

THE COSTS OF MIGRATION

**CENTRE
FOR
MIGRATION
CONTROL**



**ECONOMIC INACTIVITY
AMONGST MIGRANTS
AGED 16 - 64**



INTRODUCTION

On 4 December the government announced a plan which, it claimed, would bring net migration down from its current peak of 745,000 to 300,000. Although still a far cry from the “tens of thousands”

In response to this announcement the BBC website carried the following article:

Will curbs to migration hit the UK economy?

5 December 2023 · Comments



By Faisal Islam >

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The framing is clear, and indicative of the general tenor of political debate which assumes that all attempts to reduce net migration will pose a threat to the UK’s economic performance.

OUR FINDINGS

On Tuesday 13 February, the Office for National Statistics released its figures from the latest quarter of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) from October to December 2023.

The data of the LFS is used by the ONS to calculate the size and composition of the UK workforce and is deemed to be so authoritative that it underpins the OBR’s Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

One component of the LFS breaks down the economic status of individuals between the ages of 16 and 64; whether they are working, unemployed, or economically inactive, as well as by their nationality and country of birth.

This data has previously been used to report that, as a whole, the UK has 9.23m people who are out of work, and not actively looking for employment opportunities.¹

The data is [available here](#)

The Centre for Migration Control focused on the number of people who are economically inactive and from “non-UK” nations.

There are two clear conclusions that can be drawn from this data:

- 1) The number of economically inactive migrants, aged 16-64, reached a record high in 2023, surpassing any other single calendar year.
- 2) That public sector expenditure on economically inactive migrants has been £23.8bn (£35.84bn inc. students) since the start of 2020.

METHODOLOGY

- 1) To calculate the number of economically inactive migrants, aged 16-64 the CMC calculated the mean of the four quarters for each year since records began.
- 2) To calculate the economic burden that has been imposed on the UK taxpayer since 2020, the CMC used data from the Institute for Fiscal Studies’ spending composition spreadsheet that can be found [here](#).

We used the sum of those areas of expenditure which most directly affect the everyday lives on individuals: social security (non-pensioners), health, education, defence, public order & safety, transport, housing & community amenities.

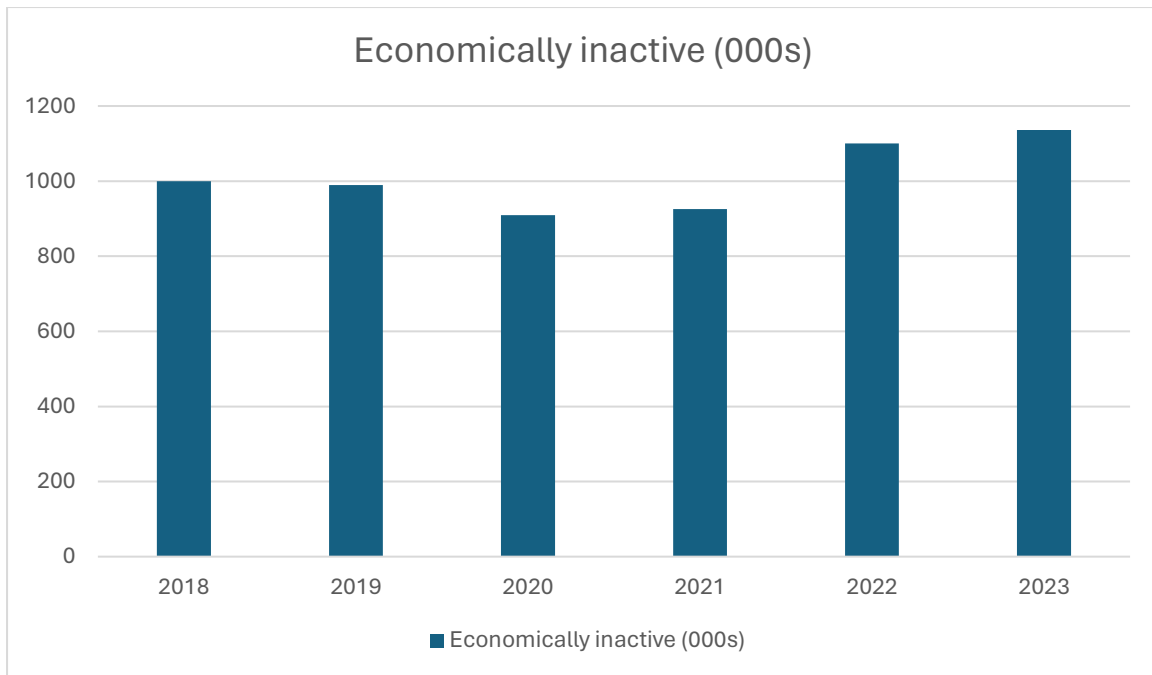
This, therefore, excludes any expenditure which goes towards overseas aid, debt interest, or social security for pensioners (those aged over 64 years) as well as longer term capital investments.

