



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Duration on working-age benefits, Great Britain

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Contents

Summary 3

Methodology 3

Results 6

Local Authority Breakdown 11

Contact Details 12

Summary

- Indicator 4 of the Social Justice Framework measures the proportion of the working-age population who are claiming working-age benefits and have been for at least 3 out of the previous 4 years, focusing on those capable of work or work-related activity. This release includes this indicator as well as wider contextual statistics.
- On 31 March 2014, 7.6 per cent of the working-age population of Great Britain had been claiming working-age benefits¹ for at least three out of the previous four years. This proportion was down 0.4 percentage points compared to the year before, and down 0.9 percentage points against 2006.
- The benefits treated as indicating a capacity for work or work-related activity are Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance Assessment Phase (ESA AP), Employment Support Allowance Work Related Activity Group (ESA WRAG) or Income Support for Lone Parents² (ISLP).
- On 31 March 2014, 3.7 per cent of the working-age population were claiming a benefit which indicated a capacity for work or work-related activity and had been claiming working-age benefits for at least three out of the past four years. This is an annual decrease of 0.3 percentage points, from 4.0 per cent on 31 March 2013 to 3.7 per cent on 31 March 2014. This rate had been increasing since 2008 which coincided with the introduction of ESA, and the gradual transition of claimants receiving predecessor incapacity benefits to the ESA Assessment Phase, the ESA Work Related Activity Group and, in some cases, JSA.

¹ Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA), Incapacity Benefit (IB) / Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Income Support (IS).

² We have compiled this data to be consistent the DWP's tabtool. This data includes all claimants who are claiming Income Support with a child under 16 and no partner.

Methodology

This publication looks at a snapshot of claimants on 31st March of each year and examines the total duration those individuals had spent in receipt of one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits over the preceding four years. To calculate this we:

- Used the National Benefits Database³ (NBD) to identify claimants who were in receipt of one of the main DWP working-age benefits on 31st March of each year from 2006 to 2014;
- Included only those who were aged 18 to 59 throughout the entire four year period⁴. This means we only include those who were aged 22 to 59 on 31st March 2014. This ensures that no-one was under 18 years old at the start of the four year period so that we only consider those who could have spent the entire four year period on one of the main DWP working-age benefits⁵;
- Ensured that where people were claiming more than one benefit at a time (e.g. Income Support and Incapacity Benefit), we only counted one spell on benefits;
- Summed the total period spent on one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits over the four years for each claimant. This might include multiple separate spells on benefit. We used this to calculate the proportion of the previous four years that these individuals had been in receipt of any of these benefits.

This analysis is then repeated looking at claimants who are in receipt of a subset of benefits as of 31st March each year.

Not all of the time spent on benefit will have been built up during the current benefit claim or on the current benefit. For example, a lone parent who has moved over from Income Support to JSA in the last six months may have spent all of the last four years claiming benefits, but only the last six months on JSA. Within the individual benefit breakdown in this analysis this person would be classified as a recipient of JSA on 31st March 2014.

Local Authority breakdown methodology:

³ The NBD is a database of all DWP benefits paid to customers. The 2013 and 2014 values use the NBD released on September of the relevant year and therefore have been calculated on the basis of a claimant's status as recorded at this time. This means 2013 data onwards does not take account of any subsequent revisions made to a claimant's benefits status e.g. due to retrospective amendments reflecting the outcome of an ESA Assessment Phase decision, or a successful appeal by the claimant against an original benefit decision. Values prior to 2013 use the NBD released at September 2013 and will capture the majority of revisions where these have occurred i.e. not necessarily reflect all claimants' benefit status as recorded at 31st March of the relevant year. This is likely to have only a very small effect on the rates presented in tables 3 and 4.

⁴ The upper age limit reflects that up to 2010 women were able to access state pension at the age of 60. For consistency we have not adjusted this age limit, however we will review this in future releases.

