

Research and Innovation in Wales

The UK government has recognised the critical role that research and innovation plays in driving long-term economic growth and delivering against its five national missions¹. Similarly, the Welsh government has placed innovation at the heart of its vision to create “a stronger, fairer, greener Wales”². Alongside this, there is a continued ambition in both Westminster and Cardiff to reduce inequality and support growth in cities and nations across the UK^{3,4,5}.

What do these ambitions to increase investment in UK research and innovation mean for Wales? This document provides an insight into the current research and innovation landscape in Wales to inform discussions over how people across the nation can contribute to and share the benefits of R&D investment.

How much is spent on R&D activity in Wales⁶?

FIGURE 1

4.6% of the UK’s population is based in Wales⁷

£1.6bn
in 2022

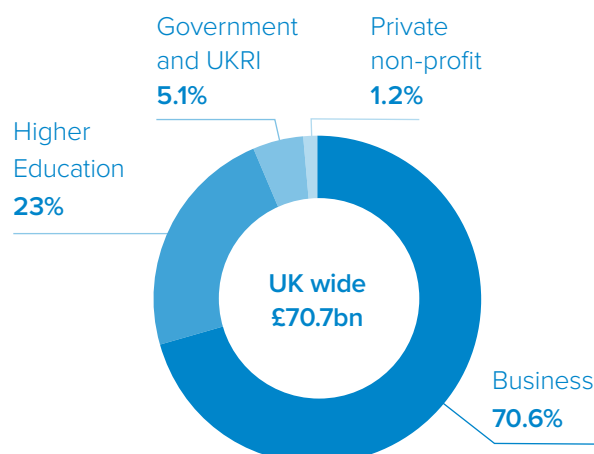
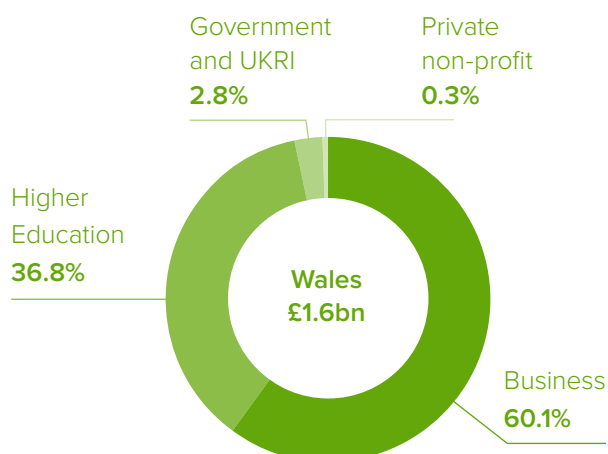
2.3% of
UK total

£500
per capita

Who performs R&D in Wales?

