

Legal Needs of Individuals in England and Wales

Summary report 2024

Jointly commissioned by The Legal Services Board and The Law Society



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About the research

This report presents the findings from the Legal Needs Survey 2023 of individuals in England and Wales (referred to as “the 2023 survey”). It follows from the Legal Needs Survey 2019 (referred to as “the 2019 survey”). Relevant comparisons between the 2023 and the 2019 surveys will be made in this report. Both surveys use the OECD guidance¹ on how to develop legal needs surveys, and the questionnaire design reflects the best practice outlined in that guidance.

The survey asks whether people have experienced one or more of 34 different types of legal issue in the last four years, for example divorce or buying a property (see technical report for a full list of issues). It then moves on to explore how they handled one legal issue and their reasons for seeking or not seeking help with that issue. Where someone has experienced more than one legal issue, they are asked about the least-common issue, to better enable analysis of low-incidence experiences. The survey also explores general attitudes such as their perceptions of the justice system and legal services.

In using the OECD framework on how to identify legal need in surveys, this research allows us to understand levels of met and unmet legal need across the population – i.e. the proportion of people who need professional support to deal with a legal issue and, within that, the proportion of people who do or do not receive adequate support. Further guidance and analysis on measuring legal need is provided later in this summary report and the accompanying technical report.

Method

The main findings are based on a sample of 17,668 adults living in England and Wales (age 18+), collected online between 19th October and 15th December 2023. These were drawn from the YouGov UK panel of people who have signed up to participate in market research.

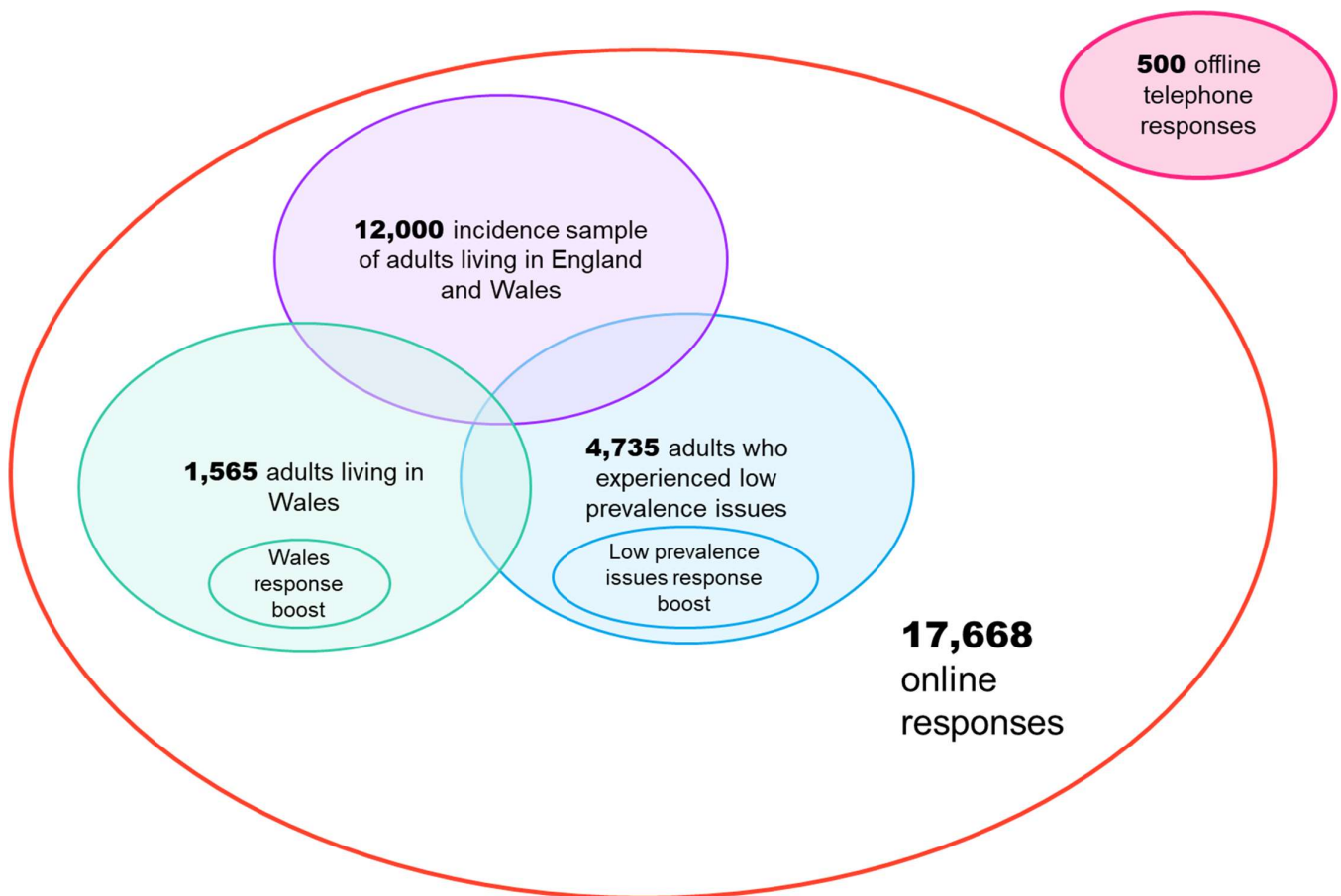
Consistent with the approach taken in the 2019 survey, an initial sample of 12,000 respondents was drawn to be nationally representative of all adults in England and Wales. After this initial phase, fieldwork focussed on low-incidence types of legal issue to increase the numbers available for analysis. Data is weighted to the representative profile of adults in England and Wales by age, gender, region, social grade, education level, and ethnicity.

¹ [OECD \(2019\). *Legal needs Surveys and Access to Justice*](#)

Additionally, to enable more detailed analysis in understanding the legal needs of individuals in Wales, the number of respondents surveyed in Wales was boosted over and above the representative proportion. In total, 1,565 respondents were surveyed in Wales and their answers have been down-weighted to reflect the correct proportion of adults in Wales in the total population of England and Wales.

Additionally, to support the main findings which were collected through an online method, a supplementary sample of 500 offline adults was collected via telephone by Kudos Research. The sample criteria was offline adults who live in England and Wales but are infrequent users (less than once a month) or non-users of the internet, so that analysis can be conducted of the legal needs of those who may be digitally excluded. Offline participants were contacted via a telephone call and asked a screener question to confirm their eligibility to participate in the survey. The sample of the offline population is unweighted and skews heavily to those over 65 years of age, as they are statistically more likely to not have internet access.

Stages of data collection



Guidance on interpretation of data

The data in this report represents the views of a sample designed to be nationally representative of adults who live in England and Wales. Therefore, when looking at data at the total population level (e.g. incidence of legal issues, attitudes towards the legal system), inferences can be made that the views of the sample collected here represent the views of the wider population.

As the second stage of sampling boosted the numbers of people who experienced low-incidence legal issues, the “What legal issues do people experience” chapter exploring prevalence rates is based on the initial 12,000 sample only.

Where possible, comparisons have been made with the 2019 survey. The 2019 survey was representative of the populations in England and Wales, but the sample and weight frame did not include controls on distribution of the population by ethnicity. The 2023 survey is designed to be representative of ethnicity across England and Wales and so, for data from the 2023 survey, some analysis is provided by ethnicity. This means that the sample frame and weight scheme applied differ between the 2019 survey and the 2023 survey. Where comparisons to the 2019 survey are provided, these are provided as percentage point changes to zero decimal places. For accuracy, where the percentage point change is affected by rounding, this is noted in a footnote.

The offline population is not included in the main data and findings. Where possible, points where the offline population differ in their views and experiences to the online population have been noted. To control for the fact that the offline population is older, comparisons have been made against participants to the online survey who are aged 65 years and over.

All differences reported have been tested for statistical significance to the 95% confidence level. This is the level typically used for detecting statistical differences and indicates there is a one in 20 chance of the difference occurring by chance alone. Figures and bars in charts may not align or sum to the net percentage figure due to rounding.

