



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Duration on working-age benefits, Great Britain

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Summary

- On 31 March 2013, 8.0 per cent of the working-age population of Great Britain had been claiming working-age benefits¹ for at least three out of the previous four years. This proportion was down 0.1 percentage points compared to the year before, and 0.5 percentage points against 2006.
- On 31 March 2013, 4.0 per cent of the working-age population were claiming Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance Assessment Phase (ESA AP), Employment Support Allowance Work Related Activity Group (ESA WRAG) or Income Support for Lone Parents² (ISLP) and had been claiming working-age benefits for at least three out of the past four years. This is an annual increase of 0.7 percentage points from 3.3 per cent on 31 March 2012 to 4.0 per cent on 31 March 2013. This rate has been increasing since 2008 which coincides with the introduction of ESA, and the gradual transition of claimants receiving predecessor incapacity benefits to the ESA Assessment Phase, the ESA work-related activity group and, in some cases, JSA.

¹ Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA), Incapacity Benefit (IB) / Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Income Support (IS).

² We have compiled this data to be consistent the DWP's tabtool. This data includes all claimants who are claiming Income Support with a child under 16 and no partner.

Methodology

This publication looks at a snapshot of claimants each year and examines the total duration those individuals had spent in receipt of one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits over the preceding four years. To calculate this we:

- Used the National Benefits Database³ (NBD) to identify claimants who were in receipt of one of the main DWP working-age benefits on 31 March of each year, from 2006 to 2013. We then calculated the proportion of the previous four years that these same individuals had been in receipt of any of the main DWP working-age benefits;
- Included only those who were aged 18 to 59 throughout the entire four year period. This means we only include those who were aged 22 to 59 on 31 March 2013. This ensures that no-one was under 18 years old at the start of the four year period so that we only consider those who could have spent the entire four year period on one of the main DWP working-age benefits⁴;
- Ensured that where people were claiming more than one benefit at a time (e.g. Income Support and Incapacity Benefit), we only counted one spell on benefits; and
- Then summed the total period spent on one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits over the four years for each claimant, which might include multiple separate spells on benefit.

This analysis is then repeated looking at claimants who are in receipt of a subset of benefits as of 31 March each year.

³ The NBD is a database of all DWP benefits paid to customers. The 2012 and 2013 values have been calculated on the basis of a claimant's status as recorded at the time. This is to aid comparisons between those years. This means that 2012 data does not take account of any subsequent revisions made to a claimant's benefits status. The most common reasons for a revision to benefit status are retrospective amendments reflecting the outcome of an ESA Assessment Phase decision, or a successful appeal by the claimant against an original benefit decision. Data prior to 2011 will capture the majority of revisions where these have occurred i.e. not necessarily reflect all claimants benefit status as recorded at the time. This is likely to have only a very small effect on the rates presented in tables 3 and 4.

⁴ Although some 16 and 17 year olds are able to claim DWP benefits in some specific situations, many will not meet the conditions for eligibility. Therefore we assume that most people do not become eligible to claim benefits until they are 18 so the analysis excludes anyone under the age of 22.

Results

Table 1 presents the total number of claimants on 31 March 2013 by the proportion of time spent on working-age benefits⁵ over the preceding four years, from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2013. For example, of those on working-age benefits on 31 March 2013, 64.1 per cent, or around 2.5 million individuals⁶, have been claiming such benefits for at least three out of the preceding four years.

The data has been broken down to show the proportion of time spent on working-age benefits by benefit received on 31 March 2013. For example, of those on one of the main DWP working-age benefits on 31 March 2013 (around 4 million), 11.9 per cent were currently on Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) and had been on one of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years.

Table 1: Claimants of DWP main working-age benefits on 31 March 2013, by proportion of time spent on one of the main working-age benefits from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2013, GB					
	0-25% (up to 1 year)	25-50% (1 to 2 years)	50-75% (2 to 3 years)	75-100% (3 to 4 years)	Total
Working age benefit claimants, 31 March 2013	537,000	418,000	440,000	2,489,000	3,884,000
Proportion of claimants	13.8%	10.8%	11.3%	64.1%	100.0%
Of which are currently on:					
JSA	8.5%	5.4%	5.4%	11.9%	31.3%
IS (2)	1.5%	1.9%	2.2%	9.7%	15.3%
Incapacity benefits (ESA/IB/SDA) (3)	3.8%	3.4%	3.8%	42.5%	53.4%

Source: DWP National Benefits Database September 2013, GB

(1) The main working age benefits are JSA, IB / SDA, ESA and IS. Figures include some people working less than 16 hours and on one of the benefits listed.