FIGURE 2

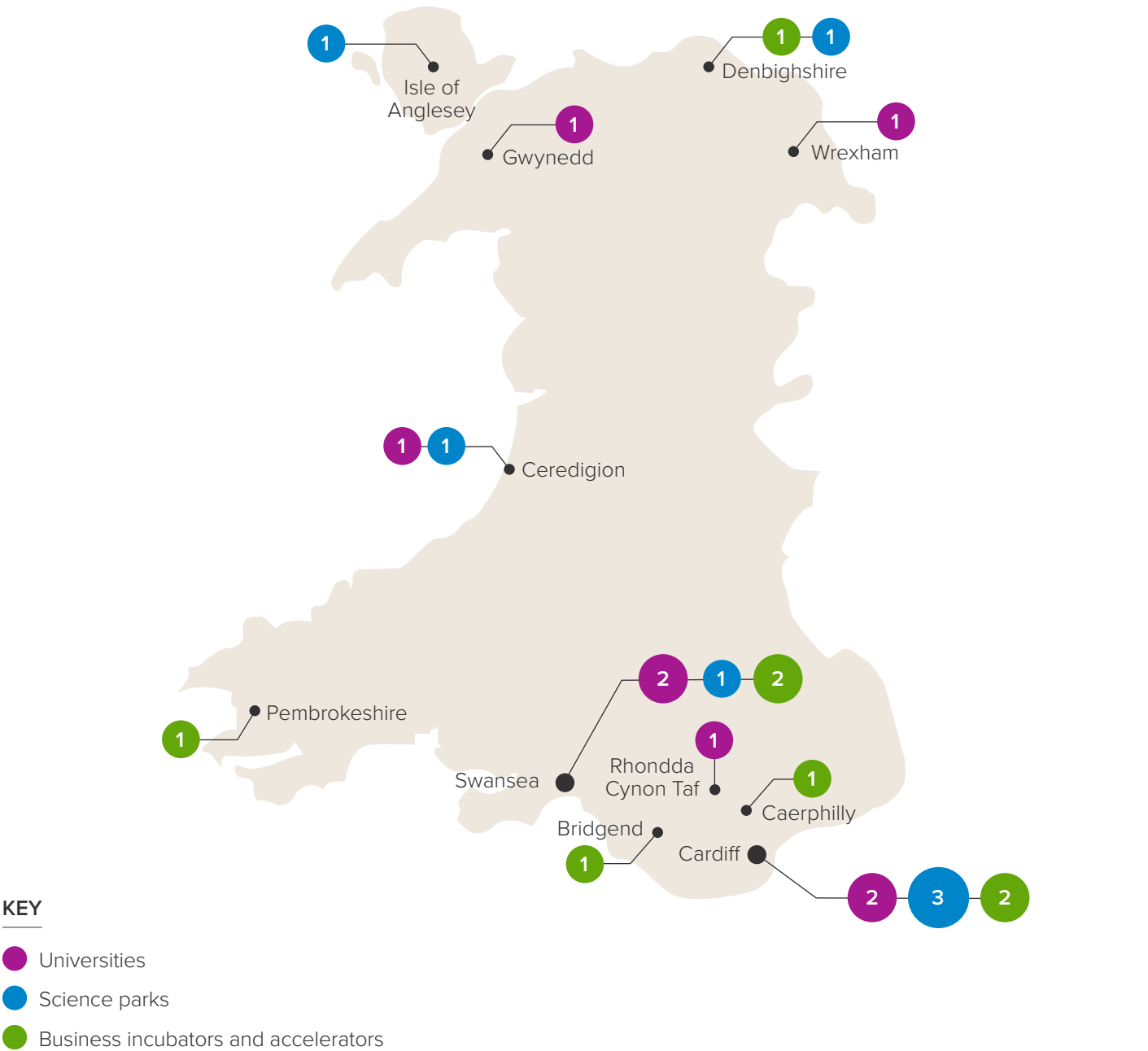
Percentage distribution of R&D spend in Wales and UK wide, 2022⁸.



Where is R&D concentrated in Wales?

FIGURE 3

Map of R&D activity in Wales.



11,130 professional, scientific, and technical workplaces ⁹	8 universities ¹⁰	7 science parks ¹¹	8 business incubators and accelerators ¹²
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Note: The R&D sites listed may not be exhaustive. The list of universities was compiled from HESA data. Higher education institutions without university title have been omitted.

How is R&D in Wales funded and supported?

R&D is funded and supported in many different ways. This includes direct investment from public, private, charitable and overseas sources, as well as indirect measures that encourage further private investment such as R&D tax credits.

FIGURE 4

Examples of R&D funders in Wales.

