

This summary contains experimental statistics on Universal Credit in Northern Ireland. Experimental statistics are new official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage. Statistics have been produced at individual claimant and household level.

Universal Credit is a new payment to help support households that are out of work or are on a low income. Eligibility for Universal Credit depends on a household's circumstances. Universal Credit was introduced in Northern Ireland on a phased geographical basis from 27 September 2017.

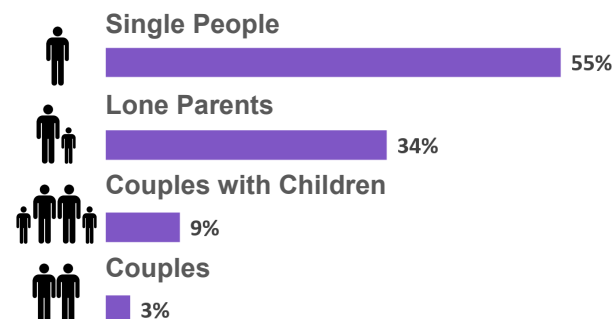
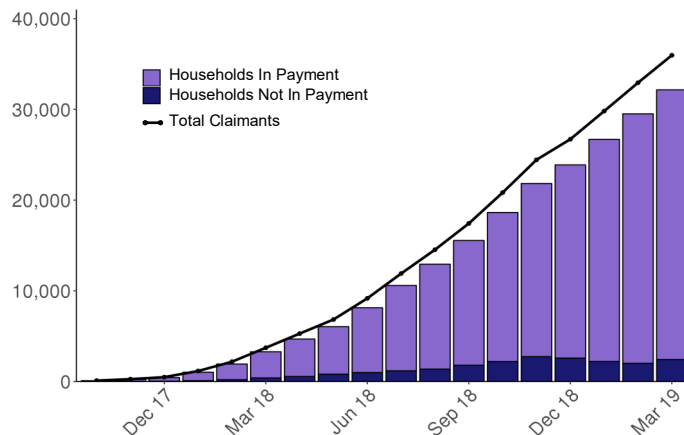
Main Stories

At 31 March 2019, 32,160 households (35,970 claimants) were on Universal Credit. The majority (29,720) of the households were in paid receipt of Universal Credit. The average amount of Universal Credit paid to the 29,720 households in payment was £590 per month. There were 2,440 households not in payment, most commonly because their monthly earnings exceeded the threshold for a Universal Credit award.

32,160 Households on Universal Credit At March 2019

29,720 Households in Payment At March 2019

Average Payment At March 2019



£590 per month

The number of households on Universal Credit rose from 29,510 in February 2019 to 32,160 in March 2019.

In March 2019 the majority of Universal Credit households in payment were single people (55%). 34% were lone parents.

The average amount of Universal Credit paid to the 29,720 households in payment was £590 per month. This is up £10 from February 2019.

At a glance

Page

What you need to know

Total Claims

3

Average monthly payment

4

Households receiving support for housing

5

Work conditionality regimes

6

Where claimants live

7

Lead Statisticians: Ben Davoll,

Emmet McNickle

ben.davoll@communities-ni.gov.uk

emmet.mcnicke@communities-ni.gov.uk

DFC Press Office:

press.office@communities-ni.gov.uk

Comments? Feedback is welcome

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/NIUniversalCreditStatistics/>

Published: 26 June 2019

Next edition 28 August 2019

This summary contains statistics on Universal Credit from its commencement on 27 September 2017 until the end of March 2019.

Universal Credit provides a single award per household based upon the circumstances of the household. Support for housing costs, children and childcare costs are integrated into Universal Credit. It also provides additions for disabled people and carers. Universal Credit replaces six existing benefits and tax credits.

The benefits and tax credits being replaced by Universal Credit:

- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

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.

Universal Credit payment arrangements differ between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In Great Britain, Universal Credit is paid once per month directly to the claimant, including any housing allowances. Northern Ireland flexibilities are processes put in place to help the transition to Universal Credit in Northern Ireland. They include more frequent payments (twice per month) and the facility for payment of rent direct to the landlord. Payment can also be split between members of a household.

