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Intellectual Property

WIPO Publishes 2021 World Intellectual Property Indicators Report: China Ranks World Top 1 in the Numbers of Patent, Trademark and Design Applications

On November 8, WIPO published this year's World Intellectual Property Indicators Report (hereinafter the "WIPI Report"). In 2020, China ranked the world's Top 1 in the total numbers of patent, trademark and industrial design applications, accounting for 45.7%, 54% and 55.5% of the world's total numbers respectively.

Worldwide trademark-filing activity boomed in 2020, defying a global economic downturn and signaling vibrant entrepreneurship and the introduction of new goods and services in response to the pandemic.

WIPO's WIPI Report also showed that patent and industrial designs filing activity rebounded in 2020, illustrating the resilience of human innovation even amid the dire global health situation.

Trademark filing activity rose by 13.7%, patents by 1.6% and designs by 2% according to the WIPI Report, which compiles new data from some 150 national and regional authorities and shows how innovators, designers and brands are increasingly relying on intellectual property tools to expand their enterprises and seek new growth.

The annual WIPI Report collects and analyzes IP data to inform policy makers, business leaders, investors, academics and others seeking macro trends in innovation and creativity.

Patents

Worldwide patent-filing activity returned to growth in 2020 after the first dip in a decade in 2019, driven by a decline in China. In 2020, China's IP office reported growth again with 1.5 million patent applications. This was 2.5 times more than the amount received by the patent office of the second leading country, the United States (USPTO; 597,172). The U.S. was followed by Japan (JPO; 288,472), the Republic of Korea (KIPO; 226,759) and the European Patent Office (EPO; 180,346). Together, these five offices accounted for 85.1% of the world total.

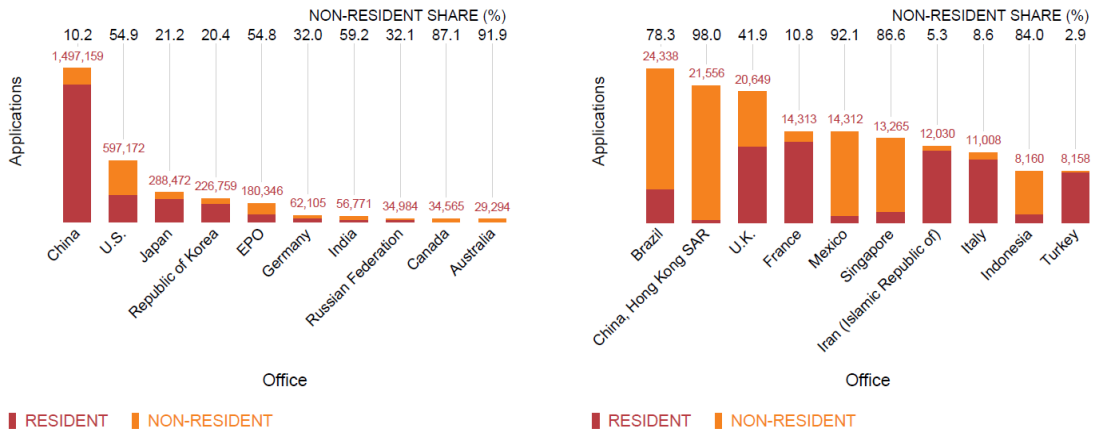
Patents	2019	2020	Growth rate (%)	Share of world total (%)
Applications worldwide	3,226,100	3,276,700	1.6	100.0
China	1,400,661	1,497,159	6.9	45.7
U.S.	621,453	597,172	-3.9	18.2
Japan	307,969	288,472	-6.3	8.8

Among the top 10 offices, only three offices – China (+6.9%), India (+5.9%) and the Republic of Korea (+3.6%) – recorded growth in applications in 2020, while Germany (-7.9%) and Japan (-6.3%) saw a steep declines.

Germany (62,105), India (56,771), the Russian Federation (34,984), Canada (34,565) and Australia (29,294) also featured among the top 10 offices.

