

Government in numbers

The UK state is a complex mosaic of organisations, democratically accountable to 46.8 million electors and supporting a population of 64.6 million people.^{1,2}

The Government's accounts identify 5,500 organisations across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales as the UK public sector. Together, they employ 5.4 million people, or 17 per cent of UK employment.

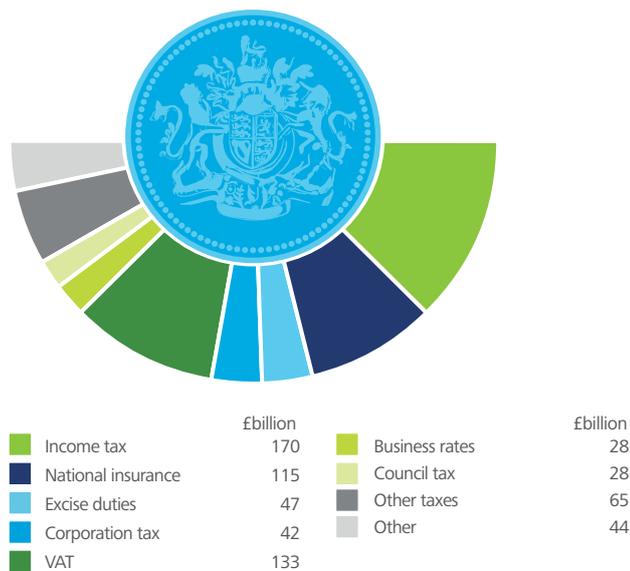
As well as national Government in Westminster and Whitehall, three distinctive administrations based in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh run the state, each held to account by a unique elected assembly. Eight political parties are currently parties of UK national and devolved Government, with 149 ministers serving as political decision makers.

A total of 947 elected representatives currently legislate and scrutinise government in our elected assemblies, along with 775 members of the House of Lords acting as a second chamber of the UK Parliament. A further 73 UK members of the European Parliament scrutinise EU legislation that affects the UK and 18,100 councillors hold 418 councils to account.³

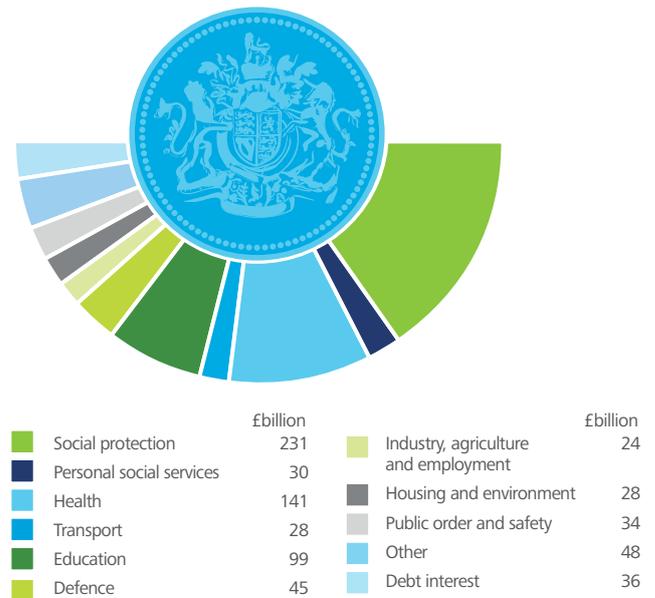
This financial year, the UK Government will raise £673 billion and spend £742 billion. The difference between what the state earns and what it spends – the deficit – is funded by borrowing, and this financial year the Government is expected to borrow £69.5 billion.⁴ The cumulative effect of that borrowing over time means that the Government's debts have risen almost threefold since the global financial crisis in 2008 to £1.5 trillion in 2015.⁵

The UK Government's latest balance sheet shows £1.337 trillion of assets including land, the road network and military equipment, and liabilities of £3.189 trillion including public sector pension schemes and borrowing. The state's net liability – the difference between what the Government owns and what it owes at an accounting year end – rose by £224 billion to reach £1.852 trillion at last count for the 2013-14 financial year.

Figure 1. Government income will be £673 billion in 2015-16



Government will spend £742 billion in 2015-16



Source: Budget 2015, HM Treasury