



Local Government Association

The growth of claimant unemployment by broad occupation and area

June 2009

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Key findings

The growth in claimant count unemployment rate has varied across England and Wales. The biggest increases have been recorded in the West Midlands, south Wales and Yorkshire, but also in towns across the south (like Swindon and Harlow) and the East Midlands (Corby and Wellingborough).

Different parts of the workforce have been hardest hit in different areas. Unemployment amongst people in skilled trades has grown notably in the North West and areas where engineering is a significant employer (in the West Midlands, Darlington and South Tyneside, for example).

Unemployment growth has been greatest in absolute terms for people looking for less skilled work, and particularly in older industrial areas. But unemployment amongst managers has also grown, and this has been most marked in the commuter belt around London. Unemployment amongst professionals has grown least in absolute terms but significantly in percentage terms, with the highest increases recorded in a range of London boroughs.

Different places are experiencing the recession differently, which argues for tailored measures to address specific local effects.

Introduction

This report examines how unemployment has changed over the past year at local authority district level. It uses statistics on the number of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) as a proportion of resident population of working age. As explained below, this is not the only measure of unemployment, but is more timely and more reliable than the main alternative at the district level.

The tables and the maps show the percentage point changes in the unemployment rate over the last year. For example, they show that Blaenau Gwent's unemployment rate increased by 3.79 percentage points over the year to April, while Ceredigion's rose by 0.62 percentage points. The reasons for choosing this measure are discussed at the end of the report.

The report also examines the change in unemployment according to the usual occupation of claimants. It concentrates on four groups – managers, professionals, those in skilled trades and those in 'elementary' occupations (such as labourers, cleaners and catering assistants). It shows that the geographical distribution of rising unemployment varies amongst these groups.

Overall unemployment

Over the year to April, JSA claimants as a proportion of working age population in England and Wales increased from 2.2% to 4.1%, an increase of 1.9 percentage points. But the average increase masks substantial geographical variation, as the table below shows. In April 2009 there were 1,379,900 JSA claimants, an increase of 645,600, or 87.9%, over April 2008.

Table 1: Changes in claimant count unemployment, April 2008-2009

<i>Biggest changes</i>	<i>% point change</i>	<i>Smallest changes</i>	<i>% point change</i>
Blaenau Gwent	3.79	Derbyshire Dales	1.11
Cannock Chase	3.70	Merton	1.10
Swindon	3.68	Craven	1.09
Corby	3.61	Rutland	1.08
Redditch	3.46	Guildford	1.06
Walsall	3.38	Allerdale	1.03
Kingston upon Hull	3.33	West Dorset	1.02
Merthyr Tydfil	3.24	Barrow-in-Furness	0.93
Sandwell	3.06	Kensington/Chelsea	0.93
Tamworth	3.06	Camden	0.91
Sunderland	3.02	Ribble Valley	0.89
Rotherham	2.94	Winchester	0.89
Stoke-on-Trent	2.90	Westminster	0.89
Wellingborough	2.87	Copeland	0.86
Bridgend	2.85	Cambridge	0.83
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	2.82	West Somerset	0.83
Harlow	2.82	City of London	0.83
Barnsley	2.78	Eden	0.81
North Lincolnshire	2.77	South Lakeland	0.75
Gloucester	2.77	Ceredigion	0.62

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In 11 districts claimant unemployment rose by more than three percentage points, while in 13 others it rose by less than one percentage point.

