

A survey of public attitudes towards conveyancing services, conducted on behalf of:

The logo for the Solicitors Regulation Authority, featuring a grid of red dots of varying sizes arranged in a roughly square pattern.

Solicitors **Regulation** Authority

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Q1 Have you used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the last five years?
By conveyancing, we mean legal services you need when buying or selling property,
or re-mortgaging an existing property.

Q2 Thinking about the most recent time when you used a solicitor for conveyancing
services, which *one* of the following best describes what you did?

Q3 In general how satisfied were you with the service you received
from your solicitor?

Q3.1 You mentioned that you were generally satisfied with the performance
of your solicitor. Would you say that each of the following accurately
describes the service you received from your solicitor?

Q3.2 You mentioned that you were generally dissatisfied with the performance
of your solicitor. Would you say that each of the following accurately
describes the service you received from your solicitor?

Q4 Since the 14th of December 2007, houses being sold in England and Wales
must have a Home Information Pack (often referred to as HIPs),
containing information about the property and local area. This includes an
energy performance certificate and details of local authority searches.
If you sold a property that required a HIP, did your solicitor provide this for you?

Q4.1 Thinking about the HIP provided for you by your solicitor, to what extent
do you agree or disagree that your HIP was good value for money in terms
of the overall contribution it made to you being able to sell my property?

Q5 How did you find the solicitor that you used to help you buy, sell
or re-mortgage property?

Q5.1 If you were looking online for a solicitor, which resources or websites,
if any, would you use?

Q6 In the future, if you required a solicitor to help you buy, sell
or re-mortgage property, how likely or unlikely would you be
to use the same solicitor that you used before?

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Q7 When choosing a solicitor to deal with buying or selling property, how important would each of the factors be to you?

Q8 Thinking about how you might decide to use a particular solicitor to deal with buying or selling a property, how strongly would you agree or disagree with each of the following?

Q9 And how strongly would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about using solicitors on property deals?

Q10 If you had to sell a property quickly to raise money, how important or unimportant would it be to you that your solicitor:

Q11 How important are each of the following factors in helping you to decide which solicitor to use during a property deal?

APPENDIX – Question List

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Methodology

ComRes interviewed 1,004 adults in England and Wales between 17th and 21st December 2008. Data were weighted to be nationally representative, and are analysed by gender, age, social class and region.

The sample is representative demographically (by age, gender, region and social class) of all adults in England and Wales. The sample is selected using quotas so that it is generally representative and then it is weighted so as to be exactly representative.

The table below details how each social grade is defined.

Social grade	Social status	Occupation
A	upper middle class	higher managerial, administrative or professional
B	middle class	intermediate managerial, administrative or professional
C1	lower middle class	supervisory or clerical, junior managerial, administrative or professional
C2	skilled working class	skilled manual workers
D	working class	semi and unskilled manual workers
E	those at lowest level of subsistence	state pensioners or widows (no other earner), casual or lowest grade workers

In the analysis of a number of questions, we calculate mean scores to aid analysis. In such cases, individual answers are assigned scores and an average score is then calculated for that group's answer to that question.

For example, if the question were "do you agree that the earth is flat?", a score of 1 would be assigned to the answer 'agree' and a score of -1 to the answer disagree. If all 1000 participants answer 'disagree', the mean score would equal -1; however, if half answer 'agree' and half answer 'disagree', the mean score would be 0.

Mean scores aid analysis of questions where there are multiple statements, and allow more effective comparison. They also elucidate the strength of opinion at the extreme ends of opinion scales – such as where the options vary from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules (www.britishpollingcouncil.org). This commits us to the highest standards of transparency.

The BPC's rules state that all data and research findings made on the basis of surveys conducted by member organisations that enter the public domain, must include reference to the following:

- The company conducting the research (ComRes)
- The client commissioning the survey
- Dates of interviewing
- Method of obtaining the interviews (e.g. in-person, post, telephone, internet)
- The universe effectively represented (all adults, voters etc)
- The percentages upon which conclusions are based
- Size of the sample and geographic coverage.

Published references (such as a press release) should also show a web address where full data tables may be viewed, and they should also show the complete wording of questions upon which any data that has entered the public domain are based.

All press releases or other publications must be checked with ComRes before use. ComRes requires 48 hours to check a press release unless otherwise agreed.

Executive Summary

This survey focuses specifically on the public's view of solicitors in relation to work on conveyancing, and what factors are significant in choosing a solicitor when they are buying, selling or remortgaging property.

Part 1: your experience

- Younger people, and those in social grades AB are the groups most likely to have used solicitors for conveyancing work in the past 5 years; just over a fifth (21%) of the British public have done so in the past 5 years.
- The most likely purpose is for buying a house, which 42% of those who had used a solicitor for conveyancing in the past 5 years had done; this compares to just 9% who sold a house without buying.
- Satisfaction rates for solicitors in the field of conveyancing are stratospherically high; 93% are fairly or very satisfied. Moreover, the majority of these are very (65%) – rather than fairly (28%) – satisfied; indicating that those with experience of using a solicitor for conveyancing work recently are not just happy, but very happy.
- Twice as many people who were given a HIP received it from a source other than their solicitor (15% to 7%).
- The most popular way people found their solicitor was to use one they had used before (27%), closely followed by a recommendation from someone they know (24%).
- People are also highly likely to go back to the same solicitor as they have used previously (80% very or fairly likely). More than half (57%) are *very* likely to go back.

Part 2: your opinions

- 'Receiving a recommendation from a friend' and 'specialising in conveyancing work' are seen as more important by more of the public than providing a cheap quote. However, men see specialisation as more important than a recommendation, whereas women hold the opposing view.
- Overall, the public are more likely to disagree that they would use a solicitor recommended by their estate agent than they are to agree (40% disagree versus 37% agree), although a significant proportion (22%) cannot decide. The public are even less likely to use a solicitor recommended by their estate agent, if the agent will receive a commission as a result.

- This reluctance to accept an estate agent's recommendation is more apparent among men than women. However, younger people and those who have not used a solicitor for conveyancing work recently are less likely to be so hostile to such a recommendation.
- Despite the majority of people agreeing that an estate agent would recommend an expert solicitor (57%) and that this would save them time (52%), the vast majority of the public would prefer to find their own solicitor for conveyancing work, rather than have one recommended to them (70%).
- Those people who have used a solicitor for conveyancing work in the past 5 years are likely to disagree that an estate agent recommending a solicitor would be helpful (53%); those that have not, are more likely to agree (51%).
- The key factor in determining which solicitor people would use for conveyancing work is whether they have used the solicitor before; this is seen as the most important factor out of the four listed for nearly half (48%) of people. This is true across gender, age and experience.

Part 1: your experience

Q1 This question is designed to identify the proportion of the general public who have used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the past 5 years.

- Just over a fifth of the general public have used a solicitor for conveyancing work in the past five years.
- While nearly a third of those in grades AB have used a solicitor for conveyancing work in the past five years, only one in ten in grades DE has done so.

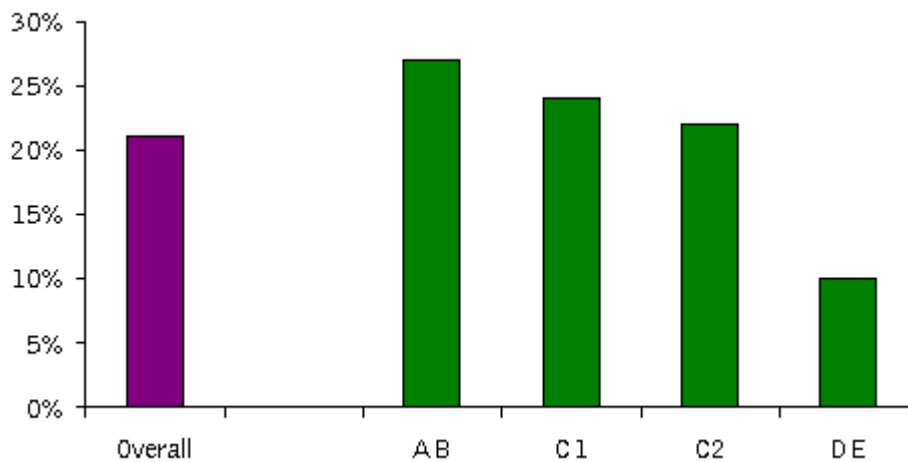


Fig 1i: Used solicitor for conveyancing in the last 5 years.
Base: General public, split by social grade (1004)

21% of the general public have used a solicitor in the last 5 years. Understandably, those in lower social grades are less likely to fall into this group than those in higher social grades. 27% of those in grades AB have used a solicitor for conveyancing work in the past 5 years, compared to just 10% of those in grades DE.

