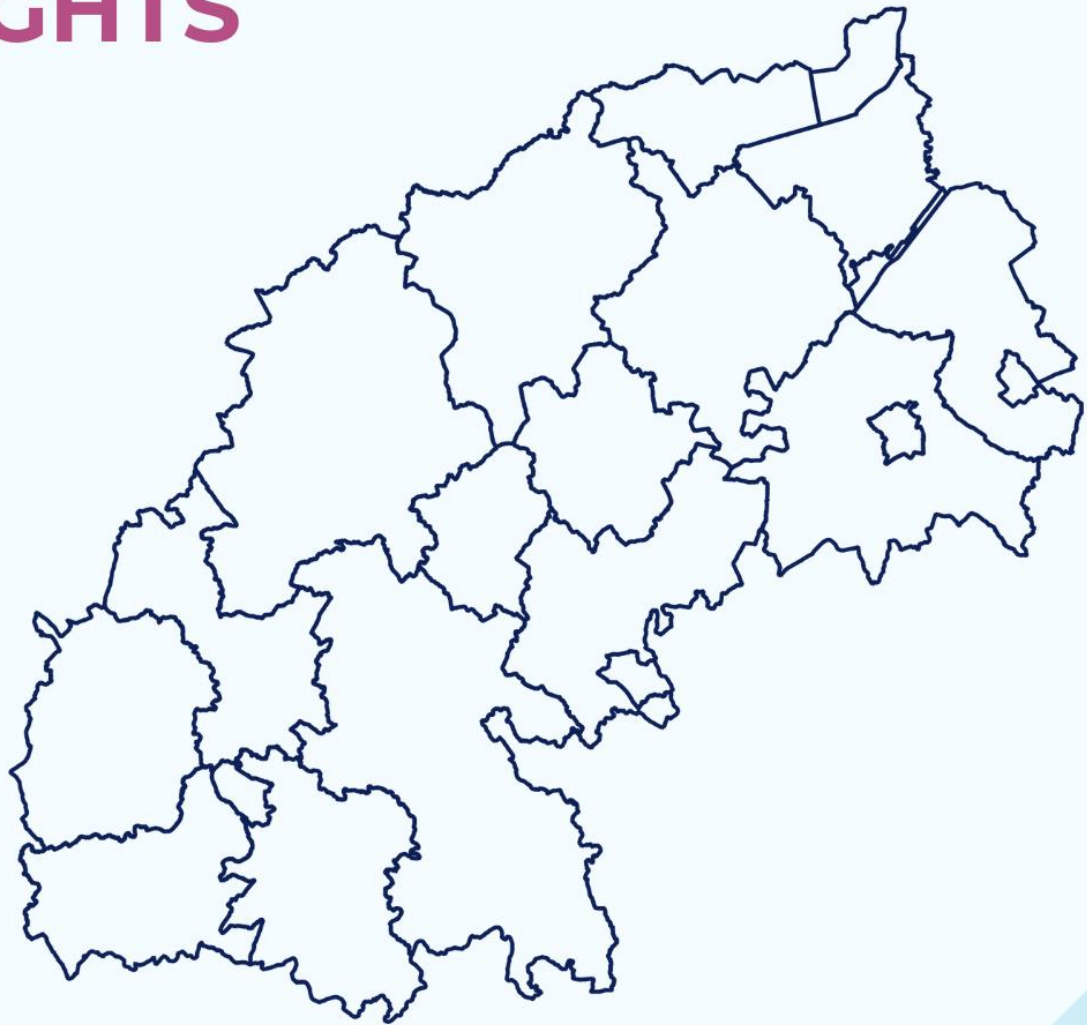


# Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor

## ECONOMIC INSIGHTS



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The data presented in this report are correct at the time of writing but may be subject to revision by the original sources. Some datasets are part of national statistics currently in development and should be interpreted accordingly. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy; however, no liability is accepted for any errors or omissions.

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A publicly accessible data portal containing all the raw data, with interactive charts and maps can be accessed from this link: [Oxford to Cambridge Data Observatory](#)

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# Introduction

## Context

The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor is a nationally significant area, recognised for its world-leading universities, innovative industries, thriving businesses, and productive agricultural land. This combination of comparative advantages makes it a key contributor to the economy and a focal point for future development.

Economic growth is the number one mission of UK Government and the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor is a key pillar of this. Referred to as Europe's equivalent to Silicon Valley<sup>1</sup>, the corridor is backed by billions in government funding, aimed at enhancing its existing strengths and attracting further innovation, entrepreneurship, and investment. Furthermore, it is particularly strong in six of the eight sectors highlighted in the Government's sector plans that have greatest growth potential over the next decade and a critical role to play in supporting economic security and resilience, net zero and regional growth<sup>2</sup>:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Clean energy industries
- Life sciences
- Digital and technologies
- Defence
- Creative industries

The Oxford to Cambridge Supercluster Board, an industry-led partnership established in 2023 to accelerate growth in the corridor, produced scenario modelling in the corridor. This identified that with their most ambitious growth scenario, the corridor could achieve a GVA of £47 billion above the baseline by 2050, equivalent to £51 billion in GDP<sup>3</sup>.

While supporting economic growth is a key priority, it is important to ensure that this development contributes to building resilient communities, improving quality of life, and protecting and enhancing the natural environment. A balanced approach is essential to ensuring the corridor's long-term success across all economic and environmental aspects.

## Purpose and aims

This report provides an annual concise, high-level synthesis of the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor's principal economic characteristics. It is not an exhaustive assessment nor a replacement for specialist studies; instead, it brings together existing evidence and analysis to support stakeholders in locating, understanding and using regional intelligence.

**The purpose of this report is to:**

- improve understanding of the region's economic profile by compiling current and historical evidence into a single, accessible summary

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<sup>1</sup> DBT, 2025. This is the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor. [\[Link to source\]](#)

<sup>2</sup> DBT, 2025. Sector Plans. [\[Link to source\]](#)

<sup>3</sup> Oxford to Cambridge Supercluster, 2024. Scenario Modelling. [\[Link to source\]](#)

- summarise the region’s core strengths and development needs, including relevant comparators
- serve as a gateway to existing research by signposting to partner studies, datasets and analyses.

#### This report aims to:

- enable collaborative action to unlock shared opportunities
- shape the development of focused interventions to address regional challenges
- enable coordinated promotion of the region to attract investment
- support collective advocacy for policy change.

#### This report does not intend to:

- serve as a performance report for the corridor
- define policy objectives for the corridor
- invalidate or supersede existing reports or evidence related to the corridor
- forecast future economic or environmental performance.

#### Data sources

This report draws on material from the [Oxford to Cambridge Data Observatory](#). Readers are encouraged to consult the Data Observatory for additional evidence and analysis. The Observatory contains a Reports section with further reading and source documents that complement the findings presented here.

#### Administrative boundaries

The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor comprises 18 LA areas across the ceremonial counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire. These LA areas are organised into four growth hub areas aligned with Local Enterprise Partnership boundaries, shown in Table 1 and visualised in Figure 1. Some datasets in this report are only available at the aggregated growth hub level. Where data is available at localised scales, small area estimates are incorporated to enhance analytical precision.

Table 1. The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor as defined by local authority district areas and growth hubs. Note: Unitary authorities are marked with UA.

<b>Local authority district</b>	<b>Growth hub</b>
<b>Bedford UA</b>	South Midlands Authorities
<b>Buckinghamshire UA</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Cambridge</b>	Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority
<b>Central Bedfordshire UA</b>	South Midlands Authorities
<b>Cherwell</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>East Cambridgeshire</b>	Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority
<b>Fenland</b>	Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority
<b>Huntingdonshire</b>	Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority
<b>Luton UA</b>	South Midlands Authorities
<b>Milton Keynes UA</b>	South Midlands Authorities
<b>North Northamptonshire UA</b>	South Midlands Authorities
<b>Oxford</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Peterborough UA</b>	Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority
<b>South Cambridgeshire</b>	Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority
<b>South Oxfordshire</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Vale of White Horse</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>West Northamptonshire UA</b>	South Midlands Authorities
<b>West Oxfordshire</b>	Oxfordshire

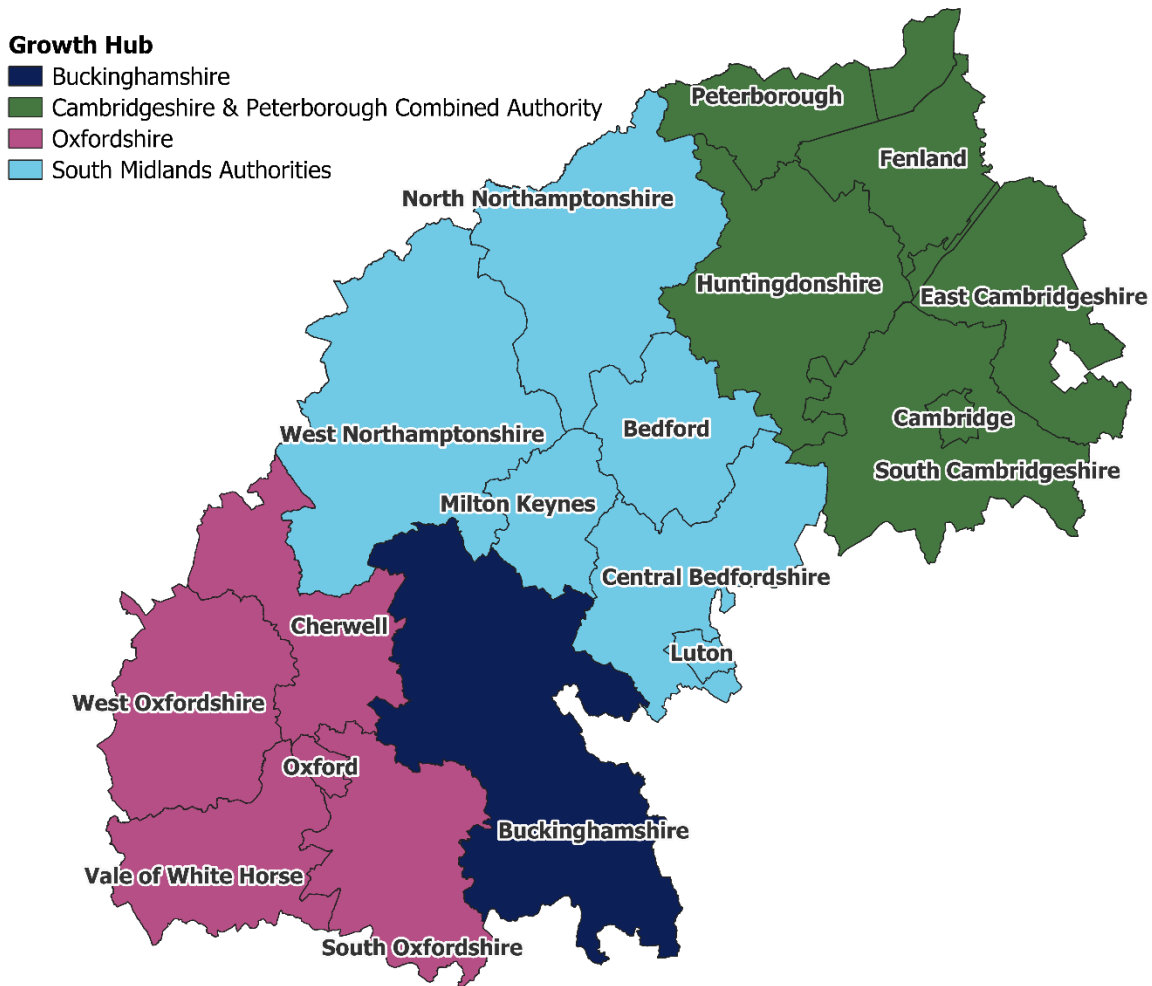


Figure 1. Local authority areas in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, grouped by growth hub.

### Oxford to Cambridge Data Group

The Oxford to Cambridge Data Group was formed to bring together key stakeholders from across the entire corridor, to collaborate and provide expert guidance on the Oxford to Cambridge Data Observatory and this report. Through their collective expertise, these partners ensure resources are relevant, impactful, and aligned with the corridor’s growth priorities. The group includes a diverse mix of organisations from local and central government, academia, and other influential bodies:

- Bedford Borough Council
- Better Futures
- Buckinghamshire Council
- Cambridge Ahead
- Cambridge City Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Centre for Business Research, University of Cambridge
- Cherwell District Council
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

- Cranfield University
- Elsevier
- England's Economic Heartland
- Environment Agency
- Greater Cambridge Partnership
- Greater South East Net Zero Hub
- Luton Rising
- Luton Borough Council
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
- Oxford City Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Peterborough City Council
- UK Research and Innovation
- University of Bedfordshire
- West Northamptonshire Council

## Key findings

The table below presents the key findings drawn from the analysis in this report, structured by theme and indicator.

Indicator	Theme	Findings
<b>Total GVA</b>	<i>Productivity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor generated £143 billion Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2023.</li> <li>GVA grew by £10.9 billion between 2022 and 2023, a nominal increase of 8.2%, slightly below England's overall growth rate of 9.1%.</li> <li>Cambridge saw the fastest growth at 12.9%, followed by Peterborough at 12.1%, while Oxford recorded the smallest increase at 2.7%.</li> <li>Buckinghamshire contributed the largest absolute gain within the corridor, adding £1.5 billion to output and accounting for 13.8% of total 2022-2023 growth.</li> </ul>
<b>Small area GVA</b>	<i>Productivity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excluding London, the corridor contains three of the top 20 Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in England by GVA (2023), located in Milton Keynes, Oxford and West Northamptonshire.</li> <li>Five of the top 10 ranked LSOAs in the corridor by GVA were in either Cambridge, Milton Keynes or Oxford.</li> <li>There is evidence of high-GVA small areas tending to form clusters, indicating a spatial concentration of economic activity in the corridor.</li> </ul>
<b>GVA per head</b>	<i>Productivity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2023, GVA per head in England was £36,632, compared to £35,195 in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor.</li> <li>Cambridge recorded the highest GVA per head in the corridor at £59,348, well above England's average, followed by Milton Keynes (£56,201) and Oxford (£52,063).</li> <li>Fenland recorded the lowest GVA per head in the corridor at £21,896, slightly below Central Bedfordshire (£23,866) and North Northamptonshire (£23,930).</li> <li>The gap between Cambridge, the highest GVA per head, and Fenland, the lowest, was £37,452.</li> <li>From 2016-2023, GVA per head in England was mostly higher than in the corridor.</li> </ul>
<b>GVA per filled job</b>	<i>Productivity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2023, GVA per filled job in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor was £64,500 compared to £66,400 in England.</li> <li>GVA per filled job in the corridor was 1.7% lower than in 2022, while England recorded a smaller decline of 0.5%.</li> <li>Milton Keynes had the highest GVA per filled job in 2023 at £85,100, while North Northamptonshire had the lowest at £50,600.</li> </ul>

Indicator	Theme	Findings
<b>GVA per hour worked</b>	<i>Productivity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2023, GVA per hour worked in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor was £39.84 compared to £41.87 in England.</li> <li>• In 2023, GVA per hour worked in corridor was 1.6% lower than in 2022, while England recorded a smaller decline of 0.2%.</li> </ul>
<b>GVA by sector</b>	<i>Productivity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services dominate the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor's economy, contributing nearly 80% of GVA in 2023, compared to 13.5% from Production and 6.7% from Construction.</li> <li>• Cambridge had 96.1% of its economic output generated by the Services sector, the highest share locally.</li> </ul>
<b>Trade in services</b>	<i>Trade</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2023, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor exported £25bn and imported £12bn in services (6.0% and 4.6% of England's totals, respectively).</li> <li>• The corridor had high service sector intensity in Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Oxford and South Oxfordshire.</li> </ul>
<b>Trade in goods</b>	<i>Trade</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2023, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor exported £25bn in goods (9% of England's total) and imported £56bn (11.8%), making it a net importer with imports more than double exports.</li> <li>• Oxfordshire generated the greatest total exports of goods, and the highest exports to non-EU destinations.</li> </ul>
<b>FDI projects</b>	<i>Investment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2023/24, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had more single site Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects per 10,000 businesses than England (excluding London), with 5.3 compared to 4.3.</li> <li>• Oxfordshire recorded the highest FDI projects (46) and was the only growth hub to see an increase since 2021/22, up 21%.</li> </ul>
<b>Innovation activity</b>	<i>Innovation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2023, a higher percentage of businesses in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor were defined as innovation active than in England, with 43.3% compared to 37.1%.</li> <li>• Oxfordshire ranked second of all growth hubs in England (50.8%) and led in process innovation (44.2%) and research and development (R&amp;D) (28.6%).</li> </ul>
<b>R&amp;D core occupations</b>	<i>Innovation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chemical Scientists and Physical Scientists show high employment concentration and positive competitive effects, indicating regional specialisation and growth exceeding national trends.</li> <li>• Biochemists, Biomedical Scientists and Laboratory Technicians had high representation but negative competitive effects, suggesting slower growth and potential challenges such as limited expansion or shifting demand toward other specialisms.</li> </ul>

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Findings</b>
<b>Business count</b>	<i>Business demography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2025, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had 173,000 businesses.</li> <li>• Micro businesses made up 89.6% of all businesses in the corridor, while large businesses made up 0.44%, which were both slightly higher than for England (89.2% and 0.43% respectively).</li> <li>• From 2010-25, business growth in the corridor trailed England slightly (1.6% compared to 1.9%), though the corridor had more businesses per 1,000 people (41.8 compared to 40.5).</li> <li>• In 2025, Luton had the highest percentage of micro businesses (91.7%), while the lowest were seen in Oxford and Cambridge, as these areas have the highest percentages of small, medium and large businesses.</li> <li>• From 2010-25, Luton had the highest growth in the corridor with 4%, though the South Midlands was strong as a whole.</li> </ul>
<b>High-growth businesses</b>	<i>Business demography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2023, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had 815 high-growth businesses, which is 44 per 10,000 enterprises and is slightly below England's 48.</li> <li>• Oxford recorded the most high-growth businesses per 10,000 enterprises, with 113, followed by South Cambridgeshire (79), and Cambridge (75), while East Cambridgeshire was lowest with 13.</li> </ul>
<b>Business births</b>	<i>Business demography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2024, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had 19,425 business births, with a rate of 10.6% of active businesses, lower than England's rate of 11.2%.</li> <li>• Luton had the highest business birth rate of 16% and East Cambridgeshire had the lowest of 7.8%.</li> </ul>
<b>Business deaths</b>	<i>Business demography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2024, both the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor and England had an equivalent business death rate of 9.9%.</li> <li>• Luton had the highest business death rate (12.4%) and West Oxfordshire the lowest (7.7%).</li> </ul>
<b>Business survival</b>	<i>Business demography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For 2021 business births, survival rates for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor closely matched England initially, with 93.6% compared to 93.5% after one year, but slightly strengthened over time, with 55% compared to 53.5% after three years.</li> <li>• Most local authority areas in the corridor had three-year survival rates above England's 53.5% average, with South Oxfordshire leading at 66.9%, while Luton and Fenland were lowest at 47.2%.</li> </ul>
<b>Employment</b>	<i>Labour market</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2024, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had higher employment than England (78.4% compared to 75.6%) and this was consistently higher since 2004.</li> </ul>

Indicator	Theme	Findings
<b>Economic activity</b>	<i>Labour market</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most local authority areas in the corridor were above England’s rate, with South Cambridgeshire highest at 88% and Luton lowest at 63.6%.</li> <li>• In 2024, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had higher economic activity than England (81.3% compared to 78.7%) and this was consistently higher since 2004.</li> <li>• Most local authority areas in the corridor were above England’s rate, with South Cambridgeshire highest at 88.9% and Luton lowest at 68.7%.</li> </ul>
<b>Unemployment</b>	<i>Labour market</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2024, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had lower unemployment than England (3.5% compared to 3.9%) and this has been consistently lower since 2004.</li> </ul>

## Acronyms

Acronym	Full definition
<b>APS</b>	Annual Population Survey
<b>CAGR</b>	Compound annual growth rate
<b>CPCA</b>	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
<b>DBT</b>	Department for Business and Trade
<b>ERB</b>	Employer representative body
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FDI</b>	Foreign Direct Investment
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GVA</b>	Gross Value Added
<b>HMRC</b>	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs
<b>IDBR</b>	Inter-Departmental Business Register
<b>ITL</b>	International Territorial Level
<b>LA</b>	Local authority
<b>LFS</b>	Labour Force Survey
<b>LQ</b>	Location Quotient
<b>LSIF</b>	Local Skills Improvement Fund
<b>LSIP</b>	Local Skills Improvement Plan
<b>LSOA</b>	Lower layer Super Output Area
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>ONS</b>	Office for National Statistics
<b>PAYE</b>	Pay As You Earn
<b>PCT</b>	Patent Cooperation Treaty
<b>R&amp;D</b>	Research and Development
<b>RQF</b>	Regulated Qualifications Framework
<b>SDF</b>	Strategic Development Fund
<b>SIC07</b>	Standard Industrial Classification 2007
<b>SME</b>	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
<b>SOC</b>	Standard Occupational Classification
<b>UA</b>	Unitary authority
<b>VAT</b>	Value Added Tax

## 1. Productivity

This section provides a comprehensive view of economic performance across the corridor, using a range of indicators that capture both overall output and efficiency. It includes measures of total Gross Value Added (GVA) and small-area GVA to highlight spatial variations, alongside productivity metrics such as GVA per head, GVA per filled job, and GVA per hour worked, which assess how effectively labour and time contribute to economic output. Additionally, GVA by sector offers insight into the structure of the economy and the relative contribution of different industries. Together, these indicators enable a detailed understanding of regional productivity trends and inform strategies to drive growth and competitiveness.

### 1.1 Total GVA

#### Indicator definition

GVA is a measure of the total value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or section of the economy and is widely used to assess economic performance at subnational levels, such as across regions or local authority (LA) areas<sup>4</sup>. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produce multiple versions of GVA estimates, with varying methodologies. The data presented uses the balanced approach, which combines estimates produced using income-based and production-based approaches, to create a single best estimate of GVA for each region and industry.

#### Data significance

Regions with higher productivity typically offer better wages, stronger career progression opportunities, and greater job stability, making them highly attractive to skilled labour and especially workers seeking roles aligned with high-value sectors. Furthermore, high productivity is a signal of economic resilience and growth potential, which can reassure investors, attracting longer-term funding commitments.

#### Headline figures

The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor generated £143 billion in GVA in 2023, accounting for 6.8% of England's total economic output. Between 2022 and 2023, the corridor's GVA rose by £10.9 billion, a nominal increase of 8.2%. However, this was slightly below England's overall growth rate of 9.1%.

#### Regional story

Within the corridor, Cambridge recorded the strongest growth at 12.9%, followed by Peterborough at 12.1%, while Oxford saw the smallest increase at 2.7%, as shown in Table 2. Of the 18 LA areas, 10 recorded growth rates below the England average, and eight areas outperformed England. Buckinghamshire made the largest absolute contribution within the corridor, adding £1.5 billion to economic output, accounting for 13.8% of the total year-on-year growth between 2022 and 2023.

