

Budgeting on their terms

The Singapore Government’s annual budget does not exist on its own. How each session of Parliament allocates spending over its term of governance provides a fuller picture of the priorities for that session. As the current 13th Parliament enters its latter days with expectations of a General Election on the horizon, we take a look at how fiscal spending has changed over the past three sessions of Parliament. For the purpose of this analysis, an annual Budget is counted under a session of Parliament as long as the Budget was announced while that session was still in power.

The 11th Parliament therefore comprised the Budgets for 2006 to 2011 inclusive, the 12th Parliament the Budgets for 2012 to 2015 inclusive, and the 13th Parliament the Budgets for 2016 to 2018 inclusive. **By Kenneth Lim**

Transport, health spending share gain as defence, education shrink

Changes in allocations reflect the priorities of the day. The 13th Parliament has so far allocated a smaller share of its fiscal spending on defence and education than each of the previous two sessions of Parliament. Larger shares have instead gone to transport, where the expansion of Changi Airport and investment in public land transport have fuelled infrastructure spending; and healthcare, where rising costs have been an ongoing concern. A focus on economic restructuring has also seen more resources put toward manpower support for financial security and long-term employability.

Special transfers make a big impact

Certain expenditures are not accounted for under the ministries’ annual budgets. Instead, they fall under the category of special transfers, which are meant for non-structural schemes and ad-hoc expenditures. Some of the landmark initiatives by each term of government have fallen under this classification, and these initiatives have in fact received more funding than some ministries.

11th Parliament

National Research Fund (NRF)

The NRF was established in 2006 to provide sustained support for research and development work.

MINISTRY OR SPECIAL TRANSFER	TOTAL SPENT (\$\$ BILLION)
Defence	63.7
Education	52.0
Transport	21.1
Health	18.2
Home affairs	17.3
Trade & industry	16.2
National development	13.0
Social & family	8.9
Environment & water	5.9
National Research Fund	4.7
Comms and info	3.2
Finance	3.2
Foreign affairs	2.3
Manpower	2.1
Organs of State	1.6
Law	1.6
Manpower (financial security, employability)	1.5
Infocomms and media	1.4
Prime Minister's Office	1.4

