

Response to consultation on proposals for a new statistical series to count the number of unemployed claimants

Summary of user responses to the consultation and planned publication strategy for Official Statistics

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1. Summary

This paper summarises the responses to the consultation on **proposals for a new statistical series to count the number of unemployed claimants** and uses this to form a publication strategy for publication of an alternative Claimant Count statistical series.

As well as gaining views from a wider range of users on a new series (see Annex A to C), the consultation has proven valuable in better understanding why and how users use the Claimant Count and, linked to the value pillar of official statistics, it gives a strong basis for investing the time and resource to develop and publish a new series.

Consultation responses

The aim of the consultation was to seek a wide range of users' views on the construction, scope and release of a new experimental statistical series (in addition to the Claimant Count) which gives a consistent picture of national and local labour market unemployment conditions over time.

There were **53** responses to the consultation. Local Government formed the largest group of respondents (60%), but we had replies from many types of organisations (see Annex A).

On the options presented and their construction, **Option 1** (lifting the historic Claimant Count to what it would have been under a "Universal Credit world") was preferred by the vast majority (95%) of respondents, over Option 2 (adjusting the current Claimant Count to 'remove' additional claimants in order to continue to derive a measure of JSA jobseekers).

There was also a strong preference (90%) to remove Universal Credit pre-WCA cases from a new Count (on the basis that these UC Searching for Work claimants are awaiting a Work Capability Assessment and – at the discretion of the work coach – are not required to be available for work even if they are required to plan and prepare for work). There was also a preference (78%) to remove JSA-Credits Only cases from a new Count.

On the timeliness of statistics (time between when they are released and the count date) and frequency of release, respondents' strong preference was for a "gold standard" release of monthly and very timely statistics.

On the scope of the statistics, users preferences ranged from availability of national and regional statistics to small geographies requested by Local Government e.g. Lower Super Output Area (LSOA).

On the statistical products that users would value, NOMIS was frequently cited alongside stat-xplore, but traditional products (e.g. some form of web-release for users to tabulate statistics, some form of Statistical Release (PDF or web-based HTML) and summary excel tables, were more important requirements than interactive maps and dashboards.

2. Background

The Claimant Count is a measure of *the number of people claiming unemployment related benefits*. Before 2013 this was simply the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). Since the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) from April 2013 the Claimant Count is measured as the number of people claiming JSA and the number of Universal Credit claimants placed in the 'Searching for Work' conditionality group.

As more people are brought within the coverage of the Claimant Count, the Claimant Count is set to rise noticeably over time. This will happen irrespective of how the economy performs and is a feature of the design of Universal Credit which brings additional groups of people into 'Searching for Work' conditionality (and therefore the Claimant Count), compared to Jobseeker's Allowance, to help encourage and support these claimants into work.

To address this, we published a research and consultation report to:

1. Summarise options for a new experimental statistical series (in addition to the Claimant Count) which gives a consistent picture of national and local labour market conditions over time (part 1).
2. Seek the views of users on these options, and the scope of any new experimental statistics (part 2 – see separate questionnaire).

The [consultation on an alternative Claimant Count statistical series](#) ran for 8 weeks from 21 May to 21 July 2018 and asked for feedback on the construction of a new statistical series, the scope of the statistics and how they are released (frequency and timeliness), and the statistical products we publish. Respondents were asked to rank some questions based on necessity:

1. *essential and top priority*
2. *highly desirable*
3. *might be useful, but a lower priority*
4. *not useful*

And to tell us why information would be useful.

[Annex A](#) summarises the number and type of respondents to the consultation.

[Annex B](#) provides a more detailed analyses of responses to each question and how these are addressed in the publication strategy.

[Annex C](#) lists the organisations responding to the consultation.

3. Publication strategy

The publication strategy is formed from consultation responses balanced against other considerations such as availability of data sources, technical build and resourcing. The following publication strategy is planned:-

Construction

A new headline series based on Option 1 (lifting the historic Claimant Count to what it would have been under a “Universal Credit world”) and defined by excluding UC-WCA cases awaiting assessment but including JSA-Credits Only cases

Data available by

GB-level statistics (later extending to UK dependent on availability and suitability of Northern Ireland data). Publication of national and sub-national data to include regions, Local Authority and Parliamentary Constituency – and smaller areas (Lower Super Lower Output Area).

