



THE WORLD OF CONVEYANCING: WHAT DO CONSUMERS REALLY THINK?

Foreword by
Paula Higgins,
CEO and Founder
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What conveyancers do and why they do it is, to most people a mystery but you would be very unwise to sell or buy your home without instructing one to act for you. The good news is the home moving process is improving for consumers, however, more needs to be done to raise awareness of what conveyancers do.

I'm particularly alarmed 40% of people wrongly believe the conveyancer will undertake structural checks of property as part of their responsibilities. Clearly more needs to be done to educate the consumer on this important and vital service.

We must remind ourselves the majority of homebuyers do not buy and sell homes very often and we cannot assume they are avid readers of the property pages and property websites like HomeOwners Alliance.

We need to continue to raise awareness of the role of the conveyancer in the homebuying and selling process. Instructing one shouldn't be seen as a hurdle but rather as an aid to protect the buyer's and seller's investment.

We are therefore pleased to support this research, carried out in order to highlight the level of consumer understanding of conveyancing and the role of a conveyancer in the home purchase/sale process. We are also pleased to support National Conveyancing Week which aims to raise awareness of what conveyancers do and why.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The conveyancing community has been on a rollercoaster ride for the last four years. UK Finance predicts the number of [residential] property transactions will continue to hover around one million until 2025. Although this is a 15% drop in the average number of pre-covid transactions over five years from 2015 to 2019¹, the market remains robust.

A combination of lockdown and property market incentives artificially inflated demand, and placed upward pressure on house prices when the market re-opened in May 2020. A period of frenzy ensued which by 2023 saw a return to some semblance of seasonality and 'normality'. Lending for property purchases is now at a level last seen a decade ago. In the peak year of 2021, lending hit nearly £200 billion, this fell by 23% in 2023, and is predicted to fall a further 8% in 2024.²

The conveyancing profession has had to cope with this fluctuating demand whilst retaining talent and expertise, driven out by the growing pressures of the role; and training new staff to tackle the rigours and nuance of property law. The introduction of new legislation, including The Building Safety Act 2022, and growing obligations around AML, Source of Funds and Source of Wealth checks adds to the sense of frustration from professionals simply trying to do a good job for their clients and move them into their dream home.

It is against this backdrop that National Conveyancing Week was born. The aim of this initiative is to raise the profile of conveyancing and the role of property lawyers in the home buying and selling process. As part of this, National Conveyancing Week conducted research amongst 2,000 UK adults to highlight the level of consumer understanding of conveyancing and the role of a conveyancer in the home purchase/sale process. It also asked how UK homeowners selected their conveyancer, their satisfaction with the service provided, and what improvements they would like to see to the process.

KEY FINDINGS

Large numbers of consumers are unsure about the services a conveyancer will provide them with. 48% were unaware the conveyancer acts on behalf of both them and the mortgage lender while 40%, wrongly think, the conveyancer checks the structure of the property is sound.

There were high levels of consumer satisfaction with the service they received. 72% said they were satisfied with the service provided by their conveyancer with 74% of those who had bought a home within the last five years saying they would use the same conveyancer/conveyancing firm again.

A majority said their experience of the conveyancing process could have been improved, with 38% of those saying they simply wanted it to be faster, 31% wanting more frequent communication from their conveyancer, and 21% wanting a clearer explanation of the legal process and the issues that arose.

Common delays experienced by consumers included: delays in the chain; legal issues such as a lack of paperwork/guarantees/certifications and permissions; seller delays in coming back on enquiries; mortgage/lender delays.

1. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/713530/number-of-residential-property-transactions-united-kingdom-uk/>
2. <https://www.ukfinance.org.uk/system/files/2023-12/Mortgage%20Market%20Forecasts%202024-2025.pdf>

THE RESULTS

WHAT IS CONVEYANCING?

