

## EQUALITY, POVERTY AND SOCIAL SECURITY

# Universal Credit Scottish choices – management information to end March 2020

## Introduction

The figures in this report present management information on the number of Universal Credit (UC) recipients in Scotland who were given, and who took up, the UC Scottish choices.

UC Scottish choices give recipients of UC in Scotland a choice to have their UC award paid either monthly or twice monthly, and have the housing costs in their award of UC paid direct to their landlord. A person can make just one or both choices, depending on their circumstances.

The UC Scottish choices were introduced on 4 October 2017 for people making a new UC claim in full service areas. On 31 January 2018 they were extended to everyone receiving UC in full service areas, including people transferring from live to full service. As of April 2019, all live service claimants have been moved to the full service system. This publication covers the period from September 2019 to March 2020, including data on new claims and existing claims, but no further data on live to full service transfer.

This report presents figures on the number and type of UC Scottish choice offers by Local Authority. These values are cumulative from June 2018 only (see [Background](#) for more information).

This publication covers up to the end of March 2020 and therefore spans the time period when the Covid-19 pandemic began in Scotland, as the first case was confirmed on 1 March 2020. While the pandemic led to large increases in claims for UC in March, any impact of this will not be seen in the UC Scottish Choices data until April due to the process involved between a person making a claim for UC and them then being offered the UC Scottish Choices (see [Background](#) for more information on the process).

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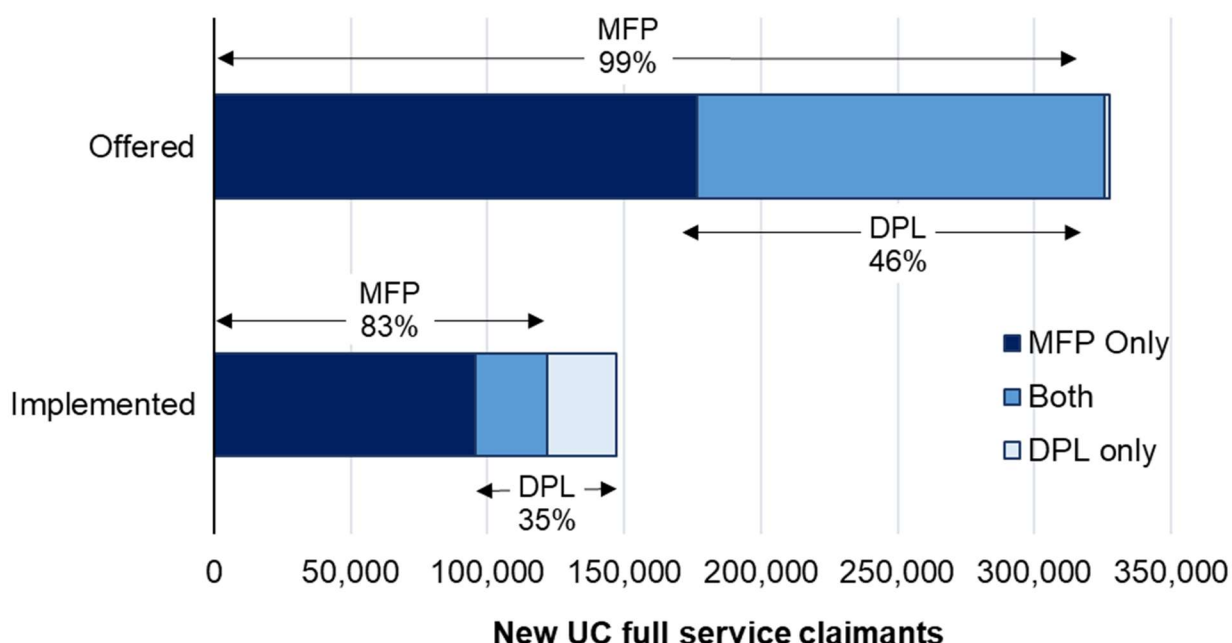
## Key Points

- Since October 2017, a total of 147,000 **new** claimants who were offered have taken up one or both choices.
- The rate of **new** UC full service claimants who took up at least one of the UC Scottish choices offered to them was 45 per cent in March 2020. This rate has decreased slightly over the last year, from 47 per cent in March 2019.
- In total since October 2017, 168,030 people have taken up one or two choices, either with or without an offer (this includes **new**, **existing** and **live to full transfer** claimants).
- Of those people 77 per cent (129,600 people) have taken up more frequent payments (MFP) with or without an offer and 40 per cent (66,600 people) have taken up direct payment to landlords with or without an offer.
- 24 per cent (30,640 people) of those who implemented MFP have chosen to revert back to monthly payments by end March 2020. 16 per cent (10,510 people) of those who implemented DPL have chosen to revert back to receiving their UC payment instead of it going direct to landlords.

