

# Stigma in the System: Experiences of the UK Social Security System

*Turn2us is a national charity that helps people experiencing financial insecurity to access the support they're entitled to and advocates for a system built on dignity, fairness and trust. Turn2us works alongside those with lived experience, developing tools, grants, and services to support them.*

*This media summary highlights findings from the Stigma in the System report from University of Bristol's Personal Finance Research Centre and was commissioned by Turn2us.*

*The research shows how stigma is baked into the design and delivery of social security: how it delays claims, pushes families into crisis and damages trust. The University of Bristol is ranked within the top ten universities in the UK and 51st in the world (QS World University Rankings 2026). It is also ranked among the top five institutions in the UK for its research, according to analysis of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 and is the 5th most targeted university by top UK employers.*

*The research was generously funded by Royal London as part of a long-term strategic relationship with Turn2us.*

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# Introduction

Anti-poverty charity Turn2us works to improve the experience of people accessing social security and to push for a fairer system, based on compassion, that is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our commitment is ongoing and strategic: tackling the deep-rooted barriers that keep people from financial security, and driving the systemic change needed to remove them. We know this cannot be achieved by one organisation, through one project, or in a short space of time. Instead, it requires sustained effort, collaboration, and a willingness to confront the social and structural challenges that hold people back.

This report explores how stigma associated with the social security system acts as a deep-rooted barrier, preventing people from accessing the support that they need. It details key areas where stigma manifests, and key ways to tackle it. It is the first step towards transforming our social security system, so that it works as originally designed; an effective safety net for everyone, rooted in dignity and trust, and a springboard giving each of us the confidence to bounce back and move forward.

## Our approach

The research examines how stigma is produced, reinforced and experienced within our social security system; how it shapes perceptions and behaviours; and the impacts on people's financial security and wellbeing. It explores the drivers of stigma, the impacts on both claimants and non-claimants, and considers changes needed to create an effective system that supports people with dignity and fairness.

**To examine these areas, the research involved three stages:**



**Secondary data analysis** of the British Social Attitudes survey (from 2012-2023). This is an annual cross-sectional survey of between approximately 3,000 and 6,500 UK adults, capturing (among other things) attitudes to welfare and benefit claimants. We use this data to explore trends in attitudes over time.



**25 online semi structured in-depth interviews** with claimants of any age who have experience of the benefits system (sample size of 13), non-claimants on low incomes (sample size of 6), and those working in the welfare advice sector (sample size of 6).



**A nationally representative online survey of 4,000 UK adults** exploring perceptions of the social security system and the experiences of those who claim benefits. The survey was distributed via YouGov's nationally and politically representative panel in June 2025.

*This report is an extract, the full academic report will be published on Bristol University's website from Wednesday September 24.*

## Executive summary

*“It just makes people feel like, you know, they're not a real person...just got this set of questions which you're asking to everybody and you've got to tick your boxes. You just feel like you don't matter”*

*“... The whole process took 18 months and was stacked against the applicant at every turn. I have multiple issues and use a wheelchair, but I had my application rejected twice and had to go to a tribunal which was incredibly stressful and aggravated my mental health”.*

These quotes from two survey respondents are unfortunately not isolated experiences. Our analysis, qualitative interviews and the results of our survey show that stigma is baked into the design of the UK's social security system, especially since the onset of Universal Credit, which is means tested. Our research found stigma and complexity led to delays in claiming, forcing families into crisis, damaging mental health, and undermining trust in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Jobcentres, which are often where stigma is experienced.

### Impacts of stigma

Both claimants and non-claimants reported exacerbated financial hardship, increased debt and harm to health, with higher downstream costs for health and social services, as well as reduced economic and community participation.

**One in five people (21%) delayed for more than a year before applying, and more than half waited at least two months. Just under half cut back on food and heating rather than claim, more than one in five borrowed money on a credit card, overdraft or other lending, and one in 12 used a food bank rather than claim.**

### Suspicion, hostility and surveillance

For claimants, stigma was experienced primarily through the design and delivery of benefits, which reinforced ideas about a person's worthiness. **64% of claimants said it felt like officials were trying to 'catch them out', and half said the system made them feel undeserving of support.**

### Harming mental health

**More than half of claimants (51%) reported that claiming damaged their mental health, rising to 64% of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claimants, with some reporting lasting effects on wellbeing.** Further damaging to mental health

was the theme of suspicion and control with strict conditionality and the process for PIP assessments fostering mistrust and reduced autonomy. Monitoring felt intrusive and punitive.