What do we really mean by conveyancing? Two-thirds (65%) of UK adults surveyed had heard of the term 'conveyancing.' The breakdown between homeowners and non-homeowners were understandably split, with over three-quarters (77%) of homeowners saying they had heard of conveyancing compared with just 44% of non-homeowners.

Only half of homeowners (53%) claimed to know a little bit about conveyancing, falling to just one in five (17%) amongst non-homeowners. 30% of the 2,000 adults surveyed had never come across the term conveyancing, suggesting conveyancers cannot assume the legal process of buying and selling homes is common knowledge.

We asked those who had heard of the term 'conveyancing' for more detail. Of six true or false questions around the key role of property lawyers, 44% answered less than half correct, 56% answered more than half correct. Respondents correctly said conveyancers transfer the ownership of the property (68%); register the change in ownership at Land Registry (65%); and checks the property is not affected by neighbour disputes, flooding, drainage or planning breaches (63%).

Concerningly 38% of respondents suggested it was the conveyancer who checked the structure of the property was sound, just two percentage points lower than those who has heard of conveyancing. This is the role of the surveyor and a potential reason for why so few homebuyers instruct a survey. It is clear the conveyancing profession needs to do more to educate their clients on this point.

Table 1 : Awareness of term 'conveyancing'

Awareness of term 'conveyancing'	Total UK Adults	%	
		Homeowners	Non Homeowners
Have heard of conveyancing	65%	77%	44%
Know at least a little about conveyancing	40%	53%	17%
Have you heard of conveyancing?			
Yes, and I know a lot about it	11%	15%	4%
Yes, and I know a little about it	29%	37%	14%
Yes, but I'm not sure what it is	25%	24%	26%
No	30%	19%	48%
Not sure	6%	4%	8%
Sample size:	2000	1326	674

Table 3 Understanding the role of a conveyancer (among homeowners)

Understanding role of conveyancer (among homeowners)	% of homeowners believe statement is...		
	True	False	Unsure
Which statement about conveyancer's role is true/ false			
Transfers ownership of property from the seller to the buyer	73%	9%	18%
Registers my ownership at the Land Registry	71%	8%	21%
Ensures the property is not affected by neighbour disputes, flooding, drainage issues, planning breaches	67%	11%	21%
Acts on behalf of both me and my mortgage lender	53%	19%	27%
Protects a buyer from buying a property with a third party mortgage registered against it	55%	8%	37%
Checks that the structure of the property is sound	38%	41%	21%
% of correct answers:			
Up to 3 correct answers	38%		
Over 3 correct answers	62%		
Sample size (homeowners) 1053			

Table2. Understanding the role of a conveyancer

Understanding role of conveyancer (have heard of conveyancing)	% believe statement is...		
	True	False	Unsure
Which statement about conveyancer's role is true/ false			
Transfers ownership of property from the seller to the buyer	68%	9%	23%
Registers my ownership at the Land Registry	65%	8%	26%
Ensures the property is not affected by neighbour disputes, flooding, drainage issues, planning breaches	63%	12%	25%
Acts on behalf of both me and my mortgage lender	52%	17%	31%
Protects a buyer from buying a property with a third party mortgage registered against it	51%	9%	40%
Checks that the structure of the property is sound	40%	37%	23%
% correct answers:			
Up to 3 correct answers	44%		
Over 3 correct answers	56%		
Sample size (have heard of conveyancing) 1364			

HOW DID YOU FIND YOUR CONVEYANCER AND WHY?

Recommendation remains the single largest route to market for most conveyancing firms; with the survey identifying family friend recommendation (21%), estate agent recommendation (18%) or mortgage broker/ lender recommendation (15%) and new build developer (3%) referrals accounted for over 50% of responses.

Client relationships and service ranked second (20%) with one in five respondents deciding to use the same firm they had used before. The survey also suggested a physical presence on the high street continues to be important with 19% of respondents engaging a conveyancer from their local high street.

