

Incapacity Benefits: Deaths of recipients

9 July 2012

Introduction

This statistical release presents the number of deaths of recipients of incapacity benefits, that is Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and its predecessors Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA). For those who have moved from IB/SDA to ESA and then died and for new ESA claimants who died the figures are split into those who were in the Support Group (SG) and those who were in the Work Related Activities Group (WRAG). The figures are derived from administrative data held by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Background

In October 2008, existing benefits paid on grounds of incapacity and disability, that is IB, SDA and Income Support (IS) on the grounds of incapacity, were replaced with Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for all new claimants. Starting from October 2010 most claimants who receive IB, SDA and IS paid on the grounds of illness or disability will be assessed to see if they qualify for ESA.

A key part of the ESA regime is the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) process, which is used to assess capability for work and eligibility for benefit. Those claiming ESA are initially put in the assessment phase. Following the assessment phase the claimant can have three possible outcomes:

Individuals can be found fit for work – in this case their claim closes and the claimant can move to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or it remains open pending recourse against the decision, via reconsideration from DWP or appeal to Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service.

Individuals can be found to have limited capability for work – in this instance they are allowed the benefit and placed in the Work Related Activity Group. Those in this group are not expected to work, but are provided with help and support to prepare for work where possible. They receive a higher payment than those on JSA; and

Individuals can be found to have limited capability for work and in addition, limited capability for work related activity – in this situation they are allowed the benefit and placed in the Support Group. Those in this group have the most severe functional impairments and so are provided with unconditional support and receive a higher premium than those in the Work Related Activity Group.

Results

Information request: Can you please provide me with the number of Incapacity Benefit claimants who have died in 2009, 2010 and 2011?

The analysis below covers all cases where a date of death is given, whether or not the cause of death is related to the health issues leading to the incapacity benefit award. It would be expected that the mortality rate amongst those on incapacity benefits recipients would be higher than that in the general population as some people receive incapacity benefits due to life-threatening conditions or terminal illness.

Please note that the data supplied, for those with a date of death recorded, are derived from previously unpublished information which has not been quality assured to Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.

Table 1: IB/SDA and ESA off-flows with a date of death in 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11, Great Britain

Year ²	IB/SDA & ESA		
	Total off flows from IB/SDA & ESA	Of those, with a date of death recorded ⁴	% of off flows with date of death recorded
2008/09	650,330	41,870	6%
2009/10	692,450	42,100	6%
2010/11	728,740	41,750	6%

Source: DWP Information, Governance and Security Directorate: Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study 100%.

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest ten or nearest whole percent.
2. Data is sourced from quarterly point in time data at February, May, August and November. For example 2010/11 includes the quarters May 2010, August 2010, November 2010 and February 2011. Incapacity Benefit was replaced by ESA for new claims from October 2008. 2008/09 data includes IB/SDA for all 4 quarters and ESA for November 2008 and February 2009 only.
3. Off Flows – The total number of spells on benefit that ended. A person may flow on and off the same benefit more than once during the year. The datasets used in this analysis are quarterly and point in time, hence flows between these quarters (short-term claims) may not be captured and the figures are likely to be an underestimate. For more information on these missing flows see the 'Guidance for Users':

http://83.244.183.180/flows/flows_off/Guidance%20for%20Users.pdf

4. Please note that the data supplied, for those with a date of death recorded, are derived from previously unpublished information which has not been quality assured to Official Statistics publication standard. They should therefore be treated with caution.

Information request: Can you also, for 2010 and 2011, give me a separate figure for those previously on Incapacity Benefit who were re-assessed and awarded Employment and Support Allowance and have died? Please break that figure down into the following categories:

- **Those who were found fit to work**
- **Those who were placed in the work related activity group**
- **Those who were placed in the support group**
- **Those who have an appeal pending**

Table 2, on the next page, provides data on the numbers of incapacity benefits claimants reassessed for ESA where the claim ended and the Department holds information on a date of death being recorded. It covers all cases where a date of death is given, whether or not the cause of death is related to the health issues leading to the incapacity benefit award. The table shows claims ending between October 2010, when the reassessment process started in the trial areas, and November 2011, the latest data available.

In total, between October 2010 and November 2011, some 310 claims ended and a date of death was recorded within six weeks of the claim end. This represents less than 3% of all death recorded for ESA claims over the same period. The table below shows the position of these claims when they were closed.

It would be expected that the mortality rate amongst those on incapacity benefits recipients would be higher than that in the general population as some people receive incapacity benefits due to life-threatening conditions or terminal illness. Those in the Support Group receive unconditional support due to the nature of their illness, which can include degenerative conditions, terminal illness and severe disability.

Note it is possible that the claimant had already closed their claim and then subsequently died, meaning that these figures may overestimate the true picture. Care should therefore be taken when interpreting these figures.

Table 2: Previous incapacity benefits claimants leaving ESA between October 2010 and November 2011 with a recorded date of death, Great Britain.

Reassessment outcome	Number of claimants leaving ESA with a recorded date of death
Work Related Activity Group	80
Support Group	230
Total	310

Source: The figures are derived from administrative data held by the Department for Work and Pensions and assessment data provided by Atos Healthcare.

Note: All figures have been rounded to the nearest 10.

Incapacity benefits claimants are assessed through the WCA process to determine their capability for work and eligibility for ESA whilst still on their current benefit (i.e. IB, SDA and/or IS). If an incapacity benefits claimant is found fit for work their IB, SDA and/or IS claim closes.

Data on the number of incapacity benefits claimants that have died following a fit for work decision is not available, as the Department does not hold information on a death if the person has already left benefit.

The Department does not hold information on the number of claimants who died whilst an appeal was in progress.

Information request: Can you please provide me with the number of ESA claimants who have died in 2011?

Can you please break down that number into the following categories:

- **Those who are in the assessment phase**
- **Those who have been found fit to work**
- **Those who have been placed in the work related activity group**
- **Those who have been placed in the support group**
- **Those who have an appeal pending**

Table 3, on the next page, provides data on the numbers of ESA claimants where the Department holds information on a date of death being recorded in 2011 and whose latest WCA date (or activity towards assessment) was before the end of November 2011, the latest data available.

In total, between January 2011 and November 2011, some 10,600 claims ended and a date of death was recorded within six weeks of the claim end. This represents about 1% of the total ESA caseload in November 2011, the latest caseload data available. The table below shows the position of these claims when they were closed.

Those in the Support Group receive unconditional support due to the nature of their illness, which can include degenerative conditions, terminal illness and severe disability.

Note it is possible that the claimant had already closed their claim and then subsequently died, meaning that these figures may overestimate the true picture. Care should therefore be taken when interpreting these figures.

Table 3: Claimants leaving ESA between January and November 2011 with a recorded date of death, Great Britain.

WCA Outcome at most recent assessment	Number of claimants leaving ESA with a recorded date of death
Assessment not complete	2,200
Work Related Activity Group	1,300
Support Group	7,100
Total	10,600

Source: The figures are derived from administrative data held by the Department for Work and Pensions and assessment data provided by Atos Healthcare.

Note: All figures have been rounded to the nearest 100.

Data on the number of ESA claimants that have died following a fit for work decision is not available, as the Department does not hold information on a death if the person has already left benefit.

The Department does not hold information on the number of claimants who died whilst an appeal was in progress.

David Green (ESA.ANALYSIS@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK)
Department for Work and Pensions
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