Age and gender; monthly back-series to January 2013.

By component (JSA, UC Searching for Work, “Additional”).

Frequency of Release

Publish experimental and provisional (for latest month) official statistics on a quarterly basis aligned to Labour Market Statistics release date, with a count date of the 2nd Thursday of the month (as per existing Claimant Count, Labour Force Survey and Universal Credit statistics). Provisional date for a first release of 22nd January 2019.

Timeliness

2-month lag in reporting: so statistics published on Tuesday 22nd January 2019 are for the count date of Thursday 8th November 2018.

Dissemination

Publish statistics on the stat-xplore platform to enable the release of as much data as possible and for users to generate their own tabulations. Publish a Statistical Release and accompanying methodology note including key issues on interpreting the series.

Future releases to consider

On- and off-flows (to better understand what is driving trends), length of time on the Count (durations – subject to further exploration of how to define durations for “additional” claimants and those transitioning between benefits), seasonally adjusted series, population rates for context.

4. Status of new statistics

A key part of the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) concerns the relevance of statistical products:

V1.3 User satisfaction with the relevance and usefulness of the statistics and data should be reviewed routinely. This should consider the timeliness, accessibility, clarity and accuracy of the statistics and data.

We will work to the following principles in developing any new series:

- be of appropriate quality
- give a rounded and impartial view - be produced impartially, and free from political influence
- include sufficient background and methodology information
- be presented in a politically neutral manner
- be useful, easy to access, remain relevant and support understanding of important issues

The new series will be published as experimental statistics to aid understanding of trends in local areas. The statistics will also be labelled as provisional (for the latest month) to assess subsequent retrospection. Release of interactive data on webpages will be badged as Beta phase developments. Guidance will be clear that annual revisions to the back-series may also be necessary on occasion.

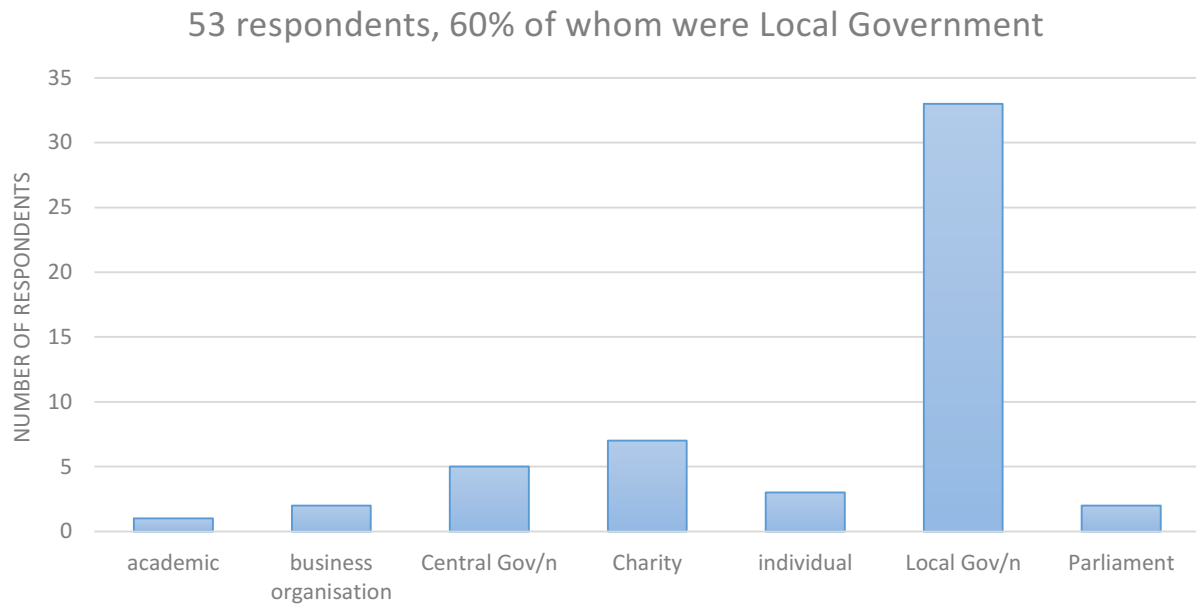
5. Next Steps

The new series will be pre-announced for publication in the [DWP statistics release calendar](#).

