

Duration on working-age benefits, Great Britain

April 2013

Methodology

This note looks at a snapshot of claimants each year and examines the total duration those individuals had spent in receipt of one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits over the preceding four years. To calculate this, we:

- Used the National Benefits Database¹ (NBD) to identify claimants who were in receipt of one of the main DWP working-age benefits² on 31 March of each year, from 2006 to 2012. We then calculated the proportion of the previous four years that these same individuals had been in receipt of any of the main DWP working-age benefits;
- Included only those who were aged 18 to 59 throughout the entire four year period. This ensures we only consider those who could have potentially spent the entire four year period on one of the main DWP working-age benefits³;
- Ensured that where people were claiming more than one benefit at a time (e.g. Income Support and Incapacity Benefit), we only counted one spell on benefits; and
- Then summed the total period spent on one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits over the four years for each claimant, which might include multiple separate spells on benefit.

This analysis is then repeated looking at claimants who are in receipt of a subset of benefits as of 31 March each year.

Results

Tables 1 and 2 show the results of the analysis for those claiming the main working-age benefits on 31 March 2012.

Table 1 presents those claimants by the proportion of time spent on working-age benefits⁴ over the preceding four years, from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2012. For example, of those on working-age benefits on 31 March 2012, 62 per cent, or around

¹ The NBD is a database of all DWP benefits paid to customers. Figures in this paper are based on the September 2012 NBD.

² Jobseeker's Allowance, Incapacity Benefit / Severe Disablement Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support

³ Although some 16 and 17 year olds are able to claim DWP benefits in some specific situations, many will not meet the conditions for eligibility. As a consequence, the analysis excludes anyone under the age of 18.

⁴ See note (1) of Table 1.

2.5 million individuals⁵, have been claiming such benefits for at least three out of the preceding four years.

The data has been broken down to show the proportion of time spent on working-age benefits by benefit currently received. For example, of those on one of the main DWP working-age benefits (around four million), 10 per cent were currently on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and had been on one of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years.

Table 2 shows the proportion of time spent on one of the main DWP working-age benefits for those receiving one of the following:

- Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Employment and Support Allowance, assessment phase or the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) only, and;
- Income Support for lone parents (ISLP).

From table 2 we can see that of the 2.3 million claimants receiving one of these benefits as at 31 March 2012, around one million had been claiming one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least 75 per cent of the four-year period.

A breakdown of this by current benefit received shows, for example, that 17 per cent of the claimants were currently on JSA and had been receiving one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least 75 per cent of the four-year period.

Not all of the time spent on benefit will have been built up during the current benefit claim or on the current benefit. For example, a lone parent who has moved over from Income Support to JSA in the last six months may have spent all of the last four years claiming benefits, but only the last six months on JSA. Within the individual benefit breakdown in tables 1 and 2 this person would be classified as a current recipient of JSA.

Similarly in table 2, a person currently in the ESA assessment phase that has spent at least 75 per cent of the four-year period on benefit may have built up the majority of that time while on Incapacity Benefit.

Tables 3 and 4 present a time series showing the numbers of those who have been claiming benefits for at least three years out of a four year period.

Table 3 presents the number of live claims for the main DWP working-age benefits on 31 March where the claimant had been claiming one or more such benefits for at least three of the preceding four years. It shows that in 2012 the 2.5 million individuals who were claiming the relevant benefits for at least three of the preceding four years represented approximately 8.1 per cent of the total GB population aged 18-59.

Table 4 shows the number of claims for JSA, ESA (assessment phase or WRAG) or ISLP on 31 March where the claimant had been claiming one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years. It can be

⁵ Some individuals may be making a claim on behalf of a partner as well as themselves. This is not accounted for in the figures presented here. As such, all figures represent the lower bound of the number of individuals.

seen that the one million individuals who were claiming the relevant benefits for at least three of the preceding four years represented approximately 3.3 per cent of the GB population aged 18-59. It should be noted that the figures in this table represent a subset of those in table 3.

These figures show that the proportion of the GB population aged 18-59 who were claiming one of this selected subset of working-age benefits on 31 March each year, and who had been claiming one of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years, has been increasing since 2008. This increase marks the introduction of ESA, and the gradual transition of claimants receiving predecessor incapacity benefits to the ESA assessment phase, the ESA work-related activity group and, in some case, JSA.

