

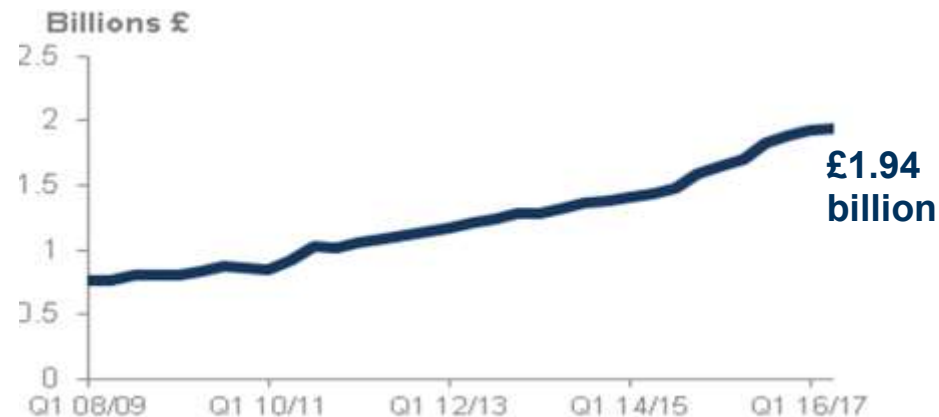
Housing Benefit is an income related benefit that is intended to help meet housing costs for rented accommodation. The statistics in this release capture information on the amount of Housing Benefit that is overpaid to claimants, the subsequent recoveries and amounts written off.

Main stories

During the first half of 2016/17:

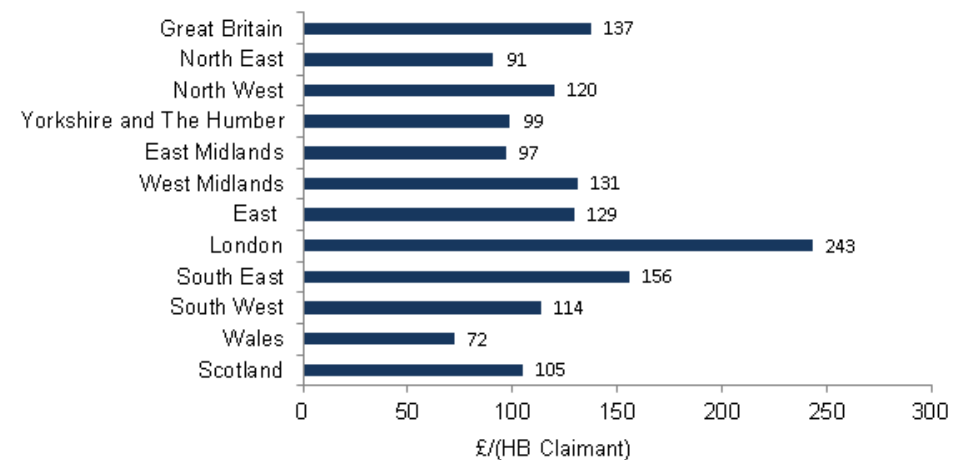
- £455 million Housing Benefit overpayments identified.
- £337 million Housing Benefit overpayments recovered.
- £40 million Housing Benefit overpayments written off.

£1.94 billion Housing Benefit overpayments outstanding at July 2016



The total value of outstanding Housing Benefit overpayments continues to follow an increasing trend. At July 2016 (the beginning of quarter 2, 2016/17) the total value of outstanding debt was around £1.94 billion, an increase of £240 million (14%) on this point the previous year.

The average Housing Benefit overpayment outstanding per claimant in Great Britain was £137 at July 2016



At July 2016 the largest average HB outstanding debt amount per claimant was in London (£ 243 per claimant) while the smallest was in Wales (£ 72 per claimant.)

At a glance

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Thoughts? We welcome feedback

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What you need to know

The latest National Statistics on Housing Benefit Debt Recoveries (HBDR) produced by the Department for Work and Pensions were released on 8th March 2016 according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority.

This release contains statistics relating to amounts of incorrectly overpaid Housing Benefit (HB). Following the introduction of the Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS), which has now gone live in all 379 Local Authorities (LAs), **from Quarter 1 2016/17 this publication no longer includes fraud data.** The publication has been renamed from 'Housing Benefit Recoveries and Fraud (HBRF) statistics' to 'Housing Benefit Debt Recoveries (HBDR) statistics' to reflect this change.

