



If you don't meet one or more conditions of your benefit claim, without good reason, your benefit could be stopped or reduced. This is a benefit sanction. This release includes Official and Experimental Statistics about sanctions for Universal Credit (UC), Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance Work-Related Activity Group (ESA WRAG) and Income Support (IS).

**Sanction statistics should not be compared across benefits as the policies for each benefit are very different.**

## Main stories

- In May 2018, the percentage of UC claimants with a drop in payment due to a sanction was 2.8%, and is down 1.3 percentage points from February 2018. From February 2018 to April 2018, 63% of all Universal Credit decisions resulted in a sanction. This is up 16 percentage points from November 2017 to January 2018. 72% of UC decisions in February 2018 to April 2018 occurred due to failure to attend or participate in a Work-Focused Interview. The average (median) sanction length was 31 days. **There are some instances of incomplete UC live service data from January 2018 to April 2018 that affect UC live service decisions, rates and durations. For more information see [page 10](#).**
- The percentage of Jobseeker's Allowance claimants with a drop in payment due to a sanction in December 2017 was 0.3%. This is down 0.1 percentage points from September 2017. The average (median) sanction length was 28 days.
- The percentage of Employment and Support Allowance (WRAG) claimants with a drop in payment due to a sanction is down 0.1 percentage points to 0.1% from September 2017. The average (median) sanction length was 28 days.
- A decision can be made to sanction or not. For the period February to April 2018, 2,100 (91%) of all Income Support decisions were decisions to sanction.

### Universal Credit

2.8% of people had a drop in benefit due to a UC sanction in May 2018

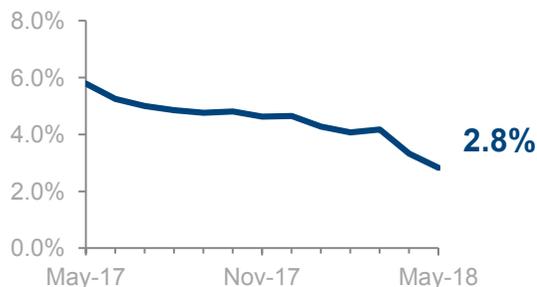
### Jobseeker's Allowance

0.3% of people had a drop in benefit due to a JSA sanction in December 2017

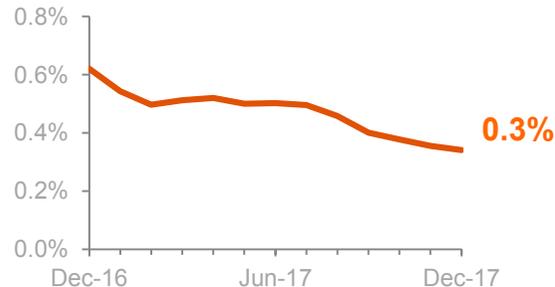
### Employment and Support Allowance

0.1% of people had a drop in benefit due to an ESA sanction in December 2017

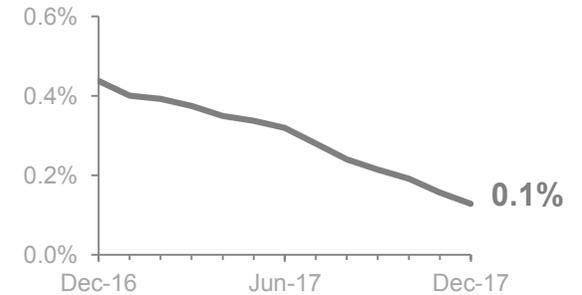
Experimental rate of claimants receiving less benefit due to a sanction



The average UC sanction lasted **31 days**  
(Experimental median: Aug 15 – May 18)



The average JSA sanction lasted **28 days**  
(Experimental median: Oct 12 – Dec 17)



The average ESA sanction lasted **28 days**  
(Experimental median: Dec 12 – Dec 17)

## At a glance

Page

<a href="#">The process of a benefit sanction</a>	3
<a href="#">Sanction Decisions and Reasons</a>	4
<a href="#">Sanction Durations</a>	7
<a href="#">Benefit Sanction Rates</a>	8
<a href="#">Benefit Destinations</a>	9
<a href="#">About these statistics</a>	10

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## What you need to know

If you don't meet one or more conditions of your benefit claim without good reason, your benefit could be stopped or reduced. This is a benefit sanction. However, not everyone that is initially referred for failing to meet the conditions of their claim will receive a sanction. Where a claimants' benefit is reduced, the claimant may be eligible for a hardship payment.

Benefit sanction statistics are primarily sourced from data originally collected via administrative systems and were published as part of the [Quarterly Benefits Summary](#) until August 2017. From November 2017, they are published in the [Benefits Sanction Statistics](#) publication which will be released every quarter in February, May, August, and November. Please note that sanction statistics for each of the benefits are not directly comparable as the policies for each benefit are very different.

This release is a summary of the latest Official and Experimental Statistics on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance Work-Related Activity Group (ESA WRAG), and Universal Credit (UC) benefit sanctions. For ESA claimants, sanctions only apply to the Work-Related Activity Group (WRAG), not the Support Group.

Users can also:

- Produce their own tables and access demographic breakdowns using [Stat-Xplore](#)
- Access [supporting tables](#)
- Find further information about the sanctions process, source of these statistics and the publication rounding policy in the [Background Information and Methodology](#) documents.

This publication comprises both Official and Experimental Statistics. Statistics are developed in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Act and are designated as Experimental whilst the methodology used to produce them is being refined. Once the methodology has been finalised, the statistics are designated as Official statistics.