This report contains four measures:

- **Claims** made counts the number of household claims submitted for Universal Credit.
- **Starts** on Universal Credit follow an initial interview where eligibility for Universal Credit is confirmed and members of a household accept their **Claimant Commitment**. Entitlement to Universal Credit must also have been calculated.
- **Claimants** on Universal Credit include all individual members of a household who have started and are still on Universal Credit at the end of the reported month. Some claimants will have their claim terminated either at the request of the individual or if their entitlement to Universal Credit ends.
- **Households** are counted as being on Universal Credit where a claimant or claimants within the household have been included within the count of claimants.

Statistics will be published quarterly. Supplementary tables accompanying this publication are available at <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/universal-credit-statistics>. Figures contained within this publication are subject to rounding unless otherwise stated. Figures are also the subject of disclosure controls where less than 10. Percentages shown are calculated using figures prior to rounding, and may not always sum to 100%.

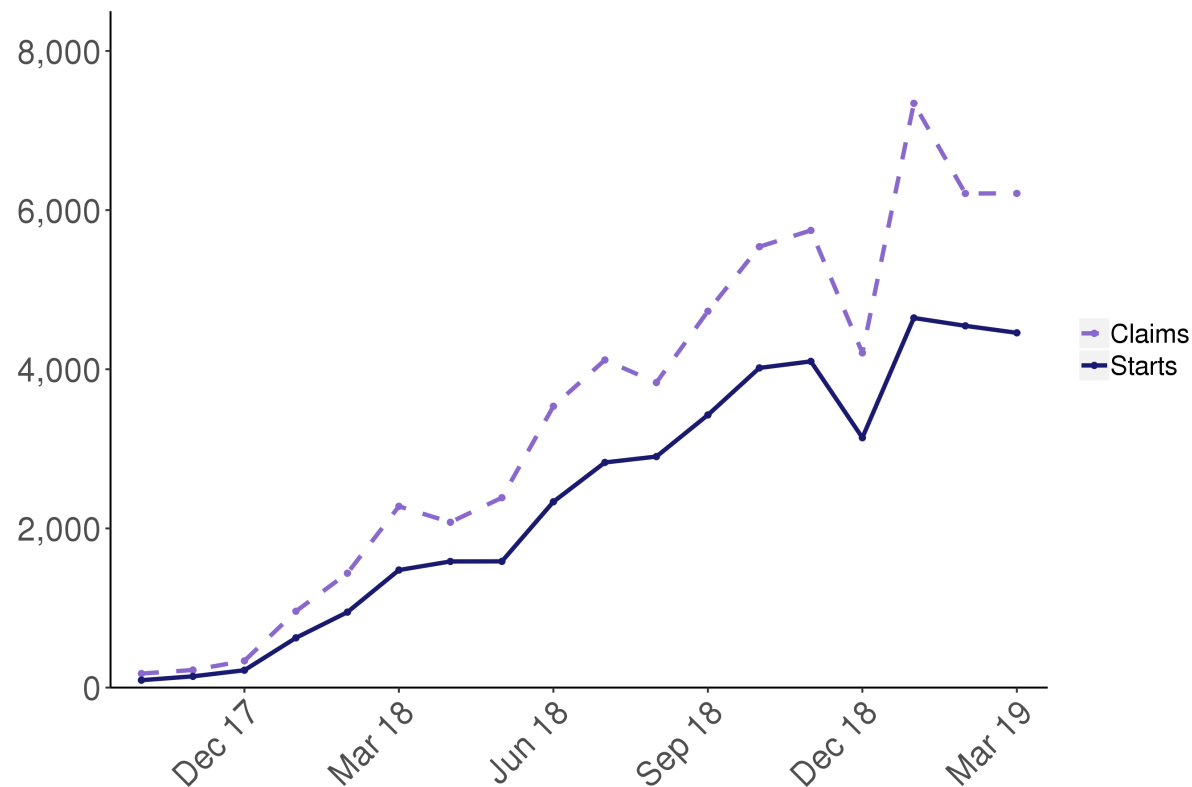
Claiming Universal Credit

How households claim Universal Credit

Households will usually make a **Claim** for Universal Credit online, during which initial verification will take place. The claim date is the date that a household completes this process and submits their claim. After making a claim, an initial interview will take place with