yes
No

ASK IF Q35=1

36. How were you charged for legal advice?

A fixed price
An hourly rate
No win, no fee arrangement
Legal Aid paid for some/all
It was a free service
Other (please specify)
Don't know/Can't remember

ASK IF Q35=1

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37. Was the final price paid...?

- Much lower than you expected
- Slightly lower than you expected
- About what you expected
- Slightly higher than you expected
- Much higher than you expected
- Don't know

ASK IF Q35=1 and if Q17=5

38. Was the final price you were charged similar to the prices published on your legal advisor's website?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

PROTECTION

ASK ALL

39. Before choosing your legal advisor, did you know if they were regulated? (single code)

- They were regulated but I didn't know who regulated them
- They were regulated and I knew who regulated them
- They were not regulated
- Didn't know

ASK ALL

40. Before choosing your legal advisor did you know if you would be protected in any of the following ways?.
(MULTICODE)

- They have to meet set standards of work
- They have insurance in case something goes wrong
- Their regulator might be able to compensate me if my money is lost
- Their regulator might be able to get my documents back
- I can complain to the Legal Ombudsman
- I can report them to their regulator
- Other (please specify)
- None of these
- Don't know

41. If you were dissatisfied with your legal advisor, would you complain?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

ASK IF Q41=1

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42. Would you...?

- Complain to my legal advisor
- Complain to someone else in their organisation
- Complain to the Legal Ombudsman
- Complain to their regulator

43. Why would you not complain?

- Because it might cost too much
- Because it might take too long
- For another reason

44. As far as you are aware, which of the following statements best describes how legal services are currently regulated? (select one)

- All legal services providers are regulated
- Some legal services providers are not regulated
- Only law firms and solicitors are regulated

REGISTER

ASK ALL

45. Are you aware of the following ways to find legal services and, if so, have you used any of these sources? (PLEASE CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY)

Aware of
Used

- The Law Society "Find a Solicitor" database
- Legal Choices website
- Juriosity, the official Bar directory
- The SRA's Solicitors Register
- Legal services price comparison websites
- Websites with consumer reviews and/or ratings of legal services

ASK IF Q45(USED)=4 (SRA Solicitors Register)

46. How easy or difficult was it to use the SRA's Solicitors Register?

- Very easy
- Fairly easy
- Neither easy or difficult
- Fairly difficult
- Very difficult
- Don't know

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ASK IF Q45(USED)=4 (SRA Solicitors Register)

47. How useful was the information you found on the SRA's Solicitors Register?

- Very useful
- Useful
- Neither
- Not useful
- Not useful at all
- Don't know

ASK IF Q45(USED)=4 (SRA Solicitors Register)

48. What did you use the SRA's Solicitors Register for? (select all that apply)

- Check whether somebody is a solicitor
- The legal services offered by a law firm
- Find out where a solicitor works
- Check if the SRA regulates a solicitor or law firm
- Check the regulatory record of a law firm
- Check the regulatory record of a solicitor
- Other (please specify)

General thoughts

ASK ALL

49. How confident would you be using a legal advisor in the future?

- More confident
- No difference
- Less confident
- Don't know

50. Based on your experience of using a legal advisor, to what extent do you agree with the following statements? (SINGLE CODE ACROSS OPTIONS)

- Agree*
- Disagree*
- Neither agree or disagree*

- I better understand legal advisors' services
- I better understand how services are charged
- I will find it easier to contact and engage with legal advisors
- I have greater trust in the legal profession

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I better understand how to complain about a legal advisor
I better understand my protections when using a legal advisor
I better understand how a legal advisor can help with problems

51. Would you like to participate in a follow-up interview with IRN Research? If so, please provide your email address.

Yes

No

Open text (if completed, then add IRN will be in touch with you if you are selected for interview).

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Law Firm Survey Questionnaire

TRANSPARENCY RULES

In December 2018, the SRA introduced its Transparency Rules (Better Information, More Choice reforms) requiring all regulated law firms to publish more information on the services that you provide. The aim is to make it easier for people to make an informed decision when purchasing legal services.

The SRA commissioned us, independent researchers IRN Research, to help them review the impact of the rules and inform their future development. Please help us to understand your experiences and the experiences of your clients.

Completing the survey should take no more than 15 minutes. It is open until 29th July. Please feel free to respond openly. The reporting of findings will remain confidential and will not be linked to you or your firm. No information on your individual responses will be available to the SRA as the findings will only be reported at the aggregate level.

By completing this survey, you give consent for your answers to be used by IRN Research only for the purposes of this research study.

Thank you. We appreciate and look forward to receiving your feedback.

YOUR FIRM

Q1 Which of the following practice areas does your firm work in? Please select all that apply.

Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution
Asylum
Bankruptcy/ Insolvency
Children
Clinical or Medical Negligence
Commercial (excluding property)
Commercial Property
Consumer
Crime/criminal offences (other than motoring offences)
Debt Recovery
Discrimination/Civil Liberties/Human Rights
Divorce
Employment
Family/matrimonial (excluding divorce)
Financial Advice and Services
Housing, Planning, Landlord or Tenant
Immigration (excluding asylum)

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Licensing Business Premises
Mental Health
Motoring Law and Offences
Personal Injury
Power of Attorney
Probate
Residential Conveyancing
Social Welfare
Wills, Trusts and Tax Planning
Litigation other (please specify)
Non-litigation other (please specify)

ASK IF Q1= 27

Q2 Which other areas of litigation does your firm work in?

ASK IF Q1= 28

Q3 Which other areas of non-litigation does your firm work in?

Q4 Are there any practice areas that you have stopped working in during the last 18 months?

Yes
No
Don't know

ASK IF Q4= 1

Q5 Which practice areas have you have stopped working in during the last 18 months?

Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution
Asylum
Bankruptcy/ Insolvency
Children
Clinical or Medical Negligence
Commercial (excluding property)
Commercial Property
Consumer
Crime/criminal offences (other than motoring offences)
Debt Recovery
Discrimination/Civil Liberties/Human Rights
Divorce
Employment
Family/matrimonial (excluding divorce)
Financial Advice and Services
Housing, Planning, Landlord or Tenant
Immigration (excluding asylum)
Licensing Business Premises
Mental Health

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Motoring Law and Offences
Personal Injury
Power of Attorney
Probate
Residential Conveyancing
Social Welfare
Wills, Trusts and Tax Planning
Litigation other (please specify)
Non-litigation other (please specify)
Don't know/would rather not say

ASK IF Q5= 27

Q6 What other areas of litigation have you stopped working in?

ASK IF Q5= 28

Q7 What other areas of non-litigation have you stopped working in?

ASK IF Q4= 1

Q8 Why have you stopped working in these practice areas?

Q9 Does your firm have a website?

Yes
No
Don't know

ASK IF Q9= 1

Q10 Approximately, in the last 18 months what proportion of your clients used your website before instructing you?

None
1%-25%
26%-50%
51%-75%
76%-100%
Don't know

Q11 Where do your new instructions come from? (select all that apply)

Website enquiries (ONLY ASK IF Q9=1)
Telephone enquiries
They saw our local office
Repeat business
Word of mouth recommendations
Referrals from third party

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Networking events/advertisements
Other

ASK IF Q11=8

Q12 From what other sources do your new instructions comes from?

YOUR WEBSITE

ONLY SHOW PRACTICE AREAS SELECTED IN Q1

Q13 Do you have the following content on your website for these practice areas? (select all that apply)

The services included in the price
Qualifications and experience of the staff and supervisors
Prices
Key stages
Typical timescales
All of these (NOT CODED WITH THE ABOVE)
None of these

Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution
Asylum
Bankruptcy/ Insolvency
Children
Clinical or Medical Negligence
Commercial (excluding property)
Commercial Property
Consumer
Crime/criminal offences (other than motoring offences)
Debt Recovery
Discrimination/Civil Liberties/Human Rights
Divorce
Employment
Family/matrimonial (excluding divorce)
Financial Advice and Services
Housing, Planning, Landlord or Tenant
Immigration (excluding asylum)
Licensing Business Premises
Mental Health
Motoring Law and Offences
Personal Injury
Power of Attorney
Probate
Residential Conveyancing
Social Welfare
Wills, Trusts and Tax Planning

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Litigation other
Non-litigation other

Q14 Do you have any of the following on your website? (select all that apply)

Information about the quality of your services
The SRA clickable logo
Information about the Compensation Fund
Your complaints policy and procedure
How and when a complaint can be made to the Legal Ombudsman and the SRA
That you have the minimum terms of Professional Indemnity Insurance
Customer reviews
None of these

ASK IF Q14=1

Q15 What information do you include on your website about the quality of your services?

ONLY SHOW PRACTICE AREAS WHERE "PRICES" OR "ALL OF THESE" OPTIONS WERE SELECTED IN Q13

Q16 You indicated that you have prices on your website for the following areas. What type of prices are included on the site? (Select all that apply for each area)

Price range
A fixed price
An hourly rate
Capped charges
Conditional fee arrangement/damage based agreement
Price calculator
Monthly/annual retainer
Scenario based pricing
Other
Don't know

Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution
Asylum
Bankruptcy/ Insolvency
Children
Clinical or Medical Negligence
Commercial (excluding property)
Commercial Property
Consumer
Crime/criminal offences (other than motoring offences)
Debt Recovery
Discrimination/Civil Liberties/Human Rights
Divorce
Employment
Family/matrimonial (excluding divorce)
Financial Advice and Services
Housing, Planning, Landlord or Tenant
Immigration (excluding asylum)

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Licensing Business Premises
Mental Health
Motoring Law and Offences
Personal Injury
Power of Attorney
Probate
Residential Conveyancing
Social Welfare
Wills, Trusts and Tax Planning
Litigation other
Non-litigation other

PROVIDING INFORMATION

ASK IF Q9=2. ONLY SHOW PRACTICE AREAS SELECTED IN Q1

Q17 Do you provide any of the following information to potential clients on request?