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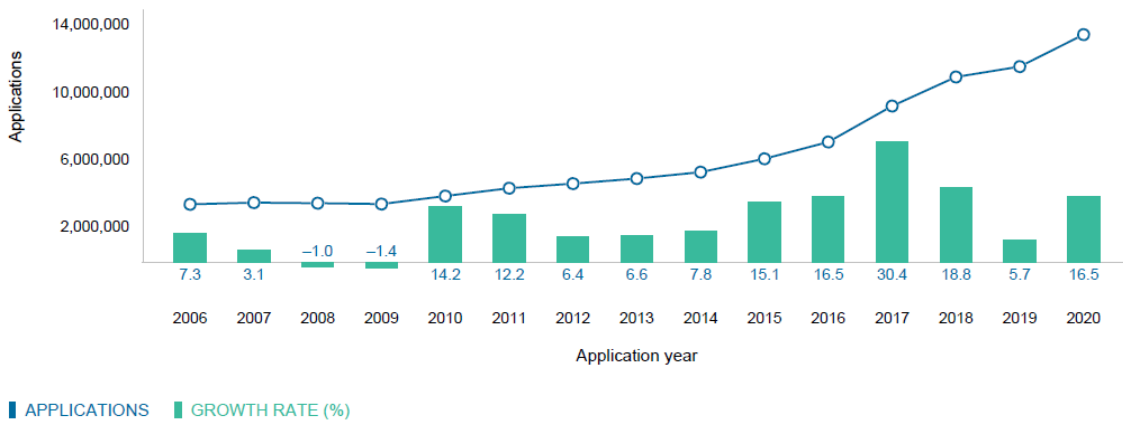
A8. Patent applications at the top 20 offices, 2020



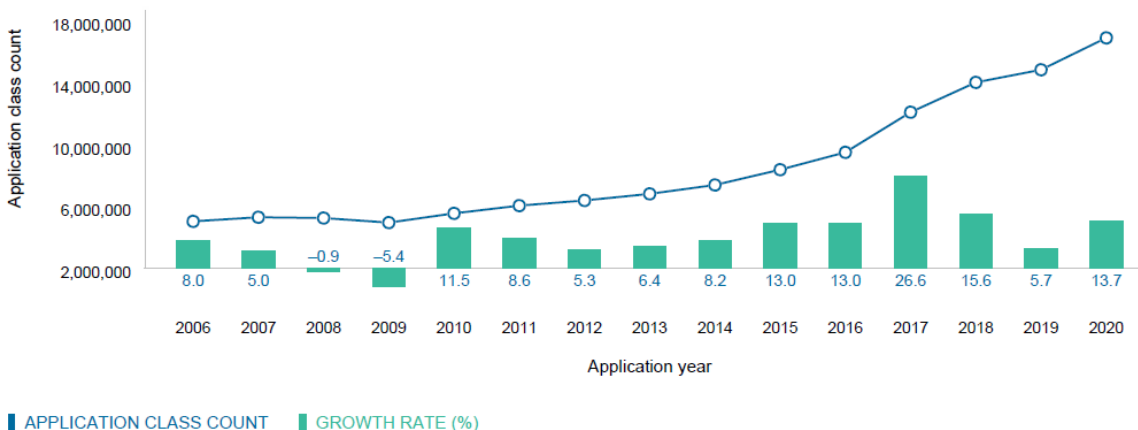
Trademarks

An estimated 13.4 million trademark applications covering 17.2 million classes were filed worldwide in 2020. The number of classes specified in applications grew by a remarkable 13.7% in 2020, marking an eleventh successive year of growth. Many countries around the global saw a considerable downturn in economic activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, trademark filing activity grew substantially in 16 of the top 20 offices. In fact, 11 offices recorded double-digit growth in 2020, ranging from 12.2% in Germany to 44.3% in Indonesia. In most cases, growth in resident filings drove the overall growth.