### **Increased uncertainty and fear**

**Two-thirds of claimants (67%) worried their benefits could be withdrawn, rising to 80% of PIP claimants answering yes to the question 'I often worry that my benefits could be taken away from me in future'.**

The fact that someone whose health was exactly the same as when they successfully claimed could be turned down at their next assessment caused a huge amount of worry, and potential financial hardship, among our interviewees who were either receiving disability benefits or trying to claim them. **These interviews were conducted around the time that the government had announced the 'Pathways to Work' Green paper, which had considerably increased this anxiety and uncertainty.**

### **Institutional indifference, errors and poorly trained staff**

People felt being in the system was a stigmatising experience. **Almost half (49%) of current claimants felt the system made them seem undeserving of support.** Only 15% of respondents found Jobcentre Work Coach experiences helpful. Through structured interviews we also found that frequent errors, difficulty correcting them, and poorly trained staff undermined confidence. PIP assessors were also sometimes found to be dismissive or misrepresented claimants' experiences. **More than a quarter (26%) reported the DWP made errors** in handling their claim. These errors and poor treatment (which are caused by institutional stigma) demonstrate that stigma leads to an ineffective and inefficient system.

### **Mixed and changing attitudes**

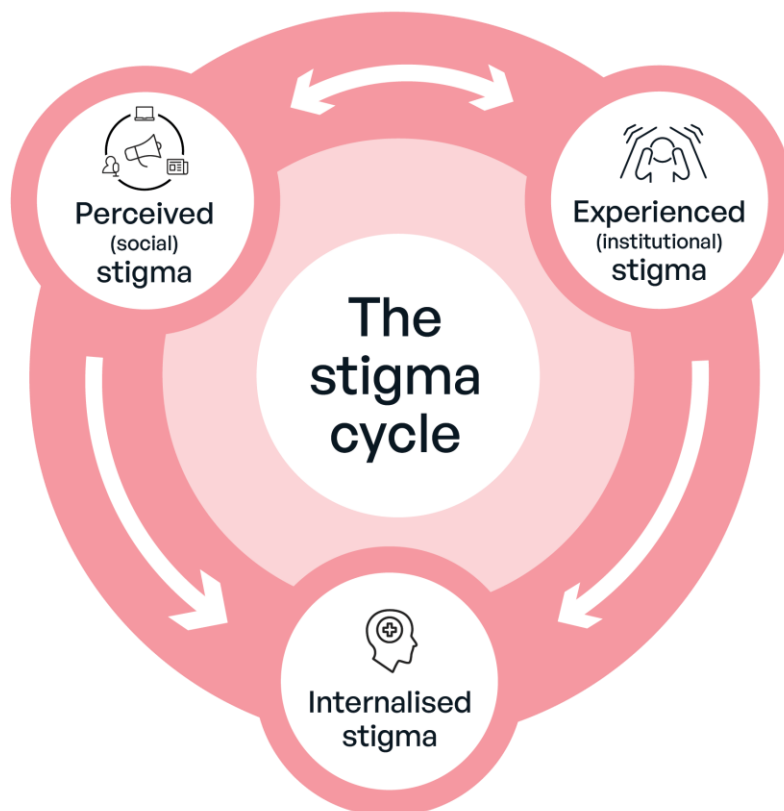
**A majority of British people believe that claiming benefits should not be a shameful experience** (71% of survey respondents). Over half (51%) agreed that benefit claimants are unfairly stereotyped by media and politicians. 79% would encourage loved ones to apply, if in need. Nevertheless, **68% of claimants in our research felt bad about needing support.**

## Stigma and the social security system

Our research looked at how stigma shows up in the UK social security system; how people claiming support are stereotyped or treated as less deserving.

This research identifies three forms: **institutional stigma** (how the system is designed and delivered), **societal stigma** (where a person recognises and believes that society holds prejudicial beliefs and discriminates against them), and **internalised stigma** (how people absorb those messages and feel ashamed themselves). These elements feed into each other.

The report explores how the institutional stigma produced within the social security system influences the wider, societal stigma around benefit claimants. Together, they help form societal beliefs around benefits, which can then lead to claimants, and potential claimants, internalising these views. This then affects how people interact with the system.



## **Societal stigma**

The claimants we spoke with were keenly aware of the negative stereotypes held in society and amplified by the media, about people who claimed benefits. Although many were critical about the media portrayal, they sometimes echoed them in their own opinions; prefacing their accounts with distancing narratives, making clear that they were a 'deserving' claimant. They did not want to be judged by these standards. One woman commented that she wasn't concerned about being judged, as she believed she didn't 'look' like a benefit claimant. She felt, that as her husband wore a uniform to work every day, her neighbours wouldn't assume they received benefits.

## **Experienced (institutional) stigma**

The structural stigma experienced by our participants was mostly found within the benefits system. This included how people were talked to by DWP staff, the Jobcentre experience, the PIP assessment process and how intrusive, hostile, or depersonalising they found processes to be. The system often confirmed ideas about the value or deservingness of those who claimed.

