Benefit claimants in East Sussex

January 2025

Some headline numbers for East Sussex:

In November 2024 there were 55,017 people in East Sussex claiming Universal Credit (UC), including 16,724 who were working (with or without additional work seeking requirements) and 11,076 who were searching for work. The number of UC claimants has risen by 14.9% (7,140 claimants) since November 2023.

In East Sussex in August 2024 there were 44,749 households on UC.

In May 2024 there were 75,161 working age people claiming at least one DWP benefit (including working people on UC or Housing Benefit, but not including those who claim Tax credits only), an increase of 2,604 claimants (up 4.4%) since May 2023.

45,623 people were claiming a benefit because they were not in work, either because they were unemployed or because of sickness or caring responsibilities, in May 2024. This figure was up 6.1% (2,604 more claimants) compared to a year previously.
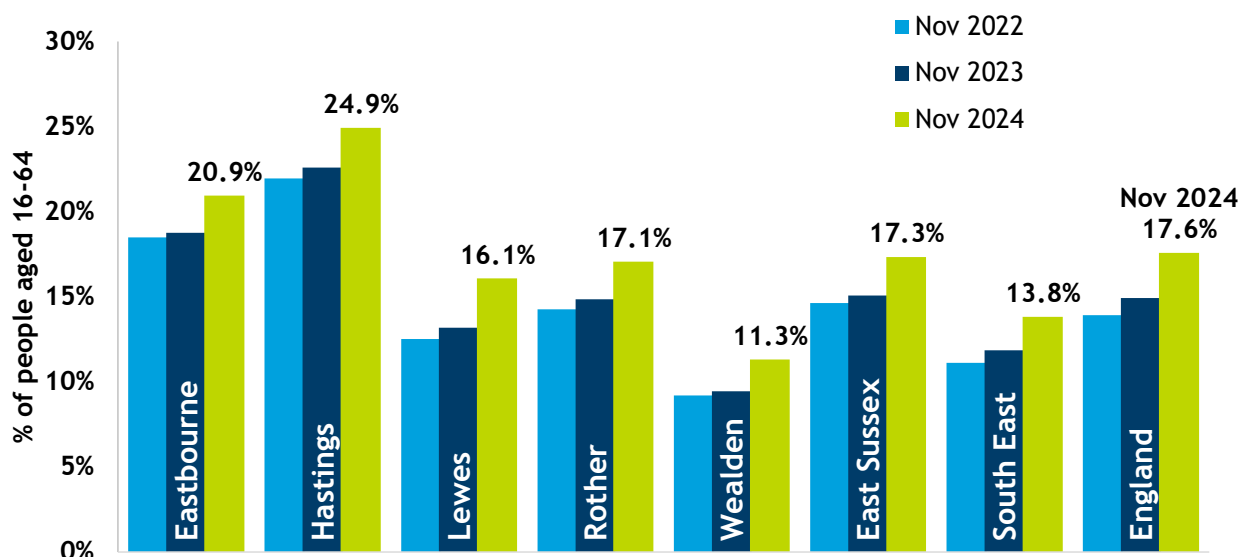
In November 2024 there were 11,610 people claiming UC or Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA) because they were unemployed, 3.7% of working age people. This was 195 more claimants than in October 2024 (up 1.7%) and up 940 claimants (8.8%) since November 2023.

There were 12,902 people claiming Pension Credit in East Sussex in May 2024, which was 9.2% of all people aged 66 and over.

In May 2024 there were 26,966 working age people claiming DLA/PIP because of sickness or disability, and a further 8,921 who were aged 65 and over and 7,334 who were aged under 16.

Universal Credit Claimants [note 1]

Figure 1: Claimant rate for Universal Credit, November 2022, 2023 and 2024

In East Sussex in November 2024 there were 55,017 people claiming UC. This is 17.3% of working age people (aged 16-64), close to the national (England) rate of 17.6% but below the regional rate of 13.8%. Numbers have increased by 14.9% since November 2023, a rise of 7,140 claimants over the year.

Claimant rates are highest in Hastings (24.9% in November 2024), where a quarter of working age people are claiming Universal Credit. Rates are also high in Eastbourne (20.9%) but considerably lower than average in Wealden (11.3%).

While the number of people who are searching for work has risen slightly over the last year (November 2023-2024), the number of claimants in the 'No work requirements' group continues to rise at a steady rate and in November 2024 made up more than 42% of all UC claimants, compared to 37.6% in November 2023. Some of the change in the numbers of claimants in different conditionality groups maybe due to the effects of people on legacy benefits being migrated onto UC (See box overleaf).

Figure 2: Universal Credit claimants by conditionality – November 2018-2024
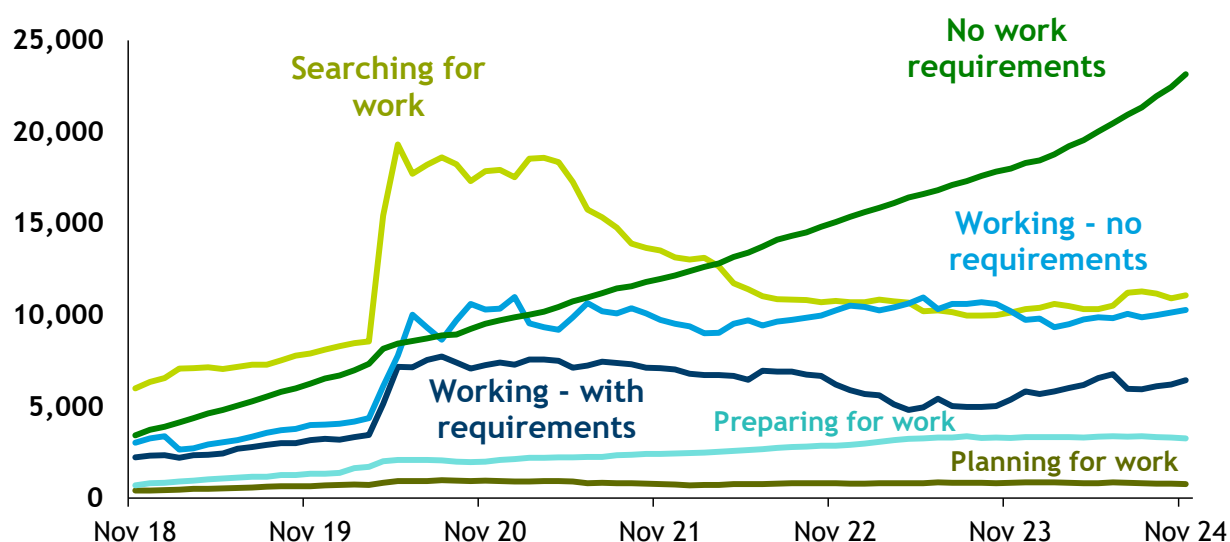
Table 1: Universal Credit claimants by conditionality in East Sussex, November 2024

Conditionality measure	Number of UC claimants	Percentage of all UC claimants
Searching for work	11,076	20.1%
Working without requirements	10,270	18.7%
Working with work-seeking requirements	6,454	11.7%
Preparing or planning for work	4,049	7.4%
No work requirements	23,165	42.1%
All claimants	**55,017**	**100.0%**

Box 1: Universal Credit: migration from other benefits

Universal Credit (UC) is gradually replacing tax credits, and a variety of other means-tested social security benefits, including income-based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support (IS) and Housing Benefit (HB). These are known as "Legacy benefits".

Universal Credit is now fully rolled out to all areas, and it is no longer possible for anyone to make a brand-new claim for tax credits or most other means-tested benefits. The only exception is for certain people who are granted refugee status. (People with sufficient contributions can still claim contributions-based JSA and ESA). Instead, people are expected to claim UC or pension credit depending on their circumstances. Although existing tax credit claimants can continue to renew their tax credits, the DWP's aspiration is that the majority of existing tax credit claimants will move to either Universal Credit or pension credit by the end of the 2024/25 tax year. The migration of ESA/Housing benefit claimants is planned for completion by the end of 2025.

In the 22-month period from July 2022 to May 2024, there was an increase of 1.2 million Universal Credit claimants, but in the same period, 735,000 people on legacy benefits were migrated to UC, representing just over 60% of all of these new UC claims (see note 1). It is likely that this pattern can also be seen in East Sussex.

Table 2: Definitions of conditionality groups

| Conditionality group	Claimant conditions
Working: no requirements	Individual or household earnings over the level at which conditionality applies.
Working: with requirements	In work but could earn more, or not working but has a partner with low earnings.
Searching for work	Not working, or with very low earnings. Claimant is required to take action to secure work—or more/better paid work.
Preparing for work	Expected to start preparing for future even with limited capability for work at the present time or has a child aged 2. (Aged 3-4 prior to April 2017).
Planning for work	Expected to work in the future. e.g. Lone parent/lead carer of child aged 1. (Aged 1-2 prior to April 2017).
No work requirements	Not expected to work at present. Health or caring responsibility prevents claimant from working or preparing for work.

Figure 3: Universal Credit claimants by conditionality in East Sussex, November 2022 – November 2024
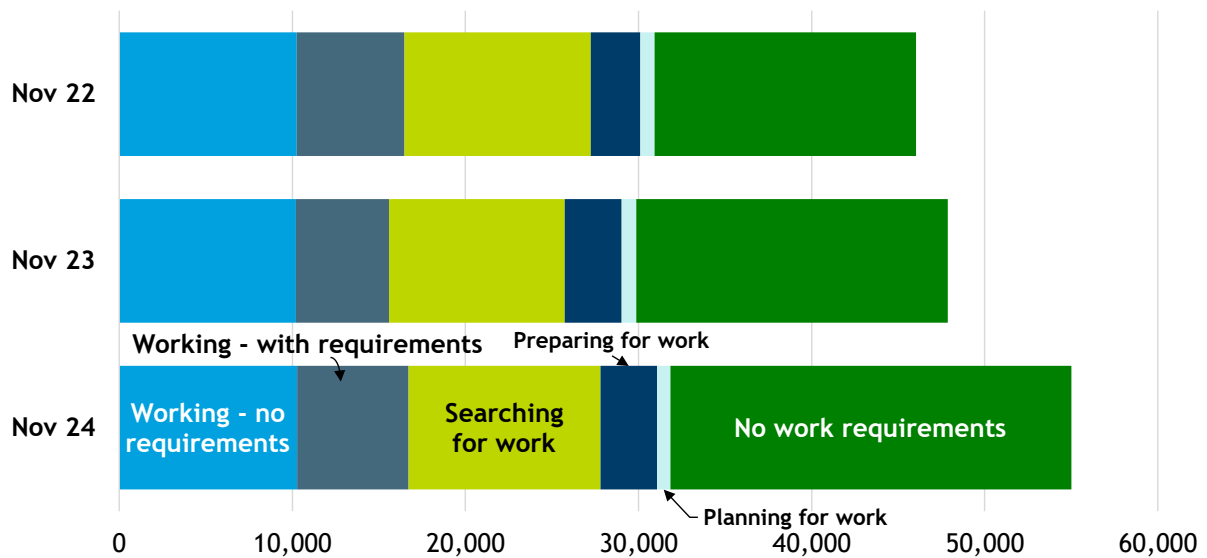
Employment indicator (see [note 2](#) for definition)

In October 2024, 36.9% of UC claimants (19,876 people) were in employment. This is down from 38.6% in October 2022. This data refers to the employment indicator which shows whether someone received any earnings within the whole UC assessment period, as opposed to the conditionality data seen above which indicates the employment status of the individual on the count date.

Figure 4: Employment indicator of Universal Credit claimants in East Sussex – October 2022, 2023 and 2024 [[note 2](#)]
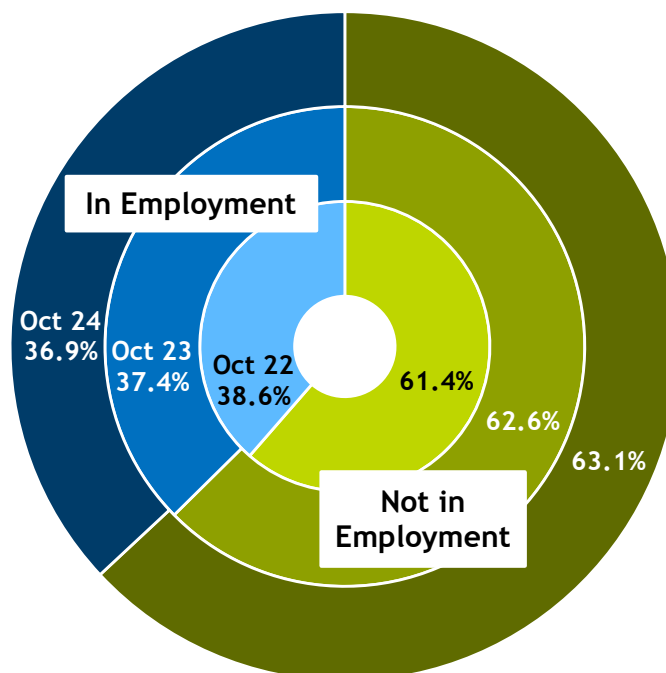
Universal Credit claimants by sex

In November 2024, there were 32,515 UC female UC claimants, 59% of all UC claimants. This compares to 46% of unemployed UC/JSA claimants who were female (see chart below). The percentage of UC claimants who are female is highest in Wealden (63%) and lowers in Eastbourne and Hastings (57%).

Figure 5: Male and female claimants of Universal Credit and UC/JSA unemployed claimant count, November 2019-2024, East Sussex
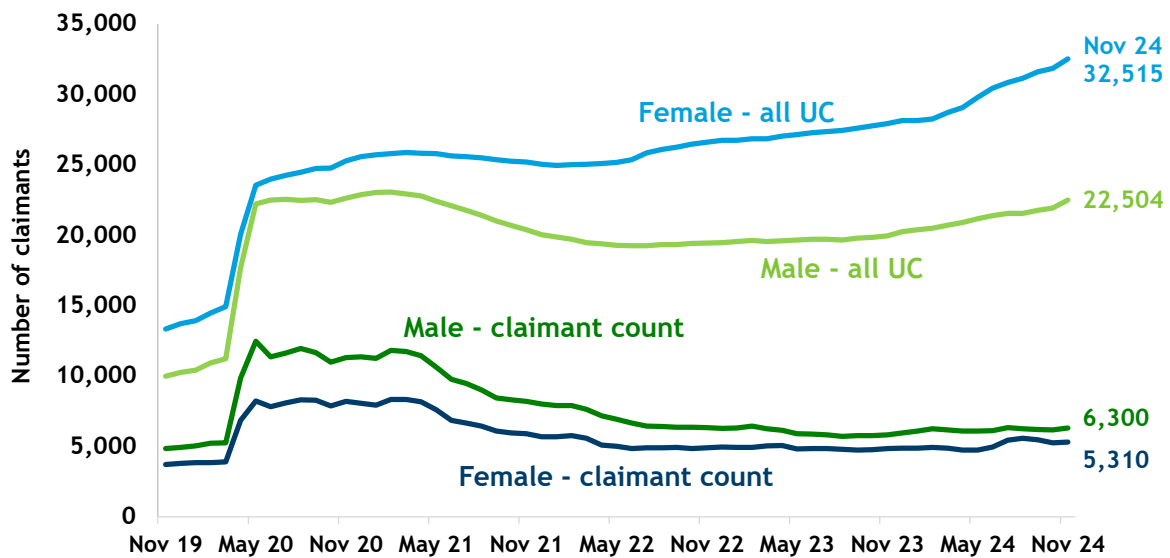
Duration of claim

In August 2023, half (49.6% or 27,268) of all UC claimants had been receiving the benefit for at least 3 years, and nearly 3 quarters of UC claimants (73% or 39,994 claimants) have been claiming the benefit for over 1 year.

Figure 6: Universal Credit claimants by duration in August 2023, East Sussex
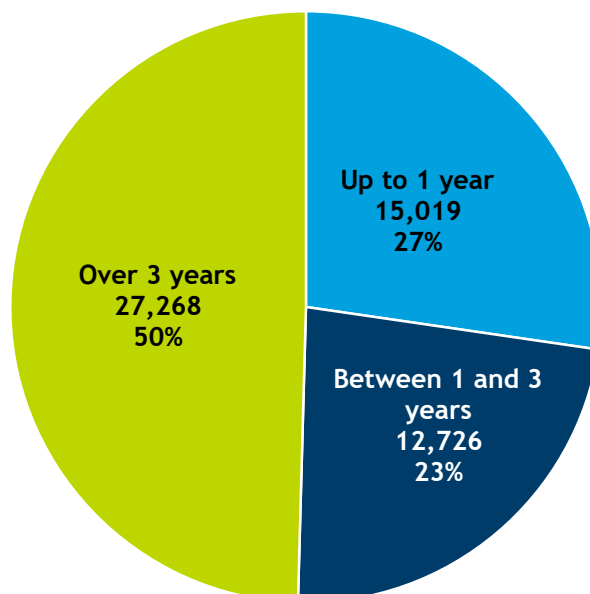
Households on Universal Credit

In East Sussex in August 2024 there were 44,749 households on UC. 47% of these UC claimants are single people with no children. 49% are families with children and 70% of these families are single parents. Only 19% of claimants are couples, of whom 79% have children. The number of single claimants without children rose by 1,564 claimants (8.0%) in the year to August 2024, but the number of single parents increased by 16.1% (2,118 claimants). Likewise, childless couples claiming UC increased at a slower rate (up 98 or 5.8%) in the same period compared to the rise in couples with children (up by 896 or 15.7%).

