

Claims made to Universal Credit

Related documents

For more information on unemployment and DWP benefit claimants please see our [Unemployment and Benefit](#) page

NOTE: When referring to Kent we mean the Kent County Council Area, which includes all twelve local authority districts but does not include the Medway Unitary Authority

Further Information

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This bulletin looks at the number of claims for Universal Credit in Kent and Medway. This includes the number of new claims made, the number of new starts, and the total number of people who are currently claiming Universal Credit.

Highlights

- The number of new claims to Universal Credit in the four weeks to 28 October were much lower than pre-coronavirus levels; 5,252 compared to 6,568 in the four weeks to 12 March 2020.
- 4,391 monthly new starts to Universal Credit in October 2021.
- New starts in October 2021 were highest amongst claimants aged 16–24 (1,195). These were 18% higher than March 2020.
- 152,504 people on Universal Credit in October 2021, an increase of 89.9% (+72,180) since March 2020.
- 13.5% of people in Kent & Medway were claiming Universal Credit in October 2021, below the figure for Great Britain (14.2%).
- The number of male claimants has increased at a faster rate than female claimants since March 2020; +99.4% compared to +83.1%.

Introduction

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) publishes information on the number of claims being made to Universal Credit.

Universal Credit is a payment to help with living costs for those on a low income or who are out of work. Universal Credit provides a single payment 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 can be claimed even if the claimant is still employed but they have a low income. As a consequence of coronavirus measures, many people have experienced a reduction in their income. For example, under the *Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme* an individual placed on temporary leave ('furlough') and receiving 80% of their regular wage may still have been eligible to make a claim for Universal Credit. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ended on 30 September 2021.

Universal Credit is available in every jobcentre across Great Britain.

The Government introduced changes to Universal Credit in response to the coronavirus pandemic, including a temporary £1,040 per year increase (£20 per week) to the standard allowance from April 2020. This temporary increase to the standard allowance ended on 6 October 2021. The standard allowance (monthly) is detailed in the table below. The Government also temporarily removed the 'minimum income floor' in April 2020 to help self-employed individuals whose income has fallen. The 'minimum income floor' reflects how much the DWP expects you to earn each month, based upon the national minimum wage and the number of hours you work. From 1 August 2021 the pre-pandemic rules regarding 'minimum income floor' have started to apply again.

Your circumstances	Monthly standard allowance
Single and under 25	£257.33
Single and 25 or over	£324.84
In a couple and both under 25	£403.93 (for you both)
In a couple and either of you is 25 or over	£509.91 (for you both)

In addition, the DWP also implemented measures to speed up the application process such as the redeployment of staff to cope with the surge in claims (applications) made to Universal Credit, and temporarily removing the face-to-face assessment to follow the government guidelines in place at the time.

The first section of this bulletin looks at the number of new claims (applications) made to Universal Credit in postcode areas that cover Kent and Medway between August 2021 and October 2021.

This bulletin uses the four postcodes which largely cover Kent and Medway: CT, ME, DA (which overlaps into Greater London), and TN (which overlaps into East Sussex). As a result of this overlap the total figure is not for Kent and Medway alone as it includes some residents from Greater London and East Sussex. N.B. A very small area of Dartford and Sevenoaks are situated within the BR postcode area. These have been excluded from this analysis. A map of the postcode areas used in this bulletin is located in the Appendix.

The data shows new claims made to Universal Credit irrespective of whether the claimant goes on to be awarded the benefit. This data is available by the 'date of claim' but is summarised by 'week of claim' in this bulletin.

The second section of this bulletin looks at those people for whom a new claim had been awarded and started between August 2021 and October 2021.

This data looks at starts to Universal Credit by claimants residing in Kent and Medway Jobcentre Plus areas. There are thirteen Jobcentre Plus areas across Kent and Medway. The Jobcentre Plus areas are defined as those areas that are covered by each Jobcentre Plus office. As such, they do not correspond with local authority district boundaries, but they are situated within Kent and Medway boundaries.

The third section of this bulletin looks at all those who are receiving Universal Credit in Kent and Medway compared to Great Britain, the claimant's sex, and whether they are in employment or not in employment.

Analysis

The coronavirus pandemic and the lockdown response implemented by the UK government has impacted on the ways in which many people are able to work. Some people have been able to work remotely from home. However, others may have seen their income decrease because they have been furloughed, have seen their working hours reduce or have lost their jobs, or have been unable to work. For many people this has impacted on their ability to earn an income. As a consequence, many workers have needed to claim Universal Credit to replace lost income through not being able to work.

Claims made to Universal Credit

This section looks at the number of new claims (applications) per week made to Universal Credit in the postcode areas covering Kent and Medway in the 4 weeks to 28 October 2021 compared to the 4 weeks to 12 March 2020 before the effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) were seen (herein *pre-coronavirus*).

The claims figures in this release are defined as the total number of claims that are made to Universal Credit, up to the count date. A claim does not automatically mean a claimant will receive a Universal Credit payment. The data presented here includes all claims made within the time period. If an individual goes on to make multiple claims, each claim will be included in the headline figure. Claims that were not progressed to the individual starting on Universal Credit are also included.

There are four postcode areas covering the majority of Kent and Medway. Postcode areas are not restricted to county boundaries. As a result, two of the Kent postcode areas overlap into other surrounding areas, DA and TN. The DA postcode area overlaps into Greater London and TN overlaps into East Sussex. A very small part of Dartford and Sevenoaks are covered by BR postcodes. These have been excluded from this analysis as the vast majority of BR postcodes are outside Kent and Medway. A map of Kent and Medway postcode areas can be found at the end of this bulletin.

DWP weekly claims reporting runs from Friday to Thursday each week. DWP new claims data is released on a quarterly basis and provides counts of the new claims made each day during the reference period.