The survey identified growing trends amongst recommendations from mortgage broker and lenders with a result of 26% of respondents who had moved home in the last five years, up from 11% amongst those who had bought over five years so; representing the largest increase in the comparative figures (14%).

The other major trend was the growth of online routes to market. Over five years ago, just 7% of respondents used Google search (5%) and conveyancing quote comparison sites (2%). This has now increased by 13%. One in five (20%) of respondents now start their search for a conveyancer online using Google (14%) and comparison sites (6%).

The reasons why consumers choose one conveyancer over another has seen a dramatic shift over the last five years. Although personal recommendation (21%), previous experience (21%) and a presence on the high street continues to be important (19%), more people are instructing based on a competitive price (22% compared to 13% five years ago) the recommendation of the estate agent (19% compared to 15%), and demonstrable experience with the type of property (18% up from 11%).

The move toward online is again highlighted with 12% of respondents who bought in the last five years indicating they had used customers service and online reviews to select their conveyancer (up from 4% for over five years) and nearly one in ten (9%) chose their conveyancer because they offered an online service, up from 3%.

Table 4: Finding a conveyancing solicitor

How did you find your conveyancing solicitor? (used conveyancer to buy home)	% who used conveyancer/ solicitor		
	Total	Bought within 5yrs	Bought over 5yrs ago
Used conveyancer / solicitor to buy home	77%	73%	81%
How did you find your conveyancer/ solicitor:			
Friends/ family recommendation	21%	24%	20%
Had used them before	20%	19%	21%
Local firm on the high street	19%	19%	19%
Estate agent recommendation	18%	22%	16%
Mortgage broker/ lender recommendation	15%	26%	11%
Online Google search	8%	14%	5%
New build developer recommendation	3%	7%	2%
Conveyancing quote comparison site	3%	6%	2%
Other*	2%	2%	3%
<i>Don't know/ can't recall</i>	9%	0%	13%
Sample size:	1056	267	784

Table 5: Reasons for choosing a particular conveyancing solicitor

How did you find your conveyancing solicitor? (used conveyancer to buy home)	% who used conveyancer/ solicitor		
	Total	Bought within 5yrs	Bought over 5yrs ago
Used conveyancer / solicitor to buy home	77%	73%	81%
Key reasons for choosing conveyancer/ solicitor:			
Friends/ family recommendation	21%	18%	18%
Had used them before	21%	30%	29%
Local firm on the high street	19%	20%	20%
Estate agent recommendation	16%	19%	15%
Most competitive price	15%	22%	13%
Had experience with my type of purchase	12%	18%	11%
Mortgage/ lender recommendation	12%	7%	10%
Customer service ratings/ online reviews	6%	12%	4%
Online service	5%	9%	3%
Rapport with conveyancer when getting quote	5%	4%	5%
New build developer recommendation	3%	4%	1%
Other*	3%	2%	4%
<i>Don't know/ can't recall</i>	12%	4%	14%
Sample size:	1056	267	784

Other reasons include: family member/ personal friend, business contact/ worked with them, convenience, discount through union membership/ NHS discount, solicitors firm I always use for all legal work, past experience, did work myself, executor of the estate, only one available, professionalism on initial contact, same conveyancer for seller (supposed to make it quicker).

WHAT DELAYS DID YOU EXPERIENCE IN YOUR HOME BUYING PROCESS?

Delays have doubled in the last five years. 40% of homemovers who moved in the last five years experienced delays when buying their property; compared to 20% of those who bought more than five years ago.

The top five reasons cited for causing delays were:

- **Delays in the chain (buyer/ seller wanting longer to complete) (35%);**
- **Seller delays in coming back on enquiries (26%);**
- **Legal issues (lack of paperwork, guarantees, certificates, permissions) (25%);**
- **Mortgage/ lender delays (24%);**
- **Search delays (15%).**

As has been widely reported in the press, the issue of gazumping has seen an increase in the last five years, up to 8% from 3%, likely to be as a result of the febrile property market during and post pandemic. A 13 percentage point increase in mortgage/lender delays may be an indication of the capacity and staff issues many businesses faced throughout the pandemic.

