

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

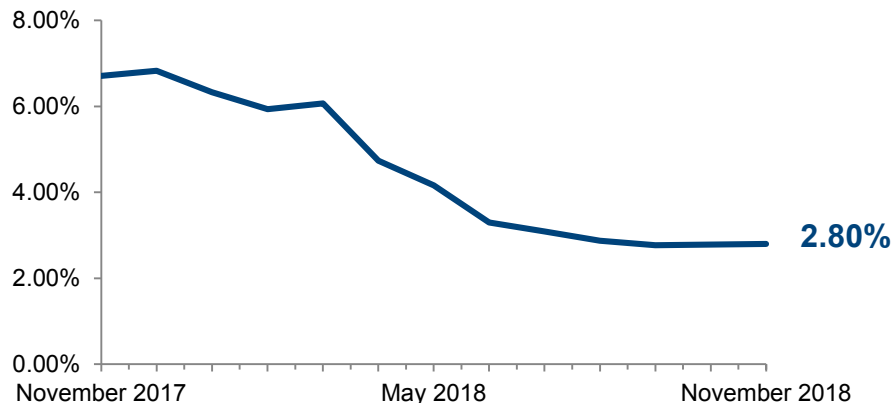
## Sanction statistics should not be compared across benefits as the policies for each benefit are very different.

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. In the period August 2018 to October 2018 63% of UC Live Service decisions occurred due to failure to attend or participate in a Work-Focused Interview.

## Universal Credit

**2.80% of people subject to conditionality\* had a drop in benefit due to a UC sanction in November 2018**

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

**The average UC sanction lasted  
31 days**

(Experimental median: Aug 2015 to Nov 2018)

## Main stories

- In November 2018, 2.80% of people subject to conditionality at the point where the sanction was applied on UC, had a deduction taken from their UC award as a result of a sanction, down 0.08 percentage points from August 2018.
- 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 November 2018, 64% of the UC caseload were in the conditionality groups that could be subject to sanction, compared to 81% in August 2015.
- From August 2018 to October 2018, 52% of all Universal Credit live service decisions resulted in a sanction. This is up 2 percentage points from May 2018 to July 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 June 2018 was 0.02% (see page 7). This is down 0.19 percentage points from March 2018 and 0.48 in the past year.
  - The percentage of Employment and Support Allowance (WRAG) claimants with a drop in payment due to a sanction is 0.03% (see page 10). This is down 0.06 percentage points from March 2018 and 0.27 in the past year.

## 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 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](#).

Income Support 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. For the time period covered by these statistics, full service was available to all claimant types but only in certain areas of the country. Live service was available in all parts of the country to single working age claimants only, in areas where full service had not yet been rolled out. More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/universal-credit-full-service-and-live-service>

## At a glance

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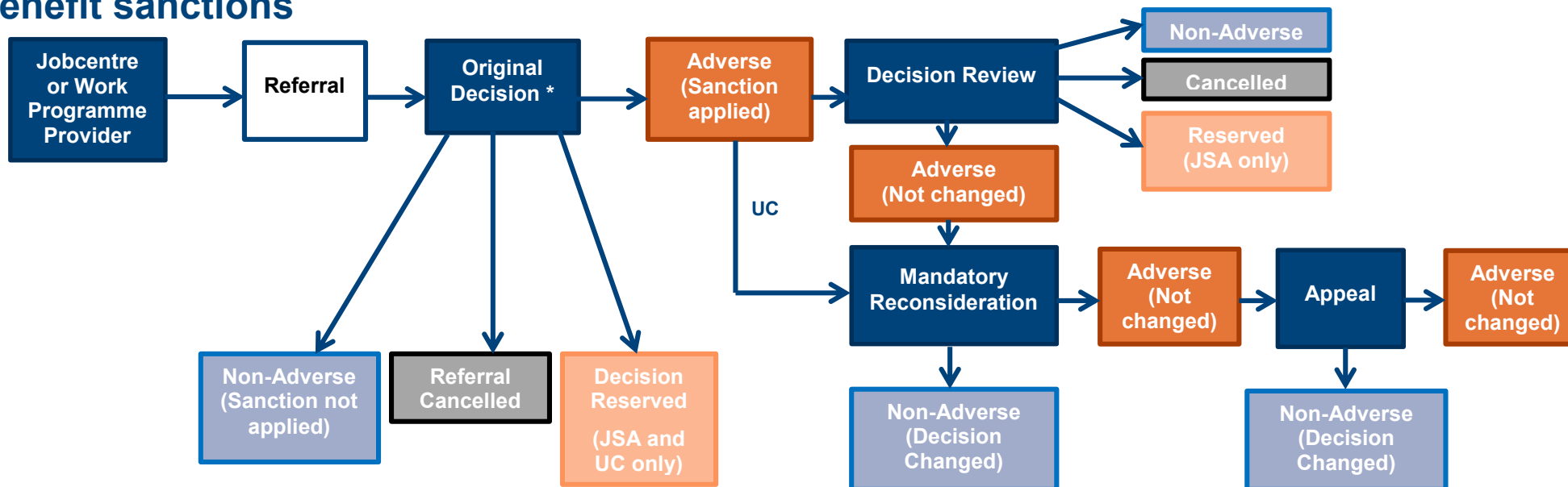
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## Benefit sanctions



