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Pensions



Social Science in Government

Universal Credit Expanded Gateway Singles Survey

Wave 1 interim findings on attitudes, behaviour and
early labour market outcomes

February 2015

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Executive summary

This short research paper presents early emerging evidence from Wave 1 of the latest Universal Credit (UC) claimant survey. Interviews took place in November and December 2014. 900 single claimants on UC and 900 similar JSA claimants in comparator areas were interviewed on average just under 6 weeks after their claim. Claimants will be interviewed again during March 2015.

This paper focuses on evidence around claimant attitudes to the benefit, their behaviour and labour market outcomes. Main headlines are:

- **Attitudes to benefit system:** UC claimants who have claimed JSA in the previous two years generally considered UC to be easier to understand than JSA and to offer greater rewards for small amounts of work and better financial benefits. They were also more likely than those in the JSA survey to think that the benefits system is effective at getting people into work. The vast majority of UC respondents thought that some or all the actions in their claimant commitment would help them find work.
- **Job search:** UC claimants reported spending more time than the JSA claimants on job search activities. Most claimants were willing to do short term jobs and more UC claimants were willing to take any job on offer.
- **Comparative labour market outcomes UC/JSA:** Around a quarter of UC claimants were in work at the time of their interview - on average around 38 days after their claim start - compared to a fifth of the JSA claimants.

Later this year, DWP will publish a report providing more details of the claimant survey at Wave 1 and Wave 2.

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1 Introduction

This report provides interim results on the first wave of the survey of single claimants in the Expanded Gateway areas. When compared to the earlier Pathfinder areas, the Expanded Gateway includes new claimant groups (see annex). The overall survey consists of two separate surveys; one of Universal Credit claimants principally in the North West of England and a second, comparator survey, of similar JSA claimants in comparable areas. The first wave took place in November and December 2014 and the second wave will follow in February and March 2015.

Ipsos MORI was commissioned to undertake the survey following a competitive tendering exercise.

This report discusses the methodology used and sets out the profile of the two surveys. This is followed by some of the results of the first survey, focussing on attitudes to the benefits system, jobsearch and labour market outcomes.

2 Methodology

DWP commissioned a claimant telephone survey in Expanded Gateway sites predominantly in the North West of England¹ to generate quantitative data on those claiming Universal Credit (UC). The survey data provides evidence on a broad range of factors including, attitudes, experiences, behaviours and outcomes of new UC claimants.

The survey is longitudinal over two waves. This means the same group of people are interviewed at two different points, the first as soon as possible after their claim² and then approximately three months later. This allows us to learn about claimant experiences at different stages in their UC claim and any changes to their labour market status during that time.

To allow comparisons with the current benefit system we simultaneously ran a comparator survey with new Jobseeker Allowance (JSA) claimants. The surveys are:

- **UC Expanded Gateway survey:** single people that lived in the Expanded Gateway areas and met the eligibility criteria and had made a new claim for UC.
- **JSA Comparator Survey:** single people that met the Expanded Gateway criteria and lived in areas that had similar labour market conditions to the Expanded Gateway areas³. As far as possible the sample for the matched comparison survey reflects the UC population in all respects other than geography (i.e. it includes JSA claimants who would, if they lived in the Expanded Gateway areas, be eligible for UC).

In total there were 1800 achieved interviews in Wave 1, comprising 900 for the UC survey and 900 for the comparator survey. The interviews for this Wave were carried out between 27th November and the 23rd December 2014.

¹ Offices outside North West England were Hammersmith, Harrogate, Inverness, Shotton, Rugby and Bath.

² On average Expanded Gateway Wave one survey interviews took place 38 days after the initial claim for both the UC and JSA comparator surveys.

³ DWP and contractor analysts derived comparison areas based on statistical analysis of previous benefit off-flow rates in jobcentres across the country.

3 Survey Profile

The Expanded Gateway UC and JSA samples are very similar. A breakdown of the characteristics of the respondents to the two surveys is found in Table 1. Some of the differences in responses reported from the samples may in part be due to the different characteristics exhibited by the UC and JSA samples.

Table 1. Profiles of the UC and JSA surveys

	UC	JSA
	%	%
Male	72	74
18-24	53	53
Living with family and friends	66	62
White	90	80
Have a degree	17	20
Have a health condition	16	14
Have a limiting health condition	3	3
Receive HB or housing element	17	19
Base: all claimants	900	900

(Estimates are weighted by gender and age)

4 Interim Results

4.1 Experiences of claiming Universal Credit

Around half of the UC claimants in the Expanded Gateway survey recalled claiming JSA in the previous two years. Around two-thirds of these agree that the conditions for claiming UC are easier to understand, that it provides a better financial incentive to find a job, and a better reward for doing small amounts of work. Around half of respondents thought that UC was easier to claim than JSA.

Table 2. Comparing UC with JSA

	UC			
	%	%	%	%
Compared with JSA, UC is ⁴ :	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	DK
Easier to understand what you are required to do	61	14	22	3
Better financial incentives	63	12	18	7
Better rewards for small amounts of work	64	11	14	12
Easier to claim	47	20	29	4
Base: All UC claimants recalling claiming JSA in past two years (478)				

4.2 Attitudes to Claimant Commitment

Table 3 shows that the vast majority of respondents think that some or all of the actions agreed in the Claimant Commitment would help them find work; took account of their circumstances and were achievable. Almost all respondents felt that some or all of the actions agreed would be checked by the Jobcentre.

⁴ Options for respondents were: agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, disagree strongly, don't know.

