

China's National Intellectual Property Administration Releases Report on 2021 Patent Agency Industry – China has 60,369 Patent Agents; 47,511 Registered to Take the Patent Bar; Over Half of Patent Agencies Ordered to Make Rectifications

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On July 8, 2022, the [China National Intellectual Property Administration](#) (CNIPA) released the Development of the National Patent Agency Industry Report (2021) ([????????????????2021?](#)) listing statistics on the growth in patent agents and agencies over the past decade. Some highlights include: there were 60,369 patent agents by the end of 2021; there were 3,934 mainland patent agencies (excluding Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan) by the end of 2021; the number of patent agencies grew 20.9% year-on-year; and over 50% of agencies were ordered to make rectifications due to the filing of fraudulent (also translated as abnormal or irregular) patent applications or other reasons.

I. Patent Agency Data

After 2012, the number of patent agencies across China has grown rapidly. In 2013, the number of patent agencies nationwide was close to 1,000. In 2014, the number of new patent agencies opened exceeded 100. Since 2016, the number of patent agencies has entered a stage of rapid growth, with an annual growth rate of more than 20%. By the end of 2021, the total number of patent agencies has reached 3,934. Compared with 2020, the number of patent agencies has increased by more than 600, with an annual growth rate of 20.9%.

As expected, patent agencies are mainly located in Beijing, Guangdong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghai. There are more patent agencies in the eastern and coastal economically developed regions, and the regional distribution is basically consistent with the number of patent applications in each province (region, city).



图1 2012-2021年我国专利代理机构数量变化情况（不含港澳台地区）

Growth rate in the number of patent agencies. The blue bar is the total number of agencies while the orange line indicates YoY growth rate.

The top five provinces and cities in terms of the number of patent agencies are: Beijing, Guangdong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghai. Among them, the number of patent agencies in Beijing ranks first in the country, with a total of 845, accounting for 21.6% of the total number of patent agencies in the country; Guangdong ranks second with a total of 634, accounting for 16.2% of the total number of patent agencies in the country; Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Shanghai have 424, 286, and 265 agencies, respectively, accounting for 10.8%, 7.3%, and 6.7% of the total number of patent agencies nationwide. Shandong, Sichuan, Anhui and Henan have 174, 152, 136 and 106 agencies, respectively.

Among the 3,934 patent agencies in the country, according to the years of establishment of patent agencies, 316 patent agencies have been established for more than 20 years, accounting for 8.1% of the total number of patent agencies in the country; There are 256 patent agencies with less than 20 years of age, accounting for 6.5%; 253 patent agencies with 10 to 15 years of establishment, accounting for 6.4%; patent agencies established for 5 to 10 years There are 626 institutions, accounting for 15.9%; 659 patent agencies established for 3 to 5 years, accounting for 16.8%; 1824 patent agencies established within 3 years, accounting for 46.4%.

Most patent agencies are small. Among the 3,934 patent agencies in the country, there are 3,356 patent agencies with less than 10 practicing patent agents, accounting for about 85.3% of the total number of patent agencies. Among them, there are 1104 patent agencies with less than 3 practicing patent attorneys, 1504 patent agencies with 3-5 employees, and 748 patent agencies with 6-10 employees.

II. Patent Agent Data

By the end of 2021, a total of 60,369 people have obtained patent agent qualification certificates, with an annual growth rate of 13.7%. There were 26,840 practicing patent agents (those that have completed all requirements after receiving certificates) by the end of 2021. This means that each patent agent has filed an impressive 73.5 patent applications (invention and utility model) in 2021 on average as there was a total of [over 4.4 million patent applications filed in 2021 per CNIPA](#).



图 2 2012-2021 年执业专利代理师及取得专利代理师资格人数变化情况

Patent agents in China. Orange and blue bars indicate number of certificate holders and practicing agents, respectively. Blue and yellow lines indicate growth rate in patent certificates and practicing agents, respectively.

In contrast, the USPTO identifies [49,607 active practitioners](#) on the OED's practitioner roster.

III. Chinese Patent Bar

The number of applicants for the Patent Attorney Qualification Examination is increasing year by year. In 2021, the number of applicants for the Patent Attorney Qualification Examination reached a new high, and the number of applicants nationwide reached 47,511 although this represented a growth rate of less than 6% compared to a recent peak of almost 21% in 2018. In contrast, [only 2,062 people took the US patent bar in 2021](#) although this does reverse the decade-long drop in test takers.