6. Further Information

Further queries on the new statistics and the publication strategy should be sent to: stats.consultation-2018@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Annex A: number and type of respondents



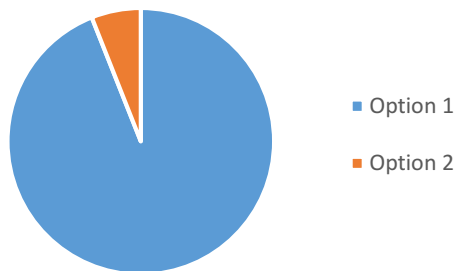
In addition to local Government (Local Authorities and Borough Councils), consultation replies were received from a wide range of organisations. For example House of Commons library, Citizens Advice, Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales, and from Northern Ireland, academics and individual citizens, business organisations, Learning & Work Institute. Meetings with Bank of England and Resolution Foundation were also held.

Annex B: summary responses to questions

Question 1 - Which of the options presented in the research paper for a new statistical series do you prefer?

Options	Total
Option 1 lifts' the <u>historic</u> Claimant Count to what it would have been under a "Universal Credit world"	48
Option 2 adjusts the <u>current</u> Claimant Count to remove additional claimants in order to continue to derive a measure of JSA jobseekers	3
Both	2
Neither	0

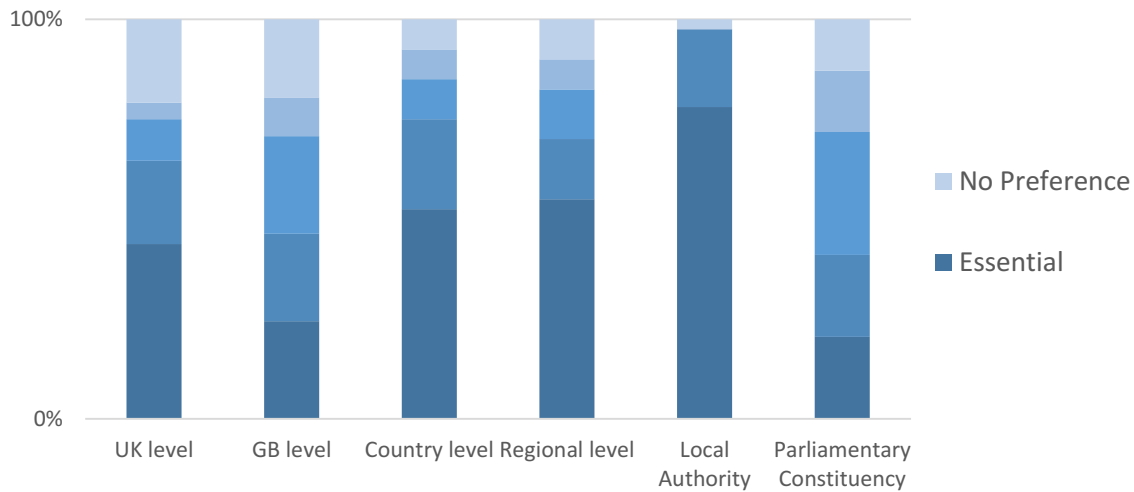
Almost all users preferred Option 1:



DWP Response: The new statistical series will be constructed on the basis of Option 1.

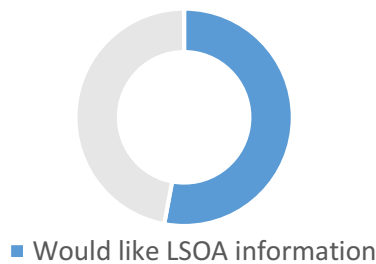
Question 2 - What geographical information would be useful to include?

All of the geographies listed below were judged as essential or highly desirable by the majority of users. The ability to produce both national and localised counts are key requirements



What else would users like to see?

Over 50% of returns expressed a need for Super Output Area level data.



