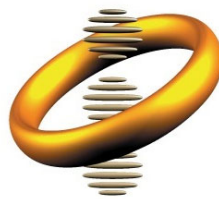


***Survey on Professional and Business Services
relating to Intellectual Property Trading/
Commercialisation for 2024***
- Summary of Findings -

Prepared For



Intellectual Property Department

Prepared by



OVERVIEW

1. This survey (*Survey*) provides a statistical overview of the professional and business services relating to intellectual property (*IP*) trading/commercialisation (*IP services*) in Hong Kong. The data indicates a measurable increase in workforce size engaging in IP services since 2017 (9.7% increase)¹, a high level of educational attainment among the staff providing IP services (79.3% with bachelor's degree or above), and a service landscape dominated by legal firms and trade mark-related activities. The data shows that a significant portion of local IP services providers were not only serving local clients but were actively bridging the Chinese Mainland and international markets (43.6% served clients from the Chinese Mainland/Macao/Taiwan and 39.2% overseas), demonstrating Hong Kong's dual roles as "super-connector" and "super value-adder".
2. The Survey also shows general confidence in local infrastructure (over 80% establishments providing IP services considered positively adequate), indicating a trusted legal environment. While the regulatory environment in Hong Kong was viewed favourably, there were still challenges such as inadequacy of IP professionals in the market, causing difficulties in recruitment.

BACKGROUND

3. The National 14th Five-Year Plan promulgated in March 2021 affirmed the Central Government's support for the development of Hong Kong into, amongst others, a regional IP trading centre as well as an international innovation and technology (*I&T*) centre. With the support of the Government, Hong Kong enterprises (particularly those in the I&T sector, cultural and creative industries, business and commercial sector) have been engaging in more activities or transactions involving/relating to research and development (*R&D*), as well as commercialisation and trading of IP rights² in order to leverage a variety of IP assets in collaboration with other market players in and outside Hong Kong (such as in other parts of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (*GBA*)) for enhancing their individual competitiveness and grasping more market opportunities for

¹ In the "Survey on Manpower in Intellectual Property Trading and Management" conducted by the Intellectual Property Department (*IPD*) in 2017 (*2017 Survey*), the manpower engaged in IP service then was estimated to be 3 780, contrasted to an estimated workforce of 4 148 in this Survey.

² IP trading/commercialisation generally refers to business/commercial transactions for exploitation and transformation of intangible IP rights (covering trade marks (brands); patents (inventions and R&D outcomes); copyright for computer software/system, copyright works other than copyright for computer software/system (original literary/musical/artistic/dramatic works; films, sound recordings, broadcasts etc.); designs (new shapes/features of products); layout-designs of integrated circuits; trade secrets; plant variety rights etc.) into products or services for marketing in order to generate values or profits. Such activities typically include buying, selling and licensing of IP rights.

generating more business growth.

4. Against the aforesaid background, noting the advancement of Hong Kong towards an innovation-driven and knowledge-based economy, IPD launched the “Study on Contribution of Intellectual Property-Intensive Industries to Hong Kong Economy”³ in 2022-23 to identify the IP-intensive industries and their contribution to Hong Kong economy. The commercialisation and trading of IP assets created by these IP-intensive industries require varying level and degree of professional and business advice and support given by service providers with various expertise in addressing a range of issues relating to or otherwise arising from IP creation, protection, enforcement, management and commercialisation. To better understand the existing landscape of these IP professional and business services, IPD has commissioned MOV Data Collection Center Limited to conduct the Survey.

SURVEY OBJECTIVE

5. The Survey aims to stock-take the existing professional and business services provided by relevant service providers in Hong Kong to facilitate or support IP trading/commercialisation activities in Hong Kong and other parts of the GBA. Findings of the Survey will serve as references to the Government, as and when appropriate, for reviewing existing IP policies, exploring enhanced measures conducive to, in particular, industry support and nurturing IP talents to meet future needs in consolidating Hong Kong as a regional IP trading centre.

³ The report is available at https://www.ipd.gov.hk/filemanager/ipd/en/content_161/Study-on-IP-Intensive-Industries-to-HK-Economy-e.pdf.

SURVEY COVERAGE

6. The Survey covered establishments in various service sectors which were or likely to be engaged in providing professional and business services relating to IP services during the 12-month period of 2024 or any consecutive 12-month period between 1 April 2023 and 31 December 2024 according to the accounting practice of the relevant establishment (*Survey Reference Period*). These service sectors mainly included:

Legal services

- (a) Solicitor services
- (b) Barrister services

Non-legal services

- (c) Business management and consultancy services
 - (d) Accounting and auditing services
 - (e) Book keeping and general accounting services
 - (f) Knowledge transfer offices of local universities (*KTOs*) and R&D centres⁴
 - (g) Other miscellaneous professional, scientific and technical activities n.e.c.
7. Given that establishments providing IP services straddled different service sectors, in order to make better use of available resources for efficient conduct of the Survey, the establishments surveyed comprised of —
- (a) all the establishments which were likely to be providing such services in the service sectors referred to in Paragraph 6 as identified by existing resources;⁵ and
 - (b) establishments in the service sectors referred to in Paragraph 6 sampled from the Central Register of Establishments (*CRE*) of the Census and Statistics Department (*C&SD*).

⁴ The inclusion of those establishments in this category was based on their support or assistance rendered to other in-house parties involved in R&D activities in trading/commercialisation of the R&D output of the latter.

⁵ Establishments which were likely to be providing IP services were identified by making reference to the following resources: (a) contact information of the members of local associations of IP practitioners; (b) list of e-filers (firms/agents) having registered accounts at IPD E-Filing System for filing of IP applications; (c) list of service providers in Hong Kong found on the Asia IP Exchange online platform operated by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council; and (d) member list of the IP Committee of The Law Society of Hong Kong.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

8. The Survey data were collected through face-to-face interviews conducted during in-person visits to the establishments based on a structured questionnaire and supplemented by telephone interviews where necessary.
9. The fieldwork of the Survey was conducted from 19 May to 3 October 2025. Among a total of 1 455 establishments sampled, 244 were classified as invalid (for reasons such as business ceased, operations suspended, untraceable, etc.). For the remaining 1 211 establishments, 751 were successfully enumerated. The overall response rate was 62.0%.

	(a) Establishments likely to provide IP services	(b) Establishments sampled from CRE of C&SD	Total
(i) Total no. of cases	635	820	1 455
(ii) No. of cases successfully enumerated	276	475	751
(iii) No. of confirmed unsuccessful cases	249	211	460
(iv) No. of confirmed invalid cases	110	134	244
<i>Response rate = (ii) / [(ii) + (iii)]</i>	<i>52.6%</i>	<i>69.2%</i>	<i>62.0%</i>

CAUTIONARY REMARKS

10. It should be noted that establishments which were likely to provide IP services (referred to in Paragraph 7(a) above) do not constitute a scientific random sample and this would impose some limitations on statistical inference. Accordingly, the data collected in this category only represented those establishments successfully enumerated.⁶
11. The above remarks also apply to “KTOs and R&D centres” (referred to in Paragraph 6(f) above) which are distinguishable from other service providers in that the IP services provided by these establishments are generally restricted to parties within the same institutes that conducted R&D activities or operated with the resources provided or otherwise supported by the institutes concerned. The data collected in this category similarly only represented those establishments successfully enumerated.
12. For establishments sampled from the CRE of C&SD which constitute a scientific random

⁶ The statistics only showed the percentage of enumerated establishments which provided IP services during the Survey Reference Period. There were cases that some establishments used to provide such services but did not do so during the Survey Reference Period and hence their data were not reflected in the Survey findings.

sample, projection of data under this category was based on usual statistical practices to represent the corresponding population of the relevant service sectors.

13. Some data collected were derived from a small number of samples (less than 5) and were subject to relatively large sampling errors. Such data were suppressed by the symbol “#”.
14. As a result of rounding in figures, there may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total as shown in some tables. It should also be noted that actual figures without rounding are used in compiling the percentage shares in tables.