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<sup>4</sup>ONS, 2025. Regional gross domestic product: local authorities. [\[Link to source\]](#)

Table 2. Nominal GVA (balanced, current prices, £ millions) by LA area (2022-23) (ONS, 2025).

Local authority area	GVA 2022 (£m)	GVA 2023 (£m)	Absolute change (£m)	Relative change (%)	Relative to England
Bedford	4,807	5,151	+344	+7.2	-1.9
Buckinghamshire	17,677	19,176	+1,499	+8.5	-0.6
Cambridge	7,885	8,900	+1,015	+12.9	+3.8
Central Bedfordshire	6,592	7,358	+766	+11.6	+2.5
Cherwell	5,549	6,086	+537	+9.7	+0.6
East Cambridgeshire	2,095	2,345	+250	+11.9	+2.8
Fenland	2,044	2,267	+223	+10.9	+1.8
Huntingdonshire	5,014	5,548	+534	+10.7	+1.6
Luton	6,150	6,639	+489	+8.0	-1.1
Milton Keynes	15,817	16,763	+946	+6.0	-3.1
North Northamptonshire	8,175	8,806	+631	+7.7	-1.4
Oxford	8,372	8,600	+228	+2.7	-6.4
Peterborough	7,098	7,957	+859	+12.1	+3.0
South Cambridgeshire	6,560	7,068	+508	+7.7	-1.4
South Oxfordshire	4,822	5,051	+229	+4.7	-4.4
Vale of White Horse	5,554	5,893	+339	+6.1	-3.0
West Northamptonshire	14,634	15,792	+1,158	+7.9	-1.2
West Oxfordshire	3,372	3,699	+327	+9.7	+0.6
<b>Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor</b>	<b>132,217</b>	<b>143,099</b>	<b>+10,882</b>	<b>+8.2</b>	<b>-0.9</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>1,936,254</b>	<b>2,113,338</b>	<b>+177,084</b>	<b>+9.1</b>	<b>...</b>

## 1.2 Small area GVA

### Indicator definition

The ONS disaggregates GVA statistics to 2011 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), providing a consistent geographic framework that links small-area GVA estimates to local population data at lower levels<sup>5</sup>. Note that this data is classed as official statistics in development and estimates at this scale are modelled rather than directly observed, meaning they carry uncertainty and should not be

<sup>5</sup> ONS, 2025. UK small area gross value added (GVA) estimates. [\[Link to source\]](#)

interpreted as precise figures. Additionally, small-area GVA does not capture commuting patterns or cross-boundary economic flows, which can distort the picture of local prosperity.

### Data significance

GVA at small-area level provides insight into the spatial distribution of economic activity across the corridor, helping identify concentrations of productivity and economic contribution. Benefits include the ability to pinpoint local economic strengths and disparities, supporting targeted policy interventions and investment decisions. Even though population size is fairly consistent across LSOAs, high GVA in a small area does not necessarily mean high productivity per person since it could reflect the presence of a large industrial site or business park rather than a dense population of high-value jobs.

### Headline figures

In 2023, excluding London, the corridor contained 3 of the top 20 LSOAs in England by GVA: Milton Keynes 007A, Northampton 028D, and Oxford 008A. Together, these areas generated an estimated £8.6 billion in GVA.

### Regional story

5 of the top 10 ranked LSOAs in the corridor by GVA were in either Cambridge, Milton Keynes or Oxford. This can be seen in Figure 2, which shows centres of high GVA across the entire region, denoted by lighter coloured areas. In 2023, Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford, combined, contributed £34.2 billion in GVA<sup>6</sup>, which was almost a quarter of the corridor's total GVA and 1.6% of England's total GVA.

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<sup>6</sup>ONS, 2025. Regional gross domestic product: Local Authorities. [\[Link to source\]](#)

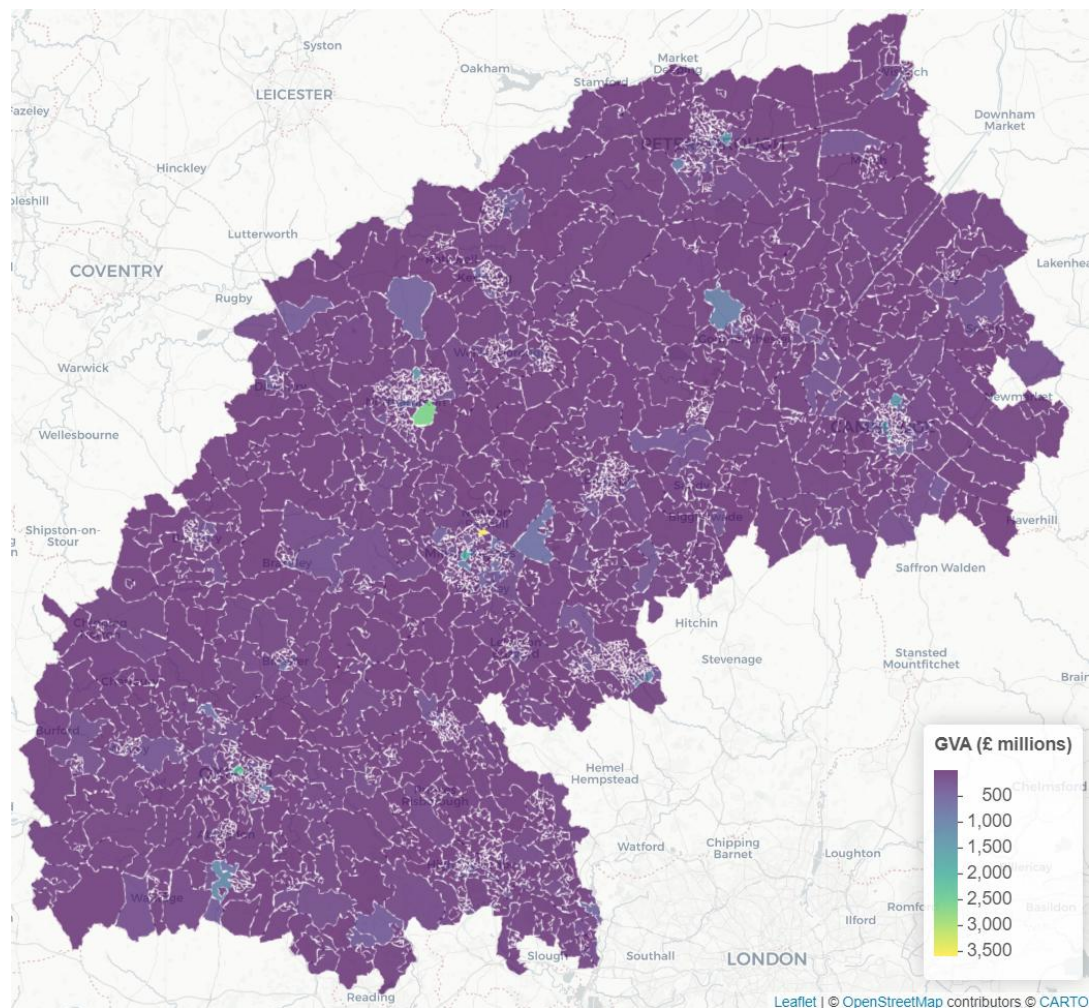


Figure 2. Small area GVA estimates in 2023 (£, millions) by LSOA (ONS, 2025).

### Deeper dive

Whilst a map of GVA values shows where economic output is high or low, it does not reveal whether these patterns are statistically significant or spatially structured. Economic structure and land use vary significantly across LSOAs, which can influence interpretation.

Moran's I is a statistical measure that can be used to address this, by quantifying spatial autocorrelation, that is, whether similar values cluster together or occur randomly<sup>7</sup>. A positive Moran's I coefficient value indicates that areas with similar values (e.g., high GVA) tend to be near each other, forming clusters, while a negative value suggests a checkerboard pattern. A value near zero implies spatial randomness. This is important because economic activity is rarely evenly spread; identifying clusters helps with the understanding of spatial dynamics and to target interventions effectively.

<sup>7</sup>Moran, P. A. P. (1950). Notes on continuous stochastic phenomena. *Biometrika*, 37(1/2), 17–23. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2332142>

In the corridor, the global Moran's I value for GVA across LSOAs is 0.0627<sup>8</sup>, with a significant p-value<sup>9</sup>, which suggests that GVA is not randomly distributed. Instead, there is a modest but statistically significant tendency for high-GVA areas to cluster together, and likewise for low-GVA areas. The local Moran's I results are illustrated in Figure 3, which provides more granular insight. This statistical analysis adds depth beyond a raw GVA map by highlighting where clustering is meaningful rather than coincidental. In relation to targeted investment, hotspots represent established economic hubs to consider reinforcing, while coldspots may need infrastructure or skills investment to stimulate growth. It is important to note that this is not necessarily a sign of economic underperformance but rather a structural characteristic of land use. Further analysis should distinguish between true economic coldspots and areas that are residential by design so that any interventions should focus on commercial or mixed-use areas, not purely residential neighbourhoods.

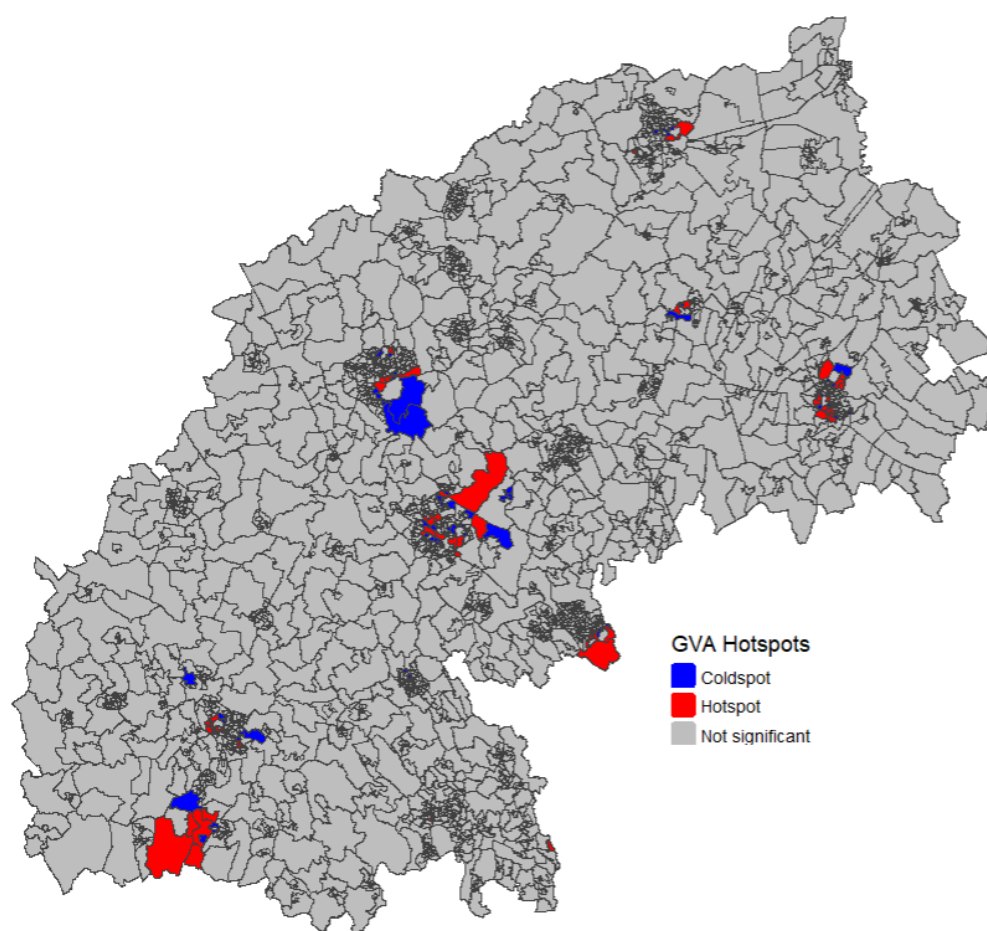


Figure 3. Moran's I clustering of small area GVA estimates in 2023 (£, millions) by LSOA (ONS, 2025). Note: Red areas (hotspots) denote LSOAs with high GVA surrounded by other high-GVA areas, blue areas (coldspots) denote low-GVA LSOAs surrounded by other low-GVA areas, and grey areas are not statistically significant, meaning there is no clear clustering pattern.

<sup>8</sup> Analysis was conducted using the `spdep` package (v1.1-5; Bivand & Wong, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> A p-value is a statistical measure that quantifies the probability of a finding occurring by random chance, by testing the observed data against the null hypothesis (the assumption that no real effect exists).

Total GVA only reveals the overall economic output, productivity is influenced by the environment of labour, capital and technology that can differ between places. Therefore, whilst total GVA is important for understanding the absolute size of the local economy, the following indicators normalise the GVA data to aid the interpretation of the economic data.

### 1.3 GVA per head

#### Indicator definition

GVA per head normalises total GVA by population size through dividing an area’s total GVA by its population, providing a broad measure of economic prosperity<sup>10</sup>.

#### Data significance

GVA per head offers a valuable measure of economic output relative to population size, providing insight into productivity levels and living standards across different areas. This metric helps identify regions with higher or lower economic performance on a per-person basis, revealing disparities that may require policy attention. Benefits include enabling more equitable resource allocation, guiding investment strategies, and supporting efforts to boost productivity where it lags.

#### Headline figures

In 2023, England’s GVA per head stood at £36,632 whereas the GVA per head in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor was slightly lower at £35,195. Since 2016, the GVA per head of England surpassed that of the corridor’s GVA per head as plotted in Figure 4. The chart demonstrates that whilst the corridor remains a high-value one its relative advantage to England overall weakened in recent years and therefore suggests a need for renewed focus on innovation and productivity in the corridor to maintain its competitiveness.

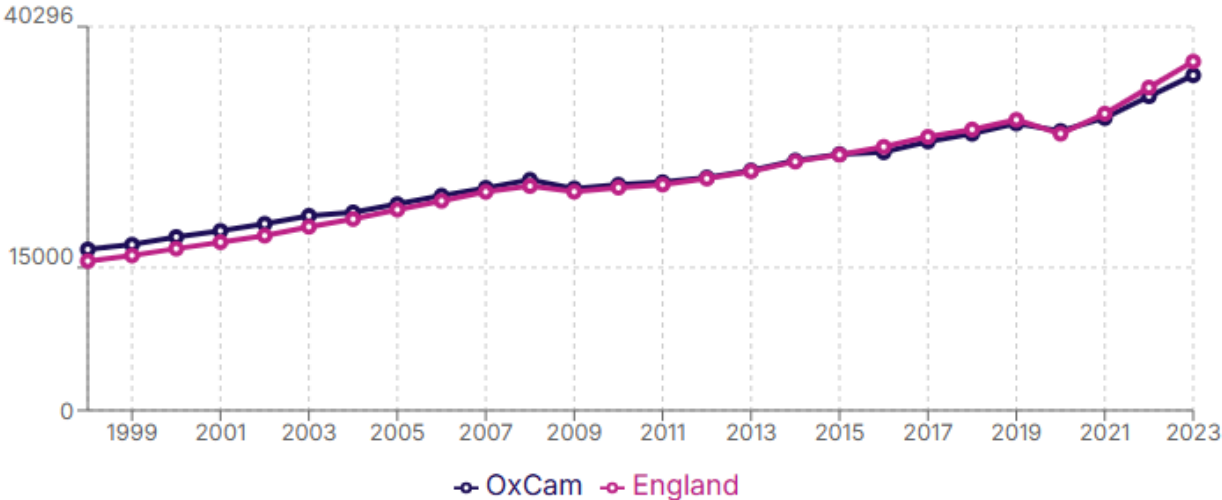


Figure 4. GVA per head (£) for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam), compared to England (1998 to 2023) (ONS, 2025).

<sup>10</sup>ONS, 2025. Regional gross domestic product: local authorities. [\[Link to source\]](#)

## Regional story

In 2023, Cambridge had a starkly superior GVA per head than England at £59,348, the corridor's highest, followed by Milton Keynes with £56,201 and Oxford with £52,063 as shown in Figure 5. Fenland had the corridor's lowest GVA per head at £21,896, which was marginally lower than Central Bedfordshire with £23,866 and North Northamptonshire with £23,930. The gap between Cambridge, the highest GVA per head, and Fenland, the lowest, was £37,452.

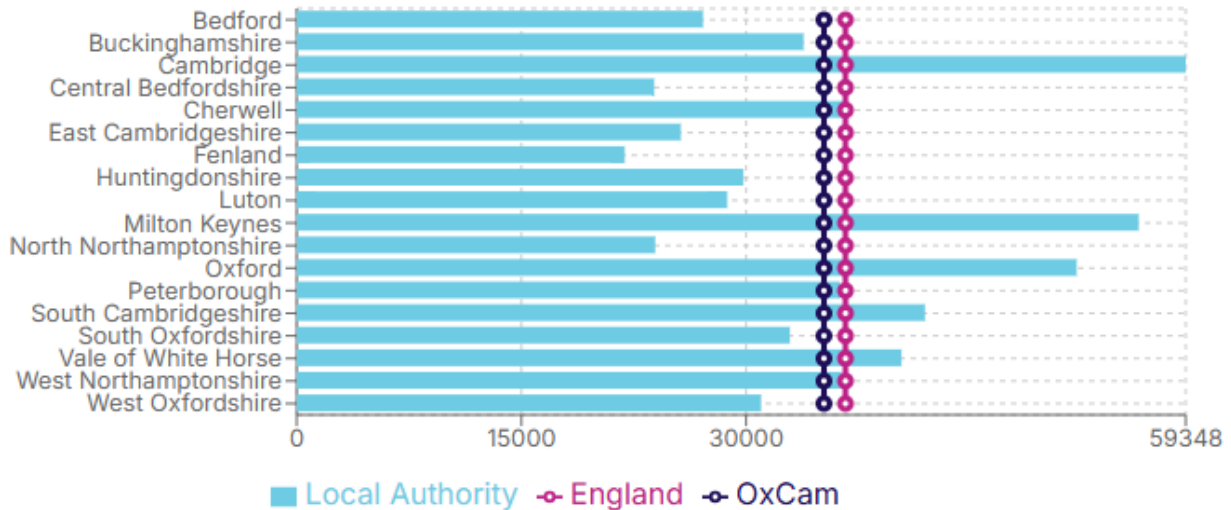


Figure 5. GVA per head (£) by LA area, compared to England and the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam) (2023) (ONS, 2025).

## Deeper dive

Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford benefit from advanced economic structures, with higher concentrations of high-value sectors such as life sciences, pharmaceuticals, financial services and technology-driven industries that tend to generate higher productivity. These city areas also attract highly skilled professionals since Cambridge and Oxford have excellent academic research bases whilst Milton Keynes is a modern city with advanced infrastructure. Amongst UK academic institutions, Oxford and Cambridge Universities have produced 400 spinouts, consistently topping the leader board<sup>11</sup>. Indicative of their strong academic ecosystems, remarkably Oxford retained 90.9% of its spinouts locally, whilst Cambridge had a similar rate at 89.6%.

Whereas these places demonstrate agglomeration effects with innovative firms clustering around their unique academic and infrastructure offerings that attracts inward commuting of high-value workers. Comparatively Fenland, Central Bedfordshire and North Northamptonshire are more conditional on lower-value sectors such as agriculture, logistics, and traditional manufacturing, which generate less output per person compared to high-tech or knowledge-intensive industries. Fewer high-value businesses and less economic clustering also tend to mean weaker agglomeration effects, which typically boost productivity.

<sup>11</sup> Beauhurst (2025) Spotlight on Spinouts UK academic spinout trends. [\[Link to source\]](#)

GVA per head, however, does not account for labour market participation or working patterns, consequently areas with high population but low employment may appear less productive. Additionally, it can be skewed by commuting patterns when GVA in a city centre is high, but where workers live outside of the city area.

## 1.4 GVA per filled job

### Indicator definition

GVA per filled job normalises total GVA by the number of jobs in an area, offering insight into productivity per job<sup>12</sup>. The GVA per filled job estimates from the ONS are official statistics in development. It is calculated by dividing total GVA by the number of filled jobs, which helps compare how efficiently labour is utilised across regions or sectors. By using smoothed data, the ONS reduces volatility in the data caused by short-term fluctuations or sampling variability, providing a clearer picture of underlying productivity trends.

For data observed across several years, the ONS GVA per filled job data is chained volume indexed, to compare the productivity of a region against the base year of 2022, in constant price terms. From these indices, year-on-year changes in productivity can be calculated. However, chained volume productivity indices should not be compared across areas.

### Data significance

A greater GVA per filled job results from generating more economic output, indicating that workers are more efficient or that the jobs themselves are in higher-value sectors. Regions with high GVA per filled job often have sector specialism like technology, finance, or advanced manufacturing that produce more output per employee and have workers that benefit from better infrastructure, innovation ecosystems, and agglomeration effects.

### Headline figures

In 2023, GVA per filled job in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor was slightly lower than the England average, at £64,500 compared to £66,400. Regarding comparisons across years, the data estimates that the corridor's GVA per filled job was 1.7% lower in 2023 than 2022, whilst England's was 0.5% lower. Moreover, the data suggests that since 2016, England's relative performance to its own 2022 GVA per filled job was better than the corridor's relative performance to its own 2022 GVA per filled job, as plotted in Figure 6.

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<sup>12</sup> ONS, 2025. Subregional productivity: labour productivity indices by combined authorities and economic enterprise regions. [\[Link to source\]](#)

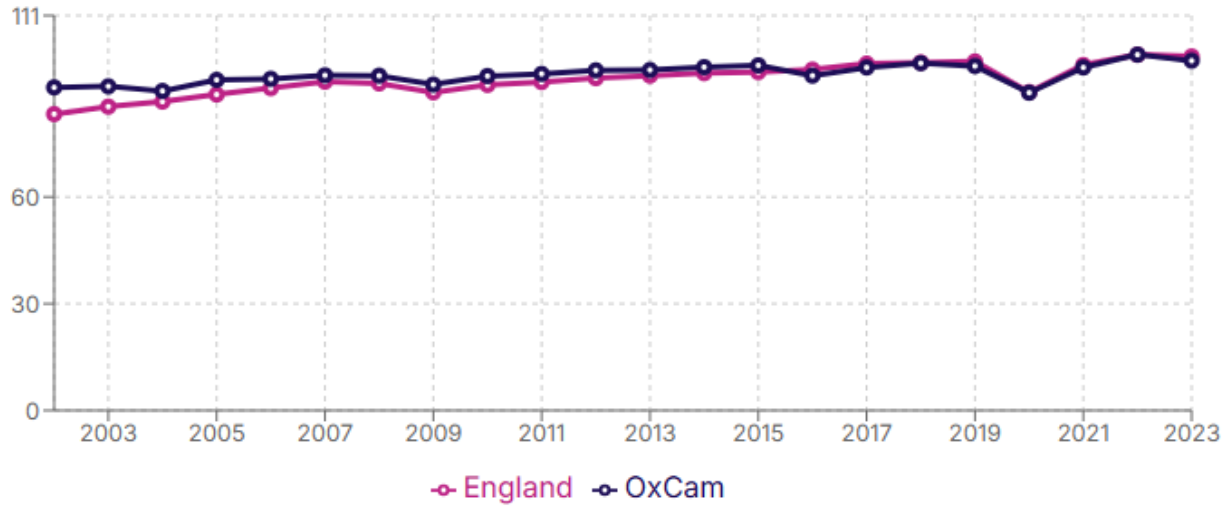


Figure 6. GVA per filled job (indexed 2022 = 100) for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam), compared to England (2002-2023) (ONS, 2025).

