



The Online Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) Trial evaluation

Summary of key findings and department response

Overview

The Online JSCI Trial was designed to test the feasibility of delivering the JSCI online. The JSCI is a departmental tool to predict a job seeker's likelihood of becoming or remaining long term unemployed, and to determine the best level of employment servicing for the job seeker. The JSCI assesses job seekers on the basis of a range of factors, such as educational attainment and recent labour market experiences. A higher JSCI score means a job seeker has a greater likelihood of remaining unemployed for at least 12 months.

The Job Seeker Snapshot (JSS) is the online version of the JSCI, which has traditionally been conducted through telephone or in-person interviews. The JSS captures the same information as the interview based JSCI, but the wording and sequencing of some questions have been adapted to the online environment.

The Trial was conducted from July 2018 to March 2020. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and the introduction of Online Employment Services (OES), the trial was terminated, and the JSS has since been rolled out broadly as part of OES.

JSS completion had more consistent responses and streaming outcomes

When JSCI responses were re-tested through a follow-up survey as part of the evaluation, the vast majority of the survey participants who completed either the JSS or the interview based JSCI were consistently allocated into the same employment services streams. Nonetheless, the JSS completers had statistically significantly more consistent JSCI scores than the comparison group who completed the interview-based JSCI, resulting in slightly greater consistency in streaming outcomes for online completers. This could be due to the nature of online completion, which allowed more time for job seekers to consider their responses.

The JSS was easy to use and time efficient

More than 98% of the job seekers who commenced the JSS completed it, and more than 90% of those who completed the JSS found that it was easy to use and navigate. However, completion of the online JSCI was voluntary, and around half of job seekers selected for the trial did not complete the JSS.

The evaluation found that the JSS was time efficient, generally taking no more than 10 to 15 minutes to complete, which was comparable to the time required to undertake the interview based JSCI. Furthermore, JSS completers were referred to a service provider slightly faster than the comparison group.

JSS completers mostly had a positive experience

Most trial completers had a positive experience with the JSS. A majority (72%) of the respondents surveyed for the evaluation to the 2018 Job Seeker Survey, a study designed to inform the evaluation, stated that online would be their preferred way to complete the JSCI if they made another claim.

Furthermore, the 2019 Job Seeker Snapshot Survey, another study to inform the evaluation, found that two-thirds (66%) of the survey respondents who either completed or attempted to complete the JSS would recommend the JSS to other job seekers. This proportion was higher among younger groups, likely reflecting differing digital literacy across age groups.

There are barriers to online completion

A descriptive analysis of the data shows that older people, Indigenous Australians, people with vocational qualifications and people with disabilities or unstable living situations were less likely to complete the JSS. But further analysis using statistical models found that digital literacy was the most important determinant of JSS completion and could account for most of the differences across demographic groups. Nonetheless, being younger than 20 years of age (qualitative research suggests this group may have been less likely to engage due to passive detachment), having a disability or having experienced an unstable living situation remained significantly correlated with failure to complete the JSS.

Systems and technical issues also impacted JSS completion rates. Job seekers viewed navigating different platforms within myGov between the initial claim for income support and completing the JSS as troublesome. Many non-completers reported they had problems logging into myGov or the jobactive website or did not get around to logging in.

The Department is addressing these barriers

The department's response to the findings, included in the evaluation report, outlines how these barriers are being addressed in order to improve the online delivery of the JSCI and appropriate referrals to services.

In particular, the response notes that digital service delivery may not be appropriate for some job seekers, such as those with limited digital access or low levels of digital literacy. Job seekers who are unable to complete their JSS will be able to access the telephone and face to face interviews currently conducted by Services Australia or by employment service providers.

Allocating job seekers to online servicing is currently determined by their JSCI scores. However, safeguard measures, such as Digital Assessments and Digital Service Reviews, have been introduced to help identify job seekers who may not have the access or ability to participate in online servicing and prompt them to consider moving into face-to-face servicing. Job seekers can also choose to move from online servicing to provider servicing at any time.

The response also explains that the Department has worked with Services Australia to address a range of early technical issues and is continuing to work with the Department of Social Services and Services Australia to identify how best to reduce duplication and inefficiencies in the income support application and employment services assessment processes. This intent is to allow the JSS to be prepopulated as part of the online claim workflow and enhance the user experience.

Online completion was cost-effective

A key consideration in the provision of employment services is cost-effectiveness. As completing the JSS without an interview freed up time and resources and was found to deliver similar results in terms of JSCI scores and servicing streams, the JSS provides a cost-effective option.