



2018 CANADIAN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY OFFICE CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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For more information on this report, please contact Innovation,
Science and Economic Development Canada at:

ic.publicopinionresearch-recherchesurlopinionpublique.ic@canada.ca

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's (ISED) 2016-2021 Service Management Strategy stipulates that ISED will establish "baseline client satisfaction measures and develop a proposal to measure horizontal client satisfaction" before the end of the 2017-18 fiscal year.

The Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO) Client Satisfaction Survey was developed as a standardized measure of client satisfaction and conducted as a baseline in 2017-18 against which future waves can be compared to assess progress and trends over time. This project also included initial focus groups that informed the questions asked in the quantitative survey.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Develop a series of baseline performance measurement metrics relating to customer satisfaction for CIPO;
- Outline client priorities for CIPO's service delivery; and,
- Collect data to support other business intelligence needs related to CIPO's clients.

B. METHODOLOGY

1. Qualitative phase

EnviroNics Research conducted a series of nine focus groups between December 6, 2017 and January 16, 2018. Seven focus groups were held in person (in Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver) and two were conducted by telephone conference call. The groups were segmented by client type, as follows:

- **Agents** (3 groups: 2 patent/industrial design and 1 trademark) – Agents are Intellectual Property (IP) professionals who prosecute IP applications on behalf of their clients or the companies they work for (in-house counsel)
- **Unrepresented clients** (2 groups: primarily trademark) – Clients who have completed the process to obtain IP without the help of an agent
- **Represented clients** (4 groups: 3 in Canada and 1 in the United States, mixed patent and trademark) – Clients who used an agent to complete the process to obtain IP

Focus group participants were selected according to the Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research – Qualitative Research¹. More detailed information on qualitative methodology is provided in Appendix A of the full report, along with a copy of the research instruments (Appendices B and C).

¹ Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research – Qualitative Research. <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/rop-por/documents/rechqual-qualres-eng.pdf>

Statement of limitations: Qualitative research provides insight into the range of opinions held within a population, rather than the weights of the opinions held, as would be measured in a quantitative study. The results of this type of research should be viewed as indicative rather than projectable to the population.

2. Quantitative phase

The quantitative phase of this research project involved an online survey with 1,136 clients of CIPO, from February 21 to April 22, 2018. The margin of error for the total sample of 1,136 is +/- 2.9 percentage points, at the 95% confidence level (margin of error is greater for subgroups).

The sample provided by CIPO included three client groups: agents, unrepresented clients and represented clients. The agent group was selected from a list of registered agents representing both national and international clients. The latter two groups of clients were selected from a list of Canadian applicants if, between June 1, 2016 and November 1, 2017, they were: granted/registered IP; their applications were refused/abandoned/ withdrawn; or if their application was still in progress. This survey represents an attempted census of eligible clients for whom email information is available.

The distribution of completed interviews was as follows:

	Patent	ID	TD	Total	Margin of Error*	% Actual**
Agents	113	84	236	433	± 4.7	38%
Unrepresented clients	88	20	476	584	± 4.0	51%
Represented clients	20	3	23	46	± 14.4	10%
Mixed clients***	21	6	46	73	± 11.5	-
Total	242	113	781	1136	± 2.9	100%
Margin of Error*	± 6.3	± 9.2	± 3.5			

*Margins of sampling error shown are at the 95% confidence level

**Represents the actual proportion of emails in the database provided by CIPO

*** Mixed clients are those who indicated that they sometimes used an agent and sometimes interacted with CIPO on their own behalf in the previous 18 months.

When clients indicated experience with more than one line of business in the past 18 months, the survey programming selected a line of business for respondents to respond about, prioritizing those with fewer sample records (Industrial Design and Patent) to ensure these are sufficiently represented in the data. The data were statistically weighted to the proportions of agents, unrepresented and represented clients having e-mails in the original sample file.

A more detailed description of the quantitative methodology is presented in Appendix A, and the questionnaire is included as Appendix D.

C. CONTRACT VALUE

The cost of this research was \$147,083.06 (HST included).

