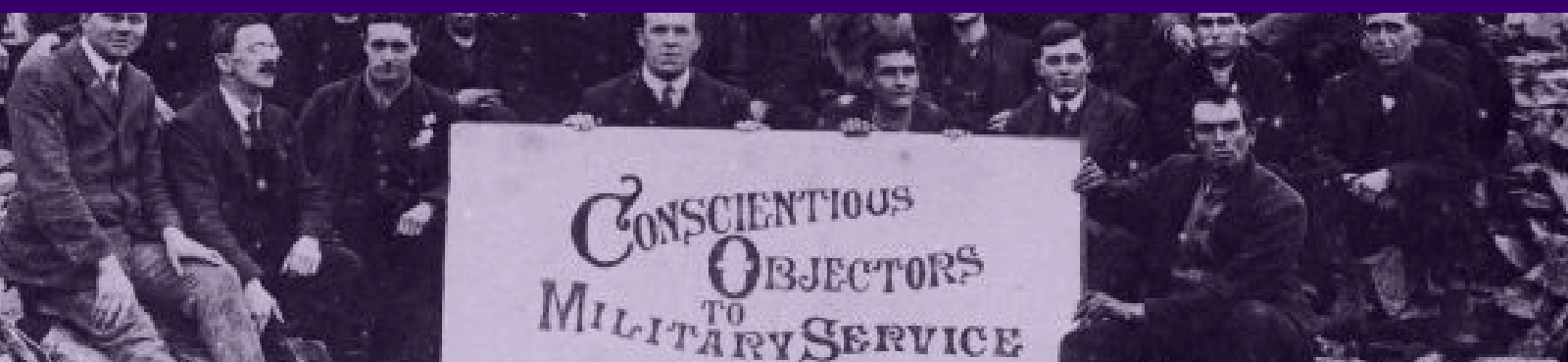


# FACTSHEET EDUCATION FOR PEACE

## Military spending in the United Kingdom



### HOW MUCH DOES THE UK SPEND ON THE MILITARY AND WHAT IS THIS MONEY SPENT ON?

This seems a straightforward question. However, the area of UK defence spending is a complex one. Different defence spending definitions and different accounting methods produce different figures.

#### Under MOD definition

Using one definition, total UK defence spending in 2021/22 was calculated as £45,930,000,000. The biggest spending is on capital expenditure, followed by service personnel, then equipment support, and infrastructure.

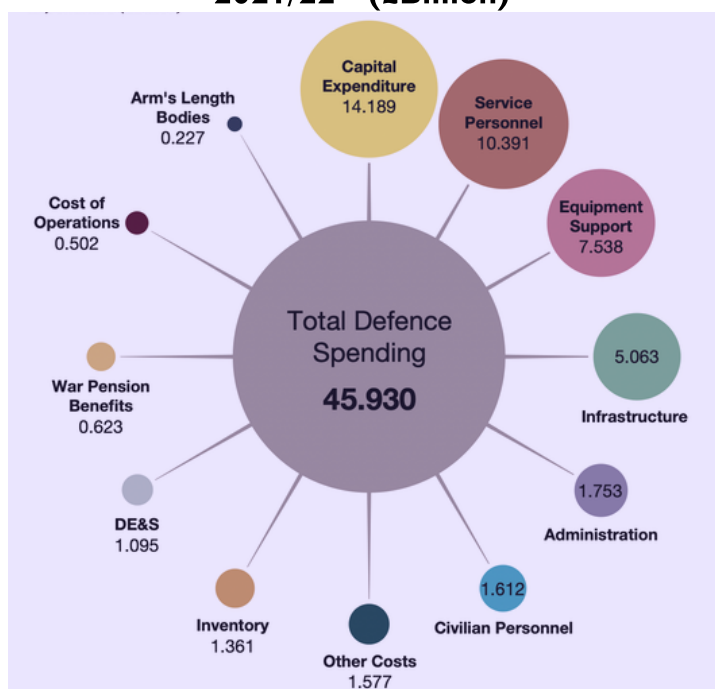
**!** Note: The UK does not release official detailed costs for its nuclear weapons programme.

#### NATO definition

NATO defines defence expenditure as “payments made by a national government specifically to meet the needs of its armed forces, those of Allies or of the Alliance”. Since 2006 the UK, along with other NATO members, has committed to spend 2% of GDP on defence. It remains opaque why there is a discrepancy between what the Ministry of Defence (MOD) itself reports as the defence budget (£45,930 billion for 2021) and what it reports to the NATO as ‘defence expenditures’ (£52,291 billion for 2021).