## UC Scottish choices offers – new UC full service

- By end March 2020, 327,630 new UC full service claimants had been offered one or both UC Scottish choices since October 2017.
- Of those offered UC Scottish choices 99 per cent (325,400 people) have been offered more frequent payments (MFP) [**Table 1, Chart 1**].
- Of those offered UC Scottish choices 46 per cent (150,940 people) were offered direct payment to landlords (DPL) [**Table 1, Chart 1**].
- 176,690 people (54 per cent) received an offer of MFP only, 2,230 (1 per cent) received an offer of DPL only and 148,710 (45 per cent) received offers of both MFP and DPL [**Table 1, Chart 1**].
- Over twice as many offers included an offer of MFP than an offer of DPL [**Chart 1**]. This is because it is more common for individuals to be ineligible for the DPL offer, either because they do not receive the housing element of UC or they have an Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA) in place ([**Summary Panel 1**], see Background).

**Chart 1: Cumulative number of new UC full service claimants offered UC Scottish choices since introduction in October 2017, by type of choice and implementation (as at end March 2020)**



## UC Scottish choices implementations – new UC full service

- Of those people given one or two offers for UC Scottish choices, 45 per cent (147,000 people) accepted an offer, as at March 2020 [Table 1].
- Of those people offered MFP, 37 per cent (121,750 people) accepted an offer of MFP; of which 95,520 chose MFP only and 26,230 chose both choices [Table 1, Chart 1].
- Of those people offered DPL, 34 per cent (51,480 people) chose to implement DPL; of which 25,250 chose DPL only and 26,230 chose both choices [Table 1, Chart 1].

**Table 1: Cumulative number of new UC full service claimants offered UC Scottish choices, by type of choice and implementation**

|   | As at end Sep 2019 | As at end Oct 2019 | As at end Nov 2019 | As at end Dec 2019 | As at end Jan 2020 | As at end Feb 2020 | As at end Mar 2020 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>No. given one or two offers:</b>     | <b>240,870</b>     | <b>256,370</b>     | <b>269,450</b>     | <b>284,710</b>     | <b>296,690</b>     | <b>311,430</b>     | <b>327,630</b>     |
| Offer of MFP only                       | 129,210            | 137,550            | 144,480            | 152,830            | 159,210            | 167,520            | 176,690            |
| Offer of DPL only                       | 1,600              | 1,710              | 1,870              | 1,950              | 2,060              | 2,110              | 2,230              |
| Offer of both                           | 110,060            | 117,110            | 123,100            | 129,930            | 135,420            | 141,800            | 148,710            |
| <b>No. accepting one or two offers:</b> | <b>111,150</b>     | <b>117,570</b>     | <b>122,730</b>     | <b>128,220</b>     | <b>134,580</b>     | <b>140,070</b>     | <b>147,000</b>     |
| Implemented MFP only                    | 71,680             | 75,880             | 79,240             | 82,780             | 87,050             | 90,720             | 95,520             |
| Implemented DPL only                    | 18,700             | 19,900             | 20,920             | 21,970             | 23,060             | 23,970             | 25,250             |
| Implemented both                        | 20,770             | 21,790             | 22,570             | 23,470             | 24,470             | 25,380             | 26,230             |
| <b>% given an offer who accept:</b>     | <b>46%</b>         | <b>46%</b>         | <b>46%</b>         | <b>45%</b>         | <b>45%</b>         | <b>45%</b>         | <b>45%</b>         |
| Offer of MFP                            | 39%                | 38%                | 38%                | 38%                | 38%                | 38%                | 37%                |
| Offer of DPL                            | 35%                | 35%                | 35%                | 34%                | 35%                | 34%                | 34%                |

## UC Scottish choices implemented outwith offer

New UC claimants in full service areas are able to request the choices outwith a formal offer being made.

- In total, as at end March 2020, 18,490 new UC claimants have had one or both of the choices implemented via a request, with 25 percent (4,580 people) requesting MFP only, 67 per cent (12,310 people) requesting DPL only and 9 per cent (1,600 people) requesting both **[Table 2]**.

From 31 January 2018 the UC Scottish choices were also opened up to existing UC full service claimants. Existing claimants were not formally 'offered' the choices, but were able to request the choices.

- To end March 2020 there were 1,740 existing UC full service claimants who had a choice implemented via a request, 52 per cent (910 people) for MFP only, 32 per cent (550 people) for DPL only, and 16 per cent (280 people) for both **[Table 2]**.

