



Presentation of Findings

July 2019



Victoria Legal Aid

Client Satisfaction Survey 2019



Background & Methodology





Background

Objectives

Measure clients' perceptions and experience of VLA services

Help VLA make decisions about the services provided in the future

Report findings to government and stakeholders

Meet reporting requirements under the NPA

Approach

Online and telephone survey of VLA clients

In-depth qualitative follow up of selected clients





Methodology



Multi-Method
Survey

- 503 telephone interviews plus 494 online interviews – total 997
- Equal representation of:
 - Legal Advice, Casework, Duty Lawyer and Legal Help
 - Criminal, Civil and Family Law
- Weighted to VLA's client population
- Fieldwork conducted February-March 2019

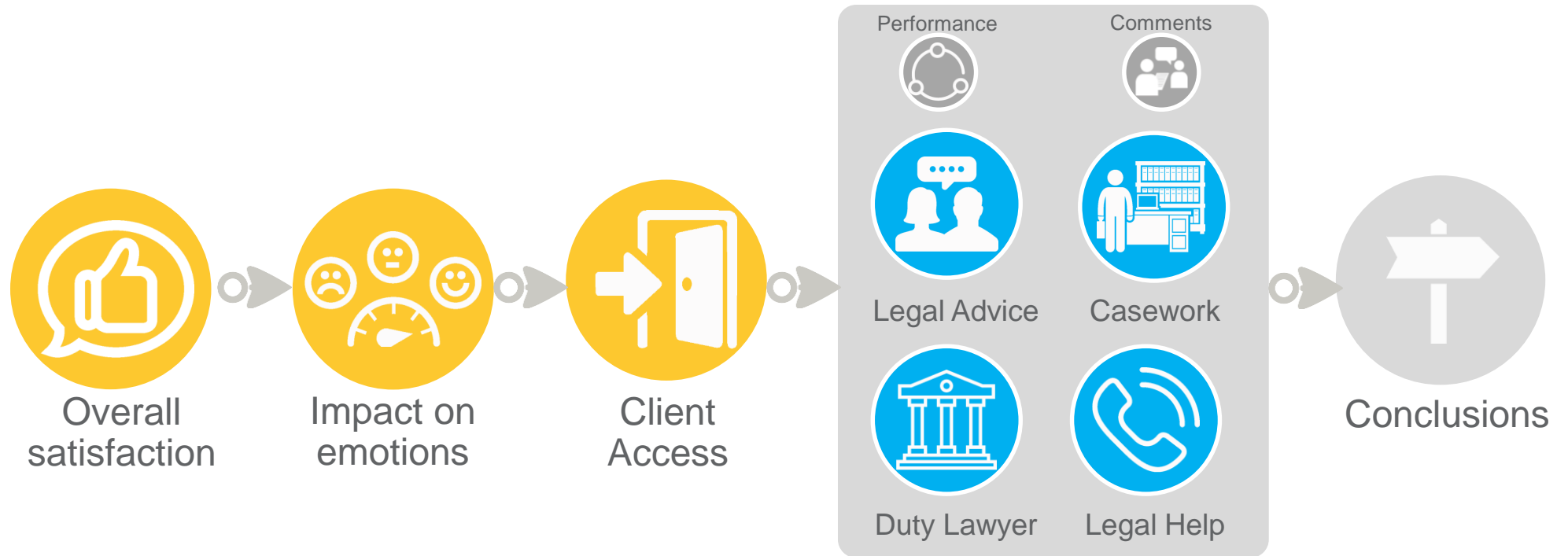


Qualitative
Follow-up

- Follow-up qualitative interviews with n=20 clients
- Selected to represent:
 - Service types and client types
 - Levels of satisfaction
 - CALD, disabled and Indigenous clients
- An extension of survey responses – telling their story