## **Internalised stigma**

Many claimants internalised the stigma, leading to unhappiness and lower self-worth for some. For example, one pensioner wouldn't talk to her children about claiming benefits "*because I don't want to seem to be this needy, worthless person to them*". Much of this internalised stigma reflected the belief that to claim benefits was to have failed in some way.

Each of these elements feed into and reinforce each other, creating increased anxiety and stress for people engaging with the social security system and causing many to avoid or delay claiming what they're entitled to, pushing them further into hardship.

# Key findings

## Stigmatising experiences within the system

Both our qualitative interviews and survey results showed the experience of navigating the social security system to be difficult, overly complex, and demoralising. This difficulty could be deeply stigmatising and, in some cases, traumatising.

*“... ‘I don't particularly trust any of it, and the sooner I'm out of the system, the better for me. As soon as I can go back to work full-time and not be dependent upon because I hate being dependent upon the system. Because I do feel like your life is in somebody else's hands and I know they can stop the money at any stage if they wanted to for no reason. So yeah, I just hate it.’”*

## Complexity and difficulty

Claimants generally had less difficulty making initial applications (38% of current claimants found this ‘very’ or ‘quite difficult’) and updating the DWP on any changes in their circumstances (28%). However, our research found other aspects were more challenging, including:

- **Half (50%) of current claimants found it difficult to know what benefits they might be eligible for.**
- **57% of those who had experienced errors or issues with the DWP struggled to get these resolved.**

The most difficult stages of the process were: filling out the PIP application form (82% of PIP claimants found this difficult); having their health condition assessed by an Independent Assessment Provider (76% of PIP claimants); and appealing DWP decisions (63% of current claimants).

Those who were currently claiming health-related benefits (such as PIP) were more likely to find each stage of the process difficult than those solely claiming low-income benefits, such as Universal Credit. For example, two-thirds (65%) of those receiving only health-related benefits found appealing the DWP's decision a difficult experience, as opposed to 49% of those only receiving low-income benefits.



## **Suspicion and control in conditionality and PIP assessment**

Through the interviews we found institutional stigmatisation in the benefits system arises from practices that prioritise fraud prevention and compliance over meaningful support. Claimants often felt treated with suspicion, subjected to intrusive monitoring, rigid rules, and frequent rejections, particularly in disability assessments such as PIP, which undermine trust and question their lived experiences.

Conditionality and sanctions were found to further depersonalise the process, forcing people into “tick-box” exercises rather than genuine help. Supportive approaches that acknowledged the challenges of finding a job, such as those seen during the Covid-19 pandemic, showed the system could be more person-centred. But in the current system, many claimants experienced stress, mistrust, and a loss of autonomy.

We asked current claimants about some of these issues in the YouGov Survey. We found that:

- **Three-in-five (64%) of current claimants felt like the benefits system was trying to catch them out.**
- **Nearly half (49%) were made to feel like they weren't deserving of any money.**
- **Just one-in-five (22%) felt that the application process was easier than expected, while nearly half (47%) disagreed with this – suggesting that many found the process more challenging than (or as challenging as) they thought it would be.**

Statement	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
"It feels like the benefits system is trying to catch you out."	38%	26%	24%	7%	5%
"The benefits system made me feel like I wasn't deserving of any money."	24%	25%	24%	18%	9%
"The process of applying for benefits was easier than I expected."	5%	18%	31%	25%	22%
"The staff assessing my application lacked empathy for people in my situation."	20%	21%	31%	18%	9%
"The Department for Work and Pensions made errors when handling my claim."	13%	13%	30%	22%	22%

*Percentage of current claimants who agreed or disagreed with each statement related to the process of applying for benefits (Source: YouGov survey). Notes: based only on responses of current claimants. Sample sizes range from 744 to 905. We exclude those who answered 'not applicable'.*

## Procedural rigidity, dismissive attitudes, errors and uncertainty

**Only 15% of claimants describe work coaching as 'quite' or 'very' beneficial.**

Our research also found a lack of flexibility in the system to account for individuals' circumstances when they did not align with predefined categories or expectations.

This happened most frequently during work coaching (which is meant to offer 'tailored support'). In the survey data, **of those who could recall going through work coaching, only 15% said it had been 'very' or 'quite beneficial'.**

Some DWP staff appeared inadequately trained in their role, which could feel belittling to the claimants. For example, one woman noted she had to explain things

to the staff at the Jobcentre that they should have known, claiming they were 'nothing but unhelpful' and just 'ticking boxes'. She felt they made unhelpful suggestions not suited to her circumstances. Their attitude was also demeaning, believing 'they speak down to you' and that they were 'really quite derogatory, they try and teach you how to suck eggs'.

