

Jobseeker Traffic Survey – Year Two

GHK, in association with the Policy Research Institute at Leeds Metropolitan University, was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions to undertake a quantitative survey of the impact of the Modernising Employment Service (MES) programme on Jobseekers' use of Jobcentres and Jobcentre Plus provided services. The survey formed part of the second year of the MES evaluation. The survey took place at 36 of the 37 Jobcentres surveyed in 2001. The first year survey was published as Baseline Jobseeker Traffic Survey report (ESR 108). All of the Jobcentres had Jobpoints installed in intervening period. The purpose of the research was to uncover any changes in Jobcentre use between the two surveys and show how Jobseekers knowledge of and satisfaction with MES have changed.

Nearly 1,600 Jobcentre users were approached and the survey results were weighted using traffic counts of men and women also taken at the Jobcentres.

Over the year (2001-2002) there has been a 10% increase in the numbers entering the Jobcentres. The most noticeable change has been the increase in the numbers and proportion of women (35% to 39%). As in 2001 the largest group (56%) were in receipt of JSA; however the largest proportional increase was amongst those who were not in work and not claiming any benefits (+20%) and the only group to decline both absolutely and proportionally was

those not in work and claiming other benefits (-20%).

The main reason for entering the Jobcentres was to look at vacancies (39%) followed by fortnightly review/sign on (35%). Fortnightly review/sign on has increased proportionally (from 31%) and more people are visiting for more than one purpose.

The majority (85%) are looking for jobs with under an hour's travel time this is similar to 2001. While a minority chose jobs on the day of the visit more did so than in 2001 and they chose more jobs. The proportion of first time visitors selecting jobs increased, and the visitors who chose jobs chose more than in 2001.

Awareness of MES services has increased amongst all groups of Jobcentre visitors. 97% are now aware of Jobpoints compared to 13% in 2001. Levels of satisfaction with the MES services generally have risen from 78% to 85% although proportion very satisfied has fallen from 28% to 22%.

Satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus generally has also increased (from 78% to 84%). However, while still mostly satisfied, the disadvantaged groups exhibit lower levels of satisfaction. For example 71% of ethnic minorities were satisfied with the overall Jobcentre Plus service.

Overview of Key findings

Volume and distribution of Jobcentre Visitors

The overall number of visits to the Jobcentres increased, by around 10%, between 2001 and 2002.

Men accounted for the majority of visitors in both 2001 and 2002. However, the numbers of women visitors increased at a much faster rate than men. Women accounted for over 90% of the rise in the number of visitors.

The largest increase was amongst visitors aged 25-49 years (up 15%). There was a shift in the distribution of Jobcentre visitors towards more people under 50 years. The largest increase in female visitors was amongst younger age groups.

The number of non-white visitors increased in line with the overall increase. However, white visitors predominate and overall there was little change in the distribution of visitors by ethnicity. There was little change in the proportion of visitors with a disability.

Characteristics of Jobcentre Visitors

When analysed by work status, the number of visitors increased in all but one group between 2001 and 2002, but the biggest increase (20%) was in visits by people who were not in work and not claiming any benefits. The number of visits by unemployed visitors claiming JSA rose by 11%, whilst the numbers on 'other' benefits fell by 20%.

There was a significant increase in the number of visits by shorter term

unemployed people (under 6 months unemployment) from 73% of all visits to 77%. Amongst unemployed visitors, the average length of unemployment declined from 10.4 months in 2001 to 8.7 months in 2002.

The proportion of Jobcentre visitors with qualifications increased 2001-2002 from 76% to 79% while nearly 90% of employed visitors had qualifications.

There was an increase from 17% to 21% in visitors using the Jobcentre for the first time, especially employed first-time users (21% to 31%). The proportion of visitors looking for a job/change of job for themselves has increased (72% to 85%).

Nature of Visits to Jobcentres

Visitors whose primary motivation for visiting was to attend a fortnightly review/sign on increased from 30% to 35%. The proportion of visitors who were attending primarily to look at vacancies was stable (40% 2001, 39% 2002). In addition, a larger proportion of visitors were undertaking more than one activity whilst in the Jobcentre. The most common combination of activities was signing-on and looking at vacancies.

JSA claimants tended to visit more often than others, although amongst this group weekly visits were slightly declining whilst fortnightly visits were increasing (25-31%). People who were in work and those unemployed claiming 'other' benefits on the other hand were visiting more frequently than in the past. Men tended to visit more frequently than women.

