

Freedom of Information request 2015-896

Date received 5 March 2015

Date of response 31 March 2015

Information request

For each month from January 2011 to September 2014, please give the number of adverse ESA sanctions decisions broken down by the Summary International Classifications of Diseases (i.e. ESA Total; Other; Mental and Behavioural Disorders; Diseases of the Nervous System; Diseases of the Circulatory or Respiratory System; Diseases of the Musculoskeletal system and Connective Tissue; and Injury, Poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes) so that the total in each month matches the adverse decisions figures given in Table 2.1 in the DWP sanctions statistics release of 18 February 2015.

For clarification, I am requesting the same information (but the updated statistics) as Freedom of Information request 2014-2282 (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/343310/foi-2014-2282.pdf) or in Table 1 of Freedom of Information Request 2014-79 (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/295384/foi-79-2014.pdf).

Whilst adverse decisions are a priority, if you are able to also supply non-adverse and cancelled referral numbers broken down as above within the £600 limit, this is also requested.

DWP response

Claimants should do everything they can to find work if they are able to in return for benefits, and more than 70 per cent say they are more likely to follow the rules if they know they risk having their benefits stopped if they do not. Benefit sanctions are only used as a last resort and the overwhelming majority of claimants do not receive a sanction. The recent independent Oakley review confirmed that they are vital to a properly functioning welfare system.

When a sanction is applied to someone's benefit it is only the personal allowance element of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) which is affected. Any child-related premiums they receive are unaffected. Those receiving housing benefit will continue to do so throughout a sanction period provided they continue to meet the ESA conditions.

ESA claimants do not face sanction for not finding work and are not required to apply for or take up specific jobs. Sanctions are only imposed where a claimant does not engage with the support on offer which is designed to improve their chances of finding or preparing for work. Claimants are encouraged to discuss the impact of their condition on their support needs, and work coaches are well-placed to understand and reflect the needs of claimants, identifying the type of work related activity that will help them successfully move towards employment. It is worth noting that the vast majority of ESA claimants are not sanctioned; in any given month only around 1% receives a sanction.

In response to your query the information you require is shown in the attached Excel spread sheet (FOI 2015-896 Response.xls). This includes information on the number of the number of adverse, non-adverse and cancelled ESA sanction decisions by the Summary International Classifications of Diseases as requested. The data covers the period January 2011 to September 2014. Please note with respect to the data in more recently published months care must be taken in using and interpreting this as these are subject to a high degree of revision.

Please ensure you read the notes before using and interpreting this data.

**The figures supplied are derived from unpublished information and have not been quality assured to National Statistics or Official Statistics publication standard.
They should therefore be treated with caution.**