

**Employment and  
Support Allowance  
Division**

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

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# 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 August 2009 and WCAs to February 2010.

The headline figures are:

For all new ESA Claims from 27<sup>th</sup> October 2008 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2009, the result of the initial WCA is as follows:

- Support Group - 5%
- Work Related Activity Group -13%
- Fit for Work - 39%
- Claim closed before assessment complete - 37%
- Assessment still in progress - 5%

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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 first and second publications released in October 2009 and January 2010 respectively.

### 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 the outcomes of these assessments are passed on to DWP to make a final decision on the claimant's ESA status<sup>1</sup>. 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,

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<sup>1</sup> Note that this publication reflects ATOS advice, not the JCP Decision, see final bullet

- Fit for Work – The ESA claim is ceased but individuals can ask for a reconsideration or appeal if they disagree with the decision.
- 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 are not included in this publication.
- This data is based on recorded advice from ATOS, rather than the Decision Maker's final determination. The final outcomes of cases may change. This will be further compounded by reconsiderations following additional evidence and the outcomes of appeals.

# 2 Headline Statistics

## 2.1 WCA results and Appeals

### 2.1.1 WCA results for all ESA Claims

For all new ESA claims from October 2008 to August 2009, the breakdown of the ATOS recommendation at initial assessment (by the end of February 2010) is as follows:

- Support Group - 5%
- Work Related Activity Group -13%
- Fit for Work - 39%
- Claim closed before assessment complete - 37%
- Assessment still in progress - 5%

### 2.1.2 WCA results for all completed assessments

For all completed assessments (not including assessments still in progress or people who left ESA before completing assessment) to the end of February 2009 the breakdown of the ATOS recommendation at initial assessment is as follows:

- Support Group – 9%
- Work Related Activity Group -23%
- Fit for Work - 68%

### 2.1.3 WCA Appeals

Of people who made a claim for ESA between October 2008 and March 2009 and who were found Fit for Work at assessment, 29% have had an appeal heard by Tribunals Service *to date*. The original decision made by DWP has been confirmed for 61% 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	Work related			Claim closed before assessment complete	Assessment still in progress	Total
	Support Group	Activity Group	Fit for Work			
Oct-08	600	1,100	3,500	3,600	200	9,100
Nov-08	2,600	5,200	17,000	18,100	1,000	43,800
Dec-08	2,300	4,900	14,700	16,400	1,100	39,500
Jan-09	2,800	6,700	20,500	20,700	1,700	52,300
Feb-09	2,500	6,200	19,300	18,900	1,800	48,700
Mar-09	2,800	7,200	22,800	20,600	2,400	55,800
Apr-09	2,700	6,900	21,200	18,400	2,500	51,700
May-09	2,700	6,900	21,100	18,700	3,000	52,400
Jun-09	2,800	7,400	21,600	20,500	4,000	56,300
Jul-09	3,100	7,400	21,300	20,300	4,900	57,100
Aug-09	2,600	6,700	18,500	17,700	5,600	51,100
Total	27,600	66,600	201,600	194,000	28,100	517,900

1.1. Table 1 and Table 2 (below) present initial assessment results<sup>2</sup> by breaking down cohorts of ESA benefit claims. This is presented for claim starts to August 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 May 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.

1.2. National Statistics on ESA on-flows and caseload are published on the DWP Tabulation Tool. Latest data available shows there were 521,120 new ESA claims between 27th Oct 2008 and 31st August 2009. Note that rounding and exclusion of clerical claims means the total figures in Table 1 won't match the Tabulation Tool figures exactly.

<sup>2</sup> 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%	12%	38%	40%	3%
Nov-08	6%	12%	39%	41%	2%
Dec-08	6%	12%	37%	42%	3%
Jan-09	5%	13%	39%	40%	3%
Feb-09	5%	13%	40%	39%	4%
Mar-09	5%	13%	41%	37%	4%
Apr-09	5%	13%	41%	36%	5%
May-09	5%	13%	40%	36%	6%
Jun-09	5%	13%	38%	37%	7%
Jul-09	5%	13%	37%	36%	9%
Aug-09	5%	13%	36%	35%	11%
Total	5%	13%	39%	37%	5%

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	400	200	600	1,200
Jan-09	900	700	2,200	3,700
Feb-09	1,400	1,400	4,500	7,400
Mar-09	2,200	3,500	11,800	17,400
Apr-09	1,900	3,900	13,100	19,000
May-09	2,300	5,500	17,300	25,100
Jun-09	3,100	8,400	28,200	39,700
Jul-09	3,100	8,900	28,000	40,000
Aug-09	2,900	8,200	24,800	35,900
Sep-09	3,000	7,700	23,700	34,400
Oct-09	3,300	8,300	23,800	35,300
Nov-09	3,200	8,300	22,200	33,700
Dec-09	3,100	7,600	19,900	30,500
Jan-10	3,000	7,700	21,800	32,500
Feb-10	3,200	8,500	22,900	34,600

1.4. Table 3 presents ATOS recommendations at initial assessment by the month assessment was completed up to the end of February 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. Table 3 only includes people completing assessment and also includes assessments relating to claims that started after May 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 that determines the date of 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	62%	19%	19%
Dec-08	32%	18%	50%
Jan-09	23%	19%	58%
Feb-09	19%	19%	62%
Mar-09	13%	20%	68%
Apr-09	10%	21%	69%
May-09	9%	22%	69%
Jun-09	8%	21%	71%
Jul-09	8%	22%	70%
Aug-09	8%	23%	69%
Sep-09	9%	22%	69%
Oct-09	9%	23%	67%
Nov-09	10%	25%	66%
Dec-09	10%	25%	65%
Jan-10	9%	24%	67%
Feb-10	9%	24%	66%
Total	9%	23%	68%

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 November 2009

ESA Claim start month	Fit for work	Appeals heard (to date)	% of 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	3,500	1,200	35%	500	700	40%	60%
Nov-08	17,000	5,800	34%	2,300	3,500	40%	60%
Dec-08	14,700	4,900	33%	1,900	2,900	40%	60%
Jan-09	20,500	6,300	31%	2,400	3,800	39%	61%
Feb-09	19,300	4,900	25%	2,000	3,000	40%	60%
Mar-09	22,800	5,000	22%	1,900	3,000	39%	61%
Total	97,800	28,000	29%	11,000	17,000	39%	61%

1.7. Table 5 presents data on ESA claims up to the end of March 2009 where the person claiming has been found fit for work, who subsequently appeal the Department's decision and the appeal has been heard by Tribunals Service by the end of February 2010. This data shows that to date 61% of DWP decisions have been upheld.

1.8. More appeals have been heard since the figures included in the January 2010 publication. However, due to the time it takes for appeals to be submitted to Tribunals Service and heard, we still expect there are more appeals that have not yet been heard for these early cohorts of ESA claims. These figures should continue to be treated as emerging findings and not final at this stage.

# Annex B: Technical Note

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 August 2009;
- functional assessment data sourced from ATOS Healthcare covering assessments completed up to February 2010; and
- appeals data sourced from Tribunals Service covering appeals heard up to February 2010 (and which link to ESA claims up to the end of March 2009).