*"... She was like, 'so have you made a CV?' and I literally looked at her, and I said, 'I worked in recruitment for seven years, please don't ask me if I've made a CV'. I said if you spent 30 seconds getting to know me, then you would know my previous history."*

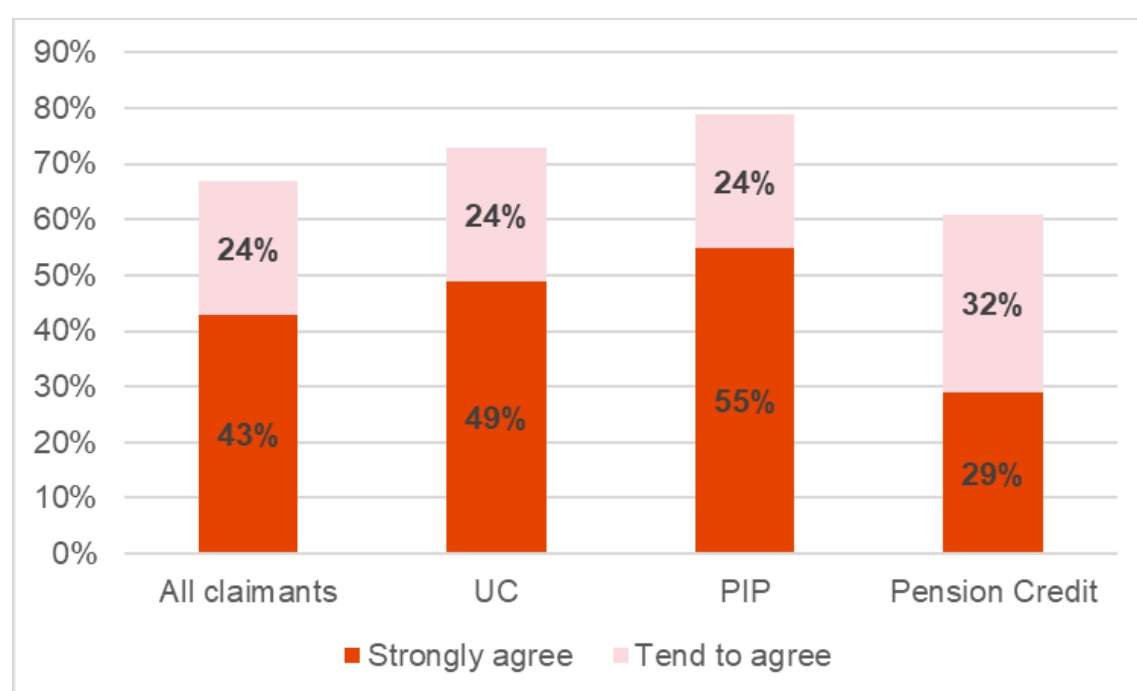
The attitude of the staff may even be self-defeating, as she felt that being spoken to in this way could have put her off getting back into work, as it made her feel she 'wasn't good enough for anything'.

The errors that claimants encountered within the system, and the difficulties experienced when trying to rectify them, were perceived to be disempowering. Although it was initially easier to apply for Universal Credit, when issues arose, they could be difficult and time-consuming to resolve, and claimants could also be subject to rude treatment from DWP staff in the process.

There was evidence of this from both the YouGov survey and the qualitative interviews. As shown in the table above:

- **A quarter (26%) of current claimants felt that DWP had made errors when handling their claim, while 28% disagreed – suggesting negative experiences weren't universal.**
- **Two-in-five (42%) current claimants agreed that "the staff assessing [their] application lacked empathy for people in [their] situation".**

The PIP assessment was another area where claimants felt that the staff were dismissive, misrepresenting what had happened or been said during the assessment process. One woman had it noted that she was “*very mobile*” as she walked quickly through the assessment room. In fact, the woman was feeling dizzy and wanted to get to her seat quickly. Another felt the whole process was hostile, and that the assessor had made up her mind before she even arrived. The claimant felt that the assessor “*didn’t believe me from the moment I walked in the room*”. Furthermore, some of the information on which the assessment was based, was not accurate.



**PIP claimants were most concerned about their benefits being taken away.** Percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement “I often worry that my benefits could be taken away from me in the future”, by type of benefit received (Source: YouGov survey).

The system was also seen as unreliable and inherently uncertain, as reflected in our YouGov survey which showed:

- **Two thirds (67%) of all current claimants agreed with the statement: “I often worry that my benefits could be taken away from me in future”.**
- **This rises slightly to 73% among current UC claimants, but even more so among PIP claimants (80%).**
- **Pension Credit claimants, on the other hand, were slightly less likely to be concerned about losing their benefits, though three-in-five (61%) were still concerned.**

These interviews were conducted around the time that the government had announced the 'Pathways to Work' Green Paper. This had increased the anxiety and uncertainty felt by interviewees who were either receiving benefits or trying to claim them.

