



Market Report

A Snapshot of your Marketing Sector

Publishing and Writing

This pack has been designed to provide information on setting up a business in the **publishing and writing** industry in Scotland, as well as helping to inform the market research section of your business plan. You can find more information on how to write a business plan from the Business Gateway website (www.bgateway.com/businessplan), including an interactive template and tips to get you started.

This market report was updated by Business Gateway in April 2025.

What do I need to know about the publishing and writing market?

The following summary statistics have been taken from market research reports and reliable resources that the Information Service uses to compile industry information. They should give you an indication of how your industry is faring at present and whether there is demand for your type of business:

- ◆ The UK is the largest exporter of books in the world, however economic headwinds have damaged the UK book publishing industry, with revenue anticipated to **stall over the five years through 2024-25, standing at £6.9 billion**. Both print sales and export trade are edging upwards and many publishing houses have successfully modified their strategies to adjust to the growing trend for digitalisation. Revenue is forecast to swell at a compound annual rate of 2.5% over the five years through 2029-30 to reach **£7.8 billion** (IBISWorld, *Book Publishing in the UK*, September 2024).
- ◆ Over the five years through 2023-24, audiobook publishing industry revenue in the UK has **grown at a compound annual rate of 9.3% to £205.6 million**. Audiobook sales will continue to expand as more demographics gain access to smart devices and subscription service users climb. Revenue is forecast to **grow at a compound annual rate of 8.7% over the five years through 2028-29 to £312.5 million** (IBISWorld, *Audiobook Publishing in the UK*, February 2024).
- ◆ E-book publishing industry revenue is expected to fall at a compound annual rate of 4.1% over the five years through 2024-25 to £348.1 million. Studies suggest that consumers are tired of digital media texts and may prefer to consume printed material solely or in conjunction with e-books. Over the five years through 2029-30, revenue is projected to **dip at a compound annual rate of 1.2% to reach £327.8 million** (IBISWorld, *E-Book Publishing in the UK*, July 2024).
- ◆ Despite the rise in digital alternatives, parents still value children's books, which has enabled the children's book publishing industry to succeed amid strong external competition. Children's book publishing industry revenue is estimated to grow at a compound annual rate of 1.9% in 2024-25 to reach **£868.1 million**, and then grow at a compound annual rate of 2% over the five years through 2029-30 to reach **£958.4 million** (IBISWorld, *Children's Book Publishing in the UK*, October 2024).
- ◆ In 2023, total publisher sales of books, journals, and rights for both physical and digital formats in the UK reached £7.1 billion (up from £6.9 billion in the previous year), with **£4.4 billion coming from exported sales** (Statista, *Book market in the United Kingdom (UK)*, 2024).
- ◆ The national organisation for this industry is [Publishing Scotland](#). Other industry bodies include the [Publishers Association](#), [Independent Publishers Guild](#), [Writers & Artists](#), [Professional Publishers Association](#), [Society of Young Publishers](#), [Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers](#), [Association of Online Publishers](#), [News Media Association](#) and [Creative Scotland](#).

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Where can I find more information on my market?

The Information Service has access to a number of databases which can offer more detail on this industry. Some of these reports are listed below - if you would like to be sent extracts from any of these reports, please contact us on **0300 013 4753** or email info@bgateway.com.

- ◆ **IBISWorld - Audiobook Publishing in the UK (September 2024).** As technology adoption continues to expand so does access to audiobooks. Publishers have grown with subscription and audio library services faster than GDP. There is still plenty of room to grow for audiobook publishers with a continuous supply of new books to adapt into audio form. Greater accessibility, live events and social media marketing have helped expand the audiobook audience.
- ◆ **IBISWorld - Magazine Publishers in the UK (July 2024).** Print magazine circulation fell by 12.4% in 2023, pushing many publishers to shift online. Digital platforms provide new advertising revenue streams and help maintain subscriptions, proving crucial amid declining print sales. Despite the decline in print circulation, professional magazines and periodicals continue to resist the trend, primarily due to businesses' bulk subscriptions offering valuable industry insights and strategic advice.
- ◆ **IBISWorld - Book Publishing in the UK (September 2024).** Smaller publishers tend to concentrate on narrower subject areas, which can make them more vulnerable to market downturns. Nonetheless, the fact that the vast majority of publishers have fewer than 10 employees demonstrates that size isn't a barrier to success. Since Amazon and major bookselling chains are important ways to reach consumers, it's difficult for publishers to do well without coming to an agreement with these outlets. Small publishers with little bargaining power are likely to end up in unfavourable agreements. This suppresses smaller companies' ability to grow their market share. The low cost of e-book publishing has created an incentive for some authors, particularly those writing their first book, to self-publish digitally and reach audiences directly, bypassing the standard publishing gatekeepers. As a result, there is a burst of independent titles and imprints cropping up. Some giving traditional book publishers a run for their money.

