

## **Web Appendices**

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## **Web Appendix 1:           Details of the surveys**

The details of the sampling, field period and access for each of the surveys are as follows (sample sizes vary by question and are included in the main paper):

**British Social Attitudes (BSA)** – BSA is run by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), and is one of the most widely-used and highly-respected survey series in Britain. We obtained the data via the UK Data Service (Study Numbers 3572, 3764, 4486, 4615, 5329, 5618, 6390, and 7500 for 1994, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008 and 2013 respectively); for full details of the funders in each year, see the UK Data Service. In all years, the survey uses a multi-stage random sample of adults aged 18+ from the Postcode Address File (excluding those living north of the Caledonian Canal). Since 2000, the main fieldwork period has been June-September (with a smaller number of interviews in October & November), although it was earlier in the year in 1994 & 1995. Like most survey series, response rates have declined over time, from 65-69% in 1994/5 to 53-56% 2005-2013, although the response rate throughout is relatively high for general population attitudes surveys. We use weights supplied by NatCen to correct for both unequal probabilities of selection and for non-response. While BSA includes a self-completion survey, the questions we use are all within the main face-to-face survey. While the topics covered in BSA vary by year, the surveys are not focused on benefits, and instead cover a wide range of political and social attitudes.

**European Social Survey (ESS)** – ESS is a highly-respected international comparative survey, but in this paper we focus solely on the British sample for 2008, which is publicly available via <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/data/>. In Great Britain ESS is also run by NatCen (the Northern Ireland sample is run by NISRA) using a similar design to BSA; that is, it is a face-to-face survey using a multi-stage random sample from the Postcode Address File. The fieldwork period was Sep 2008 to January 2009. The response rate was 56%, and we use the weights provided to correct for both unequal probabilities of selection and for non-response. One of the main topics covered by ESS in 2008 was attitudes to the welfare state, which came after core modules on the media, social trust, politics, subjective wellbeing, and identity.

**Eurobarometer (EB)** – EB is the opinion survey used by the European institutions for general monitoring of attitudes across the EU, primarily those towards the European institutions themselves, but also a number of other topics varying by wave. We use the British samples from EB 67.2 (publicly available from Gesis, code ZA4530) and EB 72.1 (Gesis code ZA4975). These are face-to-face surveys conducted by TNS UK in April-May 2007 and Aug-Sep 2009 using a random route process (that is, a starting address was randomly selected using a multi-stage design, and interviewers were asked to interview people at every Nth address). While technically this should produce a random sample, response rates for random route surveys are not typically available, and (because of the discretion awarded to the interviewer, and the lack of follow-up calls) the sample is generally considered to be closer to a quota sample. We use the weights supplied by TNS in our analyses, based on gender, age, region and size of locality. While the few questions being used here

focus on knowledge of economic indicators, the surveys to that point had covered a wide variety of topics, including (in 2009) poverty, social exclusion, the welfare state, and climate change, and (in 2007) comparisons in quality of life between countries, attitudes to the EU and data protection.

**Ipsos MORI face-to-face survey 2012** – this survey was commissioned in a project involving the present author (Baumberg et al., 2012). The survey was the IpsosMORI ‘Capibus’ survey, which is a face-to-face omnibus survey, using quota sampling: Primary Sampling Units were randomly selected within relatively homogeneous ACORN area types, and interviewers then had to meet a quota by age, gender and working status within these streets. We use the weights supplied by Ipsos MORI that weight for non-response according to age, social grade, region and working status (within gender). We added a ‘claimant boost’ from two further waves; the total sample was 2,601, of whom 1,123 had claimed benefits/tax credits in the past year (results are reweighted to maintain representativeness). The survey was undertaken in May 2012. The question on perceived benefit fraud used in the main paper was part of a bank of questions about benefits stigma; in a random half of the cases the question came at the start of the section, and in half the cases it came at the end.

**YouGov online panels** – we use two online panels from YouGov in the paper, one undertaken for an ESRC project by Curran et al that is publicly available from the UK Data Service (Study Number 7007), and one that was kindly provided via the sponsoring organisation, the TUC.

The YouGov 2010 survey for Curran et al provides very little by way of methodological details. From the dataset, we can tell that the survey was carried out from 6-12<sup>th</sup> July 2010. The YouGov 2012 online survey for TUC was undertaken between 11–12 December 2012. YouGov note that “*the figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+)*”, and we use the YouGov-supplied weights for both YouGov samples.

YouGov provides more general descriptions of its panel at <https://yougov.co.uk/about/panel-methodology/> [accessed 27/7/2015]. This states that they have recruited a panel of 360,000 individuals in Britain over ten years, who are ‘recruited from a host of different sources’. When they are conducting a new survey, they offer incentives to a sub-sample of the panel to take part, who are designed to be representative of British adults according to age, gender, social class and type of newspaper (upmarket, mid-market, red-top, no newspaper), according to the Census and National Readership Survey. Further technical details about panel construction are available from the YouGov ESOMAR statement at [http://web.archive.org/web/20141113110233/http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus\\_uploads/document/t3r5k565j5/ESOMAR\\_28.pdf](http://web.archive.org/web/20141113110233/http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/t3r5k565j5/ESOMAR_28.pdf) [accessed 27/7/2015].