RESULTS

- 1) 2023 saw a record number of economically inactive 16–64-year-old migrants.**

The results show that in 2023 the number of economically inactive adult migrants, regardless of the visa on which they arrived, reached its highest point thus far, surpassing the total in 2022 which was, itself, a record figure.

¹ [CBP-9366.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#)



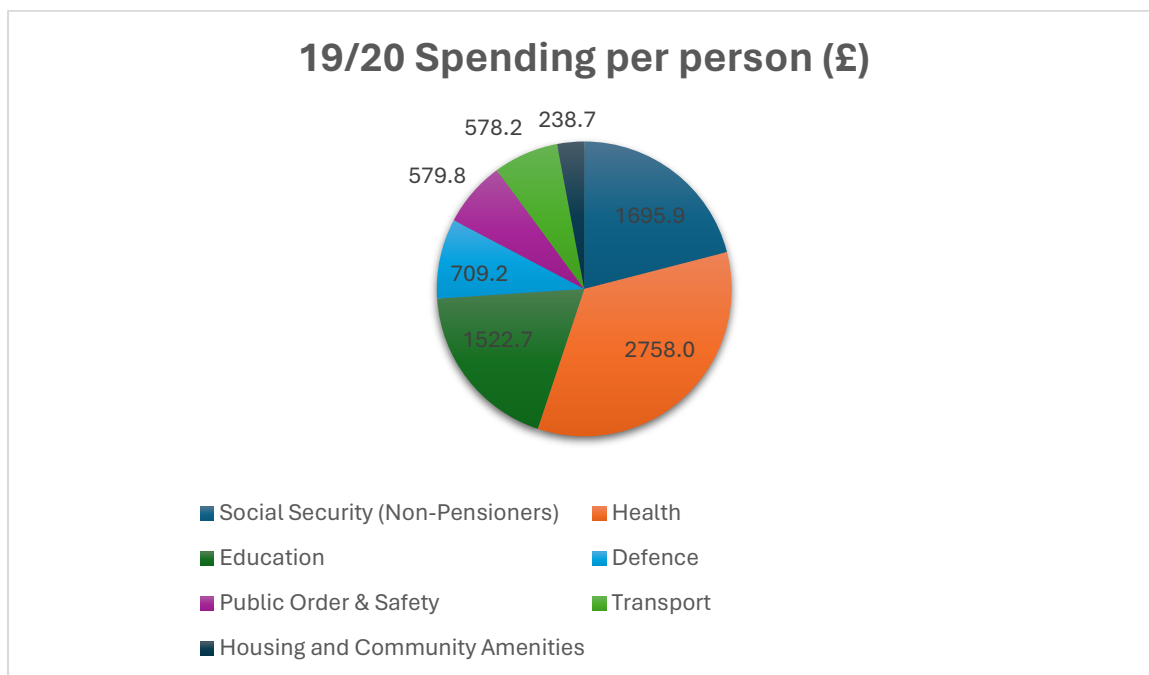
2) Public expenditure on economically inactive migrants has been £23.8bn since 2020

Excluding students, the number of migrants who were jobless, and not seeking employment in the UK, were as follows:

YEAR	ECON. INACTIVE
2020	623,500
2021	623,250
2022	740,000
2023	711,500

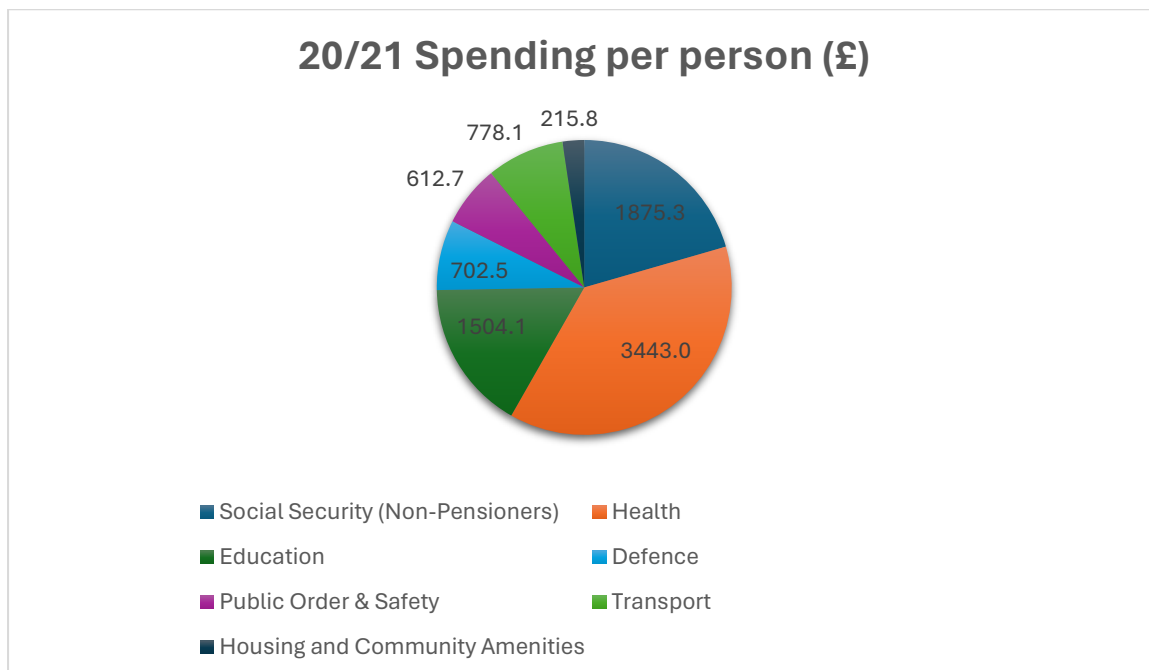
To calculate the amount spent per person, we have used Institute for Fiscal Studies data which shows that the following annual amounts were spent per person on non-pensioner social security, health, education, defence, public order & safety, transport, housing & community amenities.

In 2019/20 the amount spent on core provisions per person was £8,082:



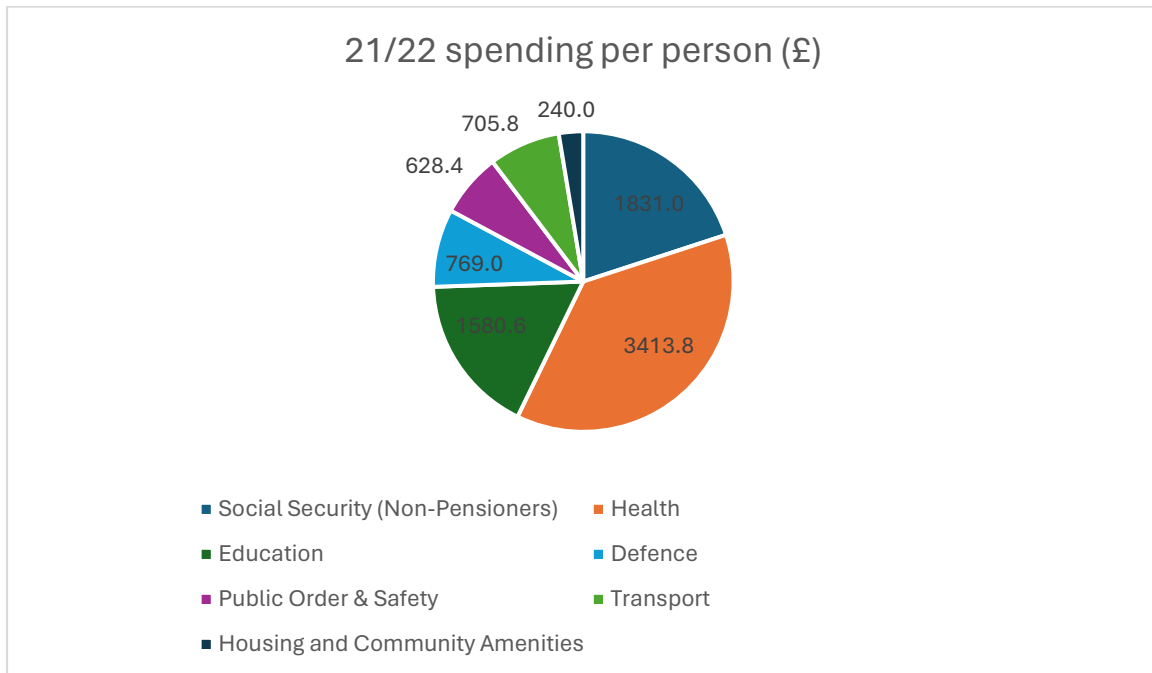
This means that the total spend which was attributable to economically inactive migrants who were eligible to work was £5.03bn.