The services included in the price

Qualifications and experience of the staff and supervisors

Prices

Key stages

Typical timescales

All of these (NOT CODED WITH THE ABOVE)

None of these

Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution
Asylum
Bankruptcy/ Insolvency
Children
Clinical or Medical Negligence
Commercial (excluding property)
Commercial Property
Consumer
Crime/criminal offences (other than motoring offences)
Debt Recovery
Discrimination/Civil Liberties/Human Rights
Divorce
Employment
Family/matrimonial (excluding divorce)
Financial Advice and Services
Housing, Planning, Landlord or Tenant
Immigration (excluding asylum)
Licensing Business Premises
Mental Health
Motoring Law and Offences
Personal Injury

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Power of Attorney
Probate
Residential Conveyancing
Social Welfare
Wills, Trusts and Tax Planning
Litigation other
Non-litigation other

ASK IF Q9=2

Q18 Do you provide any of the following information to potential clients on request? (select all that apply)

Quality of your services
Your regulated status
Compensation Fund details
Your complaints policy and procedure
How and when a complaint can be made to the Legal Ombudsman and the SRA
That you have the minimum terms of Professional Indemnity Insurance
Customer reviews
None of these

ASK IF Q18=1

Q19 What information do you provide about the quality of your services?

ASK IF Q18=1 TO 7

Q20 How do you usually provide this information to potential clients? (select all that apply)

Face to face
Telephone
Text
Email
Posting a leaflet/brochure

ONLY SHOW PRACTICE AREAS WHERE "PRICES" OR "ALL OF THESE" OPTIONS WERE SELECTED IN Q17

Q21 What type of price information is provided on request for the following practice areas?

Price range
A fixed price
An hourly rate
Capped charges
Conditional fee arrangement/damage based agreement
Price calculator
Monthly/annual retainer
Scenario based pricing
Other
Don't know

Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution
Asylum

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Bankruptcy/ Insolvency
Children
Clinical or Medical Negligence
Commercial (excluding property)
Commercial Property
Consumer
Crime/criminal offences (other than motoring offences)
Debt Recovery
Discrimination/Civil Liberties/Human Rights
Divorce
Employment
Family/matrimonial (excluding divorce)
Financial Advice and Services
Housing, Planning, Landlord or Tenant
Immigration (excluding asylum)
Licensing Business Premises
Mental Health
Motoring Law and Offences
Personal Injury
Power of Attorney
Probate
Residential Conveyancing
Social Welfare
Wills, Trusts and Tax Planning
Litigation other
Non-litigation other

PRICE CHANGES

ONLY SHOW PRACTICE AREAS SELECTED IN Q1

Q22 For the following practice areas, did your prices change during 2019?

Increased

Decreased

Stayed the Same

Don't know

Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution
Asylum
Bankruptcy/ Insolvency
Children
Clinical or Medical Negligence
Commercial (excluding property)
Commercial Property
Consumer
Crime/criminal offences (other than motoring offences)
Debt Recovery
Discrimination/Civil Liberties/Human Rights
Divorce
Employment

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Family/matrimonial (excluding divorce)
Financial Advice and Services
Housing, Planning, Landlord or Tenant
Immigration (excluding asylum)
Licensing Business Premises
Mental Health
Motoring Law and Offences
Personal Injury
Power of Attorney
Probate
Residential Conveyancing
Social Welfare
Wills, Trusts and Tax Planning
Litigation other
Non-litigation other

ONLY ASK IF IMPLEMENTED ANY OF THE TR REFORMS FROM Q13, Q14, Q17, Q18

Q23 Over the last 18 months, has your firm experienced any of the following benefits related to the Transparency Rules? (select all that apply)

We are more competitive in the market
We have been more innovative with our services
We have been more innovative with our pricing models
Our clients have more realistic expectations
We receive fewer queries about price
We receive fewer complaints about price
We receive fewer complaints about other issues
Improved visibility for our firm
Increased web traffic
Increased conversion of enquiries
Clients are paying their fees more promptly
Increased repeat business
None of these
Don't know

ONLY ASK IF IMPLEMENTED ANY OF THE TR REFORMS FROM Q13, Q14, Q17, Q18

Q24 Over the last 18 months, have there been any other benefits to your firm related to the Transparency Rules?

Q25 Have you noticed any of the following changes over the last 18 months?

Improved consumer understanding of law firms' services
Improved consumer understanding of law firms' prices
Improved consumer understanding of complaints processes
Improved the accessibility and approachability of solicitors and law firms
Consumers seem more confident about choosing a solicitor/law firm
It seems easier for consumers to compare providers
Consumers seem more able to differentiate between regulated and unregulated legal providers
Vulnerable consumers have benefitted from these changes

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None of these
Don't know

Q26 Which, if any, of the following statements do you agree with?

Agree
Disagree
Not sure/Don't know

Our firm is planning to expand the Transparency Rules to other practice areas not yet covered by the reforms
We would recommend that the publication of price and service information is good for business

ASK IF Q9=1

Q27 Over the last 18 months, has your firm experienced any of the following challenges related to the Transparency Rules? (select all that apply)

Too difficult to change the website
Too expensive to change the website
Difficult to know where to put the information on the website
Difficult to know how to set out the information
Difficult to know how much information to give
We don't have the expertise to change the website
Don't know
None of these

ASK IF Q9=1

Q28 Are there any specific challenges for providing pricing information? (select all that apply)

Could give our competitors an advantage
Matters can be complex and variable
It doesn't consider clients' different needs and budgets
Can confuse potential clients
Difficult to keep it up to date and accurate
Difficult to know how to set out the information
We have noticed that other firms publish artificially low prices
Other (please specify)
Don't know
None of these

ASK IF Q28=8

Q29 What other challenges are there for providing pricing information?

ASK IF Q9=1

Q30 Are there any specific challenges for providing complaints information?

Number of complaints has increased
We are concerned that complaints might increase
Difficult to know how to set out the information

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None of these

ASK IF Q9=2

Q31 What are the challenges of providing this information on request?

- Too expensive
- Difficult to know how to set out the information
- Difficult to know how much information to give
- Don't know
- None of these

ASK IF Q9=2

Q32 Are there any specific challenges for providing pricing information to potential clients?

- Could give our competitors an advantage
- Matters can be complex and variable
- It's difficult to consider clients' different needs and budgets
- Can confuse potential clients
- Difficult to know how to set out the information
- Other
- None of these

ASK IF Q9=2

Q33 Are there any specific challenges for providing complaints information?

- Number of complaints has increased
- We are concerned that complaints might increase
- Difficult to know how to set out the information
- Too time consuming
- Other
- None of these

Q34 Have there been any other challenges related to the Transparency Rules?

COSTS

ONLY ASK IF IMPLEMENTED ANY OF THE TR REFORMS FROM Q13, Q14, Q17, Q18

Q35 What has been the cost to your firm of publishing more information relating to the Transparency Rules?

- Very high*
- High*
- Moderate*
- Low*
- Very low*
- No cost*
- Don't know*

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Additional one-off monetary cost
Additional on-going monetary cost
Resource/time cost

ONLY ASK IF IMPLEMENTED ANY OF THE TR REFORMS FROM Q13, Q14, Q17, Q18

Q36 Do you agree with the following statement "Any cost is outweighed by the benefits to our firm"?

Yes

No

GUIDANCE

Q37 Do you think the Transparency Rules are clear?

Very clear

Clear

Not very clear

Not clear at all

Q38 How could they be made clearer?

Q39 Have you used the SRA's guidance and templates on the Transparency Rules?

Yes

No

Don't know

ASK IF Q39=1

Q40 Did you find the SRA's guidance and templates on the Transparency Rules useful?

Very useful

Useful

Not very useful

Not at all useful

Q41 What other guidance or templates for the Transparency Rules would be useful?

SOLICITORS REGISTER

Q42 Does your firm use the SRA's Solicitors Register?

Yes

No

Don't know

ASK IF Q42=1

Q43 What do you use the Solicitors Register for? (select all that apply)

Check a third party solicitor/firm is regulated

Check a third party solicitor/firm's current practise area

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Check a third party solicitor/firm's regulation record
Check the record of a potential employee
Other (please specify)
Don't know

ASK IF Q43=5

Q44 For what other purposes does your firm use the SRA Register?

ASK IF Q42=1

Q45 What improvements would you like to see on the SRA's Solicitors Register?

COMPARISON AND REVIEW WEBSITES

Q46 Does your firm provide price and service information to any price comparison websites?

Yes
No
No, but we are planning to
Don't know

ASK IF Q47=1

Q47 Which price comparison website(s) is your firm included on?

Q48 As far as you are aware, can clients add reviews and/or ratings of your firm on any of the following?

Yes
No
No, but planning to
Don't know

Your website (ONLY ASK IF Q9=1)
Comparison website(s)
Consumer review website(s)

ASK IF Q48=3

Q49 Which consumer review websites is your firm mentioned on?

ASK IF Q48=YES

Q50 Do you take into account the feedback in these online reviews?

Always
Often
Sometimes
Never

ASK IF Q48=YES

Q51 Do you reply to these online reviews?

Always
Often
Sometimes

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Never

Q52 What do you think are the benefits of comparison websites and/or online reviews to your firm?

Website comparison

Online reviews

Increases number of enquiries

Increases volume of work

Saves time for our firm

Easier for consumers to research options

We can check that our prices are competitive

Helps our firm to innovate

Q53 What do you think are the challenges of comparison websites and/or online reviews to your firm?

Website comparison

Online reviews

Consumers don't trust these

Creates confusion for consumers

Difficult for us/consumers to verify the prices/information

Some prices/information is misleading

Reviews can be based on outcomes of the case not our service/advice

Focused mainly on price

Not appropriate for the legal sector

Unable to respond fully because of legal professional privilege

Risk of loss of confidentiality

Not completely accurate

None of these

Q54 Are there any other benefits and/or challenges of comparison websites and/or online reviews?

ABOUT YOUR FIRM

Q55 What type of firm are you working in?

Partnership

Limited Liability Partnership

Incorporated Company

Sole Practitioner

Other (please specify)

Don't know

ASK IF Q55=5

Q56 What "other" type of firm are you working in?

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Q57 Which of the following best describes your firm? Please select all that apply.

- Online only
- High street practice
- Top 100 City Firm
- Alternative Business Structure
- Specialist/niche firm
- Other (please state)
- Don't know

ASK IF Q57=6

Q58 What other classification best fits your firm?

Q59 How many partners are in your firm?

- 1 (sole practitioner)
- 2 to 4
- 5 to 10
- 11 to 25
- 26 to 80
- 81+
- Don't know

Q60 How many fee earners are in your firm?

- 1 (sole practitioner)
- 2 to 4
- 5 to 10
- 11 to 25
- 26 to 80
- 81+
- Don't know

Q61 How many offices does your firm have in total?

- 1
- 2
- 3 to 5
- 6 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21 to 50
- 50+
- Don't know

Q62 What region is the main office/headquarters of your firm in?

