



An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection

Jobseekers Allowance Control Survey 2023

Published: 08 March 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Department of Social Protection undertakes Control Surveys, as collaborative work between the Statistics & Business Intelligence Unit and Control Division, to establish baseline incorrect benefit levels for social welfare schemes, with a view to designing processes and control measures specifically targeted to minimise the level of future risk.

This survey was undertaken on the Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) scheme. JA is a means-tested payment made to people who are unemployed and:

- Who do not qualify for Jobseeker's Benefit (JB)/Jobseeker's Benefit (Self-Employed) (JBSE).
- Whose entitlement to JB/JBSE has expired.

OR

- Who do qualify for JB/JBSE but choose to claim Optional Jobseeker's Allowance.

In all cases the applicant must meet the means test requirements, be habitually resident in the state and be genuinely seeking full time employment.

For the survey, 947 randomly sampled JA claims in payment in 2022 and 2023 were reviewed to assess recipients' compliance with the rules of the scheme. These reviews took place in three batches: 250 claims were selected in February 2022, another 500 in September 2022 and a further 197 in April 2023.

The headline reporting metric for this Control Survey is shown as Net Loss to Government, which is the overpayment rate established by the survey, minus transfers to other schemes, minus the value of overpayments recovered.

1.2 Methodology and categorisation of results

The results are categorised based on the decisions taken on each case in the sample:

- ✓ **Benefit Correct:** Includes cases where no evidence was found that any conditions for receipt of benefit, or the rate of benefit in payment, were not satisfied.
- ✓ **Incorrect Benefit:** Includes cases where one or more of the eligibility conditions for receipt of benefit, or the rate of benefit in payment, are not being met, such that a revised decision has been made, or should in principle be made, leading to a change in the payment rate for this customer or the termination of the claim. Cases of incorrect benefit are further classified based on the decisions of the Deciding Officer in each case included in the survey sample:

- Suspected fraud arises where a Deciding Officer is satisfied that there is sufficient evidence that the customer deliberately provided false or misleading information or wilfully concealed relevant information.
- Customer error refers to cases where a customer provided inaccurate or incomplete information or there was an unreported change in a person's circumstances; and
- Official error refers to cases where benefits are paid incorrectly due to inaction, delay or mistakes made by the Department's staff.

The main results of the survey are set out in section 2.

2. Main results

The survey finds that Net Loss to Government for JA was 7.4% of total expenditure.

Table 1 – Main results of JA 2023 Control Survey

Percentage of Expenditure	Predominant category	Type of claim impact (percentage of expenditure)				
		Over-payment	Transfers with other schemes	Recoveries	Net Loss to Government	Under-payment
	Suspected Fraud	5.3	0.0			0
	Official Error	0.3	0.0			0.0
	Customer Error	2.8	0.0			-1.2
	Total	8.3	0.0	-0.9	7.4	-1.3
	95% CI Lower	6.7	-0.3	-0.9	6.8	-1.8
	95% CI Upper	10.0	0.3	-0.9	9.1	-0.8

Source: DSP. Figures may not add due to rounding.

Table 2 - Outcomes by predominant category and eligibility component (percentage of expenditure) – Overpayments

Percentage of expenditure affected	Predominant incorrect benefit component	Predominant category			
		Suspected Fraud	Official Error	Customer Error	All Over-payments
	Customer failed to supply required information	2.3	0.0	0.0	2.3
	Customer does not meet basic eligibility criteria	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.8
	Customer means are not correct	1.8	0.2	2.3	4.3
	Additional allowances are not correct	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
	Other unreported change in circumstances	0.4	0.0	0.4	0.9
	Total	5.3	0.3	2.8	8.3

Source: DSP. Figures may not add due to rounding.

3. Scheme characteristics

3.1 Overview

Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) is a means-tested payment made to people who are unemployed.

The overall characteristics of the scheme on the date of sample selection are summarised below in Table 3:

Table 3: Characteristics of the scheme

Date	Characteristic	Sample	Population
Cases from 2022 & 2023	Age (mean, median)	41,41	41,40
	% Men	62%	62%
	%Women	38%	38%
	% part-time/ casuals	16%	16%
	Claim duration [months] (mean, median)	39,20	39,19
	Payment (mean, median)	237,208	235,220

The eligibility conditions for JA are summarised below, and further information is available at [gov.ie - Jobseeker's Allowance\(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie).

