



**MIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS CLAIM  
£12BN IN  
UNIVERSAL  
CREDIT**

RESEARCH BRIEFING

# Migrant households received £12bn in Universal Credit payments in 2025

Centre for Migration Control | 2026

## Headline figures

Households containing at least one foreign national received £11.920bn in Universal Credit last year, new research by the Centre for Migration Control can reveal.

That is a 25% increase on the £9.533bn paid out in 2024, and a 57% increase on the [£7.6bn that was reportedly paid out in 2023](#).

A total of £7.669bn was paid in Universal Credit to foreign national households where an individual was not-in work.

## What the figures show

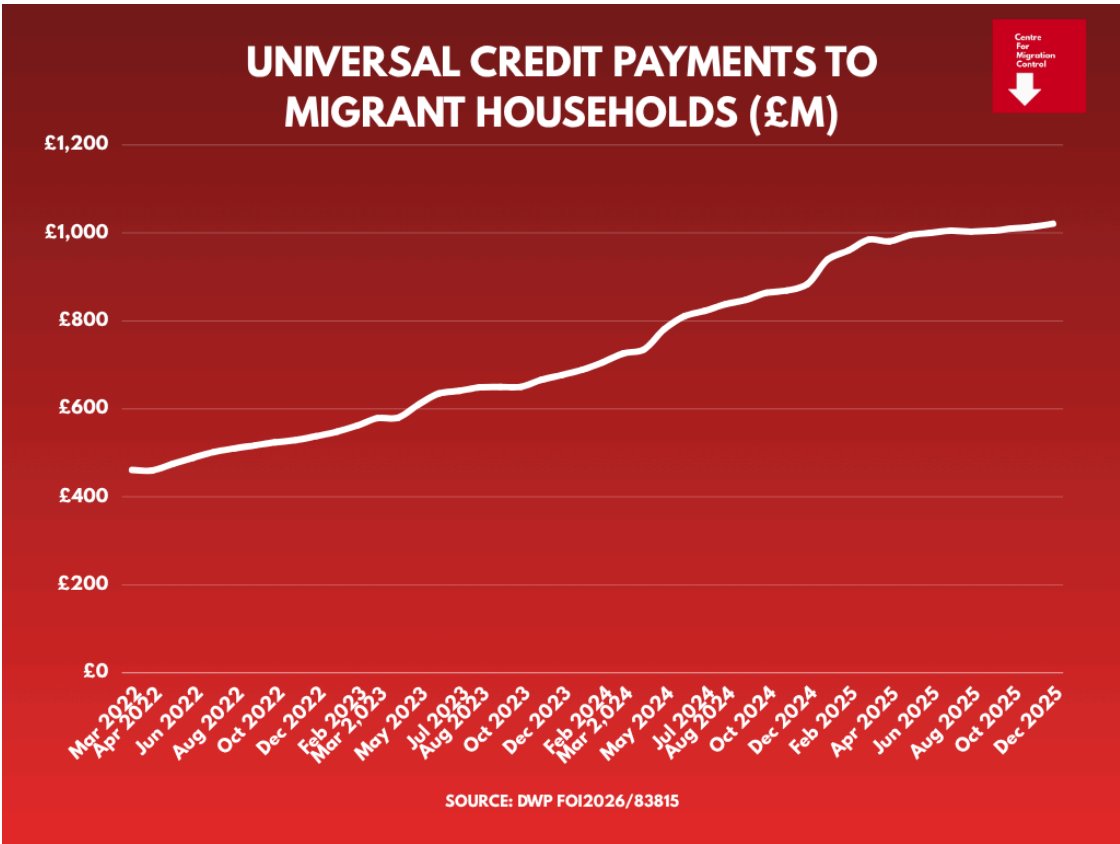
The data, obtained via freedom of information request from the Department for Work and Pensions, shows the amount paid out to households containing at least one individual who had passed the Habitual Residence Test and were recorded as being a non-Common Travel Area (CTA) national.

**Table 1: Monthly UC expenditure for households containing at least one non-CTA national who have passed the HRT, January to December 2025**

| Month  | Non-CTA UC expenditure | As % of total UC expenditure |
|--------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Jan-25 | £940m                  | 16.3%                        |
| Feb-25 | £960m                  | 16.2%                        |
| Mar-25 | £985m                  | 16.2%                        |
| Apr-25 | £981m                  | 16.1%                        |
| May-25 | £995m                  | 15.9%                        |
| Jun-25 | £1,000m                | 15.7%                        |
| Jul-25 | £1,005m                | 15.5%                        |
| Aug-25 | £1,003m                | 15.3%                        |
| Sep-25 | £1,005m                | 15.3%                        |
| Oct-25 | £1,010m                | 15.1%                        |
| Nov-25 | £1,014m                | 15.0%                        |
| Dec-25 | £1,021m                | 15.0%                        |

| Month      | Non-CTA UC expenditure | As % of total UC expenditure |
|------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2025 total | £11,920m               | 15.6%                        |

For context, the amount of UC paid out to households where one or more claimant(s) has declared themselves a non-Common Travel Area national and has passed the HRT, using the same methodology as above, was £9,533m in 2024 - meaning there was an increase of 25% between 2024 and 2025.



