



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions



# DWP Employer Experience Survey 2015/16

Methodological note

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# 1 Survey design

## 1.1 Background

The 2015/16 Employer Experience Survey was designed primarily to help the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) understand employers' recruitment practices, experience of using DWP services and their views on key policy areas.

The research follows on from a similar wave of research – the 2013 Employer Engagement and Experience Survey – which was intended to act as a baseline against which the impact of policy changes could be judged. To this end, key questions used in the 2013 Employer engagement and experience survey were replicated in the 2015/16 survey.

A key area of policy interest for the latest wave of the research is the introduction and impact of Universal Credit (UC). Consequently, questions designed to gauge levels of awareness, experience and perceived impact of UC were included.

A total of 2,869 telephone interviews were conducted with 'core' businesses and a further 1,331 with 'UC' businesses. The core businesses were a cross-section of employers of all sizes and across all sectors of the economy. The UC businesses were employers known to have or have had at least one member of staff claiming UC at the time of interview.

The research was conducted at site-level – as opposed to organisation level. The rationale for this is that the workplace is the core interface between employers, their staff and the DWP. This also replicates the approach taken for the 2013 Employer engagement and experience survey. As in 2013, it is possible that more than one establishment from a multi-site organisation could have participated in the survey.

All workplaces with at least two members of staff were in-scope for the survey. The most senior individual at the site with responsibility for human resources was asked to take part.

## 1.2 Interview approach

The survey sections were modularised to ensure sufficient coverage across the breadth of topics whilst still maintaining a manageable interview length. This was to mitigate respondent fatigue and therefore ensure the collection of high quality responses. Across the fieldwork period, the average interview length was just over 26 minutes and was carried out by trained IFF Research interviewers.

## 2 Sampling

The survey encompasses businesses in Great Britain (GB) with two or more employees across England, Scotland and Wales, in all sectors of the economy (across the commercial, public and charitable spheres).

### 2.1 The core sample

A probability proportionate to size (PPS) approach was adopted, whereby certain groups in the GB employer population were overrepresented to allow for sufficient interviews and therefore sub group analysis and reporting. The following groups were overrepresented:

- larger employers;
- employers in smaller sectors; and
- employers in smaller regions (so that interviews were spread evenly between Jobcentre Plus region).

The sample was drawn using a random stratified sampling approach with targets set by size and sector on an interlocking basis.

An overall target of around 2,800 'core' interviews was agreed. In order to set interviewing targets per sector, half of the overall 2,800 target was allocated evenly and the remaining half was allocated in proportion to the sector profile of GB employers. Following this, half of the sector targets were distributed evenly across the five size-bands. The remaining half was then distributed according to the size profile for each sector.

An overarching regional target aim of 400 interviews for each Jobcentre Plus region was also imposed.

The core sample was sourced from the Experian business database.

### 2.2 The Universal Credit boost

The introduction of the UC benefit has resulted in a requirement for the DWP to be made aware of earnings and pensions made to an individual within a period of UC; this information is shared with DWP by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) systems. In DWP, this is held in a database called Real Time Earnings (RTE), therefore, DWP holds for an individual with a live UC claim an up-to-date picture of their earnings.

The UC sample was sourced from these data sources and consisted of any employer who has or has had a UC claimant in employment at a time where that person was claiming UC and payment for these purposes includes two or more payments [so not a final payment just after the date of claim]. The period covered for this sample is 2014/15 and 2015/16.

The contact details were then added to this list of employers using DWP's Debt Management database and against data already held from HMRC. A similar process was undertaken separately by HMRC to match the employer size and sector information, where known.

## **DWP Employer Experience Survey 2015/16**

A random sample of records was drawn from the final database to form the starting sample for the UC employer element of the survey.

It should be noted that there is no obligation for an employee to disclose that they are claiming UC, so not all employers were aware that they had staff claiming UC.

### **2.3 Fieldwork**

Interviews were completed using IFF's computer assisted telephone interviewing system (CATI) between 14 October 2015 and 2 February 2016.

The relevance, length and flow of the questionnaire were tested during an initial phase of cognitive and pilot interviewing. Findings from this phase were then used to finalise the questionnaire.