**Table 2: Cumulative number of claimants requesting UC Scottish choices outwith an offer, by claimant type**

|   | As at end Sep 2019 | As at end Oct 2019 | As at end Nov 2019 | As at end Dec 2019 | As at end Jan 2020 | As at end Feb 2020 | As at end Mar 2020 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Total new full service claimants</b>                 | <b>13,280</b>      | <b>14,220</b>      | <b>15,130</b>      | <b>15,750</b>      | <b>16,620</b>      | <b>17,550</b>      | <b>18,490</b>      |
| New claimants - received MFP only                       | 3,360              | 3,560              | 3,740              | 3,890              | 4,080              | 4,320              | 4,580              |
| New claimants - received DPL only                       | 8,700              | 9,370              | 10,030             | 10,460             | 11,060             | 11,680             | 12,310             |
| New claimants - received both                           | 1,220              | 1,290              | 1,360              | 1,400              | 1,480              | 1,550              | 1,600              |
| <b>Total Live to Full service claimants<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>800</b>         | <b>800</b>         | <b>800</b>         | <b>800</b>         | <b>800</b>         | <b>800</b>         | <b>800</b>         |
| Live to full - received MFP only                        | 420                | 420                | 420                | 420                | 420                | 420                | 420                |
| Live to full - received DPL only                        | 320                | 320                | 320                | 320                | 320                | 320                | 320                |
| Live to full - received both                            | 60                 | 60                 | 60                 | 60                 | 60                 | 60                 | 60                 |
| <b>Total existing claimants</b>                         | <b>1,620</b>       | <b>1,650</b>       | <b>1,670</b>       | <b>1,680</b>       | <b>1,700</b>       | <b>1,730</b>       | <b>1,740</b>       |
| Existing claimants - received MFP only                  | 850                | 870                | 870                | 880                | 890                | 900                | 910                |
| Existing claimants - received DPL only                  | 530                | 530                | 540                | 540                | 540                | 550                | 550                |
| Existing claimants - received both                      | 240                | 250                | 260                | 260                | 270                | 280                | 280                |
| <b>Total claimants outwith an offer</b>                 | <b>15,700</b>      | <b>16,670</b>      | <b>17,600</b>      | <b>18,230</b>      | <b>19,120</b>      | <b>20,080</b>      | <b>21,030</b>      |

<sup>1</sup> The UC live system was closed to new applicants in January 2018. As of April 2019 all live service claimants have been moved to the full service system.

## UC Scottish choices – all implementations by end March 2020

Since UC Scottish choices was introduced in October 2017, 168,030 people have taken up one or two choices. This includes new claimants, either with or without an offer, those transferring from Live to Full Service, and existing UC claimants who have requested the choices.

Of those people who have implemented a UC Scottish choice, 77 per cent (129,600 people) have taken up MFP, with or without an offer, and 40 per cent (66,600 people) have taken up DPL, with or without an offer.

The majority of implementations were through new full service claimants accepting an offer (87 per cent) or outwith an offer (11 per cent), with only one per cent coming from existing claimants and less than 1 per cent from Live to Full service transfers.

Some claimants, after choosing to implement a UC Scottish choice, decided to revert back to the standard method of receiving UC. By end March 2020, 24 per cent (30,640 people) of those who had chosen MFP made the choice to revert back to receiving UC once a month. For those who chose DPL, 16 per cent (10,510 people) reverted back to having the payment made to them rather than going direct to their landlord.

**Table 3: Cumulative number of claimants implementing UC Scottish choices, by implementation type, and reverting back, by end March 2020**

|  | MFP            | DPL           | MFP or DPL or both | Percentage by implementation type |
|--|----------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| New full service claimants accepting offer                           | 121,750        | 51,480        | <b>147,000</b>     | <b>87%</b>                        |
| New full service claimants outwith offer                             | 6,180          | 13,910        | <b>18,490</b>      | <b>11%</b>                        |
| Live to Full service claimants <sup>1</sup>                          | 480            | 380           | <b>800</b>         | <b>0%</b>                         |
| Existing claimants outwith offer                                     | 1,190          | 830           | <b>1,740</b>       | <b>1%</b>                         |
| <b>Total claimants implementing UC Scottish choices</b>              | <b>129,600</b> | <b>66,600</b> | <b>168,030</b>     |                                   |
| <b>Percentage by type of choice</b>                                  | <b>77%</b>     | <b>40%</b>    |                    |                                   |
| No. claimants choosing to revert back to standard UC payment methods | 30,640         | 10,510        |                    |                                   |
| Percentage reverting back  | 24%            | 16%           |                    |                                   |

<sup>1</sup> The UC live system was closed to new applicants in January 2018. As of April 2019 all live service claimants have been moved to the full service system.