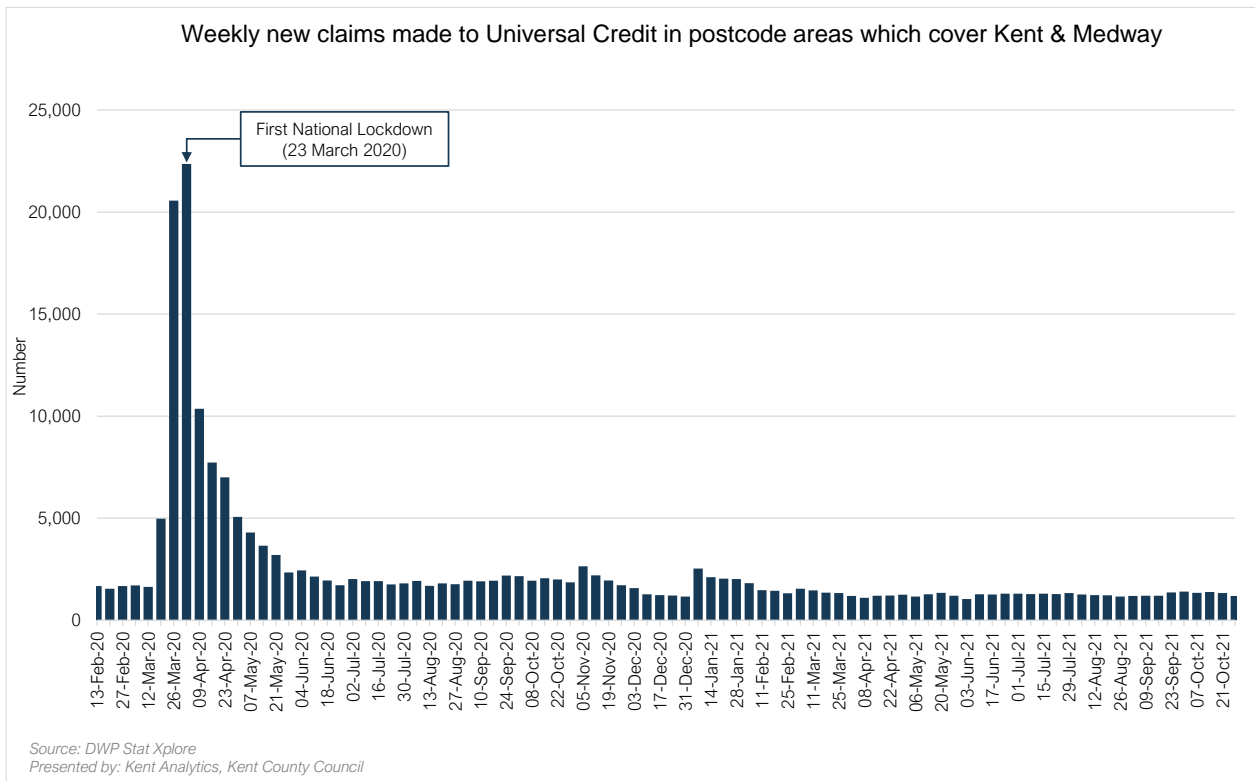
New claims in Kent and Medway

In the 4 weeks leading up to 28 October 2021 an average of 1,313 weekly new claims were made to Universal Credit. This is an increase of 10% compared to an average of 1,197 claims in the 4 weeks to 9 September 2021. The number of weekly new claims made has generally declined through January–April 2021. In the succeeding months the number of weekly new claims has been relatively stable at an average of 1,264. In August, September, and October 2021, the average weekly new claims are considerably lower than the average for the 52 weeks to 12 March 2020 (1,692). This is shown in Chart 1 overleaf.

There were, on average, 1,642 claims per week made to Universal Credit in the 4 weeks to 12 March 2020 (pre-coronavirus). Restrictions were introduced throughout the country in March 2020, leading to an increase in the number of claims for Universal Credit. In the week beginning 16 March 2020, the number of new claims made weekly increased three-fold to 4,976. In the two weeks following the announcement of the national lockdown from 23 March 2020, there were 42,927 claims made to Universal Credit: 20,567 and 22,360 in the week ending the 26 March 2020 and 2 April 2020, respectively. Each of these weeks is more than 10 times the weekly average for the year to the 12 March 2020 of 1,731.

In total, since restrictions were introduced (week beginning 13 March 2020) in response to the coronavirus pandemic, there have been 208,541 claims made to Universal Credit across Kent and Medway.

Chart 1. Weekly new claims to Universal Credit



New claims by postcode area in Kent and Medway

There are four postcode areas which cover the majority of Kent and Medway: CT, ME, DA (which overlaps into Greater London) and TN (which overlaps into East Sussex). As a result of this overlap the total figure is not for Kent and Medway alone as it will include some residents in Greater London and East Sussex.

Rochester (ME) postcode area saw the highest number of weekly new claims in the week ending 28 October 2021 (351). Furthermore, ME postcode area saw the highest number of weekly new claims in the 4 weeks to 28 October 2021 (see Table 1 and Chart 2 overleaf). The number of weekly new claims represent a change of -15% (-66), -19% (-93), -35% (-182), and +10% (+31) compared to the 4 weeks to 12 March 2020.

Tonbridge (TN) postcode area saw the second highest claims (313) for the week ending 28 October 2021. This represents a decrease of 39% (-199) weekly new claims compared to week ending 12 March 2020. Over the same time period the number of weekly new claims

in Canterbury (CT) and Dartford (DA) postcode areas decreased by 42% (-204) and 24% (-75), respectively.