The majority (77%) of visitors only used one Jobcentre regularly (within one month), and the tendency to visit more than one Jobcentre was declining.

The average length of time spent in the Jobcentre has increased slightly (from 25 in 2001 to 27 minutes in 2002). People who were not in work and not claiming benefits spent most time in the Jobcentre on average. The average time spent speaking to staff has decreased.

Employed people, and those whose primary motivation for visiting was looking for jobs, spent the most time on average looking for jobs 15 minutes compared to the average of 11 minutes. Amongst unemployed people, the time spent was inversely related to the length of unemployment (longer term unemployed people spent least time).

The majority of visitors did not select any jobs whilst in the Jobcentre, although the proportion selecting jobs has increased (from 29% in 2001 to 37% in 2002). The average number of jobs selected whilst in the Jobcentre (amongst those who selected jobs), rose from 1.9 in 2001 to 2.7 in 2002.

Fewer visitors (17% compared to 36%) applied for jobs whilst in the Jobcentre in 2002 than 2001. Most people who did apply whilst in the Jobcentre did so through a staff member (67% in 2002).

New Services

Not surprisingly, there was a large increase in the proportion of visitors who were aware of Jobpoints (13% to 97%). Unemployed JSA

claimants were less likely to use Jobpoints than employed people (89% compared to 95%).

Awareness of Jobseeker Direct has increased from 57% to 70%. Usage has increased from 25% to 41%, with a marked rise amongst unemployed people claiming 'other' benefits (15% to 42%).

Only a minority of visitors (39%) were aware of the Jobcentre Plus Internet Job Bank, although usage has increased amongst those who are aware of it (30% to 49%). The highest level of awareness was amongst people with NVQ level 4 or equivalent qualifications (53%).

Worktrain remained relatively unknown with only 24% awareness in 2002. Employed people used Worktrain more than unemployed people.

A fifth of visitors who applied for jobs whilst in the Jobcentre used the Jobcentre or Jobpoint phone. Employed people were much more likely to use the Jobcentre phone than unemployed people.

Satisfaction with the services provided through the Jobcentre has increased over time with 84% being satisfied or very satisfied (compared to 78% in 2001). Overall, satisfaction with new Jobcentre Plus initiatives increased, although the proportion who were very satisfied fell.

The majority of visitors were satisfied or very satisfied with Jobpoints (81%). People who have used a computer before were slightly less satisfied than non-computer users.

Just under half (45%) of visitors said that Jobpoints have increased the

time they spend looking for jobs whilst in the Jobcentre. The majority (52%) said they had made no difference to the geographical areas considered. However, 48% said they had broadened the types of jobs looked at.

Overall, there was a slight increase in the proportion of visitors willing to consider jobs outside their local area, but within their region.

Jobcentre visitors were using a wider range of methods to look for jobs. The biggest increase was in 'word of mouth' (17% to 41%) and 'speculative enquiries' (3% to 18%). Use of commercial web sites also increased 24% to 37%.

Use of the Internet for job search increased from 33% to 48%, and was found to be highest amongst unemployed people claiming JSA or not claiming any benefits. Visitors who used the Internet for job search visited the Jobcentre less frequently than people who don't use the Internet for job search. Proportionately slightly more longer-term unemployed visitors (6 months plus) used the Internet for job search than shorter term unemployed visitors (77% compared to 74%).

Disadvantaged Groups

In 2002 only 28% (compared to 37% for all visitors) of unemployed ethnic minority visitors selected jobs whilst in the Jobcentre. Relatively fewer (76% compared to 91%) unemployed ethnic minority visitors used Jobpoints. Only 62% of unemployed ethnic minority visitors were satisfied with Jobpoints while 74% of unemployed people overall

and 81% of all visitors were satisfied, This lower level of satisfaction amongst unemployed ethnic minorities was also apparent for the overall Jobcentre service with 62% being satisfied.

Only 23% of visitors with disabilities or health problems were visiting the Jobcentre to look at vacancies. Visitors with disabilities/health problems were relatively less satisfied with the Jobcentre services (63%) and the new Jobcentre Plus initiatives.

More older visitors spent less than 10 minutes in the Jobcentre than younger visitors. The importance of fortnightly visiting for the over 50s has also increased from 55% in 2001 to 64% in 2002. In addition only 24% selected jobs compared to 37% overall.

Visitors over 25 years with low skills (no qualifications or ESOL) showed higher levels of satisfaction with Jobpoints than adults in general, as did visitors seeking elementary occupations.