D. REPORT

This report begins with an executive summary outlining key findings and conclusions, followed by a detailed analysis of the survey data and a detailed analysis of the focus group. Provided under separate cover is a detailed set of “banner tables” presenting the results for all quantitative survey questions by population segments as defined by client group, IP type, region and other subgroups. These tables are referenced by the survey question in the detailed analysis.

In this report, quantitative results are expressed as percentages unless otherwise noted. Results may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple responses. Net results cited in the text may not exactly match individual results shown in the tables due to rounding.

E. USE OF FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The qualitative research conducted as part of this project was used to develop and finalize the questionnaire content. The CIPO Client Satisfaction Survey is intended to be a standardized measure of client satisfaction, used to establish a baseline in 2017-18 and subsequently updated every three years to assess progress and trends over time.

The 2018 CIPO Client Satisfaction Survey Report has garnered valuable feedback from clients and stakeholders regarding the quality of service that CIPO provides to its clients. CIPO will use this information to put in place service quality improvements that align with the Government of Canada Service Strategy, which aims to improve service for Canadians and put the client first. Going forward, CIPO will continue to measure and monitor the implementation of service delivery and share results through existing mechanisms such as CIPO’s Annual Report to ensure that information about the organization’s continuous improvement efforts is accessible to clients and stakeholders.

F. KEY FINDINGS – QUANTITATIVE PHASE

The findings of the quantitative survey reveal moderate satisfaction with CIPO, with substantial room for improvement. Half of clients (51%) are satisfied overall with the service it provides, compared to two in ten (22%) who are neutral and one-quarter (27%) who are dissatisfied. This pattern in client satisfaction (roughly half satisfied, the remainder almost evenly divided between neutral and negative opinions) is remarkably similar across the service aspects measured, including ease of access to service and the time to receive their IP registration or grant.

- Where satisfaction is slightly *higher* is with services related to filing (57% overall among those who filed an application in the past 18 months); satisfaction is slightly *lower* for services related to examination (48%) and the quality of office actions (46%).
- CIPO receives its highest scores for providing services in the clients’ official language of choice (87% agree); for an easy to use electronic payment process (73%); and, for the professionalism of its staff (67%), the latter of which was also a key strength raised in the focus groups.
- Perhaps not surprisingly, service satisfaction is linked to success at achieving registered/granted IP. Overall satisfaction and satisfaction with specific service aspects is generally higher among those who have received a registration/grant in the past 18 months, and lower among those whose IP was abandoned or refused.

Overall satisfaction with CIPO service is broadly consistent by client type, despite the varying degrees of interaction and experience that agents, unrepresented and represented clients have with CIPO.

- Where differences do exist is with respect to filing and examination services. Satisfaction with service received during filing is higher among agents (64%, vs. 55% of unrepresented clients). Notably, agents give higher ratings for the efficiency of the process and that forms are easy to complete than about CIPO's databases being easy to use and giving them the information they need – while the opposite is true for unrepresented clients.
- In turn, satisfaction with service received during examination is lower among agents (44%, vs. 50% for unrepresented clients). Compared to unrepresented clients, agents give higher ratings for ease of understanding office actions and verbal discussions with examiners, and lower ratings for the consistency of decisions between examiners and the timeliness of first office actions.
- Represented clients are distinguished by a greater tendency to use the “neutral” or “no opinion” categories to describe their views of CIPO, reflecting the fact that they interact primarily with their agent rather than CIPO itself. Otherwise, the relative proportion of positive versus negative views is similar to other client types (i.e., they are no more likely than others to be satisfied or dissatisfied with CIPO's service).

Overall client satisfaction is higher for industrial design (ID) services (68%) than for patent (55%) or trademark (49%) services.

- This cannot be attributed to the higher proportion of agents who handle ID because of its complexity (48% of those responding about ID are agents, vs. 22% for patents and 12% for trademarks) – since agents are no more likely than other to report overall satisfaction with CIPO services. Instead, the data points to significantly higher satisfaction with the time to receive a registered ID (67%, vs. 54% for a granted patent and 46% for a registered trademark).
- While overall satisfaction is statistically similar for patent and trademark services, views about trademarks are distinguished by higher levels of *dissatisfaction*. Clients who received trademark services are more likely to be dissatisfied with filing, examination, the quality of office actions and the time to receive to a registered trademark.