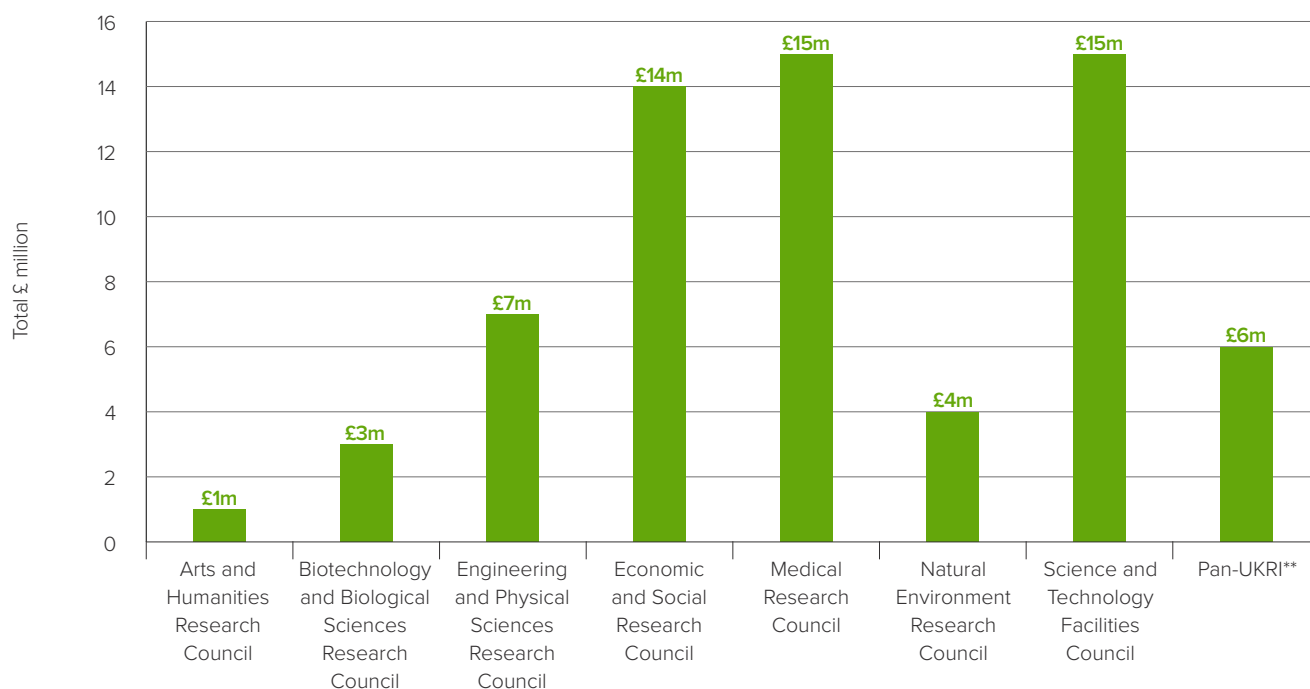


* These figures are indicative estimates of the Royal Society’s grants expenditure in 2023/2024, based on payments made through the Society’s grant management system. They have not been audited. The location is based on the postcode of the head office of the payee, not necessarily where R&D is performed.

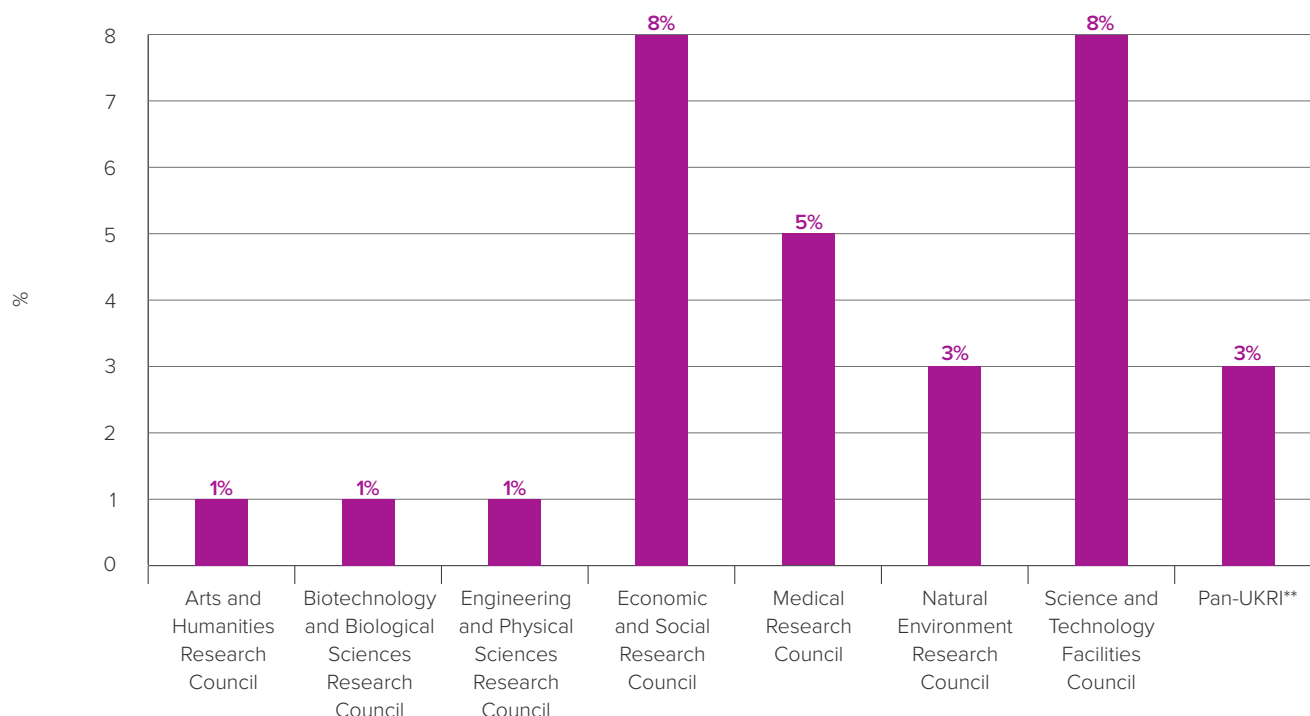
Note: Per capita figures calculated using ONS mid-2024 populations.