The proportion of the public who have used a solicitor for conveyancing work in the past 5 years, is the same (21%) as the proportion returned by the larger survey 'A survey of public attitudes towards solicitors' ComRes conducted on behalf of the SRA.

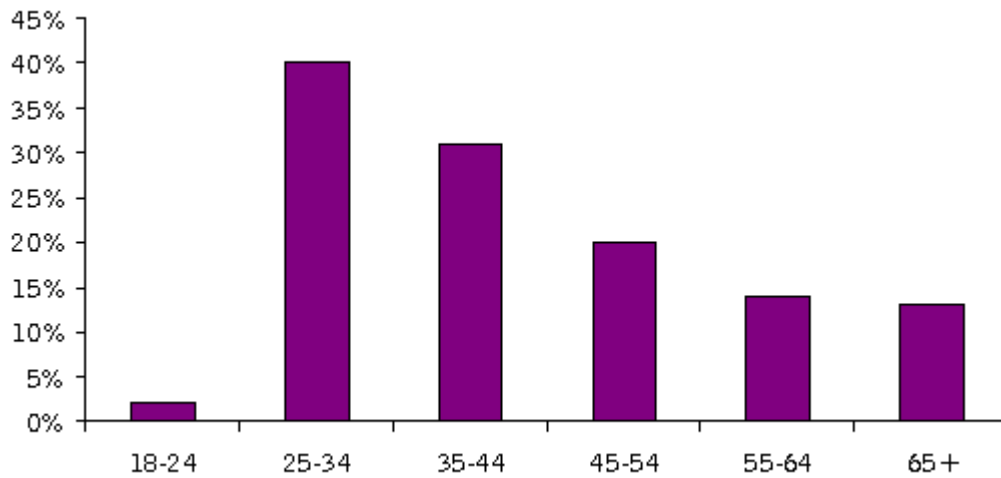


Fig 1ii: Used solicitor for conveyancing in the last 5 years.
Base: General public, split by age (1004)

Those in the age range 25-34 are most likely to have used a solicitor for conveyancing work in the last 5 years, with a huge 40% answering yes to this question. As age increases, the proportion answering yes drops; just 13% of those 65 and over have used a solicitor for such work, and only 2% of those aged 18-24.

Q2 This question is designed to ascertain the relevant proportions of the transactions involved in the conveyancing work identified in question one. As such, only those who answered 'yes' to the first question were directed to this question.

- The most common reason for members of the public requiring a solicitor for conveyancing work, was to buy a property.
- Those aged 65+ are more than twice as likely as those aged 25-34 to undertake conveyancing work to sell a property.
- The 25-34, 35-44 and 45-54 age groups are more than twice as likely to undertake conveyancing work to buy a property than those aged 55 or older.

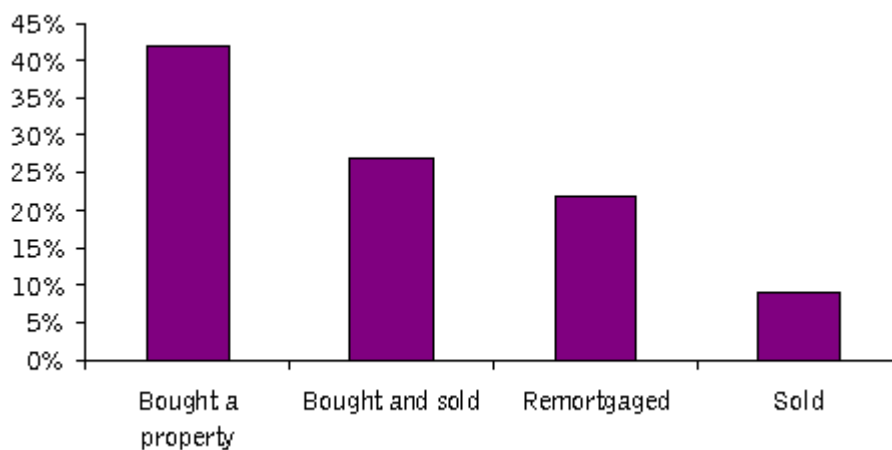


Fig 2i: For what type of transaction?

Base: Members of the public who have used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the past 5 years (210)

Of those who have used a solicitor for conveyancing work in the past 5 years, the most common purpose was to buy a property (42%). Just over a quarter (27%) used a solicitor because they both bought and sold a property, and more than a fifth (22%) of those who required a solicitor for conveyancing needed a remortgaging service.

Just 9% of those who have used a solicitor for conveyancing work required the solicitor because they sold a property.

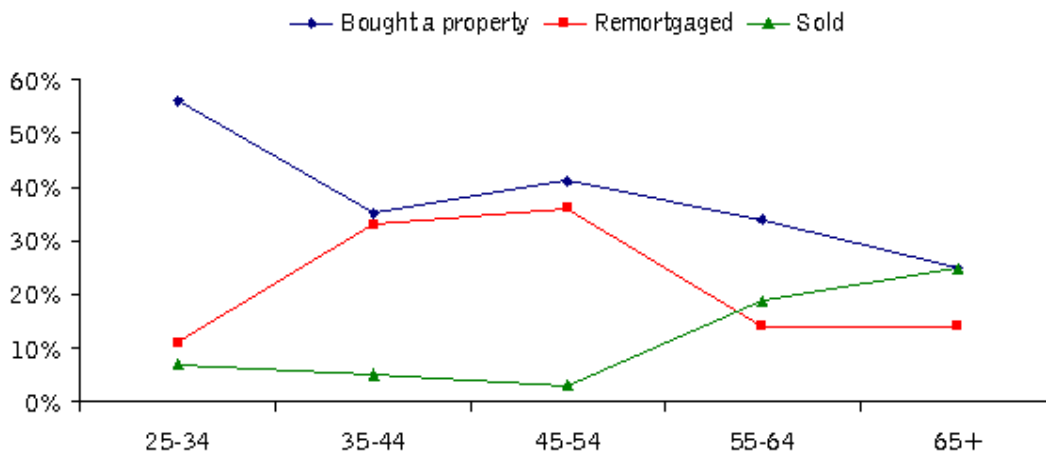


Fig 2ii: For what type of transaction?

Base: Members of the public who have used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the past 5 years, split by age (210)

There are notable trends by age for three of the transaction types. The green line in the chart above illustrates that requiring a solicitor for selling a property is mostly utilised by those who are older; from less than 10% among the younger age ranges, leaping to 25% among those over 65. The opposite is true for buying a property, where the highest proportion is among 25-34 year olds (56%), but much lower among those 65 and older (25%).

The red line illustrates the trend for remortgaging – which is relatively low for the eldest and the youngest, and relatively high for 35-44 year olds (33%) and 45-54 year olds (36%).

There is also a notable trend by social grade, where those in the lowest social grades are much less likely to have used a solicitor to buy a property. For those in social grade DE, the proportion for buying a property is just 23%, compared to 51% of those in grade AB.

Q3 This question is designed to identify how satisfied those people who have used a solicitor in the past 5 years for conveyancing services are with the service they received.

- Levels of satisfaction for conveyancing work are extremely high.
- Of those dissatisfied with the service they received, most indicated their unhappiness with their treatment by the member of staff they had dealt with.