⁵ Although some 16 and 17 year olds are able to claim DWP benefits in some specific situations, many will not meet the conditions for eligibility. Therefore we assume that most people do not become eligible to claim benefits until they are 18 so the analysis excludes anyone under the age of 22.

Figures were then broken down by each local authority in Great Britain. The local authority used to break down these figures was based on the claimant's home address as recorded on the NBD.

- In some cases it was not possible to resolve the claimant's address to a single local authority area. The number of cases where the local authority is unknown, and cannot be determined based on the information contained in the NBD, is shown in the accompanying tables.
- The address used to break down the figures is that recorded on the NBD. This is the latest (or last) address recorded for that benefit claim at the point that the data was compiled. In a number of cases the claimant may have moved address after 31st March of the relevant year. In such cases the NBD will show the claimant's later address, rather than where they were living on 31st March.

Results

Time spent on all main working-age benefits

Table 1 presents the total number of working-age claimants on 31st March 2014 by the proportion of time spent on working-age benefits⁶ over the preceding four years, from 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2014. For example, of those on working-age benefits on 31st March 2014, 66.7 per cent, or around 2.4 million individuals⁷, have been claiming such benefits for at least three out of the preceding four years.

The data has been broken down to show the proportion of time spent on working-age benefits by benefit received on 31st March 2014. For example, of those on one of the main DWP working-age benefits on 31st March 2014 (around 3.6 million), 10.5 per cent were currently on Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) and had been on one of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years.

Table 1: Claimants as of 31 March 2014 by current benefit type and total duration spent one of the main working-age benefits from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2014, Great Britain (GB)

	0-25% (up to 1 year)	25-50% (1 to 2 years)	50-75% (2 to 3 years)	75-100% (3 to 4 years)	Total
Working age benefit claimants, 31 March 2014	437,000	357,000	393,000	2,381,000	3,568,000
Proportion of claimants	12.3%	10.0%	11.0%	66.7%	100.0%
Of which are currently on:					
JSA	6.6%	4.1%	4.2%	10.5%	25.5%
IS (2)	1.5%	2.0%	2.3%	10.3%	16.2%
Incapacity benefits (ESA/IB/SDA) (3)	4.1%	3.9%	4.5%	45.8%	58.4%

Source: DWP National Benefits Database September 2014, GB

(1) The main working age benefits are JSA, IB / SDA, ESA and IS. Figures include some people working less than 16 hours and on one of the benefits listed.

(2) IS excludes people who are both on IS and IB/SDA.

(3) Incapacity benefits include ESA, IB/SDA and claimants on a combination of IS and IB/SDA.

IB/SDA includes people IS and IB/SDA.

(4) Values are rounded to the nearest 1,000 and percentages rounded to one decimal place. Totals may not be the sum of the individual cells due to rounding.

⁶ The main working age benefits include JSA, IB / SDA, ESA, IS. Figures include some people working less than 16 hours and on one of the benefits listed.

⁷ Some individuals may be making a claim on behalf of a partner as well as themselves. This is not accounted for in the figures presented here. As such, all figures represent the lower bound of the number of individuals.

Time spent on working-age benefits which indicate a capacity for work or work-related activity (JSA, ESA AP, ESA WRAG and ISLP)

Table 2 shows the proportion of time spent on one of the main DWP working-age benefits for those receiving one of the following:

- JSA;
- ESA AP and ESA WRAG only, and;
- ISLP.

From Table 2 we can see that of the 2.1 million claimants in receipt of a benefit which indicates a capacity for work or work-related activity at 31st March 2014, over 1.1 million had been claiming one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years.

Table 2 also breaks down duration on working age benefits from 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2014 by the specific benefit claimed on 31st March 2014. For example, 18.1 per cent of all of the claimants claiming either JSA, ESA AP, WRAG or ISLP on 31st March 2014 were claiming JSA and had been receiving one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years.