**67% of claimants worry  
their benefits could be taken away.**

## The practical impact of stigma

The research found evidence that stigma can influence how people approach claiming benefits. Most commonly, it led individuals to delay making a claim or to only apply as a last resort, often when their financial situation had become extremely constrained, rather than applying earlier or more proactively. In some cases, though less frequently, stigma deterred people from applying altogether.

### Delaying claims

Many claimants in our YouGov survey had not applied for benefits immediately after encountering the circumstances that ultimately led to their application. While 46% of current claimants had claimed immediately or within a month, a third (33%) waited between two months and a year, and one-in-five (21%) waited more than a year.

**1 in 5 wait more than  
a year to start claiming.**

Breaking this down by type of benefits claimed, we saw that households receiving UC were more likely to claim straightaway. Those receiving only health-related benefits were more likely to delay claiming; a third (33%) had waited more than a year after first experiencing a change in circumstances. Demographically, claimants over 65 were the most likely age group to delay applying, with a quarter (26%) waiting more than a year to apply.

The biggest barriers to claiming are: **lack of awareness of entitlements, complexity of the process, and stigma**. Awareness was the top reason identified by the public in our YouGov survey, while interviews revealed how complexity and stigma reinforced each other. People assumed they weren't 'the sort of person who claims' or gave up after struggling with paperwork.

### **There were a variety of reasons why people had delayed making a claim**

Of those who had waited two or more months to apply, what percentage gave each reason for doing so, by type of benefit received.

Reason why claimants had delayed applying	Of those who waited 2+ months to apply...			
	Current claimants	Low-income benefits only	Health-related benefits only	Both types together
EITHER wasn't aware I was eligible until told OR not entirely sure what I was eligible for	61%	46%	69%	54%
I wasn't entirely sure if I was eligible or what I was eligible for	40%	29%	45%	38%
I wasn't aware I was eligible until someone told me	35%	25%	42%	29%
EITHER embarrassed what people would think OR didn't see myself as someone who would claim benefits	29%	25%	26%	38%
I didn't see myself as someone who would claim benefits	21%	18%	22%	22%
The application process seemed too complicated or overwhelming	21%	8%	23%	26%
I thought I'd be able to manage okay without benefits	20%	28%	14%	25%
I was embarrassed what people would think if I claimed benefits	16%	19%	10%	24%
I didn't have anyone to help me apply	11%	4%	10%	18%
I didn't know how to apply	11%	9%	10%	13%
I was put off by previous bad experiences of applying (or experiences I'd heard about)	11%	7%	10%	15%
I thought applying for benefits would be more trouble than it is worth	10%	7%	10%	10%
<i>Sample size</i>	<i>410</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>211</i>	<i>116</i>

## A complex system

It was commonly mentioned within our qualitative interviews that various complexities of the system either put people off applying or had caused people to delay their claims. Applying for benefits can involve long forms and be a very difficult process (especially applying for PIP). This was clearly off-putting:

- **Two-in-five current claimants (43%) agreed that they ‘didn’t want to apply for benefits because [they] knew how hard it can be to apply’.**
- **Around one-in-five (21%) current claimants who had delayed claiming did so because they felt the application process was too complicated or overwhelming and around one-in-ten felt they either didn’t have anyone to help them (11%), didn’t know how to apply (11%) or thought it would be more trouble than it was worth (10%).**

Similarly, one-in-five non-claimants hadn’t yet claimed despite thinking they might be eligible because:

- **They thought ‘the application process seems too complicated or overwhelming’ (22%) or because they thought ‘applying for benefits is more trouble than it’s worth’ (19%).**

There were instances where complexity overlapped with perceptions of institutional stigma. Some people in the qualitative interviews didn’t apply for benefits because they were reluctant to give up control of their lives. They worried there would be too many conditions and too much pressure, if they felt they could manage without. Part of this pressure came from having to justify their choices, and a fear of being judged for those choices. For many, claiming support felt like a last resort.

- **Over half (53%) of current claimants surveyed agreed that they ‘only applied for benefits as a ‘last resort’ (while 25% disagreed).**
- **More than half (57%) also said that they ‘applied for benefits very soon after finding out [they were] eligible’.**

