



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 - both live and full service), Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), and Employment and Support Allowance Work-Related Activity Group (ESA WRAG).

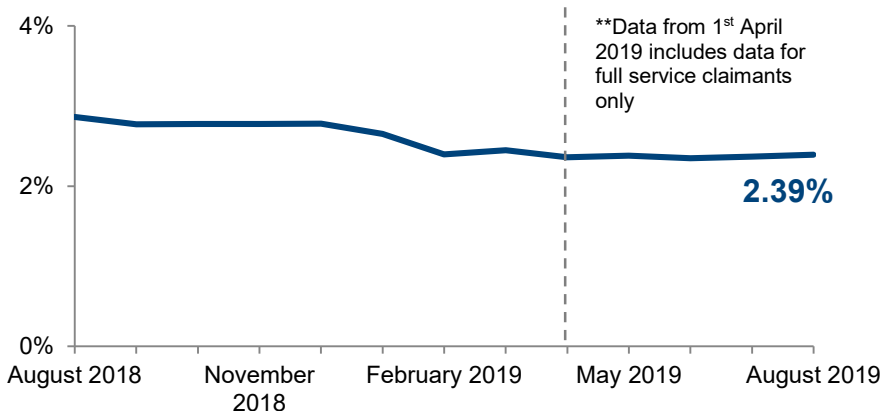
Sanction statistics should not be compared across benefits as the policies for each benefit are very different.

On Jobseeker's Allowance, if a claimant fails to attend a Work-Focused Interview, their claim can be closed. However, because Universal Credit replaces a number of benefits, claims are not closed if a claimant fails to attend a Work-Focused Interview.

Universal Credit

2.39% of people subject to conditionality* had a drop in benefit due to a UC sanction in August 2019

Experimental rate of claimants receiving less benefit due to a sanction



*This is the conditionality group at the point where the sanction was applied on UC.

**As UC live service claimants have migrated to UC full service, the systems that were used to administer live service cases were shut down by 1st April 2019. Data presented above past this point is for full service claimants only.

**The average UC sanction lasted
30 days**

(Experimental median: Aug 2015 to Aug 2019)

Main stories

- In August 2019, 2.39% of UC claimants subject to conditionality at the point where the sanction was applied had a deduction taken from their UC award as a result of a sanction, remaining broadly comparable to the rate in May 2019. For further information regarding how this is calculated, see the "Sanction Rates" section of the [background information and methodology document](#).
- Over the course of the roll-out of Universal Credit, the balance of individuals subject to sanction as a proportion of the caseload has changed. In August 2015, 81% of claimants were in the conditionality groups that could be subject to sanction. In August 2019, this proportion was 63%. This proportion has remained steady for more than one year, fluctuating between 63% and 66% since June 2018.
- Numbers of claimants on legacy benefits have steadily reduced due to migration to Universal Credit. Whilst claimants on JSA and ESA can still be sanctioned, the number of decisions is now very low for both benefits.
 - The percentage of Jobseeker's Allowance claimants with a drop in payment due to a sanction in March 2019 was 0.06% (see page 9). This is down 0.06 percentage points from December 2018 and down 0.18 percentage points in the past year.
 - The percentage of Employment and Support Allowance (WRAG) claimants with a drop in payment due to a sanction in March 2019 was 0.05% (see page 12). This is down 0.04 percentage points from December 2018 and down 0.13 percentage points in the past year.

At a glance

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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 claimant's 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.** For example, UC is not comparable to JSA because on JSA people who fail to attend an interview have their benefit stopped if they fail to provide good reason within a five-day period, whereas on UC they are referred for a sanction. A large majority of UC sanctions are given due to failure to attend an interview.

This release is a summary of the latest Official and Experimental Statistics on Universal Credit (UC), Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance Work-Related Activity Group (ESA WRAG) 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.

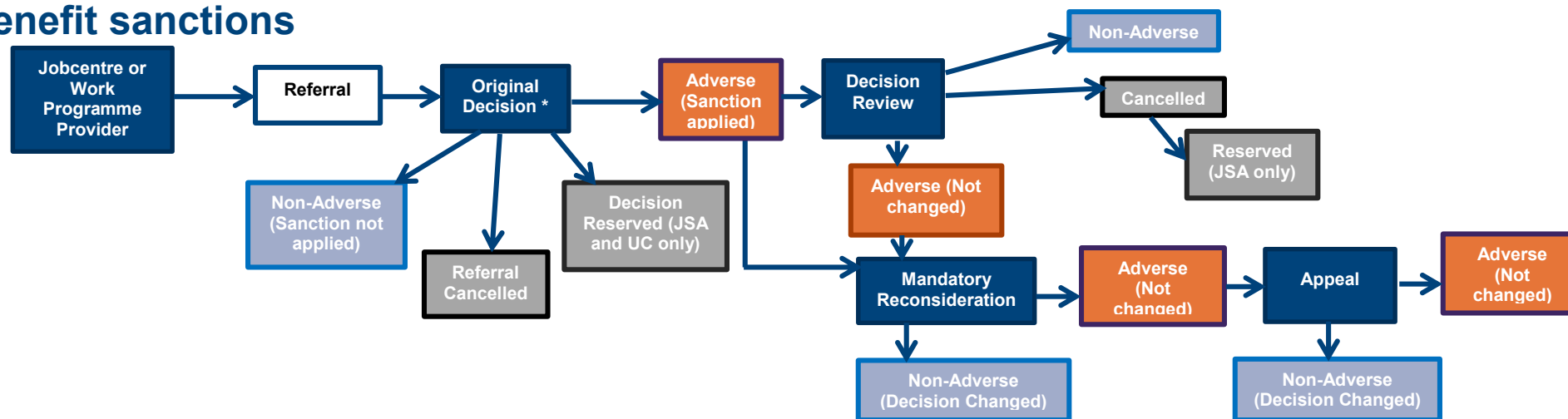
- UC sanction statistics date from August 2015
- JSA sanction statistics in this publication date from the [regime change](#) on 22nd October 2012 when new rules were brought in. Data from before the regime change (April 2000 - 21st October 2012) is available on [Stat-Xplore](#) and in the [supporting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

Income Support (IS) sanction statistics are not included in this publication, but are available on [Stat-Xplore](#). 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.

