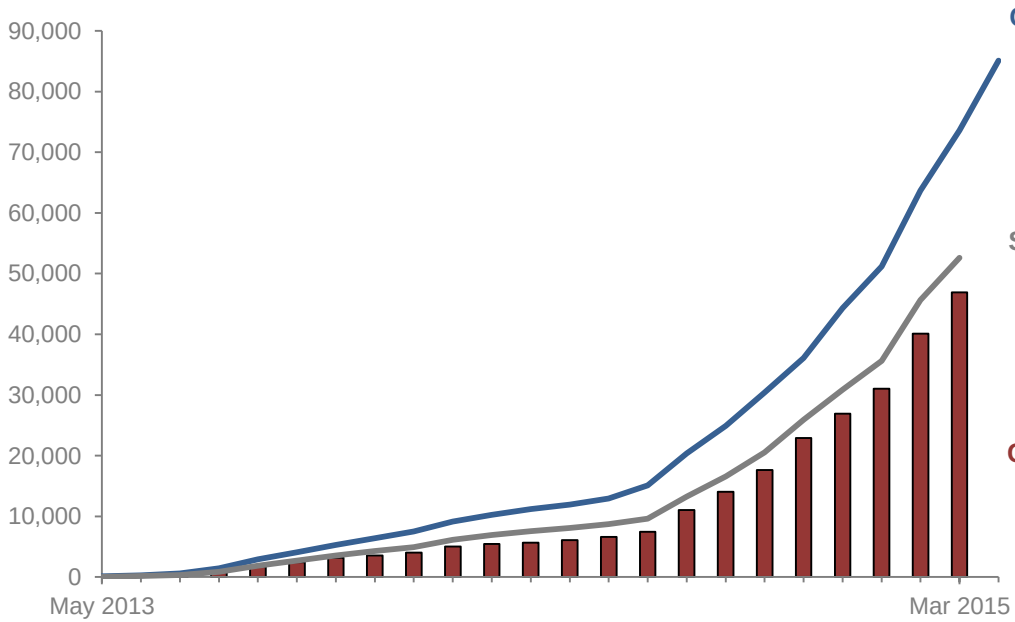
Universal Credit – monthly experimental official statistics to April 2015

Universal Credit is a new benefit which aims to reduce poverty, by making work pay, and to help claimants and their families to become more independent.

Universal Credit 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. In the period covered by this release, 177 Jobcentre Plus offices have started to introduce Universal Credit.

Universal Credit

Claims, Starts and Caseload on Universal Credit by month



Main Findings

85,110 people have made a claim for Universal Credit up to 9th April 2015. The rate at which people are claiming continues to increase as the roll out of Universal Credit continues.

52,630 of the people who have made a claim have, up to 12th March 2015, attended an initial interview, accepted their claimant commitment, and gone on to start Universal Credit.

46,920 people were on the Universal Credit caseload, as of 12th March 2015. Of these, 14,550 (or 31 per cent) were in employment and 32,370 (or 69 per cent) were not in employment.

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Published on **Fri 17 Apr 2015**, next release date is **Wed 13 May 2015**.

Government Statistical Service

Universal Credit – monthly experimental official statistics to April 2015

Introduction

This Summary contains statistics on Universal Credit covering the period to 9th April 2015 (for claims made) and 12th March 2015 (for starts and caseload) covering the 177 Jobcentre Plus offices which had implemented Universal Credit up to this date.

Universal Credit is a new benefit which aims to reduce poverty, by making work pay, and to help claimants and their families to become more independent. It also aims to simplify the benefits system by providing a single payment based upon the circumstances of the household. Support for housing costs, children and childcare costs are integrated in the new benefit. It also provides additions for disabled people and carers.

The following benefits will be abolished as Universal Credit rolls out.

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

The main differences between Universal Credit and the current welfare system are:

- Universal Credit is available to people who are in work and on a low income, as well as to those who are out-of-work
- most people will apply online and manage their claim through an online account
- Universal Credit will be responsive – as people on low incomes move in and out of work, they will get on going support
- most claimants on low incomes will still be paid Universal Credit when they first start a new job or increase their part-time hours
- claimants will receive a single monthly household payment, paid into a bank account in the same way as a monthly salary; support with housing costs will usually go direct to the claimant as part of their monthly payment

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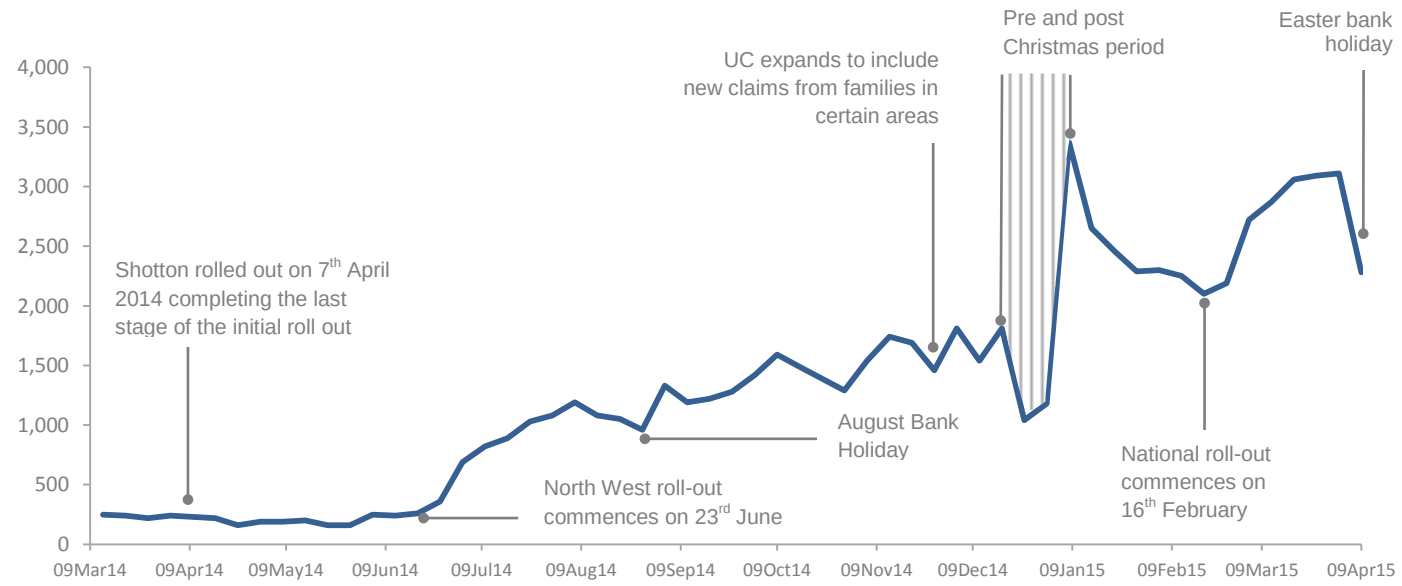
Universal Credit – monthly experimental official statistics to April 2015

Claiming Universal Credit

People will usually make a claim for Universal Credit on-line, during which initial claim verification will take place. After making a claim, an initial interview will take place with the claimant at which eligibility for Universal Credit will be confirmed, and the claimant will accept a Claimant Commitment. At this point, a claimant will be recorded as starting Universal Credit. Users should note that the statistics on claims made are four weeks more up-to-date than statistics on starts and caseload. Not all people who make a claim for Universal Credit will go on to start.

Claims made to UC are increasing

new claims in each week in the last 13 months to Thur 9th Apr 2015



Key messages

The overall rate at which people are making a claim continues to increase as Universal Credit expands to the rest of Great Britain.

The total number of people who have made a claim is now 85,110, with an average of 2,885 new claims per week in the past four weeks, compared to an average of 2,470 new claims per week in the previous four weeks. Following national roll-out the rate of claims peaked at over 3,100 claims in the week of 2nd April. However, there has been a slight decline in claims due to the Easter break.