Key concepts and definitions

This research covers a number of concepts and terms related to the provision of legal services in England and Wales. Below we outline what these terms mean.

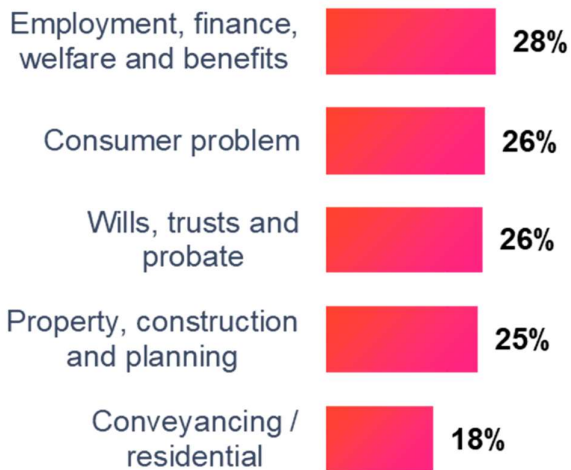
- **Legal issues:** A problem issue or question that can be resolved or answered by law. The research asked people if they had experienced one or more of 34 different legal issues such as divorce or buying a property (full list provided in technical report).
- **Contentious legal issues:** Contentious legal work relates to legal matters that take place when there is a dispute between two or more parties, which can involve mediation, arbitrations, courts, and tribunals.
- **Non-contentious legal issues:** Non-contentious legal work relates to transactions occurring between parties where there is not a dispute, such as the sale or purchase of a house, or advisory work.
- **Main adviser:** The survey identified who, if anyone, individuals dealing with a legal issue got help from. An individual's main adviser was whom they considered to be their main source of help.
- **Legal confidence:** A score measuring a person's confidence that they could personally achieve a fair and positive outcome in legal scenarios. Two-fifths (38%) of adults in England and Wales have a low level of legal confidence, 50% have a medium level, and 12% have a high level of legal confidence.
- **Accessibility of justice:** A score measuring the degree to which someone thinks the justice system, excluding criminal justice, is accessible. One-fifth (21%) think justice is very accessible, with a high score. Over half (56%) have a medium score and 23% have a low score.
- **Accessibility of lawyers:** A score measuring the extent to which someone thinks lawyers, excluding criminal lawyers, are accessible. One in ten (12%) have a high score, a fifth (19%) have a medium score, and a similar proportion (22%) have a low score. Just under half (47%) of people are unsure how accessible lawyers are.
- **Legal need:** When an individual needs support to deal with a legal issue.
- **Met legal need:** When the legal need is resolved, and the help was useful.
- **Unmet legal need:** When the legal need is not resolved adequately because there was no support/ the support was not helpful.
- **Offline adults:** Refers to the findings of the CATI sample (offline adults who live in the England and Wales but are infrequent users (less than once a month) or non-users of the internet)

Key findings

PREVALENCE

66% of people have experienced at least one legal issue in the last four years

The most common issues:



EXTERNAL FACTORS

Among those with a contentious issue...

23% believe **COVID-19** made their legal issue worse

26% believe the **cost of living** made their legal issue worse

Young people, and those from ethnic minorities, are more likely than average to say their issue was made worse by these external factors



62% of those with an issue received help
Approx. 26 million people



52% got professional help



11% only got non-professional help

Young people do seek help, but look to non-professional friends/ family (18% under 35s)

MET AND UNMET LEGAL NEED

Looking at the experience of those with a resolved contentious issue which started since 2016...



Help was inadequate

What legal issues do people experience?

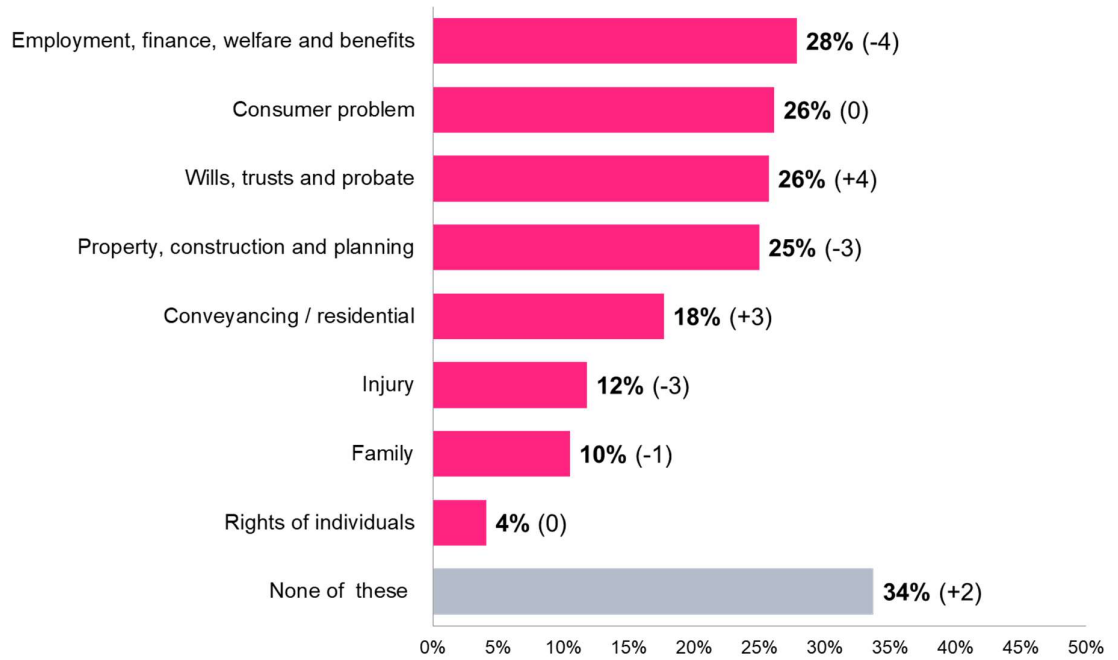
Two-thirds (66%) of people within the initial incidence sample have reported experiencing a [legal issue](#) within the last four years, representing a two percentage point increase since the 2019 survey. The most commonly experienced legal issues relate to employment, finance, welfare and benefits, with roughly three in ten (28%) reporting to have experienced this type of legal issue.

Reported incidents regarding consumer problems remains consistent with the 2019 survey's figure, and the prevalence of property, construction and planning issues has declined by three percentage points since the 2019 survey. However, there has been a notable four percentage point rise over the last four years in the proportion of people reporting an experience concerning wills, trusts and probate.

Outside of the most broadly experienced legal issues, almost one in five (18%) people report having experienced a conveyancing/ residential legal issue, a three percentage point rise in incidence since the 2019 survey. Likewise, there has also been a sizeable increase since the 2019 survey in the proportion of people who have experienced a [contentious issue](#), rising by four percentage points to 57% in 2023.

Less than two-fifths (37%) of [offline adults](#) report experiencing a legal issue in the last four years, with 21% reporting a contentious issue and 24% experiencing a non-contentious issue. The most common issue among offline adults is to do with wills, trusts, and probate – a quarter (25%) report dealing with this in the last four years. All other legal issues are experienced by less than one in ten offline respondents.

Figure 1. Incidence of legal issue over the past four years



Base: All respondents to incidence sample (12,000)

Percentage point changes compared to the 2019 survey shown in brackets

How do people understand the nature of their legal issues?