### 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

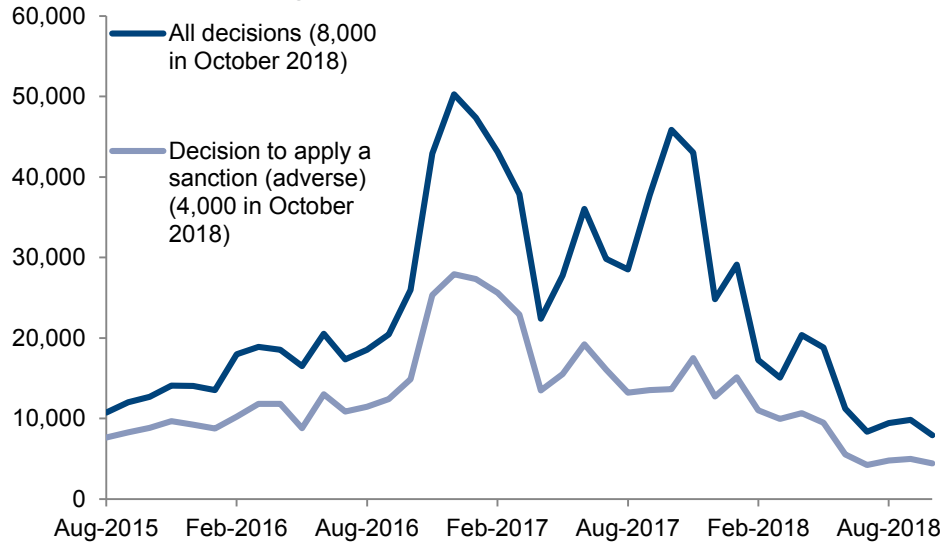
We calculate the number of people who are receiving less benefit because they were sanctioned as a proportion of the total number of people in receipt of each benefit at a point in time (i.e. on a specific day of the month). These figures are calculated differently to the decisions figures, which are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

### Destinations

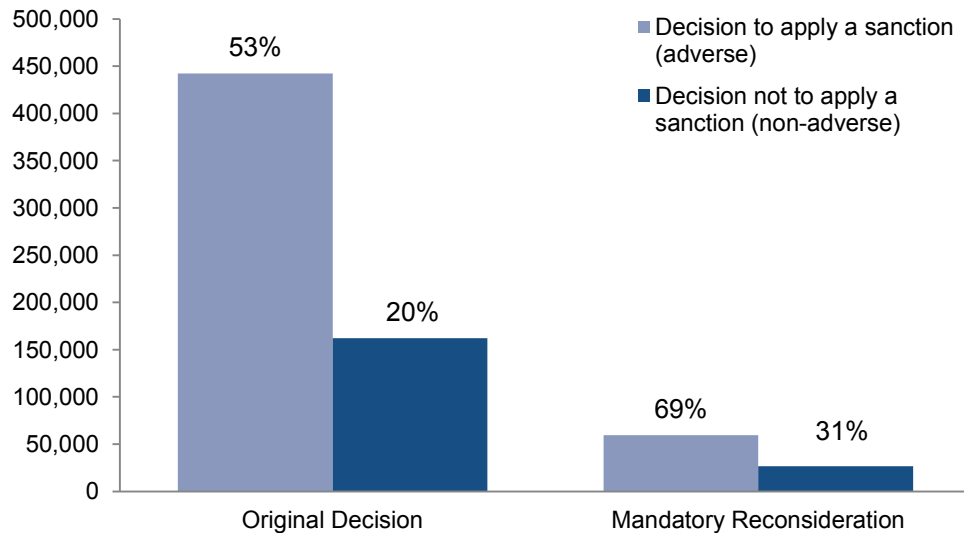
We track what happens to claimants after they receive an **\*Original, adverse sanction decision**. The figures show the amount of time spent on different working age benefits (UC, JSA, ESA and IS) in the 180-day period following the decision. In addition, we have developed statistics to show who has had a period of earnings after their Sanction. Further information can be found in the [destinations methodology document](#).

