

Freedom of Information request 2014-5070

Date received 20 November 2014

Date of response 30 March 2015

Information request

We are interested in benefit sanctions and how they are applied to people in Wales. The information we would like access to is supplied for Great Britain in the Freedom of information requests reference numbers 2014-79 and 2014-2282. We wish to request similar data for Wales and have adapted the wording from those Freedom of Information requests.

- For each month from October 2008 to March 2014 inclusive, please give the number of adverse ESA sanctions decisions against claimants in Wales, broken down by the Summary International Classification 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 13 August 2014.

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 Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and ESA conditions.

The most common reasons for a JSA sanction include failure to actively look for work, failure to take part in an employment programme and not having a good reason for missing a meeting at the Jobcentre. Claimants can always ask for us to look at the sanction decision again, and we have a well-

established system of hardship payments where needed for vulnerable claimants.

The Government has introduced the Claimant Commitment for anyone making a new claim for JSA. The commitment will see jobseekers having to account more clearly for their efforts to find work in order to receive their benefits.

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.

Please note that ESA sanctions are only applied to those in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG), and not the Support Group, therefore comparisons should only be made with the ESA WRAG caseload and off-flows statistics published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/employment-and-support-allowance-caseload-statistics>

The information requested on the number of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) adverse benefit sanction decisions in Wales from the sanction statistics publication of 13 August 2014 broken down by Summary ICD classification is shown in the table below.
As figures are now available up to September 2014 we have included the latest information.

Please note these will not match the figures given in Table 2.1 of the 13 August release, as this shows the total for Great Britain, but the total number of adverse decisions figures for Wales have been extracted from that data to produce the attached table and are also available in Stat-Xplore here: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>

Guidance on how to extract the information required from Stat-Xplore can be found at: https://sw.stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/Stat-Xplore_User_Guide.htm

If you have any difficulties extracting the relevant information please let us know.

Please note that 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.

The number of adverse Employment and Support Allowance sanction referral decisions, by ICD (disease) Summary Code, Wales: January 2009 – September 2014

	IB ICD (disease) summary code						
Date	Diseases of the Circulatory or Respiratory System	Diseases of the Musculoskeletal system and Connective Tissue	Diseases of the Nervous System	Injury, Poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes	Mental and Behavioural Disorders	Other/ Missing	Total
Jan-09	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Feb-09	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Mar-09	0	5	0	5	6	12	28
Apr-09	0	6	0	6	15	10	46
May-09	0	9	0	0	7	34	60
Jun-09	0	10	0	5	24	29	68
Jul-09	5	10	6	8	28	36	83
Aug-09	0	13	0	5	33	52	110
Sep-09	0	15	7	10	26	42	105
Oct-09	5	13	6	19	45	53	145
Nov-09	9	24	0	18	52	47	154
Dec-09	0	18	5	14	43	38	119
Jan-10	8	30	5	21	51	58	179
Feb-10	11	20	5	26	58	54	178
Mar-10	6	16	12	22	71	79	205
Apr-10	5	12	0	12	54	49	129
May-10	0	13	0	21	58	48	138
Jun-10	6	17	0	24	41	43	134
Jul-10	8	7	5	21	44	40	121
Aug-10	5	22	6	20	43	23	114
Sep-10	9	0	5	30	25	26	96
Oct-10	7	12	6	17	30	21	87
Nov-10	0	5	0	8	31	11	62
Dec-10	6	0	0	5	12	5	25
Jan-11	0	5	0	5	22	7	40
Feb-11	0	6	0	0	15	6	31
Mar-11	0	5	0	0	12	8	25
Apr-11	0	0	0	0	7	0	10
May-11	0	0	0	0	7	0	12
Jun-11	0	0	0	0	9	0	5
Jul-11	0	0	0	0	0	6	8

Aug-11	0	0	0	0	6	0	10
Sep-11	0	8	0	0	6	7	22
Oct-11	0	0	0	0	7	5	13
Nov-11	5	5	0	8	18	11	45
Dec-11	0	5	0	0	30	6	42
Jan-12	0	9	0	6	29	8	53
Feb-12	5	15	0	6	27	18	69
Mar-12	9	11	5	0	50	26	102
Apr-12	6	9	5	5	47	26	87
May-12	7	11	0	10	111	28	167
Jun-12	5	5	6	7	73	18	108
Jul-12	5	7	6	8	87	24	138
Aug-12	8	6	8	7	105	27	150
Sep-12	0	12	0	6	100	27	150
Oct-12	0	5	0	6	99	25	135
Nov-12	0	6	0	10	87	16	125
Dec-12	0	5	6	5	47	8	77
Jan-13	0	6	0	0	52	11	71
Feb-13	0	8	0	7	60	12	90
Mar-13	0	6	0	0	56	13	80
Apr-13	5	16	6	8	101	24	155
May-13	7	13	8	9	123	17	172
Jun-13	5	11	0	7	105	24	155
Jul-13	7	13	0	6	118	30	172
Aug-13	0	11	7	9	107	21	155
Sep-13	5	9	8	16	123	12	175
Oct-13	0	18	5	6	137	29	200
Nov-13	5	11	5	6	86	18	134
Dec-13	0	13	8	8	74	23	126
Jan-14	0	23	15	6	148	35	228
Feb-14	0	12	9	8	124	27	186
Mar-14	6	19	9	13	147	22	211
Apr-14	5	29	11	0	168	47	256
May-14	7	28	6	9	168	35	248
Jun-14	7	16	9	0	147	37	219
Jul-14	5	19	14	8	159	51	255
Aug-14	7	24	7	0	87	37	163
Sep-14	9	11	5	5	46	20	94

Source: DWP: Sanctions and Disallowance Decisions Statistics Database and WPLS

Notes:

1. Cells in this table have had statistical disclosure control applied to avoid the release of confidential data. Therefore totals may not be the sum of the individual cells.
2. Data for the most recent months will be subject to a high degree of revision. Numbers of sanction decisions and decision outcomes can change due to reconsidered decisions and appeals.

3. ICD (disease) summary code: ICD (disease) code Causes of incapacity are based on the International Classification of Diseases, 10th Revision, published by the World Health Organisation. Medical condition is based on evidence provided at the start of the claim and so may not represent a claimant's most recent medical condition. The "Other" category includes claimants with an unknown medical condition. Please also note that where someone has more than one diagnosis or disabling condition only the predominant one is used.
4. A medical condition does not confer entitlement to Employment Support Allowance and the decision on entitlement is based on the claimant's ability to carry out the range of activities related to physical and mental function, assessed by the Work Capability Assessment.