

IMPACT OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT CUTS ON WOMEN

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION 2020 - 2021



OVERVIEW

THE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN TO AXE THE UPLIFT TO UNIVERSAL CREDIT ON OCTOBER 6 WILL IMPACT THE MOST VULNERABLE MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY. OUR RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATES THAT WOMEN IN THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION WILL BEAR THE BRUNT OF THESE CUTS.

The number of people accessing Universal Credit nationally has almost doubled throughout the pandemic. Introduced to support individuals and low-income families during the pandemic, the £20 weekly uplift provided a vital lifeline to 5.9 million people across the UK.

Women have been most affected by high rates of redundancies across the Liverpool City Region (LCR) and forced into low paid and often unstable employment. During the pandemic, the increase of women accessing Universal Credit in LCR outnumbered men by eight to one. In-work poverty in the region is now at a record high, with 38,000 employed women now accessing Universal Credit across the LRC, compared to 25,000 employed men.

This report highlights that even pre-pandemic women were disproportionately represented in the UK labour market and demonstrates how the proposed cuts to Universal Credit will only further exacerbate an already very real and growing problem.



WOMEN AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT IN THE UK: OVERVIEW



The UK has seen a significant rise in women accessing Universal Credit since the start of the pandemic. Data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) indicates the total amount of women claiming Universal Credit almost doubled (84%) in the year following the COVID-19 outbreak, an increase of nearly 120,000 women each month.

Accordingly, women continue to make up the majority of those accessing Universal Credit across the country. Most recent figures show 3.1 million women claimed at the end of July 2021, compared to 2.7 million men. These figures have risen drastically for women both in and out of employment. We know this result comprises many affecting issues, including the current composition of the UK labour market, the knock-on effects of higher levels of furlough and redundancy, and the growing level of insecure employment for women.

The figures of women claiming Universal Credit whilst in employment are particularly stark. Higher rates of redundancies have forced women into low paid, often unstable employment and in turn driven the figures of Universal Credit claims up significantly.

On average, women make up 58% of all those accessing Universal Credit whilst in employment, despite representing only 47.3% of the overall UK workforce. Since the start of the pandemic, there has been a 107% increase to women in employment accessing Universal Credit. When we consider the eligibility of claiming Universal Credit, we can assume this employment is low paid and most likely to entail zero-hour contracts.

Similarly, women accessing Universal Credit whilst not in employment has increased by 72% since the start of the pandemic, despite female economic activity reducing by only 0.2% in the same time period. Across the UK, nearly 800,000 more women not in employment are accessing Universal Credit than was the case pre-COVID.

WOMEN AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT IN LIVERPOOL CITY REGION: OVERVIEW

Although women accessing Universal Credit across the Liverpool City Region has consistently outnumbered men, the region has seen a startling increase in the number of women accessing Universal Credit since the start of the pandemic. With an increase of 67% nearly 91,000 women now access Universal Credit across the region compared to 82,000 men. This equates to nearly 3,000 more women each month accessing Universal Credit in the Liverpool City Region since the start of COVID-19.

Data from DWP highlights how the increase to female Universal Credit claimant amounts vary across the local authorities within Liverpool City Region. This is due to the composition of the local labour market. Local authorities that operate a higher number of businesses within the hospitality, retail, and tourism sectors, for example, will inevitably have seen a hike in the number of women accessing Universal Credit across their locality, as women account for a higher proportion of jobs in those sectors.



Women and Universal Credit in Liverpool City Region – In Employment

During the pandemic, all local authorities across LCR experienced a greater increase to women in employment accessing Universal Credit than men. We know more women have been made redundant during the pandemic, and at a faster rate, compared to their male counterparts. These higher rates of redundancies have forced thousands of women into low paid, insecure work, and increased the amount of employed women accessing the vital social security support provided by Universal Credit.

Women and Universal Credit in Liverpool City Region – Unemployment

Data from DWP indicates the Liverpool City Region saw a greater increase in women not in employment accessing Universal Credit during the pandemic than those in employment. Nearly 19,000 more women not in employment have accessed Universal Credit since the start of the pandemic across LCR; an increase of 55% despite female economic activity across the region reducing by only 1% within this time.