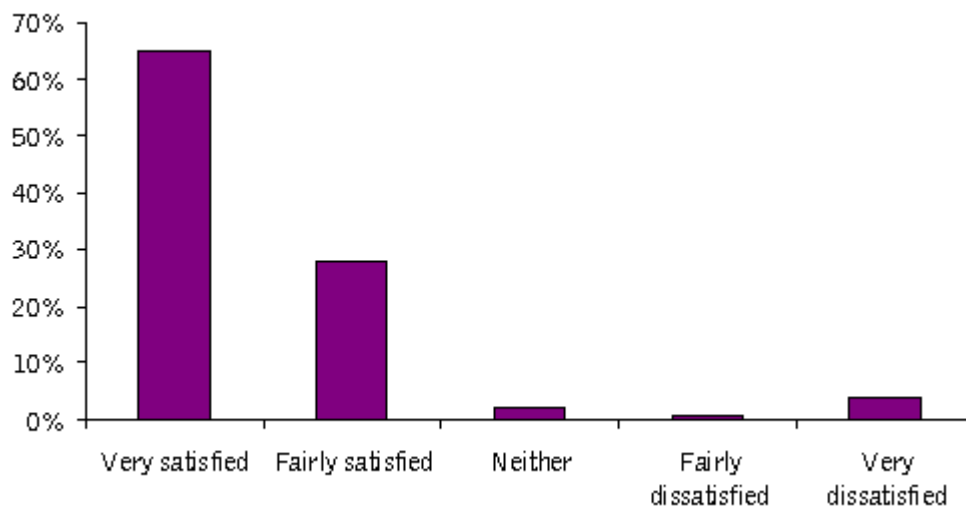


Fig 3i: How satisfied?

Base: Members of the public who have used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the past 5 years

The satisfaction rate for those who have used a solicitor for conveyancing work in the past 5 years is extremely high. Nearly two-thirds (65%) are very satisfied, with 28% fairly satisfied. Just 5% of this group were dissatisfied with the service they received. These satisfaction rates are high across gender, social grade, age and region.

Q3.1 This question is designed to explore the views of individuals who are satisfied with the performance of their solicitor, and detail what made their experience satisfactory.

There is general agreement with all six of these statements; the lowest approval rating (for statement IV) was 84%, and most scored in the top 10% bracket. This corroborates the results to question 3, that people are very positive regarding the services provided to them by their solicitor in conveyancing work, and would describe it in the positive terms above.

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
III	90%	96%
IV	80%	89%
VI	84%	93%

Fig 3.1i: Agreement with statements?

Base: Members of the public who have used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the past 5 years, split by gender (210)

As noted by the chart above, there are notable splits by gender on three of the statements. For statements III, IV and VI, men are less likely to agree than women, by 6%, 9% and 9% respectively.

It should be noted that men in this sub-question are still very likely to back the statements listed; however, it is worth noting that they are less effusive than women on these three points.

Q3.2 This question is designed to explore the views of individuals who are dissatisfied with the performance of their solicitor, and detail what made their experience unsatisfactory.

As a direct result of the stratospheric levels of satisfaction among members of the public who have used a solicitor for conveyancing work in the past 5 years, the total number answering this question is incredibly low (just 10).

Of those that are dissatisfied, there was widespread (80% plus) agreement with statements I-IV. However, for statement VI, nearly a third did not agree, indicating that even among the dissatisfied, there is a significant minority were happy with the member of staff they interacted with.

Moreover, even though these are people who are dissatisfied with the service they received, more answered 'no' to statement V than answered yes (63% to 31% respectively). This would indicate that solicitors' charges are being explained properly in the vast majority of cases – indeed even in those cases where the result is unsatisfactory for the client.

Q4 This question is designed to identify what proportion of the public who have sold a property since 14th December 2007 were provided with a HIP by their solicitor.

- Those who have received a HIP are more than twice as likely not to have received it from their solicitor as they are to have received it from their solicitor.
- For the majority however, the HIP did not apply.

<i>Response</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	7%
No	15%
N/A	75%

Fig 4i: Response on HIP provision

Base: Members of the public who have used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the past 5 years (210)

As is clear from the table above, it is much more common that people who have used a solicitor for conveyancing work in the past 5 years will have done so prior to 14th December 2007 than after this date. As such, for three quarters of this group, this question was not applicable.

Those who have received a HIP, are more than twice as likely not to have received it from their solicitor as they are to have received it from their solicitor (7% to 15%). For that 15% who did not receive their HIP, the majority don't know (or cannot remember) who provided their HIP.

Q4.1 This question is designed to determine whether those who were provided a HIP by their solicitor believe it to have been good value for money.

Overall, more people who received a HIP from their solicitor disagree that the HIP was good value for money (49%) than agree (46%). However, given the high levels of satisfaction expressed in question 3, this is more likely a reflection on the HIP than on the solicitors providing them.

Q5 This question is designed to identify how those people who have used a solicitor for conveyancing in the past 5 years found their solicitor.

- The most common way for people to find their solicitor is to use the same solicitor they have always used.
- Women are nearly doubly as likely than men to have been recommended their solicitor by their estate agent.

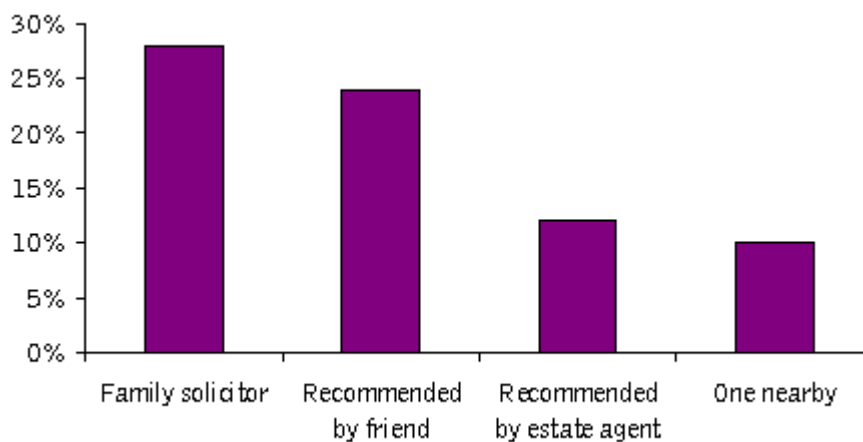


Fig 5i: How did you find them?

Base: Members of the public who have used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the past 5 years (210)

Using the solicitor that they have always used is the most popular option (27%), although there is a clear and intuitive trend where younger people are less likely to select this option than older people.

This option is closely followed by using the solicitor they were recommended by someone they knew (24%). The third most popular option was to use a solicitor recommended by their estate agent (12%); however, women are more likely than men to have been recommended their solicitor by their estate agent (17% to 8% respectively).

Q5.1 This question is designed to identify the most commonly used tools for searching for a solicitor online.

Given that only 4 members of the weighted sample were forwarded to this question, the results are entirely indicative and not definitive. People are more likely to use a search engine than a property website for finding a solicitor online, with three out of the remaining sample of 4 using this method. The Law Society's 'Find a Solicitor' service does not receive a mention.

Q6 This question is designed to identify the proportion of those people who have used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the past 5 years who would go back and use the same solicitor for such services again.

- The majority are 'very likely' to use the same solicitor again; just a small minority are unlikely to do so.