the household, where the eligibility for Universal Credit will be confirmed and members of a household accept their **Claimant Commitment**. At this point, a household will be recorded as **Starting** Universal Credit provided entitlement is calculated. Not all households who make a claim for Universal Credit will go on to start. A household may not be eligible following assessment, the household may withdraw the claim or the household may not fulfil the claimant commitment requirements.

Total claims made have reached 61,340 since September 2017

New claims and starts per month up to March 2019



Universal Credit was introduced in Northern Ireland on a phased geographical basis starting with Limavady Jobs & Benefits Office on 27 September 2017 and concluding with Antrim and Ballymena Jobs & Benefits Offices on 5 December 2018 (for more detail see Where Universal Credit Claimants Live, [page seven](#)).

There has been a trend of steadily rising numbers of claims and starts as Universal Credit has rolled out across Northern Ireland.

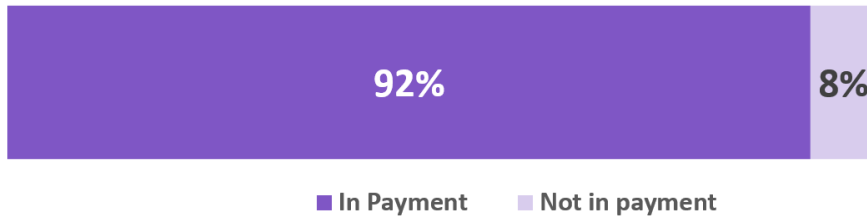
The total number of household claims to Universal Credit in March 2019 was 6,210 and the number of starts was 4,460. Since Universal Credit was introduced in September 2017, a total of 61,340 claims have been made in Northern Ireland up to March 2019. At March 2019 43,070 claims had gone on to start Universal Credit.

Caution should be exercised when comparing the number of claims and starts in a given month; the month a claim starts can be different to the month a claim is made. For example 1,500 of the 6,210 claims made in February 2019 went on to start in March 2019.