This presentation





Overall Client Satisfaction





Overall satisfaction

Overall satisfaction, 2019

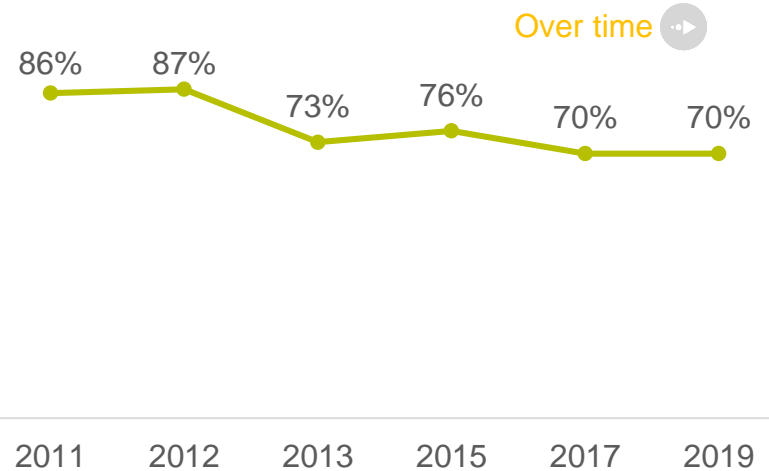


- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know

Service and client type

Legal Advice	Casework	Duty Lawyer	Legal Help
71%	75%	71%	70%

Family	Criminal	Civil
70%	72%	66%



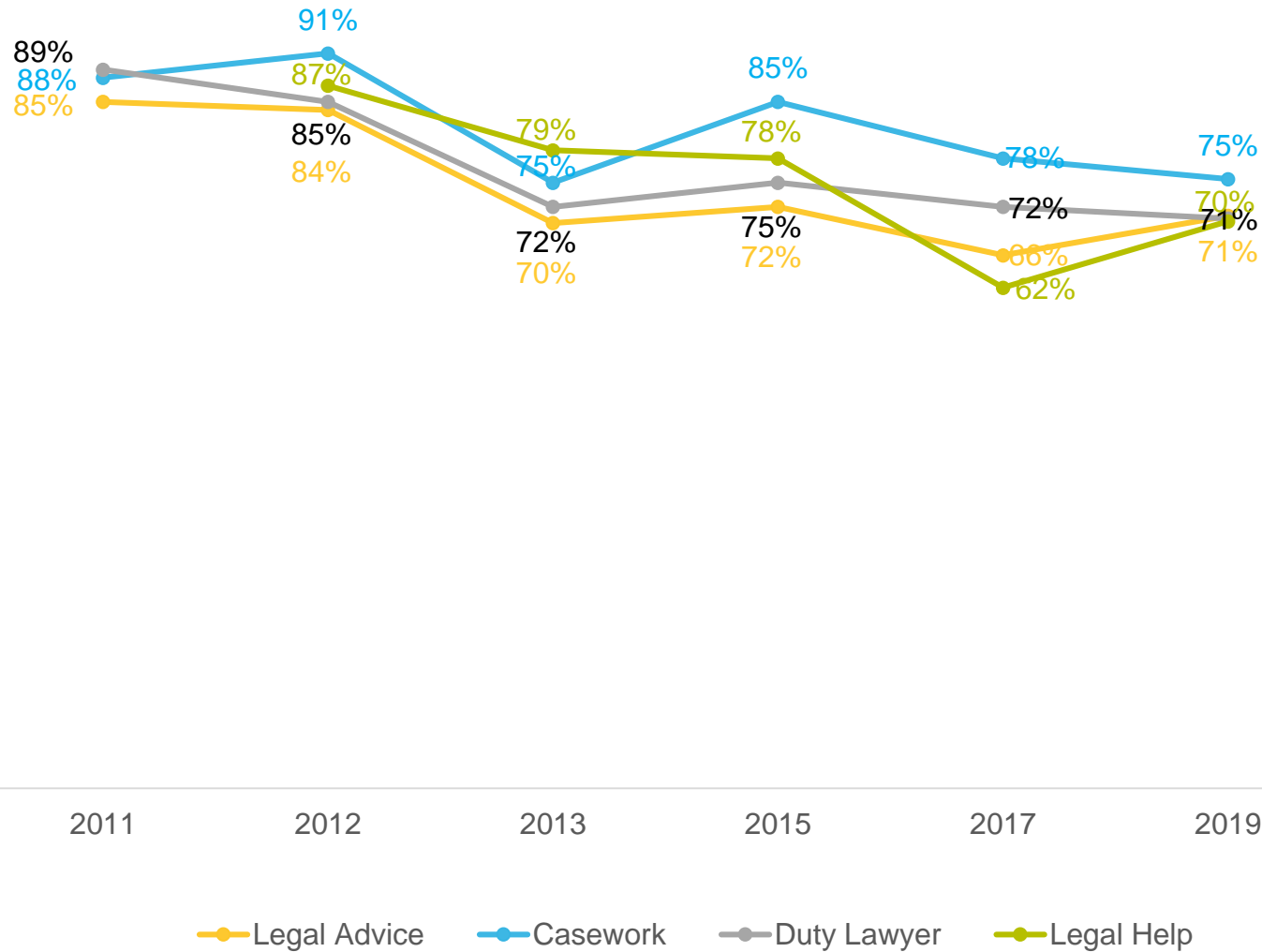
Overall, seven in ten clients were satisfied with VLA's services

Satisfaction with Victoria Legal Aid has stabilised in 2019

Satisfaction was higher for Casework services, and clients with Criminal matters



Overall satisfaction by service area





Key Standardised Measures

Findings for VLA for the six key standardised measures set by the Attorney-General's Department are:

- 84% of clients thought it was easy to contact VLA;
- 82% of clients felt that their lawyer or advisor listened to them;
- 77% of clients felt that their lawyer or advisor helped them understand their situation;
- 86% of clients felt empowered to seek legal help in the future;
- 45% of clients with personal/cultural needs felt that VLA met those needs; and
- 85% of clients would recommend VLA's services to others.



Impact on Emotions





Impact on emotions



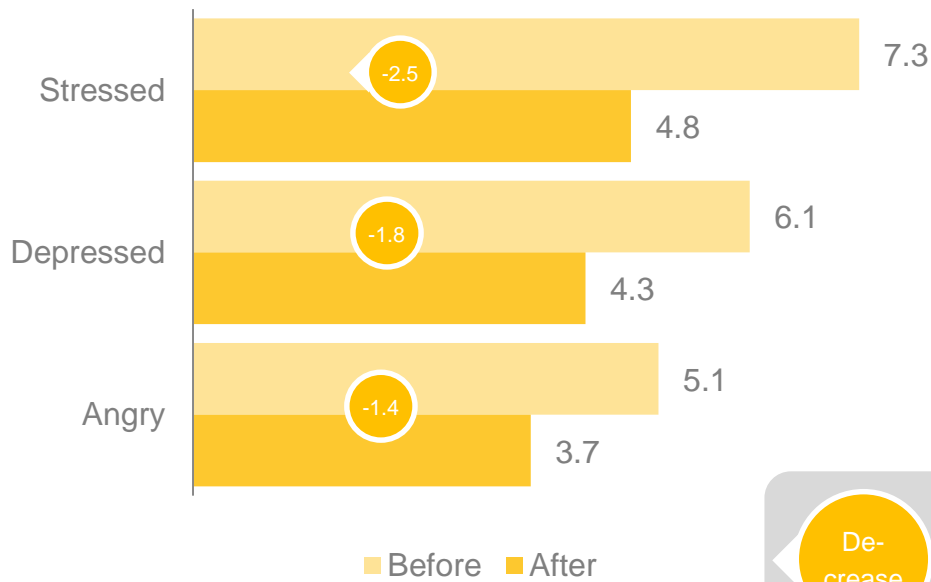
Clients were asked about their emotional state before and after VLA's services

Differences in mean emotional ratings are shown

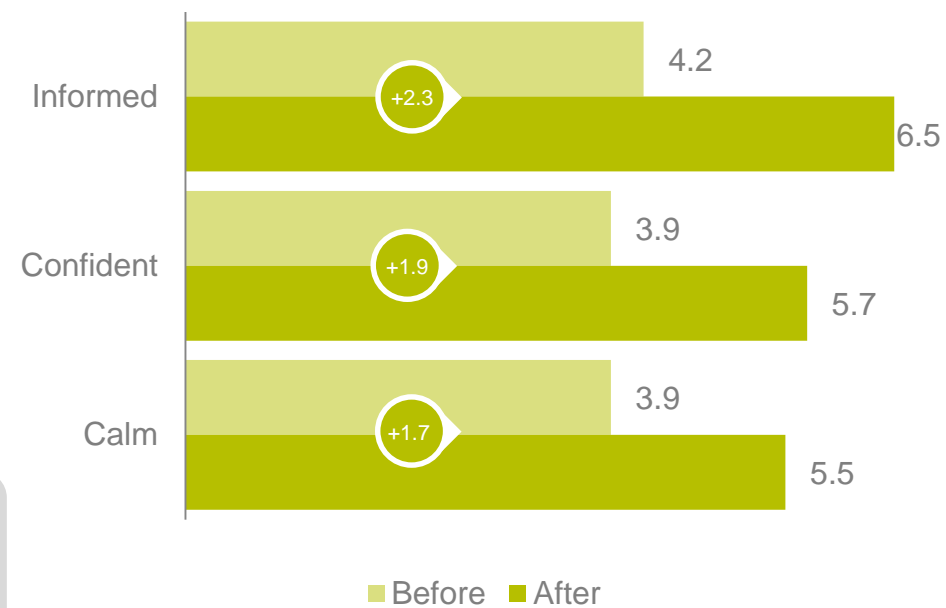
VLA's services had a very positive impact on clients' wellbeing

