

Take-Up Rates of Scottish Benefits: October 2022

October 2022

Introduction

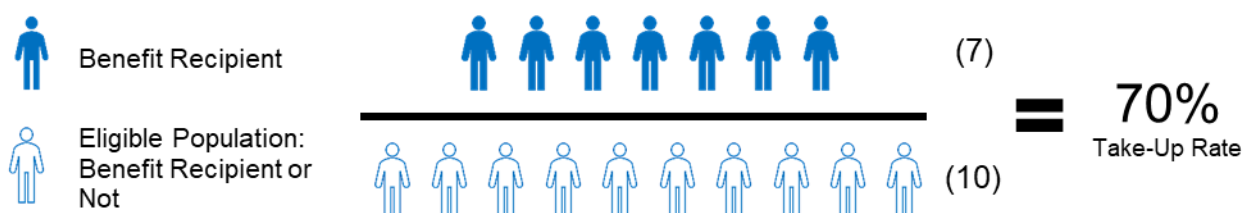
The [Social Security Scotland Charter](#) sets out what people should expect from Scotland's social security system. This includes working towards a better future by investing in the people of Scotland and making a positive difference to all our lives. As part of this the Scottish Government has committed to improving take-up, ensuring as many people as possible get what they are entitled to and making a particular effort to reach people who are most likely to be excluded.

This is a new, annual publication that contains our latest estimates of take-up of the Scottish benefits delivered by [Social Security Scotland](#), covering:

- Scottish Child Payment
- Best Start Grant
- Best Start Foods
- Young Carer Grant
- Job Start Payment
- Funeral Support Payment

What is take-up?

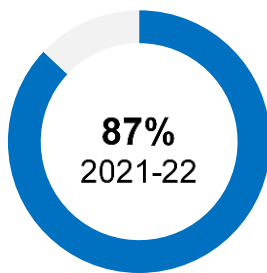
- A take-up rate is the percentage of people entitled to a benefit that actually receive it.
- Some people do not apply for benefits they are entitled to, this could be due to: social barriers (e.g. perceived stigma of applying for benefits), costly or complex access (e.g. complex application process), or a lack of information (e.g. people being unaware of available support).
- We calculate the take-up rate by dividing the number of recipients of a benefit by the number of people eligible for the benefit (whether they received the benefit or not).
- While the number of people receiving these benefits is known, the number of people eligible to claim these benefits has to be estimated. **This means the take-up rates in this publication are estimates only and contain a degree of uncertainty.**



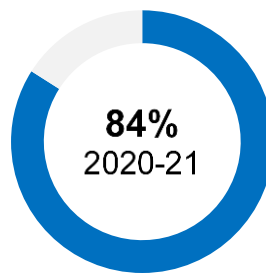
Estimates of Take-Up

Our estimates of take-up for the most recent financial year possible for each benefit are outlined below, with estimates for previous years included in Table 1 and Table 2.

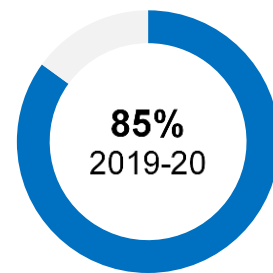
Scottish Child Payment



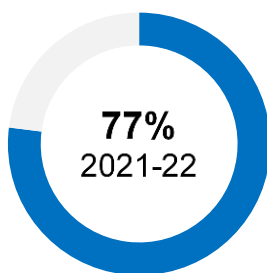
BSG: Pregnancy & Baby Payment



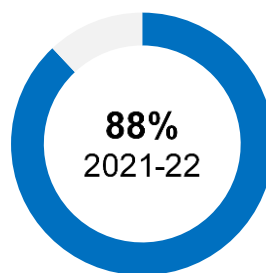
BSG: Early Learning Payment



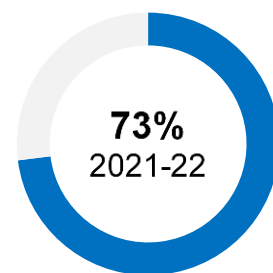
BSG: School Age Payment



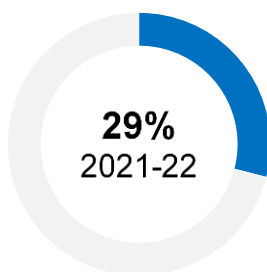
Best Start Foods



Young Carer Grant



Job Start Payment



Funeral Support Payment

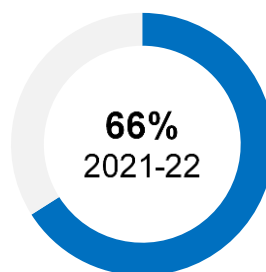


Table 1. Annual Estimates of Take-Up: Five Family Payments

Year	Scottish Child Payment	Best Start Grant			
		Pregnancy and Baby Payment	Early Learning Payment	School Age Payment	Best Start Foods
2019-20	..	83%	85%	73%	..
2020-21	..	84%	..	91%	74%
2021-22	87%	77%	88%

