

Statistical bulletin

UK government debt and deficit: September 2021

Quarterly estimates of UK government debt and deficit.



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1 . Main points

- UK general government gross debt was £2,223.0 billion at the end of March 2021, equivalent to 103.7% of gross domestic product (GDP).
- UK general government deficit (or net borrowing) was £327.6 billion in the financial year ending 2021, equivalent to 15.3% of GDP.
- The general government gross debt and deficit figures published here (for 1997 onwards) are fully consistent with those published in the [Public sector finances, UK: November 2021 statistical bulletin](#), published on 21 December 2021.

In this release, we present statistics for the general government sector. These are used for international comparisons and include central and local government only. The public sector finances release has a wider scope, adding data for other public sector bodies, including public corporations, public sector pensions and the Bank of England.

2 . Government debt

Table 1: General government gross debt

General government gross debt, UK, financial year ending March 2016 to financial year ending March 2021

Financial year ending March ²	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Debt (£ billion)¹	1,651.0	1,719.8	1763.2	1,820.6	1,875.7	2,223.0
Debt (as % GDP)³	84.5	84.3	83.5	82.8	83.0	103.7

Source: Office for National Statistics - UK government debt and deficit

Notes

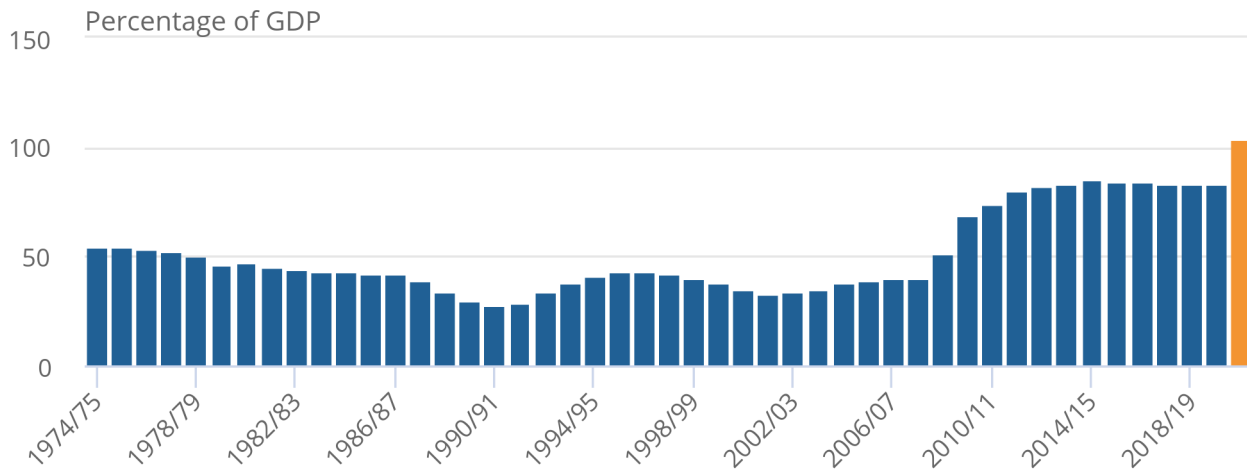
1. Debt is recorded as at the end of March of each financial year.
2. Financial year represents the period of April to March.
3. GDP – Gross domestic product.

Figure 1: Debt as a percentage of GDP has nearly quadrupled since the early nineties

General government gross debt as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), UK, March 1975 to March 2021

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General government gross debt as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), UK, March 1975 to March 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics - UK government debt and deficit