- London/Greater London
- South East

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South West
East of England
East Midlands
West Midlands
Wales
Yorkshire & Humberside
North East
North West

FURTHER RESEARCH

Q63 As a follow up to this survey, IRN Research are conducting telephone interviews and focus groups relating to the Transparency Reforms. Would you be willing to participate in further research?
This enables you to receive further details relating to the research but does not commit you to participation.

Yes
No

ASK IF Q63=1

Q64 Please provide your email address. IRN Research may contact you by email and provide you with more information.

Consumer Interview Discussion Guides

First of all, can you describe the way you found your legal adviser, and the information sources used to help you? If more than one, which were the most important or were more useful to you and why? (Interviewer prompt if necessary: Internet searches, law firm websites, printed materials from the legal adviser, word of mouth, referral from other advisers etc. Also compare any offline versus online sources – was there a difference in importance in making a choice)

You said in the survey that you compared different advisers/just went with one adviser and did not compare.

If the latter, why did you not compare different advisers? Did you go with an adviser used before or someone different? If the latter, how did you pick the new adviser? Interviewer prompt: any of these - prices, services, the quality of their services, people who would do the work, the website in general, location, number of offices, anything else). If “quality of service” how would you say you evaluated this, and what information you used to assess this?

If the former, what were the things that you were comparing (Interviewer prompt: any of these - prices, services, the quality of their services, people who would do the work, their websites in general, location, number of offices, anything else). If “quality of service” how did you compare this, and what information did you use to assess this?

You said in the survey that you looked at the following content on the website(s)/you asked for details of the following and you looked at

But you did not look at – list key content not looked at from:

Their services

Prices

Who would do the work

Your consumer rights and protections

The complaints policy

Their regulator’s logo

Can you explain why you did not look at this content?

How were the details of the fees charged by the legal adviser given to you? Was this all clear? Were the final costs you paid what you had understood you were going to have to pay? For those comparing legal advisers – did you go with the adviser offering the lowest price and, if so, was the price the key factor in your choice or did other factors come into play?

You said in the survey that it was easy/difficult to compare legal advisers. Was there anything in particular that made it easy for you, and 2) were there any problems at all that came up when

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comparing legal advisers? OR What difficulties came up when comparing advisers and 2) is there anything that legal advisers could do to make it easier for you?

What do you think are the most important factors for an individual when they are choosing a legal adviser? What convinced you to pick the legal adviser that you did?

Did you know if the legal adviser that you used was regulated or not? If yes and it was regulated, can you remember the name of the regulatory body? If yes, and it was not regulated, is there any specific reason why you chose this adviser knowing that it was not regulated?

Question for those using a price comparison site

You said in the survey that you used a legal price comparison site (s) when choosing a legal adviser? Can you describe how useful or not this was in making your choice? Can you remember the name of the site(s)? Would you use these sites again?

Would you post/have you posted a review or comments about the legal advice services you used on any comparison site or a site with consumer reviews on it? If you have posted, why did you decide to write a review or comment and was it a positive or negative review? Would you post again if you used a legal adviser again. If No, why not?

If you would not post a review on a comparison site or a site with consumer reviews on it can you say why?

If you wanted to make a complaint about a legal adviser, where would you go to find out how to make a complaint?

Anything else that you would like to add?

Further Analysis

Not all the graphics/data generated for the report are shown in the main body of the report. Below are some of the key graphics which expand on the analysis in the main body.

Individual Consumers - legal advisors used

A clear majority of individual consumers turn to a solicitor for legal advice: 72% in a law firm.

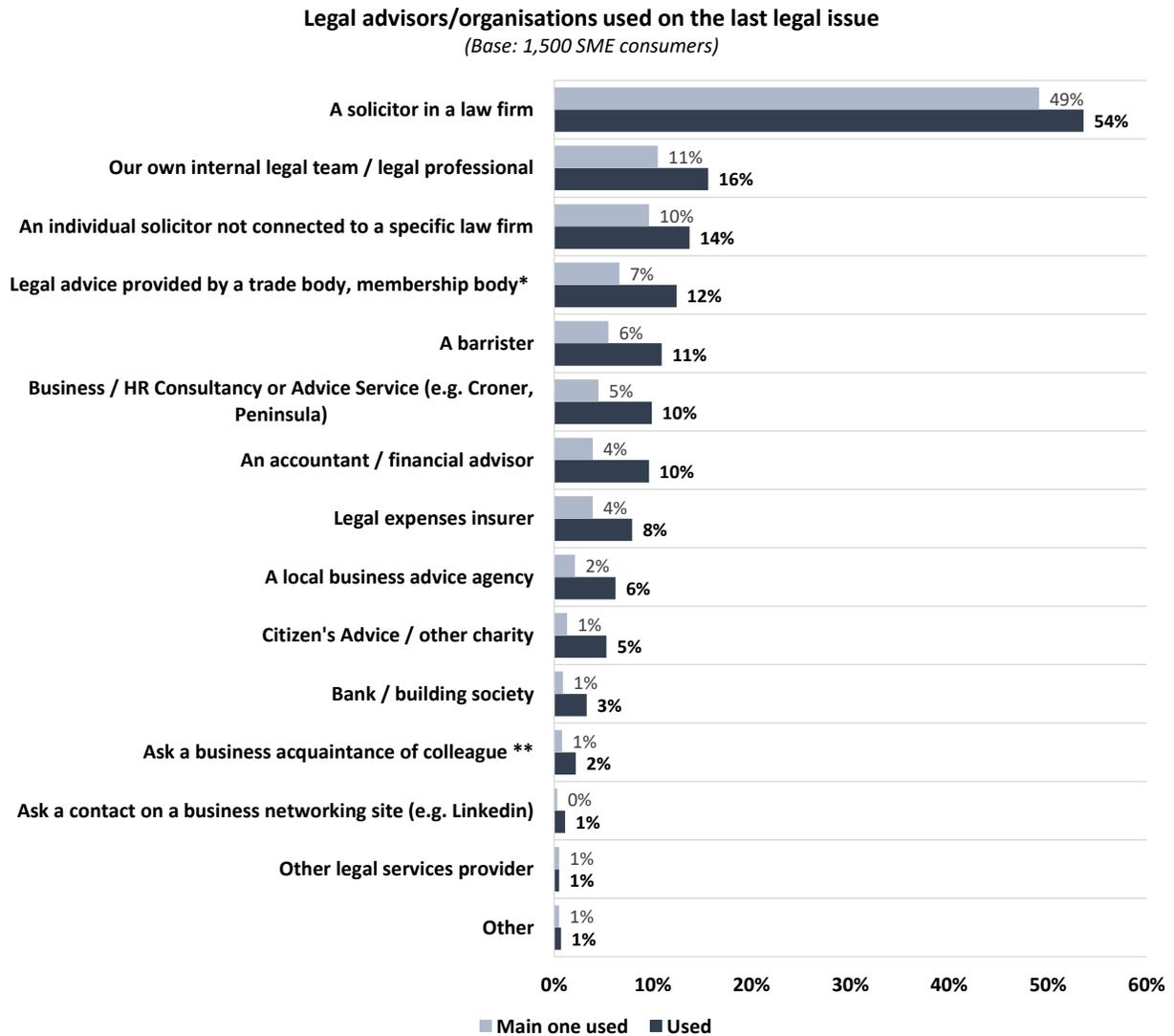
	Number of respondents	%
A solicitor in a law firm	1454	72%
An individual solicitor not connected to a specific law firm	127	6%
A barrister	49	2%
A claims management company	66	3%
A licensed conveyancer	89	4%
A specialist will writing or probate service	53	3%
An accountant / financial advisor	53	3%
A bank / building society	30	1%
Citizens Advice / other charity	59	3%
Other	21	1%
Don't know	28	1%
Total of respondents	2029	100%

SME Consumers – legal advisors used

The majority have a regular need for legal advice, with 67% needing legal advice either daily, weekly or monthly.

Top five areas for legal advice in the last 18 months for SME consumers were business contracts (48%), employment law (26%), debt recovery (25%), general health and safety (21%) and business formation (17%). These are also the top five issues when respondents were asked about their most recent legal issue.

Figure A1 Which legal advisors or organisations did you use for your most recent legal issue?



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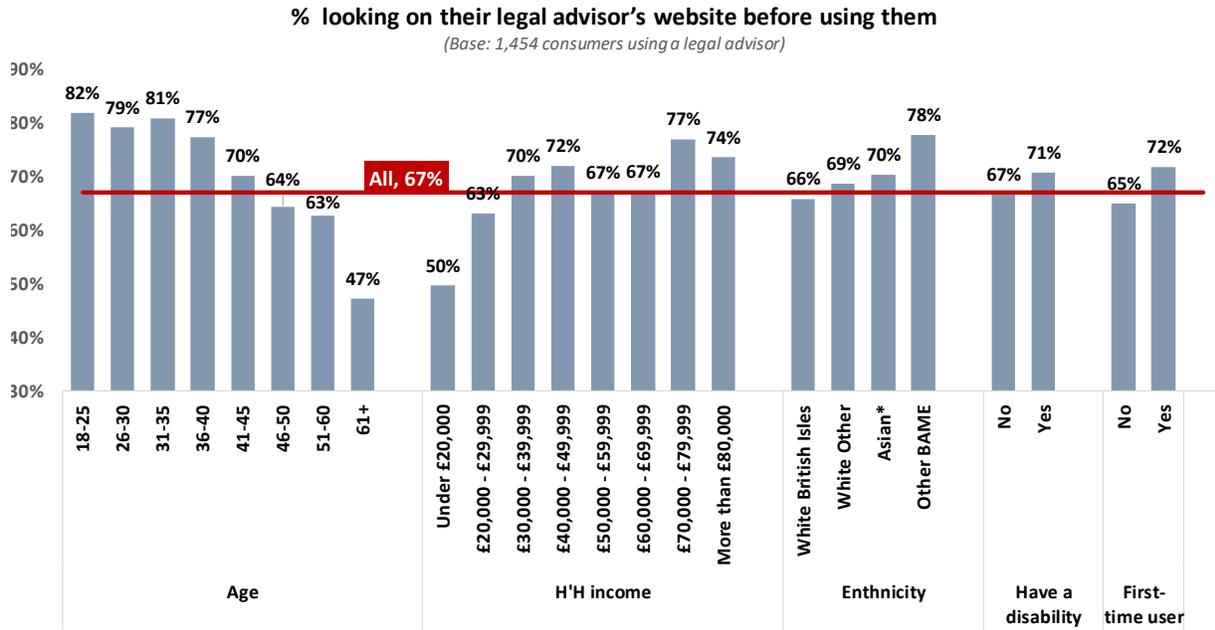
Individual Consumer Survey

Figure A2 How easy or difficult was it to find and choose a legal advisor?

