

Baseline Jobseeker Traffic Survey

Research Summary

GHK, in association with the Policy Research Institute at Leeds Metropolitan University, was commissioned by the Employment Service to undertake a baseline Jobseeker survey and traffic count this year at 37 Jobcentres across the country. The purpose of this work is to provide a baseline against which to assess the impacts of all MES initiatives on various factors such as Jobseeker characteristics, job search behaviour and the nature of Jobcentre use. None of the Jobcentres visited had Jobpoints at the time of the survey. A follow-up survey planned for July 2002 is expected to capture the MES impacts.

A quantitative survey of 1,691 Jobcentre users was undertaken, and the survey results were weighted using traffic counts of men and women that were also taken at each Jobcentre.

In terms of Jobseeker characteristics, on the whole there has been no great change since 1996. Interestingly, the percentage of employed visitors has increased since 1996. Most of the Jobcentre visitors in this year's survey were claimants in receipt of ES and/or non-ES benefits and contributions.

The main reason for Jobcentre visits is to look at vacancies followed by to attend fortnightly review/sign on. The reverse was true in 1996. A decrease in the frequency of visits has also been observed this year, and this may be related to the observed increase in the average length of each Jobcentre visit. Indeed, the average time spent in the Jobcentre has doubled since 1996.

Jobcentre users also look mainly locally for jobs. In addition, 26% of the visitors surveyed selected a job and 11% applied for at least one of the

jobs selected on the day of the interview.

Proportionately more claimants than non-claimants are aware of and have used the MES facilities. This is not surprising as claimants are more likely to speak to Jobcentre staff. Of those visitors who were asked if they would prefer the MES services, a majority stated that they would prefer vacancies to be displayed with employer details so that they could contact them and apply for jobs directly.

The majority of all Jobcentre visitors were also satisfied with the ES/Jobcentre overall.

The following section highlights the key findings in greater detail.

Overview of Key Findings

Traffic Volumes

- The number of Jobcentre visitors peaks during the lunchtime period (37% of all visits are made during lunchtime), but otherwise numbers do not change much throughout the day.
- More women visit the Jobcentres in the afternoon rather than in the morning; roughly the same number of men visit in the afternoon as in the morning.

Characteristics of Jobcentre Users

- The majority of all Jobcentre users are male (67%) and white (89%).
- Benefits claimants (74%) represent the majority of Jobcentre visitors. Benefit claimants within this evaluation are those who are in receipt of ES and/or non-ES benefits or contributions (e.g. National Insurance Contributions) and also include those who had signed off on the day of the interview or were still being assessed for benefits.
- Jobcentre users under the age of 35 represent 62% of all users.

- Unemployed people comprise 56% of all Jobcentre users (31% are unemployed for less than 6 months, and 25% are unemployed for more than 6 months).
- Only 6% of claimants¹ are employed compared with 47% of non-claimants.
- The majority of the employed (72%) are not in receipt of benefits.
- Most of those unemployed for less than 6 months (85%) and unemployed for more than 6 months (73%) are in receipt of JSA only.
- Most Jobcentre users are qualified (75%), but tend to not be highly qualified.
- Proportionately more non-claimants (81%) than claimants (74%) have qualifications. Interestingly, qualified claimants and non-claimants generally have similar levels of qualifications.
- 19% of claimants have a health problem or disability compared to 10% of non-claimants.
- Jobcentre users have experience of using computers and the Internet: 76% of all users have used a computer before; 53% have had some form of computer training; 50% use the Internet; and 34% have used the Internet to look for work.
- Most users spend all their time at the Jobcentre on one activity on any particular visit (57%).
- Jobcentre users mainly visit the Jobcentre more than once a week (34%), but not daily. Only 3% of all Jobcentre users visit daily. In 1996, 54% of users visited more than once a week, but not daily. This decrease in the frequency of Jobcentre visits may be related to the observed increase in the average length of each Jobcentre visit and the alternative means of obtaining access to vacancies and information now available.
- The frequency of visits differs between claimants and non-claimants. Most claimants (38%) visit the Jobcentre more than once per week (but not daily). On the other hand, 26% of non-claimants stated that it was their first visit to the Jobcentre.
- A majority of all Jobcentre users, 76% of claimants and 81% of non-claimants, only visit the Jobcentres they were interviewed at.
- Jobcentre users spent an average of 25 minutes in the Jobcentre on the day of their interview, almost twice as long as in 1996 (13 minutes).

Jobcentre Use

- The main reason why people visit the Jobcentre is to look at vacancies (40%) and the second most common reason is to attend fortnightly review/sign on (31%).
- The main reason why claimants visit the Jobcentre is to sign on (40%). The main reason non-claimants visit the Jobcentre is to look at vacancies (76%).

Job Preferences and Job Search Behaviour

- The majority of all Jobcentre users (94% of claimants and 85% of non-claimants) were looking for work for themselves.
- Of those looking for work for themselves, the majority are looking for full-time work (72%), 11% are looking for either full or part time hours, and 9% are looking for part-time work. Proportionately more non-claimants (19%) than claimants (7%) are searching for part-time work.
- Just over half of all Jobcentre users looking for work look mainly locally (53%).

¹ Employed claimants might be in receipt of, amongst others, Income Support, Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) and disability allowances.

- Claimants and non-claimants appear to have a similar degree of confidence when it comes to finding work. Roughly 17% of claimants and 20% of non-claimants are not confident of finding work, and 70% of claimants and 69% of non-claimants feel confident.
- The majority (66%) of all Jobcentre users did not select any jobs to apply for on the day of the interview; 26% did. Thirteen per cent of all users selected one job to apply for, 7% selected two, 3% selected three jobs, and 2% selected more than three jobs.
- In a similar survey conducted for the Jobpoints Pathfinder evaluation (ES Report 76), 47% of all respondents selected a job to apply for and 23% applied for at least one of the jobs selected on the day of the interview. In comparison, 26% of the respondents of the 2001 survey (undertaken in Jobcentres without Jobpoints) selected a job and 11% went on to apply for at least one of the jobs selected on the day of the interview. This suggests that Jobpoints are positively influencing job search behaviour.

Satisfaction with Jobcentre and New Services

The majority of claimants (79%) and non-claimants (79%) who have used the MES services are satisfied with them. In terms of overall satisfaction with the ES/Jobcentre, 79% of claimants are satisfied, as are 80% of non-claimants.

Awareness and Use of New ES Services

The research took place in Jobcentres that had not had Jobpoints installed.

Generally, Jobcentre users do not have a high awareness of MES. Of all users, 13% are aware of Jobpoints, 21% are aware of the ES Internet Job Bank, and 18% are aware of Worktrain.

In comparison, 57% of Jobcentre users were aware of Employment Service Direct and 25% had used it to obtain information on vacancies. This telephone job search service was introduced in 1999 and widely publicised.