



Martindale-Avvo™

HIRING AN ATTORNEY 2019

Legal Consumer Choices;
Client Expectations

INTRODUCTION

What do prospective clients value in an attorney? Are they more interested in your online reviews or your fee schedule? Does your heavy caseload cause potential clients to hire someone else? In the age of online information, do referrals still matter?

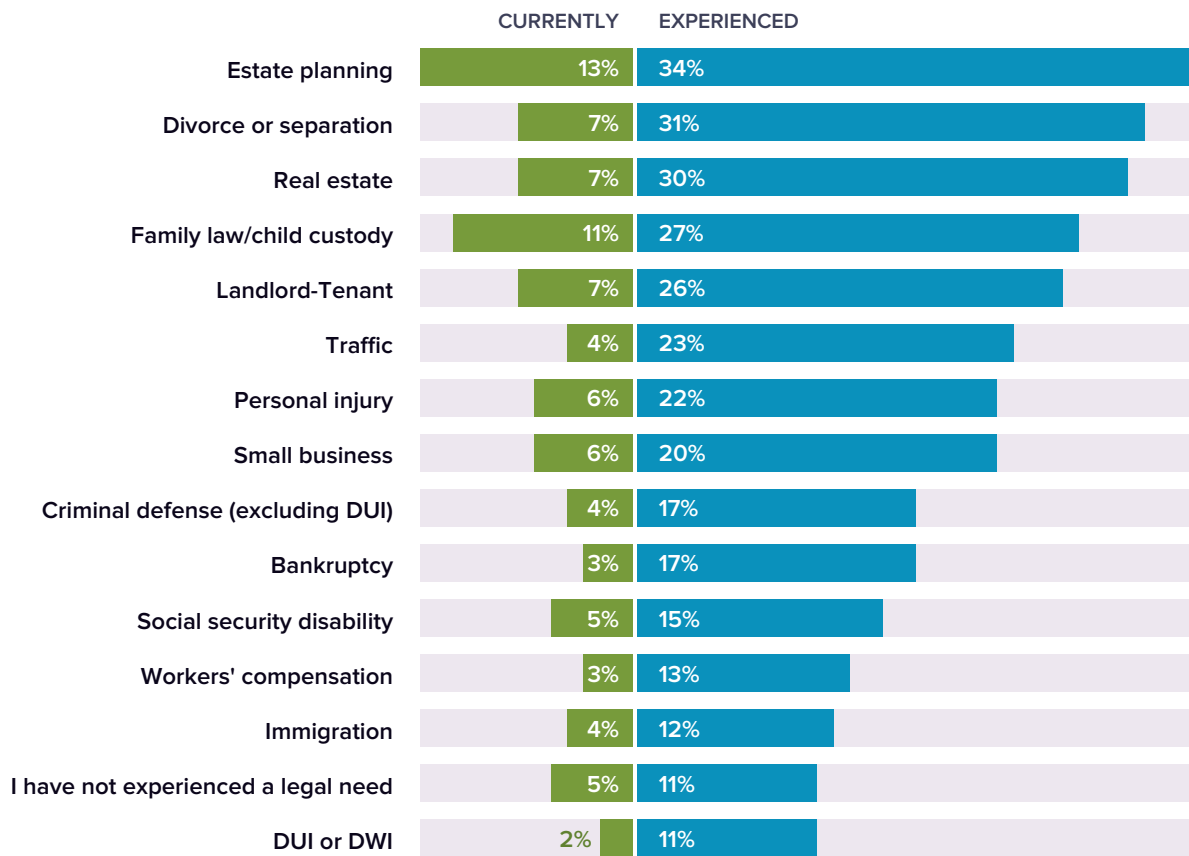
As more potential clients become comfortable researching and connecting with attorneys online, law firms are reassessing and recalibrating how they manage prospects' expectations and client needs.

To help you understand what matters most to these potential clients, Martindale-Avvo surveyed consumers in the fall of 2018, gaining insight from 6,300 respondents across the United States and Canada about the criteria that mattered most to them when choosing an attorney. We discovered that the immediate nature of communication in the digital world makes responding to clients quickly a big focus, and there are significant opportunities for attorneys to grow their business beyond referrals.