Table 1. Weekly new claims to Universal Credit

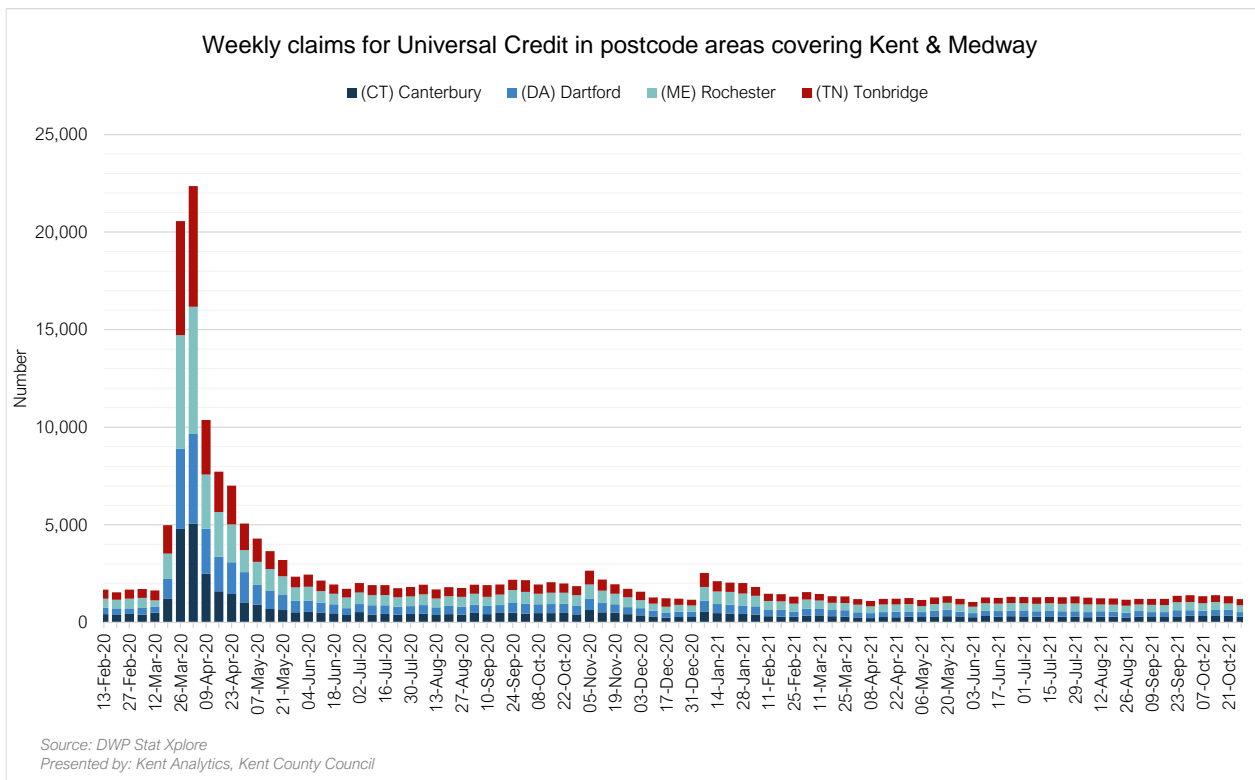
DWP weeks are from Friday to Thursday. Data here are week ending.

	(CT) Canterbury	(DA) Dartford	(ME) Rochester	(TN) Tonbridge	Total
07 October 2021	327	277	373	364	1,344
14 October 2021	331	303	408	348	1,384
21 October 2021	333	309	332	361	1,335
28 October 2021	288	241	351	313	1,189
4 week total	1,279	1,130	1,464	1,386	5,252

Source: DWP Stat Xplore

Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

Chart 2. Weekly new claims to Universal Credit by postcode area



Starts to Universal Credit

This section looks at the number of starts to Universal Credit. The starts figure shows the number of claims which have gone through the application process and have been awarded Universal Credit.

The data is available to Jobcentre Plus areas. The Jobcentre Plus office at which a claimant is recorded is based upon the postcode of where the claimant lives. Thirteen Jobcentre Plus areas cover Kent and Medway.

Data is available on a monthly basis. The latest months' figures are provisional ("P") and liable to revision in future releases.

Totals may not sum due to rounding at source.

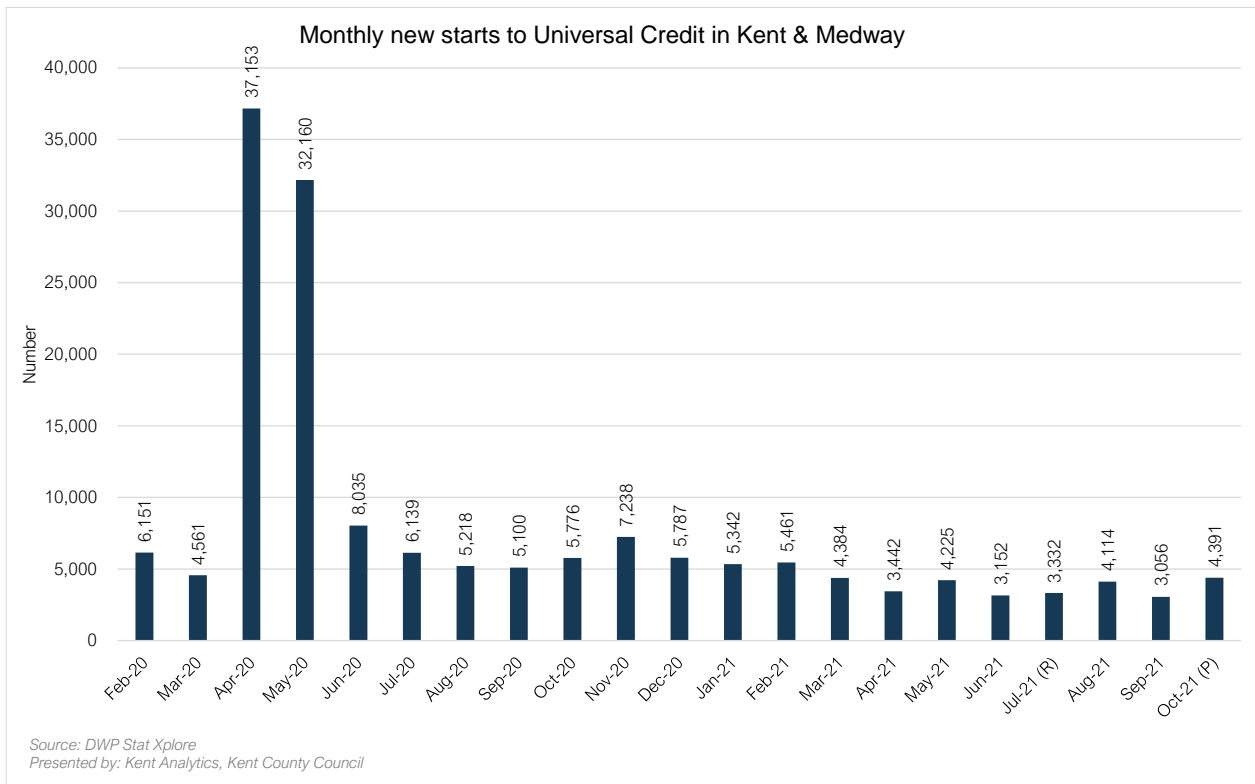
New claims started in Kent and Medway

There were 4,391 starts to Universal Credit in October 2021. This represents an increase of 44% (+1,335) when compared to September 2021 (3,056). The UK government introduced a number of changes to Universal Credit (see [Introduction](#)) in response to the coronavirus pandemic. These changes, together with the negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic on people's circumstances, coincided with a considerable increase in the number of new claims started in Kent and Medway in April 2020.

