

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
United States Patent and Trademark Office
USPTO Ombudsmen Survey
OMB CONTROL NUMBER 0651-New
August 2014

B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

1. Universe and Respondent Selection

Data from the USPTO Ombudsman Survey is used to evaluate the effectiveness of Ombudsmen personnel at the Corps level, and also of Ombudsmen personnel within each Technology Center (TC). The initial respondent pool covers all inquiries for Ombudsman Program assistance in the most recent Fiscal Year. The USPTO expects 350 - 550 inquiries to the Ombudsman Program per month during a Fiscal Year, or approximately 5,000 annual inquiries. However, roughly 40% are for issues unrelated to the Ombudsman program, e.g. questions on Patent filings procedures, fees, publications, or specific Patent program initiatives. These inquiries are forwarded by the General Ombudsman Office to other Patent Offices or personnel outside the Ombudsman program. Therefore the final pool is narrowed to approximately 3,000 inquiries whose concerns are addressed directly by Ombudsmen personnel. The 3,000 inquiries can come from single or multiple use customers. Program users will be selected only once regardless of the number of times they used the program. The respondent pool will be constructed by extracting all records in the Ombudsman database and then subjecting it to a matching program to identify repeat users. Customers' first usage of the system will be identified as the primary record and all duplicate records will be removed before the selection process. Based on the 2013 USPTO Ombudsman Survey, each respondent averaged 1.7 Ombudsman inquiries in the past year. Therefore, the final respondent pool from the 3,000 inquiries will likely be around 1,800 unique customers.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

Email addresses are collected from applicants/attorneys when they initiate contact with USPTO Ombudsmen. The Ombudsman Program Survey is a voluntary survey. A link to the online survey is sent to each applicant/attorney who has provided an email address and utilized the Ombudsman Program within the past fiscal year. The survey period will be open for a period of five (5) weeks. Customers not responding within the initial three (3) weeks will be sent a second email message and link seeking their participation. There will not be any additional follow-up conducted for this survey

3. Methods to Maximize Responses

The USPTO Ombudsman Survey is essentially a customer satisfaction survey using an online survey instrument (Survey Monkey). The survey results will only be used internally by the USPTO to determine effectiveness of the Ombudsman Program and whether any modifications are necessary to increase the effectiveness. The results are influential in terms of the Ombudsman Program itself, but the survey is not designed or intended to measure the core USPTO function - the patent examination process – or influence any other agency initiatives. There are no unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures, thus survey responses are not weighted or imputed to estimate for the entire universe or account for non-response. Analysis will be based primarily on response frequencies and simple cross-tabulations. Standard deviation and confidence interval testing are conducted to assess statistically significant differences between current/previous fiscal years and between Technology Centers.

Given the limited scope, complexity, and influence of this survey, the USPTO does not utilize extensive follow-up enumeration via outside contractors to boost response rates. However, efforts are made within the current survey design to maximize response rates to enhance the reliability of survey results. These include:

- Use of properly defined respondent pool. A survey link will only be sent to customers whose inquiries were resolved by USPTO Ombudsmen. Prior to 2014, any customer whose inquiry was initiated with an Ombudsman was eligible. Customers whose inquiry was resolved elsewhere would likely be a non-response.
- A 5-week survey period will allow for correction of invalid email addresses and survey links being re-sent.
- Assuring all participants that only aggregated data will be used. Individual responses will be kept private/only used in aggregated totals, to the extent permitted by law.
- Follow-up reminders sent to customers who have not responded in the first 3 weeks.
- Use of survey instrument that is both brief and simple. The Survey Monkey instrument contains only nine questions, three of which are optional comment boxes. Questions are geared towards measuring satisfaction and do not require any additional research by respondents. See Appendix file. The emailed survey link sends the respondent directly to the instrument, and does not require sign-ups, IDs, logins, etc.
- The primary USPTO Ombudsman's contact information is provided within the email notification and also on page 1 of the survey in case a respondent has any questions or concerns about survey content.

4. Testing of Procedures

The USPTO Ombudsman Survey has been in place since Fiscal Year 2010 and is relatively unchanged. Previous year survey results and comments do not indicate any respondent confusion or mis-interpretation of the survey instrument. Given these factors, testing is not considered necessary.

5. Contact for Statistical Aspects and Data Collection

The Office of Patent Quality Assurance of the USPTO is responsible for conducting and summarizing the USPTO Ombudsman Survey. Michael Easdale is the point of contact for this survey and can be reached by phone at 571-272-3533 or by e-mail at michael.easdale@uspto.gov.

References

A. Appendix USPTO Ombudsman Survey