

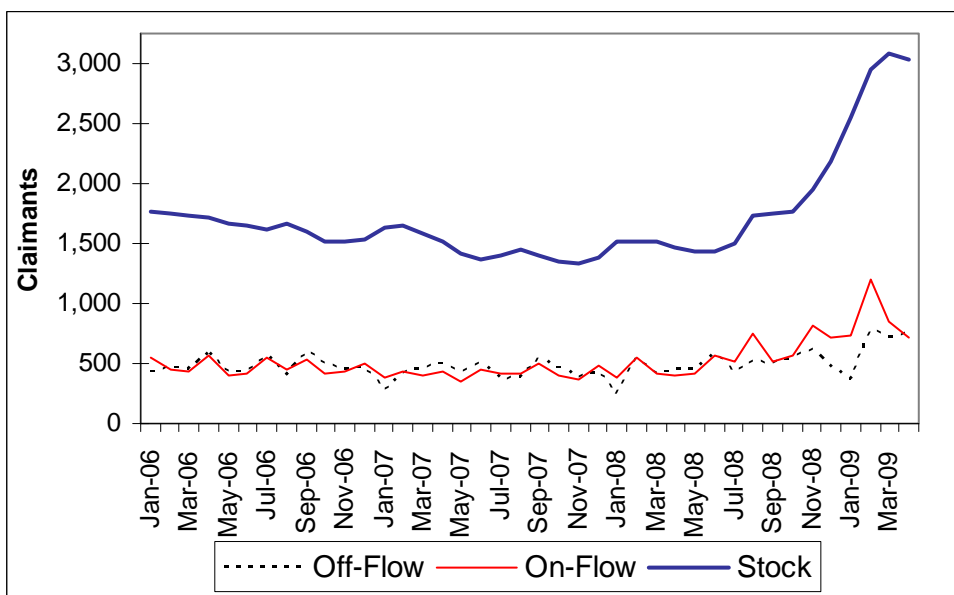
UNEMPLOYMENT

Update April 2009

Key findings

- The claimant count (Jobseekers Allowance) for Herefordshire saw a small decrease between March and April reversing the trend of recent months. In April 2009 the count was 3,038, a 1.5% decrease on March. Despite this the claimant count is still much higher than in April 2008 (1,471). The claimant counts for the West Midlands and England saw respective increases of 3% and 2% between March and April.
- The on-flow (new claimants) was reduced further in April (724) compared to March (856) and February (1,193), but was still very high compared to April 2008 (404). The off-flow (claimants leaving benefit) increased in April to 758, also high compared to April 2008 (445). This resulted in a net decrease in claimants (-34) in April that was similar to that seen in previous years.

Chart 1. Claimant on-flow, off-flow and stock (count) for Herefordshire, 2006-2009



Source – ONS crown copyright

- The number of claimants has been high since July 2008 relative to the same point in the previous year. The claimant count in April 2009 was up 107% (1,567) on April 2008, a larger increase than seen for the West Midlands (81%) and England as a whole (88%). However, this increase was lower than for the shire authorities of Staffordshire (154%), Worcestershire (136%), Warwickshire (116%) and Shropshire (115%). Conversely the metropolitan areas of the West Midlands saw smaller percentage increases in the number of claimants, although they are starting from a higher base in terms of their unemployment rate.

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- The unemployment rate¹ in April 2009 was 2.9%, a decrease from 3.0% in March, but still higher than 1.5% in April 2008. This rate remains low compared to that for the West Midlands region (5.4%) and England as a whole (4.1%), both of which continued to increase between March and April.
- Claimants between 25 and 49 years of age accounted for the greatest proportion of claimants, 52% (1,570 claimants). Those under 25 accounted for 29% and the over 50s 19%. All three age groups had increased by around 100% since July 2008; over 50s (104%); the under 25s (105%); and 25-49s (99%).
- Unsurprisingly it was those claiming for less than six months that accounted for most of the increase (89%) since July. In April 2009 they accounted for 84% of claimants.
- Below county level the wards with a consistently high unemployment rate are mostly in Hereford City (Belmont, Central, St. Martins and Hinton, St. Nicholas) but also all wards in Leominster and Ross-on-Wye (two wards in each).
- The wards which experienced the greatest increase in unemployment rate (in percentage point terms), between July 2008 and April 2009, were Central (3.1) Belmont (2.5), Ross-on-Wye West (2.5), St Martins and Hinton (2.4) and St. Nicholas (2.1). The greatest increases in the number of claimants were in Belmont (156), St Martins and Hinton (152), Three Elms (106) and Ross-on-Wye West (97). Between March and April however, it was only Ross-on-Wye West that continued to experience an increase in number of claimants. Aylestone, Tupsley, Bringsty and Penyard were the wards that saw the largest increase on March.
- When looking at the usual occupation of claimants, the greatest proportion are in the 'elementary trades, plant and storage related occupations'² accounting for 19% of all claimants. It was also this group that saw the largest increase in the number of claimants (280) since July 2008. The 'sales occupations' also accounted for a large proportion of total claimants (16%) and had increased by 275 claimants since July. Other groups that saw large increases in the number of claimants were 'transport and mobile machine drivers and operatives' (130), 'skilled construction and building trades' (130), 'process, plant and machine operatives' (130) and 'elementary administration and service occupations' (115).
- In April 2009 the volume of vacancies notified to Jobcentre Plus (521) was considerably less than in April 2008 (854). However, this was a marked increase on January 2009 when there were only 275 notified vacancies, compared to 442 in January 2008.
- When looking at occupation the greatest proportion of notified vacancies in April 2009 were in the 'elementary administration and service occupations' (14%)

¹ The unemployment rate is the number of claimants as a proportion of the working age population

² 'Elementary trades, plant and storage related occupations' include; elementary trades within agriculture and construction e.g. woodworking and building labourers; elementary process plant occupations e.g. foundry workers and packers; and elementary goods storage occupations e.g. stevedores, dockers and slingers.

'administrative occupations' (11%) and 'caring personal service occupations' (11%).

- The number of unfilled vacancies in April 2009 (343) was considerably less than in April 2008 (864), with the greatest proportion being in the 'caring personal service occupations' (19%), 'elementary administration and service occupations' (12%) and 'business and public service associate professionals' (10%).
 - It seems increasingly likely that the large increases in the claimant count over the latter part of 2008 and early 2009 are as a result of a slowdown in the local economy. It is not clear, at this stage however, how long these effects will last. This will be dependent on how closely the fate of Herefordshire's economy is tied to that of the national and global economies. Interestingly, the modest decrease in claimant count seen in Herefordshire in April, whilst maybe not an indication of a reversal of increases seen recently, is not mirrored regionally or nationally where the count has continued to increase.
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