

Introduction

The Child Support Agency (CSA) was launched on the 5th April 1993, as an executive agency of the then Department of Social Security (DSS). The CSA was given the role of implementing the 1991 Child Support Act and subsequent legislation with purpose of ensuring that parents who live apart both maintain their children, whenever they can afford to do so. The agency is responsible for tracing Non-resident Parents, calculating how much they should pay and, if required, collecting and enforcing payments.

This publication was first produced in November 1995. Earlier extracts are taken from the CSCS each quarter starting in October 1993. Some results from the earlier and subsequent extracts have been published in the 1994 – 2000 editions of *Social Security Statistics*, the 2000-2002 editions of *Work and Pension Statistics* and in replies to Parliamentary Questions.

Until February 1995 the results were derived from a 1 per cent sample of records. In May 1995 a redesigned 5 per cent scan using National Insurance numbers to capture one in twenty of the 'live' cases on the Child Support Computer System (CSCS) replaced this sample. The key data on CSCS relating to the selected cases is transferred automatically from the Agency to Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Information Centre (IC) Information and Analysis Directorate (IAD) each quarter. The change in method has resulted in reduced processing time and improved quality of results.

From the 3rd March 2003 all new Child Support applications have been assessed under a new scheme. These cases are stored on a new CSA system with a small number of old scheme cases that are linked to new cases. Although at present there is little validated information available on these new scheme cases, the information we do have is found in Section 1. The tables and charts found in Sections 2-6 refer **only** to cases held on the old CSA system (CSCS).

All data within the sections 2-6 are grossed to the total 'live' CSA caseload held on CSCS for Great Britain. Since most of the tables report CSA caseload some Parents/Persons With Care (those associated with more than one Non-resident Parent) will appear more than once (See Table 3.6).

The data in sections 2-6 is, as with any grossed sample results, subject to the sampling error explained in Appendix A. Table 3.3 includes analysis based on Government Office Regions. These regions are illustrated in Appendix B.

Figures in this, and future DWP publications are affected by the introduction of Child Tax Credit (CTC) in April 2003. The main changes are:

- Child dependency increases paid with non-income related benefits are abolished for new claims to State Pension, Bereavement Benefit, Incapacity Benefit and Carer's Allowance from April 2003.
- CTC will replace the child elements of Income Support (IS) and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA(IB)). This will happen from April 2004 onwards.

Dates when there may be particular changes in the figures are:

- April 2003, when Child dependency increases paid with non-income related benefits are abolished for new claims.
- October 2003, when it is planned that families on Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) with children will have child elements migrated to CTC.
- Financial year 2004/05, when families on Income Support and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance will have child elements migrated to CTC.

A small number of IS/ JSA(IB) recipients will no longer be eligible once CTC is in payment. This is because CTC payments will raise total income above the IS/JSA(IB) threshold, or other income exceeds the threshold once child allowances are removed.

We therefore advise that customers exercise caution when performing year on year comparisons, or when comparing with the previous quarter.

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Glossary of terms

Absent Parent (Old Scheme only)

This term has now been replaced by Non-resident Parent.

Arrears Account (Old Scheme only)

An account held by the Child Support Agency into which the Non-resident Parent may make payments to pay off arrears of maintenance.

Cases

A unit for assessment purposes which holds details of a Parent/Person With Care and one Non-resident Parent who are responsible for qualifying children. A PWC or NRP may be part of more than one case.

Child Support Computer System (Old Scheme only)

Computer system on which data on Child Support Agency cases are stored.

Compliance – Full

Payment(s) have been made into the regular payment accounts and/or arrears accounts during the last three months at least equal to the total amount charged.

Compliance – Partial

Payment(s) have been made into the regular payments accounts and/or arrears accounts during the last three months totalling less than the total amount charged.

Compliance – Nil

The NRP has been charged in the regular payments accounts and/or arrears accounts during the last three months but has not made any payment.