The managed migration of legacy claimants onto full service will continue until 2023. As of April 2019, 100% of Universal Credit live service claimants have transferred onto full service. We are now including statistics relating to UC full service decisions in this publication.

Please note that any tables that can be produced via [Stat-Xplore](#) are no longer included in the published data tables supporting this release. This data continues to be available via [Stat-Xplore](#).

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](#).

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 (UC, JSA, ESA and IS) in the 180-day period following the decision. In addition, we have developed statistics to show who has had a period of earnings after their Sanction. Further information can be found in the [destinations methodology document](#).

Universal Credit full service

At present, we only hold data on **original, adverse sanction decisions** for claimants on Universal Credit full service and cannot differentiate between non-adverse, reserved and cancelled outcomes. Prior to May 2016, UC full service was being implemented as a trial in a small area of the UK only (Sutton, Southwark, Croydon, Hounslow and Musselburgh) so data on original, adverse decisions is included from May 2016 onwards. on all decisions prior to this date. Note that statistics for UC full service adverse sanction decisions were removed from this release in June 2020. Further information is available in section 1.1, and an updated version of these statistics is available in the [June 2020 release](#).

Universal Credit live service

New claims to Universal Credit live service ceased in January 2018, and since then the remaining live service cases have been gradually migrated to Universal Credit full service. This has resulted in a gradual decrease in the number of live service sanction decisions. By 1st April 2019, the systems that were used to administer live service cases were shut down. Due to this, data for any original Universal Credit live service sanction decisions has been frozen from this point.

1.1. Universal Credit full service: Sanction decisions and reasons – Experimental Statistics

Improved methodology and undercount of UC full service adverse decisions

While implementing a methodological improvement, it has been identified that previously published 'adverse sanction decisions' for UC full service have been undercounted in this release. The undercount impacted the whole time-series. As a result of this, any 'adverse sanctions decisions' statistics for UC full service were removed from this release in June 2020. These statistics were also removed from Table 1.1 of the data tables supporting this release. Users can find updated statistics on UC full service 'adverse sanction decisions' for the entire time-series in the [June 2020 release](#) of Benefit Sanctions Statistics, where an improved methodology has been used to calculate these statistics. A full table of the undercount for each month back to May 2016 has also been included in Table 5.1 of the [data tables](#) supporting the June 2020 release.

We previously calculated UC full service adverse decisions by selecting cases where the decision date fell within the period a service centre was active, but found that some valid adverse decisions were missed because they occurred outside of this date range. The new methodology counts all adverse sanction decisions. Further information about this methodological change is in the [UC background information and methodology document](#). The sanctions rate for UC will continue to be published and is unaffected. This is because it is calculated using a different methodology.

The sanctions rate for UC will continue to be published and is unaffected. This is because it is calculated using a different methodology.

The 'all sanction decisions' statistics for UC full service were withdrawn from this release in February 2020.

It has been identified that previously published 'all sanction decisions' statistics for UC full service are missing some data as a result of how information is recorded. While the data on the number of sanctions given is correct and the sanction rate is correct, some other sanction related decisions have been undercounted (i.e. where a sanction was not given). As a result of this, 'all sanction decisions' measures for UC full service have been removed from all publications in February 2020. The number of sanctions and the sanctions rate will continue to be published and are unaffected. This is because they are recorded on a different system.

Sanction decisions: May 2016 to Jul 2019

Following the methodology change mentioned at the beginning of this section, this figure was removed in June 2020. Updated statistics for the entire time-series of this measure are available in the [June 2020 release](#).

Summary of original adverse decision reasons: Aug 2018 to Jul 2019

Following the methodology change mentioned at the beginning of this section, this figure was removed in June 2020. Updated statistics for this measure are available in the [June 2020 release](#).

The move of legacy claimants onto full service will continue until migration is completed. As of April 2019, 100% of Universal Credit live service claimants have transferred onto full service.

Prior to May 2016, UC full service was being implemented as a trial in a small area of the UK only (Sutton, Southwark, Croydon, Hounslow and Musselburgh). More information about this is available in our [Universal Credit background information and methodology document](#). Due to this, data for UC full service original adverse sanction decisions will not be included for instances where the original decision data occurred before May 2016.

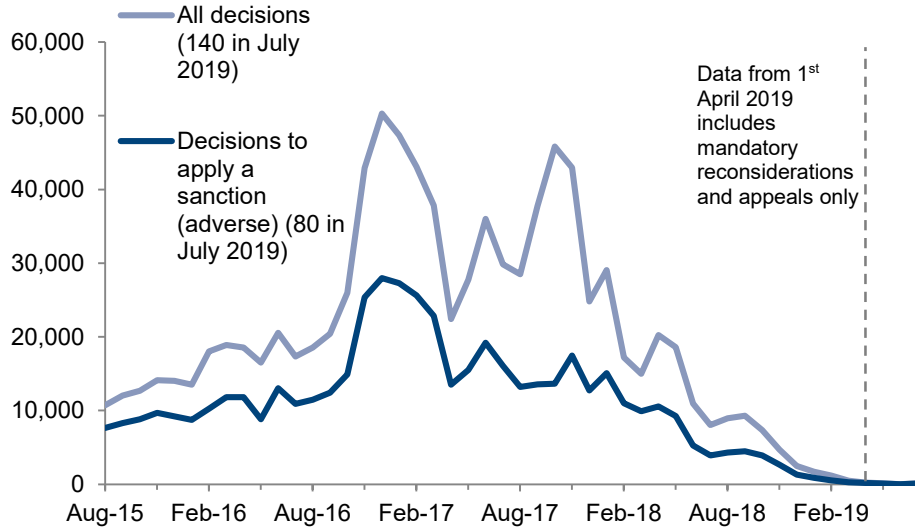
It should be noted that references to full service adverse decisions describe **original, adverse decisions** only. We are currently unable to provide statistics on original non-adverse, reserved or cancelled decisions, as this information is not captured on the front end system. We are looking at ways of improving the way we collect sanctions information in UC full service.

