



Department
for Work &
Pensions

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[DWP Website](#)

Our Ref: FOI2021/61616

18 August 2021

Dear Magdalena Caley,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 29 July. You wrote:

“Could you please provide the following:

-the number of UC claimants who have been overpaid UC between 1 April 2020- April 2021.

-the total value of this overpayment

-how many of these were caused by the official error, number of cases and the value of the overpayment -how many of these were not recovered because of the waiver being used, and the value written off as a result -how many times a waiver was used in cases of UC overpayment caused by official error, and the value written off as a result”

DWP Response

I can confirm that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) does hold the information requested.

Please note that we have interpreted the timeframe for your request as being the 2020/2021 financial year (1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021) and that all the data provided in the table on the following page relates to activity recorded on DWP's Debt Manager system during that period. These will not necessarily correlate with the dates any overpayments occurred or were identified.

Individuals may have more than one debt recorded on Debt Manager, consequently the number of debts is unlikely to equate to the number of debtors.

The data shown is taken from operational data systems and is not intended for publication. Therefore, the data itself is not quality assured to the standard of published Official Statistics.

Unless otherwise specified, all figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

We have interpreted your request as being for:

- The number of UC claimants who have been overpaid UC within the specified timeframe and the total value of this overpayment. (Q1)

- The number of UC claimants who have been overpaid UC within the specified timeframe where the overpayment has a classification of “Official Error” and the total value of this overpayment. (Q2)
- The number of UC overpayments (all classifications) where a waiver was applied during the specified timeframe and the value of those waiver decisions. (Q3)
- The number of UC overpayments classified as Official Error where a waiver was applied during the specified timeframe and the value of those waiver decisions. (Q4)

Q1:	Number of new UC Overpayments entered on Debt Manager	Value of new UC Overpayments entered on Debt Manager
	447,000	£347,500,000
Q2:	Number of new UC Overpayments entered on Debt Manager with a classification of Official Error	Value of new UC Overpayments entered on Debt Manager with a classification of Official Error
	337,000	£228,355,000
Q3:	Number of UC Overpayments waived	Value of UC Overpayments waived
	10 (<i>*rounded to nearest 10</i>)	£26,000
Q4:	Number of UC Overpayments waived with a classification of Official Error	Value of UC Overpayments waived with a classification of Official Error
	10 (<i>*rounded to nearest 10</i>)	£22,000

Outside of your request, I should explain that, for Universal Credit (UC) and New Style Jobseekers Allowance and Employment Support Allowance, the 2012 Welfare Reform Act made any overpayment in excess of the entitlement recoverable.

When the pandemic hit, DWP saw an unprecedented surge in UC claims, which demanded an extraordinary response to ensure that the welfare safety net continued to catch all those in urgent need. During this period a large number of staff were moved from other work areas to help meet the challenge. The additional 3 million UC claims we received, allied to this redeployment, helps contextualise the numbers of actual overpayments in the tables.

However, it should be noted that our Fraud and Error estimates (published May 2021) indicate that overall UC Official Error as a percentage of benefit expenditure, actually decreased from 1.3% to 0.9% in 2020/2021, which is testament to the efforts of our staff and the hard work put in to support claimants during this difficult time.

In summary, DWP pays welfare benefits to around 23 million people and is committed to ensuring that the right people are paid the right amount of UC; indeed, the vast majority of benefit expenditure (more than £200bn across all benefits) was paid correctly in the last financial year, with front line staff working hard to prevent overpayments from occurring.

Nevertheless, we know that there is more we can do and I am pleased to say we recently secured significant funding via the Spring Budget to support our plans to prevent fraud and error entering the benefit system. We talk more about this and our approach to tackling Fraud and Error in our Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21, which can be found on-line.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact us quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,

DWP Central Freedom of Information Team
Department for Work and Pensions

Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act

If you are not happy with this response you may request an internal review by e-mailing freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gov.uk or by writing to: DWP Central FoI Team, Caxton House, 6-12 Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NA.

Any review request should be submitted within two months of the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted our own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

Website: [ICO Contact Information](#) or telephone 0303 123 1113.