FIGURE 5

Total value of grants awarded to Wales from each research council in 2022 – 2023¹⁸.



Percentage of funding awarded to Wales from each research council in 2022 – 2023¹⁹.



**Pan-UKRI includes COVID-19 related research funding, Fund for International Collaboration (FIC), Future Leaders Fellowships (FLF), Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF), Newton Fund, Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) and Strength in Places Fund (SIPF).

Note: The data included in Figure 5 excludes non-competitive grants, such as funding for UKRI institutes.

There is no R&D without people

A thriving R&D environment in Wales requires a talented workforce to perform research as well as young people in the pipeline who are equipped with the skills they will need in the future economy.

FIGURE 6

A snapshot of students taking A level subjects in Wales, 2025²⁰.

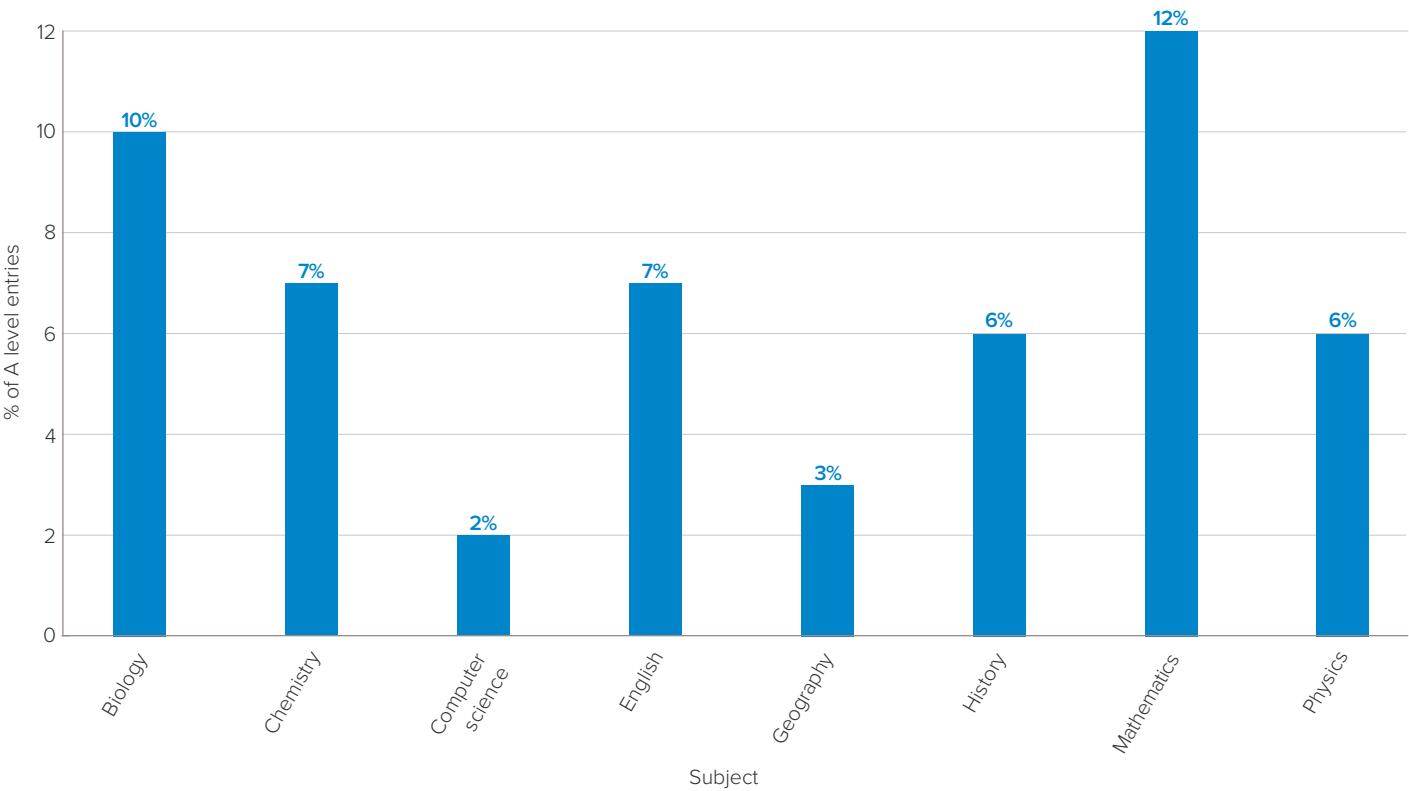
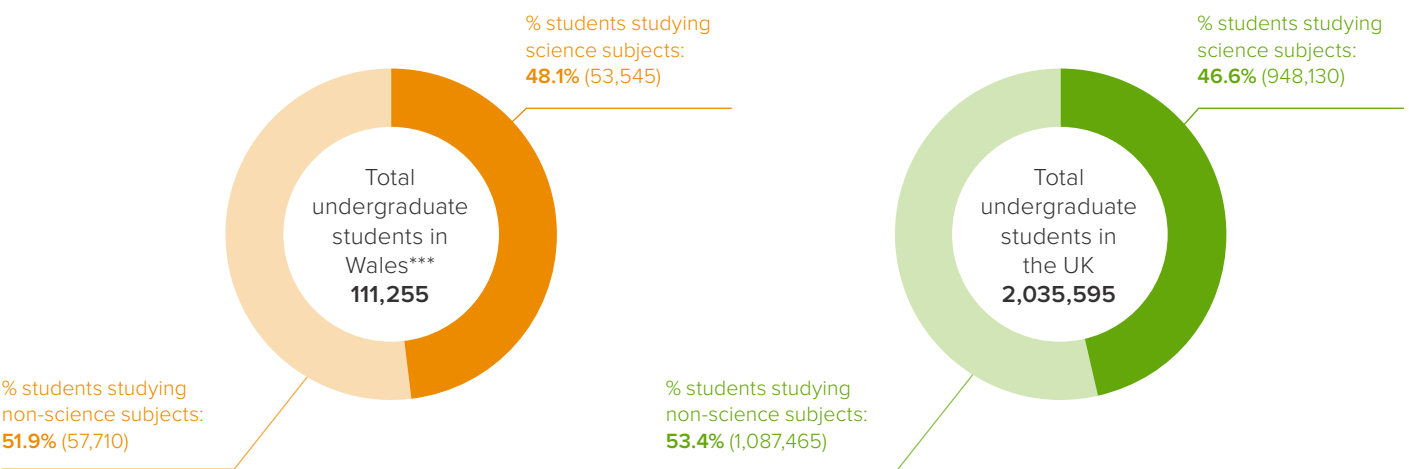