We are currently unable to report on volumes of Mandatory Reconsiderations and Appeals for UC full service. We will include this data as soon as it becomes available.

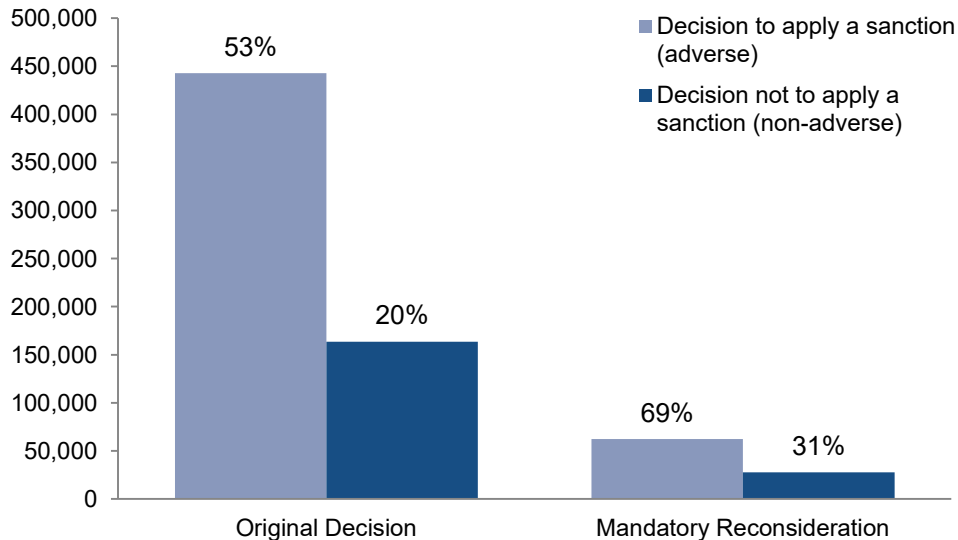
Statistics usually provided in this section are for full service claimants only and do not include live service data; full service data and live service data come from different sources, which is why they have been reported separately for decisions. Note that rates are calculated in a manner that is not affected. For further information, see the [Universal Credit background information and methodology document](#).

2.1. Universal Credit live service: Sanction decisions and reasons – Experimental Statistics

Sanction decisions: Aug 2015 to Jul 2019



Summary of decision outcomes at each stage: Aug 2015 to Jul 2019*



*There were not any original decisions past 1st April 2019. 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.

100% of UC live service claimants were transferred onto UC full service by April 2019. There is no information for original decisions on UC live service past this point, hence any changes beyond this point refer to mandatory reconsiderations and appeals only.

The total number of monthly decisions has varied since August 2015, with peaks in December 2016 (50 thousand) and October 2017 (46 thousand) and a reduction to 140 in July 2019.

The volume of decisions processed is falling based on the fact that UC live service has closed to new claims, and that the entire caseload has migrated to UC full service.

Around 53% of original decisions have resulted in a sanction being applied and 69% of mandatory reconsiderations resulted in a sanction being upheld since August 2015.

Failure to attend or participate in a Work-Focussed Interview accounted for 69% of all UC live service sanction decisions from August 2018 to July 2019.

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

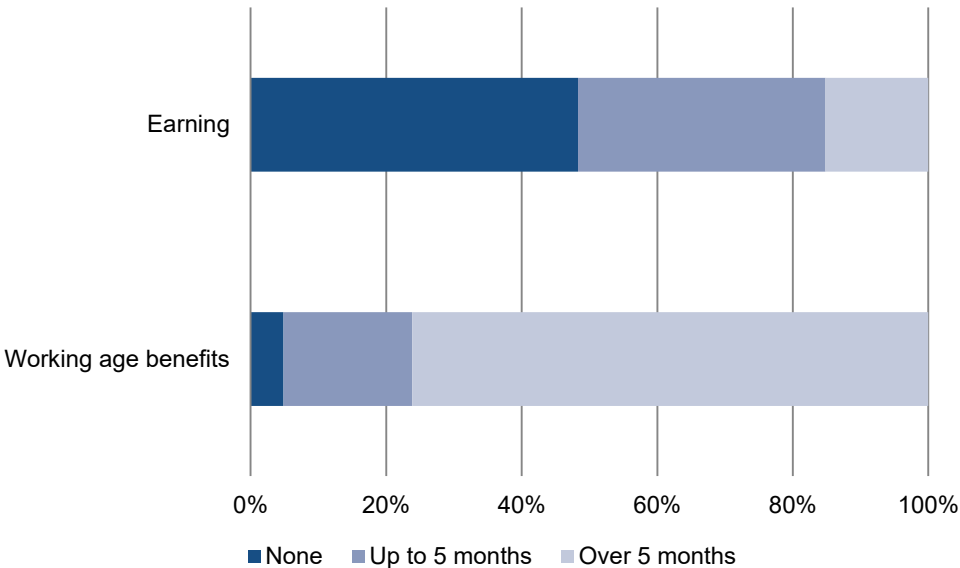
Summary of decision reasons: Aug 2018 to Jul 2019

All decisions made by reason group	Latest Year (Thousands)	Latest Year (%)	Latest Quarter (Thousands)	Latest Quarter (%)
Work-Focussed Interviews	25.1	68.6	0.2	59.6
Availability for Work	4.7	12.9	0.0	10.7
Employment Programmes	4.8	13.2	0.1	29.5
Reason for Leaving Previous Employment	1.7	4.8	0.0	0.0
Other	0.2	0.6	0.0	0.0
Total	36.7	100.0	0.3	100.0

Disclosure control has been applied to this data for confidentiality purposes. Due to this, totals may not be the sum of the individual data breakdowns.

2.2. Universal Credit live service: Destinations of claimants receiving a benefit sanction – Experimental Statistics

Distribution of number of months spent by UC claimants earning or on working age benefits in the 180 days (6 months) following a sanction decision



After receiving a UC sanction decision, claimants spent an average (mean) of 153 days out of the following 180 days in receipt of benefit (UC, JSA, ESA or IS). On average (mean), only 2 of the 180 days were spent on a benefit that was not UC.

