

30 May 2002

Coverage: Great Britain
Theme: Social and Welfare

CHILD SUPPORT AGENCY QUARTERLY SUMMARY OF STATISTICS - (QSS) February 2002

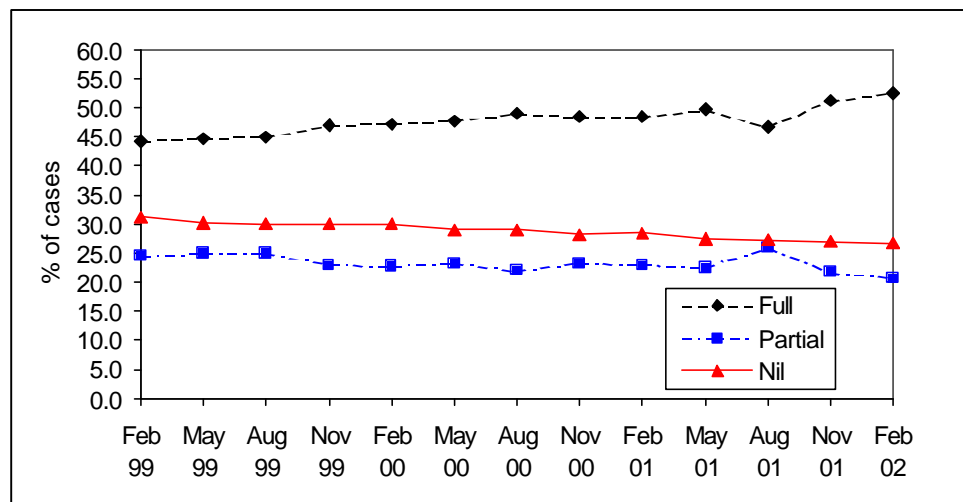
The Child Support Agency Quarterly Summary of Statistics for February 2002 is published today.

The publication shows profiles of Non-resident Parents (NRPs) and Parents/Persons with Care (PWCs), amounts of maintenance assessments and compliance levels based on 'live' and assessed Great Britain cases on the Child Support Computer System (CSCS) at end-February 2002. Following investigations into the over-estimation of IMA figures, we are now able to provide accurate IMA figures using a 100% scan of CSA work in hand totals taken on a monthly basis. These accurate IMA totals can be provided for May 2001 onwards, however, all IMA figures for February 2001 and earlier were calculated using the old methodology and are subject to over-estimation.

The main findings are:

Caseloads

The number of cases with a Child Support Agency full maintenance assessment (FMA) increased by 3.3% in the year to February 2002, to 1.03 million. The FMA caseload has risen consistently year-on-year since the CSA began in April 1993.



Compliance

Payment compliance continues to rise gradually. 73% of Non-resident Parents (NRPs) were partially or fully compliant in the quarter to February 2002, compared with 72% a year earlier and 69% in the quarter to February 1999.

(Compliance data excludes cases where payment is not made through the CSA collection services or where no maintenance was charged via the regular payment or arrears accounts during the quarter).

Employment/Benefit Statuses

38% of Parents With Care (PWCs) with a FMA were also in receipt of IS/JSA(IB) at February 2002, compared with 41% a year earlier. The proportion of PWCs receiving Working Families' Tax Credit (WFTC) has remained constant at 25% over the year, with the proportion of cases not on IS/JSA(IB) nor WFTC similarly increasing from 35% to 37%. This reflects the continuing shift in PWC benefit statuses away from IS/JSA(IB) onto WFTC and off benefit/tax credits altogether. 48% of NRPs with a FMA were employed at February 2002, with a further 5% self-employed. These percentages are virtually unchanged over the past three or four years. However, the proportion of NRPs on IS/JSA(IB) continues to fall gradually, from 29% at February 2001 to 27% at February 2002. (Please note that NRP employment/benefit statuses are taken from the CSCS, and are more representative of the situation at case take-on rather than at the current time).

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Next Publication:

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Maintenance Assessments

The average weekly maintenance assessment for all 'live' fully assessed cases rose from £20.32 to £20.87 during the period February 2001 to February 2002. NRPs with regular income from working as an employee had an average weekly full maintenance assessment of £38.57 at end-February 2002, compared with £22.33 for the self employed.

NOTES TO EDITORS

New Methodologies

- (a) From November 1998, a new, improved methodology for determining the benefit status of PWCs has been used. Full details of the new methodology and the need for the change are included in Appendix C, page 46. To aid comparisons a complete time series back to November 1997 is shown in table 4.2 (page 40).
- (b) From November 1998, a new, improved compliance methodology has been used to produce more stable and accurate compliance data. The change in methodology is fully explained in Appendix D, page 48. To aid comparisons a complete time series back to November 1997 is shown in tables 4.5 and 4.6 (page 42).

Background information

This publication contains data taken by Analytical Services Division's Information Centre from scans of the Child Support Computer System. Extracts have been taken each quarter since October 1993. The first quarterly results were published in May 1996 in respect of the quarter ending November 1995. Some results from previous and subsequent extracts have also been published in the 1994-2000 editions of *Social Security Statistics*, the 2001 edition 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 this sample was replaced by a 5 per cent scan capturing one in twenty of the 'live' cases on the computer system. The change in method resulted in reduced processing time and improved quality of results.

All data within the tables have been grossed to the total 'live' and fully assessed CSA caseload for Great Britain and are representative at November 2001. As with any grossed sample the results are subject to the sampling error explained in Appendix A of the publication.

Following investigations into the over-estimation of IMA figures, we are now able to provide accurate IMA figures using a 100% scan of CSA work in hand totals taken on a monthly basis. These accurate IMA totals can be provided for May 2001 onwards, however, all IMA figures for February 2001 and earlier were calculated using the old methodology and are subject to over-estimation.

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