Universal Credit online channel usage

Data to June 2016

Department for Work & Pensions

The UC full service trial sites began operating from November 2014 and National Roll-out started from May 2016. Throughout, this digitalised service has been open to all new claims and all claimant types. Claimants can use the digital platform to submit information to support a claim application and report a change of circumstances to it, or DWP agents can submit information on behalf of the claimants. This publication provides ad hoc statistics on the proportion of claimants who submit these actions.
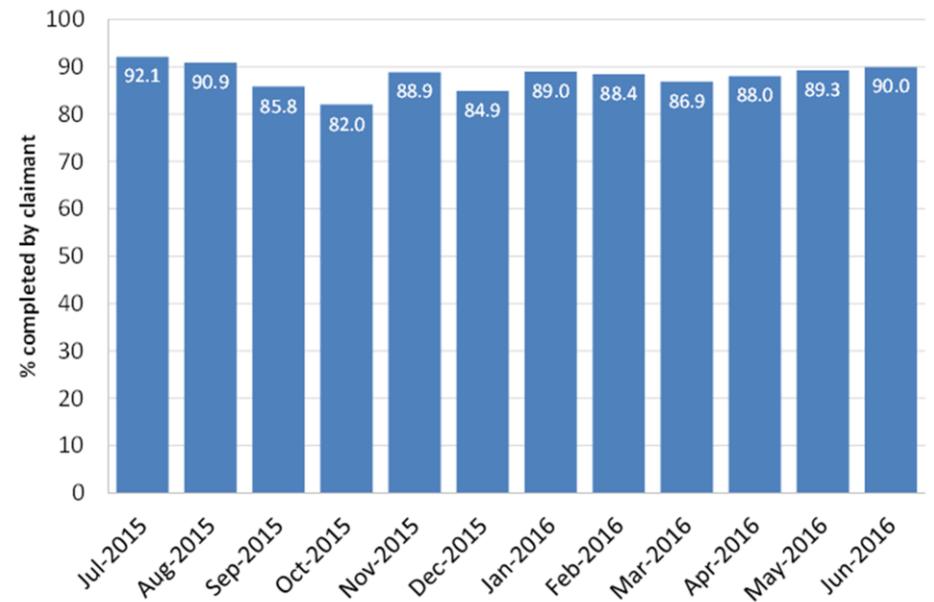
Main stories

Proportion of times claimants submitted personal, social and financial information into the UC online system
Since July 2015
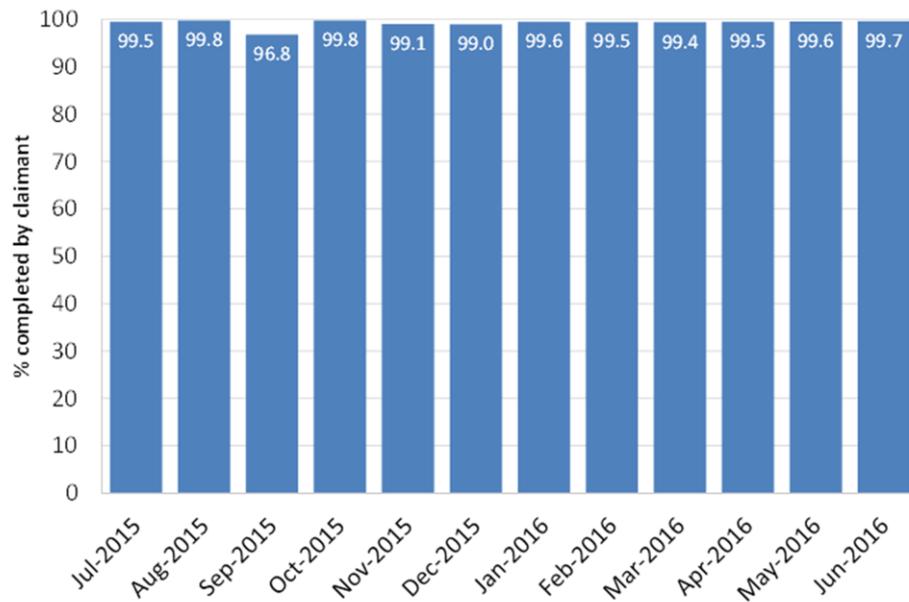
Proportion of times claimants reported their change of circumstances into the UC online system
Since July 2015

At a glance

What you need to know

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) began large-scale reform of the welfare system in the last Parliament from 2010. UC represents a major part of this overhaul of the current system. It aims to reduce poverty by making work pay while simplifying the benefits system by providing a single payment based upon a household's circumstances.