In the 180 days following a UC live service sanction decision, 4.9% of claimants were not in receipt of any of the tracked benefits (UC, JSA, ESA or IS). Around 76.2% of claimants spent over 150 days (5 months) in receipt of benefit and 70.3% of claimants spent the full 180 days in receipt of benefit.

After receiving a benefit sanction decision, UC live service claimants spent an average (mean) of 51 days out of the following 180 days earning, with around 9.0% of claimants earning for the full 180 days after they had been sanctioned. See the [methodology document](#) for further information on how earnings are calculated.

Decisions made from 1st August 2015 to 31st December 2018 for UC live service are included.

There should be no comparisons made across benefits

Whilst the same methodology has been used to produce these statistics, the benefits themselves are very different and require interpretation based on the rules of the specific benefit

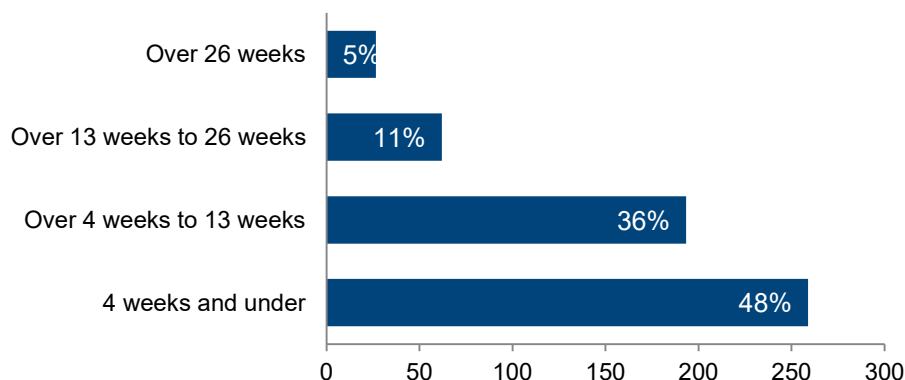
3.1. Universal Credit live and full service: Benefit sanction durations – Experimental Statistics

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.

Note that the sanctions rate and durations measures provided in this section are unaffected by the methodology improvement mentioned in section 1.1. This is because the rate and durations measures are calculated using a separate methodology.

There should be no comparisons made across benefits
 Whilst the same methodology has been used to produce these statistics, the benefits themselves are very different and require interpretation based on the rules of the specific benefit

UC live and full service sanctions completed by length of sanction (Thousands): Aug 2015 to Aug 2019



More than four-fifths (84%) of ended UC sanctions lasted 13 weeks or less since August 2015. The average (median) UC sanction lasted 30 days. See the [methodology document](#) for further information on why a median has been used.

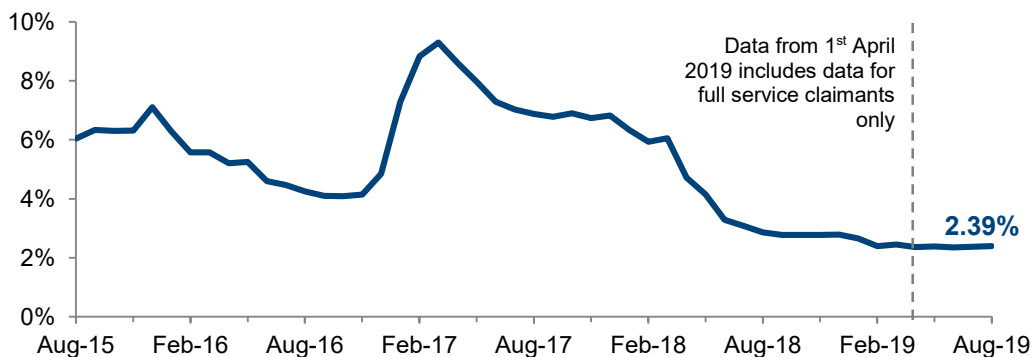
Since August 2015, almost half (48%) of all sanctions that ended lasted 4 weeks or less. 36% lasted between 5 and 13 weeks. 16% lasted over 13 weeks. Of all live service decisions in the last 3 months, 60% were made on the referral reason group “Work-Focused Interviews”. For certain conditionality groups the sanction for this referral reason lasts until the claimant attends an interview, and 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.

As UC live service claimants have migrated to UC full service, the systems that were used to administer live service cases were shut down by 1st April 2019. Data shown here past this point is for full service claimants only.

3.2. Universal Credit live and full service: Benefit sanction rates – 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*: Aug 2015 to Aug 2019



In August 2019, 2.39% of people on UC subject to conditionality* had a deduction taken from their UC award as a result of a sanction.

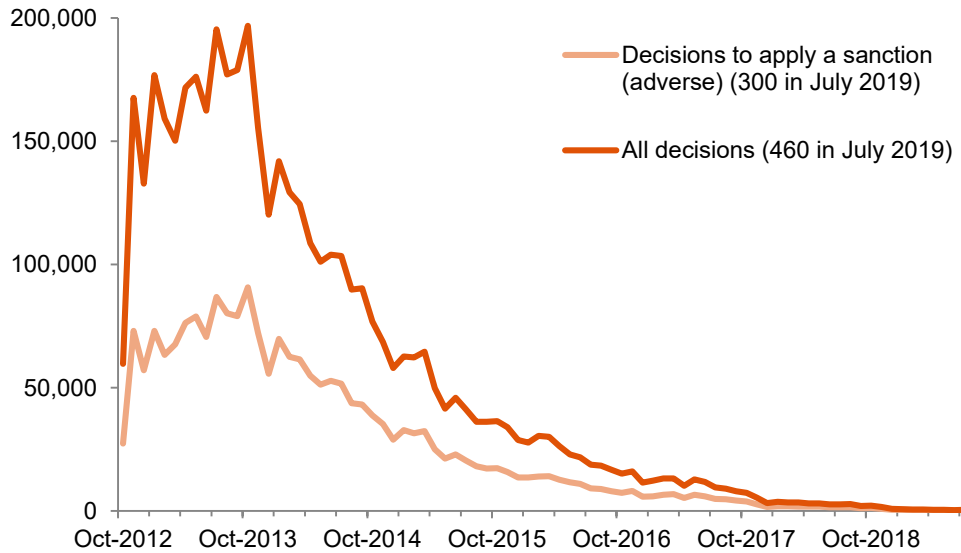
The experimental monthly rate of UC claimants (both live and full service) with a sanction deduction showed a steady decrease from March 2017 to February 2019, from which point it has levelled-out.