**Ipsos MORI online panels** – we use two online panels from Ipsos MORI that were sponsored by the Royal Statistical Society & Kings College London, and have kindly been made available by Ipsos MORI for the present project. The interviews were conducted online with people aged 16-75 as part of Ipsos MORI’s i:Omnibus panel, and were conducted 14-18<sup>th</sup> June 2013 and 5-9<sup>th</sup> June 2015. We use weights supplied by MORI that ensure the sample is matched to the National Readership Survey

according to age, gender, region, social grade, working status and main shopper status. Further technical details about panel construction are available from the Ipsos MORI ESOMAR statement at <https://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Techniques/ESOMAR-28-Questions.pdf> [accessed 27/7/2015].

**Web Appendix 2: Descriptive statistics**

**Table 1: Age and sex of each sample wave**

	<b>Min age</b>	<b>Max age</b>	<b>Mean age (18-75)</b>	<b>% male (18-75)</b>
BSA 1994	18	99	43.5	47.2%
BSA 1995	18	99	43.9	46.4%
BSA 2000	18	99	44.5	45.3%
BSA 2001	18	99	44.7	46.2%
BSA 2004	18	99	44.8	46.2%
BSA 2005	18	99	44.4	48.9%
BSA 2007	18	99	44.4	49.4%
BSA 2008	17	99	44.4	49.6%
BSA 2013	17	99	44.8	49.3%
ESS 2008	15	123	44.4	48.7%
Ipsos MORI face-to-face 2012	16	95	44.2	48.4%
Ipsos MORI web 2015	16	75	44.6	50.2%
Ipsos MORI web 2013	16	75	44.2	49.3%
YouGov/Curran et al 2010	15	89	41.8	47.7%
YouGov/EFC web 2012	18	83	45.7	47.8%
YouGov/TUC web 2012	18	84	45.8	48.1%

Based on weighted data.

## Web Appendix 3: Benefit belief question wording

### Perceptions of benefit fraud

NOTE: The first three questions ask about benefit fraud specifically, while the final two ask about ‘false claims’. Note that some questions ask about the perceived share of claimants (2012 Ipsos MORI/EFC, 2007 BSA), while others ask about the perceived share of spending (2013 Ipsos MORI/RSS/KCL, 2012 YouGov/TUC).

The 2012 Ipsos MORI face-to-face survey (sponsored by EFC) asks:

*"The Government release figures on the amount of 'benefit fraud' – where some people deliberately deceive the Government, as they would not be entitled to benefits if they told the truth. Out of every 100 people claiming out-of-work benefits, how many, if any, would you say, commit fraud in this way? Even if you are not sure, just give your best guess."*

The 2013 Ipsos MORI web survey (sponsored by RSS/KCL) asks:

*"Out of every £100 spent from the welfare budget, can you tell me how much of that is claimed fraudulently (i.e. people who dishonestly claim more benefits than they are entitled to)? Even if you are not sure, please just give your best guess and answer in whole numbers."*

The 2012 YouGov web survey (sponsored by the TUC) asks exactly the same question as:

*"Out of every £100 spent from the welfare budget, can you tell me how much of that is claimed fraudulently (i.e. people who dishonestly claim more benefits than they are entitled to)? (Even if you are not sure, please just give your best guess and answer in whole numbers.)"*

[The previous question defines ‘welfare budget’ as follows: “The government’s welfare budget pays for pensions, tax credits, benefits for the unemployed, the disabled and other groups.”]

The 2007 BSA face-to-face survey asks two successive questions:

*"Out of every 100 people receiving **sickness or disability benefits**, how many do you think are **falsely** claiming the benefits? INTERVIEWER: ENCOURAGE BEST ESTIMATE IF UNSURE."*

*"And out of every 100 people receiving **unemployment benefits**, how many do you think are **falsely** claiming the benefits? INTERVIEWER: ENCOURAGE BEST ESTIMATE IF UNSURE."*

*[Bold text included in the original survey]*

As discussed in the text, the 2013 Ipsos MORI web survey followed up this question on fraud by asking, “*When you were answering the last question, which of the following activities, if any, were you thinking of as fraud?*”, giving the following response options as well as ‘other’ and ‘don’t know’:

*[Authors’ note: these responses are legally classified as fraud]*

- People providing false information to claim more benefits than they are entitled to
- People faking disabilities or illness
- Not reporting changes in circumstances e.g. a partner moving in
- Working cash in hand
- People on unemployment benefit not trying to find work

*[Authors’ note: these responses are NOT always legally classified as fraud]*

- People from abroad/immigrants claiming benefits
- People claiming benefits who haven’t paid any taxes/national insurance
- People having more children so that they are entitled to more benefits

## **Perceptions of spending on benefits**

### ***Social security compared to other areas of government spending***

The 2001 BSA survey asks the following three questions:

*“Here are some areas of government spending. Look through the card and pick out the one area that you think has the largest amount of money spent on it at the moment. Please read through the whole list before deciding.”*

*“And tell me which one you think has the next largest amount spent on it at the moment.”*