3.2 Eligibility conditions

To qualify for Jobseeker's Allowance, an applicant must:

- be over 18 and under 66 years of age
- satisfy a means test
- be habitually resident in Ireland
- be capable of work
- be available for full-time work
- be genuinely seeking work
- be fully or partly unemployed (at least 4 days out of work in every 7)

3.3 Payment rates

The rate of payment will depend on an applicant's income and the outcome of the means assessment. If an applicant has no means, is aged 26 or over, and is single, s/he will get the full weekly payment of €232.

An increase is payable for each child dependant if an applicant is getting an increase for a qualified adult. If an applicant does not qualify for an increase for a qualified adult, s/he may get a half-rate increase for a qualified child dependant.

4. Survey Findings & Conclusions

4.1 Survey findings

The Net Loss to Government arising from JA is 7.4% of scheme expenditure. This is made up of the overpayment rate established by the survey of 8.3% of expenditure, minus 0.9% of expenditure recovered from overpayments in the relevant years. Some 7.9% of claims were found to have been underpaid.

4.2 Risk analysis by cohort

The survey did find a number of significant differences in overpayment case numbers.

Part-time / Casuals were almost three times as likely to have received an overpayment compared to non-casuals (48% compared to 17%). Females are more likely to be part-time jobseekers, and hence more likely to have an overpayment (27%) compared to men (19%).

Receiving payments at Post Offices was associated with a lower likelihood of receiving an incorrect payment (14%) compared to other payment methods (34%).

Ignoring employment means, those with any other means were over three times as likely to have received an overpayment compared to those without such means (62% compared to 20%).

Customers who are married or cohabiting were more likely to have received an overpayment (34%) than those who were single (16%).

There were no differences according to:

- Claim duration
- Nationality
- Province of residence
- Age group

Measures which will improve control activity:

Most of the cases in this survey were selected for review in 2022. This was at a time when the department were still re-introducing many of the controls that had been suspended during the pandemic. In addition, the department was undergoing some major changes in reorganising the divisional structure and management of its network of INTREO offices and Social Welfare Inspectorate. These changes are now in place and control activity will be to the forefront of their operations.

- From the risk analysis of the Jobseekers Allowance (JA) Survey, the Department will continue to ensure that priority is given to reviewing high risk claims identified by the data matching with real-time payslip information provided by Revenue¹. In 2023, the circular on use of real-time payslip information was updated and should ensure greater use at both award and review stages of claims.
- Since April 2023 all Jobseekers are now required to attend their Intreo centre within one month of claim award for signing. They are then required to sign on quarterly going forward. Signing had been suspended during the pandemic and therefore impacted on the cases included in this survey.
- During 2023, the process for Commencement of Earnings notifications (from Revenue) was streamlined which should provide faster processing of reviews on claims and reduce incidences of overpayments.
- There will be increased targets of claim reviews for 2024 (increase of c. 10,000 expected to be completed). In addition, there will be an increase in reviews referred to Social Welfare Inspectors.
- The Department's employment services staff will be taking a more active role in reviewing claims where the customer is not engaging as required with Employment Services
- There will be a greater focus on employer verification of work patterns on Casual claims. Processes are currently being worked with a view to roll out later in 2024.
- The Department will continue to ensure that all new applicants for Jobseeker's allowance will be paid at the post office.
- The Department will continue to utilize the resources and experience of the Department's Special Investigation Unit to target high risk sectors where fraud and abuse is considered to be the most prevalent, e.g. non-residency, concurrent working and claiming.

¹ The legal basis for the sharing of personal data with third parties and the processing of personal data is covered in more detail in the Department's privacy statement (<https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/534503-privacy-statement/#section-6-the-legal-basis-for-processing>)

Many of the measures above were implemented during 2023 and will not have had any impact on this survey but should have a positive impact on future control surveys on JA.