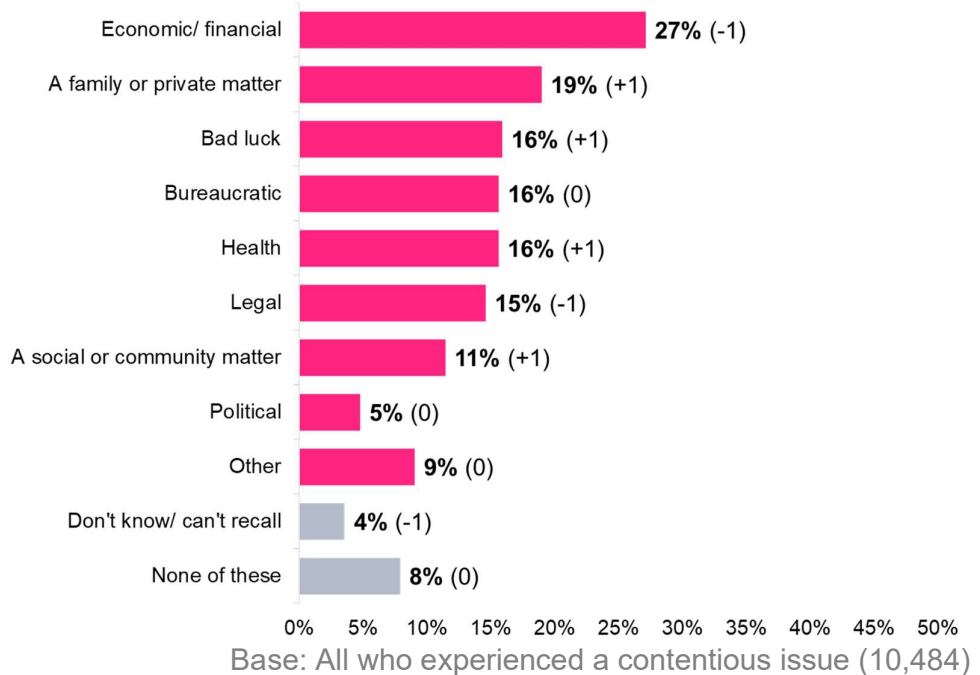
How is the issue described?

An individual’s understanding of the nature and severity of their issue has an impact on if and how they seek help. People’s description of a [contentious issue](#) they have experienced remains broadly consistent with the 2019 survey. At an overall level, the most common description of an issue is economic or financial (27%).

Meanwhile, bad luck, bureaucratic, and health are each used to describe 16% of issues. Notably, those with low accessibility of justice are more likely than those with high accessibility to describe their issue as bureaucratic (21% vs 10%). Whereas [offline adults](#) are more likely than online adults to describe their issue as health related (23% vs 16%).

These descriptions are closely followed by the proportion who describe their issue as legal in nature (15%), where those who describe it as such were more likely than average to have received help (73%). This pattern is consistent with findings from the 2019 survey.

Figure 2. Description of contentious issue



Similarly, the reported seriousness of issues remains broadly consistent with the 2019 survey, with a median score of 5 and mean value of 5.18 (on a scale of “1 – the least serious” to “10 – the most serious”). There is a relatively even distribution across the scale of seriousness, with 41% saying their issue is less serious (1 to 4), and 44% saying it is more serious (6 to 10). It is worth noting that those who have low [accessibility of lawyers](#) and justice are more likely to note their issue as more serious (48% and 49% respectively).

Did external factors cause or contribute to the contentious issue?

When considering external factors – such as Brexit (the UK’s exit from the EU), the COVID-19 pandemic, and increases in inflation/ the cost of living – some of those with a [contentious issue](#) felt that these either caused or had some impact on their issue.

Indeed, 5% believe that their issue was caused by Brexit, whilst 12% believe that Brexit made their issue worse. This does increase for those with high [legal confidence](#), with 12% of those with high legal confidence saying Brexit caused their issue and 23% believing it made their issue worse.

² To two decimal places, the percentage point change between the 2019 survey and the 2023 survey for describing a contentious legal issue as relating to “health” is +0.45% (15.14% 2019 vs 15.59%)
To two decimal places, the percentage point change between the 2019 survey and the 2023 survey for selecting “none of these” is -0.56% (8.34% 2019 vs 7.78% 2023).

Likewise, those from ethnic minority backgrounds are also much more likely than the overall sample to think their issue was caused by Brexit (10% vs 5%) and just under a quarter (23%) think it was made worse by Brexit. Similar to those from an ethnic minority³, 18 to 34 year olds (8%) are more likely than average to think their issue was caused by Brexit, and 20% think it was made worse by it. This could be related to younger people's views concerning Brexit, which is exemplified by younger people being less likely to have voted Leave in 2016.⁴

While 12% of people report that their issue was caused by COVID-19, this is also a view more likely to be held by those from an ethnic minority or 18 to 34 year olds. Just under a fifth of those from ethnic minority backgrounds or 18 to 34 years old (17% and 16%, respectively) think their issue was caused by the pandemic. Moreover, three in ten of those from ethnic minority backgrounds and 18-34 year olds (both 29%) think the COVID-19 pandemic made their issue worse.

Finally, 15% felt that their issue was caused by increases in inflation/ the cost of living, which makes it the most impactful external factor. This feeling was more likely to be felt by people with a gross annual household income of £32,000 or less (17%) than those earning over £60,000 (11%). Moreover, 26% believe that their issue was made worse by the cost of living, with those earning a household income of £32,000 or less (28%) again being much more likely to say so than those earning over £60,000 (21%), which may be related to lower income households being typically more adversely affected by the cost of living⁵.

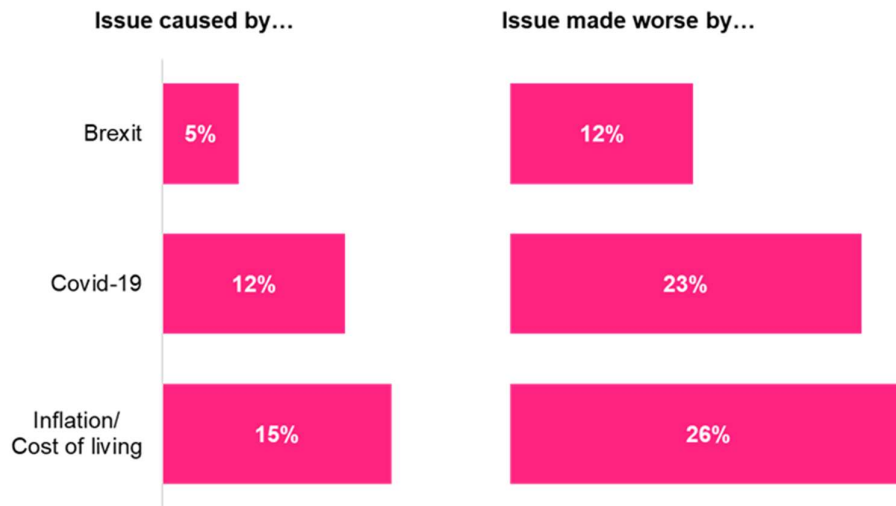
A similar sentiment to those with low household income is felt among ethnic minorities and 18-34 year olds. Indeed, 22% of 18 to 34 year olds and 23% of ethnic minorities believe the cost of living caused their issue. A third of 18 to 34 year olds and those from ethnic minority backgrounds (both 34%) believe the cost of living made their issue worse.