*“And which area do you think has the smallest amount of money spent on it at the moment.”*

*[The showcard providing response categories for these questions lists the following: “Education | Defence | Health | Housing | Public transport | Roads | Police and prisons | Social security benefits | Help for industry | Overseas aid”]*

The 2013 MORI survey (sponsored by the RSS and KCL) asks:

*“Which two or three, if any, of the following areas do you think the UK Government spends the most money on?”*

*“Overseas aid | Defence | Education and schools (not including universities) | Transport | Health | Policing and criminal justice | State pensions | Working*

*age benefits (such as tax credits and job seeker's allowance) | Interest payments on the national debt | Don't know"*

### ***Spending of different areas of social security***

The 2001 BSA survey asks the following three questions:

*"Here are some of the areas covered by social security spending. Look through the card and pick out the one area that you think has the largest amount of money spent on it at the moment.*

*"And tell me which one you think has the next largest amount spent on it at the moment.*

*"And which area do you think has the smallest amount of money spent on it at the moment."*

*[The showcard providing response categories for these questions lists the following: "Retirement pensions | Child benefits | Benefits for the unemployed | Benefits for disabled people | Benefits for single parents"]*

The 2013 MORI survey (sponsored by the RSS and KCL) asks:

*"And which do you think the UK Government spends more on, Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) or state pensions? [Response options are: JSA, Pensions, Both the same, Don't know]*

The 2012 YouGov survey (sponsored by the TUC) asks:

*"The government's welfare budget pays for pensions, tax credits, benefits for the unemployed, the disabled and other groups. Out of every £100 of this welfare budget, how much do you think is spent on benefits for the unemployed? (For example, if you think that half of the budget is spent on benefits for unemployed people, then please write in '50'. Even if you are not sure, please just give your best guess and answer in whole numbers, you do not need to include the £ sign.)*

### ***Costs/savings from specific policies***

The 2013 MORI survey (sponsored by the RSS and KCL) asks:

*"The government is looking for ways to save money... [Shows the list below, and then asks about which 2-3 policies they support the most]*

*"And which one of the following do you think saves the most money?*

*"And which one of the following do you think saves the least money?*

*Capping benefits at £26,000 per household*

*Raising the pension age to 66 for both men and women*

*Stopping child benefit for any household where one parent earns more than £50,000*  
*Capping benefit rises for working age people at 1% per year*  
*Stopping giving the winter fuel allowance to better-off pensioners*  
*Reduction in housing benefit for those with spare rooms (the “bedroom tax”)*  
*Stopping free bus travel for better-off pensioners*  
*Stopping free TV licenses for better-off pensioners*  
*None of these*  
*Don’t know”*

## **Perceptions of levels of benefit claims among the working-age population**

### ***Unemployment claims***

Note that only the first two questions ask about the rate of unemployment within the working-age *population*. The final two questions ask about the ‘unemployment rate’, which is conventionally expressed as a share of the *active* population – that is, it excludes the inactive population who are not looking for (and/or available for) work, many of whom having disabilities and/or caring responsibilities.

The 2008 ESS asks:

*“Of every 100 people of working age in [country] how many would you say are unemployed and looking for work? Choose your answer from this card. If you are not sure please give your best guess.*

*[The response options are: “0-4 | 5-9 | 10-14 | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | 35-39 | 40-44 | 45-49 | 50 or more | (Don’t know)”]*

The 2013 Ipsos MORI survey (sponsored by the RSS and KCL) asks:

*“Out of every 100 people of working age in the UK, how many do you think are currently unemployed?”*

The 2007 and 2009 Eurobarometer surveys ask:

*“What was the official unemployment rate, the percentage of active people who do not have a job, in (OUR COUNTRY) in 2008? I can tell you that the exact figure is between 0% and 20%”*

The 2010 YouGov survey (reported by Curran et al) asks:

*“The national unemployment rate in May was around... [Randomly reversed order, except for ‘Can’t say’]: 8 percent | 12 percent | 15 percent | 20 percent/ Can’t say”*

### ***Sickness and disability claims***

The 2008 ESS asks:

*“And of every 100 people of working age in [country] how many would you say are long-term sick or disabled? “*

*[The response options are: “0-4 | 5-9 | 10-14 | 15-19 | 20-24 | 25-29 | 30-34 | 35-39 | 40-44 | 45-49 | 50 or more | (Don’t know)”]*

### ***Out-of-work benefit claims***

The 2015 Ipsos MORI survey asks:

*“At present, out of every 100 people of working age, how many do you think are claiming out of work benefits? By out of work benefits we mean benefits for people who are not in work because they are unemployed, disabled, carers or single parents.*

*“Fifteen years ago (the year 2000), out of every 100 people of working age, how many do you think were claiming out of work benefits then?”*

The implied trend in out-of-work benefits receipt is calculated by subtracting the answer to the second question from the first (for those answering both questions).