Despite efforts to improve the accessibility of leasehold management information, 11% transactions in the last five years have been affected by delays in the provision of the leasehold management pack, up from 4% over five years ago. Other reasons quoted for delays occurring were conveyancers not moving things forward, conveyancers being slow and not talking to each other, the conveyancer being incompetent or inefficient and mistakes being made.

Table 6 - Delays during the home buying process

Did you experience delays when purchasing your last property?	% of homeowners		
	Total	Bought within 5yrs	Bought over 5yrs ago
Experienced delays in purchase process			
Yes	25%	40%	20%
No	63%	53%	68%
Can't recall	11%	7%	13%
Delays experienced:			
Delays in the chain (buyer/ seller taking longer to complete)	35%	33%	38%
Seller delays in coming back on enquiries	26%	25%	26%
Legal issues (lack of paperwork, guarantees, certificates, permissions)	25%	26%	24%
Mortgage/ lender delays	17%	24%	11%
Search delays	15%	15%	15%
Chain collapsing	9%	8%	9%
Leasehold management pack delays	7%	11%	4%
Results of a bad survey	5%	5%	6%
Being gazumped	5%	8%	3%
Other*	12%	8%	15%
Don't know/ can't recall	6%	4%	7%
Sample size (experienced delays):	343	143	196

***Other delays: Main mentions:** Conveyancer not moving things forward/ conveyancer slow/ solicitors not talking to each other/ conveyancer incompetent/ solicitor inefficiency & mistakes/ disharmony with conveyancer.

Other mentions: Covid, Builder was slow/ new build delays, delay getting deposit, delay signing documents, buyer delayed raising money, EA had cyber-attack, Bereavement which affected funds, waiting for probate issues with property being listed building, property insulation problems, Gazundering – seller asking for reduction in agreed price, tenant in property refused to leave, unusual freehold.

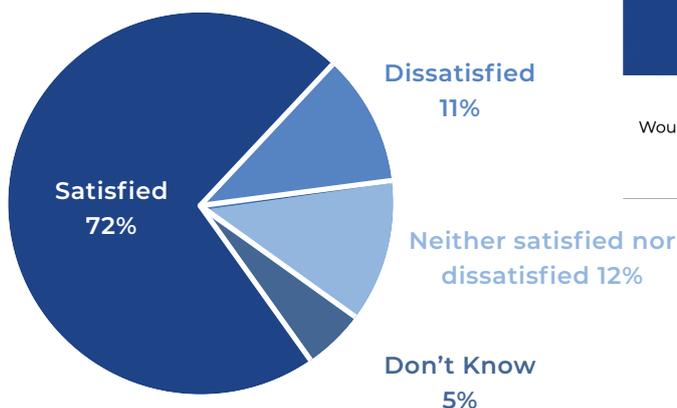


OVERALL HOME MOVING SATISFACTION

Client satisfaction with their conveyancing solicitor was encouragingly high with 72% of respondents being satisfied. Amongst home movers who have moved in the past five years, 74% of respondents would use their conveyancer again; this upward trend contrasts with just over half of respondents who moved over five years ago (56%).

Residual sentiment for conveyancing and property law firms is low; 91% of respondents who moved home in the last five years were decisive about whether they would or would not use the same firm again. 9% were unsure. For those who moved over five years ago, 28% of respondents were unsure, demonstrating an opportunity for firms to maintain more contact with clients over time.