HBDR data is aggregate level data received on a quarterly basis from each LA, but published bi-annually each March and September. The March publication covers the first two quarters of the year (April to September). The publication in September covers finalised data for all four quarters of the year.

Tables containing the data that underlies the charts and figures featured in this statistical summary are also [published](#).

The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

Some LAs do not send completed data forms every quarter, or cannot supply data for all fields. This produces missing data in the returns which, in turn, affects the reported Great Britain totals. Statisticians can fill the gap created by missing data though imputing or estimating what the missing value might have been. Our methodology for this can be found [here](#).

Unless stated otherwise, all figures in this statistical summary are based on imputed statistics.



Housing Benefit Overpayments Outstanding at the Start of the Quarter

The chart below shows the cumulative amount of outstanding Housing Benefit overpayments (based on current prices) in Great Britain since April 2008.

The total value of HB overpayments outstanding in Great Britain is steadily increasing

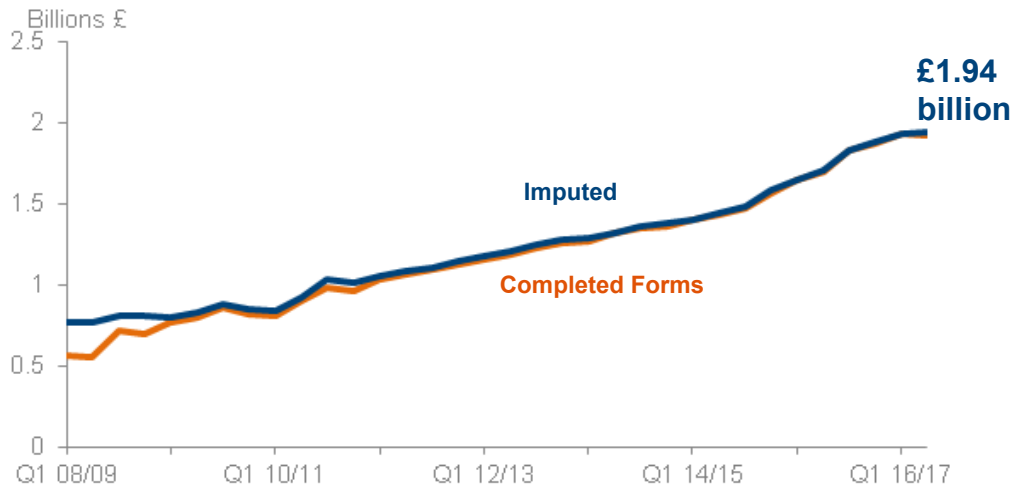
Total value of Housing Benefit overpayments outstanding at the start of the quarter

Quarter		Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
2015/16	Q1	1,644,569,000	1,646,322,000	0%
	Q2	1,700,237,000	1,705,194,000	0%
	Q3	1,827,276,000	1,827,276,000	0%
	Q4	1,876,948,000	1,880,187,000	0%
2016/17	Q1	1,931,134,000	1,934,474,000	0%
	Q2	1,927,157,000	1,944,997,000	1%

The total value of outstanding overpayments continues to follow an increasing trend.

The total GB value of HB overpayments outstanding at the beginning of July 2016 (quarter 2 of 2016/17) was around £1.94 billion; an increase of £240 million (14%) on this point the previous year.

Please see [Additional Information](#)



Note: As you can see from the differences in the two time series, imputed values and non-imputed values have been much closer aligned in recent times – indicating that there has been less missing data within recent [LA returns](#).



Housing Benefit Overpayments Identified During the Quarter

The chart below shows the value of Housing Benefit overpayments identified in each quarter going back to April 2008.

The total value of HB overpayments identified in GB continues to fluctuate

Total value of Housing Benefit overpayments identified during the quarter

		£		
Quarter		Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
2015/16	Q1	244,313,000	244,573,000	0%
	Q2	321,233,000	322,170,000	0%
	Q3	265,268,000	265,268,000	0%
	Q4	239,549,000	239,963,000	0%
2016/17	Q1	212,349,000	212,716,000	0%
	Q2	240,304,000	242,529,000	1%