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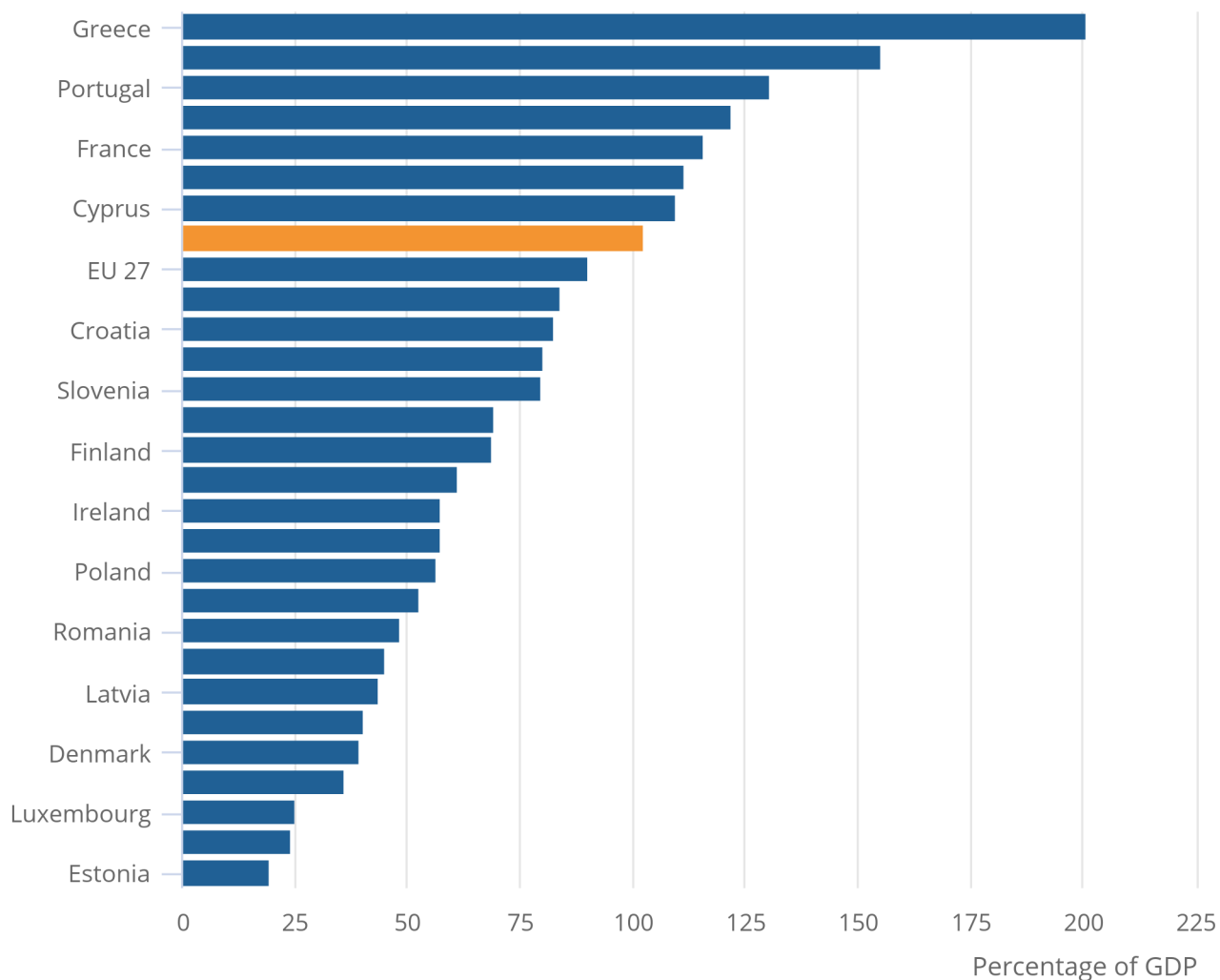
Latest comparison with the European Union member states

Figure 2: UK debt as a percentage of GDP is currently 12.4 percentage points above the EU average

General government gross debt as a percentage of GDP, UK and EU member states, at the end of Quarter 3 (September) 2021

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General government gross debt as a percentage of GDP, UK and EU member states, at the end of Quarter 3 (September) 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics - UK government debt and deficit, Eurostat

Notes:

