In 2002, 312 thousand patents were granted around the world. More than a third of these were granted in Japan. Just under a third were granted in the United States.

A patent is supposed to protect the ideas and inventions that people have. Patenting something will then allow the owner of the patent to charge others for the usage of an idea or invention. The aim is to reward the creator for their hard work or intelligence. But patents can prevent people from using good ideas because they cannot afford to do so.

A quarter of all territories had no new patents in 2002, so will not profit from these in future years as others will.

Territory size shows the proportion all patents worldwide that were granted there.

“... the world’s poorest countries are still waiting for the promised benefits of stronger patent protection at home.”

The Economist, 2001