Publication of ethnicity data for Jobseekers Allowance claimants
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Summary

Ethnicity data for Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) claimants have been published for the first time in November 2006.

The data are now available via the two existing channels for accessing JSA data – the Office for National Statistics (ONS) claimant count data on the NOMIS website and JSA caseload data on the Tabulation Tool on the Department for Work and Pensions website.

The purpose of this article is to:-

- announce the publication of ethnicity data within existing National Statistics releases for JSA claimants;
- summarise the methodology for matching ethnicity data to JSA claimants;
- describe what variables will be available through both publication channels and explain key differences between the two;

Introduction

JSA benefit claimant statistics have been published for many years as a key labour market indicator.

The official source of JSA data is the claimant count which is produced by the ONS, and disseminated via the NOMIS website. From this website, users can access data for 100% stocks and flows of JSA claimants, for a wide range of variables, including age band, gender, duration, occupation, destination and various geographical levels.

More recently, the DWP has also started publishing National Statistics for the 100% JSA caseload, via the DWP website. Previously, estimates from a 5% sample were published.

In November 2006 JSA claimant data by ethnicity were published for the first time, through both dissemination routes.

A fuller article including some exploratory analysis of this new data will be published in February 2007, in the Economic and Labour Market Review.

Methodology

The Department for Work and Pensions has been collecting ethnicity data for Jobseekers since the introduction of the New Deal in 1998. This information is stored on the Labour Market System (LMS), used in Jobcentre Plus offices in Great Britain. However, until recently, only a subset of this ethnicity information – for New Deal participants – was published.

Advances in linking between the LMS and the JSA payment system mean that we can now match an ethnicity marker to around 96% of the JSA caseload (including around 8% who preferred not to state their ethnic origin).
The ethnicity information merged to the JSA claimants uses the same categorisation as used for the ONS Census in 2001 (see Box 1).

Box 1 Two ethnicity variables

1) Summary Ethnicity
   White
   Mixed
   Asian or Asian British
   Black or Black British
   Chinese or Other Ethnic Group
   Prefer not to say
   Unknown

2) Detailed Ethnicity
   White: British
   White: Irish
   White: Other white
   Mixed: White & Black Caribbean
   Mixed: White & Black African
   Mixed: White & Asian
   Mixed: Other Mixed
   Asian or Asian British: Indian
   Asian or Asian British: Pakistani
   Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi
   Asian or Asian British: Other Asian
   Black or Black British: Black Caribbean
   Black or Black British: Black African
   Black or Black British: Other Black
   Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Chinese
   Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Other Ethnic Group
   Prefer not to say
   Unknown

Dissemination

Ethnicity information for JSA claimants has been published for the first time as a National Statistic in November 2006. The availability of these new data fills a significant gap in the published information on JSA claimants and represents a major improvement to Labour Market Statistics.

This information is now disseminated through two routes:

a) The ONS claimant count, available via the NOMIS website and
b) DWP JSA claimant information, available via the DWP Tabulation tool website

There are slight differences in volumes of claimants between the two data sources - for information on the reasons for this, please see Box 2.
Table 1 illustrates what information is available by ethnicity through the two dissemination channels.

### Table 1: Details of variables available

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ONS Claimant Count (monthly)</th>
<th>DWP 100% JSA data (quarterly)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity summary - 7 groups</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity full breakdown - 18 groups</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography (down to Local Authority/Parliamentary Constituency)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caseloads</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflows / Off-flows</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Planned in 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim duration (for off-flows and caseloads)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age band</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children/age youngest child</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average amount of JSA payment</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner flag</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the NOMIS website the ethnicity data are published as a new separate summary dataset alongside the usual claimant count data (dataset called ‘Claimant count stocks and flows – ethnicity, age and duration’). It is published as a separate dataset because the data are released a month in arrears of the usual claimant count data (due to additional time required for the merging process). The dataset excludes clerical claims (similar to the existing ‘Age and duration’ dataset), so totals will not match the headline claimant count figures, which include these non-computerised claims. It also includes data for Great Britain only, as ethnicity data are not available for Northern Ireland (due to the fact that the Labour Market System does not exist in Northern Ireland).

On the DWP Tabulation Tool website, the ethnicity data is released within the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study datasets, as additional variables for the JSA caseload data. From January 2007 it is planned that the ethnicity data will appear on the DWP Tabulation Tool for JSA flows as well. The data on the DWP Tabulation Tool data is limited to Great Britain - it doesn’t include Northern Ireland JSA claims. It also excludes clerical claims.

A key difference between the two sources is that the ONS claimant count and DWP 100% JSA data have been protected using slightly different statistical disclosure control methods – this will further explain the small difference in volumes between the two datasets.

### Box 2 Explanation of reasons for differences between ONS claimant count and DWP 100% JSA caseload statistics

Both the ONS claimant count and DWP 100% JSA data are measures of the numbers of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), however there are differences in the statistics published from these two sources.

The difference in overall numbers claiming JSA on the ONS claimant count and DWP 100% data is small (usually less than 20,000 – 2 percent) and both data sources follow the same trend over time.

The main reason for the disparity between the overall numbers reported on the ONS claimant count and DWP 100% data is timing differences. The count day is different for the two data sources – the ONS claimant count includes JSA claims that are live on the second Thursday of each month, the DWP 100% data counts live claims on the last day of the month (approximately 19 days apart). JSA is a benefit with a high rate of on and off flow activity, which will result in a difference in overall numbers reported on the two sources and also a difference in individual claimants that appear on each dataset.
Other explanatory factors for the difference include – retrospection, late terminations, data extraction rules and coverage differences (see the full report via the link below for more details).

It is recommended that whenever possible, access JSA statistics from the ONS claimant count. If the information you need is not available from the ONS claimant count then you should use the DWP 100% data in the first place, or finally the DWP 5% data.

Further Information.
A more comprehensive report into these differences is available on the DWP website at: http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/tabtools/differences.pdf If you have any comments or questions arising from this summary please email: Michael.Payne@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Notes

1 http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/
2 http://www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/tabtool.asp

Further information

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