## **Perceptions of the value of benefits**

### ***BSA recent series***

BSA includes a series of questions on people’s perceptions of the value of benefits, which all follow a common pattern. Taking the example of the 2013 survey (repeating a question also used in 1994, 1995, 2000 and 2013), BSA first asks:

*“Think of a 25 year-old unemployed woman living alone. Her only income comes from state benefits. Would you say that she ... has more than enough to live on | has enough to live on| is hard up | or, is really poor?”*

This is then followed by a second question, in which they are told how much money the person would actually receive in state benefits:

*“Now thinking again of that 25-year-old unemployed woman living alone. After rent, her income is £72 a week. Would you say that she... has more than enough to live on, has enough to live on, is hard up, or, is really poor?”*

This question is repeated for the following groups of claimants:

- *“...an unemployed single mother with a young child”*  
(1994/1995/2000/2004/2008)

- “...a couple living together without children who are both unemployed” (2005 only). An earlier version of this question asks about “a married couple without children [who] live only on unemployment benefit”, and reverses the order of the response categories (1998 only).
- “...a woman who can't work because she has to look after her husband or partner who has a long-term illness” (2005 only)
- “...a pensioner living alone. Her only income comes from the state pension and other benefits specially for pensioners” (2000/2004/2008)
- “...a pensioner couple living together. Their only income comes from the state pension and other benefits specially for pensioners” (2005 only). An earlier version of the question asks about “a married couple living only on the state pension”, and reverses the order of the response categories (1998 only).

The ‘true’ sums of money that claimants would receive is examined in Web Appendix 4 below.

### ***BSA earlier series***

An earlier version of these questions has a very similar wording, but the follow-up question instead asks:

*“Now thinking of a married couple without children living on £79 per week. Would you say that they are ...really poor // hard up // have enough to live on // have more than enough?”*

The main difference here is that respondents are NOT told that the £79/pw is after rent. This makes a considerable difference to the results, as shown by a survey experiment in 1998 in which a random half of the sample was asked each question wording, shown in the table below. For example, for the pensioner couple, 21.0% of people decided that people would be harder-up than they thought when they heard the true amount (‘under-estimated benefit’), when the ‘true’ amount did not say that it was after rent. When it was clarified that this was after rent, this rose to 38.5% of people.

**Table 2: Understanding of level of benefits in 1998, when told vs. not told that benefit amount is ‘after rent’**

<b>Perceived level of the benefit (BSA, various years)</b>	<b>Under-estimated benefit</b>	<b>Over-estimated benefit</b>	<b>No change</b>	<b>Don't know</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>
Pensioner couple on £103, 1998	21.0%	17.9%	56.5%	4.6%	1543
Pensioner couple on £103, 1998*	38.5%	9.6%	48.3%	3.7%	1573
Unemployed couple w/o kids on £79, 1998	5.0%	49.8%	37.1%	8.1%	1550
Unemployed couple w/o kids, £79, 1998*	10.1%	37.2%	45.1%	7.5%	1569

\* = explicitly mentions that benefit amount is 'after rent'

For this reason, the earlier questions are not regarded as comparable to the later questions, and are not presented in the main chapter. For completeness, though, the earlier series are presented in the following table:

**Table 3: Understanding of level of benefits, when not told that benefit amount is ‘after rent’**

Perceived level of the benefit (BSA, various years)	Under-estimated benefit	Over-estimated benefit	No change	Don't know	<i>n</i>
Pensioner couple on £103, 1998	21.0%	17.9%	56.5%	4.6%	1543
Pensioner couple on £98, 1996	15.5%	19.4%	61.1%	4.0%	607
Pensioner couple on £87, 1993	20.4%	14.4%	61.2%	4.0%	1437
Pensioner couple on £75, 1991	21.8%	15.3%	58.1%	4.8%	1457
Pensioner couple on £66, 1989	12.8%	22.2%	61.5%	3.4%	1492
Pensioner couple on £62, 1986	15.7%	17.0%	61.1%	6.3%	1522
Unemployed couple w/o kids, £79, 1998	5.0%	49.8%	37.1%	8.1%	1550
Unemployed couple w/o kids, £78, 1996	4.4%	39.6%	48.5%	7.5%	610
Unemployed couple w/o kids, £60, 1991	6.9%	36.5%	43.7%	12.9%	1456
Unemployed couple w/o kids, £53, 1989	3.1%	44.4%	42.9%	9.6%	1492
Unemployed couple w/o kids, £50, 1986	5.2%	42.6%	40.4%	11.8%	1526

While the exact estimates vary year-on-year, overall this shows relatively little change over the 1986-1998 period.

### ***Other questions***

The 2012 YouGov survey (sponsored by the TUC) asked the following series of questions:

*“Please imagine an unemployed couple with two children, aged 6 and 10. Excluding housing costs, approximately how much money do you think they need to live on PER WEEK?...”*

*“Thinking again of the unemployed couple with two children, aged 6 and 10. Excluding any other benefits such as housing, council tax or child benefits, approximately how much do you think they would receive in unemployment benefit (Jobseeker’s Allowance) PER WEEK? (Even if you are not sure, please just give your best guess and answer in whole numbers, you do not need to include the £ sign.)”*

*“Thinking again of the unemployed couple with two children, aged 6 and 10, if one of the parents got a job paying the minimum wage for 30 hours a week, in general, do you think they would be financially better or worse off or would there be no difference? -> Better off | Worse off | No difference | Don't know*