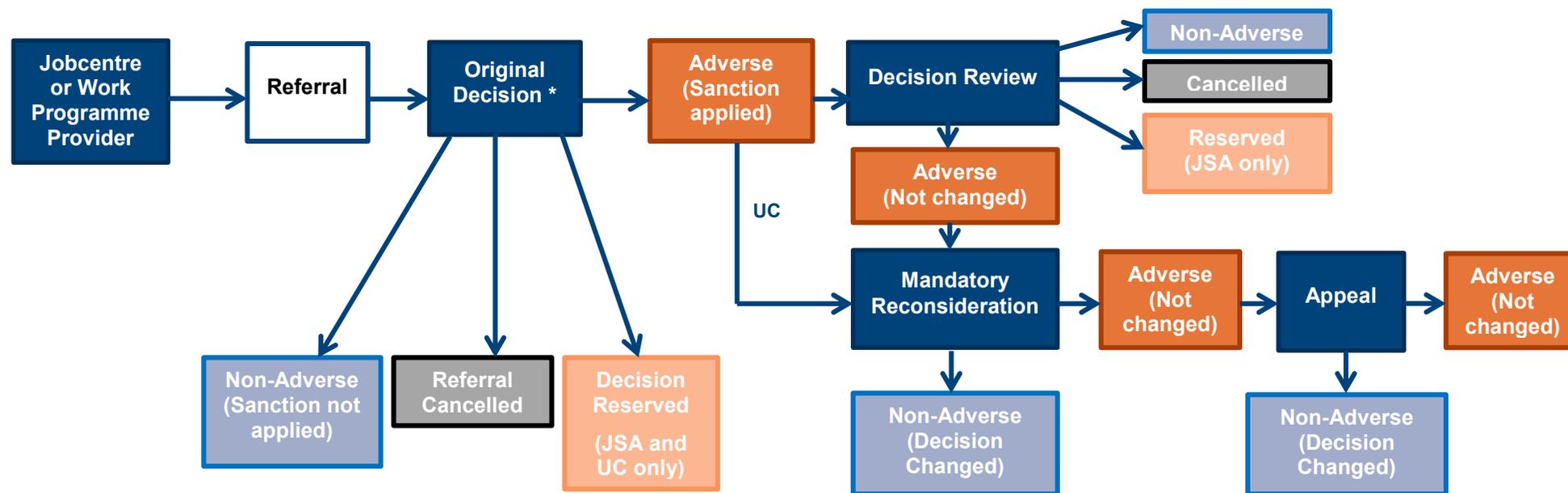
The data in this publication is the latest available for each set of statistics.

- JSA sanction statistics in this publication date from the [regime change](#) on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012 when new rules were brought in. Data from before the regime change (April 2000 - 21<sup>st</sup> October 2012) is available on [Stat-Xplore](#) and in the [supporting tables](#).
- ESA sanction statistics date from the [regime change](#) on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2012 when new rules were brought in. Data from before the regime change (October 2008 - 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2012) is available on [Stat-Xplore](#) and in the [supporting tables](#).
- UC sanction statistics date from August 2015

Detailed IS sanction statistics are not included in this publication, but are available on [Stat-Xplore](#) and in the supplementary tables. This is because data is only published from October 2016, when it became robust enough to use, and therefore there is currently only a small amount of information available.

Universal Credit sanction statistics for both full and live service are presented in this publication. Full service is available to all claimant types but only in certain areas of the country at present. Live service is available in all parts of the country to single working age claimants only, in areas where full service has not yet rolled out. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/universal-credit-full-service-and-live-service>

## Benefit sanctions



### Sanction decisions

A claimant is referred to a sanction Decision Maker when they do not meet a condition of their benefit. The Decision Maker looks at the available information about the claimant and their referral and decides on an outcome. The decision made can be:

- Adverse - They decide to sanction the claimant
- Non-Adverse - They decide not to sanction the claimant
- Cancelled - They decide that the referral was not appropriate and cancel it
- Reserved - A decision to sanction the claimant cannot be made, since the claimant is not currently on benefit, so the sanction cannot be applied. The claimant will be re-referred to a Decision Maker if they begin to claim benefit again.

Within this publication, we refer to all of these outcomes as decisions. Many sanction decisions can be made during the course of a claim where the claimant has failed to meet the conditions of their benefit claim more than once.

### Sanction stages

Each JSA, ESA-WRAG or IS sanction decision can have a maximum of four stages, beginning with the Original Decision made by a Decision Maker. If the claimant does not agree that their benefit should be reduced, they may request a Decision Review, Mandatory Reconsideration, and Appeal. UC has a maximum of three stages as there is no Decision Review.

In the statistics, only the latest decision is kept, meaning that any previous decisions for each sanction referral are updated with every publication.

### Sanction durations

We count the length of time that a claimant is receiving less benefit because they were being sanctioned and calculate the median. The median is the middle number when all of the sanction lengths have been arranged from smallest to largest. Durations are counted up to and including the last month in which a deduction is taken. If someone has multiple sanctions which are served without a break in deductions, this will be counted as one sanction in the statistics. The underlying figures can be found in the [supporting tables](#).