Contribution to Maintenance (CTM) (Old Scheme only)

A Non-resident Parent in receipt of IS/JSA(IB) should have a nil maintenance assessment. However, all Non-resident Parents are required to pay the minimum amount of maintenance, currently £5.40 per week, unless they fall into an exempt category. The request for CTM is considered by Jobcentre Plus/The Pension Service who determine the actual CTM after taking into account any other deductions currently being made from the Non-resident Parent's benefits.

Disabled Person's Tax Credit (DPTC)

DPTC replaced Disability Working Allowance (DWA) from 5th October 1999. It is a tax credit available to working people who have an illness or disability which puts them at a disadvantage in getting a job.

Employment Income

Non-resident Parents are classed as having employment income only if they are in receipt of regular income from employment.

Full maintenance assessment (FMA) (Old Scheme only)

An assessment of the Non-resident Parent's liability to pay maintenance based on the full facts having been provided by both the Parent/Person With Care and the Non-resident Parent. Note that full maintenance assessments include category B interim maintenance assessments.

Future Payment Account (Old Scheme only)

An account into which a Non-resident Parent transfers a lump sum or which is used when a NRPs payment exceeds the amount charged. The remainder is placed in their future payment account, to be used when the NRP is next charged.

Income Support (IS)

Income Support is an income related benefit which provides financial help for people who are not in remunerative work and whose income from all sources is below a minimum level set by Parliament.

Interim maintenance assessment (IMA) (Old scheme only)

An assessment of the Non-resident Parent's liability to pay maintenance based on incomplete facts relating to the Parent/Person With Care and/or the Non-resident Parent. Note that category B interim maintenance assessments are included with full maintenance assessments.

Interim maintenance assessment – Category A (Old scheme only)

An interim assessment made where the Non-resident Parent does not provide enough information to make an FMA, or does not return the Maintenance Enquiry Form (MEF), or returns an incomplete MEF and does not respond to request for further information.

Interim maintenance assessment – Category B (Old scheme only)

An interim assessment made where Non-resident Parent and Parent/Person With Care have provided details, but information relating to a partner or other family member of the Non-resident Parent or Parent/Person With Care is incomplete. Note category B interim maintenance assessments are included with full maintenance assessments.

Interim maintenance assessment – Category C (Old scheme only)

An interim assessment made where the Non-resident Parent is self-employed and co-operating, but is unable to provide evidence confirming their business's income immediately and there is no existing court order or written maintenance agreement.

Interim maintenance assessment – Category D (Old scheme only)

An interim assessment made where the Non-resident Parent is not co-operating in providing necessary information for a full maintenance assessment, a category A interim assessment is in force and the Non-resident Parent's income is such that they can afford more than the amount of a category A interim assessment.

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) replaced Unemployment Benefit and Income Support for unemployed people from the 7th October 1996. JSA is a single benefit structure designed to meet the needs of the unemployed until they return to work. There are two routes of entry: (i) JSA(Cont.) – NI contributors get a personal rate for six months irrespective of their capital or partner's earning; (ii) JSA(IB) – income related help to unemployed people and dependants according to need, paid as long as required.

Live Cases

A case where registration has started and the maintenance application form has been returned.

Maintenance Application Form

The form completed by an applicant to provide initial case details. Satisfactory completion of this form is a pre-requisite to an assessment being made.

Maintenance Enquiry Form

The form completed by a non-resident parent for provision of necessary information from which a full maintenance assessment can be made.

Mean

The mean is the value obtained when a set of data values are summed and then divided by the total number of values in the set.

Median

The number that is exactly in the middle position when a collection of data values is arranged in increasing order of size.

Method of Payment

The means by which money is transferred from the Non-resident Parent to the Parent/Person With Care.

Migrated cases

Old scheme CSA cases linked to new scheme CSA cases have been reactively migrated from the Child Support Computer System to the new computer system CS2.

Net income for assessable purposes (Old Scheme only)

Non-resident Parent's net income to be used in the calculation of the maintenance assessment. It includes net income from employment (i.e. after tax, National Insurance and 50 per cent of pension contributions), certain benefits and income from capital sources.

Non-Dependant (Old Scheme only)

Non-resident Parents sharing accommodation with friends or relatives on whom they are not dependant for financial support. This does not include people living together as a family, lodgers, tenants or boarders.

