

Women in Industrial Property: Progress Despite Persistent Inequality

22.12.2025 3 min read

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Topics

BMA Review Intellectual Property

Gender diversity in industrial property remains a significant challenge for innovation both in Brazil and globally.

On October 1, 2025, Brazil's National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI) released its 2024 Industrial Property Statistical Yearbook¹ (Yearbook), presenting an overview of the country's industrial property system based on data collected by the INPI. For the first time, the 2024 Yearbook features a dedicated section on gender, spotlighting women's participation in patents, trademarks, industrial designs, and software registrations.

This new focus in the INPI Yearbook reflects a broader international movement to track and promote gender diversity in innovation. The topic has already been the subject of global studies by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). According to WIPO's most recent report, The Global Gender Gap in Innovation and Creativity² ("Report"), about 23% of international patent applications filed between 1999 and 2020 included at least one female inventor, while nearly 96% included at least one male inventor.³

As a result, women make up only 13% of all inventors listed, and just 4% of the applications analyzed in the Report featured inventors who were exclusively women. These figures highlight the still limited representation of women in research and innovation.

Even so, women's participation has shown positive growth. Over the last few decades, the share of international patent applications with at least one female inventor increased from less than 20% in 2000 to 30% in 2020. The proportion of inventors who are women also rose from 8–10% to 13–15% during the same period.

The WIPO Report also estimates when gender parity in patent protection could be reached in different regions. North America is expected to achieve parity first, around 2055. Asia is projected to reach parity in 2056, while Latin America and the Caribbean may take longer, with parity expected only in 2068.

Among the main countries filing international patent applications between 2016 and 2020, 22% of inventors in Brazil are women. This places Brazil third⁴ in terms of the highest percentage of women inventors, behind Spain and Colombia.

The data published by INPI analyzes individual applicants living in Brazil, providing a domestic perspective and a snapshot of innovation by region within the country. The Brazilian figures confirm the progress observed globally.

According to the Yearbook, 17% of patent applications filed with INPI in 2024 were submitted by women. While this percentage is still modest, it represents progress compared to 2015, when women's participation did not exceed 12% of filings.

The analysis points to São Paulo as the leader in absolute numbers, and highlights Rio Grande do Norte for its relative participation, where women accounted for 49% of patent filings.

Overall, the scenario shows that although gender inequality persists in patent filings, there are clear signs of progress. The growth is even more notable in other areas: over the past decade, the number of filings by women increased by 616.6% for trademarks and 563.2% for computer programs, showing greater inclusion across different areas of the industrial property system.

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NOTES

¹ Instituto Nacional da Propriedade Industrial (INPI). Anuário Estatístico de Propriedade Industrial 2024. 7ª edição. Rio de Janeiro: INPI, Coordenação-Geral de Economia e Inovação, 2025. Available at www.gov.br/inpi/pt-br/inpi-data/relatorios/anuario-estatistico-pi-2024.pdf.

² WIPO Development Studies. The Global Gender Gap in Innovation and Creativity – An International Comparison of the Gender Gap in Global Patenting over Two Decades, 2023. Available at www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo-pub-ds-gender-2023-en-the-global-gender-gap-in-innovation-and-creativity-an-international-comparison-of-the-gender-gap-in-global-patenting-over-two-decades.pdf.

³ The indicator used in the Report considers the presence of at least one female inventor (and, separately, at least one male inventor) in each application analyzed.

⁴ Although Brazil has a high proportion of female inventors, gender parity projections are based on the growth rate of female participation, not just the current absolute number. As a result, North America is expected to reach parity first, due to its faster rate of growth.

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