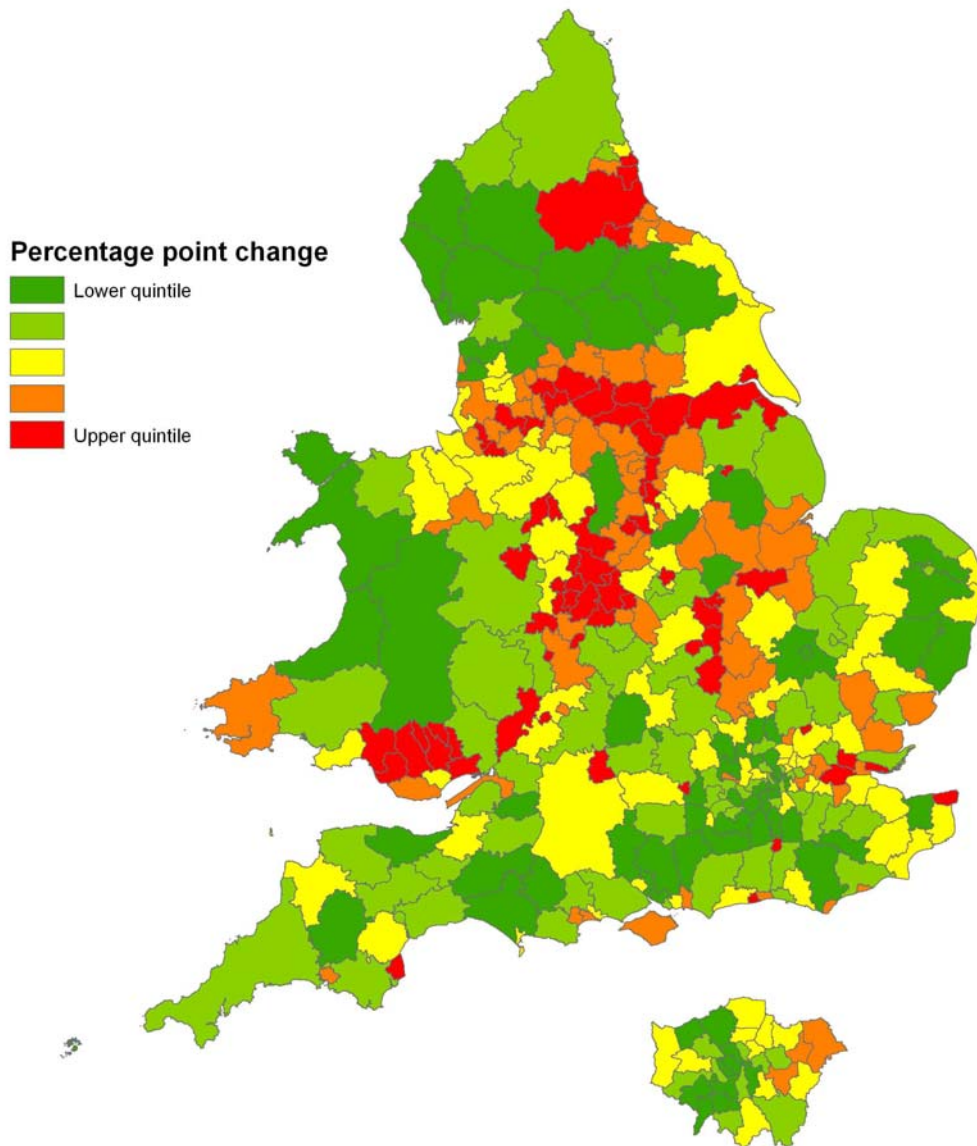
Fourteen of the areas with the largest increases are in the West Midlands (six), Wales (four) or Yorkshire and the Humber (four). Two (Swindon and Gloucester) are in the South West and two (Corby and Wellingborough) are in Northamptonshire, in the East Midlands region. Harlow is the nearest to London and Sunderland the furthest away.

Map 1 shows that other areas with large changes in claimant unemployment include a band running from the Humber through industrial Yorkshire. County Durham and Darlington also registered large increases (though Teesside and Tyneside less so). Some seaside areas in the south such as Thanet, Adur and Torbay had large changes, as did a group of areas running south from Peterborough to Milton Keynes, parts of Gloucestershire, Leicester and Telford.

Of the 20 areas recording the smallest increases in unemployment rate, five are London boroughs, but the list is not otherwise dominated by southern districts. Five of the districts are in Cumbria, one in each of Yorkshire and Lancashire and two (Derbyshire Dales and Rutland) in the East

Midlands. The lowest increase was recorded in Ceredigion (Wales). The remaining five authorities in the list are spread across the south of England (Cambridge in the Eastern region, Winchester and Guildford in the South East, and West Dorset and West Somerset in the South West). Several of the districts outside London are predominantly rural, but that is not invariably the case (witness Barrow, Copeland and Cambridge, for example). Map 1 shows that lowest quintile increases in unemployment occurred in a range of rural areas – within Wales, Dorset, North Yorkshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, for example. Oxford and Cambridge and parts of Surrey, East Sussex and Hampshire also recorded low increases.

Map 1: Changes in claimant count unemployment, April 2008-2009



Source: claimant count with rates and proportions, Nomis April 2009

Unemployment in 'elementary occupations'

The table below shows the change in the proportion of resident working age population who are claimants whose usual occupation falls in the 'elementary' category (this includes cleaners, labourers, catering assistants and porters, for example). In April 2009 there were 404,100 JSA claimants whose usual occupation was in the 'elementary' category. This had increased by 148,800 or 58.3% over the previous year. This was the largest increase in absolute terms, but the smallest increase in percentage terms, of the four groups considered here.

Table 2: Changes in claimants in 'elementary' occupations, April 2008- 2009

<i>Biggest changes</i>	<i>% point change</i>	<i>Smallest changes</i>	<i>% point change</i>
Corby	1.23	Elmbridge	0.17
Swindon	1.19	Runnymede	0.17
Cannock Chase	1.13	Eden	0.16
Kingston upon Hull	1.03	Chiltern	0.16
Tamworth	0.94	West Somerset	0.16
Wellingborough	0.90	Test Valley	0.16
Stoke-on-Trent	0.88	Ribble Valley	0.16
North Lincolnshire	0.86	Ceredigion	0.16
Sunderland	0.86	Waverley	0.15
Redditch	0.84	Barnet	0.14
East Staffordshire	0.84	Wokingham	0.14
Sandwell	0.84	Hart	0.13
Walsall	0.82	Winchester	0.13
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	0.81	Brent	0.12
Wakefield	0.79	Merton	0.12
Doncaster	0.79	Camden	0.12
Erewash	0.77	Kensington/Chelsea	0.11
Bolsover	0.77	Richmond upon Thames	0.11
Barnsley	0.76	Westminster	0.08
Blaenau Gwent	0.76	Wandsworth	0.07

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The list of authorities recording the biggest change is similar to that for total unemployment. This is partly because people in 'elementary' occupations accounted for more of the rise in unemployment rate than any other occupational group (0.44 percentage points out of 1.92). In fact 15 of the 20 authorities with the largest rises in 'elementary' occupation unemployment are on the list of those with the largest rises in total unemployment. Three of the additions are in the north Midlands (East Staffordshire, Bolsover and Erewash) and two in Yorkshire (Doncaster and Wakefield).