As explained in the methodology section, a person currently in the ESA AP that has spent at least three of the preceding four years on benefit may have built up the majority of that time claiming another benefit, such as IB.

Table 2: JSA, ESA (AP and WRAG) and lone parent IS claimants on 31 March 2014, by proportion of time spent on one of the main DWP working-age benefits from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2014, GB

	0-25% (up to 1 year)	25-50% (1 to 2 years)	50-75% (2 to 3 years)	75-100% (3 to 4 years)	Total
Claimants on JSA, ESA AP and WRAG, ISLP on 31 March 2014	364,000	271,000	292,000	1,148,000	2,075,000
Proportion of claimants	17.5%	13.0%	14.1%	55.3%	100.0%
Of which are currently on:					
JSA	11.3%	7.1%	7.2%	18.1%	43.8%
ESA assessment phase	3.6%	2.1%	2.1%	6.3%	14.0%
ESA WRAG	0.5%	1.2%	1.6%	18.3%	21.6%
IS Lone Parents	2.1%	2.7%	3.2%	12.6%	20.6%

Source: DWP National Benefits Database September 2014, GB

(1) Figures include some people working less than 16 hours and on one of the benefits listed.

(2) Figures only include those who are aged 22 to 59 on 31st March 2014

(3) Values are rounded to the nearest 1,000 and percentages rounded to one decimal place. Totals may not be the sum of the individual cells due to rounding.

Time series from 2006 to 2014 – claimants currently in receipt of a main working-age benefit who have been on one or more working-age benefit for at least three out of previous four years

Table 3 presents the time series of the number of live claims for the main DWP working-age benefits on 31st March where the claimant had been claiming one or more such benefits for at least three of the preceding four years. It shows that in 2014 the 2.4 million individuals who were claiming one or more of the main working age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years represented 7.6 per cent of the total working age population aged 22 to 59. Between 31st March 2013 and 31 March 2014 this proportion has fallen by 0.4 percentage points, from 8.0 per cent to 7.6 per cent.

Table 3: Claimants of DWP main working-age benefit claimants on 31 March of each year, 2006 to 2014, who had been in receipt of one of the main working-age benefits for at least three out of the preceding four years, GB

	Number of claimants in receipt of one or more of the main working-age DWP benefits as at 31 March who had been in receipt of one or more of the main working age DWP benefits (1) for a total period of at least three out of the preceding four years	Estimate of population 22-59 (million)	Number of claimants, as a percentage of the population
2006	2,564,000	30.2	8.5%
2007	2,530,000	30.4	8.3%
2008	2,469,000	30.5	8.1%
2009	2,456,000	30.6	8.0%
2010	2,472,000	30.7	8.1%
2011	2,467,000	30.9	8.0%
2012	2,513,000	31.1	8.1%
2013	2,489,000	31.2	8.0%
2014	2,381,000	31.4	7.6%

Source: benefit data is from the National Benefits Database, GB.

Population estimates are from the Annual Population Survey (APS), April to March of the relevant year i.e. 2014 is based on APS April 2013 to March 2014.

(1) The main working age benefits are JSA, IB / SDA, ESA and IS. Figures include some people working less than 16 hours and on one of the benefits listed.

(2) Figures only include those who are aged 22 to 59 on 31st March 2014

(3) Values are rounded to the nearest 1,000 and percentages rounded to one decimal place. Totals may not be the sum of the individual cells due to rounding.

(4) Some figures may differ from previous year's releases. This is due to; (i) revisions as a result of using an updated NBD release and; (ii) using the Annual Population Survey (APS) to calculate population estimates, rather than the Labour Force Survey (LFS) .

Time series from 2006 to 2014 – claimants currently in receipt of a working-age benefit which indicates a capacity for work or work-related activity (JSA, ESA AP, ESA WRAG, ISLP) who have been claiming one or more working-age benefit for at least three out of previous four years

Table 4 shows the time series of the number of live claims for JSA, ESA AP, ESA WRAG or ISLP on 31st March in which the claimant had been claiming one or more of the main working age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years. On 31st March 2014 this number was 1.1 million individuals; representing 3.7 per cent of the GB population aged 22-59. It should be noted that the figures in this Table represent a subset of those in Table 3.