³ Please note that census data has shown that those from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to be from younger age groups, which could also influence perceptions concerning Brexit. More information about the age groups can be found on GOV.UK [here](#). Accessed 19th March 2024

⁴ YouGov, [How Britain voted at the EU Referendum \(2016\)](#). Accessed 31st January 2024

⁵ House of Lords, [Cost of Living: Impact on Public Wellbeing](#). Accessed 11th April 2024

Figure 3. Impact of external factors



Base: All who experienced a contentious issue (10,484)

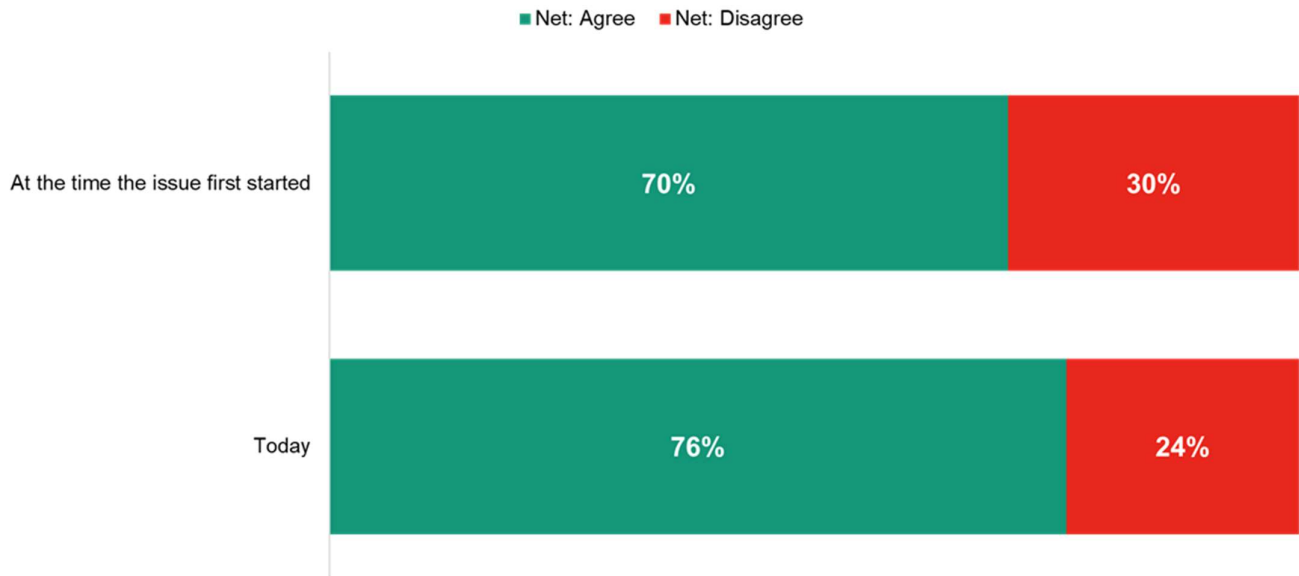
Do people understand their rights?

Seven in ten (70%) of those who experienced a [contentious issue](#) agree that they understood their legal rights and responsibilities at the time the issue first started, with more (76%) agreeing that they understand their legal rights and responsibilities “today” (i.e. the date of their survey response, after their issue first started).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, those with low [legal confidence](#) are less likely than average to agree that they understood their legal rights and responsibilities at the time when the issue first started (57%) and do “today” (63%). Similarly, 58% with low [accessibility of justice](#), agree they understood their rights and responsibilities at the time the issue first started, and 66% agree that they do today.

Figure 4. Understanding rights and responsibilities

Understanding legal rights and responsibilities...



Base: All who experienced a contentious issue (10,484)

What did they experience as a result?

As a result of or as part of their [contentious issue](#), a majority said they experienced stress (53%), making it the most common experience (as it was in the 2019 survey). This was more likely to be experienced by those with a gross annual household income of £32,000 or less than those with a household income of £60,000 or more (55% vs 49%). Results also showed that 54% of people who are white experienced stress, compared with 50% of people from an ethnic minority background.

Three in ten (29%) report experiencing financial loss, which is a four percentage point decline from the 2019 survey. Ill-health or injury was the third most-common experience, with 16% experiencing it, a decline of two percentage points from the 2019 survey. This is more likely to have been experienced by those on lower incomes (gross annual household income of £32k or less) than those on higher incomes (gross annual household income of £60k or more) (20% vs 11%).

What is the desired outcome?

The three most-desired resolutions of [contentious issues](#) are money or property (22%), somebody recognising rights or meeting responsibilities (22%), and an apology (20%). These all remain unchanged from the 2019 survey.

Compared to the 2019 survey, there has been a one percentage decrease in the proportion of people desiring a change to a decision (to 14%) and a change to the nature of a relationship (to 6%).

What do people do in response to experiencing a legal issue?

Who gets help on their legal issue?

Most people (62%), who faced a [contentious or non-contentious legal issue](#) in the last four years, received some form of help (figure 5). This is a four percentage point drop from the proportion in the 2019 survey who got help. Half received help from a professional (52%) while one in ten (11%) only got help from a non-professional family member or friend. The proportion getting help from professionals has dropped compared to the 2019 survey by three percentage points, while the proportion getting help from only friends/ family members is consistent with the previous survey.

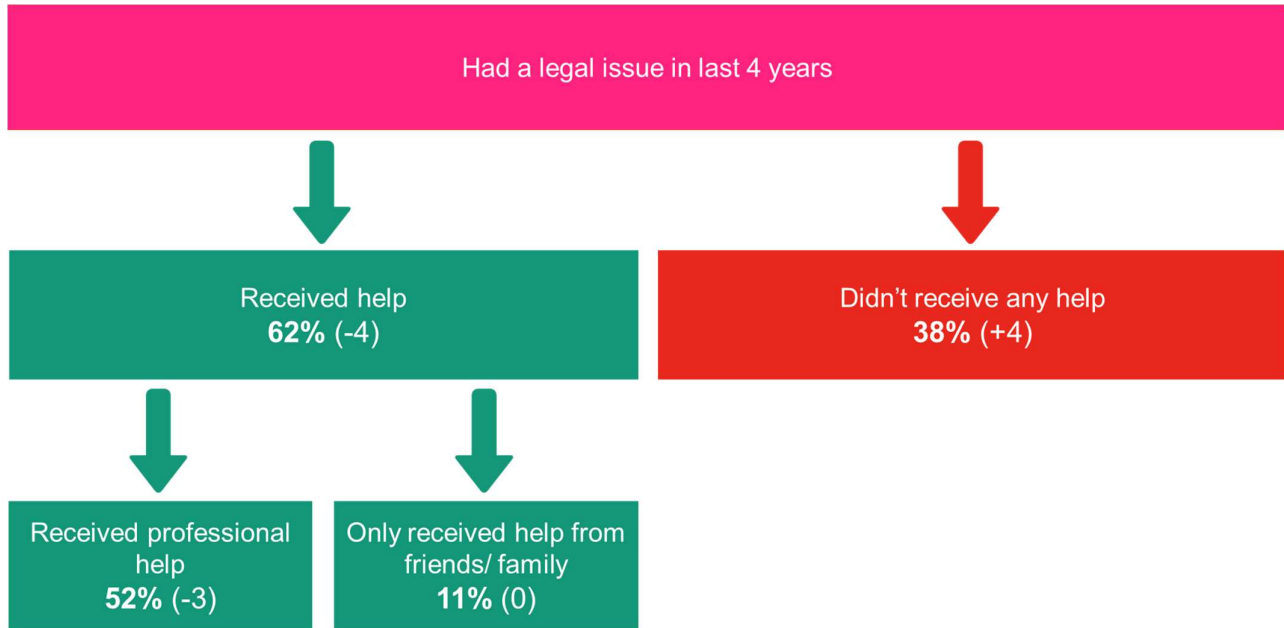
As in the 2019 survey, those with a non-contentious legal issue were more likely to have received help from a professional (68%) compared to those with a contentious issue (48%).

Those with a contentious issue described as legal in nature are the most likely to get any form of help (73%) and the most likely to specifically get professional help (66%). Those who consider their contentious issue serious in nature are also more likely than those with less-severe issues to get professional support (41% low, 48% medium, 59% high).

Perceived [accessibility of lawyers](#) is also associated with getting professional help for a contentious or non-contentious issue – those who think lawyers are highly accessible are much more likely to get professional help (45% low, 57% medium, 63% high). Correspondingly, those with low levels of [legal confidence](#) are less likely to successfully get professional help (47% low, 54% medium, 59% high) and more likely to get help from friends/ family members (13% low, 10% medium, 7% high).

When focusing upon age, nearly two-thirds (63%) of 18 to 34 year olds got help with their legal issue in the last four years, compared to 59% of those aged 65 and over. However, young adults are more likely to say they only got help from non-professional friends/ family members (18% 18 to 34 year olds vs 7% 65+).