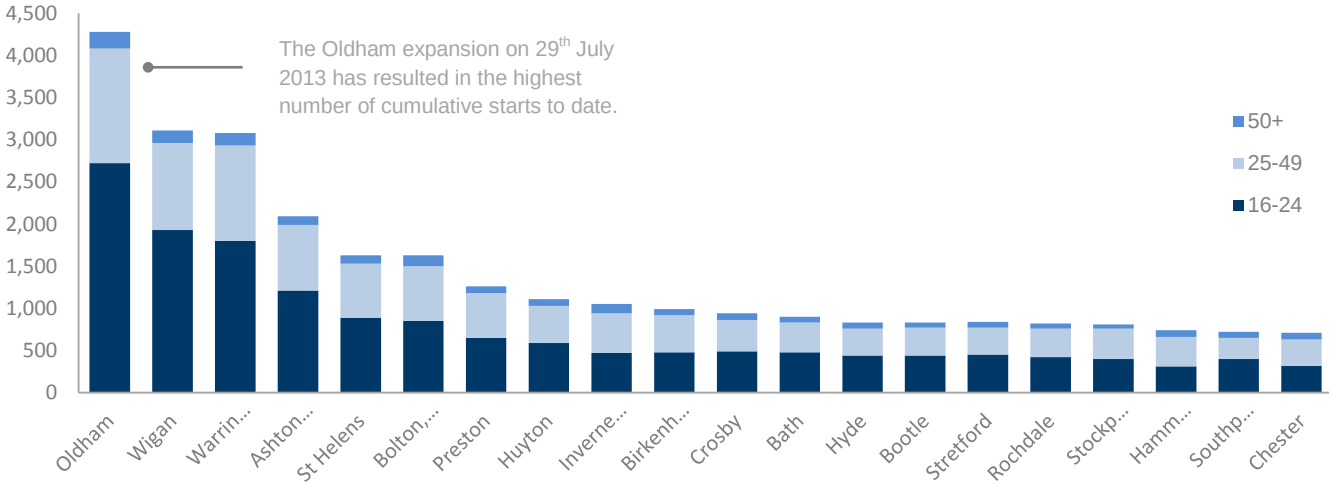
In total nearly 30 Jobcentre Plus offices have begun accepting to Universal Credit in the four week period between 16th March and 6th April 2015.

See **Excel table 1.01** for full data.

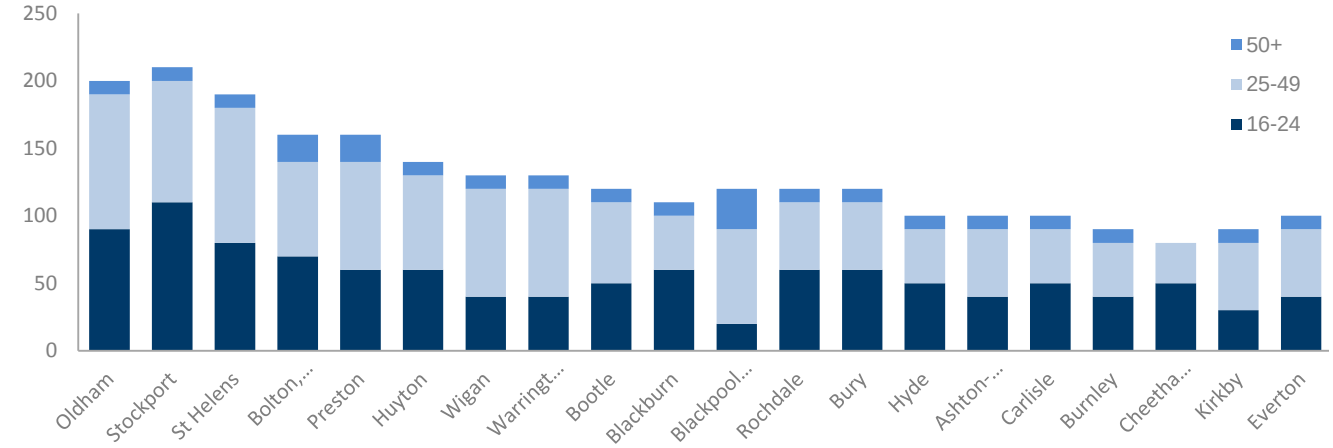
Universal Credit – monthly experimental official statistics to April 2015