Figure 7: UC households in East Sussex, May 2022 and 2023, by family type
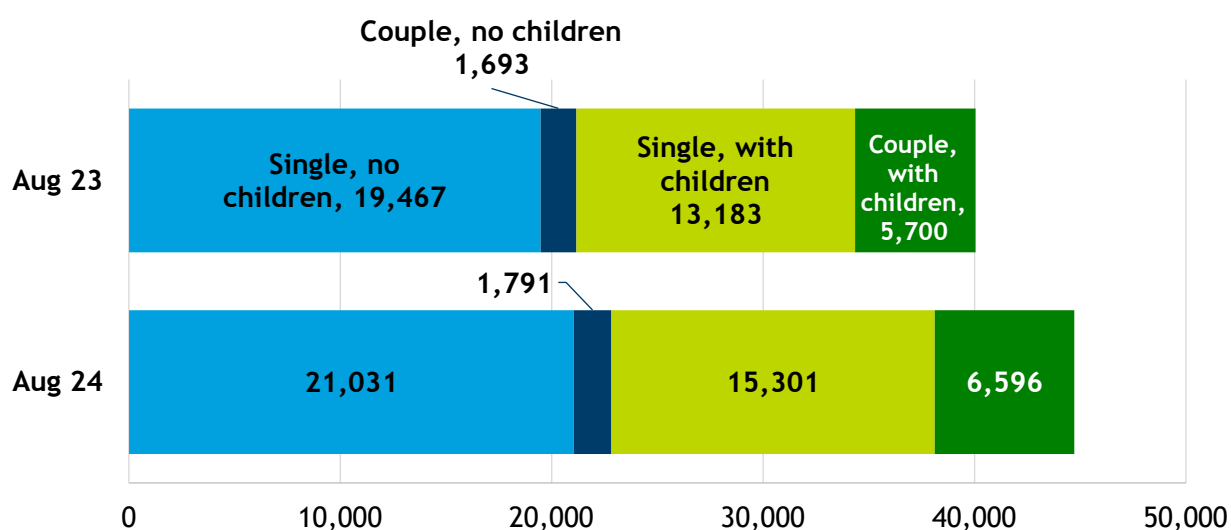
Table 3: Households on Universal Credit by family type, East Sussex, November 2024

Household type	UC households in November 2024	Percentage of all UC households
Single, no children	21,031	47.0%
Couple, no children	1,791	4.0%
Single, with children	15,301	34.2%
Couple, with children	6,596	14.7%
All UC households without children	22,822	51.0%
All UC households with children	21,897	48.9%
All households claiming UC	**44,749**	**100.0%**
All UC claimants	**55,017**	

Claimant count [note 3]

There were 11,610 Unemployed JSA and UC claimants in East Sussex in November 2024 (3.7% of the working age population). This is lower than the England rate of 4.2%, but higher than the South East Region (3.2%). In East Sussex numbers have been rising – up 1.7% since October 2024 and up 8.8% since November 2023.

Figure 8: Claimant rates in East Sussex, districts and comparators, November 2022, 2023 and 2024
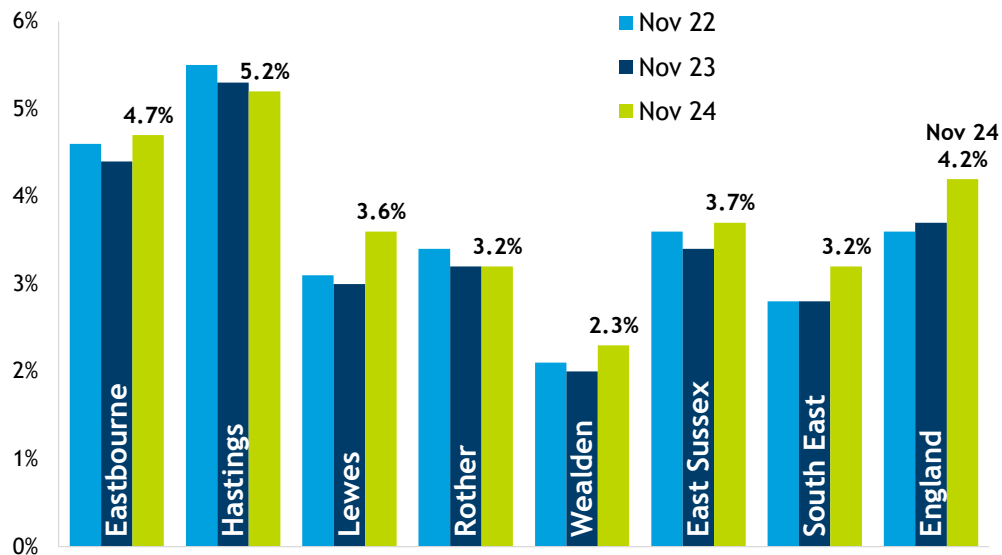
Unemployed claimant figures rose by 1.7% in East Sussex in the year to November 2024, from 10,545 to 11,610. This compared to a rise of 15.5% in England as a whole, and 13.2% in the South East region over the same period. But in the month to November 2024, numbers rose by 1.7% in the county, compared to a rise of just 0.2% regionally and nationally.

Figure 9: Claimant rates in East Sussex districts and comparator areas, November 2019 – November 2024
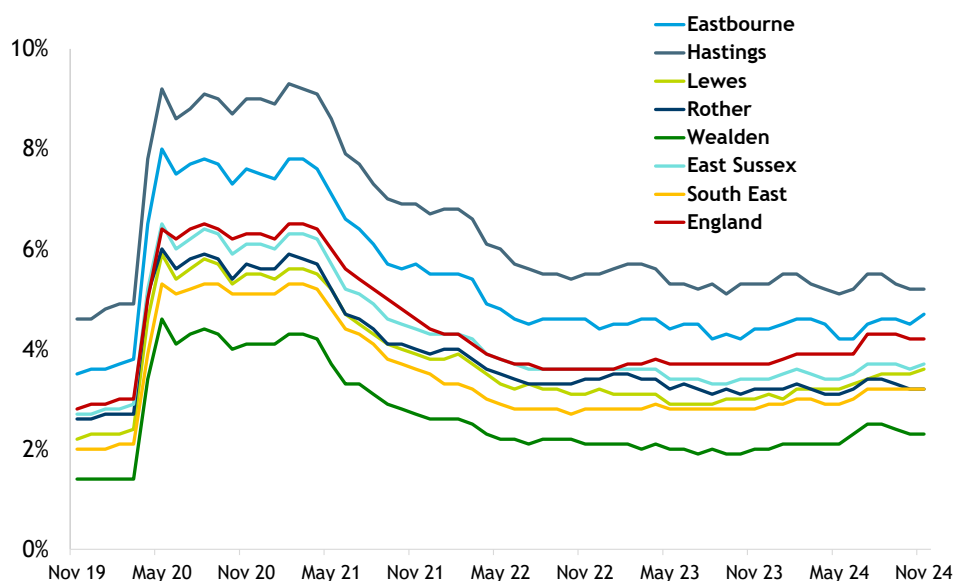
In November 2024, 6.0% of people aged 18-24 in East Sussex (2,015 young people) were claiming UC/JSA up from 5.9% in November 2023. These East Sussex figures are higher than the national average rate of 5.5% among young claimants in England in November 2024. Figures are particularly high in Hastings, where 9.4% of young people are claiming UC/JSA, including 11.4% of young males. But in November 2024, the number of young people claiming in Hastings fell by 9.8% compared to the previous year, from 615 to 555.