Households Receiving Universal Credit Payment

29,720 households on Universal Credit were in payment at 31 March 2019

Percentage of households on Universal Credit who were in payment, March 2019

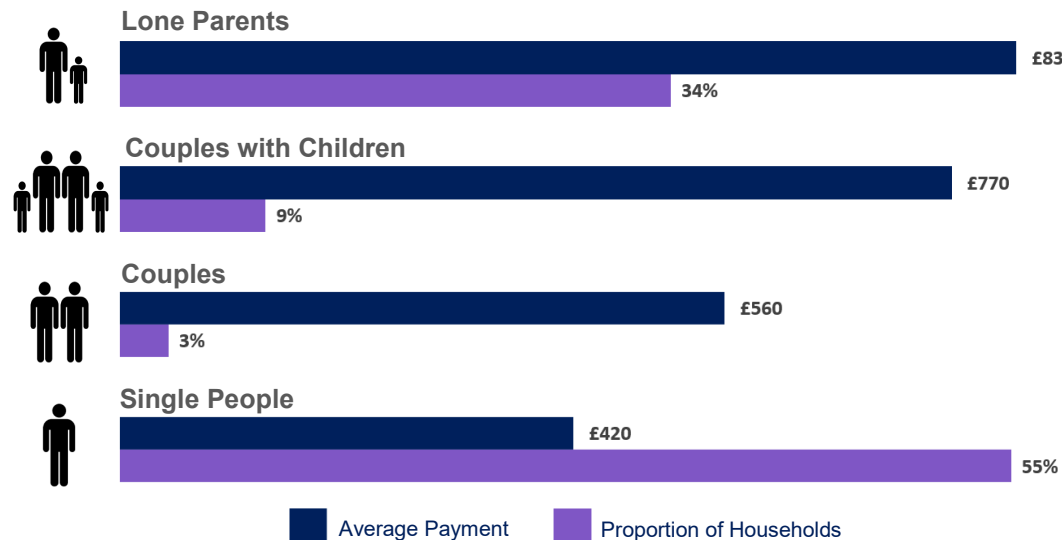


At 31 March 2019, 32,160 households were on Universal Credit. Of these households, 29,720 (92%) were in payment. The equivalent figure in February in Great Britain was 92%. Of the 2,440 households not in payment, 2,160 (89%) received a nil award due to earnings above the entitlement threshold. Further reasons for a nil award include income from other sources, or capital in excess of £16,000.

Households can remain on Universal Credit for up to six months without payment before their claim is closed.

The average Universal Credit household payment was £590 per month

Mean monthly amount of Universal Credit paid and proportion of households by family type, March 2019



During March 2019, the average amount (mean) of Universal Credit awarded to households in payment was £590 per month.

For households with children, higher average payments were a result of entitlement to support for one or more children, and a higher proportion with entitlement to support for housing. Lone parents received on average £830, whilst couples with children received £770.

In March 2019, 55% (16,310) of Universal Credit payments were to single people without children, while lone parents accounted for 34% (10,040) of Universal Credit payments. 9% (2,560) of payments were to couples with children and 3% (800) to couples without children.

Housing Support & Payments Direct to Landlord

Over half of all households receiving a payment of Universal Credit were entitled to support for housing

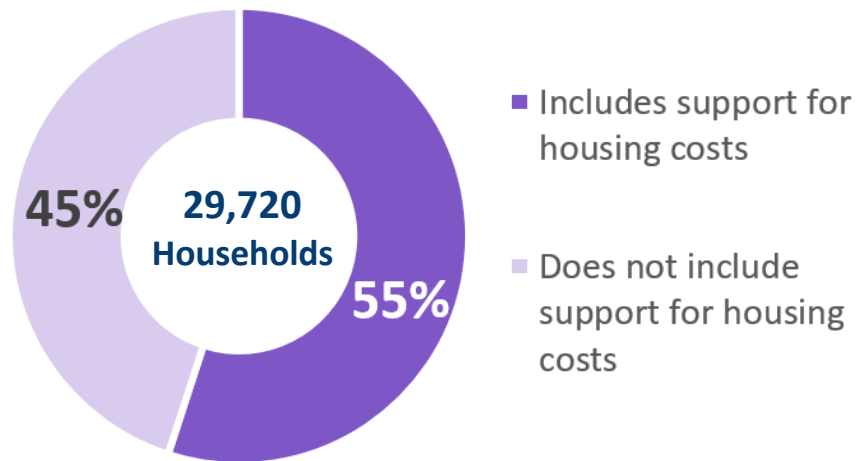
Universal Credit pays for different types of support required by the household, but in order to be entitled to this support certain conditions have to be met.

Support for housing helps households with costs such as rent or the interest charged on a mortgage. Over half (55%, 16,250) of households that received a payment of Universal Credit in March 2019 were entitled to support for housing.