There were 37,153 starts to Universal Credit in April 2020; an increase of 715% (+32,592) compared to the previous month. Fewer starts to Universal Credit were reported in May 2020 (32,160). Yet, 27,599 more claims started than in March 2020 (+605%). The number of starts to Universal Credit declined sharply through June (8,035) and July 2020 (6,139). Excepting November 2020 (7,238), between August 2020 and October 2021 the number of starts to Universal Credit has returned to pre-coronavirus levels, ranging between 3,056 and 5,787. Indeed, there were 32,762 (-88%) fewer starts to Universal Credit in October 2021 compared to the peak in April 2020. This is shown in Chart 3.

In total, there have been 153,505 claims starting on Universal Credit since 13 March 2020 in Kent and Medway. Of these, 69,313 (45%) started between 13 March and 14 May 2020.

Chart 3. Monthly new starts to Universal Credit



Starts to Universal Credit were highest in the Chatham Job Centre Plus area (745) in October 2021, then Maidstone (452) and Canterbury (401). Chatham has consistently reported the highest number of new claims started throughout the current reporting period (August 2021 = 723; September 2021 = 531) and accounts for between 17.0% and 17.6% of starts to Universal Credit during this period.

In Kent and Medway, in the current reporting period (August to October 2021) the number of starts to Universal Credit (11,561) were at the second lowest level seen since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. The number of starts to Universal Credit has decreased by 88% (86–90%) between April 2020 and October 2021. This is shown in Table 2. Monthly starts to Universal Credit have remained broadly unchanged since March 2021 and are similar to pre-coronavirus levels.

Table 2. Monthly new starts to Universal Credit

	Oct 2021 (P)	Change (No.) since Apr 2020	Change (%) since Apr 2020	Change (No.) since Sep 2021	Change (%) since Sep 2021
Ashford	321	-2,361	-88%	82	34%
Canterbury	401	-3,080	-88%	145	57%
Chatham	745	-5,034	-87%	214	40%
Dartford	352	-2,784	-89%	99	39%
Dover	256	-2,022	-89%	78	44%
Folkestone	262	-2,202	-89%	57	28%
Gravesend	337	-2,235	-87%	109	48%
Maidstone	452	-3,646	-89%	100	28%
Margate	233	-1,737	-88%	92	65%
Ramsgate	210	-1,852	-90%	55	35%
Sheerness	173	-1,043	-86%	85	97%
Sittingbourne	253	-1,904	-88%	83	49%
Tonbridge	396	-2,862	-88%	136	52%
Total	4,391	-32,762	-88%	1,335	44%

Source: DWP Stat Xplore

Note: Figures marked "P" are provisional and subject to revision

Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

New claims started by age group

Between the end of the previous reporting period (July 2021) and October 2021, more claimants started on Universal Credit in all groups (+18 to +43%).

In October 2021, claimants starting on Universal Credit who are aged 16–24 (1,195) form the largest proportion of claimants (27.3%). Since April 2020, claimants aged under 25 have on average accounted for 24.5% of starts to Universal Credit each month. This compares to 22.2% in March 2020. This age group peaked at 29.2% in July 2020. This age group constituted 21.5% (32,855) of starts to Universal Credit between April 2020 and October 2021.

In October 2021, claimants starting on Universal Credit who are aged 24–35 (1,176) form the largest proportion of claimants (26.9%). Since April 2020, claimants aged 25–34 have on average formed 28.1% of starts to Universal Credit each month. This compares to

30.1% in March 2020. This age group constituted 28.7% (44,001) of starts to Universal Credit between April 2020 and October 2021.

The proportion of claimants starting on Universal Credit aged 35–44, 45–54, and 55–Over 65 have on average constituted 20.2%, 15.1%, and 12.0%, respectively, each month since April 2020. These are similar to pre-coronavirus levels: 35–44 (21.1%), 45–54 (14.6%), and 55–Over 65 (12.0%) in March 2020.

This is shown in Table 3 and Chart 4.