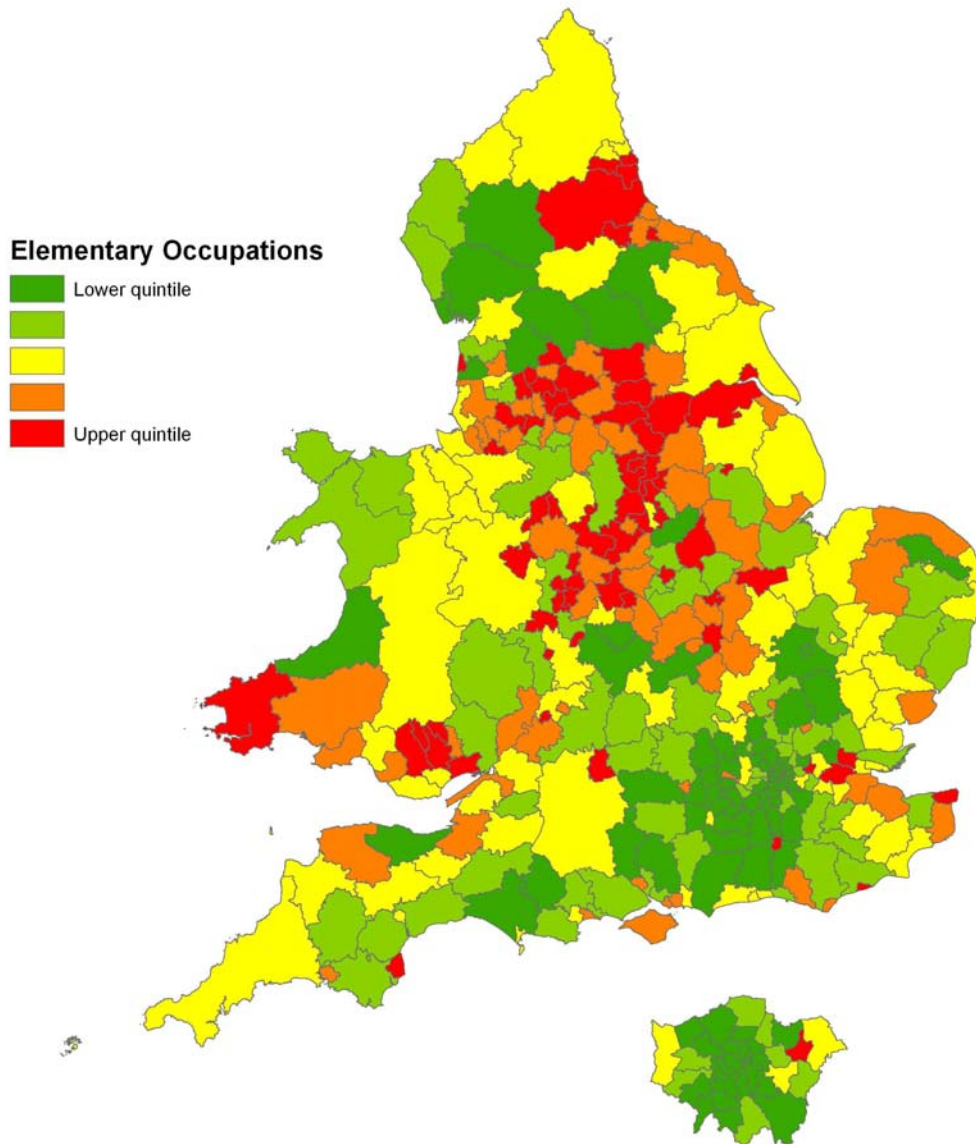
Map 2 indicates that other areas that registered large increases in claimant unemployment for those in elementary occupations included Pembrokeshire, Thanet, Torbay, Durham, Darlington, and several areas within the North Midlands and in the Manchester conurbation.

The list of 20 areas with the smallest increase is dominated by the south in a way that the list for smallest increase in overall unemployment was not. Eight are London boroughs, including the seven with the smallest increase. Eight more are in the South East region. The other four (Ceredigion, Eden, Ribble Valley and West Somerset) all recorded low increase in overall

unemployment, and each is largely rural. Most of these 20 areas had low levels of unemployed people in 'elementary' occupations in April 2008, as well as witnessing little change.

Map 2 confirms that many London boroughs recorded small increases in unemployment in 'elementary' occupations. So did several districts in Surrey and West Sussex (excluding Crawley), and parts of Essex, Cambridgeshire and Buckinghamshire. Away from the south east, low values were recorded across Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Dorset.

Map 2: Changes in claimant count unemployment, April 2008-2009 - Elementary Occupations



Source: claimant count with rates and proportions, Nomis April 2009

Unemployment in skilled trades occupations

Nationally, 0.55% of the working age population in April 2009 were JSA claimants whose usual occupation was classified as 'skilled trades'. This compares with 0.23% a year earlier. The increase is therefore smaller (at 0.32 percentage points compared with 0.44 percentage points) than for elementary occupations, but it is the second largest of the nine major occupational groupings (of which four are reported here). In absolute terms, claimant unemployment increased by 107,800 to 184,900 in the year to April 2009, a rise of 140%.