How easy or difficult was it to find and choose a legal advisor?					
	Difficult	Neither easy or difficult	Fairly easy	Very easy	All*
Base: legal advice takers	157	187	540	557	1454
Age					
18-25	10%	6%	6%	4%	6%
26-30	11%	7%	8%	6%	7%
31-35	14%	15%	13%	12%	13%
36-40	13%	11%	12%	13%	13%
41-45	10%	15%	13%	10%	12%
46-50	8%	10%	10%	9%	9%
51-60	22%	18%	21%	21%	21%
61+	12%	17%	16%	25%	20%
Household Income					
Under £20,000	12%	14%	9%	11%	11%
£20,000 - £29,999	17%	16%	18%	15%	16%
£30,000 - £39,999	20%	14%	13%	16%	15%
£40,000 - £49,999	15%	12%	16%	14%	15%
£50,000 - £59,999	8%	13%	12%	10%	11%
£60,000 - £69,999	10%	10%	6%	7%	7%
£70,000 - £79,999	2%	7%	6%	9%	7%
More than £80,000	11%	10%	15%	13%	13%
Ethnicity					
White British Isles	71%	76%	83%	89%	83%
White Other	11%	6%	4%	2%	4%
Mixed, Multiple Eithnicity	4%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi	7%	10%	3%	4%	5%
Black African Caribbean	4%	2%	5%	1%	3%
Other	3%	4%	2%	1%	2%
All BAME	18%	18%	13%	9%	13%
Disability					
Not Disabled	81%	87%	89%	93%	90%
Disabled but can use the Internet	17%	10%	9%	5%	8%
Disabled, restricted use of the Internet	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%
All with disability	17%	10%	9%	6%	9%
First time User?					
No	55%	58%	61%	74%	65%
Yes	44%	38%	39%	26%	34%
Don't know	1%	4%	1%	1%	1%

Red entries show a demographic group is over-represented. At least 3 percentage points higher than legal advice takers as a whole.
* include don't know responses which are not shown

Figure A3 Did you look at your legal advisor's website before using them?



* Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi

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Figure A4 From the various legal advisors that you looked at, how easy or difficult did you find it to compare: Services on offer, Prices, Quality of Services

From the various legal advisors looked at, the % who found it difficult to compare							
		Services		Prices		Quality	
All		14%		21%		27%	
Age	18-25	23%		23%		25%	
	26-30	16%		18%		24%	
	31-35	13%		21%		25%	
	36-40	17%		19%		21%	
	41-45	14%		18%		20%	
	46-50	13%		30%		32%	
	51-60	12%		21%		36%	
	61+	11%		19%		29%	
H'H income	Under £20,000	11%		20%		23%	
	£20,000 - £29,999	17%		28%		28%	
	£30,000 - £39,999	12%		20%		24%	
	£40,000 - £49,999	22%		27%		27%	
	£50,000 - £59,999	15%		23%		30%	
	£60,000 - £69,999	21%		14%		22%	
	£70,000 - £79,999	9%		10%		17%	
	More than £80,000	7%		15%		34%	
Ethnicity	White British Isles	13%		21%		26%	
	White Other	24%		34%		49%	
	BAME	18%		18%		22%	
Disability?	No	14%		21%		28%	
	Yes	18%		20%		19%	
First-time User	No	13%		20%		26%	
	Yes	16%		22%		29%	

Red entries shows an above average level of difficulty. At least 3 percentage points higher compared with All respondents

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

Website content looked at by key demographics

Figure A5 *Before choosing your legal advisor, did you look at any of the following content on their website?*

Website content looked at before choosing a legal provider by age

	Age Group		Total	Difference is statistically significant at 0.05 level?
	18-40	41 and over		
Base: consumers using a solicitor	442	535	977	
Their services	84%	86%	85%	N
Timescales of the service	35%	26%	30%	Y
Key stages of the service	34%	23%	28%	Y
Who would do the work	32%	33%	33%	N
Prices	70%	64%	67%	N
Your consumer rights and protections	27%	17%	22%	Y
Their complaints policy and procedure	20%	14%	17%	Y
The role of the Legal Ombudsman	14%	12%	12%	N
Their regulator's logo	16%	14%	15%	N
Quality marks	40%	28%	34%	Y
Whether they were regulated	34%	41%	38%	Y
Customer reviews	54%	43%	48%	Y
Details of their insurance cover	12%	6%	8%	Y
None of these	1%	2%	2%	N

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Website content looked at before choosing a legal provider by experience

	First Time User?		Total	Difference is statistically significant at 0.05 level?
	No	Yes		
Base: consumers using a solicitor	611	359	977	
Their services	85%	85%	85%	N
Timescales of the service	31%	29%	30%	N
Key stages of the service	30%	25%	28%	Y
Who would do the work	36%	26%	33%	Y
Prices	64%	72%	67%	Y
Your consumer rights and protections	24%	18%	22%	Y
Their complaints policy and procedure	19%	12%	17%	Y
The role of the Legal Ombudsman	14%	9%	12%	Y
Their regulator's logo	15%	14%	15%	N
Quality marks	36%	30%	34%	Y
Whether they were regulated	42%	30%	38%	Y
Customer reviews	48%	49%	48%	N
Details of their insurance cover	10%	6%	8%	N
None of these	2%	2%	2%	N

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

Website content looked at before choosing a legal provider by disabled position

	Disabled?		Total	Difference is statistically significant at 0.05 level?
	No	Yes		
Base: consumers using a solicitor	868	95	977	
Their services	85%	85%	85%	N
Timescales of the service	31%	26%	30%	N
Key stages of the service	27%	35%	28%	Y*
Who would do the work	32%	40%	33%	N
Prices	67%	71%	67%	N
Your consumer rights and protections	21%	27%	22%	N
Their complaints policy and procedure	16%	18%	17%	N
The role of the Legal Ombudsman	12%	18%	12%	Y*
Their regulator's logo	14%	20%	15%	N
Quality marks	33%	44%	34%	Y
Whether they were regulated	37%	44%	38%	N
Customer reviews	47%	53%	48%	N
Details of their insurance cover	8%	12%	8%	N
None of these	2%	1%	2%	N

* significant at the 0.1 level

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

Website content looked at before choosing a legal provider by income group

	Income Group		Total	Difference is statistically significant at 0.05 level?
	Under £20,000	Over £20,000		
Base: consumers using a solicitor	80	851	977	
Their services	88%	85%	85%	N
Timescales of the service	24%	30%	30%	N
Key stages of the service	33%	28%	28%	N
Who would do the work	29%	33%	33%	N
Prices	58%	68%	67%	Y*
Your consumer rights and protections	18%	22%	22%	N
Their complaints policy and procedure	8%	18%	17%	Y
The role of the Legal Ombudsman	11%	13%	12%	N
Their regulator's logo	8%	16%	15%	Y*
Quality marks	24%	35%	34%	Y
Whether they were regulated	34%	38%	38%	N
Customer reviews	48%	48%	48%	N
Details of their insurance cover	5%	9%	8%	N
None of these	4%	1%	2%	N

* significant at the 0.1 level

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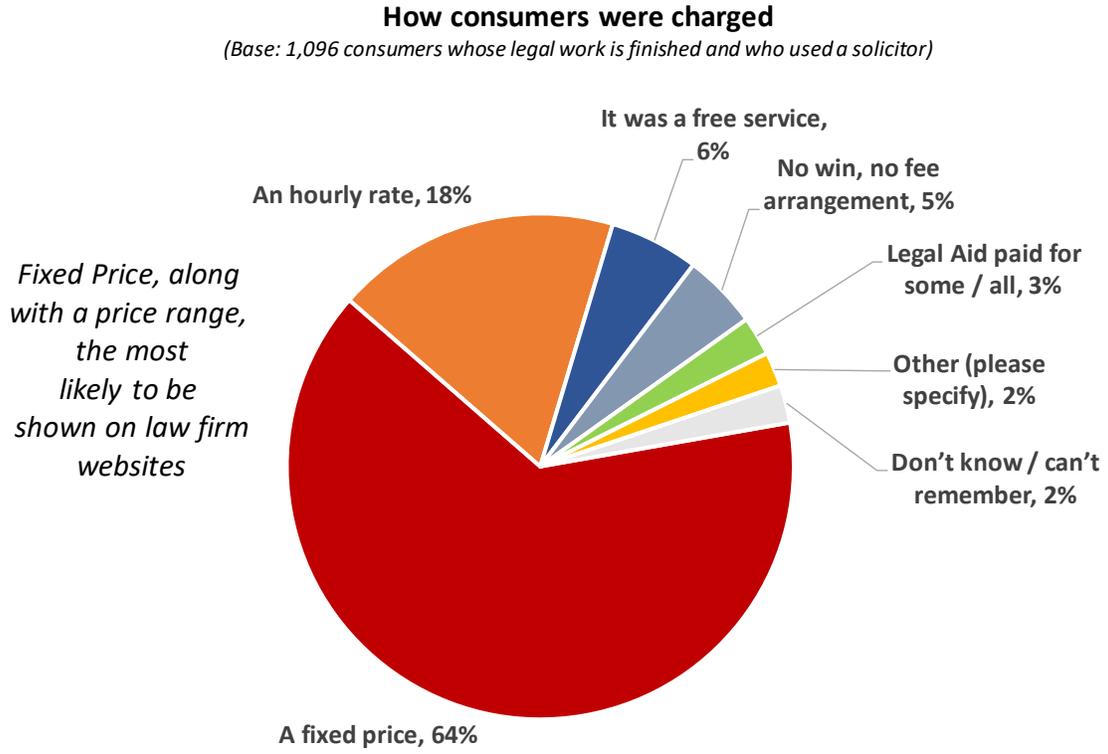
Website content looked at before choosing a legal provider by ethnicity

	Ethnicity		Total	Difference is statistically significant at 0.05 level?
	White	BAME		
Base: consumers using a solicitor	797	138	977	
Their services	85%	80%	85%	
Timescales of the service	30%	34%	30%	
Key stages of the service	26%	41%	28%	Y
Who would do the work	32%	34%	33%	
Prices	67%	69%	67%	
Your consumer rights and protections	20%	34%	22%	Y
Their complaints policy and procedure	16%	24%	17%	Y
The role of the Legal Ombudsman	12%	16%	12%	
Their regulator's logo	14%	19%	15%	
Quality marks	32%	41%	34%	Y*
Whether they were regulated	37%	45%	38%	Y*
Customer reviews	46%	57%	48%	Y
Details of their insurance cover	8%	11%	8%	
None of these	2%	1%	2%	