*[FILTERED BY RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS Q]: “Approximately, by how much do you think that they would [better off/worse off] PER WEEK? (Even if*

*you are not sure, please just give your best guess and answer in whole numbers, you do not need to include the £ sign.)”*

## **Other questions**

The 2012 YouGov survey (sponsored by the TUC) asks:

*“The next question is about Jobseeker’s Allowance, the benefit you claim if you are unemployed. Out of every 100 people who sign on to make a claim for Jobseeker’s Allowance, approximately how many do you think go on to receive it for more than a year? (For example, if you think that half of people who make a claim for Jobseeker’s Allowance then go on to claim it for more than a year, your answer would be 50. Even if you are not sure, please just give your best guess and answer in whole numbers)”*

## Web Appendix 4: True values (and their associated uncertainty)

### Notes:

- *All electronic sources are last accessed on 21/7/2015 unless otherwise specified.*
- *'Working-age population' refers to the 16-64 year-old population unless otherwise specified. (For a discussion of the changing definition of 'working-age population' as women's State Pension Age rises, see <http://cesi.org.uk/blog/2014/sep/are-employmentinactivity-rates-near-records-paul-bivand-looks-figures-little-more-clos>)*
- *The purpose of making these calculations publicly available is to maximise transparency (something we are strongly committed to) and to enable other people to build on this paper. It does inevitably raise the possibility that other people will spot errors that would otherwise have been concealed. As such, if you do spot any errors, then please do let us know!*
- *The working underlying these figures are given in a series of Web Tables, which are available from [www.benbgeiger.co.uk/publications.htm](http://www.benbgeiger.co.uk/publications.htm)*

### **Benefits fraud**

The official estimates for fraud for the most recent period are taken from the DWP's report 'Fraud and Error in the Benefits System: 2012/13 estimates'.<sup>1</sup> This publication also describes how these estimates are created, and the principles by which 'fraud' is inferred from reviewed cases (see p10). For the 2007 estimates for comparing to BSA, we use the equivalent publication for 2007/8.<sup>2</sup> For estimates of tax credit fraud, we use Table 3 of HRMC (2014), 'Child and Working Tax Credits: Error and Fraud Statistics 2012-13'.<sup>3</sup>

When people are reporting a 'true' figure alongside a poll (see the topline figures via Duffy, 2013, TUC, 2013), they tend to say that the true fraud figure is 0.7%, which is the overall estimated rate of benefit fraud produced by the DWP in the sources above. However, this includes all benefits, whereas the questions tend to have a different focus – sometimes wider (including tax credits, in YouGov/TUC 2012), and sometimes narrower ('welfare', 'out-of-work benefits', or even 'unemployment benefits'). We make sure that we take the appropriate fraud rate for each question, and document this transparently – further details are given in Web Tables 4a.

Note that the bands for 'correct' answers are the same – 0-10% – whether we use narrowly-defined fraud, or fraud + customer error (see Web Tables 4a).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fraud-and-error-in-the-benefit-system-201213-estimates>

<sup>2</sup> [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130422101152/http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd2/index.php?page=fraud\\_error\\_arc](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130422101152/http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd2/index.php?page=fraud_error_arc)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-and-working-tax-credits-error-and-fraud-statistics-2012-to-2013>

## *Public spending on benefits*

Public finance statistics on the amount of Government spending that is allocated to different functions is easily available within the Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses (PESA). For comparing to the BSA 2001 survey, we use PESA 2000-1,<sup>4</sup> while for the Ipsos MORI/RSS/KCL 2013 survey, we use PESA 2011-12.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, expenditure on different benefits is available from the official Benefit Expenditure & Caseload tables; we use the version published alongside the 2013 Autumn Statement.<sup>6</sup> However, there are two further challenges.

Firstly, these benefit tables do not include expenditure on Tax Credits. To get figures on Tax Credit spending split by client groups, we primarily use ‘Personal tax credit statistics - finalised awards 2012-2013’.<sup>7</sup> For 2001 data, we also use the publications on the Working Families Tax Credit and the Disabled Person's Tax Credit.<sup>8</sup> This step appears not to have been taken when some of the previous claims have been made, resulting in mistaken claims of ‘true values’.

Second, and most importantly, allocating each of the headings in these tables to particular categories like ‘benefits for unemployed people’ can be difficult. If we just look at benefits that are specifically labelled as ‘unemployment benefits’ (in our case, Jobseeker’s Allowance, ‘JSA’), then we miss spending on Housing Benefit for unemployed people – a critique that Taunton-Collins (2013) makes of the TUC study. We therefore combine spending as follows:

- *‘Benefits for the unemployed’* (for both BSA 2001 and YouGov/TUC 2012): JSA, and the relevant portions of Income Support, Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit, and Tax Credits. NOTE that we were unable to get any estimates for the share of the social housing subsidy (separate to Housing Benefit) that is spent on unemployed people.
- *Retirement pensions*: the Basic State Pension and War Pensions (excluding the Pension Credit).
- *Child benefits*: Child Benefit, the child elements in Income Support and JSA, and miscellaneous other child-focused benefits (primarily Disability Living Allowance for children).
- *Benefits for disabled people*: out-of-work incapacity benefits (Employment and Support Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance, Incapacity Benefit), extra cost disability benefits for working-age people (Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payment) and pensioners (DLA and Attendance Allowance), Statutory Sick Pay, and the relevant portions of