Figure 10: Claimant rates in East Sussex, all working age and broad age groups, November 2021-2024
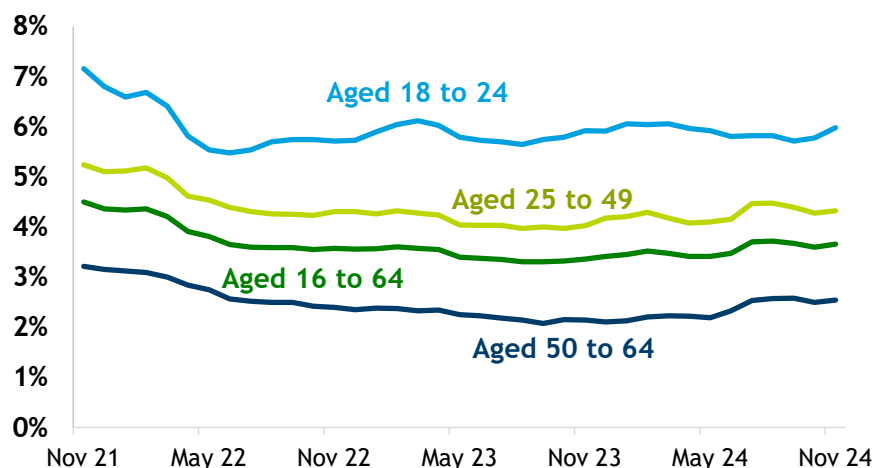
Figure 11: Claimant rates among young people aged 18-24 by sex in East Sussex, districts and comparators, November 2024
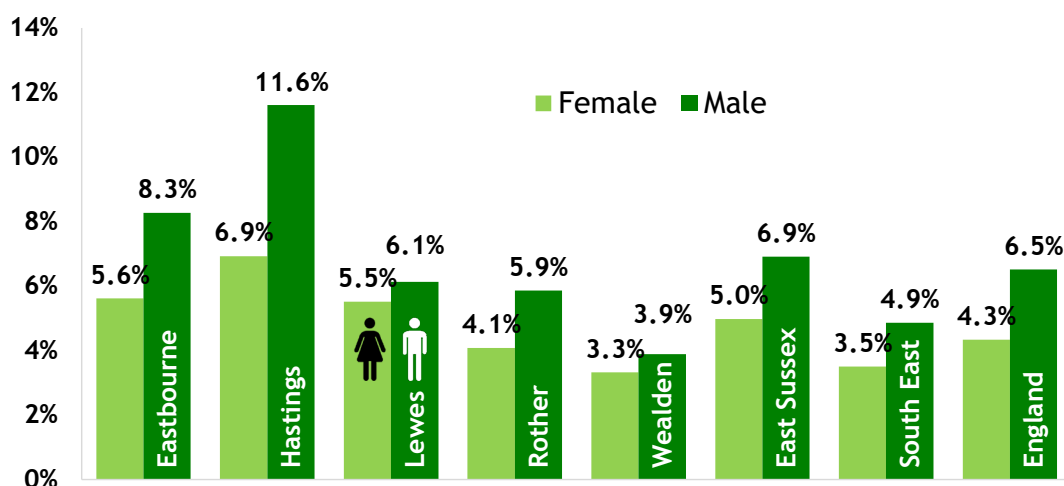
Claimant counts rose in all districts in the month to November 2024 except Hastings which saw a decline of 1.0% (down 30). The biggest increase was seen in Eastbourne (up 4.7%) with an increase of 130 claimants in the month to November 2024, but there was also a significant rise in Lewes (up 3.8% or 75 claimants).

24 wards in the county now have a JSA/UC claimant rate higher than the national average of 4.2%. This includes 9 wards in Hastings, 6 in Lewes, 5 in Eastbourne, 3 in Rother, and 1 in Wealden.
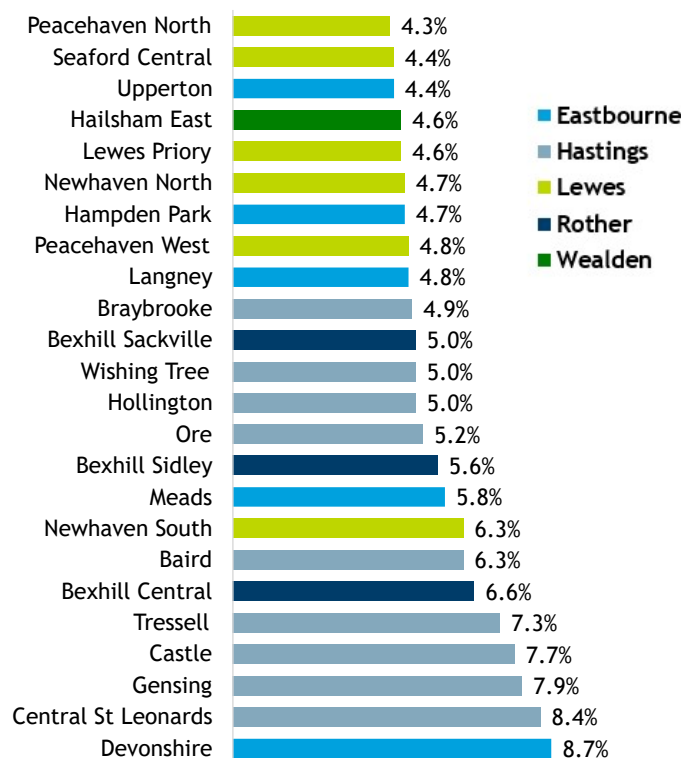
The ward with the highest rate is now Devonshire in Eastbourne which overtook Central St Leonards in November 2024.

47 wards saw an increase in claimant numbers in the month to November, while 26 wards saw a decline, and 35 saw no change.

A higher proportion of unemployed UC/JSA claimants are male (4.1% of working age males), compared to females (3.3%). This compares to overall Universal Credit claimants where female claimants considerably outnumber male claimants. 19.8% of working age females are claiming Universal Credit in all conditionality groups, compared to 14.4% of males. (see chart on page 5).

There was a rise in both male and female claimants in East Sussex, with male claimants up 140 (2.3%) in the month to November 2024 and female claimants up by 55 (1.0%) in the same period. However, since November 2023, male claimants have increased by 475 (8.2%), compared to a rise of 465 (up 9.6%) female claimants.

Figure 12: Claimant rates in November 2024 for all East Sussex wards above England rate (4.2%)

Legend:
- Eastbourne
- Hastings
- Lewes
- Rother
- Wealden

Ward	Rate
Peacehaven North	4.3%
Seaford Central	4.4%
Upperton	4.4%
Hailsham East	4.6%
Lewes Priory	4.6%
Newhaven North	4.7%
Hampden Park	4.7%
Peacehaven West	4.8%
Langney	4.8%
Braybrooke	4.9%
Bexhill Sackville	5.0%
Wishing Tree	5.0%
Hollington	5.0%
Ore	5.2%
Bexhill Sidley	5.6%
Meads	5.8%
Newhaven South	6.3%
Baird	6.3%
Bexhill Central	6.6%
Tressell	7.3%
Castle	7.7%
Gensing	7.9%
Central St Leonards	8.4%
Devonshire	8.7%

Eastbourne

The claimant count increased by 130 (4.7%) in the month to November 2024. The claimant rate at 4.7% is well above the national average of 4.2%. Devonshire ward had the highest rate in the district, and the county, at 8.7%, but rates in Meads (5.8%), Hampden Park (4.7%) and Upperton (4.4%) are also higher than the national average. All wards except St Anthony's in Eastbourne saw a rise in claimant numbers in the year to November 2024.

Hastings

The claimant count decreased in Hastings by 30 (1.0%) in the month to November 2024, and has seen a 1.0% decrease in the year since November 2023, but the district continues to have the highest rate of claimant count unemployment at 5.2%. 9 out of 16 wards have a rate above the national average, with the very highest rates in Central St Leonards (8.4%), Gensing (7.9%) and Castle (7.7%), although Central St Leonards no longer has the highest claimant rate in the county. There were falls in 8 wards in the month to November 2024 with 3 wards seeing an increase and 5 wards remaining stable this month.

Lewes

Lewes saw an increase of 75 claimants (3.8%) in November 2024 and the figure is now 20.6% higher than in November 2023. 6 wards now have a rate above the national average: with the highest rates in Newhaven South (6.3%), Peacehaven West (4.8%) and Newhaven North (4.7%). Numbers rose in 9 wards, fell in 4 others and were stable elsewhere in the month to November 2024. Over the year, 17 out of 21 Lewes wards saw an increase in claimants.

Rother

The number of unemployed claimants increased by 15 (0.9%) in the month to November 2024, and are 3.5% higher than in November 2023. 3 wards, all in Bexhill, have rates above the national average, Bexhill Central (6.6%), Bexhill Sidley (5.6%) and Bexhill Sackville (5.0%). In the month to November 2024 there were rises in claimant numbers in 10 wards, and declines in 6 wards, while rates remained stable in all other wards in Rother.

