



## ESA and incapacity benefit statistics

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Author: Roderick McInnes  
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Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is aimed at working-age people who are unable to work due to incapacity. It was introduced for new claimants in October 2008 and replaced Incapacity Benefit and Income Support paid because of an illness or disability.

A programme of reassessments is under way (running from October 2010 to Spring 2014) in order to determine whether the remaining claimants of these superseded benefits or of Severe Disablement Allowance (closed to new claimants in 2001) are eligible to receive ESA.

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) can be contribution-based (taxable) or income-related (non-taxable).

This note presents a summary of statistics on ESA and its predecessors.

- In November 2011, there were around 2.7 million working-age claimants of ESA or other incapacity benefits in the UK – this represents 6.7% of the population aged 16 to 64.

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## **1 ESA and predecessor benefits – a brief overview**

This note relates to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), the benefit specifically aimed at those who are unable to work due to incapacity, and the incapacity-related benefits which ESA superseded upon its introduction in October 2008, but which are still payable to people whose claims began before this date. This section contains a brief description of these benefits.

### **1.1 Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)**

From 27 October 2008 Employment and Support Allowance replaced Incapacity Benefit and Income Support paid on incapacity grounds for new claimants. Eligibility is determined by a Work Capability Assessment (see [Library note SN05850](#) for more details).

Around 1.5 million of the remaining claimants of ESA's predecessors – Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support paid on the grounds of illness or disability – will by spring 2014 have had their claims reviewed as part of a reassessment programme which began in 2010. Those found eligible will be transferred onto ESA. Details of the reassessment programme are on the [DWP website](#).

### **1.2 Incapacity Benefit (IB)**

Incapacity Benefit was introduced in April 1995 to replace Sickness Benefit and Invalidity Benefit. It is a mainly contributory benefit paid to those who began their current claim before 27 October 2008.

Until 6 April 2001, entitlement to IB payments was based purely on National Insurance contributions. From that date, an exemption from the contribution conditions was introduced for those who would previously have been eligible for Severe Disablement Allowance (see below).

A claimant who does not meet the contribution conditions for IB payments can still receive IB credits – which increase the claimant's NI contribution record – while receiving payments via Income Support (see below). Recipients of IB payments also receive credits.

### **1.3 Income Support paid on the grounds of illness or disability**

For claims starting before October 2008, claimants who had not paid enough NI contributions to receive Incapacity Benefit payments may instead receive means-tested Income Support on the grounds of illness or disability. This can be received in conjunction with IB credits. Recipients of IB or SDA payments may also have their benefit receipt topped up with Income Support.

### **1.4 Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA)**

SDA is a non-contributory benefit for people who are at least 80 per cent disabled or whose incapacity began when they were under 20. The *Welfare Reform and Pensions Act 1999* abolished SDA for new claimants from 6 April 2001. From that date, some new claimants who would previously have qualified for Severe Disablement Allowance became entitled to Incapacity Benefit instead. Existing SDA claimants were unaffected.

**(Note** – Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is not within the scope of this note. DLA is payable on the basis of care or mobility need rather than inability to work *per se*, and is therefore not classed as an out-of-work benefit.)

## 2 Overall caseload on incapacity benefits

In November 2011 there were **2,688,410** people of working-age in the United Kingdom claiming an incapacity-related benefit – this represents **6.7%** of the population aged 16 to 64.

### 2.1 Trends over time – Great Britain

The number of claimants in Great Britain rose sharply during the late 1980s and early 1990s, from under 1¼ million to around 2½ million (see chart 1). Caseload growth slowed down after 1995, with the introduction of Incapacity Benefit. Since 2003 the working-age caseload has exhibited a gradual downward trend. Table 1 shows the Great Britain caseload since 2000, and the DWP's latest forecasts of claimant numbers up until 2016-17 (which foresee a substantial fall in the incapacity caseload due to the current reassessment programme):