A reassurance letter was provided to any employers who wanted further background or information about the survey, after initial contact was made by an IFF representative.

An overall response rate of 38 per cent was achieved for the core employer element and 44 per cent for the UC employer element.

### 3 Weighting

The DWP were keen to establish a single weighting variable so that the core and UC employer elements could be analysed together.

This required a reasonably complicated process which had to correct for;

- The oversampling of some groups within the core employer element (i.e. larger employers, employers in smaller sectors and employers in smaller regions).
- The oversampling of UC employers relative to their proportion in the population.
- The fact that some UC employer were picked up within the core employer element of the survey.

In order to do this, we needed to populate the size by sector by UC status grid below for each for the 7 JCP regions – both for our achieved interviews and for the GB population as a whole.

	1 to 9		10 to 49		50 to 249		250+	
	UC	Not UC	UC	Not UC	UC	Not UC	UC	Not UC
<b>Primary sector and utilities</b>								
<b>Manufacturing</b>								
<b>Construction</b>								
<b>Trade, accommodation and transport</b>								
<b>Business and other services</b>								
<b>Non-market services</b>								

Three sources of information were used in this process:

1. **ONS population data derived from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR):** This shows the profile of GB businesses by size and sector, but does not contain information about whether or not businesses have members of staff claiming UC.
2. **An initial file of UC employers containing 21,645 unique records:** This was the file used for sampling for the employer survey and contained records of all UC employers up to the point when piloting of the survey started. The file contained postcode information – so that a regional marker could be applied – and size and sector information for most records, although this information was missing, or unclassifiable for 20 per cent of the records.
3. **An updated file of UC employers containing 55,935 records:** This updated file contained all UC employers at the point when fieldwork was completed. It only had partial postcode information and no size-by-sector information.

## DWP Employer Experience Survey 2015/16

Populating the grid for achieved interviews involved the following steps:

1. Size and sector data was taken from information given during the survey.
2. The proportion of 'UC employers' who were interviewed as part of the 'core employer sample' was established through matching employers in the core sample with the updated file of UC employers.
3. The employers who were matched were added to the employers who were sampled as part of the UC employer element of the survey so that the full achieved sample could be grouped into 'UC' and 'non-UC' employers.

The following steps were taken to derive the profile of the UC employer population by size and sector:

1. An approximate size-by-sector profile for the 20 per cent of employers missing size or sector information in the initial UC sample was derived using survey data. We looked at the size and sector information given by the employers in this group who were interviewed and applied this profile to the full 20 per cent. This gave us a full size by sector profile for the initial UC employer file.
2. This profile was then scaled up to the 55,935 records in the updated UC file.

Then the following steps were taken to populate the grid above for the full GB employer population:

1. A size by sector profile was obtained for each Jobcentre Plus region using IDBR data.
2. The derived population of UC employers for each cell was subtracted from the IDBR total population figure to arrive at an estimate for the number of 'UC' and 'non-UC' employers for each size-by-sector cell.
3. In some cases – mostly in the largest sizeband (employers with 250+ staff) – the estimate for UC employers exceeded the total IDBR population. In these cases, the estimated UC population was capped at 100 per cent and the remaining UC records redistributed among the smaller sizebands.

Each step taken to produce the weighting targets was checked by at least two members of the core project team. Once the weights were applied, the data was again checked to ensure they had been applied correctly.



## 4 Reporting conventions

The survey was carried out at an establishment level. The terms 'business', 'employer' and 'organisation' are used interchangeably throughout the report to avoid excessive repetition and to aid reading.

Throughout the report, unweighted base figures are shown on tables and charts to give an indication of the statistical reliability of the figures. As a general convention throughout the report, figures with a base size of fewer than 40 establishments are not reported and are denoted by a dash '-'.

In tables findings, an asterisk '\*' is used if the figure is larger than zero but smaller than 0.5.

All differences noted are significant to a 95 per cent confidence level unless otherwise stated.

In some cases, charts may not always add to 100 per cent and where this is the case this is due to rounding (i.e. 99 per cent or 101 per cent). The columns in some tables may sum to more than 100 per cent where respondents can provide multiple responses to the question. Furthermore, in the majority of cases, 'don't know' answers have not been included in the charts.