### Regional story

Milton Keynes had the highest GVA per filled job in 2023 at £85,100 whilst North Northamptonshire had the lowest GVA per filled job at £50,600 shown in Figure 7, a difference of £34,500. Milton Keynes is a hub for high-value sectors like finance, advanced technology and professional services that generally generate more output per worker, whilst North Northamptonshire has a stronger presence in lower-value sectors such as manufacturing, retail, and warehousing, which tend to have lower productivity.

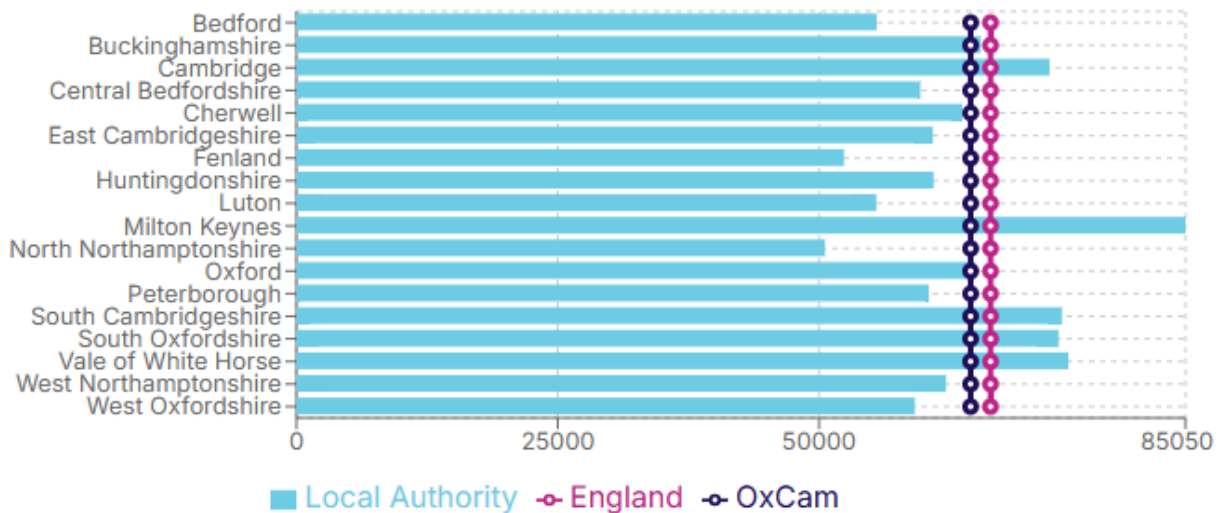


Figure 7. GVA per filled job (£) by LA area, compared to England and the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam) (2023) (ONS, 2025).

## 1.5 GVA per hour worked

### Indicator definition

Usually considered a better measure of productivity than GVA per filled job, GVA per hour worked normalises total GVA by actual hours worked, making it the most accurate measure of labour productivity<sup>13</sup>. It represents the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of the economy per hour of labour input. The GVA per hour worked estimates from the ONS are official statistics in development. By using smoothed data, the ONS reduces volatility in the data caused by short-term fluctuations or sampling variability, providing a clearer picture of underlying productivity trends.

For data observed across several years, the ONS GVA per filled job data is chained volume indexed, to compare the productivity of a region against the base year of 2022, in constant price terms. From these indices, year-on-year changes in productivity can be calculated. However, chained volume productivity indices should not be compared across areas.

### Data significance

This metric allows for meaningful comparisons between regions by accounting for differences in working patterns, such as part-time employment or variations in average hours worked. GVA per hour worked is particularly useful for identifying disparities in economic performance between areas and informing targeted policy interventions.

### Headline figures

The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had a slightly lower GVA per hour worked in 2023 compared to England, £39.84 and £41.87 respectively. Furthermore, in 2023, the corridor's GVA per hour worked had an index value of 98.4 when England had an index value of 99.8. Therefore, the data estimates that the corridor's GVA per hour worked was 1.6% lower in 2023 than 2022, whilst England's was 0.2% lower. In more recent years, the relative performance of GVA per hour worked converged between the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor and England, when previously there was a sizeable gap, as shown in Figure 8.

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<sup>13</sup> ONS, 2025. Subregional productivity: labour productivity indices by combined authorities and economic enterprise regions. [\[Link to source\]](#)

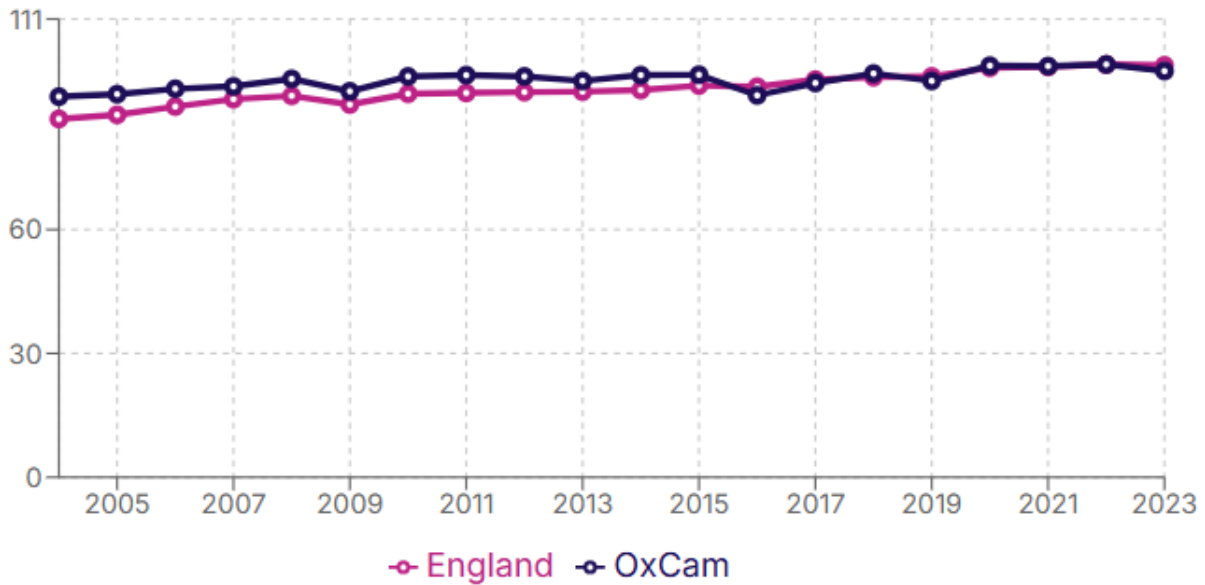


Figure 8. GVA per hour worked (indexed 2022 = 100) for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam), compared to England (2002-2023) (ONS, 2025).

### Regional story

Milton Keynes had the highest GVA per hour worked in 2023 at £50.59 whilst North Northamptonshire had the lowest GVA per hour worked at £31.57, a difference of £19.02, charted in Figure 9. South Oxfordshire had the second highest GVA per hour worked at £46.46 followed by Cambridge at £45.50. Five LA areas in the corridor had a GVA per hour worked higher than the England average of £41.87.

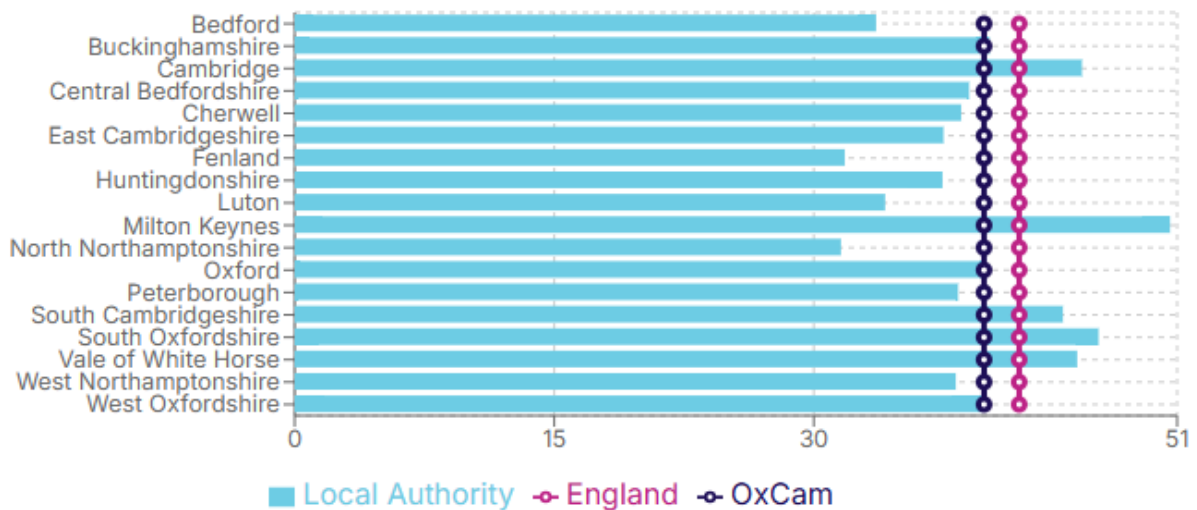


Figure 9. GVA per hour worked (£) by LA area, compared to England and the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam) (2023) (ONS, 2025).

## Deeper dive

To provide a multi-dimensional view of productivity and economic scale, all the GVA data for 2023, the latest year of data available at the time of writing, is laid out in Table 3.

- Total GVA shows the size of each local economy.
- GVA per filled job and per hour worked reveal productivity differences.
- GVA per head indicates economic output relative to population, highlighting prosperity levels.

Of note, whilst South Oxfordshire had the second highest GVA per hour in 2023, it had the tenth highest GVA per head in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor. High GVA per hour with low GVA per head implies strong workplace productivity but relatively low economic output per resident, possibly due to population structure, commuting flows, or limited local economic scale.

*Table 3. Nominal GVA (balanced, current prices, £ millions) by LA area, ordered descending by GVA (2023) (ONS, 2025). Note: \* UK average excluding Extra-Regio, which closely represents England.*

Local authority area	GVA 2023 (£m)	GVA per hour 2023 (£)	GVA per filled job 2023 (£)	GVA per head 2023 (£)
Buckinghamshire	19,176	40.15	65,442	33,838
Milton Keynes	16,763	50.59	85,050	56,201
West Northamptonshire	15,792	38.21	62,145	36,358
Cambridge	8,900	45.50	72,045	59,348
North Northamptonshire	8,806	31.57	50,563	23,930
Oxford	8,600	39.86	64,937	52,063
Peterborough	7,957	38.34	60,490	36,249
Central Bedfordshire	7,358	38.98	59,683	23,866
South Cambridgeshire	7,068	44.40	73,241	41,936
Luton	6,639	34.12	55,475	28,737
Cherwell	6,086	38.52	63,698	36,592
Vale of White Horse	5,893	45.22	73,845	40,371
Huntingdonshire	5,548	37.44	60,960	29,817
Bedford	5,151	33.60	55,506	27,126
South Oxfordshire	5,051	46.46	72,910	32,922
West Oxfordshire	3,699	39.71	59,162	30,998
East Cambridgeshire	2,345	37.50	60,883	25,638
Fenland	2,267	31.79	52,383	21,896
<b>Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor</b>	<b>143,099</b>	<b>39.84</b>	<b>64,494</b>	<b>35,195</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>2,113,338</b>	<b>*41.87</b>	<b>*66,402</b>	<b>36,632</b>

Figure 10 plots the GVA per head and GVA per hour worked in 2023 on a scatter plot using z-scores for all eighteen LA areas in the corridor. Z-scores were deployed to convert each metric into standard deviations from the mean, making them comparable on the same axis without distortion. It shows how far each LA area is above or below the corridor average for both GVA indicators, making it easier to identify outliers.

South Oxfordshire is found in the top left quadrant of high productivity but low prosperity. Further investigation is required to understand the reason(s) for South Oxfordshire’s relatively lower prosperity to higher productivity grouping in the corridor. Several LA areas are grouped together in the bottom left quadrant such as Fenland and North Northamptonshire, which represents lower productivity with lower prosperity whereas five LA areas are grouped together in the top right quadrant that denotes both high productivity and high prosperity including Milton Keynes and Cambridge.

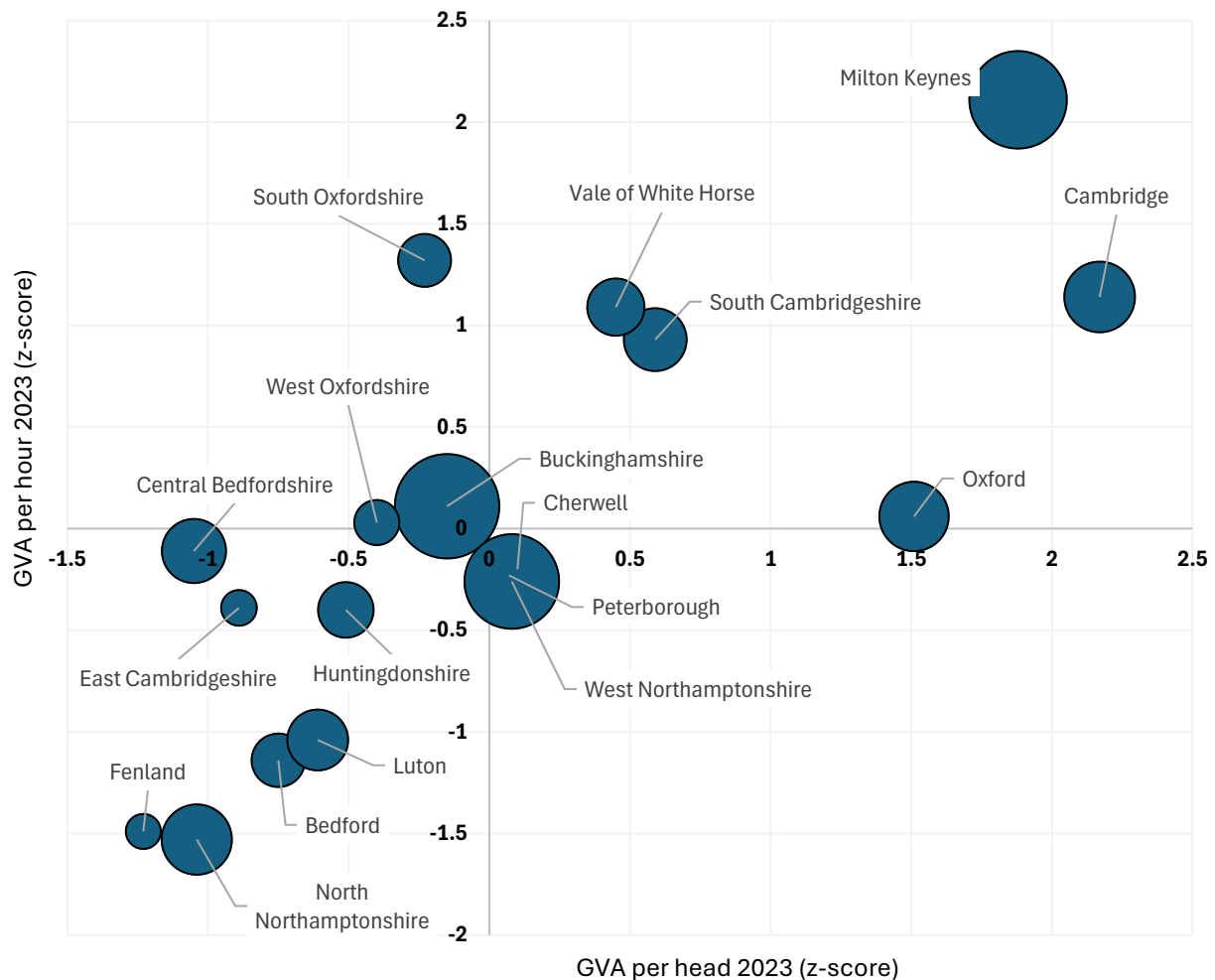


Figure 10. GVA per head and GVA per hour (z-scores) by LA area (2023) (ONS, 2025). Note: Size of bubble denotes total GVA.

## 1.6 GVA by sector

### Indicator definition

GVA by industry measures the economic value generated within LAs, allocated on a workplace basis to the location where activity occurs<sup>14</sup>. Estimates are presented in both current basic prices and real terms, using chained volume measures to remove the effect of inflation. Balanced GVA combines income and production approaches, weighted by quality metrics, and is disaggregated by industry according to SIC07 classifications. Data are derived primarily from VAT turnover, supplemented by employment, housing, and population data for specific sectors. While these accredited official statistics provide detailed insights at small geographic scales, figures can be volatile and should be interpreted with caution.

### Data significance

This metric provides a key measure of economic performance at a LA level, offering insight into the scale and structure of regional economies. By allocating value added to the location where economic activity occurs, this indicator helps identify growth sectors, productivity trends, and spatial disparities. It enables the design of targeted interventions, monitoring of progress against economic strategies, and assessments of the resilience to national and global challenges.

### Headline figures

In 2023, 79.8% of GVA in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor came from the Services sector, 13.5% from Production, and 6.7% from Construction. For England overall, the Services share was slightly higher at 81.7%, while Construction was marginally lower at 6.3%. The Production sector accounted for a smaller proportion nationally, at 12.0%.

### Regional story

There was significant variation across the corridor, with Cambridge standing out with 96.1% of its economic output generated by the Services sector, the highest share locally, while neighbouring South Cambridgeshire recorded only 69.6% (Figure 11). Only 4 of the 18 LA areas had a Services sector share more than five percentage points above the England average. Alongside Cambridge, Milton Keynes (87.8%), Oxford (87.6%), and South Oxfordshire (86.9%) also showed strong dominance of services in their economies. Fenland recorded the smallest share of GVA from the Services sector, with only 62.2% of its total GVA attributed to services.

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<sup>14</sup> ONS, 2025. Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: local authorities by ITL1 region. [\[Link to source\]](#)



Figure 11. GVA (balanced) by broad industry (current basic prices, % of total GVA) by LA area (2023) (ONS, 2025).

### Deeper dive

With proximity to the Felixstowe port and good access to major road networks, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Huntingdonshire had a share of greater than 10 percentage points above the England average in production industries. The highest Production sector proportion in the corridor was in Fenland at 30.0%, an area of rich agricultural land that attracts food manufacturing, processing and packaging industries. Along with Fenland, both Huntingdonshire (25.3%) and East Cambridgeshire (24.5%) attract space-intensive industries such as manufacturing due to their relatively lower land and property costs. The other LA areas with greater output in the Production sector include South Cambridgeshire (21.0%), Peterborough (19.4%), North Northamptonshire (18.8%) and West Oxfordshire (18.6%).

Further differences in the composition of GVA by LA area, indicating local sectoral intensity, can be found at a more detailed sector level. For example, 33.1% of economic output in Oxford was derived from the Education sector, followed by Cambridge with 20.5%. Furthermore, over a fifth of output in South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and Cambridge was produced from Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities whilst 13.6% of the economic output of Luton was generated from the Transport and Storage sector, subsequent of its airport that handles more than 16 million passengers annually<sup>15</sup>. The area with the highest Manufacturing sector concentration was in Fenland at 23.7%. Appendix A contains radar charts of GVA concentration by sector for Cambridge and Oxford, as both areas of high intensity in fewer sectors, and Peterborough and West Northamptonshire, as both areas of a more balanced GVA distribution across multiple sectors, to contrast their economic structure.

In addition, Location Quotients (LQs) measure the relative concentration of a sector in an area compared to the wider region and when combined with each area’s own GVA share by sector, this analysis highlights several LA areas with sector specialisms. Figure 12 shows LAs with these sector

<sup>15</sup> London Luton Airport, 2024. December 2024 Passenger Statistics. [\[Link to source\]](#)

specialisms, where the sector accounts for over 20% of local GVA share and has a high LQ, indicating both economic significance and regional concentration. Though the sector classifications used in this analysis are broad, the findings suggest that the corridor’s specialisms are aligned with the key sectors laid out in the Government’s sector plans<sup>16</sup>. These include advanced manufacturing, clean energy industries, life sciences, digital and technologies, defence and creative industries, which are evidenced to be established in the corridor in the Government’s investment prospectus<sup>17</sup>.

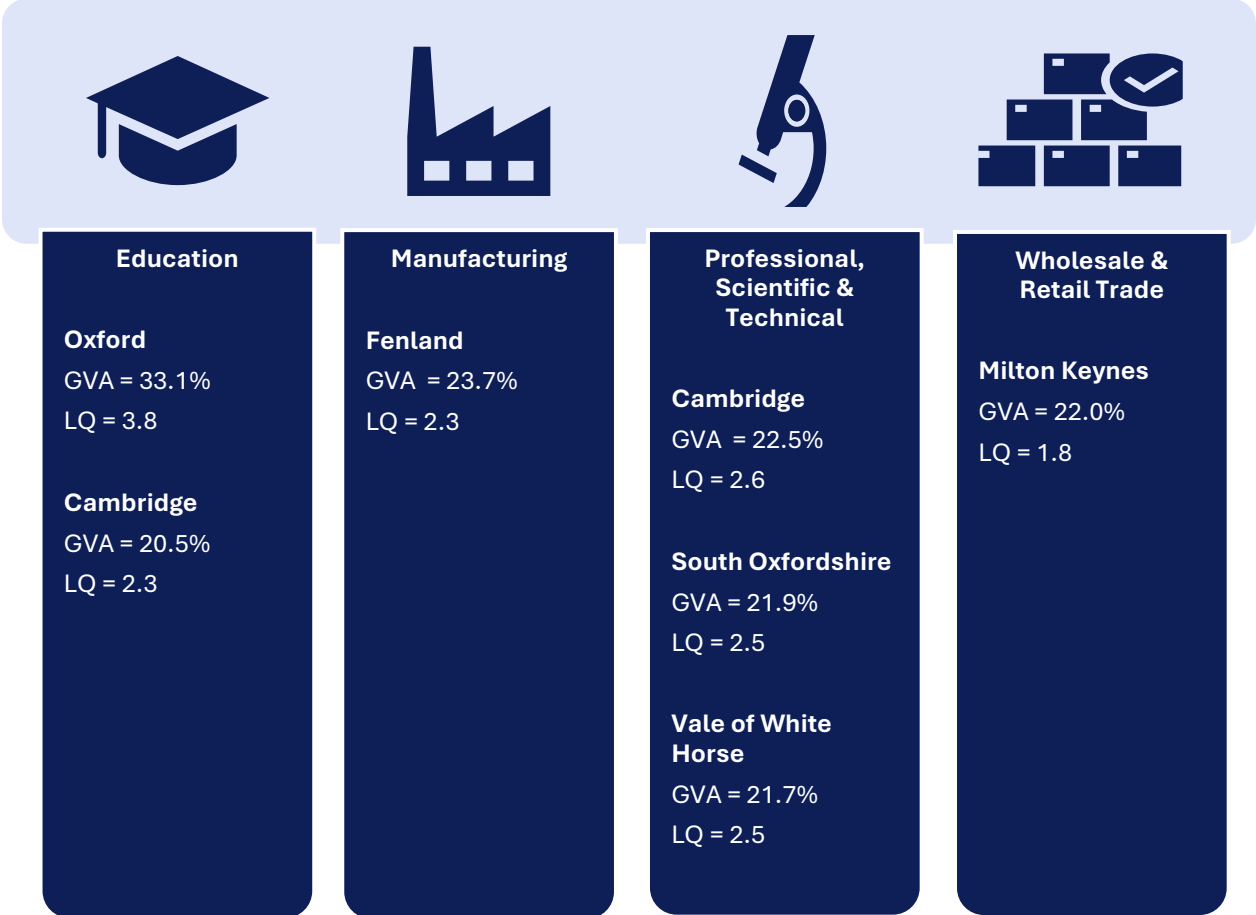


Figure 12. Local authority areas with sector specialisms, calculated using GVA (2023) (ONS, 2025).

