

# [Latest statistical release now available](#)

News story

SLC publishes statistics on student loans for higher and further education



SLC has published its [latest statistical release](#) providing information on student loan outlays, repayment and borrower activity. The release includes reports for all four UK countries and covers:

- Income Contingent Student Loan balance by repayment plan type
- Total amount lent to student borrowers
- Interest added to Income Contingent Loans
- Average Income Contingent Loan balances
- Income Contingent Loan repayments

Please note this year's data shows significant differences to the previous year due to the More Frequent Data Sharing (MFDS) between HMRC and SLC introduced in April 2019, providing a more up-to-date picture of loan balances and repayments.

The transition to MFDS in the last year has affected how repayments and interest amounts have been reported, meaning these figures cover almost two financial years (those processed in both 2018-19 and 2019-20). Prior to MFDS, repayments and interest shown in a given financial year were mainly for the year before.

The improved data does not affect the actual amount borrowers need to repay or the interest applied. The data sharing is part of a number of measures to create a more efficient loan repayment system and also helps to prevent graduates overpaying at the end of their loan.

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## **Data charges removed for websites supporting victims of crime**

The UK's major telecoms companies have agreed their customers' mobile phone data won't be used up if they're seeking information and support online.

Zero-rating these websites is the latest in a series of commitments from the telecoms industry to support vulnerable people during the pandemic. It comes at a time when some charities are reporting significant increases in visits to their websites.

Instructions to stay at home as much as possible may have been a major cause of anxiety for some victims while social distancing measures mean it is harder for organisations to offer face-to-face support.

To ensure this vital support remains available mobile network operators EE, Vodafone, O2, Three, Sky Mobile, Virgin Media, Tesco Mobile and giffgaff have agreed that their customers will not incur data charges when accessing support and information on the following websites:

### **Providing support for victims and witnesses of crime**

Victim Support – [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

### **Providing support for victims of sexual violence and abuse**

Rape Crisis – [www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)

The Survivors Trust – [www.thesurvivorstrust.org](http://www.thesurvivorstrust.org)

Male Survivors Partnership – [www.malesurvivor.co.uk](http://www.malesurvivor.co.uk)

### **Providing support for victims of domestic abuse**

Refuge – [www.refuge.org.uk](http://www.refuge.org.uk)

National Domestic Abuse Helpline – [nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://nationaldahelpline.org.uk)

Women's Aid and Welsh Women's Aid – [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk) and [www.welshwomensaid.org.uk](http://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk)

Providing support for children suffering abuse

NSPCC – [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

Digital Infrastructure Minister Matt Warman said:

This agreement will help people who are at risk of violence during

this pandemic get the information and support they need, particularly those on pay as you go contracts or tight data allowances.

This is yet another positive commitment from the UK's brilliant mobile network providers to support the vulnerable and contribute to the national effort to overcome coronavirus.

Justice Minister Alex Chalk said:

Victims need to know that support remains available despite this pandemic.

Ensuring free access to these important websites and more funding for vital helplines is just one part of the work we are doing to make sure no victim is left to suffer alone.

The move follows previous commitments from the UK's internet service and mobile providers to support and protect [vulnerable consumers](#) and [the NHS](#) during the pandemic.

As part of this all of the UK's internet providers have already agreed to remove all data allowance caps on current fixed broadband services, so accessing these websites through a home broadband connection will not incur data charges.

### **Further Quotes**

The Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales Dame Vera Baird QC said:

This is something that I have called for and I am pleased that the Ministry of Justice and the mobile network operators have responded and worked together to make it happen.

No one should be denied access to these important sites because of data restrictions. This move will allow even more victims – especially those who may be struggling to use traditional contact methods during the lockdown – to access the help and support they need, and I hope that it becomes a permanent arrangement.

Nick Jeffery, CEO of Vodafone UK said:

We believe in the power of technology to make a positive difference in the world, and have worked to support domestic abuse organisations for many years. The Bright Sky app – developed by the Vodafone Foundation and Hestia and which provides support and information to anyone affected by domestic abuse – has seen a 47% increase in downloads during lockdown. This is a huge concern and

we wholeheartedly support this initiative.