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

Sanction decisions: Aug 2015 to Oct 2018



Summary of decision outcomes at each stage: Aug 2015 to Oct 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.

The total number of monthly decisions has varied since August 2015, with peaks in December 2016 and October 2017 and a low of 8,000 in October 2018.

The volume of decisions processed is falling based on the fact that UC Live Service has closed to new claims.

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-Focused Interview accounted for 69% of all Universal Credit sanction decisions in the last year.

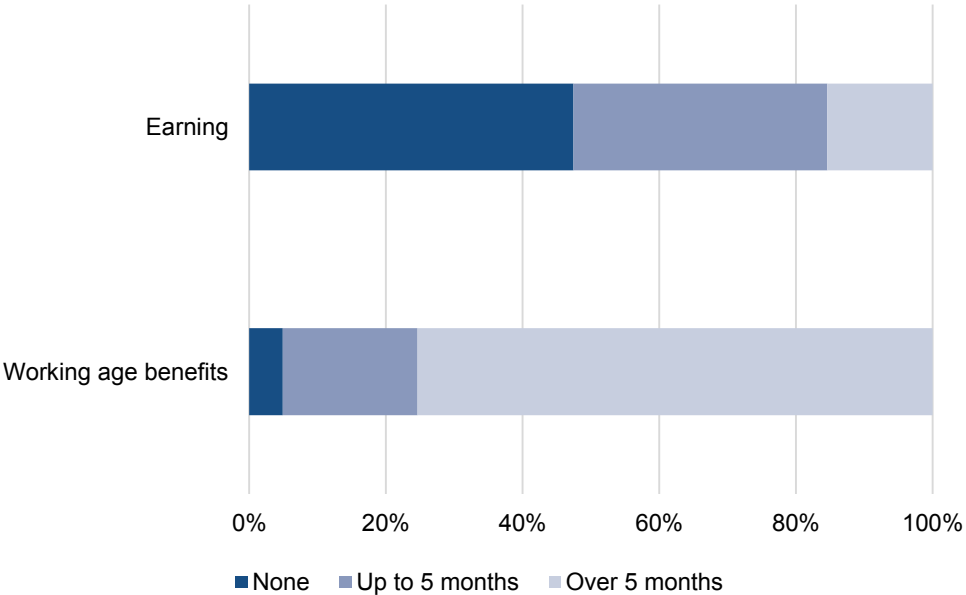
**These figures are for live service claimants only and do not include full service data.**

Summary of decision reasons: Nov 2017 to Oct 2018

All decisions made by reason group	Latest Year (Thousands)	Latest Year (%)	Latest Quarter (Thousands)	Latest Quarter (%)
Work-Focused Interviews	148.6	69.0	17.2	63.3
Availability for Work	29.2	13.6	4.1	15.2
Employment Programmes	21.9	10.2	4.0	14.8
Reason for Leaving Previous Employment	13.8	6.4	1.6	6.1
Other	1.7	0.8	0.2	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>215.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>27.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>

# 1.2. 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 of 152 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 live service sanction decision, 4.9% of claimants were not in receipt of any of the tracked benefits. Around 75.4% of claimants spent over 150 days (5 months) in receipt of benefit and 69.1% of claimants spent the full 180 days in receipt of benefit.

After receiving a benefit sanction decision, UC live service claimants spent an average of 52 days out of the following 180 days earning, with around 9.1% of claimants earning for the full 180 days after they had been sanctioned.

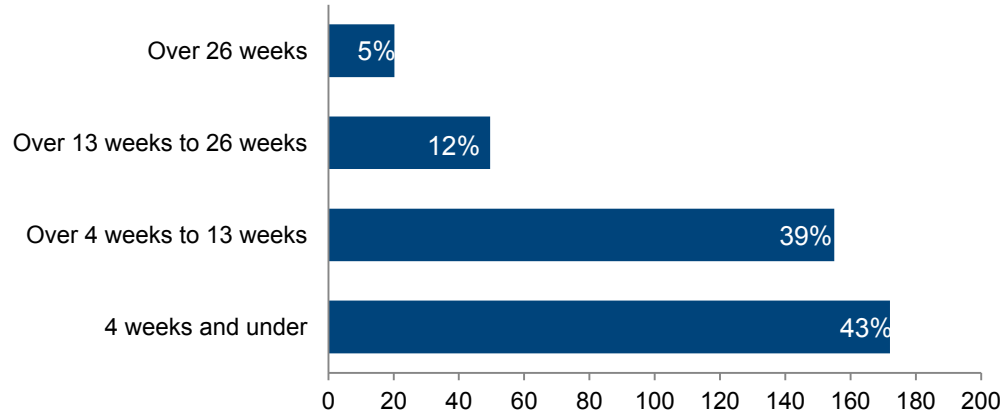
**Decisions made from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 for UC live service are included.**