(2) IS excludes people who are both on IS and IB/SDA.

(3) Incapacity benefits include ESA, IB/SDA and claimants on a combination of IS and IB/SDA.

IB/SDA includes people IS and IB/SDA.

Figures only include those who are aged 22 to 59 on 31 March 2013

⁵ The main working age benefits include JSA, IB / SDA, ESA, IS. Figures include some people working less than 16 hours and on one of the benefits listed.

⁶ Some individuals may be making a claim on behalf of a partner as well as themselves. This is not accounted for in the figures presented here. As such, all figures represent the lower bound of the number of individuals.

(4) Values are rounded to the nearest 1,000 and percentages rounded to one decimal place. Totals may not be the sum of the individual cells due to rounding.

Table 2 shows the proportion of time spent on one of the main DWP working-age benefits for those receiving one of the following:

- JSA;
- ESA AP and WRAG only, and;
- ISLP.

From Table 2 we can see that of the 2.4 million claimants receiving one of these benefits as at 31 March 2013, over 1.2 million had been claiming one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years.

Table 2 also breaks down duration on working age benefits from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2013 by the specific benefit claimed on 31 March 2013. For example, 19.3 per cent of all of the claimants claiming either JSA, ESA AP, WRAG or ISLP on 31 March 2013 were claiming JSA and had been receiving one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years.

Not all of the time spent on benefit will have been built up during the current benefit claim or on the current benefit. For example, a lone parent who has moved over from Income Support to JSA in the last six months may have spent all of the last four years claiming benefits, but only the last six months on JSA. Within the individual benefit breakdown in Tables 1 and 2 this person would be classified as a recipient of JSA on 31 March 2013.

Similarly in Table 2, a person currently in the ESA AP that has spent at least three of the preceding four years on benefit may have built up the majority of that time claiming IB.

	0-25% (up to 1 year)	25-50% (1 to 2 years)	50-75% (2 to 3 years)	75-100% (3 to 4 years)	Total
Claimants on JSA, ESA AP and WRAG, ISLP on 31 March 2013	459,000	341,000	357,000	1,244,000	2,400,000
Proportion of claimants	19.1%	14.2%	14.9%	51.8%	100.0%
Of which are currently on:					
JSA	13.8%	8.8%	8.7%	19.3%	50.6%
ESA AP	2.4%	1.6%	1.6%	6.4%	11.9%
ESA WRAG	1.0%	1.3%	1.7%	15.1%	19.1%
IS LP	1.9%	2.5%	2.9%	11.1%	18.4%

Source: DWP National Benefits Database September 2013, GB

(1) Figures include some people working less than 16 hours and on one of the benefits listed.

(2) Figures only include those who are aged 22 to 59 on 31 March 2013

(3) Values are rounded to the nearest 1,000 and percentages rounded to one decimal place. Totals may not be the sum of the individual cells due to rounding.

Table 3 presents the time series of the number of live claims for the main DWP working-age benefits on 31 March where the claimant had been claiming one or more such benefits for at least three of the preceding four years. It shows that in 2013 the 2.5 million individuals who were claiming one or more of the main working age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years represented 8.0 per cent of the total working age population aged 22 to 59. Between 31 March 2012 and 31 March 2013 this proportion has fallen by 0.1 percentage points to 8.0 per cent.

Table 3: Claimants of DWP main working-age benefit on 31 March of each year, 2006 to 2013, who had been in receipt of one of the main working-age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years, GB

	Number of claimants in receipt of one or more of the main working-age DWP benefits as at 31 March who had been in receipt of one or more of the main working age DWP benefits (1) for at least three out of the preceding four years	Estimate of population aged 22-59 (million)	Number of claimants, as a percentage of the population
2006	2,564,000	30.1	8.5%
2007	2,529,000	30.2	8.4%
2008	2,469,000	30.3	8.2%
2009	2,456,000	30.4	8.1%
2010	2,472,000	30.5	8.1%
2011	2,467,000	30.7	8.0%
2012	2,512,000	31.0	8.1%
2013	2,489,000	31.1	8.0%

Source: benefit data is from the National Benefits Database, GB. As explained in methodology the 2006 to 2012 figures are based on Sept 2012 NBD and the 2013 data on the Sept 2013 NBD. Population estimates are from the Labour Force Survey, Q1 of the relevant year.

