Office for National Statistics

Article

Proposed changes to be implemented in Blue Book and Pink Book: 2026

Planned scope and content of the UK National Accounts, the Blue Book, and UK Balance of Payments, the Pink Book, 2026 editions.

Contact:
Blue Book Coordination team
blue.book.coordination@ons.gov.uk
+44 1633 988038

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1 . Overview

Every year, we at the Office for National Statistics (ONS) update the sources and methods for the UK National Accounts and publish the latest estimates (including revisions to past periods) in our annual UK National Accounts, the Blue Book compendium. A regular part of these updates is the comprehensive data confrontation through the annual supply and use balancing framework. This brings together detailed data on the three approaches (production, income, and expenditure) to measuring gross domestic product (GDP), balancing them by product, and updating the volume series.

In the UK, the national accounts and balance of payments are fully integrated and coherent. Therefore, a parallel process is followed for balance of payments, in which we publish our annual UK Balance of Payments, The Pink Book bulletin at the same time as the Blue Book, which includes detailed balance of payment statistics, such as geographical breakdowns of the current account and the international investment position. These show the transactions between UK residents and the rest of the world.

This article is part of a series describing the proposed approach for implementing changes to the UK National Accounts and balance of payments. These are being made in our Blue Book 2026 and Pink Book 2026 releases to ensure that they continue to provide the best possible framework for analysing the UK economy, and for international comparison.

The Blue Book and Pink Book are scheduled to be published on 30 October 2026. However, the regular quarterly releases for the GDP quarterly national accounts, Quarterly sector accounts, and Balance of payments, which are consistent with the Blue Book and Pink Book, are scheduled to be published on 30 September 2026.

We will publish further details on the proposed approach and its expected effects in a series of articles in the lead-up to the release of this year's edition of the Blue Book and Pink Book.

We also note that the 2027 editions of the Blue Book and Pink Book are scheduled to be published in July 2027.

2 . Approach to Blue Book and Pink Book 2026

This section outlines some of the proposed main methodological improvements to be implemented as part of the continued transformation of the UK National Accounts, in the Blue Book and Pink Book 2026.

Our scope for this year's updates was also presented to the UK Statistics Authority's Advisory Panel on National Accounts, in March 2026.

Household income

Low pay estimates

Following a review of processing methods, we will improve and update our estimates for individuals earning below the personal allowance for the taxable pay threshold. As part of these changes, we will also process stored revisions going back to 2009, which are led by improvements to deflation methodology by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), who supply the data. These changes are in line with our National Accounts Revision Policy.

Rent a Room

We will refine our processing of data from the Rent a Room scheme, which represent income generated by the letting of furnished accommodation in an already occupied home. This will allow us to more accurately reflect the self-assessment data for 2017 onwards, supplied to us by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), and what we draw from the Wealth and Assets Survey (WAS), to improve the quality of our mixed income outputs.

Statutory sick pay and redundancy payments

Transactions for statutory sick pay and redundancy payments have been reallocated to reflect their correct economic classification, and to align with international standards. They will now be treated as employers' actual non-pension contributions, having previously been treated as employers' imputed non-pension contributions.

Household final consumption expenditure

For the Blue Book 2026, we will make improvements to the way we measure private actual and imputed rentals within household final consumption expenditure (HHFCE). This change includes the use of hedonic-modelled rental prices, improved deflators, and other refinements to existing sources and methods.

Annual Survey of Goods and Services

The UK economy has a large proportion of activity in the service sector, but historically, readily available data have been limited on the products that businesses in the service sector produce.

Separately, for the manufacturing sector, we use our UK Manufacturers' Sales by Product PRODCOM survey. To significantly improve the understanding of the output of the service sector at a highly disaggregated product level, we developed a comprehensive survey of services industries, the Annual Survey of Goods and Services (ASGS). This survey, which began in 2017 following a successful pilot, is sent to around 40,000 businesses classified to the UK economy's service sector.

ASGS data are used to allocate industry level output derived primarily from the Annual Business Survey (ABS) to individual products. This significant quality improvement replaces product patterns derived from our previous Services Turnover Survey (Servcom) Survey data, which were partially aligned to early iterations of the ASGS during the implementation of double deflation.

ASGS data are now fully integrated in the national accounts production process. The survey data are available from 2017 to 2024 and will be back-cast to 2006. The lead time to fully integrate ASGS data has been necessary to ensure an appropriate level of quality assurance for survey data and national accounts processes. This has been especially important in integrating survey data for the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic period (between 2019 and 2021).

The ASGS itself does not change our starting estimate of the total output of industries in the non-financial business economy, as this comes from the Annual Business Survey. However, the improved understanding of the range of service products that those industries produced has led us to re-evaluate how we have reconciled data in our supply and use framework. Therefore, the ASGS will have some effect on current price (nominal) GDP. In addition, some impact on real GDP (chain volume measures) is expected, as annual double deflation methods are based on products rather than industries.