* significant at the 0.1 level

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

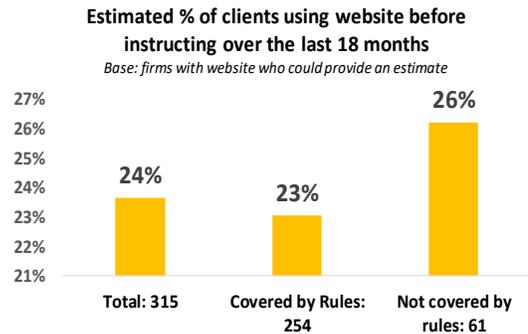
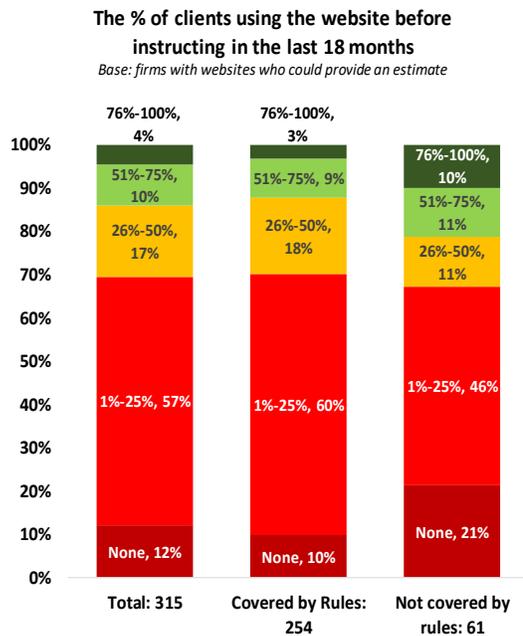
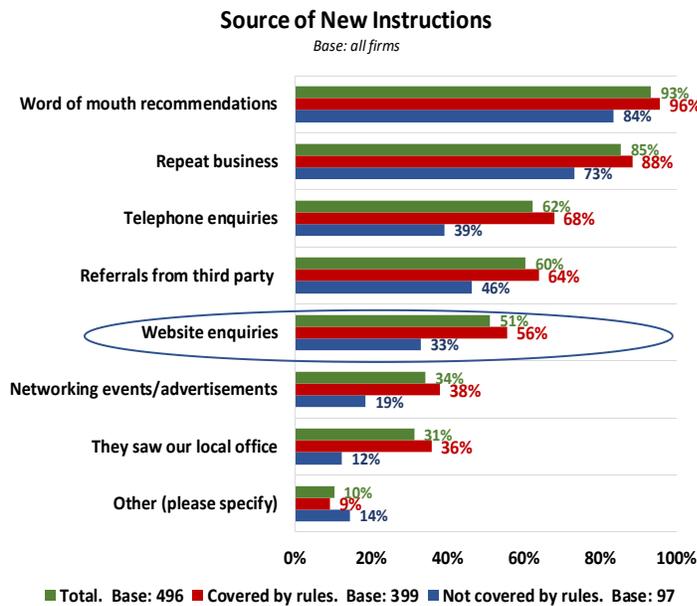
Figure A6 How were you charged for legal advice?



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SRA Law Firm Survey

Figure A7 Where do your new instructions come from? (multi response). Approximately, in the last 18 months what proportion of your clients used your website before instructing you?



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Figure A8 Do you have the following content on your website for these practice areas? (multi response)

Information shown on Websites by Practice Areas covered by the price and service information element of the Transparency Rules							
	Residential Conveyancing	Probate	Motoring Law and Offences	Employment	Immigration (excluding asylum)	Debt Recovery	Licensing Business Premises
Base: firms with websites	178	189	33*	173	105	105	27*
Specific Practice Areas							
The services included in the price	30%	33%	27%	22%	37%	21%	22%
Qualifications and experience of the staff and supervisors	29%	34%	48%	36%	30%	38%	41%
Prices	34%	34%	30%	22%	36%	26%	19%
Key stages	9%	15%	9%	10%	14%	13%	4%
Typical timescales	12%	15%	15%	9%	6%	7%	7%
All of these	52%	43%	30%	40%	42%	41%	26%
None of these	4%	9%	15%	14%	4%	12%	26%
Any of the practice area specific information	96%	91%	85%	86%	96%	88%	74%
Specific Practice Areas with the "All of these" responses apportioned**							
The services included in the price	● 82%	● 76%	● 58%	● 62%	● 79%	● 62%	○ 48%
Qualifications and experience of the staff and supervisors	● 81%	● 77%	● 79%	● 76%	● 71%	● 79%	● 67%
Prices	● 86%	● 77%	● 61%	● 62%	● 78%	● 67%	○ 44%
Key stages	● 61%	● 58%	○ 39%	● 50%	● 56%	● 54%	○ 30%
Typical timescales	● 64%	● 58%	○ 45%	○ 49%	○ 48%	○ 48%	○ 33%
Item most likely to be shown	Prices	Qualifications/ Prices	Qualifications	Qualifications	Services	Qualifications	Qualifications

Icon Code
● 75% and more
● 60%-74%
● 50%-59%
○ Less than 50%

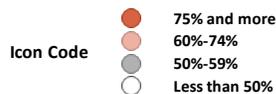
* small sub-samples so subject to wide margins or error

** the "All of these" responses have been added to the individual information categories

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

Information shown on Websites by Practice Areas not covered by the price and service information element of the Transparency Rules									
Respondents	Base	The services included in the price	Qualifications and experience of the staff and supervisors	Prices	Key stages	Typical timescales	All of these	None of these	Any of these
Specific practice area									
Wills, Trusts and Tax Planning	191	<input type="radio"/> 26%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 48%	<input type="radio"/> 29%	<input type="radio"/> 5%	<input type="radio"/> 7%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 26%	<input type="radio"/> 17%	83%
Commercial Property	176	<input type="radio"/> 17%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 51%	<input type="radio"/> 11%	<input type="radio"/> 6%	<input type="radio"/> 5%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 13%	<input type="radio"/> 29%	71%
Divorce	158	<input type="radio"/> 29%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 58%	<input type="radio"/> 29%	<input type="radio"/> 8%	<input type="radio"/> 8%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 11%	<input type="radio"/> 20%	80%
Power of Attorney	148	<input type="radio"/> 24%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 52%	<input type="radio"/> 28%	<input type="radio"/> 5%	<input type="radio"/> 8%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 16%	<input type="radio"/> 24%	76%
Commercial (excluding property)	146	<input type="radio"/> 11%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 57%	<input type="radio"/> 8%	<input type="radio"/> 5%	<input type="radio"/> 4%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 8%	<input type="radio"/> 32%	69%
Family/matrimonial (excluding divorce)	143	<input type="radio"/> 22%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 57%	<input type="radio"/> 20%	<input type="radio"/> 8%	<input type="radio"/> 7%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 8%	<input type="radio"/> 21%	79%
Litigation - Other	139	<input type="radio"/> 13%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 55%	<input type="radio"/> 9%	<input type="radio"/> 7%	<input type="radio"/> 6%	<input type="radio"/> 7%	<input type="radio"/> 28%	72%
Housing, Planning, Landlord or Tenant	98	<input type="radio"/> 15%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 45%	<input type="radio"/> 11%	<input type="radio"/> 1%	<input type="radio"/> 3%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 11%	<input type="radio"/> 33%	67%
Personal Injury	92	<input type="radio"/> 21%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 54%	<input type="radio"/> 8%	<input type="radio"/> 12%	<input type="radio"/> 8%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 13%	<input type="radio"/> 19%	82%
Children	85	<input type="radio"/> 15%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 66%	<input type="radio"/> 13%	<input type="radio"/> 6%	<input type="radio"/> 7%	<input type="radio"/> 7%	<input type="radio"/> 18%	82%
Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution	71	<input type="radio"/> 6%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 58%	<input type="radio"/> 1%	<input type="radio"/> 4%	<input type="radio"/> 3%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 10%	<input type="radio"/> 30%	70%
Non-Litigation - Other	62	<input type="radio"/> 15%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 52%	<input type="radio"/> 13%	<input type="radio"/> 5%	<input type="radio"/> 2%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 5%	<input type="radio"/> 39%	61%
Crime/criminal offences (other than motoring offences)	52	<input type="radio"/> 23%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 52%	<input type="radio"/> 25%	<input type="radio"/> 8%	<input type="radio"/> 14%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 12%	<input type="radio"/> 21%	79%
Bankruptcy/ Insolvency	48*	<input type="radio"/> 8%	<input type="radio"/> 44%	<input type="radio"/> 4%	<input type="radio"/> 2%	<input type="radio"/> 2%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 13%	<input type="radio"/> 40%	60%
Clinical or Medical Negligence	46*	<input type="radio"/> 13%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 61%	<input type="radio"/> 7%	<input type="radio"/> 11%	<input type="radio"/> 9%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 13%	<input type="radio"/> 20%	80%
Asylum	45*	<input type="radio"/> 42%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 36%	<input type="radio"/> 27%	<input type="radio"/> 11%	<input type="radio"/> 13%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 33%	<input type="radio"/> 9%	91%
Specific Practice Areas with the "All of these" responses apportioned**									
Wills, Trusts and Tax Planning	191	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 51%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 73%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 54%	<input type="radio"/> 30%	<input type="radio"/> 33%			
Commercial Property	176	<input type="radio"/> 30%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 64%	<input type="radio"/> 24%	<input type="radio"/> 19%	<input type="radio"/> 18%			
Divorce	158	<input type="radio"/> 40%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 69%	<input type="radio"/> 39%	<input type="radio"/> 19%	<input type="radio"/> 18%			
Power of Attorney	148	<input type="radio"/> 40%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 68%	<input type="radio"/> 44%	<input type="radio"/> 21%	<input type="radio"/> 24%			
Commercial (excluding property)	146	<input type="radio"/> 18%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 64%	<input type="radio"/> 16%	<input type="radio"/> 12%	<input type="radio"/> 12%			
Family/matrimonial (excluding divorce)	143	<input type="radio"/> 31%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 66%	<input type="radio"/> 28%	<input type="radio"/> 16%	<input type="radio"/> 15%			
Litigation - Other	139	<input type="radio"/> 20%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 63%	<input type="radio"/> 17%	<input type="radio"/> 14%	<input type="radio"/> 13%			
Housing, Planning, Landlord or Tenant	98	<input type="radio"/> 27%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 56%	<input type="radio"/> 22%	<input type="radio"/> 12%	<input type="radio"/> 14%			
Personal Injury	92	<input type="radio"/> 34%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 67%	<input type="radio"/> 21%	<input type="radio"/> 25%	<input type="radio"/> 21%			
Children	85	<input type="radio"/> 22%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 73%	<input type="radio"/> 20%	<input type="radio"/> 13%	<input type="radio"/> 14%			
Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution	71	<input type="radio"/> 15%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 68%	<input type="radio"/> 11%	<input type="radio"/> 14%	<input type="radio"/> 13%			
Non-Litigation - Other	62	<input type="radio"/> 19%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 56%	<input type="radio"/> 18%	<input type="radio"/> 10%	<input type="radio"/> 6%			
Crime/criminal offences (other than motoring offences)	52	<input type="radio"/> 35%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 63%	<input type="radio"/> 37%	<input type="radio"/> 19%	<input type="radio"/> 25%			
Bankruptcy/ Insolvency	48*	<input type="radio"/> 21%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 56%	<input type="radio"/> 17%	<input type="radio"/> 15%	<input type="radio"/> 15%			
Clinical or Medical Negligence	46*	<input type="radio"/> 26%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 74%	<input type="radio"/> 20%	<input type="radio"/> 24%	<input type="radio"/> 22%			
Asylum	45*	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 76%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 69%	<input checked="" type="radio"/> 60%	<input type="radio"/> 44%	<input type="radio"/> 47%			

Across all of these practice areas, with the exception of Asylum, the qualification/experience of staff is the type of information most likely to be shown.