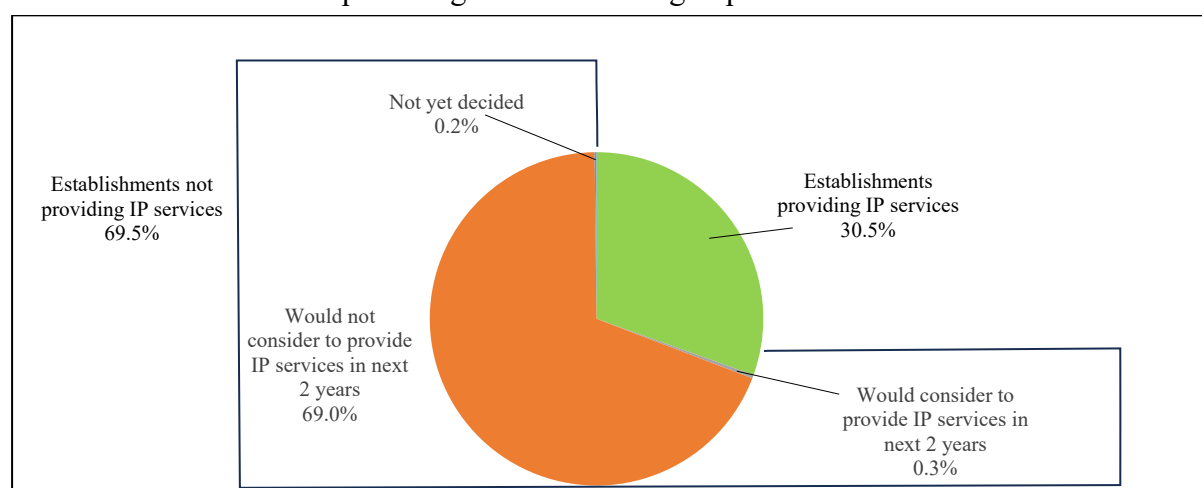
MAJOR FINDINGS

A. IP services⁷

Provision of IP services by relevant service sectors

15. 30.5% of the establishments in the service sectors covered by the Survey provided IP services during the Survey Reference Period.⁸ Those establishments indicating that they had not provided any IP services during the Survey Reference Period were asked if they intended to provide such services in the next 2 years. Only a small number of them (0.3%) indicated the intention to do so.

Chart 1 Establishments providing and/or intending to provide IP services



Base: Establishments covered by the Survey

⁷ The types of IP services were listed in Chart 2.

⁸ In the 2017 Survey, the percentage of IP services providers (referred to as IP intermediaries) providing such services was 27.0%. The IP intermediaries covered in the 2017 Survey constituted the same service sectors as enumerated in Paragraph 6 above.

16. 41.4% of establishments in the legal services sector revealed that they had provided IP services during the Survey Reference Period whereas the proportion for the non-legal services sector was 23.8%.

Table 1 Establishments providing and/or intending to provide IP services by service sectors

	<u>Overall</u> %	<u>Service Sector</u>	
		<u>Legal services</u> %	<u>Non-legal services</u> %
Providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period	30.5	41.4	23.8
Not providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period	69.5	58.6	76.2
- <i>Would consider to provide IP services in next 2 years</i>	0.3	0.8	0.1
- <i>Would not consider to provide IP services in next 2 years</i>	69.0	57.9	75.8
- <i>Not yet decided</i>	0.2	-	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

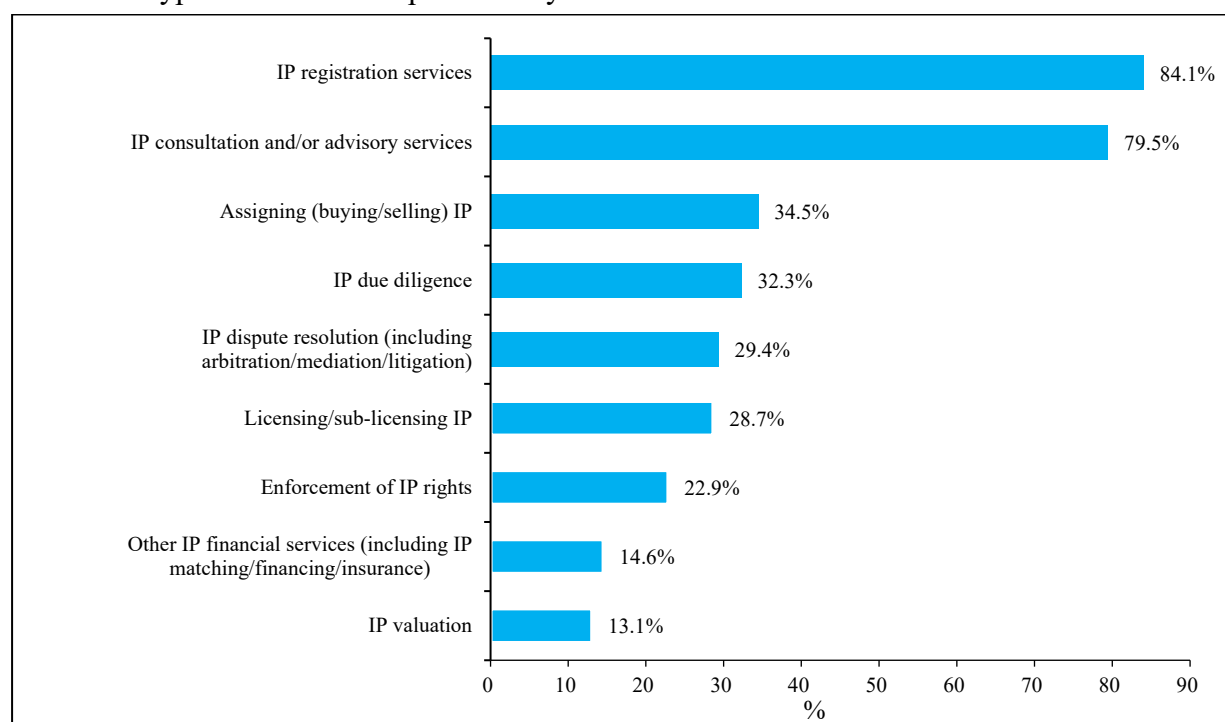
Base: Establishments covered by the Survey

Types of IP services

17. Among those establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period, the majority provided “IP registration services” (84.1%) and “IP consultation and/or advisory services” (79.5%).⁹ The types of IP services that fewer establishments involved in were “assigning (buying/selling) IP” (34.5%), “IP due diligence” (32.3%), “IP dispute resolution (including arbitration/mediation/litigation)” (29.4%), “licensing/sub-licensing IP” (28.7%) and “enforcement of IP rights” (22.9%).

⁹ In the 2017 Survey, the percentages of the two most common types of services provided by IP intermediaries were “IP registration” (62.5%) and “IP protection strategy (incl. consulting)” (49.0%).

Chart 2 Types of IP services provided by establishments

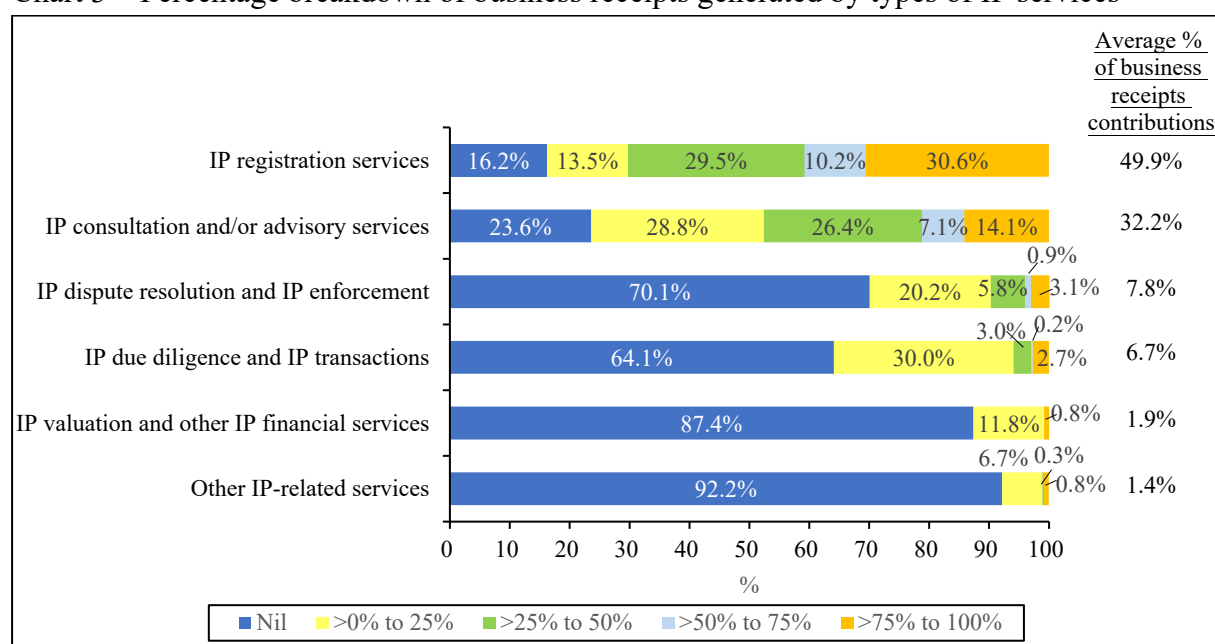


Base: Establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period

Note: Multiple answers were allowed

18. The enumerated establishments were asked about the proportion of business receipts generated by the provision of IP services. Among the various types of services so provided, “IP registration services” and “IP consultation and/or advisory services” constituted the highest proportion in the business receipts generated.