**53% of current claimants agreed that they 'only applied for benefits as a 'last resort'.**

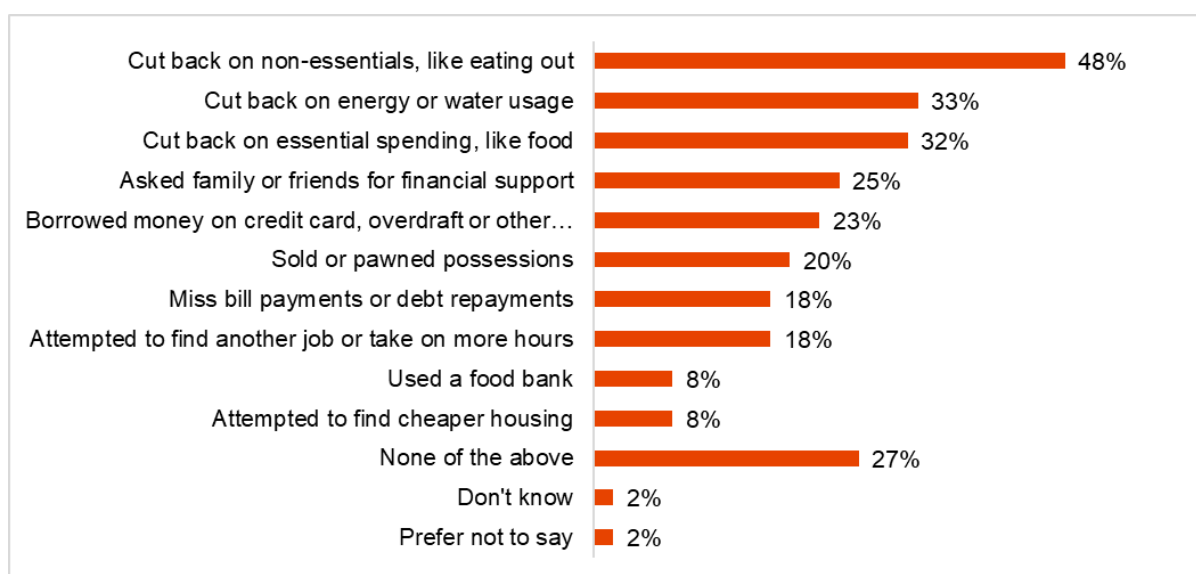


Among those who had delayed claiming:

- **21% did so because they didn't see themselves as someone who would claim.**
- **16% delayed because they felt embarrassed about what people might think of them.**
- **11% (around one-in-ten) were put off by a previous bad experience of claiming (or a bad experience they had heard about).**

## Impacts of delay and avoidance

Our interviews showed people delaying claiming whilst getting into debt, cutting back on essentials like food and heating, and using foodbanks. Systemic stigma and complexity pushes vulnerable people into further hardship, blocking them from accessing the support they are entitled to.



**Households used a range of strategies to make ends meet prior to claiming.** Percentage of respondents who took each action in the period before applying for benefits (among those who delayed claiming for two or more months)

The YouGov survey results show that those who had delayed making a claim used a variety of strategies to make ends meet (see chart below). These include:

- **Nearly half (48%) cut back on non-essentials.**

- **Nearly a third (32%) cut back on essential spending, like food.**
- **More than one-in-five borrowed money on a credit card, overdraft or through other lending (23%).**
- **Around one-in-six missed bill payments or debt repayments (18%).**
- **Around one-in-twelve used a food bank (8%).**