### Sanction rates

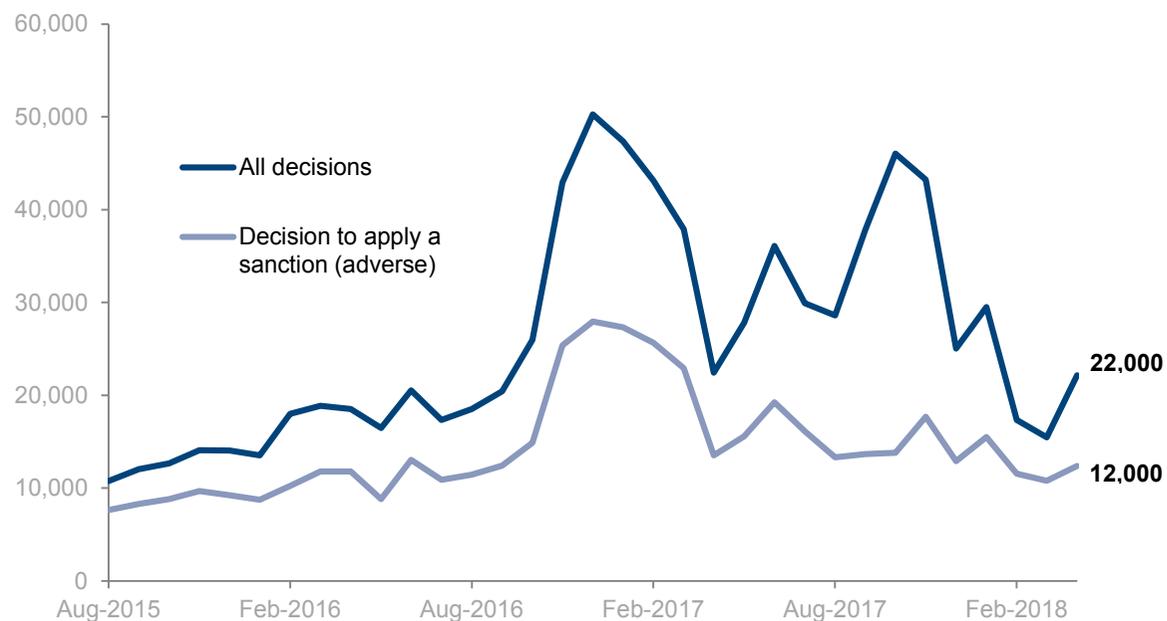
We calculate the number of people who are receiving less benefit because they were sanctioned as a proportion of the total number of people in receipt of each benefit at a point in time (i.e. on a specific day of the month). These figures are calculated differently to the decisions figures, which are based on the number of decisions made in a full month. The underlying figures can be found in the [supporting tables](#).

### Benefit destinations

We track what happens to claimants after they receive an **\*Original, adverse sanction decision**. The figures show the amount of time spent on different working age benefits (JSA, UC, ESA and IS) in the 180 day period following the decision. Further information can be found in the [destinations methodology document](#).

# 1.1 Sanction decisions and reasons: Universal Credit live service – Experimental Statistics

Sanction decisions: Aug 2015 to Apr 2018



The total number of monthly decisions has varied since August 2015, with peaks in December 2016 and October 2017 and a low of 15,000 in March 2018. The total number of monthly decisions currently stands at 22,000 in April 2018.

The volume of decisions processed in any given month varies and is affected by both availability of decision-making resource, and claimant behaviour. For example, due to resource pressures, there were a large number of outstanding sanction referrals towards the end of 2017. Some of these were cancelled rather than formally processed by decision makers in order to be as fair as possible to claimants.

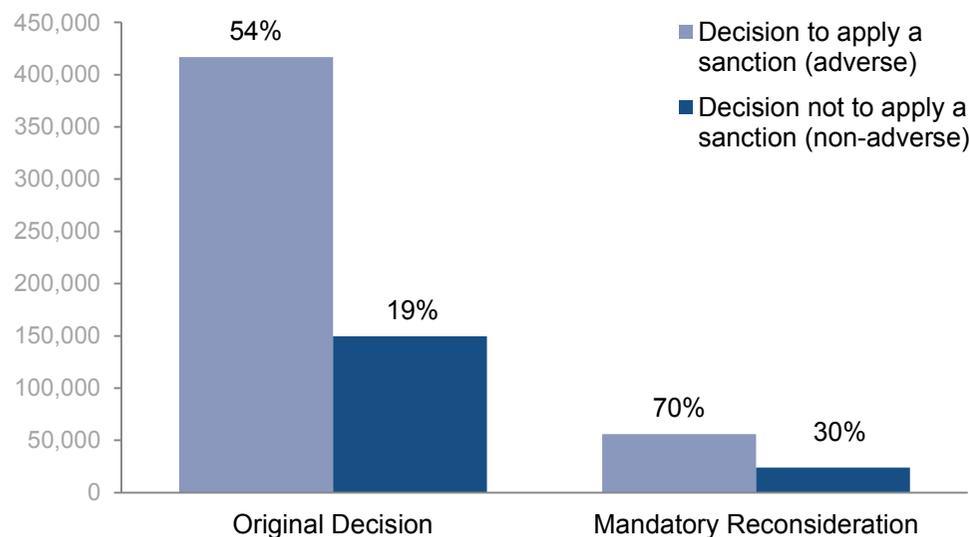
Around 54% of original decisions have resulted in a sanction being applied and 70% of mandatory reconsiderations resulted in a sanction being upheld since August 2015.

Failure to attend or participate in a Work-Focussed Interview accounted for 71% of all Universal Credit sanction decisions in the last year.