Table 3: Changes in claimants in skilled trades, April 2008- 2009

<i>Biggest changes</i>	<i>% point change</i>	<i>Smallest changes</i>	<i>% point change</i>
Kingston upon Hull	0.83	Elmbridge	0.14
Cannock Chase	0.68	Cambridge	0.14
Walsall	0.66	South Cambridgeshire	0.14
Barnsley	0.59	Richmondshire	0.14
Knowsley	0.58	Ceredigion	0.14
South Tyneside	0.57	Kingston on Thames	0.14
Harlow	0.56	South Bucks	0.13
Gloucester	0.56	South Lakeland	0.12
Redditch	0.56	Wandsworth	0.12
Stoke-on-Trent	0.56	Runnymede	0.12
Dudley	0.56	St Albans	0.12
Doncaster	0.55	Guildford	0.11
Liverpool	0.53	Hart	0.11
Wigan	0.52	Richmond on Thames	0.11
Rotherham	0.52	Camden	0.09
Blaenau Gwent	0.52	Rutland	0.09
Sandwell	0.51	Eden	0.08
Darlington	0.50	Westminster	0.08
Pembrokeshire	0.50	Kensington/Chelsea	0.07
Halton	0.50	City of London	0.00

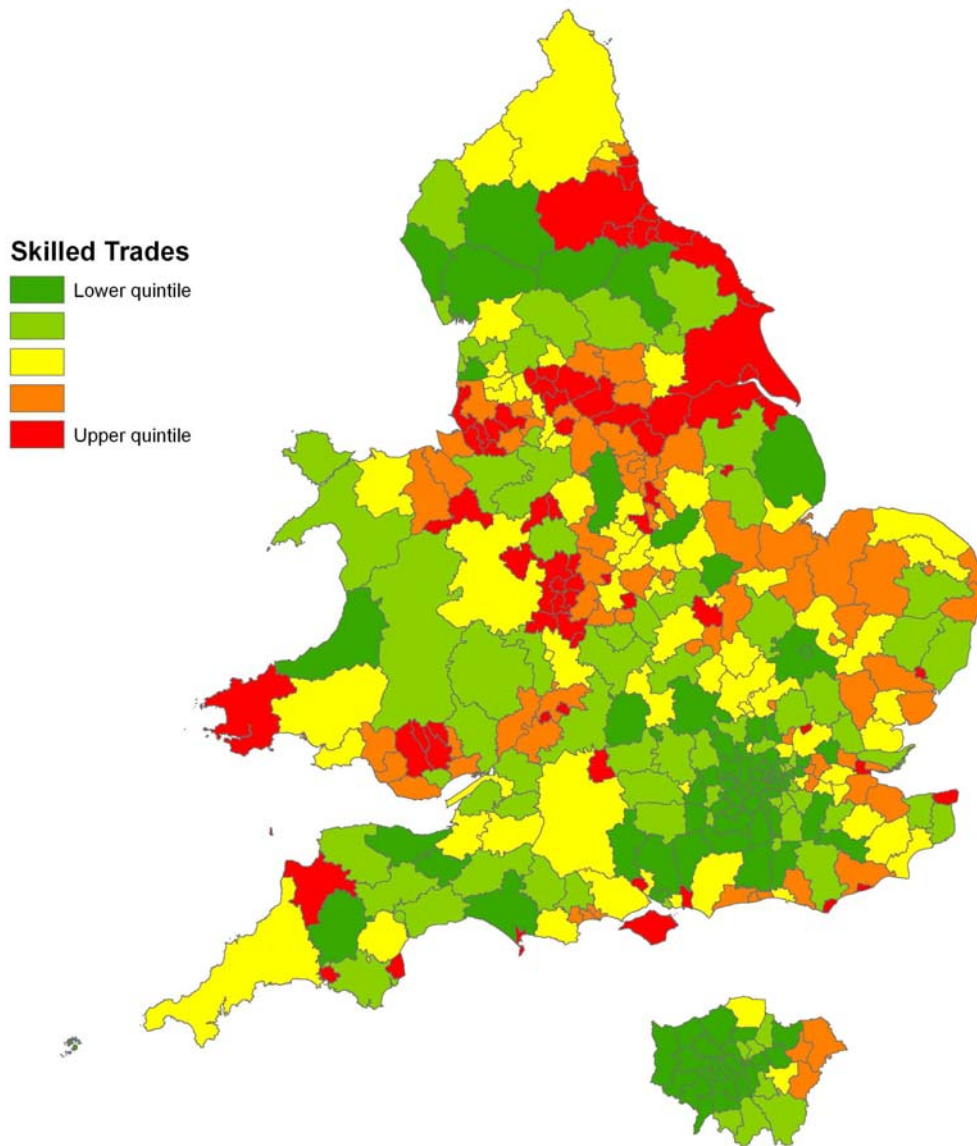
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The list of authorities with the largest increases includes six in the West Midlands, four in Yorkshire (including three in South Yorkshire), four in the North West, two in the North East and two in Wales. Eleven of the 20 are on the list of areas with the greatest increase in total unemployment rate, including Harlow and Gloucester, which didn't feature on the list for 'elementary' occupations. The four North West areas (Liverpool, Knowsley, Wigan and Halton) do not feature on either of the lists previously discussed. Nor do South Tyneside, Darlington or Pembrokeshire, each of them areas with significant employment in engineering.