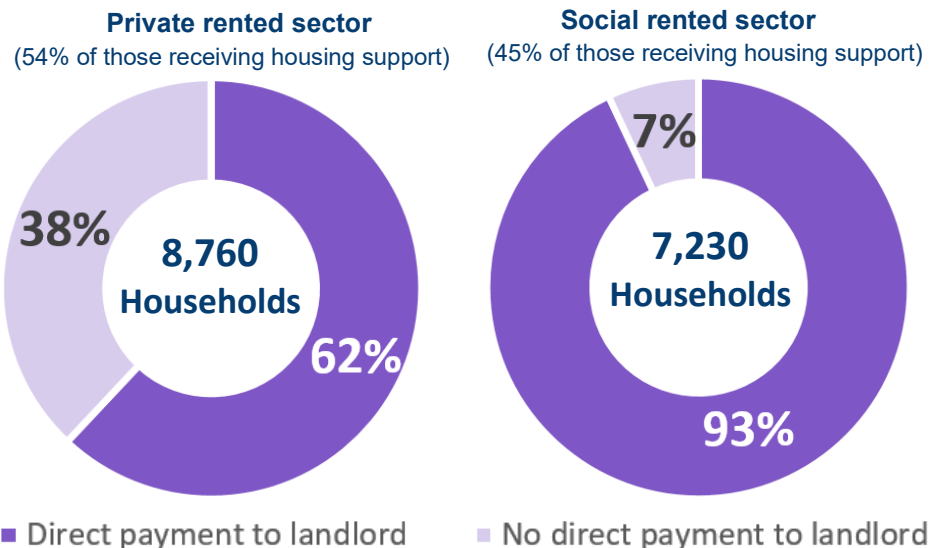
In March 2019, 45% (7,230) of households receiving a payment of Universal Credit with entitlement to support for housing were in the social rented sector, compared to 54% (8,760) in the private rented sector.

There were 2% of households categorised as 'other or unknown' for tenure. This included households in owner-occupied accommodation receiving support for mortgage interest.

Proportion of households receiving a payment of Universal Credit with entitlement to support for housing costs



Direct payments to landlords by tenure, March 2019



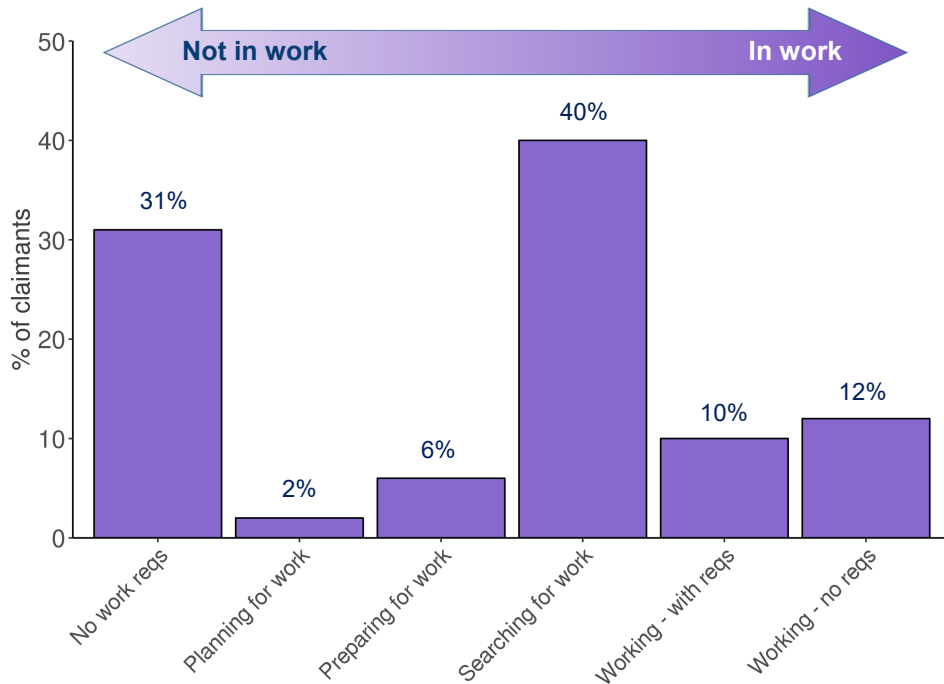
In Northern Ireland support for housing costs is made by direct payment to landlord, by default, where renting. This NI policy position differs from Great Britain where direct payments are made to the claimant by default.

In March 2019, 93% of households entitled to support for housing costs in the social rented sector had these paid directly to a landlord, compared to 62% in the private rented sector.

Claimants on Universal Credit

40% of claimants on Universal Credit were in the “Searching for work” conditionality regime

Claimants on Universal Credit by conditionality regime at March 2019



Of the 35,970 claimants on Universal Credit, 40% (14,460) were in the **Searching for Work** conditionality regime.

