**INDICATIVE REPRESENTATION OF THE CLAIMANT COUNT INCLUDING UNIVERSAL CREDIT CASELOAD
GUIDANCE DOCUMENT**

Introduction

The Claimant Count is a measure of the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed. Since October 1996 it has been a count of the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). People who qualify for JSA through their National Insurance contributions are eligible for a personal allowance for a maximum of six months. This is contribution-based JSA. People who do not qualify for contribution-based JSA can claim a means-tested allowance. This is income-based JSA.

Universal Credit (UC) is being introduced to replace a number of existing means-tested benefits, including income-based JSA. Consequently the Claimant Count will include people who continue to claim JSA, along with the subset of claimants of UC who are claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed, i.e. jobseeker UC claimants.

On 29 April 2013, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) started a Pathfinder for UC which created the first jobseeker UC claimants. This was initially extended to 10 Jobcentre Plus Offices across Great Britain by April 2014. From June 2014 a further gradual roll out of Universal Credit was introduced to extend the coverage, initially to the whole of the North West.

The initial roll-out of UC was to a subset of claimants who would have previously been claiming JSA. The subset covered individuals who were single, with no dependents, housing costs or links to other benefits. Consequently claimants entered UC as jobseekers. As their circumstances change, however, they remain within UC, meaning that the benefit soon additionally covered people who were working or not working but not looking for work (economically inactive). From June 2014 the coverage of roll-out claimants was extended to include childless couples, with families to follow later on.

Through the initial implementation, the data needed to incorporate jobseeker UC claimants into the claimant count has not been available. DWP has initially published a total caseload of all UC claimants, with the intention that over time it will become possible to produce a breakdown that identifies jobseeker UC claimants separately.

In the meantime, in the absence of a series of jobseeker UC claimants, ONS has made use of the published DWP information to produce an adjusted version of the Claimant Count.

Adjusted Claimant Count

ONS has used figures directly from the [DWP Universal Credit - experimental official statistics](#) publication.

ONS has not made any estimations based on the series published by DWP. Generally this includes other UC claimants in addition to jobseekers, so the figure is likely to slightly overstate the number of unemployed UC claimants at a point in time. However, the extent of the overstatement arising from this is expected to be smaller than the understatement in the Claimant Count arising from not including any UC claimants.

Because the DWP statistics are the subject of ongoing development they are undergoing regular revisions to the whole series. ONS will not be routinely applying these ongoing revisions and will initially use the DWP figure for any period as it was first published. ONS may take on revisions to the time series later on at preannounced points.

In September 2014 DWP published a new series aligned with the Claimant Count reference dates, to replace their previous series aligned with the ends of calendar months. At this point ONS revised the time series to move to a consistent reference date basis.

The UC figures published by DWP are not seasonally adjusted. However, the Claimant Count is a very seasonal indicator, affected by such influences as tourism, Christmas and the academic year.

Consequently ONS believes it will be most useful to users to see a seasonally adjusted version of the Indicative Adjusted Count. Because it is not possible to calculate a seasonal path from the short run of UC data, ONS has made the assumption that the UC data has similar seasonal properties to the total Claimant Count and consequently has seasonally adjust published UC data using implied seasonal factors derived from published Claimant Count series. The factors used are the implied factors derived from the UK total male and female seasonally adjusted and unadjusted series.

$$\text{Implied Seasonal Factor} = (\text{Seasonally Adjusted Series} / \text{Unadjusted Series}) * 100$$

$$\text{Universal Credit (seasonally adjusted)} = (\text{UC Unadjusted Series} * \text{Implied Seasonal Factor}) / 100$$

The published Indicative Adjusted Claimant Count series will include both the seasonally adjusted versions of the Claimant Count and Universal Credit.

Future Plans

It is expected that DWP will be able to publish a series of UC caseload excluding people in work later in 2014, followed by a series of jobseeker UC claimants at a later date. ONS will monitor these developments and endeavour to use the most appropriate figures published by DWP to help users understand the impact that the introduction of UC is having on the Claimant Count.

When appropriate information becomes available it remains ONS' intention to rework all Claimant Count series to incorporate UC data.

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