Figure 5. Legal issue handling strategies



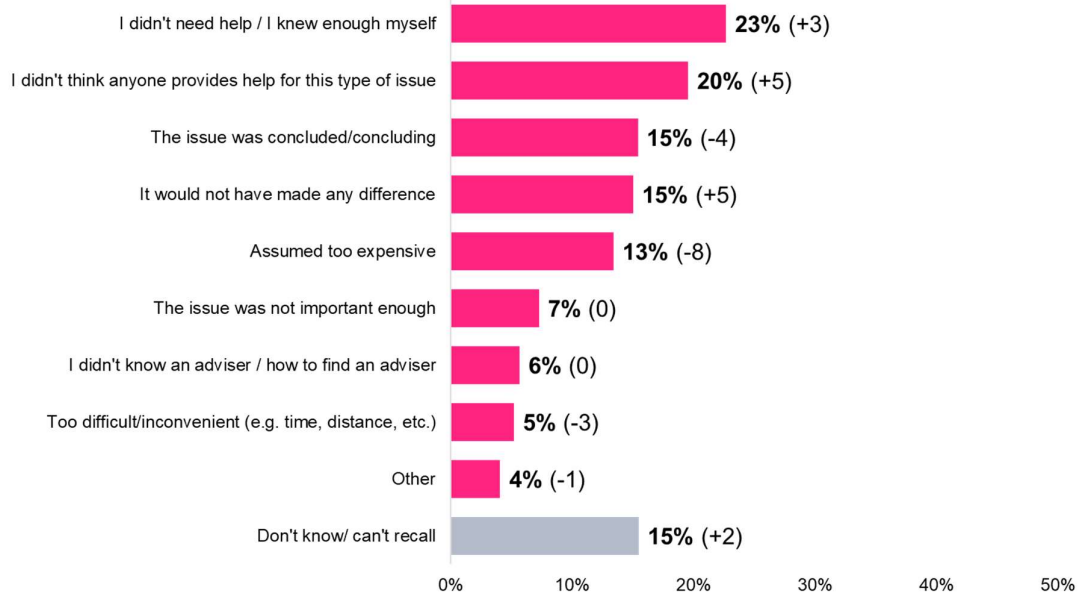
Base: All with a contentious or non-contentious legal issue in the last four years (12,594)

Reasons for not obtaining legal and professional advice

Whilst 38% did not receive any help, a small proportion of respondents did not try to seek independent help to resolve their [legal issue](#). Among those who did not try to seek independent help, 23% report that they knew enough themselves and 20% that they did not know anyone that provides help for their issue. Those with high [legal confidence](#) are more likely than those with low legal confidence to say they knew enough themselves (18% low, 25% medium, 32% high). Those dealing with a [non-contentious issue](#) are more likely than those dealing with a contentious issue to report knowing enough themselves to deal with it (34% vs 22%).

The 23% who reported that they did not need help because they knew enough has grown by three percentage points since the 2019 survey (figure six). Similarly, the proportion who report that they did not think anyone provides help or that getting help would not have made any difference have both risen by five percentage points. In contrast, the proportion who assumed help would be too expensive has fallen by eight percentage points.

Figure 6. Reasons for not getting help to resolve their legal issue



Base: All who did not try to get independent help for contentious/ non-contentious legal issue (1,128)

Percentage point changes compared to the 2019 survey shown in brackets

A third (35%) of those with a contentious legal issue said it was not important enough to try to get help from an independent adviser. That rises to nearly half (46%) of those who gave their contentious issue a low severity score. In contrast, those who considered their contentious legal issue to be of high severity and did not try to get help said they assumed it would be too expensive (26%) or did not think there were advisers that could help (21%).

The government funds legal aid for legal services for people who meet certain eligibility criteria, where the problem is serious and where people cannot afford to pay for legal costs. However, people are unsure what issues legal aid is currently available for. When asked what types of issue legal aid is currently available for, three in ten (29%) did not know if it was available for any. Half think that legal aid is available for issues related to crime (49%) and two-fifths think it is available for domestic violence (43%).

Those on lower incomes are more likely to think legal aid is not available. Those with a gross annual household income of £32,000 or less are the most likely to say that legal aid is not available for any issues (9% vs 6% with over £60k). Only a quarter (24%) of those on lower incomes think legal aid is available for welfare/ benefits issues, compared to 32% of those with higher incomes (over £60k). People do think legal aid should be available for most issues: over half say that legal aid should be available for each type of legal issue, with 72% saying it should be available for issues around domestic violence.

How do people access help with legal issues?

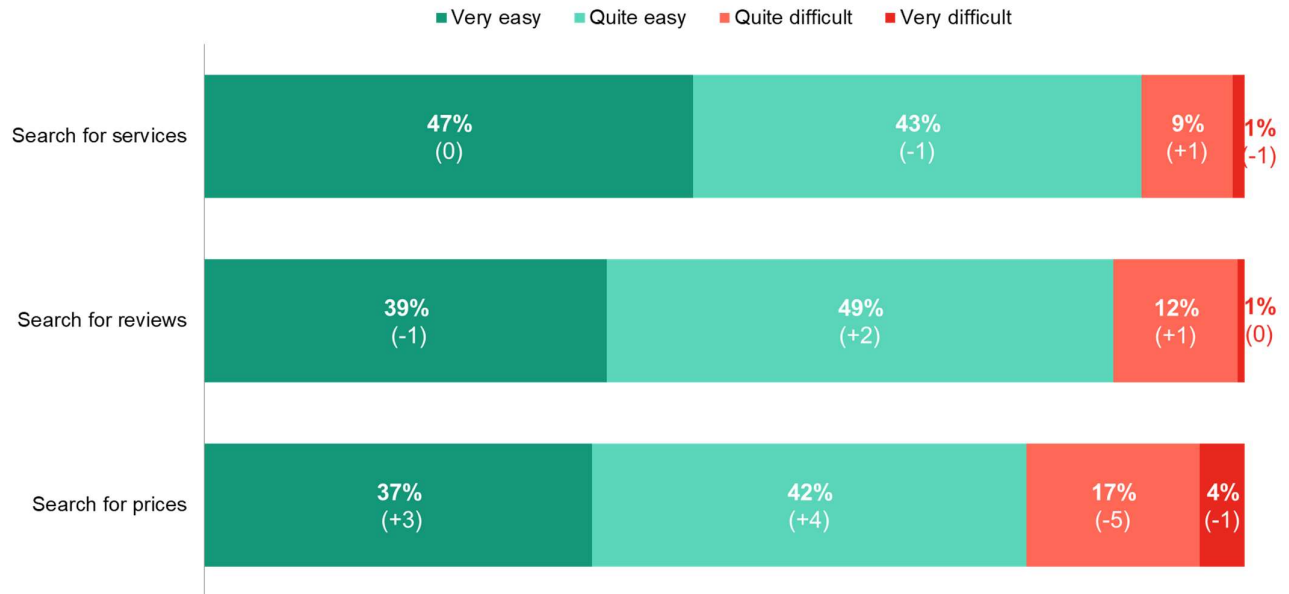
Who shops around & do they compare prices?

The research indicates that shopping around for a [main adviser](#) is important. Those with a [contentious issue](#) who searched for services to find their adviser are more likely than those who did not/ are unsure to say that their main adviser was value for money (88% vs 82%).

When focusing on *who* shops around, those with high [legal confidence](#) are much more likely than those with low confidence to report that they search for prices when looking for a main adviser to help deal with their contentious issue (21% vs 11%). There has also been an increase since the 2019 survey in the proportion of high legal confidence individuals who search for services - a four percentage point increase to a quarter (27%).

The majority who search for these prices and services find it easy. This is reflected by nine in ten (90%) of those who searched for services reporting it being easy, and eight in ten (78%) finding it easy to search for prices. Those with low legal confidence are much more likely to say that they found searching for prices of their main adviser very difficult (9% vs 1%).