Over the course of the roll-out of Universal Credit, the balance of individuals subject to sanction as a proportion of the caseload has changed. In August 2019, 63% of the UC caseload were in the conditionality groups that could be subject to sanction, compared to 81% in August 2015.

*This is the conditionality group at the point where the sanction was applied on UC

4.1. Jobseeker's Allowance: Sanction decisions and reasons – Official Statistics

Sanctions decisions: Oct 2012 to Jul 2019

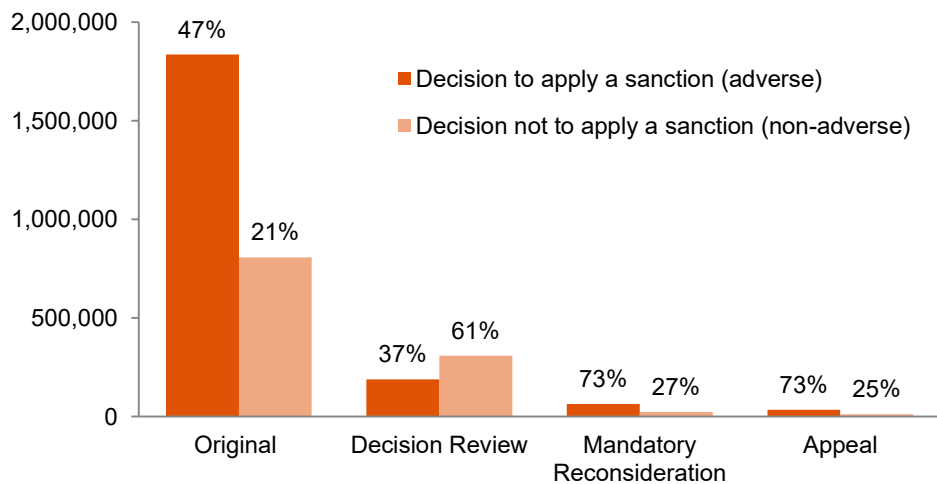


The fall in decisions is in part due to the fall in Jobseeker's Allowance claimants as more people move to Universal Credit. Over the last three years, the total number of decisions per month has steadily declined to 460 in July 2019. Original decisions currently account for 86% of all decisions made 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 4,600 in October 2013 to only 130 in the last year.

The trend in JSA sanction decisions also coincides with the end of the Work Programme. 30% 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. Referrals to the Work Programme ended in March 2017.

Just under 30% of sanction decisions in the last year were due to Availability for Work referrals, followed by just under 25% of referrals for failing to attend or participate in a Work Focused Interview.

Summary of decision outcomes at each stage: Oct 2012 to Jul 2019



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.

Summary of decision reasons: Aug 2018 to Jul 2019

All decisions made by reason group	Latest Year (Thousands)	Latest Year (%)	Latest Quarter (Thousands)	Latest Quarter (%)
Work Programme	4.1	30.0	0.0	0.0
Work-Focussed Interview	3.4	24.8	0.5	34.5
Availability for Work	4.0	29.6	0.8	57.4
Reason for Leaving Previous Employment	1.7	12.7	0.0	1.0
Other Employment Programmes	0.4	2.8	0.1	6.8
Other	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Total	13.6	100.0	1.3	100.0

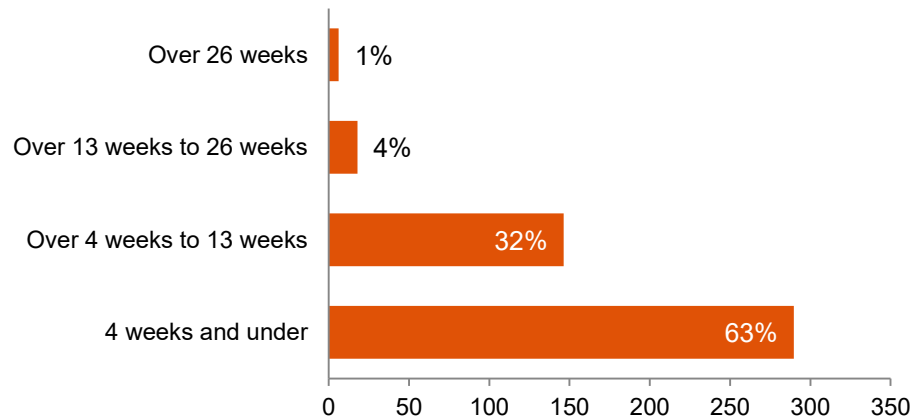
Disclosure control has been applied to this data for confidentiality purposes. Due to this, totals may not be the sum of the individual data breakdowns.

4.2. Jobseeker's Allowance: Benefit sanction durations – 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.

JSA sanctions completed by length of sanction (Thousands):

Oct 2012 to Mar 2019



95% of ended JSA sanctions lasted 13 weeks or less since October 2012. The average (median) JSA sanction lasted 28 days. See the [methodology document](#) for further information on why a median has been used.