Chart 3 Percentage breakdown of business receipts generated by types of IP services

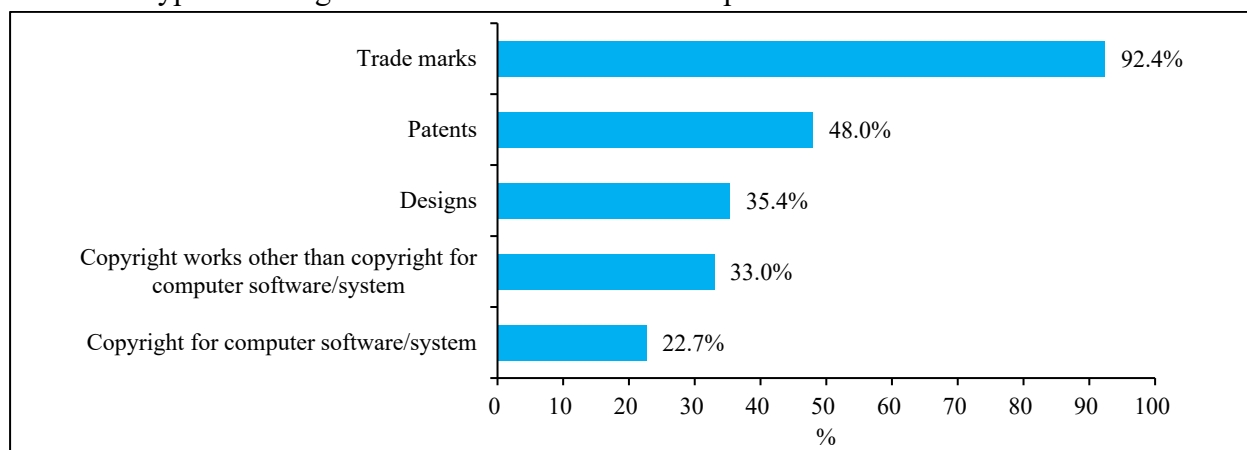


Base: Establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period (excluding those which refused to reply or replied no business receipts were generated during such period)

Types of IP rights involved in IP services provided

19. In terms of the types of IP rights involved in the IP services provided, 92.4% of the establishments providing such services were involved in “trade marks”, followed by 48.0% in “patents”, 35.4% in “designs” and 33.0% in “copyright works other than copyright for computer software/system”.¹⁰

Chart 4 Types of IP rights involved in the IP services provided

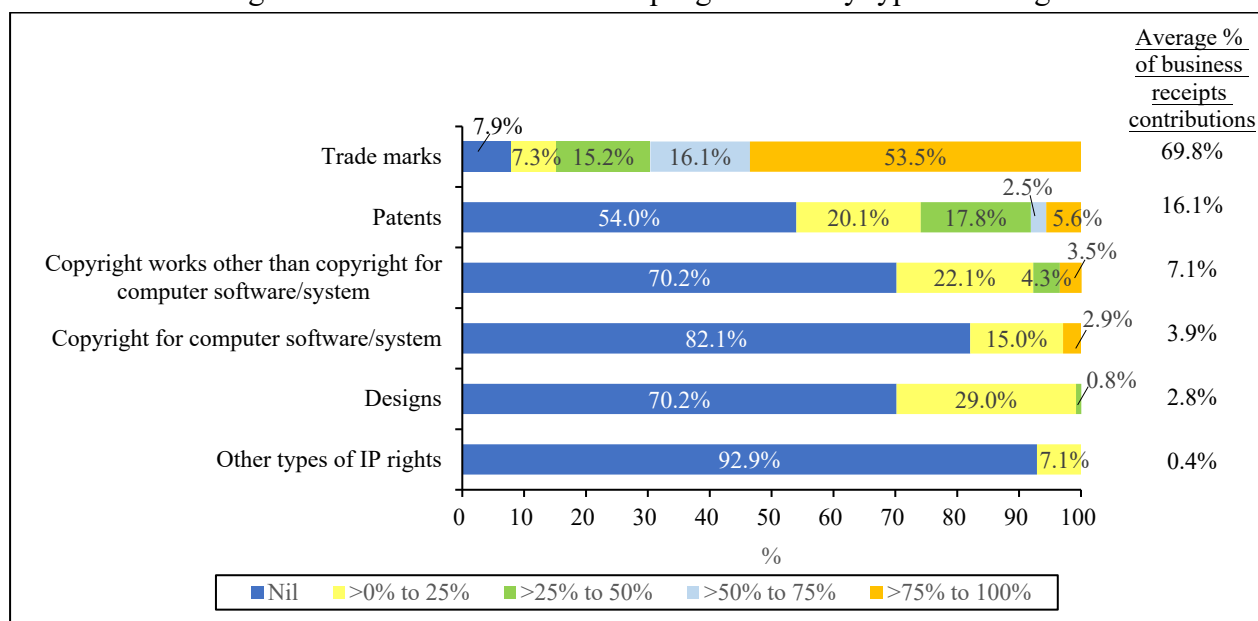


Base: Establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period

Note: Multiple answers were allowed

20. “Trade marks” were the dominant generator of business receipts among the establishments providing IP services bearing a significantly higher proportion than the other IP rights.

Chart 5 Percentage breakdown of business receipts generated by types of IP rights



Base: Establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period (excluding those which refused to reply or replied no business receipts were generated during such period)

¹⁰ In the 2017 Survey, the corresponding percentages of the IP rights that IP intermediaries were most involved in were: 98.8% for trade marks, 60.6% for patents, 34.2% for designs, and 35.8% for copyright works other than copyright for computer software/system.

Industry groups of clients to which IP services were provided

21. As IP rights existed in multiple business areas, IP services were provided to clients from a wide spectrum of industries. The top three industry groups that sought such services were “manufacture-related industries” (62.3%), “wholesale and retail trades” (58.8%) and “import and export trade” (54.1%).

Chart 6 Industry groups of clients to which IP services were provided



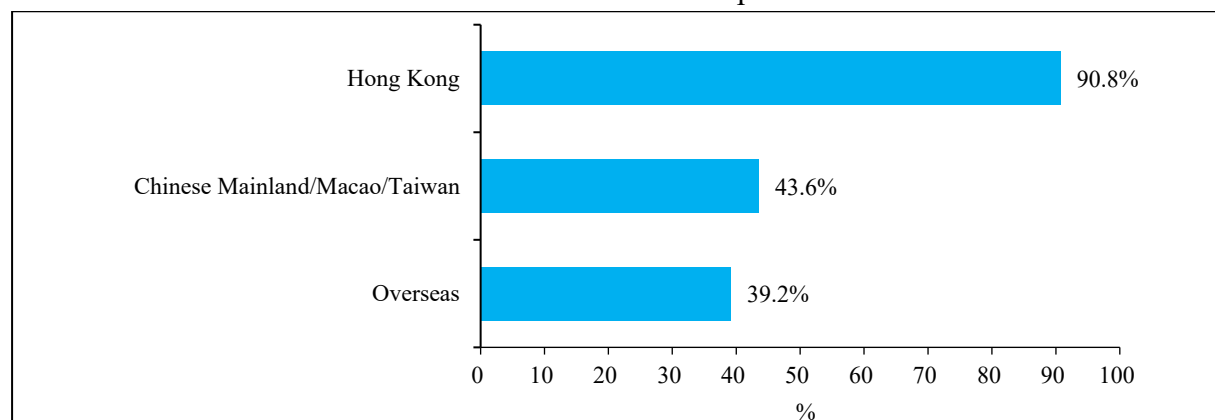
Base: Establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period

Note: Multiple answers were allowed

22. In terms of the locations of clients, majority of establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period served local clients (90.8%). Clients from outside Hong Kong also sought to use the IP services offered by Hong Kong service providers. About two-fifths of the enumerated establishments indicated that they had provided IP services to clients from the Chinese Mainland/Macao/Taiwan (43.6%) and overseas (39.2%).¹¹

¹¹ The percentages quoted in Paragraph 22 were not mutually exclusive and the data on IP services provided might overlap in different geographical regions.