FIGURE 7

What are undergraduates studying at universities in Wales, 2023 – 2024²¹?

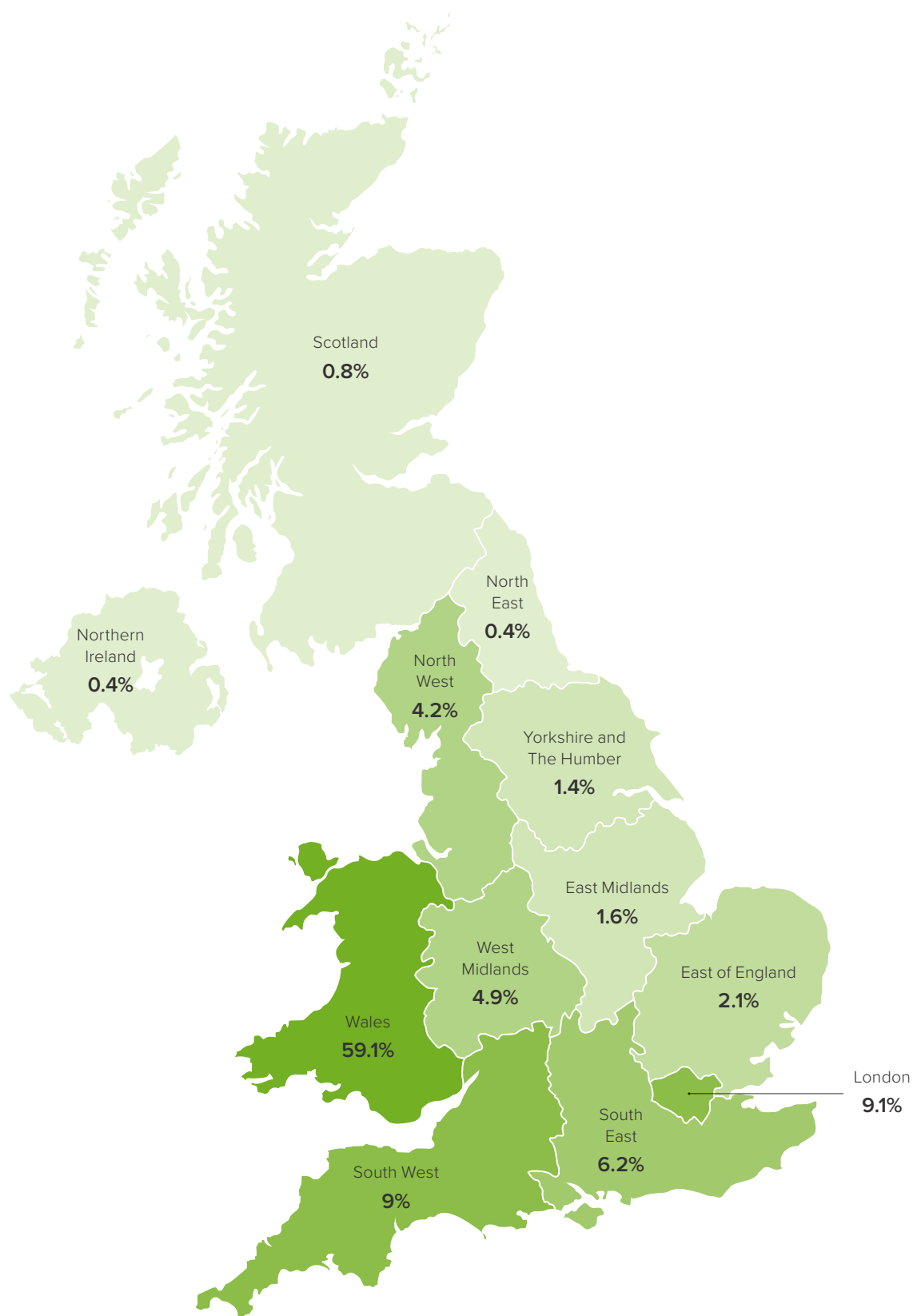


*** The total for Wales does not include students studying at the Open University who are based in Wales.

Note: The HESA science grouping includes subjects like medicine, nursing, and agriculture which may not be included in other definitions of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and maths). Includes CAH Level 1 01-11, 13 and 26.

FIGURE 8

Proportion of Welsh graduates working in the different regions and nations of the UK, 2020 – 2021²².



Note: sample only includes surveyed graduates who remained in the UK for work after graduation. Proportion may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

FIGURE 9

How many people are employed in R&D in Wales?

14,000
staff employed in R&D at
Welsh companies in 2024.
2.7% of the UK total²³.

11,345
academic staff employed at
Welsh universities in 2023/24.
4.6% of the UK total²⁴.

Note: Academic staff refers to academic staff with roles in both teaching and research or in research only. Both full-time and part-time research staff are included in the figure. All figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Find out more

Investing in UK R&D

Explore research and innovation in other areas of the UK and read the Royal Society's briefings on R&D investment in the UK produced together with the other UK National Academies. Find out more on royalsociety.org/uk-research-and-innovation

Industry programme

The Royal Society's Science and Industry programme connects industry with the Society and promotes the value of science to the economy by bringing together industry, academia, and government. Find out more on royalsociety.org/industry

Promoting excellence in science

The Royal Society promotes excellence in science and supports international collaborations by funding research in the life and physical sciences, including engineering, in the UK and internationally. Find out more about the Royal Society's grants programmes on royalsociety.org/grants

A National Academy for Wales

The Learned Society of Wales is Wales's National Academy for sciences, arts and humanities, championing knowledge and supporting experts to benefit Wales and beyond. The Society is a route for experts to support evidence-based policymaking, and a voice for Wales in the UK and international science and research community.
learnedsociety.wales

Early Career Researchers Network

The Learned Society of Wales's Early Career Researcher Network is an interdisciplinary network of early-career researchers working across Wales. Free for researchers in any sector in Wales to join, the network supports its members to collaborate, learn, and discover new ways of doing research.
learnedsociety.wales/ecr-home

Funding for early-stage collaboration

The Learned Society of Wales offers early-stage funding for researchers to collaborate with groups outside of the research sector – such as community groups, charities, and the public sector – to explore ideas and develop proposals to win competitive UK and international research funding.
learnedsociety.wales/research-workshop-grants

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