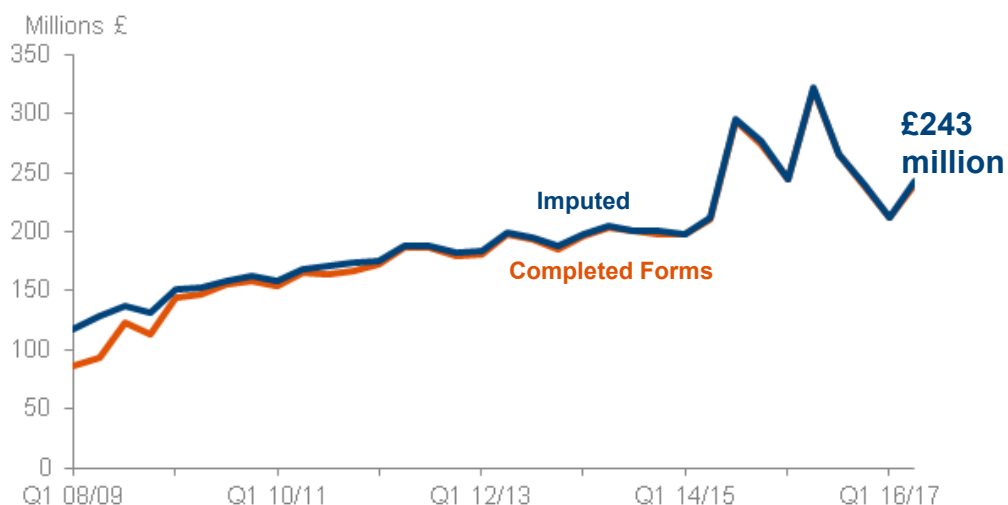
Generally, an upward trend is seen in the total value of overpayments identified with more overpayments being identified in the middle of each year.

During the first half of 2016/17 the total value of HB overpayments identified was £455 million; a decrease of £111 million (20%) in comparison to those overpayments identified in the first half of 2015/16.

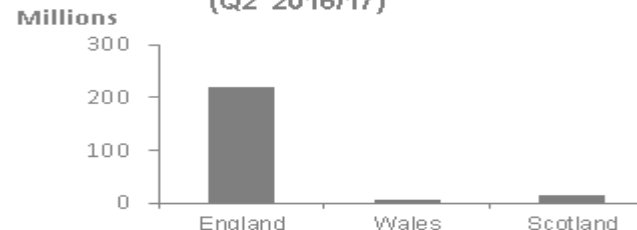
The total value of overpayments identified decreased in Quarter 1 of 2016/17 from £240 million at March 2016 (Q4 of 2015/16) to £213 million at June 2016. This trend was observed over a large number of LAs; based on the raw data the values decreased for around 64% of LAs, with 11 of them seeing a decrease of over £0.5 million.

The total value of overpayments identified then increased in Quarter 2 of 2016/17 from £213 million at June 2016 (Q1 of 2016/17) to £243 million at September 2016 (Q2 of 2016/17). Again, the trend was observed over a large number of LAs; based on the raw data the values increased for around 66% of LAs, with 16 LAs seeing an increase of over £0.5 million.

Please see [Additional Information](#)



HB overpayments identified by country (Q2 2016/17)



Note: As you can see from the differences in the two time series, imputed values and non-imputed values have been much closer aligned in recent times – indicating that there has been less missing data within recent [LA returns](#).



Housing Benefit Overpayments Recovered During the Quarter

The chart below shows the total value of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered each quarter since April 2008.

The total value of HB overpayments recovered in GB is rising

Total value of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered during the quarter

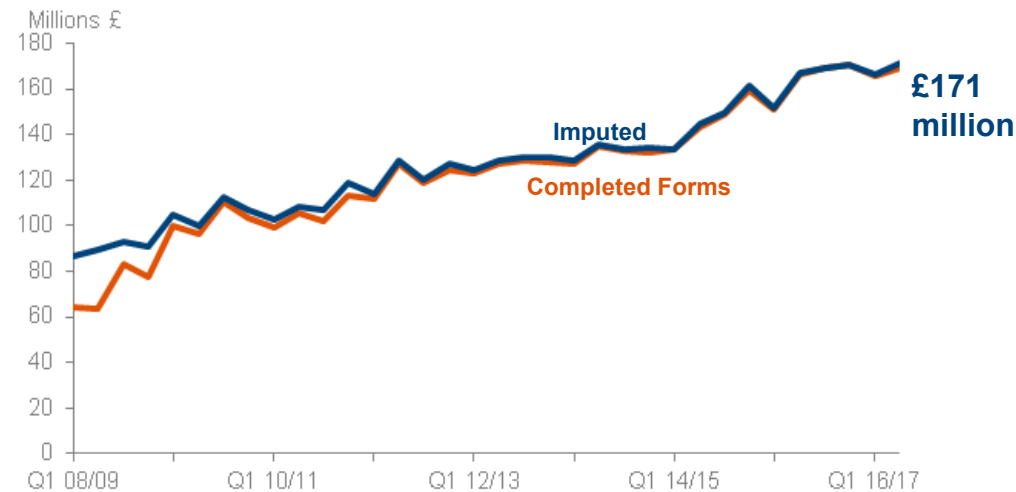
				£
Quarter		Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
2015/16	Q1	151,185,000	151,346,000	0%
	Q2	166,479,000	166,964,000	0%
	Q3	169,376,000	169,376,000	0%
	Q4	170,584,000	170,879,000	0%
2016/17	Q1	165,804,000	166,091,000	0%
	Q2	169,382,000	170,950,000	1%

