

**2023**

# **Business Innovation Survey**



**UK Research  
and Innovation**

# About

The trading environment over the last few years has been challenging; from increased costs, climate change, the UK's exit from the EU, the Covid pandemic, energy cost increases and supply chains impacted from international wars.

In this climate, the appetite and ability for businesses to invest resources to carry out research and development and innovation activities can come under pressure. However, we know that these activities are critical to ensure our food systems in the UK are sustainable and secure, while also important for driving regional economic growth through new products, markets and job creation.

In 2023, we ran our first annual Business Innovation Survey, benchmarking innovation and research activities with companies Growing Kent & Medway has engaged with across the horticultural and plant-based food and drink sector, and as a means of gauging the impact of our support. Our survey is being repeated annually to allow us and the businesses we work with, to track trends and monitor our impact.

The Growing Kent & Medway annual Business Innovation Survey invites businesses engaged with our programmes to complete a short online questionnaire, asking about their innovation and research activity.

In 2023, survey entrants were offered the chance to enter a free prize draw to win a 'Best of Kent' hamper worth £60. Five winners were picked at random and only one contact per company was permitted to enter. The survey closed on 31st October 2023.

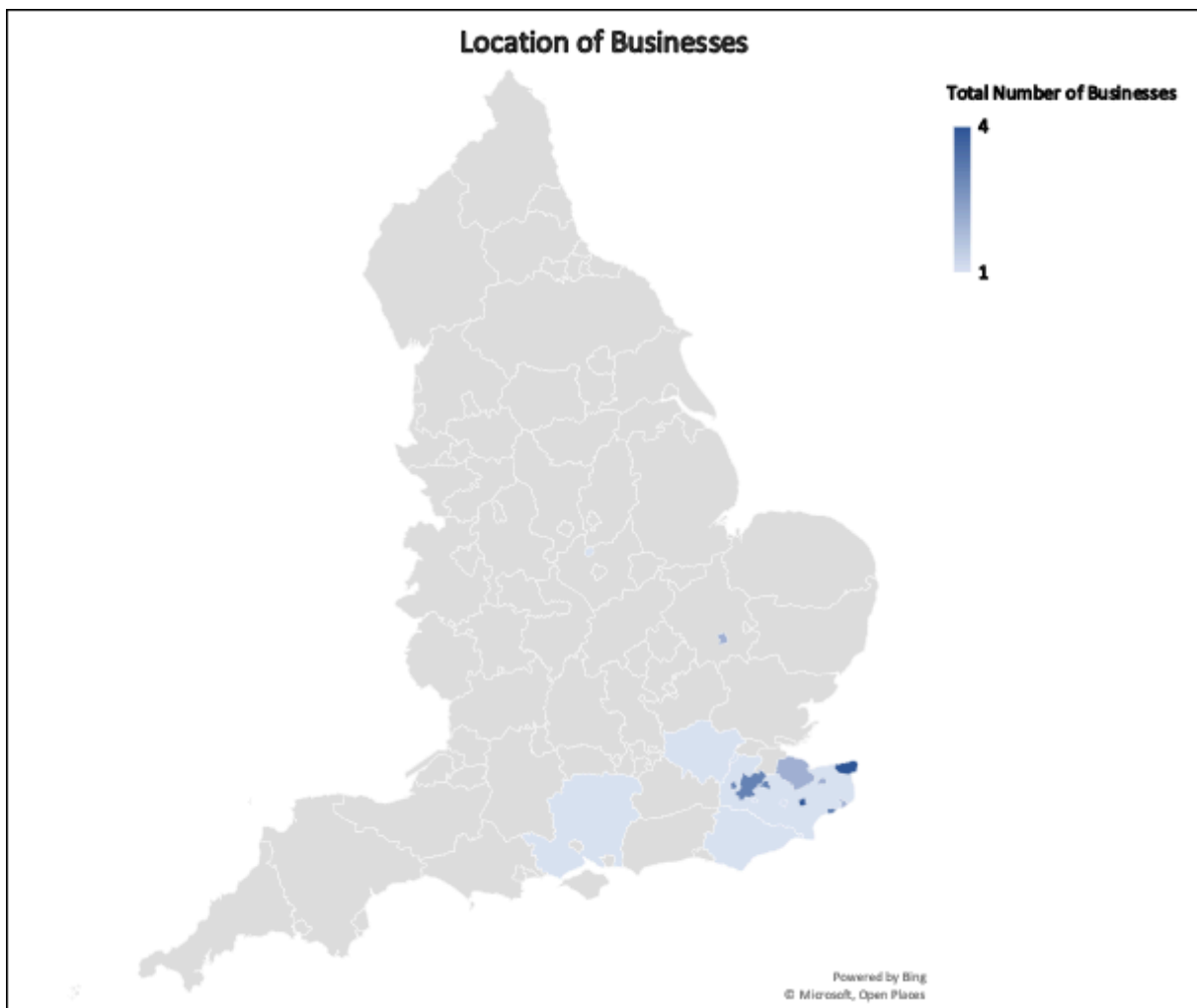


# Key findings

## Who responded?

We had 44 responses, of which most were from smaller organisations.

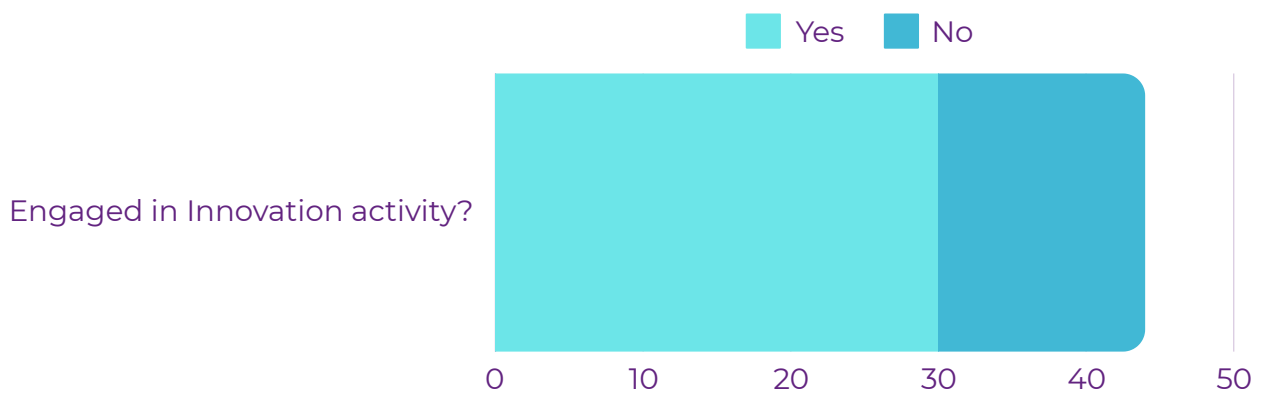
Many were working in food processing, manufacturing, agri-tech, farming or related industries and predominantly (74%) based in Kent or Medway.



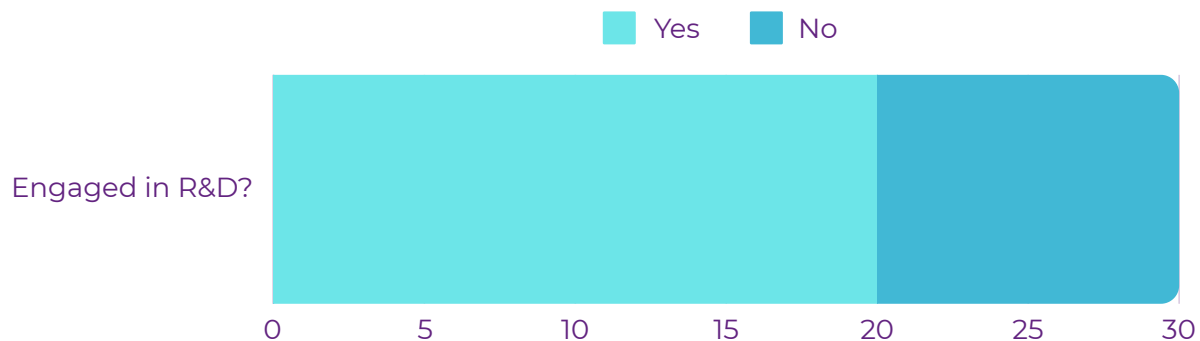
## 68% of respondents to the survey identified themselves as innovation active

This compares to the UK government national, cross-sector Innovation Survey<sup>1</sup>(UKIS) finding, of 36% of UK businesses innovation active between 2020 and 2022. Within the related category of “Manufacture of food clothing, wood paper and printing”, the UKIS figure was 54.5%.