## UC Scottish choices offers by Local Authority

The Local Authority breakdown includes the cumulative number of new UC full service claimants offered Scottish choices from June 2018. For UC Scottish choices offered before June 2018 the Local Authority breakdown cannot be determined from the data. These offers are classified as 'Unknown'. The 'Unknown' category also includes offers that were created in one month and completed in a subsequent month (See [Data quality](#) for more information).

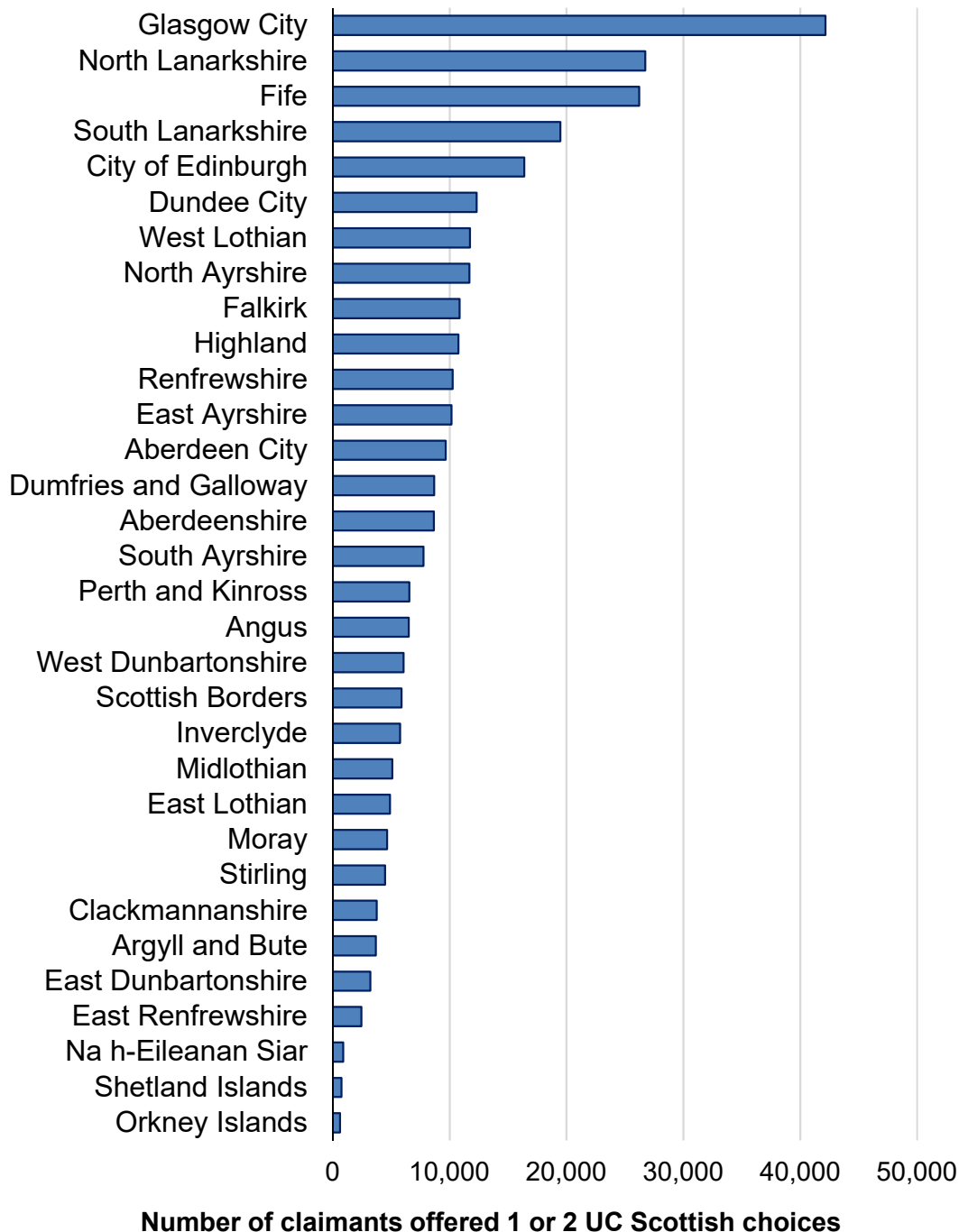
**Table 4: Cumulative number of new UC full service claimants offered UC Scottish choices, by Local Authority (to end March 2020)**