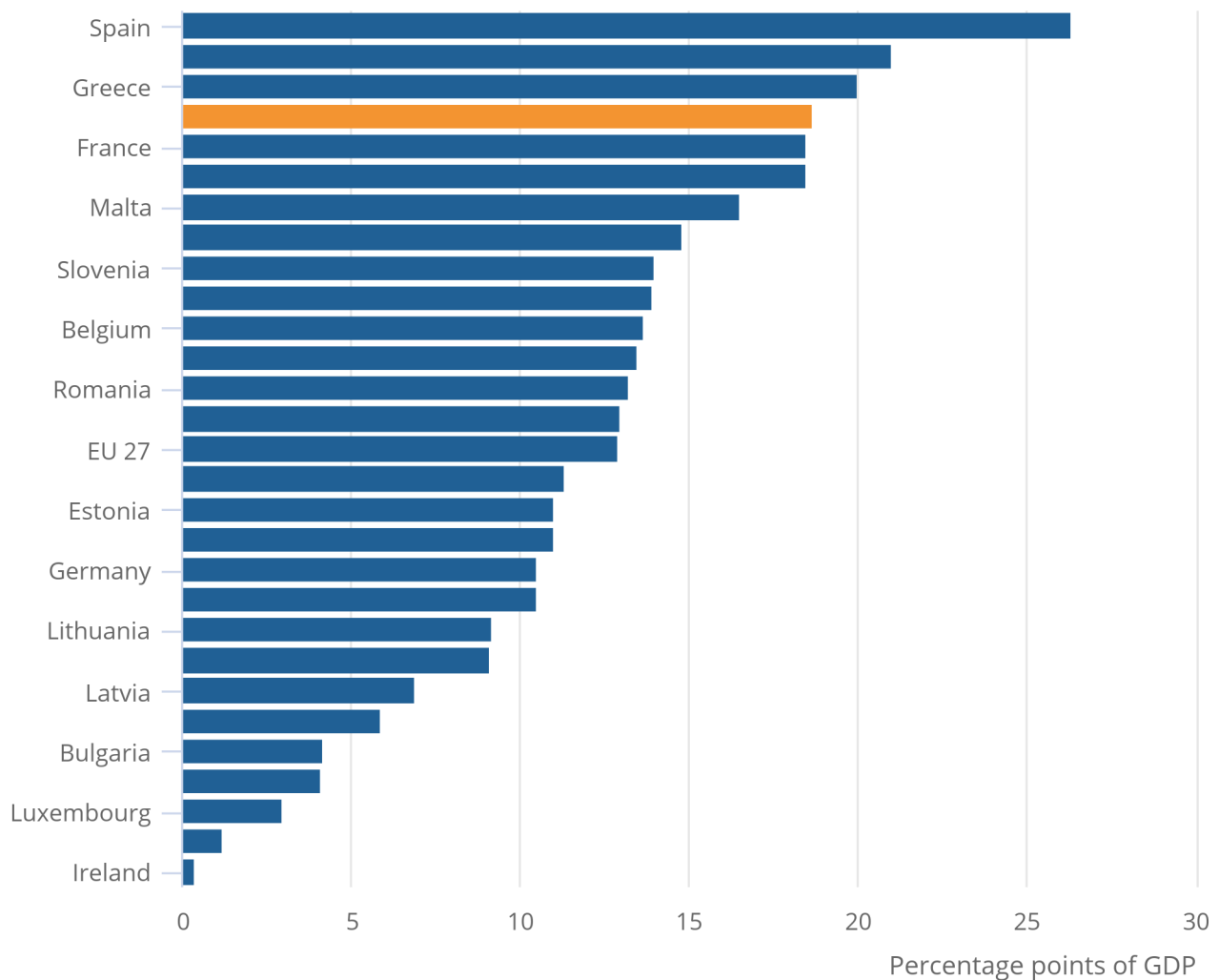
1. GDP – gross domestic product.
2. EU 27 - Average of the 27 EU member states.

Figure 3: UK debt has risen more than the EU average during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Change in general government gross debt in percentage points, UK and EU member states, at the end of Quarter 3 (September) 2021 compared with the end of Quarter 4 (December) 2019

Figure 3: UK debt has risen more than the EU average during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Change in general government gross debt in percentage points, UK and EU member states, at the end of Quarter 3 (September) 2021 compared with the end of Quarter 4 (December) 2019



Source: Office for National Statistics - UK government debt and deficit, Eurostat

Notes:

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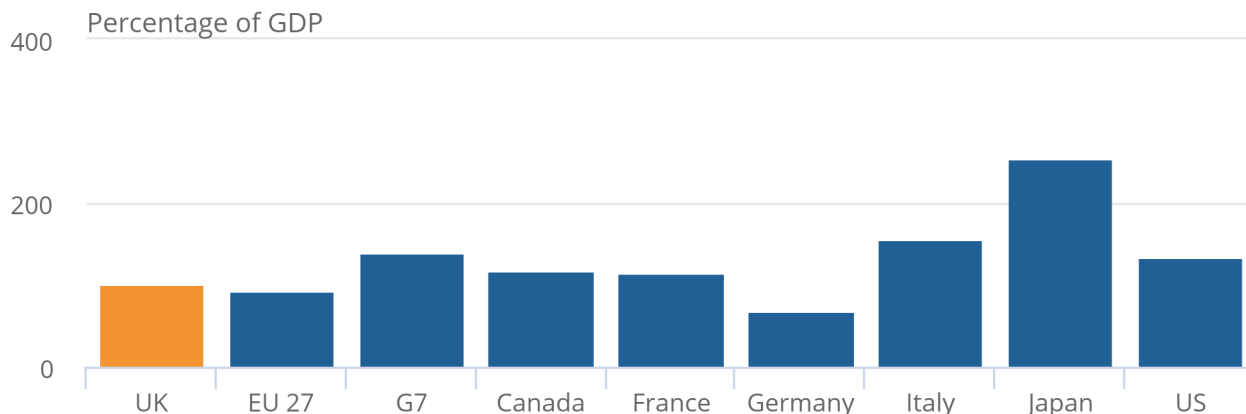
Latest comparison with Group of Seven (G7) member states

Figure 4: UK general government gross debt as a percentage of GDP at the end of December 2020 was lower than the G7 average

General government gross debt as a percentage of GDP, at the end of December 2020, UK, EU and G7 member states

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General government gross debt as a percentage of GDP, at the end of December 2020, UK, EU and G7 member states



Source: Office for National Statistics, International Monetary Fund – World Economic Outlook, October 2021

Notes:

1. GDP – gross domestic product.
2. EU 27 – Average of the 27 EU member states.
3. G7 – Group of Seven.
4. Debt is recorded as at the end of December of each calendar year.
5. The latest available data for all G7 member states.

An international comparison of general government gross debt as a percentage of GDP can be found in [general government debt and deficit as percentage of GDP – Annex A](#).

3 . Government deficit

Table 2: General government deficit

General government deficit, UK, financial year ending March 2016 to financial year ending March 2021

Financial year ending March¹	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Deficit (£ billion)	83.1	55.6	55.1	39.1	59.4	327.6
Deficit (as % GDP)²	4.3	2.7	2.6	1.8	2.6	15.3

Source: Office for National Statistics - UK government debt and deficit

Notes

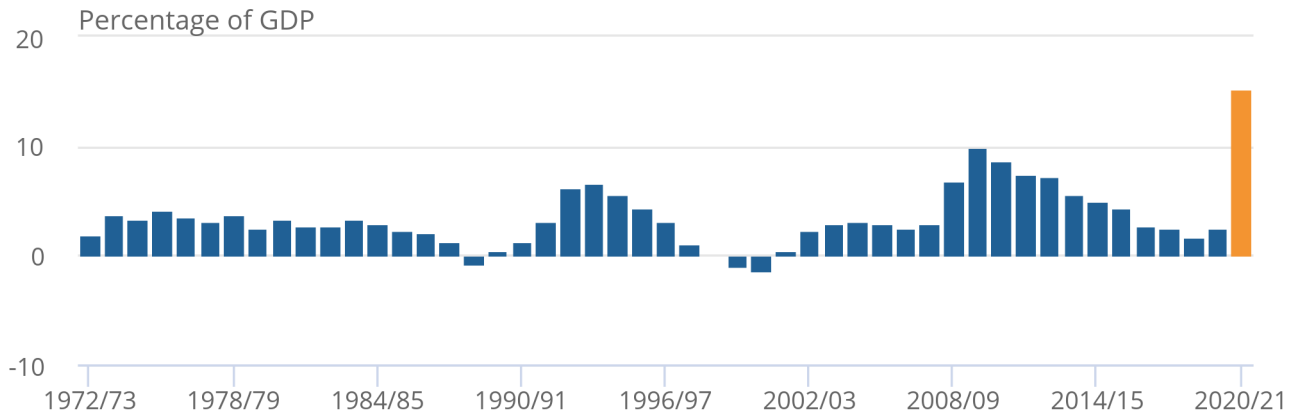
1. Financial year represents the period of April to March.
2. GDP – Gross domestic product.