- Almost 70% of our respondents are engaged in innovation activities



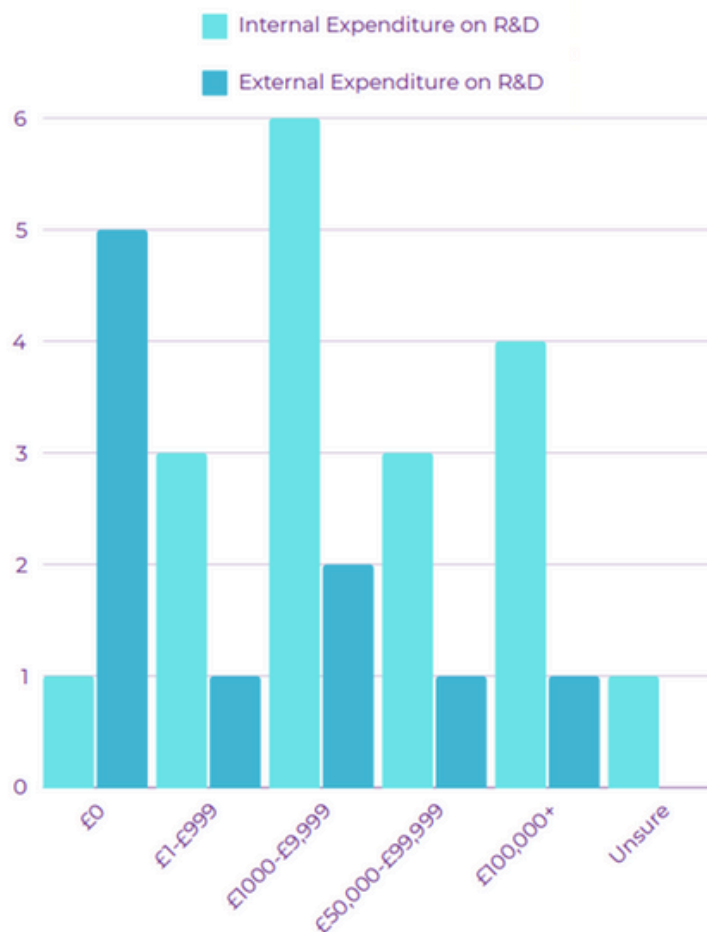
- Of those engaged in innovation activity, two-thirds are undertaking research and development



1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-innovation-survey-2023-report/united-kingdom-innovation-survey-2023-report>

