

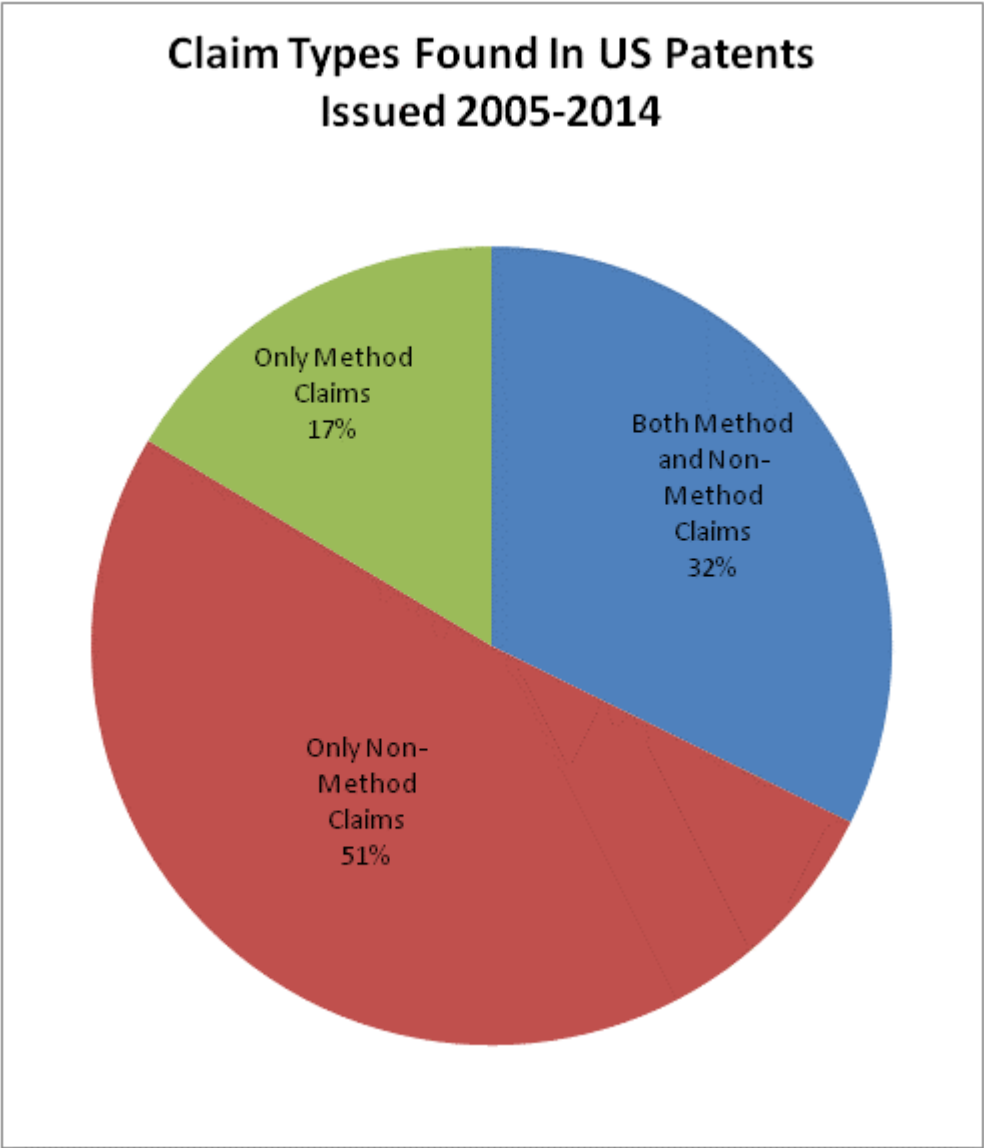
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# Patent Types: Method, Non-Method, or Both

🕒 January 27, 2014    👤 Dennis Crouch

*By Dennis Crouch*

In reply to a [prior post](#), one comment asked about the whether US patents tend to have claims directed to both an apparatus and to a method or instead are those types of claims separated out into separate patents. To answer that question, I parsed through a set of recently issued utility patents – looking only at the claim preambles to see whether the claim could be classified as either a “method” claim or a “non-method” claim. My search pattern was simplistic. If the preamble included the word “method” or “process” then I defined the claim as a method claim. I then compared the independent claims within each patent to see whether the patent includes only method claims, only non-method claims, or both types. The results are as follows: 17% included only method claims; 51% include only non-method claims; and 32% include both method and non-method claims. I ran a time series and found that these ratios have changed only slightly over the past decade with the trend moving toward more combined patents and fewer method-only patents



As part of this little project, I also pulled up the preambles themselves. Of the four million independent claims in the data set, there were more than two million different preambles. The most common are listed below:

Rank	Preamble	Count
1	A method	111124
2	An apparatus	64954
3	A system	57933

4	A semiconductor device	25371
5	An image forming apparatus	15317
6	A device	13064
7	A computer program product	12947
8	A computer system	10564
9	A composition	9140
10	An integrated circuit	8469
11	A computer-implemented method	8017
12	A display device	8001
13	A electronic device	7843
14	An article	5789
15	An article of manufacture	5660
16	A liquid crystal display device	5572
17	A semiconductor memory device	5440
18	A memory device	5340

19	A pharmaceutical composition	5260
20	A method of manufacturing a semiconductor device	5156
21	An image processing apparatus	4978
22	A circuit	4302
23	A communication system	3687
24	A method for manufacturing a semiconductor device	3565
25	A vehicle	3278

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