**Table 1 – Claimants of incapacity benefits**

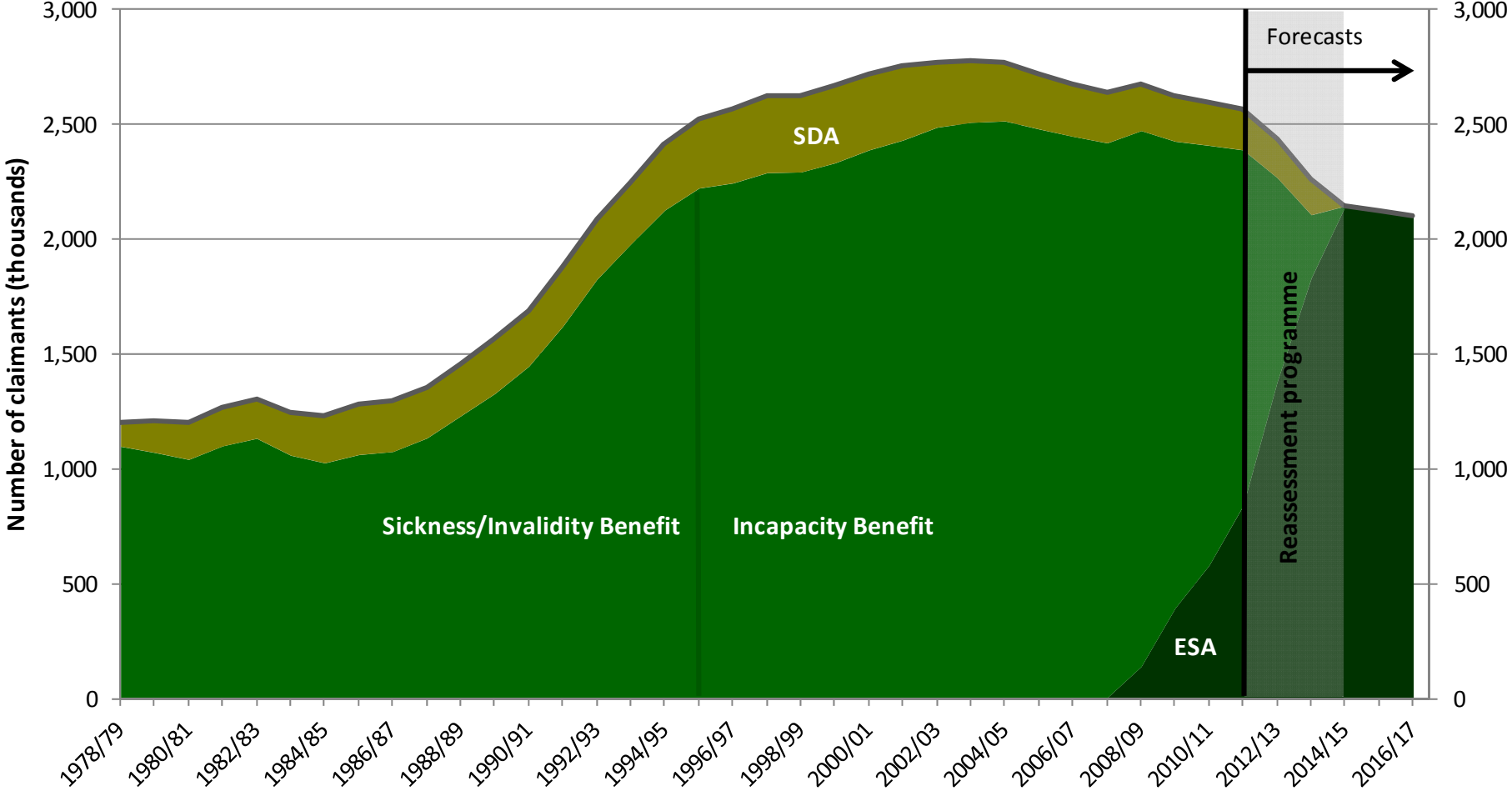
Great Britain and abroad - actual figures 2000 to 2011; DWP forecasts 2012-13 to 2016-17

	All ages	Of whom:			Working-age	% (a)
	Total	ESA	Incapacity Benefit	SDA	Total	
Nov 2000	2,764,140	-	2,387,860	376,280	2,722,570	7.4
Nov 2001	2,787,710	-	2,425,570	362,140	2,746,020	7.4
Nov 2002	2,818,480	-	2,489,910	328,560	2,776,560	7.5
Nov 2003	2,822,270	-	2,509,010	313,260	2,780,490	7.4
Nov 2004	2,814,410	-	2,514,740	299,670	2,772,180	7.4
Nov 2005	2,752,900	-	2,466,200	286,700	2,710,500	7.1
Nov 2006	2,714,950	-	2,441,030	273,910	2,672,960	7.0
Nov 2007	2,683,750	-	2,422,020	261,740	2,641,700	6.8
Nov 2008	2,646,780	53,770	2,343,250	249,760	2,605,510	6.7
Nov 2009	2,659,650	425,770	1,994,950	238,930	2,618,380	6.7
Feb 2010	2,655,960	479,430	1,940,290	236,230	2,614,760	6.6
May 2010	2,653,810	527,120	1,892,990	233,710	2,613,100	6.6
Aug 2010	2,646,550	563,980	1,851,010	231,550	2,606,610	6.6
Nov 2010	2,625,860	593,930	1,802,930	229,000	2,586,420	6.6
Feb 2011	2,617,270	631,350	1,759,620	226,300	2,578,660	6.6
May 2011	2,608,430	662,230	1,722,390	223,810	2,570,220	6.5
Aug 2011	2,619,680	731,950	1,666,210	221,520	2,582,180	6.6
Nov 2011	2,612,520	857,890	1,535,380	219,250	2,575,600	6.5
2012-13	2,495,000	1,376,000	887,000	232,000	2,439,000	6.2
2013-14	2,315,000	1,827,000	275,000	213,000	2,261,000	5.7
2014-15	2,196,000	2,140,000	-	56,000	2,145,000	5.4
2015-16	2,168,000	2,121,000	-	47,000	2,121,000	5.3
2016-17	2,150,000	2,106,000	-	44,000	2,106,000	5.3