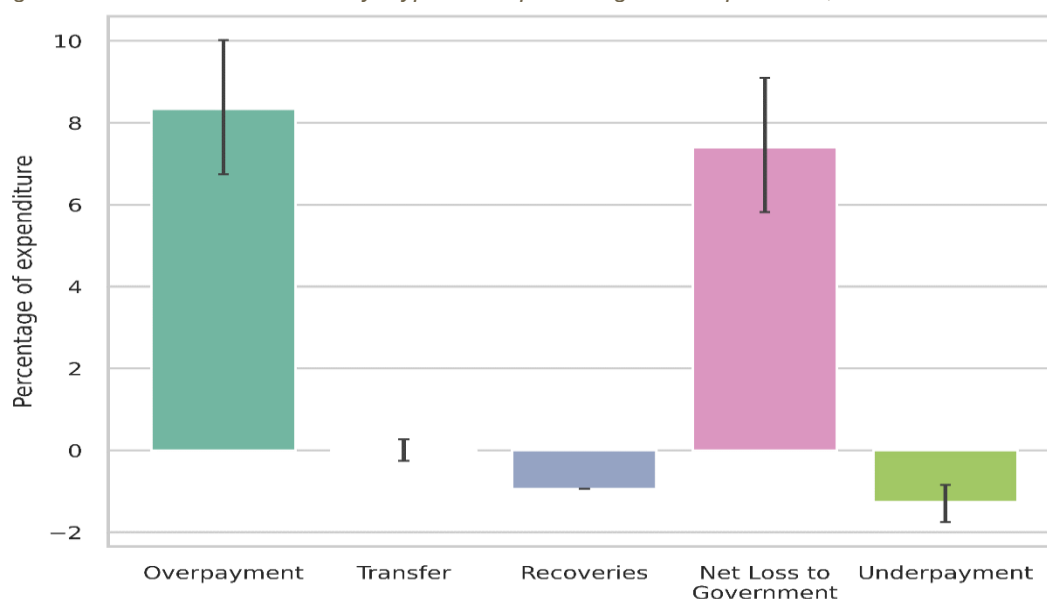
Annex 1 - Detailed survey results

The results of the survey are presented in this section. Bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals for the results are shown both graphically and numerically below each table.

Incorrect benefit by type and category

Percentage of Expenditure

Figure 1 - Incorrect benefit by type and percentage of expenditure, with 95% confidence interval



Incorrect benefit by type, with 95% confidence intervals

Table 0-1 - Incorrect benefit by type and predominant category (*percentage of expenditure affected*)

Percentage of Expenditure	Predominant category	Type of claim impact (<i>percentage of expenditure</i>)				
		Over-payment	Transfers with other schemes	Recoveries	Net Loss to Government	Under-payment
	Suspected Fraud	5.3	0.0			0
	Official Error	0.3	0.0			-0.0
	Customer Error	2.8	0.0			-1.2
	Total	8.3	0.0	-0.9	7.4	-1.3
	95% CI Lower	6.7	-0.3	-0.9	5.8	-1.8
	95% CI Upper	10.0	0.3	-0.9	9.1	-0.8

Source: DSP. Figures may not add due to rounding.

Weekly expenditure impact

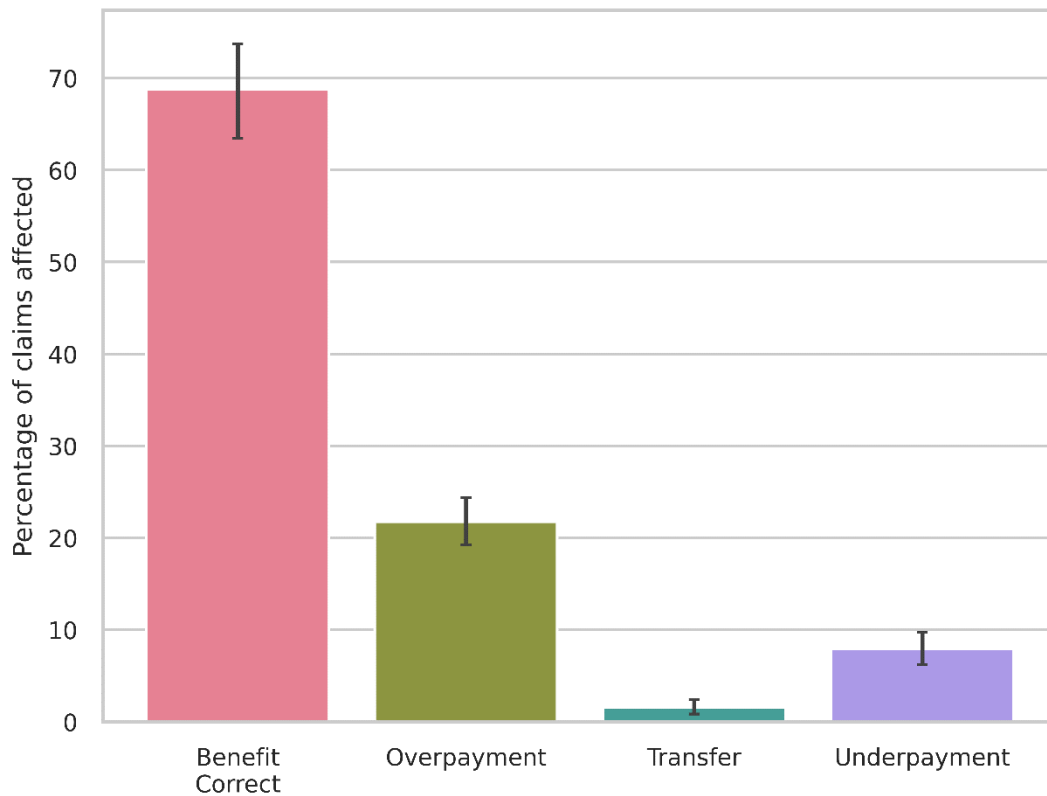
Table 0-2 – Incorrect benefit by type, and predominant category (**weekly** expenditure impact (€m))