While technology continues to change the way consumers find, research and select law firms, one thing remains true – **the quality of the client experience is still paramount.**

Respondents experienced a range of legal needs

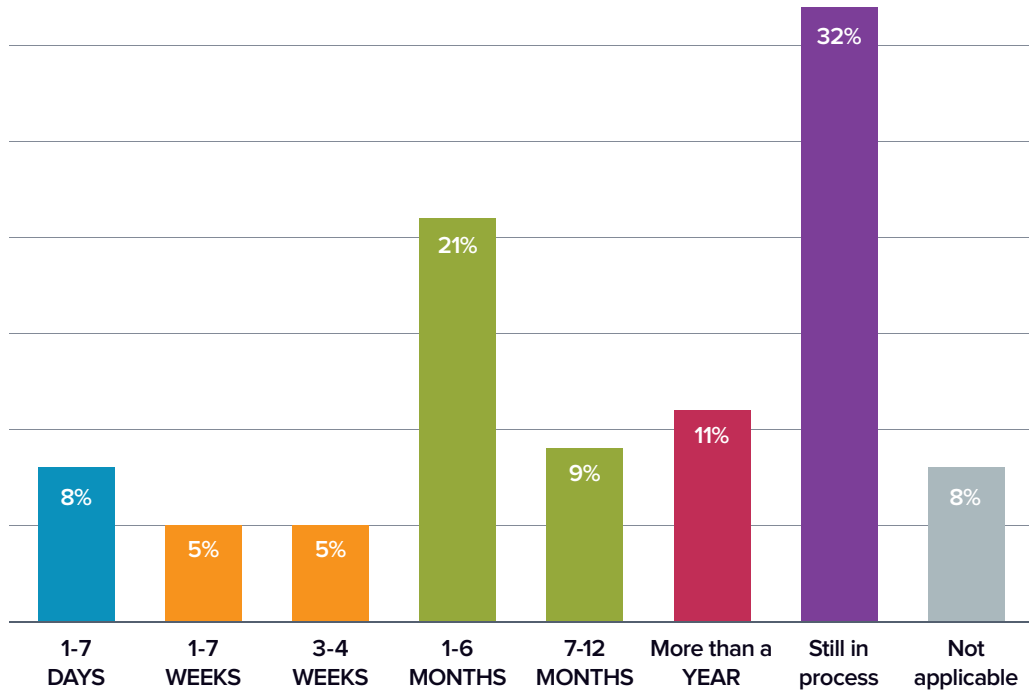
What legal needs have you experienced or dealt with? (select all that apply)



Nearly one-fifth (18%) of those surveyed were experiencing more than one legal need, while the majority (63%) had experienced at least one legal need. More than one-third have dealt with estate planning issues, followed by divorce /separation or real estate issues. Overall, DUI/DWI was experienced least (11%).