Table 3. Monthly new starts to Universal Credit by age group

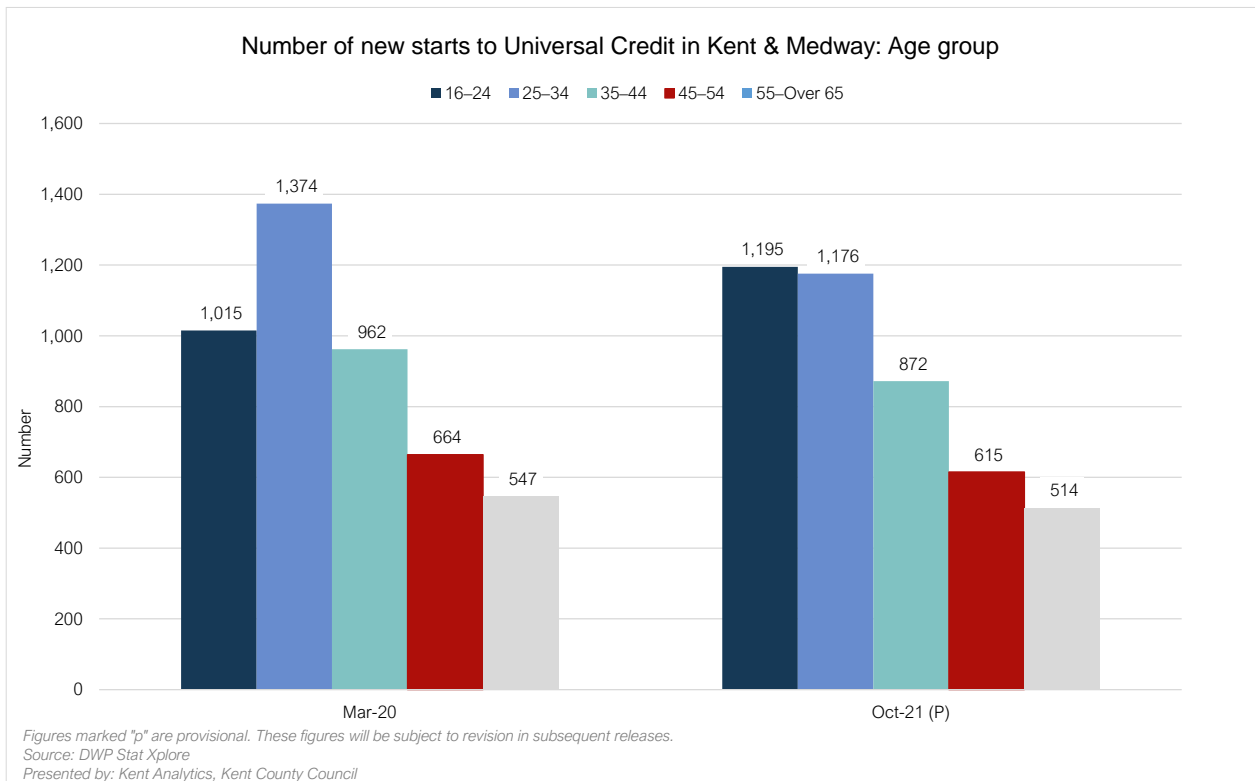
	Oct 2021 (P)	Change (No.) since Mar 2020	Change (%) since Mar 2020	Change (No.) since Sep 2021	Change (%) since Sep 2021
16 - 24	1,195	180	18%	371	45%
25 - 34	1,176	-198	-14%	384	48%
35 - 44	872	-90	-9%	254	41%
45 - 54	615	-49	-7%	182	42%
55 - Over 65	514	-33	-6%	147	40%
Grand Total	4,372	-190	-4%	1,338	44%

Source: DWP Stat Xplore

Note: Figures marked "P" are provisional and subject to revision

Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

Chart 4. Monthly new starts to Universal Credit by age group



People on Universal Credit

This section looks at the total number of people who are receiving Universal Credit in the Local Authorities in which they are living.

The data looks at the sex of the claimant and includes a comparison to Great Britain. The data also looks at whether a claimant is *in employment* or *not in employment*.

Universal Credit Claimants in Kent and Medway

Between March 2020 and October 2021, the total number of Universal Credit claimants in Kent and Medway increased by 89.9% (+72,180) from 80,324 (March) to 152,504 (October). 91% of this increase (+65,967) occurred between March and May 2020. The total number of Universal Credit claimants in Kent and Medway peaked at 159,076 in March 2021. In the succeeding months (April to October 2021) the number of people on Universal Credit has gradually fallen by 4.1% (-6,572).

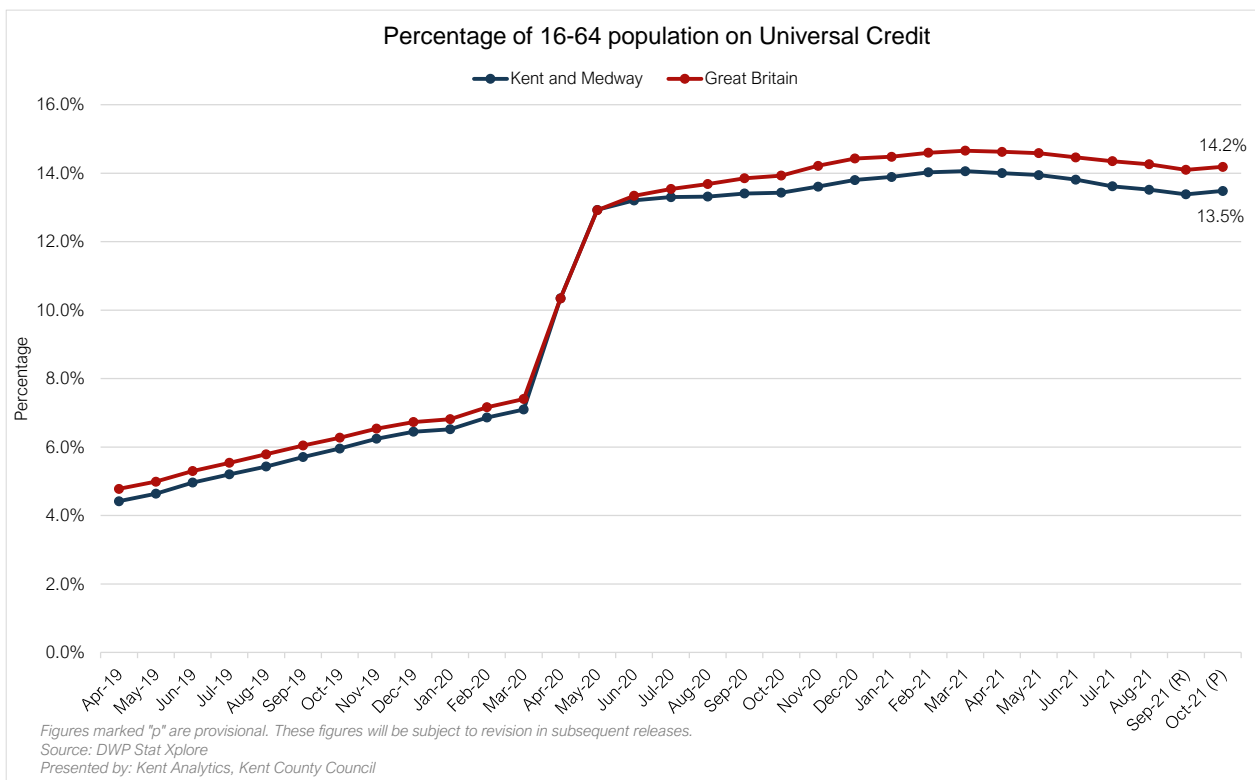
Month-to-month changes with respect to the total number of Universal Credit claimants in Kent and Medway through August to October 2021 were -0.7% (-1,109), -1.0% (-1,540), and +0.7% (1,124), respectively.