Figure 5: Deficit as a percentage of GDP for the financial year ending 2021 was 12.7 percentage points higher than in the same period the previous year

General government deficit (net borrowing) as a percentage of GDP, UK, financial years ending 1973 to 2021

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General government deficit (net borrowing) as a percentage of GDP, UK, financial years ending 1973 to 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics - UK government debt and deficit

Notes:

1. Financial year represents the period of April to March.
2. GDP – gross domestic product.

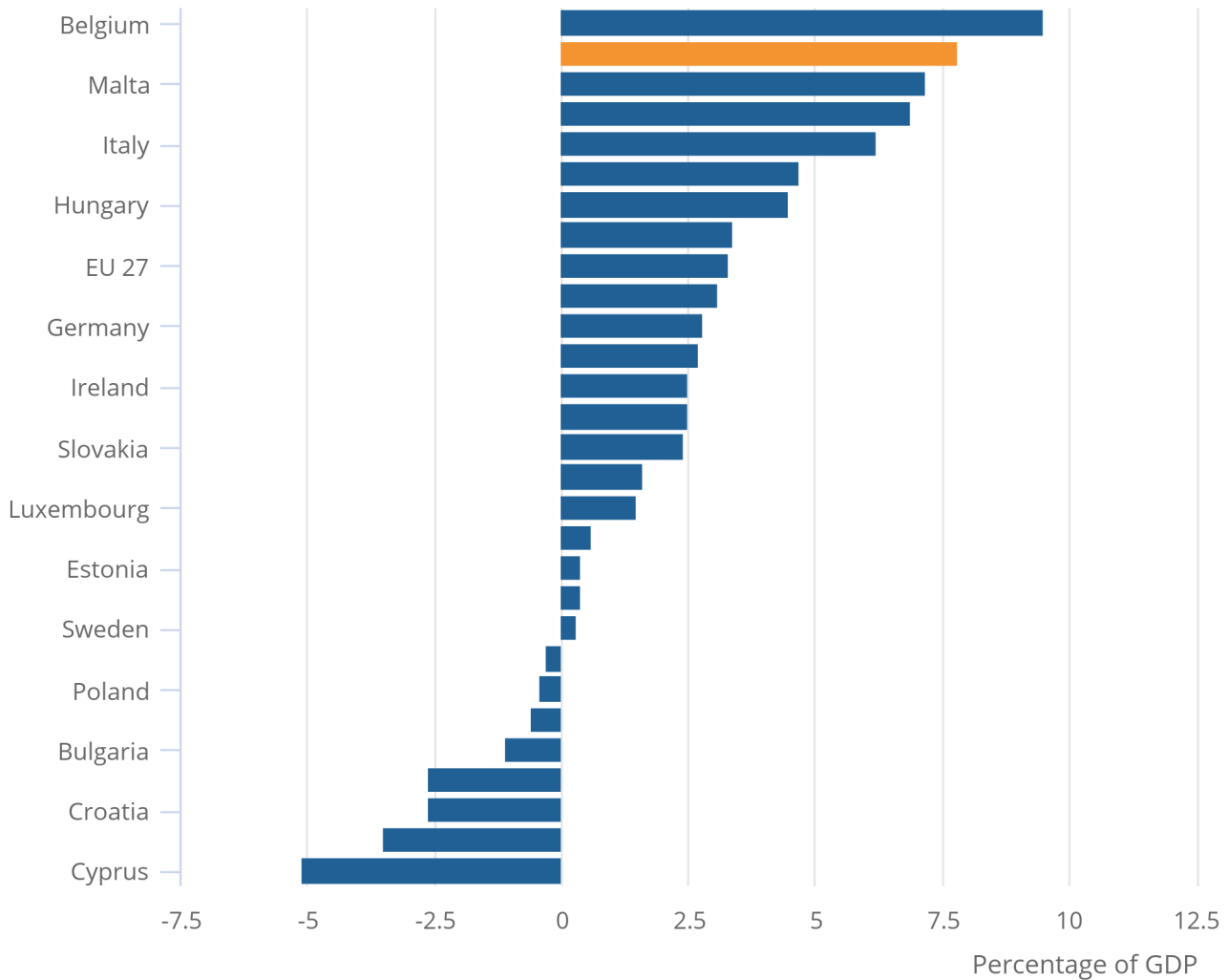
Latest comparison with the European Union member states