Other geographical information requested included:

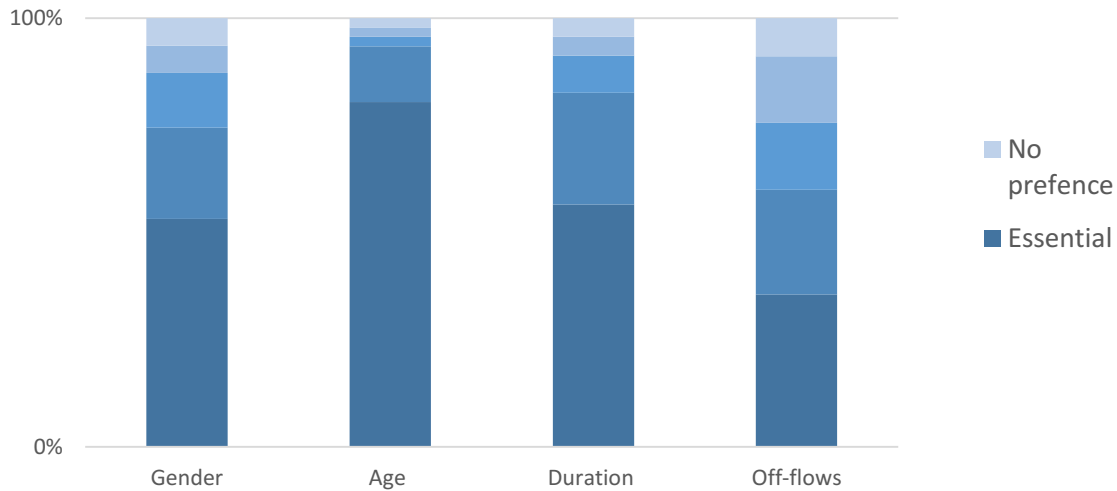
- Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Travel to work areas
- Wards / Data zones
- Jobcentre
- Combined Authority
- Postcode

DWP Response: The initial release of data will cover Great Britain with statistics available for standard geographies (e.g. Country, region, Parliamentary Constituency, Local Authority) but also for smaller area counts – Lower Super Output Area (e.g. LSOA). These will be made available via the stat-xplore platform for users. Publication of UK-level statistics is dependent on the availability for analytic purposes of benefit data-sources within DWP for Northern Ireland. In the main, these are available with the exception of Northern Ireland Housing Benefit data. Work is

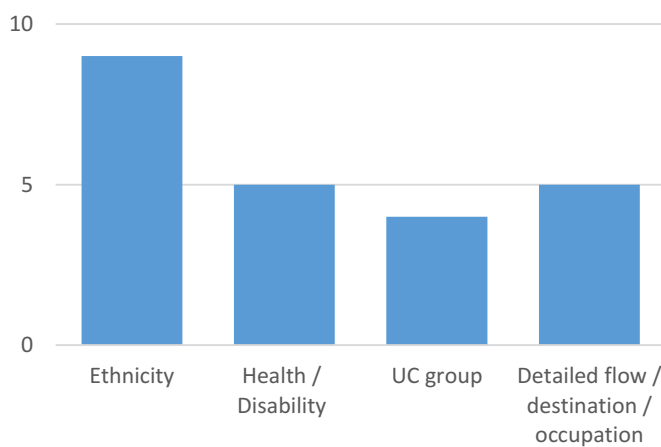
underway to secure analytical access to this data source for modelling NI and UK level statistics.

Question 3 - What other key breakdowns are required?

Age and gender are standard variables that can readily be provided – duration is also a key requirement for users



What else would users like to see?



> Counts by ethnicity group and for those with a health/disability condition were also requested

> Customer journey statistics on previous status and subsequent destinations were also raised

DWP Response: individual age and gender will be available in the initial release of statistics.