Between 2014 and 2023, the corridor experienced notable sectoral shifts towards a service and knowledge-based economy. The fastest-growing industry was education, which expanded by 3.7%, likely reflecting an increased demand for skills and retraining due to technological change. This was followed by professional, scientific, and technical activities at 2.7%, which may be driven by growth in knowledge-intensive services, supported by innovation clusters or Research and Development (R&D) investment. Arts, entertainment, and recreation also saw a 2.1% increase, suggesting a growing experience economy (Figure 13).

<sup>16</sup> DBT, 2025. Sector Plans. [\[Link to source\]](#)

<sup>17</sup> DBT, 2025. This is the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor. [\[Link to source\]](#)

In contrast, financial and insurance services contracted by 1.4%, potentially due to the automation of routine tasks or a shift toward larger financial hubs. A large decrease in activities in households of 7% is seen, which may be due to a general increase of agencies and apps employing domestic staff, which changes the industry classification to administrative and support service activities, though this is also the lowest GVA sector, which introduces volatility in percentage changes.

While manufacturing saw a modest overall decline of 0.3%, this figure is driven by large decreases in Cambridge (10.4%) and South Oxfordshire (8%), as most of the LA areas in the corridor (12 out of 18) saw an increase. To strengthen the sector’s overall resilience and future competitiveness, the following measures could be prioritised:

- investing in advanced manufacturing technologies, such as automation and digitalisation to boost productivity
- supporting supply chain innovation and diversification, to reduce vulnerability to global disruptions.
- encouraging the transition to low-carbon production, through incentives for green technologies and energy efficiency
- developing targeted skills programmes, to equip the workforce for high-tech manufacturing roles.

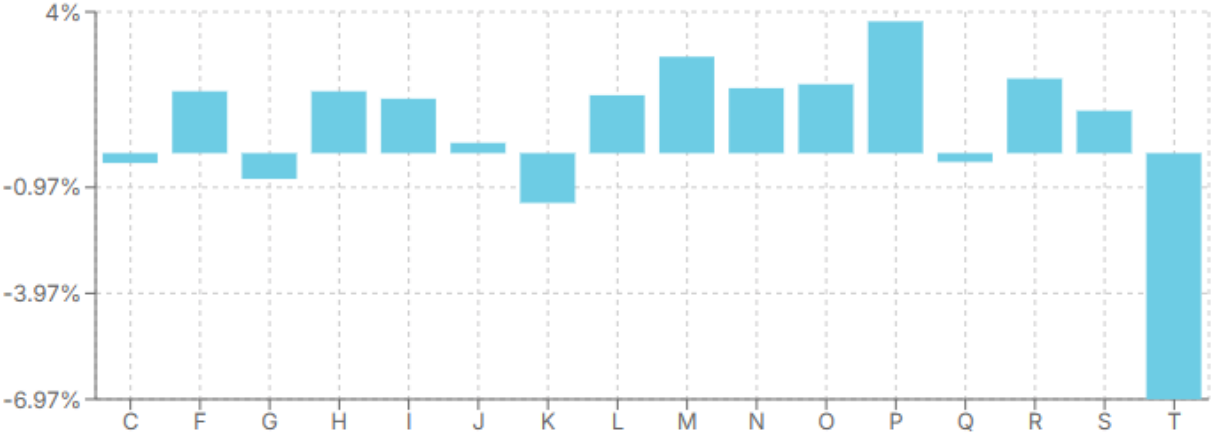


Figure 13. Compound Annual Growth Rates of GVA (chained volumes) by industry in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (2014-2023) (ONS, 2025).

Note: C: Manufacturing, F: Construction, G: Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, H: Transportation and storage, I: Accommodation and food service activities, J: Information and communication, K: Financial and insurance activities, L: Real estate activities, M: Professional, scientific and technical activities, N: Administrative and support service activities, O: Public administration and defence, P: Education, Q: Human health and social work activities, R: Arts, entertainment and recreation, S: Other service activities, T: Activities of households.

## 2. Trade

This section provides insight into the flow of goods and services across regions, capturing both imports and exports at a subnational level. These indicators reveal how local economies connect to national and global markets, highlighting industry specialisations, supply chain dependencies, and trade performance. Trade levels, across both goods and services, are primary drivers of regional growth since trade can stimulate economic activity, attract investment, and create jobs.

### 2.1 Trade in services

#### Indicator definition

Subnational trade in services measures the value of services traded at a subnational level within the UK, broken down by industry<sup>18</sup>. It provides experimental estimates of exports and imports of services for local areas, offering insight into the role of services in regional economies. These figures are based on industry classifications and should not be compared to estimates broken down by service type. The data are designed to support analysis of regional trade patterns and inform policy decisions, but as experimental statistics, they should be interpreted with caution. Throughout the longitudinal trade plots, 2020 was chosen as the index point as it was the year of a major structural break due to COVID-19 and therefore as the base year, it highlights recovery trends in the post pandemic era.

#### Data significance

This metric provides insight into the flow of services across regions, helping to understand the role of services in local economies and their contribution to national trade performance. By breaking down estimates by industry, this dataset enables policymakers to identify regional specialisations, assess exposure to global markets, and design targeted strategies to boost competitiveness. Although experimental, these estimates are crucial for evidence-based decision-making, particularly in shaping trade policy, supporting regional growth, and monitoring the impact of economic shocks on service-based industries.

#### Headline figures

In 2023, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor exported £25 billion in services and imported £12 billion in services, which was 6.0% and 4.6% of England's total, respectively. Figure 14 charts the yearly exports of services totals between 2016 and 2023, which shows that in the post-pandemic recovery period, the growth in services exports was similar at the national level to the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor<sup>19</sup>. Although there was a greater bounce back in the corridor in both 2021 and 2022 than for England, by 2023 the gap narrowed such that the percentage growth on the year of 2020 was around the 50% mark for the corridor and England. This may be a result of the corridor's strong service sectors with highly specialised offerings that were able to pivot and were in high demand, before England's convergence in the most recent year of available data.

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<sup>18</sup> ONS, 2025. Subnational trade in services. [\[Link to source\]](#)

<sup>19</sup> ONS, 2025. Subnational trade time series. [\[Link to source\]](#)

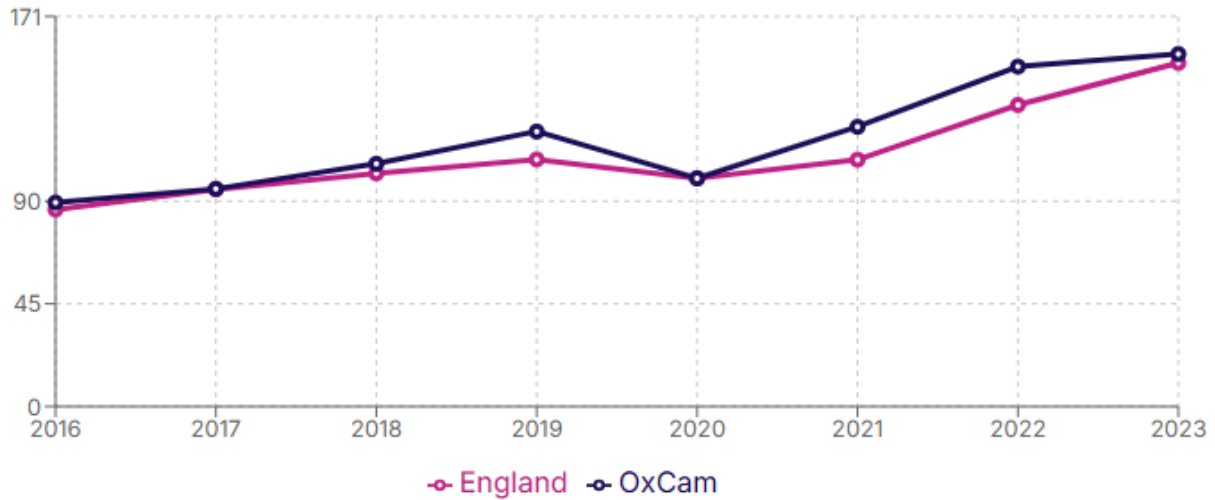


Figure 14. Services exports (£m, total worldwide trade, indexed 2020 = 100) for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam), compared to England (2016-2023) (ONS, 2025).

### Regional story

Whilst nominal growth in the exports of services reached just above the 50% level in the third-year post-pandemic, growth in services imports was lower in the corridor at 33.6% compared to England's growth rate of 73.5%, as shown in Figure 15. Yet, with the corridor's high service sector intensity in places like Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Oxford and South Oxfordshire, this indicates that the corridor has a lesser reliance on services imports than nationally.

A lower dependency on imported services suggests that the corridor is less vulnerable to global shocks. This could explain why the drop in services imports between 2019 and 2020 was lower in the corridor than for England, overall. Nonetheless, whilst a region that produces services locally is generally positive for local jobs and wages, it can limit productivity growth should it reflect a lack of access to high-value services. Given the academic excellence of both Cambridge and Oxford Universities and the evidence of superior retainment of their spinouts locally, it signals a strong local services ecosystem. Therefore, the corridor's richness of local services is a comparative advantage as it allows spinouts to scale faster because they reduce friction for entrepreneurs in accessing critical business functions.

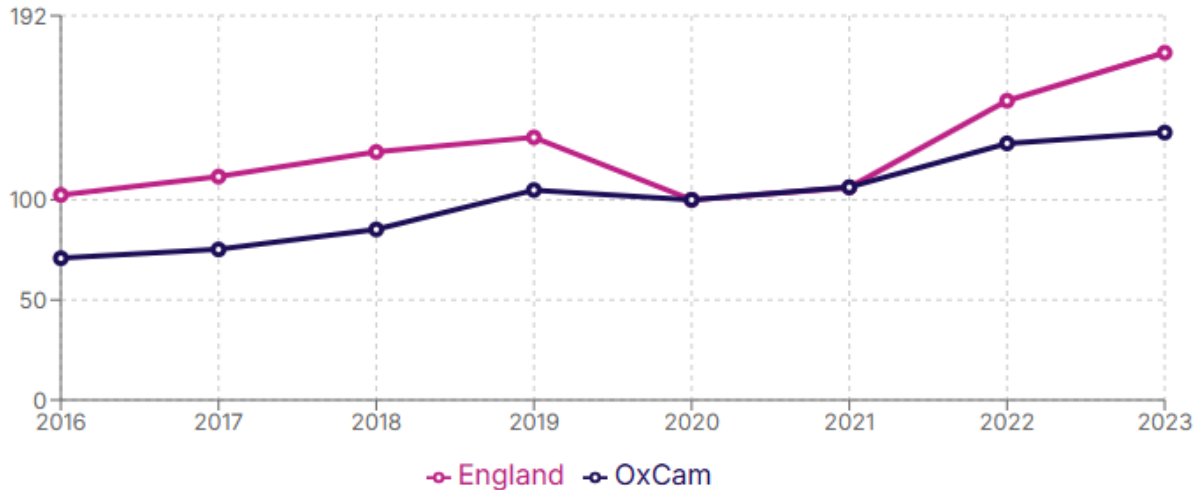


Figure 15. Services imports (£m, total worldwide trade, indexed 2020 = 100) for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam), compared to England (2016-2023) (ONS, 2025).

## 2.2 Trade in goods

### Indicator definition

Subnational trade in goods provides experimental estimates of goods trade at a regional level, broken down by industry<sup>20</sup>. These figures are derived by apportioning low-level trade in goods data to local units, using HMRC trade data combined with employment information from the Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR). The estimates focus on industry-level breakdowns and should not be compared to data classified by product type. Throughout the longitudinal trade plots, 2020 was chosen as the index point as it was the year of a major structural break due to COVID-19 and therefore as the base year, it highlights recovery trends in the post pandemic era.

### Data significance

This metric is important for understanding the movement of physical products across regions and their contribution to local and national economies. By providing estimates of goods exports and imports at a regional level, this dataset helps identify trade hubs, supply chain dependencies, and areas of comparative advantage. It supports evidence-based policymaking by informing strategies on infrastructure investment, logistics, and regional competitiveness. These insights are particularly important for assessing the impact of global trade dynamics, economic shocks, and policy changes on manufacturing and goods-producing sectors.

### Headline figures

In 2023, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor exported £25 billion in goods, which was 9.0% of England's total. Furthermore, the corridor imported £56 billion in goods in 2023, 11.8% of England's total. Both the corridor and England were net importers of goods in 2023, though dissimilar to England, the corridor had imports more than double its exports. This suggests that the corridor has a different economic structure to the national one. For example, it points to a greater consumer demand or supply chain dependence on external production, offset by the corridor's specialised

<sup>20</sup> ONS, 2025. Subnational trade in goods. [\[Link to source\]](#)

non-tradable sectors in services, such as education. The implication is that the corridor could be somewhat vulnerable to global supply chain disruptions.

The corridor’s nominal growth in goods exports was stronger than England’s in the three years after 2020, reaching 34.5% in 2023, compared to England’s growth rate of 23.2%, which is demonstrated in Figure 16, where values are indexed relative to 2020<sup>21</sup>. Notwithstanding, the growth in goods exports lagged that of the growth in services exports by around 20 percentage points, in the corridor, during this period.

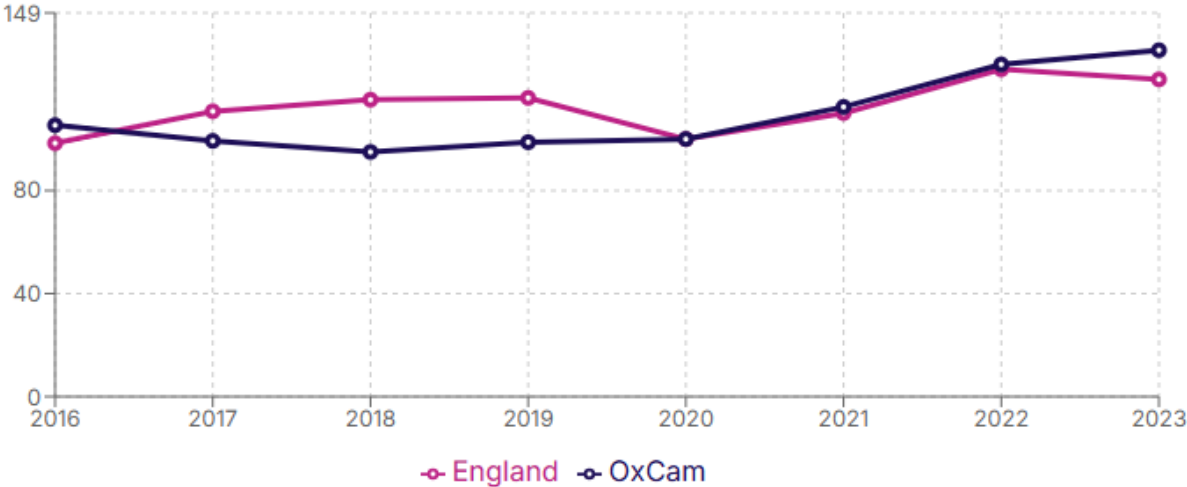


Figure 16. Goods exports (£m, total worldwide trade, indexed 2020 = 100) for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam), compared to England (2016-2023) (ONS, 2025).

**Regional story**

In 2023, by ITL3<sup>22</sup>, Oxfordshire generated the greatest total exports of goods at £5.3 billion, driven by the highest exports to non-EU markets of £2.8 billion, showing its global reach in sectors, such as life sciences and automotive (Figure 17). Cambridgeshire also had the second highest non-EU exports of £2.6 billion, similarly demonstrating its global distribution with goods, in sectors such as life sciences and high-tech manufacturing. Alternately, Buckinghamshire had the highest exports of goods to EU countries at £3.2 billion, which may indicate its integration with European supply chains, with industries where geographic proximity and alignment with EU regulatory standards are important. Bedford had the lowest overall trade in exports of goods however it must be noted that the data was not adjusted for regional scale factors such as population size, land area, or number of firms.

<sup>21</sup> ONS, 2025. Subnational trade time series. [\[Link to source\]](#)

<sup>22</sup> ITL3 refers to International Territorial Level 3, which is part of the UK and EU statistical geography classification system used for regional analysis.

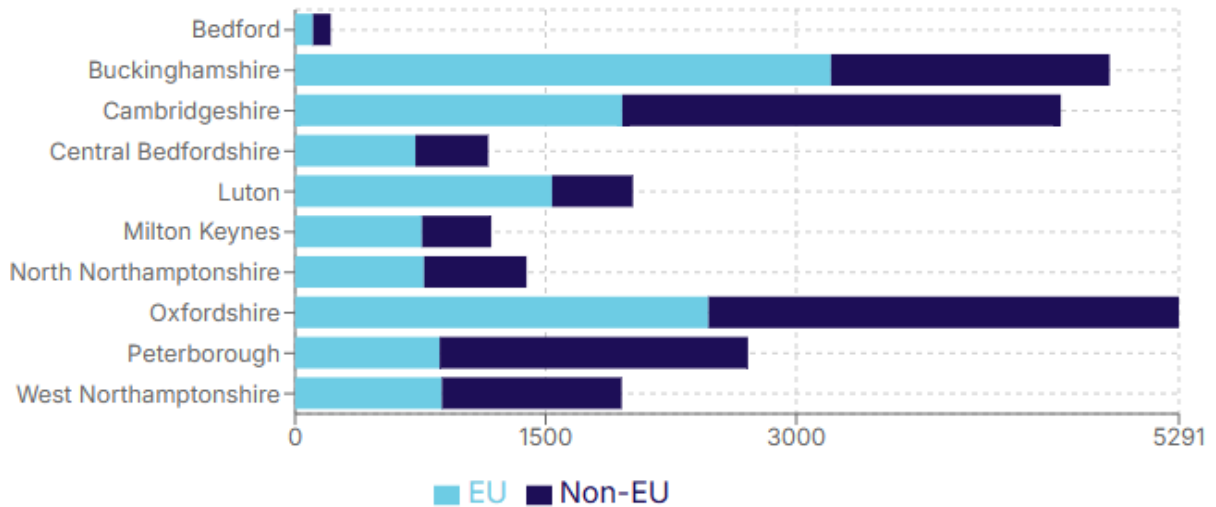


Figure 17. Goods exports (£m) by ITL3 area split by destination (2023) (ONS, 2025).

Nonetheless, given the disparity between areas and the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor’s lower growth rate compared to England, policymakers could consider whether:

- a goods trade deficit indicates a weakening industrial base and reduced competitiveness in key sectors like manufacturing
- targeted policies are necessary to stimulate local production, attract manufacturing investment, and enhance export capabilities
- an overreliance on imported goods leaves the corridor’s economy disproportionately vulnerable to global supply chain disruptions.

As shown in Figure 18, the corridor surpassed England’s post 2020 growth rate in goods imports, which further suggests some regional growing reliance on the imports of goods. Albeit further data points covering subsequent years are necessary to understand whether this is a trend rather than a one-off that happened in 2023.

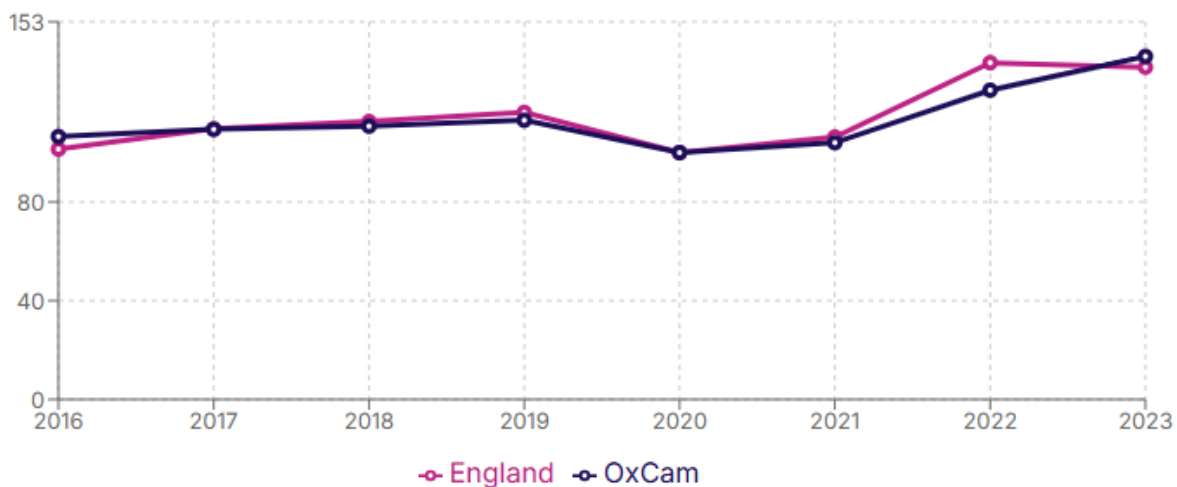


Figure 18. Goods imports (£m, total worldwide trade, indexed 2020 = 100) for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam), compared to England (2016 and 2023) (ONS, 2025).

Figure 19 illustrates how Milton Keynes recorded the highest level of goods imports in the corridor at £20.6 billion. This is primarily driven by its role as a major national logistics and distribution hub. While many of these goods are not for local consumption, the methodology attributes values from companies to specific areas based on employment presence. Consequently, because large retail and logistics firms maintain a significant headcount at their Milton Keynes facilities, a disproportionate share of their total import value is allocated to this region. Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Cambridgeshire follow with lower but significant import values, potentially driven by their requirements for specialised components and raw materials to support manufacturing and R&D sectors.