| Local Authority <sup>1</sup> | No. given one or two offers | Offer of MFP (MFP only and both) | Offer of DPL (DPL only and both) | Percentage offer of MFP | Percentage offer of DPL |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Scotland</b>              | <b>327,630</b>              | <b>325,400</b>                   | <b>150,940</b>                   | <b>99%</b>              | <b>46%</b>              |
| Aberdeen City                | 9,660                       | 9,600                            | 4,390                            | 99%                     | 45%                     |
| Aberdeenshire                | 8,640                       | 8,610                            | 4,160                            | 100%                    | 48%                     |
| Angus                        | 6,510                       | 6,450                            | 3,200                            | 99%                     | 49%                     |
| Argyll and Bute              | 3,690                       | 3,670                            | 1,640                            | 99%                     | 44%                     |
| City of Edinburgh            | 16,390                      | 16,300                           | 7,510                            | 99%                     | 46%                     |
| Clackmannanshire             | 3,750                       | 3,710                            | 1,680                            | 99%                     | 45%                     |
| Dumfries and Galloway        | 8,680                       | 8,650                            | 4,120                            | 100%                    | 47%                     |
| Dundee City                  | 12,300                      | 12,210                           | 5,820                            | 99%                     | 47%                     |
| East Ayrshire                | 10,160                      | 10,090                           | 4,590                            | 99%                     | 45%                     |
| East Dunbartonshire          | 3,210                       | 3,200                            | 1,140                            | 100%                    | 36%                     |
| East Lothian                 | 4,890                       | 4,850                            | 2,070                            | 99%                     | 42%                     |
| East Renfrewshire            | 2,460                       | 2,460                            | 790                              | 100%                    | 32%                     |
| Falkirk                      | 10,860                      | 10,790                           | 5,260                            | 99%                     | 48%                     |
| Fife                         | 26,230                      | 26,090                           | 11,990                           | 99%                     | 46%                     |
| Glasgow City                 | 42,160                      | 41,860                           | 18,300                           | 99%                     | 43%                     |
| Highland                     | 10,740                      | 10,700                           | 5,140                            | 100%                    | 48%                     |
| Inverclyde                   | 5,760                       | 5,730                            | 2,310                            | 99%                     | 40%                     |
| Midlothian                   | 5,100                       | 5,050                            | 2,070                            | 99%                     | 41%                     |
| Moray                        | 4,640                       | 4,630                            | 2,250                            | 100%                    | 48%                     |
| Na h-Eileanan Siar           | 890                         | 890                              | 370                              | 100%                    | 42%                     |
| North Ayrshire               | 11,700                      | 11,590                           | 5,270                            | 99%                     | 45%                     |
| North Lanarkshire            | 26,740                      | 26,600                           | 12,090                           | 99%                     | 45%                     |
| Orkney Islands               | 620                         | 610                              | 350                              | 98%                     | 56%                     |
| Perth and Kinross            | 6,540                       | 6,510                            | 3,600                            | 100%                    | 55%                     |
| Renfrewshire                 | 10,260                      | 10,200                           | 4,170                            | 99%                     | 41%                     |
| Scottish Borders             | 5,880                       | 5,860                            | 3,230                            | 100%                    | 55%                     |
| Shetland Islands             | 750                         | 750                              | 370                              | 100%                    | 49%                     |
| South Ayrshire               | 7,760                       | 7,730                            | 2,960                            | 100%                    | 38%                     |
| South Lanarkshire            | 19,470                      | 19,350                           | 7,030                            | 99%                     | 36%                     |
| Stirling                     | 4,480                       | 4,470                            | 1,810                            | 100%                    | 40%                     |
| West Dunbartonshire          | 6,050                       | 6,040                            | 2,500                            | 100%                    | 41%                     |
| West Lothian                 | 11,740                      | 11,700                           | 5,570                            | 100%                    | 47%                     |
| Unknown                      | 18,920                      | 18,450                           | 13,190                           | 98%                     | 70%                     |

<sup>1</sup> Local Authority totals are cumulative from June 2018 to end March 2020 only

Local Authorities with the greatest number of new UC full service claimants with one or two UC choice offers since June 2018 were Glasgow City (42,160), North Lanarkshire (26,740), Fife (26,230) and South Lanarkshire (19,470).

**Chart 2: Cumulative number of claimants offered 1 or 2 UC Scottish choices, by Local Authority (from June 2018 to end March 2020)**