(1)The main working age benefits are JSA, IB / SDA, ESA and IS. Figures include some people working less than 16 hours and on one of the benefits listed.

(2) Figures only include those who are aged 22 to 59 on 31 March 2013

(3) Values are rounded to the nearest 1,000 and percentages rounded to one decimal place. Totals may not be the sum of the individual cells due to rounding.

Table 4 shows the time series of the number of live claims for ESA AP, ESA WRAG or ISLP on 31 March in which the claimant had been claiming one or more of the main working age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years. On 31 March 2013 this number was 1.2 million individuals; representing 4.0 per cent of the GB population aged 22-59. It should be noted that the figures in this Table represent a subset of those in Table 3.

These figures show that the proportion of the GB population aged 22-59 who were claiming one of this selected subset⁷ of working-age benefits on 31 March each year, and who had been claiming one of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years, has been increasing since 2008. This increase coincides with the introduction of ESA, and the transition of claimants receiving predecessor incapacity benefits to the ESA AP, the ESA WRAG and, in some cases, JSA.

Table 4: Selected working-age benefit claimants on 31 March of each year, 2006 to 2013 who had been in receipt of one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years, GB

	Number of claimants aged 22-59 in receipt of JSA, ESA (AP or WRAG) or ISLP (1) as at 31 st March, who had been in receipt of one or more of the main working-age DWP benefits for a total period of at least three out of the preceding four years	Estimate of population aged 22-59 (million)	Number of claimants, as a percentage of the population
2006	660,000	30.1	2.2%
2007	652,000	30.2	2.2%
2008	619,000	30.3	2.0%
2009	634,000	30.4	2.1%
2010	698,000	30.5	2.3%
2011	732,000	30.7	2.4%
2012	1,008,000	31.0	3.3%
2013	1,244,000	31.1	4.0%

Source: benefit data is from the National Benefits Database, GB. As explained in methodology the 2006 to 2012 figures are based on Sept 2012 NBD and the 2013 data on the Sept 2013 NBD. Population estimates are from the Labour Force Survey, Q1 of the relevant year.

(1) Figures include some people working less than 16 hours and on one of the benefits listed.

(2) Figures only include those who are aged 22 to 59 on 31st March 2013

(3) Values are rounded to the nearest 1,000 and percentages rounded to one decimal place. Totals may not be the sum of the individual cells due to rounding.

⁷ JSA, ESA (Assessment Phase or WRAG) or ISLP

Table 5 shows the percentage breakdown of benefit groups as at 31 March each year, 2006 to 2013, who had been in receipt of one or more of the main working age DWP benefits for a total period of at least three out of the preceding four. It shows that the percentage of this group that are claiming JSA, ESA (AP, WRAG) or ISLP at 31 March in each year has risen from 26% in 2006 to 50% in 2013.

Table 5: The Percentage breakdown of benefit groups as at 31 March each year, 2006 to 2013, who had been in receipt of one or more of the main working age DWP benefits for a total period of at least three out of the preceding four, GB

Year	Number of claimants in receipt of one or more of the main working-age DWP benefits as at 31 March who had been in receipt of one or more of the main working age DWP benefits for a total period of at least three out of the preceding four years	% of these claiming JSA, ESA (AP, WRAG), ISLP on 31 March 2013	% of these claiming ESA Support, IB, SDA, IS Not for Lone Parents on 31 March 2013
2006	2,564,000	26%	74%
2007	2,529,000	26%	74%
2008	2,469,000	25%	75%
2009	2,456,000	26%	74%
2010	2,472,000	28%	72%
2011	2,467,000	30%	70%
2012	2,512,000	40%	60%
2013	2,489,000	50%	50%

Source: benefit data from the National Benefits Database September 2013, GB.

(1) Figures include some people working less than 16 hours and on one of the benefits listed.

(2) Figures only include those who are aged 22 to 59 on 31 March 2013

(3) Values are rounded to the nearest 1,000 and percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Totals may not be the sum of the individual cells due to rounding.

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