Satisfaction with Conveyancer / Solicitor



Sample size (used conveyancer/ solicitor): 1056

Table 6. Likelihood of using conveyancer/ solicitor again

How likely would you be to use same conveyancer/ solicitor again?	% who used conveyancer/ solicitor		
	Total	Bought within 5yrs	Bought over 5yrs ago
Would use again (definitely/ probably)	61%	74%	56%
Would not use again (probably not/ definitely not)	16%	17%	16%
Don't know	23%	9%	28%
Sample size:	1056	267	784

DELAYS IN CONVEYANCING

Despite a high percentage of people being happy with their conveyancing solicitor and a good number not feeling they experienced any significant delays with the process, over 60% of respondents felt the overall experience could have been improved. This sentiment increases amongst those who have moved in the last five years, up to nearly four in five (78%). The top five suggestions were:

- **Having a faster process (31%);**
- **Having frequent communication from their conveyancer (21%);**
- **Having the ability to complete documents online (19%);**
- **Having the ability to access their transaction online 24/7 (16%);**
- **Having a clearer explanation of legal process/issues (16%).**

The results suggest that increasingly clients want a greater understanding and more control of their transaction. 17% of respondents who bought their home over five years ago said more frequent correspondence from the conveyancer would improve the process. This rises to 31% amongst those who bought in the last five years. A clearer explanation of legal process and issues saw a similar increase, from 14% to 21%.

The introduction of technology; such as completing documents online, access to 24/7 case updates, and a mobile app for notifications, stood out as improvements amongst those who purchased their property in the last five years.

Table 7. What would improve the conveyancing process?

What would have improved the conveyancing process?	% who used conveyancer/ solicitor		
	Total	Bought within 5yrs	Bought over 5yrs ago
Experience could have been improved	61%	78%	55%
Nothing could have improved experience	25%	19%	28%
Don't know/ can't recall	13%	4%	17%
What would improve the conveyancing process?:			
A faster process	31%	38%	29%
More frequent communication from my conveyancer	21%	31%	17%
Ability to complete documents online	19%	20%	18%
Ability to access case online 24/7	16%	19%	15%
Clearer explanation of legal process/ issues	16%	21%	14%
Clearer explanation of fees	13%	18%	11%
Mobile app to notify me when I needed to do something	12%	19%	9%
Longer opening hours – evenings/ weekends	9%	18%	6%
Other*	3%	2%	3%
<i>Sample size:</i>	1056	267	784

***Other things that could improve the conveyancing process:** Clear explanation of what they do and don't do, a more competent conveyancer, treating woman as equal/ directing enquiries to me as main contact, not just the male partner, being able to contact the conveyancer during office hours, being local, cheaper fees, conveyancer doing things without being chased/more proactive, dealing with same person throughout, letting me know when they are going on holiday, more pleasant, not using new build recommended conveyancer, not losing funds, not making billing mistakes.



METHODOLOGY

The survey was carried out by Opinium online and figures are weighted and representative of all UK adults (aged 18+). Total sample size was 2,000 adults of which 1,326 were Homeowners and 531 Renters. Fieldwork 19-22nd January 2024.

ABOUT NATIONAL CONVEYANCING WEEK

National Conveyancing Week was established in 2023 by Rob Hailstone (Bold Legal Group) and David Opie (Today's Media) to raise the profile of conveyancers/conveyancing and property lawyers in the home-moving process.

The purpose of National Conveyancing Week is to: Inform; Educate; Assist; Motivate; Reassure; Help recruit new entrants; Improve the profile of conveyancing and conveyancing; and ensure fees can be set, and kept, at an acceptable level.

All talks and presentations from National Conveyancing Week are available to view on the YouTube Channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/@conveyancingweek>

ABOUT HOMEOWNERS ALLIANCE

The HomeOwners Alliance champions the interests of Britain's homeowners and aspiring homeowners. It is a property advice website providing helpful advice and services for all the key moments of buying, selling and owning your home.

We are one of Britain's most popular and fastest growing property advice websites, staying true to its mission to help homeowners facing some of the biggest and most complex decisions of their lives. Last year, more than four million homeowners and aspiring homeowners visited its website, [hoa.org.uk](https://www.hoa.org.uk).



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