**These figures are for live service claimants only and do not include full service data.**

**There are some instances of incomplete UC live service data from January 2018 to April 2018 that affect UC decisions. For more information see [page 10](#).**

Summary of decision outcomes at each stage: Aug 2015 to Apr 2018



Original decision outcome percentages may not total 100% as they do not include any cancelled or reserved decisions that are made at this stage. Appeals data has been omitted due to possible under-recording of adverse decisions.

Summary of decision reasons: May 2017 to Apr 2018

All decisions made by reason group	Latest Year (Thousands)	Latest Year (%)	Latest Quarter (Thousands)	Latest Quarter (%)
Work-Focussed Interviews	254.8	71.0	39.3	71.5
Availability for Work	47.1	13.1	6.9	12.6
Employment Programmes	35.1	9.8	5.1	9.3
Reason for Leaving Previous Employment	19.4	5.4	3.3	6.0
Other	2.7	0.7	0.4	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>359.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>55.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

# 1.2 Sanction decisions and reasons: Jobseeker's Allowance – Official Statistics

Sanctions decisions: Oct 2012 to Apr 2018



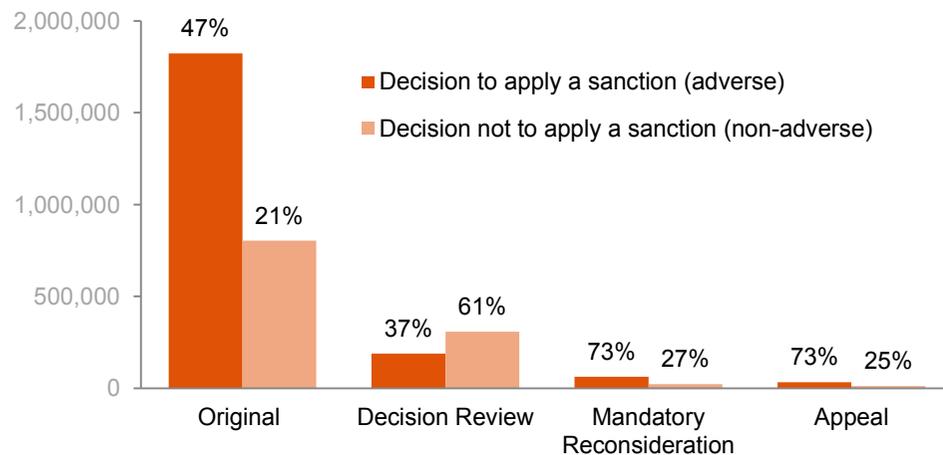
**The fall in decisions is in part due to the fall in Jobseeker's Allowance claimants as more people move to Universal Credit.** Over the last three years, the total number of decisions per month has steadily declined to 4,000 in April 2018. Original decisions currently account for 86% of all decisions made since October 2012. Since October 2012, 47% of Original decisions have resulted in a sanction being applied. Since the introduction of the Mandatory Reconsideration in November 2013, Appeals have dropped from a peak of 4,500 in October 2013 to only 290 in the last year.

**The trend in JSA sanction decisions also coincides with lower numbers of JSA claimants joining the Work Programme.** 57% of all JSA sanction decisions in the last year were due to Work Programme sanction referrals. These have been falling since October 2013, making the total number of JSA sanction decisions fall. The next biggest proportion in the last year was almost 15% for Work-Focussed Interview sanction decisions.

Summary of decision reasons: May 2017 to Apr 2018

All decisions made by reason group	Latest Year (Thousands)	Latest Year (%)	Latest Quarter (Thousands)	Latest Quarter (%)
Work Programme	47.4	57.2	4.0	35.1
Work-Focussed Interview	12.2	14.7	2.3	20.1
Availability for Work	11.4	13.8	2.1	18.9
Reason for Leaving Previous Employment	10.5	12.7	2.7	23.7
Other Employment Programmes	1.2	1.4	0.2	2.0
Other	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>82.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>

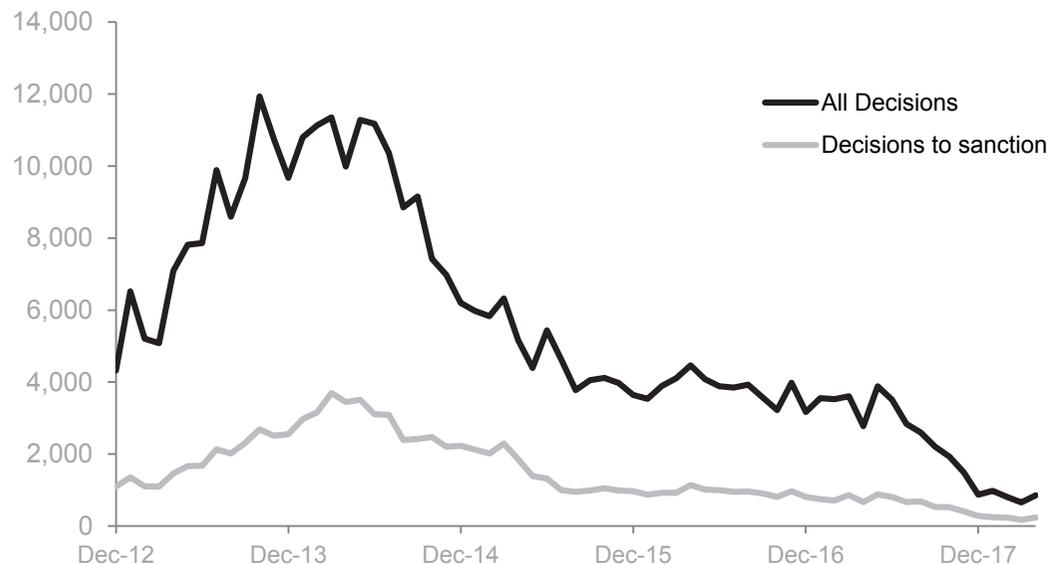
Summary of decision outcomes at each stage: Oct 2012 to Apr 2018



Original decision and decision review outcome percentages may not total 100% as they do not include any cancelled or reserved decisions that are made at this stage.