Wealden

Claimant numbers in Wealden rose by 10 (0.5%) in November 2024 and are now 16.8% higher than in November 2023. At 2.3%, the claimant rate is well below the national average (4.2%), with only one ward having a rate above – Hailsham East, (4.6%). Numbers rose in 16 wards and fell in 8 others in the month to November 2024. But since November 2023, the number of claimants has risen in 28 Wealden wards and fallen in 5, remaining stable elsewhere. In Crowborough St Johns, which saw an unusual rise in claimant numbers in the period April-October 2024, peaking at 7.4% in June 2024, rates are now near to their previous level at 2.5%.

Claimants of other DWP benefits

All benefits and out of work benefits

In May 2024 there were 75,161 working age people claiming at least one DWP benefit in East Sussex, (23.7% of the working age population) of whom 45,623 were on at least one Out-of-work benefit (14.4% of working age)

The Out-of-work benefits figure is 6.1% higher than in May 2023, an increase of 2,604 claimants over the year. This compares to a 1.1% rise in the number of unemployed JSA/UC claimants over the same period [note 4].

**Figure 13: Percentage of working age people claiming any DWP benefit and Out-of-work benefits in May 2024 in districts of East Sussex and comparators**

Legend:
- Out of work benefits
- All benefits

District	Out of work benefits	All benefits
Eastbourne	17.1%	27.8%
Hastings	21.6%	33.0%
Lewes	12.8%	22.4%
Rother	14.6%	23.6%
Wealden	9.1%	16.2%
East Sussex	14.4%	23.7%
South East	10.6%	18.5%
England	14.0%	23.3%
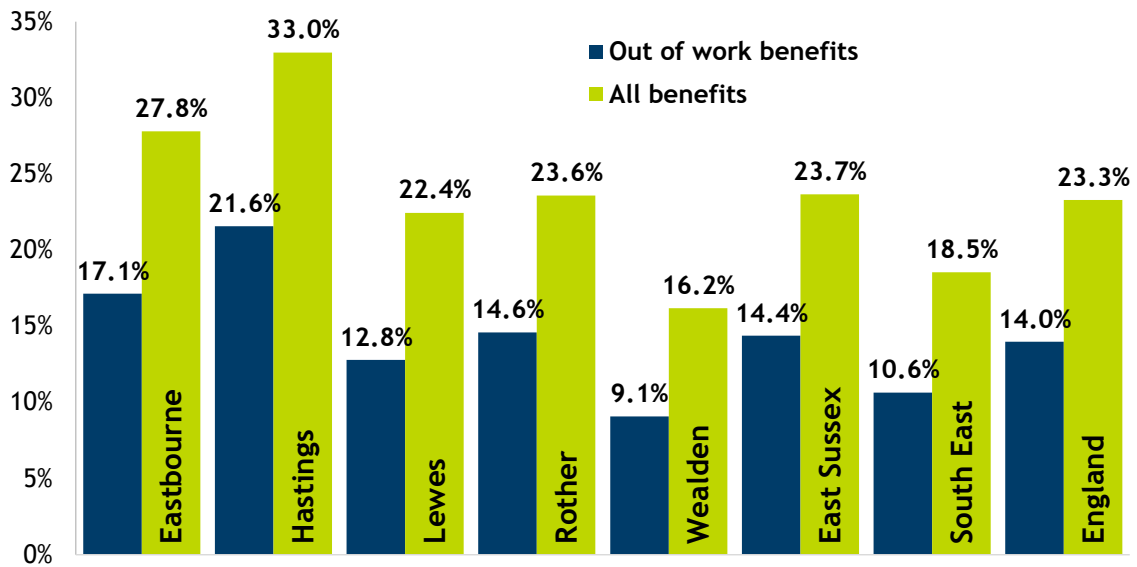
DLA and PIP claimants

Figure 14: DLA and PIP claimants in East Sussex by age, May 2019 to May 2024 [note 6]

May 19: 31,163
May 24: 43,211

Categories: Aged 65 and over, Aged 16 to 64, Aged under 16
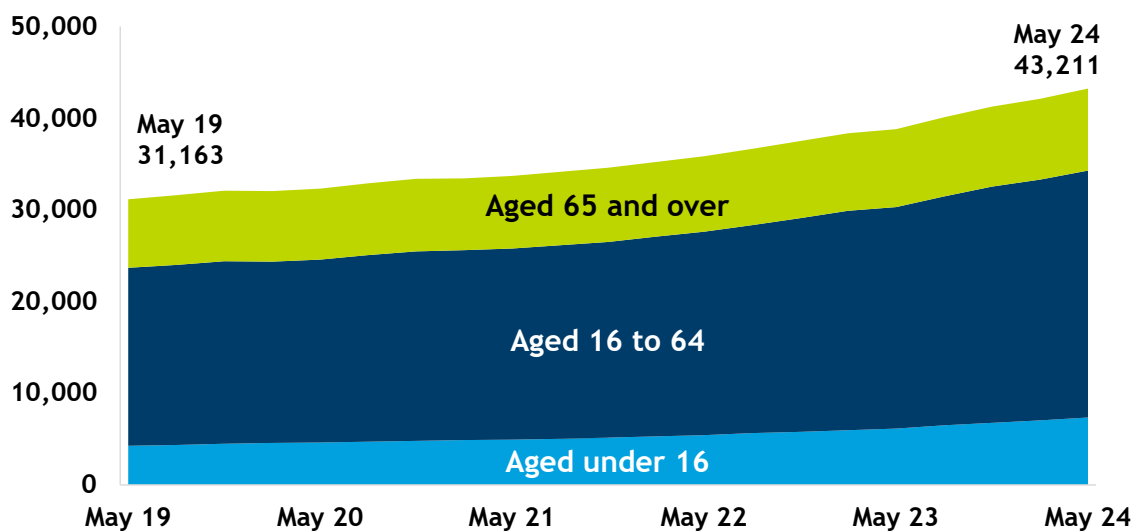
In May 2024 there were 43,211 claimants of the main non-means-tested disability benefits, Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which is slowly replacing DLA for claimants aged 16 and over.

The number of DLA and PIP claimants has continued to rise at a steady rate over the last 5 years and in May 2024 was 8.5% higher than the previous year. But while there was a 11.5% increase among those aged 16-64, the number of claimants who were under 16 rose by 19.9% in the year to May 2023, and those aged 65+ increased by just 0.6%.

Rates of claiming DLA and PIP among working age people (aged 16-64) are higher in East Sussex than in England as a whole. In May 2024, 8.5% of working age people (26,966) in the county were claiming DLA/PIP, compared to 7.4% nationally, and in Hastings, 11.7% of working age people receive DLA or PIP.

Table 4: DLA and PIP claimants in May 2024

	Total DLA/PIP claimants	**Working age DLA/PIP claimants**	**% of working age claiming DLA/PIP**
Eastbourne	9,296	5,962	9.8%
Hastings	9,873	6,529	11.7%
Lewes	7,590	4,665	8.1%
Rother	7,394	4,493	9.0%
Wealden	9,059	5,305	5.7%
East Sussex	**43,211**	**26,966**	**8.5%**
South East	574,688	354,985	6.1%
England	4,318,506	2,700,028	7.4%

Legacy Benefits

Under the legacy benefits regime (before Universal Credit) some people could claim a number of different benefits (known as 'legacy benefits'), so some of the following groups will overlap.

## Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Incapacity Benefit (IB)

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) (which superseded Incapacity benefit (IB) in 2008) was the main benefit for all people who were unable to work due to sickness or disability until Universal Credit began to replace it for claimants with low incomes from 2018 onwards. However, people who have paid sufficient National Insurance contributions but do not meet the criteria for means tested benefits can still make a claim for ESA.

People can receive DLA or PIP alongside ESA/IB or Universal Credit (health related).

In East Sussex (May 2024) there were 11,871 people claiming Employment and Support Allowance and a further 258 were claiming Incapacity Benefit [note 4]. The number of people claiming income-based ESA continues to decline as no new claimants move onto ESA as they now claim UC – numbers of those with any means tested element of ESA fell by 9.4% between May 2023 and May 2024. However the number of people claiming contributions based ESA is not falling, and increased by 2.4% in the year to May 2024.