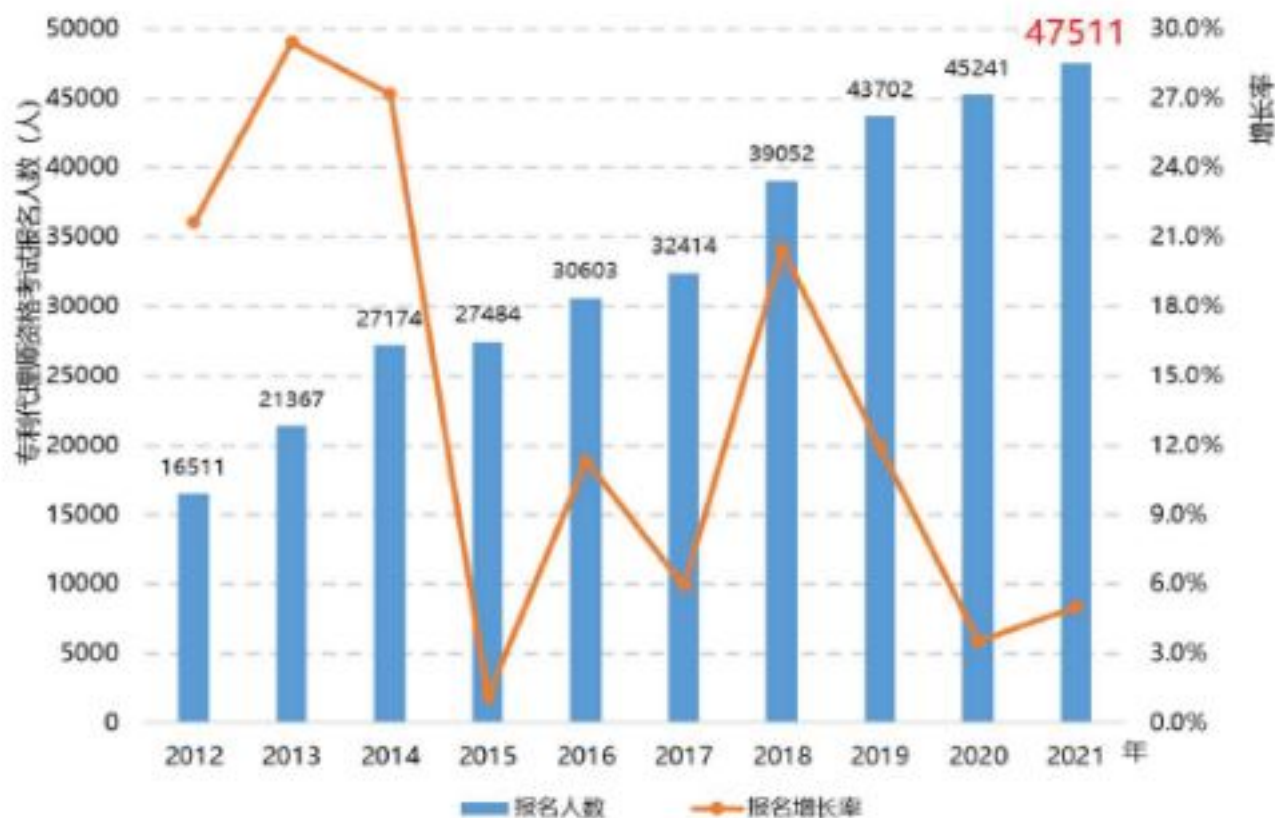


图3 2012-2021年专利代理师资格考试报名情况（不含港澳台地区）

IV. Supervision of the Patent Agency Industry

In 2021, the CNIPA “thoroughly promoted the special campaign of “Blue Sky” rectification of the intellectual property agency industry, and cracked down on the illegal and irregular agency acts.” A total of 2,350 agencies were interviewed, 2,105 were ordered to make rectification (out of 3,934 patent agencies registered), 220 fines and warnings were issued, and 12 agencies were suspended and closed down.

The full text of the report is available [here](#) (Chinese only).

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National Law Review, Volume XII, Number 191

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/china-s-national-intellectual-property-administration-releases-report-2021-patent>