



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

# Statistics to support the 5<sup>th</sup> Independent Review of the WCA

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November 2014

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# Introduction

This statistical release supports the Fifth Independent Review of the Work Capability Assessment (WCA), led by Dr. Paul Litchfield and published on 27 November 2014. It contains previously unpublished statistics on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claims that underpin some of the analysis presented in the Fifth Independent Review report.

The WCA is a part of the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) regime. It assesses how a person's sickness or disability affects their capability for work.

The statistics contain information on outcomes of ESA claims and characteristics of ESA claims, including type of assessment, claimants' age and primary health condition, and re-referral periods. Breakdowns of final outcomes and DWP Decision Maker decisions compared to Atos Healthcare recommendations are also included. A full list of tables can be found below.

# Background

## Overview of the WCA process

The Work Capability Assessment (WCA) is a functional assessment that evaluates how a person's sickness or disability affects their capability for work. It is used to assess claimants' eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

ESA claims will have one of the three following outcomes:

1. Claimants are found fit for work and are not eligible for ESA. These claimants may claim Jobseeker's Allowance if they wish;
2. Claimants are found to have limited capability for work and are placed in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG). Those placed in the WRAG are expected to undertake reasonable work-related activity, with a view to preparing to enter into work. It is not a condition of benefit that they look for or take up work, though support is available if they wish to do so; or
3. Claimants are found unable to work and are placed in the Support Group. Those placed in the Support Group are not expected to undertake work or any work-related activities, though support is available if they wish to do so (on a voluntary basis).

People who wish to claim ESA contact DWP to start this process. They are asked to fill in an initial questionnaire providing details about their condition or disability, and to submit any supporting evidence. Most claimants will then attend a face-to-face assessment with Atos Healthcare, however some claimants will be assigned to the Support Group based on their submitted documents alone (paper-based assessment)<sup>1</sup>.

Based on the evidence collected at the WCA, the Atos Healthcare professional makes a recommendation on outcome, and, if recommending that the claimant is found eligible for ESA, also recommends a re-referral period by which time the claim should be reassessed. The recommendation by Atos Healthcare, along with

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<sup>1</sup> For re-referrals or for Incapacity Benefit reassessments claimants can be placed in either the Support Group or the Work Related Activity Group based on the paper evidence alone

any other additional evidence provided by the claimant, is then passed to the DWP Decision Maker who makes the decision on the outcome of the claim.

A claimant may challenge a decision, first by having a mandatory reconsideration by a different DWP Decision Maker, and subsequently by an Appeal to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS).

## Sources of data

Figures used in this data release come from:

- DWP's benefit administration datasets for ESA WCA Outcomes from 27 October 2008 to 31 December 2013; and
- Atos Healthcare's assessment data.

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