* small sub-samples so subject to wide margins or error

** the "All of these" responses have been added to the individual information categories

Consumer, Discrimination/Civil Liberties/Human Rights, Mental Health, Financial; Advice and Social Welfare could not be shown because of very low sample bases

Figure A9 What has been the cost to your firm of publishing more information relating to the Transparency Rules?

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

Impact on costs and resources of implementing Transparency Rule			
	Implemented the changes on their website	Implemented the changes off their website	All implementing changes
	Either	Either	
Base	388	64	452
Additional one-off monetary cost			
Very high	4%	0%	3%
High	11%	5%	10%
Moderate	32%	8%	29%
Low	14%	13%	14%
Very low	7%	8%	8%
No cost	26%	48%	29%
Don't know	6%	19%	8%
All low,very low or no cost	48%	69%	51%
COST IMPACT	LOW	VERY LOW	LOW
Additional on-going monetary cost			
Very high	3%	0%	2%
High	5%	6%	6%
Moderate	24%	11%	22%
Low	14%	11%	13%
Very low	9%	9%	9%
No cost	37%	48%	38%
Don't know	8%	14%	9%
All low,very low or no cost	60%	69%	61%
COST IMPACT	LOW	VERY LOW	LOW
Resource/time cost			
Very high	11%	2%	9%
High	18%	6%	16%
Moderate	34%	19%	31%
Low	15%	16%	15%
Very low	8%	11%	8%
No cost	9%	34%	12%
Don't know	5%	13%	6%
All low,very low or no cost	31%	61%	36%
RESOURCE/TIME IMPACT	MODERATE	LOW	MODERATE

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

Figure A10 Which practice areas have you stopped working in during the past 18 months?

Changes in practice areas offered by law firm				
	Covered by Transparency Rules	Not covered by Transparency rules	Total	
Base: firms	420	100	520	
Stopped working in some practice areas?				
Statistically significant difference* → Yes	11%	5%	10%	
No	86%	95%	88%	
Don't know	3%	0%	2%	
Practice areas stopped working in				
No statistically significant difference*	Employment	2%	3%	3%
	Debt Recovery	1%	0%	1%
	Probate	0%	1%	1%
	Residential Conveyancing	0%	0%	0%
	immigration	0%	0%	0%
	Licensing Business Premises	0%	0%	0%
	All areas covered by the new rules	4%	4%	4%
Statistically significant difference* → Areas not covered by the rules	9%	3%	8%	

* at the 0.5% level

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

Figure A11 Over the last 18 months, has your firm experienced any of the following benefits related to the Transparency Rules? (multi response)

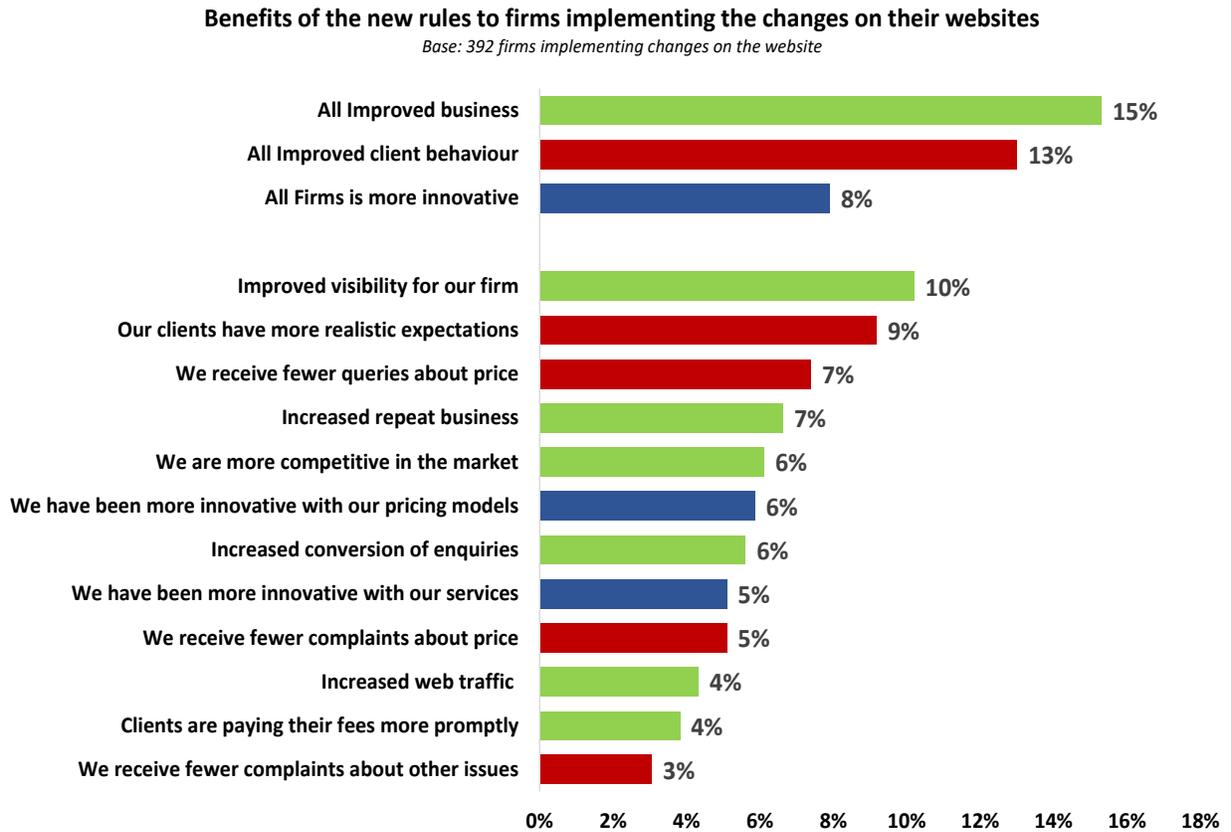
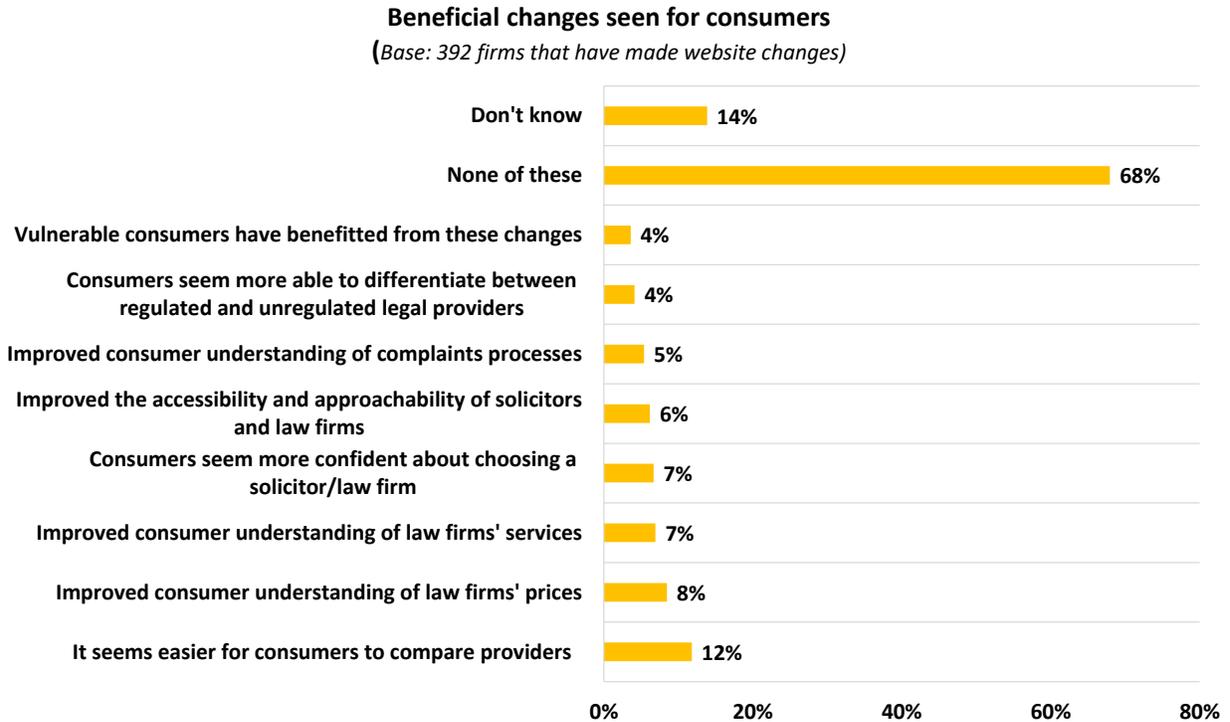
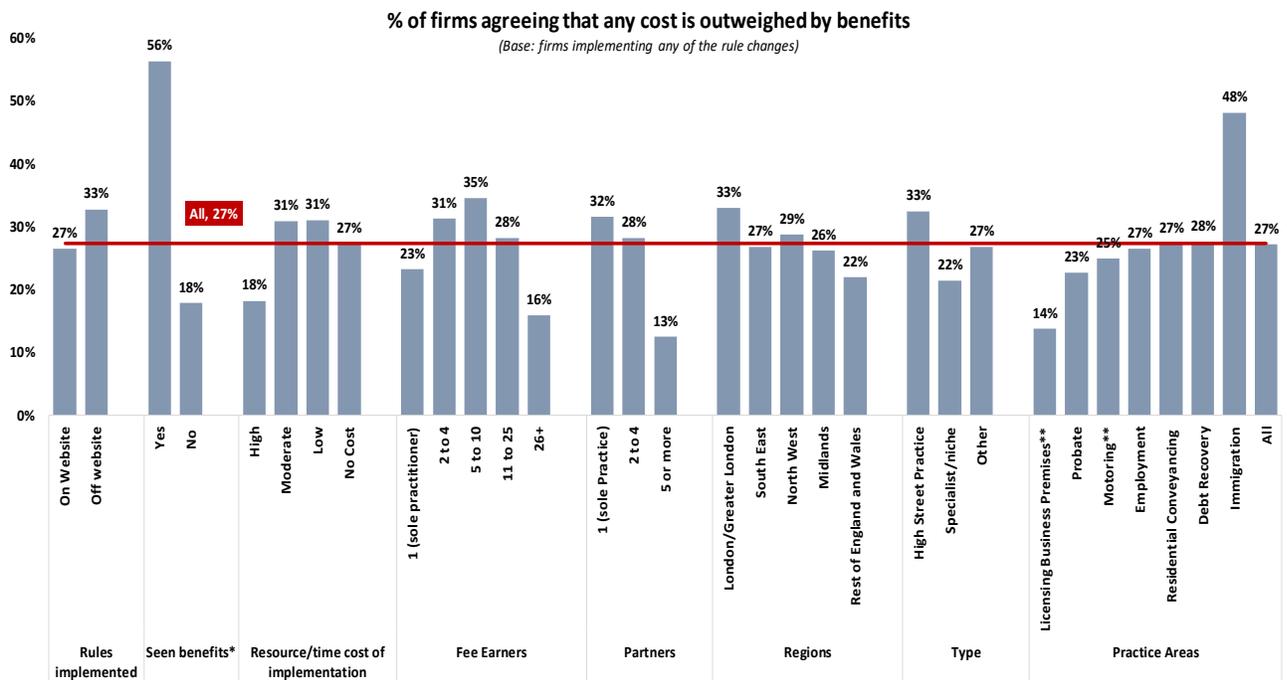