The six following benefits will be replaced once UC's rollout is completed:

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit

UC live service was introduced in April 2013 in certain pathfinder areas of North West England. Since October 2013, it has progressively been rolled out to other areas. It is now available in all Jobcentre Plus offices to single claimants, as well as limited numbers of other claimant types. This document does not report on live service.

UC full service is the enhanced digital platform which provides more online features, giving claimants greater control over their claim, with one online account for payments, reporting changes of circumstance, and receiving job alerts and work coach feedback. The full service aims to increase the efficiency of the existing UC service and improve value for money.

UC full service was first operated in trial areas in South London from November 2014 and National Roll-out started from May 2016, throughout this time it has been open to all new claims by all claimant types. This is in contrast to the live UC service which is specific to single claimants and a limited number of other claimant types

This publication is for the full service – it does not include any results for the live service, however, anyone who has previously been claiming UC through the live service in areas where the full service is rolled-out will be migrated over to this end state service. For more background information about the service please refer to the "Universal Credit at Work" document:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/483029/universal-credit-at-work-december-2015.pdf>.

These statistics cover

- Proportion of times claimants, or agents on their behalf, have inputted personal, social and financial information into the UC online system. These figures are not the same as the number of claims made to UC, which is reported in the Universal Credit Official Statistic:
  <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/universal-credit-statistics>.
- Proportion of times claimants, or agents on their behalf, have inputted change of circumstances into the UC online system.
- Both headline statistical series are split by jobcentre sites and type of information gathering activity.
  Statistics are supported by social research previously published by the Department in December 2015.

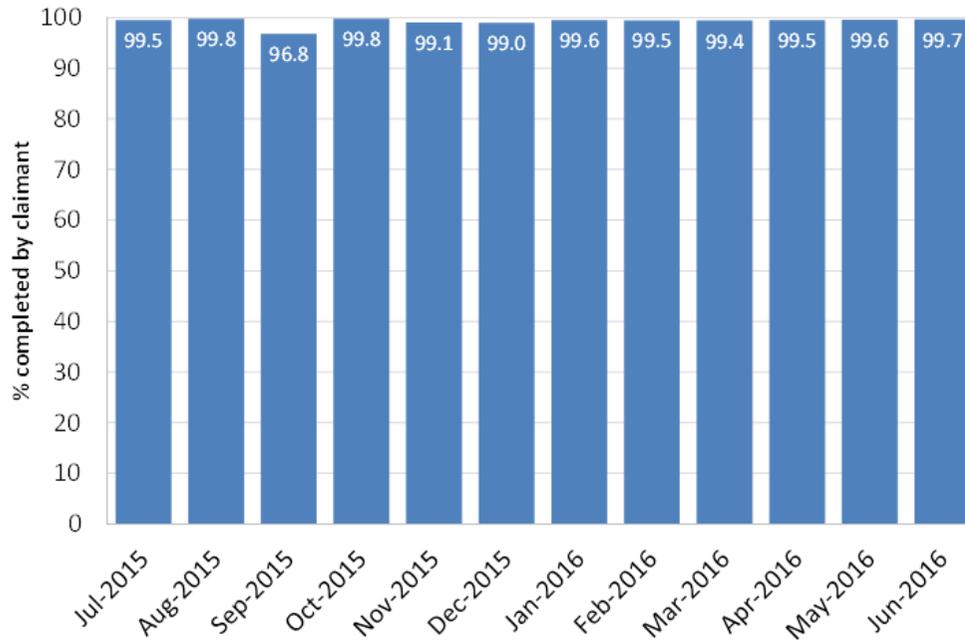# Universal Credit full service claimant journey

Claimant journey

The diagram below summarises the UC full service claimant journey into a series of sequential steps. It details the constituent steps in the journey from the point of view of the claimant rather than the operation of the business.

Registration

The potential claimants register for an account by creating a username, password and security answers.

The claimants have up to 7 days to input their name, date of birth and contact details including email address.

A verification code is sent to them by email, and they have 1 hour to enter this and verify the account.

