

# INTERNATIONAL INNOVATION COLLABORATION ACTIVITY BY SOUTH AFRICAN BUSINESSES

## AT A GLANCE



Innovation is widely recognised as a key ingredient in the growth of economies. At firm level, it is equally vital as a capability for businesses to cooperate and compete. International collaboration occurs when enterprises work together across borders with partners on joint innovation projects and is one way that businesses can optimise the innovation process on a much wider level.

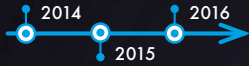
Drawing on the latest available national South African innovation and R&D data, this fact sheet shows that while some South African businesses already collaborate internationally on innovation, more collaborate through local innovation partnerships, which includes R&D partnerships. As such, potential opportunities exist for more South African firms to share skills, risk, and resources by expanding joint work with international partners. Where international collaboration is not taking place, the barriers preventing it need to be understood and addressed at policy level.

FACT SHEET NO. 42

# INNOVATION ACTIVITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN FIRMS



## BUSINESS INNOVATION SURVEY PERIOD



## TOTAL NUMBER OF BUSINESSES



**41 535**

**Industry:** 15 517  
**Services:** 26 018

## TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED



**5 281 342**

**Industry:** 2 909 633  
**Services:** 2 371 709

## BUSINESS SIZES



Large



Medium



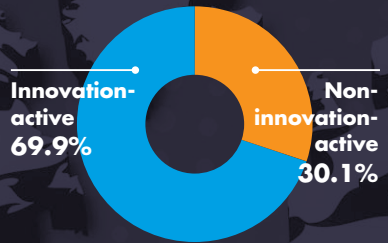
Small



Very small

## INNOVATION-ACTIVE VERSUS NON-INNOVATION-ACTIVE BUSINESSES

Innovation-active businesses took some steps, all scientific, technological, organisational, financial, and commercial steps, which actually led, or were intended to lead, to the implementation of innovations.

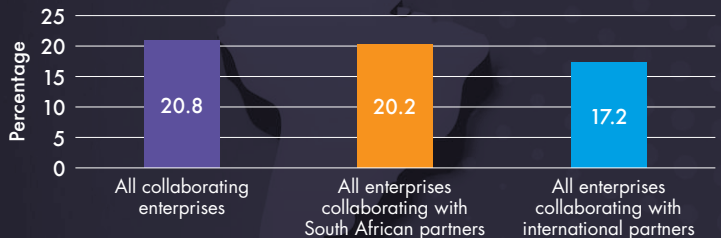


# INTERNATIONAL & LOCAL INNOVATION COLLABORATION



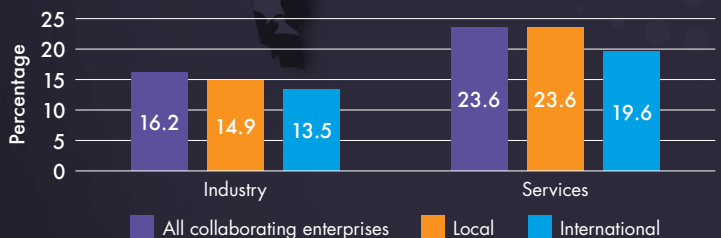
One-fifth of all innovation-active enterprises reported some innovation collaboration. But more businesses reported local innovation collaboration than international.

## INNOVATION COLLABORATION WITH SOUTH AFRICAN VERSUS INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS



Most innovation collaboration activity took place in the services sector.

