

Duration on out of work benefits

December 2010

Methodology

To identify the number of individuals that have been claiming out of work benefits for different proportions of the past ten years we have undertaken the following:

- Using a 5% sample of the DWP benefits component of the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study¹, we identified claimants who had experienced spells on one or more out of work benefits (Job Seekers Allowance, Incapacity Benefit / Severe Disablement Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, Income Support) over a ten year period (June 1999 to May 2009).
- We only included those who could have spent the entire period on out of work benefits (by excluding those aged above 60 at the end of the period or below 16 at the start).
- Where it was possible for a claimant to receive more than one out of work benefit at a time (e.g. Income Support and Incapacity Benefit) we ensured this was counted as a single spell.
- For each claimant we then summed the total period spent on out of work benefits over the ten years, which might include multiple separate spells on benefit.
- To simplify the analysis durations were counted in whole months and onflows or exits from benefit were assumed to equate to a half month on benefit.

¹ The Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS) links benefit and programme information held by DWP on its customers, with employment records from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Only DWP data was used for this analysis.

Results

Table 1 shows the results of the analysis. For example around 1.4 million individuals were claiming out of work benefits for at least nine years out of the period June 1999 to May 2009. This will not just include unemployed claimants but also those unable to work due to sickness or disability as well as those not expected to work such as lone parents receiving Income Support.

Table 1: Claimants of out of work benefits June 1999 to May 2009 by total period spent on benefit ¹

Total period spent on benefit	Claimants (Thousands)	Proportion of Claimants
Up to one year	4,985	46%
One to two years	1,269	12%
Two to three years	728	7%
Three to four years	538	5%
Four to five years	436	4%
Five to six years	385	4%
Six to seven years	336	3%
Seven to eight years	322	3%
Eight to nine years	329	3%
Nine to ten years	1,409	13%
All claimants over period	10,737	100%

Source: DWP Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study, 5% sample

¹ Includes Job Seekers Allowance, Incapacity Benefit / Severe disablement Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, Income Support

Department for Work and Pensions
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