Notes: (a) Rates are percentages of population aged 16-64 and relate to claimants resident in Great Britain.

ESA introduced in October 2008.

**Chart 1: Working-age claimants of ESA and predecessor incapacity benefits – Great Britain, 1978 to current**



Source: [DWP Benefit Expenditure Tables](#).

## 2.2 Regions and constituencies

Incapacity claimant rates vary across the country. At country/region level, Northern Ireland has the highest claimant rate (10.6%), followed by Wales (9.4). Scotland, North East England and North West England all have more than 8% of their population aged 16-64 claiming an incapacity benefit.

Among constituencies the variation is wider still. Four constituencies have claimant rates of 15% or above. The top eleven constituencies are all situated in Glasgow, South Wales or Merseyside. The lowest claimant rates are generally found in South East England.

The table below shows the twenty highest and lowest constituency claimant rates in Great Britain. For more constituency-level statistics on incapacity benefits, see [Library Standard Note SN03301 ESA and incapacity benefits – constituency statistics for Great Britain](#).

**Table 2: ESA and incapacity benefits: claimant rates in UK countries/regions**  
November 2011

	number	rate
England	2,108,260	6.2
Scotland	280,160	8.2
Wales	177,690	9.4
Northern Ireland	122,300	10.6
<i>English regions:</i>		
North East	141,780	8.3
North West	383,850	8.6
Yorkshire and The Humber	228,380	6.6
East Midlands	177,700	6.1
West Midlands	233,910	6.8
East	181,790	4.9
London	318,410	5.9
South East	248,890	4.6
South West	193,550	5.8
Great Britain	2,566,110	6.5
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>2,688,410</b>	<b>6.7</b>
Overseas	9,490	-
UK and overseas	2,697,900	-

Source: ONS Nomis

Note: components may not sum to totals due to rounding.

**Table 3: ESA and incapacity benefits: highest and lowest claimant rates**

November 2011, parliamentary constituencies in Great Britain

20 highest rates				20 lowest rates			
rank	constituency	number	rate	rank	constituency	number	rate
1	Glasgow East	9,520	16.8	607 =	Witney	1,950	3.0
2	Rhondda	6,980	16.1	614 =	South Cambridgeshire	2,030	2.9
3	Glasgow North East	9,340	15.3	614 =	Chesham and Amersham	1,580	2.9
4	Aberavon	6,140	15.0	614 =	Esher and Walton	2,040	2.9
5	Liverpool, Walton	8,980	14.8	617 =	Sheffield, Hallam	1,700	2.8
6	Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	6,710	14.7	617 =	York Outer	1,730	2.8
7	Cynon Valley	6,250	14.5	617 =	Kenilworth and Southam	1,420	2.8
8	Birkenhead	7,750	14.4	617 =	Hitchin and Harpenden	1,710	2.8
9 =	Knowsley	9,210	13.6	617 =	Mid Bedfordshire	1,900	2.8
9 =	Blaenau Gwent	5,920	13.6	617 =	Richmond Park	2,310	2.8
11	Glasgow South West	7,570	13.5	623 =	Beaconsfield	1,670	2.7
12	Easington	7,060	13.3	623 =	Maidenhead	1,770	2.7
13	Ogmore	6,250	13.2	623 =	Runnymede and Weybridge	1,920	2.7
14	Blackpool South	6,650	13.1	626 =	South Northamptonshire	1,830	2.5
15	Blackley and Broughton	9,490	13.0	626 =	Henley	1,470	2.5
16	Neath	5,900	12.9	626 =	Windsor	1,700	2.5
17 =	Bootle	7,860	12.5	629	Buckingham	1,500	2.4
17 =	Liverpool, West Derby	7,460	12.5	630	Wimbledon	1,630	2.3
19	Glasgow North West	7,220	12.4	631	Wokingham	1,600	2.2
20 =	Blackburn	7,690	12.2	632	North East Hampshire	1,270	2.1

Source: ONS Nomis

Note: rates are working-age claimants as a percentage of the population aged 16-64.