Figure 7. Ease of searching for services, searching for reviews and searching for prices



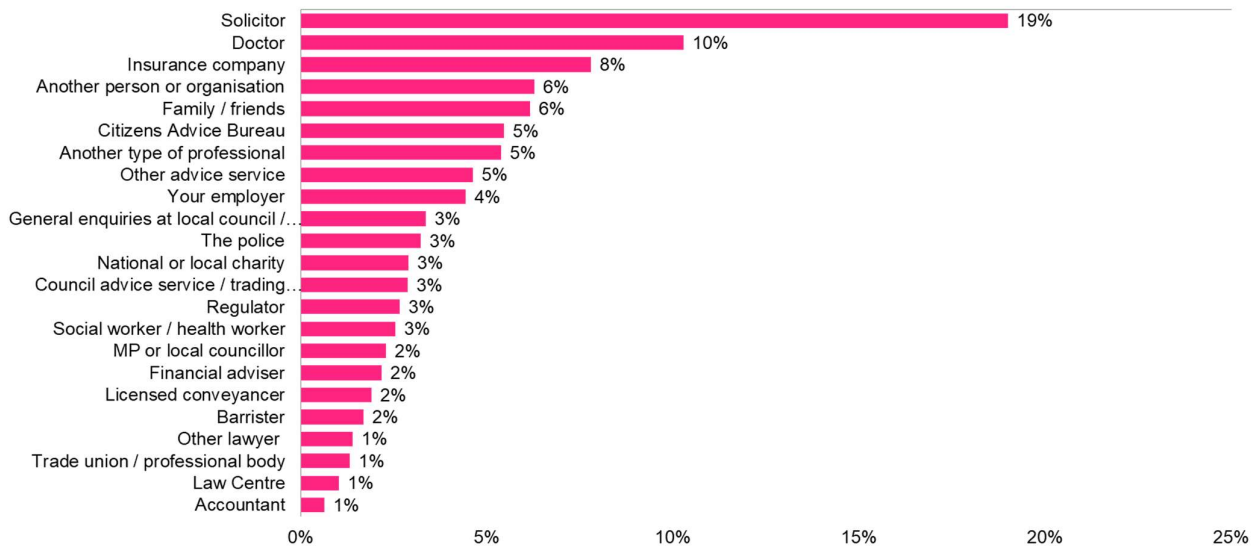
Base: All who did this when looking for a main adviser for their contentious issue (searched for services=1317; searched for prices=634; searched for reviews=685)
 Percentage point changes compared to the 2019 survey shown in brackets⁶

⁶ To two decimal places, the percentage point change between the 2019 survey and the 2023 survey for considering it “very difficult” to search for services is -0.32% (1.52% 2019 vs 1.20% 2023).
 To two decimal places, the percentage point change between the 2019 survey and the 2023 survey for considering it

Who are people’s main adviser and how do they choose that main adviser?

While solicitors are still the most frequently used [main adviser](#) for [contentious issues](#) in England and Wales (19%), their reported usage sees a two percentage point decrease since the 2019 survey. In contrast, 2023 sees a notable increase in the use of insurance companies for advice – rising by two percentage points since the 2019 survey to 8%.⁷

Figure 8. Most commonly used main adviser to handle a contentious issue over the last four years



Base: All with a main adviser for a contentious legal issue (5,144)

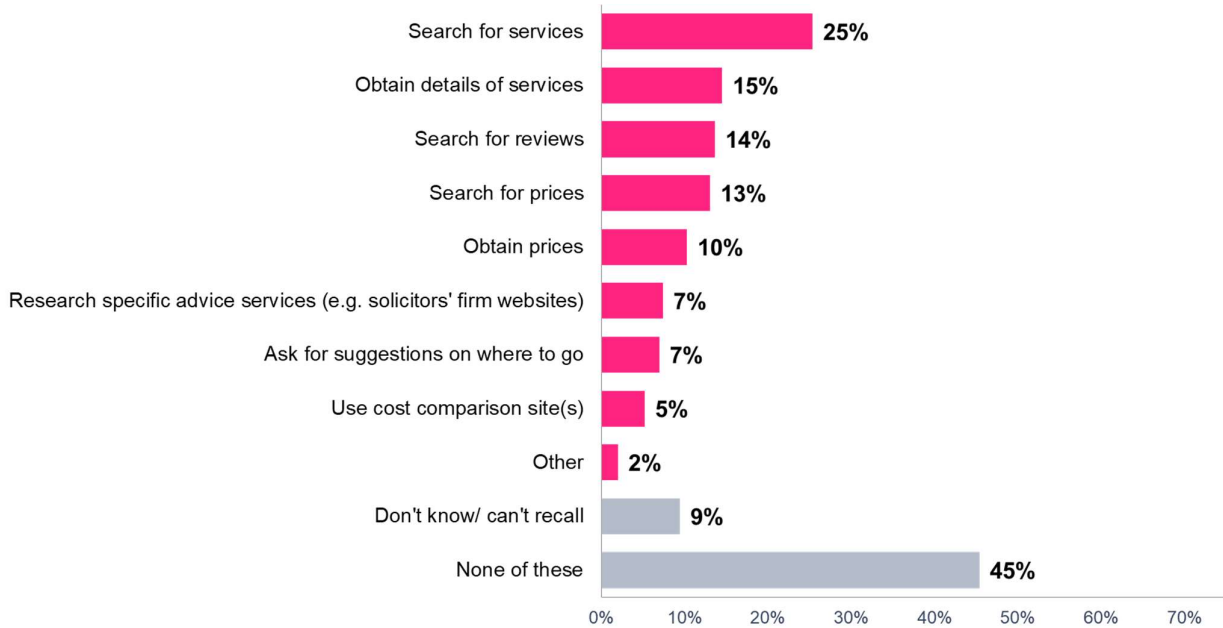
The results suggest that there is a slight increase in searching for services when choosing a main adviser, with a quarter (25%) having searched around this year, a rise of four percentage points from the 2019 survey. Other research undertaken by those seeking a main adviser includes: obtaining service details (15%), searching for reviews (14%) and searching for prices (13%), which are also common activities people do while choosing their main adviser. A third of those with a contentious legal issue who did not make any comparisons between more than one legal provider were happy with their first main adviser result (32%).

⁷ “very easy” to search for reviews is -1.79% (40.29% 2019 vs 38.50% 2023)

To two decimal places, the percentage point change between the 2019 survey and the 2023 survey for considering it “very difficult” to search for prices is -1.85% (6.37% 2019 vs 4.52% 2023)

⁷ To two decimal places, the percentage point change between the 2019 survey and the 2023 survey using an insurance company as a main adviser for a contentious issue is +1.38% (6.43% 2019 vs 7.81% 2023).

Figure 9. Strategies for finding their main contentious issue adviser



Base: All with a main adviser for a contentious legal issue (5,144)

How do they communicate?