The figures presented above for Kent and Medway reflect the general trends seen in Great Britain, although the Universal Credit claimant rate has fallen at a slightly faster rate in the former (Chart 5).

N.B. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough) ended on 30 September 2021. It is too early to assess any impact on the number of people on Universal Credit.

In Kent and Medway, 13.5% of the population aged 16–64 now claim Universal Credit. This represents an increase of 6.4% since March 2020 (7.1%) – and a reduction from the peak in March 2021 (14.1%). This is slightly lower than the claimant rate figure for Great Britain (14.6%).

Chart 5. Percentage of 16–64 population on Universal Credit



Universal Credit claimants by Kent District

The total number and proportion of Universal Credit claimants in Kent and Medway Local Authorities are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

The number of people in receipt of Universal Credit has increased significantly since March 2020, with some districts having more than double the number of claimants in October 2021 compared to March 2020.

The largest percentage increases in the number of people on Universal Credit were in Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks, and Tonbridge and Malling, reported as +136%, +125%, and +124%, respectively. However, within these districts the number of people on Universal Credit prior to coronavirus restrictions were among the lowest in Kent. Indeed, with the exception of Dover (+3,934), Sevenoaks (+3,354), Tunbridge Wells (+3,863), and Tonbridge and Malling (+4,001) have seen the lowest increases in the actual number of people on Universal Credit since March 2020. In October 2021, these districts also had some of the lowest proportions of population on Universal Credit in Kent (excluding Medway). Sevenoaks has 4.8%, while Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells have 5.0% and 5.4%, respectively.

The smallest percentage increase in the number of people on Universal Credit between March 2020 and October 2021 was in Dover (+56.5%) and Thanet (+57.1%). Yet, in terms of numbers, Thanet has seen the second largest increase in the number of claimants (+6,587) in Kent, slightly less than Maidstone (+6,689). In October 2021, 18,113 people in Thanet were in receipt of Universal Credit (22.4% of the district population), the highest number and proportion of claimants in Kent.

In Kent and Medway, month-to-month change (%) in the number of people in receipt of Universal Credit through August to October 2021 was relatively small. In August, this ranged between -1.4% (Folkestone and Hythe) and +0.3% (Maidstone), in September the ranged between -2.0% (Sevenoaks) and -0.1% (Folkestone and Hythe), and in October this ranged between 0.0% (Thanet) and +1.5% (Canterbury) in October.

Table 4. Number of Universal Credit claimants in Kent districts

	Oct 2021 (P)	Change (No.) since Mar 2020	Change (%) since Mar 2020	Change (No.) since Sep 2021	Change (%) since Sep 2021
Ashford	10,390	4,882	89%	92	0.9%
Canterbury	11,191	5,411	94%	161	1.5%
Dartford	9,133	4,850	113%	90	1.0%
Dover	10,895	3,934	57%	97	0.9%
Folkestone and Hythe	9,721	4,690	93%	54	0.6%
Gravesham	10,260	5,057	97%	38	0.4%
Maidstone	12,194	6,689	122%	62	0.5%
Sevenoaks	6,037	3,354	125%	14	0.2%
Swale	14,445	6,230	76%	176	1.2%
Thanet	18,113	6,587	57%	-7	0.0%
Tonbridge and Malling	7,223	4,001	124%	52	0.7%
Tunbridge Wells	6,695	3,863	136%	12	0.2%
Kent County Council	126,297	59,552	89%	841	0.7%
Medway	26,207	12,632	93%	283	1.1%
Kent and Medway	152,504	72,180	90%	1,124	0.7%
South East	650,267	336,224	107%	2,781	0.4%
Great Britain	5,768,868	2,757,349	92%	36,072	0.6%

Source: DWP Stat Xplore

Note: Figures marked "P" are provisional and subject to revision

Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

Table 5. Percentage of Universal Credit claimants in Kent districts

	Mar 2020	Aug 2021	Sep 2021	Oct 2021 (P)
Ashford	7.0%	13.4%	13.1%	13.3%
Canterbury	5.5%	10.5%	10.4%	10.6%
Dartford	5.9%	12.7%	12.5%	12.7%
Dover	10.0%	15.6%	15.5%	15.7%
Folkestone and Hythe	7.6%	14.7%	14.7%	14.7%
Gravesham	8.0%	15.8%	15.7%	15.7%
Maidstone	5.2%	11.7%	11.5%	11.6%
Sevenoaks	3.8%	8.7%	8.5%	8.6%
Swale	9.0%	15.8%	15.7%	15.9%
Thanet	14.3%	22.6%	22.4%	22.4%
Tonbridge and Malling	4.0%	9.0%	8.9%	9.0%
Tunbridge Wells	4.0%	9.5%	9.3%	9.3%
Kent County Council	7.0%	13.2%	13.1%	13.2%
Medway	7.8%	15.0%	14.8%	15.0%
Kent and Medway	7.1%	13.5%	13.4%	13.5%
South East	5.6%	11.7%	11.5%	11.5%
Great Britain	7.4%	14.3%	14.1%	14.2%

Source: DWP Stat Xplore

Note: Figures marked "P" are provisional and subject to revision

Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

Universal Credit claimants by sex

Females account for 56% of people on Universal Credit in October 2021.

Through the early months of the coronavirus pandemic more males than females were starting on Universal Credit. The proportion of male claimants increased from 42% in March 2020 to 48% in May 2020. The largest percentage increase in the number of people on Universal Credit between March 2020 and October 2021 were men (+99%, +33,499). The number of female claimants grew by 83% (+38,702) over the same time period (Table 6).