In March 2022, [the first month for which figures have been published](#), the monthly amount being paid to foreign national households in Universal Credit was £461m. That monthly figure has now more than doubled and, as of June 2025, the Department for Work and Pensions was spending £1bn a month on this one form of welfare support.

In December 2025, that figure was £1.021bn, the equivalent of £32.9m every day or £230.5m a week.

Between March 2022 and December 2025, a total of £33.924bn was spent on Universal Credit for foreign national households. This is in addition to the £18.4bn that the Home Office has spent on the asylum system since Q2 2022.

The figures show that across 2025 foreign national households received 15.6% of the total spent on Universal Credit. In May 2026, published DWP figures show that 15.2% of individuals claiming Universal Credit had an immigration status other than CTA.

The Migration Observatory estimates that in 2025, [13.5% of people aged over 16 in England and Wales were foreign citizens](#). Some might therefore be tempted to argue that the claim rate is proportionate. They would be wrong to do so.

Because whilst 13% of the 16+ population may be foreign nationals, a large proportion of them are subjected to No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) visa conditions and are thus ineligible for welfare support. The House of Commons Library reported that, in 2024, [3.6 million people were in the UK on a visa with NRPF conditions attached](#).

The data obtained by the Centre for Migration Control also reveals the breakdown of payments made to foreign national households by employment status.

£7.7bn (65%) went to foreign national households with an employment status of “not-in work”, defined as those not recognised as receiving PAYE income and not flagged as being self-employed.

**Table 2: Monthly UC expenditure for households containing at least one non-CTA national who have passed the HRT, January to December 2025, by employment status (not in-work)**

| Month      | UC expenditure (not in-work) |
|------------|------------------------------|
| Jan-25     | £596m                        |
| Feb-25     | £610m                        |
| Mar-25     | £626m                        |
| Apr-25     | £626m                        |
| May-25     | £636m                        |
| Jun-25     | £641m                        |
| Jul-25     | £644m                        |
| Aug-25     | £647m                        |
| Sep-25     | £655m                        |
| Oct-25     | £659m                        |
| Nov-25     | £663m                        |
| Dec-25     | £667m                        |
| 2025 total | £7,669m                      |

In 2024, the total amount of Universal Credit given to foreign national households with a migrant not in employment was £6,695m — meaning there was an increase of just under £1bn in 12 months.

It is important to note that these figures relate to the most recent data held by the DWP. A migrant may have since obtained naturalisation status and be classed administratively as British, but this may not have been updated on their UC claim.

Conversely, there are likely to be many individuals included within the CTA/British figures who are migrants that obtained citizenship after as little as six years. Payments made to such individuals would not be reflected in these

figures. It is incumbent on the DWP to recommence previously published statistics which showed benefit claimants by country of birth, not just their present immigration status or nationality.

The figures also give an insight into what is driving the increase in Universal Credit claims among migrants.

Between January and December 2025, the monthly amount being paid to households containing an EEA national increased from £533m to £555m (4.1% growth). For non-EEA nationals, this growth was more pronounced — from £471m to £528m (12.1%).

These categories overlap, as a household containing both an EEA national and a non-EEA national would be included in the figures for both. In 2025/26 it is estimated that 10% of households containing an EEA national also contained a non-EEA national. Seasonal factors can affect month-to-month comparisons, but the general trend is that the growth in UC payments to foreign nationals is being driven predominantly by non-European nationals.

## Expenditure equivalents

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- In April 2025, the [median salary of full-time employees in Britain was £39k](#), which would equate to an annual income tax and National Insurance payment of £7,400. The total amount awarded in Universal Credit to unemployed foreign national households, £7.7bn, is equivalent to the total income tax and National Insurance paid by 1,036,000 British resident full-time workers.
- In 2025 the ONS estimates there were [29 million households in the UK](#). The UC payments made to workless foreign national households is equivalent to £294 for every UK household.
- The Royal College of Nursing estimates there are [29,000 registered nursing vacancies across the NHS in Britain](#). In 2023, the University of Kent estimated the cost of training a nurse at approximately [£67,000](#). The Universal Credit expenditure on not-in-work foreign national households is equivalent to the training of 114,000 nurses, or the salaries of 160,000 Band 6 nurses ([2025/26 pay scales put this at between £38,682 and £46,580](#)).
- In 2021 the Ministry of Justice announced plans to increase prison estate capacity by 20,000 places. In December 2024, [the National Audit Office forecast this would cost up to £10.1bn](#) by completion.
- The Migration Advisory Committee forecast that the [lifetime tax revenue of the median skilled worker migrant would be £72,100](#). One year of Universal Credit payments to foreign national households was therefore covered by the total lifetime tax contribution of 166,436 migrant 'skilled workers'.
- Analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, using 2025/26 data, shows the cost to the state of [educating a child from ages 4-18 works out at £109,300](#). This £12bn is thus enough to pay for the complete education of roughly 110,000 British schoolchildren.