Receiving help from VLA boosted clients' positive emotions and reduce their negative emotions

Decrease in negative



Increase in positive





Impact on emotions



Positive impact on emotions



"I was numb. As the incident had just happened. I was in shock. I felt shell shocked. But I calmed down after I spoke to VLA. I had direction. I knew what had to be done."



"When I first called them I was beside myself. I was completely distraught. After talking with them I felt relieved I'd be able to get some help."



Negative impact on emotions



"They made me have twice as much stress, because I felt like there was no lifeline. To be told there was nothing they could do. They should have organised someone else to help me, but they give no alternatives."—



"It was distressing a time. Talking to the Duty Lawyer did not make me less distressed. She was just interested in getting through it quick and not in getting the right outcome for me."



Access to Legal Aid





First Contact

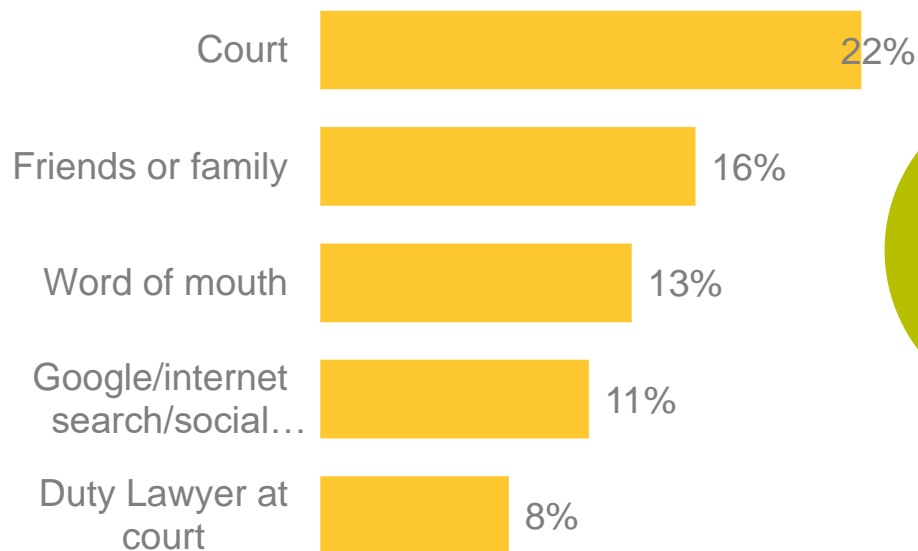


Most VLA clients become aware of the service via a court or family and friends

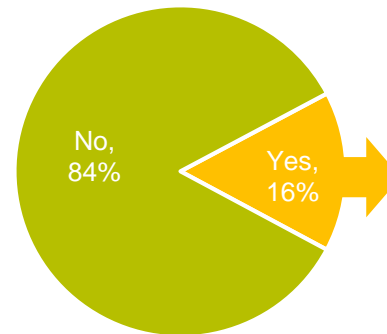
Few experience difficulties first accessing the service

Those that do experience difficulties report issues getting through on the phone and access issues relating to eligibility

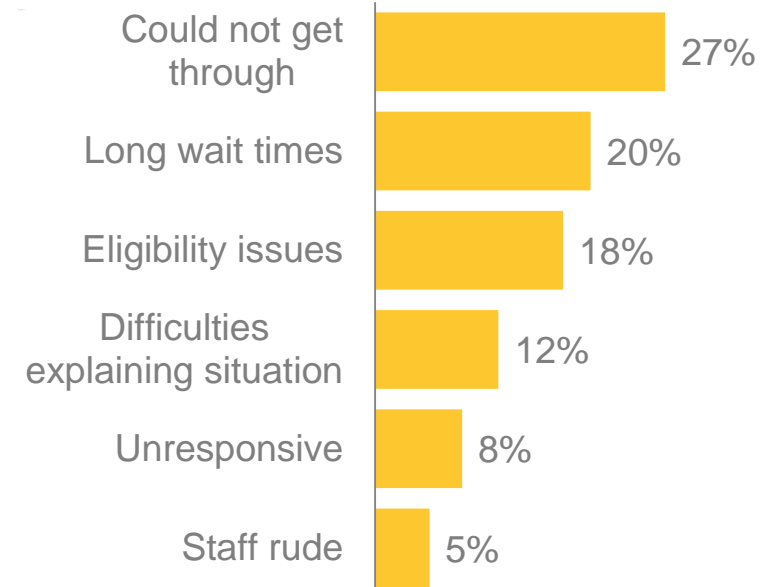
Source of awareness ...



Any difficulties?

