Uptake of legal self-help resources (SHRs)

This paper reports new analysis of the national Legal Australia-Wide (LAW) Survey dataset, examining respondents’ use of self-help resources for legal problems. Self-help resources were shown to be typically one of a number of strategies people used to resolve legal problems, suggesting they are a complementary rather than an alternative, stand-alone strategy. The use of self-help resources was associated with increased use of formal advisers. But many people in the community are less capable of using self-help resources effectively and don’t find them helpful. The access to justice impact must be monitored in light of evidence suggesting self-help resources are better suited to the ‘missing middle’.

SHRs were only used in response to 20% of legal problems

<table>
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<tr>
<th>SHRs used with or without another strategy</th>
<th>Other action taken excluding SHRs</th>
<th>No action taken</th>
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<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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Who used self-help resources?

- 25-34 year olds were the most likely of any age group
- People who had post-school qualifications were twice as likely as those who had not completed Year 12
- People with disabilities were 1.3 times as likely as others

How helpful did respondents find self-help resources?

- Two-thirds of respondents who used a self-help resource also sought help from a professional adviser e.g. legal, financial, government or health and welfare adviser
- 64% of respondents found self-help resources helpful for 40% of these problems
- 40% of respondents found self-help resources not helpful for 60% of these problems

Better outcomes?

Respondents who found self-help resources helpful had a higher likelihood of:

- Resolving their legal problem
- Achieving a favourable outcome
- Satisfaction with the outcome

How can self-help resources be more useful for legal problems?

- Ongoing monitoring of the helpfulness and effectiveness of self-help resources for different groups of people and different types of legal problems is vital to improve their utility and impact
- Better design and targeting
- Increased uptake and utility

See Uptake of legal self-help resources: what works, for whom and for what?, Justice Issues paper 30
http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/publications/