

# Uses and Users of the DWP Statistical Summary

## ***Introduction***

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) publish a Statistical Summary document each month. It is used for the release of a wide range of DWP statistics

The DWP Statistical Summary brings together key National Statistics on DWP administered benefits, some employment programmes and JSA (Jobseeker's Allowance) sanctions and Jobcentre Plus vacancies. To provide a more complete picture of DWP responsibility, statistics on Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (administered by Local Authorities) and the Child Support Agency are also included.

The Summary is published monthly, containing National Statistics on Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit together with Official Statistics giving early estimates of inactive benefit caseloads. Each quarter (in May, August, November and February), a larger document also contains the detail of DWP administered benefits, some employment programmes, JSA sanctions, Jobcentre Plus vacancies and the Child Support Agency.

Alongside the Statistical Summary, there are a large number of tables which enable the user to delve in to the detail. These are provided to the user as:

- The DWP Tabulation Tool – for DWP administered benefits and employment programmes the Tabulation Tool provides the user with an interactive tool to select one of thousands of possible tabulations. This is available for caseloads and on/off flows at: <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=tabtool>. A similar Tabulation Tool, derived from 5% sample data, is also available. Whenever possible, 100% data should be used in preference to 5% estimates, as these are both more accurate and form DWP's headline statistics. Some statistics remain outside the scope of the Tabulation Tool but will continue to be available via the internet as pre-defined summary tables.
- Identical numbers via Nomis (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/Default.asp>)
- Separate detailed tables on Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit; and Claimants on out-of-work benefits
- Separate numbers regarding Flexible New Deal
- Tables broken down by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)
- Other tables and background information via links on the Tabulation Tool pages (e.g. links to long time series spreadsheets; descriptions of the benefit.)

For the rest of this document, the DWP Statistical Summary should be taken to include all the products and tables outlined above (except the Child Support Agency statistics, as the main release is separate at: <http://www.childmaintenance.org/en/publications/statistics.html>).

## ***Known Uses of DWP Statistical Summary***

The Summary (and underlying datasets) are used by DWP for:

- Providing the evidence base for assessing the potential effect of policy options
- Monitoring current DWP policy and evaluating recent changes
- Monitoring the effect on the benefit system of the economic cycle
- Answering Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests
- Forecasting benefit expenditure (in conjunction with expenditure statistics)
- Monitoring the performance of LAs as they process Housing Benefit/ Council Tax Benefit claims on behalf of the department.
- Producing other statistical series (e.g. Children in Out-of-work Benefit Households, Neighbourhood Statistics, Disadvantage Indicators)

Outside DWP, the internet based publication mechanism for the Summary means that we cannot understand all the varied uses of these numbers. However, we do know that the Summary (and underlying datasets) are used for:

- Providing general information on the benefit system in Great Britain
- Measuring Government targets relating to DWP (see <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/about%2Ddwp/vision%2Ddaims%2Dand%2Dvalues/>)
- Producing indices of deprivation in England, Wales and Scotland
- Local Authority performance indicators (e.g NI173, NI116)
- Improving population estimates, especially at a small area level
- Academic research
- Policy development and evaluation by local authorities and other welfare to work and pensions stakeholders and providers

## ***Analysis of Users***

We have conducted an analysis of users of our main benefit statistics. There are two ways to access the Benefits data; via Nomis and via the DWP Tabulation Tool.

### Nomis

Supplier reports have been received from Nomis for the use of DWP Benefits and Jobcentre Plus Vacancies for the period Jun-May 2011.

- Of those who signed in to the Nomis system, local and central government are the main users overall, however, some individual commercial and academic users take enormous chunks of information in one go.
- The most accessed dataset in this period was the Working Age Client Group benefit breakdowns at 37% of all data downloaded by users.

### DWP Tabulation Tool

Access logs for the period between 28th February 2011 and 3rd April 2011 were obtained for analysis of the Tabtool users.

- The most common users of the DWP Tabulation Tool came from a Government or Council background accounting for 47% of identifiable regular users with the next most common users being academic accounting for 26% of identifiable regular users.
- The top identifiable user of the Tabulation Tools was the Northern Ireland Civil Service, followed by The Houses of Parliament and the NHS.
- The remaining users not in a Government or Academic field were largely policy based, for example, think tanks, charities and research institutes.

## ***Valid Uses of DWP Statistical Summary***

The Summary can be used for:

- Obtaining the definitive numbers of people claiming DWP benefits or participating in the employment programmes
- Exploring the characteristics of those claiming benefit and participating the employment programmes
- Evaluating DWP programmes and benefits. However, users should be aware that administrative changes in the benefit system can and do affect the published numbers. Therefore, users should read footnotes carefully.

However, the numbers should not be used for:

- Statistics on unemployment. There are a number of measures of unemployment, all of which are published by the Office for National Statistics. These numbers can be found at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/product.asp?vlnk=1944>. However, DWP statistics can provide additional details and context to support the main labour market statistics
- Calculation of expenditure on benefits (by multiplication of caseloads and averages). Expenditure tables can be found at: <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd4/index.php?page=expenditure>

### **Areas of Unmet Need**

Customers (both within DWP and externally) sometimes request the following:

- More timely release of statistics. National Statistics are released around six months after the reference period. This is to allow for late notification of claims and processing time. This is called retrospection. The early estimates series (published monthly) has been introduced to accommodate this need.
- More detail and more flexible online analysis. A huge amount of detail about claimants' personal and financial circumstances is collected by DWP in the administration of benefits. Whilst some of these data are available in the Tabulation Tool, the Tool is limited in the number of breakdowns it can present. At present, no further detail can be added to the Tabulation Tool.
- Statistics relating to DWP process. For example, sometimes information on the number of changes of circumstances is requested. There is no readily available quality assured dataset regarding DWP administrative processing.

### **How to comment and get involved**

DWP would like to hear your views on our statistical publications. If you use any of our statistics publications, we would be interested in hearing what you use them for and how well they meet your requirements. Please email DWP at [stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk) or complete the ongoing questionnaire at [http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/statistical\\_summary\\_questionnaire.doc](http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/statistical_summary_questionnaire.doc)

If you would like to receive occasional e-mails from DWP to directly inform you of documents seeking the views of users, please email [general.statistics@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:general.statistics@dwp.gsi.gov.uk) giving details of the DWP publications you use.

In addition to these, DWP use a number of routes to seek user views. For example:

- National Statistics consultations are run for large proposed changes. For example, in 2005 a consultation was held to change the headline data source for benefit statistics.
- DWP publish experimental statistics for new series, whilst seeking user views to inform a full National Statistics release
- Hold six monthly meetings with a selection of users
- New statistics are developed in conjunction with groups of stakeholders to help understand and quality assure output
- Monitor the usage of the DWP website and Tabulation Tool
- Monitor ad hoc analysis requests

Ad hoc comments are also welcome. Please provide such comments to: [stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:stats-consultation@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

For all other enquiries please contact the appropriate person using the list at: <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=contacts>