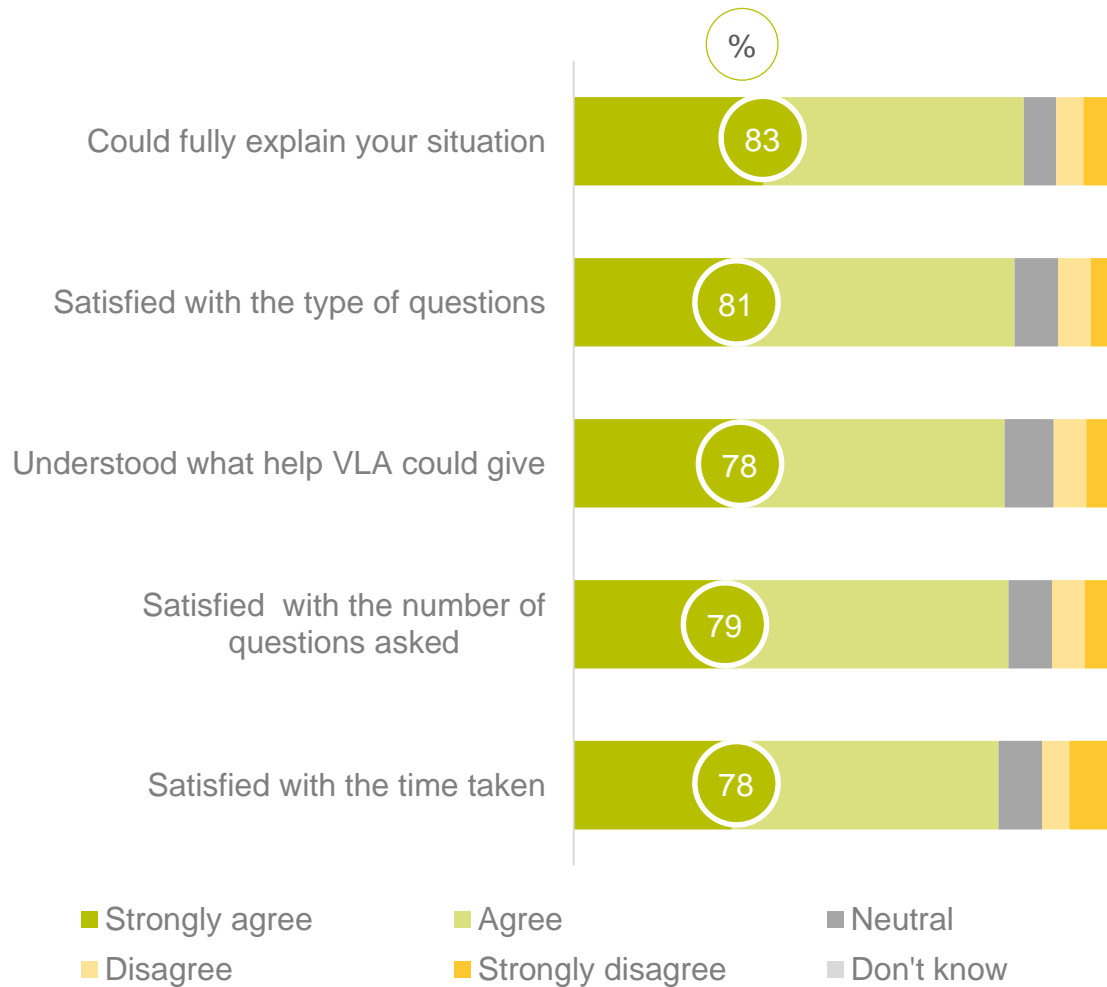


Why?





Assessment



Few VLA clients had difficulty completing assessment

Time taken and understanding what help VLA could give were the biggest issues, though only for a small number of clients