Weekly expenditure impact (€m)	Predominant category	Type of claim impact (percentage of expenditure)				
		Over-payment	Transfers with other schemes	Recoveries	Net Loss to Government	Under-payment
	Suspected Fraud	1.7	0.0			0
	Official Error	0.1	0.0			0
	Customer Error	0.9	0.0			-0.4
	Total	2.7	0.0	-0.3	2.4	-0.4
	95% CI Lower	2.2	-0.1	-0.3	1.9	-0.6
	95% CI Upper	3.2	0.1	-0.3	2.9	-0.3

Source: DSP. Figures may not add due to rounding.

Percentage of claims affected

Figure 2 – Cases of incorrect benefit by type, with 95% confidence intervals



Incorrect benefit by type, with 95% confidence intervals

Table 0-3 – Percentage of Overpayment and Transfer cases by type and category

Percentage of cases affected	Predominant category	Type of claim impact (percentage of cases affected)		
		Overpayment	Transfers with other schemes	Underpayment
	Suspected Fraud	5.8	0.0	0
	Official Error	0.8	0.0	0.2
	Customer Error	15.1	1.6	7.7
	Total	21.8	1.6	7.9
	95% CI Lower	19.2	0.8	6.2
	95% CI Upper	24.4	2.4	9.7

Source: DSP. Figures may not add due to rounding

Predominant and overlapping error categories

More than one category of incorrect benefit may be detected in respect of a given claim. In such cases, the *predominant* category is assigned according to the following hierarchy: 1–Suspected Fraud; 2–Official Error; 3–Customer Error. The tables in this section show which cases were affected by more than one type of incorrect benefit and provide an additional breakdown of the Fraud or Error categories found.

Figure 3 – Overpayments by *predominant* and *overlapping* category (*explanatory table*)

<i>Predominant</i> category ↓↓	↓↓ All cases affected by this category (including overlaps)		
	Suspected Fraud (all)	Official Error (all)	Customer Error (all)
1. Predominantly Suspected Fraud	Suspected Fraud (all cases)	←←of which, Suspected Fraud AND Official Error	<i>Not possible to combine</i>
2. Predominantly Official Error	<i>Cases with Suspected Fraud can't be predominantly Official Error</i>	Official Error (NO Suspected Fraud)	←←of which, Official Error AND Customer Error
3. Predominantly Customer Error	<i>Cases with Suspected Fraud can't be predominantly Customer Error</i>	<i>Cases with Official Error can't be predominantly Customer Error</i>	Customer Error (NO Official Error)

Table 0-4 – Overpayments by *predominant* and *overlapping* category (*percentage of expenditure affected*)

Percentage of Expenditure	<i>Predominant</i> category ↓↓	↓↓ Overlapping category (percentage of expenditure)		
		Suspected Fraud (any)	Official Error (any)	Customer Error (any)
1. Suspected Fraud		5.3	0.3	
2. Official Error			0.3	0.1
3. Customer Error				2.8

Table 0-5 – Overpayments by *predominant* and *overlapping* category (*percentage of claims affected*)

Percentage of Claims Affected	<i>Predominant</i> category ↓↓	↓↓ Overlapping category (percentage of claims affected)		
		Suspected Fraud (any)	Official Error (any)	Customer Error (any)
1. Suspected Fraud		5.8	0.5	
2. Official Error			0.8	0.2
3. Customer Error				15.1

Source: DSP. Figures may not add due to rounding.