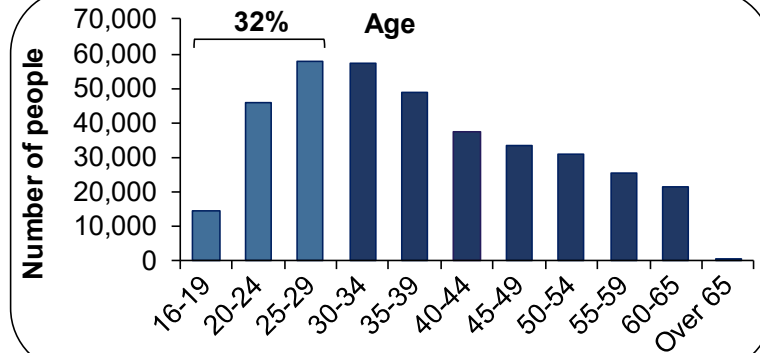
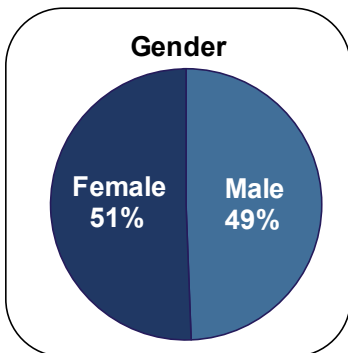
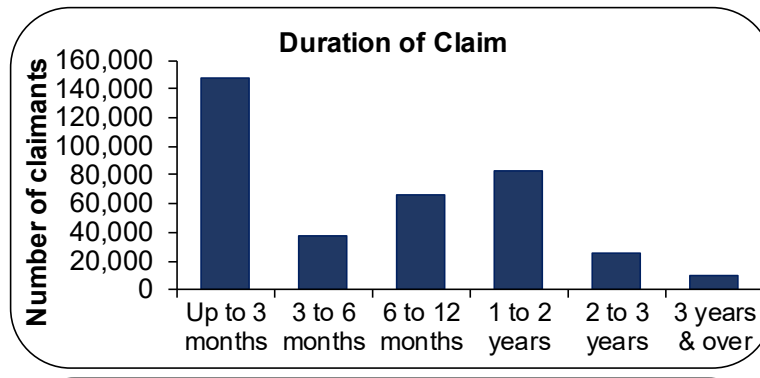
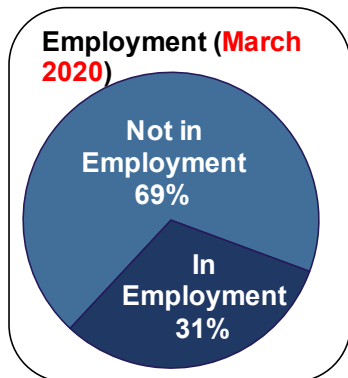
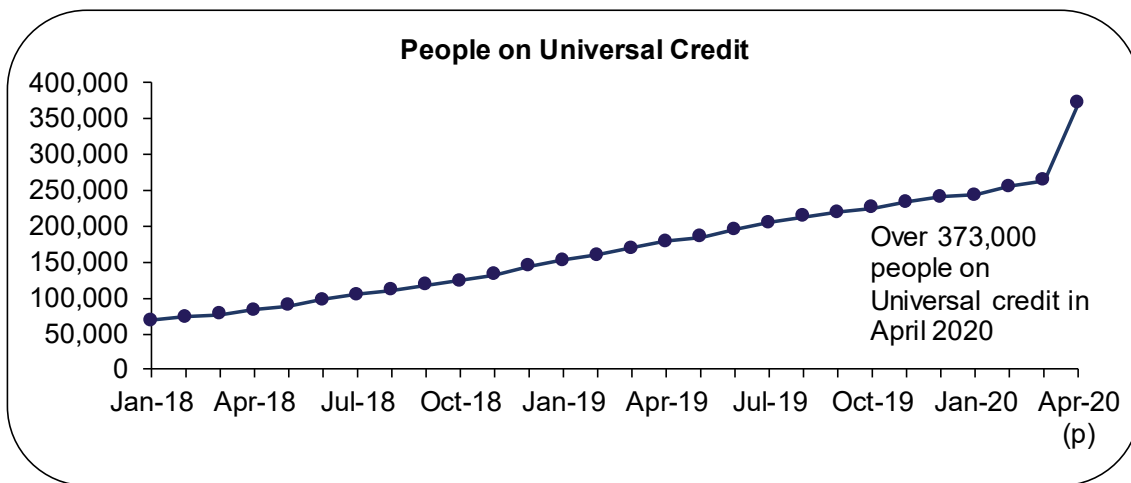




## People in Scotland on Universal Credit at April 2020

Statistics of people in Scotland on UC are published by DWP<sup>1</sup>. These data are not directly comparable to the above management information, as they are counted on a different basis. In addition, not all UC claimants in Scotland are eligible for the UC Scottish choices (see [Background](#) and [Data Quality](#)). There has been a large increase in people on UC in April due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The age and gender of people on UC is similar to previous months, but the duration of claim shows a far larger proportion have been claiming for under 3 months, rising from 30 per cent in April 2019<sup>1</sup> compared to 40 per cent in April 2020.