**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

## 2.1. 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.

**UC live and full service sanctions completed by length of sanction (Thousands):** Aug 2015 to Nov 2018



### 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

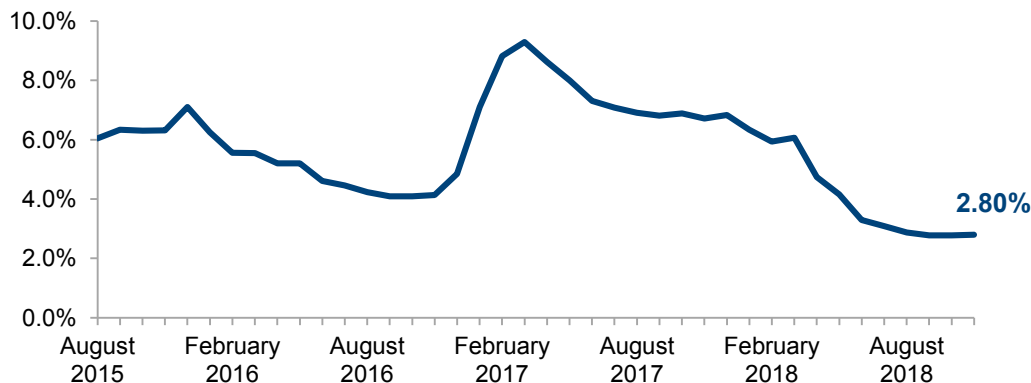
**More than four-fifths of ended UC sanctions lasted 13 weeks or less since August 2015. The average (median) UC sanction lasted 31 days.**

Since August 2015, more than two-fifths of all sanctions that ended lasted 4 weeks or less. 39% lasted between 5 and 13 weeks. 18% lasted over 13 weeks. 63% 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.

## 2.2. 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 Nov 2018



**In November 2018, 2.80% 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 has continued to decrease since a peak in March 2017.

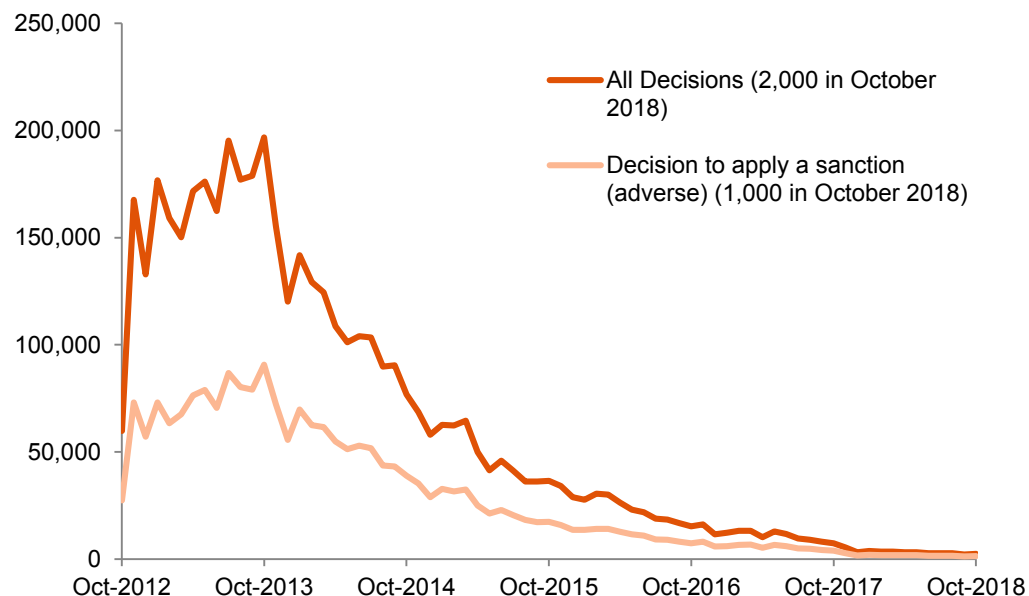
Over the course of the roll-out of Universal Credit, the balance of individuals subject to sanction as a proportion of the caseload has changed. In November 2018, 64% of the UC caseload were in the conditionality groups that could be subject to sanction, compared to 81% in August 2015.

