

**Working Age Benefits
Division**

**EMPLOYMENT AND
SUPPORT ALLOWANCE:
WORK CAPABILITY
ASSESSMENT:
Official Statistics**

July 2010

Executive summary

This is the official statistics publication of Work Capability Assessment (WCA) figures relating to Employment and Support Allowance Claims (ESA). It contains figures on ESA claims to November 2009 and WCAs to May 2010.

The headline figures are:

For all new ESA Claims from 27th October 2008 to 30th November 2009, the result of the initial WCA is as follows:

- Support Group - 6%
- Work Related Activity Group -14%
- Fit for Work - 39%
- Claim closed before assessment complete - 37%
- Assessment still in progress - 4%

For this report, the final outcome of the WCA has been calculated using a newly available, more accurate variable than was used in previous publications. The impact of this change is not more than 1 or 2 percentage points within each assessment outcome group. This change is explained in more detail in Annex B.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Work Capability Assessment

1.1.1 Summary

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) replaced Incapacity Benefit and Income Support paid on the grounds of incapacity for new claims from 27th October 2008. The introduction of ESA for new claimants in October 2008 was accompanied by a new assessment, the Work Capability Assessment (WCA). The WCA is based on advice delivered by the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) assessment services contractor, ATOS Healthcare.

1.1.2 Previous publications

This publication reports on latest available data on ESA claims in England, Scotland and Wales that are assessed by the WCA. This is an update to the previously published statistics released in October 2009, January 2010 and April 2010.

One important change for this report is the result of assessment is now based on the final decision made by DWP rather than the ATOS recommendation. The impact of the definitional change is not more than 1 or 2 percentage points within each assessment outcome group. This change is explained in more detail in Annex B.

1.1.3 Background

- This report presents monthly data on ESA claims and their subsequent WCA outcomes. ESA claimants begin the functional assessment process shortly after starting their claim. ATOS Healthcare undertake an assessment and following the assessment their recommendation is passed on to DWP to make a final decision on the claimant's ESA status. This will be one of the following:

- Support Group (for those with severe disabilities) – they receive a higher rate of benefit entitlement overall and exemption from mandatory involvement with Pathways to Work;
 - Work Related Activity Group – They receive a higher rate of benefit than those on JSA and are mandated to engage with Pathways to Work; and,
 - Fit for Work – The ESA claim is ceased but individuals can ask for a reconsideration or appeal if they disagree with the decision.
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- If someone is found Fit for Work by DWP they are no longer entitled to claim ESA. However, they may ask for a reconsideration and then may appeal against the DWP decision. A large proportion of people claiming ESA cease their claim before assessment is complete (for example, if they have a short term health condition) and this is reflected in the figures presented in this paper.
 - Around 3% of assessments are made clerically. These figures were not included in previous publications. However, with the availability of the final DWP Decision, we can now determine the outcome of most clerical assessments and these are included in the figures. Note that there is a still a very small number of clerical assessments which are unknown (0.1% of all ESA claims).

Headline Statistics

1.2 WCA results and Appeals

1.2.1 WCA results for all ESA Claims

For all new ESA claims from October 2008 to November 2009, the breakdown of the DWP decision at initial assessment (by the end of May 2010) is as follows:

- Support Group - 6%
- Work Related Activity Group -14%
- Fit for Work - 39%
- Claim closed before assessment complete - 37%
- Assessment still in progress - 4%

1.2.2 WCA results for all completed assessments

For all completed initial assessments (not including assessments still in progress or people who left ESA before completing assessment) to the end of May 2010 the breakdown of the DWP decision at initial assessment is as follows:

- Support Group – 10%
- Work Related Activity Group - 24%
- Fit for Work - 66%

1.2.3 WCA Appeals

Of people who made a claim for ESA between October 2008 and June 2009 and who were found Fit for Work at assessment, 32% have had an appeal heard by Tribunals Service *to date*. The original decision made by DWP has been confirmed for 60% of these appeals heard.

Annex A: Tables

Figures are rounded to the nearest 100 and totals may not sum due to rounding

Table 1: Monthly ESA on-flows by month of claim start and result of initial functional assessment.