Figure A12 Have you noticed any of the following changes over the last 18 months?



Note: firms making website changes includes some that operate in practice areas which are not subject to the requirements of the Transparency Rules.

Figure A13 Do you agree with the following statement "Any cost is outweighed by the benefits to our firm"?



SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

Figure A14 Which, if any, of the following statements do you agree with? We would recommend that the publication of price and service information is good for business

Would recommend that the publication of price and service information is good for business
(Base: 467 firms)

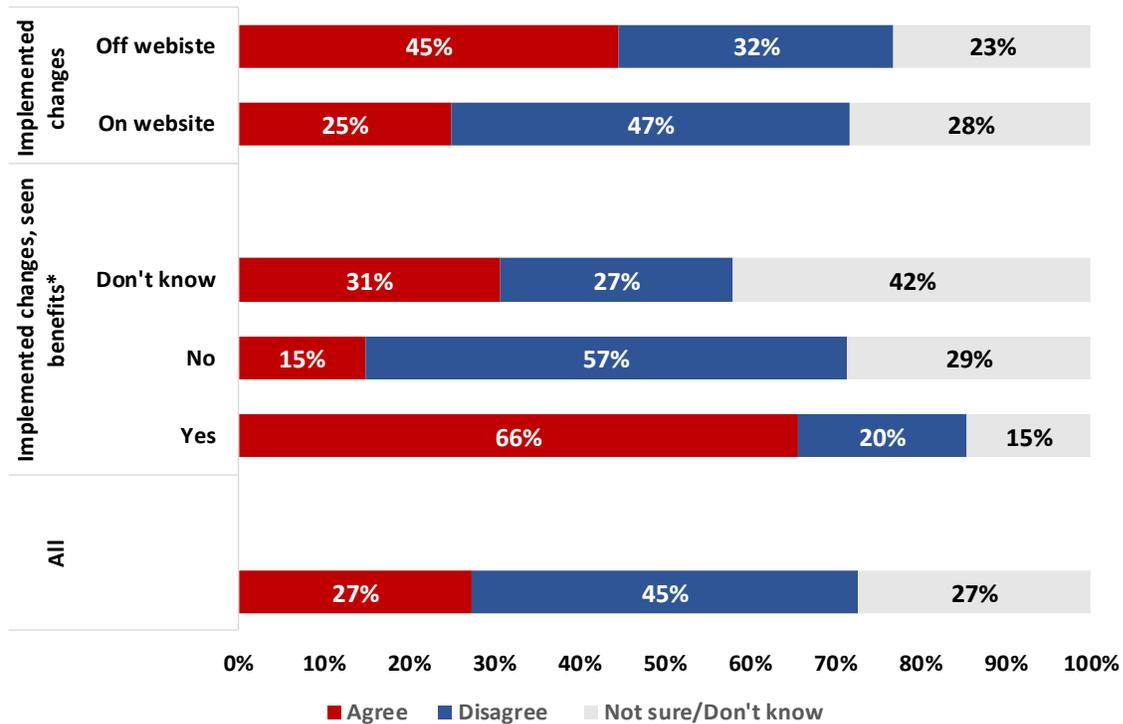


Figure A15 *For the following practice areas, did your prices change during 2019?*

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

Price Increases during 2019				
Practice area	All firms		All firms implementing rule changes on their website	
	Total/Base	Net increase*	Total/Base	Net increase*
Covered by the new rules				
Residential Conveyancing	186	23%	162	22%
Employment Law	177	20%	160	21%
Licensing Business Premises	28***	25%	26***	19%
Probate	203	17%	178	16%
Debt Recovery	103	10%	95	11%
Immigration (excluding asylum)	112	5%	97	5%
Motoring Law and Offences	38***	6%	29***	3%
Not covered by the new rules**				
Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution	70	27%	67	27%
Wills, Trusts and Tax Planning	205	23%	178	24%
Commercial (excluding property)	155	23%	135	22%
Children	90	21%	76	21%
Housing, Planning, Landlord or Tenant	99	18%	91	20%
Bankruptcy/ Insolvency	49	20%	42	19%
Commercial Property	186	19%	163	18%
Power of Attorney	155	15%	139	15%
Family/matrimonial (excluding divorce)	149	16%	134	15%
Discrimination/Civil Liberties/Human Rights	27***	12%	23***	13%
Divorce	168	13%	148	13%
Consumer	34***	9%	30***	10%
Clinical or Medical Negligence	43***	10%	41***	10%
Crime/criminal offences (other than motoring offences)	62	10%	46***	9%
Personal Injury	93	0%	87	0%
Asylum	52	0%	41**	-2%
Non-Litigation - other	62	33%	57	33%
Litigation - other	143	20%	128	23%

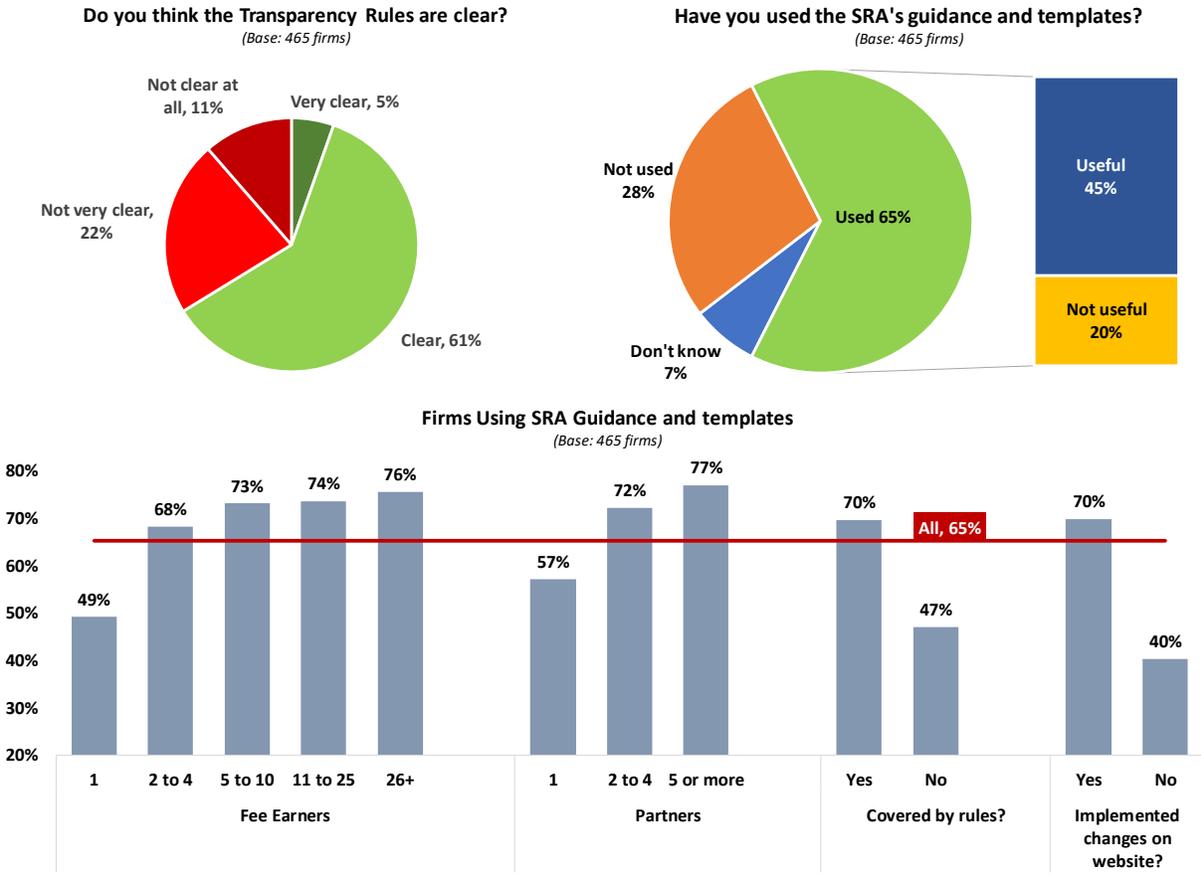
* % stating prices had increased less % saying prices had decreased

*** small sub sample

Mental health, Financial Advice and Social Welfare not shown because of very small sample bases

SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

Figure A16 Do you think the Transparency Rules are clear? Have you used the SRA's guidance and templates on the Transparency Rules? Did you find the SRA's guidance and templates on the Transparency Rules useful?