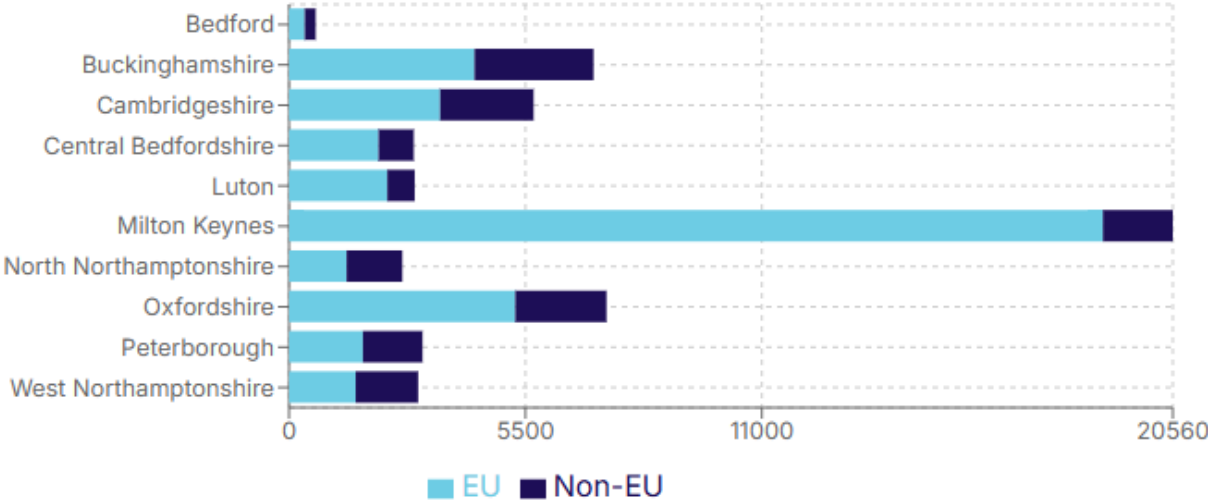


Figure 19. Goods imports (£m) by ITL3 area split by destination (2023) (ONS, 2025).

### 3. Investment

This section provides insight into investment activity within the corridor, in the context of inward investment. This refers to money invested in a country by foreign entities, taking various forms, such as, building infrastructure or acquiring or merging with local companies, which can stimulate economic growth and create jobs. By understanding where investment occurs, the attractiveness of the corridor to global investors and its role in supporting long-term economic development can be assessed.

#### 3.1 FDI projects

##### Indicator definition

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is a cross-border investment made by a non-UK resident entity where the direct investor acquires at least 10% of the voting power or ownership. FDI projects are tracked by the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) for each financial year, with datapoints such as total FDI projects (including those with multiple sites inside and outside each area, single site FDI projects and new jobs created from FDI projects). To compare FDI projects in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor and England, the single site projects can be converted to an intensity value of single site FDI projects per 10,000 businesses (sourced from ONS<sup>23</sup>). The single site value should be used when comparing to England, to prevent double counting. However, using an intensity to compare regions with FDI projects using the number of businesses is not perfect, due to other influences such as distances from major transport infrastructure, and should be used with caution.

It should also be noted that, these figures only reflect projects the DBT is aware of, or has supported, and is not a comprehensive representation of all FDI deals and projects. Furthermore, an update for 2024/25 is available, however the lowest geographic granularity at the ITL2 level makes analysis across the corridor difficult<sup>24</sup>. Therefore, the previous results by Local Enterprise Partnerships, that map to growth hubs are presented here, but a review will need to be conducted into how inward investment is best assessed in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor going forward.

##### Data significance

Reviewing the number of FDI projects is important, as it reflects investor confidence in an area's economy. A high number of FDI projects (total and single site) in an area indicates that is attractive to investment, with a stable economic environment that has potential for economic growth. Furthermore, creating a high number of new jobs from these projects indicate that labour availability and skills match investor needs and the corridor will benefit from increased employment.

##### Headline figures

As seen in Figure 20, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had a higher number of single site FDI projects in 2023/24 per 10,000 businesses than England (with London removed), with 5.3 compared to 4.3<sup>25</sup>. This suggests that the corridor is a popular destination for FDI projects outside of London in

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<sup>23</sup> ONS, 2025. UK Business Counts - enterprises by industry and employment size band. [\[Link to source\]](#)

<sup>24</sup> DBT, 2025. DBT inward investment results 2024 to 2025. [\[Link to source\]](#)

<sup>25</sup> DBT, 2024. DBT inward investment results 2023 to 2024. [\[Link to source\]](#)

England. Furthermore, when comparing 2021/22 to 2023/24, there was a decrease in both the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor and England (excluding London).

**Regional story**

As seen in Figure 21, in 2023/24, Oxfordshire had the highest number of total FDI projects at 46 and it was the only growth hub to have seen an increase since 2021/22 at 21%. This number includes both single site projects, and projects with multiple sites that have a site in the corridor, however the same trend is true, with Oxfordshire having 36 in 2023/24 and a 24% increase from 2021/22 (Figure 22). For growth hubs at the intensity level of single site projects per 10,000 businesses, Oxfordshire still had the highest (11.3 per 10,000 businesses) and is the only area to see an increase from 2021/22 to 2023/24 (26%) (Figure 20).

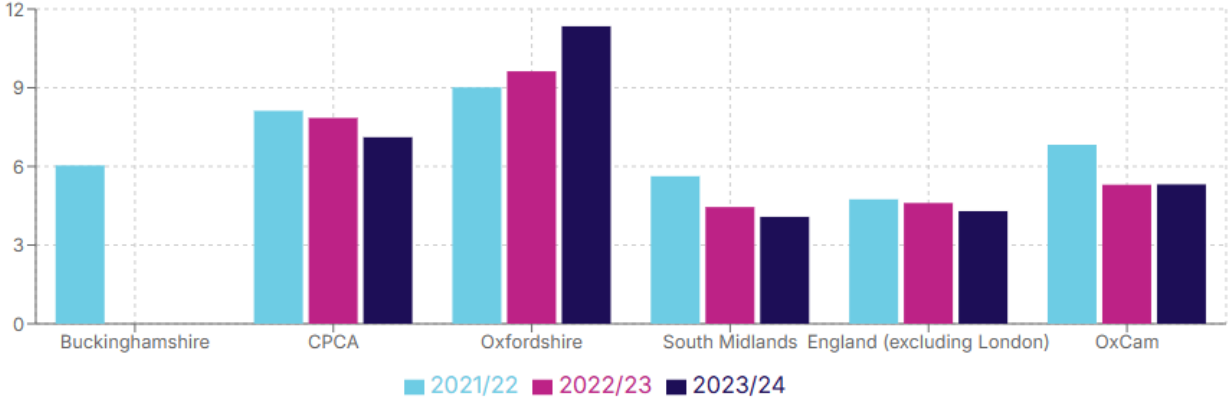


Figure 20. Single site FDI projects per 10,000 businesses by growth hub area (2021/22-2023/24) (DBT, 2024 and ONS, 2025).

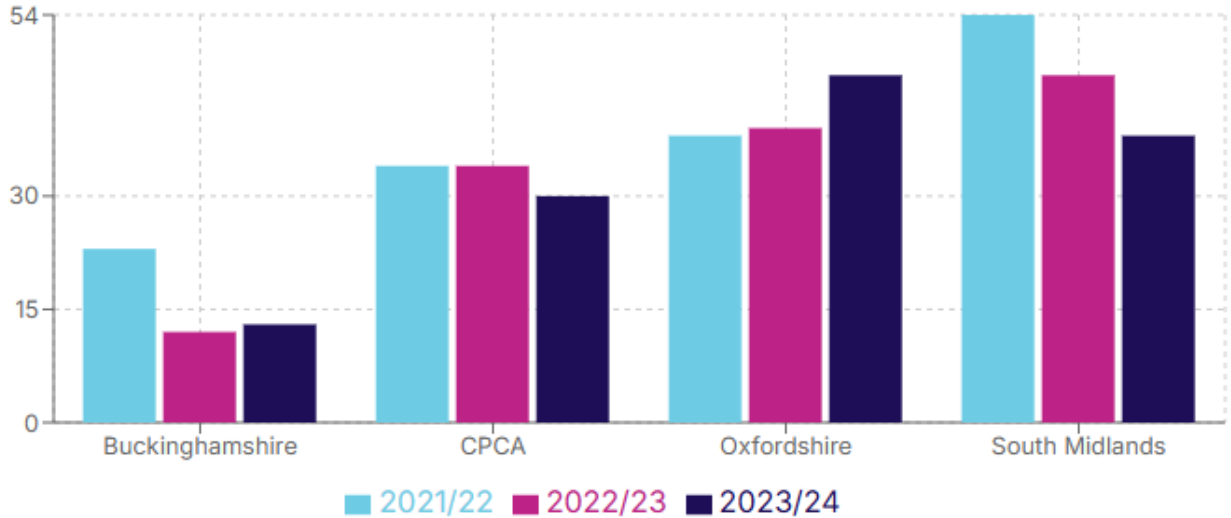


Figure 21. Total FDI projects by growth hub area (2021/22-2023/24) (DBT, 2024).

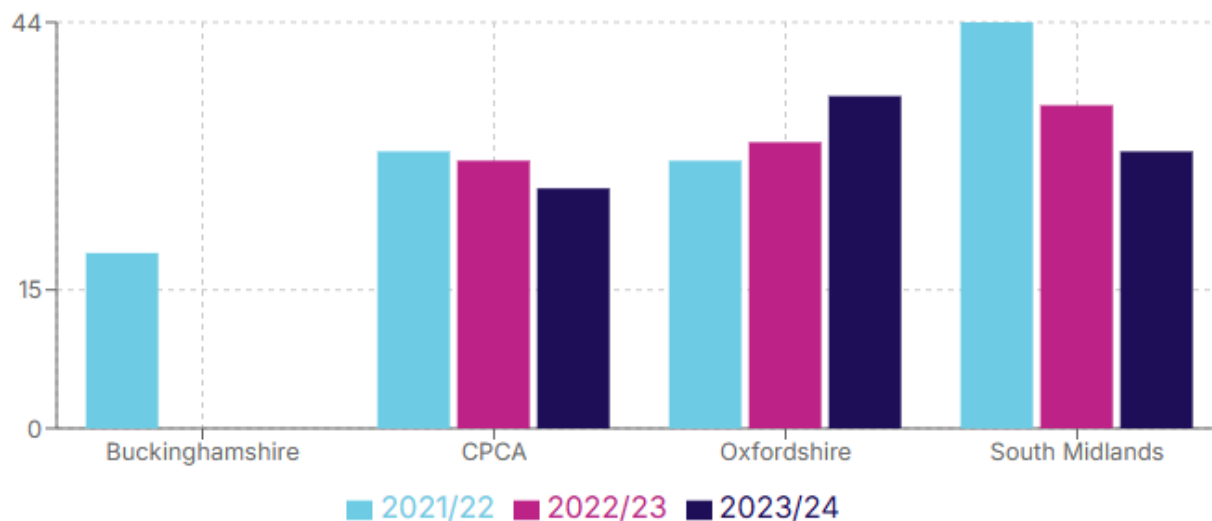


Figure 22. Single site FDI projects by growth hub area (2021/22-2023/24) (DBT, 2024).

Alternatively, a different trend is seen for new jobs created from FDI projects, with South Midlands achieving the highest in 2023/24 with 3010 new jobs and an increase was seen in all growth hubs with available data between 2021/22 and 2023/24 (Figure 23). This indicator demonstrates that even though Oxfordshire had the highest number of total FDI projects, in the most recent year, each project was creating less jobs than in South Midlands and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA). This suggests that these growth hubs were attracting fewer, but larger investment projects, with South Midlands having 79 new jobs per FDI project in 2023/24, while CPCA had 56 and Oxfordshire had 17.

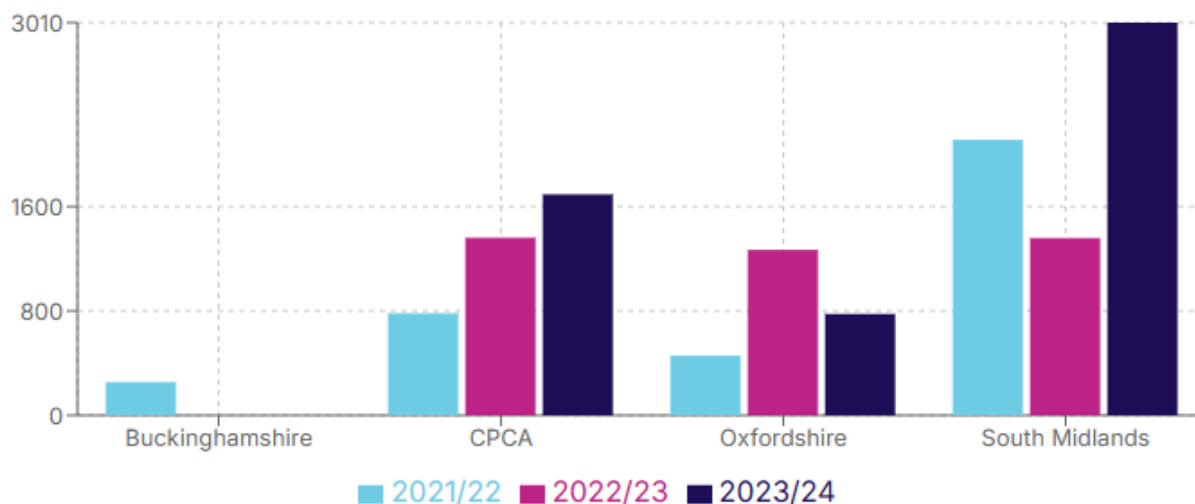


Figure 23. New jobs created from FDI projects by growth hub area (2021/22-2023/24) (DBT, 2024).

## 4. Innovation

This section provides a view of innovation activities by businesses across the corridor, which play a key role in driving economic growth, productivity, and long-term competitiveness. Innovation enables businesses to develop new products, processes, and technologies, strengthening resilience and attracting investment. The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor is recognised as a leading centre for innovation in the UK and internationally, supported by world-class research institutions and established science and technology clusters.

### 4.1 Innovation activity

#### Indicator definition

The UK Innovation Survey 2023 is the main data source for business innovation in the UK. It is conducted every two years and can be used to estimate the proportion of businesses engaging in various innovation activities, during the survey period of 2020-2022<sup>26</sup>. The UK definition of innovation is based on an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) definition, outlined in the Oslo Manual 2018<sup>27</sup>. This definition includes any of the following activities, if they occurred during the survey period:

- 1) the introduction of a new or improved product (goods or services)
- 2) business processes used to produce or supply all goods or services that the business has introduced, regardless of their origin (new to business or new to the market)
- 3) engagement in innovation projects not yet complete or abandoned
- 4) investment activities in areas, such as internal research and development, training, acquisition of external knowledge or machinery and equipment linked to innovation activities.

A business that has engaged in any of the activities 1 to 3 above is defined as ‘innovation active’. A business that undertakes activity 2 only is described as a ‘business process innovator’. A percentage of businesses with these definitions is calculated, as well as those that are product innovators (activity 1) and those performing internal R&D (activity 4). A further metric of businesses introducing products not previously offered by any of your competitors, is also calculated as a percentage of turnover. A weighting is used to compensate for the businesses that did not respond to the survey and those not selected for the sample. This weighting is calculated using TL2 boundaries, broad sector and business size and more information is available in the source<sup>28</sup>. The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor results have been calculated as a sum product, using the total number of businesses in each growth hub in 2020 to calculate the growth hub’s percentage of the corridor’s businesses and multiplying this by each growth hub’s innovation score.

#### Data significance

Reviewing innovation activity is important, because it provides insight into a region’s capacity for growth and ability to be competitive in national and global markets. An area with high business

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<sup>26</sup> DBT, 2024. United Kingdom innovation survey 2023: report. [\[Link to source\]](#)

<sup>27</sup> OECD, 2018. Oslo Manual 2028. [\[Link to source\]](#)

<sup>28</sup> DBT, 2024. UK innovation survey 2023: statistical annex. [\[Link to source\]](#)

innovation metrics indicates that the area may have a strong knowledge economy, skilled workforce, sector specialisation and export potential.

### Headline figures

From 2020-2022, it was estimated that 43.3% of businesses in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor were defined as innovation active, which was higher than the England value of 37.1% (Figure 24). Furthermore, the corridor had a higher percentage for all other metrics of business innovation than England, with 24.9% of businesses as product innovators, 35.1% as business process innovators, 18.7% as performing internal R&D and 20.9% of turnover coming from businesses introducing products not previously offered by any of your competitors.

### Regional story

Within the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, at the growth hub level, all were above or around the England percentage of businesses defined as innovation active. In addition, in England, Oxfordshire had the second highest innovation active percentage (50.8%) and CPCA had the fourth (49%), while Buckinghamshire followed with 44.4% and South Midlands had 37%. Oxfordshire also saw the highest percentage of businesses defined as business process innovators (44.2%) and those performing R&D (28.6%) in the corridor. Nevertheless, the highest percentage of product innovator businesses were seen in CPCA (28.9%) and the highest percentage of turnover from businesses introducing products not previously offered by any of your competitors was seen in South Midlands (25.6%).

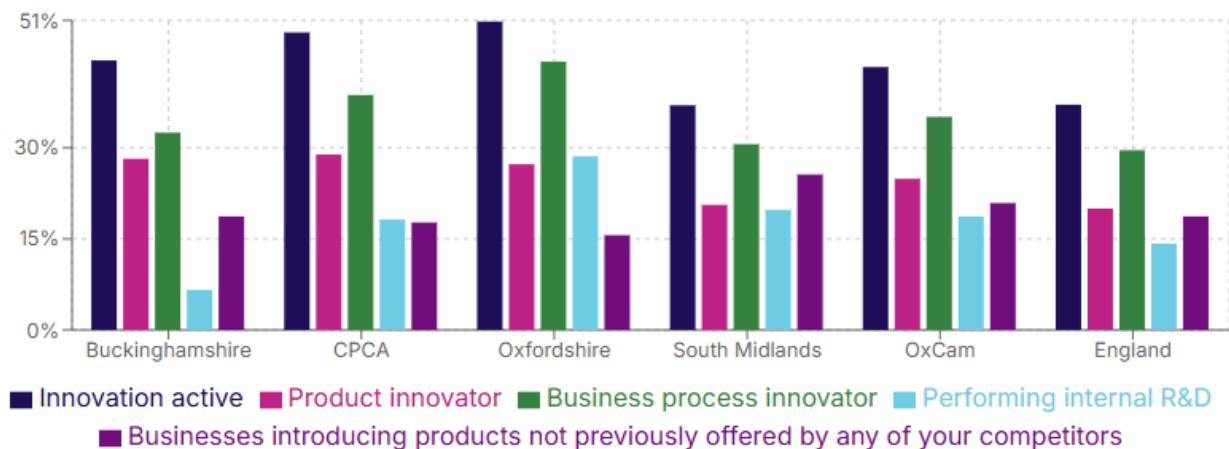


Figure 24. Business innovation activities, as a percentage of businesses by growth hub area (2020-2022) (DBT, 2024).

### Deeper dive

The Global Innovation Index 2025, produced by the World Intellectual Property Organization, provides a holistic and flexible measure of the innovation happening all around the world today<sup>29</sup>. With the use of innovation metrics, clusters can be ranked, which enables comparisons of innovation activity in the Oxford and Cambridge clusters with its global

<sup>29</sup> WIPO, 2025. Global Innovation Index 2025. [\[Link to source\]](#)

competitor regions. These metrics cover Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) applications, scientific publications and venture capital deals.

In 2025, the United Kingdom had four clusters among the top 100 innovation clusters in the World, with London (8<sup>th</sup>), Cambridge (69<sup>th</sup>), Oxford (77<sup>th</sup>) and Manchester (94<sup>th</sup>). However, as seen in Table 4, when using intensities of these metrics per capita, Cambridge goes up to 2<sup>nd</sup>, with Oxford in 5<sup>th</sup>. In addition, Cambridge and Oxford were 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> globally for the metric of scientific populations per capita, as seen in Figure 25.

*Table 4. Top 10 innovation intensity ranking of clusters (2025) (WIPO, 2025). Note: \* Per capita figures refer to per 1,000,000 of population*

Cluster name	Rank per capita	Economy	PCT applications per capita*	Scientific publications per capita*	Venture Capital deals per capita*	Total innovation intensity share per capita*
San Jose–San Francisco	1	US	8132	9044	2608	1.84
Cambridge	2	GB	6331	33133	1282	1.43
Boston–Cambridge	3	US	4542	17660	1079	1.02
Ningde	4	CN	13032	733	9	1.01
Oxford	5	GB	2778	31340	897	0.98
Seattle	6	US	4333	7718	830	0.78
San Diego	7	US	6816	5068	435	0.77
Ann Arbor	8	US	1897	29806	464	0.73
Helsinki	9	FI	2444	10563	899	0.7
Eindhoven	10	NL	7184	4704	185	0.68

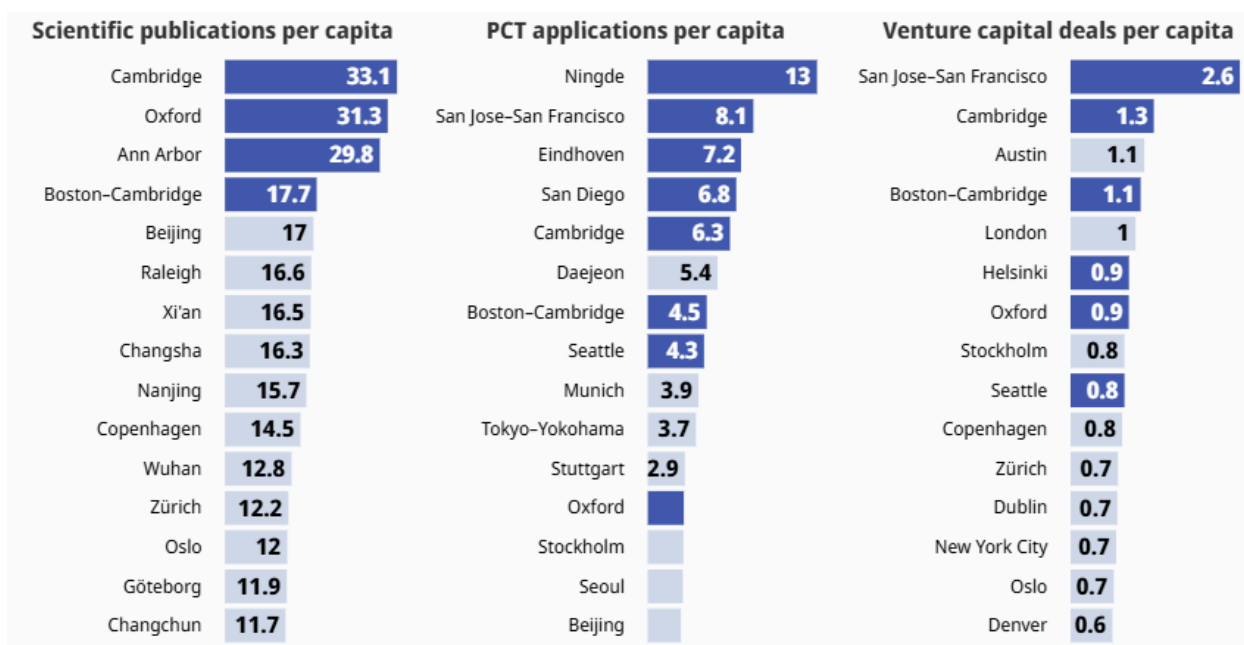


Figure 25. Top 15 innovation intensive clusters, by metric per 1000 people (WIPO, 2025). Note: Dark blue represents a top 10 cluster.

Please refer to the [full report](#) for details on the cluster definition methodology and source data.