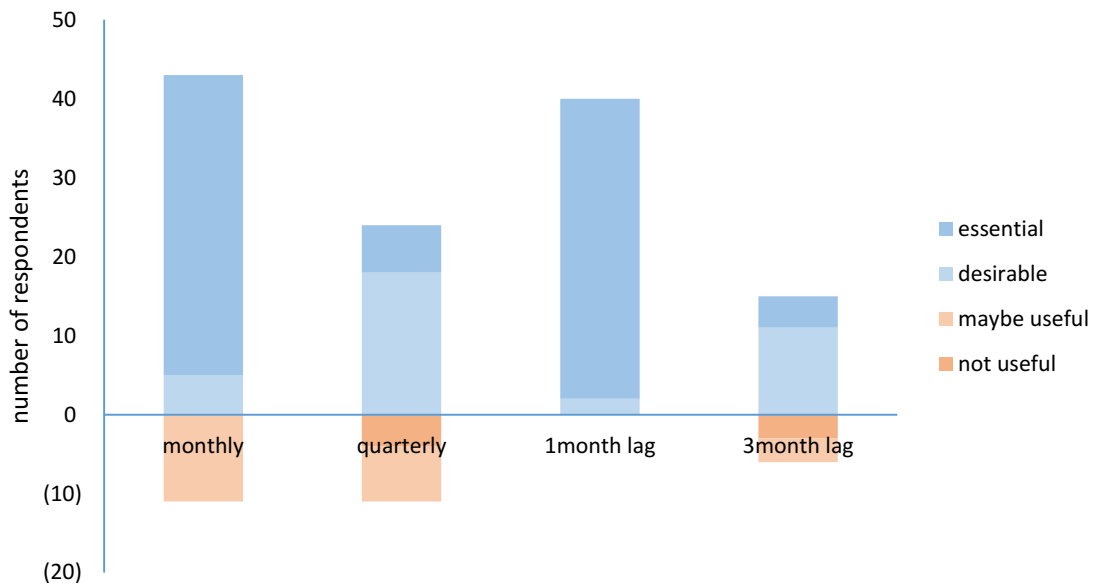
Statistics on on-flows and off-flows (to better understand what is driving the Count) will not be available initially – but will be considered for a subsequent release.

Statistics on duration requires further consideration both to define what duration is being measured (particularly around how to define duration for “additional” claimants

who are neither on JSA or UC) – and how to construct it. Data sources for ethnicity are too incomplete to merit publication at this stage. Statistics on transitions across UC conditionality groups will form part of the [UC publication strategy](#).

Question 4 How important are the frequency of release and timeliness of statistics?

most users want regular and timely statistics

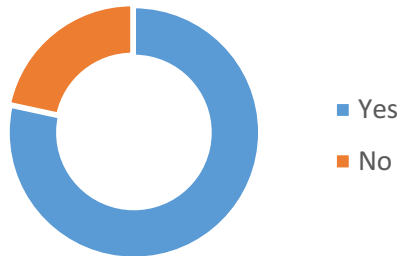


DWP Response: balancing user needs with the availability of timely data across multiple benefit datasets, and the resource available to maintain and develop a new series, statistics will be published on a quarterly basis with a 2 month lag.

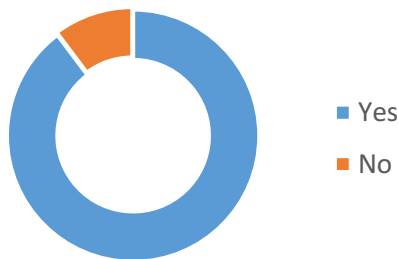
Statistics will be released on a quarterly cycle but with a monthly back-series (to January 2013). For example, statistics released on 22nd January 2019 will form a Count of unemployed claimants as at 8th November 2018 (and 11th October and 13th September.....back to January 2013)

Question 5 - What are your views on removing JSA Credits Only and/or Universal Credit cases awaiting Work Capability Assessment (WCA) from new statistics?