Table 2. Annual Estimates of Take-Up: Other

Year	Young Carer Grant	Job Start Payment	Funeral Support Payment
2019-20
2020-21	68%	30%	49%
2021-22	73%	29%	66%

Comparisons should not be made between the latest estimates of take-up published here and our estimates published in the second Benefit Take-Up Strategy last year. The main reasons for this are differences in the time period covered and changes in the methodology for estimating eligibility. This is discussed further in the Commentary section. However, Table 1 and Table 2 above can be used to understand how take-up rates have changed over time.

[Child Winter Heating Assistance](#) is paid automatically to children and young people who receive Child Disability Payment, Adult Disability Payment, Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment at a certain rate. Similarly, [Carer's Allowance Supplement](#) is paid automatically to people who receive Carer's Allowance.

Scottish Child Payment was first paid to clients in February 2021 so 2021-22 is the first full financial year that take-up can be estimated for.

The take-up rate for Best Start Grant: Early Learning Payment relates to children who turned two years old in 2019-20. Some people whose child turned two years old in 2020-21 could still apply for the benefit after our data cut-off period, due to the relatively long application window (18 months). Similarly, some people could still apply for Best Start Grant: Pregnancy and Baby Payment in 2021-22 after our data cut-off period. Our estimates only consider people whose opportunity to apply for a benefit has closed to avoid under-estimating the take-up rate. The estimate for Job Start Payment in 2020-21 covers September 2020 onwards as the benefit was launched in mid-August of that year.

Commentary

Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

The estimated take-up rates for Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods – the ‘Five Family Payments’ – are generally higher than the other Scottish benefits.

This could be because there are more opportunities to reach people eligible for the five family payments than the other Scottish benefits. For example, the Scottish Government’s interim evaluations of [Scottish Child Payment](#), [Best Start Grant](#) and [Best Start Foods](#) found clients learned about them through a variety of channels. Social Security Scotland proactively promotes the benefits through a range of online and offline channels. For example, five family payment leaflets are available in the Scottish Government’s baby box, were sent to parental support organisations, money advice services, healthcare practitioners and added to midwife information packs. Information is also sent to schools and nurseries via local authorities, encouraging them to share information on their channels. This helps to spread awareness through word of mouth, and is also complemented via online, print, radio and out of home media advertising as well as social media.

Clients are invited to make a combined application for all of the five family payments and their eligibility for each is then assessed. So clients may apply for one of the five family payments, which then leads them to apply for the others they were previously unaware of, increasing take-up.

There has been an increase in the estimated take-up rate for Best Start Foods from 2020-21 to 2021-22, up 14 percentage points to 88%. Some of this increase could be linked to the work Social Security Scotland has been carrying out with supermarkets in Scotland to raise awareness and encourage take-up of Best Start Foods, with a particular focus on explaining how to use the pre-paid card.

There was also a noticeable increase in the take-up rate for Best Start Grant: School Age Payment in 2020-21, to 91%. One possible explanation is more people seeking Government support during the Covid-19 pandemic, as seen with the rise in the number of applications for Universal Credit.

Young Carer Grant

More than seven in ten (73%) people estimated to be eligible for Young Carer Grant claimed the payment in 2021-22. This has risen slightly on the previous year. However, there is a greater degree of uncertainty when estimating the size of the eligible population for Young Carer Grant than other benefits, due to the small size of the eligible population and difficulties in collecting information about caring in survey

data. Therefore, relatively small differences in take-up rates over time should be treated with caution.

Job Start Payment

We estimate that less than a third (29%) of eligible young people took-up their entitlement to Job Start Payment in 2021-22. This is the lowest take-up rate we have estimated of any Scottish benefit and is broadly similar to the estimated take-up rate for 2020-21. An [evaluation](#) of the payment was published on 23rd September 2022 which highlights a number of possible reasons why take-up is low. These include a lack of awareness of the benefit and its eligibility rules, and otherwise eligible applications being rejected due to clients' inability to provide suitable evidence of job offers.

The evaluation findings summarise the following areas where changes could potentially improve take-up: a) raising awareness of Job Start Payment among young people and support organisations, b) making improvements to the application process including simplifying it, and c) considering adjustments to eligibility criteria. Work is already underway to address the issues highlighted in the evaluation, including making the application process easier and adjusting some of the eligibility criteria.