Map 3 illustrates that high levels of increase occurred right across the industrial north, from the Humber through south and west Yorkshire to Manchester and Merseyside. The east Yorkshire coast also recorded high levels of change, as did Durham and Teesside. Further south, towns such as Ipswich, Lincoln and Cheltenham recorded top quintile increases, as did many parts of the West Midlands. Along the south coast, Eastbourne, Hastings, Weymouth, Torbay, Plymouth, Thanet, Havant, Southampton and the Isle of Wight recorded high increases, as did Torrington. Several areas in South Wales were in the top quintile, as was Wrexham.

The areas listed in the table with the smallest increases in unemployment rate for skilled trades are mostly in the south, though slightly less concentrated there than for 'elementary' occupations. Seven are London boroughs, five are in the South East and three in the Eastern region. Two are in Cumbria, with one each in Yorkshire, Wales and the East Midlands. Most of these areas had low levels of skilled trades unemployment a year ago, as well as little increase (though other areas with similarly low levels a year ago reported greater increases). Map 3 broadly confirms this pattern. The bottom quintile increases in skilled trades unemployment occur in west London, and then in belts going south west into Surrey and Hampshire and north west to Aylesbury Vale, Oxford and West Oxfordshire. Low values are also recorded for Cambridge, parts of Somerset and Dorset, most of Cumbria and inland North Yorkshire (though not the coastal areas).

Map 3: Changes in claimant count unemployment, April 2008-2009 - Skilled Trades



Source: claimant count with rates and proportions, Nomis April 2009

Unemployment in managerial occupations

In April 2009 former managers claiming JSA accounted for only 0.22% of the working age population. Nevertheless, this was nearly treble the proportion a year earlier (0.08%) with an increase of 0.14 percentage points over the year. In absolute terms, the number of former managers claiming JSA rose by 45,800 to 74,000 in the year to April 2009, a rise of 162%. The extent of geographical variation was less marked than for the other groups examined here, partly because the numbers of unemployed managers are smaller in any case. However, the spatial distribution is strikingly different to those for the other groups, as shown by the table below.

Table 4: Changes in claimants in managerial occupations, April 2008-2009

<i>Biggest changes</i>	<i>% point change</i>	<i>Smallest changes</i>	<i>% point change</i>
Windsor and Maidenhead	0.29	Camden	0.06
Surrey Heath	0.28	Waveney	0.06
Bracknell Forest	0.27	Pembrokeshire	0.06
Elmbridge	0.27	Boston	0.06
Harborough	0.26	East Lindsey	0.06
South Northamptonshire	0.26	Cambridge	0.06
Wokingham	0.26	Wyre	0.06
Horsham	0.25	South Somerset	0.06
Milton Keynes	0.25	Allerdale	0.05
Redditch	0.25	West Somerset	0.05
Wycombe	0.24	Weymouth/Portland	0.05
Lichfield	0.24	Anglesey	0.05
Reading	0.24	Eden	0.05
Rugby	0.23	North Norfolk	0.05
Aylesbury Vale	0.23	Ceredigion	0.04
Woking	0.23	Gwynedd	0.03
West Berkshire	0.22	Copeland	0.02
Central Bedfordshire	0.22	Barrow-in-Furness	0.01
Hart	0.22	Powys	0.01
Runnymede	0.22	City of London	0.00