### **3 Employment and Support Allowance**

#### **3.1 ESA – caseload summary**

To be eligible for ESA, a person must undergo a Work Capability Assessment (WCA). Claimants are assessed during the first 13 weeks of their claim (or longer if necessary). This initial stage is called the **assessment phase**.

The WCA assesses whether the claimant has a *limited capability for work*, and also whether they are capable of engaging in *work-related activity* aimed at preparing the claimant for an eventual return to the workforce.

Once assessed, the claimant is placed in either the **Support Group** – for those whose condition is so severe that work-related activity is unsuitable for them – or in the **Work-Related Activity group (WRAG)**. For those in the latter group, access to the full rate of benefit may be conditional on participation in Work-Focused Interviews (WFIs) and undertaking work-related activity. They do not however have to be available for work or to apply for jobs.

As of November 2011 there were **889,450** ESA claimants in the UK (2.2% of the population), of whom:

- **401,100 (45%)** were in the **assessment phase**;
- **279,240 (31%)** were in the **Work-Related Activity Group**;
- **155,780 (18%)** were in the **Support Group**.

A further **53,340 (6%)** were ‘credits-only’ cases whose actual ESA phase could not be identified. Credits-only claimants satisfy the generic conditions for ESA entitlement but receive no ESA payment, because they do not have a sufficient NI contribution record to qualify for contribution-based ESA and their resources mean that they are ineligible for income-related (means-tested) ESA payments. They do however receive NI credits which contribute towards entitlement to State Pension at a later date.

Table 4 overleaf shows a breakdown of the latest ESA caseload by payment phase, payment type and region.

**Table 4: ESA claimants: breakdown by payment phase, payment type and region**

November 2011

	All ESA claimants		Payment phase				Payment type				Receiving contrib. ESA in WRAG (c)		
	number	rate (a)	Assess- ment	Work-rel.		unknown (b)	Contrib only	Contrib + income related	Income- related only	Credits only (no payment)	of whom:		
				activity grp (WRAG)	Support group						Total	Not qualifying for ESA(IR)	Also qualifying for ESA(IR)
England	709,210	2.1%	320,530	221,740	124,370	42,560	226,800	53,750	377,340	51,310	102,570	84,830	17,740
Scotland	93,760	2.7%	41,380	28,540	19,010	4,830	32,080	6,830	49,060	5,790	14,040	11,890	2,150
Wales	54,200	2.9%	25,950	17,650	7,330	3,280	19,790	3,770	26,670	3,970	9,160	7,790	1,370
Northern Ireland	32,290	2.8%	13,240	11,320	5,070	2,670	..	..	..	3,060	..	..	..
<i>English regions:</i>													
North East	46,070	2.7%	22,880	12,330	8,620	2,230	16,170	3,580	23,490	2,830	6,210	5,190	1,020
North West	126,930	2.8%	55,390	41,340	23,030	7,180	41,810	9,280	67,140	8,700	19,230	16,050	3,180
Yorkshire & Humber	77,600	2.2%	34,150	23,040	15,090	5,330	25,840	5,810	39,640	6,320	11,320	9,470	1,850
East Midlands	55,480	1.9%	22,870	18,150	10,400	4,060	19,680	4,350	26,710	4,740	9,060	7,570	1,490
West Midlands	79,390	2.3%	39,620	22,970	12,200	4,610	26,450	6,290	41,070	5,580	11,540	9,570	1,970
East	62,880	1.7%	27,900	19,560	11,460	3,970	21,330	5,340	31,510	4,700	9,660	7,920	1,740
London	109,740	2.0%	54,320	31,690	17,040	6,680	24,000	6,570	71,260	7,900	10,100	8,170	1,930
South East	86,440	1.6%	36,140	29,160	16,270	4,870	28,240	7,270	44,790	6,140	13,650	11,160	2,490
South West	64,680	2.0%	27,280	23,500	10,260	3,640	23,300	5,250	31,730	4,410	11,800	9,740	2,060
Great Britain	857,160	2.2%	387,860	267,920	150,710	50,670	278,680	64,350	453,070	61,060	125,770	104,510	21,260
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>889,450</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>401,100</b>	<b>279,240</b>	<b>155,780</b>	<b>53,340</b>	..	..	..	<b>64,120</b>	..	..	..
<i>Overseas</i>	730	..	270	160	270	30	640	-	40	40	150	150	..
<i>UK and overseas</i>	<i>890,180</i>	..	<i>401,370</i>	<i>279,400</i>	<i>156,050</i>	<i>53,370</i>	..	..	..	<i>64,160</i>	..	..	..