## INNOVATION COLLABORATION WITH SOUTH AFRICAN VERSUS INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS BY SECTOR



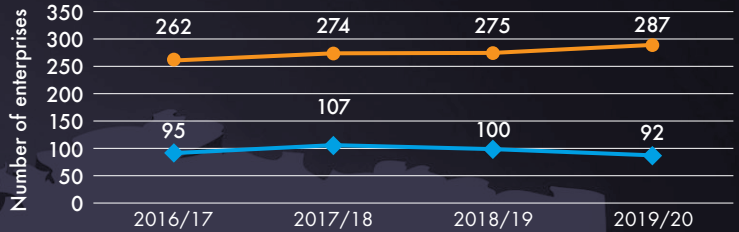
# COLLABORATIVE R&D, 2016/17 – 2019/20



Research and experimental development (R&D), which includes creative and systematic work undertaken for the increase of the stock of knowledge, is one of the key innovation activities in South Africa. Local R&D collaboration steadily increased between 2016/17 and 2019/20. However, international collaboration experienced a dip between 2018/19 and 2019/20.

## TOTAL R&D COLLABORATION ACTIVITY OVER TIME

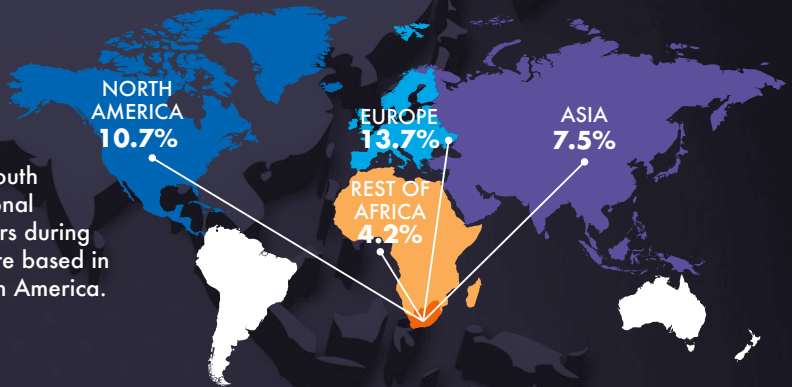
— Local  
— International



## LOCATION AND TYPE OF INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS



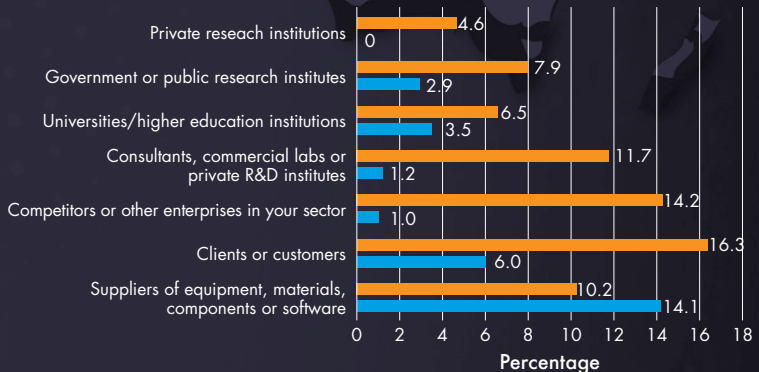
The majority of South Africa's international innovation partners during 2014 to 2016 were based in Europe and North America.



Internationally, partners mostly included suppliers of equipment, materials, components or software. Locally, partners were mainly clients and customers. Comparatively low proportions of businesses collaborated with private research institutions, both locally and internationally.

## TYPE OF INNOVATION COLLABORATION PARTNER BY LOCAL VERSUS INTERNATIONAL LOCATION

■ Local  
■ International



# BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Data for this fact sheet is drawn from the South African Business Innovation Survey, 2014-2016, and South African National Survey of Research and Experimental Development Inputs (R&D Survey) 2019/20. Both surveys were conducted by the Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators (CeSTII) at South Africa's Human Sciences Research Council, on behalf of the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI). R&D and innovation statistics are collected in terms of the Statistics Act No. 6 of 1999, and are quality assured by Statistics South Africa.

Data collected through the surveys, and their historic data series, inform decision-makers on investment planning, policy-making, advocacy, and research in South Africa. Data streams also add to benchmarking and performance comparisons with our international counterparts. Please note that some indicator totals may be subject to rounding errors.

Access previous R&D and innovation survey reports:  
<http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/departments/CeSTii/reports-cestii>

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