Month ESA claim started	Support Group	Work Related Activity Group	Fit for Work	Claim closed before assessment complete	Assessment still in progress	Total
Oct-08	700	1,200	3,600	3,600	200	9,300
Nov-08	2,800	5,700	17,400	18,100	700	44,800
Dec-08	2,600	5,400	15,100	16,500	700	40,300
Jan-09	3,100	7,400	20,900	20,900	1,100	53,300
Feb-09	2,800	6,800	19,800	19,000	1,100	49,500
Mar-09	3,100	7,900	23,400	20,800	1,400	56,700
Apr-09	3,000	7,700	21,700	18,600	1,400	52,400
May-09	3,100	7,600	21,900	19,000	1,500	53,100
Jun-09	3,100	8,100	22,600	21,000	2,000	56,900
Jul-09	3,500	8,300	22,600	21,000	2,300	57,700
Aug-09	3,100	7,600	20,100	18,500	2,400	51,700
Sep-09	3,400	8,200	21,400	19,200	3,000	55,300
Oct-09	2,900	7,600	20,600	18,600	3,700	53,400
Nov-09	2,900	7,100	19,300	18,000	5,000	52,300
Total	40,100	96,700	270,400	252,800	26,500	686,500

1.1. Table 1 and Table 2 (below) present initial assessment results¹ by breaking down cohorts of ESA benefit claims. This is presented for claim starts to November 2009. Beyond this date the results are not reliable as many claims are still within the process. Note that monthly cohorts up to the end of August 2009 were included in the previous publication. These figures are updated in Table 1 and 2 with any assessments or claim closures that have occurred since, plus any changes due to using the DWP final decision variable rather than the ATOS recommendation.

1.2. National Statistics on ESA on-flows and caseload are published on the DWP Tabulation Tool. Latest data available shows there were 680,720 new ESA claims between 27th Oct 2008 and 30th November 2009. Note that rounding and exclusion of clerical claims with an unknown assessment result means the total figures in Table 1 won't match the Tabulation Tool figures exactly.

¹ Initial assessment – the initial assessment associated with the claim, repeat assessments are excluded from the figures.

Table 2: Monthly ESA on-flows by Claim Start and result of initial functional assessment – percentages.

Month ESA claim started	Support Group	Work Related Activity Group	Fit for Work	Claim closed	
				before assessment complete	Assessment still in progress
Oct-08	7%	13%	39%	39%	2%
Nov-08	6%	13%	39%	40%	2%
Dec-08	6%	13%	38%	41%	2%
Jan-09	6%	14%	39%	39%	2%
Feb-09	6%	14%	40%	38%	2%
Mar-09	6%	14%	41%	37%	2%
Apr-09	6%	15%	41%	36%	3%
May-09	6%	14%	41%	36%	3%
Jun-09	6%	14%	40%	37%	4%
Jul-09	6%	14%	39%	36%	4%
Aug-09	6%	15%	39%	36%	5%
Sep-09	6%	15%	39%	35%	5%
Oct-09	5%	14%	39%	35%	7%
Nov-09	5%	14%	37%	34%	10%
Total	6%	14%	39%	37%	4%

1.3. Table 2 presents the same figures shown in Table 1 as percentages.

Table 3: Completed assessments by month of assessment and result – initial assessments only.

Month of Assessment	Support Group	Work Related Activity Group	Fit for Work	Total
Oct-08	0	0	0	0
Nov-08	100	0	0	200
Dec-08	300	100	600	1,000
Jan-09	800	600	2,000	3,400
Feb-09	1,400	1,200	4,100	6,700
Mar-09	2,000	3,000	10,100	15,100
Apr-09	2,000	3,500	11,300	16,800
May-09	2,300	4,900	15,100	22,300
Jun-09	3,000	8,000	23,900	34,900
Jul-09	3,300	8,700	25,300	37,300
Aug-09	3,100	8,700	23,400	35,300
Sep-09	3,100	8,300	23,200	34,600
Oct-09	3,500	8,400	25,100	37,100
Nov-09	3,700	9,100	25,200	37,900
Dec-09	3,100	7,800	19,100	30,000
Jan-10	3,200	8,100	22,300	33,700
Feb-10	3,500	9,000	23,100	35,500
Mar-10	3,900	10,200	25,900	40,000
Apr-10	3,200	9,000	22,100	34,300
May-10	3,500	10,300	26,600	40,400
Total	49,000	118,800	328,500	496,200

- 1.4. Table 3 presents the DWP decision at initial assessment by the month assessment was completed up to the end of May 2010, the latest data available. Repeat assessments and clerical assessments are excluded from these figures. Note that these figures are not intended to match the figures in Tables 1 and 2 above. Tables 3 and 4 only cover completed assessments and are likely to include some assessments relating to claims that started after November 2009.
- 1.5. This publication includes all initial WCA assessments to date. Figures may differ slightly to the figures in previous publications due to retrospection and the use of a more accurate variable to determine the outcome of the assessment.