**These figures include both live and full service claimants.**

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

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

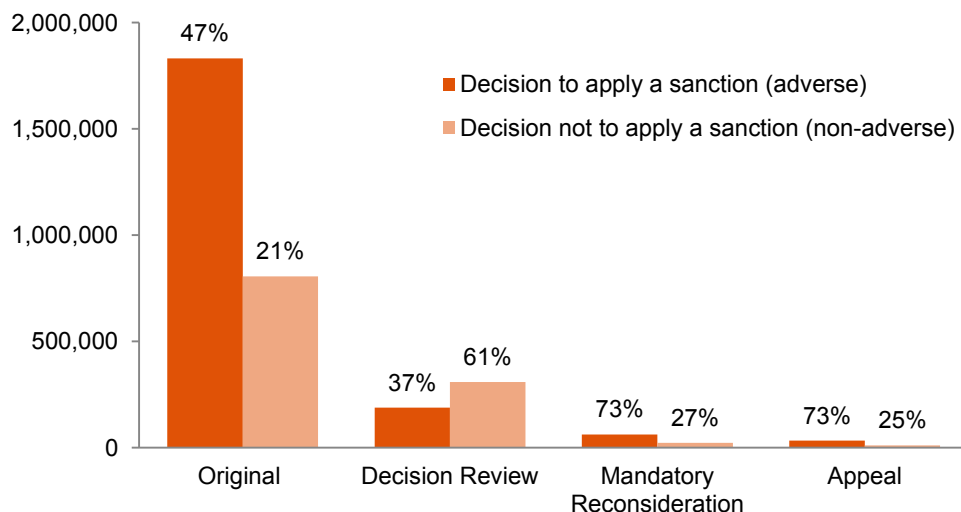
Sanctions decisions: Oct 2012 to Oct 2018



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 2,000 in October 2018. Original decisions currently account for 87% 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 330 in the last year.

The trend in JSA sanction decisions also coincides with the end of the Work Programme. Around 37% 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 21% for Work-Focussed Interview sanction decisions.

Summary of decision outcomes at each stage: Oct 2012 to Oct 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.

Summary of decision reasons: Nov 2017 to Oct 2018

All decisions made by reason group	Latest Year (Thousands)	Latest Year (%)	Latest Quarter (Thousands)	Latest Quarter (%)
Work Programme	14.1	36.8	3.0	40.3
Work-Focussed Interview	8.0	21.0	1.6	21.1
Availability for Work	7.5	19.6	1.5	19.8
Reason for Leaving Previous Employment	7.9	20.5	1.2	17.0
Other Employment Programmes	0.8	2.0	0.1	1.8
Other	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>

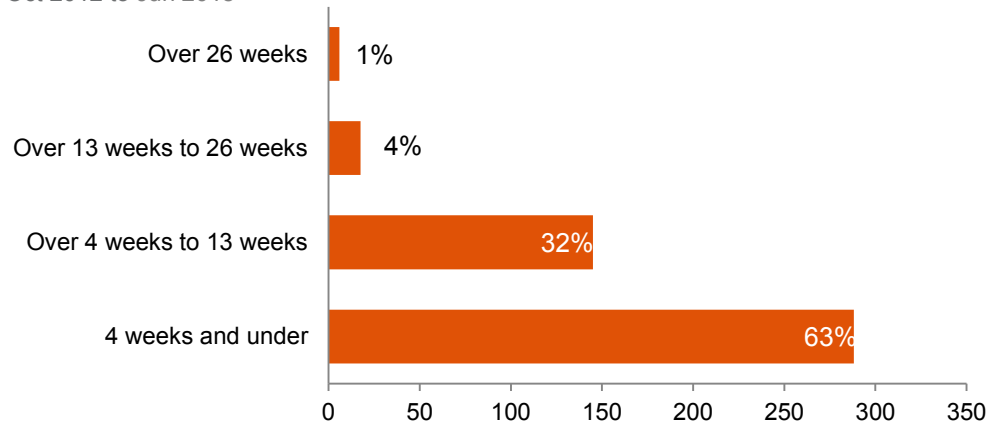


## 3.2. Jobseeker's Allowance: Benefit sanction durations – Experimental Statistics

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 Jun 2018



**95% of ended JSA sanctions lasted 13 weeks or less since October 2012. The average (median) JSA sanction lasted 28 days.**