Table 0-6 – Overpayments by **predominant** and **overlapping** category, with details (**percentage of expenditure affected**)

Percentage of Expenditure	Predominant category ↓↓	↓↓ Overlapping category, with details (percentage of expenditure)						
		Suspected Fraud		Official Error			Customer Error	
		Materially incorrect information	Wilful concealment	Decision error	Failed to act on information	Length of time since last claim review	Inaccurate information provided	Unreported change in circumstances
		1. Suspected Fraud	0.9	4.4	0.0	0.3	0.0	
2. Official Error			0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	
3. Customer Error						0.0	2.6	

Table 0-7 – Overpayments by **predominant** and **overlapping** category, with details (**percentage of claims affected**)

Percentage of Claims Affected	Predominant category	↓↓ Overlapping category, with details (percentage of claims affected)						
		Suspected Fraud		Official Error			Customer Error	
		Materially incorrect information	Wilful concealment	Decision error	Failed to act on information	Length of time since last claim review	Inaccurate information provided	Unreported change in circumstances
		1. Suspected Fraud	1.3	4.5	0.1	0.4	0.0	
2. Official Error			0.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.2	
3. Customer Error						0.1	13.4	

Source: DSP. Figures may not add due to rounding.

Outcomes by incorrect eligibility condition

Figure 4: Incorrect Benefit by eligibility criteria and expenditure impact

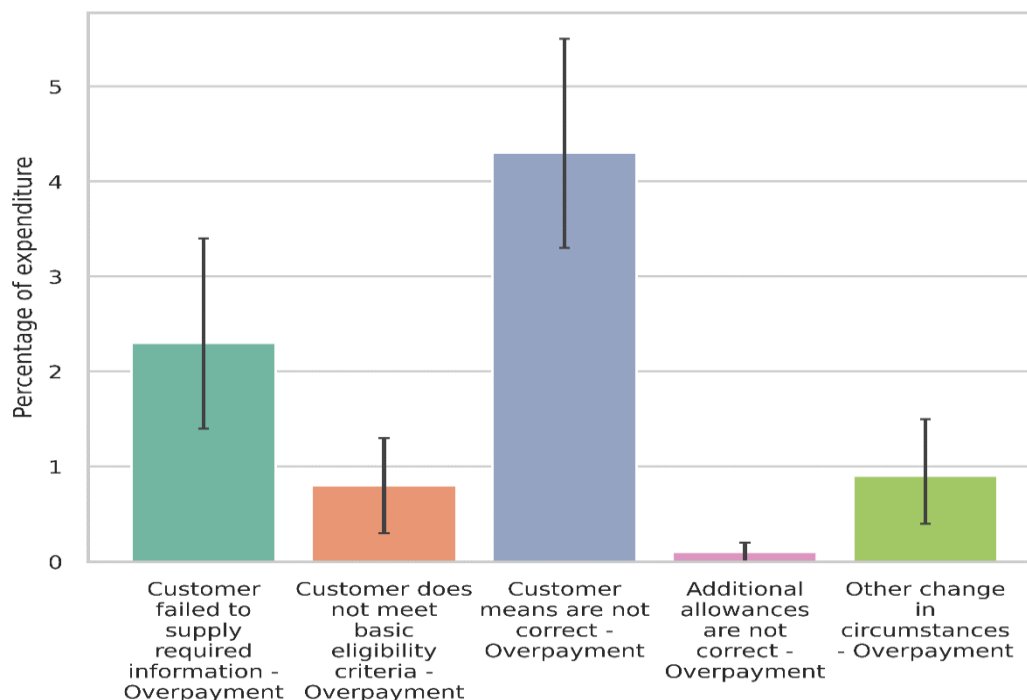


Table 0-8 –Outcomes by predominant category and eligibility component (percentage of expenditure) – Overpayments

Percentage of expenditure affected	Predominant incorrect benefit component	Predominant category			
		Suspected Fraud	Official Error	Customer Error	All Over-payments
	Customer failed to supply required information	2.3	0.0	0.0	2.3
	Customer does not meet basic eligibility criteria	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.8
	Customer means are not correct	1.8	0.2	2.3	4.3
	Additional allowances are not correct	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
	Other unreported change in circumstances	0.4	0.0	0.4	0.9
	Total	5.3	0.3	2.8	8.3

Source: DSP. Figures may not add due to rounding.

