

FEATURE

Karen Grierson

Department for Work and Pensions

Ethnicity data for Jobseeker's Allowance claimants

SUMMARY

Ethnicity data for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants were 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 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; and provide some summary analysis based on the newly-released data.

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 Office for National Statistics (ONS), and disseminated via the NOMIS website at www.nomisweb.co.uk/. From this website, users can access data for 100 per cent stocks and flows of JSA claimants, for a wide range of variables, including age band, sex, duration, occupation, destination and various geographical levels.

More recently, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has also started publishing National Statistics for the 100 per cent JSA caseload, via the DWP website at www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/tabtool.asp. Previously, estimates from a 5 per cent sample were published.

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

Methodology

The DWP 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 99 per cent of the ONS claimant count (including around 8 per cent who preferred not to state their ethnic origin).

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

The ethnicity information merged to the JSA claimants uses the same categorisation as used for the ONS Census in 2001 (see **Box 1**).

Dissemination

Ethnicity information for JSA claimants was 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:

- the ONS claimant count, available via the NOMIS website, and
- 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.

On the NOMIS website, the ethnicity data are published as a new separate summary data set alongside the usual claimant count data (the data set is called 'Claimant count stocks and flows – ethnicity, age and duration'). It is published as a separate data set 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 data set excludes clerical claims (similar to the existing 'Age and duration' data set), 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 there).

On the DWP Tabulation Tool website, the ethnicity data is released within the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study data sets, as additional variables for the JSA caseload data. In early 2007 it is planned that the ethnicity data will appear on the DWP Tabulation Tool for JSA flows as well. Data on the Tabulation Tool are limited to Great Britain, so do not include Northern Ireland JSA claims; they also exclude clerical claims.

A key difference between the two sources is that the ONS claimant count and DWP 100 per cent JSA data have been produced using slightly different statistical disclosure

Box 2

Explanation of reasons for differences between ONS claimant count and DWP 100 per cent JSA caseload statistics

Both the ONS claimant count and DWP 100 per cent JSA data are measures of the numbers of people claiming 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 per cent data is small (usually less than 20,000 – 2 per cent) 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 per cent 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, while the DWP 100 per cent 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 data set.

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, JSA statistics from the ONS claimant count are used. If the information needed is not available from the ONS claimant count, then the DWP 100 per cent data should be used in the first place, or finally the DWP 5 per cent data.

A more comprehensive report into these differences is available on the DWP website at www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/tabtools/differences.pdf

Table 1
Details of variables available

	ONS claimant count (monthly)	DWP 100 per cent JSA data (quarterly)
Ethnicity summary – 7 groups	✓	✓
Ethnicity full breakdown – 18 groups	✓	✓
Geography (down to local authority/ parliamentary constituency)	✓	✓
Caseloads	✓	✓
Inflows/off-flows	✓	Planned in 2007
Claim duration (for off-flows and caseloads)	✓	
Sex	✓	✓
Age band	✓	✓
Number of children/age youngest child		✓
Average amount of JSA payment		✓
Partner flag		✓

control methods – this will further explain the small difference in volumes between the two data sets.

Analysis

The following section presents a sample of the analysis made possible by the publication of the ethnicity data for JSA claimants.

The ethnic distribution of the claimant count is presented in **Table 2**.

A higher proportion of the ethnic minority working age population in England are claiming JSA compared with the white population (**Table 3**). This finding

reflects the well-known labour market disadvantage faced by ethnic minorities – ILO unemployment rates show ethnic minorities have a higher unemployment rate compared with the overall rate (latest data for spring 2006 show ethnic minorities have an unemployment rate of 11.2 per cent compared with 5.2 per cent overall). Within the ethnic minority population, however, there is considerable variation.

The Black or Black British ethnic group has the highest proportion of their working age population on the claimant count, with 10.2 per cent of the Other Black group on JSA. However, the small numbers in

Table 2
Claimant count by ethnicity, September 2006

Great Britain		Thousands	Percentage of total
Total		919.99	
Total - Ethnic minorities		285.97	31
Total - White		678.31	74
	British	653.88	71
	Irish	7.16	1
	Other	17.28	2
Total - Mixed		13.88	2
	White and Black Caribbean	6.39	1
	White and Black African	2.03	0
	White and Asian	1.68	0
	Other Mixed	3.79	0
Total - Asian or Asian British		56.57	6
	Indian	17.71	2
	Pakistani	21.11	2
	Bangladeshi	10.64	1
	Other Asian	7.12	1
Total - Black or Black British		60.70	7
	Caribbean	28.38	3
	African	25.64	3
	Other Black	6.68	1
Total - Chinese or Other Ethnic Group		23.70	3
	Chinese	2.38	0
	Other Ethnic Group	21.32	2
Prefer not to say		74.18	8
Unknown		12.69	1

Source: NOMIS

Table 3
Proportion of resident working age population on claimant count, September 2006

England		Percentages
Total		2.5
Total - Ethnic minorities		4.4
Total - White		2.0
	British	2.1
	Irish	1.8
	Other	1.4
Total - Mixed		3.6
	White and Black Caribbean	5.5
	White and Black African	3.8
	White and Asian	1.4
	Other Mixed	3.7
Total - Asian or Asian British		3.2
	Indian	2.1
	Pakistani	4.1
	Bangladeshi	5.6
	Other Asian	3.3
Total - Black or Black British		6.7
	Caribbean	7.3
	African	5.8
	Other Black	10.2
Total - Chinese or Other Ethnic Group		4.7
	Chinese	0.9
	Other Ethnic Group	8.7

Note:

Proportions are calculated by dividing the claimant count by the resident working age population estimates for England, from mid-2004, from an experimental series published by ONS. There is not an exact definitional match between the two series to the extent that claimant count figures show separate categories for those whose ethnicity is recorded as 'prefer not to say' or 'unknown' while population estimates do not.