Non – resident Parent (NRP)

A parent who has a liability to maintain the children of a Parent/Person With Care, but lives apart from the Parent/Person With Care.

Qualifying Children

A child is a qualifying child if one or both of his/her parents are absent parents i.e. the child lives apart from at least one parent. A child is a person under 16, or who is under 19 and receiving full-time, non-advanced education at a recognised establishment. Children aged 16 – 18 who are being educated somewhere other than at school or college may still count as children provided that the Secretary of State is satisfied that they were receiving the same sort of education before they were 16 years old.

Parent/Person With Care

Parent/Person who lives with, and has day to day care of, the qualifying children (the children on whom the assessment is made).

Payment compliance

The regularity and quantity of payments made from the Non-resident Parent to the Parent/Person With Care.

Referral source

The body or individual which issues or requests issue of the Maintenance Application Form thereby initiating the case.

Region

The regions used in this publication are the Government Office Regions illustrated in Appendix B.

Regular payment account (Old Scheme only)

An account held by the CSA into which payments of regular maintenance should be made by the Non-resident Parent (assuming there is a non-zero maintenance assessment).

Suspended Case (Old Scheme only)

A live case currently under investigation by the CSA or awaiting removal from the CSCS.

Working Families' Tax Credit (WFTC)

WFTC was introduced on the 5th October 1999 and is payable to families where either the claimant or their partner work at least 16 hours a week and are responsible for one or more children. It is income related with the amount of WFTC payable depending on the family's net income and savings, the number of hours worked, the number and ages of children in the family and, in some circumstances, the amount of child care charges paid.

Working Tax Credit

Working Tax Credit was introduced on April 2003 and replaced Working Families Tax Credit and Disabled Persons Tax Credit. It is for people who work 16 hours or more a week, are paid for that work and expect to work for at least 4 weeks. Recipients need to be aged 16 or over and responsible for at least one child; or aged 25 or over and usually working at least 30 hours per week. It is income related with the amount of WFTC payable depending on the family's gross income.

Appendix A

Sampling error – Sections 2-6

The data contained in sections 2-6 are based on 5% of the total 'live' GB cases held on the Child Support Computer System (CSCS). The 5% sample contains all the characteristics of the complete set of records held on the CSCS. Therefore, if the number of cases in a sample with characteristic A is 500, we can say that the number of cases with characteristic A on the CSCS is equal to 500 multiplied by 20 i.e. 10,000 cases. The sample taken is just one of many different samples we could have taken, therefore the total calculated number of cases with characteristic A is only an estimate of the actual number of cases. If another sample had been taken then the estimate for the same characteristic may have been slightly different. The table contained in this appendix shows the amount of variation that can be expected from the estimated number of cases with a certain characteristic. For example, if from a 5% sample there are 500 cases with characteristic A then the estimated number of cases on the CSCS with the same characteristic is 10,000. We could reasonably expect the actual figure to lie between 9,150 and 10,850.

Formula

Two formulae are used to calculate the standard error and the associated confidence intervals. For samples with fewer than 30 cases the binomial distribution is used to calculate the standard error. For samples with greater than 30 cases the normal approximation to the binomial is used. The normal approximation formula used to calculate the standard error is:

$$\sqrt{(1-F)S} \frac{1}{F}, \text{ where } F \text{ is the sampling fraction (e.g. 0.05 for a 5\% sample) and } S$$

is the number of sample cases with the characteristic.

In an example where there were 50 sample cases with characteristic A taken from a sample representing 5% of the population, the standard error is:

$$\sqrt{(1-0.05)50} \frac{1}{0.05} = 137.8... \approx 138.$$

There is a 95% probability that the actual population value falls within 1.96 standard errors of the grossed up sample value. For the above example this would be:

$$(50/0.05) \pm 1.96 * 138 = (730, 1270)$$

This range is known as the 95% confidence interval.

Please note that this method can only be applied to estimates of number of cases and not to estimating the sampling error associated with averages such as average weekly maintenance etc.