Some matters resolved quickly

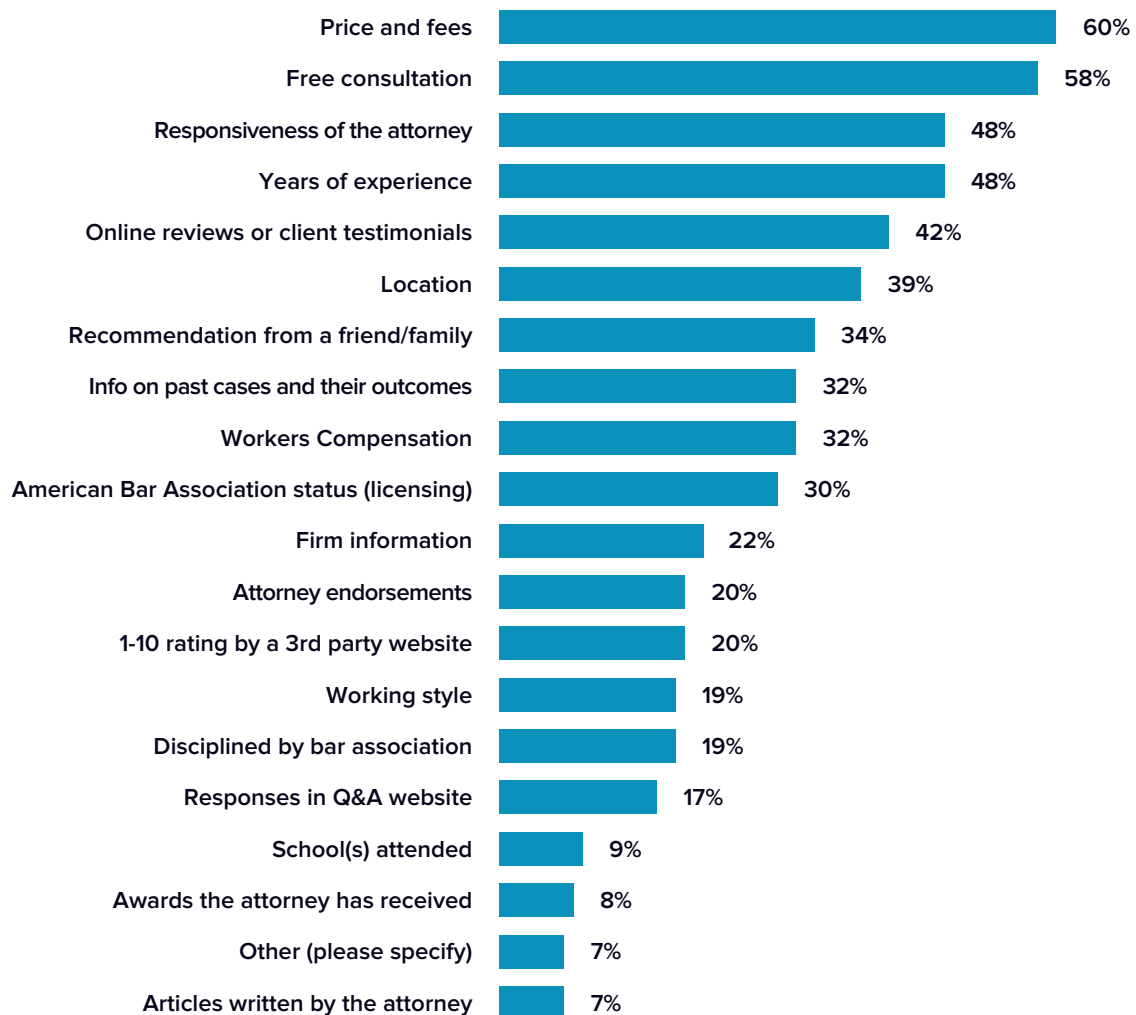
How long did your most recent legal matter take to resolve?



For consumers whose legal issues were resolved, 30% were wrapped up in three months or less. The majority of respondents were still actively involved in a legal matter.

The decision criteria list

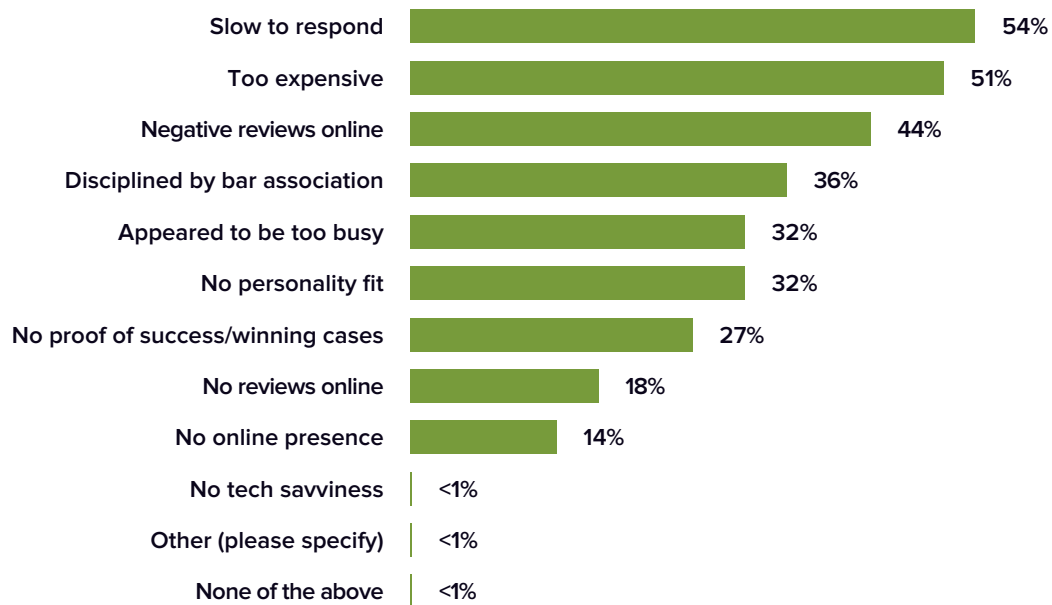
What information did/do you want before you first contact an attorney?
(select all that apply)



Financial data topped the list of information consumers want to know before contacting an attorney, with 60% desiring fee information and 58% wanting a free consultation first. Consumers aged 25-34 gave greater weight to reviews and testimonials than consumers aged 55+. Conversely, a recommendation from a family or friend was highest for consumers aged 65+ and for those with a household income of more than \$100K, and lowest for those aged 18-24.

