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Who said crime doesn't pay? Counting prostitution and drugs in the GDP figure has seen the UK's economy overtake France as fifth largest in the world

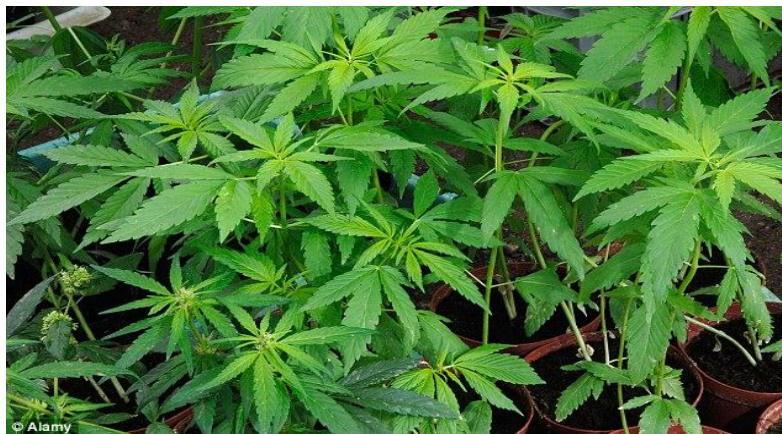
- Britain's economy is expected to be worth total £1.86trillion in 2014
- Overtakes France, whose economy is worth £1.82trillion, in world rankings
- Estimates boosted by inclusion of prostitution and drugs in GDP figures
- Activities now counted as part of overhaul in measuring economic output

By [STEPHANIE LINNING FOR MAILONLINE](#)

The UK has overtaken France to become the fifth largest economy in the world after the money made from prostitution and drugs was counted in the GDP figure for the first time.

Britain's economy is expected to be worth a total £1.86trillion in 2014 - up from £1.63trillion the previous year - compared to £1.82trillion in France, new calculations reveal.

Government figures show that prostitution added about £4.3billion to the economy while illegal drugs provided a roughly £6.7billion boost.



Boost: The darker corners of the economy are now being counted - alongside traditional sectors such as farming and financial services - as part of an overhaul in the way economic activity is measured

This year is the first time that the GDP - an economic estimate produced every three months by the Office For National Statistics (ONS) - has included the money made from illegal drugs and sex work.

The darker corners of the economy are now being measured - alongside traditional sectors such as farming and financial services - as part of an overhaul in the way economic activity is calculated.

The change, which was introduced as part of EU rules implemented earlier this year, means that a booming sex trade or an expansion in the market for illegal drugs can boost the Chancellor's outlook.

And when these more inclusive figures edged the nation ahead of France in world rankings when they were used in calculations of the size of the UK's economy.

But experts at the Centre for Economics and Business Research, who produced the World Economic League Table, noted that France did not include the sex work and illegal drugs in its estimations.

It added that, if it did, there was a possibility that it might retake its fifth place position - and that the UK might drop down to sixth.

France does not include prostitution and illegal drugs in calculations as it does not believe they constitute 'voluntary commercial activity', adding that they are often tied to criminal networks.

The GDP covers every sector - from manufacturing and construction to agriculture, public services and tourism.

It now also covers the import, production and sale of illegal drugs and the 'provision of prostitution services'.

The data classes growing drugs or importing them as 'production', buying them for home use as 'expenditure' and selling them as 'income'.

It covers crack cocaine, powder cocaine, heroin, cannabis, ecstasy and amphetamines.

JOCKEYING FOR POSITION: WORLD ECONOMIC LEAGUE TABLE 2014

1. United States
2. China
3. Japan
4. Germany
5. United Kingdom
6. France
7. Brazil
8. Italy
9. India
10. Russia

Source: Centre for Economics and Business Research

While some EU countries give a detailed breakdown of prostitution types such as 'street' and 'escorts', the UK is not able to do this with the data available.



Overhaul: The change, which was introduced as part of EU rules implemented earlier this year, means that a booming sex trade or an expansion in the market for illegal drugs can boost the Chancellor's outlook

Illegal drugs and sex work were worth £12.3bn, or 0.7 per cent of our GDP, making them as economically significant as agriculture, according to ONS figures released this year.

The CEBR expects Britain to pull further ahead of France in the coming years. The data also showed that China is expected to overtake the US as the world's largest economy in 2025.

Meanwhile, the figures also showed the impact of the economic crisis in Russia, which slipped two places in the 2014 league table to tenth, back below India and Italy.