Chart 7 Locations of clients to which IP services were provided



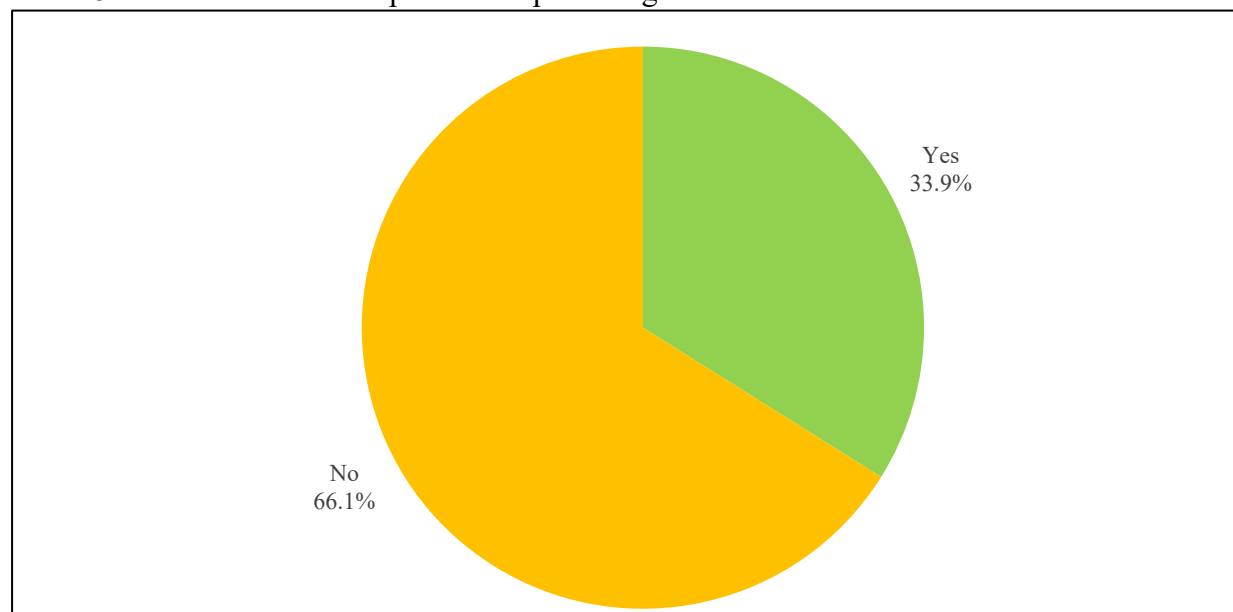
Base: Establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period

Note: Multiple answers were allowed

Collaboration with other parties in providing IP services

23. Some establishments which provided IP services during the Survey Reference Period responded that they had worked together with other parties (in short, *partners*) in the course of offering the services. More specifically, about one-third (33.9%) of them indicated that they had collaborated with partners in providing IP services.¹²

Chart 8 Collaboration with partners in providing IP services

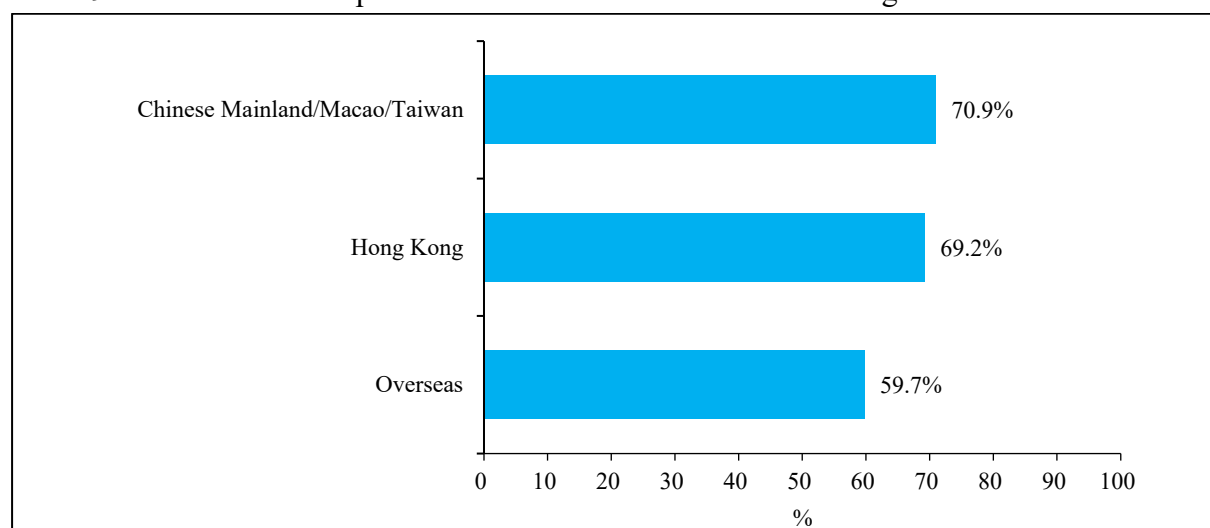


Base: Establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period

¹² In the 2017 Survey, 32.6% of IP intermediaries indicated they had collaborated with partners in providing IP intermediary services.

24. For those establishments which had collaborated with partners in providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period, 70.9% collaborated with partners in the Chinese Mainland/Macao/Taiwan, 69.2% with partners in Hong Kong and 59.7% with overseas partners.¹³ The types of IP rights that mostly involved in the collaboration were “trade marks” (93.4%) and “patents” (63.8%).

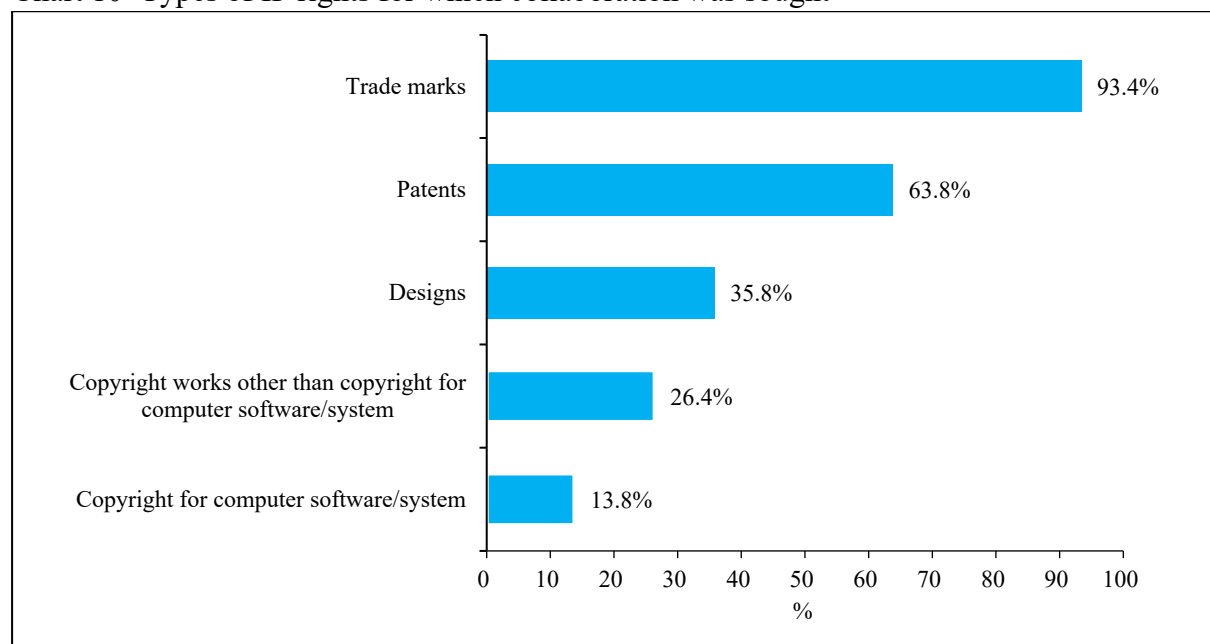
Chart 9 Locations of the parties with whom collaboration was sought



Base: Establishments which collaborated with partners in providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period

Note: Multiple answers were allowed

Chart 10 Types of IP rights for which collaboration was sought



Base: Establishments which collaborated with partners in providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period

Note: Multiple answers were allowed

¹³ In the 2017 Survey suggested that among the IP intermediaries which sought collaboration with partners, 77% collaborated with partners in Hong Kong, 59% in Chinese Mainland and 45% in overseas.