Starts to Universal Credit

Highest cumulative number of starts in the top 20 Jobcentre Plus offices by age



Highest number of starts in the top 20 Jobcentre Plus offices by age in the latest month



Key messages

The total number of people who started Universal Credit up to 12th March 2015 was 52,630, within 148 Jobcentre Plus offices.

The total number of people who have now started Universal Credit is 15 per cent higher than the previous month (45,630).

In the past month, more people started on Universal Credit in Oldham and Stockport Jobcentre Plus offices than any other (200 people starting in each).

Around two-thirds (70 per cent) of people who started on Universal Credit were male, and over half (53 per cent) were aged under 25.

The proportion of people that started Universal Credit and were under 25 has decreased over time. In the past year this has fallen from 59 per cent, in March 2014, to 53 per cent, in March 2015. This could be a result of the changes to the eligibility criteria which has extended from singles to couples and now families.

There is also some variation in the under 25 age category between the Jobcentre Plus offices. This may be a reflection of the demographic breakdown of the different areas. For example, in Stockport significantly more people who started Universal Credit in the latest month were aged 16-24 compared to Blackpool North.

See **Excel tables 2.01 - 2.02** for full data.

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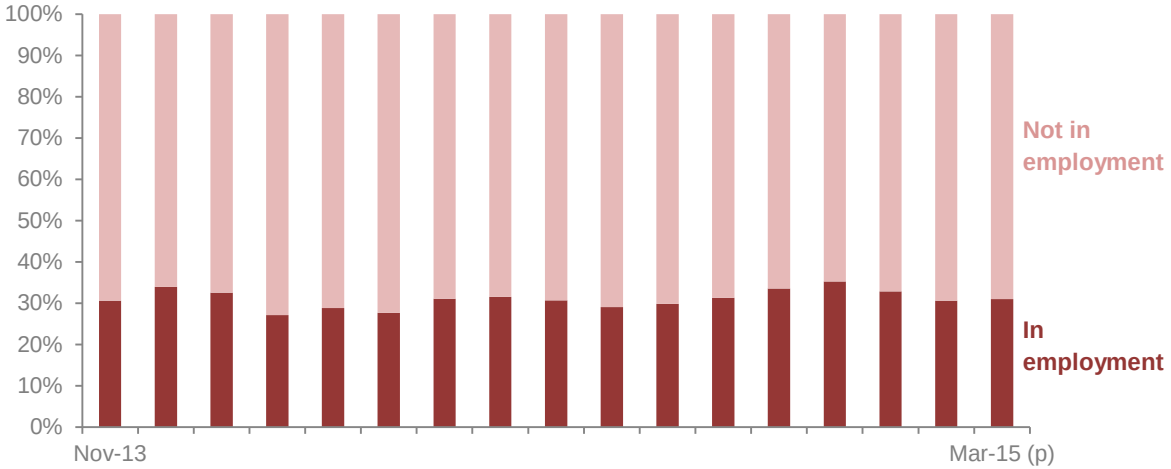
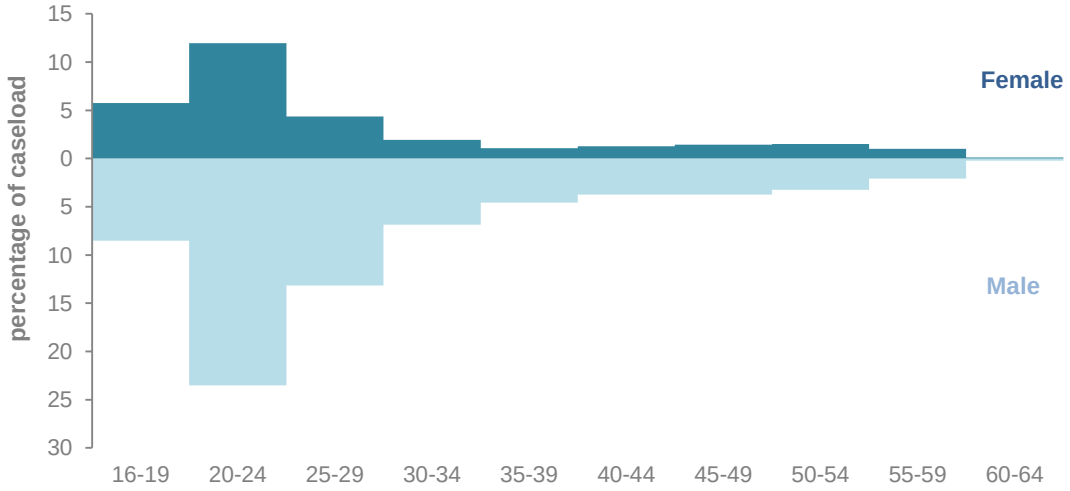
Universal Credit – monthly experimental official statistics to April 2015