Robert Finnegan, CEO of Three UK said:

We believe that the most vulnerable people in society should be able to access the help and support that they need at this difficult time. Zero-rating access to these websites is a great initiative that Three are pleased to support.

Tom Denyard, CEO of Tesco Mobile said:

At Tesco Mobile, we understand that the ability to connect can be a lifeline for many so we want to ensure that our customers have access to information and support during this difficult time, without the need to use their data allowance. We hope that by giving free access we are helping, even in a small way, to provide some level of comfort to victims of crime.

Lutz Schöler, CEO of Virgin Media said:

The role of connectivity in our lives has never been more apparent than it is right now. We know that, in these difficult times, being able to connect to the outside world and access help and support is vital. We're committed to providing easy, unrestricted access to these important websites for our customers at a time when they may need it most.

Nicola Green, Director of Corporate Affairs at 02, said:

We are pleased once again to be working with the Government during the COVID-19 pandemic to support vulnerable people. The ability of domestic violence victims to access support services through digital connectivity can help protect and remove them from dangerous situations. 02 is delighted to back this initiative.

Debbie Klein, Group Chief Marketing, Corporate Affairs and People Officer for Sky said:

Like many, we are deeply concerned to see the shocking increase in the number of people reporting incidents of domestic violence during lockdown. Sky is committed to supporting our customers and those affected by ensuring they are able to seek information and support online without using their data".

Christian Thrane, MD Marketing, BT / EE said:

We're pleased to be able to support this important initiative to help domestic violence victims during the pandemic.

Ash Schofield, CEO at giffgaff said:

Since the coronavirus pandemic began there's sadly been an influx of outreach to websites offering support to vulnerable victims of crime. During such difficult times, we at giffgaff have joined forces with other telcos to provide vulnerable victims of crime free access to the websites offering vital support needed.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors:**

- This is in addition to [NHS websites](#) and other support websites already zero rated by some mobile network operators, and includes Imkaan, a website dedicated to addressing violence against Black and Minority Ethnic women and girls.
- The majority of these websites have now been zero rated, but this is on an operator by operator basis. All of the mobile network operators have committed for the zero rating to take effect as soon as possible.
- Mobile network operators have agreed that these measures will be in effect until at least 31 October 2020.
- Those who have run out of data will still be able to access these websites by typing the exact web address into their mobile internet browser.
- Zero-rating usually applies on a domain basis only. Third party content on these websites may not be covered by the zero rating.

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## **Government invests £10 million to help make future technologies more secure**

- Nine winners of the Digital Security by Design grant competition will share £10 million investment

The government will provide £10 million over four years to develop groundbreaking cyber security technologies, Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden will announce later today at London Tech Week Connects.

Nine grant winners have been revealed as the latest recipients in the

government's Digital Security by Design programme, which aims to help the tech infrastructure of UK organisations and digital devices be more resilient to cyber attacks.

The winning research teams that will share the £10 million investment include the University of Southampton's HD-Sec solution, which aims to speed up the process and reduce errors and security vulnerabilities in software design that could have been exploited by hackers.

The University of Glasgow-led AppControl will also receive a share of the fund to leverage state-of-the-art microprocessors, developed earlier in the programme, to make sure vital systems that could be used in cars, medical robots or nuclear power plants remain digitally secure.

And the University of Birmingham has been awarded funding for leading the digital solution CAP-TEE, which will use prototype microchips to protect systems that shield sensitive, personal data from hackers.

The Digital Security by Design programme, [launched](#) last year, has the potential to prevent hackers from remotely taking control of digital systems such as autonomous cars, personal computers or smart home security systems as well as cyber attacks and data breaches, meaning people and online businesses are better protected.