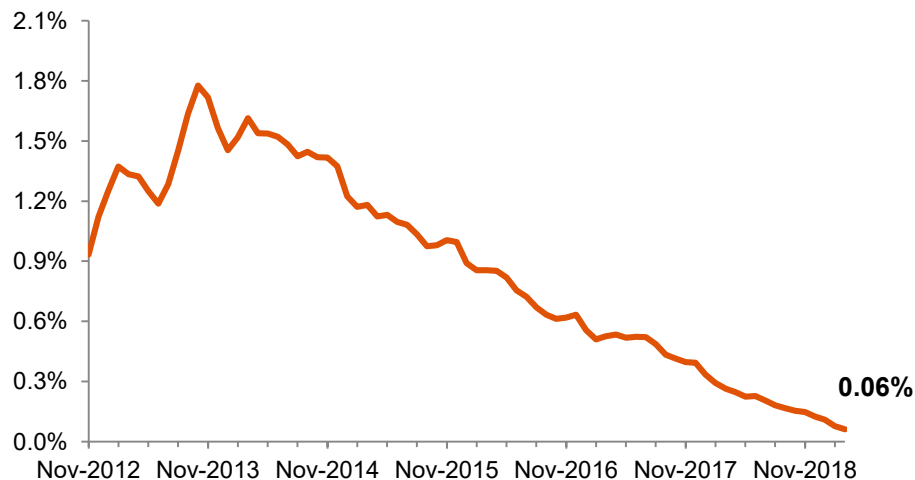
Since October 2012, 63% of all sanctions that ended lasted 4 weeks or less, a further 32% lasted between 5 and 13 weeks. 5% lasted over 13 weeks. In the last three months, 57% of referrals were made on the referral reason group Availability for Work. A further 34% of all decisions in the last three months were made on the referral reason group Work-Focussed Interviews. For a first-time failure, sanctions issued under this referral reason last 4 weeks. This helps to explain why such a large proportion of sanctions last 4 weeks and under.

4.3. Jobseeker's Allowance: Benefit sanction rates – 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.

JSA claimants with a sanction deduction, as a proportion of JSA claimants:

Nov 2012 to Mar 2019



In March 2019, 0.06% 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 five years from a peak of 1.78% in October 2013, in line with the decrease in JSA sanction decisions.

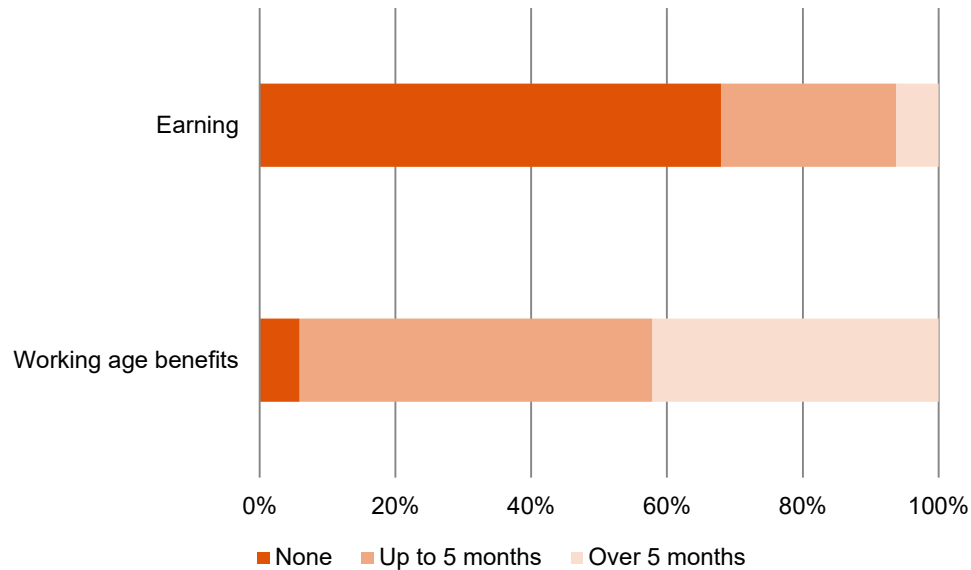
There should be no comparisons made across benefits

Whilst the same methodology has been used to produce these statistics, the benefits themselves are very different and require interpretation based on the rules of the specific benefit

Please note that JSA claims have been closed when claimants have been migrated to Universal Credit full service (UCFS). In the May 2019 release, this resulted in a retrospective increase in the JSA rate because claimants who had open long-term sanctions were included in calculations (when they were not included previously). As the maximum length of a JSA sanction is three years, there was not any retrospective change prior to 2014. For further information, see the [background information and methodology document](#).

4.4. Jobseeker's Allowance: Destinations of claimants receiving a benefit sanction – Experimental Statistics

Distribution of number of months spent by JSA claimants on working age benefits or earning in the 180 days (6 months) following a sanction decision.



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

In the 180 days following a JSA sanction decision, 5.9% of claimants were not in receipt of any of the tracked benefits (JSA, UC, ESA or IS). Around 42.1% of claimants spent over 150 days (5 months) in receipt of benefit and 27.0% of claimants spent the full 180 days in receipt of benefit.

After receiving a benefit sanction decision, JSA claimants spent an average (mean) of 28 days out of the following 180 days earning, with around 2.5% of JSA claimants earning for the full 180 days after they had been sanctioned. See the [methodology document](#) for further information on how earnings are calculated.

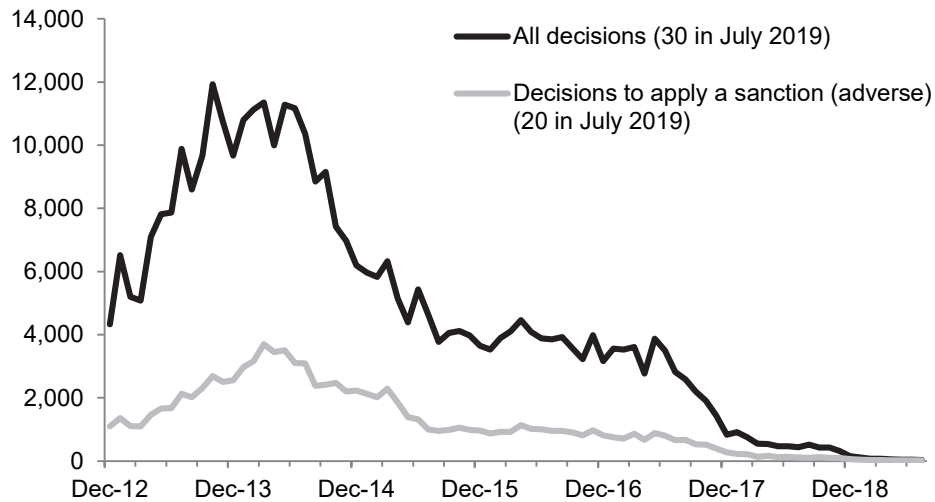
Decisions made from 22nd October 2012 to 31st December 2018 for JSA are included.