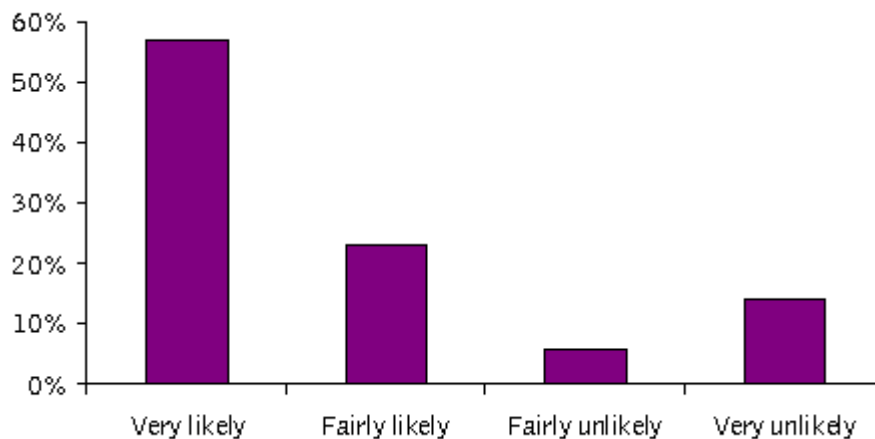


Fig 6i: Would you go back to them?

Base: Members of the public who have used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the past 5 years (210)

The vast majority of people who have used a solicitor for conveyancing in the past 5 years are either very (57%) or fairly likely (23%) to go back to the same solicitor. However, this leaves 20% who are fairly or very unlikely. This would indicate that there is not a directly proportional relationship between satisfaction (as assessed by question 3) and likelihood to return to the same solicitor.

What is also notable, is that the majority of those who are unlikely to return to the same solicitor are entrenched in that view; 6% are fairly unlikely, compared to 14% who are very unlikely. This is a mirror of those who are likely to go back to their solicitor, with the majority at the extreme (very likely) position.

Part 2: your opinions

Q7 This question is designed to identify how important each of the factors listed above are for the public, when choosing a solicitor for conveyancing services. Mean scores were calculated for each factor to aid analysis.

- A recommendation or being a specialist are the two most important factors for the public when choosing a solicitor for conveyancing work.
- Women are more likely to decide on personal recommendations than men.
- The elderly are considerably more likely to base their decision on whether or not the solicitor is a specialist than those aged 18-24.

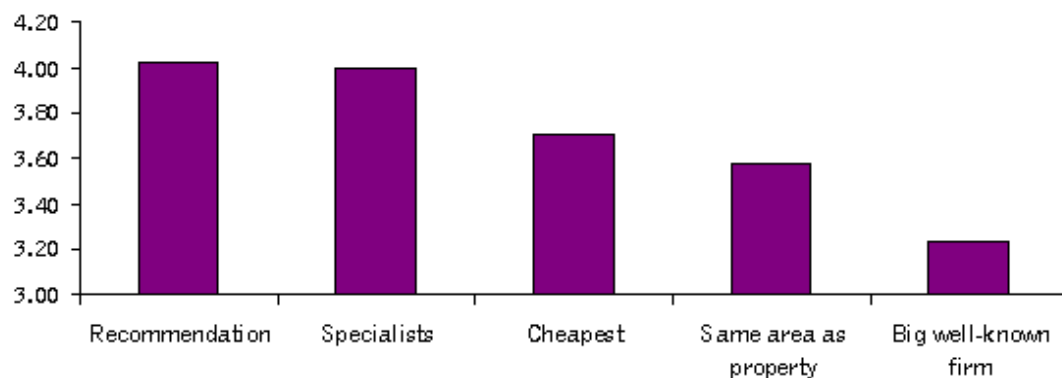


Fig 7i: What is important when choosing a solicitor?

Base: General public (1004)

It is clear from these results that two factors (a recommendation from someone the person knows and the firm specialising in conveyancing) are significantly more important in the minds of the public than the other three. A recommendation receives a mean score of 4.03 and being a specialist scores 4.00, and both receive a score of 5 from very high proportions of the public (44% and 45% respectively).

There is then a notable drop to the cheapness of the quote – which scores 3.71 – and the solicitor’s office being in the same area as the property (3.58). Being a big well-known firm is the least important factor here, scoring 3.24.

Having said this, it is notable that for all five factors, the scores only range from a high of 4.03 to low of 3.24, which is still above the median on this range. This indicates that although there is a significance to the ranking in these results, each of these factors are seen as important by the general public.

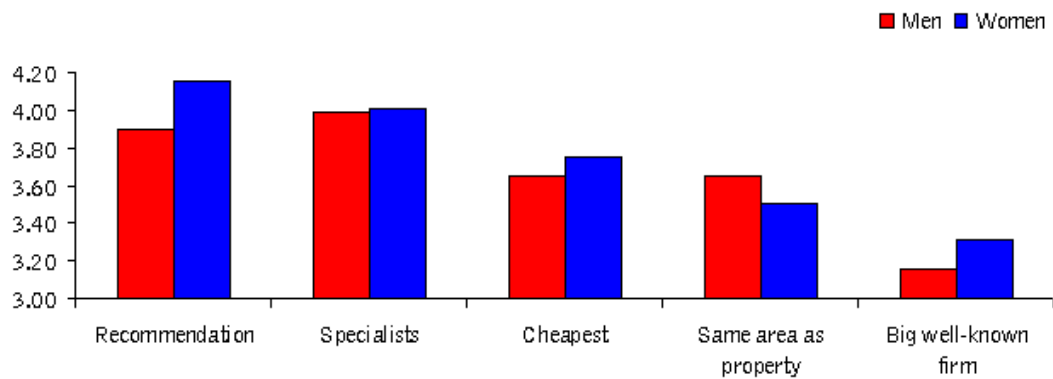


Fig 7ii: What is important when choosing a solicitor?
Base: General public, split by gender (1004)

There are notable variations by gender on the scores for some, but not all, of these factors. The largest differential is for the 'recommendation' factor, with men returning a score of 3.90, and women scoring 4.16. This order is repeated for the cheapest quote and whether the firm is well known, but reversed for the solicitor's office being in the same area as the property.

As with the previous chart, it should be noted that the discrepancies are not enormous in absolute terms. However, it is important that for women, the most important factor in choosing a solicitor for conveyancing work is a recommendation, whereas for men, the most important factor is whether the solicitor is a specialist in the area.

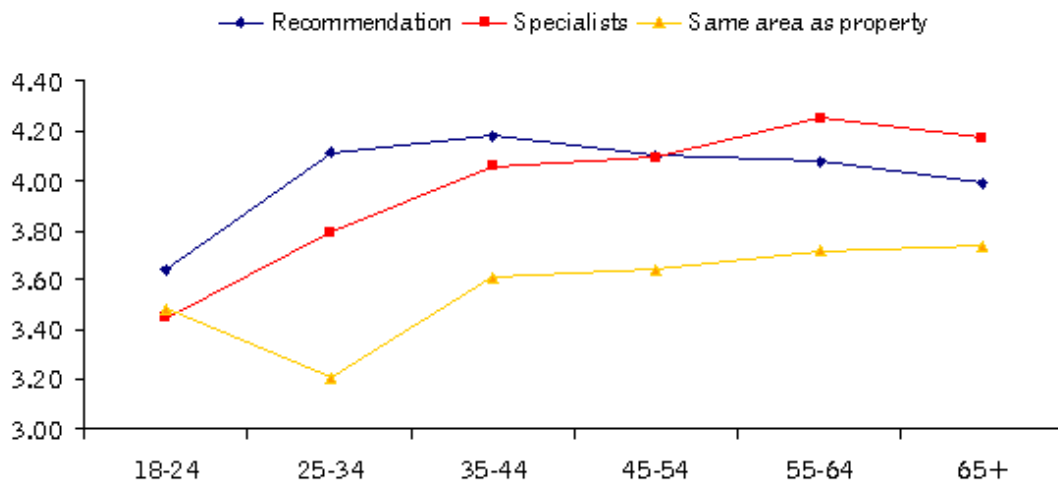


Fig 7iii: What is important when choosing a solicitor?
Base: General public, split by age (1004)

The graph above details the trends by age evident for three of the factors listed. For two of the factors (recommendation and being in the same area) the trends are marginal. There are two figures that are outliers on each trend, and the relative change is quite small – illustrated by the shallow gradient for each line.