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*Source: DWP Freedom of Information response FOI2026/83815; ONS; House of Commons Library; Migration Observatory; Resolution Foundation; Royal College of Nursing; NHS Employers; National Audit Office; Migration Advisory Committee; Institute for Fiscal Studies.*



DWP Central Freedom of  
Information Team  
Caxton House  
6-12 Tothill Street  
London  
SW1H 9NA

[freedom-of-information  
request@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information<br/>request@dwp.gov.uk)

[DWP Website](#)

Our Ref:

FOI2026/83815 17

September 2026

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 19 August. You wrote:

“Please can you tell me the amount claimed in Universal Credit by households containing at least one foreign national (a non-Common Travel Area national) who have passed the Habitual Resident Test, for the following time period:

1) January - December 2025 (by month)

If possible, could you please also break these down by EEA/ Non-EEA nationality. If also possible, please could you break down by in-work and out-of-work. However, I understand these nationality and work breakdowns may not be possible.”

## **DWP Response**

We confirm that we hold the information you have requested.

Please note that when establishing the eligibility of non-UK/Irish claimants to claim benefits, an individual’s specific nationality does not play a role in this decision. Eligibility is usually determined by an individual’s immigration status and whether it restricts access to benefits, alongside the individual’s ability to meet the requirements of the Habitual Residence Test (HRT) for income-related benefits, including Universal Credit (UC).

UC is a household-based benefit. In the case of a couple claim, it is not possible to apportion

the total payment to each individual on the claim. In the figures in the tables below, we have counted the total amount paid to households where at least one claimant's nationality group is recorded as non-Common Travel Area, and the partner is not an ineligible partner.

**The categories overlap and cannot be added together to get a total. A household can appear in more than one nationality or employment group, so adding the columns together would count some households more than once. The categories are not mutually exclusive.**

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For example, in January 2025 a household in receipt of UC which contains an EEA and a non-EEA national would have their UC award included in both the 'EEA UC expenditure' figure and the 'non-EEA UC expenditure' figure. Therefore, adding 'EEA UC expenditure' and 'non-EEA UC expenditure' for January 2025 will not equal the total non-CTA spend for that month due to double counting.

Ineligible partners are where one claimant is not eligible for UC (e.g. because they have failed the HRT) but their earnings are considered when calculating the UC entitlement amount.

**Table 1: Monthly UC expenditure for households containing at least one non-CTA national who have passed the HRT, January to December 2025**

|        | <b>Non-CTA UC expenditure</b> | <b>Non-CTA UC expenditure as a percentage of total UC expenditure (when calculated the same way)</b> |
|--------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jan-25 | £940m                         | 16.3%                                                                                                |
| Feb-25 | £960m                         | 16.2%                                                                                                |
| Mar-25 | £985m                         | 16.2%                                                                                                |
| Apr-25 | £981m                         | 16.1%                                                                                                |
| May-25 | £995m                         | 15.9%                                                                                                |
| Jun-25 | £1,000m                       | 15.7%                                                                                                |
| Jul-25 | £1,005m                       | 15.5%                                                                                                |
| Aug-25 | £1,003m                       | 15.3%                                                                                                |
| Sep-25 | £1,005m                       | 15.3%                                                                                                |
| Oct-25 | £1,010m                       | 15.1%                                                                                                |
| Nov-25 | £1,014m                       | 15.0%                                                                                                |
| Dec-25 | £1,021m                       | 15.0%                                                                                                |

|                   |                 |              |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>2025 total</b> | <b>£11,920m</b> | <b>15.6%</b> |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|

**Table 2a: Monthly UC expenditure for households containing at least one non-CTA national who have passed the HRT, January to December 2025, by nationality grouping (EEA)**

|                   | <b>EEA UC expenditure</b> |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Jan-25            | £533m                     |
| Feb-25            | £543m                     |
| Mar-25            | £555m                     |
| Apr-25            | £549m                     |
| May-25            | £555m                     |
| Jun-25            | £556m                     |
| Jul-25            | £556m                     |
| Aug-25            | £553m                     |
| Sep-25            | £552m                     |
| Oct-25            | £553m                     |
| Nov-25            | £552m                     |
| Dec-25            | £555m                     |
| <b>2025 total</b> | <b>£6,613m</b>            |

