

# Universal Credit

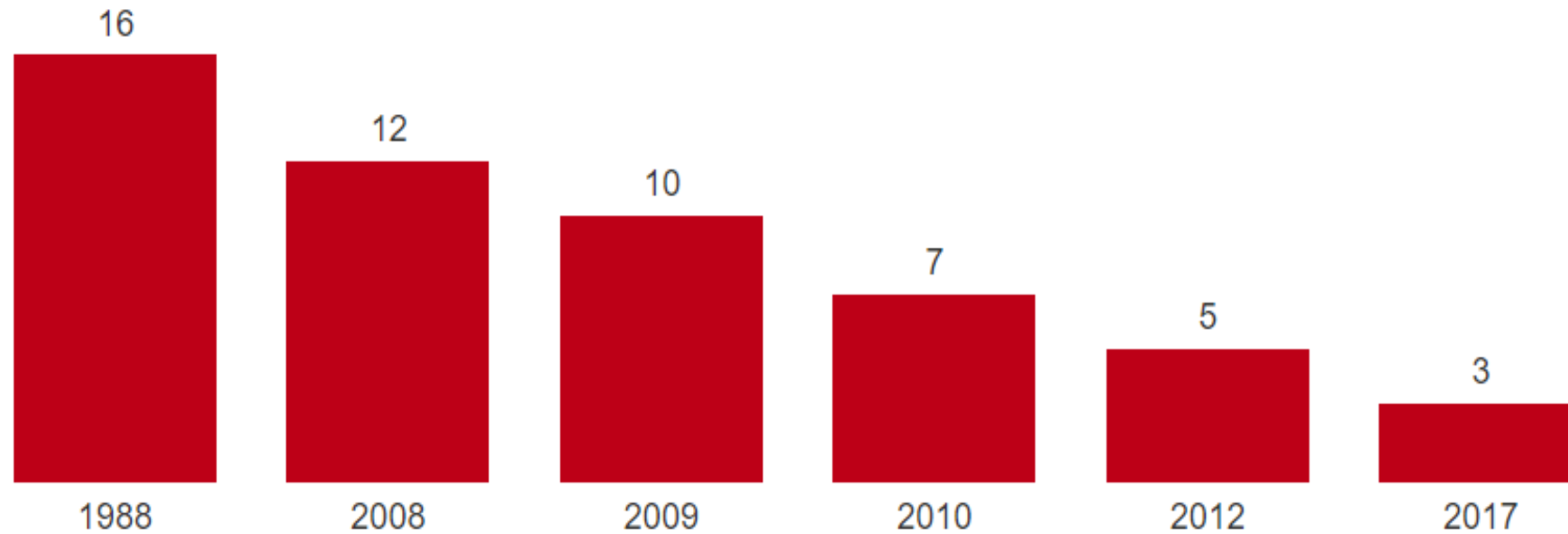
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- New means tested benefit for working age people
- Gradual roll out: 2013-2023
- Government's aims:
  - Simplify the benefits system
  - Improve incentives to undertake paid work
- Key changes:
  - Monthly payment
  - Digital claims
  - Single taper rate
  - Paid into one account (joint claims)
  - Conditionality and sanctions intensified

Age of youngest child	Work-related requirements
Under one	You don't need to look for work in order to receive Universal Credit.
Age 1	You will be asked to attend work focused interviews with your work coach to discuss plans for a future move into work.
Age 2	You will be expected to take active steps to prepare for work.
Age 3 or 4	You will be expected to work a maximum of 16 hours a week (or spend 16 hours a week looking for work).
Age 5 – 12	You will be expected to work a maximum of 25 hours a week (or spend 25 hours a week looking for work).
Age 13 and above	You will be expected to work a maximum of 35 hours a week (or spend 35 hours a week looking for work).

Source: DWP 2017 *Universal Credit: Further information for families*

## Age of youngest child at which lone parents are required to undertake paid work



Source: Patrick 2017 *New welfare reforms put extra pressure on single parents to enter paid work*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Single or joint claim</b>	<b>Number of children</b>	<b>Highest qualification</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Age of participant</b>
<b>Abby</b>	Joint	2	College certification	Yorkshire	20s
<b>Angie</b>	Single	1	Postgraduate diploma	Yorkshire	40s
<b>Anwen</b>	Joint	2	Degree	North East	30s
<b>Claire</b>	Single	1	Degree	North West	20s
<b>Gemma</b>	Single	2	College certification	Yorkshire	20s
<b>Helen</b>	Single	1	College certification	North West	30s
<b>Kim</b>	Joint	5	A-Levels	East of England	30s
<b>Nicky</b>	Single	1	GCSEs	South West	20s
<b>Stephanie</b>	Joint	2	College certification	South West	20s
<b>Vicky</b>	Single	1	Degree	Yorkshire	30s

She asked me what I wanted and we talked it through together for what would be best within my circumstances. *Nicky, lone mother, one child*

They didn't really talk about that [caring responsibilities] to me much but I don't think they really care about that. They made me feel as though I just needed to get back to work. They didn't really care about how I would find childcare for training or how it would affect my children. *Stephanie, coupled mother, two children*

In terms of what they write on the Commitment it's very by the book and so it's like strict...they're expecting you to do all these things and they don't think about care and you've got a child at home. *Helen, lone mother, one child*

In order to do that job-search I'm having to shirk mothering responsibilities.

*Anwen, coupled mother, two children*

I've got her older brother looking after her. You know he's never looked after her so much as he has done in the last five months. *Anwen, coupled mother, two children*

I don't think they understand how hard it is to care for children and how much of your time it takes up. *Stephanie, coupled mother, two children*

Things that are really important like being able to read with them after school and being able to go out and buy them a pair of shoes because you've got time. Those things are not seen as important you know they are important.

*Anwen, coupled mother, two children*

I find a time where if he's playing out in the garden I'll just sit in the garden with the tablet and do a little bit or I do a bit when he's in bed. Even when he's in the bath sometimes I sit next to him and just check my emails.

*Helen, lone mother, one child*

It's been very very stressful. It's been a stressful six months.

*Angie, lone mother, one child*

It does make me wonder why we're claiming it when it's an awful lot of hassle and stress, and they make you feel so low. *Stephanie, coupled mother, two children*

We have made sure we have never missed an appointment and we are doing more than what is actually asked. *Kim, coupled mother, five children*

I don't give them an inch. I don't give them any opportunity to say you've not done this we're going to sanction you. I cover my back thoroughly.

*Anwen, coupled mother, two children*

Either one of us drops the ball that's a loss of money...you can't risk that ball being dropped or it happening for stupid reasons.

*Anwen, coupled mother, two children*



# Conclusions

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Universal Credit policy fails to value and recognise women's roles and responsibilities leading to adverse impacts for women and their caring responsibilities.

The joint claim is problematic for the citizenship rights of partnered women.

Subjecting mothers to conditionality works against aims to redefine citizenship so that it is more inclusive of women. Instead it:

- devalues informal care
- further subjects women to dual and conflicting roles of paid work and informal care