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<sup>4</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101128151454/http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/hmt/5101/5101-03t5.htm>

<sup>5</sup> These are the PESA out-turns given by Ipsos MORI alongside the survey, which in turn are the Guardian Datablog’s accessible version of the PESA 2011-12 data at <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/dec/04/government-spending-department-2011-12#data>.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-expenditure-and-caseload-tables-2013>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-and-working-tax-credits-statistics-finalised-annual-awards-2012-to-2013>

<sup>8</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110202195410/http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/wftctables/index.htm> and <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110202195410/http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/dptctables/index.htm>

Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit. NOTE that we were unable to get any estimates for the share of the social housing subsidy (separate to Housing Benefit) that is spent on unemployed people.

- *Benefits for single parents*: Income Support for Lone Parents (including child elements), and the relevant portions of Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit. NOTE that we were unable to get any estimates for the share of the social housing subsidy (separate to Housing Benefit) that is spent on unemployed people.

These categories are not mutually exclusive, so some spending is double-counted under multiple headings. There is also room for debate about exactly which categories should be allocated to which heading, although the areas of possible dispute are relatively small and unlikely to noticeably change our findings. Full details are given in the attached spreadsheet, Web Tables 4b. Similar issues also apply to the grouping of public spending categories using the PESA data, which are detailed in Web Tables 4c.

There are certain areas in which we disagree with the ‘true’ figures claimed in other sources. For the overall expenditure figures (in the case of Ipsos MORI 2013), these have no impact on the results.<sup>9</sup> For the split of social security spending on different claimant groups, though, the figures reported in Taylor-Gooby & Hastie (2003) seem inaccurate. The source they cite (DWP 2000) does not lead to the figures they produce; their tables only amount to 55% of total expenditure (thus ignoring much of social security spending); and the figure they give for spending on single parents (0.1% of the total budget) is implausible. In contrast to Taylor-Gooby & Hastie, we treat both ‘benefits for unemployed people’ (at 3% of the total) and ‘benefits for single parents’ (at 7% of the total) as correct answers in the main paper, as they lie considerably below the other groups.

### *Costs/savings of different policy options*

The 2013 Ipsos MORI/RSS/KCL survey asks respondents to rank the costs/savings from a number of different policies. The sources for these are given by Ipsos MORI alongside the survey; we have checked these and the sources are all accurate. In many cases these figures are projections, but the projections are relatively direct and are not dependent on behavioural responses, and are therefore still relatively certain. The individual sources are:

- Capping benefits at £26,000 per household: £0.29bn [Institute of Fiscal Studies<sup>10</sup>]

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<sup>9</sup> Their stated figures for spending on ‘Policing and criminal justice’ (£6bn) is for Home Office spending excluding the border agency, counter-terrorism, NOMIS, and the Ministry of Justice, but even if these are added then this category is not one of the 2-3 largest categories of spending. Similarly, the stated figures for spending on ‘Working-age benefits’ (£82bn) differ from our estimate (£97bn), but either way this is one of the 2-3 largest categories of spending.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/6012>

- Raising the pension age to 66 for both men and women: £5bn [Institute of Economic Affairs<sup>11</sup>[http://www.iea.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/files/Sharing the burden - how the older generation should suffer its share of the cuts.pdf](http://www.iea.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/files/Sharing%20the%20burden%20-%20how%20the%20older%20generation%20should%20suffer%20its%20share%20of%20the%20cuts.pdf)]
- Stopping child benefit for any household where one parent earns more than £50,000: £1.7bn [Institute of Fiscal Studies<sup>12</sup>]
- Capping benefit rises for working age people at 1% per year: £1.9bn [Government estimate as part of the Welfare Up-rating Bill<sup>13</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/175019/welfare-benefits-up-rating-bill-ia.pdf.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175019/welfare-benefits-up-rating-bill-ia.pdf.pdf)]
- Stopping giving the winter fuel allowance to better-off pensioners: £0.1bn [from the Huffington Post,<sup>14</sup> assuming that 'better off'=higher-rate taxpayers]
- Reduction in housing benefit for those with spare rooms (the “bedroom tax”): £0.5bn [Government estimate<sup>15</sup>]
- Stopping free bus travel for better-off pensioners: £45m [Institute of Fiscal Studies,<sup>16</sup> assuming 'better-off' = higher-rate tax]
- Stopping free TV licenses for better-off pensioners: £26m [Institute of Fiscal Studies,<sup>16</sup> assuming 'better-off' = higher-rate tax]

### ***Levels of benefit claims among the working-age population***

Out-of-work benefit claims (as a % of the working-age population) are taken from the November 2015 edition of ONS labour market table BEN01. Strangely the official series excludes carers, even though these are also (almost exclusively) out-of-work benefit claimants. We have therefore added Carer’s Allowance and (prior to 2003) Invalid Care Allowance using the claimant numbers using the Benefit Expenditure & Caseload tables accompanying the 2015 Budget (Table 1c),<sup>17</sup> assuming that claimants in payment would not be eligible for any of the other out-of-work benefits. These numbers also closely mirror the Carer’s Allowance claims available from nomis for 2003-. Full details are given in Web Tables 4d.