Funeral Support Payment

Funeral Support Payment was claimed for around two thirds (66%) of eligible deaths in 2021-22. The take-up rate has increased from an estimated 49% in the previous financial year (2020-21). Although the number of claims has remained fairly consistent between the two financial years, there were more eligible deaths in 2020-21 due to the economic impacts of the pandemic as more people become eligible for support. The increase in take-up between the two financial years could be partly influenced by increased promotional activity for the benefit. The Funeral Support Payment [evaluation](#) details a number of improvements that have been made to communications, such as advertising on radio to better reach the target population.

Comparison to the Second Benefit Take-Up Rate Strategy (published in October 2021)

Due to methodological improvements made this year comparisons should not be made between the take up figures in last year's publication and this one. However, Table 1 and Table 2 (page 3) can be used to understand changes in the take-up rate over time.

The methodology to estimate the take-up rate of the five family payments has been developed since the second Benefit Take-Up Strategy published in October 2021. Last year, the microsimulation model UKMOD was used to estimate eligibility in the

absence of eligibility data. However, we have changed our approach because published data on young children in families claiming Universal Credit or Child Tax Credits is now available.

The effect of this change is to increase take-up rates. For example, while our take-up rate estimate for Scottish Child Payment as of June 2021 was 77%, our new approach to estimating eligibility would have produced a take-up rate estimate of 85%.

We believe this development provides more robust estimates of take-up.

Future Developments

This publication includes our initial estimates of take-up for Young Carer Grant and Job Start Payment. We are continuing our work to develop methodologies to estimate take-up rates for the other Scottish benefits not yet reported on (e.g. Adult Disability Payment), which have only recently launched or will be launched in the coming years. When new take-up rates can be produced, they will be subject to the roll-out stage and availability of data on recipients and the eligible population required to estimate take-up.

Take-Up Strategy Progress Update

Ensuring that families can access all of the Scottish Social Security support to which they are entitled is a legal duty and fundamental priority of the Scottish Government. The [second Benefit Take-up Strategy](#), published in October 2021, sets out how the Scottish Government is working to ensure people can access the support they are entitled to, and is built around five core principles.

1. Prioritising person-centred approaches
2. Communicating and engaging effectively
3. Bringing services to people
4. Encouraging cross-system collaboration
5. Continuously learning and improving

At the heart of the second Strategy is the recognition that benefit take-up is part of a bigger picture - supporting a holistic Scottish Government approach to maximising incomes. This underpins the key commitments of tackling poverty and supporting recovery from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and more recently the cost of living crisis.

Since the publication of the last Strategy, the following actions have been taken to maximise the take-up of Scottish benefits, delivering against each of the principles:

Principle 1: Prioritise person-centred approaches

- The Scottish Government has committed £20.4m over the next four years in the Social Security Independent Advocacy Service, which launched in January 2022. The service is free and supports disabled people to access and apply for Social Security Scotland assistance. The service has provided support to over 200 clients since it was launched.
- Stigma has been identified as one of the key barriers to the take-up of benefits. The Scottish Government has a rights-based approach to social security – working to change the narrative, challenging negative perceptions around benefit receipt, and encouraging friends and family to talk and share knowledge about services and support available. User research means we better understand how to tackle stigma, and ensures that Scotland’s social security system is designed with input from the people who will use it. To date, User Researchers have spoken to more than 2,000 people about their experiences in applying for and receiving benefits. Their experiences are central to tackling stigma and influence what we do, for example: the design of the application process and application forms, communications material, web content, operational guidance for staff, and decision letters.

- The Scottish Government is delivering on the Programme for Government commitment to explore ways to automate payment for devolved social security benefits. Subject to parliamentary approval, from 14 November the Scottish Government will introduce automatic awards of Best Start Grant Early Learning Payment and School Age Payment to eligible families in receipt of Scottish Child Payment, meaning people will not need to apply if they receive Scottish Child Payment, which could help improve take-up.