These figures show that the proportion of the GB population aged 22-59 who were claiming one of this selected subset⁸ of working-age benefits which indicate a capacity for work or work-related activity on 31st March of each year, and who had been claiming one of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years, had been increasing since 2008. This increase coincided with the introduction of ESA, and the transition of claimants receiving predecessor incapacity benefits to the ESA AP, the ESA WRAG and, in some cases, JSA.

Table 4: Selected working-age benefit claimants on 31 March of each year, 2006 to 2014 who had been in receipt of one or the main DWP working-age benefits for at least three of the preceding four years, GB

	Number of claimants in receipt of JSA, ESA (Assessment Phase or WRAG) or ISLP (1) as at 31 March, who had been in receipt of one or more of the main working-age DWP benefits for a total period of at least three of the preceding four years	Estimate of population aged 22-59 throughout the four year period (million)	Number of claimants, as a percentage of the population
2006	660,000	30.2	2.2%
2007	652,000	30.4	2.1%
2008	619,000	30.5	2.0%
2009	634,000	30.6	2.1%
2010	694,000	30.7	2.3%
2011	723,000	30.9	2.3%
2012	963,000	31.1	3.1%
2013	1,244,000	31.2	4.0%
2014	1,148,000	31.4	3.7%

Source: benefit data is from the National Benefits Database, GB.

Population estimates are from the Annual Population Survey (APS), April to March of the relevant year i.e. 2014 is based on APS April 2013 to March 2014.

(1) Figures include some people working less than 16 hours and on one of the benefits listed.

(2) Figures only include those who are aged 22 to 59 on 31st March 2014

⁸ JSA, ESA (Assessment Phase or WRAG) or ISLP

(3) Values are rounded to the nearest 1,000 and percentages rounded to one decimal place. Totals may not be the sum of the individual cells due to rounding.

(4) Some figures may differ from previous year's releases. This is due to; (i) revisions as a result of using an updated NBD release and; (ii) using the Annual Population Survey (APS) to calculate population estimates, rather than the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

Time series from 2006 to 2014 – percentage breakdown of benefit groups who have been claiming one or more working-age benefit for at least three out of previous four years

Table 5 shows the percentage breakdown of benefit groups as at 31 March each year, 2006 to 2014, who had been in receipt of one or more of the main working age DWP benefits for a total period of at least three out of the preceding four. It shows that the percentage of this group that are claiming a working age benefit which indicates capacity for work or work-related activity (JSA, ESA AP, ESA WRAG or ISLP) at 31st March in each year has risen from 26% in 2006 to 48% in 2014.

Table 5: The Percentage breakdown of benefit groups at 31 March each year, 2006 to 2014, who had been in receipt of one or more of the main working age DWP benefits for a total period of at least three out of the preceding four years, GB

Year	Number of claimants in receipt of one or more of the main working-age DWP benefits as at 31 March who had been in receipt of one or more of the main working age DWP benefits (1) for a total period of at least three out of the preceding four years	% of these claiming JSA, ESA (AP, WRAG), ISLP on 31 March 2014	% of these claiming ESA Support Group, IB, SDA, IS Not for Lone Parents on 31 March 2014
2006	2,564,000	26%	74%
2007	2,529,000	26%	74%
2008	2,469,000	25%	75%
2009	2,456,000	26%	74%
2010	2,472,000	28%	72%
2011	2,467,000	30%	70%
2012	2,512,000	40%	60%
2013	2,489,000	50%	50%
2014	2,381,000	48%	52%

Source: benefit data is from the National Benefits Database, GB. As explained in methodology section the 2006 to 2013 figures are based on September 2013 NBD and the 2014 data on the September 2014 NBD.