Declaration

The potential claimants provide information on their circumstances under various headings to complete the application. These are presented to the claimants as a series of tasks in their account.

They have up to 28 days to complete these tasks and then make a final submit claim. Here claimants check and confirm the information they have inputted is correct. Claimants must then accept the high level responsibilities or claimant commitment before declaring their eligibility for UC

Identity Verification

The claimants must verify their identity as prompted by a task in their account.

They are given the option to do this online via GOV.UK Verify, but can also do this face-to-face through booking and attending a specific meeting.

Claimant Commitment

Some claimants must appear at an initial interview and potentially subsequent appointments.

This is to potentially set a work-search regime, which work-coaches will use to consider progress against. Once this is done, claimants must accept their claimant commitment to continue their claim.

Some claimants will be exempt from attending these interviews and instead accept an auto-generated claimant commitment online e.g. those working enough or severely disabled.

Award

The claimants must complete the previous steps and provide any further evidence required, e.g. sick notes, before payment is awarded and thereafter from that date.

Some claimants are expected to do work-search activity. If required they are asked to develop and upload their Curriculum Vitae.

It is this point where information is submitted initially or later than is being reported in this publication.

Change of Circumstance – from the point the claimants have submitted a claim; they can make changes to their circumstances. In the first assessment period, these changes are very likely to be due to mistaken entries in the first instance e.g. householders in partnership claiming two individual UC claims, whereas later changes are more likely to be due to real changes to their circumstances. This is also reported on in this publication.

If at any time the claimant needs help, they can phone the UC helpline for digital assistance

Claimants declaring information

The UC full service design means that potential UC claimants should submit information online

Proportion of times claimants submitted personal, social and financial information in the UC online system by month
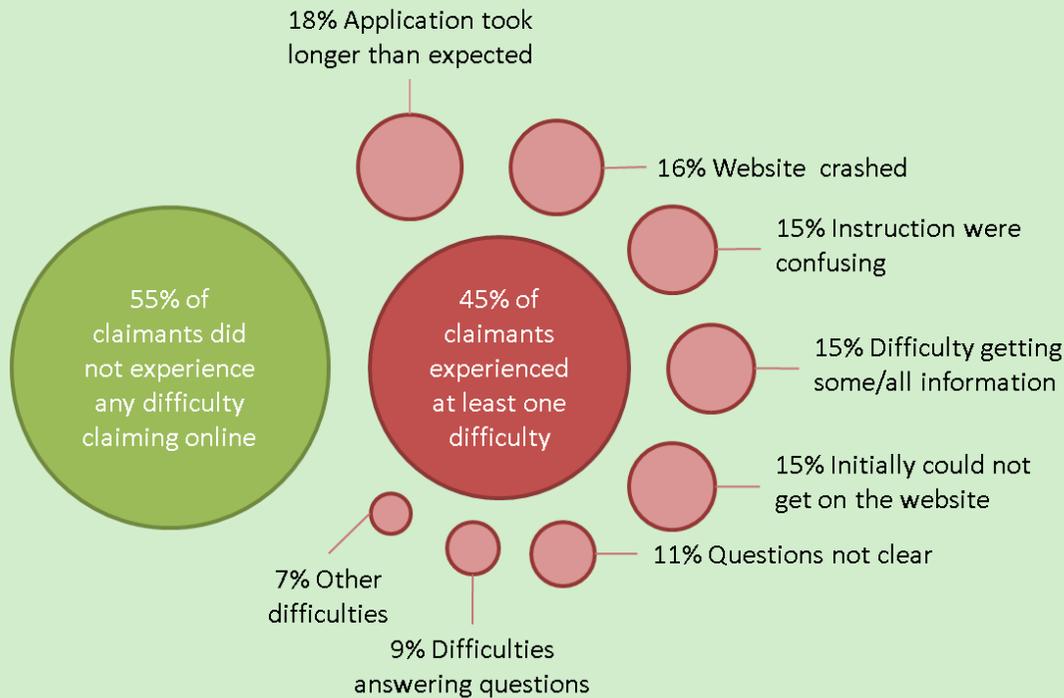

Key results

- In June 2016, 99.7 per cent of submissions of information were completed by the claimants using the UC full service online system, while 0.3 per cent of submissions were completed by DWP agents on the claimants' behalf.

