



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Numbers of claimants on Employment and Support Allowance with progressive conditions

Figures for February 2015

September 2015

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Introduction

This statistical release provides information on the numbers of people with progressive diseases claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and is published pursuant to Official Report 20th July 2015, Volume Number 598, Column Number 1259.

This provides further information on the outcome of assessments provided in Freedom of Information (Fol) Request 2014-3129¹ (Table 2), using data to end February 2015.

WCA outcomes are broken down by the following conditions in line with Fol 2014-3129:

1. Cystic Fibrosis
2. Spinal Muscular Atrophy
3. Parkinson's Disease
4. Multiple Sclerosis
5. Other Rheumatoid Arthritis

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/351360/foi-3129-2014.pdf

Background

Entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is based on the Work Capability Assessment (WCA). The WCA is a functional assessment of what activities an individual can do. In practice, individuals are assessed by qualified healthcare professionals against a set of qualifying descriptors. As such, whilst it is unlikely that individuals with certain progressive illnesses will recover from their condition, the assessment will take into account their functional abilities at the time of the assessment and where the individual is capable of working or of undertaking some work related activity they could be found fit for work or placed in the Work-related Activity Group (WRAG).

If an individual's condition deteriorates or they present another illness they may make another application for ESA and have their eligibility reassessed, either via a new WCA or based on paper evidence; and on this basis they may then be moved into the WRAG or Support Group (SG). Those placed in the WRAG may request a repeat assessment which may place them in the Support Group if their condition has deteriorated. See **Annex 1** for further detail on both ESA and the WCA.

Results

The following table lists the number of those claiming ESA as of February 2015, broken down by benefit phase and condition.

Table 1: Employment and Support Allowance claimant population by medical condition and phase of claim, Great Britain, 28th February 2015

	Support Group (SG)	Work-related Activity Group (WRAG)	Assessment Phase (AP)
Cystic Fibrosis	1,000	100	-
Spinal Muscular Atrophy	600	-	-
Parkinson's Disease	2,400	200	200
Multiple Sclerosis	19,600	1,200	600
Other Rheumatoid Arthritis	9,400	3,300	900
Total progressive	33,000	4,800	1,700
Other Medical Condition	1,217,300	479,100	513,000
All	1,250,400	483,900	514,800

Source: Data in the above table is derived from administrative data held by the DWP and assessment data provided by the Centre for Health and Disability Assessments (CHDA).

Generic Notes:

All figures are rounded to the nearest 100; therefore addition of all volumes for outcomes and statuses may not sum to total cases. "-" denotes nil or less than 50.

1. Data includes only those individuals who were claiming ESA as of 28th February 2015.
2. Individuals categorised as being in the Assessment Phase are awaiting a WCA.
3. The outcome recorded is the final DWP Decision Maker's decision or the recommendation made by the CHDA Professional where the Decision Maker's decision is not yet available.
4. Motor neurone disease is shown in the table as 'Spinal muscular atrophy'.
5. Figures in the table differ from the figures presented in FoI 2014-3129 which showed outcomes of initial functional assessments adjusted to account for the outcome of appeal by disease code: October 2008 – September 2013

Annex 1: Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) groups and phases information

In October 2008, ESA replaced the existing benefits of Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA) for all new claimants. Starting from October 2010 claimants who received IB/SDA were assessed to see if they qualify for ESA.

A key part of the ESA regime is the 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 award is closed and the claimant can move to Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA). If the individual disagrees with the decision they can ask the DWP to review their decision via the mandatory reconsideration (MR) process introduced in October 2013. If they then disagree with the outcome of the MR they can appeal to Her Majesty’s Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS).

Individuals can be found to have limited capability for work – in this instance they are entitled to 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, 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 entitled to 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.

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Press enquiries should be directed to the Department for Work and Pensions press office: Media Enquiries: 0203 267 5144 Website: www.dwp.gov.uk

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