Figure 6: UK deficit as a percentage of GDP in Quarter 3 2021 is 4.5 percentage points higher than the EU average

General government deficit (net borrowing) as a percentage of GDP, UK and EU member states, Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2021

Figure 6: UK deficit as a percentage of GDP in Quarter 3 2021 is 4.5 percentage points higher than the EU average

General government deficit (net borrowing) as a percentage of GDP, UK and EU member states, Quarter 3 (July to Sept) 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics - UK government and deficit, Eurostat

Notes:

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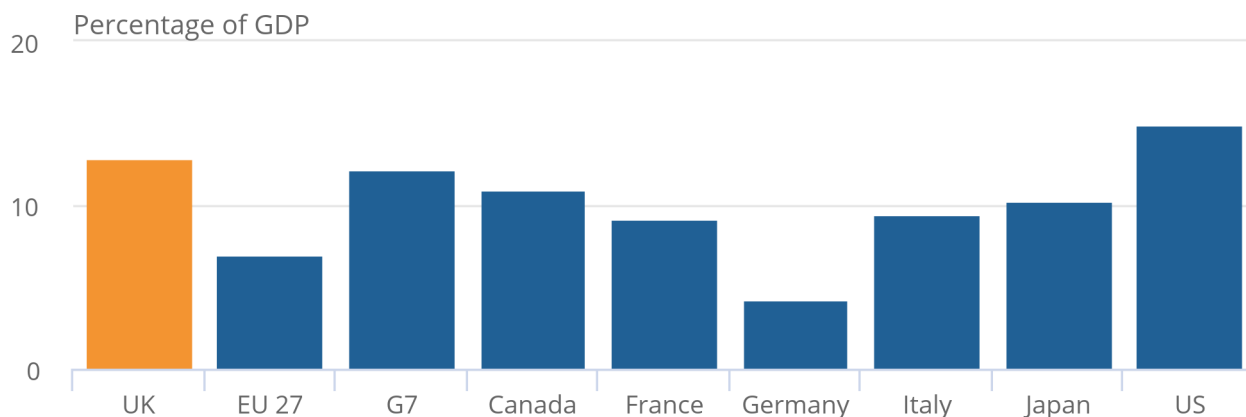
Latest comparison with Group of Seven (G7) member states

Figure 7: UK deficit as a percentage of GDP in 2020 was 0.7 percentage points higher than the G7 average

General government deficit as a percentage of GDP, 2020 calendar year, UK, EU and G7 member states

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General government deficit as a percentage of GDP, 2020 calendar year, UK, EU and G7 member states



Source: Office for National Statistics, International Monetary Fund – World Economic Outlook, October 2021

Notes:

1. GDP – gross domestic product.
2. Calendar year represents the period of January to December.
3. EU 27 – Average of the 27 EU member states.
4. Group of Seven (G7) – Average of the Group of Seven member states.
5. The latest available data for all G7 member states.

An international comparison of general government deficit as a percentage of GDP can be found in [general government debt and deficit as percentage of GDP – Annex A](#).

4 . UK government debt and deficit data

[General government debt and deficit as percentage of GDP: Annex A](#)

Dataset | Released 31 January 2022

International comparison of general government debt and deficit as percentage of GDP.

[Government deficit and debt return](#)

Dataset | Released 31 January 2022

Summary, reconciliation, and revisions information on UK government deficit and debt figures by calendar and financial year since the last publication.

[General government main aggregates: ESA Table 2](#)

Dataset | Released 31 January 2022

Breakdown of general government expenditure (both current and capital) and general government revenue, compiled according to the European System of Accounts.

[General government quarterly non-financial accounts: ESA Table 25](#)

Dataset | Released 31 January 2022

Breakdown of general government expenditure (both current and capital) and general government revenue, compiled according to the European System of Accounts.

[General government quarterly financial accounts: ESA Table 27](#)

Dataset | Released 31 January 2022

Complete set of quarterly financial accounts of the general government sector and its sub-sectors, compiled according to the European System of Accounts.

[General government quarterly debt \(Maastricht debt\): ESA Table 28](#)

Dataset | Released 31 January 2022

Summary of government debt on a quarterly basis, for general government and its sub-sectors, compiled according to the European System of Accounts.

5 . Glossary

General government

UK general government consists of two sub-sectors: central government and local government.