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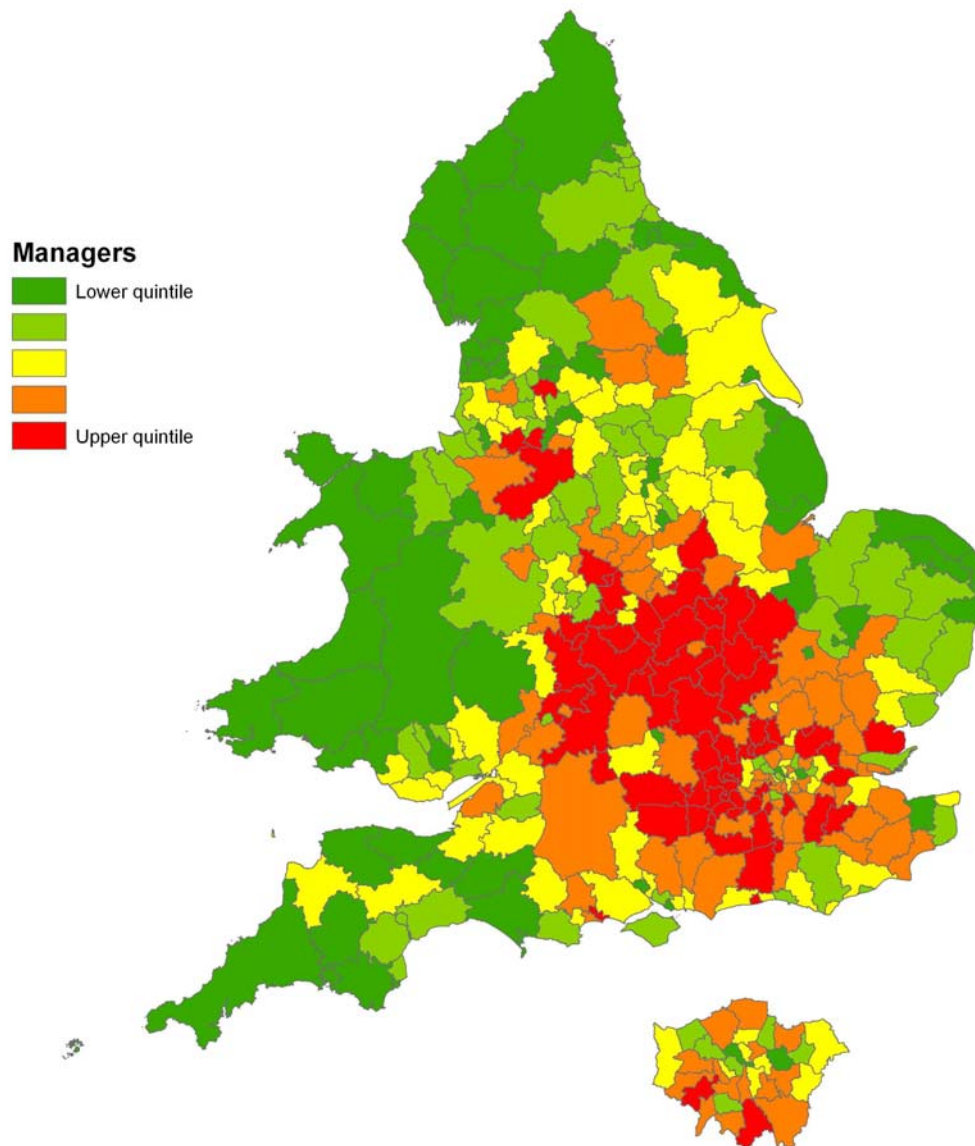
Fourteen of the 20 areas with the largest increase in the manager claimant rate are in the South East region, and another (Central Bedfordshire) in the East. Two (South Northamptonshire and Harborough) are in the East Midlands and three in the West Midlands. The latter include Redditch, the only area to appear in each of the five tables presented here.

Map 4 shows that areas with the highest increases stretched from West Sussex in a swathe up to the West Midlands, through Surrey and north Hampshire, the Thames Valley, Cherwell and Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and south Warwickshire. Croydon and Richmond-upon-Thames also had top quintile rates, as did parts of Gloucestershire, East Cheshire and parts of the Manchester conurbation.

The 20 areas with the smallest increases in the manager claimant rate are geographically widespread, but mostly outside the largest conurbations (with the exception of Camden and the City of London). Five are in mid and west Wales, four in Cumbria and one in Lancashire, three in the East region, two in Lincolnshire and three in the South West. Several are largely rural, though

there are exceptions such as Cambridge and Weymouth. To some extent Map 4 confirms that smallest increases in manager unemployment occurred in rural areas, particularly in West Wales, Cornwall, Somerset and Cumbria. However, low rates were also recorded for a number of towns and cities – Southampton, Plymouth, Hull, York, Oxford, Lincoln and Canterbury, for example. Urban Cumbria, north Lancashire and the mix of urban and rural settlements in Northumberland and Norfolk also recorded low increases in manager unemployment.

Map 4: Changes in claimant count unemployment, April 2008-2009 - Managers



Source: claimant count with rates and proportions, Nomis April 2009

Unemployment in professional occupations

Professionals are a relatively small element of the total workforce, and generally record below average levels of unemployment. In April 2008, only 0.05% of the working age population were JSA claimants whose usual occupation was classed as professional. A year later, the proportion had more than doubled, but was still only 0.13%. In absolute terms, JSA claimant unemployment rose by 26,200 to 44,700 in the year to April 2009, an increase of 142%. The areas recording the greatest and lowest percentage point change in professional claimants are shown in the table below.

Table 5: Changes in claimants in professional occupations, April 2008- 2009

<i>Biggest changes</i>	<i>% point change</i>	<i>Smallest changes</i>	<i>% point change</i>
Hackney	0.17	Waveney	0.04
Islington	0.16	Burnley	0.04
Rugby	0.16	Blackpool	0.04
Redditch	0.15	South Lakeland	0.03
St Albans	0.14	Bolsover	0.03
Lambeth	0.14	Eden	0.03
Barnet	0.14	South Holland	0.03
Hammersmith/Fulham	0.14	Taunton Deane	0.03
Worthing	0.14	Gosport	0.03
Milton Keynes	0.13	Preston	0.03
Coventry	0.13	Great Yarmouth	0.03
Woking	0.13	Allerdale	0.03
Wokingham	0.13	West Somerset	0.03
Reading	0.13	East Lindsey	0.03
Wandsworth	0.13	Forest Heath	0.03
Broxtowe	0.13	Copeland	0.02
Brent	0.13	Gwynedd	0.02
Wycombe	0.13	Breckland	0.02
Waltham Forest	0.13	Richmondshire	0.02
Kingston upon Thames	0.12	Ceredigion	0.01

Nine of the areas with the largest increases are London boroughs – a mix of inner and outer London, with boroughs in the east and west of the capital appearing. A further seven areas are in the south east (one, St Albans, is in the Eastern region but close to London). Thus, even though the numbers and therefore the range are small, there is a distinct geographical pattern. However, four areas in the list are in the midlands (including Redditch, which has appeared on all of the lists in this report).

