Social security:
What does good evidence look like?

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Social security:
sources of information

Data

- Official statistics (e.g. HBAI)
- Benefit Expenditure Tables
- DWP Tabtool
- NOMIS
- Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- ScotStat

Evidence

- DWP reports
- CPAG Early Warning System
- CAS Briefings
- Case reports

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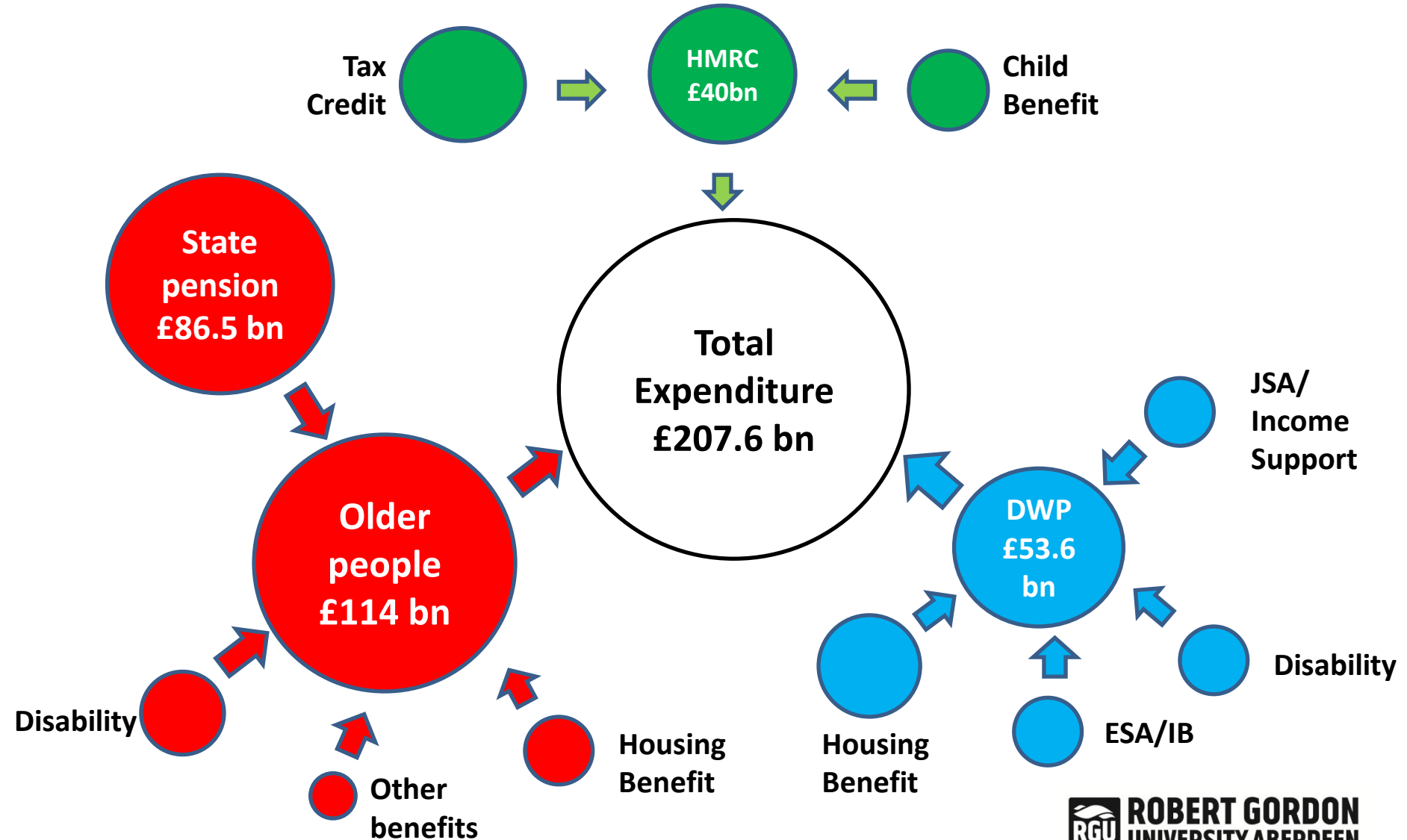# Problems with the statistics

Limits to indicators

- Signposts not "measures"
  - *Indicators show trends and directions*

- Associations do not prove there are causal links

- Problems with pilots and control trials

Doctoring the figures

- Work Programme
  - UKSA: misleading press statements
  - PAC: The measurements chosen by the Department distort real performance.