This work was originally scheduled for full implementation in our 2025 annual data release. However, we decided to delay its full implementation until our 2026 data release, to allow additional time for a full quality review of balancing assumptions. This included a review of sources of data on the economic demand for products where ASGS data suggested significant change to the level of supply in the economy. Therefore, our 2025 data release only included the ASGS's effects on some targeted cases, for example, in the research and development industry. Our 2026 data release includes a full range of ASGS data, following a substantial and detailed quality assurance process.

Review of energy industries and products

The combination of rapid price changes, business insolvencies and government interventions has led to challenges in reconciling data covering the energy sector over recent years, particularly in the electricity and gas industries. We are reviewing our data sources and how we compile these to obtain our estimates of gross value added for the energy industries, with particular focus on changes since 2019.

In order to ensure the UK National Accounts remain comparable with the national accounts of other European economies, we are also developing them to include an estimate of own account electricity generated by households. This development will allocate a value to electricity generated by households through solar panels, whether this is supplied to the energy grid or consumed directly by the household.

A market production element (P11) will be valued by reference to prices received by households on the Feed-in Tariff and Smart Export Guarantee schemes, and an output for own final use element (P12) will be valued by an appropriate basic price approach.

The output for own final use creates a corresponding new value for household final consumption and gross operating surplus, raising the level of GDP by a modest amount. We had already included the market production element in the accounts through supply use balancing.

While the values involved are small in comparison with total electricity generation and use, this method future-proofs the UK National Accounts for any further growth in own account electricity generation. The method was designed in close cooperation with and using data supplied by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ).

Deflators

We are making several changes within deflators to improve our estimates.

As part of the Blue Book 2025, we incorporated corrected chain-linking methods for the Producer Price Indices (PPI), Import Price Indices (IPI), Export Price Indices (EPI), and Service Producer Price Indices (SPPI). We will make a further update to the Blue Book 2026 to include updated weights for these business price indices. Updated weights have already been used in our monthly and quarterly GDP estimates from 2024 onwards.

This will bring the national accounts data fully in line with our [monthly business price bulletins]. More information on the chain-linking error and the impact of methodological changes in the producer prices dataset are detailed in our [Impact of correction to chain-linking methodology used in Producer Price Indices and Services Producer Price Indices: October 2025 article], published on 22 October 2025.

We will also make updates to:

- the fixed based weights used in the calculation of some output deflators from 2022 onwards
- the quality adjustment applied to the output and exports computer hardware deflator, to improve the monthly path for changes in quality
- plant, labour and materials weights used in our construction output deflator for the periods from 2018 onwards

Gross fixed capital formation

We will implement important updates to improve the accuracy and relevance of our non-financial asset estimates, such as refined methodologies and more up to date data sources.

These include:

- updated methods for estimating costs associated with the transfer of ownership of non-financial assets, otherwise known as transfer costs, to ensure that we reflect real market activity and international best practice; this includes those for Land Registry fees and fees associated with the transfer of a football player but not the transfer fee

- including revised Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data for 2024, which we use to calculate labour costs in our sum-of-costs approach for calculating own-account software estimates

- updating artistic originals from 2018 onwards to incorporate improved data sources, strengthening coverage and reliability for periods from 2018 onwards

These changes are designed to deliver more granular, transparent, and accurate estimates, strengthening the quality of the UK National Accounts.

We will also refine the bottom-level industry profile for estimates of research and development gross fixed capital formation. These changes will not affect top-level aggregates.

Local government

Removal of Scottish Integration Joint Boards from the calculation of intermediate consumption (P.2)

Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) were established in Scotland following the introduction of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014. Its purpose is to bring together the 32 Scottish councils and 14 territorial NHS boards into partnerships to integrate how social care and community healthcare services are provided.

Our main source for Scottish Local Government intermediate consumption is the Scottish Government's Local Government Finance Statistics publication. Between the financial year ending (FYE) 2019 and FYE 2020, there was a change in how IJBs were recorded in this publication.

This change has resulted in our estimates of Scottish Local Government intermediate consumption being artificially increased from FYE 2020 onwards. Therefore, we will implement a methodological improvement to remove the effects of this change on our estimates and ensure that their recording is similar to that for the equivalent bodies in England and Wales. There is no impact on this series for periods before FYE 2020.

This methodological change will bring the UK National Accounts in line with our public sector finance publications, which implemented this improvement, as explained in our Economic statistics classifications and developments in public sector finances: August 2025 article.

We will detail this further in upcoming articles on the impact of methods changes to the Blue Book and Pink Book 2026.

3 . Communication

To keep you informed on all our changes to the UK National Accounts, we will publish a series of more detailed articles in the lead up to the publication of the Blue Book and Pink Book 2026 that highlight the effects of the main improvements. This is an approach that we have taken in previous editions of the Blue Book and Pink Book, which includes publishing supporting methodology articles on the changes we make to the data, where applicable.

4 . Related links

UK National Accounts, The Blue Book: 2025
Compendium | Released 31 October 2025
National accounts statistics including national and sector accounts, industrial analyses and environmental accounts.

UK Balance of Payments, The Pink Book: 2025
Bulletin | Released 31 October 2025
Balances between inward and outward transactions, providing a net flow of transactions between UK residents and the rest of the world and reports on how that flow is funded.

5 . Cite this article

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