Speed is key in client conversion

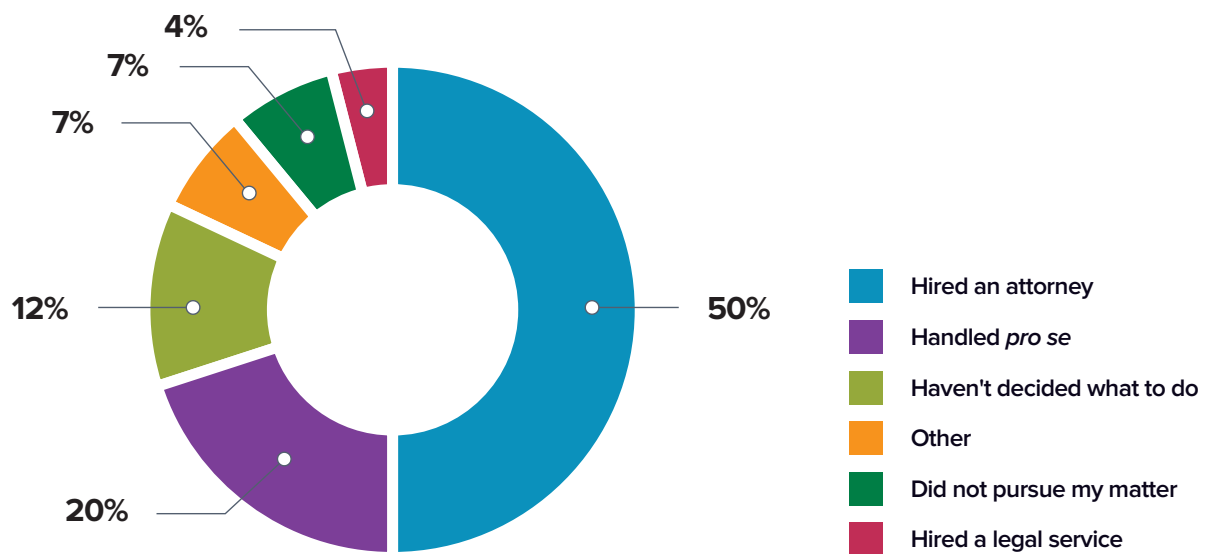
What are the 3 biggest deterrents (or red flags) to hiring a particular attorney?



Consumers ranked approximately a dozen reasons why they bypassed one attorney and hired another. Topping the list? Attorneys slow to respond to the inquiry for legal assistance. Thirty-two percent of consumers also indicated that the lack of online reviews or a robust online presence raised a red flag.

More than half hired or worked with an attorney

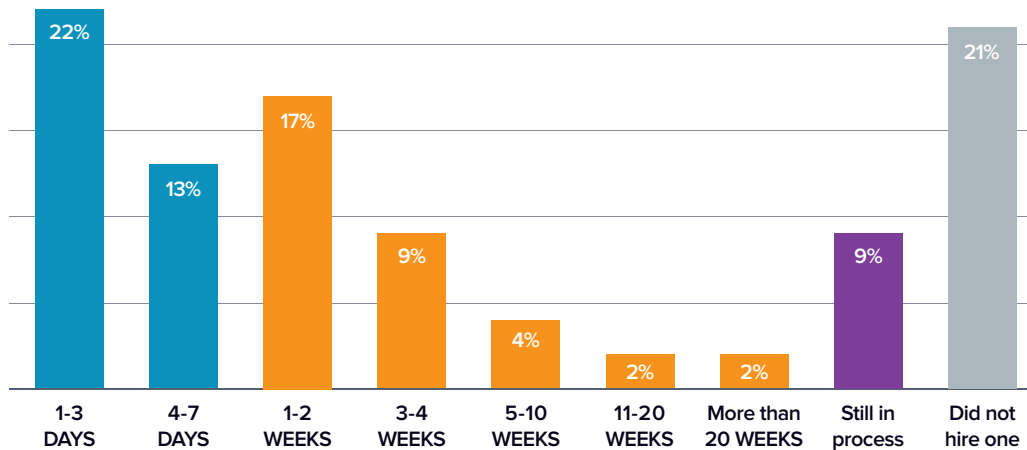
How are/did you handle your most recent legal matter?