There is no disputing Universal Credit has provided a vital lifeline for residents across the Liverpool City Region during the pandemic.

WOMEN AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT IN LIVERPOOL CITY REGION: LOCAL AUTHORITY BREAKDOWN



HALTON

On average, Halton experienced an equal increase to men (39%) and women (38%) accessing Universal Credit during the pandemic. Halton has the highest rate of residents with no qualifications than any other borough of LCR.

More women (5,000) not in employment across the borough continue to access Universal Credit than men not in employment (4,700). We know this is predominantly due to Halton being recognised as a hub for advanced manufacturing, food, life sciences, and financial services, which are all typically male-predominant industries.

The borough has experienced a 49% increase to employed women accessing Universal Credit since the start of the pandemic. Data from DWP indicates nearly 4,000 employed women now access this vital social security support; this equates to 13% of all females employed in Halton.

ST HELENS

St Helens experienced a significant increase of women (69%) accessing Universal Credit during the pandemic compared to men (49%). Home to over 300 manufacturing businesses, the borough has a long and successful industrial and manufacturing history.

Whilst men make up the majority of those employed within these industries, nearly twice (94%) as many employed women in St Helens accessed Universal Credit during the pandemic. Women now make up the majority (53%) of those accessing Universal Credit across the borough.

WOMEN AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT IN LIVERPOOL CITY REGION: LOCAL AUTHORITY BREAKDOWN

SEFTON

On average, 63% more women accessed Universal Credit during the pandemic across Sefton. Home to Peel Ports, Sefton saw one of the highest increases to employed women accessing Universal Credit across LCR since the start of the pandemic. With an increase of 81%, over 6,000 employed women now access Universal Credit across Sefton. The borough also experienced a significant increase to women not in employment accessing Universal Credit during the pandemic compared to their male counterparts (51% more women compared to 39% more men).

We know these significant increases are due to the heavy reliance the borough places on the logistics industry, as well as the leisure and tourism sector. Accelerated growth of the logistics industry, which occupies predominantly men, coupled with the closure of the leisure and tourism sector, heavily occupied by women, has significantly impacted female employment rates and driven up rates of female Universal Credit claimants across the borough.

LIVERPOOL

Liverpool has seen the highest increase of women accessing Universal Credit whilst in employment of all local authorities - a staggering 118% increase from 5,600 to over 12,000 women. Liverpool's labour market is heavily reliant on sectors which women are overrepresented - including the hospitality, retail, and service and accommodation sectors - all of which were significantly impacted by COVID-19.



WOMEN AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT IN LIVERPOOL CITY REGION: LOCAL AUTHORITY BREAKDOWN



KNOWSLEY

Categorized as the second most deprived borough in England, women have been disproportionately affected by the impact of COVID-19 across Knowsley.

The borough experienced a higher increase of women (68%) accessing Universal Credit during the pandemic compared to men (49%). Nearly 11,000 women now access Universal Credit in Knowsley, compared to 8,500 men. We know this is primarily due to the size and scale of the manufacturing and logistics industries within the borough, which occupy majority male employees, coupled with the closure of sectors primarily occupied by women such as beauty, retail and hospitality.

WIRRAL

Wirral has faced a significant downturn to sectors most occupied by women during the pandemic, which has inevitably impacted the numbers of Universal Credit claimants within the region. Large retail and hospitality infrastructures in Wirral experienced mass closures at the height of the pandemic, leaving thousands of the people employed in those industries facing furlough or redundancy. This has had a significant impact on Universal Credit figures across the region - 16,000 women now access Universal Credit compared to 14,000 men.

With an increase of 71% nearly 3,000 employed women now access Universal Credit in Wirral. This equates to 11% of all employed women in Wirral compared to 6% of employed men. With a growing visitor economy and a large construction base for the Wirral Waters regeneration project, women continue to be disproportionately impacted.

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