(1) Figures include some people working less than 16 hours and on one of the benefits listed.

(2) Figures only include those who are aged 22 to 59 on 31st March 2014

(3) Values are rounded to the nearest 1,000 and percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Totals may not be the sum of the individual cells due to rounding.

Local Authority Breakdown

Published alongside this release, this section gives details of the number of claimants who were on one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits⁹ as of 31st March 2014, for each local authority in Great Britain. The analysis also gives the number who had been in receipt of one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits for at least three out of the previous four years. Figures have been further broken down based on the benefit that the claimant was in receipt of as of 31st March 2014.

- The local authority used to break down these figures has been derived based upon the claimant's home address.
- The statistical tables accompanying this document are at the following link: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/duration-on-working-age-benefits-april-2010-to-march-2014
- See Methodology section for details on the approach taken.
- For each local authority in Great Britain, table 1 shows as of 31st March 2014:
 - i. The number of claimants on one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits (JSA, IS, ESA/IB/SDA) at 31 March 2014.
 - ii. The number of these claimants who have been on one or more of these benefits for a total period equivalent to at least three out of the previous four years.
 - iii. Of (ii), the number in receipt of
 - 1. JSA;
 - 2. IS (excludes claimants on both IS and IB/SDA)
 - 3. ESA/IB/SDA (includes claimants on both IS and IB/SDA).
- For each local authority in Great Britain, table 2 shows as of 31st March 2014:
 - i. The total number of claimants recorded as being on a working-age benefit which indicates a capacity for work or work-related activity (Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), the Employment and Support Allowance Assessment Phase (ESA AP), or in the Work Related Activity Group (ESA WRAG), or Income Support for lone parents (ISLP)) at 31st March 2014.
 - ii. The number of these claimants who have been on one or more of the main DWP working-age benefits for a total period equivalent to at least three out of the previous four years.
 - iii. Of (ii), the number in receipt of
 - 1. JSA;
 - 2. ESA AP

⁹ Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Employment & Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance.

3. ESA WRAG
4. ISLP (excludes claimants on both IS and IB/SDA.);

- Tables 3 and 4 contain the figures detailed above for tables 1 and 2 respectively, for those claiming a main DWP working-age benefit as of 31st March 2013.

All figures in the spreadsheet have been rounded to the nearest 10. Therefore the totals may not add up.

Each table also includes the population estimates for those aged 22-59 for each Local Authority. This is to enable calculations of these statistics as a percentage of the equivalently aged population. These are estimated using the Annual Population Survey (APS), April 2013 to March 2014 (in tables 1 and 2) and the APS, April 2012 to March 2013 (in tables 3 and 4).

An ad-hoc statistical publication, *Claimants on working-age benefits for 3 out of previous 4 years*¹⁰, was published in July 2014. This contained figures in table 3 and table 4, as detailed above, for those claiming a main working-age benefit at 31st March 2013. The population estimates included in these tables used the Labour Force Survey, Quarter 1 2013. Revised population figures have been included in Tables 3 and 4 of this publication (using the Annual Population Survey, April 2012 to March 2013) to allow for comparisons between 2013 and 2014.

The Annual Population Survey provides more robust estimates of population sizes at the Local Authority level compared to the Labour Force Survey. For Local Authority level population estimates the recommended source is the ONS Population Estimates¹¹ as it provides more robust estimates, despite being less timely. However, for consistency with the working-age benefit population aged between 22 and 59, we have used the Annual Population Survey in this publication. These population estimates have been rounded to the nearest 100 and any figure less than 10,000 has been excluded due to sample data protocols.

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Other National Statistics publications and general information about the official statistics system of the UK are available from www.statistics.gov.uk

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/claimants-on-working-age-benefits-for-3-out-of-previous-4-years-july-2014>

¹¹ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pop-estimate/population-estimates-for-uk--england-and-wales--scotland-and-northern-ireland/2013/index.html>