Historically, more females than males have typically claimed Universal Credit. The total number of Universal Credit claimants that were male peaked at 73,677 in March 2021. During the succeeding months this number has gradually fallen to 67,216 (-6,514) in

October 2021. Conversely, the number of female claimants peaked in May 2021 (85,538) but has remained broadly unchanged (October 2021 = 85,503). This is shown in Chart 6.

In October 2021, 12.0% and 14.9% of the male and female population aged 16–64 in Kent and Medway were on Universal Credit, respectively. This is lower than the figures for Great Britain (male = 13.0%; female = 15.4%).

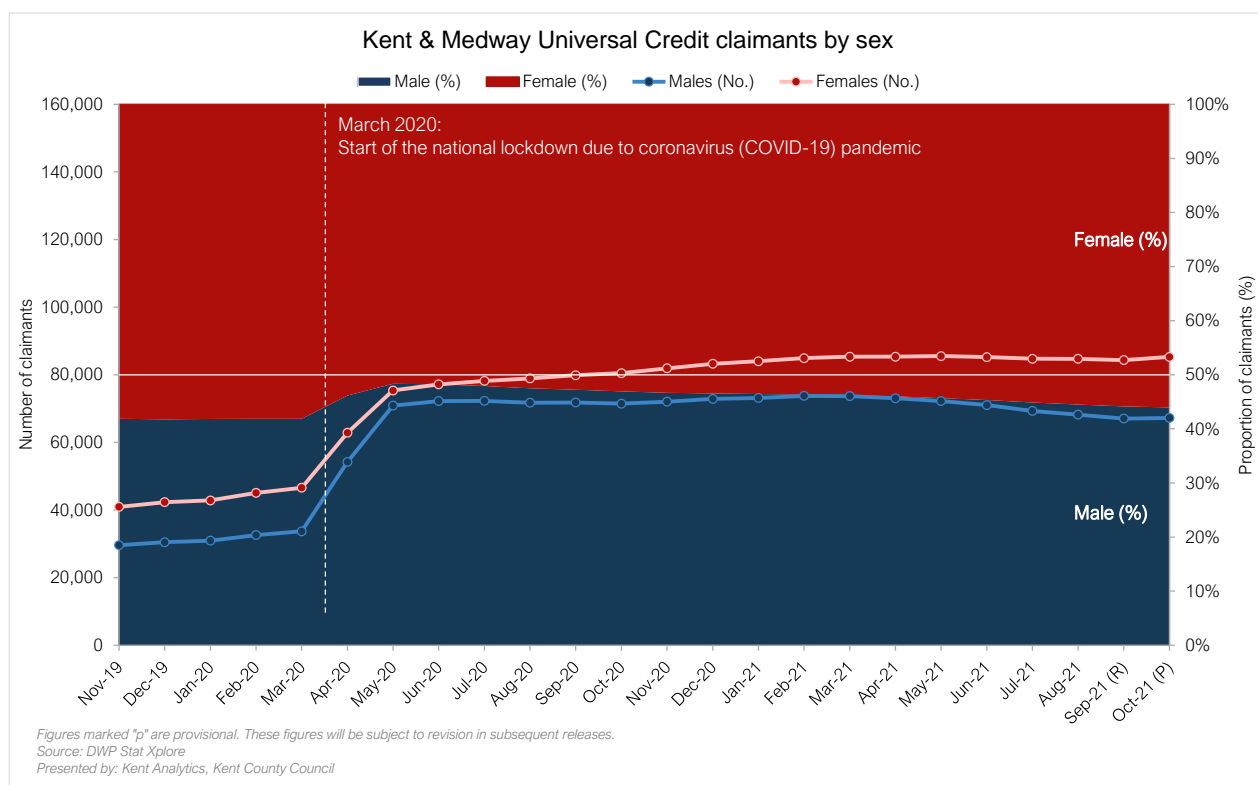
Table 6. Universal Credit claimants in Kent and Medway by sex

	Mar 2020	Oct 2021	Change (No.) since Mar 2020	Change (%) since Mar 2020
Male	33,717	67,216	33,499	99.4%
Female	46,584	85,286	38,702	83.1%
Total	80,300	152,503	72,203	89.9%

Source: DWP Stat Xplore

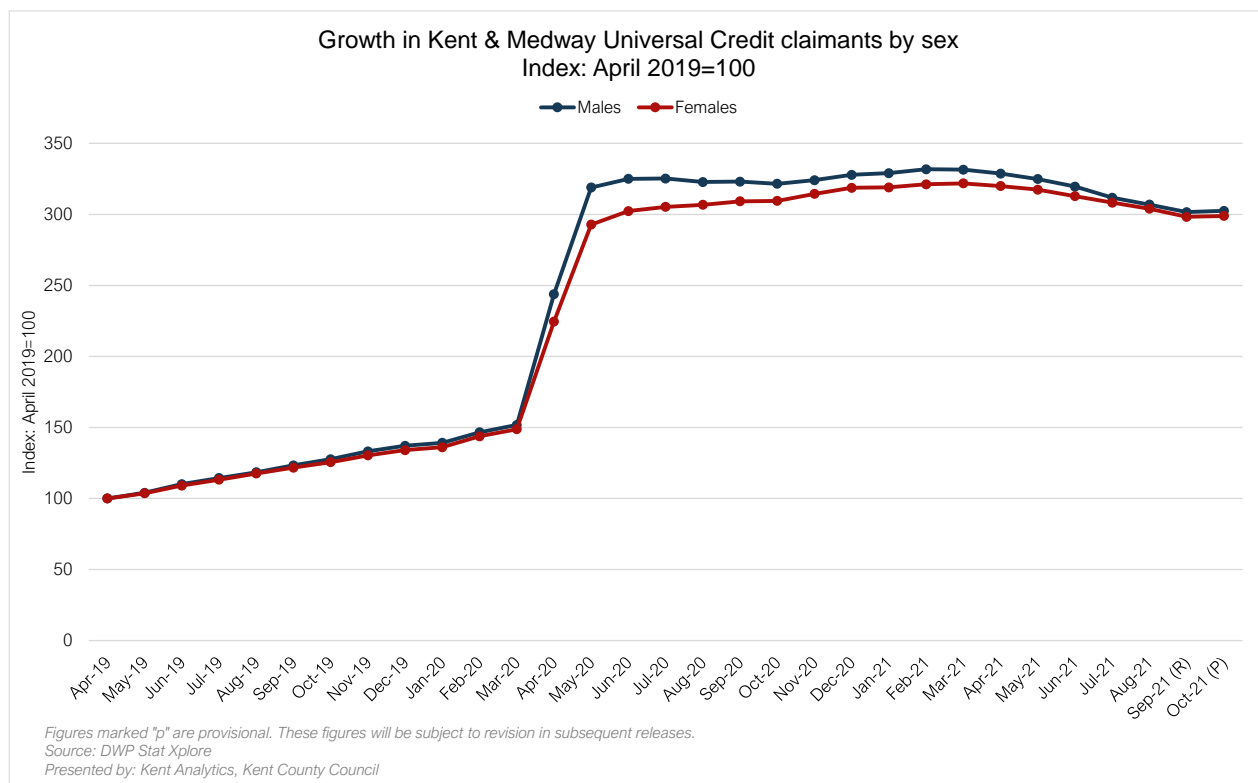
Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

