



National Audit Office

The UK's independent public spending watchdog

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EXPENDITURE ON THE CIVIL SERVICE

Thank you for your request of 13 February 2023 for information relating to Civil Service Pay.

You wrote "I wondered if you could reply or re-direct me to get the answer to my questions, summarised as?"

1. What is the annual payroll of the Civil Service? And its headcount?
2. Where can I find measures of productivity across the civil service?"

Your request is being handled under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and I can confirm that we hold information in scope of your request.

1. Civil service headcount

The latest official figures on civil service headcount are published as part of the Cabinet Office's civil service statistics releases, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics-2022>.

The most recent statistics release shows that civil service employment stood at 510,080 headcount and 478,090 on a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis as at 31 March 2022.

2. Civil service payroll

HM Treasury publishes annual Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses (PESA). The most recent publication is the 2022 PESA, available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/public-expenditure-statistical-analyses-2022>.

Figure 6.5 of the 2022 PESA reports that central government expenditure on pay was £164.11 billion in 2021-22. This figure includes pay for civil servants employed in government departments and executive agencies, as well as pay for non-civil service staff employed in other government bodies, including arm's-length bodies, health trusts and academies. HM Treasury PESA figures do not provide a breakdown of civil service and non-civil service pay costs.

The most recent National Audit Office report on civil service staff costs was published in 2015 and is available here: <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Central-government-staff-costs.pdf>.

This report found that the annualised cost of civil service salaries was £11.13 billion as at 31 March 2014.

3. Productivity measures

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes information and analysis on public sector productivity measures, available here:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/publicservicesproductivity>.

The ONS focuses on measuring productivity in specific public services such as health and education, most of which do not employ staff classed as civil servants. The ONS does not publish civil service-wide measures of productivity. This may be because it would be difficult to establish consistent output-based measures of productivity across the civil service, given the variety of activities carried out by civil servants in different departments.

You may also be interested to know that the National Audit Office is currently conducting value-for-money work on the civil service workforce, which will look at some of the issues you raise. We plan to publish this report in autumn 2023.

Annex A sets out the steps you may wish to take if you are not satisfied with the way we have handled your request for information under the FOIA.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

NAO FOI Team

Annex A

Statement of Policy

Our policy is to respond to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as helpfully and promptly as possible, having regard to the principles set out in the Act. I therefore hope you are happy with the way we have handled your request. If you are not, then you should take the following steps.

In the first instance, within 40 working days, write to the National Audit Office Freedom of Information (FOI) Team at FOI.requests@nao.org.uk or by post to:

FOI Team, Green 2, National Audit Office, 157-197 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 9SP

The Head of FOI will arrange a review, which will be conducted by a senior member of staff who was not involved in decisions relating to your original request. Once the review has been completed, we will write informing you of the outcome.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

<https://ico.org.uk/> or Information Commissioner's Office Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF