



Economy

Drugs? Prostitution? They Are Part of GDP Too, U.K. Says

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— Britain will begin counting illegal drugs and prostitution when assessing the growth of its economy, the government says.

VANDERLEI ALMEIDA / AFP - Getty Images

Sex please — we're British.

Britain's Office of National Statistics said prostitution and the import, manufacture and consumption of illegal drugs will be counted when making the government's quarterly calculations of gross domestic product.

The statistics agency said Friday some of these activities are legal in certain European Union countries, and comparable figures are needed. All member states need the same standard because they are used to assess a member state's contribution to the EU budget.

"As economies develop and evolve, so do the statistics we use to measure them," said Joe Grice, the ONS's chief economic adviser. "These improvements are going on across the world and we are working with our partners in Europe and the wider world on the same agenda."

At the moment, the only illegal activities included in GDP are estimates on alcohol and tobacco smuggling.

The ONS said that the new estimates would add approximately 10 billion pounds (\$16.7 billion) to the level of GDP in 2009. That said, it remains a very small portion of Britain's overall GDP, which now stands at 1.5 trillion pounds.

Nonetheless, calculations may prove challenging. To measure prostitution, statisticians will have to tabulate up the value of things like brothel rental, condom sales, makeup and the clothing of sex workers.

For illegal drugs, the ONS will examine production and sales of crack cocaine, powder cocaine, heroin, cannabis, ecstasy and amphetamines. Growing drugs will be classed as "production," buying them for home use, "expenditure," while selling them as "income".