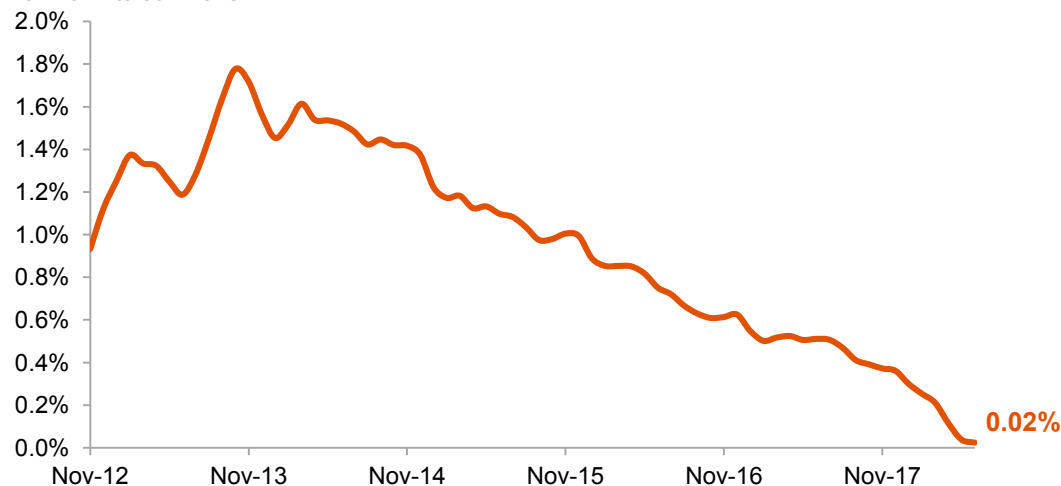
Since October 2012, 63% of all sanctions that ended lasted 4 weeks or less, a further 32% lasted between 5 and 13 weeks. 5% lasted over 13 weeks. Just over 61% of all decisions in the last three months were made on the referral reason groups Work Programme and Work-Focussed Interviews. The sanction for 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.

## 3.3. 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 Jun 2018



**In June 2018, 0.02% 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 1.78% in October 2013, in line with the decrease in JSA sanction decisions.

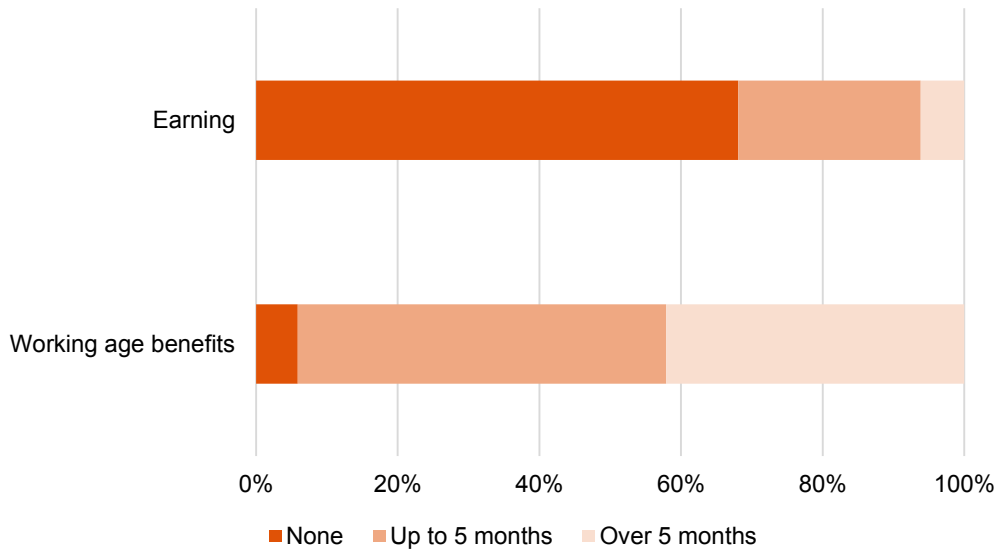
#### There should be no comparisons made across benefits

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



### 3.4. 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 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, 5.9% of claimants were not in receipt of any of the tracked benefits. 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