Figure 15: Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants in East Sussex by type of claim, May 2018 -May 2024
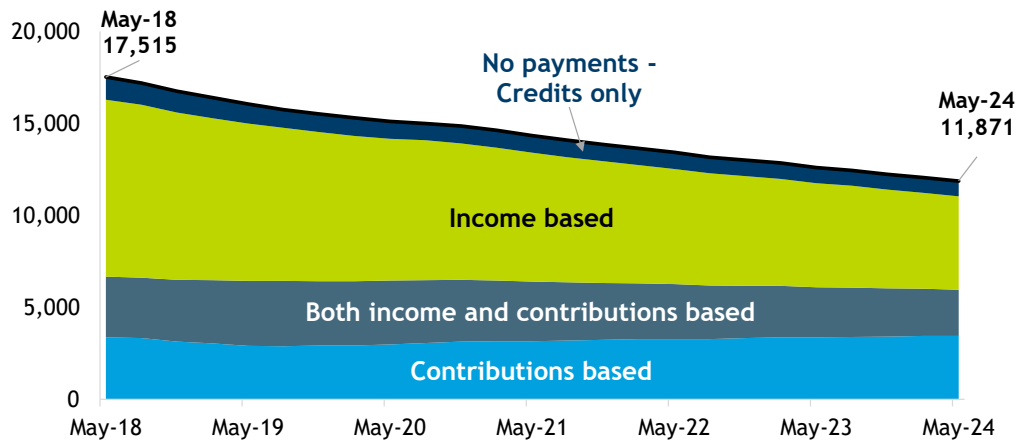

Income Support and Carers Allowance

709 people were claiming Income Support (IS) in May 2024, of whom 281 were lone parents, and 417 were carers. 7,071 working age people were claiming carers allowance.

Housing Benefit

In August 2024 there were 17,747 households claiming Housing Benefits in the county, of whom 7,759 were of working age, and 9,986 were aged 65 and over.

A further 27,831 Universal Credit claimant households claim some support for their housing, 57% of whom were in private tenancies. So a total of 35,593 working age households are in receipt of some kind of housing support. Housing support does not always cover the whole of a claimant's rent (see below)

Figure 16: Working age households on Housing Benefit and UC rented housing element, in East Sussex, August 2015-August 2024 [note 5]
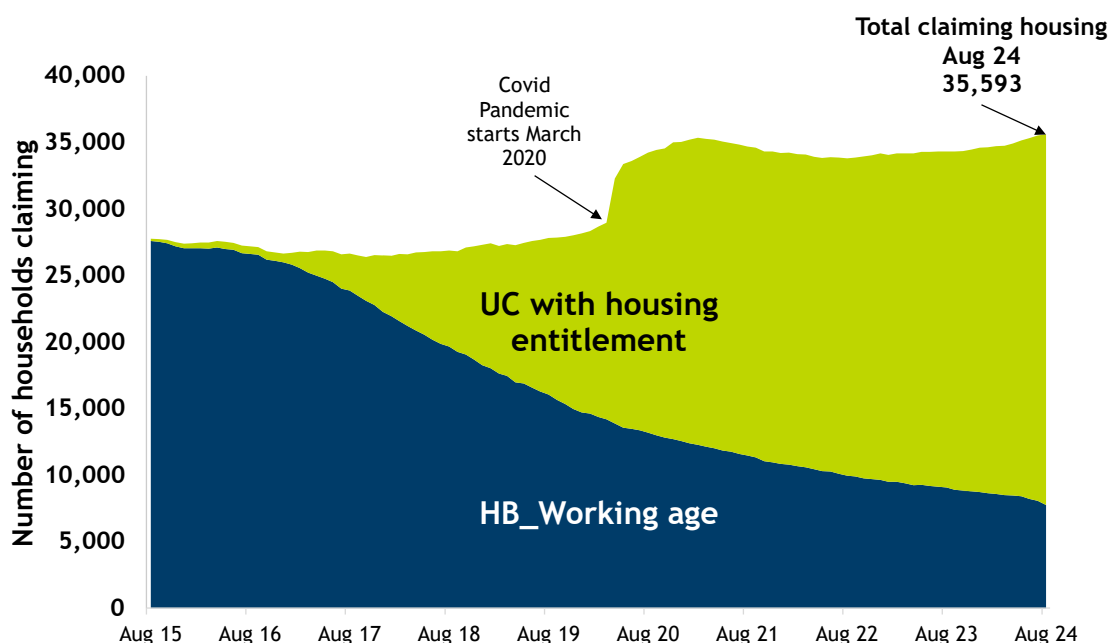
Claimants on particularly low incomes

In East Sussex there are:

- 6,762 households whose LHA element of UC does not cover the private rent they pay (August 2024).

- 1,424 households who have their UC reduced due to reductions in housing element for social tenants who are considered to have "spare bedrooms" (commonly known as "bedroom tax"

- 590 households whose HB is reduced due to "spare room subsidy" (August 2024).

- 1,092 households (HB or UC) whose benefit is capped to £1,667 pcm regardless of the rent they pay or the size of their family (August 2024)

- 692 UC claimants receive a lower amount of benefit because they have been sanctioned (August 2024).

- Assuming these groups do not overlap, in August 2024 there were around 10,560 people in the county who did not get sufficient benefits to cover their needs including their housing costs.

- Data is not available on the number of households on Housing Benefit whose LHA does not cover their private rent.

Glossary for data above:

UC: Universal Credit; LHA: Local Housing Allowance; HB: Housing Benefit; PCM: per calendar month

> ## Box 2: Why are some claimants receiving particularly low amounts of benefit which may mean they experience hardship?
>
> Welfare benefits are supposed to be set at levels to provide sufficient income for people to be able to meet their very basic needs, such as rent payments, utility bills, and nutrition. However, a number of factors mean that many people who rely on benefits do not receive the minimum income needed to cover these expenses.
>
> Firstly, welfare benefit increases have not kept up with inflation. There was a four-year benefit freeze between 2016 and 2020 which meant that in these years, benefits fell in value in terms of their purchasing power. Despite the return to the uprating of benefits based on inflation, which was reinstated in 2020, the use of previous September 2023 inflation rates to increase benefits in April 2024 during a period of rising inflation meant the period during which benefits were either frozen or uprated at a level below current inflation was extended. This increase has not bought the rate of benefits into line with the rise in living costs. Furthermore, many claimant households will fail to see any increase in their income following the uprating because the benefit cap limits their total entitlement. The benefit cap was uprated in line with inflation in 2023 for the first time since 2016, but has not increased in 2024.
>
> Secondly, a number of claimants receive less than the minimum that is calculated to meet their family's needs because of different factors:

1) Restrictions on the amount of rent support they receive so that it does not cover all the rent due, via restrictions to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) for private tenants, or removal of Spare Room Subsidy ('Bedroom tax') for social tenants (applies to both UC and Housing Benefit). This means that claimants have to use some of the money they are nominally given for bills and food to pay their rent. If a claimant in this situation is evicted for non-payment of rent, they are generally considered to be 'intentionally homeless' and so not entitled to any support with finding housing.

2) Some larger families are subject to the 'Benefit cap', whereby the maximum total amount of benefits a family can receive (outside London) is now £22,020 per year (£1,835 per month (pcm) – increased from £1,667 in 2023) including all housing support, regardless of the size of the family. The average rent for a 3-bedroom property in the county varies across the districts, but is highest in Lewes (£1,389 pcm) and Wealden (£1,384), meaning that a family with three or four children in a three-bed home in Lewes might be left with just £446 per month for all bills, food, etc. The OFGEM capped energy price at January 2025 was £1,738 per year, or £148 per month for an average household.

3) People who do not meet one or more conditions of their benefit claim without good reason, such as failing to undertake sufficient work-seeking activity, can have their benefit stopped or reduced. This is a benefit sanction, which reduces their standard benefit allowance (not including extra money for children or housing costs) for a period of time from 1 week up to 3 years if regime breaches continue.

Another issue is the number of claimants who have been claiming for long periods of time. While a household may be able to manage with reduced income from benefits alone for a short period, it is more difficult to cope when they have had to rely on benefits for a protracted period

Pension age claimants

All benefits paid to people of Pension age ([see note 8](#))

In East Sussex there were 139,703 claimants of Pension Age (PA: 66 years and over) in May 2024. Around three quarters of all Pension age claimants (73% or 101,037 people) are claiming State Pension only, while 38,666 are claiming at least one other benefit, which includes Pension Credit, Disability benefits (Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Attendance Allowance (AA) and Industrial Injuries Disability Benefit (IIDB)), Housing Benefit, and Carers allowance (CA).

27% of claimants aged 66+have at least one additional benefit in addition to their State Pension. 24,608 of PA claimants are on at least one disability benefit. Note that most of these disability benefits are not means-tested. DLA/PIP claimants have to have made their claim before age 65 in order to receive it when they reach age 66. Disabled older claimants can apply for Attendance Allowance for help with daily activities.

There are 1,905 PA claimants in East Sussex who receive no state pension (but get other benefits including Pension Credit).

