

Statistical bulletin

# Research and development expenditure by the UK government: 2024

Research and development and related expenditure by UK government departments and devolved administrations.

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# 1 . Main points

- The UK government's net expenditure on research and development (R&D) rose to £20.4 billion in 2024, which is up from £18.3 billion in 2023 and is an increase of 11.6%.
- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), excluding Research England, contributed the most to net expenditure on R&D, increasing £484 million to £6.8 billion in 2024, which was 33.2% of total net government expenditure on R&D.
- Civil departments' total net expenditure on R&D was the second largest contributor to the total, at £5.8 billion in 2024, an increase of £1.2 billion since 2023; this was followed by the higher education funding bodies' net expenditure of £3.4 billion.
- The Ministry of Defence's net expenditure on R&D rose by £426 million (16.1%) to £3.1 billion in 2024.
- The UK contributed £1.2 billion to the Horizon Europe and Copernicus Earth observation programmes in 2024; the contribution was £1.1 billion in 2023, following the UK becoming an associated country to Horizon Europe and a participating state in the Copernicus programme.
- UK government expenditure on knowledge transfer activities related to R&D was £315 million in 2024, an increase of £31 million (10.9%) since 2023.

## 2 . Data on Research and development expenditure by the UK government, 2024

[Research and development expenditure by the UK government](#)

Dataset | Released 17 April 2026

Dataset on research and development and related expenditure by UK government departments and devolved administrations.

## 3 . Glossary

### Research and development

Research and development (R&D) is defined by the Frascati Manual as creative and systematic work undertaken to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humankind, culture, and society, and to devise new applications of available knowledge.

### UKRI

[UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\)](#) is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). It is the national funding agency investing in science and research in the UK. It brings together the UK's seven Research Councils, Innovate UK, and Research England.

### Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

The [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#) is an international organisation of governments that exists to find solutions to social, economic, and environmental challenges.

## Frascati Manual

The internationally recognised [Frascati manual](#) sets out a methodology for collecting and using R&D statistics. It is published by the OECD and includes definitions of basic concepts, data collection guidelines, and classifications for compiling R&D statistics.

## Knowledge transfer

Knowledge transfer activities (including technology transfers) are designed to help the conveyance of ideas, research, results, and skills between researchers, businesses, and wider communities. These actions contribute to the dissemination and application of scientific and technical knowledge, including consultancy services, demonstration projects, and sharing information.

## 4 . Data sources and quality

This release provides estimates of research and development (R&D) performed in and funded by UK government departments and the devolved administrations.

The main source of estimates for this publication is the annual Government Research and Development (GovERD) Survey. This is an annual census survey of UK government departments, the devolved administrations, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and higher education funding bodies.

The periods referred to in this release relate to financial years, therefore references to 2024 relate to the financial year 2024 to 2025.

All figures quoted are in current prices unless otherwise stated.

In this release, R&D-related concepts follow internationally agreed standards defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as published in their [Frascati Manual 2015](#).

## Other statistics on research and development

Estimates of R&D performed "in-house" (by the government sector or other organisations themselves) are also included in our [Gross domestic expenditure on research and development \(GERD\), UK statistical bulletin](#). The GERD statistics measure expenditure on R&D performed in-house for the government and all other sectors of the economy.

The values of in-house expenditure on R&D performed by the government sector are included in Table 12 of our accompanying R&D expenditure by the UK government (GovERD) dataset. They are also available in Table 1 of our [UK GERD dataset](#), which shows values of R&D performed by all sectors in the economy. Our UK GERD dataset breaks down the total government sector into UKRI and the rest of government, so the sum of these values in GERD Table 1 is comparable with the in-house values in Table 12 of our GovERD dataset.

In contrast, most estimates in our [Research and development expenditure by the UK government \(GovERD\) statistical bulletins](#) are on a net expenditure basis, which means in-house R&D that is performed, plus purchased R&D or funding provided for R&D, less funding received for R&D.

The GovERD dataset also include estimates of expenditure on knowledge transfer activities related to R&D.

## Contributions to international programmes

From 1 January 2024, the UK became an associated country to Horizon Europe and a participating state in the Copernicus Earth observation programme. This allows UK researchers to lead projects, access funding as beneficiaries, and use Copernicus data.

This was during the 2023 to 2024 financial year, and therefore the first UK contribution to the programmes value is shown under the 2023 period in our accompanying dataset.

The Department for Science, Innovation, and Technology (DSIT) is responsible for paying the UK's contribution to the Horizon Europe and Copernicus programmes. However, these contributions do not form part of DSIT's estimates in the data tables. This is because only overall total values of the contributions to the programmes are available, and not the breakdowns as presented in the data tables.

Estimates for contributions to the Horizon Europe and Copernicus programmes have been included in the 2024 data tables with the indicative contributions to EU R&D expenditure, under subsections called "UK contributions to international programmes".

## Deflator for constant price estimates

Estimates in our GovERD data tables are presented in current and constant prices. Historically, the gross domestic product (GDP) expenditure deflator has been used to create the constant price series. However, an R&D deflator has been developed for compiling constant price estimates of R&D in the National Accounts. We have introduced the use of the R&D deflator to calculate the constant price estimates in this release, replacing the use of the GDP expenditure deflator. The R&D deflator version we have used is consistent with Blue Book 2025.

## Time series comparisons

Estimates for 2019 for total government R&D expenditure, and those specifically for defence, are not strictly comparable with previous periods. This is because a methodological review of the [Ministry of Defence's R&D statistics](#) resulted in a decrease in R&D reported for 2019 and changes to the statistics following the review were not applied to previous periods.

Estimates in this release from 2019 onwards for R&D expenditure by civil departments, the devolved administrations, UKRI, and the higher education funding bodies are still comparable with previous periods. Therefore, time series comparisons for all elements, excluding defence R&D, are still possible.

Further details about changes to the defence statistics that affected comparability over time are available in our [Research and development expenditure by the UK government: 2021 bulletin](#).

## Quality

More quality and methodology information (QMI) on uses and users of the data and how the data were created is available in our [Research and development expenditure by the UK government QMI](#).

## 5 . Related links

[Gross domestic expenditure on research and development, UK: 2023](#)

Bulletin | Released 15 August 2025

Annual estimates of research and development performed and funded by business enterprise, higher education, government, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and private non-profit organisations.

[Business enterprise research and development, UK: 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 28 November 2025

Spending and numbers employed on research and development by businesses in the UK, including data on sources of funds and regional spread, broken down by product sector, and civil and defence type of research.

## 6 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 17 April 2026, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Research and development expenditure by the UK government: 2024](#)