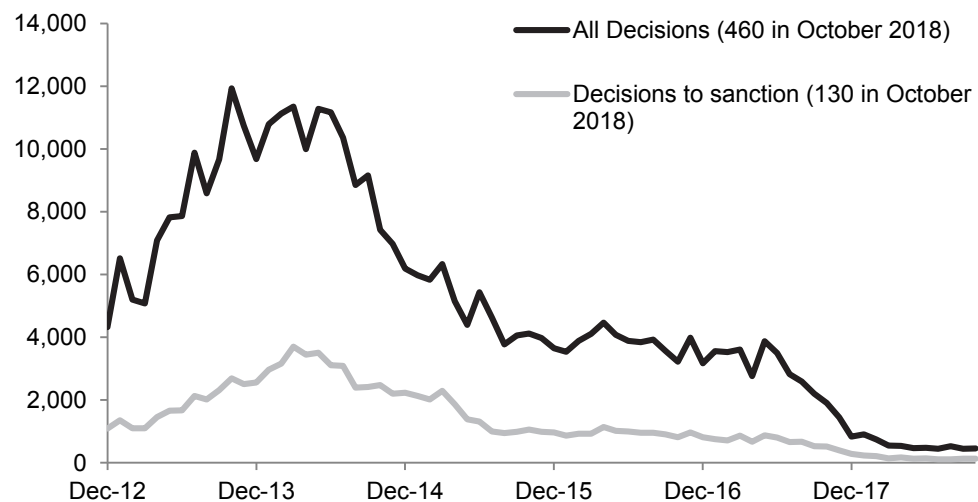
After receiving a benefit sanction decision, JSA claimants spent an average of 28 days out of the following 180 days earning, with around 2.5% of JSA claimants earning for the full 180 days after they had been sanctioned.

**Decisions made from 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 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

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

Sanction decisions: Dec 2012 to Oct 2018



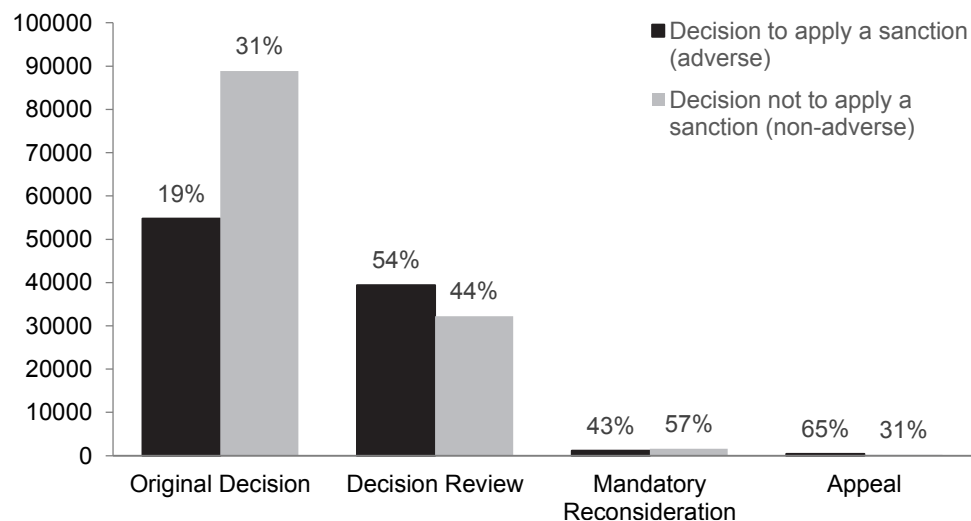
The total number of ESA sanction decisions has continued to fall sharply since May 2017, to 460 in October 2018. It is expected that as Universal Credit full service continues to roll out, and claimants move from ESA to UC, the ESA sanctions will continue to fall, in-line with the fall in the number 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, 82% 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 Oct 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: Nov 2017 to Oct 2018

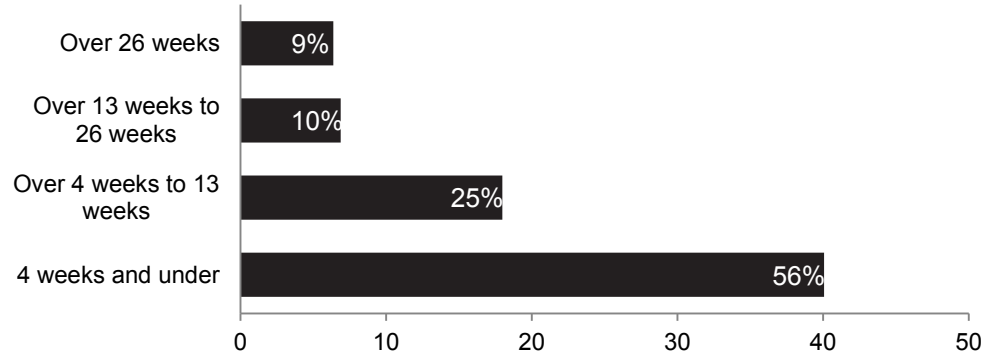
All decisions made by reason group	Latest Year (Thousands)	Latest Year (%)	Latest Quarter (Thousands)	Latest Quarter (%)
Failure to Participate in Work-Related Activity	6.5	83.6	1.2	82.1
Failure to Attend Mandatory Interview	1.3	16.4	0.3	18.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 4.2. 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 Jun 2018



