

# Impact of COVID-19 on advice sought from the Scottish Citizens Advice Network

27.4.20



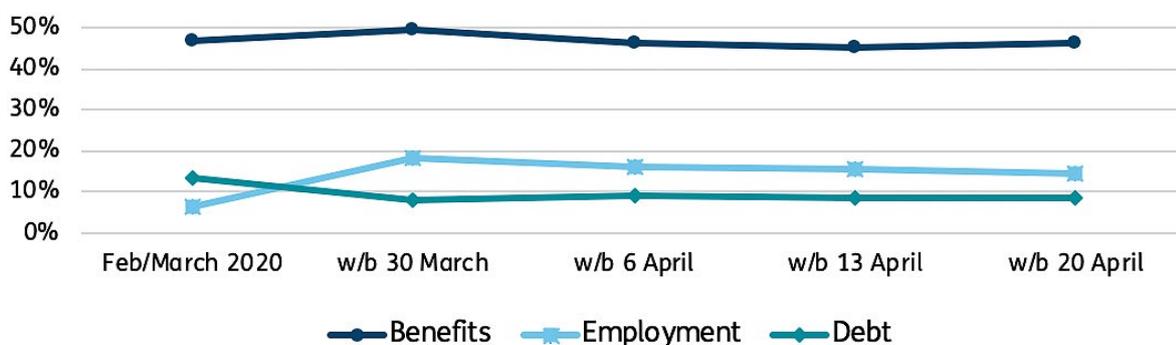
## Introduction

This is a weekly report that tracks changes in the type of advice people are seeking from the Scottish Citizens Advice Network. It includes data from Citizens Advice Bureaux and from our public advice site. Employment-related advice remains more popular than debt-related advice, a change from pre-COVID-19 trends. On our public advice site, views of two new coronavirus specific pages - "If you can't pay your bills because of coronavirus" and "Coronavirus check what benefits you can get" - have shown the largest week-on-week increase in percentage terms.

## Advice from Citizens Advice Bureaux

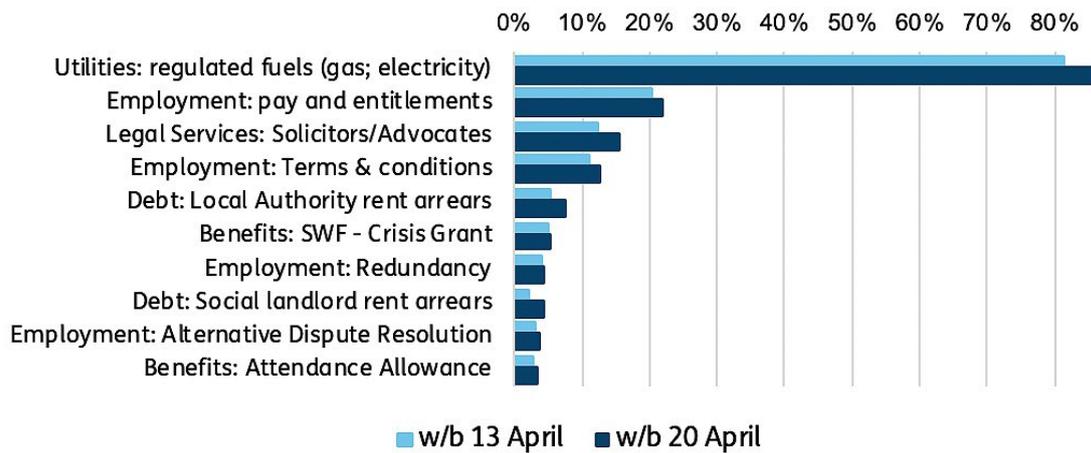
The proportion of advice given on social security has been broadly constant in recent weeks, but employment-related advice has overtaken debt-related advice as the second most common advice area.