B1. Trend in trademark applications worldwide, 2006–2020



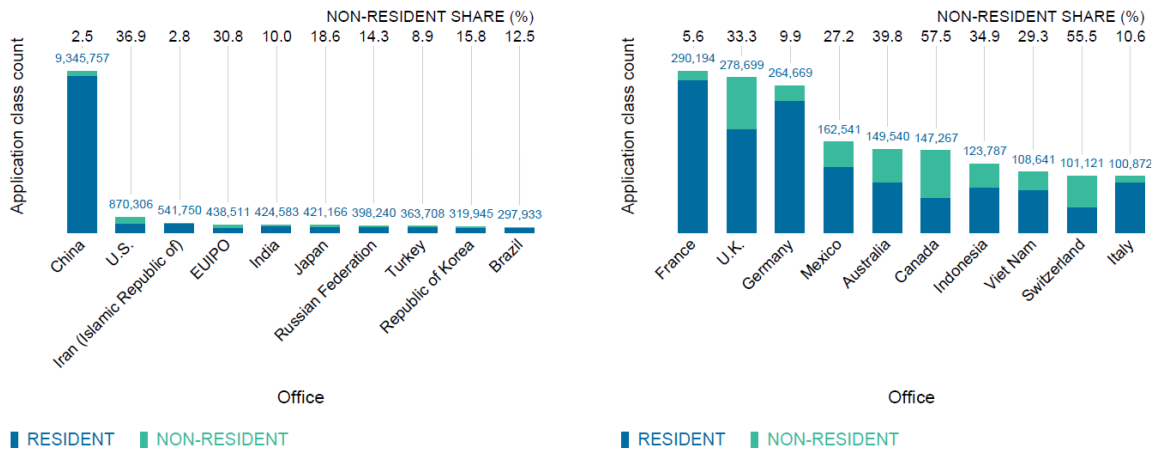
B2. Trend in trademark application class counts worldwide, 2006–2020



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China's IP office had the highest volume of filing activity^[1] with a class count of around 9.3 million; followed by the USPTO (870,306), the Islamic Republic of Iran (541,750), the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) (438,511) and the office of India (424,583). India's office overtook Japan to become the fifth largest office for trademark filing activity.

B10. Trademark application class counts for the top 20 offices, 2020

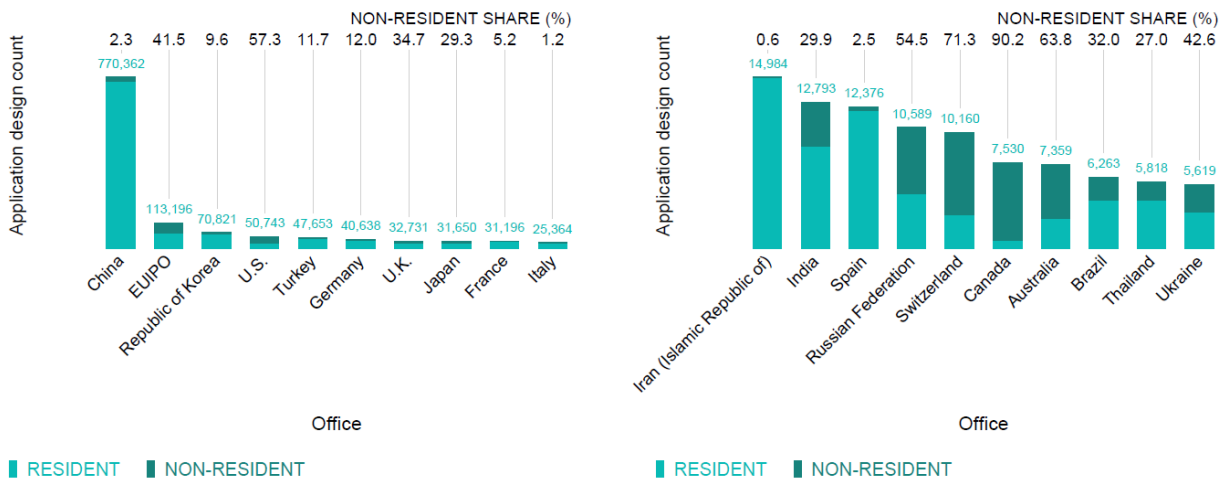


Offices located in Asia accounted for 71.8% of all trademark filing activity in 2020, up from 41.3% in 2010. Europe's share declined from 34.1% in 2010 to 14.7% in 2020. North America accounted for 5.9% of the world total in 2020, while the combined share of offices located in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania was 7.7% in 2020.