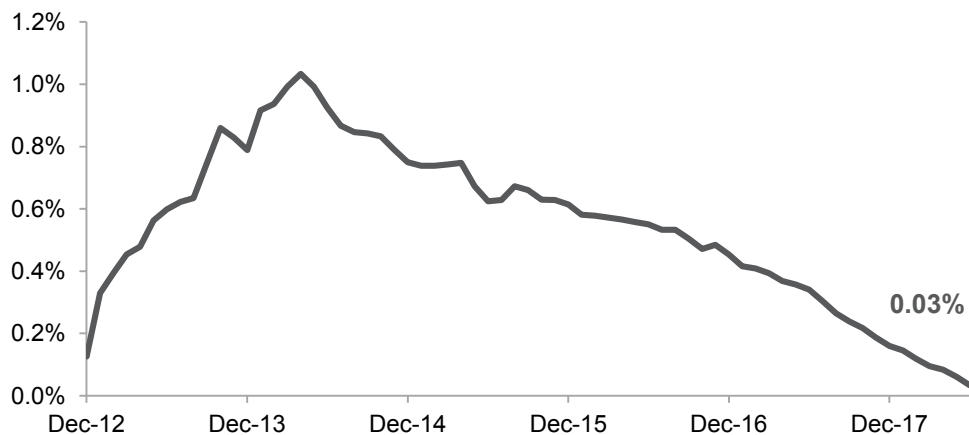
**More than four-fifths of ended ESA sanctions lasted 13 weeks or less since December 2012. The average (median) ESA sanction lasted 28 days.**

Since December 2012, over half 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.

## 4.3. 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 Jun 2018



**In June 2018, 0.03% of people in the ESA WRAG had a deduction taken from their personal allowance as a result of a sanction.**

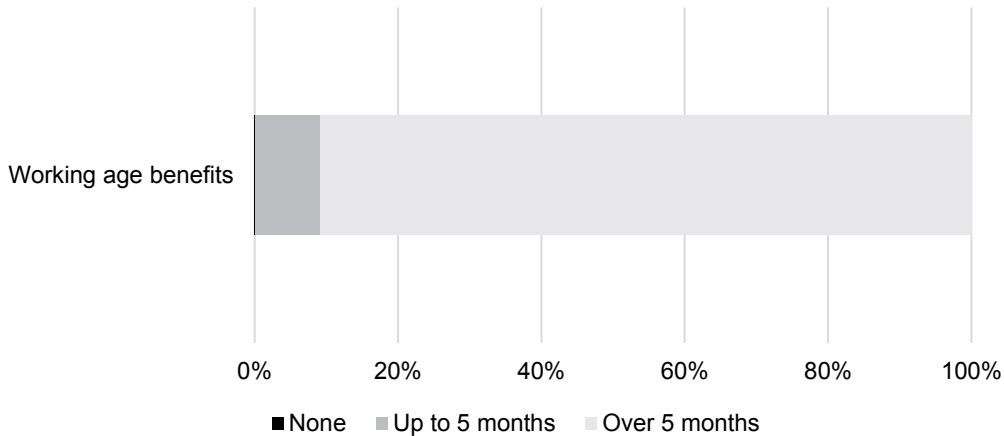
The experimental monthly rate of ESA WRAG claimants with a sanction deduction has fallen steadily from its peak of 1.03% in April 2014.

#### **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

## 4.4. 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 of 171 days out of the following 180 days in receipt of benefit (ESA, UC, IS, or JSA). On average, 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. Around 90.9% of claimants spent over 150 days (5 months) in receipt of benefit and 85.1% of claimants spent the full 180 days in receipt of benefit.

**Decisions made from 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 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>

## Known issues, changes and revisions

This release includes Experimental Statistics for the duration and rate of UC, JSA and ESA sanctions.

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. 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 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.

Information on the numbers of people who move into an earnings spell after they have released a sanction uses the same methodology as the Benefits Destinations but uses a different data source to match the sanction information on to. For further information please read <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-destinations-of-claimants-receiving-a-benefit-sanction-methodology>

## Contact information and feedback

For more information, please contact Tracy Hills at [tracy.hills@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.hills@dwp.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@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:stats-consultation@dwp.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.