### ***Levels of unemployment and long-term sickness among the working-age population***

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.iea.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/files/Sharing%20the%20burden%20-%20how%20the%20older%20generation%20should%20suffer%20its%20share%20of%20the%20cuts.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.ifs.org.uk/bns/bn13.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/175019/welfare-benefits-up-rating-bill-ia.pdf.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175019/welfare-benefits-up-rating-bill-ia.pdf.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/peter-hain/why-labour-is-wrong-to-cut-winter-fuel-allowance\\_b\\_3377239.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/peter-hain/why-labour-is-wrong-to-cut-winter-fuel-allowance_b_3377239.html)

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/138017/social-sector-housing-under-occupation-wr2011-ia.pdf.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/138017/social-sector-housing-under-occupation-wr2011-ia.pdf.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.ifs.org.uk/bns/bn130.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/benefit-expenditure-and-caseload-tables-2015>

As the text notes, these figures are based on survey responses and are therefore subject to sampling biases (e.g. under-coverage of unemployed people) and response biases (e.g. mis-reporting of labour market states) – much as they are treated as hard ‘facts’ in most public discussion.

We take unemployment and long-term sickness rates (as both a % of the active population and of the whole working-age population) from Eurostat data;<sup>18</sup> details of the calculations are given in Web Appendix 4e.

### *Value of benefits – BSA questions*

The actual payment levels of different benefits is a matter of administrative processes, and can therefore again be obtained with high levels of certainty. Payment levels are obtained from the Institute of Fiscal Studies’ historic benefit rates data tables.<sup>19</sup>

The challenge, however, is in matching the brief vignettes presented in the BSA survey questions to the labyrinth that is the benefits system. While the exact calculations (linked to the IFS tables) are presented in Web Tables 4f, a summary of the issues are presented here, grouped by claimant type – the most problematic assumptions are highlighted in bold:

- *‘Unemployed woman living alone’*: BSA seems to use the single-person’s Unemployment Benefit/Jobseeker’s Allowance rate. The survey figures are accurate, with the minor exception of 1995 when £46.45 is rounded-up to £47.
- *‘Couple living together without children who are both unemployed’*: BSA seems to use the couple Unemployment Benefit/Jobseeker’s Allowance rate. The 2005 figure used in the main paper is accurate.

For the earlier series (as reported above in Web Appendix 3), the BSA figures have the minor caveat that in some years the rates changed during the BSA fieldwork period (benefit rates generally changed on the 1<sup>st</sup> April, and 1989-1993 the BSA fieldwork period began in March. After this point, fieldwork began in April).

- *‘Unemployed single mother with a young child’*: BSA seems to use the single parent’s Income Support rate, with additions for one dependent child and the lone parent IS premium. However, the lone parent IS premium was abolished in 1998, and payments for dependent children after 2004 are through the tax credits system – the rates for 2000 and 2008 therefore refer to existing claimants only. While tax credit eligibility is complex to estimate, our estimates are that new claimants would receive slightly lower amounts in both 2000 (£93 rather than £95) and 2008 (£122 rather than £130).

A further issue is that these figures exclude Child Benefit. There is nothing about the question wording (that says ‘their only income comes from state benefits’) to suggest that the respondent should assume that they are not

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<sup>18</sup> This was taken from the Eurostat database, using the ‘LFS series - Detailed annual survey results’ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/lfs/data/database>, 28/3/2015

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.ifs.org.uk/tools\\_and\\_resources/fiscal\\_facts](http://www.ifs.org.uk/tools_and_resources/fiscal_facts)

receiving Child Benefit, and in practice, most such claimants would receive this. (Similarly, a DWP study using similar questions (Kelly, 2008) seems to include Child Benefit in its 'true' amount). **As a result, the 'true' figures given in BSA actually understate the true figure by £16-19 per week.** In terms of the implications of including Child Benefit, while we do not have the underlying microdata to estimate under-/over-estimates, Kelly (2008) does show that 10% more people thought that benefits for enough to live on after hearing the true amount.

**Furthermore, the BSA figure for 2004 seems to be too high.** Ironically, the degree to which this is wrong (£16 for existing claimants, £22 for new claimants) is balanced out by the Child Benefit which BSA do not include (£18). Readers who believe that Child Benefit should be included in the true figure should therefore focus on 2004 (which is roughly accurate) and ignore the figures for the unemployed single mother with a young child for other years.

- *'Woman who can't work because she has to look after her husband or partner who has a long-term illness'*: BSA seems to use the couple Income Support rate, with additions for the couple disability premium and the carer's premium, which is £146.70. (They then round this down to £146).