**A third (33%) cut back on energy before claiming.**

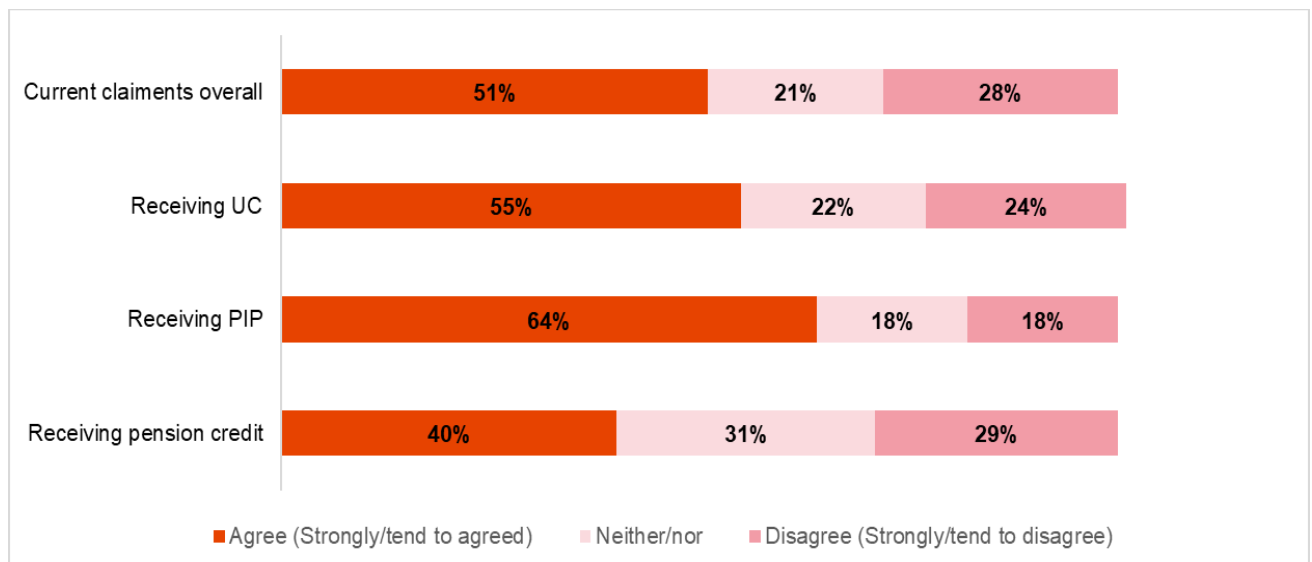
## The health impact of stigma

**51% of current claimants agreed that applying for benefits made their mental health worse.**

Qualitative interviews highlighted the health and emotional impact of the social security process, especially PIP. Some claimants we spoke to describe the process as traumatic and dehumanising. One respondent stated it "*changed my personality*," making her guarded and distrustful.

In the YouGov survey we found:

- **51% of current claimants agreed (either strongly or tended to agree) that applying for benefits made their mental health worse.**
- **This rises to nearly two-thirds (64%) of those who were receiving PIP at the time of the survey (see chart below).**



**Claimants (especially of PIP) said claiming worsened their mental health.** Percentage of respondents who agreed/disagreed with the statement 'The process of applying for benefits made my mental health worse', by type of benefit received. Notes: excludes those who answered 'not applicable'. Sample sizes as follows: current claimants = 853; UC = 397; PIP = 405; pension credit = 68.

Given that claimants applying for PIP already have health conditions, the stress of applying could impact their physical health. For example, as one interviewee with fibromyalgia mentioned, it is a condition “*caused by being in flight or fight...so any stress will make it worse.*”. For one man, the process exacerbated his mental health issues to the point of needing in-patient healthcare, as he described:

*“... I did actually have an inpatient mental health issue. So I was taken in for a month into a mental health institution because I just couldn't cope any longer with that constant treadmill... I think that [3rd PIP application] tipped me over the edge. If you like, from being able to function with my mental health to a point whereby, you know, I was suicidal that point because I thought I just can't continue to fight every single time. And I think part of the issue was giving the same information every time.”*

## Perceptions of benefit claimants

Analysis of the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey shows that, though stigma does clearly remain, attitudes towards benefit claimants generally softened between 2012 and 2023 - there was a substantial increase over time in the proportion of UK adults who agreed that “cutting welfare benefits would damage too many people’s lives” (from 47% to 59%) – coupled with significant decreases in the percentage who held negative attitudes, such as “many people who get social security don’t really deserve any help” (from 35% to 24%). It is interesting to note, however, that this trend does seem to be reversing (slightly) in the latest year of data available (2023).

From the qualitative data, we identified several key social beliefs underpinning the stigmatised views held about benefit claimants. They were:

- A belief that non-claimants don’t get out of the system what they put in.
- Households should work to support themselves rather than relying on the state to provide.
- Many people who claim benefits are not genuinely in need of them.

While the idea of the deserving and undeserving poor is long standing, the findings from this research reflect the trend in the UK for the welfare system to be seen as a place of last resort, rather than the contributory safety net that people were entitled to call upon.

In addition to the three beliefs underpinning stigma towards benefit claimants, we did, however, find evidence from our YouGov survey that many still see **claiming as an important right** and a belief that people shouldn’t feel ashamed about claiming what they are entitled to.

Many non-claimants responding to the YouGov survey felt that the welfare system doesn’t really work for them:

- **Over half (55%) of non-claimants agreed that “even if you work hard, it can be difficult to get by without needing benefits or government help” and this rises to 71% among non-claimants who reported being very worried about their financial situation.**
- **A quarter (24%) of non-claimants felt they should get more support from the Government than they do, but three-in-five (60%) felt that the conditions for getting benefits meant they were unlikely to ever be eligible.**

- **Only two-in-five trusted that the benefits system would be there for them if they needed it in future.**
- **Just a third (34%) believed that “the benefits system helps to make the UK a fairer country”, with a similar proportion disagreeing (32%).**

Throughout the qualitative and quantitative analysis, we saw a clear expression of the value placed on self-reliance: the majority of participants articulated that those who can work, should work, and broadly speaking at a level that means the household does not need to claim social security. Analysis of the BSA survey from 2012 to 2023 shows how persistent this belief has been over time. It is perhaps more indicative of the stigma that social security recipients receive. It is a less actively hostile belief, but still a viewpoint that treats claimants with a certain level of suspicion; that being out of work is either the result of a lack of effort or a failure to be self-sufficient.

