



News release

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CONVEYANCING TAKES TOO LONG BUT CONVEYANCERS DO A GOOD JOB

Nearly half of the UK's house buyers (46%) are concerned about the length of time it takes to exchange contracts, according to new research by YouGov commissioned by First Title Insurance plc (First Title).

Just over one in three house buyers (36%) is also fearful that a property deal will fall through - a fear which might be connected to the time it takes to reach exchange. The same number is keen to make sure that the process of buying remains as stress free as possible.

The research also paints a positive picture of conveyancers. A significant majority of respondents (68%) said that their conveyancer had done a professional job; and 44% cited the individual looking after their conveyancing transaction as being well informed. These results demonstrate a strong degree of appreciation for, and trust in, conveyancers. So much so, that a third of house buyers are happy to leave the whole process to them. However, 60% expect their conveyancer to keep them fully informed on progress.

"This research offers a robust endorsement of conveyancers. It may not be something we hear often, but it is very encouraging. Clearly the profession is doing a great job. This is very good news and it underlines the fact that, in many respects, the process we have in place for buying and selling houses works well," commented John Maidens, Chief Executive Officer, First Title.

There is a reasonable divergence in habits among house buyers as they prepare to buy a new house. Three factors seem to predominate when it comes to selecting a conveyancer, for example. Just under a third of people (29%) want someone local; while 24% tend to use their family solicitor. However, 23% of people use someone who is recommended to them by their estate agent. Perhaps reassuringly, only 4% rely on recommendations from the internet to select their conveyancer.

On the all-important subject of pre-purchase house surveys, 42% opt for a 'homebuyer's survey' - the middle option for checking the soundness of a property. But nearly two out of ten people (17%) take out no survey at all. Given that anyone applying for a mortgage will need a survey to secure that mortgage this data might suggest that almost one fifth of house purchases are being completed without a mortgage.

So far as appetite for risk is concerned, house buyers appear relatively unaware of, and/or un-phased by, what could be costly, time-consuming and damaging risks. Conveyancers tend to explain issues such as boundary disputes, seller misrepresentation and mortgage fraud to their clients in only a limited number of cases (13%, 7% and 4% respectively). Worryingly, 54% of house buyers themselves think their boundaries are either completely accurate (27%), or accurate to within a small distance in either direction (27%). And despite the fact that mortgage fraud is on the rise, over half (52%) don't think it is likely to affect them.

"Altogether, this is a fascinating piece of research. It offers some interesting insights into house buyers' habits, motivation and appetite for risk and it provides food for thought for all parties involved in the conveyancing process. We believe it presents a perfect platform to help explain some of the key risks associated with buying residential property. Issues such as the accuracy of boundaries, if misinterpreted, can cause problems that drag on for a long time, cause considerable heartache and cost a lot of money. We think people should be more aware of these types of risk and find out how to mitigate them with the help of their conveyancers," concluded John Maidens.

The research was carried out by SixthSense, part of YouGov plc. Data analysis was provided by Colporteur.

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Notes to editors

First Title

First Title Insurance plc offers expert risk management solutions and specialises in the provision of legal indemnity insurance to solicitors and property professionals involved in residential and commercial real estate transactions. With a successful 20-year track record in the UK, First Title has in-depth knowledge of the risk management market and emerging trends and issues. First Title Insurance plc is part of The First American Family that traces its heritage back to 1889. First Title is a trading name of First Title Insurance plc, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.

First Title policy advisory note

This material is intended to provide general information only. For specific coverage and exclusions, refer to the relevant policy wording.

YouGov SixthSense report

Research was via a survey conducted among YouGov's online panel, drawing on a sample of 1,959 UK adults aged 18+ who had bought a residential property within the last two years. The survey was conducted between 19 and 22 September 2011.

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