A majority opted to hire an attorney or work with a legal service who could provide them with an attorney. Less than 20% went it alone, handling their case *pro se*. Interestingly, consumers at both the lower and the higher end of the income spectrum comprised the largest percentage of those who handled their own cases.

The decision to hire an attorney did not take long

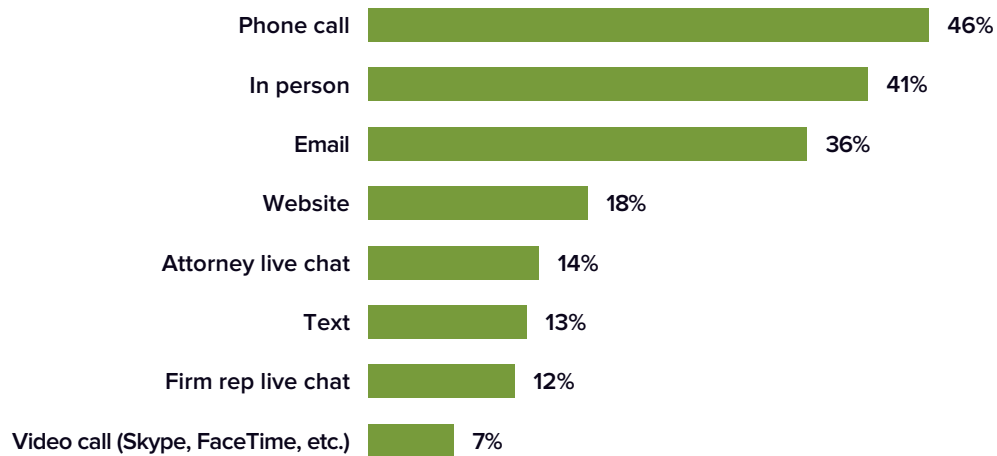
About how long did it take to hire an attorney (from the moment you knew you needed an attorney to making a decision on one attorney)?



The majority of consumers moved quickly, selecting the attorney they wanted to have handle their legal matter within 1-3 days. Overall, most consumers hired an attorney within two weeks from the time they first knew they needed an attorney.

They still want to talk to you

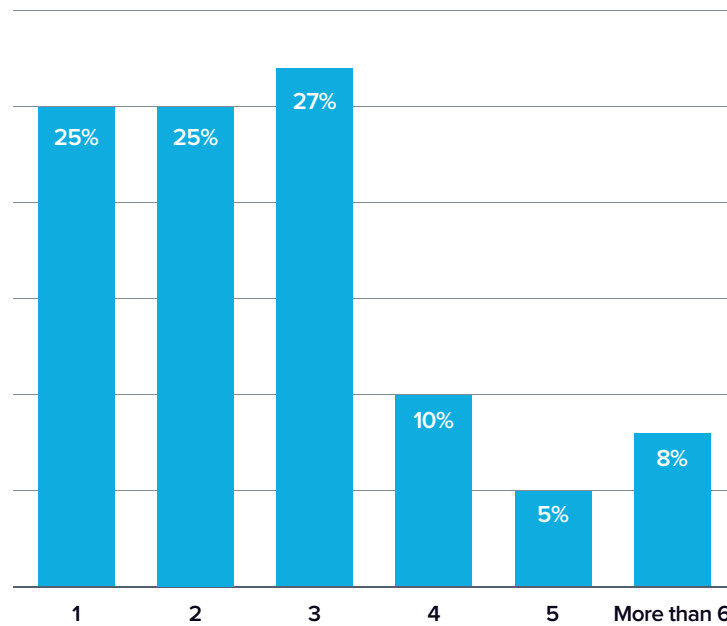
How likely are you to use the following methods when initially contacting an attorney?



For the initial contact, consumers indicated they prefer to meet in person or speak with an attorney on the phone. A majority responded that video calls (Skype, FaceTime, etc.) were the least preferred option for making this first connection.