Table 1: Claimants of DWP main working-age benefits on 31 March 2012, by proportion of time spent on one of the main working-age benefits from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2012, GB

	0-25% (up to 1 year)	25-50% (1 to 2 years)	50-75% (2 to 3 years)	75-100% (3 to 4 years)	Total
Working age benefit claimants, 31 March 2012	601,000	455,000	481,000	2,512,000	4,049,000
Proportion of claimants	15%	11%	12%	62%	100%
Of which are currently on:					
JSA	9%	6%	6%	10%	31%
IS (2)	2%	2%	2%	10%	16%
Incapacity benefits (ESA/IB/SDA) (3)	4%	3%	4%	42%	53%

Source: DWP National Benefits Database September 2012, GB

(1) The main working age benefits include Jobseeker's Allowance, Incapacity Benefit / Severe Disablement Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support. Figures include some people working less than 16 hours and on one of the benefits listed.

(2) IS excludes people who are both on Income Support and Incapacity Benefit/Severe Disablement Allowance.

(3) Incapacity benefits include ESA, IB/SDA and claimants on a combination of IS and IB/SDA.

IB/SDA includes people on Income Support and Incapacity Benefit/Severe Disablement Allowance.

Figures exclude those who would have been under 18 years old on 1 April 2008 or aged 60 or over on 31 March 2012.

Table 2: JSA, ESA (assessment phase and WRAG) and lone parent IS claimants on 31 March 2012, by proportion of time spent on one of the main DWP working-age benefits from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2012, GB

	0-25% (up to 1 year)	25-50% (1 to 2 years)	50-75% (2 to 3 years)	75-100% (3 to 4 years)	Total
Claimants on JSA, ESA assessment phase and WRAG, Income Support for lone parents in November 2011 (1)	524,000	387,000	406,000	1,008,000	2,325,000
Proportion of claimants	23%	17%	17%	43%	100%
Of which are currently on:					
JSA	16%	10%	10%	17%	53%
ESA assessment phase	3%	2%	2%	5%	12%
ESA WRAG	1%	2%	2%	8%	13%
IS Lone Parents	2%	3%	3%	13%	22%

Source: DWP National Benefits Database September 2012, GB

(1) Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment Support Allowance assessment phase and Work Related Activity Group and Income Support for Lone Parents.

Figures exclude those who would have been under 18 years old on 1 April 2008 or aged 60 or over on 31 March 2012.

Table 3: Claimants of DWP main working-age benefit claimants on 31 March of each year, 2006 to 2012, who had been in receipt of one of the main working-age benefits for at least 75 per cent of the preceding four years, GB

	Number of claimants in receipt of one or more of the main working-age DWP benefits as at 31 March who had been in receipt of one or more of the main working age DWP benefits (1) for a total period of at least three out of the preceding four years	Estimate of population aged 18-59 throughout the four year period (million)	Number of claimants, as a percentage of the population
2006	2,564,000	30.1	8.5%
2007	2,529,000	30.2	8.4%
2008	2,469,000	30.3	8.2%
2009	2,456,000	30.4	8.1%
2010	2,472,000	30.5	8.1%
2011	2,467,000	30.7	8.0%
2012	2,512,000	31	8.1%

Source: benefit data is from the National Benefits Database September 2012, GB. Population estimates are from the Labour Force Survey, Q1 of the relevant year.

- (1) The main working age benefits include Jobseeker's Allowance, Incapacity Benefit / Severe Disablement Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support. Figures include some people working less than 16 hours and on one of the benefits listed.

Figures exclude those who would have been under 18 years old on 1 April 2008 or aged 60 or over on 31 March 2012.

Table 4: Selected working-age benefit claimants on 31 March of each year, 2006 to 2012 who had been in receipt of one or the main DWP working-age benefits for at least 75 per cent of the preceding four years, GB

	Number of claimants aged 18-59 throughout the preceding four years in receipt of JSA, ESA (Assessment Phase or WRAG) or ISLP (1) as at 31 March, who had been in receipt of one or more of the main working-age DWP benefits for a total period of at least three out of the preceding four years	Estimate of population aged 18-59 throughout the four year period (million)	Number of claimants, as a percentage of the population
2006	660,000	30.1	2.2%
2007	652,000	30.2	2.2%
2008	619,000	30.3	2.0%
2009	634,000	30.4	2.1%
2010	698,000	30.5	2.3%
2011	732,000	30.7	2.4%
2012	1,008,000	31	3.3%

Source: benefit data is from the National Benefits Database September 2012, GB. Population estimates are from the Labour Force Survey, Q1 of the relevant year.

(1) Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance assessment phase and Work Related Activity Group and Income Support for Lone Parents.

Figures exclude those who would have been under 18 years old on 1 April 2008 or aged 60 or over on 31 March 2012.

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