UK SIC 2026: What the Changes Mean for B2B Marketing Data

Original research by Results Driven Marketing (RD Marketing) | 19 October 2026

Executive summary

UK SIC 2026 introduces an updated framework for classifying UK business activities. RD Marketing analysed the official ONS SIC 2007-to-SIC 2026 correspondence data and found that 230 of 806 distinct legacy class and subclass codes have multiple possible 2026 destinations. A classification correspondence is not an automatic instruction to reclassify each company; the appropriate category may depend on its actual activity.

The practical issue for organisations buying B2B marketing data is that old and new classifications cannot always be swapped one-for-one. Moreover, an identical code number can describe a different activity across versions. RD Marketing supplements standard SIC filtering with a separate commercial market-sector taxonomy of 2,285 named business types, offering additional routes to build precise audiences where the underlying data supports them.

Key research findings

Finding	Result
Distinct legacy class/subclass codes in ONS analysis	806
Legacy codes with more than one possible 2026 destination	230
New classifications with multiple legacy predecessors	206
Reversible one-to-one code links	470
Detailed commercial market sectors in supplied taxonomy	2,285

These are counts of classification relationships, not shares of UK companies or estimates of inaccurately coded businesses.

Where the changes matter most

Legacy SIC 2007	Activity	Possible 2026 destinations
47.91	Mail order / Internet retail	34
47.99	Retail outside stores, stalls or markets	32
82.99	Other business support activities	24
62.01/2	Business and domestic software development	11
43.99/9	Other specialised construction activities n.e.c.	10

For example, SIC 2007 code 47.91 denotes retail sale via mail order houses or via the Internet, while SIC 2026 uses 47.91 for intermediation service activities for non-specialised retail sale. Someone transferring a saved marketing filter from one framework to another must check not only the code, but its meaning.

Applying the changes to commercial B2B targeting

SIC codes identify economic activities, but a marketer normally needs a commercially specific audience. Suppliers of automotive workshop equipment, for instance, may want operating garages rather than every business under a broad motor-trade definition. Software providers may need to distinguish a particular type of business from a general industry division.

RD Marketing can select audiences using SIC-based criteria alongside a taxonomy of 2,285 specialist market sector categories. Examples in the supplied taxonomy include abattoirs, abattoir machinery and equipment, abrasive product manufacturers, abrasive product wholesalers and access equipment. These distinctions illustrate how commercial industry targeting can be more granular than a broad statutory industry heading.

However, the supplied taxonomy does not include a code-by-code concordance against SIC 2007 or SIC 2026. We therefore do not claim that it automatically converts legacy SIC classifications to the new framework or that it resolves every ambiguous correspondence.

A historical database cross-check

RD Marketing also tested the ONS correspondence against a supplier-provided historical BiziReach export containing 476 five-digit SIC 2007 rows and 1,488,055 address entries. All 476 legacy codes could be matched to the corresponding official class or subclass in the analysed table. Of these historical entries, 634,123 (42.6%) fell under old codes with more than one possible 2026 destination.

This is an exploratory historical database statistic, not a current count of UK businesses or of records needing correction. The extract date is unspecified, database inclusion is not a census, and a multi-destination correspondence does not establish an incorrect classification. These figures are included to demonstrate the method, not to calculate the national scale of change.

What data buyers should do

- Ask which SIC version is used in the proposed business list.
- Do not copy saved SIC code numbers into the new classification without checking definitions and official correspondence.
- Combine SIC targeting with activity descriptions, market sector categories, location, size and decision-maker criteria as appropriate.
- Request sample counts and clarify whether the audience definition has changed between data extracts.
- Retain the classification version and extract date alongside every campaign audience.

Timing: a phased transition

The ONS finalised UK SIC 2026 in April 2026 and is introducing it over time. Publication of the classification does not mean that all UK company registers and commercial marketing databases have already been converted. Organisations should check adoption dates with each relevant data provider and authority.

Methodology and limitations

The classification figures were calculated from the ONS UK SIC 2007-to-UK SIC 2026 official correspondence workbook, 3 August 2026, counting distinct class/subclass codes and unique mapped destinations. The commercial market sector count comes from the supplied Market Sector Breakdown taxonomy, excluding the total row. The BiziReach exploratory analysis uses an undated vendor extract with historical counts, matching each five-digit legacy SIC to the corresponding ONS class/subclass. The analysis does not identify individual companies requiring reclassification, establish deliverability or data accuracy, or estimate the percentage of current UK companies affected.

About RD Marketing

Results Driven Marketing (RD Marketing), based in Newcastle upon Tyne, supplies UK B2B marketing data and lead generation services, including email, telephone and postal business data. RD Marketing provides broad UK business coverage as well as specialist industry and market-sector targeting. Learn about its UK B2B data services at https://rdmarketing.co.uk/buy-data/.

Sources

- Office for National Statistics, UK SIC 2026 and official correspondence resources: https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/ukstandardindustrialclassificationofeconomicactivities/uksic2026
- Internal analysis: RD Marketing SIC 2026 Final Evidence Workbook (provided separately).
- Download full technical report here