Debt

Debt represents the cumulative amount the general government sector owes to organisations in other UK sectors and overseas institutions, which is largely a result of government financial liabilities on the bonds (gilts) and Treasury bills it has issued.

Deficit

Deficit (or net borrowing) measures the gap between total revenue and total spending. A positive value indicates borrowing while a negative value indicates a surplus.

6 . Measuring the data

The UK government debt and deficit statistical bulletin is published quarterly in January, April, July and October each year. This is to coincide with when EU member states are required to report on their debt and deficit to the European Commission.

Revisions since previous publication

The revisions between releases are usually the result of improved departmental (and other government bodies) data replacing previous estimates.

The [Government deficit and debt return table](#) presents the revisions to our main aggregates since the last publication of the UK government debt and deficit return (published on 27 October 2021). These revisions are consistent with revisions incorporated within the [November 2021 Public sector finances statistical bulletin](#).

The [public sector finances revisions policy](#) provides information on when users of the statistics published in the [Public sector finances](#) and [UK government debt and deficit](#) statistical bulletins should expect to see methodological and data-related revisions.

7. Strengths and limitations

To supplement this release we publish an accompanying [methodological guide](#) and [Quality and Methodology Information](#) outlining the strengths, limitations, and appropriate uses of government finance statistics.

Economic statistics governance after EU exit

Following the UK's exit from the EU, new governance arrangements are being put in place that will support the adoption and implementation of high-quality standards for UK economic statistics. These governance arrangements will promote international comparability and add to the credibility and independence of the UK's statistical system.

At the centre of this new governance framework will be the new National Statistician's Committee for Advice on Standards for Economic Statistics (NSCASE).

Further information about NSCASE can be found in the article [National Statistician's Committee for Advice on Standards for Economic Statistics \(NSCASE\) – UK Statistics Authority](#).

Comparability with monthly public sector finances

The general government debt and deficit figures published in this statistical bulletin (for the time period 1997 onwards) are fully consistent with those published in the [Public sector finances, UK: November 2021 statistical bulletin on 21 December 2021](#).

There are two main differences between the headline debt and deficit measures published in the public sector finances and those published in this bulletin.

Firstly, this bulletin includes only the debt and deficit of central and local government bodies. The public sector finances' measures also include the debt and deficit of other public sector bodies, including public non-financial corporations and the Bank of England.

Secondly, this bulletin reports gross debt, while the focus of the public sector finances is net debt. Gross debt represents only the financial liabilities (debt securities, loans and deposits) of central and local government, while net debt deducts any liquid assets (official reserve assets and other cash or cash-like assets) from these financial liabilities.

Comparability with gross domestic product (GDP)

GDP data at market prices used to calculate government gross debt and deficit as a ratio of GDP are fully consistent with those published in the [GDP quarterly national accounts, UK: July to September 2021](#) on 22 December 2021.

Comparability with EU member states

The general government debt and deficit figures used in the comparison of each of the 27 member states are fully consistent with those published in the [Eurostat Government Finance Statistics – quarterly data: Quarter 3 2021](#) on 21 January 2022.

Comparability with Group of Seven (G7) member states

The general government debt and deficit figures used in the comparison of G7 member states are fully consistent with those published in the [International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook](#) on 12 October 2021.

8 . Related links

[Public sector finances, UK: November 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released 21 December 2021

How the relationship between UK public sector monthly income and expenditure leads to changes in deficit and debt.

[Public sector finances borrowing by sub-sector](#)

Dataset | Released 21 December 2021

Public sector finances analytical tables (PSAT) showing transactions related to borrowing by sub-sector. Total Managed Expenditure (TME) is also provided.

[Recent and upcoming changes to public sector finance statistics](#)

Article | Released 21 December 2021

Areas for future development in the public sector finance statistics.

[The debt and deficit of the UK public sector explained](#)

Article | Released 16 March 2016

A detailed explanation of the debt and deficit of the UK public sector.

[Eurostat Government Finance Statistics – quarterly data: Quarter 3 2021](#)

Bulletin | Released January 21 2022

The latest debt and deficit quarterly statistics of the 27 European countries which make up the European Union.

[International Monetary Fund - World Economic Outlook: October 2021](#)

Report | Released October 12 2021

The latest report from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) containing key indicators of its member countries.