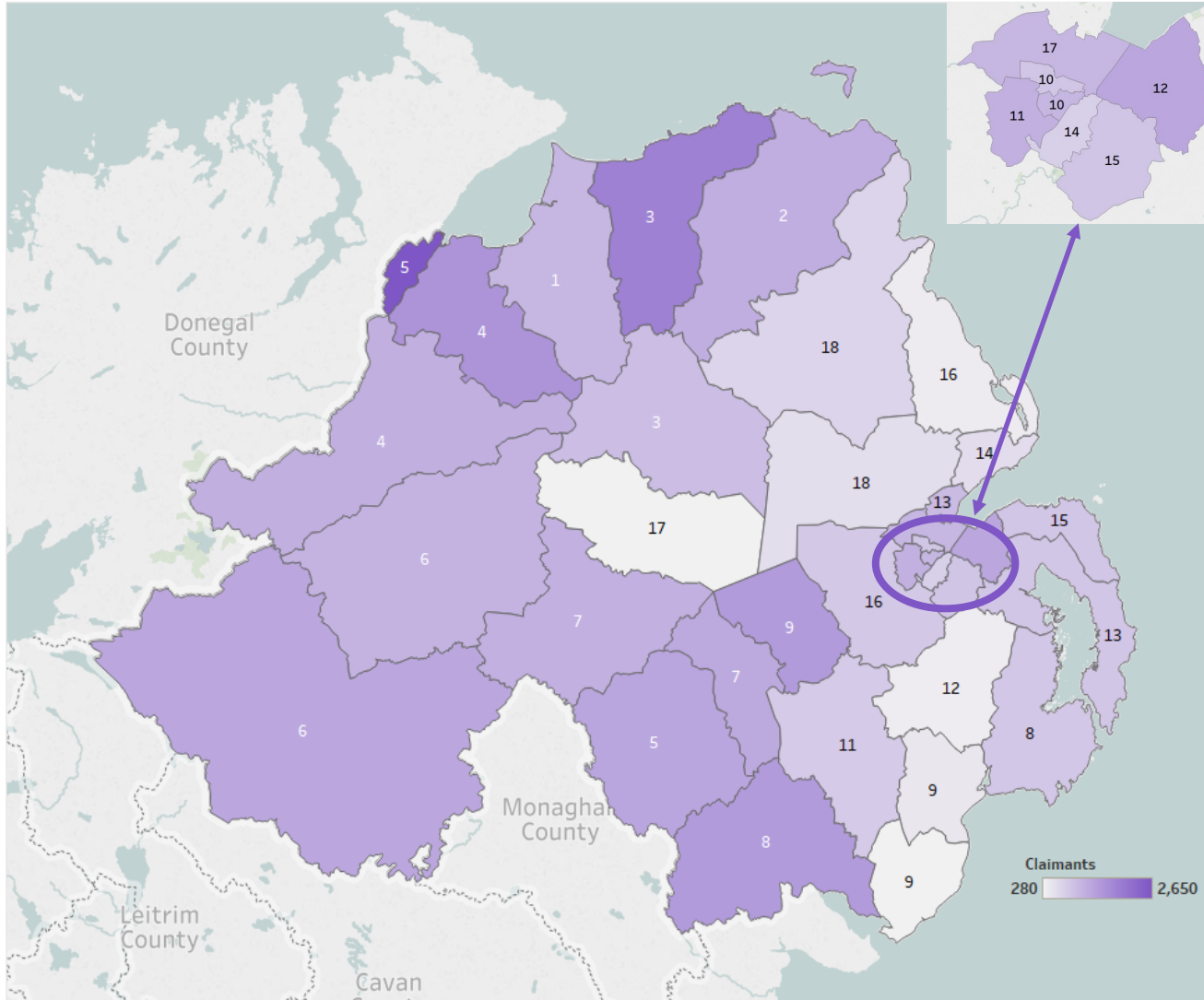
Conditionality regime specifies the category a claimant is in at the end of any given month. Conditionality refers to those work-related activities an eligible adult will have to carry out in order to retain eligibility for Universal Credit. Each eligible adult will fall into one of six conditionality regimes based on their capacity and circumstances. Different members of a household may be subject to the same or different requirements. As circumstances change claimants can also transition between different levels of conditionality.