XX = % Strongly agree + agree



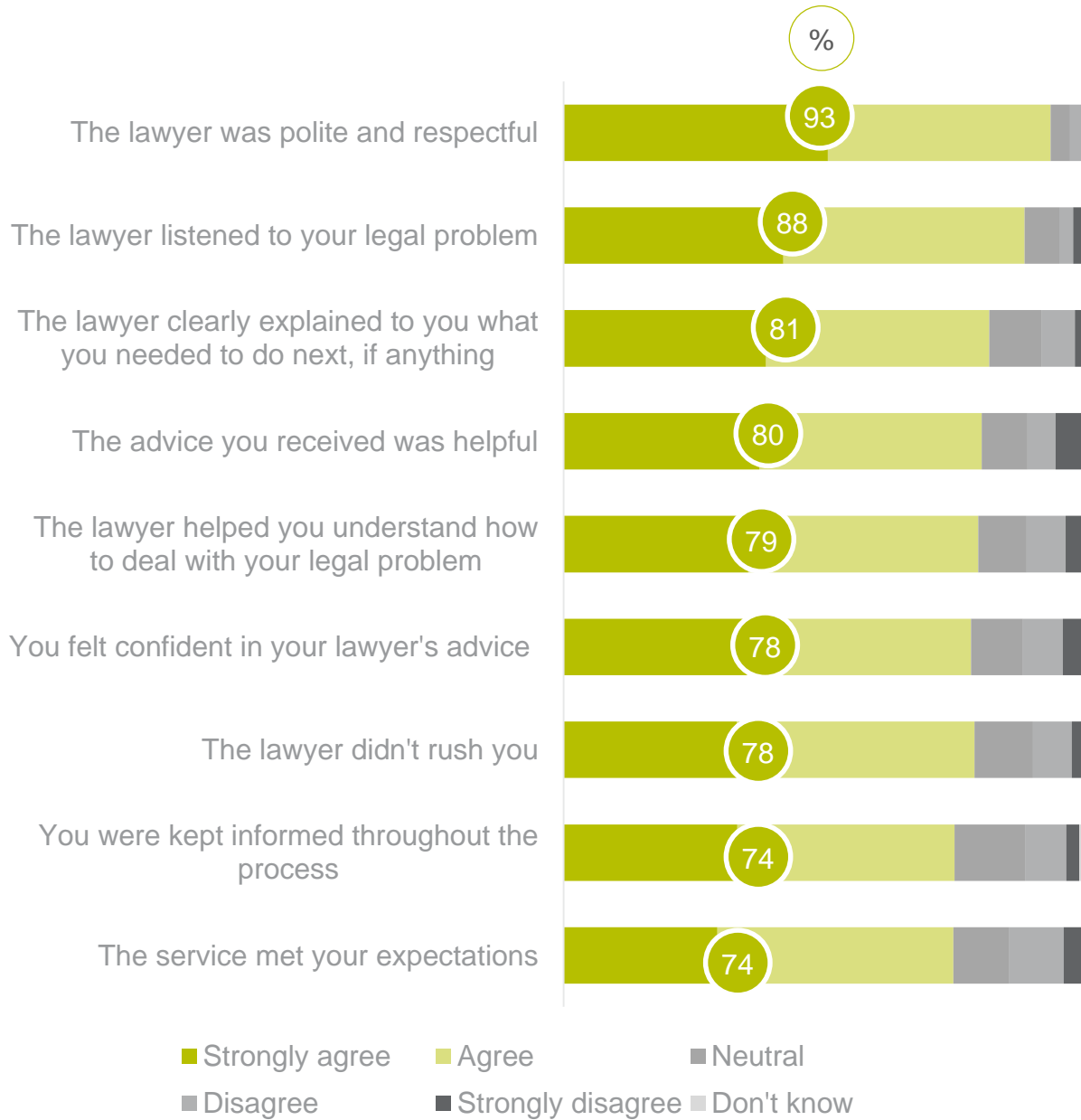
Performance measures for each service





Legal Advice





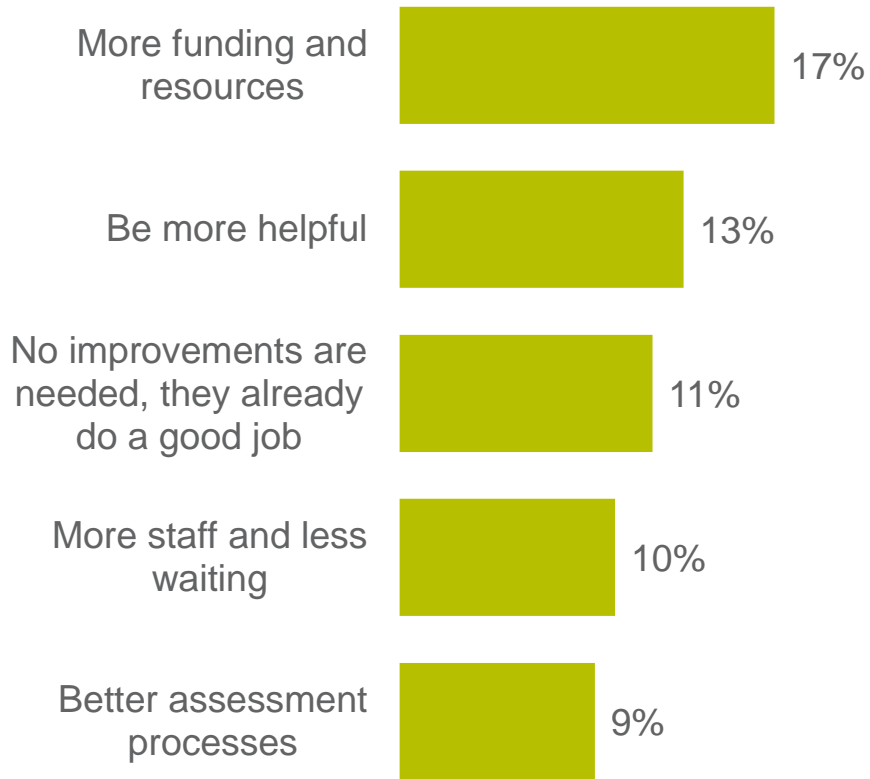
Legal Advice clients considered that the staff at Legal Advice are polite, respectful and provide clear explanations

Some clients would like more information on an ongoing basis throughout the process

XX = % Strongly agree + agree



The most common suggestions for improvement to the Legal Advice service were increases to funding and therefore resources
Helpfulness of advice was also recommended as an area for improvement



“They could be more helpful and have a service similar of that to west justice or recommend something like that instead of saying well sorry we can't help you best of luck. That's not really fair.”



“Give them more funding so they can help more people.”



“Victims of family violence should be allowed the service regardless of their financial situation.”



Most 'other' comments were positive and related to the lawyers' helpfulness and professionalism and communicativeness

Satisfied with lawyer/VLA NFI 22%

Helpful 20%

Friendly, polite, approachable 14%

Communicative, explained options well 9%

Unhelpful 14%

Felt rushed 7%

Short-staffed or not available 5%



"He was very helpful & emailed me the information that I needed"



"I found that [NAME] was very respectful, gave good advice and had a very nice manner about him."