Beyond the impact of client type and line of business, client satisfaction tends to be *higher* among represented and unrepresented clients with more IP experience (as measured by a larger number of applications in the past 18 months) and *lower* among agents who work with international clients requiring Canadian IP services (compared to agents who work only with domestic clients). Client satisfaction (both overall and with specific aspects of CIPO's services) does not vary in a meaningful way by gender, client location, industry, or company size.

Given the variation in ratings of CIPO's service aspects, overall and by key subgroups, a more in-depth analysis was conducted to determine which service aspects are the key “drivers” or factors influencing clients' overall satisfaction with CIPO service.

- Clients are most likely to have a favourable impression if they are satisfied with services provided during filing and examination and with the timeliness of the process. The views of represented and unrepresented clients are also influenced by perceptions that CIPO staff “go the extra mile” to fulfill their needs.

- A performance analysis indicates that CIPO receives relatively weaker ratings for the following service aspects: Developing and adjusting filing and examination processes/services with user needs in mind; timeliness, both of office actions and time from initial filing to registered/granted IP; consistency of decisions between examiners (this is a particularly weak perception among agents); and among represented and unrepresented clients, perceptions that CIPO staff go the extra mile. Thus, the extent to which CIPO can address these issues/concerns likely provides the greatest opportunity to improve overall client satisfaction with its services.

CIPO has recently developed a program to raise awareness of and educate Canadians about IP. These services included a range of informational material about IP, seminars and events, as well as access to CIPO staff who can help Canadians better understand the value of IP and discuss their IP strategy. At this early stage in the program, one in five unrepresented and represented clients say they are aware of these services. However, there is widespread agreement (69%) that these types of services are useful to businesses/individuals.

G. KEY FINDINGS – QUALITATIVE PHASE

The focus groups revealed two main orientations towards CIPO's service, in terms of their expectations and experience:

- On one hand are the **experts**, which include agents and certain represented clients. This audience wants service customized to their specific needs as high-volume, very experienced users. Service improvements should focus on: enhancing the functionality of the IP search databases (particularly the trademark database); improving the consistency of examination across examiners and time periods, and in relation to laws/regulations; and, improving the consistency of the IP process between the three lines of business.
- On the other hand are the **laypersons**, which mainly include unrepresented clients and less experienced represented clients. This audience likes the automated, self-service online IP process, but often encounters problems without an advanced level of knowledge about IP. Their priority areas for service improvement are more clarity around information requirements and adequate support that backs up their ability to submit a successful IP application.

There were also common themes related to client service that were raised *across* client types:

- The most consistent praise was for CIPO staff, who were consistently described as professional, courteous and good to work with. Agents were most likely to see further room for improvement, in terms of accessibility (i.e., desire for a direct contact over the general call centre) and knowledge, both among examiners and other support staff (the latter with respect to how their role fits within the larger IP process and why it is important).
- Areas for improvement that were consistently raised include: improving CIPO's accuracy and ability to easily and quickly correct mistakes; improving the transparency of where an application is in process; and, developing its online capabilities (e.g., increasing use of email correspondence, putting all documents related to a file online).

One of the goals of the focus groups was to determine the extent to which represented clients can comment on CIPO's service, since contact is typically moderated by an agent. However, the research revealed that a sufficient number expressed the desire to "go it alone" and that some try to

do so before encountering problems. Because CIPPO's mandate includes helping clients navigate the IP process, represented clients were included in the quantitative survey, together with agents and unrepresented clients.

H. POLITICAL NEUTRALITY STATEMENT AND CONTACT INFORMATION

I hereby certify as a Vice President of Environics Research Group that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy on Communications and Federal Identity of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not contain any reference to electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leader.



Sarah Robertson
Vice President, Corporate and Public Affairs
Environics Research
sarah.roberton@environics.ca / 613.699.6884