- The latest month's figure is consistent with that over the last 12 months (see Annex A for full data). Across all of the months where data is available, 99.5 per cent of submissions of information were completed by the claimants online.

- This gives reasonable assurance that the majority of this activity was submitted digitally online by the claimant. However, there is the possibility that some of this activity is being submitted by the claimant, but only after consultation with other people, potentially including jobcentre staff.

- If this is submitted into the online system by a DWP agent, then this might be on behalf of the claimant who has used an alternative communication channel, like telephony, to submit information.

The story above is consistent with existing social research on the UC live service

Proportion of UC live service claims that were completed online and where these claimants experience difficulties

85% of claimants submitted their claim online, of which:

18% Application took longer than expected

16% Website crashed

15% Instruction were confusing

15% Difficulty getting some/all information

15% Initially could not get on the website

11% Questions not clear

9% Difficulties answering questions

7% Other difficulties

55% of claimants did not experience any difficulty claiming online

45% of claimants experienced at least one difficulty

- In summer 2014, DWP commissioned Ipsos MORI to commence research as part of a wider UC evaluation programme. This comprised a series of qualitative and quantitative interviews. For more details on the research please refer to the "Universal Credit Extended Gateway Evaluation": <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/481865/universal-credit-extended-gateway-evaluation.pdf>

- From the research, it was found that 85 per cent of UC live service claimants submitted claims online, with 11 per cent submitting claims by phone and 4 per cent submitting in person.

- However, research found that some of these online claimants experienced difficulties while claiming. 45 per cent of claimants who submitted information online experienced at least one difficulty with the process. The types of difficulties are outlined in the diagram opposite.

- To note, the UC live service's online system was a simple submit of an electronic form, whereas the UC full service's online process is a substantial customer journey. Therefore, the same or similar issues may or may not arise to an equal degree within the headline statistics of this report.

There are consistent patterns across jobcentre sites and in constituent parts of the information gather
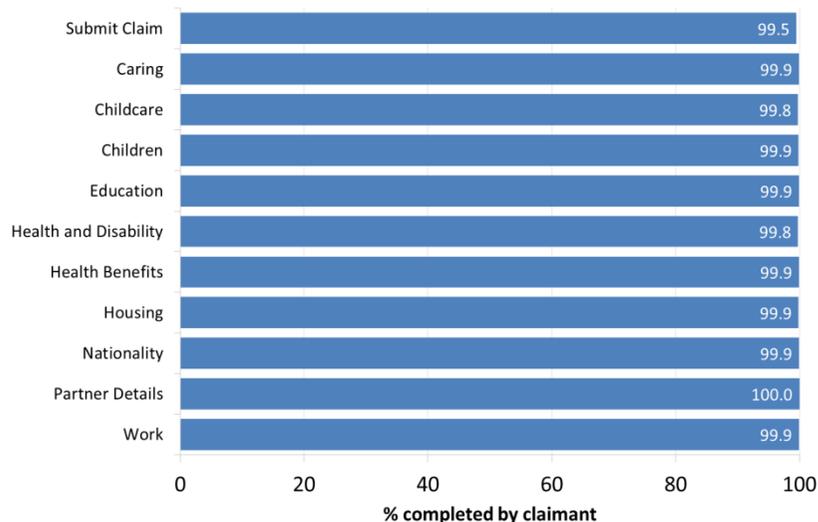
Proportion of times claimants submitted personal, social and financial information in the UC online system by jobcentre site
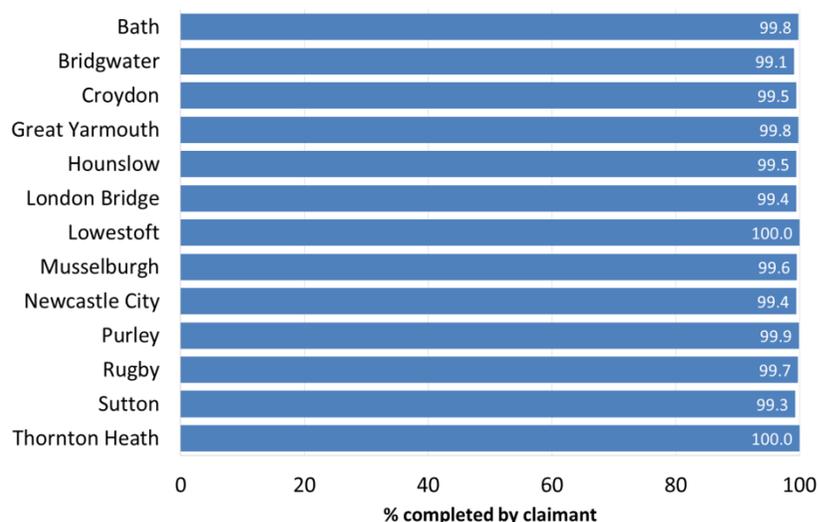
- Between May 2015 and June 2016, there has been little difference between the proportions of submissions of information completed by the claimants using the UC full service online system across jobcentre sites where full service is rolled out. Overall, the difference between sites is less than 1 per cent.