## 4.2 R&D core occupations

### Indicator definition

The following insights are based on data extracted from Lightcast<sup>30</sup>, a leading labour market analytics platform that provides detailed information on employment trends, industry dynamics, and occupational patterns. Lightcast uses advanced data modelling to help regions understand their workforce strengths and identify opportunities for growth. The core R&D occupations are referenced in Section 8.2 of the UK Government’s R&D Skills Supply and Demand report<sup>31</sup>, coded using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system. These SOC codes provide a consistent framework for identifying and analysing R&D-related roles.

### Data significance

Employment concentration is measured using the Location Quotient (LQ), which compares the share of a specific occupation in the region to its share in the United Kingdom. A high LQ indicates that the region has a greater proportion of R&D occupations than the United Kingdom average. This signals specialisation, meaning the region is relatively strong in R&D compared to other regions.

The competitive effect, derived from shift-share analysis, measures how much of employment change is due to regional competitiveness, beyond national or industry trends.

<sup>30</sup> Lightcast, 2025. Lightcast Data. [\[Link to source\]](#)

<sup>31</sup> DSIT, 2025. R&D skills supply and demand: long-term trends and workforce projections. [\[Link to source\]](#)

A positive competitive effect means the region is growing faster than expected, given national and industry growth rates. This suggests local advantages, such as strong firms, clusters, infrastructure, or supportive policies that are attracting or retaining jobs. When the region has both a high LQ ( $\geq 1.5$ ) and positive competitive effect, it indicates the region is specialised and outperforming national trends, which is a strong signal of a thriving cluster with significant growth potential.

### Headline figures

As laid out in full in Table 5, in 2025 in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, both Chemical Scientists (2111) and Physical Scientists (2114) exhibited high employment concentration (Lightcast name for LQ) and a positive competitive effect, indicating that the region is not only specialised in these occupations, but also growing faster than United Kingdom trends. This suggests a strong and dynamic cluster in core scientific disciplines, likely driven by local research strengths, industry demand, and innovation infrastructure.

Yet in contrast, Biochemists and Biomedical Scientists (2113) and Laboratory Technicians (3111) also showed high LQs, meaning they are well-represented in the region, but their negative competitive effect signals slower growth compared to United Kingdom expectations. This could imply that while these roles are part of the region's scientific base, they may face challenges such as limited expansion opportunities or shifting demand toward other scientific specialisms.

Table 5. R&D core occupations, with employment concentration and competitive effect in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, in comparison to the United Kingdom (2025) (Lightcast, 2025). Note: \*Blue: strong specialism, light blue: slight specialism, white: no specialism. \*\*Pink: competitive advantage, green: competitive disadvantage, white: equal.

Occupation	Description	2025 employment concentration*	2025 competitive effect**
2111	Chemical Scientists	1.7	4
2112	Biological Scientists	1.8	-1
2113	Biochemists and Biomedical Scientists	1.8	-6
2114	Physical Scientists	1.7	3
2119	Natural and Social Science Professionals n.e.c.	2	-11
2121	Civil Engineers	0.9	0
2122	Mechanical Engineers	1.1	2
2123	Electrical Engineers	1.1	2
2124	Electronics Engineers	1.4	4
2126	Aerospace Engineers	1.2	-1
2127	Engineering Project Managers and Project Engineers	1	1
2129	Engineering Professionals n.e.c.	1.2	8
2135	Cyber Security Professionals	1.1	-6
2136	IT Quality and Testing Professionals	1	-7
2139	Information Technology Professionals n.e.c.	1	-32
2161	Research and Development (R&D) Managers	1.5	-1
2311	Higher Education Teaching Professionals	1.7	-57
2433	Actuaries, Economists and Statisticians	0.9	-1
2434	Business and Related Research Professionals	1.3	-6
2439	Business, Research and Administrative Professionals n.e.c.	0.6	-14
2481	Quality Control and Planning Engineers	1.2	16
3111	Laboratory Technicians	1.6	-43
3112	Electrical and Electronics Technicians	1.2	4
3113	Engineering Technicians	1.1	-18
3114	Building and Civil Engineering Technicians	1	-4
3115	Quality Assurance Technicians	1.2	5
3116	Planning, Process and Production Technicians	1.1	-8
3119	Science, Engineering and Production Technicians n.e.c.	1.3	-1

## 5. Business demography

This section provides analysis of business dynamics across the corridor, using a range of indicators that capture both the scale and vitality of enterprise activity. It includes indicators of total business count to show the overall size of the business base, alongside high-growth businesses to highlight the quantity of those that are driving expansion. Furthermore, indicators such as business births and deaths provide insight into the rate of churn within the economy, while survival rates assess the resilience and sustainability of new businesses over time. Together, these metrics offer understanding of business formation, growth patterns, and stability, informing strategies to strengthen the corridor's entrepreneurial ecosystem and long-term economic performance.

### 5.1 Business count

#### Indicator definition

Business counts are provided by the ONS, via analysis of the IDBR<sup>32</sup>. This contains all enterprises, which are the smallest combination of legal units that has a certain degree of autonomy within an Enterprise Group. An enterprise is an organisational unit producing goods or services that has a certain degree of autonomy in decision making. This data can be broken down by legal status i.e. private or public sector, as well as size, measured by the number of employees: micro (0-9), small (10-49), medium (50-249) and large (250+). Growth in business counts can be assessed using the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR), which calculate the average yearly rate at which business counts increase over a given period, assuming growth at a constant rate each year. It smooths out fluctuations to show what the annual growth would look like if business counts grew steadily from the starting size to the ending size.

#### Data significance

Assessing the count of businesses helps to understand the scale and structure of the local economy and the conditions for business activity. A high number of businesses is an indicator of a strong local economy and a supportive environment for entrepreneurship. It is also important to consider other characteristics, such as business size, since a region could have many smaller businesses or fewer larger corporations, with varying economic effects. While large corporations provide high-paying, stable jobs, micro-businesses are the primary starting point for entrepreneurs to test new ideas with low overheads and drive innovation. As these grow, small businesses begin to add more specialised roles, while medium businesses often drive local productivity, as they provide a balance of the agility of smaller firms with the resources of larger ones.

#### Headline figures

In 2025, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor was home to just over 173,000 businesses. This accounted for 7% share of national businesses, meaning that 1 in every 14 businesses in England was based in the corridor. Private sector firms made up 99.2% of all businesses in the corridor, which was marginally lower than for England (99.5%). Micro businesses made up 89.6% of all businesses, while large businesses made up 0.44%, which were both slightly higher than for England (89.2% and

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<sup>32</sup> ONS, 2025. UK Business Counts - enterprises by industry and employment size band. [\[Link to source\]](#)

0.43% respectively). Alternately, small (8.3%) and medium (1.61%) businesses in the corridor made up a slightly lower percentage than England (8.7% and 1.61% respectively).

Growth in the total business population in the corridor was similar to that of England over the long run. Although, in the most recent three-year period, from 2022 to 2025, England’s relative growth rate was between 1.6% to 2.0% higher than the corridor’s relative growth rate to its 2022 business count, as plotted in Figure 26. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 27, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had a CAGR between 2010 and 2025 of 1.6%, which was slightly below England’s 1.9%. However, the corridor had a higher total businesses per 1,000 people than England, with 41.8 compared to 40.5, contained in Table 6.

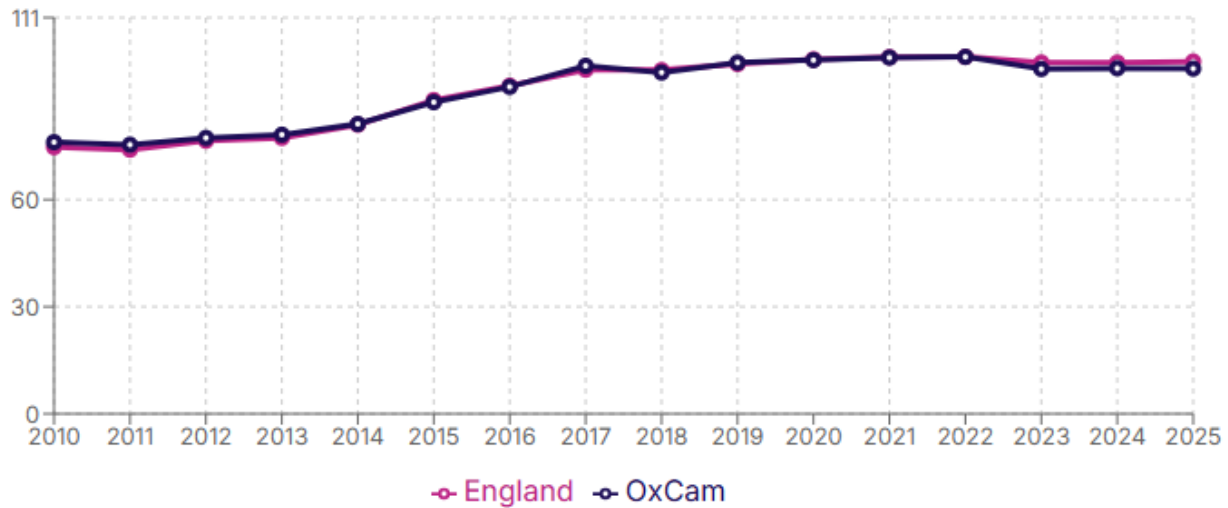


Figure 26. Total business counts (indexed 2022 = 100) for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam), compared to England (2010-2025) (ONS, 2025).

### Regional story

As illustrated in Figure 27, in 2025, Luton had the highest percentage of micro businesses (91.7%), while the lowest were seen in Oxford (83.9%) and Cambridge (85.2%). Oxford then had the highest percentage of small, medium and large businesses, while Cambridge had the second highest. This may indicate that Luton has a significant proportion of self-employed individuals and startups, though there could be barriers to survival or scaling up. On the other hand, Oxford and Cambridge’s size distribution illustrates how their university-linked economies may attract and develop the high-level and specialised skills, as well as the investment needed for startups to scale rapidly into larger organisations.

Furthermore, there was evidence of higher growth in the total business population in the South Midlands area with Luton, North Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes, Bedford and West Northamptonshire all LA areas that had a greater CAGR between 2010 and 2025 than the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor overall. Luton was the LA area with the highest CAGR at 4.0% as shown in Figure 28. The only LA area in the top five outside of the South Midlands region was Peterborough at 3.2%.

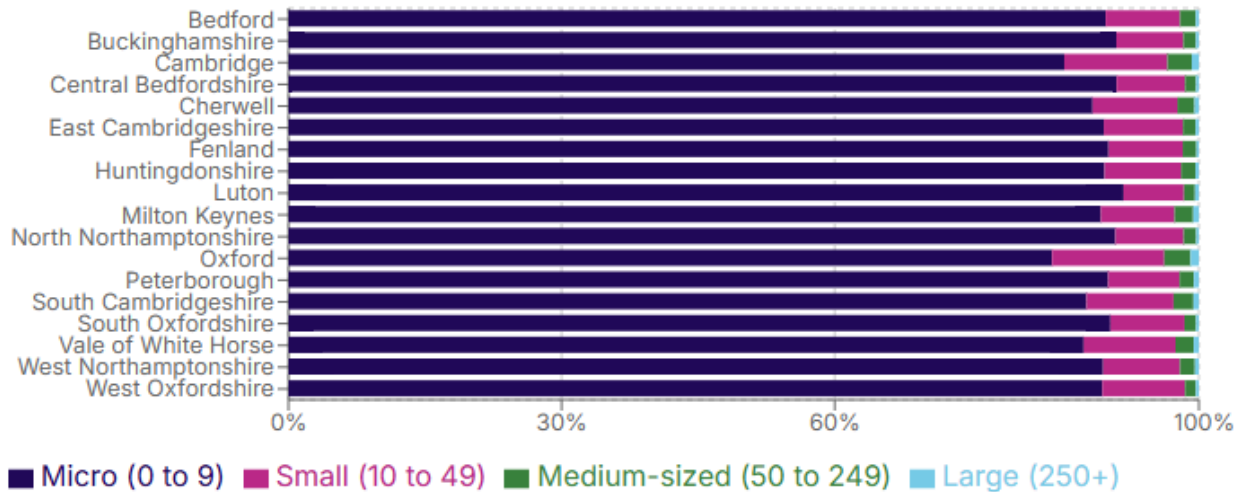


Figure 27. Business counts by size (categorised by number of employees, as a percentage of total business counts) by LA area (ONS, 2025).

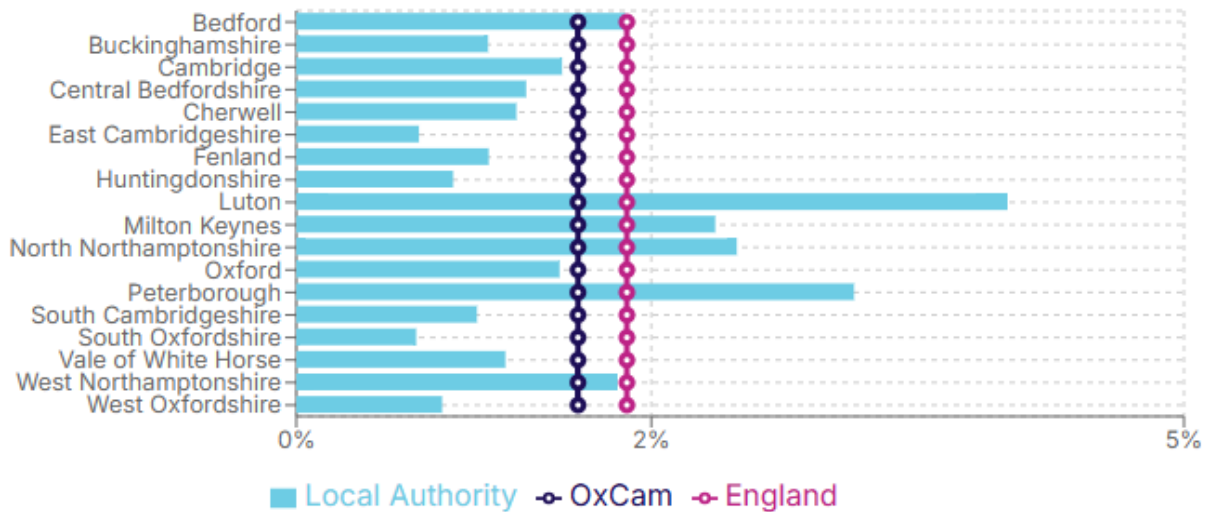


Figure 28. Business population growth (as compound annual growth rate, %) by LA area (2010-2025) (ONS, 2025).

### Deeper dive

Whilst Luton had a higher CAGR for total business counts between 2010 and 2025 than South Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire had a much higher count of total businesses per 1,000 population in 2025<sup>33</sup> with 50.4 compared to Luton’s 33.3 contained in Table 6. More businesses per capita often indicate entrepreneurial activity, innovation, and adaptability in the local economy and that the area is attractive for investment with a supportive environment for startups and SMEs.

<sup>33</sup> ONS, 2025. Estimates of the population for England and Wales. [\[Link to source\]](#)

Table 6. Total businesses per 1,000 population by LA area (2025 business count, 2024 population count) (ONS, 2025).

Local authority area	Business count 2025	Population count 2024	Businesses per 1,000 population
Bedford	7,225	194,976	37.1
Buckinghamshire	30,535	578,772	52.8
Cambridge	5,065	149,352	33.9
Central Bedfordshire	12,500	315,877	39.6
Cherwell	7,240	170,426	42.5
East Cambridgeshire	4,020	92,906	43.3
Fenland	3,675	104,896	35
Huntingdonshire	7,720	190,619	40.5
Luton	7,955	239,090	33.3
Milton Keynes	12,535	305,884	41
North Northamptonshire	14,950	373,871	40
Oxford	4,865	166,034	29.3
Peterborough	7,975	223,655	35.7
South Cambridgeshire	8,100	172,544	46.9
South Oxfordshire	7,880	156,470	50.4
Vale of White Horse	6,045	149,347	40.5
West Northamptonshire	19,020	439,811	43.2
West Oxfordshire	5,895	120,941	48.7
<b>Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor</b>	<b>173,200</b>	<b>4,145,471</b>	<b>41.8</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>2,376,615</b>	<b>58,620,101</b>	<b>40.5</b>

Figure 29 illustrates that Buckinghamshire had the greatest business count per 1,000 population in 2025 with 52.8 businesses, followed by South Oxfordshire with 50.4 businesses. Buckinghamshire’s and South Oxfordshire’s rate is much higher than both the corridor and England, overall. Cambridge and Oxford have relatively lower business counts per 1,000 population in the corridor. However, both city areas are dominated by large businesses, such as universities, hospitals, and research institutes, which reduces the number of smaller, independent businesses relative to population size. They are also historic centres that have limited land availability for commercial development.

According to CoStar, a leading provider of commercial real estate data and analytics, office rents in central Oxford and Cambridge in 2025 were typically £10–£15 per square foot higher than in South Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. This significant cost differential highlights the relative higher cost of entry for businesses in these historic university cities. Elevated rents, combined with limited

space and strict planning regulations, create barriers for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups, often pushing them to locate in surrounding districts where property costs are more affordable. This dynamic helps explain why business density per 1,000 population was lower in Oxford and Cambridge compared to nearby areas. Luton has business density between Oxford and Cambridge, however this may not be linked to rental prices or a higher number of large businesses, but instead influenced by its relatively higher population compared to Oxford and Cambridge in a similar small land area.

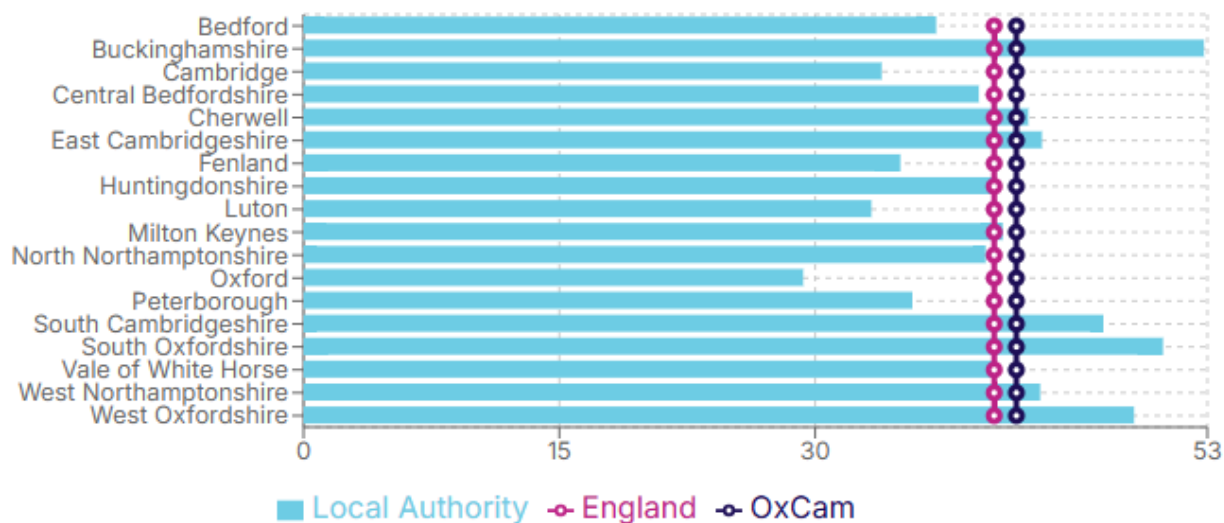


Figure 29. Total businesses per 1,000 population in by LA area, compared to the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam) and England (2025) (ONS, 2025).

## 5.2 High growth businesses

### Indicator definition

High growth enterprise data provides an aggregate view of the concentration of high growth businesses across LA areas. The ONS Business Demographics analysis defines a high growth business as an enterprise with average annual employment growth exceeding 20% per annum, over a three-year period<sup>34</sup>. To ensure meaningful results, a size threshold of 10 employees is applied, as recommended by Eurostat, to avoid distortions from very small businesses. While some cases of growth due to mergers or takeovers cannot be fully excluded, these are rare and unlikely to significantly affect the findings.

### Data significance

This indicator highlights regions where business expansion is driving employment growth, offering insight into local economic dynamism and scale-up potential. Areas with a high number of high-growth businesses suggest that an area has conditions that support business development, such as access to skilled labour and finance. Understanding their distribution helps policymakers plan targeted support, monitor progress, and inform strategies for regional economic development.

<sup>34</sup> ONS, 2025. Business demography, UK. [\[Link to source\]](#)

## Headline figures

In 2023, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had 815 high growth businesses equating to 44 high growth businesses per 10,000 active enterprises, slightly below the England value of 48.

## Regional story

There were notable hotspots of growth within the corridor, such as Oxford, which had 113 high growth businesses per 10,000 enterprises, followed by South Cambridgeshire with 79 and Cambridge with 75 high growth businesses per 10,000 enterprises, as shown in Figure 30. East Cambridgeshire had the lowest count of high growth businesses in the corridor with 13 per 10,000 enterprises. The gap between Oxford and East Cambridgeshire stood at 100 high growth businesses.

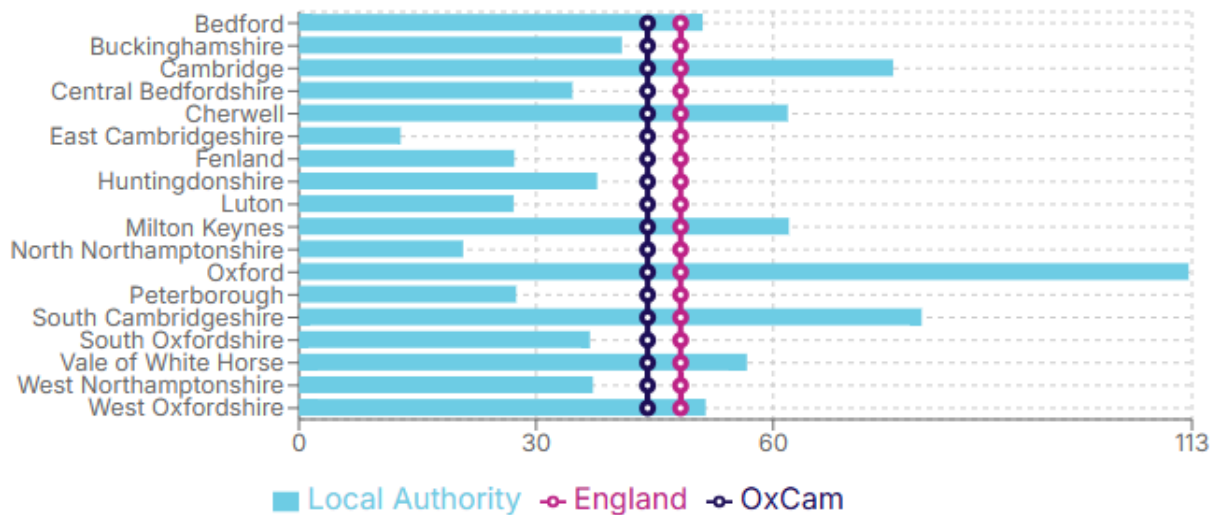


Figure 30. High growth businesses per 10,000 businesses by LA area, compared to the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam) and England (2023) (ONS, 2025).

