

Govt. survey on R&D in India gets weak response from private sector

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Due to tepid response from private research and development (R&D) firms, the Science and Technology Ministry, which conducts a periodic National Science and Technology Survey to gauge the state of scientific research in India, is set to postpone the publication of its analysis.

The biennial survey, which originated in the mid-1990s, now surveys around 8,000 research and development bodies - public and privately funded - and provides insight into questions such as the country's domestic expenditure on research and development; the share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) devoted to it; the number of scientists (including the proportion of women) in the country; patents generated, and how India fares



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on research spending compared with other countries.

Data for the survey are sourced by the Science Ministry by sending a detailed questionnaire to organisations. Though the identities of firms are masked, the data are used to ascertain general trends on the state of scientific research.

The latest edition of the survey was launched in December 2024 with firms given time until September 30, 2025 to submit res-

ponses. While most of the responses from governmental institutions were in, the private sector response has been weak.

"We will likely extend the date till November 30 and publish the results within a month," said Arvind Kumar, the head of the National Science and Technology Management Information System (NSTMIS), the division of the Science Ministry in charge of the exercise. He was speaking at a workshop organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) on Friday, to encourage private sector participation in the survey.

As of September, 73% of government R&D institutions had shared their data but only 35% of industry bodies (registered with the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research) and 9% of multinational

companies had shared their responses.

Another concern is the funding mix: about 75% of India's R&D spending comes from the public sector, whereas in most advanced economies, private firms contribute the lion's share.

Industry participants said that a major challenge in furnishing such information to the government was that the parameters of what constituted "research and development spending" was not clear. "Many a time, the questionnaire doesn't provide clarity on the numbers that we need to fill. Given that India's GDP per capita is low, India's spend on R&D is actually fairly impressive and we should not at this time compare it to the industrially advanced nations," said Sankalp Sinha, general manager, IBM India, who attended the workshop.