However, for the factor concerning whether the solicitor is a conveyancing specialist or not, the trend is much more obvious. Those who are older are much more likely than the young to ascribe a higher importance to this factor; the mean score for 18-24 year olds is 3.45, whereas for those over 65 the score is 4.17. This is a significant change, and is reflected in the steep gradient of the line – particularly between the first three age groups.

For the remaining questions, we have performed a further set of analysis, based on the answers participants gave to the first question. All those who have used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the past 5 years have been separated out from those that have not, allowing us to assess whether there are significant differences in opinions between these groups. These groups are referred to as experienced – for those who have used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the past 5 years – and inexperienced – for those that have not.

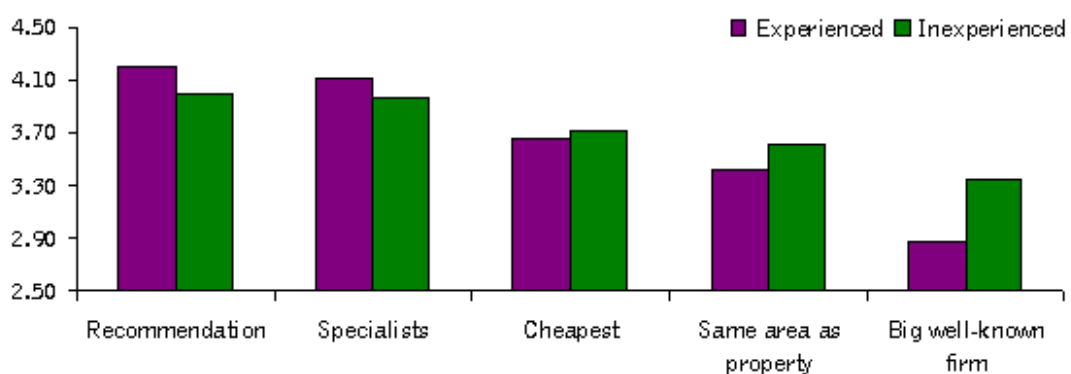


Fig 7iv: What is important when choosing a solicitor?

Base: General public, split by whether they have used a solicitor for conveyancing in the past 5 years (1004)

It is notable that there are differences in the scores for four of the factors between the experienced and the inexperienced groups. That the importance of the cost of the quote does not change between these groups is perhaps unsurprising, however, it is notable that the experienced group are more likely to see recommendations and specialising in conveyancing as more important than the inexperienced groups. For recommendations, the mean score is 4.20 for the experienced group and 3.99 for the inexperienced group; for specialising in conveyancing the scores are 4.11 and 3.97 respectively.

However, the opposite is true for being in the same area as the property (3.42 for the experienced group and 3.62 for the inexperienced group) and particularly for being a big, well-known firm (2.87 and 3.34 respectively). It is worth noting how much more important choosing a big, well-known firm is for those who have not used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the past 5 years, than it is for those who have.

Q8 This question is designed to establish how accepting the public would be of a solicitor recommended by their estate agent – as well as whether the estate agent receiving a commission would affect this.

Scores are assigned to each answer, where agree strongly = 2, agree = 1, neither agree nor disagree = 0, disagree = -1 and disagree strongly = -2. Mean scores are calculated to aid analysis.

- Overall, the public are unlikely to use a solicitor recommended to them by their estate agent.
- They are even less likely to use a solicitor recommended to them by their estate agent if a commission is involved.

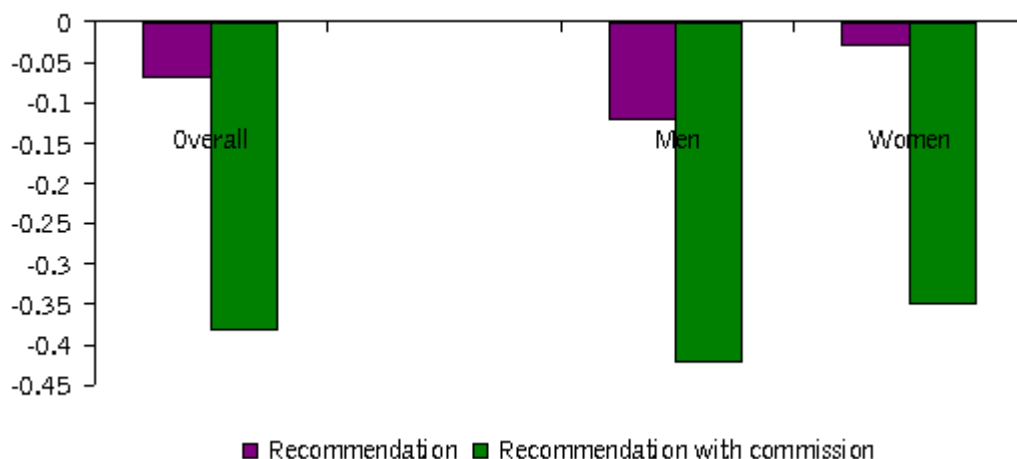


Fig 8i: Would you use a solicitor recommended by your estate agent?
Base: General public, split by gender (1004)

Across the whole sample, and when it is broken down by gender, most people would be reluctant to use a solicitor recommended by their estate agent. The mean score for this statement is -0.07, indicating that there is more disagreement among the public with this statement than agreement – but not much. 40% of the public disagree, whereas 37% agree; however, a full 22% neither agree nor disagree, indicating nearly a quarter of people who struggle to decide.

The opposition becomes markedly stronger if the estate agent would receive a commission from the solicitor – with a mean score of -0.38; the proportion that disagree jumps to 50%, and the proportion that agree drops notably to 29%. It is notable that, across both statements, men are more likely to disagree than women. For the first statement, men return a mean score of -0.12 compared to -0.03 for women; for the second statement, the score for men is -0.42 and for women the score is -0.35.

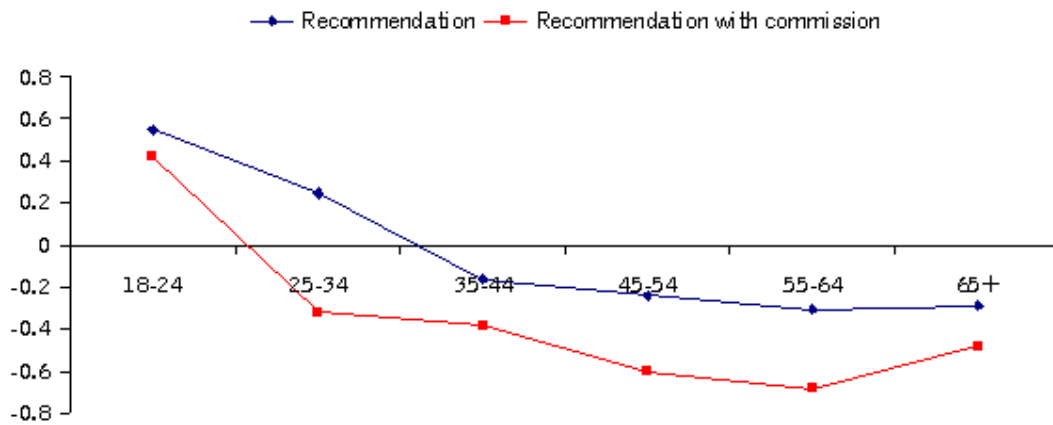


Fig 8ii: Would you use a solicitor recommended by your estate agent?
 Base: General public, split by age (1004)

There is a notable trend by age, with the young much more likely to agree with both statements than the old. This is true to the extent that those in the youngest age bracket (18-24) are more likely to agree with both statements than disagree with them, returning scores of 0.55 and 0.42 for each statement respectively.