There should be no comparisons made across benefits

Whilst the same methodology has been used to produce these statistics, the benefits themselves are very different and require interpretation based on the rules of the specific benefit

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

Sanction decisions: Dec 2012 to Jul 2019



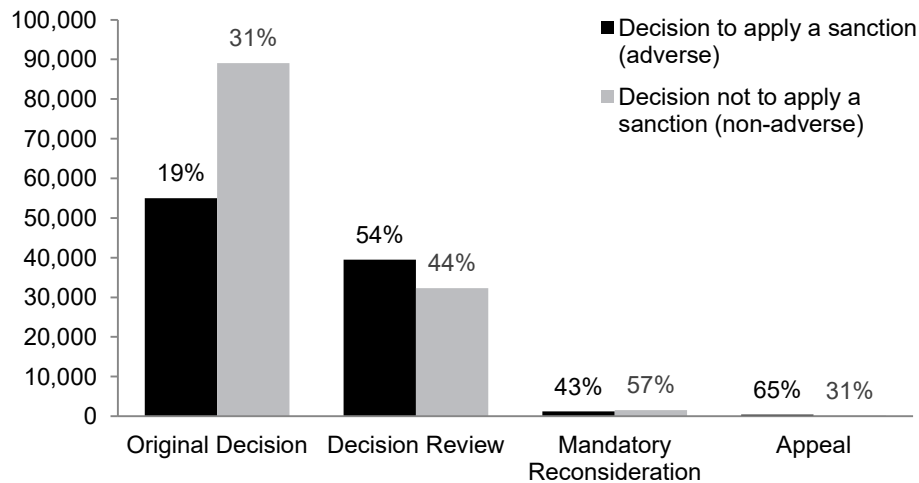
The total number of ESA sanction decisions has continued to fall since May 2017, to 30 in July 2019. It is expected that as Universal Credit full service continues to roll out and claimants move from ESA to UC, the ESA sanctions will continue to fall (in-line with the fall in the number of ESA WRAG claimants).

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. 92% of sanction decisions for ESA relate to failure to participate in work-related activity since December 2012. There has been a change in this trend over time, as claimants have moved from ESA to UC following a change in circumstance or have been diverted to UC instead of ESA. In the latest quarter, 100% of all sanction decisions were made due to failure to attend a mandatory interview.

Summary of decision outcomes at each stage: Dec 2012 to Jul 2019



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: August 2018 to Jul 2019

All decisions made by reason group	Latest Year (Thousands)	Latest Year (%)	Latest Quarter (Thousands)	Latest Quarter (%)
Failure to Participate in Work-Related Activity	1.6	70.0	0.0	0.0
Failure to Attend Mandatory Interview	0.7	30.0	0.1	100.0
Total	2.3	100.0	0.1	100.0

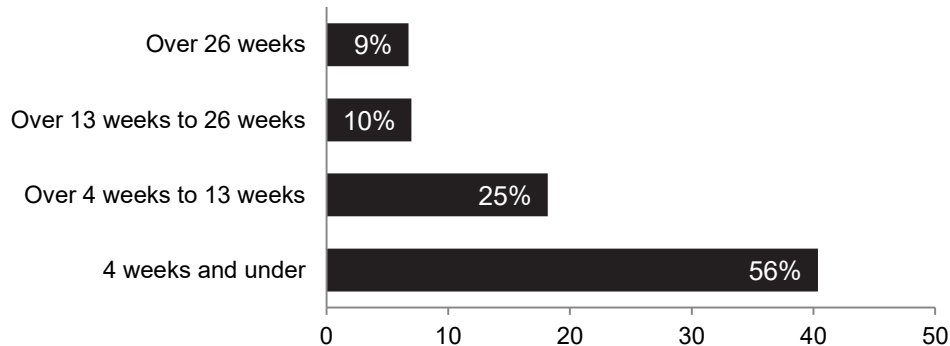
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5.2. Employment and Support Allowance: Benefit sanction durations – Experimental Statistics

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.

ESA sanctions completed by length of sanction (Thousands):

Dec 2012 to Mar 2019



More than four-fifths (81%) of ended ESA sanctions lasted 13 weeks or less since December 2012. The average (median) ESA sanction lasted 28 days. See the [methodology document](#) for further information on why a median has been used.

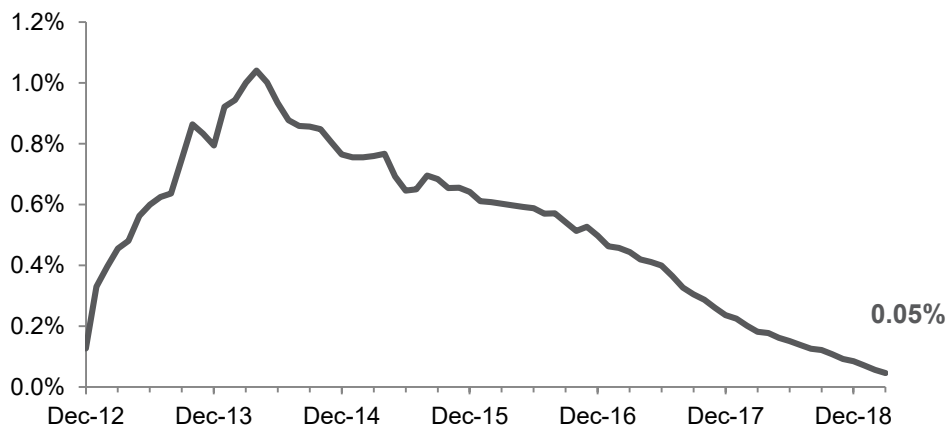
Since December 2012, over half (56%) of all sanctions that ended lasted 4 weeks or less, a further 25% lasted between 5 and 13 weeks and 19% lasted over 13 weeks. ESA sanctions are open-ended until the claimant complies with the interview requirement or work-related activity that they failed to attend 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.