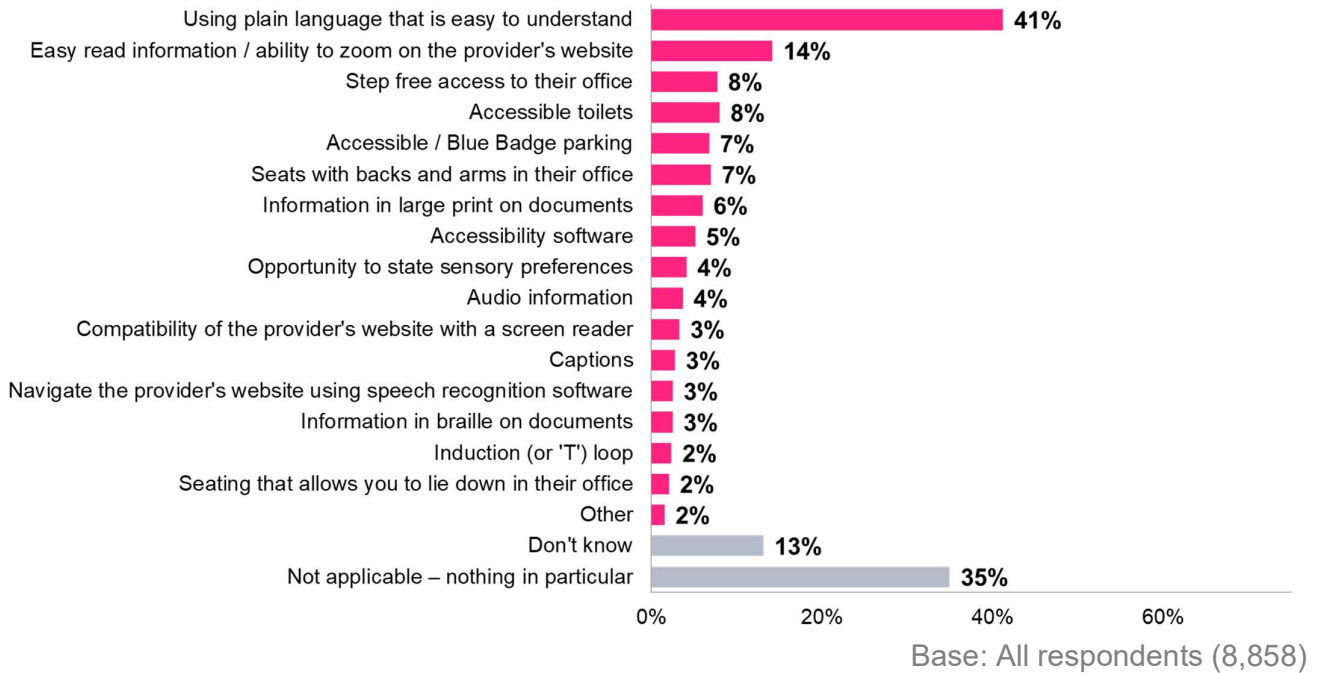
Direct communication over the telephone (28%) or face to face (27%) prove to be the main method of contact for [main advisers](#) for [contentious issues](#), with another quarter citing that they communicated via email (24%).

However, these most commonly used methods of communication differ to how people prefer to be contacted by their main adviser. When respondents were asked what method of communication they would prefer, three in ten (32%) preferred face to face method of communication, which is higher than those who preferred communication via telephone (26%) or via email (26%). This desire for human connection and traditional face to face communication when people contact their main advisor is reflected by their perceptions of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Indeed, the main barriers to using AI to access services are a lack of trust in AI technology (51%) and a lack of human oversight (49%).

For a vast majority of those with a contentious issue it was easy to contact their main adviser using their chosen methods, with almost nine in ten (86%) reporting this to be the case. Yet, there is still evidence that communication could be enhanced through using plain language and by making information clearer. Indeed, two in five (41%) of all adults that used an advisor report that communication could be improved by using plain language that is easy to understand. This was followed by one in seven (14%) saying that they would benefit from easy to read information or having the ability to zoom on the provider's website.

This is apparent among those with low [legal confidence](#), who are more likely than those with high legal confidence to say that legal services would have been made easier if the main adviser used plain language that is easy to understand (44% vs 35%).

Figure 10. How services could be improved



Do outcomes meet people's needs?

What is the ease/ satisfaction of dealing with the issue?

A majority (57%) of those with a resolved [legal issue](#) felt that it was easy to deal with, which is broadly unchanged from the 2019 survey. Furthermore, white people found it easier to deal with their issue than those from ethnic minority backgrounds (58% vs 51%).

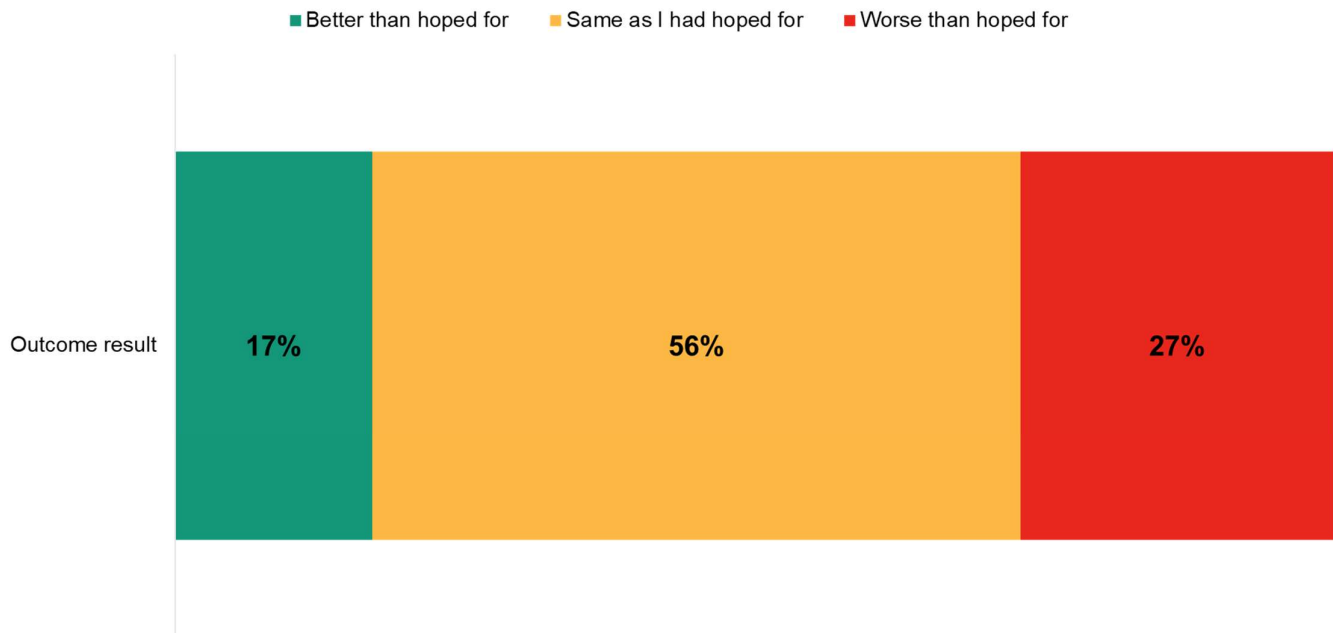
Almost nine in ten (88%) of those who had a [main adviser](#) were satisfied with their services.

Young people (18 to 34) are less likely to be satisfied with their main adviser than people aged 65 and over (83% vs 94%).

Was the outcome what they expected?

A majority of those with a resolved [contentious issue](#) feel that the outcome is the same as they had hoped for (56%), 17% think it was better, and 27% believe it was worse than what they had hoped for.

Figure 11. Outcome result



Base: All with a resolved contentious issue (7,496)

Those with high [accessibility of justice](#) and high legal confidence are more likely to say that the result of their contentious issue is better than they had hoped for (27%), whilst those with low accessibility of justice are more likely to say the result was worse than they had hoped for (38%).

Among those with a resolved contentious issue, younger people (18 to 34) are more likely to say the outcome was better than they had hoped for (20%), which has increased four percentage points from the 2019 survey. Those with a resolved issue from ethnic minority backgrounds are also more likely than white adults to say the outcome was better than they had hoped for (21% vs 16%).

Over two-thirds (71%) of all with a resolved contentious or non-contentious issue believe that the help they received helped them to get a better outcome, unchanged from the 2019 survey.

Furthermore, just over two thirds (67%) think that the outcome was fair to everyone concerned, again unchanged from the 2019 survey.

How was the issue resolved?

The most common method for those who experienced a [contentious issue](#) is to resolve it without formal or third-party interference. For example, just under a fifth say that they and the other party came to an agreement (18%), or the issue sorted itself out (17%), which broadly remain unchanged from the 2019 survey. Furthermore, 12% say that the other party did what they wanted, whilst one in ten say that they moved away from the issue or they/or all other parties gave up trying to resolve it (both 9%).

Just 5% say that their contentious issue was resolved by a court (or tribunal) judgement, a decline of three percentage points from the 2019 survey. However, those with high [accessibility of lawyers](#) are more likely to say that their issue was resolved by court (or tribunal) judgement (8%).