## 5.3 Business births

### Indicator definition

Business births measure the number of new enterprises registered within a given period, as recorded by the ONS<sup>35</sup>. A business birth occurs when an enterprise starts trading and is added to the IDBR, typically through VAT or PAYE registration. Business births are reported annually and can be disaggregated by geography, industry, and enterprise size. The business birth rate is calculated as the number of new business births (enterprises newly registered for VAT and/or PAYE) during a given year, expressed as a percentage of the active business population in the same year.

### Data significance

Business births are an important indicator of entrepreneurial activity and the overall health of the local economy. Higher levels of new business formation can suggest confidence among entrepreneurs and opportunities for job creation. This information supports evaluating the

<sup>35</sup> ONS, 2025. Business demography, UK. [\[Link to source\]](#)

effectiveness of enterprise support, identifying areas of emerging activity, and understanding how local economies respond to changing conditions.

**Headline figures**

In 2024, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had 19,425 business births, down from the 19,880 business births the previous year. Consequently, the business birth rate in the corridor fell marginally to 10.6% in 2024, from 10.8% in 2023. In England, the business birth rate was 11.2% in 2024, up from 11.1% in 2023. The average business birth rate between 2021 and 2024 was 11.6% in England, whilst slightly lower in the corridor, at 10.9%.

**Regional story**

In 2024, Luton had the highest business birth rate of 16% and East Cambridgeshire had the lowest of 7.8%. As illustrated in Figure 31, Luton also had the highest mean business birth rate between 2021 and 2024 in the corridor, with 14.6%, while South Oxfordshire had the lowest, with 8.3%. Though the corridor had a lower business birth rate than England, the LA areas of Luton, North Northamptonshire, Peterborough and Milton Keynes were all higher. This high business birth rate in Luton, combined with the earlier findings about its high percentage of micro-businesses, demonstrates that low barriers to entry in the area may facilitate a high volume of startups with fewer than 10 employees.

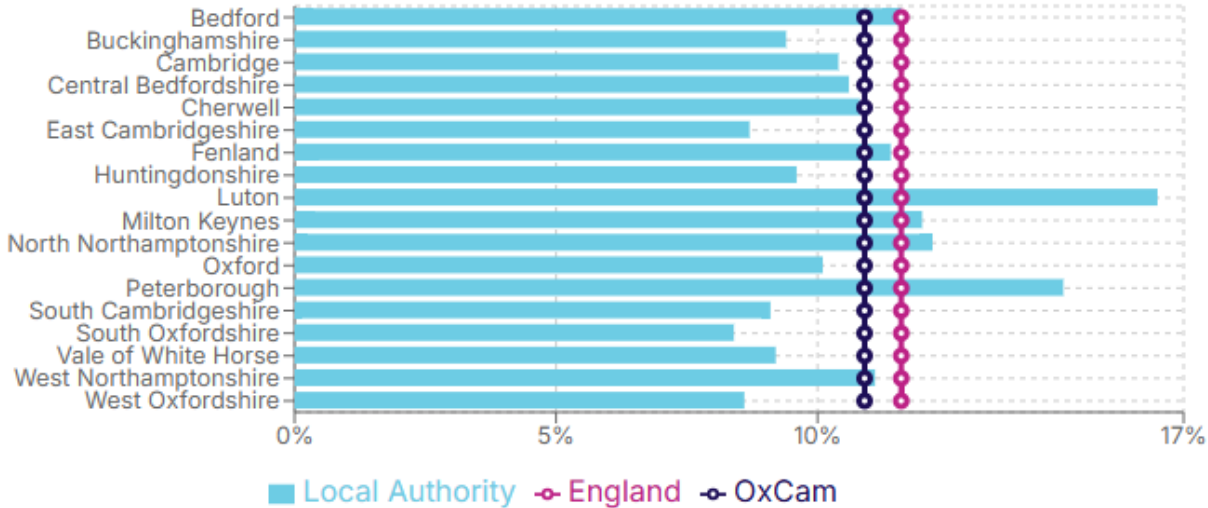


Figure 31. Business birth rate (%) by LA area, compared to the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam) and England (2021-2024 mean) (ONS, 2025).

**5.4 Business deaths**

**Indicator definition**

Business deaths measure the number of enterprises that cease trading within a given period, as recorded by the ONS<sup>36</sup>. A business death occurs when an enterprise is no longer active and is removed from the IDBR, typically because it deregisters from VAT and/or PAYE. Business deaths are

<sup>36</sup> ONS, 2025. Business demography, UK. [\[Link to source\]](#)

reported annually and can be broken down by geography, industry, and enterprise size. The business death rate is calculated as the number of business closures during a given year, expressed as a percentage of the active business population in the same year.

### Data significance

A high business death rate may indicate economic stress or sectoral shifts, as well as limited support and access to finance. However, high business death rates combined with high business birth rates can point to a dynamic but volatile economy with strong competition and rapid experimentation. While this pattern is common in innovative clusters, it highlights the need for targeted support, such as accelerators and funding, to help businesses scale and sustain growth.

### Headline figures

The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had an average business death rate between 2021 and 2024 of 11.1%, which was comparable to that of England (11.0%) and in 2024, both the corridor and England had a rate of 9.9%. The number of business deaths recorded in the corridor was 18,235 in 2024, significantly lower than the 19,490 business deaths in the previous year.

### Regional story

As shown in Figure 32, Luton had the highest mean business death rate between 2021 and 2024 in the corridor, with a rate of 14.2%, while West Oxfordshire had the lowest, with 8.1%. This trend was also true for 2024, where Luton had the highest with 12.4% and West Oxfordshire had the lowest with 7.7%. Though the corridor had a comparable business death rate with England, the LA areas of Bedford, Luton, Peterborough, Milton Keynes, North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire were all higher.

The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had a slightly higher business death rate than birth rate, whilst England has a marginally higher business birth rate than death rate, over the entire 2021 to 2024 period. The LA area with the highest disparity between birth rate and death rate, was both North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire, having a 1.9% lower business birth rate against their death rate.

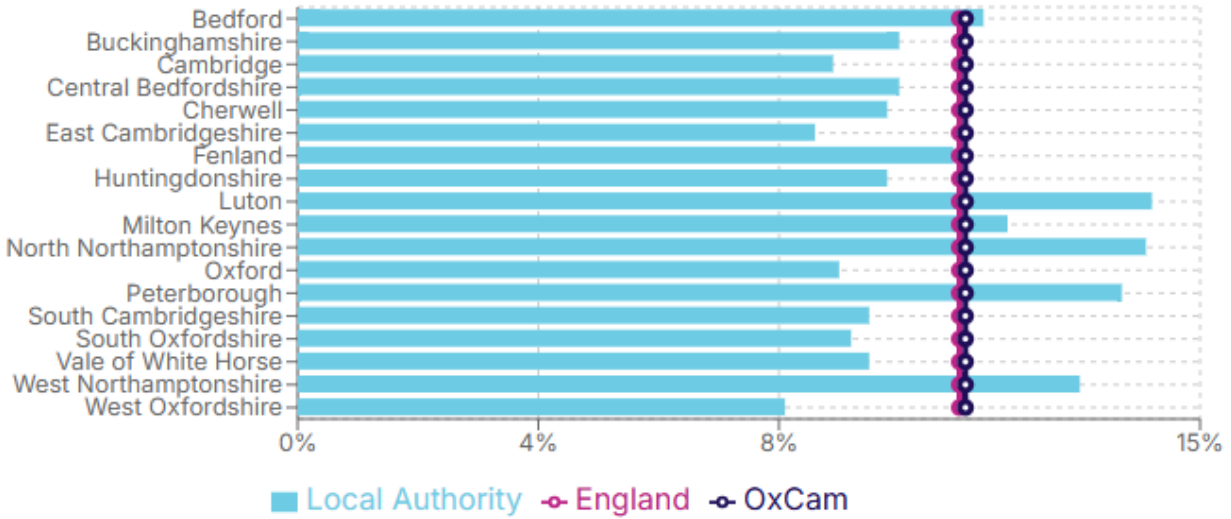


Figure 32. Business death rate (%) by LA area, compared to the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam) and England (2021 to 2024 mean) (ONS, 2025).

## 5.5 Business survival

### Indicator definition

Business survival rates measure the proportion of enterprises that remain active after a given number of years since their birth, as recorded by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) using the IDBR<sup>37</sup>. Survival is tracked annually for cohorts of businesses first registered for VAT and/or PAYE, and rates are typically reported for one-year, two-year, three-year, and five-year periods. For example, the one-year survival rate shows the percentage of businesses still trading one year after their birth. These statistics can be disaggregated by geography, industry, and enterprise size, providing insight into business resilience and longevity across the UK economy.

### Data significance

Business survival rates are a key indicator of economic resilience and the quality of entrepreneurial activity. While business birth rates indicate the level of new enterprise activity, survival rates reveal whether new enterprises can sustain operations beyond the initial start-up phase. High survival rates suggest a stable business environment with supportive conditions for growth, whereas low survival rates may indicate structural challenges such as limited access to finance, skills shortages, or market volatility. Tracking survival by sector and geography helps to identify areas where interventions, such as business support programs or infrastructure investment are needed to improve longer-term survivability.

### Headline figures

Regarding 2021 business births, business survival rates in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor closely mirrored the national trend, of England, but showed slightly stronger resilience over time, as presented in Table 7. Both the corridor and England recorded similar one-year survival rates (93.6%

<sup>37</sup> ONS, 2025. Business demography, UK. [\[Link to source\]](#)

and 93.5% respectively), indicating that short-term survival was broadly consistent. However, differences emerged over longer periods since the corridor’s two-year survival rate stood at 70.6%, marginally higher than England’s 70.3%, and its three-year survival rate was notably stronger at 55% compared to 53.5% nationally. This suggests that while initial survival is uniform, businesses in the corridor demonstrate slightly better medium-term sustainability, which may reflect regional advantages such as stronger support ecosystems, sectoral composition, or market conditions.

*Table 7. Business survival rates up to three years by LA area (2021 business births) (ONS, 2024).*

Local authority area	2021 Business Births	1-year survival %	2-year survival %	3-year survival %
Bedford	960	94.3	71.4	56.3
Buckinghamshire	3,285	95.3	76.1	61.5
Cambridge	570	94.7	69.3	55.3
Central Bedfordshire	1,450	94.1	73.4	59.7
Cherwell	865	92.5	69.9	54.3
East Cambridgeshire	345	95.7	78.3	65.2
Fenland	540	91.7	68.5	47.2
Huntingdonshire	805	93.8	75.2	58.4
Luton	1,705	91.5	63.9	47.2
Milton Keynes	1,795	93.6	70.2	52.9
North Northamptonshire	2,295	93	65.1	48.1
Oxford	560	94.6	73.2	59.8
Peterborough	1,395	92.8	68.1	49.1
South Cambridgeshire	890	93.3	65.2	52.8
South Oxfordshire	755	94.7	79.5	66.9
Vale of White Horse	645	93.8	72.1	58.1
West Northamptonshire	2,480	92.3	68.5	52.6
West Oxfordshire	505	95	76.2	63.4
<b>Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor</b>	<b>21,845</b>	<b>93.6</b>	<b>70.6</b>	<b>55.0</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>324,485</b>	<b>93.5</b>	<b>70.3</b>	<b>53.5</b>

### Regional story

Of the 18 LA areas within the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, 11 recorded three-year business survival rates above the England average. South Oxfordshire achieved the highest rate in the corridor at 66.9%, followed by East Cambridgeshire at 65.2%, as shown in Figure 33. Luton and Fenland had the lowest three-year survival rate at 47.2%. This created a gap of 19.7 percentage points between the strongest and weakest performers. The disparity was much smaller after the first year at 4.2%,

widened to 15.6% by the second year, and reached 19.7% by the third year, highlighting increasing divergence in business survival over time.

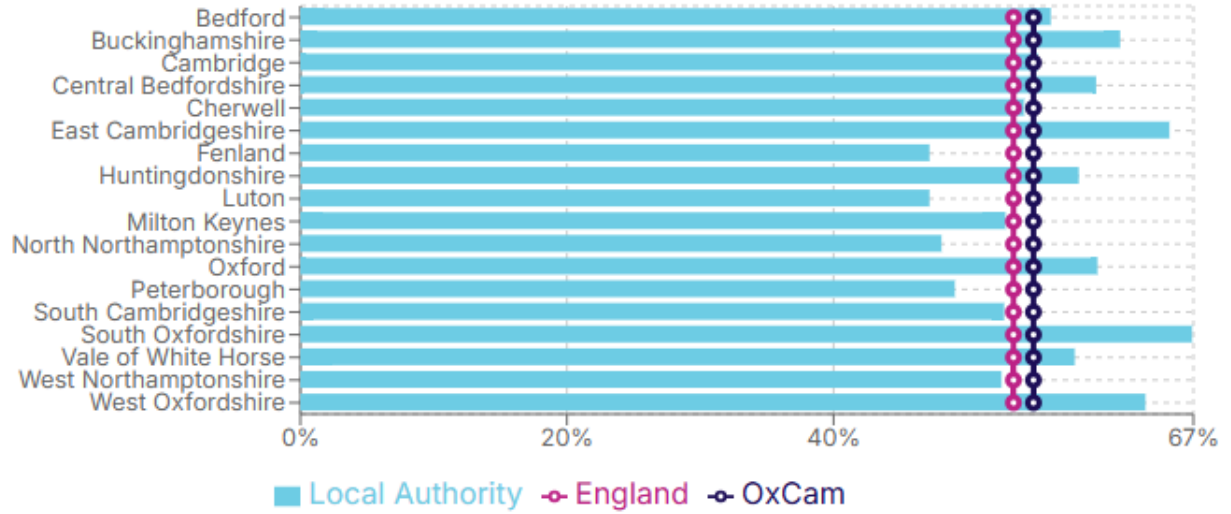


Figure 33. Business three-year survival rate (%) by LA area, compared to the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam) and England (2021 business births) (ONS, 2025).

## 6. Labour market

This section provides insight to labour market conditions across the corridor, using a range of indicators that capture both workforce participation and skills. Included are the indicators of employment and economic activity to show the extent of labour engagement, alongside unemployment rates to highlight areas of pressure. Additionally, qualification levels provide insight into the skills profile of the workforce and its capacity to support knowledge-intensive industries. Together, these indicators give an overview of the labour market, informing strategies to strengthen employment and productivity across the corridor.

Labour market data in this section is sourced from the Annual Population Survey (APS)<sup>38</sup>, which is a continuous household survey for the UK, covering employment and unemployment, as well as housing, ethnicity, religion, health and education. This enables the monitoring of estimates between censuses. The APS datasets are reweighted back for 2 years, using the mid-year population estimates and are reweighted back for 10 years using the latest census population estimates. Data originates from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), combined with data collected on a local sample boot. However, it must be noted that the APS estimates have not been reweighted to new populations and consequently, will be inconsistent with the population totals used for the LFS in the latest periods. Rates published from the APS remain robust, however, levels and changes in levels should be used with caution.

### 6.1 Employment

#### Indicator definition

The employment rate, as reported by the Annual Population Survey (APS), measures the proportion of people aged 16 to 64 who are in employment, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group. Employment includes individuals who are employees, self-employed, on government-supported training schemes, or unpaid family workers.

#### Data significance

Employment rate can highlight the availability of jobs and labour and the overall strength of the local economy. A high employment rate may suggest labour market stability and an alignment between workforce skills and employer needs. However, it is important to note that the employment rate on a regional area may not represent levels of employment within businesses in that area, as an employee's place of work may be different to where they live.

#### Headline figures

From 2004-2024, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor consistently had a higher employment than England (Figure 34). This difference was on average 4.1 percentage points higher, though it varied from 5.5 in 2004, to 2.2 in 2021. In 2024, the corridor had a rate of 78.4% compared to 75.6%, showing that this difference is smaller than the average over this time period.

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<sup>38</sup> ONS, 2025. Annual Population Survey. [\[Link to source\]](#)

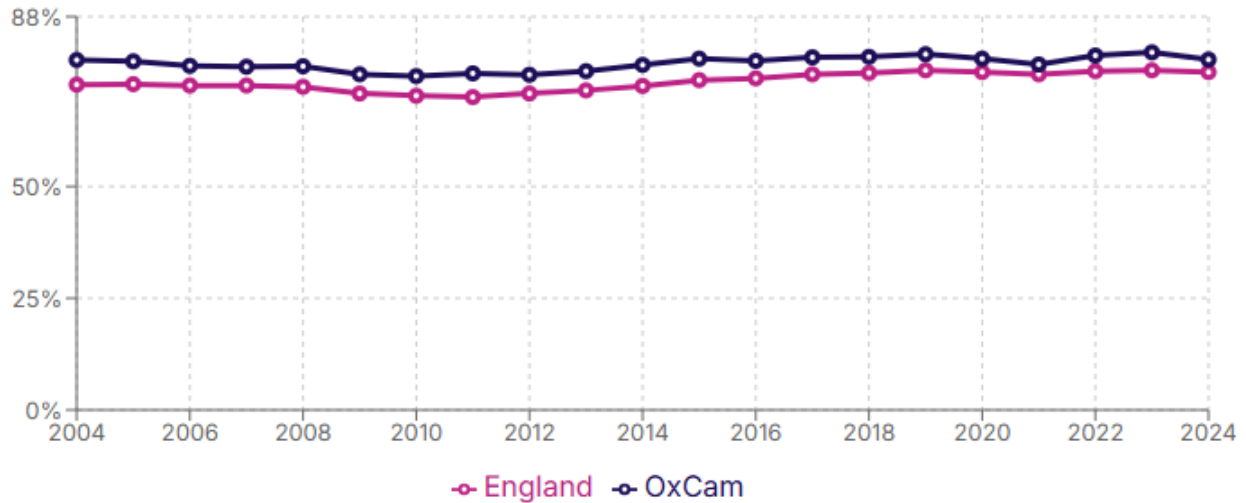


Figure 34. Employment rate aged 16 to 64 (%) for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam), compared to England (2004-2024) (ONS, 2025).

### Regional story

When looking at the LA level, Figure 35 demonstrates that the highest employment rate was seen in South Cambridgeshire, with 88%, followed by West Oxfordshire (87.4%) and South Oxfordshire (86.7%). The lowest employment rate was seen in Luton with 63.6%, which was one of only four LAs below the England rate, joined by Fenland, Cambridge, and Peterborough from lowest to highest

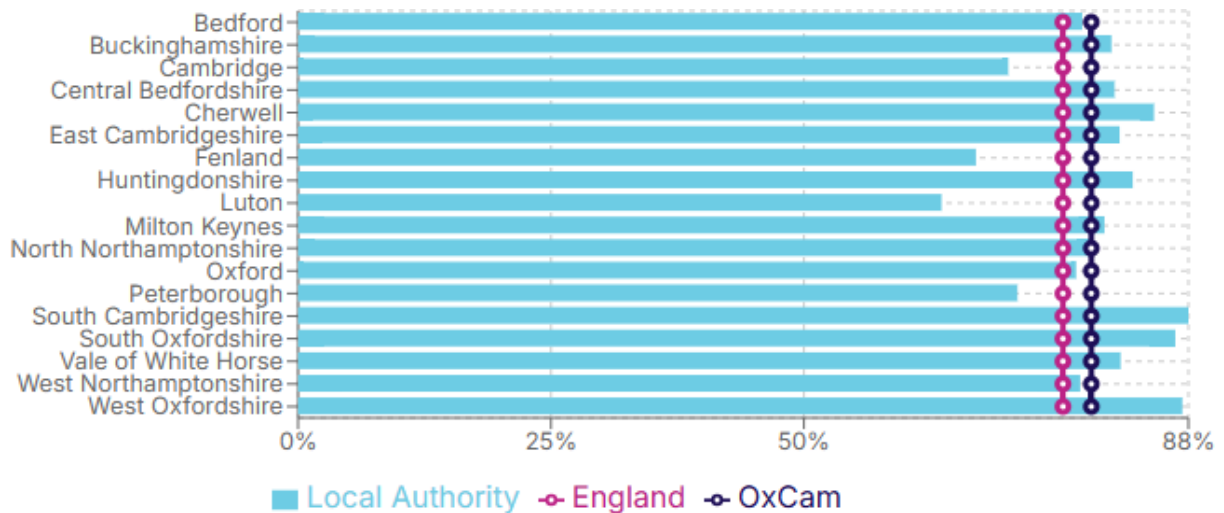


Figure 35. Employment (%) by LA area, compared to the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam) and England (2024) (ONS, 2025).

## 6.2 Economic activity

### Indicator definition

The economic activity rate measures the percentage of the population aged 16-64 that is either employed or actively seeking work, regardless of their current job status. This includes all

economically active people participating in the labour market who have not withdrawn for any reason e.g. early retirement, caring responsibilities, long term sickness or education.

### Data significance

A high economic activity rate indicates an area with a stronger labour force, with low levels of working age individuals leaving the labour market for a variety of reasons, enabling economic growth. Even if unemployment is present, a high economic activity rate means that the labour force is available and motivated to find employment. Alongside employment rate, this helps identify areas with labour availability and informs strategies for workforce development and job creation.

### Headline figures

The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor has had a historically high economic activity rate among its population, relative to the England average (Figure 36). From 2004-2024, this ranged from 4.8 percentage points higher in 2004, to 1.4 in 2021, with an average of 3.4. In 2024, the rate in the corridor was 81.3% compared to 78.7%.

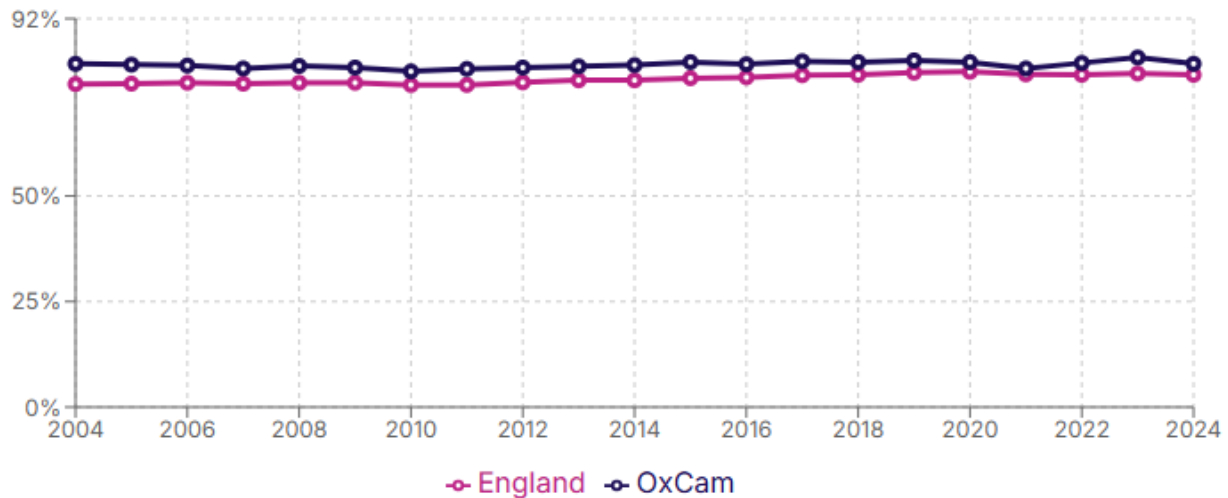


Figure 36. Economic activity (%) for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam), compared to England (2004-2024) (ONS, 2025).