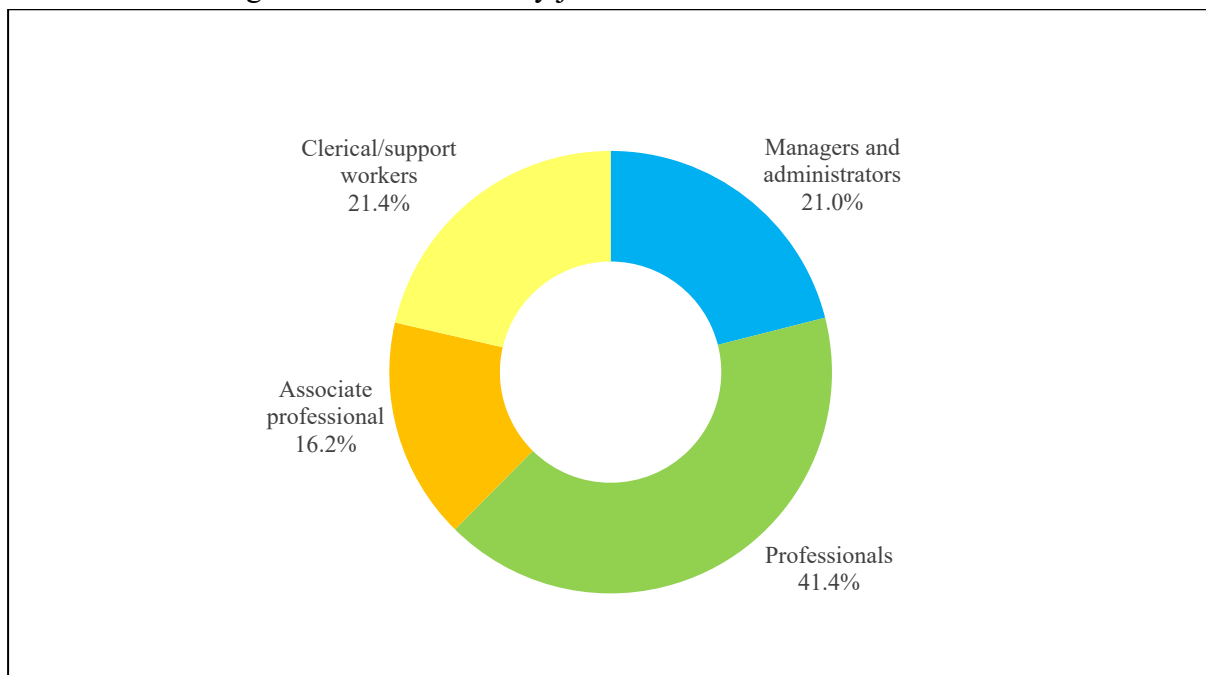
B. Persons Engaged in Providing IP services

Manpower situation

25. The Survey findings suggested that as at end-December 2024, there were some 4 148 persons engaged in providing IP services (*IP-related staff*). This is a gross estimated number irrespective of the working time the individuals spent on work involving the provision of IP services.
- (a) In terms of job level, 21.0% of the IP-related staff were managers and administrators, 41.4% professionals, 16.2% associate professionals and 21.4% clerical/support workers.
 - (b) Most of the IP-related staff (79.3%) had attained education at bachelor degree level or above¹⁴, 16.2% had attained education at diploma/certificate/sub-degree level and 4.5% had attained education at secondary school level or below.
 - (c) 26.0% of the IP-related staff (excluding those engaged by establishments which refused to disclose relevant information) possessed relevant academic qualifications, 13.6% with relevant professional qualifications and 30.2% both. The remaining 30.2% of such staff possessed neither relevant academic qualifications nor professional qualifications.

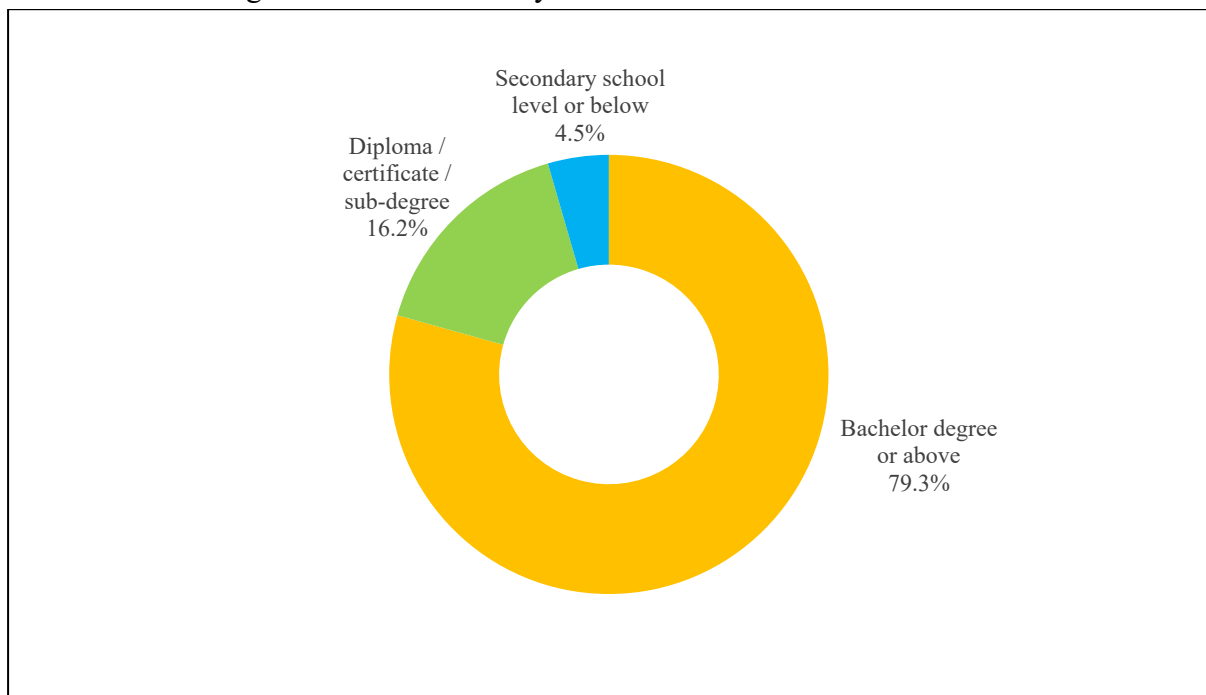
¹⁴ The percentage of “employed persons over 15 (excluding foreign domestic helpers)” with post-secondary education (degree) in Hong Kong in 2024 was estimated to be 37.2%. (https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/web_table.html?id=210-06304A)

Chart 11 Percentage of IP-related staff by job level



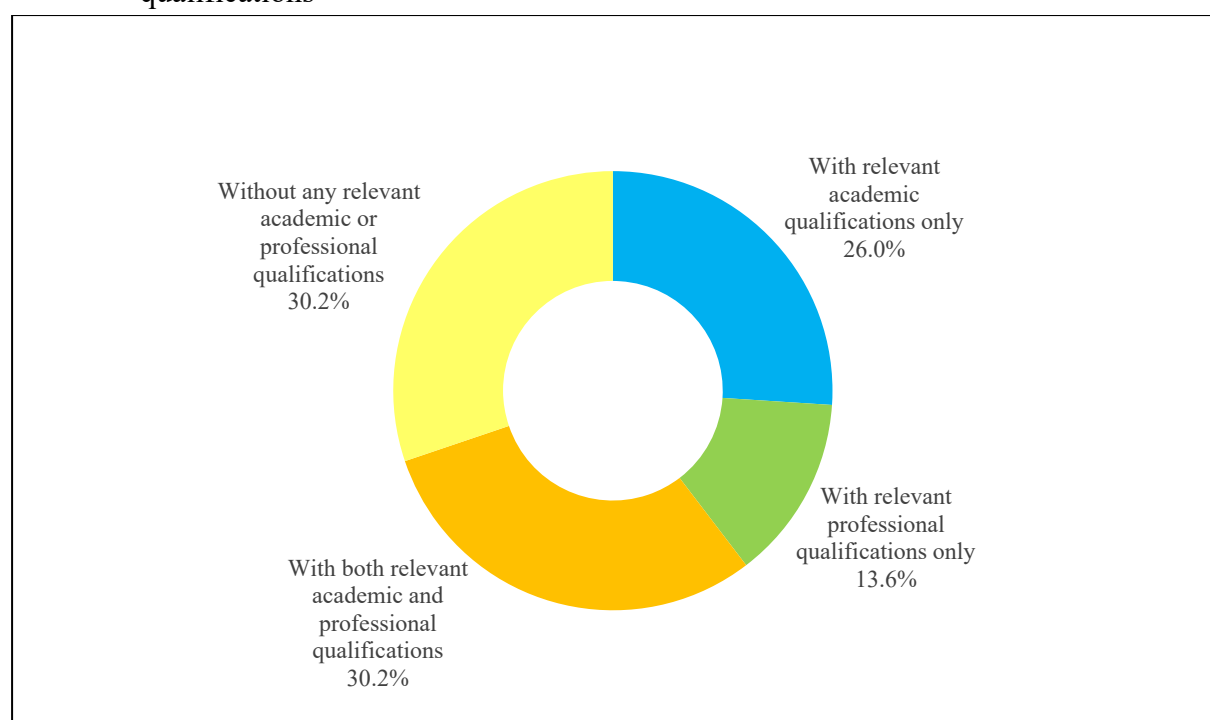
Base: All IP-related staff

Chart 12 Percentage of IP-related staff by educational attainment



Base: All IP-related staff

Chart 13 Percentage of IP-related staff with relevant academic and/or professional qualifications