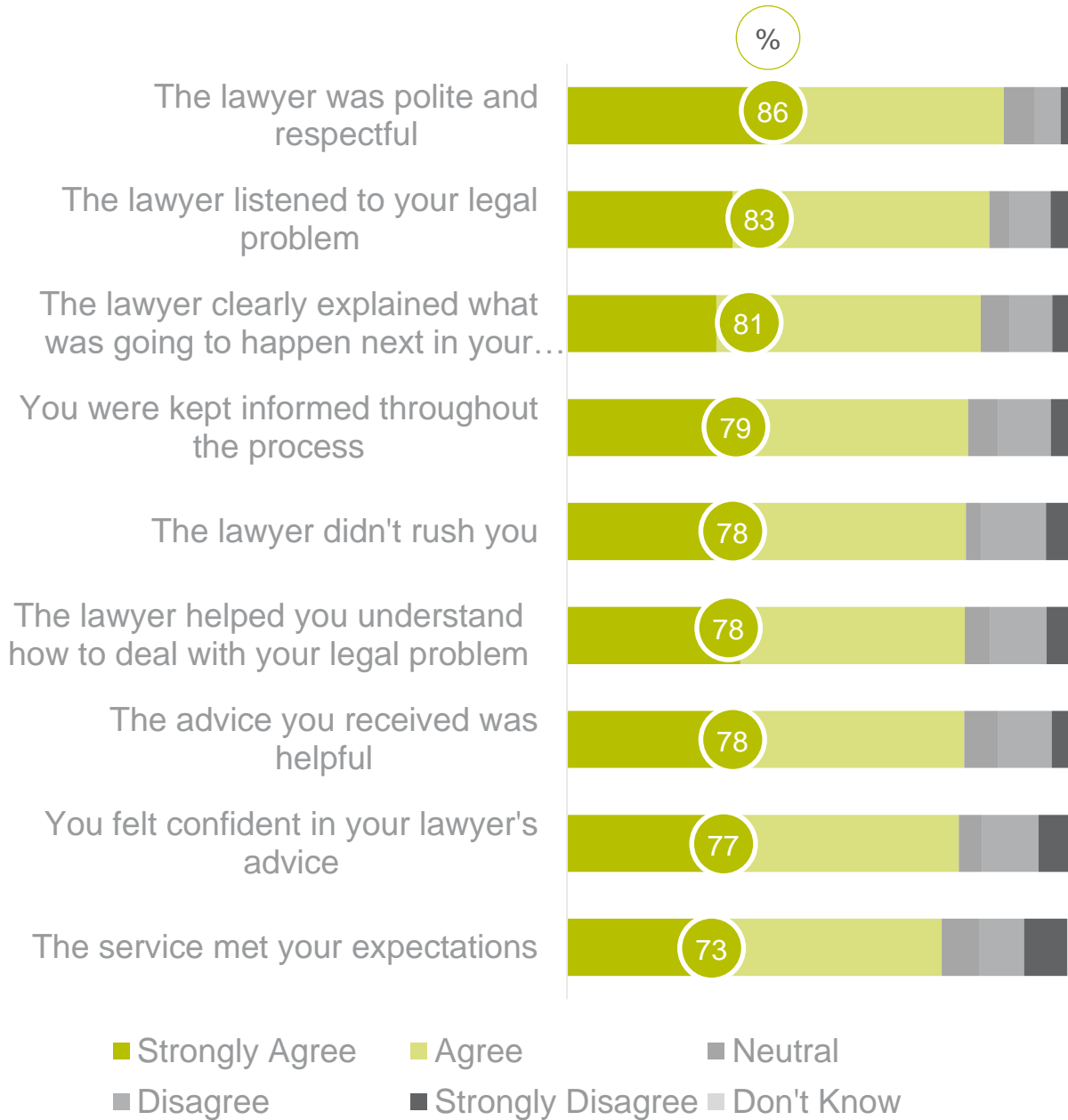



"Very helpful and explained everything that was going on. Good communication."



Casework







 Most Casework clients described their lawyer as being polite and being good listeners.

 Some Casework clients did not feel as confident in their lawyers advice.

XX = % Strongly agree + agree



More funding to build capacity was again identified as the main area for improvement to the Casework service



"Listen to the clients a bit more, get what the clients want, instead of going in without any evidence."



"More lawyers, so that they may spend more time with their clients, so that they can actually speak for them at court and appropriately handle their case."



"Definitely the ratio of cases to lawyers. The one I saw had such a large caseload that they couldn't spend much time with me."



Most 'other' comments about the Casework service were positive, though non-specific

Some Casework clients praised the lawyers' helpfulness and professionalism

Satisfied with lawyer/VLA NFI 26%

Helpful 16%

Professional 12%

Friendly, polite, approachable 9%

Could not help 16%

Short-staffed or did not see lawyer 11%

Unresponsive or did not listen 7%



"They were very helpful when I felt overwhelmed and reassured me in the best way possible."



"She was really good with getting things organised, she did a good job."




"He knew what he was talking about and I was very happy with him."




Duty Lawyer



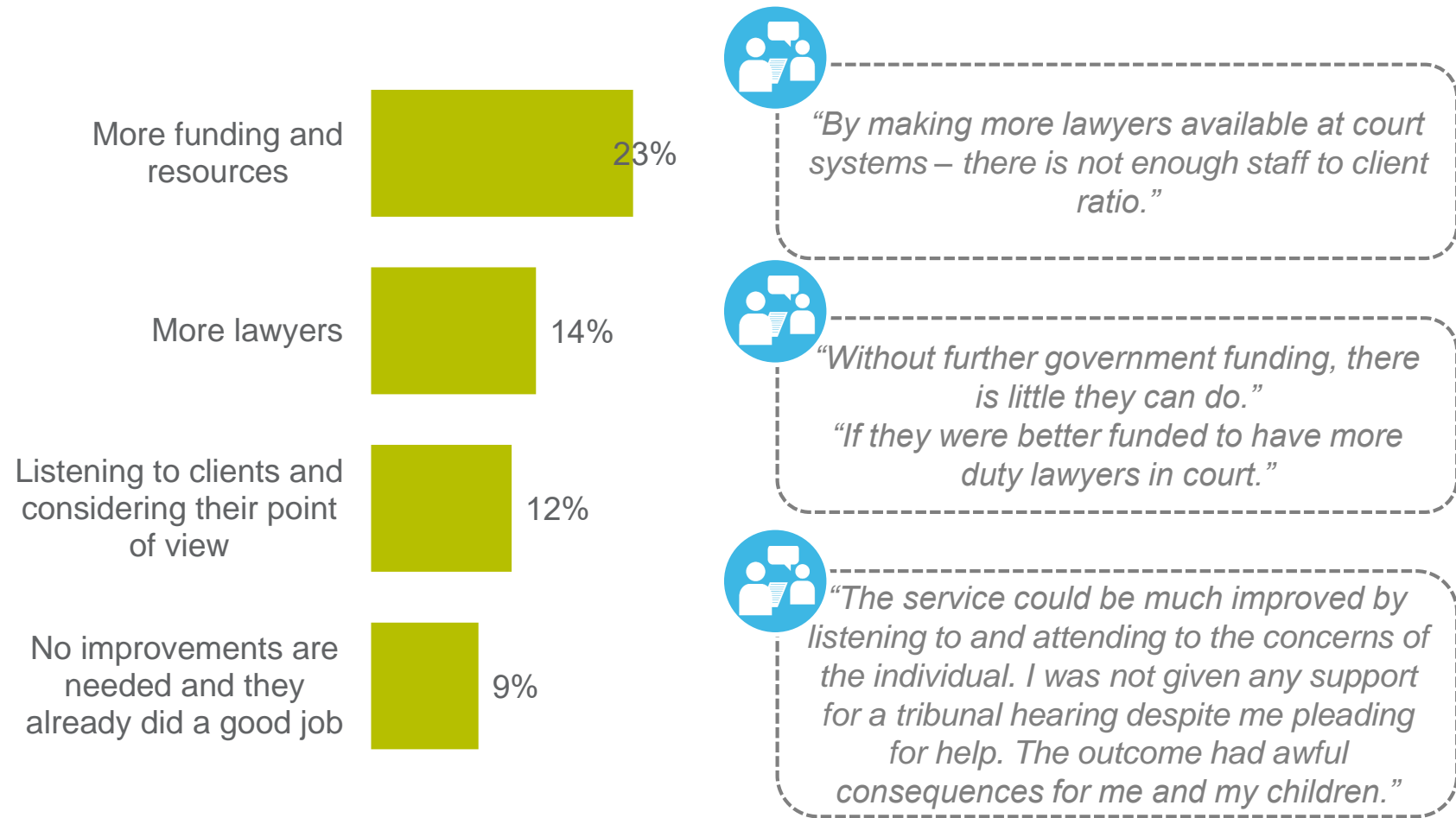



 Duty Lawyer clients perceived their lawyers to be polite and that the advice they received was helpful. Clients also praised the service for explaining what would happen next with their case. The amount of waiting time, however, was a particular issue for these clients.