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**Table 2b: Monthly UC expenditure for households containing at least one non-CTA national who have passed the HRT, January to December 2025, by nationality grouping (non-EEA)**

|        | <b>Non-EEA UC expenditure</b> |
|--------|-------------------------------|
| Jan-25 | £471m                         |
| Feb-25 | £482m                         |
| Mar-25 | £496m                         |
| Apr-25 | £496m                         |
| May-25 | £505m                         |
| Jun-25 | £509m                         |

|                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Jul-25            | £513m          |
| Aug-25            | £513m          |
| Sep-25            | £515m          |
| Oct-25            | £519m          |
| Nov-25            | £523m          |
| Dec-25            | £528m          |
| <b>2025 total</b> | <b>£6,069m</b> |

**Table 3a: Monthly UC expenditure for households containing at least one non-CTA national who have passed the HRT, January to December 2025, by employment status (in-work)**

|                   | UC expenditure (in-work) |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Jan-25            | £471m                    |
| Feb-25            | £479m                    |
| Mar-25            | £491m                    |
| Apr-25            | £483m                    |
| May-25            | £488m                    |
| Jun-25            | £488m                    |
| Jul-25            | £490m                    |
| Aug-25            | £483m                    |
| Sep-25            | £477m                    |
| Oct-25            | £477m                    |
| Nov-25            | £475m                    |
| Dec-25            | £480m                    |
| <b>2025 total</b> | <b>£5,782m</b>           |

**Table 3b: Monthly UC expenditure for households containing at least one non-CTA national who have passed the HRT, January to December 2025, by employment status (not in-work)**

|  | UC expenditure (not in-work) |
|--|------------------------------|
|--|------------------------------|

|                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Jan-25            | £596m          |
| Feb-25            | £610m          |
| Mar-25            | £626m          |
| Apr-25            | £626m          |
| May-25            | £636m          |
| Jun-25            | £641m          |
| Jul-25            | £644m          |
| Aug-25            | £647m          |
| Sep-25            | £655m          |
| Oct-25            | £659m          |
| Nov-25            | £663m          |
| Dec-25            | £667m          |
| <b>2025 total</b> | <b>£7,669m</b> |

Please note the following points when analysing the information below: 1. Figures are for Great Britain and are rounded to the nearest £1 million, with percentages given to one decimal place.

2. The figures are in nominal terms.

3. A household may have claimants with different nationalities. For example, around 10% of households containing at least one EEA-national were mixed EEA and non-EEA households in 2025/26.

4. Figures are based on administrative data on UC statements held by the DWP. These figures are not classified as “Official Statistics” as they have not undergone the required rigorous quality assurance check.

5. The methodology used to extract this information continues to evolve so figures provided in this response may differ to future iterations of the figures. The total UC payments figure presented here may differ to those in the DWP Benefit Caseload and Expenditure tables due to differences in methodology and data sources used.

6. In each period, around 2% of all households have at least one individual within that household with no recorded nationality and so are not included in the nationality figures. 7. These figures include amounts paid out through direct and indirect UC. 8. Retrospective updates have been applied to the amounts to correct for any under or overpayments that should have been paid at the time.

9. Nationality is self-reported and gathered as part of the DWP’s operational processes. For statistical purposes, we use the latest record held as current (which may be updated during a change of circumstance). Where claimants have stated multiple nationalities, we have allocated them based on the first nationality they listed. Nationality data for

non-claimant members of the household is likely to be less robust than for claimant members.

10. We define a claimant with a non-Common Travel Area (CTA) nationality as someone who does not hold British or Irish nationality.

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11. UC can be claimed by people who are either in or out of employment or self-employment. For the purpose of this analysis, 'in-work' is defined as those who either receive positive PAYE earnings from an employer, or they are flagged as being in self-employment due to reporting their earnings from self-employed activity to the DWP. 'Not in-work' is defined as those who do not receive PAYE earnings from an employer and are not flagged as being in self-employment.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact us quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team

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**- Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act**

If you are not happy with this response you may request an internal review

- by:
- e-mailing - [freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gov.uk); or
  - writing to - DWP Central FoI Team, Caxton House, 6-12 Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NA.

Any request for an internal review must be received by us within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please note we are not obliged to provide a review if it is requested after more than 40 working days.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted our own complaints procedure.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted by:

- emailing - [ICO FOI and EIR complaints](#);
- writing to - The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF; or
- telephoning - 0303 123 1113.