Pension Credit ([see note 9](#))

Pension Credit gives claimants extra money to help with living costs if they are over State Pension age and on a low income. Pension Credit can also help with housing costs such as ground rent or service charges and might mean extra help if they are a carer, severely disabled, or responsible for a child or young person. A person can get Pension Credit even if they have other income, a pension, savings or own their own home.

There were 12,902 PC claimants in East Sussex in May 2024, which was 9.2% of all people aged 66 and over. 69% of PC claimants are aged over 75, and two thirds of all PC claimants are women. Hastings has the highest rate of PC claimants – 16.1% of people aged 66+ are claiming pension credit.

Figure 17: Number of claimants of Pension Credit in May 2024
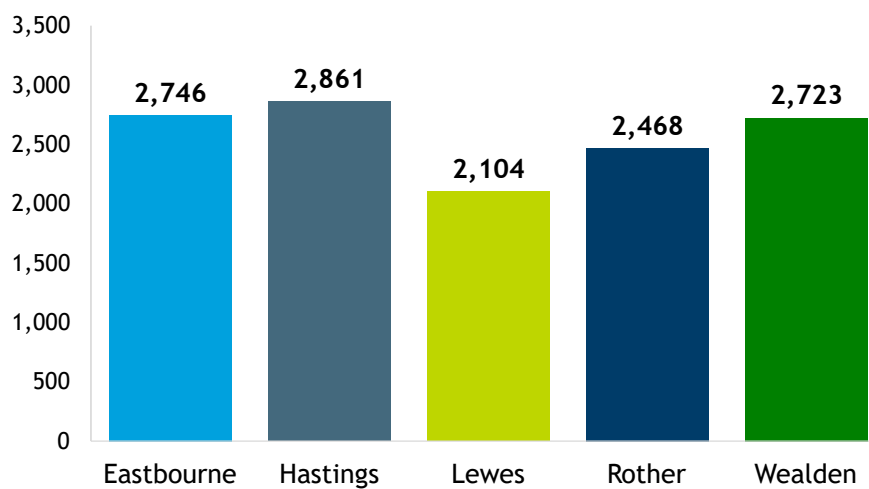
Figure 18: Pension Credit claimant rate by sex, districts and comparators, May 2024
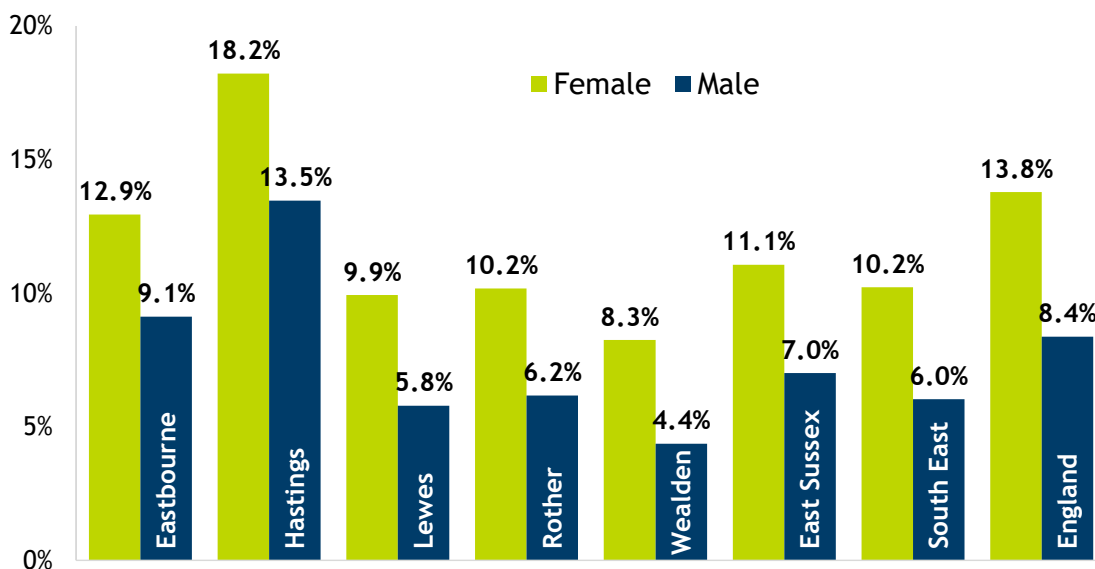
State Pension

In May 2024 there were 138,677 people in the county claiming their State Pension. 70% are paid the pre-2016 type pension, and 30% are paid New State Pension which was introduced in 2016. 26% of people do not receive the full amount of State Pension, but only 1% receive less that 50% of the basic amount. People who receive a lower amount of State Pension can apply for Pension Credit if they do not have sufficient other sources of income.

Further information and notes

This briefing analyses a variety of different benefits data, which is released by DWP for different time periods. UC and UC/JSA claimant count data is published on a monthly basis with data for the previous month, and the most recent data available is for November 2024, although employment indicator data for UC is only available for October 2024. Other benefits data is available for different time periods (e.g. Benefit Combinations is available for May 2024, Housing Benefits for August 2024). Please take care to ensure you understand that the data reflects how the situation was at that time period. Where we have combined data in one chart we have used the same time period.

Note 1

Universal Credit (UC) is replacing six benefits ("legacy benefits"): Income-based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA); income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA); Income Support (IS); Housing Benefit (HB); Working Tax Credit (WTC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC). Universal Credit is for people of working age who are on low incomes whether or not they work. All new income-related benefit claimants of working age now claim UC, and claimants of legacy benefits are being migrated to UC over the next year or so. The House of Commons Library has produced a useful note about the progress of this migration: Managed migration: Completing Universal Credit Rollout (December 2024)
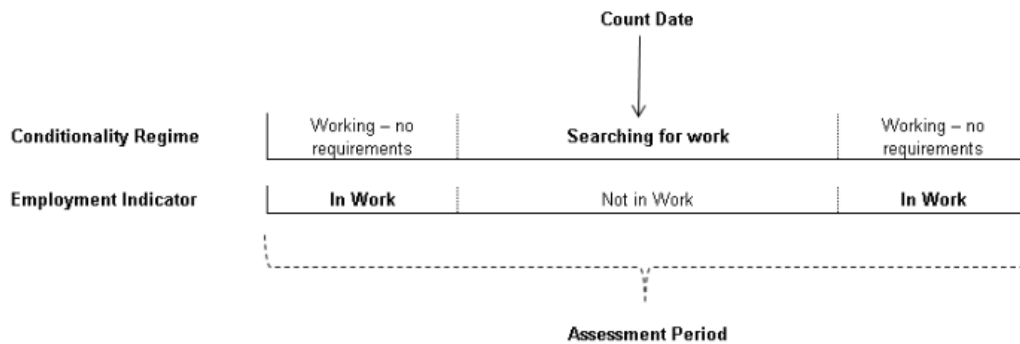
Note 2

The Employment Indicator for Universal Credit shows whether earnings were recorded within an individuals' completed UC assessment period closest to the count date. Employment detail is not yet available for November 2024.

The Conditionality Regime is based on an individuals circumstances on the count date.

It is therefore possible for an individual to be 'In Work' using one measure and 'Not in Work' using the other as shown in the example below. Care should be taken when interpreting any tables created by cross-tabulating these two variables.

This diagram shows how the two measures are related.

Count Date

Conditionality Regime	Working – no requirements	Searching for work	Working – no requirements
Employment Indicator	In Work	Not in Work	In Work

Assessment Period

Note 3

The Claimant Count measures the number of people who have made claims for benefits (either JSA or UC) for reasons of unemployment. Most new claimants for benefit are covered by Universal Credit, but there are some claimants who do not qualify for UC because they have savings of over £16,000, but may be entitled to contributions-based JSA which is not means-tested.

The Full Service of UC has been rolled out since 2018. This means that all new claimants of means-tested benefits claim UC rather than the legacy benefits including JSA, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support, Housing Benefits and Tax Credits. People claiming non-means tested benefits such as contributions-based JSA and ESA, are still able to apply for and claim these benefits.

To qualify for JSA or UC as a job seeker, claimants must meet certain eligibility criteria which include being available for and actively seeking work, although they may work less than 16 hours per week and still be eligible if their earnings are very low. The count of JSA claimants includes those claiming only National Insurance credits.

The Claimant rate is defined as the number of claimants resident in an area expressed as a percentage of the working age population resident in that area which includes all people aged 16-64. Rates for different age groups use the population of that age group. Population figures are derived from the latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-year population estimates, which are currently available for 2023 for the county and districts, and 2022 for wards.