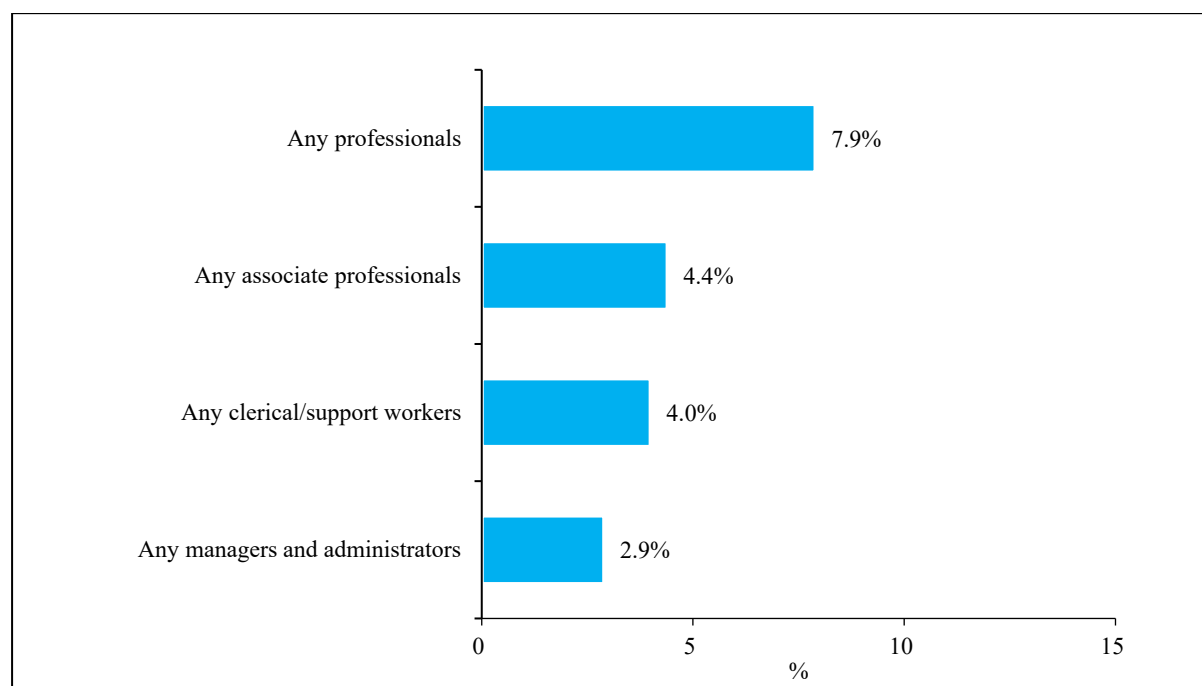


Base: All IP-related staff (excluding those engaged by establishments which refused to disclose relevant information)

Recruitment of IP-related staff

26. Among those establishments providing IP services, 12.2% reported that they had recruited IP-related staff during the Survey Reference Period. With respect to the job levels of the IP-related staff recruited, 2.9% were managers and administrators, 7.9% professionals, 4.4% associate professionals and 4.0% clerical/support workers.

Chart 14 Job levels of IP-related staff recruited

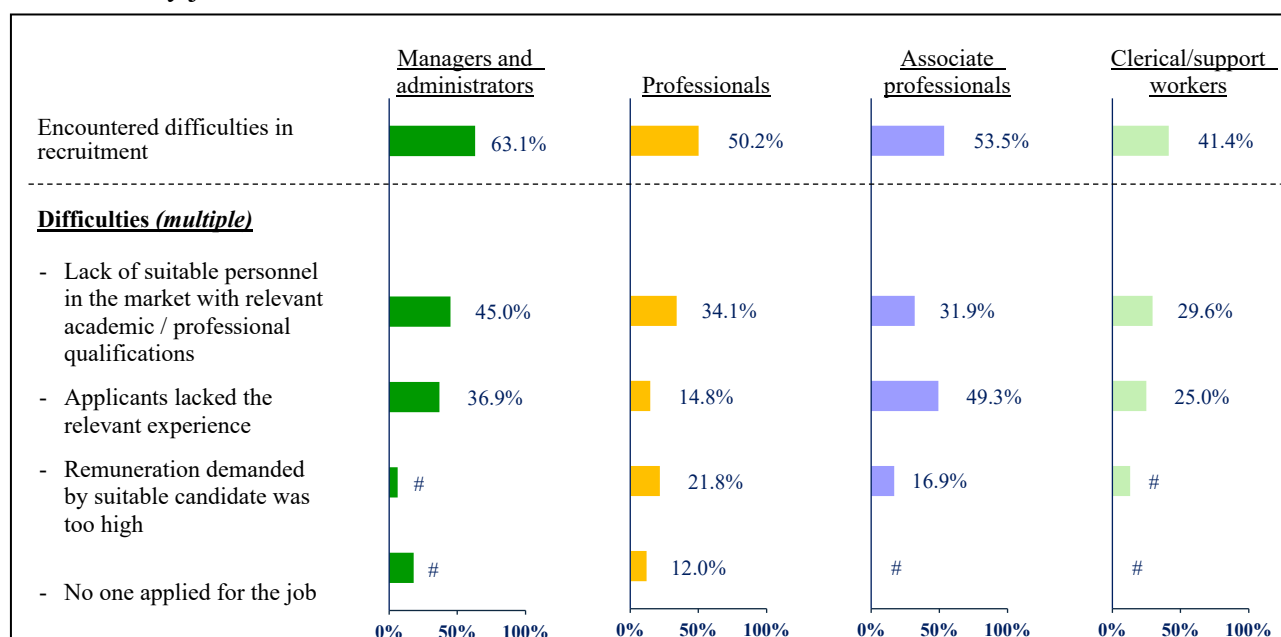


Base: Establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period

Note: Multiple answers were allowed

27. Establishments which had recruited IP-related staff at the respective levels during the Survey Reference Period were asked whether they had encountered any difficulties in the process, and if yes, the recruitment difficulties they encountered. About half or more of the establishments which conducted recruitment reported that they had encountered difficulties in recruiting different levels of staff. 63.1% of the establishments revealed having difficulties in recruiting managers and administrators, 53.5% in recruiting associate professionals, 50.2% in recruiting professionals, and 41.4% in recruiting clerical/support workers. The difficulties encountered in recruitment across the various levels of staff were mainly “lack of suitable personnel in the market with relevant academic/professional qualifications” (29.6% to 45.0%) and “applicants lacked the relevant experience” (14.8% to 49.3%).

Chart 15 Difficulties encountered in recruitment during the Survey Reference Period
by job level



Base: Establishments providing IP services with recruitment of respective levels of IP-related staff taken place during the Survey Reference Period

Note: Multiple answers were allowed

Figures are suppressed due to small number of samples (less than 5)

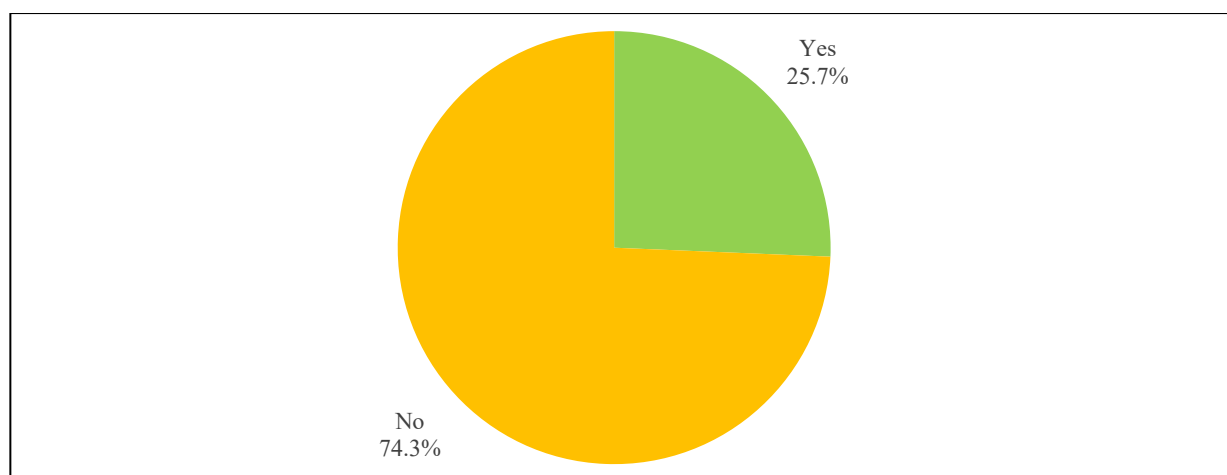
C. IP Trading/Commercialisation Activities in or concerning the GBA (other than Hong Kong)

Types of IP services provided and types of IP rights involved

28. The references to the “GBA” in this Part C below only cover the geographical areas of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area other than Hong Kong.

