

News release

Research shows trust in legal services high

23 October 2024

Research has shown that most people have trust and confidence in legal services, with high professional standards and high-quality training the most important drivers of that trust.

[Our current Corporate Strategy \[https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/corporate-strategy/\]](https://higher-rights.sra.org.uk/sra/corporate-strategy/) sets out our purpose as being to drive confidence and trust in the sector. We wanted to know what current levels of trust and confidence are and how best to increase them.

Independent research agency, ThinkS Insight and Strategy, were commissioned to carry out research with around 3,400 stakeholders – the legal profession, the public, SMEs (small and medium enterprises), elected representatives and other opinion formers – to assess what drives this trust.

The results are contained in a report entitled SRA corporate strategy benchmarking – what drives trust and confidence in legal services? Most respondents are positive about the sector, with around three quarters of consumers and SMEs saying they have both trust and confidence in legal services, and 79% of the profession.

A similar proportion of consumers (74%) and SMEs (75%) believe legal services are well regulated, although awareness of legal regulation among consumers was generally low. Most of the profession (62%) was also positive about regulation, although around a fifth (21%) disagreed.

MPs and Senedd members (MSs) were generally less positive, and more likely to be neutral in their responses. For instance, only 54% of MPs and Senedd members said they had confidence in legal services, with 49% believing legal services are well regulated.

The research identified nine key drivers of confidence and trust in legal services. The most important drivers were high standards in legal services, legal professionals who have done high quality training and qualifications, and transparent cost structures. All of these were considered important factors for us to play a role in.

Opinion leaders, MPs and MSs felt particularly strongly that regulators took action when there was misconduct was important, while some legal professionals had concerns that we were not proportionate in our enforcement action and too punitive towards minor infractions.

We have committed to additional work on consumer information in our new business plan. This followed results which showed how important clear costs structures are in driving trust and confidence in legal services, particularly to consumers and SMEs.

Anna Bradley, Chair of the SRA Board, said: 'Getting the views of more than three-thousand stakeholders has been invaluable. It is good to see that generally people's priorities chime with our strategy, where high qualification and professional standards are central.

'It does, however, identify areas where we need to do more. We are already using the results to shape our work. There are some really rich insights in the report, which we think will be useful to anyone who is interested in what drives trust and confidence in legal services.'

Carol McNaughton Nicholls, Managing Partner at Thinks Insight and Strategy, added: 'The results in this report are generally positive, particular in relation to levels and trust and confidence in the legal sector. High professional standards and qualifications are particularly fundamental to this.

'For consumers, the mere existence of legal regulators enforces trust and confidence, though many are not aware of the SRA or that all legal services aren't regulated. Overall, most people – from the profession to small businesses – believe legal services are well regulated.'

The research set out to establish a benchmark for the level of confidence and trust in legal services. We will repeat the full research exercise again when our current strategy finishes in 2026 to find out whether and how our work and that of others has changed levels of trust and confidence.

[Go to the research - SRA corporate strategy benchmarking.](https://publications.sra.org.uk/corporate-strategy-benchmarking/)
[\[https://publications.sra.org.uk/corporate-strategy-benchmarking/\]](https://publications.sra.org.uk/corporate-strategy-benchmarking/)