



Region	<u>UC debt</u> ¹	<u>Poverty</u>	<u>Wants to work</u> ²	Region	<u>UC debt</u>	<u>Poverty</u>	<u>Wants to work</u>
East of England	42%	18%	7.8%	South East	42%	19%	7.4%
East Midlands	45%	23%	9.5%	South West	41%	20%	7.9%
London	40%	25%	8.4%	Wales	48%	22%	8.6%
Northern Ireland	-	17%	7.0%	West Midlands	45%	27%	9.6%
North East	53%	25%	9.4%	Yorkshire & Humber	49%	23%	8.9%
North West	50%	23%	9.9%	UK	(GB) 45%	22%	8.6%
Scotland	50%	21%	8.5%				

Harms

- Include *all* social security debt in Breathing Space, the Government’s debt respite scheme. No-one who is eligible for social security should be pushed further into poverty but the State as a result of welfare system design and errors.

Employment

- The government should ensure that access to relevant employment support is available to all. The Salvation Army supports those who are furthest from the labour market and require specialist support like the type delivered by Employment Plus.

Poverty

- The government should commit to ensuring that the basic rate of Universal Credit at least covers the cost of essentials like food, household bills and travel costs. The Salvation Army is part of the [Guarantee Our Essentials campaign](#) to ensure social security payments actually meet the cost of living. No-one eligible for social security support should be pushed into poverty while in receipt of it.
- Scrap the 5-week wait for Universal Credit. The Salvation Army has found the five-week wait for an initial payment creates and compounds financial hardship which advance payments fail to alleviate.
- As a temporary measure, until the cost-of-living crisis has been resolved:
 - Universal Credit loans should be replaced with grants
 - DWP should pause the clawback of benefits debt

¹ This is the proportion of recipients of Universal Credit who have had their entitlement reduced as a result of things like advance repayments, third party deductions (such as utility bills) and all other deductions, but excludes sanctions and fraud penalties which are reductions of benefit rather than deductions.

² The proportion of people who are not currently working but would like to work/and or are seeking work.

- A new cross-Government task force to tackle, with empathy and compassion, the reasons people are not earning and are trapped in poverty, by improving education and employment locally so they can achieve a decent standard of living.

The General Election provides all of us with an opportunity to use our voices and challenge those seeking elected office to address the issues in your community. To help you make the most of the coming weeks and stay compliant with electoral law, [the Public Affairs Unit has created a range of resources](#).