Source: ONS Nomis

Note: components may not sum to totals due to rounding.

(a) rates are percentage of the population aged 16-64.

(b) consists of credits-only cases (i.e. no payment) where the phase cannot be ascertained from the administrative database.

(c) Contribution-based ESA is time-limited to one year maximum for claimants in the Work-Related Activity Group. These claimants will therefore cease to receive ESA payments after one year unless they also qualify for ESA(IR) (income-related ESA ).



### 3.2 ESA Work Capability Assessment

As mentioned above, applicants for ESA undergo a Work Capability Assessment (conducted by Atos Healthcare) which informs the decision as to whether to grant ESA and, if so, into which claimant group the claimant should be placed.

The DWP publish data on WCA outcomes for a) new ESA claimants;<sup>1</sup> b) existing ESA claimants who are reassessed;<sup>2</sup> c) the remaining claimants of the predecessor incapacity-related benefits (IB, SDA and IS) who are being reassessed as part of the reassessment programme running until spring 2014.<sup>3</sup> Headline figures for these three groups are summarised below.

#### a) Work Capability Assessment outcomes for new ESA applicants

A total of 1,116,800 WCAs have been completed in respect of new ESA claims lodged between October 2008 and August 2011. In 60% of cases the initial decision was 'fit for work', i.e. not entitled to ESA. However, if we take into account the results of appeals against adverse decisions, the number of initial claims ultimately resulting in fit-for-work decision falls by eight percentage points, from 60% to 52% of completed initial assessments:

Initial assessment outcome	Before appeals	After appeals
ESA WRAG	294,700 (26%)	379,700 (34%)
ESA Support Group	148,400 (13%)	155,400 (14%)
Fit for work	673,800 (60%)	581,700 (52%)

38% of appeals against initial fit-for-work decisions were successful (in respect of claims initiated before March 2011). The proportion of fit-for-work decisions which are successfully overturned at appeal has however been gradually falling, from 40-41% in the first year of ESA's operation to 32% in the most recent quarter (claims started Dec 2010-Feb 2011).

In addition to the completed assessment outcomes, a substantial proportion of initial applications for ESA are closed before the assessment is completed. Of the 1.83 million initial claims for ESA which had been made by the end of August 2011, 669,400 (37%) were closed early.

The DWP's examination of the reasons for early closures of initial applications for ESA found that "[an] important reason why ESA claims [...] were withdrawn or closed before they were fully assessed was because the person recovered and either returned to work, or claimed a benefit more appropriate to their situation."<sup>4</sup>

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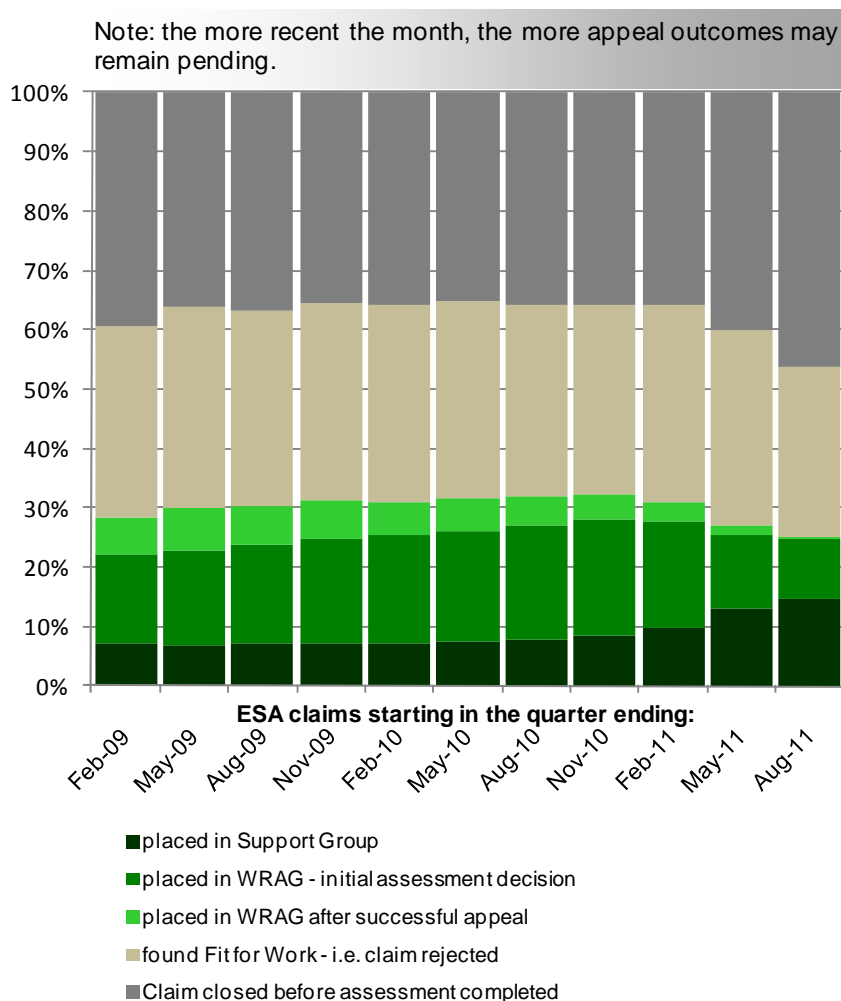
<sup>1</sup> DWP [Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessment statistics](#)