- The site level percentages are based on different volumes of submissions of information. For the sites that have been running for the longest, Sutton and Croydon, there are large overall volumes of submissions, but growth in the volumes will be steady from this point onwards.

- Other sites, like Hounslow, have very large volumes of submits of information because of the population of benefit claimants in them.

- Other sites still have small volumes and so tend to have entirely online submission of information. As these sites run for longer the proportion may drop.

Note: a small number of submits are currently unassigned to a site. This is because the submitting claimants have not yet been assigned to a jobcentre in the system, due to being the newest users of the service. They are excluded from the chart opposite, and their absence does not substantively change the story.

Proportion of times claimants submitted personal, social and financial information in the UC online system by type of information gather


- Between May 2015 and June 2016, there has been little difference between the proportions of different parts of the submissions of information that were completed by the claimants using the UC full service online system.

Note: information gather on similar topics have been combined in the chart opposite.

Claimants changing circumstance

The UC full service design means that potential UC claimants should report change of circumstances online

Proportions of times claimants reported their change of circumstances into the UC online system
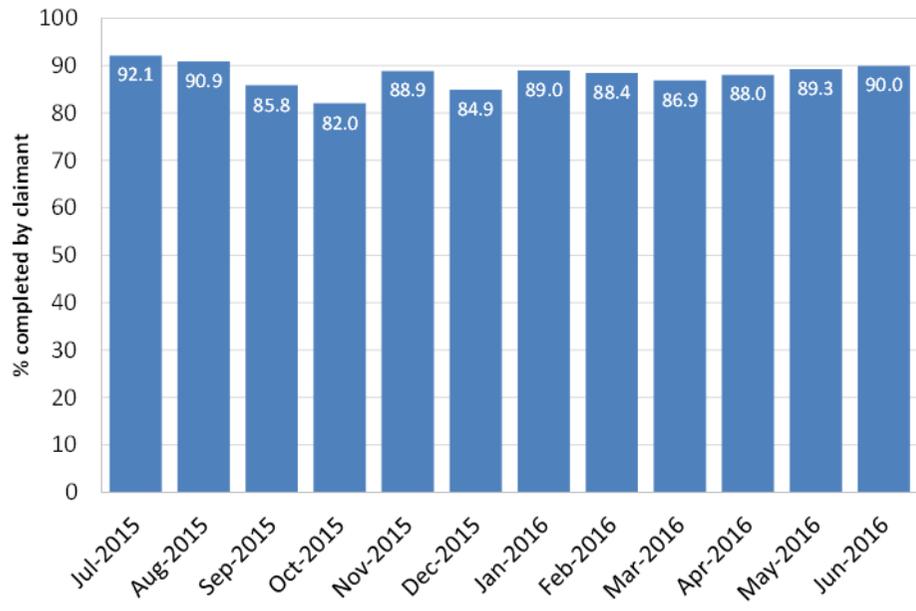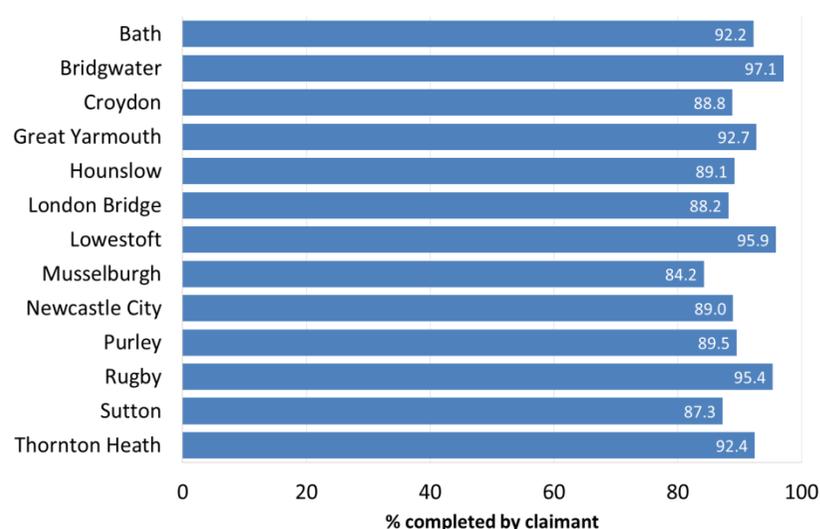