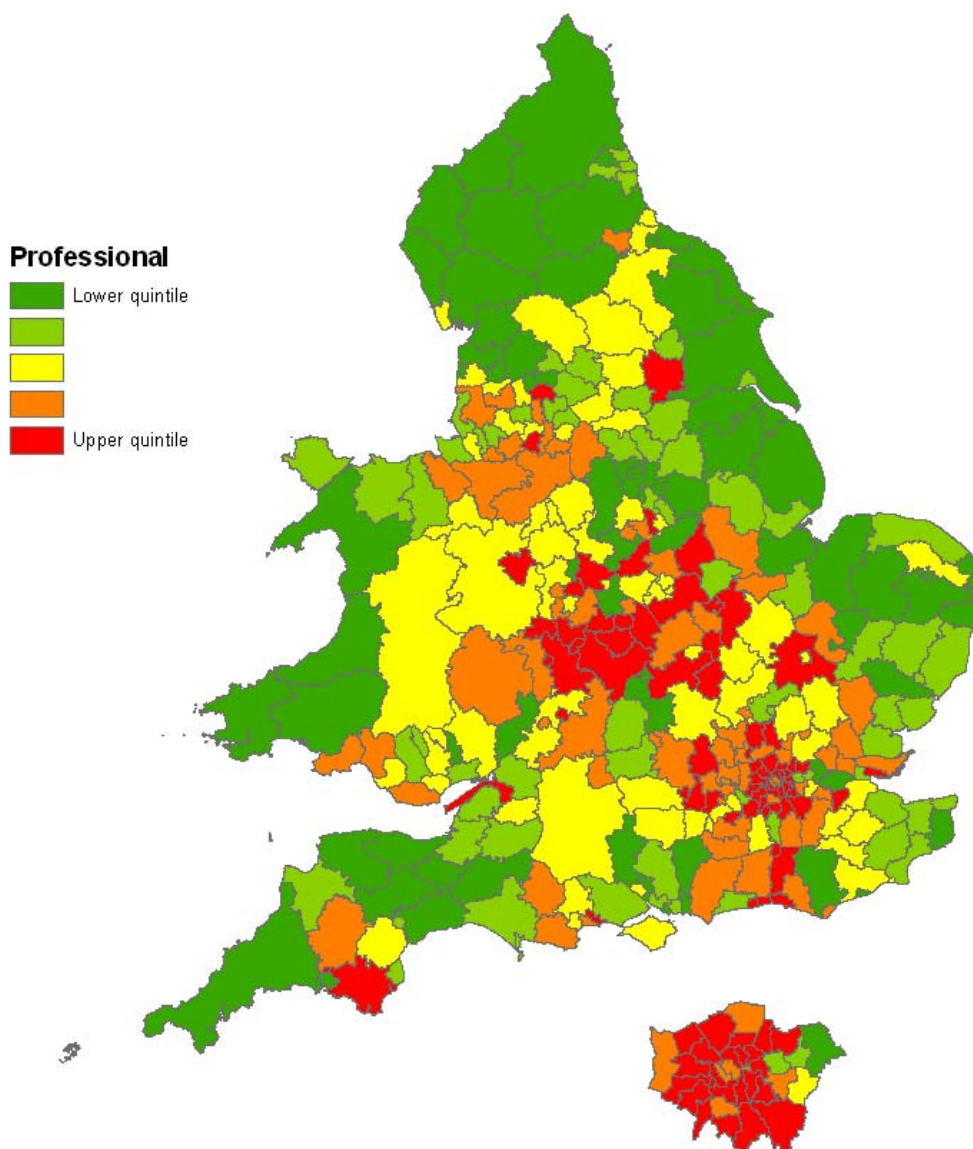
Map 5 confirms that many London boroughs recorded increases in professional JSA claimants well above the national average. The map also identifies a belt of areas across the midlands with above average rates, including much of Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire, as well as Coventry and Solihull. Along the south coast Worthing, Christchurch and South Hams recorded top quintile increases, as did Bristol, Cheltenham, Crawley and Telford. There were few areas in the northern half of the country with top quintile increases: Selby, Rossendale and Trafford were amongst them. Outside London, then, the greatest increases in professional

unemployment occurred largely outside the main conurbations (with some exceptions), but for the most part in areas that are urban rather than rural.

The 20 areas recording the smallest increases are largely outside the south east (Gosport is the one exception) and outside conurbations. Several are predominantly rural (Richmondshire, Ceredigion and Eden, for example), while others are centred on towns (such as Preston, Taunton Deane and Great Yarmouth). Seven are in Cumbria or north Lancashire, while four are in Norfolk or Suffolk.

Map 5 confirms the rural predominance of areas with low increases in professional unemployment, with concentrations in West Wales, Cornwall, Somerset, Lincolnshire and East Anglia. Low values were also recorded in East Kent, Cumbria, Northumberland and Durham.

