



# HEADLINE FINDINGS

Solicitors Regulation Authority

18<sup>th</sup> January 2016



# METHODOLOGY

## Methodology Note

ComRes interviewed 1,810 adults in England and Wales online between 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> January 2016. Data were weighted to be representative of all adults in England and Wales aged 18+.

## Guidelines for the Public Use of Survey Results

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- 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.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than four in five English and Welsh adults (86%) say that solicitors should be regulated. This is the highest proportion of all professions tested, and similar to doctors (85%), dentists (82%) and accountants (81%).

The majority of adults in England and Wales (68%) report being more likely to trust a profession that is independently regulated, while just one in ten (10%) say that the same of a profession that regulates itself.

Accordingly, there is widespread support for the idea of solicitors being regulated independently (82%), compared to just 6% of adults in England and Wales who say that solicitors should be self-regulated.

Around seven in ten English and Welsh adults (69%) say that they would feel more comfortable making a complaint if the regulator was fully independent of solicitors.

More than three quarters of adults in England and Wales (77%) agree that they support Government attempts to make the regulator of solicitors fully independent.

# FINDINGS IN DETAIL

The majority of English and Welsh adults say that solicitors *should* be regulated (86%). This is in line with the proportion who say the same of doctors (85%), dentists (82%) and accountants (81%).

*Q. Some of the following occupations are regulated (there are rules regarding professional conduct and action is taken when things go wrong), and some are not. Which of the following, if any, do you think should be regulated?*

	%
Solicitors	86%
Doctors	85%
Dentists	82%
Accountants	81%
Plumbers	63%
Hairdressers	28%
None of these	6%

*Base: All adults in England and Wales (n=1,810)*

- On the whole, women are more likely than men to say that each profession tested should be regulated. For example, more than a third of women (36%) say that hairdressers should be regulated, while just one in five men say the same (20%). Women are also more likely to say that plumbers should be regulated (67% compared to 60%).
- Age is a significant factor in predicting likelihood to say that solicitors, and other professions, should be regulated. While around seven in ten 18–24 year olds and 25–34 year olds (73% and 70%) say that they should be regulated, 96% of those aged 65+ say the same.
- Younger adults (those aged between 18–24 and 25–34) are significantly more likely than their older counterparts to say that none of the professions tested should be regulated; 12% and 14% say this, compared to just 2% of those aged 55+.

Almost seven in ten adults from England and Wales say that they are more likely to trust a profession that is independently regulated (68%), while only one in ten (10%) say that they are more likely to trust a profession that regulates itself.

*Q. Many professions in the UK (e.g. doctors, dentists, solicitors) are regulated. Some are regulated by organisations that are independent from the profession itself (independently regulated) and some are regulated by the profession itself, such as by a representative body or trade association (self-regulated). On the whole, which of the following statements best describes your viewpoint?*

	%
I am more likely to trust a profession that is independently regulated	68%
The way in which a profession is regulated makes no difference to my trust in it	12%
I am more likely to trust a profession that regulates itself	10%
Don't know	11%

*Base: All adults in England and Wales (n=1,810)*

- In line with the previous question, older adults are significantly more likely than their younger counterparts to say that they are more likely to trust a profession that is independently regulated. More than three quarters of those aged 65+ say this (77%), compared to just three in five 18–24 year olds (58%).
- English and Welsh adults from social grades AB and C1 are more likely than those from C2 and DE to say that they are more likely to trust a profession that is independently regulated (71% of ABs and C1s, compared to 62% of C2s and 66% of DEs).

There is widespread support for solicitors to be regulated by a fully independent regulator (82%), rather than regulating themselves (6%).

*Q. How do you think that solicitors should be regulated?*

	%
Solicitors should be regulated by a fully independent regulator (independently regulated)	82%
Solicitors should be regulated by themselves through their representative body (self-regulated)	6%
Solicitors should not be regulated	0%
Don't know	11%

*Base: All adults in England and Wales (n=1,810)*

- While support for solicitors to being self-regulated is low, 25–34 year olds are the age group most likely to say that they are in favour of this (11%).
- Again, age is a significant predictor of attitudes towards regulation; nine in ten adults aged 65+ say that solicitors should be independently regulated (90%). However, just two thirds of 18–24 year olds say the same (67%). Older adults are also less likely to say that they don't know; just 3% of those aged 65+ say this, compared to a quarter of 18–24 year olds (23%).
- Adults from London are more likely than those from any other English region or Wales to say that solicitors should be self-regulated (14%).

Around seven in ten adults in England and Wales (69%) say that they would feel more comfortable making a complaint if the regulator was fully independent of solicitors.

*Q. Please now imagine that you experienced a problem with your solicitor or law firm and that you needed to report them to the regulator (e.g. you wanted to complain about a solicitor's behaviour and conduct). Which of the following statements best describes your viewpoint?*

	%
I would feel more comfortable making a complaint if the regulator is fully independent of solicitors	69%
I would feel equally comfortable in both scenarios	12%
I would feel more comfortable making a complaint if the regulator is <i>not</i> fully independent of solicitors	8%
Don't know	11%

*Base: All adults in England and Wales (n=1,810)*

- While one in ten men (10%) say that they would feel more comfortable making a complaint if the regulator was *not* fully independent of solicitors, just 6% of women report the same.
- Older English and Welsh adults are considerably more likely than those who are younger to say that they would feel more comfortable making a complaint if the regulator was fully independent of solicitors (80% of those aged 55–64 say this, and 77% of those aged 65+, compared to just 56% of those aged 18–24). This reflects attitudes seen in previous questions.
- Adults in England and Wales who are in the AB social grade are more likely than those from C2 and DE to say that they would feel more comfortable making a complaint if the regulator was fully independent of solicitors (74%, compared to 65% of C2s and 67% of DEs).

At least three quarters of English and Welsh adults agree with each of the statements tested, and almost nine in ten (87%) agree that it is important that solicitors are regulated.

Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	NET: Agree	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	NET: Disagree	Don't know
It is important that solicitors are regulated	87%	63%	24%	7%	1%	–	1%	5%
I would have more trust in solicitors if I knew that their profession was regulated	79%	47%	32%	13%	1%	–	2%	6%
An independent regulator for solicitors would do a better job of protecting the interests of the public than a representative body for solicitors which regulates itself	78%	48%	30%	12%	2%	–	2%	8%
I support Government attempts to make the regulator of solicitors fully independent	77%	48%	29%	14%	1%	1%	2%	8%
I generally prefer independent regulation of professionals to self-regulation	75%	47%	27%	14%	3%	1%	3%	8%

Base: All adults in England and Wales (n=1,810)

- For all statements tested, age is a significant predictor of agreement; for example, nine in ten English and Welsh adults aged 65+ agree that they would have more trust in solicitors if they knew their profession was regulated independently (88%). This compares to just 65% of 18–24 year olds who say the same.
- Younger adults are also most likely to say that they don't know for every statement tested; 15% say this in response to 'I support Government attempts to make the regulator of solicitors fully independent', while only 2% of those aged 65+ say this.



- Men (77%) are more likely than women (72%) to agree that they generally prefer independent regulation of professionals to self-regulation. ABs are also more likely than DEs to agree with this statement; 79% compared to 69%.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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