Remove JSA-Credits only



Remove UC WCA

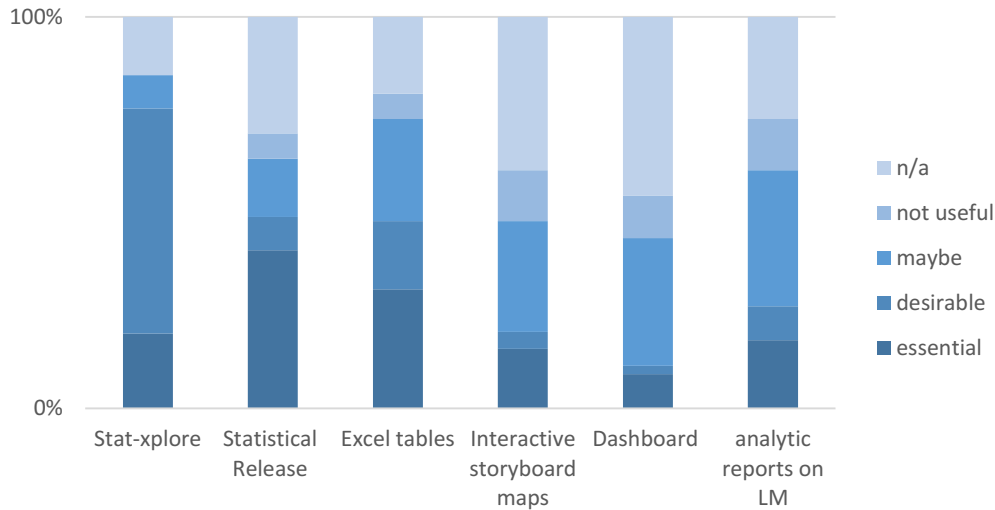


DWP Response on UC Work Capability Assessment cases: *The series will exclude Universal Credit Searching for Work claimants who are awaiting a Work Capability Assessment; on balance although the majority of customers on the health journey (i.e. pre-Work Capability Assessment with a valid fit note) are in the Searching for Work conditionality regime, attendance and work related requirements are tailored to reflect their health condition. Work Coaches use their discretion to tailor interventions and frequency of contact to reflect conversations with the customer about how their health condition or disability affects their day to day activities. They may be set work search and / or work preparation requirements – however they cannot be asked to be available to take up work.*

DWP Response on JSA-Credits Only cases: *The series will include JSA Credits Only cases. Whilst the majority of users indicated exclusion of these cases (on the basis set out in the research report that there is no equivalent under UC), persuasive arguments for inclusion were made; that JSA Credit Only cases (and JSA Contributory only cases) continue to exist outside of Universal Credit, and that such claimant are unemployed, available and looking for work. On balance, a new series to count the total number of people claiming unemployment related benefits in a consistent manner, should therefore include those claiming JSA Credits Only.*

Question 6 - What statistical products would best support you?

A web-release of data via stat-xplore (or NOMIS) is valued by users, alongside traditional products such as a Statistical Release and summary excel tables. Storyboard maps and dashboards were cited as being of lesser use.



DWP Response: data will be disseminated via [stat-xplore](#) as the routine platform for the release of DWP official statistics. This will allow users to query data and tabulate the results – for example time-series by local area by age/gender. A Statistical Release, summary excel tables and a methodology paper will also be published. Interactive maps and other tools to disseminate and visualise data will be considered for subsequent releases.

Annex C: List of organisations responding to the consultation

Local Government

Allerdale Borough Council
Barnsley Council
Birmingham City Council
Blackburn with Darwen BC
Blackpool Council
Calderdale MBC
Cardiff Council
Cheshire West and Chester
Cumbria County Council
Dorset County Council
Durham County Council
Fife Council
Gloucestershire County Council
Greater London Authority
Greater Manchester Combined Authority
Hampshire County Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Humber Local Enterprise Partnership
Manchester Council
North Norfolk District Council
Nottingham City Council
Nottinghamshire County Council
Oldham Council
Rotherham MBC
Sheffield City Council
Shropshire Council
West Suffolk councils
West Sussex County Council
Worcestershire County Council
Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities

Charity or social enterprise

Charity - United Welsh
Citizens Advice Denbighshire
Citizens Advice Staffordshire North and Stoke
Citizens Advice - London
Mencap

Other Organisations

TRAC Consultancy
Sovereign Housing Association
National Housing Federation
The Charity for Civil Servants
Adzuna
House of Commons Library
Learning and Work Institute
University of Glasgow

Central Government

Northern Ireland SRA
Welsh Government
Public Health England
Scottish Government