Key results

- In June 2016, 90.0 per cent of reported changes of circumstances were completed by the claimants using the UC full service online system, while 10.0 per cent of reported changes of circumstances were completed by DWP agents on the claimants' behalf.

- The latest month's figure is consistent with that over the last 12 months (see Annex A for full data). Across all of the months where data is available, 88.7 per cent of reported changes were completed by claimants online.

- This gives reasonable assurance that the majority of this activity was reported digitally online by the claimant. However, there is the possibility that some of this activity is being reported by the claimant, but only after consultation with other people, potentially including jobcentre staff.

- If this is reported into the online system by a DWP agent, then this might be on behalf of the claimant who has used an alternative communication channel, like telephony, to report changes.

Note: these statistics are only for change of circumstances available online.

There are less consistent patterns across jobcentre sites and by different types of changes

Proportion of times claimants reported their change of circumstances in the UC online system by jobcentre site

- Between May 2015 and June 2016, there is a difference between the proportions of reported changes of circumstances completed by the claimants using the UC full service online system across jobcentre sites where UC full service is rolled out.

- The site level percentages difference is 12.9 per cent between low and high; with Musselburgh having 84.2 per cent of reported changes completed by the claimants online and Bridgwater having 97.1 per cent of reported changes completed by the claimants online.

- As with the submission of information above, some of these differences may be due to small volumes. However, it might also be because of the composition of claimant types, in terms of health, education and digital skills, and the locality's access to the internet.

  Note: a very small number of reported changes are currently unassigned to a site. This is because the reporting claimants have not yet been assigned to a jobcentre in the system, due to being the newest users of the service. They are excluded from the chart opposite, and their absence does not substantively change the story.

Proportion of times claimants reported their change of circumstances in the UC online system by type of circumstance
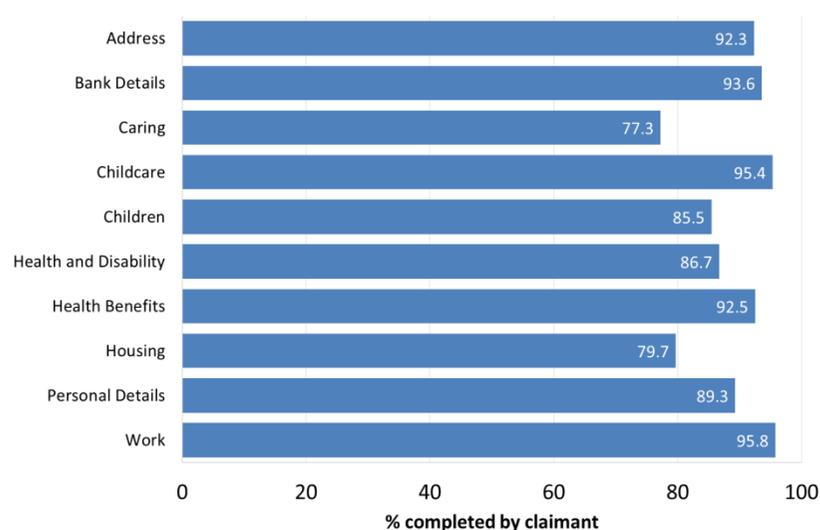
- Between May 2015 and June 2016, there were differences between percentages for the various types of changes reported albeit the majority in each case are completed online. However, what is not known is to what degree, if any, this activity is being submitted by the claimant after consultation with other people.