**However, this is not the most obvious interpretation of the question that they ask.** The question refers to the woman doing the caring, and NOT the couple. (The question also does not specify that they have virtually no assets, which is a requirement for them to be entitled to Income Support). If we instead look solely at the woman's entitlement by virtue of being a carer, then her Carer's Allowance is £44, and with an addition for an adult dependent then this reaches £71 – much less than the £146 given as the true figure in the question. **At the very least, this is a debatable figure to regard as the 'truth'.**

- *'Pensioner living alone'*: for 2000, BSA seems to use the Income Support rate plus the Enhanced Pensioner premium. This assumes that the person described simply as a 'pensioner' is aged 75+; if they were younger than this, they would receive £78 rather than £81 (the survey strangely uses £82, a figure we cannot exactly replicate).

For 2004 and 2008, BSA seems to use the Pension Credit rates. These figures are accurate in 2004, but in 2008 they accidentally seem to make a minor error in using the 2007 rate (£119) rather than the 2008 rate (£124).

- *'Pensioner couple living together'*: in 2005, the BSA seems to use the Pension Credit couple rate (which is the same as the equivalent Income Support rate plus the Pensioner premium). However, they make a minor error in stating a figure of £171, whereas the actual figure is £167. (We cannot find a way of estimating the entitlement as £171).

The figures for the earlier series (see Web Appendix 3 above) refer solely to the state pension, and seem accurate with the minor exception of 1986 (where the stated rate of £62 was only introduced in July 1986, being £61 prior to this).

### ***Value of benefits & whether better-off in work – YouGov/TUC 2012 questions***

We can again use the Institute of Fiscal Studies' historic benefit rate tables to construct answers to the YouGov/TUC 2012 question on how much an unemployed couple with two children would receive (see Web Tables 4f). The TUC themselves say that the correct answer is £111 per week, which is the correct figure for the couple rate of Jobseeker's Allowance.

It is worth stressing that many respondents may have misunderstood the complex question used (see above for wording), which asks about how much they would 'receive in unemployment benefit (Jobseeker's Allowance)', after excluding 'other benefits such as housing, council tax or child benefits'. The fact that the question explicitly mentions their two children, but then asks them to exclude child benefits, may have confused some respondents. It is also unclear whether some people may have confused Child Tax Credit as 'unemployment benefits' (given that this is paid to people who are out-of-work), even if they were excluding Child Benefit (which is paid to most families). This makes a considerable difference to the true figure: this hypothetical couple would receive £34/wk in Child Benefits, and £114/wk in Child Tax Credit, more than doubling their income.

The question on whether this couple would be better-off in work (with one earner at 30hrs/wk at the minimum wage) is even trickier to construct a true figure for. This starts from the true amount of benefits that the couple would receive, as just discussed. The TUC then say that the correct answer is £138/wk better off (providing no further detail), but we have been able to reconstruct this figure. The closest we can get is £128/wk, which includes their wages, tax and national insurance, and how this influences their benefit and tax credit eligibility (see Web Tables 4f for details).

Furthermore, this ignores any costs associated with working (which at a minimum will include some travel costs, and may also include e.g. suitable clothing), any loss of other benefits (e.g. Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit),<sup>20</sup> and any loss of passported benefits (e.g. free prescriptions, free school meals)<sup>21</sup> – all of which a survey respondent may well have been taking into account in answering the question (which explicitly asked people to think 'in general' about how much better off this family would be). It is therefore an upper bound on the true value of how much better off someone would be in practice.

### ***Duration of Jobseeker's Allowance claims***

The TUC claim the correct value for the proportion of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claims that last for more than a year is 27.8%. While they provide no source for this

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<sup>20</sup> See hypothetical calculations at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/blog/2014/03/better-off-working-than-benefits>

<sup>21</sup> Passported benefits taken from <http://www.entitledto.co.uk/help/Passported-benefits>

figure, it seems likely to be the proportion of all Jobseeker's Allowance claimants who have been claiming benefits for more than a year (usually known to policy analysts as the 'stock' of claimants), which is exactly 27.87% (see Web Tables 4g, and many thanks to Declan Gaffney for tracking down this statistic). However, the TUC/YouGov question refers to the share of initial claims (usually known to policy analysts as the 'flow' of claimants) that last at least 12 months – which is a different statistic.

If we focus on the flow, as the survey question does, then this features in one mythbuster that the present authors were involved with (Turn2us, 2012), which in turn take data from a Government report (MoJ and DWP, 2011). This found that 32% of people who started to claim JSA in 2008 were still claiming JSA one year later – which is roughly the same as the TUC figure (particularly as the TUC regard 30% as approximately correct, given respondents' tendency to round responses to the nearest 10). No more recent data are available.

It is worth noting however that there are two other reasonable interpretations of the answer to this question. Firstly, the question could refer to the number of new JSA claimants who have made a single *uninterrupted* JSA claim lasting 12 months – and using the same MoJ/DWP data source, this figure is much lower at 10%. (The other 22% of initial JSA claimants who were still on JSA a year later have left JSA during this year, but have returned to it by this point). Secondly the question could refer to the number of new JSA claimants who were still claiming *out-of-work benefits* (rather than just JSA) a year later – and using the same data source, this is slightly higher at 40%. The DWP/MoJ report is available from [www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/statistics/mojstats/offending-employment-benefits-emerging-findings-tables.xls](http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/statistics/mojstats/offending-employment-benefits-emerging-findings-tables.xls), and full details are given in Web Tables 4g.

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