5.3. Employment and Support Allowance: Benefit sanction rates – 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.

ESA WRAG claimants with a sanction deduction, as a proportion of all ESA WRAG claimants:

Dec 2012 to Mar 2019



In March 2019, 0.05% 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 1.04% in April 2014.

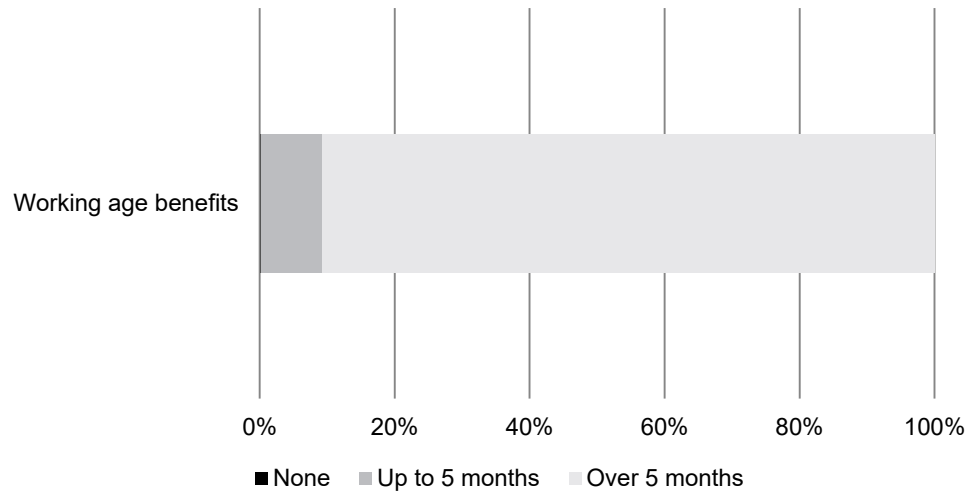
There should be no comparisons made across benefits.

Whilst the same methodology has been used to produce these statistics, the benefits themselves are very different and require interpretation based on the rules of the specific benefit

Please note that ESA claims have been closed when claimants have been migrated to Universal Credit full service (UCFS). In the May 2019 release, this resulted in a retrospective increase in the ESA rate because claimants who had open long-term sanctions were included in calculations (when they were not included previously). For ESA, this occurred where some sanctions had been open-ended until the claimant either complied or flowed off benefit. For further information, see the [background information and methodology document](#).

5.4. Employment and Support Allowance: Destinations of claimants receiving a benefit sanction – Experimental Statistics

Distribution of number of months spent by ESA WRAG claimants on working age benefits in the 180 days (6 months) following a sanction decision



After receiving an ESA WRAG sanction decision, claimants spent an average (mean) of 171 days out of the following 180 days in receipt of benefit (ESA, UC, JSA or IS). On average (mean), only 5 of the 180 days were spent on a benefit that was not ESA.

In the 180 days following an ESA sanction decision, 0.2% of claimants were not in receipt of any of the tracked benefits (ESA, UC, JSA or IS). Around 90.8% of claimants spent over 150 days (5 months) in receipt of benefit and 85.0% of claimants spent the full 180 days in receipt of benefit.

Decisions made from 3rd December 2012 to 31st December 2018 for ESA WRAG are included.

There should be no comparisons made across benefits

Whilst the same methodology has been used to produce these statistics, the benefits themselves are very different and require interpretation based on the rules of the specific 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>

Contact information and feedback

For more information, please contact Tracy Hills at tracy.hills@dwp.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@dwp.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.

Changes, revisions and known issues

While implementing a methodological improvement, it has been identified that previously published 'adverse sanction decisions' for UC full service have been undercounted in this release. The undercount impacted the whole time-series. As a result of this, any 'adverse sanctions decisions' statistics for UC full service were removed from this release in June 2020. These statistics were also removed from Table 1.1 of the data tables supporting this release. Users can find updated statistics on UC full service 'adverse sanction decisions' for the entire time-series in the [June 2020 release](#) of Benefit Sanctions Statistics, where an improved methodology has been used to calculate these statistics. A full table of the undercount for each month back to May 2016 has also been included in Table 5.1 of the [data tables](#) supporting the June 2020 release. We previously calculated UC full service adverse decisions by selecting cases where the decision date fell within the period a service centre was active, but found that some valid adverse decisions were missed because they occurred outside of this date range. The new methodology counts all adverse sanction decisions. Further information about this methodological change is in the [UC background information and methodology document](#). The sanctions rate for UC will continue to be published and is unaffected. This is because it is calculated using a different methodology.

The 'all sanction decisions' statistics for UC full service were withdrawn from this release in February 2020, because it has been identified that previously published 'all sanction decisions' statistics for UC full service are missing some data as a result of how information is recorded. While the data on the number of sanctions given is correct and the sanction rate is correct, some other sanction related decisions have been undercounted (i.e. where a sanction was not given). As a result of this, 'all sanction decisions' measures for UC full service have been removed from all publications in February 2020. The number of sanctions and the sanctions rate will continue to be published and are unaffected. This is because they are recorded on a different system.

New claims to Universal Credit live service ceased in January 2018, and since then the remaining live service cases have been gradually migrated to Universal Credit full service. This has resulted in a gradual decrease in the number of live service sanction decisions. By 1st April 2019, the systems that were used to administer live service cases were shut down. Due to this, data for any original Universal Credit live service sanction decisions has been frozen from this point. Users should be mindful that this is also evident in the combined Universal Credit live and full service sanctions durations and rate data, and caution should be taken when comparing data before and after 1st April 2019. Work is currently underway to develop more data for Universal Credit full service, and the aim is to release this as and when it is available.

In the May 2019 release, it was noted that JSA/ESA claims were closed when claimants were migrated to Universal Credit full service, resulting in both an increase in the number of claimants included in the JSA/ESA rate and retrospective changes to previously published rates.

Users should be aware that there are differences between sanctions policy across benefits that will affect comparisons. Whilst the same methodology has been used to produce these statistics the benefits themselves are very different and require interpretation based on the rules of the specific benefit. The sanctions process means that the outcome of a sanction is subject to retrospective changes which should be considered when using the decision data.

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.