Table A1: Confidence intervals for a 5% sample

Estimated value	95% confidence interval	Confidence interval as a % of the estimate
0	0 to 60	.
100	34 to 230	.
300	171 to 490	.
500	328 to 732	.
1,000	± 270	± 27.0%
2,500	± 427	± 17.1%
5,000	± 604	± 12.1%
10,000	± 850	± 8.5%
25,000	± 1350	± 5.4%
50,000	± 1910	± 3.8%
100,000	± 2700	± 2.7%
1,000,000	± 9000	± 0.9%



Appendix C – Benefit/employment status data

Parents/Persons with Care (PWCs) – Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.12, 5.2, 6.2

Non-resident Parents (NRPs) – Tables 4.1 – 4.4, 4.8, 5.3, 5.4, 6.3

Introduction

Some of the tables in sections 4, 5 and 6 of this publication show Parent/Person with Care (PWC) and Non-resident Parent (NRP) benefit/employment status i.e. show how many PWCs and NRPs are receiving income from particular benefits or from employment. Editions of the CSA Quarterly Summary of Statistics (QSS) prior to November 1998 showed the benefit/employment status as recorded on the Child Support Computer System (CSCS). However, CSCS data only reflects the position at the point the case was taken on or when a subsequent reassessment was made and does not necessarily, therefore, show the *current* benefit/employment status of the PWC/NRP. This has meant that previous editions of this publication have overestimated the number of people on benefits, primarily Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance. A new methodology has been designed to improve the quality of the benefit status data for PWCs each quarter and, less frequently, for NRPs.

New Methodology – PWCs

As well as collecting the data on a 5% sample of cases on CSCS each quarter, IAD also receives data on a 5% sample of cases on the Income Support Computer System (ISCS), Jobseeker's Allowance Payment System (JSAPS), and Working Families Tax Credit System (WFTCS) each quarter. The 5% samples are selected on the basis of the National Insurance number (NINo) of the claimant/recipient, or PWC in the case of the CSCS data.

Since the same sample of National Insurance numbers are used in both cases IAD can determine, for each PWC, whether or not they are actually in receipt of IS, JSA or WFTC at the end of each quarter. PWC benefit status figures using the data on ISCS, JSAPS and WFTCS are, therefore, truly representative of the situation at the end of the quarter. Accordingly, they are now used in preference to the benefit status recorded on CSCS throughout this publication (see Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.12, 5.2 and 6.2).

New Methodology – NRPs

The NRP benefit/employment status figures in Section 4, 5 and 6 of this publication show the situation as recorded on the Child Support Computer System (CSCS) at the end of the quarter. Similarly, the August 2001 Quarterly Summary of Statistics (QSS) published the following NRP benefit/employment status figures, showing the situation recorded on CSCS at the time:

Table C1: August 2001 NRP benefit/employment statuses as recorded on CSCS and published in the QSS: Full assessments

Thousands

Non-resident Parents							
In Employment			Income Support (IS)	JSA(IB)	JSA(Cont)	Incapacity / disability benefit	Other
Total	Employed	Self-employed					
1,001.5	482.5	50.7	162.4	110.4	22.7	34.6	138.1
%	48.2	5.1	16.2	11.0	2.3	3.4	13.8

Unfortunately, it is not possible to produce more accurate NRP benefit/employment status figures each quarter in the same way as for PWCs. This is because IAD's 5% sample of CSCS is selected on the basis of the PWC's NiNo, not that of the NRP. Thus it is not possible to check whether or not they are receiving IS or JSA from the 5% samples of IS and JSA claimants each quarter.

However, at the end of August 2001, IAD received 100% scans containing details of every IS and JSA claimant at that point in time. Thus it is possible, for each NRP at August 2001, to determine whether or not they were in receipt of IS or JSA. NRP benefit/employment status figures for August 2001, derived by merging the CSCS data with the 100% scan data are shown below:

Table C2: August 2001 NRP benefit/employment statuses after merging of CSCS, ISCS and JSAPS data: Full assessments

Thousands

Non-resident Parents							
In Employment			Income Support (IS)	JSA (IB)	JSA(Cont)	Incapacity / disability benefit	Other
Total	Employed	Self-employed					
1,001.5	477.4	50.1	126.9	68.4	6.8	34.3	237.7
%	47.7	5.0	12.7	6.8	0.7	3.4	23.7

Comparing the figures in tables C1 and C2 suggests that the CSCS-based figures published in the QSS over-estimate the number of NRPs in receipt of IS/JSA(IB). It is apparent from IAD's analysis that many NRPs moving off IS/JSA(IB) are not having their benefit/employment status updated on CSCS.