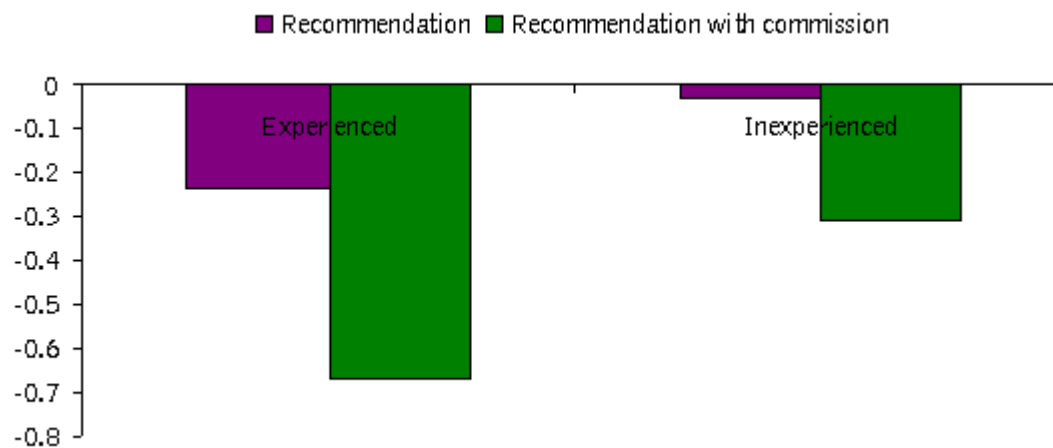


Fig 8iii: Would you use a solicitor recommended by your estate agent?
 Base: General public, split by whether they have used a solicitor for conveyancing in the past 5 years (1004)

There is also a relationship between people’s propensity to disagree with these statements, and their experience of using a solicitor for conveyancing work. The experienced group are notably less likely than the inexperienced group to use a solicitor recommended by their estate agent (mean scores of -0.24 and -0.03 respectively) and this gap is even wider when the estate agent gains commission (-0.67 and -0.31).

Q9 This question is designed to establish the public’s level of agreement with each of the statements listed above, concerning solicitors and property deals.

Scores are assigned to each answer, where agree strongly = 2, agree = 1, neither agree nor disagree = 0, disagree = -1 and disagree strongly = -2. Mean scores are calculated to aid analysis.

- More than two thirds of the public would prefer to find their own solicitor than receive a recommendation from their estate agent.
- Despite this, overall the public agree that receiving a recommendation from an estate agent would both save them time and that they would recommend an expert.

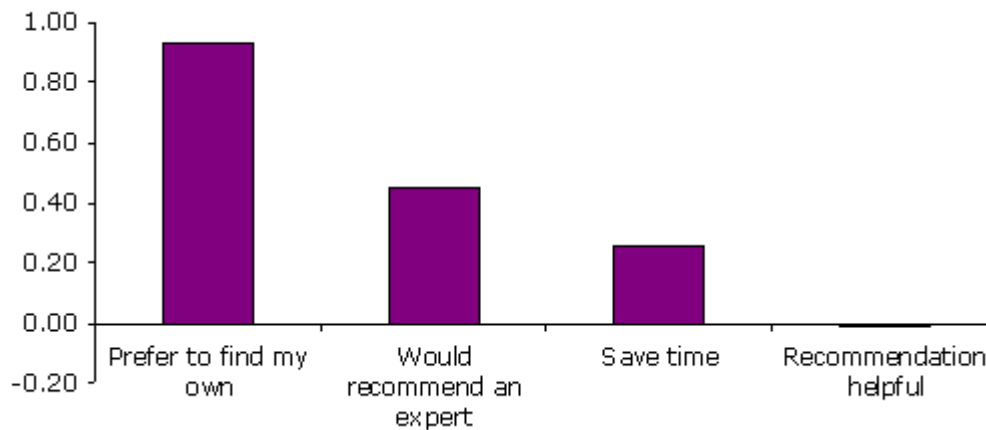


Fig 9i: Levels of agreement with statements about using solicitors on property deals.
Base: General public (1004)

The public are broadly in agreement that they would prefer to find their own solicitor; 70% of the public agree with this statement, and just 17% disagree, returning a mean score of 0.93. This would indicate that the public value their own independence when choosing a solicitor. Interestingly, there is overall agreement that an estate agent would recommend an solicitor expert in conveyancing (mean score 0.45) and that it would save them time (0.26).

There is a (slight) negative mean score for the statement concerning the helpfulness of such a recommendation (-0.01), yet despite this, more people agree with the statement than disagree (46% to 42%); the reason the mean score is negative is that among those who disagree, they are more likely to disagree strongly than those who agree are to agree strongly. This has a greater impact on the mean score, and pulls the average into the negative.

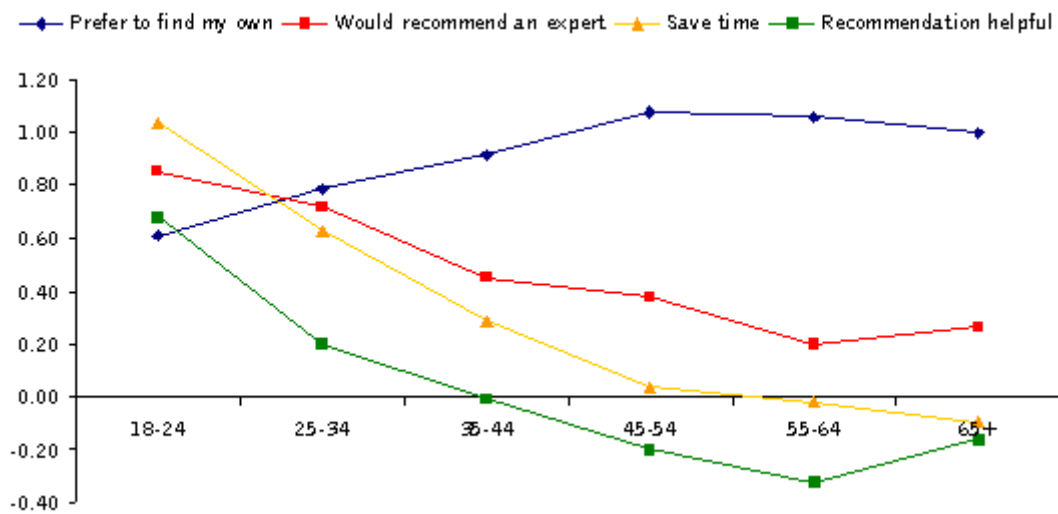


Fig 9ii: Levels of agreement with key factors when choosing a solicitor for property work. Base: General public, split by age (1004)

For three of these statements, the trend is quite notably that the young are much more likely to agree with each statement than the old. The most notable change is for the statement concerning saving time, with a score of 1.04 among 18-24 year olds to -0.10 among the over 65s.

However, for the statement concerning finding your own solicitor, older people are more likely to agree than the young. Although this trend is less strict than for the other three statements, it does indicate that – in general – the young are more open to the benefits of having a solicitor recommended to them than the old.

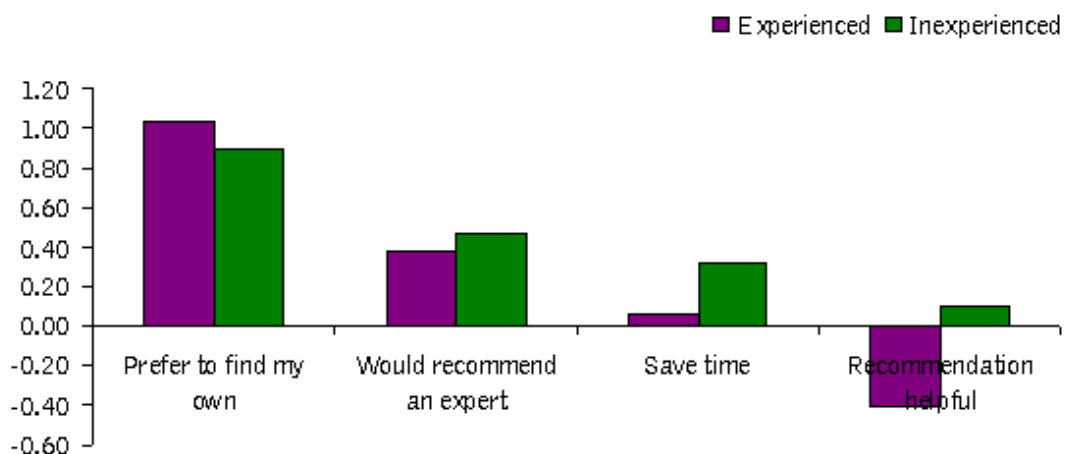


Fig 9iii: Levels of agreement with key factors when choosing a solicitor for property work. Base: General public, split by whether they have used a solicitor for conveyancing in the past 5 years (1004)

When we split the sample by whether people have used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the past 5 years or not, there are two notable differences in the results. First, the experienced group are much less likely than the inexperienced group to believe that having their estate agent recommend them a solicitor would save them time – although the mean scores are positive for both (0.06 and 0.32 respectively).