Almost half of businesses (46 per cent) and more than a quarter of charities (26 per cent) have reported experiencing cyber security breaches or attacks in the last 12 months, according to the [Cyber Security Breaches Survey 2020](#). The report estimates the average cost of a cyber attack on a medium or large-sized business has increased to £5,220.

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

We have a world-class cyber security sector and together we are working hard to make sure the UK is the safest place to work, connect and live online.

With government support these projects will build cutting-edge, secure technologies that will give people and businesses further confidence in our digital services and help weaken the threat of cyber attackers.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

Cyber attacks can cause significant economic and social damage and leave a lasting mark on affected businesses.

Today's funding will allow some of the country's most innovative businesses and academics to work together on digital solutions to tackle these threats. The UK not only has a proud heritage in computing, but is a world leader in digital security and we are

committed to ensuring our country remains one of the safest places to do business online.

The funding forms part of the government's commitment to increase investment in research & development by 2.4 per cent of GDP by 2027.

The earlier phases of the initiative saw research and development of cutting-edge microprocessor technology known as Capability Hardware which has safeguards built in to make it more secure and can be used in anything from a supercomputer to a server, laptop or smartphone. This technology will soon underpin secure digital devices and services around the world.

Grant winners will use the new funding to build on this progress and create enhanced software and applications that make sure software code is secure and any hacking attempts can be contained.

Organisations such as banks, healthcare services or online retailers could use the highly secure software in their day-to-day systems, giving people increased confidence in digital services and reducing costly cyber attacks or data breaches for businesses.

Each team will create a working example of their solution, using the prototype chips, to showcase the economic and societal benefits of their new secure technology.

UKRI's challenge director for Digital Security by Design John Goodacre said:

The Digital Security by Design programme will radically update the security foundations of the digital computing infrastructure that underpins the entire economy. I'm honoured that these leading universities and researchers have aligned their expertise to this challenge.

These projects will increase the knowledge and skills around this new technology, as well as research the opportunities this fundamental change offers to the security of computers across business and society in the future.

The government last month launched the new ['Cyber Aware'](#) campaign which offers advice for people to protect passwords, accounts and devices. And while doing the basics correctly is the best defence for homes and businesses right now, having innovative hardware and systems solutions is a vital step in defending digital technologies in the long term.

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# Seatruck Progress report and flyer published

News story

Fatal accident on the stern ramp of a ro-ro freight ferry at Brocklebank Dock, Liverpool.



Our accident investigation report on the death of a third officer after being struck by a semi-trailer that was being pushed down Seatruck Progress's stern ramp at Brocklebank Dock, Liverpool on 15 May 2019, is now published.

The report contains details of what happened, the subsequent actions taken and recommendations made: [read more](#).

## **Statement from the Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents:**

This tragic accident has highlighted two significant safety issues.

The first, is the hazard of using a mobile phone when on duty or in a working environment. Users can too easily become distracted from the tasks they are doing and lose awareness of what is happening around them. This accident occurred on the loading ramp of a ro-ro ferry, however, the use of mobile phones in other hazardous workspaces and on the bridge of ships is becoming a serious concern.

Secondly, this accident again highlights the importance of separating moving vehicles and pedestrians on the ramps and vehicle decks of ro-ro ferries. Moving vehicles are a constant hazard during loading and discharge, and if physical separation cannot be achieved then robust procedural controls must be put in place to prevent people from being injured or killed.

Recommendations have been made to reinforce the importance of



maintaining the safety of pedestrians when loading and discharging ro-ro cargo, and the UK and IoM marine administrations have been recommended to provide guidance on the dangers of using mobile phones when working in hazardous areas on board ships.

A [safety flyer](#) to the shipping industry summarising the accident and detailing the safety lessons learned, has also been produced.

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## **Coronavirus (COVID-19): ministerial direction for the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme**

Ministerial direction letters authorising the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), which provides financial support to smaller businesses affected by coronavirus.

The first letter is from the Permanent Secretary for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to the BEIS Secretary of State requesting the ministerial direction.

The second letter is from the BEIS Secretary of State to the Permanent Secretary setting out the ministerial direction.