Industrial Designs

An estimated 1.1 million industrial design applications containing 1.4 million designs were filed worldwide in 2020, representing a 2% year-on-year increase. China's IP office received applications containing 770,362 designs in 2020, corresponding to 55.5% of the world total. It was followed by the EUIPO (113,196) and KIPO (70,821), USPTO (50,743) and Turkey (47,653).

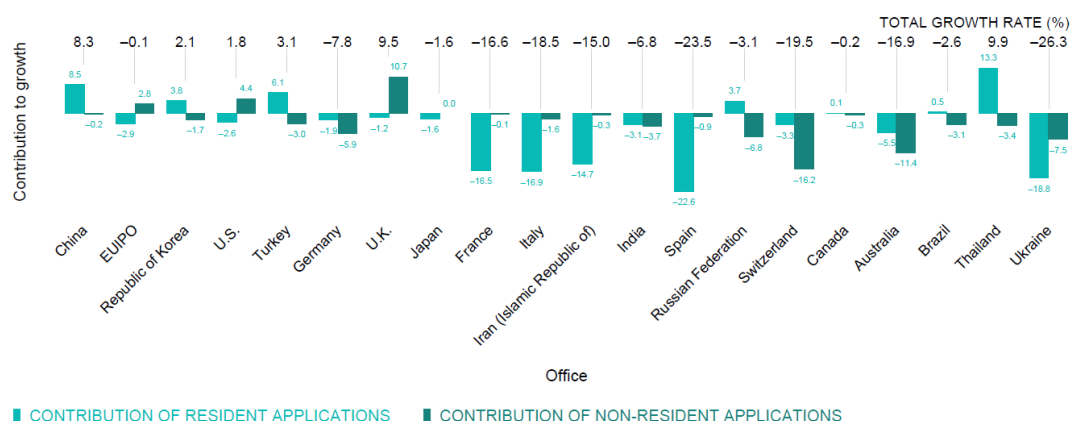
C10. Application design counts for the top 20 offices, 2020



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Among the top 10 offices, the U.K. (+9.5%) and China (+8.3%) recorded strong growth in design filing activity in 2020, while Turkey (+3.1%), the Republic of Korea (+2.1%) and the U.S. (+1.8%) saw a modest growth.^[2]

C11. Contribution of resident and non-resident application design counts to total growth for the top 20 offices, 2019–2020

