

Whoever Wins on Election Day 2016, American Science Is Still #1 in the World



By Alex Berezow, PhD — November 8, 2016



Credit: Shutterstock [1]

On one thing at least, almost all Americans agree: This election cycle has been too long and depressing. When [Sheryl Crow](#) [2] is taking time out of her busy schedule to campaign for electoral reform, it's obvious that we've hit Peak 2016.

Despite all the negativity and Apocalypse predicting, neither the world nor the United States will end if your favorite candidate loses. The 24/7 media circus wants you to believe that, however, because it helps keep them in business. Indeed, as that mildly disappointing James Bond villain* [said](#) [3], "There's no news like bad news."

In order to refresh our minds with some cleansing thoughts, let's focus on something America does really well: Science. Regardless of the outcome of Election Day 2016, the following facts will remain true:

The United States leads the world in Nobel Prizes. In fact, it's not even close. As of 2015, the [World Atlas](#) [4] counts 353 Nobel Prizes for the U.S., nearly tripling the United Kingdom's 125 prizes. The U.S. has more Nobel Prizes than the next five countries combined (i.e., UK, Germany, France, Sweden, and Switzerland).**

The United States spends more money on research and development than every other country on Earth. Again, it's not even close. According to *R&D Magazine* ([PDF](#) [5]), the U.S. is estimated to have spent about \$514 billion in 2016 alone. (China, a nation with four times the population as America, comes in second with \$396 billion.) Notice that \$328 billion (64%) of U.S. R&D spending is because of industry. Tireless critics of Big Pharma, Big Ag, and Big Chemical ought to ponder on that.

| The Source-Performer Matrix | | US\$ Billions, change from 2015 | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| R&D is funded by the federal government, industry, academia and non-profit organizations who then perform varying levels of that research, along with FFRDC (federally funded R&D centers) which are operated for the federal government by industry, non-profit organizations or academia. | Source of Funds | Federal Gov't | Industry | Academia | FFRDC (Gov't) | Non-Profit | Total |
| | Federal Government | \$43.0 1.5% | \$29.0 1.8% | \$38.0 1.3% | \$15.0 -3.2% | \$6.3 0.5% | \$131.3 1.5% |
| | Industry | | \$328.4 1.5% | \$5.0 1.0% | \$3.0 4.0% | \$2.0 1.0% | \$338.4 2.0% |
| | Academia | | | \$18.0 2.0% | \$0.3 0.0% | | \$18.3 2.0% |
| | Other Government | | | \$6.5 7.0% | | | \$6.5 7.0% |
| | Non-Profit | | | \$5.0 1.0% | \$0.1 0.0% | \$14.4 3.0% | \$19.5 3.0% |
| | Total | \$43.0 1.5% | \$357.4 2.0% | \$72.5 2.0% | \$18.4 1.0% | \$22.7 3.0% | \$514.0 3.4% |

Source: *R&D Magazine*

American universities are the best in the world. In the *Times Higher Education* [6] ranking of universities, 41 of the global top 100 schools are located in the United States. (My alma mater, the University of Washington, comes in at #25. Go Huskies!)

So, buck up, buttercup.

Of course, none of this is to imply that elections are meaningless. Obviously, they are important. Policies can have a long-lasting positive or negative impact. But nations aren't built or destroyed overnight. History follows a long arc, and the United States is bigger and stronger than any one person, even the President.

**As it turns out, Sheryl Crow sang the [theme song](#) [7] for that movie, too. Not only does ACSH provide you with the latest science and health news, we also provide you with cultural trivia.*

***This list includes all Nobel Prizes, including those for literature, peace, and economics.*

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Links

[1] <http://www.shutterstock.com/pic-126648680/stock-photo-male-and-female-scientists-using-microscopes-in-laboratory.html>

[2] <http://time.com/4544117/sheryl-crow-petition-election-cycle/>

[3] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lecHdtywAAU>

[4] <http://www.worldatlas.com/articles/top-30-countries-with-nobel-prize-winners.html>

[5] https://www.iriweb.org/sites/default/files/2016GlobalR%26DFundingForecast_2.pdf

[6] https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2017/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25/country/2787/sort_by/rank_label/sort_order/asc/cols/rank_only

[7] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2BxTkJtpGYA>