

China drives global patent applications to new high

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Engineers checking a machine they designed in a factory in Zouping, eastern China's Shandong province on June 30, 2015

China accounted for nearly a third of the world's patent applications last year, once again driving strong global growth, despite a sharp decrease in industrial design filings, the UN said Monday.

Some 2.7 million [patent applications](#) were filed worldwide last year—a rise of 4.5 percent over 2013 and marking the fifth consecutive annual hike, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) said.

"In terms of numbers, again we see growth ... that is much higher than the growth rates that one sees in GDP at the national level, or at the world level ... in respect to [intellectual property](#)," WIPO chief Francis Gurry told reporters.

Unsurprisingly in this digital age, computer technology remains the fastest growing field and now represents 7.8 percent of the total patents filed, followed by electrical machinery (7.4 percent), measurement (4.8 percent) and digital communication (4.6 percent).

China's patent office received by far the most filings, clocking nearly one million of them—outstripping the combined total of patents filed in runner-up countries the United States and Japan, the UN agency said in a report.

"It is quite extraordinary the numbers coming out of China," Gurry said.

This, he said, "demonstrates a massive buy-in to the intellectual property system on the part of China. They are the number one users of it in the world."

Last year, some 10.2 million patents were in effect around the world, with the United States still holding nearly a quarter of all patents in use globally, followed by Japan, at 18.8 percent and China at 11.7 percent.

But China is moving ahead fast. The Chinese patent office last year saw application numbers shoot up 12.5 percent compared to 2013.

In comparison, the European [patent office](#) saw a 3.2-percent rise in filings, its South Korean equivalent saw a 2.8-percent rise, and the United States a hike of 1.3 percent, while Japan registered a 0.7-percent drop.

In addition to [patents](#), WIPO said global trademark filings also rose markedly in 2014, and had nearly doubled since 2000.

Last year, the total number of trademark classes specified in applications reached 7.45 million, up six percent from 2013, with China alone counting for about a third of them.

Industrial design applications meanwhile fell for the first time in 20 years, dropping 8.1 percent to around 1.14 million last year.

That fall was mainly due to a sharp 14.4-percent

decrease in filings by Chinese residents, who nonetheless remain the clear leaders in this field.

China in 2014 received [applications](#) containing 565,555 designs, followed by the EU in a distant second place with 98,273, WIPO said.

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