

Unemployment hotspots

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Unemployment has risen in all constituencies – but not equally

The recession has seen unemployment rise in every parliamentary constituency in the UK. Those with relatively high initial levels have often seen large, additional, absolute rises, while those with relatively low levels have seen them double or even treble. But the effect of rising unemployment is far from equal across the UK and, as some constituencies are starting to see unemployment levels fall, the situation is worsening in others.

Constituency-level Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimant data is available every month and the Library provides analysis of this for Members in *Unemployment by Constituency*. JSA claimants are not a perfect measure of unemployment because, for example, not all those unemployed claim JSA, while some are not entitled to it. The measure differs from the standard ILO measure but it is the most timely available at a constituency level.

LARGEST RISES

Over the last two years (March 2008 to March 2010), there have been over 2,000 more claimants in 23 different constituencies. The worst hit according to this measure is Leeds Central (up 3,012 claimants, a 74% rise). Five of the 23 constituencies are in Northern Ireland, with Mid Ulster standing out (up 2,090 claimants to 2,875). In these worst-hit constituencies, JSA claimant numbers have continued to rise over the last year. It should be noted that variations in constituency populations have not been taken into account in this analysis of absolute levels.

Increases in claimant count levels have often been largest in constituencies where levels were already high

Another 129 constituencies have seen a rise of between 1,500 and 2,000 claimants, while a total of 401 have seen a rise of 1,000 or greater over the last two years. Those areas most affected can be identified on the map, including parts of London, the West Midlands, a band stretching from Liverpool to Hull, Glasgow, other urban areas and Northern Ireland. Many of these areas experienced relatively high unemployment levels prior to the recession.

BETTER PERFORMING CONSTITUENCIES

There are some exceptions: Cambridge, a hub for high-technology business, has seen the number of claimants rise by just 688 over the two years (60% up, compared to 92% nationally), while 186 constituencies have seen a fall in the number of claimants over the last year. Places such as South Northamptonshire and South Swindon have seen sharp rises start to reverse.

Consideration of data at constituency level demonstrates the unequal nature of the recovery. What is apparent is that some of the UK's most deprived areas have been both among the worst hit by the recession and among the slowest to recover.