Figure 5 - Incorrect benefit by eligibility criteria and number of cases affected

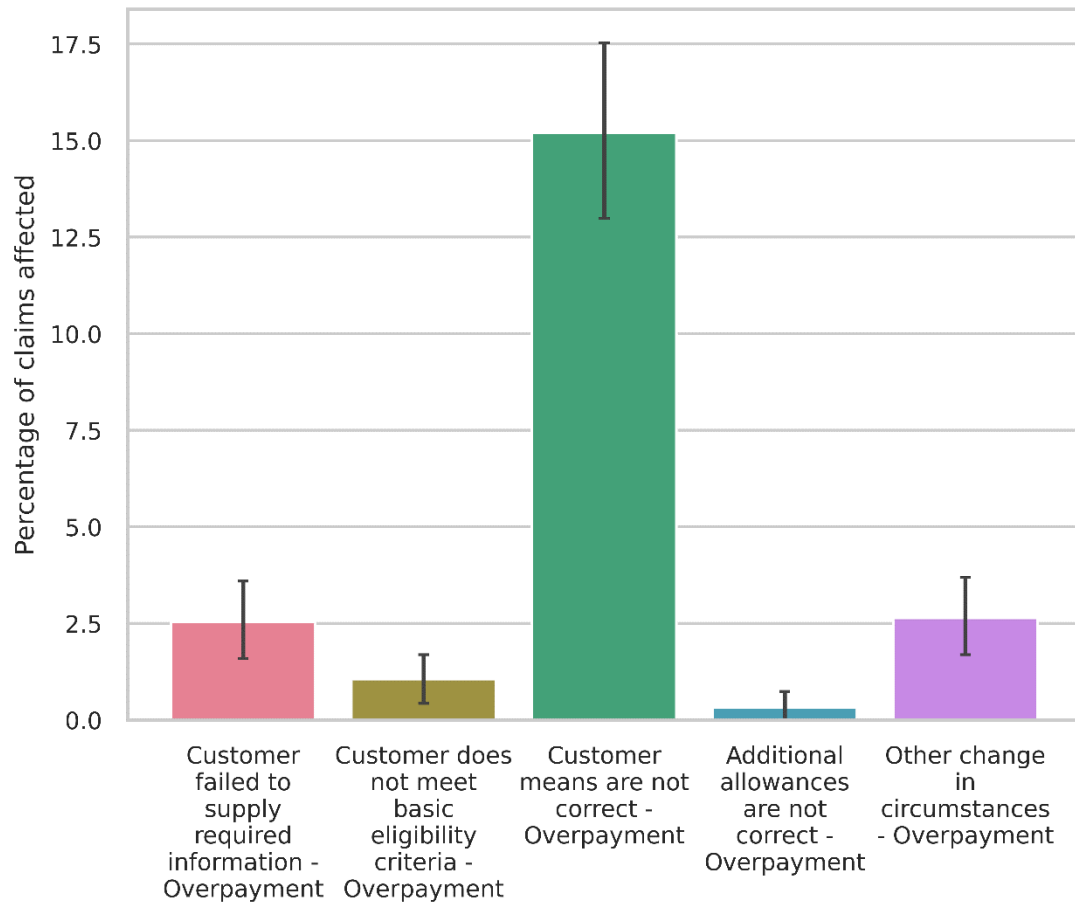


Table 0-9 – Percentage of Overpayment cases by predominant category and eligibility component

Percentage of cases affected	Predominant incorrect benefit component	Predominant category			
		Suspected Fraud	Official Error	Customer Error	All Overpayments
	Customer failed to supply required information	2.5	0.0	0.0	2.5
	Customer does not meet basic eligibility criteria	1.0	0.1	0.0	1.1
	Customer means are not correct	1.9	0.5	12.8	15.2
	Additional allowances are not correct	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.3
	Other unreported change in circumstances	0.4	0.1	2.1	2.6
	Total	5.8	0.8	15.1	21.8

Source: DSP. Figures may not add due to rounding.