Conditionality Regimes

No work requirements	Not expected to work at present. Health or caring responsibility prevents claimant from working or preparing for work.
Planning for work	Expected to work in the future. Lone parent/lead carer of child aged 1. Claimant required to attend periodic interviews to plan for their return to work.
Preparing for work	Expected to start preparing for future even with limited capability for work at the present time or parent of a child aged 2. The claimant is expected to take reasonable steps to prepare for working including Work Focused Interview.
Searching for work	Not working, or with very low earnings. Claimant is required to take action to secure work - or more/better paid work. The Work Coach supports them to plan their work search and preparation activity.
Working - with requirements	In work but could earn more, or not working but has a partner with low earnings.
Working - no requirements	Individual or household earnings over the level at which conditionality applies. Required to inform Department for Communities of changes of circumstances, particularly if at risk of decreasing earnings or losing job.

Where Universal Credit Claimants Live

The North & West, where rollout began, had the largest number of claimants on Universal Credit



The adjacent map shows claimants on Universal Credit by Jobs & Benefits Office (JBO) at March 2019.

The darker areas of the map are areas with higher numbers of Universal Credit claimants, while the lighter areas are the areas with fewer Universal Credit claimants.*

Roll Out Schedule

Key	Roll Out Date	JBO (Total Claimants)
1	27/09/2017	Limavady (1,090)
2	15/11/2017	Ballymoney (1,220)
3	13/12/2017	Magherafelt (1,000) & Coleraine (1,920)
4	17/01/2018	Strabane (1,200) & Lisnagelvin (1,610)
5	07/02/2018	Foyle (2,650) & Armagh (1,340)
6	21/02/2018	Omagh (1,140) & Enniskillen (1,330)
7	07/03/2018	Dungannon (1,190) & Portadown (1,300)
8	16/05/2018	Newry (1,510) and Downpatrick (860)
9	30/05/2018	Lurgan (1,510), Newcastle (430) & Kilkeel (280)
10	13/06/2018	Falls Rd (1,100) & Shankill Rd (870)
11	27/06/2018	Andersonstown (1,170) & Banbridge (810)
12	05/09/2018	Hollywood Rd (1,320) & Ballynahinch (350)
13	19/09/2018	Newtownabbey (1,030) & Newtownards (870)
14	03/10/2018	Shaftesbury Square (750) & Carrickfergus (560)
15	17/10/2018	Knockbreda (890) & Bangor (870)
16	31/10/2018	Lisburn (850) & Larne (360)
17	14/11/2018	North Belfast (1,090) & Cookstown (280)
18	05/12/2018	Ballymena (680) & Antrim (540)

*Additional geographical breakdowns are available within the supplementary tables that accompany this publication.

About these Statistics

These Experimental Statistics have been compiled using data from records of Universal Credit benefit claims held by the Department for Communities.

The methodology used and definitions of the statistics may be updated within subsequent releases, along with information on the impact of any changes to the time series already released.

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 (<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/NIUniversalCreditStatistics/>).

Figures contained within this publication are subject to rounding to the nearest 10 unless otherwise stated. Percentages shown are calculated using figures prior to rounding.

Roll out

Universal Credit was introduced to Great Britain in 2013 and began rolling out in Northern Ireland on 27 September 2017. Roll out for new claims in Northern Ireland completed on 5 December 2018. By 2023 all existing legacy claimants will have moved on to Universal Credit. Information on the rollout schedule can be found on [page seven](#).

Where to find out more

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/universal-credit>

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/communities/dfc-universal-credit-introduction.pdf>

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/universal-credit-customer-information>