



Use of Online Web Based Survey Tools by Researchers at Kwantlen

[British Columbia's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#) (FIPPA) has important implications for Kwantlen researchers using web-based survey companies with servers located outside of Canada (e.g., Survey Monkey and Zoomerang). According to section [30.1](#) of the Act, any personal information collected by or in affiliation with a public body, such as Kwantlen, cannot be stored or accessed outside Canada without explicit written consent from the individual involved¹

Personal identifying information includes any data that could be used to uniquely identify an individual. Examples include, but are not limited to, an individual's name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, Social Insurance Number, employee or student number. Any type of student email address is considered personal information, including a Kwantlen account. Business contact information (e.g., name, position or title, business address, phone, e-mail or fax) is generally not considered personal information.

In addition to storing data outside of Canada, the company's server may collect the Internet Protocol (IP) address of the respondents' computer. As an IP address can be a unique personal identifier, collection of **sensitive personal information** is also problematic. Examples of sensitive personal information include, but are not limited to, an individual's medical history, academic grades or details on academic performance, details of work performance, illegal activities, criminal history, personal finances, racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religious or political opinions or associations and opinions about named third parties.

Researchers collecting any type of personal information are encouraged to use Canadian owned web- survey companies who store their data in Canada. One option is to use the web-survey software purchased by Kwantlen (*Vovici*). For information on Kwantlen's web-based survey tool please contact Kathleen Bigsby, Director of Institutional Analysis and Planning at Kathleen.Bigsby@kwantlen.ca

Kwantlen's Research Ethics Board will consider, on a case by case basis, on-line surveys using companies located outside Canada (e.g. United States, Australia) which do not collect personally identifying or sensitive data that could be used to identify the research subject. The consent form or letter of introduction must inform research subjects of the location of the survey company's server and include a description of any associated limits to confidentiality. An example of a typical statement is:

"This online survey company is hosted by a web-survey company located in the USA and as such is subject to U.S. laws. In particular, the US Patriot Act which allows authorities access to the records of internet service providers. This survey or questionnaire does not ask for personal identifiers or any information that may be used to identify you. The web-survey company servers record incoming IP addresses of the computer that you use to access the survey but no connection is made between your data and your computer's IP address. If you choose to participate in the survey, you understand that your responses to the survey questions will be stored and accessed in the USA. The security and privacy policy for the web-survey company can be found at the following link: _____"²

For inquiries about personal information in relation to your web-survey, please contact any [member of the REB](#). For questions about personal information in relation to FIPPA legislation, please contact Cathy MacDonald, University Librarian, at Cathy.MacDonald@kwantlen.ca

¹ See section [74.1](#) of [FIPPA](#) for fines.

² Kwantlen would like to thank UBC and SFU for permission to use language from their web-based survey tool guidelines.