# 1.3. Sanction decisions and reasons: Employment and Support Allowance – Official Statistics

Sanction decisions: Dec 2012 to Apr 2018



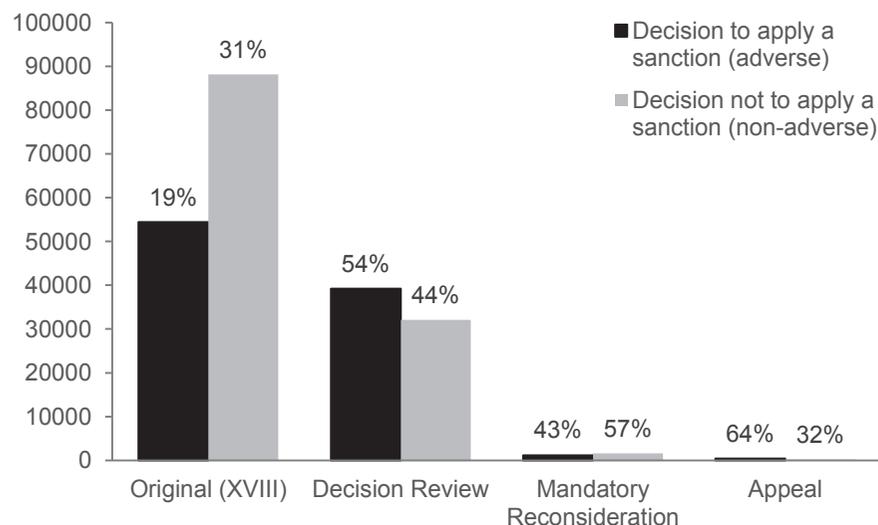
The total number of ESA sanction decisions has continued to fall sharply since May 2017, to 860 in April 2018. It is expected that as Universal Credit full service continues to roll out, and claimants move from ESA to UC, the ESA sanctions will continue to fall, in-line with the fall in the number of ESA WRAG claimants.

ESA has a high proportion of decisions that are subsequently changed. As the data is overwritten by the latest decisions each quarter, the number of adverse decisions in the last month of the previous quarter can drop by over 30%.

19% of original decisions since December 2012 have resulted in a sanction being applied.

Trends are driven by work-related activity sanction decisions. Just over 92% of sanction decisions for ESA relate to failure to participate in work-related activity since December 2012. In the latest quarter, 86% of all sanction decisions were made due to failure to participate in work-related activity.

Summary of decision outcomes at each stage: Dec 2012 to Apr 2018



Original decision and decision review outcome percentages may not total 100% as they do not include any cancelled decisions that are made at this stage.

Summary of decision reasons: May 2017 to Apr 2018

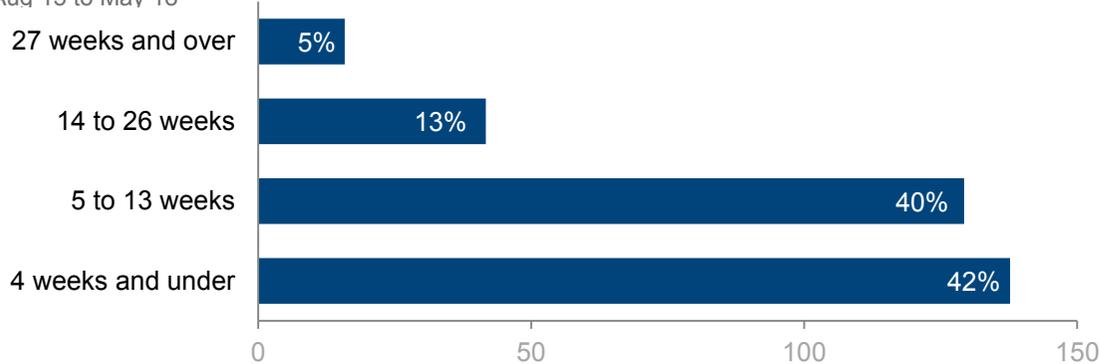
All decisions made by reason group	Latest Year (Thousands)	Latest Year (%)	Latest Quarter (Thousands)	Latest Quarter (%)
Failure to Participate in Work-Related Activity	21.1	93.4	2.0	85.7
Failure to Attend Mandatory Interview	1.5	6.6	0.3	14.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 2. Benefit Sanction Durations: All benefits – Experimental Statistics

The figures for benefit sanction durations are calculated based on sanctions that have ended, using the number of weeks that a claimant has a drop in their benefit payments to determine the length of the sanction. This means that if someone has multiple sanctions which are served without a break in deductions, this will be counted as one sanction in the statistics. Please note that percentages may not sum due to rounding.