 XX = % Strongly agree + agree

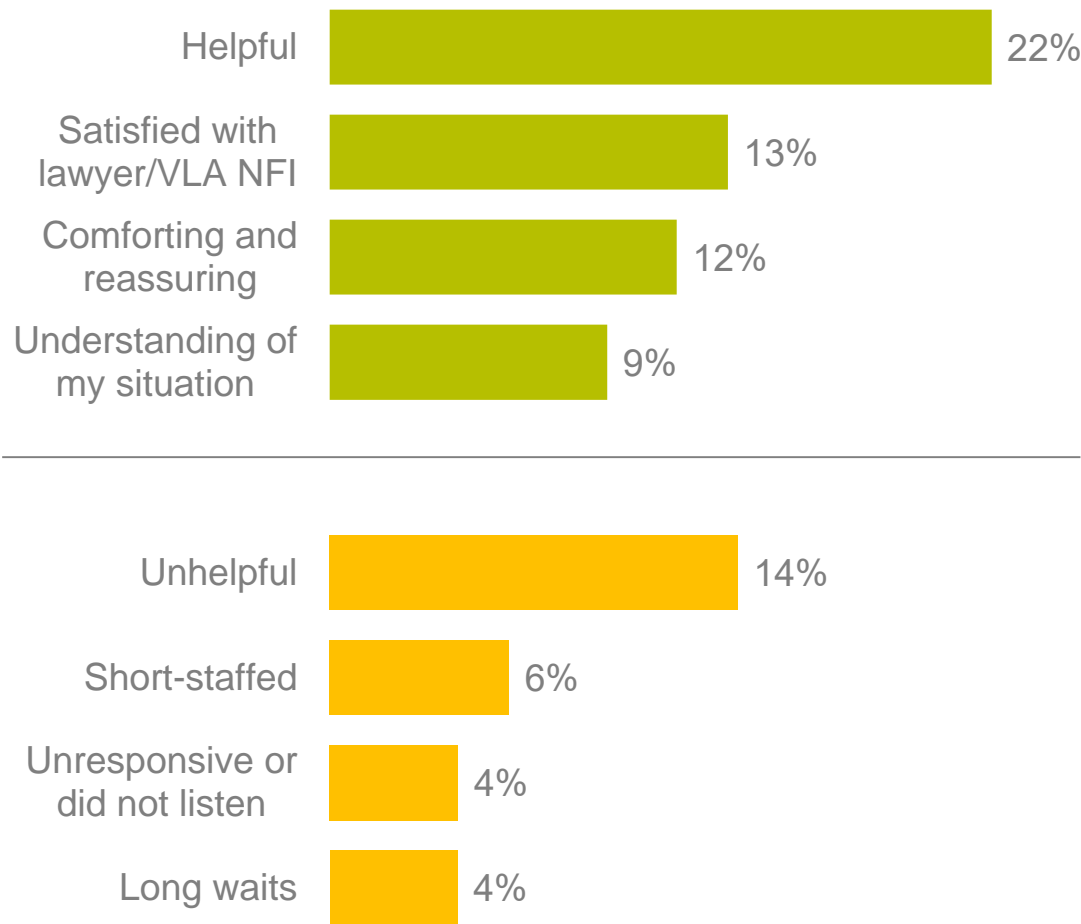


Like other VLA services, Duty Lawyer clients perceive that the service needs more funding to build capacity





Positive comments about the Duty Lawyer focussed on helpfulness and general satisfaction
Some clients held an opposite point of view and did not perceive the Duty Lawyer to be helpful



"They were very helpful and understanding with my situation and tried to fight for the best outcome for my personal gain."



"I never been court in my entire life. By talking to a duty lawyer, I was confident to face the court."



"The Duty Lawyer was helpful and assisted me through the day and made the day much less dark."



Legal Help





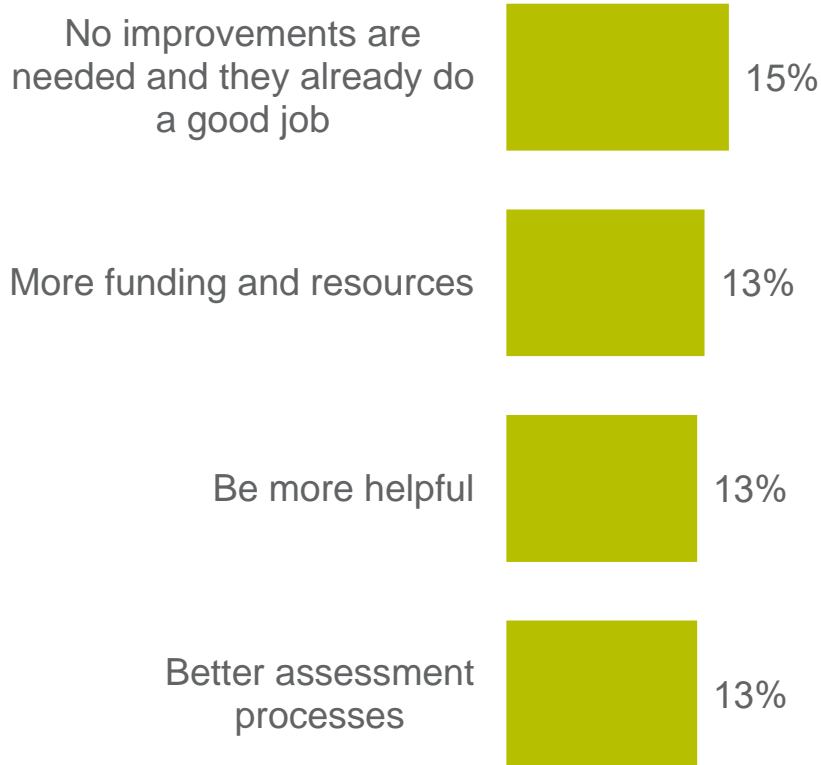
Legal Help advisors are viewed as polite and respectful.

However, some clients felt that the advice that was provided was unhelpful

XX = % Strongly agree + agree



Greater funding and resources was again the most commonly suggested improvements for Legal Help



“Legal Aid should not be refusing anyone the basic requirements of legal advice, especially tax payers who essentially fund their entire scheme.”