This wider social stigma clearly affected the claimants we spoke to in the qualitative interviews. Several current claimants were keen to emphasise that their need for benefits was temporary, that they had been self-supporting in the past, and will be again in the future. Throughout the interviews we heard the same sentiment echoed, that:

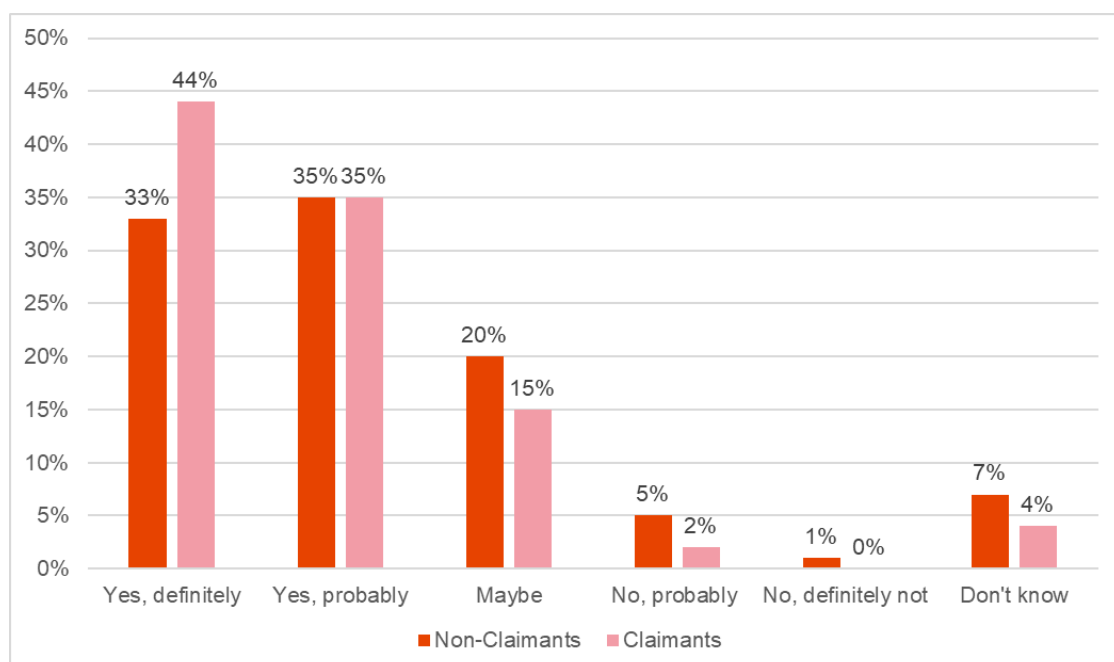
- Paid work was a necessity and a societal good, and a valid premise on which to base a social security system. The mental health benefits of working were also mentioned by interviewees, particularly non-claimants.
- Those who did claim often remarked that the public seems unaware that many people who claim benefits are actually in work.

## Support for the system

**71% of those surveyed agree that people shouldn't be ashamed about claiming benefits.**

Despite the three beliefs identified, broad support remains for the principle that people should claim what they are entitled to. Our YouGov survey revealed:

- **71% agreed that “people shouldn’t be ashamed about claiming the benefits they are entitled to”.**
- **67% of non-claimants said that they would ‘probably’ (35%) or ‘definitely’ (33%) encourage a friend or family member to apply for benefits if they were in financial difficulty – while just 6% said ‘no’.**
- Amongst claimants, this figure rises to **four-in-ten (79%) who said they would ‘definitely’ (44%) or ‘probably’ (35%) encourage a family member or friend to apply**, with a further 15% saying ‘maybe’. A very small minority (2%) of claimants said they wouldn’t encourage someone they knew to apply.



**Most non-claimants and claimants would encourage loved ones to apply.** Responses when asked “If a close friend or family member was experiencing financial difficulty, would you encourage them to apply for benefits?” (Source: YouGov survey)

## Next steps

This research provides conclusive evidence that stigma is a structural feature of the UK social security system, designed into its processes and experienced in its daily operation. It lays bare the urgent need for reform built on dignity, fairness, and trust.

Turn2us has pinpointed three critical areas of focus we will tackle:

1. The operation of Jobcentres and the role of Work Coaches
2. The use of sanctions and conditionality
3. The Personal Independence Payment assessment process

**This report diagnoses the problem.**

**Next month, Turn2us will publish a policy report, detailing practical recommendations to reduce stigma from these parts of the system.**

**As the Timms Review begins and the government's welfare reforms continue, our solutions will demonstrate how the government can deliver a more efficient, effective and compassionate system.**

Like our NHS, our social security system was conceived to be there for all of us in our time of need. Realising that vision, a system fit for the 21st century, is now the essential work ahead.

