

Criminology & Social Policy: Facts & Figures

Further trends in JobSeeker payments across the Illawarra region

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Key findings

- In June 2020, the number of people accessing the JobSeeker payment was 1,441,287 nationwide. This decreased slightly to 1,399,858 in September 2020 (down 2.9%).
- A similar trend was seen in the Illawarra region, with the number of JobSeeker recipients also decreasing slightly from 16,254 people in June to 15,780 in September 2020 (down 2.9%).
- Despite this, the number of JobSeeker recipients was higher in September than in March 2020, with a total increase of 66% across the Illawarra region.

Background

The provision of the Corona Virus Welfare Supplement during 2020 raised the level of NewStart (now known as "JobSeeker") from \$565 a fortnight to \$715. The increased payment alleviated financial stress for many people during the pandemic (ACOSS 2020). However, an increase in unemployment, especially in regional areas such as the Illawarra, has been an area of concern. In Figure 1, we map the changes in JobSeeker receipts from June to September 2020 and Figure 2 indicates changes in JobSeeker receipts from March to September 2020.

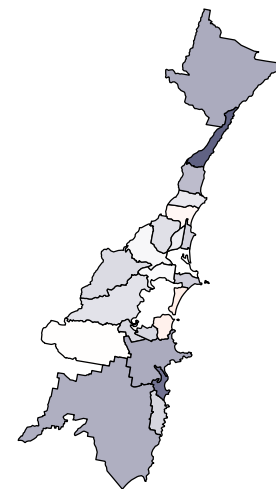
Data and methods

JobSeeker receipts are mapped using quarterly data accessible from the Department of Social Services (2021). This data is reported by geographical location. Locations are aggregated into Statistical Area Level 2 (2016), which are a geographical unit identified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), and contain between 3,000 and 25,000 people.

Implications

Unemployment in regional areas such as the Illawarra is still higher than pre-COVID-19 (ABS 2020), despite regional areas experiencing higher increases in employment than metropolitan areas. However, there is a concern that the job growth may benefit those moving from metropolitan to regional areas, as individual's bring jobs with them or are employed in professional or skilled sectors (Regional Institute Australia, 2021). Local's experiencing long-term unemployment, or working in sectors most impacted by COVID-19 such as hospitality and tourism, may not benefit from the resurgence in employment and are therefore more likely to be hardest hit by a reduction in the JobSeeker payment to near pre-COVID-19 levels.

Change in JobSeeker (June - September 2020)



Note: Values represent the relative change (1 = no change) in the population-standardised rate of JobSeeker from June-September.

Change in JobSeeker (March - September 2020)

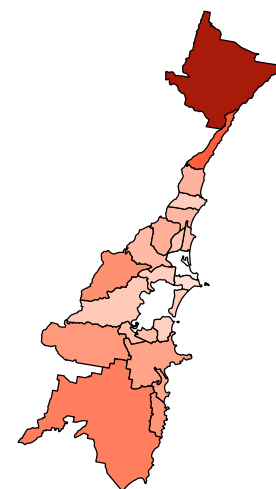


Figure 2 shows that, measured as a rate, JobSeeker receipts were higher in September than in March 2020.