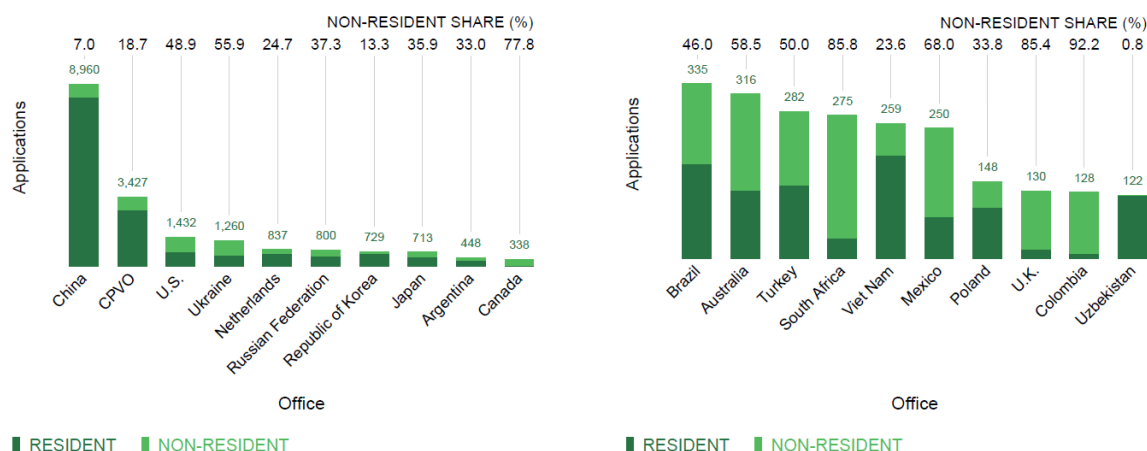


Offices located in Asia accounted for 70.9% of all designs in applications filed worldwide in 2020, up from 60.8% in 2010. Europe's share declined from 31.5% in 2010 to 22.1% in 2020. The combined share of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and Oceania was 7% in 2020.

Plant Varieties

Around 22,520 plant variety applications were filed worldwide in 2020, up +5.1% on 2019. China's relevant office received 8,960 plant variety applications in 2020, corresponding to 39.8% of the world total. China was followed by the Community Plant Variety Office of the European Union (CPVO; 3,427) and relevant offices of the U.S. (1,432), Ukraine (1,260) and the Netherlands (837).

D5. Plant variety applications for the top 20 offices, 2020



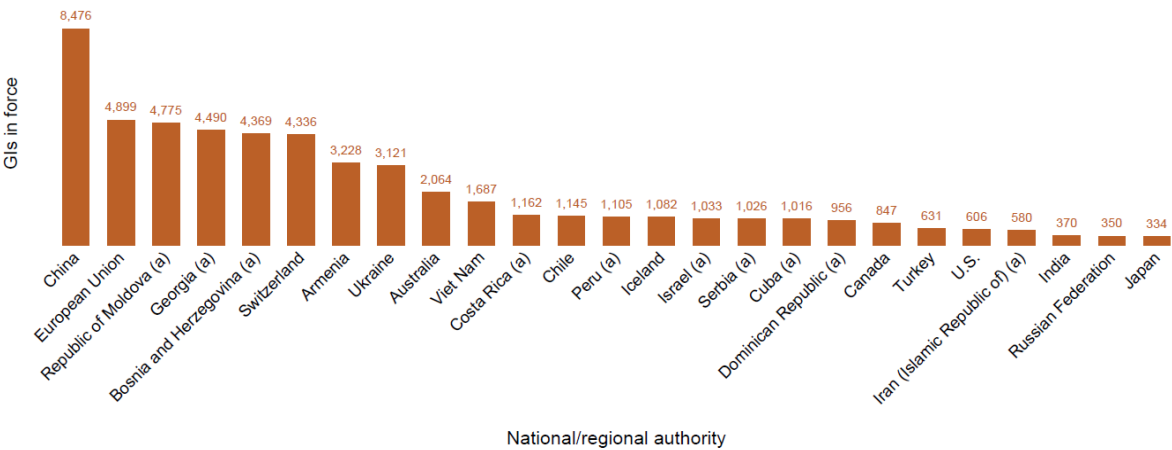
Among the top 10 offices, six offices saw growth in filings between 2019 and 2020, with double-digits growth in Argentina (+18.8%) and China (+14.4%). Robust growth was also reported by the Netherlands (+9.1%), the Republic of Korea (+4.9%) and the Russian Federation (+4.6%).

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Geographical indications

Data from the 92 national and regional authorities show there are an estimated 58,800 protected geographical indications (GIs) in existence in 2020. GIs are signs used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin, such as Gruyère for cheese or Tequila for spirits. Germany (14,394) reported the largest number of GIs in force, followed by China (8,476), Hungary (7,566) and the Czech Republic (6,180).

5.1. Geographical indications in force for selected national and regional authorities, 2020



GIs in force relating to “wines and spirits” accounted for around 56.1% of the 2020 world total, followed by agricultural products and foodstuffs (38.6%) and handicrafts (3.6%).

(Source: World Intellectual Property Organization)

Notes:

[1] Trademark filing activity refers to the total number of classes specified in trademark applications.

[2] Industrial design filing activity refers to the total number of designs contained in industrial design applications.