This differential is even more notable for the statement concerning the helpfulness of such a recommendation; the experienced group score 0.10, but the inexperienced group return a negative score of -0.41. More than half (53%) of the experienced group *disagree* with this statement, whereas more than half of the inexperienced group *agree* with this statement.

Q10 This question is designed to identify how important each of the following factors are to members of the public who are wanting to sell a property quickly. With this question, scores were assigned to the answers as follows, and mean scores were calculated to aid analysis: very important = 4, fairly important = 3, fairly unimportant = 2, very unimportant = 1.

- Each of the factors listed received high importance ratings from the public.
- The competitiveness of the quote is the option that receives the lowest score, yet it is still seen as important by the vast majority of the public.

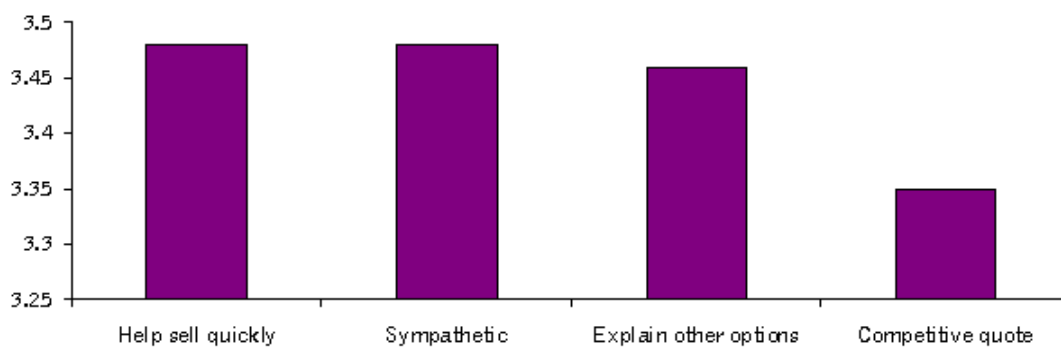


Fig 10i: Levels of agreement with key factors when choosing a solicitor for property work. Base: General public (1004)

What is notable, is the lack of variation between the mean scores for each of the four statements; the lowest score is returned for providing a competitive quote (3.35), with the highest (3.48) just 0.13 higher. This lack of variation indicates that there is little to choose, in the public’s mind, between each of these factors.

More surprising, is that there do not appear to be significant trends by age, gender or social class. Each of the mean scores rank between 3 (fairly important) and 4 (very important), indicating that they consider each factor to be important; indeed, for each of the statements, the proportion attracting the lowest score (very important) is never more than 4%.

Q11 This question is designed to find the order of priority the public ascribe to each of these factors, when they decide on which solicitor to use for conveyancing services. The scores illustrated in the charts below are reflective of the mean ranking score, where 1 is the factor ranked first, and 4 is the factor ranked last.

The scores have been aggregated to produce mean scores; as such – in contrast to the previous questions – the lower the score, the more important the factor is viewed by the public.

- By a large margin, the most important factor for members of the public is whether they have used the solicitor previously.
- Cost is more likely to influence the decisions of younger members of the public than older age groups.
- Those who have not used a solicitor for conveyancing in the past five years are more likely to believe a solicitor’s knowledge of the local area is important than those who have.

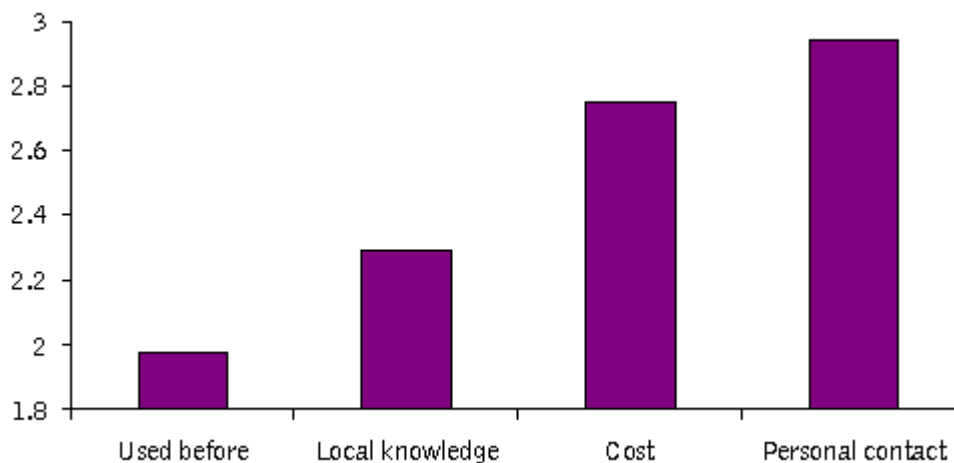


Fig 11i: Levels of priority for key factors when choosing a solicitor for property work. Base: General public (1004)

For the general public, the most important factor is whether they have used the solicitor before, which returns a mean score of 1.98. The second most important is the solicitor’s knowledge of the local area (2.29) followed by the cost of the service (2.75). The factor people view as least important is personal contact, with a score of 2.94.

It is notable how much more important the first factor is than each of the other three. Not only does the ‘used before’ factor return the lowest mean score, but almost half of the public (48%) rated it as the most important; to put this into perspective, ‘local knowledge’ received only a quarter (25%) of first place votes.

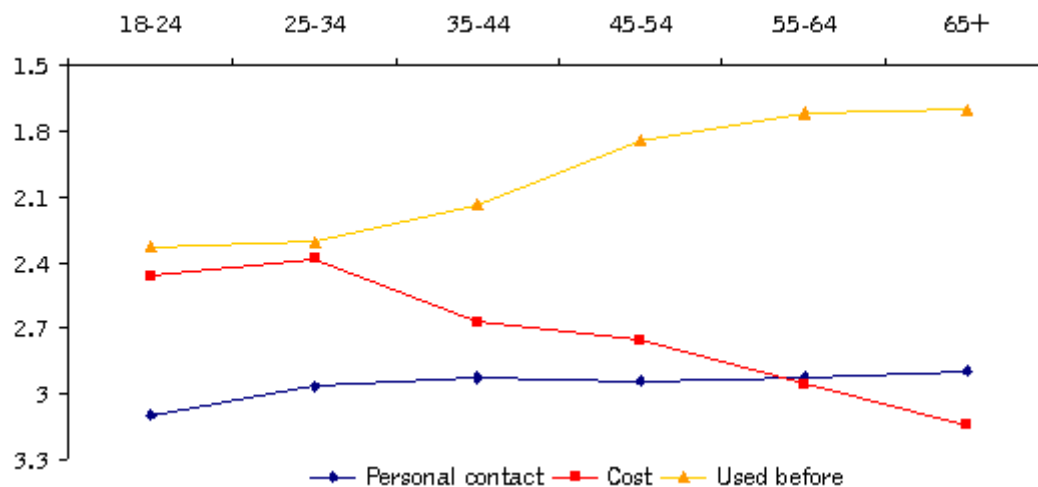


Fig 11ii: Levels of priority for key factors when choosing a solicitor for property work. Base: General public, by age (1004)

For the 'personal contact' factor, there is a trend by age, but the variations are not particularly significant. However, for both the cost of the service, and for having used the solicitor before there is a significant trend – albeit in opposite ways.