Exploring estimates of met and unmet legal need

This report includes analysis of the OECD-based model to estimate levels of [met and unmet legal need](#). The approach is consistent with analysis conducted in the 2019 survey, which was drawn from the OECD guidance⁸ and was developed in partnership by YouGov, the Legal Services Board and The Law Society. Professor Pascoe Pleasance, who is a principal author of the OECD guidance, advised on the approach used.

There were 34 different [legal issues](#) asked about in the survey. If, based on their survey answers, it is established that people needed professional support to deal with their issue, they are considered to have a legal need. If the support was helpful and the issue is resolved, the need has been met. If they did not get support with their legal need, the support was not helpful, or the issue took too long to resolve (over two years) the need is unmet.

A number of judgements and key assumptions have been made to create a workable model with the available data. Further details of those can be found in the technical report.

Contentious legal need

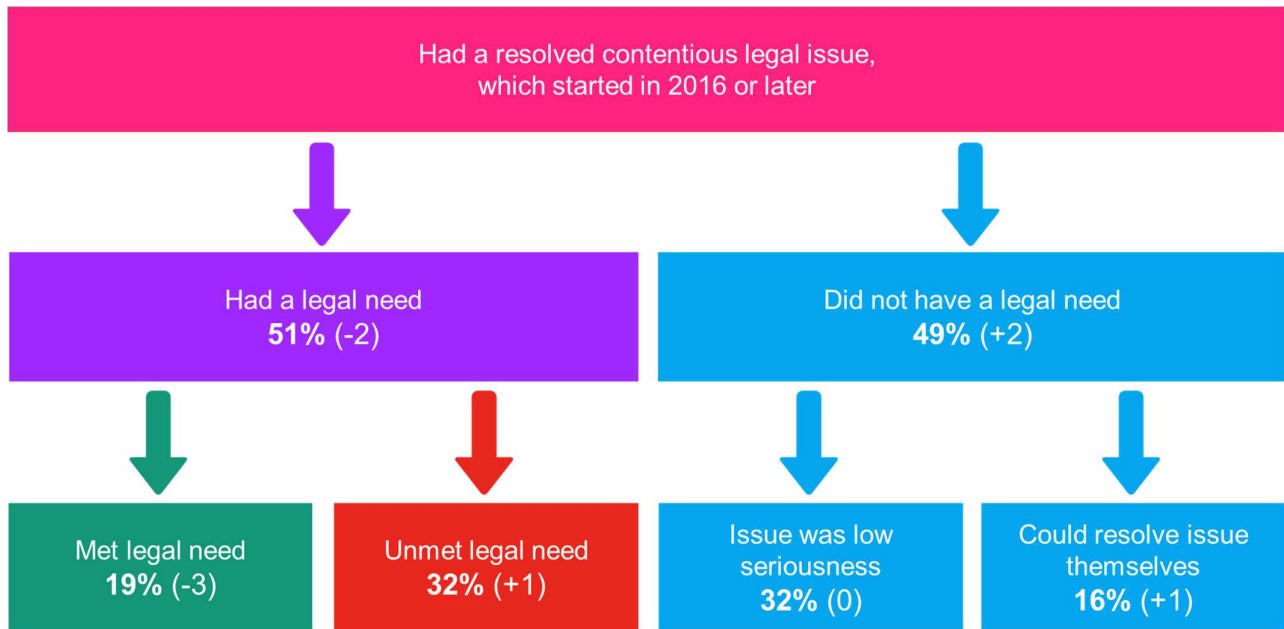
When the model is applied to resolved [contentious issues](#), half (51%) of people with a concluded [legal issue](#) are deemed to have had a [legal need](#) (i.e. needed support to deal with their legal issue). A similar proportion (49%) are estimated to not have a legal need – primarily because they did not consider their issue to be serious (32%).

⁸ OECD (2019). [Legal Needs Surveys and Access to Justice](#).

One in six with a resolved contentious issue are considered to have no legal need because they could resolve the issue themselves (16%) – that is, they have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities, feel confident they can resolve the issue, and overall think the process is fair to all participants regardless of the outcome.

One in five (19%) have a met legal need as a result of obtaining adequate professional help, which has fallen three percentage points since the 2019 survey. A third (32%) of those with a resolved contentious issue have an unmet legal need, primarily because they did not get professional help (20%). However, 3% report that the help they received was not adequate (i.e. they would have liked more information or assistance) and one in ten (10%) report that the issue took too long (i.e. more than two years to resolve).

Figure 12. Model estimates of met and unmet legal need for people with a resolved contentious legal issue



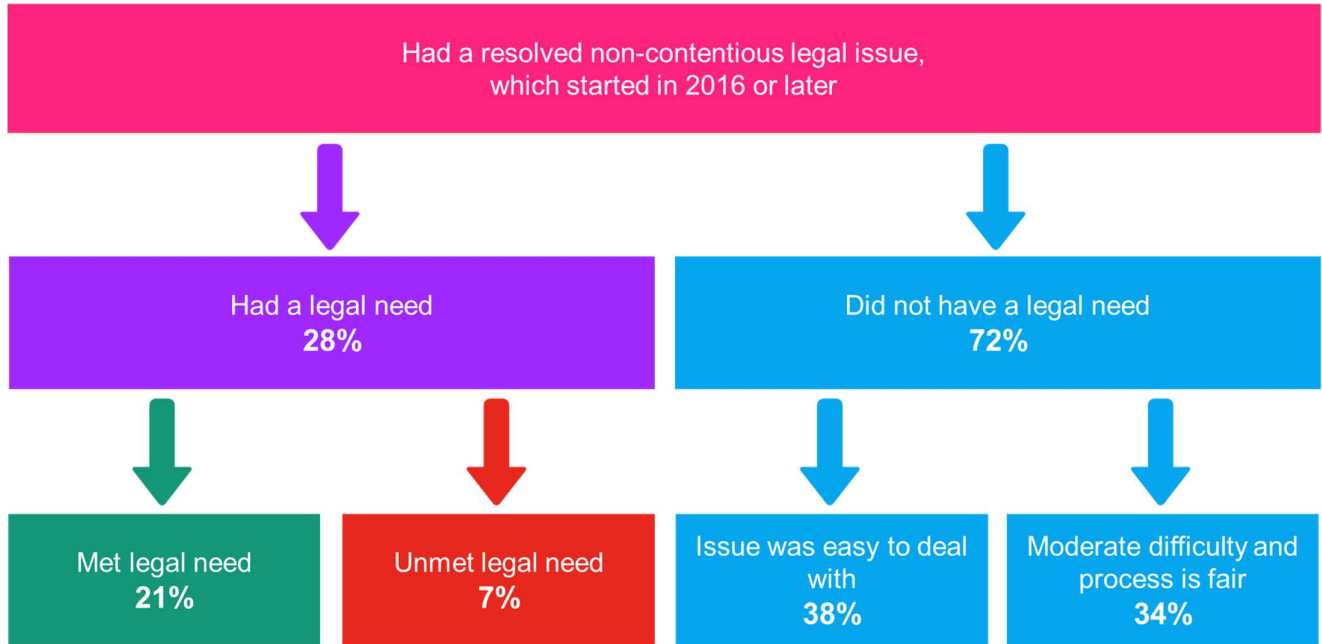
Base: All who had a resolved contentious legal issue that started in 2016 or later (7,203)

Non contentious legal need

With a modified model for resolved [non-contentious issues](#), 28% are estimated to have [a legal need](#). Most have no legal need. Two fifths (38%) of those with a resolved non-contentious legal issue have no legal need as their issue was very easy to deal with. A third (34%) have no legal need due to moderate ease of dealing with the issue, good awareness and legal understanding and a belief that the process is generally fair to everyone regardless of the outcome.

One in five (21%) of those with a resolved non-contentious legal issue have a met legal need as a result of obtaining adequate professional help, while 7% have an unmet legal need – either because they did not get professional help, or because the help was inadequate. The proportions of met and unmet legal need for non-contentious issues are unchanged from the 2019 survey.

Figure 13. Model estimates of met and unmet legal need for people with a resolved non-contentious legal issue



Base: All who had a resolved contentious legal issue that started in 2016 or later (1,741)