



# Research Summary: Universal Credit Full Service Claimant Survey

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This summary presents findings from two waves of quantitative research with Universal Credit Full Service claimants. This longitudinal survey explored areas such as claimants' experiences of registering a claim and understanding of Universal Credit, their job search activity and attitudes to work, and their experiences of budgeting and sanctioning. Interviews were conducted with claimants, between March 2017 and September 2017, at approximately three and eight months into their Universal Credit claim.

## Key findings

Universal Credit (UC) is a digital service and 98 per cent of claimants did claim online. Over half (54 per cent) of all claimants were able to register their claim online unassisted, with a further fifth (21 per cent) completing it online but with help. Three in ten (30 per cent) of those who registered a claim online found this difficult, and the process of verifying their identity online was seen as particularly difficult. Overall, more than four in ten (43 per cent) claimants said they needed more support registering their claim for UC. Three in ten (31 per cent) said they need more ongoing support with using their UC digital account.

Claimants were asked about their understanding of some of UC's key features. Findings suggest that there is scope to improve knowledge of UC. Six in ten claimants (62 per cent) knew that, if they are on low income, they can still receive UC regardless of how many hours they work; and half (51 per

cent) of claimants agreed that, compared with only being on benefits, every hour they work would leave them better off under UC.

Understanding and recollection of the Claimant Commitment was high; three quarters (77 per cent) of claimants said that the conditions of their Commitment were explained well. This is reflected in strong knowledge of processes such as reporting changes in circumstances and sanctions. However, among individuals who had claimed other benefits in the past there was some uncertainty about whether UC to a greater extent financially motivates them to find work, and whether it is easier to claim.

Claimants were largely very positive about the interventions they had received as part of their claim and about key aspects of the digital service, such as the journal and the 'To Do's'.

A comparison of the hours claimants said they were required to complete (according to their Claimant Commitment) against the hours completed in the week prior to survey, showed that half had met or exceeded the number of hours required. The most common reason for not completing any work search activity was an illness or health condition.

There is evidence of positive employment outcomes for UC claimants, with a near doubling of the proportion of claimants being in a paid role after eight months into the claim. When they first made their UC claim, just under a quarter (23 per cent) of claimants were working for an employer in a paid role. At around three months into their claim, the proportion working for an employer in a paid

role had increased to a third (33 per cent) of claimants and by eight months into the claim, 40 per cent of claimants were in a paid role.

Respondents were asked about their working hours in both surveys, and comparing overall figures suggests that there was a slight overall increase in the number of hours worked.

Similarly, comparing figures on annual income from both surveys shows an increase in overall income levels, with those in work seeing an average increase of £600 per year and a drop in the proportion making less than £10,000.

Four in ten claimants at both survey waves were experiencing difficulties keeping up with bills approximately eight to nine months into their claim. In both waves, just over a third were experiencing housing payment arrears and, for 44 per cent, the situation had deteriorated between the two surveys. One in three claimants in arrears in both waves said the situation had improved.

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