Table 4: Completed assessments by month of assessment and result – initial assessments only – percentages.

Month of Assessment	Support Group	Work Related Activity Group	Fit for Work
Oct-08	-	-	-
Nov-08	68%	13%	19%
Dec-08	31%	14%	54%
Jan-09	24%	17%	60%
Feb-09	21%	18%	62%
Mar-09	13%	20%	67%
Apr-09	12%	21%	67%
May-09	10%	22%	68%
Jun-09	9%	23%	69%
Jul-09	9%	23%	68%
Aug-09	9%	25%	66%
Sep-09	9%	24%	67%
Oct-09	9%	23%	68%
Nov-09	10%	24%	66%
Dec-09	10%	26%	64%
Jan-10	10%	24%	66%
Feb-10	10%	25%	65%
Mar-10	10%	25%	65%
Apr-10	9%	26%	65%
May-10	9%	25%	66%
Total	10%	24%	66%

1.6. Table 4 presents the same figures shown in Table 3 as percentages.

Table 5: WCA Appeals heard on 'Fit for Work' Decision –ESA claims to December 2008/Appeals heard by end of February 2010.

ESA claim start month	Fit for Work	Appeals heard (to date)	% fit for Work with an appeal heard (to date)	Decision in favour of appellant	DWP decision upheld	% Decision in favour of appellant	% DWP decision upheld
Oct-08	3,600	1,400	38%	500	800	40%	60%
Nov-08	17,400	6,700	39%	2,600	4,100	39%	61%
Dec-08	15,100	5,900	39%	2,400	3,500	41%	59%
Jan-09	20,900	8,000	38%	3,200	4,800	40%	60%
Feb-09	19,800	6,900	35%	2,800	4,100	41%	59%
Mar-09	23,400	7,700	33%	3,100	4,600	41%	59%
Apr-09	21,700	6,300	29%	2,600	3,700	41%	59%
May-09	21,900	5,500	25%	2,200	3,300	40%	60%
Jun-09	22,600	4,500	20%	1,700	2,700	39%	61%
Total	166,300	52,800	32%	21,200	31,600	40%	60%

1.7. Table 5 presents data on ESA claims up to the end of June 2009 where the person claiming has been found Fit for Work, subsequently appeals the Department's decision and the appeal has been heard by Tribunals Service by the end of May 2010. This data shows that to date 60% of DWP decisions have been upheld.

1.8. Due to the time it takes for appeals to be submitted to the Tribunals Service and heard, it is likely that there are more appeals that have not yet been heard, particularly for the most recent cohorts of ESA claims. These figures should continue to be treated as emerging findings and not final at this stage.

Annex B: Technical Note

Changes to calculation methodology since April 2010 publication

In this publication assessment outcomes are based on the DWP decision, rather than the ATOS recommendation, as used in previous publications. The DWP decision is made by the Decision Maker in Jobcentre Plus, taking into account the recommendation provided by the ATOS healthcare professional and the evidence provided by the applicant. Data on the final DWP decision has only recently become available centrally. The change has been made to provide more accurate figures on the WCA, as it is the Decision Maker's decision that determines whether ESA will be awarded. Using this variable also means we can include more complete information on people clerically assessed by ATOS as the result of assessment is recorded by the Decision Maker.

By comparing the results calculated using the DWP decision variable - described above, with those calculated using the ATOS recommendation variable – as used in previous publications, we see the following small changes in the headline WCA outcomes:

- Support Group figure changes from 5% to 6%
- Work Related Activity Group figure changes from 13% to 14%
- Fit for Work figure changes from 40% to 39%
- Claim closed before assessment complete – no change
- Assessment still in progress – no change.

Source Data

The data presented in this publication combines three main data sources:

- benefit claims data held by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) covering new ESA claims that started between October 2008 to November 2009;
- functional assessment data sourced from ATOS Healthcare covering assessments completed up to May 2010; and
- appeals data sourced from Tribunals Service covering appeals heard up to May 2010 (and which link to ESA claims up to the end of June 2009).

Related Statistical Publications

The Department will shortly be releasing new official statistics drawn from the WCA on the claimant's functional impairment and their initial medical condition. This supplementary data will be used to provide context to these statistics. Figures are currently in the final stages of quality assurance and will be released on the 11th August.