Principle 2: Communicate and engage effectively

- Work on inclusive communication continues. We know that people who are eligible to receive disability benefits are more likely to have a communication disability or experience communication disadvantage than the general population.
- Scottish benefits are being promoted through a number of marketing campaigns:
 - Financial support marketing campaign (directing people to a [bespoke financial wellbeing support page](#) (no longer active)) supporting, empowering and offering opportunities to people who are newly financially vulnerable, from 29 November 2021 to 31 March 2022.
 - Social Security Scotland ran 12 marketing campaigns across a range of channels, including TV, radio, print, online and digital advertising, to raise awareness of our benefits and encourage people to apply.
 - To support the national launch of Child Disability Payment in November 2021 and Adult Disability Payment in 2022, Social Security Scotland ran paid-for marketing campaigns across radio, print, digital and out of home advertising, created resources including factsheets, posters and leaflets which were shared with stakeholders.
 - A multi-media marketing campaign is running from 28 September to 22 November 2022 to encourage people to find out about all the support available during the current cost of living crisis and improve take-up.
- To maximise awareness and promote take up of Adult Disability Payment and Child Disability Payment, Social Security Scotland delivered 110 engagement events with over 6,500 stakeholders signing up to attend.
- To maximise take-up of Funeral Support Payment, Social Security Scotland continuously promotes the benefit through social media channels, radio, newsletters and newspaper articles to raise awareness. A week of promotional activity at the start of December has been organised to tie in with National Grief Awareness Week, and awareness sessions will be held for funeral directors to provide clarity and guidance on how the payment operates to help improve take-up.
- Social Security Scotland's National Engagement Team have worked with National Records of Scotland to ensure information on Funeral Support Payment is shared with Registrars. They now have access to Funeral Support

Payment materials to help initiate and support conversations with clients who may be eligible for Funeral Support Payment.

- During Baby Loss Awareness week, resources were proactively promoted highlighting financial support available to bereaved parents on the Social Security Scotland website and social media channels, which will be further shared via stakeholder newsletters. The Scottish Government has also reached out to relevant stakeholders encouraging them to share our resources on financial support available via their own channels and networks.

Principle 3: Bring services to people

- The local delivery service is available across the country. This provides people with support from trained advisers in their local community and includes face to face support to understand eligibility to benefits, and to complete and submit application forms. By October this year the team had supported more than 18,000 appointments since the launch of the service in July 2021.
- The Scottish Government has continued to invest in advice in accessible settings to maximise income and tackle poverty. This includes expanding the Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships trial into a further 30 GP practices in remote, rural, and island communities through investment of an additional £600,000. This investment brings the total commitment to £3.5 million over three years to place welfare rights advisors in up to 180 practices in Scotland's most deprived areas.
- Social Security Scotland ensure information is in the places and networks people are already using and visiting, for example, the five family payments leaflet included in the baby box was updated to include information about Child Disability Payment.
- In partnership with supermarket retailer ASDA, Social Security Scotland has delivered seven in-store engagement events to raise awareness of Best Start Foods and how to apply for and use the card, reaching more than 2,100 people. This activity was complemented with posters and in-store radio adverts across all Scottish stores. In addition, the Best Start Foods logo and link to online application was included on milk cartons and Del Monte's frozen fruit and vegetables across Iceland's Scottish stores, posters were displayed at the tills of Scotmid stores and Coop shared digital advertising across their social media feeds.

Principle 4: Encourage cross-system collaboration

- To meet the Scottish Government's commitment to provide clients with effective referrals to independent advice providers and other support organisations, a multi-disciplinary project team, steering group, and three working groups have been resourced. This work will explore options to

develop robust signposting and referral arrangements with a range of organisations across Scotland – piloting approaches with key partners in 2023.

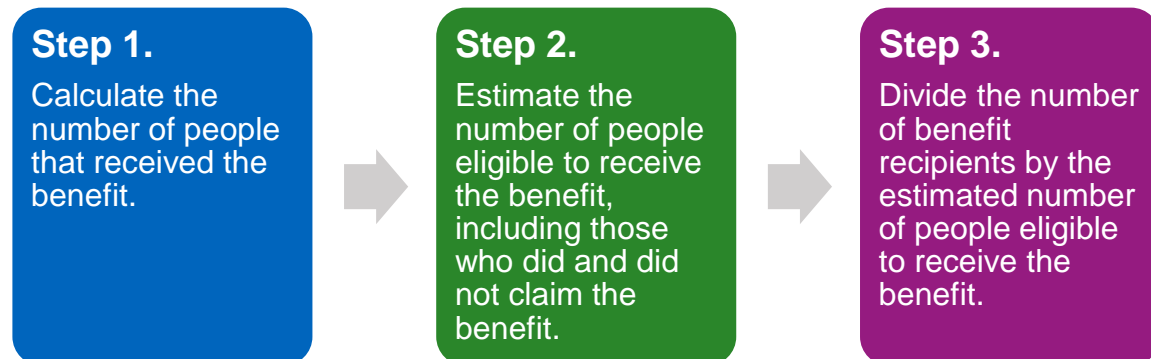
- The Scottish Government is dedicated to exploring opportunities to automate social security payments, and to ensure we put in place the appropriate mechanisms to maximise take-up. Across all of the devolved benefits, the Scottish Government is committed to ensuring we minimise as far as possible any burden on clients or barriers to access. As part of their remit, the above mentioned multi-disciplinary project team and groups will be exploring the potential automation of processes and payments across our system.
- As part of the commitment to exploring automation and remove barriers to accessing benefits and services, the Scottish Government has undertaken a joint discovery exercise with local authorities exploring options for sharing data. A number of technically feasible recommendations that align with Social Security Scotland policy and with local authority needs have been made.