#### Where does our defence budget go? 2021/22 - (£Billion)

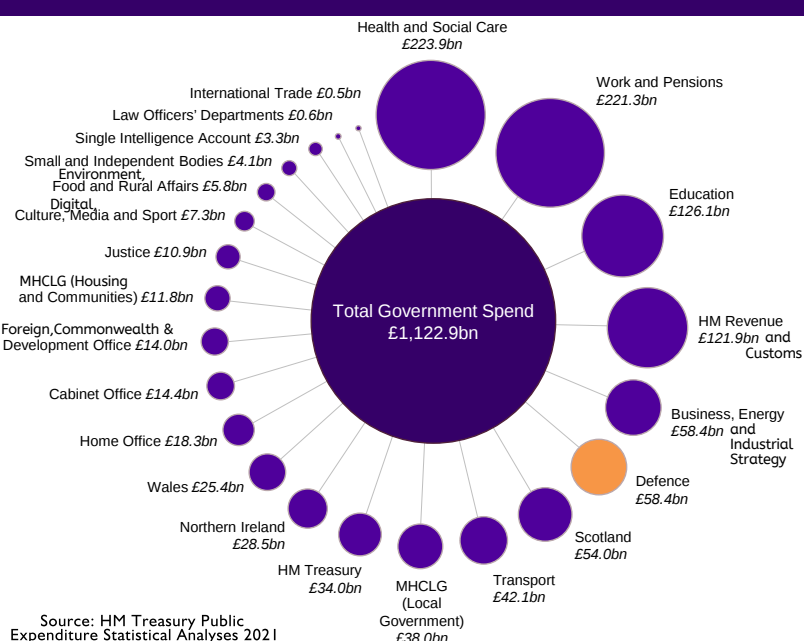


Source: MOD Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22

#### HM Treasury definition

Under HM Treasury accounting rules, which use different definitions, defence spending was £58.4 billion whereas MOD reported £42.365 billion in 2020/21. The government website explains that 'the difference can be attributed in part to HMT inclusion of depreciation, impairment and fixed assets written on/off and the Armed Forces Pension Scheme'.

### HOW DOES THE MILITARY BUDGET COMPARE WITH OTHER AREAS OF UK EXPENDITURE?



This diagram gives a sense of how defence spending (£58.4 billion) compared with other areas of spending in 2020/21.

We can see that defence spending was equivalent to 26% of health and social care expenditure.

This factsheet is one of a series produced by Conscience Education for Peace. They are available, together with videos and other resources at [consciencecampaign.org.uk](http://consciencecampaign.org.uk)

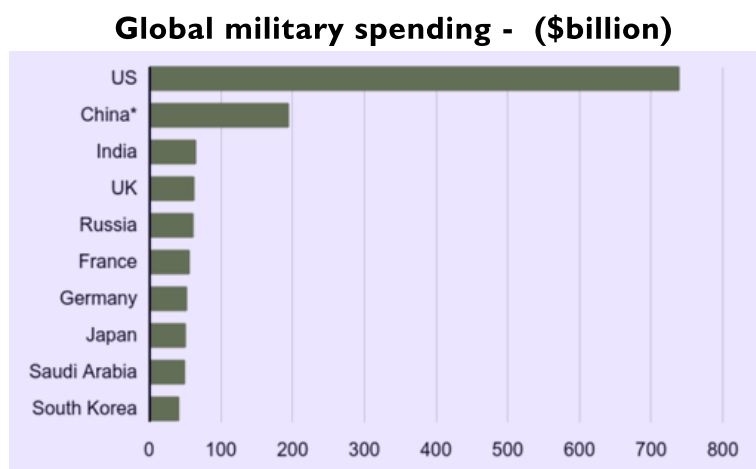


# HOW DOES UK MILITARY EXPENDITURE COMPARE WITH THE MILITARY EXPENDITURE OF OTHER COUNTRIES?

## In real terms

There are different ways of looking at how UK military expenditure compares with the military expenditure of other countries. One way is to compare the expenditures in real terms.

This graph shows the ten highest military budgets in the world, in real terms, in 2019.



Source: [IISS Global Military Balance, 2020](#)

In this assessment the UK had the 4th highest military budget in the world.

Considering military expenditure in real terms is important because the amount of money spent on the military relates to the extent of damage the expenditure can cause, both directly and indirectly:

Directly in terms of the number of armed forces,



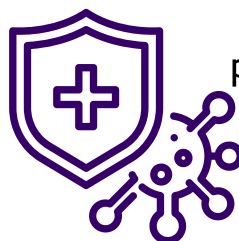
the quantity of weapons,



the number of people who can be killed.

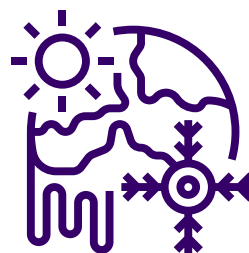


Indirectly in terms of the harm done / lives lost by not spending that money on, for example,



preventing pandemics,

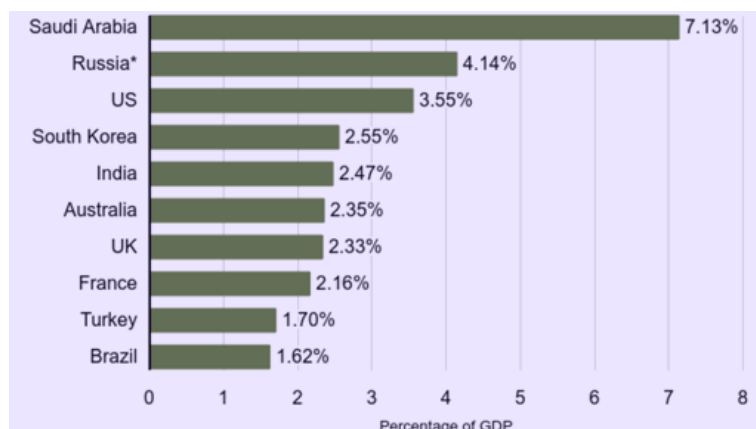
stopping climate change etc.



## As a percentage of GDP (Gross Domestic Product)

Another way of looking at military expenditure is to consider what proportion of a country's GDP it spends on the military. GDP is used by some economists as an estimate of 'the size of, and growth in the economy.'

### Military spending as a percentage of GDP



Source: [IISS Global Military Balance, 2020](#)

In 2019, with military spending at 2.33% of GDP, the UK came 7th highest in the world after Saudi Arabia (7.13%), Russia (4.14%), US (3.55%), South Korea (2.55%), India (2.47%), and Australia (2.35%).

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION - CLICK ON EACH LINK TO DISCOVER MORE FACTS



• [How many more categories of military spending are there that previous calculations did not include?](#)



• [How does the UK defence spending compare to other countries?](#)

• [How much does the UK earn from arms trade and what does that mean for peace?](#)



• [How much does the UK spend on Nuclear Weapons?](#)