Universal Credit caseload

By month and employment status, as of 12th March



By age group and gender, as of 12th March



Key messages

There were 46,920 people on the Universal Credit caseload as of 12th March 2015. This represents an increase of 17 per cent on the caseload compared to February 2015.

The Jobcentre Plus office with the largest caseload was Oldham, with 2,980 Universal Credit claimants, followed by Warrington, with 2,120 (caseload breakdown by local authority and parliamentary constituency are available in accompanying Excel tables).

Of the people on the caseload in March 2015, 31 per cent were in employment and 69 per cent were not in employment.

46 per cent of the Universal Credit caseload in March 2015 has been on for less than three months, this compares to 48 per cent in February, 47 per cent in January, and 52 per cent in December 2014.

There are more males on the Universal Credit caseload than females (70 per cent compared to 30 per cent).

Males aged 20-24 make up 24 per cent of the total Universal Credit caseload.

See **Excel tables 3.01 – 3.11** for full data.

Please note figures for the latest month (March 2015) are provisional and will be finalised in the next release. See the Data Source and Definitions section for more details.

Universal Credit – monthly experimental official statistics to April 2015

Universal Credit caseload and starters

Further statistics on the Universal Credit caseload and starters showing information at Jobcentre Plus office level are also available via an interactive map.

This shows the location of Jobcentre Plus offices who now accept Universal Credit claims, up to 12th March 2015.

Please click here to access the full interactive version.

Notes

The location of each pin represents the postcode of the Jobcentre Plus office but may not represent the precise location of the office.

The size of each pin is proportional to the number of claimants on Universal Credit as at 12th March 2015.

To view key statistics for each Jobcentre Plus office click on each pin.

For further information on supported browsers, please visit the following website: http://doc.arcgis.com/en/arcgis-online/reference/browsers.htm

Universal Credit – monthly experimental official statistics to April 2015

Data Source

These official statistics have been compiled using data from systems within local offices and records of Universal Credit benefit payments made by the Department.

This and other new data sources will, in time, allow a progressively wider range of breakdowns to be published as the new IT systems are introduced. The methodology used and definitions of the official statistics may be updated within subsequent releases, along with information on the impact of any changes to the time series already released. A strategy for the release of official statistics on Universal Credit was published in September 2013.

These statistics have been developed using guidelines set out by the UK Statistics Authority, and are new official statistics undergoing evaluation. They have, therefore, been designated as Experimental Statistics. Users are invited to comment on the development and relevance of these statistics at this stage.