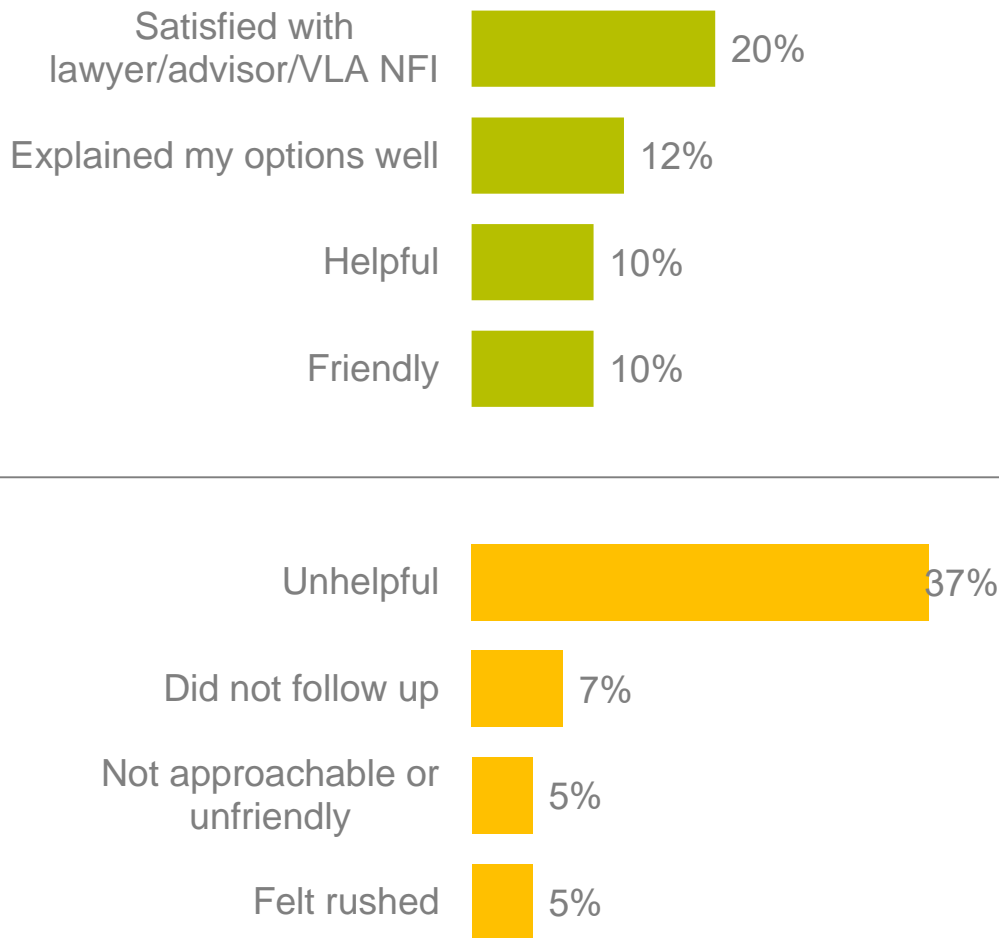
“Make sure the advisers are fully informed to the best of their ability. So, if I call twice with the same problem I will receive the exact same information and legal advice.”



“Consistency with advice is important and if it's beyond the scope of Legal Aid then must inform the client to seek a more comprehensive option.”



'Other' comments about the Legal Help service were mostly positive and centred on general satisfaction, and the helpfulness and friendliness of advisors.



"It was made easy to understand what I needed to do next. Very helpful."



"Good service when you are stuck for information."



"The adviser was very helpful and understanding and took the time to really ask questions about my situation and listen without making judgement but pointed me in the right direction."



Qualitative findings





Conduct of lawyer/advisor



Many clients were very impressed by the manner and professionalism of the lawyer or advisor



"She was really good. Willing to help. She helped me understand my legal problem. Good at communicating and helped me understand things. If it went to court she told me what would happen."



"They were very caring and assisted positively. Frequently calling or emailing and telling me and giving advice. It was very positive."



"She was able to explain everything in laymen's terms. She really helped me. I believe if I had any other lawyer I would have gone to jail."



However, others questioned the lawyers dedication and abilities



"I think she was good at communicating what she felt was important about my legal problem. But she didn't listen to what I said. All they were interested in was let's get out of here before lunch."



He needs to brush up on his communication skills. He said 'we don't deal with this' as soon as I mentioned traffic infringement. I had no advice from anyone. What am I supposed to do?"



she was terrible at communicating and she didn't care about me. I made a complaint because there was no communication from her for about 3 and a half months. She didn't send me anything."



Meeting expectations



The expectations of clients were met or exceeded for many clients. The services provided by VLA went above and beyond what they thought they might receive



“They have a better understanding of the court proceedings and what is going on than I do myself. They were able to advise me better on what I should be doing more so than if I did it myself. I think they did it very well.”



I expected they would be good people and that they would respect my situation. I got what I needed. I needed support in a hard time and help and that’s what they gave me.



Not all clients felt that their expectations were met. Issues of eligibility appeared to be the main driver of unmet expectation



They never even told me there was an on-duty lawyer. I knew nothing about the courts. There was no advice of any description given to me.



‘It was what I expected. Because everyone said only poor people get Legal Aid – you don’t get good lawyers. Because they are not being paid normal fees – they don’t do the job as well. Or they don’t give legal aid clients priority over other full fee-paying clients.’



Conclusions





In conclusion

1

VLA continues to provide very high quality services – most of the organisation's clients, some of whom have complex issues, were satisfied overall.

2

Staff members' professionalism, politeness, listening skills and ability to provide clear explanations were praised

3

Clients' overall satisfaction levels remain high in 2019. Rates have stabilised across all client types (Civil, Criminal and Family) and services (Legal Advice, Casework, Duty Lawyer and Legal Help).

4

Out of each of the key performance measures that were assessed, feeling that the service met their expectations was rated the lowest across all service types and client types. This is possibly due to be a mix of:

- 9 **Ineligibility for services in relation to expectations;**
- 9 **Lower than expected quantities or types of service;**
- 9 **Perception of under-resourcing (non-attentive staff).**

5

Service improvement efforts could emphasise expectation setting, explanation of eligibility criteria and enhanced referrals. Monitoring of external lawyers should also be prioritised - to ensure that the service they are providing to clients is of an expected standard. Building legal awareness among clients should continue to be a focus of VLA's service offerings.