Principle 5: Continuously learn and improve

- With a renewed focus on hard to reach and seldom heard groups, as well as equalities groups, the Scottish Government is working to ensure people from all walks of life can access the support they are entitled to through their new Scottish social security system.
- Information about Scottish social security benefits is included in the welcome packs supporting refugees, factsheets are proactively being translated into community languages, adding Ukrainian this year, and we are exploring collaboration with community radio to translate adverts to be shared across local radio shows.
- The Scottish Government has published evaluations of Job Start Payment and Funeral Support Payment, and is already using the findings to help improve what we do. We have been proactively working with work coaches across DWP's Jobcentre network in Scotland, providing promotional materials to support young people they are working with.

Methodology

There are three steps to estimating take-up rates, summarised below.



Step 1. All benefits

- Published data or monitoring information requested from Social Security Scotland is used to calculate the number of recipients for each benefit.

Step 2. Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

- Data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on the number of young children in families claiming Universal Credit or Tax Credits is used to calculate the proportion of young children these Scottish benefits can be claimed for.
- This proportion is then multiplied by the total number of births or children in the specific age range for each of these Scottish benefits. This produces our estimate of the number of children these benefits can be claimed for.
- Adjustments are made for the Best Start Foods income thresholds and people flowing into eligibility over the application period for Early Learning Payment and School Age Payment.

Step 2. Young Carer Grant

- Data from the Scottish Surveys Core Questions pooled over four years to 2019 is used to estimate the proportion of 16 to 18 year olds providing at least 16 hours of unpaid care per week.
- This is multiplied by the number of people aged 16 to 18, to estimate the number of young people eligible to claim the benefit.
- Young carers who claim Carer's Allowance or provide care to someone not in receipt of a qualifying disability benefit are subtracted from the estimate of the eligible population, as they are not eligible for the benefit.

Step 2. Job Start Payment

- DWP provided aggregated estimates of the number of Universal Credit claimants living in Scotland aged 16 to 24, who had no earned income (according to HMRC earnings data) for a period of at least six months prior to receiving some income from employment. We believe this provides the best available estimate for the number of people eligible for the Job Start Payment.

Step 2. Funeral Support Payment

- The microsimulation model UKMOD is used to estimate the proportion of the population in receipt of a qualifying reserved benefit for Funeral Support Payment.
- This proportion is then multiplied by the total number of deaths to estimate the number of people eligible to claim Funeral Support Payment.

Step 3. All benefits

- Divide the number of benefit recipients by our estimate of the eligible population to calculate the take-up rate.

Further Information

Further information about these benefits and how to apply can be found on the Scottish Government's website:

- [Scottish Child Payment](#)
- [Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods](#)
- [Funeral Support Payment](#)
- [Job Start Payment](#)
- [Young Carer Grant](#)

Interim evaluations of these benefits have been [published](#) by the Scottish Government. Social Security Scotland also [publish statistics](#) about the number of applications and payments made for these benefits.

The DWP publish information on the number of young children in families claiming Universal Credit on [StatXplore](#). These statistics are available from June 2020; prior to this, we use bespoke monitoring information shared with us by the DWP. HMRC publish similar information for [Tax Credits](#).

The aggregated estimates provided by DWP for estimating take-up of Job Start Payment have some caveats, including:

- The estimates exclude self-employed people and those employed by small businesses that are not enrolled on RTI.
- The estimates only count people the first time they meet the specified criteria. Whilst people can become eligible more than once, a person cannot reapply for Job Start Payment within two years of receiving the benefit. Therefore we do not consider this to be an issue.

[UKMOD](#) is maintained, developed and managed by the Centre for Microsimulation and Policy Analysis at the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), University of Essex. The results and their interpretation are the Scottish Government's sole responsibility.

Any questions about this publication can sent by email to the Scottish Government's Central Enquiry Unit mailbox (ceu@gov.scot), addressed to:

Social Security Policy Analysis and Modelling Branch
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Communities Analysis Division
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