In 2020/21 the amount spent on core provisions per person was £9,131:



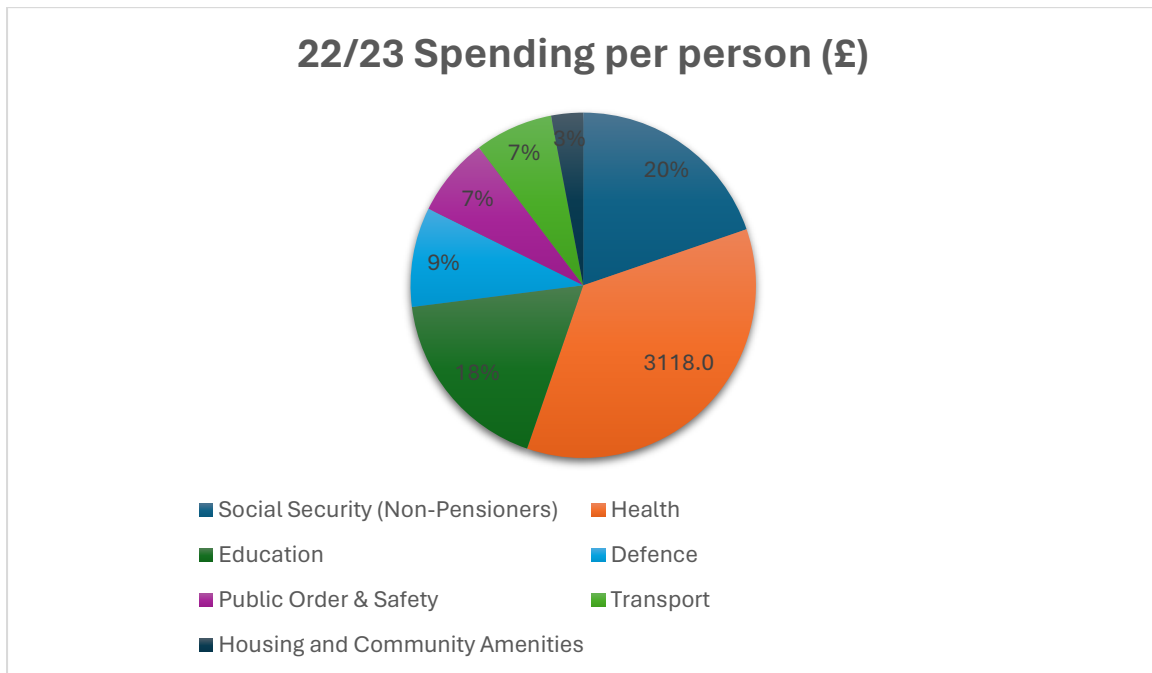
This means that the total spend which was attributable to economically inactive migrants who were eligible to work was £5.69bn.

In 2021/22, the amount spent on core provisions per person was £9,168:



This means that the total spend which was attributable to economically inactive migrants who were eligible to work was £6.78bn.

In 2022/23 the amount spent on core provisions per person was £8,773:



This means that the total spend which was attributable to economically inactive migrants who were eligible to work was £6.24bn

This means that between 2020 and 2023 there has been £23.8bn spent by the government on amenities and core provisions that were used by economically inactive migrants.

ABOUT ‘ECONOMIC INACTIVITY’

Economic Inactivity is defined by the ONS as “people not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks.”²

They are individuals that are considered to have fallen out of the labour market. Reasons for this include long-term health, housekeeping, the ambiguous category of ‘other’, or being a student.³

The number of economically inactive migrants has been calculated to exclude international students in the UK – despite them also being beneficiaries of government everyday expenditure.

INCLUDING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN FIGURES

International students are allowed to work a maximum of 20 hours a week and the OBR estimates that, amongst recent cohorts, around half of those arriving in the UK to study also go into employment.

Although a single fixed tuition is paid by these students, they still place requirements upon amenities and public services and are still technically classed as “economically inactive” and produce no output measurable under economic models.

Therefore, were international students to be included in the figures above, the total number of economically inactive migrants per year would be as follows:

Number of economically inactive migrants (inc. students):

YEAR	ECON. INACTIVE
2020	909,771
2021	925,564
2022	1,100,229
2023	1,135,949

And, as a result, the amount that was spent on all economically inactive migrants would have been:

YEAR	COST
2020	£5.03bn
2021	£5.69bn
2022	£6.78bn
2023	£6.24bn
TOTAL	£23.8bn

² [Economic inactivity - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/economic-issues/inactivity)

³ [Who are “economically inactive” people, and could they join the work force? - Full Fact](#)

YEAR	EXPENDITURE
2020	£7.35bn
2021	£8.45bn
2022	£10.08bn
2023	£9.96bn
TOTAL	£35.84bn