- Pathways to Work
  - NAO: failure to deliver outcomes
  - selection of cohorts
  - alteration of statistical tests
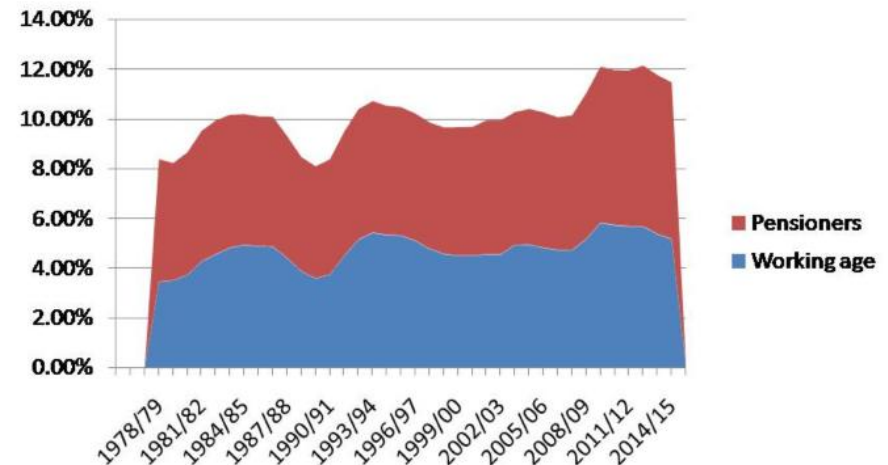
Public spending on benefits

Spending on out of work benefits

Out of work benefits are out of control

Most of the money goes on pensioners

The amount of money going to people of working age is going down

Social security spending as a % of GDP

Legend: Pensioners, Working age

Better off on the dole?

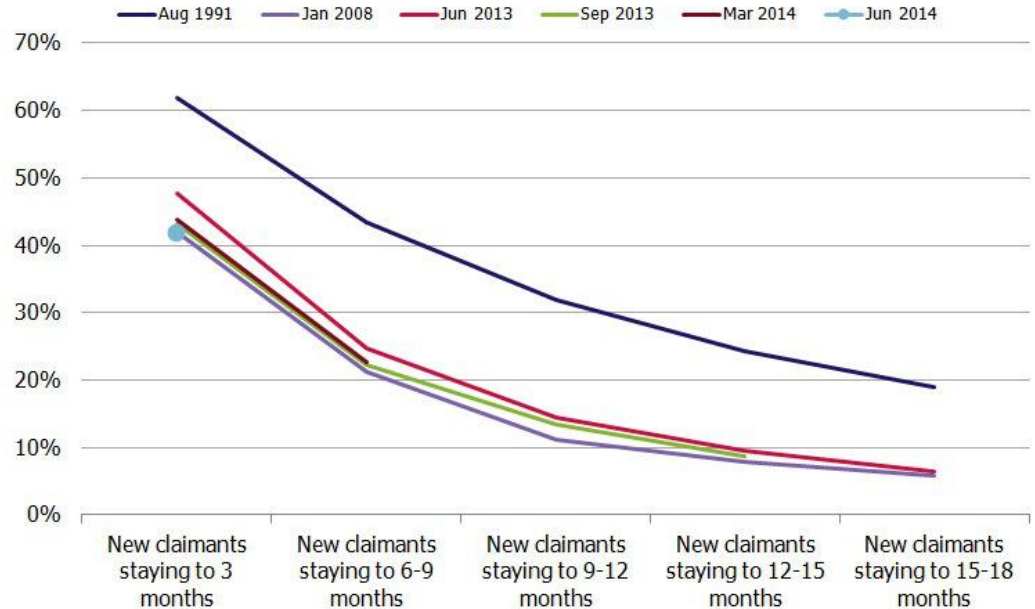| 'People found they are better off on the dole than in work' |
| :--- |
| Britain's unemployment benefits are "manifestly inadequate" (Council of Europe) |

Replacement ratios in the first year	
Switzerland	68.7%
Norway	62.4
Taiwan	60%
France	47.9%
Germany	35.3%
Japan	28.9%
USA	27.5%
Australia	21%
UK	18.9%

Changing claimant behaviour

Iain Duncan Smith:

"At the heart of our welfare reforms is a simple goal: to tackle the culture of welfare dependency that Labour allowed to develop."

Source: Jonathan Portes, NIESR

Long term benefit claims

There are families where no-one has ever worked

This is mainly true only where people are disabled

Very few people stay on JSA for more than five years

	All claimants	1 year or less	5 years or more
All	5,150,210	1,404, 420	2,219,450
Jobseekers	973,660	655,920	38,760
ESA	2,470,210	452,590	1,454,490
Lone parents	474,730	127,790	105,070
Carers	556,020	96,110	228,670
Disabled (*mainly DLA*)	461,890	1,800	337,310

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Assessing the evidence

Some key problems

- Sanctions
- Reassessments
- Mandatory reconsideration and appeals
- Unregistered unemployed
- Problems signalled by the EWS, e.g.
  - correspondence addresses
  - travel costs
  - slow processing speeds

Qualitative evidence

- Murphy's Law

- Proof depends on corroboration

- Triangulation trumps statistics