The Claimant Count is often used as an indicative measure of unemployment as it provides frequently updated information for a range of geographies. Care should be taken not to confuse this with ONS' official labour market statistics which use the International Labour Organisation's definition of the unemployment rate, which includes all those aged 16 plus who are out-of-work, but actively seeking work, including those claiming no benefits, as a percentage of all Economically Active people aged 16 and over.

Note 4 – Benefit combinations

The aim of the DWP's Benefit Combinations dataset is to look at the whole, combined picture for all DWP benefit claimants. Some people who claim benefits receive more than one type (for example DLA, IB and HB) depending on when they claimed and the reason for their claim, so combining individual claimant counts for different benefits may count the same claimant more than once. The Benefit Combinations data has been published by

DWP to provide statistics on the number of individuals claiming a DWP benefit in total (i.e., counting each individual claimant only once within the data). The data is available from [DWP's StatXplore website](), and profiles using some of this data are available on ESiF.

Claimants who are out -of-work in the Benefit Combinations dataset include all those claimants who are claiming and not in work (or searching for work), which includes all people claiming Universal Credit who are not in work (with or without work-seeking requirements), including those who are searching for work, those who have no work requirements, and those who are planning for or preparing for work. It also includes JSA, ESA and IB and Income Support claimants.

For household level benefits (UC, PC and HB), both the main claimant and partner (if applicable) are included in the statistics as separate individuals. This differs from publication elsewhere of PC and HB statistics where figures show number of claims regardless of whether for a single person or a couple. HMRC administered benefits such as Tax Credits and Child Benefit are not included in the statistics, but households who receive Tax Credits are in the process of being migrated Universal Credit in 2025.

Definitions

A DWP benefit claimant is defined for the purposes of these statistics as the individual who is claiming benefit on their own behalf, or in the case of Universal Credit, Pension Credit and Housing Benefit, an individual who is part of a single or couple claim for benefit. An individual is not counted as a benefit claimant if they are a beneficiary of another persons benefit claim but are not claiming any benefit in their own right.

DLA/PIP/AA

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a non-means tested benefit for disabled people who need assistance with personal care or mobility. From 2013 DWP started to replace DLA for working age people with Personal Independence Payment (PIP), and all new claims by working age people are now made to PIP rather than DLA, while existing DLA claimants aged less than 65 on 8th April 2013 are gradually being invited to switch to PIP. However, people can continue to receive PIP or DLA after reaching state pension age if they continue to satisfy the entitlement conditions. Attendance Allowance (AA) is a benefit for people at state pension age or over who are so severely disabled that they need a great deal of help with personal care or supervision. Essentially these three benefits each offer help for similar sets of circumstances, although under slightly different qualifying conditions. As such they have been banded together and the benefit combinations statistics simply show PIP/DLA for Working Age individuals, or PIP/DLA/AA for State Pension Age individuals, where the individual could be on any of the benefits shown at the reference date.

Incapacity Benefits

ESA/IB/SDA/IS(IB) are benefits paid to people who are too sick or disabled to work. Incapacity Benefit (IB), Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA) (for those under pension age), and Income Support for those claiming on the basis of incapacity (IS(IB)) closed to new claimants from 2008, with existing claimants migrated to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) on a rolling program since that date. Migration is not yet fully completed. Essentially these four benefits each offer help for similar sets of circumstances, although

under slightly different qualifying conditions. As such they have been banded together where at the reference date the individual could be on any of ESA; IB and/or SDA (separately or in combination); and IS where IB and/or SDA is also in payment.

ESA can be contributions-based (see JSA below) or income-based, but income-based ESA is being replaced by Universal Credit, with managed migration to UC for all ESA claimants planned for completion by 2026.

Income Support (IS) and Pension Credit (PC)

IS is a legacy benefit for those claiming on the basis of incapacity (IS(IB)) or because of parenting or caring responsibilities. IS(IB) closed to new claimants from 2008, with most existing claimants migrated to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Migration is not yet fully completed. Benefit Combinations statistics include IS(IB) cases in the INCAP category defined above. Those claiming Income Support on the basis of something other than incapacity (e.g. carers, lone parents etc.) are shown as IS within these statistics.

Pension Credit (PC) gives claimants extra money to help with living costs if they are over State Pension age and on a low income. Pension Credit can also help with housing costs such as ground rent or service charges and might allow a claimant to get extra help if they are a carer, severely disabled, or responsible for a child or young person. A person can get Pension Credit even if they have other income, a pension, savings or own their own home. Some partners of PC maybe under age 65 and are included in the Benefit Combinations data. PC data is now available on ESiF.

Housing Benefit (HB)

HB is a benefit paid to help people pay their rent if they are unemployed, on a low income or claiming benefits. HB is being replaced by Universal Credit, but in certain circumstances new claims may still be made, such as if someone is getting the severe disability premium with their income support or if someone is in supported, sheltered or temporary housing.

Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)

JSA is a working age benefit for people who are not in full time employment (work less than 16 hours per week) and are available for, and actively seeking, work. Income-based JSA is being replaced by Universal Credit (UC).

JSA is either contribution-based or income-based depending on the jobseekers circumstances:

- Contribution-based JSA: People can get contribution-based JSA if theyve paid enough Class 1 National Insurance contributions. They can get this type of JSA even if their partner works or they have savings over £16,000. New style JSA is a type of contribution-based JSA which can be applied for if someone lives in a UC full service area - it can be claimed on its own or at the same time as UC.

- Income-based JSA: People would be eligible for income-based JSA if the following applied: they work less than 16 hours per week on average; their partner works less than 24 hours per week on average; they and their partner had £16,000 or less in

savings between them. People cannot get income-based JSA and UC at the same time - all new unemployed claimants now claim UC.

Universal Credit (UC)

UC is now available in all areas to all claimant types. The following benefits are being replaced as Universal Credit rolls out: Income-based Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support (IS), Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Housing Benefit (HB). An individual claiming Universal Credit may have to do work-related activity in order to get full entitlement to Universal Credit. Each eligible adult will fall into one of six conditionality regimes based on their capability and circumstances. These are then grouped by DWP into three groups:

UC 'Out-of-work'

- Searching for work (Not working, or with very low earnings. Claimant is required to take action to secure work - or more / better paid work. The Work Coach supports them to plan their work search and preparation activity.)

- Planning for work (Expected to work in the future. Lone parent / lead carer of child aged 1 (or aged 1-2 prior to April 2017). Claimant required to attend periodic interviews to plan for their return to work.)

- Preparing for work (Expected to start preparing for future even with limited capability for work at the present time or a child aged 2 (or aged 3-4 prior to April 2017), the claimant is expected to take reasonable steps to prepare for work including Work Focused Interview.)

UC No Work Requirements

Claimants in this group are not expected to work at present. Health or caring responsibility prevents claimant from working or preparing for work.

UC Working

- Working - with requirements (In work but could earn more, or not working but has a partner with low earnings.)

- Working - no requirements (Individual or household earnings over the level at which conditionality applies. Required to inform DWP of changes of circumstances, particularly if at risk of decreasing earnings or losing job.)

Figures in the benefit combinations data are affected by the introduction of Universal Credit (UC). The main changes have been:

- increasing number of individuals claiming UC with corresponding decreasing number of individuals claiming JSA, ESA, IS and HB.

- increasing number of individuals claiming UC who would previously have claimed Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit and who would not have appeared in these statistics until their UC claim began.

Note 5

In this chart, data for Housing Benefit has been combined with data on Universal Credit claiming households who are awarded a 'housing entitlement' to help with social and private rent payments. The data was obtained from the DWP's StatXplore website.

Note 6

Data on the number of DLA/PIP claimants is available from DWP StatXplore – see above for full definition.

Note 7

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) publish an annual update of their Minimum Income Standard report, which analyses pay and benefit levels, and gives an estimate of the minimum income needed to afford a reasonable standard of living. It can be accessed here.

Note 8

Benefit Combinations data for Pension age claimants is available from DWP StatXplore.

Note 9

Pension Credit data is available from DWP StatXplore.

Contact details

For further information about unemployment, benefits, claimants and other labour market data please contact the Research and Intelligence team on esif@eastsussex.gov.uk.

The Research and Intelligence Team, Governance Services, provides demographic and socio-economic data, intelligence and insight to support East Sussex County Council and other East Sussex Partners. The Team also manages East Sussex in Figures (ESiF), the Local Information System for East Sussex.

ESiF (www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk) is a web-based information system that contains detailed, up-to-date and reliable information on a wide range of topics. It is free and easy to use.

You can also use ESiF to view Area profiles for different topics and geographies, including profiles to support funding bids.