There are also a number of online resources you may find helpful:

- ◆ **The Bookseller** (thebookseller.com) magazine is the UK's leading book industry magazine and posts online news and features on current industry events across all genres.
- ◆ The **Publishers Association** (www.publishers.org.uk) publishes a range of industry-related [research](#).
- ◆ **Publishing Scotland** (www.publishingscotland.org) has interesting [market insights](#) for Scotland and a guide to [starting a publishing business](#).
- ◆ **Publishers' Licensing Services** (www.pls.org.uk) provides UK and international publishers with collective licensing services, rights management services and help with permissions.

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How can I find out about my competitors?

Business Gateway's online guide to [Competitor Analysis](#) explains how to find your competitors, how to research what they're doing and how to act on what you learn about them.

Immediate competition will be from other businesses in your local area. There are several online directories which can be used to find company information and generate lists easily and at no expense. Many Local Authorities also publish local business directories on the web. Below are some key web resources:

- ◆ General business directories such as [Yell](#), [Thomson Local](#) or [Google Maps](#)
- ◆ Trade specialists like [EuroPages](#) (European directory), [The Wholesaler](#) or [Free Index](#)
- ◆ Business to business (B2B) specialists such as [Kompass](#)

Likewise, your local Chamber of Commerce may publish a members' directory; find your local Chamber on the [Scottish Chambers](#) website.

Once you've identified who your competitors are, the next step is to gather information on the way they do business. Which services do they provide? How do they market themselves? How much do they charge?

To learn about your competitors:

- ◆ Look for articles or adverts in local newspapers, trade press and directories.
- ◆ Try to read their marketing material; if the company has an online presence, visit the company's website as a first port of call. Not only does it give you a better understanding of the company's activities, it can also offer a wealth of information such as a company history or staff biographies, as well as the company's partners or suppliers
- ◆ Search for information on limited UK companies via the [Companies House](#) website
- ◆ Gain an insight into your competitor's performance using credit checks and the accounts that limited companies are required to submit to Companies House each year.

We can provide credit checks free of charge; if you are interested in using this resource, or looking for us to help you find relevant publications, please contact us by emailing info@bgateway.com or by calling **0300 013 4753**



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What about suppliers?

[Choosing and Managing Suppliers](#) can help you decide what you need from a supplier, how to identify one and how to choose one to deal with.

Trade associations or industry specific organisations may also be able to recommend suppliers or contacts. You can also use the aforementioned resources for finding competitors to find suppliers.

Once you have decided on a supplier, we can run a credit check on the company to help assess their financial stability. We provide credit checks free of charge; if you are interested in using the resource please info@bgateway.com or by calling **0300 013 4753**.

Who are my customers?

Your business plan should include information about the customers you would expect. Business Gateway's guides on [Market and customer research](#) will help you to identify new trends, opportunities, customers and competitors.

It can be useful to group your customers by geographical location, age or lifestyle. The websites listed below are freely available and can provide most of this information. If you can't find what you're looking for from these websites, please contact us and one of the team will be happy to help:

- ◆ Access the latest population estimates from the [National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#). NRS also offers demographic factsheets for each council area in Scotland, which can provide summary statistics for the area you will be based in.
- ◆ Information from the most recent census in 2011 is released via the official website. See in particular the [Census Area Profiles](#). Clicking on your area of interest will give the latest population figures, including estimates by age.
- ◆ [Understanding Scottish Places](#) has interactive profiles of towns and cities across Scotland. It can be useful for understanding the interrelationships and flows between towns, and also gives comparisons between two or more places.
- ◆ [Scottish Government Statistics](#) provide accurate and up-to-date statistics on Scotland, covering population, health, education and housing.
- ◆ [The Scottish Household Survey](#) provides information on the structure, characteristics, attitudes and behaviour of Scottish households, both at a national and local level.
- ◆ [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) is the recognised national statistical body for the UK. ONS covers a wide range of demographic, economic and social issues at a UK level.



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How can you help me with other aspects of starting my business?

The Business Gateway website has guides, videos, online tutorials and tips on all aspects of starting up a business in Scotland. Follow the links below to explore each resource:

Accountancy

Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland's (ICAS) "[Find a Chartered Accountant](#)" tool

Funding

[Practical information](#) on finance and funding for starting and growing your business

Insurance

[Business insurance guide](#)

Legal Help

Gov.uk "[Licence Finder](#)" tool

Law Society of Scotland's "[Find a Solicitor](#)" tool

Pricing

Business Companion [Pricing & payment guide](#).

Please note: the most effective way to research pricing is to conduct your own research – visit wholesalers or suppliers to obtain price lists, find quotes from similar companies and work out what other businesses in your area are charging

Promotion

[BG guides to Marketing](#)

Training

[Skills Development Scotland's My World of Work](#)

[Funding for training](#)

[Small Business Bonus Scheme \(Scotland\)](#)

Your local Business Gateway can offer events, workshops and 1:2:1 support on all aspects of starting and developing your business. Call the helpline on **0300 013 4753** to find out what is available in your area.

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You must not rely on the information in the report as an alternative to advice from an appropriately qualified professional. If you have any specific questions speak to your Business Gateway Advisor or consult an appropriately qualified professional.

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