### Summary Panel 1: People in Scotland on Universal Credit at April 2020



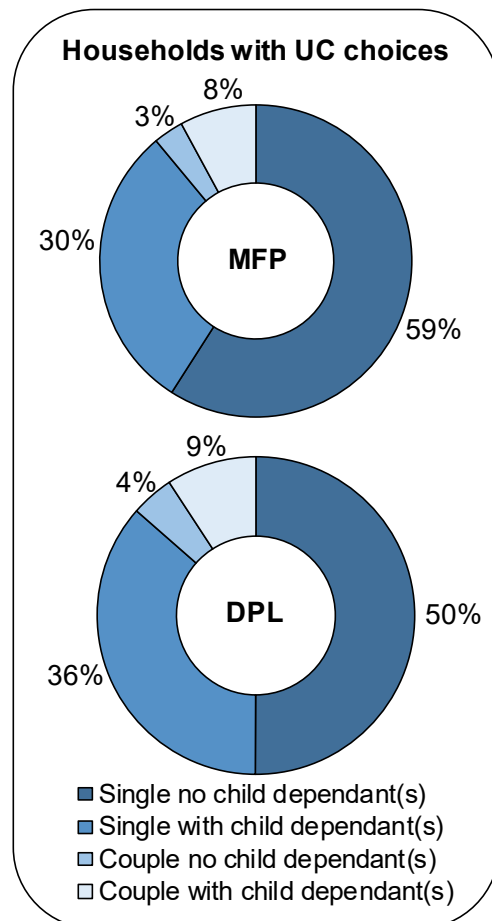
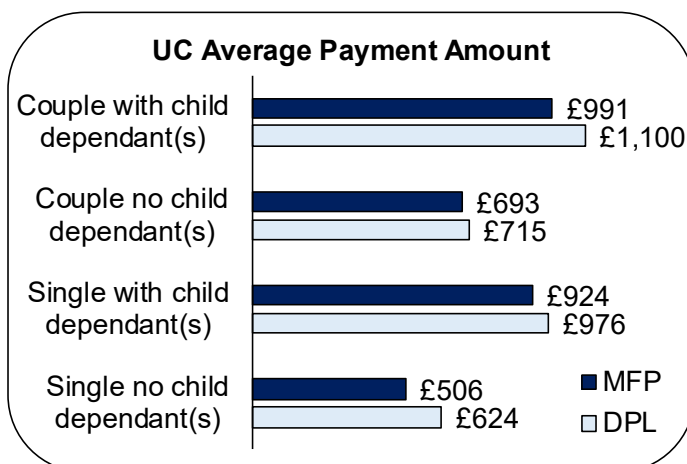
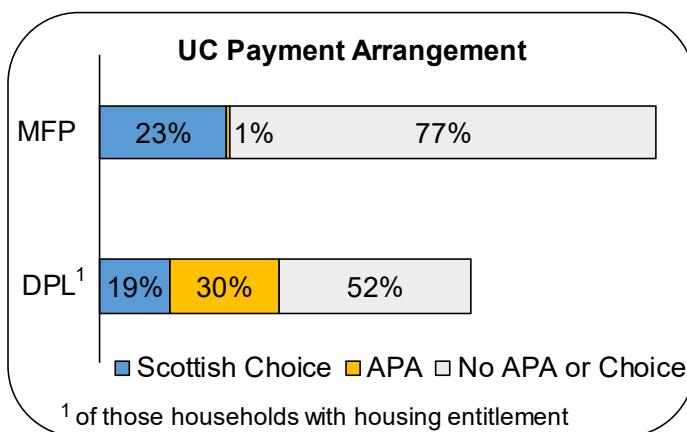
<sup>1</sup> See [Stat-Xplore](#) for further breakdowns

(p) April 2020 is marked as provisional (p) meaning they are subject to revision in subsequent releases.

## Scottish households in payment of UC at February 2020

Statistics on Scottish households in payment of UC with UC Scottish choices are published by DWP<sup>2</sup> and are different to the above management information and people count. These payment data are based on whether a household received a UC payment in a particular month via the UC Scottish choice. If the household is not in payment in a given month it will not be included in these statistics. This could occur if, for example, the household's earnings for the month are high enough to take the household out of UC entitlement. Because of this, payment data are lower than offers given. The latest figures show that of those households in payment of UC, 69,300 households are in receipt of UC with Scottish choices and 46,200 households have an Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA) in place.

### Summary Panel 2: Scottish households in payment of Universal Credit at February 2020



<sup>2</sup> See [Stat-Xplore](#) for further breakdowns

## Background

As UC is reserved to the UK Government, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) delivers the UC Scottish choices on behalf of the Scottish Government, with all costs associated with delivery being met by the Scottish Government.

The DWP provides the Scottish Government with management information on UC Scottish choices on a monthly basis, including the number of people who are offered the choices and the numbers who took them up.

The Scottish Government have received data covering 4 October 2017 to end March 2020. However, the earliest date that the UC Scottish choices offer would have gone out was 11 November to claimants not required to serve the seven waiting days<sup>3</sup> and from 18 November to those who were subject to the waiting days.