Consumers shopped around

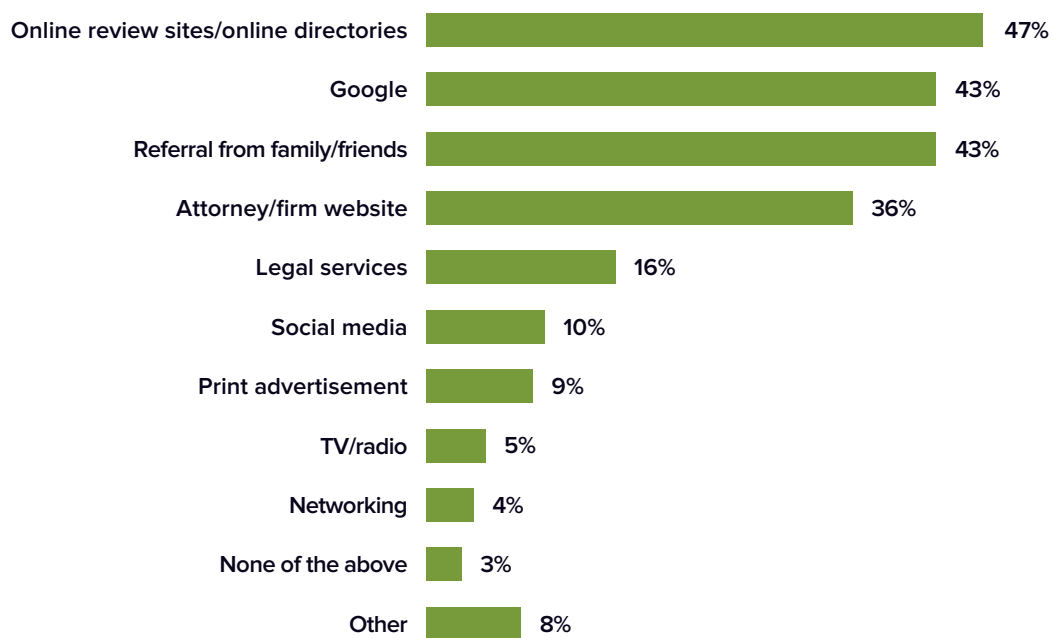
How many attorneys did you contact before deciding whom to hire?



Of the 4,913 consumers who hired an attorney, 77% contacted three or more lawyers before hiring. When faced with a potentially more time-sensitive legal matter such as DUI/DWI, 25% of consumers contacted only one attorney before making the decision to hire. Proximity also played a role in the selection process, with 35% wanting to hire an attorney within their city.

Consumers' research tapped a variety of resources

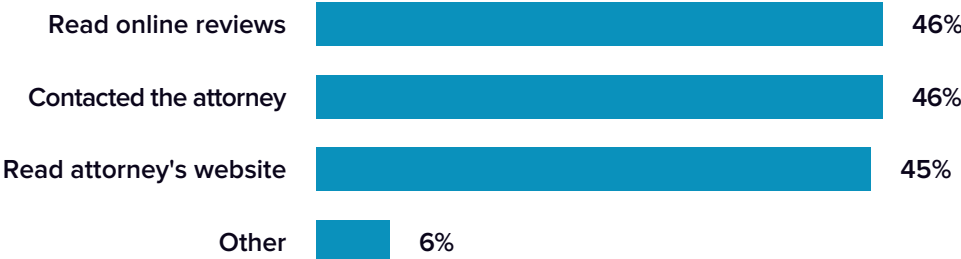
What resources did you use to find an attorney?



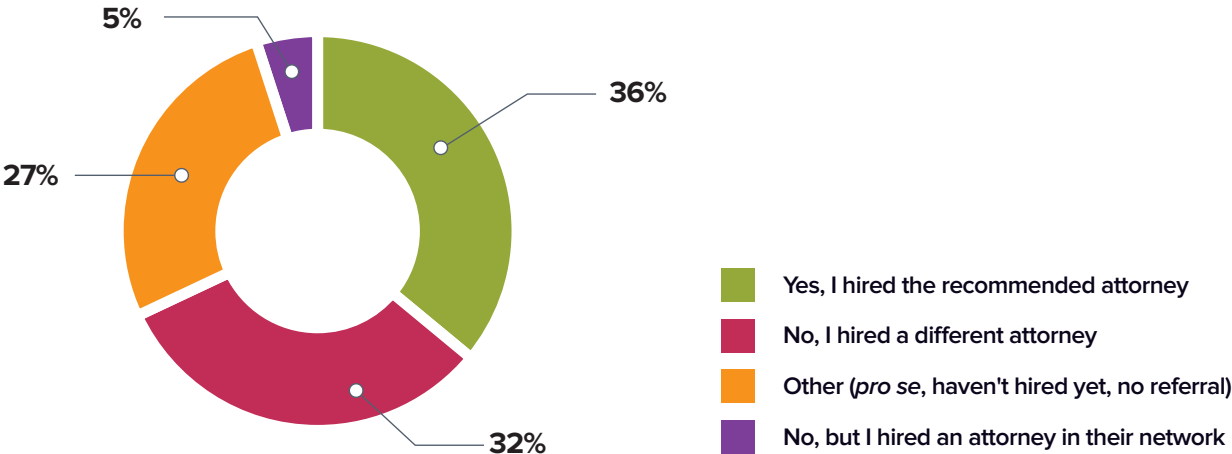
Respondents used multiple resources to assist them in their hiring decision. Online review sites, like Yelp, Avvo.com, Lawyers.com, Google and online directories (46.53%), Google search (42.76%) and referrals (42.78%) all played key roles.