SRA Transparency Rules: Year One Evaluation

Figure A17 Does your firm use the SRA’s Solicitors Register? What do you use the Solicitors Register for? (multi response)

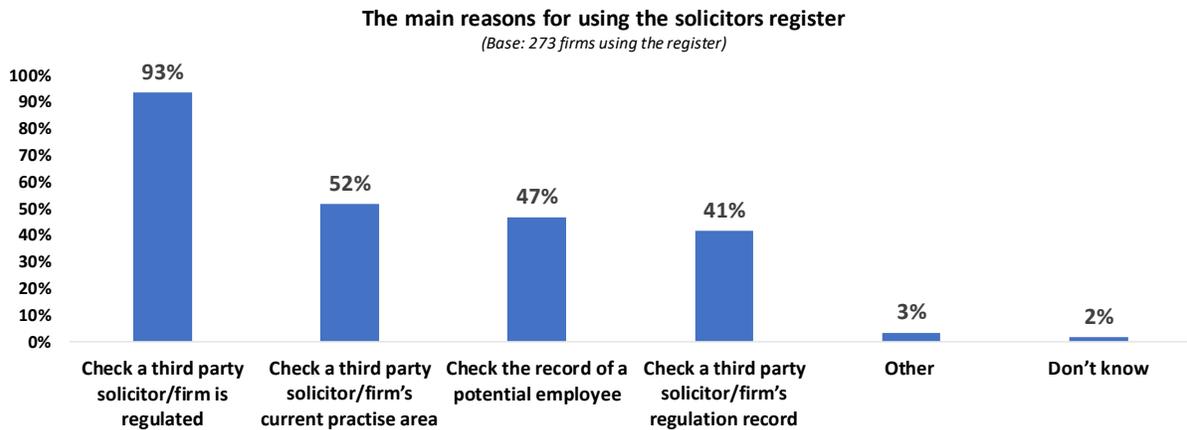
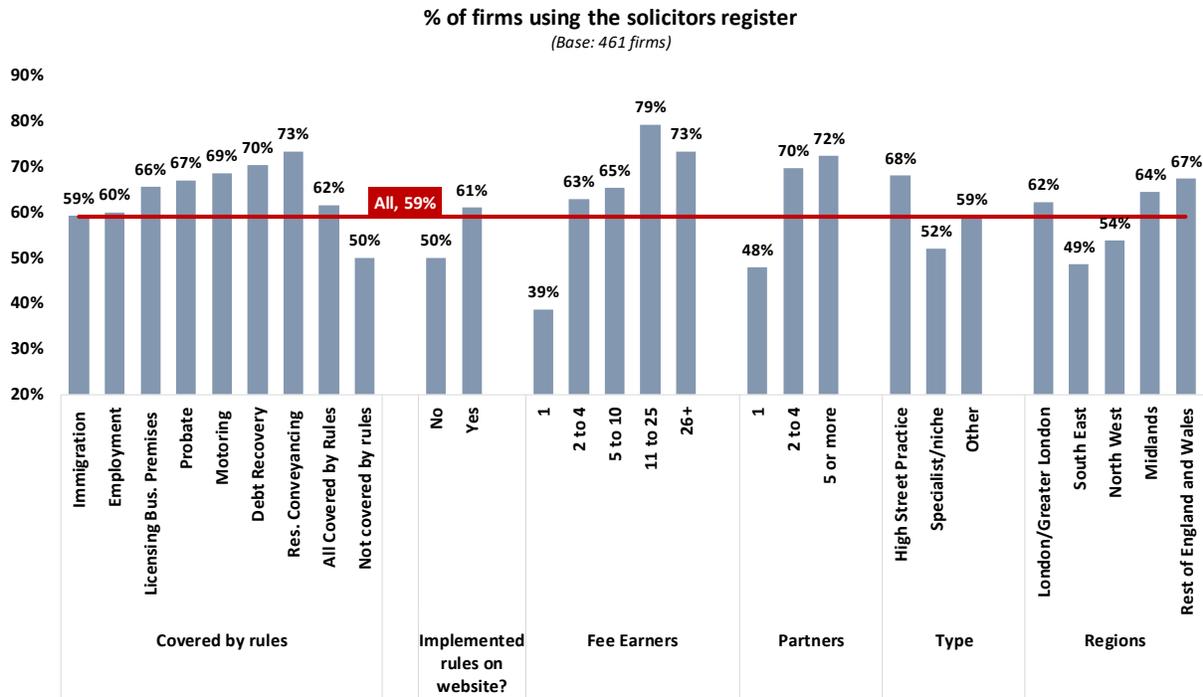


Figure A18 As far as you are aware, can clients add reviews and/or ratings of your firm on any of the following?

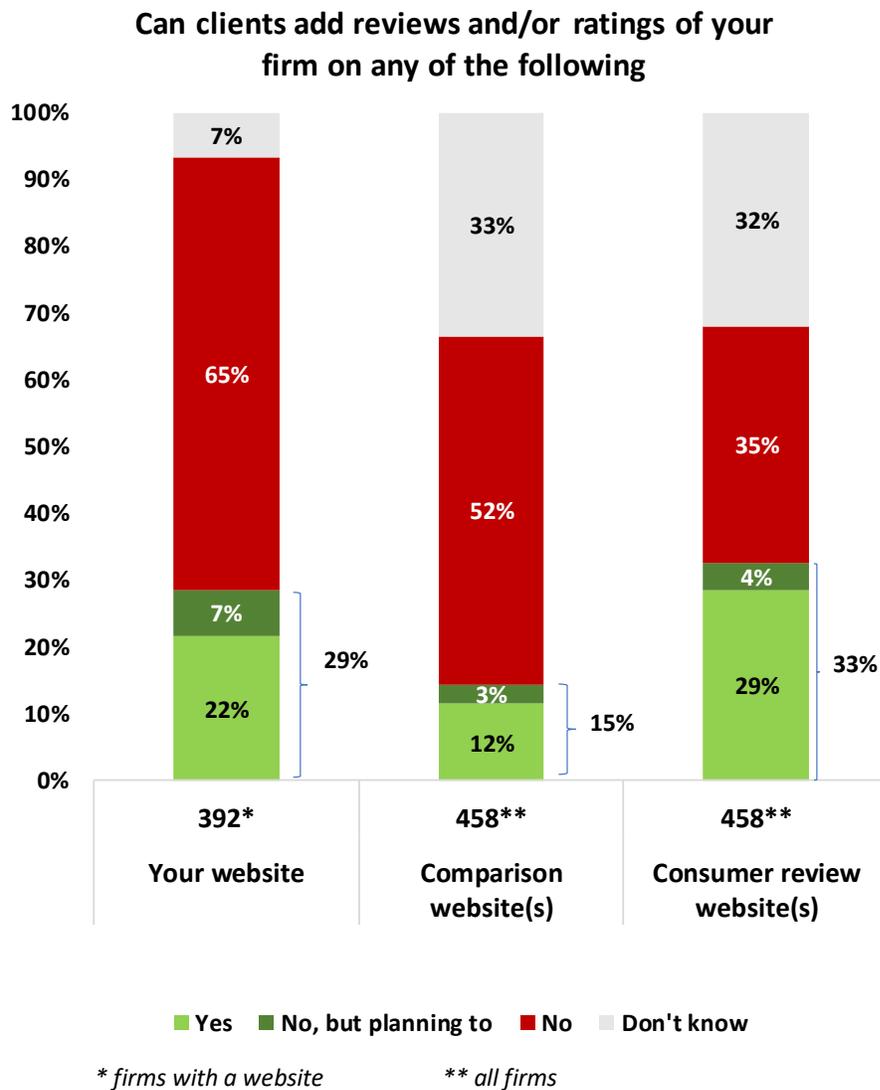
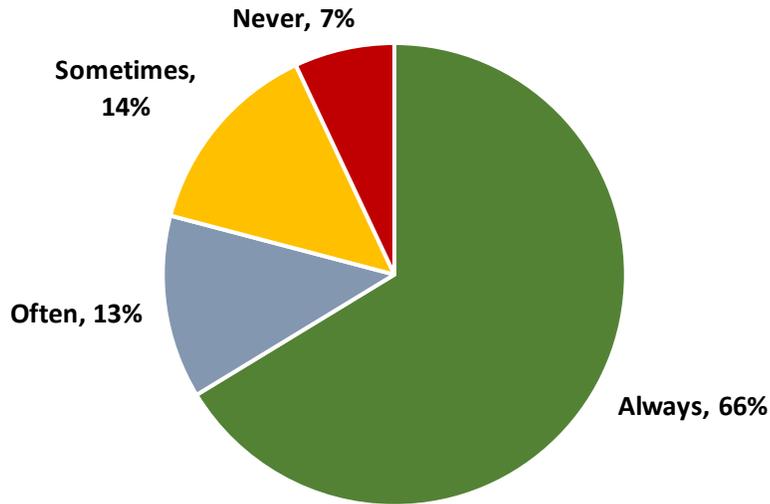


Figure A19 Do you take into account the feedback in these online reviews? Do you reply to these online reviews?

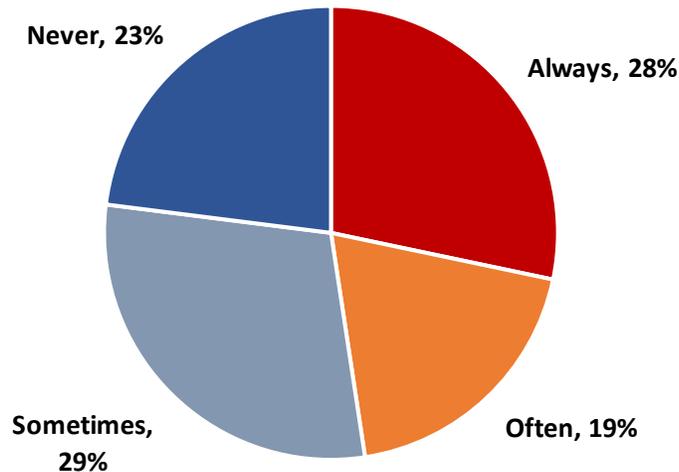
Do firms taken into account client feedback received on their own website or DCTs*

(Base: 187 firms receiving feedback)



Do firms reply to client feedback/reviews received

(Base: 187 firms receiving feedback)



* comparison websites and consumer online review sites