### UC live and full service sanctions completed by length of sanction (Thousands)

Aug 15 to May 18



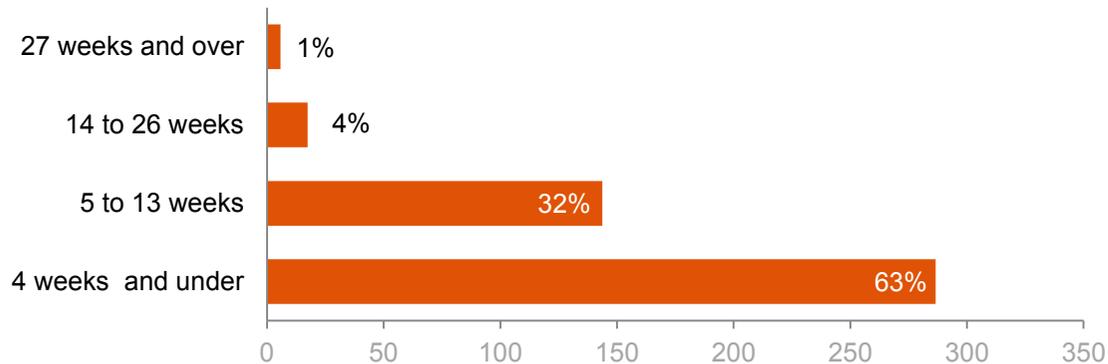
### 82% of ended UC sanctions lasted 13 weeks or less since August 2015.

Since August 2015, just under half (42%) of all sanctions that ended lasted 4 weeks or less. 40% lasted between 5 and 13 weeks. 18% lasted over 13 weeks. 72% of all decisions in the last 3 months were made on the referral reason group "Work-Focussed Interviews". For certain conditionality groups the sanction for this referral reason lasts until the claimant attends an interview; then a sanction of between 7 and 28 days is applied. This helps to explain why such a large proportion of sanctions last 4 weeks or less.

**These figures include both full and live service claimants. There are some instances of incomplete UC live service data from January 2018 to April 2018 that affect UC live service durations. For more information see [page 10](#).**

### JSA sanctions completed by length of sanction (Thousands)

Oct 12 to Dec 17

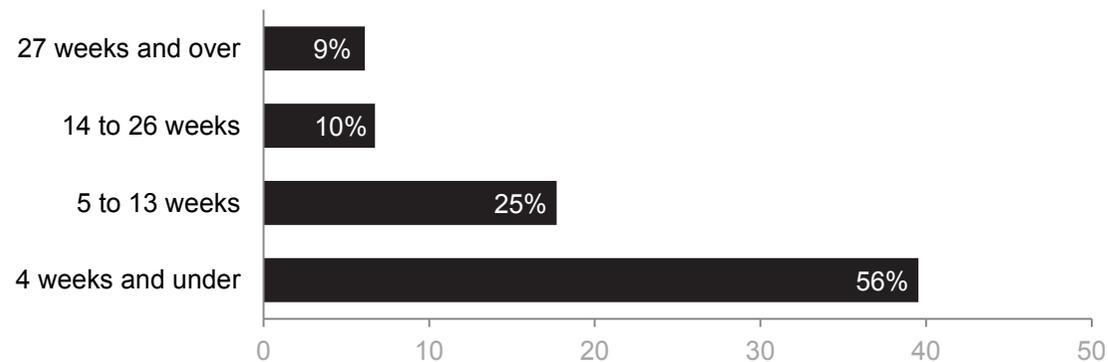


### 95% of ended JSA sanctions lasted 13 weeks or less since October 2012.

Since October 2012, 63% of all sanctions that ended lasted 4 weeks or less, a further 32% lasted between 5 and 13 weeks. 5% lasted over 13 weeks. Just over 55% of all decisions in the last three months were made on the referral reason groups Work Programme and Work-Focussed Interviews. The sanction for these referral reasons for the first failure lasts 4 weeks. This helps to explain why such a large proportion of sanctions last 4 weeks and under.

### ESA sanctions completed by length of sanction (Thousands)

Dec 12 to Dec 17



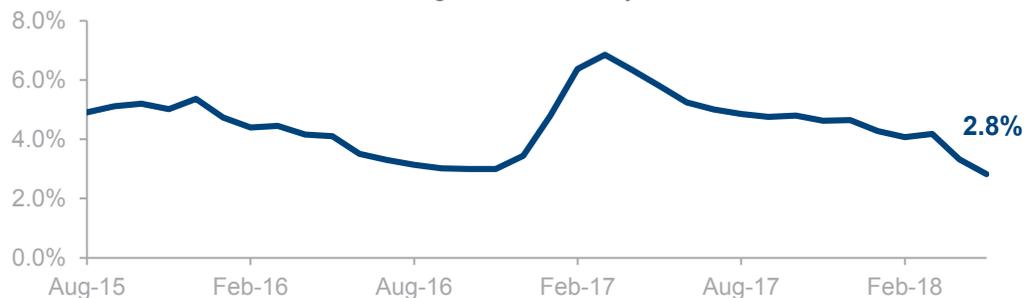
### 82% of ended ESA sanctions lasted 13 weeks or less since December 2012.

Since December 2012, over half (56%) of all sanctions that ended lasted 4 weeks or less, a further 25% lasted between 5 and 13 weeks and 18% lasted over 13 weeks. ESA sanctions are open-ended until the claimant complies with the interview requirement or work-related activity that they failed to attend or participate in. Once the claimant re-complies, a fixed-length sanction is imposed of 1, 2 or 4 weeks. This means that a sanction of longer than 4 weeks will be due to a claimant failing to re-comply, or where an individual has multiple sanctions which are served without a break in deductions.