Definitions used

This report contains three main measures:

- The number of **claims** made is defined as the number of individuals who have submitted a claim to Universal Credit regardless of whether they then go on to start Universal Credit. There are a number of reasons why they may not start, for example if the individual is not eligible to claim Universal Credit. It is also important to note that the headline figure relates to all claims made up to 9th April 2015, which is 4 weeks later than the figures provided for starters and caseload. This means that individuals who have made their first claim to Universal Credit after the 12th March 2015 will be included in the claims made figure but will not be included in the starters and caseload figures even if they have completed the claim process and have started on Universal Credit. They will, however, be captured in future releases which cover the period after 12th March 2015.
- A **starter** to Universal Credit is defined as an individual who has completed the Universal Credit claim process and accepted their Claimant Commitment. The reporting month in relation to **starts** to Universal Credit relates to a period from the second Friday in the previous month to the second Thursday in the current month, for example for March 2015 the starts recorded relate to the period 13th February 2015 to 12th March 2015. Figures show the first successful claim per individual. Subsequent claims by the same individual will not be counted in this release. Work is currently on-going to identify and include these cases in future publications.

- The **caseload** of Universal Credit claimants includes those who have started Universal Credit (as above) and have not had a termination recorded for this spell, up to the 'count date'. A termination would be recorded either at the request of the individual or if their entitlement to Universal Credit ends. For example, if they no longer satisfy the financial conditions to receive Universal Credit as they have capital over £16,000, or if increased earnings reduced their award to zero for six consecutive months. The latest overall Universal Credit caseload figure reported in this release relates to the second Thursday in March, i.e. 12th March 2015. Please note that caseload figures are provisional and will be finalised in the next release (the expectation is that the provisional caseload figure will be within one per cent of the final figure). The caseload figure includes a breakdown on whether the claimant is **in employment** or **not in** employment, which is also subject to revision; although the expectation is that this will be within two per cent of the final figure. An individual on Universal Credit at the count date will be recorded as in employment if they have employment earnings within the Universal Credit assessment period which spans the count date. They may not be in employment precisely on the count date.

Universal Credit and measures of unemployment

Unemployment in the UK is measured using the Labour Force Survey (LFS) consistent with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definition. The LFS is a sample survey of people living in private households. The survey asks a series of questions about respondents' personal circumstances and their activity in the labour market. Through these questions every respondent is classified as in employment, unemployed or economically inactive, consistent with ILO definitions.

The LFS and ILO defines an individual as unemployed if they are without work, available for work and seeking work. The UK considers anybody who is not in employment by the above definition, has actively sought work in the last 4 weeks and is available to start work in the next 2 weeks, or has found a job and is waiting to start in the next 2 weeks, to be unemployed. The measure is not dependent on which, if any, benefit is being claimed.

The Office for National Statistic (ONS) also publish monthly National Statistics on the claimant count – a measure of how many people are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance. Although the headline claimant count statistics do not include data on Universal Credit claimants, ONS do publish an indicative representation of the claimant count adjusting for Universal Credit caseload.

Universal Credit – monthly experimental official statistics to April 2015

Further roll out

Universal Credit, which is available in a number of areas across England, Scotland and Wales, completed its roll out to the whole of the North West of England on 15th December 2014. From 30th June 2014 Universal Credit expanded to include new claims from couples and from 24th November 2014 to new claims from families. Universal Credit continued its roll out to all Jobcentre Plus offices and local authorities across the country on 16th February 2015.

A limited test of the Digital Service for Universal Credit was launched in Sutton, South London on 26th November 2014. Claimants will manage their Universal Credit claim online to monitor payments, communicate with their work coach and record work search progress. Please note that this publication does not currently include statistics covering this area.

Further information can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/universal-credit-to-take-the-first-new-claims-for-couples

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/welfare-revolution-rolls-out-to-families-universal-credit-to-be-in-a-third-of-jobcentres-by-spring

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plans-announced-for-accelerated-rollout-of-universal-credit-after-success-in-north-west

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/384115/uc-national-expansion.pdf

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-information-for-claimants-in-sutton

For the period for which these statistics cover there were 177 Jobcentre offices delivering Universal Credit.

See **Excel table 4.01** for a full list of Jobcentre Plus offices by the date they implemented Universal Credit.