### Regional story

In 2024, economic activity rates outperform the England average across most LA areas, apart from Luton, Fenland, Cambridge and Peterborough, which was the same order as when observing at employment rate (Figure 37). Furthermore, the same top three LAs were seen for economic activity rate, though a slightly different order, with South Cambridgeshire (88.9%), followed by South Oxfordshire (88.4%) and West Oxfordshire (87.9%), while Luton had the lowest (68.7%).

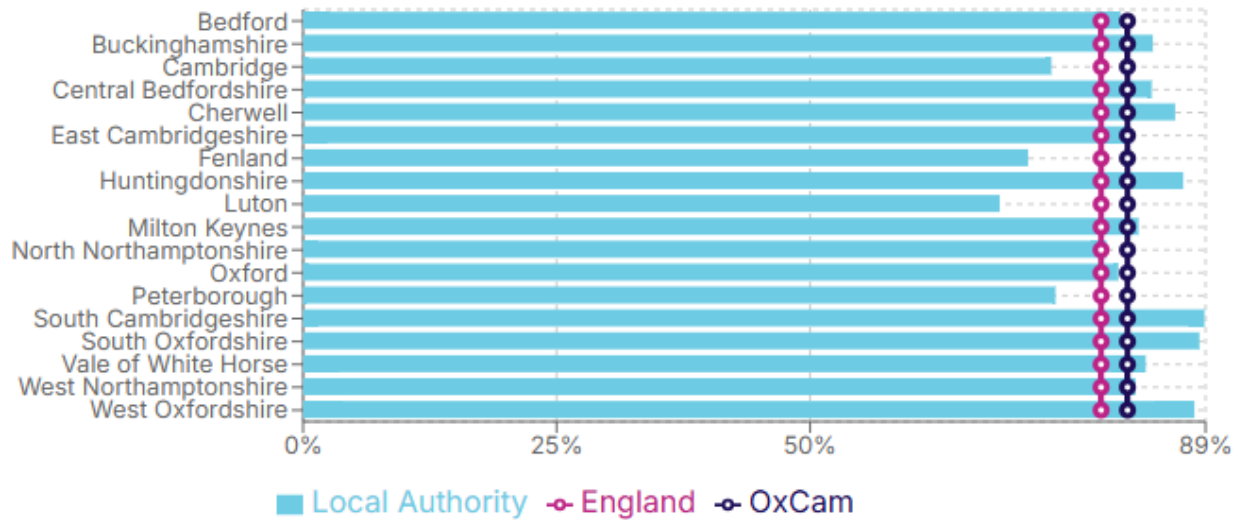


Figure 37. Economic activity (%) by LA area, compared to the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam) and England (2024) (ONS, 2025).

### 6.3 Unemployment

#### Indicator definition

Unemployment in the corridor can be measured as a percentage of the economically active population (those who have not withdrawn from the labour force and are available for work), aged 16+, who are unemployed.

#### Data significance

High unemployment rates can signal underlying economic and social challenges, such as reduced local spending power, loss of skills, and migration in search of work, all of which can weaken the local economy and affect wellbeing. Analysing unemployment alongside economic activity provides additional context, as an area may have high economic activity, but still experience high unemployment if job opportunities are limited or skills do not match employer needs. In addition, high unemployment rates combined with high employment rates, show the extent of the economically active population that are looking for work, which could be masked by looking at employment alone, where the labour force has high participation.

#### Headline figures

Similar to the trend observed for employment, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had a historically low unemployment rate, compared to England, with 2024 values of 3.5% and 3.9% respectively, as shown in Figure 38. Since 2004, this ranged from 2.2 percentage points lower in 2011, to 0.4 in the most recent two years, with an average of 1.1 lower.

Due to small sample sizes, it is difficult to provide reliable estimates of unemployment at the LA level, so these are not presented.

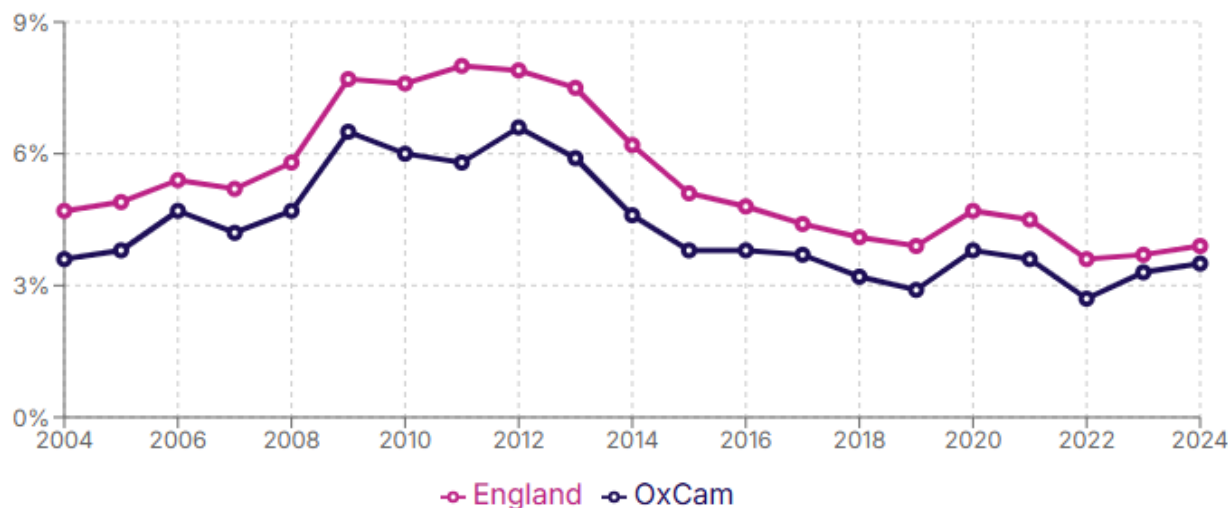


Figure 38. Unemployment (%) for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam), compared to England (2004-2024) (ONS, 2025).

## 6.4 Qualifications

### Indicator definition

The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) is the system used in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland to classify qualifications based on their difficulty and complexity. There are 8 main levels, as well as entry levels:

- Level 1: Introductory knowledge e.g. GCSE grades 3-1/D-G
- Level 2: Basic understanding with more depth e.g. GCSE grades 9-4 or grades A\*-C
- Level 3: Advanced knowledge e.g. A level
- Level 4: Higher education entry level e.g. certificate of higher education (CertHE) – equivalent to 1 year of undergraduate study
- Level 5: Intermediate higher education e.g. diploma of higher education (DipHE) – equivalent to 2 years of undergraduate study
- Level 6: Full bachelor's degree level e.g. BA/BSc
- Level 7: Master's degree level e.g. MA/MSc
- Level 8: Doctoral level e.g. PhD

Percentages of the population based on their highest level of qualification have been calculated.

### Data significance

Education levels indicate the quality of locally available jobs, whether they require higher levels of education and whether they are higher paid. Areas with good educational attainment, opportunities and job markets are likely to have a richer local economy. Meanwhile, areas with a less-qualified workforce might have fewer job opportunities for highly qualified people, struggle to train or attract and keep qualified workers, and have a poorer local economy.

## Headline figures

Figure 39 shows the 2024 percentage of highest level of achieved qualifications in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, compared to England, which demonstrates higher percentages of RQF4+ and RQF2 and lower percentages of RQF3, other qualifications and no qualifications. Only 5.8% of the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor's working age population had no qualifications, compared to 6.6% in England. In terms of higher education, the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor had a slightly higher proportion of its population educated to RQF4 and above than the England value (47.8% compared to 46.8%).

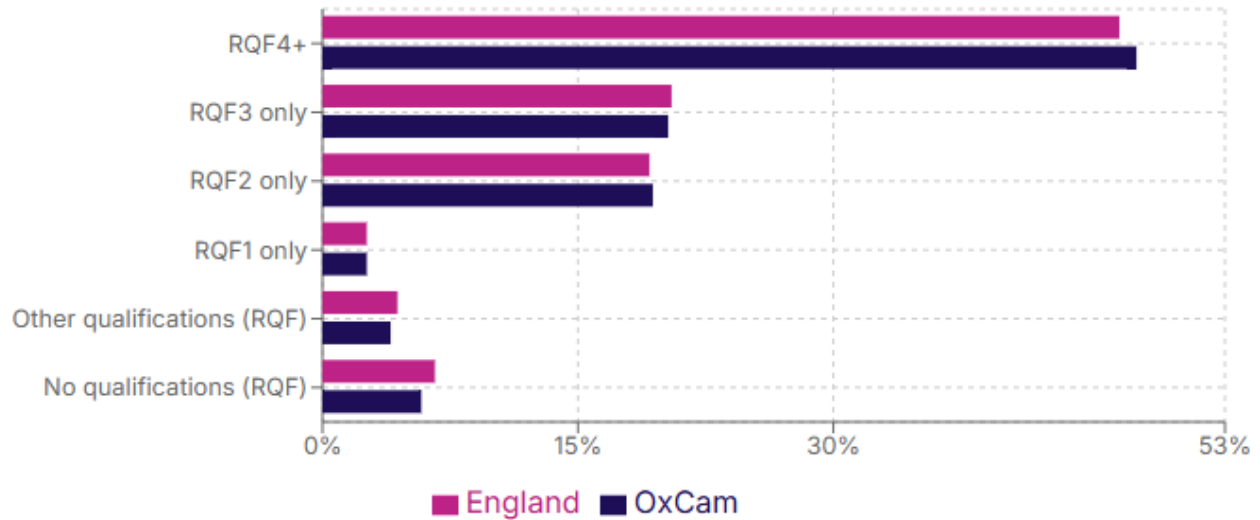


Figure 39. Percentage of the population aged 16-64 by highest achieved RQF level for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam), compared to England (2024) (ONS, 2025).

## Regional story

When looking at a LA level, there was large variation across the corridor. As seen in Figure 40, 8 out of the 18 LAs were below the England value, with the lowest three being Fenland (16.7%), Peterborough (30.8%) and North Northamptonshire (35.8%). The LAs with the top three percentages of RQF4+ were Oxford (72.9%), Cambridge (65.9%) and South Cambridgeshire (63.5%).

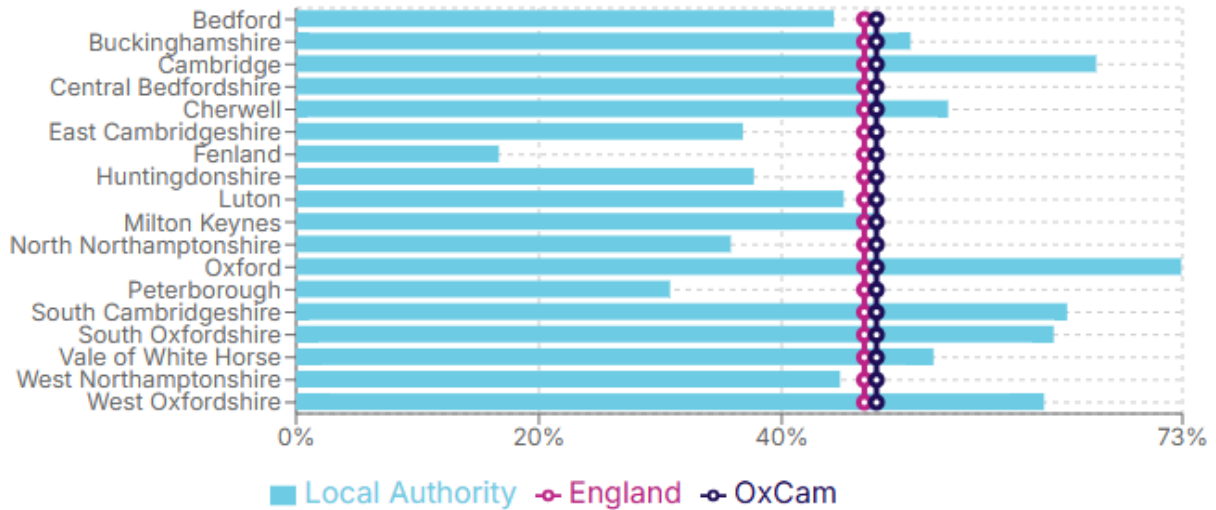


Figure 40. Percentage of the population aged 16-64 with RQF4+ by LA area, compared to the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (OxCam) and England (2024) (ONS, 2025).

A breakdown of the percentage of each highest qualification level by LA is not shown, due to small sample sizes in some areas making it difficult to provide reliable estimates. However, with the data that is available, it can be seen that while Fenland had the lowest percentage of the population with RQF4+, it was Luton that had the lowest percentage of the population with no qualifications at 10.6%, while Fenland had 5.9%. Furthermore, all LAs had the largest percentage of their population with RQF4+ as their highest qualification, apart from Fenland, which was RQF3 (32.1%).

### Deeper dive

It should be noted that these broad categories of qualifications give limited insights into local skills gaps in the labour market. For more detail on this, Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) can be explored. LSIPs provide an agreed set of actionable priorities that employers, providers and other stakeholders in a local area can get behind to drive change<sup>39</sup>. In autumn 2022, employer representative bodies (ERBs) were designated to lead the development and review of LSIPs for 38 economic regions in England. The designated ERBs worked closely with employers, technical education providers and stakeholders to develop evidence-based and actionable LSIPs. Each plan sets out the key changes needed in a local area to make technical education and training more responsive to employer and local labour market needs.

The four LSIPs covering the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, including links to the original reports, are as follows:

- [Buckinghamshire Local Skills Improvement Plan](#)
- [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Skills Improvement Plans](#)
- [Oxfordshire Local Skills Improvement Plans](#)
- [South East Midlands Local Skills Improvement Plans](#)

<sup>39</sup>Department for Education, 2024. Local skills improvement plans (LSIPs) and local skills improvement fund (LSIF). [\[Link to source\]](#)

The local skills improvement fund (LSIF) is designed to enable further education providers within their respective geographic area to collectively address priorities within local skills improvement plans (LSIPs). The funding covers two financial years - 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025. The LSIF builds on the Strategic Development Fund (SDF), which underwent a pilot phase from 2021 to 2022 and was subsequently rolled out across England in 2022 to 2023.

The Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor has received £12.7 million to drive from the LSIF, equivalent to 7.8% of England's total allocation<sup>40</sup>. In per capita terms, Buckinghamshire received the highest allocation at £4.39 of funding per person. With England's LSIF funding per capita at £2.85/person, every area in the corridor, except for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), received a higher LSIF funding per capita than England.

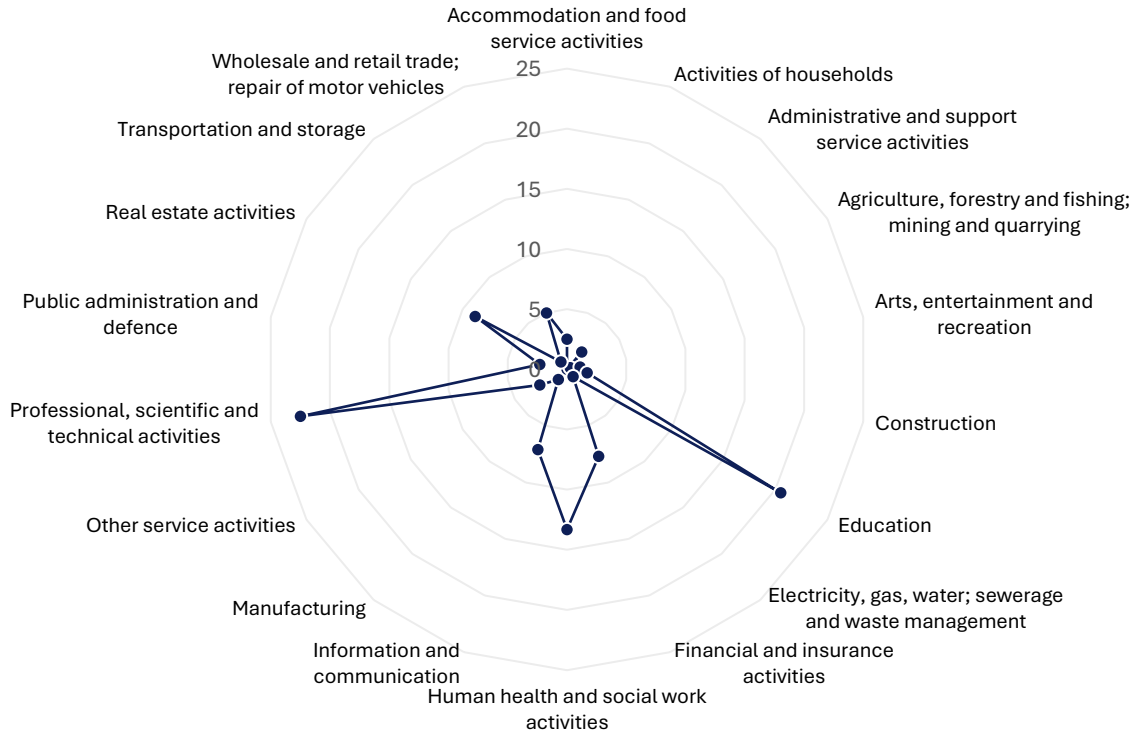
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<sup>40</sup> Department for Education, 2023. Local skills improvement fund awards 2023 to 2025. [\[Link to source\]](#)

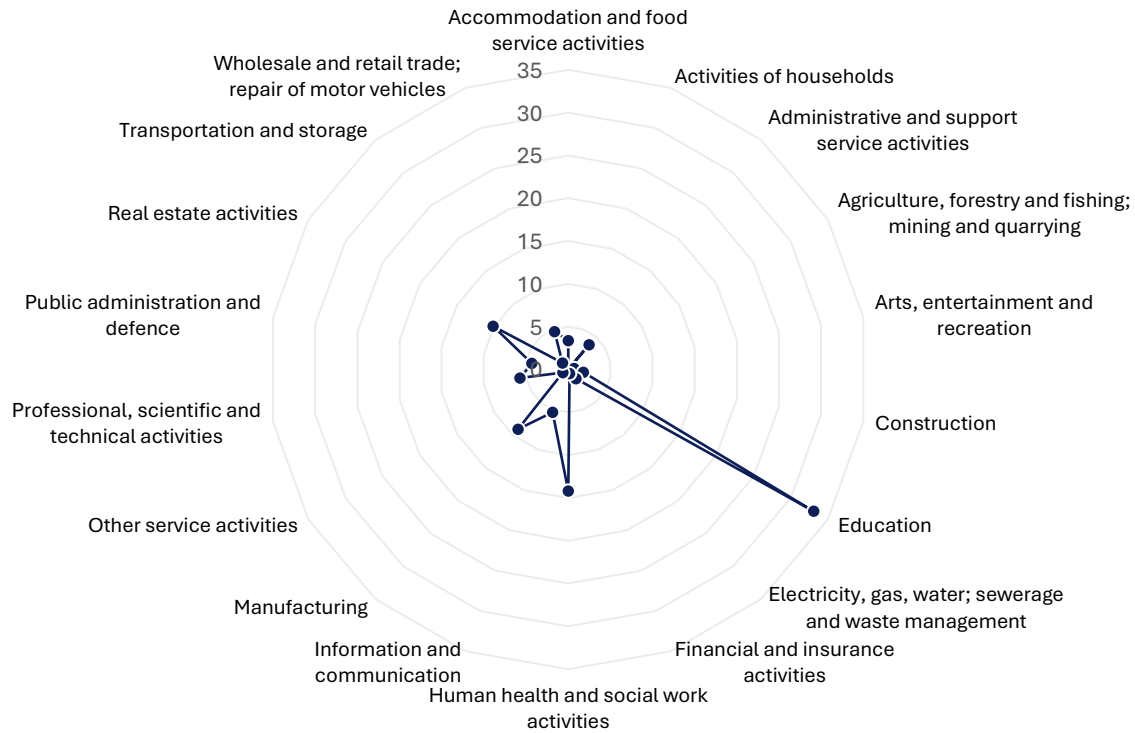
## Appendix A: Radar charts of GVA Concentration by Sector (%)

These charts highlight differences in economic structure, with Cambridge and Oxford exhibiting areas of high intensity in fewer sectors, compared to Peterborough and West Northamptonshire, which demonstrate a more balanced GVA distribution across multiple sectors.

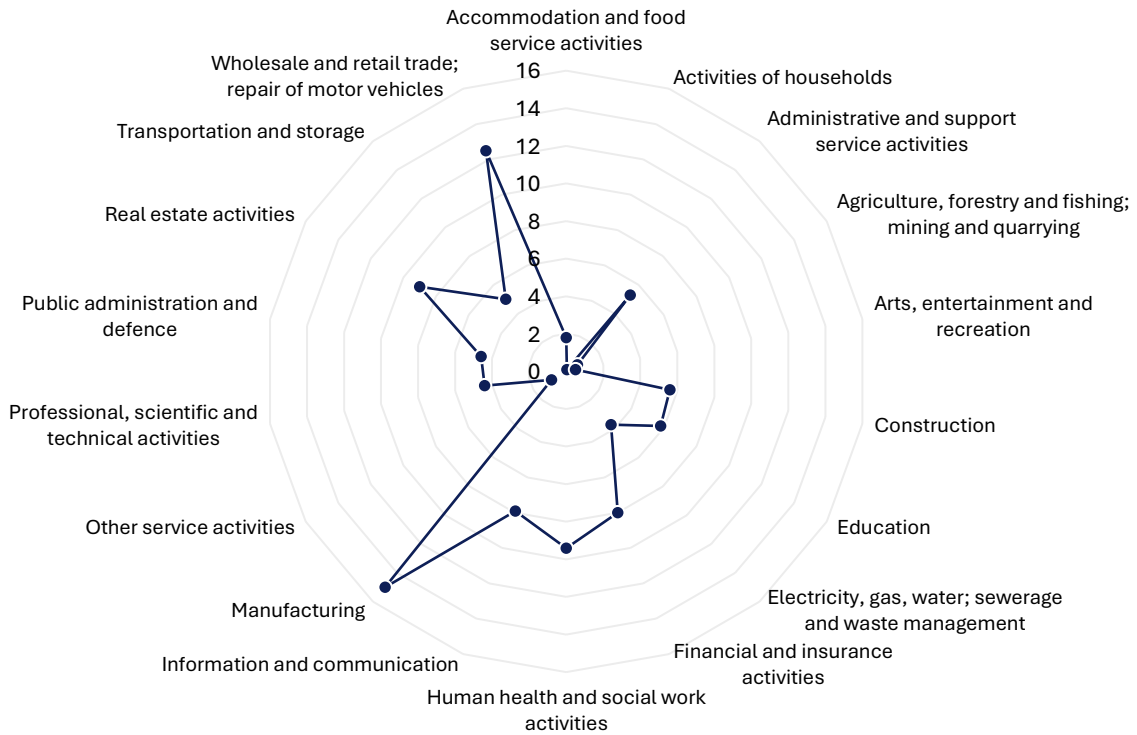
### Cambridge



### Oxford



## Peterborough



## West Northamptonshire