Table 3. Attitudes towards the Claimant Commitment

	UC			
Actions agreed in Claimant commitment will:	All of them	Some of them	None of them	DK/NA
	%	%	%	%
Genuinely increase chances of finding work	42	48	7	3
Take account of personal circumstances	37	48	11	4
Be achievable	53	44	2	*
Be checked by the jobcentre	76	20	2	3
Base: All UC claimants recalling signing the claimant commitment (856)				

*= Less than 0.5%

Almost all the respondents knew what would happen (reduced or stopped payments) if they did not fulfil their Claimant Commitment conditions (Table 4).

Table 4. Which conditions would lead to UC being reduced or stopped

	UC
	%
Your UC payment could be stopped if for:	
Not taking all reasonable action to look for work	95
Not attending a meeting with an adviser that I was told I had to attend	94
Not doing something that's set out in my claimant commitment	95
Not doing a particular action/activity that I was told to do	93
Not turning up/being late to a work research review	89
Failing to apply for a job I have been told to apply for by an adviser	84
Base: All UC claimants	900

4.3 Jobseeking activity and attitudes to finding work

Respondents to the UC survey report spending 9 hours more a week on job search than respondents on the JSA comparator survey. This is despite the UC and JSA Claimant Commitment regimes now being similar. UC and JSA respondents apply for similar numbers of jobs.

Table 5. Work related activities during the last week

	UC	JSA
Mean hours spent on work related activities	26	17
Mean number of jobs applied for	17	16
Base: All not in work⁵	657	724

Around nine in ten claimants of either UC or JSA respondents report they would take a short-term or temporary job. More UC respondents (some two-thirds) would consider any job compared to JSA respondents.

Table 6. Respondents’ views on Jobsearch

	UC	JSA
	%	%
Willing to take a short term/temporary job	89	88
Willing to take any job you can do	68	59
Base: All not in work⁶	657	724

Respondents were asked whether they thought there were jobs available in their areas. UC survey respondents were more likely to be pessimistic than JSA survey respondents. This is surprising as the JSA comparator areas were chosen on grounds that they have similar labour market conditions to the UC areas, and more UC claimants compared to JSA report being in work (see Table 10 below).

⁵ For the UC survey only those on UC and not in work were asked this question.
⁶ For the UC survey only those on UC and not in work were asked this question

Table 7. Views on local job market

	UC	JSA
	%	%
Think there are no jobs in my area	36	30
Base: All not in work	677	724

A little over three-quarters of both the UC and JSA respondents not in work expressed confidence finding work in three months. JSA respondents appeared slightly more confident, but again the difference is slight and may be due to differences in the groups who are out of work at this stage – fewer UC claimants report not being in work.

Table 8. Confidence in finding work

	UC	JSA
	%	%
Confident they will find work in three months	76	78
Base: All not in work	677	724

Around three quarters of UC claimants consider the benefits system to be effective at getting people into work. This compares with around two thirds of the JSA respondents.

Table 9. Attitude to benefit system

	UC	JSA
	%	%
Benefit system effective in getting people into work	77	68
Base: All claimants	900	900

4.4 Economic Status

Around one quarter of the UC Expanded Gateway survey respondents reported being in paid work at the time of their interview⁷. This compares with around one fifth of those in the JSA comparator survey. As in section 4.3 it is possible that some of the differences between the two groups are due to different sample characteristics. This will be the subject of further analysis which will form part of the final report.

Table 10. Economic status at time of interview

	UC	JSA
	%	%
Working for an employer	23	20
Self employed	2	0
Not in work	75	80
Base: All claimants	900	900

⁷ The interviews took place on average 38 days after claim for both UC and JSA claimants.

5 Conclusion

This report has set out some of the interim results from the first wave of the survey of UC Expanded Gateway claimants. It gives us useful insights into the experiences of claiming UC in the second year of its operation. Work on the second wave of the survey is now underway. Results from this research will further our understanding of claimant experiences later in the UC claim process, and how claimants are progressing in terms of their labour market behaviour and outcomes. We will report on the results later in the year.

Annex

Eligibility criteria for Claimants that would receive UC in Expanded Gateway areas in this survey.

A claimant is eligible for UC if they live in an Expanded Gateway area and:

- Does not live with a partner
- Does not have any dependent children
- Is not required to pay maintenance for a child by the CSA
- Is a British citizen living in England, Wales or Scotland
- Has lived in the UK continuously for the last 2 years
- Is aged between 18 and 60 years and 6 months
- Has a UK national insurance number
- Does not receive and/or receive DLA or PIP
- Does not have a fit note or is in a period of self-certification for sickness
- Is not self-employed
- Is not in education or training and is not due to start education or training in the next month
- Is not represented by a PAB/CAB
- Is not a carer for an adult with disabilities or health problems
- Is not pregnant and hasn't given birth in the last 15 weeks
- Does not have savings, shares or capital worth over £6,000
- Has a bank, building society or post office card account
- Do not have take home pay of over £270 a month if aged under 25
- Do not have take home pay of £330 a month or over if aged 25 or over
- Is not currently claiming ESA, JSA, IS, WTC, IB, SDA
- Is not appealing against a decision not to pay ESA, JSA, IS, WTC, IB, SDA
- Is not waiting for a decision on ESA, JSA, IS, WTC
- Have not received JSA in the last 2 weeks
- Have not received ESA in the last 2 weeks

Notes

An independent research company, Ipsos Mori carried out the fieldwork for both the UC and JSA surveys. Ipsos Mori was selected to do the research following a competitive tendering exercise.

Overview of the sample used.

	UC	JSA
Sample used (after opt-outs)	4117	5273
Achieved sample size	900	900
Refused during interview	450	366
Ineligible/screened out	230	651
Not available during fieldwork	77	87
No direct contact made	1707	2005
Telephone number supplied not valid	298	711
Other (e.g. appointments)	455	553