Chart 6. Universal Credit claimants by sex



By setting the same starting point (April 2019=100) Chart 7 shows how the number of male and female claimants have grown. While the number of male and female claimants have both increased at a similar pace throughout the year, in the months succeeding the lockdown restrictions the growth rate of the number of male claimants has been greater. This remained the case between August and October 2021, although the difference in the male and female claimant growth rates has narrowed considerably.

Chart 7. Growth in Universal Credit claimants by sex



Universal Credit claimants by employment status

In Kent and Medway, for Universal Credit claimants where the employment status was known, over a third (38.9%) were in employment in September 2021. This has increased from 34.4% in March 2020. This may be a consequence of workers having had their wages reduced to 80% of their usual levels under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough). Note that this scheme ended on 30 September 2021, however it is too early to assess any impact on the number of people on Universal Credit.

There was a greater percentage increase in the number of people on Universal Credit that are in employment than not in employment between March 2020 and September 2021, with those in employment growing by 113.1% compared to those not in employment growing by 75.6%. This is more prominently reflected in male Universal Credit claimants where those in employment and not in employment have increased by 144.0% and 81.0%, respectively. This is shown in Table 7 and Chart 8.

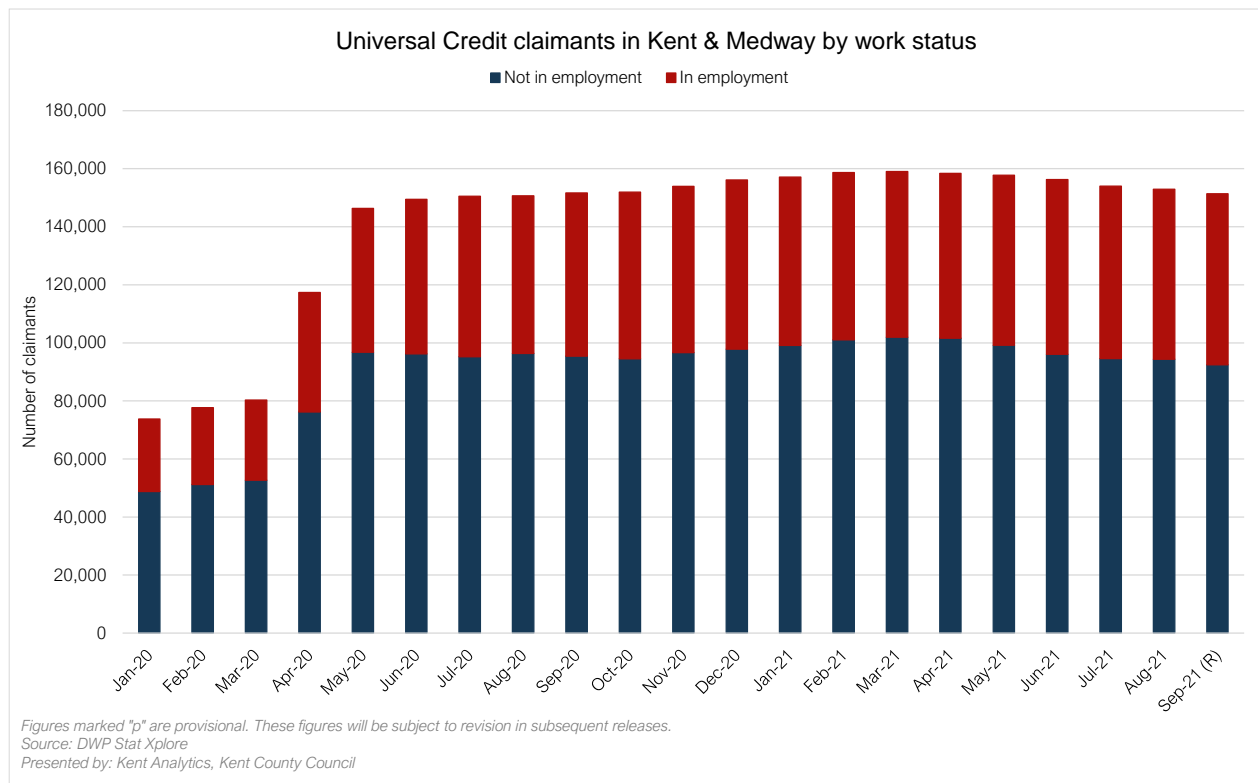
Table 7. Universal Credit claimants by work status

Kent & Medway	Sep 2021 (R)		Change (No.) since Mar 2020		Change (%) since Mar 2020	
	In employment	Not in employment	In employment	Not in employment	In employment	Not in employment
Males	23,228	43,806	13,710	19,607	144.0%	81.0%
Females	35,681	48,659	17,558	20,199	96.9%	71.0%
Total	58,913	92,467	31,267	39,812	113.1%	75.6%

Source: DWP Stat Xplore

Presented by: Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

Chart 8. Universal Credit claimants by work status



Appendix

Map of postcode areas in Kent and Medway.