Historically, the total value of overpayments recovered has tended to vary seasonally between quarters, however overall it follows an upward trend.

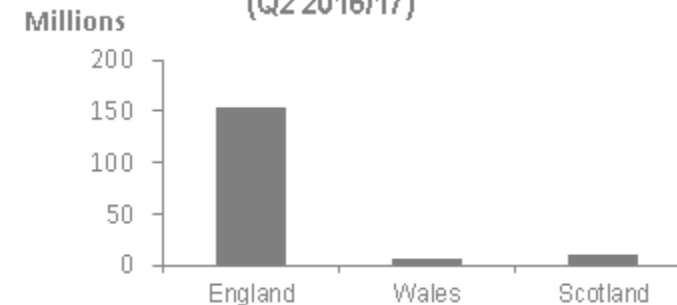
During the first half of 2016/17 the total GB value of HB overpayments recovered was £337 million; an increase of £19 million (6%) in comparison to those overpayments recovered in the first half of 2015/16.

The total value of overpayments recovered decreased in Quarter 1 of 2016/17 from £171 million at March 2016 (Q4 of 2015/16) to £166 million at June 2016. The total value of overpayments recovered then increased again in Quarter 2 of 2016/17 to 171 million.

Please see [Additional Information](#)



HB overpayments recovered by country (Q2 2016/17)



Note: As you can see from the differences in the two time series, imputed values and non-imputed values have been much closer aligned in recent times – indicating that there has been less missing data within recent [LA returns](#).



HB Overpayments Written Off During the Quarter

The chart below shows the total value of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered each quarter since April 2008.

The total value of HB overpayments written off in GB continues to fluctuate

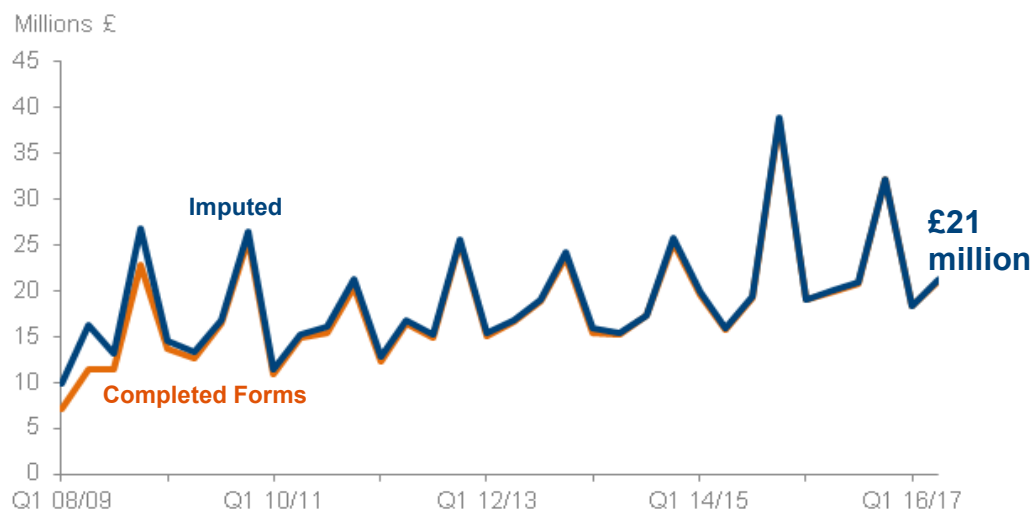
Total value of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered during the quarter

Quarter		Total of completed forms	Imputed GB total	Percentage difference
2015/16	Q1	18,953,000	19,068,000	1%
	Q2	19,939,000	19,997,000	0%
	Q3	20,780,000	20,834,000	0%
	Q4	32,087,000	32,143,000	0%
2016/17	Q1	18,356,000	18,388,000	0%
	Q2	21,080,000	21,316,000	1%

The total GB value of HB overpayments written off during the first half of 2016/17 was £40 million; a decrease of £1 million (2%) in comparison to those overpayments written off in the first half of 2015/16.