29. Among those establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period, about one-quarter (25.7%) indicated that they also provided professional or business services relating to IP trading/commercialisation in or concerning the GBA (***GBA-related IP services***).

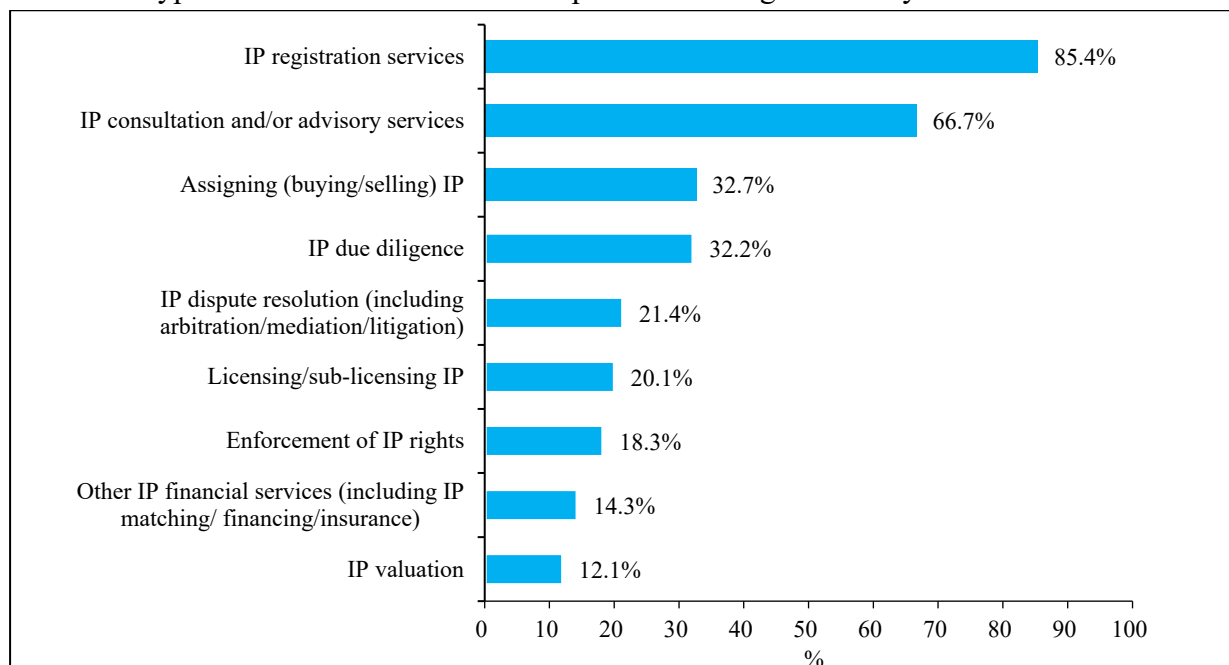
Chart 16 Whether GBA-related IP services were provided during the Survey Reference Period



Base: Establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period

30. For those establishments which provided GBA-related IP services, 85.4% of them were involved in “IP registration services” and 66.7% in “IP consultation and/or advisory services”. A smaller percentage of those establishments were involved in services concerning “enforcement of IP rights” (18.3%), “other IP financial services (including IP matching/financing/insurance)” (14.3%) and “IP valuation” (12.1%).

Chart 17 Types of GBA-related IP services provided during the Survey Reference Period



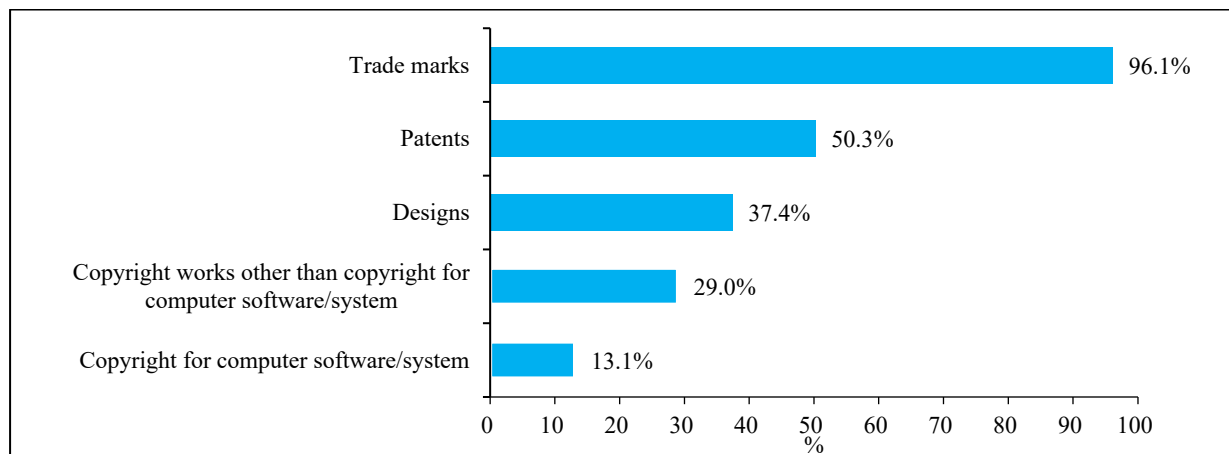
Base: Establishments providing GBA-related IP services during the Survey Reference Period

Note: Multiple answers were allowed

31. Almost all the establishments providing GBA-related IP services were involved in “trade marks” (96.1%). Other common types of IP involved by the establishments were

“patents” (50.3%), followed by “designs” (37.4%) and “copyright works other than copyright for computer software/system” (29.0%).

Chart 18 Types of IP rights involved in GBA-related IP services during the Survey Reference Period



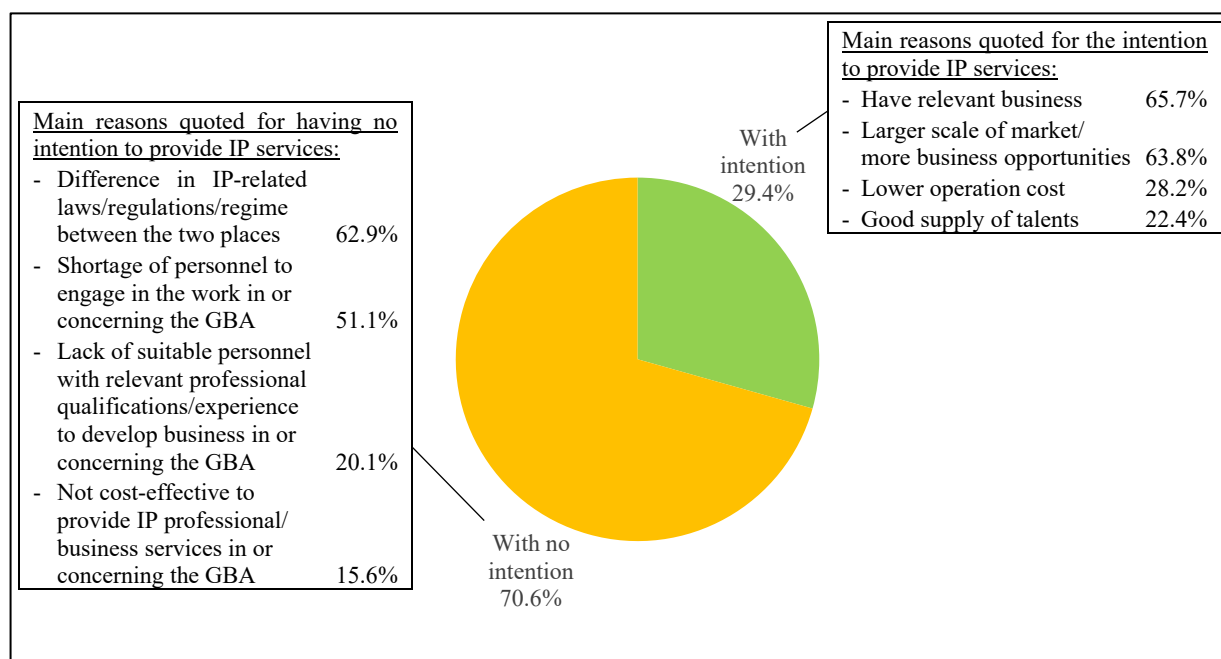
Base: Establishments providing GBA-related IP services during the Survey Reference Period