Referrals received additional vetting

Did you research or contact the attorney you were recommended?



Did you hire the attorney you were recommended by a friend, family member, or colleague?

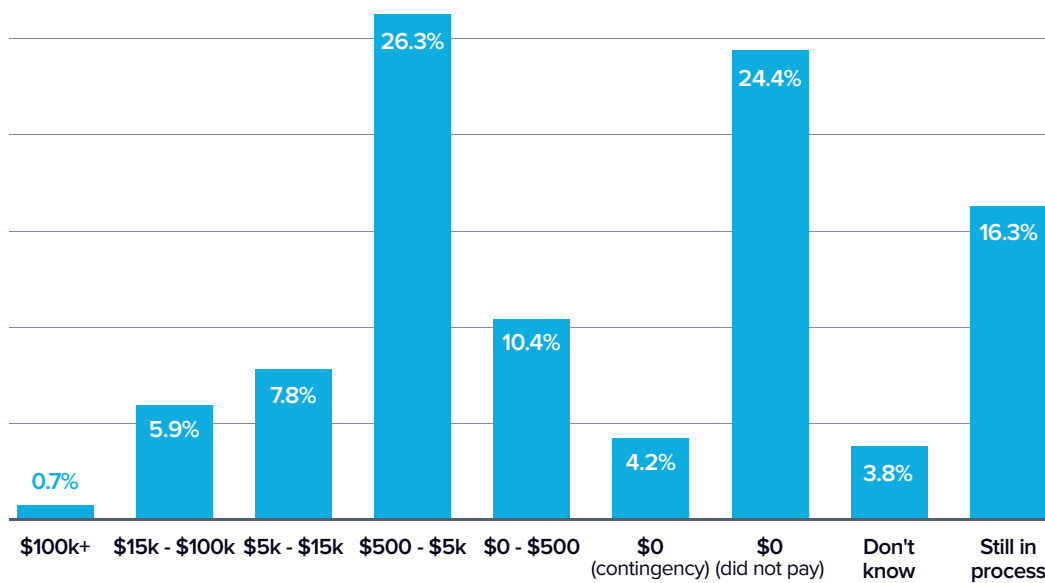


Consumers did not take referrals at face value, opting instead to vet the attorney's reputation and experience. Forty-six percent contacted the attorney directly before making a final decision.

Ultimately, 41% of consumers hired the attorney who was referred to them or someone in the attorney's network, while 32% opted for someone else entirely.

Skill is important...but so are your fees

How much did you pay to resolve your most recent legal case (including all attorney fees, court fees, etc.)?



The majority of consumers who paid for legal representation paid less than \$5,000 to resolve their matter. Twenty-four percent turned to legal aid (30%), an EAP (13%), legal insurance (4%), a public defender or pro bono assistance for handling their case. Twenty-eight percent said that the cost was what they expected, while 22.6% said it cost more than expected.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Consumers are price sensitive even when legal issues are involved.



Response time is critical and potential clients want their issue addressed quickly.



Consumers consider referrals to be a starting point but do not rely solely on word of mouth to make their hiring decision.



Client reviews provide important additional information and serve as a proxy when a consumer does not have a referral.



Consumers use various methods for initial contact, with phone call, website and even chat providing access.

Martindale-Avvo™

INSIGHT, VISIBILITY, CONNECTION

Exposure to 25 million
consumers monthly

Architects of more than
40,000 law firm websites

Opportunities with 850,000
leads per month

Double your website's
conversion rates

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