Map 5: Changes in claimant count unemployment, April 2008-2009 - Professional



Source: claimant count with rates and proportions, Nomis April 2009

Implications from the analysis

It is evident that, overall, the claimant unemployment rate has increased most in areas where manufacturing is a significant source of employment. It seems that closures and downsizing by organisations unable to access credit has caused more unemployment than job losses in the financial sector itself. The additions to the claimant count have come from those looking for lower-skilled work, or as operatives or in skilled trades more than in managerial, clerical or professional work.

However, it is too simplistic to say that the recession has bitten harder in the north while the south has escaped unscathed. Looking at total unemployment, rates have increased most in parts of the West Midlands, Yorkshire and south Wales but less in the North West and the North East. Moreover, some of the biggest overall increases have been outside the Industrial Revolution heartlands, in places such as Corby, Wellingborough, Swindon and Harlow. By the same token, parts of the north, particularly in Cumbria and particularly but not wholly in more rural areas, have experienced some of the smallest increases in claimant count.

The picture is subtly different for 'elementary' occupations and for skilled trades, with areas along the Mersey-Manchester corridor experiencing some of the biggest increases in unemployment in skilled trades (along with areas with significant engineering employment such as Darlington and Pembrokeshire). At a broad level there is a tendency for unemployment of those in a particular occupational group to increase most in areas where that group forms a higher proportion of the workforce than elsewhere (the north and West Midlands for elementary and skilled trades occupations, and the south for managerial and professional jobs). But the geographical patterns examined here are more complex.

It is evident, though, that the turmoil in financial services has had an effect in the south. This is evident in the figures on the increases in manager claimant count. The effect here has been concentrated in London's commuter belt rather than the capital itself, but is undoubtedly a London effect (claimants are counted according to where they live rather than where they worked). The increases in manager unemployment in places like Woking, Maidenhead and Surrey Heath attest to this. However, there is little evidence that the effect of the recession has had as much impact on people looking for less skilled work in the South East. Some of the places which have recorded the highest increases in manager unemployment (like Hart, Wokingham and Runnymede) have some of the lowest increases in unemployment for those in 'elementary' occupations. While the commuter belt has recorded the greatest increases in manager claimants, London boroughs have recorded the greatest increases in unemployment amongst professionals.

The impacts of the recession are complex and spatially varied. The summary presented here illustrates this, but inevitably involves generalisation. Each district, and parts of each district, are experiencing the recession differently, and will need specific, tailored approaches to address specific problems.

Data issues

This report uses Job Seekers Allowance claimant count statistics. The government's preferred measure of unemployment is based on the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and produces a higher figure, since it counts those looking for work and available for work, rather than those who qualify for a specific benefit. The LFS count tends to include a higher proportion of women, since they are less likely to be eligible for JSA. However, the Labour Force Survey is a sample survey and the results for smaller districts have a wide error range. The claimant count, on the other hand, is a 100% count of those receiving a particular benefit in an area.

The claimant unemployment rate used here divides the numbers of claimants by resident working age population, the denominator used to calculate district-level claimant count unemployment rates by the government's NOMIS system. Claimant unemployment rates at national and regional level are generally published using workforce jobs plus claimants as the denominator. This denominator is not so timely or accurate at local authority level, and is therefore not adopted here. The workforce jobs plus claimants denominator yields a claimant unemployment rate for the UK of 4.7% at April 2009, compared with 2.5% a year earlier. The change of 2.2 percentage points is thus a little larger than the 1.9 percentage points we report here for England and Wales using the broader denominator. The main difference between the denominators is that the one used here includes people of working age who are economically inactive. These are around 20% of the relevant age group. The proportion is slightly higher in areas where unemployment is highest (London, West Midlands and North East) and slightly lower in areas of low unemployment (such as the South East and South West). Thus the denominator used here reduces rates more in 'high unemployment' areas than 'low unemployment' areas in comparison with the workforce jobs plus claimants denominator.

The figures on claimants in each occupational group are taken from the government's NOMIS system, and refer to usual occupation. If the claimant has had no previous occupation, or does not give it, the sought occupation is used instead. Note that the figures used do not show the proportion of people in a particular occupation or seeking a particular occupation (in a particular area) who are claimants. We cannot calculate this because we do not have reliable figures on the numbers in each area in each occupation. Rather, they show, for example, the proportion of working age residents in the area who are claimants with a managerial (or skilled trades, or 'elementary') occupation.

We have used the percentage point change in the rate between April 2008 and April 2009 as our measure. Thus if an area experienced an increase from 1% to 4%, we register a three percentage point change. We would have found different outcomes if we had used the percentage change in the rate. For example, an increase from 1% to 4% is a 300% growth; an increase from 5% to 10% is a 100% growth. We have rejected the percentage change and used the percentage point change because the former gives prominence to areas that had very low rates at the start of the period (i.e. April 2008) and we judge that it is more important to consider the situation now (i.e. April 2009). Using the hypothetical example above, we would rank the five percentage point change from 5% to 10% higher than the three percentage point change from 1% to 4%. We use change in rates rather than absolute numbers to avoid emphasising change in areas with the greatest populations.

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Local Government Association

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