- The difference between percentages for the types of change of circumstance is 18.5 per cent between low and high; with 77.3 and 79.7 per cent of caring and housing related changes respectively compared to 95.4 and per cent 95.8 per cent of childcare and work related changes.

About these statistics

The statistics have been compiled using management information from the UC full service system. This system generates data as a result of business processes; that is the registering for an account, completing a declaration, providing identity and other evidences, accepting claimant commitments, reporting a change of circumstance and making a payment to a claimant. If a feature of the full service online design does not exist as a specific process, it will not currently be reflected in this publication.

The total volumes for the submissions of information and changes of circumstances are counts of completed tasks related to both of these actions. Within the data it is recorded who has completed these tasks, either the claimant or the agent on their behalf. The headline statistics around the proportion of times the claimant has completed the two types of actions are the count of the tasks completed by claimant over the count of all tasks. This can be observed in the tables in the Annex.

In accordance with end-users engagement strategy, readers are invited to comment on the development and relevance of these statistics via the contact detail at the head of the document.

Limitation of the statistics

The UC full service management information starts from May 2015 and so percentages and underpinning volumes are only available from that date.

There is no quantitative or qualitative data on the level of support or assistance the claimants might have received by non-online communication channels. Therefore, this publication has included some information about the UC live service in order to give the reader the fullest possible story. Please note that research findings are not based on actual counts of submissions of information or reports of changes of circumstances, and have a level of uncertainty of +/-5 per cent around them.

Where to find out more

This publication is part of a wider publication strategy which aims to release relevant information about UC into the public domain in a clear and controlled way.

More information on the UC statistics release can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-statistics-background-information

Monthly UC official experimental statistics releases can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/universal-credit-statistics

For progress reports on the implementation of UC:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-at-work

For information about the transition to UC full service:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-transition-to-full-service

Annex A

Statistical tables

Volumes and proportions of times claimants submitted personal, social and financial information in the UC online system by month

	Volumes [1]			Percentage		
	All submits	By claimants	By agents	All submits	By claimants	By agents
Total	50,600	50,400	200	100.00	99.51	0.49
Month						
May-15	100	100	0	100.00	98.54	1.46
Jun-15	400	400	0	100.00	100.00	0.00
Jul-15	600	600	0	100.00	99.51	0.49
Aug-15	500	500	0	100.00	99.79	0.21
Sep-15	500	500	0	100.00	96.77	3.23
Oct-15	500	500	0	100.00	99.78	0.22
Nov-15	900	900	0	100.00	99.07	0.93
Dec-15	1,000	1,000	0	100.00	98.96	1.04
Jan-16	1,600	1,600	0	100.00	99.55	0.45
Feb-16	4,400	4,300	0	100.00	99.45	0.55
Mar-16	5,300	5,300	0	100.00	99.41	0.59
Apr-16	7,900	7,800	0	100.00	99.48	0.52
May-16	11,300	11,200	0	100.00	99.58	0.42
Jun-16	15,900	15,800	100	100.00	99.67	0.33

1 - Volumes rounded to nearest 100

Volumes and proportions of times claimants reported their change of circumstances in the UC online system by month

	Volumes [1]			Percentage		
	All change of circumstances	By claimants	By agents	All change of circumstances	By claimants	By agents
Total	28,400	25,200	3,200	100.00	88.65	11.35
Month						
May-15	100	100	0	100.00	72.84	27.16
Jun-15	200	100	0	100.00	90.67	9.33
Jul-15	300	300	0	100.00	92.13	7.87
Aug-15	300	300	0	100.00	90.91	9.09
Sep-15	500	400	100	100.00	85.84	14.16
Oct-15	500	400	100	100.00	82.01	17.99
Nov-15	600	600	100	100.00	88.87	11.13
Dec-15	800	700	100	100.00	84.92	15.08
Jan-16	1,200	1,100	100	100.00	88.98	11.02
Feb-16	2,100	1,900	200	100.00	88.44	11.56
Mar-16	3,000	2,600	400	100.00	86.91	13.09
Apr-16	4,500	4,000	500	100.00	88.04	11.96
May-16	5,900	5,300	600	100.00	89.26	10.74
Jun-16	8,400	7,500	800	100.00	89.96	10.04

1 - Volumes rounded to nearest 100