

Martindale-Avvo™

# HOW CONSUMERS CHOOSE ATTORNEYS

A mixed methodology study of the  
decision-making criteria legal  
consumers find most important

# RESEARCH SUMMARY AND GOALS

The purpose of this research was to tackle some fundamental questions:



Which **DECISION CRITERIA** are most important to legal consumers when choosing which attorney to ultimately hire?



Which **FILTER CRITERIA** are legal consumers using most frequently online when narrowing down a list of potential attorneys to hire?

We conducted an exercise interviewing 14 consumers to narrow down the filter criteria, then surveyed 525 consumers and panelists.

## PRICE & PRICING OPTIONS TOP THE DECISION CRITERIA LIST

**Price** (e.g. hourly rate, retainer fee) was the **most valuable decision** criteria in the survey, with **68% of respondents** saying it was an important factor.

Some participants hadn't heard of fixed fee and packaged services, and some didn't understand how they worked and what was included.



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**Takeaway:** Be transparent about what you charge and make sure prospective clients understand how your fee agreements work.

## SOFT SKILLS PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE

Three of the top decision criteria revolved around “soft skills,” like helping a customer understand the legal process and customer service.

As legal advisors, attorneys need the ability to connect with the client and inspire confidence.



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**Takeaway:** Consumers’ definition of soft skills include: “Help me demystify the legal process so I know what to expect,” “I know my legal situation may not be urgent but it feels urgent to me” and “I want to feel comfortable and understood.” Responding to potential clients expediently, empathetically and courteously will help you and your staff meet prospects’ expectations.

# MOST IMPORTANT FILTERS FOR FINDING AN ATTORNEY

Practice area and free consultations topped the list of 40 potential filters that were the most important criteria for consumers. Filter criteria are important because it means that consumers are actively looking for ways to eliminate attorneys who do not include this information.



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**Takeaway:** Make sure these elements are available and easy to find on your online attorney and firm profile.

## LEAST IMPORTANT FILTERS FOR FINDING AN ATTORNEY

The ability to make house calls and photos of your office, among other criteria, carried little importance for consumers.

Legal generalist	3%
House calls	3%
Gender	3%
Cultural background	3%
Office photos	3%

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**Takeaway:** Don't overstuff your online profile with information of no interest to your prospects. If, however, you are focused on a niche audience, such as military veterans, certainly include your affiliation with the military.

# WHAT DO CONSUMERS EXPECT TO LEARN ONLINE VERSUS IN PERSON?

Consumers were asked a yes/no question to indicate what information they expect to be able to determine online.



Consumers expect to learn online whether the attorney offers free consultations, provides a cost estimate, is accepting new clients, or has a record of misconduct. They also expect to be able to see whether a lawyer has experience with their particular type of legal matter.

***For example,** a consumer seeking to adopt a child may filter you out of their list if you only display Family Law in your list of practice areas.*



Until they actually speak with the attorney, consumers do not expect to learn the hourly rate, current caseload, preferred methods of communication, and an explanation of fixed fee services.

# METHODOLOGY

This research project unfolded in three parts:

1

Identify a list of 40 criteria legal consumers might use to make a decision.

2

Conduct an exercise with 14 consumers to categorize the 40 criteria, along with interview sessions to understand why they made their decisions.

3

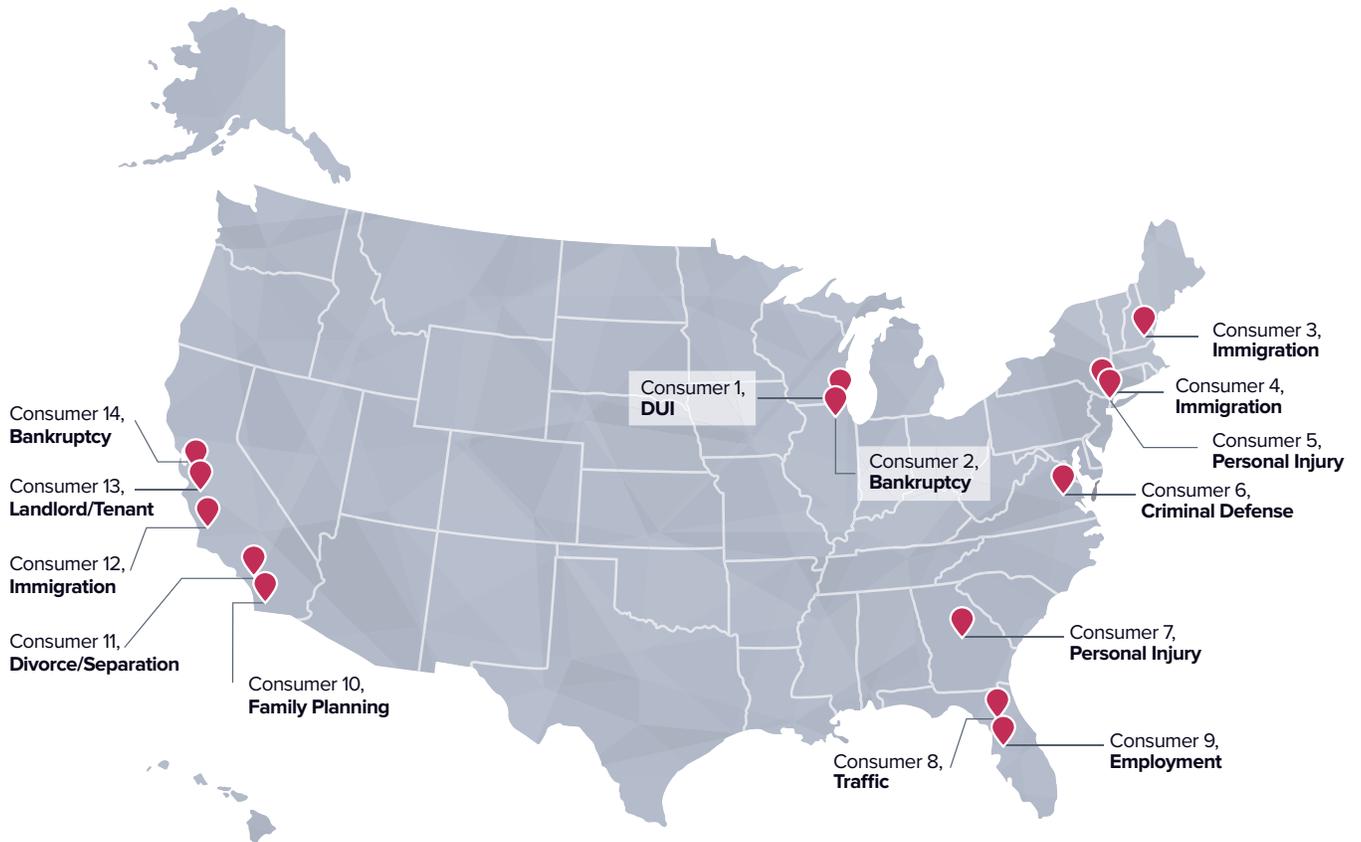
Use this qualitative data to create a quantitative decision criteria survey. The quantitative survey respondents comprised 252 Avvo users and an external panel of 273 legal consumers.