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> [Incapacity Benefits Reassessment: Work Capability Assessments](#), DWP, March 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Barnes, H. et al (2011) '[Unsuccessful Employment and Support Allowance claims – qualitative research](#)'.

**Chart 2: results of initial ESA assessments** (including claims closed before completion of assessment and taking into account appeals against adverse decisions)



### b) Work Capability Assessment outcomes for reassessed ESA claimants

In addition to the data on WCA outcomes for new claimants, there are also figures published relating to the outcomes of repeat assessments for people already on ESA.<sup>5</sup> These are people who began their claim in or after October 2008, and who have had to undergo a repeat assessment after the prognosis period of their first (or previous) work capability assessment expired.

Prognosis periods are usually but not always a standard length of time such as 3, 6, 12, 18 or 24 months, depending on the claimant's health, and are meant to reflect the length of time the claimant may be expected to take to become fit for work. So the more serious the condition, the longer the prognosis period. This means that claimants in the Work-Related Activity Group (WRAG) are reassessed with greater frequency than those in the Support Group.

<sup>5</sup> [Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessment statistics](#), DWP, published quarterly

The latest figures cover the 382,200 completed repeat assessments which as of April 2012 were recorded as having been conducted in respect of claimants whose ESA eligibility began between October 2008 and August 2011. Of these:

- 179,300 (**47%**) were placed in the **ESA WRAG**;
- 80,300 (**21%**) were placed in the **ESA Support Group**;
- 122,600 (**32%**) were assessed as being **fit for work** and therefore no longer eligible for ESA.

As might be expected, the proportion of claims which are disallowed on 'fit-for-work' grounds is substantially lower for existing claimants with a previously established entitlement than it is for new claimants.

In addition to these completed reassessments, 57,600 reassessments (or 11% of the over 500,000 reassessments initiated in respect of claimants whose eligibility began in or before August 2011) were closed before completion, meaning that the claimant left the ESA caseload.

### **c) Initial outcomes of the IB reassessment programme**

The remaining claimants of the predecessor incapacity-related benefits (IB, SDA and IS) are to be reassessed between now and 2014. It is expected that eventually around 1.5 million people will have undergone a reassessment by spring 2014.<sup>6</sup> When the programme began, the working-age caseload for the predecessor incapacity benefits stood at around 2 million, but a large proportion of these are expected to leave the caseload before spring 2014. Those who will attain state pension age before this date will not be reassessed.

The reassessment programme began in October 2010 with a trial in Aberdeen and Burnley; full nationwide rollout of the programme began in April 2011.

The first set of data from the national rollout of the reassessment was published in March 2012<sup>7</sup> and covers the period from October 2010 (the start of the Aberdeen/Burnley trial) to July 2011 (i.e. four months into the full national rollout).

By July 2011, a total of 141,110 reassessments had been initiated. The headline figures for the outcomes of these reassessments are:

129,190 completed reassessments, as a result of which:

- 44,220 claimants (**34%**) were placed in the **ESA WRAG**;
- 37,560 claimants (**29%**) were placed in the **ESA Support Group**;
- 47,410 claimants (**37%**) were assessed as being **fit for work** and therefore ineligible for ESA.