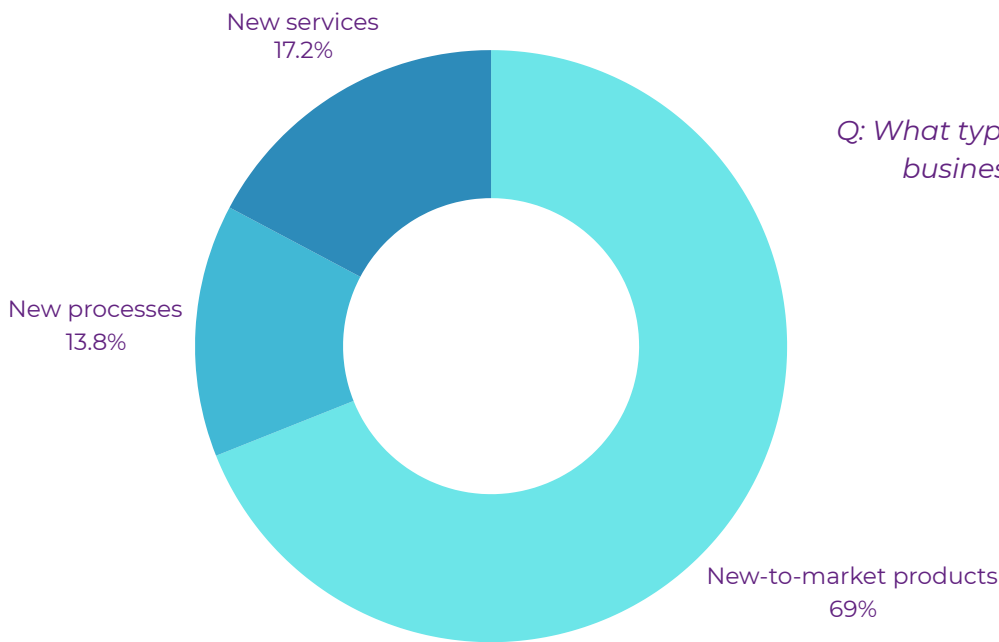


- Of those who said they were innovation active, **60%** agreed that their interaction with Growing Kent & Medway had led to an **increase in innovation** or R&D type activity.
- **43%** of businesses agreed that they had **full time employees engaged in R&D** activities within their business.
- **36%** of businesses responded that they were spending money on **internal research and development**. The most common expenditure bracket for this was £1000 - £9999
- **11%** of businesses responded that they were spending money on **externally procured research and development**. Expenditure ranged from the £1-£999 bracket up to the £100,000+ bracket.



How much approximately has your business spent on R&D in the past 12 months?

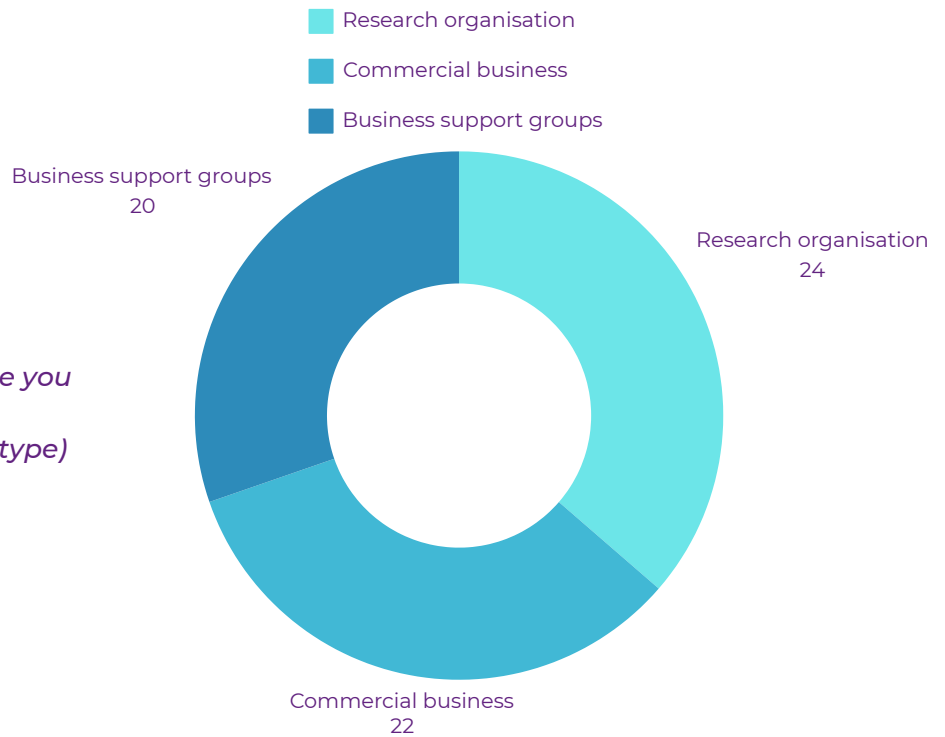
- **41% of respondents** had developed **new to market products, services or processes** in the previous 12 months and **52%** agreed they would be **introducing** these in the next 12 months.



- Of those introducing new-to-market innovation in the next 12 months; the **majority** are introducing **new-to-market products**.
- **61%** of survey respondents agreed that interacting with Growing Kent & Medway had led to an **increase in collaborations** between their business and other organisations.
- This means that **69%** of those who reported that they were collaborating with other organisations, **attributed the increase** in collaborations to **Growing Kent & Medway**.



*What type of businesses are you collaborating with?  
(Can select more than one type)*



- **36%** of businesses created **new full time and/or part-time roles** within their businesses in the previous 12 months
- **23%** of survey respondents felt that interaction with Growing Kent & Medway has led to the **creation of new jobs** within their business. This is almost **63%** of businesses who had created new roles in the past 12 months.



# Contact



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Growing Kent & Medway is an innovation cluster, funded by UKRI's Strength in Places Fund.

Our mission is to help horticultural, and plant-based, food and drink businesses to innovate and grow.

Growing Kent & Medway members get access to networking opportunities, mentoring, a Food Accelerator, access to technical expertise and facilities and grant funding.

Membership is free.