## **Research Team:**

Aubri Denevan, User Experience Researcher, Avvo

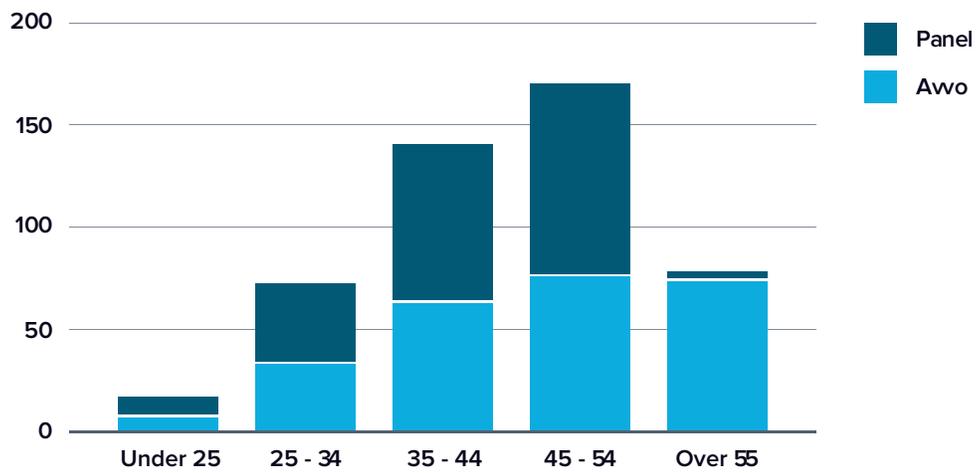
Jackelyn Magwire, User Experience Research Manager, Avvo

# INTERVIEW DEMOGRAPHICS

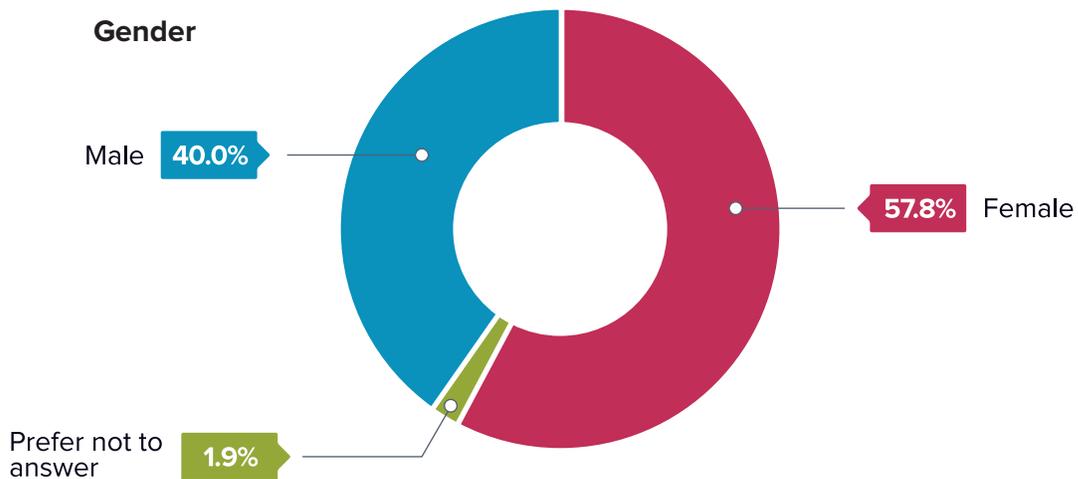


# SURVEY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

## Age ranges



## Gender



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# INSIGHT, VISIBILITY, CONNECTION

Exposure to 25 million  
consumers monthly

Architects of more than  
40,000 law firm websites

Opportunities with 850,000  
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