Source: NOMIS and ONS experimental series

this group cast some uncertainty over this figure. The ethnic group with the most similar claimant count proportion to White residents is the Indian population, with 2.1 per cent of their working age population on JSA. Those ethnic groups with claimant proportions below that of the overall rate are White Irish, White Other, White and Asian, and Chinese.

Figure 1 (overleaf) shows that the same proportion of White, Mixed, and Asian or Asian British JSA claimants in September 2006 had been on JSA for less than six months

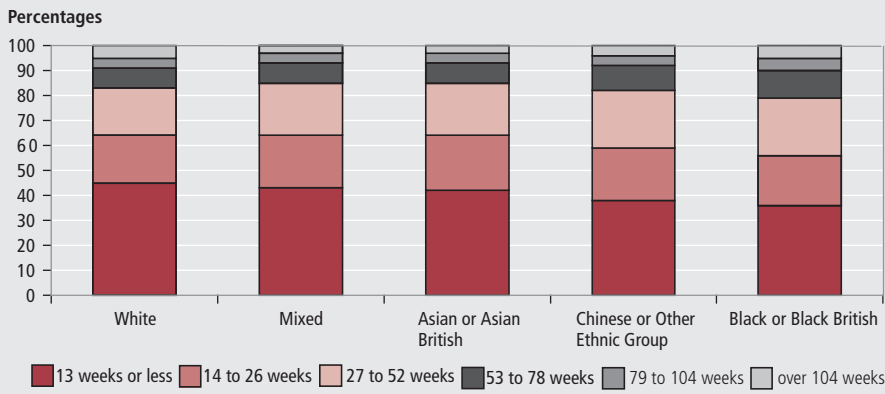
(64 per cent). Claimants of Black or Black British ethnicity are more likely to have longer claim durations – 21 per cent of claimants in this ethnic group had been on JSA for over a year (compared with 17 per cent of White claimants).

Further analysis of the duration of claims for the September 2006 caseload shows that Black or Black British claimants have the longest claims – at an average of 35 weeks per claim, compared with 30 weeks for White claimants, and 27 weeks for both Mixed, and Asian or Asian British claimants. Chinese or Other Ethnic Group claimants have an average claim duration of 31 weeks.

A high proportion of both white and ethnic minority 18 to 24 year old JSA claimants flow off JSA within six months, as they enter the Options stage of the mandatory New Deal for Young People. However, **Figure 2 (overleaf)** shows that a lower proportion of ethnic minority JSA claimants aged 18 to 24 flowing off JSA have flowed off after both 6 and 12 months, compared with white claimants (though the gap is smaller after 12 months).

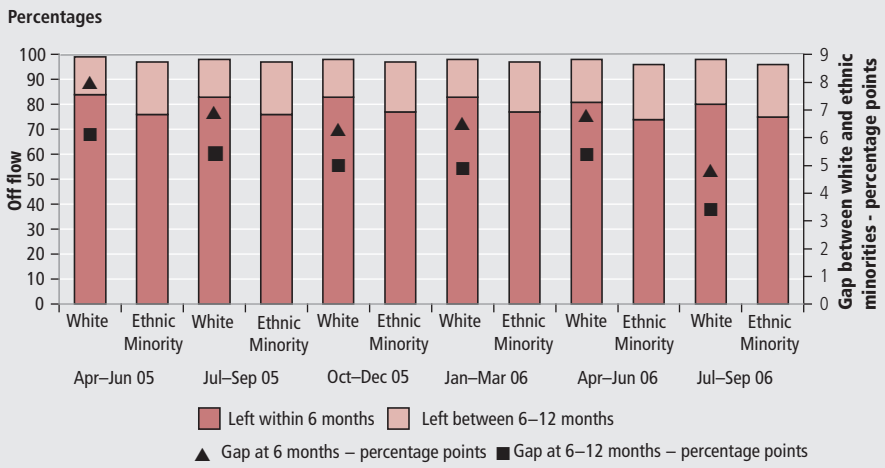
Since the earliest data available, in April 2005, the gap between white and ethnic minority claimants who had flowed off after 6 and 12 months has been decreasing. Over this period, the gap between white and ethnic minorities who had flowed off after 6 months has dropped by 3 percentage points.

Figure 1
Duration of claim for live JSA claims, September 2006



Source: NOMIS

Figure 2
Duration of claims for those 18–24 year olds flowing off the claimant count, by ethnic group



Source: NOMIS

CONTACT

✉ elmr@ons.gsi.gov.uk

REFERENCE

Experimental statistics on population estimates by ethnic group are available at www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=14238