The amount of overpayments written off changes throughout the year. It is generally highest in Quarter 4 (March) of each collection year followed by a sharp decrease during Quarter 1 of the following year. In line with this there has been a decrease in the total amount of overpayment written off from £32 million at March 2016 (Quarter 4 of 2015/6) to £18 million in June 2016 (Quarter 1 of 2016/17).

Please see [Additional Information](#)



HB overpayments written off by country (Q2 2016/17)



Note: As you can see from the differences in the two time series, imputed values and non-imputed values have been much closer aligned in recent times – indicating that there has been less missing data within recent [LA returns](#).

HBDR Data – Collection Processes and Accuracy

Data Collection

The table below details the list of questions asked as part of the data collection process.

Field	Overpayment Questions
1	Total value of HB overpayments outstanding at the start of the quarter
2	Total value of HB overpayments identified during the quarter
3	Total value of HB overpayments recovered during the quarter
4	Total value of HB overpayments written off during the quarter

Average Data Return Rates

Collection Period	Average LA Return Rate (across all quarters)
2008 – 2009	89.7%
2009 – 2010	99.2%
2010 – 2011	99.5%
2011 – 2012	99.6%
2012 – 2013	99.8%
2013 – 2014	99.7%
2014 – 2015	99.3%
2015 – 2016	99.9%
2016 – 2017 (Q1 & Q2)	99.6%

Some LAs cannot complete certain questions. Hence, the question level completion rate is often lower than the values quoted here. Therefore we publish additional estimates, allowing for imputation (at a Great Britain level only) to account for LAs which could not provide data. These additional figures give a sense of scale of this impact.

Additional Information

HBDR is aggregate level data received from each LA, and as such, is subject to a significant degree of variation both in and between different LAs. From 2014 we have observed a significant amount of variation in the overpayment data. This could be due to a wide range of factors such as: variations and issues with different authorities' software suppliers; reduced LA return rates; additional side affects due to the phased implementation of SFIS and factors unique to each LA (e.g. increases/decreases in resources, bulk clearing of historical overpayments).

About these statistics

Known Issues, Changes and Revisions

Our **Methodology** and **Background Information Note** provides further information on DWP HBDR statistics, including some of the processes involved in developing and releasing these statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/housing-benefit-recoveries-and-fraud-data-methodology-and-definitions>

Following the introduction of a new Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS), which has now gone live in all 379 areas, this publication (from Q1 2016/17) only includes information on Housing Benefit overpayments. The publication has been renamed to 'Housing Benefit Debt Recoveries statistics' to reflect this change.

Other National and Official Statistics

Details of other National and Official Statistics produced by the Department for Work and Pensions can be found on the DWP website via the following link:

- A schedule of statistical releases over the next 12 months and a list of the most recent releases: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/statistics>
- Detailed background notes and methodology relating to this First Release can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/housing-benefit-recoveries-and-fraud-data-methodology-and-definitions>

Feedback

Specific HBDR statistics feedback can be submitted via our [HBDR user questionnaire](#).

Completed questionnaires can be returned by e-mail to stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or by post to the following address:
Client Statistics, Data and Analytics, Department for Work and Pensions, Room BP5201, Benton Park Road, Longbenton, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, NE98 1YX

Users can also join the "Welfare and Benefit Statistics" community at: <http://www.statsusernet.org.uk> DWP announces items of interest to users via this forum, as well as replying to users' questions.

About these statistics

Supplementary Statistics

Tables containing the data that underlies the charts and figures featured in this statistical summary are [available](#). These include information by local authority on outstanding overpayments at the beginning of each quarter and identified, recovered and written-off overpayments at the end of each quarter.

Uses and Users

HBDR is aggregate level data received on a quarterly basis from each LA. This data is used to produce established statistics on the amount of HB overpaid to claimants. The statistics also provide a means of comparing and contrasting information between LAs.

The data will also be used to feed into a range of briefings for Ministers and other senior officials and will be used to answer Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests. It will also be used for other policy functions including monitoring and informing changes to related policies.