### 3. Benefit Sanction Rates: All benefits - Experimental Statistics

The sanction rate is calculated as the proportion of people on each benefit at a point in time (i.e. on the same day that the claimant count is recorded) with a deduction from their benefit due to a sanction. This is different to the data on sanction decisions, which uses the total number of decisions across a whole month.

**All UC claimants (live and full service), with a sanction deduction, as a proportion of UC claimants:** Great Britain: August 2015 to May 2018

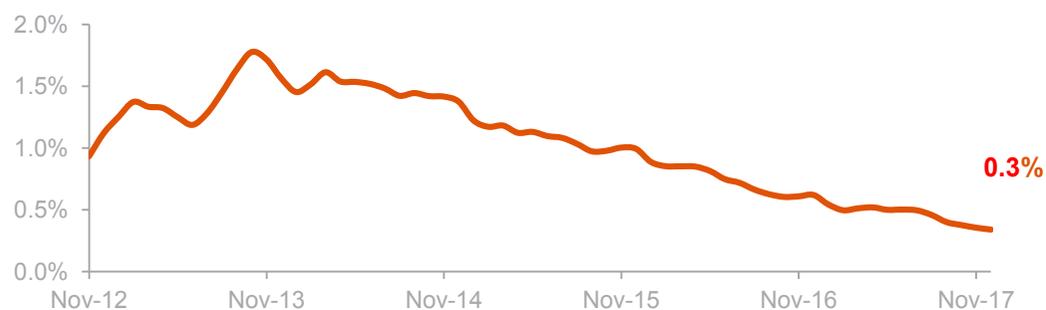


**In May 2018, 2.8% of people on UC had a deduction taken from their UC award as a result of a sanction.**

The experimental monthly rate of UC claimants (both live and full service) with a sanction deduction has decreased since a peak in March 2017. The increased rate in early 2017 was a consequence of the increase in sanction decisions at the end of 2016. This occurred due to the allocation of more Decision Makers to deal with a buildup in referrals awaiting decisions.

**These figures include both live and full service claimants. There are some instances of incomplete UC live service data from January 2018 to April 2018 that affect UC live service rates. For more information see [page 10](#).**

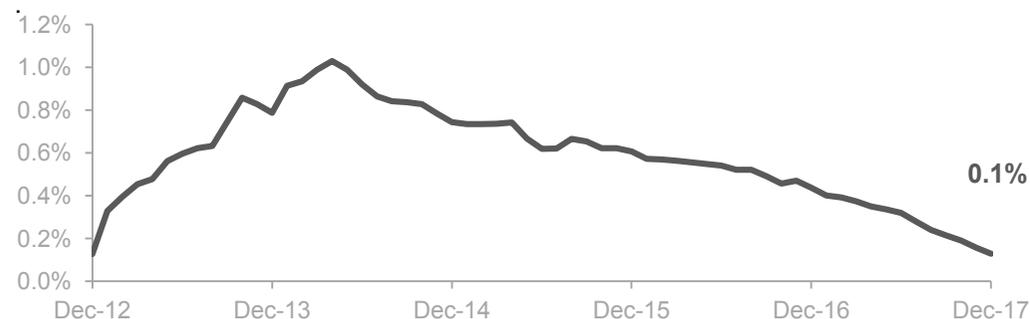
**JSA claimants with a sanction deduction, as a proportion of JSA claimants:** Great Britain: October 2012 to December 2017



**In December 2017, 0.3% of people on JSA had a deduction taken from their payment as a result of a sanction.**

The experimental monthly rate of JSA claimants with a sanction deduction has decreased steadily over the past three years from a peak of 1.8% in October 2013, in line with the decrease in JSA sanction decisions.

**ESA WRAG claimants with a sanction deduction, as a proportion of all ESA WRAG claimants:** Great Britain: December 2012 to December 2017



**In December 2017, 0.1% of people in the ESA WRAG had a deduction taken from their personal allowance as a result of a sanction.**

The experimental monthly rate of ESA WRAG claimants with a sanction deduction has fallen steadily from its peak of 1% in April 2014.

**Sanction statistics between benefits are not directly comparable as the policies for each benefit are very different.**

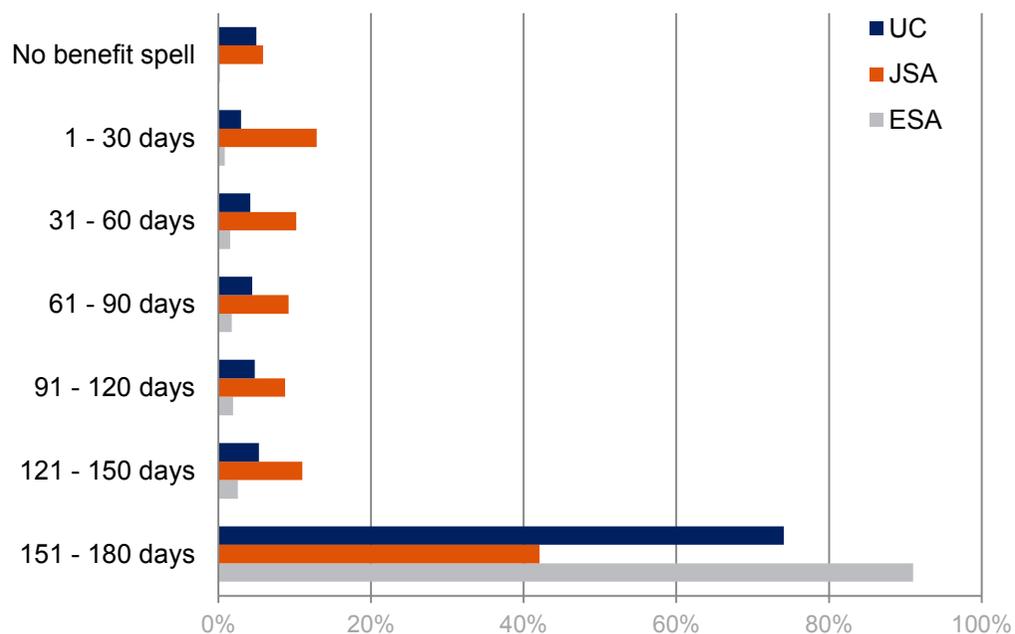
## 4. Benefit destinations of claimants receiving a benefit sanction – Experimental Statistics