Note: Multiple answers were allowed

Intention to provide/expand IP services in or concerning the GBA

32. For those establishments providing IP services in Hong Kong during the Survey Reference Period, 25.7% of them suggested they also provided such services in or concerning other parts of the GBA. 29.4% of those establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period indicated the intention either to start providing or to expand IP services relating to IP trading/commercialisation in or concerning the GBA in the next 2 years.
33. The main grounds supporting the intention to provide/expand related IP services in or concerning the GBA were “have relevant business in the GBA” (65.7%), “larger scale of market/more business opportunities in the GBA” (63.8%), and “lower operation cost in the GBA” (28.2%).
34. Those not intending to provide or expand related IP services in or concerning the GBA quoted “difference in IP-related laws/regulations/regime between the two places” (62.9%) and “shortage of personnel to engage in the work concerning the GBA” (51.1%) as the major reasons.

Chart 19 Intention to provide/expand IP services in or concerning the GBA



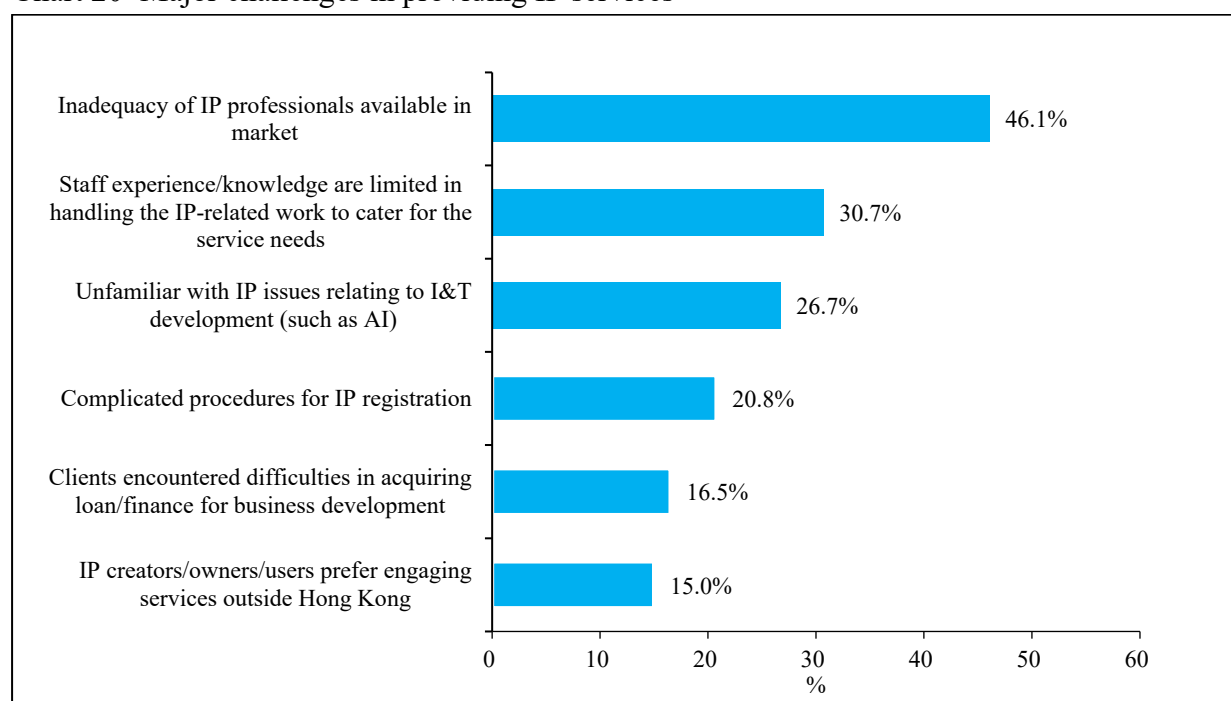
Base: Establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period

D. Views on Development of IP Trading/Commercialisation

Major challenges in providing IP services

35. Establishments that provided IP services during the Survey Reference Period revealed that the major challenges encountered in providing such services were “inadequacy of IP professionals available in market” (46.1%), “staff experience/knowledge are limited in handling the IP-related work to cater for the service needs” (30.7%) and “unfamiliar with IP issues relating to I&T development (such as AI)” (26.7%). Other challenges included “complicated procedures for IP registration” (20.8%), “clients encountered difficulties in acquiring loan/finance for business development” (16.5%) and “IP creators/owners/users prefer engaging services outside Hong Kong” (15.0%).

Chart 20 Major challenges in providing IP services



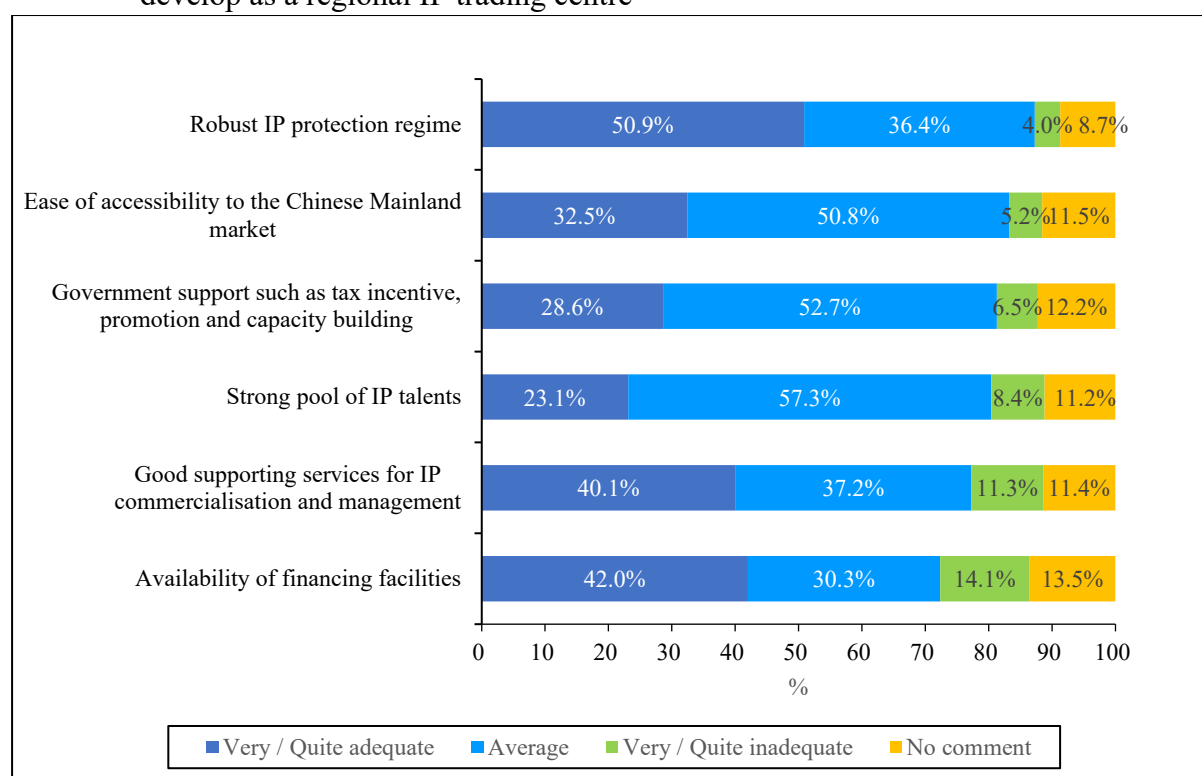
Base: Establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period

Note: Multiple answers were allowed

Adequacy of supporting facilities for promoting Hong Kong to develop as a regional IP trading centre

36. In the Survey, establishments which provided IP services during the Survey Reference Period were asked about their views on the adequacy of various aspects of supporting facilities for promoting Hong Kong to develop as a regional IP trading centre. According to the views collected, the current supporting facilities covering “robust IP protection regime”, “ease of accessibility to the Chinese Mainland market” and “Government support such as tax incentive, promotion and capacity building” were considered by over 80% of the establishments to be positively adequate (i.e. very/quite adequate or average in adequacy).

Chart 21 Adequacy of various supporting facilities for promoting Hong Kong to develop as a regional IP trading centre



Base: Establishments providing IP services during the Survey Reference Period