Younger members of the public are more likely to see cost as a more important factor than those who are older. 25-34 year olds return a score of 2.38, whereas those over 65 return a score of 3.14, indicating they see cost as a significantly less important factor.

The opposite is true for the 'used before' factor, there the oldest are more likely to see this factor as the most important than the youngest: 18-24 year olds return a score of 2.33, whereas those over 65 score 1.70. Indeed, whereas just a third (33%) of 18-24 year olds see this as the most important factor, fully 57% of those over 65 (and 59% of 55-64 year olds) believe this is the most important factor.

However, it should be noted that – despite this trend – even the youngest still see having used a solicitor before as more important than the cost. It is clear from these results that, above all else, the public see their own experience as the most important factor.

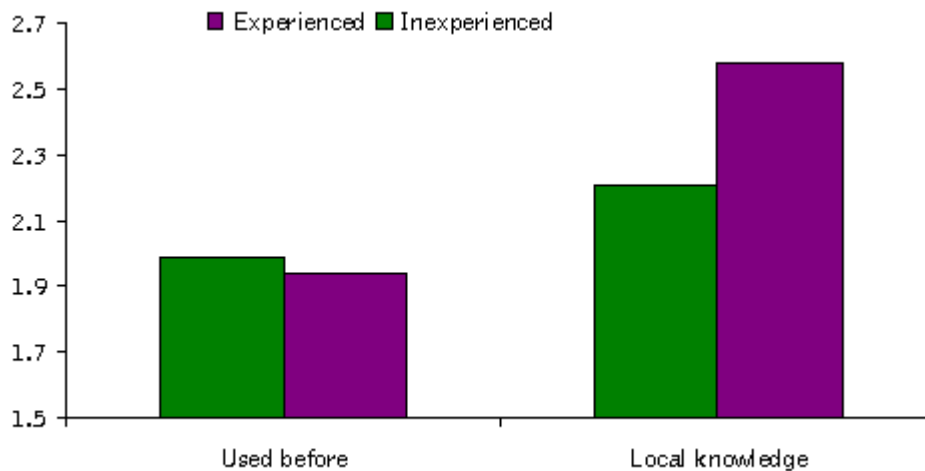


Fig 11iii: Levels of priority for key factors when choosing a solicitor for property work. Base: General public, split by whether they have used a solicitor for conveyancing in the past 5 years (1004)

There are two factors for which splitting the sample – by experience of having used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the past 5 years – produces noteworthy results.

The first, is that there is very little difference between the scores for the experienced and inexperienced for the 'used before' factor. The score the inexperienced group returns is 1.99 and for the experienced group the score is 1.94, a tiny difference. This indicates that, regardless of whether a person has recent experience of using a solicitor or not, they are likely to see their own experience as the most important factor in making a decision over which solicitor to use.

However, in the case of the solicitor's knowledge of the local area, there is quite a large difference between the two groups' scores; the inexperienced group scores 2.21, whereas the experienced group scores 2.58, indicating that this factor is seen as more important by people who haven't used a solicitor for conveyancing work recently.

Questions Index

Q1 Have you used a solicitor for conveyancing services in the last five years?

By conveyancing, we mean legal services you need when buying or selling property, or re-mortgaging an existing property.

Yes; No.

Q2 Thinking about the most recent time when you used a solicitor for conveyancing services, which *one* of the following best describes what you did?

I bought a property (either with a mortgage or with my own funds); I sold a property; I bought one property and sold another property at the same time; I re-mortgaged an existing property.

Q3 In general how satisfied were you with the service you received from your solicitor? (please choose *one* only)

Very satisfied; Fairly satisfied; Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; Fairly dissatisfied; Very dissatisfied.

Q3.1 *You mentioned that you were generally satisfied with the performance of your solicitor. Would you say that each of the following accurately describes the service you received from your solicitor?*

Yes; No; Can't remember / Don't know (not prompted).

- I. They were generally supportive throughout
- II. They were considerate of my personal circumstances
- III. They kept me well informed about what I had to do
- IV. They kept me well informed about what other parties involved were doing (for example, about the situations of other buyers/sellers in the property chain)
- V. They communicated clearly and were straightforward with me
- VI. They completed the work quickly, or explained the reason for any delay

Q3.2 You mentioned that you were generally dissatisfied with the performance of your solicitor. Would you say that each of the following accurately describes the service you received from your solicitor?

Yes; No; Can't remember / Don't know (not prompted).

- I. They took too long to complete the work, or did not explain the reason for any delay
- II. They did not keep me well informed about what I had to do
- III. They did not communicate clearly with me
- IV. They did not keep me well informed about what other parties were doing (for example, about the situations of other buyers/sellers in the property chain)
- V. They did not explain their firm's charges properly
- VI. I was not happy with the member of staff looking after my work

Q4 Since the 14th of December 2007, houses being sold in England and Wales must have a Home Information Pack (often referred to as HIPs), containing information about the property and local area. This includes an energy performance certificate and details of local authority searches.

If you sold a property that required a HIP, did your solicitor provide this for you?

Yes; No (please state the provider if known); I don't know; I haven't sold a property since 14 December 2007.

Q4.1 Thinking about the HIP provided for you by your solicitor, to what extent do you agree or disagree that your HIP was good value for money in terms of the overall contribution it made to you being able to sell my property?

Strongly agree; Agree; Don't know; Disagree; Strongly disagree.

Q5 How did you find the solicitor that you used to help you buy, sell or re-mortgage property?

Code by the following:

- I used the solicitor that I or my family have used before
- I used one recommended by someone I know
- I used one located near to me (for example on your local high street)
- I found one by searching online
- I found one from a phone directory, or a directory services telephone service
- I used one recommended to me by the estate agent I used
- Other
- I don't know

Q5.1 If you were looking online for a solicitor, which resources or websites, if any, would you use?

Code by the following:

- A search engine (such as Google or Yahoo)
- The Law Society's 'Find a Solicitor' service
- A property website (such as Rightmove)
- Another website
- I don't know
- Other

Q6 In the future, if you required a solicitor to help you buy, sell or re-mortgage property, how likely or unlikely would you be to use the same solicitor that you used before?

Very likely; Fairly likely; Fairly unlikely; Very unlikely.

Q7 When choosing a solicitor to deal with buying or selling property, how important would each of the factors be to you?

Please rank each on a scale of 1-5, where 1=not at all important and 5=very important

- Someone you know recommends them
- They are a big well-known firm
- They have an office in the same area where the property is located
- They specialise in conveyancing
- They provide you with the cheapest quote

Q8 Thinking about how you might decide to use a particular solicitor to deal with buying or selling a property, how strongly would you agree or disagree with each of the following?

Agree strongly; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Disagree strongly.

- I would be happy to use a solicitor recommended to me by my estate agent
- If my estate agent received a commission from a solicitor, I would be happy to use that solicitor if my estate agent recommended them
- Don't know

Q9 And how strongly would you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about using solicitors on property deals?

Agree strongly; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Disagree strongly.

- Using a solicitor recommended by my estate agent would save me time
- I'm not sure how to find a new solicitor so it would be helpful for my estate agent to recommend one
- An estate agent would probably recommend a solicitor who is an expert in property deals
- I would prefer to find my own solicitor, rather than have one recommended to me by an estate agent

Q10 If you had to sell a property quickly to raise money, how important or unimportant would it be to you that your solicitor:

Very important; Fairly important; Fairly unimportant; Very unimportant; Don't know (not prompted).

- Provides a cheap, competitive quote for the conveyancing work?
- Promises to help me get the property sold quickly?
- Helps me understand other options open to me besides selling the property?
- Is sympathetic to my personal circumstances?

Q11 How important are each of the following factors in helping you to decide which solicitor to use during a property deal?

Please rank these factors in order, with the most important first, then the second most important, and so on.

- Cost
- Their knowledge of the local area
- Personal contact
- Using a solicitor I've used before