Decisions made from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2015 for UC live service, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012 for JSA, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2012 for ESA WRAG to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 are included. Please note that figures may not sum due to rounding.

### Mean number of days spent on working age benefit\* in the 180 days following a sanction

Sanctioned benefit	Days on sanctioned benefit	Days on other benefits*	Total days spent on benefit post-sanction	Total as % of 180 days
Universal Credit	149	2	151	84
Jobseeker's Allowance	97	14	111	62
Employment and Support Allowance	167	4	171	95

### Distribution of number of days spent on any working age\* benefit in the 180 days following a sanction decision



\*UC, JSA, IS, or ESA

### Universal Credit

After receiving a UC sanction decision, claimants spent an average of 151 days out of the following 180 days in receipt of benefit (UC, JSA or ESA). On average, only 2 of the 180 days were spent on a benefit that was not UC.

In the 180 days following a UC sanction decision, 5% of claimants were not in receipt of any of the tracked benefit. Around 74% of claimants spent over 150 days in receipt of benefit and 68% of claimants spent the full 180 days in receipt of benefit.

**These figures include live service claimants only.**

### Jobseeker's Allowance

After receiving a JSA sanction decision, claimants spent an average of 111 days out of the following 180 days in receipt of benefit (JSA, UC, IS, or ESA). On average, 14 of the 180 days were spent on a benefit that was not JSA.

In the 180 days following a JSA sanction decision, 6% of claimants were not in receipt of any of the tracked benefits. Around 42% of claimants spent over 150 days in receipt of benefit and 27% of claimants spent the full 180 days in receipt of benefit.

### Employment and Support Allowance (WRAG)

After receiving an ESA WRAG sanction decision, claimants spent an average of 171 days out of the following 180 days in receipt of benefit (ESA, UC, IS, or JSA). On average, only 4 of the 180 days were spent on a benefit that was not ESA.

In the 180 days following an ESA sanction decision, less than 1% of claimants were not in receipt of any of the tracked benefit. Around 91% of claimants spent over 150 days in receipt of benefit and 85% of claimants spent the full 180 days in receipt of benefit.

## About these statistics

The statistics in this publication are for Great Britain. All background and methodology documents can be found [here](#).

### Other National and Official Statistics

Details of other National and Official Statistics produced by the Department for Work and Pensions can be found via the following link:

- A schedule of statistical releases and a list of the most recent releases: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/statistics>

## Known issues, changes and revisions

This release includes Experimental Statistics for the duration and rate of UC, JSA and ESA sanctions. The rate differs from previous reported methodologies as the point-in-time figure is now available through the development of duration measures.

The sanctions process means that the outcome of a sanction is subject to retrospective changes which should be considered when using the decision data.

Users should be aware that there are differences between sanctions policy across benefits that will affect comparisons.

The UC sanctions statistics now include UC live service and full service for the duration and point-in-time statistics. Data on sanction decisions and destinations is only for live service; full service will be added as availability and quality assurance of the data progresses.

Care must be taken when interpreting the duration charts and figures as, for fair comparisons, sufficient time must have passed before longer duration categories can be achieved e.g. sanctions lasting 27 weeks or more starting in January 2016 would not begin to be cleared until July 2016. Deductions can end for a number of reasons, such as the claimant leaves benefit, transfers to a different conditionality group, or the claimant is earning enough on UC that they no longer have any standard allowance from which a deduction can be taken. These statistics include those sanctions which subsequently go on to be overturned. Claimants whose sanction is overturned will be repaid any deduction. When a claimant leaves benefit following a sanction start, but before the sanction is served, the claim end date is taken to be the sanction end date. In the cases where a sanction end date is the same date as the sanction start (the claimant serves zero days of sanction), the cases are not counted as a sanction served and are excluded from the data.

**It was discovered that there are some instances of incomplete UC live service data from January 2018 to April 2018. This has impacted UC live service sanctions decisions, rate and durations data for a limited number of live service claims, and will impact sanction destinations data in the future. Although the problem has since been resolved, there is no reliable method for recovering the missing data, meaning that statistics on live service sanctions for Universal Credit between January and April 2018 should be treated with caution. The appropriate action has been taken to ensure that this does not re-occur.**

## Contact information and feedback

For more information, please contact Tracy Hills at [tracy.hills@dpw.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.hills@dpw.gsi.gov.uk).

DWP would like to hear your views on our statistical publications. If you use any of our statistics publications, we would be interested in hearing what you use them for and how well they meet your requirements. Please email DWP at [stats-consultation@dpw.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:stats-consultation@dpw.gsi.gov.uk).

Users can also join the “Welfare and Benefit Statistics” community at: <http://www.statsusernet.org.uk> DWP announces items of interest to users via this forum, as well as replying to users’ questions.