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Innovation rates in Wales lag behind many other part of the UK shows new research

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New research from the Enterprise Research Centre show East Wales 29th and West Wales and the Valleys 34th in its innovation league table

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Innovation rates in Wales are in the bottom half of a new UK league table compiled by the Enterprise Research Centre (ERC).

The research shows the UK has a clear 'arc of innovation' stretching from Cambridge through the South-East Midlands and along the M4 corridor to take in Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

However, there are beacons of innovation elsewhere include the Tees Valley, Dorset and Liverpool.

London, meanwhile, is way down the list, while Scotland and Northern Ireland also show below-average levels of innovation, according to the research from the UK's leading independent research institute on the drivers behind business growth and success.

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Analysis

ERC's analysis of six key indicators of innovation has allowed it to produce an 'innovation league table' for 45 local enterprise partnership (LEP) areas in England and equivalent zones in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

These indicators range from new products being brought to market, to collaboration and research and development (R&D) activity.

Welsh rankings

East Wales is ranked 29th, while West Wales and the Valleys is 34th.

Oxford LEP is ranked first. Cumbria is ranked bottom at 45th, followed by Northern Ireland, Eastern Scotland and East Anglia.

The findings are based on a new analysis of data from the 14,000 firms which responded to the UK Innovation Survey 2013, relating to their innovation activity over the period 2010-2012.

League table in full

	Product / Service	New to market	Process	Strategy / Marketing	R&D	Collaboration	Overall
Oxfordshire LEP	1	5	1	2	1	1	1
Greater Cambridge & Peterborough	5	10	5	1	2	2	2
South East Midlands	3	6	7	3	9	6	3
Gloucestershire	2	17	12	7	6	3	4
Enterprise M3	4	1	21	12	7	4	5
Dorset	10	2	3	11	13	21	6
Tees Valley	8	15	2	10	12	14	7
Coast to Capital	18	3	11	4	18	8	8
Swindon and Wiltshire	7	9	4	5	5	38	9
Liverpool City Region	16	25	14	8	10	13	10
Northamptonshire	9	16	6	33	3	20	11
Cheshire and Warrington	15	22	13	16	14	22	12
Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly	19	26	8	6	37	7	13
Coventry and Warwickshire	24	23	23	17	11	9	14
Lancashire	6	33	16	22	16	15	15
Black Country	14	30	19	34	8	5	16
Leicester and Leicestershire	11	35	10	21	4	29	17
Thames Valley Berkshire	17	11	30	35	17	10	18
Hertfordshire	37	7	28	14	22	24	19
Greater Manchester	26	19	18	38	25	11	20
Heart of the South West	21	18	31	18	15	34	21
Derby, Derbysh., Nottingham, Notts.	20	31	37	9	19	23	22
North Eastern	23	8	29	31	24	26	23
Leeds City Region	22	28	24	32	21	16	24
London	32	20	22	23	23	25	25
Worcestershire	39		26	13	31	12	26
Sheffield City Region	27	29	15	26	20	30	27
Greater Birmingham and Solihull	25	4	27	29	33	32	28
East Wales	12	36	34	20	32	28	29

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South East	28	24	33	19	27	31	30
Solent	33	14	32	41	26	17	31
Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire	29	13	17	27	40	40	32
West of England	34	34	9	15	44	33	33
West Wales & The Valleys	35	37	20	28	28	27	34
SW Scotland	40	12	35	30	34	45	35
The Marches	38		39	37	35	18	36
Buckinghamshire Thames Valley	30	27		39	36	36	37
Humber	44		42	25	38	19	38
NE & Highlands & Islands	13	40	40	45	30	35	39
York and North Yorkshire	45	21	36	36	39	39	40
Greater Lincolnshire	31		41	24	45	41	41
New Anglia	43	38	25	40	41	37	42
Eastern Scotland	36	32	43	42	29	44	43
Northern Ireland	41	39	38	43	42	42	44
Cumbria	42			44	43	43	45

This survey found that while UK-wide 45% of firms reported being 'innovation active', only 18% were engaged in new product innovation.

Firms in Oxfordshire report the most innovation activity followed closely by Greater Cambridge and Peterborough. South East Midlands (centred on Milton Keynes) and Gloucestershire follow relatively closely.

ERC academics believe this could be explained by the concentration of high-end manufacturing companies in this belt, as well as a focus on research and development (R&D), particularly in areas with major universities.

Tees Valley is the best performing of the northern English local economic areas. This new finding runs counter to the current narrative of a 'northern powerhouse' in the North-West centred on Manchester (Greater Manchester is only ranked 20th for innovation).

London's innovation rate relative to the total number of firms there is relatively low – with the capital only making number 25 on the list. Experts believe this could be due to London's specialisms in service sectors such as law and finance, which tend to be highly regulated and therefore less innovative.

ERC view

Professor Stephen Roper, who led the ERC research, said firms' ability to innovate played an important role in sustaining growth and competitiveness, with economic implications for whole regions:

He said: "For the first time, this research gives us a picture of which localities of the UK have the highest proportion of firms introducing new products and services. The findings run counter to the dominant narrative of a country dependent on London, with innovation being much more dispersed across the country than was previously thought.

"Innovation is strongly linked to growth, exporting and productivity - all areas in which the UK economy needs to improve if we want to boost our international competitiveness.

"Wales showed lower rates of innovation activity than elsewhere and this may be a reflection of its wider economic performance relative to other parts of the UK.

"The significant variation between different parts of the UK suggests that some localities are succeeding in creating a more innovation-friendly environment than others.

"Policymakers and researchers need to examine the local factors that could be contributing to this so that we can create the conditions for firms to become more

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innovative – creating jobs and growth - in every corner of the UK.”

Reaction

Kevin Baughan director of technology at Innovate UK said: “Just as it is important that research, innovation and commercialisation is developed across all parts of the economy, so is it important to society that it is now developed right across all parts of the UK.

”That’s the benefit of an organisation like Innovate UK in both responding to the innovation needs of businesses wherever they are located as well as developing the strengths of local areas in the pursuit of the global markets of the future.”

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