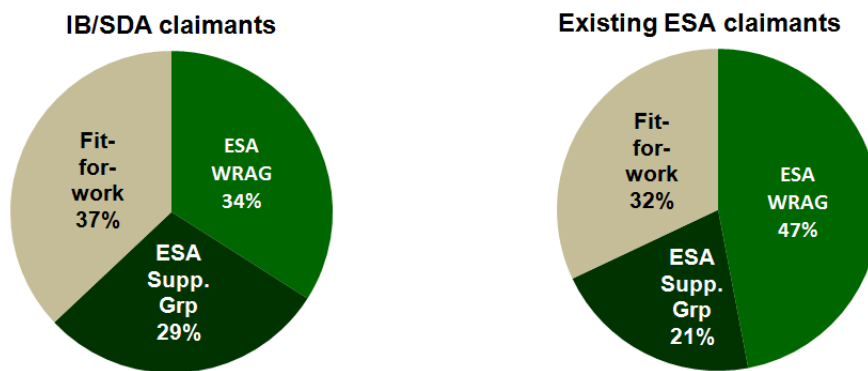
In addition to these completed assessments, a small number (4,280, or 3% of initiated reassessments) were closed before the reassessment was completed, while a further 7,640 reassessments were still ongoing at the time that the data were collated.

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<sup>6</sup> [Reassessment of incapacity benefits: an introduction](#), DWP, August 2011

<sup>7</sup> [Incapacity Benefits Reassessment: Work Capability Assessments](#), DWP, March 2012.

**Chart 3: outcomes of completed reassessments – to date**



Note that while these figures take into account any successful appeals against adverse reassessment decisions up to February 2012, some appeal verdicts may remain pending, meaning that the above figures may be subsequently revised and should therefore be treated as provisional.

Data on the reassessment programme have also been published for regions and local authorities.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [Incapacity Benefits Reassessments: Outcomes of Work Capability Assessments](#) DWP ad-hoc analysis, 20 April 2012 (excel; PDF)

## 4 Expenditure

Expenditure on incapacity benefits paid to working-age claimants IB and its predecessors peaked in real terms in 2001-02, with expenditure of £12.4 billion representing £16.2 billion in today's prices. Spending is forecast to continue falling in real terms from 2012-13 onwards.

**Table 5: Expenditure on ESA and predecessor incapacity-related benefits aimed at working-age claimants**

Great Britain		£ million					
		Employment and Support Allowance (a)	Incapacity Benefit and predecessor benefits (b)	Severe Disablement Allowance (c)	Income Support paid on the grounds of illness or disability (d)	Total working-age expenditure on incapacity benefits	
		Nominal	Nominal	Nominal	Nominal	Nominal	<i>Real (2012-13 prices)(e)</i>
1991-92	Outturn	-	4,823	518	1,399	6,740	10,743
1992-93	Outturn	-	5,517	548	1,899	7,964	12,425
1993-94	Outturn	-	6,260	599	2,358	9,217	14,075
1994-95	Outturn	-	6,799	668	2,758	10,225	15,393
1995-96	Outturn	-	6,834	709	3,222	10,765	15,774
1996-97	Outturn	-	6,793	801	3,507	11,101	15,781
1997-98	Outturn	-	6,744	862	3,679	11,286	15,728
1998-99	Outturn	-	6,820	840	3,848	11,508	15,712
1999-00	Outturn	-	6,629	862	4,051	11,542	15,483
2000-01	Outturn	-	6,763	851	4,400	12,014	16,029
2001-02	Outturn	-	6,749	874	4,769	12,392	16,224
2002-03	Outturn	-	6,758	795	4,773	12,326	15,743
2003-04	Outturn	-	6,724	766	5,005	12,495	15,615
2004-05	Outturn	-	6,662	794	5,066	12,522	15,200
2005-06	Outturn	-	6,650	772	5,028	12,450	14,774
2006-07	Outturn	-	6,566	768	5,094	12,429	14,363
2007-08	Outturn	-	6,657	698	5,397	12,752	14,378
2008-09	Outturn	127	6,516	712	5,322	12,677	13,914
2009-10	Outturn	1,267	6,108	723	5,211	13,310	14,393
2010-11	Outturn	2,243	5,533	698	4,573	13,048	13,720
2011-12	Estimate	3,619	4,910	686	3,452	12,667	13,009
2012-13	Forecast	6,555	2,847	708	1,845	11,955	11,955
2013-14	Forecast	8,910	765	665	440	10,780	10,517
2014-15	Forecast	10,473	-	26	-	10,498	9,992
2015-16	Forecast	10,546	-	-	-	10,546	9,793
2016-17	Forecast	10,857	-	-	-	10,857	9,836

Notes:

(a) ESA was introduced in October 2008.

(b) Incapacity Benefit replaced Invalidity Benefit & Sickness Benefit in 1995/96.

(c) Working-age SDA expenditure only.

(d) Income Support paid on the grounds of illness or disability is the income-related counterpart to Incapacity Benefit (which is a contributory benefit). IS (illness or disability) payments are generally received in conjunction with NI credits claimed through Incapacity Benefit. IS (illness or disability) was superseded by income-related ESA for new claimants from Oct 2008 onwards. From 2010-11, only payments to those also receiving IB NI credits are shown in this column.