In the future, it is expected that IAD will receive 100% scans of ISCS and JSAPS each August. At this time each year, merging the CSCS, ISCS and JSAPS data for NRPs will produce NRP benefit status. Figures for August 2002 are not yet available.

Appendix D – Compliance methodology

Tables 4.9 – 4.12, 5.5, 5.6, 6.4

Introduction

Some of the tables in sections 4, 5 and 6 of this publication show compliance levels i.e. the extent to which Non-resident Parents (NRPs) pay the maintenance they have been charged. Editions of the Quarterly Summary of Statistics (QSS) prior to November 1998 published compliance figures covering the Regular Payment Accounts (RPAs). According to this 'old' compliance methodology, NRPs were placed into one of four categories as follows:

Not Applicable – Covers two groups of NRPs. Firstly, 'direct pay' NRPs, where payment is not via the CSA Collection Service. Secondly, 'nothing due' NRPs, where no payment has been made in the RPAs during the last quarter and nothing is outstanding.

Full – Payment(s) have been made to RPAs during the last quarter and nothing is outstanding.

Partial – Payment(s) have been made to the RPAs during the last quarter and an amount is outstanding.

Nil – No payment(s) have been made to the RPAs during the last quarter and an amount is outstanding.

Problems with the old methodology

Analysis by DWP's Information and Analysis Directorate (IAD) has found four potential problems with this methodology:

- It is not intuitive, so may classify NRPs paying all of the regular maintenance charged them in the latest quarter as partially compliant. This will be because of maintenance outstanding from a previous quarter(s).
- The compliance classification of some NRPs is affected by how long after the end of the quarter IAD's scan of the Child Support Computer System is run, since this determines whether or not some NRPs have an amount outstanding in the RPAs.
- The compliance classification of some NRPs may be affected by the Agency transferring money between accounts e.g. a partially compliant NRP may become fully compliant simply because of the Agency transferring the amount they have outstanding in the RPAs into arrears.
- The compliance methodology purely covers the RPAs/regular maintenance payments and takes no account of compliance with arrears schedules.

New Methodology (based on case compliance)

The new methodology eradicates all of the four problems noted above. It measures quarterly case compliance (QCC) in the RPAs and Arrears Accounts (AAs) combined. For each NRP the total amount charged in the RPAs and AAs during the quarter is calculated. Similarly, the total amount paid into the RPAs and AAs is calculated. Dividing the total received by the total charged (and multiplying by 100) gives a percentage case compliance value for each NRP. Each NRP is then placed into a compliance category as follows:

Not Applicable – Covers two groups of NRPs. Firstly, ‘direct pay’ NRPs, where payment is not via the CSA Collection Service. Secondly, ‘Nothing charged’ NRPs, where no charge has been made in the RPAs or AAs during the last quarter.

Full – 100+% compliant i.e. NRP has made payments at least equal to the total amount charged during the quarter.

Partial – 1 – 99% compliant i.e. NRP has made payments totalling less than the total amount charged during the quarter.

Nil – 0% compliant. NRP has paid nothing towards the total amount charged during the quarter.

As NRPs on a weekly payment schedule sometimes make payments on a different day of the week to the day the account is charged, quarters not exactly 13 weeks (91 days) in duration can show fluctuations in full and partial compliance.

For example, if a 90 day quarter includes 13 charges but only 12 payments, a NRP who is meeting each weekly maintenance charge in full would be shown as partially compliant. For a comparable quarter on quarter time series, combine full and partial compliance figures.

Tables 5.5, 5.6 and 6.4 give a time series on the new basis.