**Top 3 advice areas (as a proportion of all advice provided)**



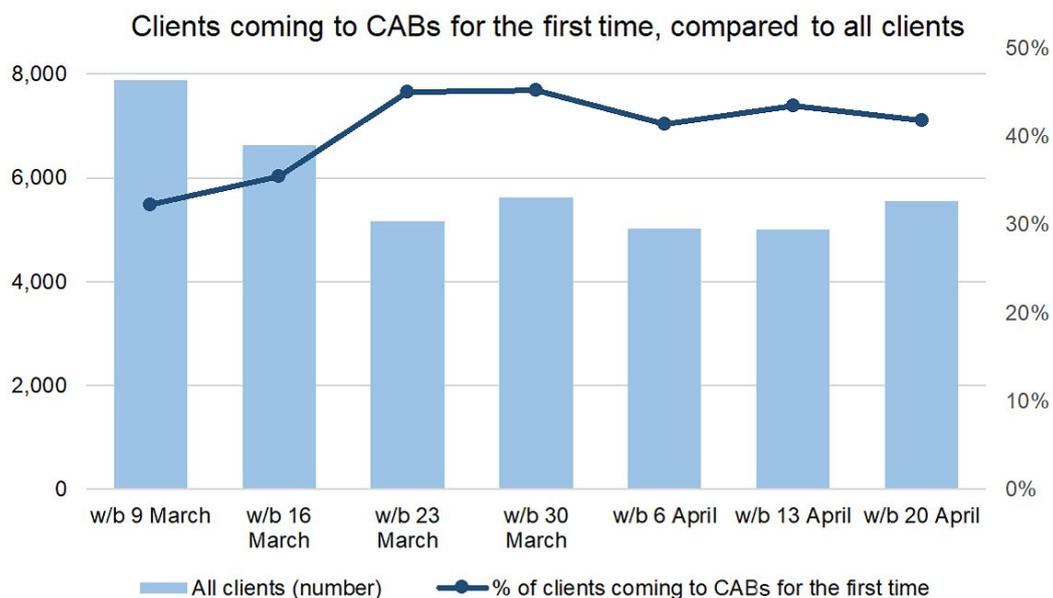
For the most part, the proportion of advice given in these general top-level areas appears to be returning to pre-COVID 19 levels. However, there are increases in specific kinds of advice within some top-level areas. The most notable are within the top-level areas of Utilities, Employment, Legal Services, Debt, and Benefits, as can be seen below.

**Top 10 shifts in proportion of advice provision February to March 2020  
(in order of largest proportional change to the smallest)**



Note: Chart shows the ten advice sub-categories (e.g. ‘regulated fuels’, ‘pay and entitlements’) that have grown most as a proportion of their associated main advice category (e.g. ‘Utilities’, ‘Employment’). Advice sub-categories recorded less than 100 times in March 2020 are omitted.

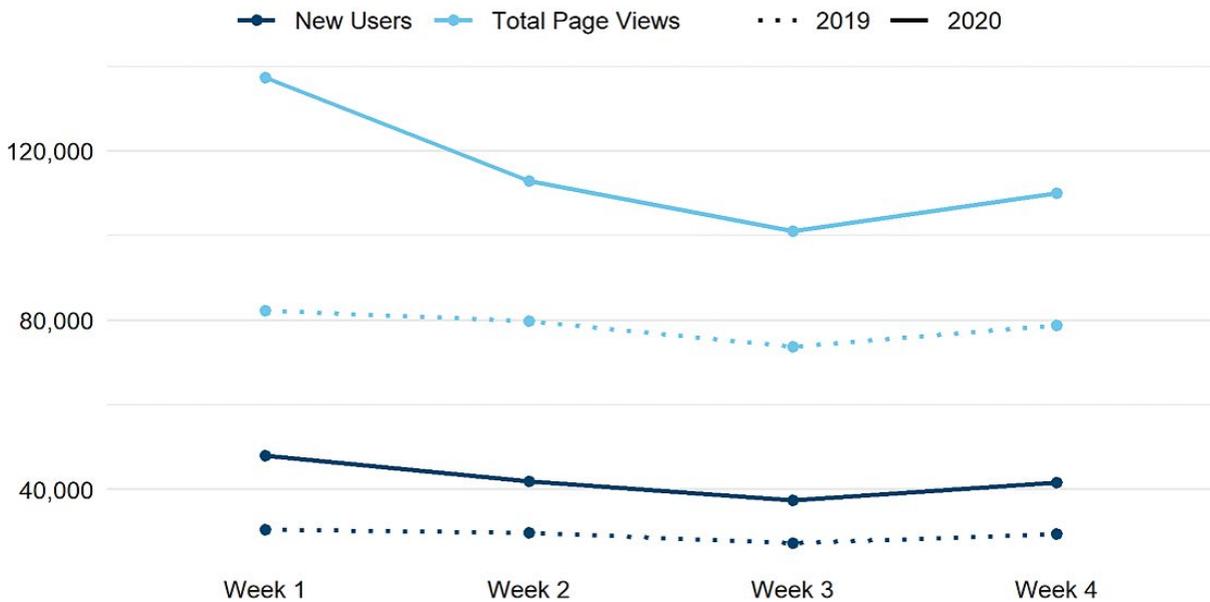
An increase in new clients coming to bureaux for advice has also been evident in recent weeks.