(e) Adjusted for inflation using GDP deflator.

Source: DWP Benefit Expenditure Tables

## **5 Causes of incapacity**

The table overleaf (table 6) looks at the main conditions which underlie claims for ESA, IB or SDA.

- 43% of claimants have mental/behavioural disorders as their primary condition.
- A further 16% of claimants suffer primarily from musculoskeletal or connective tissue disorders.
- Cancer (neoplasms) accounts for 2% of incapacity claims overall, but 10% of claimants in the ESA Support group.

## **6 Further reading**

Related Library briefings:

- [Employment and Support Allowance: an introduction \(SN05574\)](#)
- [The Work Capability Assessment for ESA \(SN05850\)](#)
- [ESA and incapacity benefits: constituency statistics \(SN03301\)](#)

**Table 6: ESA and incapacity benefits - claimants by main disabling condition**

Great Britain and abroad, November 2011

	Total		Of which:							IB or SDA			
			Employment and Support Allowance										
	Number %		Total		Assessment phase		Work related activity group		Support group		Unknown phase		
			Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,612,520</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>857,890</b>	<b>100.0</b>	388,130	100.0	268,080	100.0	150,980	100.0	50,700	<b>1,754,630</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>ICDGP condition (claimant's main condition)</b>													
Mental and behavioural disorders	1,131,520	43.3	359,310	41.9	159,810	41.2	119,880	44.7	63,500	42.1	16,110	772,210	44.0
Diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue	414,860	15.9	122,970	14.3	59,280	15.3	44,310	16.5	11,280	7.5	8,090	291,890	16.6
Symptoms, signs and abnormal clinical and laboratory findings, not elsewhere classified	309,760	11.9	107,770	12.6	53,000	13.7	30,640	11.4	16,370	10.8	7,760	201,990	11.5
Diseases of the nervous system	166,540	6.4	41,650	4.9	11,970	3.1	14,460	5.4	13,040	8.6	2,180	124,890	7.1
Injury, poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes	147,900	5.7	68,660	8.0	41,760	10.8	15,740	5.9	5,310	3.5	5,850	79,240	4.5
Diseases of the circulatory system	112,680	4.3	35,780	4.2	14,010	3.6	11,520	4.3	7,890	5.2	2,350	76,900	4.4
Diseases of the respiratory system	51,220	2.0	17,960	2.1	7,340	1.9	5,640	2.1	3,960	2.6	1,020	33,260	1.9
Neoplasms	47,550	1.8	28,770	3.4	8,060	2.1	4,020	1.5	14,360	9.5	2,330	18,780	1.1
Diseases of the digestive system	40,450	1.5	15,630	1.8	7,680	2.0	4,090	1.5	2,860	1.9	1,000	24,820	1.4
Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases	36,300	1.4	12,200	1.4	5,340	1.4	4,100	1.5	1,900	1.3	860	24,100	1.4
Factors influencing health status and contact with the health services	33,340	1.3	10,050	1.2	4,450	1.1	2,600	1.0	2,400	1.6	610	23,290	1.3
Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities	25,270	1.0	2,720	0.3	430	0.1	380	0.1	1,850	1.2	70	22,550	1.3
Certain infections and parasitic diseases	21,990	0.8	9,130	1.1	3,810	1.0	2,290	0.9	2,540	1.7	490	12,860	0.7
Diseases of the eye and adnexa	19,730	0.8	5,040	0.6	1,840	0.5	2,270	0.8	600	0.4	330	14,690	0.8
Diseases of the genito-urinary system	18,860	0.7	7,430	0.9	2,890	0.7	2,580	1.0	1,420	0.9	550	11,430	0.7
Diseases of the skin and subcutaneous system	15,350	0.6	5,240	0.6	2,630	0.7	1,610	0.6	680	0.5	320	10,110	0.6
Diseases of the ear and mastoid process	10,560	0.4	2,670	0.3	1,070	0.3	1,040	0.4	360	0.2	200	7,890	0.4
Diseases of the blood and blood forming organs and certain diseases involving the immune mechanism	4,740	0.2	1,860	0.2	850	0.2	520	0.2	360	0.2	130	2,880	0.2
Pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium	3,860	0.1	3,020	0.4	1,900	0.5	390	0.1	290	0.2	450	840	0.0
Certain conditions originating in the perinatal period	50	0.0	30	0.0	20	0.0	10	0.0	~	~	10	20	0.0
Claimants without any diagnosis code on the system	10	0.0	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	~	10	0.0

~ These figures are nil or negligible.

Source: ONS Nomis