There are a number of ways a UC claimant in Scotland can take up one or both of the choices:

- New claimants – offered as a to-do<sup>4</sup> and accepted offer.
- New claimants – requested offer via other channel, e.g. phone, face to face. This can be prior to the choice officially being offered<sup>5</sup>.
- Existing claimants – requested offer via other channel.
- Claimants transferring from UC live system to full service – offered as a to-do<sup>3</sup> and accepted offer.
- Claimants transferring from UC live system to full service – requested offer via other channel, e.g. phone, face to face. This can be prior to the choice officially being offered<sup>4</sup>.

From May 2016 claimants have been transferring from live to full service areas. The UC live system was closed to new applicants in January 2018. As of April 2019, all live service claimants have been moved to the full service system. We no longer receive data on live to full transfer claimants.

Not all UC claimants in Scotland are eligible for the UC Scottish choices. As part of the first UC assessment period, DWP identifies if the person in receipt of UC has any vulnerabilities or complex needs, for example, substance misuse or mental health problems. This may then lead to them being supported through an Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA). Options for APAs include more frequent payments; direct payments of housing costs to landlords; and split payments of the UC award between members of a household. UC Scottish choices are offered as part of the second UC assessment period, which is generally at least 5 weeks from when

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<sup>3</sup> Exemptions are set out by the DWP.

<sup>4</sup> A to-do is a digital notification in the UC online account notifying of potential action required. For the UC Scottish choices, it is not mandatory to complete the to-do.

<sup>5</sup> As standard, the UC Scottish choices are offered at the start of the second assessment period following a new claim to UC, or a transfer from UC live service to full service. However, it is possible to request the choices before they are offered.

people apply for UC, and is after DWP have decided whether to put an APA in place. Those who already have an APA will not be eligible for the choices and will therefore not be offered them.

Some UC claimants are only eligible for one of the UC Scottish choices. This could be because they already have an APA in place, or because they do not receive the housing element of UC, and therefore, will not be offered the direct payment to landlord choice.

## **Data Quality**

This management information provides data on the take up of the UC Scottish choices. The DWP carries out a range of quality assurance checks on the monthly data before sending it to Scottish Government. These include:

- Comparisons with previous month's figures.
- Check values are consistent across full range of tables.
- Sense check trends in data over time.
- Independent checking of the code to run the tables, and subsequent outputs.

Work is currently being taken forward by the DWP to enhance the quality of this data by setting up a more structured and stable extract of the data. When this work is complete this will ensure that the quality of the data is sufficient to allow it to be published as official statistics.

Due to data quality reasons we publish Scotland-level statistics from cumulative figures rather than monthly figures. As we receive Local Authority breakdowns as monthly figures only, we have calculated proxy cumulative figures by summing these monthly values. This makes them more susceptible to inaccuracy from rounding i.e. rounding error is more significant over time. The proxy cumulative figures only include those offers created and completed within the same month, so are an underestimate of the total number of offers.

Prior to June 2018 we did not receive data for UC Scottish choices broken down by Local Authority. Those people who were offered choices before June 2018 are included in the Local Authority breakdown as having an 'Unknown' Local Authority. This category also includes those offers created in one month and completed in a subsequent month.

Due to the large number of 'Unknowns' the Local Authority breakdown data is not directly comparable to the Scotland-level data, however comparisons can still be made between Local Authorities.

All figures in this report have been rounded to the nearest 10.

## Comparison to DWP statistics

As explained above not all UC claimants in Scotland are eligible for the UC Scottish choices, so will not be offered the choice. Universal Credit Scottish Choices data differs from DWP's official statistics on people and households in the following ways:

- UC Scottish choices are offered to a household from the second assessment period, so will not be captured in the management data until at least one month after DWP's people and household payment statistics.
- DWP statistics include those people that are on UC (completed the UC claim process, accepted their Claimant Commitment and have not had a termination recorded) and households in payment of UC that have an assessment period on the 'count date' (second Thursday in each month).
- In comparison, UC Scottish Choices show the number of households that were offered and implemented a choice as at the end of each month and include those that may have left UC/ UC Scottish choices within the given month.
- DWP's statistics have a structured and stable data extraction process, which ensures consistency in figures over time. DWP also revise their figures in subsequent releases where data quality issues arise.
- In comparison, UC Scottish Choices monthly data are not extracted in a consistent way and are not regularly revised.

## Further development

We plan to publish this data as official statistics in future. We will engage with users to establish their needs, both in terms of content and timing of future publications.

We will be gathering more breakdowns of the choices data by Local Authority area, including the number of offers accepted and the take up rate. This will be included in future publications when the data has been sufficiently quality assured.

## Contact

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