

Not to be used before 00:01 hours, 21 June 2011

PUBLIC TRUST IN LAWYERS – LESS THAN 50%

Only 47% of the general public in England and Wales say they would generally trust lawyers to tell the truth. Younger people (38%) and those from non-white backgrounds (34%) are less likely to be trusting of the profession. These are the worrying findings from a recent YouGov survey commissioned by the Legal Services Consumer Panel.

Better news for lawyers is that most consumers are happy with the outcome of legal work and the service they receive. However, satisfaction varies widely depending on the area of legal work. While 9 in 10 consumers surveyed are happy with outcomes (92%) and service (88%) for will-writing, fewer than 7 in 10 are happy with outcomes (69%) and service (68%) for accident or injury claims.

The profession is falling short on aspects of service. A significant minority of recent users are dissatisfied with levels of communication (11%) and timeliness (12%). Consumers are also less satisfied with how much they are paying in legal fees – a little over half of recent users (56%) considered they got good value for money.

Other key findings include:

- 31% of the general public have used legal services in the last two years
- 51% of the general public are confident that their consumer rights would be protected when using lawyers
- 35% of recent users did not complain about poor service
- Reputation is the most important factor when deciding on a lawyer – 81% of recent users say this influenced their choice
- 19% consumers shop around when choosing a lawyer

The Legal Services Consumer Panel is releasing the findings of polling with consumers about their attitudes towards lawyers and experience of legal services. The research is being used to inform the Panel's forthcoming Consumer Impact Report – the first consumer assessment of the Legal Services Act reforms.

Cont.

Dr Dianne Hayter, Chair of the Legal Services Consumer Panel, said:

“Consumers place their trust in lawyers to protect their interests when they are at their most vulnerable, so it is extremely worrying that fewer than half of the public say they would generally trust lawyers to tell the truth.

“The recent revelation that lawyers may be charging clients to deal with complaints about bad service is one example of behaviour which is denting people’s trust. The profession must take a hard look at itself and work to restore confidence in lawyers as trusted advisors.

“Most consumers get the outcome they want when using legal services, but lawyers are not meeting their clients’ expectations in some crucial areas. No doubt businesses poised to enter the legal market from October will take note that consumers are demanding better value for money and excellent service from their lawyers.”

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For more information, contact Steve Brooker, Consumer Panel Manager, on 020 7271 0077. The full report is available on our website:
www.legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk

Notes to editors

1. The Legal Services Consumer Panel was established under the Legal Services Act 2007 to provide independent advice to the Legal Services Board about the interests of consumers of legal services in England and Wales. We investigate issues that affect consumers and use this information to influence decisions about the regulation of legal services.
2. The research was carried out by YouGov in March 2011. The survey was in two parts: first, with 1,277 members of the general public aged 18+ in England and Wales; second, with 1,114 adults who had used legal services in the last two years.
3. A written summary of the research findings has been published today and is available on the Panel’s website:
http://www.legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk/publications/research_and_reports/index.html
4. The full data tables can also be accessed on the Panel’s website:
http://www.legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk/publications/research_and_reports/index.html
5. The Consumer Impact Report will be published later in June. The Report will assess the progress of the legal services reforms against the Panel’s vision for the market based on the YouGov research and other evidence.