## Online advice

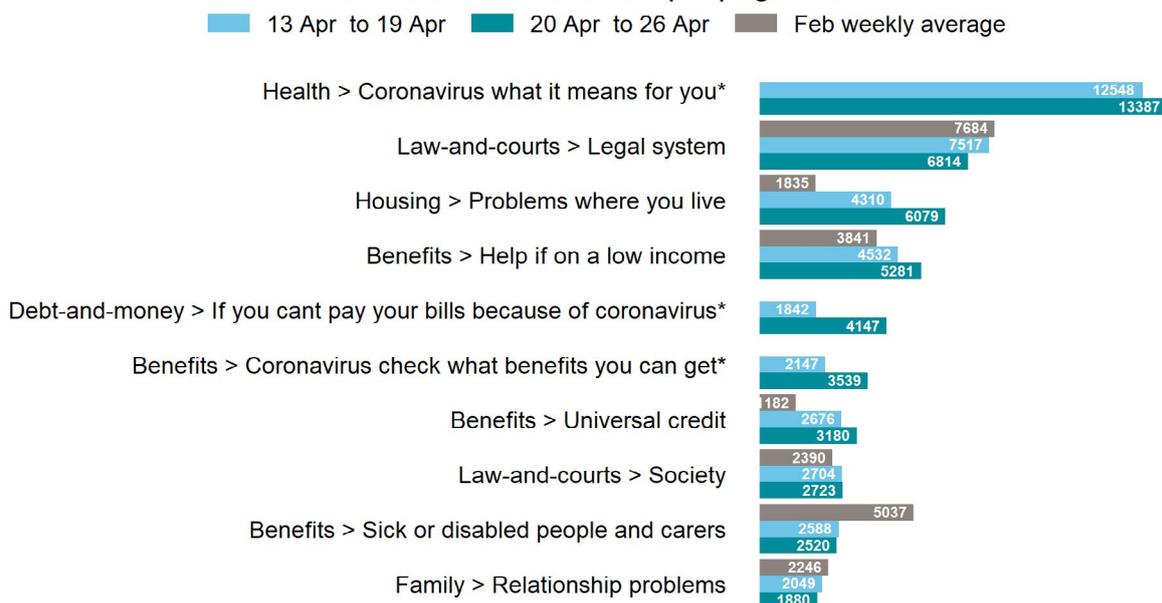
On the public advice website, total page views and the number of new users on the site are well above the level seen for the comparable period in 2019.

Advice for Scotland: Total page views and new users



The recently added Coronavirus information pages continue to receive a high number of views. Views of the Universal Credit pages have almost tripled compared to pre-Covid-19 levels, and views of pages related to housing problems have more than tripled. Week-to-week, views on “If you can’t pay your bills because of coronavirus” have more than doubled, and views have increased 65% on the “Coronavirus check what benefits you can get” page.

Advice for Scotland: Unique page views\*



\*Coronavirus pages new in March, so no February weekly average available

## Contact method

Beyond the website, telephone calls and emails to individual Citizens Advice Bureau have increased a lot over the past four weeks, as the network has moved away from face-to-face advice. Calls to the new national Helpline, which began operation on 14 April, are also slowly increasing.