12th Parliament

Pioneer Generation Package and Fund

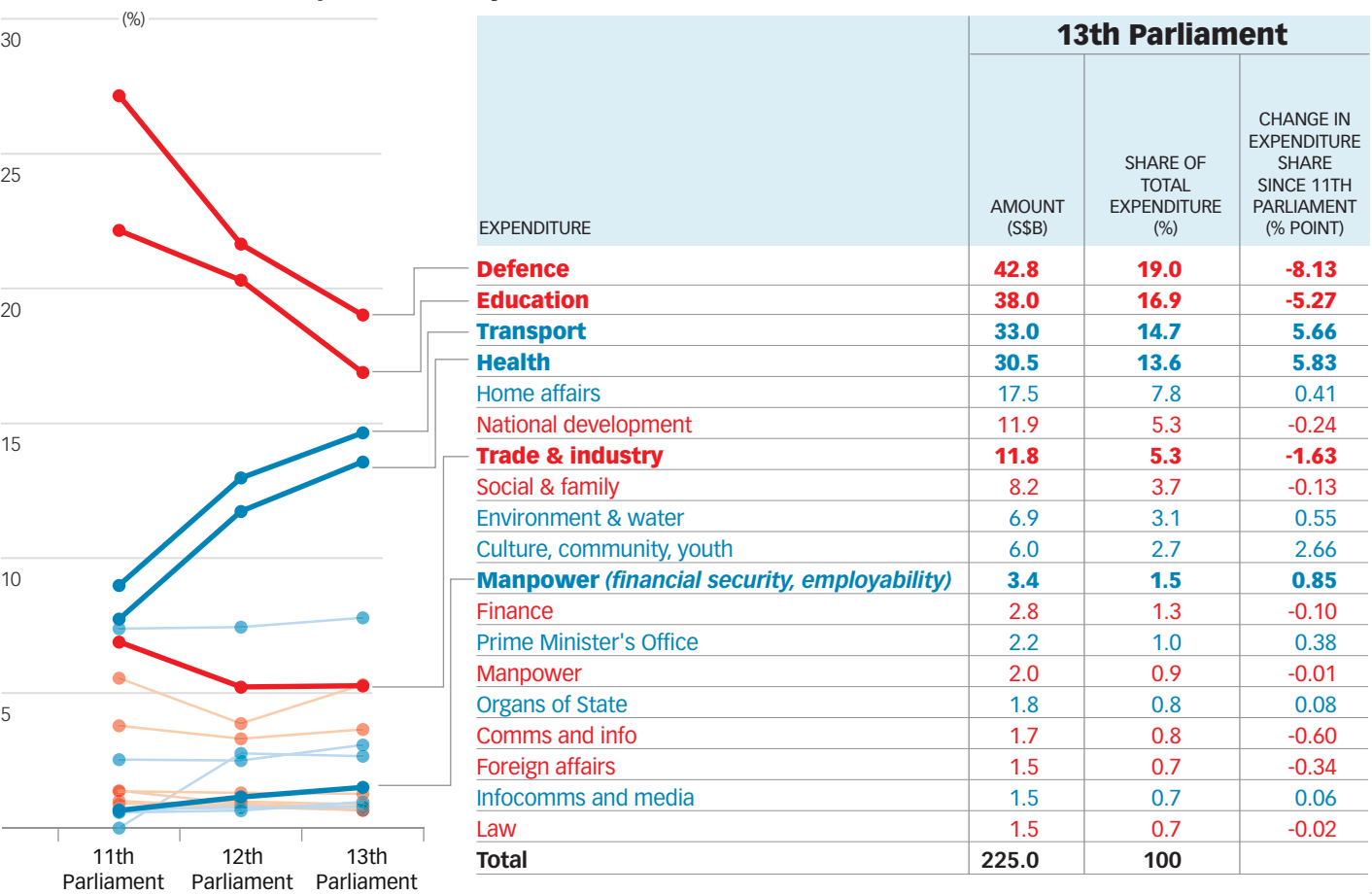
Announced in 2014, the Pioneer Generation Package provided substantial healthcare subsidies for elderly Singaporeans. An S\$8 billion fund was established to ensure that those benefits could always be funded.

Changi Airport Development Fund

To ensure that enough money would be available to expand Singapore’s national airport, the Government set aside some money in 2015 in a fund, then topped it up in 2016.

MINISTRY OR SPECIAL TRANSFER	TOTAL SPENT (\$\$ BILLION)
Education	45.7
Transport	29.2
Health	26.4
Home affairs	16.7
Trade and industry	11.7
National development	8.7
Pioneer Generation package, fund	8.3
Social and family development	7.4
Culture, community and youth	6.2
Environment and water resources	5.6
Changi Airport Development Fund	3.0
Finance	2.9
Manpower (financial security and lifelong employability)	2.6
Manpower	2.2
Law	2.0
Communications and information	2.0
Info-communications and media development	2.0
Foreign affairs	1.7
Organs of State	1.7
Prime Minister's Office	1.4

Cumulative share of expenditures by session of Parliament



13th Parliament

Rail Infrastructure Fund

A major push to improve Singapore’s rail network led to the creation of the Rail Infrastructure Fund during the 2018 Budget.

MINISTRY OR SPECIAL TRANSFER	TOTAL SPENT (\$\$ BILLION)
Defence	42.8
Education	38.0
Transport	33.0
Health	30.5
Home affairs	17.5
National development	11.9
Trade and industry	11.8
Social and family development	8.2
Environment and water resources	6.9
Culture, community and youth	6.0
Rail Infrastructure Fund	5.0
Manpower (financial security and lifelong employability)	3.4
Finance	2.8
Prime Minister's Office	2.2
Manpower	2.0
Organs of State	1.8
Communications and information	1.7
Foreign affairs	1.5
Info-communications and media development	1.5
Law	1.5